

RE: By-Election for Mayor 2023 | Position on Issues of the Built Environment

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?

Toronto, like the rest of the world needs a new model of housing, a sort of "stepping stone home" to allow more people the ability to tread the waters of homeownership without drowning in debt. A shift in focus towards facilitating a smoother transition from renter to homeowner is central to this vision. By expanding supply, the pool of homeowners who were formerly renters could broaden, nurturing a more empathetic breed of landlords. These landlords, having personally experienced the pressures of renting, would be less likely to resort to renovictions, instead embracing stable rent increases, which inevitably contributes to a healthier housing market. This can only be achieved by automating as much of the construction of the affordable housing supply as possible.

Furthermore, the economic stability provided by home ownership offers an enhanced degree of belonging and stability. Knowing that you own a home can benefit the outlook of an individual or family by giving them the confidence to dig deep and take more risks to help grow their communities in only ways that they can. Our city needs a healthy mix of renters and owners, with more emphasis on renter to owner transition. Many owners of buildings often become renters to help fund their ownership goals, and these renters are often seen as more caring and understanding of the realities faced by renters because they were once renters too.

To make all this work, we need to expand the capacity of our housing industry in three ways. First, we need to add capacity to the production of housing by leveraging Building Automation and Off-Site Construction technologies to streamline the production of floors/ceiling and walls along with volumetric construction options. We also need to re-evaluate and change existing building codes to offer more flexibility to address the needs of our growing population.

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?

Building Energy Use Benchmarking has made a significant impact on how we perceive and implement energy efficiency. Taking this approach a step further, we could apply similar benchmarking principles to resilience and adaptation, which has the potential to entirely transform the way we approach home retrofitting.

To achieve this, the first step involves identifying a representative building that typifies common architectural styles in a particular area. The selected building would then undergo a comprehensive retrofit, focusing on enhancing resilience and adaptation. The retrofit might include structural modifications for improved durability against extreme weather, swapping materials for better insulation and thermal resistance, and integrating sustainable energy systems.

Every detail of the retrofit would be carefully documented and analyzed - the materials used, the techniques applied, the overall expenditure, and so forth. This compiled data would serve as the foundation of our benchmarking system, offering a comparative standard for future retrofit projects. With a well-established benchmarking system, the retrofitting process for similar buildings in the region becomes streamlined and more efficient. The data gathered from the initial retrofit will provide critical insights into the most effective materials and techniques, as well as a practical estimation of costs.

For homeowners, this benchmarking system could act as a dependable guide when looking to make their homes more resilient. For contractors, this system could elevate the quality and consistency of their work. The overarching outcome is a more resilient housing stock and a more efficient, cost-effective retrofitting process.

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?

My commitment is to ensure our great city remains a place where everyone can live, work, and play comfortably and safely. Our parks, libraries, and streets are the beating heart of our city, the places where community life unfolds. To maintain and enhance these important civic spaces, we need to prioritize certain key strategies.

First and foremost, community engagement is critical. We need to listen to our fellow Torontonians, understand what they need, and ensure their voices are reflected in our designs. These are their spaces, and their insights are invaluable in helping create environments that are not just visually appealing, but also practical and meaningful.

Sustainability is another priority. Design excellence is synonymous with sustainable, eco-friendly planning. A commitment to integrating sustainable materials and elements in our designs is key, such as adding more green spaces and resilience elements such as natural shading or water capturing systems. We owe it to future generations to leave a legacy of responsible, sustainable development.

We also need to ensure universal accessibility. Every single Torontonian should be able to enjoy these spaces. There should be a commitment to ensuring that inclusive and welcoming designs are made available to all, regardless of age or ability. Furthermore, we must ensure that our constructions are of the highest quality. We don't want to create spaces that will deteriorate quickly. Investing in durable materials and skilled craftsmanship will ensure these spaces last for years to come.

And let's not forget maintenance and upgrades. The upkeep of our public spaces is a continual commitment. Regular maintenance ensures these spaces remain attractive and safe. We also need to be prepared to make upgrades as needed, so these spaces continue to serve our evolving needs. Future-proofing is also on our radar. Designers should aim to anticipate and plan for the future, creating versatile spaces that can be adapted for different uses and accommodate emerging technologies.

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?

I too value our city's architectural heritage and share your concerns about their preservation. Toronto's diverse architectural styles are reflections of our rich history and progress. Our modern landmarks play a pivotal role in shaping our city's character and cultural identity. Therefore, preservation is, indeed, a priority for my administration.

In order to protect these important structures, we need to take a comprehensive approach. We aim to reinforce our existing heritage laws to provide adequate protective status to these modern marvels. Advocacy at both provincial and federal levels is a key part of the strategy. We'll ensure that Toronto's voice is heard when our iconic structures are at risk. We understand that preserving these structures is vital not only for their historical value but also for their continued service to our communities.

There should be a focusing on education and public engagement. By fostering a deeper appreciation among Torontonians for our city's architectural heritage through engagement, we hope to inspire commitment to preservation efforts across the city. In essence, our city's modern architectural landmarks are more than just buildings; they connect us to our past, play a significant role in our present, and offer inspiration for our future. By preserving them, we also preserve Toronto's unique identity.

Climate Action - Mayoral Candidate,

Jamie Atkinson

www.jamieatkinson.ca

info@jamieatkinson.ca