

Independent eyes peer at Bamberton

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The proposed Bamberton development will be undergoing a third-party, independent review before any decisions are made about the ambitious project, the News Leader Pictorial has learned.

Mike Tippet, deputy manager of development services for the Cowichan Valley Regional District, said the results of a consultant's study should be available by the end of the year, even though no one has officially been hired to do the job.

The study — to be conducted by a firm which will be named next week — will focus on development issues and existing facilities in south Cowichan, specifically Mill Bay, Shawnigan Lake and Cobble Hill.

“We want to look at things like recreation, fire protection services and general issues related to development such as traffic and the impact a new community would have on all that,” said Tippet.

Victoria-based Three Point Properties Ltd. wants to build a community on the old Bamberton cement site and, if approved, the area could see as many as 3,200 homes go up in the next two decades.

The project has already prompted an unprecedented four public meetings that took place last year.

“The consultant will be using minutes from those meetings to help them and the firm being considered is proposing its own public consultations and maybe some workshops,” said Tippet.

“It's not going to be a backroom thing where they go away and come back with an academic report — they want to be out there in the community touching base with everyone, including five First Nations groups.”

Tippet said it's vital an independent body do the study.

“We wanted a third party to step in to assist us in reviewing those impacts because the applicants, in the community's eyes, don't necessarily have 100 per cent credibility and we, to be frank, probably don't have 100 per cent credibility either,” he said.

“A third, unbiased party's report might help everybody understand it all better.”

Ross Tennant, a managing partner of Three Point, said he welcomes the new study and finds it heartening.

“I guess the encouragement I’ve taken from it is it’s real tangible work being done to move the application forward,” he said.

“In fairness to Mike Tippet and the CVRD, they have been working hard on this, much of it behind the scenes and they are trying to do a good job, I believe, and trying to cover all the bases.”

The cost of the study was not immediately available, but the money will come out of the \$315,000 application fee Three Point initially paid the district.

“Who knows what the outcome will be,” said Tennant.

“They’re covering the bases and the questions they need answers to in order to make a recommendation to the community.”