

Re: Item No. 15.1.1

HALIFAX

Housing Accelerator Fund - Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing & Suburban Housing Accelerator SMPS & LUB (MINORREV-2023-01065)

Regional Council, First Reading

April 23, 2024

About this presentation

The presentation will provide background on:

- Background
- Process
- Public Engagement
- Overview of Proposed Changes
- Next Steps
- Recommendation

BACKGROUND

Process to Date

June 6, 2023: Council direction to submit application to the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)

Sept. 26, 2023: Council direction on the final agreement and direction to initiate amendments to planning documents by July 2024

Oct. 12, 2023: HRM & CMHC reach HAF Agreement

Jan. 17 – Feb. 16, 2024: Public comment period on proposed HAF changes to planning documents.

Related Processes:

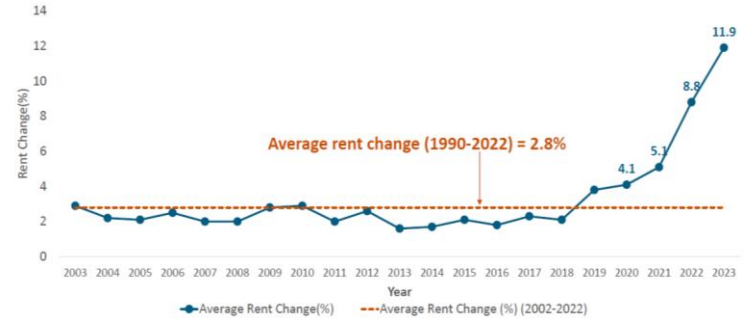
July 11, 2023: Council initiates Suburban Planning process

June 20 – Oct. 23, 2023: Community engagement on Draft Regional Plan

Why do we need more housing?

- **Housing affordability and availability** are significant challenges for the municipality and across Canada.
- **Rapid population growth** (approx. 2-4.5% per year) has greatly increased demand for housing
- Growth pressures, along with challenging market and project conditions have led to a **lack of supply** in the market
- The rate of **residential construction** has not been able to keep up with the demand for housing
- **Vacancy rates are low and prices continue to rise** for renters and potential homeowners
- There is a **need to act now to support the long-term availability of housing** and to support individual projects in being realized more quickly

Halifax, percent change in same-sample average rents, all apartment dwellings, 2003 to 2023



PURPOSE-BUILT RENTAL MARKET

Vacancy Rate

1.0%

Average Two-Bedroom Rent

\$1,628

UP by 11%










Source: CMHC 2024

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Changes in support of:

- Council and public support for housing
- Provincial Housing Strategy
- Housing Accelerator Fund

What changes are being considered now?

-  Enabling 4 units per lot as-of-right, where services exist in the municipality
-  Increasing density and height in ER-3, COR and HR Zone and near transit corridors
-  Increasing density in residential areas, with a focus on encouraging wood frame construction
-  Increasing height and floor area ratio (FAR) in Centre Zones in the Regional Centre
-  Increasing density near university and college campuses
-  Removing more parking requirements
-  Increasing as-of-right development approvals
-  Protecting heritage and considering water and wastewater infrastructure
-  Work with the Province to enable unilateral discharge of DAs

ENGAGEMENT

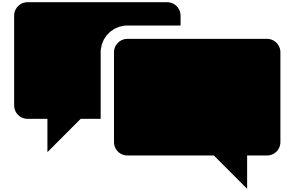
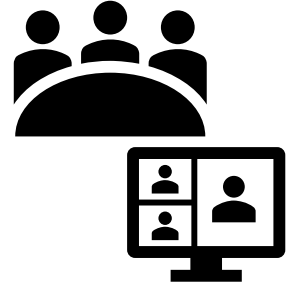
What We Heard – Report Attachment A 8

- Engagement **January 17, 2024 - February 16, 2024.**
- **What We Heard Report (Att. 8 of staff report)** includes a summary of process and key themes as well as correspondence received



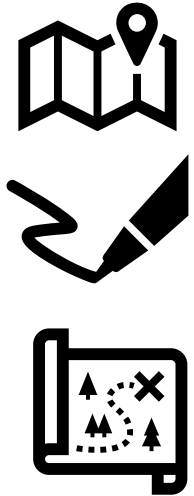
What did we hear?

- The municipality received **over 700 pieces of correspondence** and five petitions
- Positive feedback included general support for action on the housing crisis, more housing, more transit-oriented development, and more gentle density in communities
- Concerns included losing community character, lack of infrastructure, and limited engagement on the proposed changes
- Local concerns accounted for approximately half of all feedback received. Concerns were focused on several neighbourhoods



How did we use this information?

- Public feedback is recorded and summarized in the **What We Heard Report** and will be included in the report to Regional Council
- **Some of the changes in response to feedback include:**
 - revised zoning and heights in areas near post-secondary institutions (Peninsula South and Peninsula North), and along Victoria Road
 - additional lot size and urban design requirements for Established Residential areas;
 - one new and one expanded proposed Heritage Conservation District (HCD) in the Regional Centre
 - addressing additional site-specific requests in the Regional Centre;
 - minor changes to Suburban Opportunity Sites and a proposed second grouping of Suburban Opportunity Sites and suburban parking requirements



OVERVIEW

Report Structure

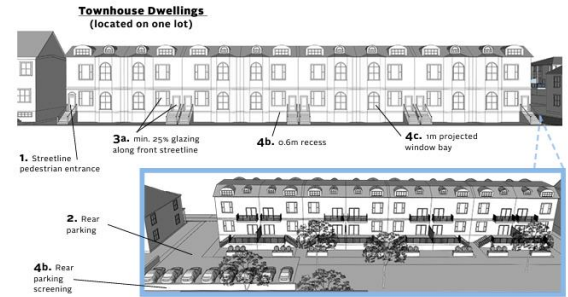
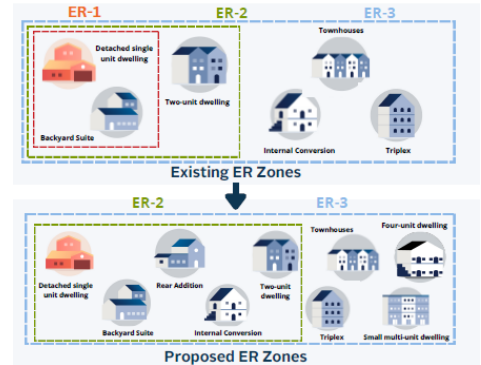
DISCUSSION

- Changes to the Centre Plan
- Changes to Planning Documents in the Urban Service Boundary
- Region-Wide Changes to Planning Documents
- Site-Specific Changes to Planning Documents
 - Centre Plan Site-Specific Requests
 - Suburban Plan Site-Specific Requests (Opportunity Sites)



Regional Centre – Key Changes ER Zones

- **Gentle Density:** moving from 3 to 2 zones (ER 2 & ER 3)
- **ER 2 Zone:** permit 2 units + backyard suites, rear additions & internal conversions
- **ER 3 Zone:** permit 4 units per lot + backyard suite; up to 8 units per lot based on lot size
- **Max. Height:** 8 m - 11 m (ER-2); 11 m + 3 m for habitable peaked roof (ER-3)
- **Bedroom Counts:** removed, controlled by built form & Building Code
- **Design Controls for 4 + units:** screening for waste & parking screening, location of parking, max. building dimensions, setbacks, yards, articulation, entrances etc.

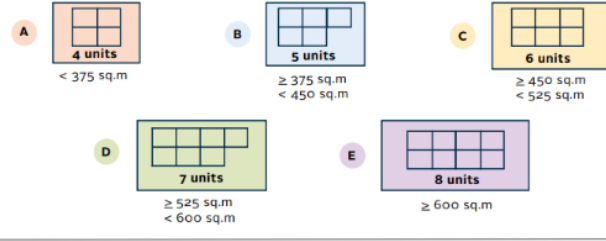


Regional Centre – Key Changes ER Zones

ER-3 Zone: Unit count & lot size



How many dwelling units will be permitted in the proposed ER-3 Zone?



Based on lot size, the proposed ER-3 Zone will permit up to 8 units per lot.

How many dwelling units will I be permitted on my lot?

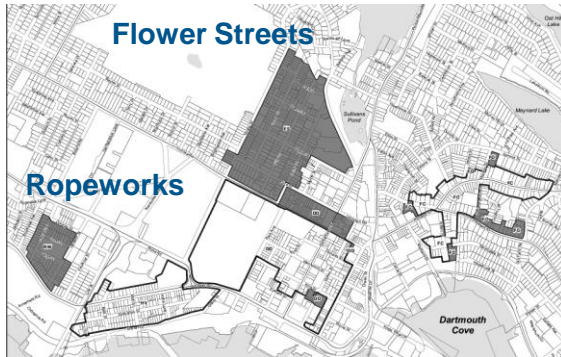
	A	B	C	D	E
If your lot size is:	less than 375 square metres	at least 375 square metres but less than 450 square metres	at least 450 square metres but less than 525 square metres	at least 525 square metres but less than 600 square metres	greater than 600 square metres
You can have up to:	4 dwelling units per lot + 1 backyard suite	5 dwelling units per lot	6 dwelling units per lot	7 dwelling units per lot	8 dwelling units per lot

Regional Centre – Key Changes

- **Post-Secondary Institutions:** more multi-unit zoning & height increases on within walking distance from campus, and on select university sites
- **Mixed-Use Areas:** more height & Floor Area Ratio (FAR) increases eliminate all parking requirements, 1 new Centre, and 1 new FGN
- **Built Form Flexibility:** increased tower dimensions, streetwall stepback for mid-rise buildings
- **Wood Construction:** regulating height in storeys vs metres, streetwall exemption for up to 6 storeys wood buildings in HR zones
- **Heritage:** Minor expansions to 4 proposed Heritage Conservation Districts; Heritage DA in Downtown Halifax Zone; 4 new Heritage Conservation Districts



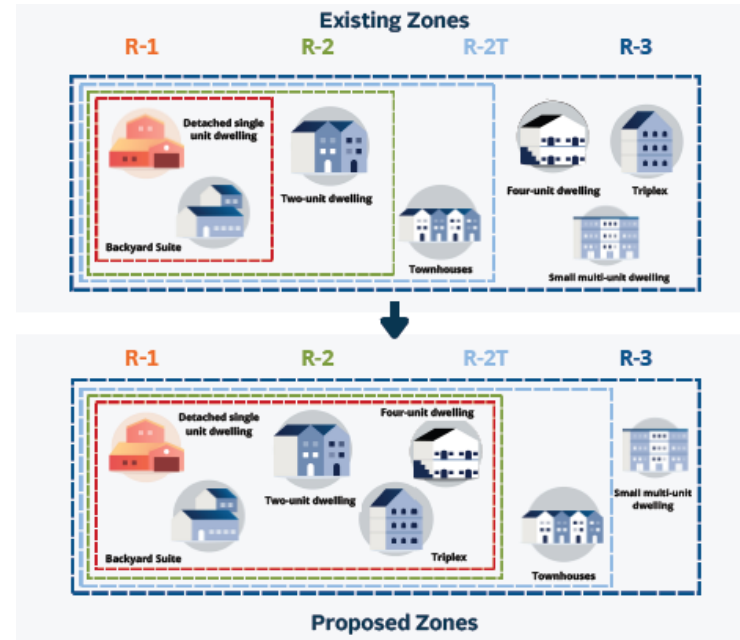
Regional Centre – Additional Proposed HCDs



Attachment C1: MAP
20 1-3

Suburban Area – Key Changes

- Allow 4 units on a lot serviced by municipal water and sewer
- Reduce parking requirements for multi-unit dwellings
- Modernize by-laws to streamline approval of new housing developments



Region-Wide Changes

- **Regional Plan Policy S-35 & S-36:** more flexibility for accessory units
- **Regional Subdivision By-law:** minor housekeeping change for one site-specific request
- **Region-Wide Changes to Planning Documents:** increased flexibility for backyard suites and new accessibility requirements

Regional Centre – Site Specific Requests

- Approximately 60 site-specific requests being recommended as part of HAF process (Att. A-6)
- Key considerations included:
 - Alignment with Centre Plan policy
 - Site Conditions
- **NOTE:**
 - *The requests and our response is depicted in Attachment A6*
 - *Changes can be found in the Centre Plan Area policy and regulatory documents Attachment C1-C2*

Suburban – Site Specific Requests *1

- 42 opportunity sites being recommended majority received BEFORE Jan. 17, 2024 (Att. A7.1)
- Key considerations included:
 - Lot size, location within BRT walkshed or near post-secondary institutions, no net loss of existing multi-unit residential, affordable housing & environmental considerations.
 - To enable most sites – a new zone under the Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan & LUB was created but some requests addressed through minor changes to existing planning policies and regulations
- 2 SMPS Applications included (MPSA 2023-00484 Main Ave, Halifax & MPSA-2023-00851, 41 Cowie Hill Road)
- **NOTE:**
 - *The requests and our response is depicted in Attachment A7 - A7.1 (recommended) and A7.2 (not recommended) generally received before engagement period ; Changes can be found in the Suburban Housing Accelerator SMPS and LUB Attachment C3-C4*



Attachment A5
Proposed Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan (April 2024)

HOUSING ACCELERATOR (HA) ZONE

The Housing Accelerator Designation has only one zone: Housing Accelerator (HA)

Sample development based on design guidelines

Setbacks: 2.0 metres (front) and 3.0 metres (left side-rise) and 6.0 metres (high-rise)

Setbacks: 6 metres from residential or park lanes, 3 metres elsewhere

Building dimensions: Maximum 64 metres width below the streetwall

Streetwall: Typically 4 to 5 storeys, 6 storeys (12 metres) for wood-frame or mass timber construction

Ground-floor height: 3.0m

WHAT IS THE HOUSING ACCELERATOR ZONE?

WHAT IS PERMITTED?

- Residential uses:** A broad range of residential uses are permitted from single-unit up to multi-unit dwellings.
- Commercial uses:** Local commercial uses that are compatible with residential neighbourhoods are permitted on the ground floor.
- Building types:** Most developments in the HA zone will be mid-rise buildings (4 to 7 storeys). Other building types permitted include townhomes (4 storeys or less), tall-mid rise (7 to 10 storeys), and high-rise (more than 10 storeys).

WHERE ARE HOUSING ACCELERATOR ZONES TYPICALLY LOCATED?

The Housing Accelerator (HA) zone is generally located in areas that are close to a high-frequency transit service or post-secondary institutions. Some exceptions may be possible for affordable housing projects. Exact HA zone locations are mapped in Schedule 1 - Maps 1 to 5 of the Suburban Housing Accelerator Land Use By-law.

Suburban – Site Specific Requests *2

- Second set of Site-Specific requests received AFTER Jan. 17, 2024
- Additional 90 submissions, of which approx. 30 may meet HAF project criteria
- Option for Council to direct a 2nd package of opportunity sites using same process as before & bring for Regional Council consideration
- **NOTE:**
 - *The requests and our response is depicted in Attachment A7 - A7.3 and A7.4*
 - *This is not a decision to include now, only a decision to advance forward with a process for these sites – would require engagement and future public hearing*

Project Impact – Regulatory Capacity

Regional Centre:

- 20% increase in regulatory capacity in mixed use areas
- Approx. 30,000 units in Mixed-Use Zones
- Approx. 70,000 units overall

Suburban Area:

- Approx. 5,000 units for Opportunity Sites
- Approx. 135,000 units overall

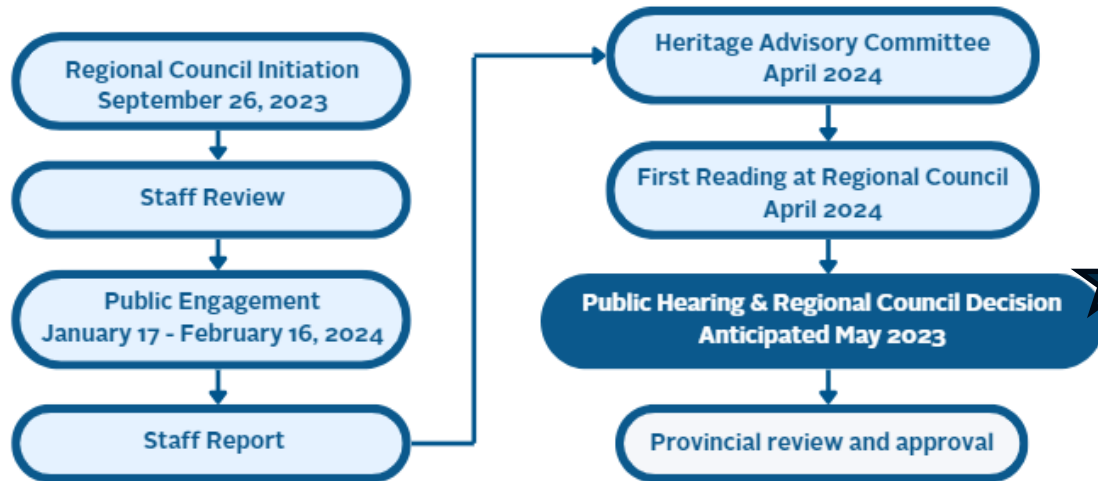


Risks

- **HAF Milestones:** under the CMHC and HRM HAF Agreement require that changes be made to the Centre Plan Area by July 1 2024 and to the Suburban Area by February 2 2025
- **Impact on Projects:** Delays in process also impact construction season, and delivery of Regional Plan
- **Property Values:** There may be a rise in property values due to an increased anticipation and development opportunities. This is expected to stabilize as housing supply increases over time
- **Local Infrastructure:** Funding of constraints in local/area water, wastewater, stormwater and transportation infrastructure are the responsibility of the project applicant/developer
- **Services:** HRM will continue to face pressure on its infrastructure and services in both the short and long-term
- **Affordable Housing:** Continues to be significant need for the development of deeply affordable and affordable housing to offset the high demand and high costs associated with housing in HRM

NEXT STEPS

What are the next steps?



Residents can **send questions** to **haf@halifax.ca**. **Feedback** on the proposed amendments can be sent to the **Clerk's Office** at **clerks@halifax.ca**. This feedback will be shared with Regional Council as part of the Public Hearing process.

★ Next Opportunity for Public Feedback

Information Resources

Information Resources

Interactive
Map

Fact Sheets

Presentations

Staff
Report

Report
Attachments

Report Attachments: The full list of proposed amendments to planning documents (Attachments B - E) can be viewed [here](#).



Information Resources

URGENT CHANGES TO PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR HOUSING

Why do we need more housing?

- Rapid population growth in the municipality (2 - 4.5 % per year) has greatly increased the demand for housing.
- The rate of residential construction has not been able to keep up with the demand for housing. As of 2024, the municipality is estimated to have a shortage of 20,000 dwelling units.
- Unprecedented growth has led to a lack of supply and high costs for renters and potential home owners. Since 2021, the vacancy rate in Halifax has remained at 1.1%, while rent continues to rise (up 11.8 % between 2022-2023).
- The municipality requires not only a greater supply of housing, but also a more diverse supply with options that meet the needs of all residents. Without intervention, the gap between housing demand and housing supply will continue to increase every year.



What is "Missing Middle" Housing and Gentle Density?

Missing middle refers to housing that is intended to fill the gap between single-unit dwellings and high-density multi-unit apartments or mixed-use residential buildings. Missing middle housing options support walkable, complete communities that meet the needs of all residents.

Examples include: Townhouses, two and three-unit dwellings, cluster housing and small scale multi-unit housing.



Gentle density is additional housing that has a minimal impact on a neighborhood's built form and character. The benefits of gentle density include intergenerational living spaces, aging in place and additional income for property owners.

Examples include: Backyard suites, secondary suites and internal conversions of existing single unit dwellings to create new units.

For more information on housing affordability in Halifax, please read the **Municipal Housing Needs Assessments**.

For more information please visit halifax.ca/haf

HALIFAX

URGENT CHANGES TO PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR HOUSING

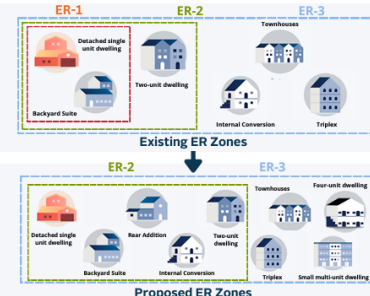
Regional Centre: Established Residential Zones

Proposed HAF Amendments: Permitted Uses

It is proposed that the municipality allow **four or more dwelling units** in all residential zones in the **Regional Centre** by amending the existing "Established Residential" (ER) Zones (ER-1, ER-2 and ER-3) to permit more housing options.

The proposed approach is to replace the ER-1 Zone, which currently limits a large portion of the Regional Centre to single-unit dwellings, with the ER-2 and ER-3 Zones, which allow for greater density and a range of housing types.

See the following table for more details about the proposed zone amendments.

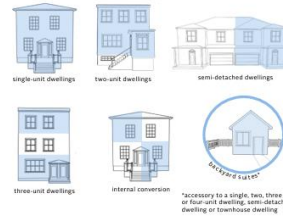


For more information please visit halifax.ca/haf

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PERMITTED BUILDING TYPES IN THE PROPOSED ER-3 ZONE

What building types are currently permitted in the ER-3 Zone?



What additional housing types will be permitted in the proposed ER-3 Zone?



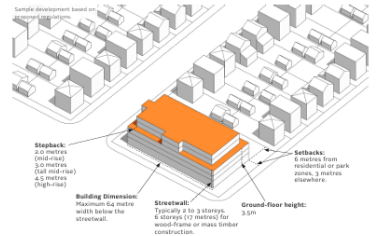
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This document has been prepared for public information purposes only. It does not constitute a contract and is subject to change and Regional Council approval.

HALIFAX

Attachment A5 Proposed Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan (April 2024) HOUSING ACCELERATOR (HA) ZONE

The Housing Accelerator designation has only one zone: Housing Accelerator (HA).



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WHAT IS PERMITTED?

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WHERE ARE HOUSING ACCELERATOR ZONES TYPICALLY LOCATED?

The Housing Accelerator (HA) zone is generally located in areas that are close to a high-frequency transit service or other secondary institutions. Some exceptions may be possible for affordable housing projects. Exact HA zone locations are mapped in Schedule 1 - Maps 1 to 5 of the Suburban Housing Accelerator Land Use By-law.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Give First Reading to consider:
 - a. Approval of the proposed amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Regional Subdivision By-law and applicable secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws, as set out in Attachments B1 to C2, and D1 to E9,;
 - b. Approval of the Suburban Housing Accelerator Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law as contained in Attachments C3 and C4;and schedule a public hearing.
2. Adopt the proposed amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Regional Subdivision By-law and applicable secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws, as set out in Attachments B1 to C2, and D1 to E9.
3. Adopt the Suburban Housing Accelerator Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law as contained in Attachments C3 and C4.
4. Following the approval of the Suburban Housing Accelerator Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:
 - a. Consider amendments to applicable planning documents to enable the Suburban Site Specific Requests listed in Attachment A7, Table A7-3 of this report; and
 - b. Follow the public participation process set out in section 6(a) of *Public Participation Administrative Order*.

Thank you

www.halifax.ca/haf