



Consultation Plan

Squamish Lillooet Regional District Regional Growth Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THIS PLAN

The purpose of this Consultation Plan is to guide the work of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) Board of Directors as it gathers input and feedback for use in the development of a Regional Growth Strategy. As required by the Section 855 (2) of the *Local Government Act*, the SLRD will provide opportunities for extensive, early, and ongoing public consultation with residents, local governments, First Nations, and other government bodies.

The three broad goals of the Consultation Plan are to:

- Communicate to raise awareness about the Regional Growth Strategy, spark interest and discussion on growth management issues and priorities, and inform about opportunities to participate;
- Gather input and feedback through a variety of means, including public meetings, elected officials' forums, surveys and other consultation methods;
- Present this input and feedback in a manner that informs the development of the Regional Growth Strategy.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District has resolved to initiate and undertake a Regional Growth Strategy process as a means to determine a common strategic vision and set of economic, social, and environmental goals for the region. In accordance with the legislation, this process must fully involve the member municipalities – which ultimately must come to consensus on the resulting strategy – while also including opportunities for input from residents, provincial agencies, First Nations, and others.

The SLRD Board has prioritized the Regional Growth Strategy work, recognizing that the region now faces a historically unique combination of challenges and opportunities. These include the following:

- Massive growth pressure, especially in Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton;
- Significant infrastructure and real estate development associated with the 2010 Olympics, including major upgrading of the Sea to Sky Highway;
- First Nations with traditional territory in the region taking leadership in land and resource management;
- The Province and its agencies promoting development of Crown lands;
- Declining employment and economic transition in the northern part of the region.

The Regional Growth Strategy will be a tool for managing these challenges and opportunities in such a way that land use decision making will contribute to improved livability, quality of life, and sustainability. Ultimately, the Regional Growth Strategy will be successful if it strongly articulates a positive vision that enables decision makers to address the unique sets of issues in the two sub-regions:

1. To manage growth and development, particularly in the Sea to Sky corridor, so that it is consistent with environmental, economic and social values, as reflected in the principles of Smart Growth;
2. To address negative economic trends in the northern part of the region so that there will be expanded employment and long-term viability of communities in the north.

Approval of a consultation plan by the SLRD Board is a milestone that is required by the legislation that empowers regional districts to create growth strategies (Section 855 (2) of the *Local Government Act*).

CONSULTATION SCOPE

The Regional Growth Strategy consultation will seek to inform and engage residents, affected local governments including the four member municipalities and the four Electoral Areas (A, B, C and D), adjacent regional districts, the twelve First Nations with traditional territory in the region, local, provincial and federal government agencies, and non-governmental organizations and community interest groups.

The substantive focus of the Regional Growth Strategy will be shaped in accordance with the issues and priorities identified during the initial public consultation activities. This way, research and planning efforts will be targeted to address matters of highest priority. Throughout this process, the Regional Board will provide project oversight for the regional growth strategy and will be kept regularly apprised of the results of the consultation activities.

PROJECT TIMELINE

The implementation of this process will follow a pre-consultation stage (March – August 2004). This stage includes facilitation of an Orientation Session for Elected Officials (March 19), selection of a consultation consultant team (June 28), preparation and adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy Consultation Plan, organization of the initial consultation activities to be implemented in fall 2004, and dialogue with First Nations about their preferences regarding involvement in the Regional Growth Strategy process.

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) consultation will occur in four stages, as identified in the table below.

	Stage	Expected timing
1	Identification of key priorities, goals, and vision.	September - November 2004
2	Identification and analysis of options.	November – May 2005
3	Review and selection of options.	June - July 2005
4	Final public review.	August - September 2005

2. CONSULTATION APPROACH

OVERALL APPROACH

To help ensure that the Regional Growth Strategy is completed in a timely and cost effective manner, the consultation will use a strategic approach. The Regional Growth Strategy will build on the results of other consultation and planning processes in the region (e.g., planning in specific communities, and Land and Resource Management Planning). In addition, this Consultation Plan reflects lessons learned by other regional districts that have completed Regional Growth Strategy processes.

The consultation will occur in 4 stages, as follows.

Stage 1 will focus on identifying growth management priorities, goals and objectives.

The consultation in this stage will include a Regional Ideas Symposium, a series of public engagement workshops, an Elected Officials Forum, an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meeting, and various communications activities. The results will be presented in an initial consultation report, “Confirmation of Key Priorities”. Prioritization of issues will help determine what issues and ideas should be researched.

Stage 2 will focus on reviewing the results of Stage 1.

The primary consultation activity in this stage will be collection of feedback through feedback forms which will focus on the “Confirmation of Key Priorities” report. Meanwhile, the SLRD will be reviewing and developing a set of growth management options.

Stage 3 will focus on reviewing and commenting on growth management options.

Consultation in this stage will include extensive communications activities, a second series of public meetings, an online survey, an Elected Officials Forum, and an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meeting. The results will be used in selecting and developing a preferred option.

Stage 4 will involve a final public review of the draft Regional Growth Strategy.

Consultation activities will include a final series of public engagement workshops, an Elected Officials Forum, an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meeting and a well-publicized formal public hearing.

CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

The Regional Growth Strategy consultation will uphold the following principles:

1. **Inclusiveness** through offering multiple methods of participation (e.g., people who do not want to, or cannot, attend public meetings can provide comment through surveys and / or feedback forms);

2. **Innovation**, using new technology and creative consultation, analysis and communication methods;
3. **Clarity** of the consultation process, with clearly expressed goals and objectives;
4. **Flexibility** in the design of the process, to incorporate ongoing feedback on preferred or alternative methods of consultation;
5. **Honesty** about the constraints that the process has to operate within;
6. **Respect** for all participants;
7. **Integrity**, with commitment to take input and feedback into consideration; and,
8. **Timeliness**, with substantial early involvement and rapid analysis of results at each stage.

3. OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND TIMING

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the Consultation Plan are to:

1. **Raise awareness among elected officials and regional residents** to encourage and support informed involvement;
2. **Engage First Nations leadership in early dialogue** to develop a program that would actively involve their communities in the process;
3. **Launch the process with a Regional Ideas Symposium**, engaging elected officials and community stakeholders in discussion of growth management issues, priorities, ideas and vision for the region;
4. **Facilitate resident and community participation** through public engagement workshops and surveys;
5. **Facilitate political leadership of the process** through ongoing project leadership by the SLRD Regional Board and through a series of Council of Elected Officials Forums;
6. **Coordinate Provincial government agency participation** through a series of Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meetings; and,
7. **Provide a final opportunity for comment** on the proposed Regional Growth Strategy before it is taken through a formal public hearing process.

The following chart shows a summary of how these objectives will be addressed through various activities and outputs (deliverables).

SUMMARY OF REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

Stage	Objectives	Activities	Outputs	Participants	Timing
1 Identification of key priorities, goals & vision	1, 2	Pre-consultation with First Nations to explore options for their involvement	First Nations Consultation Program	SLRD, First Nations leaders	July-Sept 2004
	1, 3	Regional Ideas Symposium	Symposium Proceedings	Elected officials, First Nations, agencies, residents	Sept 15, 2004
	1, 4	Public engagement workshops in Squamish (for Squamish / Area D South); Whistler (for Whistler / Area D North); Pemberton (for Pemberton / Area C); and Lillooet (for Lillooet / Areas A & B)	Report on meetings	Residents and community reps	Sept-Oct 2004
	1, 5	Elected Officials Forum (EOF)	Forum proceedings	Mayor and Council Members, Electoral Area Directors, and Chief and Council Members	Oct 2004
	1, 6	Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting	Meeting minutes	Prov'l, federal, regional agencies	Oct 2004
	5	SLRD Regional Board meeting(s) to review project updates and provide direction	Meeting minutes	SLRD Regional Directors	Monthly
2 Identification of options	1	Review of Stage 1 report, "Confirmation of Key Priorities"	Summary of feedback	All	Nov 2004 – Jan 05
	5	SLRD Regional Board meeting(s) to review project updates and provide direction	Meeting minutes	SLRD Regional Directors	Monthly
3 Selection of options	1, 4	Public engagement workshops in Squamish (for Squamish / Area D South); Whistler (for Whistler / Area D North); Pemberton (for Pemberton / Area C); and Lillooet (for Lillooet / Areas A & B)	Report on meetings	Residents and community reps	Mar-April 2005
	1, 4	On-line survey	Summary of survey results	Residents and community reps	Mar-April 2005

	1, 5	Elected Officials Forum (EOF)	Forum proceedings	Mayor and Council Members, Electoral Area Directors, and Chief and Council Members	Apr-May 2005
	1, 6	Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting	Meeting minutes	Prov'l, federal, regional agencies	Apr-May 2005
	5	SLRD Regional Board meeting(s) to review project updates and provide direction	Meeting minutes	SLRD Regional Directors	Monthly
4 Final public review	1, 4	Public open-house meetings in Squamish (for Squamish / Area D South); Whistler (for Whistler / Area D North); Pemberton (for Pemberton / Area C); and Lillooet (for Lillooet / Areas A & B)	Report on meetings	Residents and community reps	June 2005
	1, 5	Elected Officials Forum (EOF)	Forum proceedings	Mayor and Council Members, Electoral Area Directors, and Chief and Council Members	June-July 2005
	1, 6	Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting	Meeting minutes	Prov'l, federal, regional agencies	June-July 2005
	1, 7	Informal Referral of draft to member municipalities	Comments	Elected Officials	July-Aug 2005
	1, 7	Formal Public Hearing	Public hearing minutes	Residents and community reps	Sept 2005
	5	SLRD Regional Board meeting(s) to review project updates and provide direction	Meeting minutes	SLRD Regional Directors	Monthly

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION METHODS

The SLRD will use seven consultation methods in developing the Regional Growth Strategy:

- Pre-consultation with First Nations to explore options for their involvement;
- A Regional Ideas Symposium, featuring engaging presentations and a variety of opportunities to share ideas for consideration in the development of the Regional Growth Strategy;
- An initial round of public engagement workshops early in the process, followed by two further sets of public engagement workshops designed to involve participants in the review of various Regional Growth Strategy options, and the preferred option;
- Collection of survey responses (through the SLRD website and in hard copy);
- Council of Elected Officials Forums at key points in the Regional Growth Strategy process;

- Inclusion of input from all relevant agencies through a series of Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) meetings;
- A formal public hearing.

First Nations Pre-Consultation

The SLRD and the consultant team recognize that effective First Nations consultation on the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy will require initial meetings and discussion with First Nations leaders to seek their input and explore options for effective First Nations involvement. It would be inadvisable to pre-determine in any great detail what an effective consultation plan for First Nations will look like without first involving the affected First Nations in the design of the plan.

Based on those initial meetings and discussion, the SLRD will prepare a proposed First Nations Consultation Program. In addition, the Regional Growth Strategy process will feature the following:

- Inclusion of First Nations Leadership in Council of Elected Officials forums; and,
- Acknowledgement of First Nations traditional territory at the outset of all Regional Growth Strategy consultation events.

Regional Ideas Symposium

A full day Regional Ideas Symposium held in a central location early in the process will publicly launch the Regional Growth Strategy process. The purpose of the symposium is to provide an early forum for local elected officials and community stakeholders to come together to identify and discuss growth management issues / priorities, and share ideas about the future of the region.

Some of the objectives of the symposium will be to:

- Generate interest and dialogue on the Regional Growth Strategy process;
- Stimulate discussions on the key priorities to be included in the Regional Growth Strategy at the regional level;
- Raise awareness and inform communities on regional trends and important issues with respect to growth and growth management; and,
- Identify interest and opportunities to be involved through various means in the Regional Growth Strategy process.

Public Engagement Workshops/ Meetings

The Regional Growth Strategy consultation process will include three sets of public engagement meetings in central locations in the four main sub-regions: Squamish / Area D South; Whistler / Area D North; Pemberton / Area C; and Lillooet / Areas A & B.

In Stage 1, public engagement workshops will be designed to spark interest in the process, and to discuss and identify the key issues that are important for regional growth and management of that growth. The purpose of this initial series of public workshops will be to kick off the Regional Growth Strategy process in each sub-region and to stimulate more detailed discussions among a broader public than at the regional symposium. The meetings will be designed to maximize:

- awareness and understanding of, and interest in, the Regional Growth Strategy process and regional growth issues;

- broad public input on possible solutions or options for addressing regional growth issues.

Stage 3 public engagement workshops will focus on review and discussion of Regional Growth Strategy options. Following presentation of the options, participants will be encouraged to engage in dialogue on the pros and cons of each option. The sessions will be designed to maximize:

- understanding of each of the Regional Growth Strategy options;
- engagement in discussion of the merits of each option, considering local and regional priorities;
- input on what option is preferred; and,
- identification of possible modifications to preferred options.

Stage 4 public open-houses will provide an opportunity for comment on the preferred option chosen which will be described in detail in the draft Regional Growth Strategy. These meetings will provide the public an opportunity to review the draft in advance of the formal public hearing.

On-line Survey

An on-line survey, which will also be available in hard copy, will provide a means for larger numbers of people to vote and provide feedback on the RGS options. The survey tool will be especially important in creating access to the process for people who are unable to, or prefer not to, attend meetings. In addition, respondents will have opportunities to comment on how preferred options could be modified and strengthened.

The survey tool will be designed to be user-friendly, so that it is clear and easy to use in both the on-line and hard copy versions. The questions will elicit opinion from SLRD residents and interested organizations at a key stage of the RGS development process.

Elected Officials Forums

At key stages during the preparation of the Regional Growth Strategy, Elected Officials Forums will be held to provide local government and First Nations elected officials with an opportunity to discuss progress on the RGS, debate strategy content, brief each other on relevant issues in the plan area, and provide comments and input to the Regional Growth Strategy process along the way. The Council of Elected Officials is comprised of SLRD Regional Board members (including all Electoral Area Directors), other elected officials from member municipalities, and First Nations Chief and Council members.

Intergovernmental Advisory Committee Meetings

There will be several Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) meetings throughout the strategy process. The role of the intergovernmental advisory committee is to advise the Regional District on the development and implementation of the regional growth strategy, and to facilitate coordination of Provincial and local government actions, policies and programs as they relate to the development and implementation of the regional growth strategy.

It is essential to maintain this contact with all levels of government participating in the regional growth strategy process, and to obtain updates from agencies on their own plans and processes.

Formal Public Hearing

Prior to the formal public hearing, the draft Regional Growth Strategy will be informally referred to each member municipality. Following the receipt of comments from the member municipalities and last-minute fine tuning of the document, a public hearing will be scheduled in a central location in the Region. The formal public hearing, as required by law, will be the final opportunity for input on the Regional Growth Strategy and after the conclusion of the public hearing, no further public consultation will be conducted. After the regional district gives first and second reading to an RGS and holds a public hearing, it must formally refer the strategy for acceptance to all member municipalities. Each jurisdiction has 120 days in which to review the strategy before notifying the regional district board whether they accept it.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS

A range of communication tools will be used throughout the Regional Growth Strategy consultation process to inform and engage the general public and interested parties. Informing residents and interested organizations will be important for raising the profile of the Regional Growth Strategy process; building and maintaining interest; raising awareness of growth management issues in general, and more specifically, what growth means for our Regional District; keeping people updated on progress; and, informing people about opportunities to provide input and feedback.

The Regional Growth Strategy process will rely on the following primary tools for dissemination of information:

- an electronic Regional Growth Strategy newsletter (also available in hard copy),
- a dedicated section of the SLRD website,
- articles in the monthly *Regional District Update* (the SLRD's regular monthly newsletter),
- media releases at key stages,
- publication of fact sheets,
- research reports, and consultation process reports.

Two additional communication tools will be used to support consultation events: display materials, and advertising in local media outlets to inform residents and other interested parties about key consultation events.

4. CONCLUSION

By implementing this consultation plan, the Regional Board will ensure strong inclusion of elected officials, residents and other interested parties in the creation of a Regional Growth Strategy. The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District faces a unique combination of challenges and issues. Effectively engaging the full spectrum of local and regional interests will be necessary to create a common vision of the region and a clear strategy for moving toward that vision.

The region has excellent potential for stronger First Nations involvement than has been achieved in Regional Growth Strategy processes elsewhere in British Columbia. The Regional Board hopes that pre-consultation dialogue with First Nations leaders will provide the foundation for an innovative pilot project that will allow for meaningful First Nations involvement.

The communication tools described in this plan will inform residents and interested organizations of opportunities to participate more effectively in the Regional Growth Strategy process. Raising public awareness about growth management priorities and options will also be useful in building a strong foundation, in each community of the region, for future implementation of the Regional Context Statements.

Using the set of consultation tools identified in this plan will provide multiple points of access to the Regional Growth Strategy process. The purpose of these tools is to listen to the voices of residents, local governments, First Nations, and other government bodies. In combination with the various communications activities, consultation activities will create strong connections between these voices and the Regional Growth Strategy process. Ultimately, the quality of the process will be reflected in the quality of the product: a Regional Growth Strategy that will guide development of the region over the next generation and beyond.