



HAF Initiative – Village Core (VC) Zone Density Increase

Planning Advisory Committee

May 13, 2021

Planning & Development Department



EAST HANTS

Background

- East Hants entered into a HAF funding agreement with CMHC on February 23, 2024 for \$5,885,000 .
- 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 currently 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 keep the Village Core (VC) Zone a 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.

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.



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.
- Initially, Staff recommend that the maximum gross floor area increase to 1,584 m² from 835 m².
- At the PIM, developers who attended indicated that the gross floor area needed to be increased to accommodate corridors and utility areas. The developers also indicated that two-bedroom units should be a minimum of 93 m² (1,000 ft²) in area to accommodate market demand.
- After further analysis, staff now recommend the max. gross floor area be 1,888 m².
- To accommodate the additional dwelling units, staff recommend permitting a maximum of three stories, without requiring the third storey be constructed into the roof line.

Proposed Amendments

- To assist PAC in visualizing a building size of 1,584 m² and 1,888 m² staff have provided an illustration showing the potential size of the buildings if the area was evenly distributed over three floors.
- 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.
- Many of the existing lots in the Village Core (VC) Zones are too small to accommodate the maximum gross floor area that is being recommended. In some instances, Developers will have to acquire multiple lots to construct the maximum gross floor area. A few Developers with smaller lots may opt for smaller apartment units or micro units, instead of larger two-bedroom apartment units.





Proposed Amendments

- Changes are also being proposed to the following:
 - height, to allow for three full stories.
 - Transparency requirement reduction on 2nd and 3rd stories.
 - Commercial component not required on existing flag lots.
 - No accommodations, general commercial uses on ground floor of subject buildings.
 - New policy added to the Municipal Planning Strategy to enable new regulations.
- The full set of proposed amendments are in staff's report.

Samples of 3-Storey Buildings with Ground Floor Commercial



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 was placed in the *Chronicle Herald* and on the Municipal website.
- A public information meeting was held on April 1, 2025.
- Two developers of Village Core (VC) Zoned land attended the meeting.
- Two major concerns was the proposed maximum gross floor area being too small and parking requirements. Details are in the staff report.
- A letter from Tolson Developments concerning the proposed amendments has been provided to PAC for their consideration.
- The next step in the citizen engagement process is for a public hearing to be held for the proposal.

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 first reading be given to the proposed Village Core amendments and authorize staff to schedule a public hearing.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *give first reading to the proposal to amend the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw to increase the density in the Village Core (VC) Designation and Zone; for the purpose of enabling a public hearing and authorize staff to schedule a public hearing.*