

DATE OF MEETING March 4, 2024

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SUBJECT REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY: SHAPING OUR FUTURE 2040

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present the Regional District of Nanaimo's proposed Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw: Shaping Our Future 2040 and seek a Council resolution to accept the proposed bylaw.

### **Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Accept the proposed "Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023" as presented pursuant to Section 436 of the *Local Government Act*, and,
2. Direct Staff to forward a copy of the Council Resolution to the Regional District of Nanaimo.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has been working on a review of the existing Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) over the past 24 months. Engagement included a community survey, a series of workshops with local government staff and elected officials, and the informal referral of a draft Shaping Our Future 2040 document to the City of Nanaimo and other member municipalities, provincial departments, and local First Nations for review. In June 2023, the RDN Board gave first and second reading to the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw at its regular meeting held 2023-DEC-12 (Attachment A: Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023).

As per Section 436 of the *Local Government Act*, the RDN has forwarded the proposed "Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023" to Council for consideration of acceptance (Attachment B: RGS Referral Letter of 2024-JAN-26).

In accordance with Section 446 of the *Local Government Act*, an Official Community Plan (OCP) must include a Regional Context Statement (RCS) where a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) applies to the same area as the OCP (*City Plan – Nanaimo Reimagined*). City Plan recognizes the importance of a collaborative approach to growth management with the Regional District of Nanaimo and local First Nations, including Snuneymuxw First Nation, and specifically outlines how City Plan complies with the goals and objectives of the RGS (Section A1.5). [See Attachment C: Regional Context Statement, City Plan]

Section 452 of the *Local Government Act* requires a regional district with an adopted regional growth strategy bylaw to establish a monitoring program on implementation to help measure the progress made towards its objectives and actions. It also directs the preparation of an annual report to evaluate and publicly communicate the progress made towards achieving the RGS goals. In this regard, it should be noted that City staff provide GIS, statistical, and project data

related to the key indicator areas contained in the RGS annually to the RDN to support the creation of the annual RGS Indicators report. |

## **DISCUSSION**

The regional growth strategy is a long-term plan for the region, encompassing the RDN and its member municipalities, that coordinates efforts to address regional land use challenges. It tackles issues like climate change; transportation and mobility; housing; economic development; and, environmental protection, aiming to foster socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable communities.

Specifically, the strategy provides the following functions:

- **Coordination:** Facilitates collaboration between member municipalities, the regional district, and provincial and federal governments while encouraging meaningful and collaborative relationships with indigenous communities.
- **Regional Thinking:** Ensures collective interests are considered for better decision-making on regional matters such as housing, transit, protection of the environment, and agricultural lands.
- **Future Planning:** Guides growth and development over the next 20 years, focusing on sustainable communities and efficient services for future generations.
- **Communication:** Communicates the region's priorities and strategic approach to existing and new residents, investors, all levels of government, and others, addressing key issues relevant to the region's long-term vitality.

Shaping Our Future 2040 is an enhanced version of the existing RGS, building on the strengths of the previous version adopted in 2011. It updates policies addressing climate adaptation and mitigation, land use mobility, housing diversity, and affordability.

During the RGS engagement process, RDN staff consulted with City staff in the development of the draft strategy update, allowing opportunity for input. The results of this engagement are summarized in Attachment D – What We Heard Engagement Summary Report. Staff are satisfied with the engagement process employed by the RDN and the consideration given to the City's input throughout this process. As a result of this engagement and review of the proposed regional growth strategy, Staff recommend that Council pass a resolution accepting "Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023" and direct Staff to forward a copy of the Council Resolution to the Regional District of Nanaimo. |

## **OPTIONS**

1. That Council:

1. Accept the proposed "Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023" as presented pursuant to Section 436 of the *Local Government Act*; and,

2. Direct Staff to forward a copy of the Council resolution to the Regional District of Nanaimo.
  - Advantages: Will provide formal City acceptance needed by the RDN to adopt the RGS. This acceptance will provide an updated regional policy framework to guide regional goals and objectives and coordinate efforts to address regional land use challenges in the future.
  - Disadvantages: None identified.
  - Financial Implications: There would be no direct financial implication to accepting the proposed RGS Bylaw.
  
2. That Council not accept the proposed “Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023” as presented pursuant to Section 436 (7) of the *Local Government Act*, and include each provision to which it objects, the reasons for its objection, and whether it is willing that a provision to which it objects be included in the regional growth strategy on the basis that the provision will not apply to its jurisdiction.
  - The advantages of this option: Will ensure that all aspects of the RGS are acceptable to the City of Nanaimo, and any points of contention are resolved or mitigated.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Will delay adoption of the RGS Bylaw.
  - Financial Implications: Additional City and RDN staff resources will be required to address the City’s objection(s).

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The purpose of the report is for Council to consider acceptance of the Regional District of Nanaimo’s proposed Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw: Shaping Our Future 2040.
- The regional growth strategy is a long-term plan for the region, encompassing the RDN and its member municipalities, that coordinates efforts to address regional land use challenges.
- The proposed strategy is an enhanced version of the existing RGS, building on the strengths of the previous version adopted in 2011. It updates policies addressing climate adaptation and mitigation, land use mobility, housing diversity, and affordability.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- ATTACHMENT A: Link to “Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1874, 2023”  
ATTACHMENT B: RGS Referral Letter of 2024-JAN-26  
ATTACHMENT C: Regional Context Statement Overview, City Plan  
ATTACHMENT D: What We Heard Engagement Summary Report

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