

Langford gets first look at ambitious green concept

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Ground-breaking plans for what is billed as the first green neighbourhood of its type in North America were greeted with curiosity and cautious optimism by Langford residents at an information meeting Thursday night.

Traffic -- including that generated by the project -- was the main concern about the proposed Westhills development. About 150 people attended the meeting, expected to be the first of many for the plan.

The 200-hectare neighbourhood with 5,000 units would be built over the next 10 to 15 years on land straddling the E&N rail line on the south side of Langford Lake between Humpback and Jacklin roads.

Seen as a future home to 12,000 to 15,000 people, it would be the first entire neighbourhood in North America to be built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) sustainability standards.

LEED ratings are voluntary guidelines to promote green development. A project accumulates points for such features as public transportation, proximity to schools and environmentally friendly design.

"I'm excited about this. I hope that this project will take shape and form and have the enthusiasm that this community is really good for, like we did with the Bear Mountain Resort," Mayor Stewart Young said earlier Thursday.

"[Bear Mountain] is first class. This will be even better. This will be a planned community second to none in Canada. With everyone's support we will make this happen and we will be a model that will put Langford on the map again for another project."

Community Services Minister Ida Chong praised the idea.

"Never before have we seen this applied to an entire development, and that in itself is ground-breaking," Chong said.

The development is being done by Westhills Land Corporation. One of that company's subsidiaries, Quadra Pacific Land, owns all of the property. None of the land planned for the development is in the agricultural land reserve, said Westhills development manager Jim Hartshorne.

Westhills Land Corp. was incorporated March 27 with Quadra Pacific Properties and Associated Building Credits as owners. The two directors are Reginald Martin Stewart and Royston Wyndham Stewart.

Among previous Victoria projects of the Stewart family are Goodacre Towers, Regent Towers and Charter House.

The Westhills concept puts an emphasis on "compact high-density development" including single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums and five per cent affordable housing.

- Secondary suites would be legal.

- 40 per cent of the area would be preserved for parkland or open space and 100 per cent of wetlands and streams would be protected.

- All buildings would have environmental features such as energy-efficient and low-pollution lighting, low-flow toilets, grey-water irrigation systems and pesticide-free landscaping.

- Buildings would accommodate both live and work spaces and amenities would be located within walking distance of the neighbourhood core.

- Bike and bus routes as well as use of the E&N Rail line for commuter traffic are envisaged to reduce traffic congestion. The new neighbourhood would have one major village centre and a couple of smaller commercial areas.

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