

Bamberton sale an opportunity to build something worth having

Last week's sale of Mill Bay's sprawling Bamberton lands can only be seen as positive for the Valley if its new owners heed harsh lessons learned by the property's former developer, David Butterfield.

Despite talking a good game and showing an impressive track record, he failed to gain regional rezoning approval in the early 1990s for transforming the derelict cement-plant site into a 4,900-home seaside Shangri-La.

Too many questions about water supplies, runoff, parking, traffic, waste cleanup, sprawl and impacts on Mill Bay's proudly rural lifestyle remained unanswered to the satisfaction of locals and regional directors.

Butterfield's Bamberton dream died leaving the owners — three unions — with the option of simply logging the slopes for timber values.

Thankfully, that never happened.

Now Three Point Properties can pick up the ball and run for a touchdown through teamwork with local folks.

Ross Tennant, a partner with the Victoria-based buyer, said his firm's immediate job is to clean up its dangerous property then seek local ideas about Bamberton's best use.

WE SAY:

Let's hope the community and the developers learned from the battles of the '90s

It's a golden opportunity to construct an ecologically sustainable community showcasing cutting-edge technology in urban design; road building; water, storm and sewage treatment; recycling; alternate power sources like solar, wind, and tidal; and to design a cool village centre with art studios, cafes and shops.

East-facing Bamberton could also offer parks for folks to just enjoy views across beautiful Saanich Inlet, far from the hum of the Victoria Airport and pricey

Saanich Peninsula.

Bamberton residents could also boost ridership on the trusty Mill Bay ferry while the new community could launch its own water-taxi service to the airport and Sidney ferries without having drivers brave the Malahat.

Idealistic? Maybe, but the alternative is for Three Point to suffer the same rezoning fate as Butterfield's plan, leaving 1,490-acre Bamberton a forested hillside and industrial dumpsite.

The best parts of Butterfield's project can be salvaged by locals helping Three Point Properties see ways to make money while creating the right project at the right time, in the right way.

Let the cleanup start and the dialogue begin.