

UPCOMING DATES

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Toronto Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 2 Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 9 Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 10 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 13 North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
CreateTO, 1:30 p.m. [video conference]
- 14 Infrastructure & Environment Committee, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 15 General Government & Licensing Committee 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
TTC Board, time TBC [video conference]
- 16 Design Review Panel, time TBC [video conference]
- 17 Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 20 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 21 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 22 Economic & Community Development Committee, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]
- 23 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 1

Council, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]

OCTOBER

- 6 Toronto Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m. [video conference]

CITY ADOPTS PLAN TO FUND TOWER RENEWAL PROJECTS

RETROFIT AMBITIONS



Rob Jowett

A significant funding agreement will allow the **City of Toronto** to support tower retrofits as it seeks to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions and improve quality of life for people living in aging apartment buildings.

At its meeting July 14-16, City of Toronto council adopted a new plan to fund tower renewal projects. The program, known as "Taking Action on Tower Renewal," is a new part of the city's existing residential energy retrofit programs and extends the existing multi-residential streams through the end of 2026. Previously, the multi-residential stream was set to expire at the end of this year. Tower renewal projects are renovation and upgrading projects undertaken in aging apartment buildings to improve their energy efficiency and the overall quality of life the buildings provide to tenants. The city has received \$11,746,300 in financing and \$1,761,900 in grants from the **Federation of Canadian**

Municipalities (FCM) to fund tower renewal projects, which will be allocated to eligible building owners who have applied to the city's programs.

"Tower renewal focuses on older apartment buildings and older apartment neighbourhoods across the city," City of Toronto tower and neighbourhood revitalization manager **Aderonke Akande** told **NRU**. "The City of Toronto has over 1,000 of these buildings, built a number of years ago... largely in the 60s and 70s. And so, as these buildings are older, there's a need for additional investment in the buildings themselves, but also an opportunity for additional investment in the

neighbourhood."

Akande says over half a million Torontonians live in aging apartment buildings and that these buildings contain more than half of the city's rental and affordable housing stock, so tower renewals will directly benefit a significant number of residents. Reducing the energy of the buildings is also a major step towards achieving the city's goal of producing net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"Buildings overall are about 55 per cent of the city's carbon emissions, and multi-residential buildings account for about a quarter of that," **The Atmospheric Fund** policy and

CONTINUED PAGE 3

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- Bryan Purcell



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RETROFIT AMBITIONS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

programs vice-president **Bryan Purcell** told *NRU*. “A key issue is you want to select the buildings that are targeting the deepest improvements in terms of energy efficiency, in terms of reducing carbon emissions and in terms of improving the quality of the environment for residents.”

Purcell says overheating has also been a major issue in Toronto in recent years, and that about 120 residents die annually as a result of overheating in apartments. He says most of the people who have died as a result of overheating lived in older residential buildings with insufficient cooling systems.

Akande says the approximately \$13.5-million in funding from FCM will be able to support five to 10 tower renewal programs. She says the money would cover roughly 80 per cent of the cost of a project, while the remaining 20 per cent would be covered by a building owner. She says the city is prioritizing retrofit projects that provide the most direct benefits to residents and the greatest greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

“In addition to just making improvements that will help [reduce] the greenhouse gas emissions or the carbon budget of the building, we’re also

looking at improvements that help to, for example, improve the thermal comfort in the building,” says Akande. “We’re encouraging buildings to go deeper in terms of the retrofit ambitions and the amount of reduction they can bring forward and the amount of change they can bring forward.”

Tower renewal projects are complex and involve a lot of different pieces, **ERA Architects** associate **Ya’el Santopinto** told *NRU*. She says depending on the building, projects can include improvements to the building envelope, like using windows which better retain hot or cold air, upgrading mechanical systems like HVAC, reducing energy demands, and making other improvements, like adding accessibility features. She says the projects can also be an opportunity to make other improvements to a building, like fixing plumbing or elevator issues.

“These become, very quickly, very holistic jobs that need to be looked at together,” says Santopinto. “In a tower renewal project, you’re not actually just tackling carbon, you’re tackling primarily... housing quality, and carbon follows. And that’s been our approach at ERA whenever

we do a tower retrofit, it’s very human-centered approach.”

In addition to its architectural practice, ERA operates the **Tower Renewal Partnership**, a non-profit initiative designed to support tower renewal work with research, advocacy, and demonstrations of the methods that can be used and the benefits that can be gained through renewal projects.

Santopinto says the most significant challenge the industry needs to address right now with tower renewals is how to undertake them while residents are living in a building. Tower renewal projects often involve significant construction work and substantial work within individual dwelling units, meaning residents often have to be moved out or to live with invasive construction work. She says if there were ways to undertake projects in a way that would have less of an impact on tenants’ enjoyment of their units, there would likely be more interest from building owners in undertaking these projects.

While undertaking tower renewal projects is challenging and expensive, the projects usually have very beneficial long-term returns, ERA Architects principal **Graeme Stewart** told *NRU*. He says large older buildings waste a lot more energy than newer buildings due to outdated design methods, so capital investment in retrofits in these older, larger structures goes

a lot further. He says these buildings can fairly easily save 30 to 40 per cent of their emissions, and that it is even possible to reduce emissions by up to 95 per cent, depending on the nature of the retrofit.

“There’s quite an opportunity to get to net zero [in tower renewals],” says Stewart. “These are great targets for that type of activity, both because it extends the life of these critical buildings, but also, you can tackle 500 homes in one go, where the amount of capital required and the level of complexity to do 500 individual homes would be much greater.”

Akande says that with council’s approval of the program, the city will soon begin considering individual tower renewal projects for funding. 🌱