



# Regional Growth Strategy Survey Results

Consultation on some possible changes to  
the Regional Growth Strategy  
March 1, 2009 to May 1, 2009

## Introduction

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) initiated a comprehensive review of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in 2007. The RGS review process has included several opportunities for the community to provide comments on changes to the RGS and the RDN received numerous suggestions on how to improve the RGS to better address issues related to regional growth and contribute to regional sustainability.

In response to input received, a number of possible changes to the RGS were identified and included in a set of six discussion papers released in Spring 2009. While many of these possible changes would be minor in nature, some are more significant. Eleven of the more significant changes were highlighted and formed the basis of an online survey. The community was asked for its views in March/April 2009 to gauge support for the new direction proposed for the RGS.

## Purpose

This report documents the responses received from residents, stakeholders, and special interest groups regarding their views on eleven of the more significant changes proposed for the revised RGS. Feedback was provided by completing an online survey and/or community workbook, or providing comments in writing to RGS staff. The eleven areas of potential change can be grouped into four central themes –

- provide a stronger focus on principles and policies that will enhance the sustainability of the region;
- establish clear and consistent policies for the RGS amendment process;
- establish greater accountability for implementation of policies; and
- enhance public and stakeholder awareness of the role and purpose of the RGS.

## Method

Consultation in the current phase of the RGS Review process is focussed on going out to the community and encouraging them to provide feedback on possible changes to the RGS including filling out an online survey. RDN representatives have presented information on the RGS review process to a variety of groups. These groups represented specific communities, naturalists, farmers, builders, university and high school students. The RDN also worked with a Vancouver Island University student to set up a display on the RGS review at multiple community events in the region. To increase awareness of the review process, the website and survey was advertised in several newspapers, and news stories appeared in both newspapers and on cable television on the importance of community engagement in the current review.

An on-line survey and comprehensive community workbook were developed to solicit input from residents and stakeholders regarding their views on eleven potential areas of change. Since the survey was intended to be succinct and a quick method to provide input on the RGS review, all respondents were also encouraged to go further to provide their comments and ideas in the community workbooks also available on the website.

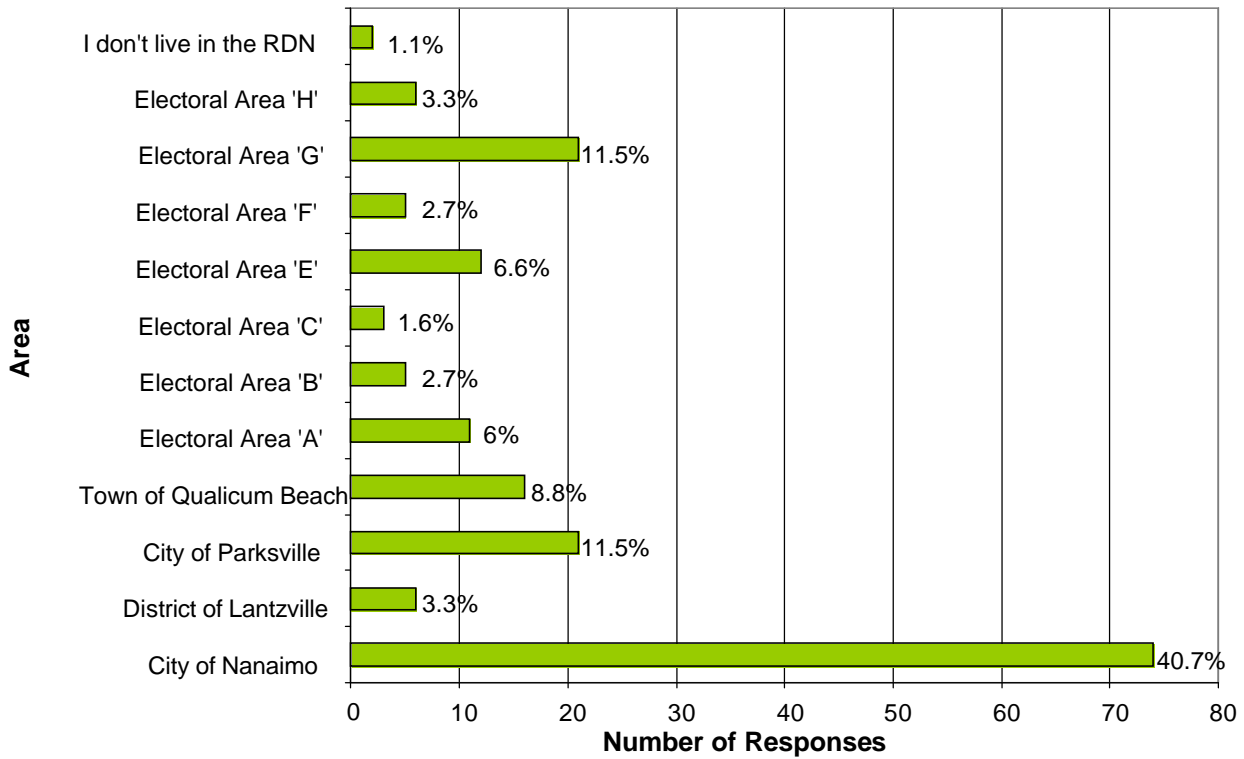
Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the proposed change and how much direction the revised RGS should provide. Areas of potential change include the following:

1. The updated RGS will be based on a set of clearly stated sustainability principles.
2. The process for making changes to the RGS will be explained and included in the updated RGS. A clear and transparent process will be used when changes to the RGS are considered.
3. The updated RGS will include more detail on how it is to be implemented, and will include regular public reporting on progress made in moving toward RGS goals.
4. The updated RGS will include targets and measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing energy use, and improving air quality.
5. The updated RGS will set clear direction for the RDN and its member municipalities on their role in the provision of affordable housing.
6. The updated RGS will set clear direction for supporting farming and food production.
7. The updated RGS will set clear direction for coordinating land use planning with transportation planning.
8. The updated RGS will set clear direction for determining how designated growth areas will be serviced.
9. The updated RGS will set clear direction for coordinating sustainable economic development with land use planning, transportation planning and planning for utility infrastructure.
10. The updated RGS will set clear direction on creating complete, compact communities.
11. The updated RGS will set clear direction on education and awareness activities that will support and explain the RGS and its sustainability objectives.

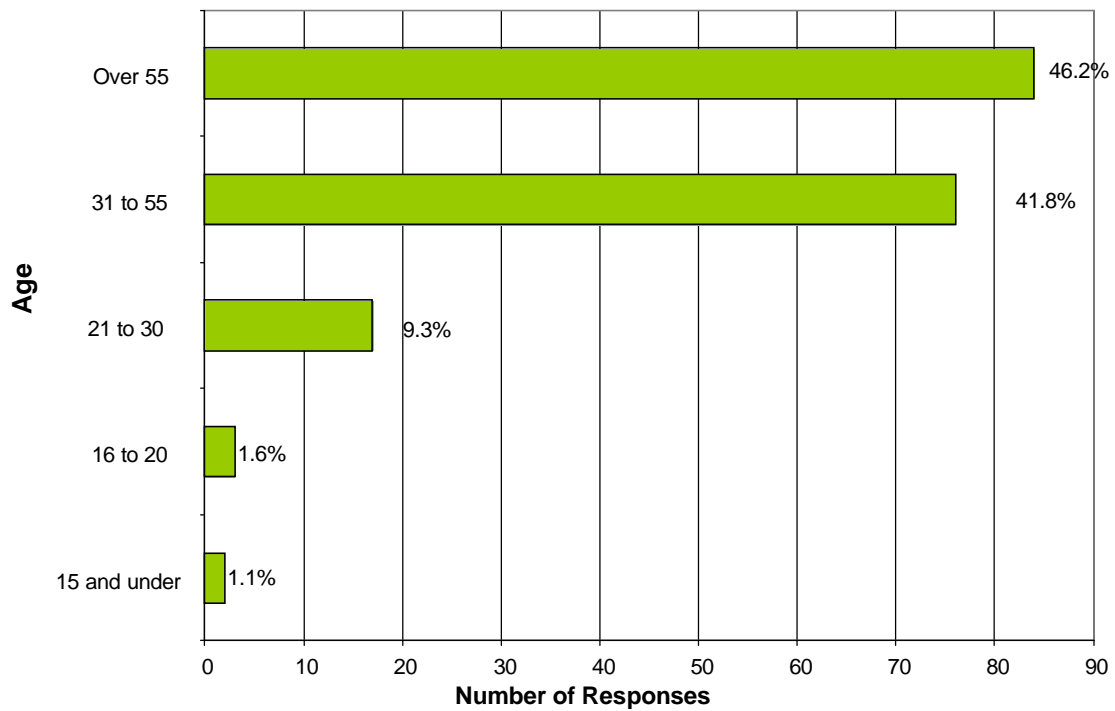
## **Results**

Community groups and individuals were encouraged to complete both the workbook and the online survey. The survey is intended to measure the level of public support for eleven of the most significant changes suggested in the discussion papers. Respondents who would like to go further with their ideas or provide recommendations for the draft were encouraged to complete a workbook on the changes. There were 185 people who completed the survey. The results of the survey indicate that most participants support strong direction in the RGS on the topics identified in the discussion papers. The results of the survey are provided below.

**Question #1 – In which area of the Regional District of Nanaimo do you live in?**



**Question #2 – What age are you?**



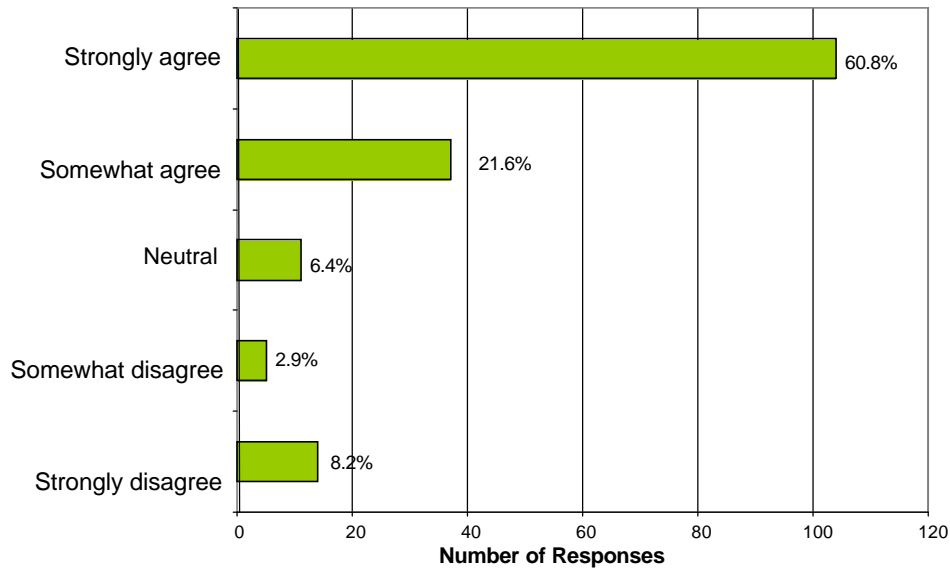
### Sustainability Principles

The purpose of the RGS review is to identify how the RGS can better support sustainability in the region. Clearly stating a set of sustainability principles for the RGS assures the direction provided to local initiatives is founded on values of sustainability and equity. Such sustainability principles would be the basis for the goals, objectives and policies in the RGS.

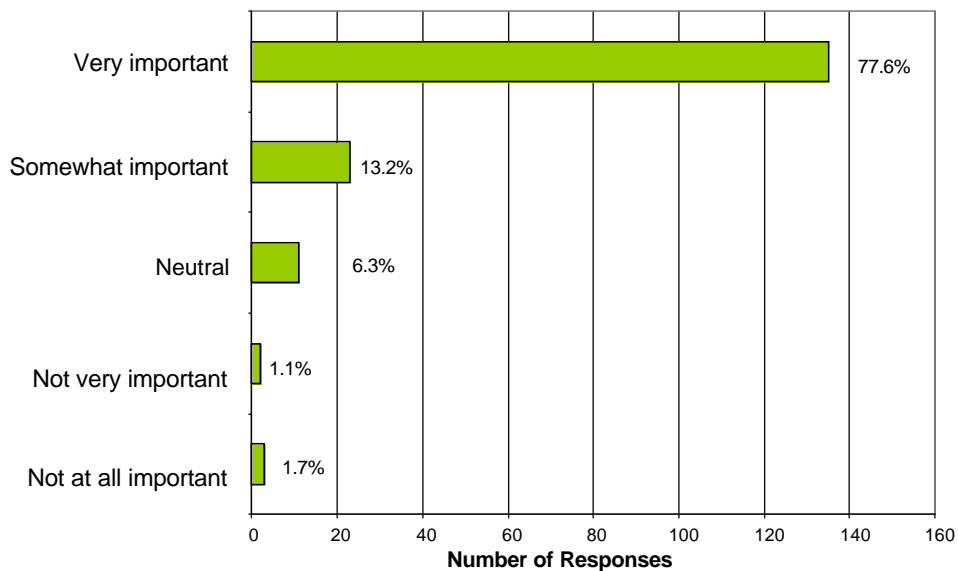
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will be based on a set of clearly stated sustainability principles.”

#### Question #3 – How much do you agree with this change?



#### Question #4 – On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is it that the revised Regional Growth Strategy be based on sustainability principles?



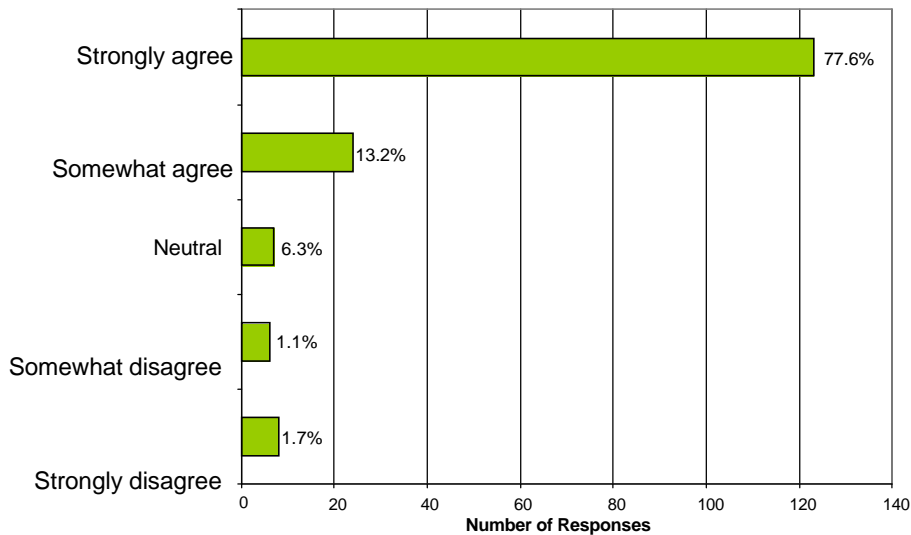
### Amending the RGS

A clear and transparent public amendment process for the Regional Growth Strategy means that everyone can be informed and involved in decisions that affect the sustainability of the region.

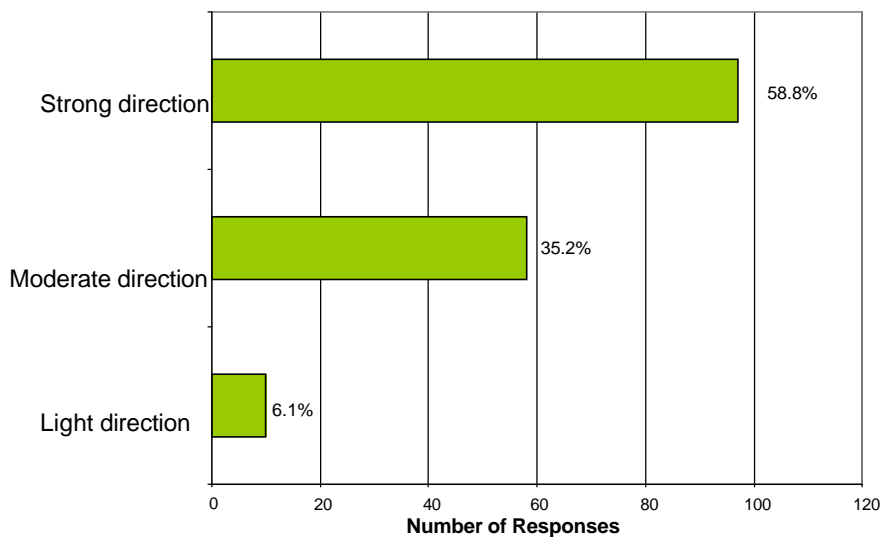
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The process for making changes to the RGS will be explained and included in the updated RGS. A clear and transparent process will be used when changes to the RGS are considered.

**Question #5** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #6** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on the amendment process?



## Implementation and Monitoring

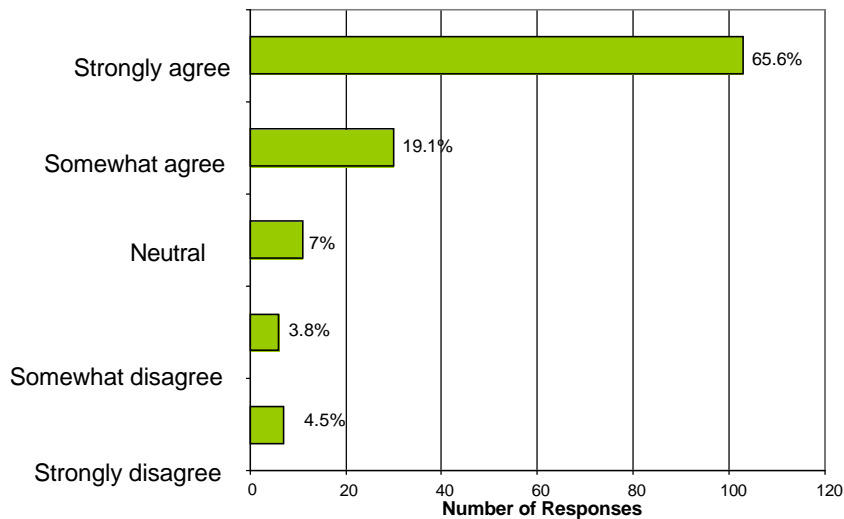
The RGS is a policy document that provides direction on how growth is to be managed on a region wide basis. The RGS policies identify the types of actions required to achieve the eight RGS goals. This means that implementation of the RGS requires the use of other tools and changes to other planning documents like official community plans and zoning bylaws.

Monitoring and implementation of the goals of the RGS gauges the effectiveness of these policies in achieving the desired outcome.

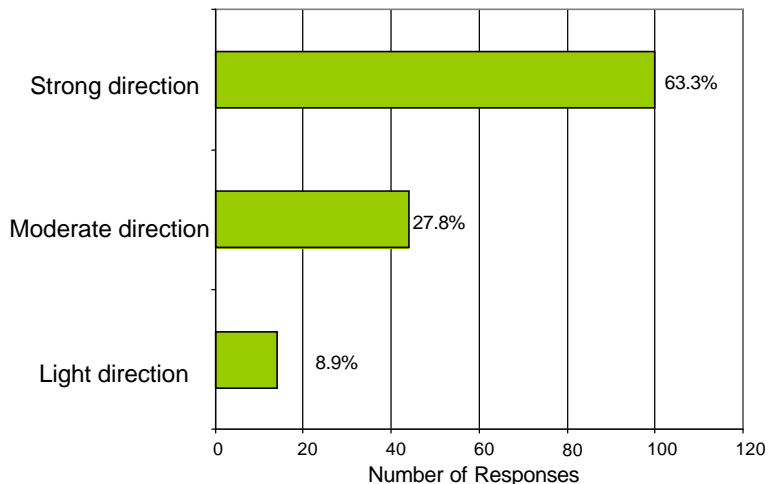
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will include more detail on how it is to be implemented, and will include a framework for regular public reporting on progress made in moving toward the RGS goals.

**Question #7** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #8** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on implementation and monitoring?



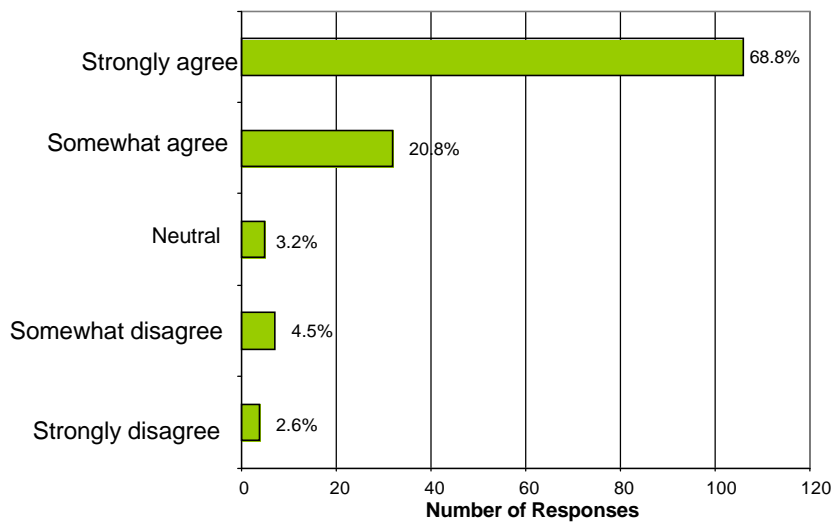
## Greenhouse Gas Targets

Along with most other local governments in BC, the RDN and its member municipalities have committed to reducing GHG emissions. As well, new legislation requires that GHG emission reduction targets and the measures to achieve the targets be included in the RGS. To make progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it is imperative for local governments to set emission reduction targets for a specific period of time and identify the actions to meet those targets.

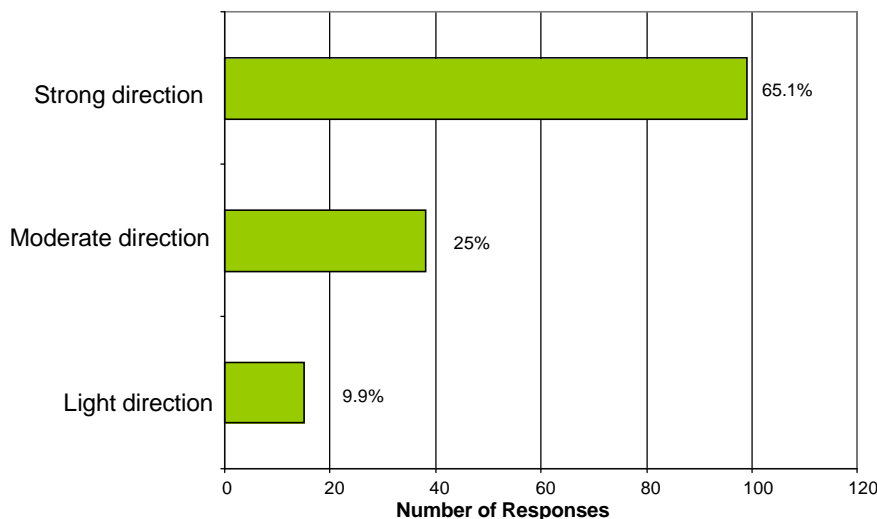
The possible change to the Regional Growth Strategy that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will include targets and measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing energy use, and improving air quality.”

**Question #9** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #10** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing energy use, and improving air quality?



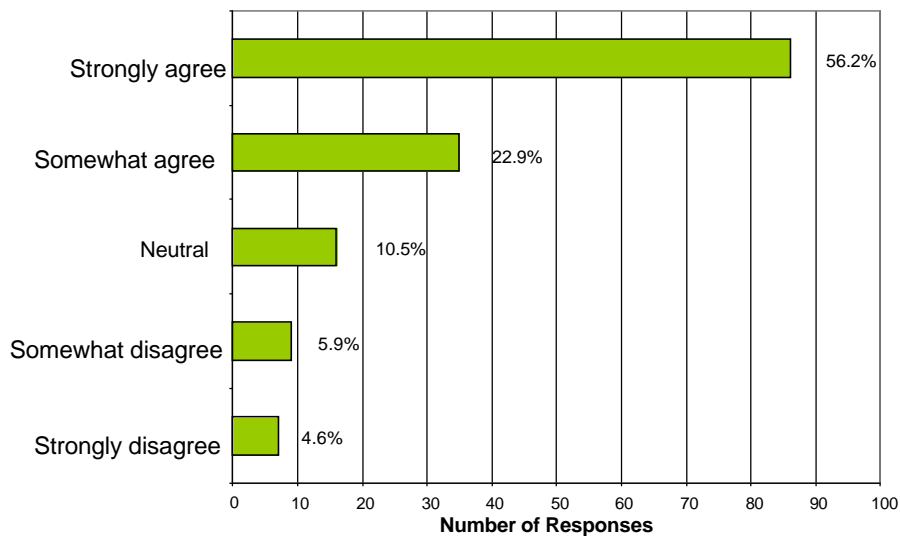
## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing has not been identified as an important sustainability challenge. A sustainable region includes a variety of housing so that people can choose the type of dwelling that meets their needs, not pay more than they can afford and have a choice about where to live. Spending less on shelter means that more money is available for other necessities.

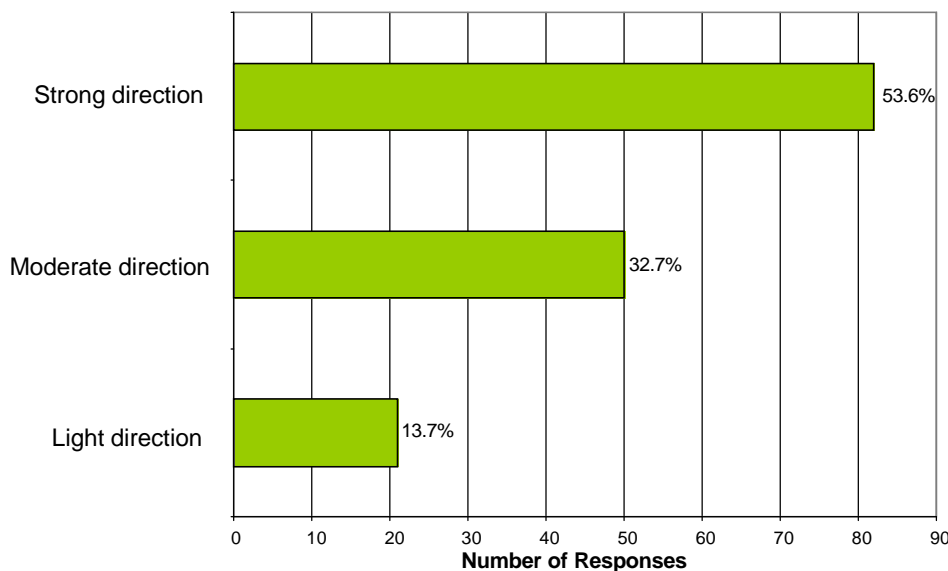
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set clear direction for the RDN and its member municipalities on their role in the provision of affordable housing.”

**Question #11** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #12** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on addressing the issue of affordable housing?



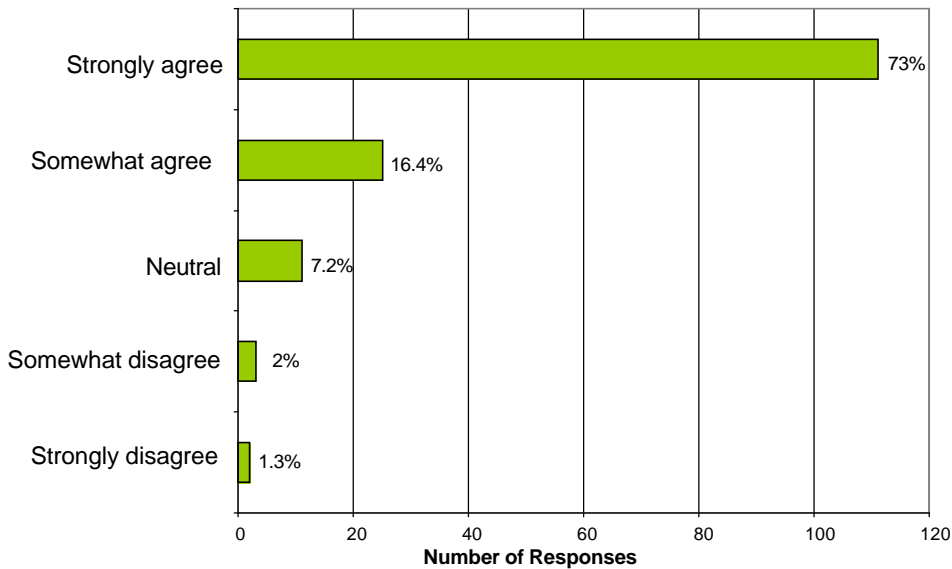
## Farming and Food Production

Food security is important to the region’s sustainability as locally grown or raised agricultural products support a local food supply and reduce the region’s reliance on imported food products. The local production of food supports the RDN commitment to sustainability by reducing emissions from transportation and contributing towards local employment opportunities in food production.

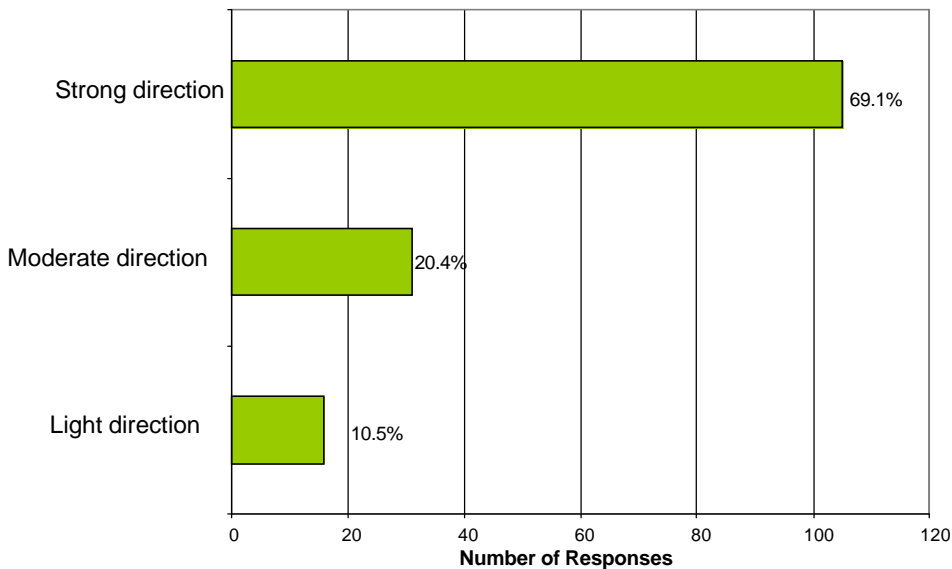
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set clear direction for supporting farming and food production.”

**Question #13** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #14** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on the issue of farming and food production?



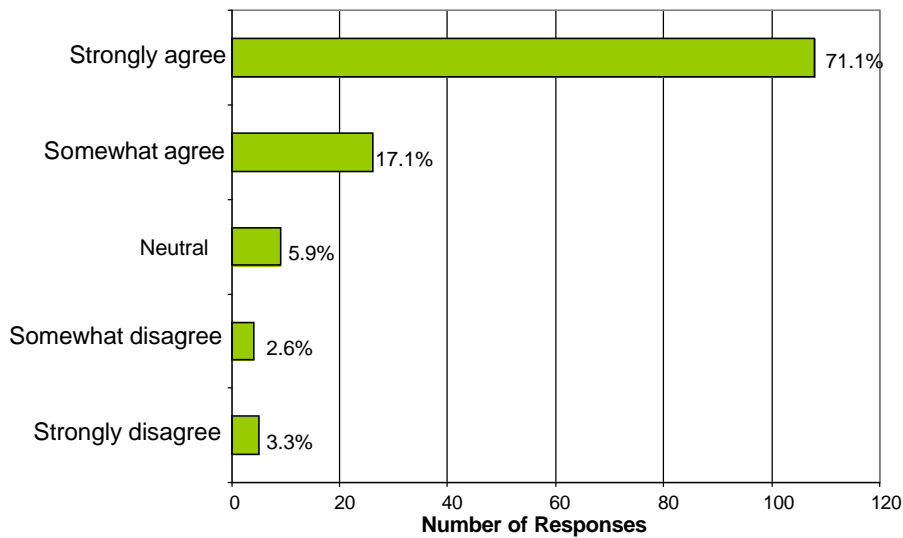
## Land Use and Transportation Planning

Land use patterns play a key role in influencing travel patterns. When development occurs at low densities and when the places where people live are located far from where they shop, work, go to school, and recreate, people have very few options for getting around. When different land uses are sited together or even close together then people have options other than the car for travelling. Walking, cycling and transit are viable options when different land uses are located close to each other and when facilities are provided.

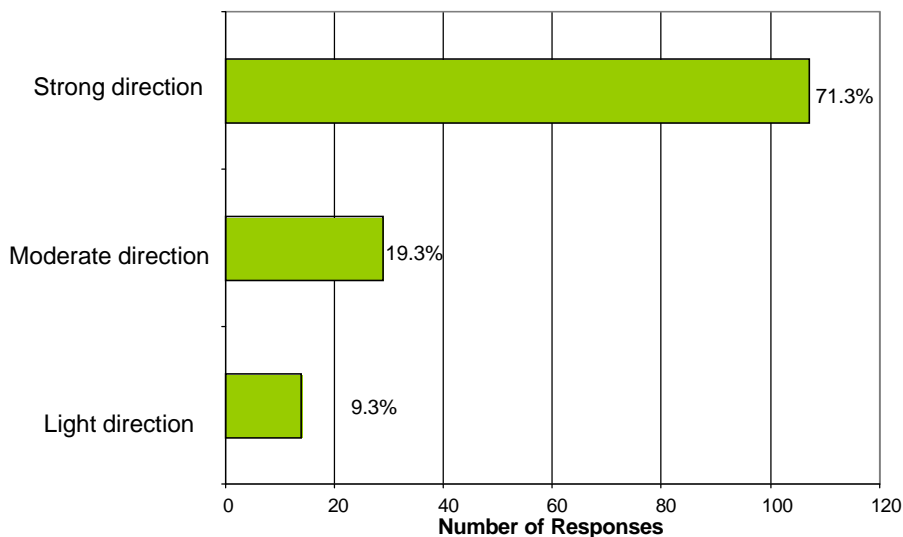
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set clear direction for coordinating land use planning with transportation planning.”

**Question #15** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #16** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on coordinating land use and transportation?



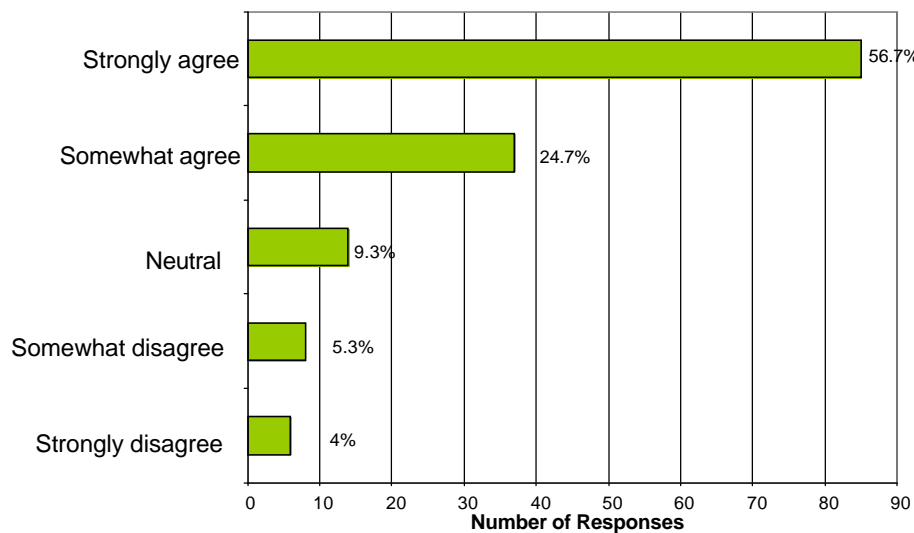
## Servicing

The primary aim of the RGS is to direct the majority of new development in the region into the designated growth areas. Only by encouraging new development in existing developed areas and discouraging growth in previously undeveloped areas can all of the goals of the RGS be achieved. The type of growth envisioned for these areas requires that full community services be provided, in particular sewer and water. Most of the designated growth areas are already serviced by community water and sewer systems but some areas, particularly the village centres located in the unincorporated electoral areas, do not have full services.

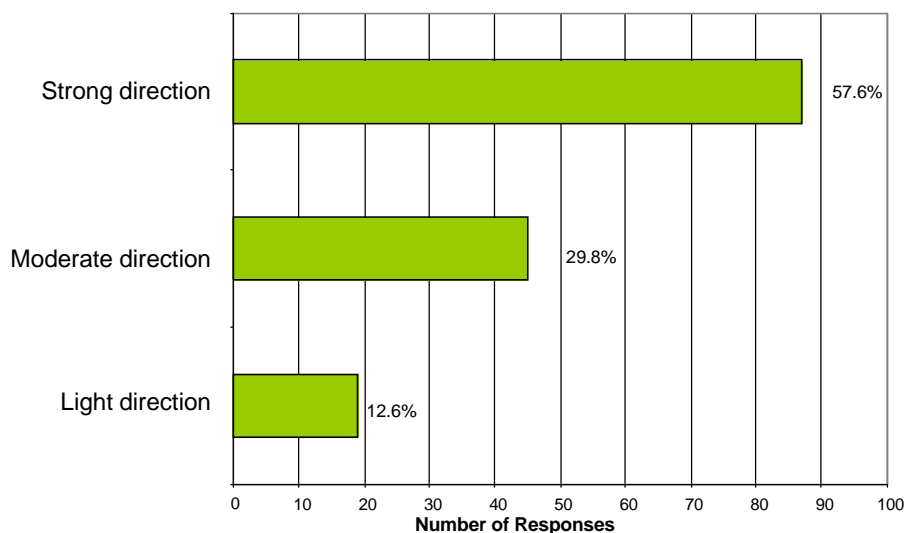
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set clear direction for determining how designated growth areas will be serviced.”

**Question #17** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #18** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the Regional Growth Strategy provide for determining how designated growth areas will be serviced?



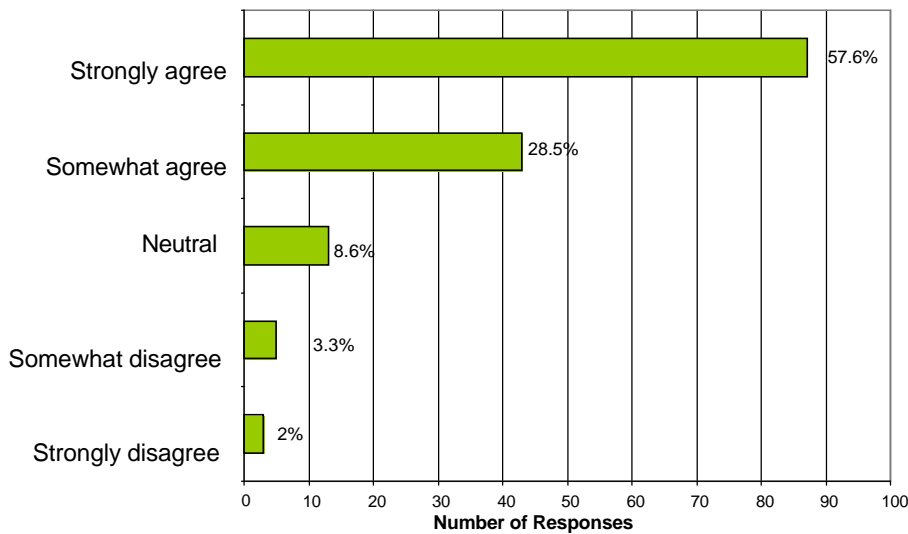
## The Economy, Land Use and Transportation

Offices and retail areas are key components of vibrant and flourishing communities. In support of economic and social sustainability, a region should have employment opportunities close to where people live, not only to reduce commuting times for workers, but also to support economic development in the urban areas throughout the region. At the same time, there should be a sufficient supply of land for industry and commerce with good regional transportation connections for workers and customers.

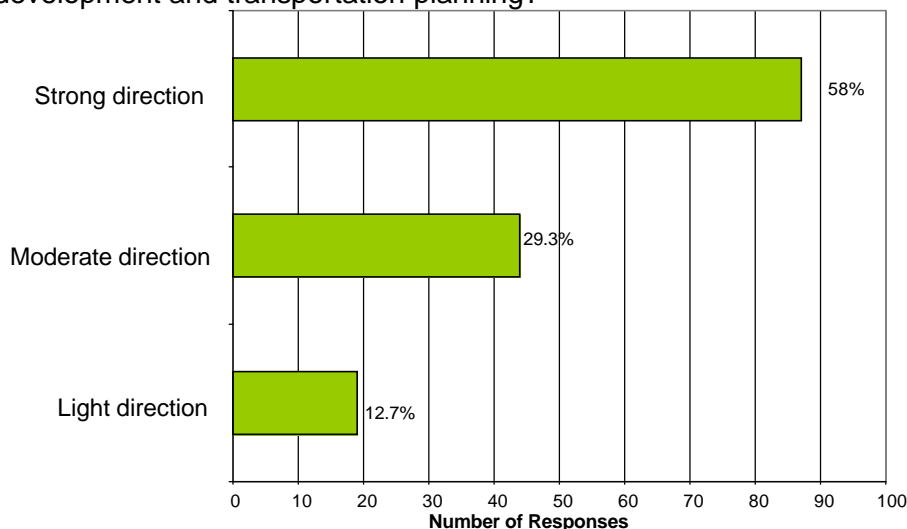
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set a clear direction for coordinating sustainable economic development with land use planning, transportation planning and planning for utility infrastructure.”

**Question #19** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #20** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on the coordination of land use planning, economic development and transportation planning?



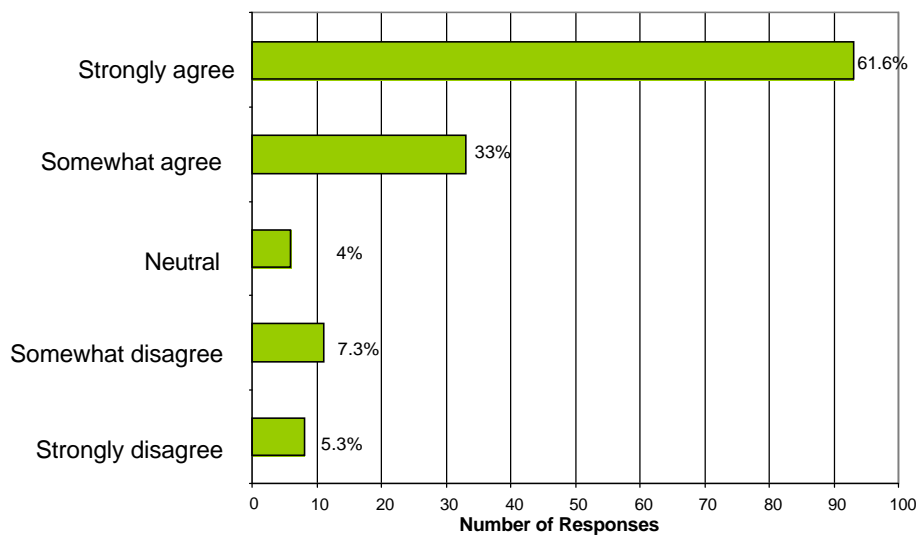
### Complete, Compact Communities

In the urban areas, higher density mixed use development is needed to support a wide variety of sustainability goals and objectives. The increased density of urban areas is necessary to support public transit, reduce costs for utilities and infrastructure, provide a range of housing, and allow for travel by foot and bicycle. Increased density within urban areas also reduces development pressure in rural areas, preserving resource land and wildlife habitat and reducing vehicle kilometres driven by automobile, the number one contributor to GHG emissions in the region.

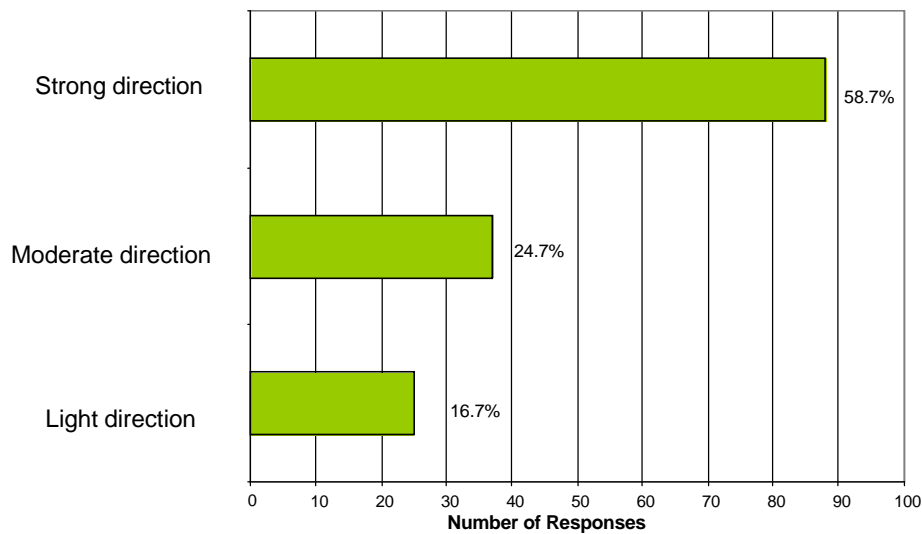
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set clear direction on creating complete compact communities.”

**Question #21** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #22** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on the challenge of creating compact, complete communities?



## Education and Awareness about Sustainability

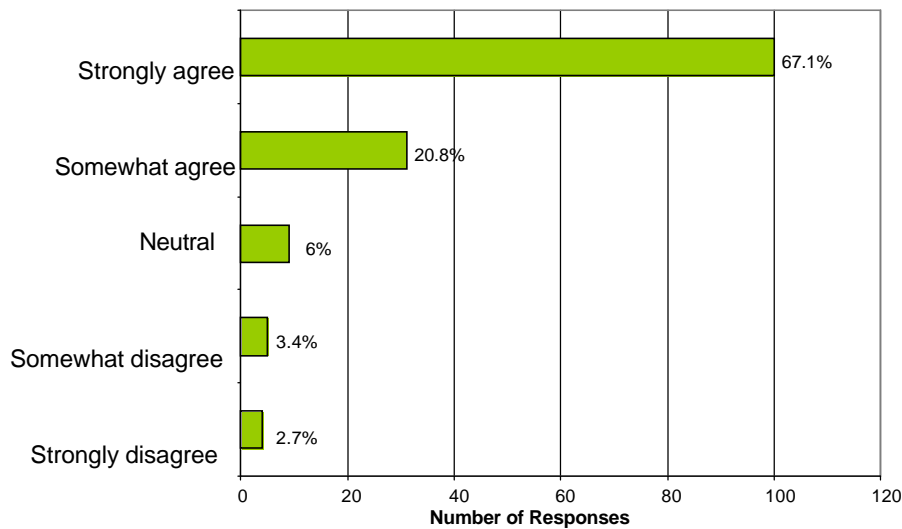
Education is an essential part of realising the goals of the RGS. Increasing public awareness of the RGS allows for more informed dialogue between decision – makers and the community and will result in a document that is better understood and more accepted.

Trust between the public and government is strengthened when informed feedback is valued and incorporated into all decisions.

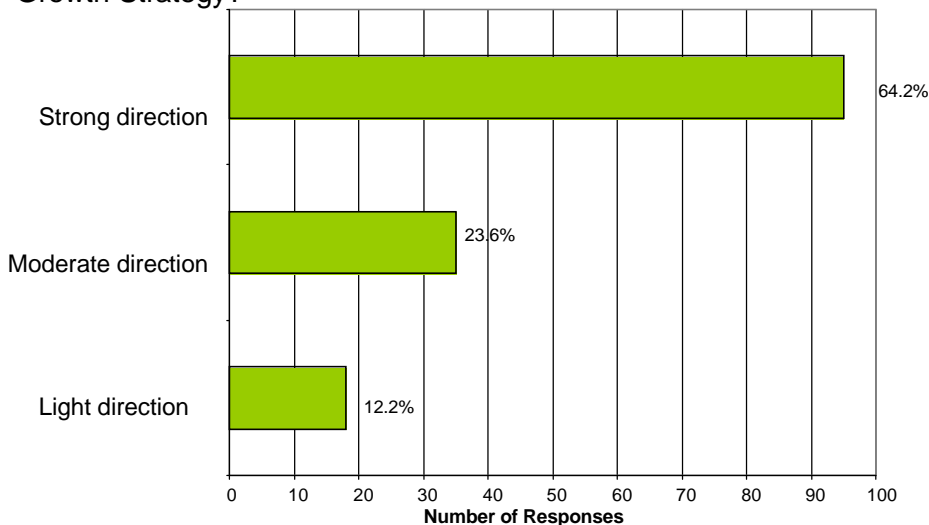
The possible change to the RGS that would respond to this concern is as follows:

“The updated RGS will set clear direction on education and awareness activities that will support and explain the RGS and its sustainability objectives.”

**Question #23** – On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with this change?



**Question #24** – On a scale of 1 to 3, how much direction should the revised Regional Growth Strategy provide on education and awareness for sustainability and the Regional Growth Strategy?



**Next Steps**

The results of the survey both support the possible changes suggested in the discussion papers and indicate that the majority of respondents prefer strong direction to be included in the RGS on each possible change. In conjunction with the feedback received through the workbook and letters submitted, a revised RGS will be drafted for the fall of 2009. There will be another opportunity for community consultation on the proposed changes to the RGS prior to the beginning of the bylaw adoption process.