

# **Jane Finch Initiative**

## **Inclusive Economic Opportunity Stakeholder Consultation**

### **Summary Report**

**June 23rd, 2021 10:30-12pm**

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**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, June 23rd, 2021, from 10:30am-12:00pm, the first 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. See agenda on page 7.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Provide a brief explanation of the Jane Finch Initiative and upcoming consultations;
- Get feedback from stakeholders of local Jane Finch economic groups about the Jane Finch Initiative process and guiding principles
- Engage stakeholders about their thoughts and theme recommendations for creating an Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan

### Attendees:

- 3 JFCF centre staff, Berta Kaisr, Amadeo Ventura and Clara Stewart-Robertson;
- Anna-Kay Brown, a local resident as a co-facilitator;
- 2 City of Toronto Staff, Dan Rosen and Leah Birnbaum;
- 9 local economic stakeholder participants

## **How We Engaged**

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

The meeting opened with a land acknowledgement and agenda walk-through followed by an ice-breaker question asking participants where they would like to travel to if COVID-19 was no longer an issue. Before the City of Toronto presentation, Anna-Kay Brown, the co-facilitator, asked the participants to think of the question “what goes into an Inclusive Economic Plan?” throughout the presentation. Then Dan Rosen from the City of Toronto gave a 15 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. The sample principles were based on preliminary conversations, past research and recent community economic development work in other parts of the city.

After Dan’s presentation, Anna-Kay began the visioning segment of the consultation after a brief tutorial on the use of Jamboards by Berta. 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**

The participants were presented with a few different topics and sample principles that Dan Rosen and City staff drafted to help lay the foundations for a discussion. These sample principles are not final and are open to the influence of community’s feedback. Participants were encouraged to voice their opinions and concerns for what else they thought should go into an Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan.

The summary of what we heard is organized under each theme/topic as presented in the consultation. Detailed Jamboard notes can be found on page 8.

### **1) What else goes into an inclusive economic plan?**

For this question, the answers from participants were split into two categories: a) What the plan should include and b) what the plan needs to address.

The answers indicated that the plan should include stable and sustainable quality jobs, an economic hub and business incubator, good wages, and regularly accessible employment opportunities for the marginalized members of the JF communities.

The plan should address the gaps and lack of services for those often left out of the conversation such as low-income folks and seniors who might not be receiving any support from the government. Enterprise Toronto was mentioned as a potential resource for the community, but the participants commented that those types of services are mainly beneficial for middle class communities and they don't contextualize the support needed for a low income community like Jane and Finch.

## **2) Maintaining and Supporting Community Serving Businesses:**

The participants expressed that It is imperative to focus on resident-owned and local businesses and provide them with the resources needed to avoid being pushed out of the community by big chain retailers. Providing grant opportunities and recognizing formal and informal economies in the area could be some ways to improve the support for the residents and their local businesses.

Another important factor in maintaining community businesses includes ensuring residents of the JF community are involved in the process of influencing what types of businesses come into the community, especially through new developments like the redevelopment of the malls in Jane Finch. Establishing models such as a worker's coop and questioning what type of support BIAs provide in the community can also be useful.

## **3) Community Benefits and Social Procurement:**

Examples of community benefits in the area include the benefits promised by Metrolinx through the Finch West LRT, but the community has not been consulted and no community benefits have been implemented yet. This is why accountability is needed to ensure community benefits are followed through with. The stakeholders during this consultation emphasized that these community benefits also need to align with community needs and qualifications as it is not enough to simply provide opportunities when they are not equitable ones. Training programs provided through community benefits to ensure there are more than construction jobs available could also be beneficial as that could support job skills development, improvements and upgrading.

Questions asked in this section:

- Does the local JF Framework need to align with the City's current framework and its implementation, or can it go deeper and be bolder?

- How will opportunities through City agencies like TTC be included in the local community benefits framework?

#### **4) Engaging Large Employers:**

Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) do not have a great reputation or a great relationship within the Jane Finch community and the model of BIAs needs to be questioned when there are discussions of establishing them in the community. One of the reasons participants provided to support the argument against BIAs is the fact that businesses should support the community, not the other way around.

Some questions to ask when thinking of engaging large employers as suggested by the participants in the meeting:

- Which large employers is the community comfortable engaging? How to address large employers that have poor/unsafe workplaces and jobs?
- What kind of larger employers need to be approached and invited into the community?
- How does the local plan connect to the City's larger plan?

#### **5) Workforce Development Support:**

The main points of this section stress the idea that workforce development strategies and projects should be community-led and/or have community engagement at their core. Centering community within these processes is important and establishing a centralized platform where service providers and residents have access and contribute to different services and projects within the community could be an element that aides in the creation of an inclusive economy.

#### **6) Business Start-Ups, Social Enterprise Inclusive Sector Development**

Some of the feedback in this section included asking the question: Does the City have a definition for affordable commercial space and what does that mean in the context of Jane Finch? Again, the idea of incubation centres that are pre-equipped with the resources needed for local startups came up as well as the suggestion for creating a global market within Jane Finch so that anything you need is accessible in the community. Participants also suggested paid programs to train individuals interested in business/entrepreneurship, which may include a social enterprise and business/personal financial literacy component.

## **7) Ongoing City/Other Funder Resources:**

In this final section, stakeholders had the opportunity to add on final thoughts and anything else they would like the City to focus on in terms of the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan. Some of the points mentioned include the need for accountability and transparency. The City needs to provide a clear and ongoing structure for community oversight as there are people in the community doing a lot of the necessary work the City wants to implement so the participants asked for funding for the tables and individuals? already involved in this work.

## **Consultation Reflections:**

Overall, the main takeaways from this first Inclusive Economic Consultation is that the community wants to be more involved in processes that affect their present and future.

A point that also came up a few times in the discussion, especially in the “Engaging Large Employers” section, is around the BIAs and how that model does not work within the Jane Finch community and that if the desire is to decrease crimes in the City, then there must be more investment in the community’ economy and opportunities for youth.

This stakeholder-focused consultation was an excellent first conversation in the overall process needed to create and implement a first-of-its-kind Inclusive Economic Opportunity Plan in the Jane Finch community.

## Appendix 1: Agenda

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| <b>10:30 Housekeeping and Opening Remarks (Berta &amp; Anna-Kay)</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tech check:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who to contact if you're having tech issues (Amadeo/Berta)</li> <li>○ Explain how to mute/unmute/raise hand</li> <li>○ If joining by phone, press *6 to mute/unmute and *9 to raise your hand.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Land Acknowledgement</b></li> <li>• <b>Purpose of Meeting</b></li> <li>• <b>Ice breaker question:</b> Covid permitting, if you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?</li> </ul>  |
| <b>10:50 City Presentations (Dan Rosen)</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Toronto presentation by Dan Rosen</li> </ul>   |
| <b>11:00 Engagement Session (Anna-Kay)</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening question examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you think is an inclusive economic opportunity plan?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discussion of each of the example principles from Dan's presentation through the use of Jamboard slides.</li> <li>• Additional discussion questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do the sample overall vision and more specific sample themes/principles make sense as priorities to focus on?</li> <li>○ What is missing?</li> <li>○ What existing community led work and previous experiences should the City be aware of?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>12:00 Meeting Wrap Up (Berta)</b>  |

| Roles                       |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Facilitator                 | Berta Kaisr    |
| Co-facilitator              | Anna-Kay Brown |
| In-meeting Tech support     | Amadeo Ventura |
| Note-taker                  | Berta Kaisr    |
| City of Toronto presenter   | Dan Rosen      |
| City staff attending        | Leah Birnbaum  |
| Break-out room facilitators | Not applicable |

## Appendix 2: Jamboard Feedback

### Jamboard Slide 1



Question: What else goes into an inclusive economic plan?

- A focus on the household scale of economic development.
- Regular, accessible opportunities to network with employers
- Quality jobs - good pay, benefits, etc.
- Economic hub and business incubator - Enterprise Toronto is great for middle class communities but doesn't contextualize those supports for a low income community like Jane and Finch
- Preparing residents with training and upskilling in order to compete for jobs being offered in the future with the new plan
- Think of those left out conversations. How does the city support those left in the gap? What supports are there for low-income people?
- Has to address the disconnect with the new "Life-Long Learners" Economy and the education attainment rates in the community. Not to mention the accessibility of being a lifelong learner.
- Address Senior poverty
- The upward mobility of workers.
- Address the fact that the majority of workers in the community are in the manufacturing and retail jobs, both of which are declining, often have a cost



leader strategy (low price thus low wages) and have an unstable future, due to changes in technology.

- Which organizations/BIA's currently support economic opportunities?
- Emphasis needs to be put on inclusiveness. Need more support for the most vulnerable such as people with past conflict with the legal system, people with learning disabilities etc.
- Ways to improve the quality of life for everyone, including marginalized people, opportunities for residents to contribute and increase access to opportunities to leverage city and developers investment.
- affordable housing options for current residents (rents, ownership, access to affordable mortgages)

## Jamboard Slide 2



## Topic: Maintaining and Supporting Community Serving Businesses:

- Residents/JF community should have influence on what types of businesses are needed and should be prioritized through new developments (esp. redevelopment of malls)
- Ensure that those traditionally left out are active participants and have access to opportunities resulting from development

- Include focus on resident-owned businesses
- Support for local businesses through shared space.
- To be inclusive we need to recognizing formal as well as informal economies
- Establish ways to prevent chains from pushing local businesses out
- Try not to repeat mistakes done in other communities.
- True and real support for historically marginalized communities. Specific strategies.
- Look at current models in and out of the community.
- Ensure that big businesses do not over-power and eliminate smaller local businesses.
- Grant opportunities for local businesses
- Include focus and supports for JF-based businesses that are attempting new financial/operating models, like worker coops

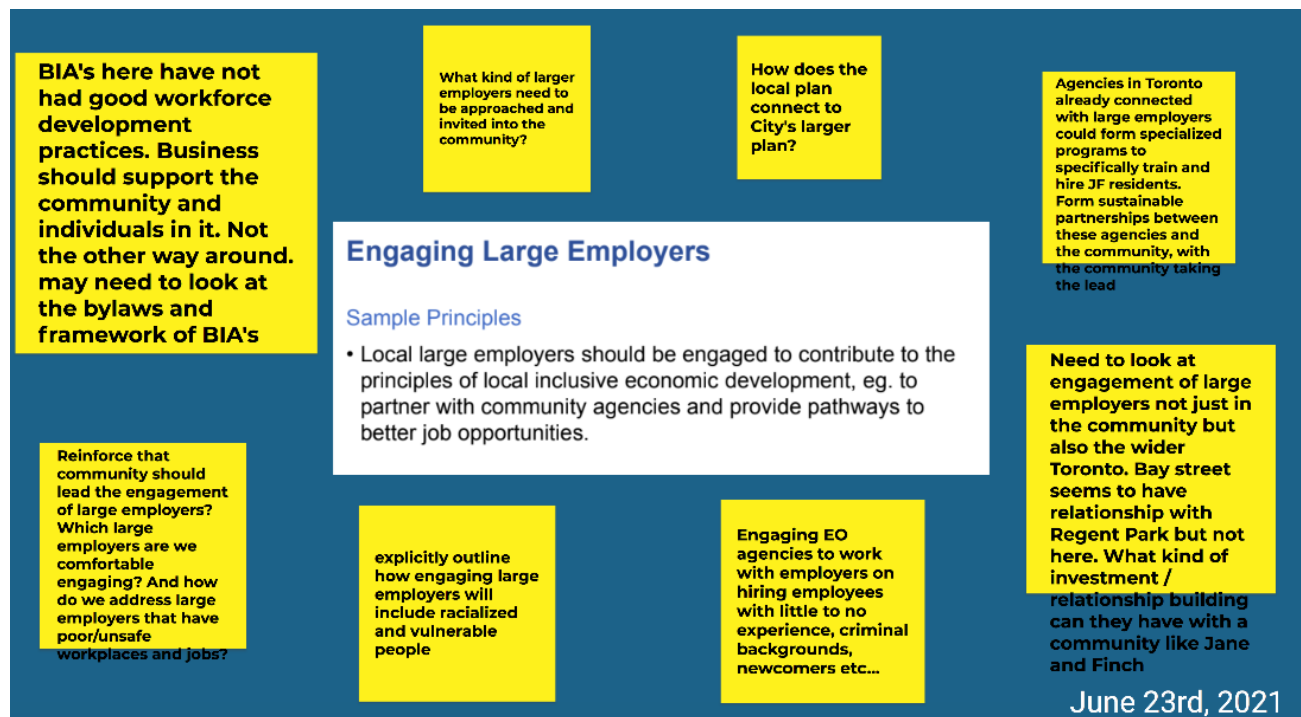
### Jamboard Slide 3



### Topic: Community Benefits and Social Procurement:

- LRT came in selling community benefits but those benefits are not evident. There is no community outreach and no effort to employ marginalized peoples.

- Does the local JF Framework need to align with the City's current framework and its implementation, or can it go deeper and be bolder?
- need to ensure that community benefits get materialized, not just something that is put on paper. It needs to have some teeth to it.
- Ensure there is sustainable and paid/incentivized programming to make it more accessible for low-income residents
- How will opportunities through City agencies like TTC be included in the local community benefits framework?
- Implement training and development opportunities that align with the needs/demands of employers in the community. Consistently re-evaluate to stay up to date with labour market demands
- The framework should explicitly outline how it will include racialized and vulnerable communities
- Look at capacity building in the community when it comes to employment, entrepreneurship and education.
- Actually, put money into community benefits. There needs to be an economic investment.
- Support job skills development, improvements and upgrading.
- Support the establishment of a local Business Support Agency in Jane and Finch, adequately staffed and resourced to provide tailored intervention to residents on Economic Inclusion - starting a business, business growth, job access.

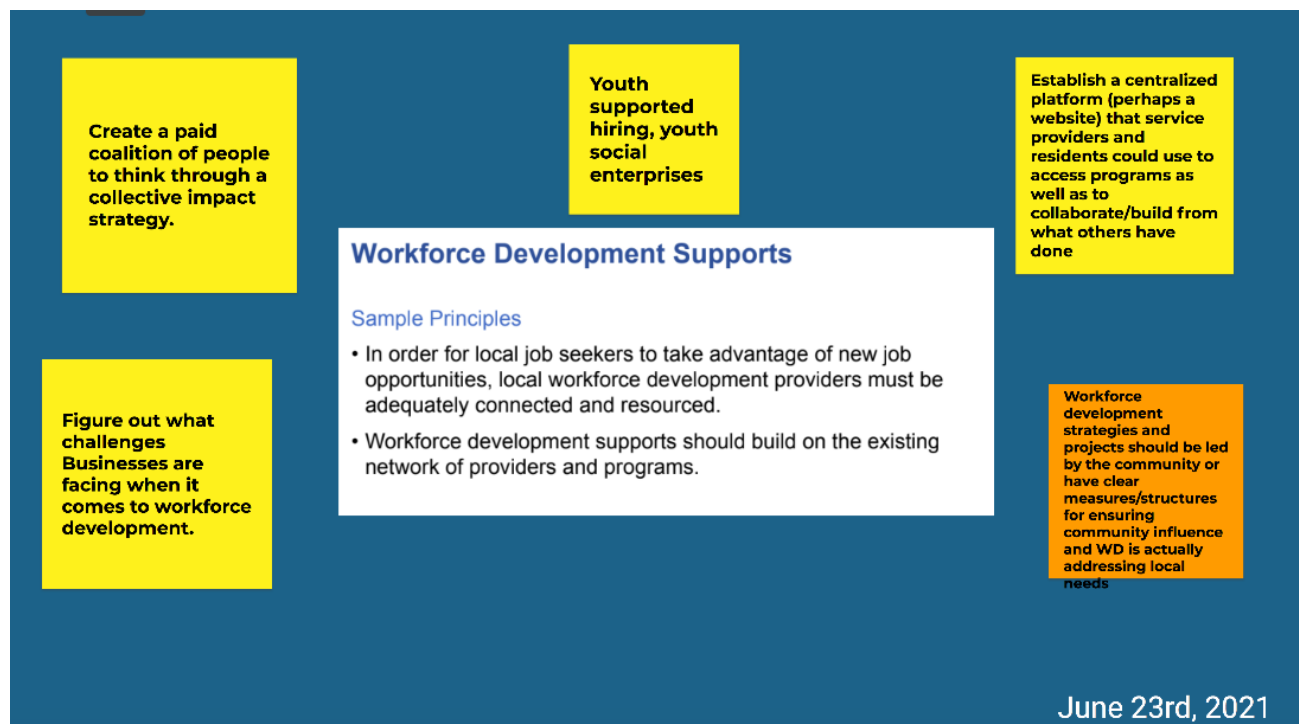


Topic: Engaging Large Employers:

- BIA's here have not had good workforce development practices. Business should support the community and individuals in it. Not the other way around. may need to look at the bylaws and framework of BIA's
- Reinforce that community should lead the engagement of large employers? Which large employers are we comfortable engaging? And how do we address large employers that have poor/unsafe workplaces and jobs?
- explicitly outline how engaging large employers will include racialized and vulnerable people
- What kind of larger employers need to be approached and invited into the community?
- How does the local plan connect to the City's larger plan?
- Engaging EO agencies to work with employers on hiring employees with little to no experience, criminal backgrounds, newcomers etc...
- Agencies in Toronto already connected with large employers could form specialized programs to specifically train and hire JF residents. Form sustainable partnerships between these agencies and the community, with the community taking the lead

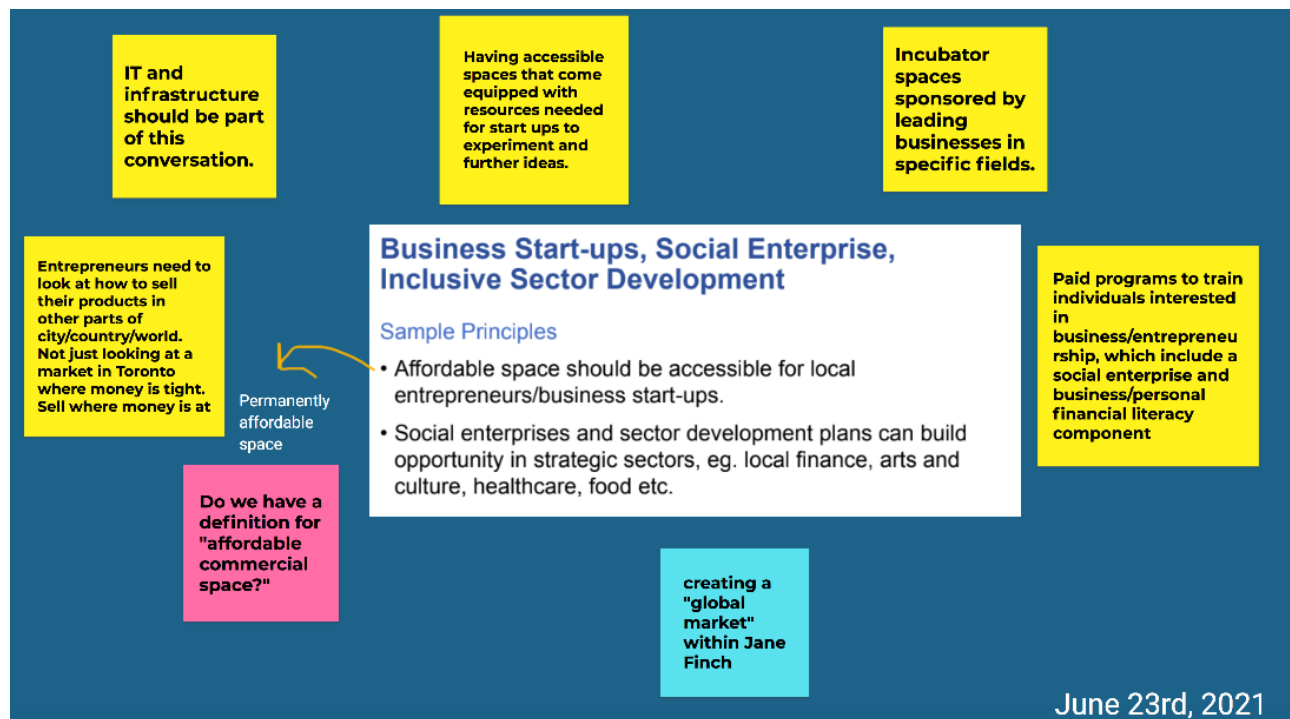
- Need to look at engagement of large employers not just in the community but also the wider Toronto. Bay street seems to have a relationship with Regent Park but not here. What kind of investment / relationship building can they have with a community like Jane and Finch

## Jamboard Slide 5



## Topic: Workforce Development Support:

- Create a paid coalition of people to think through a collective impact strategy.
- Figure out what challenges businesses are facing when it comes to workforce development.
- Youth supported hiring, youth social enterprises
- Establish a centralized platform (perhaps a website) that service providers and residents could use to access programs as well as to collaborate/build from what others have done
- Workforce development strategies and projects should be led by the community or have clear measures/structures for ensuring community influence and WD is actually addressing local needs



Topic: Business Start-Ups, Social Enterprise Inclusive Sector Development

- IT and infrastructure should be part of this conversation.
- Entrepreneurs need to look at how to sell their products in other parts of city/country/world. Not just looking at a market in Toronto where money is tight. Sell where money is at
- Do we have a definition for "affordable commercial space?"
- Having accessible spaces that come equipped with resources needed for start ups to experiment and further ideas.
- creating a "global market" within Jane Finch
- Incubator spaces sponsored by leading businesses in specific fields.
- Paid programs to train individuals interested in business/entrepreneurship, which include a social enterprise and business/personal financial literacy component



Topic: Ongoing City/Other Funder Resources:

- Resource framework and overall implementation plan for the plan should include a clear and ongoing structure for community oversight
- Fund tables and people to do this work.
- The city can seek and speak with investors at another level.
- Accountability is key. There is no public report on what work has been done.
- The BIA model does not work in the community.
- If we want to decrease crime we must be investing in the community for good jobs, adequate income and opportunities for youth that provide hope and meaning