Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations Release

Q&A

Last updated: Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2026

Purpose:

This document will serve as a Q&A for all inquiries related to the release of approved Minimum Planning Requirements (MPR) Regulations announced by the Province of Nova Scotia on Wednesday, Oct. 28.

This document has been drafted by Corporate Communications, reviewed by Planning & Development, and shared with Corporate Communications (specifically the Public Affairs Office and the Communications Business Partner), the Mayor's office, the 311 Customer Contact Centre and the Councillors' Support Office to assist with inquiries.

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Relevant provincial news release: Province Strengthens Planning Rules to Support Housing, Community Growth in HRM | Government of Nova Scotia News Releases

Q: What are the Minimum Planning Requirements?

A: The "Minimum Planning Requirements" (MPRs), established by the provincial government, specify what must be included in municipal planning strategies in the municipality. These requirements are intended to make sure that the municipality's planning documents and approval processes address the current housing crisis in the Halifax region and work to support increasing housing supply.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs approved new MPRs Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2026. The new MPRs will require amendments to municipal planning documents at both the Regional Plan and Community Plan/Land Use By-Law level.

Q: Why are the Minimum Planning Requirements being updated?

A: Following the refusal of the 2025 Regional Plan, the existing MPRs were implemented through the ***Planning Changes to Support Housing*** amendments, which were approved by Regional Council on Dec. 11, 2025, and came into effect on Feb. 2, 2026. The Province of Nova Scotia has advised that the current changes are intended to further support housing supply, increase housing opportunities, and address barriers to residential development.

Q: Is the municipality required to implement these changes?

A: The municipality is required to ensure its planning documents comply with provincial legislation and regulations. As a result, the municipality is required to ensure its planning documents comply with approved provincial Minimum Planning Requirements within the timelines established by the province.

Q: What are the most significant changes?

A: The new and revised MPRs are summarized below according to when they need to be implemented:

Required to be implemented by Jan.15, 2027:

- **Residential built form envelope [new clause (ca)]:** This new clause requires HRM to permit residential uses as-of-right in zones within the urban service area boundary where habitable commercial or institutional uses (such as hotels, nursing homes) are permitted as-of-right, except in zones that are exempt under existing clause (c). Residential buildings would allow a building envelope at least as large as that allowed for the habitable commercial or institutional use.
- **Additional residential uses in all zones [new clause (cb)]:** This new clause requires zones within the urban service area boundary that permit residential uses to permit more residential uses than only shared housing or shared housing with special care.

- **Residential buildings in institutional and community facility zones [new clause (cc)]:** This new clause requires that if a property is zoned for institutional or community facility uses and shares a boundary with a residentially-zoned property, and the proposed development does not require any new public streets, then the property may be developed with any residential use that is allowed in the abutting residential zone. No plan amendment, development agreement, or rezoning would be required by the property owner to use this provision. Planning documents will need to be amended to enable this.
- **Stepbacks for mass timber construction [new clause (n)]:** The new clause would require that residential buildings that use mass timber as the primary structural system, provide that no stepback is required and that a tall mid-rise may be up to 12 storeys in height. Stepbacks are recesses that break the vertical plane of an exterior wall on a main building.

Required to be implemented by June 30, 2027:

- **Conservation Design Development [amended clause (f); new clause (fa)]:** The existing MPRs requires the Regional Plan's conservation design policies to determine maximum density based on gross area, for developments that begin construction before April 1, 2028. The amended MPRs deletes the time limitation. Additionally, a new clause requires the municipality not to impose restrictions on eligibility based on the date an area of land was created. The current policy enables Conservation Designation Developments on lots that had 20 metres of public street frontage on April 29, 2006.
- **Subdivision egress and road connectivity [new clause (m)]:** This clause requires residential development and subdivision resulting in new public streets to be enabled where emergency egress can be improved by providing a second access to an existing residential subdivision as identified in the 2026 Regional Subdivision Connectivity Study. Regional Council has previously given direction to staff to explore strategic connections as an outcome of the study referenced in this new clause.

Q: When do these changes need to be implemented?

A: The Minister of Municipal Affairs has established implementation deadlines of Jan. 15, 2027, for some changes, while others must be implemented by June 30, 2027.

Q: Has municipal staff already reviewed the new regulations?

The municipality is reviewing the revised Minimum Planning Requirements to assess the resource needs associated with implementing them in relation to the provincial timelines.

Q: Will there be opportunities for public input?

The plan amendment process includes legislatively required public engagement and public hearings. Because the Minimum Planning Requirements are mandated by the HRM Charter and the Requirements in some cases require very specific provisions, the public may have limited ability to influence the policy reasons for the amendments.

Q: Do these changes take effect immediately?

A: The regulations establish requirements that the municipality must implement through amendments to its planning documents. Planning & Development staff are reviewing the revised Minimum Planning Requirements to assess the resource needs associated with implementing them in relation to the provincial timelines.

Q: What happens if the municipality does not meet the prescribed deadlines?

A: Section 229A(1) of the HRM Charter sets out actions that the Minister can take if the municipality does not fulfill the minimum planning requirements, including establishing an interim planning area order.

> *Failure to meet minimum planning requirements*
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> *229A (1) Where a municipal planning strategy does not fulfill the minimum planning requirements, the Minister may request that the Council, within the time prescribed by the Minister, amend the municipal planning strategy to fulfill, or adopt a new municipal planning strategy that fulfills, the minimum planning requirements.*
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> *(2) Where the Council does not comply with a request pursuant to subsection (1), the Minister may, by order, establish an interim planning area for an area prescribed by the Minister.*