

Planning in Toronto Workshop (ENVS 6331)

Fall 2024

Course Instructors

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Time and Location

Monday, 6:00 – 8:50 pm

The location of the class will vary, and will include:

- HNES 142
- Urban Strategies Office: 197 Spadina Avenue, Suite 600, Toronto
- Downsview (site tour)

Official Course Description

Using Downsview and the new Downsview Secondary Plan as a precedent and a vehicle to guide conversation, this workshop will explore historic and contemporary debates shaping modern planning, provide insights on Toronto's planning processes, and investigate the tools planners have to shape development towards progressive city-building objectives. Choosing a specific topic area, students will conduct a peer review of policies and plans, to develop recommended revisions or alternative approaches. A key focus will be on critically engaging with the context, pressures and challenges associated with building a contemporary City.

Outline

The course is a seminar-style course led by the instructors, with additional guest speakers. The class will meet weekly. A walking tour is planned, and some classes will take place at the Urban Strategies office in Downtown Toronto, which is accessible by TTC. Students are required to attend class sessions off-site. EClass will be used for course management.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course; however, priority will be given to students in the second year of the MES Planning Program.

Anticipated Course Readings

Course readings will include publicly accessible planning documents, policy reports, City of Toronto Staff Reports, and zoning by-laws. Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course, and will be made available at no cost.

Course Evaluation

- Participation: 20%

- Evaluation will be based on class attendance and active participation in discussions and other class activities
- Assignments (Group Project): 80% (see 'Assignments' section below)
 - Assignment 1: 10%
 - Assignment 2: 15%
 - Final Presentation: 20%
 - Final Report: 35%

Expanded Course Description

How do you plan for new communities on 520 acres of land used as an airfield for the last century?

The Downsview airport has been central to fostering Toronto's aviation industry and played a key role in Canada's 20th century war efforts. Most recently, the lands have been home to Bombardier's aerospace manufacturing operations. This contemporary role has had a significant impact on the surrounding city and communities: offering secure employment and economic opportunities, but also shaping the neighbourhood fabric.

But recent changes to the airport are sparking transformation to the surrounding context: In 1999 the Canada Forces base closed, opening the door for mixed-use redevelopment and the opening of the 291-acre Downsview Park in 2012; in 2017, TTC expanded its Line 1 subway service through the lands, creating a pathway for intensification; and in 2024, Bombardier announced its departure and the decommissioning of the airport. The recently updated Downsview Secondary Plan represents a new vision for the future of these lands and is the collaborative result of a City and key landowner-led process.

Using Downsview and the new Secondary Plan as a precedent and a vehicle to guide conversation, this workshop will explore historic and contemporary debates shaping modern planning, provide insights on Toronto's planning processes, and investigate the tools planners have to shape development towards progressive city-building objectives. Choosing a specific topic area, students will conduct a peer review of policies and plans, to develop recommended revisions or alternative approaches. A key focus will be on critically engaging with the context, pressures and challenges associated with building a contemporary City.

Learning Outcomes / Objectives

- Develop an understanding of current processes and actors involved in drafting policies and plans for new communities in the City of Toronto
- Develop an understanding of policy implementation, including development approvals processes
- Deepen the understanding of various roles and skills related to being a planning practitioner
- Explore best practices for policies, legislation, and projects that further city building objectives based on students' areas of interest
- Gain insights into how policies shape planning outcomes and the built environment

Requirements:

Participation

- Evaluation is based on active and substantive participation in class discussions, fieldwork, and all class activities.
- If ever there is a reason for absence, please inform the Course Instructors in writing, preferably in advance.

Course Texts (required)

- No textbooks to be required.
- Readings will be issued prior to each class, as needed.

Course Materials

- TTC fare will be required to attend sessions off-campus.

Assignments:

Working in groups of 3-4, throughout the duration of the course, students will research and develop and policy recommendation for a topic area or a District at Downsview, focusing on a specific theme chosen. Themes may include: affordable housing, age-friendly community building, active transportation / accessibility, environmental resilience, inclusive economic development, working towards reconciliation, smart cities and digital infrastructure, low-carbon energy, community and social infrastructure, food security, 15-minute city, circular economy, artificial intelligence (AI), built form design for [insert priority/topic here], open space design for [insert priority/topic here].

Evaluation of each assignment will be assessed by the instructor based on evidence of thorough engagement with the themes of the course, research excellence, high quality of presentation, and critical thinking.

Assignment 1: History of the Theme and Policy Context

Groups will conduct a literature and policy review of the theme as it relates to planning in Ontario and other precedent planning contexts. The purpose of this assignment is to provide students an opportunity for (relatively) independent critical engagement with a topic of interest. Groups will summarize their findings in their choice of either a presentation or a simple report.

Assignment 2: Precedent and Best Practice Review

Groups will identify best practices related to the chosen theme. These precedents can be geographic specific precedent projects that demonstrate excellence as it relates to a specific theme, or a can be policy tools used to advance matters related to the theme. Groups will summarize their findings in the form of a presentation or a simple report – whichever was not chosen for Assignment 1.

Assignment 3: Policy and/or Implementation Strategy

Building on the work completed in Assignment 1 and 2, groups will research and develop and policy recommendation for a topic area or a District at Downsview. Each group will be responsible for preparing and presentation and accompanying report that establishes the following: history of the theme explored; policy context; precedents; and policy recommendation for a district or general topic at Downsview.

The goal will be to prepare an accessible and visually appealing presentation and report. The report will be no longer than 20 pages, including graphics and images.

Weekly Schedule:

Note that the location of classes is preliminary and may be subject to change. Class location will be confirmed in the class prior.

Class	Date	Topic	Location	Assignments
Week 1	Sept. 9	Introduction to course and Downsview (1/2)	HNES 142	Group assignment introduced

Week 2	Sept. 16	Introduction to Downsview (2/2) – the history, policy framework, and current priorities	HNES 142	Group assignment signup
Week 3	Sept. 23	Planning at different scales: the planner’s toolkit	HNES 142	
Week 4	Sept. 30	Getting to know the Site and Context: Site tour	Downsview Tour	
Week 5	Oct. 7	Establishing a vision: setting and aligning priorities (public/policy, community, landowner)	Urban Strategies Office	Assignment 1 due October 7
Oct. 14 - Reading Week (no class)				
Week 6	Oct. 21	Guiding and Regulating Land Use & Built form	HNES 142	
Week 7	Oct. 28	Achieving Housing options and affordability	HNES 142	
Week 8	Nov. 4	Striving for sustainability and resilience	HNES 142	Assignment 2 due November 4
Week 9	Nov. 11	Planning for Complete Communities: Physical and community infrastructure	HNES 142	
Week 10	Nov. 18	It’s not (P)lanning: Our limitations as capital “P” planners/ other	HNES 142	
Week 11	Nov. 25	Group Work Session / Check-in with Instructors	HNES 142	Instructors will be available to offer feedback on draft presentation/report content
Week 12	Dec. 2	Group Presentations (Assignment 3)	Urban Strategies Office	
Dec. 9 - Group Reports (Assignment 4) Due				

CIP/OPPI Planning Accreditation

For students seeking planning accreditation, this course assists students in achieving their Canadian Institute of Planners and Ontario Professional Planners Institute accredited planning program certification, by directly supporting attainment of their functional and enabling competencies, as follows.

Functional competencies are integrated into coursework, including:

- **Human Settlement and Community, Regional and Provincial Settings:** Understand evolution of human settlements and their environmental, political- economic and social contexts, and current and future planning issues and challenges.
- **Planning Theories, Principles and Practices:** Understand theories and principles guiding different scales of community planning, including approaches and methods of policy analysis and public consultation, community-based development, and various interests of the ‘public interest’ vs. professional expertise.

- **Environmental and Sustainable Development:** Understand environmental management, ecological processes and sustainability development (relationships between ecological, social, economic factors) to assess development actions.
- **Diversity and Inclusiveness:** Understand and able to develop plans for diversity, inclusiveness, and difference.
- **Functional Integration of Knowledge:** Understand planning relations and decision-making processes of transportation, housing, infrastructure, economics, environment, resources and urban design; and understand how technology can support planning and policy development.
- **Developing Visions and Outcomes:** Understand and able to develop planning visions and outcomes to articulate and defend plans and policies.
- **Strategic Information Gathering and Analysis:** Able to gather information to enable critical analysis to support development of a proposal or plan (with applicable technology to support analysis).
- **Decision Making and Risk Management:** Understand various modes of decision making with consideration for technical, financial, social, political and environmental considerations for risk management.
- **Emerging Trends and Issues:** Understand emerging planning trends and issues; critically assess applicability to plans, projects and activities; support information exchange within the profession of trends and best practices.

Enabling competencies are integrated into coursework, specifically:

- **Issues Identification:** Able to identify, analyze and facilitate issues related to project goals, resources and stakeholders interests.
- **Problem Solving and Decision Making:** Understand effective problem-solving and complex decision making practices, underlying values and potential ethical issues.
- **Research and Analysis:** Understand methods and practices to find information and conduct analysis (cause/effect relationships) and evaluate results.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Understand and support innovative and creative practices to facilitate decision-making.
- **Political Awareness:** Understand political motives and actions and follow political issues and trends influencing decision-making.
- **Change Management:** Understand stages and practices to implement change and decisions.
- **Diversity and Inclusiveness:** Understand the value diversity and difference; apply policy and practices to accommodate diversity and inclusiveness.
- **Written and Oral Presentation:** Understand practices/tools to support effective written, oral and visual/ graphic presentations and to communicate complex matters clearly.
- **Information and Knowledge:** Understand, integrate, translate, support various sources of information.
- **Use of Information Technology:** Integrate multi-media material into presentations and communications.
- **Vision:** Understand importance, methods and processes of vision development and promotion, of progress monitoring and recommendations.
- **Responsiveness and Influence:** Anticipate future needs and developments, formulate solutions and recommendations to key stakeholders.
- **Ethical Standards:** Understand ethical responsibilities and dilemmas for the professional planner; adhere to and monitor highest ethical standards for self/others.

Access / Disability

If you have a health-related learning, physical, psychological or sensory impairment and require accommodation in teaching style or evaluation methods, please register with the Office for Persons with Disabilities. Once you are registered, the instructor will be notified and will make arrangements for necessary accommodation.

Students who feel that there are extenuating circumstances that may interfere with the successful completion of the course requirements are encouraged to discuss the matter with the instructor as soon as possible.

Students with physical, learning or other disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in teaching style, access to materials or sites, or evaluation methods should discuss this with instructor early in the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Do not hesitate to ask.

Academic Honesty

All York students are subject to policies regarding academic honesty as set out by the Senate of York University and by the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES). Students are strongly encouraged to read the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, a copy of which can be found on the York University website <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm>

FES is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity. Please be advised that conduct that violates the ethical or legal standards of the University community may result in serious consequences. For more information, please contact the Director, Student and Academic Services and/or the FES Writing Program Coordinator.

Research Ethics

Students may be required to conduct interviews as part of the research process and are covered by course-wide approval Faculty of Environmental Studies Human Participants Research Protocol.

Students are advised that all human participants in the research must have either signed a written consent form or have provided oral consent for their participation in the research. Students also are advised that the consent forms must be retained by the instructor for two years following the completion of the research.

Student Conduct

Students and instructors are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterized by courtesy and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to such a relationship. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the instructor to maintain an appropriate academic atmosphere in the classroom, and the responsibility of the student to cooperate in that endeavour. Further, the instructor is the best person to decide, in the first instance, whether such an atmosphere is present in the class. A statement of the policy and procedures involving disruptive and/or harassing behaviour by students in academic situations is available on the York website at: <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies>.