

Mark Saunders

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: Toronto is in housing chaos because City Council has failed to create the housing we desperately need. People are left to live on the street or in encampments because RGI and supportive units are not being built. We need to build 285,000 new units in the next ten years - that's the equivalent of close to 1,000 new apartment buildings. Three years ago, Council promised to build 40,000 affordable homes in ten years but at the current rate of construction, it will take Council 45 years to reach its goal. In the meantime, the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$2,500 and rising every month. This is outrageous.

As Mayor, I will enable rapid new construction by cutting red tape and slashing project approval times to one year from three years. I will also create the fiscal environment and offer incentives to encourage the maximum number of new affordable, RGI and supportive units are included in new projects - for free - to create vibrant mixed communities.

Some of my opponents say the City should build its own housing. However, what they don't mention is that only a fraction of their new units will be affordable. They also don't tell you that their plans require the City to take out \$5 billion to \$12 billion in construction loans, and hire hundreds of new City employees to monitor construction so each building is completed on time and on budget and then to collect thousands of monthly rents, clean and maintain the buildings, and do unit repairs such as fix leaky faucets or broken stoves. Billions of dollars more will have to be set aside for capital repairs down the road for things like new roofs, boilers and elevators - just like TCHC's \$3 billion capital repair budget.

We can spend billions of dollars to get a few thousand affordable, RGI and supportive units, or we can incentivize builders to build them for free, without the added long-term expense of operating and fixing them. Whatever the

cost in incentives will be a fraction of what it would cost the City to build them.

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: Putting more thought towards the construction of our built environment during the design stage to decrease carbon emissions is the practical thing to do. Not only does this make new buildings much more comfortable for those who use them, but also reduces our carbon footprint and energy costs in the long run. In regards to older buildings, the City should ensure that when retrofits are carried out on its aging buildings, such renovations prioritize maximum energy efficiency.

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: Shared public spaces make our city livable, and innovation in design makes them more welcoming and appealing, and encourage children to play and explore. As Mayor, I will encourage such innovation, which I know can be achieved at a similar cost to the standard play spaces of my generation. Another issue that must be addressed is the slow pace at which new parks are built. The City has collected parks levies from builders specifically for this purpose, however much of this money is sitting unused. The construction of public spaces and amenities are equally important to a healthy, vibrant and sustainable city as any other infrastructure.

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: It is important to recognize Toronto's heritage, and I appreciate the work of many organizations across the city who are dedicated to this cause. Where practical, historic buildings should be preserved in some form, from full structures that can be renovated to incorporating the facade when this is not possible.