

Keele Finch Plus: September 28, 2017 Open House & Public Workshop

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 matt.armstrong@toronto.ca or 416-392-3521.

Event Overview

On September 28, 2017, the City of Toronto hosted an Open House and Public Workshop for the Keele Finch Plus Study. This is the third open house hosted for the Study and second workshop. The consultation was held at James Cardinal McGuigan School at 1440 Finch Avenue West. Consultation materials are available online at www.toronto.ca/keelefinchplus.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- report back on what we heard at the March 7, 2017 Open House and Public Workshop;
- present three options for how the area may grow and change in the long term, which are all based on feedback received to date and other work;
- discuss with the public the merits and shortcomings of each of the options in order to make the options better;
- focus the discussion on connections, the public realm and buildings (type, size and placement); and
- receive feedback on community services and facilities, including which facilities the public uses and which they believe could use improvement.



The event was part of the second phase of the Keele Finch Plus Study. City Planning staff as well as staff from Parks, Forestry & Recreation 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, including the public realm improvements that come with them.

Approximately 100 people attended the event. Younger and older people attended, as well as renters and homeowners, business people, students, 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 notes on display boards and participating in the workshop. The participation and involvement of attendees is always appreciated. **Thank you to all who attended!**

Consultation Details and Promotion

The consultation ran from 5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and consisted of an open house with display boards, a short presentation and a facilitated workshop. Feedback was encouraged from participants throughout the event and through conversation with Staff.

Promotions

The consultation was promoted through two newspapers: the North York Mirror included a print ad on Thursday September 21st and the Downsview Advocate printed it in their September release. The Downsview Advocate also sent out a notice to their email list, posted a banner on their website, and included Facebook and Twitter messages. A consultation flyer was mailed to all who previously provided an address. The dedicated website listed the event, emails were sent from the dedicated listserv, posts were made through official City social media accounts, and word was spread through the local Councillor and centres of influence, such as the DUKE Heights Business Improvement Area.

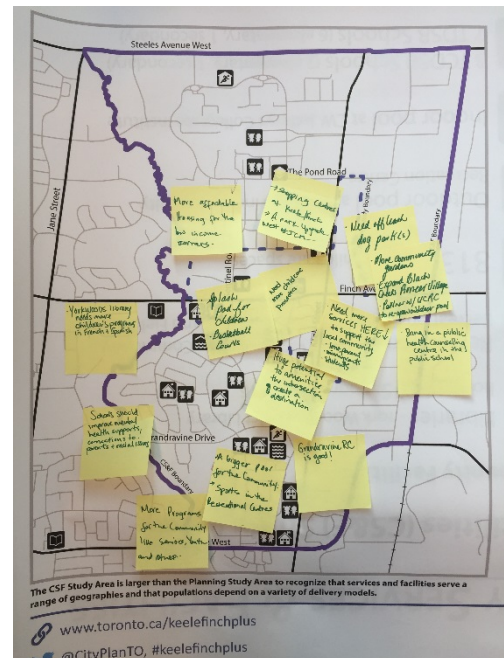
For more on the event itself, attendees, promotion and more details, please see Appendix A.

Open House & Activities

The Open House consisted of two areas: the first area provided an overview and context for the Study, as well as the results of Phase 1. The intention of including this area was to ensure that participants new to the Study can understand the reasons for the Study and what has been accomplished to date. The second area included a summary of what we heard from the March 2017 open house and public workshop.



Almost all participants were involved for each of the three options, which was great!



The Three Options

Three options were presented to the public one-at-a-time during the workshop. Each option was based on work completed to date, including public input.

Option 1, called 'The Stations', focussed on two geographic areas close to the Keele and Finch intersection (near the future Finch West subway station and Finch West LRT stop), and Sentinel and Finch intersection (near the future Finch West LRT stop). This option proposed intensification of those two areas, while offering some public realm improvements.



Option 2, called 'Nodes and Corridors', geographically builds on Option 1 by extending the area of change north and south along Keele, as well as east along Finch. It also connects the two stations via redevelopment and new connections on the south side of Finch. The areas around the stations were not proposed to be as intently developed as in Option 1. Public realm improvements extended further than in Option 1.

Option 3, called 'Main Streets', included the largest geographic area, the most new connections and the greatest public realm improvements. The intention of this option was to provide significant density to support more than one 'main street' with shops and services. This meant contemplating many new streets and significant redevelopment. This option therefore has the greatest potential impact on existing neighbourhoods.

Summary of Feedback

Feedback was received from attendees through workshop activities, comment sheets, notes on boards and through conversation. **The following is a summary of the feedback received.**

In General

Overall, there was great interest at the consultation where participants were clearly eager to learn about the options and to be involved in making their community even better. Unlike previous consultations, there was decidedly less discussion about the transit infrastructure, and much more discussion about community building. This made for focussed and useful discussions in evaluating the options. Most participants stayed to consider all three options.

Create a Destination

One of the most consistent messages from the public was the need to transform the area immediately around the subway station into a 'destination'. Comments were made about encouraging shops, services, restaurants and possibly even cultural facilities nearby. Participants called for the area to have a distinct and vibrant character, with enough interest to encourage people who work in the area to linger and stay into the evening. Affordable spaces for artists were also mentioned.

Integrate, Don't Inundate

Creating a denser, more connected community was of interest to the vast majority of participants. Better integration among the residential communities was called for, as well as with York University. Participants liked the connections shown in Options 2 and 3. However, some participants were concerned that the area could be overwhelmed with students or overwhelmed by the size and scale of development. Option 3, in particular was cited as having gone too far in terms of the scale of the development on the south side of Finch Avenue West (between the nodes) and in how development was depicted around Fountainhead Park. Option 1 was not preferred by any workshop table, with some calling it 'underwhelming'. It seems clear that a better connected and modestly bold plan is preferred by the community.



Comfortable, More Pleasant Streets

The landscaping, including streetscapes, open spaces and buffers to industrial uses were all considered positive elements of the options. Participants commented that currently, Finch Avenue West is unpleasant to walk, and that active frontages onto Finch, along with wider sidewalks and street trees would make it more pleasant.

More Direct, More Walkable, More Cycle-friendly Connections

There was near-universal support for improving connectivity, which may partly explain why Options 2 and 3 were generally preferred over Option 1. Participants liked the extension of Tangiers Road northward, believing that it could help with traffic congestion in the area. Making connections more formal across the hydro corridor was well-liked as well, as was the new street around Fountainhead Park. The existing informal connection between Sentinel and Murray Ross to the mall on Four Winds Drive was the only 'missing' formal connection that was mentioned multiple times.

As at previous meetings, some participants expressed a desire for future connections to be streets wherever possible. Mid-block connections and pathways were described as feeling less safe and less well-lit. Paraphrasing one participant: 'sometimes the only eyes-on-the-street are from drivers'.

Improvements for cyclists were mentioned, with participants questioning why cycle connections were not shown on the sketch of a potential future Keele Street.

Better Parks, and More (decently sized) Parks

There were several comments about improving Fountainhead Park. All participants who commented, indicated that they liked the new street around the park and better framing of the park. There was also great interest in seeing the park itself improved and better programmed. More seating, a skating rink, basketball courts, a small venue space and better furniture (including more benches and waste bins) are all examples of items cited. A connection directly from the park to the shopping area on Four Winds was thought to be good for the visibility and viability of retail.

A few comments were made about the reduction in size of Fountainhead Park through the new street and new buildings framing it. However, it should be noted that none of the options show new buildings on city parkland.

Concerns were expressed about the size and type of open spaces provided in each of the options. Participants suggested that the parks were well distributed, but perhaps too small to be useful. Similarly, there was interest in a plaza by the subway station, but an actual park might be better located on side streets, rather than along Finch Avenue West.

Housing is Important

Comments from the meeting included a request for future housing to be of a mix of types and tenures. There is interest in condos, townhouses, rental tenure and ownership. Concern about the future affordability of housing was expressed.

Building Types and Sizes Depends on Location

There was consensus that midrise buildings are appropriate within the Study Area. However, some participants believed that the heights of midrise buildings should be limited to 6 to 8 storeys in most areas, whereas others believed that buildings should be as tall as possible at the Keele and Finch, and Sentinel and Finch intersections. Some workshop tables provided feedback that Finch Avenue West between the two nodes should only have low-rise development, and that mid-rise buildings to the north of Fountainhead Park are too large and could overwhelm the park.

Some participants have expressed a desire to see tall buildings in the area. However, Staff have indicated that there are strict height limits resulting from the area being underneath the flight path of Downsview Airport. Those heights are included as part of Phase 1 of the Study.

It should be noted that Staff have been clear that no consideration for redesignation of employment lands to non-employment uses will be considered through the Keele Finch Plus Study. Regardless, some participants believe that residential uses should be considered east of Keele Street. Work was completed as part of Phase 1 of the Study includes an "Environmental Conditions Report", which

interprets Provincial Guidance about land use compatibility. The report includes Figure 3 which shows a minimum separation distance between classes of industrial uses and sensitive uses (such as residential).

Buildings Should Better Frame Streets and Open Spaces

While there was debate about the size of buildings facing Fountainhead Park, there remained interest in better framing this park. Similarly, some participants suggested that all new buildings have parking underground or to the back of their buildings, with only landscaping on the primary street. The Walmart Store at Broadoaks and Keele was cited as a good example of this.



A Complete Community

There was great interest in seeing the area evolve into a more mixed-use community where day-to-day needs could be addressed locally. More housing and more housing options were desired, as were more job opportunities and opportunities to shop and dine. This would be supported by an improved public realm and better programming (i.e. more to do) in public spaces. Suggestions were made for improving community services and facilities (e.g. for a library east of Black Creek and for larger community pools), though the Grandravine Community Centre was described as 'good'.

Efforts Should be Made to Improve Safety

Safety concerns were discussed, with two types dominating: personal safety and land use compatibility. Participants were concerned about showing new buildings east of Keele along the proposed Tangiers Road extension. However, these concerns seemed to be allayed when Staff provided clarity that those buildings were being contemplated as employment or industrial uses only. For personal safety, participants cited a preference for streets over mid-block connections or pathways (as previously cited) and for more activity in general. However some participants wondered if this would be improved once the subway is open, with people coming and going to the station.

Other Comments

There were several comments that are less easy to categorize, but are worth noting. Participants provided the following:

- Fuel trucks should not cross over the subway corridor;
- The busway should be used by trucks in the future;
- Accessibility is important for all – regardless of age or ability;
- Future noise from traffic, industry and more people is a concern;

- There is concern about the ability of infrastructure to support density;
- Traffic is getting worse and should be planned for;
- Parking should be metered on side-streets to avoid commuters parking on residential streets; and
- Stormwater management and basement flooding are concerns.



What happens to this feedback?

This feedback is one component of input into the Keele Finch Plus Study. Other inputs include planning policy and inputs from the local community, stakeholders, City Divisions and agencies. Toronto City Planning will consider all of this feedback in identifying which elements of the options shown at the consultation will form part of the preferred option. The preferred option will be presented at future public consultations.

Appendix A: Consultation Details

Date, time and location of consultation: September 28, 2017 between 5:00 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. Extended hours to allow as many people as possible to participate. Fifteen minute presentation. Workshop.

Handouts: Discussion Guide that explained the Study at a high level and summary of Phase 1. Comment sheets. Contact details and the website are on the Guide.

Promotions: Two newspaper ads: 1) North York Mirror on Thursday September 21st in print and 2) Downsview Advocate in print at the end of September, and through electronic means (email listserv, website post, Facebook and Twitter posts). A flyer distributed to interested parties who previously provided an address. A dedicated website was set up for the Study and contained event details. Two emails were sent to the Keele Finch Plus listerv containing over 200 subscribers in advance of the event. Social media were used for promotion through City of Toronto official accounts (Facebook, Twitter). 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. A follow-up conference call was held with the The Six Nations. The Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat requested involvement only if there was soil disturbance or archaeological studies.

Feedback opportunities: Staff covering many disciplines, including Transportation Planning, Urban Design and Community Planning, as well as Staff from the Transportation Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation Divisions were present to take questions. A comment section was included in the Discussion Guide. A half-page comment sheet was left on the tables. The workshop was conducted at tables with facilitators who took notes and helped facilitate the workshop discussion. Two City-retained consultants – one from DTAH (urban design and public realm) and one from LEA (transportation planning) were presented to listen from their points-of-view and to provide comments back.

Reach: Nearly 100 people attended on September 28, 2017. There were a total of 431 unique visits to the website (September 12 to 28, 2017). Twitter impressions for tweets about the event were 2,060 during the event and 1,332 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: Comments were received from one-on-one discussions and feedback received by Staff, emails received, completed workshop maps and notes, comment sheets and phone calls.