

Attachment A

December 5th 2023

To the Sunshine Coast Regional District Board of Directors,

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this application.

Before I lay out the rationale for the proposed site-specific zoning amendment, let me tell you a little bit about us.

My partner, Sandy Buck, and I moved onto this piece of land 15 years ago. The land spoke to us. The words of Sandy's Aunt, a Metis elder, was a gift to us. "Live on the land for a year. Allow it to tell you what it wants." It was in that first year that a vision emerged: a creative space to share with others that brought us closer to the land and nature. However, we did not want to impose this vision onto our community. We didn't know much about our community at all. We wanted to better understand how this vision could support the community in general. With that in mind, we developed an arts organization called "Deer Crossing The Art Farm" (www.deercrossingtheartfarm.org). This organization focused on collaborative arts projects with community members and community groups. Over the past 14 years, we've produced hundreds of events, coordinated dozens of programs, and launched several multi-year initiatives, collaborating with thousands of community members. We've learned so much through this process. Both our children were born and raised into this community, and we're grateful to call this community our home.

Beginning in 2015, our organization committed to a rigorous practice of decolonization and reconciliation. We felt an urgent need to integrate this practice into all our programming, including the long-term vision for the property. Through this commitment (and the generous nature of the Shíshálh and Skwxwú?mesh people), we met Xet-semit-sa Candace Campo. Candace is founder and CEO of an indigenous tourism company called Talaysay Tours. We have partnered with Candace on multiple projects over the years, and her vision to mentor indigenous youth in storytelling and land-based learning is now interwoven with ours.

I should also note that I sat on the Official Community Plan Advisory Committee for Area F (2011) and collaborated with the planning department at the SCRD on multiple occasions on an unfolding initiative we call "The Smart Farm Project". Through-out this process we have steadfastly remained open to learning and guidance from planners, neighbours, and community members – and we thank them all for their continued support and friendship.

Our proposed site-specific zoning amendments would—in essence—be a "Smart Farm" pilot. As mentioned above, we have worked with the planning department for many years on this project. The Smart Farm pilot will provide affordable energy-efficient housing for four families, along with space and facilities for cultural and education programming that reconnects us with the land, ourselves, and each other. We recognize that our proposal is unique, both in location and use. However, it is this very uniqueness that motivated us to apply for rezoning. We would like to open our land, studios, and cultivated space to more people of diverse backgrounds (i.e., youth, seniors, people with disabilities, Knowledge Carriers) to live, gather, learn, and collaborate—and we are proposing to do this in a way that limits the impact on our neighbours while generating a positive impact for the community, as a whole.

We are asking for an increase in housing density to allow for two more 'tiny' homes to be built on our property (in addition to our existing two single family dwellings). These new homes would be no larger than 800 square feet. The size of the homes would enable us to provide affordable and energy-efficient workforce housing for single individuals, a couple and/or a small family. Rental costs for these units (including utilities and maintenance fees, along with access to the shared spaces on the property) will begin at a flat rate of \$1500/mo.

We are also asking for an amendment to allow for 'Assembly Use' on our property. This would enable us to carry out the education and cultural programming we envision for the space. We have worked with the planning staff to ensure that this assembly use is modest, limited, and appropriate to the rural residential area surrounding us. These limitations include: a maximum of 10 day-time gatherings with no more than 40 people per month, and 2 evening gatherings with no more than 60 people per month (more details on this in the attached descriptions). As

mentioned above, the gatherings we envision enable us to open our space and studios to the diverse ages, backgrounds and abilities we collaborate with, in a modest, limited, and respectful fashion. There is nothing quite like The Art Farm here on the coast. The unique combination of art-making studios, outdoor spaces, and access to the Rainforest is truly one-of-a-kind.

We'd like to note that, in developing the proposed limitations for our dwellings and gatherings, we have tried to remain within the parameters of our current zoning, in terms of increased traffic and housing on the land.

The additional tiny homes will, in essence, act as the equivalent to tenant suites in our existing dwellings; they are detached because the cost of renovating our dwellings to accommodate an additional suite would far outstrip the costs of a tiny home.

When considering the number of people (and cars) that would accompany our gatherings, we have aimed to be the equivalent of what a steady Bed-and-Breakfast with a farm stand might see over the course of a month. We envisioned an average of 35 additional vehicles per week (or 140 additional vehicles per month). With 1 vehicle for every 3 people, and all our gatherings at maximum capacity, we would see an increase of approximately 130 additional vehicles per month. Of course, we will not be operating at maximum capacity – but we wanted to fall within this range, nonetheless.

Over the past few years, in preparation for this application, we have added additional parking, a roundabout, fencing, berms and landscaping for privacy and sound barriers between our property and our neighbour's property to the south. As you will see in the attached site drawings, we are proposing additional parking, as well as noise and privacy barriers. We have also endeavored to place all our buildings and infrastructure as far from this neighbour's property line (a shared hydro line makes this our most exposed boundary). In addition, we have taken care to preserve the existing sound and privacy barriers (forest and trees) between our other neighbours to the east and north. See our attached documents for more specifics on these plans, along with water treatment, septic requirements, and our fire safety plan.

The following is our rationale for these proposed site-specific zoning amendments:

How the Smart Farm pilot fits into the Official Community Plan for Area F

The Rural Residential B designation applies to rural acreage parcels that are for the most part located outside of service areas, including water distribution, fire protection, and solid waste collection. The properties are also located outside of the Agricultural Land Reserve. These acreage properties are conducive to the rural residential lifestyle and further rural uses such as home occupations, garden nurseries, agriculture, keeping of livestock, low density campgrounds, spiritual and cultural retreats may be considered where properties are large enough to provide sufficient buffer to neighbouring parcels.

The Smart Farm pilot will:

- Lessen the impact of human settlement on the environment,
- Showcase a low impact cultural use on a self-sustaining rural residential parcel,
- Provide affordable housing through a mixture of smaller housing forms, and
- Remain part of the agricultural base for the community

How the Smart Farm pilot will support the SCRD and Sunshine Coast community as a whole

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In September, 2020, the Urban Matters consultation group released the 'Sunshine Coast Housing Needs Report', which was followed by the 'Housing Needs Report Implementation Framework' in December 2020. These reports

show a clear need for more diverse housing options on the Sunshine Coast, and provide recommendations in facing the housing crisis.

According to the Housing Needs Report (citing a variety of sources), affordability of housing continues to be the greatest challenge in the West Howe Sound community.

The Smart Farm pilot project will address our Affordable Housing crisis by modeling:

- development that maintains the unique character of different communities and provides a range of housing types.
- development that allows for “aging in place” as baby boomers age, leave the workforce and experience greater mobility challenges.
- new zoning/regulatory features to promote housing diversity (e.g. smaller lots, coach houses, infill housing, multifamily, mixed use development)

FOOD SECURITY

As The Smart Farm pilot is committed to subsidized access to agricultural land and affordable housing for farmers along side education and engagement with the community, it directly supports or indirectly builds support for 4 of the 6 strategic goals in the SCRD’s Agricultural Area plan, including:

- Protecting farms, improving farming opportunities, and expanding access to land for agriculture
- Developing a viable Coastal food system
- Educating and increasing awareness of Coastal food and agriculture
- Advancing and promoting sustainable agricultural practices

The pilot will also support the food security goals as outlined in the SCRD’s 2012 We Envision Sustainability Plan, such as:

- increase the skills and knowledge of local residents to both produce for, and purchase from, the local food system
- encourage organizations in the business, food security, and education sectors to work together to leverage skills and jobs in the area of food production and preservation
- provide incentives for public-sector and community groups to promote food security and grow and preserve their own food, as well as make local foods accessible to, and affordable for all people

ARTS and CULTURE, LEARNING and LEADING

Lastly, through its unique co-operative framework made up of private members and community organizations, The Smart Farm pilot will support arts & culture and learning & leading goals as set out in the SCRD’s We Envision Sustainability Plan, including:

- creating opportunities for youth and young adults to be active in the arts and in cultural opportunities
- working with the shíshálh (sechelt) and the skwxwu7mesh (squamish) nations to acknowledge and develop planning processes to support their cultural places, languages, heritages and identities
- promoting cultural sensitivity and understanding among community members, organizations and institutions
- increasing placed-based learning (local natural and cultural history) opportunities,
- increasing opportunities for action and service learning (learning a skill or practice while contributing to a larger community project)

Some additional words from my partner, Sandy, on why we believe this proposal is a benefit to our community:

I am grateful for this land I live on, my family lives on, and other families before us. We got here through our ancestors' ingenuity and tenacity because Canada is a country made up of settlers coming from somewhere else. My family has had the honour to learn from the Indigenous people whose families have lived here for thousands and thousands of years before us. The land we live on now shows us these teachings through its plants and foliage, and every year it returns the cycle of life and abundance. When we first purchased this land in 2007 we knew it was special, and we can see 15 years later that many people feel that same way. The challenge is: only those who can afford it can live and gather on land like ours. We have learned over the pandemic that being outside was the healthy choice: it relieved so much tension and anxiety for all. Being parents of children and youth, we have seen over and over again the value of being outside, planting a garden & making something with your hands. We have worked tirelessly to cultivate a place for creativity because it is more and more important to do so. Our land is a place where we do just that. We have built tools and spaces that keep us healthy, in our mind, body, and spirit. Our organization has an international audience, and people are looking to us for potential models in their communities across the world. We have found that more and more people are asking to come to our space, and we would like to offer them this opportunity in a way that is thoughtful, considerate, and respectful of our neighbours. We believe this proposal does just this.

I am reminded of a story shared with me by Kwat-le-Mat Hollyann Higgins from the Shishálh Nation:

There was a great fire long ago and all the animals had to run for their lives towards the water to safety. The bear could run fast and kept seeing a hummingbird fly past him towards the fire and then past him away from the fire and then back towards the fire.

After several passes, the bear called out "HUMMINGBIRD! Why do you keep flying toward the fire, the water is in this direction!"

"Oh yes bear, I know, I am flying to the water and filling my beak as much as possible and flying back to spray the oncoming fire so all the animals can run to safety! It is what I can do, I must fly now and do what I can!"

This story impacts me every time I tell it because in the face of a raging storm (affordable housing, climate change, loss of language, culture, diversity) we are met with a choice: what is it that we can do to help? What is the best we can do?

Thank you again for taking the time to read through this application and consider our proposal. We believe the Sunshine Coast will benefit greatly from this and are committed to a low impact elegant development that will prove the viability of this model within a rural residential setting.

What we have learned over the years is that when you honour the land, the land takes care of you. That is our intention for ourselves, for our community, for our children and for our children's children.

With respect and gratitude,



Chad Hershler

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