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OTTAWA'S HOUSING MARKET Shows Early Signs of Transition as Winter Activity Remains Subdued



MARKET OVERVIEW

Ottawa's residential market continued its winter slowdown in February, with overall sales remaining well below the five-year average of 990 transactions for the month. The slowdown, however, is not uniform across segments, and the data tells a more nuanced story than the headline numbers suggest.

Average condo apartment prices rose month over month while inventory measures eased, signalling what may be an early shift in a segment that has carried elevated supply since late 2025. Townhomes saw the most turnover of any segment, with sales activity running stronger than typical February levels even as rising inventory placed downward pressure on prices. The single-family market remained comparatively stable, with pricing holding relatively steady despite a drop in total sales. The data suggests significant competition for listings at lower price points.

With CREA forecasting a gradual strengthening in demand throughout 2026, we can likely expect continued balanced market conditions even as we approach a more active spring market.

"Benchmark prices moved higher in February across every segment, and demand remained active where affordability allows, creating a more balanced environment," said President of the Ottawa Real Estate Board. "Buyers are gaining a little more breathing room to make thoughtful decisions, while sellers continue to see consistent momentum. The conditions that kept many buyers cautious over the past year are gradually shifting. Spring is shaping up to be a meaningful window for those who are ready to act."

RESIDENTIAL MARKET ACTIVITY

In February, 780 residential properties sold in Ottawa, down 6.8% from February 2025. Activity improved from January's 610 transactions, though sales remained 21.2% below the five-year February average of 990 and 17.8% below the ten-year average of 949. This makes the current winter one of the slowest of the past decade. Even so, demand has not disappeared. Buyer activity remains present, particularly at lower price points, with elevated inventory and ongoing affordability considerations contributing to longer decision timelines.

Pricing trends reflected this environment. The average residential sale price in February was \$662,773, down 1.0% year over year, while the median price declined 3.1% to \$615,450. Both movements remain modest in scale and are consistent with a market adjusting to elevated supply rather than one experiencing broad-based downward pressure. With months of inventory easing to 3.8 from January's 4.4 as seasonal sales activity increased, Ottawa continues to operate in balanced territory.

The MLS® Home Price Index provides important context. Benchmark prices remain below year-ago levels, but February recorded month-over-month increases in the composite, single-family, townhouse, and apartment benchmarks compared to January. Because the HPI controls for seasonality and changes in the mix of sales, these gains reflect genuine upward movement in market valuation rather than simply the typical increase in pricing that accompanies the approach of the spring market. This suggests that, despite a slower-than-usual winter, pricing momentum is beginning to firm across segments.

PRICES AND MARKET BALANCE

New listings in February totalled 1,582, down 7.8% from February 2025 but up from January's 1,522. Active listings reached 2,928 units at month end, an increase of 11.1% year over year and well above levels seen in recent February periods.

The broader inventory base is giving buyers more properties to consider at any given time, which is reducing urgency. At the same time, improved sales activity and rising month-over-month benchmark prices indicate that underlying demand remains present. Inventory is higher than seasonal norms, but it is being absorbed in a way that is keeping pricing and overall market balance steady.

LOOKING AHEAD

February's data reinforces what January initially indicated: Ottawa is in a period of transition. This winter has been slower than the past few years, but the combination of firmer month-over-month HPI benchmarks, improving apartment absorption, steady townhome turnover, and relatively stable detached pricing suggests that demand is stable. Buyers continue to operate with more time and more choice than in recent years.

CREA's 2026 outlook anticipates gradually strengthening demand as lower borrowing costs work their way through the market. Ottawa's recent results are consistent with that view. If momentum continues to build into spring, the current inventory base should support a more active market without generating the sharp price acceleration that has defined previous cycles.

MONTHS OF INVENTORY

Single Family: 3.8

Townhome: 2.7

Apartment: 5.6

Not intended to solicit properties currently listed for sale.

TIPS TO MAKE A SMALL ROOM LOOK BIGGER

If you want to make a compact room feel brighter, airier and more spacious than its square footage suggests, a few thoughtful design choices can make a big impact. These tried-and-true tips work in any room of the home and suit every budget – with no renovation required.



1. LIGHTEN UP THE WALLS

Lighter paint colours instantly open up a room, helping it feel airy and expansive. White is a classic choice, but soft neutrals, gentle pastels and muted tones can create the same sense of openness. Dark, saturated colours tend to absorb light and visually shrink a room, making it feel more intimate, which can be lovely, but not ideal if your goal is to maximize space.

2. USE MIRRORS TO VISUALLY DOUBLE YOUR SPACE

Mirrors are one of the most effective tools for making a room appear larger. A full-length mirror, a statement floor-to-ceiling piece or a large framed mirror over a sofa or console will reflect light and create the illusion of added depth. Placing mirrors opposite windows is especially impactful, helping to bounce daylight throughout the room.

3. STREAMLINE YOUR WINDOW TREATMENTS

Heavy, long curtains can visually shorten walls and interrupt the flow of the room. For a cleaner, more open look, try low-profile blinds or shades that can be tucked neatly out of sight. If you prefer curtains, choose sheer fabrics or panels that closely match the wall colour to maintain continuity and avoid breaking up the room.

4. CLEAR THE FLOOR AND EDIT YOUR FURNITURE

Crowded rooms feel smaller. Removing just one unused or oversized piece of furniture can dramatically improve the sense of space. When selecting new items, choose pieces scaled appropriately for the room. For example, apartment-sized sofas and slim-profile accent chairs offer comfort without overwhelming the layout.

5. CHOOSE FURNITURE THAT FEELS VISUALLY LIGHT

Open, airy furniture helps extend sightlines and keeps a small room from feeling boxed in. Great options include:

- Glass or acrylic coffee tables
- Dining tables with slim silhouettes
- Chairs with visible legs rather than skirting
- Clear resin pieces for modern spaces
- These elements allow the eye to travel through the room, creating a more spacious feel.
- Keep patterns and decor simple

Bold patterns and heavy textures can dominate a small room. Opt for subtle prints, minimal accessories and cohesive colour palettes to maintain a sense of harmony and openness. One or two statement pieces can shine more effectively when the rest of the room feels balanced.

Maximizing a small space doesn't mean compromising on style. With the right combination of colour, light, furniture and thoughtful design choices, any room can feel brighter, larger and more inviting.

Have fun experimenting and creating a home that works beautifully for you!