

Ausma Malik

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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: Housing is a human right. Housing in Toronto has for too long been treated as a tool to build wealth for big developers and the wealthy. The time for this is over. What's needed at City Council is a major shift in the balance of power and the political will to get the job done.

Housing affordability is the biggest issue affecting our neighbours. I hear about these challenges with housing every day when knocking on doors in our community. People are paying a huge portion of their monthly income on rent: they may be picking up second jobs to pay the rent, living with roommates to save money, or staying at home with family for longer and longer. We know this is not sustainable or fair in our City.

Our City must make the best possible use of our public lands for deeply affordable, rental and non-profit housing. This means identifying more opportunities for City purchases of land to build new affordable housing, as well as maintaining our current stock. We should explore tools such as raising the vacant homes tax and ending exclusionary zoning.

I am a real voice for renters. I will fight to expand rent supplements and the rent bank to prevent evictions and keep people in their homes. We need to strengthen the RentSafeTO program to protect tenants and ensure apartment maintenance standards are met.

Council needs strong advocates focused on the enforcement of Toronto's short-term rental regulations, with the goal of returning the city's ghost hotel inventory to the housing market. We also need to increase the City's vacant homes tax to discourage housing speculation. I plan to continue to advocate for real rent control to the

provincial government so renters have the protections they deserve.

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 committed to being a champion for a green and sustainable city. We must seriously address and invest in combatting emissions from our buildings. We must work to prioritize building retrofits and achieving the latest green efficiency standards for new builds. Fuel switching must be a priority for home heating and water heating, ending our reliance on natural gas and switching to electric air pump space heating and water heating. We need to ensure we are on track to achieve our TransformTO target of net zero emissions from all buildings by 2030. We must also protect our heritage buildings and the character of our neighbourhoods.

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: My focus will always be on ensuring we invest in our shared spaces: this means that we commit to planning in collaboration with community to hear and be responsive to their needs in the design process. Changes in the planning process such as balancing the need for dog areas in our parks with the need for children's spaces and green space make a big difference to ensure a diverse range of park users feel welcome. Thoughtful design is key.

I commit to being a voice for creating green, public accessible spaces and ensuring our facilities are properly maintained year-round. We also need to invest in our community services, like libraries and childcare centres, and explore more opportunities to expand capacity. I am opposed to wasteful public-private partnerships and will fight to ensure that new projects and maintenance services remain as much as possible in public hands and accountable to residents of the City. We also need to preserve and protect the character of our heritage buildings for future generations to enjoy.