

**Jane Finch Initiative:
Local Businesses Meeting
November 29th, 2021
9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.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 an inclusive local economic opportunity plan and a social development 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 Monday, November 29th, 2021, from 9:00 am to 10:30 a.m., City of Toronto staff and the Jane/Finch Centre (JFC) staff hosted a Local Businesses engagement meeting. This meeting is a part of the Jane Finch Initiative's comprehensive engagement stream, and it was held online over Zoom. The presentation deck, which includes an agenda, can be viewed in Appendix 1 on page 8.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Introduce the Jane Finch Initiative (JFI) to local businesses in the study area.
- Provide a presentation from City staff to participants about the Jane Finch Initiative and answer questions following the presentation.
- Hold a discussion with participants about the local business perspective for the JFI.
- Provide an opportunity for a presentation by Councillor Perruzza's office about the process to establish a Business Improvement Area (BIA) and steps taken to identify interest in a BIA for the Jane-Finch/ Black Creek area.
- Answer questions following this presentation.

ATTENDEES:

- **1 JFC staff:** Maymun Abukar (Jane Finch Initiative Coordinator).
- **City of Toronto staff:** Dan Rosen (Senior Policy Advisor, Economic Development & Culture), Ron Nash (Economic Partnership Advisor, Economic Development & Culture).
- **Councillor's Office:** Councillor Anthony Perruzza, Ayesha Khan (Councillor's Aide – Outreach, Office of Councillor Perruzza), Jessica Pointon (Communications Coordinator & Interim Administrative Assistant), Matias de Dovitiis (Chief of Staff), Rachel Scott (Outreach Coordinator (West) & Interim Administrative Assistant),
- 5 Local Business participants

MEETING SUMMARY

- Maymun welcomes everyone, reads the Land Acknowledgement, and goes over the morning agenda.
- City staff and Local Businesses take a moment and introduce themselves to others in the meeting.
- Councillor Perruzza welcomes everyone to the meeting and thanks participants for their time and attendance. Also mentions the future of Jane-Finch with the upcoming developments and the importance of collective, local involvement in the growth of the area- the overall JFI project.
- Dan briefly presents an overview of the Jane Finch Initiative and City of Toronto business supports to the participants, followed by a discussion (see What we Heard section below).
- Matias De Dovitiis presents information about the process to form a Business Improvement Area (BIA).
- Following this presentation, City staff leave their contact information so that local businesses can ask their questions offline.
- At the end of the discussion, the meeting is adjourned.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting. The discussion questions posed to the participants can be found in Appendix 2 on page 9.

Discussion Questions/ Answers Discussed:

What do you value about your neighbourhood now? What is your vision for the future of the area?

- Neighbourhood is mixed and vibrant
- Loyalty to local businesses during the pandemic
- The mall will work to cater to the needs of residents in the area, an example is fresh produce and healthy food options for residents.
- Diversity
- People who live here generally stay here - they have been here for a long time and enjoy the area

What do you see as the main challenges and opportunities for your business? What has been/will be the impact of the Finch West LRT?

- Access to business due to the construction of the LRT is a challenge (maybe temporary until it is complete).
- It can be difficult to market primarily through social media when there's not a lot of foot traffic (applies especially to businesses like bakeries, dry cleaners/laundry, and appliance repairs).
- An opportunity for Jane Finch businesses is a festival or event that would bring in people from all parts of the city (eg. Salsa on St. Clair) – that would highlight the area positively (eg. businesses and cultures/diversity).
- Businesses may not know about some of the support programs available through the City of Toronto.
- Especially in this area, there are a lot of small businesses, but the pandemic has taken its toll- especially on small businesses.

Where do your customers/employees travel from?

- Customers are generally residents in the area, but also come from across the GTA.

Do you plan to expand employment? Where do you find candidates?

- The mall is expanding in a similar sense to the JFI.
- The mall is taking steps to help local residents with employment and education: a Hub dedicated to this process and Aspire to Inspire.
- people would love to work and be employed in the area but there is not enough of a job inventory here- maybe we can explore this.

What can the City of Toronto do to support local businesses?

- Would like to learn from the JFI project and collaborate on information collected during this process and produce results that cater to the community.
- There are lots of opportunities for infrastructure and collaboration with the City.
- The City can support local businesses by having more people employed through these kinds of projects, communicate, and share information/feedback provided in these projects.
- In particular retail, there are so many creative people that want to open up a business or a restaurant, repair service and no one can find a way to train people in retail, cooking or what other skill they would need to start a business in Jane-Finch. There is motivation and passion but just no outlet for people to get the skills they need to start a business.

Appendix 1: Meeting Agenda

JFI Local Businesses Consultation Agenda- November 29, 2021

9:00 – 9:10: Maymun introduction, land acknowledgement, agenda, City staff introduction including passing to Councillor, local businesses introduction

9:10-9:15 Councillor Perruzza welcome

9:15-9:25 Dan presentation

9:25 – 10:05 Discussion

10:05 – 10:25 BIA presentation by Matias de Dovitiis and Q&A

10:25 – 10:30 wrap-up

Appendix 2: Discussion Questions

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you value about your neighbourhood now? What is your vision for the future of the area?
2. What do you see as the main challenges and opportunities for your business? What has been/will be the impact of the Finch West LRT?
3. Where do your customers/employees travel from?
4. Do you plan to expand employment? Where do you find candidates?
5. What can the City of Toronto do to support local businesses?