

USE OF TSAWWASSEN LANDS IS ON A ROLL

In March, Tsawwassen First Nation's Legislature gave the okay to a new 'neighbourhood' on its old reserve lands. That was followed in mid-April by the announcement of a partner in a huge mixed-use development on 70 hectares of treaty lands along Highway 17 near BC Ferries. In less than three years, many of the promises of treaty are being realized.

'SIGNATURE SHOPPING' DESTINATION

When the Tsawwassen Economic Development Corporation (TEDC) announced an agreement with Ivanhoe Cambridge and Property Development Group (PDG) recently, it didn't mince words.

"This exciting project has the potential to become one of British Columbia's signature shopping locations."

Chris Hartman, who heads TEDC said Ivanhoe would be developing about two-thirds of the 175 acres along the highway leading to the BC Ferries terminal. PDG will develop the rest. He had outlined the plans to the Delta Chamber of Commerce in February, but the April announcement was much more detailed.

"Under the current concept, approximately 1.8 million square feet of retail, office, entertainment and other uses would be developed in two projects," he said.

The Ivanhoe part of the project would include retail and an entertainment centre, tentatively named Tsawwassen Mills. It is based on it will follow the success of CrossIron Mills, near Calgary, and Vaughan Mills near Toronto.

PDG will develop the remainder of the parcel for outdoor retail space and mixed use. He said it would be called 'Tsawwassen Commons' and "will be similar to destination retail neighbourhood centres they are developing in other parts of Canada."

The project could generate more than 1,200 person years of employment during construction and employ over 4,500 workers once the projects are in operation. He said initial phases of the projects will be under construction in 2012.

PLANNING A NEIGHBOURHOOD

Meanwhile, a plan for more than 100 hectares (about 270 acres) of key TFN lands got the final approval from the TFN Legislature recently.

The plan's purpose is to create a variety of residential, employment and recreational opportunities, for the benefit of Tsawwassen landowners. The new 'neighbourhood' plan is for lands of the former Tsawwassen Reserve, an area north from Highway 17 to an area near the industrial lands adjacent to DeltaPort and west of the proposed mixed-use business park and specialty retail areas.

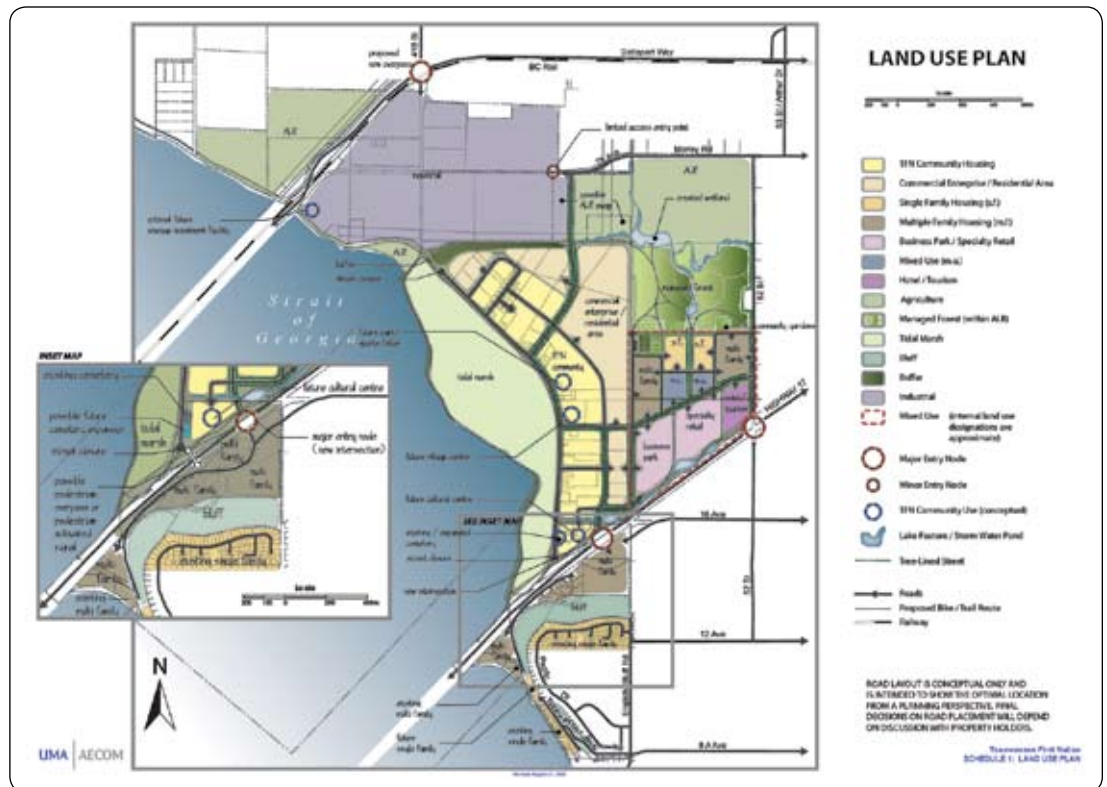
Two years ago, TFSI holders' ability to dispose of land interests was highlighted as being one of the key ingredients of building the TFN of the future. One of the guiding principles of the TFN's overall land use plan was making sure that landowners ("Tsawwassen Fee-Simple Interest" or "TFSI" holders) were able to maximize financial returns by working together.

The Tsawwassen Land Use Plan, which was adopted in 2009, said TFSI holders "will collaborate on development opportunities and share the costs of servicing to generate higher returns than could be obtained by going it alone." That is why families, property owners and out-of-town TFN members gave their feedback at a series of meetings since last summer.

APPROVAL PROCESS

An open house for the draft Neighbourhood Plan was held in early March after which the Legislature approved the document. The plan is designed to be a flexible document, in that TFSI holders will have to have options to develop their lands while the needs and desires of the overall community is considered.

Detailed studies regarding sewers, storm water management, water supply, transportation and flood construction levels are now underway. The regulation process for development will apply for all activity undertaken in the area, including rezoning, subdivision and the granting of development permits.



All land use applications must comply with the TFN's Land Use Planning and Development Act and other regulations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPURS NON-NATIVE DEBATES

Klahowya readers will be familiar with some grumbles from Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council nation's neighbours as economic development activities take place. Most recently, we reported last year about objections to Snaw-naw-as Nation's logging plans.

Now there is a healthy debate going on among Tsawwassen First Nation's neighbours about its plans for large developments on TFN Treaty Lands.

One writer to the Delta Optimist newspaper said:

I am sickened by the fact some of the best agricultural land in B.C. (which should be used for growing food and possibly agri-tourism related business) will instead hold a mega industrial development, complete with possibly 200 stores, 1,864 homes, storage area for Deltaport containers and who knows what else (perhaps an incinerator)?

But another resident, Gerry Copeland, wrote:

"TFN has probably been more affected by the changes in our community than most of us. It was only 50 years ago when its quiet little community was changed forever when the provincial government built a four-lane highway for the hundreds of cars a day that would drive through the middle of it heading to and from the ferry terminal.

"That was followed by the now mammoth-sized Roberts Bank. Along with the noise and pollution produced by both, this also left the TFN looking out onto an unattractive industrial landscape and the eerie amber glow at night. How much thought or consideration was given to how these two developments would impact upon the lives of the TFN? I suspect very little.

"I might not necessarily agree with everything TFN members are planning to do, but it is their land and their right to do what they feel is best for their people."

www.delta-optimist.com/