

City of Barrie
Updated Affordable Housing Strategy

Summary of Consultation

'What We Heard' Reports

nblc

Trusted advisors since 1976.





City of Barrie Updated Affordable Housing Strategy

Summary of Consultation

Table of Contents

Public Engagement Meeting #1.....1

Public Survey & Online Discussion Forum #15

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #117

Council Meeting #119

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #220

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #323

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #426

Council Meeting #2 – Affordability Committee28

Public Survey & Online Discussion Forum #230

Public Engagement Meeting #2.....38

Public Engagement Meeting #1

Affordable Housing Symposium – May 4th, 2023, 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Southshore Community Centre (205 Lakeshore Drive, Barrie, Ontario)

Event Summary:

On Thursday, May 4, 2023, the City of Barrie hosted an Affordable Housing Symposium from 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm at the Southshore Community Centre in Barrie. Approximately 80 people participated in and attended the event.

The event included:

- A screening of the documentary *Searching for Home*, including a Q and A session.
- Booths featuring local affordable housing partners and organizations.
- The chance to share feedback on the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy update.
- A panel discussion with experts in the field, discussing affordable housing across the spectrum.

A booth to showcase the City of Barrie’s Affordable Housing Strategy was set up to provide the public and community stakeholders with an opportunity to learn about the initiative, engage with staff members and provide feedback. The booth was equipped with a board intended to inform the public about the City of Barrie’s Affordable Housing Strategy and to highlight the summary and key findings of Housing Needs Assessment. Additionally, two other boards were included to solicit feedback from the public regarding their current housing situation, their perspectives on housing-related statements, as well as any advice, questions, and additional comments.

The symposium agenda is included in Appendix A.

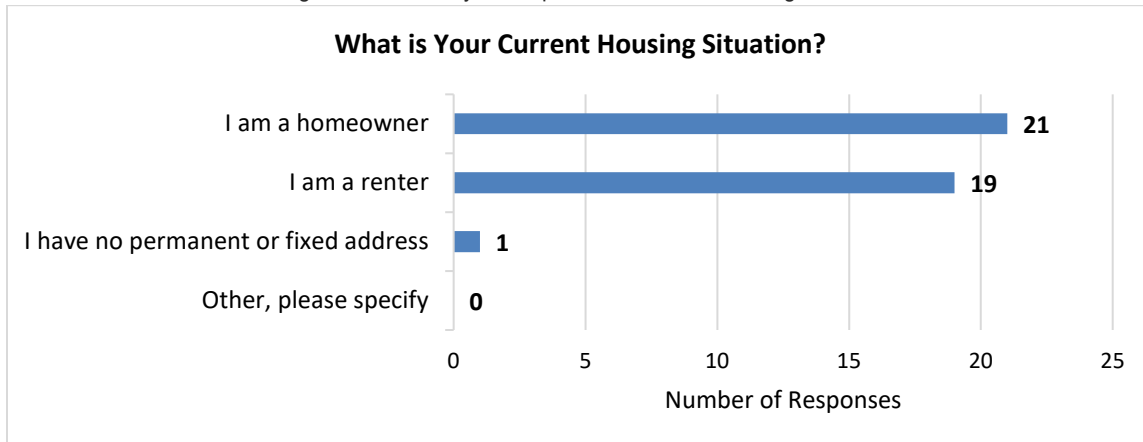
‘What We Heard’ Summary:

The feedback, advice, and considerations shared by participants through sticky notes and discussion during the symposium are captured below and organized by each feedback board question. This summary reflects the main points shared by participants during the meeting and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

Current Housing Situations in the City of Barrie:

Participants were invited to share their current housing situation. Approximately half of the respondents were homeowners, while the other half were renters. One respondent reported not having a permanent or fixed address.

Figure 1 – Summary of Respondent’s Current Housing Situation



Participants were invited to place one dot sticker to indicate how each housing related statement resonated with them. The following indicates how many participants agreed or disagreed with the provided statements.

	<i>Housing affordability is a significant barrier to permanently living in Barrie.</i>	<i>Finding appropriate housing in Barrie is challenging.</i>	<i>I would consider moving if more affordable housing is not offered in Barrie.</i>
Agree	23	28	13
Disagree	0	0	5

Additional written comments providing further comments are summarized as follows:

- Searching for affordable housing is a challenge in Barrie.
- The need for affordable, safe, and stable housing is crucial.
- Even adult children with well-paying jobs cannot afford to move out of their parent's house.
- Government policies create disparities, benefiting some while leaving others at a disadvantage.
- Homeownership for young residents in Barrie is uncertain due to a lack of affordable housing.
- Affordable housing options are scarce for those who need to relocate.
- Access to affordable housing is a basic human right that must be fulfilled.

Feedback on the City of Barrie’s Affordable Housing Strategy:

Participants were invited to share any advice, questions, or additional comments on the City of Barrie’s Affordable Housing Strategy. The following reflects the key points shared by participants during the symposium and is organized by theme:

Provision of Affordable Housing

- Access to adequate housing is a human right that encompasses affordable housing.
- The 'affordable housing' in Barrie is not affordable. The definition of affordable housing needs to be more explicit.
- Affordable housing options in the form of co-ops, duplexes, secondary suites, and tiny houses need to be explored.
- Multicultural awareness and expansion of affordable housing options is key.
- The private sector alone cannot solve the affordable housing crisis in Barrie.

Proposed Solutions

- Office to residential conversions can be a viable solution to the affordable housing crisis.
- Incentives for adaptive reuse of housing in older neighbourhoods should be provided.
- Waterfront property homeowners should be allowed to create secondary suites to rent out.
- Housing rates should be aligned with room rental rates.
- Rent increases on new builds should not exceed affordable market rates.
- Rent increases need to keep up with inflation.

Housing Supports

- Young people and seniors need extra support.
- Affordable and safe housing options for the aging population and one-person households must be available.
- Affordable housing options with recreational activities and a sense of community for seniors are needed.
- Seniors require co-housing/co-living options where they can age comfortably in their own homes. These housing options can include shared laundry, cooking spaces, and sustainable gardening.
- Seniors, single parents, and single women often struggle to find affordable housing. Single parents require access to affordable childcare options.
- Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) housing and/or rent supplements are needed for all individuals receiving government benefits such as Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program.
- Emergency housing options should be available for displaced refugees.
- Fixed incomes can lead to homelessness.

Financial Support, Grants and Additional Services

- Rent supplements should be provided for individuals receiving government benefits such as Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program.
- Rent supports for young people, and seniors are necessary.
- First-time homebuyers require larger grants to allow for more affordable housing options.
- Renovation grants should be easier to access with faster timelines for new homeowners.
- Renovation grants should be provided that allow homeowners to split their homes into separate apartments.

Tenant and Landlord Rights and Regulations

- Appropriate housing regulations with population and tenant control are necessary.
- Tenants and landlords should have lease agreements recognizing shared spaces and tenant rights.
- Landlords should not be allowed to evict tenants arbitrarily.
- More tenant perspective is needed on the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board.

Other Comments and Suggestions

- The online questionnaire could ask for feedback about ideas.
- The City of Barrie website requires improvement.

Next Steps:

Participants were invited to visit the project web page to learn more about the City of Barrie’s Affordable Housing Strategy, sign up for project updates, and take the online survey. Additional public engagement opportunities will continue and include small group dialogues, and public meeting sessions. As the Housing Needs Assessment is completed, policy options will be evaluated to support the updated Affordable Housing Strategy.

Appendix A – Affordable Housing Symposium Agenda:

Time	Agenda
4:00 pm	Welcome and Public Consultation Booths
6:00 pm	Viewing of <i>Searching for Home</i> followed by a Question & Answer Session
7:00 pm	Panel Discussion
8:00 pm	Adjourn

Public Survey & Online Discussion Forum #1

May 1st to May 28th, 2023

Online

Event Summary:

An online survey was made available to the public to share feedback about the current conditions of affordable housing in Barrie and ideas to help improve housing issues. The survey was available on the BuildingBarrie website from May 1st to May 28th, 2023.

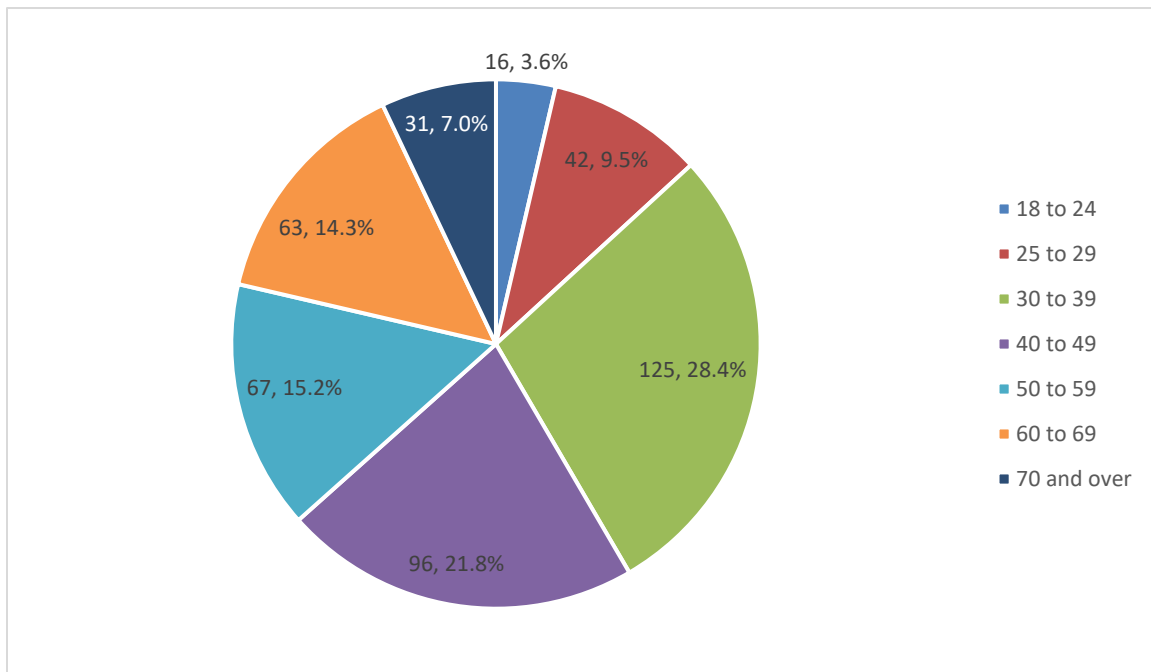
The survey was completed by 442 participants. Additionally, 20 people provided thoughts on what affordable housing in Barrie means to them through an online discussion forum.

'What We Heard' Summary:

The survey questions and a summary of the survey responses are provided below.

Question 1:

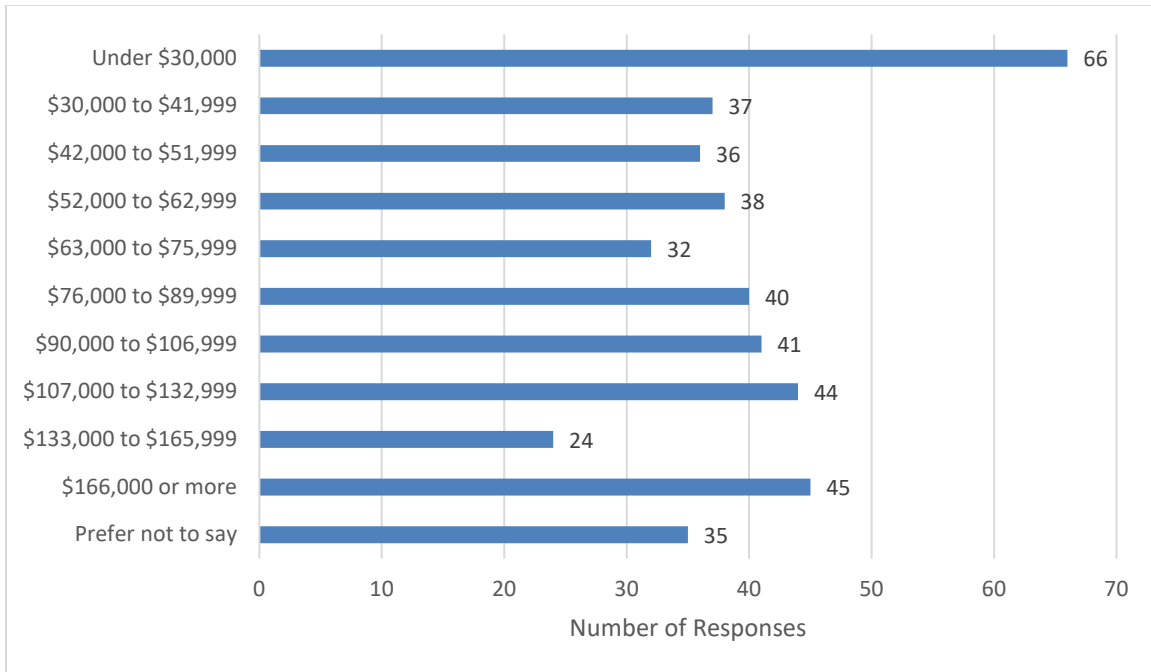
What is your age range?



- Most respondents to this survey (50%) are between the ages of 30-49.

Question 2:

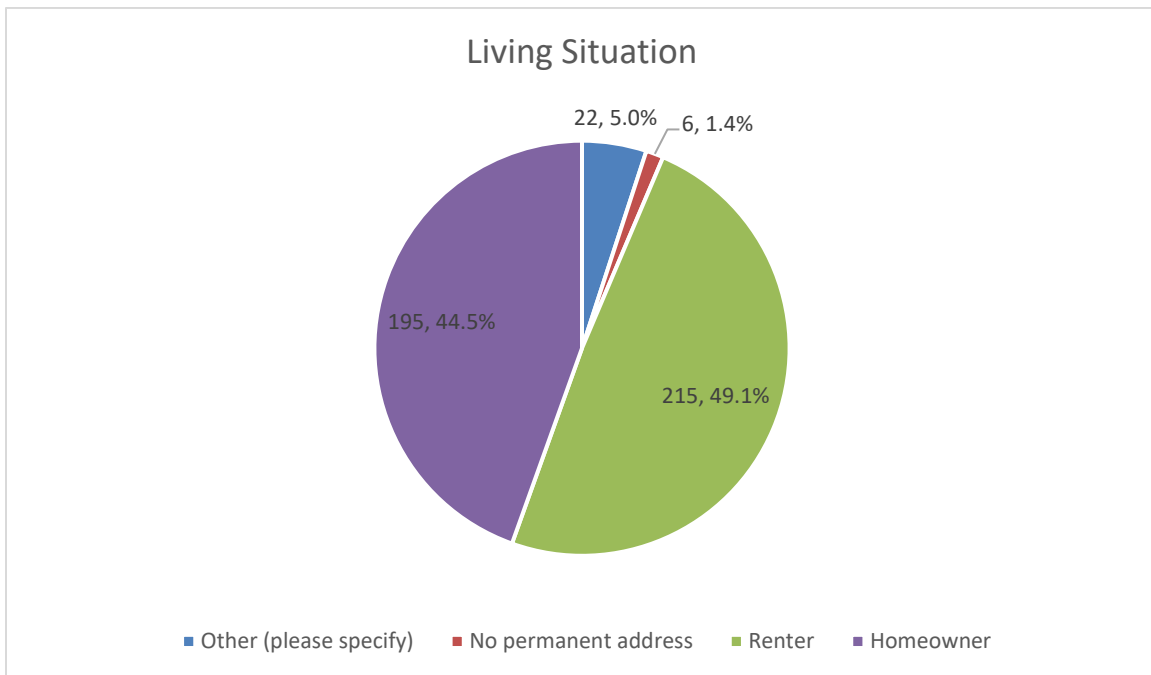
What is your household's approximate average annual income (before tax)?



- 32% of respondents have a household average annual income (before tax) under \$52,000, while 26% have over \$107,000.

Question 3:

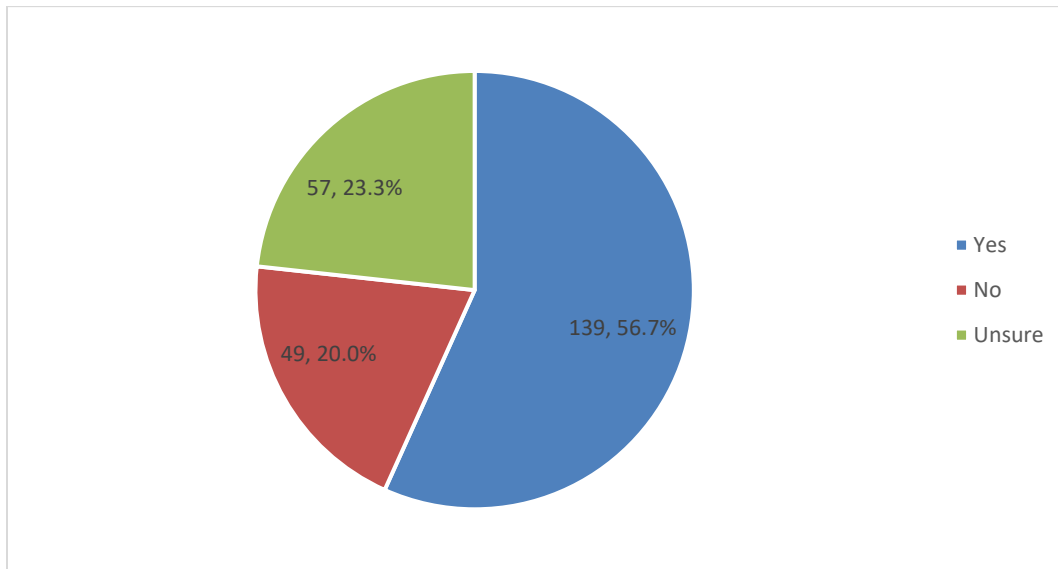
Which best describes your current living situation?



- 49% of respondents are renters, while 44% are homeowners. Those that chose 'Other' indicated that they were homeless, lived with family members (e.g., parent, relatives, in-laws), or in a housing condition that included room and board.

Question 4:

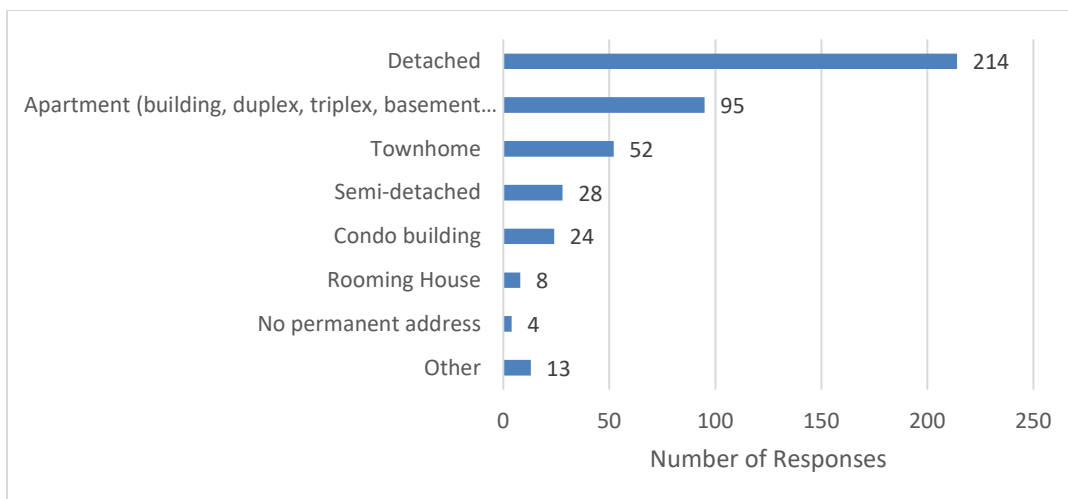
Is homeownership a goal for you?



- Many respondents (57%) indicated that homeownership is a goal for them.

Question 5:

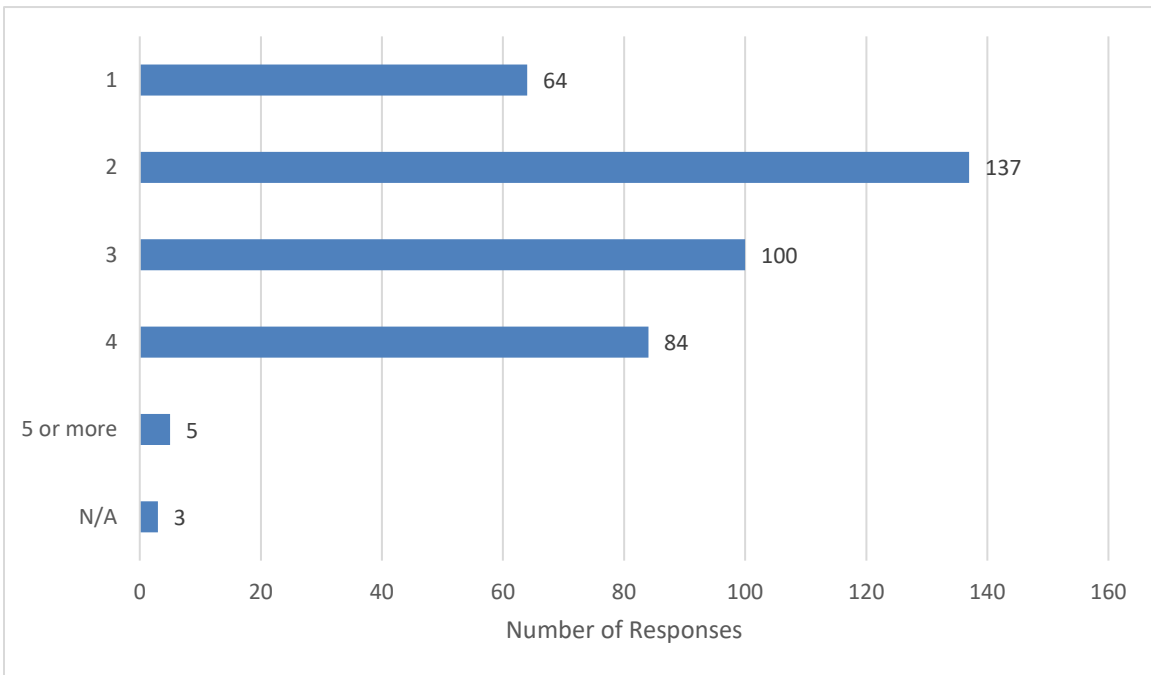
Which type of home most accurately depicts where you currently live?



- 49% of respondents currently live in a detached home. Those that chose 'Other' indicated that they live in a basement, staying in a motel, living with relatives, or homeless.

Question 6:

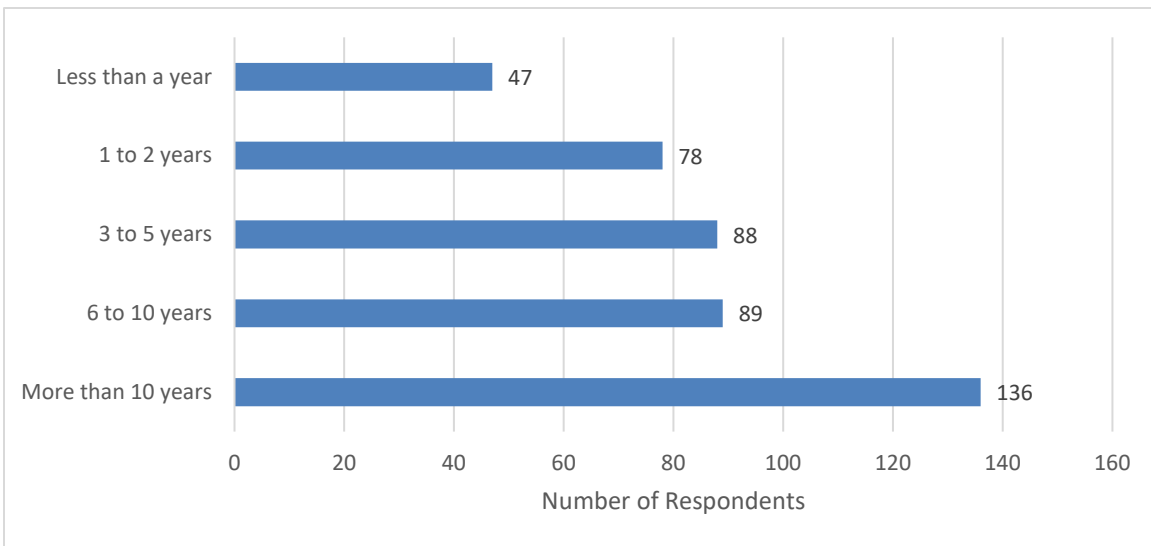
How many people currently live in your household?



- Many respondents (53%) indicated that there are 3 or more people currently living in their household.

Question 7:

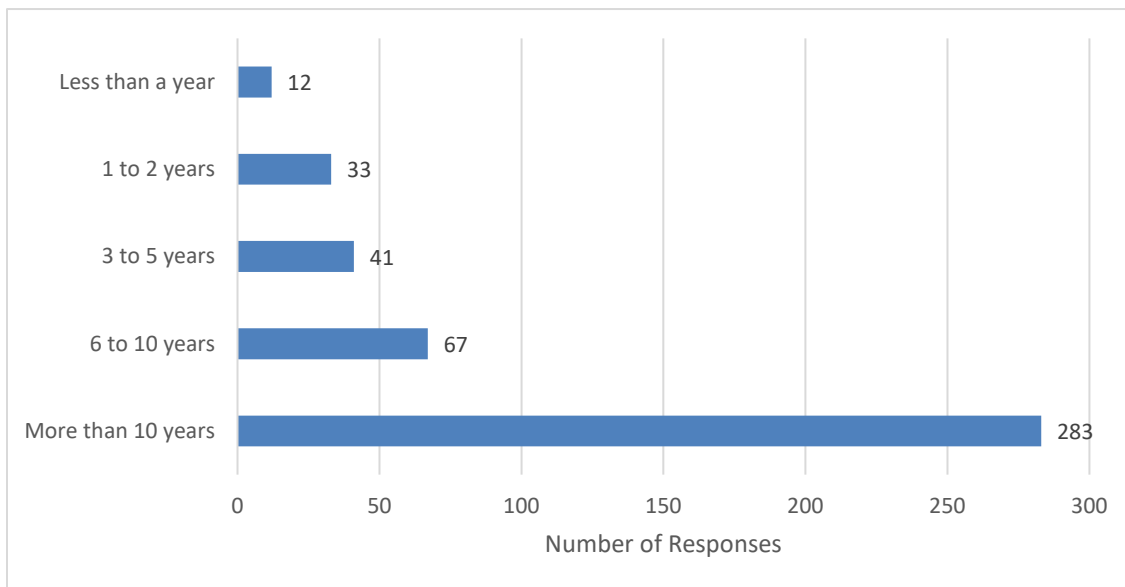
How long have you lived at your current place of residence?



- Many respondents (51%) indicated that they have lived at their current place of residence for at 6 years or more.

Question 8:

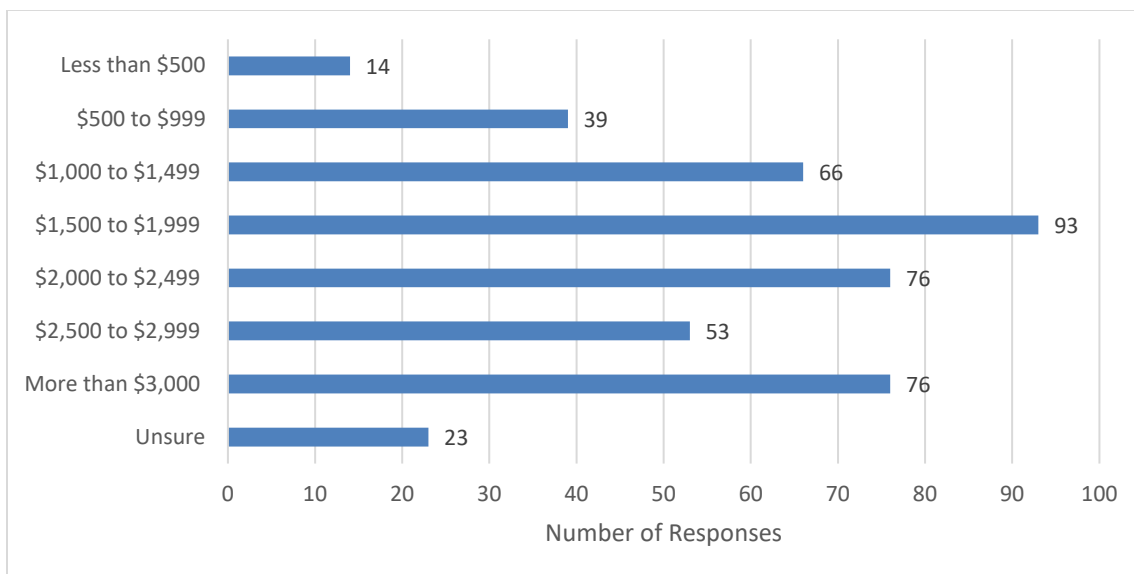
How long have you lived in Barrie?



- Many respondents (65%) indicated that they have lived in Barrie for more than 10 years.

Question 9:

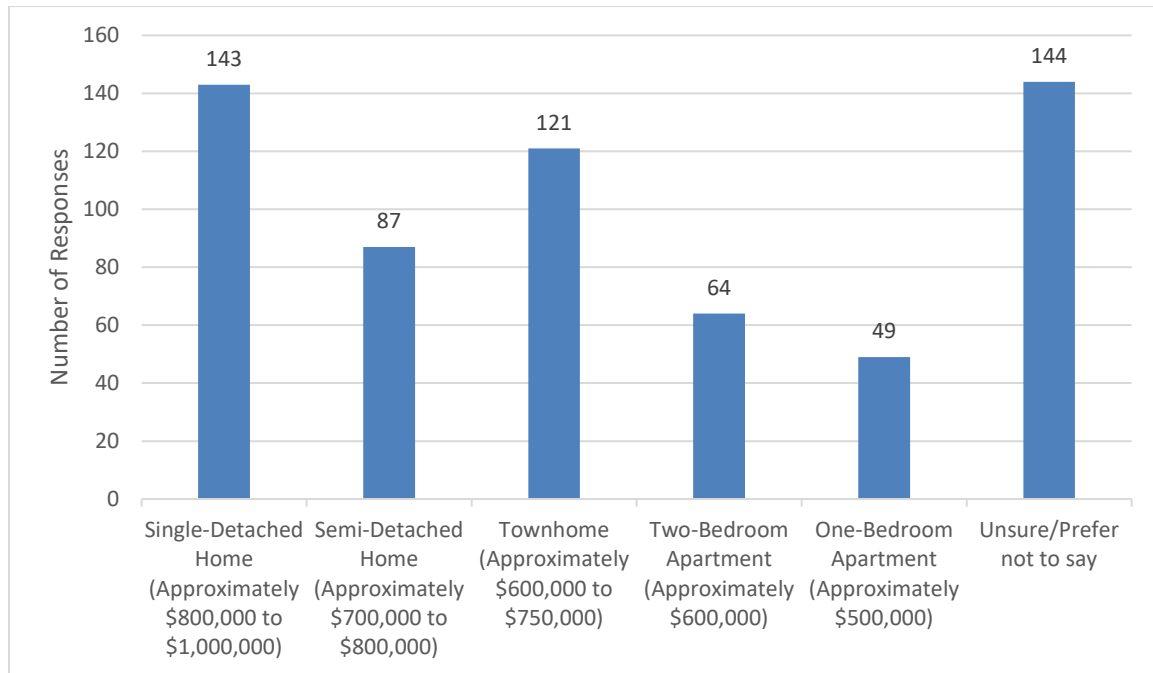
Approximately how much does your household spend on housing costs per month?



- 83% of respondents indicated that their household spend at least \$1,000 on housing costs per month, with 17% spending more than \$3,000.

Question 10:

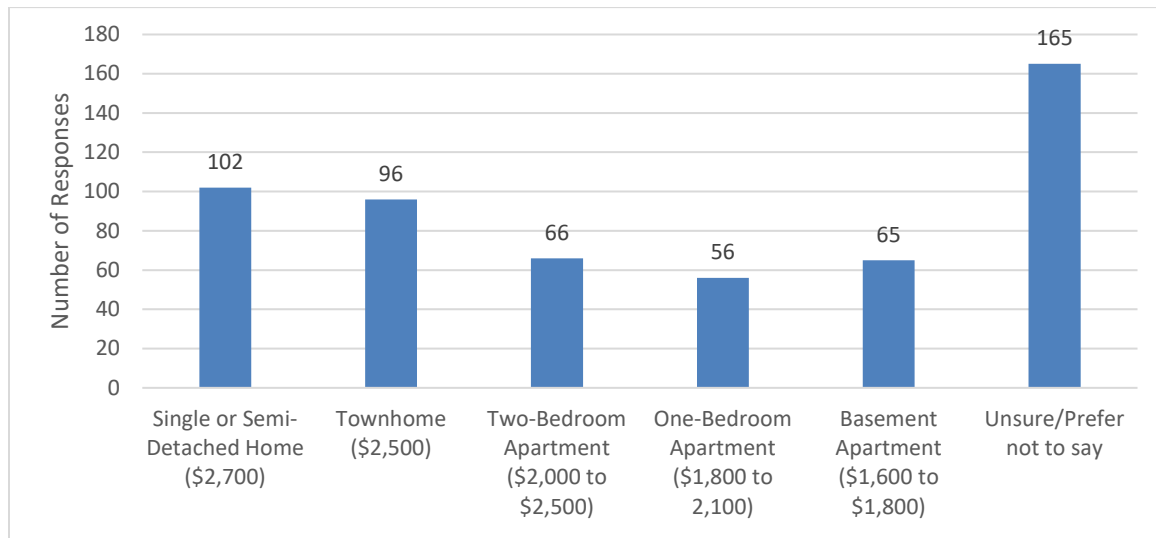
Considering estimated monthly cost to own, which of the following would you consider an acceptable form of housing for your household?



- The top options that the respondents selected as an acceptable form of housing for their household when considering the estimated monthly cost to own were:
 - Single-detached homes (33%),
 - Townhomes (28%), and
 - Semi-detached homes (20%).
- The respondents who included additional comments expressed that the following options are not an acceptable rental choice and were not financially feasible.

Question 11

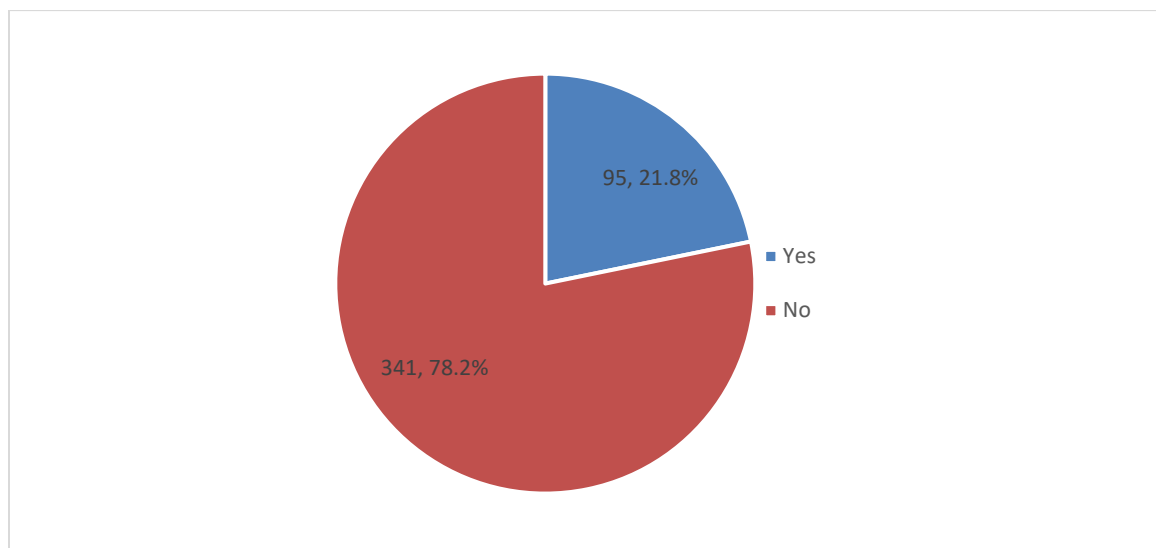
Considering estimated monthly cost to rent, which of the following would you consider an acceptable form of housing for your household?



- The top options that the respondents selected as an acceptable form of housing for their household when considering the estimated monthly cost to rent were single or semi-detached homes (24%) and townhomes (23%).
- The respondents included additional comments expressed that the rental amount for each housing segment is too high and unaffordable, particularly for those on a fixed income.

Question 12

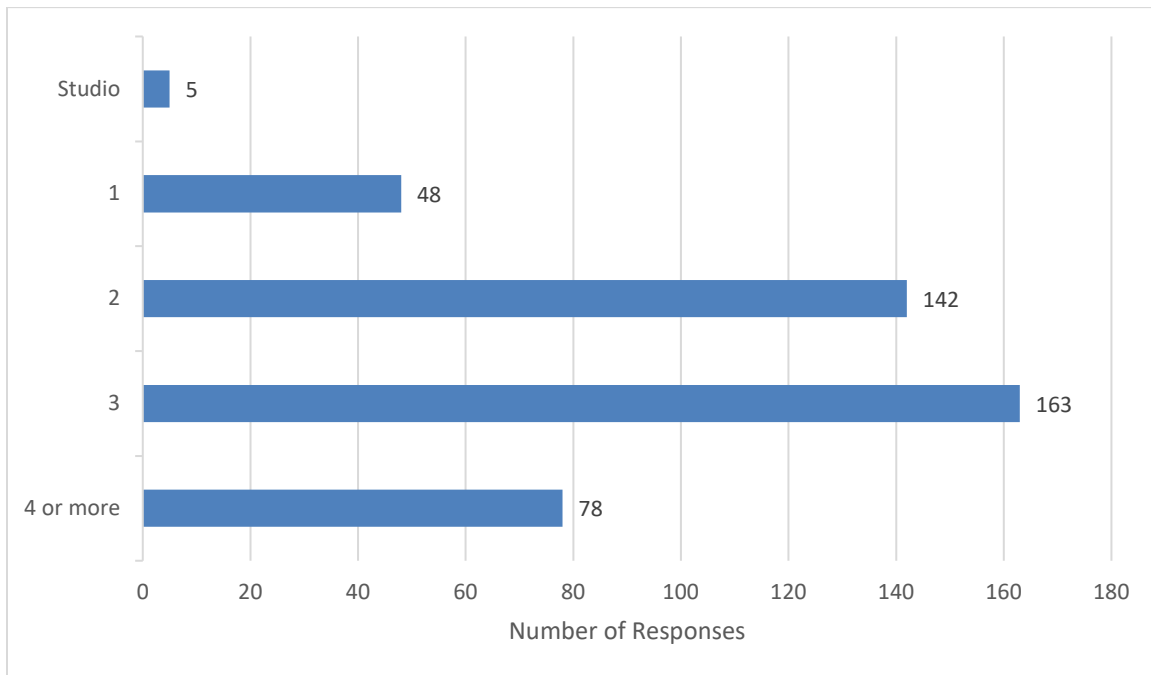
Would a basement apartment suit your needs?



- Many respondents (78%) indicated that a basement apartment would not suit their needs.
- The respondents who included additional comments expressed that a basement apartment does not meet their accessibility needs and would not be ideal due to lack of space, storage, privacy, access to sunlight.

Question 13

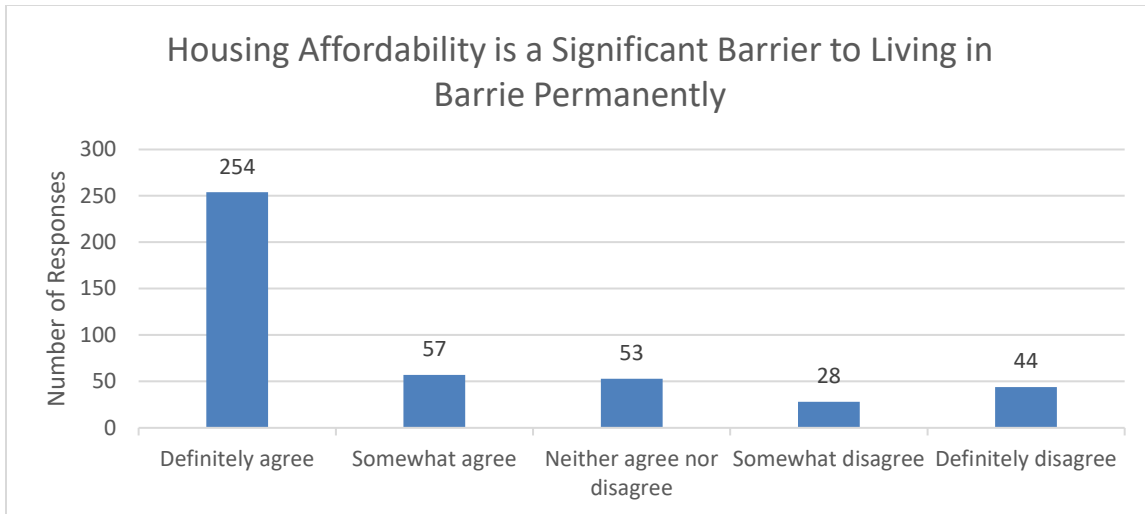
How many bedrooms do you anticipate your household needing in the future?



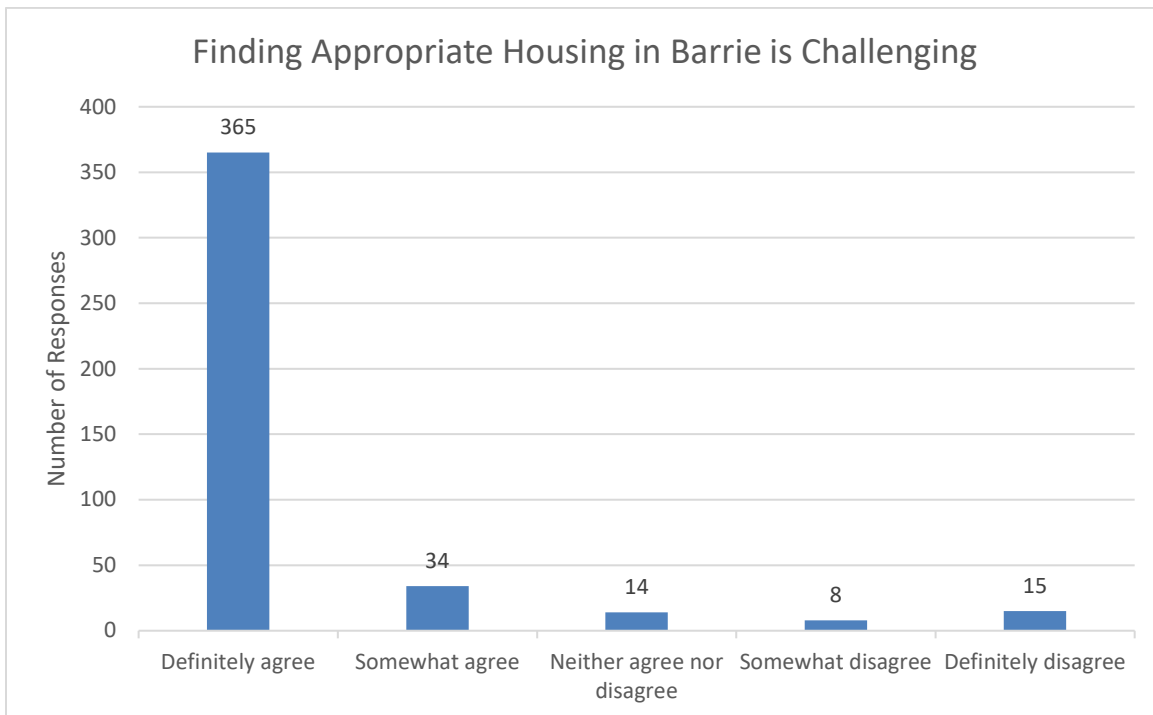
- 55% of respondents are anticipating needing 3 bedrooms or more for their household in the future.

Question 14:

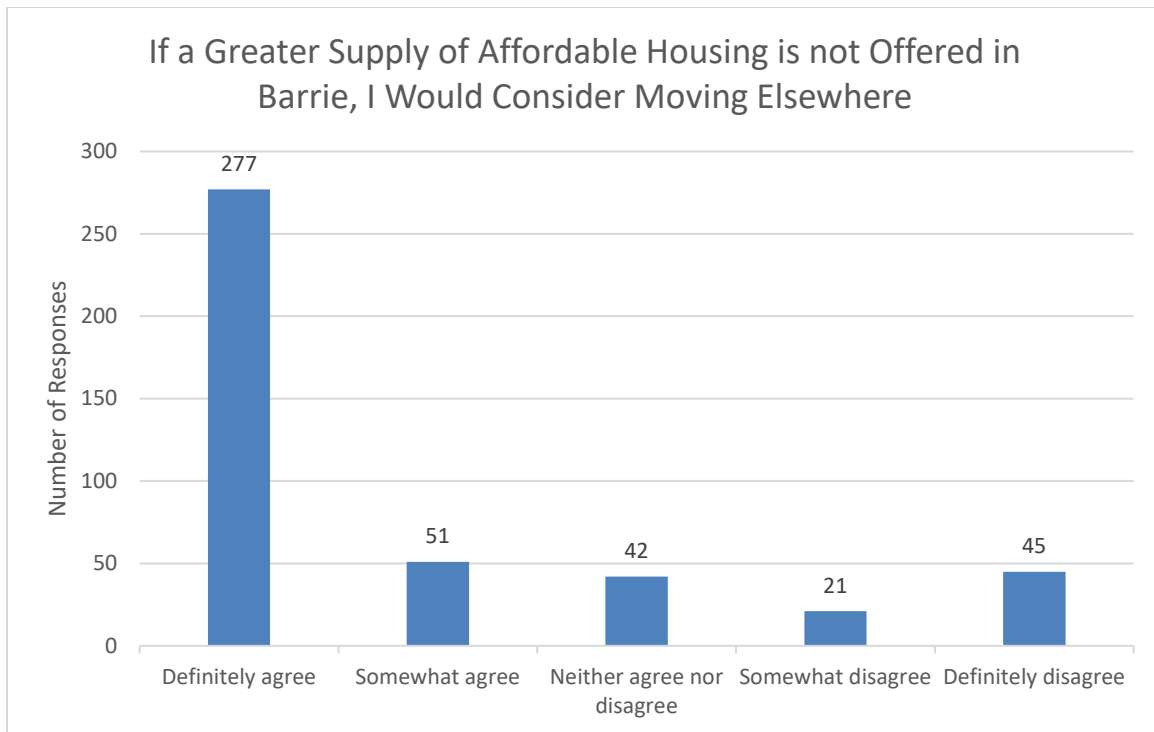
Please indicate your agreement level with the following statements.



- Many respondents (58%) indicated that they definitely agree that housing affordability is a significant barrier to living in Barrie permanently.



- Many respondents (83%) indicated that they definitely agree that finding appropriate housing in Barrie is challenging.



- Many respondents (63%) indicated that if a greater supply of affordable housing is not offered in Barrie, they would consider moving elsewhere.

Question 15

Please share any explanations for your responses to the previous question?

Respondents emphasized the widespread concern about the high and increasing cost of living in Barrie, particularly with housing.

- Housing options in Barrie are considered expensive for what is available.
- The estimated costs to rent or own are perceived as excessively high, making it challenging to afford living in Barrie.
- Barrie is generally viewed as an expensive place to live and unaffordable for students, families, and individuals with average incomes.
- Barrie's rising housing costs and high costs of living disproportionately affect lower-income individuals, making it challenging to cover basic necessities and provide for their families.
- Respondents desire a better quality of life beyond basic shelter and minimal food expenses.
- Barrie's housing costs are comparable to larger and more urban cities, highlighting the intensity of the housing crisis in the area.
- Affordable housing units in new builds are often priced out of reach for many potential buyers.

- The lack of affordable housing options contributes to the overall challenge of finding reasonable living arrangements in Barrie.
- Transit costs in Barrie have increased to the point of being comparable to larger cities like Toronto without corresponding affordable housing options.

Some respondents have considered relocating or have been forced to move out because of Barrie's rising cost of living.

- Respondents are contemplating relocating to more affordable regions due to Barrie's increasing cost of living.
- Some express the idea of moving out of the province if the situation and affordability do not improve.
- Some individuals have been forced to leave Barrie due to high costs, leading to a sense of loss for their community and connections.

Respondents who are homeowners find it increasingly difficult to afford and sustain homeownership due to high property prices, escalating property taxes, and limited affordable housing solutions.

- Property prices have surged along with property taxes, making it challenging even for those with moderate incomes to sustain homeownership without accumulating significant debt.
- High-interest rates and increasing home prices have made it challenging for people to move or afford their homes.
- Homeowners are concerned about financial stability and the long-term feasibility of residing in Barrie.
- The pandemic's impact on jobs and financial stability has made homeownership inaccessible for many.

Question 16

Are you or someone you know affected by the affordability of housing in Barrie? Please share about these challenges and your lived experience.

Respondents highlighted the diverse housing challenges faced by individuals and groups across various income levels, age groups, and backgrounds due to Barrie's lack of affordable housing options. Their responses demonstrate how this has impacted them as renters and potential homeowners. The majority have also highlighted their difficulties in being able to pay their rent, property taxes or mortgages in Barrie.

- Families are forced to live together due to unaffordable housing, resulting in multiple generations sharing one household.
- Families live with extended relatives to distribute housing costs, with some individuals relying on certain family members to help cover rent expenses.
- Many households live in cramped spaces and cannot move out to more suitable ones due to financial constraints.

- Most living situations are shaped by affordability rather than personal preference.
- Single parents with employment still face difficulties finding affordable housing.
- The younger generation finds it challenging to access affordable housing, and with limited job prospects, it is harder for them to consider staying in Barrie long-term.
- Financial constraints force some individuals to remain in unhappy or abusive living conditions because they cannot afford separate living arrangements.
- Individuals living in unauthorized apartments endure safety and health hazards.
- Students are having trouble securing safe and affordable housing, often enduring years in cramped shared spaces.
- Escalating property taxes and housing costs are forcing homeowners to sell their properties and consider relocation.
- Landlords are evicting tenants to sell the property for capital gains or raise rent prices.
- Average earners cannot afford housing despite having a regular income.
- Many low-income and homeless individuals depend on government aid for housing assistance.
- There are limited affordable housing options for seniors transitioning from their homes.
- Seniors who are unable to afford rent rely on assistance from their families.
- Retirement homes and home care services are increasingly costly, making it challenging for seniors and those on fixed incomes.

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #1

May 24th, 2023, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual

Event Summary:

On Wednesday, May 24, 2023, the City of Barrie, NBLC, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met for the first time. The TAC is a group of individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds established into a committee by the City of Barrie to provide input on the Updated Affordable Housing Strategy project.

The TAC is composed of the following groups:

- Social Housing at the County of Simcoe
- Barrie Housing
- Camphill Foundation
- Chantal+Michael Realty Group Brokerage
- MCL Architects
- Georgian College
- Redwood Park Communities
- City of Barrie Finance Department

The meeting included a presentation by NBLC, which involved the following:

- Overview of the project including where we are now and phases to be completed.
- Presentation of the Draft Housing Needs Assessment.
- Proposed Engagement Strategy.
- Next steps for the project.

After NBLC's presentation a question and answer period occurred. At this time NBLC made clarifications and educated the TAC on the project, the TAC provided feedback on the draft Housing Needs Assessment and suggested ideas for the later phases of work, and the City of Barrie discussed the role of the TAC and their next steps in this project overall.

'What We Heard' Summary:

Feedback from the TAC regarding the presented Draft Housing Needs Assessment and suggestions they had in terms of potential policy tools that could be explored are summarized below. Discussions that occurred regarding the presented engagement strategy are also summarized below.

Feedback on the Draft Housing Needs Assessment:

The TAC was invited to provide feedback on the Draft Housing Needs Assessment presented to them by NBLC. The following reflects the key points shared:

- Rented rooms should be added to the rental housing survey and affordability gap analysis. TAC members from community mental health and student housing backgrounds emphasized individuals resorting to renting rooms in Barrie because other housing options are unaffordable. TAC members were interested to see how the cost to rent a room compares to other rental units in Barrie in terms of affordability. TAC members offered to share data with NBLC and this will be explored further within a subsequent phase of the project.

Discussing Policies/Tools to Explore in Phase 2 and 3:

The meeting led into a discussion about the next phases of work where NBLC will begin to explore policy options that the City of Barrie could implement to increase the supply of affordable housing. The following summarizes the key ideas discussed:

- There is a difficulty for non-profit groups to obtain financing. TAC organizations have shared experience of long waiting times to get commercial mortgage approvals, which impacts their ability to compete in the market when purchasing new homes/buildings/sites.
- The supply of new affordable housing has slowed down given this struggle to secure financing for new affordable housing developments/purchases by non-profit and charitable organizations.
- Housing targets set out by the County of Simcoe and City of Barrie do not accurately capture affordability and should be re-evaluated to be more effective in the Updated Affordable Housing Strategy. Moving from a specific unit count/ target to a ratio or index will be explored.
- Incentives for smaller developers and builders should be explored in the next phases of work. Smaller organizations have different financial needs and abilities, a one-size-fits-all approach.

Self-Identifying Groups for Stakeholder Consultations:

Throughout the meeting some of the TAC groups self-identified to be part of the stakeholder consultation meetings. These groups and their interests are identified below:

- Camphill Foundation: Discussed they can provide the perspective of the needs of individuals who require supportive housing. Camphill acquires new homes to provide supportive housing and are also offering their own staff affordable housing as a means of attracting and retaining employees.
- Redwood Park Communities: Interested in discussing advocacy efforts or tools that can be implemented to help charitable organizations like themselves better secure lending from banks.

Council Meeting #1

June 7th, 2023, 7:30 pm

Barrie City Hall (70 Collier Street, Barrie, Ontario)

Event Summary:

On Wednesday, June 7, 2023, NBLC attended a City of Barrie Council meeting in-person at Barrie City Hall. In this meeting NBLC presented on the final Housing Needs Assessment to inform Councillors about the results of the analysis. A question and answer period occurred shortly afterward, with the following questions and feedback provided to NBLC from the City Councillors:

- How much does a single parent have to make to live affordably in the City of Barrie?
- Is the housing wait list composed of families or individuals?
- Would the home share program at Georgian College fall under next steps of this project?
- Is there any available data that can highlight the affordability issues in Barrie into the future? What about something that can be used by those with a 5 year mortgage coming to an end soon?
- If a finding is that we need to create more rental housing, how can Council control the tenure that support is going to?
- Moving forward do you see more social housing or co-op housing as a solution in the short term, understanding that other new affordable housing development would take 3-5 years?
- Is social housing for the middle class?
- What do you see as the impact of increasing development charges?
- Comments from the Mayor that the next presentation to Council on this project needs to be a solution to the problem. Also noted that it needs to be presented in 2023 so that they can understand what's to come for 2024 budget implications.

The above questions and comments were integrated into the development of the Strategic Direction Options Report.

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #2

July 10th, 2023, 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Virtual

Event Summary:

On Monday, July 10, 2023, the City of Barrie, NBLC, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met for the second time.

The deliverable for Phase 2 of the Updated Affordable Housing Strategy is currently being developed, which consists of a list of draft recommended policy options that the City of Barrie can implement to address the need of affordable housing. In early July it was determined by the City of Barrie to delay further engagement with the public and other stakeholder groups to focus on engaging with the TAC as these policy option recommendations are being developed. To ensure all voices were heard, half of the TAC attended this meeting, with the other half attending a second meeting on July 11th, as detailed on Page 10. The July 10th meeting consisted of the following groups:

- Barrie Housing
- Camphill Foundation
- Georgian College
- Redwood Park Communities
- Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness

This meeting was facilitated by NBLC where we asked a variety of probing questions regarding the issue of affordable housing in the City of Barrie and the tools that could be developed as solutions. The meeting allowed for an open dialogue across all attendees to discuss individual experiences and opinions and to collaborate on potential policy options that could be recommended.

'What We Heard' Summary:

The questions asked by NBLC and a summary of the responses and feedback from the TAC are provided below.

Question 1:

What do you think are the biggest obstacles/barriers to date on the issue of affordable housing in the City of Barrie?

- Financing is a barrier, particularly to non-profit groups. Banks consider non-profits high-risk and make it difficult for them to receive financing. TAC members from non-profit groups discussed having unencumbered properties and equity in owned developments but still are unable to obtain financing from banks and secondary lenders. Overall opinion from TAC members that the financial industry has blacklisted charities and non-profits, and with little funding available from other levels of government it is a big obstacle to develop and maintain affordable housing units.

- Retention of affordable housing units is an obstacle. Discussion amongst the TAC that when individuals leave or get evicted from affordable housing units, the rent of the unit then gets increased to market levels for the next tenant. Interest in stabilizing these units and creating more protection for renters.
- Available partnerships and resources from the City or local corporations are not distributed equitably. Certain charities and non-profits have monopolized on local opportunities. Overall opinion from the TAC that smaller non-profit groups should be involved in the distribution of land, incentives, or public-private partnerships.

Question 2:

What do you think the City should be doing in the immediate term to improve housing conditions in Barrie?

- Improving funding was noted across all TAC members. Discussion about the End of Operating Agreements which will allow housing providers to move RGI units to higher rent levels. With no funding available, a lot of smaller affordable housing providers are tapped out of their resources and will be pushed to move units from affordable rates to market rates to operate their buildings.
- A City-operated subsidized secondary suites program or tiny homes program could help to get more units built that could be priced affordably. Building secondary suites in particular is relatively quick to do and could be developed in the short term. The TAC is eager to encourage the County to keep the scattered sites they are selling off and develop them with secondary suites or tiny homes included as an additional unit on site.

Question 3:

Discussion of potential policy tools/solutions:

- Non-traditional housing forms like home sharing programs and co-housing should be encouraged, particularly for younger renters.
- Building residential units on top of one-storey commercial buildings.
- Approved as-of-right site plans for housing that can easily be adapted – i.e. modular secondary suites, 4-storey wood-frame apartment buildings, stacked townhouses, etc.
- Improving housing targets – have them grounded based on a ratio of people within certain income bands to the number of homes existing at those rates or from a rental perspective being based on vacancy rates being within balanced conditions.

Question 4:

Keeping in mind that the City has limited resources, what do you think their priority should be?

- Declaring housing as a right and then prioritizing the people who don't have any.
- Increasing funding opportunities for non-profit groups.

- Encouraging a paradigm shift on the renter side – concern amongst the TAC about the City considering the issue of affordability in terms of individuals not being able to buy housing. Emphasis that there needs to be a priority placed on renter households who are struggling to afford first and last months rent over households struggling to put together a downpayment. Renters are driving household growth in Barrie and are important residents that need to be prioritized.

Question 5:

How should the City fund these potential recommendations/solutions?

- If possible, the City could co-sign on loans for non-profit groups or issue lines of credit for groups that have approved funding but haven't received it and want to start construction.
- Rework the existing CIP with increased funding for affordable housing.
- Increase property taxes but find a way to reframe it as a separate fund to align to the Mayor's 0% tax increase platform.

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #3

July 11th, 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Virtual

Event Summary:

On Tuesday, July 11, 2023, the other half of the TAC that did not attend the July 10th meeting attended a virtual meeting with the City of Barrie and NBLC to discuss the issue of affordable housing in Barrie and the policy options being developed as solutions.

This meeting consisted of the following groups:

- Chantal+Michael Realty Group Brokerage
- MCL Architects
- Social Housing at the County of Simcoe
- City of Barrie Finance Department

This meeting was facilitated by NBLC where we asked a variety of probing questions regarding the issue of affordable housing in the City of Barrie and the tools that could be developed as solutions. The meeting allowed for an open dialogue across all attendees to discuss individual experiences and opinions and to collaborate on potential policy options that could be recommended.

'What We Heard' Summary:

The questions asked by NBLC and a summary of the responses and feedback from the TAC are provided below.

Question 1:

What do you think are the biggest obstacles/barriers to date on the issue of affordable housing in the City of Barrie?

- Lack of integration congruency across City departments. TAC members discussed examples of Councillors and the building, planning, and finance departments having differing opinions on development applications. Opinion from some TAC members to encourage these groups to work together, if a policy is permissive on one end it should be on all.
- From the City's perspective (Finance Department) growth is expensive and it is an obstacle to justify to a tax payer that they need to pay for infrastructure and servicing for growth in the South end of Barrie's greenfield land while they are already paying for the infrastructure they use. There are challenges to intensifying in places where the infrastructure already exists, and the City is also confined by their phasing plan which includes secondary plan areas with significant greenfield land needing development.

- NIMBYSM – there are specific areas of the City where there is significant pushback on intensification. People seem to understand height and density in the downtown core, but it's a struggle elsewhere, with the East end of Barrie being particularly difficult. On this topic, the issue of also intensifying with affordable housing is pushed back against as neighbours think that there will be crime and social issues coming along with affordable housing in the neighbourhood. Conversation that there needs to be an education component on the importance of developing high-density housing, affordable housing, and differences between low-income and middle-income groups. Suggestion from some TAC members that having a figure of authority from the City like a Councillor push back against NIMBYSM would help a lot.

Question 2:

What do you think the City should be doing in the immediate term to improve housing conditions in Barrie?

- A subsidized registered secondary suites program would improve housing conditions and can be done in the short term. Secondary suites are an advantage for people from an affordability standpoint to getting a mortgage and also to paying it off.
- Advocate to upper levels of government to clearly articulate the state of housing and the emphasis that needs to be placed on the rental market.
- Create clarity in the approvals process, avoid red tape and the need for numerous revisions and resubmissions to applications which can be a burden to soft cost firms like architects and engineers.
- Advocate to Provincial and Federal government regarding mandates on immigration and foreign investment – both are factors driving demand but there is not enough supply to keep pace.

Question 3:

What are your thoughts on the best use of City-owned land from an affordable housing perspective?

- Gearing it towards rental housing and to the people who are most in need.
- Creating partnerships with community organizations and non-profits on the development of affordable housing on City-owned land.
- Consider as-of-right zoning for higher densities.

Question 4:

What revenue tools are available to the City of Barrie?

- The City of Barrie just passed their first CBC by-law which collects 4% of land value for growth related infrastructure, including affordable housing development. Noted this is the only revenue tool that they have and it provides no where near what charging development charges for affordable housing did (now exempt through Bill 23).

- There is no other funding unless it's a grant from another level of government or funding from the City's tax base.

Question 5:

How should the City fund these potential recommendations/solutions?

- Adding a line to the property tax bill for affordable housing is palatable. Discussion amongst the TAC that many people aren't fully aware what's on their tax bill, and if it is collected through a separate fund like the 'City Building Fund' in Toronto then it doesn't go against the Mayor's 0% tax increase mandate. Overall, opinion that people will always argue that tax payers shouldn't have to pay for certain things, but it's all philosophical and depends on Council voting.

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #4

September 18th, 2023, 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Virtual

Event Summary:

On Monday, September 18, 2023, the City of Barrie, NBLC and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met to discuss NBLC's Draft Strategic Direction Options Report.

This meeting consisted of the following groups:

- MCL Architects
- Campfield Communities Ontario – Barrie & Simcoe County
- Barrie Housing
- Social Housing at the County of Simcoe
- Social and Community Services at the County of Simcoe
- Simcoe County Alliance to end homelessness – Barrie Chapter
- City of Barrie Finance Department

This meeting was facilitated by the City of Barrie. A presentation was provided on the Draft Strategic Direction Options Report to highlight the solutions being considered to improve housing affordability in the City of Barrie. A question and answer period occurred afterward, where NBLC received feedback and answered inquiries from the TAC on the draft report.

'What We Heard' Summary:

The following provides a summary of the key feedback and commentary received from the TAC.

- It was noted that the report was heavily focused on supply side issues and recommendations. While municipalities do not have much control over demand side forces, they should still advocate for demand side solutions.
- Referring to the perceived need for more demand solutions in the report, and in response to the impact of rental exploitation as a factor in current housing conditions, rental protections were suggested as an addition to the report's recommendations.
- The numbers cited to be Altus cost estimates should be better articulated in terms of what the costs include, as these will likely be scrutinized upon review by other parties.
- Parking reduction/elimination via zoning changes, as well as of case studies that reflect this, should be included in the report.
- Leveraging public land for social housing on a municipal level is an important solution.

- It's easy for people to gloss over national housing targets, but putting the focus on how many homes should be built on the municipal level, based on the national targets, can help make the housing needs in various municipalities clearer.
- When for-profits operate affordable housing, issues come up. Having operators that focus on making enough money to operate the housing without prioritizing profit maximization is important.
- There are international students that can no longer afford to live in Canada and are forced to return to their country of origin after finishing school. Student housing is noted as an important need.
- End of Operating Agreements should be discussed in the report. While the social housing operators primary mandate is to stay affordable, they will have to increase their share of market rate units to offset costs of operating RGI units without subsidies. Barrie Housing would have to flip quite a few of their RGI units to market rent levels to cover costs.
- There currently are illegally operating secondary suites in the City of Barrie. Legislation requiring these landlords to meet building standards could cause them to stop operating these units as they may not be able to afford the costs. This should be discussed in the report.

Council Meeting #2 – Affordability Committee

September 27th, 2023, 5:00 pm

Barrie City Hall (70 Collier Street, Barrie, Ontario)

Event Summary:

On Wednesday, September 27, 2023, NBLC attended an in-person meeting with the City of Barrie's Affordability Committee. In this meeting the City of Barrie presented on the Strategic Directions Options report to show the Affordability Committee the draft policy options being brought forward through the Updated Affordable Housing Strategy.

A question and answer period occurred after the presentation, with the following questions and feedback provided to NBLC from the committee:

- In terms of the recommendation to enact a rental replacement bylaw to preserve existing rental stock, there should be a piece of that where if the City expropriating a property with existing rental units they would also be responsible for restoring that rental stock.
- Why is prioritizing housing outcomes on public land considered a minimum impact? Discussed it was an element to the lack of public land that the City has.
- Under creating a funding stream for affordable housing and development incentives - the City has a funding stream through affordable housing and chooses to deliver that through the County. Comment about changing this policy recommendation to say 'increase' or 'enhance' the funding stream.
- Discussion about new affordable housing costing between \$100,000 and \$300,000 a door. If the City delivered \$100M, it would return 1,000 affordable housing units. City Council looking for further examples of this to determine if they should weigh their funding to the County of Simcoe. The deeper the level of affordability of those units the greater the subsidy required.
- Where does the need for rental fit in in targeting affordability? Is there any rental policy opportunities and ways to incentivize rental getting built?
- Shifting of the public discourse on infill development is important. Hopefully consultation feedback from the future perspective first-time buyer in particular can be heard.
- It's extremely problematic that there are 'next to no options of rental or ownership housing for moderate income households.' If the private market cannot provide this, it presumably needs to be the public market. Traditionally the public sector paid for it and now that they are out of the business of housing we are reaping the impacts. In the absence of the federal government contributing, there does need to be more public involvement.
- The Official Plan has a target of 15% of units being affordable, and if developers don't want to build them they can pay cash-in-lieu (MMAH approved both of these 6 months ago). Can NBLC provide some tools to put these into effect? Discussion that the municipality cannot require affordable housing, only try to meet their targets through incentives and regulatory approaches.

- For neighbourhoods that are sensitive to change, off the shelf designs will allow Councillors to work with the residents to provide something more accepted that provides an older neighbourhood feel.

The above questions and comments will be integrated into the development of the final Updated Affordable Housing Strategy.

Public Survey & Online Discussion Forum #2

Oct 23th to Nov 14th, 2023

Online

Event Summary:

Feedback gathered for the Housing Needs Assessment in spring 2023 has informed the creation of multiple affordable housing policy options in Barrie, resulting in 10 action items.

An online survey was made available to the public to determine the most important priorities and action items. The survey was available on the Building Barrie website from Oct 23th to Nov 14th, 2023. The survey was completed by 123 participants.

Council will consider the feedback received when deciding which action items to prioritize for updating the Affordable Housing Strategy.

'What We Heard' Summary:

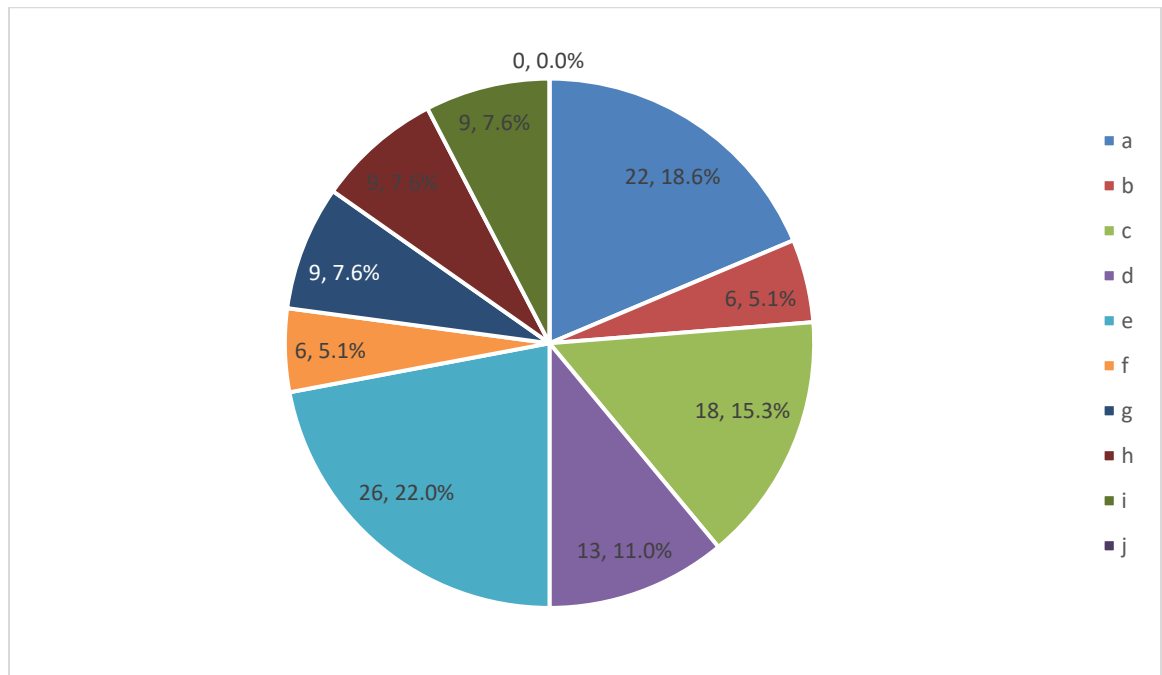
The survey questions and a summary of the survey responses are provided below.

Question 1:

In your opinion, which action item is most important?

- a) Undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories).
- b) Financial incentives: Offer financial incentives for projects contributing affordable units.
- c) Prioritize housing outcomes on public land: This option looks at municipal land holding that may be appropriate for residential development.
- d) Work towards a decision faster: Timely City approvals directly ties to a project's affordability. This option prioritizes continuous process improvements for even faster approvals.
- e) Create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects).
- f) Create a concierge program to move strategic projects through the organization's approval process: This option prioritizes expanding the current concierge's project portfolio throughout various City departments.
- g) Enhancing participation in Simcoe County's Secondary Suite Program: The City is currently taking part in this program. This option prioritizes allocating additional funding to those providing deeply affordable accessory dwelling units.
- h) Enact a Rental Replacement By-law: With more Federal/Provincial rental housing development support, this option prioritizes preserving current stock while ensuring long-term maintenance of newly built rentals.
- i) Continue shifting the public discourse around growth/housing: This option prioritizes continually working with neighbourhoods, developers, and the public to understand their needs while also gently intensifying where appropriate.

- j) Explore the potential for Inclusionary Zoning in Barrie: Inclusionary zoning would permit significant changes in the city’s two Major Transit Station Areas to require a developer to deliver affordable housing through zoning.



- Most respondents to this survey (22.0%) chose option E, ‘create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects)’.

Question 2:

Why? (a) Undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories)

- Increased density standards and allowing multi-unit dwellings in all neighbourhoods can reduce housing costs city-wide.
- Create measures to discourage single, detached housing construction.
- Encourage rental units that are affordable to both students and seniors.
- It should be legally enforced for developers to build a percentage of affordable housing units in all new developments.
- Redevelop unused plazas and malls into multi-use developments that include both housing and shopping.
- More density translates to more affordable housing.
- Functional and affordable public transit requires greater density.
- City policies and procedures need to be reviewed to improve treatment of people and residents.
- Need a medium between single-detached housing and high-rise developments, such as walk-up style, few floor apartments.
- More flexible zoning to allow for the re-use of underutilized land and buildings.
- Gently intensifying and reducing yard setbacks can enable homeowners to utilize land without sacrificing their backyards.

Why? (b) Financial incentives: Offer financial incentives for projects contributing affordable units.

- Provide incentives to landlords and developers.

Why? (c) Prioritize housing outcomes on public land: This option looks at municipal land holding that may be appropriate for residential development.

- Blend new development with existing urban fabric.
- Cost effective option that can be implemented in addition to the donation of materials and time from local contractors and builders.
- This option will add to the tax base and help finance other options going forward.
- Can facilitate faster development and make use of underused, existing space.
- Consider building mobile or prefabricated temporary homes for faster solutions.
- These lands can be converted quickly as they are likely already serviced and examined.
- Consider locations such as old factories, lofts and churches.

Why? (d) Work towards a decision faster: Timely City approvals directly ties to a project's affordability. This option prioritizes continuous process improvements for even faster approvals.

- Confront current red tape – resulting in delays and additional costs.
- Accelerate approvals and impose penalties in the event of a delay for developers.

Why? (e) Create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects).

- Affordable housing can work to address the city’s homelessness crisis.
- Affordable housing opportunities will foster successful participation in employment.
- Increase funding towards housing cooperatives.
- Find alternative options for housing - separate from private developments.
- The market and private sector cannot be the sole primary provider, government assistance is necessary.
- Can work to fix current issues of low-income people and those on ODSP not having anywhere to live.
- Include social and mental health supports.
- Can have immediate impact.
- Consider the re-allocation of existing funds.
- Important to create solutions that are not controlled by a profit motive.

Why? (f) Create a concierge program to move strategic projects through the organization’s approval process: This option prioritizes expanding the current concierge’s project portfolio throughout various City departments.

- No comments received.

Why? (g) Enhancing participation in Simcoe County’s Secondary Suite Program: The City is currently taking part in this program. This option prioritizes allocating additional funding to those providing deeply affordable accessory dwelling units.

- Can result in quicker housing options.
- More attention to be paid towards non-corporate developers.
- Second suites and detached accessory units are more urgent and can provide quicker results.
- Allows for the residents to be involved and participate in creating more affordable housing options.

Why? (h) Enact a Rental Replacement By-law: With more Federal/Provincial rental housing development support, this option prioritizes preserving current stock while ensuring long-term maintenance of newly built rentals.

- Create affordable, safe and comfortable housing options for young adults, aside from high-density options.
- Government enforcement needed to provide rent caps.
- Create subsidized housing for peoples with disability, seniors, and those on fixed income.
- Work towards intensification, rather than developing on new land.
- Control current Airbnb and short-term housing to increase the availability of long-term rentals.

Why? (i) Continue shifting the public discourse around growth/housing: This option prioritizes continually working with neighbourhoods, developers, and the public to understand their needs while also gently intensifying where appropriate.

- Create a discourse and proper understanding of “affordable housing”.
- Create and understanding in the community, that “affordable housing” as we know it, is still not affordable for many.
- Shifting the discourse around growth/housing is the most economical option.
- Target existing city issues such as gridlock and traffic congestion prior to targeting new development.
- Due to the lack of public funds, resident and municipal taxes should go towards this cause.

Why? (j) Explore the potential for Inclusionary Zoning in Barrie: Inclusionary zoning would permit significant changes in the city’s two Major Transit Station Areas to require a developer to deliver affordable housing through zoning.

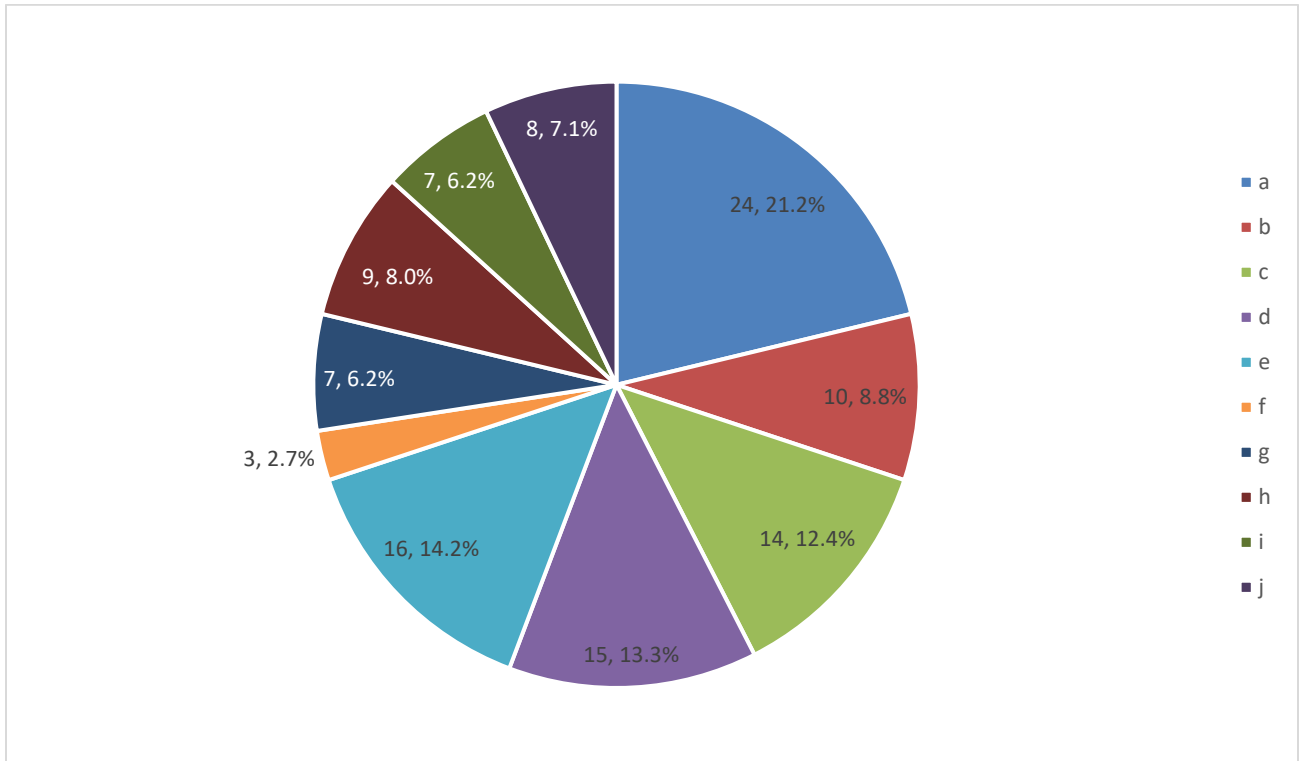
- Important to create affordable housing in the areas that foster employment opportunities and access to transit.
- Need affordable, high-density housing near transit.
- Will promote access to essential services.

Question 3:

In your opinion, which action item is the best to implement in Barrie?

- a) Undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories).
- b) Financial incentives: Offer financial incentives for projects contributing affordable units.
- c) Prioritize housing outcomes on public land: This option looks at municipal land holding that may be appropriate for residential development.
- d) Work towards a decision faster: Timely City approvals directly ties to a project's affordability. This option prioritizes continuous process improvements for even faster approvals.
- e) Create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects).
- f) Create a concierge program to move strategic projects through the organization’s approval process: This option prioritizes expanding the current concierge’s project portfolio throughout various City departments.
- g) Enhancing participation in Simcoe County’s Secondary Suite Program: The City is currently taking part in this program. This option prioritizes allocating additional funding to those providing deeply affordable accessory dwelling units.
- h) Enact a Rental Replacement By-law: With more Federal/Provincial rental housing development support, this option prioritizes preserving current stock while ensuring long-term maintenance of newly built rentals.

- i) Continue shifting the public discourse around growth/housing: This option prioritizes continually working with neighbourhoods, developers, and the public to understand their needs while also gently intensifying where appropriate.
- j) Explore the potential for Inclusionary Zoning in Barrie: Inclusionary zoning would permit significant changes in the city’s two Major Transit Station Areas to require a developer to deliver affordable housing through zoning.



- **Most respondents to this survey (21.2%) chose option A, ‘undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories)’.**

Question 4:

Why? (a) Undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories).

- Make it easier to create affordable housing units through less restrictive zoning bylaws.
- Create measures to discourage single, detached housing construction.
- Encourage rental units that are affordable to both students and seniors.
- It should be legally enforced for developers to build a percentage of affordable housing units in all new developments.
- Need more diverse housing options.
- More flexible zoning to allow for the re-use of underutilized land and buildings.
- Redevelop unused plazas and malls into multi-use developments that include both housing and shopping.
- Greatest likelihood for faster improvement.
- Create more accessible ways for community members interested in development, to contact and connect with the City.
- Build in areas that are quiet and peaceful in addition to main/busy areas.
- Involve builders in the solution so that it can be sustainable, and equal for both sides.

Why? (b) Financial incentives: Offer financial incentives for projects contributing affordable units.

- Financial incentives can work to encourage affordable housing amongst community members/neighbourhoods who may initially be hesitant.
- Can help keep costs low for potential buyers and rentals.
- Encourage and incentivize people modifying current homes to include additional units for those requiring affordable housing.

Why? (c) Prioritize housing outcomes on public land: This option looks at municipal land holding that may be appropriate for residential development.

- This option will add to the tax base and help finance other options going forward.
- Can facilitate faster development and make use of underused existing spaces.
- Consider building mobile or prefabricated temporary homes for faster solutions.
- Blend new development with existing urban fabric.

Why? (d) Work towards a decision faster: Timely City approvals directly ties to a project's affordability. This option prioritizes continuous process improvements for even faster approvals.

- Removing red tap can help push initiatives forward.
- Accelerate approvals and impose penalties in the event of a delay for developers.
- Prioritize the improvement of housing for those currently in poor housing conditions.

Why? (e) Create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects).

- Affordable housing can work to address the city’s homelessness crisis.
- Affordable housing opportunities will foster successful participation in employment.
- Find alternative options for housing - separate from private developments.
- Can work to fix current issues of low-income people and those on ODSP not having anywhere to live.
- Include social and mental health supports.

Why? (f) Create a concierge program to move strategic projects through the organization’s approval process: This option prioritizes expanding the current concierge’s project portfolio throughout various City departments.

- No comments received.

Why? (g) Enhancing participation in Simcoe County’s Secondary Suite Program: The City is currently taking part in this program. This option prioritizes allocating additional funding to those providing deeply affordable accessory dwelling units.

- Create rent caps on all units of all sizes and quality.
- There are units that are under-used because they are not affordable or worthy of price.

Why? (h) Enact a Rental Replacement By-law: With more Federal/Provincial rental housing development support, this option prioritizes preserving current stock while ensuring long-term maintenance of newly built rentals.

- Need to preserve rental stock.
- Can work to stop erosion.

Why? (i) Continue shifting the public discourse around growth/housing: This option prioritizes continually working with neighbourhoods, developers, and the public to understand their needs while also gently intensifying where appropriate.

- Create a discourse and proper understanding of “affordable housing”.
- Create and understanding in the community, that “affordable housing” as we know it, is still not affordable for many.

Why? (j) Explore the potential for Inclusionary Zoning in Barrie: Inclusionary zoning would permit significant changes in the city’s two Major Transit Station Areas to require a developer to deliver affordable housing through zoning.

- Need affordable, high-density housing near transit.
- Will promote access to essential services.

Public Engagement Meeting #2

*Affordable Housing Strategy Update Open House – Nov 9th, 2023, 3:30 pm – 6:00pm
 City Hall Rotunda (70 Collier Street, Barrie, Ontario)*

Event Summary:

On Thursday November 9, 2023, the City of Barrie hosted an Open House from 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm at City Hall Rotunda in Barrie. Approximately 21 people participated in and attended the event.

This drop-in event provided an opportunity to the public to:

- Learn about the types of policies which could be implemented, the possible costs associated with the proposed initiatives & the work already being done to assist in developing affordable housing.
- Engage with staff and ask questions.
- Share which of the possible action items is most important to you.

A booth to showcase the City of Barrie's Affordable Housing Strategy Updates was set up. The booth was equipped with two engagement boards intended to inform and seek feedback from the public about the City of Barrie's Affordable Housing Strategy including policy options. The public was invited to share advice, questions, and additional comments.

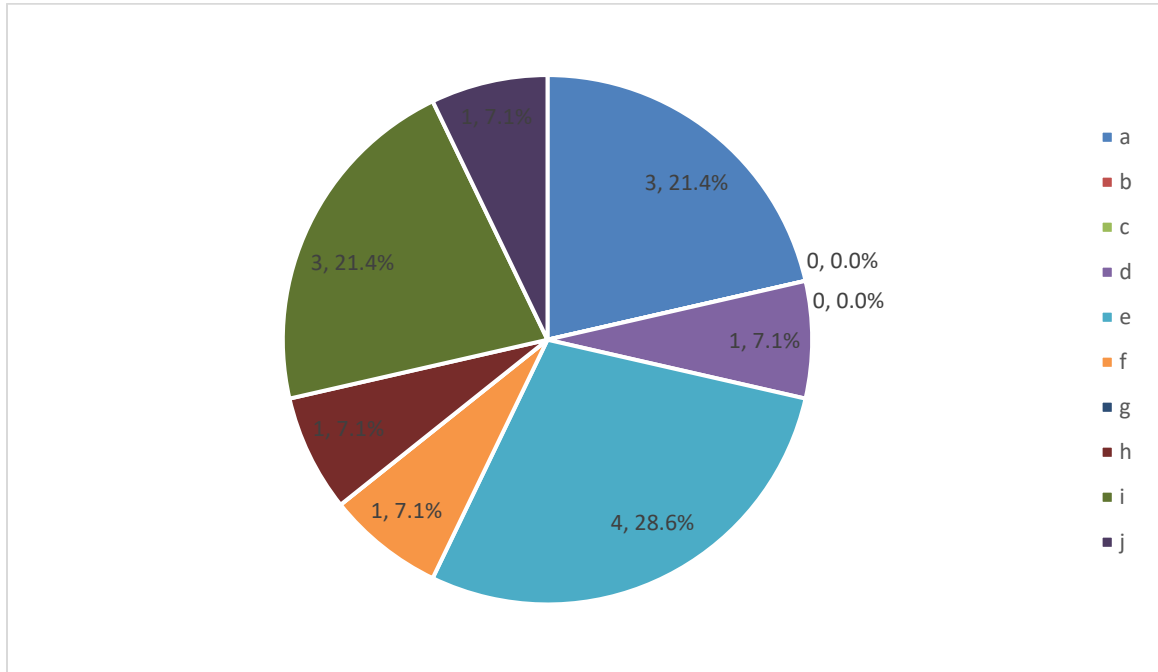
Conversations were guided by a series of engagement questions on each of the engagement boards:

Question 1:

In your opinion, which action item is most important?

- a) Undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories).
- b) Financial incentives: Offer financial incentives for projects contributing affordable units.
- c) Prioritize housing outcomes on public land: This option looks at municipal land holding that may be appropriate for residential development.
- d) Work towards a decision faster: Timely City approvals directly ties to a project's affordability. This option prioritizes continuous process improvements for even faster approvals.
- e) Create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects).
- f) Create a concierge program to move strategic projects through the organization's approval process: This option prioritizes expanding the current concierge's project portfolio throughout various City departments.
- g) Enhancing participation in Simcoe County's Secondary Suite Program: The City is currently taking part in this program. This option prioritizes allocating additional funding to those providing deeply affordable accessory dwelling units.

- h) Enact a Rental Replacement By-law: With more Federal/Provincial rental housing development support, this option prioritizes preserving current stock while ensuring long-term maintenance of newly built rentals.
- i) Continue shifting the public discourse around growth/housing: This option prioritizes continually working with neighbourhoods, developers, and the public to understand their needs while also gently intensifying where appropriate.
- j) Explore the potential for Inclusionary Zoning in Barrie: Inclusionary zoning would permit significant changes in the city’s two Major Transit Station Areas to require a developer to deliver affordable housing through zoning.



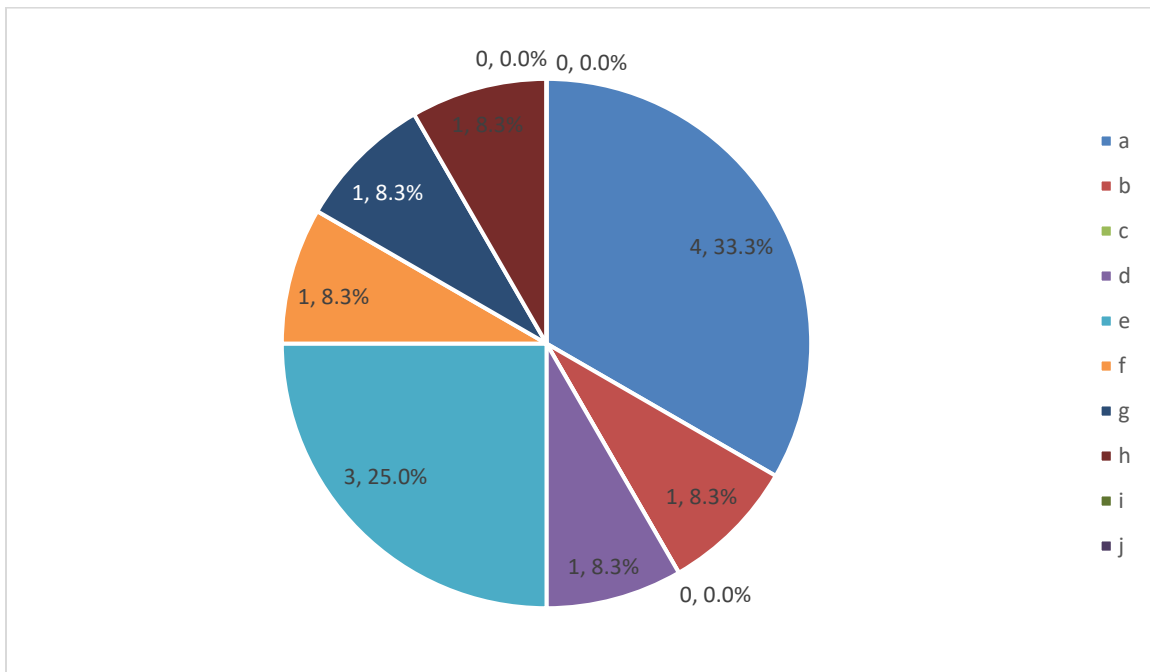
- **Most respondents to this survey (43%) chose option E, ‘create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects)’.**

Question 2:

In your opinion, which action item is the best to implement in Barrie?

- a) Undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories).
- b) Financial incentives: Offer financial incentives for projects contributing affordable units.
- c) Prioritize housing outcomes on public land: This option looks at municipal land holding that may be appropriate for residential development.

- d) Work towards a decision faster: Timely City approvals directly ties to a project's affordability. This option prioritizes continuous process improvements for even faster approvals.
- e) Create an affordable housing funding stream: This option looks to create a funding program for affordable housing projects (i.e., increase taxes to designate funds to assist with the creation of new affordable housing projects).
- f) Create a concierge program to move strategic projects through the organization's approval process: This option prioritizes expanding the current concierge's project portfolio throughout various City departments.
- g) Enhancing participation in Simcoe County's Secondary Suite Program: The City is currently taking part in this program. This option prioritizes allocating additional funding to those providing deeply affordable accessory dwelling units.
- h) Enact a Rental Replacement By-law: With more Federal/Provincial rental housing development support, this option prioritizes preserving current stock while ensuring long-term maintenance of newly built rentals.
- i) Continue shifting the public discourse around growth/housing: This option prioritizes continually working with neighbourhoods, developers, and the public to understand their needs while also gently intensifying where appropriate.
- j) Explore the potential for Inclusionary Zoning in Barrie: Inclusionary zoning would permit significant changes in the city's two Major Transit Station Areas to require a developer to deliver affordable housing through zoning.



- **Most respondents to this survey (33.3%) chose option A, ‘undertake a Zoning By-law review: prioritizing how zoning standards and regulations can contribute to affordable housing development (i.e., increased height and density, reduced setbacks, more permissive building types in all zone categories)’.**