



May 5, 2026

From:

West End Home Builders' Association
1112 Rymal Road East
Hamilton, Ontario L8W 3N7

To: **Members of the General Issues
Committee, City of Hamilton**
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4Y5

WE HBA Letter: Innovation in Planning Approvals – Bloomberg Harvard Innovation Track and Bloomberg Implementation Accelerator Program Updates Report PED26072

The West End Home Builders' Association (WE HBA) is the voice of the land development, new housing and professional renovation industries in Hamilton, Burlington, and Grimsby. WE HBA represents 320 member companies made up of all disciplines involved in land development and residential construction. In the Hamilton CMA in 2024, residential construction contributed over \$4.6 billion in investment value and provided over 21,000 jobs paying about \$1.6 billion in wages¹. WE HBA notes that these economic indicators are in rapid decline and that the Missing Middle Institute has noted that the decline in housing starts, compared to the previous four-year average, is estimated to have reduced the number of jobs in Hamilton by 1,921².

WE HBA would like to express our support for this initiative and its objective of improving outcomes within the City of Hamilton's planning and development approvals system. We want to acknowledge at the outset that the work outlined in Report PED26072 reflects an effort by staff to confront long-standing challenges.

In particular, the early results of the All4One pilot demonstrate what is possible when processes are streamlined and collaboration is prioritized. The reported reduction of approximately 123 days (46%) in processing timelines, along with conditional approvals being issued in under 30 days, is a notable achievement.

Similarly, initiatives such as the use of artificial intelligence to support zoning compliance reviews, and the development of a Planning Application Information Website to improve transparency and access to information, are practical and forward-thinking steps. These efforts signal a shift toward modernization, improved customer experience, and better use of staff resources.

However, these positive steps must be viewed in the broader context of the City's overall performance. The most recent Altus Group benchmarking study released in 2025 placed Hamilton dead last among major Canadian municipalities in planning approval timelines. Hamilton takes nearly three times longer to issue approvals than average. With approvals taking roughly 31 months on average, the City is operating at a level that is fundamentally out of step with other municipalities.

¹ CHBA Economic Impacts 2024 Fact Sheet, City of Hamilton.

² Missing Middle Institute: 2025 GTA and GGH Final Housing Report Card, April 2026



While the pilot program shows improvement is possible, the efficiency gains seen are not yet reflected in the broader system. The current system continues to be characterized by excessive documentation requirements, fragmented review processes, and prolonged timelines that add cost, uncertainty, and risk to housing delivery. These inefficiencies ultimately work against Council's goal of building 47,000 housing units by 2031.

While we support this initiative, we emphasize that incremental improvements will not be sufficient. What is required is a comprehensive, end-to-end review of Hamilton's planning and approvals processes, with a clear mandate to:

- Eliminate redundant studies and submission requirements;
- Standardize and scale successful pilot practices across departments;
- Streamline internal coordination and decision-making; and,
- Improve accountability for timelines and outcomes.

The work underway demonstrates that staff are capable of innovation and that meaningful gains are within reach. The challenge now is implementing them broadly, consistently, and with urgency. Hamilton cannot afford to remain in last place.

We support this initiative as a step in the right direction. However, it must serve as a catalyst for broader structural reform. The housing crisis demands more than pilot success stories. Hamilton requires system-wide change.

We urge Council and staff to build on the momentum outlined in this report and commit to the full-scale transformation necessary to restore efficiency, predictability, and competitiveness to Hamilton's development approvals system.

WE HBA remains committed to working collaboratively with the City, staff, and other stakeholders to advance meaningful reform. We see this as a shared responsibility that requires open dialogue and mutual accountability. We stand ready to contribute constructively to solutions that improve outcomes for everyone. By working in true partnership, we are confident that Hamilton can become a more efficient and competitive city capable of delivering the housing residents urgently need.

Sincerely,

Mike Collins-Williams, MCIP, RPP
Chief Executive Officer
West End Home Builders' Association