

Staff Report

Date: February 7, 2024
To: Chief Administrative Officer
From: James van Hemert, Consulting Planner
Re: **Application for a Natural Hazards Lands (wildfire) Development Permit for Lot 18, Section 6, Renfrew Land District, situated in Cowichan Lake District, Plan 8069, with a street address of 163 Neva Road**



APPLICATION

The applicant requests a ***Development Permit*** in accordance ***with Development Permit Area 2 –Natural Hazards, Subsection 6.3.8 Wildfire Hazards Guidelines*** for a subdivision comprising four residential lots.

BACKGROUND

A Development Permit for this land is required in accordance with the Town of Lake Cowichan Official Community Plan (2019) and the BC Local Government Act. The relevant Development Permit Area is DPA 2 –Natural Hazard Lands.

The subject property is zoned R-6 Small House Residential.

The subject property has received ***preliminary subdivision*** approval from the Approving Officer. The plan proposes four lots for single detached homes.



Left: view looking east from Neva Road of existing home at 163 Neva Road; right: view looking west from eastern boundary of subject property at the eastern terminus of Oak Lane. Note: lack of vegetative fuels at subject property; new sidewalk on Oak Lane.

WILDFIRE HAZARD PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

A Wildfire Hazard Assessment was conducted by Strathcona Forestry Consulting. It was completed on January 14, 2024 in accordance with the guidelines of the Official Community Plan's Development Permit Area 2 –Natural Hazards, Subsection 6.3.8

Wildfire Hazards.

The assessment determined that the **wildfire threat** at the subject property is currently **moderate**. The land is clear of all vegetation. The site is surrounded by residential and commercial development.

The site is located within the service area of Lake Cowichan Fire Department, a volunteer fire department with a Fire Chief and about 30 on-call members. The fire hall is at 3 North Shore Road, a distance of less than 0.5 km from the subject site.

Scoring from the wildfire hazard assessment and fire behavior analyses determined the subject property currently has a **low Fuel Assessment rating**.

The wildfire hazard assessment encourages the implementation of FireSmart standards for vegetation management and construction.

Staff recommend that FireSmart standards be carried forward as conditions of approval of the development permit.

Fire Smart Zones

Specific recommendations with respect to the following zones:

1. Immediate Zone 1a: - to 1.5 metres
 - a. A noncombustible surface should extend for 1.5 metres around structures, homes, and accessory structures, and any attachments, such as decks.
 - b. Landscape with noncombustible materials, such as gravel, brick, or concrete
 - c. Avoid woody shrubs, trees, or tree branches
2. Intermediate Zone 1—0 to 10 metres
 - a. Low density fire resistant plants and shrubs
 - b. Nonflammable hardscapes
 - c. Limb (prune) trees 1.5 to 2 metres from the ground
 - d. Avoid using woody debris, including bark mulch
3. Extended Zone 2—10 to 30 metres
 - a. Thin and prune evergreen trees
 - b. Regularly clean up accumulations of fallen branches, dry grass

A Land Title Act Section 219 Wildfire Hazard Covenant will be placed upon the land to address the specific recommendations of the Wildfire Hazard Assessment, particularly with respect to Fire Smart Zones and construction materials.

TOWN BYLAW REVIEW & ANALYSIS

I. Official Community Plan

Development Permit Area Development Permit Area 2 –Natural Hazards, Subsection 6.3.8 Wildfire Hazards Guidelines

Relevant ***selected*** guidelines are cited below. A staff review concludes that the subdivision design, specific recommendations made by Strathcona Forestry Consulting, and the requirements of the Town's Wildfire Hazard Covenant, satisfies the guidelines.

Site Design

- 1) To an extent that is reasonable and feasible, new buildings and structures shall be located away from any contiguous undeveloped forested areas or areas containing hazardous forestry fuel types or accumulations.
- 3) FireSmart design standards, as identified in the latest version of "FireSmart: Protecting Your Community" shall be applied to all firebreaks, fuel breaks, and infrastructure design.
- 4) The Subdivision, Works and Services Bylaw establishes design standards for streets and infrastructure that minimize the risks to public safety due to wildfire hazards.
- 5) All development applications shall be jointly reviewed with and assessed by the Fire Department.

Building and Infrastructure Materials

- 6) The following fire resistive materials and construction practices are required:
 - a) Class A fire retardant roofing materials, such as asphalt or metal;
 - b) decks, porches and balconies sheathed with fire resistive materials;
 - c) all eaves, attics, roof vents and openings under floors screened to prevent the accumulation of combustible material, using 3 mm, noncombustible wire mesh, and vent assemblies with fire shutters or baffles;
 - d) exterior walls sheathed with fire resistive materials such as poured concrete, stucco, brick, and fiber cement boards/panels;
 - e) portions of exterior walls facing away from forested edges may use fire resistive wood, subject to a report by a qualified professional;
 - f) fire-resistive decking materials, such as solid composite decking materials or fire-resistive treated wood;
 - g) all windows tempered or double-glazed to reduce heat and protect against wind and debris that can break windows and allow fire to enter the new building or structure;
 - h) all chimneys and wood-burning appliances with approved spark arrestors; and
 - i) building design and construction generally consistent with the highest current wildfire protection standards published by the National Fire Protection Association or any similar, successor or replacement body that may exist from time to time.

Landscaping and Vegetation Management

- 8) The following landscape and service conditions are required:
- d) landscape plantings should be fire resistant, in accordance with the latest version of the FireSmart Guide to Landscaping;
 - g) establish and maintain a 1.5 metre non-combustible zone around buildings and any attachments (i.e., decks) in accordance with FireSmart Homeowner's Manual;

RECOMMENDATION & APPROVAL CONDITIONS

Staff recommend approval of a Development Permit, subject to conditions as described below.

That a Development Permit for land described as Lot 18, Section 6, Renfrew Land District, situated in Cowichan Lake District, Plan 8069, with a street address of 163 Neva Road, be approved with the following conditions:

- 1) Development must comply with all Town Bylaws, specifically including, but not limited to:
 - a. Zoning Bylaw
 - b. Subdivision, Works, & Services Bylaw
- 2) A Land Title Act Section 219 Wildfire Hazard Covenant shall be placed upon the land to address the specific recommendations of the Wildfire Hazard Assessment, particularly with respect to vegetation management within the FireSmart Zones and construction materials.
- 3) Approval of this Development Permit does not constitute approval of a Building Permit.



James van Hemert, MCIP, RPP
Consulting Planner