



TOMMY THOMPSON PARK - Fact Sheet

LOCATION

[Tommy Thompson Park](#) is located on the waterfront at the foot of Leslie Street, south of Lake Shore Boulevard East, on a man-made peninsula known as the Leslie Street Spit.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Tommy Thompson Park is an integral component of Lake Ontario Park on Toronto's waterfront. This unique urban wilderness located minutes from downtown represents some of the largest existing natural habitat on the Toronto waterfront. At more than 500 hectares in size it provides one of the best nature watching areas in the GTA.

Wildflower meadows, cottonwood forests, coastal marshes, cobble beaches and sand dunes are just some of the habitats at Tommy Thompson Park. Wildlife, especially birds and butterflies, flourish at the park. Other recreational opportunities include hiking, cycling, rollerblading and fishing.

Since its construction by the Toronto Port Authority began in 1959, millions of cubic meters of concrete, earth fill, dredged sand and construction waste have been added. The site now extends about five kilometers into Lake Ontario.

From this humble beginning, Tommy Thompson Park has developed into a complex mosaic of habitats which support a diverse community of plants and wildlife. The park has been designated as a globally significant [Important Bird Area](#) by [Bird Life International](#), a global partnership of conservation organizations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity.

PARK IMPROVEMENT FEATURES

Waterfront Toronto and [Toronto and Region Conservation](#) (TRCA) have completed a number of improvements including significant natural area enhancements and the construction of three small buildings at Tommy Thompson Park as part of the revitalization of Toronto's waterfront.

The natural restoration and habitat improvements include 7.0 kilometres of new primary and secondary trails and 3.3 kilometres of new nature viewing trails. Aquatic habitat improvements were also a major focus of the project with over 1.2 kilometers of shoreline restoration and 18.9 hectares of wetland habitat enhancements completed. Terrestrial habitat enhancements focused on increasing the amount and diversity of natural cover at the park through the installation of native trees and shrubs, as well as planting and seeding native grasses and wildflowers. Essential habitat features have been installed both in the water and on land; these include fish spawning shoals, turtle nesting and basking areas, bird nesting boxes and platforms, snake hibernacula and many other elements that provide critical habitat for wildlife. These habitat improvements benefit a wide range of species that use the park, including invertebrates, birds, fish, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians and further enhance the park as a biological centre on the Toronto waterfront.

The three small buildings constructed as part of the project are designed to act as elemental shelters without disturbing the park's character as an urban wilderness. Included is a new Staff Booth, an Environmental Shelter and an Ecological Research Station. The buildings emphasize an unobtrusive design and comply with the city's bird-friendly development guidelines.

The buildings blend beautifully into their surroundings and are designed to improve user and staff experience, while also reinforcing the important research underway onsite. The new trails and structures defer to the natural habitat, offering visitors opportunities to rest, interpret, interact with TRCA staff or take refuge from the elements.

The new Staff Booth features display space for park information and functions as an interpretation center allowing staff to interact with visitors and provide park information. The Environmental Shelter is an outdoor amphitheatre that functions as an outdoor classroom and observation area. Sheltered views from the covered outdoor classroom allow for wetland habitat interpretation, and a generous bench is provided that affords an entire class a comfortable look out to the marsh. The newly constructed Ecological Research Station is a much-needed upgrade to a facility that provides valuable information regarding the park's 300-plus bird species. It will allow research activities to expand while also allowing for better interpretive and educational program opportunities.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

To protect the integrity of this magnificent urban gem, the interaction between visitors and natural habitats was carefully considered when planning, designing and constructing the park improvements. The interventions were thoughtfully designed to minimize impact on their surroundings while supporting the enjoyment, management and interpretation of the park.

Key to the design process was the exceptional ability of nature to reclaim the site and transform man made materials and construction waste into a unique urban wilderness. It is this transformative power of nature that inspired the approach to this project.

The structures were designed to seamlessly integrate with the site, and all of the interventions are minimalistic in terms of both materials and systems, designed to withstand the harsh elements with minimal maintenance. At the end of their life, the structures will be stripped back to their elemental materials - concrete and steel - and be left in situ to be taken over by nature in the same way that nature has appropriated the rubble fill that supports the park.

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc.

PARK OPERATIONS

Tommy Thompson Park is managed by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation Department

BUDGET

Funded by the Government of Canada. Total Project Budget of \$7.8 million undertaken as part of the TTP Master Plan Implementation Project