

MIDTOWN

PARKS AND PUBLIC REALM PLAN

2018



City of Toronto
Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan

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Executive Summary

The Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan sets out a comprehensive vision for parks and the public realm in Midtown and establishes a path to achieving an expanded, connected and improved parks and public realm system within Midtown's mature urban fabric. It presents a shared vision to significantly improve the quality of urban living over the coming decades and ensure that the dual qualities of Midtown – lush and green, and dense and urban – remain central character-defining elements as the area continues to evolve as a thriving, metropolitan district in the heart of Toronto.

The Plan has been developed to support the development and implementation of the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan. As part of Toronto's Official Plan, the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan provides a blueprint for growth and infrastructure over the next 25 years. It establishes expectations related to the intensity of development, permitted building types and heights and will set the direction for Midtown as a vibrant and prosperous urban district defined by its collection of diverse neighbourhoods.

Midtown is one of the fastest growing area in the city and has one of the lowest parkland provision rates per capita in Toronto. A key challenge in the area is how to accommodate growth while at the same time proportionally providing a diverse range of high-quality and highly accessible public parks and open spaces. As Midtown continues to intensify, improved and expanded parks and open spaces must be provided to address the needs of an increasing intensity of residents, workers and visitors and ensure that development does not erode Midtown's characteristic green landscaped character.

The Parks and Public Realm Plan examines the need for parkland within the context of Midtown, having consideration for the range of parks and publicly accessible open spaces that exist within the boundaries of the area, estimated population growth, built form directions and the need to expand the public realm. It integrates key provincial policy directions related to achieving complete communities including convenient and equitable access to an appropriate supply of new and expanded parks and open spaces.

The Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan serves as the 'Parks Plan' for Midtown, providing a framework to inform decisions about the acquisition of new parks, parks expansions, increased accessibility and improvements to existing parks, the reclamation of city streets as a series of community spaces and creatively capitalizing on the variety of other open spaces scattered throughout Midtown.

The Plan and vision are rooted in Three Core Elements to support Midtown's continued evolution:

- A series of **Public Realm Moves** that create the framework for a transformed public realm;
- A **Connected and Versatile Network of Public Parks** to provide a variety of places for people to play, be active, rest and relax and contribute to an enhanced environment; and
- **Maximizing the use of Other Open Spaces** to supplement Midtown's public parks and reinforce Midtown's open space character.

Priorities and delivery mechanisms for the Plan are outlined in Chapter 11: Moving from Plan to Action. This chapter outlines the various tools the City will need to utilize to realize the vision and elements of this Plan, and the role of private development in delivering specific elements of the Plan.

The Parks and Public Realm Plan has been developed in collaboration with staff in City Planning, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services. It is based on careful examination of the best available information about Midtown's current conditions and trends. The Plan is also informed by extensive consultation with residents and stakeholders who shared their ideas and aspirations for the future of Midtown's parks and the public realm. A comprehensive parkland provision assessment informed the Plan with an analysis of existing and future parkland need based on estimates of population and employment growth.

CHAPTER

1



INTRODUCTION

Toronto's streets, parks and publicly accessible open spaces are among the city's greatest assets and are essential to the quality of life that Torontonians enjoy. Expanding, maintaining and improving these assets must be prioritized for the city to maintain and enhance its character and liveability as Toronto's built environment continues to intensify and as more and more people live, work and visit the city.

In Midtown, existing parks and open spaces are exceptional and beloved spaces, from its historic, picturesque cemeteries to its well-used larger parks and recreation grounds dating from the early and mid- 20th Century that draw people from across the city. These spaces bring people together, create social bonds and set the stage for civic life. The activities that occur in these spaces are fundamental to the identity and liveability of Midtown. They provide places for celebration, recreation, relaxation, mobility and experiencing nature in the city. There are, however, many parks, streets and open spaces in the area that are also in need of attention. As Midtown continues to evolve, there is an opportunity for these spaces to be rethought, reimagined and redesigned to better serve this fast-growing city district, while at the same time better contributing to placemaking in Midtown.

Toronto's Official Plan identifies that the parks and open space system will need to expand as the city grows and changes. It highlights that ongoing reinvestment in Toronto's parks and open space system is also required to support a high quality of life in Toronto. Midtown's population has grown by over 17 per cent over the last 20 plus years, while the city as a whole has only grown by 9 per cent. Midtown's population boom has been accommodated primarily in the form of intense high-rise tower development and infill activity. If left unchecked, this form of development will erode Midtown's characteristic lush and green character. This growth is also generating unanticipated demand for new

parkland that the City has not been able to meet. As Midtown continues to intensify, improved and expanded parks and other open spaces must be provided to address the needs of an increasing intensity of residents, workers and visitors.

A key challenge in Midtown is how to accommodate the anticipated growth while at the same time proportionally providing a diverse range of high-quality and highly accessible public parks and other open spaces. The Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan examines the need for parkland within the context of Midtown, having consideration for the range of parks and public open spaces that exist within the boundaries of the area, estimated population growth, built form directions, expansion of the public realm, specific facility and programming needs and the geographic distribution of park space. It outlines the value of parks and the public realm, examines existing conditions, and addresses future challenges and opportunities. The Parks and Public Realm Plan sets out a comprehensive vision for parks and the public realm in Midtown and establishes a path to achieving an expanded, connected and improved parks and public realm system within Midtown's mature urban fabric to significantly improve the quality of urban living over the coming decades.

The Parks and Public Realm Plan emphasizes the need for new and expanded public parks, increased accessibility and improvements to existing parks, the reclamation of city streets as a series of great urban and community spaces and creatively capitalizing on the variety of other open spaces scattered throughout Midtown. It sets out locations for expansion and improvements to Midtown's public parks, both big and small, and addresses the need to better utilize existing parks and open spaces. It provides a tailored vision

for Midtown premised on achieving Three Core Elements:

- A Series of Public Realm Moves;
- A Connected and Versatile Network of Public Parks; and
- Maximising the Use of Other Open Spaces.

Toronto has, and is advancing, a number of city-wide strategies related to parkland and recreational facilities, most notably the city-wide Parkland Strategy which is currently under development, and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (FMP), which was approved by City Council in the fall of 2017. The vision and elements identified in the Parks and Public Realm Plan are aligned with the key objectives emerging through the city-wide Parkland Strategy. Further, the recreational needs identified in the FMP have been accounted for and built upon. The Parks and Public Realm Plan recognizes that there are both local and city-wide recreational facilities that will need to be located in Midtown. Some of these facilities may be located within existing parks or capitalize on recreational facilities owned and operated by the local school boards. Others will require the acquisition of new parkland and expanding existing parkland.

The Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan has been developed to support the development and implementation of the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan. The Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan, as part of Toronto's Official Plan, will provide a blueprint for growth and infrastructure in Midtown over the next 25 years. It will be a comprehensive Plan designed to ensure that Midtown, at its foundation, is a complete community. The Secondary Plan will address, among others, Midtown's urban structure

and set out expectations related to the intensity of development, permitted building types and heights. It will set the direction for Midtown as a vibrant and prosperous urban district defined by its collection of diverse neighbourhoods.

The development of the Parks and Public Realm Plan has also considered provincial policy directions related to achieving complete communities. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017) includes parks as among the elements of achieving complete communities. The Provincial Policy Statement (2014) (PPS) requires planning for public streets and spaces to meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity. The PPS calls on municipalities to plan for a full range and equitable distribution of built and natural settings for recreation. This includes public parkland, public spaces, open space areas and trails and linkages, all of which are addressed in this Plan.

The implementation of this Plan will involve broadening traditional approaches to providing new and improved parks and open spaces. Partnerships with a range of stakeholders within the City, other orders of government, public agencies and the private sector will be needed. Additionally, implementation of the Parks and Public Realm Plan requires recalibrating and refreshing the City's planning and financial toolkit. Key tools that will be used to implement the Plan include:

- Parkland dedication as a condition of development approvals;
- Development Charges;
- Securing community benefits in exchange for increases in height and density under Section 37 of the *Planning Act*;

- Site Plan Control;
- Parkland acquisitions; and
- Partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.

The Plan will be used to:

- Provide an overarching framework to inform and guide decision-making and investment decisions related to acquiring, enhancing and expanding parks in Midtown, and improving connections to these spaces by re-imagining the role and function of some of Midtown's streets;
- Identify the toolbox, priorities and actions needed to make this Plan happen;
- Inform the policy directions of the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan, specifically related to priorities for an inter-connected network of public parks, open spaces, streets, pedestrian connections, trails and other recreational facilities and how this network will be achieved; and
- Guide the implementation of the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan and inform the review of development applications in the area.

Staff in Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Transportation Services and City Planning were involved in the development of this Plan. In accordance with the Ontario *Planning Act*, the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board were consulted on the Plan.

1.1 STUDY AREA

Midtown is located in the heart of Toronto at the crossroads of Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue – two significant streets that bisect the city north-

south and east-west, respectively. It is a complex, built-up environment that has undergone waves of generational development. It has stable, low-rise residential areas, historic main streets, apartment neighbourhoods, and office/institutional nodes that were developed in the 1960s and 80s. The area has been experiencing considerable intensification over the last 10 to 15 years.

The study area used for the development of this Plan consists of the existing Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan area. The Secondary Plan area is a 600 hectare area and one of the largest Secondary Plan areas in the city. The Secondary Plan area is generally bounded by Briar Hill Avenue and Blythwood Road to the north, Mount Pleasant Cemetery to the south, Bayview Avenue to the

east, and Chaplin Crescent and Latimer Avenue to the west (Figure 1). In addition, parks and open spaces adjacent, or in close proximity, to the existing Secondary Plan area have also been considered.

The Yonge-Eglinton Centre, one of five Urban Growth Centres identified in the City of Toronto's Official Plan and an Urban Growth Centre in the Province of Ontario's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, is located at the centre of the Secondary Plan area. The Yonge-Eglinton Centre is generally bounded by Erskine Avenue to the north, Soudan Avenue to the south, Mount Pleasant Road to the east and Duplex Avenue and Yonge Street to the west.

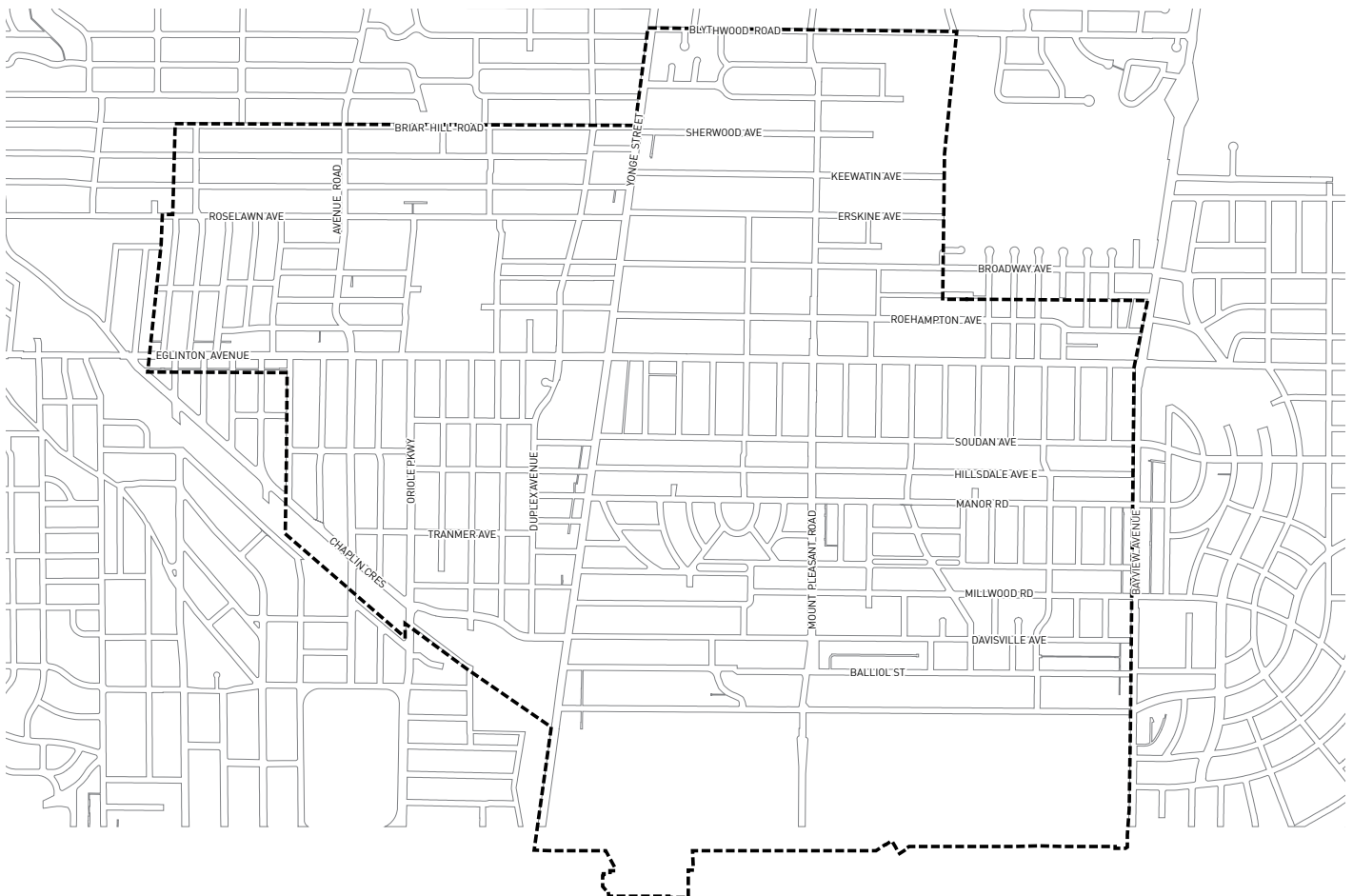


Figure 1: Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan Area

1.2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement on parks and the public realm in Midtown has been ongoing for several years, beginning in 2012 with the development of the Midtown in Focus: Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan (2014). A variety of consultation activities have provided opportunities for people to provide feedback and input into the development of this Plan.

The Council-adopted Midtown in Focus: Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan included extensive public engagement including community walks, public meetings, stakeholder meetings and digital media outreach. In November 2016, following interest from the community to examine parks and public realm improvements in the Davisville area, City staff hosted a public workshop and walking tours of the area – or Walkshop – for residents to identify key assets and areas for improvement. 10,000 postcards were distributed to area residents and property owners in the area advertising the Walkshop. Approximately 75 people attended the event, including the Toronto District School Board, with the ideas generated laying the ground work for the development of a public realm vision for the Davisville area.

Additional public consultation activities hosted as part of the Midtown in Focus: Growth, Built Form and Infrastructure Review (2015-2018) have included three public open houses, nine Planners in Public Spaces (PiPS) events, eight Midtown Planning Group meetings, an online interactive mapping tool for residents to identify their local priorities and an online survey to gather public feedback on the proposed Secondary Plan. While these public engagement activities addressed a wide range of matters related to the review of the Yonge-Eglinton

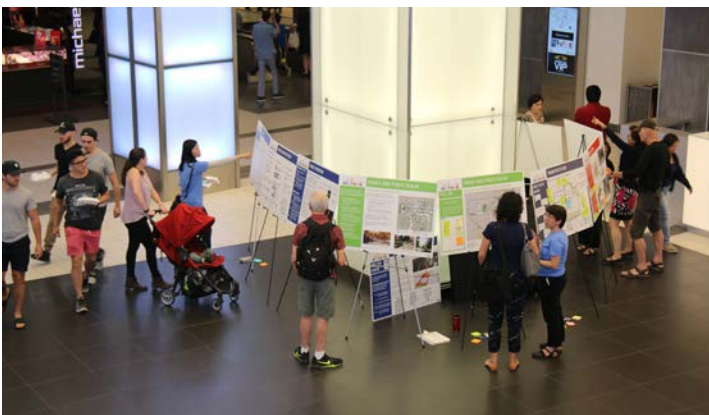
Secondary Plan, parks and the public realm were the focus of a number of the community meetings and workshops.

The draft Parks and Public Realm Plan and policy directions for parks and the public realm were presented for feedback in January 2018 to the Midtown Planning Group. These were also presented at the February 10, 2018 Open House, that included two parks and public realm-specific workshops. City staff also met with the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic School Board on March 29, 2018.

The feedback received from various public engagement events and consultation with the local school boards has informed and shaped the development of the Parks and Public Realm Plan. Key themes that emerged through these public engagement activities included:

- The Tower in the Park landscapes are a key defining feature of the area and provide important landscaped open space, which needs to be protected;
- The tree canopy has eroded over time. New shade trees need to be planted to bring balance to the dense urban environment;
- With the existing deficiency of park space, new and expanded parks are needed to keep pace with development and population growth;
- New parks that are being secured are often very small and have limited functionality. There needs to be new larger parks that serve multiple functions over time;
- A number of existing parks need improvements and additional amenities to better serve the community;

- Eglinton Park needs to be reviewed to ensure that permitting of the sports fields does not limit local community access to important greenspace;
- Open spaces other than public parks (e.g., school yards and playfields, religious institutions) should be examined for partnership opportunities to serve the community;
- There is a need for another dog off-leash area in the Secondary Plan area;
- Many streets in the area provide little pedestrian amenity. Sidewalks are often narrow and are becoming more constrained given the increasing volume of pedestrians;
- Narrow sidewalks and crossing designs at some of the main intersections are inadequate and dangerous from a pedestrian perspective (e.g., Yonge Street and Davisville Avenue, Mount Pleasant Road and Merton Street);
- Streets need to be destinations in addition to moving people. Public realm improvements and amenities (benches, pedestrian scale lighting, street trees) are needed to create a connected green network of parks and open spaces;
- Many streets, like Davisville Avenue are designed to move vehicles. Wide travel lanes and narrow sidewalks create a hostile condition. These streets need to be reconsidered in regards to how they can be designed to safely accommodate multiple modes, particularly streets that connect community destinations like parks, schools, and transit;
- There is a need for more safe pedestrian crossings, especially near schools;
- Blocks in much of the Secondary Plan area are large. They limit connectivity within and between neighbourhoods and reduce the number of safe and direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Parks and other local destinations are often located within the large blocks which limits their accessibility;
- Existing midblock connections and laneways are well-used but some need improvements (i.e., better lighting). Additional midblock connections are needed to encourage people to use active modes for local trips and will provide additional opportunities to expand the green network;
- Aside from parks, there are few other public spaces, like squares, in which to gather - for exchange, for respite, for local commerce and people watching;
- New Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (POPS) need to be secured through redevelopment to expand the public realm. Existing POPS need to be improved to clearly identify them as publicly accessible;
- There are no direct, safe and separated cycling facilities in Midtown. There are only signed routes which do little to encourage people to cycle;
- Cycling facilities are needed to connect people to Downtown;
- Connections to the ravine system are important to maintain access to naturalized areas and to provide connections to other areas of the city;
- The Beltline Trail is a special place and green connector in the area. Additional and improved access from Merton Street would be welcome;
- Mount Pleasant Parkette is not well-designed for public use (i.e., no curb cuts, limited seating and amenities). The space needs to be rethought so it is not just a median, as it is now;



Photos from Public Consultation Events (2012-2018)

- June Rowlands Park is a much-loved space in the Davisville area offering a variety of uses (permitted and informal) and facilities and has a good balance of natural and built/programmed spaces;
- The sculpture garden on Balliol Street is a great example of a landscaped courtyard space for seating;
- Decking over the subway tracks to provide additional space for a park, public realm improvements, and off-street bike lanes has mixed support from the community. Cost and feasibility are noted as the important factors to consider and some wonder if funds are better spent elsewhere;
- Additional/expanded park land acquisition tools are of interest. Changes to the parkland dedication rate to address parkland deficiencies are welcome; and
- Midtown needs a destination and signature park space.

Highlights of the feedback received from the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board included:

- All of the schools in Midtown are over capacity and many school yards in the area lack adequate green space, particularly considering the limited capacity and continued growth in the area;
- Neither School Board has surplus land in Midtown that may be considered for park uses;
- Public access to school yards after hours is determined by each school. Many playfields are permitted out to sports organizations;

- The School Boards support working in partnership with the City to ensure the provision of recreational and landscaped open space on existing, reconfigured or redeveloped School Properties including through development of shared-use open spaces and recreation facilities; and
- Where school yards are located adjacent to proposed parks in the Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan, the School Boards are supportive of taking a collaborative approach with the City to planning new or expanded schools, school yards and new City parks.

1.3 DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

The Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan is organized as follows:

Section 2: Parks and Public Realm outlines the role and importance of public parks and the public realm. This section also summarizes guiding policy directions and aligned initiatives that have informed the development of this Plan.

Section 3: Guiding Policy and Aligned Initiatives summarizes provincial and municipal policy documents and other City initiatives that have been taken into consideration during the development of this Plan.

Section 4: Midtown's Parks and Public Realm summarizes the existing parks and open space system in Midtown. It looks at the historical development of parks and public realm in this

area of the city, and the resultant parks and open spaces that people living and working in Midtown have access to today.

Section 5: Challenges and Opportunities examines the opportunities and challenges facing Midtown that provide starting points to guide Midtown's next evolution. It examines the need for public parkland, using an updated method for measuring parkland provision.

Section 6: Midtown's Next Evolution presents the vision and aspirations for parks and the public realm in Midtown.

Section 7: Public Realm Moves presents and summarizes the original five Public Realm Moves from the 2014 Midtown in Focus: Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan and the new moves identified for the Yonge-Davisville area.

Section 8: A Connected and Versatile Network of Public Parks identifies the optimal locations for future park acquisitions, expansions and improvements. It presents locations where the public park system can be complemented by access to other publicly managed lands and where public realm connections should be provided to improve pedestrian access to parks in Midtown.

Section 9: Maximizing the Use of Other Open Spaces identifies the role of other open spaces in Midtown in recognition of the important contributions these spaces make in supplementing public parkland.

Section 10: Pulling It All Together summarizes the Three Core Elements of this Plan – the Parks and Open Space Network Plan, the Public Realm Moves and Maximizing the Use of Other Open Spaces. An overall illustrative plan summarizes key recommendations from Sections 5 to 7.

Section 11: Moving from Plan to Action – Implementation Toolbox outlines the various tools the City will need to utilize to realize the vision and elements of this Plan, and the role of private development in delivering specific elements of the Parks and Public Realm Plan.

CHAPTER

2



PARKS AND PUBLIC REALM

In the most memorable neighbourhoods and cities, the quality and experience of a place is directly tied to its identity. Cities are expanding their focus beyond the design of buildings in recognition of this. There is now much more emphasis being placed on the space between buildings – the public realm – and how buildings frame this space. Toronto has many exceptional qualities and continues to be identified as one of the most liveable cities in the world. Toronto's public realm, consisting of all areas to which the public has access such as its streets, laneways, public parks and other open spaces, plays a pivotal role in contributing to this liveability. Our streets and public parks are our largest civic assets and define the image of our city.

Public Parks

Public parks are publicly owned land that is set aside for the enjoyment and use by people who live, work and visit a city. They have multiple roles, and are more than just green spaces between a city's hard concrete edges and its buildings. They are treasured parts of our city's heritage. They have had intrinsic value in shaping the urban landscape, and will continue to do so well into the future.

Public parks are an extension of the home, which is increasingly important in dense, urban settings like Midtown. They come in all shapes and sizes, from large, signature open spaces to small pocket parks, squares, hardscaped plazas, gardens and promenades. People gather, socialize, celebrate and play in parks. They are used for cultural and community events that bring life and enjoyment to the city. In recent years, public parks have also increasingly become a magnet for families and pet owners, providing space for children and our four-legged animal companions to run and play. Parks also boost tourism by acting as destinations that attract visitors. They have a positive impact on the perception of a city to the outside world, and contribute to our economic competitiveness.

Public parks have been linked to positive mental health outcomes including stress reduction. They improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages by providing space for people to rest, relax, contemplate life and be active. They offer a diversity of recreational programming, from passive activities to sports and other types of physical recreation. They also offer a respite and reprieve from the hustle and bustle of city living, and allow people to have contact with nature and with one another.

Public parks also beautify the urban landscape and strengthen the environment. They support biodiversity by providing habitat and food for wildlife, and are a key component of a city's green infrastructure. They contribute to a healthy and robust tree canopy, absorb stormwater, clean the air and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Streets

Streets traditionally functioned as meeting place, marketplace and movement space. The functions of streets dramatically changed in mid 1900s, when streets were largely given over to the personal automobile. Recently, there has been a paradigm shift and resurgence about the role that streets play in cities. They are once again being recognized as important civic spaces that can offer placemaking with high-quality design and provide multiple options for citizens to move around the city.

Streets throughout the world are being redesigned with emphasis being placed on walking, cycling and public transit. Streets that balance competing interests and improve accessibility to destinations work to create a cohesive, connected parks and open space system. The historic nature of Toronto's street grid and the built-up environment of

Midtown restricts the availability of space needed to accommodate all these activities. Creativity is needed in rethinking and rebalancing streets such that they move people, not just cars, and ensuring they provide welcoming and safe connections to and from our public parks and other open spaces.

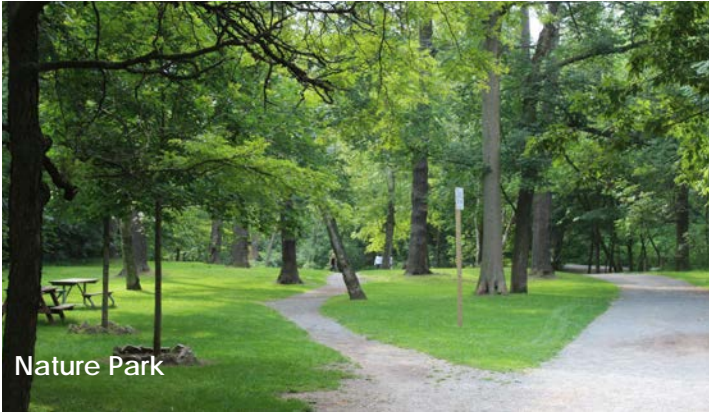
Other Open Spaces

A city's park system is bolstered by the other open spaces that dot the urban landscape – both public and privately-owned. These spaces do not replace the need for public parks. They complement and supplement a city's system of public parks, providing additional recreational opportunities where public use of these spaces is permitted. There is untapped potential in Midtown's churchyards, school yards, cemeteries, privately-owned open spaces and other overlooked places that can be harnessed to contribute to a vibrant public realm.

2.1 MIDTOWN PUBLIC PARK TYPOLOGIES

2.1.1 FUNCTION AND CHARACTER

Toronto's system of public parks offers a diverse range of experiences and opportunities for people across the city. While each park's function and character may be different, collectively they support the needs of Torontonians and are synonymous with Toronto's identity as a green, liveable and lively city.



Nature Park



Destination Park



Active Park



Local Park



Square/Plaza



Linear Park

Nature Parks

Nature parks are natural or re-naturalized spaces that balance significant area preservation and enhancement with low-impact public access and use, such as walking trails, relaxing and unwinding, bird-watching and wildlife viewing.

Destination Parks

Destination parks are significant visitor and tourist attractions either because of their historical context or the high standard of design and activity available in the park. They draw people from across the city and beyond. They contribute to a city's specific brand and can help to shape a city's international image.

Active Parks

Active parks are parks that primarily host sports and recreation facilities, such as baseball diamonds, soccer fields or cricket pitches. They may also include indoor recreational uses like skating rinks, running tracks and swimming pools. These parks provide opportunities for organized sports to occur, as well as informal play when not actively used for sporting activities.

Local Parks

Local parks are focal points within a community and provide dedicated spaces for people to relax, socialise and play. They offer locally-oriented active and passive recreational opportunities within close walking distance to where people live and work.

Squares and Plazas

Squares and plazas are largely hardscaped gathering places. They are places which help to establish connections and linkages, where people can move through, visit and congregate. They also provide great canvasses for public art, further

helping to shape the identity and character of a place. Large squares and plazas, such as Nathan Philips Square, provide important spaces for events and festivals. Small squares and plazas, like the recently reimagined Berczy Park, provide places to sit in the sun, pass through and gather in small numbers.

Linear Parks

Linear parks are typically narrow, vegetated green corridors that feature trails, floral displays or naturalized vegetation and connect a series of places and destinations. They may be located in association with key streets, such as University Avenue's centre median, or along former and active utility corridors such as Kay Gardner Belt Line Park.

2.1.2 Size

The size of a park matters and contributes to defining its role and purpose within an area or a city's overall system of public parks, and can influence how people access parks (Table 1). Within Toronto, there is a spectrum of park sizes from the smallest parks, our parkettes, to our largest, legacy parks that are a product of historical acquisitions or donations, or the city's natural heritage and topography.

Parkettes (less than 0.5 hectares) have limited opportunities for a range of parks programming. They are often only capable of accommodating one feature or amenity and a limited amount of passive space for use by nearby residents and workers. Nonetheless, they are important components of the overall network of parks and open spaces. They can provide momentary reprieves from dense, urban living, space for landscaping and trees and contribute to the character of an area.

Small parks are parks that range in size from 0.5 to 1.5 hectares. Parks of this size, shaped to maximize utility, will become increasingly important as the city continues to mature and intensify. They are versatile and are capable of providing a range of parks programming. They can provide places to sit and relax, small playgrounds, multi-purpose space for being active with one another or hosting community events, and can also offer more distinct parks programming. They are also more easily achievable than larger parks in a built-up environment like Toronto where land availability is scarce.

Medium-sized parks (1.5 to 3.0 hectares) can offer even more park programming with the ability to serve multiple neighbourhoods. They are capable of supporting both a wide range of parks and indoor and outdoor recreational programming, but also recreational uses that are land intensive, such as regulation-sized sports fields that can be permitted out for league play.

Large parks (3.0 to 12.0 hectares) or our city’s legacy parks (greater than 12.0 hectares) can be a world unto themselves given their sheer size and scale. People can get away or escape from the city in these parks without actually having to leave the city. By virtue of their size, they are capable of being high-performing, multi-functional parks, accommodating the most programming or providing the most environmental benefit to a city. High Park, for example, is by and large a natural park and an integral link in the city’s natural heritage system, given its historical design and location at the mouth of the Humber River. However, because of its sheer size at over 160 hectares it is also capable of hosting a diverse array of parks programming from playgrounds to sports fields.

Table One: Park Size and Distance to Travel

	Size (ha)	Catchment Area (Distance to Travel)
Parkette	Less than 0.5	0.5 km (less than a 10 min walk)
Small	Between 0.5 to 1.5	0.8 km (10-15 min walk)
Medium	Between 1.5 to 3	1.5 km (20-30 min walk)
Large	Between 3 to 12	3 km (45 min walk or accessible by transit)
Legacy	Greater than 12	Varies

CHAPTER

3



GUIDING POLICY AND ALIGNED INITIATIVES

The development of the Midtown Parks and Public Realm Plan has been informed by provincial and local policy, and a number of aligned corporate initiatives.

3.1 PROVINCIAL POLICY

The Province sets out the overarching policy direction to guide land use planning decisions through the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017). These documents recognize the importance of planning for public parks and the public realm. They set the expectation that municipalities will align planning for new parkland with the approval of new development. They explicitly recognize that providing convenient access to an appropriate supply of new and expanded parks and open spaces will support the achievement of complete communities. The policy documents note that:

- Parks and the public realm are integral elements of an active transportation network and, the provision of green infrastructure;
- A full range and equitable distribution of publicly-accessible built and natural settings for recreation is needed; and
- The provision of parks and public realm contribute to energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

3.2 TORONTO'S OFFICIAL PLAN

Official Plans are long-term visions for how a city should grow and are the most important vehicles for implementing provincial policies and plans. The City's Official Plan recognizes that Toronto's waterfront, ravines, watercourses, parks and other open spaces connect to form an extensive network of green space across the City, and that our parks and open space system will need to be protected, renewed and expanded as the city grows and changes. It highlights that, much like Toronto's streets and sewers, ongoing reinvestment in Toronto's parks and open space system is as important to city-building as creating new parks and open spaces. It directs that:

- New parks and amenities, particularly in growth areas, will be added, in addition to improving and expanding existing parks;
- Parks need to be designed to be of a high quality and provide a variety of amenities to promote user comfort, safety, accessibility and year-round use and to enhance the experience of "place";
- Access to existing publicly accessible open spaces will be protected and expanded; and
- The use of private open space and recreation facilities, including areas suitable for community or allotment gardening, to supplement the City's parks, facilities and amenities be promoted.

The Official Plan also recognizes that the public realm is a defining component of great cities, and the characteristics and qualities that makes cities great places to visit, also makes them great places to live.

3.3 2014 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND STREETSCAPE MASTER PLAN

In late 2012, City staff, in consultation with Midtown Planning Group, initiated a public realm plan for areas around the Yonge-Eglinton Centre that were experiencing high levels of growth. The purpose was to guide future redevelopment and civic/capital improvements and provide an overall vision for the public realm in the area.

The process included research, analysis and extensive public consultation, and resulted in the Midtown in Focus: Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan. The Master Plan, adopted by Council in 2014, recognized Midtown's distinct identity as a vibrant community with an open and green landscaped character and focused on the public realm as a fundamental contributor to quality of life in Midtown. It identified a number of goals, strategies and initiatives as well as Five Public Realm Moves that formed a framework for creating an integrated network of parks, open spaces and streetscapes within the Yonge-Eglinton area.

As part of the implementation of the Midtown in Focus: Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan, City Council adopted Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 289 in 2015 which amended the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan to include an enhanced policy framework for parks and the public realm in and around Yonge-Eglinton Centre.

3.4 CITY-WIDE PARKLAND STRATEGY

In 2017, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation division launched the city-wide Parkland Strategy. The Strategy will be a 20-year plan that will guide planning of the city's park system – including new parks, expansions, improvements and enhanced access to existing parks. It will support decision-making and prioritization of investment in parkland across Toronto. This Plan is building on four emerging principles developed through this Strategy. They include:

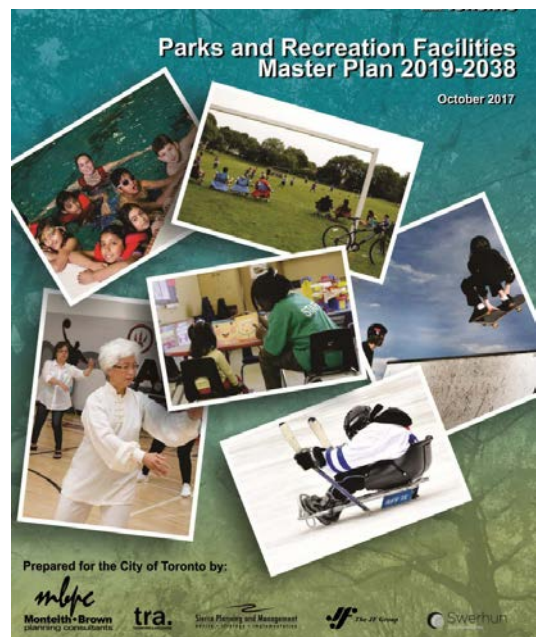
- **Expand** new parkland to support growth and address gaps to create a flexible, adaptable parkland system that will support the needs of a livable, diverse city;
- **Improve** access and function of the existing parkland system to promote health and wellbeing through active living, access to nature and the provision of appropriate spaces for rest, relaxation and leisure;
- **Connect** parks and open spaces, physically and visually so that people, communities and wildlife can navigate throughout the parkland system; and
- **Share** the parkland system by removing barriers so that parks and open spaces are inclusive and equitably accessible for people of all ages, cultures, genders, abilities and income levels.

In addition to the four principles identified above, an updated methodology for assessing the provision of parkland in the city has been developed through the Parkland Strategy. This methodology is based on the total park area

accessible within a 500 metre walking distance, and reflects the intensity of the residential user population using these parks within that catchment area. This methodology has been used in Midtown to assess and analyze parkland provision.

3.5 PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation finalized the 20-year Facilities Master Plan (FMP) in 2017. This Plan will guide investment in parks and recreation facilities such as community recreation centres, ice rinks, and sports fields. In developing the Plan, consideration was given to demographics, the use and conditions of current facilities, recreation and leisure trends, facility best practices, and legislative changes together with public, stakeholder and staff input. It considered population growth in Midtown and the rest of the city based on the projected development pipeline available at the time of developing the Master Plan.



CHAPTER

4



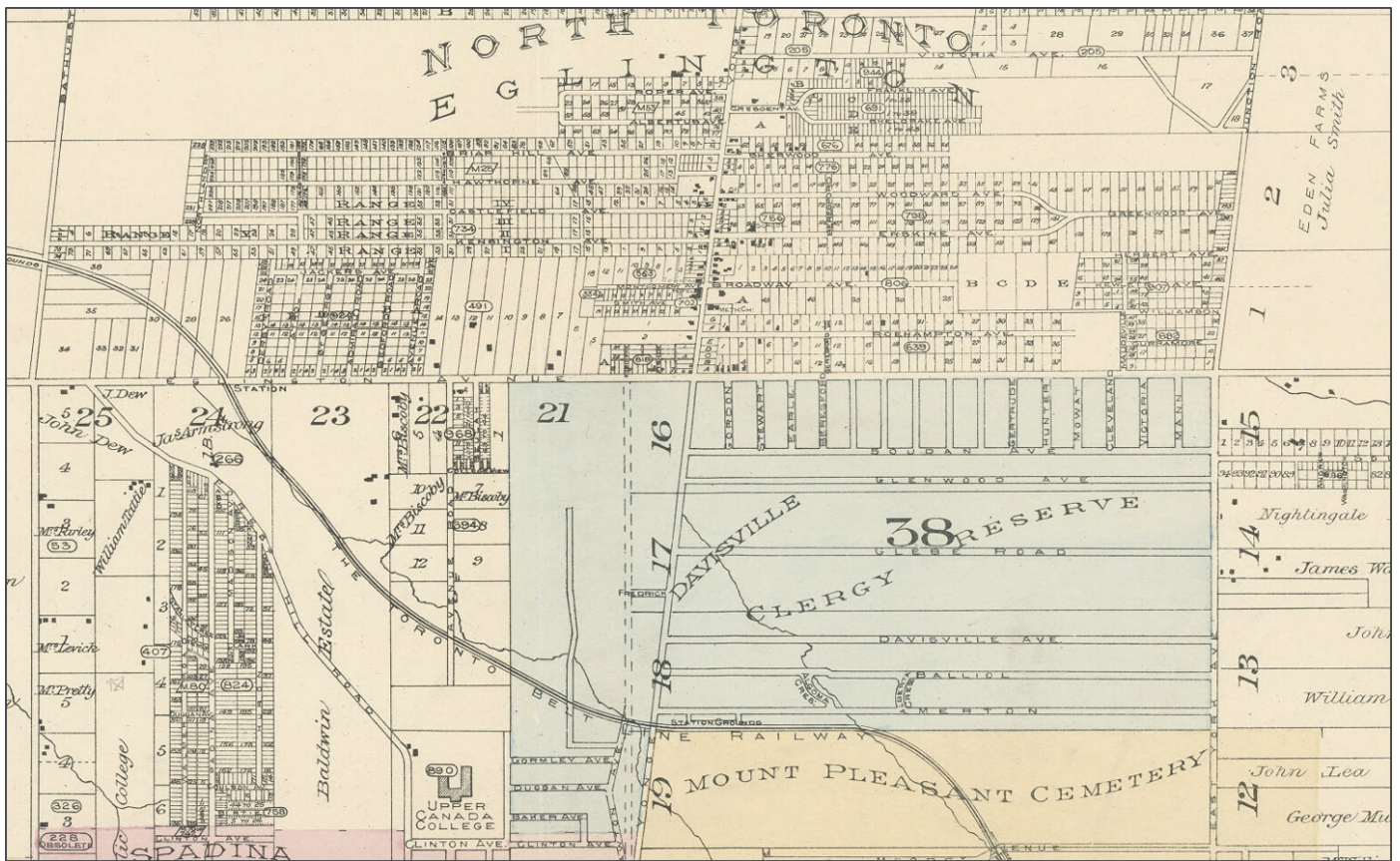
MIDTOWN'S PARKS AND PUBLIC REALM

The development of existing parkland in Midtown has been informed by different eras of planning and a variety of approaches for acquiring and providing parkland. Historically, parkland in the area was often acquired, developed and expanded over time. While many of Midtown's parks emerged through the redevelopment of greenfield or brownfield lands, Midtown is now a complex, built-up urban environment with unique challenges for acquiring and expanding parkland. New approaches to acquire, expand and connect parkland in the area are needed to ensure the area remains a complete, liveable community.

4.1 EVOLUTION OF MIDTOWN

Pre-1900s

During the 19th century, Midtown was comprised of two early settlements, Davisville and Eglinton, and largely had a rural and agricultural character. The two settlements were separated by an 80 hectare Clergy Reserve held by the Anglican Church. The first north-south concession road in the area was Yonge Street, which was laid out and constructed earlier in 1794 to connect Toronto's harbour to Newmarket and Georgian Bay. In the Yonge-Eglinton area, five rectangular farm lots were laid out in an east-west orientation between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue and between St Clair Avenue and Eglinton Avenue.



Map showing settlements of Davisville and Eglinton, 1890



Photo of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, 1900

The farm lot belonging to Mary Ann White was purchased in 1873 by the Toronto Cemetery Trustees to become Mount Pleasant Cemetery, which would serve all citizens regardless of denomination. The cemetery was laid out in 1874 by H. Engelhardt, a notable landscape architect, in a picturesque manner with gently curving carriage roads and plantings of native trees and exotic specimens. The curved roads followed the area's topography and included ponds and streams.

In 1860, John Davis, the first postmaster of the Village of Davisville and a pottery maker, donated land for a local school east of Yonge Street on what would become Davisville Avenue. Initially a two room school house, the Davisville School and school site expanded over the next 50 years with the addition of 10 classrooms and a kindergarten. The school remained on this site until it was demolished and replaced in 1962.

The first new streets and development lots in the Davisville area emerged in the 1870s, starting with Davisville Avenue between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. Merton Street and Balliol Street soon followed after 1880. All three were laid out as 1.5 kilometre long streets. Only a small north south street near the current Pailton Crescent linked Balliol Street and Merton Street. These blocks were subsequently divided for market garden lots and large suburban houses.

North Toronto Town Hall was built in 1884 at the north-west corner of Yonge Street and Montgomery Avenue. Much of the area's development and population was located along Yonge Street and the surrounding cross-streets. In addition to being a local destination, Yonge Street was already a key connection to downtown Toronto for the greater area, including settlements to the north. Congestion

on Yonge Street necessitated the development of parallel streets - including Duplex Avenue and Oriole Road (now Oriole Parkway) - as alternatives for moving people. In 1889, the Village of North Toronto was incorporated by merging Davisville and Eglinton.

The Beltline Rail was established in 1892, stretching west from the Don Valley and crossing the eastern half of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. It was laid out north of Mount Pleasant Cemetery on 20 metres of land taken from properties on the south side of Merton Street. It crossed over Yonge Street on a large truss bridge at the northern edge of Mount Pleasant Cemetery and continued northwest. Though unsuccessful as commuter rail, it remained open for cargo until the 1950s. This new access to rail shipment changed the character of Merton Street, in particular the south side of the street which shifted from residential to industrial and commercial uses, including pottery manufacturing, warehouses, coal storage and lumber yards.

1900-1920s

In 1912, the Village of North Toronto was annexed by the City of Toronto, bringing a number of infrastructure improvements to the area, including paved roads. The infrastructure improvements in the area led to the development of a number of planned subdivisions.

The Town of Leaside was laid out as a planned community in 1912 by the landscape architect Frederick Gage Todd who had been hired by the York Land Company, the development arm of Canadian Northern Railway. Todd's plan included a few very small parks but over time they were eliminated. The Town subsequently purchased lots over time to create parks in the area.

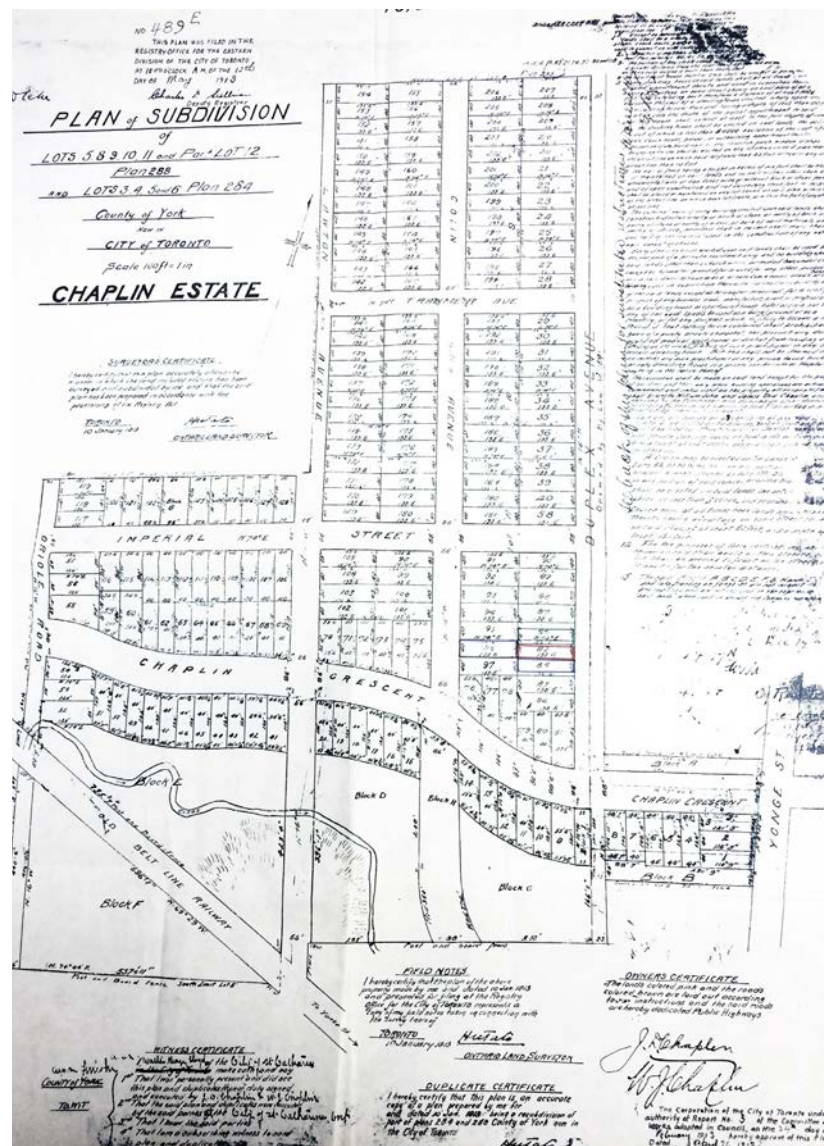


Davisville Post Office, 1909

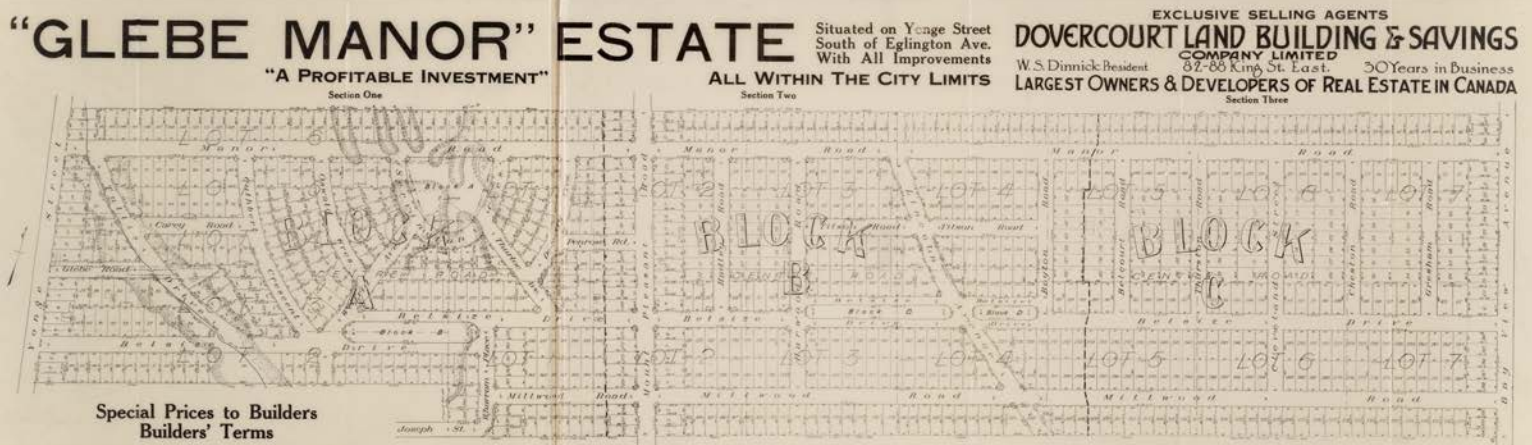
Around 1913, both the Glebe Manor Estates and Chaplin Estates had formal plans of subdivision in place. The Glebe Manor Estates Plan featured three linear boulevard parks laid out along Belsize Avenue, meant to provide a spacious and green quality to the neighbourhood. The original plan of subdivision for Chaplin Estates included a number of large blocks located along the southern edge of the plan. Though not designated for parks, they would eventually be combined to create Oriole Park. Construction of the Glebe Manor Estates and expansion of transit service into Midtown spurred additional growth east of Yonge Street through the 1920s.

The major street network, as it exists today, was largely established by this time. The most significant addition to the street network at this time was Mount Pleasant Road. Built in 1910, it was a streetcar extension of the St. Clair Avenue line north to Eglinton Avenue. After the street was extended to Jarvis Street south of Bloor Street, it became one of four significant streets connecting North Toronto to downtown.

Annexation also eliminated the need for North Toronto Town Hall and the building was eventually demolished. Between 1910 and 1912, it was the location of North Toronto Collegiate. In 1912, a new five-room school, called North Toronto Collegiate Institute, and a large playfield was

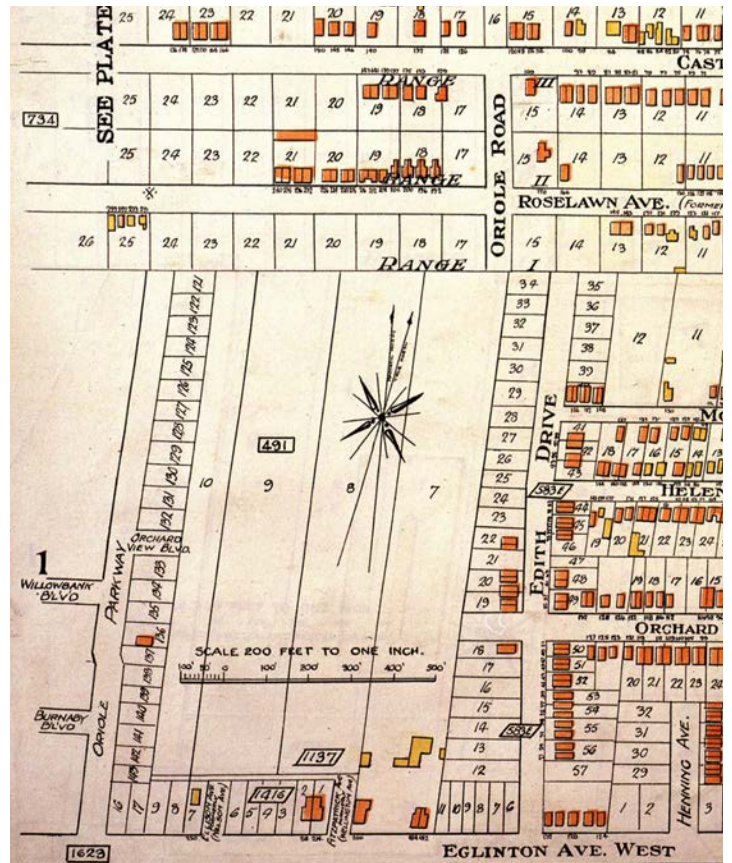


Top: Chaplin Estate Plan of Subdivision, 1913
Bottom: Glebe Manor Estate Plan, 1910



built on Broadway Avenue east of Yonge Street on what was previously farmland. Over time the school expanded with additional storeys, building additions and a new entrance on Roehampton Avenue. Eglinton Junior Public School also opened in 1912 at the corner of Eglinton Avenue and Mount Pleasant Road. The school expanded over the next 10 years. Hodgson Middle School (originally Davisville East School) opened in 1915 on Davisville Avenue east of Mount Pleasant Road. Originally built as three portable units, a permanent school was built over time.

In 1923, Eglinton Park, formerly the Davisville and Carlton Brick Company, was acquired by the City of Toronto through expropriation for the purpose of developing an athletic field. It was named Eglinton Park in 1929, and a field house was constructed in 1930. In 1930, Northern Secondary School (then Northern Vocational School) and school yards were built on Mount Pleasant Road between Roehampton Avenue and Broadway Avenue.



Goad's Atlas (1924) showing the future location of Eglinton Park



Eglinton Park Field House, 1930

1930-50s

Low-rise commercial and apartment buildings were constructed along Eglinton Avenue West in the 1930s and residential development west of Yonge Street grew with the construction of the Chaplin Estates. From 1944 to 1952, a series of publicly and privately owned blocks and lots along the southern edge of the Chaplin Estates were assembled to create Oriole Park as it exists today. The full footprint of Eglinton Park was also realized during this time.

June Rowlands Park (then called Davisville Park), which originally consisted of a number of individual lots, started to take shape and grew through the gradual acquisition of adjacent lots. In 1948, Charlotte Maher Park (originally Roehampton Park) was identified in a registered plan of subdivision northwest of Eglinton Avenue and Bayview Avenue, with the owner dedicating the land as a public park. The land that was dedicated was low-lying and covered by a pond of stagnate water. In 1950, the City installed a drain, filled the land and sodded it for use as a public park.

Howard Talbot Park was also built in the late 1940s on lots that were purchased for the development of the park. The land was comprised of swampy lowlands with high banks to the south and a creek running through it from west to east. Drainage had to be installed and the land was graded with the addition of ball fields in 1950 and the bowling green in 1951.



Southwest corner of Yonge St and Eglinton Ave, 1930s



Northeast corner of Yonge-Eglinton intersection, 1930s

Memorial Park was created after the Second World War on ravine land located between the Belt Line Railway and a cemetery running along Roselawn Avenue. Originally industrial supply yards used to store construction materials, the land was identified for the creation of a park in a 1931 proposed plan for the northern part of the Village of Forest Hill. The park was developed in the late 1940s and was named in tribute to Forest Hill citizens who were killed in action during the war.

The completion of the Yonge subway line in 1954 brought transformative growth and change to Midtown, shifting the area from a largely low-rise neighbourhood to a dense urban area with apartment tower developments. In the late 1950s, both sides of the Eglinton Avenue from Duplex Avenue to Mount Pleasant Road were rezoned to allow more intense commercial uses. The first new office buildings along Eglinton Avenue began to appear shortly afterwards. At this time, the deep lots north and south of Eglinton Avenue between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road attracted the development of apartment blocks, with associated land assembly and rezoning to allow for high-density residential development.

1960s-80s

Construction of major office buildings in the area continued from the 1960s through to the 1980s. Following the rezoning and development of high-rise apartment buildings north and south of Eglinton Avenue, in the early 1960s the residential areas between Eglinton Avenue, Keewatin Avenue, Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road were up-zoned to allow for additional high-density residential development.

South of Eglinton Avenue, Greenwin developed a master plan for the lands between Davisville

Avenue and Balliol Street and the south side of Balliol Street between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road in 1967. The plan, consisting of large slab apartment towers in an open, landscaped setting, or "Towers in the Park", played a significant role in shaping the Yonge-Davisville area. As part of this development, the City approved an increase in density on one lot in exchange for the creation of a private parkette to which the public has access along Balliol Street. This site, now known as Balliol Parkette, remains today. It is an early example of Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces in the area and continues to be designated as Parks and Open Space Areas in the City's Official Plan.

Although the Tower in the Park developments in both the Yonge-Eglinton and Yonge-Davisville area included generous open landscapes, few new parks were introduced to the area during this time. New parks established in these areas included:

- Redpath Parkette as part of the redevelopment of the block between Keewatin Avenue and Erskine Avenue;
- The final expansion of June Rowlands Park which reached its current size by 1967; and
- The acquisition of the right-of-way of the former Beltline Railroad by the City of Toronto in 1988 for use as a linear park.

1990s-2010s

As Toronto continued to evolve through the turn of the century, Midtown remained a desirable area to live given the variety of housing types, transit connections to Downtown and elsewhere and access to a full range of local services and amenities. In the early 2000s, a new era of intense residential development began with an increasing



Top: Aerial photo of Yonge-Eglinton intersection, 1951
Bottom: Aerial photo of Yonge-Eglinton intersection, 1969

number of high-rise condominiums constructed on lands in and adjacent to Yonge-Eglinton Centre. This wave of development introduced new building types into Midtown neighbourhoods, including residential and mixed-use tall buildings where office and retail uses had previously predominated on Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue East and tower-and-podium tall buildings in the Apartment Neighbourhoods. This era of intensification led to a doubling of Yonge-Eglinton Centre's population between the 1990s and 2010s with development pressures further accelerating in 2016-2018 in parallel with the Midtown in Focus study.

Several recent developments have contributed to a limited amount of new parkland in Midtown. The new parkland primarily consists of small parkettes including those located at 35 Dunfield Avenue, 54 Berwick Avenue and 79 Keewatin Avenue. New and redesigned parkland and open spaces have also been created along Yonge Street, from Montgomery Square in the north through new squares at the Yonge-Eglinton intersection to publicly-accessible open space at Quantum Square and an expanded Hillsdale Parkette.

4.2 MIDTOWN'S PUBLIC PARKS

Midtown did not benefit from a pre-determined master plan for the provision of its parks and open spaces. While some areas of the city have master plans for their park and open space resources, others have evolved organically and incrementally as growth and change have occurred. Midtown's urban fabric is largely the product of waves of

development and redevelopment, with each development era providing different kinds and amounts of parks and taking varying approaches to the provision of parkland.

Midtown includes 16 public parks totaling 26.2 hectares (Figure 2). Appendix 1 provides a more detailed summary of each park in the area, the programming they offer and any improvements undertaken in recent years or planned to be undertaken.

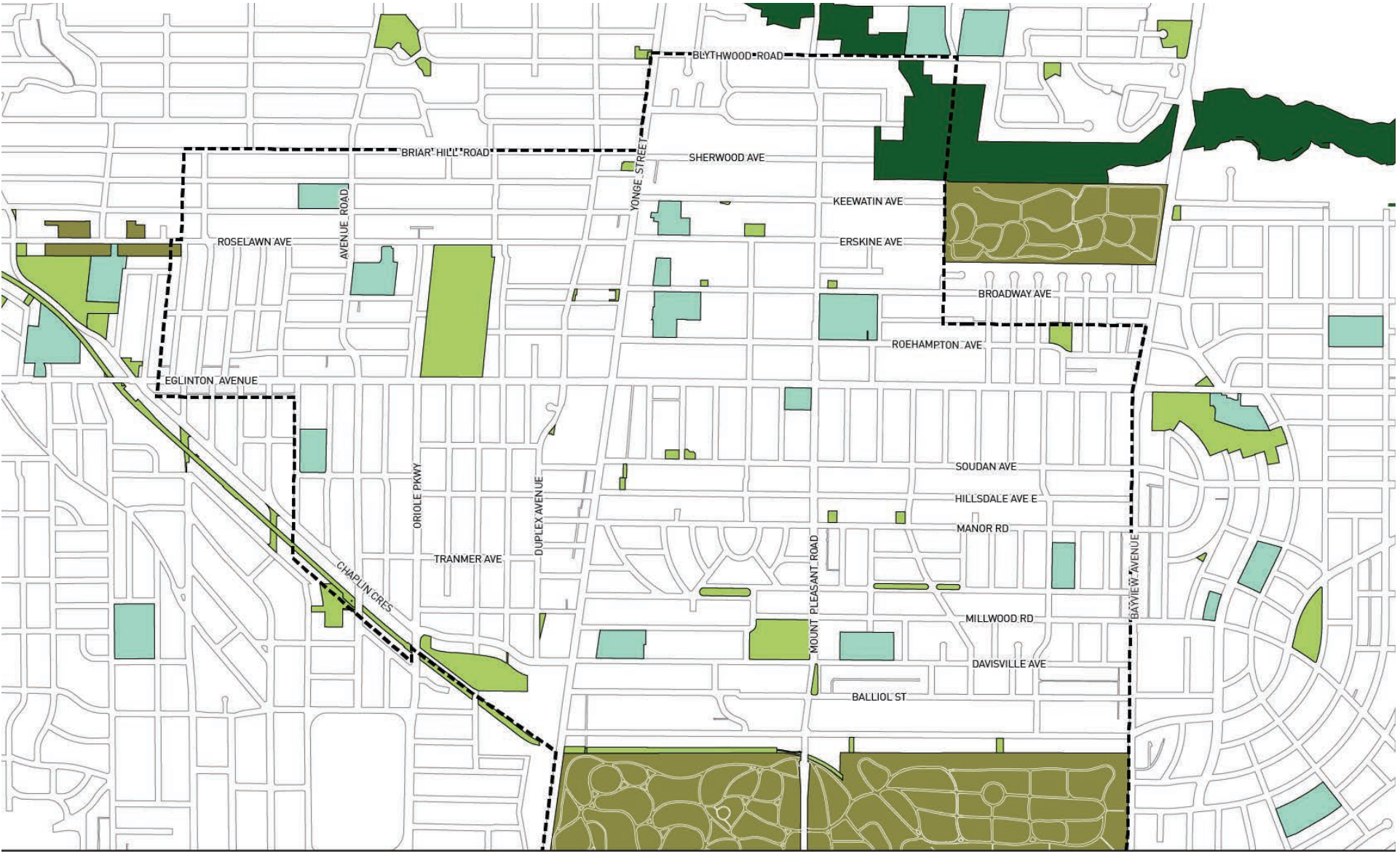
Parkettes

Parkettes under 0.5 hectares make up 56 per cent of all parks in the area. There are 9 parkettes in total. Parks of this size offer limited opportunity for providing programming and recreational use. While a number of these parks, such as Dunfield Park (0.1 hectares) and Redpath Avenue Parkette (0.28 hectares) contain playgrounds, half of them, including Fiona Nelson Parkette (0.09 hectares) and Mount Pleasant Parkette (0.16 hectares), have few amenities other than benches.



Dunfield Parkette

Figure 2: Existing Parks and Open Spaces



- Existing Secondary Plan Area
- Existing/Approved Public Parks
- Ravines/Natural Areas
- Cemeteries
- School Properties

Not to Scale

Small Parks

Two parks in the area are considered small parks at between 0.5 and 1.5 hectares in size. Charlotte Maher Parkette at 0.61 hectares includes both a playground and additional passive open space, but has opportunity for additional parks programming and could be further improved through expansion.

Glebe Manor Square at 0.87 hectares is a long, narrow boulevard park dotted with benches. The linear nature of the park and its location between two streets makes the addition of new programming challenging. However, there may be opportunities to provide low intensity recreational uses, or to rethink adjacent streets to provide additional space to expand this park.

Medium-sized Parks

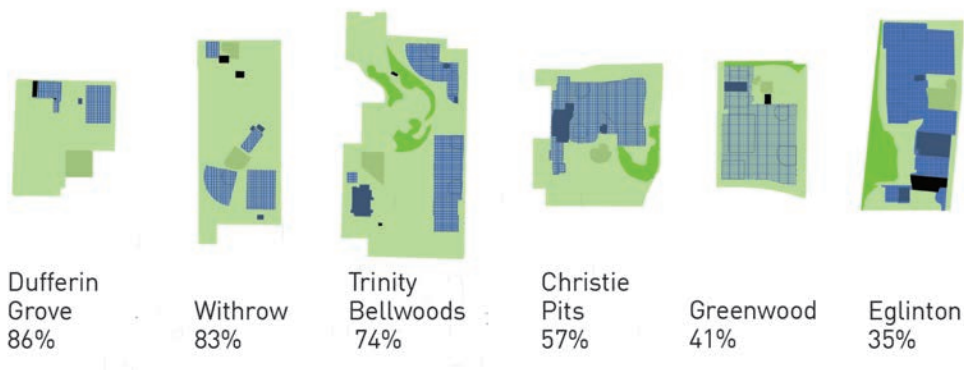
There are two medium sized parks in Midtown between 1.5 and 3.0 hectares in size – Oriole Park and June Rowlands Park. Each of these parks provides a range of parks programming and facilities, and significant passive open space. Oriole Park at 2.91 hectares includes a number of recreational and play spaces including a playground, wading pool and splash pad, as well as two tennis courts and a ball diamond. June Rowlands Park at 2.65 hectares is a key community destination in the Davisville area with six tennis courts, a baseball diamond, playground and splash pad. The local farmers market operates in the

park during the summer and fall, and it is a major attractor for communal gatherings.

Large Parks

Sherwood Park is a 6.78 hectare park located at the northern extent of the existing Secondary Plan area and connects with the city's ravine system to the north and east. The park is largely a nature park with significant natural heritage features. A large portion of the park was designated in the City's Official Plan as an Environmentally Significant Area in 2015. It mostly offers passive parks programming with walking and running trails and picnic sites. The park does, however, also include a playground, wading pool, baseball diamond and the area's only dog off-leash area. Though the park is a significant asset for the area, most of the park is ravine land and comprised of trails. Additionally, the park frontage, visibility and accessibility is limited.

The largest park in the area is Eglinton Park at 9.09 hectares. Because of its size and central location on Eglinton Avenue, there are many demands placed on Eglinton Park. It provides active, recreational uses and a passive green refuge for Midtown and the broader city. It has five multi-purpose sports fields, two baseball diamonds and two outdoor tennis courts. It also has a playground, wading pool and picnic sites. The North Toronto Memorial Community Centre and Arena, and associated surface parking area, are also located within the



park's footprint. It is heavily used by a diverse range of sports clubs in all seasons.

At present, sports fields, which comprise the majority of the park, are not accessible to the local community during warmer months due to the permitting schedule for sports leagues. After accounting for the athletic fields, the remaining park area is equivalent to the size of a small park, and the park's topography and steep hill along its western edge limit the locally-oriented activities that can take place. Nonetheless, Eglinton Park has the potential to be an excellent open space resource for people living and working in Midtown.

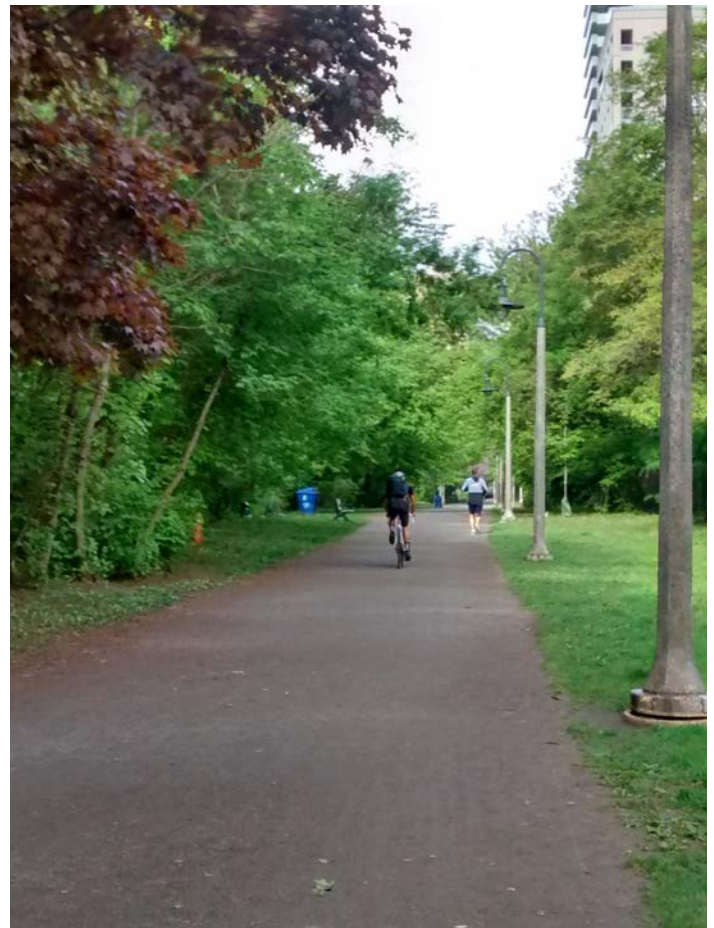
There is currently a Master Planning process underway for Eglinton Park to better address the needs of the community, and to guide the renewal of the multi-functional park's design and programming. Access to the park on both its eastern and western edges can be improved, and its Eglinton Avenue frontage can be designed to be more prominent and inviting.

Linear Parks

The Kay Gardner Beltline Park is a 2.29 hectare linear park that extends from Mount Pleasant Road to Allen Road. A portion of the linear park runs along the southern boundary of the Secondary Plan area and connects into the Mount Pleasant Cemetery trail system eventually linking to other



Beltline Trail bridge



Beltline Trail, a linear park in Midtown

recreational trails that connect with Downtown Toronto. It is a significant recreation trail running through the study area that supports both passive and active uses – walking, running, cycling and benches for sitting. It currently lacks washroom facilities or an adequate number of drinking fountains.

Adjacent Parks

There are seven parks located immediately outside the Secondary Plan area, including Howard Talbot Park (4.9 hectares) to the east, Chaplin Parkette (0.14 hectares) and Memorial Park (5.4 hectares) to the west, Snyder Parkette (0.18 hectares) to the north and Forest Hill Road Park (1.08 hectares), Robert Bateman Parkette (0.13 hectares) and Laratt Parkette (0.11 hectares) to the south.

Howard Talbot Park, at 4.9 hectares in size, is a large park. It provides important open space amenity for the adjacent high school and most of the area is dedicated to baseball diamonds, tennis courts, lawn bowling fields, and a sports field and track. While there is a splash pad and playground located in the park, there is little space dedicated for passive uses. Additionally, the park is lined with residential homes to the south, limiting access to the park to a few narrow entrance points along that edge. Its main access points are from Eglinton Avenue and Parklea Drive.

Memorial Park is another large park (5.4 hectares) located just outside the Secondary Plan area. The park is located next to the Larry Grossman Forest Hill Memorial Arena and includes a multipurpose field, outdoor track, two baseball diamonds as well as a horticultural display and pathways. The park also provides open space amenity for an adjacent junior school, daycare and nursery.

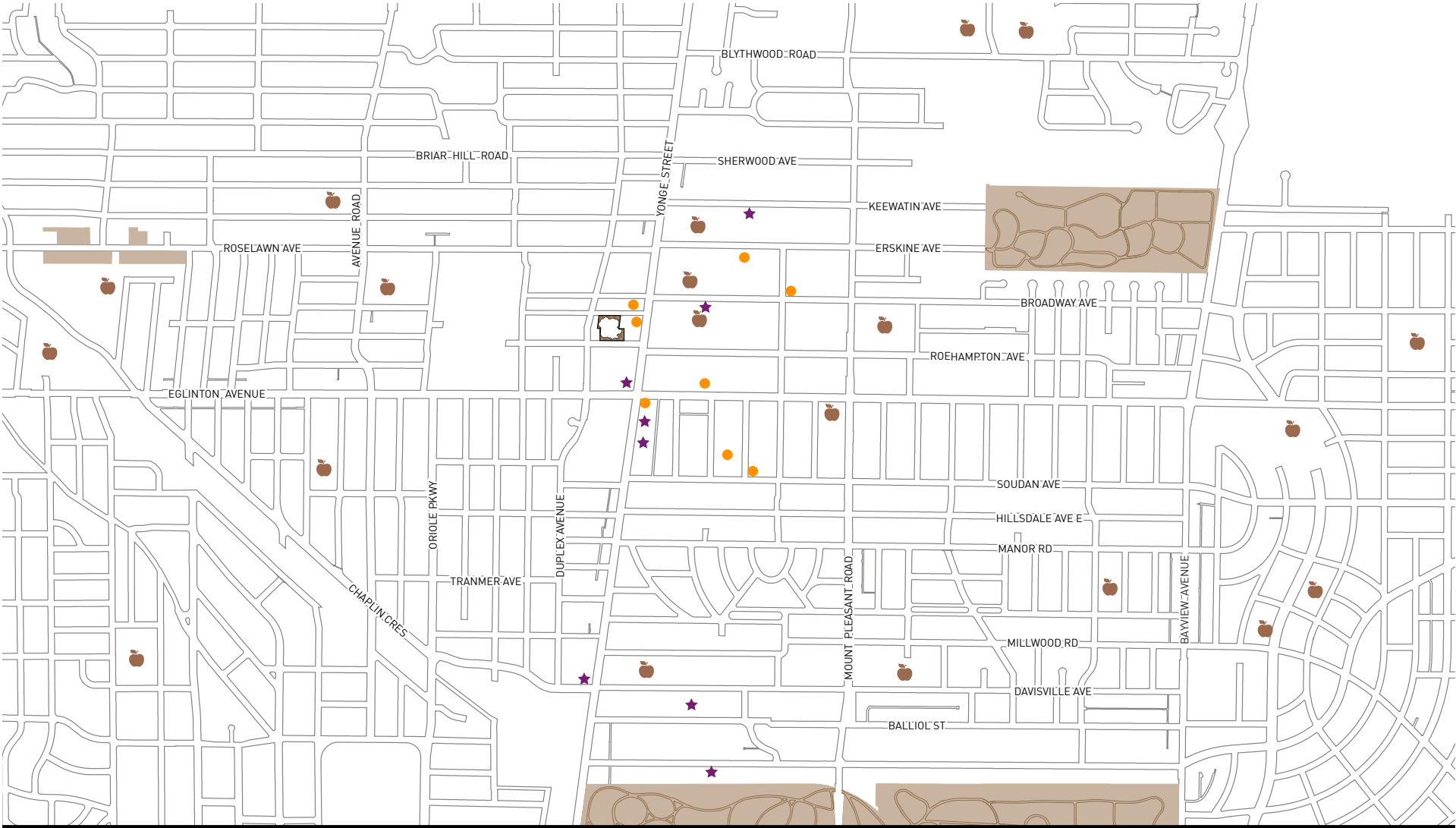
Approved Parks

Nine new parkettes (all under 0.15 hectares) have been recently acquired in Midtown. Three are under construction but most have not been built or programmed. Seven were acquired as parkland dedication associated with development approvals and two were land acquisitions led by the City. The small size of these new acquisitions is, in part, due to the ineffectiveness of the City's current tools to acquire larger parks. However, securing these parkettes may offer opportunities for future expansion to create larger parks.

4.3 MIDTOWN'S RAVINES

Ravines are a key component of the City's open space network. They provide linear connections between neighbourhoods and link many of the city's parks and open spaces. Ravines also perform important ecological functions, provide recreational opportunities and create opportunities for quiet reflection and connection with nature. To the south of the study area, Mount Pleasant Cemetery connects to the Don Valley via the Vale of Avoca Park Ravine and the Kay Gardner Beltline connects to the Don Valley via the Moore Park Ravine. To the north of the study area, the Blythwood-Sherwood Ravine has trail connections to the Don Valley via Sunnybrook Park and northwest to Lawrence Park Ravine and the Chatsworth Ravine.

Figure 3: Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Open Spaces and Other Open Spaces in Midtown



- Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces
- ★ Existing

● Approved
- 🍏 School Properties

🏛️ Library Open Space

🌳 Other Major Open Space

Not to Scale ↗

4.4 MIDTOWN'S OTHER OPEN SPACES

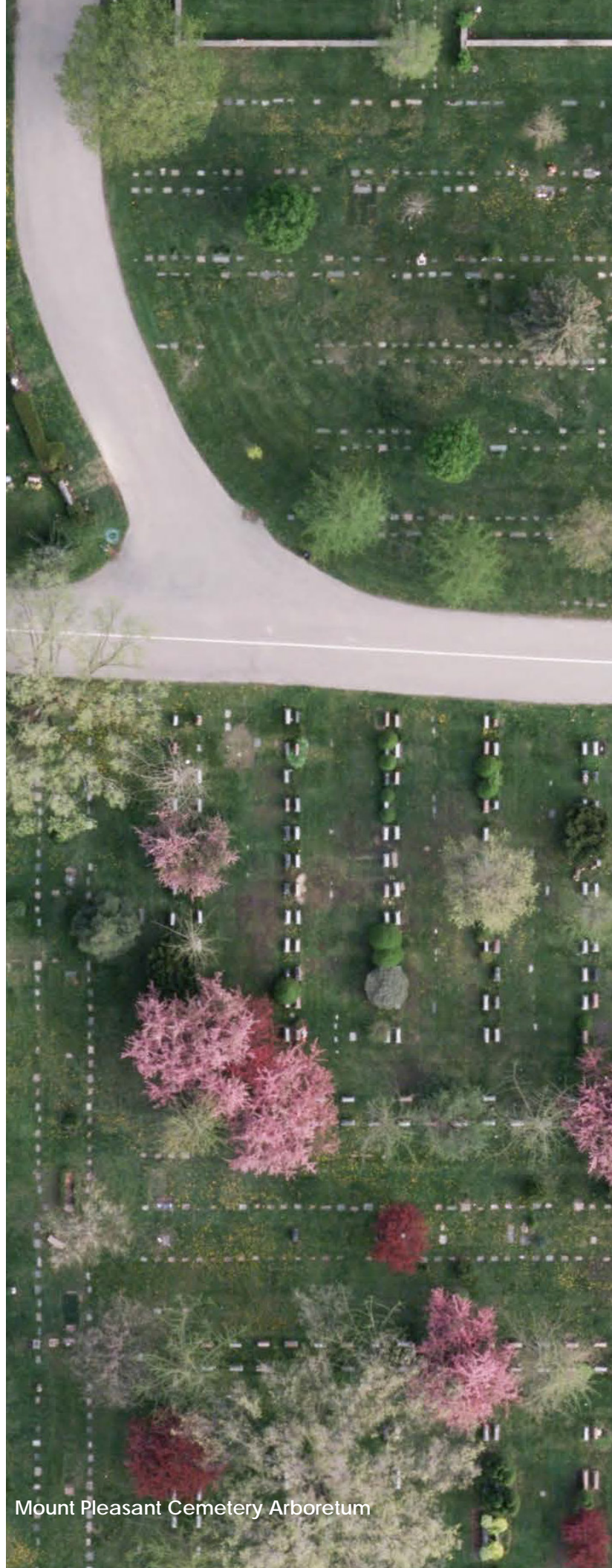
There are a number of important open spaces owned by other public agencies and institutions (e.g. School Boards) and private landowners in the area. Similar to parks, they are key components of the network of green, open spaces that offer contrast and respite from the dense built environment and provide a variety of opportunities for active and passive recreation. While they do not replace the need for new and enhanced parkland, they are still important to Midtown and critical to preserve and expand.

Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces

In order to provide additional open space within dense urban neighbourhoods, the City regularly negotiates and secures Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces through new development. POPS are an important element within the city's public realm network, complementing existing and planned parks, open spaces and natural areas. There are currently half a dozen POPS built or secured in Midtown, ranging from public walkways and mid-block connections, to small plazas, forecourts and courtyards and deep setbacks adjacent to planned public realm and streetscape projects. Figure 3 shows the current and secured POPS in Midtown.

Places of Worship

There are 15 Places of Worship in the Secondary Plan area. However, most have limited green space. The Church of the Transfiguration, located at Manor Road and Redpath Avenue, has the



Mount Pleasant Cemetery Arboretum

largest green space in the area. The open space onsite, at approximately 0.6 hectares, is equivalent to a small park. The site is elevated and surrounded on all sides by public streets, and currently provides an important passive green space for residents and play structures for a local nursery school. If leased or acquired by the City, a number of passive recreational uses could be accommodated. The 2014 Midtown in Focus Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan recognized the potential of this space.

A few other local churches, including St. Clement's Church at Duplex Avenue and St. Clements Avenue, Glebe Road United Church at Glebe Road East and Tullis Drive, St. Peter's Estonian Lutheran Church at Mount Pleasant Road and Roehampton Avenue and St. Cuthbert's Church on Bayview Avenue and St. Cuthberts Road have landscaped yards, open space amenities and church steps that also provide important passive space for the community and a visual respite from the surrounding built up areas.

Cemeteries

There are two large cemeteries located in the vicinity of Midtown which are important open space assets. Both provide a recreation function for the area with walking and running paths and quiet shaded spaces. Mount Pleasant Cemetery, at approximately 80 hectares, runs along the southern boundary of the existing Secondary Plan area from Yonge Street to Bayview Avenue. It was established in 1874 with numerous walking circuits, ornate monuments, mausoleums and flower gardens that continue to draw visitors from across the city. The cemetery also includes an extensive local and exotic tree collection, making it a significant arboretum in the city. Mount Hope Cemetery is

approximately 20 hectares and is located north east of the study area, adjacent to Sherwood Park. It is a Catholic cemetery established in 1898. Walking paths and unique monuments make it a local destination.

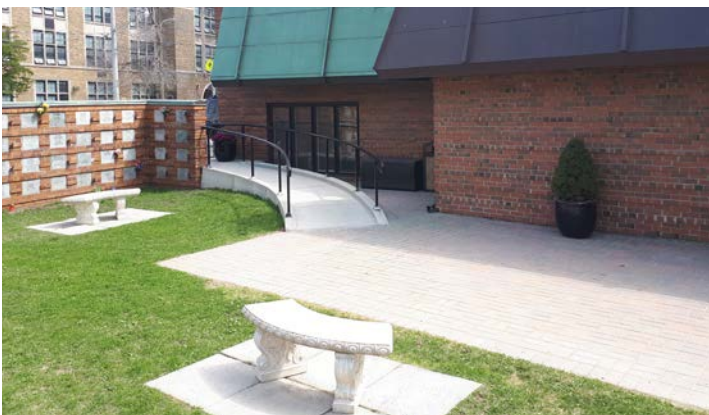
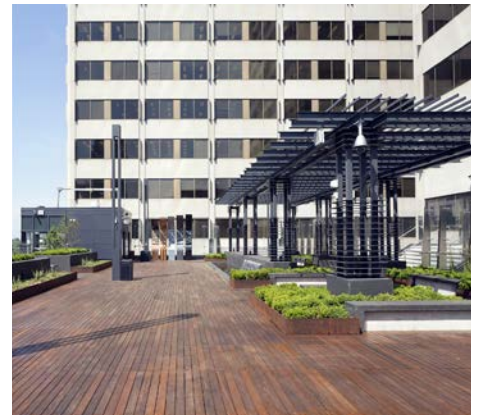
School Yards

School yards are an important community asset and valued component of the parks and open space network, providing active recreational space for children and landscaped open space in built-up neighbourhoods. Greater public access to these spaces would provide much needed open space. There are 12 publicly-funded schools within Midtown, including nine elementary schools and three secondary schools. Most of the school yards have sports fields and play structures; however, a few schools only have paved school yards with play structures. In the last ten years, the City has secured over \$1.5 million in Section 37 funds to support improvements to school grounds including playgrounds and playfields in the area.

The Toronto District School Board's guiding principles for community use of their facilities acknowledges that neighbourhood schools are hubs of the community and that use of these facilities should be maximized to further both educational and community objectives. However, public access to school yards during non-school hours is inconsistent and determined by each facility.

Libraries

Northern District Library branch, located on Orchard View Boulevard, is a community destination in the area. A master plan developed for the branch outlines numerous improvements for the exterior of the building including the creation



Photos of Midtown Open Spaces

Top row: North Toronto Collegiate Institute playfield, Northern District Library forecourt

Middle row: Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces in Midtown

Bottom row: St. Peters Church open space and Mount Pleasant Cemetery

of more publicly accessible open space. In the last few years, a new forecourt and landscaped access ramp with seating and lighting has been completed. Additional planned improvements include redeveloping the Helendale Avenue frontage as a publicly accessible space at grade and raising the depressed plaza space on Orchard View Boulevard to create more open space at grade. These improvements will continue as funding becomes available. The open spaces surrounding the library and the planned improvements are a component of the Public Realm Moves identified in the 2014 Midtown in Focus: Parks, Open Space and Streetscape Master Plan.

Towers in the Park

Midtown includes a collection of large slab style apartment buildings, most of which are located on large lots. Many include significant open spaces around the buildings, which largely give these areas a green and open character, commonly referred to as Tower in the Park landscapes. These buildings contribute to the open space network in the area. This character is being threatened by continued infill and intensification pressures. In some cases, the open areas associated with the Tower in the Park developments have been dedicated to surface parking or have been paved over the years. Many of them now resemble “Tower in the Parking Lot”, rather than the initial intent associated with these types of buildings. Providing incentives, such as enabling modest infill development on these sites, will enable improvements to open spaces and pedestrian access and ensure they regain their Tower in the Park qualities.



Examples of Tower in the Park Open Spaces

4.5 MIDTOWN'S STREETS AND CONNECTIONS

4.5.1 STREETS

Street networks play a key mobility function in neighbourhoods – moving people into and through an area – but as part of the public realm and having a placemaking role, they can also create connections to community destinations including parks. Depending on their design, they can also be vital open spaces themselves. Streets in Midtown serve a mobility function primarily for vehicles, while their civic role as a place for people to occupy and the role they play in the area's active transportation network is currently limited.

Yonge Street

Yonge Street is the most historic and important major street in the area. It is the world's longest street and bisects the city. It has been identified as a Great Street in the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan. Much of Yonge Street in Midtown is lined with traditional two and three story main street buildings with narrow frontage street level retail. Around the Yonge-Eglinton and Yonge-Davisville intersections, the character of the street changes with large residential and office towers dominating the street. There are a few parkettes and plazas located along Yonge Street including St. Clements Parkette at the northern edge of the study area, an open plaza at the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue, and a plaza in front of the TTC headquarters at Davisville Avenue. New plaza spaces are under construction or approved at the northeast and southeast corners of Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue.



Rendering of Eglinton Avenue as a Complete Street

As the central spine connecting north and south Toronto, Yonge Street is a busy arterial that accommodates a subway, bus routes and on-street parking. Sidewalks along Yonge Street are modest for the level of foot traffic in the area, particularly near the subway station entrances where sidewalk crowding is common.

Eglinton Avenue

Eglinton Avenue is a major arterial street that runs east-west through Midtown. It is a busy corridor that currently has two lanes of traffic in each direction. Multiple bus routes currently operate along the street. The street also runs along the southern edge of Eglinton Park, a key park destination in the area. The street was comprehensively planned from Jane Street to Kennedy Road in association with the Eglinton Crosstown. The approved design between Avenue Road to Mount Pleasant Road consists of a multimodal street with two lanes of traffic, a centre turn lane, lay-by parking, dedicated and separated bike facilities, wider sidewalks and additional street greening. Between Mount Pleasant Road and Bayview Avenue the design consists of four lanes of traffic, dedicated and separated bike facilities, on-street off-peak parking and additional street greening. A portion of the street from Avenue Road to Mount Pleasant Road will be reconstructed as part of the Eglinton Crosstown project. The balance

of the street will be constructed over time and as funding is available.

Mount Pleasant Road

Mount Pleasant Road is a major arterial street and one of four significant streets connecting north Toronto neighbourhoods to downtown. Between Soudan Avenue and Millwood Road, the street has a consistent main street building fabric while, to the south, the main street retail fabric ends and is replaced by a mix of building types. The street provides a connection to a number of area schools as well as June Rowlands Park. A small triangular parkette is also located on the east side of Mount Pleasant Road between Davisville Avenue and Balliol Street.

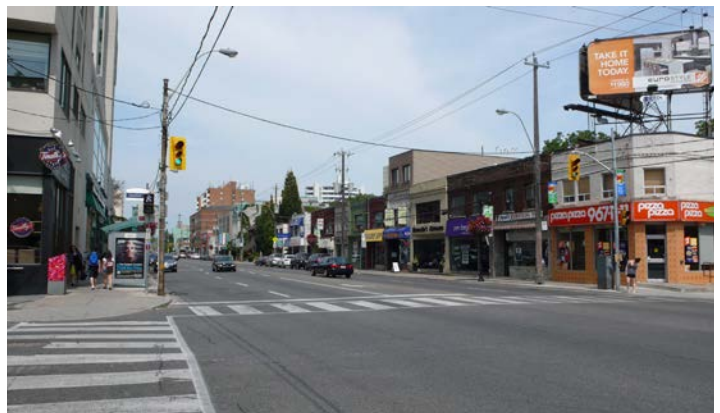
The street design is largely car-oriented with two lanes of through traffic in each direction. The street also accommodates two bus routes (including one express route) and on-street parking in some areas. Sidewalks are narrow with few street trees and amenities along the corridor.

Bayview Avenue

Bayview Avenue is a major arterial street running north-south through the study area. Much of the street between Soudan Avenue and Davisville Avenue has a two to three storey retail main street



Yonge Street



Mount Pleasant Road

character. South of Davisville Avenue, the street has a mix of low- and mid-rise residential buildings. North of Eglinton Avenue, the building heights increase and building types are residential and retail. The street has four traffic lanes, off-peak parking and accommodates one bus route. South of Soudan Avenue, the street has wider setbacks and sidewalks which provide a more comfortable pedestrian condition.

Duplex Avenue

Duplex Avenue is a collector street that extends north of Chaplin Crescent to Lawrence Avenue. The street provides one lane of traffic in each direction. South of Eglinton Avenue, the street is lined with largely low-rise single detached dwellings. Driveway access for these buildings creates regular curb cuts that break up the modest sidewalks. Sidewalks are missing from the east side of the street between Lola Street and Manor Road.

North of Eglinton Avenue, high-rise residential buildings are mixed among the low-rise homes within the residential neighbourhood. Since Duplex Avenue runs parallel to Yonge Street, it handles vehicle traffic and has been acting as an alternative to Yonge Street. However, this increase in vehicle traffic causes the street to function as a minor arterial instead of a traditional collector. The

street is identified as a signed route on the City's cycling network; however, given the high traffic volumes, the lack of a dedicated cycling facility is a concern.

Broadway Avenue

Broadway Avenue is a collector street starting at Yonge Street and extending east of Bayview Avenue. The street has one lane of traffic in each direction and on-street parking on the north side of the street. Mid- and high-rise residential buildings, many of which have generous landscaped setbacks, line the street between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road with low-rise residential buildings found east of Mount Pleasant Road. The street provides a connection to both North Toronto Collegiate Institute and Northern Secondary School and Eglinton Park via Montgomery Avenue west of Yonge Street. Vehicle and pedestrian capacity on the street is increasingly constrained due to the number of large developments along Broadway Avenue and on adjacent streets. The street is identified as a signed route on the City's cycling network; however, high traffic volumes along the street highlights the need for a dedicated cycling facility.



Duplex Avenue



Broadway Avenue

Davisville Avenue

Davisville Avenue is an extension of Chaplin Crescent between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. It is a minor arterial running east-west through the Davisville area that connects two parks (June Rowlands and Oriole), two junior public schools, a future community hub and Davisville subway station. The busy corridor also accommodates two bus routes and increasing traffic and pedestrian volumes related to residential growth in the area. Between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road, the narrow right-of-way is largely dedicated to vehicles with one lane of traffic and one lane of parking in each direction. The narrow sidewalks on both sides of the street are further constrained with light poles, signage, bus stops and other street elements.

Redpath Avenue

Redpath Avenue is a short collector street that extends between Manor Road and Erskine Avenue. It is the only street in the area that provides a north-south connection across Eglinton Avenue between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road. South of Soudan Avenue, the street is lined with residential sideyards and garages with sidewalks missing from the west side of the street between Manor Road and Soudan Avenue.

North of Soudan Avenue, the condition changes to mid- and high-rise multi-unit residential buildings with their primary addresses on Redpath Avenue and a small vibrant commercial hub just north of Eglinton Avenue. Driveways and building drop-off locations along the Avenue break up the sidewalk creating a narrow and inconsistent pedestrian condition.

Redpath Avenue is bookended by open spaces - Redpath Parkette in the north and the Church of the Transfiguration in the south. The street is currently heavily used by both vehicles and pedestrians moving through the neighbourhood and connecting to major streets. Development in the area and along the street itself has progressively created more foot traffic and vehicle congestion.

Merton Street

Merton Street is a collector street in Davisville that extends between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. West of Mount Pleasant Road, the street is lined with mid- and high-rise buildings and a unique mix of residential, institutional and commercial uses, including a small commercial hub at Pailton Crescent. Additionally, there are several access points to the Beltline Trail along Merton Street. East of Mount Pleasant Road, Merton Street becomes a quieter residential street with two parkettes and



Davisville Avenue



Merton Street

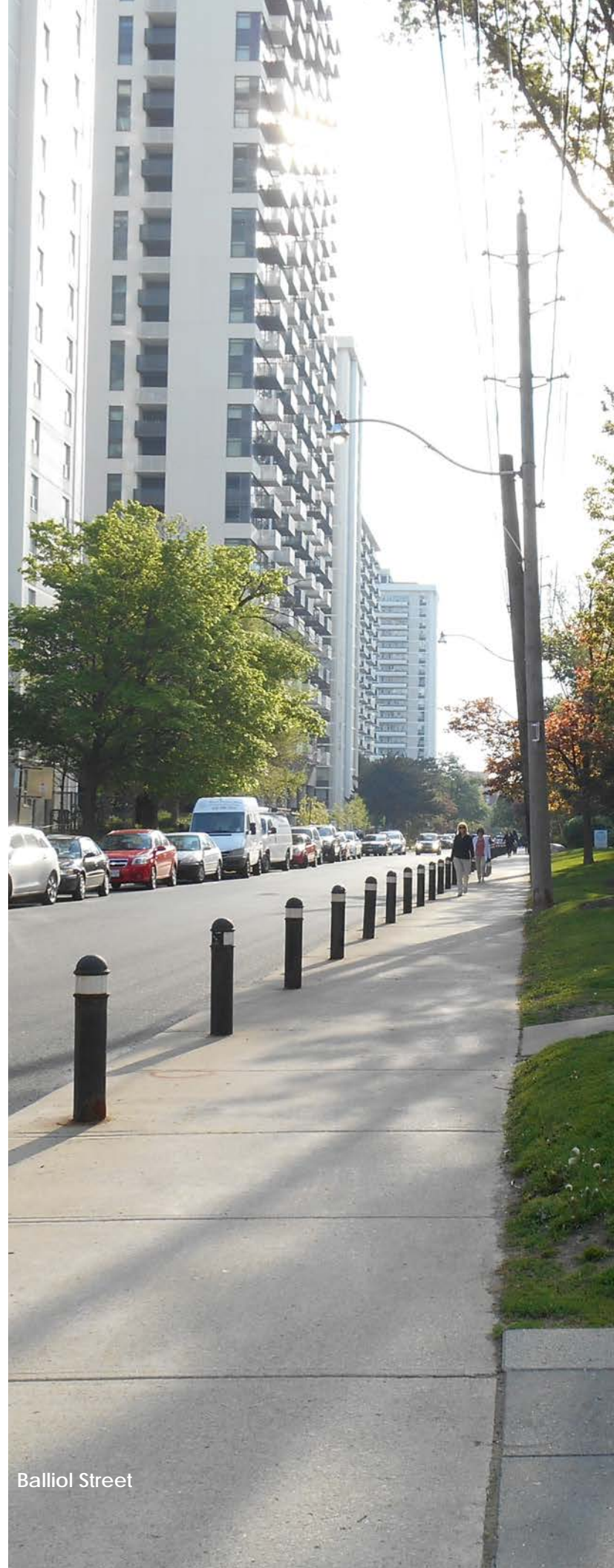
speed tables on the road. The street has one lane of traffic in each direction and on-street parking on the south side of the street.

Balliol Street

Balliol Street is a local street in Davisville that stretches between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. West of Mount Pleasant Road, the street includes a mix of Tower in the Park apartment buildings, townhouses and mid-rise apartment blocks. East of Mount Pleasant Road, low-rise homes and apartment buildings line the street. The street has one lane of traffic in each direction and on-street parking on the north side of the street. The sidewalk on the south side of the street west of Pailton Crescent has bollards along the curb to prevent parking from encroaching on the sidewalk. East of Mount Pleasant Road, curb extensions at intersections, chicanes and special pavement treatments slow vehicle traffic.

Pailton Crescent

Pailton Crescent is a short local street in the Davisville area oriented north-south that connects Davisville Avenue and Merton Street. High-rise apartment buildings line the street with a private tennis club located on the southwest corner of Balliol Street and a vibrant commercial/retail hub located at Merton Street. The street has one lane of traffic in each direction and on-street parking on the east side of the street between Davisville Avenue and Balliol Street. Wide corner radii at the southwest corner of Pailton Street and Balliol Street, as well as a missing sidewalk segment and commercial boulevard parking south of Balliol Street impact pedestrian comfort and safety.



Balliol Street

4.6 MID-BLOCK CONNECTIONS

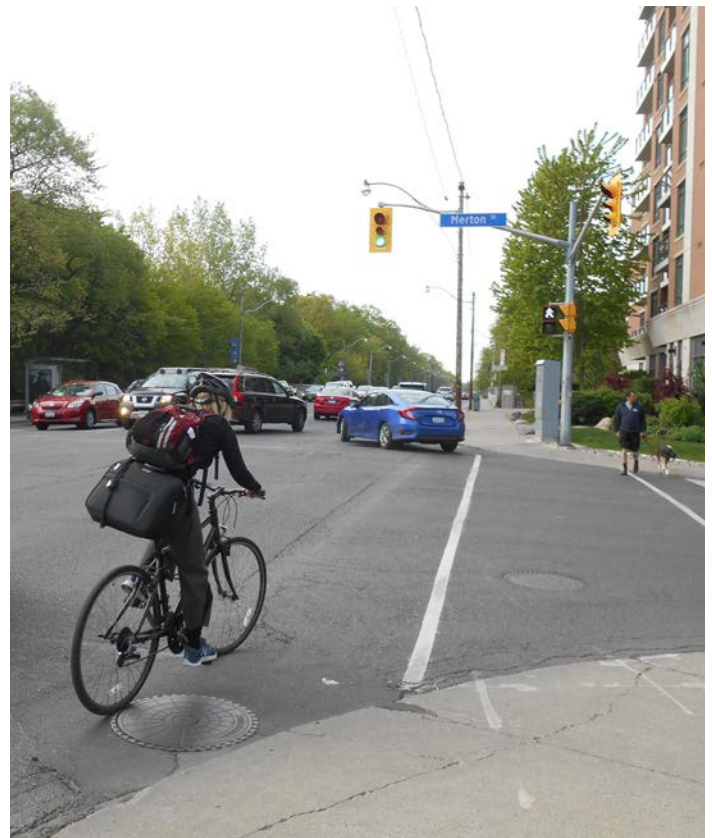
Historic patterns of development in the area have resulted in large development blocks that make it difficult to create a dense pedestrian network that would support walkability. To address this, over time, numerous mid-block connections have been secured, largely through the Tower in the Park neighbourhoods to improve the permeability of the large blocks. However, the design and condition of these connections varies greatly with some mid-block connections narrow with poor sightlines, poor lighting and few amenities. There are opportunities to further increase pedestrian and cycling permeability and connectivity in the area to augment the existing mid-block connections.

4.7 CYCLING CONNECTIONS

There are currently very few cycling facilities located in the Secondary Plan area. The Beltline Trail is a multi-use trail running along the southern edge of the Secondary Plan area. In addition to this single dedicated facility, there are three quiet/signed routes, one along Duplex Avenue, one along Lascelles Avenue/Edith Drive/Rosewell Avenue and one along Roselawn Avenue/Broadway Avenue. The quiet/signed on-street routes do not include pavement markings to denote space for cyclists.

The City's Ten Year Cycling Network Plan (2016-2025) identifies on-street facilities (painted bike lanes, separated cycling facilities) on Eglinton Avenue as part of Eglinton Connects, Chaplin Crescent/Davisville Avenue from Duplex Avenue to Acacia Road, and Mount Pleasant south of Merton Street. A corridor study along Yonge Street is also identified in the Ten Year Cycling Network Plan. A number of quiet streets and signed routes are also identified in the area. Additional routes and extensions of planned routes are currently being considered through the City's two year review of the cycling network.

Safe and direct cycling routes will be provided to create more connections to parks and open spaces in the area. By redesigning street rights-of-way to provide dedicated cycling facilities, additional safety and public realm improvements can be secured.



Cycling in Midtown



Examples of Mid-block Connections in Midtown