

2024 Municipal Benchmarking Study

BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST

This checklist outlines best practices governments should consider implementing to improve housing supply outcomes and affordability in communities across Canada.

These recommendations are derived from the key findings of CHBA's [2024 Municipal Benchmarking Study](#) and are divided into three improvement areas: **development charges (DCs), rules and regulations, and the development application process.**

A link to the full CHBA Municipal Benchmarking Study is available at chba.ca/municipal-benchmarking.



DEVELOPMENT CHARGES



FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- ☐ User charges for certain services have been implemented (best suited for sewer and water services or roads)
 - **Note:** This requires more borrowing, perhaps by new, municipally owned corporations
- ☐ Some DCs, particularly those for services that benefit the wider community beyond new development (libraries, roads, new fire stations, etc.) have been shifted to property taxes
 - **Note:** Look to Quebec and Alberta models
- ☐ Land value capture techniques for transit improvements are adopted

FOR PROVINCES AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- ☐ Federal and provincial transfers to municipalities are enhanced, including by making them:
 - Available to municipalities on an incentive basis, as a reward for reducing DCs and encouraging efficient development
 - Conditional upon meeting growth plan and/or density targets
- ☐ Municipalities are allowed to debt-finance infrastructure over its full useful life (e.g., 50 or more years for some infrastructure)
 - **Note:** This requires changes in municipal financial practices and may require provincial legislative change

- ☐ Provinces have granted revenue sharing or new taxation powers to municipalities
- ☐ Community Development Districts (CDDs) have been explored and implemented where possible
 - **Note:** This is a U.S. model where bonds are serviced over 30 years by owners with ongoing maintenance fees paid to the CDD body after the bond is paid off

RULES AND REGULATIONS



FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- ☐ Restrictive zoning rules (i.e., exclusionary zoning) have been reviewed and eliminated where possible – pre-zoning for gentle density that allows housing of all forms and tenure (including “missing middle” homes, high-rise, etc.) has been meaningfully explored/considered
- ☐ A concerted effort to systematically combat NIMBYism is being meaningfully explored and carried out
 - **Note:** Local resident opposition to new development often delays or derails development plans, which drives up new home prices
- ☐ Measures to advance the building code outside of the direction of the Provincial Building Code are being avoided at all costs
 - **Note:** Attempts to advance the building code at the municipal level prevents efficient and cost-effective building at scale
- ☐ “Code by other means” is avoided.

FOR PROVINCES AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- ☐ Municipal process improvements are tied to housing supply outcomes
- ☐ All building and development-related municipal regulations are required to be harmonized
 - **Note:** This eliminates barriers to rapid deployment of housing
- ☐ A National Building Code Interpretation Centre, which includes binding interpretations for all municipal building officials, has been established
- ☐ Municipal implementation of “code by other means” is being prevented through provincial regulation of by-laws, zoning, code interpretations, or other means that make the same home difficult to build in different municipalities

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION PROCESS



FOR MUNICIPALITIES

Preparation

- ☐ Development guidance is clear and easy to find
- ☐ All parameters set out for development guidance information is available
- ☐ Documentation and webpage information is consistent
- ☐ Terms of References include statements for when study is required and/or exempt
- ☐ Checklists for applications are both on webpages and inside application forms
- ☐ Feedback from new and experienced applicants about user-friendliness of webpages/guides is being collected
- ☐ In-force and historic zoning data is provided
- ☐ Zoning interactive maps are linked to text of zoning bylaws
- ☐ Yearly consolidated versions of zoning bylaw text and maps, including amendments, are provided
- ☐ Periodic review of maps for technical issues is standard operating procedure
- ☐ Search functionality within staff directory is connected to planning and building departments' "contact us" pages
- ☐ All staff information (phone numbers, emails, job titles, division/department) is available on application web tracker
- ☐ Staff contacts are organized by category – geography, business unit, or function

Submission

- ☐ Online submission options for planning applications and building permits are available
- ☐ Types of applications that can be applied for are listed
- ☐ All steps of submission process (including naming conventions for file formats, terms of reference materials, etc.) are explained in written and video format
- ☐ Information regarding payments (including payment methods) is clear
- ☐ FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) webpages are available
- ☐ Multiple accounts can be associated with the same application
- ☐ Dedicated "help" contacts are available and clearly listed

Tracking

- ☐ Application information is available in both a dedicated webpage and an interactive map
- ☐ Links to dedicated application webpages are supplied in mapping information
- ☐ Important dates, staff contact information, submitted studies, and status are included on dedicated application webpages
- ☐ Status indicator with meaningful information (e.g., "Application Refused," "Waiting on 3rd Submission," etc.) is provided
- ☐ Related applications are easily searchable in a convenient format with statuses included
- ☐ Copies of submitted studies are provided
- ☐ Aggregate historical development application data (date of submission, decision date, etc.) is provided
- ☐ Complementary map views are available (population growth forecasts, land use designations, etc.)
- ☐ Filtering options are available (geographic area, ward boundaries, application status, etc.)
- ☐ Mapping data is connected to downloadable records (documents submitted, etc.)

FOR PROVINCES

- ☐ Service standards for municipal decisions are applied
- ☐ Service standards for appeal boards are applied
- ☐ Costs for appeals that are determined to be frivolous in nature are allowed
- ☐ Municipalities are required to list all information requirements in their municipal plans
- ☐ Municipalities are required to list information requirements on their websites to be allowed to request that information from an applicant

For more detailed information on how municipalities can improve their processes to support residential development in their communities, see CHBA's full 2024 Municipal Benchmarking Study at chba.ca/municipal-benchmarking.

