

Crystal Mountain Development Plan – Brief 2: Duplicate Infrastructure on Upper Ridge

“It does seem a stretch for a portion of the community to rezone a forest lot to a Community Facility potentially and then to take it a step further, the hooked lot configuration. It is a bit of a difficult step for me to make and it has been since the first day I’ve seen it...I’m just aware that I’m not comfortable with a totally separate piece of property being a part of the rezoning.” Trustee Tahirih Rockafella, Galiano Local Trust Committee meeting, Sept. 7, 2021

There’s absolutely no justification for allowing Crystal Mountain Society (CMS) to build cabins and a second extensive set of infrastructure on its Upper Ridge, above a cliff and completely cut off and unconnected with the main intensive development area on the same forest lot down below.

Duplicate Infrastructure

Area 2 (Upper Ridge development) would duplicate facilities already proposed for the lower retreat area - a separate well (yet to be drilled), a separate septic tank, a separate septic field, and separate kitchen, bathhouse, laundry, storage building, access for service vehicles and parking. The three larger sleeping cabins (225 sq. ft.) on the Upper Ridge are supposed to accommodate “long term” visitors for retreats of up to six months.



Source: Staff Report Sept.7, 2021. Map showing Area 1 and Area 2 as completely separate lots.

The Upper Ridge has no connection to the rest of the development and no access to grid electricity. As such, all infrastructure (power, pumps, water heating, building heat, cooking, etc.) will have to be supplied by fossil fuels which contravenes Islands Trust Policy Statement on climate change. Neither is extensive use of fossil fuels advisable in forested areas, especially during the summer months. Further, parking space will require removal of trees and shrubbery from an area deemed important to replenishing the water table of the lower sections of the property and adjacent areas.

No precedent exists for this kind of disjointed development anywhere on the island, on land currently zoned F-1 - for forestry use only, where no enclosed buildings are allowed. This development conforms to no accepted planning principle other than, according to planning staff, "it's important to the applicant". Further, this type of duplicated infrastructure directly contravenes the Galiano OCP and its directive to cluster and minimize developed areas. In fact, the proposed development appears to maximize sprawl by scattering the cabins and support structures over the entire area of the Upper Ridge.

Other problems with this Upper Ridge (Area 2):

1. Road access to the Upper Ridge for construction equipment, service vehicles and supplies such as propane or diesel for generators, food, support staff such as cooks and caretakers and pumping of septic tank would be by a private easement through two adjacent properties. The current path does not support any heavy machinery or frequent use.
2. Access and parking area will require substantial tree removal.
3. One of the proposed sleeping cabins is to be located on a lower bench on the cliffside, likely within a Development Permit Area controlling development above a steep slope.
4. At least part of the cliffside is also classified as a Sensitive Ecosystem DPA, because it is in an old forest. CMS' project manager, who also prepared the CMS ecological assessment, stated during the recent Community Information Meeting that locating development on the Upper Ridge is "not ideal" because it fragments the forest ecosystem. It also carves up the land CMS is exchanging with the Islands Trust Conservancy into disjointed chunks.

The Galiano Trustees should firmly reject any development on the Upper Ridge and require CMS to remove this disjointed, fragmented development concept from the application.

This document (Brief 2 of 5) was prepared by Galiano residents and landowners who are concerned about the Crystal Mountain application: Sheila Anderson, Serena Coutts, Jenna Falk, Akasha Forest, Suzanne Fournier, Dan Gaucher, Bob Grist, Diana Lilly, Brad Lockett, Pat Mayhill, Ian Mayhill, Tom Mommsen, Art Moses, Sandy Pottle, John Ronsley, Risa Smith