

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting



6:00-8:00pm, May 16th, 2023

OVERVIEW

On May 16th 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 information on housing policy, affordable housing, and inclusionary zoning.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting.

- Jane and Finch has many diverse large family structures, including families with more than four children, and multi-generational families. These families often struggle to find larger units, and do not qualify to rent apartments with fewer bedrooms. What can be done to incentivise building affordable housing for larger families?
 - Response from City staff: The City uses the Growing Up Guidelines for developments that are over 80 units. The guidelines speak to having more larger units, but only encourage more two and three bedroom units. Toronto Community Housing does offer some 4-5 bedroom units, but the City recognizes that the available stock of public and private housing is not meeting needs for all larger families.
- As a larger family living in a Toronto Community Housing property, it has been difficult to qualify for a transfer. In our area this is a big issue when it comes to private rentals, purchasing a home, and living in Toronto Community Housing. Many larger families are living in unsanitary, hazardous, and crowded conditions because unit sizes are not sufficient. We would like to see inclusionary zoning implemented to accommodate larger families.
 - Response from City staff: Inclusionary zoning through designating Protected Major Transit Areas (PMTSAs) has been adopted by the City, but it needs to be implemented by the Province. This does not necessarily require a certain number of bedrooms in units, but this may be something to consider in the future.
- Can a development complete the application and construction process as a rental building, and then change to an ownership model after construction is complete?

Summary Report by the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre

Residents are concerned that developers may find loopholes to avoid fulfilling affordable housing requirements.

- Response from City staff: Rental housing usually cannot be demolished or converted to a condominium if there are more than 6 units without replacing those rental units. Under the Rental Housing Demolition Control by-law, rents are categorized into affordable, mid-range, and high-end. Replacement of rental units is not required if all of the units are considered high-end rents. Since new buildings often have high rents and are not subject to rent control, they may be exempt from rental replacement in the future.
- Many residents are being required to move out of their long-term rentals so that the landlord can renovate the unit, then expected to pay current market rent at a much higher cost than their previous controlled rent.
 - Response from City staff: Unfortunately, rental replacement does not apply to cases where units are being renovated. The City is aware that renoviction is a common problem, especially in Jane and Finch, but the Residential Tenancy Act and much of the legislation that governs housing is a provincial responsibility.
- How is “affordable” housing determined?
 - Response from City staff: When looking at buildings proposed for demolition, buildings are categorized into affordable, mid-range, and high-rent. Affordable is generally below market rent. However, in other cases, we use an income-based definition of affordable housing. A good rule of thumb is that rent below market rent is affordable, and above market rent is either mid-range or high-end.
- Almost 60% of the units in my co-op are subsidized, and residents are told that they cannot receive the subsidies if they move to a different building. Is this true?
 - Response from City staff: Yes, this is the way that the agreements were originally determined between the Federal, Provincial, and City governments as a part of the operating agreement. Some of these agreements have already ended, and some will be ending soon. The City has recently created a new unit to address this.
- Will housing options be more affordable in Jane and Finch compared to in other areas because Jane and Finch is a lower income area?
 - Response from City staff: We sometimes look at localized data when determining rental housing replacement and tenant assistance programs, but generally speaking, definitions of affordability are based on city-wide data.
- As Jane and Finch is rapidly densifying, residents are concerned about displacement and affordability in new buildings
 - Response from City staff: Jane and Finch currently has more affordable housing options than many other parts of the city, and as the Finch West LRT comes in, redevelopment is inevitable. We hope to be very proactive about mitigating the effects of gentrification by implementing rental replacement, inclusionary zoning, and other tools.
- Starlight has already begun buying many properties in the area, and has been increasing the cost of rent. For example, one building offered one bedroom apartments for \$1700

inclusive of utilities and parking two years ago. Now those units are \$1800 before utilities, laundry, and parking.

- Response from City staff: Starlight has been purchasing many buildings, but some of their buildings do include affordable and mid-range units below market rent. We do recognize that displacement is already happening in Jane and Finch.
- Current residents are being pushed out so that the buildings can be turned into condominiums. The City may be trying their best, but developers can always go over the City's head to the province.
- Residents and City staff should put pressure on the province to approve inclusionary zoning legislation urgently, especially because rents are already rising.
- How is the City able to secure their affordable housing requirements, and what will be difficult to enforce?
 - Response from City staff: When we replace rental housing and new affordable housing is built as a part of a new development, we sign an agreement with the developer that is registered on the property of the building. These agreements describe the operations of the rental units. Since these agreements are registered on title rather than on the owner, they are still valid if the property is sold to a new owner. If the owner does not fulfill the obligations set out in the agreement, the City can take legal action. Additionally, the City monitors above-guideline rent increases, and agreements are enforced through these monitoring processes.
- There was recently a consultation at [4500 Jane Street](#), what exactly is being proposed for that site in terms of affordable units?
 - The proposal is a Starlight application, and they are proposing two six-storey buildings along Gosford. In addition to the buildings, there will be an outdoor amenity space between the new buildings and 4500 Jane Street. Compared to other buildings, the proposal includes more two and three bedrooms, including a minimum of 23% two bedrooms and a minimum of 27% of three bedrooms. Starlight and other developers will be encouraged to exceed the minimums throughout the application process. Unfortunately, we do not have the policy to require and enforce affordable housing in these buildings, and they are outside of the protected major transit area boundary.
- Some three bedrooms in my residential building are being converted to one bedroom apartments. Is this legal?
 - Reducing the number of bedrooms in a unit is considered a demolition, and the developer is required to apply for a permit. We can follow up with details on this property after the meeting.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

6:00 Participants Join
6:05 Welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions, land acknowledgement, agenda [JFC staff]
6:15 Housing Coalition and Community Benefits Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentations on housing policy, affordable housing and inclusionary zoning, including information about the role of City Planning, planning policy and incentive programs for affordable housing, and policies and tools that may be used to secure new affordable housing in Jane and Finch.• Q&A and discussion period
7:55 Closing notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closing notes TBD [JFC Staff]
Attendees: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 JFCF Centre Staff: Clara Stewart-Robertson, Denelle Carvalho• 4 City of Toronto Staff: Zahra Joseph Wilson, Andrew Cohrs, Daniel Hahn, Lauralyn Johnson• Community Advisory Committee Members: William Ballard, Veronica Eastman, Jennifer Boakye, Devayani Chitnis, Kayzie Sutton, Susel Munoz, Sharon Taylor, Maria B., Christine Le, Troy Budhu, Kemisha Thomas, Mena Hervieux, Maize Blanchard

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](#)), centered 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**.