



**Subject:** *Municipal Housing Strategy - Housing Working Group Update*  
**To:** CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, July 16, 2024  
**Date Prepared:** June 26, 2024  
**Related Motions:** PAC23(60) November, C23(383), PAC23(66) December and C23(402)  
**Prepared by:** Rachel Gilbert, Manager of Planning  
**Approved by:** John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development

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### Summary

At their November 2023 meeting, Council approved the formation of a Municipal Housing Working Group to aid in the development of a Municipal Housing Strategy. This interim report sets out the discussions held to-date and the motions coming forward to Planning Advisory Committee from the Housing Working Group. Once the working group has completed discussions around issues and opportunities relating to housing a final report will be prepared for Planning Advisory Committee. This final report will include all the motions made by the working group for consideration by Planning Advisory Committee.

### Financial Impact Statement

\$1800 has been added to the 2024-25 budget to cover honorariums for the public members.

### Recommendation

This report is provided as an update on the work of the Municipal Housing Working Group. No recommendation is provided by staff with this report.

### Recommended Motion

This report is prepared for information purposes.

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## Background

In November 2023 Council approved the establishment of a Municipal Housing Working Group to aid in developing a Municipal Housing Strategy. The working group consists of the following members:

- 3 Councillors - Councillors Garden-Cole (chair), Moussa, and MacPhee (vice-chair)
- 2 members representing the East Hants Development Community - Andrew Bone and Brad Ross
- 2 members representing the Non-Profit Housing Community - Paul Mombourquette (CCOA) and Linda Wood (HEART Society).
- 1 member representing the East Hants Chamber of Commerce - Tracy Williams
- 1 public member at large - Jacob White
- Director of Planning & Development - Non-Voting
- 1 staff member representing Economic & Business Development - Non-Voting

The Housing Working Group have been meeting every month since March 2024. A copy of the workplan for the working group has been added as Appendix A to this staff report.

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## Discussion at Housing Working Group

This report outlines the issues related to housing and the associated staff reports that the working group have discussed to-date. Once the working group has completed their work there will be a final report presented to Planning Advisory Committee which will include all the motions made from March 2024 onwards. This interim report is intended to update Planning Advisory Committee on the discussions held to-date. For further details of the discussions held at the working group meetings the minutes have been added to this report as Appendix B.

The following meetings have been held:

### March 25, 2024

This was an introduction meeting for the working group where background information on the current status of housing in East Hants and further afield was presented. At this meeting various discussions were held and these led to amendments to the proposed workplan.

### April 22, 2024

#### Housing Accelerator Fund

Following the announcement from the Federal Government regarding the Housing Accelerator Fund for East Hants a presentation was made to the Housing Working Group. This presentation was an overview of the Housing Accelerator program, how much that East Hants will receive (\$5,885,000) and the 9 housing initiatives that will need to be completed.

#### Accessible Housing

Discussion on this topic included: ageing in place; the Accessibility Advisory Committee; and the existing Land Use Bylaw (LUB) regulations regarding Special Care Facilities.

The following Motion was made.

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee be requested to review the draft Housing Strategy and advise regarding accessibility issues and opportunities.
- The definition of Special Care (Residential Care Facility, Home for Special Care or Group Home) be amended so that the number of individuals living in the facility be 8 or less and be considered a single unit dwelling, as outlined in the staff report.

May 27, 2024

#### Lot Sizes

The presentation included information on the minimum lot sizes for serviced R1 and R2; the lot sizes that have been negotiated with recent Walkable Comprehensive Development District (WCDD) developments; minimum lot sizes for un-serviced lots; and small lot singles.

The following motions were made:

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to the Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- Lot sizes in unserviced areas be reviewed with the intent of reducing the lot area and frontage requirements to what is technically feasible while accommodating septic and well service.

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- Serviced R1 lots sizes be reduced to 12.2m of frontage and 372m<sup>2</sup> of area.

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- Small lot single unit dwellings be permitted on an R2 lot where the R2 lot meets the minimum provisions for the lot to be subdivided under Section 6.6.1 of the LUB.

#### Manufactured Housing

A manufactured home refers to a dwelling that is built in a factory and transported to a building site and includes modular homes and mobile homes. The East Hants LUB does make a distinction between modular buildings and mobile homes.

- Modular construction can be used for many different types of construction as long as the final design meets the minimum requirements of the Land Use Bylaw and the construction adheres to the National Building Code Standards.
- Mobile homes are only permitted in select zones within East Hants due to their unique design.

The following Motions were made:

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- Mini homes be permitted across the municipality as an affordable housing option with an emphasis on permitting mini homes in serviced areas.

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- The Mini-Home (MH) Zone regulations be amended to permit mobile homes on free-hold (individual) lots.

### Short Term Rentals

Short term rentals have emerged in popularity over the past years and provide alternative options for accommodations than hotels, motels, etc. These rental units are a concern within some municipalities where they are more prevalent but there appears to be only a few within this municipality. Within East Hants, as long as buildings comply with the underlying zoning, the municipality does not actively regulate or enforce how private owners utilize their homes. Background information was provided on the Provincial Tourism Accommodations Registry.

The following motion was made:

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- No changes be made to the current regulations applicable to Short Term Rentals.

### Multi-Unit and Mixed Use

An overview of the different zones where multi-unit residential units are permitted or can be negotiated which includes the Townhouse (R2-T) Zone; Multiple Unit Residential (R3) Zone; Mixed Use Centre (MC) Zone; the Village Core (VC) Zone and the Walkable Comprehensive Development District (WCDD) Zone. Information was provided to the working group on the number of residential units already permitted.

The following motion was made:

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- The as-of-right density permitted in the Village Core (VC) Zone be increased from 12 to 16 units.

### June 24, 2024

Minutes from this meeting have not yet been approved by the Municipal Housing Working Group as they have not yet met in July.

### Transportation and Transit

Transportation impacts housing options including the affordability of housing and the location of housing for people without access to their own vehicle. Background information was provided on how much people spend on transportation, as a percentage share of spending. People in Nova Scotia spend the highest percentage on transportation across all provinces and this spending impacts the ability of people to be able to afford other things such as housing.

The Municipality has been investigating Transit for several years and WSP is currently updating the Transit Business Plan. In addition to background information on a potential Transit service in East Hants background information was also provided on the Joint Regional Transportation Agency and zoning/development which may be supported by transit stops and routes.

The following motions were made

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to the Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- The Municipal Housing Working Group supports transit options which assist in affordability and access housing.

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- a discounted fare program be investigated if transit services are offered in East Hants.

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- a future project be added to the Municipal Projects and Studies section of the Municipal Planning Strategy. The project would be to review existing policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy to identify where land use policies and regulations could be amended or developed to take advantage of a new transit service.

#### Bonus and Inclusionary Zoning

Background information was provided on both Inclusionary Zoning and Bonus Zoning which included information on the Halifax Inclusionary Zoning Framework; municipal resources required to manage inclusionary zoning regulations; and alternatives to inclusionary zoning.

The following motion was made:

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- Council consider offering a height and/or unit bonus to developers who are offering a federal or provincial affordable housing program.

## Future Housing Working Group Meetings

The next meeting of the Municipal Housing Working Group is scheduled for July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The following items are planned to be discussed in upcoming meetings:

- Accessory Dwelling units
- Gravel roads
- Non-market housing
- Surplus land
- Incentives
- Energy poverty
- Rural housing
- Homelessness
- Municipal position on provincial/federal action

Once the Housing Working Group have considered all of the staff reports and discussed all the items included in the workplan, a draft Municipal Housing Strategy will be presented to the working group. The draft Municipal Housing Strategy will then be presented to the Planning Advisory Committee including all the recommended motions from the Housing Working Group.

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## Attachments

Appendix A - Housing Working Group Workplan.

Appendix B - Municipal Housing Working Group minutes.

