

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Engagement

**August 16th, 2022,
5:30pm-6:30pm and August
30th, 2022, 6:00pm-7:00pm**



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 August 16th, 2022, 5:30pm-6:30pm and August 30th, 2022, 6:00pm-7:00pm, two Community Advisory Committee Engagements were 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.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Collect ideas and feedback relating to several topics to inform the JFI workplan and engagement strategies for Phase 2B.

ATTENDEES:

- 1 JFCF Centre Staff, Denelle Carvalho
- 1 City of Toronto Staff, Zahra Joseph-Wilson
- 11 community members, William Ballard, Devayani Chitnis, Kayzie Sutton, Maria B, Christine Le, Terryl Knox, Sharon Taylor, Mena Hervieux, Kemisha Thomas, Veronica Eastman, Jennifer Boakye

HOW WE ENGAGED

On August 16th, 2022, Community Advisory Committee members gathered in-person to walk through the study area. Attendees walked north from Jane and Finch to the Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational Trail, then east to Black Creek. Attendees briefly visited and discussed several sites including the Jane Finch Mall and the Yorkgate Mall, Corner Commons, the San Romanoway Community Garden, Driftwood Park, and Rudy's Garden. Attendees also discussed the streetscape along Jane Street, and the recreational trails along the Finch Hydro Trail and the Black Creek Parklands. Staff recorded notes on the discussion.

On August 30th, 2022, a virtual alternative to the in-person walk was hosted to provide a remote option for Community Advisory Committee members who chose not to attend the in-person walk.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the recorded comments from the discussions during the August 16th, 2022 engagement session and the August 30th, 2022 engagement session. Comments are recorded under the relevant discussion topics.

- Corner Commons and the Jane Finch Mall
 - Comment: The Corner Commons Site is valued by many residents as a gathering space and an example of welcoming and inclusive design. The site should be improved, not removed, through the Jane Finch Mall redevelopment. For example, the site can be enclosed in a tent during the winter months or moved to an indoor space in the mall, and the site can function as a space for sharing information about community events, programs, and services.
- Pedestrian Safety
 - Comment: The Corner Commons site and the entrances to the Jane Finch Mall parking lot from Jane Street and Finch Avenue West are unsafe. Additional barriers should be added to insulate the Corner Commons site from the roads, and dedicated pedestrian pathways should be added throughout the Jane Finch Mall parking lot to reduce the likelihood of pedestrians being injured by cars entering the parking lot.
 - Comment: Pedestrians crossing mid-block to enter plazas is a significant hazard. The planning processes for Jane Street and Finch Avenue improvements should analyze common pedestrian crossing patterns, and add crossings where necessary to prevent unsafe mid-block crossing.
 - Comment: The temporary orange barricades do not sufficiently protect pedestrians.
 - Comment: Bikes crossing pedestrians on sideways is a hazard. Sidewalks should be widened, and bike lanes should be added to reduce this hazard.
- Food Growing Initiatives
 - Comment: Growing plants and being in nature is good for mental and physical health. There should be more opportunities for residents to get

involved with community gardening and food growing through volunteer opportunities and paid opportunities

- Comment: Residents should have opportunities to care for and maintain hens for eggs production, and beehives for honey production.
- Comment: Residents should be more aware of what they are allowed to do or not allowed to do on their own property. For example, the City's "Turfgrass and Prohibited Plants Bylaw" came into effect in 2022, and removed the requirement for natural garden exemptions, and the City's UrbanHensTO pilot project will be in effect until 2023. This information should be widely shared with residents and homeowners.
- Comment: the quality of food at food banks is low, and fresh produce is rarely available. Partnerships between community gardens, urban farms, and organizations like "not far from the tree" can improve the diversity of food being offered at food banks.
- Comment: Black Creek Farm is a significant asset in the neighbourhood, but many residents are not aware of the work they do. The Jane Finch Initiative should investigate ways for the Black Creek Farm to become more involved in the community
- Comment: Schools may be interested in starting community gardens, which can be stewarded by students.
- Comment: Oakdale Community Centre has previously had a community garden, and Driftwood Community Centre currently has a garden. Food Justice engagement meetings in the Jane Finch Initiative should investigate best practices for community gardening projects in Jane and Finch in order to ensure that gardens are sustainable in the long-term.
- Comment: There is a need for allotment gardens, community gardens, and larger scale urban farming projects like Black Creek Farm. Residents should have opportunities.
- Cycling infrastructure
 - Comment: The cycling path along the Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational Trail should be better marked.
 - Comment: Many residents are afraid to cycle because the streets feel too dangerous. Main streets should have dedicated bike lanes with physical barriers, and should have protected turning at intersections.
- Heritage
 - Comment: Plaques and heritage signage should be more visible, especially along the Black Creek Parklands. Signage can communicate the natural heritage value and the Indigenous history in the area.
 - Note: New signage is scheduled to be installed in the Black Creek in 2023.
- Supporting young parents
 - Comment: The Jane Finch Initiative should investigate available supports for young parents, including affordable daycare options.
- Housing and homelessness
 - Comment: The Jane Finch Initiative should make a strong effort to engage with unhoused people on housing issues.

- Comment: There are currently very few support services for people who are experiencing addiction or mental illness. Creating programs and services for unhoused people, and especially unhoused people suffering from addiction and mental illness should be a priority. For example, peer mentorship programs led by people who have previously been unhoused may be helpful.
- 2SLGBTQ services
 - Comment: Community service facilities for LGBTQ+ residents are needed, as there are no gathering spaces or support services for LGBTQ+ residents within the community.
 - Comment: Investigating LGBTQ+ history in the area (including advocacy and organizing, services, programs, and spaces) through the Jane Finch Initiative may inform future community service facilities for LGBTQ+ residents.
- Transit
 - Comment: Buses are often late and irregular, and are too often stuck in traffic. Dedicated bus lanes should be used to ensure more reliable and regular service during busy hours.
 - Comment: Bus stations should be fully enclosed and warmed in the winter months.
- Public Works Maintenance
 - Comment: Many issues around Jane and Finch are caused by insufficient maintenance and cleaning. For example, damaged bus shelters take too long to be repaired, pigeon defecation is not cleaned up near the Jane Finch Mall, trash bins are not emptied often enough, and cracks in the sidewalks are not filled in a timely manner.
- Parks and Public Space
 - Comment: Parks are appreciated by the community and should be preserved. However, adding amenities and recreation opportunities to existing parks could make them more attractive to a wider diversity of residents. For example, skate parks, skating rinks, splash pads and more basketball courts. Beautification initiatives would also make the parks more attractive, and could create job and volunteer opportunities for local residents. For example, hiring local artists to create installations in parks, or working with volunteer gardeners to create attractive bioretention areas and pollinator gardens.
 - Comment: Residents need to be encouraged to use parks. Community park animators may be able to do this work. For example, by hosting guided walking tours, outdoor movies, and other events. Beautification projects and improving signage and lighting around the entrances to parks may also encourage residents to use them.
 - Comment: There is a lot of underutilized space along the Finch Hydro Corridor. This space could be converted into community gardens, a long skating rink, a dog park, or another amenity.