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Toronto Mayoral Candidate

The following answers were provided by the candidate in response to [a letter sent by the Toronto Society of Architects on May 16, 2023](#) outlining four 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: Ana fundamentally believes that an individual cannot succeed in life without a stable roof over their head.

As you may already know, I was pushing to build more affordable housing when it was unpopular. As an immigrant of a working-class family, I know first hand of the struggles one faces when they arrive in the country. I come from a working-class family and when we came to Canada many decades ago, my parents could afford to purchase a home. That would not be the case if we were to have moved here today.

When everyone told me it couldn't be done, I showed up in Ottawa and I didn't take no for an answer. When housing wasn't "popular", I was the only person talking about it and making it a priority on the City's agenda. We need to urgently house residents experiencing homelessness and connect them with the supports that they need. We need to protect those who are at risk of losing their homes, and protect existing affordable and rental homes.

I have a strong record as a housing champion for the City of Toronto having served residents for 12 years as a City Councillor and served for 5 of those years as Deputy Mayor and Chair of Planning and Housing.

In those twelve years, I brought Toronto back into the housing business by:

- Increasing Toronto's affordable housing capital budget from \$96 million to over \$4 billion;
- Creating a \$24 billion housing strategy approved by Council;
- Securing a fully-funded \$2.6 billion capital repair plan for social housing;
- Updating the definition of affordable housing and affordable rental to better match Toronto's real costs;
- Pushing for the creation of the vacant home tax to get more units occupied by renters or owners;
- Expanding housing options to address the "missing middle" of affordable housing - options between

single-family homes and apartment buildings - which are critical for middle-income Torontonians;

- Getting planning and zoning regulations changed to build more housing; and
- Starting new initiatives like the rapid housing program that has resulted in new supportive housing being built for those who are homeless.

As Mayor, I will:

- Provide rental assistance to women and gender-diverse people who are at risk of losing their homes as a result of gender-based violence.
- Hire 30 staff with a mandate to support renters and fight unjustified evictions in Toronto.
- Temporarily freeze new development applications that would demolish rental apartment buildings for reasons other than health and safety, for up to one year while undertaking a city-wide review.
- Build 285,000 new homes in the next decade, with a set target and guarantee that 20% of all new homes built - a minimum of 57,000 homes - are purpose-built rental.
- Invest \$10 million dollars to accelerate work, and unlock funding from the federal government to help non-profit and co-op organizations who play an important role operating affordable housing, but face far too many barriers to do that work.
- Align city departments, streamline planning approvals, champion transformative planning regulations to build “missing middle” housing and lead a mayor’s campaign to incentivize densification.
- Instruct the city manager to publish quarterly public updates on our progress on housing commitments.

I will also create a Mayor’s initiative to incentivize intensification, including “missing middle” housing of medium scale that meets needs between condos and single-family homes. To accomplish this I will champion planning, zoning, and land use reforms including:

- Legalizing walk-up apartments on secondary transit routes across Toronto;
- Upzoning avenues to be “as of right” for 8 to 12 storeys;
- Relaxing “Shadow Guidelines” which have, for too long, arbitrarily increased the cost of building in Toronto, and reduced the number of units that could be built;
- Introduce “Rental Zoning” to ensure that there are sites zoned exclusively for rental;
- Prioritize approvals for development applications that include rental homes; and
- Reduce office replacement requirements when buildings are demolished or converted in exchange for affordable housing.

With multiplexes across Toronto, walk-up apartments on secondary transit routes, and upzoning on avenues these changes will help build many types of “missing middle” homes in neighbourhoods. All of these changes would be implemented by working closely with local Councillors and communities to preserve neighbourhood connectivity

and create more housing options.

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: Environmental policy is connected to everything we do as a city, here's what I commit to do as Mayor:

I support the steps we're taking as a City to reach Net Zero by 2040. We know buildings and vehicles are largely responsible for the City's direct emissions.

The City is responsible for about 5% of Toronto-wide GHG emissions, and the rest will require us to work with all levels of government, the private sector, non-profits, and individuals.

The most effective way to reach our climate goals is to get Torontonians out of their cars and onto public transit. To that end, as Mayor, I will:

- Focus attention on improving transit to drive ridership and build housing in the city. Having less people in vehicles will substantially reduce carbon emissions
- Continue to champion repairing our city's existing social housing, which has a positive impact on the environment as I did 12 years on Council and as Chair of Planning and Housing
- Continue to set standards for innovative building practices that are sustainable while working with universities, colleges, unions and building trades to create a Centre for Housing and Environmental Innovation.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't include my plan to expand Bike Share locations especially in the suburbs. As Mayor, I will work with Toronto Parking Authority to fast-track the five-year expansion and focus on the following key areas:

- Ensuring Bike Share coverage across the WATERfront Trail from the furthest West end to the furthest East end of Toronto;
- Incorporating Bike Share into the Etobicoke corridor park;
- Increasing the number of Bike Share stations across Scarborough, and North York; and,
- Bring Bike Share to the Toronto Islands so residents and visitors can access it

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: Our shared spaces are vital to our community and level the playing field.

Libraries are more than just books—they're hubs for communities in every corner of our city, they provide access to technology and the internet for all Torontonians, and they served as vital food distribution hubs for food banks during the pandemic. They also are hubs where community members can borrow a Museum & Arts Pass to visit attractions across the city free of charge such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, Ripley's Aquarium, the Toronto Zoo etc.

As Mayor, I would ensure our libraries would not experience any cuts.

The Arts are what make our city the vibrant, thriving hub that it is, but arts and cultural communities were particularly hard hit by the pandemic. The full recovery of our culture sector and the success of Toronto's artists will improve the quality of life of all Torontonians. My plan will expand access to the arts for residents and equitably support arts and culture in every corner of Toronto so our city can remain a vibrant international artistic and cultural hub

In order to increase the equity, opportunity and vision for Toronto's arts and cultural communities, as Mayor, I will:

- Make arts and culture more accessible for children and families by permanently funding the Toronto Public Library's Museum + Arts Pass with \$2 million;
- Unlock underutilized spaces for cultural use - giving property tax breaks to those who rent their spaces at below market rates to arts organizations;
- Expand city investment in arts and culture beyond the downtown - measuring cultural investment impact to ensure equitable distribution city-wide; and
- Creating a 30-year cultural infrastructure plan for the City of Toronto, in addition to implementing the 2020-2023 Public Art Strategy.

I have a long track record of doing that as a councillor - in my ward, we improved nearly every park with additions like new benches, new grass, better playgrounds, outdoor kitchens, and new splash pads.

As Toronto grows, I am committed to making life better for kids and families. Play spaces like splash pads and playgrounds play an important role in growth and development for children of all backgrounds and abilities.

As Mayor, I would accelerate improvements and construction for splash pads, sport fields and playgrounds across Toronto as kids and families can't wait, which is why these upgrades would be moved to the front of the line.

Parents are not only bringing their kids and equipment to sport fields, but also bags of dirt to fill holes so their kids don't get hurt as they play. This is simply unacceptable. As we build more affordable homes, we need to make sure we're bringing services to residents in their communities. Playgrounds, splash pads and sport fields have, for too long, been an afterthought. They are critical infrastructure for young people to thrive, and I want to make sure kids and families have adequate play structures in every corner of our city - whether they're in Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, or right downtown.

Q4: Toronto's modern architectural heritage is at risk, with both the redevelopment of Ontario Place and the potential demolition of the Ontario Science Centre jeopardizing some of the most important architectural landmarks in the country. Other modern buildings, including city-owned properties, have been left to decay with inadequate maintenance. What measures will you take as Mayor to protect, preserve and revitalize our city's 20th century built legacy?

A: As architects, I know you'll be as passionate as I am to properly maintain our historical architectural gems of buildings across the city which adds so much to the Toronto canvass.

I wanted to ensure my position on Ontario Science Centre and Ontario Place was also clear. The main reason I called on the provincial government to move the science centre to Ontario Place was to build 5,000 new homes, including 1,500 affordable homes on the city-owned land on the Science Centre parking lot and the land outside the ravine. I want the original and historical building gem that currently houses the Science Centre to be preserved and updated into a community centre for residents that live in the new homes being built and surrounding area.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to respond to your questions and I look forward to meeting you and your members during the campaign at community events and at the doors.