



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation ☒	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: Mayor Zebian and Members of Council

Submitted by: Kayla Leary-Pinch, Councillor District 7

Date: July 28, 2026

Subject: Strengthening Subdivision Standards for Future Private Road Developments

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Municipal Government Act (Nova Scotia) – Part VIII (Planning and Development) and Part IX (Subdivision). The MGA provides Council with the authority to adopt and amend Municipal Planning Strategies, Land Use By-laws and Subdivision By-laws, and to establish subdivision standards that support public safety, sustainable development, municipal service delivery and the creation of safe and viable communities.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

THAT Council direct staff to prepare the necessary amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy, Land Use By-law, Subdivision By-law and any other applicable municipal policies to establish subdivision standards for all future private road developments requiring:

- 1. A designated common waste collection area located at or near the entrance of private road developments;***
- 2. Secondary emergency access (secondary egress) where appropriate, based on development size, road length, topography, hazard risk, and other community vulnerability factors; and***
- 3. The appropriate incorporation of FireSmart and other hazard-resilient community design principles into subdivision planning and approval processes, where appropriate.***

BACKGROUND

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social ☐	Economic ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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West Hants Regional Municipality has experienced increasing residential development on private roads over recent years. While these developments provide valuable housing opportunities, they also present long-term challenges related to public safety, municipal service delivery, infrastructure resilience and future municipal planning.

The ongoing discussions surrounding waste collection for the Destination Way and Cozy Crescent subdivision have demonstrated the challenges that can arise when key infrastructure considerations are not addressed during the subdivision approval process. Over the past several years, Council and staff have devoted significant time and resources to exploring options for municipal waste collection within this development. While these discussions have been important, they have also highlighted the difficulty, cost and limitations of retrofitting solutions once a subdivision has been completed and occupied.

Rather than continuing to address these issues after development has occurred, West Hants has an opportunity to proactively establish planning standards that better support future residents, developers, municipal operations and long-term community resilience.

The need for resilient subdivision design has become increasingly apparent following the devastating 2023 Nova Scotia wildfires. Municipalities across the province have since undertaken comprehensive reviews of how neighbourhood design can improve emergency preparedness and community safety.

The Municipality of East Hants completed an extensive review of single-access developments, including vulnerability assessments, consultation with emergency services and consideration of FireSmart principles. Their work recognized that community vulnerability is influenced by a range of factors—not simply the number of homes—but also roadway design, surrounding vegetation and fuel loads, emergency response capability, available water supply, evacuation opportunities and overall community resilience.

Similarly, Halifax Regional Municipality has strengthened its subdivision requirements by introducing secondary emergency access requirements for many new developments, recognizing the importance of subdivision design in supporting public safety and emergency preparedness.

These initiatives reflect an emerging best practice among Nova Scotia municipalities to incorporate community resilience into subdivision planning.

DISCUSSION

The experiences of Destination Way and Cozy Crescent, together with evolving subdivision planning practices across Nova Scotia, demonstrate the importance of proactively establishing

standards that support community resilience, public safety and efficient municipal service delivery.

As municipalities continue to grow and adapt to changing risks, subdivision planning presents an opportunity to incorporate infrastructure and design features that improve long-term sustainability while reducing future operational and servicing challenges. The following recommendations are intended to strengthen subdivision standards for future private road developments by addressing three key areas: secondary emergency access, FireSmart and hazard-resilient community design and designated common waste collection areas.

1. Secondary Emergency Access (Secondary Egress)

Private road developments with only one point of access present inherent risks when that roadway becomes blocked by a structure fire, wildfire, motor vehicle collision, flooding, fallen trees, utility failures or other emergencies.

A single blocked roadway can delay emergency responders while simultaneously restricting residents' ability to evacuate safely. Recent wildfire events and other emergencies across Nova Scotia have demonstrated the importance of ensuring communities have safe and reliable access during emergency situations.

East Hants' review concluded that vulnerability should be assessed using a variety of factors rather than relying solely on subdivision size. These include:

- Road length and configuration;
- Surrounding vegetation and wildfire fuel loads;
- Available water supply;
- Emergency response capability;
- Population and housing density;
- Evacuation opportunities; and
- Overall community resilience.

Where appropriate, incorporating secondary emergency access into future private road developments would:

- Improve resident safety;
- Enhance emergency response capabilities;
- Provide additional evacuation routes;
- Improve community resilience during natural disasters and other emergencies; and
- Support utility restoration and recovery operations.

2. FireSmart and Hazard-Resilient Community Design

- Beyond roadway access, subdivision design itself can significantly influence community resilience.
- As municipalities across Nova Scotia continue adapting to increasing hazard risk, there is value in considering FireSmart principles during subdivision planning. These principles may include consideration of secondary emergency access, vegetation management, road widths, turnaround areas, water supply, and other design features that improve the

ability of emergency responders to safely protect homes and assist residents during emergencies.

- Reviewing these practices now provides an opportunity for West Hants to learn from recent provincial experiences while ensuring future developments are designed with resilience in mind.

3. Common Waste Collection Areas

As part of the subdivision approval process, **future private road developments should** include a designated common waste collection area located near the entrance of the development.

The experience at Destination Way and Cozy Crescent demonstrates how challenging it can become to establish appropriate collection locations after homes have already been built.

Incorporating these facilities during subdivision planning would:

- Provide a safe, organized location for municipal waste collection;
- Improve operational efficiency for municipal collection services;
- Eliminate the need to retrofit collection areas after development;
- Provide certainty for developers and purchasers regarding municipal service expectations; and
- Reduce future demands on Council and staff to resolve servicing issues after subdivision completion.

Planning for these areas during subdivision design is significantly more practical and cost-effective than attempting to identify suitable locations after development has occurred.

NEXT STEPS

Should the recommendation be supported, staff will consult with internal departments, emergency services and other stakeholders prior to developing the required amendments. Draft amendments as requested requiring:

- Common waste collection areas;
- Secondary emergency access where appropriate; and
- FireSmart and resilient community design considerations.

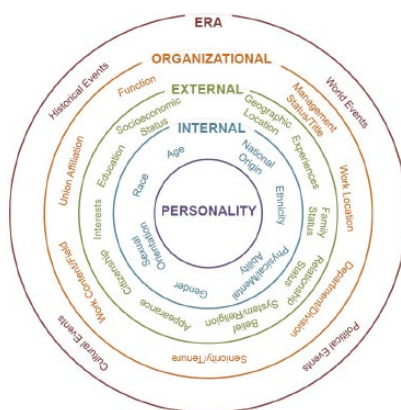
Report back with the proposed amendments included in the Reginal Plan Review documents (MPS, LUB and Subdivision By-Laws) prior to proceeding to Public Hearing and Second Reading for final approval of the documents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To be determined by the Director of Planning and Director of Financial Services as this additional work may fall outside of the additional funding requested for a more in-depth review of the changes already made within the Planning documents.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed amendments support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion by helping to ensure that future private road developments are designed with the safety, accessibility and well-being of all residents in mind. Incorporating secondary emergency access, resilient community design and centralized waste collection areas can improve access to essential services and emergency response for seniors, persons with disabilities, families, and other vulnerable populations. By considering community resilience and service accessibility during the planning process, the Municipality can help create neighbourhoods that are safer, more inclusive and better able to meet the needs of diverse residents over the long term.



ALTERNATIVES

Should Council choose not to proceed with the proposed amendments at this time, the following alternative options could be considered:

- 1 – Maintain Current Requirements (Status Quo)** Continue administering subdivision applications under the existing Municipal Planning Strategy, Land Use By-law and Subdivision By-law with no additional requirements for waste collection areas, secondary emergency access or FireSmart design.
- 2 – Implement Common Waste Collection Area Requirements Only** Direct staff to prepare amendments requiring designated waste collection areas in future private road developments while deferring consideration of secondary emergency access and FireSmart requirements.
- 3 – Develop Guidelines Rather than Regulatory Requirements** Direct staff to prepare voluntary subdivision design guidelines encouraging secondary emergency access, FireSmart principles and common waste collection areas without making them mandatory requirements.
- 4 – Phase-in Requirements** Direct staff to prioritize one or more components of the recommendation (e.g., waste collection areas first) and return with a phased implementation approach for future consideration of emergency access and community resilience measures.

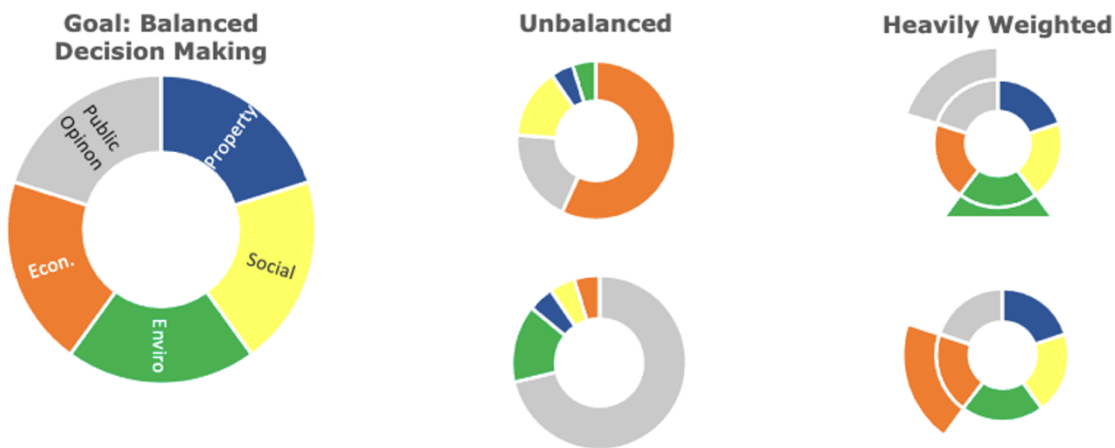
ATTACHMENTS

None

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

(For use if report is from a Councillor. CAO to provide additional comments on background, department/staff responsible and workload, budget, options, preferred strategy. State "Not Applicable" if report is from staff which already incorporates CAO review.)

Council has been provided with a reference taken from the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy , Appendix C "Decision Making by Council and Committee of the Whole" as a reminder of the principles highlighted for good decision making.



Report Prepared by: _____
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Report Reviewed by: _____
Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Report Approved by: _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer