



# HIDDEN HILLS

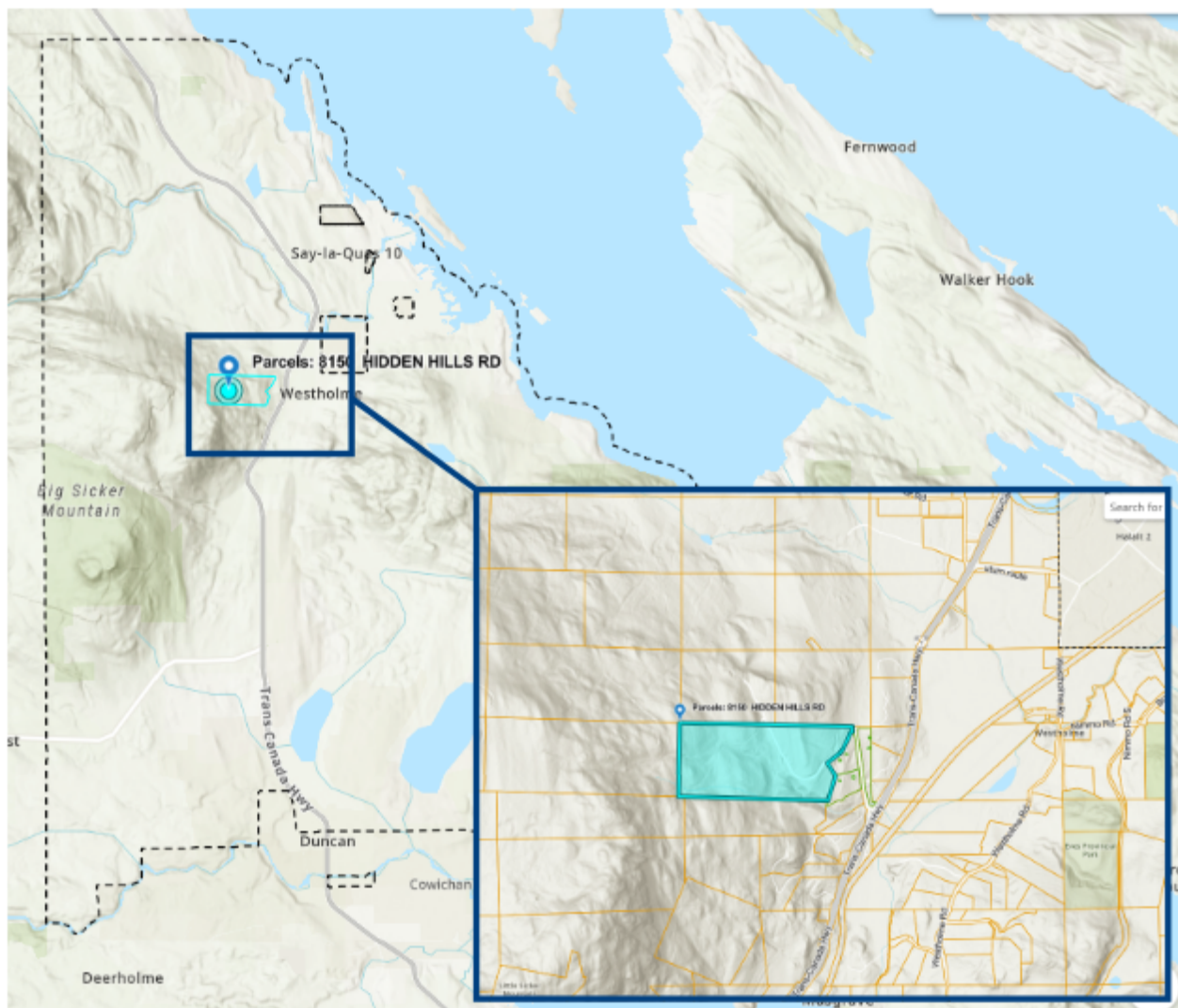
A Bare-Land Strata Proposal

## The Owners

The property is owned by Eddie Paul and Myrna Pokiak, who also operate several Indigenous-led businesses on Vancouver Island, including Gordon Homes.

## The Land

The proposed development encompasses 118 acres across two adjacent properties west of the Trans-Canada Highway near Westholme, at the end of Hidden Hills Road. Situated on the eastern slopes of Mount Sicker, the site offers panoramic views of North Cowichan and the Gulf Islands. The land is forested with mature trees and features a tributary of Goudie Creek running through it. Access is available via existing logging roads.



## Zoning

The parcels are currently zoned **Rural (A2)**, which permits:

- A minimum lot size of 2 hectares (5 acres)
- A maximum of two dwellings per lot

Other properties along Hidden Hills Road have been subdivided under this zoning.

## Official Community Plan (OCP)

*What is an OCP and how does it differ from a Zoning Bylaw?*

In British Columbia, zoning bylaws and Official Community Plans serve distinct but complementary roles in land use planning:

Aspect	Official Community Plan (OCP)	Zoning Bylaw
<b>Purpose</b>	Long-term, overarching policy document guiding community development.	Regulatory document specifying land use and development.
<b>Level of Detail</b>	Broad and strategic; general land use designations.	Detailed and prescriptive; specific zoning regulations.
<b>Legal Status</b>	Policy document under the <i>Local Government Act</i> ; not directly enforceable.	Legally binding bylaw under the <i>Local Government Act</i> .
<b>Flexibility</b>	Flexible and interpretive; sets a vision.	Rigid and precise; variances or rezonings required for changes.
<b>Role in Planning</b>	Guides zoning bylaw creation and amendment; provides the "why."	Implements the OCP; provides the "how."
<b>Public Consultation</b>	Extensive public engagement during creation or updates.	Public input sought mainly during rezonings or major amendments.

- **Zoning bylaws** are regulatory and enforceable, dictating what is legally permitted on a property.
- **OCPs** are policy documents that provide long-term vision and guidance for land use, sustainability, and community development. While not regulatory, OCPs influence decisions about rezoning and development applications.

## Land Use Designation

The OCP designates the land as “**Agriculture, Forestry and Conservation.**”

Relevant sections include:

- **3.2.17.b:** “Permit subdivisions only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. those that reconfigure parcel boundaries to improve conservation, or other objectives of the Rural designation).”
- **3.2.17.h:** “Prioritize retention, protection, and regeneration of natural features and wildlife areas.”

This proposal includes the permanent conservation of over **55 acres**—nearly half the property—to protect sensitive ecosystems and mature forest. The owners believe this commitment to conservation qualifies as an “*exceptional circumstance*” under section 3.2.17.b.

However, the Municipality of North Cowichan has advised that, despite the proposal’s alignment with some Rural OCP objectives, it does not align with the **intent** of the current Land Use designation. Staff have recommended an **OCP amendment** to redesignate the land as **Rural Residential**, which is more consistent with the zoning and development goals.

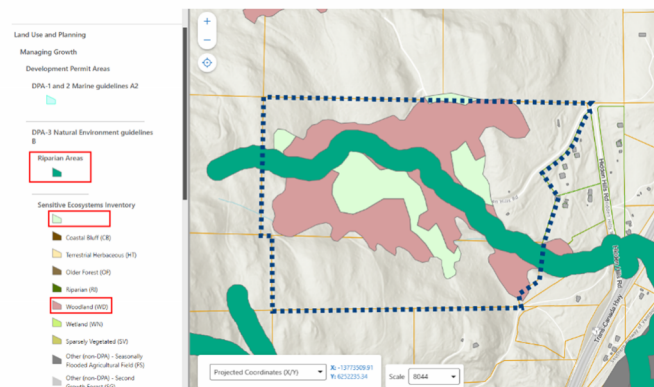
This document is intended to provide Council with the necessary context to consider **early support for an OCP amendment.**

## Development Permit Areas (DPAs)

Before proceeding with permit applications, the owners seek Council’s feedback on the overall concept. Required assessments include:

- Fire Hazard Assessment
- Riparian Areas Protection (RAPR) Assessment
- Environmental Assessment of Sensitive Areas

Findings from these assessments will guide the placement of protective covenants and development boundaries.



## The Proposal

### *Lot Layout and Servicing*

The proposed plan includes **twenty-one 2-hectare (5-acre) lots**, fully compliant with current A2 zoning. Each lot will be serviced with:

- A private well providing potable water
- A septic field built to modern environmental standards
- A strata road for access, built to engineering standards

All road construction and maintenance will be privately funded through the strata, ensuring **no financial burden to the Municipality**.

### *Environmental Protection*

Environmental stewardship is a core value for Eddie and Myrna. Although current land use permits forestry, the owners propose using **Section 219 Restrictive Covenants** to **permanently protect over 55 acres** of mature forest, riparian zones, and wildlife corridors.

Other environmental features include:

- Utilizing existing logging roads for access, minimizing tree removal
- Replacing two outdated culverts at stream crossings with **larger, fish-friendly culverts**, improving habitat and migration pathways
- Enhancing buffer zones beyond RAPR requirements wherever feasible
- Avoiding any other encroachments into Streamside Protection Areas



This plan presents a **business case for conservation** by tying economic viability to ecological protection.

### *Housing Affordability and Indigenous-Led Development*

Eddie and Myrna, through Gordon Homes, offer high-quality, modular housing solutions. To improve affordability and accessibility for first-time buyers:

- Buyers can purchase lots **fully serviced with a modular home installed**
- This allows for **conventional mortgage financing** (as little as 5% down, compared to 50% for raw land)
- This helps local families access nature-based living at a more affordable entry point

The first modular home is already under construction, demonstrating the owners' commitment and readiness.

## In Summary

The land is already zoned to allow 5-acre residential lots. An **OCP amendment** to designate the area as **Rural Residential** will unlock significant benefits:

- **Permanent protection** of over 55 acres of mature forest and sensitive habitat
- **Upgraded stream crossings**, improving fish habitat and migration
- **Affordable, modular homes** for first-time buyers and local families
- **Privately funded services**, with **no cost to taxpayers or the Municipality**
- **Immediate housing supply** in a time of high demand

**Counterfactual:** Without this amendment, the opportunity for permanent conservation will be lost. The land may eventually be sold and used for its most profitable permitted use, including potential logging or more intrusive land development.