

Evan Sambasivam

Councillor Candidate in the City of Toronto, Ward 8
City of Toronto

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:

- Increase the stocks of supportive and subsidized housing. This will require funding from the provincial and/or federal governments. In the case of supportive housing, they will actually save money due to the reduction of people experiencing homelessness in hospital beds and jail cells, reduce the mental health burden, and increase the likelihood that they will seek gainful employment.
- Abolish the yellow belt & allow more homes to be built as of right. In neighbourhoods, this means duplexes, triplexes, multiplexes, townhouses, and low-rises where single-family homes existed before.
- Review, revise, and/or remove mid-rise design guidelines. Arbitrary height restrictions and angular planes reduce capacity, increase costs, and reduce energy efficiency - all in the name of preventing shadows. That is not an equitable trade-off.
- Respect the mandate of Housing Now, and follow the benchmarks set out in HousingTO. We have good targets in place, and we have respected experts at our disposal. City Council has not made a good-faith effort to meet the goals of HousingTO, and councillors routinely ignore the recommendations of Housing Now. These can be viewed more as culture changes than policy changes.

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've endorsed EnvironmentalDefence's plan which can be found [here](#). Incentives for retrofitting buildings/homes, prioritizing urban infill over sprawl, building complete streets, and creating comprehensive transit networks that reduce car reliance are all part of the solution. With respect to housing, urban infill [provides the greatest net benefit](#) to carbon reduction.

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: With respect to design excellence, I have seen discussions surrounding the appointment of a City Architect, which I find intriguing. With respect to proper maintenance, Toronto is long overdue for the creation of new revenue streams. Basic city services are not being provided, let alone the services that allow us to thrive. I want to create an Economic Impact Office to conduct cost-benefit analysis on all city projects to ensure that we are spending resources on projects that provide surplus value, and cutting wasteful expenses. In light of that, I find it likely that Toronto will need to raise property taxes to adequately fund projects.