

ELECTION PRIORITIES

Hamilton, Ontario



OUR PRIORITIES

- 1. Faster, More Accountable Development Approvals**
- 2. Increasing Housing Supply and Choice**
- 3. Streamlining Missing Middle Housing Approvals**
- 4. Establishing a Housing-Enabling Hierarchy for Municipal Decision-Making**
- 5. Revitalizing Downtown Hamilton Through Housing and Community Safety**

1. Faster, More Accountable Development Approvals

Hamilton cannot solve affordability, homelessness, infrastructure pressures, or economic competitiveness without significantly increasing housing supply and improving the conditions for investment and growth. This requires serious effort to fix the development approval system.

Lengthy approval timelines, excessive red tape, rising municipal fees, and an increasingly uncompetitive investment climate are making Hamilton one of the most difficult and costly places to build housing in Canada. These delays directly increase housing costs, restrict supply, discourage investment, and undermine economic growth.

According to a recent Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) Municipal Benchmarking Study, by the Altus Group **Hamilton ranks last among municipalities for residential development approval timelines**. New housing applications in Hamilton take an average of 31 months to approve which is nearly three times longer than the national average of just over 11 months.

The study also found that:

- Hamilton requires **up to 93** separate studies, reports, and documents, almost double the national average of 50
- Since 2021, development charges in Hamilton have **increased by 87%** (WE HBA acknowledges recent efforts to temporarily reduce DCs under the Development Charge Reduction Program)
- Approval delays are adding approximately **\$3,718 per month** to the cost of low-rise housing units and **\$2,112 per month** for high-rise units.
- If we take the National average of eleven months as a best practice for timelines, Hamilton's shortcoming is adding **\$78,000** in costs to low-rise units and \$44,000 to high-rise units. This is ultimately passed on to homebuyers and renters, making housing less attainable for Hamilton residents.

The consequences extend beyond affordability. Housing delays reduce construction activity, weaken investor confidence, and threaten jobs across Hamilton's construction and skilled trades sectors.

Hamilton cannot compete for investment, talent, or economic growth if it continues to lag behind other municipalities in delivering housing approvals efficiently and predictably.

WE Support:

- Guaranteed approval timelines and enforceable municipal service standards
- A comprehensive review of Hamilton's planning and development approvals framework
- Reducing unnecessary studies, duplication, and administrative red tape
- Digital modernization of planning, permitting, and inspections processes
- Concurrent application reviews to eliminate avoidable delays
- Regular public reporting on approval timelines, permit backlogs, and performance metrics
- The creation of a dedicated Housing and Development Task Force to identify and implement immediate process improvements
- A diversity of housing options including intensification, missing middle and greenfield urban boundary expansions

The Opportunity

Every month of delay increases financing, construction, labour, and carrying costs that ultimately raise the price of housing for residents and deters investment in our City.

A faster, more predictable approvals system will:

- **Increase housing supply**
- **Improve affordability**
- **Strengthen investor confidence**
- **Support construction jobs and skilled trades**
- **Accelerate economic growth**
- **Compete with other municipalities for investment and talent**



2. Increasing Housing Supply and Choice

Hamilton must significantly expand its housing stock to meet the needs of current and future residents. A growing city requires a housing market that can accommodate people at every stage of life and across all income levels. Without a substantial increase in all types of housing supply, affordability challenges will continue to worsen, workforce attraction will become more difficult, and economic growth will be constrained.

Families, young professionals, seniors, newcomers, and essential workers are increasingly struggling to find housing that meets their needs and budgets. Ground-oriented homes suitable for raising families have become increasingly difficult to find and afford within Hamilton, contributing to outmigration to neighbouring municipalities. This represents a loss of economic activity, assessment growth, and community investment that should be retained within our city.

Housing supply is the foundation upon which affordability is built. The more housing options available, the greater the opportunity for residents to find homes that meet their needs, while reducing upward pressure on prices and rents over time.



WE Support:

- Increasing the supply of attainable and affordable housing across all income levels
- Encouraging a diverse mix of housing types, including purpose-built rental, missing middle housing, and family-oriented units
- Promoting ground-oriented housing opportunities so that Hamilton families do not need to leave the city to find a home that meets their needs
- Supporting policies that reduce barriers to housing construction and accelerate housing delivery
- Incentivizing intensification in the downtown core and along transit corridors to maximize existing infrastructure investments

The Opportunity

Every new home built in Hamilton helps address housing affordability, supports local jobs, generates economic activity, and contributes to the city's long-term prosperity.

A stronger housing system will:

- **Create more housing choice for residents at all stages of life**
- **Support workforce attraction and retention**
- **Strengthen Hamilton's tax base and long-term fiscal sustainability**
- **Ensure residents aren't relocating to neighbouring municipalities**
- **Support construction jobs and broader economic growth**
- **Create complete communities where residents can live, work, and raise their families**



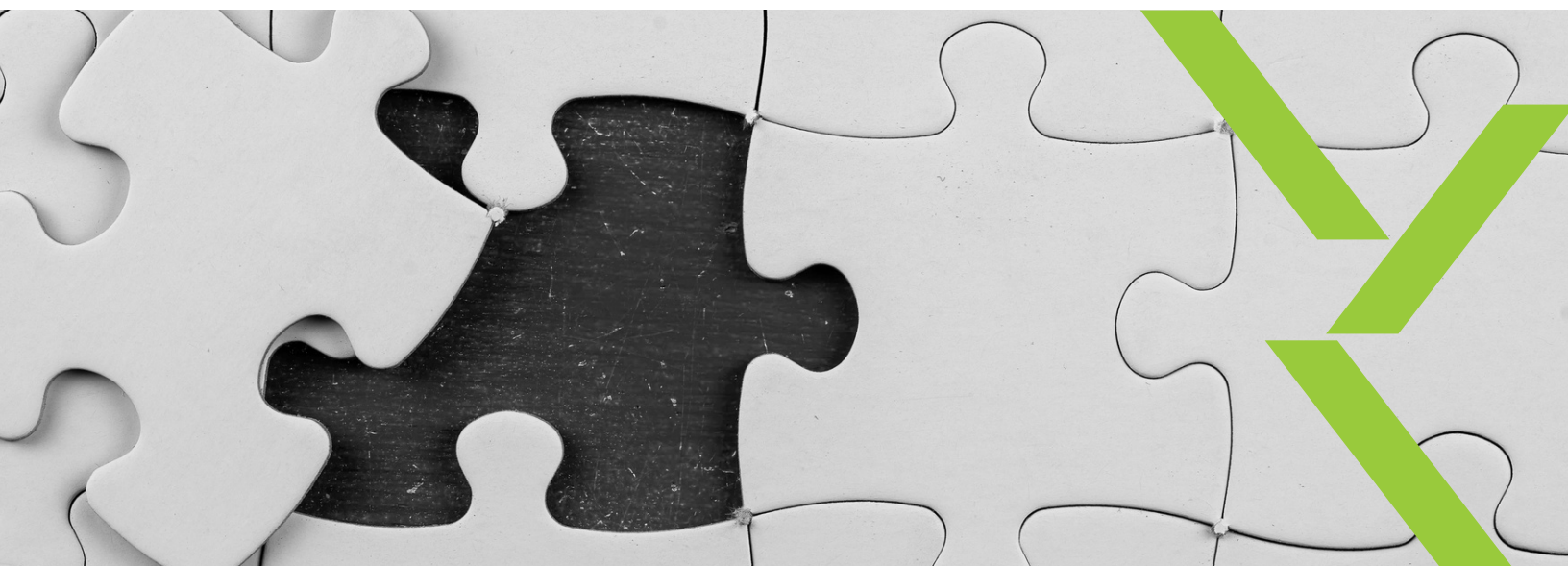
3. Streamlining Missing Middle Housing Approvals

Hamilton's housing needs cannot be met through high-rise development or greenfield growth alone. Missing middle housing represents one of the most effective opportunities to increase housing supply, while making best use of existing infrastructure.

Missing middle housing includes housing forms such as townhomes, stacked townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and laneway housing.

Despite widespread recognition of the need for more missing middle housing, the development approval process remains disproportionately challenging for many projects. Complex approval requirements and lengthy timelines can make otherwise viable housing projects financially unfeasible, reducing the number of homes delivered and limiting housing choice for residents.

Creating a more responsive and predictable approvals process for missing middle housing represents one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to increase housing supply while leveraging existing infrastructure and expanding housing choice.



WE Support:

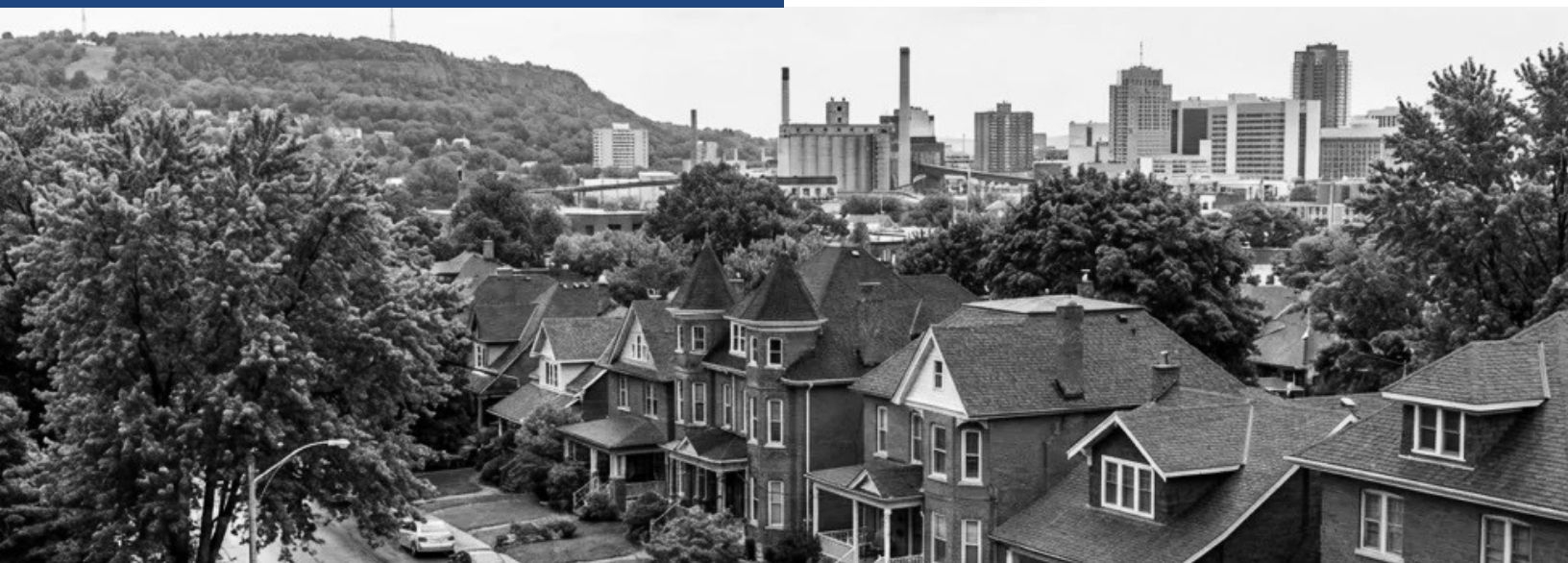
- Aligning municipal policies and approval processes with housing supply objectives
- Creating a more transparent, predictable, and efficient “as-of-right” planning and approvals framework
- Providing targeted support and streamlined processes for smaller infill and missing middle projects
- Reducing unnecessary studies, application requirements, and administrative barriers for appropriately scaled projects
- Encouraging gentle intensification within existing neighbourhoods where infrastructure capacity already exists

The Opportunity

Missing middle housing can be delivered more quickly and more affordably with a better public policy framework. By removing unnecessary barriers and creating a more predictable approvals process, Hamilton can unlock thousands of new housing opportunities within existing communities.

A streamlined missing middle approvals framework will:

- **Increase housing supply more rapidly**
- **Expand attainable homeownership opportunities**
- **Create more housing options for families, seniors, and first-time buyers**
- **Make better use of existing infrastructure and public investments**
- **Reduce development costs that ultimately impact housing prices**



4. Establishing a Housing-Enabling Hierarchy for Municipal Decision-Making

Hamilton has adopted ambitious housing targets and repeatedly identified housing affordability and supply as critical priorities. Achieving those objectives requires a consistent approach to decision-making across all municipal departments, policies, guidelines, standards, and regulatory frameworks.

Too often, housing projects are delayed, made more expensive, or rendered financially unviable because housing objectives are being weighed against an ever-growing number of competing municipal priorities without a clear framework for balancing outcomes. While goals related to urban design, sustainability, transportation, environmental protection, accessibility, and public realm improvements are important, the cumulative impact of layering additional requirements onto housing projects can significantly increase costs, extend approval timelines, and reduce housing supply.

The result is often a disconnect between the City's housing objectives and the practical implementation of municipal policies. Hamilton needs a clear decision-making framework that places housing supply and affordability at the centre of policy implementation.



WE Support:

- Establishing housing supply and attainability as core considerations in all municipal policy and regulatory decisions
- Requiring housing impact assessments, including cumulative impacts, for new policies, guidelines, standards, and development requirements
- Reviewing existing municipal policies to identify barriers that delay housing approvals or increase housing costs
- Prioritizing policies that directly support housing construction and accelerate housing delivery
- Ensuring municipal departments work collaboratively to advance housing outcomes rather than creating competing requirements
- Creating exemptions, flexibility, or alternative compliance pathways for missing middle and infill housing projects where appropriate
- Aligning municipal implementation practices with provincial housing supply objectives and growth policies

The Opportunity

Every additional requirement imposed on housing projects carries a cost, whether through increased construction expenses or longer approval timelines. If Hamilton is serious about addressing housing attainability and achieving its housing targets, every municipal policy must be viewed through the lens of its impact on housing supply.

A housing-enabling hierarchy will:

- **Increase housing supply by reducing compounding and conflicting barriers to development**
- **Reduce costs that are ultimately passed on to homebuyers and renters**
- **Create greater consistency and predictability in municipal decision-making**
- **Support faster delivery of new homes and rental units**
- **Strengthen Hamilton's ability to meet provincial housing commitments and growth objectives**



5. Revitalizing Downtown Hamilton Through Housing and Community Safety

Hamilton's downtown should be one of the city's greatest strengths. As the heart of our community, downtown Hamilton has the potential to be a vibrant, inclusive, and attractive place where people choose to live, work, invest, and build their future.

Downtown intensification is critical to Hamilton's long-term housing strategy. With significant existing and planned infrastructure investments, including the forthcoming LRT, the downtown core is uniquely positioned to accommodate substantial housing growth while supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and fostering an inviting downtown.

The success of Hamilton's housing strategy depends on the success of its downtown. Provincial growth policies, municipal planning objectives, and infrastructure investments all point toward increased residential intensification within the urban core. However, attracting residential investment and homebuyers to the downtown is becoming increasingly challenging.

Developers, investors, and prospective residents are making decisions based not only on housing availability and affordability, but also on perceptions of safety, cleanliness, accessibility, and quality of life. Unaddressed social disorder, public safety concerns, visible homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges, and deteriorating public spaces are affecting confidence in Hamilton's urban core and creating barriers to residential investment.

Creating a downtown where people want to live is one of the most important housing and economic development initiatives the city can undertake.

WE Support:

- Incentives for adaptive reuse, redevelopment, and conversion projects
- Investments in public realm improvements, including lighting, streetscaping, cleanliness, maintenance, and park enhancements
- Increased supportive, transitional, and attainable housing options
- Better coordination between municipal, provincial, healthcare, and community service partners to address homelessness, addictions, and mental health challenges
- A coordinated downtown revitalization strategy that aligns housing, economic development, infrastructure investment, and social services
- Measures that support a clean, safe, welcoming, and vibrant downtown

The Opportunity

Downtown Hamilton represents one of the city's greatest opportunities to increase housing supply, strengthen economic competitiveness, and maximize the value of existing and planned infrastructure investments. Hamilton's downtown is essential to the city's future and long-term economic success.

A revitalized downtown will:

- **Increase housing supply in the city's most strategic growth area**
- **Support the success of LRT and transit investments**
- **Attract private-sector housing and commercial investment**
- **Create more attainable housing opportunities close to jobs, services, and amenities**
- **Support local businesses, restaurants, and cultural institutions**
- **Strengthen assessment growth and municipal finances**
- **Help attract and retain young professionals, families, students, and skilled workers**



WE BUILD THE FUTURE

Mike Collins-Williams, MCIP | Chief Executive Officer
mikecw@westendhba.ca | (416) 435-6757

Amanda Stringer | Manager, Government Relations
amanda@westendhba.ca | (289) 684-9450

