

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting July 19th, 2022, 6-8pm



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 July 19th, 2022 from 6-8pm, the Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee 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 on page 10.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Inform members of the Jane Street Road Safety Study, and receive input on the process.
- Inform members of the work being done by Community Music Schools in Jane and Finch, and receive input on the organizations' future plans.
- Receive input on the food justice engagement stream.

ATTENDEES:

- 3 JFCF centre staff, Amadeo Ventura, Clara Stewart Robertson, Elise Antonialdis
- 3 City of Toronto Staff, Zahra Joseph Wilson, John Smith, Alyssa Krantzberg
- 1 Facilitation Partner, Richard Marsella

- 10 CAC Members: Veronica Eastman, Christine Le, John Romaro, Maize Blanchard, Maria B, Mena Hervieux, Susel Munoz, William Lopez, Jennifer Boakye, Troy Budhu

MEETING SUMMARY

- Denelle Carvalho shared welcoming remarks and a land acknowledgement
- Elise Antoniadis shared a presentation on the Jane Street Road Safety Review.
- Richard Marsella shared a presentation on Community Music Schools.
- All attendees were divided into breakout rooms
 - Breakout room facilitators Elise Antoniadis, Richard Marsella, and Zahra Joseph Wilson introduced the exercise and the Jamboard medium.
 - Members were invited to share ideas and suggestions in response to prompts.
 - Breakout room facilitators ensured that all comments were noted on the Jamboard.
- Members returned to the main Zoom meeting room for the meeting wrap-up.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting. City staff responded to the questions asked in this section

- Question: What surveys are available to share feedback on the Jane Street Road Safety Review?
 - Response from Elise Antoniadis: The surveys will be launched by end of July or early August, and Denelle will share it with CAC members.
- Comment: As a pedestrian, it has felt safe to walk, but as a driver it looks like many pedestrians are not safe. The left turn when going northbound on Jane to Westbound on Finch is especially unsafe, and it is difficult to cross between plazas. The LRT will help safety along Finch, but not along Jane.
- Comment: The buses along Jane are always late and irregular. Express buses are often empty, and the others are crowded. The buses should stop at Driftwood and Jane rather than at Shoreham.
- Comment: When going south on Jane, most people jaywalk to the mall because the bus stop is in a weird space.
- Comment: It is hard to find the bus stop for the 960 bus north of Yorkgate mall. The construction also makes it difficult to cross to the plaza and the Humber River hospital in this area.
- Question: Will the LRT stops be in the middle of the street or off to the side?
 - Response from Clara Stewart Robertson: The stops should be in the middle, so you will need to walk in through the intersection to get into the LRT stop.
- Comment: What corporate partnerships exist for the community music schools broadly, and how will the operations at Jane and Finch be funded?

- Response from Richard Marsella: Community Music Schools is hoping to scale up the operations at Jane and Finch, and the organization is very committed to financially sustainable growth. Hoping to come in with a vision that includes sustainability. Community Music Schools has a foundation that will work on behalf of the school, and will do the fundraising to help sustain the school. The foundation is trying to build a capital campaign which will include operating costs.
- Comment: Will the Community Music Schools donors be able to pick and choose which location they are able to support, or will all donations be distributed centrally to all of the schools across the city?
 - Response from Richard Marsella: The Regent Park School is on solid footing, and the same effort is being committed to Jane and Finch. Staff are thinking about this as a doubling of the work being done in Regent Park.
- Comment: As someone who went to school in the area, how is the programming offered by Community Music Schools different from exciting programming in schools and community centres. Also, how will the programming be affordable for residents.
 - Response from Richard Marsella: A major part of the work being done right now is finding out what work is already being done, and complementing the existing services. The program also tries to remove all financial barriers, and to target students who would not otherwise be able to access. The partnership with the Yorkwoods Library is also a major asset for affordability.
- Comment: Residents are very concerned about gentrification, and we need to make sure that service providers are being held accountable to the community.
- Comment: There are many artists in the community doing similar work. How can we coordinate the services to compliment one another, and how can we leverage the talents in the community to do the work that Community Music Schools is doing? How can we pay to source talent within the community to be the paid instructors?
 - Response from Richard Marsella: Community Music Schools pay a competitive rate to teachers. It is important that students see themselves represented by teachers and board members. Community Music Schools is providing mentorship and leadership opportunities to other organizations, and hope to play a role in knowledge sharing between organizations in Jane and Finch.
- Question: Where are the funds coming from to build the school?
 - Response from Richard Marsella: Those capital funds come from fundraising.

The comments from each breakout room are listed below, along with the main discussion prompts. Please see Appendix 2 to view the Jamboard slides.

Jane Street Road Safety Review breakout Room

Main ideas included addressing safety issues for pedestrians by improving both the sidewalk and cycling infrastructures, and improving the streetscape by adding benches, shading, lighting, and enclosed bus stops with heating.

- Prompt: What are your main reasons for travelling along Jane Street and what is your main mode of transportation?
 - Most members take the bus or walk around the neighbourhood.
- Prompt: How safe do you feel while travelling along Jane Street?
 - Parents and neighbours tell women and girls not to walk at night, and areas with no lighting make it unsafe.
 - Very unsafe. Trying to walk around corners and intersections is very frustrating. Cars try to turn when pedestrians are walking, even when pedestrians are obeying traffic signs and signals. If nothing changes, more people will get hurt.
- Prompt: Can you tell us about a specific road safety issue, or a time/experience on Jane Street when you felt unsafe?
 - A lot of vehicles do not give the right of way to pedestrians.
 - People needing to cross from one plaza to the other will cross in the middle with no lighting. This has been an issue for over 30 years.
 - There is very little shade on Jane from Sheppard to Finch. Heat waves make it difficult to walk.
 - Crossing the main intersections and being in parking lots are main concerns for safety.
 - York University has the highest incidents of street safety issues, and women often have to call campus police to walk them to residence buildings. More street lights should be added.
 - The development of the mall and new apartments facing the LRT is an issue.
 - Bikes and e-bikes are going on the sidewalk along Jane street, endangering pedestrians.
 - Other passengers on the bus can get rowdy. This is especially concerning when travelling with kids. In one instance, her child was physically assaulted by someone and nobody helped.
 - When the bus is full it is not safe to ride it.
 - Driving culture in the area has a lot of speeding.
 - The bus shelters seem to be designed for advertising, and do not offer protection from the elements.
- Prompt: What improvements to Jane Street would make you feel safer?
 - As a pedestrian, cars moving slower have helped pedestrians. Speeds should be further reduced along Jane.
 - Existing sidewalks should be repaired.
 - The walkway to the mall should be remodelled.
 - Desire paths should be honored, especially around bus stops (particularly at Jane and Frith Rd.
 - Adding bike lanes will help with the safety issue of people cycling on the sidewalk.

- Reconnect the bike lanes from the hydro corridor to the highway. This connection was well-used and closed for hydro construction.
- The ActiveTO waterfront trail is a good example of improved transportation lanes. One side is for cars, the other side is for bikes, skateboards etc.
- A bike lane all the way to York University would be helpful.
- More electric signs at bus stops would be helpful. Not all commuters can rely on their phones.
- There should be more lighting near Jane and Finch Mall, towards Yewtree side near Yorkgate mall, and the hydro corridor. News reports and crime statistics will tell us where we need more safety lighting.
- There should be more lighting near Yorkwoods gate towards Jane Street, and in the sidestreets (such as Driftwood).
- Beautification and art improvements, murals, paintings, art, and greenery will make Jane street a nicer place to walk around, and will improve feelings of safety in the area.
- There should be more of a grassy buffer between the street and the sidewalk.
- Additional comments:
 - Jane and Finch area feels very suburban compared to downtown where everything is walkable and in close proximity.
 - In Jane and Finch, you have to get a car or rely on public transportation. It is very inconvenient to get food, for example. There are not a lot of food stores close together compared to downtown.
 - Instead of improving pedestrian safety, they started handing out "jaywalking tickets".
 - Walking infrastructure is not walkable.
 - Police are not able to address street safety incidents.
 - There should be more seating along Jane street, around the malls, and plazas, and at bus stops. This is important for seniors and people who have issues with their feet.
 - There are many seniors and people with mobility issues in the neighbourhood.
 - There is a strong desire for more active transportation, but it is not possible to bike or walk along Jane Street because there is no biking infrastructure.
 - Travelling on the bus with kids is not accessible. There is nowhere to sit, and kids prefer the 84 to the 35.
 - The bus schedule is not reliable, often you will miss three buses at once and have to wait for 30 minutes.
 - The bus system should improve connectivity to the nearest Walmart at Wilson or Keele. It is hard to access these big box stores

Community Music Schools Breakout Room

Main ideas include working with local artists and arts organizations through partnerships, local employment opportunities, and events, and ensuring that staff and

educators are trauma-informed and willing to address mental health and wellness challenges through music.

- Comments
 - The land that the music school will be built on is City and Library Board land. Negotiations are starting.
 - Community getting to know the musicians involved in the school of music is important.
 - Arts and culture is very fragmented, not much of a collective effort. Need a stronger network.
 - Could have the picture of musicians displayed at malls, libraries, schools, etc.
 - Idea for a drop-in event where a musician has a drop in night (like an open mic style event). Example spots- corner commons, peach, jfm+, the library
 - Hockey heroes is a program that has a model that can be copied as far as rotating participants.
 - Work should be trauma-informed, and music can be used as a therapeutic tool.
 - Point of the program is not to create future musicians. We are trying to develop their social side and leadership skills.
 - Programs like this highlight the positives in our community.
 - It's good to have artists from the J&F community employed as teachers/instructors.
 - Sustainability is an issue that needs to be addressed from the beginning.
 - How are you reaching out to parents to promote the program?

Food Justice Breakout Room

Main ideas included engaging more closely with Black Creek Community Farm, reviewing opportunities and spaces for food growing, and connecting with groups and individuals doing food justice work on a small scale.

- Prompt: What are some of the most popular food initiatives in the area?
 - Balcony gardening resources pre-pandemic were very helpful including giving out free seedlings.
 - Gardens at 4400 jane and 2999 jane.
 - Black Creek Farm box, indispensable operating throughout pandemic but limited food options - veg focused, no protein, cooking oils etc.; no formula or other specific needs.
 - Driftwood community garden, great place to grow food but small and a lack of community ember to maintain the garden has led to disarray
 - SNAP garden at san romanoway is ongoing.
 - would like to see more funding go to the BCCF programs, volunteers deliver the boxes; resources required for improved admin and space to process and store food.

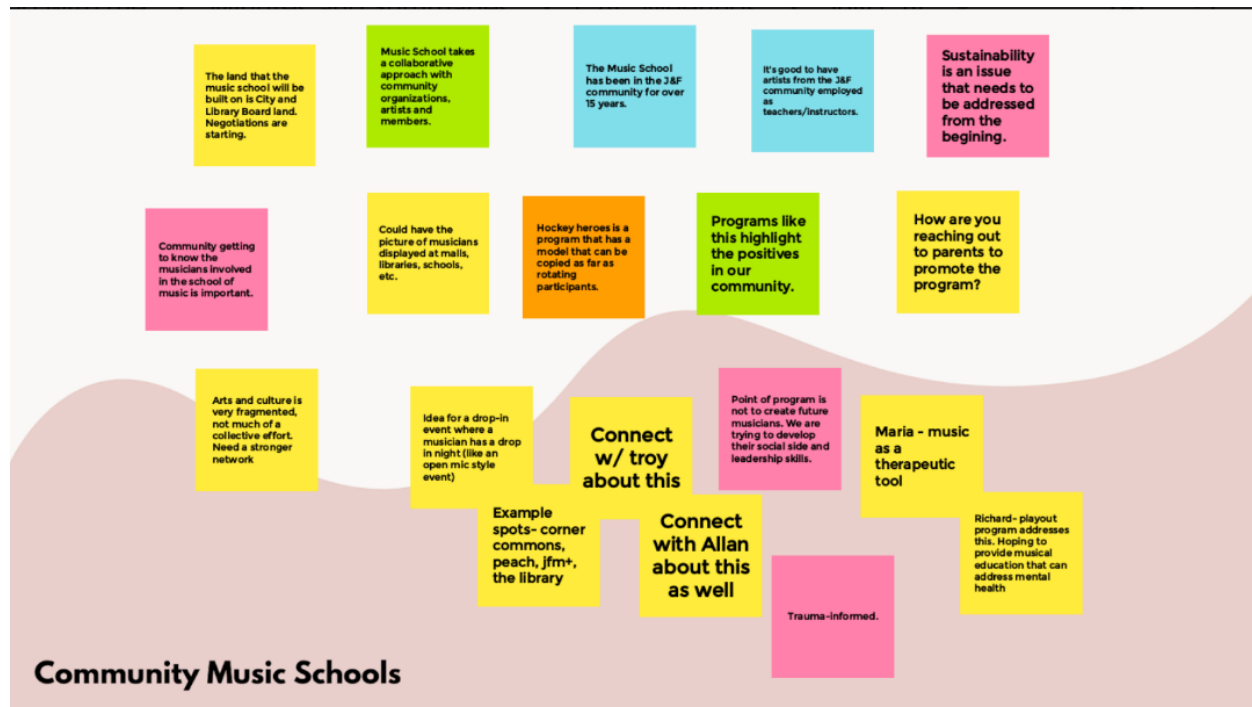
- york u garden for food production
- BCCF gives out seeds and runs workshops for planting and garden tending - we need more things like this so we can feed ourselves
- both boards have a partnership to provide grocery gift cards every 3-4 months to families for essential milk, cheese and bread
- gosford garden - untended due to covid
- Prompt: What resources, services, and supports are needed?
 - Support for people who are already doing work but aren't running official programs
 - Need more space to grow, process, and store food at the farm. The farm should be better funded because they have proven that they can do good work.
 - Youth programming relating to food growing, which can offer an opportunity to learn to grow and care for food gardens.
 - Maize's group is using a piece of land at driftwood (driftwood community garden). Understaffed now, only 3 members using the garden, growing quite a bit of food but could be more with a larger space
 - Honoraria would help keep people interested in growing and tending
 - Need connection between food banks and homes with fruit trees in the backyard.
 - Use community spaces to produce food. Community members are trying to get additional community gardens - could go at Shoreham
 - We need more community kitchens to produce meals for the community
 - More programs like food share are needed.
 - Students need access to nutritious food. Look into school breakfast programs for children in the community.
 - Jane and Wilson is a really good kitchen (kitchen 24) - the man who runs it experienced homelessness and provides meals for free to shelters and the homeless.
- Prompt: What stakeholders should be engaged as part of the food justice work on JFI?
 - Foodshare
 - Engage councillors and higher levels of government for better funding for community food initiatives and food banks.
 - Engage TCHC, church groups, the school boards, food share, BCCF, York University.
 - Partnership with foodshare and the church.
 - Migrant farm workers
- Additional comments
 - Programs that were feeding kids at school are not continued in the summer and we need to find ways to feed kids throughout the summer time.
 - We door-knock and check on our neighbours to see if they're okay for food and other resources, esp. in the winter when things are even more challenging.
 - Food production, access and employment are all connected.

- Migrant farm workers are not treated fairly by employers or government.
- Covid plus inflation means that people are starving.
- Lack of lived experience is perpetuating the existing systemic flaws.
- Abuse of free labour in the area for years - we want to see time, effort and skills valued properly by partners working in JF. The community never sees the money from funders.
- Concerns that people are stealing food grown at community gardens.
- People are feeding community youth from other households from their own kitchens despite not having enough themselves.
- Food security programming is essential but relies often on volunteering which is not feasible when people are stretched for resources already.
- Shifting priorities in the wake of Covid, increased competition between grocers means choosing between paying rent, putting gas in your car and having food on the table.
- Need better funding for existing food banks outlets.

APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

6:00 Participants Join
6:05 Welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions, land acknowledgement, agenda [Denelle] *Begin recording
6:10 RapidTO and Jane Street Review Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 minutes: Presentation [Elise and Clara]• 10 minutes: Presentation by Richard Marsella• 5 min: Q&A and discussion [All]
6:35 Introduce Breakout Rooms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 minutes: Introduce breakout room discussion topics [Denelle]
6:40 Enter Breakout Rooms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jane Street review breakout room [hosted by Elise]• Community Music Schools breakout room [hosted by Richard Marsella]• Food Justice breakout room [hosted by Zahra Joseph Wilson]
7:20-7:30 Closing notes and next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closing notes TBD [Denelle]

APPENDIX 2: Jamboard



- What are some of the most popular food initiatives in the area?
- Are there initiatives that have started, stopped or changed throughout covid that you are aware of?
- What stakeholders do you think should be engaged as part of the food justice work on JFI?
- Would you prefer to engage on food production and distribution as separate topics or all at once?

whats happening	balcony gardening resources pre-pandemic were very helpful including giving out free seedlings	gardens at 4400 jane and 2999 jane	whats needed	support people who are already doing work but arent running official programs	who to talk to	engage councillors at higher levels of government for better funding for community food initiatives and food banks	Engage TCHC, church groups, the school boards, food share, BCCF, York University	follow up with Maize about partnerships with food share and the church
Black Creek Farm box, indispensable operating throughout pandemic but limited food options - veg focused, no protein, cooking oils etc, no formula or other specific needs	Driftwood community garden, great place to grow food but small and a lack of community ember to maintain the garden has led to disarray	SNAP garden at san romanoway is ongoing	Need more space to grow, process, and store food at the farm. The farm should be better funded because they have proven that they can do a good job	youth programming opportunity to learn to grow and care for food gardens	general comments	Migrant farm workers	need access to NUTRITIOUS food, look into school breakfast programs for children in the community	Jane and Wilson is a really good kitchen (kitchen 24) - the man who runs it experienced homelessness, provide a meal for free, remainder to shelters and the homeless
would like to see more funding go to the BCCF programs, volunteers deliver the boxes, resources required for improved admin and space to process and store food	gosford garden - untended due to covid	york u garden for food production	Maize's group is using a piece of land at driftwood (driftwood community garden). Understaffed now, only 3 members using the garden, growing quite a bit of food but could be more with a larger space	honoraria would help keep people interested in growing and tending	programs that were feeding kids at school are not continued in the summer and we need to find ways to feed kids throughout the summer time	we door-knock and check on our neighbours to see if they're okay for food and other resources, esp. in the winter when things are even more challenging	food production, access and employment are all connected	migrant farm workers are not treated fairly by employers or government
BCCF gives out seeds and runs workshops for planting and garden tending - we need more things like this so we can feed ourselves	food share	both boards have a partnership to provide grocery gift cards every 3-4 months to families for essential milk, cheese and bread	trying to get additional community gardens - could go at Shoreham	use community spaces to produce food	covid paired with inflation means that people are starving	lack of lived experience is perpetuating the existing systemic flaws	abuse of free labour in the area for years - we want to see time effort and skills valued properly by partners working in JF, community never sees the money from funders	concerns that people are stealing food grown at community gardens
Food Justice			we need more community kitchens to produce meals for the community	more programs like food share are needed	people are feeding community youth from other households from their own kitchens despite not having enough themselves	food security programming is essential but rely often on volunteering which is not feasible when people are stretched for resources already	shifting priorities in the wake of covid, increased competition between grocers means choosing between paying rent, putting gas in your car and having food on the table	need better funding for existing food banks outlets