

Jane Finch Initiative
Agency Cluster Consultation
Summary Report
July 15, 2021 9:00-10:30 AM



Report compiled by Jane Finch Community and Family Centre

Background

The [Jane Finch Initiative](#) is about planning for the future of the area and 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](#)) centred on the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West.

The initiative involves three integrated streams of work:

- 1) **Comprehensive engagement** (ongoing)
- 2) A **community development plan** including a local economic opportunities plan;
- 3) An update to the **land use planning framework**.

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, July 15th from 9-10:30, The Jane Finch Community and Family (JFCF) Centre, in collaboration with the City of Toronto, hosted the second Jane Finch Initiative - Agency Cluster Consultation. This consultation was held over Webex and featured many non-profit organizations based in the Jane Finch area or who provide services to the area. See Appendix 1, page 8 for the agenda.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Provide a brief explanation of the Jane Finch Initiative;
- Understand the challenges and opportunities related to delivering services in the Jane Finch area;
- Engage local agencies and organizations to inform the Community Services & Facilities Study/Land Use Plan and the Community Development Plan.

Attendees:

- 2 JFCF centre staff, Berta Kaisr and Amadeo Ventura;
- City of Toronto Staff: Alexandra McDonough, Janvere Lyder, and Lillian D'Souza;
- 28 participants from 16 agencies.

Participants were also reminded to complete an online survey with a larger focus on the theme of "space" asking questions about how these agencies and organizations use space currently and what their anticipated needs would be. This survey was distributed prior to the meeting.

How We Engaged

This consultation was held during the bi-weekly meeting of the Black Creek-Humber Summit Neighbourhood Cluster. An email was sent out to the Cluster contacts informing them of the consultation and inviting them to participate. There were 16 agencies present on the call.

The meeting opened with a land acknowledgement and agenda walk-through followed by a City of Toronto presentation about the Jane Finch Initiative and the Community Services & Facilities Study/Land Use Plan as part of the JFI. The City staff presenter was Alexandra McDonough, Community Services & Facilities Study lead. After the presentation, the agencies and organizations were invited to provide feedback and answer questions through Jamboard slides as well as through the chat and verbally by unmuting themselves. A tutorial on how to use the Jamboard was also provided.

What We Heard

In this section, there is a summary of the major themes of discussion which includes the information from the Jamboard, Webex chat and verbal discussions. For a more detailed look at the Jamboard discussion, see Appendix 2, page 10.

The themes in this section are also in answer to these four major questions:

- What locations in the neighbourhood are most special to you and your clients?
- What services are key to residents' wellbeing? What are the service gaps?
- What changes to your space would help you deliver programs and services? (Ideas could include relocation, renovation, expansion, and co-location)
- Imagine the area in approximately 25 years. What do you see?

These questions provided the agencies with the opportunity to share what matters to them and their clients and what could improve their ability to provide better services.

1) What locations in the neighbourhood are most special to you and your clients?

Public Spaces:

Some of the most important locations that are considered special to the participants are community spaces that are easily accessible. These locations included:

- Community gardens and farms like the Black Creek Community Farm

- Community centres and organizations like the Firgrove Learning and Innovation Centre and Jamaican Canadian Association
- Community gardens and green spaces like parks, trails and playgrounds for kids
- Libraries such as the York Woods location of the Toronto Public Library
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Health centres
- Community health services in-house
- Gyms, Indoor swimming pools and ice rinks
- Mall spaces

Mobility:

When the participants were asked which locations were most special to them and their clients, it was mentioned that places that are near transit work best for clients who do not have cars and/or have trouble getting around. Thus, having community centres and common spaces for the clients close to transit is extremely important to the participants. There were also discussions about having community centres that are within walking distance for the clients as well as being able to host events in parking lots to help with social distancing. The participants were also vocal about the need for more parking spaces for those that have cars and protected bike lanes because it gives people the chance to move around when they aren't able to take transit.

2) What services are key to residents' well being? What are the service gaps?

Inclusivity:

When the participants were asked what services they think are key to residents' well being, the importance of services for non-status community members was discussed. Making community spaces available in different locations to make them accessible for the diverse representations as well as addressing Islamophobia and confronting Anti-Black Racism and providing a safe space for residents were also some important points of discussion. Not only that, but also providing affordable and accessible support for LGBTQ+ individuals and providing language support like interpreters and community animators. There were also discussions about having more support for those individuals with disabilities and the overall theme of breaking down barriers and providing more accessibility services.

Training & Collaboration:

The participants and co-facilitators discussed the importance of having community members involved with the community's development and engaging staff by facilitating a community of practice and allyship. They also expressed that hiring residents to help with projects like the Finch West LRT and having the residents be more involved when it comes to security measures in order to prevent shootings and lower crime in the area was just as important as well as more collaborations with other agencies in the community.

Accessibility:

As described within the "Inclusivity" theme, the participants were especially passionate about accessibility; community members need access to technology, affordable food and housing, health care services and child care support. In addition, education services such as degree and diploma programs need to be more accessible and affordable for community members as this is especially difficult for newcomers. It was also mentioned that having support from the government regarding academic upgrading programs for newcomers and making it affordable is needed as it promotes and encourages higher education.

3) What changes to your space would help you deliver programs and services? (Ideas could include relocation, renovation, expansion, and co-location)

Access to Space

During this part of the discussion, it was clear that there is a need for more space for non-profit organizations to deliver programs and services in the Jane Finch area. Participants discussed wanting more space generally and having more access to space in existing locations such as the Firgrove Learning and Innovation Community Centre, and also at future centres such as the Jane Finch Arts Hub. There were several comments about the challenges to accessing existing spaces such as local schools and Seneca College, and participants mentioned that even though the organizations and the needs are growing; their spaces are not.

Several participants described challenges related to renting space. There was interest in a community run/owned space because most of the agencies currently rent their spaces and these were considered expensive and hard to find even if they could afford the space.

Some participants also felt that co-location opportunities are important and needed in the community. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated that many services (especially related to health) were provided to the community from outside groups who didn't necessarily have a space to access.

Participants felt that more collaboration between social agencies, community organizations and businesses would improve discussions about access to space and ensure that spaces are inclusive. Air conditioning and improved air circulation in these spaces is also a must; not just during COVID-19 times.

Recreational Space:

When agency representatives were asked to think of what spaces they'd like to see added or improved in the area, there was a great deal of interest in piazzas, splash pads and pools. Piazzas in particular were repeatedly mentioned. Some mentioned that residents had to leave the community to access pools.

4) Imagine the area in approximately 25 years, what do you see?

Many of the answers for this fourth question reflected the changes that participants would like to see within their communities. Some of the answers for this question reflected what the participants think will eventually come to exist in the future of Jane Finch. Sometimes these answers were positives and other times less encouraging as they might have highlighted the reality of what the participants were used to. Some of these answers included:

- Affordable daycare, affordable housing and transit with better biking infrastructure
- Self-sustained community with easily accessible services and programs
- A variety of sustainable community gardens
- Pride in the community and an improved image and reputation
- Well-maintained schools
- Safety, especially for youth and brighter futures for them
- More condos and gentrification
- Business hub for entrepreneurs
- Intergenerational program services
- Piazzas

Consultation Reflections

The Jamboard slides have been offered as an engagement option at each of the Jane Finch Initiative consultations thus far, and the agency representatives at the Agency Cluster consultation were some of the most engaged with the slides as evident in appendix 2. This enthusiasm for the slides means that there was great engagement from the group.

The participants of the Agency Cluster consultation are very passionate about the Jane Finch community and about providing their services to as many residents as possible, but they need better and more adequate access to spaces in the community in order to fulfill their goals. Their feedback at this meeting is invaluable and will serve as great guidance in the upcoming Jane Finch reports and policy directions that will plan for the future of Jane Finch.

Appendix 1 : Agenda

8:30 Tech Check (All)
9:00 Welcome and Introductions of Presenters (Ronni / Janvere)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land Acknowledgement ● What is the purpose of this meeting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide input on existing conditions, challenges and opportunities related to delivering services in the JF study area. ● Results of earlier consultations
9:02 Workshop Intro (Berta)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall structure of the workshop
9:10 City Presentation (Lillian / Alex)
<p>Lillian (3-5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JFI refresh and updates on work-to-date <p>Alex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High-level overview of CS&F needs assessment (process, purpose and timeframe) ● Invitation to the survey (link in the chat)
9:20 Visioning Workshop (Jamboard)
<p>Berta</p> <p>Lead the visioning Workshop with Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What locations in the neighbourhood are most special to you and your clients? ● What services are key to residents' well-being? What are the service gaps? ● What changes to your space would help you deliver programs and services? (Ideas could include relocation, renovation, expansion, and co-location). ● Imagine the area in approximately 25 years. What do you see?
10:10 Meeting Wrap Up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reminder CS&F survey due July 29 (next cluster meeting), linked in chat

Roles	
Facilitator	Berta Kaisr (Co-host)
Co-facilitator	Janvere Lyder (Host)
In-meeting Tech support	City of Toronto staff
Note-taker	Jane Finch Centre staff
City of Toronto presenter	Lillian D'Souza
City staff attending	Alex McDonough Janvere Lyder
Break-out room facilitators	Not applicable

Questions to guide the discussion:

What kind of facilities would you like to see in the community?

What do the buildings and neighbourhoods look like?

Where do people like to go to meet each other or play sports?

How do you imagine the parks and public spaces?

What kinds of community facilities are there?

Where do people go to get help and services?

What do you love in other parts of the city that you'd like to see here?

What opportunities do you want the new transit line to bring?

Appendix 2: Jamboard Feedback

Photo #1: Jamboard Slide 1



Question: What locations in the neighbourhood are most special to you and your clients

- TCHC community rooms and kid friendly spaces
- Mobile space school with permits and parking space
- Libraries
- Yorkgate Mall, Jane/Finch Mall, Driftwood centre and Black Creek farm
- Large number of people don't have cars. Having locations/ shops near transit is extremely important for residents and clients
- Community Centres that are within walking distance
- Street level accessibility
- Community gardens and green spaces like parks, trails and playgrounds for kids
- Parking lots that help with social distancing used for events
- Making community spaces available in different neighbourhoods to make it more accessible for the diverse representations
- Having large community spaces that can be used for events
- Jamaican Canadian Association
- Schools/college/university
- Having protected bike lanes is important as it gives people the chance to move around when they don't want to take transit

- Health centres that aren't necessarily clinics can be important for the community

Photo #2: Jamboard Slide 2

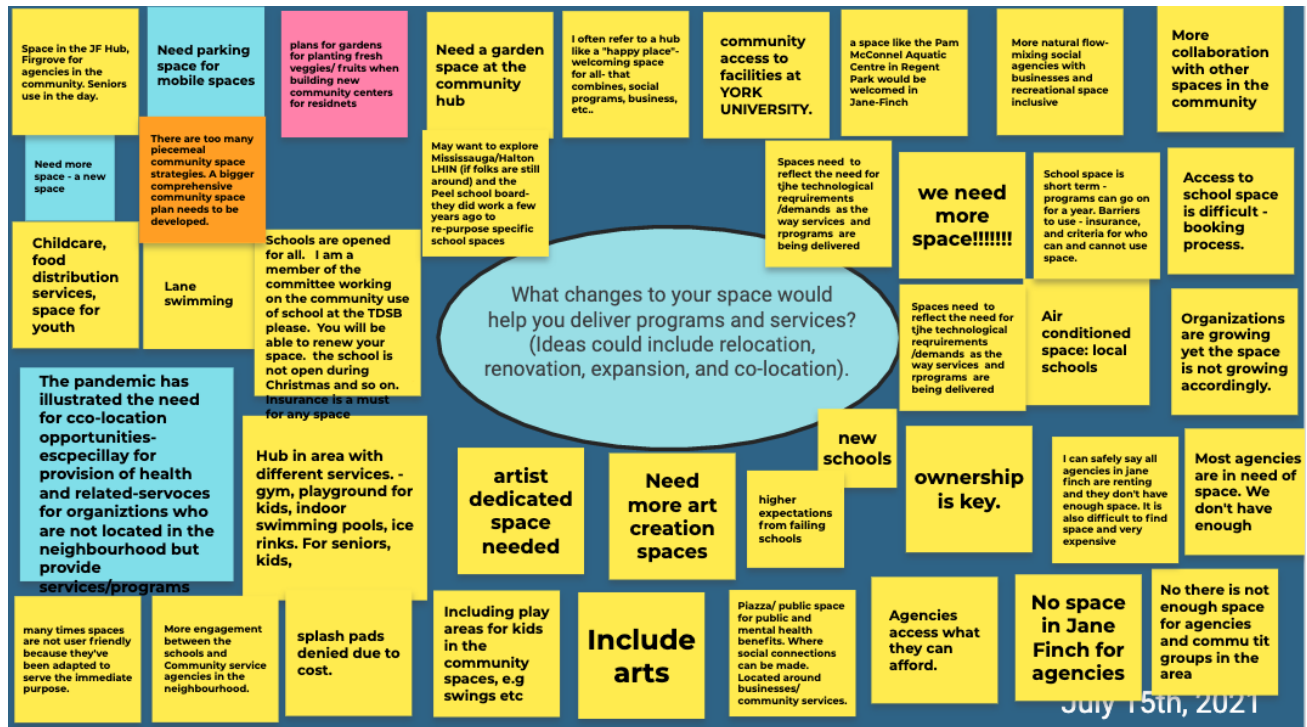


Question: What services are key to residents' well being? What are the service gaps?

- Services for non-status community members
- Space where people can gather and feel safe
- Supportive housing with connections to needs of the tenants
- Health care services
- More community garden spaces and to decrease food insecurity
- Quality businesses
- Community health services in house
- Individual community champs
- Affordable and accessible support for LGBTQ+ individuals
- Affordable food and housing
- Settlement services, language supports, community animators to help with language supports like interpretation
- Access to technology
- Community members should be involved with the community development
- Child care/ support services
- Addressing ABR (Anti-Black Racism)

- Addressing Islamophobia
- There is also the need to engage organizations/staff by facilitating a community of practice/allyship
- Degree and Diploma certification services
- Easy access to educational institutions because this is especially difficult for newcomers
- Deliberate employment opportunities for youth and everyone in the neighbourhood
- Domestic violence and gender-based violence support.
- Equipping the staff organizations so that they can support clients
- Build capacity of frontline and executive staff
- Jobs training in skilled trades
- Interpretation services (part of newcomer settlement services)
- Good businesses in the area- for example, a good quality grocery store
- Public education to address positive aspects of Jane-Finch Neighbourhood
- Vocational education services
- Youth entrepreneurship opportunities which help design side businesses
- Tenant advocacy
- A reduction in hyper-police-surveillance
- Education and training programs
- Help the residents to own housing, like no interest housing, rent to own, etc. because rents are skyrocketing and keep the community poorer and poorer.
- Gender based violence as it also relates to Human Trafficking and building capacity in that specific area
- Employment and mental health services
- The government should mandate any project that is going on in the area to hire some residents. E.g. The LRT that is being built now
- Involvement of residents in security measures in order to prevent gangs and shootings
- Affordable child-care services
- Having support from the government in making academic upgrade programs for new immigrants affordable for newcomers
- Support for individuals with disability

Photo #3: Jamboard Slide 3



Question: What changes to your space would help you deliver programs and services?
(Ideas could include relocation, renovation, expansion, and co-location).

- Space in the JF Hub, Firgrove for agencies in the community
- More space and new spaces
- Childcare food distribution services, space for youth
- The pandemic has illustrated the need for cco-location-opportunities especially for provision of health and related services for organizations who are not located in the neighbourhood but provide services/programs
- Many times spaces are not user friendly because they've been adapted to serve the immediate purpose
- Need parking space for mobile spaces
- There needs to be a bigger comprehensive community space plan needs to be developed because there are a lot of piecemeal community space strategies
- Lane swimming
- More engagement between the schools and community service agencies in the neighbourhood
- Plans for gardens and planting fresh veggies/fruits when building new community centers for residents

- Insurance is a must for any space, especially for community use of schools at TDSB
- Hub in area with different services like gyms, playgrounds for kids, indoor swimming pools, ice rinks for seniors and the kids as well
- Splash pads were denied due to cost
- Need a garden space at the community hub
- May want to explore Mississauga/Halton LHIN (if folks are still around) and the peel school board did work a few years back to repurpose specific school spaces
- Artist dedicated spaces are needed
- Including play areas for kids in the community spaces
- A welcoming place that combines social programs, businesses, etc.
- Community access to facilities at York University
- New schools and higher expectations from failing schools
- Public space for mental health benefits where social connections can be made, this can be located around businesses/ community services
- A space like McConnell Aquatic Centre in Regent Park would be welcomed in Jane-Finch
- Spaces must reflect the need for the technological requirements and demands as the way services and programs are being delivered
- Agencies access what they can afford
- Ownership is key
- More natural flow like mixing social agencies with businesses and making recreational space inclusive
- School space is short term and programs can go up to a year.
- Barriers to use
- Insurance and criteria for who can and cannot use space
- Air conditioned space for local schools
- No space in Jane & Finch for agencies
- More collaborations with other spaces in the community
- Organizations are growing yet the space is not growing accordingly with them
- Most agencies are in need of space

Photo #3: Jamboard Slide 4



Question: Imagine the area in approximately 25 years, What do you see?

- Multiple sustainable garden spaces with fruits and veggies
- A self-sustained community with services and programs that are easily accessible.
- Community market
- Positive energy- sense of pride
- Inclusive and welcoming space- reflective of the community
- bright and beautiful
- well maintained schools, nice food stores
- All youths have jobs, none of them are in gangs and shootings
- Vast majority of the community gentrified
- No more food apartheid
- I see that the area will be gentrified. There will be little or no subsidized housing. Observe what is happening on Eglinton
- Secure housing/ home ownership
- Piazza, safe bike lanes
- Affordable daycares
- Condos

- Business hub, how to write business plans, help with taxes. Helping people start and grow their business
- I hope we could have a safe community space with intergenerational program center. We have similar online with the Black and Indigenous team. Our Indigenous team is having a town hall on Friday this week at 4 pm. Indigenous person sharing her experience in the big city "Toronto" when she first came here.
- Spaces that allow organizations and community groups to easily work together on strategies that improve the community. (similar to Centre for Social Innovation)
- I would like to see an area where all the community members can easily access opportunities, services and resources they need.
- I hope the reputation of Jane and Finch has changed and is seen as a safe, growing place without any fear. Nowadays we don't even mention that we live in Jane and Finch when applying for jobs and other things. I wish in 25 years, I will be proud to mention I live at Jane and Finch area
- Affordable housing
- More gardens which lead to lower food prices
- Many folks displaced due to over-development
- More trees planted
- to see our school atop of academic achievement
- More cycling infrastructure that's beyond recreational use. Where people can bike to work etc.
- More home ownership