

Sharing Approaches
to the Housing Crisis in

Halifax and Nova Scotia





Ren Thomas (she/her/they/them)
Dalhousie University

Jill MacLellan (she/her)
Halifax Regional Municipality

Brandon Umpherville (he/him)
Halifax Regional Municipality

1

Context

2

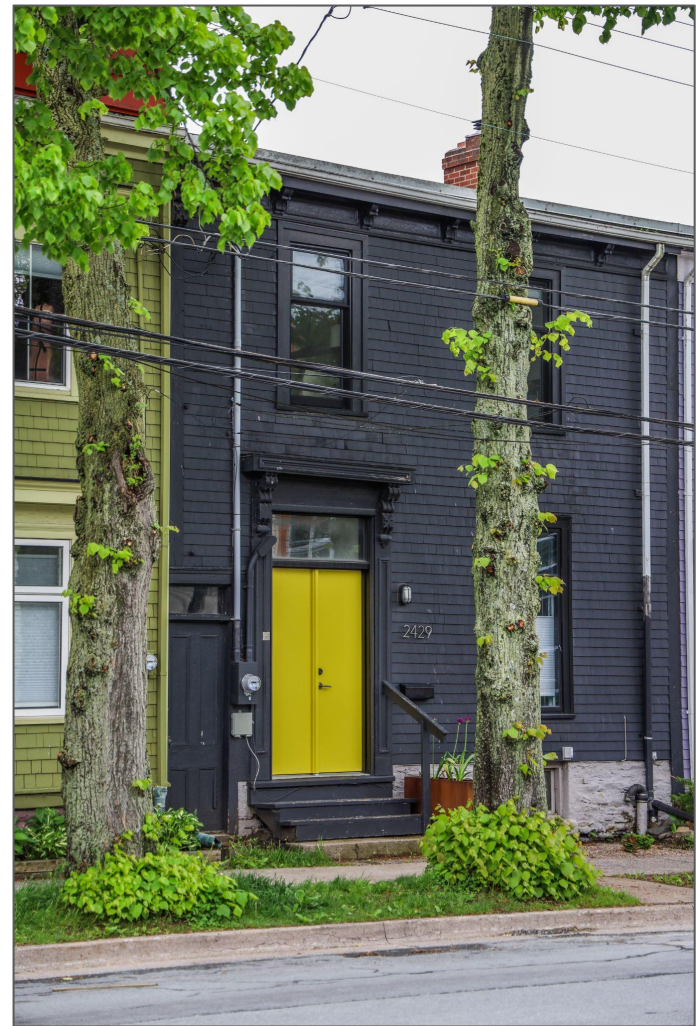
Nova Scotia

3

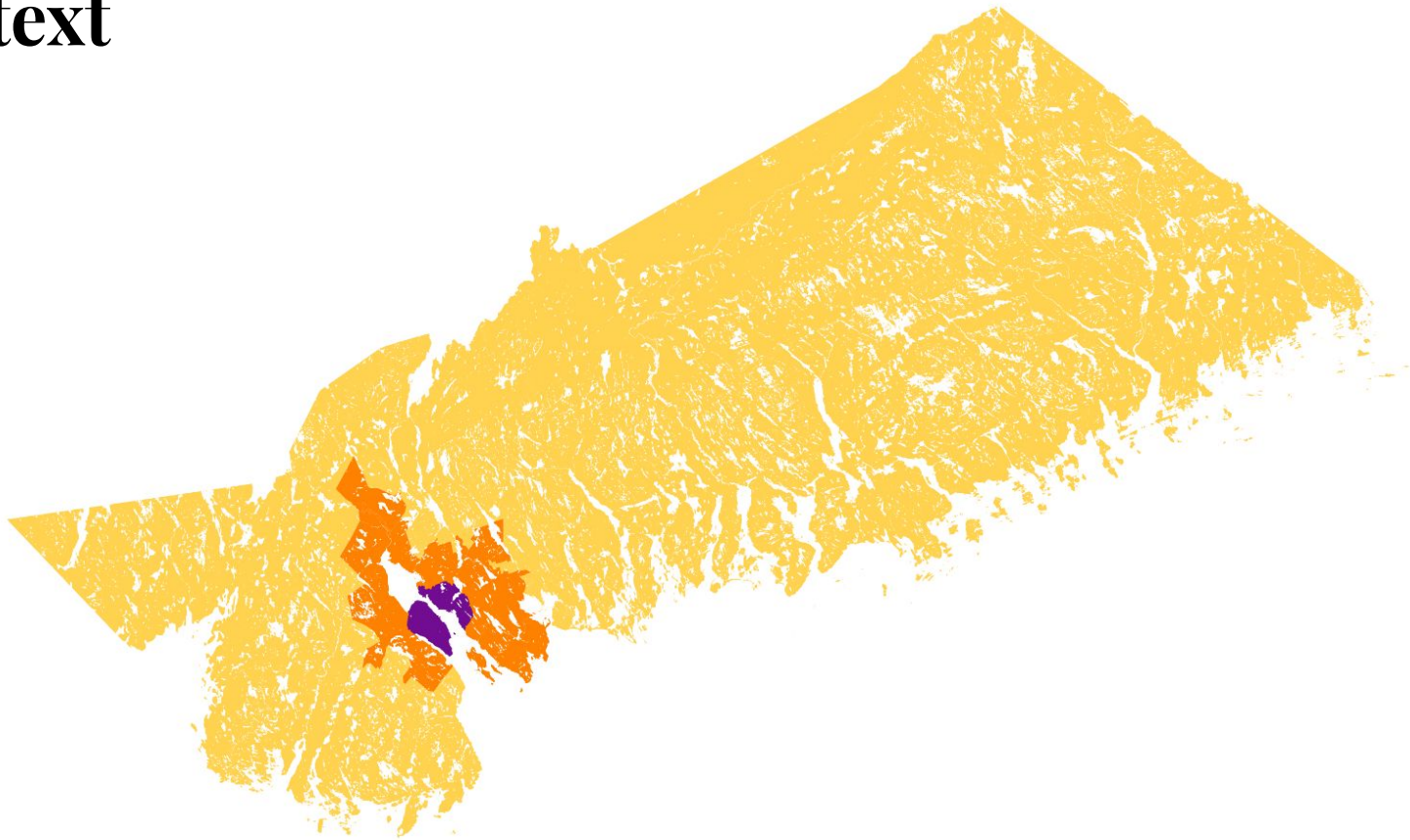
Halifax

4

Workshop



Context



Government Jurisdiction

Municipality

- Land Use Regulations
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Financial Support

Province

- Public/Social Housing
- Financial Support
- Powers Granted to the Municipality

Federal Gov't / CMHC / Indigenous

- National Housing Strategy
- Housing Market Studies/Research
- Financial Support

Research and Policy Development

Surplus Land

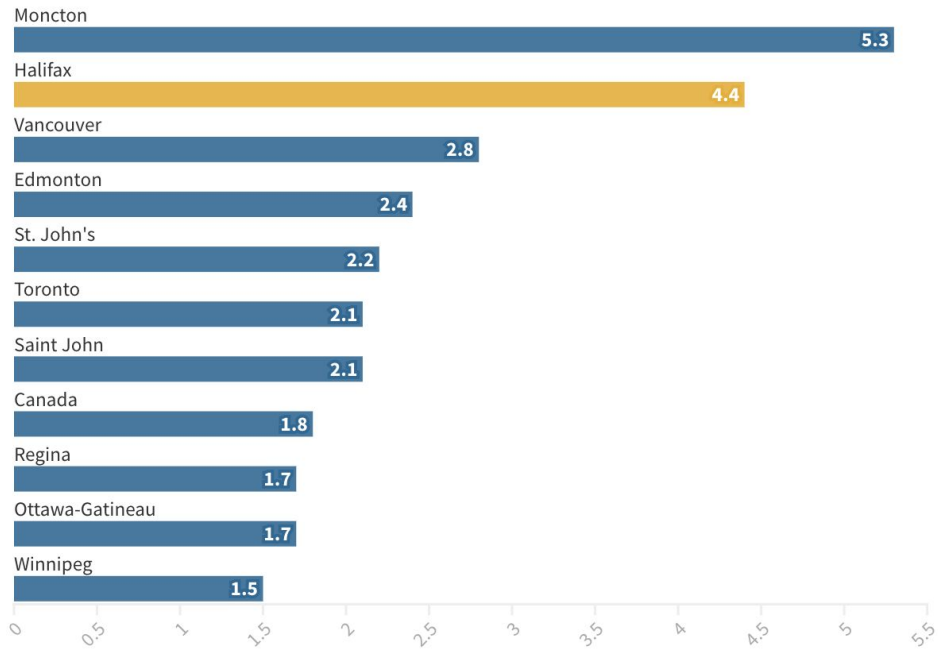
Advocacy/Support





Atlantic boom: No other urban centres in Canada saw as much population growth by percentage as Moncton and Halifax in 2022

Halifax's population grew more than twice as fast as the national average from July 1, 2021, to July 1, 2022.



Source: [Statistics Canada: Annual demographic estimates](#)

PURPOSE BUILT RENTAL MARKET

Vacancy Rate

1%

Average Two-Bedroom Rent

\$1,449

UP by 9.3%

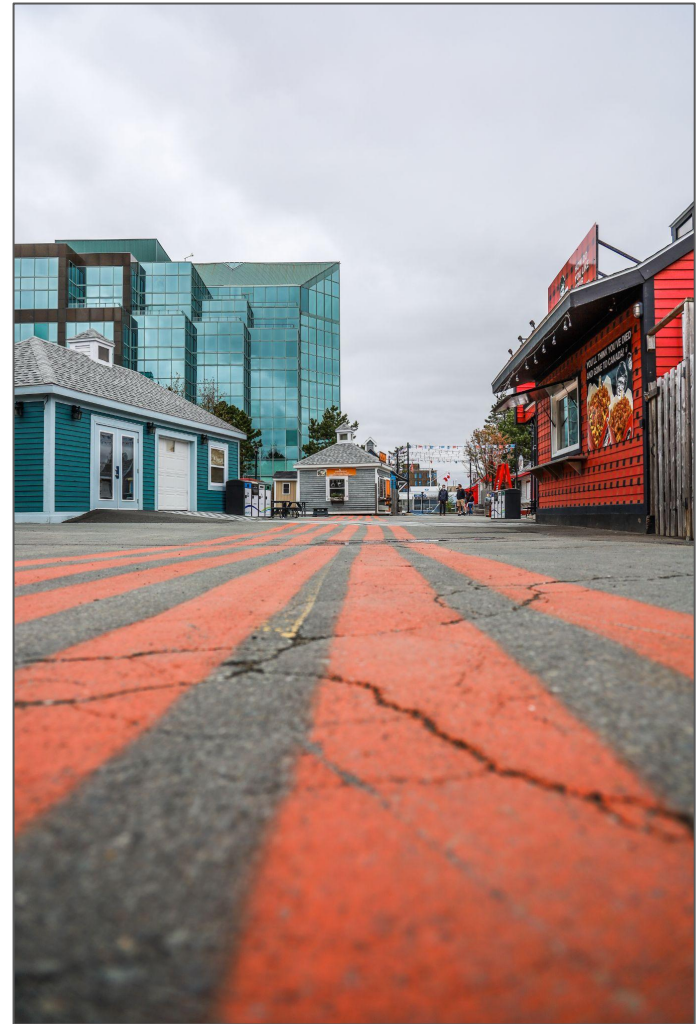




Figure 2 Percent of rental units in Halifax affordable for each income quintile, 2022



Source: CMHC, Statistics Canada

Nova Scotia

Family with 5 kids living in tents amid 'crisis' in South Shore housing



Advocates say people are struggling to find any vacancies, let alone affordable ones



[Nicola Seguin](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jun 28, 2022 4:26 PM ADT | Last Updated: June 28, 2022



Jessica Smith and her family have been living at this campsite for the past month. They lost their home in a fire and haven't been able to find a new one. (Submitted by Jessica Smith)





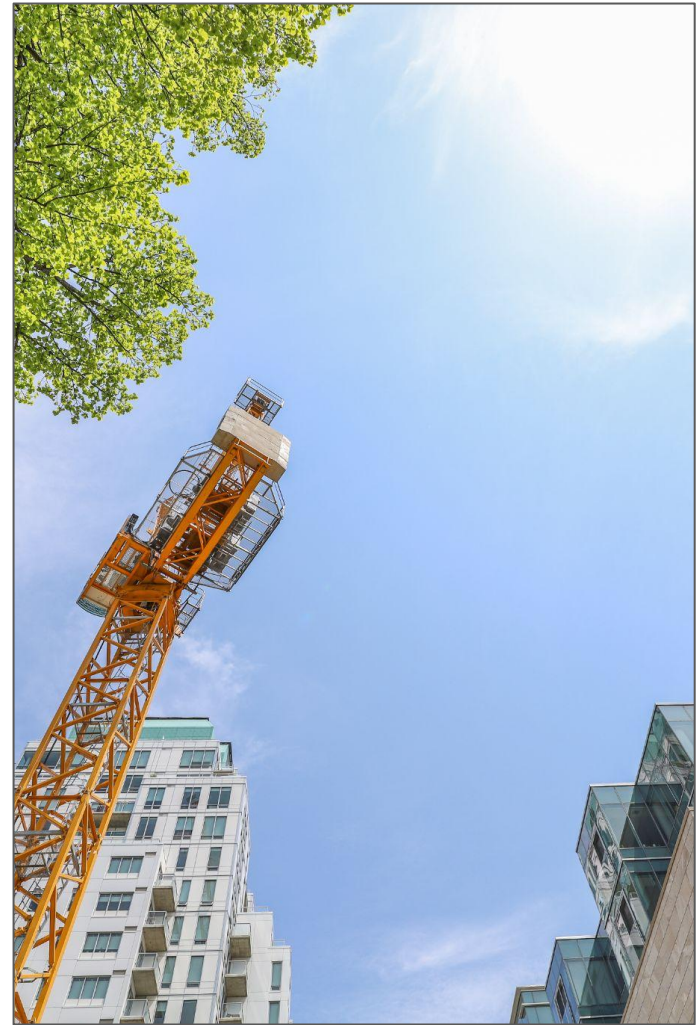
Acknowledgment of the need for systemic change

- ScotiaBank Insights and Reviews (January 18, 2023) recommends buying, building, retrofitting and building new social housing units to meet the need of low-income households
- CMHC 2022 Rental Market Report (January 2023) showed a vast increase in the number of rental units being built (including a record number in Vancouver), but also in the number of renter households
- Rentals.ca January 2023 Rent Report noted average rent increases of 12% from 2021, but individual cities were as high as 32% (Kitchener)

What has the Province done?

The Province established an Affordable Housing Commission in 2020 to engage with the public and key stakeholders to come up with recommendations, reporting back to the Premier and Minister by July 2021. The Commission report emphasized 17 recommendations including four Quick Start actions:

- \$35 M Housing Supply Fund for demonstration projects in mixed-use and mixed-tenure (including 714 affordable units), 425 new rent supplements, and targeted funding to support the federal Rapid Housing Initiative
- \$2.5 M Community Housing Growth Fund for co-ops and non-profits
- \$2 M for existing public housing repairs/renewal
- \$500,000 for housing needs assessments to help the 49 local authorities understand their housing needs, including African NS communities





What has the Province done?

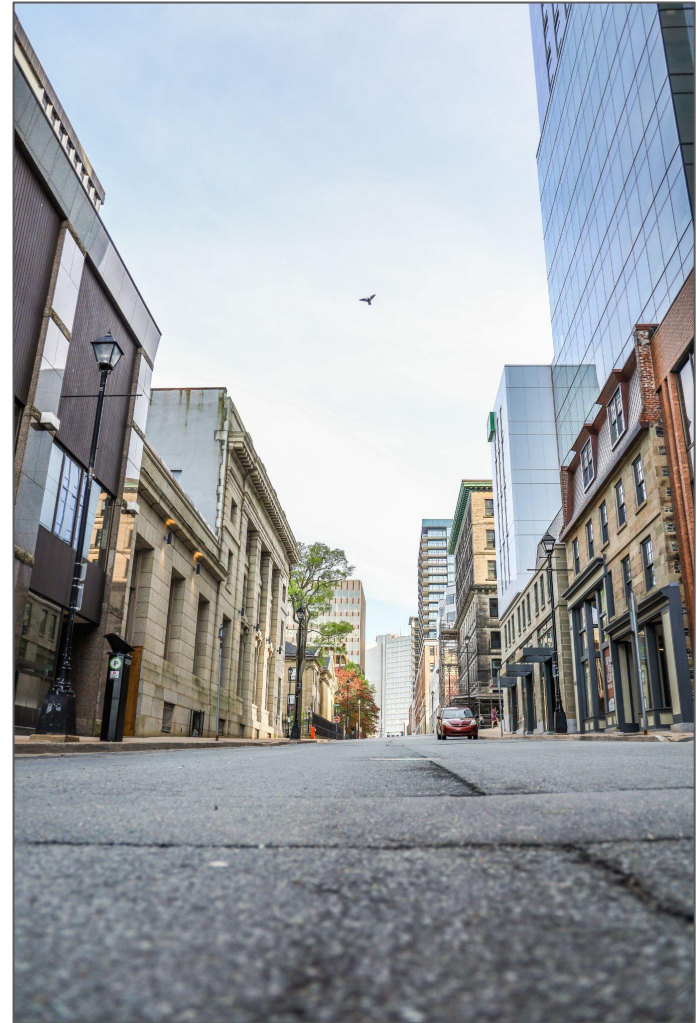
Recommendations

1. Establish an arm's length independent provincial housing entity
2. Recognize housing as a right and a key strategic sector for economic development, health, and social equity
3. Modernize provincial legislation and regulations
4. Develop a long-term provincial housing strategy
5. Empower municipalities to become key partners in affordable housing
6. Support the creation of more affordable housing, prioritizing a mixed-income, multi-partner approach
7. Reduce costs for new affordable housing
8. Reduce regulatory and non-cost barriers of new development
9. Prevent the loss of affordable homes
10. Build community housing capacity
11. Transform our public housing model
12. Expand housing options that meet the needs of seniors and vulnerable Nova Scotians
13. Provide targeted resources and supports to vulnerable and underrepresented communities
14. Enhance renter protections, equitable access, and better-functioning conditions for rental housing
15. Address the specific needs of rural and non-urban communities
16. Improve access to rental housing data
17. Support innovation and promote cross-sectoral partnerships

July 2022 Progress Report

What has the Province done?

- Consolidated the five regional housing authorities into a central authority managing public housing
- Collaborated on helping communities develop Community Land Trusts, such in as Truro and Hammonds Plains
- Amended the Municipal Governance Act (allowing them to use inclusionary zoning, provide private-sector housing incentives)
- Amended the Residential Tenancies Act to enhance protection from eviction due to renovations
- Supporting a housing needs assessment for African NS communities and supporting Tawaak Housing Association in their work on the National Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy
- Created an inventory of publicly owned land to identify sites for affordable housing development
- Amended the Halifax Charter to allow faster decisions, free up staff times, and improve development agreements (Deloitte Report October 2022)





What has the Province done?

Less action on:

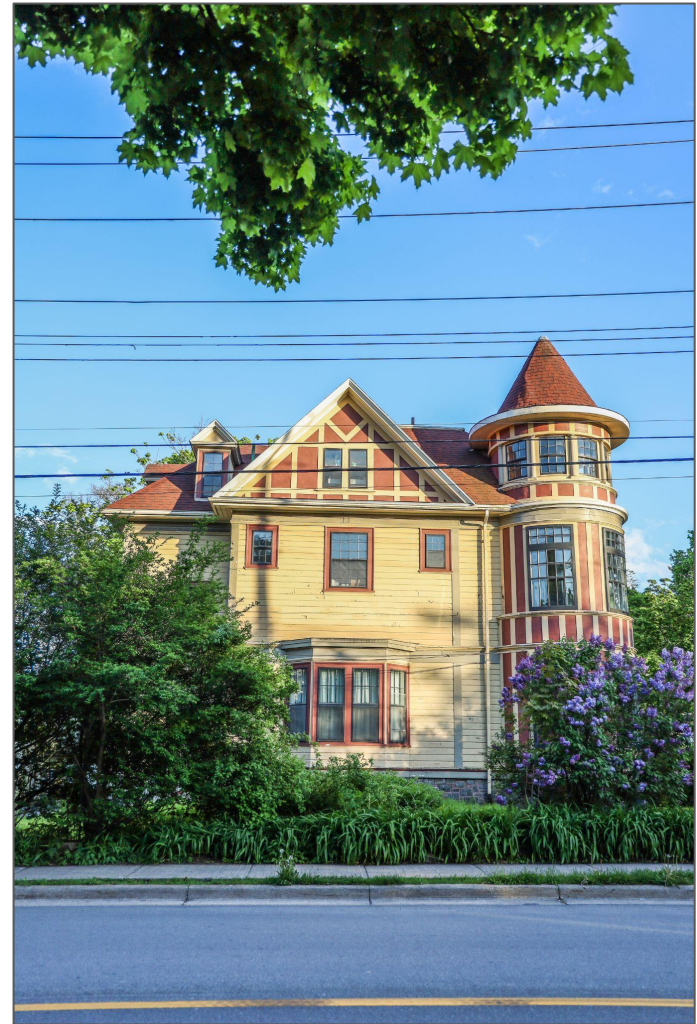
- Establishing an arms-length provincial housing authority
- Developing a provincial housing strategy (engagement process began July 2022)
- Data sharing
- Education and awareness campaigns
- Online rental housing registry
- Rental unit preservation

Find their reports here:

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/affordable-housing-reports>

What are other stakeholders doing?

- Mi'kmak Friendship Centre is building a tiny homes project for three individuals
- With provincial and federal funding (RHI), Adsum for Women & Children, the Mi'kmaw Friendship Centre, North End Community Health Centre, AHANS, Soul's Harbour, and Coady's Place are building new affordable units
- Akoma Holdings Inc. is redeveloping their property
- Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association, developed in partnership with the Community Housing Transformation Centre, Pauline MacIntosh at St. FX/Coady Institute

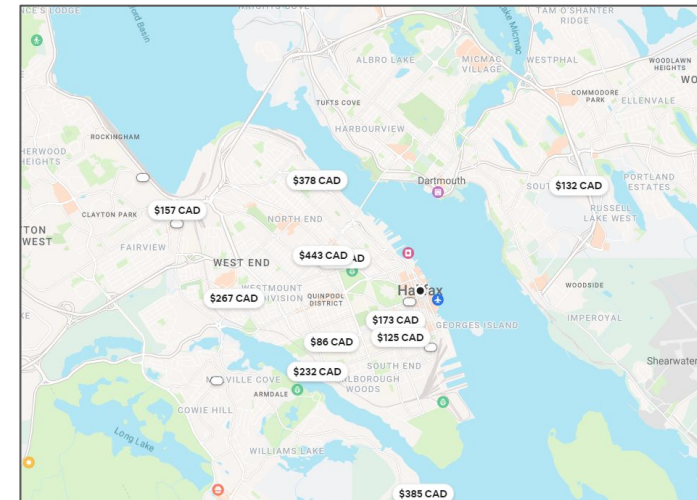


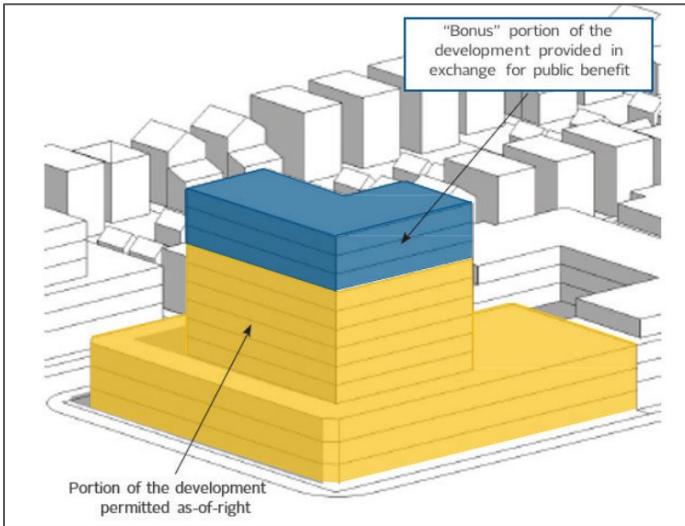
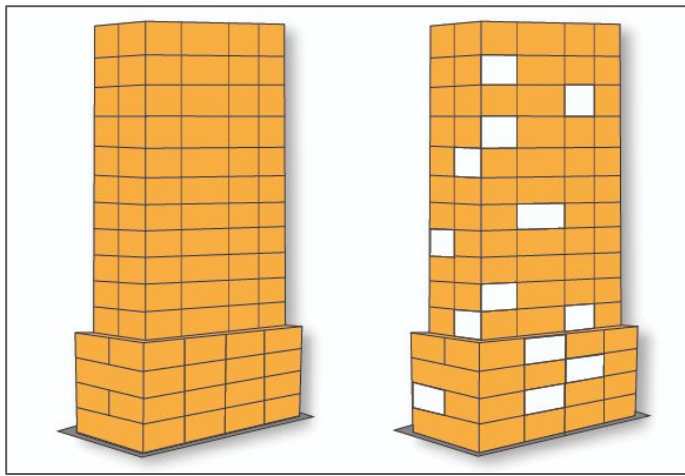


What is HRM doing?

Removing Land Use Barriers

- Secondary and backyard suites
 - ◆ Region-wide amendments in 2020 to allow a secondary or backyard suite accessory to all single unit, two-unit or townhouse dwellings
- Tiny homes
 - ◆ Removed outdated prohibitions focused on mobile homes (minimum building size, mobile dwelling prohibition)
- Shipping Containers
 - ◆ Allowed the use of shipping containers as dwellings, understanding that requirements of the building code would cover minimum safety considerations
- Shared housing
 - ◆ Region-wide amendments in 2022 to allow shared housing in all residential zones.
 - ◆ Regulate it as we do all residential uses. Focus on built form rather than tenancy.
 - ◆ Allows for larger scale shared housing to update approach to seniors housing, those in need of support or personal care, those in need of affordable housing or those seeking a group-style living situation.
- Short-term rentals
 - ◆ Allow in all residential zones in conjunction with a primary residence.
 - ◆ Allow in commercial zones as we do traditional tourist accommodations.



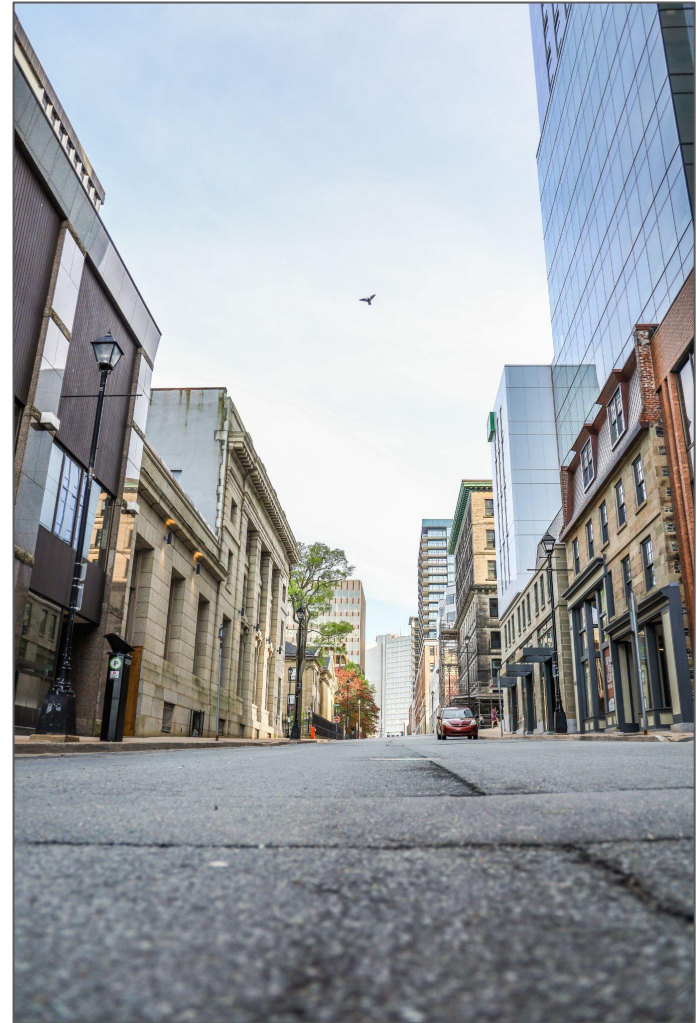


New Development Initiatives

- Density bonusing
 - ◆ Incentive or bonus zoning requires new development to provide public benefits that contribute to the public realm or increased liveability.
 - ◆ First implemented in 2009, updated as part of Centre Plan.
 - ◆ New framework applies to the top 20% of development floor area, over 2000 sq.m.
 - ◆ Allows 6 acceptable public benefits with a minimum of 60% provided as cash in lieu for affordable housing.
- Inclusionary zoning
 - ◆ Power asked for by HRM and granted by the Province. Team has completed a jurisdictional review and best practices analysis. Next step is a fiscal analysis.
- No net loss/rental replacement

Financial Support

- Affordable Housing Grant Program
 - ◆ Disperses the money collected through the Density Bonus program.
 - ◆ As of May 2023 there was 5.6 million dollars collected in the reserve for affordable housing.
 - ◆ Program funds new construction, renovations, property assessments and acquisitions.
 - ◆ Year 1 funded just under 1 million, year 2 is just over 1.2 million.
- Waiving Permit Fees
 - ◆ Waive the majority of municipal fees related to construction of residential
- Property Tax Relief
 - ◆ Property tax reduction for eligible non-profit and charitable organization (25-100%)
- Surplus Land
 - ◆ New surplus land category added for affordable housing in 2020.





Other Initiatives

- Rental Registry
 - ◆ Mandatory, one-time registration for all rental properties.
 - ◆ Ensures all rental accommodations meet minimum occupancy standards.
- Modular Housing
 - ◆ HRM owned.
 - ◆ Operated by Out of the Cold Community Association
- Community Land Trusts
 - ◆ Demonstration initiative funded by CMHC
 - ◆ Led by United Way Halifax
- Led the country in new residential development in 2022

Rapid Housing Initiative



North End Community
Health Association Blue
House



Mi'kmaq Native
Friendship Centre
Diamond Bailey Centre



AHANS
True North Crescent



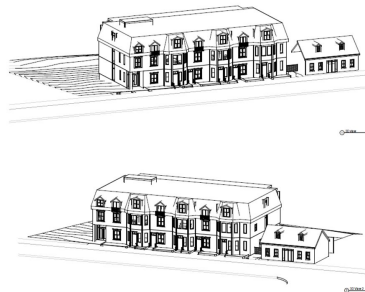
AHANS
The Overlook



Souls Harbour



Adsum for Women and
Children
The Sunflower



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul



AKOMA
Fairfax Homes

HALIFAX



Community Land Trusts

Community members own land as a non-profit to retain affordable housing

Examples

Parkdale NLT (2012, Toronto ON) includes homes transferred from TCHC, Down the Marsh CLT (2021, Truro, NS)

Rental Replacement By-Laws/Plans

Municipalities require one-for-one replacement of rental units at similar rents

Examples

City of Mississauga Rental Housing Protection By-Law (2018), City of Vancouver Rental Housing Stock Official Plan (2021)

Inclusionary Housing Policies

Municipalities require a percentage of affordable units

Examples

City of Montreal “20 20” by-law (2021) on all developments 450 m² or larger

Municipal Housing Corporations

Arms-length corporations building/operating affordable housing

Examples

CityHousing Hamilton (13,000 units), Calgary Housing Company (7,100 units)

Housing Navigators

Non-profit real estate developers focused on supporting development within the non-profit/community sectors

Examples

Cadco - Ottawa, New Commons Development - Vancouver

Zoning Modernization / Upzoning

Municipalities remove barriers to housing types and remove single unit dwelling zoning

Examples

Toronto - Upzoning to 6 Units, Halifax - Regional Centre Plan



Workshop Questions

- What are the benefits and disadvantages of your team's initiative?
- How would your team approach the initiative?
- What resources, including people, are needed to make your initiative successful?
- Are there other examples of jurisdictions that are super stars in implementing your team's initiative?