

Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing



What is the goal of the initiative?

In collaboration with the federal and provincial governments, as part of the continued effort to support housing supply, the municipality is proposing amendments to planning documents that regulate the type of development in the municipality's serviced areas.

The proposed changes to planning documents are intended to:

- Meet the housing objectives of the municipality, as well as the Federal Government and the Province of Nova Scotia to increase housing supply and streamline approvals;
- Respond to the requirements established for the Municipality under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Housing Accelerator Fund Program;
- Create more supportive policy and regulatory conditions for building new housing, providing more housing options, and diversifying construction types;
- Build on the Centre Plan framework to further support gentle density, missing middle housing, more housing on transit, more housing for students and residential conversions;
- Advance suburban opportunity sites aligned with transit, and other amendments to suburban planning documents that improve regulatory conditions;
- Create more flexibility for backyard suites across the entire municipality; and
- Create additional regulatory capacity for at least 200,000 units in the Urban Service Area.

Initiatives in HRM's Action Plan include:

1. Make the permit application process more efficient and less expensive for applicants upfront
2. Encourage converting non-residential (e.g. office) buildings into residential units
3. Promote more dense development along proposed rapid transit corridors
4. Make it easier to include housing in heritage redevelopment projects
5. Work with partners to incentivize more density in residential neighbourhoods
6. Partner with the private sector to speed up approvals
7. Expand the Affordable Housing Grant Program
8. Create a program to identify available land for affordable housing

Additional planning proposals include:

- Expand the list of permitted dwelling types in the Established Residential (ER) Zones
- Increase height in Higher Order Residential and Corridor Zones
- Increase height and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) increases in Centre Zones
- Increase density near universities
- Permit up to four-unit dwellings in all residential zones within the Urban Service Boundary
- Remove/reduce minimum parking requirements
- Increase as-of-right development approvals
- Work with the Province of Nova Scotia to discharge Development Agreements



Please note these are **proposed** changes and are **subject to Regional Council approval**.

URGENT CHANGES TO PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR HOUSING

Where are these changes being proposed?

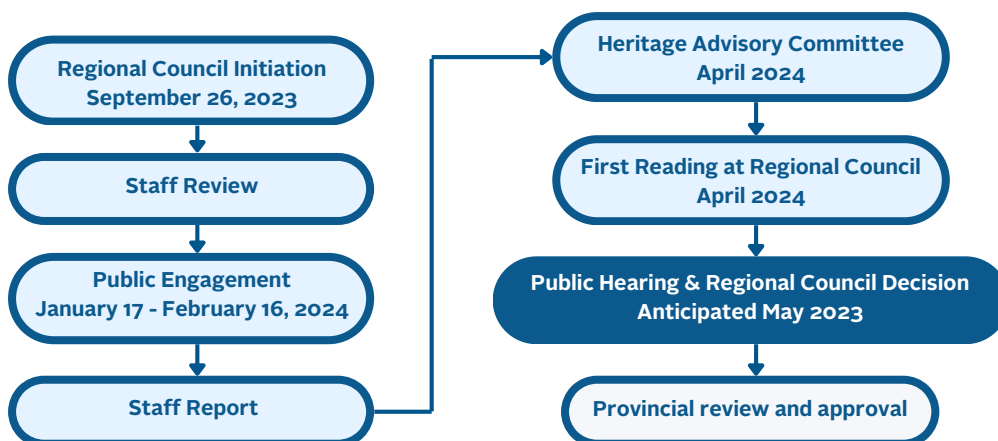
- The proposed planning document amendments will be implemented in existing serviced areas, which include the Regional Centre, the Suburban Area, and Rural communities with central water and sewer.
- The Regional Centre, Suburban Area **and** Rural Area will receive amendments to existing accessory structure regulations to allow more backyard suites.
- Visit the interactive map to see what changes are proposed in your area.

How will the proposed amendments impact existing municipal plans?

- The proposed amendments are guided by the principles set out in the Regional Plan and developed using existing frameworks and feedback from public consultation during the recent phase of the Regional Plan Review.
- Once approved by Regional Council, these amendments will enable higher density development as-of-right, to support more housing options within communities.
- The amendments will not directly build affordable housing, but will accompany the municipality's other affordable housing initiatives, including those outlined in the HAF agreement, to help address the housing needs of current and future residents.

What is the adoption process?

- Planning staff drafted proposed amendments to existing planning documents and collected initial feedback from the public between January 17 and February 16, 2024.
- A staff report with proposed amendments, revised to reflect what was heard from communities, and compiled public feedback will be presented to Regional Council at **First Reading**, anticipated in April 2024.
- An in-person **Public Hearing**, anticipated in May 2024, will be held for the public to attend and speak (please check the HAF website for an updated schedule).
- Regional Council may request staff to make further revisions to the proposed amendments prior to a **Second Reading** at Regional Council after the Public Hearing.
- The municipality must meet the conditions of the HAF agreement to receive funding.



Residents can **send questions** to **haf@halifax.ca**.

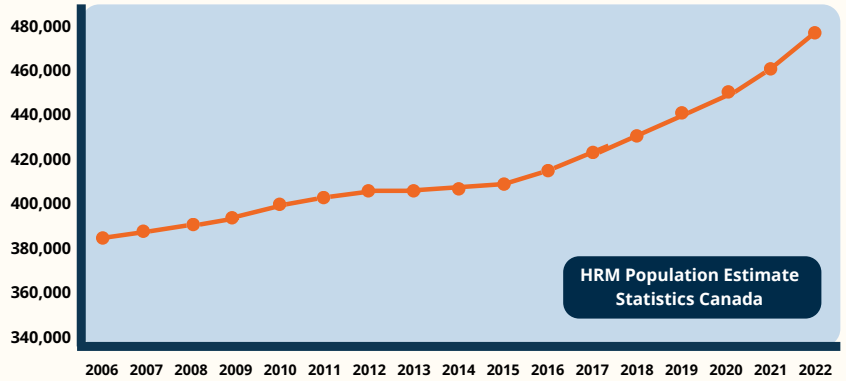
Feedback on the proposed amendments can be sent to the **Clerk's Office** at **clerks@halifax.ca**.

This feedback will be shared with Regional Council as part of the Public Hearing process.

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.

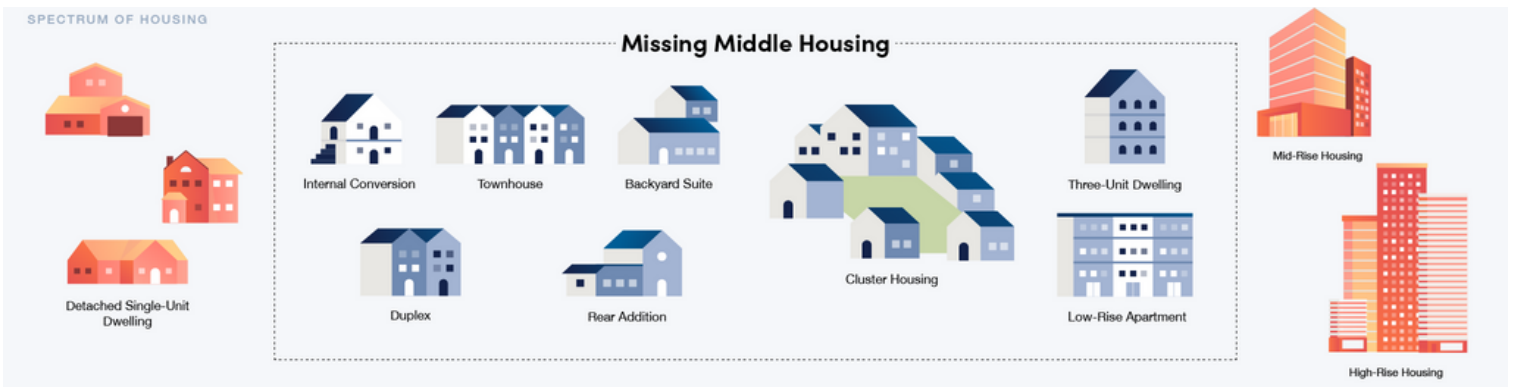


- Unprecedented growth has led to a **lack of supply** and **high costs** for renters and potential home owners. Since 2021, the vacancy rate in Halifax has remained at 1 %, while rent continues to rise (up 11.8 % between 2022-2023).
- The municipality requires not only a greater supply of housing, but 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 Assessment**.

URGENT CHANGES TO PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR HOUSING

What is the Housing Accelerator Fund?

The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) is a federal program that is administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) that aims to provide funding directly to local authorities to incentivize and support initiatives that accelerate the supply of housing. The Halifax Regional Municipality is one of 179 Canadian jurisdictions that have entered into contribution agreements to fast-track the construction of new homes.

How does the HAF funding work?

HAF funds will be released in four equal payments, over a four years period, with installments based on whether the municipality is meeting its HAF housing target. All funding must be spent by the end of the four-year program.

In order to receive funding, the municipality must meet the conditions of the HAF agreement, including implementing the eight specific initiatives and housing supply growth targets identified in the Action Plan within two years of the start of the HAF program.

Once funding is received, municipalities can choose how to use them, as long as it meets the broad range of permitted uses under the HAF program. This can include funding the Action Plan initiatives, or broader capital investments in housing infrastructure and community-related infrastructure that supports housing.

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| Application Stage | June 2023 | Regional Council <u>approved staff's recommendation</u> to move forward with the HAF application process, which included the submission of an <u>Action Plan</u> . |
| | September 2023 | The Federal Minister of Housing asked the municipality to commit to four housing policy changes to receive approval of its HAF application. These changes were considered and <u>largely endorsed by Regional Council</u> . |
| | October 2023 | The municipality's application was <u>approved by the Federal Minister of Housing</u> and an <u>agreement was reached</u> to deliver \$79.3 million in support of housing initiatives that will be implemented by the end of 2026. |

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| Funding Stage | October 2023 | Round 1: Provided shortly after the approval and signing of the HAF contribution agreement. |
| | October 2024 | Round 2: Assessment by the CMHC of the municipality's implementation and completion of HAF initiatives. |
| | October 2025 | Round 3: Assessment by the CMHC of the municipality's implementation and completion of HAF initiatives. |
| | October 2026 | Round 4: Assessment by the CMHC of the municipality's performance meeting its housing supply growth targets. |



For more information on the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) application process, please visit the CMHC website.