

January 2024

To: City Planning

From: Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre

Re: Update on Jane Finch Initiative Phase 3 Consultation

1 Introduction

In Phase 3, Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre continued to work closely with City staff and community leaders in a comprehensive consultation process. We used a breadth of collaborative engagement strategies to refine residents' goals and objectives across several thematic areas: Heritage, Housing; Land Use, Built Form, and Urban Design; Mobility; Climate Action; and Parks and Public Spaces.

From September 2023 to January 2024, we connected with approximately 280 community members, and used a range of in-person, virtual, synchronous, and asynchronous methods to receive rich and wide-ranging feedback on the [draft study documents](#). We leveraged new and existing community relationships and consultation methods to build on Phase 2 outcomes. This report summarizes the community engagement process and input received throughout Phase 3. A full record of Phase 3 consultation activities is available in Appendix A.

2 Phasing

The Jane Finch Initiative involves three integrated streams of work: 1) Comprehensive engagement; 2) A community development plan including a local economic opportunities plan; and 3) An update to the planning framework.

Phase 1: May 2021 - December 2021

Community engagement activities in Phase 1 included:

- Confirming the engagement approach, including co-creating an equitable engagement framework with key community leaders
- Reviewing the [Jane Finch Existing Conditions Background Report](#) and the [Jane Finch Consultation History Report](#)
- Holding two public open houses to workshop community values, visions for the future, and guiding principles
- Forming the Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Hosting thematic focus groups
- Consulting with local businesses including through a survey
- Online engagement

- Creating a video entitled '[Valuing the Present, Imagining the Future](#)' with local resident participation'

A summary of engagement from Phase 1 can be found [here](#).

Phase 2: January 2022 - August 2023

The City released the [Jane Finch Ideas Report](#) at the beginning of Phase 2. It analyzes what we heard from residents in Phase 1, and proposes a series of actions that would form the basis of a second round of engagement to inform the development of the detailed plans in Phase 2.

Community engagement activities for Phase 2 included:

- An open house and pop-up consultations on the Ideas Report
- Monthly CAC meetings
- Indigenous outreach and consultation
- Focus groups on several themes, including heritage, arts & culture and economic development
- A series of deep dialogues on themes of inclusive economic and social development, as well as arts and culture
- Online engagement

A summary of engagement from Phase 2 can be found [here](#)

Phase 3: September 2023 - January 2024

The City released several [draft study documents](#) during Phase 3. These include:

- Draft Secondary Plan
- Draft Urban Design Guidelines
- Draft Community Service Facilities Strategy
- Draft Historic Context Statement
- Draft Community Development Plan Principles and Actions

Community engagement priorities for Phase 3 included:

- Public meetings to refine the Draft Secondary Plan, Draft Urban Design Guidelines, and Draft Community Development Plan Principles and Actions
- A written survey to collect feedback on the Community Development Plan Principles and Actions
- Focus groups on cultural heritage
- Monthly CAC meetings
- Online engagement on the draft Secondary Plan through a web survey

3 What We Heard

Heritage:

Participants discussed the impacts of area stigma on youth in Jane Finch, and emphasized that it is important to highlight successful residents as role models. Many suggested commemorating local artists and community leaders through artistic representations, including murals, statues, and a “Jane Finch Walk of Fame”. Some participants discussed artistic and educational projects to combat area stigma by uplifting resident historians and educators, such as sharing books and documentaries created by residents in libraries and schools, and funding a street photography project to document places of community interest.

Some also suggested commemorating organizations and places through artistic representations as well as plaques and signage. For example, acknowledging community organizations that have fought for equity in Jane-Finch, and celebrating cultural diversity by commemorating significant places of worship and gathering. Some organizations that were mentioned include Northwood Neighbourhood Services, Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization, and the local ACORN chapter.

Many residents noted the cultural heritage value of community gathering and organizing spaces, including inside residential buildings. The apartment buildings at 2999 Jane Street, 4400 Jane Street, and 15 Tobermory were cited as having significant community gathering spaces, or hosting community organizations which deliver important programming and services. Participants expressed that as new residential buildings are developed, providing spaces for community members to gather should be prioritized as a community benefit. Residential buildings should continue to include spacious resident common areas with relevant amenities, and hold spaces for community organizations to operate services and programs.

Some frequently mentioned key places with community interest include: The Palisades, the York Woods Library and Theatre, Jane Finch Mall, Yorkgate Mall, Yorkwoods Village, Edgeley Village, Brookview Middle School, Oakdale Community Centre, Driftwood Community Centre, Northwood Community Centre, and Black Creek Community Farm (especially the heritage farmhouse on the property).

Participants noted the cultural heritage value of trees, gardens, and green spaces. Residents specified the importance of old trees at 4400 Jane Street, Rudy’s Garden in the Black Creek, and various community gardens. Participants also noted the importance of the Black Creek Parklands and the Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational Trail to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and to the Huron Wendat. Many expressed a shared sentiment on the importance of natural elements to the community's identity and cultural richness.

Housing:

Housing affordability was the most frequently cited concern in Phase 3 engagement. Participants noted that inclusionary zoning should be implemented at the provincial level, and many residents strongly urged that developers should maximize the percentage of affordable

and deeply affordable units in new buildings. Some participants advocated for increasing the permissible building heights across Jane Finch and foregoing transition zones, to maximize the supply of new housing.

Participants also emphasized that new residential developments should include diverse housing types that will meet the needs of all types of families. Many participants discussed the importance of preserving and maintaining Toronto Community Housing stock. Some participants also noted that the City should also invest in supporting land trusts and cooperative ownership models.

Land Use, Built Form, and Urban Design:

Residents reiterated the importance of maintaining and expanding vibrant, accessible, and inclusive gathering spaces across Jane Finch. Priorities included preserving and expanding gathering spaces for seniors and youth around the Jane Finch intersection. Many spoke about the importance of a well-designed, year-round public square in the south east corner of the Jane Finch intersection to replace Corner Commons. Some noted that residents informally gather outdoors on the Jane Finch Mall, Norfinch Shopping Centre, and York Woods Plaza sites, and suggested formalizing this by adding seating and lighting. Many also specified the significance of preserving or replacing indoor gathering spaces on mall and plaza sites, including food courts and hallway seating areas inside the Jane Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall. Participants expressed concerns about losing indoor gathering spaces as large sites are redeveloped, and noted that outdoor gathering spaces (such as a public square) are not a substitute for indoor gathering spaces which are more accessible for seniors and people with disabilities, and which can be used year-round.

Many also noted that it is important to have community spaces spread across Jane-Finch so that they are easily accessible and walkable for all residents. Several residents shared that the North/South divide and violent events makes some residents unsafe or unwelcome in parts of Jane Finch. There is a need for design to create neutral gathering spaces across Jane Finch, and which supports community safety. Some participants emphasized the need for “eyes on the street”, and for gathering spaces in all neighbourhoods to be highly visible.

We heard a variety of perspectives on building heights and density. Most residents were supportive of new affordable housing development, but also expressed concerns around building heights, shadows, and density. Some participants supported allowing taller buildings across Jane Finch, with less consideration for transitions. Some participants suggested reclassifying more neighbourhoods as mixed-use or apartment neighbourhoods to complement Finch Avenue as a rapid transit corridor. Others suggested incorporating more mid-rise buildings with significant spaces in between buildings, and expressed concerns about high-rise buildings contributing to population crowding, reduced natural light, and loss of neighbourhood aesthetics and character.

Residents shared mixed perspectives regarding Towers in the Park style apartment buildings. Some participants said that the green space around buildings discourages walkability, is unused

by residents, and should instead be used for mixed-use infill development, where ground level commercial uses are more visible from the street. However, some said that the spaces between buildings cultivate spaciousness and leisure, and differentiate the feel of Jane Finch from Downtown. Many participants agreed that any green space that is preserved between buildings should appear intentional; all spaces should be well-maintained, and should include seating, lighting, and plantings wherever possible.

Several participants suggested narrowing the green setbacks along Jane Street and suggested promoting more retail along Jane Street instead. Some noted that wide setbacks may make the street feel less walkable and vibrant. Many participants agreed that setback widths from the street should be consistent along Jane Street to retain visibility. Many participants also agreed that regardless of the width, any setbacks should be well-designed and well-maintained, with plantings and appropriate lighting.

Mobility

Participants highlighted the importance of investments in the pedestrian network to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for pedestrians with disabilities. For example, many participants suggested widening sidewalks and adding lighting and seating along streets. Extensive community consultation should be done on new streets, and prioritizing pedestrian access and safety during construction processes, especially on the Jane Finch Mall site. A few participants suggested creating new, car-free streets and avoiding car-centric design.

We heard mixed perspectives on cycling infrastructure and on Bike Share Toronto's expansion in Jane Finch. Many participants expressed support for the Bike Share Toronto's network expansion, which adds several new Bike Share stations but noted that it must be aligned with investments in bike lanes, and investments in educational opportunities and campaigns to promote its usage. Some participants expressed concern that bike lanes will not be used, especially along main, busy roads.

Many participants expressed concerns about vehicle congestion and the need to address traffic issues. Accessibility for residents using cars must be considered, including by ensuring adequate parking surrounding medical facilities. A few participants suggested adding lanes for vehicular traffic on Jane Street, and allowing more parking around plazas. Residents emphasized the importance of aligning new development with necessary investments in improvements to Jane Street.

Climate Action:

Participants shared a desire for climate action to be prioritized in building and street design, and that resident climate leaders should have opportunities to influence building. Several participants emphasized that landowners and developers should bear the financial burden of ensuring that new properties are efficient and resilient.

Parks and Public Spaces:

Several participants discussed the importance and cultural significance of the Black Creek, and some called for the consideration of wildlife and preserving ecological integrity in the planning process. Some noted that the Black Creek trails are perceived as unsafe, and questioned how this can be addressed through lighting or amenities.

Many residents expressed that parks should include more relevant amenities, including splash pads, sports facilities, pet-friendly spaces, community gardens, and more. Residents expressed concerns that existing parks may not be sufficient to meet demand as the population grows. Some participants noted that the priority should be investing in maintaining and adding amenities to existing parks before creating new parks. Many participants expressed a desire for more mature trees and shrubs, highlighting aesthetic, environmental, and mental health benefits of more biodiverse green spaces.

Appendix A

September 2023

- September 18th: CAC Meeting: Reflections on the Community Advisory Committee and forming a Community Partnership Circle (Virtual)

October 2023

- October 4th: Cultural Heritage Focus Group (Virtual)
- October 16th: CAC Meeting: Discussion on 2775 Jane Street Pre-Application; JFI Cultural Heritage Update
- October 20th to November 6th: Survey on Community Development Plan Draft Actions and Principles (Virtual)

November 2023

- November 2nd: Cultural Heritage Focus Group (Virtual)
- November 21st: CAC Meeting: Draft Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines; update on Bike Share Toronto implementation plan
- November 25th: Public Open House (In-person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- November 28th: Public Open House (Virtual)
- November 29th: Public Open House (In-person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- November 30th: Public Open House (In-person at the Jane Finch Mall)

December 2023

- December 7th: Pop-up Information and Feedback Session in collaboration with Bike Share Toronto (In-person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- December 15th: CAC Meeting: Winter Social
- December 15th to January 15th: Survey on Draft Secondary Plan and Draft Urban Design Guidelines (Virtual)

January 2024

- January 16th: CAC Meeting: Update on Promoting Education and Community Health (PEACH); Participation opportunities at upcoming Community Council and Committee meetings (Virtual)