

NEWS

Bamberton a changed plan

REVISIONS: Developer says community input has led to a new proposal for south-end site

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News Leader Pictorial

With a revised plan in hand, developers for the Bamberton proposal are holding their own public meeting in an effort to win over the community.

That get-together could spawn even more meetings in a process that's already seen a record four public meetings, said Cowichan Valley Regional District director Mike Walker.

The Mill Bay director was quick to point out the upcoming meeting, scheduled for next month, is not sanctioned or organized by the CVRD.

"It'll be interesting to see what they come up with, what they're presenting because we really can't do anything from our side until we see this revised proposal."

Ross Tennant, a managing partner of Three Point Properties, the company that wants to develop Bamberton, said he believes changes have been made to the overall proposal that could win some people over.

"We're coming back to the community to show we listened," he said.

"It's not a wholesale change to the plan, but I think it fine tunes some of the contentious issues to the point some

people feel comfortable with the direction we're taking."

Bamberton is a project on 630 acres that encompasses an old cement plant and would eventually house about 8,000 people in approximately 3,200 homes over a four-stage, 25-year plan.

During the previous four meetings, people raised concerns about issues from land use and housing; servicing and infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, to parks and environment.

Tennant said he didn't want to go into detail about the revisions for fear people "will react before the company has the chance to properly present it," but he did talk about a couple of the changes.

For example, the plan to drain treated sewer water offsite has been revised.

"That water would now be used for irrigation and landscaping on the site, some of it would go to the water features on site and some would go back into the aquifer so the water that wasn't necessary for lawns or use in toilets, those kinds of things you don't need potable water for, could then be put back into the aquifer it originated from."

Tennant said he also heard loudly and clearly the community wants to see more green space preserved and it wanted to see the largest share of the development

happen on previously damaged parts of the property.

"I think there's more we can do," he said. "We've got more now in the way of encouraging a walkable community and more in the way of giving people live/work opportunities on the site."

"One of the things we heard was people wanted to have employment opportunities in the community to take away the need for someone to get in their car and head out on the highway if they need to get groceries or go to a doctor's office."

To that end, the new plan calls for less residential areas and more commercial and retail space on the site.

"That was a fine line because we didn't want to compete with the economies of Mill Bay and the surrounding areas," said Tennant. "But for people to get what they needed to run their lives they'd have to hop in a car."

There's more, but Tennant said he's saving those for the Nov. 3 meeting, scheduled to take place at Brentwood College, the site of the previous meetings.

Our plan will, I hope, win us new friends," he said.

"If nothing else I think the community will at least know they've been well listened to and (Three Point) has responded to the points they brought up."