

January 2024

To: Social Development Finance & Administration; Economic Development & Culture

From: Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre

Re: Update on Jane Finch Initiative Phase 3 Consultation

1 Introduction

In Phase 3, we 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 the Community Development Plan thematic areas: Community Safety and Wellbeing; Spaces; Food Justice; Climate Action; Arts, Culture, and Heritage; Gentrification and Displacement; and Inclusive Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities. We also sought ideas and feedback on the development of a Community Partnership Circle, including a Residents' Table.

In Phase 3, 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 resident feedback on the draft study documents. We leveraged new and existing community relationships and consultation methods to build on Phase 2 outcomes. This report includes a summary of outcomes from our community engagement process from September 2023 to January 2024. A full record of consultation activities in Phase 3 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 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 - Present

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 PDF

Community engagement priorities for Phase 3 included:

- Open house sessions 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 through a web survey

3 What We Heard

Community Safety and Wellbeing:

Many participants discussed the importance of destigmatizing mental health and promoting community wellbeing through ongoing community engagement, programming, and accessible services. Participants discussed the need for more programs and services for residents dealing with grief, and loss, particularly targeting difficult-to-reach youth dealing with trauma. Some suggested establishing a youth-led community safety network, incorporating resident leaders and peer mentorship opportunities. Any programs established should center resident voices and long-term relationship building, implementing trauma-informed care through programming.

Participants expressed that many programs offered by community organizations are appreciated, and should be appropriately expanded. Organizations and programs mentioned include Promoting Education and Community Health (PEACH), The Boys and Girls Club, The Spot, and EarlyON Centre. Many noted that these programs and services are already overwhelmed by demand, and appropriately investing in existing community organizations to support expansion is more important than implementing new programs.

Community Programs and Spaces:

Participants highlighted the importance of community centres across Jane Finch as safe and accessible youth spaces with trauma support and community wellbeing programming. Residents noted the importance of the relationships between staff members and youth in the community. Minimizing staff turnover and ensuring that programs are long-standing is critical to maintaining these relationships, and preserving safe spaces for youth. Participants also noted the significance of the North/South divide, and recognized that it is important that programming and services are offered throughout Jane Finch, so that they are accessible to all youth.

Many discussed the importance of having inclusive spaces for seniors. Several noted that the Yorkgate Mall and the Jane Finch Mall have become informal gathering spaces for seniors, and expressed concern about losing access to these indoor gathering spaces in the future. Some acknowledged that the existing senior services offered by community organizations and in community centres are important, but are becoming overcrowded. There is a need to continually preserve and expand senior services through implementation phases.

Food Justice:

Residents expressed support for investment in local, resident-led food growing and distribution initiatives. Participants envisioned a comprehensive picture of community involvement in the food landscape, including community gardens that encourage intergenerational participation, well-funded food banks and food distribution programs, and resident leaders promoting holistic food and nutrition educational programs. Participants highlighted the health and community cohesion benefits of community food gardens.

Climate Action:

Participants noted that local climate leadership should be centered in accountability and governance structures. Some participants suggested forming a panel or a working group of local climate leaders who can provide feedback to the Councillor's office, development applicants, and City divisions on a breadth of projects.

Arts, Culture, and Heritage:

Local artists highlighted the importance of sustainable and long-term funding for artists, and suggested setting short-term goals to initiate long-term funding and paid opportunities for local arts initiatives. Community members were supportive of funding opportunities such as Cultural Hotspot and the potential for Jane-Finch exhibits as a part of wider City festivals, such as Nuit Blanche. Participants emphasized that both long-term funding and start-up funding should support existing, established grassroots arts groups in Jane-Finch.

Participants discussed the impacts of area stigma on youth in the community, and emphasized that it is important to highlight successful residents as role models. Many expressed a desire to commemorate 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. For instance, 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 both artistic representations, and 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.

Gentrification and Displacement:

Housing affordability was the most frequently mentioned concern in Phase 3 engagement, and many residents expressed fears that housing costs across Jane Finch will increase over the coming years. Many participants expressed that residents should have ongoing opportunities to participate in municipal decision making, and to advocate for affordable and appropriate residential development. Participants also expressed that it is difficult to access information about development applications (for example, through the Applications Information Centre). The City should consider more effective strategies for resident involvement and information sharing around residential development applications.

Participants noted that Jane-Finch is home to many newcomers, including refugees and immigrants. There should be more wraparound supports and programs to connect newcomers with affordable housing, and to teach them how to seek affordable housing. Participants suggested funding settlement programs to conduct outreach and educational sessions at shelters, hotels, and other temporary housing.

Some noted that seniors are especially impacted by gentrification and displacement because they are often on a fixed income and unable to earn more to keep up with rising rent. Seniors should be a priority for low-income housing.

Inclusive Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Residents discussed the importance of creating diverse local hiring opportunities across sectors. Participants were particularly interested in youth employment opportunities, including mentorship, training, and co-op programs. Some suggested opportunities to partner with secondary schools and local universities to offer a broader range of opportunities to youth.

Participants noted that newcomers often hold credentials from their home countries, but struggle to validate their experience in Canada and find relevant jobs that use their skills. A few participants suggested that settlement case workers or community organizations could connect newcomers to upskilling opportunities and job opportunities within their field.

Some noted that Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) should be better funded and should be encouraged to better publicize opportunities for job seekers, including hosting job fairs and supporting employment-focused organizations to respond to strategic procurement opportunities.

Additional Comments on the Community Development Plan Draft Principles and Actions:

Many participants noted that the Community Development Plan should be as accessible and readable for all community members as possible. Participants emphasized the importance of using plain, readable language and avoiding any jargon and acronyms. A few participants expressed that the term “local Indigenous, Black and Equity-Deserving” in the Draft Principles and Actions is not inclusive to all people who rely on programs and services, and noted that for programs and services to be inclusive in practice, the priority should be comprehensive outreach and cultural sensitivity.

Participants identified some areas of redundancy in the Draft Principles and Actions, and suggested reducing the number of goals to focus on a smaller number of actions with feasible, measurable outcomes.

Participants expressed concern that some of the Draft Actions were abstract, and should be as specific as possible, especially where they relate to supporting community organizations in partnership and collaborations.

Community Partnership Circle:

A Community Partnership Circle was proposed to support Community Development Plan implementation beginning in 2024. The Circle will convene residents, City divisions, community organizations, and other stakeholders. In Phase 3, participants discussed strategies for comprehensive resident involvement in a Community Partnership Circle.

Many emphasized the importance of involving residents in determining the functions and operations of the Community Partnership Circle from an early stage, especially in determining the role of members on a residents' table. For example, members of the table may be responsible for providing feedback on development applications, acting as community ambassadors by sharing updates from the Community Partnership Circle with the wider community, and communicating broader community priorities to City divisions. Several participants noted that an important aspect of the residents' table should be creating effective opportunities for residents to provide feedback directly to landowners, sufficient training and capacity building opportunities should be available for residents sitting on the table. Echoing conversations from Phase 2 meetings, some participants said that residents on the Community Partnership Circle could be involved in the implementation of small-scale projects, such as public art installations or entrepreneurship grants.

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: Planning Open House (In-person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- November 28th: Planning Open House (Virtual)
- November 29th: Planning Open House (In-person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- November 30th: Planning 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 18th 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)