

# Jane Finch Initiative: In-Person and Virtual Open House



**2:00-5:00pm, March 25th, 2023**

**6:00-8:00pm, March 28th, 2023**

## OVERVIEW

On March 25th, 2023, an in-person Open House was hosted by the Jane Finch Community and Family (JFCF) Centre and the City of Toronto, with support from Perkins and Will. This consultation is part of the Jane Finch Initiative comprehensive engagement stream and it was held in person at the Jane Finch Mall.

A virtual Open House was held on the evening of March 28th 2023 on Zoom. Members of the public can review and comment through Social Pinpoint and can download [materials](#) via the [website](#).

The purpose of the events was to:

- Present, discuss, and receive feedback on a draft parks and public spaces plan; a draft mobility strategy for getting around the area; and, draft concepts of new building locations and forms.
- Increase general awareness of the Jane Finch Initiative, and encourage residents to participate in the wider Jane Finch Initiative engagement process.

## FACILITATORS:

- 1 JFCF Centre staff, Denelle Carvalho.
- 10 City of Toronto staff, Zahra Joseph Wilson, Leah Birnbaum, John Smith, Andrew Farncombe, Andrew Cohrs, Daniel Hahn, Alyssa Krantzberg, Sam Baptise, Heather Oliver, and Hania Butter.
- 2 Perkins and Will staff, Paul Kulig and Eunice Wong.
- 3 Resident co-facilitators, Terryl Knox, William Lopez, and Sawjana Rafique.
- 1 Resident artist, Mindy Huynh.

## HOW WE ENGAGED

At the March 25th in-person event, staff members from the City, Perkins and Will, and the Jane Finch Centre hosted tables in a central location in Jane Finch Mall. Poster boards on the draft strategies and the four focus areas were displayed, and flyers, booklets, and refreshments were distributed to community members. A community artist facilitated a neighbourhood mapping exercise, and community members were encouraged to share feedback in discussion with staff. Community comments were captured on sticky notes which were physically posted on the boards and neighbourhood mapping exercise, or entered digitally through [Social Pinpoint](#).

**Summary Report by the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre**

Refreshments were provided. The agenda for the March 28th Virtual Open House can be viewed in Appendix A

Approximately 375 people viewed the boards, shared feedback, or spoke with staff facilitators at the In-Person and Virtual Open Houses.

## WHAT WE HEARD

### March 25th, In-Person Event:

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions and sticky notes shared during the Open House. A full list of the recorded feedback can be viewed in Appendix B.

#### KEY THEMES

- **Mobility: Getting Around**
  - Maintaining sidewalks and roads, including temporary walkways during construction, is a priority to ensure safety, accessibility, and cleanliness.
  - Addressing congestion is a priority. Residents are concerned about the impact of densification on roads.
  - Bike lanes should be well-organized and cohesive across Jane and Finch, and should be complimented by improvements to Bike Share services.
  - More amenities including public washrooms, seating, and water fountains should be added to recreational trails and main streets.
- **Greening**
  - Maintaining existing parks and public spaces is a priority.
  - Amenities such as public washrooms, seating, and water fountains should be added.
  - The City should invest in improving and adding recreational facilities in public parks. Residents shared feedback on facilities that are not used, and the facilities that should be added.
  - Concerns about resident safety in public parks, especially concerns about gang activity and shootings.
- **Building**
  - Affordable housing is a priority. Residents would like to see more well-maintained Toronto Community Housing units, affordable rental buildings, affordable senior housing, and affordable family-sized units.
  - Residents expressed general concerns about displacement.
  - Residents expressed concerns about densification and congestion. Some residents expressed a preference for mid-rise construction over high-rise construction.

## **March 28th: Virtual Meeting**

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the virtual meeting. All comments were also captured on the online engagement platform.

### **KEY THEMES**

- Improvements should be made across the study area. Improvements should not only be clustered around the intersection.
  - Travel time from the all residential areas of the Jane and Finch to the services and programs offered along Jane Street and Finch Avenue should be considered.
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- Question: How were the focus areas identified, and what are the plans for the southeast corner of the study area?
    - Response from Perkins and Will staff: Since it is out of the scope for this project to model the entire secondary plan area, focus areas were selected to represent larger areas. The south east corner of the intersection is the Jane Finch Mall, and an extensive planning and design process for the Jane Finch Mall site is underway. More information on that process and the initial design proposals is available on the JFM+ website [<https://jfmplus.ca>]
  - Question: It looks like there is a lot going on around the intersection, and not as much in the Black Creek area and the lower glenn heights area. Is there a plan to improve connection between residential areas and the intersection? People currently walk between buildings.
    - Response from Perkins and Will staff: More rapid densification and growth is anticipated around the intersection because of the creation of the LRT.
    - Response from City Staff: Desire for greater and more efficient pedestrian connections to Finch has come up before in this engagement. If there are existing shortcuts, we can look into making them more formal, safer, or more accessible. Some of these connections are already on the map and we'd like to hear of other that we missed.
  - Question: What do the dotted white lines refer to?
    - Response from Perkins and Will: The dotted white lines are proposed new public streets.
  - Question: Would a Plan of Subdivision be required to create these new streets, including for large properties like the Jane Finch Mall?

- Response from City staff: New public roads are secured through the subdivision process, so a subdivision application would be required.
- Question: Are these roads in correspondence with the secondary plan?
  - Response from City staff: The secondary plan hasn't been written yet, we are currently engaging on these ideas and guidelines, and the secondary plan will reflect the outcome of the engagement process. There are some constraints, such as water and sewage infrastructure that prevents building in certain areas.
- Question: How many residents are we expecting in the focus areas?
  - Response from City Staff: We will use the projections of where new buildings are to develop a growth projection. Determining that approximate number is a part of this planning process. We are anticipating significant growth in the area.
- Question: Are all of the shopping malls undergoing development?
  - Response from City staff: The malls are privately owned, and if applications are submitted, the City will respond to them. We have an application for a tower in the parking lot of the Yorkgate mall, and the Jane Finch Mall is undergoing a planning and design process, but no application has been submitted yet.
- Question: Has the conservation authority provided any input yet?
  - Response from City staff: The TRCA is aware of the study, and they will review the draft materials. We hope to put together a plan that maintains the integrity of the ravine, and which increases access so people can enjoy greater access to nature.
- Question: Regarding the blue "mixed use node" zone, what does it mean by "direct access to the LRT"? Will there be underground access to the LRT for people who live on Finch?
  - Response from Perkins and Will staff: These sites front onto Finch Avenue West, so there will be easy access to the LRT. Since the LRT is at grade, not below ground, there will be no underground access.
- Question: How many stores will be characterised in midrise and tall buildings?
  - Response from City staff: We don't know yet. The priority in the plan is the relative height, meaning that the tallest buildings will be around the intersections, and some taller buildings will also be around Highway 400 so that the height of buildings doesn't affect the enjoyment of public streets and parks as much.
- Question: Regarding the retail strategies, what is the distinction between the narrow pink areas and the intensity of retail in the priority retail areas?
  - Response from Perkins and Will: The priority retail street will be concentrating and adding to the amount of retail around the intersection, especially on the existing mall sites. These priority retail areas will be extended by the shopping streets (along Jane Street and Finch Street).

- Response from City staff: The difference in policy is that retail will be required at grade in priority retail areas, but only encouraged on shopping streets.
- Question: Is this project actively taking into account the Ontario government's proposal to increase the available housing stock over the next few years.
  - Response from City staff: We are generally intending to approve more housing quickly. This aligns with the province's growth targets. We are also hoping to use inclusionary zoning policies to both increase housing stock and create housing that is affordable.
- Question: Is the intention for this project to create a community where people live, play, work, and travel?
  - Response from City staff: Jane and Finch was originally built and designed as a car oriented community, so we are trying to transform it into more of a "complete community"; a place where you can move between residential spaces, work places, and recreational facilities easily without requiring a car.
- Question: Does this project overlap with Tower Renewal?
  - Response from City staff: We would like for the land use plan to complement tower renewal projects, and to not interfere with initiatives like community gardens, or the orchard at San Romanoway. Investing in retrofits was the initial priority of Tower Renewal, and it aligns with the sustainability goals of the Jane Finch Initiative.
- Question: How soon will the parks be developed? Will the broken down fences be repaired as well, especially the fences between the Shoreham Court Park and Condo Building near Jane Street?
  - Response from City staff: There are two ways for parks to be developed. The City can fund new parks or park improvements through the capital budget, or the City can receive a cash payment from developers to be used towards creating new parks.
- Question: Is there a library on the west side of the map?
  - Response from City staff: There are two libraries, the York Woods Library and the Jane/Sheppard Library both on the east side of the study area. York Woods Library is a good size for the area. The Jane/Sheppard branch is identified in the [Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan](#) as a relatively new branch in good condition, though below the ideal size for a neighbourhood branch. The branch will be held in a good state of repair.
- Question: How preliminary are the locations of the parks? There is an existing police station on the left half of the park proposed on Norfinch.
  - Response from City staff: The exact sizes and locations of parks are not represented on the boards, these are very preliminary conceptual images, and there are no plans to turn a police station into a park.
- Comment: Have you considered a community college?

- Response from City staff: The city can't create a new community college, but will be pushing to retain educational uses and will cooperate on any future proposals for educational uses.
- Comment: How about a community garden in the mixed use area on Finch Avenue.
- Comment: The setbacks on Jane Street are not going to be used as parks just because they are green space. Create real parks behind the buildings along Jane Street, and improve the overall design and beautification of the street, even if the setback needs to be narrowed.
  - Response from City staff: It is helpful to hear what features need to be on the street to make it more comfortable and beautiful to walk on. If they are set back, what else would need to be added to feel like a "city in a park".
- Comment: Desire for malls to be redeveloped and for amenities to be improved.

## APPENDIX A: AGENDA (MARCH 28TH)

### 6:05 Welcome

- Welcome, land acknowledgement, agenda [JFC]
- Introductions in chat [all]

### 6:10 Presentation

- 5 minutes: City introduction and context on the Jane Finch Initiative [City of Toronto staff]
- 10 minutes: Presentation on the draft strategies for Greening, Moving, and Building, including more detailed design guidelines for the four focus areas [Perkins and Will]
- 5 minutes: Q&A
- 5 minutes: Explain social pinpoint exercise [JFC]

### 6:30 Social pinpoint activity

- An interactive version of the poster boards on [Social Pinpoint](#) was shared with attendees.
- Staff reviewed each of the boards with attendees and time was allotted for attendees to share questions and feedback.
- Facilitators ensured that all questions and comments were recorded on Social Pinpoint. [All]

### 7:55 Closing

- 5 minutes: Final thanks, links, and follow up notes [JFC]

## **APPENDIX B: MARCH 28TH RECORDED FEEDBACK**

### **Moving around Jane and Finch (map board)**

- Snowplough damage to residential streets
- Need better maintenance of rental buildings
- Flyover for pedestrians – crossing is not safe
- More: bicycle parking, bike lanes, electric-assist bikes (for Bike Share)
- Priority bus lanes (BRT) on Jane street
- Bus routes should not be winding, they should be organized in a grid.
- Improving bus frequency needs to be a priority – recently waited 45 minutes for the Jane Street bus.
- Maintenance of roads needs to be a priority

### **Moving around Jane and Finch (precedent board)**

- Comments regarding the impact of LRT construction on people's daily lives, creating barriers to walking, issues with utilities
- Winter sidewalk maintenance is bad
- Places for seniors to walk –indoors
- Maintain the roads
- Formalize desire paths
- More seating
- Reduce congestion
- Bike on boulevards
- Two travel lanes for cars
- More frequent and reliable bus service
- Priority bus lanes in the middle lane of Jane street
- Transit transfer needs to be cheaper, fare integration, better connection to Go Transit and BikeShare
- Free bikes and affordable bike share. Also look into e-scooters and e-bikes
- Repave Jane and backroads – dangerous
- Better sidewalk connections, shorter walking distances
- Bike share is a necessity
- Better lighting – LED, none on the trail, really dark
- More garbage receptacles
- Water fountain near bus stop
- Public phones
- LRT [tracks] not smooth, damages vehicles



### **Greening Jane and Finch (precedent board)**

- Better maintenance and seating areas
- More outdoor recreational facilities including those to develop our youth
- More programming for kids and gardening — connection to community centers
- Topcliff Park needs reinvestment
- Keep Hullmar Park –very important to the community
- Youth activities – skate rinks, tennis courts, skateboard areas
- Concerns about safety and shootings
- Replace townhouses with 4-storeys and better security
- Skate-spot opportunity at Topcliff
- Innovative solutions for washrooms in the ravine (composting toilets?)
- Playground updates at Driftwood
- Public playgrounds
- Active play spaces for young children
- More programming for kids and gardening – connection to community centres
- Farmers markets + local food needs to be affordable

### **Greening Jane and Finch**

- Habitat for bees
- More trees
- Community centres don't feel safe – gang activity
- Add to existing empty space around Topcliff Park – splash pads, benches, slides
- Access to trees and water is good
- More public spaces further from Jane and Finch intersection
- With more high rises we should see more parks, more recreation
- Need more space in rec programs for youth – bowling, swimming pools
- Comment that ravines need better maintenance to clean litter and make sure the trails can be used year round
- Support for better connections between school yards, hydro corridor and other green spaces
- Suggestions for reuse of an existing bocce court at Topcliff Park that is no longer in use.
- Desire for better access to the ravine and more options for public washrooms - suggestion of composting toilets to serve areas that can't be connected to the sewage system.

### **Building Jane and Finch (area-structure map board)**

- More rental housing
- More affordable housing

- More TCHC housing
- Need more housing
- Need seniors housing
- Concerns about displacement of existing residents
- Concerns that the redevelopment of the malls would result in the loss of affordable retail options in the area
- Questions about the phasing of the mall redevelopments, who is leading it and how long it will take.
- Concerns about parking at the mall if they add new condos - skepticism that people won't own cars even with LRT.
- concerns over safety and shootings. Thought that the design of buildings can make people safer - slightly taller buildings (suggested 4 storeys to house 4 families) with better security.
- Questions about economic feasibility of the buildings shown on the boards. Suggestion that the economic feasibility be explored before we set policy to guide built form

### **Building Jane and Finch (Precedent Board)**

- Build housing for lower economic classes
- Don't let development push out residents
- Make the mall bigger – more businesses
- Bigger stores not here yet, want more
- Better retail options, good businesses in area
- Space for more small businesses
- Keep stores on bottom and housing on top
- Preference for mid-rise
- Family sized units
- Meeting and community spaces in buildings
- Lower auto insurance
- More small community spaces throughout
- Don't forget improvement to Toronto Community Housing. Question about the TCH redevelopment at Grass-ways and a comment that this proposal needs to be more clear on our materials

### **Focus Area: The Jane and Finch Intersection (map board)**

- Green towers (like Milan)
- Free parking in area around the intersection
- Control safety with development – drugs, gangs, outreach
- Improve aesthetics of community, ensuring best from developers; Good design not cheapest
- Maintain rent prices for families

- Lower amount of parking spots and reduce additional traffic on York Gate Boulevard; Congestion
- Affordable housing for seniors and everyone else

**Focus Area: The Jane and Finch Intersection (renderings board)**

- Concerns about corruption in condo boards – need for support for owners to organize
- Concerns about traffic and parking
- Uneven streetcar [LRT] tracks at Jane and Finch
- Distances between stops are too long

**Focus Area: Finch Avenue**

- Combination of new and old
- Wide sidewalks
- Bike lanes
- We should consider economic/social feasibility of proposed developments

**Focus Area: Jane Street**

- Family friendly spaces
- Bigger spaces

**Additional comments:**

- Job development should be a priority, especially job fairs for youth and youth development and experiences.