FOOD & CULTURAL CENTER

A New Model for Toronto's Shopping Center

|A place for collective memories and un-heard stories of South Asian Immigrants & their future generations in Canada|

by
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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2022

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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

With the increase in global migration, the notion of cultural identity is now no longer attached to a single place or time and is a continuous process of re-making. This thesis investigates the role of art, craft, and food in preserving the cultural identity of South Asian Immigrants and their future generations in Canada. Building on the existing research on dissipating cultural identities of immigrants, this thesis documents the unheard stories of South Asian Immigrants and food recipes that remind them of home to create a passage of embracement. It focuses on the South Asian community settled in Thorncliffe Park, Toronto, known as the 'Arrival City'. The thesis also envisions ways to collectively re-make their socio-cultural identity through the medium of food, craft, and art, and create a place of opportunity. The research begins with collecting an archival collection of authentic recipes, stories, food traditions, and community initiatives as a medium to be seen and heard through storytelling platforms that will contribute to developing the un-heard narrative of this design-based thesis. This design-based thesis will take the steps toward creating a South Asian community recreational space in Thorncliffe Park, a source, and a resource to preserve their food traditions, and community-sensitive building language, and hence, create better revenue generation opportunities.

Acknowledgments

There are several people who have played a significant role in helping me complete my thesis. First, I would like to start by thanking the University of Waterloo for giving me the opportunity to pursue my post-graduation course at this esteemed university. I would also like to thank all the professors for their guidance and patience.

I owe my gratitude to my supervisor Val Rynnimeri for his constant support and guidance throughout this thesis. I would not be here without his dedication and enthusiasm at every stage of this thesis. I sincerely appreciate his support and confidence in pursuing my thesis work.

I thank my committee member, Terri Boake, for helping me stay consistent and focused to complete my goals at every stage of this thesis.

To Tracey Eve Winton, for your guidance in the initial stage of my thesis. You helped me understand my interests and guided me to develop a strong direction for my research.

To all my friends here in Canada and India, especially Anmol, Kriti, Hania, Adit, and Tala, without whom this journey would have been very difficult. This has been a long journey and I will cherish all the moments of laughter and tears.

Last but not the least; I would like to thank my father, Dr. Pankaj Gupta, and my mother, Dr. Neelam Jain Gupta for loving me, supporting me in every possible way, and encouraging me to do my best.

Dedication

To all the Immigrants and their stories of struggle



To forgotten stories

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Figure 1 Different experience, Same food stories

1

2

Introduction

Thesis Statement | Literature Review | Thesis Structure

Thesis Statement

With the increase in global migration, the notion of cultural identity is now no longer attached to a single place or time and is a continuous process of re-making. Similar to the concept of translating recipes, re-constructing identities is now no longer attached to or based on their origin. It adapts itself by incorporating new elements of meaning with a blend of social practices while re-drafting the old, thus, forming a cultural mosaic. Due to the complex cultural blend of diverse ethnicities and evolving social fabric, it becomes an essential reason for people to better understand and empathize with the traditions and food customs of diverse ethno- cultural groups living together.

Hence, "this thesis explores the role of food, and art in preserving the cultural identity of South Asian Immigrants and their future generations in Canada".

Thorncliffe Park, a neighborhood in Toronto, also known as the "arrival city" is an example of the earliest form of such a culturally diverse settlement wherein immigrants from various countries have lived there as a single close-knit community in one of the first high-rise residential apartments in Toronto. These families include nuclear families, joint families as well as different families living together that share a single unit. "People who can't afford a two- or three-bedroom apartment are living in a one- or two-bedroom apartment."[1] The city sustains one of the highest numbers of South Asian populations who are diligently trying to re-construct their lives to achieve a better living standard. Overlea Boulevard, a South Asian shopping complex in Thorncliffe Park, is home to not just small-scale businesses but is also a reflection of the South Asian communities and their identity built over the years.

However, Metrolinx in the year 2019 confirmed the construction of a new Ontario Metro Line to be located at the Overlea boulevard in replacement of the existing shopping complex. It also involves an adjoining area of 175,000 sq. m finalized for its maintenance and parking facility where currently, there are over 100 small-scale businesses, an Islamic center, and an industrial park located. According to the Toronto Employment Survey (2019), 1100 direct jobs and other recreational community areas will be affected due to the decision leaving many unemployed and a few businesses displaced.

[1] *Monsebraaten, L. (March 12th, 2014). Highrise hell for low–income families in Toronto*

Case	Measure	Site 1 - Wicksteed	Site 2 - Overlea	Site 3 - Leaside	Site 8 - Railside	Site 9 - Greenwood
Strategic	Surface Transportation Impacts	Closure of Wicksteed and Beth Nealson				
	Business Impacts[1]	up to 900 direct jobs impacted plus up to 8 fold indirect jobs	up to 1100 direct jobs impacted	up to 1900 direct jobs impacted plus up to 8 fold indirect jobs	1600 direct jobs	-
	Community Impacts		Major impacts		Major impacts to community services	Connection track impacts
	Environmental Impacts				300 m Don Valley crossing	Former landfill site, extensive remediation
Economic	Passenger Benefits	Comparable				
Financial	Cost [2]			▲	▲	▲▲▲[3]
Deliverability & Operations	Constructability		Additional hydro corridor crossings	Risks crossing under CP and hydro corridor	Don Valley, DVP and CP crossings	Risk with connection tunnel and yard retrofit
	Schedule	Comparable				TTC relocation and connection track
		Preferred				

Figure 2 Metrolinx document: Issues existing in Overlea Boulevard, Thorncliffe Park, Toronto

The table above shows the possible sites identified for the construction of Metrolinx along with a parking and storage space. Out of the above identified sites, Overlea Boulevard was finalized for its construction thus, affecting the existing South Asian market and Islamic center along with other small-scale businesses. Considering the positive side of the Metrolinx project, the community's opinions are unified and support the Metrolinx project, allowing better connectivity to different parts of the city, making culture within the reach of more people. However, the final location of the Metrolinx parking and storage will severely affect the cultural significance of this community. There is no doubt that the cultural significance of the community will be in crisis, with an outside force threatening to replace the existing food center (for example: Iqbal Halal Foods) and Islamic center, the only form of a culturally significant structure present.

Apart from the Metrolinx project, East York Town Center, the 1970s era shopping center that is 100m away from the existing food center, is also in crisis with most of its outlets and retail shops going out of business slowly over the recent years. In such a situation, the mall's Food Basics grocery store is acting as the anchor of the East York Town Center that is still running as the lone retail backbone of the mall. Food Basics is one of the most affordable corporate grocery stores in Canada with a diverse range of ethnic ingredients available caters to the needs of the diverse population of Thorncliffe Park. With the change in Thorncliffe Park's demography over the years, the existing shopping center in Thorncliffe Park can only witness a mixture of the few remaining retail shops left open and the grocery store. The retail sector of the community has failed to maintain its identity now relies mainly on the grocery store, Food Basics, which actually has adapted itself based on its surrounding community.



Figure 3 CBC News: Community members gather a protest against a Metrolinx train yard planned for Thorncliffe Park, 2021

This work is a design-based thesis, the goal of which is to transform Thorncliffe Park's center into a Canadian public form of the traditional communities of new immigrants. Hence, these existing and future, issues shape a re-consideration of the developing needs of the neighborhood along with a new version of a district shopping center to help preserve the now absent traditions and offer opportunities to small-scale businesses. The thesis envisions ways to collectively re-make the socio-cultural identity of residents of Thorncliffe Park through the medium of food, craft, and art, and provide a similar social structure that feels like home, a place of opportunity, for the first- and second-generation immigrants from South Asian countries.

This thesis also focuses on the role of architecture and marketplace in enhancing the identity of the South Asian communities and their future generations. The goal is to retain the cultural significance of the South Asian community in the area by transforming the meaning and value of the Overlea Boulevard into a significant and symbolic place in Thorncliffe Park. Food and Culture together form the intangible heritage of the South Asian communities that must be preserved and shared with people belonging to other communities. Hence, this thesis will take the steps towards creating a South Asian community socio-recreational space in Thorncliffe Park, a source, and a resource to preserve the food traditions, and community-sensitive building language thus, create better revenue generation opportunities.



Figure 4 Path to South Asian Connection

Literature Review

South Asian Diaspora and Cultural Heritage

Diaspora and memories of cultural heritage are two parts of a dovetail joint, both interdependent and interrelated to each other. There exists an abundance of literature regarding the global diasporas, existing issues and initiatives are taken, and the preservation of cultural heritage by the diaspora everywhere in the world. This discussion ranges from social, economic, and political factors affecting the new identity of the immigrant. At the same time, it is also dependent on the initiatives taken at the micro and macro level by the community itself and the support from the government. A few of the paper journals as primary sources reflect on the idea of a connection between south Asian diaspora and their retention of cultural heritage.

Diaspora and cultural heritage: the case of Indians in Canada by Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Dave Sangha, School of Social Sciences University of Hyderabad; Migration, cultural bereavement &cultural identity by Dinesh Bhugra, Matthew A.B.

Food, craft, and Identity

To explore the relationship of above mentioned along with the elements that bind them together, this thesis explores the inter-dependency of food, craft, and identity to form the cultural heritage of the South Asian Immigrants. The academic journals and architectural thesis reports are primary and secondary sources of information and form the foundation of this design-based thesis highlighting these cultural heritage elements as the intangible heritage unique to every culture.

Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities by Fabio Parasecoli, New York University; Traditional Food Knowledge: Renewing Culture and Restoring Health by Jessica Christine Kwik, thesis presented to University of Waterloo; The Design of Food by Jennifer L. Janzen, thesis presented of University of Waterloo; Cultural Spaces Research on Architecture and Identity by Ulrike Herbig.

Thesis Structure

Creation-Destruction-Recreation are three terms that reflect the unique journey of Immigrants who re-craft their identity many times. Colonization by European nations significantly transmuted the South Asian regions; however, it is neither the beginning nor the end of their stories. Rather than being directed by the binaries, it is important to focus on creating a polyculture space to commemorate the cultural “differences” or “sameness”. We commonly identify people or communities by their name and in some cases physical features but often people can also relate with each other through dominant forms of cultural production (food, craft, tourism, etc.)

The thesis structure is divided into three parts, history and arrival of immigrants, present examples/precedents and focus community and site for future development for this design-based thesis. The research begins with focusing on the history of arrival of South Asian Immigrants in Canada alongside the stories and memories of food and culture that keeps the community connected to their roots.

In the second part of this design-based thesis, the focus is on researching precedents based on similar concepts that form the foundation of the idea of a food and cultural center. This part covers background, stories, issues, and initiatives taken by Conflict Kitchen, and Caravan, Toronto 1969.

The third part of the thesis starts by identifying the thesis site along with the existing issues leading to design solutions, initiatives taken by the women’s committee of Thorncliffe Park, stories and voice of the community, lack of socio-cultural spaces and significance of food and culture exists in the site contributing to maintaining the traditions of the community.

The proposed situation is represented through maps, drawings, such as diagrams, tables, collages, and perspectives. The design criteria will be based on the idea of a combination of South Asian shopping complex on the verge of its de-construction and traditional forms of cultural elements that help people experience the tangible as well as intangible elements of culture and heritage. The key idea is to adapt a people centered approach as a design strategy

for the indoor and open outdoor spaces. “Public spaces designed holds particular importance for many different types of minorities, for whom a certain amount of visibility might be crucial to survival”[2]

Through this design-based thesis, the goal is to propose a built structure within a similar building envelope of the existing East York Town Centre in Thorncliffe Park. This design of the new version of the district shopping center will include a few of the important anchor retain shops and grocery stores to preserve the identity and experience of the existing shopping center. An existing shopping center, that similar to the other shopping centers like in Don Mills has the scope to be re-developed into a more impactful and resourceful building for the users. The objective is to redevelop the available land to create a place of opportunity for the communities that live, shop and can potentially work in Thorncliffe Park, thus, bringing back new life to the shopping centers that are no longer used to their full potential. Lastly, the impact and significance of this thesis will be discussed in the conclusion.

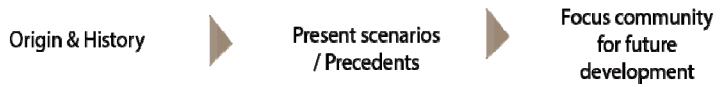
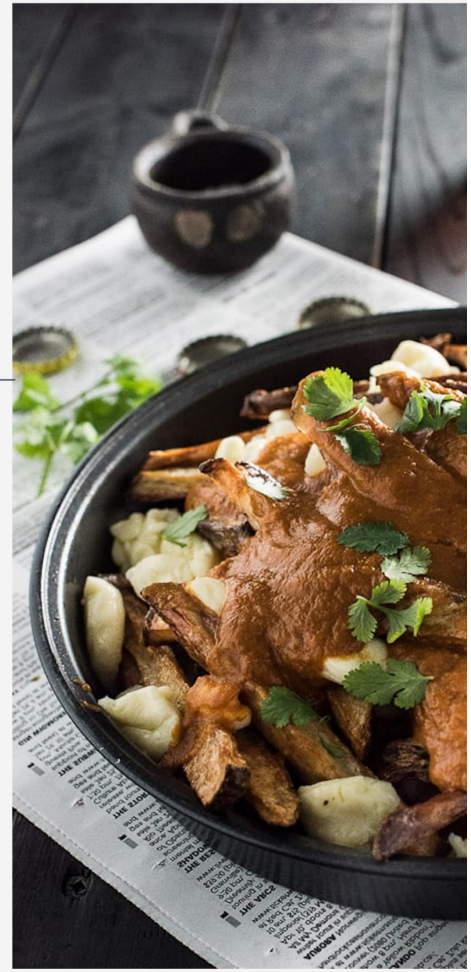


Figure 5 Thesis structure diagram

[2] *Wall E, Waterman T. (2010), Basics Landscape Architecture 01: Urban Design*

Poutine + Butter Chicken

(CANADA) (INDIA)



Ingredients

- 4 cups frozen french fries
- Tomato and butter gravy
- 1 cup Mozarella, shredded
- Shredded spicy roasted chicken
- Finely chopped green onions or coriander to garnish

CHAPTER 1

Edible Cultures

| Building edible cultures, through the accumulation of experiences |

1.Edible Cultures

"It was a take-out order. Since it was a Halal restaurant, we ordered Butter chicken. When we got home and tried it, it did not taste good. Maybe we expected a familiar taste since we thought the ingredients used were almost the same. So, we added spices and sauces that we got from our home country. It's tough to find the authentic ingredients here. The curry did not taste quite the same, but yes, once we added a few things, it was more acceptable for our taste palates."

"Why do you think it tasted different?"

"The recipe was probably different and spices here are not intense or homemade".

The thrill of living in a new country, making friends, and finding solace is a process that thousands of immigrants go through. Humans tend to have emotional attachments with memories of a place and try to re-live them each time in a different way. It is noticeable in the case of food-related memories. People who feel homesick or find themselves in a foreign environment, tend to find a secure space or a place of familiarity. Eating together is once such everyday activity that we rely on to share our experiences, stories of struggle, or sometimes feel at "home".

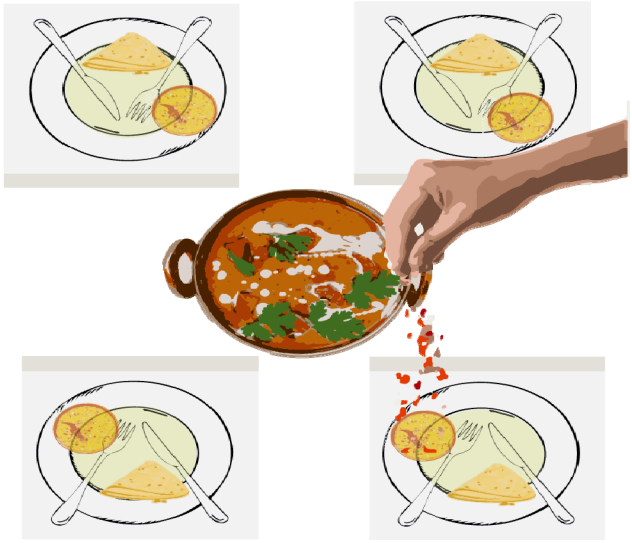


Figure 6 Forming edible cultures

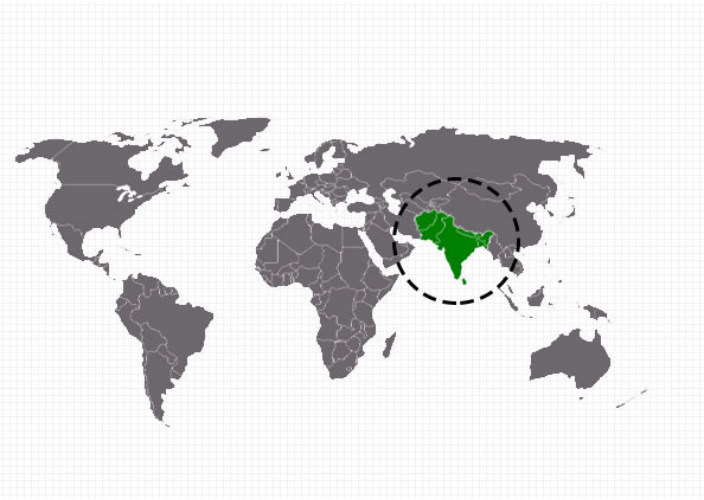


Figure 7 South Asian region

Every year thousands of Immigrants from different parts of the world travel to Canada in search of education, work, and a better quality of life. According to the census 2016, urban cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary have equipped the highest population of South Asians. South Asians, who are originally from countries like India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Myanmar. South Asian immigrants are those, originally from south Asians nations but have now migrated to other countries of the world for education and work etc. which leads to the formation and development of these cities based on the changing needs of the community thus, also focusing on the cultural needs of the immigrant communities, those particularly bound in the community architecture.

Canada in 1971, adopted the multiculturalism policy that emphasizes the social importance of immigration and highlights the diverse composition of unique identities that forms the Canadian cultural mosaic. "In the past three decades, Toronto has significantly transformed socially and culturally due to changes in migration law. Unlike most of their predecessors, the children of current immigrants are becoming more Canadian amid the continuous process of immigration". [3]

[3] *Kasinitz et al ,2008*

As a result, the meaning of culture and how one identifies themselves may differ between first- and second-generation Immigrants. On one hand, "Migration has contributed to the richness in diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and races in developed countries but on the other hand, individuals who migrate experience multiple stresses that can impact their mental wellbeing, including the loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and concept of self" [4] In such a case, it becomes essential to understand, what keeps the Immigrant communities closely attached to their roots, culture, traditional food habits and how can they preserve their cultural identities through the help of edible culture.

This research references and builds upon the missing or un-heard stories of immigrants that rely on cultural elements, traditions, and food for preserving their identity as a medium to keep themselves and their future generations stay closer to their roots. The thesis also addresses how political changes can lead to the loss of cultural significance for a community and the need for a place to have a sense of belonging to retain what needs to be preserved.

Thorncliffe Park, a neighborhood of Toronto, also known as the 'arrival city' was one of Toronto's first multi-residential, high-rise rental apartment communities developed as a response to the post-war housing boom and influx of migrants moving to the city. The recent decision of Metrolinx, in 2019, has created insecurities amongst the communities of Thorncliffe Park and has attracted mixed opinions from within and outside the city. The character of a city may not be defined by a building but by its people and the vibrancy of the neighborhood. Overlea Boulevard, which consists of over 100 small-scale businesses, an Islamic center, and an industrial park, is the immediate life of the city that highlights the South Asian culture and is the perfect space for the social interaction of its community.

As the Urban designer and author Aseem Inam said, "Democracy is crucial in the process of development because every voice of experience must be heard to discover best practices that illuminate new theories"5. Since Overlea boulevard is home to not just small-scale businesses but is also a reflection of the South Asian communities and their identities, displacing them would severely impact their cultural significance as first or second-generation immigrants in the city over these years.

[4] *Bhugra, D., & Becker, M. A. (2005). Migration, cultural bereavement, and cultural identity. World psychiatry: official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), 4(1).*

[5] *Inam, A. (2019). Designing Urban Transformation*

1.1 Constructing Ethnicities: South Asian diaspora

"In a world that promotes multiculturalism and markets ethnicity, conceptualizing food as a marker of heritage opens up an avenue for societies and individuals to gain cultural awareness, freely assert their identities, claim sovereignty, and aspire to grow visibility and economic capitalization". Brulotte R.L and Giovine M.A

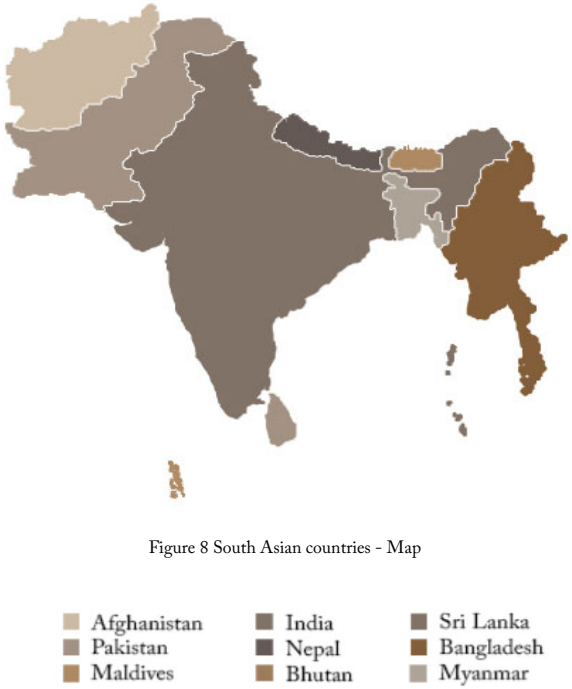


Figure 8 South Asian countries - Map

1.2 History of Arrival – South Asian Immigration

South Asians are broad ethno cultural categories of communities, cultures, and heritage. Immigrants from the South Asian region once immigrate to Canada can be further subdivided by nationalities, such as Indian Canadians, Pakistani Canadians, and Sri Lankan Canadians as first or second-generation immigrants. "As of 2016, 1,963,330 Canadians had South Asian geographical origins, constituting 5.6% of the Canadian population and 32% of Canada's Asian Canadian population making them the largest visible minority group in Canada". [6]

South Asian Immigration to Canada, Fiscal years 1904-2016	
Fiscal year	Number
1904-1905	45
1905-1906	387
1906-1907	2,124
1907-1908	2,623
1908-2016	1,924,635

Table 1 Increase in South Asian Immigration, Source: Hindoo Immigration to Canada: Continuous journey, A social history of South Asians in Canada, Census profile 2016

According to the 2016 census, some of the larger communities of South Asian origin are found in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta focused on metropolitan cities like Toronto (995,125), Vancouver (291,005), and Calgary (122,515). The first South Asian migrants, the majority of them Sikhs, had traveled to come to Canada in 1902. The group belonged to the Hong Kong military regiment who were in route to England for the celebrations of the coronation of King Edward VII. Since then, the country has undergone various policies and

[6] *Buchignani, N. (2020), The Canadian Encyclopedia – "South Asian Canadians"*

political acts that initially restricted the migration of people from South Asian countries but had later on revised the policies for an easy and official approach to immigration.

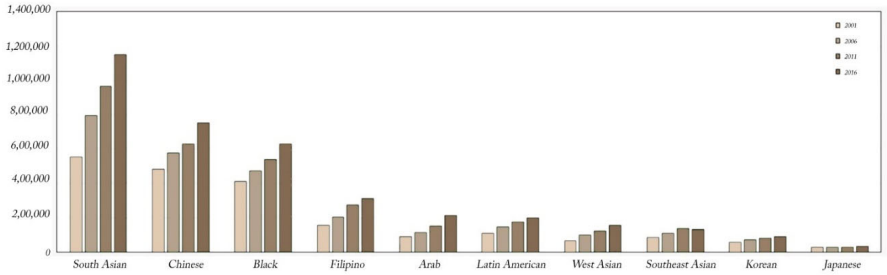


Figure 9 Visible minorities in Ontario, 2001 to 2016, Source: Statistics Canada, Census of population, 2001, 2006 and 2016; National Household Survey, 2011

1.3 Socio-Cultural Conflict and Preservation

Colonization by European nations significantly transmuted the South Asian regions; however, it is neither the beginning nor the end of their stories. Rather than being directed by the binaries, it is important to focus on creating a polyculture space to commemorate the cultural "differences" or "sameness". Immigrants coming from different nations may have already formed traditions and identities but are often influenced by the change in or loss of social structures and traditions. With that being said, based on the existing research, studies show that the way first-generation immigrants hold on to their cultural identity and emotional connection to their traditions, food knowledge, and festivals are different from what the second-generation immigrants believe in and feel connected to.

"Some immigrants may decide to assimilate completely into the new culture, or they may choose to maintain elements of certain traditional values and practices that symbolize continuity with their culture of origin".[7] Nevertheless, the majority of South Asian immigrants have stressed maintaining the traditions and cultural elements of their family's origin. "These include family roles, food traditions, religion, and to a varying degree,

7 Sohi, S. (1992). The experience of cultural conflict in second-generation Indo Canadian Women

language”. [8] However, when a second-generation immigrant is exposed to two different cultures, that might or might not overlap. How and why do the first-generation immigrants preserve their country’s cultural elements and traditions to pass them on to their successor generations? These issues highlight some of the thoughts that confront many first and second generations Canadians.

D De Anda in her book states that “it is harder for immigrants to integrate the values of a new culture with their own if the amount of overlap between the two cultures is minimal”.[9] Also, on the other hand, “being unable to identify completely with either cultural group may create difficulties in identity formation for individuals who are caught between contrasting cultures”. [10] Thus, being home away from home can be treated as not just a quote but as a statement of comfort, as a method to dive deep into one’s culture. Often, we notice that people belonging to different countries of the South Asian region face differences in terms of political and economic situations but find themselves bonding over the “sameness” in their culture and food in a third country. This bond formed within people separated by borders but united by culture becomes a natural process of reviving from homesickness where *food and craft* play an important role in preserving or reviving what is left behind.

“The rise of the “*creative food economy*” of entrepreneurs selling ethnic and other niche cuisines clearly indicates an opportunity for the diversity of ‘minority’ cultures to be included in the formal economy of urban centers such as the Greater Toronto Area”. [11] Such small or big food businesses help people serve distinctive ethnic cuisines that may develop the traditional food knowledge amongst different communities and their future generations.

Supermarkets such as Walmart, Loblaws, Metro, Freshco, food Basics, etc. provide a selective range of authentic ingredients for diverse cuisines along with restaurants serving authentic food. The North American diets have evolved with time and now include a wide range of foods from all over the world. Supermarkets and the culinary industry are now focusing on the multi-cultural and inclusive approach to food ingredients and recipes that provides a way for people to feel at home away from home.

8"South and Southeast Asians of Canada." (2022). Encyclopedia of World Cultures.

9 Diane de, A. (1984). Biocultural Socialization: Factors affecting the minority experience

10 Spencer, M.B, & Markstrom- Adams, C. (1990). Identity process among racial and ethnic minority children in America

[11] Donald, B and Palmer, B. (2006). The urban creative-food economy: producing food forthe urban elite or social inclusion opportunity?



Figure 10 "Ethnic aisle" in supermarkets, source: Mura Dominko



Figure 11 Walmart store, source: Lauren O' Neil



Figure 12 Food Basics, source: Francis Racine

1.4 Constructing Identities: through Memories and Food

Delhi, India:

"Delhi smells like 5 AM on the terrace of your friend's house. It smells like one of those nights that feel nostalgic even while you're living through it. A sweet mid-October scent with teasing chilly winter, my favorite month of the year. It's the aroma of the freshly sieved samosas from the hot sizzling oil, the unforgettable taste of the street food like art served on a plate, and the smell of post-naphthalene, sun-soaked cardigans on everyone's shoulders that have just been brought down from the terrace. Preparing for winter, welcoming Diwali, the scent of this city is in making your way out from the narrow lanes of Old Delhi, with the web of wires like roots of trees floating over your head, a guitarist playing old Bollywood songs on the street, and the first of: "the weather feels nice today, do you want to go outside for some street snacks and tea"



Figure 13 The scent of Delhi

Dhaka, Bangladesh:

"Dhaka smells like my grandparent's home. The ridden damp walls have absorbed the love and laughter of the families who lived here through decades, the lazy afternoon naps in the courtyard while the whiff of hilsha fish curry escaped the kitchen towards you. The warm familiarity of the only two sweet shops we visit every year for the anniversary cake, followed by the musky yet classic scent of the ancient sofas in the restaurants there. Dhaka is sometimes that lurking scent of smoke on your balcony, you have known the smell for years, it is from your neighbor's kitchen on the ground floor who cooks barbeque fish every Saturday evening with a dash of spices on it".



Figure 14 The courtyard

Kathmandu, Nepal:

"Kathmandu smells like deep flavors of authentic food and generations-old traditions ingrained in the culture. The steamy mornings, and eastern hilly regions of Nepal, perfectly fit in the window frame of my house. Seeing Kathmandu as the city wakes up, is the pure sound of the bells along with the sweet laughter of children outdoors, where the morning raga of the milkmen selling fresh dairy draws you to the balcony, the market which is usually chaotic but the colors, scent, and sounds make you stop and linger, and each time I do, I get swallowed by in the sacks of spices, piles of pink Himalayan salt, and the passion of the sellers. In the evening, the crunch of wai wai with the strong smell of kinema my sister is preparing, is strong enough for the neighbors to notice it. The smell of Kathmandu is in the religious attachment to Hindu ethics, and the charming tune of rich musical heritage. And just like that every night in Kathmandu, before going to bed as I take off my Dhaka topi (traditional Nepali hat) – the now settled smell of hard work, the bright moonlight falling on you mixed with the trees fighting their way to perfectly fit in the gap, find a way from that slightly broken window".



Figure 15 My uniform- Dhaka Topi

Story Box:

"Story Box sounds like a magic box we used to hear about in our childhood. It takes us back to our innocent childhood where the only knowledge of institution used to be the stories narrated by my father every night before bed. Stories, that took me deep into their imaginary world to understand the experiences of its characters. In the present times, these stories have not just become a source of entertainment but helps us reach a bigger audience to form a community. A community that is sewed together through series of common experiences or just one, food. The image story box is a compilation of diverse fridge stories from our past that aim to preserve to their culture and traditions through ingredients, recipes, and food. It also highlights the struggles of first-generation immigrants with homesickness overcome by using food as the binding factor to feel home away from home".



Figure 16 Story Box: Compilation of food and culture related stories

Salad + Chicken Tikka

(INDIA)



Ingredients

- 150 g marinated tandoori chicken breast
- 4 cups baby spinach
- 2 cups cucumber (chopped)
- 1 cup onion (sliced)
- 1 avocado (chopped)
- Topped thousand island sauce and green mint chutney

CHAPTER 2

Spaces that Speak Stories

2.Spaces that speak Stories

Architects and Urban Planners believe every little to big space has a story, a concept behind it. Spaces that Speak Stories is a significant way of treating each space designed or developed highlighting the un-heard or missing story from our educational and cultural context. Spaces designed along with their cultural elements have the power to influence the mood, atmosphere, experience, and knowledge adapted by the users in that space. As Kevin A. Lynch in his book "The image of the city" said, "Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequence of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences". [12] Thus, people belonging to different ethnicities and cultures mostly rely on mediums like colours, music, art, ethnic clothes, food, and stories of culture and political knowledge to showcase their heritage and culture in a foreign country.



Figure 17 Cultural gully

[12] *Kevin A. Lynch. (1960). The image of the city*

2.1 Conflict Kitchen Pittsburgh, United States

Jon Rubin, an art professor at Carnegie Mellon University started a "Waffle shop" A Reality Show" in Pittsburgh, where his idea was to have a place where he could introduce both a restaurant and performance art together. His experimental nature did not stop here, when in 2010, he came up with the idea of *Conflict Kitchen*.



Figure 18 Conflict Kitchen, Pittsburgh, United States

Before Pittsburgh, Jon Rubin traveled and lived in several cities across the United States. It was when he moved back to Pittsburgh that he realized the city lacks space for the exchange of cultural dialogue. During the 80s, after the steel industry left, Pittsburgh was a very quiet city where Jon thought of using food as a medium to "bring diverse people together, introduce unknown cultures through food, and galvanize conversation between strangers".[13] Starting as a take-out restaurant in East Liberty, later expanded to a dine-in restaurant, Conflict Kitchen was a public artwork in the form of a restaurant that served cuisine from countries with which the United States was in conflict. It served cuisines from other countries

[13] *By Koutsovolou, E. (2014). Cultural dialogue. Interview with Jon Rubin, Conflict Kitchen*

that the United States had imposed bans upon, whether through war or economic sanctions like Iran, Afghan, Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, Haudenosaunee, and Palestine. As it is said, “the quickest way to someone’s heart is through their stomach” The menu created, and the food served is not that simple.

The restaurant aims to highlight the key factors responsible for developing the traditional food situation of a country whether it is political, social, or cultural. For example, a trip to North Korea is open to all visitors but they are not allowed to talk to their citizens. Cooking and consumption of meat are only allowed on special occasions like the political leader Kim Jong’s birthday whereas Jon Rubin’s trip to South Korea along with the co-founders Dawn Weleski, and John Pena was rather an experiential one. Both the co-founders had the opportunity to cook with the locals and interview them about food and their lifestyle. All of which led to the formation of recipes that came out of that experience. Moreover, food is a gateway to help spread awareness of different cultures and existing political practices that can initiate a cultural dialogue between people as a way to get to know the community and their culture better.



Figure 19 North Korean restaurant - conflict Kitchen



Figure 20 Venezuelan Takeout, conflict Kitchen: Cultural dialogue meetup



Figure 21 Iranian restaurant - Conflict Kitchen

What is the key binding factor of the project?

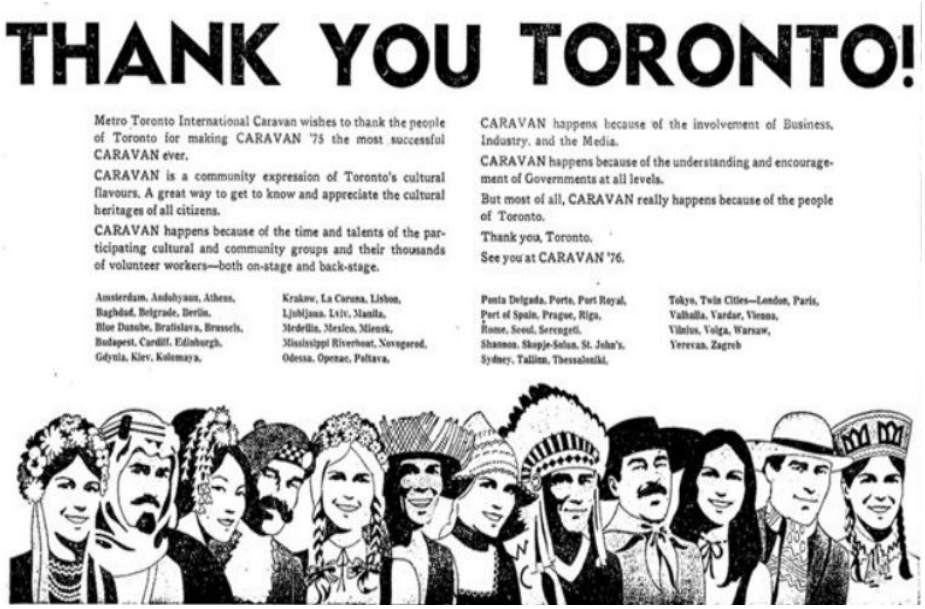


Figure 22 Take out meal - Conflict Kitchen

"Food is a common bond. It prompts memories and stories of childhood, family, ancestry, and migration. It's a point of pride and a way for people to share a bit of themselves. Food is also identity; to better understand Philadelphia, try standing in line for a cheesesteak or a hoagie. Like music, food is a universal language".[14] Food and the stories that revolve around it have a lasting impact on people and can draw people to talk about customs and events they know very little about. The menu and stories by the conflict kitchen team are focused on the ingredients and recipes that resonate with historical and contemporary culinary traditions of that respective country, particularly those offering an insight into its political decisions and conflicts. "For instance, they attribute Bolani Pazi's authenticity and recipe development to connecting with the local Afghan diaspora and they bolster educational objectives through "custom-designed wrappers that include interviews with Afghans both in Afghanistan and the United States on subjects ranging from Afghan food and culture to the current geopolitical turmoil". [15]

[14] *McKeever, M. (2015). Reports on Eater {E}*

[15] *Leigh, T. (2017). "How one Pittsburgh restaurant is fighting the travel ban with food"*


THANK YOU TORONTO!

Metro Toronto International Caravan wishes to thank the people of Toronto for making CARAVAN '75 the most successful CARAVAN ever.

CARAVAN is a community expression of Toronto's cultural flavours. A great way to get to know and appreciate the cultural heritages of all citizens.

CARAVAN happens because of the time and talents of the participating cultural and community groups and their thousands of volunteer workers—both on-stage and back-stage.

CARAVAN happens because of the involvement of Business, Industry, and the Media.

CARAVAN happens because of the understanding and encouragement of Governments at all levels.

But most of all, CARAVAN really happens because of the people of Toronto.

Thank you, Toronto.

See you at CARAVAN '76.

Amsterdam, Andubyaur, Athens, Baghdad, Belgrade, Berlin, Blue Danube, Bratislava, Brussels, Budapest, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Gdynia, Kiev, Kolomaya, Krakow, La Coruna, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Lviv, Manila, Medellin, Mexico, Minsk, Mississippi Riverboat, Novegorod, Odessa, Openac, Poltava, Ponta Delgada, Porto, Port Royal, Port of Spain, Prague, Riga, Rome, Seoul, Serengeti, Shannon, Skopje-Solun, St. John's, Sydney, Tallinn, Thessaloniki, Tokyo, Twin Cities—London, Paris, Valhalla, Vardar, Vienna, Vilnius, Volga, Warsaw, Yerevan, Zagreb

Figure 23 Caravan, 1969, Toronto

2.2 Caravan, Toronto, 1969

"Many of the immigrants who came here after the Second World War had lost everything, including for a time, their sense of belonging. So, for the older people, especially, I like to think Caravan gives them a way to recapture the world they knew when they were young"[16].

Post the Second World War, many people migrated from different countries and relocated to different parts of Toronto. This gave rise to the development of a new culture, an ambiance that reflected the new Canada's cultural mosaic. In which each piece reflected a different culture, customs, and cuisine. To acknowledge the changing cultural fabric and create a sense of belonging for the immigrant groups, a week-long festival showcasing food, music, and other cultural traditions of Toronto's immigrant population was proposed in 1968. The concept of the Caravan was based on a "passport", which entitled people to visit any and all the participating pavilions by stamping them. "Venues usually featured traditional décor, historical exhibits, food, music, and crafts". [17] In total thirty groups participated in the first Metro International Caravan, making it one of the first of many cultural platforms for diverse ethnic groups. Each pavilion participating in the Caravan had unique architecture and concepts showcasing its traditions. Out of all, the two most attractive points of interaction were food and craft.

Food is a unique form of intangible heritage which defines a nation's identity based on geographical, political, and cultural situations. Craft on the other hand was fascinating as people from diverse ethnic groups were given a chance to experience the tangible culture through elements that had significant meaning for immigrant communities. Such a macro-level initiative draws our attention to explore how the event contributed to changing Toronto's image and overview of various ethnic groups living together in a place as a chance for neighbors to get to know each other better.

"Caravan 1969 is an urban welcome mat for new immigrants and a chance for neighbors to get to know each other".

[16] *Wencer, D. (2017). "Historicist: The Caravan is on its way"*

[17] *Wencer, D. (2017). "Historicist: The Caravan is on its way"*



Figure 24 Passport - Caravan, Toronto

2.3 South Asian fests and festivals



Figure 25 Fests and Festivals

South Asian festivals are celebrated year-round. These festivals reflect the culture and traditions of each of the south Asian countries and its spiritual beliefs. Whether it is the festival of lights or a kite festival, each of these celebrations help ignite the memories of past. Such fests and festivals bring people of different countries in a third world country together to share the joy of these festivals and embrace the sameness of their culture. With each festival, is attached the recipes and stories of its origin that brings people of different beliefs, culture, and language together.

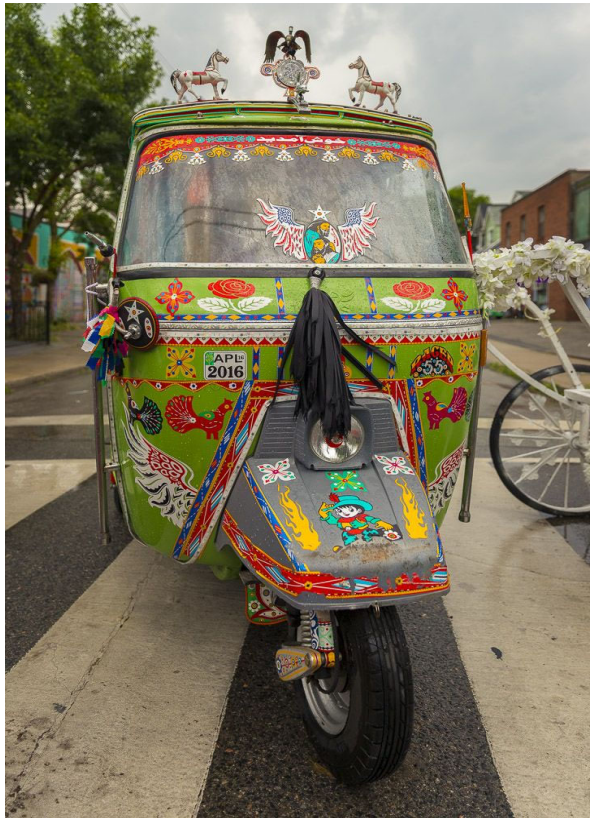


Figure 26 Auto rickshaw photograph from South Asian festivals at Gerrard St., Toronto, Owner: unknown

Artifacts displayed in South Asian fests, are covered in colours of joy, with diagrams reflecting the culture and stories behind celebration of the festival. These decorated auto rickshaws are one of the main three-wheeler modes of transport systems found in many of these South Asian nations, hence, holds significant importance in the day-to-day life of people.

Spicy Broth + Momos

(NEPAL) (TIBET)



Ingredients

- 1 ¾ cups plain flour + 2 tbsp whole wheat flour (for the momo dough)
- finely choped vegetables for momo filling)
- tomato pure + ginger garlic paste
- garnish with finely choped coriander

CHAPTER 3

Spaces that Speak culture

3.Spaces that Speak Culture

Spaces that speak Culture are a significant way of spreading cultural awareness amongst different ethnic groups. Since Canada is a multicultural country there is a great emphasis on the social importance of Immigration, and the focus is on improving cultural relations with and within the country. It is not surprising to find various ethnic enclaves formed within the city. These ethnic enclaves speak stories of culture and act as a one-stop destination to experience all the cultural elements, food, stories, and art of these ethnic communities. Little India, Little Italy, and Chinatown are a few ethnic enclaves found in most of the major cities e.g.: Toronto, Vancouver, Manitoba, Montreal, etc. Communities residing here try to showcase their culture in ways of retail, art, performance, signages, gateways, architecture, food supply, restaurants, and souvenirs.



Figure 27 The Pathway

3.1 Little India, Singapore



Figure 28 Little India street, Singapore. Source: Uopera Tour Operators

Little India is a vibrant and ethnic neighborhood formed in various countries and cities all over the world like Toronto, Vancouver, Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg, Melbourne, Singapore, London, New York, and Chicago. In Singapore, Little India is one of the most vibrant districts. It is a one stop destination where people can explore mix of cultures from Hindu to Chinese temples, mosques, and churches. Apart from the diverse religious structures, this neighborhood reflects upon the culture in both tangible as well as intangible ways. The neighborhood has been designed through a user centric approach and focuses on the relationship of the indoor with outdoor spaces. The community living and working here have transformed the user experience of the space by focusing on creating a sense of arrival and a feeling of coming back home for the south Asian immigrants staying in other parts of the country. Little India consists of a vibrant and colorful ornamented facade, street food stalls, authentic food restaurants, cultural alley for festivals, ethnic clothing, and various incidental resting spaces for the tourists to truly experience the Indian cultural atmosphere of a food and shopping complex.



Figure 29 Wall decoration, Source: Brianthio



Figure 30 The cafe, Source: Hungry Onion



Figure 31 Food stalls with outdoor eating space, Source: KKDay, ZDL

3.2 Little India, Gerrard St., Toronto



Figure 32 Little India, Toronto, Source: Parul Agrawal, 2017

"Toronto's Little India is a place showcasing stories of immigrant's dreams defining and re-defining social, cultural, and geographical identity of a place". [18] In 1972, Gian Naaz, an immigrant of India, rented a theatre on Gerrard St with an intention to show Bollywood and Pakistani films on screen. "His idea was to create a place where South Asians could meet and a women would get a chance to flaunt their saris freely". [19]

Today, this south Asian bazaar holds over 150 shops started by immigrants and now taken over by their second generation. Based on recent documentaries like *Village of dreams, Little India: Six blocks, many stories, and Neighborhood: Little India,* unlike the first-generation immigrants who initially struggled to establish their business, their children are optimistic to use the best of their Indo Canadian identity. The Little India street celebrates diverse festivals throughout the year by transforming the main street running between the shops into an open-air theatre. Along with the existing South Asian shops, other diverse and non-South Asian shops have been a part of this street, thus, emerging as a more global culture. Through these documentaries and existing research, the businesses aim to modernize their shops and businesses while still preserving their cultural legacy for their future generations.

[18] *Little India ARTS, 2017*

[19] *Bauder H, Suorinieni, A,2010*



Figure 33 Little India illustration, a homage to Naaz Theatre by Rosena Fung

"The film, Village of dreams, reflects how a Sri Lankan shop, a Tibetan outlet, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi business setups have all mingled and showcase the new and a much diverse Canada. The business prospects of ethnic food, fashion and Beauty in a 'foreign' land have brought them all together."[20]

[20] *Little India, ARTS, 2017*

Biriyani + Fried Chicken Wings

(PAKISTAN / INDIA) (USA-NEW YORK)



Ingredients

- Rice - 500gm fot Biriyani
- Ginger, Garlic and biriyani masala
- Tomato - onion paste for gravy
- Marinated Chicken Leg piece (fried until golden brown)
- Topped with coriander and lime juice

CHAPTER 4

Thorncliffe Park, a neighborhood in Toronto

4. Thorncliffe Park, a neighborhood in Toronto



Figure 34 Collage: Thorncliffe Park, Toronto

Thorncliffe Park, Toronto, "located on the Don River valley corridor, is a self-contained, multicultural community that includes its shopping mall, school, library, park, community center, churches, and business center"[21]. It is also known as the "Arrival city", which is an example of one of the earliest forms of a culturally diverse settlement wherein immigrants from various countries have lived together for years as a single close-knit community in one of the first high-rise residential apartments in Toronto. As Ed Wall and Tim Waterman mentioned in their book, "Basics Landscape Architecture: 01: Urban design", "communities, like cultures, share common values and come together for mutual support, even for survival"[21]. The East York Center in Thorncliffe Park is situated in the middle of Thorncliffe park, hence, upholds the opportunity to act as the core anchor socio-recreational space for the communities.

[21] Thorncliffe Park Community Hub

4. 1 Thesis site – East York Town Center, Thorncliffe Park, Toronto

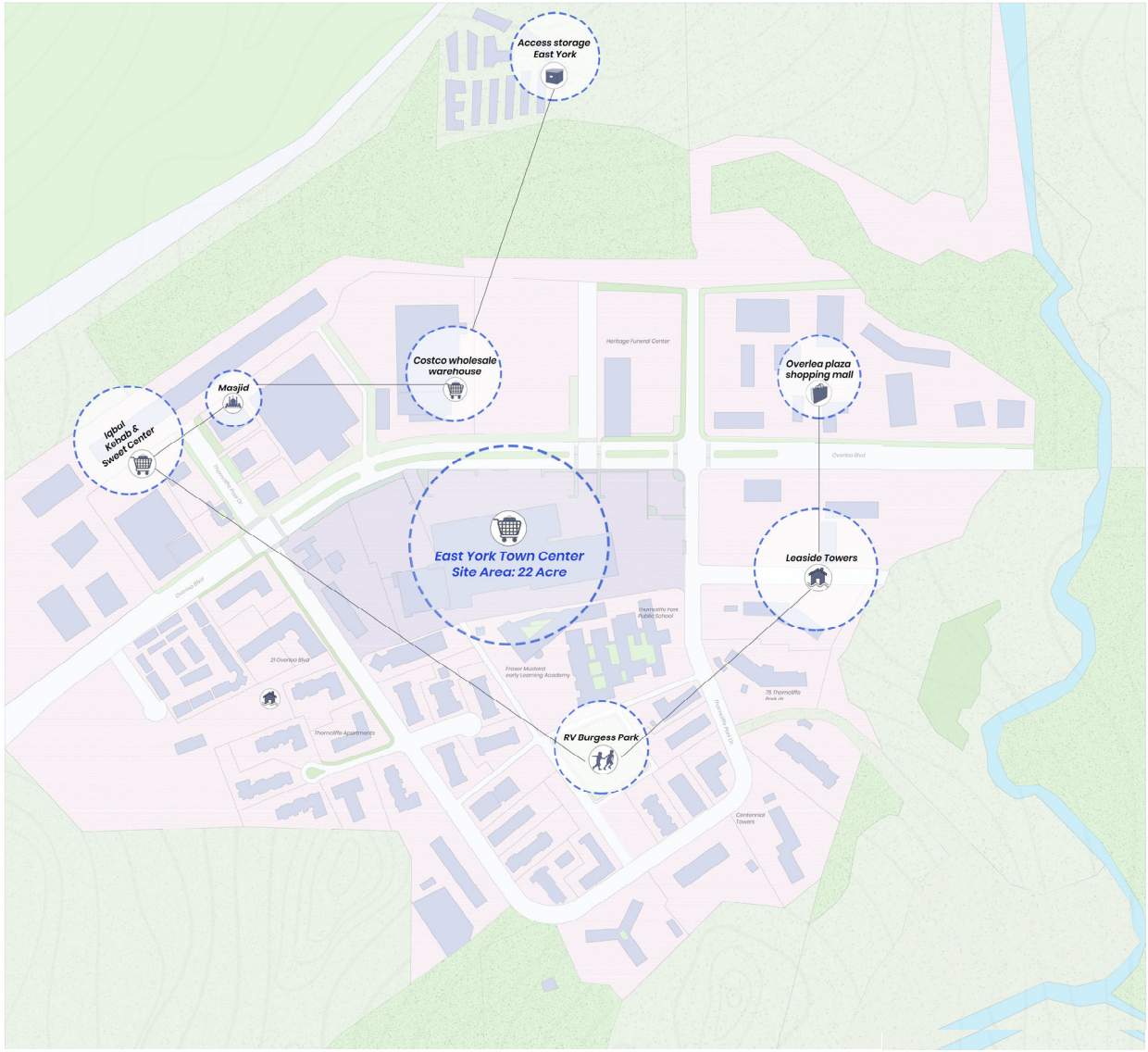


Figure 35 Location Map: Thorncliffe Park, Toronto



Figure 36 Thesis site - Food & Cultural Center

Thorncliffe Park also known as the Arrival city has seen several waves of incoming immigrants each year. Due to the increasing population, Thorncliffe Park over the years has developed itself as a community space with a food shopping center, Islamic learning center, shopping mall, church, high-rise residential towers, Costco, food basics, park, schools, etc. On an urban scale, all the typologies have been designed close to each other with the East York Town Center placed as the central and focal point of Thorncliffe Park.

4.2 Issues: Thorncliffe Park, Toronto

Thorncliffe Park is the Arrival city for many first- and second-generation immigrants who have decided to re-construct their lives in Canada. As the rent is comparatively lower than some of the other parts of GTA, many individuals and families have settled here for a long time. A study by University of Toronto suggests that the "neighborhood between 2001 and 2006 has found more than 30,000 residents (mostly newcomers) that are crowded into 34 high rise and low-rise apartments in a 2.2 square kilometer concrete jungle behind Don Mills Road and Don Valley Parkway".[22]

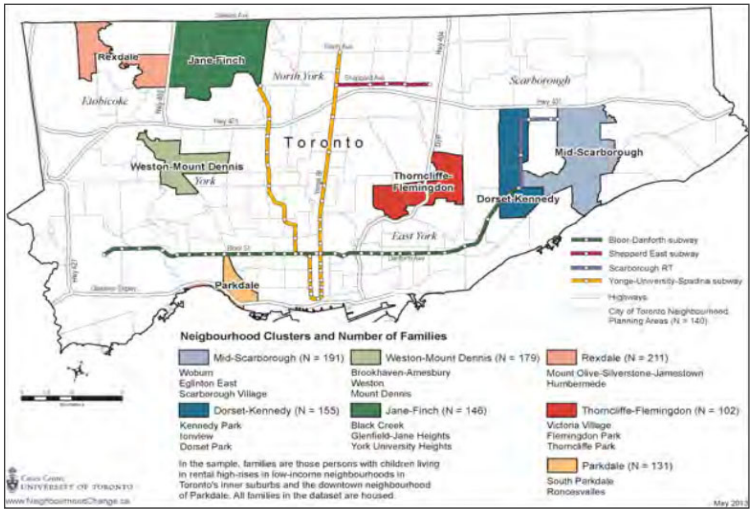


Figure 37 High-poverty neighborhood clusters in GTA

This increase in population is associated with various other issues like

- Crisis in housing sector
- Lack of socio- cultural spaces
- Lack of recreational spaces
- Lack of culturally significant spaces important for an ethnic neighborhood community.
- Lack of opportunities leading to poverty

[22] Thorncliffe Park Community Crowded, Stressed, Toronto *Star*.

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4.3 Initiatives: Women's Committee, Thorncliffe Park, Toronto



Figure 38 Weekly Bazaar (Market): by Women's committee



Figure 39 The city Tandoor: By Women's Committee



Figure 40 Park Cafe: By Women's Committee



"In 2008, Thorncliffe Park gained its title as the "arrival city" of some 34,000, predominately South Asian families with young children. Some apartments housed multiple families struggling to gain an economic foothold. Few in this low-income neighborhood had cars to connect to the rest of the city, and Thorncliffe had no town square or commercial main street where residents could meet and socialize. At its heart was the tiny R.V. Burgess Park, but that heart was barely beating. After the Women's committee approached then local city councilor John Parker who relayed their concerns to the City of Toronto's Department of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, city staff and the councilor began meeting with the women in their "office" — the par. They worked to develop a wish list for renewal that included improvements to the park and the community center. Together, they surveyed local residents about what they wanted. As more entered the conversation the park began taking on greater meaning as a critical community hub for the neighborhood. We really wanted to make the park a common backyard for children who are living an apartment life in Canada. We also wanted to break down barriers between language, employment, and culture…".

(Sabina Ali, TPWC & Metcalf Foundation)

"On a sunny spring afternoon, a group of women stream into a tiny park. Under a canopy of trees, they set up vendors' tables displaying traditional Middle Eastern and South Asian clothing and jewelry, create mini food stalls for selling savory snacks, and fire up a tandoor oven from which charcoal smoke wafts into the air along with the sizzling sound of the samosa and freshly prepared hot naan coming out of the tandoor. Knowing Dufferin Grove had a pizza oven, the Women's Committee began to explore bringing what would be North America's first tandoor oven to the park. Such bake ovens are used widely in South Asian countries to make flatbreads such as naan. The women wanted to introduce children to that tradition and also welcome people from other parts of Toronto to share in the celebration of their heritage. To their surprise, the city said yes and offered a $1600 grant. More than a few bearings witness to these impressive achievements say the Women's Committee possesses "a secret sauce." This short chronicle will consider the ingredients that went into the Committee's unique and robust recipe for community development, including perseverance, a willingness to forge partnerships, and an immense commitment to volunteering".



(Sabina Ali, TPWC & Metcalf Foundation)



"In many of our cultures, women are primarily responsible for childrearing. So, we asked ourselves, how can we empower women while recognizing their responsibilities and the constraints on their time?" The Women's Committee believed that if it could provide opportunities for women to participate in the community, it would help them integrate into their new homeland. "Its important women come out and have time for themselves to build self-esteem and friendships." As more women started congregating in the park and sharing their stories, they wanted to know how they could get involved. The Women's Committee, in turn, discovered that many women were highly entrepreneurial. They ran small informal businesses in their apartments to supplement the family income yet, like the Women's Committee, they needed support to strengthen their micro-businesses. Soon the idea percolated up: why not work together and bring this economic activity outside? Run a weekly Friday bazaar in the park?

(Sabina Ali, TPWC & Metcalf Foundation)



"The bazaar quickly became a grassroots community incubator for micro entrepreneurship. For example, Fathima Farook, a teacher in Sri Lanka, had no idea how to make money here. Though she had no experience cooking commercially, she says, "I saw vendors in the market selling food and thought, I could be a food person. Sabina (Ali) is there to help, and she encourages us to go to workshops." She helps is with the menu planning, choosing low-cost ingredients, and finding a price point that allows a profit yet keeps prices affordable. At a quick glance, much of this busy, festive bazaar looks like it could be in Lahore or Kabul. But the setting is actually R.V. Burgess Park, which is tucked amidst a cluster of high rises that comprise one of Toronto's most dense city neighborhoods — the multicultural Thorncliffe Park. Thus, the park was awarded for creative revitalization of an urban green space that brings people together across social, economic, and racial divides.

(Sabina Ali, TPWC & Metcalf Foundation)[23]

[23] Metcalf Foundation & Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee (TPWC), (2018)

4.4 Existing site images



Figure 41 Existing shopping center - 700m from the site

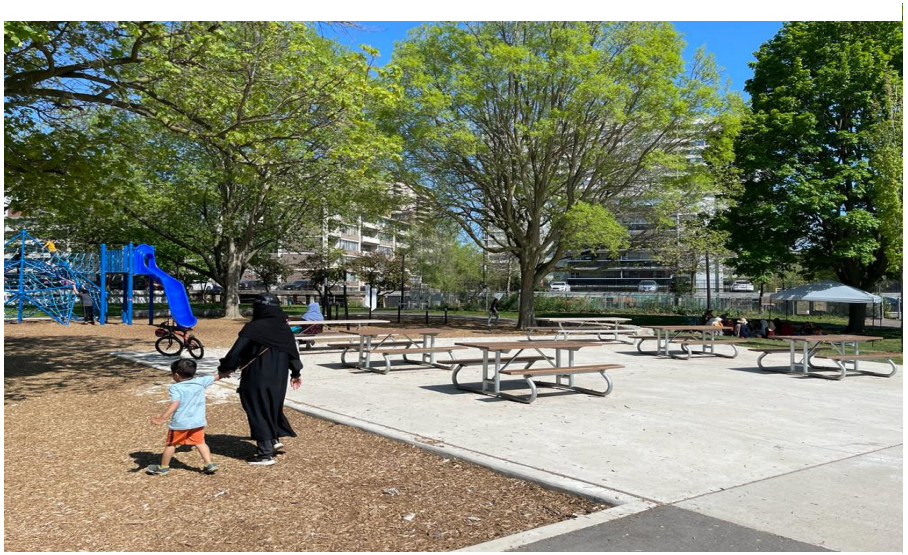


Figure 42 R.V Burgess Park - 600m from the site



Figure 43 Islamic Society of Toronto - 650m from the site



Figure 44 Fraser Academy - 450m from the site

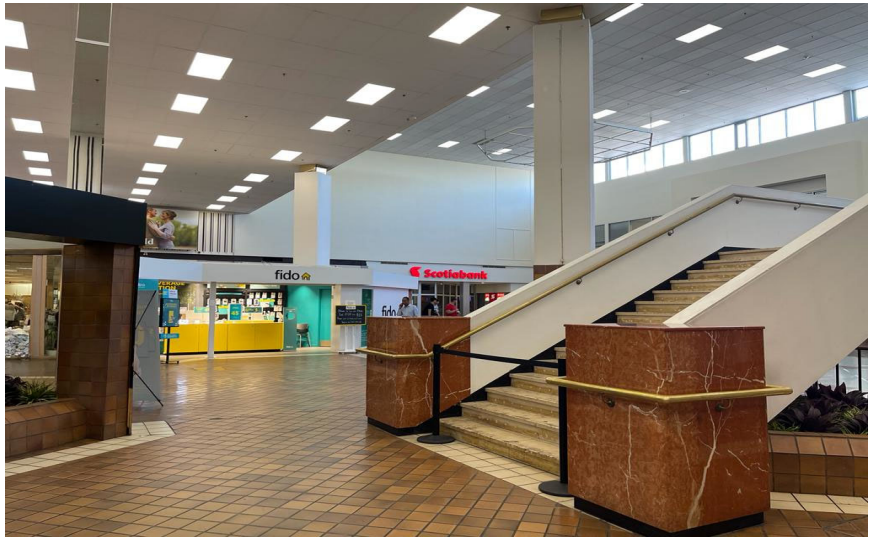


Figure 45 First floor - East York Town Center

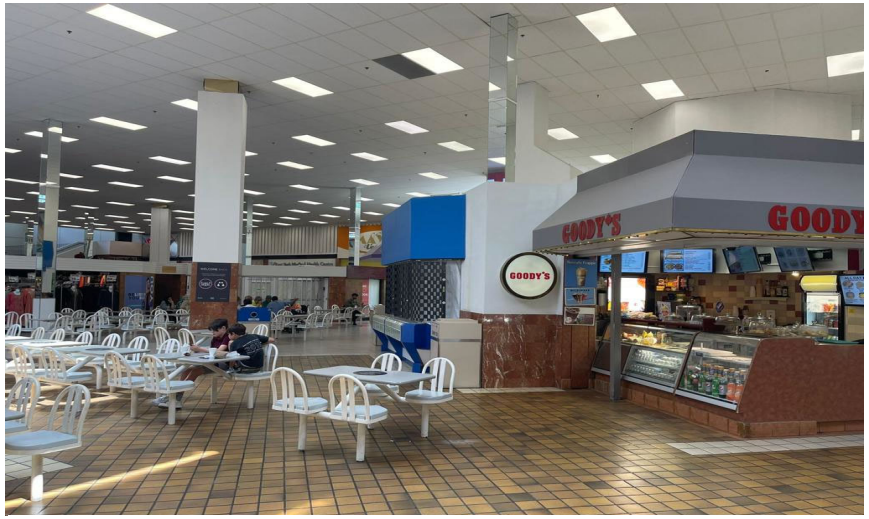


Figure 46 Food Court

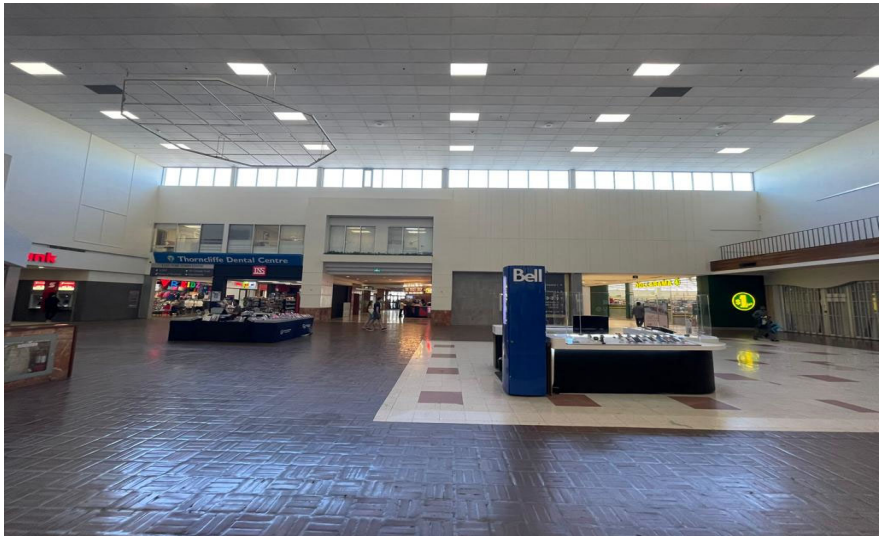


Figure 47 Vacant space - First floor



Figure 48 Working Retail shops



Figure 49 Empty lobby on the First floor with permanently closed retail stores

Many of the East York Town Center stores have run out of business either due to a lack of adaptability of goods or have failed to draw the users' attention. The non-descript and rather banal nature of the architecture of the mall is also a major part of the problem as the architecture has not been updated and looks like it belongs to an earlier decade. Food court, which could be the major attraction of the mall has also not been updated in terms of its flooring, seating areas designed, kiosks, kitchen to name a few. Currently, the mall's central area comprises a few kiosks that are working to cater to the needs of the people. Few of these food kiosks are run by women in Thorncliffe Park as are many of the other small-scale businesses in the community. However, this indicates that the East York Town Center is facing abandonment and is on the verge of failing as it hasn't been developed in years based on the diverse population of users and their requirements.

Paan + Maple

(INDIA) (CANADA)



Ingredients

- Almonds + Pistachio + Fennel seeds (15gm)
- Hari Patti (betel leaves)
- Cardamom + Gojiberries (15gm)
- Maple Syrum for sweetening
- Garnished with Rose Petals

CHAPTER 5

Food & Cultural Center
A new version of Toronto's Shopping Center

| A place for collective memories and un-heard stories of South Asian Immigrants and their future generations in Canada|



Figure 50 Humans of 'World Food Market'

The Food and Cultural Center is a new version of a district shopping center on the site of East York Town Center, Thorncliffe Park, Toronto. The goal of which is to create a journey of experiences for the South Asian immigrant population as well as people from different ethnic backgrounds to better understand and explore the south Asian culture. The Food and Cultural Center is a one stop place for collective memories and un-heard stories of south Asian immigrants in its diverse forms. The concept of a Food and Cultural Center began with the idea of food, a universal binding factor, that helps give a glimpse of the culture, it's people, history and traditions of a community or a country. However, it branched out into various other aspects responsible for preserving the memories, culture, and traditions of communities in tangible and intangible forms. The goal is not just to make a shopping center, but a prototype of a shopping center for Thorncliffe Park, a multi-ethnic neighborhood and for its diverse communities that uses food as one of its ways to preserve their identity. A space and a place that is closer to how this community wants to live, the one that reflects their identity by recognizing its needs and hence provides an opportunity to transform the community by offering various social, cultural and revenue generating opportunities.

5.1 Design Concept

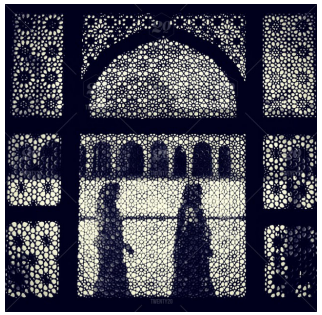


Figure 51 Jali design



Figure 52 Cluster planning



Figure 53 Decorative tile work

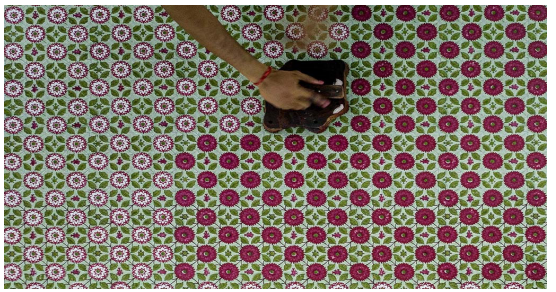


Figure 54 Block printing – Ethnic cloth printing style

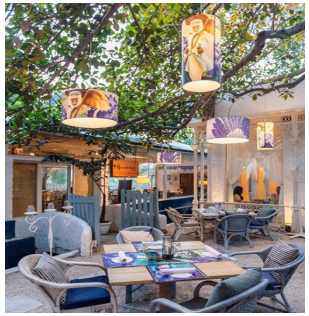


Figure 55 Indoor-Outdoor relationship



Figure 56 Arches & Arcade



Figure 57 Design elements - collage

The collage here depicts the design highlights which reflect the South Asian culture using elements that are of utmost significance. For this thesis design, elements used have been inspired from the ancient fort style South Asian architecture. Arches, and arcade have been placed in the semi open entrance walkway that separates the parking lane from the building entrance and highlights the primary and secondary entries of the Food & Cultural Center. Jali patterns are one of the most common design elements found in the early South Asian architecture; used as a separation corridor in the interior parts of the structure. Similarly, the jalis are placed in the interior most corridor of the structure that separates the indoor spaces with the plaza area. The building has been divided into four parts for example, restaurants, Food Basics, Retail complex, and common interactive areas with each designed comprising of a series of courtyards leading to the central plaza of celebration while also maintaining the indoor-outdoor relationship. Similar to the early period of forts and palaces, wherein the structures were commonly decorated with colourful stones, tiles, walls, hand crafted cloth materials, paintings, jewels etc. to highlight its royalty and richness, decorative tile patterns,

for flooring and roof along with the colourful wall arts and paintings have been used. It not only highlights the design elements but also provides an opportunity to the artists in the community to retain their art and craft style. Apart from the design elements, a major part of the planning of the structure is inspired from the South Asian streets and their gateways at the entrance like those found in Old Delhi, India that are vibrant in nature and leads to an open public square. Hence, these elements form the foundation of the design structure and strategies for the Food and Cultural Center.

5.2 Thesis Site - location maps



Figure 58 Green spaces – Site location map

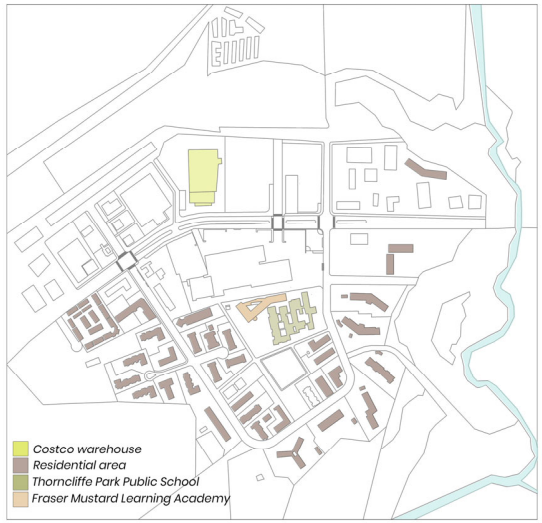


Figure 59 Typologies around the site – Site location map



Figure 60 Religious spaces – Site location map



Figure 61 Socio recreational spaces - Site location map



Figure 62 Existing commercial center/ Metrolinx proposed project site - Site location map



Figure 63 Existing built and green areas on thesis (East York Town Center) site - Site location map



Figure 64 Site (East York Town Center site)

The site selected for the Food & Cultural Center design is the existing site of East York Town Center in Thorncliffe Park. Due to the prime and central location of the thesis site, the design of the built structure is largely influenced by its surroundings. Elements present in the surrounding that are documented to carefully understand its influence on the design of the built structure. These are green spaces, existing typologies like residential, educational, commercial etc., religious spaces like church, Islamic learning centers, socio-recreational spaces, existing South Asian commercial food center, and existing built structures with facilities onsite along with green areas. Analyzing the surrounding built structures, open green spaces, public spaces, and recreational spaces will help form the foundation of the design requirements of the planning of the Food & Cultural Center suitable for the communities in Thorncliffe Park, Toronto.

5.3 Massing

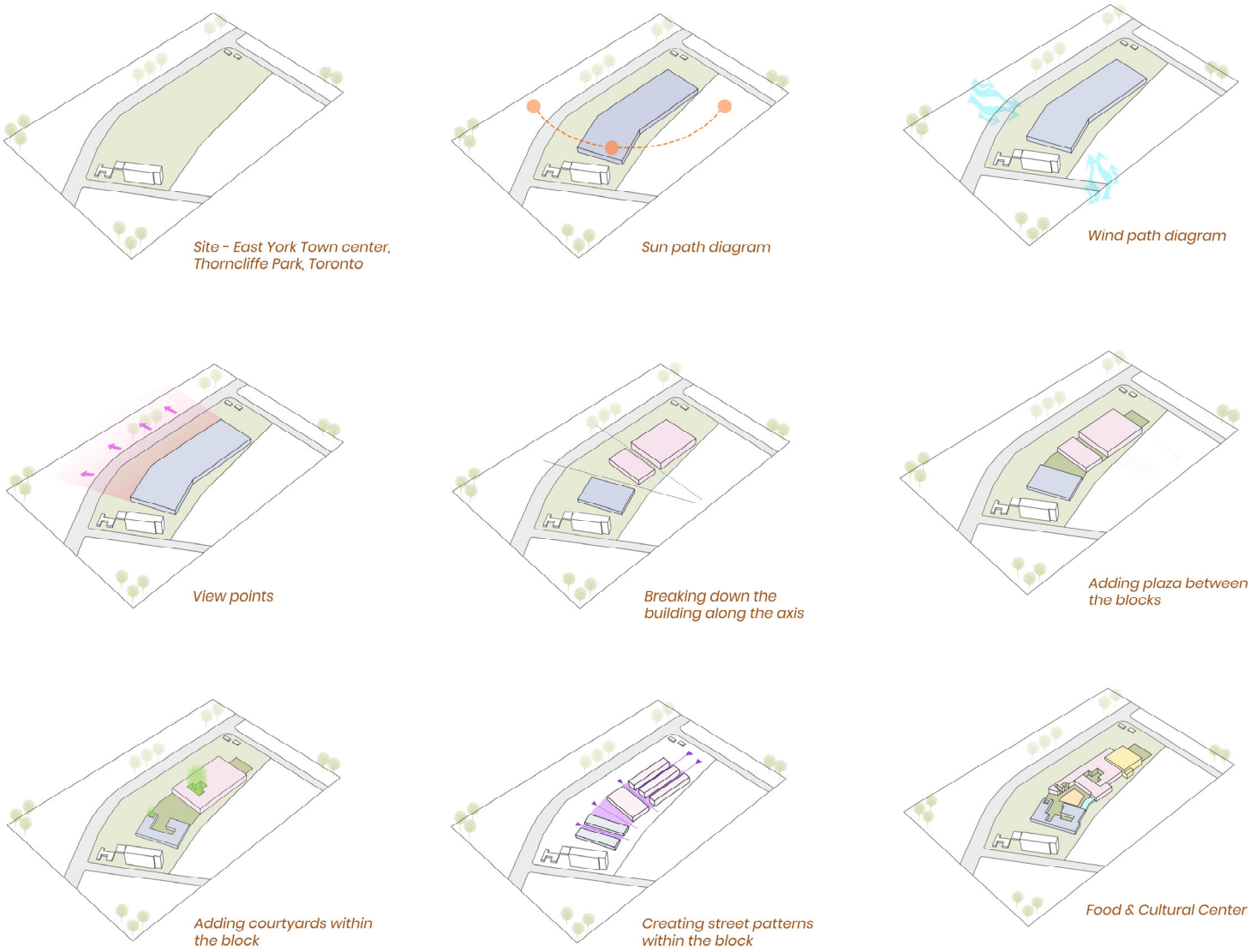


Figure 65 Massing diagram

The massing of the Food & Cultural Center thesis design started with the goal of developing the structure within the existing building envelope. Food & Cultural Center design has been divided into four parts namely the restaurant area, Food Basics grocery store and Farmer's Market, retail area, and central open-air plaza.

The restaurant area is placed near the community care center as it has its own individual back-of-the-house exit doors for the kitchen connecting it to the back side of the site for services and storage. The volume of the Food Basics grocery store is kept similar to the existing one along with a farmer's market. The retail shop's block has been placed next to the Food Basics grocery store with a flexible and more transparent front facade to create a sense of arrival and a warm welcome for the users.

The open-air central plaza is the focal point of the structure where the series of courtyards placed in the different parts of the built structure open onto the central plaza while providing the experience of South Asian Street culture. The heights of the different parts of the structure increase from west to east direction i.e., from restaurants to Food Basics, thus, maintaining the hierarchy and retaining the focus on Food Basics and the architectural structure of the Farmer's market as the anchor point.

The parking present onsite has been retained keeping in mind the existing green spaces and Overlea boulevard and pedestrian path along the site. This open space for parking can also be used for temporary structures required during the seasonal markets or a festival celebration thus, creating an experience of vibrant and complex market areas in South Asian countries.

5.4 Zoning

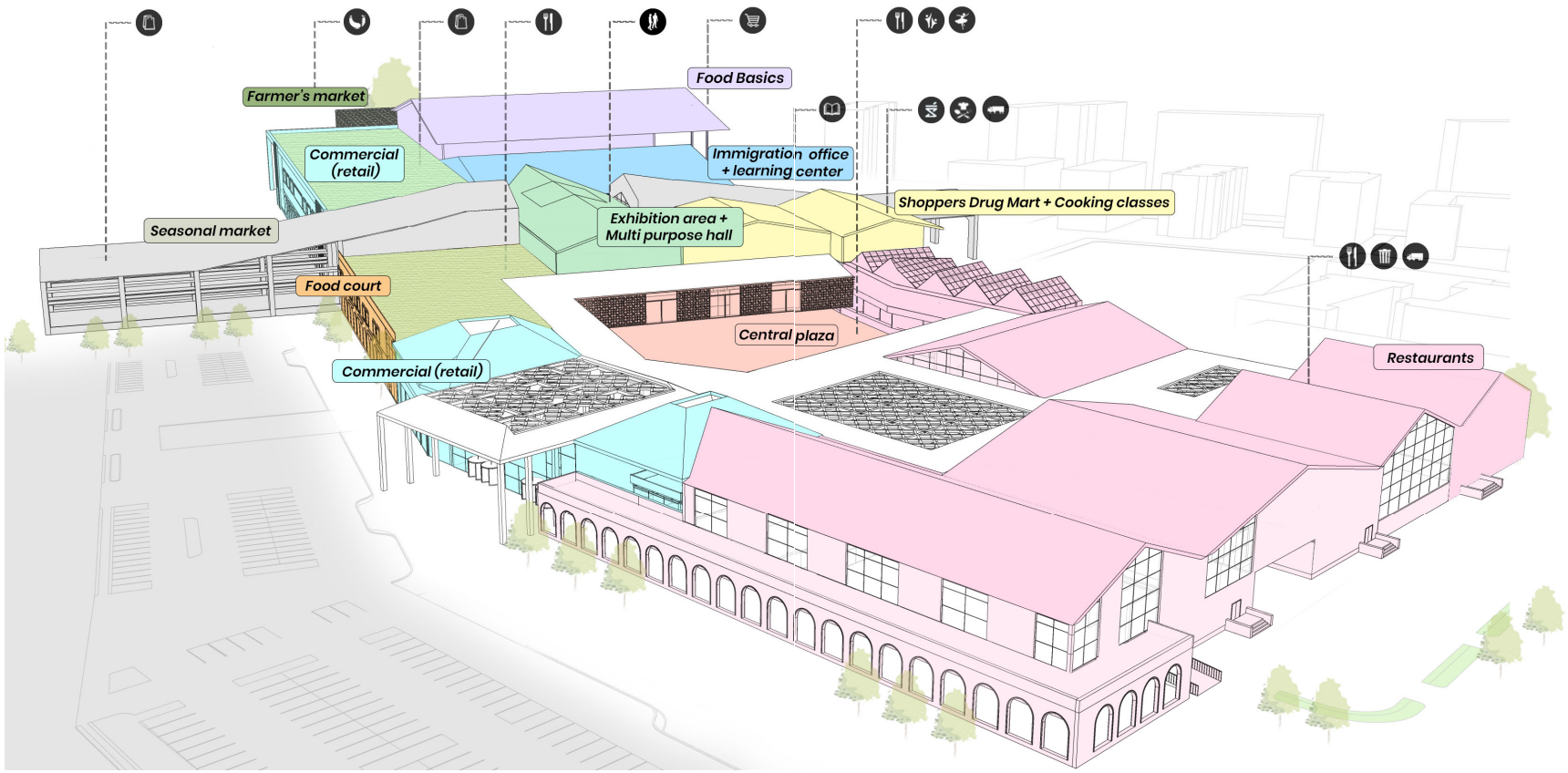


Figure 66 Zoning diagram

The concept of zoning is based on the idea of proposing an indoor-outdoor relationship for the built structure while keeping in mind the changing climate and weather conditions of Canada during its diverse seasons. Both the restaurant block and central plaza have an indoor walkway with a combination of a Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete and glass structure for its roof and wall structures. The commercial hub's flexible façade and the food court placed at the front side of the structure are used to attract more users and create a sense of arrival. Food Basics grocery store, Shoppers Drug Mart and restaurant block have exit doors, back of the house area, and storage areas placed on the back side of the site for easy accessibility and garbage disposal. The building has two primary entrances, each placed at the cross-section of different parts of the Food & Cultural Center building.

5.5 Floor plans and layouts

The ground floor plan is divided into four parts:

1. *Restaurant block*
2. *Retail Block*
3. *Food Basics grocery store*
4. *Open air central plaza*

The ground floor of the restaurant block comprises of three restaurants along with a designated space for informal seating area for eating and social interaction. The block has its separate indoor plaza that is internally connected to the central open-air plaza. Overall, the restaurant block has two washroom blocks designed close to the restaurants with entries from both the restaurant as well as the plaza. All the kitchens are connected to the back side of the site with accessibility to the garbage disposal area, storage and loading dock.

The food court is an important part of this shopping center as it is designed with different types of seating areas to cater to the needs of people. The kiosks on the first floor have a drive thru window which makes the façade more transparent, attractive, and welcoming for the users. The food also has an indoor private seating area and a designated open space for the live tandoor as inspired by the tandoor in R.V Burgess Park by the Women's committee of Thorncliffe Park. Along with that, the court has its own outdoor patio to host small scale food events.

One of the two primary entries leads straight into the central open-air plaza with courtyard style planning on both the sides to attract more people as a design strategy of a shopping center. The plaza consists of a waterbody in the center which can be used as an ice-skating rink during the winters in the outdoor. An enclosed path with glass fiber reinforced concrete jali and glass walls in designed on the periphery of the plaza to maintain the indoor and outdoor relationship during winters.

The central axis on the site has space designated for seasonal markets that is extended towards the edge of the site to create a sense of arrival for the people visiting the Food & Cultural Center in Thorncliffe Park. The central axis entry is connected to the exhibition area on the first floor which has a double height workshop space designated to organize cooking classes, spice and live snacks making workshops.

The Food Basics grocery is a two-story double height grocery store designed on the similar envelope as the existing Food Basics onsite. To accentuate the Food Basics grocery store and create a similar South Asian Street shopping experience, an architectural structure is

designed at the entrance of the grocery store. This space can be utilized for temporary market space or parking in situations when required.

The retail block has glass openings on the front side on the building as a design strategy of the shopping center to make the façade more flexible and transparent for the people visiting the Food & Cultural Center.

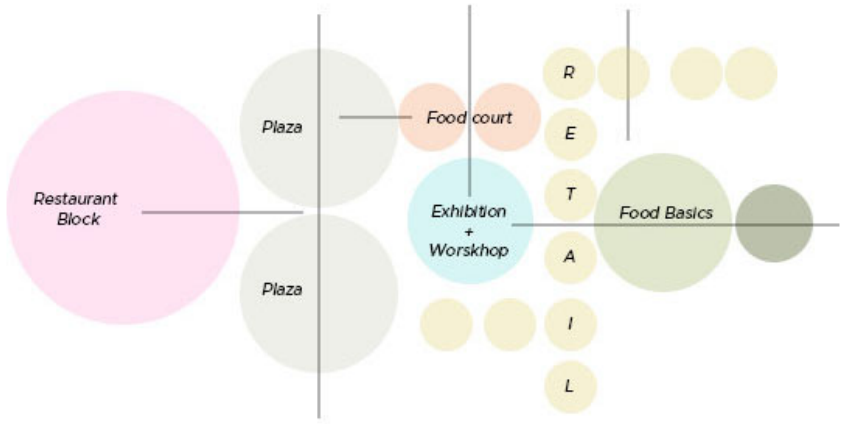


Figure 67 Bubble diagram – First floor planning

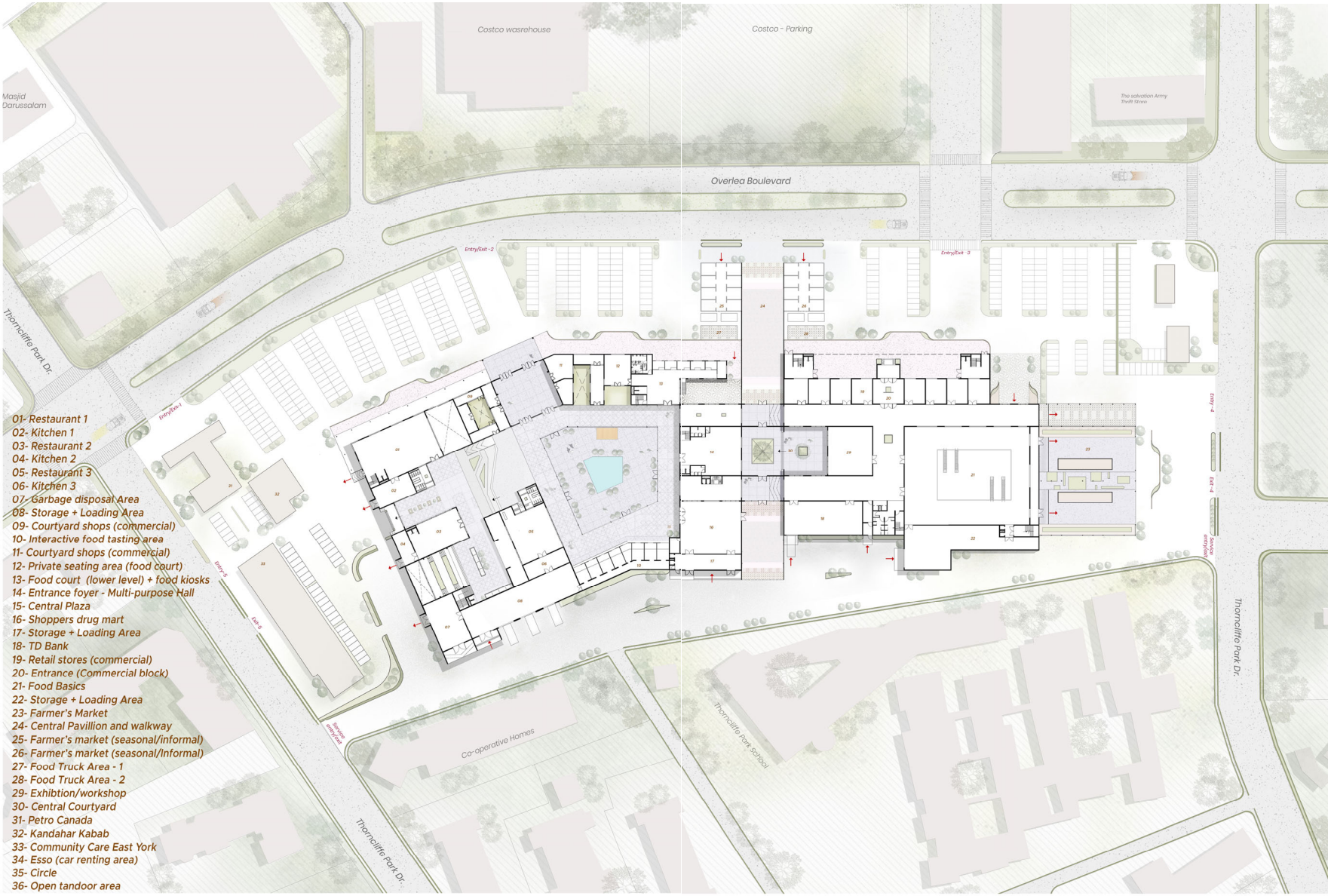


Figure 68 First floor plan – Food & cultural Center

The second-floor plan is similar to the first-floor plan. However, in the second-floor plan, the exhibition and workshop areas are replaced by a doubt-height multi-purpose hall and a community kitchen designed to host big-scale indoor events like weddings, festival celebrations, etc. Retail stores like LCBO, Dollarama, and Food Basics grocery stores are placed closer to each other for easy accessibility in case of events.

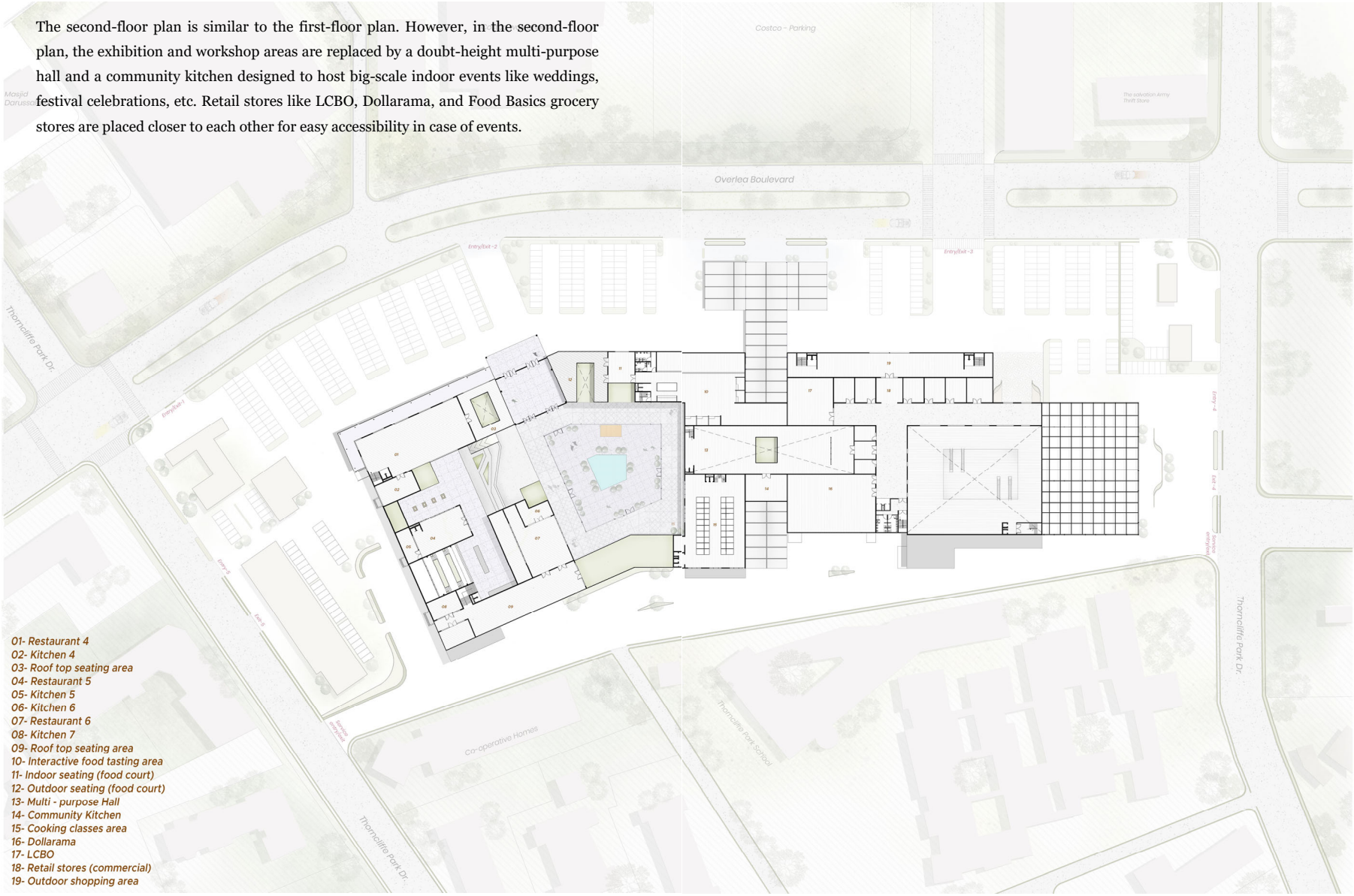


Figure 69 Second floor plan – Food & cultural Center

The third-floor plan consists of the upper-level floor of the Food Basics grocery store with an atrium cut out in the center. Since Thorncliffe Park has many incoming and existing immigrants who might not be very comfortable with the English language as their first language, a language learning center is designed on the third floor to help them improve their speaking and writing skills that can contribute well to professional fields as well. Alongside the learning center, an immigration office with a common reception and waiting area has been designed to cater to the needs of incoming immigrants in Canada. A co-working space has been designed on the same floor which can be rented by small-scale start-up businesses to support the economic growth of the community. These co-working spaces will be cost-effective as well as useful for professionals who need to work from home but don't have the space or resources for an office set-up.

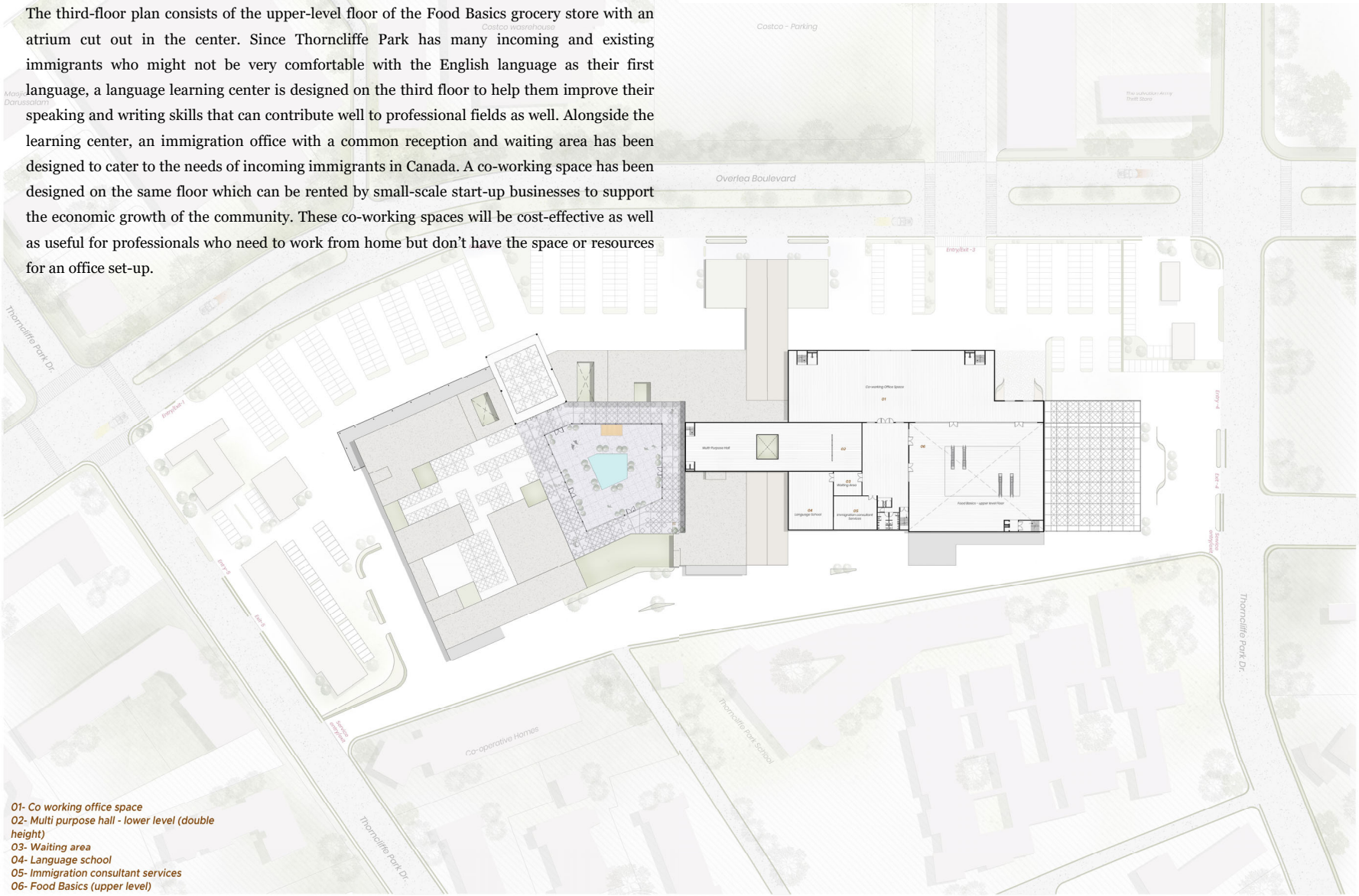


Figure 70 Third floor plan – Food & cultural Center

The fourth-floor plan comprises the service and storage floor of the Food Basics grocery store. This floor is designed for the staff working at the grocery store and can be accessed through the service elevators and staircase designed at the rear end of the Food Basics store.

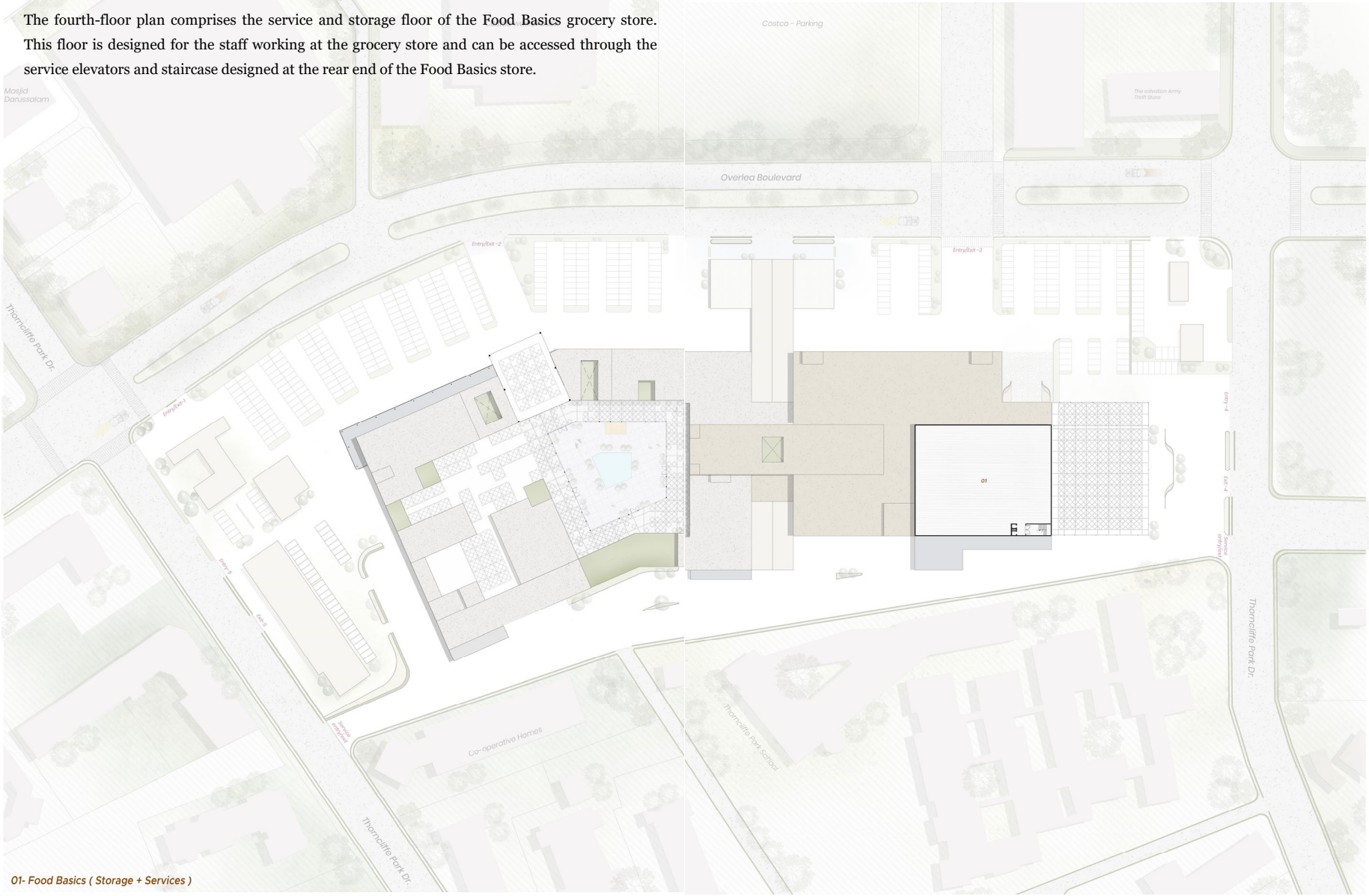


Figure 71 Fourth floor plan – Food & cultural Center

The roof structure of the Food & Cultural Center is designed based on the concept of cluster planning and pitched roofs similar to the forts and palaces in the South Asian region, different from a typical shopping center. The roof plan also consists of a central open-air plaza along with cut-outs and openings at various areas in the design to maintain a harmonious relationship between indoors and outdoors.

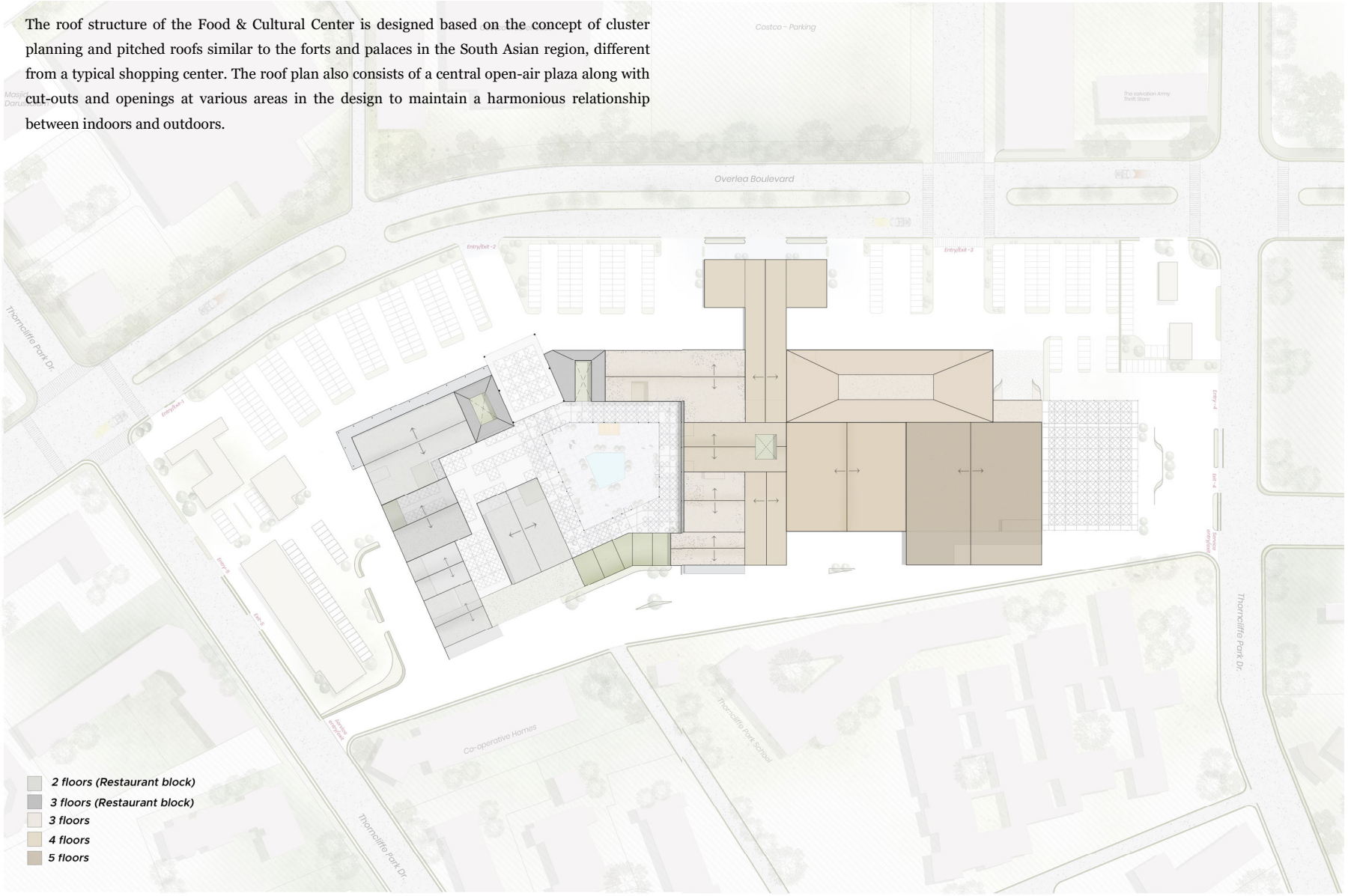


Figure 72 Roof plan – Food & cultural Center

5.6 Design co-related spaces

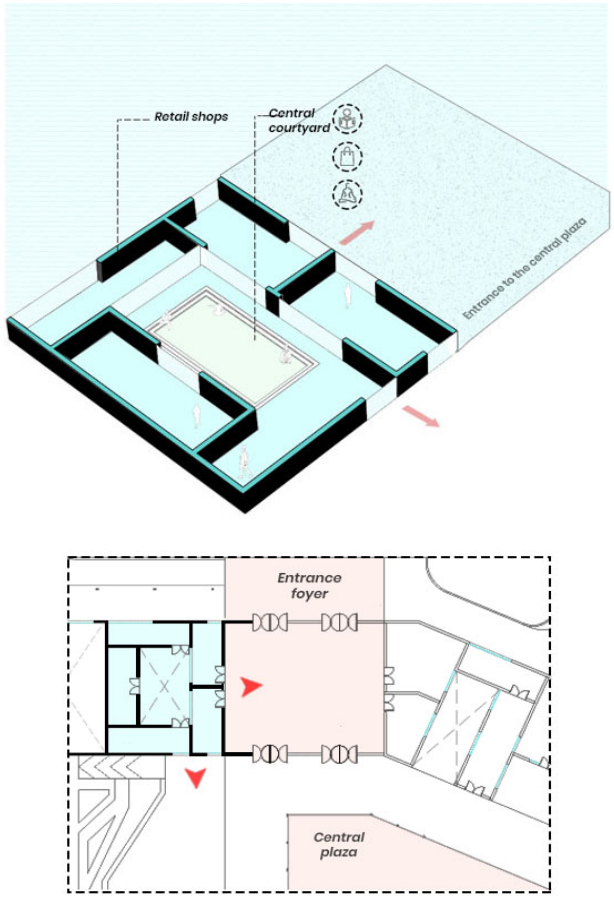


Figure 73 Courtyard shopping area

The primary axis designed at the cross-section of the restaurant block and food court has a courtyard-style commercial area designed on both sides of the entrance. This courtyard-style commercial block has a green stepped-down courtyard with shops surrounding it. Not only can the courtyard be used for resting and social interaction but also serves the purpose of an unofficial retail space similar to those found in street shopping. These shops can also be used for small-scale businesses brooming within the community in order to support the local businesses.

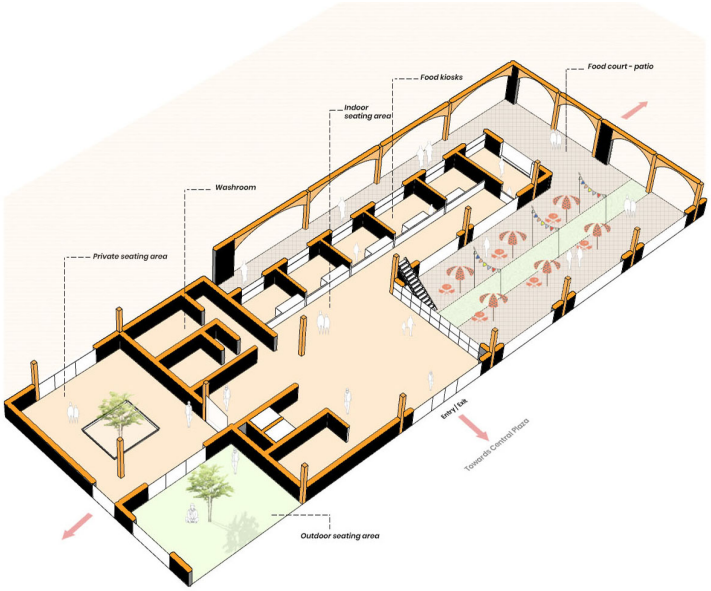




Figure 74 Food court

The food court is one of the most common parts of planning for a shopping center as it caters to several people with diverse cuisine options in a limited space. Here the food court in the Food & Cultural Center has been designed between the two primary axes at the front side of the building to attract more users. The food court has been divided into two floors with the kiosks on the first-floor catering to the drive-thru users. The second floor comprises a public and private indoor seating area and a rooftop seating area extending over the courtyard commercial block. Apart from the indoor seating area, the food court has a designated space for a live tandoor area and an outdoor patio for small-scale food festivals.

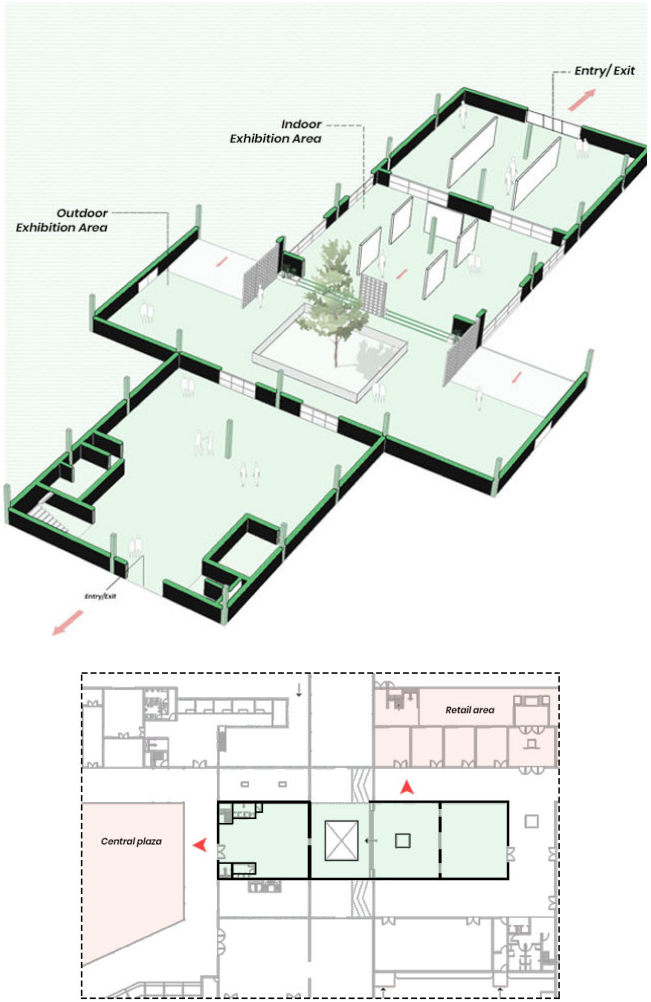


Figure 75 Exhibition + Workshop area

The Exhibition and Workshop area are two important requirements of the Food & Cultural Center as it provides space and a medium for the artists in the community to explore their art and share it with other people of different communities. It can also be a mode of spreading cultural awareness and providing revenue generation opportunities to people of the South Asian community living in Thorncliffe Park. The exhibition and workshop areas can also be used for organizing cooking classes or art and craft exhibitions of local artifacts, decorative elements, and paintings. Both the exhibition and workshop spaces have an indoor as well as a common double-height semi-outdoor area for the display and to maintain the indoor-outdoor relationship.

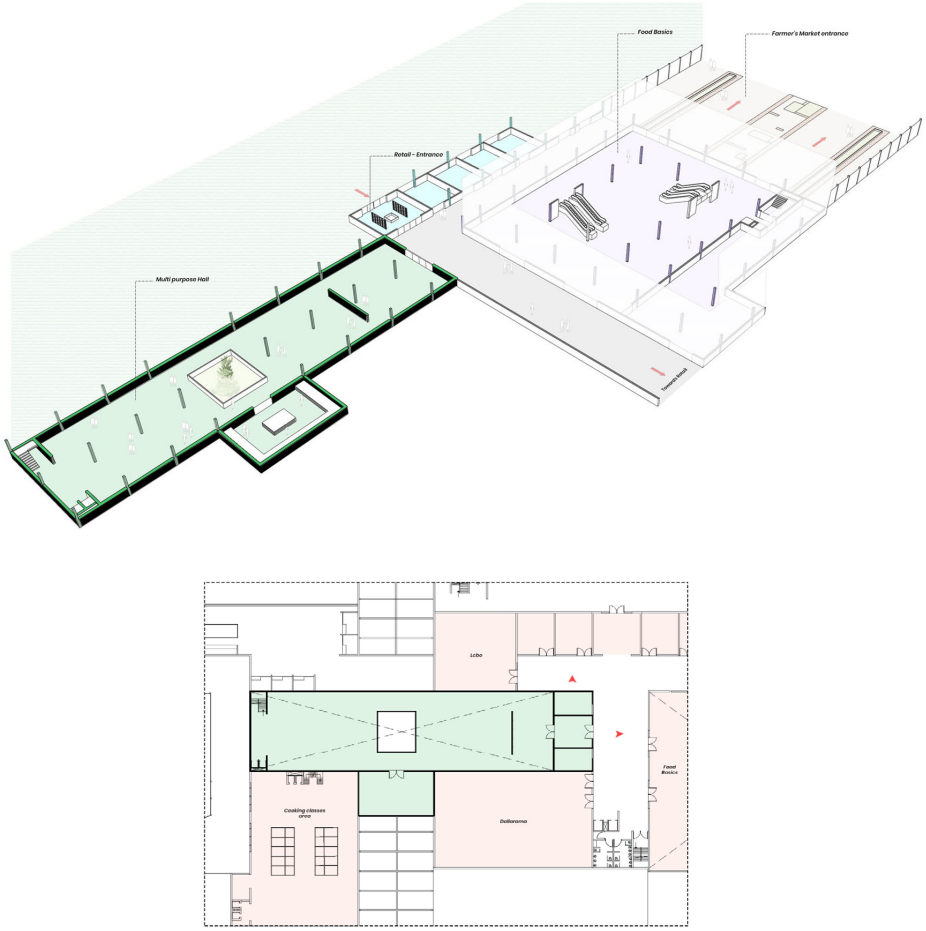
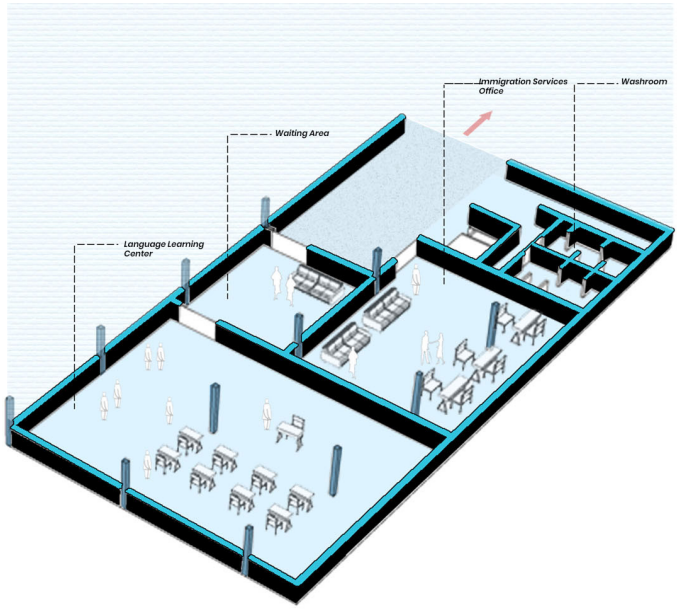


Figure 76 Multipurpose Hall + Community Kitchen

The multi-purpose hall along with a community kitchen is an important part of the design as it can cater to 150-200 people at a time on special occasions, celebrations, etc. South Asian culture has various festivals and celebrations throughout the year that requires space for big gatherings. As catering to a large number of people is sometimes not cost-effective, having a community kitchen along with a multi-purpose hall will be cost-effective for the people of the community. Since Food Basics grocery store, Dollarama, and Multi-purpose hall are all designed on the same floor close to each other, families can get groceries from Food Basics and cook the meals in large quantities themselves similar to the food traditions found in South Asian countries. Family members hosting a large event usually gather together to prep and cook meals in large quantities for their guests rather than ordering.



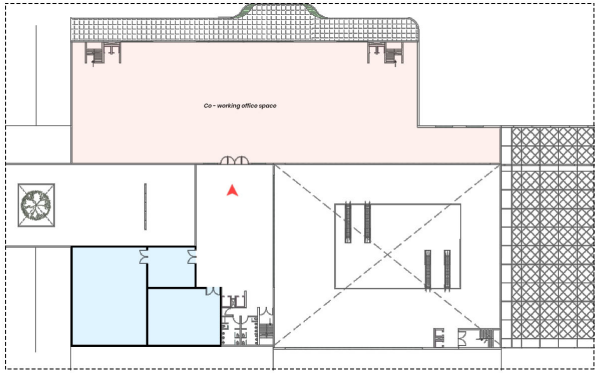
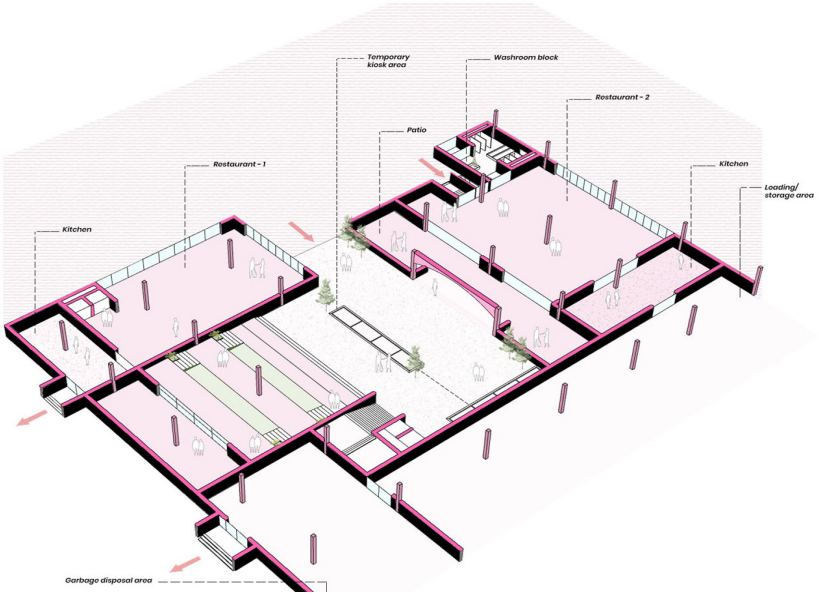


Figure 77 Immigration office and Language learning center

Thorncliffe Park has an increasing number of incoming immigrants from various countries along with the first and second-generation immigrant families who have been living there for years. Based on the recent interviews and local surveys many of the family members especially women and children are hesitant with English as their first language and thus, fail to find professional jobs in their field sometimes. Thus, a language learning center along with an immigration office will not only help people in improving English language but also help them in their future prospects.



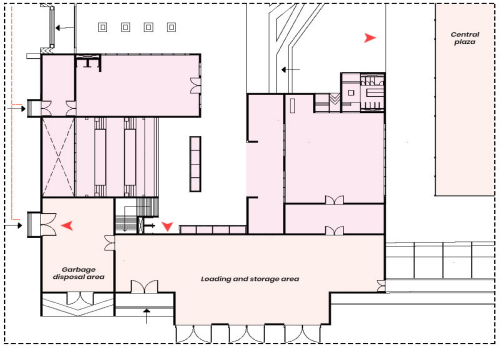


Figure 78 Restaurants and plaza

Food is the primary focus of the Food & Cultural Center, wherein the restaurants have been designed as a separate block with an indoor plaza internally connected to the central open-air plaza. The restaurant block has two separate washroom areas designed attached to the restaurants as well as the plaza for better accessibility. Overall, the block is divided into two floors with each floor comprising three restaurants belonging to different South Asian countries and serving ethnic/local cuisine. The central part of the restaurant plaza also has a space designated for food trucks along with an informal social interaction space for eating and initiating conversations over food.

5.7 Section XX'



Figure 79 Section XX'

The perspective section here cuts through the restaurant plaza extending to the open-air central plaza. The restaurant block comprises of two floors with three restaurants each on the first and second floor, each designed for a South Asian country serving ethnic and local cuisine. The cross-section cuts through the restaurant named 'Pickle'. Pickle is a side dish usually a part of every lunch and dinner meal in most Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi cuisines and has different varieties like mango, lemon, carrot, garlic, and olive pickle which has great health benefits based on the research done by food technologists. The restaurant plaza and the central plaza are distinguished by the steps in front of the restaurant that can also be used for social interaction. The section also highlights the courtyard-style commercial block placed on both sides of the primary entry to the Food & Cultural Center wherein the first floor consists of retail shops for small-scale local businesses and the second floor is used for the open-air seating area extended from the restaurant and food court over the courtyard style commercial block.

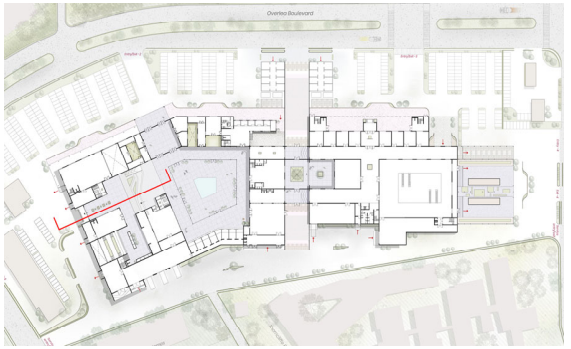


Figure 80 Key plan – Section XX'

5.8 Elevation

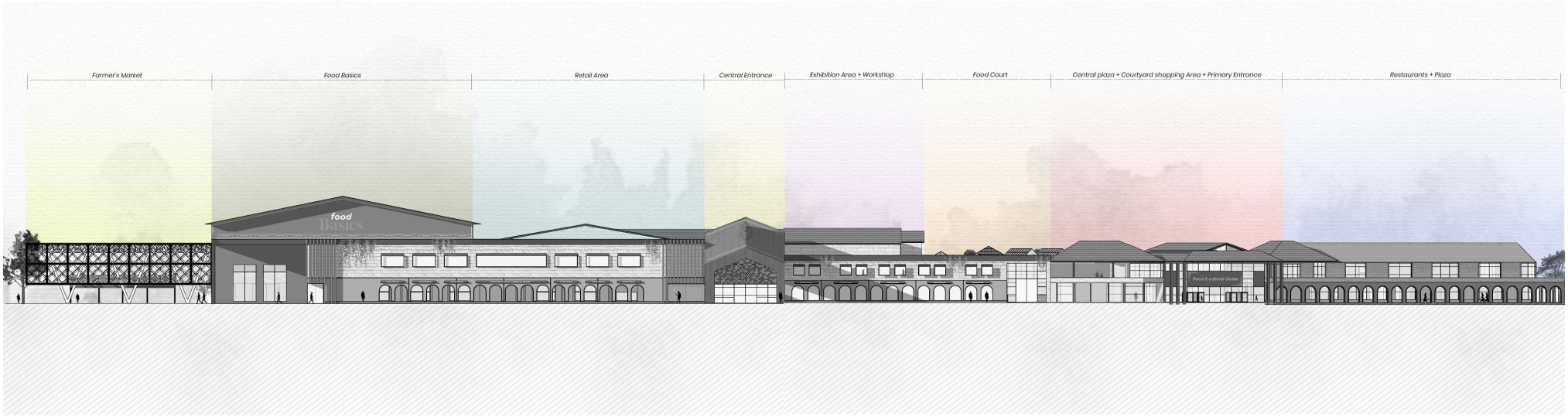


Figure 81 Zoning – Front elevation

The front elevation of the Food & Cultural Center here highlights the eight major facilities of the building. The architectural structure of the farmer's market is designed at the entrance of the Food Basics grocery store thus, highlighting its importance and entrance. The retail block and food court are designed to be placed on the front side of the structure with an arcade on the first floor. The building has two primary entrances with one in the center extending towards the edge of the site thus, attracting more people to the culture and welcoming experience of the Food & Cultural Center. The restaurant block is placed on the opposite end of the site with the kitchens opening to the back side of the site for better accessibility to storage and garbage disposal area. The height of the overall structure is increasing from the restaurant block to the Food Basics grocery store, thus, highlighting the grocery store as the anchor of the building.

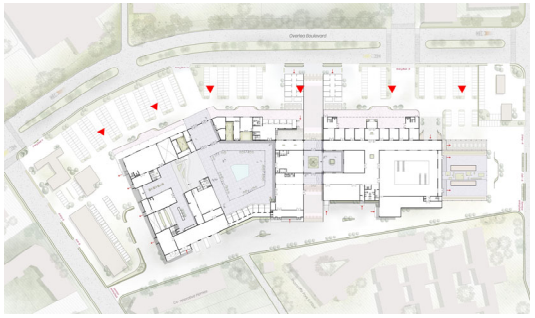


Figure 82 Key plan – Front elevation



Figure 83 Front elevation

The front façade of the Food & Cultural Center reflects on the mosaic culture of Canada that speaks about unity in diversity. The façade is divided into two parts where the first floor has an earthy colour tone with stucco finish to create a feeling of warm and welcoming environment visually. The second-floor façade is done in white brick cladding with long rectangular windows. The arches designed on the first floor of the building along with the uniformly placed commercial banners highlights the market architecture of the South Asian Region. There are two primary entries which are designed at the cross section of different parts of the building and creates a visual focus through its architecture and design for example: the gateway central axis draws the attention of the people as it extends over to the edge of the site and creates an experience of a traditional bazaar which is different from a normal shopping center entry. The cluster formed by the ceramic tiles roof structure on the right side of the façade creates another highlighted primary entry of the building. To maintain the hierarchy of heights of the overall building, the architectural structure of the farmer's market on the left side is made up of glass fiber reinforced concrete to accentuate the entry of Food Basics grocery store as the anchor of the building façade.



Figure 84 Front side aerial view –

The front side aerial view here depicts the overall built Vs open ratio of the Food and Cultural Center designed on the site of East York Town Center in Thorncliffe Park. The image also gives an approximate idea about the distance of surrounding areas, especially the proposed Metrolinx project.



Figure 85 Rear side aerial view

The rear side aerial view here depicts the overall built Vs open ratio of the Food and Cultural Center designed on the site of East York Town Center in Thorncliffe Park. The roof structures and planning are inspired by the cluster planning of various streets, markets, and forts-built years ago in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal, etc.



Figure 86 The Arcade

The Arcade is inspired by the arcade found in South Asian forts by a series of Arches as corridors connecting one space to another. The decorative tile work is called the Jaipur style tile work with hand-painted or crafted stone and colour work. Most of the artists use all-natural colours for Jaipur-style tiles. The series of arches, decorative flooring along with wooden planning on the ceiling forms a mosaic of designs inspired by different cultures.



Figure 87 Informal interaction area – Restaurant block

The informal interaction area is designed in the restaurant block. This space is designed to cater to up to 50-70 people at a time. Steps have been used to create informal seating for the people who can get food from the food truck area designed in front of the seating area and enjoy a short and informal meal here. The walls of this area are covered in the art style inspired by the Rajasthani style of Art and Architecture found in the western region of India and the Eastern region of Pakistan with colours creating a warm and welcoming experience. This style of hand painting art form was found on the exterior and interior walls of huts in the rural areas of India. Hence, the goal was to create a similar experience with the pitched roof structure, wall arts, warm colours, and families enjoying their meals together under one roof.



Figure 88 Community kitchen

Thorncliffe Park in Toronto has one of the few first high-rise residential towers built in the city. These apartments are now rented to families with most of them being first- and second-generation immigrants from different countries especially South Asian region. Since the size of these apartments is small it gets difficult to host big events that are usually celebrated for weddings or other festivities like Diwali, Eid, Holi etc. Apart from the celebration on these festivities, one thing that's important in these festivals is the unique food that is prepared for each of them. It is the prepping, cooking, and eating of the food together that makes the festivities even more special and helps bring people together. In such a case a community kitchen with a multipurpose hall can be a great solution for families who would want a space to cook on a large scale and celebrate together.



Figure 89 Central entrance with seasonal market

The central entrance with seasonal market creates a similar experience of a souk and a local market (traditional bazaars) organized under the gateways of Old Delhi. These gateways are designed at the entrance and along the city's boundaries thus, highlighting the entrance of the capital city of India, Delhi. These bazaars set under the gateways sell souvenirs, traditional cloth pieces like suits and sarees, crafted tablecloths, designer earthen clay pots, lights etc. Similarly, the designated spaces for the bazaar under the central axis can be used by the members of the women's committee of Thorncliffe Park who organize a weekly market every Friday in R.V. Burgess Park, in Thorncliffe Park as a mode of their income. Hence, the prime location of these stalls can help reach a larger audience and contribute to providing better revenue generation opportunities not only for the members of the women's committee but other brooming small-scale businesses.



Figure 90 Food Basics entrance with farmer's market

The farmer's market designed at the entrance of the Food Basics grocery store is inspired from the Jali designs and patterns found in the forts and palaces of South Asian region. The architectural structure of the farmer's market not only highlights the entrance but also brings focus on the Food Basics store. Alongside, it enhances the value and importance of having a farmer's market in the neighborhood to provide fresh vegetables, fruits, and flowers. Food is an important part of people, and their cultures, thus, it becomes vital for them to be able to have an experience of a good quality farmer's market. The space is designed keeping in mind it's multi-functional opportunities and hence, can also be used for parking, events, street food stalls, and food related events etc.



Figure 91 Central open-air plaza

The central open-air plaza is designed as the focal point of the Food & Cultural Center. A combination of Glass fiber reinforced concrete and concrete materials are used for the walls of a corridor designed in the periphery of the plaza to maintain the indoor and outdoor relationship during winters. The water body in the center can be used as an ice-skating rink during winters for recreational activities. The plaza is a multi-functional space that can be used for a variety of events throughout the year like concerts, fests, food fests, festival celebration, and local events etc. like Taste of India, South Asian festivals etc. It provides the community a space and a place to be seen and heard by people belonging to other diverse communities and hence, provide an opportunity for better revenue generation and preserve the identity of the South Asian community through the medium of food, craft, and art.

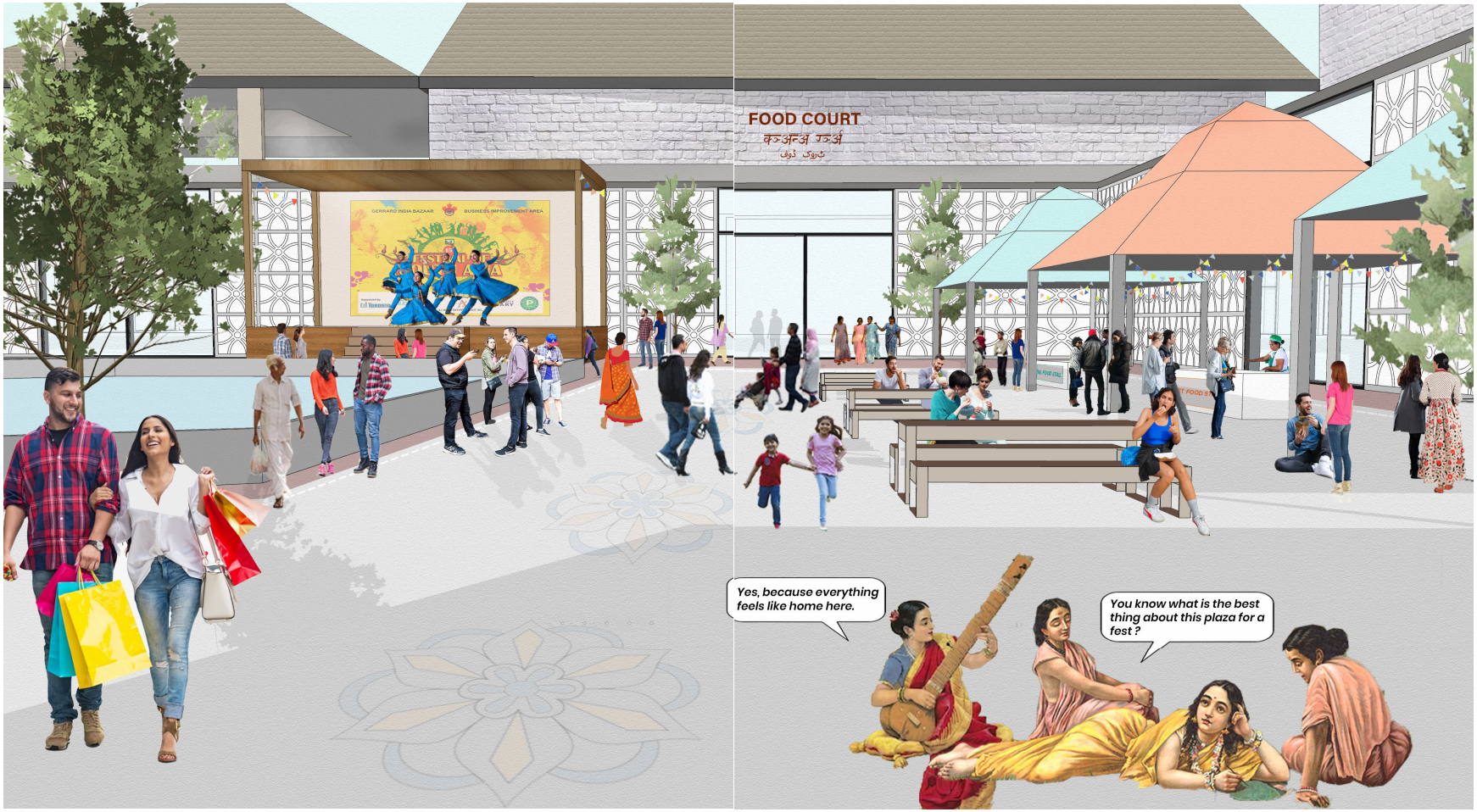


Figure 92 Food Fest

Central open-air plaza is the focal point of the Food & Cultural Center. It is a multi-functional space that can be used for a variety of events throughout the year. The goal is to design a space to accommodate variety of activities throughout the year according to the changing climate. The calm water body in the summer can be used as a skating rink during winters, and kiosks will be replaced by health care booths during a health camp, etc. The combination of these festive events, the aroma of south Asian food in the air and art & culture around will contribute to making the Food & Cultural Center in Thorncliffe Park different from a traditional shopping center, a space to make new memories, share old stories, and a place to call home.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Thorncliffe Park Food & Cultural Center Re-Considered
A new possibility for Toronto's Shopping Centers



Figure 93 Pathway to cultural familiarity

6.A Brief Conclusion

Food, culture, and traditions have a significant influence on the lives of many. This can be reflected through the stories and needs of the people in the community. The nature of this design thesis is to identify and explore design solutions that would intersect the issues existing in the south Asian community of Thorncliffe Park, Toronto. A neighborhood that is known to welcome and nurture incoming immigrant population but lacks the social, recreational, and cultural spaces to cater to their evolving needs. Hence, the architecture of this thesis aims to design spaces that use local and personal opinions and knowledge to cultivate spaces to build social connections. It is proposed that by introducing the concept of developing spaces based on the needs of the community, the quality of life of residents in these ethnic neighborhoods would be improved, and thus, help keep the future generation closer to their roots.

In addition, the thesis suggests that these projects have the strength to preserve the identity of a community through the medium of food, art, and craft. Projects based on the social requirements of the community can develop social awareness amongst other communities and other ethnic groups. This new prototype version of a district shopping center has the scope of development based on the diverse and evolving needs of the community that can become a focal point of significance in itself. Although the context research and design proposal focus specifically on the cultures and needs of the South Asian community of Thorncliffe Park, the methods of working and exploring creative design opportunities can be applicable other communities experiencing lack of social identity.

Towards the last phase of the thesis, the project aims to redirect its focus on improving urban life and creating a place of opportunities that lack in Thorncliffe Park. Involving needs, opinions, recipes of struggle and stories of the community is a design practice that gives the project a new meaning and identity. Hence, through this thesis, I have aimed to resolve the following questions, ironically those whose answers were found in the original stories of the ‘humans of this community’ and then reflected in the building and urban work of this design thesis.

1. *How can the idea of a local shopping center adapt to the needs of the community?*
2. *Can this new version of Toronto’s shopping center contribute to improving the quality of life of people in Thorncliffe Park and create job opportunities for better revenue generation in the community?*
3. *Can the Food & Cultural Center in Thorncliffe Park bring back the lost cultural significance for its residents?*
4. *How can the Food & Cultural Center in Thorncliffe Park be a platform for South Asian Immigrants to be seen and heard to preserve their socio-cultural identity?*

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