

**Jane Finch Initiative:
Heritage Focus Group
November 3rd, 2021
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**



Summary Report by the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre

BACKGROUND

The [Jane Finch Initiative](#) (JFI) is a community-informed project to plan for the future of the Jane and Finch area. Together, we are developing a community development plan and a land use plan so that residents and businesses are supported as the area changes over time with the opening of the Finch West LRT. 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 opportunity plan.
- 3) An update to the **land use planning framework**.

Community engagement is at the heart of the Jane Finch Initiative. The City is working in collaboration with the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre which is supporting community engagement and facilitating different community conversations to collect ideas and feedback. This includes facilitating monthly meetings of a Community Advisory Committee.

MEETING OVERVIEW

On Wednesday November 3rd, 2021, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 p.m., City of Toronto staff, Jane Finch Community and Family (JFCF) Centre staff, Common Bond Collective (CBC) staff and a Community Researcher hosted the first of two Heritage focus groups. These focus groups are part of the Jane Finch Initiative's comprehensive engagement stream, and it was held online over Webex. The presentation deck, which includes an agenda, can be viewed in Appendix 1 on page 10.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Introduce the Jane Finch Initiative (JFI) to focus group participants.
- Provide a presentation from City's Heritage Planning staff, Common Bond Collective and a Community Researcher to focus group participants about the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment and the scope of work.
- Answer questions following the presentation.
- Hold a discussion with focus group participants about the heritage of Jane Finch.

ATTENDEES:

- **1 JFCF centre staff;** Maymun Abukar (Jane Finch Initiative Coordinator).
- **3 City Planning staff:** Gary Miedema (Project Manager, Heritage Planning), Tatum Taylor (Heritage Planner, City Planning), Zahra Joseph-Wilson (Assistant Planner).
- **2 Common Bond Collective staff:** Ellen Kowalchuk (Partner), David Deo (Partner).
- **1 Community Researcher:** Sam Teclé
- **9 Focus Group participants:** Winston LaRose, Paul Nguyen, Jerome Johnson, Shannon Holness, Fatima Begum, Sayem Khan, Unblind, Talisha Ramsaroop, Leticia Ama Amponsah.

MEETING SUMMARY

- Maymun welcomes everyone, reads the Land Acknowledgement, and goes over the evening agenda.
- City staff, Common Bond Collective staff, Community Researcher and Focus Group participants briefly introduce themselves.
- Zahra briefly presents the Jane Finch Initiative to focus group participants.
- Tatum presents the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) to focus group participants.
- Sam presents “Making Meaning in Place”, including the scope, census data and social realities of Jane Finch to focus group participants.
- Ellen presents the CHRA scope of work to the participants. David presents the work to date with the CHRA and next steps to the focus group participants.
- After the presentation, City staff and Common Bond Collective staff answer any follow-up questions pertaining to the heritage presentation and the heritage assessment of Jane Finch.
- Following this Q&A period, Maymun facilitates the discussion, asking a research question for focus group participants to engage.
- At the end of discussion, the meeting is adjourned. The next focus group will take place on November 23, 2021.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Webex meeting. There will be continued discussion with the Heritage Focus Group on November 23, 2021.

Presentation Questions/ Answers Discussed:

- **Q:** What types of things could be suggested for the heritage designation?
 - **Response:** (Tatum) [Common Bond Collective] will be doing a scan of every property within the study area of the CHRA and will be looking at every building and landscape within those boundaries. All the properties have potential to be identified as heritage and to be conserved through different means. If a property gets recommended for conservation under the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA), there is a set of criteria that Heritage planners must use under this provincial act. This helps municipalities to identify which properties have heritage significance, and under those criteria there are a few different ways that a property can qualify;
 - Architectural significance,
 - Important design,
 - Associated with a person, group, event that took place in the community,
 - Associated with a famous architect,
 - Contextual value: how a property relates to its surroundings.
 - There are a few different ways that a property can qualify, it must meet one of the criteria in the OHA to be officially identified by the City of Toronto as a heritage property. There are also other tools that we (heritage planners) might consider using to acknowledge the heritage value of properties that came to the surface during this process.
 - (Ellen) In the category of historical and associative value that a property may have, it is significant to hear from you to know what is important to a community and taking the intangible values and make a strong case, making a recommendation and include it in the heritage registers.

- **Q:** Can you speak to urban forestry and is it a part of the CHRA? Would you consider it?
 - **Response:** (Ellen) Things like views and vistas can be considered, it cannot be on its own identified because it is not a piece of actual property. If there are parks that are not within the study area boundary, we can make a recommendation for the city to investigate the park- either through a Cultural Heritage Evaluation or a Cultural Landscape Study. Something that we are starting to recommend as part of the CHRA is Cultural

Landscape Studies to understand the intangible values and to understand the things like use, views, and vistas.

- (Gary) The beauty about the CHRA being a part of a planning study is that the OHA is only 1 tool that heritage planners use, but Zahra (city planner) have a different set of tools they can use. So how can we capture views and other aspects you might value are not restricted here. In this case, the JFI has a Community Development Plan. We need to hear from you anything that you value and we're going to find which tools we can use to make use of that.
- **Q:** What mechanisms are in place to protect heritage- designated sites?
 - **Response:** (Gary) When a property is designated under the OHA, staff will do a lengthy report to explain 'why'. When staff explain, that will include the list of attributes. Change can be allowed on the property to adapt. The resources required for these changes- you can get access to;
 - Heritage Grant Program (if a property is designated). This covers up to 50% for owners to make repairs.
 - A Tax Rebate Program for commercial properties access 50% of costs.
 - 2 incentive programs to help owners to conserve a property. The other way where resources can be found is often through development itself. Local Councillors are aware of needs that can direct funds related to development and support projects.
- **Comment:** More engagement needs to happen for the JFI, we need engagement and involvement from those who have contributed to the community.
 - **Response:** (Gary) We will have further conversations to make sure engagement is thorough and that we hear from everyone.
- **Q/Comment:** Can we get the presentation slides after this focus group? Local Mosques in the area are engaged and if you want additional information, pictures, data, they [the Mosques] will assist you [Common Bond Collective/ Community Researcher].
 - **Response:** (David) Will follow- up with participant regarding information.

Research Discussion Responses:

The question asked of the participants was, “*We understand that places are shaped by their histories. What part of Jane & Finch’s past have made it what it is today?*”.

- **Participant:** The Vietnamese community is relatively young, arriving in 1979 to 1980. Jane Finch has the largest population of Vietnamese people in Ontario, we (the Vietnamese community) might not have any buildings or places, but is there somehow a way we can mark that as intangible heritage? Maybe a plaque, monument down the road?
 - **Response:** (Ellen) In terms of this scope, we can make a recommendation to the City.
- **Participant:** It is a shame that we are looking at the end of a life for a lot of public housing in Jane Finch, just because the state of repair, conditions, and quality of the buildings. I know many people are not fans of the architecture, but I believe it is significant to a time where there was a lot of investments of housing in Canada. I wonder if there is opportunity to look further into the forms and structures of public housing- there is a lot of rich history in these communities that need to be preserved, ex. Firgrove, Shoreham, Driftwood, Towers on Finch.
 - **Response:** (David) We are finding a few resources about public housing projects in the area.
 - (Sam) Acknowledging this point, how do we mark meaning and heritage to publicly- funded infrastructure that is allowed to decline?
- **Participant:** Activism is important in the community and a part of the history. Activism in spaces of housing complexes is significant.
- **Participant:** Ways to preserve community murals- each have their own development backstory/ history. San Romanoway, the Farm, Driftwood, Grandravine, are all TCH locations where these murals exist.
- **Participant:** International foods and supporting these restaurants by making them historical sites.
- **Participant:** Community centres and schools are important spaces. Driftwood Community and Recreation Centre, Oakdale Community Centre, Westview C.I. (there needs to be TDSB involvement).
- **Participant:** Jane Finch Mall is an early memory for many residents, central meeting space in mall parking lot.
- **Participant:** Yorkwoods Library was an important space growing up, specifically living in Eddystone.
- **Participants:** Dwight Drummond, Jully Black, Dream Warriors and Keenan are all from the Jane Finch community. Cultural icon, Beanie Man, was once spotted in the Mall.
- **Participant:** Ravines, pathways and creeks should be preserved, specifically the Black Creek and a pathway behind Yorkwoods Library.
- **Participant:** The tennis court and the theatre has been underused but an excellent venue to use for engagement, they should be sustained.

- **Participant:** Another community a part of the cultural heritage of Jane Finch is the Cambodians living in the Eddystone neighbourhood (suggest reaching out to them).
- **Participant:** Restaurants in Yorkgate Mall and Yorkwoods Plaza provide different foods and authentic experiences.
- **Participant:** Question regarding transportation – How would you discuss this theme in the report?
 - **Response:** (David) Developing a document called a Historic Context Statement. Transportation is a fundamental theme of area evolution. For example, Highway 400 affected the land uses on either side and why the neighbourhood has been shaped this way.
- **Participant:** Jane Finch Mall is undergoing future and redevelopment consultations, have we (the JFI) been aware?
 - **Response:** (Zahra) Through that process, it's mostly been connecting with Troy Budhu. No official application has been submitted yet but there is an intention from the mall to engage to the larger community. Speaking with the (planning) team with the master plan and use what we collect with the JFI in their planning into consideration.
- **Participant:** The Huron- Wendat trail along the hydro corridor used to be a settlement of long houses, what considerations for Indigenous heritage are in this conversation?
 - **Response:** (David) We came across this trail in our study area. Looking into the importance of creeks and ravines to the Huron Wendat people.
 - (Gary) Separate Indigenous engagement programs are currently happening in the JFI, reaching out to the Nations to join the conversation about the historical and contemporary Indigenous communities of Jane Finch.
- **Participant:** Marches, murals, and vigils – can those places be marked as historical sites? 4400 Jane Street Basketball Court is a space where a community member was murdered. It is systemic neglect that should be addressed.
 - **Response:** (Zahra) Connected with Barry Reeder (Minister) through economic development, Inclusive Economic Table.
- **Participant:** Jane's walk led by the JFC with different organizations including Black Creek Community Farms and the Green Change Project.
- **Participant:** A digital repository/ digitized space where events can live. There is a strong, significant Hip Hop and Rap subculture in Jane Finch – community events are documented in these songs and are a part of Jane Finch's identity.
 - **Response:** (Zahra) Capture digital and non-physical heritage.
 - (Gary) Mapping music and murals to places across the community.
- **Participant:** Corner of Jane Finch used to be a political gathering site in the Mike Harris days. Space for folks to connect. The (Jane Finch) Mall also should be considered. Organizations apart of this heritage are the Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization (JFCCO) and the Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAAP).

Next Steps

- Explore the influences and themes of the discussion for the second heritage focus group on November 23, 2021.

Appendix: Meeting Agenda

Heritage Focus Group Meeting Agenda

6:00 – 6:45

- Land acknowledgement
- Introductions – Facilitators, City Staff, Consultants
- Introductions – Heritage Focus Group Members – What is your Jane & Finch story?

6:45 – 7:15

- Presentation – City Staff, Consultants – What is the Jane & Finch Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment?

7:15 – 8:00

- Discussion – Heritage Focus Group Members – We understand that places are shaped by their histories. What parts of Jane & Finch's past have made it what it is today?