

## District of North Van approves first village centre plan



By North Shore Outlook

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Two years since the District of North Vancouver signed its development-defining official community plan, the first neighbourhood to get the green light to begin its transformation into an official village centre is Lower Capilano.

The neighbourhood, near the foot of the Lions Gate Bridge, is bisected by Capilano Road on the north side of Marine Drive. That means it's one of the heaviest commuter-traffic communities on the North Shore, a reality its new village-centre designation won't eliminate but try to do smarter.

District council unanimously approved the Lower Capilano Marine Village Centre Plan on Monday,

which will bring a village square, new park space, 100,00 square feet of new commercial-office space, pedestrian walkways, community amenities and about 1,200 new housing units to the neighbourhood over the next 20 years.

Neighbourhood resident and Capilano Gateway Association chair Doug Curran was instrumental in organizing the community around the village-centre plan. He told The Outlook on Tuesday he's just relieved to see that change is officially afoot.

"Obviously, I'm very pleased the implementation plan was approved unanimously by council," Curran said. "I've had a lot of people who when we began this were in opposition to everything we were trying to do, who have since come on board with the changes."

Most of those changes will happen in the heart of the village centre, between Marine Drive, Belle Isle Place, Fullerton Avenue and Capilano Road.

"We will see significant amenities delivered through the development process," said the District's manager of sustainable community development, Susan Haid. "There will be refinements from time to time. The design guidelines for the village centre are near completion and would be added to the OCP as an amendment and go through public process subsequently."

Promoting alternative transportation modes like walking, biking and transit will also be a big part of the village centre revitalization plan over the coming years as today very few trips are made in the area outside of cars, due to the neighbourhood's thoroughfare-oriented infrastructure.

In a worst-case study of additional car traffic likely to be brought about by the new Lower Capilano development, district staff predict about 10 new vehicle trips per minute travelling through the area.

"We've heard from our traffic consultant that there's nothing we can do with a lot of those traffic concerns regardless of what happens in Lower Cap because of the concerns of the Lions Gate Bridge," Coun. Alan Nixon said.

"This is not all going to happen, thankfully, in the next two to three years," he said, adding some changes will take as long as seven years to reach fruition.

Coun. Lisa Muri said that while she initially struggled to get onside with changes of this order during the official community plan process, she feels she has now "evolved from my initial opposition to development."

The Maplewood neighbourhood is poised to be the next to gain approval of its village-centre plan, as are the two larger "town centres" of Lynn Valley and Lower Lynn.

"Not everybody is, or will be, happy with the direction we've taken," Mayor Richard Walton said. "[But] there'll be ample opportunity every time a piece of property is going to be zoned or developed; there'll be public hearings, and opportunity after opportunity after opportunity. These are living documents. This is like a roadmap and roadmaps are changed all the time."

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