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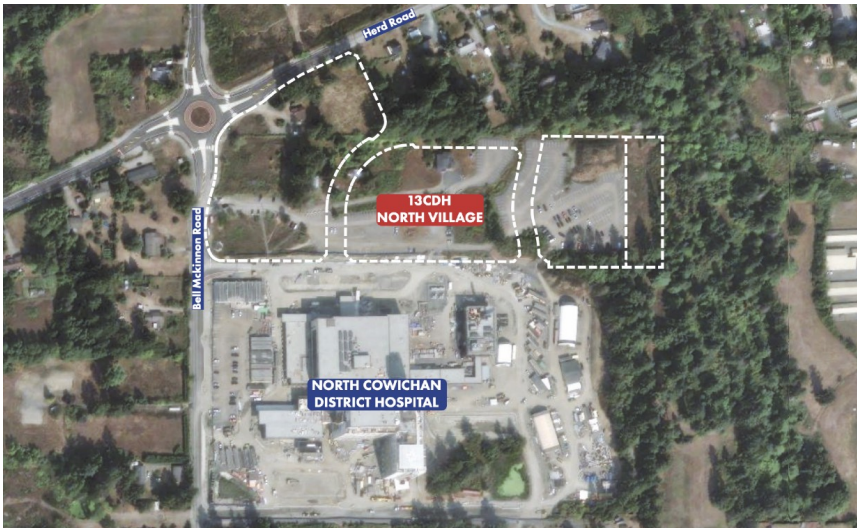
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North Cowichan / North Community Design Rationale

Bell McKinnon Road & Herd Road, North Cowichan / November 2026 update

The 13CDH parcel is located north of the City of Duncan, within the growing municipality of North Cowichan. The Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) establishes the development and land-use standards for this district, centred on creating an integrated community around the new Cowichan District Hospital. A supportive cast of community facilities will be essential to establishing the 'neighbourhood village' defined by the BMLAP. Setting the scene for this development are the region's housing shortage, an aging population, and the acute needs for healthcare services for the region's residents.

The project design follows the principles set out in the BMLAP, focusing on three crucial urban design principles: creating life between in the public spaces between buildings, designs that prioritize people over vehicles, and an ecological design which connects city to nature. North Village brings together medical support services with a diverse range of housing and community amenities. A pedestrian oriented network connects plazas and outdoor spaces, weaving a village environment around the new hospital.



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PROJECT DESCRIPTION : NORTH VILLAGE

North Village comprises around 700,000 square feet of total floor area, with highly energy-efficient housing and commercial buildings situated above an underground parking structure. Deep analysis of utilities was done in anticipation of this influx of residents and increased activity in the area.

The wide array of housing options anticipates the growth in the region, from compact, affordable rental units to family-oriented condominiums. 1- 3 bedroom units are provided across both rental and market strata housing. The project includes 152 managed rental units and 145 strata residences.

Short-term accommodation is provided through a 90-room hotel overlooking the West Village Plaza, considering needs of hospital patients, outpatients, and care-giving families traveling for treatment.

The architectural approach responds to the site's predetermined planning concept for the central sub-area. As the site spans two distinct land-use designations, Core Village and Residential-High, the proposal incorporates higher-density residential development alongside mixed-use retail and commercial spaces, townhomes, and multi-family buildings. Pedestrian-oriented pathways and shared spaces connect these uses into a cohesive neighbourhood.

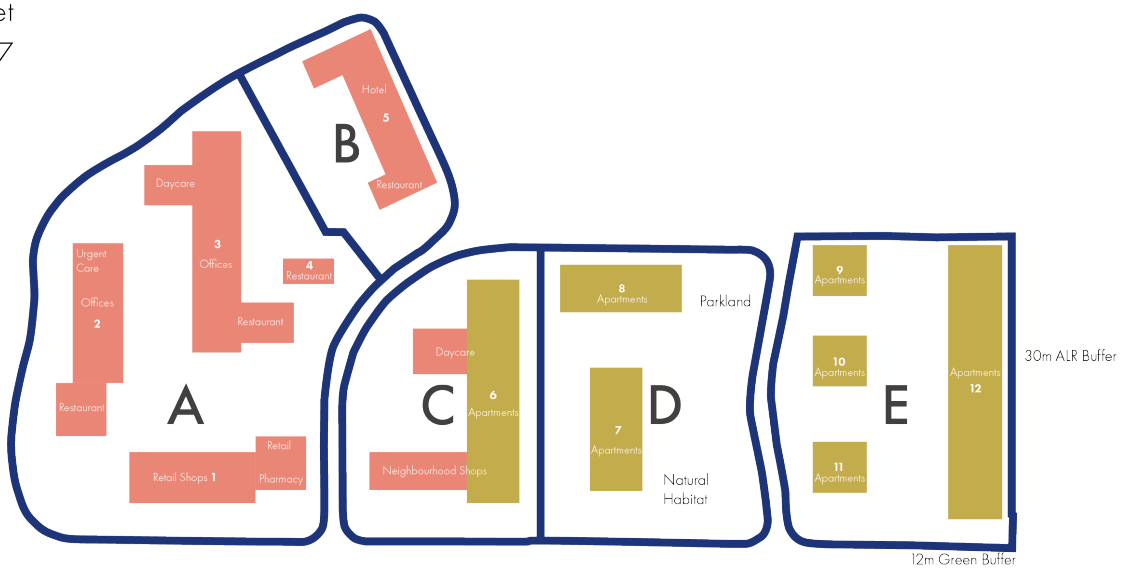
Careful consideration was given to the ground plane. Surface parking was assigned for the conveniences and success of local businesses, while keeping the below grade for residential and private use. Rigorous analysis of space was done to ensure firetruck access was easy while preserving the pedestrian experience and maintaining green space. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles were adopted creating open, through, car-free, illuminated paths to connect the parcels.

The project blends ecology into an urban setting while providing housing and community infrastructure. Weaving together sociability, walkability, and sustainability, North Village establishes a well-serviced urban village, offering an alternative to conventional suburban development and urban sprawl. Careful consideration has been given to the relationship between built form and open

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space, ensuring that public areas are well-defined and framed by buildings. We prioritized the ground-level experience, with breezeways improving circulation, mixed-use ground floors restaurants and retail, and open-air amphitheatres and tree-lined corners activating the public realm. Taller residential buildings are positioned at the north end of the site, where the rising topography helps optimize sunlight access in buildings and on the street. Despite the urban scale of the development, the human spacial experience remains central to the design.

WEST BLOCK – PARCELS A AND B

The Village Centre fronts Bell McKinnon Road, tailored to accommodate the needs of hospital visitors and staff. This urban hub offers medical services and professional offices, and a hotel, with a convenient range of cafés and restaurants, a pharmacy and gift shop, therapy and medical specialists, all wrapped around a new civic plaza.

Open corners create visual connections to site, inviting people in through sight and physical access. This more urban area of the village works in tandem with the hospital by providing professional space for medical specialists alongside

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food and shop options for hospital staff, patients and families, and office workers alike.

The hotel supports families traveling to be near loved ones during extended hospital stays. This is particularly important for rural and Indigenous communities, whose members may need to travel considerable distances to receive treatment. Providing short-term accommodation adjacent to the hospital helps address the spacial inequalities in healthcare access facing many British Columbians.

CENTRE BLOCK – PARCELS C AND D

The Centre Block provides a transition between the urban commercial and residential areas, bridging the two and serving as the true village core. These parcels are comprised of two condominium buildings, and community amenities, including a neighbourhood shops, a fitness centre, and daycare. Dividing the two parcels is a central street designed with a raised, textured speed-table, made for walking comfort and to calm traffic. While accessible to cars, pedestrian safety and experience takes precedence over vehicular efficiency, creating a more village atmosphere. This block also hosts an interactive wetland that serves as both an educational landscape and a natural stormwater retention system, connecting residents with the surrounding ecology. Weaving through this central block are well lit, accessible paths focused on pedestrian safety connecting the urban core to community services, through green plazas, to residential buildings, and beyond to the natural trail network.

EAST BLOCK – PARCEL E

The East Block features strategically situated condominiums and townhouses along the outer edges of the parcel, with an underground parkade beneath a predominantly natural public space at its centre.

The eastern edge is dedicated to green space, connecting with a proposed broader network of pathways and responding to the area's existing rural and natural character.

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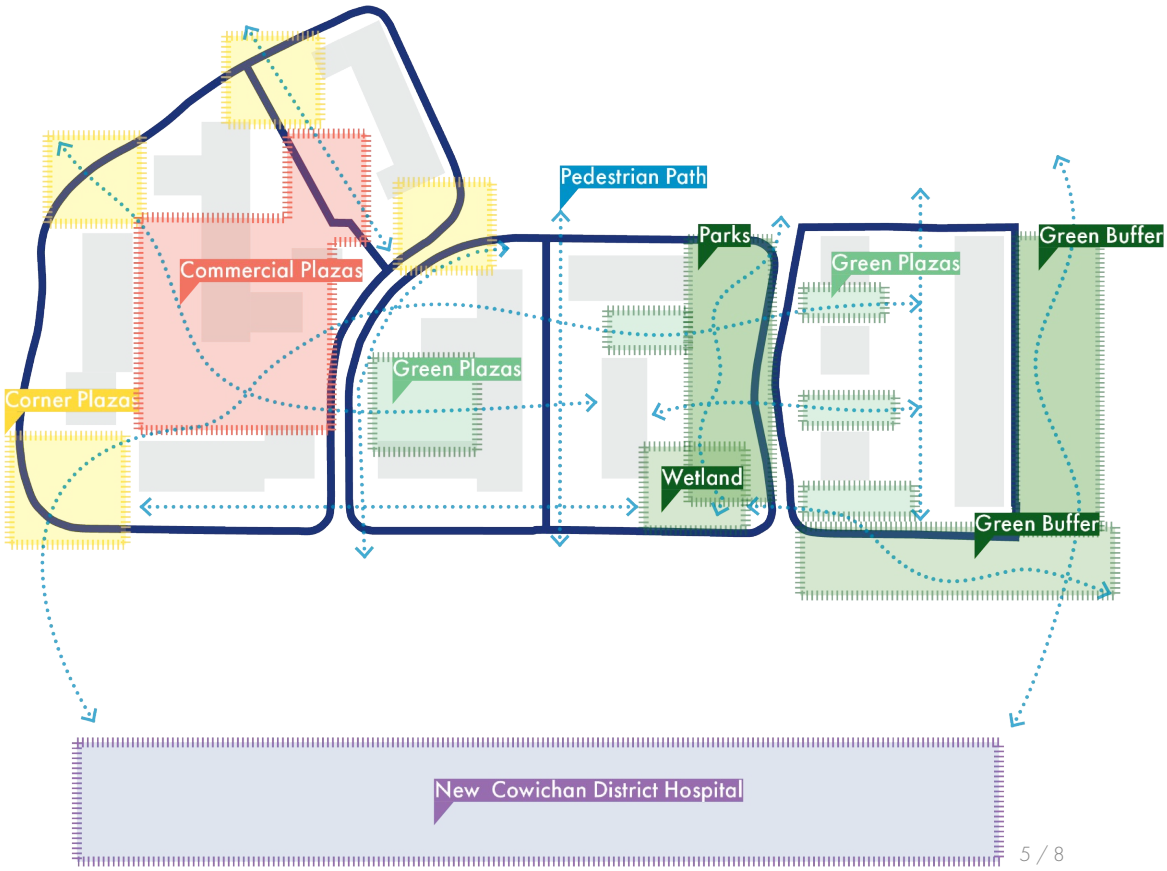
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SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE

The vision for North Village is rooted in social infrastructure: living within walking distance of work, gathering in open plazas, accessing everyday services close to home, and enjoying cafés, restaurants, and generous green spaces. These elements encourage residents to move beyond isolated living and engage with their neighbourhood.

We aim to create a sustainable, inclusive community that accommodates a range of lifestyles, from young professionals to families, to retirees. This development will be a model for how thoughtful, community-focused development can support long-term growth, and create healthy lifestyle-based communities.

Our proposed design is meticulously crafted to comply with zoning regulations while ensuring residents can access various housing options, employment opportunities, retail, community facilities, and public amenities.



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Anticipating the significant workforce required by the new hospital, the design goes beyond providing housing to prioritize liveability, lifestyle, and the comforts of Island living within a safe, convenient, and connected village setting.

PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY

Our design of North Village ensures amenities are integrated into everyday life: connecting housing with the hospital, daycare, restaurants, cafés, shops, medical offices, and community services. This approach reduces reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and supports the principles of a 15-minute city, where residents can live, work, and access essential services within their own neighbourhood.

Vehicles take a back seat to the internal pedestrian promenades and cycling paths. To ensure convenient movement across the three-block site, a connected network of pedestrian and cycling paths is integrated with the urban infrastructure and natural systems.

Beginning in the urban west block, the promenade extends east through the family housing district, passing a spacious daycare accommodating up to 70 children and a public wellness and fitness facility. Beyond the Family Plaza, the route continues through a protected wetland, connecting the village to the upper ridge hiking trail network.

By prioritizing pedestrian and cycling connections, and rigorously applying CPTED standards, the plan creates safe and accessible spaces for everyday activities. Whether a family walk, an evening outing to a restaurant patio, or a nurse returning home after a late shift, these paths connect people to the services they need while being open, lit, away from traffic, and safe. This network provides a comfortable and convenient car alternative for residents and visitors alike.

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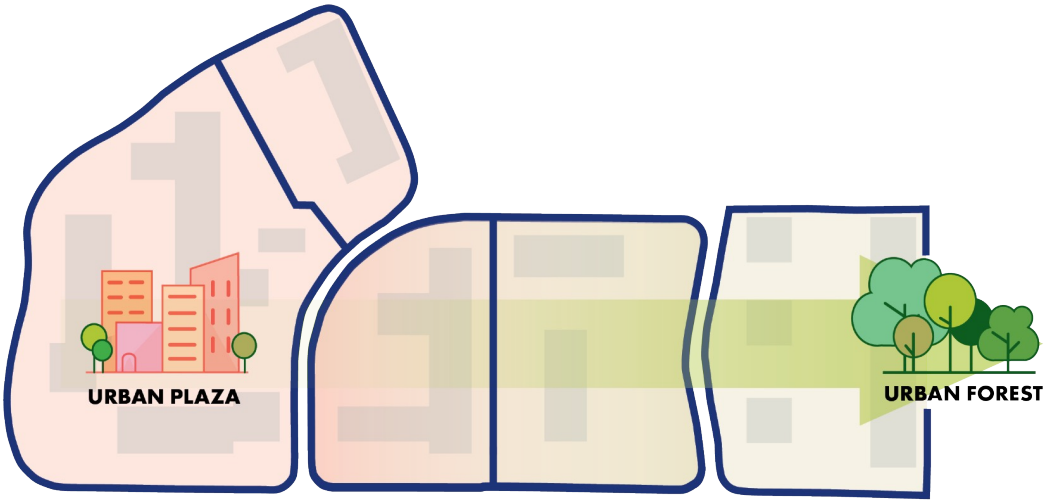
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ECOLOGICALLY FOCUSED

North Village integrates ecology into an urban setting while providing housing and community infrastructure to support the new hospital. The design celebrates local ecosystems, maintaining a gradient of tree canopy density, from lighter around the urban plazas, to denser in the east. The diverse sequence of open spaces gradually transitions from the landscaped urban plazas of the west block to more residential urban forests in the east block, creating a distinctive environment that brings together the benefits of urban living and the surrounding landscape.

Green outdoor spaces are strategically distributed throughout the site, providing residents with accessible opportunities to experience nature: dedicated parkland at the eastern edge preserves the area's rural character and provides space for walking and hiking; rain gardens are incorporated along the secondary street in the west block; the wetland in the centre block will provide opportunities for residents to connect with nature and learn about the area's natural history through a boardwalk and educational signage; a pond and surrounding marsh, planted with native reeds and grasses, will provide natural stormwater



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management and accommodate regular rainfall as well as more extreme weather events.

A continuous walking and cycling paths connects all these green plazas and parks across the site, contributing to the broader development's blue-green network. This pedestrian focused system weaves the natural environment into the otherwise urban setting.

Additionally, our energy efficient buildings are designed to promote sustainable living, reducing the environmental impact of the development while also providing residents with a comfortable and eco-friendly living environment.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

Our proposal for the three blocks at the junction of Herd Road and Bell McKinnon Road, adjacent to the new hospital, aligns with the BMLAP vision for the community around the new Cowichan Hospital. The project accommodates over 150,000 square feet of commercial, retail, and restaurant space, 297 permanent residences, and a 90-room hotel.

While significant in scale, the development is carefully organized to create a cohesive and integrated village. This is not a suburb of disconnected buildings and parking areas linked by roads, but an urban tapestry in which people can live, work, gather, and build community across generations.

Rather than contributing to urban sprawl, we intend to cater to the growing demand for high-density living by building a mixed-use village. Our primary focus is to create a community that prioritizes the well-being of its residents and environmental responsibility while ensuring the quality of everyday experiences. In doing so, we aim to foster a sense of belonging and promote sustainable living practices in this vibrant community around the new Cowichan District Hospital.