

**Jane Finch Initiative:
Community Advisory
Committee Meeting No. 8
February 15, 2022, 6-8:15pm**

BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto's [Jane Finch Initiative](#) (JFI) is a resident-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 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 support community engagement and facilitate different community consultations to collect feedback.

MEETING SUMMARY

On February 15, 2022, the eighth Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was hosted 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 agenda and event materials can be viewed in Appendix 1.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Engage in a question and answer session with Mayor John Tory, as well as Councillor Perruzza and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) staff
- Conduct a workshop on Mobility Parks and Public Realm to outline the initial policy ideas on the topic and get feedback from CAC members about how they use the existing transportation network and parks system in the area.

ATTENDEES:

- 1 JFCF centre staff: Amadeo Ventura
- 16 community members: Allan B.B. Ramsarran, Jennifer Boakye, Kemisha Thomas, Maize Blanchard, Maria B., Mena Hervieux, Devayani Chitnis, Sharon

Taylor, Susel Munoz Plasencia, Terryl Knox, Troy Budhu, William Ballard, William Lopez, Veronica Eastman, Christine Le, John Romano

- 8 City of Toronto Staff
 - City Planning: Leah Birnbaum, Zahra Joseph-Wilson, Samuel Baptiste
 - Economic Development & Culture: Dan Rosen
 - Social Development, Finance & Administration: John Smith, Imara Rolson
 - Parks, Forestry and Recreation: Heather Oliver
 - Transportation Services: Alyssa Krantzberg
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC): Jessica Hawes
- Mayor's Office: Mayor John Tory, Cindy Lee
- Councillor's Office: Councillor Anthony Perruzza, Matias de Dovitiis

WHAT WE HEARD

This section summarizes the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting.

Q&A with Mayor Tory, Councillor Perruzza and TCHC staff

Mayor Tory began the session with welcoming remarks emphasizing the importance of community input as plans are developed and the importance of creating a complete community. Mayor Tory commented that quality of life for the people of Jane and Finch is the most important consideration and expressed gratitude for the CAC members' willingness to contribute to the work. The following questions from CAC members were answered during the meeting.

Q (to Mayor): What do you think it will take for the Jane and Finch community to be regarded as a cultural hub capable of hosting such investment and the confidence from investors to create great venue spaces?

The Mayor stated that it begins with small seeds, like Councillor Perruzza's [motion](#) for the Community Music School of Toronto to establish a location for kids and families in the north-west of the city. Leadership like this and private donor funding, including from those who supported the Regent Park School of Music, highlight the growing arts scene and bring further investment in venues, and in arts and culture projects.

Q (to Mayor): Is it guaranteed that most of our policies proposed by the CAC group will be passed and implemented by City Council?

The Mayor noted that, while it is not guaranteed, to forego the expertise of community would be to waste city staff and councillor time. Staff and the councillor will ensure as much feedback as possible is incorporated because this input reflects what is needed for the community to thrive. The Mayor takes this very seriously and is happy to return for future meetings and to stay in touch with the project as it proceeds.

Q (to Mayor): In your past involvement with City projects, do you see any successes coming from the community after working with them?

The Mayor provided the example of Regent Park in which community input was integral. Key community facilities were established first, followed by programming for kids and families. With the change that will follow transit investment, if we listen to community and act carefully, good things will come. Local advice is invaluable and community involvement doesn't end when we make the plans, it continues throughout plan implementation.

Q (to Mayor): What advice would you give to youth to be more engaged in community issues?

The Mayor noted that this is a question best asked to youth in the community. These communities are being built for them, as they will hopefully stay in the neighbourhood and build a future. If the Mayor or Councillor Perruzza's presence would help during future conversations with youth on community issues, they are happy to attend.

Q (to Mayor): I'm living in a construction zone with jackhammers from 8am to 5:30pm. What can we do so this doesn't happen again to other people? Tenants need some guarantee that their homes won't be subjected to these things.

The Mayor expressed his sympathy and hope that this disruption results in a better place to live. The Mayor committed to speak with Councillor Perruzza and Starlight Developments regarding timelines and to clarify building plans.

Q (to Mayor): We've had programs come in and then they drop out again. Is that going to happen with this music program? There's no consistency. We need permanence of programs. It's bad for mental health of the participants when things come and go.

The Mayor stated that the intention is to bring people who have established programs in Regent Park and bring more of their expertise and support to Jane and Finch. A permanent program is expected within York Woods library. It is important to establish facilities like the Hub at the Metrolinx site, build out York Woods library and implement long term programming that is well-supported by private sector investment. This is positive for people's mental health and overall development, which benefits the whole community – not just Jane Finch but to Toronto as a whole.

Q (to Mayor): How can we have developers provide affordable rent or purchase? These are low income communities.

The Mayor noted that there is a focus on ownership but there are more people who need rental. [Inclusionary Zoning](#) will require new development of a certain size to

deliver a percentage of their proposal as affordable units. This will be municipal law to ensure that developers don't opt out of building it. Also, City land is being used to build affordable rental and supportive housing, which can be well below market rates as there is no cost for the land. Developers will include some affordable and some market rate units in the site design so it's mixed.

Councillor Perruzza thanked the Mayor for his support on two initiatives:

- 1) The renovation of the York Woods library to a state-of-the-art facility and to explore having a music school on the premises.
Learn more about the Motion at City Council here:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.MM39.16>.
- 2) Exploring options for revitalization or rebuild of the Edgeley Village community.
Learn more about the Motion at City Council here:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.MM39.9>.

[Mayor Tory left the call for another appointment at 6:40]

Q (to TCHC staff): Can you tell us more about plans to develop other TCHC properties like Edgeley Village? We have a lot of empty units in bad conditions and big families in small homes being denied transfers.

TCHC has a process for identifying revitalization sites and bringing them to Council for direction. TCHC is routinely exploring the viability of revitalization sites and the condition of buildings. Councillor Perruzza's motion will get TCHC to look at and analyze options for Edgeley Village.

TCHC staff will connect with the CAC member directly about specific details.

Q (to TCHC staff): Is the viability assessment framework for TCHC properties publicly available?

TCHC staff noted that these are generally not publicly available as it is part of the analysis that goes into creating the [Initial Development Proposal](#) on the website. A new framework came into place in 2019, which considers things like comparing repair and replacement costs to figure out the best approach to bring communities up to standard. Significant funding is required to address backlogs of repairs, so it is important to reach out superintendents and client care to ensure repairs requests are logged and queued as soon as possible.

Q (to Councillor): Once the music programs start will there be opportunities for local artists? There are established musicians here who can contribute. And will it be open to community classes for people who want to learn music as a hobby for reducing stress and building feelings of community interaction?

Conversations have been held to build a school of music to provide musical education to neighbourhood residents, mostly free of charge. The next stage of discussions will be

to consult the community to shape the future school, including the types of musical instruction that should be provided.

Q (to Councillor): Can you put in me in touch with someone about the waiting list for Rent-Geared-to-Income units in co-op housing?

Please get in touch with my office and we'll help. Contact Matias de Dovitiis at matias.dedovitiis@toronto.ca or 416-338-5320.

Workshop on Mobility, Parks and Public Realm

The workshop included a presentation from City staff on initial policy ideas punctuated by questions for CAC members related to how they move throughout the area and use existing parks. The topic of mobility encompasses accessibility for all people, including seniors and those who use mobility devices like wheelchairs, walkers and canes.

Use of the hydro lands between Highway 400 and the Black Creek

Currently, these lands are perceived by CAC members as desolate and unwelcoming but possessing a great potential to host community amenities, improved greenery and locally produced art. CAC members expressed a desire to beautify and use this space for:

- Recreational amenities, like community gardens, outdoor gyms, basketball courts, soccer fields, running trails, winter skating, skate parks and remote control vehicle parks
- Artistic endeavours, such as seasonal art installations and nature photography
- Educational signage about the establishment of the trail, hydro-electric power, biodiversity and climate action.

One member suggested to use Downsview Park as a model for improving the hydro lands and another person noted that there may be an opportunity for vertical gardening focused on innovation and new technologies.

CAC members noted the following barriers when it comes to use of the hydro lands in their current form:

- Concern about radiation from hydro lines and general safety
- Lack of bike share facilities
- Inability to establish community gardens due to pipelines underneath the area
- Lack of nighttime and winter safety
- Lack of accessible parking
- Presence of tents from people experiencing homelessness

Desire Lines

There is an informal path that cuts through the hydro lands connecting them to the parking lot of Yorkgate Mall. CAC members noted that children use it to get to school and many people use it to access the local grocery store. It is widely used by the community, including in the winter despite a lack of seasonal maintenance. Additional informal paths of note in the community included:

- A path from Jane Street to Frith Road created by TTC users and pedestrians
- The parking lot and driveway of Lafayette Apartments to access Sheppard Avenue
- A path across Northwood Community Centre to access the ravine

Activity nodes

CAC members generally agreed with the identified activity nodes, adding that places of worship where people gather should be included, as well as Calico School.

Parks

Parks were noted to be of great value to all CAC members. Some features that would make the existing parks more inviting and desired amenities included:

- The need for child- and teen-friendly spaces and programming, such as pools, playgrounds and splash pads,
- The need for ample seating, especially for seniors, as this allows people to linger and have informal discussions;
- The addition of ice pads in the neighbourhood would reduce the need for community members to leave the area to access outdoor skating facilities;
- Adapting underused spaces (such as the bocce ball courts) for new uses, such as an outdoor theater, community gardens or outdoor gyms;
- The addition of programmable areas and spaces that can be reserved (like fire pits), especially those which can be used in winter, for events like family and community gatherings;
- Accessible public washrooms that are open when people need them;
- Small vendor spaces to purchase goods like ice cream or coffee; and,
- Areas designated for pets that include facilities for pet waste.

Ravine

The ravine was described as a beautiful destination with limited points of access that are cumbersome for those with bicycles or mobility devices. Most people use informal paths, through trees and down very steep hills, to access the ravine due to the inconvenience of accessing the official access points. A couple of accesses north of Finch were discussed but it was noted that for those with mobility devices (e.g. strollers, walkers and wheelchairs), the distance to reach them can be very far to travel. These included a point of access near Driftwood community centre and a path from Black Creek Pioneer Village to the ravine accessible via Shoreham Drive, but there is no way to cross without going back to the bridge. There is also a need for accesses and paths to be well maintained in the winter as snow and ice make accessing the ravine very difficult.

Safety was a major discussion theme due to the isolation of the area, including concerns about sexual assault. Members noted that there is no surveillance of any kind, no lighting at night and no emergency calling stations. CAC members also expressed a need for maps and other wayfinding features, as well as educational signage on local wild life and trail safety for newcomers to the area to make the ravine more inviting to all.

Other Information

CAC members highlighted:

- A lack of recreational programming in the area, such as lane swimming
- An appreciation for the space at Northwood Community Centre
- The lack of splash pads in walking distance of the intersection of Jane and Finch
- A lack of free community spaces for recreational programs, groups or events
- A desire for revitalization of parks spaces and amenities, including improved lighting for recreational facilities at Stanley Park and Topcliff Park

Q (to City staff): Does mobility encompass accessibility ie. seniors and disabled?

A: Yes – success of a mobility system is measured by how well everyone can use it regardless of age or ability.

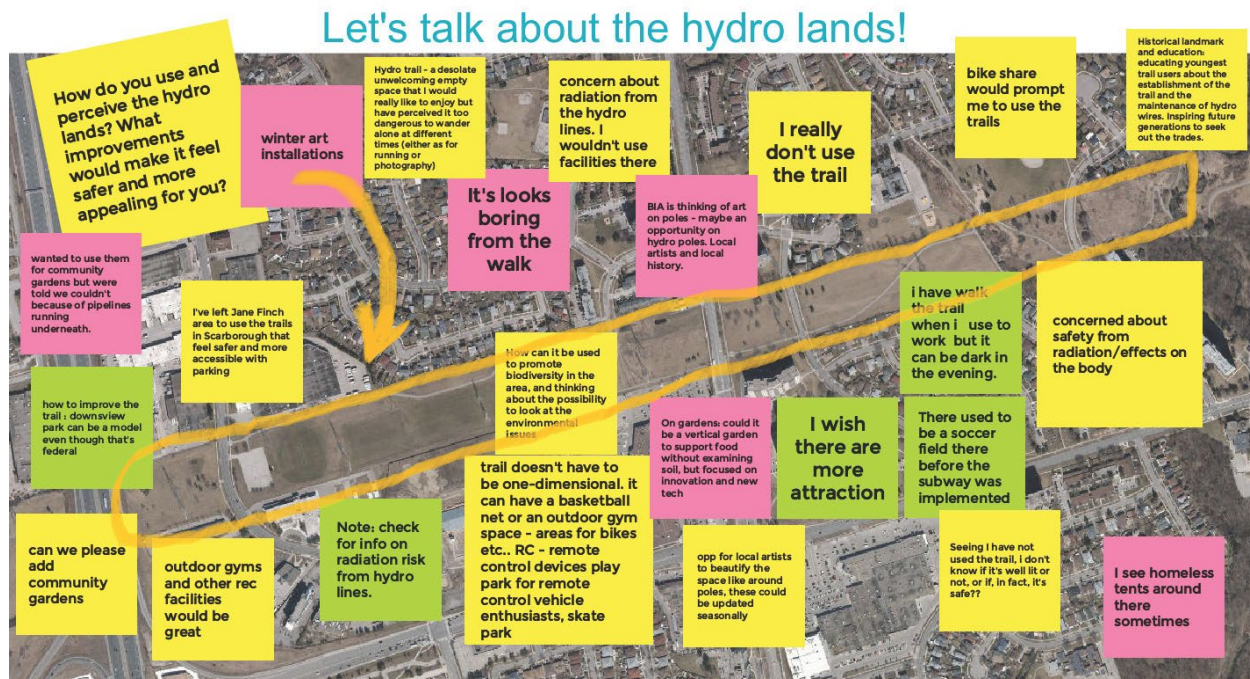
Discussion Themes

- Community services and facilities
- Local arts and culture development
- Local music programming and hiring of local artists
- Housing affordability
- Quality of life disruptions due to construction
- Community input in planning studies and impacts on securing important facilities
- The TCHC revitalization process
- Walking and cycling throughout the area
- Parks and public realm
 - Activities in parks
 - Equitable access
 - Safety
 - Need for additional gathering spaces
 - Need for child- and teen-friendly spaces and programming

Appendix 1: Meeting Agenda

6:05 Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions (Zahra)
6:10 Mayor's Address and Q/A (Mayor Tory)
6:30 Housekeeping (Zahra)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Confirm meeting minutes from January 18th meeting for posting online.2. Policy updates3. Other business
6:40 Mobility, Parks and Public Realm Presentation and Workshop (City Planning and PFR staff)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation on early policy ideas for mobility, parks, public realm• Discussion / input from CAC members
7:40 Next Steps and Meeting Wrap Up
7:45 Internal Staff Debrief

Appendix 2: Meeting Jamboards



Let's talk about the hydro lands! How do you use and perceive the hydro lands? What improvements would make it feel safer and more appealing for you?

- Winter art installations
- Hydro trail - a desolate unwelcoming empty space that I would really like to enjoy but have perceived it too dangerous to wander alone at different times (either as for running or photography)
- Concern about radiation from the hydro lines. I wouldn't use facilities there
- It's looks boring from the walk
- BIA is thinking of art on poles - maybe an opportunity on hydro poles. Local artists and local history
- I really don't use the trail
- Bike share would prompt me to use the trails
- Historical landmark and education: educating youngest trail users about the establishment of the trail and the maintenance of hydro wires. Inspiring future generations to seek out the trades.
- Wanted to use them for community gardens but were told we couldn't because of pipelines running underneath.
- I've left Jane Finch area to use the trails in Scarborough that feel safer and more accessible with parking
- How can it be used to promote biodiversity in the area, and thinking about the possibility to look at the environmental issues
- I have walk the trail when I use to work but it can be dark in the evening
- Concerned about safety from radiation/effects on the body
- How to improve the trail : Downsview park can be a model even though that's federal
- On gardens: could it be a vertical garden to support food without examining soil, but focused on innovation and new tech
- I wish there are more attraction
- There used to be a soccer field there before the subway was implemented
- Seeing I have not used the trail, I don't know if it's well lit or not, or if, in fact, it's safer?
- I see homeless tents around there sometimes
- opp for local artists to beautify the space like around poles, these could be updated seasonally
- trail doesn't have to be one-dimensional. it can have a basketball net or an outdoor gym space - areas for bikes etc... RC - remote control devices play park for remote control vehicle enthusiasts, skate park
- Note: check for info on radiation risk from hydro lines.
- outdoor gyms and other rec facilities would be great
- can we please add community gardens
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- can be dangerous because no winter maintenance
- cut through the walk to the grocery store.
- used to be a soccer field
- during winter skating area
- pioneer village to the creek - Sentinel Road. There's a path there. No way to cross without going back to the bridge. Not accessible for people using wheelchairs
- Exercise, biking
- have never used these paths
- kids use it to go to and from school

What features make a public space most inviting to you and your loved ones?

- How about an area for an outdoor theatre like they have at high park? Bocce court or lawn bowling for seniors.
- Is it safe to walk through? Signage to help people find their way if they're unfamiliar
- Topcliff Park needs to be revitalized.
- Suggest we designate one or a few dog parks.
- Places to drop Dog Poop
- Reservable space. Fire pits
- hard to find space winter activities
- some of these community centres can host arts hubs or free/low cost gyms w better equipments instead of not competing w the for profit gyms around the malls
- How about an area for an outdoor theatre like they have at high park? Bocce court or lawn bowling for seniors.
- open spaces for youth with band stands where our young people can put together live local concerts that are locally organized by youth featuring local talent
- BOCCE COURTS CAN BE TURNED TO GARDENS - this has been an issue since 2014 most filipinos i spoke w had really wanted (newcomers but were ignored)
- Senior friendly open spaces with ease of access and good lighting and appropriate entertainment
- Can "picnic area" with amenities to host picnics be considered? Always have to go far away to have a picnic. 😊
- Need rentable spaces
- Accessible washrooms in the park
- A place to entertain friends and family by way of spending money safely with reliable vendors (ice cream, coffee) and is accessible for seniors.
- spaces to sit and read sheltered from the elements
- need trail signage - education on local flora and fauna
- Inviting to other areas and those far from major intersections. A major attraction such as Brampton's Chinguacousy Park
- Place for kids to gathering and play such as the pool, splash pad and playground at Irving Chapley Community Center. Jane and Finch needs to replicate this.
- More seating areas in local parks where you can book a space outside (Ex: Woodbine Beach)
- cleanliness has been an issue, so maintaining that - I have been organizing little shore clean ups around the creek, but there's just a lot of garbage
- places that are accessible for seniors - seating is really important
- need way to comfortably and safely access the ravine
- We had a coyote 2 days ago
- the ravine is also nice to look at plants, not vast empty spaces
- I will definitely add about spaces for activities with kids



Let's talk about the ravine!

How often do you visit and why? Is it a destination, a way to travel through your neighbourhood, a barrier to travel?

- safety at night is a concern
- Near water beautiful but little bit smelly
- the ravine is a way to access nature, and it is important for me and my family. what I want to see is better ecological state - invasive species are rampant and natural balance is disturbed
- walking groups use it - Jane's Walks used it.
- Ravine connects the whole neighbourhood really nicely. Goes all the way to Wilson

Where/how do you access it?

- walk from community centre down and across - better accessibility there on concrete path. Coming down by the bridge you can't get there.
- access at grandravine and driftwood; great for birdwatching
- use it for bird-watching. But we leave at dusk.
- informal paths to get in - people just make paths for where they want to go

Do you want to use the ravine more? What would make that possible/more appealing for you?

- A lot of nature spaces but no way to get down the stairs for people with mobility issues
- limited access points - at least people might not know where they are
- hard to find a bench or place for seating to rest
- could get lost easily! Need signs (and keep a cell phone). Marked trails.
- need ways to push bikes up. Need ramps or some way to address steep inclines

- There were attacks - sexual assaults. It's dark there
- isolated - no cameras or help towers
- lighting is no good. It's totally dark at night. Not safe
- newcomers are not used to the wildlife (coyotes, deer). Need signage so people aren't surprised!
- some of these i have yet to visit and would love to have more access to - a good walk and some green is good for mental health. it'd be nice to have proper paths that are both easy to access, safe for everyone, and clean
- maintenance issues - need trees to be looked after. Great to have wild spaces.



What else would you like us to know?

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- I definitely have a lot of frustration with recreational programming (and it's lack)
- Northwood CC is such a beautiful space that i rarely have any idea what they're used for pre-covid
- splash pads are far to walk to for people who live near jane and finch
- We don't have community spaces for recreational programs , groups or events. I have been told that in order to do events such as workshops we have to pay ; or be a nonforprofit org .
- Lighting for some fantastic rec areas we have (example Stanley Park tennis, Pool, soccer areas.
- Stanley park's rusting, dangerous old baseball diamond should be addressed.

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