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These 10 Alberta towns had the biggest rent increases in 2024

Brett McKay || December 24, 2024



Fort Macleod, Alta. (CTV News Calgary)

Though rent growth in Canada slowed in 2024, tenants in some Alberta municipalities saw rental costs jump by two, three, and even six times the national average.

The average price for a two-bedroom unit in Canada rose 5 per cent this year, down from 8 per cent in 2023, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporations (CMHC).

The rental markets in Alberta's largest cities have cooled off slightly as well, but in many smaller towns, where dedicated rentals have never been a large part of the housing supply, the trend is going in the opposite direction.

Using data from Alberta's annual apartment vacancy and rental cost survey and CMHC rental market survey, Great West Media compared average rental prices for two-bedroom units in 75 towns and cities.

Half of the municipalities surveyed reported average rent increases of 10 per cent or more in 2024.

The town of Fort Macleod had the largest year-over-year increase in average rent, with prices in 2024 up 37 per cent compared to 2023, or \$349 more per month.

Valleyview and Vulcan recorded the second and third highest average rent increases, with 35 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively.

Fort Macleod Mayor Brent Feyter said that parallel to the upward trend in rental costs is a significant growth curve in the local economy and related population changes.

“In the last three to five years, industry in Fort McCloud has really established itself,” he said.

“I think that is probably the biggest driver we're seeing. I would say the demographic of our town is changing from more of an aging community to quite a vibrant and younger community.”

With Lethbridge only a half-hour away, Fort Macleod is also becoming home to more people who have trouble finding a place in the city, Feyter said.

“As the housing needs in Lethbridge are a bit in short supply as well, then I think you start seeing people move out a little bit,” he said.

The average rent in Lethbridge increased by 26 per cent in the last year, the fourth largest increase among municipalities surveyed, and the only city in the top ten.

Behind Lethbridge are Strathmore, Carstairs, and Claresholm, where the average rents rose by 25 per cent, 22 per cent, and 20 per cent.

Sundre's rent spike hasn't been as dramatic as in Fort Macleod, up 19 per cent in 2024, but the story behind it is much the same.

Steady commercial and industrial development over the past five to six years has gradually filled the already limited rental properties in Sundre, Mayor Richard Warnock.

“Which is great for our town to get a better percentage base of commercial-industrial on the tax base,” but also drives rental prices skyward.

“When you have zero vacancy, the prices go up. We don't want to see that, of course...but it is the reality,” Warnock said.

The lack of available housing also creates added difficulties for the town in attracting other in-need professionals, such as doctors, nurses, and other medical staff, Warnock said.

Two dedicated rental projects are expected to be finished by mid-2025, which he said will add about 30 new apartments and will likely have a big impact on demand, he said.

Smokey Lake had the ninth largest percentage increase in average rent in 2024 with 18 per cent, followed by Penhold in tenth place, where rent was 17 per cent more than the previous year.