

East Hants Housing Strategy – Initial Report

Planning Advisory Committee

November 14, 2023

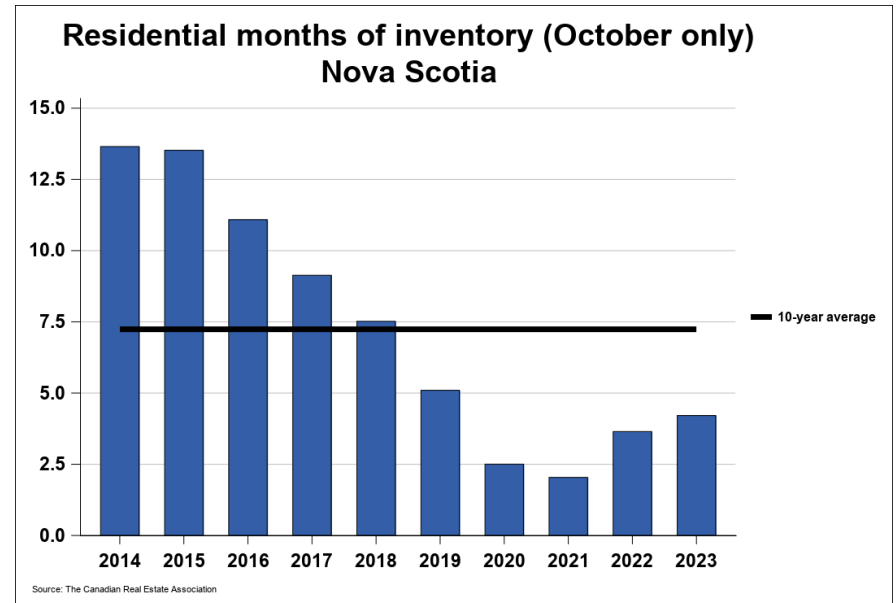
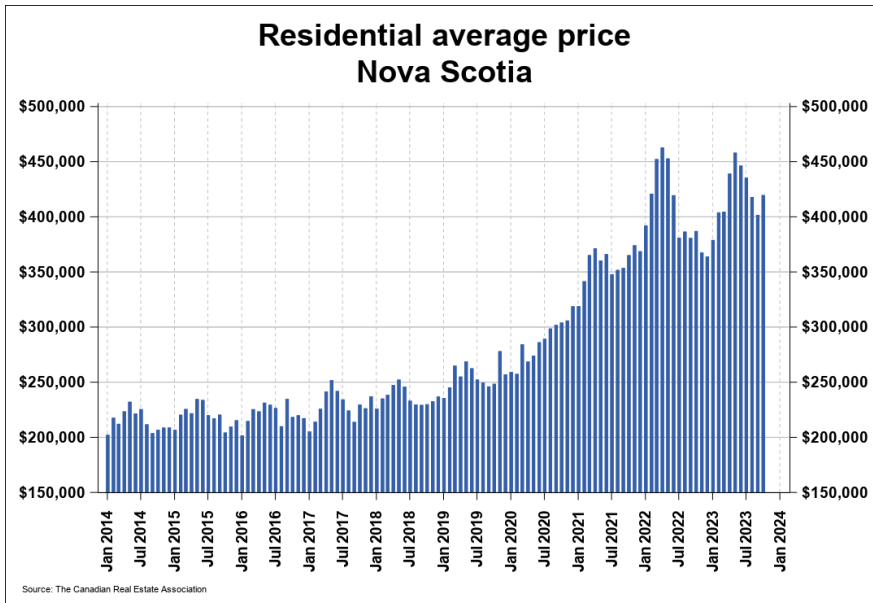
Planning and Development Department



EAST HANTS

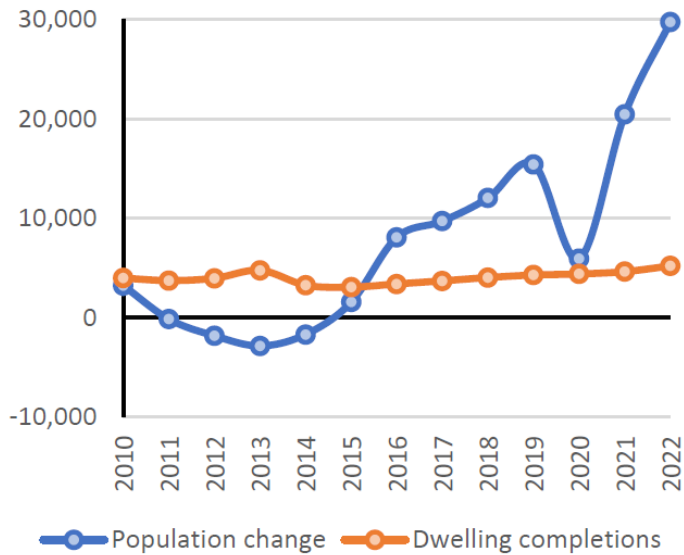
Background

- The availability and affordability of housing has changed dramatically over the past few years across Nova Scotia, including East Hants.



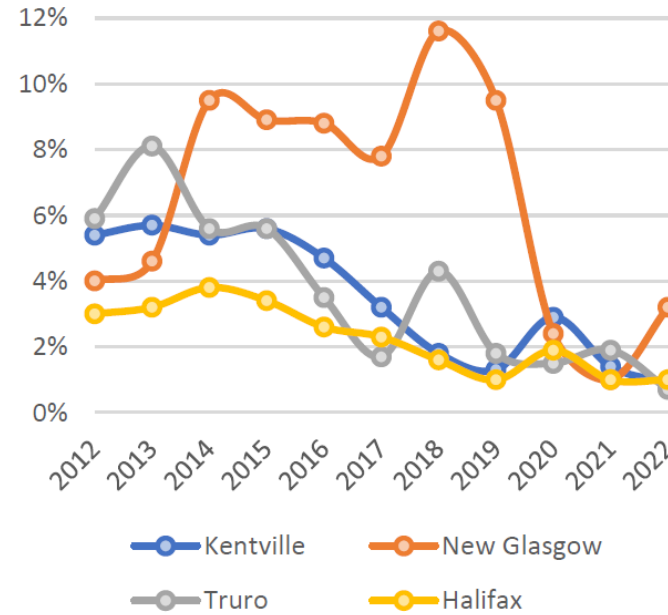
Background

Growth of population and dwellings



Source: Statistics Canada. Tables 34-10-0135-01, 17-10-0009-01.

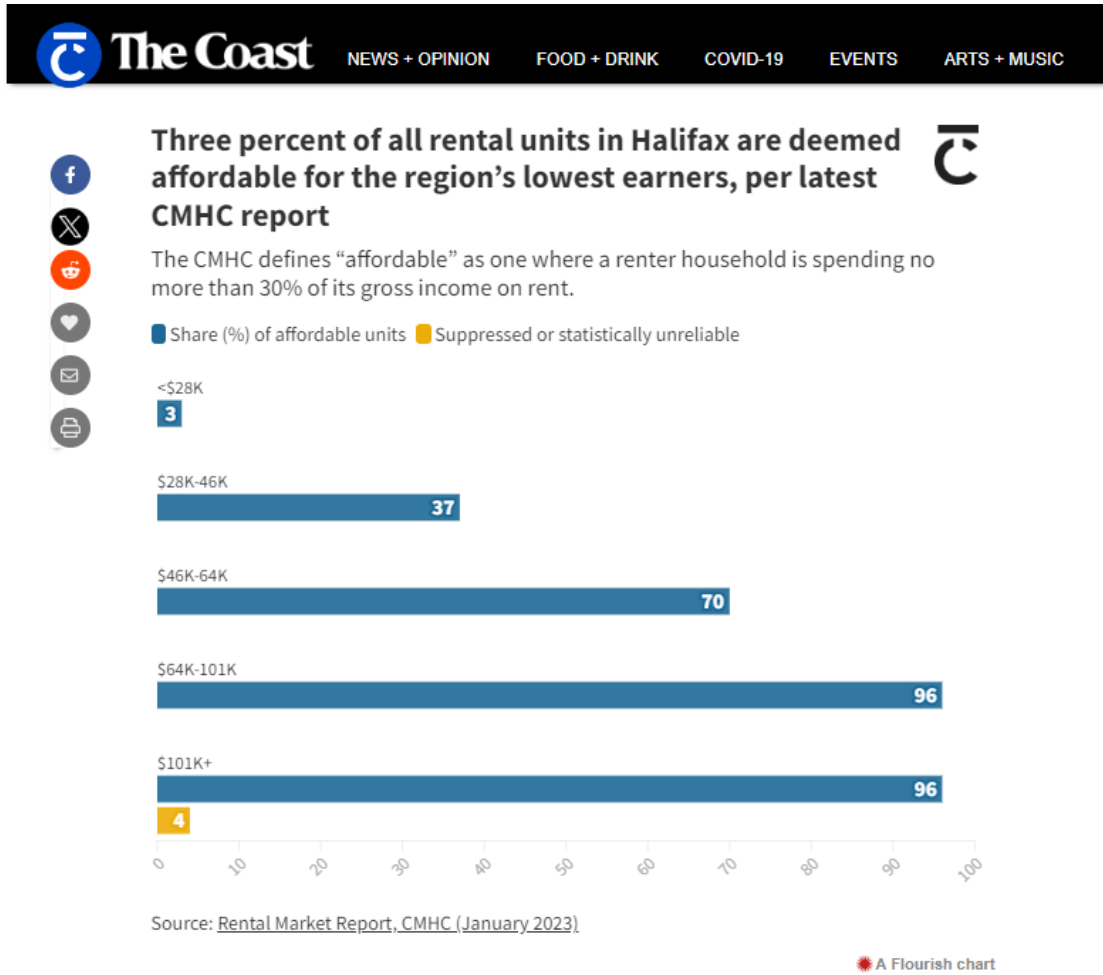
Declining rental vacancy rates



Source: Statistics Canada. Tables 34-10-0130-01, 34-10-0132-01.

- CMHC considers a healthy vacancy rate to be between 3% and 5%.
- The 2022 vacancy rate in East Hants was 0%.

Background

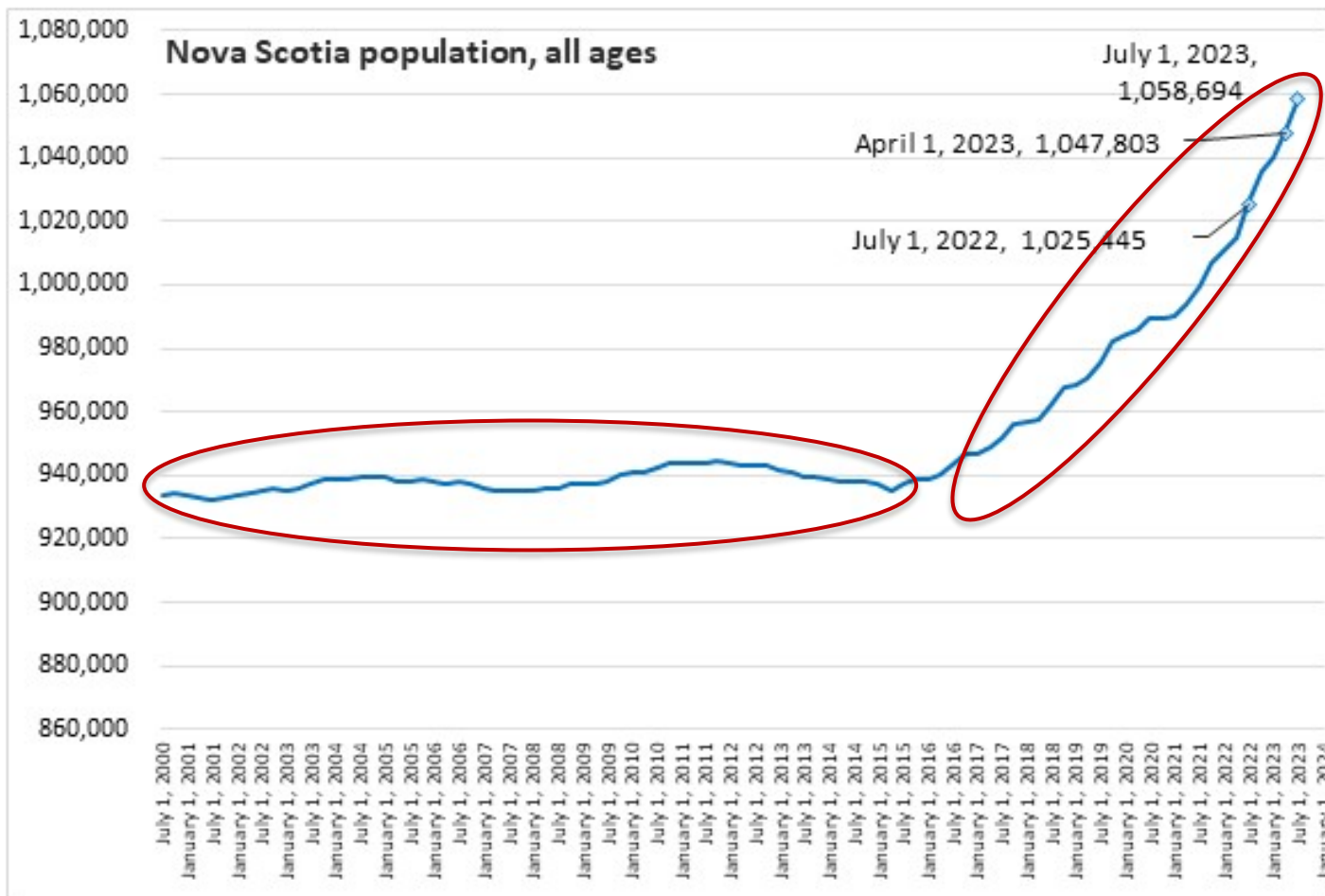


- Affordability has obviously been impacted as a result of this shortage

Population Growth

September 27, 2023

NOVA SCOTIA QUARTERLY POPULATION ESTIMATES AS OF JULY 1, 2023



Actions Taken To Date

East Hants has an Official Community Plan in compliance with the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing. Specifically:

- Accessory Dwelling Units are permitted where ever a single unit dwelling is permitted.



- Small option or group homes are permitted as single unit dwellings.
- The EH planning documents use a variety of zones that permit denser forms of housing including manufactured housing, multi-units, semi-detached units and townhouses.
- There is also a provision for unique housing solutions such as tiny homes on wheels and urban cottage developments shown below:



- East Hants has also been planning for and making critical investments in sewer and water infrastructure to enable growth (e.g., Enfield Water Treatment Plant, Shubenacadie Waste Water Treatment Plant).

Actions Taken To Date

- Over the past decade East Hants Council has approved developments that enable 5,979 dwelling units to be built.
- This housing contains a wide range of unit types and will eventually house an estimated 14,350 new East Hants residents, increasing the population by 58%.
- An additional 1500 units are currently in the application process and developer interest remains strong in East Hants with other projects in discussions between staff and the development community.



East Hants Housing Stock

- There are an estimated 11,907 housing units in East Hants broken down as follows:
 - 10,028 Single-detached (84%)
 - 696 Semi-detached (6%)
 - 277 Townhouses (2%)
 - 905 Multi-units (8%)
- Although East Hants is heavily skewed toward single unit dwellings this has been changing over the past several years.
- Permits of new dwelling units issued in 2022 include:
 - 52% Single-detached
 - 19% Semi-detached
 - 19% Townhouses
 - 10% Multi-units

East Hants Housing Stock

- The vast majority of housing in East Hants is private market housing. However, there is also some non-market public housing in East Hants.
- Nova Scotia Public Housing Agency (created in 2022 from 5 merged housing agencies) owns 11,200 dwelling units across the Province that provide affordable housing to low income Nova Scotians.
- In East Hants the NSPHA owns 15 properties with a total of 84 units. These units include single unit dwellings and multi-unit buildings in:
 - Enfield
 - Lantz
 - Maitland
 - Mount Uniacke
 - Nine Mile River
 - Shubenacadie
 - Upper Rawdon
- Of these, NSPHA also owns 5 senior residences:
 - Bayview Manor, Noel
 - Cobequid Bay Manor, Maitland
 - Enfield Manor, Enfield
 - Parkview Manor, Mount Uniacke
 - Sunny Brook Manor, Shubenacadie

East Hants Housing Stock

- Corridor Community Options Society also provide non-market housing for 14 individuals with intellectual disabilities within 3 properties in Enfield and Lantz.
- There are also 4 Nursing homes/residential care facilities in East Hants:
 - Magnolia, Enfield - 71 beds
 - Serenity Lodge, Enfield - 6 beds
 - Mitchell's Rest Home, Upper Nine Mile River - 3 beds
 - Willow's Manor, Shubenacadie - 8 beds

The Housing Continuum



City of Fort St. John

Municipal Housing Strategy

- A municipal housing strategy is typically intended to:
 - Better understand housing trends and needs in a municipality.
 - Identify measures a municipality can take to enable additional housing to be built.
 - Establish measurable targets for the number of units created and/or affordability of housing within the municipality.
- The province is responsible for public & non-market housing programs. Despite this, the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing requires municipalities to take steps within their planning documents to ensure that a variety of housing is permitted.
- In addition, municipalities have control over a number of areas beyond zoning that can influence the supply and cost of housing. A housing strategy would highlight those areas and outline actions a municipality is proposing to take.

Municipal Housing Strategy

- A typical housing strategy would have these components:
 1. Needs Assessment
 2. Zoning & Land Use Regulations
 - Accessory dwelling units
 - Multi-unit housing
 - Manufactured housing
 - Bonus zoning
 - Inclusionary zoning
 - Short term rentals
 3. Incentives
 4. Use of surplus land
 5. Infrastructure
 6. Community Engagement
 7. Short, medium & long-term actions
 8. Monitoring & Evaluation

Housing Needs Assessment

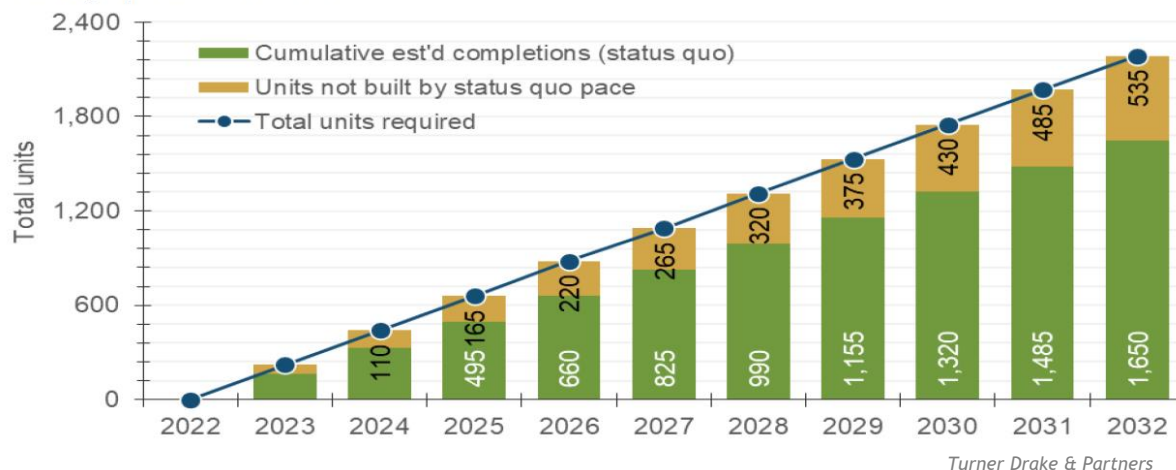
- As noted above, a housing needs assessment is a typical first step in developing a housing strategy.
- To this end, the Province of Nova Scotia engaged Turner Drake & Partners to prepare a Housing Needs Assessment for the province as well as for each municipality. The East Hants Housing Needs Assessment was released earlier this year.
- The report attempts to identify the projected housing need in EH out to the year 2032 and estimate the annual gap in required units.
- Staff find the report to be of limited use given that the report focuses specifically on East Hants without taking a regional focus and our connection to the HRM housing market. As the report states:

“It is important to identify the primary limitation of the model: it cannot consider what impacts of nearby community growth might have locally. Specifically, East Hants’ market condition is significantly related to the nature of the Halifax Regional Municipality’s (HRM’s) balance of supply and demand.”

Housing Needs Assessment

- The report also identified a potential shortfall in housing by estimating an annual need of 220 dwelling units and construction of only 175 per year.
- The 175/year number was derived by taking the average of permits from 2016 to 2021. However, in 2022 alone 372 units were permitted.
- The study also didn't take into consideration the large amount of future housing already approved by Council or steps that the municipality has taken to increase capacity, such as hiring additional building inspection and development control staff.

Figure 4.1: Anticipated Unit Gap based on Total Units Required and Estimated Completions, Demographic Model Results



Turner Drake & Partners

Developing a Housing Strategy

- Option 1
 - Create a housing advisory working group to prepare a draft housing strategy for Council’s consideration.
 - Working group could be composed of:
 - 2 councillors
 - 2 members of the development community
 - 2 members of the non-profit housing community
 - 1 public member at large
- Option 2
 - Staff draft the plan for Council’s consideration after taking initial direction.
 - Consultation with stakeholders could involve requesting initial feedback and then comments on a draft strategy.
- Staff favour Option 1 as it could provide for more in-depth discussions with stakeholders and additional time to deal with the topic than the executive committee agenda usually affords.

Recommended First Steps

- Decide on an option for the preparation of the strategy.
 - Option 1 Housing Advisory Working Group
 - If Option 1 is selected, staff will prepare a terms of reference for Council consideration as well as begin recruitment for the working group
 - Option 2 Staff-Council Project
 - If option 2 is selected, Staff will begin bringing issue papers to PAC for discussion and decision.
- Invite Max Chauvin, HRM Director of Housing and Homelessness to speak to PAC. Mr. Chauvin is a leading thinker in the region on the issue of housing. His contribution will, no doubt, be invaluable as we begin this project.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *Authorize staff to begin the preparation of a terms of reference for a municipal housing working group;*
- *Authorize staff to begin recruiting for a municipal housing working group; and*
- *Invite Max Chauvin, HRM Director of Housing & Homelessness to present to PAC.*

Alternative Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *Authorize staff to begin the preparation of a municipal housing strategy; and*
- *Invite Max Chauvin, HRM Director of Housing & Homelessness to present to PAC.*