

Complete, Compact Communities

Possible Change:

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

What is meant by a complete, compact community?

A complete, compact community consists of neighbourhoods within existing urban areas, with diverse housing and transportation choices. Complete compact communities have the following characteristics:

- housing, jobs, schools, recreation, and other daily needs are within easy walking distance of one another;
- neighbourhoods are well connected by an efficient transit system and as many activities as possible are located within easy walking distance of transit stops;
- a diversity of housing types enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within the same neighbourhood;
- the community has a center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural and recreational uses where civic buildings and squares reinforce the identity of the neighbourhood;
- the community has lots of open space in the form of squares, greens and parks whose frequent use (for social activity and recreation) is encouraged through placement and design;
- the design of streets serves equitably the needs of pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles;
- architecture and landscape respond to the unique character of the region and preserve the charm and unity of the neighbourhood as a whole.

Why is this important for a sustainable region?

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.

Research has shown that concentrating development in already-serviced areas with attention to design and creating a variety of housing choices contributes to economic, social and ecological sustainability. Costs of development, servicing infrastructure, and long-term maintenance are reduced. Transit and other non-automobile transportation modes become viable. Compact development in existing developed areas also protects important values located outside of the urban area including ecologically sensitive areas, drinking water supplies, and farm and forest lands.

How can the RGS provide guidance on this sustainability challenge?

The RGS could include growth targets for both member municipalities and village centres in electoral areas. The targets may include the share each village centre would receive of regional population, housing growth, and commercial development. The RGS could recognise that municipalities will receive the majority of this growth and would be designated as the priority area for future growth. Electoral area village centres may be designated as secondary areas for future growth. These municipal and village targets may either be consolidated as 'regional' and 'electoral area' or be specific to the node. Regional context statements in each official community plan could be required to state how the targets will be met.

