

THEME 10

IMAGINING HRM INTO 2050 AND BEYOND

As 2020 has taught us, society can change dramatically over a short time. However, with long-range planning, the municipality can be better prepared to handle an uncertain future, and to some extent, even direct what the future can look like based on a shared vision. Now that this plan is nearing the end of its lifespan (2031), it is time to begin thinking about what we want HRM to look like further into the future

WHY CONSIDER LONG-RANGE POLICY?

Our ideas about what the future may look like can change drastically over a few decades. In 2006, the municipality did not foresee the population growth we are currently seeing in 2021, most of which is due to immigration. In 2006, the municipality was not planning for pandemics that would transform how we work, where we choose to live, how we travel, and the importance of outdoor spaces. Since 2006, there has also been an increased push to act on climate change and real understanding of how climate change is already impacting communities (e.g., droughts, forest fires, flooding, and increased hurricanes). Social movements exposing the impacts of inequality and systemic racism have also been growing stronger each year. In 2006, the aim of our planning documents was to ensure efficiency and affordability for the municipality and to start thinking about the importance of complete communities. While these concepts are still a major focus for planning documents, plans must also demonstrate how we will tackle and prepare for climate change and crises and improve social well-being for traditionally under-served and under-represented groups.

Now is the time to start talking to communities about what they think is important to consider when envisioning HRM into 2050 and beyond.

With increased population, we need to consider where are the most appropriate places to encourage more or new development and what form it should take (e.g., single unit dwellings, apartments, townhouses, shared housing, small lots, large lots). What will the household makeup look like? Will people prefer living in group settings (with family or roommates) or in small units with small household sizes? Will it be important for residents to be able to travel with ease (by car, transit, bike or walking) to downtowns and business parks or will “working from home” or suburban employment centres become the norm for a growing number of work sectors? How important will the protection of our open space and wilderness areas be to a growing population? Are residents concerned about losing the character of our historic downtowns and rural communities or are they excited about change? What do residents think is most important when considering setting up today’s children for success?

As 2020 has taught us, there are some variables we cannot control. These include pandemics, federal immigration policies that impact population growth, the impacts of climate change, industry and workforce trends (like increased automation, moving to green technology, workforce skills, ability to work anywhere with internet, market demand for traditional industries), and the global

economy and political forces. However, we have the power to create tools and policies that incentivize development in ways that work toward a shared vision of what HRM can be in the future.

THE REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW WILL:

- 10.1 Develop and model several future scenarios based on stable and uncertain variables. Determine what policies should be prioritized based on several scenarios.**
- 10.2 Design a framework for how to engage communities on what they think should be studied and considered when planning for the future of HRM. This engagement will inform what to research over the next number of years to position us for the 2026-2030 Regional Plan Review.**