

September 21, 2022

Toronto Society of Architects, Questions and Answers

1. 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?

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, “Canada has recognized that adequate housing is a fundamental human right by ratifying the ICESCR and has agreed to take appropriate steps towards realizing the rights set out in it.” This ‘Right’, while established in official documents, needs to be implemented by higher levels of government first and foremost meaning at the Federal, Provincial, and County/Regional levels. Municipal administrations tends to implement what trickles down while City Councils simply wring their hands in total frustration.

As the potential Councillor representing residents of Ward 4 in the City of Barrie, I am no magician nor do I have the power to enact any schemes by myself that I could possibly dream up. It is best to address the question of housing availability and rent affordability in Council as a whole.

2. 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?

Urban environments are known to be heat islands with their own micro-climates, due for the most part to the covering of the landscape with impervious surfaces such as roof scapes, parking areas, pavements and sidewalks not to mention building size and structure congestion.

Emissions from natural gas heating and vehicles in our municipality is a very tiny input into the micro-climate equation of small to medium sized cities. The European Union has declared Natural Gas as "Green Energy". No need for changes there. Most vehicular emissions in Barrie emanate from the 6 lanes of traffic on the provincially owned Highway 400 that cuts right through Barrie. Soon there will be 8 lanes of traffic. The City has no control over that.

To reduce the increase in micro-climate variability, less intensification of development, lower densification, more green space and adopting a vigorous policy of tree planting on both public land and private land is necessary. Such policy while deemed necessary is completely opposite to the ways various governments approach the issues about housing. But they would bring a measure of relief for micro-climate change. If only I had the wisdom of Solomon.

3. 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?

The majority of municipal life does not happen in shared public spaces. It happens in homes, in shopping areas, recreation centres, parking lots, restaurants, transportation hubs, commercial areas and in work places (to name a few). Meanwhile, parks are aesthetically pleasing additions to any urban area and should be expanded. Libraries are wonderful for those who like reading hard print but as media has/is changing to electronically dominated format, the libraries need to adapt or they'll be (sadly) out of business. As for streets, they're paved with asphalt and are a necessary evil in our modern society. Upkeep and replacement of infrastructure is the bailiwick of the City Administration, not the City Council.

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