

HAF Initiative – Village Core (VC) Zone Density Increase

Planning Advisory Committee

January 21, 2025

Planning & Development Department



EAST HANTS

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.

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 LUB, 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.

Village Core Density Increase

- To prevent the Village Core (VC) Zone from becoming 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.
- 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 business that support the community and increase the East Hants commercial tax base.

Village Core Density Increase

- Planning and EBD staff have discussed the dwelling unit increase and recommend ensuring that a minimum 75% of the ground floor street frontage be used for commercial uses for buildings between 13 to 16 dwelling units.
- The requirement will preserve the streetscape and commercial presence but will allow a developer to construct dwelling units on the ground floor where there is no street frontage.
- Commercial requirements are not proposed to be applicable to existing flag lots.



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.

<https://urbanistarchitecture.co.uk/building-regulations-drawings/>

Proposed Amendments

- 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 the increase in unit numbers.
- Staff recommend that the maximum gross floor area increase to 1,584 m² from 835 m².
- 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.

Proposed Amendments

- To assist PAC in visualizing a building size of 1,584 m², staff have provided an illustration showing the potential size of the building footprint if the area was evenly distributed over three floors.
- The footprint would be approximately 528 m² 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 amendments.
- An advertisement outlining the proposed amendments 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.

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.*