Official Community Plan Vision for the Upper Lands and the Goals for this Process

OCP Vision for the Upper Lands

The District updated its Official Community Plan (OCP) in 2018. This update included expanded planning policy for the Upper Lands, proposing a further evolution in the shift toward protection of natural areas and more sustainable development.

The overall long-term vision in the OCP is to:

• Protect all of the lands west of Eagle Creek (i.e. all of the Inter Creek and Eagleridge planning areas) in a natural state and enhance outstanding recreation opportunities.
• Create new compact, sustainable urban communities in Cypress Village and Cypress West in clustered villages that protect natural and recreation features within these areas.

This vision builds on extensive analysis and creative thinking by the citizen-led Upper Lands Working Group, which looked at planning the remaining Upper Lands in a holistic way. This vision also echoes aspirations set out in other planning policies and processes over the past two decades (see the background document, Additional Planning Context, for more information).

The OCP recommends achieving this vision by transferring the existing development potential of the lands in Inter Creek and Eagleridge into Cypress Village and Cypress West.
First Major Step in Implementing the Vision, which is the Focus of the Planning the Upper Lands Process

Transferring all of the residential development potential from Inter Creek and Eagleridge into Cypress Village and Cypress West likely involves converting almost all of the units from single detached to multifamily. This is necessary to achieve a compact, sustainable urban form.

The resulting amount of multifamily housing would take decades to develop at the recent, relatively slow pace of growth in West Vancouver, likely spanning 50 years or more. It is neither possible nor prudent to predict the kinds of changes in technology, transportation, community priorities, housing needs, climate, and the nature of urban development that will likely occur over such a long timeframe. There is a need for flexibility, to adapt to a changing world over time.

Therefore, the District is planning for a major first step in implementing the long-term vision in the OCP. This first major step will create detailed policy to govern development that will span the next 15 to 20 years. This first step is the focus of the Planning the Upper Lands process. The goals are to:

- Protect a substantial portion of the Eagleridge lands for conservation and recreation, including the most ecologically significant portions
- Create a compact urban community in Cypress Village, served by transit, with a mix of housing types, community facilities, and shops/commercial space to serve Cypress Village and Rodgers Creek.

This approach means that planning for the rest of Cypress Village and Eagleridge, plus Cypress West and Inter Creek, would happen in the future as part of a subsequent and separate planning and engagement process.

The concept of this idea is shown in the image above. Note that this is illustrative only. The location and extent of the lands that will be involved in this first major step of implementing the OCP vision will be determined as part of the Planning the Upper Lands process.
The scale and character of the Cypress Village neighbourhood will be determined during the planning process. Preliminary testing indicates that a community of about 2,500 residential units is needed to support transit service, support a neighbourhood commercial centre, include a diverse mix of housing including strata and rental homes, and to facilitate the transfer of development potential to protect a large portion of Eagleridge. The planning process will include analysis of the benefits and potential impacts of the proposed village, including ways to minimize impacts on traffic and the environment.
Extracts from the 2018 OCP

Extracts from the OCP about the Upper Lands are contained in the Documents section of the website. Some of the relevant policies from the OCP include:

- OCP, Section 2.2: “Undeveloped lands below 1,200 feet in elevation are zoned for single-family development. However, these lands include important environmental assets and recreational opportunities that the community values, notably in areas west of Eagle Creek where the District recently dedicated Whyte Lake Park (2014) and where important wetlands and Arbutus groves exist. Adopting a more holistic lens is needed to situate all future development within its wider mountain context - both to preserve the most valuable environmental and recreational values in perpetuity, and to provide for future development of the kinds of housing and amenities in and around Cypress Village that most benefit the community.”

- OCP Policy 2.2.8: “Cluster development around a mixed-use Cypress Village to minimize the area developed, protect natural and recreational features, reduce required infrastructure, achieve the compact development of mixed housing forms, and ensure a sustainable village with a strong sense of community.”

- OCP Policy 2.2.13: “Establish Cypress Village as a unique gateway to mountain recreation with strong links to the rest of West Vancouver, incorporating distinctive uses and features (such as unique retail, a civic plaza, community and recreational facilities, and other public amenities) in addition to commercial and institutional uses that serve the local community.”

- OCP Policy 2.2.14: “Include a range of housing types, tenures and unit sizes (including rental, non-market, family, and seniors housing) within the Cypress Village and Cypress West neighbourhoods to meet the needs of residents of different ages and incomes, and establish maximum unit sizes for these housing types.”

- OCP Policy 2.2.1: “Manage new development in the Upper Lands...by:
  a. Continuing to restrict residential development in the Limited Use and Recreation area above 1,200 feet;
  b. Maintaining an overall residential density of 2.5 units per gross acre for undeveloped public and private lands below 1,200 feet; and
  c. Varying density within areas and transferring development rights from one area to another to direct development to lands most suitable for development, protect and acquire environmental and recreational assets, and allocate density to achieve neighbourhood focus and identity.”

- OCP Policy 2.2.2: “Prepare Area Development Plans to establish permitted land uses, development criteria, and design controls prior to the subdivision, rezoning and development of land.”

- OCP Policy 2.2.3: “Determine through a planning process, including technical analysis and public input, if there are demonstrable community benefits that would warrant consideration of:
  a. Any exceptions to the restriction on residential development above 1,200 feet; or
  b. Any increases to the overall residential density provisions below 1,200 feet.”
• OCP Policy 2.7.9: “Protect environmental values below 1,200 feet in the Upper Lands area by:
   a. Seeking to protect permanently areas west of Eagle Creek, prioritizing areas of significant ecological values such as the Arbutus groves west of Nelson Creek, Larson Creek and wetlands, and other sensitive wetlands and habitats;
   b. Transferring development potential of lands west of Eagle Creek to future neighbourhoods east of Eagle Creek and dedicating public lands west of Eagle Creek as municipal parkland; and
   c. Establishing a ‘soft edge’ of development and appropriate urban-forest interface and buffer to sensitive features.”

• OCP Policy 2.2.9: “Seek to transfer the residential development potential from all remaining lands below 1,200 feet west of Eagle Creek to:
   a. The Cypress Village planning area (between Cave and Cypress Creeks) as the primary focus for future neighbourhood development in the Upper Lands; and
   b. The Cypress West planning area (between Cypress and Eagle Creeks) as a secondary community supporting Cypress Village.”

• OCP Policy 2.2.15: “Consider density bonuses in the Cypress Village and Cypress West neighbourhoods if:
   a. The residential development potential from lands west of Eagle Creek below 1,200 feet has been accommodated within the Cypress Village and Cypress West neighbourhoods; and
   b. More complete and successful communities in Cypress Village and Cypress West can be achieved, in terms of amenities and facilities, the desired variety of housing types and tenures, and the economic feasibility of commercial services.”

• OCP, Section 2.2: “This OCP recommends the transfer of development potential away from higher value ecological and recreational assets to cluster new housing close to existing infrastructure in the compact and complete future neighbourhood(s) of Cypress Village and Cypress West. This would allow a much larger area to become protected in perpetuity.”