

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting



6:00-8:00pm, August 15th, 2023

OVERVIEW

On August 15th, 2023, a 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 process and it was held online over Zoom. The agenda and project background can be viewed in the appendices.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Discuss community safety and wellbeing for youth.
- Share an update on Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts.
- Share a presentation on the Community Development Plan draft actions and introduce the Community Partnership Circle model.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the discussions during the Zoom meeting. Additional comments shared after the meeting are italicized.

Key Themes

- Discussion on safety and wellbeing for youth
 - Members expressed concerns about drug use in secondary schools, and discussed the impact of drugs on community wellness. The Community Development Plan should aim to address issues relating to substance abuse, community wellness, and mental health.
 - Members suggested individuals and organizations that young people can reach out to for support.
- Discussion on the Jane Finch Hub and Centre for the Arts
 - Members expressed a desire to see diverse types of community spaces represented in the Hub, including indoor and outdoor performance spaces, study spaces, and a community kitchen. These spaces should be accessible and barrier-free, with minimal bureaucracy.
 - Members noted the importance of having clear terms of the land transfer and approved uses from the City.
- Discussion on a Community Partnership Circle
 - Members discussed strategies to track the progress of development applications,

Summary Report by the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre

influence development applications, and spread awareness of upcoming developments widely in the community.

- Members suggested setting up a governance structure that would put residents into a monitoring role to hold developers accountable, rather than an advisory role.
- A future Community Partnership Circle should consider strategies to involve the broader community of the Circle's activities, and inform the broader community of important issues and updates.

Discussion on safety and wellbeing for youth

- Question: What is the role of the City of Toronto and the Jane Finch Initiative in ensuring public safety for youth in schools? I have witnessed how kids in this area are susceptible to drug abuse in schools, and other students witness this when going to middle school and high school. Lots of people even consider leaving the community due to fear and concern about kids' well-being as they grow up and go to schools in Jane and Finch. What roles do the City and the Jane Finch Initiative play in establishing a model and a structure for councillors to address these concerns and create a safer community?
 - Response from City staff: The Community Development Plan can address many issues, including community health, substance abuse, and mental health among youth. There will be a section focused on community safety and wellbeing, and we should continue to work on identifying actions, leveraging the existing resources, and investing in youth themselves. It is important to focus on collaboration with and between institutional and community partners. Any emerging actions should be implemented in a way that is youth-friendly, and addresses challenges in communication and access for youth. The priority should be involving youth at every stage, treating young people as leaders. So the Community Development Plan should build partnerships, support community-led initiatives, and continually involve young people. The Community Development Plan will not be the only solution, but it is an opportunity to engage with youth, their families, and their allies as a part of a broader effort. I am happy to provide links and connections to community organizations that may be relevant to students looking for support.
 - Response from City staff: It is important for students and their families to speak directly with school administrators to make sure that staff are appropriately monitoring activities on school property. It is also important for students to have safe spaces to go to outside of school, in case they don't feel safe at school and they haven't been able to get help from school administration.
- Comment: Some contacts are the school trustee, the parent council lead, and the superintendent. Some Community Advisory Committee members may be able to make connections with these contacts.

- Response from City staff: City staff can connect the student with the councilor's office through an introductory email.
- Comment: Sometimes school administrators are aware of the issue, but they lack the resources and the staffing ability to address safety concerns. The public school board has an anonymous reporting tool where students and families can submit issues. Particularly as more dangerous drugs, including fentanyl, make their way into schools, it is important to have a paper trail that shows students and parents are reporting issues to the school administrators.
- Comment: Students looking for support can reach out to their guidance counsellor.
- Comment: The Jane Finch Education Parents' Group is a good resource to seek support. The Spot is also a good safe space for high school students to go to.
- Comment: I wonder if one of the roadblocks for students to access safe spaces has to do with community spaces being closed outside of school hours.

Discussion on the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts

- Comment: Having a space for arts entrepreneurship, along with outdoor theatre and performance spaces would be great. It's important to offer resources to support artists and create opportunities for more programming. Artists are stretched so thin when it comes to marketing and selling their work, so having an entrepreneurship space dedicated to artists could make this easier while also facilitating connections and collaboration. It's important that we create a collaborative arts environment. Equipment rentals to help sell and market their art would also be a good, practical solution for people who don't have access to necessary things.
- Comment: I always advocate for spaces where grassroots organizations can conduct their workshops, presentations, meetings, and events without the burden of red tape. All of the permit payments, insurance payments, and requirements pose significant challenges for grassroots initiatives and especially for organizations that are not registered. These spaces should be free to use, and free of bureaucracy.
- Comment: I would love to see spaces for outdoor theatre and other performance spaces integrated in the hub.
- Comment: I would love to see a study hub and a library in the Hub. Spaces for youth to work and study in are needed.
- Comment: A community commercial kitchen for resident use.
- Comment: Make sure that there is a written agreement from the City so we can get the land and we do not have push back from the City in the future. We need to have firm working terms for this. Otherwise they can just take the land back. We have to do this because we have been burned too many times in this community, and we end up with nothing.
 - Response from HOC Representative: Yes, we are working on this. There is an agreement with Metrolinx, which says the land can only be used for items discussed in the feasibility study. That is technically an agreement. There is also a commitment from City Council. We are working to get explicit written language

of the commitment so we're not going through the same problem. Hopefully by the next time we share public information we will have that information.

- Comment: There should be a central place for people to share feedback on the Hub, like a Google form that is accessible through the Instagram linktree.
 - Response from HOC Representative: This is a great suggestion, we will be updating the linktree.

Discussion on a Community Partnership Circle

- Comment: Is there a budget for a table that functions for awareness of the development applications for the broader community?
 - Response from City staff: There has to be a specific budget that supports a CAC and continued capacity growing in the community. This process will go to long-term engagements that include a Community Advisory Committee.
 - *Additional comment from City staff: This group would have to exist as part of the Community Partnership Circle and therefore be funded through the CDP implementation budget. City Planning currently conducts community consultation meetings on development applications and posts all application materials online at the [Application Information Centre](#). The future CPC could lean on these resources/tools and would also benefit from forming relationships with landowners in the area.*
- Comment: Instead of just having a Community Advisory Committee, it is better to have a body of residents to help keep development applications accountable.
 - Response from City staff: We will focus on monitoring and reporting mechanisms for a Community Advisory Committee in Phase 3. Program advisory boards can shape action plans, and work on timelines for actions. The key question is measuring the success of these actions, such as evaluating the impacts of investments. The Community Advisory Committee would contribute to defining what success means for the initiatives and actions in the Community Development Plan, and establishing performance indicators and evaluation criteria to continually gauge success.
 - *Additional comment from City staff: The CAC as it exists currently would not continue on after Phase 3 of the Jane Finch Initiative but residents on the future CPC could have a similar but expanded role, to be defined through further engagement. Further discussion is needed to clarify what members mean by holding "development applications accountable". There are some features that the community would like to see accompany development that are not legally enforceable by the City though the City can play a role in encouraging applicants and developers to conduct meaningful community engagement. More information about this process can be found through resources provided by the [city](#) and the [province](#).*
- Comment: I get worried about sustainability and turnover. Especially as community organizations like the Jane Finch Centre have limited capacity. What would be the terms of partnership for both individual residents and community organizations.

- Response from City staff: Whoever is involved should be committed to a written process and an agreement on the investment, and this is why I think a five year report back cycle on a ten year plan is a better way to ensure that there is a recommitment by City Council every five years. Additionally, it is important to have a concrete plan with core principles, while allowing some amount of turnover so that there are continually new opportunities for new residents to get involved.
- Question: Now that the new Mayor has been elected, where does that leave us?
 - Response from City staff: Yes, we have a new mayor, a new executive, new chairs of committees, and new deputy mayors. Many of these people are in the process of adjusting, settling into new roles, but Mayor Chow's priority is affordable housing, deeply affordable housing, and social housing. There are also new chairs, Alejandra Bravo is the chair of the Economic and Community Development Committee, and is very experienced with politics across the board, and of course we regularly connect with and update the local councillor Perruzza and his office.
- Comment: If possible, we should send out an invite to the Mayor to inform her of who we are and what we are doing.
- Comment: When you're looking at funding partners there has to be a body ready to accept those funds. We need to have a strategy in place to ethically receive and administer funds.
 - Response from City staff: Different funds have different mechanisms. Some will come through a grant-like structure, such as with United Way. There's also federal and provincial level funding opportunities that can be made available. Lastly, philanthropic organizations like Toronto Foundation may offer donations towards specific facilities.
- Comment: There should be an opportunity for residents who are not involved in nonprofits or the CAC to provide feedback and be engaged in this process.
- Comment: Many residents are working people and don't have time to attend meetings or participate in committees like this. Finding ways to meet people where they are, for example by conducting outreach and engagement at schools, bus stops, and supermarkets, is necessary.
 - Response from City staff: This is a great idea. We can consider building outreach roles into the membership duties for a future Community Advisory Committee.
- Comment: We have many people with disabilities in our community, and many seniors. It is important that these people are represented in governance structure so that accessibility is a priority.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

6:00 Participants join
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome, introductions, and land acknowledgement [Denelle]
6:15 Discussion on youth wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation on substance abuse and youth wellbeing in schools [Christine]• Discussion on youth wellbeing in schools [All]
6:35 Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation on the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts [HOC Representatives]• Discussion on resident priorities in developing community spaces [All]
7:25 Community Partnership Circle
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation on the Community Development Plan draft actions and a potential Community Partnership Circle [CoT Staff]• Discussion on a Community Partnership Circle [All]
Attendees: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 JFCF Centre staff: Denelle Carvalho and Clara Stewart-Robertson• 2 City of Toronto staff: Zahra Joseph Wilson and John Smith• 2 HOC Representatives: Pamela Phan and Shenali Don• 12 Community Advisory Committee members: William Ballard, Troy Budhu, Maize Blanchard, Devayani Chitnis, Kayzie Sutton, Christine Le, Terryl Knox, Maria B, Sharon Taylor, Kemisha Thomas, Susel Munoz, Allan Ramsarran

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The City of Toronto's Jane Finch Initiative 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.

The [Jane Finch Initiative](#) is a resident-informed project to plan for the future of the Jane and Finch area and to determine 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](#)), centered on the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West.

The Jane Finch Community and Family Centre are supporting the City's community engagement process by facilitating community consultations.

The initiative involves three integrated streams of work:

- 1) **Comprehensive engagement**
- 2) A **community development plan** including a local economic opportunities plan;
- 3) An update to the **land use planning framework**.