

Sustainability Principles

Possible Change:

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

What are sustainability principles?

A principle is defined as an “accepted truth” that can be used as the basis for decision making and policy development. Principles establish the constraints within which one makes choices. If well formulated and agreed to by consensus, principles provide solid guidance for, and reasonable expectations on decision-makers. Sustainability principles are not new and have been developed and used in many places. There are generally six recurring themes that at least one, and often several, sustainability principles touch on. These are:

1. Complexity: different systems are connected but much is unknown about how they work
2. Efficiency: continual improvement and innovation while reducing waste
3. Participation: those affected by decisions should have a say in decision making
4. Ecological integrity: respect for biodiversity, ecosystem function and carrying capacity
5. Equity: fairness and recognition of intergenerational considerations
6. Sense of place: community identity, social cohesion, landscape character and cultural history

Why are sustainability principles important for a sustainable region?

The RDN State of Sustainability report explained that sustainability is about “recognising that

people are part of the ecosystem, and that the economic and social lives of people should be integrated into the environment, in ways that maintain or enhance the environment, rather than degrade or destroy it.”

Clearly stating sustainability principles for the RGS assures that the direction provided to local initiatives is founded on values of sustainability and equity.

The principles, as established through broad based community engagement, will provide a basis for developing policies for addressing the important sustainability challenges facing the region. With the entire new RGS based on sustainability principles, more focus will be placed on the sustainability implications in future decisions on regional growth and development.

How can the RGS provide direction on sustainability principles?

The RGS could include sustainability principles that reflect regional priorities consistent with widely held ideas about sustainability.

These principles will be incorporated into the RGS as the foundation of the revised goals and policies for a sustainable region.

These principles will ensure that the RGS is based on a shared understanding of what sustainability means, and how a sustainable society can be achieved.

