

# HALIFAX

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**Item No. 4**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**November 17, 2020**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by   
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** November 6, 2020

**SUBJECT:** **Municipal Affordable Housing Initiatives – Update on the Affordable Housing Workplan**

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## INFORMATION REPORT

### ORIGIN

On July 31, 2018 the following motion of Regional Council was put and passed:

*“THAT Halifax Regional Council direct staff to proceed with the initiatives contained in the Affordable Housing Work Plan, as set out in Attachment B of the staff report dated June 21, 2018.”*

### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

*Municipal Government Act - Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing*

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter), Part III – Powers, Part IV - Finance and Part VIII Planning & Development*

## **BACKGROUND**

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* defines affordable housing as “housing that meets the needs of a variety of households in the low to moderate income range”. The broad nature of this definition exemplifies how affordable housing encompasses a large range that can address deep affordability for our most vulnerable populations as well as a moderate affordability for our working population. Affordable housing is most often tied to housing that addresses “Core Housing Need” or when no more than 30% of low to moderate income households’ gross income is spent on housing. This includes the cost of mortgage/rent, monthly heat (includes gas, oil and electricity), water, and utilities.

As a regulator of development, HRM plays a significant role in where and how housing can be developed. Our land use provisions impact housing supply, housing types and densities. While the provision of affordable housing is often noted as the responsibility of the province, HRM acknowledges it is a shared responsibility. Where the provincial government plays a large role in providing services to support those in need of housing, including rent supplements, emergency shelters and public housing, HRM plays an important part in supporting affordable housing through land use policies in our Regional Plan and Community Plans, by requiring the inclusion of affordability through incentive or bonus zoning, or through financial incentives and by providing the use of surplus land to develop. As exemplified in this report, HRM’s role in supporting and encouraging affordable housing has increased steadily over the past several years.

### **Housing and Homelessness Partnership**

The [Housing and Homelessness Partnership](#) (HHP) is a collaborative of nine partners from the three levels of government, the private sector and non-profit organizations in Halifax. In October 2013, Regional Council endorsed HRM’s formal participation with the Partnership. The Partnership’s Charter was formally signed in 2014, with the mandate to “end homelessness and housing poverty in Halifax” by addressing policy and systemic issues. The HHP acknowledges that affordable housing and homelessness cannot be solved by any single group or any single solution and that all partners need to work together.

HRM has collaborated with members of the HHP on several initiatives including the [2015 Housing Needs Assessment](#), [5 – Year Strategic Plan](#) and supporting municipal Housing First projects. While the HHP has served an important role in collecting information and establishing collective priorities, it has been integral for developing working relationships between the groups involved. This is important for HHP initiatives as well as initiatives of individual groups. The 5 Year Strategic Plan, which includes the following three goals for maintaining and creating affordable housing in Halifax:

- increase the supply of affordable housing options that meet people’s needs;
- reduce the number of residents living in core housing need;
- foster a strong housing sector.

In response to the strategic plan, HRM developed the [Affordable Housing Work Plan](#) which outlines 6 key areas where the Municipality can contribute to meeting the 5 year targets. This work plan was approved by Regional Council on July 31, 2018.

## **DISCUSSION**

The following paragraphs provide an update to the 2018 Affordable Housing Work Plan along with additional initiatives that are being further explored by HRM.

### **Update on the Affordable Housing Workplan**

On July 31, 2018, Regional Council approved the affordable housing workplan which highlighted 6 key areas where the municipality can contribute to the HHP’s 5-year strategic plan and our overall goals (Attachment A). The following provides a summary of the work completed to date in relation and updates on next steps.

## 1. DENSITY BONUS:

The *HRM Charter* enables the Municipality to use the incentive or bonus zoning (density bonus) planning tool to allow an increase in built area in exchange for public amenities or benefits.

### *Progress Since July 2018*

- On September 18, 2019 Regional Council approved Centre Plan Package A, which includes a density bonus program for all of the Regional Centre, with the exception of the lands within the Downtown Halifax Plan, which already has a density bonus program. 60% of the density bonus must be provided in the form of cash-in-lieu to be used for affordable housing.
- On September 30, 2020 Regional Council approved a density bonus reserve and Administrative Order 2020-007-ADM, Respecting Incentive or Bonus Zoning Public Benefits that will guide how cash-in-lieu collected through the density bonus program will be allocated.
- On September 30, 2020 Regional Council also approved Administrative Order 2020-008-ADM, Respecting Grants for Affordable Housing which creates guidelines for an affordable housing grant program.

### *Next Steps*

- A consistent density bonus program including the option of cash-in-lieu for affordable housing will be expanded to the Downtown Halifax Plan Area through Centre Plan Package B. This program will eventually be expanded to the Suburban and Rural areas as part of the Plan and By-law Simplification Program.
- Staff are exploring how to create an interim density bonus program for areas outside the Regional Centre as part of the Regional Plan review.

### *Links to Resources/Reports*

- [Incentive or Bonus Zoning Fact Sheet](#)
- [Incentive or Bonus Zoning Reserve; Administrative Order 2020-007-ADMADM, Respecting Incentive or Bonus Zoning Public Benefit; and Administrative Order 2020-008-ADM, Respecting Grants for Affordable Housing Staff Report](#)

## 2. REGISTRATION AND/OR LICENSING OF RESIDENTIAL RENTAL UNITS:

The registration and/or licensing of residential rental units will require all residential rental units within the municipality to be registered or licensed. This allows for more flexibility in ensuring buildings are compliant with rules and regulations including meeting minimum standards.

### *Progress Since July 2018*

- On April 30, 2019 Regional Council directed staff to draft amendments to By-law M-200, Respecting Standards for Residential Occupancies, that include provisions for mandatory registration of residential rental accommodations.
- On September 30, 2020 Regional Council approved amendments to By-law M-200 to expand minimum safety standards to apply to all residential buildings and enhance safety, community integration, and accountability provisions.

### *Next Steps*

- A staff report regarding a rental registration by-law will be presented to Regional Council in 2021.

### *Links to Resources/Reports*

- [Amendments to By-law M-200, Respecting Standards for Residential Occupancies, and Administrative Order 15, Respecting License, Permit and Processing Fees Staff Report](#)

### 3. POLICY AND REGULATORY BARRIERS:

While the Regional Plan supports a diversity of housing forms, HRM's various community plans and land use by-laws are inconsistent and complex and may be creating barriers to the types of affordable housing needed by key populations. Housing forms in need of review include:

- Special Care Facilities / Supportive Housing;
- Secondary Suites; and
- Single Room Occupancies.

#### *Progress Since July 2018*

- On September 1, 2020 Regional Council approved amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and all Land Use By-laws to allow secondary and backyard suites accessory to low density residential uses.
- On September 30, 2020 Regional Council requested a staff report that
  1. recommends approaches to ensure accessibility to secondary and backyard suites from streets or driveways; and
  2. discusses how the Municipality will monitor secondary and backyard suites to determine if further amendments to community land use by-laws should be considered.
- Staff have been drafting an approach to remove barriers for shared housing – a single term to include special care facilities, supportive housing and single room occupancies.

#### *Next Steps*

- A staff report recommending region wide amendments on shared housing will be presented to Regional Council in 2021.
- A staff report recommending approaches to ensure accessibility to secondary and backyard suites and a monitoring program to assess the success of the land use by-law amendments will also be presented to Regional Council in 2021.
- HRM will be releasing educational material regarding secondary and backyard suites to help address frequently asked questions.

#### *Links to Resources/Reports*

- [Case 21162: Secondary Suites and Backyard Suites Supplementary Staff Report](#)
- [Shared Housing Shape Your City Page](#)

### 4. MUNICIPAL FUNDING INCENTIVES:

Government funding support for affordable housing developments is one of the most effective ways to reduce housing costs and increase the supply of affordable housing. While the Federal and Provincial governments currently play the leading role in providing funding incentives, many municipalities throughout Canada have implemented their own form of funding programs, such as waiving development fees or providing grants.

#### *Progress Since July 2018*

- Over the winter of 2019 HRM invited Municipalities across Canada to complete a survey asking what sorts of municipal programs or incentives are offered to support the development and retention of affordable housing. The majority of questions were focused on funding programs and the use of municipal surplus land.
- Over the winter of 2019, HRM met with several non-profit housing organizations to discuss municipal programs that support affordable housing (mainly grants and surplus land program) and whether new approaches are needed to work towards the Housing and Homelessness Partnership's affordable housing targets.
- In 2019, 54 properties owned by 6 non-profit organizations, where the provision of housing was the primary mandate, were awarded some level of tax relief totaling \$33,691.94.
- In 2019, \$101,500.00 was awarded to 6 housing organizations for repairs and site maintenance through our community grants program.

- On March 26, 2019 Regional Council directed staff to prepare a report discussing the implications of waiving all construction related permit fees.
- On September 30, 2020 Regional Council approved first reading of the proposed amendments to municipal administrative orders and by-laws to waive the majority of municipal related construction fees for residential developments by registered non-profit and charitable housing groups.
- On September 30, 2020 Regional Council approved amendments to the multi-year tax relief program to allow for a form of multi-year tax relief.

#### *Next Steps*

- On November 10, 2020 Regional Council approved amendments to municipal administrative orders and by-laws to waive the majority of municipal related construction fees for residential developments by registered non-profit and charitable housing groups.
- Should Regional Council approve second reading of the noted amendments, staff will monitor the success of the program.
- Consider using cash-in-lieu for affordable housing to launch the Affordable Housing Grant program for 2021.
- A staff report that outlines the above research findings, discusses the financial implications and effectiveness of various approaches in the HRM context and makes recommendations concerning the feasibility of providing municipal funding incentives for affordable housing will also be presented to Regional Council in 2021.

#### *Links to Resources/Reports*

- [Incentive or Bonus Zoning Reserve; Administrative Order 2020-007-ADMADM, Respecting Incentive or Bonus Zoning Public Benefit; and Administrative Order 2020-008-ADM, Respecting Grants for Affordable Housing Staff Report](#)
- [Waiving Municipal Related Construction Fees for Registered Non-Profit and Charitable Housing Developments Staff Report](#)

#### **5. SURPLUS MUNICIPAL LAND:**

Government funding support for affordable housing developments is one of the most effective ways to reduce housing costs and increase the supply of affordable housing. Since land is often a great cost barrier to development, the use of surplus land is a key municipal contribution to the development of affordable housing.

#### *Progress Since July 2018*

- Over the winter of 2019 HRM invited Municipalities across Canada to complete a survey asking what sorts of municipal programs or incentives are offered to support the development and retention of affordable housing. Most questions were focused on funding programs and the use of municipal surplus land.
- Over the winter of 2019, HRM met with several non-profit housing organizations to discuss municipal programs that support affordable housing (mainly grants and the surplus land program) and whether new approaches are needed to work towards the Housing and Homelessness Partnership's affordable housing targets.
- Planning and Development continue to work with the Corporate Real Estate Team to identify properties suitable for housing when reviewing municipally owned properties that are under consideration to be deemed surplus.
- On September 22, Regional Council approved a motion to schedule a public hearing to consider the sale of 64 – 91 True North Crescent, Dartmouth, to the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia. The public hearing is scheduled for November 17, 2020.
- On September 22, Regional Council requested that staff amend Administrative Order 50, Respecting the Disposal of Surplus Real Property (AO-50), to establish a specific category for affordable housing; and explore the other approaches (Ad Hoc, Land Trusts, Land Development agency, and a Housing Corporation) to leveraging surplus municipal land for affordable housing.

*Next Steps*

- Staff will return to Council with a recommendation report regarding a specific surplus land category for affordable housing and exploring other approaches to leverage surplus land.

*Links to Resources/Reports*

- [Homes for Heroes Foundation, Clustered Tiny Homes and Surplus Municipal Land for Affordable Housing Staff Report](#)

**6. VULNERABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS:**

HRM contains a number of neighbourhoods that are especially in need of affordable housing. In 2017 the Housing and Homelessness Partnership agreed to focus on homelessness and housing poverty solutions in the area known as “Between the Bridges” that encompasses Dartmouth North.

*Progress Since July 2018*

- In the spring and fall of 2019 HRM, along with various other members of the HHP, participated in a five-day Social Innovation Lab organized by Between the Bridges with the goal of increasing the amount of quality affordable homes in Dartmouth North.
- As a result of the Social Innovation Lab, three themes were highlighted as possible projects, including:
  - exploring tiny homes as an affordable type of development
  - establishing a housing navigator (or point person for questions/contacts regarding housing) and
  - community beautification.

*Next Steps*

- Each of these three themes are continuing to be explored by participants with support from Between the Bridges. Planning and Development staff are currently playing a role in exploring Tiny Homes and are available to assist in any of the projects.

**Other Initiatives Related to Affordable Housing**

Housing and Homelessness Partnership

As noted in the Background section, in 2015, the Affordable Housing Working Group developed a 5 Year Strategic Plan, which includes 3 main strategic goals for maintaining and creating affordable housing in Halifax. These goals are intended to be revisited in 2022, however since the establishment of the strategic plan the following progress has been made:

- 1) Increase the supply of affordable housing options that meet people’s need
  - 109 additional units of affordable social and non-market rental housing
  - 191 additional units of affordable home-ownership units
  - Approximately 120 new secondary units
  - 5 additional single room occupancy residents
- 2) Reduce the number of residents living in core housing need
  - 551 additional rent supplements
  - 423 units preserved or upgraded
- 3) Foster a Strong Housing Sector
  - The HHP holds an annual housing symposium to discuss matters related to affordable housing and share success stories throughout the province. The symposium brings together non-profit housing organizations, government representatives and people with lived experience. The [7<sup>th</sup> annual housing symposium](#) will be held virtually on November 23, 2020.

- During the fall to spring of 2018-19 the HHP held individual forums directed to private developers, landlords and non-profit housing organizations to provide information regarding government programs to support the development and retention of affordable housing and to discuss how support can be expanded and strengthened.

In recent years the HHP has been exploring initiatives regarding a Housing Investment Trust Fund, exploring funding opportunities related to secondary and backyard suites and encouraging the development of supportive housing.

#### Rapid Housing Initiative

On October 26, 2020, the Federal Government launched a new Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) that invests \$1 billion to create up to 3,000 new permanent, affordable housing units across the country. This is much needed funding that will help the Municipality to address urgent housing needs of people and populations who are vulnerable.

This Rapid Housing Initiative covers the construction of modular housing and the conversion of vacant or non-residential buildings to affordable housing, including the acquisition of land. This initiative will be delivered through two funding streams:

- Major Cities Stream: funding will flow directly to municipalities to ensure they are directed to areas where chronic homelessness is most prevalent and;
- Projects Stream: program will prioritize applications received from Provinces, Territories, municipalities, Indigenous governing bodies and organizations and non-profits based on the overall strength of the application.

As part of the Major Cities funding stream, HRM has been identified for immediate funding of \$8,659,527 to create a minimum of 28 units of new permanent affordable housing. To secure this funding, an investment plan outlining the capital projects that will be built, must be submitted to CMHC before November 27, 2020.

Municipal staff have reached out to affordable housing providers to identify partners and establish projects that could benefit from this new funding initiative. The municipality will need to partner with not-for-profits or registered charities that are established housing providers to deliver the housing and will be further discussed in a separate report.

#### National Housing Strategy

The federal government announced the National Housing Strategy in November 2017. The Strategy allocates \$40 billion over 10 years to fund programs, housing research, loans and grants to maintain existing affordable housing as well as create new supply. Support outlined in the Strategy includes the provision of federal surplus land, cash contributions and low interest loans. Through programs, such as the co-investment fund, proponents are encouraged to work with other levels of government to support affordable housing developments.

In 2019 the federal government adopted the National Housing Strategy Act, which recognizes housing as a right.

#### Short Term Rentals

Short term rentals (STR) are temporary overnight accommodations rented out by property owners or tenants, typically for a few nights or weeks. While STRs are often linked to benefiting tourism and the local economy they are often associated with concerns about the loss of long-term rental housing and increasing rents.

On May 16, 2019, the Community Planning Economic Development (CPED) Committee requested that staff prepare a report to consider the creation of a By-law to regulate STRs. Key components of this request included:

- Completing a jurisdictional scan;
- Creating a resident survey; and
- Consulting with the short-term rental industry and the Province of Nova Scotia.

A [staff report](#) was presented to Regional Council on September 30, 2020 as and as result Regional Council

- Initiated a process to amend the Regional Plan and all applicable secondary municipality planning strategies and land use by-laws to establish consistent regional wide policies, definitions and regulations for short-term rentals in residential areas consistent with the direction set out in the Discussion section of this report;
- Requested staff Develop short-term rental registration requirements consistent with the direction set out in the Discussion section of this report;
- Requested the Mayor write a letter to the Province to request the required amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Marketing Levy Act to enable the Municipality to apply the marketing levy to operations consisting of less than 20 rooms or rental units.
- Requested a staff report that considers requesting the Mayor also ask the Province to amend the Marketing Levy Act to allow for a possible increase to the maximum marketing levy.

#### Tiny Homes

On September 22, Regional Council requested staff consider developing planning policies to enable clustered tiny home developments through the By-law Simplification program, Regional Plan Review and Land Leased Community By-law review. This motion was a result of a former request that staff prepare [a report](#) outlining what steps would be necessary to accommodate a program known as Homes for Heroes in the HRM. Homes for Heroes, a non-profit organization that offers supportive housing for homeless veterans who are transitioning from military service to civilian life in the form clustered tiny home communities.

This work will not only benefit groups such as Homes for Heroes but will also compliment the work regarding Tiny Homes with the Between the Bridges group.

#### **Conclusion**

It is worth noting that the majority of initiatives noted above have been led by or have had significant involvement from Planning and Development. HRM further supports housing and homelessness work through our community grants and non-profit tax relief programs, through work from our public safety office and its support for the housing navigator programs, through collaboration with the United Way on the Anti-Poverty Solution Strategy, through the work of our emergency management coordinator and through support from the Mayor and Councillors in community-led initiatives.

To reiterate, while the provision of housing is often noted as the responsibility of the province, HRM has played a significant role in encouraging housing affordability and supporting non-profit housing organizations. Through continued work with the HPP and progressing with the next steps of the Affordable Housing Work Plan and other noted initiatives, staff look forward to continuing this role.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate financial implications of this report. The proposed Affordable Housing Work Plan can be carried out with existing resources, within the approved 2020-21 budget. Through this work plan, further financial analysis will need to be conducted on the context of Municipal Funding Incentives and Surplus Municipal Lands. Any future findings or recommendations requiring additional resources or funding will return to Regional Council in a separate report(s) for consideration.



**RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation of this report. Items contained within the Affordable Housing Work Plan will require additional reports to Council where potential risk will be further assessed.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

While there has been no additional community engagement as part of this information report, each of the initiatives outlined in this report have undergone a form of community engagement or may be subject to further engagement. Much of the Municipality's work regarding affordable housing is discussed with members of the Housing and Homelessness Partnership.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: 2018 Affordable Housing Work Plan

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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# Affordable Housing Work Plan

## Planning & Development

June 2018

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In December 2016, Regional Council directed staff to develop a work plan to support the Housing and Homelessness Partnership five-year affordable housing targets of creating 3,000 new affordable homes and preserving 2,000 existing affordable homes. While concerted efforts from all partners are needed to meet the agreed upon targets, the following summarizes the specific Municipal project work staff will prioritize in addition to staff's continued support for the Partnership's shared initiatives.

Note: The below priorities may be adjusted should the Province amend the HRM Charter to enable HRM to use inclusionary zoning planning tools, or implement other new approaches for supporting affordable housing developments.

### 1. Density Bonus

The *HRM Charter* enables the Municipality to use the density bonus planning tool to allow an increase in built area in exchange for public amenities or benefits. While originally limited to downtown Halifax, in 2014, the Province extended HRM's ability to use the density bonus tool to the Centre Plan Area. At the time, the Province also required a portion of the bonus to be provided in the form of affordable housing. In spring 2018, the Province amended the *HRM Charter* to enable the Municipality to use the density bonus tool in all areas of HRM. To date, however, the density bonus tool has not yet been used outside of downtown or in support of affordable housing due to several factors, including the lack of an administrative approach for calculating and monitoring affordable housing benefits. Currently, there are draft provisions in Package A to support density bonusing in the Centre Plan Area. The Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) recently discussed the density bonusing material on June 27, 2018 and a recommendation from CDAC on the density bonusing approach is expected in the coming months.

#### Proposed Direction

- expand the ability to implement density bonusing in key areas within the Centre Plan Area. and throughout HRM growth area
- where affordable housing is provided as part of a density bonusing agreement affordable units must
  - be reasonably dispersed throughout the development
  - be of similar design to the market units, although interior amenities may differ; and
  - remain affordable for a set amount of years
- money to be used for affordable housing may be collected and retained by the Municipality
- developers will be required to provide annual reports to the Municipality showing that the unit(s) are affordable and rented to low income tenants

#### Support for five-year affordable housing targets

- contributes to the goal of creating 1,000 new affordable private market rental units
- possibility to contribute to the goal of creating 250 affordable home ownership units through condo developments

#### Support Requested from Partnership

- collaboration from Housing Nova Scotia to provide advice on how to monitor the affordability of units provided by private developers

- potential collaboration with other members of the partnership to match units with not-for-profit housing providers

#### Monitoring Tools

- developers may be required to provide annual reports to the Municipality showing that the unit(s) are affordable and rented to low income tenants
- staff will keep a record regarding the number of affordable units created through the program
- further monitoring tools will be discussed in a separate report to Council

#### Progress to date

- On December 13, 2016 Regional Council directed staff to proceed with developing a bonus zoning program
- In February, 2018 proposed density bonus policies and regulations were included in the Centre Plan draft Package A

## **2. Registration and/or Licensing of Residential Rental Units**

Through By-law M-200, Respecting Standards for Residential Occupancies, residential buildings are required to meet minimum health, safety, and liveability standards. M-200 cases are investigated by P&D Building Officials and HRFE Fire Prevention staff. M-200 complaints are submitted by the tenants based on conditions in their own units. If violations are found they are brought to the attention of the owner to remedy. In this common scenario, the tenants' complaint is unavoidably revealed to the owner. Some tenants do not feel comfortable making a complaint under this system for fear of reproach from their landlord. Other tenants may not be aware of their rights to file a complaint. Requiring registration or licencing of residential rental units could alleviate some of these issues as it could facilitate a system of proactive inspections and would make the landlord more accountable for the state of their residential units through publicly accessible reporting. The information gained by a residential registration program would provide valuable information that could be used to support evidence based decision making for affordable housing initiatives.

#### Proposed Direction

- In June 2016 Regional Council directed staff to consult a variety of housing stakeholders to discuss and potentially develop a residential building licensing model. Specific direction concerning a rental licensing and its potential use in HRM will be discussed in the resulting staff report.

#### Support for five-year affordable housing targets

- contributes to the goal of preserving and upgrading 2,000 existing units
- contributes to goal of reducing vacancy rates in key neighbourhoods through providing a database of existing rental units

#### Support Requested from Partnership

- Stakeholder engagement has taken place through a consultant and the findings will be discussed in the forthcoming staff report. HRM can work independently on this initiative and may seek additional feedback from the Partnership in the future.

#### Monitoring Tools

- Monitoring tools will be further assessed in a separate report to Council.

#### Progress to date

- June 2016, Regional Council directed staff to consult a variety of housing stakeholders to discuss and potentially develop a residential building licensing model.

- February through to May 2017, Stantec Consulting Ltd completed various stakeholder interviews, focus groups and a large workshop to discuss a potential residential building licensing model for HRM.
- Staff are currently drafting a report for Council to further discuss registration and/or licencing of rental properties.

### **3. Policy and Regulatory Barriers**

While the Regional Plan supports a diversity of housing forms, HRM's various community plans and land use by-laws are inconsistent and complex and may be creating barriers to the types of affordable housing needed by key populations. Housing forms in need of review include:

- Special Care Facilities / Supportive Housing;
- Secondary Suites; and
- Single Room Occupancies.

There is currently little consistency in how such uses are defined and permitted through the various community plans and land use by-laws. In the case of some forms of Special Care Facilities / Supportive Housing, the use is further limited though outdated regulation that requires provincial licensing.

#### Proposed Direction

- build on the direction contained in the Regional Plan and consider permitting Special Care Facilities / Supportive Housing, Secondary Suites and Single Room Occupancies in zones that permit residential uses
- update the definitions of each use and provide consistent definitions in each of the community plans
- complete a review of each use and update policies and remove unnecessary and outdated policy and regulatory barriers
- work in close coordination with the Centre Plan and By-law Simplification initiatives to prepare regional wide MPS and LUB amendments

#### Support for five-year affordable housing targets

- contributes to the goal of creating 500 new secondary units
- contributes to the goal of creating 250 affordable home ownership
- contributes to goal to increase the number of licensed Single Room Occupancies
- contributes to removing barriers to housing developments geared towards key populations in need of affordable housing, including seniors and person with disabilities

#### Support Requested from Partnership

- HRM can work independently on addressing the policy and regulatory barriers. However, HRM will seek input from the members of the Partnership when conducting research and preparing recommendations to Council.

#### Monitoring Tools

- staff will track development permit applications for permitting Special Care Facilities / Supportive Housing and Secondary Suite developments and measure any increases in such applications
- staff will track the number of newly registered Single Room Occupancy uses
- further monitoring tools will be discussed in a separate report to Council

#### Progress to date

- August 2017, Council initiated the process to amend planning documents to simplify, consolidate and remove barriers to the development of special care facilities. Over the fall, staff reviewed land use regulations in other jurisdictions and consulted with stakeholders. Staff are currently drafting a recommendation report for Council.
- March 2018, Council initiated the process to amend planning documents to simplify, consolidate and remove barriers to the development of secondary suites. Staff are currently reviewing land use regulations and consulting with stakeholders.
- Secondary suites permit data suggests that there have been 106 permits issued for secondary or accessory apartments from Dec 2015 to July 2018 or roughly 21% of the stated goal of 500 units by 2022.
- Staff are in the process of reviewing current regulations regarding single room occupancies and are exploring approaches to expand the uses.

#### **4. Municipal Funding Incentives**

Government funding support for affordable housing developments is one of the most effective ways to reduce housing costs and increase the supply of affordable housing. While the Federal and Provincial governments currently play the leading role in providing funding incentives, many municipalities throughout Canada have implemented their own form of funding programs, such as waiving development fees or providing grants. Given Council's commitment to the affordable housing targets, staff will explore the development of a Municipal affordable housing funding program aimed at encouraging affordable housing developments in the Municipality. A variety of approaches will be reviewed to ensure any proposed program makes the most effective use of limited Municipal resources. This will include collaboration on initiatives already underway with the Department of Finance and Asset Management.

On January 30, 2018 Regional Council requested a staff report to assess options for requesting the transfer of the responsibility to operate and deliver housing programs and services within the boundaries of Halifax on behalf of the Province. As staff prepare the above requested report, the below proposed direction to review municipal funding incentives may change as staff open discussions with the Province, conduct further analysis and respond to additional Council direction.

#### Proposed Direction

- assess the effectiveness of December 2017 changes to By-law B-201, the Building Bylaw, allowing the waiving of building permit fees for projects undertaken by not-for-profits with funding from Housing Nova Scotia or CMHC
- review municipal funding programs adopted by other municipalities
- review, and assess the applicability of, Section 73 of the HRM Charter for entering into agreements with the Minister of Community Services or the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to support the provision of affordable housing in the municipality
- prepare a report to Council that outlines the above research findings, discusses the financial implications and effectiveness of various approaches in the HRM context and makes recommendations concerning the feasibility of providing municipal funding incentives for affordable housing

#### Support for five-year affordable housing targets

- potential to contribute to all sub-targets depending on how the program is designed and implemented

#### Support Requested from Partnership

- collaboration with Housing Nova Scotia or CMHC will be required to explore funding agreements
- input from the whole partnership to discuss best options for financial incentives and to establish criteria

#### Monitoring Tools

- tools to monitor Municipal funding incentives will be further discussed in the report to Council

#### Progress to date

- On November 14, 2017, Regional Council considered a staff report concerning municipal funding incentives and amended the Building By-law to exempt building permit fees for developments proposed by not-for-profit organizations or charities that include affordable units.

### **5. Surplus Municipal Lands**

High land costs are one of the main barriers to affordable housing developments. For this reason, several municipalities throughout Canada have developed programs to make municipal owned lands available for affordable housing. Making lands available for affordable housing developments in HRM could have a significant impact in promoting new affordable housing developments. This will include collaboration with initiatives already underway with the Department of Finance and Asset Management.

#### Proposed Direction

- ensure that members of the Partnership are aware of any surplus municipal lands
- review how other municipalities leverage affordable housing projects through surplus municipal lands and determine if any practices could be implemented by HRM
- prepare a report to Council that outlines the above research findings, discusses the financial implications and effectiveness of various approaches in the HRM context, and makes recommendations concerning the feasibility of leveraging surplus Municipal lands for affordable housing developments

#### Support for five-year affordable housing targets

- contributes to the goal of creating 3,000 new affordable homes
- contributes to the goal to strengthen and build capacity for increased effectiveness of the housing sector

#### Support Request from Partnership

- input from affordable housing providers to determine what lands would be most desirable for affordable housing projects
- input from the whole partnership to discuss best options for enabling not-for-profit affordable housing providers to access to surplus municipal lands

#### Monitoring Tools

- tools to monitor the effectiveness of using surplus Municipal land to leverage affordable housing projects will be further discussed in the report to Council

#### Progress to date

- research on practices from other Canadian municipalities

### **6. Vulnerable Neighbourhoods**

HRM contains a number of neighbourhoods that are especially in need of affordable housing. These needs are often related to broader community and social development issues. Over the summer of

2017, two Dalhousie University School of Planning students looked at the Halifax and Dartmouth neighbourhoods and highlighted 6 vulnerable neighbourhoods. As a result of this work, in October 2017 the Housing and Homelessness Partnership agreed to focus on homelessness and housing poverty solutions in the area known as “Between the Bridges” that encompasses Dartmouth North. The Partnership will focus on developing pilot projects specifically designed to the neighbourhood. These projects will be assessed by the Partnership and if deemed successful will be tailored to other neighbourhoods throughout HRM.

#### Proposed Direction

- identify issues in the Dartmouth North neighbourhood that contribute to housing poverty and homelessness
- develop one or more actions plans to address the identified issues; this may include policy changes, public investments, or other community development initiatives

#### Support for five-year affordable housing targets

- potential to contribute to all sub-targets depending on the community’s needs and plan of action

#### Support Request from Partnership

- input from the whole partnership to identify issues and determine action plans and methods for implementation

#### Monitoring Tools

- tools to monitor programs and pilot projects will be tailored to the specific project

#### Progress to date

- over the summer of 2017, 6 communities in Halifax and Dartmouth were highlighted as vulnerable neighbourhoods
- October 2017, the Housing and Homelessness Partnership agreed to focus on homelessness and housing poverty solutions in the area known as “Between the Bridges” located in Dartmouth North
- the non-profit group, Between the Bridges has been operating in Dartmouth North for over two years and is currently the lead organization working with Dartmouth North as a vulnerable community
- staff continue to be engage Between the Bridges in their work along with a number of other stakeholders, including Public Health, the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and the Halifax Regional Police