



Housing Options

West Hants Regional Municipality
Fast-Tracked Housing Design Initiative

January 27, 2026



UPLAND

This report was prepared for the West Hants Regional Municipality by Passive Design Solutions in collaboration with UPLAND Planning + Design Inc.

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Introduction



Many communities in Nova Scotia are facing challenges with rising costs (housing, heating, etc.) and are also dealing with extreme weather. One way to address these challenges is by building smaller, more efficient homes that add more housing choices and gentle density to existing neighbourhoods.

This booklet offers a set of fast-tracked home plans designed to support new homeowners and renters in West Hants Regional Municipality. We considered the needs of all residents but focused especially on younger people—those under 44—who have some of the toughest housing challenges.

Almost two-thirds of lots could fit a small backyard home, and over 80% could fit a two-unit building. That means more homes for friends, family, or renters—helping West Hants grow without spreading out.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

These home designs fit the local climate and geography. They include:

- Efficient building shapes that use less energy
- Well-insulated airtight building envelope including walls, roof and foundation.

These plans exceed current building codes and can be built as *Net-Zero Ready*. A *Net-Zero Ready* home is one that, once solar panels are added, produces as much energy as it uses in a year. Homes like this may get cash back through energy programs¹.

Building a *Net-Zero Ready* home can cost more at first, but often has lower costs over time. Some benefits are:

- Lower energy and maintenance bills
- Simple heating and cooling systems that are easy to use
- Quiet and private indoor spaces
- Comfortable temperatures with no drafts
- Clean indoor air with lots of natural light.

Choosing a Net Zero Ready home from this booklet can cut energy use by 50-60% compared to a typical new home.

RESILIENCE

Like many other regions in Atlantic Canada, West Hants has seen flash flooding and long power outages in recent years. This shows how important it is for new homes to handle storm water, lower flood risks, and stay livable during power failures.

Net-Zero homes can keep warm enough during long outages to stay safe and comfortable.

Introduction

(continued)



None of these designs have basements because above-ground spaces are less expensive to build and have lower risk of mold or mildew and flooding. These plans could also be built with extra features to help manage storm water, including:

- Green roofs
- Rain barrels
- Surfaces that let water soak into the ground, like planting or porous paving.

PERSONALIZATION

You can change these plans by picking different exterior cladding and roof materials, and window styles. You can also choose your own fixtures and finishes, so the homes can fit your budget and style.

Each Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) has an alternate plan included which allows for a universally accessible space, a bigger space, or more economical construction.

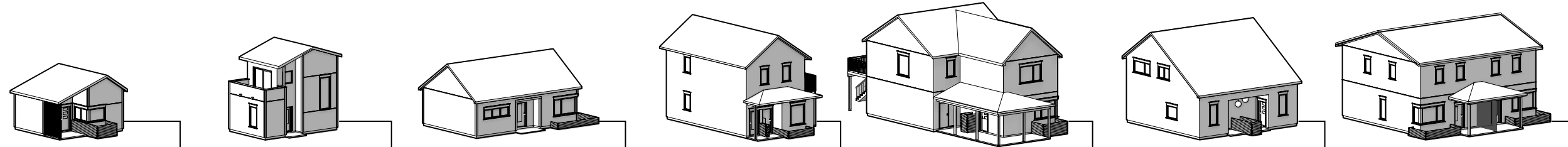
A builder or designer can help you decide which option is best for you, based on your budget and timeline. Someone at the Municipality will confirm if the chosen plan will meet the requirements for your site. Keep in mind, changing the designs more than just choosing finishes and fixtures will trigger the need for a more extensive review by the Municipality.

This booklet is part of a bigger effort to make housing more affordable and available in West Hants. We hope it gives you a good starting point whether you are a resident or builder.

Fast-tracked plans alone can't solve the housing crisis—but they're a big step forward. They cut costs, save time, and raise the bar on quality, making it easier for people to build homes that truly fit their lives and budgets.

Along with all the endnotes, more details and technical information can be found at the end of this booklet in the 'fine print' section.

Summary³



	ADU TINY HOME	ADU LOFT	ADU COTTAGE	TWO-UNIT MICRO FLATS	TWO-UNIT MULTI-GEN	TWO-UNIT COMPACT TOWN	TWO-UNIT+ CLASSIC ROW
Unit Mix	1 - Studio, 1 Bath	1 - 1 Bed, 1 Bath	1 - 2 Bed, 1 Bath	2 - 2 Bed, 1 Bath	1 - 3 Bed, 2 Bath 1 - 1 Bed, 1 Bath	2 - 2 Bed, 1.5 Bath	2 - 3 Bed, 1.5 Bath
Target Audience	Individual	Individual or couple	Couple, senior, remote worker or small family	Couple, senior or small family	Family and relative (i.e. parent, adult child)	Couple, remote worker or small family	Families
Number of Stories	1	1.5	1	2	2	1.5	2
Type of Unit(s)	ADU	ADU	ADU	stacked duplex	home with apartment	rowhouse	rowhouse
Gross Area (all floors)	385 ft ²	705 ft ²	835 ft ²	1,565 ft ²	2,300 ft ²	1,900 ft ²	2,850 ft ²
Building Footprint	385 ft ² (35.8 m ²)	395 ft ² (36.9 m ²)	835 ft ² (77.5 m ²)	785 ft ² (72.7 m ²)	1,150 ft ² (106.8 m ²)	1,010 ft ² (93.6 m ²)	1,425 ft ² (132.4 m ²)
Living Space	300 ft ²	460 ft ²	705 ft ²	ground - 605 ft ² second - 625 ft ²	main - 1,345 ft ² suite - 490 ft ²	720 ft ²	1,200 ft ²
Building Frontage	22'-0"	25'-0"	35'-0"	20'-0"	27'-0"	33'-0"	40'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	32'9" (10.0 m)	37'-5" (11.4 m)	42'-10" (13.1 m)	30'-2" (9.2 m)	37'-5" (11.4 m)	46'-1" (14.1 m)	45'-9" (13.9 m)
Developable Lots (see Page 18 for definition)	80% ²	86% ²	75% ²	86%	82%	85%	83%
Ground Floor Dimensions							



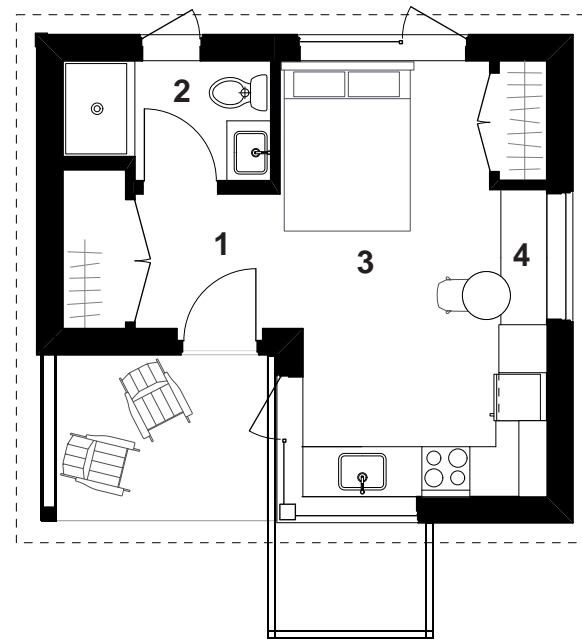
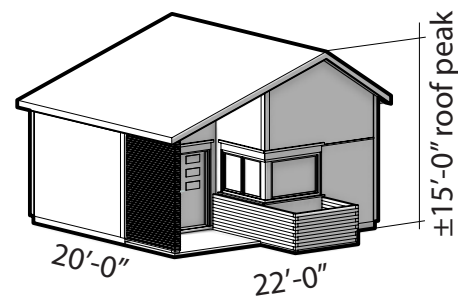
Tiny Home

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

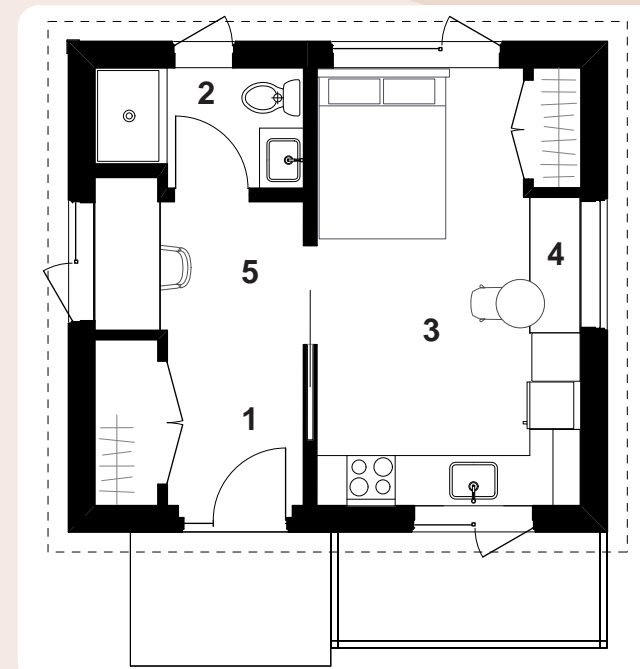
BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	1 - 1 Bed, 1 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	385 ft ²
Building Footprint	385 ft ² (35.8 m ²)
Living Space	300 ft ²
Number of Stories	1
Type of Unit(s)	ADU
Building Frontage	22'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	38'-0" (11.5m) min.
Developable Lots	80%



DESCRIPTION: The Tiny Home is a small and efficient studio-style home with one main open room for living, sleeping, cooking and eating. This ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) is designed to fit in the backyard of another home. Family members could live there or it could be used for earning rental income. The alternate floor plan has an extra work space and gives the option for two separate rooms, making it more suitable for more than one person.



FLOOR PLAN



ALTERNATE FLOOR PLAN (LARGER)

- LEGEND:**
1. Entry
 2. Bathroom
 3. Great Room
 4. Eating Nook
 5. Office Nook



Loft

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	1 - 1 Bed, 1 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	705 ft ²
Building Footprint	395 ft ² (36.9 m ²)
Living Space	460 ft ²
Number of Stories	2
Type of Unit(s)	ADU
Building Frontage	25'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	41'-0" (12.5m) min.
Developable Lots	86% ⁴

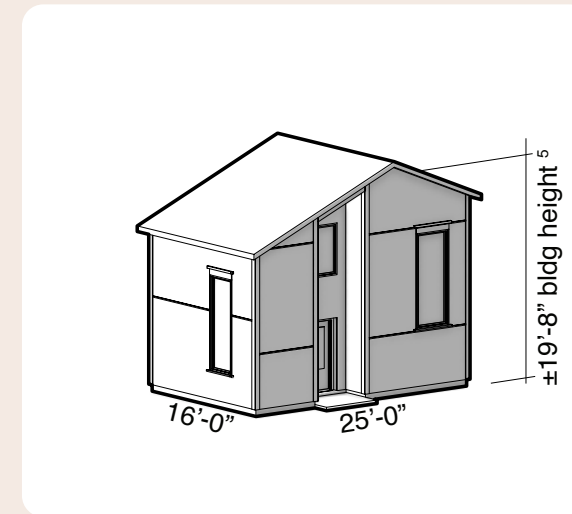
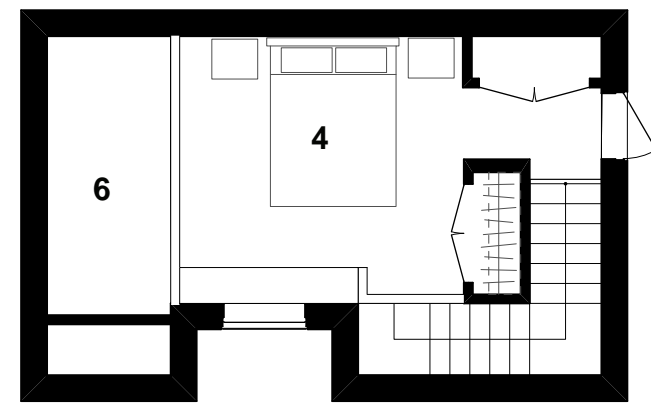
DESCRIPTION: The Loft is a small home with all of the living spaces on a the ground floor and a vaulted bedroom loft with patio above. This ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) is designed to fit in the backyard of another home and can use relaxed building code rules for smaller homes⁶. Family members could live there or it could be used for earning rental income. The alternate version doesn't have a deck which means it will be cheaper to build. Additionally, the alternate version has a lower roof which means it will fit on more lots.⁵



Loft

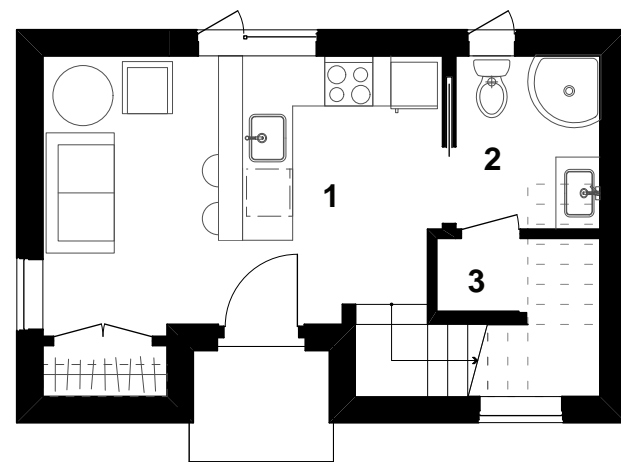
Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

ALTERNATE LOFT FLOOR PLAN (WITHOUT DECK)

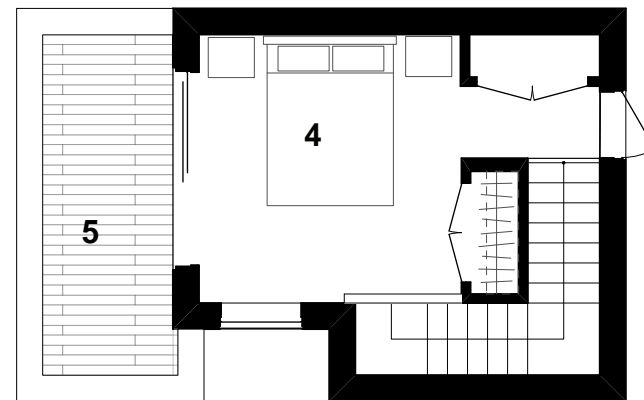


LEGEND:

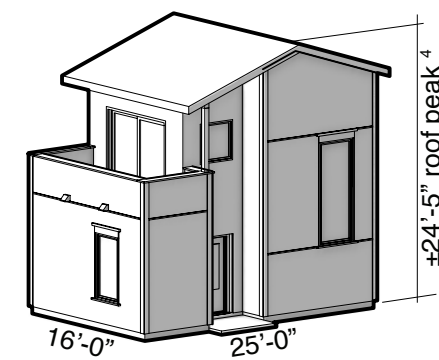
- 1. Great Room
- 2. Bathroom
- 3. Mechanical
- 4. Bedroom
- 5. Deck
- 6. Open to Below



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



LOFT FLOOR PLAN



Cottage

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

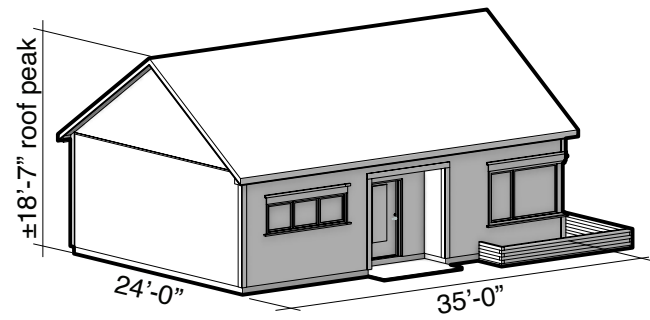
BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	1 - 2 Bed, 1 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	835 ft ²
Building Footprint	835 ft ² (77.5 m ²)
Living Space	705 ft ²
Number of Stories	1
Type of Unit(s)	ADU
Building Frontage	35'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	51'-0" (15.5m) min.
Developable Lots	75% ²

DESCRIPTION: The Cottage is the largest possible ADU (accessory dwelling unit) that is allowed to be built in a backyard. This building design could also work as a single family home on a small lot. With its two bedrooms, this home could function for a broader number of people/families than the Tiny Home or Loft. In addition to a single person or couple, it could also work for seniors or a small family. The alternate version only has one bedroom, but is fully accessible, so could allow for someone in a wheelchair to live there.

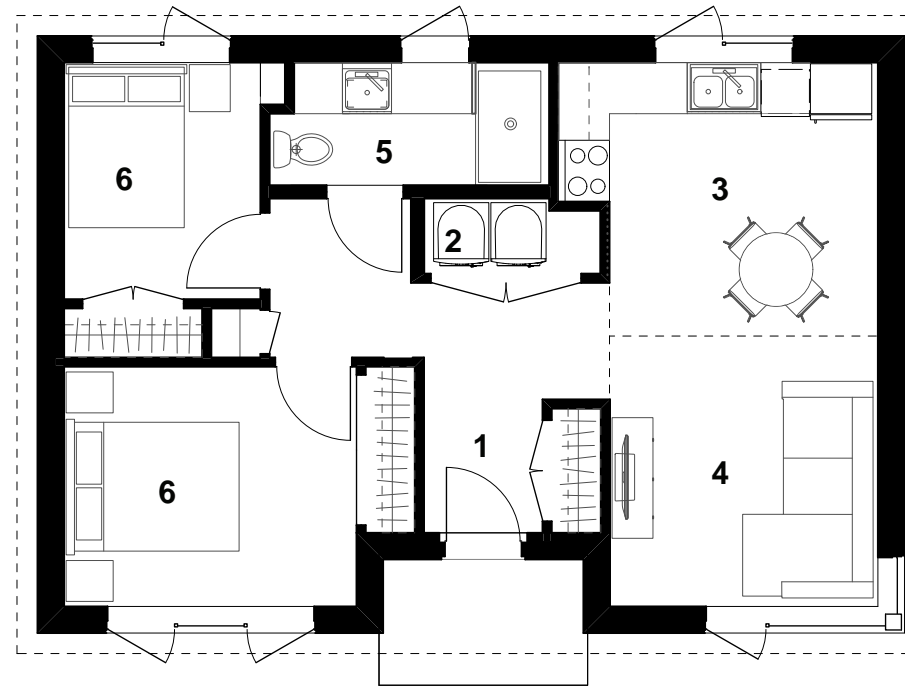


Cottage

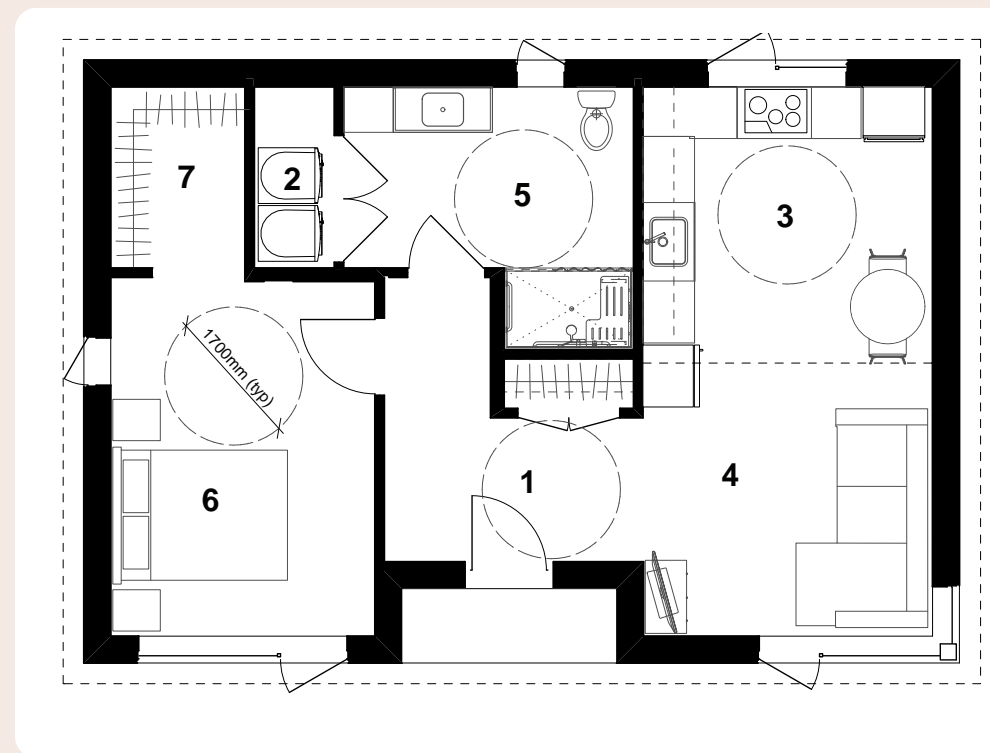
Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)



FLOOR PLAN



ALTERNATE FLOOR PLAN (ACCESSIBLE)



LEGEND:

- 1. Entry
- 2. Laundry/Mechanical
- 3. Eat-in Kitchen
- 4. Living Room
- 5. Bathroom
- 6. Bedroom
- 7. Closet



Micro Flats

Two-unit, Stacked Duplex

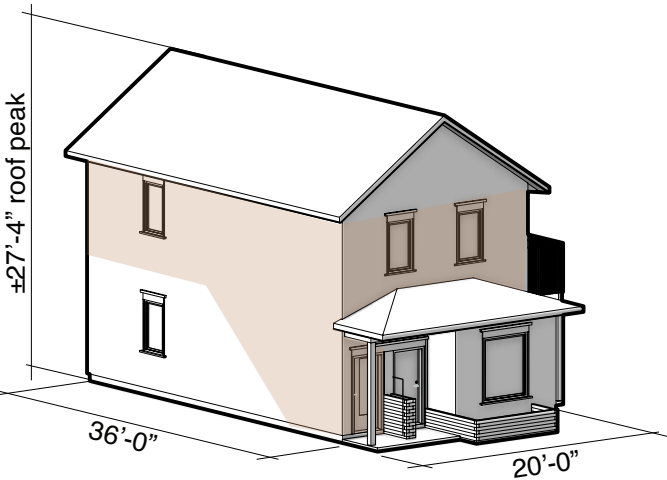
BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	2 - 2 Bed, 1 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	1,565 ft ²
Building Footprint	785 ft ² (72.7 m ²)
Living Space (Ground) ⁷	605 ft ²
Living Space (Second) ⁷	625 ft ²
Number of Stories	2
Type of Unit(s)	Stacked Duplex
Building Frontage	20'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	36'-0" (11.0m) min.
Developable Lots	86%

Description: The Micro-unit is a very efficient stacked or “over-under” duplex. The two levels are similar, but different arrangements of the kitchen, living and dining rooms have been shown on the top and lower levels as options. The ground floor could be well suited to seniors, while the upper level would be well suited to a couple or small family.



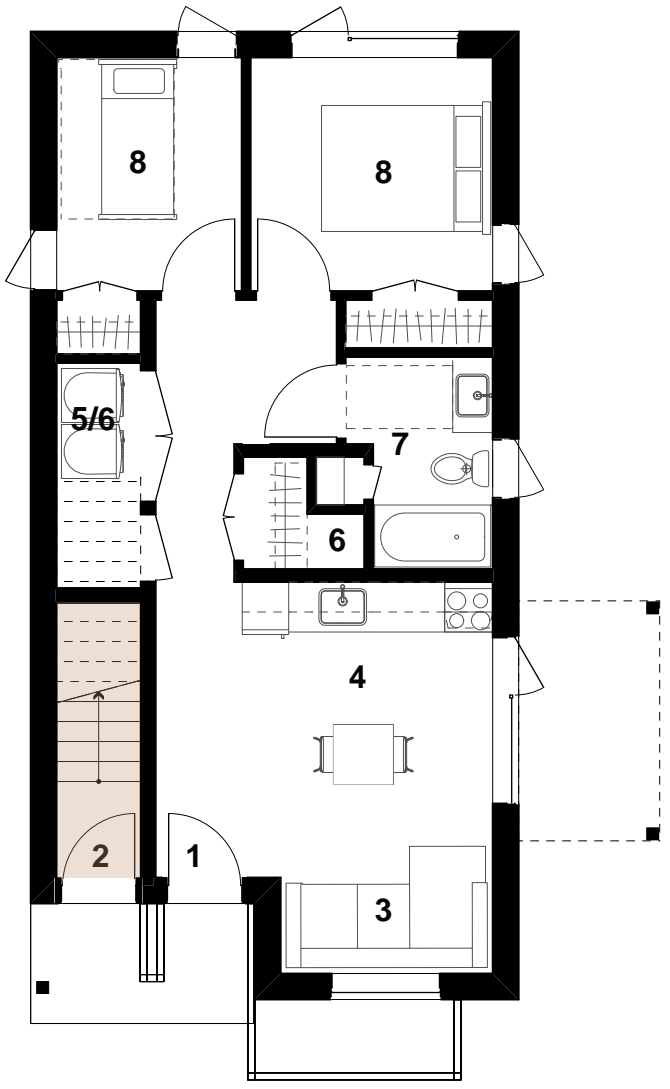
Micro Flats

Two-unit, Stacked Duplex

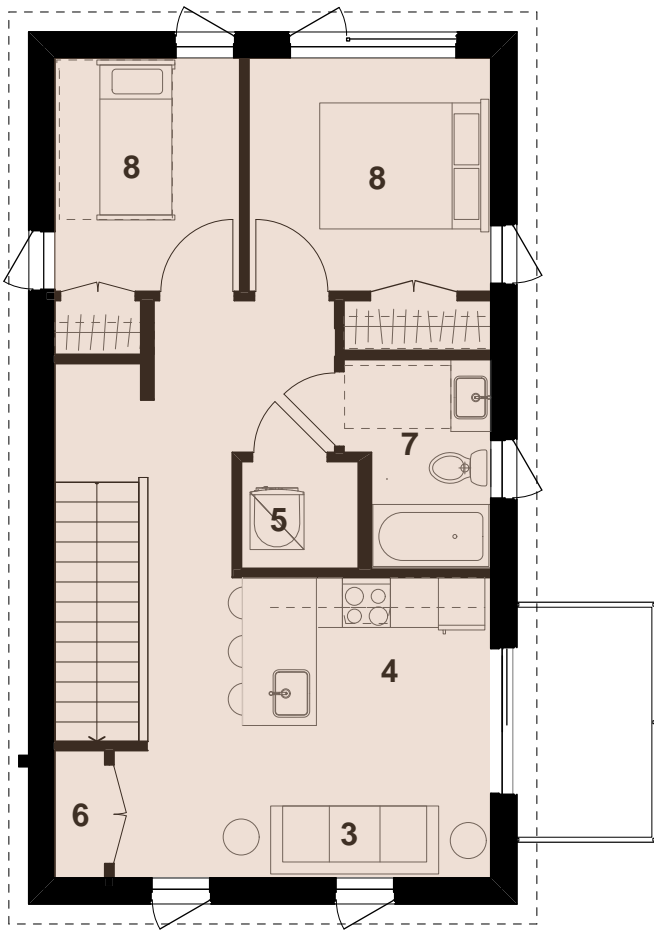


LEGEND:

- 1. Entry (ground unit)
- 2. Entry (second level unit)
- 3. Living Room
- 4. Eat-in Kitchen
- 5. Laundry
- 6. Mechanical Room
- 7. Bathroom
- 8. Bedroom



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Multi-Gen

Two-unit, Home with Apartment

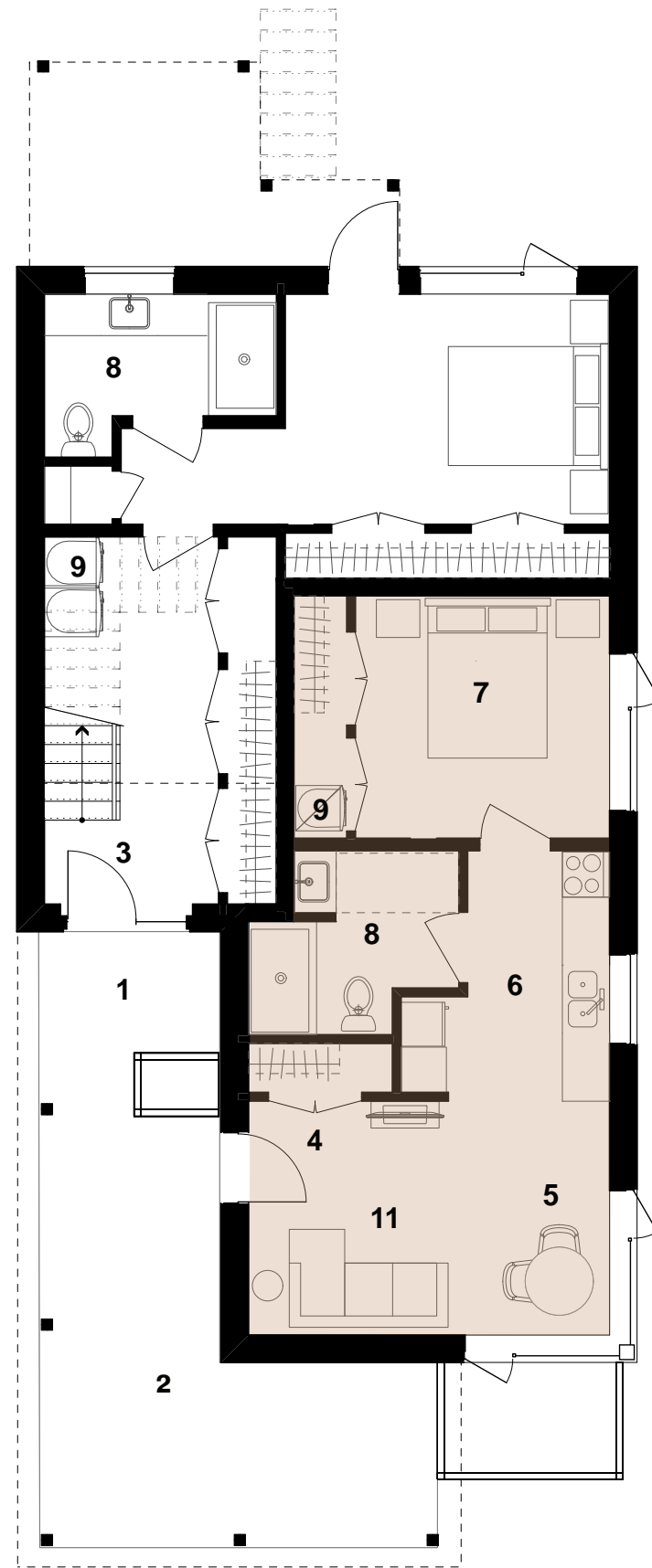
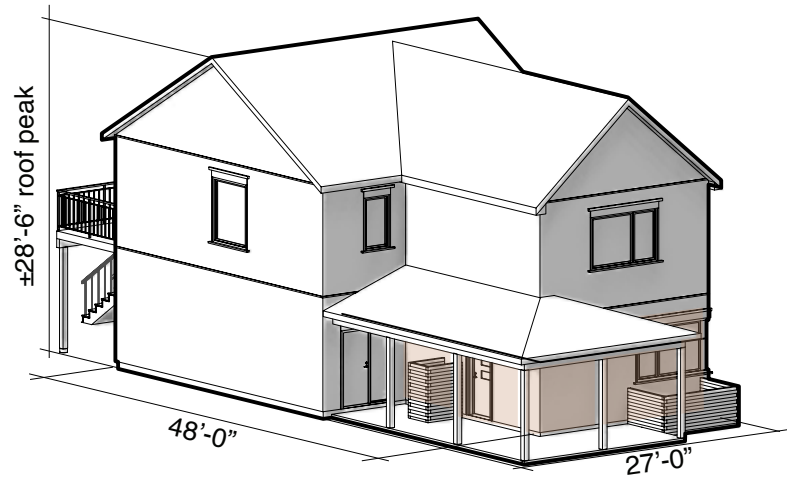
BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	1 - 3 Bed, 2 Bath
	1 - 1 Bed, 1 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	2,300 ft ²
Building Footprint	1,150 ft ² (106.8 m ²)
Living Space (Main) ⁷	1,345 ft ²
Living Space (Suite)	490 ft ²
Number of Stories	2
Type of Unit(s)	Home w/ Apartment
Building Frontage	27'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	43'-0" (13.1m) min.
Developable Lots	82%

Description: Like its name suggests, the Multi-Gen was designed for more than one generation of a family to live under one roof. It is an efficient family home with a ground level suite intended for an adult child or parent. Laundry is shown in both units, but could be provided in only the main home. The second level living spaces are open to the entry below.

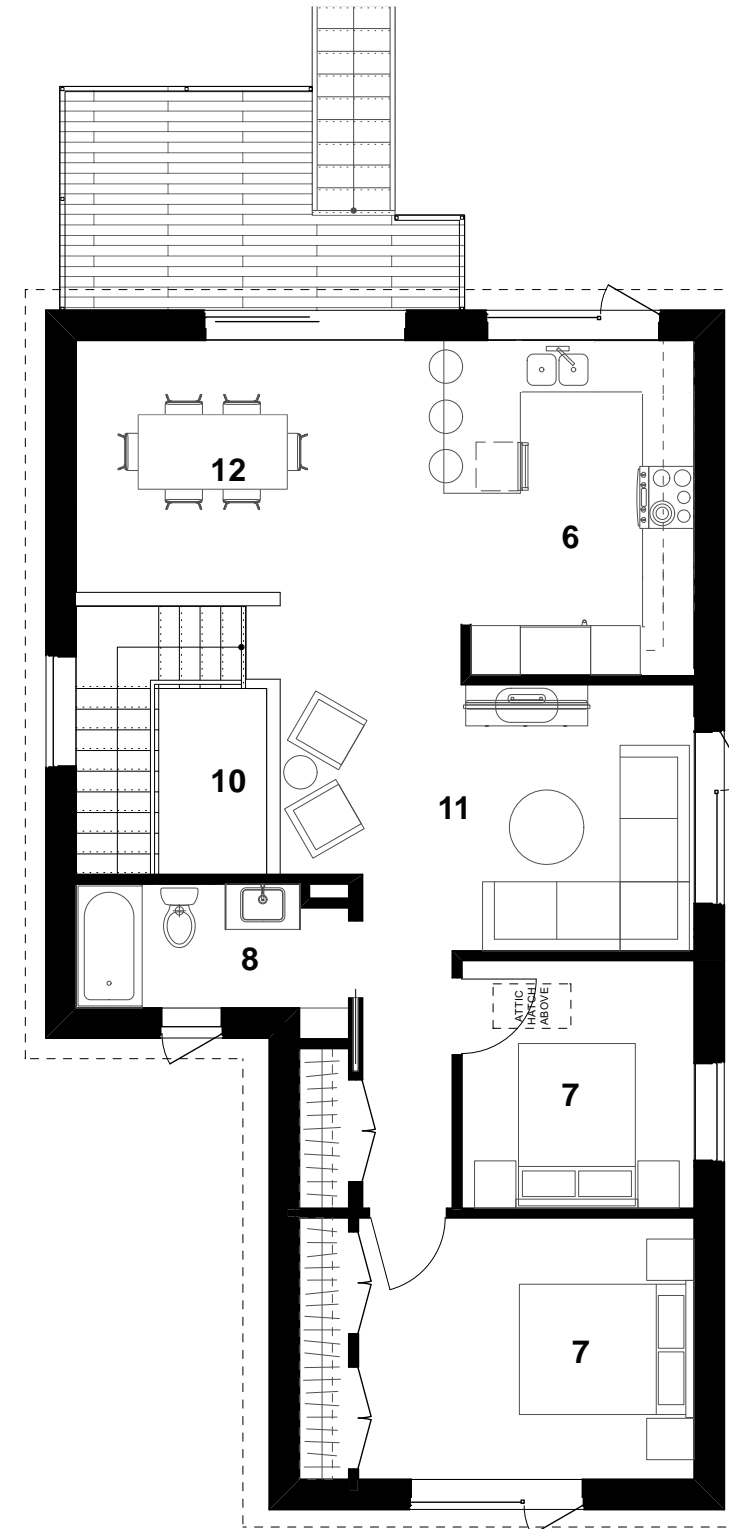


Multi-Gen

Two-unit, Home with Apartment



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND:

1. Porch (main home)
2. Porch (suite)
3. Entry (main home)
4. Entry (suite)
5. Breakfast Nook
6. Kitchen
7. Bedroom
8. Bathroom
9. Laundry
10. Open to Below
11. Living Room
12. Dining Room
13. Primary Suite
14. Deck



Compact Town

Two-unit, Townhouse

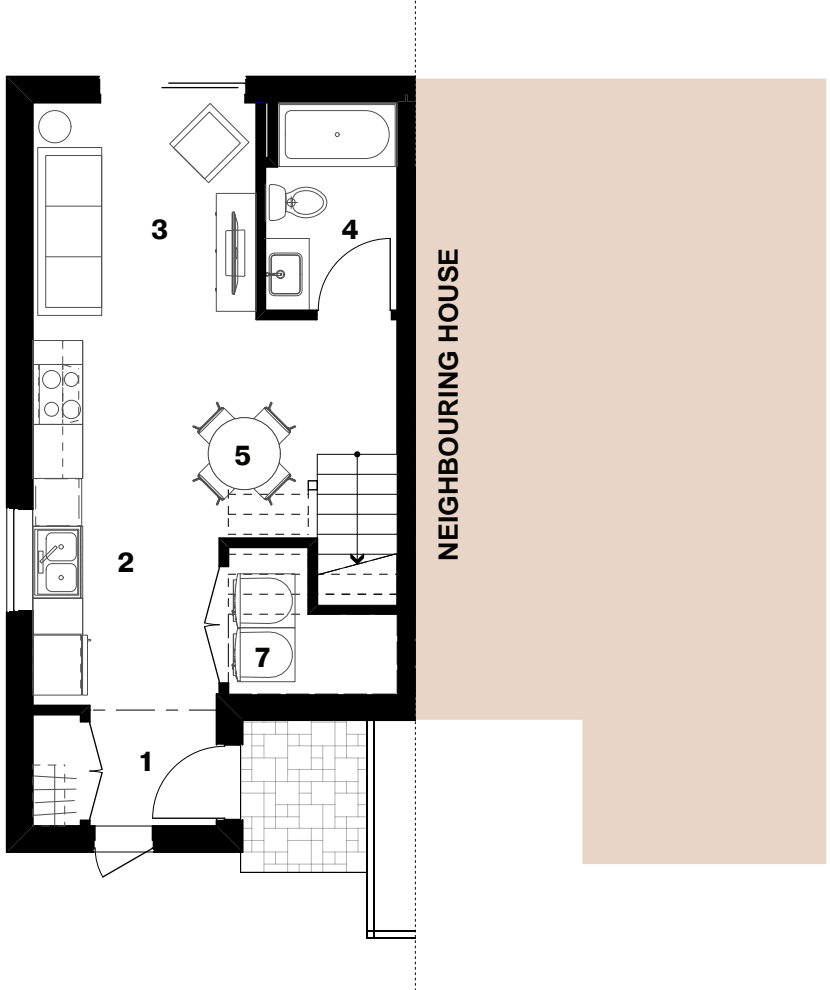
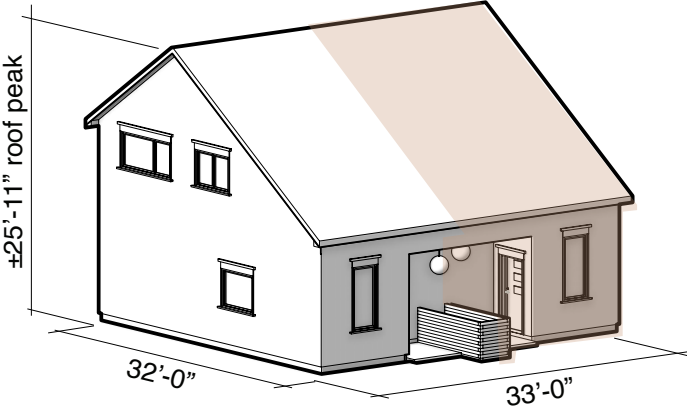
BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	2 - 2 Bed, 1.5 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	1,900 ft ²
Building Footprint	1,010 ft ² (93.6 m ²)
Living Space (per unit) ⁷	720 ft ²
Number of Stories	1.5
Type of Unit(s)	Rowhouse
Building Frontage	33'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	38'-9" (11.8m) min.
Developable Lots	85%

Description: Similar to the Micro Flats Duplex, the Compact Town provides two very efficient two-bedroom units. These dwellings are arranged side-by-side, so each unit has two floors. Due to the building width, there are fewer developable lots available than a Duplex (over-under) arrangement would allow. Splitting a dwelling over two floors, however, offers more privacy and provides interesting spaces, like an entry with a tall ceiling. These units are well suited to a couple or small family.

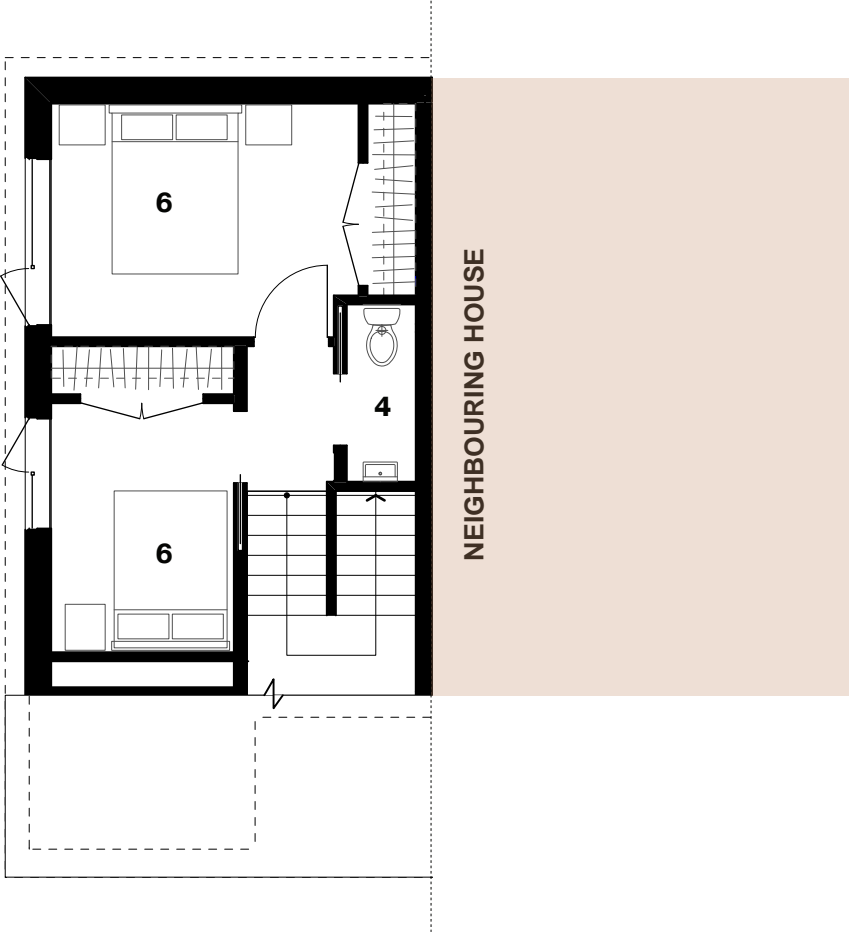


Compact Town

Two-unit, Townhouse



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

- LEGEND:**
- 1. Entry (open to above)
 - 2. Kitchen
 - 3. Living Room
 - 4. Bathroom
 - 5. Dining Room
 - 6. Bedroom
 - 7. Laundry



Classic Row

Two-unit (or more) Rowhouse

BUILDING OVERVIEW	
Unit Mix	2 - 3 Bed, 1.5 Bath
Gross Area (all floors)	2,850 ft ²
Building Footprint	1,425 ft ² (132.4 m ²)
Living Space (per unit) ⁷	1,200 ft ²
Number of Stories	2
Type of Unit(s)	Rowhouse
Building Frontage	40'-0"
Recommended Lot Width	45'-9" (13.9m) min.
Developable Lots	83%

Description: The Classic Row is composed of two side-by-side family style units. Each dwelling is split over two floors and has less area than the family unit in the Multi-Gen. While this dwelling is shown as a duplex, it could be modified slightly to be repeated as up to eight homes in a row. If you are building multiple rowhouses, please be aware that if your building footprint is higher than 450 m², your project will require an architect's stamp.

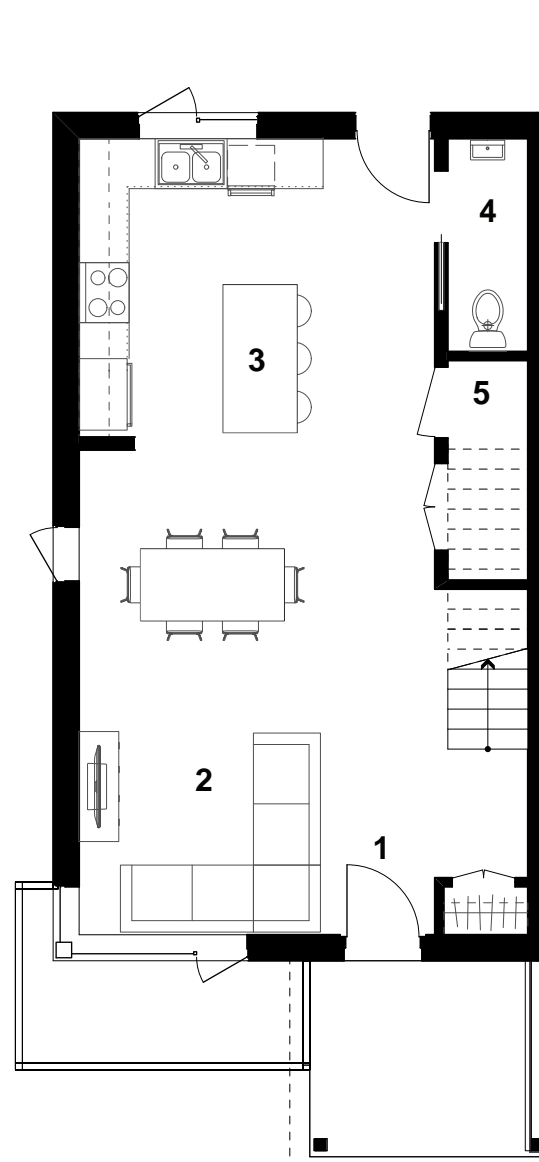
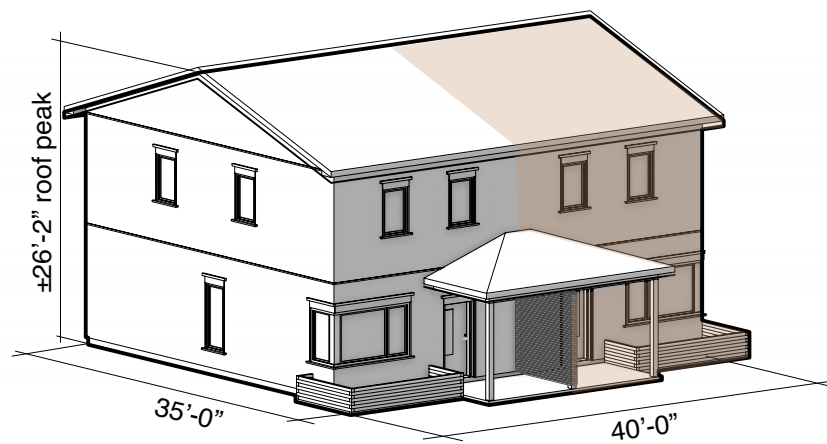


Classic Row

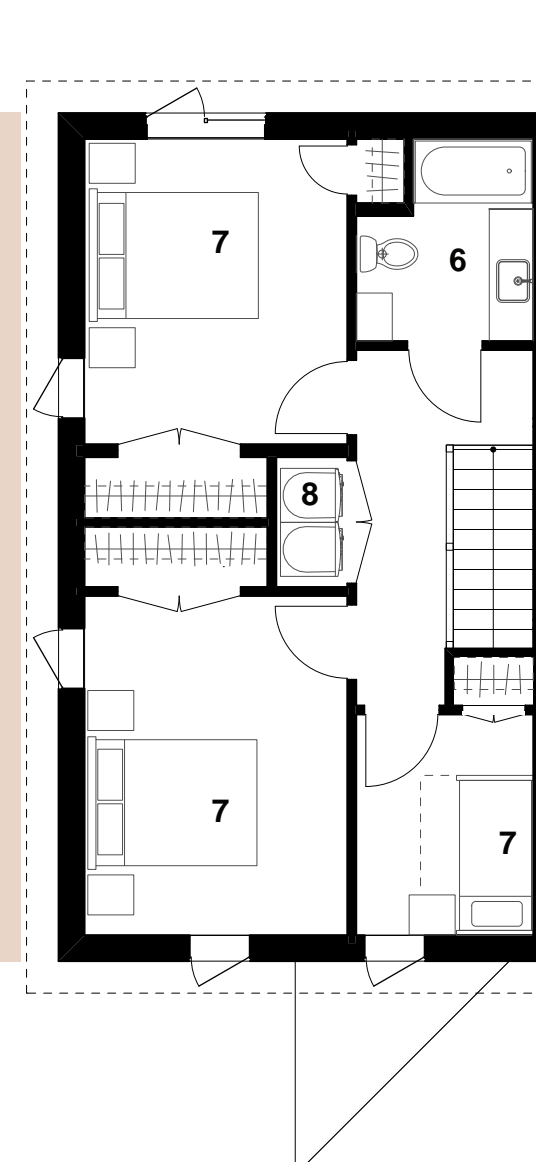
Two-unit (or more) Rowhouse

LEGEND:

- 1. Entry
- 2. Living Room
- 3. Eat-in Kitchen
- 4. Half Bathroom
- 5. Mechanical
- 6. Bathroom
- 7. Bedroom
- 8. Laundry



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



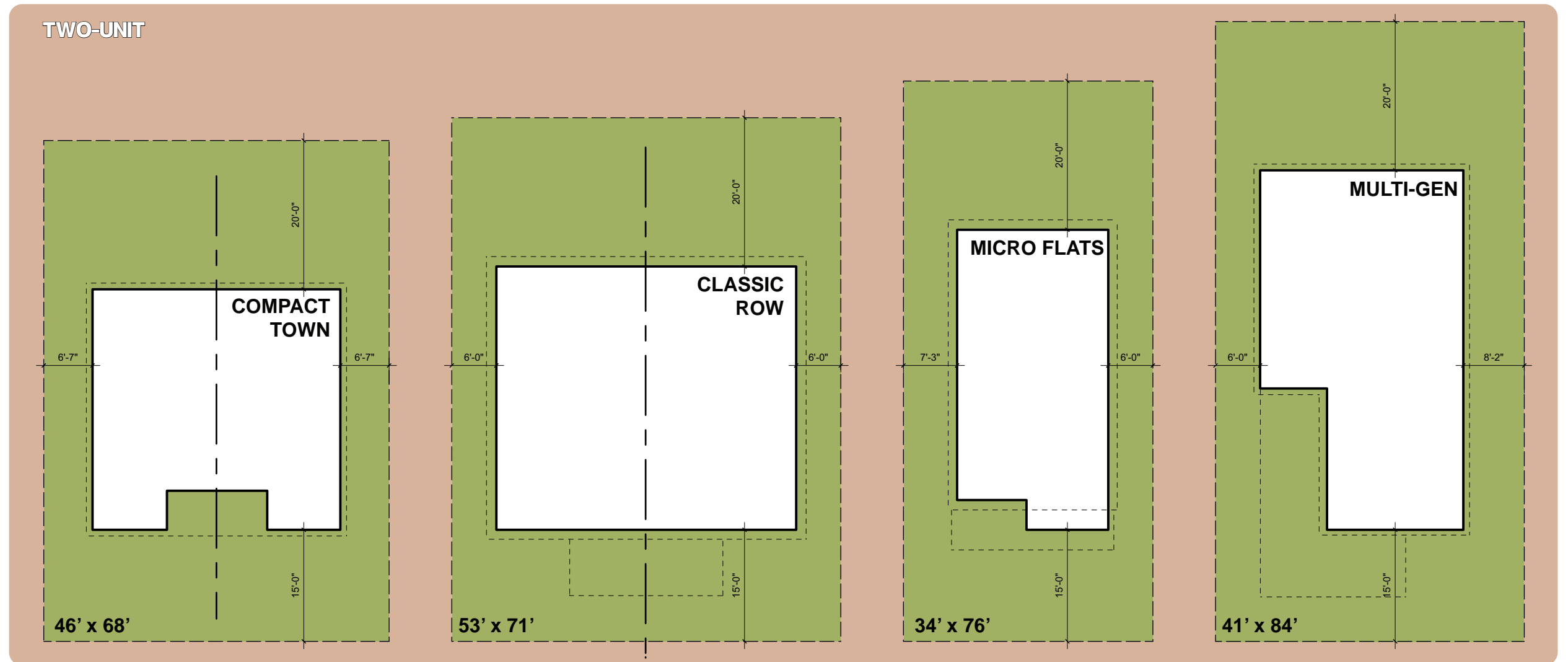
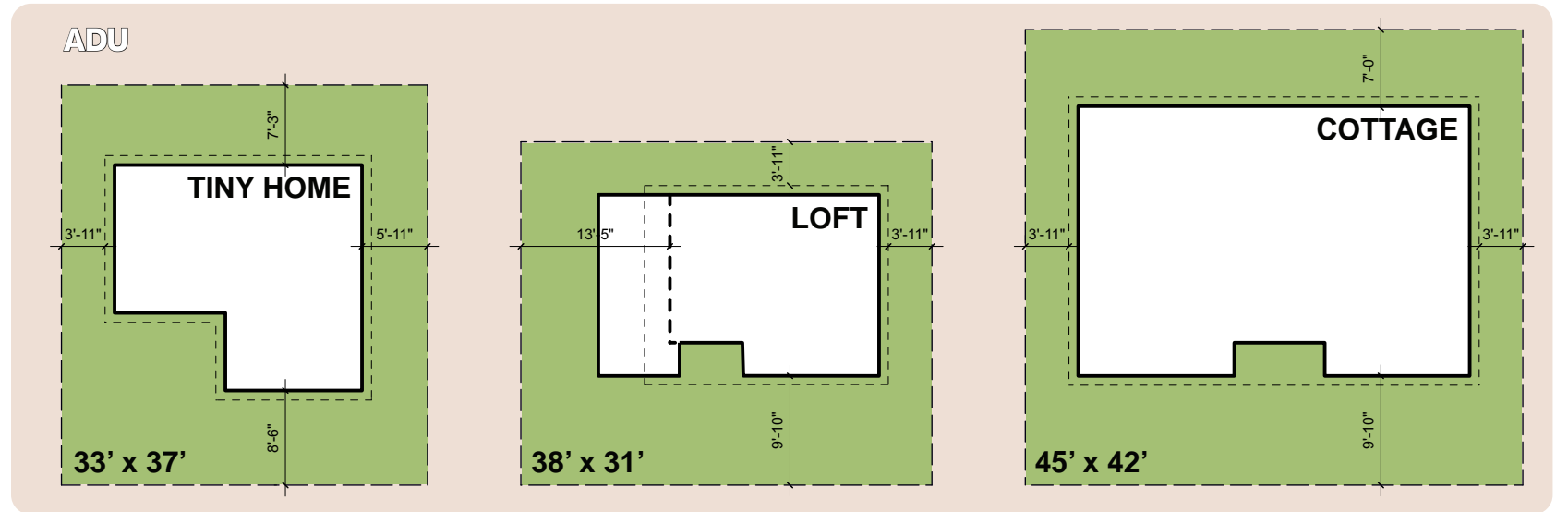
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Fitting your Site⁸

You are required to submit a site plan showing how the design you choose fits on your property. New buildings must be set back from property lines, streets, and other buildings to limit fire spread and match neighbourhood character. While a development officer can give you information specific to your project, the diagrams on this page show the required minimum setbacks to help you choose a suitable design.⁹

Please note these diagrams are only a starting point or guide. There are many factors that determine if your project and site meets the requirements. Once you have a plan in mind for your property, be sure to talk to a Development Officer at the Municipality.



Fine Print

REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

- What We Heard, Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives 1-3 (October 2024)
- West Hants Regional Municipality, Municipal Housing Needs Report (2023)
- Housing Action Plan (undated)
- Land Use Bylaw Amendments (accepted March 25, 2025)
- Town of Windsor Architectural Design Manual (effective September 21, 2005)

DRAWING SCALE

Except for the Summary page, all plans use the same scale, making it easy to compare different types of homes.

ZONING AND POTENTIAL ADOPTION

West Hants has three Land-Use Bylaws:

- Windsor
- Hantsport
- The rest of the municipality (West Hants)

Many areas don't allow homes because they are for businesses or industry. When we leave out commercial and farm zones (which need big lots),

about 83.5% of serviced lands are in residential zones R-1, R-2, R-3, and R-4.

Our analysis focuses on these areas that allow for homes. The home designs in this booklet can fit these zones if the lot meets setback rules.

Up to four units are now allowed on a lot in these residential zones. In R-1 zones, buildings must be built:

- 15' from the front property line
- 20' from the back property line
- 6' from each side property line

Windsor is a key focus area because many new homes are being built there, and other parts of West Hants have limitations on development, such as no additional servicing capacity.

ASSUMPTIONS

- All buildings follow Part 9 of the National Building Code of Canada 2020.
- No architectural or engineering stamps are needed to apply for a building permit with these pre-designed plans.
- Nova Scotia Building Code rules guide accessibility. We suggest making some areas easier

- to use than required by code—for example, a turning space of 1700 mm (5'7") for wheel-chairs.
- Building designs use common materials and methods so anyone can build and maintain them easily.

DEFINITIONS

Building footprint: The total area covered by the building on the ground, measured to the outside of the walls.

Building height: On a gabled or hip roof, the vertical distance between established grade and the mean level between eaves and ridges.

Developable lots: The percentage of lots where a building can fit compared to all lots. Note some of these developable lots may already have buildings on them, and could only fit another building if the current one is demolished.

Recommended Lot Width: The smallest lot width needed based on setbacks.

Fine Print

(continued)

END NOTES

1 At the time this document was produced, the EnergyForward New Homes program with Efficiency NS could provide financial incentives. Please review eligibility criteria and contact Efficiency NS or other program providers to determine your project's eligibility.

2 Developable lots is calculated differently for ADUs. Rather than a proportion of all lots, it's a proportion of eligible lots. Approximately 35% of lots with existing homes don't have enough space for any additional building, therefore these are considered ineligible for an ADU and are not included in the calculations.

3 The table on the summary page is colour coded by value. For applicable sections, the darker the cell the higher the number. For example, larger building footprints are dark, smaller are lighter.

4 The loft ADU may be permitted in less than the indicated percentage of lots because of its height. An ADU can only be taller than 20' if it is 2/3 the height of the main building and the main building is 2.5 storeys or taller. Refer to building

height definition on Page 18.

5 In the R-1 zone there is a maximum building height for accessory buildings (like ADUs) of 15'. In the R-2 and R-3 zones there is a maximum building height of 20' for accessory buildings. The alternate version of the loft would meet the height requirements in the R-2 and R-3 zones. Refer to building height definition on Page 18.

6 Due to its small building footprint, the Loft ADU meets the definition for a "Tiny House" in the Nova Scotia Building Code. In this example, a lower headroom or steeper stairs than would be permitted in standard construction could be used.

7 Living space (net area) does not include staircases even through they are technically contained within the unit.

8 The setbacks shown assume the building is in an R-1 zone; setbacks increase for R-2 and R-3 zones. All lot dimensions are rounded up to the nearest foot. In some cases that could mean the building could fit on a lot up to 11 1/2" smaller than the dimension than is indicated. For the

ADUs it is assumed that they will be placed on a site with another building. That is, the lot area provides a rough idea of how much space is needed within the back yard. Limiting distance from the existing house will need to be considered and may increase the lot depth required.

9 There are other factors to consider like construction type, cladding material, overall lot coverage, minimum lot size and minimum lot width. You are required to submit a site plan in order to build any of these designs. With that plan, the development officer can help you determine if you meet the other requirements. Of the two distance requirements to lot lines (limiting distance and zoning requirement), the diagrams show the larger distance.