



RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: September 10, 2024 **REPORT:** 24-083
FROM: Planning Department – Policy **FILE:** 6480-20-2024
SUBJECT: SQUAMISH-LILLOOET REGIONAL DISTRICT – REGIONAL GROWTH
STRATEGY MINOR AMENDMENT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council has reviewed the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) minor amendment as presented in the referral notice, attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report No. 24-083, and direct staff to communicate to the SLRD that Council supports the minor amendment and provides the following comments regarding proposed policies 11.1(a) and 11.2(a) and Goal 3:

- The Resort Municipality of Whistler supports and strongly encourages the adoption of achieving net zero by 2050 and recommends removing the reference to “carbon neutral”. A net zero commitment will support the achievement of the greenhouse gas emission (GhG) reduction targets outlined in the RGS. However, carbon neutrality may limit the region’s ability to achieve these targets, as carbon neutrality can be achieved through the purchase of carbon offsets without any or very little reduction in GhG; and
- Any requests for staff time that may arise regarding support for coordination on a Housing Needs Report and/or exploration of the establishment of a Regional Housing Authority would need to be evaluated against existing RMOW priorities and workplans; and further

That Council has reviewed the regional context statement (RCS) contained within the “Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2199, 2018”, attached as Appendix B to Administrative Report No. 24-083, and direct staff to submit the RCS to the SLRD for its continued acceptance.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is twofold. First, the report presents the opportunity for the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to provide comment on the proposed Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) minor amendment regarding climate action and affordable housing policies and relevant indicators. Second, the report requests Council to review the regional context statement (RCS) within the “Official Community Plan Bylaw 2199, 2018” (OCP) and direct staff to submit the RCS to the SLRD for its continued acceptance.

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 Information Report Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

RGS Minor Amendment

As per section 428(1) of the *Local Government Act* (LGA), the purpose of the RGS is to promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources. The RGS provides a broad policy framework describing the common direction that the regional district and member municipalities will follow in promoting development and services which are sustainable, recognizing a long-term responsibility for the quality of life for future generations.

The “Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1062, 2008, Amendment Bylaw No. 1356-2014” (SLRD RGS Bylaw) was adopted by the SLRD Board of Directors (Board) in June 2010. As per section 452(2) of the LGA, at least once every five years, the SLRD must consider whether the RGS must be reviewed for possible amendment. The last RGS review was adopted in 2019, therefore in 2024 the SLRD was required to consider a review of the RGS. As an outcome of this review, the SLRD is proceeding with a proposed minor amendment to their RGS Bylaw.

Section 437 of the LGA provides guidance for minor amendments to regional growth strategies and the RGS includes a minor amendment criteria and process. Of particular note, a minor amendment, in the opinion of the SLRD Board, is not considered to be of regional significance in terms of scale, impacts or precedence and is not inconsistent with the goals of the RGS. In accordance with the RGS minor amendment process, the SLRD has provided 30 days written notice to affected local governments and opportunity to provide comments prior to consideration of giving first reading to the proposed amendment bylaw. The notice provided is attached to this report as Appendix A.

The SLRD Board will be considering first reading of the RGS amendment bylaw at the November 27, 2024, Board meeting and has requested to receive any comments by October 4, 2024.

Regional Context Statement Review

A regional context statement describes the relationship between a municipality’s official community plan and the applicable region’s regional growth strategy. The RMOW’s current RCS was created for the OCP and is presented in Chapter 1. On July 23, 2019, RMOW Council gave third reading to the OCP and resolved to refer the RCS to the SLRD for consideration of acceptance, pursuant to section 448 of the LGA ([Administrative Report No. 19-099](#)). The SLRD Board accepted the RMOW’s RCS on October 23, 2019. The OCP was adopted on June 23, 2020. The RMOW’s RCS is attached to this report as Appendix B. Per the LGA, the RMOW Council is required to review the RCS at least once every five years after its latest acceptance by the SLRD Board and if no amendment is proposed, submit the RCS to the SLRD Board for its continued acceptance. Being approximately five years since the RCS was accepted, the RMOW is required to consider the RCS in 2024.

Analysis

RGS Minor Amendment

The proposed policy updates include revisions to strategic directions under Goal 3 (Affordable

Housing), Goal 11 (Climate Action) and relevant indicators. The proposed revisions reflect updated greenhouse gas (GhG) targets, and input received at the April 2024 SLRD Regional Affordable Housing Forum and through the Climate Action Policy Review. The Regional Affordable Housing Forum was attended by RMOW staff and provided the opportunity to share goals, initiatives, challenges and ideas for affordable housing, understand high level regional housing needs and identify collaborative high-level opportunities. Through the Climate Action Policy Review, member municipality staff were requested to provide one to two policies from existing official community plans or climate action plans that are missing from the RGS; RMOW staff contributed to this process. Figure 1 illustrates the RGS Review 2024 project outline.

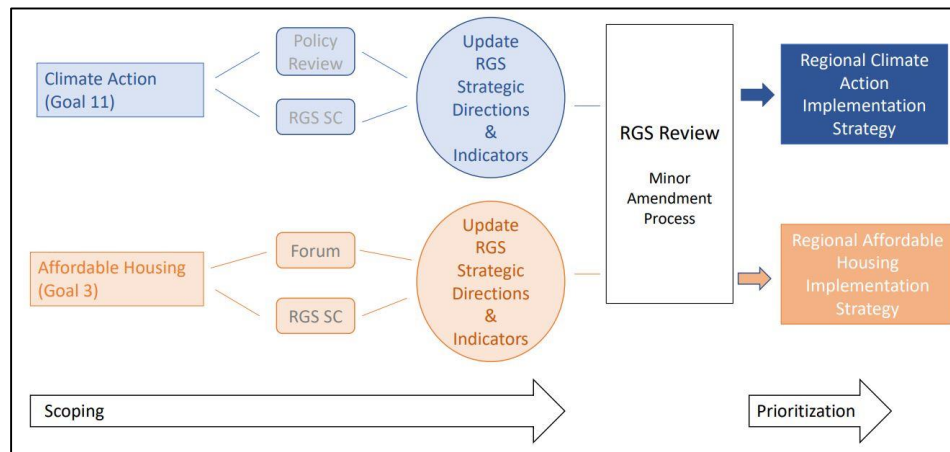


Figure 1: RGS Review 2024 Project Outline (Source: SLRD July 24, 2024 report to SLRD Board)

The SLRD’s proposed changes to the RGS are attached in Appendix C, which was extracted from a July 24, 2024 SLRD staff report to the SLRD Board. This report notes that SLRD staff proposed new and revised content shown in purple, while member municipality staff proposed new and revised content shown in blue. The following provides the RMOW staff summary of the proposed changes:

- Proposed changes to Goal 3 (Affordable Housing) of the RGS include policies focused on regional coordination on Housing Needs Reports and exploring the establishment of a Regional Housing Authority.
- Key changes proposed to Goal 11 (Climate Action) of the RGS are focused on GhG emissions targets, regional electric vehicle network, regional transit, active transportation, climate equity and youth. This includes policies suggested by RMOW staff regarding increasing the integration of lower-impact technologies for mobility, such as electric vehicle infrastructure, and working with the Provincial government to deliver and support preferred modes of transportation on Highway 99, with an emphasis on regional transit.

RMOW staff note that any requests that may arise regarding support for coordination on a Housing Needs Report and/or exploration of the establishment of a Regional Housing Authority would need to be evaluated against existing RMOW priorities and workplans.

Staff recommend the RMOW provide comment regarding the following proposed policies 11.1(a) and 11.2(b) (emphasis added):

“11.1 The SLRD will:

- a) Adopt targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% below 2010 levels by the year 2030 and to achieve a carbon neutral region/ reach a ‘net zero’ region by 2050.

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11.2 The member municipalities will:

- a) Adopt Regional Context Statements that identify how local land use, transportation and solid waste policies will contribute to meeting the regional greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 45% below 2010 levels by the year 2030 and achieving a carbon neutral region/reaching a net zero region by the year 2050.”

As these policies are written, it may be interpreted that achieving “carbon neutral” and achieving “net zero” are equivalent. However, while “carbon neutral” allows carbon offsetting, “net zero” means no GhG emissions. Staff recommend supporting and strongly encouraging the adoption of “net zero” by 2050 and request the reference to carbon neutral be removed. Comments of a similar nature were provided through the Climate Action Policy Review process.

The relationship between the OCP and the RGS and proposed minor amendments is further discussed below in the Community Vision and OCP section of this report. Staff expect there will be future opportunities for RMOW input through the ongoing implementation of the RGS.

Regional Context Statement Review

The RCS remains generally consistent with the current RGS. For this reason, staff propose that the RMOW provide the current RCS to the SLRD Board for consideration of its continued acceptance.

By the end of 2025, staff recommend that the RMOW consider making revisions to the RCS associated with the outcomes of the upcoming OCP update and proposed RGS minor amendment process. These two processes are further discussed below under the Community Vision and OCP section of this report.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

[September 17, 2019: Administrative Report No. 19-116](#): the RMOW granted acceptance of the SLRD RGS Bylaw per section 436 of the LGA.

[July 23, 2019: Administrative Report No. 19-099](#): the RMOW Council gave third reading to the OCP and resolved to refer the RCS to the SLRD for consideration of acceptance, pursuant to section 448 of the LGA. The RMOW’s RCS was accepted by the SLRD Board on October 23, 2019.

As per LGA section 448(1), Council must review the RCS at least once every five years after its latest acceptance by the SLRD Board and, if no amendment is proposed, submit the statement to the SLRD Board for its continued acceptance.

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities

- Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing

- Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

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Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The OCP is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

The RMOW's current RCS is presented in Chapter 1 of the OCP and was accepted by the SLRD Board. The RCS describes the relationship between the OCP and the RGS and is the main implementation tool of the RGS. As per LGA section 447(2), the RCS and the rest of the OCP must be consistent. As noted above, staff propose that the RCS remains generally consistent with the current RGS.

By the end of 2025, staff recommend that the RMOW consider making revisions to the RCS associated with the outcomes of the following two processes:

1. The RMOW is required to update its OCP by December 31, 2025 as an outcome of the new provincial housing legislation, Bill 44 *Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act*, to reflect an updated Housing Needs Report. If required, staff will identify any proposed amendments to the RCS for Council's consideration through this pending OCP update process.
2. The proposed RGS minor amendment requires member municipalities to update their regional context statements to reflect the proposed regional GhG emission reduction target. Should the RGS minor amendment ultimately be adopted by the SLRD Board, RMOW staff will identify this and potentially other proposed amendments to the RCS for Council's consideration in tandem with the pending OCP update process.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

There are no budget considerations. The staff time required to process SLRD referrals is included within the Planning Department's annual workplan and operating budget.

LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lílwat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for planning on unceded territories, as currently managed by the provincial government; achieve mutual objectives and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

Consistent with Goal 8 of the RGS, to enhance relations with Indigenous communities and first nations, the current RCS speaks to enhancing relationships with Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

This RGS minor amendment is being administered by the SLRD and was provided to the RMOW for comment through the minor amendment referral process. Community engagement facilitated by the RMOW is not a component of the SLRD RGS amendment process. Staff are not recommending an amendment to the RCS and subsequently the OCP at this time. Any proposed amendments to the OCP would require significant community engagement.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – SLRD RGS Minor Amendment Referral Notice

Appendix B – RMOW OCP Regional Context Statement

Appendix C – SLRD Proposed Changes to the RGS

SUMMARY

The report first presents the opportunity for the RMOW to provide comment on the proposed SLRD RGS minor amendment regarding climate action and affordable housing policies; staff recommend that Council direct staff to indicate to the SLRD that Council supports the minor amendment with one comment and consideration of the required staff time for further exploration. The report also requests Council to review the RCS and direct staff to submit the RCS to the SLRD Board for its continued acceptance, with no proposed amendments.

SIGN-OFFS

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