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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Paul Thompson  
Manager of Long Range Planning

**DATE:** December 19, 2013

**FROM:** Lisa Bhopalsingh  
Senior Planner

**FILE:** 6780 30

**SUBJECT:** Regional Growth Strategy Targets and Indicators Project

### PURPOSE

To provide an update on background work and a proposed process for setting targets and selecting indicators to be used as part of a monitoring program for the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS).

### BACKGROUND

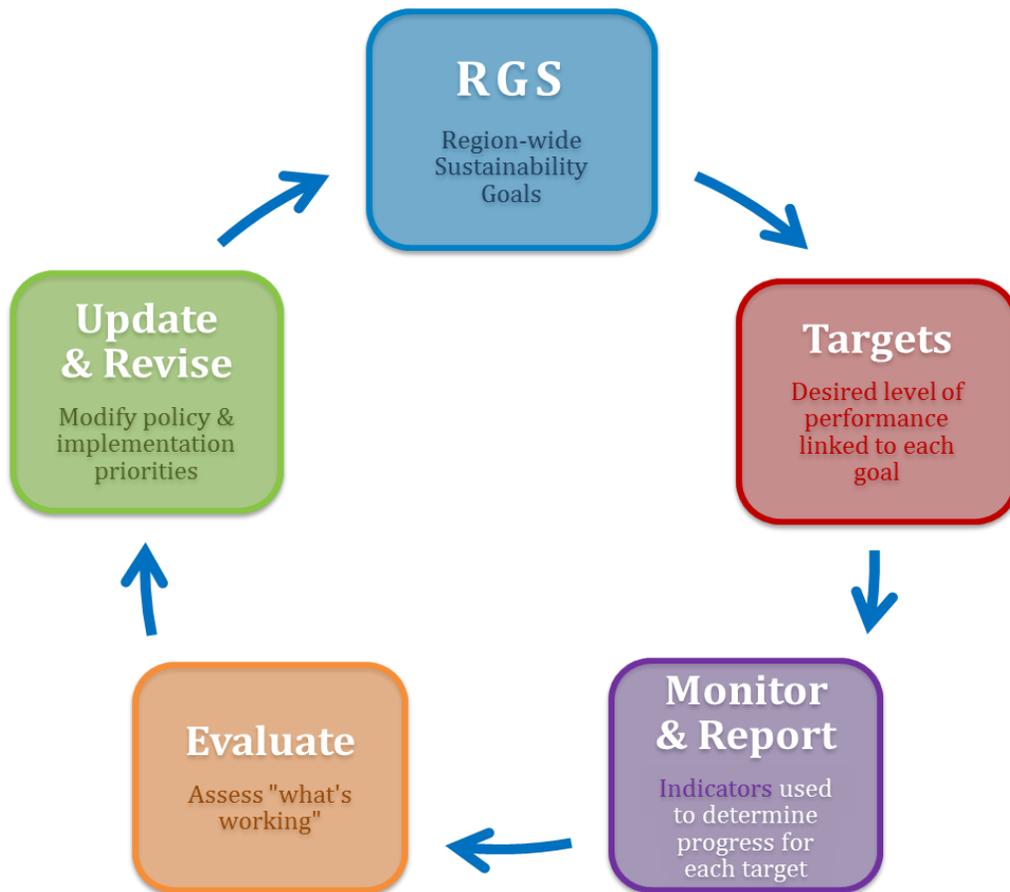
An essential part of implementing the RGS involves monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of actions undertaken by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and member local governments to achieve goals aimed at creating a more sustainable and resilient community. Monitoring progress is part of being "*accountable for our decisions and actions*", one of the sustainability principles that the RGS is founded on. Consistent with the requirements of Section 869 of the *Local Government Act*, the RGS includes specific policies to establish a process and program to monitor the RGS and produce yearly progress reports. This also includes direction to "*establish targets to achieve key policies*".

Targets and indicators are closely linked to each other and are part of the process for RGS planning, implementing and monitoring (see Figure 1). Targets establish a specific, desired level of performance or outcome of a policy or action taken to implement the RGS. Targets can help increase accountability, prioritize actions and motivate individuals and organizations to take actions that work towards achieving the target. Relevant indicators are essential for measuring the level of progress made towards achieving a target. Without indicators, it would be difficult for decision-makers to know what level of progress is being made towards a target and whether or not actions need to be adjusted.

Since the RGS was first adopted in 1997 there have been eight monitoring reports produced and a substantial amount of work done to research and identify suitable indicators for measuring progress. One of the challenges of earlier RGS monitoring has been a lack of consistency for reporting and use of measurable indicators that could easily be compared over time. While some reports have covered similar information, a standard format for reporting was never adopted.

The attached Monitoring Background Report (Attachment 1) provides a more detailed history of monitoring the RGS. This report also provides an explanation of indicators and targets as they relate to monitoring, and considerations for selecting indicators and setting targets that build upon prior monitoring efforts.

**Figure 1: Setting Targets and Monitoring through Use of Indicators in the RGS Planning and Implementation Cycle**



### **Process for Setting Targets and Choosing Indicators**

As outlined in the Monitoring Background Report, a significant amount of time and resources have been invested by the RDN in researching and selecting indicators to measure progress towards RGS goals. The proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) recognizes and incorporates this prior work. It also includes a process for setting measurable targets for RGS goals, which was not part of earlier RGS planning, implementation and monitoring processes.

The stages involved in the proposed process for setting targets and choosing suitable indicators are briefly describe in the text below and illustrated by Figure 2. Further details are provided in the ToR (see Attachment 2).

**Figure 2: Proposed Process for Setting Targets and Selecting Indicators**



To date, the following tasks have been completed as part of Stage 1:

- Prepared Monitoring Background Report (Attachment 1);
- Drafted Terms of Reference (Attachment 2) for setting targets and choosing indicators to measure progress;
- Compiled a comprehensive list of indicators based on prior monitoring work and information currently collected by the RDN and other agencies and used this to create a refined list of Potential Targets and Indicators for RGS goals (Attachment 2, Appendix 3); and
- Prepared draft information sheets explaining Monitoring, Targets and Indicators.

The documents and information compiled during Stage 1 will be used as the basis for engagement activities outlined in Stages 2, 3 and 4. These steps are discussed briefly in the 'Public Consultation Implications' section of this report and in further detail in the attached ToR.

As part of Stage 4, a report on the outcome of engagement activities and a recommended set of targets and indicators will be presented to the RDN Board for approval. Once approved, these targets and indicators will be used to initiate an ongoing RGS monitoring program. The results of monitoring will be communicated to the public and other interested parties through a variety of methods including the RDN website and annual reports on RGS progress.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That the RDN Board direct staff to proceed with the Targets and Indicators Project as described in the attached Terms of Reference.
2. That the RDN Board not proceed with the Targets and Indicators Project.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Long Range Planning Department budget for 2014 includes funds to cover costs associated with the activities as outlined in the Terms of Reference.

## **LAND USE IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Growth Management Implications***

From a growth management perspective, knowing whether or not progress is being made to achieve growth management goals will enable the RDN to determine the effectiveness of actions being taken and the need to adjust them. Although the process of setting targets and choosing suitable indicators will not directly result in impacts on growth management, the use of targets and indicators as part of a broader monitoring process will improve the RDN's ability to make more informed growth management decisions. The outcome of this may result in adjusting policies and taking actions that improve progress towards growth management goals.

### ***Sustainability Implications***

Some prior monitoring efforts in the RDN involved the use of a wide array of indicators to measure the region's sustainability. In several cases these indicators did not directly relate to the goals of the RGS and/or areas under the RDN's influence. For example, the 2006, State of Sustainability project used motor vehicle accidents or birth weights as indicators to measure progress towards predefined characteristics of a sustainable region. While indicators like these are important for understanding progress towards broader aspects of the region's sustainability, they are of limited value to the RDN's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of actions to implement the RGS and modify them accordingly. As such, the focus of this project is setting targets and indicators that directly link to RGS Goals and areas where the RDN and member municipalities can influence the region's sustainability and long term resilience. *Attachment 2, Appendix 3* provides a list of potential targets and indicators that are linked to RGS Goals.

### ***Public Consultation Implications***

As documented in the RGS Monitoring Background Report and ToR, prior monitoring efforts (particularly the 2006 State of Sustainability project) involved a high level of consultation with relevant professionals, community members and other stakeholders. Public consultation for this project reflects the fact that many indicators used in the past are still relevant to monitoring current RGS Goals and these indicators have been endorsed by the community and RDN Board through past consultation processes.

The approach proposed for this project is one of "confirming" that the RDN is on the right path with proposed targets and a list of suitable indicators to measure progress towards them. This will involve first getting feedback from relevant professionals to check and confirm the value and practicality of using specific indicators that relate to their areas of expertise (see Stage 2 Figure 2). Feedback from relevant professionals will then be used to present a list of proposed targets and indicators to the RDN Board. Based on direction from the RDN Board, the list of targets and indicators will be adjusted and presented to the wider community for feedback during Stage 3. Community feedback will be considered in producing a final list of targets and indicators for RDN Board approval. The final Stage 5 of the process will involve initiating a monitoring program using the Board approved list of targets and indicators and, communicating the results in a meaningful manner to different interest groups.

### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

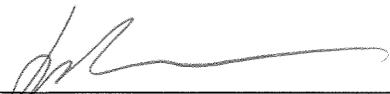
This report and the attached Terms of Reference provide a process for setting targets and selecting indicators that will fulfill RGS direction to "*establish a process and program to identify and establish targets to achieve key policies*" and "*monitor, evaluate and periodically report on progress*" towards achieving RGS goals, policies and targets.

The Terms of Reference for this project proposes a target setting and indicators selection process that takes into account prior monitoring efforts and includes opportunities to engage RDN staff, relevant professionals, the Board and wider community. The targets and indicators established through this project will be part of an ongoing RGS monitoring program.

Monitoring progress ensures that the RDN and member local governments are aware of the impacts and effectiveness of their decisions on creating a more sustainable and resilient community. The purpose of setting targets and choosing indicators to measure progress towards meeting RGS goals is to enable the RDN to better understand the effectiveness of actions being taken. In addition to meeting legislative requirements, this is part of the RDN's commitment to being accountable to citizens.

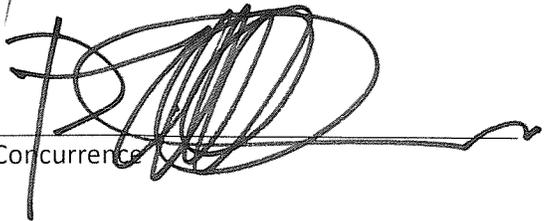
**RECOMMENDATION**

That staff proceed with the Targets and Indicators Project as outlined in the attached Terms of Reference.

  
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Report Writer

  
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General Manager Concurrence

  
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Manager Concurrence

  
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