

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting



6:00-8:00pm, April 17th, 2023

OVERVIEW

On April 17th, 2023, the Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee meeting was hosted by the Jane Finch Community and Family (JFCF) Centre with support from the City of Toronto. This consultation is part of the [Jane Finch Initiative's](#) comprehensive engagement process and it was held online over Zoom. The agenda and project background can be viewed in the appendices.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Present an update on the [Jane-Finch Housing Coalition](#).
- Present an update on the [Firgrove-Grassways Revitalization](#), and respond to questions about the revitalization.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting. Additional comments shared after the meeting are italicized.

Discussion on the Jane-Finch Housing Coalition

- As residential density is increasing in Jane and Finch, I wonder if we have the community resources, and employment opportunities to support the growing population. Does the Jane-Finch Housing Coalition look at densification as a part of your work?
 - Response from Jane-Finch Housing Coalition representative: Yes, we are looking into addressing the community infrastructure improvements and expansions that are needed to accommodate densification. We see that some neighborhoods with lots of recent development are almost entirely residential with insufficient schools, community centers, and services. We are concerned about Jane and Finch following this pattern. We are especially concerned about job opportunities for new residents, so staff from the Jane Finch Centre (a member organization of the Jane Finch Housing Coalition), has been doing some work on local hiring. Our priorities for local hiring include the new long term care home, the Metrolinx Maintenance and Storage Facility (MSF) site, and York University.
- Due to the lack of amenities for pet owners such as free dog bags along trails, trash cans, and off-leash areas, we see dog feces along trails and sidewalks, and unleashed dogs in public areas. Is the Jane-Finch Housing Coalition able to encourage the City to improve amenities for pet owners?

Summary Report by the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre

- Response from Jane Finch Housing Coalition representative: This is an issue that often comes up when we talk about improving green spaces. We will consider doing some advocacy around this issue, including a petition.
- Some of the private housing complexes have free bag stations for residents. Encouraging future housing developments to have a free bag program is a good approach for advocacy.
- The Jane-Finch Housing Coalition should do more advocacy around cooperative housing, because this is one of few opportunities for affordable housing. Cooperative housing is often required to have a certain number of rent-geared-to-income housing.
- Living in the Jane and Steeles area, I am concerned that changes to the existing buildings will be extensive, and existing residents will be immediately displaced, or displaced over time due to rising costs. Will the existing buildings be torn down?
 - Response from Jane-Finch Housing Coalition representative: [The buildings that are being proposed](#) are 45-50 stories, and will be adjacent to the buildings that are already there. The existing building will remain, but may be renovated in the future. Similar infill developments are proposed or approved at Sentinel, [4500 Jane Street](#), and [2801 Jane Street](#).
- The 50 story building at Jane and Steeles has not been approved yet, and some residents don't believe the City will approve it because it would cause too much congestion in the area.
- Infill developments anywhere in Jane and Finch will make the area feel very congested. Residents appreciate the space between buildings.
- Will there be compensation to the residents who live in existing buildings on the site of an infill development? Since these kinds of development will directly impact lives and health concerns, they should be entitled to compensation.
 - Response from City staff: Compensation is only provided in the event that 6 or more rental units are being replaced in a development proposal. So residents on the site of an infill application would not be eligible for compensation.
- Rent-geared-to-income units should be available in all bedroom types, not just one and two bedrooms.

Discussion on the Firgrove-Grassways Revitalization

- People in the area are concerned that the residents at Firgrove-Grassways are not receiving open and consistent communication from Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)
- How many of the residents who were displaced will actually be coming back to units after the revitalization is complete? The last thing we want is for people to be forced out of Jane and Finch.
 - Response from TCHC representative: Similar to all of our other revitalization communities, residents have the first right to return to their units. We have a relocation team dedicated to the revitalization sites to determine the appropriate unit size for families. Approximately 46% of residents were relocated within the Jane and Finch community, and others were relocated to other TCHC buildings.

- Response from TCHC representative: The rent for tenants in the new building will be based on the same rent-geared-to-income model, which is 30% of a household income up until a maximum point.
- How many parking spaces will be created to accommodate new residents, including multi-car families?
 - Response from TCHC representative: The parking ratio is approximately 0.6, which is higher than the parking ratio downtown. Resident parking and visitor parking will be accommodated underground, and there may be some permitted parking on the street. We expect that many residents will be using public transit instead of driving because of the LRT and other transit improvements.
- Residents are also concerned about loitering and security in isolated areas, such as an underground garage.
- Is there a way that bike locking can be done more securely?
 - Response from TCHC representative: In the two proposed buildings, there will be underground enclosed bike lockers, and only residents who own bikes will have fob access to the locker area.
- There is a general shift towards reducing parking in all new developments, and there are good reasons for it, including encouraging less car use and more transit use and walkability for sustainability and to reduce congestion.
- How is design being considered in terms of cohesion on the site and in the neighbourhood?
 - Response from TCHC representative: We will have one construction manager responsible for design for the entire site. There will likely be a lot of community engagement surrounding design and facades, and the goal is for TCHC housing and market buildings to be indistinguishable.
- What is the current waitlist for TCHC housing?
 - Response from TCHC representative: The waitlist for social housing, which includes TCHC housing, co-operative housing, and other housing providers, is managed by the City of Toronto. There are tens of thousands of people on the waitlist, and people urgently need access to deeply subsidized housing. Social housing has been severely underfunded for decades, and TCHC has advocated with residents to increase funding for social housing providers and to increase social housing stock across Toronto. TCHC is not receiving direction or funding to build more rent-geared-to-income units, we are just replacing and renovating our existing units.
 - Response from TCHC representative: We have zoning approved for 107 affordable units, but these are not rent-geared-to-income units.
- To access the waitlist for rent-geared-to-income, you need to go through the [housing cafe](#), which is a very cumbersome process. Residents in co-operative housing are well aware of the demand for more co-operative housing.
- Is there a report that outlines the choice to demolish rather than renovate Firgrove-Grassways?
 - Response from TCHC representative: There was a study done and a report was presented to the TCHC board. We would need to look for those records. This

was not something that was taken lightly. The process included a number of assessments, including building condition assessments, consultant advice comparing the costs of building new and repairing.

Post-meeting follow up: In 2017, City Council adopted a report that stated the revitalization of Firgrove was more sustainable in the long term than refurbishment due to the need for extensive repairs and substantial costs of renovation for the existing units to be deemed livable. To read the report on the closure of Firgrove-Grassways, click [here](#). To read a report on the initial development proposal for Firgrove, click [here](#).

- Some of the assumptions seem to be that because higher order transit is coming to the unit, it will be sufficient for all families. Transit is still not accessible for all people, and doesn't take everyone where they need to go. Driving should still be an option
- How many parking spots will be included in building two?
 - Response from TCHC representative: For building number two, there will be 219 units and 213 parking spaces.
- If only building 1 and building 2 will be TCHC buildings, will the rest of the buildings be market units and the rest of the land be sold? Will the community center and pool be retained as public properties?
 - Response from TCHC representative: Everything aside from the two TCHC buildings will be privately owned, but TCHC tenants will continue to have access to all amenities that they had access to before.
- What will be the governance model for the community center and pool space? How can we ensure that residents are involved in the governance of this and any other community spaces? TCHC should start thinking about how public spaces will be governed as soon as possible, especially because market rental spaces will outnumber TCHC properties.
 - Response from TCHC representative: These details have not been decided yet. We can't determine a governance framework until we know exactly who the partners will be for the community spaces. We want to make sure that the entire site is funded well.
- How can we ensure that these units last longer than 50 years?
 - Response from TCHC representative: We need to make sure that TCHC has the required funding to address mechanical, structural, and other issues proactively, and that features within units are replaced and maintained as needed. Over ten years ago, we created guidelines for more durable and higher quality materials to be used in construction for long-term sustainability. We monitor this throughout the design and construction processes so that maintenance will be minimal in the future.
 - Response from TCHC representative: The City is taking a critical look at the funding model for TCHC and has made several recommendations to change how the organization functions. These recommendations include the splitting of seniors housing, divestment of single family homes to other social housing providers, and a commitment from the City to fund a ten year capital repair plan.

Hopefully, new constructions will be more efficient and require less repair because they use modern techniques and better materials.

- Is the Province flowing funding through the City for TCHC buildings? This is the case for Glen Gardens, where funding to subsidize RGI and operating costs is partly covered by the Province, but we are not sure if this is a unique agreement for Glen Gardens, or a standard funding model for social housing across Toronto. If not from the Province, where exactly is funding coming from?
 - Response from TCHC representative: TCHC is working on securing funding for the revitalization and will be seeking funding from all levels of government.
 - *Additional comment from TCHC representatives: Funding of the Firgrove-Grassways revitalization will be determined in conjunction with the City of Toronto's annual budget process. Further, in the September 12, 2019, report to the TCHC Board of Directors, staff recommended that the Firgrove Revitalization proceed and that staff "pursue funding from all levels of government to fund the shortfall and seek funding opportunities and partnerships that will add additional affordable housing units and an expanded community space to the Firgrove Community."*
- Are the 107 affordable units based on legal minimums?
 - Response from TCHC representative: We would like to add more units, but this is the maximum we were able to include within the required building heights. Additional affordable units may be included in the non-TCHC buildings, but we do not have those details yet.
- We want to make sure that every new development is mindful of the collective spirit of Jane and Finch. Though the neighborhood is diverse, most people come from a culture that values gathering in public spaces frequently, and it is important that design accommodates this.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

6:00 Participants Join
6:05 Welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introductions, land acknowledgement, agenda [JFC staff]● Brief update on Indigenous engagement [City of Toronto staff]
6:15 Housing Coalition and Community Benefits Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 15 minutes: Presentation on the Jane Finch Housing Coalition’s mission, work and approaches, and upcoming development applications of interest in Jane and Finch. [Jane Finch Housing Coalition Representative]● Q&A and discussion [All]
6:45 Firgrove-Grassways Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 20 minutes: Presentation [TCH Representatives]● Q&A and discussion [All]
7:55 Closing notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Closing notes TBD [JFC Staff]
<p>William Ballard Attendees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 3 JFCF Centre Staff: Anna-Kay Brown, Clara Stewart-Robertson● 2 City of Toronto Staff: Zahra Joseph Wilson, Jedrick So● 6 TCHC Representatives: William Mendes, Cristina Raviele, Anna Edwards, Olu Quamina, Raven Williams, Marveh Fahoodi● Community Advisory Committee Members: Maize Blanchard, Kayzie Sutton, Veronica Eastman, John Romano, Sharon Taylor, Kemisha Thomas, Devayani Chitnis, Jennifer Boakye, Susel Munoz, Edna Cofles Gualtero, William Lopez, Troy Budhu, Maria B, Mena Hervieux, Veronica Eastman, Allen Ramserran, Terryl Knox

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The City of Toronto's Jane Finch Initiative is a resident-informed project to plan for the future of the Jane and Finch area. Together, we are developing a community development plan and a land use plan so that residents and businesses are supported as the area changes over time with the opening of the Finch West LRT.

The [Jane Finch Initiative](#) is a resident-informed project to plan for the future of the Jane and Finch area and to determine how best to leverage the investment in light rail transit (LRT) for the benefit of local communities. It is a collaborative community planning exercise in 'Neighbourhood 24 - Black Creek' and 'Neighbourhood 25 - Glenfield-Jane Heights' (see [Neighbourhood Profiles](#)), centred on the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West.

The Jane Finch Community and Family Centre are supporting the City's community engagement process by facilitating community consultations.

The initiative involves three integrated streams of work:

- 1) **Comprehensive engagement**
- 2) A **community development plan** including a local economic opportunities plan;
- 3) An update to the **land use planning framework**.