

**Jane Finch Initiative:
Artists' Collective Meeting
June 29, 2022 6:00-8:00pm**



Summary Report by the 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 June 29th, 2022, the Jane Finch Initiative Artists' Collective meeting was hosted by the Jane Finch Community and Family (JFCF) Centre with support from the City of Toronto and in collaboration with the Jane Finch Artists' Collective. 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 on page 5.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Update members of the Artists' Collective on main outcomes from the first phase of the Jane Finch Initiative's community engagement process
- To review the history and status of Arts and Culture organizations, projects, and investments within the Study Area.
- To determine priority areas and actionable items for the second phase of the community engagement process.

ATTENDEES:

- 3 JFCF centre staff, Denelle Carvalho, Abdul Nur, and Clara Stewart Robinson
- 1 City of Toronto Staff, Andrea Raymond-Wong

- 11 community members, Troy Budhu, Heavy Steve, Beny Esguerra, Butterfly GoPaul, Errol Young, Terryl Knox, Ayesha Khan, Sahle Robinson, Moose, JRebel, Sariena

MEETING SUMMARY

- Denelle Carvalho shared welcoming remarks and a land acknowledgement
- Community members Butterfly GoPaul, Heavy Steve, and Beny Esguerra shared history and context of the arts and culture community in Jane and Finch.
- Andrea Raymond Wong shared a presentation on the status of the Jane Finch initiative and the main ideas in the Arts and Culture engagement stream from the [Ideas Report](#)
- Time was allotted for questions (no questions were asked)
- Time was allotted for general discussion.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting.

- Comment: Despite being an established and experienced artist in the community, it is difficult to navigate the available grants and the procedures for applying to grants. How can we make the available resources more accessible?
- Comment: To improve the grant funding landscape, donors and funders should internally reflect on the ways they fund and the accessibility of their grant programs. Additionally, artists should consider ways to fundraise for themselves without fully relying on other organizations, and we should support the business side of arts organizations, and business skills are often new to artists. Teaching business skills and offering capacity-building resources should be a priority.
- Comment: Community members have tried to challenge the status quo, and have found that nonprofits are unwilling to challenge the structure. West side arts hub was an example of challenging the board model. It is important to try new models so there is a diversity of models for artists to find funding.
- Comment: The library theatre is a great access that the community has very little access to. We should find a way to make the theatre a part of the community and a resource for community members, and for it to be a teaching tool for youth interested in the arts.
- Comment: Upcoming opportunities and resources should prioritize the organizations and artists who are rooted in Jane and Finch.
- Comment: The library has failed the community, and has been inflexible in working with the community. Community members have experienced racism and classism from staff members in the library.
- Comment: Affordability and gentrification is not a new issue, but has been a significant concern for a long time. We need to recognize how gentrification is

already affecting the community, and create immediate financial support and funding opportunities for artists.

- Comment: An attendee who attended an advanced arts program at a secondary school outside of the community notes the different opportunities available to them at the specialized school compared to their peers who attended secondary school in the community, as well as the difference in funding for the two programs. Basic resources and arts programming for youth will produce outsized results because they will open up career opportunities in the arts, and because they will provide an alternative for youth at risk of getting involved with violence and crime.
- Comment: Visibility and representation of artists in Jane and Finch is important. We should celebrate artists who are rooted in the community, and should create opportunities to connect youth and up-and-coming artists to established artists so that they can better visualize their career and access opportunities at a young age. We should base these opportunities in local schools.
- Comment: The arts industry produces lots of job opportunities outside of art itself; marketing, administration, business, and technical positions could all be created by investing in the industry.
- Comment: Community members should be involved in every aspect of this engagement and research process, and should be a part of setting up new funding structures. However, the work of creating these new structures and networks is a significant burden on artists who are already overworked. The work should be compartmentalized so that artists can choose which advocacy projects to focus their efforts on.
- Comment: Consider immediate and short-term strategies to economically empower artists and to encourage artists to explore entrepreneurship. Many organizations have been lost because of lack of opportunities, and many projects have failed because of the lack of funding.
- Comment: Historically, money being invested in the community has been funneled into large institutions or organizations rather than local artists and residents. We need local artists to run the process to ensure that money is going into the right hands, and we need to avoid replicating models and structures that have failed artists in the past.
- Comment: Note that specific partnerships have been successful, including ArtReach (developing toolkits on writing grants and budgets), but structures have been detrimental to artists, and need to be rethought.
- Comment: The process of writing grant applications is an exhausting process, and is made more difficult by the strict qualification requirements. An attendee shared an example of being overqualified for a grant, yet struggling to operate the organization without it. Another common problem is that funding is available for new organizations and artists, but the funding stream stops for more established organizations and artists.
- Comment: Artists are often over consulted and are asked to repeat themselves. Before we invite more artists to join the conversation, we should have specific paths forward and demonstrate how specific initiatives can support the community.

APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

5:50 Pre-meeting Huddle/Tech Check (Staff)
6:05 Welcome, Land Acknowledgement (Denelle)
6:15 Updates and Introductions (all)
6:35 History and context (Butterfly & Reuben)
6:45 Presentation (Andrea)
7:00 Q&A
7:10 Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● What was missed in Phase 1?● What are priorities for Phase 2?● What are some actionable areas for Phase 2 and the long term?
7:40 Future engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Which other individuals, organizations, and demographics should we reach out to in Phase 2?
7:55 Next steps & wrap up
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Are members interested in quarterly meetings?
8:00 Internal Staff Debrief