

DRAFT DOWNSVIEW URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

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City of Toronto
City Planning

Fall 2023

The guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the Downsview Secondary Plan.

Questions or Comments? Please contact:
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1.1 Downsview Secondary Plan Area. Note this map will be updated to reflect the updated Secondary Plan boundary.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

These Urban Design Guidelines support the Downsview Secondary Plan by providing guidance for future development to implement the Plan's vision. The vision is centred around climate resiliency and achieving equitable outcomes. This will be realized partly through a robust, varied and distributed public realm, and will include unique features that serve as organizing elements for the area's public realm. These include the street network, blocks, parks and open space linkages, servicing, and community infrastructure requirements, and unique features - the Runway and Taxiway, and Green Spine. Equity through Urban Design will be achieved by removing barriers that impede equitable outcomes, including access to housing, quality jobs, education, and services. District Plans will be prepared through a comprehensive engagement program and will include engagement with Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups.

These guidelines are informed by analysis, testing and technical understanding of the constraints and opportunities of the Secondary Plan Area, as well as consideration of the Downsview Community Development Plan Priorities and Actions, the Master Environmental and Servicing Plan (MESP), and existing City-wide and area-specific studies and guidelines.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Official Plan, Secondary Plan, applicable city-wide Urban Design Guidelines, and future District Plans within the Secondary Plan Area, such as Allen East, and William Baker, as well as other applicable City guidelines and policies.

1.2. Area Description

The Downsview Secondary Plan Area is generally bound by Sheppard Avenue West to the north, Allen Road to the east, Wilson Avenue to the south, and Keele Street to the West. The Plan Area is located on high lands between the Don and Humber River watersheds and is approximately 540 hectares in size.

The vastness of the Plan Area is experienced today as discreet areas, each containing very different uses. The dominant physical open space features within the Plan Area include the 118 -hectare Downsview Park and the William Baker woodlot. Existing development and infrastructure in the Plan Area include the Wilson Subway Yard, the Department of National Defence, and the Barrie GO Rail Line. There are three TTC stations and one GO Transit Station in the Plan Area, which together provide connectivity to the broader local and regional transportation systems. Highway 401 is just south of the Plan Area.

The Plan Area has a rich collection of cultural heritage resources associated with the former Downsview Airport, including nationally significant military complexes and the De Havilland and Bombardier aerospace manufacturing facilities which date back to the 1930s.

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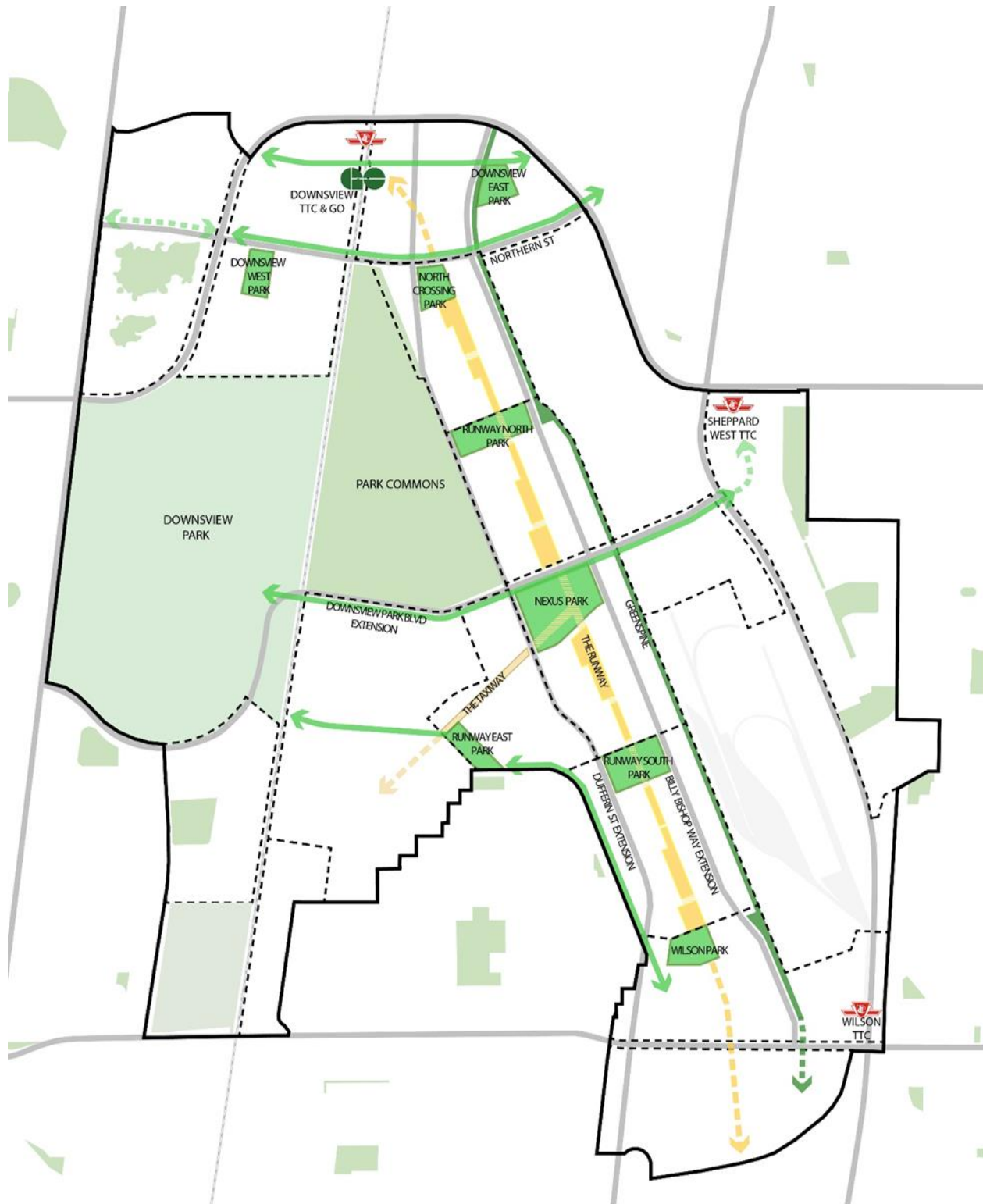
The Urban Design Guidelines recognize that the Plan Area is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. This territory is currently covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. In particular, the Downsview area is thought to have played a role for activities such as hunting and potential ceremonial purposes. Toronto, including the Downsview area, is now home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people.

Vision

The Downsview Secondary Plan outlines the vision for the Downsview area as a vibrant, attractive, and complete community: a place to live, work, play, visit and gather. The Plan Area will develop over 30 years and the Plan prioritizes building connections within and beyond its boundaries, leveraging the area's cultural heritage resources, and is guided and informed by Indigenous worldviews and perspectives.

The Urban Design Guidelines further support and advance the two overarching goals of the Downsview Secondary Plan:

- 1) Climate resilience and environmental sustainability; and
- 2) Achieving equitable outcomes for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities.



2.1 The Plan Area's Public Realm is made up of parks and open spaces, including Major Parks, the Runway, the Taxiway, and the Green Spine - as well as streets and publicly accessible portions of development parcels.

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2. PUBLIC REALM STRUCTURE

The following guidelines provide general direction for the public realm within the Plan Area, followed by more specific guidelines for the unique structuring elements.

2.1. General

- 2.1.1. Public realm design should prioritize year-round passive and active use by:
 - a. Including amenities that encourage and enhance safe active mobility and passive use of these spaces. Amenities could include bike share, bike parking and repair stations, shaded shelters, benches and other seating, water, skating trails and rinks, and cooling elements.
 - b. Designing the built form and public realm to create a comfortable at-grade microclimate by facilitating windbreaks and mitigating downdraft, without impeding the long-term health and growth of plantings where used. Wind conditions should not exceed the City's Pedestrian Level Wind Study comfort requirements for the intended use of the spaces.
- 2.1.2. Public realm design will integrate soft and hard landscaping materials that generally require reduced maintenance, particularly where it advances *green infrastructure* and *City Nature* objectives.
- 2.1.3. Development will frame and enhance the public realm and should be designed to limit shadow impacts to the greatest extent possible, while achieving broader Plan objectives regarding the appropriate distribution of density.
- 2.1.4. Through engagement with Indigenous communities and Rights Holders, public realm design should acknowledge Indigenous presence (past, present, and future), support *Indigenous place-keeping*, and incorporate elements with cultural significance and symbolism. This could include a range of spaces that support Indigenous recreation and cultural practices (e.g., sacred fires, ceremonies, sweat lodges).
- 2.1.5. Design of the Runway and Taxiway is encouraged to acknowledge its pre-aviation history and orientation between the Don and Humber River watersheds through incorporating landscape and water features, including tree canopy and other *green infrastructure*.

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Active mobility



Biodiversity



Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management

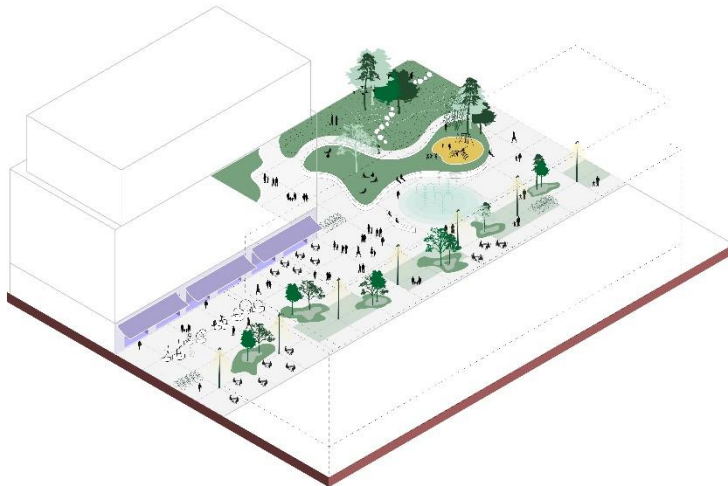


4-season comfort



Access to nature & Placemaking

2.2 The public realm will be designed and organized to support City Nature, thereby advancing a variety of desirable outcomes, including prioritization of active mobility, biodiversity, sustainability stormwater management and public realm comfort.



2.3 The Runway and Taxiway are linear spaces that will feature green infrastructure, recreational and community serving amenities, animated edges with spill out space for commercial activity, and an active mobility clearway.



2.4 In the Bjørvika district of Oslo, Sweden, the urban quality is enriched by integrating naturalized spaces which provide public health benefits, support stormwater management, and expand the tree canopy.

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- 2.1.6. Design of the public realm should include cultural heritage resources related to *Indigenous place-keeping*, aviation, and/or local cultural heritage.
- 2.1.7. The public realm should include wayfinding tools that enhance the pedestrian and cycling experience and orient users to key locations within the Plan Area.
- 2.1.8. The public realm should include appropriate lighting that recognizes the intended character of each structuring elements.
- 2.1.9. Public art should be incorporated where possible within and immediately adjacent to the public realm.
- 2.1.10. Educational signage which provides information about the history of the area should be located in the public realm.
- 2.1.11. Development will provide casual overlook of the public realm and blank wall conditions are discouraged to ensure the safety of all users.

Unique Structuring Features

2.2. The Runway and Taxiway

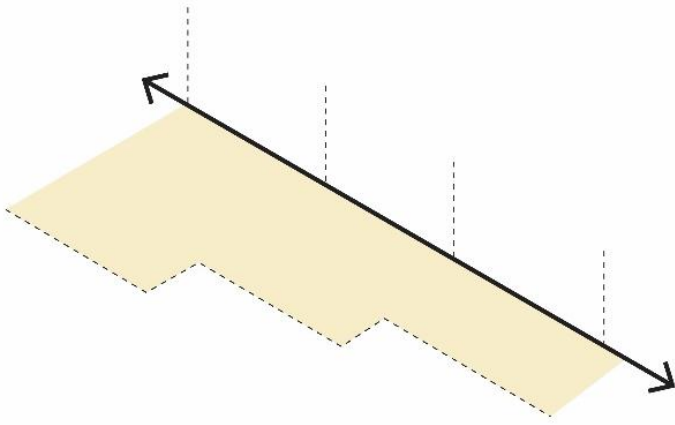
As fundamental and important elements of the site's nationally significant aerospace history, the Runway and Taxiway will be reimagined as continuous publicly accessible corridors. The integration and interpretation of these two structuring features will include similar design elements while also reflecting their unique characteristics.

The following guidelines apply to both the Runway and Taxiway:

- 2.2.1. The Runway and Taxiway should be designed for slow-moving active mobility, lingering, and gathering.
- 2.2.2. The Runway and Taxiway should include a pedestrian clearway that is not required to be linear.
- 2.2.3. Hard and soft landscaping, lighting and wayfinding features should enhance the linearity of the Runway and Taxiway and support the historic commemoration of these spaces.
- 2.2.4. The Runway and Taxiway design should achieve comfortable at-grade microclimate conditions for all users. Special attention to reducing the funnelling of wind between the Runway and major parks should be considered (See *Guideline 2.5.4*).

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2.5 The eastern edge of the Runway will be treated as a build-to line to support its legibility and reinforce its linearity at the macro level. Its western edge will expand or contract.



2.6 The Runway will be lined with different animating and public facing uses - including retail, residential entrances, and community amenities - providing a variety of experiences along its length.



2.7 The design and programming of the Runway will create diverse experiences, encourage public realm and pedestrian comfort, and reinforce its linearity at the micro scale.

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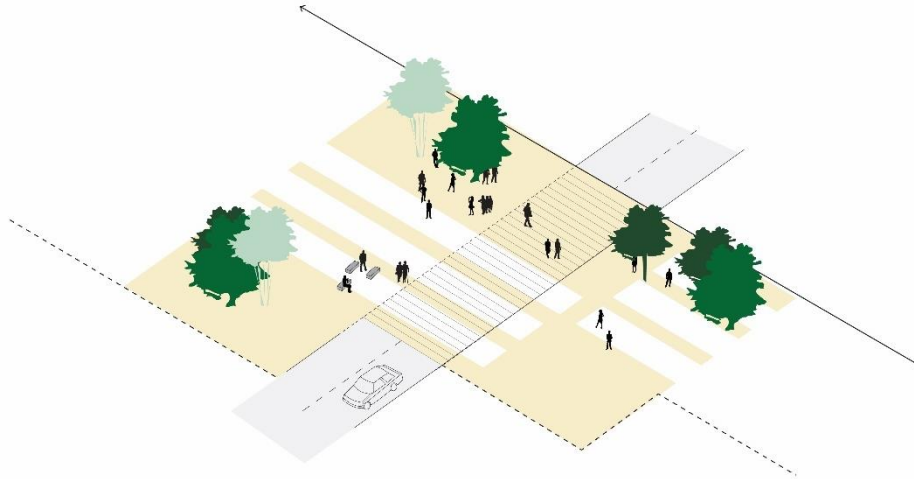
2.3. The Runway

The Runway represents a transformation of the former airstrip, reinterpreting one of Downsview's most defining heritage features. The Runway will become the central spine of public life at Downsview. The Runway will be an approximate 2.1-kilometre linear open space and active mobility route, animated with vibrant uses including community uses and public amenities, becoming a destination for citizens from across the city and beyond.

Legacy, Continuity and Linearity

The following guidelines will ensure the Runway's transformation highlights and maintains its legacy, continuity, and linearity:

- 2.3.1. The Runway widths should gradually increase and decrease to create *urban rooms* that extend along several building frontages.
- 2.3.2. The Runway should expand to its legacy width, or generally 60 metres, twice at minimum, at strategic locations such as when crossing Nexus Park.
- 2.3.3. The western edge of the Runway should expand and contract to reflect the intended character of the Runway and support adjacent uses and the corresponding district programming.
- 2.3.4. The design of the Runway is encouraged to have a common language that may be linked to the historical existence of the Runway, and the concept of flight. This will reinforce its intended linearity and continuity and may include, but is not limited to, incorporating airport signage, supergraphics and symbols.



2.8 Where the Runway intersects with a street, the design of the street will communicate the prioritization of pedestrians and cyclist. The surface treatment of the Runway may be extended into the right of way.



2.9 Where the Runway intersects with a park, the design of the park should avoid compromising the Runway's legibility by minimizing significant encroachments within areas that align with its eastern edge and incorporating elements of its materiality.

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- 2.3.5. Opportunities for extended vistas along portions of the eastern edge of the Runway are encouraged to enhance topographic variation and emphasize higher elevations.
- 2.3.6. Where the Runway intersects with a street, the surface treatment of the Runway should extend into the street. Where this occurs, the design of the street should incorporate design features that maintain the Runway's legibility and material vocabulary.
- 2.3.7. Where the Runway intersects with a major park, the design and experience of the major park should communicate the Runway's continuity and legibility while prioritizing the function and programming of the major park. The major park design should minimize significant encroachments within areas that align with the Runway's eastern edge.



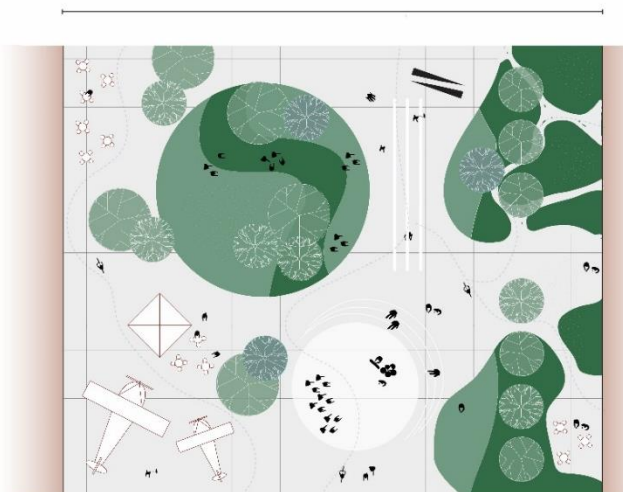
2.10 Where the Runway intersects a park the design and experience of the park should communicate the Runway's continuity as a linear open space as it passes through and beyond the park.



2.11 A sample plan of the Runway when it is at its most narrow (approximately 20 metres), highlighting the interaction between animating edges and the internal public space.



2.12 A sample plan of the Runway as it expands to 40 metres wide, highlighting opportunities for increased passive and recreational programs.



2.13 A sample plan of the Runway at its legacy width of approximately 60 metres, demonstrating the potential for both passive and active programming.

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Urban Rooms and Animation

- 2.3.8. The Runway design should be read as a sequence of *urban rooms* that individually define activities and spaces. The *urban rooms* should collectively express the linear structure and surrounding built form and uses through materiality and landscape.
- 2.3.9. The design, programming, and treatment of *urban rooms* should respond to their corresponding district's scale, character, programming, and land uses. This is to emphasize and adequately utilize the Runway's varying widths, while encouraging users to explore its full length,
- 2.3.10. At its narrowest width of 20 metres, the Runway should be experienced as a predominantly pedestrian space with unique and playful features that add interest, provide public amenity, and animate its edges, such as through café seating and program spill out space, pavilions, fountains, umbrellas, and other shelters.
- 2.3.11. Where its width expands beyond 20 metres, the Runway should be experienced as a generous open space. Programming and design should take advantage of its scale to expand and/or enhance the programs within adjacent built form, private and public spaces and offer opportunities for active and passive recreation, commercial activity, and event programming.
- 2.3.12. Commercial activity, community uses and/or program areas should be clustered to create pockets of activity that generate the critical mass needed to support businesses and vibrancy in recognizing that these uses may not be able to extend the full length of the Runway.
- 2.3.13. District Plans should describe the character, design, and programming ambitions for each *urban room* as well as their relationship to adjacent built form and surrounding uses, parks, and open spaces.



2.14 The Runway will evolve as a series of "Urban Rooms" that respond to the character of the adjacent development.

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Runway and Taxiway Connections

Map 7-2 Public Realm of the Secondary Plan refer to Runway Connections as Public Realm/Mobility Connections.

- 2.3.14. The Runway and Taxiway connections should acknowledge broader active mobility linkages and provide connections to streets, *greenways*, transit stations, heritage features and other key destinations.
- 2.3.15. Where the Runway terminates at parks, connections should be considered to continue north and south. Connections should include but are not limited to:
 - a. *Greenway* connections to support active mobility between the Runway, Wilson Districts, Downsview East Districts, and the transit stations;
 - b. Parks, open spaces and amenities between the Runway and other destinations, including transit stations; and
 - c. An active mobility connection between Wilson District and Wilson South District, in recognition of the Yorkdale Transportation Master Plan as a link to broader active mobility routes.

2.15 Development along the Runway will result in a balance of sun and shadow to promote year-round public comfort in "urban rooms". Development along the Runway should result in greater than 5 hours of continuous sun along at least 50% of each Runway segment.

Sun Exposure > 50% for Runway

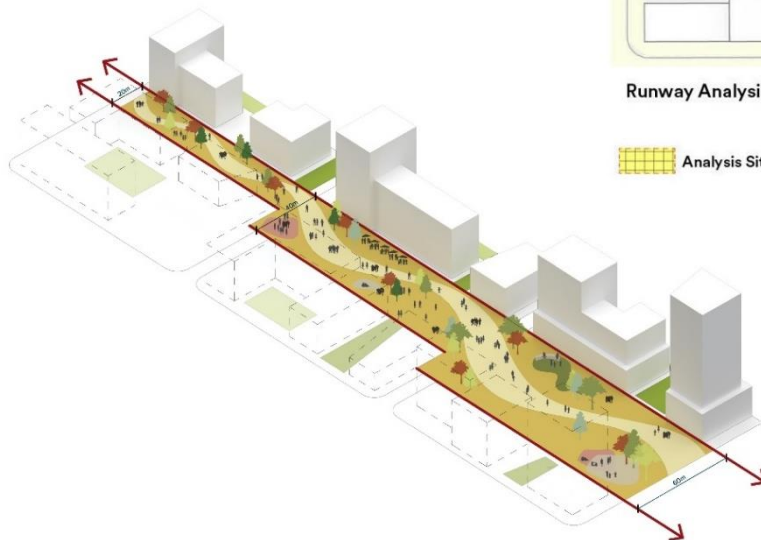


Runway Analysis - Sunlight Hours

Analysis Site

Total Sunlight Hours

50% > 5 Hours
50% < 5 Hours



2.16 The width of the Runway will vary along its length, from its minimum 20-metre width to its full legacy width. Its eastern edge will remain a fixed build-to line to reinforce the Runway's linear continuity.

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Built Form Adjacencies for the Runway

This section should be read in conjunction with Section 3: Built Form.

- 2.3.16. Street wall heights along the eastern edge of the Runway will vary and should be partly determined by the width of the Runway adjacent to each building. This will ensure the achievement of a balanced sense of openness and enclosure (See *Guidelines 3.4.3 & 3.4.4*).
- 2.3.17. Building heights along the western edge of the Runway should respond to the Runway's width to appropriately balance sunlight access, pedestrian scale enclosure, and to ensure a comfortable microclimate.
- 2.3.18. The Runway will be prioritized as a key public realm element in terms of spatial hierarchy, programming and activity, cumulative access to sun, and wind mitigation measures. District Plans will demonstrate how the built form along the Runway achieves these sun-shadow ambitions (See *figure 2.15*).
- 2.3.19. To reinforce the Runway's linearity and create opportunities for long-spanning views, development along the eastern edge of the Runway should not project beyond the defined build-to edge or be set back more than three metres. Where development includes a setback, it should be designed to engage meaningfully with the build-to-edge by using overhangs, cantilevers, and colonnades.
- 2.3.20. District Plans will demonstrate how the built form approach mitigates uncomfortable wind conditions from occurring along the Runway:
 - a. Development along the Runway should be designed to contribute to a comfortable at-grade experience for sitting, walking, and cycling across its length.
 - b. Development along the Runway's eastern edge should be designed to mitigate potential for downdraft, through a variety of strategies, including but not limited to, step backs, balconies, built form shielding on the western edge, interstitial wind-break floors, and/or porticos.

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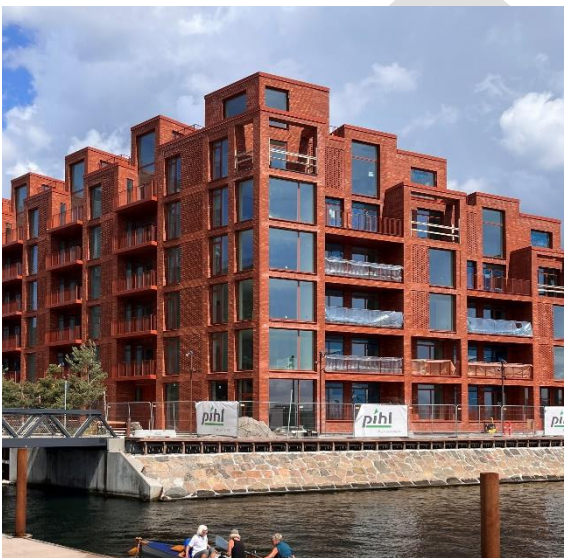
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2.17 The Schützenstrasse Development in Munich, Germany incorporates an at-grade arcade condition to create a publicly accessible mid-door space and protect pedestrians from sun in the summer and cold conditions in the winter. (Source: David Chipperfield)



2.1 The Frederiksberg Allé development in Copenhagen, Denmark incorporates built form step-backs to reduce downdraft conditions.



2.2 The Nordø development in Copenhagen, Denmark incorporates built form step-backs to reduce downdraft conditions.



2.20 The built form at Quayside will use a variety of techniques to support public realm comfort - including varying balconies that disrupt downdraft conditions. (Source: Henning Larsen)

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- 2.3.21. Where the Runway is not a focus for retail, commercial and/or community uses, residential entrances at-grade are permitted and may be oriented towards the Runway to support a finer-grain neighbourhood street character. The following should be considered:
- a. Residential units along the Runway should be designed with flexibility to accommodate other at-grade uses in the future.
 - b. At-grade residential entrances may be set-back no more than three metres to support occupant privacy and the transition between public and private space.
 - c. Building overhangs and other design features should be used to maintain the continuity of the eastern edge.
- 2.3.22. Residential courtyards may be considered along the western edge of the Runway to support animation along its length.
- 2.3.23. The built form interface should include opportunities for innovative and dynamic architectural details such as retractable awnings or canopies, solar shades, partially enclosed “mid-door” spaces, and temporary patios.
- 2.3.24. Development should incorporate elements that enhance visual interest where the Runway width exposes additional building edges, such as through integration of additional building entrances, glazing, green walls and murals.

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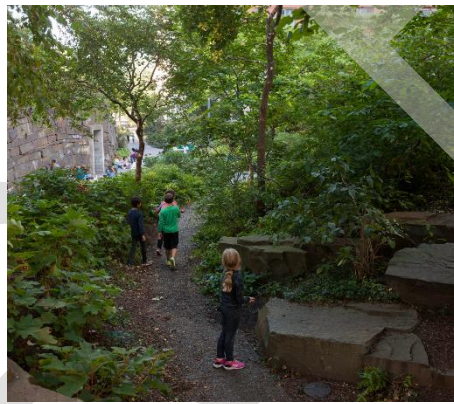
2.4. The Taxiway

The Taxiway refers to the section between Nexus Park and Robert Leek Memorial Park. The Taxiway will be reimagined to maintain its original linear axis, and to function as an east-west connection linking key spaces such as squares, plazas, and parks, through to the Runway and further to Sheppard West Transit Station.

- 2.4.1. The Taxiway design will maintain its linear legibility to support and interpret its heritage value, emphasizing its terminus at the Hangar buildings to the west and Nexus Park to the east.
- 2.4.2. The Taxiway should have a minimum building-face to building-face width of 18.5 metres and will expand in response to the program and character intentions of the district. Minimum at grade setback distances of up to 1.5 metres will apply to buildings on either side of the Taxiway and may be achieved through cantilevers, overhangs, or colonnades.
- 2.4.3. The Taxiway's north-western edge will be treated as a build-to line to reinforce its linearity and, support views along the north-western edge.



2.21 Parks and open spaces at Downsview will have a nature-forward character, with active uses such as playgrounds or recreational facilities embedded within landscapes that support City Nature. See precedents above from Copenhagen, New York, and Manchester.



2.22 Parks and open spaces at Downsview will offer opportunities for residents and workers to experience nature and its associated health benefits - like HtO in Toronto, Teardrop Park in New York City or Billund Nature Park in Denmark.



2.23 Lands at Downsview will contribute to Stormwater management. Certain parks and open spaces may be designed to be flooded during extreme weather events. Enghaveparken and Remisepark park in Copenhagen are designed to be floodable during major events.

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2.5. Parks and Open Spaces

Stormwater Management and Green Infrastructure

2.5.1. Parks that are designed to perform a stormwater management function should:

- a. Ensure low-lying areas in parks are designed to avoid flood conflict between areas for water retention and locations of tree roots to promote healthy growing environments;
- b. Identify park-based recreational facilities and programming that are not flood-tolerant and locate these at higher elevations (tablelands);
- c. Prioritize the footprint of recreational facilities to minimize impact on their function; and
- d. Locate mechanical equipment in higher elevations to avoid flooding impacts.

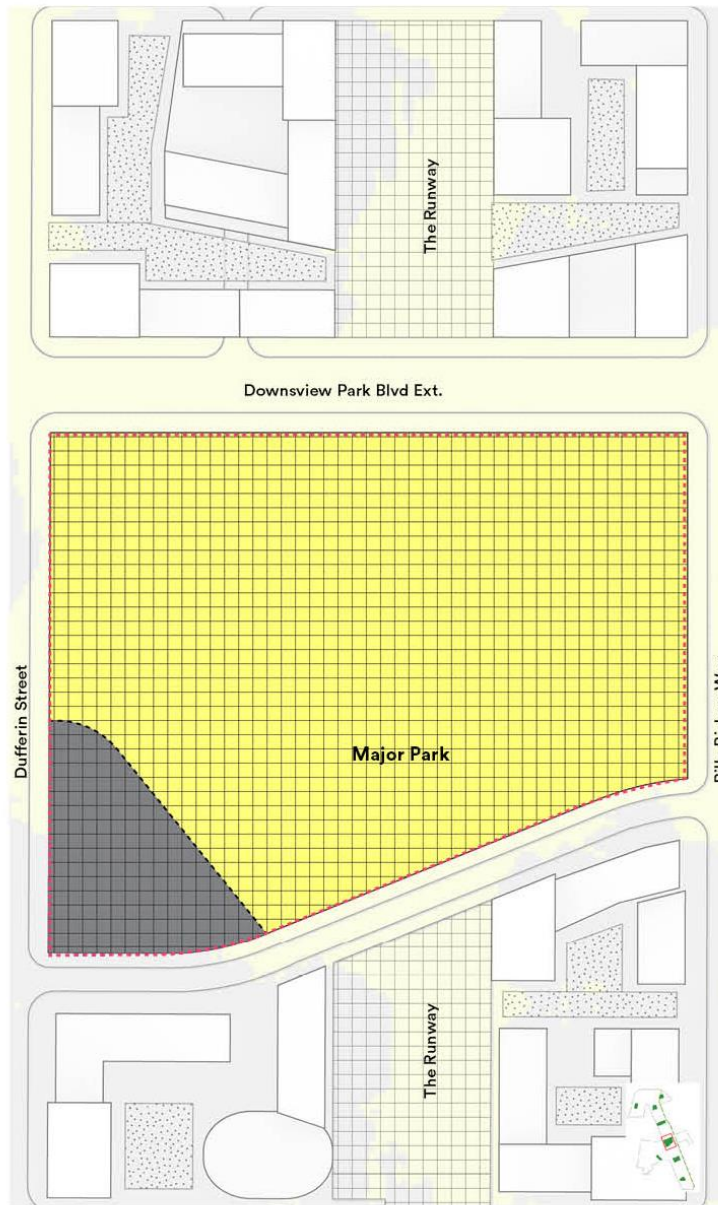


2.24 Integrating green infrastructure into parks and open spaces advances sustainability and contributes to a better public realm. Remisepark and the Loop in Denmark leverage benefits of rainwater to create more naturalized spaces.

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Sun Exposure > 75% for Major Parks



Average of

March 21st
08:00-20:00

+

September 21st
08:00-20:00

Major Park Analysis - Sunlight Hours

 Analysis Site

Total Sunlight Hours

75% > 5 Hours

25% < 5 Hours

2.25 The approach to distributing height across the Plan Area privileges Major Parks, in order to ensure that 75% of Major Parks achieve greater than 5 hours of continuous sun during the spring and fall equinox.

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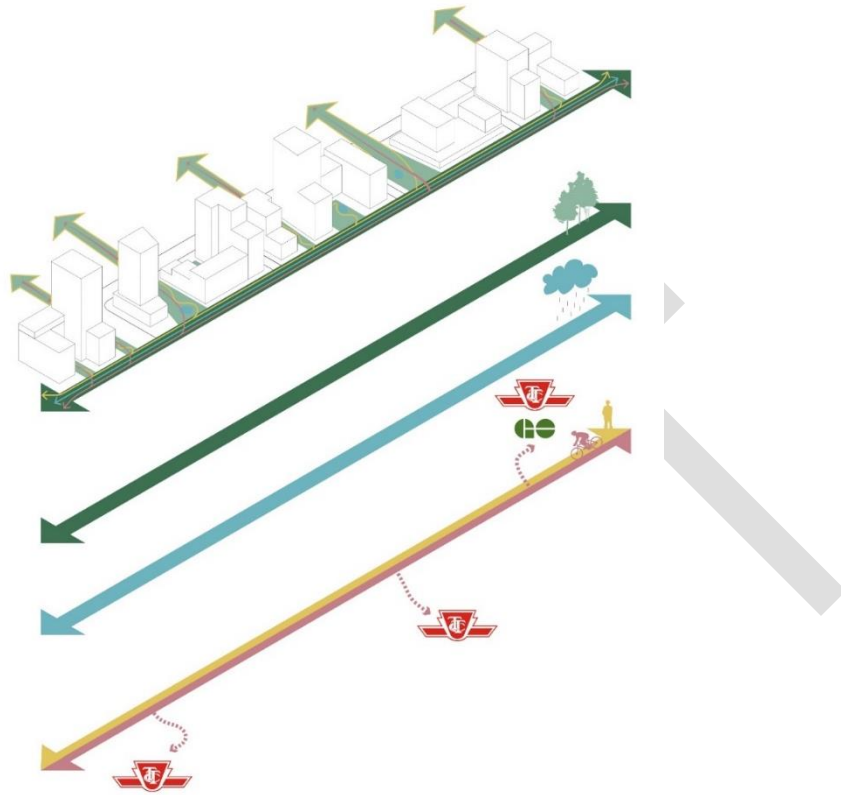
Built Form Adjacencies for Parks and Open Spaces

This section should be read in conjunction with Section 3: Built Form.

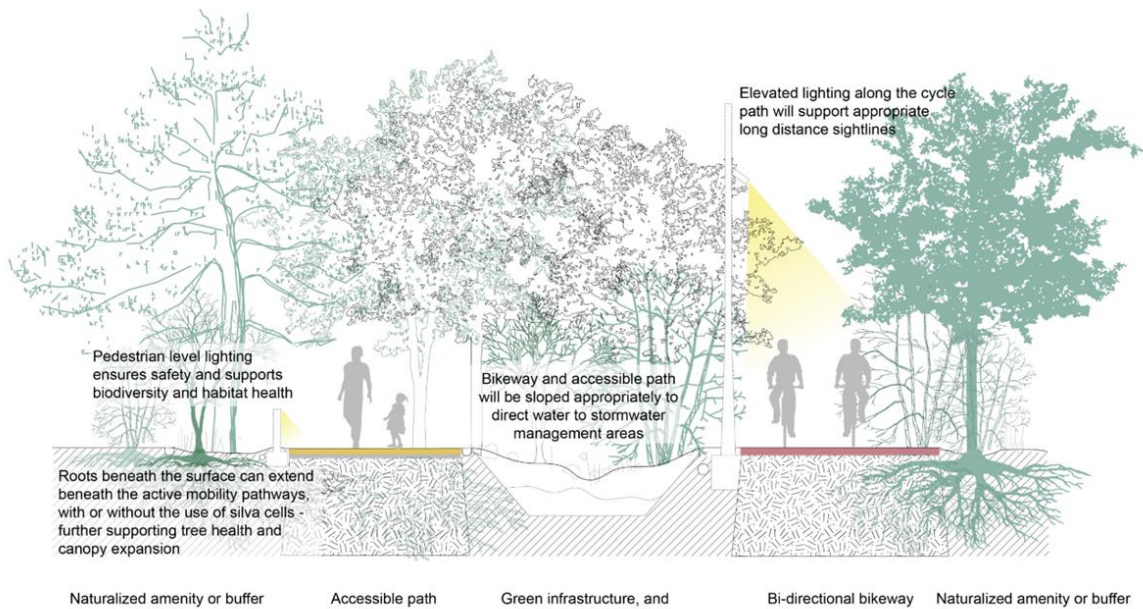
- 2.5.2. Major parks are prioritized as key public realm elements and the built form that surrounds each park should frame the space and ensure cumulative access to sun, while mitigating wind impacts. District Plans will demonstrate how the built form adjacent to major parks advances these sun-shadow ambitions (See *figure 2.25*).
- 2.5.3. Buildings should be designed to emphasize gateways to major parks (See *Guideline 3.4.7*).
- 2.5.4. District Plans will demonstrate how the built form approach has considered mitigating uncomfortable winds on parks and open space through a variety of strategies, including but not limited to: step backs, balconies, overhangs, built form shielding on the western edge, interstitial wind-break floors, and/or porticos.
- 2.5.5. District Plans will demonstrate how the proposed location of local parks and distribution of density and massing adequately limits shadowing, achieves density objectives, and considers other district-level sun/shadow priorities (e.g., major parks and the Runway).

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2.26 The Green Spine provides an essential north-south open space link across the Plan Area - supporting active mobility, stormwater management, biodiversity, habitat connectivity and tree canopy expansion.



2.27 Functional areas of the Green Spine should overlap to create the experience of a nature trail. Active mobility paths will weave throughout the width. The width of the Green Spine can function as a root zone, supporting tree health and canopy expansion.

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2.6. The Green Spine

The Green Spine is a publicly accessible active mobility, habitat connector and green infrastructure corridor located generally along the eastern edge of the central Downsview districts (Refer to Map 7-2 Public Realm and Map 7-9 Cycling Network in the Downsview Secondary Plan). The Green Spine will be approximately 3 kilometres in length and be 15 to 18 metres in width. The final width will be determined by assessing adjacent public realm uses and built forms and may narrow or widen according to these conditions.

Function and Design

- 2.6.1. The Green Spine may contribute to an Indigenous Ancestor Trail within the Plan Area, through the integration of pathways, public art, wayfinding, educational signage and/or street furniture.
- 2.6.2. The landscape and planting strategy along the Green Spine should consider the requirement for continuous movement, safety, sight lines and visibility, particularly of active mobility users at street intersections.
- 2.6.3. The lighting strategy should recognize the intended character of the Green Spine as a naturalized corridor intended to facilitate habitat connectivity.
- 2.6.4. The Green Spine will be designed with appropriate considerations for operations and maintenance, such as required vehicle access for winter maintenance.
- 2.6.5. The character and design of parks and open spaces adjacent to the Green Spine should be influenced by its natural character which supports habitat health, without compromising the functional programming requirements of the park or open space.



2.28 At times, the Green Spine's accessible path and bi-directional bike-way will be separated by planted green infrastructure features, as illustrated by this portion of the Green Path in Copenhagen.



2.29 The Green Spine's pedestrian path and bi-directional bike-way may come together while maintaining the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, as shown along the Green Path in Copenhagen.



2.30 Portions of the Green Spine may encourage the mingling of different modes without compromising safety. The blending of cyclists and pedestrians at Nørrebroparken in Copenhagen, introduces design features that encourage slower, safer travel speeds.

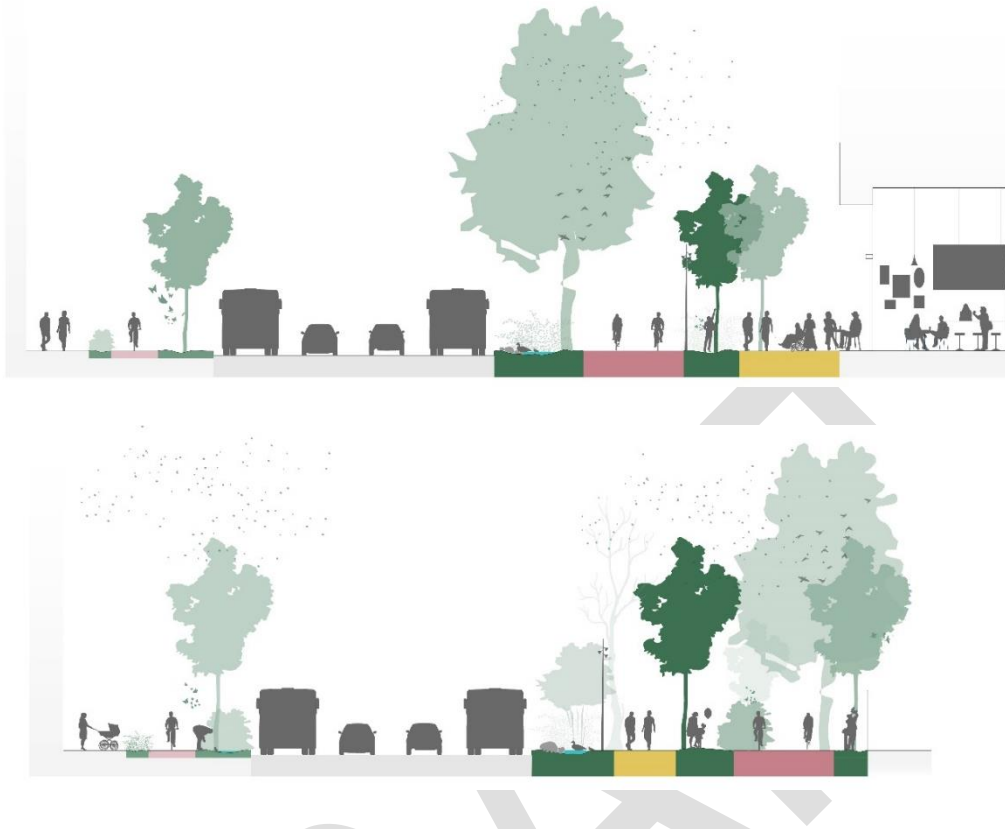
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Active Mobility

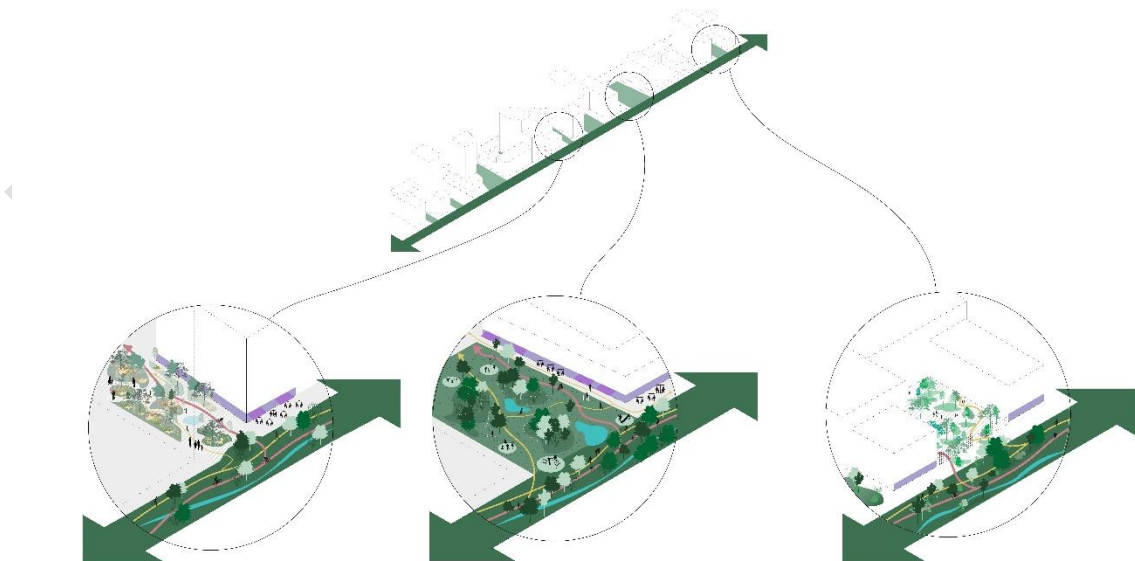
- 2.6.6. The Green Spine's pedestrian pathway will generally be 2.5 to 3.5 metres in width.
- 2.6.7. The paved bi-directional bikeway will generally be 4 to 5 metres in width (*Refer to the Toronto On-Street Bikeway Design Guidelines*).
- 2.6.8. A bioswale of approximately 4 metres in width will be included in the Green Spine to convey stormwater and allow for infiltration.
- 2.6.9. The bikeway will generally be separated from the pedestrian pathway to maintain safety, enhance movement, and reduce conflicts between users.
 - a. Where feasible, this may be achieved through natural design features such as landscaping and *green infrastructure* placement; and
 - b. Where separation is not feasible, slower travel speeds should be encouraged.
- 2.6.10. Portions of the active mobility infrastructure may be elevated over landscaped areas and/or *green infrastructure* features to make efficient use of space and to enhance visual interest. This may also provide design variation throughout the Green Spine's length and support species diversity, through the integration of flood and drought tolerant plant species, habitat structures and tree canopy. This may also be done to allow paths to travel through vegetated areas without compacting soils and root systems.
- 2.6.11. The Green Spine should include pedestrian and cyclist amenities such as benches, planter wall seating, bicycle parking and repair stations, emergency stations, water fountains, waste receptacles and other street furniture to enhance user experience and support its function as the primary north-south active mobility corridor.
- 2.6.12. The north/south termini and intersections of the Green Spine should include appropriate wayfinding to facilitate connections to other locations of interest, including major parks and transit stations.
- 2.6.13. Where the Green Spine intersects with a street, the character and treatment of the Green Spine should influence the design of the street to include features such as wider landscaping with denser planting and trees. The safety and prioritization of active mobility should be incorporate and reinforced through street design using devices such as bump-outs, table tops or other measures.

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2.31 The organization of the Green Spine may vary along its length in response to its adjacencies. Where it runs adjacent to Billy Bishop, portions of the ROW or Green Spine may be reduced to eliminate duplication.



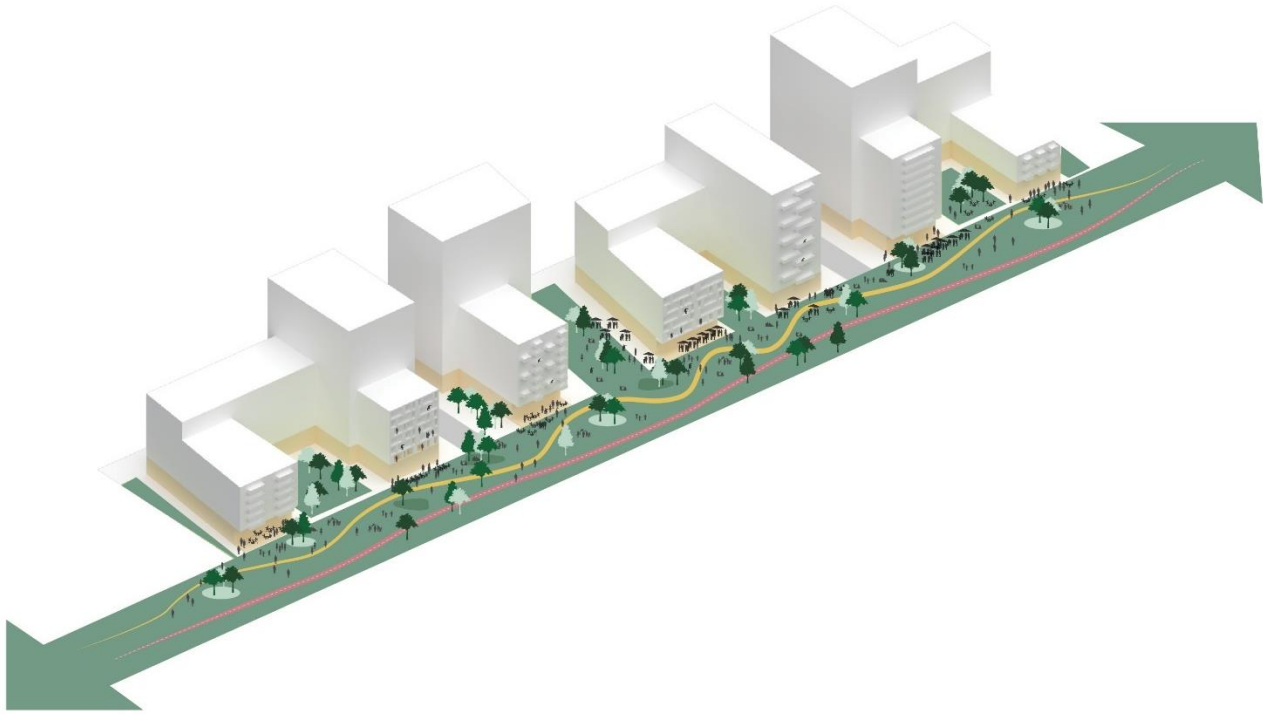
2.32 The Green Spine will encounter parks, open spaces and private courtyards. These spaces will be designed to interact with the functions of the Green Spine. Accessible paths and bike-ways may meander through open spaces to connect with the broader system.

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- 2.6.14. Where the Green Spine is immediately adjacent to Billy Bishop Way, the functions of the Green Spine and the street should be considered comprehensively to eliminate duplication and realize efficiencies, with direction from the MESP. The pedestrian, cycling and *green infrastructure* functions of the Green Spine shall be adapted to serve as the eastern boulevard condition for Billy Bishop Way.
- 2.6.15. Where the Green Spine is immediately adjacent to a street, park, or POPS, the pedestrian path and bikeway may be designed to weave through these spaces and provide enhanced connectivity to the broader open space and active mobility networks.
- 2.6.16. The northern and southern terminus connections of the Green Spine should facilitate the extension of off-street active mobility connections within the Plan Area and the broader existing and planned regional active mobility network.
- At its northern end, the Green Spine should connect to the Downsview Park TTC and GO Transit Station.
 - A protected cycling intersection should be provided at Sheppard West and Chesswood Drive to connect the Green Spine with existing active mobility infrastructure.
 - At its southern end, the Green Spine should provide a connection to the Wilson TTC Transit Station.



2.33 The Green Spine's width may vary when adjacent to parks or open space. Sections of Green Spine may be absorbed to increase programming opportunities. Active mobility may weave into these spaces, and program areas may extend into the Green Spine's width.



2.34 Though development will primarily front onto the opposite Billy Bishop Way, it will provide for appropriate lighting, visibility, and casual overlook to support the safety of those travelling along its length.



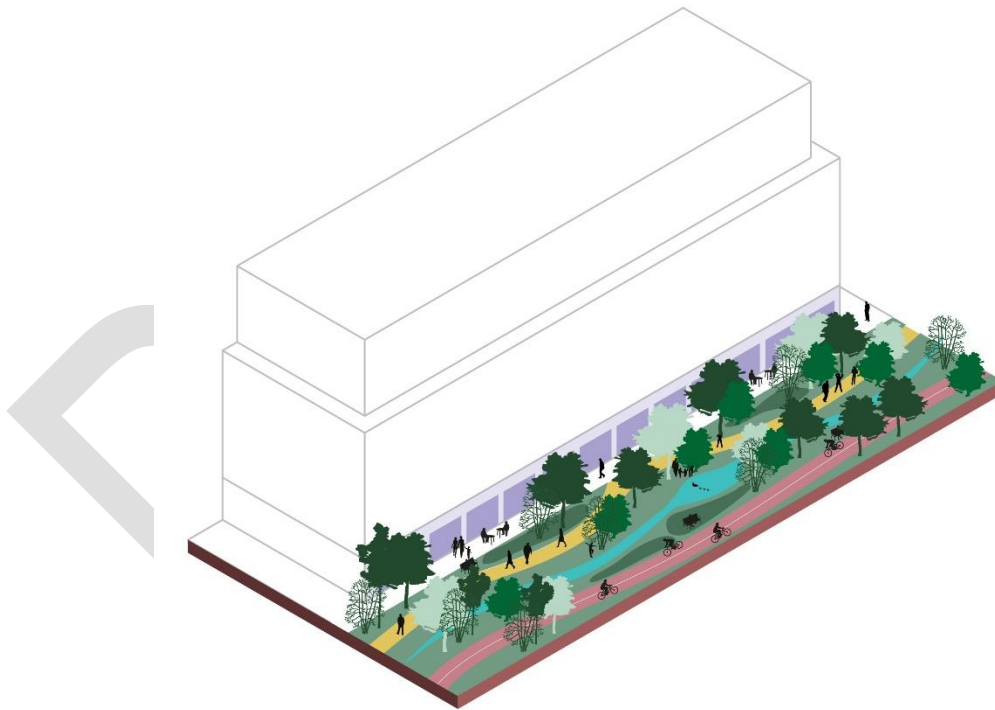
2.35 The Green Spine will be the preferred active mobility travel alternative. Like the St. Kjelds path in Copenhagen, it will offer cyclists and pedestrian a unique escape into nature, within a dense urban context.

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Built Form Adjacencies for the Green Spine

This section should be read in conjunction with Section 3: Built Form.

- 2.6.17. Development adjacent to the Green Spine will provide active frontages with grade related uses and ground-level entrances, as well as residential units that face the Green Spine. Balconies can also be provided.
- 2.6.18. A sound/privacy barrier may be installed between the Green Spine and the TTC Wilson Yard Complex and the Department of National Defence lands to reduce noise and overlook and incorporate the necessary security requirements.
- 2.6.19. Setbacks from the Green Spine are encouraged to provide appropriate separation between at-grade residential uses or other active uses fronting the Green Spine that would benefit from additional spill out space, such as cafes/restaurants and private amenity areas. Further details should be explored through the District Plan process.



2.36 Naturalized spaces and landscaped areas will be integrated throughout the green spine with active mobility infrastructure, to create the experience of a nature trail. These spaces will support stormwater management by incorporating green infrastructure.

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2.37 Conceptual Rendering of the Ravine Underpass.



2.38 Conceptual rendering of the Depot Crossing as seen from the east.

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2.7. Rail Crossings

The Secondary Plan includes two new grade-separated multi-modal crossings of the Barrie GO Rail Line, namely the Ravine Underpass and the Depot Crossing, which will integrate new and existing communities and public realm on either side of the rail corridor.

Ravine Underpass









- 2.7.1. The Ravine Underpass may support opportunities to consolidate active mobility infrastructure within the northern portions of Downsview Park Boulevard right-of-way.
- 2.7.2. The park extension under the rail corridor, north of Downsview Park Boulevard, should feature a natural character similar to Downsview Park, and support the decentralized stormwater management approach and ambitions of *City Nature*.

Depot Crossing

- 2.7.3. The Depot Crossing will be an underpass to provide a new grade-separated multi-modal connection between Sheppard Avenue at William Baker District and Sheppard Avenue at Kodiak Crescent, crossing through the Depot Building at 40 Carl Hall Road.
- 2.7.4. The design of the Depot Crossing should be carefully coordinated with plans for the conservation, interpretation, and adaptive reuse of the Depot Building through the district planning process. Adverse impacts on the cultural heritage resource should be minimized and opportunities for integration and animation should be maximized.
- 2.7.5. The change in grade necessary to accommodate the Depot Crossing underpass should be absorbed into the new frontages of the revitalized Depot Building to create an animated and friendly public-facing edge and limit the perception of travelling through a tunnel. Design strategies may include stepped terraces, stepped facades and step backs, and animation across several elevations.



LEGEND:

-  Overlook from the Green Spine to TTC Rail Yard
-  The Mound
-  Views along Runway & Downsview Park Boulevard
-  Views overlooking Ancaster, Stanley Greene & Downsview Park
-  Taxiway West rail crossing
-  Possible framed views under the Ravine & Depot Underpass
-  View along Taxiway
-  Ravine & Depot Underpass

2.39 Map of view opportunities throughout the Plan Area.

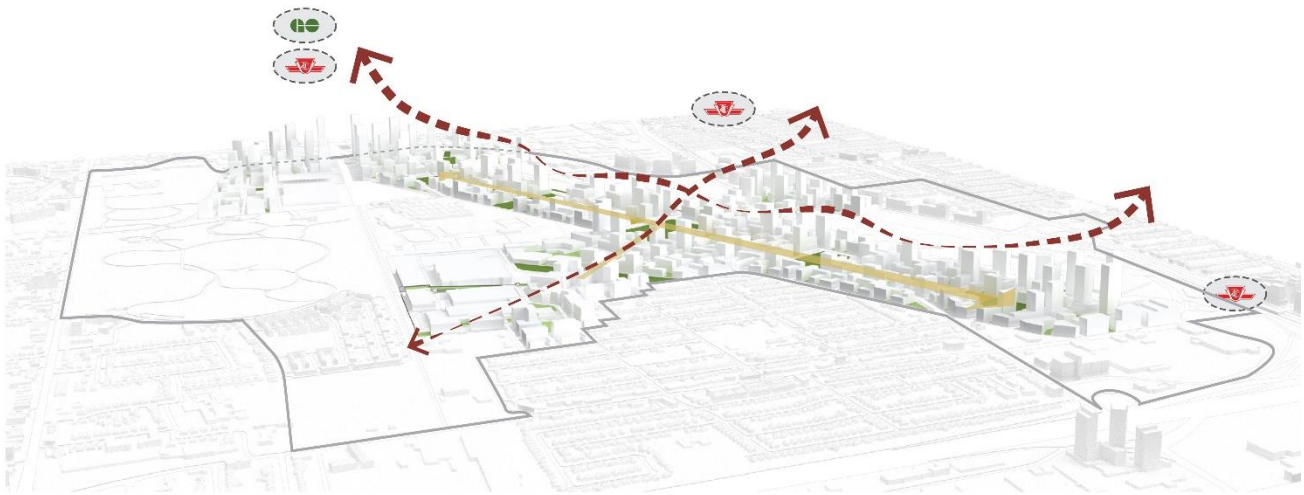
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2.8. Views and Vistas

The Mound in Downsview Park and above-grade crossings of the rail corridor should provide views to cultural heritage resources, clustered tall buildings, and key public spaces such as Central Square and Nexus Park.

View Opportunities

- 2.8.1. View opportunities within the Downsview Area should be intentionally incorporated into the layout and design of District Plans to enhance the character areas within Districts, neighbourhoods and beyond, including:
 - a. Views along the Runway and Downsview Park Boulevard, which may be view corridors, vistas or limited framed views. These views may be subject to topography and may be segmented;
 - b. Views from the Hangar Buildings along the Taxiway towards Nexus Park, and along the Taxiway towards the Hangar Buildings;
 - c. Western views from the Mound over Downsview Park;
 - d. Southern views from the rail crossing over Taxiway West District towards the Ancaster neighbourhood; and
 - e. Views towards Stanley Greene and Downsview Park from the rail crossing in Taxiway West District, on approach from the east.
- 2.8.2. Opportunities for overlook from the Green Spine to the TTC Wilson Yard Complex may be accommodated to create points of interest for locomotives and train-related activities.
- 2.8.3. View corridors, view sections and/or framed views may occur at rail crossings. The Ravine Underpass and the Depot Crossing may establish framed views.



3.1 The built form at Downsview will be intentionally varied. Tall buildings will be clustered in areas that limit shadowing on prioritized public spaces, with the tallest buildings clustered near the transit stations.



3.2 Illustrative rendering looking along the Runway, demonstrating the variety of building heights encouraged within the Plan Area.

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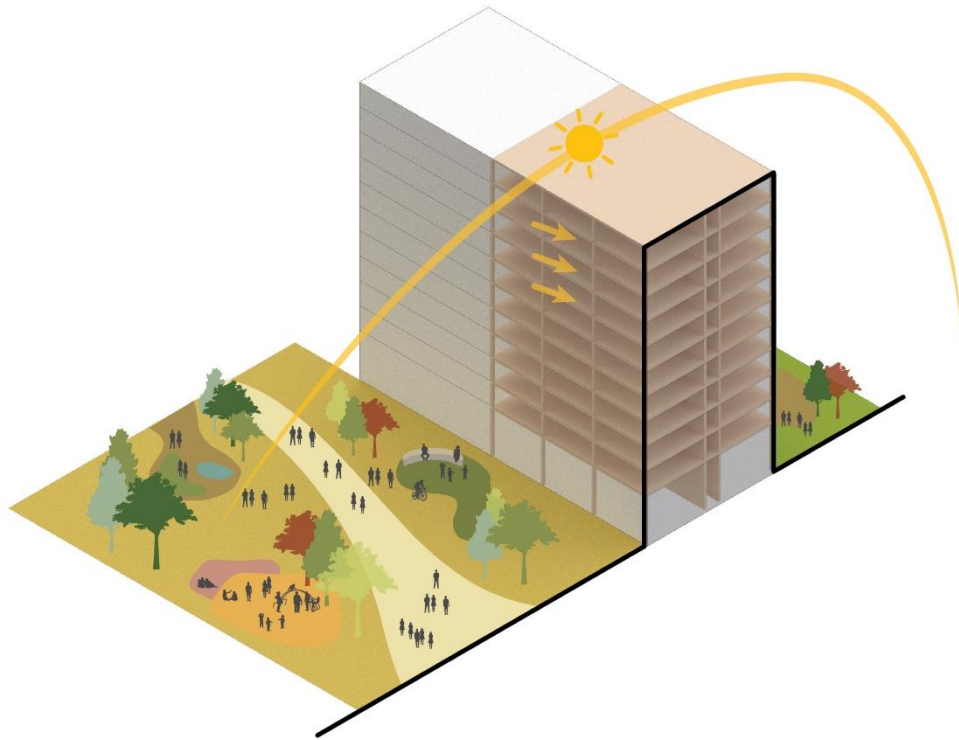
3. BUILT FORM

It is anticipated that development within the Downsview Plan Area will occur over time and will be built out in Districts and in phases. The Plan Area offers a unique opportunity to build out large areas of undeveloped and vacant land, and to anchor the built form around clusters of cultural heritage resources. The proposed built form responds to Downsview's limited adjacencies to established Neighbourhoods, distributes density deliberately, and plans intentionally for the interactions between the built form and public realm development at Downsview.

The approach to distribute density throughout the Districts in the Plan Area has been designed to prioritize the Runway and major parks for sun access and ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian-level wind performance.

3.1. General

- 3.1.1. Opportunities to integrate Indigenous principles into the location, orientation, design, and massing of development blocks and buildings, including community service facilities and other public buildings, should be explored in consultation with Indigenous communities and Rights Holders through the District Plan process.
- 3.1.2. Opportunities to co-design new and reconstructed parks and/or community service facilities with local communities, focused on Indigenous, Black, and other equity-deserving communities, should be explored for through the District Plan process.
- 3.1.3. Development adjacent to cultural heritage resources must appropriately respond to those resources, including through siting and articulating new buildings to maintain and reinforce the attributes and character of properties on the Heritage Register in the District.



3.3 By prioritizing more compact, efficient buildings with fewer step-backs, development at Downsview may be more sustainable, desirable, livable and affordable.



3.4 Compact built forms with fewer step-backs can be built efficiently with tall timber construction methods. T3 Bayside in Toronto is an example of architectural forms that exemplify sustainable building techniques by advancing tall timber construction.

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3.2. Environmental Sustainability Considerations

Prioritizing compact and efficient structures supports the City of Toronto's ambitions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2040. Advancing resilience and sustainability through built form includes assessing opportunities to conserve embodied carbon through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and using less carbon intensive construction materials and methods.

The following should be considered in built form design:

- 3.2.1. Buildings within the Downsview area will be compact, and be designed as efficient building envelopes with deliberate articulation to:
 - a. Provide a high building performance and natural ventilation;
 - b. Increase natural daylighting;
 - c. Reduce energy use and embodied carbon; and
 - d. Ensure the built form defines the public realm and provides for access to sunlight on the public realm.
- 3.2.2. Notwithstanding Guideline 3.2.1, buildings may have fewer step-backs to improve building performance, if it can be demonstrated at the District Plan stage that the buildings:
 - a. Meet requirements for sunlight access on the public realm;
 - b. Respond to human scale within the pedestrian realm;
 - c. Provide acceptable pedestrian level wind conditions; and
 - d. Appropriately describe how the building supports the required built form variety and contributes to sustainable development.
- 3.2.3. Buildings should demonstrate consideration for Tier 3 Toronto Green Standards (TGS) and reduced emissions by using less carbon-intensive construction materials, methods and building operations. This may include but is not limited to the application of Encapsulated Mass Timber in buildings.

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3.5 Development within the Plan Area will advance a fine-grained and permeable block structure, with Major and local streets broken up by frequent mid-block connections.

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3.3. Block Permeability

3.3.1. Development proposed through District Plans will demonstrate a high level of permeability, with the inclusion of streets, mid-block connections, and *greenways* located frequently to provide, address, and improve bi-direction flow.

- a. Streets, *greenways*, and mid-block connections should be located and designed to consider broader active mobility routes, destinations within and adjacent to the Plan Area, and desire lines within the Plan Area;
- b. Mid-block connections (including pedestrian mews and *greenways*) and publicly accessible courtyards are encouraged to support greater block permeability, finer-grained pedestrian scaled frontages, and an interconnected *City Nature* network;
- c. Placemaking features and public amenities should be included in the design of mid-block connections; and
- d. Larger blocks that support employment and/or institutional uses may be considered but should be designed to consider pedestrian permeability.



3.6 *Greenways adjacent to Major Street.*

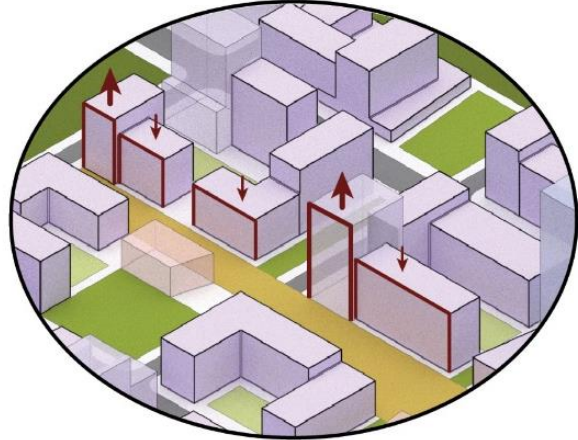
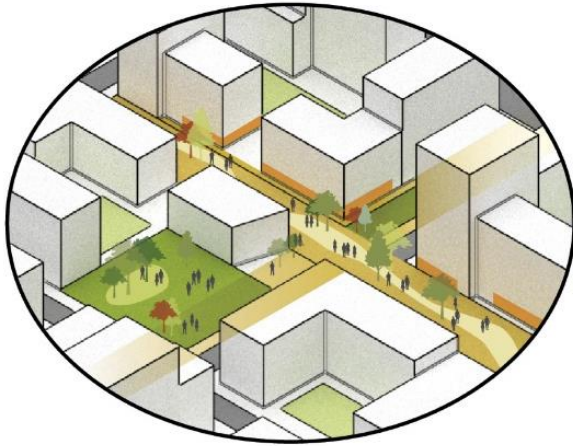


3.7 *Greenways along local street in Trapeze, Paris.*



3.8 *Greenways along local street in Jaktgatan and Lovangsgatan, Stockholm.*

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3.9 In addition to offering a more varied architectural expression, encouraging built form variety within the Plan Area will result in a variety of benefits.



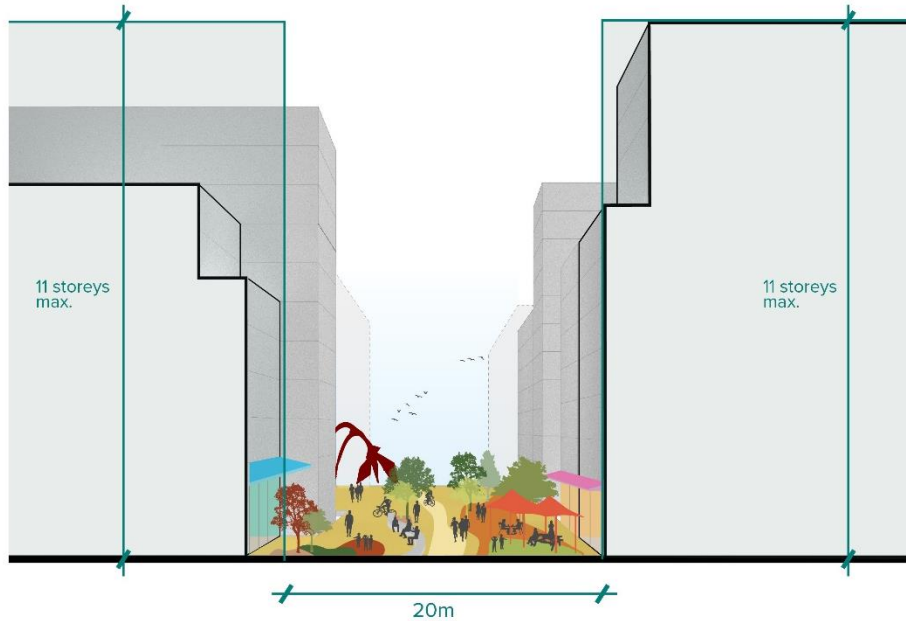
3.10 The Kroyer Square development in Copenhagen is a showcase for a variety of mid-rise building heights that are compact and efficient. The open space weaves throughout the buildings, increasing porosity of the block structure.

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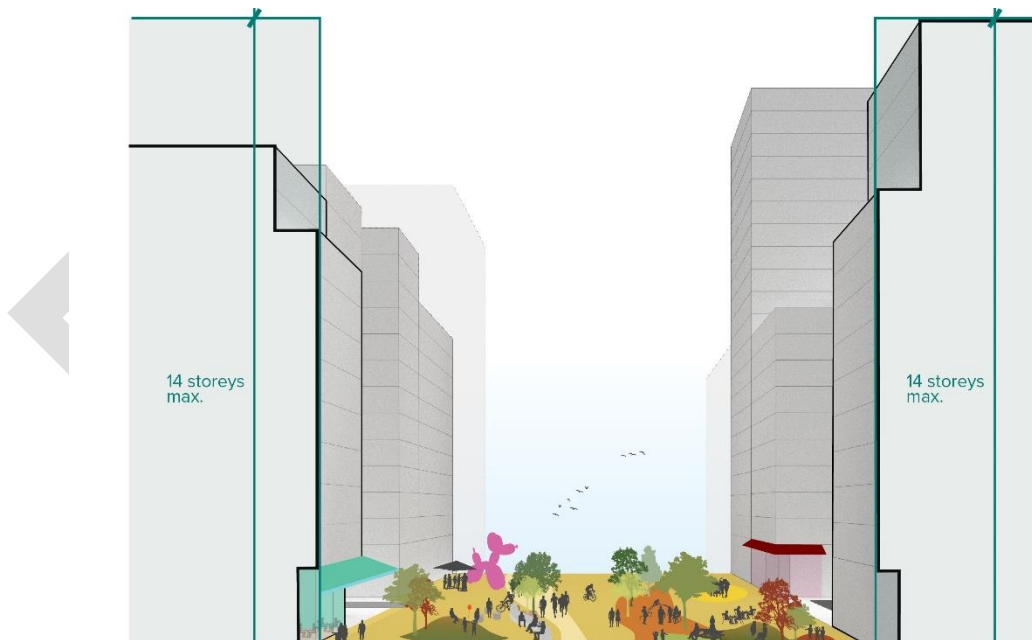
3.4. Building Heights and Organizations

Mid-Rise Buildings

- 3.4.1. Mid-rise buildings in the Plan Area will generally be consistent with the *Mid-Rise Performance Standards*.
- 3.4.2. Notwithstanding guideline 3.4.1, a variety in built form is encouraged. Given the unique nature of Downsview's extensive public realm, the district planning process, and the ability to plan communities comprehensively, mid-rise buildings may demonstrate alternative built form approaches where it:
- a. Supports sustainable design, including greater passive performance, energy efficiency and reduced embodied carbon;
 - b. Provides more multi-bedroom units beyond minimum requirements and/or more flexible units designs that can adapt as household needs change;
 - c. Improves public realm performance; and/or
 - d. Allows for a higher level of block permeability.



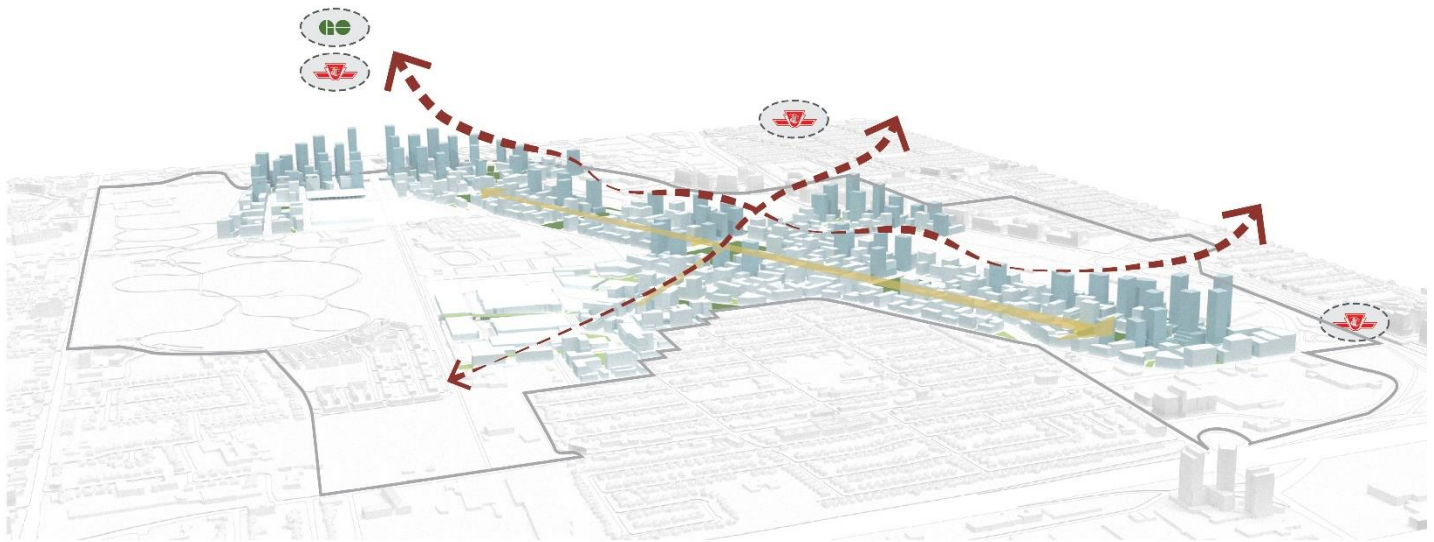
3.11 On development parcels with frontages along a secondary street or a portion of the Runway that is less than 30 metres wide, the maximum mid-rise building heights will be 11 storeys, however the average height of all mid-rise buildings on a block will generally equal the width of the adjacent right-of-way or the relevant Runway or Taxiway segment.



3.12 On development parcels with frontages along a Major Street, a portion of the Runway that is greater than 30 metres wide, or a Major Park, the maximum mid-rise building heights will be 14 storeys, however the average height of all mid-rise buildings on a block will generally equal the width of the adjacent right-of-way or the relevant Runway or Taxiway segment.

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- 3.4.3. Subject to 3.4.2., the height of a mid-rise building on any given block should respond to the width of the street, Runway or Taxiway onto which it fronts. Where the width of the street, Runway or Taxiway is the widest for a given block, a mid-rise building may achieve the following:
- a. A building height up to 11-storeys along a local street or section of the Runway or Taxiway that is less than 30 meters wide (*Flexible application of Mid-Rise Performance Standard #1 – 3.2.1*); or
 - b. A maximum height of 14-storeys along a *major street* or a segment of the Runway or Taxiway that is greater than 30 meters wide (*Flexible application of Mid-Rise Performance Standard #1 – 3.2.1*).
- 3.4.4. Notwithstanding guideline 3.4.3, mid-rise building heights should be responsive to unique, District-level contexts, Secondary Plan priorities of equity and environmental resilience including more multi-bedroom units and sustainable design in addition to the broader public-realm ambitions. District Plans will demonstrate how the average height of all mid-rise buildings on a block that faces an adjacent right-of-way, Runway or Taxiway segment will generally equal the width of the adjacent right-of-way, Runway or Taxiway segment, and will particularly illustrate how alternatives to typical mid-rise built forms, as described in 3.4.3, respond to site-specific considerations and sun-shadow performance standards (*See Guidelines 2.3.18 & 2.5.2*).
- 3.4.5. A step-back should be provided for all mid-rise buildings adjacent to streets, the Runway, Taxiway, Green Spine, parks, and open spaces, to provide a street wall that defines the public realm, ensures natural light and sunlight access is provided on the public realm, mitigates pedestrian level winds, and reduces the canyon effect.
- 3.4.6. Notwithstanding guideline 3.4.5, additional step backs or deeper step backs should be provided where further wind mitigation is needed.



3.13 Tall buildings at Downsview will be clustered around transit station areas, east of the Runway, along Billy Bishop Way and/or north of Major Parks. Within clusters, building heights should be intentionally varied to disperse shadow impacts.

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Tall Buildings

- 3.4.7. Tall buildings in the Plan Area will generally be consistent with the Tall Building Guidelines.
- 3.4.8. The tallest buildings in the Downsview Area will generally be located closer to transit stations, at *major street* intersections, or where such forms will not compromise the ability to provide a comfortable setting for wind and sunlight conditions on the Runway and on major parks (See *Guidelines 2.3.18 & 2.5.2*).
- 3.4.9. The clustering of tall buildings is encouraged to sculpt a varied and expressive skyline. The following should be considered:
 - a. Tall building clusters and their resultant skyline should be discernable at a variety of scales, both within and outside the Plan Area; and
 - b. Tall building clusters along the Runway should generally be located east of the Runway, along Billy Bishop Way, and/or north of major parks, to limit their shadow impact on key public realm elements.
- 3.4.10. Notwithstanding guideline 3.4.7, development in the Downsview Area may include tall buildings that meet the ground directly, without the need for a podium element or the stepping back of upper storeys from a base. These building typologies will only be permitted where they anchor a prominent corner or gateway and increase block porosity. Notwithstanding the above, the following should be considered:
 - a. Tall buildings without a podium should be limited to one per block along *major streets* or a segment of the Runway or Taxiway that is equal or more than 30 metres wide to avoid a tower-canyon effect and to support variety in the at-grade pedestrian experience;
 - b. Where there is no podium, design tools such as cantilevers and columns could be used to relate the building to human scale and adjacent mid-rise street wall conditions; and
 - c. District Plans should provide pedestrian-level wind studies and sun shadow analysis to demonstrate tall building without podiums do not create negative wind or sun conditions (See *Guidelines 2.3.18 & 2.5.2*). Built form approaches such as the inclusion of a podium or step-backs should be applied in these instances (*Flexible application of the Tall Buildings Guideline 3.2.2*).

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14 to 20-Storey Tall Buildings

- 3.4.11. 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings are shorter Tall Buildings which are no taller than 20-storeys and may be found within the Plan Area to provide a greater built form variety between Mid-rise and Tall Building scales. These buildings will be subject to all the applicable performance standards of Tall Buildings and the Plan Area.
- 3.4.12. 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings must be located on a block adjacent to The Runway, Taxiway, *major street* and/or a major park, where it can be demonstrated they achieve climate resilience and environmental sustainability goals of the Secondary Plan, including the application of low carbon building practices, while minimizing impacts to the public realm through efficient built form.
- 3.4.13. Any building taller than 14-storeys adjacent to a *major street* or a segment of the Runway or Taxiway that is equal or more than 30 metres wide will be considered a tall building and will be subject to the *Tall Building Guidelines*, unless where otherwise defined in these guidelines.
- 3.4.14. Any building taller than 11-storeys adjacent to a local street or a segment of the Runway or Taxiway that is less than 30 metres wide will be considered a tall building and will be subject to the *Tall Building Guidelines*, unless where otherwise defined in these guidelines.
- 3.4.15. Development blocks may generally include one 14 to 20-storey Tall Building, up to a maximum of two buildings per block. Two 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings per block may only be sited in strategic locations such as the intersection of two *major streets* or at the corners of major parks where gateways may occur.
- 3.4.16. 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings should demonstrate that the built form strategy results in the provision of adequate privacy, sunlight, and sky views.

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- 3.4.17. To support environmental sustainability goals of the Secondary Plan, including the application of low carbon building practices, built form variety and maintain an appropriate scale between built forms, 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings may have tower floor plates that exceed those typically applied to Tall Buildings, up to a maximum floor plate size of 850 square metres gross construction area (GCA), with dimensions that generally conform to a length-to-width ratio between 1.5:1 and 2:1.
- 3.4.18. Notwithstanding guideline 3.4.17, where 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings with larger floorplates, noted above, are contemplated, adverse impacts to pedestrian comfort, shadow, and wind should be minimized, appropriately addressed, and consistent with performance standards for the Runway and major parks (*See Guidelines 2.3.18 & 2.5.2*).
- 3.4.19. The following separation distance guidelines are applicable to 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings and other building types:
- a. *Mid-Rise Building Guidelines* will apply between a mid-rise building and a 14 to 20-storey Tall Building;
 - b. *Tall Building Guidelines* will apply between a 14 to 20-storey Tall Building and a Tall Building to achieve sunlight on the public realm, and views of the sky; and
 - c. *Tall Building Guidelines* will apply between two 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings to achieve sunlight on the public realm, and views of the sky.
- 3.4.20. District Plans should identify locations for 14 to 20-storey Tall Buildings and demonstrate how the placement of Tall Buildings appropriately addresses the public realm ambitions along the Runway and in major parks (*see Guidelines 2.3.18 & 2.5.2*).

4. PUBLIC ART

Public art is essential in expressing the character, history, and sense of place within the Downsview Plan Area. Public art in Downsview should aim to humanize the built environment and invigorate private and public spaces.

The vision for the overall Downsview area is that public art:

- 4.1. Will be prioritized for artists and creators who are Indigenous, Black or equity deserving;
- 4.2. Will demonstrate different mediums, materials, and methods as well as be delivered in different forms, shapes, and scales;
- 4.3. Will include varying art forms, such as sculptures, murals, landscape art, performance, and music across different spaces provided.
- 4.4. Should capture the military and aviation heritage of Downsview;
- 4.5. Should contribute to the local economy through providing spaces, programs, and initiatives for all artists and community members;
- 4.6. Should capture the rich Indigenous history of Downsview (past, present, and future);
- 4.7. Should be in strategic and prominent public spaces and along routes through Downsview; and
- 4.8. May be in open or enclosed spaces and on public or private land;
- 4.9. Could be permanent or temporary in nature depending on the requirements and space;
- 4.10. Could be educational or tell a story as a description of ideas, historic events, experiences, and life-lessons or a narrative that evokes powerful emotions and insights;

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5. DISTRICT PLANS

Detailed district-level Urban Design Guidelines will build on the Downsview Urban Design Guidelines and provide further guidance for development within the Plan Area.

- 5.1. Development at Downsview should be designed with consideration for a variety of policy priorities, balancing public realm considerations with an interest in advancing City objectives. District-level Urban Design Guidelines should demonstrate, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 5.1.1. Demonstrating how the built form design supports the City's net-zero ambitions through adaptive re-use of existing buildings, prioritizing efficient and low-carbon energy systems, and reducing overall embodied carbon of the built form;
 - 5.1.2. Conserving and enhancing cultural heritage resources as fundamental building blocks of Districts which contribute to a sense of place and local identity;
 - 5.1.3. Incorporating frequent mid-block connections to support fine-grain active mobility and green east-west connections across the Plan Area; and
 - 5.1.4. Encouraging opportunities to prepare community maintenance programs at the District Plan stage to promote a sense of communal ownership, provide and care for the City's natural assets.

6. DEFINITIONS

City Nature is a form of development that blends the built and natural environments to meet the needs of people, animals, and nature by integrating *green infrastructure*, ecological design, biodiverse habitat, gathering spaces, and play into the public realm. Inspired by Toronto's ravine system and celebrating the existing Downsview Park, City Nature is a unique form of urban development that invites nature's generosity into the bustle of the everyday, delivering public health, ecosystem, sustainability, and resilience benefits and creating a unique and compelling identity and character. The City Nature approach can be leveraged to contribute to the City's 40 percent canopy cover target.

Greenways are linear green spaces and/or landscaped pedestrian and cycling connections that form important active mobility, stormwater, biodiversity, and/or ecological corridors within the Plan Area, particularly between parks and the Green Spine, though greenways themselves are not parks. Greenways may vary in design depending on their context but should be designed to facilitate connectivity with a focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety and comfort. Greenways may be located along the edge of the street or through the interior of a block. The general location of important greenways is shown on Map 7-2 Public Realm Plan in the Downsview Secondary Plan.

Green Infrastructure means natural and human-made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes. Green infrastructure may include components such as natural heritage features and systems, parklands, stormwater management systems, street trees, urban forests, natural channels, permeable surfaces, and green roofs. For the purposes of this document, green infrastructure does not include a stormwater management pond.

Green Streets are street rights-of-way that incorporate *green infrastructure* to complement or replace grey infrastructure. The *green infrastructure* can be natural and/or human-made and captures rainwater and directs it to plants and trees, acting as a natural filter that cleans the water before it makes its way into local waterways.

(Indigenous) Place-Keeping as an approach to design is based on land stewardship that is centred around recognizing the rights of landscape as a living being first and considering our collective responsibilities to a place now and into the future. Indigenous place-keeping thinks beyond our immediate benefits and defines a relationship of reciprocity to all living things and systems and how they work together.

Major Streets refers to the significant north-south connector streets Dufferin Street extension and Billy Bishop Way extension, the east-west street Downsview Park Boulevard and the Northern Crossing (a new street aligned east-west through the Supply Depot heritage building).

Urban Rooms refer to a variety of programmatic public realm spaces that are a series of human-scale urban rooms will promote unique and diverse experience along the Runway's length and provide a sense of enclosure influenced by programming and defined by adjacent built form and other landscape features.

Questions or Comments? Please contact:

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Appendix 1

Reference Documents

The Urban Design Guidelines are complemented and further supported by additional City documents that should be considered. As of 2023, these include but are not limited to:

1. [Best Practices Effective Lighting - 2017](#)
2. [Bird-Friendly Best Practices Glass Guidelines](#)
3. [Complete Street Guidelines](#)
4. [Drought Tolerant Landscaping](#)
5. [Green Street Guidelines](#)
6. [Green Infrastructure](#)
7. [Growing Up: Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities - 2020](#)
8. [Mid-Rise Guidelines](#)
9. [Percent for Public Art Program Guidelines - 2010](#)
10. [Pet Friendly Design Guidelines for High Density Communities - 2019](#)
11. [Retail Design Manual](#)
12. [Streetscape Manual - 2019](#)
13. [Tall Buildings Design Guidelines](#)
14. [Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines](#)
15. [Toronto Green Standards](#)
16. [Toronto Green Roof Construction Standard Supplementary Guidelines](#)
17. [Toronto Multi-Use Trail Design Guidelines - 2015](#)
18. [Toronto On-Street Bikeway Design Guide](#)
19. [Toronto Police Service CPTED](#)

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Appendix 2

Heritage Context

The Downsview Secondary Plan Area is generally bound by Sheppard Avenue West to the north, Allen Road to the east, Keele Street to the west, and Wilson Avenue to the north. The Plan Area is located on high lands between the Don and Humber River - watersheds and is approximately 560 hectares in size.

The Plan Area is experienced and valued today as the sum of important and distinct layers of historical use and development. The land within the City of Toronto, including the Downsview Secondary Plan Area, has been the homeland of Indigenous peoples from time immemorial. Following the retreat of glaciers approximately 13,000 years ago, small groups of Indigenous peoples hunted and gathered the food they needed according to the seasons. Waterways, including the nearby Black Creek, were vital sources of fresh water and nourishment, and nearby areas were important sites for gathering, trading, hunting, fishing, and ceremonies.

After corn was introduced to Southern Ontario, possibly as early as 2300 years ago, horticulture began to supplement food sources. Between 1300-1450 years ago, villages became year-round agricultural settlements surrounded by large fields of crops. These villages were home to ancestors of the Huron-Wendat Nation, who would continue to occupy increasingly larger villages in the Toronto area and beyond. Around 1450, one such village stood next to Black Creek near the intersection of today's Jane Street and Finch Avenue, only a walk away from the Downsview Secondary Plan Area.

Following the Huron-Wendat, people of the Haudenosaunee and the ancestors of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation also made the Toronto area their home, establishing communities, engaging in trade, and harvesting from the land. In 1787 and again in 1805, the Mississaugas of the Credit signed treaties with the British Crown that included the lands within present-day Toronto. Toronto has continued to be the home of many First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people, and the land within the Downsview study area remains valued by them into the present day.

Underlying patterns of the early colonial development of the Plan Area are still visible in today's Sheppard Avenue, Wilson Avenue, Keele Street, and Dufferin Street, which began as rural concession roads providing access to and defining the boundaries of farm lots. The railway running north and south to the east of Keele Street was constructed in 1853. The crossroads village of Downsview served the surrounding agricultural community.

Over 70 years later, the railway and the area's flat and high terrain would be key factors in the decision of de Havilland Aircraft Company of Canada to establish an aircraft production facility near the southeast corner of Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue. Beginning in 1929, de Havilland quickly began making Canadian aviation history at the site, and its growth and development have left a rich legacy in the Plan Area. The first airplane hangar (1928) still exists and is now surrounded by other important buildings constructed over several decades of pioneering aircraft production.

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Rapid growth occurred particularly during WWII, when de Havilland was nationalized to produce airplanes for the war effort. In 1944, the facility's growth and importance led to an alteration of the early concession road pattern – the closure of Dufferin Street between Wilson and Sheppard Avenues to allow for runway extensions. In the mid-1950s, further expansion led to the rerouting of Sheppard Avenue to arch around the runways to the north.

In 1947, the Government of Canada chose Downsview as the location of its Air Materials Base, which provided support and repair facilities for Canadian military operations. More buildings were constructed, including the Downsview Supply Depot (1954). Several military related buildings were also constructed on the northeast side of the runway. Many of the buildings associated with de Havilland and the military on the north end of the Plan Area were added to the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in 2014.

The southwest corner of the Plan Area began to take its current form in 1952, when de Havilland moved its operations there and constructed a new manufacturing plant. The company's record of innovation in Canadian aviation continued at that new site, and additions to existing buildings and new hangars were constructed in key periods of growth related to the launch of new aircraft, including in the 1960s for the Twin Otter, and again in the late 1970s and 1980s for the Dash 7 and Dash 8.

After the Downsview Military Base was closed in 1996, the federal government reserved the north end of the site for Parc Downsview Park. Bombardier, which had purchased the de Havilland manufacturing complex in the 1990s, has announced its departure from the site in 2024.

As a result of its historical development, the vastness of the Plan Area is experienced today as a number of discreet areas with different uses and values to different communities. Within the Plan Area are the open spaces of the 118-hectare (291 acre) Downsview Park, the William Baker woodlot, the Barrie GO Rail Line, and the vast airfield. Many of the buildings associated with the history of the military or de Havilland on the north end of the site have been identified as cultural heritage resources and adaptively reused. The de Havilland/Bombardier complex defines the southwest corner of the site.

There are currently three TTC stations and one GO Transit Station in the Plan Area, which provides connectivity to the broader local and regional transportation systems including Highway 401.