

# Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting



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

## OVERVIEW

On October 17th, 2023, a Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee (CAC) 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:

- Discuss the 2775 Jane Street Pre-Application
- Present outcomes from the Jane Finch Initiative Cultural Heritage stream

## WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the large group and small group discussions during the Zoom meeting.

### Key Themes

- Group Discussion: 2775 Jane Street Pre-Application
  - Members expressed concerns about the building's height and shadow implications on the street and nearby buildings
  - Members expressed a need for affordable rental and ownership units of all sizes, including affordable larger units for extended families
  - Members noted the impact of increasing density on medical services and on schools, and emphasized that medical services in the community are already unable to respond to demand
- Group Discussion: Cultural Heritage in Jane and Finch
  - Members discussed the need to find innovative and creative ways to preserve and showcase cultural heritage, including artistic tools, preserving signage from malls, and incorporating technology
  - Northwood Community Centre was recognized as a historically significant place
  - Members noted the importance of moving forward and creating new heritage sites and artwork in collaboration with newcomers

## Group Discussion: 2775 Jane Street Pre-Application

- Question: How high will the building be? There shouldn't be a need for zoning exceptions in this area because the buildings are already tall in this area.
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: We have to apply for rezoning because the current rules for the area are very specific about the permitted density, height, coverage and even unit count. So we need a rezoning application to address those issues.
- Question: What will be the rent rates and the size of units? Have you considered the number of 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom units?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: The rent rate has not been determined yet. The unit sizes will be determined in alignment with the growing up guidelines.
- Comment: We have a shortage of homes with 3-5 bedrooms to accommodate larger families, which has been a recurring concern in recent CAC meetings. People have been advocating for larger units to accommodate extended families and such. I'm curious to know if the developers are considering including units with four bedrooms or more?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: We are definitely considering up to three bedroom units, but having even larger units is something that we are still discussing. The challenge is that, at market rates, they end up being as expensive as single-family homes, making them a difficult entry point for many people. So making these units attainable can be challenging. I see the point about demand for larger units, and we will take that feedback into consideration. It's good to know that the community is interested in larger unit sizes.
- Question: How close to the sidewalk will this building be? Will it be positioned further back, or will it be as close to the sidewalk as the other two buildings?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: This building will be slightly farther back than the one that's just being approved. So it's got a little bit closer to the sidewalk than the Southgate Towers. We're trying to find that balance between space to plant and put plazas and things like that without setting the building so far back that it doesn't make the street feel safe or occupied.
- Question: What will be the shadowing implications on the buildings next to it?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: It's important to note that although this is taller than the buildings next to it, the Firgrove-Grassways buildings will be 25 stories right on Jane Street as well, so in the future this building won't feel as out of place as it may look now. That said, we will be taking a look at the shadow implications, we are just at the early stages of testing those.
- Comment: The space between the buildings looks quite narrow, it doesn't look that big to incorporate more buildings.
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: When it comes to the spacing between buildings, these sites tend to look bigger once buildings are constructed. In this case, we have about 30 meters of separation from the edge of the Southgate Towers to the taller section of this new building. This exceeds the City's requirements for building separation, which is set at 25 meters. So we

can have a good distance between buildings which ensures sufficient light, comfort, and privacy for units whose windows and balconies face other buildings.

- Question: Considering all the new buildings coming up, and the fact that we're already facing challenges with people finding doctors and services like chiropractors and dentists, how are you taking into account the demand on services when planning these high-density buildings?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: As a part of our application, we will certainly look at the availability of community services and facilities. This will include information on schools, libraries, community centers, parks, and other amenities, but not doctors offices. Any feedback we receive about these missing services will be captured, but needs to be addressed by the City. From our perspective as an applicant, we are not in a position to directly address broader community issues like the availability of doctors' offices unless it directly influences the types of uses planned for the building.
- Question: As a driver, I'm wondering if Jane street will be expanded to accommodate the increased demand?
  - Response from Urban Strategies Representative: I don't believe that there are any plans to widen the right of way for Jane Street, but we can look into that. I don't believe the express bus lane needs any widening to take place, I think it would just take existing lane space on the right of way.
- Question: I am in support of modernizing this area, as it is considered to be very underdeveloped. But when these buildings are built, will the people who have been living there be left behind or will there be accommodations made to avoid displacement, like out of every five units two will be set aside for affordable rent?
  - Response from Urban Strategies Representative: We hear you about the affordability issues. We don't yet know what the rents will be on the site, or whether there will be an affordable housing component. To be transparent, this property is outside of the Protected Major Transit Station Area where the City would require inclusionary zoning, so it's up to the applicant to determine what makes sense for their building. I appreciate that this means that the market rents are outside the realm of what's possible for people in the community. That's something we are hearing clearly, and that we expected to hear. At the same time, land costs and development costs are higher than they have ever been, so it's challenging for a market developer to build something affordable without support and incentives to make that happen. But we hear you, we'll take that back. The one benefit is that nobody who lives at Southgate Towers would be impacted by this. So no units are going to be lost, and there won't be any impact on anyone's existing homes.
- Question: Have you been in touch with RapidTO regarding the Jane Street study? The last time they came to the CAC they were considering removing the bus stop at Jane and Eddystone, but it looks like Stanford Homes plans to design around it.
  - Response from Urban Strategies: It's still early in the process, so we haven't had those kinds of discussions yet, but that information is helpful. I will say I would be

surprised to see the TTC remove a bus stop at the corner of a signalized intersection where there's employment on Eddystone as well as housing, so I think certainly we will be advocating through this in our discussions with TTC when the application comes forward.

- Response from City staff: As a part of the application process, we will be circulating the application to the TTC and to Transportation services at which point we will receive feedback on the bus stop.
- Question: Will this development be strictly rental or ownership?
  - Response from Urban Strategies: Stanford Homes is still deciding that. Right now, the existing building is rental and they're quite experienced with rental buildings, but at the end of the day those things come down to the cost of how much the cost of development is. So as they move through the application they'll have to make a decision on whether it's rental or condominium.
- Question: Schools are already reaching capacity. What are the options available to new students, and has there been a plan discussed with the school board?
  - Response from Urban Strategies: We will be looking into community services and facilities as a part of this work. In situations where the school capacity is low, developers may be required to inform potential residents before they move in; essentially providing a warning about the limited school capacity. It's also good to note that educational development charges will be paid by developers which can support the creation of new schools. This funding can be crucial for addressing the educational needs that arise from new housing developments.
- Question: Will there be amenities like a swimming pool and a gym inside of the building?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: The new building will add indoor amenities for both future residents and Southgate Tower residents. Like a lot of the other older slab towers in Jane Finch and elsewhere in Toronto, there are not a lot of shared spaces inside, just a lobby. So adding a new building brings the opportunity to create indoor amenities that would be available to both existing and future residents. So what we're hoping to do is engage existing tenants on what their priorities would be for that. We're looking at anything from a bookable event space, a lounge, a coworking space, or something else.
- Question: Do you have any thoughts on how access to those amenities might impact rental costs for Southgate towers?
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: There will be no rental cost increase as a result of adding the amenities.
- Question: Doctors offices are at capacity, and I am wondering if there will be any incentive in the new building coming up to create a space where there can be medical offices allotted for bringing doctors in.
- Comment: With all of the new development, there is going to be an influx of people utilizing an already oversaturated office space for medical practice.
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: it's frustrating not to be able to access doctors and dentists and those kinds of services in the community. Whether it could happen on this site, I think it's unlikely. There are limits on how

much ground floor space you can put in on residential uses, so I think a doctor's office it's typically quite a bit bigger than the amount of space we have. It also brings a lot of parking requirements with it. Even if the City doesn't require it, people typically want really easy parking. Also, doctor's offices are usually grouped together on more than one floor. So I don't I don't think this project is a good fit for it. We will certainly continue to capture these comments and pass them on to the City.

- Comment: It's not that this space should have medical services in it, the problem is that doctors do not stay in this community. There is a doctor's office right across from this development on Eddystone. There needs to be some way for doctors to live in the community so that they stay.
- Comment: One issue is that when doctors are treating people on disability or welfare, they get a much lower pay than. So that is the reason that a lot of them leave the area, because it's not worth their time to stay in the area where a majority of the clients are on disability or welfare. Places should be made where there is some incentive for practitioners who are just now starting out, or a lower overhead.
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: I think that the issue of retaining doctors in the neighbourhood is beyond what we're able to tackle in this development project. Indirectly, creating a housing landscape that is attractive to folks of all walks of life, that's probably the best we can do here. It seems like the discussion about how to retain doctors in the community is urgent and needs to be discussed at another time with the City.
- Comment: Affordable housing where everyone can live is the most important thing, because doctors don't get a lot of pay.
  - Response from Urban Strategies representative: Just to be clear, as planners and even for the City, we can't zone for specific people. So any kind of incentives that would be to attract doctors would have to come from outside of this process. But again, I think what we can do here is just capture the comment and make sure that the City can at least hear this conversation coming through.
- Comment: I think that the conversation we're trying to have here needs to be happening at a provincial level. It's not just doctors, it's all frontline workers and medical workers. So I think we need to be cognizant of what this development is about, and maybe have a separate conversation to find out how we can bring doctors, nurses, PSWs, and stuff into the community. Incentives that need to be provided to people to get back into the medical profession.
- Comment: There are international doctors that are not licensed to work in Canada working in the community, because it is so hard for doctors to live and work here.
- Comment: I don't think it's true that there are unlicensed doctors working at the Shoreham clinic. The only doctors I have seen working there are family doctors that have been working for twenty-something years.

### **Group Discussion: Cultural Heritage in Jane Finch**

- Question: What area is encompassed for this cultural heritage work? There is a big controversy right now going through the legislature regarding the Marian Shrine of Gratitude near Weston Road and Sheppard Avenue. This has been a sanctuary and a place where some of our community members go and pray. The property has been sold, and the politicians are fighting to have it deemed a heritage site because of the importance to our community.
  - Response from City staff: We are aware of the shrine. It doesn't fall within our study area, but it's an interesting and important case.
- Question: Will the murals from the now-demolished Firgrove-Grassways be displayed somewhere? Some of these artworks and artifacts were preserved through the Firgrove Learning and Innovation Community Centre, but I'm not sure where they are being stored.
  - Response from City staff: We appreciate the reference to the Firgrove murals. We are trying to come up with creative ways to track and preserve those pieces.
- Comment: We should consider ways to create new heritage sites, we shouldn't be waiting for a death to create a heritage site. And we should consider ways to incorporate new communities who are building new memories here while also preserving the art and murals that have already been created.
- Question: Will there be ways that people can view art on their phones like an augmented reality app similar to what the AGO did for their exhibition?
  - Response from Common Bond Collective representative: That's a great idea, and definitely something we can bring back, in terms of providing access to a range of murals that exist in the area.
- Comment: Has Northwood Community Centre been considered through the Cultural Heritage work? The space was a cornerstone for lots of grassroots organizations including Information Downsvew, services for seniors, and Northwood Neighbourhood Services, and Asian Community Centre Downsvew.
  - Response from Common Bond Collective representative: Yes, Northwood Community Centre is being considered, and we recognize its significance. It is very helpful to hear this from multiple angles, and helps build a case for its importance.
- Comment: I've been involved with the Jane Finch Mall redevelopment as a community animator. This is a space where residents gather, local businesses operate, and community organizations meet and use the space. For example at Corner Commons. I'm trying to understand how any changes in this space might have broader implications. I'm unsure about the overall outcomes of any changes.
  - Response from City staff: I know that the City Planning team is very aware of the importance of the malls as gathering spaces, and the importance of places like Corner Commons. Our question is how to preserve the heritage value of these sites for the community, because the Ontario Heritage Act is not necessarily always the best tool for achieving this goal.
- Comment: I imagine that it could be as easy as memorializing the Yorkgate Mall sign or the Jane Finch Mall sign and saying this was once the space, and then preserving stories of it. That's an easy answer but also almost superficial.

- Comment: As someone who went to school in Jane Finch, there is a real lack of resources. Those little things that we usually don't pay attention to, but form a real difference between our schools and better funded schools. We should make sure that things are being modernized and maintained as needed.

## APPENDIX A: AGENDA

<b>6:00 Participants Join</b>
<b>6:05 Welcome</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introductions, land acknowledgement, agenda [JFC]</li> </ul>
<b>6:10 Updates</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6:10 - 6:20 Community Development Plan Actions [CoT]</li> </ul>
<b>6:20 2775 Jane Street Pre-Application</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6:20 - 6:40 Presentation &amp; Q&amp;A on 2775 Jane Street development [USI]</li> <li>● 6:40 - 7:00 Discussion</li> <li>● 7:00 - 7:05 Closing notes [USI]</li> </ul>
<b>7:10 Cultural Heritage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 7:10 - 7:20 Presentation and integrated discussion on JFI Cultural Heritage stream [CoT/JFC]</li> <li>● 7:20 - 7:30 Presentation and integrated discussion on important places in Jane and Finch [Common Bond]</li> <li>● 7:30 - 7:40 Presentation and integrated discussion on It Happened Here [Wada MacNevin]</li> <li>● 7:40 - 7:50 Closing notes [CoT/ JFC]</li> </ul>
<b>7:55 Closing Notes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Next steps &amp; things to look out for [JFC] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CAC roles in the November Open House</li> <li>○ Input on the CDP Actions</li> <li>○ JFC to share materials &amp; contacts in follow-up</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Attendees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 Jane/Finch Centre Staff: Clara Stewart-Robertson and Denelle Carvalho</li> <li>● City of Toronto Representatives: Gary Miedema, Tatum Taylor Chaubal, Daniel Hahn, John Patrick Smith, Imara Ajani Rolston, Zahra Joseph-Wilson</li> <li>● 2 Urban Strategies Representatives: Josh Neubauer, Ajeev Bhatia</li> </ul>

- 1 IBI Group Representative: Reyan Hanafi
- 1 Stanford Homes Representative: Mike Pirocchi
- 2 Arcadis Representatives: Heather Richardson, Aamer Shirazie
- 2 Common Bond Collective Representatives: David Deo and Ellen Kowalchuck
- Wanda MacNevin
- 10 Community Advisory Committee members: Maize Blanchard, Susel Munoz, Sharon Taylor, Maria B, William Ballard, Veronica Eastman, Allan Ramsarran, Christine Le, Mena Hervieux, and 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](#)), 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**.