

MISSION: AFFORDABLE FORUM

THE MISSION, AS YOU ACCEPTED IT ...

On February 11, 2026, CivicAction and its Housing Affordability Collaborative convened cross-sector leaders, bringing together public, private, non-profit, and community partners to **advance practical solutions to workforce housing affordability in the GTHA.**

The Forum focused on strengthening partnerships, aligning systems, and accelerating housing delivery for the workers who power our region. Through dynamic speakers, panels, and discussions, participants explored how coordinated action can unlock supply, reduce barriers, and better support essential workers. Moving from analysis to real implementation, grounded in workforce housing [research](#) and the collaborating voices of 306 key leaders, CivicAction's draft **Workforce Housing Affordability Playbook for Action** was unveiled as a shared framework for collaboration and tested with participants during facilitated discussions.

Interested in the insights from the day?

- Watch a summary of the day & hear from leaders in attendance: [Mission: Affordable Forum highlights](#)
- Watch key panels and speakers: [Presentations](#)
- Watch CivicAction's [When We Leave: The Cost of Housing Unaffordability](#)



Ana Bailão,
CEO, Build
Canada
Homes



**Mayor
Olivia
Chow,** City
of Toronto



Ray Williams,
Chair & Co-
Founder, Black
Opportunity
Fund

85

Participants from public, private, finance, healthcare, non-profit, community, and academic sectors

7 PARTNERS

Based on in-room polling, participants included a mix of Playbook partners: capital providers (29%), community voices (17%), demand anchors, (17%), development experts (23%), Indigenous organizations & communities (4%), mission stewards (21%), public partners (25%)

~4.2/5

Average participant rating for the Forum (based on increased insight on housing opportunities, partnership-driven affordability, and actionable ideas and connections)

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Forum featured keynotes and panel contributions from:

- **Ana Bailão**, CEO, Build Canada Homes
- **Brad Carr**, CEO, Mattamy Homes
- **Carolyn Whitzman**, University of Toronto
- **Fred Cassano**, Partner, PwC Canada
- **Jeanhy Shim**, Founder & CEO, Crosswalk Communities
- **Karli Farrow**, President & CEO, Trillium Health Partners
- **Kevin VanKampen**, SVP, Meridian Credit Union
- **Leslie Woo**, CEO, CivicAction
- **Matti Siemiatycki**, University of Toronto
- **Mayor Marianne Meed Ward**, City of Burlington
- **Mayor Olivia Chow**, City of Toronto
- **Minister Robert Flack**, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing ([virtual address](#))
- **Nick Gefucia**, SVP, EllisDon Community Builders
- **Paul Johnson**, City Manager, City of Toronto
- **Ray Williams**, Chair & Co-Founder, Black Opportunity Fund
- **Tim Coldwell**, President & CEO, Enska

COMMITMENTS

At the end, participants shared commitments and "no-regrets" actions to take into the future, including:

- Acting first and taking the first risk
- Being brave
- Talking about the uncomfortable facts
- Better understanding restrictions of others
- Starting with the desired outcome and worrying less about the process
- Beginning every project with a conversation about partnerships



Leaders participated in a facilitated "Deep Dive" to stress-test CivicAction's draft Workforce Housing Affordability Playbook for Action, focused on partnerships that advance and improve the feasibility of housing affordable to middle-income workers.

Some Key Takeaways from Discussions:

- ✓ Use standardized designs and streamlined processes to accelerate delivery while reframing housing as essential workforce infrastructure
- ✓ Engage communities early to build local support for workforce housing
- ✓ Scale requires cross-governmental approaches, clear accountability, faster and more predictable approvals, and courage to reduce over-engineering and procedural drag
- ✓ Building affordable housing requires coordinated incentives, long-term financing tools, and government-backed de-risking to unlock private and institutional capital

PROJECTS SHOWCASED

CivicAction spotlighted promising projects that exemplify partnership models addressed in the Workforce Housing Affordability Playbook for Action.

- **Crosswalk Communities:** Scaling affordable housing using modular construction – pilot project
- **EllisDon Community Builders:** [Base Design](#)
- **LiUNA Pension Fund of Central and Eastern Canada project in partnership with Fengate Asset Management & The Hi-Rise Group:** [The Dennis](#)
- **Meridian Credit Union:** [Reframe](#)
- **Missanabie Cree First Nation:** [140 Merton Street—Peyakôskân](#)
- **SE Health:** [Happipad](#)
- **The Ismaili Council for Canada:** [Generations Toronto](#)
- **Victoria Park Community Homes:** [60 Caledon](#)

COMING SOON

CivicAction will release the **Workforce Housing Affordability Playbook for Action** in early spring 2026.

MORE INFORMATION

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PARTICIPANT VOICES

"It's really important to have an environment like this where you can get away from the desk and really focus with a group of people who bring different perspectives and have different ideas. It lets you think outside the box and allows you to innovate and work together."

- Mark Richardson, Founder & Technical Lead, HousingNowTO

"Just the amount of brain power in the room today was incredible. The network that [CivicAction] now expanded for everyone there is invaluable and I'm sure we'll have a solution that comes through it."

- Nick Pope, Co-founder, Ourboro

"I think it's really important to come in with a Playbook, like CivicAction has, and build consensus and the groundwork for action."

- Carolyn Whitzman, Adjunct Professor & Senior Housing Researcher, University of Toronto

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