

Memo

File: 3110-20/ALR 2B 20

DATE: February 26, 2020

TO: Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission

FROM: Planning and Development Services Branch

RE: Non-Adhering Residential Use – 5109 Island Highway (Dalen / Kotilla)
Parcel F(DD 146N) of Section 24, Comox District, PID 007-546-742

An application (Appendix A) has been received to consider a Non-Adhering Residential Use within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The Comox Valley Regional District may forward the application to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) with comments and recommendations or refuse the application.

The subject property (Figures 1 and 2) is a 1.7 hectare lot, created in 1966 as the remainder of the Rennison Road subdivision. The subject property is developed as a vegetable farm with one house. A two-storey farm building is currently being constructed on the lot. The applicants are proposing to add a dwelling on the second floor of the new farm building (Figure 3).

According to the Canada Land Inventory, the land has an improved soil classification of 2D (Figure 4). Class 2 soils have moderate limitations that restrict the range of crops or require moderate conservation practices. Subclass D refers to limitation due to an undesirable soils structure and/or low permeability.

Agricultural Land Reserve

Revisions to the *ALC Act* (the Act) and its *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Regulation* came into force in February 2019. While the Act and regulations allow for one house, the only forms a secondary dwelling can take is a secondary suite within the house or a manufactured home restricted to use by the owners or their immediate family. This non-farm/residential use application is required to allow for the secondary dwelling on the second storey of a farm building.

Official Community Plan

The property is designated Agricultural Areas within the Official Community Plan, Bylaw No. 337 being the “Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 337, 2014”. It is the objective of this area designation “*To promote agriculture and aquaculture as an important economic sector of the Comox Valley*”. The relevant general policies are to “*Require new development to support the primary function of agriculture*” and to “*Protect farming integrity and function of land designated agricultural area*”. Regarding residential uses in this designation Policy 59(4) states “*Minimize the residential impact on arable farm land by dwelling units and related residential infrastructure*”. Similarly, Policy 59(6) states “*Encourage the applicant to limit the footprint of the additional dwelling(s) in order to limit negative impacts of residential use on land designated agricultural area*”.

Zoning Bylaw

The property is zoned Rural-ALR in the Rural Comox Valley Zoning Bylaw. This allows for a residential density of one single detached dwelling plus additional dwelling units that are specifically permitted by the ALC. Should the ALC approve the application, the proposal would be consistent with the Zoning Bylaw.

Sincerely,

T. Trieu

Ton Trieu, RPP, MCIP
Manager of Planning Services
Planning and Development Services Branch

/jm

Attachments Appendix A – “ALR 2B 20 Application”

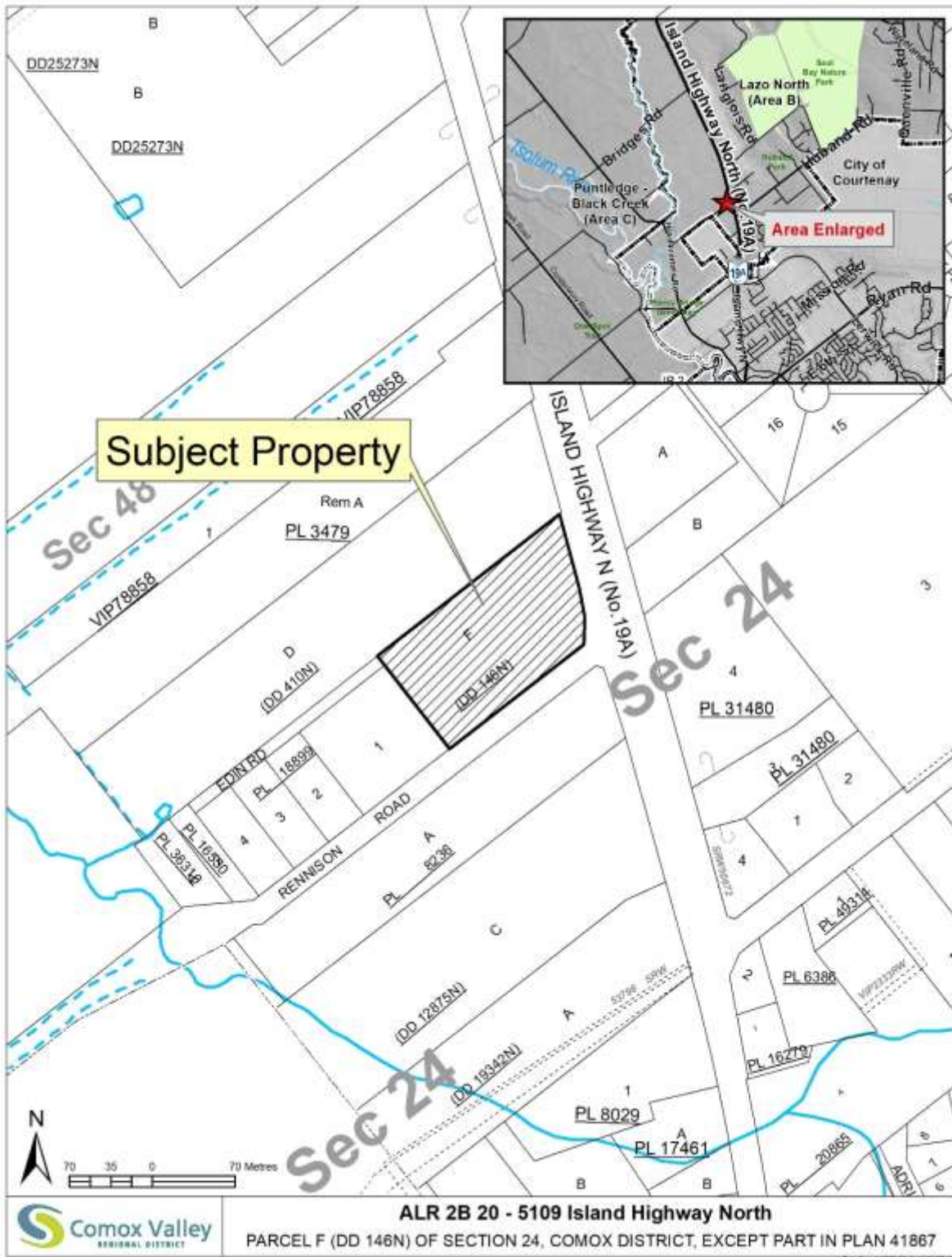


Figure 1: Subject Property



Figure 2: Air Photo (2018)



**Figure 3: Building Under Construction; Dwelling Proposed to be Located on Second Floor
(Photographs taken February 25, 2020)**



Provincial Agricultural Land Commission - Applicant Submission

Application ID: 58613

Application Status: Under LG Review

Applicant: Ingemar Dalen , Kira Kotilla

Local Government: Comox Valley Regional District

Local Government Date of Receipt: 01/14/2020

ALC Date of Receipt: This application has not been submitted to ALC yet.

Proposal Type: Non-Adhering Residential Use - Additional Residence for Farm Use

Proposal: To be granted permission to build a small secondary residence in second story of an existing farm building. It would house farm workers and support our vegetable farm operation.

Mailing Address:

5109 Island Hwy N
Courtenay , BC
V9J 1S6
Canada

Parcel Information

Parcel(s) Under Application

1. **Ownership Type:** Fee Simple

Parcel Identifier: 007-546-742

Legal Description: PCL F (DD 146N) OF SEC 24 COMOX EXC PT IN PL 41867

Parcel Area: 1.9 ha

Civic Address: 5109 Island Hwy. N. Courtenay BC, V9J1S6

Date of Purchase: 06/27/2014

Farm Classification: Yes

Owners

1. **Name:** Ingemar Dalen

Address:

5109 Island Hwy. N.
Courtenay, BC
V9J 1S6
Canada

2. **Name:** Kira Kotilla

Address:

5109 Island Hwy N
Courtenay , BC
V9J 1S6
Canada

Applicant: Ingemar Dalen , Kira Kotilla

Current Use of Parcels Under Application

1. Quantify and describe in detail all agriculture that currently takes place on the parcel(s).

I've attached this as separate document because it exceeded size limitations.

Its labelled "Agricultural Activity" in attachments

2. Quantify and describe in detail all agricultural improvements made to the parcel(s).

2015 improvements:

plowed 1/4 acre to begin crop production

repaired and expanded on existing fences

installed drip irrigation system

purchased basic farm tools/equipment

built mobile chicken coop for layer hens

2016 improvements:

installed 25x75 ft greenhouse

tilled another 1/4 acre plot

planted 28 blueberry bushes, 9 fruit trees

build 12x16ft sheep shed

purchased small flock of Icelandic sheep

expanded drip irrigation system

limed and amended 1/2 acre area

2017 improvements:

built storage shed

expanded garden by another 1/4 acre

limed and amended 3/4 acre area

minimal improvements- focused on crop production and raising baby

2018 improvements:

applied 2 tonnes lime to sheep pasture

secured funding for and purchased BCS walk-behind tractor and implements

limed and amended 3/4 acre area

minimal improvements- took time away in Nepal

2019 improvements:

installed permanent fence to enclose 2 acre sheep pasture

purchased and installed 8x11 ft walk-in cooler enclosed in new shed

set up out-door wash station

expanded garden by another 1/4 acre

updated irrigation system

planted 200 bedfeet of permanent raspberry patch (200 plants)

built multi-purpose farm building to house wash station, walk in cooler, storage, farm store, work space, farm office, co-op hub (CSA pick-up, co-op meetings, produce packing and distribution), etc.

limed and amended 0.9 acre area

Future Farm Plans (within 3 years):

*small farm store opening June 2020
turkey production 40-100 birds per year
meat birds (chicken) 60-100 birds per year
increase in season extension (winter vegetable production and storage vegetable sales)
increasing berry production
increasing vegetable production area to 1.5 acres
installing a second greenhouse/hoophouse*

3. Quantify and describe all non-agricultural uses that currently take place on the parcel(s).

Our residence is on the parcel. Split-level 3 bedroom dwelling of approx 1300 sf.ft. Some of the parcel is used as yard space, firewood storage space. A small amount is treed in fir and walnut trees.

Adjacent Land Uses

North

Land Use Type: Agricultural/Farm
Specify Activity: residential/farm. Hay only

East

Land Use Type: Residential
Specify Activity: residential, across highway

South

Land Use Type: Agricultural/Farm
Specify Activity: small farm

West

Land Use Type: Residential
Specify Activity: residential and treed

Proposal

1. What is the purpose of the proposal?

To be granted permission to build a small secondary residence in second story of an existing farm building. It would house farm workers and support our vegetable farm operation.

2. Describe the necessity for an additional residence for farm use and how it will support agriculture in the short or long term.

We run a very labour intensive, very productive small organic vegetable farm. The farm has been steadily growing since 2015 and is planned to expand more in the next few years.

Having a small second dwelling on site will allow us to house farm labourers , retain farm employees and receive help with morning and evening farm chores and general farm labour. Having employees live on site would greatly increase the viability of our farm and ensure that we can keep growing produce for many years.

The need for labour on our farm has been growing year by year. In 2019 the farm kept 3-4 adults busy throughout the growing season (March-November). The majority of the work was done by myself and Ingemar (the 2 owners). We hired one regular employee, some occasional helpers, plus had regular help

Applicant: Ingemar Dalen , Kira Kotilla

from various volunteers.

With our second child being born in Sept 2019, Ingemar needing to work away fairly often, and plans to steadily expand vegetable (and add poultry) production, we are in need of more and more hired help. Running a vegetable farm requires many early morning and late evening hours as well as split-shifts to enable working around the weather (avoiding freezing temps in the morning in shoulder seasons, avoiding the hot part of day in peak summer). This makes hiring people from off site a challenge. Farm chores requiring farm labour outside of regular working hours are: harvesting very early in the morning to avoid the heat, sometimes harvesting late afternoon to avoid frost, applying and removing row covers as temperatures change, opening and closing greenhouses as temperatures change, watering seedlings, irrigating main garden area, greeting CSA customers who are picking up veggie boxes (typically in the evenings), dealing with various weather related tasks as they arise, and attending to turkey and meat birds needs (planned for 2021), attending to farm stand as needed, and caring for livestock.

We would like to add poultry (turkey and meat bird) production to our farm, but will not do so until we are confident that we have the regular help required to keep up with chores.

Even without the planned increase in vegetable production and addition of poultry, we are finding it difficult to keep up with early morning and evening tasks, particularly when Ingemar is away and Kira is at home with two young children.

We love growing produce and are proud of how far we've come in establishing the farm in the last few years. This little farm is very productive and has potential to grow much more, but with the slim profit margins of small scale agriculture and the high cost of labour, finding the funds to employ the labour we need is proving to be quite the challenge.

Having a small second residence to house farm workers would propel this small farm into a more secure future. It would ensure that we have the needed help with farm jobs at odd hours, allowing us to add more products to our repertoire and to increase vegetable production with confidence. It would greatly increase the financial viability of the farm by helping to offset expensive labour costs. It would help us to attract and retain skilled workers. Down the road it will ideally allow us to share farm management responsibilities with a permanent live-in employee (or 2), giving us a better chance at obtaining a work-life balance and ensuring the continuation of this farm enterprise.

3. Describe the size, type and number, as well as occupancy of all residential structures currently located on the property.

There is currently one single detached family home on the property. It is 1290 sq feet, three bedroom, 2 bathroom. Mainly single floor, with a small section being split-level (bedroom above boot-room). It is occupied by our family of four which includes Ingemar and Kira, the farm operators and property owners, and two children.

4. What is the total floor area of the proposed additional residence in square metres?

64.7 m²

5. Describe the rationale for the proposed location of the additional residence.

The additional residence would be built in the second story loft of an existing farm building. No new footprint would be needed, only a renovation of an existing space.

Residence is proposed to be 64.7 sq m, or 696 sq ft. 2 bedroom, 1 bathroom.

The entire second floor is a little over 92 sq m, or 1000 sq ft. The remainder of loft is being used for farm office/meeting room and farm storage space.

The farm building is very close to driveway, close to our house (30 m), close to vegetable production area (3 m).

Please note: a very basic floor plan design was submitted as "proposal sketch". We have not yet designed a detailed floor plan, but are willing to make one as soon as possible, if its needed for this application.

6. What is the total area of infrastructure necessary to support the additional residence?

No new infrastructure would be needed.

Farm building is situated close to driveway and has small parking areas at either end.

7. Do you need to import any fill to construct the additional residence or infrastructure?

No

Applicant: Ingemar Dalen , Kira Kotilla

Applicant Attachments

- Site Photo - farmphoto1
- Site Photo - farmphoto2
- Other correspondence or file information - site map
- Other correspondence or file information - BCassessment notice
- Other correspondence or file information - Agricultural Activity
- Proposal Sketch - 58613
- Certificate of Title - 007-546-742

ALC Attachments

None.

Decisions

None.

Agricultural Activity at 5109 Island Hwy N

Introduction:

Kloverdalen Farm is a certified organic, diverse, mixed vegetable farm in the Comox Valley. We grow over 40 varieties of vegetables and some berries, and sell mainly through a small agricultural cooperative called Merville Organics (website: mervilleorganics.ca). We supply a 130 member CSA box program and various Farmers Markets, as well as some farm-gate sales. Kloverdalen Farm was started by Kira Kotilla (primary farmer) and Ingemar Dalen (farmer and helicopter pilot) in 2015 and has been gradually expanding year by year. We have had farm status with BC Assessment since 2016 and have held organic certification through IOPA since 2016.

Kira has been working towards owning and operating a vegetable farm for many years. She was raised on a hobby farm in the Comox Valley and developed a strong interest in small-scale agriculture in her mid twenties. She completed a two year Plant Science Technician program at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in 2011, worked as an organic agriculture research assistant for OACC from 2009 – 2011, completed an 8 month internship with Rachel Fisher (part of Saanich Organics) in 2011, plus various farm volunteer stints.

Ingemar grew up on a farm in Norway and studied agricultural mechanics as a young adult. He has been a helicopter pilot for over 15 years and currently holds a commercial pilots licence. He works on the farm when he is home and works away for part of the year to provide our family with a secure off-farm income.

Kira is also a co-founder, director and active member of a small agricultural cooperative called Merville Organics Growers Co-op (incorporated 2015). Merville Organics is a marketing co-op which serves a handful of small farm members in the Comox Valley and is dedicated to supporting new farmers by providing infrastructure and a stable market outlet to its members. The co-op has a very good track record of successfully operating a large CSA program and meeting its financial targets for the past five years.

The walk-in cooler, and farm building at Kloverdalen Farm is part of the infrastructure available to Merville Organics. The farm building will be used as one of the main CSA pick-up locations for the co-ops 2020 CSA program.

As the farm business has been steadily expanding, our family has also been growing; we now have two young sons born December 2016 and September 2019. With Ingemar working away periodically and the farm being in full swing there is a definite need for farm labour and onsite farm help.

Current Farm Operation:

This is a labour-intensive small scale, certified organic vegetable farm. We have 80 100ft long beds in production (0.9 acres) not including sheep pasture, small orchard and poultry areas. The market garden area includes a 25 x 75 ft unheated greenhouse which is used for spring seedlings, early spring crops, heat-loving summer crops and cold tolerant winter crops. Most crops are grown outside, many with the use of row covers for pest protection and season

extension.

A BCS walk-behind tractor is our main piece of machinery. Its used to shape beds, mow and mulch cover-crops and old garden beds and to prep beds for planting. Most other tasks including: seeding beds, starting seedlings, planting out transplants, weeding, applying amendments, applying row covers and landscaping fabric, pruning/training plants, installing crop supports (steaks/strings/fences to support larger plants) is all done with hand tools and manual labour. All harvesting, washing and packing of produce is done by hand with hand tools and simple wash-station infrastructure. The entire garden is set up with drip irrigation and a few micro sprinklers. Some hand-watering of seedlings and new transplants is necessary.

Aside from winter planning, pruning, livestock care, and infrastructure work, the growing season typically starts in February with early greenhouse crops and seedlings. We sell thousands of plant starts and various vegetable crops in the spring. The weekly work load increases significantly in late March and is easily over 80 hours per week by late spring. We prepare beds, seed, harvest, turn-in beds and succession plant throughout the season. Seeding and planting continues until at least mid October. By June we have a long list of vegetables available and spend over 20 hours per week just harvesting. Harvesting continues into late December and typically begins again in March or April. In 2019 our Fall CSA ended in early November and our last Farmers Market was on Dec 21st. Labour demand is very high from March to October and is relatively minimal through the winter months.

We sold over \$45,000 worth of produce in 2019 and plan to increase sales to \$60,000 in 2020, and to gradually expand over the next few years. Detailed sales records from 2015 to present are available upon request.

Aside from the vegetable production, we also have a small flock of Icelandic sheep (currently 7 sheep), a small orchard containing approx 30 established blueberry bushes and a few fruit trees. There are 200 bedfeet of raspberries adjacent to vegetable area.

We've also tried our hand at layer hen, meat chicken and turkey production. This is something we would like to do again and expand on, but only after securing stable farm-help.

In 2020 we will open a farm stand in the new farm building. This will be low maintenance (honour system) for the first couple of years but is planned to expand and require staff in the future.

Farm Business History and Future Plans:

2014: We purchased the property, moved in, tilled up 1/4 acre, planted garlic in fall of 2014.

2015: Our first year of commercial production. We cultivated a quarter acre, grew approximately 15 types of vegetables and sold about \$10,000 worth of produce.

2016: We expanded the vegetable plot to half an acre. We also installed the 25x75ft hoophouse and grew indoor tomatoes, cucumbers and basil for the first time. We sold roughly \$20,000 worth of produce.

2017: The growing area was expanded again to approximately three quarters of an acre. Farm gross income hit \$35,000.

2018. The farm was leased out to a friend and brought in roughly \$20,000. Kira and Ingemar decided to live in Nepal for one year in pursuit of Ingemars pilot career goals. We had a young baby and thought it was a good opportunity to take a one year break before deepening our commitment to the farm. Merville Organics Co-op enabled us to take one year off without

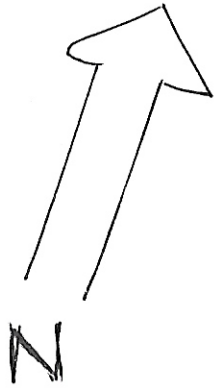
loosing our customer base or our share of the co-op market when we returned to grow for 2019. 2019, the growing area was expanded again. We now have just shy of one acre in production. We purchased a walk-behind tractor, hired an employee and made significant infrastructure investments. We sold over \$45,000 worth of produce. We grew approximately 40 types of vegetables and will do the same next year.

2020. We have crop planned for \$60,000 in sales and are confident that we can reach this goal. We will be hiring help again, opening a farm stand, completing a new wash station and walk-in cooler in our new farm building and fine tuning our growing techniques to increase production for 2020 and into the future.

2021-2023. We plan on establishing a small farm store in the new farm building, installing a second 25x75ft hoop-house and a smaller seedling greenhouse, growing small batches of turkeys and meat birds, developing some value added-products (sauerkraut, canned pickles, etc), increasing blueberry and raspberry production, and increasing vegetable production. Our goal is to increase sales by \$8,000 to \$10,000 for the next four years to hit our goal of \$75,000 gross sales in 2023. We believe we can maintain \$75,000 annual sales from this small farm with the help of long-term employees, permanent infrastructure and a greater diversity of products.

5109 Isl. Hwy N Site Map

Parcel 007 546 742
 PLC F (DD 146N) OF SEC 24 COMOX EXC PT IN
 4.26 acres total



Farm building:

36 x 48 plus outside covered areas 9" x 48" x 2

USES:

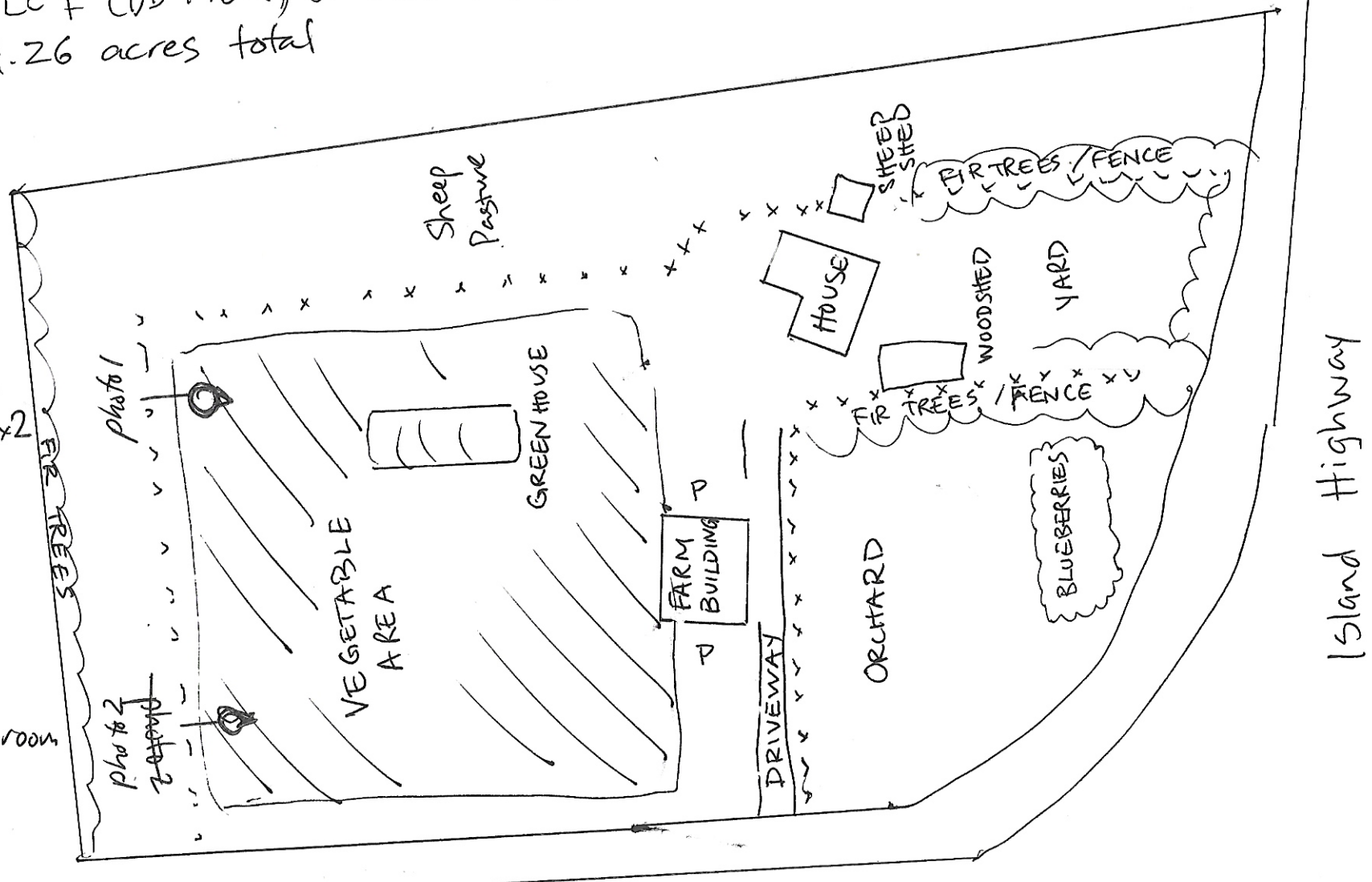
Downstairs:

- Wash station
- walk-in cooler
- vegetable storage
- farm storage
- work space
- farm store

Upstairs:

- farm office / meeting room
- storage
- proposed secondary residence

30m from main house



Rennison Rd

Island Highway

Sketch of proposed second residence @ 5109 Island Hwy N

