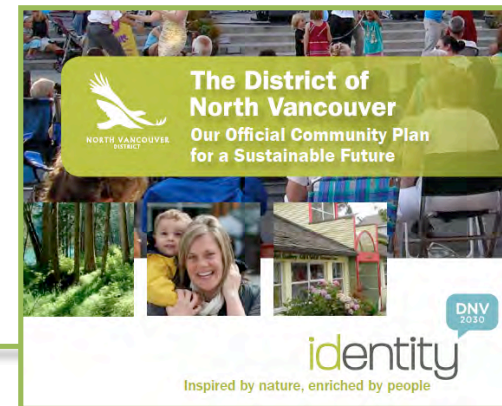


District of North Vancouver OCP: Speak up for Health!

From: Brian O'Connor, Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health

Re: Health Perspective on District of North Vancouver OCP
Public Hearing scheduled for May 16, 2011 ... Speak UP!



A. Purpose

This memo describes how the District of North Vancouver's OCP matters to people's health, and why we should speak up for health!

A body of research and evidence links the places people live with health outcomes. Vancouver Coastal Health and District of North Vancouver have a Memorandum of Understanding for health involvement with the Official Community Plan update.

VCH is interested in long-term community planning (OCP has a 30+ years planning timeline), land use, and growth management. A community that is intentionally built to support a community that is healthy will positively affect well-being and health outcomes, and can also be expected to result in more affordable health care services for a growing population.

The District of North Vancouver's Public Hearing on the OCP (May 16, 2011) is an important opportunity to speak up for health, to ensure that the OCP is adopted in a form that creates a healthy future community.

This brief intends to:

- I. Raise awareness about how 3 key OCP issues matter from a health perspective
- II. Encourage groups and individuals to "speak up for health" at the **District of North Vancouver OCP public hearing scheduled for May 16, 2011**, voice their support for policies and directions that encourage and protect the health of the people in the community



B. Health Perspectives on 3 Key OCP issues

1. Housing for all

VCH encourages housing for all.

- VCH supports OCP policies that encourage neighbourhoods with diverse housing options to meet the needs of all the people in the community, present and future.
- Different types of housing meet a critical community responsibility toward residents' health, social well being, and equity.
- VCH supports DNV's approach in the OCP for exploring the potential for infill housing initiatives on a pilot basis, which would be evaluated and guide future implementation.



Health rationale for inclusive and diverse housing

1. Children: The highest test scores for 'school readiness' are achieved by young children living in neighbourhoods with mixed income levels (higher scores than in uniformly wealthy neighbourhoods). This is related to access to neighbourhood services that facilitate their development.
2. Lifecycle needs and social connection: A mix of housing means that people can live independently and remain part of the neighbourhood as their life circumstances change, particularly as many residents age. Aging adults that are more socially connected have lower stress, they are physically and mentally healthier, and they have lower mortality rates. We all experience changing social and housing needs and choices first hand ... if not now then in the future.
3. Dollars and sense:
 - Appropriate housing choices to 'age in place' independently is more effective for public costs.
 - If appropriate supportive housing options are not provided to meet needs of people in the community (e.g. seniors, lower income people, homeless people), the public costs --in the form of health care, prisons, emergency shelters-- are much higher than if housing and support had been initially provided.

2. Leveraging Growth to make a healthier community

VCH supports a connected network of community centres.

- The District of North Vancouver's population is anticipated to grow relatively modestly in the coming years: 27,000 additional people will live in North Vancouver in 2041, which represents only 2% of Metro Vancouver's total regional growth in this period.
- The OCP plans that additional growth will be concentrated in a network of community centres, that are connected together by transit corridors. There is a strong case, from a health perspective, to create better and more concentrated opportunities for transit, shopping, walking, recreating and group gatherings.
- **Connected centres reinforce and support health objectives for people to become more active by moving around on transit, bike and walking; and to provide a concentrated land use pattern and design that promotes social connections.**



Health rationale for a connected network of mixed-use centres:

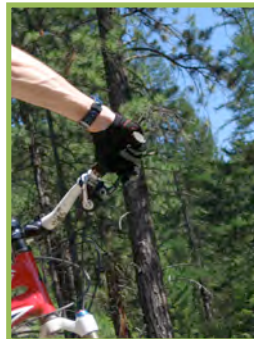
Design and layout of neighbourhoods is directly linked with people's physical activity and health.

- Medium density neighbourhoods can support **transit** as an alternative to driving. Simply by walking to transit stops people can achieve **up to 29% of recommended physical activity**.
- People that live in the most **walkable neighbourhoods drive 58% less** than the norm. As a result, a typical caucasian male living in a compact and mixed-use neighbourhood weighs 4.5 kg (10 lbs) less than his 'twin' that lives in a low-density subdivision.
- **Older adults who walk regularly report better physical and mental health and life satisfaction.** However 65% of older adults do not engage in sufficient levels of physical activity to maintain or improve health, because destinations that are too far apart and walking infrastructure is poor.
- If there is a **grocery store** (big or small) in their neighbourhood, people are 1.5 times more likely to achieve sufficient physical activity by walking to and from the store. For each grocery store within 1 km of home, we are 11% less likely to become overweight because of the potential of walking and available healthy food options.

3. Well-Being, Physical Activity & Good Food

VCH supports OCP commitment to community well-being

- The OCP recognizes the importance of safe and nutritious food, and the District's leadership role in urban agriculture, creation of a food policy, etc. The North Shore Table Matters group played a key role in mobilizing community residents about this issue, and encouraging the District to include stronger food policies in the OCP.
http://www.ediblegardenproject.com/egp_blog/not-much-urban-agriculture-in-district-of-north-vancouver-ocp/
- VCH supports OCP policies for programs, services, and strategies to specifically benefit targeted population groups including at risk populations, and those with a range of needs and economic means.
- VCH applauds the District's commitment in the OCP to work with civic and community partners to achieve mutual objectives for social well-being.



Why this is important to health

1. Some populations - low-income groups, ethnic minorities, children, seniors and those with disabilities - may be disproportionately exposed to environmental health hazards, have less access to food and opportunities for physical activity. Different approaches are required in order to maximize the opportunities for individuals from these groups to engage in healthy, active lifestyles.
2. Low-income groups tend to have poorer health and lower levels of physical activity than the population at large.
3. Physical activity is important for people with disabilities to promote health and prevent health conditions related to inactivity and overweight, such as diabetes, osteoarthritis and cardiovascular disease.
4. Spaces for food production and gardening, natural conservation and recreation areas pay off: direct contact with nature is associated with improved mood, reduced anxiety and stress, as well as improved physical health.



C. Call to Action

Speak Up for Health!

- Consider speaking up by coming in person or submitting a letter at the Public Hearing about the OCP. We are all 'experts' in our community and our voices are important. Consider the impact on your health, your children's opportunities, the environment.
- Talk it over with your family, with groups you are involved in, with your neighbours.

VCH applauds many voices in the OCP, and encourages more!

- The OCP process invested in engaging residents to create the plan and seek input. As Council considers the OCP, we need to rely on the input, intentions, and work that have created the plan.
- The voices of residents that are often not as involved in the process (e.g. disadvantaged groups, 'the silent



majority', etc.) need to be brought forward and considered.

- To implement the OCP, the municipality has a strong leadership role: taking direct action, partnering with local agencies, advocating for change to senior governments, etc.

For further information

From District of North Vancouver: <http://identity.dnv.org/>

From Vancouver Coastal Health:

Brian O'Connor, Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health - North Shore
brian.o'connor@vch.ca, 604-983-6701

Sandra Edelman, Manager, Population Health and Chronic Disease Services
Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore
Sandra.edelman@vch.ca, 604 904-6453

Jean Thompson, Team Leader, Population Health, North Shore Community & Family Health,
jean.thompson@vch.ca, 604-904-6460

Claire Gram, Population Health Policy Consultant, Vancouver Coastal Health
Claire.gram@vch.ca, 604 875-5600 local 67636