

# JANE FINCH INITIATIVE PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT



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# PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Phase 2 engagement was an opportunity to focus on collaborative approaches to developing an integrated plan for the Jane Finch area that advances social equity and economic inclusion.

Using a dynamic mix of synchronous, asynchronous, in-person, and virtual methods, and addressing a range of community development and planning themes, we worked closely with City staff and community to build on the broad visions, themes, and ideas identified in Phase 1.

This summary highlights the primary community goals and objectives we heard for each of the eleven thematic areas: arts and culture; climate action; community services and facilities; heritage; housing; inclusive employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; land use, built form, and urban design; mobility; parks and public spaces; resources, partnerships and governance; and social development.

# 1.1 EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## Arts and Culture

Artists and arts groups should be supported and celebrated by a resident-led economic framework which prioritizes economic empowerment, simplifies the grants and funding landscape, centers arts and culture in the public realm, and invests in culturally relevant and accessible arts programming.

## Community Services and Facilities

To meet growing needs, facilities should be maintained and expanded in response to demand. Community organizations, recreation centres, and libraries should be well-funded and supported to provide essential supports and services. The City should continue to work with the Jane-Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts Organizing Committee and prioritize investment and collaboration with its leadership.

## Housing

To make housing more affordable and equitable, inclusionary zoning must be urgently implemented at the provincial level. New housing should respond to the need for affordable, family-oriented units in both public and private housing. Issues of disruption and displacement in Toronto Community Housing projects was a significant concern, and should be addressed in future Toronto Community Housing redevelopment processes. Participants emphasized the need to invest in community ownership models, including cooperative housing and community land trusts. Residents also noted the growing, urgent needs for emergency shelter services.

## Land Use, Built Form, and Urban Design

Joyful, vibrant gathering spaces should be designed and created across Jane-Finch. Participants emphasized the importance of large and well-designed green spaces, and preserving wide green setbacks along Jane Street. Streetscapes should be improved with lighting, artwork, and seating to create inviting gathering spaces along main streets.

## Parks and Public Spaces

Develop safe, vibrant, and welcoming indoor and outdoor community spaces, including on the Jane Finch Mall site. Parks should be well-maintained, with relevant amenities and activations, and investments should be made to add safety and accessibility features throughout the Black Creek Parklands.

## Resources, Partnerships, and Governance

Clear visions for the future should guide practical actions. Implement community governance structures early across all planning processes to involve residents in decision making.

## Climate Action

The City should incentivize green building strategies for development applications, prioritize sustainability in governance and accountability structures by integrating local climate leadership into long-term planning, and invest in preserving and expanding green spaces, including mature trees and gardens to enhance climate action.

## Heritage

Cultural heritage strategies should commemorate community histories, cultural richness and diversity, local arts, and Indigenous histories. Participants emphasized the important roles of community centres and meeting spaces which have accommodated community organizations, and the roles of malls as landmarks and gathering spaces. These roles should be retained in new development.

## Inclusive Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Leverage new development to create diverse local employment opportunities across sectors, and prioritize investments in coworking facilities, educational and upskilling opportunities, and grants. Small businesses and local entrepreneurs must be supported, including by protecting and preserving culturally competent local businesses from displacement, and implementing specific supports for food business owners.

## Mobility

To incentivize public transit use, service must be increased and end-to-end safety for users must be centered in transit planning. Increasing the number of bus stops and the frequency of service is a priority. To encourage active transportation, residents supported using traffic calming measures and prioritizing accessibility in street design to improve the pedestrian experience. Further, a comprehensive strategy with appropriate cycling infrastructure is needed to incentivize cycling for all types of users.

## Social Development

Actions should continue to center resident leadership in social development. Working towards food sovereignty is a priority, and can be actioned by investing in local, resident-led food growing and food distribution initiatives. The City should consider the multifaceted roles of grassroots groups and community agencies, and fund resident-led programs and services to address community safety and well-being, including mentorship programs. Spaces for programs and services should be affordable, inclusive, and accessible for all community members.

## 1.2 Background and Phasing

Jane Finch is a diverse, dense and culturally vibrant neighbourhood in the north-west part of Toronto experiencing increased development interest as the area changes with the construction of the Finch West Light Rail Transit (LRT). While residents are optimistic at the potential investments associated with high-order transit, many shared stories and anxieties about gentrification and displacement. There are worries that new residential developments are going to be unaffordable to longtime residents, and planned redevelopments could threaten important gathering places. Amidst these changes, community members have organized to voice their needs and priorities to ensure longtime residents can remain and thrive in Jane Finch.

The Jane Finch Initiative is a resident-informed project to plan for the future of the Jane-Finch area and to determine how best to leverage the investment in the 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 aim of the Jane Finch Initiative is to develop an integrated plan for the Jane Finch area that advances social equity and economic inclusion for current and future residents, encourages the appropriate kinds of growth and development in the area, and guides investment in community improvements.



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 planning framework.

Community conversations in the first phase of the Jane Finch Initiative focused on:

- Confirming the engagement approach, including co-creating an equitable engagement framework with key community leaders
- Reviewing the Jane Finch Existing Conditions Background Report and the Jane Finch Consultation History Report
- Holding two public open houses to workshop community values, visions for the future, and guiding principles

- Forming the Jane Finch Community Advisory Committee
- Hosting thematic focus groups
- Consulting with local businesses including through a survey
- Online engagement Creating a video entitled 'Valuing the Present, Imagining the Future' with local resident participation

A summary of engagement from Phase 1 can be found [here](#).

The City released the Jane Finch Ideas Report at the beginning of Phase 2. It analyzes what we heard from Jane Finch communities and proposed a series of actions that would form the basis of a second round of engagement to inform the development of the detailed plans. *Community engagement*

Priorities for Phase 2 (summarized in this report) included:

- An open house and pop-up consultations on the Ideas Report

- Monthly CAC meetings
- Indigenous outreach and consultation
- Focus groups on different themes like heritage, arts & culture and economic development
- A series of deep dialogues on themes of inclusive economic and social development, as well as arts and culture
- Online engagement

Community engagement priorities for Phase 3 will include:

- Open houses to confirm design options and refine the draft secondary plan
- Monthly CAC meetings
- Indigenous consultation and engagement
- Thematic focus groups
- Deep dialogues to validate the community development plan
- Online engagement



## 2 HOW WE ENGAGED

### 2.1 Local Partnership on Community Engagement

The City of Toronto has partnered with the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre (Jane/Finch Centre) to facilitate community engagement for the Jane Finch Initiative. The Jane/Finch Centre responded to a request for expressions of interest for a local facilitation team and has been working collaboratively with City staff to conduct engagement activities for the Jane Finch Initiative.

The Jane/Finch Centre is a multi-service, community-based organization with a strong focus on poverty reduction through resident engagement, capacity building and anti-oppression. The Jane Finch Initiative team works with residents, community leaders, community groups, organizations, and partners from within the neighborhoods of Jane Finch and beyond.

### 2.2 Engagement framework

The engagement framework for Phase 2 has leveraged new and existing community relationships and consultation methods to build on the broad visions, themes, and ideas identified in Phase 1.

An equitable engagement framework for the Jane Finch Initiative was co-created by City Planning, Social Development Finance and Administration and Economic Development and Culture Divisions together with community leaders.

#### *Engagement strategies*

Engagement strategies for Phase 2 included various in-person, virtual, synchronous, and asynchronous methods of sharing and receiving ideas and feedback. Activities included:

- In-person open houses and pop-up events on all Community Development Plan and Land Use Plan themes;
- In-person and virtual meetings with community groups, tables, and committees;
- Virtual monthly Community Advisory Committee meetings;
- Online asynchronous consultation on built form options and urban design strategies through the “Jane Finch Initiative - Greening, Moving and Building” online engagement exercise;
- Online and in-person workshops on Community Development Plan themes;
- One-on-one interviews and meetings with longtime residents and community leaders;
- Direct interviews, conversations, emails, and phone calls between City of Toronto or Jane/Finch Centre staff and community members.

Due to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to hold more in-person open houses and pop-up information and feedback sessions in Phase 2. Through these events, we reached approximately 750 community members, including roughly 350 participants at our March 25th Public Meeting. Through in-person and virtual meetings with community groups, tables, and committees, we connected with over 100 participants. Through our monthly Community Advisory Committee meetings, we worked closely with 18 resident leaders.

We received 60 feedback comments on built form options and urban design strategies through the online engagement exercise, and through in-person and virtual Deep Dialogue workshops on Community Development Plan themes, we worked with over 50 participants. Lastly, we heard from between 15 and 20 individuals through direct, one-on-one interviews. Overall, we reached approximately 1000 participants, compared to 453 participants reached in Phase 1 engagement.

Throughout Phase 2, we saw many individuals participate in multiple meetings, showing resident investment in the process and demonstrating continuity in feedback and validation across consultation sessions.

A full list of Phase 2 engagement activities is attached in Appendix C

#### *Role of the Community Advisory Committee*

Continuing its work from Phase 1, a Community Advisory Committee composed of an equitable representation of residents provided advice for the Phase 2 engagement strategy and provided feedback on a wide breadth of relevant City initiatives, development applications, and community-led projects, in addition to providing input on the development of the secondary plan and the community development plan. Eighteen Committee members participated in monthly meetings, reviewed materials, and supported awareness and outreach for the Jane Finch Initiative as community ambassadors.

Using a consensus-building approach and meetings structured to facilitate productive discussions and feedback sessions, the Committee served as a platform for communication between the residents, City staff and other stakeholders, promoting open dialogue and understanding.

The Committee contributed to developing actions on a variety of themes, including arts and culture, economic development, built form and urban design, creating inclusive and accessible community spaces, and social development. Members also played an important role in providing feedback on development applications, including the comprehensive redevelopment of the Jane Finch Mall site and a proposal for a tower on the Yorkgate mall site.

In conversations with City staff, members provided feedback on significant City projects and initiatives, such as the Firgrove-Grassways revitalization and RapidTO: Jane Street. Beyond providing feedback on specific projects, the Committee offered guidance on the consultation process with a focus on inclusive outreach and engagement strategies. Members' dedication provided an important space to receive feedback and advice on a breadth of topics.

#### *Community facilitators and partners*

An engagement priority in Phase 2 was partnering with local organizations and creating opportunities for residents to act as community facilitators throughout the consultation process.

Facilitators, including Community Advisory Committee members, supported outreach efforts and acted as ambassadors at open houses and pop-up information and feedback sessions. Youth facilitators were trained and entrusted to lead youth engagement events, and were selected to facilitate interviews with longtime residents and community advocates. By centering youth as leaders in the engagement process, facilitators found avenues for more meaningful conversations with youth.

#### *Additional Engagement*

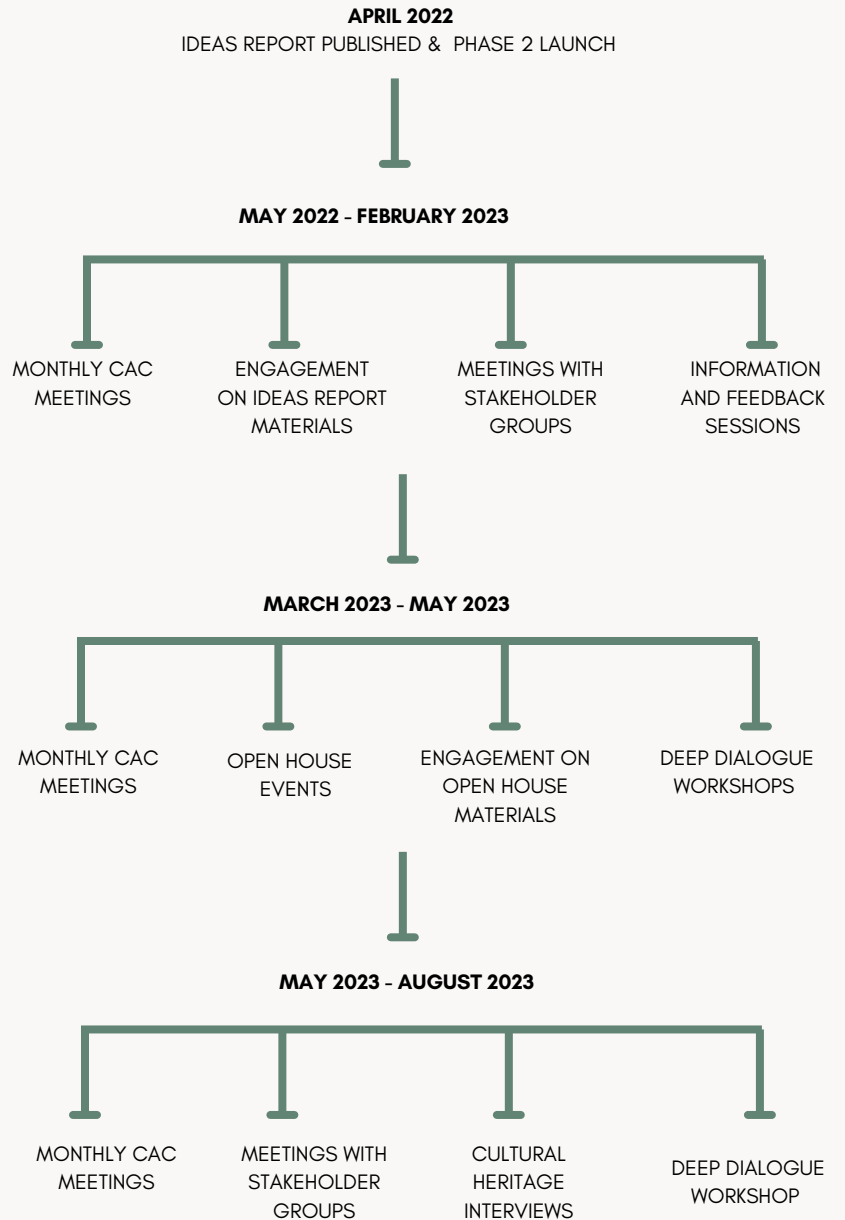
In addition to the listed consultation events, the Jane/Finch Centre hosted several one-on-one interviews and small group conversations with various stakeholders, community organizations, and residents. Outcomes from these conversations are included in the "What We Heard" section.

Additional engagement processes focused on gathering youth feedback on parks and public spaces, mobility and transportation, and land use and urban design was carried out by Urban Minds with support from the Jane/Finch Centre. Information on this consultation process is included in Appendix A.

Consultation with Indigenous stakeholders was carried out by Innovation Seven. Information on this consultation process is available in Appendix B.

2.3

# ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE





# 3. THEMES

Engagement in Phase 2 was structured around broad thematic building blocks identified in Phase 1. This section introduces vision statements and key topics for each theme.

## Arts and Culture

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch is home to a thriving and supportive arts and culture community, with engaging local events and opportunities for local artists. Arts and culture opportunities are supported, celebrated and encouraged.*

Priorities in Phase 2 engagement included developing actions to build spaces for arts and culture to thrive, increasing access to arts and culture funding opportunities, and fostering sustainable local arts and culture organizations and programming for community members of all ages. We worked with local artists and arts organizations through individual conversations and in quarterly meetings with the Artist Collective.

## Climate Action

*Vision for the future: Buildings, streetscapes, parks, open spaces and infrastructure are all designed to support achieving net zero emissions, climate adaptation and resilience by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, supporting biodiversity and reducing vulnerability to extreme weather.*

Climate action, education, and environmental resilience should be integrated in every aspect of development and design in Jane Finch. In Phase 2, conversations focused on encouraging new development to better build and plan for reduced emissions.

Retrofitting existing buildings, designing streets and public spaces for adaptation and resilience, supporting and protecting existing biodiversity, and incorporating climate action and advocacy in governance structures.

## Community Services and Facilities

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch is a community with easy access to a full range of well-maintained facilities.*

Conversations centered around maintaining and expanding community services, leveraging development to achieve community benefits, and coordinating resident priorities with planned improvements and expansions to spaces. Facilities, including community recreation centres, public libraries, licensed child care spaces, and spaces for community agencies should be inclusive and well-designed spaces for programs and services to be delivered.

## Heritage

*Vision for the future: The diverse cultural heritage resources of communities in Jane Finch are recognized, conserved and celebrated as vital contributors to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities.*

Priorities in Phase 2 engagement included identifying places of value, and discussing strategies for recognizing, conserving, and celebrating cultural heritage resources.

Facilitators hosted one-on-one interviews between resident youth and knowledge keepers focused on reviewing significant places and buildings, and exploring opportunities to commemorate places with heritage value.

## Housing

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch is a place where current and future residents have good access to adequate, affordable and appropriate housing.*

Discussions in Phase 2 focused on residents' concerns about displacement and gentrification, and addressing needs across the housing spectrum, from emergency shelter services to affordable home ownership. Engagement topics included sharing information on the existing suite of policies and programs that may be used to address displacement, protecting existing housing, creating new affordable housing, and sharing information on forthcoming development. Engagement focused on developing large sites in accordance with community needs and priorities, reviewing preferred housing types, sizes, forms, tenures, and affordability, and receiving feedback on built form options including potential re-designation of lands to accommodate appropriate development.

## Inclusive Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch residents have access to stable and well-paid job opportunities,*

including with local employers, and are supported to further develop qualifications and access to job openings. Residents are supported to start and grow businesses within and beyond the community and have access to appropriate and affordable space.

Priorities in Phase 2 engagement included discussing strategies to promote local hiring and diverse employment opportunities for all ages, with an emphasis on opportunities for youth. Facilitators convened quarterly meetings with the Economic Roundtable to discuss and develop actions to incentivize employers to outreach to and prioritize local candidates, incorporate community benefits hiring in public sector infrastructure projects, invest in education and upskilling, and strengthen workforce development supports in Jane Finch. Meetings also focused on improving awareness and accessibility of existing supports for small businesses, securing affordable and appropriate spaces for start-ups and small businesses, and supporting small businesses and social enterprises through social/local procurement.

### Land Use, Built Form and Urban Design

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch is thriving and vibrant, with a strong commercial core, and maintains a distinct sense of place, where people live, work, play, and visit.*

Engagement centered around guiding Jane Finch to grow as a transit-supported complete community with high-quality urban design that supports livability.

As a part of Phase 2 engagement, facilitators sought feedback on land use, built form, and urban design strategies, including strengthening

the mixed-use commercial core at the intersection of Jane and Finch, encouraging local-serving retail and service uses, preserving workplaces and creating space for job growth.

### Mobility – Getting Around

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch is a place where it is easy, affordable and safe for everyone to get around in all seasons.*

Priority areas for Phase 2 engagement included defining and centering equity in transportation planning and creating complete streets to safely accommodate all people using all travel modes in all seasons. Discussions focused on strategies for improving the pedestrian network, the cycling network and public transportation, including better access to transit stops and improving the waiting experience around transit stops.

### Parks and Public Spaces

*Vision for the future: Jane Finch has beautiful, connected, welcoming parks and open spaces. Parks and public spaces, public squares, and privately owned publicly accessible spaces, should be well-connected, welcoming, green and safe.*

A beautiful and thriving public realm promotes environmental resiliency and mental and physical wellness. Conversations in Phase 2 centered on creating and improving parks, activating parks by improving amenities and programming, investing in vibrant, green streets and plazas, enhancing the Finch West Hydro Corridor as a key active transportation route, and preserving the heritage value and ecological integrity of the Black Creek ravine.

### Resources, Partnerships and Governance

*Vision: Jane Finch Initiative policy ideas are developed and implemented with adequate resources and build on partnerships between the City of Toronto, community members, community agencies, institutions, and private sector and collaborative decision making that prioritizes community members.*

Outcomes from the Jane Finch Initiative should be implemented with appropriate resources, and built on effective partnerships between the City of Toronto, community members, community agencies, institutions, the private sector, and other community partners. In Phase 2, community members discussed evaluation and accountability metrics, holding space for collaborative decision making structures, and creating a strategically aligned resource strategy.

### Social Development

*Vision for the future: There are eight community actions in place to support the three guiding principles in the Jane and Finch Community: Indigenous Reconciliation, Equity for Black and Other Deserving Groups, and Resourceful Partnerships and Engagement.*

As a part of Phase 2 engagement, community members discussed strategies to use social and economic investment to prioritize the guiding principles. Actionable areas included improving access to space and mobility, advancing food justice and sovereignty, promoting community safety and wellbeing, and addressing gentrification and displacement. Participants highlighted the wealth of community assets, capacity, and resilience in Jane Finch, and the need to further empower, center, and support community leaders and community agencies in social development.



## 4. WHAT WE HEARD

### Arts and Culture

#### *Streamline and simplify access to grants and funding opportunities*

Artists and arts organizations expressed that it is difficult for both established and emerging artists to navigate grants and resources, and there is a strong need to improve the accessibility of these programs. Funding bodies should work on simplifying application processes and more widely publicizing information on processes and deadlines. Many participants mentioned that funding opportunities are predominantly short-term and precarious, forcing arts organizations to spend a disproportionate amount of time on grant writing. Long-term operating funding for arts organizations is necessary to allow them to make long-term plans and programming commitments to serve the growing community.

#### *Develop a resident-led economic framework for investing in local arts*

Participants emphasized that artists and other residents should lead governance and decision-making work to develop a more supportive economic framework for the arts and culture community in Jane Finch. Some participants voiced concerns about outside arts-based organizations dominating conversations that should be led by local artists, and shared stories of institutional partners not honouring long-time collaborations with residents. Participants discussed the need to centre local artists in the process of exploring new, innovative funding models and structures, so that they can be involved in the development and administration of future grant funding opportunities. Participants did not suggest specific models and structures in Phase 2, but there is opportunity to build on and develop this idea moving forward.

A key theme included economically empowering local artists as a short-term priority. Artists stated the importance of opportunities to make a living by developing business skills and fundraising abilities. Discussion also focused on exposing youth to viable career pathways in arts and creative industries. This can partly be achieved by funding existing arts organizations to facilitate mentorship between youth and established artists, and be achieved by leveraging educational institutions to offer tailored career programs for local youth.

Participants emphasized that economic empowerment should be collaborative and mutually supportive, not competitive. Discussion focused on opportunities to connect local artists with one another to better share opportunities and form arts collectives for funded projects. Participants also discussed the Jane-Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts, noting that many residents in Jane Finch lack studio space at home, and that subsidized private and community studio spaces should be funded for emerging artists. Such a space can have a dual function as an affordable arts creation studio and a medium for collaboration and community building. A recurring idea was to create an online directory for artists to connect with one another, share opportunities, and refer one another for projects. Most agreed that this task should not be undertaken by the City, but by an existing established community organization that can commit to updating the directory.

### *Centre arts and culture in the public realm*

Many residents discussed the importance of centering arts and culture in the public realm. Residents suggested that a breadth of community arts projects be funded to beautify the public realm, including but not limited to murals and collaborative projects involving multiple artists. Both artists and non-artists noted that performance and exhibition spaces, such as the theater at York Woods library and the art gallery at York University are valued assets, and should be better leveraged for community uses. These and other spaces should centre Jane Finch artists, and function to build community around the arts.

The City should continue to strengthen partnerships with local organizations and agencies to improve access to spaces for the arts to thrive. Residents suggested strategies to draw arts and culture into the public realm through artisan markets, outdoor art exhibits, and ethno-cultural festivals. These efforts would offer economic opportunities to artists, while activating parks and plazas.

### *Invest in culturally relevant and accessible arts programming*

Users of public and private arts programming shared that access to arts programming has had measurable positive impacts on mental health, overall well-being, and feelings of ambition in youth, and expressed that arts programming offered at community centres and by arts and community organizations should be scaled along with density and growth.

New arts programs should be culturally relevant and responsive to demand. Some suggested new programming that includes steel pan, African drumming, gymnastics, dramatic arts, and more musical instruments. Program users also shared several challenges to accessing programming, in particular the distance to spaces where programs are offered, affordability, and awareness of programs. Many participants stated a need for better connectivity between arts programming providers and schools, noting that young people need a more accessible “entry point” to get involved with the arts. Some strategies that can be further developed in Phase 3 include forming partnerships between schools and arts organizations, hiring more local residents to lead programming, and incorporating youth leadership opportunities in arts programs.

## **Climate Action**

### *Incentivize green building strategies*

Participants emphasized that major landowners should bear the responsibility of ensuring climate resilience in urban design. There was strong support among participants for implementing green building requirements for development applicants, or finding ways to incentivize and encourage developers to voluntarily follow green building requirements.

Many noted that open green spaces are often unattractive and prone to flooding. Participants discussed opportunities for improved porous green spaces, and expressed support for incorporating permeable paving, green islands, swales, rain gardens, and green curb extensions among other interventions to enhance rainfall absorption and address heat-related vulnerabilities. Many acknowledged that such interventions align with interests in beautifying public spaces. There is opportunity to continue to explore and seek input on these interventions in Phase 3 and beyond.

### *Prioritize sustainability in governance and accountability structures*

Residents understand that many of the social issues discussed in the context of the Jane Finch Initiative are interconnected with one another and with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants want to see local climate leadership included in long term climate planning through the creation of accountability and governance structures, recognizing that addressing social disparities, economic stability, and climate change must be done holistically. Particularly when reviewing the Community Development Plan actions, participants shared that long-term visions must be informed by the reality of climate change to prioritize sustainability and social equity in governance.

### *Preserve and expand the urban tree canopy, naturalized greenspace, and food gardens*

Many residents expressed pride and appreciation for green assets, including trees, naturalized greenery along the Black Creek, and community gardens across Jane Finch. Preserving and expanding the urban tree canopy, naturalized greenspace, and gardens is a crucial component of climate action. Some participants noted specific benefits of green assets, including the important role of trees for improving air quality, combating urban heat island effect by providing shade, and preserving habitat and food for wildlife. The integrity of the Black Creek ravine is important for enhancing biodiversity, and reducing the risk of flooding during extreme weather events. Many participants also discussed the educational benefits of having community food gardens in the neighbourhood. Expanded community food gardens may not only increase local food production, but also teach garden users about responsible food production and the importance of food sovereignty. Preserving and expanding existing green spaces is a tangible way to promote greater climate resilience and sustainability.

## **Community Service Facilities**

### *Maintain and expand community service facilities*

Residents expressed the importance of community service facilities and meeting spaces, and shared anxieties over the potential loss of such spaces during major redevelopment processes in the area, including the Jane Finch Mall redevelopment, and any potential Yorkgate mall redevelopment. Residents also want to ensure that they retain access to important community spaces that existed prior to the revitalization of the Firgrove–Grassways community, including the swimming pool, community centre and basketball courts. Some expressed concern that current facilities will not be sufficient to meet the needs of a growing population in Jane Finch.

Community service facilities should be maintained and expanded to meet a wide range of needs, including acting as meeting spaces for grassroots organizations, safe environments for LGBTQ+ programs and services, and welcoming community well-being programs that promote inclusivity and support for all community members. Designs for new facilities and improvements to facilities should prioritize accessibility and center the experiences of people with physical and invisible disabilities.

### *Support and invest in community organizations and community recreation centres*

Community organizations have built trust and respect in the neighbourhood for decades, having historically provided essential supports for many residents, especially young families, with dedicated programming and services for mothers and children. These organizations are becoming overwhelmed at the demand for support. Residents expressed fear that these existing organizations and their culturally competent programs and services will be replaced, and expressed that the City should provide core funding to sustain and further enhance their important work. Such investment will ensure the continued delivery of vital services and support systems for young families. The Community Development Plan should include explicit commitments regarding the provision of continuous funding to community organizations, with a strong emphasis on accountability and transparency.

Residents expressed appreciation for the existing programs and services offered at community recreation centres, and shared concerns that programs and services may not be scaled with increasing development. Residents expressed that programs that may have been dissolved during COVID should be brought back, and pushed for improved coordination and promotion to raise awareness of existing programming and services in the community. In particular, participants noted that youth programming at community centres should be better publicized in schools. Residents also acknowledged that community recreation centres should continue to function as warming spaces in the winter and cooling spaces in the summer, and should function as equitable access points to high speed internet. The land use plan should ensure that community recreation centres are improved, expanded and enhanced to support a growing population.

## **Heritage**

### *Commemorate histories of community organizations and activism*

Many participants discussed the struggle to develop community organizations and social services, and argued that commemorating this community work is often more important than preserving architectural forms. Some suggested involving local artists to develop creative ways of commemorating sites of community movements, events, and vigils. In particular, participants mentioned that the work of Northwood Neighbourhood Services, the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre, Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization, and the local Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) chapter should be commemorated with signage where appropriate. Some noted significant leaders who have been involved with these community organizations, and suggested recognizing individuals as positive and inspirational role models.

### *Celebrate diversity and preserve community spaces*

Several participants emphasized the significance of the diverse ethnic backgrounds, religious diversity, and cultural richness of the neighbourhood's immigrant stories. Some referred to Jane Finch as the "intersection of 100 languages". Many stressed the importance of safeguarding places that honor and commemorate these immigrant stories while continuing to provide vital services and community spaces to groups. There is opportunity to seek further input on specific venues for cultural gatherings, places of worship, and cultural centers that may hold cultural value.

### *Consider heritage and ecological value of trees and green spaces*

Residents discussed how nature and greenery are parts of the cultural heritage of Jane Finch and noted how there are many old growth trees in the neighbourhood. Residents ask that the City consider and prioritize the heritage and ecological value of trees and green spaces. In particular, Rudy's garden in the Black Creek Parklands is a source of pride and enjoyment for many residents. Participants suggested that funding be offered to enable Rudy to more easily and safely continue the garden in the short-term. Participants also discussed local community gardening initiatives, including the community garden in Driftwood Parkette and the San Romanoway Community Garden, which should be preserved.

### *Recognize the intangible heritage value of landmark malls*

The Jane Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall are signature landmarks in the neighbourhood, and have been among the most important gathering spaces for residents for many decades. Indoor and outdoor gathering spaces should be maintained or expanded through redevelopment processes, and the intangible heritage value of the malls should be recognized and commemorated. Several participants noted that the Information Downsview kiosk that had previously been in the Jane Finch Mall should be commemorated with signage.

### *Improve accessibility to Black Creek Pioneer Village*

Black Creek Pioneer Village is a valuable repository of the area's rich cultural heritage, but is underutilized by local residents. Although the site has valuable educational uses and preserves the stories and histories of the area, some participants noted that it feels inaccessible. Several people advocated for increased accessibility to Black Creek Pioneer Village, recognizing that the cost of admission poses a barrier for many community members. Black Creek Pioneer Village should be preserved with sustained funding to support outreach to the local community and programs to subsidize the cost of visiting for Jane Finch residents.

### *Commemorate history of arts and artists*

Resident artists noted that the theatre at York Woods Library should have plaques and signage recognizing the history of performing arts in Jane Finch, and that existing murals at the York Woods Library, Driftwood Community Centre, 10 Tobermory Drive, and other buildings should be preserved. Participants also discussed the importance of highlighting positive role models in the arts, and suggested honouring notable artists from Jane Finch through murals, statues, or commemorative signage.

### *Commemorate areas of value to Indigenous heritage*

Participants shared an interest in place-keeping and commemoration of areas that hold significance to Indigenous groups, particularly the Huron Wendat, including adding visible heritage plaques and signage about Indigenous history along Black Creek and the Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational Trail. Participants acknowledged the trail plaques along the Huron-Wendat trail, which runs through the site of a former Huron-Wendat village. Engagement on areas of significance to Indigenous cultural heritage should be a priority for continued consultation in Phase 3 and as a part of future improvements to Black Creek and the Finch Hydro Corridor Recreational Trail.

## **Housing**

### *Implement inclusionary zoning at the Provincial level*

Housing affordability was the most frequently discussed topic in Phase 2, and many residents expressed deep concerns that the increased development interest sparked by the arrival of the Finch West LRT will cause displacement. Residents shared many stories about displacement and eviction from private properties and repeatedly advocated for the City to address the effects of gentrification, protect displaced community members, and ensure that the rapid construction of new residential buildings includes a significant amount of deeply affordable housing that is appropriate for a diversity of family types. Current definitions of affordable rental costs are still unaffordable for many community members, and residents are looking to the Province to urgently implement inclusionary zoning strategies to protect and expand affordable housing stock. Residents are also looking to the City to advocate for the implementation of inclusionary zoning at the Provincial level. Several participants emphasized the urgency of implementing inclusionary zoning strategies as quickly as possible so that new developments will be held to higher affordability standards. In particular, participants voiced support for Protected Major Transit Areas (PMTSAs) and sought updated information on an implementation timeline.

### *Build affordable family-oriented units in both public and private housing*

Participants noted that many residents are living in large and multi-generational families, and expressed a need for affordable family-oriented and family-sized units in both public and private housing. Because Jane Finch is home to many immigrant communities, it is especially important for housing developments to acknowledge how cultural diversity influences family types and the demand for larger residential units. Residents expressed a need for a greater diversity of affordable rental units at larger unit sizes, so that all families can access appropriate housing. Due to current housing unaffordability and lack of appropriately sized units, many residents reported overcrowding and associated issues. Some shared stories of pest infestations and hazardous conditions in private apartment buildings and Toronto Community Housing buildings.

### *Mitigate disruption and displacement of residents in Toronto Community Housing*

Participants referred to the Firgrove-Grassways Revitalization as an example of displacement. Many community members highlighted that Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) neglected maintenance concerns for many years, resulting in demolition of the properties and relocation of residents to other TCHC communities. Participants further expressed that the lack of consideration in relocating residents caused significant disruption, as people were moved far from schools, workplaces, and community services in Jane Finch. Even though there are commitments to replace the pre-existing community facilities and housing, the potential to sell parts of public land on the Firgrove-Grassways site to the private sector without a funded plan for rebuilding the housing units is a concern for many community members. Residents would like to see as much city-owned land retained for affordable housing in the area as possible. There is a concern that city-owned lands will be sold without a housing benefit to community. Residents repeatedly expressed a pressing need for consistent dialogue between TCHC, residents, and public officials to address the issues raised during the engagement process.

### *Create affordable ownership opportunities*

Several residents noted the lack of opportunities for people to build generational wealth in Jane Finch. Ownership opportunities must be a part of a comprehensive affordable housing approach, including creating rent-to-own opportunities, building affordable and appropriate condos that are achievable for local residents to purchase, and addressing corruption in condo boards when necessary.

### *Explore opportunities for cooperative housing and community land trusts*

Many residents expressed a strong desire for cooperative housing and community land trust models to be implemented in Jane-Finch. Participants discussed organizations in other parts of the city, such as Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, Kensington Market Community Land Trust, and Chinatown Land Trust, which are achieving success in buying properties and stewarding them for affordable housing. A priority for Phase 3 should be convening discussions with residents, partners, and other supporters and developing a collective strategy for researching and advancing ideas for a housing land trust, including reviewing governance, funding models, and potential sites.

### *Expand emergency and short-term shelter services*

Participants noted that a comprehensive housing plan should include emergency and short-term shelter services. Sufficient direct engagement with unhoused residents, and with residents living in precarious housing was not done in Phase 2, and should be an ongoing priority for further consultation on housing issues during implementation phases.

## **Inclusive Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities**

### *Harness development and investment in the community as a means to create diverse local employment opportunities across sectors*

Stable and well-paying job opportunities, created in partnership with local employers, should be leveraged from new development in Jane Finch. Residents emphasized the need for economic opportunities to grow alongside development in the area, with a focus on harnessing development as a means to improve local employment opportunities. In particular, participants pointed to the potential for local hiring opportunities at the Humber Meadows Long-Term Care home, the Finch West LRT Maintenance and Storage Facility site, and the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts. Conversations focused on using workforce intermediaries as a community benefits approach to connect local talent with opportunities, and using Ontario Works Data for workforce development planning. Residents expressed a desire for clarity on how existing policies like social procurement will be implemented in Jane Finch, and questioned how the City can communicate the measurable impacts of using social procurement strategies and workforce intermediaries.

Participants also discussed the importance of generating diverse employment opportunities across sectors. Some emphasized that opportunities for entrepreneurs should be offered across industries, and suggested seeking hiring commitments in sectors of work that will benefit directly from increased development in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) like Jane Finch, including insurance and real estate, architecture, and construction. Participants noted that employment opportunities should include green jobs in the environmental sector, housing, real estate, the social sector, and arts industries.

One strategy to create a diversity of education to professional pathways is to leverage local educational institutions, including Seneca College and York University, to provide subsidized programs and upskilling opportunities for both youth and mature jobseekers. Another is to invest in diversifying co-op programs in secondary schools, including by creating partnerships between secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Several participants emphasized the intersection of economic opportunities and other social outcomes, and noted that any new educational programs should be as barrier-free as possible to be inclusive of people with childcare responsibilities, disabilities, inflexible work hours, budget constraints, and other challenges.

### *Preserve local, culturally competent businesses*

Residents expressed concern about the displacement of small local businesses as malls redevelop and as new development reshapes the commercial landscape in Jane Finch. Throughout Phase 2, participants stressed the importance of preserving culturally attuned local businesses, particularly in malls and plazas. These businesses, which often cater to specific cultural communities, frequently function as gathering spaces and are an important part of the character of Jane-Finch. Many residents also underlined the need to preserve affordable commercial units as entrepreneurship opportunities, noting that the potential to own a small business near the Jane-Finch intersection has historically been an economically viable opportunity for residents, and should not become unachievable.



### *Support food business owners*

Many conversations on the economic landscape focused on food culture and the diversity of restaurants and catering businesses in Jane-Finch. Residents discussed pressing challenges for formal and informal food businesses owners, including challenges in obtaining food service permits and the need for early business development grants for the high startup costs associated with food businesses. Many residents also expressed a desire for local farmers markets to sell prepared foods and build community around food.

### *Create educational and upskilling opportunities*

In discussing secondary education and opportunities for continuing education, residents noted the lack of financial literacy courses for youth in public schools and colleges. Financial literacy courses, as well as other educational and upskilling programs should be widely available and well-publicized to all residents, with a focus on opportunities for entrepreneurs and youth.

### *Plan for coworking facilities and a start-up hub in accessible locations*

Residents expressed the challenges of completing remote work and studies from home, particularly for residents who may live in small or overcrowded apartments. Planning for coworking facilities, start-up hubs, and meeting areas is an important strategy to provide practical and accessible alternatives to working from home. Creating these spaces throughout the community and in key accessible locations, such as the Toronto Employment and Social Service branch in Yorkgate Mall or York Woods Library, would be an important strategy to enhance accessibility.

More conversations with entrepreneurs and advocates centered around challenges in finding and accessing funding and other support for entrepreneurs. Participants shared suggestions for promoting awareness and accessibility and grants, including networking opportunities for local entrepreneurs, pitch contests and initiatives to encourage innovation, and a greater breadth of grants and bursaries to support diverse types of entrepreneurs, especially early-stage businesses. A start-up hub space in a highly visible location, such as around the Jane and Finch intersection, could enable information sharing about grants and funding for small businesses, function as a space for workshops, and enable better collaboration and meeting for entrepreneurs.

### *Create an innovative, equitable local business governance structure*

Participants voiced interest in a local business governance model that would provide direct benefits to small businesses and the overall vibrancy of Jane Finch, but several opposed creating a Business Improvement Area (BIA). Some expressed concern that a BIA would focus exclusively on business improvement without prioritizing broader benefits to the community, and that a BIA may be dominated by large new businesses moving into the neighbourhood. A new type of governance structure may allow a committee of community members to review employers' hiring processes to ensure equitable practices and center local hiring, and would be an opportunity to implement participatory budgeting strategies by involving a body of residents in developing and executing grants and funding for entrepreneurship.

Participants discussed several potential planning and governance solutions to protect small businesses, including setting maximum commercial unit sizes in mixed-use areas, setting rent control for commercial spaces, and creating a commercial community land trust. Some participants suggested governance models including a community development corporation, a chamber of commerce, or a commercial community land trust. Further development and discussion on these ideas should include small-group and focused conversations about planning and community governance structures to preserve the fabric of small businesses in Jane Finch.

## Land Use, Built Form and Urban Design

*Design joyful, vibrant, and visually appealing gathering spaces on the Jane Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall sites*

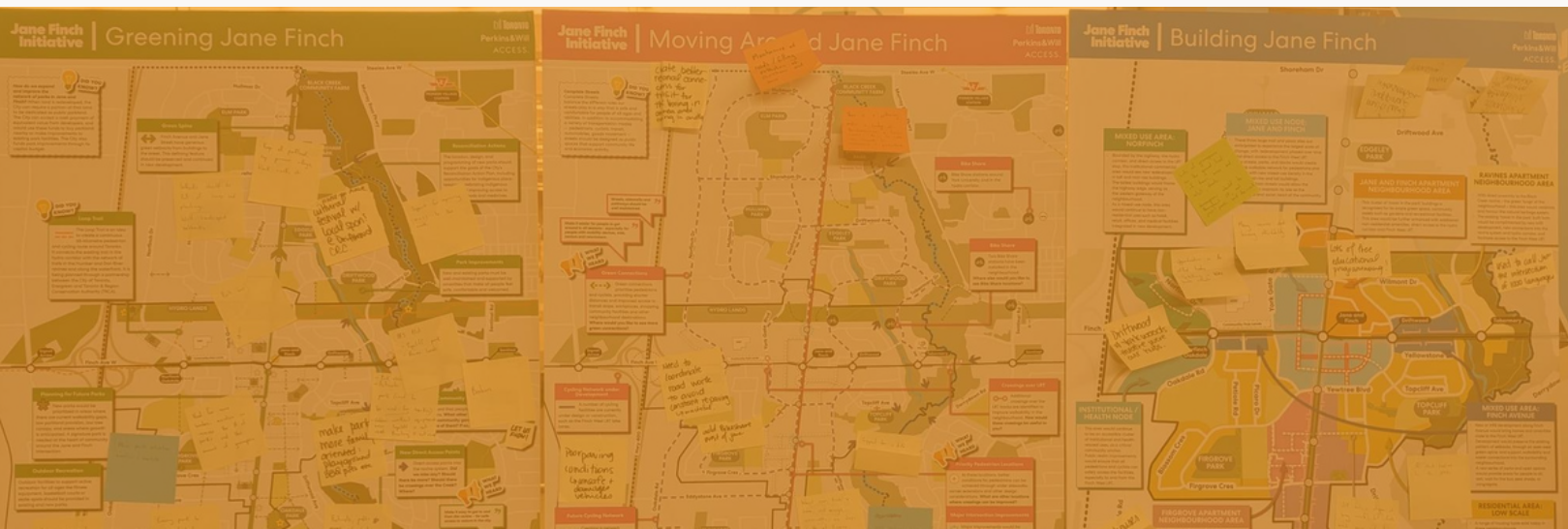
A key priority for many residents is maintaining and building upon the distinct culture, community, and atmosphere of Jane Finch. This includes maintaining the role of malls as both community spaces and commercial centers. Participants discussed joyful and vibrant design elements, including prioritizing visually appealing gathering spaces with indoor and outdoor seating, and expressed support for permanent public squares on the Jane Finch Mall site and the Yorkgate Mall site for festivals, events, and informal gathering. Participants also emphasized that both mall sites should be fully pedestrianized. Safe and accessible walking paths should be created throughout the mall sites, and developers should strongly consider the traffic implications of adding residential buildings. Although preserving a wealth of affordable commercial space for small businesses to thrive is a main priority, some participants also expressed desire for big-box stores and a wider variety of retail stores. As many residents drive to other neighbourhoods to access major shopping centers at Vaughan Mills and Yorkdale Mall, adding these commercial spaces within Jane Finch may reduce dependency on cars.

*Avoid congestion and retain open green spaces*

Residents understand that affordable housing development is necessary, but a balance needs to be struck to avoid congestion. Participants shared positive attitudes towards the existing tower in the park buildings in much of Jane Finch, and expressed opposition to infill developments which threaten the typology based on concern that it will cause congestion and increase unwanted shade. Residents shared concerns that a very dense, downtown approach to public space design will result in underused public spaces. Residents shared a strong preference for retaining as much green space as possible, including retaining publicly accessible fields, setbacks, and lawns. Residents supported retaining the characteristic green setbacks along Jane Street, but emphasized that setbacks should be well-maintained and landscaped. Many participants emphasized that the presence of large, open green spaces is an important part of the character of Jane Finch, and creates a sense of openness in contrast to the congestion of the downtown core. Several participants noted that urban design strategies being proposed and displayed at public engagement events did not include sufficient detail about the impacts of high rise developments on sunlight, shade, urban cooling, and greenery.

*Create gathering spaces along main streets*

Residents noted that streetscapes along Jane Street and Finch Avenue can be made more functional and inviting. Some improvements include widening sidewalks, and adding lighting, benches, and well-placed garbage cans. A priority should be incorporating greenery throughout streets, by adding a diversity of trees, planters, and landscaping. An important aspect brought up in discussions is perceived safety in areas where visibility is obstructed. Participants suggested creating prominent, well-lit gathering spaces along main streets that are free from visual obstructions and irregular setbacks.



## **Mobility - Getting Around**

### *Incentivize public transit use by increasing service and prioritizing end-to-end safety*

Many residents expressed optimism that the Finch West LRT will reduce congestion on Finch West, and will improve connectivity to other neighborhoods, but expressed that appropriate funding and planning should be invested in other transportation improvements within Jane Finch. Improvements to local bus routes should consider end-to-end safety for trips between residential streets across the study area to LRT stations. Some participants questioned whether planned transit improvements along Jane Street are based on accurate projections for future development. Residents noted that all transportation improvements should be scaled with development within Jane Finch, and consider projected development in adjacent areas, such as Downsview, which will impact traffic in Jane Finch.

Discussing public transportation, many residents expressed support for increasing bus frequency, increasing the number of bus stops, and implementing dedicated bus lanes on Jane Street. Residents expressed strong concern that all of the options for the RapidTO: Jane Street project propose bus stop removals, and firmly opposed bus stop removals even if they increase overall travel times. Residents were especially opposed to removing bus stops near medical and community centers.

Increasing the distance between homes and bus stops is a noted safety concern, and discourages users from choosing public transportation. Many residents also emphasized the intersection between a safe, well-designed public realm and residents' willingness to choose public transportation and active transportation options over driving a car. Participants discussed potential improvements to waiting areas, including adding lamp posts, improving seating and building enclosed bus shelters.

### *Implement traffic calming measures and prioritize accessibility for people with disabilities to improve the pedestrian experience*

Pedestrian improvements were a key theme in discussions. Participants suggested adding more crosswalks, especially around transit stops to discourage mid-block crossings. Many residents expressed support for traffic calming measures, including narrowing intersections, adding speed bumps, adding green islands, and adding red light cameras to discourage speeding and car racing. Residents were particularly concerned about safety for kids walking to schools and prioritized improvements to the pedestrian network between schools and all residential areas. Future developments and street improvements should strongly consider the impact of traffic and congestion on safety around schools. Accessibility on streets is also a key concern, and participants noted that sidewalks should be widened so that at least two people in mobility devices may pass one another. Participants noted that additional engagement on interventions to improve accessibility for pedestrians with disabilities should be undertaken where necessary, including by RapidTO: Jane Street and major landowners developing large sites.

### *Invest in a comprehensive strategy to incentivize cycling for all types of users*

Most participants who discussed cycling were interested in cycling as a transportation method, but were concerned about the safety risks and expressed that they would only be willing to use dedicated bike lanes that are maintained year-round with physical barriers, such as curbs and planters. Residents expressed concerns that unprotected bike lanes would not be respected by motorists, and that bike lanes would not be cleared of snow in the winter. Many residents who expressed that they were not interested in cycling still supported implementing dedicated bike lanes. Residents noted that cyclists using the sidewalk is a common safety hazard for pedestrians, and that creating bike lanes would have a secondary benefit as a buffer between sidewalks and busy car traffic, improving the pedestrian experience. Many expressed support for bike paths along recreational trails. A few participants were opposed to bike lanes along main roads such as Jane street, based on the concern that too few residents would use them.

Participants expressed strong support for adding Bike Share Toronto stations across the study area, prioritizing locations near recreational trails, and asked that Bike Share consider accessibility improvements to the Bike Share model so that it is more useful for residents in the inner suburbs. For example, expanding payment options beyond credit cards because many residents do not use credit cards, increasing the 30 minute timeline to two hours, and adding more electric bikes. Bike Share should partner with City divisions and community agency partners such as the CultureLink Bike Hub to take a more comprehensive approach to encouraging bike use overall. For example, by supporting educational campaigns on cycling, funding in-person demonstrations, and requiring secure bike parking in residential developments. Some participants noted that more services and amenities related to cycling should be available in the community, including bike maintenance and repair facilities.

#### *Ensure safe and accessible streets during construction*

Residents expressed the importance of moving around the community with ease and comfort, especially during construction. Many participants shared safety concerns about construction fencing, active freight transport corridors, and poor infrastructure maintenance as major persistent barriers to safety and mobility. Maintaining and enhancing pedestrian connections to important locations like shops and bus/LRT stops is crucial throughout construction, especially for areas with long-term redevelopment plans like the mall sites.

### **Parks and Public Spaces**

#### *Create a vibrant, expanded gathering space on the Jane Finch Mall site*

Community members highlighted the importance of safe, vibrant, and welcoming indoor and outdoor spaces, and extensively discussed potential improvements and additions to parks and public spaces. Many people highlighted the importance of Corner Commons, located at the northwest corner of the Jane Finch Mall site, as a vital and vibrant gathering space. Many participants suggested retaining a similar community space through the redevelopment of the Jane Finch Mall site. Several residents pointed out that the proximity to car traffic and Finch LRT construction contributes to excessive noise levels at Corner Commons and detracts from the visual appeal. Additionally, a few parents expressed concerns about the lack of physical barriers protecting the site from Finch Avenue and the Jane Finch Mall parking lot. A future design should be protected from the elements so that it may be used ear-round, and should be easily accessed yet buffered from the main roads with physical barriers and landscaping

A key strategy for animating parks is to support community gardening and allotment gardening spaces in parks and other publicly accessible spaces. Participants highlighted the many roles of food growing opportunities as an urban design feature, as a strategy to directly address food insecurity through food production, as an educational tool, and as an expression of food sovereignty. Residents suggested that community gardens could also host hens and beehives for local production and as an educational tool.

Many residents also expressed a strong desire for festivals, sports events, outdoor movies, farmers markets, artisan markets, and live music in public spaces.

*Preserve and maintain the Black Creek Parklands, and invest in safety, and accessibility features*

The Black Creek Parklands are an important community feature, but are not experienced equally across the community. Participants discussed the need to recognize the Indigenous heritage value of Black Creek, make necessary accessibility and safety improvements along the trails, including lighting improvements, washrooms, seating, and consider educational signage, including information about plantings, species, and potential harm to pets.

Residents expressed safety concerns about violence, and shootings in the community, and a few parents mentioned that they are unwilling to allow their children to go into the Black Creek Parklands. While some participants suggested features to make the Parklands feel safer, such as improving lighting, maximizing visibility in design, and adding emergency help buttons, they acknowledged that safety and violence are complicated and interconnected with a range of other social issues.

*Review strategies to ensure appropriate maintenance of parks and public spaces*

Many residents expressed that frequent maintenance of parks and public spaces should be a priority. Residents mentioned preventative measures to reduce pigeon droppings, clear snow, clean graffiti, address road damage, remove litter from parks, and more frequently update and maintain amenities. Reviewing strategies to ensure the long-term upkeep of amenities and greenspaces to ensure their proper use and functionality was outside the scope of this project, but the City should undertake a strategic review of local and City-wide strategies to ensure appropriate maintenance of parks and public spaces.

## **Resources, Partnerships and Governance**

*Consider high-level visions for the future and work towards achieving them through practical actions*

Residents shared that creating big and clear visions for the future is an important starting point for gathering community support around the various community development and land use themes. These visions, based on those drafted in Phase 1, should guide all actions to ensure themes are cohesive and holistic. Residents also noted the importance of evaluation criteria and strong accountability strategies, beginning by writing how actions will be achieved and including specific resourcing asks and opportunities to implement, monitor, and evaluate actions in the community development plan.

*Implement community governance structures in all planning processes*

Many residents expressed the need to implement community governance structures early in all planning processes, including for private developments, Toronto Community Housing Revitalization projects, and community organizations starting projects on public lands. Many residents voiced demands to be involved in development projects from an early stage, including providing input on safety, aesthetics, and affordability. Landowners and planning applicants were urged to consult the community repeatedly throughout their development proposals. There is a strong interest in creating new, progressive, and democratic governance structures to promote community benefits across a variety of themes, especially housing, economic opportunities, arts and culture, and food justice. Deeper conversations on developing and resourcing appropriate community governance structures should be a priority in Phase 3 and in the implementation of the Community Development Plan.



## **Social Development**

### *Support and expand existing food growing and distribution initiatives*

Community members highlighted the benefits of established food growing initiatives within and beyond Jane Finch. These initiatives serve multiple purposes, including beautifying and activating parks and public spaces, functioning as educational tools, contributing to food sovereignty, and creating green jobs and volunteer opportunities for youth. However, some noted that food growing initiatives often fail before becoming well-established because of lack of interest, weak governance structures, and insufficient resources. In particular, participants noted the need for core funding, including funding for full-time staff, access to meeting spaces to plan and organize, and access to community kitchens to process produce.

### *Work towards food sovereignty by investing in local community food growing initiatives, including a Jane Finch community food land trust*

To create effective new community food growing and distribution initiatives, one strategy is to form partnerships with strong resourcing strategies between public institutions, such as schools, community centers, and libraries, and community organizations and agencies to create community gardens and well-funded, practical educational programming around food growing. Black Creek Community Farm was recognized as a community asset that could partner with and offer guidance to other organizations.

Recognizing the challenges of organizing community gardens on privately owned land, several community members have sought strategies to fund and establish a community food land trust in Jane Finch. A trust would be stewarded by a community-run non-profit, and land would be held permanently for community benefit as a food-growing space. One avenue for establishing a community food land trust is through the Black Food Sovereignty Plan Community Land Trust pilot project, though participants expressed frustration at the slow implementation timeline for the pilot project, and lack of transparency around available funding and the specific terms of the pilot project. Seeking more detail on the pilot project and facilitating deeper discussion on funding and establishing a community food land trust through other avenues should be a priority for both Phase 3 and the implementation of the Community Development Plan.

### *Consider the multifaceted roles of grassroots groups and community agencies*

Conversations focused on the many roles that grassroots groups and community agencies play in supporting equity-deserving groups in Jane Finch. Several recommendations emerged, including the need for more reliable core funding from both the City and charitable organizations. There was also an emphasis on enhancing collaboration between service and program providers, as well as addressing accessibility concerns for people encountering barriers to access. A key focus was prioritizing affordable childcare in the short term. Participants noted that the lack of available childcare prevents parents from pursuing economically empowering opportunities.


### *Fund community-led programs and services to address community safety and well-being*

Concerns related to community safety and wellbeing were raised in Phase 2. Participants discussed an epidemic of grief in Jane-Finch, and noted that residents lack effective coping mechanisms to deal with the realities of loss and violence in the community. Participants emphasized the need for reliable core funding to deliver programming, services, counselling, and support groups. These initiatives should be staffed and organized by local community organizers. Participants were especially concerned about safety and mental health for young people, and stressed the importance of early outreach and engaging in difficult and emotional discussion topics with children and youth. Some participants recommended creating partnerships between community organizations and schools to share education on violence prevention and mental health services in the community. By drawing support directly into schools, more children and youth would have access to vital programming and services.

*Preserve and expand affordable, inclusive, and accessible spaces for community organizations to deliver programs and services*

Participants stressed the significance of safe and affordable spaces for programs and services to be delivered, and emphasized the importance of access to various programs and support services. Some existing safe and accessible community spaces include the Jane/Finch Centre's The Spot at Yorkgate Mall, Corner Commons, Promoting Education and Community Health, schools, community centres, and libraries. Participants also highlighted that parks and public spaces can be used for meeting and organizing if they are appropriately designed to feel like intentional gathering spaces. When designing community spaces, considerations should be made to ensure that they are safe, inclusive, and accessible for all residents. Participants noted that community spaces can often be exclusive for certain groups, including unhoused residents, LGBTQ+ people, and people with visible and invisible disabilities. In the process of designing new spaces, targeted consultation should be done with members of these identified groups to develop specific strategies for making safe, inclusive, and accessible community spaces.





## 5. ENGAGEMENT REFLECTIONS

### 5.1 What Went Well

#### *Hiring community and youth facilitators*

Recognizing local expertise by hiring community facilitators, including youth facilitators in youth spaces, made it easier to connect and outreach with residents. Community facilitators and Community Advisory Committee members also provided guidance on which community events and programming dates would be most effective for information and feedback sessions. This allowed sessions to reach more residents and a greater breadth of demographic groups. In particular, ensuring comfortable and meaningful youth participation was a core priority in our engagement process. Targeted community engagement was held in youth spaces, facilitators collaborated with youth organizations and programs, and youth leaders were hired to facilitate engagement sessions, to lead cultural heritage interviews, and to provide reflections.

#### *Using both in-person and virtual techniques to maximize engagement*

By using a variety of in-person and virtual engagement techniques, we heard a wealth of feedback from a diversity of residents, and reduced barriers to access for both people who are unable to attend events in-person and for people who are unable to participate online. We found that in-person engagement events were most effective at

reaching many people at once and building lasting relationships with participants. We also found that at in-person engagement events participants had richer dialogues with one another, and were open to having more broad-ranging conversations with facilitators, covering a wider breadth of topics than were covered in virtual events. Many of our in-person engagement events were hosted at the Jane Finch Mall and the Yorkgate Mall, and benefitted from the central location and high foot traffic. We found that virtual events were more effective for convening monthly and quarterly committees and tables. Asynchronous engagement in the form of surveys and a virtual platform to receive online comments on open house materials provided opportunities for many residents to share feedback over longer periods of time, and allowed displaced residents to participate. Some participants suggested using more technology to publicize in-person and virtual engagement dates and surveys, and using a text message update system for project updates.

#### *Community Advisory Committee*

Originally conceived to inform the community engagement process, the Community Advisory Committee assumed several other roles throughout Phase 2. In addition to its main role as an advisory board over the engagement process, it provided frequent and invaluable feedback on the content of materials presented to the public through the engagement process.

Further, the committee acted as a sounding board for policy development, City initiatives, private developments, and community organizations.



The presenters who shared their projects with the committee benefitted from the opportunity to hear from an existing table with diverse perspectives and receive valuable feedback from members. It is important to preserve these functions of the Community Advisory Committee moving forward in Phase 3 and, in some form, beyond.

#### *Collaboration with City staff*

Through the course of partnership with the City of Toronto, the Jane/Finch Centre has collaborated effectively with a core City staff team through bi-weekly meetings, and through ad-hoc meetings with additional City staff from other units and departments. Through Phase 2 engagement, City staff members have become more familiar with and connected with resident leaders and a breadth of community initiatives and projects. For example, collaboration between City staff and community organizations progressed work on local hiring efforts, administering arts grants, and aspects of the Jane Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts. This more holistic, collaborative environment has been productive and greatly beneficial to community work within and transcending the Jane Finch Initiative.

## **5.2 Areas for Improvement and Next Steps**

#### *Equitable representation in the engagement process*

Although efforts were made to reach as many residents and demographic groups as possible,

some identified groups were underrepresented in the engagement process. Early in Phase 2, the Community Advisory Committee advised facilitators to prioritize equity and inclusion and reach underrepresented groups through targeted engagement with single parents, business owners, immigrants, 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, healthcare providers, people with disabilities, religious leaders, teachers and children. As the facilitation team lacked pre-existing outreach networks and relationships for some of the identified groups, the outreach process for targeted engagement was challenging, and we received a low response rate. In particular, our consultation with healthcare providers, children, and teachers was insufficient. Greater efforts should be made to form relationships with local schools and healthcare institutions in future engagement processes to enable engagement with healthcare providers, children, and teachers.

The expanded roles of the Community Advisory Committee were instrumental to the success in Phase 2, and we recognize the importance of preserving all of these emergent functions as new and more permanent community governance structures replace the role of the Community Advisory Committee as the development of the Jane Finch Initiative's two plans concludes and the implementation phase begins. However, when co-creating future governance structures with community members, it is essential to articulate the distinct roles and responsibilities and ensure that participants are appropriately selected, well-informed, and fairly compensated. While the Committee functioned as an advisory group, members

expressed a clear desire for it to act as an accountability mechanism for City initiatives, private developments, and community organizations. As we collaboratively develop governance structures for the Community Advisory Committee and for a Community Partnership Circle moving forward, it is important to consider strategies to foster transparency and shared responsibility.

By establishing longer term schedules with regular, direct touchpoints, we can create a sense of community accountability and develop a visible thread of members' impact.

#### *Collaboration with City staff*

Misaligned timelines between City divisions led to variations in how different themes and actions were developed. Since many aspects of the Jane Finch Initiative are intersectional and interdivisional, it would be helpful to ensure that engagement on all themes follow similar timelines. Additionally, some materials prepared by City divisions for engagement events lacked sufficient depth and detail for community engagement sessions. Limited or underdeveloped materials sometimes delayed community engagement sessions or affected the richness and quality of engagement sessions, particularly around the Deep Dialogue series. Another challenge to completing engagement activities on time was navigating the divisional approvals process. When seeking approvals for formal cultural heritage consent forms and related accessibility accommodations, slow response times made it challenging to complete engagement activities according to planned timelines.

### *Coordinating consultant and engagement teams*

We also experienced some challenges due to lacking collaboration structures between the Jane/Finch Centre, other consultant and engagement teams working on the Jane Finch Initiative, and the City. The delay in receiving outcomes from activities hosted by other consultant and engagement teams caused repetitive conversations with the public on several themes, held us back from building upon feedback from events that other teams held in parallel with our own, and represented missed opportunities for shared learnings and perspectives across the work. The absence of Indigenous perspectives in our consultation process was notable, as Indigenous consultation was conducted separately from the Jane/Finch Centre's engagement activities.

Because our timelines and processes were not coordinated with the Indigenous consultation process, there was a missed opportunity to incorporate Indigenous histories, values, and perspectives across our engagement efforts. Recognizing the intersectionality of planning and community development themes, we acknowledge the ongoing need for more collaborative approaches in planning processes moving forward.

Further, external facilitators were often unable to convey detailed and updated information on other facets of the engagement process to participants. In the future, individual contracts and timelines with consultants and engagement teams should be coordinated at a high level to prioritize better collaboration and information sharing across teams.

### *Next steps*

The Jane Finch Initiative seeks to address urgent community needs across a wide breadth of land use and community development themes. As residents contend with the impacts of gentrification and displacement, and prepare for the Jane Finch neighbourhood to undergo significant changes and development, it is critical that Phase 3 of the Jane Finch Initiative continues in the same spirit of collaboration it began with.

In the coming years, successful implementation of the community development plan and the updated land use planning framework will rely on continued collaboration between residents, community organizations, landowners, and City divisions.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Urban Minds Engagement Summary

As part of the Jane Finch Initiative, Urban Minds led an engagement process to focus on facilitating discussion and gathering feedback specifically from youth within the community.

Urban Minds recruited six Youth Ambassadors between the ages of 16 to 25 who live and/or go to school in the Jane Finch area to help with 8 youth engagement events for the Jane Finch Initiative. It was important to recruit local youth who were knowledgeable about their own community and easily approachable to effectively gather feedback from their peers.

Each Youth Ambassador received training from Urban Minds and facilitated two 3-hour pop-up events throughout November and December 2022. The pop-ups were focused on feedback on the themes of Greening (parks, public realm, and open spaces), Moving (walking, cycling, or taking transit), and Building (how new development will complement the neighbourhood). The pop-up events featured a large printed map of the Jane Finch area displayed on a table along with sticky notes, markers, dot stickers, and pipe cleaners to collect youth's feedback for the Jane Finch Initiative. The pop-up booth was set up in places where community members, particularly high school students, would typically go, pass through, or gather in order to capture thoughts from those who might not have known about the initiative and would not have otherwise participated. Below is a list of the pop-up events:

- November 14 Westview Centennial Secondary School
- November 16 The Spot Youth Centre (Yorkgate Mall)
- November 19 Jane Finch Mall
- November 24 Driftwood Community Recreation Centre
- November 30 The Spot Youth Centre (Yorkgate Mall)
- December 3 Jane Finch Mall
- December 8 Oakdale Community Centre

The Youth Ambassadors also facilitated discussions with their peers at the Idea Jam & Pizza Party on February 12, 2023. This event featured multiple forms of engagement, including a welcome survey, collective mapping, and vision boarding. Participants were tasked with identifying ways to create a safer, more accessible, and youth-friendly neighbourhood for young people who live, work, study, and play in the Jane Finch area.

Below is a summary of key themes that were heard throughout the engagement events:

- Larger green spaces to provide additional recreation space for youth
- Repair sidewalks and add new sidewalks to improve accessibility and pedestrian safety
- Improve lighting to address concerns of pedestrian safety, particularly at night
- Improve both transit and bike networks as these are main forms of transportation for high school students (eg. improve frequency of bus service, expand network of bike trails)
- More public art that reflects the community
- Greater variety of retail and restaurants, including affordable options
- Provide a mix of housing options from low-rise buildings like townhouses to mixed-use high rise buildings that addresses concerns around homelessness and housing affordability
- Preserve youth-focused spaces (eg. community centres, high schools)

## Appendix B: Information on Innovation Seven Engagement

Innovation Seven coordinated outreach to and input from Treaty Holders and original caretakers of the area including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation, and the Huron-Wendat First Nation. Innovation Seven is also supporting the City in engaging with agencies that serve Indigenous residents and communities, primarily through the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC). Further outreach is planned to connect with Indigenous residents from Black Creek and Glenfield-Jane Heights. A report on Innovation Seven's engagement process will be available on the Jane Finch Initiative [website](#).

## Appendix C: Timeline of Consultation Events

March 2022

- March 29th: CAC Meeting - Municipal Decision Making Process and Deputing at Committee (Virtual)

April 2022

- April 15th to April 22nd: CAC Ideas Report Review Period (Virtual)

May 2022

- May 24th: CAC Meeting - Update Downsview, Ideas Report, Phase 1 Engagement Report, Phase 2 Engagement Process (Virtual)

June 2022

- June 21st: CAC Meeting - Development Approval Process, CAC Meeting Model, Inclusive Economies, Arts and Culture, Outreach Approaches (Virtual)
- June 22nd: Inclusive Economic Development Roundtable Meeting (Virtual)
- June 24th: Information and Feedback Session (In-person at Corner Commons)
- June 29th: Artist Collective Meeting (Virtual)

July 2022

- July 19th: CAC Meeting - Jane Street Road Safety Review, Community Music Schools of Toronto (Virtual)
- July 21st: Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at Driftwood Community Recreation Centre)
- July 26th: Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at at Oakdale Community Recreation Centre)

August 2022

- August 9th: Arts and Culture Public Forum (Virtual)
- August 16th: CAC Group Walk (In-Person, Multiple locations)
- August 24th: Pop-up Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at The Spot in Yorkgate Mall)
- August 30th: CAC Virtual Group Walk (Virtual)

September 2022

- September 14th: Pop-up Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at Corner Commons)
- September 20th: CAC Meeting - Community Benefits Framework, JFM+, Local Hiring (Virtual)
- September 27th: Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at The Spot at Yorkgate Mall)

October 2022

- October 15th: Pop-up Information and Feedback Session at Community Classic Event (In-Person at Ballers Union)
- October 18th: CAC Meeting - Community Benefits Framework, Active Transportation (Virtual)
- October 20th: Engagement with Community Music Schools of Toronto (In-Person at 127 Eddystone Avenue)
- October 20th to October 28th: Survey on Gaps and Opportunities in Arts Programming (Virtual)

## November 2022

- November 9th: Arts and Culture Fundraising Workshop (In-Person at York U-TD Community Engagement Centre at the Yorkgate Mall )
- November 15th: CAC Meeting - Youth Engagement Process, Deep Dialogues Engagement Process (Virtual)

## December 2022

- December 7th: Inclusive Economic Opportunities Roundtable Meeting (Virtual)
- December 14th: Inclusive Economic Opportunities Roundtable Meeting (Virtual)
- December 20th: CAC Meeting - Ravine Signage Improvements, Park Perceptions, Racialized Realities Research, Heritage Engagement Process (Virtual)

## January 2023

- January 17th: CAC Meeting - Emerging Strategies on Greening, Moving, and Building (Virtual)

## February 2023

- February 21st: CAC Meeting - JFM+, March 2023 Engagement Events, Jane Street Road Safety Review, CAC Roundtable (Virtual)

## March 2023

- March 7th: Artists' Collective Meeting (Virtual)
- March 9th: Deep Dialogues Session 1 (Virtual)
- March 16th: Deep Dialogues Session 2 (Virtual)
- March 21st: CAC Meeting - Jane Street Road Safety Review, RapidTO: Jane Street, Planning Open House Update (Virtual)
- March 23rd: Deep Dialogues Session 3 (Virtual)
- March 25th: Planning Open House (In-Person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- March 28th: Planning Open House (Virtual)
- March 20th to May 1st, 2023: Commenting Period - Open House Materials (Virtual)

## April 2023

- April 17th: Jane Finch Housing Coalition Meeting (Virtual)
- April 18th: CAC Meeting - Jane/Finch Housing Coalition, Community Benefits Framework, Firgrove-Grassways Revitalization (Virtual)
- April 20th: Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at the Jane Finch Mall)
- April 24th: Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at the Yorkgate Mall)

## May 2023

- May 5th, 2023: Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at the Yorkgate Mall)
- May 16th: CAC Meeting - Housing Policy Overview, Tower Renewal, Cultural Heritage (Virtual)
- May 10th to July 18th: Cultural Heritage Interviews (Virtual)

## June 2023

- June 20th: Inclusive Economic Roundtable Meeting (Virtual)
- June 20th: CAC Meeting -Yorkgate Mall Redevelopment Proposal, Community Development Plan Validation, and Design Review Panel (Virtual)
- June 28th: Deep Dialogue Session 4 (In-Person at the Driftwood Community Recreation Centre)

## July 2023

- July 6th: Pop-up Information and Feedback Session (In-Person at Corner Commons and the Jane Finch Mall)
- July 18th: CAC Meeting - Indigenous Engagement Update, JFM+ Update (Virtual)

## August 2023

- August 15th: CAC Meeting - Jane Finch Hub and Centre for the Arts and Community Partnership Circle (Virtual)



Corner Commons

Corner Commons