

# Municipal Benchmarking Study

# HAMILTON

## OVERALL RANKING

Hamilton slipped from 15th place in the 2022 study to 19th place in the 2024 study.

Rank	Municipality	Planning features (1=Best)	Approvals timelines (1=Best)	Government charges Low-Rise (1=Lowest)	Government charges High-Rise (1=Lowest)
1	Edmonton	6	4	8	9
2	Halifax	1	13	6	2
3	London	5	7	9	15
4	Regina	14	3	5	8
5	Calgary	7	6	13	10
6	Moncton	18	2	1	1
7	Charlottetown	22	5	2	3
8	Kelowna	15	8	11	5
9	Kamloops	21	10	7	6
10	Surrey	11	9	14	13
11	Saskatoon	16	1	18	7
12	St. John's	20	12	3	4
13	Ottawa	8	17	10	16
14	Winnipeg	23	14	4	11
15	Oakville	4	15	21	21
16	Burnaby	17	18	16	14
17	Vancouver	12	11	17	12
18	Brampton	9	16	20	20
19	Hamilton	10	23	12	17
20	Pickering	13	19	19	18
21	Toronto	3	22	23	23
22	Markham	2	20	22	22
23	Bradford West Gwillimbury	19	21	15	19

This study compares 23 Canadian municipalities, examining how their processes, approvals timelines, and government charges and fees contribute to housing affordability and supply issues in major housing markets across Canada.

Whether at the top or the bottom of the list, each city can learn from best practices of others and continue to improve.



# RANKINGS

The ranking reads as a report card to show which municipal governments are currently leading in which of the three pillars of the study (planning features, approvals timelines, and government charges), and provides an overall ranking. This ranking does not assess anything beyond what was analyzed and is not reflective necessarily of the engagement and cooperation between industry and local governments.

## PLANNING FEATURES

Each municipality is scored on whether they have features that can support an efficient planning approvals system, and increase transparency for developers, the public, or other interested parties. This edition of the study makes some modifications to the review of features from the previous study. After an internal review and feedback of the scoring process from the previous study, the number of themes that include features within them has been reduced from five (5) to three (3). The total number of features being reviewed has been reduced from 16 to 13.



**OVERALL SCORE FOR PLANNING FEATURES**

Theme	Feature	Score
<b>APPLICATION PREPARATION</b>	(1) Application Support Materials (2) Zoning By-law in Interactive Map (3) Zoning By-law in Machine Readable Format (4) Staff Contact Information	<b>88%</b>
<b>APPLICATION SUBMISSION</b>	(1) Planning Application Submission Options (2) Planning Application Payment Options (3) Building Permit Submission Options (4) Building Permit Payment Options	<b>69%</b>
<b>APPLICATION TRACKING</b>	(1) Active Application Information Website (2) Status Indicator for Applications (3) Historical Planning Data Availability (4) Interactive Map of Planning Applications (5) Availability of Application Submission Documents	<b>60%</b>

## MUNICIPAL CHARGES

The report provides a high-level overview of a blended rate of government charges levied by municipal governments and attempts to quantify the costs these charges and fees generate for developers, home builders, and ultimately, home buyers.

**LOW-RISE**



**\$88,200 / UNIT**

**HIGH-RISE**



**\$59,600 / UNIT**



## APPROVALS TIMELINES

We estimate typical approval timelines for development applications – from complete application to planning approval. The nature of the ‘planning approval’ can take many forms.

Delays in approvals impact housing affordability. Months of delays can add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of a home.

## INDIRECT COSTS DUE TO DELAYS

There are indirect costs that accumulate on a development as its application goes through the application process including: property taxes, financing costs, and cost escalation of construction materials and labour due to inflation.

### LOW-RISE



**\$3,718 / UNIT / MONTH**

### HIGH-RISE



**\$2,112 / UNIT / MONTH**

# SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

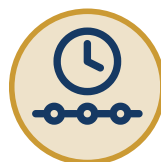
Hamilton has several elements working well, and a few others requiring improvement.

## WORKING WELL



### SOME IMPROVEMENT IN APPLICATION PROCESS

Hamilton showed moderate improvement in its application submission process as well as application tracking.



### LAST IN APPROVALS TIMELINES

Hamilton comes last out of 23 municipalities in estimated approval times, by application type, at 31 months - an increase of 8.1 months over the previous study.



### LACKING PARTICIPATION FROM CITY

The City of Hamilton did not provide any application related data. A subsample data set was taken from public records was used in scoring.



### LOW POPULATION GROWTH

Almost all municipalities in the study, grew significantly faster than the rest of Canada from 2021 - 2023. Hamilton saw a lower increase, due to a lack of housing supply.

# ABOUT THE CHBA MUNICIPAL BENCHMARKING STUDY

[www.chba.ca/municipal-benchmarking](http://www.chba.ca/municipal-benchmarking)



The Municipal Benchmarking Study was commissioned by the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) and delivered by Altus Group. The study assessed municipalities on features, approvals and government charges, drawing out best practices. All cities can learn from each others' experiences, continually improving policies and operations to increase housing supply and affordability.

The 2024 edition of the study provides further detail on how a municipality's performance on approval timelines, municipal fees, and planning features influence housing outcomes, including affordability and availability of housing for young families, and the total cost implications of these municipal processes and policies. There was also greater direct participation from most municipalities to help support the research.

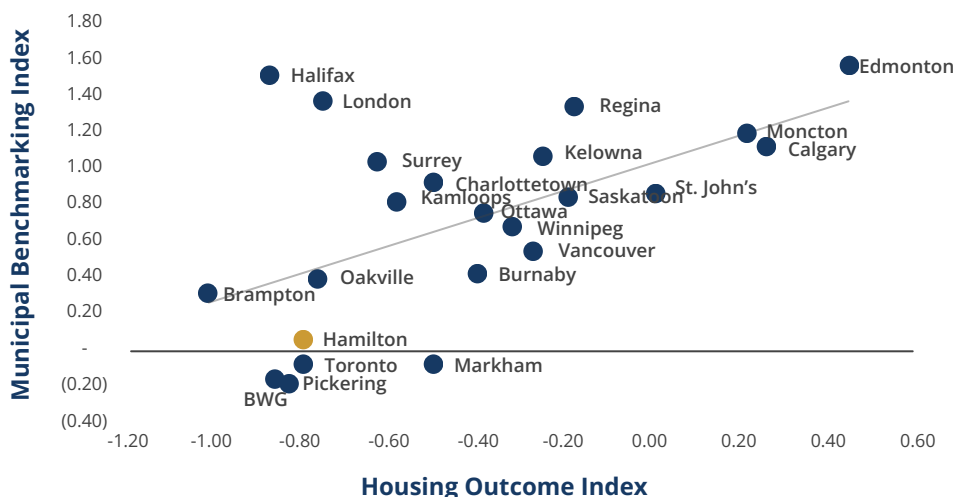
This edition also includes two additional areas of scoring: indirect costs of the residential development application process, and a housing outcome measure. The chart below shows that in general, **municipalities that score low on the municipal benchmarking index have worse housing outcomes**. Higher Municipal Benchmark Index scores are positively related to a blended measure of improved housing affordability, lower suppressed household formation rates, a balanced vacancy rate, and net positive municipal migration. Poor Benchmark scores create a high likelihood that a municipality experiences relatively poor housing outcomes—the opposite of the four blended measures. Outlier cities like Halifax and London illustrate how housing policy changes for new supply need time before measurable housing outcomes improve.

*"This study is intended to facilitate conversations among all levels of government, especially municipal governments, on how land-use planning-related factors can be improved to encourage more housing supply, and help improve affordability for Canadians across the country. Municipalities often face similar challenges, and learning from each other can help improve housing outcomes for all."*



**-Kevin Lee  
CEO, CHBA**

**Housing Outcomes Index VS. Municipal Benchmarking Index, 2024**



## NOTES

The research started with data from June 2022 onwards (to avoid overlap with the previous study). The study does not include any potential impacts on housing as a result of the changes a municipality may have made as a result of receiving money from the federal Housing Accelerator Fund.

The results are independent of the quality of the relationship between the municipal government and the residential construction industry.

# LOCAL INSIGHTS

This Local Insights page allows constituent local/provincial associations of CHBA to bring out more local context, including any successes, priorities and challenges from the report or since the original data was collected.



Soaring housing costs are driving young families out of cities like Hamilton, making homeownership increasingly unattainable. At the heart of this crisis is a severe housing shortage, compounded by rising construction costs, slow approval processes and heavy taxation on new homes.

The CHBA National Benchmarking Study reveals a few successes and areas of major concern in Hamilton when compared to peer cities across Canada. A cybersecurity incident impacted planning (and other) processes in the city, however those impacts largely occurred outside the study timeframe. While the City of Hamilton has shown some improvement in its planning features, the overall housing situation is getting worse.

In Hamilton, new housing starts have slowed significantly. Plummeting high-rise intensification housing starts have driven an over 50% decline in new housing starts. In 2024, high-rise and mid-rise new condo sales fell to their lowest levels of activity since the mid-1990s. Meanwhile, low-rise land supply remains at unsustainable levels, driving that market segment to neighbouring jurisdictions.

Municipal development charges are a major factor. Development Charges in Hamilton have increased by 87% since 2021 and the recent introduction of new Community Benefits Charges on condominiums and apartments compounds the taxation issue. These charges even include costs not directly related to development such as public parking garages and airport facilities, which raise the price of new homes. Altus identifies in the Benchmarking Study that Hamilton requires more documents and reports to be prepared as part of a planning application by consultants for municipal review (93) compared to the Canadian average (50). The benchmarking Study notes Ontario municipalities typically require twice as many reports as part of the planning process than their peers across Canada.

In Hamilton, the impact is clear. Development Charges have outpaced inflation, leading to higher mortgage payments and financial strain for homebuyers, many of whom are young families and newcomers. In the face of a generational housing crisis, Hamilton has substantially increased taxation on new housing and is adding both time and reporting costs to the planning process, all while young families leave the region in growing numbers in search of housing elsewhere.

*"The lack of attainable housing is driving young people away from cities like Hamilton, where they are desperately needed to fill jobs and sustain economic growth. Without new housing, cities face stagnation, with minimal property tax assessment growth, fewer children and a shrinking workforce. We need a complete paradigm shift in Hamilton to reduce planning approval timelines, cut red tape and reduce taxation that is crippling an industry in distress."*

**-Mike Collins-Williams,  
CEO of West End Home Builders'  
Association**