Excerpts from the CHBA Municipal Benchmarking Report

The following are excerpts from the CHBA Municipal Benchmarking Report, prepared for the Canadian Home Builders' Association, by Altus Group Economic Consulting, dated September 21, 2020.

The full report is available online: https://www.chba.ca/CHBA/Housing_in_Canada/The_Government_Role/Municipal_Benchmarking.aspx

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Altus Group Economic Consulting was retained by the Canada Home Builders' Association (CHBA) to undertake a study of several factors that are contributing to housing affordability issues in major housing markets across Canada, such as municipal approval processes, resulting timelines for approvals, and government charges levied by municipalities.

The study compares approaches that Canadian municipalities have in place to deal with the approval and ultimate development of new housing and highlights key features (and associated benefits of those features) in bringing new housing to approval and ultimate construction, as well as the cost implications of the municipal processes and policies. The analysis presented in the study was based on research done into 23 Canadian municipalities across the country. The research for this study was undertaken in late 2019 and early 2020, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 health crisis.

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Conclusions

The overall findings in the report incorporate the rankings from the three major elements studied that feed into housing affordability – providing tools and features to improve quality of submissions, ensuring approvals are done in an expedient manner, and housing costs stemming from government charges that get borne by buyers/renters.

Overall, the cities of Regina, Edmonton, Calgary and London rank atop the list, each with strong rankings in at least two of the three categories. Generally, the municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area and Vancouver Area rank towards the bottom of the ranking, with most municipalities in those metropolitan areas having combinations of high municipal charges and slow approval timelines.

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Overall Scorecard - Planning Features, Government Charges, Approvals Timelines

	Planning Features	Government Charges	Approvals Timelines	Score (Average Rank)	Rank
	rank (1=best)	rank (1=lowest)	rank (1=best)	lower=better	
Regina	11	9	1	7.0	1
Edmonton	1	17	4	7.3	2
Calgary	7	8	9	8.0	3
London	5	13	6	8.0	3
St. John's	18	3	5	8.7	5
Charlottetown	23	1	2	8.7	5
Winnipeg	15	6	7	9.3	7
Saskatoon	11	14	3	9.3	7
Oakville	1	19	8	9.3	7
Ottawa	1	11	21	11.0	10
Halifax	9	4	20	11.0	10
Hamilton	7	12	15	11.3	12
Moncton	21	2	13	12.0	13
Toronto	1	21	17	13.0	14
Pickering	9	16	14	13.0	14
Surrey	19	10	11	13.3	16
Delta	16	7	18	13.7	17
Brampton	5	22	16	14.3	18
Markham	11	23	10	14.7	19
Burnaby	21	5	22	16.0	20
BWG	11	18	19	16.0	20
Coquitlam	17	15	n.a.	16.0	20
Vancouver	19	20	12	17.0	23

Note: Government Charges based on average of low-rise and high-rise scenarios, as measured by government charges as % of housing prices

Source: Altus Group Economic Consulting

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7   BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING MUNICIPAL PROCESSES

While this study is generally limited to the 23 municipalities, in this section of the report, which scans for best practices for improving municipal processes, the scan includes any community within Canada that may be undertaking positive steps towards improvement municipal approval processes.

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7.1.2 City of Edmonton – Urban Form Business Transformation Initiative

The City of Edmonton has embarked on an initiative to improve municipal processes, which includes objectives to, among other things, create a more customer-oriented website, increase the ease with which information can be accessed, redesign the rezoning and subdivision processes.

Some of the specific tasks identified by the City are:

- Have a dedicated contact for customers;
- Establishing and communicating application requirements;
- Reducing number of touch points and re-work;
- Updating online planning and development content;
- Increase transparency, accountability and predictability of application process;
- Minimize time from submission of application to approval.

The City has a webpage where specific process improvements to implement the various initiatives are detailed and described, and how they have been impacting, or are expected to impact, development approval processes.