



CVRD RGS – Intergovernmental Advisory Committee
Monday, February 16, 2009
Filberg Centre, Courtenay

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) workshop was carried out with the IAC in order to identify the challenges and opportunities for the region, both internal and external. In a round table format, members of the IAC engaged in this exercise giving the consulting team important insight into the perspectives of each of their respective ministries and departments.

Before beginning the SWOT exercise, comments/concerns and questions were directed toward the RGS team, pertaining to the process and content of the RGS:

- What is “plan B” in terms of scheduling, if the RGS development takes longer than expected?
- How is the IAC committee involved/ going to be involved – at what points, in what ways?
- How does the sustainability strategy fit into this work – at what points?
- Population and employment projections: will additional analysis be provided on age cohorts, trends & patterns, etc?

The following recorded comments are assigned to the department, ministry, committee representative whom made them, rather than the individual themselves. A list of IAC members is available on the RGS website.

Strengths/ Weaknesses (internal issues to the Region):

- (Min. of Comm. Dev)
 - o S: Good ingredients for strong sense of regionalism, how individual municipalities can come together with solutions, good regional collaboration
 - o W: Not enough clarity on what the economic base is for the future, in the past the economy was driven by agriculture, mining, tourism... how will this change, especially given migration/ aging population?
- (Min. of Transportation)
 - o S: Beautiful new inland highway – quite an asset, challenge is to look after it – protect it from degrading (control access), ensure safety
 - o W: Pressure to accept development could be at the cost of mobility or result in other impacts
- (Min. of Environment)
 - o S: Common interest in the values that the Valley holds for residents – natural setting, outdoor recreation opportunities
 - o W: All need to work collaboratively to protect those resources. Ensure drinking water protection for the future. Now is the time to look at sources – identify one source and work together to protect that.



Comox Valley

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

- (Planning Operations, CVRD)
 - o S: Something is actually being done - 4 planning managers with competing interests collaborating
 - o W: There is a strong bias in the RD from people who don't want to see changes (i.e., density, land use). How to convince people of the changes we are facing in terms of RGS?
 - o W: Easy for all who are currently engaged in the process as policy makers, but how to ensure that the people who will be making decisions in the future will continue to endorse it (i.e., creating a tough enough doc that it is useful for entire 20 years).
 - Need to create specific and clear directives rather than motherhood statements
- (Min. of Agriculture of Lands)
 - o S: Strong, organized farm groups
 - o W: It is challenging to engage the farming community – they don't go to public meetings, and don't tend to like to get involved in these processes. They are the largest land user – important that they are involved.
 - Engage them soon or they will be too busy.
- (Land Commission)
 - o S: There is a lot of ALR land with agriculture potential, we have bylaws and OCPs that are very supportive of agriculture and we have an agriculture plan
 - o W: Subdivision patterns are not what one would want for agriculture. Fragmentation of agricultural land in the valley – conflicts with residential development, agricultural viability
 - The minimum size for agriculture lands is 8 ha in the RD
- (Min. of Tourism, Culture and the Arts)
 - o S: Very diverse region, lots of opportunity, diverse demographics
 - o W: Limited large tracks of public land in the Valley because of railway land grants. Land that we do have becomes very important – should be developing private land not selling off crown land.
- (Ministry of Forests & Range)
 - o S: No single economic drivers dominating = opportunity, less entrenchment
 - o W: How will RGS be consistent with existing planning (i.e., provincial land use)
 - Getting feedback on protecting the environment – what if it isn't consistent or something you can deliver on = disappointing stakeholders
- (Alberni-Clayoquot RD)
 - o S: Lots of land/ space, relatively low population. Now is the time to do something.
 - o W: RGS is not an OCP, not zoning bylaw, because of number of political jurisdictions there will always be a fight as to what authority and power are being taken away from the local level. Local councils want growth control in their hands rather than handing it over to a larger group in terms of a RGS



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REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

- (Town of Comox)
 - o S: Natural context
 - o W: Focus on addressing issues in isolation, not a systems approach
 - Sewer plan first, water plan second, focus on shutting down development no focus on finding places to permit development
- (CV School District)
 - o S: Community of diverse groups that can be mobilized
 - o W: Getting groups engaged in a consensus model can be a challenge
- (City of Courtenay)
 - o S: Having senior staff talking and working together
 - o W: Process is mandated by ministry – indicates that something hasn't been working, fractures occurring
 - This process has to get down to a level of zoning – to address the fracturing that has occurred in the past
 - High level won't be delivered if on the ground cooperation is lacking
 - Culture of working cooperatively, requires commitment from local government as well as provincial ministries
- (RD of Nanaimo)
 - o S: GS strength is an opportunity for cooperation we need enough direction to achieve commitment without taking away from autonomy.
 - Education and awareness is huge – anticipate this rather than respond when it comes up. Opportunity to have education process as part of planning. People are always going to question why you are doing this.
- (Village of Cumberland)
 - o S: Sensitive environments
 - o W: Turf wars. Cumberland feeling separated from CV, it's "their" RGS. How to get participation from Cumberland?
- (Strathcona RD)
 - o S: Spotlight on the RGS – means it is going to have to produce something concrete.
 - o W: Political – administrative cooperation will be the hinge
- (BC Transit)
 - o S: Historic downtown areas in the region have potential for walkability and mixed use. Need more of this type of development
 - o S: Local transit system is popular with younger people
 - o W: Multi-centred nature of the region – very difficult to serve by transit
 - o W: If developments are providing more than what is needed – this can be difficult to service. Takes time to get transit into new developments in the first place, more difficult to integrate transit into these. Many factors to consider.



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REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

- (Min. of Social Development and Housing)
 - S: Critical opportunity to create regional approach to housing. Metro Van strategy has good example of this.
 - W: Challenge with local level implementation on housing (political will, NIMBYism)
- (Vancouver Island Health Authority)
 - S: Human resource
 - W: People – spectrum of people who have been here a long time, very entrenched – how to walk the talk is challenging
 - E.g. drinking water: elected and non-elected can't agree. Lack of courage to do the right thing even when all agree. Doesn't get done at implementation stage.
 - W: Dealing with RGS before water strategy when water strategy should come first. Need to know where water is coming from.
- (Min. of Environment)
 - S: Good to see thoughtfulness going into development and growth, good diversity of participating agencies
 - W: Not clear to what extent provincial agencies are involved in sustainability strategy process. If you isolate processes will have tough time reaching success or knowing what it looks like.
 - W: Can't define where development will occur until you know what values are at risk.
 - W: See nothing about climate change – BIG ISSUE
 - Determine limits to growth to sustain eco/ social systems – WATER is a fundamental issue and will really dictate where development can go
 - W: Can we control where development will occur if not enshrined in OCP?



Opportunities/ Threats (external to the Region):

- (Vancouver Island Health Authority)
 - o O: Political will at all levels
 - o T: Global climate change
- (Min. of Social Development and Housing)
 - o O: Development industry and housing – don't know where things are going. How interested are developers in creating opportunities for affordable housing?
 - o O: Might have units for rent
 - o T: Might not take risks in terms of density bonuses, etc.
 - Pushback on affordable housing attempts, developers don't consider it in their interest
- (BC Transit)
 - o O: Transit to play a much larger role. Right now its 1% of all travel. Can grow that.
 - Provincial transit plan announced last year, looking at doubling transit ridership and service = funding opportunities
 - o T: Funding from Province
 - o T: Climate change, energy price, peak oil, etc.
- (Strathcona Regional District)
 - o O: Regional services – good time to move forward
 - Getting through water issue could inspire confidence in public
 - o T: Sequence of information gathering – can it all come together at the right time?
- (Village of Cumberland)
 - o O: Peak oil, downturn in economy – breathing space to do RGS before next wave of development
 - o T: Lack of political support
- (RD of Nanaimo)
 - o O: To get agreement in place
 - o T: If agreement isn't in place this document will get shelved. Implementation – show how this will happen (monitoring and measuring).
- (City of Courtenay)
 - o T: Making sure we know, among four studies, some things will have to change.
 - Public burn out on consultation
 - City: municipal services stay within municipal boundaries – are these being recognized in the plans (mainly water).
 - Courtenay adopting climate action strategy – this is a containment model
- (Comox Valley School District)
 - o O: Opportunity to engage youth
 - o T: Youth are busy group. Go to them – during school day.



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REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

- T: 3,100 children in grades 10,11,12; 1500 in k,1,2 = losing kids. Who are we planning for?
 - Is there a better time to engage students (time of year) what is the best forum?
- (Town of Comox)
 - O: Inflow of money, mainly from seniors with an eye to quality of life
 - T: Migration to smaller places – rush back to the past. Reasons for moving are maybe conflicting with regional growth issues
- (Alberni-Clayoquot RD)
 - O: To protect what we have. Have space, low population
 - O: Present economic climate may be an advantage
 - T: Loss of farmland. Towns and cities grow up on finest land and push out.
 - T: Buy-in over 7 councils (over life of the RGS)
- (Min. of Forests and Range)
 - O: Diversity of background, from process point of view. So much planning has happened in other places – can provide great input into this process
 - T: Buy-in to get approved – have the right people been identified?
- (Min. of Tourism, Culture and the Arts)
 - O: Look at innovative ways to approach issues and problems (other examples)
 - T: Local zoning bylaws don't always allow for creativity
- (Land Commission)
 - O: Send out a message – ALR not for development, to be preserved and protected
 - T: Thought that agriculture land is nothing more than land bag for future development. Ensure there are proper containment boundaries, targets for density. Look very long term and ensure that there is enough land in urban containment boundaries to accommodate all growth.
- (Min. of Agriculture of Lands)
 - O: Have some of the best farmland in prov./ country
 - High percentage of class 1 lands nearby
 - More demand for local products – supports agricultural economy
 - T: Access to resources and infrastructure – these limit growth
 - Forage is most common crop because it requires the least resources.
- (Planning Operations, CVRD)
 - O: Finally looking at what 4 jurisdictions have in common. Can build on this strength
 - T: Development industry. Have are a very strong lobby and have real threat to impact RGS
 - Strong language from other perspectives
- (Min. of Environment)
 - O: Education and outreach component of RGS.
 - T: Provincial government working more closely with local government but lacking formal processes to work together



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REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

- (Min. of Transportation)
 - O: Opportunity for change. To get a significant change need huge land use change (housing type, zoning)
- (Min. of Environment):
 - O: Recent legislative changes for climate change create opportunities for shifting plans. OCP mandated to include targets for reducing GHGs. Baseline data is becoming available. CEEI (emissions inventory at province level) for measuring how you do over coming years. Creates 'objective' information that can help inspire discussions.
 - Methodologies for monitoring?
 - Measure different activities?
 - T: All RGSs – the thought that once you are complete, the work is done. Not a static document, a living document. Constantly educating, looking at what actions need to change.