

Halifax Chamber of Commerce's Presentation to the Nova Scotia Housing Committee

January 13th, 2020

A large, thick orange L-shaped graphic is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, mirroring the style of the logo graphic.

The Issue

- Halifax is seeing unprecedented population and business growth as the world has come to see Halifax and Nova Scotia as an incredible place to work, live and raise a family.
- This is not a new phenomenon. There has been a housing unit deficit for the last five years in Halifax.
- The housing shortage manifested itself during COVID as an affordable housing issue. Affordable housing is only one component of the housing crisis now facing HRM. We are years away closing the gap.
- As the province targets 2 million people as the 2060 population goal. We are in a once in a lifetime opportunity for our city, but our message about our great city and province could evaporate as quickly as it came if we do not address the housing shortage.
- The reality is that HRM rapidly needs more housing, greater housing variety (urban, suburban, rural), and more affordable options for housing. How do we get to solutions to the housing crisis currently existing in Halifax?

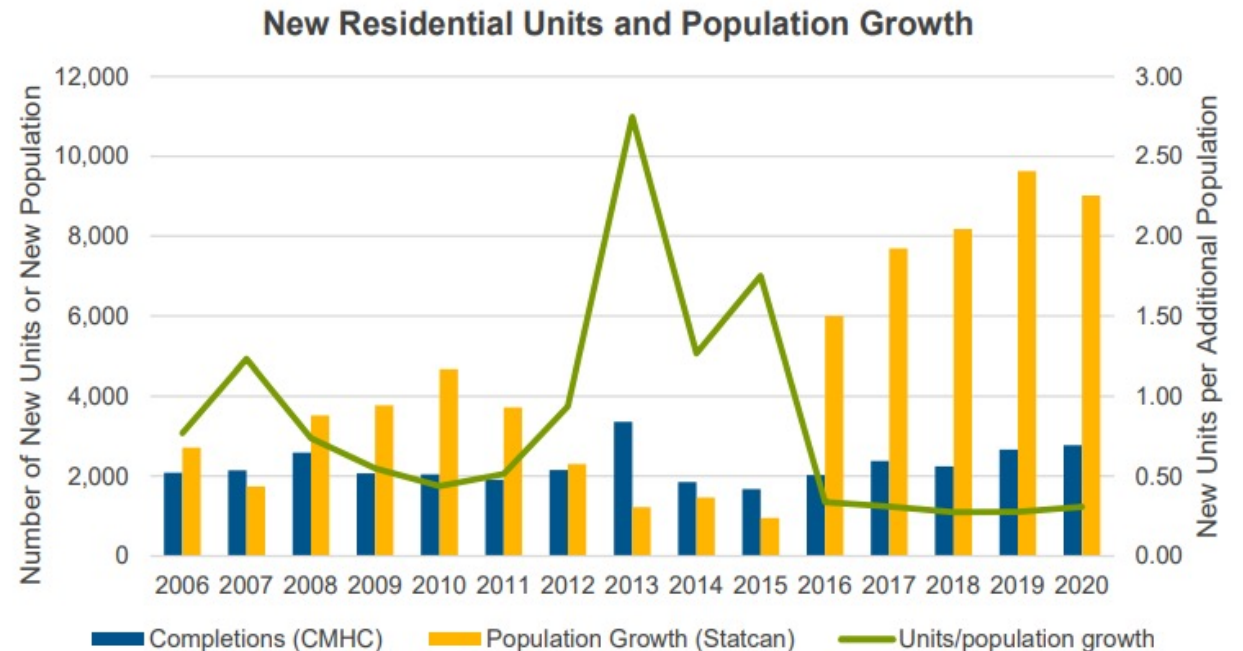
The Numbers

- HRM net pop growth July 2020 – July 2021 , **7,266***
- Ongoing annual estimated HRM net population growth - **16, 525* (High to HighHigh category)**
- Approximate Projected Annual Household Increase using high growth scenario – **6,400***
- Current Construction undersupply 2016-2020 – **12,644 units***
- Approx. annual permits issued for new construction **3-4,000**
- Annual average completions 2016-2020 – **2,419***

Supply & Demand

Important to Note: Immediate approvals still means years before we see doors based on current rates

Population Growth: HRM's completions are not keeping pace with our population growth.



Process, Accountability & Regulations

What our Members are Saying:

1. Ensure concurrent reviews of projects by multiple departments, rather than a linear process.
 1. Ensure that planning, legal, parks and engineering align to a timeline rather operate sequentially.
2. Over permit and “let market ultimately establish how much additional intensification and housing is provided”.*
3. There is a huge opportunity for development outside HRM regional center that is bogged down due to outdated municipal strategies and bylaws. Focus a concentrated 2-year effort on updating land use bylaws for regions outside the center plan area.
 1. Example Carriagewood Estates, 60ft lots approved, 40ft lots requested.
4. Single reporting per major application (either to a specific task group or CAO). Public reporting/dashboard updates.
 1. No one person responsible for one project in Halifax. Assign responsibility to one person to shepherd projects.
5. Reduce/Resolve incidents of council and councilors rejecting proposals approved by staff.
 1. Educate new councilors on implications of rejecting rezoning requests or eliminate the need for council to approve requests
6. Rent control will further stifle supply. – NS Commission on Affordable Housing does not see rent control as an effective lever in addressing the issue of supply.
7. Eliminate the CAP or “Why do renters subsidize homeowners in Nova Scotia?”

Capacity

What our Members are Saying:

1. What are the staff shortfalls and where can they be eased, or outside consultants used to speed up the process?
2. Engage developers more in the discussion. There is a disconnect between city staff and developers.
3. What are the large shovel-ready projects and what is needed to jump-start them?
4. Invest in more seats at NSCC for trades and improve apprenticeship to allow more apprentices per employer partner.
5. Align data so we are all singing from the song sheet. Significant misunderstanding/communication exists between approvals and permits issued and building timelines.
 - a) What is approved, what has building permits and what can/will be built each year, rather than have some people say we have 50,000 units approved, which may be true, but may not have building permits and would be built over 10 years.

Conclusion

- Some change is happening - city task forces , more frequent meetings with city and developers, provincial engagement ...but is it not nearly enough or quick enough.
- The irony is that everyone wants the same thing, to live in a vibrant, growing, affordable city that is built responsibly. But we are in a housing crisis, where collaboration and a will to get things done, holding people accountable and servicing the greatest good for all citizens will be the only way out.
- Sadly, we are already years away from fixing this problem even if decisions to pivot are made today. Some of these decisions may cost money to accelerate the results and enable development, but what are the positive tax implications of completing projects and the incredible risk to long term revenues of stalling the growth of the HRM and thus the province?
- We believe there needs to be clear communication and action from the province and the city about the shared benefits of good quality development, the need for a concerted problem-solving attitude, and the importance of timeline accountability in the face of the housing crisis.



Supplemental Documents

Preliminary Housing and Population Issue Paper: Supplementary Report, HRM, December 2021

[Preliminary Housing paper.pdf](#)

Preliminary Population & Housing Analysis: Technical Document, Regional Plan Review, July 9th, 2021

[764 - Responsive Records \(In Full\).pdf](#)