

# HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT

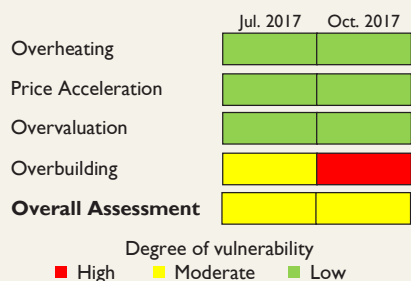
Edmonton CMA

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## Highlights

### Results Overview Edmonton CMA



- Overall, a moderate degree of vulnerability continued to be detected in Edmonton's housing market, unchanged from the previous quarter's assessment<sup>1</sup>.
- The inventory of completed and unsold new housing units moved above its threshold level and this, combined with an elevated rental apartment vacancy rate, resulted in high evidence of overbuilding.
- There was low evidence of overheating and price acceleration.
- Evidence of overvaluation remained low as prices remained below threshold levels as determined by economic and demographic fundamentals.

## HMA Overview<sup>2</sup>

As Canada's authority on housing, CMHC contributes to market stability by providing information on potential imbalances that could affect housing markets. With the HMA, CMHC offers information and analysis that can help Canadians make more informed decisions.

The HMA combines the results from a technical framework with insights gained through CMHC's Market Analysts' knowledge of local market conditions. These insights position CMHC to provide additional context and interpretation to the results of the HMA framework.

The HMA framework detects degrees of vulnerability in local housing markets by identifying imbalances.

An example would be the detection of overbuilding, a situation in which the inventory of unsold new homes accumulates due to supply outpacing demand. Such an imbalance could be resolved by an adjustment in house prices. As an example, lower prices would help resolve an excess supply imbalance by supporting stronger demand and/or reducing supply. However, other unexpected developments that do not originate from the housing market could accentuate or reduce an imbalance.

Colour codes indicate the degrees of market vulnerability. The HMA is a comprehensive framework that considers the intensity of signals of imbalances (that is, how far the indicator is from its historical average), and the persistence over

time. Generally, low intensity and persistence are associated with potentially low degree of vulnerability. As the number of intense and persistent signals increases, the associated degree of vulnerability increases.

## In Detail

### Overheating

The Housing Market Assessment (HMA) framework detected low evidence of overheating in the Edmonton housing market. The sales-to-new listings ratio (SNLR) remained well below its threshold, indicating that demand has not been outpacing supply. The seasonally adjusted SNLR averaged 46% in the second quarter

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<sup>1</sup> Results are based on data as of the end of June 2017 and local market intelligence up to the end of September 2017. CMHC continuously monitors market developments and will issue HMA updates on a quarterly basis.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed description of the framework is available in the appendix of the [National edition](#).

of 2017, down from 54% in the first quarter of 2017, and well below the framework's threshold of 85% that would be consistent with overheating. After briefly pausing in May, sales activity in the existing home market bounced back in the following three months while new listings are hovering around a nine-year high.

## Price Acceleration

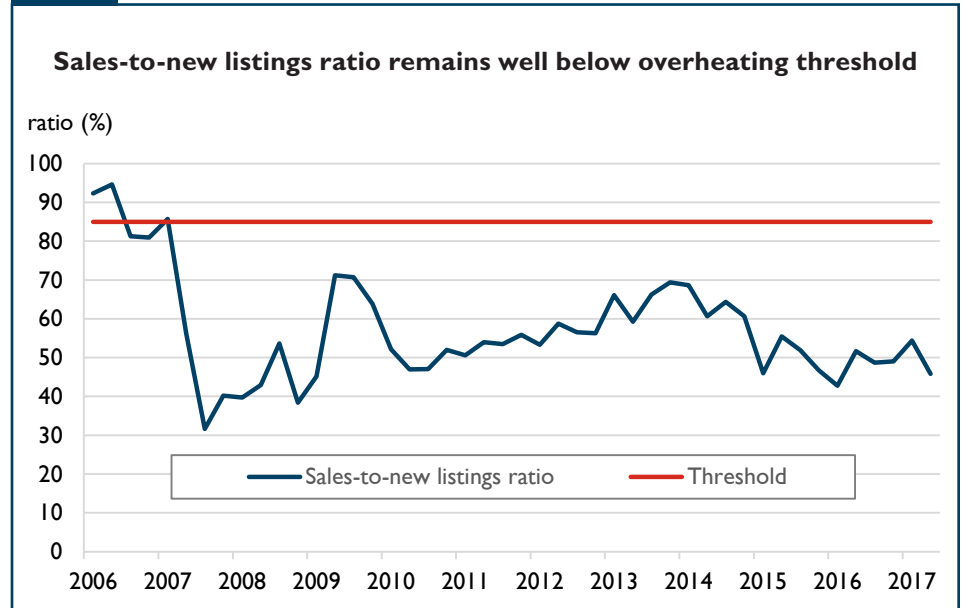
Low evidence of price acceleration continued to be detected in the Edmonton housing market. Both the New House Price Index and the Teranet-National Bank House Price Index™ indicate an absence of price acceleration in the Edmonton market. Although the MLS average price in the first half of this year was up 2.6% compared to the first half of 2016, much of the increase is due to changing sales composition. Existing home market conditions continue to favour the buyer, and future price growth is expected to remain soft as recent advances in the number of new listings have outpaced increases in sales.



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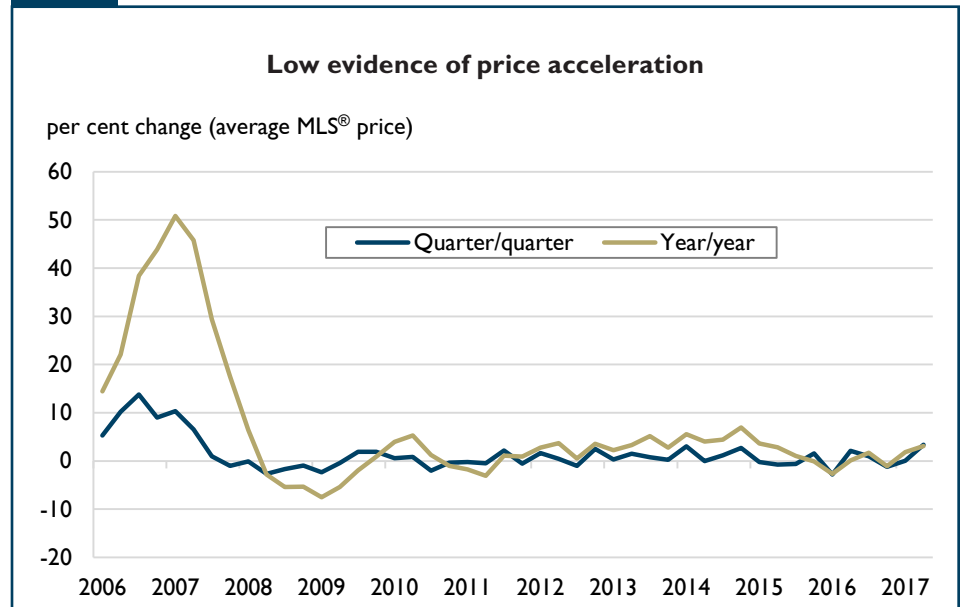
*"Evidence of overbuilding in the Edmonton housing market increased from moderate to high as imbalances in both the ownership and rental markets were detected. The inventory of completed but unsold units, mainly concentrated in the apartment sector, has now moved above the level indicating overbuilding."*

Figure 1



Source: CREA (seasonally adjusted), calculations (threshold) by CMHC  
Last data point: 2017Q2

Figure 2



Source: CREA (seasonally adjusted)  
Last data point: 2017Q2

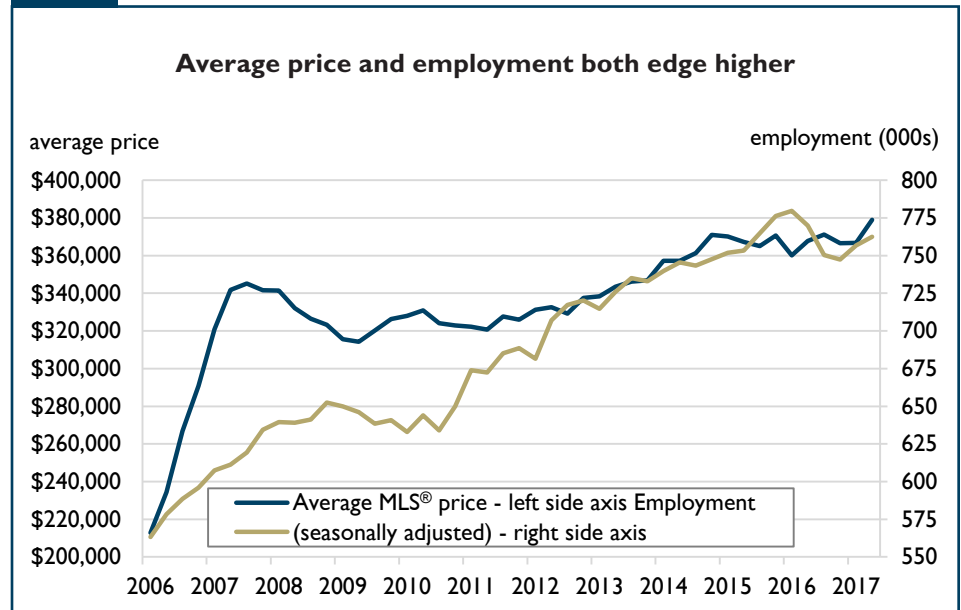
## Overvaluation

The Edmonton housing market continued to show low evidence of overvaluation. Home prices in the second quarter of this year remained below their threshold levels as determined by economic and demographic fundamentals. Demographic fundamentals improved in the second quarter with an uptick in the young adult population growth rate compared to the first quarter of 2017. Economic fundamentals remained favourable with employment moving higher for a second consecutive quarter. Average weekly earnings are also starting to trend higher.

## Overbuilding

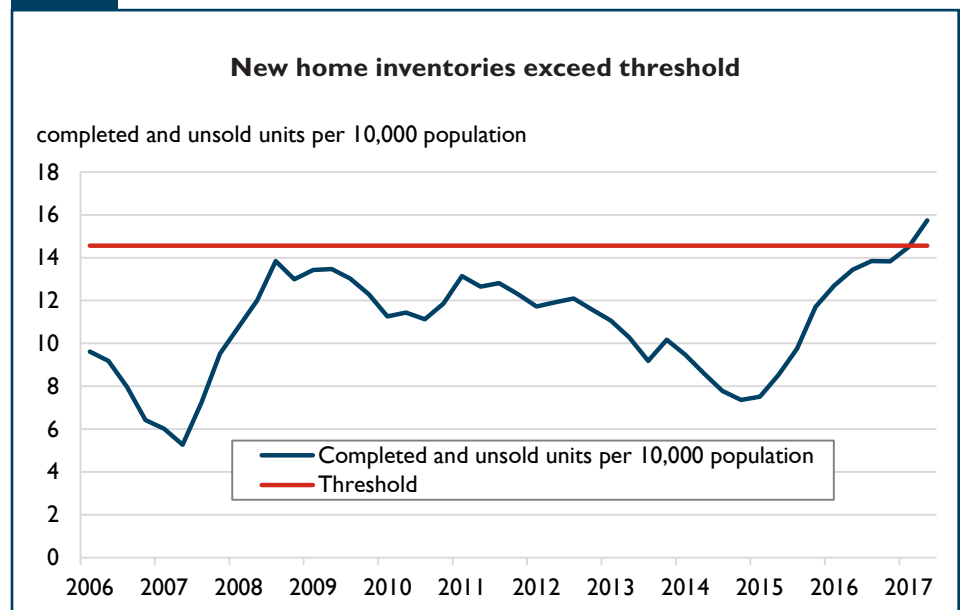
Evidence of overbuilding in the Edmonton housing market increased from moderate to high as imbalances in both the ownership and rental markets were detected. The total inventory of completed and unsold new homes has now moved above the level indicating overbuilding in the ownership market. This is primarily due to unsold row and apartment units where inventories moved higher to 1,180 units at the end of the second quarter. In the rental market, the October 2016 apartment vacancy rate of 7.1% was above its threshold level as the supply of rental apartments expanded by four per cent compared to October 2015.

Figure 3



Source: CREA (seasonally adjusted), Statistics Canada (seasonally adjusted)  
Last data point: 2017Q2

Figure 4



Source: CMHC, calculations (threshold) by CMHC, Statistics Canada  
Last data point: 2017Q2

## Overview of the Housing Market Assessment analytical framework

To obtain an accurate picture of the overall state of the housing market, it is important to consider multiple data points and lines of evidence rather than relying on just one measure or indicator.

The Housing Market Assessment (HMA) analytical framework provides a comprehensive and integrated view that relies on a combination of signals from several indicators to detect imbalances in housing markets.

Specifically, the framework considers four main factors that may provide an early indication of vulnerability in the housing market: (1) overheating (when demand outpaces supply); (2) sustained acceleration in house prices; (3) overvaluation of house prices in comparison to levels that can be supported by housing market

fundamentals (listed below); and, (4) overbuilding (when the inventory of available housing units is elevated).

For each factor, the framework tests for: (1) the incidence of signs of vulnerability, but also considers; (2) the intensity of the signals, i.e. how their magnitude compares with their historical average or how consistent they are with known or suspected house price bubbles, such as for Toronto in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and, (3) the persistence of signals over time.

Generally, a situation in which we detect few signals with low intensity or lack of persistence is associated with a low degree of vulnerability. Conversely, as the intensity, number, and/or persistence of the signals increases, so does the evidence of imbalances in the housing market.

The framework takes into account demographic, economic, and financial determinants of the housing market such as population, personal disposable income, and interest rates to detect vulnerability. The framework also takes into account developments in both resale and residential construction markets.

The framework was developed on the basis of its ability to detect vulnerable housing market conditions in historical data, such as the house price bubble Toronto experienced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The ability of the HMA to detect vulnerabilities relies on the assumption that historical relationships between prices and fundamental drivers of housing markets have not changed.

## Housing Market Assessment Factors

### Overheating

Overheating is caused by demand significantly and persistently outpacing the supply of housing. The sales-to-new listings ratio is used as an indicator to assess possible overheating conditions in the existing home market. To identify signs of overheating, the framework compares the sales-to-new listings ratio to thresholds. When demand is strong relative to supply, house prices typically grow at a faster rate. Sustained overheating on the existing home market may lead to acceleration in house prices for existing and new homes. However, as supply and demand begin to balance out, indicators of overheating (and acceleration) would begin to soften and house prices would gradually moderate.

### Acceleration in House Prices

Under balanced market conditions, house prices are expected to increase over time, in line with increases in households' cost of

living. House price acceleration occurs when the growth in house prices strengthens over time on a persistent basis. Acceleration in house prices over an extended period can cause their pace of increase to depart from the overall price inflation and eventually lead to overvaluation.

To assess acceleration in house prices, the HMA framework uses a statistical test\* that was developed to identify periods of accelerating asset prices.

### Overvaluation

Overvaluation is detected when house prices remain significantly above the levels warranted by fundamental drivers of housing markets such as income, population, and actual and expected financing costs.

The HMA framework uses combinations of different house price measures and models to estimate house price levels warranted by fundamental drivers.

The difference between observed house prices and their estimated levels consistent with housing market fundamentals allows for an estimation of the degree of over- and undervaluation. The use of different price measures and models improves the reliability of results.

### Overbuilding

Overbuilding is detected when the supply of readily available housing units significantly exceeds demand. In such a context, downward pressure on house prices would occur until the excess supply is eventually absorbed. To assess signs of overbuilding in the housing market, the HMA framework uses two indicators that relate to the supply of readily available housing units: the rental vacancy rate, and the inventory of completed and unsold housing units per 10,000 population. The HMA framework compares the current level and recent trends in these indicators with thresholds.

**Note 1:** Colour codes indicate the degree of market vulnerability. The HMA reflects a comprehensive framework that not only tests for the presence or incidence of signals of imbalances (that is, how far the indicator is from its historical average), but also considers the intensity and the persistence of these signals over time. Generally, low intensity and persistence are associated with a lower vulnerability. As the number of persistent signals increases, the evidence of an imbalance increases.

**Note 2:** Results at the CMA level are not segmented by housing type or neighbourhood. They represent an assessment of the entire CMA. However, specific CMA reports provide further detailed analysis of these markets.

**Note 3:** The colour scale extends to red only for those factors that have multiple indicators that can identify imbalances. As a result, only overvaluation and overbuilding can receive a red rating, since they are assessed using more than one indicator.

**Note 4:** To ensure the framework is as current as possible, on a regular basis, we undertake a model selection process whereby our house price models for overvaluation are tested for statistical significance at the national and CMA level. The result of this process may change the number of indicators showing vulnerability from the previous assessment.

\* See Phillips, Wu and Yu (2008) "Explosive Behaviour in the 1990s NASDAQ When Did Exuberance Escalate Asset Values?" for further details on the methodology.



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