

## *Transformation and Revitalization of Under-Used or Abandoned Areas*

**Re-imagining the Runway:  
A former airport landing strip is transformed into the central public realm feature  
for a new community of 110,000 people in Toronto, Canada**

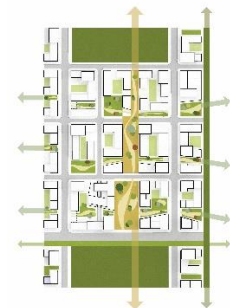
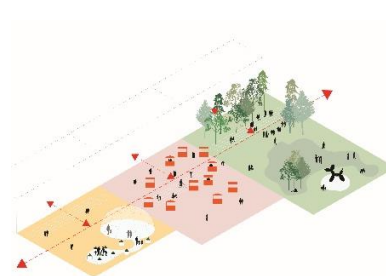
### 1. The Problem: Understanding the Space

The Runway is the defining feature of the complete redevelopment of a former airport in northwest Toronto, Canada. At over 2 kilometres (1.2 miles) long, and located at the highest point in the City, the Runway provides the opportunity to link together a series of new neighbourhoods while recognizing the historic cultural importance of the site.



### 2. Strategy, Methodology or Approach (How to?)

The former airport landing strip will be reimagined as the “Runway”, a continuous, linear, publicly accessible open space. Centrally located within a 210 hectare (520 acre) redevelopment site the Runway will be the foundational element of the new public realm created within a new 110,000 person community. It will be 20 - 60 metres wide, animated with vibrant uses, including retail, community uses and public amenities, creating a series of pedestrian-oriented urban rooms and generous open space. The Runway will be designed for active mobility, with limited automobile access, and is envisioned to become a destination for residents from across Toronto and beyond.



### 3. Results and Impact: The Transformation

The transformation of the Runway is starting already, despite the 30-year projected build-out of the surrounding area. Interim activation is bringing people to the site, allowing for the testing of ideas, events and uses that can take full advantage of the unique scale, shape, and size of the space. The north end of the Runway will be transformed into a temporary music festival space over the summer, hosting large-scale international artists. Opening the strip to cyclists, roller skaters and kite flyers has proven the public's interest in accessing the space which has been fenced off and unavailable for its entire existence. As the permanent redevelopment of the overall site progresses through 15 separate neighbourhood districts, the Runway will begin to take shape in its final form.



### 4. Lesson Learned

THINK BIG! The build-out of the Runway in its final form will take over 30 years and will link to the redevelopment of the surrounding lands. At completion, the Runway area will be a minimum of 6 hectares in total area. It can seem like a monumental task, not only with respect to determining uses, detailed design and phasing, but also in terms of programming, governance and public participation. In the case of the Downsview Runway, a generous timeline has provided the chance to consider all opportunities, try out interim uses, and allow some of the adjacent development to be planned. Once completed this truly unique space will be a draw for residents and visitors.

