

EAST HANTS HOUSING STRATEGY

2025



EAST HANTS
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DR



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

East Hants Council created a Municipal Housing Working Group to assist in developing this strategy. This group included members of municipal council, the development community, the non-profit housing community, the East Hants Chamber of Commerce and the general public.

The intent of this strategy is to better understand housing trends and needs in East Hants and identify priority strategies. From those 16 priority strategies, establish short, medium and long-term actions that can be taken to enable additional housing to be built and identify monitoring and reporting mechanisms. In total 30 Action items were identified.

Priority strategies are:

PRIORITY 6.1.1.: Increase opportunities for special care housing.

PRIORITY 6.1.2.: Provide more options for people to live in the rural areas of East Hants.

PRIORITY 6.1.3.: Investigate how the location of housing can take advantage of a new transit service.

PRIORITY 6.1.4.: Increasing the use of manufactured housing.

PRIORITY 6.1.5.: Review lot size requirements to determine if smaller lot sizes are possible.

PRIORITY 6.1.6.: Increasing density in the Village Core (VC) Zone.

PRIORITY 6.1.7.: Options for bonus and inclusionary zoning.

PRIORITY 6.1.8.: Take action to create more opportunities to build accessory dwelling units through a review of municipal regulations.

PRIORITY 6.1.9.: Advocate for federal & provincial government action regarding housing.

PRIORITY 6.2.1.: Utilize surplus property for affordable housing.

PRIORITY 6.3.1.: Take action to create a tax relief program for non-profit organizations that provide housing in East Hants.

PRIORITY 6.3.2.: Provide incentives to reduce energy poverty.

PRIORITY 6.3.3.: Investigate a discounted fare program for a future transit service.

PRIORITY 6.4.1.: Address homelessness through advocacy to senior levels of government and review of municipal regulations.

PRIORITY 6.5.1: Attract non-market housing development to East Hants.

PRIORITY 6.6.1.: Build Capacity within the Municipality and Community to address housing needs.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

To provide a focused look at the availability of housing and especially of affordable housing, East Hants Council approved the formation of a Municipal Housing Working Group. This group was intended to guide the development of a Municipal Housing Strategy. The group included various perspectives including members representing Municipal Council, the development community, the non-profit housing community, the East Hants Chamber of Commerce and the general public.

The working group consisted of:

- **Municipal Council**
 - ✦ Councillor Garden-Cole (chair)
 - ✦ Councillor MacPhee (vice-chair)
 - ✦ Councillor Moussa
- **East Hants Development Community**
 - ✦ Andrew Bone, Clayton Developments
 - ✦ Brad Ross, Citadel Homes
- **Non-Profit Housing Community**
 - ✦ Paul Mombourquette, Corridor Community Options Society
 - ✦ Linda Wood, Hants East Assisting Refugees Team
- **East Hants & Districts Chamber of Commerce**
 - ✦ Tracy Williams
 - **Public member at large**
 - ✦ Jacob White

The Housing Working Group began meeting regularly in March 2024 until the completion of this strategy in June 2025.

The outcome of that work is this strategy, which is intended to:

- Better understand housing trends and needs in East Hants and identify priority strategies.
- From those priority strategies, establish short, medium and long-term actions that can be taken to enable additional housing to be built.
 - Short-term: 1 year or less.
 - Medium-term: 1 to 3 years.
 - Long-term: 3 or more years.
- Identify means of monitoring and reporting to ensure that housing considerations remain a part of decision making in municipal priorities and land use regulation.

3.0 HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In 2022 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 report, released in 2023, attempts to identify the projected housing need in East Hants out to the year 2032 and estimate the annual gap in required units. The report focuses specifically on East Hants without taking a regional focus and 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."

Despite these shortcomings, the report is the only needs assessment available at this time and can function as a benchmark for future studies. The report identified a potential shortfall in housing by estimating an annual need of 220 dwelling units and construction of only 175 per year.

East Hants is exceeding this number significantly as can be seen below:

	Needed New Dwelling Units	Predicted New Dwelling Units	Actual New Dwelling Units	Cumulative Surplus/Deficit
2022	220	175	372	+152
2023	220	175	236	+168
2024	220	175	444	+392



The study didn't take into consideration the large amount of future housing already approved by Municipal Council or the steps that the municipality has taken to increase capacity as outlined in Section 5. However, all this new housing doesn't guarantee that any of it will be affordable housing, indeed all recent development is market housing built by the private sector. However, with more multi-unit housing being built, there is a lower cost of development per unit compared to single unit dwellings. Nonetheless, it is clear that

what is lacking is affordable and non-market housing. Actions that can help bring more affordable housing to East Hants are discussed in Section 6 of this Strategy.

A future housing needs assessment should also be conducted when this strategy is updated to better understand the future need and supply of housing, particularly the need for affordable housing.

4.0 THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

The housing continuum is a way to graphically understand the range of housing available based on varying opportunity and income.

Homelessness

- **Unsheltered:** Absolutely homeless, living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation.
- **Emergency Sheltered:** People who are staying in overnight shelters due to homelessness or family violence.
- **Provisionally Accommodated:** People with an accommodation that is temporary or that lacks security for tenure.
- **At-Risk:** People who are not yet homeless but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards (1. *Rural Devel-*

opment Network).

Transitional & Supportive Housing

- **Transitional Housing:** Temporary housing that aims to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing.
- **Supportive Housing:** Supportive housing combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use. Many families who require supportive housing have experienced chronic homelessness, experience greater barriers to maintaining their housing and have higher needs that require extra support (2. *Inn From the Cold*).
- **Public Housing** is housing that is provided by the Nova Scotia Provincial



*Our Homes, Action for Housing: A Five Year Housing Plan
Province of Nova Scotia*



Housing Agency for low-income families and seniors. The agency owns over 11,000 dwelling units across the province and 84 units in East Hants.

- **Community Housing** includes non-profit housing provided by non-governmental organizations (NGO's) but typically supported by government funding. There are 80 organizations across the province that provide housing in this sector and one in East Hants which houses 14 individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Affordable Rental/Ownership

- **Rental:** rental units that are typically in private ownership but remain affordable by market conditions/location or government rent subsidy.
- **Ownership:** Affordable ownership is difficult to attain for low-income individuals. However, non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity and govern-

ment programs can assist with down payments. There are also programs to help low-income homeowners with repairs and energy efficiency.

Market Rental/Ownership

- **Rental:** There is no subsidy or discount in market rentals. Rents are set by landlords but are subject to NS regulations regarding an annual rent increase cap (this is not permanent rent control).
- **Home Ownership:** Market home ownership is un-subsidized. Owners are responsible for paying all costs related to acquisition and maintenance of their homes.

East Hants Housing Stock

As of 2023, there were 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 dramatically over the past several years as can be seen in building permits for 2024 below:

- 41% Single-detached
- 21% Semi-detached
- 38% Multi-units (incl townhouses)

The vast majority of housing in East Hants is private market housing. However, there is also some non-market public housing in East Hants.

In East Hants the Nova Scotia Public Housing Agency owns 15 properties with a total of 84 units that provide housing for low-income individuals and families. These units include single unit dwellings and multi-unit buildings in communities across East Hants (i.e., Enfield, Lantz, Maitland, Mount Uniacke, Nine Mile River,

Shubenacadie and Upper Rawdon).

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 with a total of 88 beds as follows:

- 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

5.0 EAST HANTS ROLE

East Hants sees housing as a shared responsibility between the three levels of government, the private development industry and the non-profit housing sector.

Although some larger municipalities (e.g., Halifax Regional Municipality) have become directly involved with social housing to help alleviate the housing crisis, this is a provincial responsibility and East Hants sees no direct role for itself in building or operating non-market housing.

In addition to directly providing social housing through Housing Nova Scotia, the province also provides funding to non-profit housing providers, rent subsidies to enable lower rents in market housing as well as other programs to help low-income seniors stay in their home and fund shelter and transitional housing for homeless and vulnerable individuals. The province is also a key funder to enable municipalities to expand piped service capacity to enable growth in the housing stock.

For their part, the federal government supports local and provincial initiatives via various programs and funding agreements and has primary responsibility for Indigenous housing programs.

Meanwhile, East Hants can have the most impact through its con-

trol of land use and infrastructure, which have a direct impact on the availability of housing.

To this end, East Hants has already taken a number of initiatives that support the growth of a variety of housing forms. These include:

- Over the past decade East Hants Council has approved developments that will enable 7,479 new dwelling units.
- This housing contains a wide range of unit types and will eventually house an estimated 17,950 new East Hants residents, increasing the population by 72%.
- Additional 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.
- 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 accessory dwelling units, tiny homes on wheels and urban cottage developments.

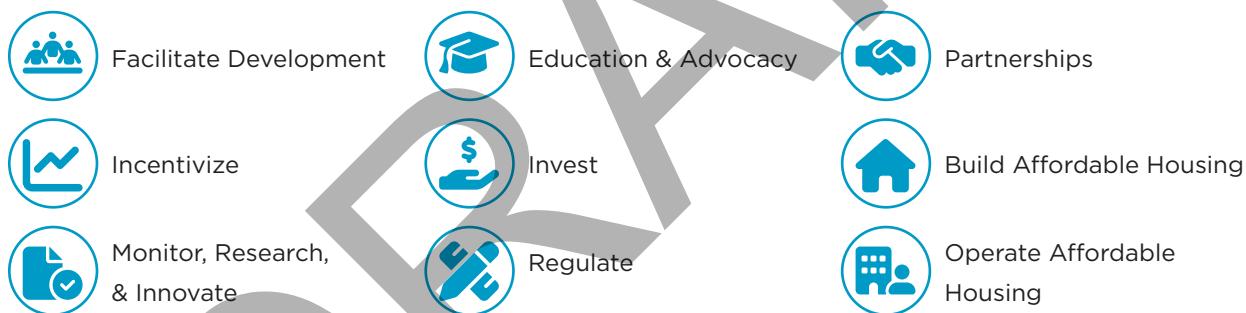
- Building permit fees for accessory dwelling units have been waived until December 31, 2026.
- East Hants has also been planning for and making critical investments in sewer and water infrastructure to enable growth (e.g., Enfield Water Treatment

Plant, Shubenacadie Waste Water Treatment Plant).

Despite these considerable efforts taken to date, there is more that East Hants can do and specific initiatives are discussed in the priority strategies in Section 6.

The chart below is intended to demonstrate the specific roles each participant plays in providing housing.

OPPORTUNITIES



AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

ROLES IN THE HOUSING SYSTEM

Local Governments



Non-Profits



Developers & Builders



Senior Government



6.0 PRIORITY STRATEGIES

6.1 Review Municipal Regulations



REGULATE

MUNICIPAL ROLE

PRIORITY 6.1.1.: Increase opportunities for special care housing.

Special care housing provides opportunities for people who have physical and/or intellectual disabilities to live in a traditional style family dwelling in existing residential communities. This housing type provides access for residents to self-help, professional care, guidance and supervision. The current land use bylaw enables this type of housing be located in a single unit dwelling in all locations where single unit dwellings are permitted.

One of the advantages of this type of housing, over more traditional care facilities, is that it provides access to the existing residential housing stock for this use, or if a new dwelling is proposed there are limited land use permitting requirements to enable this use, compared to more traditional care facilities.

The Land Use Bylaw considers that Special Care Housing, where there are 5 or fewer individuals (excluding staff) living together in a detached dwelling, is a single unit dwelling.

Actions

Action 001: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly increase the number of individuals living in a Special Care dwelling be increased to 8 people or less.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years.



PRIORITY 6.1.2.: Provide more options for people to live in the rural areas of East Hants.

Council has recognized the need for additional rural housing options whilst still protecting the rural landscape and minimizing potential conflicts between types of land uses.

The majority of lands that fall within East Hants' boundaries are rural in nature. Many people value the rural landscape and rural communities as a place they want to continue to live in, raise their families in, retire to, and relocate to. Rural housing is also essential for the rural and agricultural economy to continue to operate and grow.

There are different housing options for the rural areas and these range from single unit and two-unit dwellings, rural subdivisions, small multiplexes and mini-homes. Currently mini-homes are permitted in a mini-home community or a single mini-home building in the Rural Use or Rural Use North Zones. Changes proposed to the Official Community Plan include expanding the use of mini-homes which may provide a more affordable housing option for people.

Actions

Action 002: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly enable two-unit dwellings be an approved residential type where a maximum of 12 units are permitted in the Rural Use North (RU-2) Zone.

Action 003: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly enable two mini-homes be permitted on a lot in the Rural Use (RU) Zone, if the lot meets the requirements to be subdivided.

Action 004: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly permit five mini-homes on a lot in the Rural Use North (RU-2) Zone as-of-right.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium-term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years.



REGULATE



INVEST

MUNICIPAL ROLE

PRIORITY 6.1.3.: Investigate how the location of housing can take advantage of a new transit service.

A transit service has been and continues to be investigated by Council. The incentives section of the Housing Strategy provides a discussion on the cost of transportation and that this can impact a persons ability to pay for housing.

If a resident is going to use transit to move around the East Hants community and connect to other transportation options linking to outside of East Hants, then the location of housing relative to a transit service would be an important consideration for a resident.

Actions

Action 005: As a future municipal project and study, review how existing planning policies and regulations (e.g., transit-oriented development) can be amended to take advantage of a new transit service.

Timeline

Adding to the Municipal Projects and Studies section of the Municipal Planning Strategy is a medium-term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years. The review of the planning policies and regulations is a medium to longer term action item as it would be dependent on a new transit service.

PRIORITY 6.1.4.: Increasing the use of manufactured housing.

A manufactured home refers to a dwelling that is built in a factory and transported to a building site. The first manufactured homes were assembled in the US in the 1920s. Manufactured homes in Canada are built to the specifications of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

- Modular homes are built under the CSA A277 standards
- Mobile homes are built under the CSA Z240 standards

The current size of Canada's manufactured housing market is \$1.5 billion USD (over \$2 billion CAD) for 2024 and the market is expected to grow.

What is the difference between modular homes and mini homes/mobile homes?

A modular home is defined as home that is manufactured in sections or modules in a controlled, environmentally protected building centre or factory. The modules are then transported to the home site and permanently affixed together and to the permanent foundation, and then the exterior cladding is completed. Once finally assembled, modular homes are essentially indistinguishable from typical site-built homes (Richards Mortgage Group). The East Hants Land Use Bylaw treats modular homes the same as other housing types.

Modular construction can also be used for the construction of semi-detached dwellings and multiple unit structures.

Pictured to the right is a 44-unit apartment building constructed using modular construction techniques.

A mobile home is defined as self-contained home built on a steel frame. A mobile home is movable from one location to another, then either placed on a foundation such as blocked wood and anchored to the ground, or more permanently placed on a foundation of drilled concrete piers, poured concrete pedestal, concrete block pedestal, or anchored steel piles. Once on the foundation, the home is skirted (Richards Mortgage Group). Mobile homes don't typically look like traditional stick built homes. To accommodate highway widths they are typically long and skinny and have a linear floor plan.



Modular Construction – 44 Unit Apartment Building



Actions

Action 006: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly permit mini homes across the municipality as an affordable housing option with an emphasis on permitting mini homes in serviced areas.

Action 007: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly enable the Mini-Home (MH) Zone regulations be amended to permit mobile homes on free-hold (individual) lots.

Action 008: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly enable townhouses that are 16 ft wide to permit the use of manufactured housing in townhouse development.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years.



REGULATE

MUNICIPAL ROLE

PRIORITY 6.1.5.: Review lot size requirements to determine if smaller lot sizes are possible.

The East Hants Official Community Plan includes land use regulations for the minimum size of a property. A property's minimum size is dependent on the minimum zone requirements where Municipal services are available and on the minimum zone requirements and onsite service requirements where there are no municipal services available.

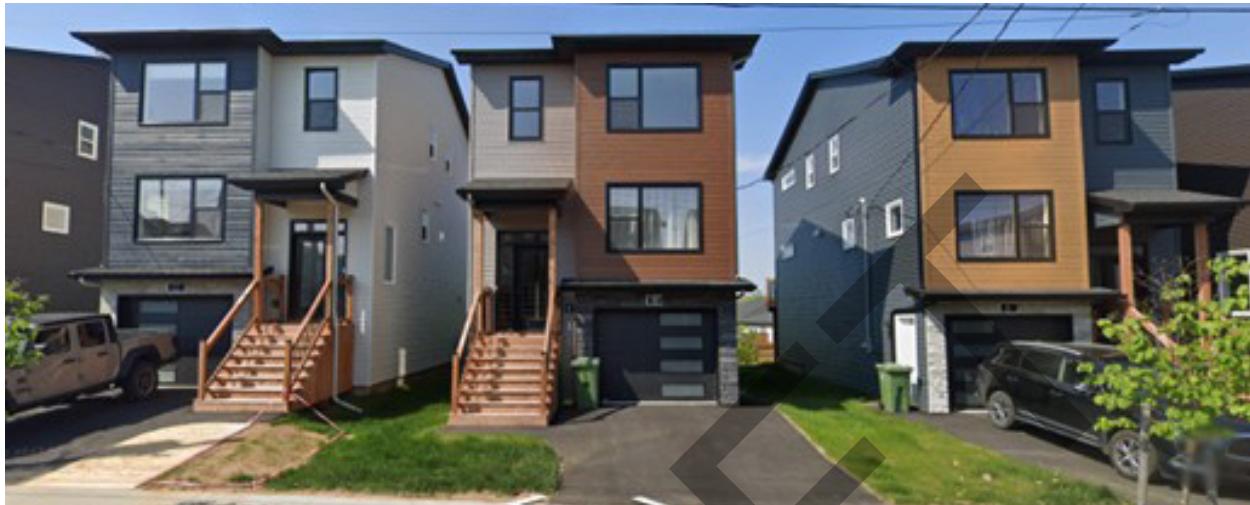
East Hants currently has the smallest as-of-right minimum lot size standards for lots with onsite services compared to the other neighbouring jurisdictions. Halifax Regional Municipality has granted smaller lot size requirements through their negotiations for master-planned communities but in the communities of Bedford and Sackville the minimum lot requirements for an as-of-right development are 8 m² larger than East Hants.

Below are some images illustrating what the current East Hants minimum lot standards might look like, as well as what 'a small lot single' development could resemble. Sam Crescent homes are, in fact, linked dwellings, although they appear as detached homes. The distinction between the two developments lies in the spacing between the detached homes. Smaller lot frontages necessitate that the homes be positioned closer together, while larger lot frontages permit the homes to be spaced farther apart. The two frontages also accommodate different styles of homes; smaller frontages typically feature narrower and taller homes, whereas larger frontages allow for various styles or larger homes.

Owdis Ave - Approximate 16 m frontages - single unit dwellings



Sam Crescent - Approximate 10 m frontages - linked dwellings



Smaller lot single unit dwellings allow for increased density and allow for more efficient delivery of Municipal services but still allow for families to have a detached home. As lot frontages decrease the cost of servicing the lot decreases. The Housing Strategy Working Group recommends a reduction in the minimum lot standards for R1 and R2 Zones.

Actions

Action 009: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly reduce lot area and frontage requirement in unserviced area, while ensuring the lot is technically feasible to accommodate septic and wells.

Action 010: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly reduce the minimum lot requirements for serviced R1 lots to 12.2m of frontage and 372m² of area.

Action 011: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly permit small lot single unit dwellings 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.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years.

PRIORITY 6.1.6.: Increasing density in the Village Core (VC) Zone.

When considering if changes to the current multiple-unit zones are warranted, the Housing Committee took into consideration other requirements, such as Municipal water and wastewater capacity; road capacity and network design; ensuring a well-designed and walkable community; and availability of soft services to support the population increase, such as but not limited to, schools, parks, recreation facilities, health care services, RCMP, etc.

Although many large developments have been approved in East Hants, not all of them are under construction. Reasons why Developers are not proceeding with their projects include the cost of construction, from building roads to the cost of construction materials, costs have gone up making project prices soar. The second issue is interest rates, the costs of borrowing are making it difficult for developers to fund their projects; however, interest rates are decreasing, which may allow developers to reconsider their projects.

The East Hants Official Community Plan generally does a good job of enabling the development of various forms of housing. Obstacles to creating more housing units appear to be related to the economic reality facing all Canadians. Therefore, only modest amendments to the Planning documents are warranted, at this time.

Actions

Action 012: East Hants Council are actively considering amendments to the East Hants Planning documents to permit the as-of-right density in the Village Core (VC) Zone be increased from 12 to 16 units, in accordance to the Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives.

Timeline

Planning document amendments required for the Housing Accelerator Fund is a short-term task that is currently underway. The new policy and regulations are anticipated to be in effect by the end of 2025.



PRIORITY #6.1.7.: Options for bonus and inclusionary zoning.

The East Hants Official Community Plan does not currently have regulations that require the development of affordable housing units or require a mix of socio-economic backgrounds. To date, the development of new social housing or affordable units has been completed by the Provincial government.

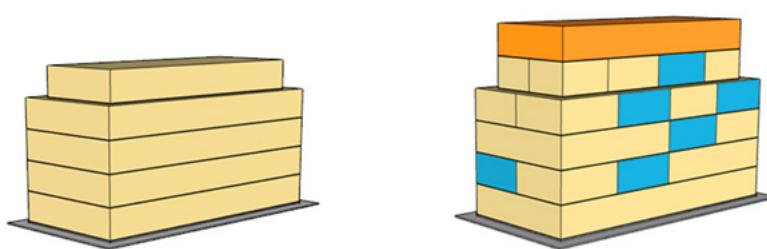
INCENTIVIZE **BONUS ZONING**

East Hants has two provisions in the Official Community Plan that allow for bonus zoning. The first regulation was adopted in the 2016 East Hants Official Community Plan and allows a developer to have a four-storey building (4th storey built into the roof line) in the Village Core (VC) Zone, if the first floor of the building is commercial space. No developer has used this provision to date.

The second bonus provision for the Village Core (VC) Zone was adopted as part of the 2023 East Hants Official Community Plan. The objective of the bonus is to encourage the preservation of existing historic dwellings. The regulation allows developers to keep homes with historical importance on their lots without counting the gross floor area of the historic home toward the overall lot gross floor area for the lot. A historic house can be kept on a lot and the rest of the lot can be developed. One developer is in the process of using this provision to maintain a historic home while constructing a new multi-unit building on the same lot; thereby giving them more gross floor area than would otherwise be permitted as-of-right.

WHAT IS INCLUSIONARY ZONING?

Inclusionary Zoning is a tool local governments use to create affordable housing by encouraging or requiring developers to set aside a percentage of housing units to be rented or sold at below-market prices (Inclusionary Zoning by Kriti Ramakrishnan, Mark Treskon, and Solomon Greene). Inclusionary land use regulations aim to provide housing to low-income residents who would otherwise be unable to afford it. An inclusionary zoning program can be mandatory or voluntary.



As an example, developers may be able to construct a larger building in exchange for 10% to 20% of the units being

5 Stories - 58,000 square feet

58 Market-Rate Units
No Affordable Units

6 Stories - 66,000 square feet

10% Inclusionary Requirement
14% Density Bonus
60 Market-Rate Units
6 Affordable Units

constructed being affordable.

IS INCLUSIONARY ZONING EFFECTIVE?

It depends on whose research is being reviewed. Literature from regulators and affordable housing groups indicates that it is working. Literature from developers and property management companies indicates that it reduces the number of dwelling units being created and pushes the costs of the units to other market housing owners. The truth is probably somewhere in between.

INCLUSIONARY ZONING AND EAST HANTS

With limited staff resources and with previous concerns raised by Council regarding taller and denser buildings, there are considerations as to whether an inclusionary zoning program would be successful in our current market. Future market conditions could allow for the reconsideration of inclusionary programs. In the meantime, a policy could be added to the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) recognizing the potential benefits of an inclusionary zoning program and that such a program could be reviewed as part of future community plan updates.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO INCLUSIONARY ZONING

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) offers programs to help support the creation of affordable housing units. As an alternative to creating an inclusionary zoning program, there may be an option to create a zoning bonus for Developers who take part in one of the CMHC programs. Developers would have to provide staff with proof that they have been approved for the program before a development and building permit was issued for the project. This option may help to encourage affordable housing units in East Hants without continual staff oversight.

Actions

Action 013: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly consider offering a height and/or unit bonus to developers who are offering a federal or provincial affordable housing program.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years.



PRIORITY #6.1.8.: Take action to create more opportunities to build accessory dwelling units through a review of municipal regulations.

East Hants Council adopted regulations to permit accessory dwelling units as part of the 2016 East Hants Plan Review. Accessory dwelling units are permitted nearly everywhere where there is a legal single unit dwelling.

The Municipality permits three types of accessory dwelling units:

1. Secondary Suite: A self-contained accessory dwelling unit fully contained within and subordinate to a single unit dwelling or bed and breakfast
2. Garage Suite: Suite built above a detached garage.
3. Garden Suite: A free-standing, single-story accessory dwelling unit located behind the primary single unit dwelling or bed and breakfast.



The maximum accessory dwelling unit gross floor area is 80% of the gross floor area of the main dwelling up to a maximum of 80 m². Since the adoption in 2016, many residents have created secondary suites, as part of the main dwelling unit. In addition to the maximum size regulation, those wishing to have an accessory dwelling unit also have to ensure their property meets the minimum lot area requirements, parking requirements, the minimum setback requirements and the maximum height requirements as outlined in the Land Use Bylaw. Garage suites and garden suites also must match the main dwelling in building material type, cladding colour, roof type, and roof pitch.

Actions

Action 014: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly enable semi-detached dwellings to be permitted to have an accessory dwelling unit.

Action 015: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January

2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly enable townhouse dwelling units to be permitted to have an accessory dwelling unit.

Action 016: As part of the East Hants Plan Review, scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to possibly increase the current maximum size of an accessory dwelling unit.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium-term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years.

DRAFT



**EDUCATE &
ADVOCACY**



PARTNERSHIPS

MUNICIPAL ROLE

PRIORITY #6.1.9.: Advocate for federal & provincial government action regarding housing.

East Hants recognizes that housing is a shared responsibility. In addition, both the Government of Canada and Province of Nova Scotia have adopted housing strategies and are taking a number of welcome actions and investments. However, East Hants should communicate to the federal & provincial governments, areas in which they should take further action.

Actions

Action 017: East Hants communicate to the federal and provincial governments:

- Continue to invest in infrastructure, particularly water and wastewater, that supports housing.
- Provide financial incentives for the community housing sector to build non-market housing.
- Provide social and financial supports to the homeless and at-risk population in East Hants.
- Stay engaged in housing issues and continue to provide relevant housing statistics.
- Communicate to the province that the provincial subdivision regulations should be reviewed, to possibly allow smaller lots.

Timeline

Advocacy is a short to long term task that can begin immediately and will be ongoing through various contacts with senior levels of government.

6.2 Surplus Land

PRIORITY #6.2.1.: Utilize Surplus Property for Affordable Housing.

 **INCENTIVIZE** Consideration should be given to using East Hants' inventory of surplus property to enable affordable housing projects to move forward.

 **PARTNERSHIPS** East Hants currently owns 189 properties. Of these, staff are currently reviewing 22 as possible surplus properties. The municipality manages surplus property through the Disposal of Surplus Property Policy. The stated purpose of this policy is:

 **FACILITATE** *...to dispose of surplus real property in a fair, legally compliant and impartial manner, which takes into account the highest financial return to the Municipality of East Hants balanced with economic and community development opportunities.*

 **MUNICIPAL ROLE** In its current form the policy could enable the disposal of surplus property for housing and could even enable the disposal of property below market value. However, there is no indication that housing is a priority in the policy.

Actions

Action 018: Review the East Hants Disposal of Surplus Property Policy to consider prioritizing the utilization of suitable surplus property for affordable housing, non-market housing, and shelter space.

Timeline

Review of the East Hants Disposal of Surplus Property Policy is a short to medium-term action.

6.3 Incentives



INCENTIVIZE



REGULATE

MUNICIPAL ROLE

PRIORITY 6.3.1.: Take action to create a Tax Relief Program for Non-profit organizations that provide housing in East Hants.

The Municipality of East Hants does not provide any incentives for new housing developments outside of waiving building permit fees for building an Accessory Dwelling Unit and waiving fees for non-profit organization. The Municipality does not offer any incentives in the form of grants or through tax relief. Incentives have been explored to encourage developers to build within East Hants and to aid in the financial costs associated with building, specifically for non-profit organizations providing affordable housing or organizations that provide a direct community benefit.

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) provides a tax-relief program where non-profit and charitable organizations are eligible for a property tax reduction each year. The HRM program has three categories for organizations that would be eligible to the tax relief:

- are non-commercial in nature;
- do not represent the interests of business, commerce, or industry; and
- provide a direct community benefit to the residents of the Municipality.

There are also a number of benefits for the non-profit and charitable organizations. A representative from a local housing non-profit indicated after a pro forma analysis that for every dollar saved in operating expenses through reduced property tax, there is \$22 dollars “unlocked” in capital financing ability. For example, if a \$100,000 annual property tax bill was waived by the Municipality, \$2,200,000 in additional mortgage servicing could be enabled over the course of a 50- year mortgage term, filling a critical gap in the upfront capital stack for housing development.

Actions

Action 019: Explore the option of implementing a tax relief program for non-profit organizations that provide housing within East Hants

Timeline

The development of a tax relief program is a medium-term action.

PRIORITY 6.3.2.: Provide incentives to reduce energy poverty.



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Energy poverty is when households cannot afford or cannot access the levels of energy necessary to meet their daily needs. The cost of energy is one element of the cost of running a home and the cost of energy is linked to the affordability of housing and a poorly insulated home and the high cost of purchasing electricity and/home heating fuel can mean that purchasing energy is unaffordable for many people.

According to researchers from McGill University, as many as one in five Canadian households can be considered to be in energy poverty. In 2024 the Nova Scotia Energy Poverty Task Force released a report and the author of that report, Economist Roger Colton, stated that “In 40 years experience in more than 40 jurisdictions across North America I’ve never seen an energy affordability situation as bad as Nova Scotia is in right now”. (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/energy-poverty-task-force-discounts-1.7217337>)

There are provincial level incentive programs that are available to homeowners, builders and home buyers. These programs have varied over the years and have included: rebates for the installation of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) system and also rebates to build energy efficient homes. The Municipality of East Hants also helps to provide low interest financing to qualified homeowners interested in undertaking clean energy upgrades. This Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing enables the property owner to repay the municipality over time on their property tax bill.

Actions

Action 020: Investigate policies to incentivize developers to construct multi-unit residential buildings with a higher energy efficiency.

Action 021: Provide information to homeowners, builders and home buyers regarding existing energy efficiency funding and rebate programs that are available.

Timeline

Amending municipal regulations is a medium-term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years. Providing information to homeowners, builders and home buyers with information on funding and rebate programs is a short-term goal but should continue on a rolling basis.

PRIORITY 6.3.3.: Investigate a discounted fare program for a future transit service.

There are no public transit options available in East Hants. A transit services has been and continues to be investigated by Council.

In 2021 the Nova Scotia average spending on goods and services for transportation, as a percentage share of spending, is the highest of all provinces with an average of 17.7%, with the lowest being Ontario with 14.1%. (source Statistics Canada - taken from survey on Household Spending - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231018/dq231018a-eng.htm>)

Data from the same survey showed that in 2021, Canadian Households spent an average of \$9,501 on private transportation; \$,803 was spent on the purchase of vehicles; \$2,080 was spent on gasoline and other fuels; and average spending on public transportation was \$598. These amounts may not be representative of current 2025 spending habits on transportation, as when the survey was conducted in 2021 this was during the Covid pandemic and typical transportation habits may have been affected. In fact, in all of the categories mentioned the spending on transportation was down in these categories with a range from 14.1% to 59.6%. (source Statistics Canada - taken from survey on Household Spending - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231018/dq231018a-eng.htm>)

Spending on transportation is a large percentage of a persons spending on goods and services which in turn impacts a persons ability to afford other things such as housing. For some people transportation can be cost prohibitive and impacts a persons ability to travel for work, for medical appointments, for education, etc.

Actions

Action 022: Investigate a discounted fare program for a future East Hants transit service.

Timeline

The timeline for this is dependent on a new transit service being introduced and for that reason this is a medium to longer term action item.

6.4 Homelessness

PRIORITY 6.4.1.: Address homelessness through advocacy to senior levels of government and review of municipal regulations.



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It is difficult to find accurate, current and local statistics regarding homelessness. In 2021 Statistics Canada reported that 10.5% of Canadians have experienced some form of homelessness at some point in their lives and 2.2% absolute homelessness.

Homeless include:

- Unsheltered: Absolutely homeless, living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation.
- Emergency Sheltered: People who are staying in overnight shelters due to homelessness or family violence.
- Provisionally Accommodated: People with an accommodation that is temporary or that lacks security for tenure.
- At-Risk: People who are not yet homeless but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards¹ (1. Rural Development Network).

Halifax Regional Municipality report 1300 homeless people (named list) and 140-150 people sleeping rough in HRM as of June 2024.

A 2022 study conducted by Acadia University and the Homeless No More Annapolis Valley initiative found 231 people including 75 children experiencing homelessness between Digby and West Hants, including:

- 44.5 per cent provisionally accommodated
- 22.5 per cent at risk of homelessness
- 16 per cent unsheltered
- 12.5 per cent emergency sheltered

Based on the population of these communities, compared to East Hants, we should expect approximately 50 people in East Hants experiencing some form of homelessness.

Actions

Action 023: Direct homeless individuals to support services (i.e., Housing NS, NS Dept of Opportunities and Social Development, Emergency Shelters, 211 NS).

Action 024: As part of the East Hants Plan Review scheduled to start in January 2026, East Hants Planning documents will be reviewed to ensure emergency shelters would be permitted at appropriate locations.

Action 025: East Hants communicate to the province the need for additional supports for those experiencing rural homelessness.

Timeline

Advocacy is a short to long term task that can begin immediately and will be ongoing through various contacts with senior levels of government. Amending municipal regulations is a medium term action as it will take place through the next plan review, which is expected to take two years. Reviewing the Surplus Property Policy is a short to medium term action.

DRAFT

6.5 Non-Market Housing



MUNICIPAL ROLE

PRIORITY 6.5.1.: Attract non-market housing development to East Hants.

Non-market housing is rental or for-sale housing provided for low and moderate-income families and individuals not traditionally served by the private market. Such housing is often subsidized through a variety of ways, including senior government support. This housing is typically managed through public, non-profit, and co-op organizations.

Public Housing

The 11,200 dwelling units owned by the Nova Scotia Housing Agency amount to approximately 2.6% or 1 in 38 dwellings in the province. However, in East Hants the 84 public housing units owned by the NS Housing Agency total only 0.83% of all dwelling units or 1 in 121. The Province has recently announced a number of projects to increase the public housing portfolio. Unfortunately, no projects have been announced in East Hants to date.

Community Housing

Community Housing includes non-profit housing provided by non-governmental organizations (NGO's) but typically supported by government funding. 80 organizations across the province provide housing in this sector. These organizations are represented by the Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA) including the Housing Trust of Nova Scotia, Akoma Holdings Inc., Habitat for Humanity and New Dawn Enterprises.

In East Hants, Corridor Community Options Society is the only known provider of NGO non-market housing. This organization provides housing for 14 individuals with intellectual disabilities within 3 properties in Enfield and Lantz.

Actions

Action 026: East Hants communicate to the province the need for additional non-market housing and public housing in East Hants and specifically point to the low ratio of public housing and absence of co-op housing in East Hants compared to the provincial average.

Action 027: Further communicate the municipality's willingness to work with the province to bring about additional non-market housing in East Hants.

Timeline

Advocacy is a short to long term task that can begin immediately and will be ongoing through various contacts with senior levels of government.

6.6 Capacity Building



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PRIORITY 6.6.1: Build Capacity within the Municipality and Community to address housing needs

Capacity-building in the housing system involves developing and strengthening the skills, processes and resources that organizations and communities require to meet the changing housing market.

Municipal Capacity Building

Municipal capacity includes the financial, skills and organizational resources available to manage the changing demands of the housing sector. This will primarily include appropriately trained staff to manage the increase in development (i.e., planners, development officers, geomatics professionals and building officials) and develop the necessary policies and technology implementation.

Community Housing Capacity Building

Nova Scotia has a Community Housing Capacity Building Program (CHCBP). The CHCBP seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Maintain existing supply of affordable housing owned and operated by co-ops and nonprofits.
- Increase organizational and governance capacity to ensure long-term sustainability and promote sector growth.
- Ensure community housing organizations are well-positioned to leverage existing and new federal funding opportunities.
- Improve housing outcomes for racialized and marginalized communities.

(Community Housing Capacity Building Program Proponent Guide)

The Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA) similarly seeks to build capacity among its members in the non-profit housing community, as its website says:

The NSNPHA will help build capacity across the non-profit housing sector through co-learning activities, pooling knowledge, and being a collective voice. Through forming networks and collaborating challenges can be more effectively tackled and strategies can be created to reduce overlap and competition.

(<https://nsnonprofithousing.ca/>)

Actions

Action 028: Review the municipality's current internal capacity to ensure it is able to manage the required increase in housing development through appropriate staffing & skills training.

Action 029: Implement technology such as electronic permitting to enable building permits to be more efficiently submitted and reviewed while also enabling more effective communications between the municipality and builders/developers.

Action 030: Actively recruit community housing providers to undertake projects in East Hants, listen to how East Hants can help them succeed and encourage these organizations to take advantage of the Provincial Community Housing Capacity Building Program.

Timeline

Reviewing internal human capacity is an annual task, implementation of electronic permitting is a short-term goal and communication with the community housing sector can begin immediately and continue as long as needed.

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7.0 MONITORING & PROGRESS REPORTING

To ensure actions outlined in this strategy remain relevant to the changing housing market and receive the required resources, it is important to monitor progress and periodically update this plan.

Annual Progress Report

An annual report to Council will be used to outline the progress on implementation of this Housing Strategy. The annual report will include updated housing statistics and progress on implementing key priorities of this strategy.

Report Update

This strategy should be updated every five years to take advantage of new housing and census data and to update the priority initiatives to deal with emerging issues. In addition, the municipality should have the housing needs assessment updated to better reflect East Hants' unique situation.

