



NEWS RELEASE

Despite housing shortage, 1-in-4 neighbourhoods in Canadian cities saw number of housing units actually decline from 2016-2021

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For Immediate Release

TORONTO—Despite a housing shortage in many cities across the country, the number of housing units in 26.4 per cent of Canada’s urban neighbourhoods—more than one-in-four—actually declined from 2016 to 2021, according to a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Policymakers across the board acknowledge there is a lack of new housing in Canada’s cities, and yet, large swaths of the urban landscape have seen little to no increase in the number of housing units, or worse, they’ve actually seen a decline,” said Josef Filipowicz, a senior fellow with the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Making Room for Growth: Housing Intensification in Canada’s Cities, 2016-2021*.

The study finds that from 2016 to 2021, more than half (54.2 per cent) of Canada’s housing stock growth occurred in existing urban neighbourhoods instead of unused, undeveloped land—what’s known as intensification.

Of those new housing units that were built in pre-existing urban neighbourhoods (called census tracts by Statistics Canada), 50.9 per cent were built in just five per cent of neighbourhoods.

Crucially, half of all neighbourhoods in Canadian cities saw the number of housing units increase by less than one per cent. And 26.4 per cent of urban neighbourhoods actually saw a decline in the total number of housing units during the same time period.

“What growth we are seeing in new housing units across Canadian cities, it is largely happening in very small pockets,” said Steve Lafleur, Fraser Institute senior fellow and study co-author.

“To more meaningfully tackle the housing shortage in Canada, policymakers will have to look at ways to create more housing units of all types across our urban areas, and not just in certain small pockets.”

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