

# HALIFAX

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**Item No. 15.1.6**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**November 23, 2021**

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

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

**DATE:** November 2, 2021

**SUBJECT:** **Public Participation Program - Interim Incentive or Bonus Zoning Program**

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## **ORIGIN**

On September 14, 2021 the following motion of Regional Council was put and passed:

*“THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report to, adopt, by policy, a Public Participation Program, the purpose of which is to initiate a process to consider amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy to establish an Interim Density Bonusing Program for land outside of the Regional Centre.”*

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter), Part VIII, Planning & Development.*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to follow the public participation program, as set out in the Discussion section of this report, for the consideration of amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, and applicable Land Use By-laws, to establish an Interim Density Bonusing Program for lands outside of the Regional Centre.

## **BACKGROUND**

Incentive or Bonus Zoning (Density Bonus) is a tool that allows the Municipality to require public benefits that are connected to development and contribute to the public realm and livability of the area. Public benefits can be on the ground, such as public art, or can be received as money-in-lieu, such as funds to be used to support affordable housing or municipal park improvements. These public benefits are generally provided in exchange for predetermined “bonus” development rights, which are granted in addition to what is permitted as-of-right.

The density bonus tool was first used in HRM in the Downtown Halifax Plan Area and subsequently in the Regional Centre Plan Area, where the provision of affordable housing is identified as a required public benefit. However, there is currently no density bonusing program outside of the Regional Centre except for the property locate at 205 Bedford Highway. As a result, there is no tool to consistently collect public benefit for developments within suburban and rural areas of the Municipality.

Establishing an interim density program was introduced as part of the Themes and Direction Report of the [2021/22 Regional Plan Review](#). An [issue paper](#) discussing an interim density bonus program was released as part of the community engagement for the Regional Plan Review undertaken this summer. On September 14, 2021, Regional Council directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to initiate a process to consider amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy to establish an interim density bonus program for lands outside of the Regional Centre. This will serve as a means to require public benefit for larger developments throughout the Municipality until a more formal program is adopted through the Land Use By-law Simplification Process for suburban and rural areas.

## **DISCUSSION**

Community engagement for the Regional Plan Review opened on May 20, 2021 and ran until July 16, 2021. Engagement was focused on the 11 themes outlined in the Themes and Direction Report. Public engagement activities included an online survey, a series of six online question and answer sessions, an online comment forum, a dedicated phone number and project email, a website with a variety of resources, and stakeholder meetings.

It is recommended that staff obtain stakeholder and public feedback specific to an interim density bonus program through sharing information on HRM’s website, providing information respecting how comments can be provided to the Municipality, and conducting targeted meetings.

In additional to public feedback received during this program, staff will review public and stakeholder feedback that relates to an interim density bonus program collected though the Regional Plan Review.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

The HRM costs associated with the planning document amendment process can be accommodated within the C320 operating budget using existing resources.

Finical implications that result from an interim density bonus program will be further discussed in a separate report.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations contained within this report. MPS amendments are at the discretion of Regional Council and are not subject to appeal to the N.S. Utility and Review Board.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In February of 1997, Regional Council approved a public participation resolution, under which staff recommends an appropriate public participation program for Council's consideration, w Accordingly, this report recommends a public participation under the Discussion section which will address the recommended public participation program for the consideration of amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy to establish an Interim Density Bonusing Program for lands outside of the Regional Centre.

In addition to the proposed public participation, the *HRM Charter* requires a public hearing to be held before Regional Council, which can consider approval of any amendments.

Amendments to the RMPS, SMPSs and LUBs will potentially impact the following stakeholders: provincial government, developers and the general public.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications were identified.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Regional Council may direct the CAO to select an alternative public participation program to consider amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy to establish an Interim Density Bonusing Program for land outside of the Regional Centre. Doing this may require a supplementary report.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

No attachments.

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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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