

Ideas Booklet:

Social Development -

This is one of 12 booklets that summarizes the Jane Finch Initiative Ideas Report. Booklet topics:

- Arts & Culture
- Climate action
- Community service facilities
- Heritage
- Housing
- Inclusive employment opportunities
- Inclusive entrepreneurship opportunities
- Land use, built form, and urban design
- Mobility - getting around
- Parks & public spaces
- Resources, partnerships and governance
- Social development



The Jane Finch Initiative is a resident-informed project to plan for the future of the area so that residents, local groups and businesses are supported as the area changes over time with the opening of the Finch West Light Rail Transit.

Social Development

Vision for the future: Community actions and partnerships are in place to support Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving residents and their ability to remain, grow, and thrive in the Jane and Finch community.

A Community Development Plan is built on resident and community assets. A plan recognizes that neighborhoods have community leaders with capacity, non-profit organizations partners, local resident networks and institutional partners that have filled in the structural gaps to services and supports for decades. For the communities in the Jane and Finch area, a Community Development Plan is an opportunity to use social and economic investment tools to address historically-rooted inequities and build on the wealth of community assets and resilience.

1. Prioritize and center equity-deserving groups.

The Jane and Finch area is significant in both its diversity of residents and also in the way legacies of colonialism and racial inequity have shaped the health and life outcomes of residents. In community conversations we heard that existing grassroots organizations have been critical to the success of programs and services in the area and that they should be supported to continue and expand their work. The Community Development Plan can be modelled on addressing key gaps and inequities that Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups identify.

Ideas

- Advance the development of a community development plan that anchors Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving residents' ability to remain, benefit, and thrive in the context of neighborhood change by leveraging strategies like the Reconciliation Action Plan and the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.
- Explore alignments with the Black Food Sovereignty strategy to identify actions and partnership models for mutual community land stewardship and ownership for Black residents and organizations (i.e. land trusts).
- Consult Indigenous communities, partners, organizations and leaders to explore opportunities for Indigenous land stewardship
- Leverage lessons from the City and community COVID-19 pandemic response to enhance recovery and resilience.
- Work with City and community partners to identify opportunities for equity-driven climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation.
- Explore community investment models that support existing Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving residents with complex needs.

Ideas

- Leverage the Toronto Newcomer Strategy 2022–2026 and Newcomer Access Plans to address the unique needs of Jane and Finch newcomer communities and explore partnership opportunities that support foresight-oriented newcomer planning based on emerging global trends.
- Work with Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving resident-led organizations and resident leaders to identify specific actions to advance small-scale organizers and resident-led mutual aid mechanisms.
- Identify opportunities to embed accessibility and universal design to employment, information and communication, public spaces, programs and services.
- Work with City divisions and partners to explore opportunities for providing affordable and quality non-profit licensed childcare in ways that will impact the well-being and economic outlook of low income Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving households.

2. Prioritize people with disabilities.

Over 400,000 Torontonians identify as disabled and experience barriers created by planning, service provision, and programming centering the abled. . In consultations we heard that there is a need for more accessible programming and services for people, particularly children and youth, with disabilities who may require specific and place-based supports and investment.

Ideas

- Identify new partnerships and existing community initiatives that centre people with disabilities.
- Explore City and community partnerships that will advance the removal of barriers and improve accessibility for people with disabilities with a strong focus on children and youth with disabilities and their caregivers.
- Ensure that resident-led groups supporting people with disabilities are centred in community development plan governance models and future phases of the community engagement process.
- Identify actions and partnerships that enhance the accessibility infrastructure in City-run and owned spaces.
- Identify City policy levers and investments to help expand affordable and accessible non-profit licensed child-care options for children with disabilities.

3. Improve access to space.

Community spaces provide a critical site for residents, community leaders, community groups and not-for-profits. New and increased investments in the area create an opportunity to make new and existing indoor and outdoor community spaces more accessible and equitable.

There is a digital divide in Toronto. 34% of low income, newcomer, single caretaker, Black, and equity-deserving groups worry about paying their internet bills. Seniors in particular experience intense connectivity challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced and deepened the impact of this divide. In exploring how to improve access to space, the City will focus on supporting grassroots groups & not-for-profits; ensuring that that people of all ages, and in particular youth and seniors, are able to equitably benefit from indoor and outdoor spaces; and addressing the digital divide.

Ideas

- Collaboratively develop actions focused on providing safe space and access to Indigenous, Black, racialized and newcomer +2SLGBTQI community groups and not for profits.
- Leverage City strategies like the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy and private sector development to increase the scope and diversity of community-owned and run spaces in the area to ensure their accessibility for groups including but not restricted to children and youth with disability, seniors, and residents with mental health challenges.
- Conduct inventories of indoor and outdoor community spaces as a contribution to a proactive accessibility strategy for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving youth and seniors.
- Explore actions and community partnerships to enhance accessibility in City-run and/or funded spaces.
- Collaborate with partners to identify opportunities for increased capital and infrastructure investments (i.e. parks, hubs, greenspaces, activity rooms, sports pads) focused on greater accessibility for all ages.
- Identify City strategies and community partnerships that can be levered to enhance in-home access to affordable high-speed internet for lower income, newcomers, single care takers, Black, and, other equity-deserving groups.
- Engage housing providers to identify opportunities for improved access to affordable high-speed internet and easily accessible technical programming at and around housing.
- Work in partnership with City and community partners to enhance high speed internet and technological programming at existing new indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration between the City, or City entities, and the private sector to digitally connect underserved areas in Jane and Finch to enhance the City-wide high-speed broadband network.
- Work with Children's Services Division to identify opportunities to prioritize access to non-profit licensed child care spaces for Black, Indigenous and equity-deserving groups.

4. Advance food justice and sovereignty.

Jane and Finch has a strong history of advancing community-owned and -led food security and food sovereignty initiatives to support lower income and food insecure households. . The Community Development Plan offers an opportunity to explore new forms of local communal land ownership and land tenure opportunities that can catalyze local food sovereignty and advance community- owned urban farming schemes.

Ideas

- Identify opportunities for alignment with the Reconciliation Action Plan to improve access to traditional foods and medicines through Indigenous land stewardship.
- Identify actions, projects and partnerships to enhance Black food sovereignty.
- Identify actions, projects and partnerships to enhance food justice for equity-deserving groups.
- Explore funding opportunities and partnerships for Black food sovereignty centres and food justice centres for equity-deserving groups.
- Explore opportunities for community land ownership and community asset ownership for growing and processing locally grown food.
- Conduct a jurisdictional scan for models of establishing community-based food co-ops.
- Identify opportunities for the activation of lands, both public and private, for Black-led community food sovereignty initiatives.
- Identify opportunities for the activation of lands, both public and private, for community food justice initiatives led by equity-deserving groups.
- Explore opportunities to support community-owned and community-serving facilities or projects related to food sovereignty (i.e. community kitchens, co-operative grocers etc.)

5. Promote community safety and well-being.

Despite its immense contributions to the city, the Jane and Finch area has a history of stigmatization and institutional and structural marginalization. This stigma has often ignored the significant strengths, assets, organizing, and talent that area holds. Community members have reported intensified racial profiling and harmful encounters with authorities. Black communities in Jane and Finch and across Toronto have a long history of advocating for alternatives to policing that promote community-led safety and well-being and many Jane and Finch resident-led initiatives have been on the vanguard of community safety approaches and violence prevention. The Community Development Plan can work with community champions and people with lived experience whose expertise can be leveraged to inform more holistic approaches to community safety and well-being.

Ideas

- Align the Community Development Plan with existing strategies that promote holistic approaches to community-led safety and well-being (i.e. TO Wards Peace, Toronto Community Crisis Service Pilot)

Ideas

- Leverage existing City policies and approaches to promote increased locally-led safety and well-being in the area.
- Collaborate with existing groups and networks leading long-term safety and well-being planning and coordination in the Jane and Finch area.

6. Address gentrification and displacement.

New investments in infrastructure, transit, and housing can adversely affect the potential for lower income Indigenous, Black, equity-deserving, and newcomer residents to remain in the Jane and Finch area. An overall lack of housing affordability, the increased pressures of gentrification on communities and established residents, and the potential for mass displacement are real issues people are concerned about and that must be addressed. The Community Development Plan will identify City strategies and policies that can be leveraged to address gentrification and displacement.

Ideas

- Learn from City processes of developing and establishing a cultural district program in Little Jamaica and in other areas.
- Explore the creation of policy frameworks that specifically aim to address the impacts of gentrification and displacement.
- Identify opportunities to prioritize access to existing and new affordable housing for individuals and families of Black, Indigenous and equity-deserving groups in the Jane and Finch area.
- Identify opportunities for in-depth and long-term research focused on issues of gentrification and displacement.

7. Leverage planned investments to create opportunities for community.

The Jane and Finch area will benefit from key investments in significant community institutions like the York Woods Library, the Jane and Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts, the Firgrove-Grassways Revitalization, and new opportunities for investments in arts and culture include interest from Community Music Schools of Toronto. These new large capital investments in Jane and Finch create the opportunity for coordinated, collaborative and complimentary actions through the Community Development Plan to magnify their positive impacts.

Ideas

- Explore a coordinated City and community partner strategy that aims to leverage key capital investments.

Jane Finch Initiative

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We want to hear what you think of these ideas. Are we on the right track? What's missing? What could be better?



Send us an email us at janeфинch@toronto.ca.



Find out more about the Jane Finch Initiative at toronto.ca/janeфинch, or scan the QR code below.



Give us a call at 416-338-0775.

