



Preserving Black Communities

Community Feedback on ULI Preserving Black Renter Affordability ETOD Report

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1.0 Overview

This report is a summary of the Community Roundtable hosted in the Jane Finch neighbourhood on November 5, 2024, by CP Planning, in partnership with the Toronto Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the City of Toronto's Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) Division, including its Community Development Unit and Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit. This event provided an opportunity for residents, community leaders, city officials, and other constituents to discuss priorities for the Jane Finch community and shape actionable solutions based on recommendations from the ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Report, "[Preserving Black Communities Apartment Affordability Around Transit in Toronto](#)" This ULI TAP report focused on Jane Finch as a case study to understand broader patterns and solutions to preserve and increase affordable housing and community space supply.

Throughout the event, Jane Finch community members actively shared their insight to ensure the ULI TAP report's recommendations reflected the needs and priorities of Black residents. In the workshop component of the event participants identified and advanced consensus building on what actionable steps should be taken as to preserve the ability for Black renters to afford staying in the Jane Finch community.

Table 1: In-person participant breakdown

Attendee	Count
Jane Finch community members	17
City of Toronto	5
Funders/Granting Organizations	2
TAP Panel members	2
ULI	2
CP Planning	2
Total	30

1.1 Background

This work represents a collaborative effort to address systemic barriers to affordability and displacement in the Jane Finch community.

The TAP report was produced by ULI, as part of their Advisory Services program, in which industry professionals volunteer their expertise and technical assistance for communities and organizations facing land use challenges. CP Planning and the City of Toronto's CABR sponsored the TAP, and the TAP also received additional funding and

support from the ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing, base in Washington DC, US. The professional panel's experience spans over 100 years, and includes the management of national organizations, and performing roles that included the oversight of a \$20 billion housing plan and tenant protections expansions. To produce their concluding TAP report and its recommendations, the panel reviewed data and various reports, and interviewed over 60 contributors, including CMHC staff, developers, Jane-Finch community leaders, among others.

Exploring solutions to displacement, through consensus building between industry and community, is part of CP Planning's [Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans to Confront Systemic Racism](#) ("Roadmap"). The Roadmap is an action-oriented program designed to address crucial gaps of systemic racism in the Land Use Planning and Development Economy. The Roadmap was launched in 2022, inclusive of incubation via CMHC's Housing Supply Challenge. Its priority is to reduce displacement within Ontario cities which have received massive investment into the development of rapid public transit.

The exploration of solutions aligns with the City of Toronto's ongoing [Growing in Place Initiative](#), and [Jane Finch Community Development Plan](#).

The Growing in Place Initiative is part of the City's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. This Initiative facilitates collaborations between community partners and various City Divisions to support planning and neighbourhood redevelopment processes to reduce the gentrification of Black commercial and residential spaces.

The Jane Finch Community Development Plan accompanies the area's land use development plan and using social and economic investment tools to address historically-rooted inequities and build on the wealth of community assets and resilience to sustain Jane Finch communities. The Jane Finch Community Development Plan is guided by three (3) core principles: Truth and Reconciliation, Confronting Anti-Black Racism, and Partnerships & Resourcing. Various actions and targets are set in this plan, and key follow up actions flow as a result.

Among various other actions, this includes:

- advancing implementation strategies for the Jane Finch Community Hub & Centre for the Arts, and
- establishing resident and community platforms to support ongoing engagement in the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, learning and evolution of the plan in future years,

1.2 Key Takeaways

The feedback gathered from community members underscores the urgency of moving beyond discussion to the implementation of strategies that prevent displacement, preserve the community's cultural richness, and promotes equitable development. Actions include effective communication with Black residents, inclusive participatory decision making, and proactive policy implementation to prevent displacement.

Exercise 1: Discussion and prioritization of recommendations from the ULI TAP Report

- **Affordable Housing Solutions:** Increasing Black homeownership through programs like "Options for Homes," tracking deeply affordable non-market units, and supporting community ownership through land trusts and co-ops were prioritized, alongside calls for accountability in addressing housing and affordability issues.
- **Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD):** Building capacity for Black community resilience in housing and transit, applying equity lenses to development policies, securing public land for equitable projects, and establishing citywide incentives to support affordability.
- **Jane Finch Community:** Deepening community involvement via the resourcing and/or ongoing implementation of
 - the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for Arts,
 - community and resident leadership tables,
 - equitably engaging tenants in development strategies, and
 - leveraging industrial land for local job creation and reducing commuting burdens.

Exercise 2: SWOT Analysis

- **Strengths:** Strong community engagement, cultural diversity, and willingness to mobilize around shared goals.
- **Weaknesses:** Limited funding, resource scarcity, and lack of engagement with developers and decision-makers.
- **Opportunities:** Leverage transit infrastructure for community spaces, youth employment, and co-op programs.
- **Threats:** Gentrification, unaffordability, funding cuts for cultural initiatives, and over-policing.

1.3 Next Steps

Concrete next steps defined in collaboration with the TAP partners, the City of Toronto, and the Jane Finch community.

Actions committed to by CP Planning during the Consultation and during the Winter:

1. **Report release** – This report documenting the outcome of the November 5th, 2024, Community Roundtable distributed to community members.
2. **2025 follow up community event** – CP Planning aims to advance priorities reflecting consensus built through an event hosted early 2025. The specific date would be determined during consultations with the TAP partners during the Winter season following this November 2024 event.
3. **Broad community consensus building** – CP Planning launched a survey in February 2025 as an opportunity for broader community feedback on what within the ULI TAP report are the priority actions to be implemented, and what are commonly held beliefs on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relevant to overcoming barriers to protect and increase affordable housing supply and the inclusiveness of neighbourhoods. The results of the broad survey are targeted to be summarized and distributed Spring 2025.

2.0 Presentations

Photo 1: Diavin Miller, presenting



To help provide context to the event, brief introductory remarks were shared by Richard Joy, Executive Director of ULI, and Diavin Miller, Director of Operations, who provided a background on their respective organization's scope and relationship to the work of building solutions to the lack of affordable housing supply and inclusive cities. This was followed by in depth presentations on the ULI TAP Report and its recommendations, and the City's Jane Finch Community Development Plan & Anti-Displacement Strategy.

2.1 ULI TAP Report & Recommendations

Kirk Johnson (President, Eco-Efficiency Consulting) and Robert Walter-Joseph (Principal, Gladki Planning and Associates) presented on the ULI TAP process and its accompanying [report](#). The TAP brought together Canadian and U.S.-based professionals from the private and public sectors to explore and recommend best practices, policies,

and solutions for improving housing affordability and reducing displacement among Black private apartment renters impacted by Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and Tower Renewal projects.

Through extensive research and interviews with over 60 community members and sector representatives, the panel identified key challenges, including the disproportionate loss of affordable housing — where 15 units are lost for every unit built — and significant financing gaps hinder the development of community-owned housing. The panel proposed 31 recommendations, organized into three key categories: Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD), Affordable Housing Solutions, and the Jane Finch community. These recommendations were further categorized into short-term (less than 3 months), mid-term (3-6 months), and long-term (6+ months) actions, emphasizing the need to align and amplify existing programs, balance housing preservation with new supply, and create a comprehensive framework for equitable development.

Key Directions of the ULI TAP Recommendations

- Equitable Transit-Oriented Development
 - Equitable development and preservation
 - Sustainable and inclusive housing
 - Community-centered initiatives
- Affordable Housing Solutions
 - Displacement and affordability protections
 - Affordable housing benchmarking and financing
 - Black home ownership and inclusive housing models
- Jane Finch Community
 - Community-led development and engagement
 - Equitable investments and opportunities
 - Spaces and capacity building

The ULI TAP report also underscored the importance of strengthening non-market developers, enhancing community participation, and building the capacity of individuals and organizations to engage effectively in urban development processes. Workforce development and the provision of resources to empower Black communities were highlighted as priorities.

A recurring theme throughout the presentation was the need for alignment and collaboration among all actors involved in urban development and a commitment to inclusive decision-making. Recognizing the sensitivities of external groups working within the community, the TAP, CP Planning, ULI, and the City of Toronto prioritized

active community involvement throughout the process and will continue this collaboration by following community leadership to implement solutions that address housing and policy gaps while promoting equitable outcomes for Black residents.

2.2 Jane Finch Community Development Plan & Anti-Displacement Strategy

Imara Rolston and John Smith, from the City of Toronto Social Development Finance and Administration Division, presented on the [Jane Finch Community Development Plan](#) (CDP) and Anti-Displacement Strategy. They highlighted the transformative changes facing the Jane Finch community, including concerns about displacement linked to significant development and revitalization projects. These changes have emphasized the need for new approaches to planning and community engagement, especially given past unmet promises related to other City-led initiatives.

In response, the City continues its collaborative process with the community to advance a plan that addresses gentrification, displacement, anti-Black racism and pursues economic development, inclusive planning, and Indigenous reconciliation. The plan prioritizes meaningful community involvement to ensure development aligns with local needs, recognizing the importance of resident voices, and local organizations in shaping equitable outcomes.

Imara highlighted the importance of cross-departmental collaboration within the city, ensuring that planning, social development, and economic development work cohesively. This approach also aims to embed equity into land-use planning, allowing language and frameworks to evolve over time to reflect community needs. Additionally, the Anti-Displacement Strategy seeks to provide a foundational framework, including concrete asks for developers, aspirational goals, and tools to address gentrification and displacement.

The presentation also introduced discussions on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) as a potential tool for long-term community ownership and stability of real estate to be used to meet community needs. While still a new concept for Jane Finch, conversations about land trusts are emerging, particularly around food security. However, the success of CLTs requires extensive community education, resources, and organizing to ensure they are sustainable and effective. Both Imara and John stressed that Jane Finch is recognized as an area in urgent need of investment, where collective action is necessary to address long-standing inequities and deliver meaningful results.

3.0 Workshop

The workshop's dotmocracy and SWOT exercises translated ULI TAP report recommendations into community-driven priorities. Community member feedback emphasized action over consultation, prioritizing Black homeownership, affordable housing preservation, community decision-making, and equitable transit-oriented development. Strengths identified included strong engagement and cultural resilience, while challenges such as underfunding and displacement risks underscored the need for targeted investment. The insights gathered provide a direction to drive meaningful, community-led progress.

3.1 Dotmocracy Prioritization of Recommendations from the ULI TAP Report

Attendees were asked to participate in a dotmocracy exercise to rank the priority of the TAP report recommendations in 3 distinct areas.

Themes:

1. Affordable housing Solutions
2. Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD)
3. Jane Finch Community

For the dotmocracy exercise, each resident was asked to rate their top 4 priorities in each category via the placement of green dots. Non-residents were encouraged to participate and share their views but were provided with dots of other colours to ensure that residents voices could be heard and measured separately during the exercise.

Across all themes, residents stressed the need for action over research, the leverage of local knowledge and resources, the preservation of the neighborhood's heritage, and for planning efforts to focus on lived experiences rather than abstract maps.

During the activity, residents repeatedly warned that these exercises had been completed in the community in the past with no resulting actions. They also highlighted that resident participation in these types of planning exercises required them to invest time and energy and they could not afford to have that wasted if these initiatives were not likely to progress to positive outcomes. Overall, the community maintains a strong focus on delivering concrete equitable outcomes and addressing the human rights of community members to adequate, affordable, and safe housing and community spaces.

3.1.1 Affordable Housing Solutions

Table 2: The top 4 prioritized recommendations

Priority	Community Votes	Other Votes
Increase Black home ownership through down payment assistance, tax exemptions or reductions, and/or rent-to-own programs.	11	2
Benchmark and track the number of deeply affordable non-market units annually and by decade	9	1
Increase Black community ownership through community land trusts and co-ops	6	3
Investigate sources for “preservation financing” for capital improvement and maintenance of low-cost existing affordable housing	6	1

The affordable housing priorities articulated by community members were focussed on increasing homeownership for the Black community in Jane Finch as well as building accountability through data. Community members felt that there was a need to track how initiatives were addressing the housing and affordability issues in the neighbourhood and whether they were effective. References were made to previous programs and studies that failed accountability expectations or to deliver on the community's needs.

3.1.2 Equitable Transit Oriented Development

Table 3: The top 4 prioritized recommendations

Priority	Community Votes	Other Votes
Secure Black community capacity building support for climate retrofit, electrification, workforce, affordability, and transit	8	3
Establish citywide equitable development incentives and affordable project allowances	4	4
Public land procurement/purchase for equitable development	4	3
Apply an equity lens to Building Performance Standards and permitting to discourage displacement	4	0

The Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD) priorities articulated by community members included capacity building for Black community resilience in housing and transit, applying equity lenses to development policies, securing public land for equitable projects, and establishing citywide incentives to support affordability.

With ETOD, the main point of feedback from residents during the report back portion of the exercise was that there should be less focus on maps from the City and planning professionals and more focus on the real lived experiences of the actual residents and how they navigate and use the physical space around them. One question generated from the discussion was around how existing landowners would be engaged in the community redevelopment planning process to achieve the priorities expressed.

3.1.3 Jane Finch Community

Table 4: The top 4 prioritized recommendations

Priority	Community Votes	Other Votes
Deepen community involvement in decision making in ways that are tailored to the members	6	2
Prioritize and fund development of the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for Arts	6	1
Engage and involve the Jane Finch tenants in equitable ways while implementing equitable development strategies	5	2
Secure funding to implement the Jane Finch Community Development Plan	4	1

Photo 2: Open discussion during the exercise



The community priorities articulated by community members included deepening community involvement, funding the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for Arts, equitably engaging tenants in development strategies, and leveraging industrial land for local job creation to reduce commuting burdens.

When considering the broader priorities for the Jane Finch community, community members reiterated that there has been lots of research done in the Jane Finch neighbourhood in the past, but little concrete action has been taken to effectively address the needs of its members. They also pointed out that there is a lot of strength, knowledge and experience present in the community and that these are assets that need to be properly leveraged. Residents spoke to the need for better career opportunities in Jane Finch.

Residents frequently returned to the point that there have been lots of community development conversations in the past that have not progressed to action and that the community will need the resources to properly participate and engage in any community development projects such as Community Development Plans.

They pointed to the available industrial land on the west side of Jane Street that could be leveraged by government and/or private partners to create light manufacturing or job training opportunities for youth in the neighbourhood. Residents highlighted that most community members have long commutes to find employment yet there are empty/underutilized employment lands available on their doorstep. They noted that, "if the city is serious about creating whole communities, then good jobs within the community need to be a priority as well."

Community members wanted a focus on making the community stronger and developing a complete community that reflects a sense of home and belonging. They were also keen to ensure that the heritage and identity of the community would be celebrated and not lost to gentrification or redevelopment.

Photo 3: Jane Finch community, ULI Toronto, and City of Toronto discussing



3.2 SWOT Analysis

Only Jane Finch community members were asked to participate in the SWOT exercise.

A SWOT analysis is a framework for identifying and analyzing a community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to inform strategic planning. Strengths are considered internal factors that give the community advantages. Weaknesses are internal factors that put the community at a disadvantage. Opportunities are external factors that can be exploited to benefit the community and threats are external factors that could lead to problems for the community in the future.

During the setup for the SWOT the facilitator reviewed the SWOT definition and encouraged community members to think of strengths and weaknesses in terms of existing conditions/assets and opportunities and threats as potential future/unrealized conditions and assets for the community. Community members then wrote on and placed stickies based on their observations of the ongoing contexts.

Summary of SWOT results:

- **Strengths:** Strong community engagement, cultural diversity, and willingness to mobilize around shared goals.
- **Weaknesses:** Limited funding, resource scarcity, and lack of engagement with developers and decision-makers.
- **Opportunities:** Leverage transit infrastructure for community spaces, youth employment, and co-op programs.
- **Threats:** Gentrification, unaffordability, funding cuts for cultural initiatives, and over-policing.

Photo 4: Residents adding stickies to indicate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Jane Finch



Table 5 : Summary of Strength and Weaknesses shared during the exercise

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Residents are deeply invested in their neighbourhood and actively participate in shaping its future. 2. The community has a strong collective voice and the ability to organize for change. 3. A rich mix of cultural backgrounds and artistic talent strengthens the community's identity. 4. A diverse and young demographic brings energy and potential for growth. 5. Large institutions and organizations are willing to invest and build capacity in the community. 6. Jane Finch has a strong, recognizable identity that fosters a sense of belonging. 7. Residents are dedicated to addressing systemic issues, including displacement and housing insecurity. 8. Local spaces serve as vital hubs for organizing, information sharing, and strengthening social ties.	1. Limited financial support for grassroots organizing and community initiatives. 2. Community organizations face a lack of access to essential resources, funding, and investment. 3. Minimal collaboration between the community and the development industry in planning processes. 4. Limited pathways for growth and investment contribute to disengagement and frustration among residents. 5. Lack of coordination among interest groups leads to misalignment of goals and priorities. 6. Residents struggle with navigating differentiating responsibilities between various government bodies. 7. Stereotypes and misconceptions hinder equitable development and community representation. 8. Concerns about the practicality of large-scale equitable development initiatives due to funding and policy gaps.

Table 6 : Summary of Opportunities and Threats shared during the exercise

Opportunities	Threats
1. The LRT expansion improves connectivity and creates opportunities for transit-oriented development. 2. Prioritizing local ownership of developable properties (e.g., former commercial and government buildings) to benefit residents. 3. Implementing policies and frameworks to prevent displacement and preserve affordability. 4. Expanding job training programs and employment pathways for young residents. 5. Strengthening co-ops, local enterprises, and non-profit collaborations for sustainable development. 6. Leveraging new development opportunities to ensure inclusive, community-beneficial growth. 7. Establishing formal frameworks to involve the community in land use and development decisions. 8. Protecting and celebrating the neighbourhood's identity, history, and social fabric through community-led initiatives.	1. Rising property values and development pressures threaten long-term residents and affordability. 2. Insufficient investment in community programs, including arts and cultural hubs, reduces local opportunities. 3. Job scarcity, particularly for youth and marginalized groups, leads to economic instability. 4. Increased surveillance and security measures in redeveloped areas may contribute to racial profiling and community mistrust. 5. Weak collaboration between government, developers, and community groups hinders progress. 6. Shifting political priorities and unstable funding sources threaten long-term community initiatives. 7. Redevelopment risks displacing cultural institutions and diminishing the neighborhood's historical identity. 8. If community demands are perceived as unfeasible, developers may bypass engagement, reducing community influence over projects.

3.2.1 Discussion

The discussion emphasized the need for sustained engagement with Black community leaders and residents to ensure inclusive decision-making, address displacement fears, and preserve affordable housing amid gentrification. Participants also highlighted the importance of honouring the cultural identity of the Jane Finch community, nurturing equitable safety policies, and embedding accountability and measurable outcomes into all development efforts.

Resulting questions for further exploration in follow ups by CP Planning include:

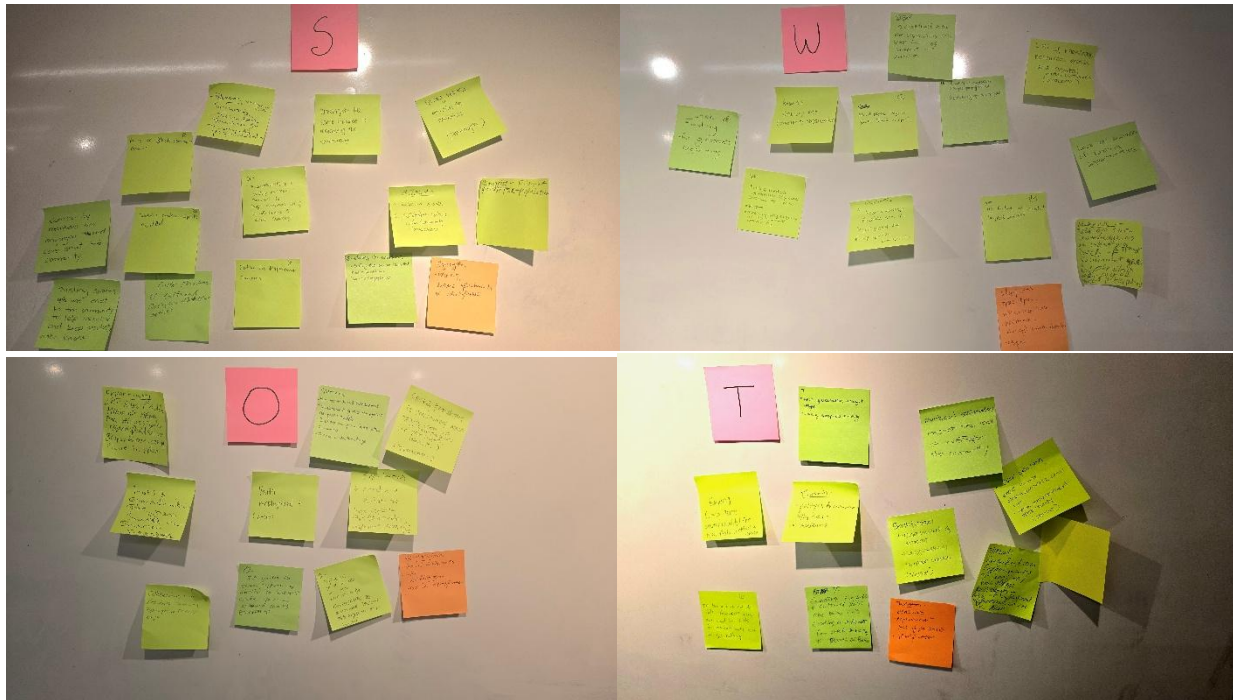
- How can sustained engagement with Black leaders and residents be ensured?
- What steps can protect affordable housing during gentrification?
- How can community services better address housing gaps for families and seniors?
- What partnerships can balance safety needs without stigmatization?
- How can safety policies address the specific needs of Black residents in Jane Finch?
- How can communication strategies effectively engage Black residents?
- What steps can ensure early, inclusive community involvement?
- How can proactive policies address displacement and preserve affordable housing?
- What strategies can protect the cultural and historical identity of the area?
- How can industry-led projects build accountability and measure outcomes effectively?

Appendix

A.1 ULI TAP Report Dotmocracy Votes



A.2 SWOT Analysis Stickie Notes



A.3 Additional Comments and Questions

At the end of the session, a member of the community who works with a local organization in Jane Finch shared written notes on additional Feedback and Questions, listed below.

Feedback

1. Need for tailored communication – Existing communication strategies may not be effectively reaching the Black community. Explore community specific channels, in-person outreach, and culturally relevant communication methods.
2. Inclusive decision-making – Past transit projects have made decisions without Black community input. Establish a framework for inclusive, early-stage involvement of Black residents in TOD and other development planning
3. Transparency in planning timelines – Provide clear, accessible updates on CABR's initiatives, progress and impacts to ensure residents are well inform and aware of the benefits
4. Protecting against future displacement – Addressing community fears of displacement requires ongoing monitoring and proactive policies that ensure affordable housing is preserved or expanded as TOD progresses

5. Cultural and historical recognition – Ensure that TOD and other development projects honor the cultural history and social fabric of Black communities, protecting spaces of cultural and historical importance to local residents

Questions

1. Community engagement and trust building - What steps can the project organizers take to ensure long term, meaningful engagement with Black community leaders and residents?
2. Housing affordability and displacement prevention – How can the CABR unit support efforts to preserve existing affordable housing, particularly in neighbourhoods undergoing significant development and gentrification?
3. Holistic community services – In what ways can the CABR unit collaborate with other city departments to address the lack of family sized units, senior housing, and intergenerational spaces
4. Partnerships for safety – What partnerships can be built between housing providers, community organizations, and public safety authorities to provide a balanced and non-intrusive approach to safety in social housing?
5. Community-specific safety policies – What policies are being developed within the affordable housing framework to ensure that safety initiatives are context specific and meet the unique needs of Black residents in Jane Finch? How can policies be designed to prevent use of excessive security measures that could contribute to stigmatizing social and community housing residents?