

1.6 Regional Context Statement

A Regional Growth Strategy for the Comox Valley Regional District was initiated under section 431 of the *Local Government Act*. The purpose of a Regional Growth Strategy is to guide decisions on growth, change and development within the Regional District.

A regional growth strategy is required to cover a period of at least 20 years from the time of its initiation and must include:

- a comprehensive statement on the future of the region, including the social, economic and environmental objectives of the board in relation to the regional district;
- population and employment projections for the period covered by the regional growth strategy;
- actions proposed for the regional district to provide for the needs of the projected population in relation to housing, transportation, regional district services, parks and natural areas, and economic development; and
- targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the regional district, and policies and actions proposed for the regional district with respect to achieving those targets.

If a regional growth strategy applies to all or part of the same area of a municipality as an official community plan, the official community plan must include a regional context statement. The regional context statement must specifically identify the relationship between the official community plan and the matters referred to above and if applicable, how the Official Community Plan is to be made consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy over time.

Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010 consists of five parts including an introductory section.

Part 2 contains 11 major trends which shape the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The Comox Official Community Plan recognizes the importance of these major trends and all are addressed in the land use designations, objectives and policies. While all are important, population growth due to in-migration from other parts of B.C. and other provinces, demographic changes due to an aging population, environmental protection and the need to increase transportation choices are key drivers of the Comox OCP. The RGS projects a population increase of 19,800 from 2010 to 2030 for the CVRD. An annual growth rate of 1.6% is projected to slowly decline to 1.0% over the 20 year timeframe of the RGS. This is consistent with the OCP which anticipates a lower growth rate for the Town of Comox than the CVRD as a whole due to a limited land base and a strong desire for incremental change from Comox residents.

An aging population will generate the need for a variety of more compact housing forms regardless of population increase from outside Comox. The Comox OCP proposes to address these population and demographic changes primarily through increasing opportunities for densification in Downtown Comox and within easy walking distance of transit corridors, located along arterial and collector roads.

'Greenfield' development will serve as a secondary means of accommodating growth but will not be sufficient due to a limited land supply and environmental constraints. Comox is blessed with numerous environmentally sensitive areas. The OCP proposes to accommodate very limited growth in these areas and only subject to extensive development permit regulation.

Improving transportation choices is of critical significance in order to take advantage of existing underutilized infrastructure, forego extensive capital expenditures, and reduce GHG emissions. The Comox OCP anticipates over three quarters of the population of Comox in 2030 will be within 400 metres of existing transit routes.

The time frame of the RGS is the 20 year period from 2010 to 2030.

Goals of the Regional Growth Strategy

Part 3 of the RGS contains eight over-riding goals. Each goal includes a series of objectives, targets and supporting policies. The OCP supports each goal through the following objectives and policies:

RGS Goal 1: Housing	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Ensure a diversity of housing options to meet evolving demographics and needs.</i>	<i>Section 2.1.1.2 Residential Objectives: 1, 2 & 3</i> <i>Section 2.1.1.3 Residential Policies: a, b, c, d, e, g, n, l & m .</i>
	<i>Section 2.1.2.3 Affordable, Rental and Special Needs Housing Policies: a, c, d & e.</i>
RGS Goal 2: Ecosystems, Natural Areas & Parks	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Protect, steward and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems.</i>	<i>Section 2.1.8.2 Parks, Trails & Open Space Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 & 12.</i> <i>Section 2.1.8.3 Parks, Trails and Open Space Policies: a, b, c</i>
	<i>Section 2.1.9.3 Agriculture and Aquaculture Supporting Policies: b & g.</i>
	<i>Section 2.3.12 Environmental Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5.</i> <i>Section 2.3.13 Environment Policies: a, l & v.</i>
RGS Goal 3: Local Economic Development:	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Achieve a sustainable, resilient and dynamic local economy that supports Comox Valley businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit.</i>	<i>Section 2.1.9.3 Agriculture and Aquaculture Supporting Policies: k & l.</i>
	<i>Section 2.1.10.3 19 Wing Comox Supporting Policies: b & c.</i>

RGS Goal 4: Transportation	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Develop an accessible, efficient and affordable multi-modal transportation network that connects Core Settlement Areas and designated Town Centres, and links the Comox Valley to neighbouring communities and regions.</i>	<i>Section 2.4.1.3 Roads – Objectives: 1, 3, 4 & 5.</i> <i>Section 2.4.1.4 Roads Supporting Policies: b, f, g, h & i.</i>
	<i>Section 2.4.1.12 Bikeways Objectives: 1, 2, 4 & 5.</i> <i>Section 2.4.1.13 Supporting Policies for Bikeways: a</i>
RGS Goal 5: Infrastructure	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Provide affordable, effective and efficient services and infrastructure that conserves land, water and energy resources.</i>	<i>Section 2.4.2.1 Utilities and Services Objectives: 5, 6, 7 & 8.</i>

It should be noted that the analysis of the municipal infrastructure by Koers & Associates indicated the anticipated growth in the OCP could be accommodated by existing infrastructure except in new development areas where developers would be responsible.

RGS Goal 6: Food Systems	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security.</i>	<i>Section 2.1.9.2 Agriculture and Aquaculture Supporting Objectives: 1 & 2</i> <i>Section 2.1.9.3 Agriculture and Aquaculture Supporting Policies: b, c & i.</i>
RGS Goal 7: Public Health and Safety	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being.</i>	<i>Section 2.4.2.3 Water Service Supporting Policies: a</i> <i>Section 2.4.2.5 Sanitary Sewerage Service: a</i>
RGS Goal 8: Climate Change	Comox OCP Supporting Objectives/Policies
<i>Minimize regional greenhouse gas emissions and plan for adaptation.</i>	<i>Section 2.3.13 Environment Policies: j & k</i>

The overall approach of the OCP is to encourage redevelopment through infill making full use of existing infrastructure. Implementation of the Plan is anticipated to result in a reduction of per capita GHG emissions of 28% by 2030, compared to the 2007 baseline.

RGS Growth Management Principles

Part 4 of the RGS addresses Growth Management. Included are 16 growth management principles, all of which are supported in the Comox OCP, where applicable. These reinforce the goals identified in Part 3 of the RGS. In addition, the RGS requires areas of existing development on the fringes of municipal areas to be identified that should eventually be incorporated through boundary extensions and provided with publicly owned water and sewer services in order to address existing public health and environmental issues. There are no known existing public health or environmental issues on the fringe of Town of Comox which meet those criteria and therefore no such areas have been identified within the Comox OCP.

The RGS also requires areas to be identified on the fringes of municipal areas that should eventually be incorporated through boundary extensions and provided with publicly owned water and sewer services in order to allow for new long-term growth opportunities in a phased and orderly manner. The Comox OCP can accommodate all projected development without any expansion in the boundaries of the Town of Comox. However the Town's small land base, varying degrees of interest amongst property owners in proceeding with development at any given time and land assembly issues could lead to restrictions in land supply relative to demand. To address this possibility, the OCP identifies three areas where potential growth could be accommodated in a phased and orderly manner. Area A is located in the Butchers Road surrounded on three sides by the Town of Comox. Area B is located west of Anderton Road in northwest Comox. Area C is located east of Anderton Road and extends north of Knight Road past Ryan Road to the ALR boundary. Other potential expansion areas are not identified due to environmental constraints, ALR status, and limited development potential.

The Town Centre for Comox as identified in the RGS MG Policy 1.3 consists of Downtown Comox as shown on *Map 1 – Land Use Designations*.

Compliance with RGS MG Policy 2B-1 is achieved as no ALR exclusion is proposed and all policies are in accordance with the Agricultural Land Commission Act and regulation under the Act.

Part 5 of the RGS addresses implementation measures, monitoring and amendment procedures. The OCP identifies policies with specific implementation measures requiring additional action outside of the OCP update process; these are contained in Part 4 of the OCP. Measures to monitor the OCP are also included in Part 4. These are identified generally as it is anticipated specific measurement indices may change over time. Annual monitoring of some indices should take place while a broader review of the context statement should occur within five years.