

HAF Initiative – Village Core (VC) Zone Density Increase

Public Hearing

June 25, 2025

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.



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.
- At their May 2025 meeting, Council gave first reading to amendments, which included a maximum gross floor area of 1,888 m².
- The purpose of increasing the gross floor area is to enable the development of 16 two-bedroom apartments and a commercial floor area on the ground floor.
- Developers who attended the PIM indicated that the gross floor area needed to be large enough to accommodate the apartments, commercial area, and the corridors and utility areas.

Proposed Amendments

- It was also indicated that two-bedroom units should be approx. 93 m² (1,000 ft²) in area to accommodate market demand.
- 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.
- To assist PAC in visualizing the mass of a building constructed to the maximum gross floor area under our current regulations and the proposed amendments, staff have provided an illustration showing the size of the buildings.

- The first image depicts the gross floor area of an 835 m² (footprint of 278 m²) building constructed under the current regulations, assuming the area is evenly distributed over three floors.
- A built example of the massing of a building under the current regulations is the brick apartment buildings located at 672 and 674 Highway 2, Elmsdale.
- The second image depicts a building with a footprint similar to a 1,888 m² building (footprint of 629 m²).
- There are currently no buildings in any of the village cores that have the same massing as what is being proposed. However, the restaurant/retail building located at 1135 Highway 2, Lantz does have a similar footprint to the image shown, except the building would be 3 stories instead of 1.5 stories



674 Highway 2, Elmsdale



1135 Highway 2, Lantz

Proposed Amendments

- Changes are 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.
- Amendment sheets are attached to the staff report.

Samples of 3-Storey Buildings with Ground Floor Commercial



Citizen Engagement

- Planning staff have complied 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 major concerns were the proposed maximum gross floor and parking requirements. Details are in the staff report.
- A public hearing notice appeared in the June 11th and 18th editions of the *Chronicle Herald* and the notice was posted on the Municipal website and social media.

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.