TSA

TORONTO SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

September 22, 2022

RE: Local Elections 2022 | Position on Issues of the Built Environment

Dear TSA,

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?

Land value tax offers an opportunity to stabilize and simplify the property assessment model by only taxing the land, not the structures on the property, to improve the incentive for upzoning on an existing property

The land value tax, paired with a vacancy tax, would encourage upzoning in low density, underused and undeveloped lots; and, under the Residential Tenancy Act, any property taxes that are reduced by 2.34% will automatically be applied to a rent reduction of 2.34%.

Additionally:
- Zoning reforms to encourage mixed-use and mixed-income spaces for residential and commercial activities, and the co-location of essential social and business development services.
- Amendments to the Official Plan to limit any stylistic or heritage designations that would impede the construction of housing during an emergency or crisis (i.e the current housing crisis, encampments, etc)
- An infusion of mixed accessible, inclusive and universal design principles into the built environment to maximize the usability of space by the greatest number of users
- Legalize rooming houses to create a formal housing ladder for young renters
- Creation of RentSmart system to centralize registration and tracking of rooming houses

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?

First, we can incorporate agritectural practices allow architects to incorporate plants and wildlife that thrive in urban areas into their designs. By doing so, urban environments and biodiversity will be restored in harmony, such as the value of pollination and bees.

For example:
- Create rooftop, ground-level, or underground commercial/vertical farms in residential developments
- Access to plaza-like setting for botanical gardens, urban parks conservatories, urban agriculture, and seasonal farmers markets in order to extend the growing season and reduce chances of food insecurity
- Incorporate urban tree canopies, the use of Right-of-Way in residential areas, green roofs, and various forms of urban landscaping into streetscape and vertical community redevelopment to create spaces for new trees, perennial plants, and flowers.

Second, we can begin by redeveloping abandoned industrial sites into micro, small and medium sized "smart buildings" (efficient buildings that offer wireless technology, heating, air conditioning, and safety features).

We can transform some of these spaces into co-working facilities for researchers in materials science so they can develop modular, green, or bioenergy systems for generating electricity (The ZooShare Biogas Project) or nano-reinforced biomaterials, such as hempcrete derived from cellulose nanocrystals.

Lastly, we involve industry and education systems:
- Reviewing waste management systems to correct design flaws in storage, recycling, and repurposing
- Develop sustainable food waste management systems in food banks, culinary education programs, restaurants and bars throughout the city in collaboration with food and beverage producers, retailers, and service providers.

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?

As Mayor, I would achieve design excellence in their initial conception and construction using social procurement for post-secondary institutions and arts and design programs to apply directly to community projects.

For long-term maintenance, the system would be used to evolve architectural guidelines and create harmony between architecture, urban design, and visual art employment pathways that grow environmental stewardship.