

## **CVRD REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT**

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), located in Southern Vancouver Island, encompasses almost 3,500 km<sup>2</sup> and includes four municipalities and nine electoral areas:

- CVRD Electoral Area A – Mill Bay/Malahat
- CVRD Electoral Area B – Shawnigan Lake
- CVRD Electoral Area C – Cobble Hill
- CVRD Electoral Area D – Cowichan Bay
- CVRD Electoral Area E – Cowichan Station/Sahtlam/Glenora
- CVRD Electoral Area F – Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls
- CVRD Electoral Area G – Saltair/Gulf Islands
- CVRD Electoral Area H – North Oyster/Diamond
- CVRD Electoral Area I – Youbou/Meade Creek
- City of Duncan
- Municipality of North Cowichan
- Town of Ladysmith
- Town of Lake Cowichan

The region faces significant growth pressures. Between 2016 and 2021, the region's population increased by 6.3% to just over 89,000. Today, the regional and its communities are transitioning from traditional resource-based economies, face housing and socio-economic issues, and are experiencing the impacts of climate change.

In 2018, the CVRD and municipalities worked in partnership to develop the Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework – a pathway to address critical, region-wide issues such as population growth, climate change and governance. Building on this aspirational work, the CVRD Board is now seeking to develop a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) to effectively guide infrastructure investments and population growth within the region.

The purpose of an RGS is to guide population growth and settlement patterns across the region that are socially, economically and environmentally healthy and make efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources. An RGS would work towards key goals such as:

- Identifying suitable lands for development, and avoiding urban sprawl;
- Facilitating adequate, affordable and appropriate housing;
- Encouraging active transportation through walking, bicycling and transit;
- Protecting the environment, ecosystems and water resources;
- Maintaining a productive resource base, and regional food security;
- Economic development that supports the unique character of communities;
- Preserving, creating and linking open space, parks and recreation areas;
- Promoting energy conservation; and
- Stewardship of culturally significant land, sites and structures.

## **2.0 REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY OBJECTIVES**

The RGS will build on the collaborative principles and goals established in Cowichan 2050, with a focus on sustainable growth, economic development, and community well-being.

The RGS will recognize Official Community Plans (OCPs) for CVRD member municipalities and electoral areas, and will endeavor to synthesize the guiding values, aspirations and policy directions of each OCP to develop a cohesive vision and growth management framework for the region.

The RGS will not replicate recent public engagement in regards to OCP development and community visioning but will focus engagement activities towards building a regional vision.

The RGS will seek to resolve the significant information gaps in regard to infrastructure and servicing, and environmental constraints, in order to direct the efficient growth of the region.

The RGS will seek to understand the interests and needs of local First Nations in relation to growth and servicing, and identify opportunities to collaboratively address these needs.

The RGS should work towards the goals noted in section 428 of the *Local Government Act*:

- Avoiding urban sprawl and ensuring that development takes place where adequate facilities exist or can be provided in a timely, economic and efficient manner;
- Settlement patterns that minimize the use of automobiles and encourage walking, bicycling and the efficient use of public transit;
- The efficient movement of goods and people while making effective use of transportation and utility corridors;
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas;
- Maintaining the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including the agricultural land reserve;
- Economic development that supports the unique character of communities;
- Reducing and preventing air, land and water pollution;
- Adequate, affordable and appropriate housing;
- Adequate inventories of suitable land and resources for future settlement;
- Protecting the quality and quantity of ground water and surface water;
- Settlement patterns that minimize the risks associated with natural hazards;
- Preserving, creating and linking urban and rural open space, including parks and recreation areas;
- Planning for energy supply and promoting efficient use, conservation and alternative forms of energy; and
- Good stewardship of land, sites and structures with cultural heritage value.

## **3.0 CONTENTS**

The RGS will cover a period of at least 20 years and 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;

- To the extent that these are regional matters, 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.
- To the extent that these are regional matters, 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.

Contents of the RGS, including those identified will be determined through discussion and evaluation of issues and opportunities following project initiation, under the guidance of an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee.

#### **4.0 ORGANIZATION**

The RGS project will be managed by a RGS Manager, employed by the CVRD and guided by an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee – an internal, technical committee comprised of CVRD and municipal staff representatives, and senior representatives of Provincial ministries and agencies.

The Intergovernmental Advisory Committee, through RGS annual workplan development, may establish ad-hoc sub-committees and invite participation from technical staff of the CVRD, municipalities and Province in regards to specific issues (e.g. infrastructure, transportation, housing, environment).

A Regional Advisory Planning Commission or Committee may be established for part or all of the RGS process to provide public representation and guidance on the develop of the RGS, such as development of regional vision and growth management policies.

#### **5.0 PROJECT TIMELINE & PHASING**

The RGS project should commence in early 2025 and be completed by end of 2027. The following phases are envisioned but may be modified or further refined through confirmation of consulting resources and guidance of the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee:

##### **Phase 1 – Initiation/Procurement (October 2025 – February 2026)**

This phase would be focused on administrative activities needed to commence the RGS project:

- Notice to member municipalities, Province;
- Development and publication of content on PlanYourCowichan;
- Invitation to local First Nations to participate and/or express wishes in regards to engagement;
- Confirmation of RGS Manager and Intergovernmental Advisory Committee members; and
- Service contracts/agreements with consultants.

## **Phase 2 – Regional Profile Development (March – December 2025)**

This phase would be focused on developing a complete understanding of the various characteristics of the region and completing baseline studies and technical reports, with mapping, including:

- Regional population and housing (based on recent HNRs);
- Review of existing OCPs and Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs);
- Assessment of environmental conditions/constraints;
- Assessment of water and sewer servicing (existing and potential);
- Assessment of agricultural productivity;
- Parks/green space inventory;
- Groundwater profile;
- Regional transportation/active transportation networks;
- Assessment of economic development objectives in relation to potential growth and servicing;
- Identification of First Nations' development interests and objectives;
- Compilation of GIS data for CVRD and municipalities (cadastral fabric, land use, servicing, etc.); and
- Gap analysis/Identification of any further assessments needed to proceed to Phase 3.

## **Phase 3 – Regional Visioning, Growth Scenarios (January – September 2026)**

This phase would be focused on developing the regional vision and exploring future growth scenarios, based on the technical assessments completed in Phase 2. Engagement with the public and local First Nations would be integral to this phase.

## **Phase 4 – Regional Growth Strategy Development (October 2026 – March 2027)**

This phase would involve preparing a draft RGS based on the technical assessments and engagement outcomes. The draft RGS will identify regional goals, objectives and strategies including specific servicing strategies to support desired growth objectives, and provide guidance to other matters confirmed through Phase 3. The draft RGS would include mapping with GCBs.

## **Phase 5 – RGS Bylaw Process (April 2027 – December 2027)**

This phase would be focused on the statutory RGS bylaw process.

## **6.0 REFERENCES<sup>i</sup>**

### Cowichan 2050

- [Cowichan 2050 "Call to Action"](#)
- [Cowichan 2050 Regional Working Group Scope](#)
- [Cowichan 2050 Backgrounder](#)

### Official Community Plans

- [CVRD Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas](#) (2021)
- [CVRD Modernized Official Community Plan](#) (draft)

- [City of Duncan Official Community Plan](#) (2024)
- [Municipality of North Cowichan Official Community Plan](#) (2022)
- [Town of Ladysmith Official Community Plan](#) (2023)
- [Town of Lake Cowichan Official Community Plan](#) (2024).

#### Housing Needs Reports

- [CVRD Interim Housing Needs Report \(2024\)](#)
- [Municipality of North Cowichan Interim Housing Needs Report \(2024\)](#)

#### Water/Sewer Infrastructure

- [CVRD Water & Sewer Systems](#)
- [Municipality of North Cowichan Water & Wastewater Systems](#)
- [Water & Wastewater Utilities Review and Assessment for the CVRD \(2017\)](#)

#### Climate Change

- [CVRD Climate Adaptation and Risk Management Strategy \(2021\)](#)
- [Cowichan Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Plan 2023-2026](#)
- [North Cowichan Climate Action and Energy Plan \(2022\)](#)
- [CVRD Natural Hazard Risk Assessments](#)

#### Transportation/Transit/Active Transportation

- [Cowichan Valley Transit Future Action Plan \(2023\)](#)
- [CVRD Regional Active Transportation Plan \(2023\)](#)
- North Cowichan 2024 Master Transportation Plan (MTP)

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<sup>i</sup> This list is not exhaustive and will be updated through dialogue with municipal partners.