

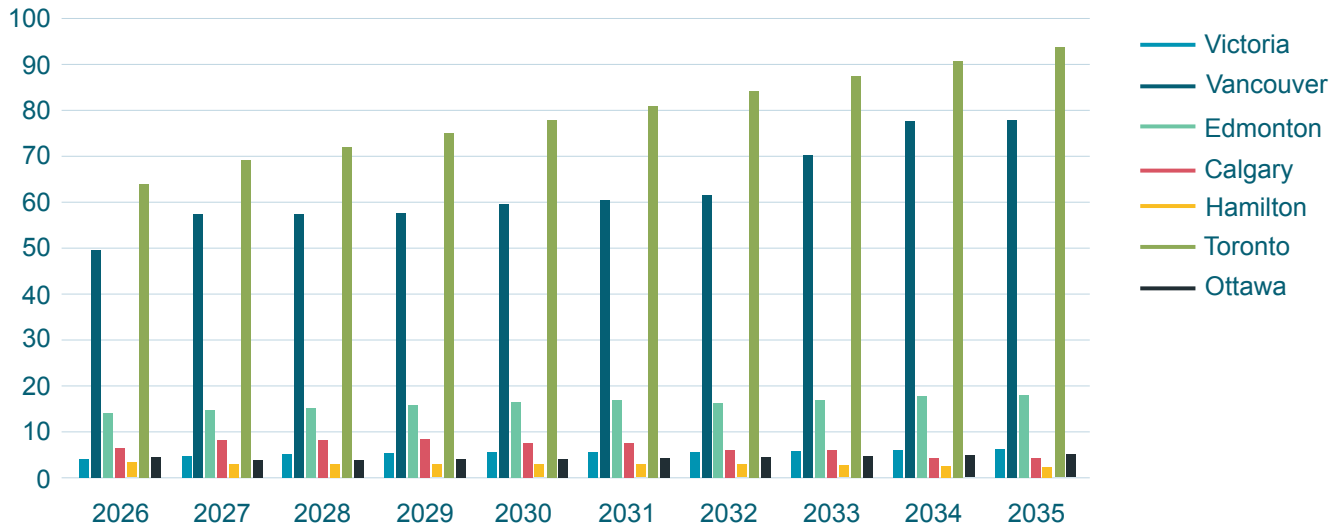
Executive Summary



Canada is under pressure to build more housing, but how that housing is delivered matters. While we race to meet our nation’s housing deficit, thousands of sound single-family homes are being simultaneously demolished in growing cities even as housing shortages deepen, construction waste piles up, and embodied carbon is lost. Following the Home Relocation and Repurposing Program (HRRP) model developed by Renewal Development, this report examines a different path: relocating and repurposing existing homes that would otherwise be demolished, then delivering them as renewed housing for communities in need. The study focuses on seven urban centres – Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Toronto, and Ottawa – and asks whether the HRRP model can function as a practical, affordable, and scalable housing strategy in Canada. It concludes that the opportunity is real, but conditional. The model is technically feasible in all seven cities, and in the right circumstances it can lower costs, reduce waste, preserve embodied carbon, and expand housing supply more quickly than conventional construction.

To assess the opportunity, the study combined demolition forecasting, public housing data, interviews with industry and housing representatives, technical and policy review, and comparative costing against modular and stick-frame construction. The findings show that the model is technically feasible in all seven cities, but the strength of the opportunity varies significantly by market. Success depends on more than whether a house can physically be moved. It depends on whether there is enough reliable supply, whether homes can be moved through dense urban environments without excessive delay and cost, whether projects remain financially viable after coordination costs are included, and whether recipient communities determine that relocated homes fit their housing needs, infrastructure capacity, and long-term priorities.

On supply, the opportunity is substantial. Across the seven target cities, roughly 90,000 single-family homes are forecast to be demolished over the next decade. Vancouver and Toronto stand out as the strongest and most sustained source markets. Edmonton also shows meaningful long-term potential. Calgary, Ottawa, and Victoria appear viable but more limited, while Hamilton is the weakest stand-alone market. The study uses a conservative, industry-informed assumption that about 20 per cent of homes slated for removal may be suitable for relocation after accounting for quality and moveability. However, it is important not to overstate the findings. Potential supply is not the same as deliverable supply. Route constraints, structural conditions, permitting, timing, transport complexity, and project economics all reduce the number of homes that can actually be secured, moved, and reused.



Number of homes estimated eligible for relocation annually across the seven urban centres (2026-2035)

On demand, study findings show strong regional need, especially in First Nations communities across British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. There is clear potential to redirect homes from urban demolition markets to communities facing serious housing shortages. However, that does not mean demand can be assumed community by community. Housing decisions depend on Nation-led assessment of fit, including housing form, cultural suitability, land availability, servicing, infrastructure capacity, financing, governance, and local planning priorities. The key finding is that there is a strong basis for further development of the model, not that every community will want or be ready to receive relocated homes.

The technical findings point in the same direction: the model works, but friction matters. Home relocation remains legally and physically possible in all seven cities, yet utility coordination, fragmented permitting, tree protection, escorts, traffic restrictions, and shrinking move corridors can all add cost and delay. The report identifies 21 structural moving companies across the seven urban centres, showing that specialized capacity exists but remains limited. Conditions also vary by city. For example, Calgary provides a detailed municipal Playbook guiding relocations, while Vancouver and Ottawa appear to offer faster permitting than other jurisdictions. At the same time, interviews with house moving companies indicate that coordination costs and administrative hurdles can make otherwise viable moves uneconomical.

The policy framework is fragmented across federal, provincial, and municipal levels and does not actively prioritize relocation over demolition. Some existing policies support the model indirectly. Federal housing, climate, and waste-diversion objectives align with preserving existing housing stock, and tax rules can benefit homeowners

who sell or donate homes for relocation. At the local level, measures such as refundable demolition deposits, variable tipping fees, and other incentives in cities like Vancouver and Victoria can improve the economics of relocation and give developers a clearer reason to consider it. At the same time, tree bylaws, oversized-load permits, utility protocols, and inconsistent treatment of relocated homes under building codes can add cost, delay, and uncertainty. Provincial policy direction toward faster housing approvals also creates resistance to any initiative seen to potentially slow redevelopment, even where such initiatives like relocation could deliver housing and environmental benefits.

Financially, the study shows that relocated homes can compare well with both modular and stick-frame construction. Based on the report's standardized assumptions, relocated homes are estimated to cost about 4.5 per cent less than modular construction and 19.8 per cent less than stick-frame construction. The report also estimates break-even for an HRRP-style operation at about 11 homes per year. Recent project experience suggests relocated homes can move from securing a house to occupancy in six to twelve months, comparable to CMHC-reported average construction timelines of 11.3 months from foundation to occupancy. That said, the economics remain highly sensitive to transport mode, distance, route complexity, permitting, utility coordination, and receiving-site conditions. Multiple-home moves, standardized retrofit scopes, and barge transport where available improve the economics significantly.

The environmental case is also compelling. Demolishing a sound home does not just remove housing stock; it destroys material value and releases embodied carbon. The report estimates that an average 1,300 square foot wood-frame bungalow contains about 49 metric tonnes of building materials and at least 23 metric tonnes of embodied carbon. Relocating and renewing these homes preserves much of that value while avoiding landfill disposal and some of the emissions associated with manufacturing and transporting new materials.

Overall, the strongest opportunities appear to be in Vancouver, Toronto, and Edmonton. Calgary, Ottawa, and Victoria remain promising but more conditional. Hamilton appears least attractive as a stand-alone market. In general, relocating and repurposing existing homes is a viable strategy to support affordable housing objectives when undertaken at scale, particularly where certain policy barriers can be addressed. Canada does not need to rely only on the linear paradigm of demolition and new construction. In many cases, one of the best housing opportunities is a home that has already been built.