

East Hants Housing Strategy – Housing Working Group Update

Planning Advisory Committee

July 16, 2024

Planning and Development Department



EAST HANTS

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
- 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.

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.

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.

Discussion at Housing Working Group

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. A motion was made regarding the following:

- 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.

Discussion at Housing Working Group

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.

Motions were made regarding the following:

- 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.
- Serviced R1 lots sizes be reduced to 12.2m of frontage and 372m² of area.
- 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.

Discussion at Housing Working Group

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.

Motions were made regarding the following:

- Mini homes be permitted across the municipality as an affordable housing option with an emphasis on permitting mini homes in serviced areas. -
 - a future report will be prepared for PAC with options provided.
- The Mini-Home (MH) Zone regulations be amended to permit mobile homes on free-hold (individual) lots.

Discussion at Housing Working Group

Short Term Rentals

Short term rentals have emerged in popularity over the past years and provide alternative options for accommodations than hotels, motels, etc. 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.

A motion was made regarding the following:

- 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.

A motion was made regarding the following:

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

Discussion at Housing Working Group

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.

Motions were made regarding the following:

- The Municipal Housing Working Group supports transit options which assist in affordability and access housing.
- a discounted fare program be investigated if transit services are offered in East Hants.
- 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.

Discussion at Housing Working Group

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.

A motion was made regarding the following:

- 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 22nd.

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.



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.