

Josh Matlow

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: Nearly half Torontonians spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. My comprehensive housing plan will create great and affordable places to live. It includes:

- Changing the development process so that City Planners work with stakeholders (tenant associations, school parent councils, social service providers, business owners) at the outset to develop Community Housing & Services Plans. These comprehensive area plans will outline neighbourhood services, infrastructure and parks up front and eliminate costly, lengthy ad-hoc consultations.
- Approving nine-storey buildings as-of-right on designated avenues with no terraced step backs or “pyramid” requirements that restrict the number of units.
- Reviewing density and height limits on major arterial roads where it makes sense to accommodate more people.
- Providing options to add up to three rental units to an existing home so a homeowner can choose to age in place and open up unused space for family members or tenants. Make it faster and cheaper to get City approval with as-of-right zoning for up to four units and a dedicated team of City lawyers, architects and planners to speed up applications.
- Encouraging construction of new apartment buildings by shifting the property tax classification for these from Multi-Unit Residential to lower than Residential rates.
- Meeting or exceeding provincial density targets in all Major Transit Station Areas
- Fast tracking development applications that provide meaningful community benefits, such as affordable housing.

- Investing \$300 million in seed money to create Public Build Toronto, a new City agency that will develop affordable housing on City-owned lands. It will generate 8,250 rent-controlled market apartments and 6,750 affordable apartments, including 750 deeply affordable units for Torontonians on very low or fixed incomes.
- Doubling the number of by-law officers dedicated to investigating illegal Airbnbs and other short-term rentals.
- Advocating to the federal government to address Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) that allow for apartment buildings to be bought and sold as commodities rather than treated as people's homes.
- Investing \$51.5 million in a Tenant Support Program that will put \$50 million more into the Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition program – or MURA – to help the City buy affordable apartment buildings, establish rent control in units that get City funding, fund paralegals to fight unfair rent increases, stand up for tenant rights at the provincial level and advocate that Premier Ford bring back rent control, remove above-guideline rent increases, and crack down on fraudulent evictions and bad landlords.

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: Buildings are the largest emitters in our city. Toronto's Green Standard is the model on which we need to build new and retrofit old buildings to reduce carbon emissions. As Mayor, I will continue to support the use of Toronto's Green Standard for municipal, commercial and residential buildings in the city. I will also advocate for the use of timber buildings which create lower levels of emissions and have the benefit of being built more quickly than traditional steel buildings.

As Mayor, I will also take action to fully fund the City's Net Zero by 2040 Climate Strategy. My \$200-million annual investment will help Toronto achieve its ambitious targets by funding efforts to:

Build smarter by mandating all new large residential and commercial construction runs off electric energy by 2028.

Buildings are responsible for 58% of Toronto's emissions – the largest source of emissions in Toronto.

Retrofit existing buildings in Toronto, including switching buildings from fossil fuels to electric energy, which has the ability to run on renewable energy. This includes expanding the Tower Renewal program to encourage physical retrofits.

Move forward with a TTC ridership growth strategy that includes improved service and lower fares; build more pedestrian-friendly communities; and connect Toronto's bike lanes to make a true city-wide network.

Electrify the City's vehicle fleet, including TTC buses; require all taxis and ridesharing vehicles be electric by 2030; mandate electric charging stations in all new housing developments and install them on public land, including schools and libraries.

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 public spaces must be designed for all types of users. As Mayor, I will request staff continually review the City's Design Guidelines to ensure they are up to current leading global practices and meet the needs of residents. I will also request staff work with public space users directly to reconfigure spaces that are not meeting the needs of residents.

As Mayor I will also make sure all new developments have the services, parks and infrastructure needed for a good quality of life. My plan includes:

- Setting per-person targets for providing community services including libraries, recreation space, parks, school space, social services and affordable childcare.
- Spelling out technical assessments of transit, water and electrical capacity.
- Taking advantage of provincially mandated 4 per cent Community Benefit Charges and Development Charges, supplemented with allocations from my City Works and Community Health and Safety Funds, to ensure adequate community services and infrastructure.
- Ensuring community space in the base of new buildings in lieu of Community Benefit Charges where appropriate.

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: I oppose the demolition of iconic heritage sites, such as Ontario Place. In the case of Ontario Place, not only will heritage be destroyed, but the proposed mega spa will have a devastating impact on the environment of Ontario Place's West Island. It is a public waterfront space used by Torontonians for recreation including walking, swimming and fishing. The West Island is currently home to beavers, minks and foxes and over 170 species of birds, 15 of which are on the provincial species at-risk list. The spa development would also provide "limited opportunity" to preserve the many mature trees on the site. As Mayor, I'll refuse to negotiate with Premier Ford on the land exchange to ensure we can protect the heritage and greenspace of Ontario Place. And I'll work with the federal government to safeguard the land in public hands.

Several years ago I requested the City develop an inventory of heritage properties to enable us to issue a 60-day demolition permit delay for staff to evaluate properties and explore options. It took staff two years to even address my request, which was unacceptable as our most important heritage buildings like Stollerys and the Dominion Foundry site are demolished year over year. As Mayor, I will implement the demolition permit delay and bring heritage site protection items to Council so we can swiftly act and direct staff to preserve heritage landmarks. I will also continue to support the Heritage Grant Program and explore options with staff to incentivize heritage owners to upkeep our heritage assets.