

Keele Finch Plus: First Open House & Public Consultation

Consultation Summary

This report is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript of the meeting, but instead provides a high level summary of participant feedback.

If you have any questions after reviewing this summary and the appendix, please contact Matt Armstrong, Planner, Strategic Initiatives, City of Toronto at marmstr3@toronto.ca or 416-392-3521.

Event Overview

On June 21, 2016, the City of Toronto hosted the first Open House and Public Consultation for the Keele Finch Plus Study. The consultation was held at James Cardinal McGuigan School at 1440 Finch Avenue West. All consultation materials are available online at www.toronto.ca/keelefinchplus.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- raise awareness, interest and involvement in the Study;
- inform and educate attendees about coming transit infrastructure, existing directions and implications;
- give the City a chance to learn from attendees about what works and what needs improvement in the area; and
- give the City a chance to begin to understand the perspective of locals and interested parties about how the area could evolve with rapid transit.

The event was part of the first phase of the Keele Finch Plus Study. City staff from City Planning (Community Planning, Urban Design, Transportation Planning and Strategic Initiatives) and Transportation Services were in attendance to answer questions and have discussions with attendees about the Study. Representatives from the TTC and Metrolinx were also in attendance to answer questions about their respective transit infrastructure projects.



Approximately 70 people attended the event. Younger and older people attended, as well as renters and homeowners, business people, community organizations, architects and developers, and people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Attendees provided feedback by speaking directly with Staff, providing feedback on comment sheets, placing sticky notes on display boards and maps, and placing dot stickers on maps and display boards. The participation and involvement of participants was appreciated. **Thank you to all who attended!**

Consultation Details and Promotion

The consultation ran from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. and consisted of an Open House with display boards, a short presentation given on the hour (4 times in total) to allow attendees to come at a time convenient to them, and activities. Feedback was encouraged from participants throughout the event and through conversation with Staff.

The consultation was promoted through two newspaper ads (the North York Mirror on June 8th and the Downsview Advocate on June 9th), a mailing to addresses in the area, a dedicated website, emails from the dedicated listserv, social media through official City accounts, through the local Councillor and centres of influence, such as the DUKE Heights Business Improvement Area.

For more on the event itself, attendees, promotion and more details, please see the appendix.

Summary of Feedback

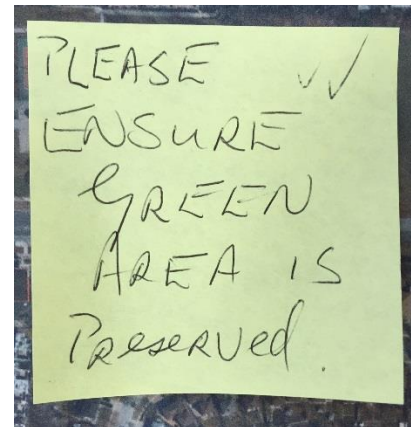
Feedback was received from attendees in note form, from comment sheets, through activities at the event and through conversation. **The following is a summary of the feedback received.**

Opportunity

Attendees told us that the Keele and Finch area is a great community and great place to live. York University is nearby and there is easy highway access to the Greater Toronto Area. With the coming subway, these should combine to create new job opportunities. There is also an opportunity to make the area more beautiful and more walkable, and to encourage transit usage through new development.

Neighbourhood amenities

One of the most repeated comments received was that there needs to be more to do, especially in the evenings. Cafes, restaurants, cultural facilities and anything to do where all ages can participate should be encouraged. Local parks, playgrounds and public spaces are great, especially where there are mature trees, but they could use more and better facilities and programming. Some of these spaces should be made safer and better lit, with more active programs. Green areas should be preserved. The community garden along Four Winds Drive is great, but could be expanded or a new one could be added elsewhere.

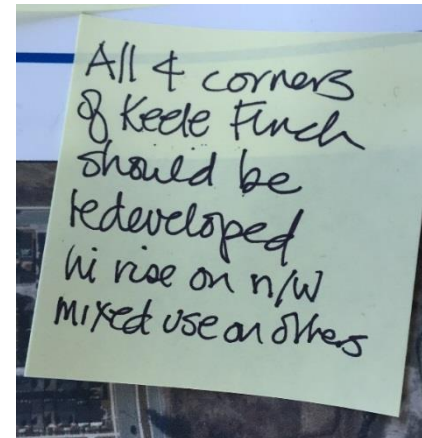


Change is expected

Most comments suggest that change and growth in the area is expected. Change seemed most desired at the intersection of Keele and Finch, along Keele Street and in the employment areas to the southeast of Keele and Finch. There were a few comments about encouraging change along Finch to the west of Keele Street and about protecting neighbourhoods along Four Winds Drive and around Hucknall Avenue.

Development Types

There were a number of comments about development type. There was one comment that said there should be no condominiums allowed in the area and another that suggested redevelopment of reverse-lotted houses on Finch and Keele. Overall, there was a desire for ground floor retail on Keele Street with other uses above and a desire for new development to frame public spaces to make them feel safer. There was also a call for more office uses in the employment areas and for more buildings with a mix of uses in them.



Development Intensity

Intensification along Finch West and Keele Street was suggested as being "ok", particularly along Keele Street and around the Keele and Finch intersection. All four corners of the intersection were identified for redevelopment. Mid-rise sized buildings were sited often as being desirable in the area, though one person suggested tall buildings were "ok" and one person said that certain areas of low-rise housing should be protected. One commenter wrote that no more low-rise, low-density housing should be allowed. Another commenter wrote that there should be no new development north of Finch.

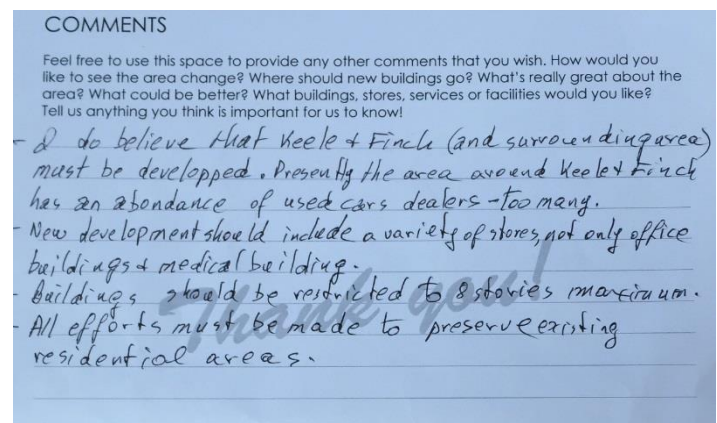
Streetscapes

There was a clear desire for better, greener and more walkable streets throughout the area. However, the employment areas were cited often.

Pedestrian crossings of major roads should be easier, safer and shorter distances. More trees, traffic calming measures, bump outs and trees were mentioned.

Look and Feel

The look and feel of the area was brought up as a topic of discussion many times. Attendees felt that the construction, some industrial and commercial uses, and the design of some streets was negatively impacting the image and reputation of the area. The large fuel storage yards (storage tanks) were cited often.



Local Access

More and better ways to walk to transit including new walkways and new streets were identified as a need in the area. The neighbourhood areas to the southwest of Keele and Finch were identified as requiring greater permeability. Comments about better connections to the community north of James

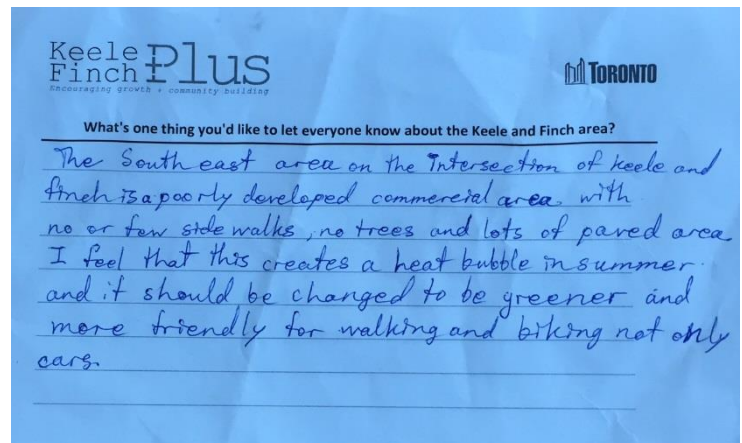
Cardinal McGuigan School (and better integration of that community with the rest of the area) were also received.

Safety

For some, the area has a largely unfounded poor reputation from a safety perspective. However, there were comments about better lighting, especially in green spaces and comments about better framing public space with development to make them feel safer. One person commented that more retail along Finch Avenue West would give people a reason to be in the area and keep it safer. High traffic speeds on local streets were identified as a safety concern.

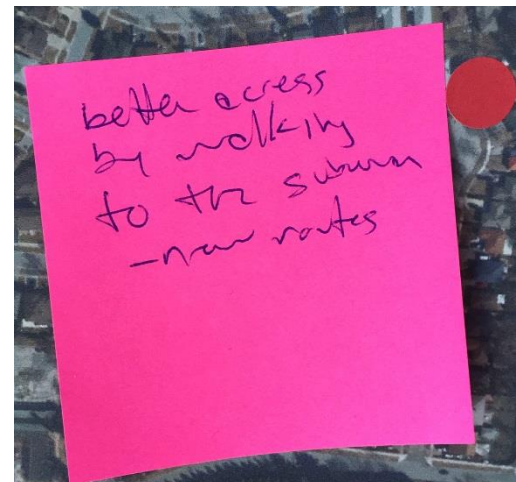
Roadways

Traffic congestion was cited as being bad in the area, but that it may get better when construction is over. Attendees also commented that there are too many trucks and tanker trucks which are noisy, disruptive and detract from the feeling of the area. One person commented that religious institutions in employment areas are a traffic concern and one person suggested that the York University busway should be used for truck traffic.



Walking

There were many comments about walkability, including the need to make streets more pedestrian friendly. Some went so far as to say that Keele Street south of Finch is "not walkable". Attendees said that crossings should be shorter, sidewalks wider and greener, and there should be more routes and walkways.



Cycling

Comments were received that spoke to the desire for safer street cycling and separated lanes. Attendees want separated bike lanes on Finch Avenue West and bike lanes on Keele Street. For off-street cycling, the hydro corridor trail was described as an asset in the area, but that it should be extended. One person was interested in bike share in the area.

Construction

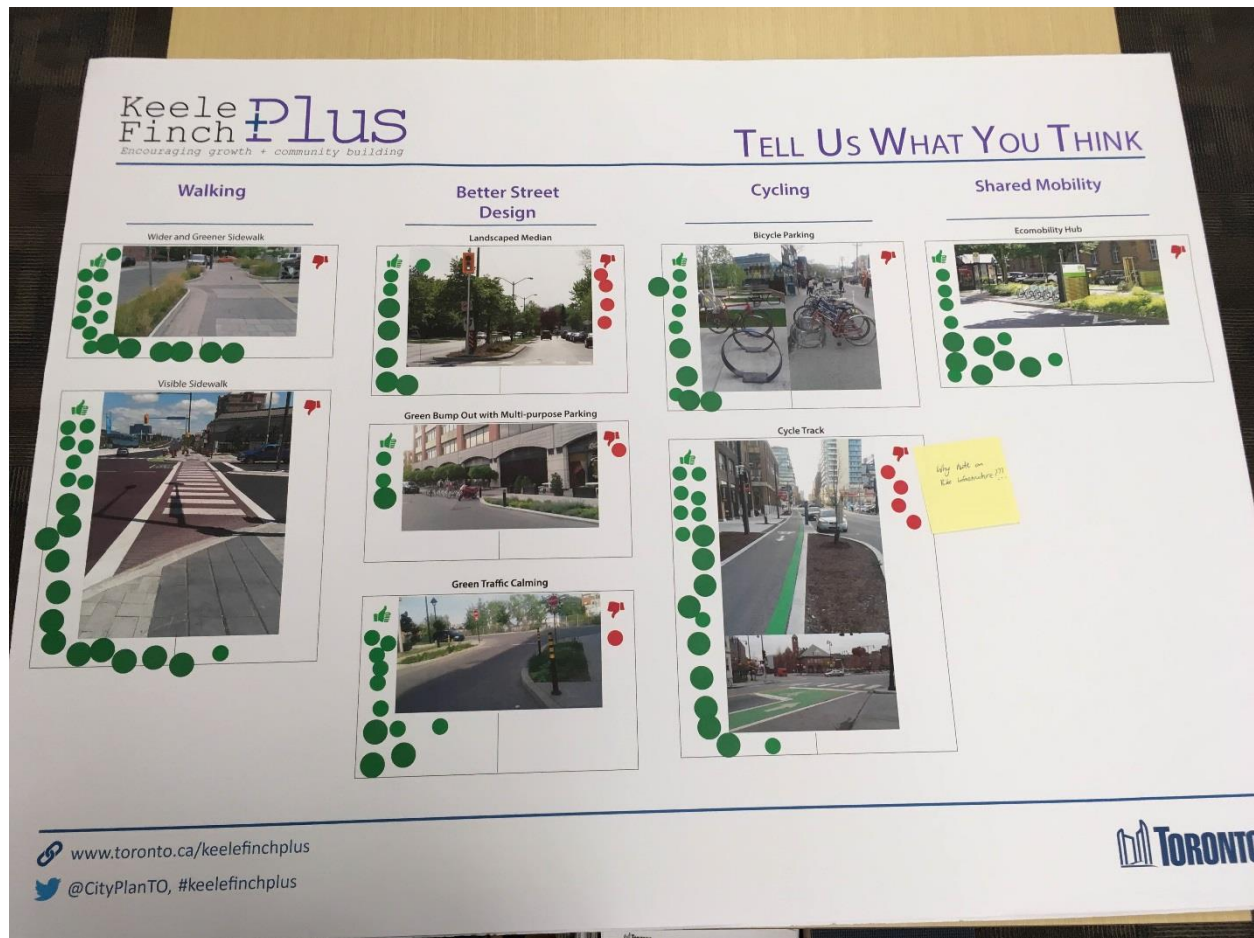
Construction at the Keele and Finch intersection was described as taking too long and being too disruptive. It was also described as impacting homes near to Finch Avenue West.

Parking

Comments about parking were in reference to there being too much paved area around Keele and Finch and that parking could be underground.

What happens to this feedback?

This feedback is one component of input into the Study. Other inputs include planning policy and directions (including Provincial policy), research and technical analysis with facts and figures, and other inputs from the local community, stakeholders, City Divisions and agencies. Toronto City Planning will consider all of this feedback to develop directions for the next stage of this Study. The directions will help guide future work in developing concept plans.



Appendix: Consultation Details

Date, time and location of consultation: June 21, 2016 between 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at James Cardinal McGuigan School (1440 Finch Avenue West, just west of Keele Street).

Format: Open House with display boards. Ten minute presentation given on the hour (4 times) to allow as many people as possible to see it. Three activities for attendees.

Handouts: Discussion Guide that explained the Study at a high level and provided an opportunity for comments. Contact details and the website are on the Guide.

Promotions: Two newspaper ads (North York Mirror on June 8th and Downsview Advocate on June 9th). A flyer distributed to 12,597 addresses around the Keele and Finch area. Addresses included rental units, homes and businesses. A dedicated website was set up for the Study and contained event details. Emails were sent to the Keele Finch listerv containing 80 subscribers in advance of the event. Social media were used for promotion through City of Toronto official accounts. Encouragement of centres of influence, such as organizations and community groups to spread the word. Promotion through Councillor Perruzza's office.

Aboriginal Consultation: Letters were sent to the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, the Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat, the Kawartha Nishnawbe First Nation, the Mississaugas of the New Credit, and the Metis Nation to offer to consult with them directly. The letter also provided details of the public consultation. The Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat responded and asked to be kept informed.

Feedback opportunities: Staff covering many disciplines, including Transportation Planning, Urban Design and Community Planning were present to take questions. Questions were taken after each presentation. A comment section was included in the Discussion Guide. A half-page comment sheet was left on the tables. A 'like/dislike' dot exercise allowed attendees to let us know what they thought of other solutions implemented in other areas of the city. Two mapping exercises were facilitated by staff where attendees could mark areas where that they liked or could be improved, or where they thought growth should be encouraged. Sticky notes were also provided for comments on the maps.

Reach: About 70 people attended on June 21. There were a total of 552 unique visitors to the website (May 1 to June 21). Twitter impressions for tweets about the event were 1,654 during the event and 7,985 leading up to the event. Note that these are impressions on the City Planning account only (@CityPlanTO). Additional impressions would have occurred from tweets from Councillor Peruzza, Metrolinx, DUKE Heights, and other accounts (personal or otherwise).

Comments received: The following were received in addition to one-on-one discussions and feedback received by Staff, emails received and the many dots placed on the maps and display boards: 5 Discussion Guide comment sheets, 18 Half-page comment sheets and 60 sticky note comments placed on the maps.