

Downsview Stories

DOWNSVIEW PARK HISTORY

The Park emerged out of a commitment of the Government of Canada. In 1994-1995, the government announced that it would decommission the Canadian Forces Base Toronto and that the land would be set aside for development, recreational, and broader public uses. CFB Toronto formally closed on April 1, 1996. Parc Downsview Park Inc. (PDP) was established in 1999 and is now managed by the federal Crown corporation Canada Lands Company.



Canada Day celebrations in Downsview Park in 2019

In 1999, the City of Toronto adopted the first Downsview Area Secondary Plan, recognizing the changes coming with the closure of CFB Toronto. It set out general provisions for the Park.

In the ensuing years aspirations and suggestions for the future park were compiled through a process that included extensive public input. A design competition was held in 1999/2000 to help generate the plan for the Park. Five concepts were prepared for the competition by highly qualified,

international, and local teams, and the community was invited to comment on the submissions. Designer Bruce Mau and architect Rem Koolhaas submitted the winning park concept known as 'Tree City'. Funding challenges and other obstacles prevented this plan from moving forward right away, and in 2006 significant steps were initiated for park development. The fundamental principles and concepts brought forward by the Tree City scheme still resonate today.



The development of the Downsview Park began in 2006

In 2011 the Downsview Area Secondary Plan was amended, reflecting the changing context for Downsview Park with then upcoming Downsview Park TTC and Go Train stations, bringing new opportunities for access to the Park. The Tree City vision formed the basis for the Park in the 2011 Downsview Area Secondary Plan.

The 291-acre Downsview Park will continue to be the heart of the community and its size will not change. Going forward, the id8downsview planning process will be looking at the surrounding development lands, including opportunities to improve the Park connectivity to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

That said, with many other dynamic parks around the world, Downsview Park is a work in progress that will never be finished! Today, Downsview Park features forested walking trails through Boake's Grove, a 3-km running track overlooking the Lake, the Festival Terrace to host events small and large, an aviation themed playground, an urban farm, a productive orchard and public art. In 2019

the Sesqui Trail was opened, it commemorates the history of the lands, recognizing it as a part of the traditional territories of the Mississauga of the Credit, acknowledging the early area farming families, and the emergence of de Havilland aircraft manufacturing and the military base. The Park's Discovery Centre offers nature education programming to thousands of kids through the school programs and interpretive park experiences to the general community.



Left: Forest walking trails in Downsview Park

Right: A historical map of Southern Ontario traces the outlines of the eight traditional treaties and describes the history of 11,000 years of Indigenous history on these lands.

Over the years, close to 120,000 trees have been planted in the Park, and a new landscape is emerging. Indeed, just as trees grow, the Park will continue to evolve, change, and mature to reflect the surrounding community with each generation.

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