

Jane Finch Initiative

Inclusive Economic Opportunity Stakeholder Consultation

Summary Report

July 14, 2021 6:00-8:00 PM



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**.

The City is working in collaboration with the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre who will support community engagement and facilitate different community consultations to collect feedback.

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, July 14, 6:00-8:00pm, the second of two Jane Finch Initiative - Inclusive Economic Opportunity Consultations was facilitated 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 stream and it was held online over Zoom. The meeting's agenda can be viewed on page 8..

The purpose of the event was to:

- Provide a brief explanation of the Jane Finch Initiative and upcoming consultations;
- Inform local residents about process and possible guiding principles for an Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan
- Engage local residents and learn about their vision and theme recommendations for creating an Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan

Attendees:

- 3 JFCF centre staff, Berta Kaisr, Amadeo Ventura, and Kirsten Desabrais;
- Kemisha Brown, a local resident as a co-facilitator;
- 2 City of Toronto Staff, Dan Rosen and Leah Birnbaum;
- 30 local residents attended

How We Engaged

For the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Meetings, the JFCF and City of Toronto City are working alongside 2 groups of community partners to help outreach to the community and understand the inclusive economic-related work already underway.

30 community members were present at this consultation. Outreach was done through community networks and the sharing of a poster over social media. See Appendix 2, page 9 for the poster.

The meeting opened with a land acknowledgement and agenda walk-through followed by an ice-breaker question asking participants where they would choose to move if they had unlimited funds. Before the City of Toronto presentation, Kemisha Thomas, the co-facilitator, asked the residents to think of the question “what goes into an Inclusive Economic Plan?” throughout the presentation. Similarly to the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Stakeholder Consultation, Dan Rosen from the City of Toronto gave a 20 minute presentation on the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan as part of the Jane Finch Initiative and some sample principles for participant feedback that the plan could build on..The sample principles were based on preliminary conversations, past research and recent community economic development work in other parts of the city. Some of the principles were amended following the feedback from the stakeholder consultation.

Next, Berta provided a brief tutorial on the use of Jamboards and Kemisha followed the tutorial by beginning the engagement section of the meeting. Participants then had the opportunity to answer questions and provide feedback through the Jamboard, typing in the chat, and/or verbally by unmuting themselves. A google form where participants could add more feedback and submit their information to receive an honorarium was provided after the meeting.

What We Heard

This section includes the main themes of the conversation and the feedback the participants provided. During the consultation, much like the stakeholder-focused consultation, the participants were invited to answer questions regarding what they believe goes into an inclusive economic opportunity plan. Residents also provided their feedback following Dan Rosen’s presentation and proposed themes/principles. For a detailed description of the Jamboard discussion, see appendix 3, page 10. Below is a summarized version of the discussion.

1) Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan

The community is interested in having an Inclusive Economic Opportunity plan that centres the community's interests and well-being. This includes economic enrichment and development, long term jobs and better opportunities for the working youth, services and support for seniors, affordable and quality housing, plans to eliminate food poverty and more services to support residents' mental health.

Participants also believe that adequate transportation can go "hand in hand with new businesses and development" so adequate transit can be the part of the improvements that would solve the issues of overcrowding and create more accessibility for people to purchase transit passes.

Safety within the Jane Finch community has always been a concern among the participants. Due to the neighbourhood violence, the community finds it unsafe to use the public parks in comfort or to allow children to play outside. Thus, in terms of what they believe goes into an Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan, establishing safety within the community is a priority.

2) Maintaining and Supporting Community Serving Businesses

When discussing the use and reliance on retail locations in Jane Finch, participants brought up the issue of Payday Loan stores. Participants believe there is too much access to these programs in the community and that they are causing more damage than good. They would like the government to address this along with the issue of high service fees at the local banks. In the discussion, a participant admitted the preference there is to using Credit Unions as opposed to signing with local banks for that reason.

Furthermore, participants believe that there is a threat that the businesses they rely on are being displaced due to the new developments coming into the community. They believe that the people of the community need to be viewed as the number one priority and need to be helped throughout these transitions. However, they see the value in needing to expand and maintain the retail options at Jane Finch. For example, they suggest utilizing the empty spaces that many of the local property owners have through creating more local businesses and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the need for another locally accessible grocery store was brought up, because not only would this allow for reduced food prices, it would also provide employment.

3) Community Benefits and Social Procurement

The example provided for this section to explain community benefits was of the Metrolinx Community Benefits Agreement with the Rexdale community through the development of the Woodbine Casino, that included a \$5 million daycare promised to the community and various other benefits.

For the Jane Finch community, a participant brought up the need for the Development of a Chamber of Commerce. They stated that a strong local Chamber of Commerce would allow for a place for community members to receive information on transportation, local jobs that are available, housing and apartments and economic and community development opportunities.

Other participants expressed frustration in their struggles of finding quality jobs despite their engineering or nursing degrees due to their immigrant status. They hoped for benefits to support immigrants with international credentials.

4) Engaging Large Employers/Anchor Institutions

Participants answered that the industries that are the largest employers in the area include the grocery stores, big businesses on Steeles and Keele, the colleges and York University. However, they believe that to expand this list, employers could be induced to hire more people through a financial incentive from the local government to assist with providing more reasonable wages and benefits. For example, Employment Ontario programs are available to provide subsidies to employers who hire locally such as paying half of the employees' wage for a year. Furthermore, Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS), other employment agencies and apprenticeship programs in the community can be utilized in training or providing good paying jobs.

Participants also discussed that the address or postal code attached to their resumes often encourages employers to reject potential hires from the area. Thus, participants are concerned with securing long term employment and ensuring that the businesses coming into the community are equal opportunity employers.

5) Workforce Development Supports

The role workforce development agencies and support programs should play in the Jane Finch community includes training and providing well paying jobs, alongside ensuring employment support and services are recognizable to the community. A participant noted that there is a lot of workforce development support in the community from non-profit organizations that are not visible because people do not have a place to

be informed of such opportunities. Therefore, more outreach is needed and more physical visibility so that residents walking around in the neighbourhood recognize a service provider's location and are able to easily access it.

Participants also suggest going into schools and speaking to the graduating class on certain trade programs to get them involved and more aware of their job opportunities.

6) Entrepreneurship Support, Social Enterprise and Space

The City can better support local entrepreneurs through exploring the possibility of offering grants to starting entrepreneurs, providing loans with lower interests and offering programs on how to apply for these grants and loans. One of the participants, a local small business owner, explains the struggle of finding and accessing help and that there is confusion in regards to current federal entrepreneurship programs. Therefore, a strong local Chamber of Commerce, as mentioned in previous sections, is important for distributing this information and making it accessible to all.

7) Other Inclusive Economic Opportunity Policy Directions

Other policy directions the City should consider as part of an Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan include teaching financial literacy at school. Teaching youth about finances, such as knowing the basics of income tax, using a credit card, the value of money, and how to do banking could help ensure a good future for them. It is also suggested that community centres or banks get involved through starting a course or sending in employers to schools to teach these basics.

Additionally, more senior-focused policies and services are needed as seniors are part of the group of residents that are often cast aside and the community wants an improvement in the future.

Consultation Reflections:

As has been evident in every JFI consultation, the community's residents want to be involved in any processes affecting their community and they want the local existing residents, especially the youth and seniors, to be prioritized.

Essentially, more improved economic opportunities and services, support for local residents to advance, and centralized platforms which include relevant information for the community are needed in order to ensure the livelihood of current and future residents.

This second Inclusive Economic Opportunity consultation provided additional feedback that will serve as great guidance to the creation of the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan in the Jane Finch community.

Appendix 1: Agenda:

6:00 Housekeeping and Opening Remarks (Berta & Kemisha)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who to contact if you're having tech issues (Amadeo/Berta) ○ Explain how to mute/unmute/raise hand ○ If joining by phone, press *6 to mute/unmute and *9 to raise your hand. • Land Acknowledgement • Purpose of Meeting • Ice breaker question: If you had an unlimited amount of money, where in the world would you choose to live?
6:20 City Presentations (Dan Rosen)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Toronto presentation by Dan Rosen
6:45 Engagement Session (Kemisha)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening question examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you think is an inclusive economic opportunity plan? • Discussion of each of the example principles from Dan's presentation through the use of Jamboard slides. • Additional discussion questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do the sample overall vision and more specific sample themes/principles make sense as priorities to focus on? ○ What is missing? ○ What existing community led work and previous experiences should the City be aware of?
7:45 Meeting Wrap Up (Berta)

Roles	
Facilitator	Berta Kaisr
Co-facilitator	Kemisha Thomas
In-meeting Tech support	Amadeo Ventura
Note-taker	Berta Kaisr & Kirsten Desabrais
City of Toronto presenter	Dan Rosen
City staff attending	Leah Birnbaum
Break-out room facilitators	Not applicable

Appendix 2: Outreach Poster



The poster features a light blue background with a white curved top. At the top center is the City of Toronto logo. Below it, the title 'JANE FINCH INITIATIVE' is written in large, bold, orange letters. Underneath, 'INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COMMUNITY CONSULTATION' is written in bold, dark blue letters. A dotted line separates this from the main text, which is in a black serif font. The date and time are highlighted in a bold, black, underlined font. Meeting details are listed in a black sans-serif font. At the bottom left is an illustration of a diverse group of people with their arms raised. To the right is a speech bubble containing the text 'SIGN UP ON EVENTBRITE!'. At the bottom right are a blue Zoom icon and the Jane Finch Centre logo.


JANE FINCH INITIATIVE
**INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

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Join us for a community meeting and provide
your feedback on creating an inclusive
economic opportunity plan for Jane-Finch

WEDNESDAY, JULY 14 @ 6PM

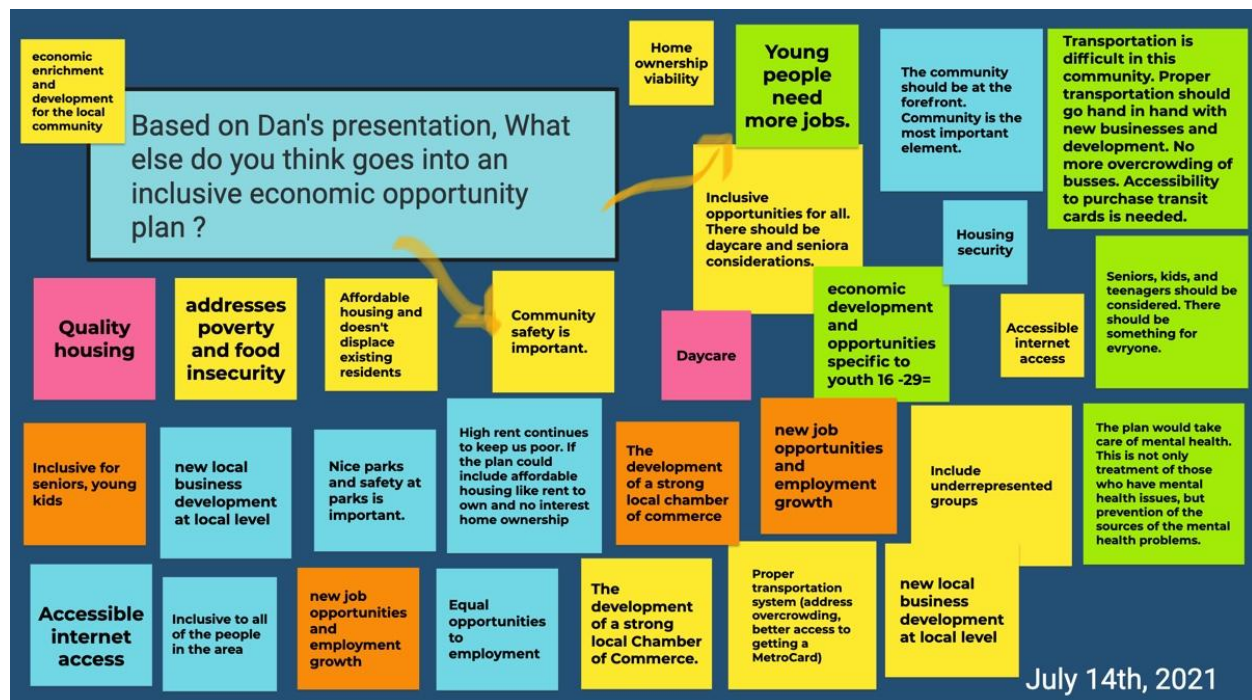
Zoom Meeting ID: 986 0717 2398
Passcode: 214052
Join by phone: 647 374 4685


 SIGN UP ON EVENTBRITE!

Appendix 3: Jamboard Feedback

Jamboard Slide 1

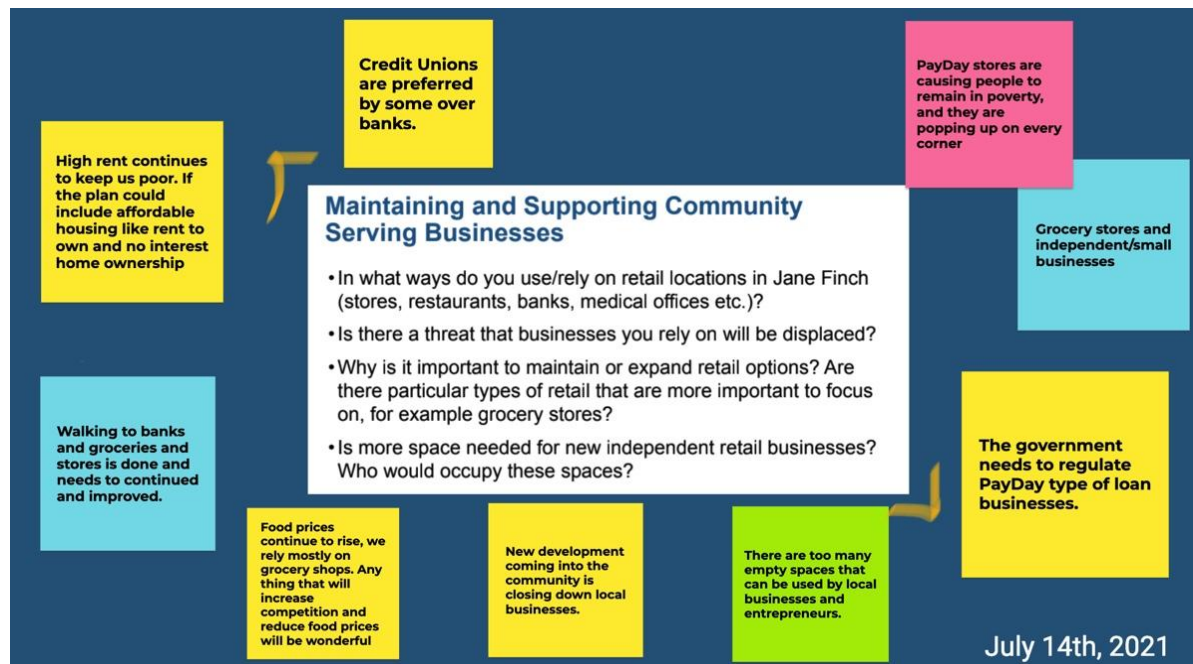


Question: What do you think goes into an inclusive economic opportunity plan?

- Economic enrichment and development for the local community
- Home ownership viability
- Young people need more jobs
- The community should be at the forefront. Community is the most important element
- Transportation is difficult in this community. Proper transportation should go hand in hand with new businesses and development. No more overcrowding of busses. Accessibility to purchase transit cards is needed
- Quality housing
- Addresses poverty and food insecurity
- Affordable housing and doesn't displace existing residents
- Community safety is important
- Daycare
- Inclusive opportunities for all. There should be daycare and senior considerations
- economic development and opportunities specific to youth 16 -29
- Housing security
- Accessible internet access

- Seniors, kids, and teenagers should be considered. There should be something for everyone.
- Inclusive for seniors, young kids
- New local business development at local level
- Nice parks and safety at parks is important
- High rent continues to keep us poor. If the plan could include affordable housing like rent to own and no interest home ownership
- The development of a strong local chamber of commerce
- New job opportunities and employment growth
- Include underrepresented groups
- The plan would take care of mental health. This is not only treatment of those who have mental health issues, but prevention of the sources of the mental health problems
- Accessible internet access
- Inclusive to all of the people in the area
- New job opportunities and employment growth
- Equal opportunities to employment
- The development of a strong local Chamber of Commerce
- Proper transportation system (address overcrowding, better access to getting a MetroCard)
- New local business development at local level

Jamboard Slide 2



Topic: Maintaining and Supporting Community Serving Businesses

Questions:

- In what ways do you use/rely on retail locations in Jane Finch (stores, restaurants, banks, medical offices etc.)?
- Is there a threat that businesses you rely on will be displaced?
- Why is it important to maintain or expand retail options? Are there particular types of retail that are more important to focus on, for example grocery stores?
- Is more space needed for new independent retail businesses? Who would occupy these spaces?

Answers:

- High rent continues to keep us poor. If the plan could include affordable housing like rent to own and no interest home ownership
- Credit Unions are preferred by some over banks
- PayDay stores are causing people to remain in poverty, and they are popping up on every corner
- Grocery stores and independent/small businesses
- Walking to banks and groceries and stores is done and needs to continued and improved
- Food prices continue to rise, we rely mostly on grocery shops. Anything that will increase competition and reduce food prices will be wonderful
- New development coming into the community is closing down local businesses
- There are too many empty spaces that can be used by local businesses and entrepreneurs
- The government needs to regulate PayDay type of loan businesses

Jamboard Slide 3



Topic: Community Benefits and Social Procurement

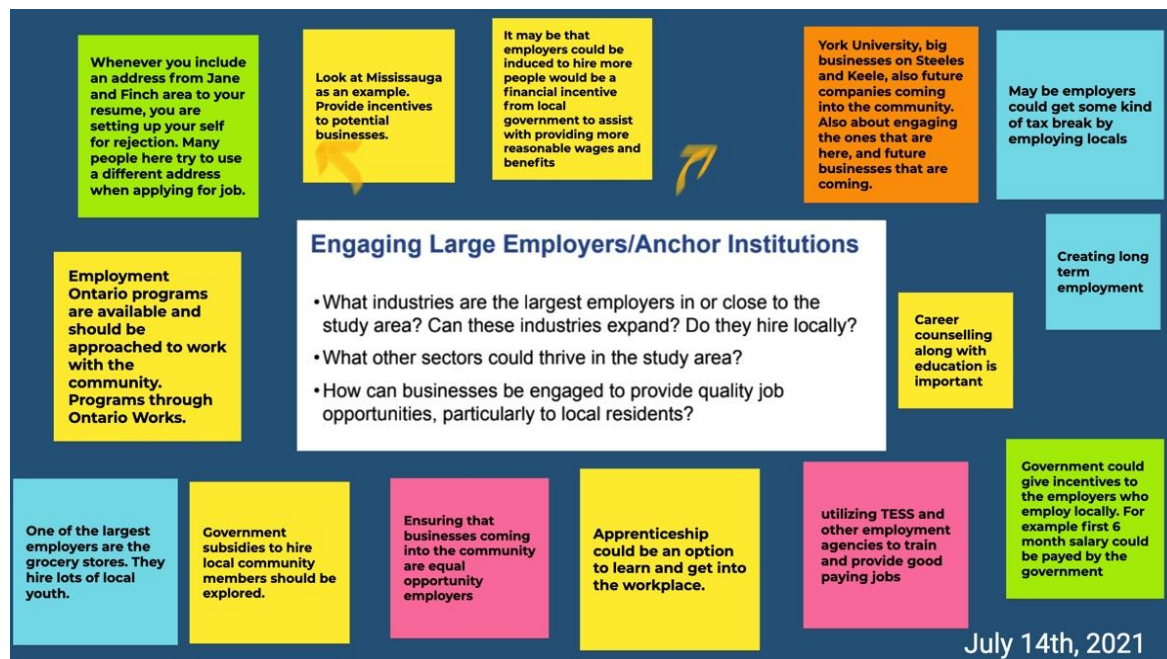
Questions:

- What has been learned from community benefit agreements in other locations that could/should be applied in Jane Finch?
- What is required to locate and connect local residents to potential community benefit employment or training opportunities? Local suppliers to procurement opportunities?

Answers:

- I am [an] immigrant, the saying [that] is affecting us [is] "It is who you know first before what you know". Our kids have degrees in civil engineering, [are] dieticians, [and] nurses who have graduated here in Canada. Their job has been applying for jobs till they end up in minimum wage jobs
- What did we learn from the Regent Park Development Project? Can we learn important and key things from that project?
- Development of a strong Chamber of Commerce
- Community Benefits Agreements that are successful (like Rexdale and Woodbine) can include mandatory % employment of local residents, the building of daycare, etc.

Jamboard Slide 4



Topic: Engaging Large Employers/Anchor Institutions

Questions:

- What industries are the largest employers in or close to the study area? Can these industries expand? Do they hire locally?
- What other sectors could thrive in the study area?
- How can businesses be engaged to provide quality job opportunities, particularly to local residents?

Answers:

- Whenever you include an address from [the] Jane and Finch area to your resume, you are setting yourself up for rejection. Many people here try to use a different address when applying for a job.
- Look at Mississauga as an example. Provide incentives to potential businesses.
- It may be that employers could be induced to hire more people [which] would be a financial incentive from local government to assist with providing more reasonable wages and benefits
- York University, big businesses on Steele and Keele, also future companies coming into the community. Also about engaging the ones that are here, and future businesses that are coming.
- Maybe employers could get some kind of tax break by employing locals
- Employment Ontario programs are available and should be approached to work with the community. Programs through Ontario Works

- Career counselling along with education is important
- Creating long term employment
- One of the largest employers are the grocery stores. They hire lots of local youth
- Government subsidies to hire local community members should be explored
- Ensuring that businesses coming into the community are equal opportunity employers
- Apprenticeship could be an option to learn and get into the workplace
- Utilizing TESS and other employment agencies to train and provide good paying jobs
- Government could give incentives to the employers who employ locally. For example first 6 month salary could be payed by the government

Jamboard Slide 5



Topic: Workforce Development Supports

Questions:

- What role do workforce development agencies and support programs play in the study area?
- Are job seekers able to connect to jobs and training?

Answers:

- Utilizing TESS and other employment agencies to train and provide good-paying jobs
- Redevelopment should have visible storefront services
- Making sure employment support/services is more visible and accessible to the community
- Go into schools and speak to graduating classes about getting into trades or certain programs

Jamboard Slide 6



Topic: Entrepreneurship Support, Social Enterprise and Space

Questions:

- How can the City support local entrepreneurs?
- What types of spaces are needed to support local inclusive economic opportunity?

Answers:

- Explore the possibility of offering grants to would be entrepreneurs
- Providing loans
- Strong local Chamber of Commerce is important for information dissemination
- Offering programs on how to write a grant, business plan, etc.

- There is confusion on current Federal entrepreneurship programs. There is no coordination on delivery
- Entrepreneur and investment training
- Utilizing empty storefronts as spaces for support services
- Our elected officials need to fight for our community and interest
- Make information more accessible and available at the resources centres in the community
- Ask the local non-profit organizations to feature a link for local social enterprises on their websites

Jamboard Slide 7

Teach financial literacy at schools.

Centres outside of educational institutions offering financial literacy training

Other Inclusive Economic Opportunity Policy Directions

- Are there other policy directions the City should consider as part of an inclusive economic opportunity plan for Jane Finch?

July 14th, 2021

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Answers:

- Teach financial literacy at schools
- Centres outside of educational institutions offering financial literacy training