

Aurora among GTA municipalities missing the mark on new housing: study

Aurora is one of several municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area to be given a failing grade on new housing starts in a study published Monday by the Missing Middle Initiative and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON).

The study found that new housing starts across the GTA are significantly down from years past despite efforts and incentives from the Provincial Government to get these numbers up.

The study looked at 34 municipalities within the GTA and the Greater Golden Horseshoe and "assessed the state of housing sales and construction" for the first nine months of 2025 and compared this year's numbers to the same time period between 2021 and 2024.

"In the first nine months of the year, housing starts were down 34 per cent in those 34 municipalities," the study found. "Condo apartment starts over the past nine months are down 51 per cent relative to 2021-24 January - September averages. On the positive side, purpose-built rental starts are up 42 per cent. Ground-oriented housing (everything other than apartments) starts are down 43 per cent in almost every municipality - Brantford, Markham, and Richmond Hill are notable exceptions - showing that the region's housing weakness extends well beyond the condo market.

"Unfortunately, given the state of new home sales, things are only going to get worse before they get better. Housing starts are a lagging indicator, as the CMHC only considers a unit to be 'started' when a building's foundation is 100 per cent complete, so it often reflects the market decisions of several years prior, when the decision to build was made. Pre-construction housing sales are a better indicator of the market's current health and are indicative of future housing starts."

For the first nine months of the year, the study found pre-construction sales of condos was down 89 per cent, while pre-construction ground-oriented sales were down 65 per cent. These statistics, they say, is a "clear indicator" that the situation will only get worse before it gets better.

Assessed on ground-oriented, condo, and rental apartment starts as well as the factors of ground-oriented and condo apartment sales, Aurora received an "F" grade - but the Town was in good company with Brampton, Caledon, East Gwillimbury, Mississauga, Toronto, Vaughan, and Whitchurch-Stouffville in the same boat.

Faring better were Ajax, Georgina, Halton Hills, Markham, New Tecumseth, Oakville and Pickering, each of which received a "D" grade; Milton and Richmond Hill received a "C" grade, while coming out on top was the Town of Newmarket, which was rated "A+."

Impacting Aurora's grade were Ground-Oriented starts, which the study found had declined by 52 per cent over the time period, condo apartment and rental apartment starts, which each declined by 100 per cent, and ground-oriented sales declining by 75 per cent.

In a statement to The Auroran, Mayor Tom Mrakas said he believed the grading system was "somewhat misleading."

"I've reviewed the report and have spoken to RESCON president Richard Lyall many times to share my perspective," he said. "The grading section is somewhat misleading - because what it doesn't reflect is the simple fact that municipalities do not control housing starts.

"Here in Aurora, we approved over 1,700 units in 2024 and more than 1,700 so far in 2025 - more than double the provincial target of 800 units per year. That's a clear demonstration of our commitment. But municipalities can't force developers to build. Market conditions, financing, labour, and broader economic factors all drive construction timelines. Any conversation about housing must reflect the full picture, not just one piece of it.

?Aurora remains fully committed to doing our part to address the housing crisis ? and the approvals we've brought forward speak for themselves.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter