



**Subject:** *HAF Initiative - Village Core (VC) Zone Density Increase*  
**To:** CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, January 21, 2025  
**Date Prepared:** January 14, 2025  
**Related Motions:** C24(121)  
**Prepared by:** Debbie Uloth, Community Planner II  
**Approved by:** John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development

### Summary

East Hants has entered into an agreement with CMHC for HAF funding. As part of the agreement, East Hants has to complete nine (9) initiatives. The 9<sup>th</sup> initiative is to increase the density in all Village Core (VC) Designations and Zones by permitting 16 dwelling units as-of-right, through site plan approval. The initiative needs to be completed to fulfill the terms of the funding agreement.

East Hants Council ratified the HAF Agreement between the Municipality and CHMC at the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of Council, Motion C24(121).

### Financial Impact Statement

If all requirements of the HAF funding agreement are fulfilled and the municipality creates 1,186 dwelling units over the four year period, the municipality will receive \$5.765 million as follows:

2024 \$1.44 million After signing agreement - received

2025 \$1.44 million Progress report required

2026 \$1.44 million Progress report required

2027 \$1.44 million Depends on number of dwelling units permitted (prorated if less than 1186)

### Recommendation

Recommend that staff be given authorization to hold a public information meeting.

### Recommended Motion

*Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:*

- *authorize staff to schedule a public information meeting to consider the proposal to amend the East Hants Official Community Plan to increase the density in the Village Core (VC) Designation and Zone.*

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## Background

East Hants entered into a HAF funding agreement with CMHC on February 23, 2024. As part of the agreement, East Hants must fulfill nine (9) initiatives to receive all of the funding. Initiative nine requires that East Hants increase the density from a maximum of 12 dwelling units permitted as of right to a maximum of 16 dwelling units as of right, through site plan approval, in the Village Core (VC) Zone. In order to complete the initiative, amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw are required. Amendments will impact all Village Core (VC) Zones.

East Hants Council ratified the HAF Agreement between the Municipality and CHMC at the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of Council, Motion C24(121).

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## Village Core Density Increase

The purpose of the Village Core (VC) Designation is to allow for a diverse mixture of retail, service, business, and residential uses in an environment serving both pedestrian and vehicle needs within an aesthetically pleasing, socially interactive streetscape serving both a local and a communitywide population.

Under the current Land Use Bylaw regulations, property owners are permitted to construct a maximum of 12 dwelling units as-of-right through site plan approval. A property owner also has the option to apply for a development agreement for multiple dwelling unit uses in excess of 12 units and up to a maximum of 20 dwelling units per 0.5 ha in the Village Core (VC) Zone, pursuant to the Village Core Form-Based Zone Requirements and to all applicable criteria under the implementing policies.

To prevent the Village Core (VC) Zone from becoming a residential zone and to protect the integrity of this mixed-use zone, staff recommend that the HAF requirement of permitting 16 dwelling units as-of-right be combined with a commercial component. Currently residential buildings in the VC zone have to be constructed with the ground floor being commercial capable. Commercial development is essential for the continued development of healthy village cores, where residents can walk to local commercial uses. It is equally important to have land available for the continued development of commercial businesses that support the community and increase the East Hants commercial tax base.

Planning and Economic and Business Development staff have discussed the dwelling unit increase and recommend ensuring that a minimum 75% of the ground floor street facing frontage be allocated for commercial uses for buildings between 13 to 16 dwelling units. The requirement will preserve the streetscape and commercial presence in the Village Core Zone but will allow a developer to construct dwelling units on the ground floor where there is no street frontage. The Form-Based Zone Requirements will still be applicable to the proposed amendments. Developers will still be able to construct buildings between 8 to 12 dwelling units without the required commercial component but they will have to ensure that the ground floor is commercial capable.



75% of the ground floor street facing frontage has to be used for commercial purposes. The purpose is to activate the streetscape. No minimum gross floor commercial area.

Due to the configuration of a flag lot, they do not lend themselves well to commercial development. Therefore, staff recommend excluding existing flag lots in the Village Core (VC) Zone from the commercial requirement. There are between 10 to 15 existing flag lots in the Corridor, some of these lots have single unit dwellings and some are undeveloped.

## Proposed Amendments

Add the following to the table of land uses under 7.1 Mixed Use Zones Permitted Uses.

*Multiplex with a minimum of 13 dwelling units to a maximum of 16 dwelling units, with 75% of the buildings street facing façade being used for ground floor commercial uses, subject to the Form-Based Zone Requirements for the Village Core (VC) Zone.*

In addition to allowing for an increase to the number of dwelling units, both the maximum gross floor area and the maximum building height will have to increase to enable up-to 16 units to be constructed. Staff recommend that the maximum gross floor area be increased to 1,584 m<sup>2</sup> from 835 m<sup>2</sup>. An increase in the gross floor area will enable the development of 16 two bedroom apartments and commercial floor area on the ground floor. A variety of unit sizes could be constructed as long as the floor area is not exceeded. To accommodate the additional dwelling units, staff recommend permitting a maximum of three stories, without having the third storey constructed in the roof line. Street facing facades shall have to be constructed at grade.

To assist PAC in visualizing a building size of 1,584 m<sup>2</sup>, staff have provided an illustration showing the size of the building if the area was evenly distributed over three floors. The footprint would be approximately 528 m<sup>2</sup> and would be similar to Parker Place. This is only a sample of what the footprint may be if a building were divided evenly over three floors. A building footprint could be larger if divided into two floors.



## Citizen Engagement

Planning staff will comply with the Citizen Engagement policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy when processing these proposed amendments. An advertisement outlining the proposed amendments and indicating that it is under review by staff will be placed in the *Chronicle Herald* and on the Municipal website. A public information meeting is required for all amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy. The PIM will be advertised on the Municipal website and on social media and will be held at the Municipal Office Building. Notes from the meeting will be included with the next staff report following the PIM.

## Conclusion

The increase to the number of dwelling units in the Village Core (VC) Zone was a commitment that East Hants made when entering into the HAF program. The new regulations will be applicable to all Village Core (VC) Zones. Existing design requirements will still be applicable to all new buildings and new commercial requirements will be added to ensure the land use pattern lends itself to providing more human scaled

development that has an interesting fabric at street level. Diversity of buildings and land uses will keep the village cores interesting and inviting to pedestrians and local commercial development.