

Over the past 20 years, Downtown Toronto has experienced unprecedented population and employment growth. High growth is anticipated to continue to 2041. This is increasing demand for and pressure on existing parks, and there are limited lands available for new parks.

Parkland, community amenities and infrastructure must keep pace to ensure Downtown remains a great place to live, work, learn, play, and invest.

Downtown has great smaller parks, including the recently revitalized Berczy Park and Grange Park. But large parks are an essential ingredient in this mix. Large parks serve regional, city-wide, as well as local functions, and provide space for events, civic gatherings and active and passive recreation, with benefits to residents, workers, students, and visitors. Large parks contribute to a high quality of life, physical and mental health and wellbeing, civic identity, economic development and tourism, and environmental sustainability.





The lands along and adjacent to the Union Station Rail Corridor, from Bathurst Street to Blue Jays Way represent a generational opportunity to create a large park in the heart of Downtown, and realize provincial and municipal growth planning and city-building objectives.





## Background & Context

In response to rapid growth, in 2014, City Council directed the City Planning Division to initiate a comprehensive study of Downtown (known as the TOcore Planning Downtown Study), to ensure growth positively contributes to Toronto's Downtown. Through the TOcore Planning Downtown Study and other related City studies and initiatives, the City has documented the need for additional parks and open spaces in Downtown, and in particular, a need for large parks.

The TOcore Downtown Study has identified the lands along and adjacent to the Union Station Rail Corridor, from Bathurst Street to Blue Jays Way as a strategic location to create a large, centrally-located signature park in Downtown.

In the fall of 2016, City Council endorsed a City Staff report to initiate planning for a significant new park over the rail corridor, called "Rail Deck Park". At this meeting, Council requested that the City Planning Division prepare an Official Plan Amendment to provide a planning framework for a park use over the rail corridor.

Urban Strategies was engaged by the City of Toronto's City Planning division to undertake a comprehensive planning study to assess appropriate changes to the planning framework. The planning study has provided findings that support a draft Official Plan Amendment ("the draft OPA") and introduces the proposed Rail Deck Park Secondary Plan to guide the creation of a large-scale park over the rail corridor.

### The Draft Official Plan Amendment: The Proposed Rail Deck Park Secondary Plan

The draft OPA will result in a new Rail Deck Park Secondary Plan for the lands within the rail corridor between Bathurst Street and Blue Jays Way and incorporates the existing Northern Linear Park and planned Mouth of the Creek Park ("the Site"). The draft OPA designates the lands for *Park and Open Space Areas* uses, while allowing for continued and expanded rail operations within the rail corridor.

## Planning Process Timeline - Addressing a long-term need for parkland

Spring 2014

Fall 2015

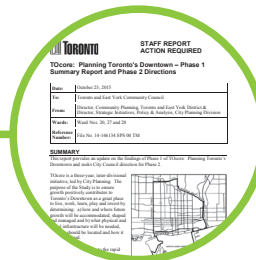
Spring 2016

Summer 2016

Fall 2016



The TOcore Planning Downtown Trends, Issues, and Intensification Report identifies parkland acquisition as a key priority in order to protect quality of life Downtown.



The TOcore Phase 1 Summary Report identifies 4 "Big Moves" including delivering parkland in unlikely spaces such as the rail corridor and under the Gardiner Expressway.



Emerging priorities in the TOcore Background Report include creative city-building ideas for establishing new *Parks and Open Space Areas* in the Downtown.



Mayor Tory announces a vision for an iconic new park in Downtown, known as "Rail Deck Park".



City Council endorses the Rail Deck Park Work Plan and directs staff to move forward with the Planning Framework Update and Implementation Strategy.

## About the Planning Study

The planning study examines the site and surrounding urban context, the history of the Railway Lands planning framework, population and employment growth trends, parks and open space needs, and the existing and emerging planning framework. The planning study builds on and incorporates the findings from related studies and ongoing planning initiatives, including the Proposed Downtown Plan, the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan, the City-wide Parkland Strategy, and Facilities Master Plan.

The planning study provides a comprehensive planning analysis and opinion in support of the draft OPA. It demonstrates that the draft OPA, and the proposed *Park and Open Space Areas* land use designation represents the best and most appropriate land use for the Site. The draft OPA has regard for the *Planning Act* and matters of provincial interest, is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conforms to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and advances the vision, objectives and policies of the Official Plan. The findings of the planning study conclude that a park use over the rail corridor is in the public interest and represents good planning.

## Study Areas

The planning study considers the Site within the following contextual study areas:



The **Local Study Area** bounded by Queen Street West to the north, Dufferin Street to the west, Yonge Street to the east and Lake Ontario to the south; and



The **Downtown Study Area**, which includes the Local Study Area and the Downtown TOcore Study Area, generally bound by the midtown rail corridor and Rosedale Valley Road to the north, the Don River to the east, Lake Ontario to the south and Bathurst Street to the west.

The planning study also explores the Site within the wider regional context of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).

Winter/Spring 2017

Summer 2017

Winter 2018

## Planning Study



## Implementation Strategy

The Implementation Strategy has been prepared separately by the City of Toronto's Rail Deck Park interdivisional team.