

Westhills housing project at Langford growing bigger

Bill Cleverley

Times Colonist

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

Already projected to house about the same number of people that live in Colwood, the massive Westhills development on the south side of Langford Lake could be getting bigger.

Just a year ago, Langford gave its blessing to 5,000 units that would be built over the next 15 to 20 years to house between 12,000 and 15,000 people. The community would be built on a 200-hectare site south and southwest of Langford Lake.

Monday, Langford's planning and zoning committee agreed that another 950 units should be allowed in the project which is trumpeted as Canada's first neighbourhood built entirely to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

"Density is what is the driver of development, said Westhills consultant Jim Hartshorne. "If you don't have density, you can't develop. It's as simple as that. You can't produce the unbelievably expensive infrastructure that we've committed to this project unless there is density."

Westhills has always promised 40 per cent of the site will be retained as green space and Hartshorne said the developers remain committed to that.

The Westhills project has been proposed as a sustainable community with green-space, a variety of housing, commercial centres, and recreational opportunities. The committee has agreed to include a new business park area in which everything from building supply outlets to commercial nurseries to film production companies would be allowed to set up shop.

Single family homes, townhouses and medium and high-rise condominiums are proposed in the mix.

The plan now is to increase the maximum number of single family dwellings to 1,500 from 1,250 and the total number of dwelling units (other than secondary suites) to 5,950 from 5,000.

Originally, it was planned to have secondary suites in every single family home. Westhills is now requesting a minimum of 850 secondary suites be built to reflect the increased number of smaller lots (less than 500 sq. metres).

Also under the revised plan, the number of areas where high-rises would be permitted would increase to 13 from seven. Hartshorne said that up to 16 towers could be built climbing to 20 storeys in height. However, he said, those would be in the last phase of the development and, depending on the market, towers may never be built .

"There are no height limitations in our zoning and there won't be to my knowledge and certainly we would object to any height restriction in regard to a general sense of high-rises," he said. He added that making the project work with 40 per cent green space dedication and building to LEED standards is a challenge.

Westhills is proposing to include additional property as protected green space. Most notable is a 14.4-hectare piece at 1321 Parkdale Drive.

As part of its plans to be an environmental leader, Westhills is planning to recover heat from sewage treatment for use in heating. Grey water from sewage treatment and collected storm water is to be used for irrigation on public lands.

The developer is to build a mini hydro electric generation plant near the Paradise Ponds falls to provide electricity for the park infrastructure and all single family homes and townhouses are to be built to Build Green bronze standards.

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

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

The new neighbourhood would have one major village centre and a couple of smaller commercial areas

Bike and bus routes as well as use of the E&N Rail line for commuter traffic are envisaged to reduce traffic congestion. The developer is giving \$1 million to Langford to build a commuter rail infrastructure including a station along the E&N tracks. The planning committee's recommendations have to be endorsed by council and go to public hearing.

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.