

# Bob Ossowski

Councillor Candidate in the City of Barrie, Ward 2  
Simcoe Region

*The following answers were provided by the candidate in response to [a letter sent by the Toronto Society of Architects on September 20, 2022](#) outlining three questions related to issues of the built environment. Answers have been copied and pasted into this page for clarity and ease of access, but all answers are verbatim and no changes or edits have been made.*

**Q1: Housing is a fundamental human right, and yet an increasing number of residents across the Greater Toronto Area are struggling to pay rent or find an affordable place to live. What policies and actions do you believe need to be implemented to address this crisis?**

**A:** My first policy would be to prioritize the building of affordable housing. To achieve this I would put the brakes on high-rise for profit condo development. The priority would be the approval of construction of affordable rental and affordable units that could be sold to families. These units would have a requirement of being offered at cost plus 10%. Development fees would be waived or reduced where feasible.

I would push to have some housing built on municipal land. About 30 years ago a charity I was involved with built a 156 unit apartment building on a ½ acre parcel land it received from the City of Toronto. Gower Park was a well-designed building and a model for what could be done in the future. 50% of units were rented at market rent (at the low end of the price range) 25% rent geared to income and 25% subsidized rent for people on social assistance. This is also an alternative to purely social housing which lumps individuals on social assistance together. We need mixed communities. Communities of people on social assistance, ODSP, low income wage earners and middle class families.

I would also implement a program to encourage homeowners to build legal secondary suites. This program would shelter them from property tax increases for a set number of years. Home owners could also be encouraged to add a floor to their homes. Building up is cheaper than building out. Single story homes, in most cases, can support a second level.

A policy that I would also implement is that if developers want to build they must redevelop existing developments. We need to reduce urban sprawl. We have areas of Barrie that have been zoned and developed as retail. Large parking lots and single story big box retail stores. I would like to see developers redesign these so that

the bottom level is retail/office space/big box stores and 3 to 4 stories of housing. Zoning changes would be made. People can live and work in the same area. We also can better use land and reduce environmental impact. We would have to work to speed up the approval process. It is my understanding that in Seoul, South Korea, the environmental assessment and building permits can be approved in as little as 28 days.

**Q2: The design, construction and operation of our built environment accounts for nearly 40% of energy related carbon emissions, contributing to the ongoing climate crisis affecting us today. What do you believe needs to be prioritised to reduce carbon emissions within the built environment?**

**A:** I am a proponent of building housing faster. To reduce the environmental impact and reduce emissions we should be reducing the use of concrete and the intensity of construction. To do this we would build low rise buildings of 5 to 6 stories. This way the natural tree canopy can shelter most of the building.

Construction should also be slab on grade. The structure of the building would be made of sustainable materials i.e.: wood. The panels can be sub assembled off site reducing delays caused by weather. This would also create employment. I understand that one or more companies are doing this already in the City of Toronto. With improvements in techniques costs and build time can be reduced.

In the City of Barrie there are many single family homes that were built without a foundation and sit on grade. In Simcoe County the extraction of gravel threatens the purest water in the world. Reducing the need for concrete reduces the need for aggregates.

**Q3: In towns and cities, so much of life happens in the shared public spaces—in our parks, libraries and streets. How can we ensure these civic spaces achieve design excellence in their initial conception and construction, and that they are properly maintained so they may continue to serve future generations?**

**A:** Civic spaces need to be designed to reflect on the past and the future direction of a city. They should fit the character of the place or neighborhood and look like they belong there. The future should also have a connection to the past. Civic spaces should be designed to be accessible by all whether by public transit, automobile, by foot or cycling.

They should also be affordable, within the budget of a city. Public spaces should also be capable of serving multiple functions and also usable in four seasons. When we are talking about outdoor public spaces such as parks I am a proponent of having public restroom facilities that are capable of being open all year.

The design should also take into account maintenance and have a capability to be upgraded in the future.

Materials should be easy to clean and maintain. An issue that is faced in many urban areas is 'tagging' with graffiti. Well lite areas help add to security.

I believe that structures should not be constructed as 'disposable' buildings. Design should take into account that they will be permanent.