

39. RAIL DECK PARK SECONDARY PLAN

Toronto Official Plan – Chapter 6, Section 39

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. INTERPRETATION	4
3. VISION	4
4. OBJECTIVES	5
5. HERITAGE	6
6. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION	6
7. ENVIRONMENT	7
8. SERVICING AND INFRASTRUCTURE	7
9. LAND USE	8
10. PUBLIC REALM AND PARK DESIGN	8
11. IMPLEMENTATION	9
12. DEFINITIONS	12
13. MAPS The maps listed below are shown on the pages that follow.	12
Map 39-1: Context Map	13
Map 39-2 Land Use Plan	14
Map 39-3: Urban Structure	15

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Rail Deck Park Secondary Plan Area is located in the *rail corridor* between Bathurst Street and Blue Jays Way, in a rapidly growing area of *Downtown Toronto*. The *rail corridor* is a key structural feature that serves as a major transportation facility, and is integral to the facilitation of transit and freight services in Toronto.
- 1.2. *Downtown* has been the subject of unprecedented growth, increasing demand for parks with limited lands available for new parkland. Today, *Downtown* has among the lowest levels of park provision in the city, and continued population and employment growth is expected to compound this scarcity. To address this and to support the *Downtown's* livability and economic competitiveness, the City must proactively plan and protect for new and creative opportunities for parkland.
- 1.3. Due to its central location and proximity to a concentration of city and regional destinations, the Secondary Plan Area has been identified as a strategic location for a new public park. It is also one of the last remaining areas in *Downtown* which can offer a large contiguous park.
- 1.4. This Secondary Plan provides a planning framework for the development of Rail Deck Park, and includes policies on matters related to public realm and park design, heritage, transportation, environment, site servicing and stormwater management, land use, and implementation. It is to be read in conjunction with the attached maps.

2. INTERPRETATION

- 2.1. This Secondary Plan should be read in conjunction with the Railway Lands West Secondary Plan, Railway Lands Central Secondary Plan, and Railway Lands East Secondary Plan to understand the comprehensive and integrative intent as a policy framework for the entirety of Rail Deck Park.
- 2.2. In the case of a conflict between this Secondary Plan and the policies in any of the Railway Lands Secondary Plans or the City of Toronto Official Plan, the policies in this Secondary Plan will prevail.
- 2.3. The boundaries of this Secondary Plan are shown on Map 39-1 and are approximate. Where the general intent of this Secondary Plan is maintained, minor adjustment to such boundaries will not require an amendment to this Secondary Plan, the Railway Lands Central Secondary Plan or the Railway Lands West Secondary Plan.

3. VISION

- 3.1. Rail Deck Park will transform the space above an active *rail corridor* in the heart of one of *Downtown's* fastest-growing communities into a signature public park. It will be a beautiful and bustling place which acts as a major destination for people from across the City and outside Toronto, while also serving the immediate community. Rail Deck Park is a long-term commitment to quality of life for all Torontonians.
- 3.2. Rail Deck Park will build on existing and proposed plans and investments in the area, including the Railway Lands Secondary Plans, King-Spadina Secondary Plan, the *Downtown Plan*, Canoe Landing Park, Mouth of the Creek Park, and the Bentway by helping stitch together the many major cultural and entertainment destinations north and south of the *rail corridor* with the revitalized waterfront to the south. It will also be an integral link that completes a core chain of parks and public spaces wrapping around the *Downtown*. With major hubs of activity on all sides, Rail Deck Park will serve as a keystone in a broader network of entertainment, civic,

commercial, and recreational destinations, encouraging residents and visitors to explore and experience the spectacular spaces that distinguish Toronto.

- 3.3. The generous scale and central location of Rail Deck Park will accommodate a variety of park uses, including active and passive recreation, naturalized areas, and civic and cultural facilities. The design, configuration, and layout of space will be coordinated to complement and enhance each piece as part of a grand park experience. The quality and range of amenities will draw visitors from across the city, the region, and internationally.
- 3.4. Rail Deck Park will be universally accessible and present a seamless and permeable relationship with the surrounding public realm. It will be directly accessible by multiple public transit and active transportation routes, and will directly connect to the Regional Express Rail network.
- 3.5. A model of sustainable infrastructure development designed to high standards of resiliency, Rail Deck Park will be a jewel of the *Downtown* parks and open space system and a major catalyst of economic development and tourism. Toronto's signature park will be a park for all of Toronto.

4. OBJECTIVES

- 4.1. The development of Rail Deck Park will proceed in accordance with the following objectives:
 - 4.1.1. Provide a Park for all Toronto
 - a) The significant scale and central location of Rail Deck Park will accommodate a diverse range of park uses and programming options to create an inclusive and welcoming public space for all Torontonians. Rail Deck Park will be designed and programmed as a vibrant, high quality and multi-functional space with a range of recreational, community, civic, and naturalized uses, and will contribute to the achievement of an attractive, inviting, comfortable and safe public realm.
 - 4.1.2. Enhance Connectivity and Accessibility
 - a) Rail Deck Park will be designed to be age-friendly and universally accessible, and will offer exceptional access both in terms of physical connections to the public realm, and in terms of broader connections to city-wide and regional transit and transportation routes. Moreover, the park itself will bridge the gap presented by the rail corridor to bring together the communities on either side of the area, and will create new links from the *Downtown* to the *Waterfront*.
 - 4.1.3. Create A Place to Gather and Celebrate
 - a) Rail Deck Park will establish a new hub where residents, workers, and visitors will be able to gather, celebrate and share in memorable experiences that will contribute to the identity of the city. Rail Deck Park will link together existing destinations in the downtown, and serve as a catalyst for further investment in arts, culture, entertainment, tourism and technology.
 - 4.1.4. Invest in Resiliency and Green Infrastructure
 - a) The principles of sustainability and resiliency will be integrated into every aspect of the planning, design, and implementation of Rail Deck Park, from landscaping and servicing, to daily maintenance and operations, to long-term management and governance. This forward-looking approach will position Rail Deck Park as a showcase for innovation and design-excellence that will be enjoyed by current and future generations of Torontonians.

4.1.5. Support and Integrate Rail

- a) Rail operations have been integral to Toronto's growth and economic vibrancy, and continue to support prosperity and livability in the city today. Rail Deck Park will be designed and managed to ensure the continued effective, safe and efficient provision of rail operations.

4.1.6. Acknowledge and Conserve the History of the Railway Lands

- a) As a site within the core of Toronto and on the former historic shoreline of Lake Ontario, the rail corridor and surrounding area has a rich history. This area has played a significant role in shaping the urban and natural environments that have emerged around it. The design and implementation of Rail Deck Park will acknowledge and share these histories that were formed first by Indigenous peoples and then influenced by the introduction of rail operations and the urbanization of Toronto that followed.

5. HERITAGE

5.1. The development of Rail Deck Park provides an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the history of the site, its surroundings, and adjacent heritage resources. These opportunities will support the objectives in Sections 4.5 and 4.6 and will be realized through the following:

- a) supporting opportunities for interpretation of the historical Lake Ontario shoreline and acknowledging the significant role of the railway and Indigenous culture and history in the evolution of the city through placemaking, landscaping, public realm, and public art elements;
- b) preserving and framing significant visual connections from Rail Deck Park to key skyline views and other unique parts of the city, as identified on Map (39-3);
- c) integrating existing heritage assets into the design of the park including the Memorial to Commemorate the Chinese Railway Workers, and other cultural heritage assets identified by the City;
- d) providing an enhanced sense of place through design treatments at transition areas between Park edges and adjacent heritage areas that reference and acknowledge the adjacent heritage districts and resources; and
- e) acknowledging and responding to the unique character of adjacent heritage areas such as the King-Spadina Heritage Conservation District, the Draper Street Heritage Conservation District, and Fort York National Historic Site, with appropriate transition in Park design and intensity of use.

6. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

6.1. As a large open space bridging the *rail corridor*, Rail Deck Park will significantly improve pedestrian and cycling circulation, and connectivity to transit networks. This Section contains policy direction to achieve the objectives of Section 4.2 and 4.5.

6.2. Public transit and active transportation will be prioritized as the primary modes of travel to and from Rail Deck Park by providing convenient and accessible pedestrian and cycling routes that link key destinations and transit stops with the Park, to the Waterfront, and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

- 6.3. The design of Rail Deck Park will be coordinated with the development of the *Spadina-Front GO RER Station* in order to encourage:
- a) pedestrian and cycling access between the park, *Spadina-Front GO RER Station*, and adjacent areas;
 - b) the design of an animated station interface with the park including a high degree of transparency, multiple entrances, and universal accessibility; and
 - c) active uses along the *Spadina-Front GO RER Station* frontage facing the park to provide an enhanced sense of place and park-level animation.
- 6.4. Any vehicular access to and parking at the park will be prioritized for accessible transit pick-up and drop-off, loading, maintenance, servicing, and emergency vehicle access.
- 6.5. The *rail corridor* will continue to function as a utility corridor in accordance with *Utility Corridor* provisions of the Official Plan, with rail uses located below the *decking structure* including active rail lines and uses associated with rail operations such as train storage, and train maintenance. The continued effective, safe, and efficient provision of inter-regional passenger rail and freight rail services will not, in any way, be compromised by the existence of Rail Deck Park.
- 6.6. The continued effective, safe, and efficient provision of inter-regional passenger rail and freight rail services will be ensured and supported through technical studies identified in Section 11.5 as part of the implementation and development of Rail Deck Park.
- 6.7. Development adjacent to or above the *rail corridor* will respect its physical configuration and its current and future operation, including approaches, access, track electrification, easements, and emergency access during and after the development of Rail Deck Park.

7. ENVIRONMENT

- 7.1. Rail Deck Park represents an opportunity to expand and enhance the public realm and open space networks in the city. This Section contains policy direction to achieve the objective in Section 4.4. The design, development, and maintenance of Rail Deck Park will support environmental stewardship, connectivity and sustainability, through:
- a) including a range of active recreational areas and passive areas within the park;
 - b) providing connected planted areas that support wildlife habitat;
 - c) ensuring adequate soil volumes to support healthy and mature landscaping and tree canopies;
 - d) reducing the urban heat island effect and increasing carbon capture through a diversity of planting and landscape design treatments;
 - e) planting a range of native species to support biodiversity and reduce the need for intensive maintenance; and
 - f) incorporating innovative approaches to irrigation, ventilation, and stormwater management systems.

8. SERVICING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 8.1. Development of Rail Deck Park will be supported by necessary improvements to servicing infrastructure to accommodate the development and operation of the park, which will be guided

by the objective in Section 4.4 in addition to the polices of this section.

- 8.2. Innovative design approaches for site servicing and stormwater management will support the long-term viability and resiliency of Rail Deck Park. This will be achieved through:
 - a) incorporating best practices in sustainable design, reduced resource consumption, waste management, and material recycling;
 - b) investigating opportunities to integrate on-site energy production; and
 - c) exploring opportunities to incorporate low-impact storm water management solutions to help increase ground infiltration and achieve a net zero increase in stormwater runoff for improved water use and quality.
- 8.3. Development of the *decking structure* and associated community amenities within Rail Deck Park will incorporate stormwater management on site and comply with the objectives in the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan Guidelines, as may be amended.

9. LAND USE

- 9.1. The area identified as Rail Deck Park on Map (39-1) is designated as *Parks and Open Space Areas*. Decking of the *rail corridor* to support a park is compatible with utility corridor uses under the Official Plan, including rail, transit, and all other uses and provisions within *Utility Corridors*.
- 9.2. Rail Deck Park will be developed with a wide variety of park and ancillary uses to support active and passive recreation activities, natural areas, and civic and cultural spaces, and will be guided by the policies and objectives of this Plan.
- 9.3. To support the vision of a multifunctional park serving a diversity of uses and users and to foster partnerships, the City may lease space within Rail Deck Park to third parties for ancillary uses and activities that are compatible with the intent and purpose of this Secondary Plan. As described in Section 11.4 below, a Leasing Strategy will be prepared with respect to leasing space within Rail Deck Park.
- 9.4. The *rail corridor* and Union Station will continue to be used for utility corridor purposes and will remain important for inter-regional passenger rail services, and freight rail services. It is recognized that utility uses are permitted within the parks and Open Space Areas designation.
- 9.5. Nothing in this Secondary Plan will restrict or prohibit the continued rail operations within the rail corridor below the *decking structure*.
- 9.6. Potential eastward expansion of Rail Deck Park to John Street over the rail corridor may be explored at a future time. Any expansion will be coordinated with existing park uses and will continue to ensure effective, safe, and efficient provision of inter-regional passenger rail and freight rail services, as described in Section 6.6 and Section 11 of this Secondary Plan.

10. PUBLIC REALM AND PARK DESIGN

- 10.1. A detailed park Master Plan will be prepared for Rail Deck Park to implement the Vision and Objectives of this Secondary Plan and to ensure the development of a coordinated, cohesive, and connected public open space.
- 10.2. The park Master Plan will be rooted in a robust and meaningful public engagement process to ensure the design and programming of Rail Deck Park responds to the needs of a broad constituency of park users including local and city-wide residents, *Downtown* employees, and

other visitors.

- 10.3. The park Master Plan will be guided by the objectives and policy directions of this Secondary Plan in order to achieve the following:
- a) a range of passive and active uses and park facilities that animate the park throughout the day, evening, and all seasons;
 - b) a comprehensive programming strategy to support a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable park environment that responds to the interests, needs, and abilities of all Torontonians;
 - c) engaging and compelling public art that highlights Toronto's diversity and an enhanced experience for park users;
 - d) a comfortable pedestrian environment that minimizes impacts from shadow, wind, and noise;
 - e) safety and security for park users during all times of the day through applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts;
 - f) a system of pedestrian and cycling routes to enhance connectivity between the Railway Lands, the *Downtown*, and the Waterfront;
 - g) seamless interface that seeks to minimize the difference in grade between the surrounding public realm and adjacent communities and the park's edges to maximize visibility and connections between the *Downtown* and the Waterfront, and ensure universal accessibility;
 - h) integration with adjacent parkland and pedestrian areas, including without limitation, Northern Linear Park, Mouth of the Creek Park, Fort York National Historic Site, the pedestrian areas surrounding the Rogers Centre and CN Tower, and the City's larger parks and trails network;
 - i) a clear, legible, and accessible wayfinding strategy to help users navigate safely and efficiently through the park;
 - j) flexibility and adaptability in park design to safely and efficiently accommodate large events, public gatherings, and high volumes of pedestrian traffic during these events;
 - k) design innovation and excellence to establish Rail Deck Park as a city-and region-wide destination and international draw;
 - l) opportunities to frame views from Rail Deck Park to the city's skyline and other prominent structures such as the CN Tower, as identified on Map 36-03;
 - m) the objectives and policy directions in accordance with Section 5-Heritage and Section 6 - Transportation and Circulation;
 - n) a range of landscaping and planting that supports biodiversity, reduces the need for intensive maintenance, and provides all-season interest, in accordance with the policies outlined in Section 7 - Environment; and
 - o) a sustainable and efficient approach to servicing and stormwater management, in accordance with the policies of Section 7 - Environment and Section 8 - Servicing and Infrastructure.

11. IMPLEMENTATION

- 11.1. Rail Deck Park will be planned comprehensively, but it is recognized that construction and development is expected to occur incrementally. The timing and phasing of necessary infrastructure and other improvements and works will depend on a number of factors, including the nature and scale of municipal infrastructure ultimately proposed as part of the development of the park.
- 11.2. A phasing strategy will be prepared that considers at least the following:
 - a) existing rail infrastructure and functions;
 - b) coordination with ongoing and future rail planning initiatives;
 - c) rail safety mitigation measures;
 - d) preparatory work related to reroute utilities and other heavy civil and structural works;
 - e) deck construction including major mechanical and electrical systems;
 - f) development of the park on and within the *decking structure*; and
 - g) construction of the urban design, planning, and transportation improvements or any other facilities identified in the development of the park Master Plan.
- 11.3. Construction of Rail Deck Park will generally include a number of preparatory works in and around the *rail corridor* to prepare the project area for civil and structural works, *decking structure* construction, and further development of the park. Future timing of development will be coordinated with other related projects, where possible, such as track electrification, the *Spadina-Front GO RER Station*, among other infrastructure projects, requirements, or studies.
- 11.4. A leasing strategy will be prepared to outline the goals, objectives, and a framework, among other matters, for managing leases for uses that are in alignment with the objectives of this Secondary Plan.
- 11.5. In order to ensure orderly and coordinated development of Rail Deck Park, the City will ensure that the necessary requirements and studies are completed and approved by Council before permitting the development of the *decking structure* or Rail Deck Park, including the following:
 - a) A detailed Park Master Plan as described in Section 10 will be prepared, which will include specific technical, development, and design details, and will inform the development of the park;
 - b) Comprehensive studies that detail how the following environmental and technical matters and considerations will be satisfactorily addressed and how requirements will be secured, including:
 - i) the noise, odour, and vibration impact of the railway to ensure compatibility with rail operations, including mitigation and attenuation measures by, among other things, the provision of buffers, including acoustical structures and landscaping features adjacent to noise, odour, and vibration sources as appropriate for open space uses;
 - ii) satisfactory air quality and climatic conditions, including wind conditions, including a consideration of the potential impact of snow and ice on rail service;
 - iii) satisfactory soil and groundwater conditions, including soil remediation or disposal plans for contaminated soil excavation and remediation measures for any noxious substances;
 - iv) servicing and stormwater management studies which confirm the sufficiency of

municipal infrastructure, including sewer, water, stormwater, as well as capacity for managing snow and ice accumulation;

- v) minimizing, to the extent possible, risks of injury or damage from accidents on the rail and adjacent roads;
 - vi) ensuring that the practices and procedures followed during construction, development, operation and maintenance of the *decking structure* and Rail Deck Park are environmentally sound; and
 - vii) energy efficiency, conservation, waste reduction, and recycling as development of Rail Deck Park proceeds.
- c) A rail corridor study, in consultation with appropriate authorities, which demonstrates that:
- i) existing and future capacity and safety of rail operations in the *rail corridor* will not be impaired;
 - ii) the effective, safe and efficient provision of rail transportation services of the *rail corridor* and Union Station will not be compromised; and
 - iii) the flexibility for future expansion of rail operations, including the implementation of the *Spadina-Front GO RER Station*, and modifications and improvements to the track and signal system will not be reduced or impacted.
- d) an emergency management plan to outline how the City will respond to and mitigate the impact of a possible emergency within the rail corridor in coordination with rail operators;
- e) a transportation monitoring program and a traffic management mitigation plan (TMMP) to address traffic infiltration issues and other traffic impacts in the neighbourhoods immediately surrounding the Rail Deck Park. The TMMP may include strategies to support transit integration and active transportation, and accommodate potential vehicular lay-bys, drop-off area and parking zones, without negatively impacting the existing transportation network, among other matters; and
- f) a construction management plan (including a construction mitigation strategy addressing impact on adjacent buildings), to be implemented during the course of construction.

11.6. Stewardship and Partnerships

11.6.1. Developing partnerships will be a key component in the management and evolution of Rail Deck Park as a vibrant, active, and multifunctional civic space for all Torontonians. The City will pursue partnerships with other public institutions, the private sector, non-profit organizations, community groups, and other relevant stakeholders to help develop collaborative relationships and funding strategies needed to realize the objectives of this Secondary Plan. A stewardship conservancy model will be further explored, among other considerations, as a potential vehicle for the long-term management of the park. Key directions for the model may include, without limitation:

- a) establishing a joint public and private partnership, unifying various groups and service providers under one umbrella;
- b) implementing a detailed programming plan and developing a park and activity guide for users;
- c) developing and managing Rail Deck Park media outreach, public relations, newsletters, and communications plan to raise awareness and inform surrounding communities about the park;

- d) establishing a list of volunteers willing to aid in a volunteer program;
- e) assisting in preparing and installing cultural heritage interpretive signs;
- f) developing educational resources;
- g) assisting the City in organizing and planning events; and
- h) fundraising and assistance in securing funding and in-kind resources to support long-term sustainability of the park.

12. DEFINITIONS

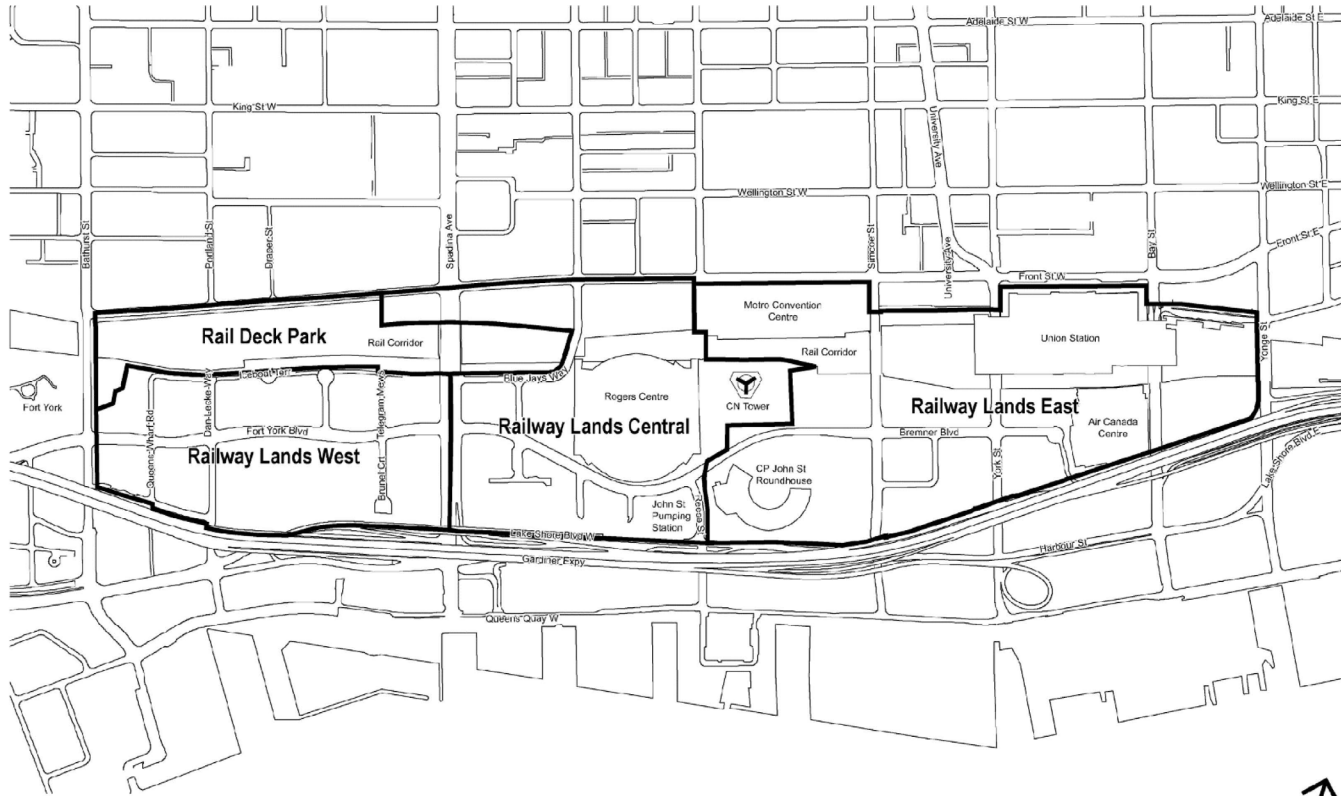
- 12.1. The *decking structure* means the structure developed over the *rail corridor* to support development of Rail Deck Park including all the necessary engineering and structural elements that may or may not extend below the grade level of the *rail corridor*.
- 12.2. *Rail corridor* means the area comprised of the Union Station Rail Corridor (URSC) and the Bathurst North Yard, generally bounded by Front Street West to the north, and the southern limit of the USRC to the south.
- 12.3. *Spadina-Front GO RER Station* means the Metrolinx GO Regional Express Rail station serving the Barrie GO Corridor, planned for Spadina Avenue and Front Street West.

13. MAPS The maps listed below are shown on the pages that follow.

Map 39-1: Context Map

Map 39-2: Land Use Plan

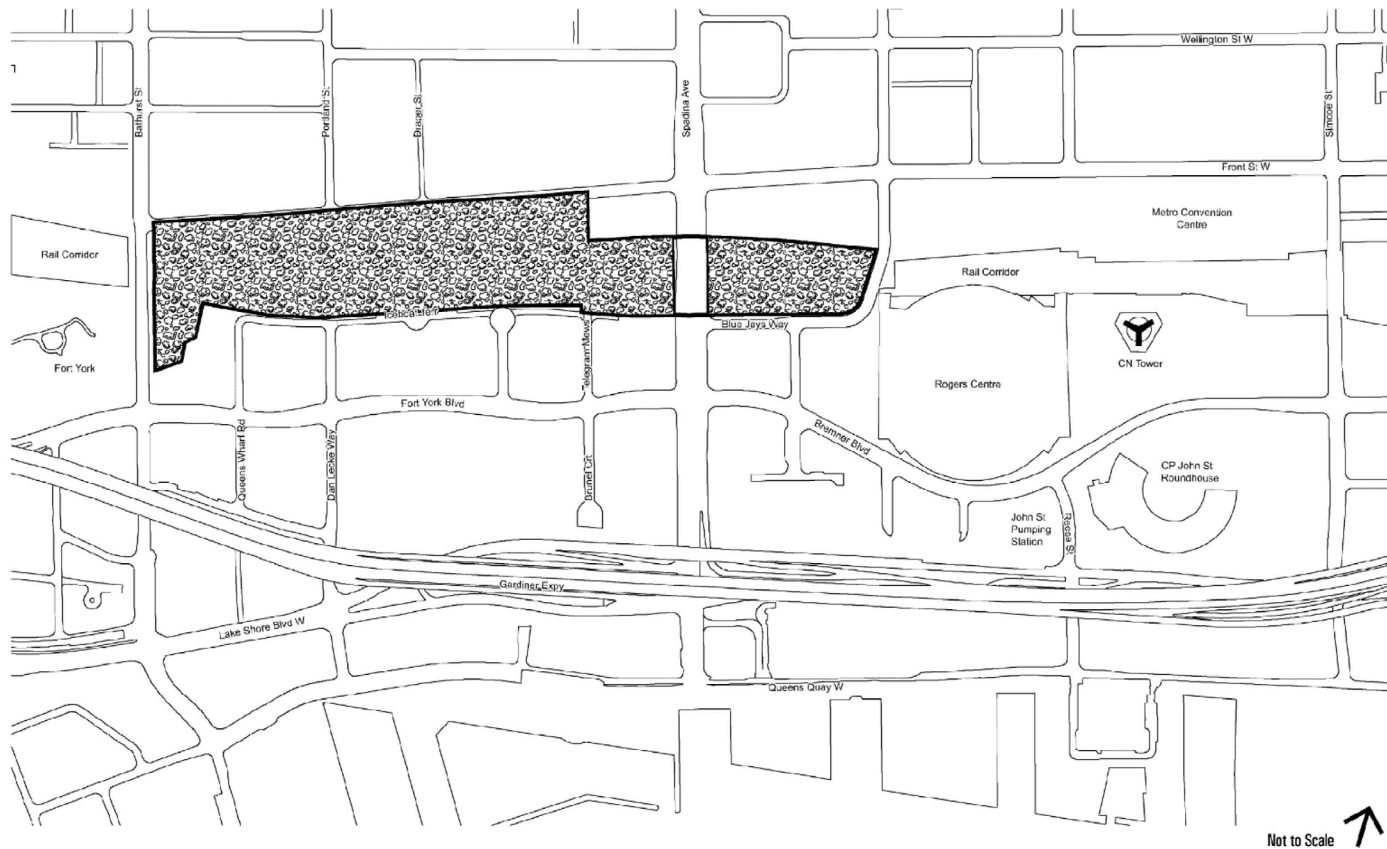
Map 39-3: Urban Structure





Rail Deck Park
MAP 39-1 Context Map

— Secondary Plan Boundary

September 2017

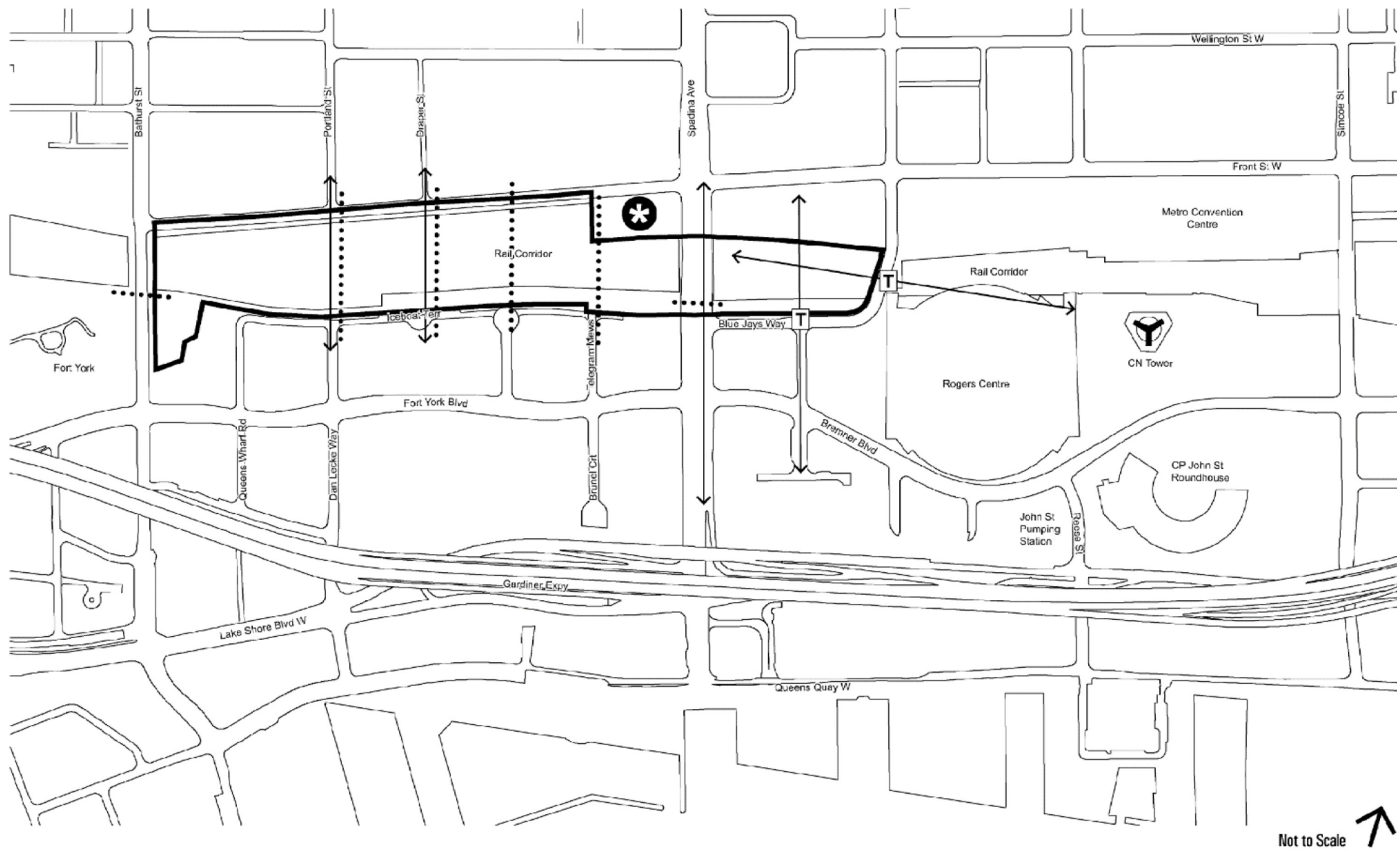


Rail Deck Park
MAP 39-2 Land Use Plan

-  Secondary Plan Boundary
-  Parks and Open Space Areas

August 2017






MAP 39-3: URBAN STRUCTURE



Not to Scale 



Rail Deck Park
MAP 39-3 Urban Structure

-  Secondary Plan Boundary
-  Existing View Terminus
-  Significant City and Waterfront Views and Vistas
-  Major Pedestrian Connection
-  Future RER Spadina Station

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