



**\*\*Business Proposal for Zoning Amendment ZB000272\*\***

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are seeking approval for a Zoning Amendment to host events on our vineyard property at 2-6380 Lakes Rd in North Cowichan zoned A2.

We are requesting approval for:

- **10 events per year**, each with a maximum of 80 guests.
  - Event end time of 11:00 PM (all guests vacated by 11:30pm).
  - Soundproof venue with doors shut after 9:00 PM to limit sound travel.

We also propose to host **five community-based events** per year at **no cost** to local non-profits and committees. These events would allow organizations to hold **Annual General Meetings, fundraisers, and small gatherings**, fostering a sense of community and support for local initiatives. By providing a dedicated space for these gatherings, we aim to contribute to the social and economic well-being of North Cowichan. These events will offer non-profits access to a high-quality venue without financial burden, enabling them to focus their resources on their missions and outreach efforts. Additionally, these gatherings will bring together residents and businesses, further strengthening local connections and community engagement.

### **Business Rationale**

With **20 years of experience in the wedding industry** and having worked at over **500 weddings**, we have a deep understanding of what makes a successful and seamless event. This expertise has allowed us to carefully design a spot unlike any other wedding venue in British Columbia. Our beautiful all white barn combined with our lush green vineyard, expansive views of Mt Prevost, Quamichan Lake, and Mt Tzouhalem make this venue the perfect place for any couple to celebrate their union. Additionally, our **20 years of business ownership experience** ensure that we operate with professionalism, efficiency, and a clear vision for long-term success.

The Cowichan Valley currently has limited options for couples to get married, and demand for wedding venues far exceeds supply. As a result, many couples are booking venues in Victoria and northern Vancouver Island due to the lack of availability in the region.

In North Cowichan's **Official Community Plan (OCP), Section 8.4.2** states that the municipality will carefully assess proposals for assembly uses in rural areas (such as wedding venues and fêtes) on a case-by-case basis to ensure acceptable levels of noise, disturbance, and traffic are maintained. We strongly believe that Oak & Vine Estate fits this description perfectly.



The ability to host 10 weddings annually is essential to covering operational costs and maintaining our vineyard. Our vineyard is aging, and considerable investment is needed to continue sustainable farming practices. Hosting weddings allows us to generate the necessary funds to revitalize and maintain the vineyard, ensuring its long-term viability. Additionally, we need to upgrade our irrigation system to include **drip irrigation**, which will make our water usage more sustainable and efficient. Revenues from the wedding venue will be reinvested into expanding our agricultural practices, including the current introduction of a **lavender crop**.

In 2016, The BC Government recognized that farming is becoming increasingly more expensive, and that farmers needed to subsidize their agricultural operations with non farm uses such as hosting events and allowing agritourism activities. As a result, properties within the ALR are now permitted to host 10 events per year. As a property with **farm status**, we are requesting the same opportunity to sustain our farm. Our direct neighbor across the street, who is within the ALR, has the right to hold events without additional permitting if they choose to do so, highlighting the inconsistency in restrictions applied to our property. Our property, while still maintaining **farm status**, is not within the ALR and thus requires additional permitting. If our property was located just **30 feet away**, we would be able to host these events without the need for special approval. Furthermore, **Duncan Community Lodge**, located just **2 km away**, is permitted to host **unlimited events** with up to **125 guests** per event.

The property was previously a fully operating winery that hosted events and is currently zoned to allow for a **craft distillery**, which could also host events and weddings if we chose to go that route. However, we have no plans to open a winery or distillery at this time, as limited weddings are significantly less disruptive compared to daily tours, tastings, and increased summer traffic that a distillery would bring. Additionally, our property is **zoned for a bed and breakfast** and has **home-based business zoning** that permits us to host **workshops and commercial photo shoots**. We have actively utilized both of these allowances and have conducted commercial activity on-site without receiving a single complaint. These uses demonstrate our ability to manage business operations responsibly and respectfully.

### **Compliance & Best Practices**

- All couples who book Oak & Vine Estate are required to sign a **legally binding contract** that outlines strict regulations regarding **event times, safety, traffic control, noise, and fire prevention**. Additionally, couples are required to hire a **wedding planner from our approved vendor list** to ensure that all weddings run smoothly and adhere to our established guidelines. Couples are also required to obtain a **special event liquor license**, and alcohol must be served by a **Serving It Right** certified individual. A **breathalyzer** will be on hand to ensure responsible consumption and guest safety.
- Our venue was constructed with an **architect** to ensure full compliance with building, **fire, assembly, and handicap accessibility codes**.
- We have been granted an **Assembly Use Occupancy** designation from the Municipality of North Cowichan that permits our building to safely host 120 guests.
- Extensive **soundproofing measures** have been implemented to prevent noise disturbances. Real-time noise monitoring will be enforced, using **smart noise decibel readers** positioned inside the venue and along the property perimeter. If sound levels exceed permitted limits, automated alerts will notify our event staff to adjust accordingly. Indoor music is not to exceed 90db and DJ's are not permitted to use Subwoofers.



## **Economic Impact**

The economic impact of weddings on a community can be substantial, with significant financial benefits extending to various local businesses and services. In Canada, weddings contribute an estimated **\$4 billion** annually to the national economy.

The average Canadian wedding costs approximately \$29,450, with a majority of this spending occurring in the local area. For example:

1. **Accommodations and Tourism** – Weddings attract out-of-town guests, leading to increased spending on accommodations, dining, attractions, and transportation. Local hotels and restaurants directly benefit from this influx of visitors.
2. **Supporting Businesses** – Other businesses like caterers, florists, photographers, videographers, DJs, salons, event planners, décor companies, and transportation providers are integral to wedding operations, with each industry receiving a portion of the spending. Oak & Vine Estate prioritizes local vendors, ensuring that revenue generated from events remains in the community, supporting businesses.

A single wedding with 100 guests can generate **\$30,000–\$40,000** in spending, much of which supports the local economy. Additionally, some estimates suggest that for every \$1 spent on wedding tourism, the economic benefit can multiply through indirect spending, such as guest purchases at local attractions, shops, and eateries.

## **Enhancing Tourism in the Region**

A wedding venue at Oak & Vine Estate has the potential to significantly enhance local tourism, transforming the area into a sought-after destination for couples and their guests.

1. **Drawing Visitors** – Weddings bring in out-of-town guests, benefiting local hotels, restaurants, and businesses.
2. **Boosting Regional Reputation** – Vineyard weddings align with Canada's growing trend of scenic rural wedding destinations.
3. **Encouraging Longer Stays & Repeat Visits** – Guests may extend their trip to explore local attractions, contributing further to the economy.
4. **Stabilizing Seasonal Tourism** – Weddings help maintain visitor flow during off-peak tourism months.
5. **Destination Marketing** – Wedding photography and social media exposure naturally promote the venue and its surrounding area.

## **Commitment to Sustainability**

At Oak & Vine Estate, we are deeply committed to sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of our operations. Our eco-friendly initiatives include:

### **1. Energy Efficiency Measures**

- **Heat Pumps** – Energy-efficient heating and cooling systems to lower consumption.
- **LED Lightbulbs** – Reducing energy use by up to 75%.
- **Solar-Powered Outdoor Lighting** – Eco-conscious evening events.

### **2. Water Conservation Efforts**

- **Low-Flush Toilets and Urinals** – Cutting water consumption by up to 50%.
- **Pond Water Resource** – Our on-site pond acts as a natural resource for drawing water to irrigate garden beds, reducing dependence on municipal water supply and promoting sustainable water use.
- **Smart Irrigation System** – Our property is equipped with a smart irrigation system that monitors rainfall levels and only operates when necessary, ensuring efficient and sustainable water usage.



### **3. Green Transportation**

- **Electric Car Chargers** – Two electric car chargers will be installed in the future to support sustainable travel.
- **Carpooling & Shuttle Services** – We have two EV vehicles to provide as a shuttle service for guests to get home safely, reducing traffic and emissions. During an event, we have an electric golf cart to shuttle guests from the parking lot to the main event area.

### **4. Conserving Green Spaces**

- Utilizing our existing vineyard avoids disrupting natural habitats while maintaining sustainable land use.

### **5. Grapevines as Carbon Sinks**

- Our 4-acre vineyard absorbs 3 to 4 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, equivalent to emissions from 250 family cars, making it an environmentally responsible venue.

#### **6. Recycling, Garbage, and Composting**

- Composting and recycling stations are on-site to minimize waste from events and reduce our environmental footprint.
- Disposable plastics are discouraged. We provide glassware for every wedding and do not allow plastic utensils or cups.

We also have future plans to use revenue generated from weddings to install solar panels, further reducing our energy consumption and enhancing the sustainability of our venue.

#### **Mitigating Neighbours' Concerns**

To address and mitigate potential concerns from our neighbors regarding hosting weddings on our vineyard, we have taken a proactive and considerate approach. Recognizing that noise and privacy are often key concerns, we have invested in a **soundproofed building** where all weddings and related celebrations will take place. This structure is designed to significantly reduce sound travel, ensuring that our events have minimal impact on the surrounding area.

In addition to controlling noise, we have invested in **588 feet of solid wood fencing** around the venue and property to

enhance privacy for our neighbors as well as **300 feet of 8-foot cedar hedging**. This measure not only creates a visual barrier but also serves as an extra layer of sound reduction, contributing to a peaceful environment for everyone. Our parking lot has a capacity for **65 cars**, ensuring that there will be no overflow parking



onto the street or surrounding areas. Parking attendants will be on hand to ensure all vehicles are parked in our designated parking areas. Additionally, there are clearly marked smoking areas on pavement to ensure safety, and our entire property is equipped with **overhead irrigation sprinklers** as a precautionary measure in the event of a fire.

Majority of the previous weddings on the property were held during the pandemic and faced unique challenges due to provincial regulations that required all events to be held outdoors to reduce the spread of Covid. As a result, proper sound mitigation was not possible since music and reception activities could not take place within the soundproofed building. The events during this time were not reflective of how weddings will be conducted under normal operating conditions, where all receptions will take place within our specially designed, soundproof venue.

We are committed to open communication and have actively sought feedback from our community. Through **open houses**, discussions with direct neighbours, and posts on our neighborhood Facebook page, we've engaged with our neighbors to discuss our plans, hear their concerns, and incorporate their input into our operations. This ongoing dialogue reflects our dedication to being good neighbors and fostering a sense of collaboration.

Finally, we deeply care about the impact our business may have on our neighbors' lives and are committed to addressing any concerns promptly and constructively. By maintaining an open-door policy and working together with our community, we aim to ensure that our business contributes positively to the area while respecting the needs and comfort of those around us.

### **Conclusion**

Our proposal seeks to balance business sustainability, responsible event management, and community engagement. We have taken every step necessary to ensure that our venue meets all municipal requirements while adding value to North Cowichan through responsible tourism and agricultural development, aligning with the OCP. We respectfully request approval of our Zoning Amendment to allow our vineyard event venue to operate as envisioned.

We appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to the opportunity to discuss this proposal further.

---

Randy Westlake & Masika Allan  
2-6380 Lakes Rd, North Cowichan BC  
Oak & Vine Estate