

Cindy Waters

Councillor Candidate in the Town of Bracebridge, Ward 1
Muskoka 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: The “built environment” considers the health of those who live and work in the areas included in any discussions: mental health, physical health, environmental health and economic health need to be part of the discussion as we build toward housing citizens in all communities. Muskoka is currently a seasonal / SECOND home for many people. Yet there are local citizens who do not have appropriate housing. The economy in Muskoka is effected enormously by the visits of those who have second homes here. Keeping the health of the area in good shape is a balancing act to say the least. We need and want people to visit Muskoka, and we also need to work on levelling out the peaks and valleys in the times they come here. There really is no short answer to the problem we face. But I think we can build toward a sustainable future by holding events that celebrate the arts during the months of April and November which are our slowest times.

Some properties that are now vacant, or becoming vacant in the town of Bracebridge could be utilized to build housing for people, but they need to be structures that are accessible and healthy places to live. There is a growing list of properties as we move the library and the arena. I think we need to encourage partnerships with governments and business to build in co-operation. We’ve a great example at McVittie Place. That kind of building where bigger apartments can be included for sale in a co-operative environment is a thought we may wish to consider.

Transportation has long been a problem in the north, Bracebridge included. A dependable train schedule would be welcomed. And at the train station, there is a vacant lot that could hold an apartment building. The local “Wave” public transit does pass by there as well. Housing would be a good addition right there.

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: We need to assist with the application process for those needing to access programs like energy audits in existing homes and business structures. Sometimes the application is never filled out because people are so intimidated by them. We need to have someone in the public service who will sit with people and help them to go through the steps. That person would need to understand building and energy needs. Can the three levels of government agree on a lending program to get the work done?

So far as new builds go, the province is responsible for the building code and our town’s building officials should be people who are well experienced in the building trades.

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: It isn’t one person’s idea that can conceive all of the aspects for “design excellence”. At the same time, too many hands in a project can be troublesome. Looking to other communities that have managed their planning well should be visited and as people consider designs, they need to be present in the space as they consider wants and needs. When they stand in that space, they need to contemplate every kind of weather; human ability or disability; location and more. It isn’t enough to give the job to someone else. Council committees and municipal planners need to be active participants in the design and build plans.