

Phase 1 Background Report: At a Glance

October 2024



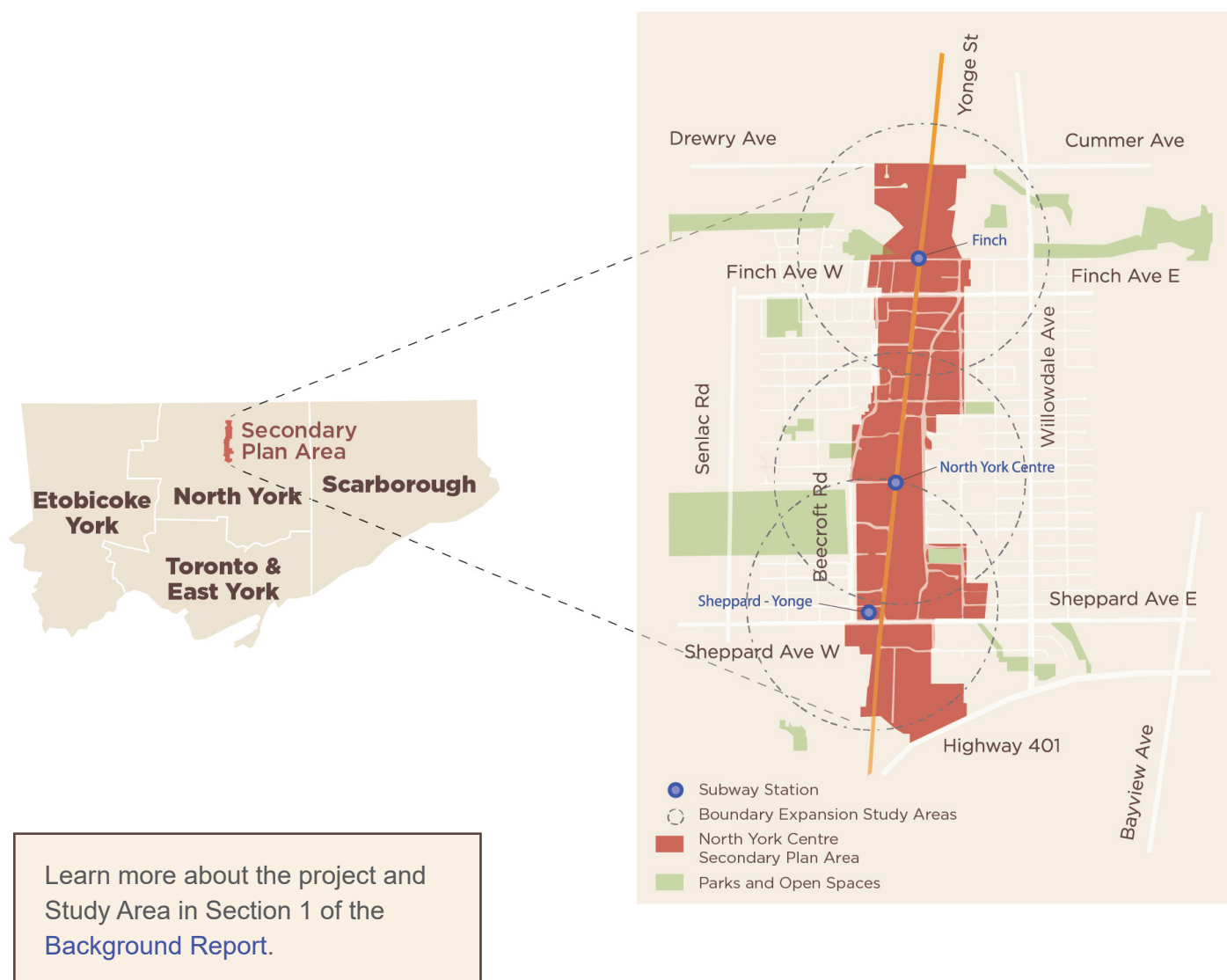
This document is an excerpt of the North York at the Centre Phase 1 Background Report: Trends, Issues, Opportunities. The full report is available at toronto.ca/nycentre.

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Introduction

The City of Toronto is undertaking a review of the North York Centre Secondary Plan to refresh the vision for North York Centre (the Centre) and develop new policy directions to strengthen its presence as an inclusive, resilient, and complete community.

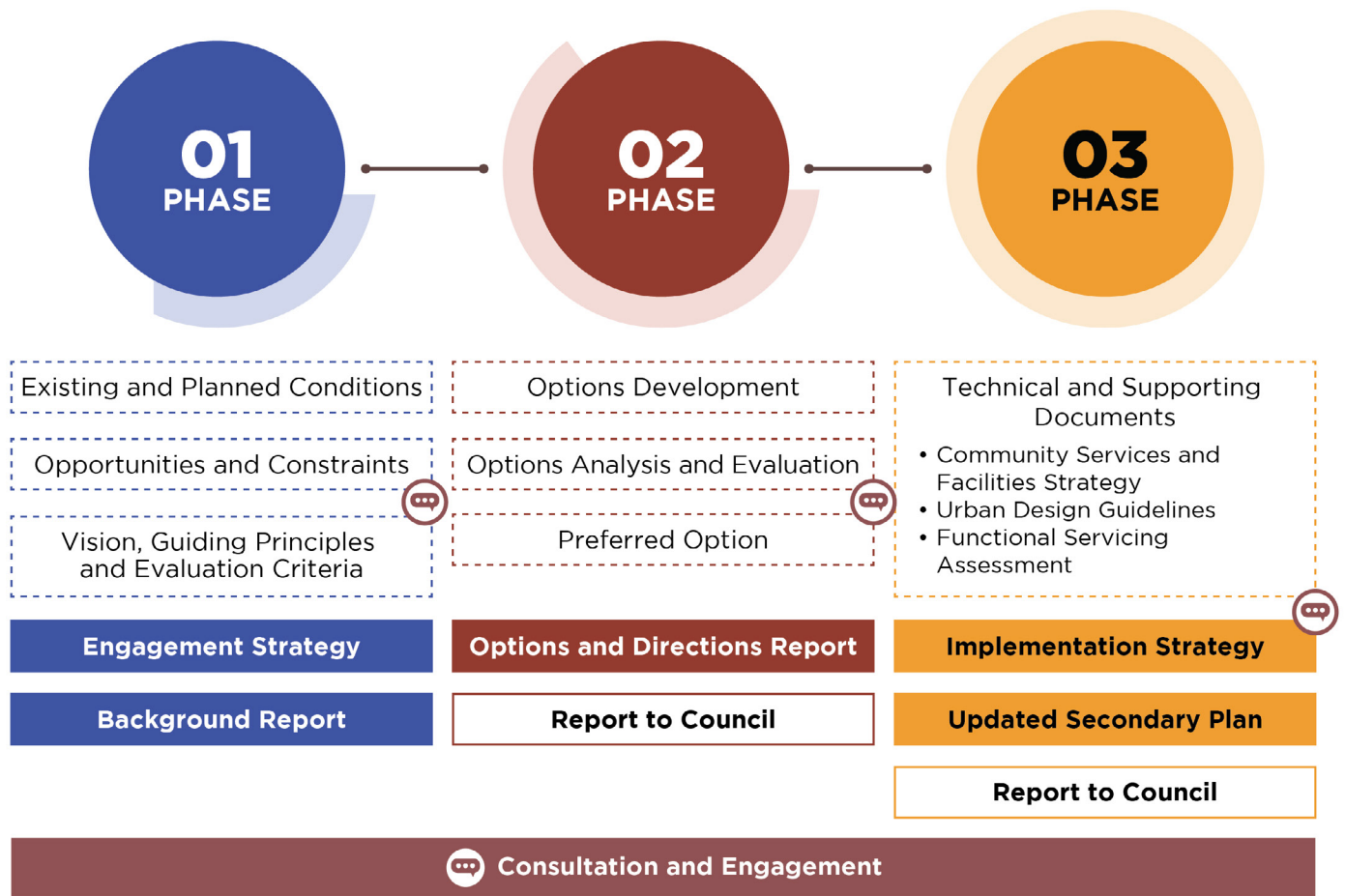
North York Centre is located along Yonge Street, from Highway 401 to Cummer/Drewry Avenue and is recognized as a focal point for mixed-use development and growth, while also serving as a hub for civic uses and community services. North York Centre is a dynamic, transit-oriented community that is home to more than 52,000 residents and nearly 35,000 employees. It is the largest office-based employment hub in Toronto outside of the Downtown and one of four 'Centres' identified in the Official Plan.



The project, known as “North York at the Centre”, includes engagement with the community and interested parties to identify aspirations, determine priorities, and recommend updates to the planning policies that guide growth and investment in the area over the next 25 years.

North York at the Centre is being completed in three phases, with engagement events and activities held in each phase to inform the project components.

- **Phase 1** – Background Review
- **Phase 2** – Options and Directions
- **Phase 3** – Implementation Strategy and Secondary Plan Update



The following provides a summary of each chapter of the Phase 1 Background Report, discussing issues related to the history, people, policy framework, natural environment, parks, open spaces, climate resiliency, land use, housing, office and retail, community services and facilities, mobility, public realm, built form, and servicing within the project Study Area. The demographic data is derived from the 2021 Census, unless otherwise noted. Each topic is discussed in more detail in the corresponding chapters. The report also discusses a vision framework for North York at the Centre that will help guide the review of the North York Centre Secondary Plan.

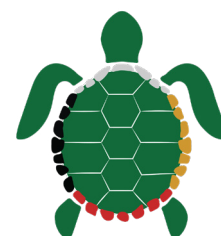
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History of North York Centre

For time immemorial, Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. Ojibway oral histories speak of Ice People, who lived at a time when ice covered the land. Following the retreat of glaciers approximately 13,000 years ago, groups of First Nations peoples moved from place to place, hunting and gathering the food they needed according to the seasons.

After corn was introduced to Southern Ontario, possibly as early as 2,300 years ago, horticulture began to supplement other food sources. Between 1,300 - 1,450 years ago, villages that were home to the ancestors of the Huron Wendat Nation became year-round settlements surrounded by crops.

In the 1640s, during an intermittent period of warfare known as the Beaver Wars, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy expanded into southern Ontario, but by the late 1680s most were pushed out of the area by Anishnabeg peoples arriving from the Upper Great Lakes. While most Haudenosaunee returned to the south shores of Lake Ontario, some stayed in the area alongside the Anishnabeg. Of the Anishnabeg peoples, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation inhabited the Toronto area when the British Crown sought to establish it as a new centre of European settlement in the late 1700s.



The lands in Toronto where North York Centre is located are covered by Treaty 13, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Dish With One Spoon Treaty, between the Anishnabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples.

Following the initial signing of Treaty 13 and founding of York Township (now Toronto) in 1793, several development periods shaped the Centre's urban evolution. York Township (now Toronto) was founded in 1793. In 1922, the largely agrarian North York Township was established, separating it from urbanizing parts of York Township to the south. During the early to mid-twentieth century, growth came to North York largely in the form of a grid of residential streets stretching east and west from the spine of Yonge Street, with farms and concession roads continuing to dominate the landscape beyond. In the second half of the twentieth century, development patterns fundamentally changed during an unprecedented urban expansion, largely made possible by the formation of Metropolitan Toronto in 1953 and its fiscal capacity to build regional water and sewer infrastructure, to widen roads, to build highways and to construct subways. By 1967 North York had been declared a borough and, by 1979, it was incorporated as a city. In 1998, North York was amalgamated with the City of Toronto.



Learn more about the Centre's history in Section 2 of the [Background Report](#).

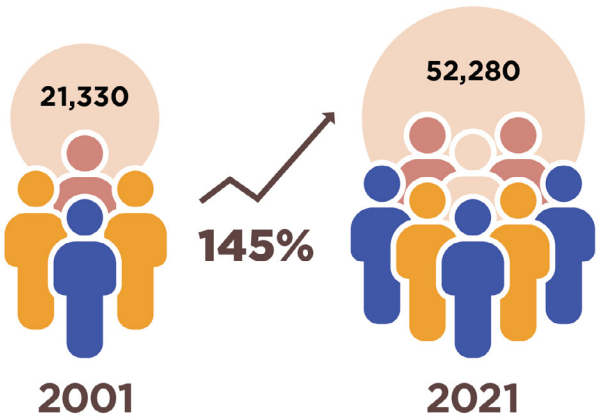
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The People Today

Population

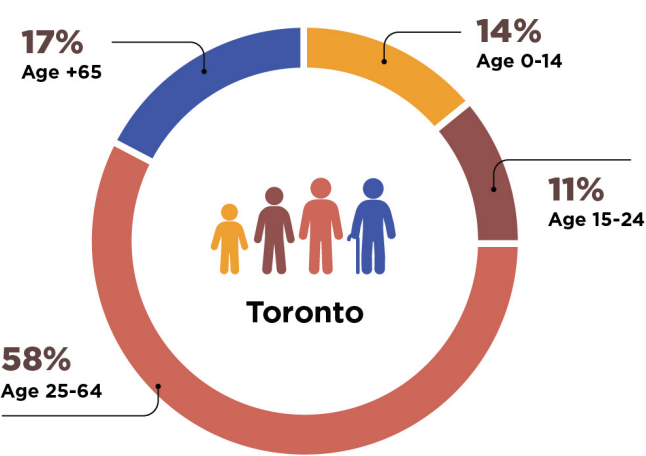
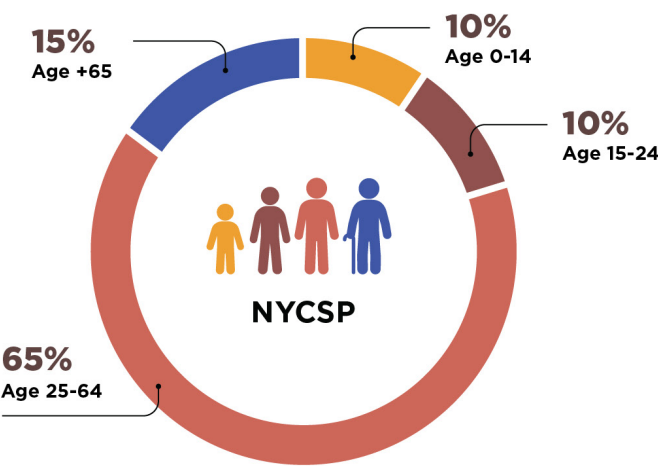
The Centre’s population has grown 145% between 2001 and 2021, from 21,330 people in 2001 to 52,280 people in 2021.

The Centre had a population density of 27,299 people per square kilometre or approximately 272 people per hectare in 2021. This is roughly six times higher than the city-wide average where the density was 4,297 people per square kilometre or 43 people per hectare.



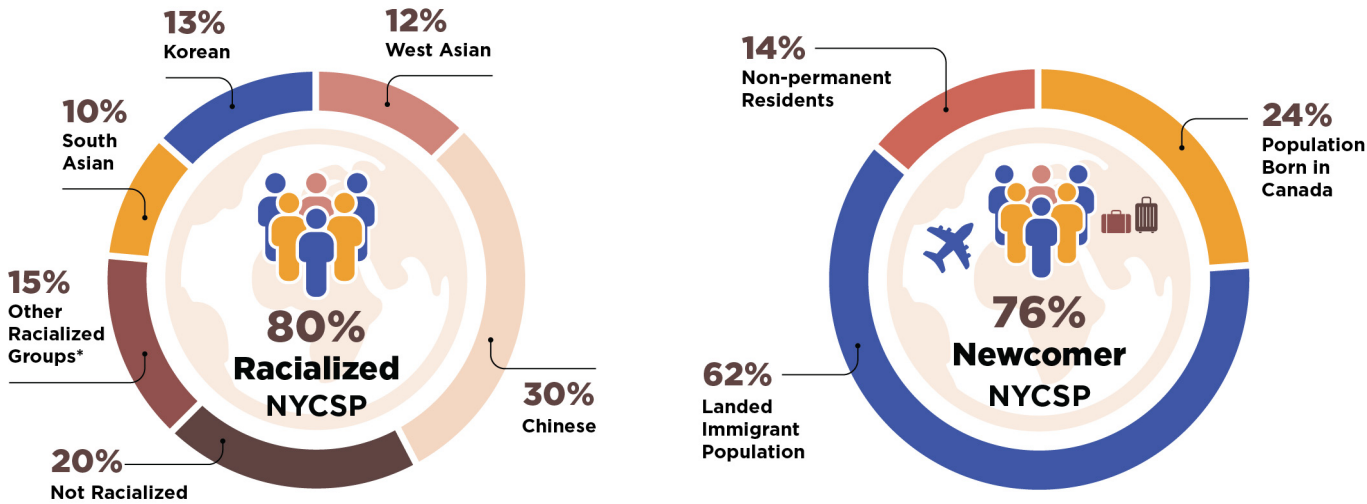
Age Distribution

When compared to Toronto overall, the Centre’s population in 2021 had a lower proportion of children (0-14 years) at 10%, a similar proportion of young adults (15-24 years) at 10%, and a lower proportion of seniors (65+ years) at 15%. However, when comparing working-age adults (24-65 years), the Centre had a higher proportion than the City of Toronto, with 65% compared to 58% city-wide.



Racialized Populations and Immigration

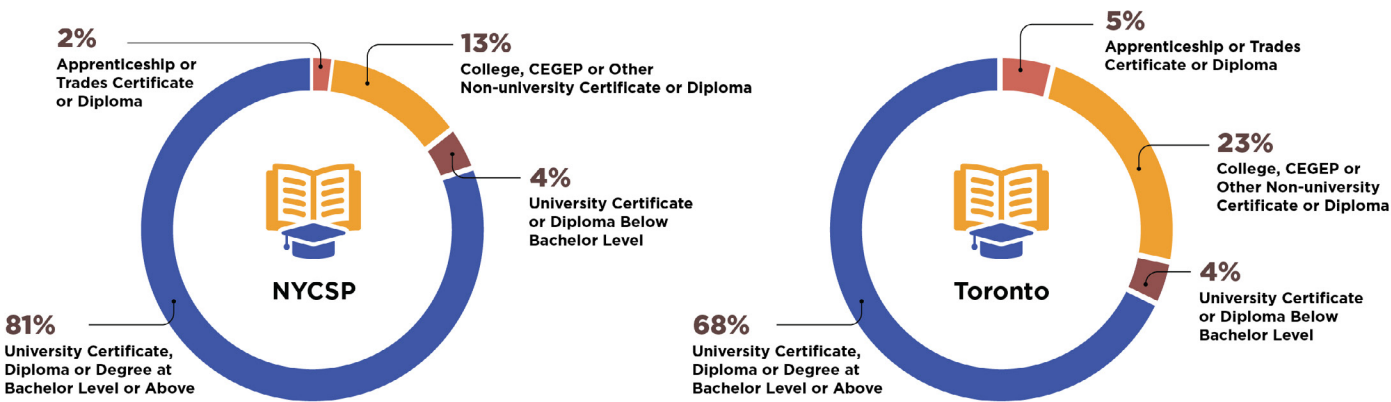
80% of residents in the Centre identify as racialized. Residents who identify as Chinese make up 30% of the Centre’s population, followed by Korean at 13% and West Asian at 12%. More than three in four residents in the Centre identify as newcomers.



*Other Racialized Groups includes South Asian (7%), Filipino (>2%), Arab (2%), Black (2%), Latin American (>1%), Japanese (1%), and Southeast Asian residents (1%), as well as residents who identified with multiple racialized groups (>1%)

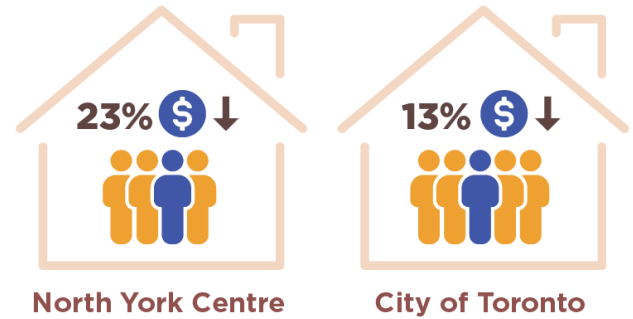
Education

Residents of the Centre are more likely to have earned a post-secondary education than residents across Toronto, at 88% versus 73% of the population, respectively.



Income

More than one in four residents in the Centre live in a low-income household, which is higher than the city-wide average of one in five



Key Findings

- The planning frameworks and strategies for the Centre should support and promote equity so that the benefits of growth and investment are shared by all members of the community.
- This includes but is not limited to facilitating inclusive economic development, diversifying

housing options, promoting affordability, and protecting the dynamic and vibrant cultures through updated land uses and retail strategies. This also means ensuring the vision of the Centre, as it evolves, is co-created through a transparent and collaborative engagement process.

Learn more about people in the Centre in Section 3 of the [Background Report](#).

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Policy Framework

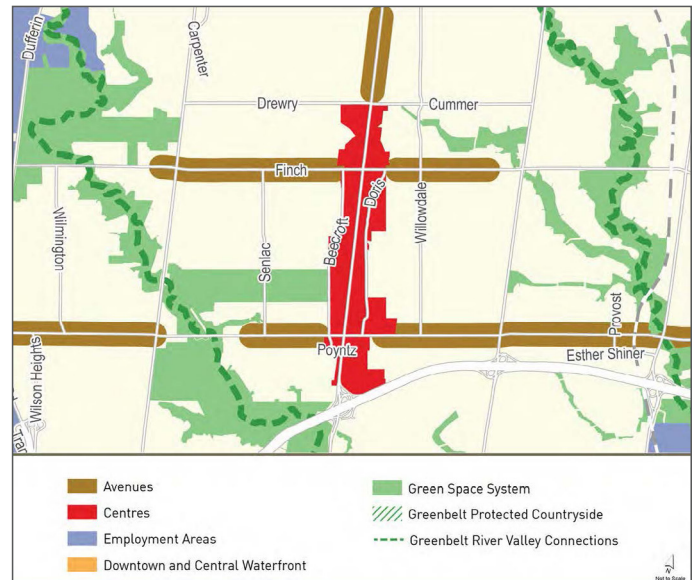
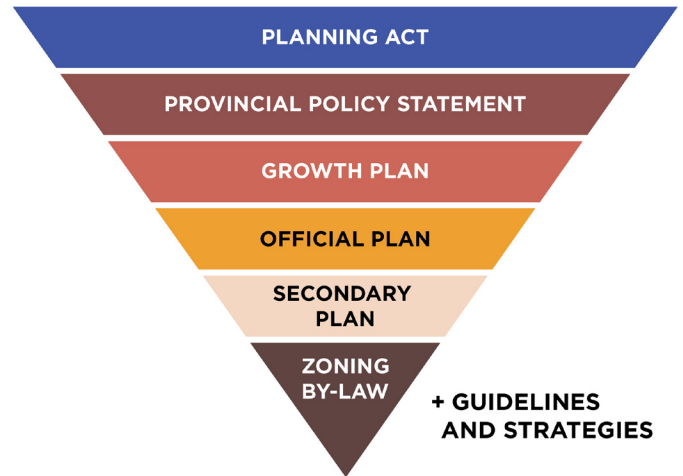
Land use planning in Ontario is based on a top-down policy framework that begins with the *Planning Act* and Provincial Policy Statement and is implemented at the municipal level through official plans, secondary plans and zoning. Within this framework, municipal planning policies and regulations must be consistent with and conform with Provincial policies and legislation.

The Changing Policy Landscape

Many Provincial policies and legislation have changed since the current North York Centre Secondary Plan first came into effect. Recent changes to Provincial regulations have addressed:

- Parkland dedication requirements;
- Community Benefits Charges (Section 37);
- Inclusionary Zoning;
- Protected Major Transit Station Areas;
- Additional Residential Units; and
- Site Plan Control.

The Province has also adopted a new Provincial Planning Statement, which will be in effect as of October 20, 2024, and will replace the current Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.



Toronto's Official Plan

Toronto's Official Plan establishes a vision, principles, and policy framework for guiding growth and development in the city through an urban structure, land use designation, and city-wide policies on topics such as healthy neighbourhoods, green spaces, the built environment, housing, community facilities, parks, the natural environment, and more.

Toronto's Official Plan identifies North York Centre as a *Centre* and designates the lands as *Mixed Use Areas*, with the surrounding residential areas designated *Neighbourhoods*. *Centres* are intended to grow into complete, mixed-use communities by accommodating significant employment and residential growth. Secondary plans are required for all *Centres* to guide their growth and the provision of services and infrastructure required to support daily living, and to assess opportunities related to climate change mitigation and resilience.

Adjacent to North York Centre, other secondary plan areas include Central Finch, Sheppard Lansing, Sheppard Willowdale, and Yonge Street North.

City-wide Strategies

Beyond the Official Plan, the City of Toronto has a number of strategies, plans, standards and guidelines that will inform the development of options and policy directions for the Secondary Plan update. These include:

- [The Reconciliation Action Plan](#);
- [Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#);
- [TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy](#);
- [HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan and 2023- 2026 Housing Action Plan](#);
- [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#);
- [Toronto Green Standard](#);
- [Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods](#);
- [Toronto Resilience Strategy](#); and
- [The 2022 Community Benefits Charge Strategy](#)

Key Findings

- The existing NYCSP has allowed the Centre to grow and accommodate significant new population and businesses since its adoption.
- There may be opportunities to implement Provincial and city-wide strategies and plans related to reconciliation, climate change and resilience, and affordable housing in a locally-specific manner through North York at the Centre.
- Updates to the City of Toronto Official Plan through Our Plan Toronto may address priorities identified through North York at the Centre on a city-wide basis, allowing the update to the Secondary Plan to focus on area-specific implementation of the direction provided.
- The Central Finch, Sheppard Lansing, and Sheppard Willowdale Secondary Plans include lands that might be considered for expanding the boundaries of the NYCSP. If expansion of the NYCSP in these areas is recommended, new policies to align with the directions of the study should be included in the NYCSP rather than amending the existing plans.

Learn more about the policy and regulatory context within North York Centre in Section 4 of the [Background Report](#).

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Natural Environment, Parks and Open Space

The *Green Space System*, as defined in Toronto's Official Plan, includes *Parks and Open Space Areas*, which range from beaches and bluffs to ravines, parks and cemeteries. The system includes both public and privately managed but publicly accessible spaces, and provides significant natural heritage and recreational value. Trails and placekeeping features complement and link together the *Green Space System*.

Natural Heritage

North York Centre is located between the east and west branches of the Don River and traversed by a tributary of the Don River, Wiliket Creek. The creek was buried underground more than a century ago but its path at-grade forms part of the area's open space network.



Parks and Open Spaces

Residents have access to 33 parks in or very near to North York Centre covering 51.7 hectares, which is equivalent to the size of almost 70 soccer fields. Parkland provision in the Centre is, however, mostly below the city-wide average of 28 square metres per person, and there are many areas with parkland provision levels between 0-4 square metres per person. Although most of the Centre has relatively low parkland provision levels, there is good walkability to parks in most of the study area. Five new parks are currently planned for the Centre.



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Parks



Glendora Park

Biodiversity

Restoration efforts can include native planting and increase biodiversity on underutilized spaces such as hydro corridors. The linear and connected parkland on both sides of the Yonge Street corridor is also an important element to foster biodiversity within and near the Centre.

Policy Context

Key features of the Conceptual Parks and Open Space Plan in the current North York Centre Secondary Plan include: the Yonge Street promenade, Parks and Private Publicly Accessible Open Spaces, areas under consideration for additional parks, linear parks along the Service Roads, the Wilket Creek parks system, and treed streets and pedestrian links within the Centre and to the parks and open space system outside the Centre.

The city-wide Parkland Strategy identifies emerging priorities that will inform renewed park policies for the North York Centre Secondary Plan. These include:

- Expanding/ creating new parkland;
- Improving the functionality of existing parkland;
- Creating welcoming and accessible places; and,
- Establishing physical and visual connections.

Key Findings

- Improve and expand accessible connections to the nearby ravine network and east-west connections between parks and open spaces throughout the Centre, bridging both sides of Yonge Street.
- Make the most of existing parks and open spaces such as Mel Lastman Square, private green spaces, cemeteries, public rights of way and parkettes through formal and informal programming.
- Focus improvements on addressing the needs of newcomers and aging residents.
- As development occurs in the Centre, new parkland will be provided. Priority should be given to expanding existing parkland and exploring opportunities to create large green spaces in collaboration with TTC/ Hydro One Networks along the Finch Hydro Corridor and throughout the Boundary Expansion Study Area (BESA) to support specific programming needs. There is a need to provide parks of a sufficient size and configuration (new parks or expansions of existing parks) to support active recreation including outdoor facilities.
- Implement placekeeping initiatives across the parks and open space network to acknowledge and honour Indigenous connections to nature within the Study Area. This can be done by providing new ceremonial and gathering spaces, and by incorporating Indigenous art, culture, language and history through the use of: Indigenous place names, symbols, colours, Indigenous plant species, food and medicines, and interpretive features.
- Improve biodiversity and pollinator habitat throughout parks and open spaces, rights of way, and future development sites.

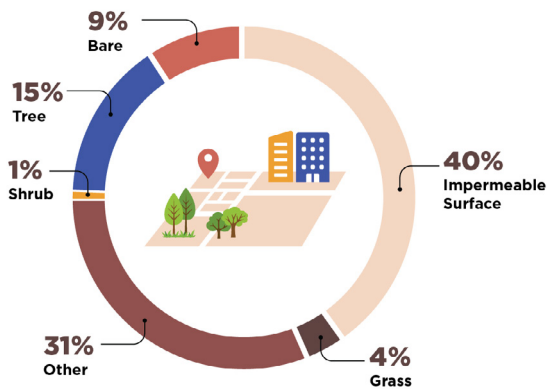
Learn more about parks and open space in the Centre in Section 5.1 of the [Background Report](#).

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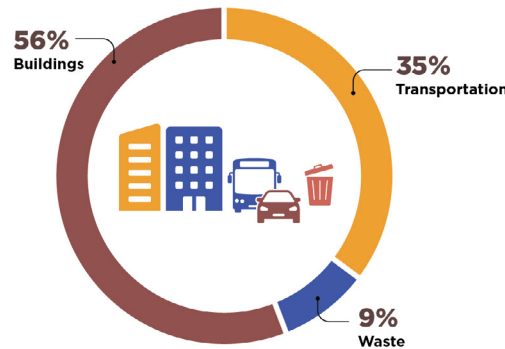
Climate and Resiliency

Buildings, followed by transportation, are the greatest source of carbon emissions in the Centre.

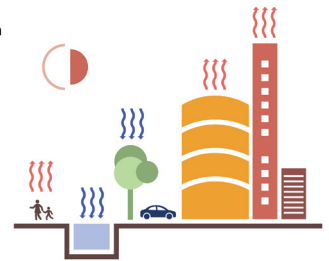
Most of the Centre is developed with impermeable surfaces increasing stormwater flows, and resulting in most of the Centre experiencing medium to high heat vulnerability, particularly where tree cover is limited. The neighbourhoods surrounding the Centre have an extensive tree canopy and much lower levels of impermeable surfaces than the Centre itself.



Ground cover in the Centre



Sources of carbon emissions in the Centre



Key Findings

- New buildings within the Centre could be encouraged to achieve higher performance levels of the Toronto Green Standard by integrating low-carbon thermal energy technologies, wastewater heat reclamation, on-site renewables and/or passive design strategies. Ensure new buildings consider all opportunities to reduce or eliminate fossil fuel usage.
- Energy performance and levels of embodied carbon of new buildings could be improved through area-specific built form policies or guidelines.
- Municipal green infrastructure and permeable surfaces can be used in new public realm improvements to manage stormwater. The relatively high proportion of office uses in the Centre makes it well suited to implement district energy as there can be transfers between office uses and neighbouring residential uses.
- Municipal green infrastructure and permeable surfaces can be used in new public realm improvements to manage stormwater. The Transform Yonge streetscape can potentially be part of this effort, the opportunity will be explored during detailed design.

Learn more about climate and resiliency in the Centre in Section 5.2 of the [Background Report](#).

Land Use

Existing Land Uses

A diverse mix of land uses can be found in and around the Centre today, including residential, commercial, institutional and mixed uses. The Centre is also a hub for public services with prominent government office buildings. The most common land use is apartment residential, which can be observed by the number of apartment towers dispersed across the Centre. Uses differ significantly between the current North York Centre Secondary Plan area and the Boundary Expansion Study Areas (BESA) which are 500- and 800-metre radii around existing subway stations.

Secondary Plan Policies

The current Secondary Plan divides the study area into North York Centre South and North York Centre North, which are further divided into a hierarchy of *Mixed Use Areas* with corresponding land use policies.

- North York Centre South is intended to be a mixed-use area with an emphasis on establishing commercial nodes and supporting substantial office buildings. Near Yonge and Sheppard,

residential uses are either prohibited or restricted to a maximum of 50% of a building.

- In contrast, North York Centre North is intended to be a predominantly residential area with open space, recreational, and community-related uses. Maximum percentages of commercial uses in North York Centre North range from 20%-65% of total gross floor area.

The Secondary Plan also identifies Prime Frontage areas where street-related retail uses are required. These areas are along Yonge Street from Poyntz Avenue to Parkview Avenue, and around the intersection of Yonge Street and Finch Avenue.

Development Activity

As of June 2023, the amount of new development proposed or under construction includes 13,750 new residential units and 81,169 square metres of non-residential GFA. In the BESA, there are 334 new residential units and 4,305 square metres of non-residential GFA proposed or under construction.

Key Findings

- There is significant residential development in the Development Pipeline which has the potential to add nearly 14,000 new residential units to the area.
- It will be important to maintain a critical mass of non-residential uses, including office and particularly in the south end of the NYCSP area, as the land use policies for the Centre are updated. Alternative approaches to maintaining a strong non-residential base in

the Centre should be explored, and policy and zoning should provide flexibility to allow new types of non-residential uses.

- Larger grocery stores are primarily located in North York Centre South, while grocery store options in North York Centre North tend to be smaller in size. North York at the Centre should seek to improve food security throughout the Secondary Plan area, particularly in the north, by improving access to grocery stores.

Learn more about land use in the Centre in Section 5.3 of the [Background Report](#).

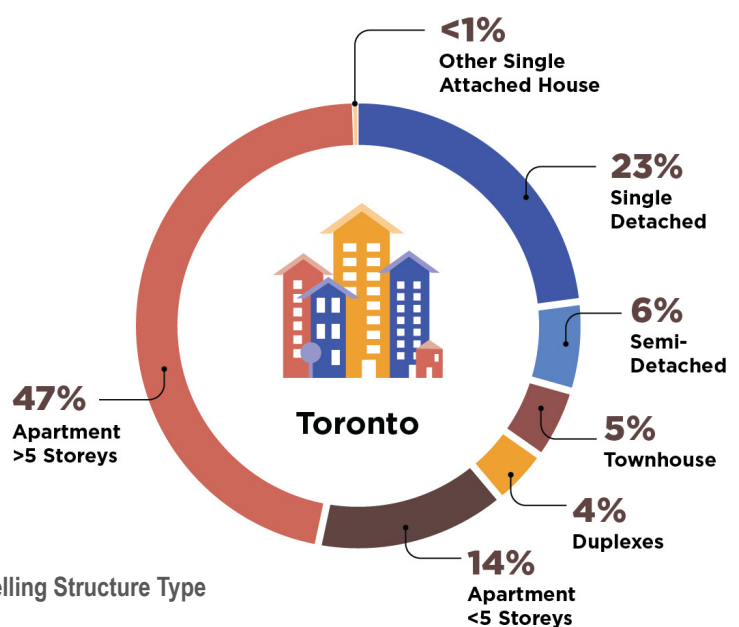
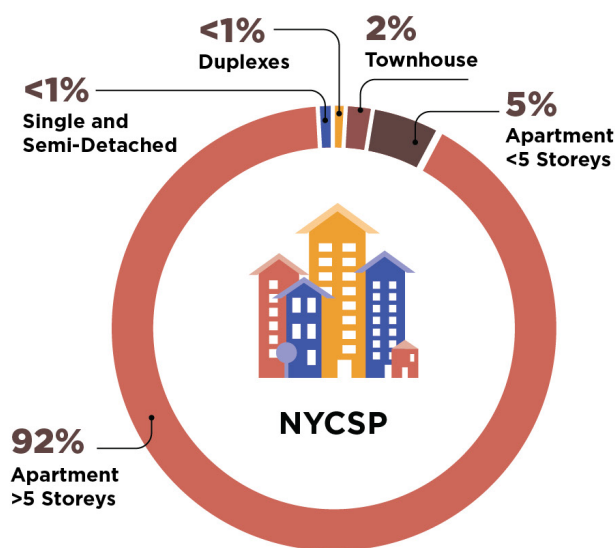
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Housing

Amidst an affordable housing crisis, housing will be one of the key focus areas for North York at the Centre.

Dwelling Types

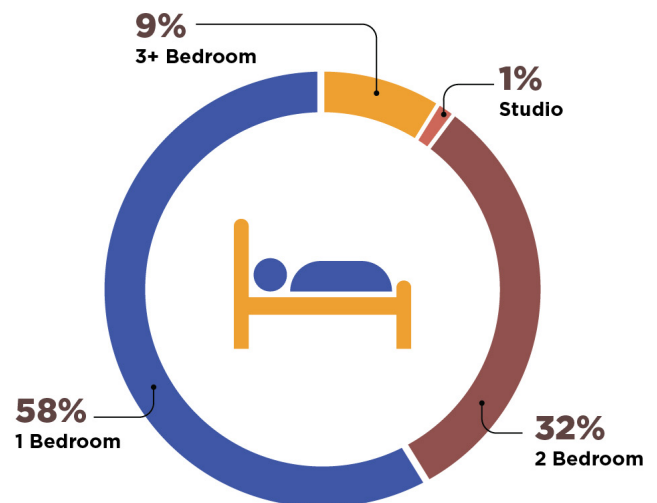
Most dwellings (92%) in North York Centre are located in apartment buildings that are five storeys or greater. This is greater than the Toronto-wide average of 47%. The existing housing inventory is also mostly comprised of one-bedroom units.



Housing by Dwelling Structure Type

Number of Bedrooms

In the Secondary Plan area the majority of residential units (over 58%) in the Development Pipeline are one-bedroom dwellings, totalling 8,029 units (Table 55). Two-bedroom dwellings account for 32% (4,429 units). Dwellings with three or more bedrooms account for approximately 9% (1,167 units). Studio dwellings are the least common, accounting for approximately 1% (125 units). Based on this review of the Development Pipeline, the Secondary Plan area is close to achieving the percentage of larger units recommended by the Growing Up Urban Design Guidelines (10% three-bedroom units and 15% two-bedroom units) and recent Secondary Plans (40% larger units, including 10% three-bedroom units and 15% two-bedroom units).



Residential Units in the Development Pipeline in the Secondary Plan Area by Number of Bedrooms (July 2018 – June 2023)

Housing Affordability

In 2021, 53% of renters and 42% of homeowners in the Centre were spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. While this trend is prevalent throughout Toronto, the city-wide statistics are slightly better than those in the Centre, with 40% of renters and 26% of owners spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. The number of renter households that are spending 30% or more of their income on shelter has not been this low since 2001.

Protected Major Transit Station Areas

The City is awaiting Provincial approval of city-wide Protected Major Transit Station Area (PMTSA) designations, including three in North York Centre. Once approved by the Province, the City will be able to require affordable housing in PMTSAs in accordance with the Inclusionary Zoning By-Law.

Key Findings

- The Development Pipeline data demonstrates that North York Centre is performing well in relation to the targets in the Growing Up Guidelines for large units. Two-bedroom units are exceeding the Growing Up Guidelines (32% in the Development Pipeline compared to 15% in the [Growing Up Guidelines](#)) and three- or more bedroom units almost meet the Growing Up Guidelines (9% in the Development Pipeline compared to 10% in the Growing Up Guidelines). The Development Pipeline in the BESA provides even higher percentages of large units.
- Making the Centre a family-friendly area will require a multi-pronged approach – continuing to provide appropriate housing options for larger households and ensuring that the community offers the facilities, services and amenities that families require. Guidelines for larger units could be strengthened in Secondary Plan policy.
- Providing more affordable housing in the Centre can be encouraged by implementing inclusionary zoning within PMTSAs, identifying more sites for the Housing Now program, and by updating policies to provide greater flexibility in the type of house that can be developed within the Centre.

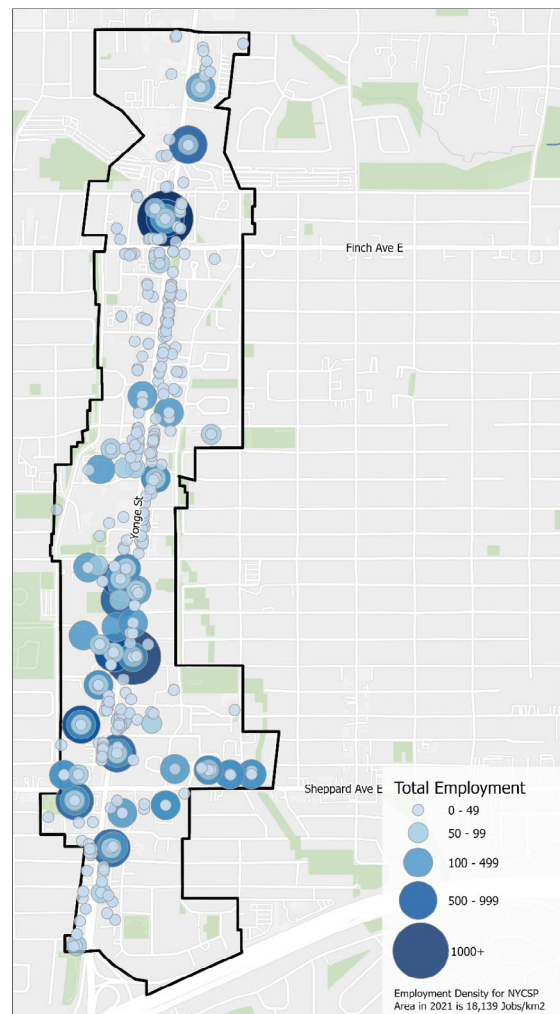
Learn more about housing in the Centre in Section 5.3.1 of the [Background Report](#).

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Office and Retail

Providing a mix of residential and non-residential land uses within the Centre contributes to its status as a complete community. There are over 34,800 jobs in the Centre making it the largest employment hub outside of the Downtown. 81% of jobs in the Centre are in the office sector, with those in business, finance, and administration representing the largest proportion of jobs at 27.4%.

The high number of office-related jobs are supported by a large supply of office space (8.98 million square feet of rentable office) in the Centre. The Centre also has nearly 1.5 million square feet of combined retail floor area (composed of retail, service commercial and restaurant uses), distributed across 784 storefronts. This retail serves the day-to-day needs of the local residents and employees as well as residents in the surrounding area and beyond. The Centre has a unique and highly robust, eclectic offering of restaurants and array of personal, professional and health services. Most visits to retail locations in the Centre are attributable to residents who live within the Centre.



Key Findings

- The office vacancy rate in the Centre is high at just below 24%. This is the highest of any office submarket in the GTA.
- The retail character differs in the north

and south of the Study Area. The north is characterized by more smaller retail establishments while the south is characterized by larger retail establishments and enclosed shopping centres.

Learn more about office and retail in the Centre in Section 5.3.2 of the [Background Report](#).

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Community Services and Facilities

Community services and facilities (CS&F) are integral elements of complete and livable communities. They are buildings and public spaces that accommodate a range of non-profit programs and services provided or subsidized by the City or other public agencies to support people in meeting their social needs and enhance their wellbeing, health and quality of life. CS&F includes recreation, community centres, libraries, child care, schools, and spaces for the provision of public health services, human services, cultural services and employment services.

In the Centre, there are:



3

**Elementary
Schools**



1

**Secondary
School**



9

**Childcare
Facilities**



1

**Public
Library**



1

**Public
Indoor Pool**

The new Community Benefits Charge (CBC) provisions under Section 37 of the *Planning Act* enable municipalities to collect the CBC from new developments with five or more storeys and 10 or more residential units. Funds from the Community Benefits Charge are capped at 4% of the value of the land and may be used to fund projects such as community hubs, cultural centres, human services agency spaces, as identified in the City's CBC Strategy and CBC By-law. Development Charge fees may also be allocated towards community services and facilities through the capital budget.

Key Findings

- Areas of need in North York Centre include childcare, Toronto District School Board (TDSB) elementary and secondary school capacity, and space for human service agencies.
- CS&F that are meeting service provision targets include the North York Central Library (NYCL) and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) schools. Investment in new recreation facilities is underway.
- North York at the Centre is an opportunity to assess future CS&F needs and identify priorities to serve the Centre's growing population. These needs and priorities can be integrated into the updated Secondary Plan and capital planning initiatives such as the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (FMP) update.
- Potential secondary plan policies could also encourage the co-location of CS&F, collaboration among sectors and agencies, and for development to include the types of spaces required for CS&F, including affordable formats for human services.

Learn more about community services and facilities in the Centre in Section 5.4 of the [Background Report](#).

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Mobility and Public Realm

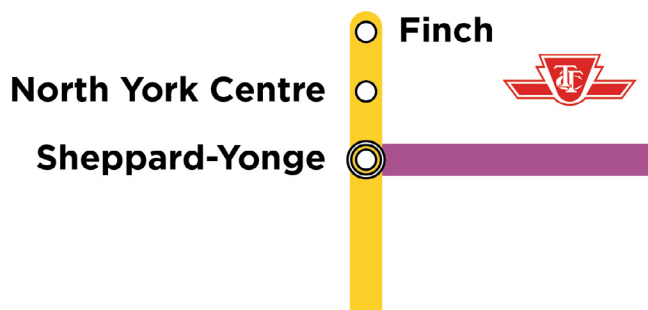
Mobility and the public realm refer to the spaces that foster public life and facilitate the movement of people and goods to, from, and within the Study Area. This includes a network of public open spaces comprised of streets, civic spaces, sidewalks, boulevards, squares, and other elements of the public right-of-way.

Mode Share

According to 2016 Census data, 49% of residents in North York Centre were using public transit to get to and from work, making it the most common mode of transportation for commuting at the time. However, according to the 2021 Census, conducted in the midst of COVID, the number of commuter trips has significantly decreased and 58% of residents commuted in a personal vehicle, making it the dominant mode during the pandemic.

There are two subway lines (Line 1 Yonge-University and Line 4 Sheppard) and three subway stations (Sheppard-Yonge, North York Centre, and Finch) in the Centre. Other current transit projects include:

- Yonge North Subway Extension
- Sheppard Subway Extension
- RapidTO



Street Improvements

There are four major street improvement projects in North York Centre:

- REimagining Yonge Environmental Assessment
- Beecroft Extension (North Service Road)
- Doris Extension (South Service Road)
- Yonge Street Highway 401 Interchange Environmental Assessment



Key Findings

- Improve conditions for safety. While Transform Yonge will introduce significant active transportation improvements to the Yonge Street corridor and has the potential to relieve the most critical issues, additional improvement opportunities still exist along the remaining segments of Yonge Street and other streets in the Centre.
- Convert short trips to cycling. Approximately 40% of the current weekday trips to North York Centre are 6 km or less, which is considered a suitable distance for cycling. Within this distance, cycling currently makes up 1% of the total trips, while auto drivers and passengers makes up 59%. This demonstrates a significant potential to convert the existing local auto driver and passenger trips under 6 km to active modes by adding cycling infrastructure and bike share stations to North York Centre to encourage people to cycle.
- Improve pedestrian connectivity to the overall transit network. Opportunities exist to encourage development and other public realm improvements to expand and improve pedestrian connections to subway stations and other key transit stops, with a focus on accessibility and wayfinding. This will be needed to better accommodate the planned population and employment growth in this area.
- Create a visible and functional hierarchy of east-west streets. Opportunity exists to distinguish east-west corridors into separate typologies to prioritize different modes and enhanced public realm. For example, elements like streetscaping, green streets, cycling infrastructure, and wider sidewalks could be prioritized differently for different corridors.
- A Yonge-centred public realm. The public realm of North York Centre is very much focused on the Yonge Street corridor, with little retail presence or open space on adjacent streets, and an abrupt public realm transition to a stable neighbourhood as one moves beyond the service roads.
- New public realm vision through [Transform Yonge](#). Plans for Yonge Street include the development of a high-quality public realm with an integrated streetscape and open space network, additional spaces for pedestrian walkways, dedicated bikeways and continuous street tree canopy.
- Enhance the pedestrian network. While the sidewalk network in North York Centre is generally complete, there are several notable gaps in sidewalk completeness and availability of pedestrian crossings within the Centre that warrant attention. In addition, there are several opportunities to improve pedestrian connectivity and access through the introduction of new mid-block pedestrian connections, which would promote walkability in and around large city blocks.
- Reconnect and expand the grid. While much of the historical grid street network still exists, there are many instances of interruptions which reduce the network's effectiveness of moving people on foot, by bike, by transit, and by car. New developments should be encouraged to create breezeways, mid-block connections and internal pathways connecting to the existing pathways in the Centre.
- Expand the Yonge Street public realm onto side streets. Opportunities exist to see Yonge Street as the "trunk" of the Centre's public realm network, with the local streets

intersecting Yonge serving as “branches”, allowing public realm improvement to expand off the main street.

- More placemaking. Placemaking in the public realm should be improved through the establishment of public art installations, additional patio space, programmable streets, and additional open spaces, tree plantings, wayfinding and installation of pedestrian scale lighting and street furniture, such as benches. These improvements can help create an accessible, comfortable, sustainable and safe public realm.
- More trees and green infrastructure in the street network. The Centre currently lacks green spaces, presenting an opportunity for improvement. Enhancements can be achieved by increasing the tree canopy and plantings within the street right-of-way, while incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) infrastructure.
- Create a network of civic plazas. Smaller plazas throughout the Centre offer opportunities to act as social gathering places that bring people together, offer respite from the heat or simply a place to rest. Programming, wayfinding and maintenance opportunities should be explored to enhance this network within the Centre.

Learn more about mobility and the public realm in the Centre in Section 5.5 of the [Background Report](#).

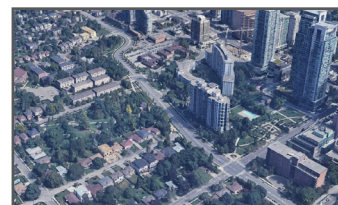
AT A GLANCE

Built Form

The built form in North York Centre today is a result of the North York Secondary Plan and historic trends in development that resulted in large roadways with different building massing, sizes and heights, including a significant concentration of highrises. Recent developments being proposed and / or approved are taller and denser than what the existing Secondary Plan permits which points to a need to review the built form policies of the current Plan.

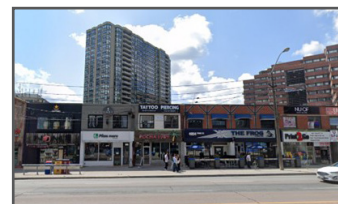
Street Improvements

There is a clearly legible transition between the tall buildings within the North York Centre and surrounding *Neighbourhoods* to the east and west. This transition is comprised of a combination of setbacks, stepbacks, height limits, landscaped open spaces, public rights-of-way and a network of parks and open spaces.



Street-Level Retail

North York Centre includes many successful examples of new, fine-grained street-level retail spaces, integrated into the podiums of high-density mixed-use developments. These spaces are generally found in older (1980-90s) buildings and contribute to a vibrant street life along Yonge Street and adjacent side streets.



Yonge Street Built Form

The existing setback, streetwall and base-building height policies for Yonge Street help to reinforce the urban condition of the street, Yonge Street's role as a primary promenade in North York Centre and supports the thriving retail vibrancy.



Key Findings

- Opportunities for a boundary expansion could require a new framework of transition policies that establish clear expectations for new housing, open spaces, privacy, views, overlook and shadow and wind impacts.
- Opportunities exist to diversify the building types beyond the tall buildings found within the Centre and low-rise housing found in the BESA. Midrise and other built forms could offer housing for more diverse households.
- Loading and servicing requirements could be reviewed with regards to their impact on public realm and creating narrow and deep retail spaces to create finer grain retail and help animate the public realm.

Learn more about the built form in the Centre in Section 5.6 of the [Background Report](#).

AT A GLANCE

Servicing

Servicing infrastructure includes the watermain, storm, and sanitary sewer network. Planning for growth and change in a community requires careful consideration of current servicing capacity and constraints, and any new upgrades or innovative practices that may be required to accommodate growth and improve a community's resilience to climate change.



Servicing needs of existing, currently proposed and potential future development need to be considered and planned for to ensure needs are met. A Municipal Servicing Assessment is being undertaken to analyze current servicing infrastructure in the Centre.



Key Findings

- The water distribution system has capacity for additional growth within The Centre.
- To support growth and change in North York Centre, it is anticipated that upgrades to infrastructure be considered to meet the City's

level of service. During subsequent phases of the project, additional work will be undertaken to better understand and determine infrastructure updates required to meet the City's level of service.

Learn more about servicing in the Centre in Section 5.7 of the [Background Report](#).

AT A GLANCE

Visioning Framework

Future phases of work on North York at the Centre will be guided by a visioning framework that establishes our shared ambitions for the project. The visioning framework is based on community input and technical analysis of issues, opportunities, and priorities for the future of North York Centre. It will be used to guide options development and evaluation in Phase 2 and Secondary Plan policies in Phase 3.

The visioning framework includes:

Three overarching **lenses** that articulate values for the type of community we are working towards in North York Centre, and which will permeate all aspects of the project:

- Truth and Reconciliation
- Equity and Inclusion
- Action on Climate Change

Four **guiding principles** that reflect aspirations for the next stage of the Centre's growth in key areas:

- Grow a Complete Centre
- Green the Centre
- Build Connectivity
- Design Places for People

A series of **objectives** for each of the guiding principles that define more specifically what North York at the Centre is striving to achieve. These objectives are listed in detail in Section 6 of the Phase 1 Background Report.

Learn more about the Visioning Framework that will guide future options for North York at the Centre in Section 6 of the [Background Report](#).



