

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM47.57	ACTION			Ward: All
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Increasing Accessible and Affordable Housing Options for Students - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor John Filion

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Planning and Housing Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor John Filion, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat to engage with students, civil society, post-secondary institutions and intergovernmental partners to assess and report back to the Planning and Housing Committee on options for increasing the supply of accessible and affordable housing for students by the end of 2023.

Summary

Housing affordability, accessibility and availability are issues across the City of Toronto. With 80 percent of renters in Toronto being 20-24 years of age, the housing crisis disproportionately impacts postsecondary students, especially low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour students, for whom it can be extremely challenging to access adequate and affordable housing options. For many students, accessing housing in Toronto and near to their university, requires that they work multiple jobs, or live in unsafe, illegal and overcrowded housing conditions. Consequently, these housing challenges place students at high risk of a reduced well-being, quality of life and academic success as well as increased experiences of intense mental health issues, vulnerability and homelessness.

On December 8, 2020, Planning and Housing Committee adopted a motion directing staff to lead and report back on discussions with post-secondary institutions regarding safe and legal housing for students. However, the student housing crisis continues to be exacerbated by the reduced visibility of student voices in discourses related to housing, a lack of intergovernmental attention to student issues, as well as the privatization of student housing. With Toronto's universities having become reliant on the private sector in conceiving and developing student-specific housing options, the development of more luxury condo-style dorms has become the focus, creating a student housing market that is unaffordable and inaccessible. This can be especially difficult for low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour students, who are excluded from accessing student-specific housing on and off campus.

Key strategic priorities identified in the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan ("HousingTO Plan") includes preventing homelessness and improving pathways to housing stability for residents across the City; ensuring well-maintained and secure homes for renters; and

improving access to affordable rental spaces. These priorities need to include the needs of students, and especially low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour students. Increasing the visibility of student needs in the housing discourse, the conception and development of more diverse housing options (shared housing, non-profit housing and intergenerational housing), as well a commitment to working in the multi-stakeholder approach identified in the HousingTO Plan when it comes to student housing is necessary to address this crisis that disproportionately affects students.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM47.57