

OPINION

A blueprint to help Mayor Tory get Toronto unstuck

By **Richard Florida** Opinion
Patrick Adler
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Toronto **Mayor John Tory's** resounding victory last month gave him an “**historic mandate,**” as he put it. He'll need it, because the city he is leading is badly stuck, unable to address the deep challenges it faces. Indeed, the mayor must use his hard-won political capital to make headway on four key fronts.

First and foremost is affordable housing. Tory has said he will make housing and housing affordability a priority of his second term, declaring that “we must do more to speed up the increase in supply of affordable housing.”



To unstick Toronto from its deepening new urban crisis will require all hands on deck. It will take bold vision and hard political work, write Richard Florida and Patrick Adler. Let's hope that Mayor Tory and the new council are up to the task. (ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE / TORONTO STAR)

He'd better act quickly, because Toronto is the ninth most unaffordable city in the world. A median house here costs a staggering eight times median household income, which is less affordable than Los Angeles or London on that metric.

In the short term, the mayor would be wise to release more city-owned land for the development of affordable rental housing, as his challenger Jennifer Keesmaat proposed. Over the longer haul, he must take on the deeply ingrained NIMBYism of politically active homeowners, who have been standing in the way of higher density development.

Second is our deteriorating ability to travel around the city. Toronto's traffic congestion is literally the worst in North America, according to a recent study. Innovation and economic growth increasingly depend on two things: density and the ability to quickly circulate people, goods and ideas.

On this front, Toronto is literally stuck in place. Car dependency is a key factor in Toronto's divide, according to [research](#) by political scientist Zachary Taylor. While suburban voters deplore "the war on the car," downtown voters demand the Relief Line. Both reflect the fact that Toronto's transit infrastructure is inadequate for its current size and ambition.