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Cowichan News Leader and Pictorial

Residents asked for input on unique development proposal

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Shawnigan Lake residents are invited to a public hearing next week, a confab that could determine the fate of a unique development proposal.

The Trust For Sustainable Forestry wants to build 90 dwellings in the Elkington Lake area, just off Stebbings Road.

The planned community would also be home to a sawmill, planer mill and secondary wood processing and manufacturing shops, agro-forestry processing, greenhouses, a community centre facility, a convenience store, a guest lodge, with spa facilities and ecological education and interpretive structures.

Developers call the proposal "a dream eco-village" in the forest and said they will build all with the smallest possible footprint.

"The trust acquires land from forestry companies, develops a small part of it and protects the rest via a covenant," Doug Makaroff, a director of the not-for-profit Trust For Sustainable Forestry, said during a 2007 pitch to Cowichan Valley Regional District directors.

The trust also promised that 90 per cent or more of the land will be protected.

To get the project off the ground, the Trust needs some unique zoning amendments and wants the CVRD to create a new designation, the "Community Land Stewardship Designation."

The CLSD includes measures to conserve 85 per cent of the land for eco-forestry uses such as harvesting and limited value added wood processing.

A similar village to the one proposed, a living forest community, is up and running.

"We first started out four years ago at Cortes Island and 95 per cent has remained as park or sustainable

forest,” Makaroff said.

Shawnigan Lake’s CVRD Director Ken Cossey said the Elkington project has been in the works for more than a year.

“There has been a community hall meeting, design charettes, they’ve done a whole bunch of things.”

The Trust will makes its pitch during a Dec. 16 public meeting scheduled to start at 7 p.m. at Shawnigan Lake Community Centre, 2804 Shawnigan Lake Rd.

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