



Regional Board Report

Information

Approved for Board Consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corie Griffiths".

Corie Griffiths, Deputy CAO

To: Regional Board
From: Todd Cashin, Director of Community Services
Date: March 17, 2022
Subject: Regional Housing Strategy - Project Update

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors – Unweighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 208*

Purpose: To provide the Regional District of Central Okanagan Board with an update on the Regional Housing Strategy.

Executive Summary:

The 2019 Regional Housing Needs Assessment is a baseline report that demonstrates the housing situation and anticipated housing needs across the housing continuum and throughout the region. This project was undertaken due to the growing concern of housing affordability across the Central Okanagan and to better understand local housing issues.

The Regional Board's Strategic Priorities identified the Regional Housing Strategy as priority Project No. 6. The objective of the Regional Housing Strategy is to develop a regional approach to direct how to move forward to address challenges around affordability, supply, supporting housing across the continuum with a heightened focus on continuing to increase the supply of affordable rental housing and of affordable home ownership.

Subsequent to the November 18, 2021 Governance and Services Committee meeting, the Board directed staff, through its consultants - Urban Matters CCC Ltd., to conduct a high level review of regional OCP's and to conduct stakeholder engagement with member municipalities and Westbank First Nation. Public engagement is ongoing and will help in the development of the final Strategy expected by June 2022. The Consultant, Nancy Henderson of Urban Matters, will provide an update on the stakeholder engagement and the OCP review.

Recommendation(s):

THAT the Regional Board receives for information the report from the Director of Community Services, dated March 17, 2022, with respect to the update on the Regional Housing Strategy.

Respectfully Submitted:



Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

Prepared by: Cheryl Wiebe, Senior Planner

Attachment(s): Urban Matters Presentation March 17, 2022

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Priorities: Sustainable Communities, Economic Development

Values: Regional Perspective, Collaboration, Relationships, Good Governance

Background:Regional Growth Strategy

The RDCO adopted Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336 on June 23, 2014. A regional growth strategy is a long-range planning tool governed by Part 13 of the *Local Government Act* that assists local governments to plan a coordinated future for their communities while dealing with regional issues and decisions that cross local political boundaries. The RGS is also a collective vision from the regional partners for the future in order to create a region that promotes growth that is economically, environmentally and socially healthy over a twenty (20) year time horizon.

RGS Steering Committee

The RGS Steering Committee, created in 2016, is a forum for senior representatives of regional and municipal planning departments, First Nation and agencies with an interest in regional planning to coordinate the strategic priorities around the region and align the priorities with the goals and policies of the RGS.

RGS Priority Projects Plan

In accordance with the RGS, through a collaborative process, RDCO staff, RGS Steering Committee members and elected officials developed a 5-year action plan to outline the priority initiatives to implement the RGS. The action plan is the framework for RGS implementation and

based on the regional initiatives identified within the RGS. The Priority Projects Plan was endorsed by the Regional Board on July 24, 2017.

The Plan contains nine projects supporting over 25 policies, across eight Issue Areas of the RGS. These projects are a framework for maintaining momentum toward RGS goals and policies. The projects have been selected and scoped to support regional coordination and collaboration in support of regionally shared needs and goals, and with the expectation that there will be efficiencies from conducting work at the regional level.

The Plan is not a rigid five-year work plan. Each year, the RDCO Board will be asked to consider the recommended projects and approve the requisite resource allocations on a case-by-case basis. As new opportunities or unexpected demands arise, the projects in this Plan can be revised, re-sequenced or replaced as needed.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment is a baseline report that demonstrates the housing situation and anticipated housing needs located across the housing continuum and throughout the region. This project was undertaken due to the growing concern of housing affordability across the Central Okanagan and to better understand local housing issues. With the larger regional situation defined, this can support a coordinated and consistent response toward regional housing goals.

The Assessment outlines where housing gaps exist for Central Okanagan communities, how individual member communities' housing markets affect the regional housing market, provide consideration of housing supply and demand parallel to the coordination of the Regional Transportation Plan, and assess needs related to the supply of housing.

The Assessment was endorsed by the Board on October 28, 2019, and provides a descriptive analysis, data on regional affordability, other specific challenges related to housing, as well as housing highlights for each jurisdiction: two electoral areas, six First Nation reserve lands (including Westbank First Nation and Okanagan Indian Band), District of Peachland, City of West Kelowna, City of Kelowna, and District of Lake Country. It was prepared through regional consultation, an analysis of relevant housing studies and statistics, and ongoing input from the RDCO and regional partners.

Regional Housing Strategy

Shifting federal and provincial government roles have continued to place considerable pressure on local government to become more active in providing and facilitating affordable housing development. Municipalities have an increasingly important role to play as it relates to affordable market and non-market housing to meet community need and support community health and well-being. Despite the development of specific policies, zoning regulations, and financial incentives at individual local levels, there is a need for a coordinated regional approach.

The objective of the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) is to explore tools and actions that can address housing issues, needs and gaps throughout the Central Okanagan. The strategy's objective is to develop a regional approach to direct how to move forward to address challenges around affordability, supply, and supportive housing across the region and improve coordinated action. The RHS will focus on the regional district as a whole to identify a range of actions at the local level specific to non-market and market housing in the two electoral areas, District of Peachland, City of West Kelowna, City of Kelowna, District of Lake Country, Westbank First Nation, and Okanagan Indian Band.

Collaborative effort is required throughout all levels of government, the housing industry, community groups, and organizations to confront challenges within the region. Taking this regional perspective will ensure that individual communities are working in unison to improve the range of housing opportunities to meet the social and economic needs of the region. The strategy is intended to establish a shared commitment, pool resources for more impact, gain momentum for collective action and advocacy, and promote the advancement of partnerships.

To date, the project has included a working session with the Regional Board, a high level regional OCP review, review by the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Committee, presentations to member municipalities and Westbank First Nation and four stakeholder engagement sessions (UDI and three (3) inter-agency groups representing government, non-profit and the development community).

Engagement

The project is currently in Phase 3 - Community Engagement and Consultation. A public online survey closed on March 7th with 700+ responses received, and consultants are coordinating further stakeholder meetings and live-experience interviews. As there were project synergies and to better understand residents' needs, the survey also included questions relating to the RDCO's Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy (COPAWS). This helped to ensure that target audiences were not experiencing survey fatigue and to maximize use of staff and consultant resources. Consultation and Engagement will continue through to the end of March.

The engagement themes to date include:

- A need for bold direction
- Government financing and partnerships provide opportunity
- Alignment between federal and provincial government financing is an issue
- Facilitate additional partnerships in the region
- Advocate to raise senior government awareness about the housing crisis in the Okanagan
- Regular review of density bonusing for financial feasibility
- Regional transportation must play a central role
- Additional staff resourcing is needed to provide the necessary focus on the housing crisis
- Education will benefit the regional housing conversation
- Inter-agency communication needed to shorten application timelines
- A desire for short-term rental regulation

The Regional Housing Strategy will require Regional Board endorsement prior to finalization. The project timeline is:



Considerations:

Organizational/External:

The Regional District is involved in the strategy development process through overall project management, contract management, and other administrative functions.

Financial:

As part of the 2021 budget deliberations, the Regional Board approved \$60,000.00 for the development of the Regional Housing Strategy.

On November 18th, , Community Services staff facilitated a Regional Housing Strategy workshop with the Governance & Services Committee. At the end of the workshop, the Regional Board directed staff to collate OCP information from all member municipalities, electoral areas and First Nation governments and convene an interim and additional Regional Housing Strategy presentation and workshop to the Regional Board as part of the project timeline.

As a result of this resolution, two scope changes to this project have been generated and an additional \$20,000 in tax requisition has been identified in the 2022 budget to assist with collating OCP information and to enhance stakeholder engagement, communications, and community outreach.

Considerations not applicable:

- Legal/Statutory Authority
- Alternate Recommendation