



Subject: *Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy - Housing*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, June 18, 2024
Date Prepared: June 12, 2024
Related Motions: PAC23(59) and C23(383)
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Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy, Planning staff have completed a review of housing and opportunities for densification in the Uniacke area. This report includes recommendations for Planning Advisory Committee's consideration.

Financial Impact Statement

Planning staff has budgeted for the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy as part of the 2024/2025 Budget Cycle.

Recommendation

Include the recommendations outlined in the Uniacke SPS Housing report in the draft Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Report.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *authorize staff to include the recommendations outlined in the Uniacke SPS Housing report in the draft Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Report.*

Background

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy, staff have undertaken a review of housing in the Uniacke area. Staff have developed a map showing the study area, current housing, approved developments, significant topographical information, and other details for PAC's information.

CURRENT ZONING IN THE UNIACKE SPS STUDY AREA

The majority of the residential properties in the Uniacke SPS study area are zoned either Established Residential Neighbourhood (R1), Two Dwelling Unit Residential (R2), or Lakeshore Residential (LR). There is a small amount of land zoned Country Residential (CR) and large areas of mostly undeveloped land zoned Rural Use (RU). Currently, the only area that permits multiple unit development as-of-right, through site plan approval, is the Village Core (VC) Zone. The VC Zone allows for the development of between eight and 12 dwelling units with onsite services. Parkview Manor is the only building with more than two dwelling units in the VC Zone.

Nearly all legally conforming existing single unit dwellings in the study area are permitted to have an accessory dwelling unit in accordance with the LUB regulations. In the Rural Use (RU) Zone, property owners may apply for a development agreement to permit the construction of a maximum of eight dwelling units.

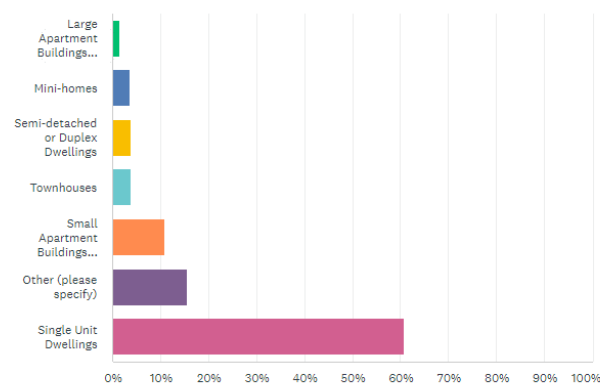
The other zone in the Uniacke SPS study area that permits a denser development pattern is the Mini-Home (MH) Zone. Valley Gate Park has 175 mini-homes and the park provides its own public water supply and sewage treatment facility, which are both regulated by Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change.

SURVEY RESULTS

Results of the Uniacke SPS survey show that single unit dwelling homes are still the preferred housing form in the community. Of the other types of housing identified small multiplexes were the second most preferred housing form with just over 10% of the respondents indicating that they preferred this style of housing. The least popular form of housing at 1.55% of the respondents are larger apartment buildings (24 units). Under the category 'other' many respondents indicated that they didn't want any new housing or indicated they would like single level senior housing.

What types of new housing would you like to see in the community?

Answered: 388 Skipped: 82



The respondents also indicated that both affordable housing and seniors housing was needed for the different stages of life. Some seniors wanted to be able to downsize from their current homes and find a smaller home or rental in their community. Based on the results of the community survey, staff are recommending mapping amendments to the East Hants Official Community Plan. The proposed amendments are explained under the "Proposed Zoning Changes" portion of the staff report.

WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES

Policy GM17 of the Municipal Planning Strategy states that *Council shall consider the provision of Municipal water and wastewater infrastructure only when the development density within the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area dictates the need and it is in the financial capabilities of the Municipality to do so. A feasibility study shall be conducted by a qualified professional to determine the financial and environmental impacts of installing Municipal services when Council determines that Municipal water and wastewater infrastructure should be considered and evaluated for the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area.*

Planning staff feel that now is the appropriate time for Council to consider conducting a feasibility study for the installation of Municipal services in Mount Uniacke. Mount Uniacke acts as a bedroom community to Halifax and the population in the area has been steadily increasing over each census period. Therefore, staff recommend that a feasibility study for the installation of Municipal Services in Mount Uniacke should be added to the 2026/2027 Budget Cycle and should be added to the East Hants Strategic Plan. Even if Municipal services are not warranted at this time the study results would help staff to plan development patterns that would support future servicing. Allowing land use development to take place in a pattern that would best allow it to be serviced at a future date.

Until there are Municipal services located in Mount Uniacke the area will continue to be developed using onsite services. To help support growth in the Uniacke SPS study area staff are in the process of finding a professional to conduct a level 1 hydrogeological assessment of groundwater in the Uniacke study area. Results of the study will be included with the draft Uniacke SPS report and will ultimately be used to help future homeowners, developers, and Council in their decision-making for both water quality and quantity.

Staff are not recommending larger apartment buildings be considered for onsite services at this time. After speaking to staff at Halifax, Planning staff have concerns about larger disposal systems that could use local lakes for their effluent disposal and about what happens if a larger disposal system fails. Instead, staff suggest waiting for the results of the Municipal Servicing Study and assess other options at that time.

PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES

1. Planning staff are proposing zoning changes for Mount Uniacke to help create a traditional neighbourhood centre. As per the feedback from the Uniacke SPS survey, staff are recommending gentle density options that would supply the aging population and young people with rental housing, while ensuring that the properties could be serviced with onsite services. Traditional neighbourhoods emphasize walkability within a compact and interconnected layout. Staff recommends amending the Townhouse (R2-T) Designation and Zone to add a category for onsite services for Mount Uniacke. The final location and area of the new R2-T zone will be based on the outcomes of the hydrogeological study. The Townhouse (R2-T) Zone allows for both townhouse and small multiplex developments. Lot sizes will have to be large enough to accommodate onsite services, parking, and amenity space.

If at a future date, the Municipality decides to provide Municipal services to Mount Uniacke, staff would recommend revisiting the land use regulations and look for other opportunities to increase density at that time.

2. As part of the Uniacke SPS process, Fathom Studio on behalf of their clients has requested mapping amendments for their lands located in Mount Uniacke between Highway 1 and Cockscomb Lake Drive, identified as PID 45136272. The first request is to increase the depth of the Lakeshore Residential (LR) Designation and Zone along Cockscomb Lake Drive which would permit the subdivision of new lots on the east side of the road. New lots could only be subdivided once a second access to the area is provided.

Fathom Studio's second request is to redesignate and rezone the remaining lands to Walkable Comprehensive Development District (WCDD). The subject property is 363 hectares (nearly 900 acres). In the past the WCDD Zone has only been applied to properties with an existing serviceable boundary. However, the applicant has presented staff with a development option that could provide 3,953 dwelling units to Mount Uniacke in a variety of housing forms if the property was serviced with central services. If the property didn't have central services only a limited number of lots could potentially be created with a much more extensive road network being required.

Alternatives

Below are the recommendations associated with the Uniacke SPS Housing Report:

1. Recommend that a feasibility study for the installation of Municipal Services in Mount Uniacke should be added to the draft 2026/2027 Budget.
2. Recommend that the depth of the Lakeshore Residential (LR) Zone on the east side of Cockscomb Lake Drive be expanded by approximately 150 m.
3. Recommend that the portion of PID 45136272 currently designated and zoned Rural Use (RU) be redesignated and zoned to Walkable Comprehensive Development District (WCDD), as per the map attached as Appendix B, and recommend that the policy statements in the MPS be updated to allow for the property to be designated and zoned WCDD.
4. Add a new category to the Townhouse (R2-T) Zone that would permit townhouse developments and small multiplexes with onsite services in Mount Uniacke. The final location and size of the zone will be based on the results of the hydrological study.

Attachments

Appendix A - Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Area Map

Appendix B - Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Proposed GFLUM and LUB Map for PID 45136272.