

Elkington Estate lake project to third reading

Cowichan Valley Citizen

COWICHAN VALLEY - Living Forest Communities, the group developing an eco-friendly neighbourhood in the Shawnigan Lake area, cleared a hurdle March 25 when the Cowichan Valley Regional District board gave third reading to a bylaw that would see the property rezoned to allow for the development.

"The third reading is the es-

sential land use decision for the rezoning and a very significant stage in the life of the project," said **Doug Makaroff**, the president of Living Forest Communities in an email to his colleagues following the meeting. "The only steps remaining for the fourth and final reading are proving the technical engineering requirements such as water and sewer design."

Elkington Estate Properties is roughly 1,000 acres of

pristine forestland. The goal of Living Forest Communities is to develop the property but leave around 85 per cent, or 850 acres, of the undisturbed forest in tact.

The 15 per cent of developed area will not include high-rises or condos, however. Think smaller. Much smaller.

"We've designed really attractive small hamlets, clustered homes," said Makaroff. "You've got to think of a European village or hilltop town where the centre of the hamlet is a common green and the houses surround the common green so that the front doors open out onto a very public experience with maybe an orchard or a play area for kids or a common area for people to gather."

Their back doors would open up onto the wild forest in all its majesty.

The housing area would be made up of two clusters, one group of 18 small houses and

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another of 44 along with 10 two-acre lots clustered for agro-forestry.

Makaroff also said the property sits next to the Trans Canada Trail.

"It would be the first stop after **Ma Miller's Pub** in Goldstream, 11 kilometres up, it would land in what we're calling the Trail-head hamlet. The Capital Regional District and CVRD have come up with numbers that they believe would see between 10,000 and 15,000 users per year that would go right by their door. They're planning a coffee-shop/community centre with a big covered open-air barbecue facility and staging area to take advantage of that opportunity.

Makaroff maintained the

infrastructure would be "light on the land," contour-hugging narrow roads, the most sustainable and integrated storm water management, microbiological sewage treatment, geothermal energy production and more.

The plan has been in the works for a number of years and after the CVRD's green light on the third reading of the latest bylaw, looks poised to progress.

Having the CVRD on side is a relief to Makaroff but having the community on side is also important.

"We have been pleasantly surprised by the expression of public good will for creating a conservation community on Vancouver Island," he said.