

An aerial photograph of a valley with a large lake in the distance, surrounded by forested hills and mountains under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the bottom portion of the image.

WEST VISTA TERRACE

OCP AMENDMENT APPLICATION

APRIL 30, 2024

OCP Amendment Application

SUBMITTED BY

Barefoot Planning + Design

SUBMISSION DATE

April 30, 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This OCP Amendment Application report provides the context and rationale for a change to the North Cowichan OCP for the properties known as “West Vista Terrace” within the Bell McKinnon corridor.

The purpose of the application is to support a phased development of residential, mixed-use, and other complementary uses – highly consistent with the Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) – within the Future Growth Area of the OCP and amend the Urban Containment Boundary accordingly.



SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

An OCP amendment is necessary to support development within the Future Growth Area and outside of the Urban Containment Boundary, which restricts redevelopment north of Herd Road that would otherwise be consistent with the Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan.

While the intent of the Future Growth Area designation is to avoid “fragmentation” of urban growth, this site is only 150m from the new regional Cowichan District Hospital site, the future centre of this local area, and will have services (e.g., sewer, water) at its doorstep in the near future. Conversely, there are many sites within the corridor that are 800m+ away on which development is currently permitted.

An OCP amendment is therefore justified in order to:

- Act now in a collaborative and cohesive manner to properly respond to the incoming Cowichan District Hospital – and everything it brings, including thousands of workers between the construction and future hospital operations;
- Advance a sustainable, nodal development pattern that supports walkability, transit-oriented development, land use synergies, etc. and realizes the progressive, award-winning vision of the BMLAP;
- Meet the extreme need for housing – including missing middle house – at the local, regional, and provincial scales, which will only increase as construction ramps up and then when the hospital becomes operational;
- Meet the need for other land uses, services, and amenities in the area, including employment lands, light industrial, commercial, office, and retail;
- Respond to the now-arriving servicing and planned improvements to Herd Road at Bell McKinnon; and
- Develop consistently within the BMLAP policies that provide an award-winning land use and design framework for sustainable and high-quality growth in the area.

Unlike most OCP amendment applications, the Municipality already has a robust policy framework to guide the site’s development.

Further, North Cowichan is listed in the BC Housing Supply Act, which identifies communities that have fallen short in terms of the availability, affordability, and unrealized potential of delivering housing. This is further support for a proposal that seeks to provide a mix of housing options for families and the workforce as well as related services and amenities. By 2025, it is projected that North Cowichan will need an additional 1,208 units of housing, most of which should be one- and two-bedroom units. According to North Cowichan’s 2021 Annual Report, 60% of new dwelling units authorized by building permits were single-family dwellings, resulting in an undersupply of one- and two-bedroom units. And, at the time of writing, limited multi-family units were in the development approvals process.

SUBJECT SITE LOCATION

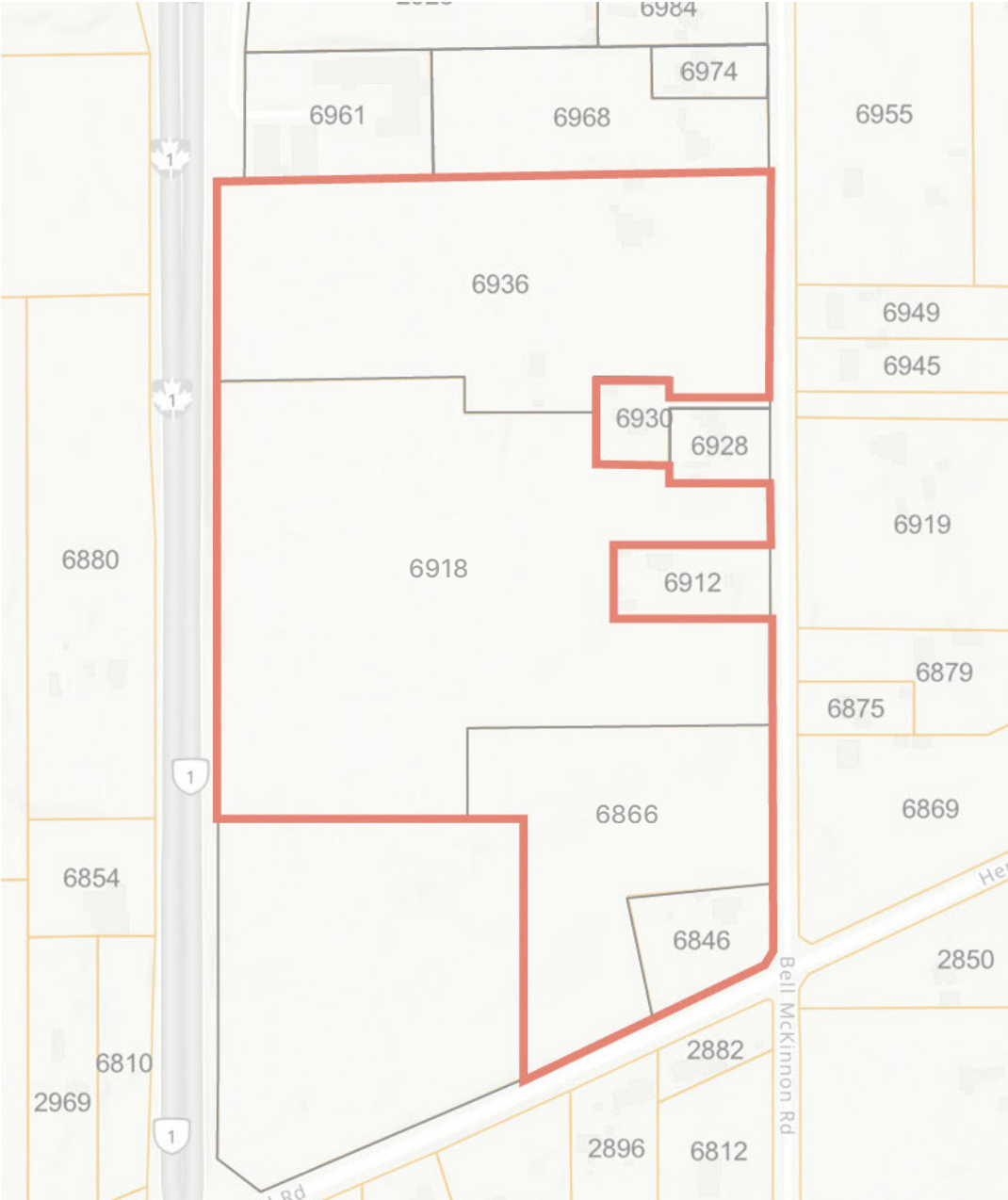
West Vista Terrace is comprised of the four parcels shown below:

Total Site Area:
30.8 acres or 12.5 hectares

Current Site Zoning:
A2 (all parcels)

Current OCP Land Use:
Future Growth Area (all parcels)

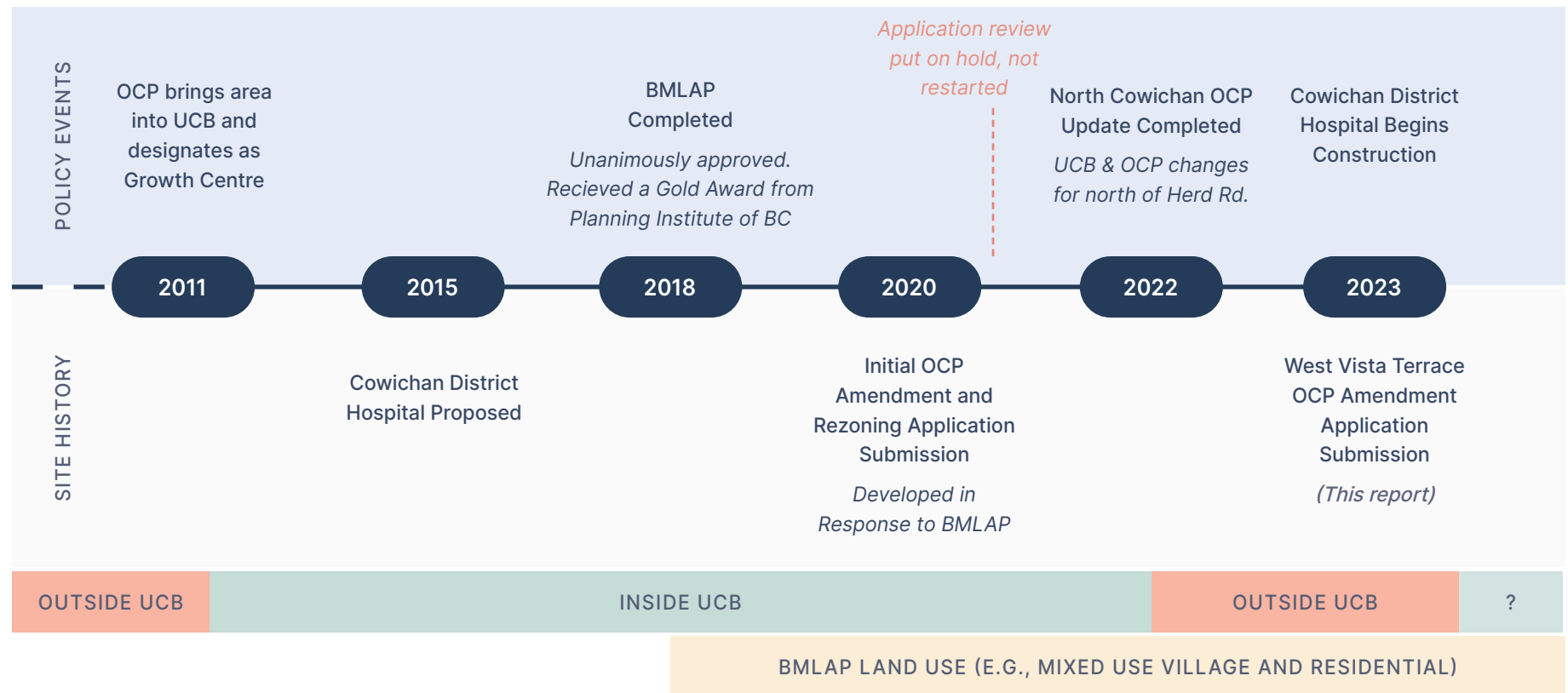
Current LAP Land Use:
Core Village, Residential - High,
Residential - Medium, Highway Buffer



2. POLICY CONTEXT AND SITE HISTORY

RECENT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Since the Cowichan District Hospital was proposed and the BMLAP was completed, plans for the site known as “West Vista Terrace” have evolved, and are summarized in the timeline below.



Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (2018)

The Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) provides detailed policies and recommendations to guide future private and public investments in the Bell McKinnon area over the next 20+ years. The plan was unanimously approved by Council in 2018 and received a Gold Award for Excellence in Policy Planning from the Planning Institute of BC.

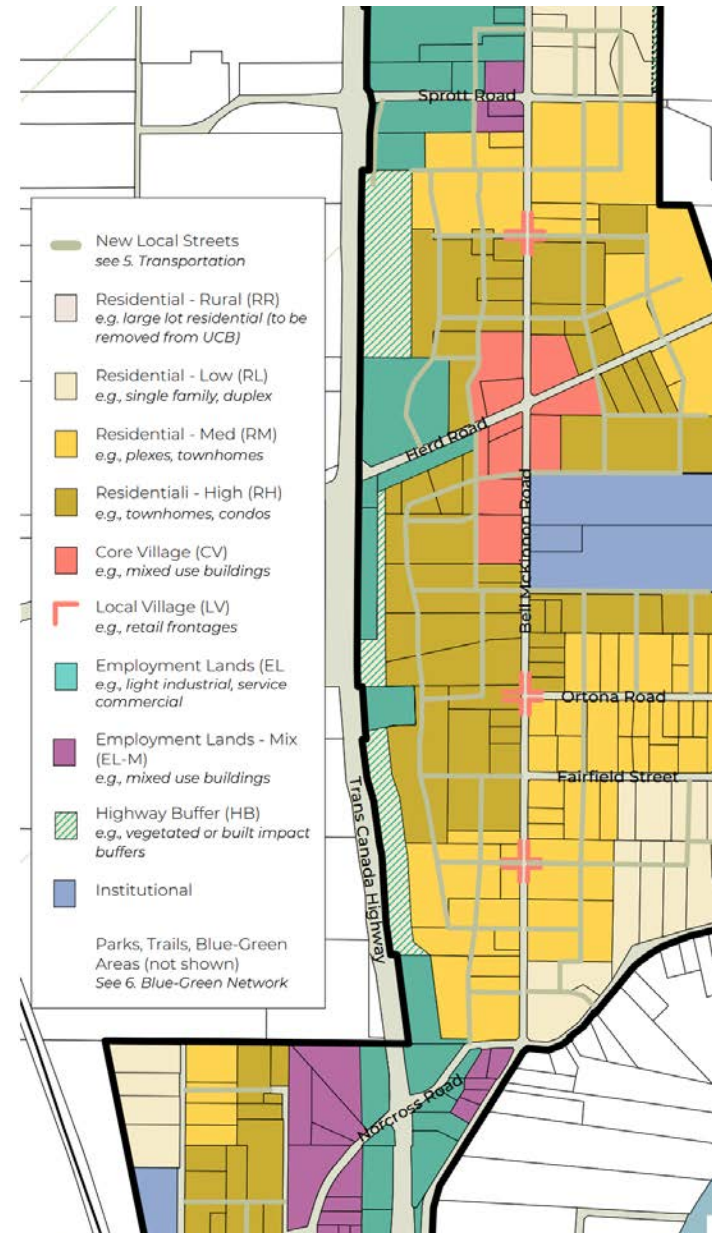
The BMLAP is a critical tool to prepare for and respond to anticipated regional growth and the new Cowichan District Hospital on Bell McKinnon Road. The land use direction for West Vista Terrace includes:

- Core Village (CV) - 3-5 storey mixed-use village area
- Residential - High (RH) - 3-5 storey multifamily residential
- Residential - Medium (RM) - 2-3 storey townhouses and duplex/triplex
- Employment Lands (EL) - 1-2 storey service commercial and light industrial
- Highway Buffer (HB) - Large vegetated or mixed (with Employment Lands uses) buffer area

The OCP Amendment will facilitate a future rezoning and phased development plan of residential, mixed-use, and other complementary uses that is highly consistent with the Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan.



Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan Streetscape Render



Bell McKinnon Area Land Use Plan

Initial OCP Amendment and Rezoning Application (2020)

In response to the BMLAP, the owners of West Vista Terrace engaged District Group as partners to begin plans for the proposed “Bell McKinnon North Neighbourhood” which would later become West Vista Terrace. The concept plans align closely with the BMLAP policies.

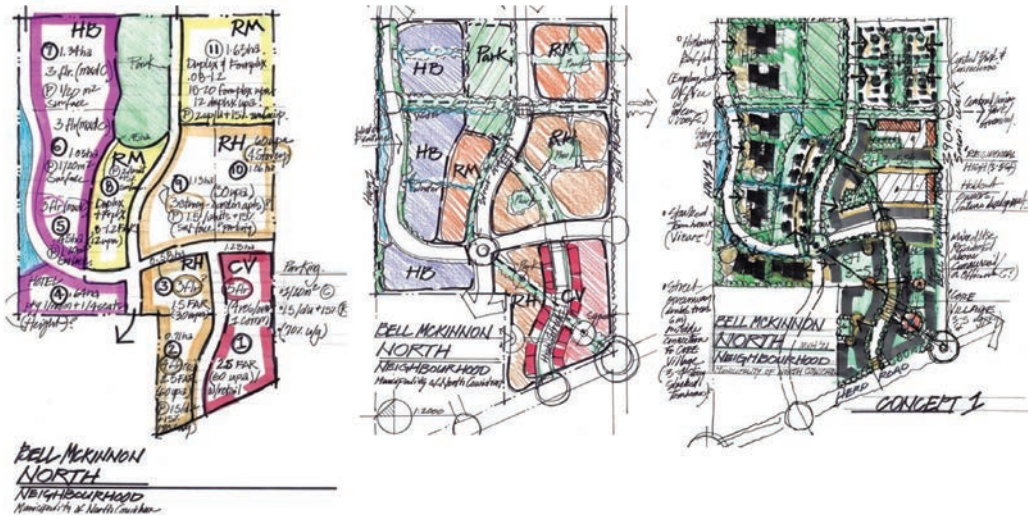
In December 2020, District Group made an OCP (under the previous OCP) and Zoning Amendment application to North Cowichan. Specifically, this was a request for:

- An OCP Amendment of the entire site from Current Growth Centre to Mixed Use Commercial Core area; and
- A rezoning of the entire site, from the current Rural Zone (A2) to a Comprehensive Development (CD) zone.

In May 2021, the Municipality completed a preliminary review of the application, requesting further information and details. In June 2021, District Group provided an updated application. However, the application review process was put on hold and never restarted as the Municipality waited for the outcomes of the OCP Update.



Bell McKinnon North Neighbourhood Concept Diagrams



North Cowichan OCP Update (2022)

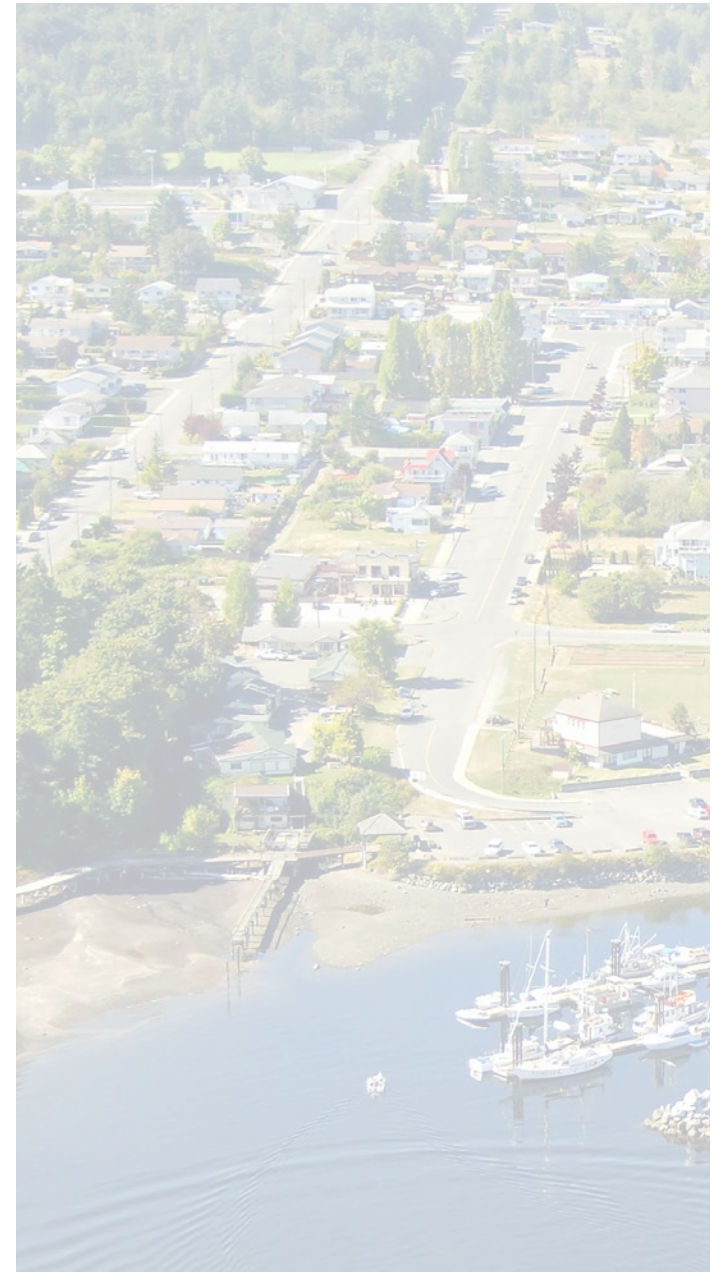
North Cowichan adopted an updated OCP in 2022. A key issue during the OCP Update process was the extent and sequencing of development in the Bell McKinnon corridor. While no consensus was established, the OCP was changed so that properties north of Herd Road were placed outside of the Urban Containment Boundary, and given a Future Growth Area designation, limiting development in the area.

This change – counter to the BMLAP – was in response to concerns about “leapfrog” development and the lack of servicing to the north end of the corridor. Both of these concerns, as this report identifies, were valid but no longer sufficient to restrict sustainable, compact development around the hospital, as guided by the BMLAP.

New OCP Amendment Application (2023)

Following the 2022 OCP Update and a changing context in the area, the owners of West Vista Terrace are now seeking an OCP Amendment as the first step in the process to allow for a phased, comprehensive development in close proximity to the new Cowichan District Hospital, as envisioned by the BMLAP.

For further rationale for the project, see Section 4.



3. PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

A Preliminary Concept Diagram has been provided on the next page. It is important to note that the phases and associated development areas will change, as this is a simplified diagram to facilitate the OCP Amendment application and illustrate the long-term vision for the site.

The key features of this plan are as follows:

- A phased, long-term development plan that thoughtfully and sequentially phases growth, while prioritizing new housing immediately in Phase 1.
- Adherence to the BMLAP policies and guidelines for land use, site planning, and design.
- A coordinated plan that encompasses the vast majority of the northwest portion of the Bell McKinnon neighbourhood in one application.
- A proposed OCP Amendment that enables a future Zoning Amendment that details a roadmap for the future of this area, while leaving individual building and site design details to the Development Permit stage.

The preliminary phases and development areas are summarized as follows:

PHASE 1:

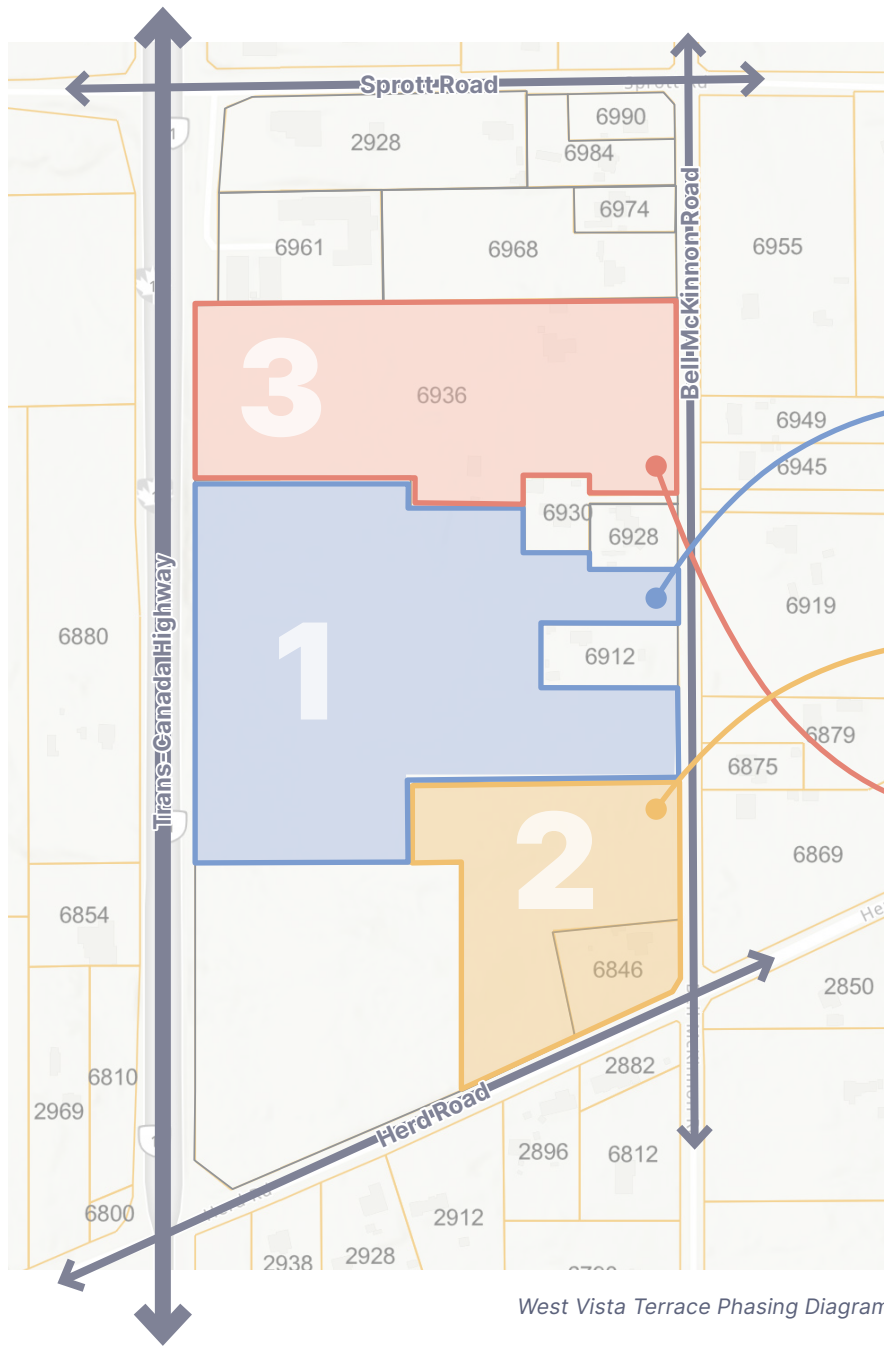
- **East/Upper Area** provides much-needed, immediate multifamily housing and a hotel, (and other potential temporary accommodation); and,
- **West/Lower Area** along the highway provides in-demand light industrial, service commercial, and green spaces to buffer the highway and provide greater stormwater management capacity.

PHASE 2:

- Provides services and amenities to the village, with a mix of uses, including retail/commercial, offices and multi-family residential.

PHASE 3:

- **East/Upper Area** provides a variety of housing types – ground-oriented and multi-family – to serve the tremendous need of the workforce, families, and a wide range of demographics in the community; and,
- **West/Lower Area** extends the lands providing in-demand light industrial, service commercial, and green spaces to buffer the highway and provide greater stormwater management capacity.



West Vista Terrace Phasing Diagram

PHASE 1 – Mix of Housing & Employment

East/Upper: A Variety of Housing
West/Lower: Light Industrial and Service Commercial

A mix of townhouse and multifamily residential, including a hotel, in the upper areas near Bell McKinnon Road and the Village.

A mix of light industry, service commercial, and green buffer lands adjacent to the highway and lower portions of the site.

PHASE 2 – Village Core

A mix of uses, services, and amenities, including retail/commercial, office, and multifamily residential.

PHASE 3 – Mix of Housing & Employment

East/Upper: Ground-oriented Housing
West/Lower: Light Industrial and Service Commercial

Predominantly ground-oriented housing in the upper areas, including the potential for additional multifamily near Bell McKinnon Road based on future community needs.

A mix of light industry, service commercial, and green buffer lands adjacent to the highway and lower portions of the site.

4. RATIONALE

2022 OCP Update & Policy Issues

As part of the 2022 OCP update, the subject properties were placed outside the UCB & in a Future Growth Area Designation. This change was largely based on concerns about “leapfrog” or fragmented development and lack of servicing north of Herd Road and not based on robust technical analyses nor strong planning rationale. Ultimately, the change was counter to the BMLAP which provided a more detailed analysis and planning rationale for the area.

The Future Growth Area policy lacks validity and “Suspends area from future growth only if and when all other significant growth areas have been built out”. This policy is unclear, undefinable, and unrealistic in the area’s current growth trajectory.

BMLAP Rationale for No Phasing

The BMLAP did not include any phasing due to:

- Likelihood of nodal development over time – including the Hospital site, Herd Road area, and Drinkwater area.
- Sequencing and infrastructure improvements tied to “triggers” rather than linear patterns.
- Bell McKinnon area is not a master-planned community that would normally require phasing.
- South to north “thinking” focused on development that may occur before the hospital.

Conditions for Amending the OCP

Amending the OCP including a UCB change can be achieved through an OCP review or local area planning process. Due to the BMLAP (local area planning process), it is understood that staff believe there is little need to trigger a public consultation process (e.g., OCP review).

If this application is approved, a rezoning process will provide a much more detailed phasing and development plan for the site including additional opportunities for public feedback.



Need for Housing Now

The proposed development supports the provincial mandate for housing now. North Cowichan is among the 47 specified municipalities in the Housing Supply Act, giving the Province the authority to set housing targets in municipalities. The targets will encourage municipalities to address local barriers to construction so that housing can get built faster, including updating zoning bylaws and streamlining local development approval processes.

By 2025, it is projected that North Cowichan will need an additional 1,208 units of housing, most of which should be one- and two-bedroom units. According to North Cowichan's 2021 Annual Report, 60% of new dwelling units authorized by building permits were single-family dwellings, resulting in an undersupply of one- and two-bedroom units.

Currently, there are very few development applications in review or permits issued for new multifamily housing in North Cowichan – and even fewer in the Bell McKinnon corridor. Anecdotally, much of the lands within the corridor have been purchased by land speculators, meaning that future applications on these lands are unlikely in the near future. This further points to the need and justification for the development of West Vista Terrace.

Seniors Housing & Living/Care Facilities

The owners are in ongoing discussions about the potential of locating a Senior Housing, Seniors Living Facility, and/or a Seniors Care facility on the lands. This is subject to further discussion as the process moves forward into the Zoning Amendment phase.



Housing Accelerator Fund

The Municipality has applied to the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), which would see the Municipality:

- Raise its 3-year housing target from 700+ units to 3,500+ units, with the majority focused in the BMLAP area, where West Vista Terrace is located.
- Pursue 7 initiatives, with the #1 initiative being the implementation of the BMLAP and the associated redevelopment of those lands.
- Receive ~\$96M in funding, including \$87M for infrastructure and facilitating redevelopment in the BM corridor.

The HAF syncs perfectly with the arrival of the Cowichan District Hospital and associated housing needs, as noted above. If approved, then developments like West Vista Terrace are essential to achieving these (needed) housing targets.

Need For Immediate Worker Accommodations

West Vista Terrace will provide much-needed worker accommodation for construction crews and other labour needed to build the Cowichan District Hospital and associated infrastructure – with construction anticipated to begin this year. The first phase of the proposed development is designed to respond to this need for immediate worker accommodation, including immediate multi-family housing and a hotel, along with other potential temporary accommodations.

The hotel and other potential temporary accommodations will provide immediate, temporary accommodation for construction workers as well as future visitors, patients, and patients' families.



Cowichan District Hospital Redevelopment Project, Island Health.

Future Workforce and Family Housing

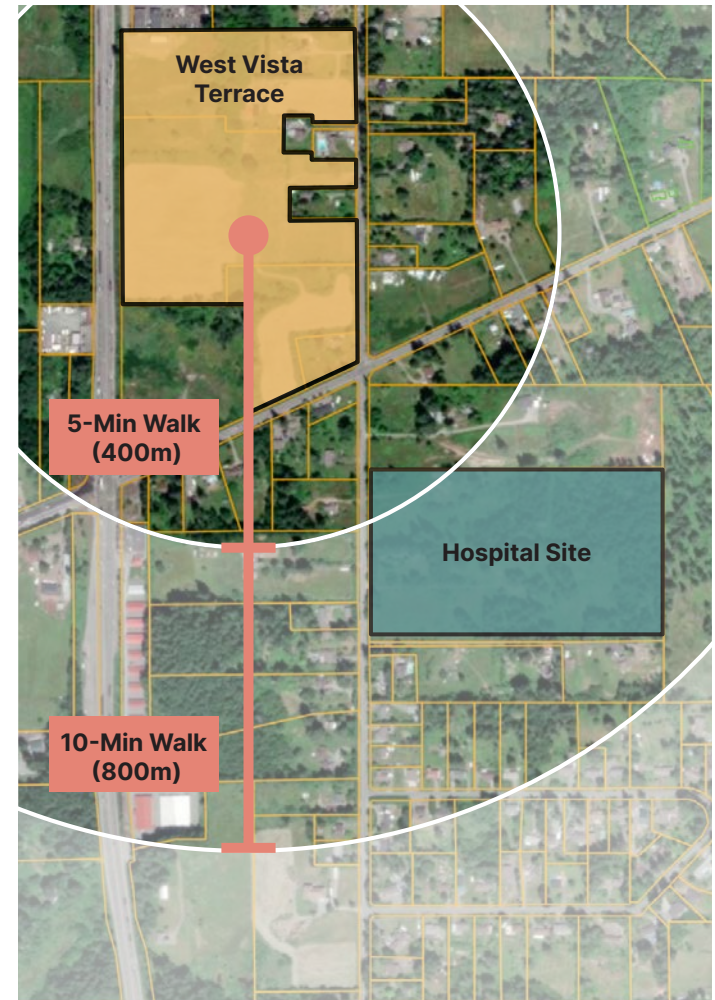
West Vista Terrace will provide future workforce housing for hospital and associated services staff (e.g., doctors, nurses, support staff, administration, and private healthcare service employees – projected to be over 700 in total) upon completion, with an anticipated opening of the hospital in 2027. The second (e.g., retail commercial, mixed-use, amenities) and third phases (e.g., ground-oriented residential, service commercial, light industrial) of development are designed to form a complete community for residents to live, work, and play for many years to come.

As per the BMLAP, multi-family and ground-oriented housing will incorporate a mix of unit types and sizes in order to be attainable and appropriate for a wide range of demographics and family types – including larger units and ground-oriented units with private outdoor spaces.

Proximity

West Vista Terrace is intended to respond to the community needs (e.g., housing, commercial/retail, amenities, services) generated by the new Cowichan District Hospital. The southern edge of the property is only 150m from the new hospital, placing the majority of the land is within a 5-minute walk of a huge confluence of people, places, and things.

Additionally, West Vista Terrace is in close proximity to other centres including Duncan, Crofton, Chemainus, and Maple Bay, an ideal location for future growth.



Proximity Diagram

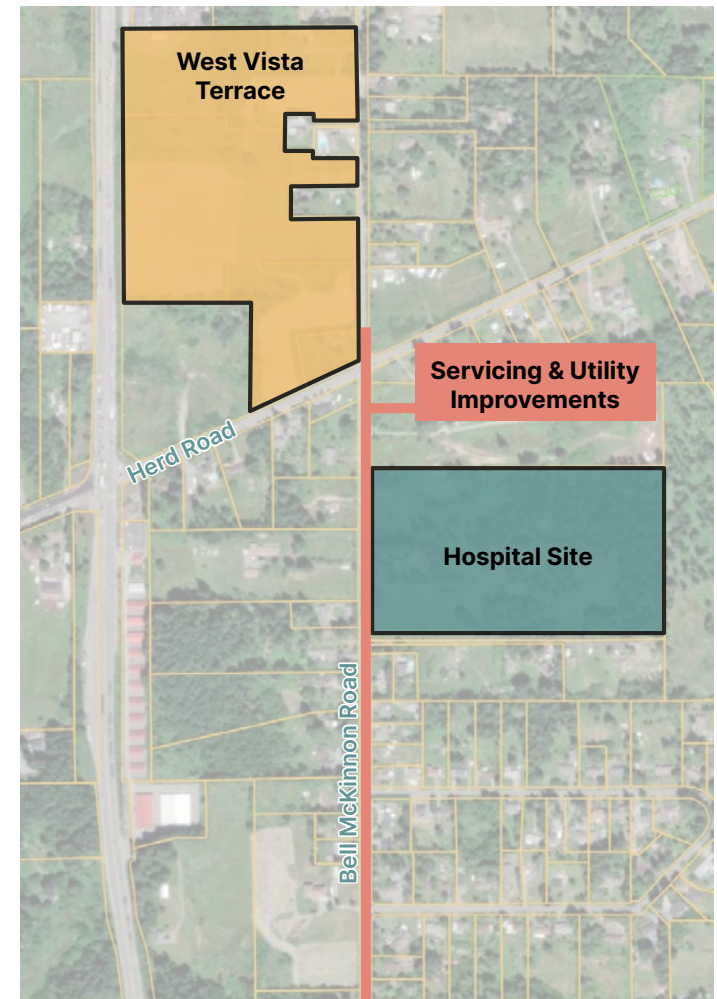
Nodal Development vs. Linear Development

West Vista Terrace is within easy walking distance of the new Cowichan District Hospital and the Core Village lands identified in the BMLAP. While the updated OCP policies seek to reduce “fragmented” development in the corridor, this proposal actually creates a more compact and sustainable neighbourhood in the shorter term – one where residents can easily meet their needs within a 5-minute walk. In comparison, linear development from the south will result in less-compact housing further from key employment sites, services, and amenities.

The primary rationale for developing south-to-north (and the resulting OCP updates) was the timing and location of servicing upgrades. However, 5 years have passed and no redevelopment has occurred since the BMLAP was adopted. Therefore, the servicing and infrastructure upgrades will now reach Herd and Bell McKinnon during this application process, meaning that rationale would only apply for lots further north than the subject site.

Servicing Location and Synergies

Servicing and infrastructure improvements are now planned to extend to the north side of the intersection of Herd and Bell McKinnon Roads in the near future – at the doorstep to West Vista Terrace. Given the close proximity to the Cowichan District Hospital, the development aims to take advantage of servicing and infrastructure created by its construction while creating synergies in terms of land use, amenities, access, and infrastructure.



Servicing Location Diagram

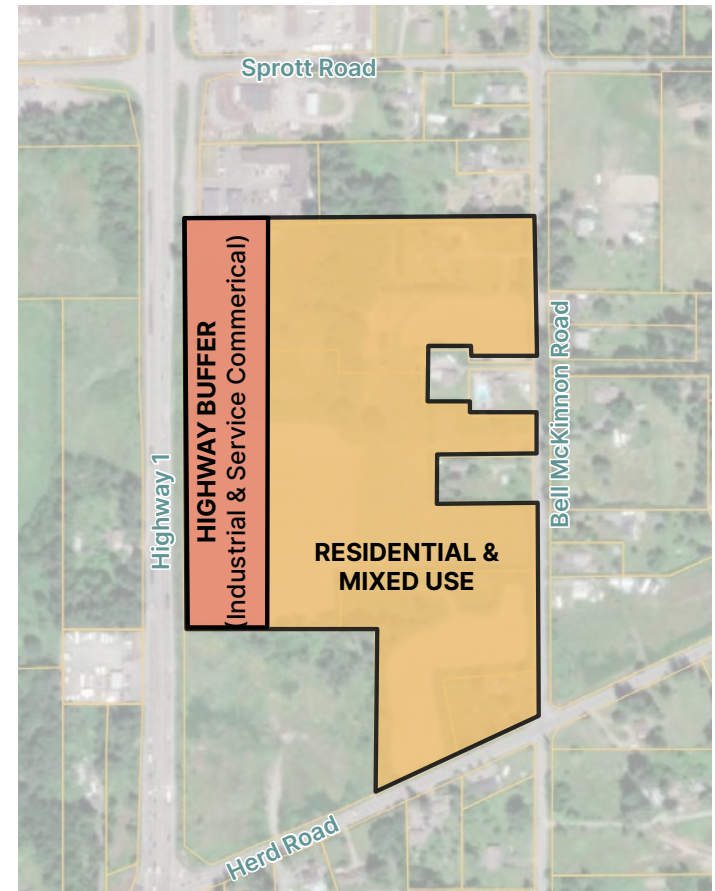
First Nation Collaboration

The owners have a signed MOU with the Quw'utsun' company RavenStone Construction that would see RavenStone provide construction services for West Vista Terrace, providing employment opportunities for local First Nation members. This relationship aims to strengthen the local economy and provide Economic Reconciliation opportunities to the local Indigenous community in a real, tangible way within the unceded Traditional Territory of Cowichan Tribes.

This is particularly important and meaningful to the owners, John and Elaine Lichtenwald, as Elaine is of Indigenous descent.

Demand For Light Industrial and Service Commercial Land

Industrial and service commercial land is in high demand across Vancouver Island, with the most recent data indicating a vacancy rate of 0.2% for light industrial land. Guided by the BMLAP, West Vista Terrace would include light industrial and service commercial lands in phases two and three. These sites are beside Highway 1, which provides ideal connections to the destination up and down the Island as well as providing a buffer from Highway 1 to other uses across the site (e.g., residential, retail). Further, existing access off of Sprott Road will provide convenient access and reduce traffic and truck impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood.



Highway 1 and Land Use Diagram

Mitigating Impacts

The Bell McKinnon corridor is in its early stages of redevelopment – spurred on by the new hospital. As part of this central node in the corridor, the development of West Vista Terrace in the shorter term will parallel this intensive redevelopment in the immediate area and thereby reduce future and ongoing impacts on adjacent properties – including future housing. The contiguous nature and location of the lands (being primarily adjacent to major roadways and the highway) will further reduce the impacts (e.g., noise, traffic) and lend itself to a larger coordinated effort.

Additionally, an existing access route off of Sprott Road allows for immediate access to the lower, west side of the lands and reduces future traffic impacts on Herd and Bell McKinnon Roads.

Long-Term Vision and Phasing

This OCP Amendment Application and future applications (e.g., Zoning, Development Permit) are guided by the BMLAP and careful consideration of current and future needs in this area. The high-level phases of this application (to be detailed later) are designed to respond to the opportunities presented by the Cowichan District Hospital, such as providing:

- Temporary accommodation and permanent housing for those engaged in major construction projects (e.g., hospital construction, infrastructure improvements, other private developments – up to an estimated 1,000 workers);
- Housing for the future workforce in the area (an estimated 700 at Cowichan District Hospital alone);
- Lands for complementary uses and business (e.g., healthcare services, offices);
- Lands for much-needed light industrial and service commercial uses; and,
- A mixed-use village of shops, services, and amenities for residents and workers alike.



Sprott Road



Bell McKinnon Road

Services, Shops, and Amenities To Serve Residents And Workers

All phases of the project are designed to build up a complete community for residents and workers. Phase Two, in particular, will see the creation of amenities in the Core Village lands (BMLAP), with a mix of uses within and between buildings, including retail/commercial, offices, and multi-family residential, as well as outdoor public spaces and amenities, ensuring that residents and workers can meet their daily needs in the community.

Sustainable Development

West Vista Terrace will realize the progressive, award-winning sustainability objectives and policies of the BMLAP, including [a] innovative approaches to open space planning that integrates natural systems (e.g., stormwater, habitat) into the creation of a new public space network; [b] achieving a minimum Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code for all new residential and mixed use buildings; and [c] supporting North Cowichan in reaching a 40% tree canopy cover for the neighbourhood (private and public land).

New School Site

The owners are in ongoing discussions with the Cowichan Valley School District about the potential of a future school site on these lands. This is subject to further discussion as the process moves forward into the Zoning Amendment phase.



5. SUMMARY

This proposal and its necessary OCP Amendment are supportable for the following key reasons:

- The proximity to the new Cowichan District Hospital and creation of a sustainable, walkable, and transit-oriented mixed-use area;
- The great and increasing need for housing in all forms in the area and the Provincial mandate for housing now;
- The current construction and future completion of the Cowichan District Hospital, with the massive influx of construction workers and future employees and visitors in the area;
- The arrival of servicing at the site's doorstep;
- The lack of development at the south end of the corridor to fulfill these needs;
- Grassroots Economic Reconciliation within the unceded Traditional Territory of Cowichan Tribes through a signed MOU with RavenStone Construction; and,
- The strong and robust land use framework of the BMLAP that will guide all site planning, design, and subsequent application review.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Evan Peterson, on behalf of West Vista Terrace

Principal, Barefoot Planning + Design

