



John Tory
Mayor

DATE: December 6, 2018
To: City Council
From: Mayor John Tory
Re: Housing Now

Dear Members of City Council,

Toronto is a successful and prosperous city, and yet the lack of available and affordable housing is having a negative effect on many of our residents and the economic vitality of our city. The unaffordable housing market is jeopardizing Toronto's reputation as a city of opportunity for all, where everyone has access to safe, stable and affordable housing.

As we begin a new term of Council, it is time for the City to re-commit to creating inclusive mixed-income and complete communities where everyone can thrive and achieve their housing aspirations.

Going forward the province anticipates that Toronto will add nearly half a million people by 2041. We also know that by 2041 there will be increasing pressure to provide new affordable and supportive housing options for seniors, low-income singles and families, persons with disabilities, and other groups that will struggle to find and maintain stable, affordable housing.

As City staff work on the development of a new 10-year housing plan for the next decade, I believe we must take immediate steps to urgently scale up our efforts to increase the supply of new affordable housing. To kick-start our resolve I am requesting your support in endorsing and approving the 11 City-owned surplus sites identified by staff for the development of affordable housing within mixed-income, mixed-use and transit oriented communities.

I also ask your support in directing the City Manager to report to the January meeting of Executive Committee with an action plan to roll-out this initiative and identify resources required to get shovels in the ground fast.

To expedite this work, I would ask that all City divisions, agencies and corporations accelerate the declaration of underutilized City-owned surplus lands.

Leveraging surplus public land to develop affordable housing and mixed income complete communities is a well-recognized strategy to achieve positive public outcomes, while contributing to city building. Over the past two decades Council has supported the development of new affordable rental homes on close to 50 surplus properties.

Cities such as London, New York, Vancouver and Montreal all activate surplus public properties to drive new affordable housing development, including the creation of new mixed income communities at locations with easy access to transit, strong community services, employment, shopping and other amenities.

The “Housing Now” initiative will guide sustainable and equitable growth near public transit and create mixed-income communities where residents can afford quality housing near transit.

Addressing and solving many of Toronto’s housing challenges is going to take everyone’s commitment, energy and strong partnerships with the private and not-for-profit sectors. The new National Housing Strategy also provides a key platform for federal and provincial governments to deliver additional funding and financing necessary to support the City’s “Housing Now” initiative.

I am also requesting that City staff work with both federal and provincial officials to develop a portfolio approach to accessing funding and financing for the 11-site initiative. This approach will be essential in developing viable business plans and provide the opportunity to complement the City’s contribution of land and Open Door Program incentives.

To move forward with scaling and speeding up the construction of affordable rental housing and new mixed income communities, I am recommending City Council approve the following:

Recommendations:

Mayor Tory recommends that:

1. City Council approve the activation of the 11 sites identified in Appendix 1 for the development of affordable housing as part of creating mixed-income, mixed-use and transit oriented communities.
2. City Council request the City Manager on an urgent basis to report to the Executive Committee in January 2019 on "Housing Now" with an action plan to roll-out this initiative and identify the resources required to expedite the implementation process.

3. City Council request that City agencies and corporations accelerate the declaration of underutilized City-owned lands surplus property, to expedite the use of lands in support of “Housing Now”.
4. City Council direct CreateTO to support “Housing Now” and to ensure that reviews and approvals of their projects and developments give consideration to including a mix of affordable housing ownership and rental units where permissible.
5. City Council request the City Manager on an urgent basis to report to the January 2019 Executive Committee meeting on the City building impacts of “Housing Now”, including the application of the City’s Open Door Program to support the affordable rental homes to be constructed.
6. City Council request the City Manager on an urgent basis to undertake discussions with federal and provincial government officials as well as private and not-for-profit housing organizations on how best to leverage funding and financing resources through the National Housing Strategy and other applicable programs to support “Housing Now”.

Sincerely,

Mayor John Tory