



Discussion Guide

Summer 2021

Welcome to the City of Toronto's Housing Now Initiative

Housing Now is a Council-approved initiative to respond to Toronto's urgent need for more permanent affordable rental homes. Housing Now will deliver new affordable rental housing and build mixed-income, mixed-use developments to support complete communities on City-owned land. Housing Now is a critical component of the City's 10-year HousingTO Action Plan, which aims to approve 40,000 affordable rental homes by 2030.

In January 2019, City Council identified 11 sites to kick-off the program. Six additional sites were added by City Council in May 2020. The 17 Housing Now sites are estimated to create approximately 12,400 new residential homes, including approximately 4,600 affordable rental homes. Based on work done to date, those numbers will likely increase as more detailed planning work is undertaken on the development potential of each site. As well, the Housing Now Initiative leverages City-owned lands to support the development of complete communities. Depending on size and location, some sites may also include new child care centres, expanded public parks, community space, employment opportunities, improved public spaces and new public streets.

This discussion guide explains why Housing Now is needed, how it works and progress to date. This guide also provides an overview of the locations, community benefits, public engagement, and timelines for current projects. More detailed information is also available for each site on the Housing Now website.

We're keen to hear from you! Community engagement is a core part of the Housing Now Initiative. Please review what's here and also check out createto.ca/housingnow for more information about upcoming sites and engagement events.

Why is Housing Now needed?

- 1. The cost of housing has increased significantly in Toronto and incomes have not kept pace.** Between 2006 and 2018, the price of housing grew by over 130% while median household income grew by only 30%. Research has shown that a renter would need to make \$27.74 per hour to be able to afford a one-bedroom rental home in Toronto.¹
- 2. New residential construction has been dominated by the development of condos, while rental housing development has lagged behind.** Between 2013 and 2018 about 80,000 new condo units were completed compared to 4,500 purpose-built rental homes. In that same time period, 2% of new housing built or approved was affordable.²
- 3. Almost half of Toronto renter-households spend more than 30% of their before-tax income on housing costs.**³ Housing is often considered "affordable" if it costs less than 30% of a household's before-tax income.
- 4. The cost of NOT having affordable housing is too high.** The lack of affordable housing in the GTA is estimated to cost between \$5.88 billion and \$7.98 billion per year in lost productivity, wage premiums, turnover and recruitment costs, and other direct and indirect costs.⁴

¹ Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, July 2019

² City of Toronto – Implementing the Housing Now Initiative, January 2019

³ City of Toronto – Inclusionary Zoning Assessment Report, September 2020

⁴ Toronto Region Board of Trade and Woodgreen – Housing a Generation of Essential Workers, a Cost of Inaction, 2021

What's Inside: How it works | Map of sites | Results to date | Public engagement | Timeline | Contact info

Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers)



Early Childhood Educator
Med. Annual Income:
\$35,997



Retired / Pensioner
Med. Annual Income:
\$38,400



Construction Labourer
Med. Annual Income:
\$39,000



Licensed Practical Nurse
Med. Annual Income:
\$51,675

Based on average asking rents in Toronto today, these people have to spend 37% - 83% of their income on housing.

How does it work?

The Housing Now Initiative leverages City-owned lands to stimulate the creation of new affordable rental, market rental, and ownership housing. The City-owned land is offered through long-term leases or at below-market rates that make it financially feasible for private and non-profit development partners to build the required affordable rental homes. In addition, funding and financing programs from other orders of government are critical to ensuring the viability and affordability of Housing Now sites.

Who can afford it?

On average, affordable rental homes created through Housing Now rent for 80% of Toronto's average market rent; with some rents as low as 40% of the average market rent. **The affordable homes created through Housing Now will be affordable and geared to households earning between \$35,000 and \$68,000 per year.** Examples of the types of professions earning incomes in this range are shown here.

How will communities benefit?

Affordable housing is the primary focus of Housing Now.

Other new site investments may include essential community infrastructure such as: new childcare facilities, new or expanded public parks, community space, improved public realm, new public streets, and social and economic benefits through workforce development and social procurement requirements.

Who can apply for an affordable rental home?

The City is exploring an approach to create a centralized online access portal which will consolidate all available affordable housing. This system would leverage the City's current system for subsidized housing to allow applicants to search and apply for available affordable housing and allow housing providers to advertise and fill affordable homes with eligible applicants through a randomized draw process. For more information on this proposed new approach visit: <https://bit.ly/3AZ48pl>

Is this social housing or Toronto Community Housing?

No, it isn't. Through the Housing Now Initiative, **the City is leveraging the value of City-owned land and partnering with private and non-profit organizations to build and operate new rental housing affordable to households earning up to \$68,000 per year.**

Housing Now Sites



SNAPSHOT: City-building benefits to be delivered on first four Housing Now sites



140 Merton St.



90 affordable rental units for seniors



Heritage Preservation



2,150 square metres of community space



Midblock connection and outdoor social spaces



777 Victoria Park Ave.



254 affordable rental units



62-space child care facility



425 square metres of community space



50 Wilson Heights Blvd.



500 affordable rental units



62-space child care facility



1,700 square metres of community space



3,800 square metres of non-residential (commercial, and retail) space



3,049 square metre public park and an extension of the William R. Allen Road Pathway



New Public Street



705 Warden Ave.



250 affordable rental units



62-space child care facility



400 square metres of retail space



13,000 square metres of office space (TTC)



3,834 square metre public park and renaturalized area around Massey Creek



New Public Street

City of Toronto and CreateTO are responding to feedback

The Housing Now Initiative is moving quickly to help meet Toronto's urgent affordable housing needs. Many different sectors and interests have shared feedback about how new affordable housing should be delivered, and the City of Toronto is responding.

The June 2020 Annual Housing Now Update identifies the following priorities:

- ✓ Increase the number of affordable rental homes by providing incentives (e.g. exempting payment of certain development charges and fees).
- ✓ Prioritize viable bids from non-profit organizations in the market offering process.
- ✓ Protect market renters through limits on market rent increases while ensuring well-maintained homes over 99 years.
- ✓ Increase the number of accessible homes and focus on incorporating universal design features on all future sites.
- ✓ Establish an accessibility advisory committee to leverage Housing Now to deliver more accessible units for persons with disabilities.

Other program enhancements include supporting Indigenous affordable housing development and expanding partnerships to increase affordability.

HousingTO Action Plan and the housing spectrum

Housing Now is a key initiative within the City of Toronto's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan and contributes towards the City's target of approving 40,000 affordable rental homes, including 18,000 supportive housing homes over the next ten years. The HousingTO Action Plan makes recommendations for action to address challenges identified across the housing spectrum, ranging from emergency shelter beds, safe and legal multi-tenant houses, and long-term care homes to market affordability challenges for first-time homebuyers. Housing Now addresses a subset of housing options within this spectrum (see image below).



Council-Adopted Housing Now Principles

The development of new housing through Toronto's Housing Now Initiative is guided by the following principles:

1. Develop the properties to achieve the highest possible public benefits.
2. Optimize the development of market and affordable rental housing with a mix of unit types and sizes.
3. Create homes affordable for a diverse range of incomes, including deeply affordable homes.
4. Appropriately address and accommodate existing City uses and other operations on the 17 sites.
5. Retain public ownership of the properties, including prioritizing long-term land leases. Affordability will be secured for new affordable rental units for 99 years.
6. Engage City Councillors and local communities in the planning and developing of each property.
7. Support the participation of non-profit organizations in the Housing Now Initiative and encourage their involvement in the market offering process through a \$1 million fund approved by City Council.

Want to know more? Want to get involved?

If you are interested in learning more about Housing Now and staying up to date, visit createto.ca/housingnow. This website provides more detail on each of the Housing Now sites, links to videos of previous meetings and summaries of feedback received, and offers opportunities to provide feedback online. If you (or someone you know) is interested in receiving information by mail, just let us know by contacting us at 416-907-8260 or emailing housingnow@toronto.ca.

Timeline

Housing Now is moving quickly to deliver housing within two to four years of site selection.

Stage 1: Preliminary Design Concept

- Vision
- Design principles
- Consultation

Stage 2: Development Concepts

- Final development concept
- City-initiated rezoning
- Design Review Panel
- Consultation
- Council approval

Stage 3: Market Offering

- Procurement of private and non-profit development partner
- Negotiation of legal agreements

Stage 4: Delivery

- Detailed design
- Site Plan Application
- Building Permits/approvals
- Construction
- Occupancy