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SEASONAL ACTIVITY IMPROVES, but Ottawa's May Market Remains Cautious



MARKET OVERVIEW

Ottawa's housing market remained balanced in May, with activity improving from April but continuing to trail last year's spring pace. A total of 1,616 homes sold in May, up from 1,336 in April, reflecting the typical lift as the spring market progressed. However, sales were down 10.6% compared to May 2025. These slower sales are becoming a theme thus far in 2026, even as the market remains active.

The sales-to-new-listings ratio rose to 48.2%, while months of inventory eased to 3.0, indicating demand kept better pace with new supply than it did in April. Active listings remained elevated at 4,917, keeping pressure on sellers to price strategically.

Average prices across market segments were mixed, though overall pricing remained relatively stable. Single-family home pricing was flat year over year, while average prices for townhomes and apartments saw modest declines. Overall pricing was less than one percentage point below last year's level, indicating continued market stability. The average residential sale price was \$721,270 in May, up from \$712,184 in April, and relatively flat at 0.9% below May 2025. The median sale price followed a similar pattern, rising to \$660,000 from \$650,000 in April while remaining 1.6% lower than last May.

Performance varied by property type. Single-family homes remained resilient, with average prices essentially unchanged year over year and the median price up 1.3%. Townhomes and apartment-style properties continued to face softer conditions, with both average and median prices below last year's levels.

The MLS® Home Price Index (HPI) composite benchmark price increased 0.9% from April but remained 0.6% below May 2025, reflecting continued variation across market segments.

"The Ottawa market is not moving in one direction across all property types," says OREB President. "May brought the seasonal increase in activity we typically expect to see in Ottawa's housing market, but sales continue to trail last year's pace. While economic uncertainty continues to influence consumer confidence, the key question moving into the summer market will be whether demand continues to keep pace with supply. The market remains active, but inventory levels, employment trends, and buyer confidence will all play an important role in shaping the months ahead."

PRICES AND MARKET BALANCE

Price trends remained stable in May, but they were not uniform across property types. The average residential sale price in May was \$721,270, down 0.9% from May 2025 but up from \$712,184 in April. The median price was \$660,000, down 1.6% year over year and up from \$650,000 in April. Year to date, the average price is \$694,539, down 0.6%, while the median price is \$639,000, down 1.7%.

Single-family homes remained the most resilient segment, with an HPI benchmark price of \$723,800, up 0.9% from April and 0.3% year over year. The average single-family sale price was essentially unchanged from last May, while the median price rose 1.3% to \$800,000.

The townhome segment softened in May data compared to recent months. Earlier in the year, townhome activity was holding up comparatively well, but May reversed that pattern. Townhouse sales fell 14.3% year over year, pulling year-to-date sales 2.8% below 2025.

Pricing has not fallen sharply month over month, with the townhouse HPI benchmark at \$557,500, down 0.4% from April and 3.2% from last May. The larger signal is softer absorption, as active listings remain elevated and months of inventory sit well above last year's level.

Apartment-style properties continued to show the most pronounced pressure. The apartment benchmark price was \$385,500, up 1.5% from April but down 6.7% from May 2025. Average and median apartment prices were also lower year over year. This weakness is not unique to Ottawa; Toronto's condo sector has also been affected by weaker investor demand and higher carrying costs. Ottawa's apartment segment, however, should still be understood within local conditions: the data points to a slower, more price-sensitive segment, not a broad market correction.

MONTHS OF INVENTORY

Single Family: 2.7

Townhome: 2.7

Apartment: 4.8

Not intended to solicit properties currently listed for sale.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR SUMMER ENTERTAINING

After months of retreating indoors during our long Canadian winters, summer hosting feels like a long-awaited dream come true. You, the host and entertainer, deserve to enjoy the experience just as much as your guests. With a little preparation, you can stay present with the people you love and still pull off a seamless gathering at home from start to finish.

1. DESIGN YOUR SPACE WITH FLOW IN MIND

Think about how guests will naturally move through your home and where they tend to gather. Clear any clutter from transition areas and create a welcoming entry point. Even a basket of spare sandals for a casual backyard get-together goes a long way.

Decide early whether you're going for a formal seated dinner or a relaxed, grazing-style setup. A long table works beautifully for sit-down occasions, whereas smaller clusters of chairs and side tables encourage better conversation for more casual events. If you'll be entertaining outdoors, do a quick shade audit at the time of day you'll be hosting to allow for ample comfort – a spot that is perfectly shaded at noon can be uncomfortably warm by the late afternoon.

2. SET THE MOOD

A well-curated playlist is a non-negotiable for any summer gathering. Music sets the energy of your event, so have your selection ready and any portable speakers charged before guests arrive.

For evening gatherings, soft lighting goes a long way – lamps, candles, or string lights create a warm atmosphere indoors and out, while a few well-placed lanterns keep outdoor walkways safely lit as the sun sets.

Lastly, minimize unwelcome pests like mosquitoes and flies by ensuring your window and door screens are free of tears, and fitting tightly in their tracks. For outdoor areas, a quick check to eliminate any standing water around the property – where pests often breed – along with the addition of a few strategically-placed oscillating fans and citronella candles can naturally deter bugs, keeping your seating areas comfortable well into the evening.

3. CLEAN SMART, NOT HARD

A pre-party clean doesn't need to be overwhelming. Focus on the spaces guests will actually use: main living areas, kitchen surfaces, and the bathroom. A tidied entryway, fresh hand towels, and a well-stocked bathroom go much further than perfectly clean baseboards. Set out clearly labelled garbage and recycling bins in the entertaining area so guests can dispose of things naturally throughout the evening – your future self will thank you.

4. KITCHEN PREP

Preparing your kitchen and barbeque area is about ensuring the heart of the home is ready for the increased demand.

Inside, clear your countertops of daily-use appliances to create landing zones for platters and dirty dishes later on. A dedicated self-serve drink station keeps traffic flow out of the busy kitchen once guests arrive. A few easy appetizers prepped in the freezer are also great insurance to ensure tummies are full for when the fun stretches longer than planned.

When it comes to dinnerware, good-quality disposable plates and cups are a practical, stress-free choice that cuts back on clean up. If you prefer something more elevated, reusable options like melamine or acrylic dinnerware hold up well whether you're hosting on a patio or around a dining table.

For your outdoor grill, check your propane levels for ample supply and give the barbeque grates a thorough clean at least the day before so you aren't troubleshooting while guests are holding their plates.

5. OVERNIGHT GUESTS

When guests are staying overnight, comfort is your primary goal. Beyond freshly washed linens and a dedicated space for their belongings, it's the thoughtful touches that make a visit feel special. Consider putting together a small welcome station with travel-sized toiletries, bottles of water, a phone charger, and the Wi-Fi password clearly displayed. This way, your guests will feel genuinely at home from the moment they arrive.

6. PRESENCE OVER PERFECTION

Summer hosting is about the joy of connection, not the pursuit of perfection. Preparing your space in advance ensures that when the first guest arrives, you are free to be present for the moments and memories that truly make a house feel like a home.

