

Thorncliffe Park, Toronto

Thorncliffe Park Major Transit Station Area (MTSA)

Thorncliffe Park, located near the Don River Valleys and Ravines, is a fast-growing neighbourhood in north-east Toronto where many newcomers settle when they arrive in Canada.

The area is undergoing major changes, largely due to the construction of the Ontario Line (OL). This new 15.6km rapid transit line, with interchanges to Lines 1, 2, and 5 of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), will connect downtown Toronto to Eglinton Avenue, going through Thorncliffe Park.

An elevated guideway segment will be constructed parallel to and along the northwest side of Overlea Boulevard, with a station proposed at the intersection with Thorncliffe Park Drive. Overlea Boulevard will be upgraded to a complete street in part through the OL

project, and an Operations, Maintenance & Storage Facility (OMSF) for the OL will be built and take up the land northwest of the study area.

As a result of these changes in land-use, Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) are proposed to the northwest of Overlea Boulevard to introduce a new form of urban model.

Employment land conversion through TOC calls for a closer look at how the new development settles into its context with Overlea Boulevard as the central spine, especially considering incompatible adjacent land uses like a major hydro substation, the future OMSF rail storage yard, and the OL elevated guideway which limits access and creates public realm challenges.

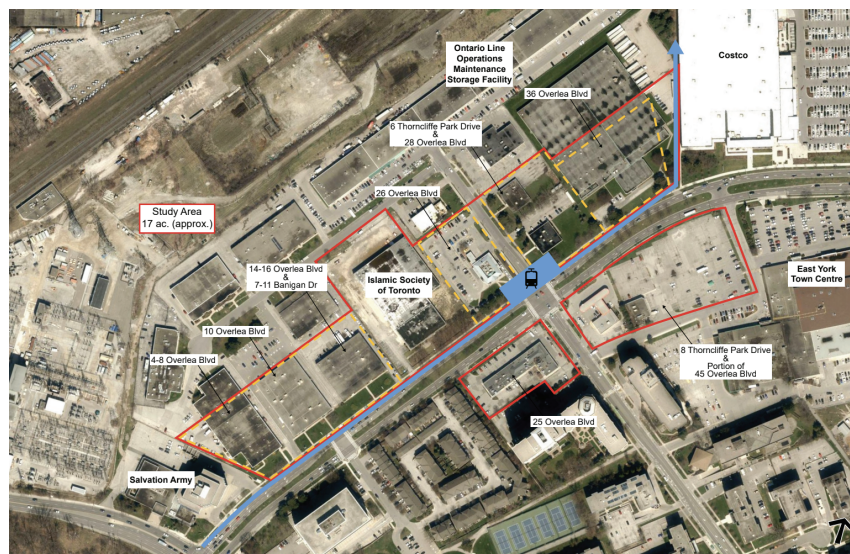


Figure 1) East York Plaza

Approx. site area:

Approximately 17 acres in size. The site is generally flat and of sufficient size to consider as a precinct.

Key Information

The wider neighbourhood is home to a large and diverse immigrant community of newcomer, younger and lower-income families living in mostly high-rise and townhouse developments, with large South Asian representation.

Priority areas & main expectations:

Students should develop a holistic mini

precinct plan that promotes livability, equity and resilience, with a special focus on the following priorities:

- 1) Introduce public art and strategies to activate public realm at prominent locations.
- 2) Connect the new Thorncliffe Park transit station to the existing neighbourhood by creating a walkable public realm.
- 3) Integrate green infrastructure and low impact development.
- 4) Address land use incompatibility to create an attractive environment that supports creation of new housing, businesses and jobs.

Presentation of the site and development expectations

Thornccliffe Park is a neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. As one of Toronto's first master-planned neighbourhoods, with the first high-rise towers built in late 1950s and early 1960s, Thornccliffe Park is now considered an "arrival neighbourhood," as it welcomes many new immigrants.

These new Torontonians in Thornccliffe Park have access to three schools, a library, a community centre and a variety of retail establishments. Housing tenure is predominantly comprised of renter households (89%) and the main mode of transportation is via public transit on local buses (45%). The neighbourhood comprises industrial employment, residential, retail, open space and institutional land uses which are mostly segregated from one another. From 1965 to 2012, Thornccliffe Park was the home of Coca-Cola's Canadian head office which has been redeveloped into a Costco.



Figure 2) East York Plaza. Source: Infrastructure Ontario

Thornccliffe Park is identified as one of [31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas](#) (NIA) in the city. The [Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy](#) (TSNS) is Toronto's action plan for increasing equitable opportunities for designated neighbourhoods by building partnerships in Toronto's neighbourhoods so they can succeed and thrive. The strategy strengthens the social, economic and physical conditions and delivers local impact for city-wide change.

The site will be significantly transformed from its current employment use and low density built form, to a higher density transit-oriented form of development, with a future elevated guideway and transit station proposed within the site boundaries. Future TOC developments will also be constructed to the northwest of Overlea Boulevard, and soft sites exist to the southeast of Overlea Boulevard, with the East York Town Centre representing a large soft site at the centre of the community with potential for intensification. A **holistic planning approach** is necessary to address the land use, built form, servicing capacity, streets and blocks, parks and open spaces, heritage, and environmental considerations.



Figure 3) Retail Plaza on Overlea Blvd. Source: Infrastructure Ontario

Site opportunities include **new housing, direct higher-order transit links**, the potential for significant **public realm** along and underneath the elevated guideway. Constraints include the transit infrastructure (i.e. the elevated guideway, station, and the adjacent OMSF rail storage yard), the existence and potential future expansion of the major hydro substation located to the west of the site, potential site remediation, and constrained curvilinear road network.



Figure 4) Townhouses southwest of TOC site area. Source: Infrastructure Ontario

Students should aim to develop a mini precinct plan for the identified properties while considering the entire Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood. The plan will connect the new Thorncliffe Park transit station to the existing neighbourhood by creating a walkable public realm that supports creation of new housing, businesses and jobs and capitalises on the billions of dollars in public transit investment.

Furthermore, the plan will align investment in infrastructure, public open spaces and community services to support current demands and future growth. A sustainability and green infrastructure lens should be applied to the project to support current demands, future growth and increase economic, environmental, health and social benefits.

* Please note, this site is actively planned to be redeveloped. The project can focus on specific area(s) within the identified site boundaries for more creative expression and greater alignment with student project ideas.

City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

Toronto, like many other cities, expects hotter, drier summers, more heat waves; warmer and milder winters; and fewer, but much more intense, summer rainfall events. These changes will impact the design of City buildings, infrastructure and the public realm to be resilient to changing weather.

The City of Toronto is committed to addressing the climate crisis, joining a global call for action to limit global temperature rise in line with international goals. In 2017, Toronto City Council unanimously approved TransformTO, which outlines a path towards net zero GHG emissions, and in 2019 declared a climate emergency. In 2022, the City adopted a net zero target by 2040 - one of the most ambitious in North America.

To reach these targets, the City will facilitate transformation in key areas by implementing performance targets for existing buildings across Toronto and increasing access to low carbon transportation options, including walking, biking, public transit and electric vehicles. The Toronto Green Standard is Toronto's sustainable design and performance requirements for new private and city-owned developments.

Toronto's Official Plan sets out a vision inclusive of climate priorities, including:

- A healthy natural environment including clean air, soil, energy and water
- Infrastructure and socio-economic systems that are resilient to disruptions and climate change;
- A connected system of natural features and ecological functions that support biodiversity and contribute to civic life;
- Green spaces of all sizes and public squares that bring people together;
- A wealth of recreational opportunities that promote health and wellness.

These elements should be considered when outlining a mini precinct plan at the Thorncliffe Park MTSA site.

Specific planning rules and regulations

Provincial Plans, Policy & Projects:

- [Provincial Policy Statement \(2020\)](#)
- [Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe \(2020\)](#)
- [Thorncliffe Park Transit Oriented Community \(TOC\)](#)

Municipal Plans, Policy & Projects:

- [Toronto Official Plan](#)
 - Chapters 2, 3 & 4
 - Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policies
 - [Don Mills Crossing Secondary Plan](#)
 - [Thorncliffe Park Major Transit Station Area](#) (MTSA) (Awaiting Minister Approval)
- [Renewing Overlea Boulevard](#)
- [Toronto Green Standards](#)
- [HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan](#)
- [Development in Proximity to Rail](#)
- [Design Guidelines](#)

- [Facilities Master Plan](#) and [Implementation Strategy](#) for the Facilities Master Plan
- [Parkland Strategy](#)

Zoning By-law 569-2013 [Interactive Map](#)

Neighbourhood Improvement Areas

- [Thornccliffe Park](#)

Implementation Considerations

- Official Plan amendments
 - Employment Conversions
- Zoning By-law Amendments

Constraints/Considerations

- Location near rail/Ontario Line Maintenance and Servicing Facility •
- Location near high-rise lower income newcomer community
- Existing Employment, Commercial and Community Uses Loss

Language requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English.

City-specific awards

The winning submission will be recognized by the Chief Planner at the City of Toronto's Planning Division Annual General Meeting.