

Item No. 15.5.1

Request for Council's Consideration		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included on Agenda (Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon Thursday)	<input type="checkbox"/> Added Item (Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon Monday)	<input type="checkbox"/> Request from the Floor
Date of Council Meeting: Tuesday August 6, 2024		
Subject: Building Code Barriers to Missing Middle Housing		
Motion: That Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to prepare a staff report on potential amendments to the building code that would eliminate barriers to constructing small scale multi-unit buildings (i.e. missing middle housing) including relaxing rules that require a second point of egress in every building of two or more storeys.		
Reason: Small scale multi-unit apartment buildings are economically very difficult to build in Canada because our building code requires a second point of access once a multi-unit building is two or more storeys tall. In the United States, the requirement for a second access point kicks in at three storeys, while most of Europe, Australia and New Zealand allows a single access point in small buildings of six or more storeys. The result of having to dedicate space for a second stairway is that Canadian and American apartment buildings tend to be much wider than is the case elsewhere as developers seek to maximize the proportion of rentable space in their projects. Needing two staircases connected by a hallway also means that it's harder to build apartments with more than one or two bedrooms as the layout of a long hallway and stairways makes 1 and 2 bedroom units the easiest floor plan to build. It's not immediately clear that Canada's strictest in the world rule around second access points has made a difference in fire deaths given the realities of non-combustible building materials, modern firefighting and sprinklers, with many countries with less strict rules producing fewer fire deaths per capita than Canada. A few North American cities, such as Seattle, have allowed for more flexibility and BC announced this year that the Province's next building code will allow for single staircase multi-unit buildings. Given the reality of our housing crisis and given that HRM has approved large-scale zoning reform through the federal housing accelerator program to allow for more missing middle housing, HRM should consider what other barriers exist that would prevent the municipality from achieving it's land-use goals. HRM should be prepared to engage and lobby the Provincial government to make changes to enable the construction of more housing.		
Outcome Sought: Staff recommendation report		
<i>Councillor Sam Austin</i>	<i>District 5</i>	