

Regional Growth Strategy

Phase 3 Consultation

April 8th - May 27th 2011

Strategy & Results



FINAL REPORT

August 29, 2011



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

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1.0 Introduction

On April 8th, 2011 the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Board released a revised draft of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) for public review. During a two month consultation period between April 8th and May 27th 2011, RDN staff undertook various activities to promote the draft RGS and gather public feedback. This report details the strategy used to receive public feedback on the April 8th, 2011 Draft RGS. It also documents and analyzes the responses received from the public (residents, stakeholders and interest groups).

The results of the public consultation are organized into key themes as they relate to the different sections of the draft RGS. Details are provided for the results of the public consultation for the Region as a whole and also separately for each member jurisdiction (Electoral Areas and Municipalities). This report will show how the results were analyzed and used to gauge support for the draft.

2.0 Background

The original Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) was adopted in 1997 as the 'Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Management Plan'. The first review of this document resulted in the adoption of the 2003 RGS. The RDN began a second review of the RGS during late 2007. The intent of this second review is to ensure that the RGS keeps up to date with changes in legislation and community values as they relate to achieving the RDN's vision for a sustainable region.

Three phases of public consultation were planned as part of the review process. The first phase of public consultation was initiated in 2008 with an online survey and two regional workshops asking for feedback on what changes should be included in an updated draft in order to support the RDN's vision of a more sustainable region.

The outcome of the first phase of public consultation resulted in a list of 'possible changes' to the RGS that reflected a desire to see strengthening of many of the existing growth management policies of the RGS. Other proposed changes reflected public desire to address sustainability issues such as affordable housing and food security. The full results of the Phase 1 public consultation are documented in the RDN report titled '*Regional Growth Strategy Questionnaire Results: From April 17 – June 27, 2008*' (available online at www.ShapingOurFuture.ca).

These 'possible changes' were presented back to the public and stakeholders during a second phase of public consultation in 2009. During this time, members of the public were asked to provide their opinion on the 'possible changes' through a second online survey and feedback at several meetings held with community groups. The full results of Phase 2 of the public consultation are documented in the RDN report titled '*Regional Growth Strategy Survey Results: Consultation on some possible changes to the Regional Growth Strategy – March 1, 2009 to May 1, 2009*' (available online at www.ShapingOurFuture.ca).

Public feedback gathered during Phase 1 and 2 of the RGS review was used to create a draft RGS for the RDN's member municipalities and electoral areas to consider. During 2009 and 2010, the RDN's member municipalities and electoral area representatives worked towards resolving a number of

outstanding issues to produce a draft RGS for public review. On April 8, 2011, this revised draft of the RGS was released to the community for the third and final phase of public consultation for the RGS review process.

3.0 Method

During the first two phases of public consultation for the RGS review, several meetings hosted by the RDN were poorly attended despite a high level of time and resources being invested in hosting them. In contrast, there was a higher turnout when RDN staff attended meetings hosted by other groups or organizations. To avoid a repeat of this pattern during Phase 3 of public consultation on the revised draft RGS, an approach designed to use existing social networks was used to generate a higher level of region-wide interest in the RGS.

Past experience also showed that very few people will take the time to thoroughly read and provide detailed comments on larger policy documents like the RGS.

Based upon these lessons learned, the strategy used for public consultation on the revised April 8th 2011 draft involved:

- Capitalizing on opportunities to use existing social networks, community meetings and events to promote the draft RGS; and
- Using a range of materials and media to capture people’s interest and accommodate a range of learning styles and abilities.

By attending events or meetings scheduled by other organizations, RDN staff were able to increase both the number and diversity of people receiving information on the new draft RGS. An estimated 4,000 to 5,000 people received information directly on the RGS through a combination of social networking and attendance at meetings/events. This approach resulted in the highest response to date for feedback during the RGS review.

3.1 Consultation Materials

All consultation materials used during Phase 3, continued to use the RGS ‘branding’ images developed during the first Phase.

a. Website

The Shaping Our Future website (www.ShapingOurFuture.ca) continued to be used during Phase 3 as an important means of providing accessible information on the RGS review and status of the draft RGS. The successful use of the website was however dependent upon a range of advertising/ promotional techniques to drive people to the website to read the information available and participate in providing feedback.



b. Reference Binder

To ensure that information was easily accessible to those without internet access, binders containing the draft RGS and background materials were available at all libraries and municipal offices in the RDN.

c. Printed Materials

Visual, one page “Goal Support Documents” were designed to generate interest and used to help explain different RGS goals. The hope was that these shorter documents would be more accessible and encourage people to consider reading the whole draft RGS.

To make the draft document more accessible for the average person with limited time, a summary four page brochure was created to summarize key RGS concepts, goals, and the Map 4 – Land Use Designations.



d. Display Materials

A variety of posters were created to display at information booths at various events. The posters were typically based on the information in the Goal Support Documents. A poster was also created to promote the online survey on various noticeboards, and all regional transit buses.



Presentations

PowerPoint presentations were produced to enable delivery of information suitable for presentations ranging from 15 minutes and up to two hours. Presentations were customized to ensure that information was as relevant and accessible to the different groups receiving them (Grade 11 high school students or adults for whom English is a second language). Groups who wanted presentations were able to let RDN staff know their area of interest so that presentations could be adapted accordingly (e.g. Environmental Groups, Realtors).

e. Survey

An online survey was developed that allowed community members to learn and comment on a few key areas of the RGS without having to actually read the whole draft (hard copies of the survey were also distributed to community members without internet access).

To motivate people to take the online survey, an incentive of winning a grand prize of \$400 towards groceries was offered along with transit and recreation passes.



Ken McLeod (left, with RDN Manager of Long Range Planning Paul Thompson) won a \$400 grocery card from the store of his choice (Thrifty Foods). Inge von Stackelberg (centre) and Mary Peters (right) each received a one-month unlimited transit pass from Daniel Pearce, Nanaimo Regional Transit System Manager of Transit and Planning.

3.2 Community Meetings & Events

Offers were made to a wide variety of community groups to host presentations on the new draft RGS for their members. This resulted in presentations being made to service clubs, neighbourhood associations, newcomers groups, and special interest groups (those interested in food security, farming, development and construction, high school students, groups interested in sustainability). Several of these groups opened their meetings so that any member of the public could attend to receive information on the new draft RGS.

Community members had numerous opportunities for face to face contact with RDN staff to find out more and discuss the new draft RGS at 31 events/meetings (see Appendix 1). This included 23 presentations by RDN planning staff to various organizations and a further eight events with displays/booths. Regional Growth Strategy information was also made available by RDN staff in other departments as part of their own public outreach at a further 12 workshops, meetings or events around the region. Information on the RGS was available at a total of 43 meetings, workshops or other events around the region. While it is estimated that over 2,500 people had an opportunity to see information at the RGS booth at one of the events around the region, the number of people directly engaged or provided hand out materials was lower. Based on the known attendance at presentations and community events, approximately 1,235 people received information directly from RDN staff on the RGS.

3.3 Information Distribution Methods

a. E-mail Lists & Phone

Using staff contact lists, representatives of community groups and other organizations (such as large employers including RDN member municipalities) were asked via e-mail, phone or in person to distribute information on the draft RGS and online survey via e-mail to their staff, clients, members and other contacts.

Representatives of a variety of community groups, major employers and individuals on the RDN e-mail alert system and other e-mail lists were sent information on the draft RGS and online survey. They were asked to forward them to members of their groups, colleagues, friends and family living in the region. While it is difficult to determine the actual numbers of people who received information this way, based upon the approximate membership numbers of each group who received information, it is estimated that between 3,000 to 4,000 people directly received information using group e-mail distribution lists.

Several organizations helped promote the April 8th draft RGS by posting links and information on the draft RGS on their websites or internal staff notice boards (e.g. Nanaimo Community Gardens, various Rotary Groups, City of Parksville, District of Lantzville, and City of Nanaimo). This included promoting RDN presentations to their members in their newsletters and via e-mails.

b. Earned Media

Several 3-4 minute videos were produced that focused on different goals of the RGS and how they relate to community members in the region were broadcast on Shaw Community TV. After these videos were aired on TV they were then linked via YouTube to the RGS Review website. The local News Channel (A-Channel) also ran one story to promote the release of the draft and encourage people to do the online survey. Getting the attention of local television media was valuable for both promoting the review process and encouraging feedback on the April 8th draft RGS.

c. Advertising

The April 8th draft RGS and online survey were promoted using a mix of traditional methods (press releases, advertising on transit buses, newspaper and radio) and other techniques involving online media including social networking (the RGS Shaping Our Future Website, Facebook, Twitter and e-mail). Earned media as noted above helped to provide 'free' advertising during the review. Posters encouraging feedback on the draft plan were also displayed on all regional library notice boards as well as other community notice boards. Please see Appendix 2.



4.0 Summary of the Survey Results

An online survey was used by the majority of people who provided feedback on the draft RGS. The survey was designed to encourage broad public participation by using brief and self-explanatory questions that did not require people to read the full draft RGS in order to provide feedback. The survey was designed to gather feedback on key areas of the new draft RGS including several new goals.

Please see Appendix 3 for the full survey questions and Appendix 4 for the full survey results.

4.1 Geographical Distribution of Survey Respondents and Response Rates

There were a total of 629 surveys completed on the draft RGS. This is more than double the previous highest response for an RGS online survey.

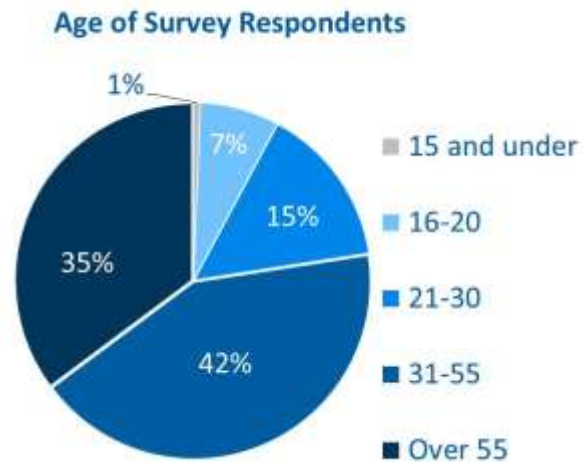
Of the 629 surveys, 613 of respondents indicated that they resided within one of the RDN's member municipalities or electoral areas. Of these 613 respondents, the majority of the surveys received were from residents of the City of Nanaimo (59%) followed by the Town of Qualicum Beach (6.5%) and Electoral Area 'H' (5.9%).

Despite the actual number of survey respondents being highest for the City of Nanaimo (366), it should be noted that the proportion of responses relative to the population of each municipality and electoral area show some electoral areas having a higher response rate than municipalities. When analyzed proportionally, Electoral Area "H" had the highest participation rate in the survey with 1% of the Area 'H' population responding, this was followed by Electoral Area "C" with 0.7% and then 0.5% from Electoral Area "F", the City of Nanaimo, District of Lantzville and Town of Qualicum Beach (see the table below). Rural residents make up 26% of the RDN's population and interestingly, 159 people or 26% of the survey respondents indicated that they live in a rural electoral area.

RDN Member	RGS Surveys Completed	Population	Proportion per Population %
Lantzville	19	3661	0.5 %
Nanaimo	366	78692	0.5 %
Parksville	29	10993	0.3 %
Qualicum Beach	40	8502	0.5 %
Electoral Area A	26	6751	0.4 %
Electoral Area B	7	4050	0.2 %
Electoral Area C	17	2508	0.7 %
Electoral Area E	15	5462	0.3 %
Electoral Area F	32	6680	0.5 %
Electoral Area G	26	7023	0.4 %
Electoral Area H	36	3474	1.0 %
Total	613	137,796	0.4 %

4.2 Age of Survey Respondents

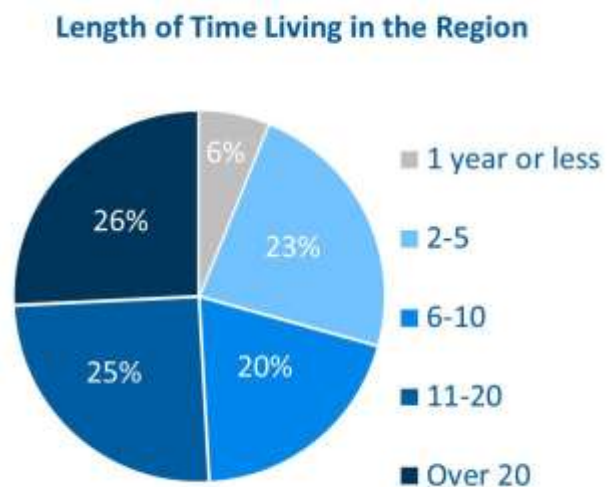
The age category with the highest number of respondents to the survey was the 31 to 55 age range which comprised 42% of all surveys received. This was followed by the over 55 age range which was 35% of all surveys received. The older age groups have typically had the highest levels of participation in the RGS review process during earlier public consultation phases. Areas with the highest percentages of respondents over 55 include Electoral Area ‘H’ (72%), the City of Parksville (69%) and, the Town of Qualicum Beach (65%).



Though respondents under 30 years of age made up less than a quarter of the survey responses (22.5% or 141 people), the results are higher than any previous efforts to engage youth on the RGS. Within individual jurisdictions, the majority of youth who completed the survey were from the City of Nanaimo with 33% or 119 respondents 30 years old or under. Nanaimo was also the only jurisdiction to have any respondents in the 15 and under category (4 people). While the District of Lantzville had 26% of surveys submitted by respondents under the age of 30 the actual numbers were 5 people. The remaining municipalities of Parksville and Qualicum along with all of the Electoral Areas had 3 or less respondents 30 years old or under with several areas having none. See Appendix 7 –Survey by Jurisdiction.

4.3 Length of time Survey Respondents have lived Region

The amount of time that respondents lived in the region is equally distributed over four of the five time categories. Few people who completed the survey lived in the region for 1 year or less (6%) and these were primarily in the City of Nanaimo. Just over half of the respondents lived in the region for over 10 years (51%) with the rest under 10 years (49%).



For some individual jurisdictions, a higher proportion of the survey respondents have lived in the region for more than 20 years, including the District of Lantzville (47%), Electoral Area ‘C’ (35%), the City of Nanaimo (28%) and Electoral Area ‘H’ (28%). See Appendix 7 –Survey by Jurisdiction.

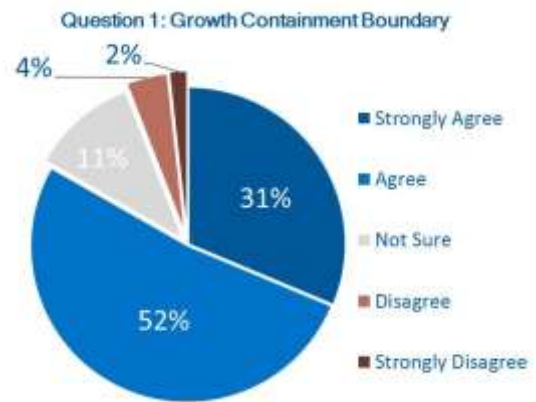
4.4 Survey Results by Question

The responses to all of the survey questions showed that the majority of respondents agree with or support the direction laid out by the draft RGS on several key issues. For example, the results confirm that a clear majority of respondents support the key concept of using Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs) to manage growth and create compact communities. This direction is the cornerstone of the RGS since it was first adopted in 1997.

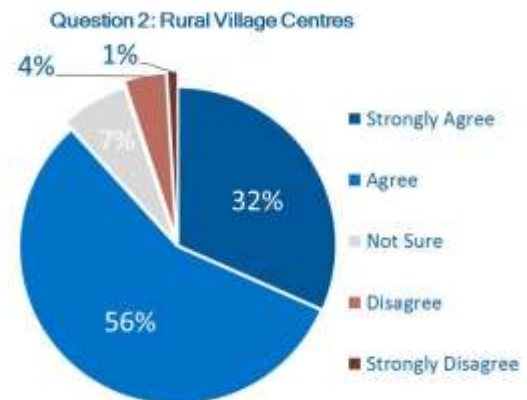
Survey results also show overall support for new policies to evaluate Rural Village Centres and to allow alternative forms of subdivision on rural lands (in order to promote better conservation of rural areas). The results of the survey also confirm a high level of support for having the RDN and its members playing a larger role in supporting agriculture and affordable housing.

The results also indicate that while there are some differences between the proportions of responses between Electoral Areas and Municipalities, there is still overall support for how various issues included in the survey are addressed by the draft RGS. Appendix 7 provides an analysis of the results for each question based upon the jurisdiction that respondents live in.

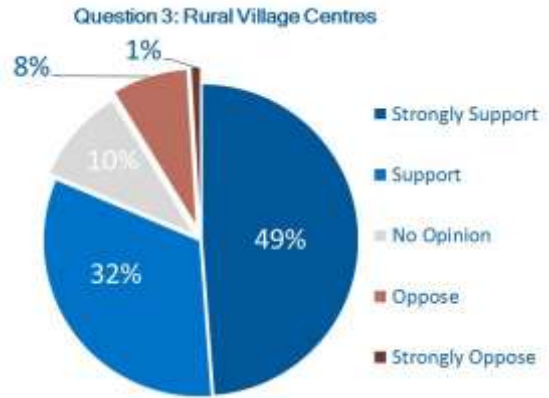
Question 1: Growth Containment Boundaries - 83% of respondents ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the continued use of GCBs to manage growth by separating areas intended for future urban growth from other areas intended to remain available for natural areas, farming, forestry and other rural uses. Eleven percent of respondents were ‘not sure’ about the use of GCB’s to manage growth and 6% of respondents either disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (2%) with this direction.



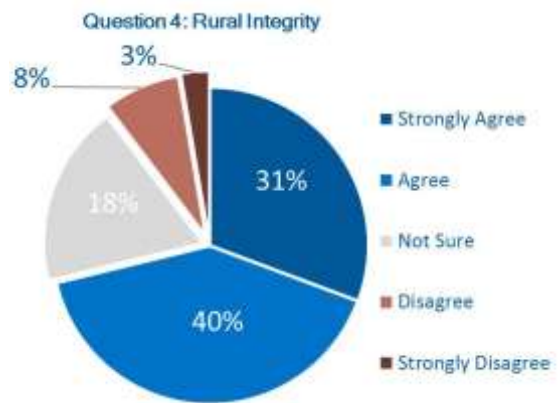
Question 2: Rural Village Centres - 88% of respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the need to evaluate which areas should remain as Rural Village Centres. Seven percent of respondents were ‘not sure’ about the need to evaluate the Rural Village Centres and 5% of respondents either disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (1%) with this direction.



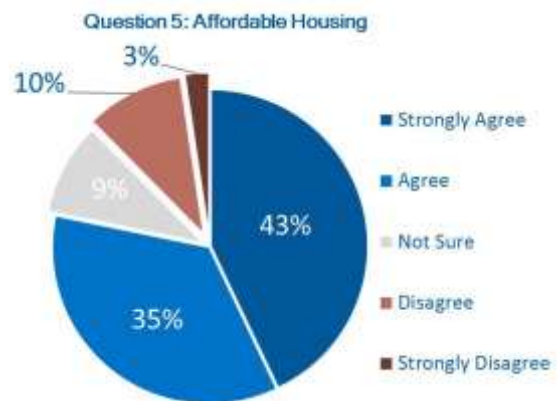
Question 3: Mobility – 81% percent of respondents ‘support’ or ‘strongly support’ the concept of encouraging more people to live within urban and rural village centres in order to increase opportunities to walk, cycle or take transit. 10% had no opinion on this and the remaining 9% either opposed (8%) or strongly opposed (1%) this direction.



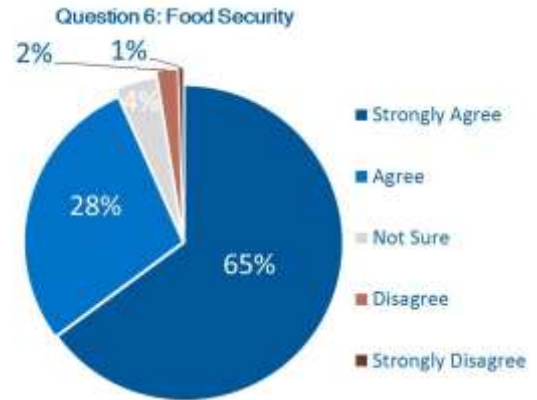
Question 4: Rural Integrity – 71 % of respondents ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that allowing different forms of subdivision in rural areas will be an effective way to protect important rural landscapes (provided that it does not result in more lots than permitted under current zoning and results in greater protection of lands for farming, forestry, environmental protection and public open space). 18% of respondents indicated that they were “not sure” whether or not this would be effective and a remaining 11% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that this would be an effective way of protecting rural landscapes.



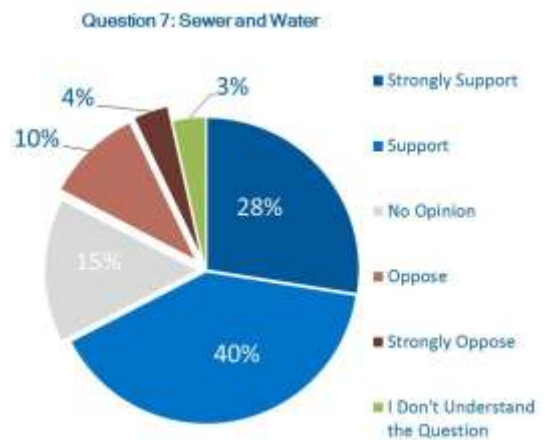
Question 5: Affordable Housing – 78% of respondents ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the RDN and its member municipalities should play a larger role in the provision of affordable housing. 9% indicated that they were “not sure” and a remaining 13% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the RDN and its member municipalities should play a larger role in the provision of affordable housing.



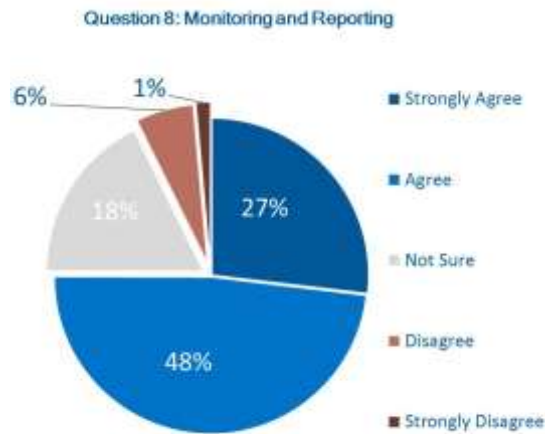
Question 6: Food Security – The most popular topic with the public involved in the review of the draft RGS was food security. 93% of respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that local governments (regional districts and municipalities) need to play a larger role in supporting agriculture. This is consistent with previous phases of the RGS review where public feedback showed a strong desire for local governments to do more to assist farmers in maintaining a sustainable food supply, including reducing conflicts with adjacent land uses, allowing complimentary land uses on farmland and supporting farmers markets.



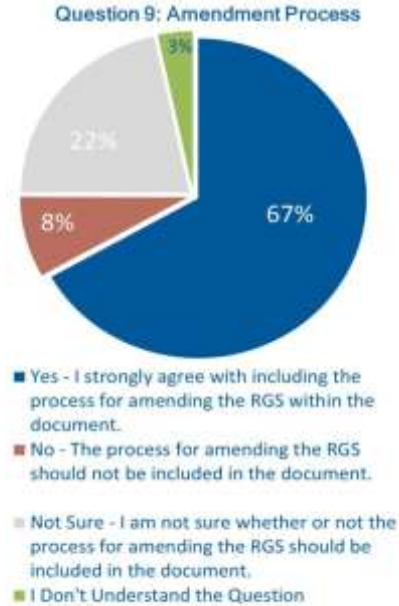
Question 7: Sewer and Water – 68% of respondents ‘support’ or ‘strongly support’ providing water and sewer to lands inside the GCB, while at the same time restricting these services to lands outside the GCB. Nearly 14% either ‘opposed’ or ‘strongly opposed’ this policy. 3% indicated that they did not understand the question and 15% had no opinion on it.



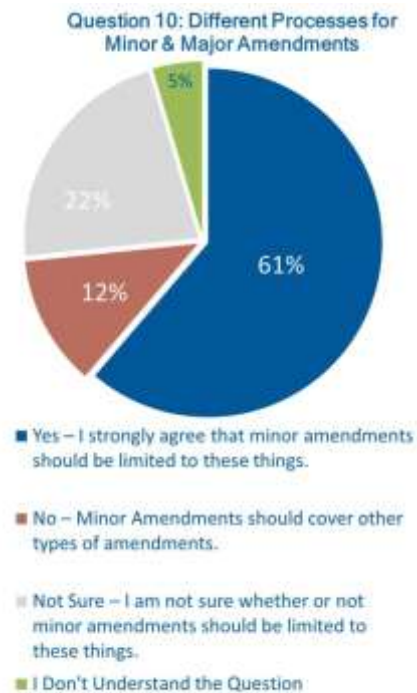
Question 8: Monitoring and Reporting – 75% of respondents ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that establishing a monitoring and reporting program for the RGS is a high priority. 7% either ‘opposed’ or ‘strongly opposed’ this direction while 18% of respondents indicated that they were ‘not sure’ whether or not this was a priority.



Question 9: Amending the RGS – 67% of those who responded to this question strongly agreed ‘with including the process for amending the RGS within the document’ while 8% disagreed with this direction. 22% of respondents indicated that they were ‘not sure’ and a further 3% did not understand the question. Eight respondents skipped this question altogether, the highest number to skip any of the questions.



Question 10: Different Processes for Minor and Major Amendments - For the question on having a different process for major and minor amendments, 61% agree with the criteria used for minor amendments and 12% of respondents support other types of amendments being considered as minor. 22% indicated they were ‘not sure’ and the remaining 5% did not understand the question.



Based on additional comments entered at the end of the survey, there were more people expressing general satisfaction with various aspects of the community consultation process for the RGS (over 26) than those who expressed dissatisfaction. This specifically included positive responses to the survey as a method of feedback and receiving information from RDN staff at meetings or events. Critical comments on the community consultation process included five requests or suggestions for distributing information more widely, three requests to have more detail on the survey questions and two concerns about the survey being biased/slanted with particular reference to Questions 9 and 10.

4.5 Written Comments

A total of 216 written comments were received from a combination of 202 respondents to the online survey groups (See Appendix 5 – Summary of Written Comments) along with another 11 written submissions from individuals and 3 from community groups (See Appendix 8 – Written Correspondence). Of these, several were not related to the RGS including comments about improving the RDN’s transit system and others requesting specific highway or road improvements. The comments related to the RGS are summarized below as they relate to each section of the draft RGS.

Goal 1 - Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption

There was overall support for compact development in order to save energy by reducing car use and promoting walking, cycling and transit. Comments also showed support for using ‘green’ design and infrastructure in new developments, including use of energy efficient techniques, water conservation and renewable energy.

In addition to the comments above there were a few comments about the need for the RGS to incorporate the principles of emergency/disaster mitigation and planning.

Goal 2 – Environmental Protection

Support for sustainable use and protection of water resources was mentioned frequently in the written comments. This included support for protecting groundwater sources and drinking water quality. Several comments about protecting water sources were linked to numerous comments about needing to establish a “carrying capacity” including setting targets for and capping population growth. These comments relate to concerns that the RDN has exceeded its ecological carrying capacity and needs to limit growth and focus on supporting existing levels of population. There was also a recommendation to undertake a study of the carrying capacity of the region prior to allowing more growth.

Some comments requested that consideration be given to entire ecosystems when making decisions on growth and development not just for designated environmentally sensitive areas, as is the current direction in the draft RGS. The Coastal Douglas Fir (CDF) zone is identified as an example of an ecosystem type in need of protection with several requests that the RDN look at acquiring CDF lands and other key lands within the RDN’s watersheds to ensure that they are maintained as natural areas and not developed. Similar to the preceding phases of the RGS review, the protection of drinking water and watersheds from the impacts of growth and development was a common theme. Another strong message was the need to see protection of habitat, green space and natural areas inside the GCB, reflecting that not all land needs to be developed.

Goal 3 – Coordinate Land Use and Mobility

Many respondents recognize that the convenience of transit, walking or cycling can be improved where there are appropriate densities to support consistent ridership or users to pay for these services. This also relates to other comments requesting improvements to the number and safety of existing bike routes and pathways and a desire to see more trails connecting areas. Support for the use of rail transit was expressed by a few people including a desire to see public transit linked to a commuter rail service.

Goal 4 – Coordinate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres

Consistent with the feedback received through the other phases of the RGS review, the majority of survey respondents support the concept of managing growth as envisioned in the RGS and several clearly expressed a desire to see this direction strengthened and implemented. Some of the respondents are concerned about too much growth as it would affect the sustainability of the region. Others expressed concern about too much density in the growth centres and the lack of a definition for ‘growth’.

Goal 5 – Rural Integrity

Overall there was considerable support for the goal to ‘enhance rural integrity’. This was expressed by support for directing future growth to lands inside the GCB and support for Policy 5.13 allowing alternative forms of subdivision to preserve more open space in Rural Residential lands. While there were a few who wanted more subdivision of rural lands allowed, there were others who expressed concern that any further subdivision of Rural Residential lands would compromise sustainability. These comments either find development standards too restrictive or not restrictive enough.

There were also several comments in favour of retaining land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) for food production, compared to a few comments expressing the need to review the viability of ALR lands for agriculture.

Goal 6 – Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing

Overall, the majority of written comments relating to affordable housing supported the RDN and local government’s role in the provision of affordable housing. This included recognition of having a range of affordable housing options in higher density areas within the GCB close to transit. Both written responses and the survey confirmed that the majority of those providing feedback on the RGS support the inclusion of this goal. There were a few comments not supporting wet housing however these appeared to be directly related to the City of Nanaimo’s recent rezoning process.

Goal 7 – Economic Development

Few comments were received relating to economic development. The comments received reflected concern that the goal for economic development was in conflict with other sustainability goals.

Goal 8 – Enhance Food Security

The written responses strongly support the concept of local food security and recommend more specific direction in the draft, particularly for urban agriculture and community gardens. While more people stated the need to keep land in the ALR, as noted above, some respondents suggested more flexibility for removing land from the ALR.

Goal 9 – Pride of Place

Few comments were received on ‘Pride of Place’. One comment suggested a name change to ‘Sense of Place’ which would be more descriptive of the goal. Another comment stated that arts and culture should not be publicly funded.

Goal 10 – Efficient Services

The majority of comments relating to servicing were expressions of strong support for developers to cover the costs of their infrastructure and ensuring that sewer and water are in place prior to approving development. There was also support for energy and water efficient design of buildings and sites including the use of green building technologies as noted above.

Goal 11 – Enhance Cooperation Among Jurisdictions

Few comments were received that directly related to this goal. The comments reflect concern over the influence the municipalities have in the rural areas, the expansion of the GCBs and the need to have good relationship with First Nations including expanding consideration to those not only with reserves in the RDN but also those whose territories fall within the RDN.

Major and Minor Amendments

The majority of the comments received show support for making the RGS and specifically the GCB very difficult to amend and not considering any changes for a period of time. A few comments expressed the desire to see the policies of the RGS adhered to and not changed due to pressure from developers. There was concern expressed that the GCB will only be effective if it is not constantly changed and some scepticism that while people supported the RGS, they were concerned that it would not be implemented. This concern was a constant theme in terms of feedback from members of the public at the majority of presentations.

Accountability, Education, Awareness and Implementation

There was support expressed for ongoing education about the RGS and its benefits, as well as keeping people informed on its implementation. Several comments support the need to monitor the effectiveness of the RGS and set targets.

Land Use Designations

There were a few comments that were critical of the City of Nanaimo's expansion of its GCB and the inclusion of ALR and environmentally sensitive lands within the GCB. Other individual comments on the land use designations were site specific, including one request to expand the GCB for the Town of Qualicum Beach to allow more development within walking distance to the town centre, a request to not include the Lantzville foothills land in the GCB and, a comment that the Fairwinds GCB was too big and should be smaller.

4.6 Changes Proposed based on Public Consultation

The following table outlines a number of changes proposed by RDN staff as a result of public comments on the draft RGS. These changes are felt to be in keeping with the intent of the RGS and do not represent a major change in direction. The changes have been included in a June 6th 2011 Draft RGS that the RDN Board gave first and second reading to on June 28th, 2011.

Draft RGS Section	Page No.	Proposed Change
4.2 Goals 1, 4 & 10	17-39	Add additional policies on stronger Integration of Emergency/Disaster Planning under Goals 1, 4 and 10.
2.2	8	Insert a reference to the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve.
4.2 Goal 2	18	Reference the endangered Coastal Douglas Fir Zone and relation to Mount Arrowsmith biosphere reserve.
4.2 Goal 2	20	Insert a reference to the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve.
4.2 Goal 2	20	Coastal Zone 2.8 Preserve and protect remaining natural segments of the coastal zone by promoting greater public awareness of the importance and sensitivity of coastal areas, <u>wildlife</u> and coastal processes (e.g. geological, environmental and biological). Add new policy <u>2.9 Minimize impacts of development in coastal zones by ensuring use of low impact development.</u>
4.2 Goal 2	20	Include specific recommendations on protecting riparian zones from run-off from farms, industrial areas and housing developments.
4.2 Goal 7	30	Bullet two in introduction. Change “Decline of natural resource sector” to “Significant challenges facing the natural resource sector”
Goal 7	31	Change preamble: In addition, the region should continue to: Support growth in the shellfish aquaculture, agriculture and forestry sectors <u>in a manner that is consistent with the environmental goals of the RGS.</u>
5.2 Implementation	42	Add new policy: Include sustainability and strategic policy implications in discussions and decision-making within development approval processes.
Appendix A Map 1		Add boundaries of Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve to Sensitive Ecosystems and Parks map.

4.7 Response to Frequent Comments

In addition to the changes made as a result of public comments, there were a few re-occurring comments that did not result in proposed changes to the RGS. The RDN’s responses to these comments are provided below.

RDN Response to Frequent Comments	
Comment	RDN Response
<p>The RDN must determine the carrying capacity of the region and use this to set limits or stop growth within the RGS.</p>	<p>There is no one set standard/ measure for determining carrying capacity or determining our ecological footprint. This is especially the case when we acknowledge that most of the goods and economic systems we rely on are connected to a global trade system. This fact requires us to consider the concept of carrying capacity well beyond our immediate areas/regions.</p> <p>Local governments are mandated by the Province of BC to “manage” not “stop” future population growth in the region. Local governments can use a variety of tools (land use planning including zoning, service provision, development fees) that can limit how and where development takes place. However, they have no jurisdictional role in restricting how many people choose to move into or out of an area. The RGS through the use of Growth Containment Boundaries aims to provide limits on where growth occurs. However, it is up to each jurisdiction to establish their own densities through official community plans.</p> <p>The RGS sets out to sustainably manage growth by addressing a variety of goals tied to the a wider vision of long term sustainability by addressing issues that fall under what the RDN and its member jurisdictions are “allowed to control”.</p> <p>With regard to the consumption of local resources, it is clear that we could accommodate more people in our region without increasing demand for water, land, and other resources. In order to achieve this, most of the region’s residents, businesses and other organizations would have to be willing to change their behaviour and expectations in order to reduce their consumption (using less water, having smaller homes, using alternative means of transportation). The RGS supports providing education and making changes in the way our communities are developed so that it becomes easier for residents to make more sustainable choices.</p>
<p>Improve opportunities to cycle and use public transit.</p>	<p>The RGS provides the framework to direct potential transit users and cyclists into Growth Containment Boundaries where they may support improved transit service and infrastructure. The RGS also provides direction to Official Community Plans to include more specific details on land uses that support improved transit service and infrastructure.</p>
<p>More specific policies for urban agriculture.</p>	<p>The RGS is an ‘umbrella’ document that provides high level guidance through its policies to achieve a variety of sustainability goals. The RGS sets the framework for more detail to be developed at the local level through Official Community Plans and Zoning bylaws. This allows each jurisdiction the flexibility to determine their own approach to meeting the RGS goals such as those relating to urban agriculture or affordable housing.</p>

5.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

The outcome of the survey and other comments received shows a clear majority of those who provided feedback support the direction of the April 8th 2011 revised draft RGS. Based upon the feedback a number of small changes were proposed. These changes were viewed as being consistent with the overall direction and intent of the draft RGS as supported by the majority of those who gave feedback.

The process to adopt the Bylaw for the new RGS, including the changes resulting from public comments on the April 8th 2011 draft RGS, was initiated by the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors on June 28, 2011.

The next steps for the RDN Board to consider adopting the draft RGS involve proceeding to public hearings and then getting “acceptance” from affected local governments. The public hearings will be a final opportunity for the community to comment on the draft document. Depending upon the timing of the public hearings and gaining “acceptance” from each affected local government, the new draft RGS could be adopted by spring 2012.