

Matti Charlton

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: Housing as a Fundamental Human Right:

Affordable housing is not merely a privilege but a fundamental human right. It is essential to ensure that every resident of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has access to safe, affordable, and dignified housing. To address this crisis, we need a multifaceted approach that focuses on both short-term relief and long-term systemic change.

a. Increase Supply and Diversify Options:

We must work collaboratively with developers, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders to increase the supply of affordable housing options. In addition to traditional approaches, I propose exploring innovative solutions, such as the establishment of tiny home communities on unused city-owned land. These communities would offer affordable, self-contained housing units and foster a sense of belonging and autonomy. With appropriate oversight, they can provide residents with the opportunity to have their own quasi-independent communities.

b. Supportive Services and Autonomy:

To ensure the success of these communities, the city will provide essential support services, including mental health resources, harm reduction programs, and employment opportunities. By integrating these services within the community, we empower residents to lead fulfilling and productive lives. Furthermore, we can collaborate with community members to establish and operate their own stores and businesses, creating economic opportunities and strengthening the community's self-sufficiency.

c. Design Excellence and Sustainability:

When developing these tiny home communities, we must prioritize design excellence to create vibrant, functional, and aesthetically pleasing spaces. Engaging architects, urban planners, and community members in the design

process will ensure that these communities fit harmoniously within the urban fabric while promoting sustainable and energy-efficient practices.

d. Collaboration and Engagement:

The success of addressing the housing crisis relies on collaboration and engagement. I will work closely with community organizations, housing experts, architects, and residents to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy. This includes actively seeking input and feedback from those directly affected by the housing crisis to ensure that our solutions align with their needs and aspirations.

e. Advocacy for Legislative Changes:

While we can take immediate action at the municipal level, advocating for legislative changes at the provincial and federal levels is crucial. I will use my position as mayor to advocate for policies that support affordable housing initiatives, strengthen tenant protections, and ensure that housing is prioritized as a human right at all levels of government.

f. Long-Term Sustainable Funding:

Addressing the housing crisis requires sustainable funding. As mayor, I will explore various funding models, including public-private partnerships, impact investing, and grants, to secure long-term financial resources for affordable housing initiatives. By leveraging resources effectively, we can create a significant and lasting impact on housing affordability in the GTA.

The housing crisis demands immediate and sustained action. By increasing the supply of affordable housing, embracing innovative solutions such as tiny home communities on city-owned land, and providing supportive services, we can create a city where all residents have access to safe and affordable housing. Toronto's future must be built on the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and social justice.

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: Prioritizing Sustainability to Reduce Carbon Emissions:

The design, construction, and operation of our built environment play a significant role in the climate crisis we face today. To create a sustainable future for Toronto, we must prioritize and accelerate our efforts to reduce carbon emissions. I propose a bold and comprehensive approach that embraces cutting-edge technology, fosters collaboration across sectors, and empowers our citizens to be active participants in building a sustainable city.

a. Net-Zero Building Standards:

We must adopt aggressive targets for net-zero carbon emissions in new construction and major renovations. By implementing stringent building standards and codes, we can ensure that all new buildings are designed and constructed to minimize their carbon footprint. This includes leveraging sustainable materials, integrating renewable energy systems, and prioritizing energy-efficient designs that optimize natural lighting and ventilation.

b. Retrofitting and Energy Efficiency:

To address the carbon emissions from existing buildings, I will champion a city-wide initiative to incentivize and support retrofitting projects. By providing grants, tax incentives, and technical assistance, we can encourage building owners to improve energy efficiency, retrofit outdated systems, and transition to renewable energy sources. This will not only reduce carbon emissions but also create local jobs and stimulate economic growth.

c. Green Infrastructure and Urban Planning:

We need to integrate green infrastructure and sustainable urban planning principles into the fabric of our city. This includes expanding green spaces, promoting urban forests, and implementing sustainable drainage systems to manage stormwater runoff. By prioritizing walkability, cycling infrastructure, and accessible public transportation, we can reduce reliance on private vehicles and lower carbon emissions associated with transportation.

d. Collaboration with the Private Sector:

To accelerate our progress, I will foster collaboration with the private sector, including architects, developers, and businesses. By providing incentives for sustainable design and construction practices, we can encourage innovation and create a market for sustainable building solutions. This collaboration will drive the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, such as green roofs, solar panels, and smart building systems, further reducing our carbon footprint.

e. Public Awareness and Education:

Engaging the public is crucial in creating a sustainable city. I will launch a comprehensive public awareness and education campaign to inform residents about the importance of reducing carbon emissions and provide them with practical tools and resources to make sustainable choices. By empowering individuals, communities, and businesses to take action, we can create a groundswell of support for sustainable practices and amplify our impact.

f. Collaborative Research and Development:

Investing in research and development is vital to fostering innovation and pushing the boundaries of sustainable design. I will establish partnerships with academic institutions, research organizations, and industry leaders to support collaborative research projects. By pooling our collective expertise and resources, we can drive technological advancements, develop sustainable building materials, and discover new approaches to reducing carbon emissions.

g. International Leadership and Collaboration:

Toronto has the opportunity to become a global leader in sustainable city-building. I will actively seek collaborations and knowledge exchange with other cities around the world that have successfully implemented sustainable practices. By joining international networks, participating in conferences, and sharing our experiences, we can learn from each other and accelerate the global transition to sustainable cities.

Reducing carbon emissions within the built environment is not only an environmental imperative but also an opportunity to create a vibrant, sustainable, and prosperous city. By embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and empowering our citizens, we can build a future that inspires the world. Together, let's make Toronto a shining example of sustainable urban living.

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: Achieving Design Excellence in Civic Spaces:

Our parks, libraries, and streets are the beating heart of our city, where people come together, connect, and engage in the tapestry of urban life. It is essential that we ensure these civic spaces achieve design excellence from their initial conception and construction, while also prioritizing their long-term maintenance to serve future generations.

a. Collaborative Design Approach:

To achieve design excellence, I will foster a collaborative approach that brings together architects, urban planners, landscape designers, and most importantly, community members. I believe in the power of collective wisdom, and by involving diverse perspectives, we can create civic spaces that truly reflect the needs, aspirations, and cultural richness of our communities.

b. Inclusive Design Principles:

Design excellence goes hand in hand with inclusivity. I will champion inclusive design principles, ensuring that our civic spaces are accessible to all, regardless of age, ability, or background. This means integrating features such as barrier-free access, inclusive play areas, and sensory elements that promote engagement and participation for everyone.

c. Sustainability and Green Spaces:

As we strive for design excellence, sustainability must be at the forefront of our efforts. I will prioritize the incorporation of green spaces within our civic areas, promoting the benefits of nature for mental and physical well-being. By integrating sustainable design features such as rainwater harvesting, native plantings, and renewable energy sources, we can create resilient and environmentally responsible spaces.

d. Smart Technology Integration:

To enhance the functionality and efficiency of our civic spaces, I will embrace the integration of smart technologies. These innovations can provide real-time information, optimize resource allocation, and improve the overall user experience. From smart lighting and waste management systems to interactive information kiosks, technology will be harnessed to elevate the quality and usability of our civic spaces.

e. Public-Private Partnerships:

Achieving design excellence requires adequate resources and expertise. I will actively seek public-private partnerships to leverage additional funding and expertise for the initial conception, construction, and ongoing maintenance of our civic spaces. By engaging with private sector organizations and philanthropic foundations, we can pool our collective resources to create world-class public spaces that truly reflect our city's aspirations.

f. Maintenance and Long-Term Planning:

Design excellence must extend beyond the initial construction phase. I will prioritize the establishment of dedicated funding and maintenance plans to ensure our civic spaces receive the care and attention they deserve. This

includes regular maintenance, repairs, and the development of long-term sustainability plans to preserve the integrity and functionality of these spaces for future generations.

g. Cultural and Artistic Integration:

Our civic spaces should celebrate and showcase our city's cultural diversity and artistic expression. I will collaborate with local artists, designers, and cultural organizations to integrate public art, installations, and cultural programming into our parks, libraries, and streets. This infusion of creativity will not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also foster a sense of identity, pride, and community ownership.

h. Continuous Community Engagement:

Design excellence is an ongoing process that requires continuous community engagement. I will establish mechanisms for regular feedback and consultation with residents, ensuring that their voices are heard throughout the design and maintenance stages. This participatory approach will empower communities to take ownership of their civic spaces, fostering a sense of pride, belonging, and shared responsibility.

Achieving design excellence in our civic spaces requires a holistic and inclusive approach. By fostering collaboration, prioritizing sustainability, embracing technology, and engaging communities, we can create vibrant and inspiring public spaces that enhance the quality of life for all residents. Together, let us reimagine our parks, libraries, and streets as catalysts for connection, creativity, and a thriving urban experience.

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: Protecting, Preserving, and Revitalizing Toronto's 20th Century Built Legacy:

Toronto's 20th-century architectural landmarks are not only symbols of our city's heritage but also invaluable cultural assets that contribute to our collective identity. The potential demolition of the Ontario Science Centre, as well as the redevelopment of Ontario Place, underscore the urgent need for proactive measures to safeguard our built legacy. As Mayor, I will take bold action to protect these architectural treasures while exploring innovative approaches to meet the evolving needs of our communities.

a. Heritage Designation and Adaptive Reuse:

Preserving our architectural heritage is of paramount importance. I will collaborate closely with heritage organizations, architectural experts, and community members to identify and designate the Ontario Science Centre as a heritage site, ensuring its historical integrity is protected. Simultaneously, I will explore opportunities for adaptive reuse within the existing structures to accommodate a unique combination of heritage preservation and the establishment of a vibrant tiny home community.

b. Innovative Urban Design and Community Integration:

The Ontario Science Centre land provides an exceptional opportunity to reimagine urban living. By integrating a tiny home community into the site, we can create a dynamic and inclusive neighborhood that respects the heritage splendor of the existing architecture. Through innovative urban design and thoughtful community planning, we can foster a sense of belonging, encourage sustainable living practices, and promote a strong sense of community among the residents.

c. Collaborative Design and Architectural Excellence:

The successful integration of a tiny home community within the Ontario Science Centre land requires a collaborative approach. I will engage architects, urban planners, and community stakeholders to develop a design that harmonizes the unique heritage elements with modern, sustainable architectural principles. By prioritizing excellence in design, we can create a community that not only respects the past but also sets new standards for future architectural innovation.

d. Sustainable Development and Green Spaces:

Sustainability will be at the heart of this project. I will ensure that the tiny home community incorporates sustainable building materials, energy-efficient systems, and renewable energy sources. Emphasis will be placed on green spaces, including community gardens, urban forests, and pedestrian-friendly pathways, to promote a healthy and environmentally conscious lifestyle. By integrating nature into the design, we can create a vibrant, sustainable, and harmonious living environment.

e. Supportive Services and Community Empowerment:

The success of the tiny home community relies on comprehensive support services and community empowerment. I will collaborate with mental health organizations, harm reduction agencies, and employment opportunity providers to ensure that residents have access to vital resources and support systems. Moreover, I will facilitate the establishment of community-run stores and facilities within the tiny home community, empowering residents to take an active role in shaping their neighborhood and fostering a strong sense of self-sufficiency.

f. Public Engagement and Cultural Programming:

Engaging the public and fostering cultural vitality will be central to the success of the tiny home community. I will encourage community involvement in decision-making processes, providing platforms for residents to express their ideas, concerns, and aspirations. Additionally, I will collaborate with cultural organizations to curate diverse and inclusive programming, such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and educational workshops. These initiatives will enrich the community fabric and ensure the preservation of Toronto's vibrant cultural heritage.

g. Economic Opportunity and Tourism Promotion:

The integration of a tiny home community within the Ontario Science Centre land presents economic opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs. I will work closely with economic development agencies to support small-scale enterprises within the community, including artisanal shops, cafés, and locally owned businesses. Furthermore, I will actively promote architectural tourism, leveraging the unique combination of heritage preservation and innovative urban design to attract visitors from around the world and generate economic benefits for the broader community.

Protecting, preserving, and revitalizing Toronto's 20th-century built legacy demands creative and forward-thinking solutions. By embracing adaptive reuse, innovative urban design, and sustainable development practices, we can safeguard our architectural heritage while meeting the evolving needs of our communities. The potential integration of a vibrant tiny home community within the Ontario Science Centre land embodies the spirit of progress and inclusivity, creating a sustainable and thriving neighborhood that embraces our heritage and imagines a brighter future.

Together, let us forge a path towards a truly remarkable Toronto—one that cherishes its past, embraces its present, and builds a future that inspires the world.