

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

2022-2026 Strategic Plan



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VISION

“A World of Opportunities Within Our Region”

MISSION

“We Will Foster Social,
Environmental, and
Economic Opportunities
Within Our Diverse Region
Through Effective Leadership”

INTRODUCTION

BD Carruthers and Associates was engaged by the RDBN to facilitate the development of a corporate strategic plan for the 2022-26 term of office. The following strategic plan framework reflects the input and perspectives provided by Directors and staff in workshops on April 21 & 22. The participants engaged in thoughtful and strategic discussions on the various elements of the strategic plan and the information received was sorted, analyzed, and prioritized, and has informed the structure and content contained in this report.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Bulkley - Nechako region is defined by its quality of life, with a slower pace, a safe and affordable environment to raise a family, diverse opportunities to make a good living, communities that are friendly and welcoming, and a sense of freedom not found in urban centres. The region is primarily rural in nature with an abundance of outdoor recreation amenities and opportunities, which contribute to the quality of life for residents and attracts visitors from around the world. First Nations communities have occupied the lands and waters of the region since time immemorial and have a great influence on the culture and economy of the region. Other cultures are increasingly calling the region home due to affordability of housing and opportunities for employment. The forestry sector continues to play an important role in the region's economy. However, change is anticipated which will result in an increased reliance on the mining and agriculture sectors and a shift to a more diverse economy. Highway 16, the CN Rail corridor, the Port of Prince Rupert and gas pipeline development contribute significantly to the region's economic future. While remote work is enabling a shift in the workforce and demographics, the lack of connectivity in the region is limiting those opportunities.

As we look to the future, there is growth in our population as people are drawn to the north in search of affordable real estate and a quality of life, resulting in younger, more vibrant communities. We are able to strike a balance between preserving our values and accommodating growth and we maintain our sense of community. We practice responsible planning and development to ensure the desirable attributes of our region are preserved and we manage the impacts of growth and development on our environment. We have adequate housing opportunities, and our communities have access to high-speed internet service. The region has a more diversified, stable economy and our local governments have a reliable and sustainable funding source to support services and infrastructure development.

OUR ROLE

As a regional government, we provide quality services that contribute to the liveability of our region and we advocate on behalf of our residents, businesses and industry on important issues that impact our communities. As elected officials, we are conduits of information between our citizens and the Board and we lead through challenging or uncomfortable situations and make difficult decisions. We foster trust from our citizens through our decisions and actions, which are focused on the common good and we develop partnerships and collaborate with other local governments, First Nations, and community organizations to effectively address needs and challenges in our communities and the region.

OUR COMMITMENTS

As a Board and as individual Directors, we will strive to:

- be fair and consistent in our decisions and our application of our policies and bylaws;
- be transparent and open in our decision-making;
- have an open mind and consider all the information that comes before us; and
- be patient, respectful and supportive of our colleagues, staff and others.

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan was developed by the Board of Directors to establish a collective direction for the regional district and ensure that our decisions, activities and policies are connected, and in alignment with the Board's goals and objectives. The plan will help focus and prioritize the use of our resources, while considering the capacity of our staff. It will also serve as a communication tool to inform our citizens and help advance our goals with external partners. The plan will inform the development of our annual budgets and departmental work plans. Quarterly reports to the Board and the Annual Report will allow us to review, communicate, and celebrate progress in achieving our goals and update the plan as necessary.



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS:

1. Relationships with First Nations

Goal

To enhance relationships with First Nations in the region and explore opportunities to collaborate and work in partnership for the benefit of our communities.

Why is it important?

As a Board, we embrace the principles of Truth and Reconciliation. Conversations and dialogue will help to build awareness, understanding and trust and enable us to work together on important issues and achieve better outcomes for our communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1** Extend invitations for informal meetings/meals with each First Nations government in the region.
- 1.2** Share and discuss respective strategic goals and objectives to identify opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on areas of mutual interest.
- 1.3** Investigate and identify opportunities for the RDBN to provide specific services to First Nations Communities.



2. Advocacy with the Province

Goal

To advocate and build relationships with provincial ministries to ensure the needs of the region are represented, impacts on our communities from their decisions and policies are understood, and adequate resources are made available to support new and increasing expectations of local government.

Why is it important?

The needs and aspirations of our region are often misunderstood or overlooked and we are increasingly faced with the costs of responding to new requirements and regulations imposed by the provincial government. It is important that we communicate our issues effectively and ensure that an appropriate share of resource revenues flow back to the region.

OBJECTIVES

- 2.1** Support efforts to secure an agreement under the Resource Benefits Alliance by engaging with our communities and consistently messaging our expectations to the Province.
- 2.2** Identify and prioritize topics and issues for provincial advocacy and advance our interests by developing strategic and consistent messaging, and offering solutions that are aligned with mutual goals.
- 2.3** Extend invitations to ministers or senior ministry staff to visit our region so they can observe and discuss our issues and interests in-person.



3. Housing Supply

Goal

To ensure there is an adequate supply and variety of housing options for our citizens.

Why is it important?

There is currently a lack of housing options in the region which impacts availability and affordability and our ability to attract and retain residents.

OBJECTIVES

- 3.1** Provide support to the non-profit sector in their pursuit of affordable housing projects and initiatives.
- 3.2** Advocate with the Province for appropriate rules and regulations to reduce impediments to housing development and better-reflect the needs of northern residents.
- 3.3** Investigate opportunities for the regional district to plan for and/or support the development of workforce housing.



4. Community and Economic Sustainability

Goal

To identify and pursue opportunities to support and diversify our economy.

Why is it important?

A strong economy is essential to grow the region, maintain our quality of life, retain our workforce and ensure our communities are healthy and resilient.

OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Convene a tourism summit to better-understand the needs of the tourism sector and explore how the regional district can support and advance tourism in the region.
- 4.2 Revisit, prioritize and advance recommendations of the RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan and the work of the Agriculture Coordinator.
- 4.3 Continue advocacy efforts with the Federal and Provincial governments, First Nations communities and industry for high-speed internet service and explore innovative solutions for high-speed internet service in partnership with the Connectivity Committee and other partners.

