

REGIONAL DISTRICT *of* EAST KOOTENAY STRATEGIC PLAN

2023 – 2026

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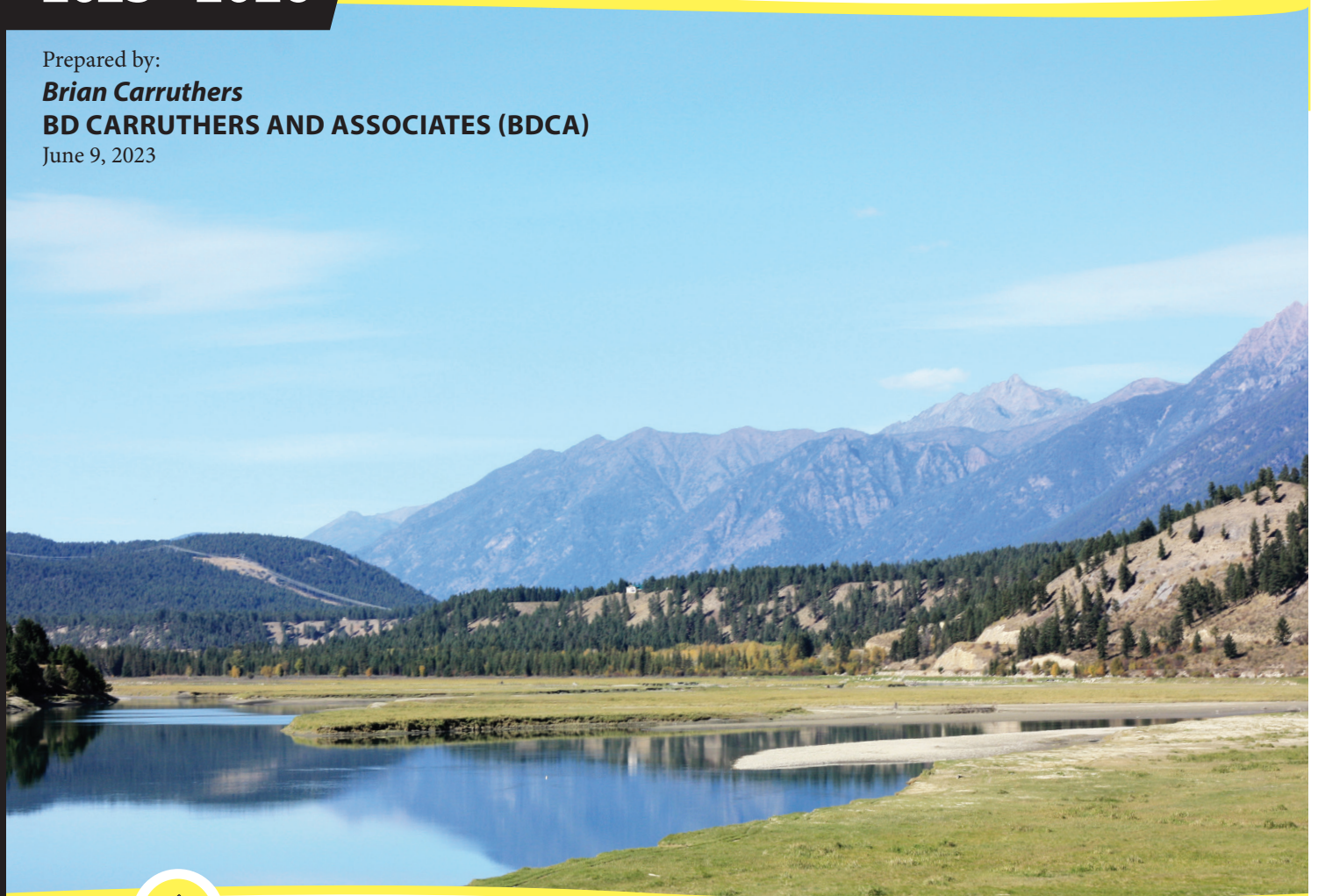


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Located in the southeast corner of BC, the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) covers roughly 27,000 km². We are a local government dedicated to providing quality service to our over 65,000 residents and property owners and work together as a partnership of municipalities and electoral (rural) areas.

Regional districts serve three main purposes:

1. They are the local governments for their electoral areas, responsible for providing basic local government services.
2. They provide the frameworks necessary for combinations of member jurisdictions to collaborate in the provision of subregional services.
3. They are regional service bodies responsible for providing important regional services to their entire regions.

The common theme in these purposes is service provision.

The RDEK Board sets the strategic vision and staff carries out the work to achieve that vision. To help guide this process and enable residents to be able to see the current priorities, the Board adopts a Strategic Plan.

INTRODUCTION

BD Carruthers and Associates was engaged by the RDEK to facilitate the development of the corporate strategic plan for the 2023-2026 term.

The strategic plan framework reflects the input and perspectives provided by directors and staff in workshops on April 27 and 28, 2023. The participants engaged in thoughtful and strategic discussions on the various elements of the strategic plan. The information received was analyzed, sorted, and prioritized and has informed the content contained in this report.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Regional District of East Kootenay has 15 members on its Board of Directors: six Electoral Area Directors and nine Municipal Directors.

Electoral Area Directors are elected directly to the Board by the electors in the areas they represent and serve a four-year term.

Municipal Directors are appointed by their respective municipal councils. A council can replace its member(s) on a regional district board at any time. Larger municipalities are represented on their regional district boards by more than one Municipal Director, which is determined by population. In the RDEK, the only municipality that has two Directors is Cranbrook.

- **Rob Gay**, Board Chair, Electoral Area C
- **Susan Clovechok**, Vice Chair, Electoral Area F
- **Thomas McDonald**, Electoral Area A
- **Stan Doehle**, Electoral Area B
- **Jane Walter**, Electoral Area E
- **Roberta Schnider**, Electoral Area G
- **Wayne Price**, Mayor, City of Cranbrook
- **Norma Blissett**, Councillor, City of Cranbrook
- **Don McCormick**, Mayor, City of Kimberley
- **Mark Doherty**, Mayor, Village of Canal Flats
- **Allen Miller**, Mayor, District of Invermere
- **Mike Gray**, Mayor, Village of Radium Hot Springs
- **Nic Milligan**, Mayor, City of Fernie
- **David Wilks**, Mayor, District of Sparwood
- **Steve Fairbairn**, Mayor, District of Elkford





MAP OF THE RDEK

The RDEK includes 6 Electoral Areas (rural areas) and 8 municipalities.

It is divided into three subregions:

- **Elk Valley Subregion:**
 - Electoral Area A
 - City of Fernie
 - District of Sparwood
 - District of Elkford

- **Central Subregion:**
 - Electoral Area B
 - Electoral Area C
 - Electoral Area E
 - City of Cranbrook
 - City of Kimberley

- **Columbia Valley Subregion:**
 - Electoral Area F
 - Electoral Area G
 - District of Invermere
 - Village of Radium Hot Springs
 - Village of Canal Flats

FIRST NATIONS GOVERNMENTS

The Regional District of East Kootenay is committed to working with Indigenous governments in the region to continue to build strong, respectful relationships through sharing, learning and understanding.

The RDEK’s regional boundaries are within the traditional homelands of four First Nations. Three are Ktunaxa (ʔakisq̓nuk, Yaq̓it ʔa·knuq̓iʔit, and ʔaq̓am) and one is Secwepemc (Shuswap).

RDEK staff and board members work, live, and learn on these unceded traditional and ancestral lands.

We are grateful to the many Indigenous elders, knowledge holders, leaders and educators who proudly share their heritage, language and culture.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

On behalf of the RDEK Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Following the elections in the fall of 2022, work began to prepare for the strategic planning process. This plan is the result of a collaborative approach between RDEK staff and directors and will guide our corporate work plan for the coming three years.

The Plan includes several strategic focus areas, goals and objectives that will help provide direction for our board and staff in decision making, servicing and funding decisions. It will also provide the public and our taxpayers with a clear understanding of our direction and corporate priorities. Each year, the Board reviews the plan to evaluate what has been achieved.

The East Kootenay is a vibrant and beautiful area. This Plan will help us collectively strive to balance our growth and economy with the need to protect our region's outdoor lifestyle, environment, and values that make the East Kootenay a special place to live for current residents and future generations.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob C. Gay". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rob Gay
RDEK Board Chair



OUR SERVICES

Unlike a municipality that has one boundary and one set of taxpayers, regional districts have a boundary for each service and only the people within that boundary pay for (and receive) that service.

The RDEK offers over 100 different services.

Some services, such as 9-1-1 are regional and affect the entire RDEK, including the rural areas and municipalities. Other services, like solid waste and recycling, are subregional and affect the rural areas and municipalities in a specific subregion. There are services that are delivered only in the electoral areas, such as building inspection. There are also very specific services, like street lighting or fire protection, that are delivered only to a specific area with an electoral area.

To view a complete list of the services provided by the RDEK, visit www.rdek.bc.ca/services

OUR REGION, OUR FUTURE

The East Kootenay region is renowned for its diverse geography and natural environments, with spectacular mountain vistas, clean air and clear waters. These attributes compliment an abundance of outdoor recreation activities that contribute to our region's outdoor lifestyle and attract visitors from around the world. The communities of the region are defined by their friendly and welcoming nature where our residents feel safe, experience a sense of peace and enjoy a high quality of life. The region has ample land to grow, while maintaining a low density of population. The economy is diverse and strong with relatively affordable housing, making it a desirable region in which to live and do business. Citizens are highly engaged and are proud of their communities – they love where they live!

As we look to the future, we envision a region that is resilient and has planned for, and responded effectively to, the pressures of growth, climate change and other influences. We are self-sufficient and not reliant on external markets for our basic needs. Communities are vibrant and remain affordable, allowing younger people to stay to work and raise a family. Our water supplies are plentiful and the environment is in better shape than it is currently, due to forward thinking and responsible decisions over time. We work closely with First Nations governments, collaborating and partnering for the benefit of the entire region. Our health services and facilities are expanded to meet the needs of our citizens and we benefit from innovative, responsive post secondary education opportunities.

OUR ROLE

As a Board of Directors, our primary roles are to practice good governance, support the delivery of services for our citizens and provide oversight of the organization through the Chief Administrative Officer. In doing so, we have a responsibility to make our decisions based on facts and to diligently follow our processes and policies. As a governing body, we allow our staff to perform their roles and do not interfere with administrative and operational matters. We listen to the concerns and needs of our citizens and consider the advice provided by our professional staff as we make decisions. Our decisions should be transparent, be in the best interest of our communities, and strike a balance between growth and maintaining of our valued environment and quality of life. We recognize that some of those decisions will be difficult and when we make decisions that are unpopular, we have an obligation to communicate with our citizens and explain the reasons and considerations.





OUR COMMITMENTS

As we fulfill our obligations and responsibilities as a regional government, we will strive to:

- Be fair and consistent
- Be open-minded to new information and perspectives
- Be prepared for meetings and educate ourselves on topics being considered
- Seek solutions as opposed to putting up barriers
- Reflect regional contexts and values
- Be cognisant and respectful of our staff's capacity
- Be respectful of other's priorities
- Engage in professional development and stay current on best-practice and innovation

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan will provide direction and focus for our Board and the organization, and will be a lens through which we make decisions, allocate funds and drive outcomes.

The strategic plan develops a shared vision, goals and priorities for the region and provides linkages between the aspirations of the Board and the work of staff. It also provides transparency and accountability with our citizens for the work we do and the decisions we make.



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Goal

To understand and anticipate the impacts from a changing climate on our citizens, our services, and our valued natural environment and to mitigate those impacts through responsible planning and decision-making.

Why is it important?

Our communities, citizens and many of our assets are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with serious implications in terms of public safety, financial loss and degradation of the natural values that contribute to our economy and quality of life in our region.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Complete a Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Analysis for the region to support effective planning and response.
- 1.2 Incorporate environmentally sensitive areas into our official community plans to better-inform land-use planning and development approvals.
- 1.3 Incorporate climate risk assessments into utility master plans to ensure continuity of service and to inform future upgrades and development of new infrastructure.
- 1.4 Develop a corporate climate action plan to identify opportunities to reduce GHG emissions associated with corporate operations and assets.



SUSTAINABLE LAND USE PLANNING

Goal

To plan for, and manage land use and development in our region in a forward-looking manner that enables us to anticipate and respond to change, protect our natural environment and landscapes, and maintain the liveability of our communities and region.

Why is it important?

We want to make responsible decisions for the future, while ensuring our current land use and development processes are predictable, streamlined and cost-effective for our citizens and developers.

OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Harmonize and modernize our existing official community plans and zoning bylaws to create more consistency and improve the effectiveness of land use planning across the region.
- 2.2 Investigate opportunities for increased delegation of development approvals to staff to increase efficiency and reduce processing time of lower-risk development applications.

3

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

Goal

To foster our relationships with Indigenous governments in the region and work collaboratively to advance our mutual goals and interests.

Why is it important?

We can achieve more as a region when we work together, building strong and respectful relationships through sharing, learning and understanding.

OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Extend invitations to meet with each Indigenous government to share and discuss respective goals and objectives and identify opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on areas of mutual interest.
- 3.2 Explore Indigenous government interest in, and opportunities for their involvement in Regional District governance through participation on the Regional District Board and committees.

4

ASSET AND INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

Goal

To ensure the long-term sustainability of our assets and infrastructure through the development and implementation of a comprehensive asset management program.

Why is it important?

The RDEK has a significant investment in assets and infrastructure that provide essential services to our citizens and communities. As such, we have a responsibility to plan for and manage our assets effectively to ensure continuity of service, affordability and eligibility for future funding opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Fully implement the key components of an asset management program including asset inventory, condition assessment, service levels and financial policies and strategies to support effective asset maintenance, repair and replacement.
- 4.2 Develop an asset acquisition policy that defines standards, expectations and processes for the acquisition of existing infrastructure from third-parties.



ADVOCACY

Goal

To represent and advance the interests of the region with other levels of government and agencies responsible for providing governance and services in our region.

Why is it important?

Challenges facing our local communities and the region can often be overlooked or underestimated by other levels of government. As a regional district, we have the benefit of a strong, collective voice to influence decisions, actions and policies through strategic advocacy effort.

OBJECTIVES

- 5.1** Develop strategies for effective advocacy on important issues facing the RDEK which may involve meeting with provincial ministers in Victoria, inviting ministers to the region to view issues and challenges first-hand, and/or combining efforts with Indigenous governments and other regional districts.
Priority topics include: emergency management; affordable housing; broadband connectivity; health care services; transit services, ALR policies; and aquifer studies.

