

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting

6:00-8:00pm, March 19th, 2024

OVERVIEW

On March 19th, 2023, a final Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was hosted by the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre (JFC) with support from the City of Toronto from 6:00-8:00pm. 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:

- Acknowledge the role that Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members have played in the Jane Finch Initiative engagement process.
- Discuss the transition from the CAC to the Community Partnership Circle (CPC)

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes a summary of key themes in the feedback collected from the large group and small group discussions during the Zoom meeting, as well as a full record of comments received by topic.

Key Themes

- Several members expressed that the shift from the CAC to the CPC lacks clear guidance for existing members. Members suggested involving a core group of CAC members in forming the CPC for continuity. Some also felt the CAC was ending abruptly and wished more information on the transition process was shared earlier.
- Members shared a strong desire to remain engaged in CDP implementation. They emphasized the importance of ongoing involvement and would like to be involved in determining the functions, representation, and governance structure of the Residents' Leadership Circle, including selecting the membership.
- Members reiterated that it is important for residents on the CPC to have at least the following roles: advisory to the City and its agencies, advisory to development applicants, ambassador/ co-facilitation, decision making, and evaluation and monitoring.
- Several members noted that there are many ongoing concerns, including community safety, confusion around major development projects, and displacement of small businesses.
- Members reflected on the engagement strategies and roles of the CAC. They noted that the diverse engagement methods at in-person and virtual engagements were appreciated, and the opportunity to provide feedback and have open dialogues with

City agencies and development applicants was important. A few people noted that there were some missed opportunities to leverage CAC members' networks in outreach and engagement processes.

- Members agreed that the CAC has been a unique group of advocates and community leaders. Most members felt that their participation in the CAC was worthwhile and that they were able to influence decision making, especially on the recommended Secondary Plan and Community Development Plan. Members valued the open dialogue and direct relationships built with City and Jane Finch Centre staff and hope that these continue to be reinforced in the CDP implementation process.

Post-meeting update: The City and the Jane Finch Centre will convene transition meetings with CAC members wishing to participate in the Community Partnership Circle to support continuity of involvement.

Breakout Room Comments

Feedback on Community Advisory Committee Transition and Community Partnership Circle:

- The transition from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Community Partnership Circle (CPC) has lacked clear next steps for existing CAC members, so the process feels incomplete.
- Transitioning to a CPC offers more opportunities for community steering, which is good. However, there's a gap between the end of the CAC and the start of the CPC. Recommendation to engage a skeleton group of CAC members in forming the CPC to facilitate periodic check-ins with the City for feedback and advice.
- Residents do not want to be excluded from the project and emphasized their desire to continue contributing as stakeholders.
- Ending the CAC prematurely feels abrupt, given ongoing development in the community and a history of organizations leaving after receiving feedback.
- While broader resident involvement in the CPC is crucial, there should be a defined role for the CAC to remain engaged.
- Some CAC members wish to continue working together regardless of their involvement in the City's process, and without the need for honoraria.

Reflections on Community Advisory Committee Experience:

- It was good that the CAC was engaged in diverse ways, including the "dot-mocracy" exercise in person, having ambassador roles in public events, completing surveys, and the ability to provide specific feedback on google sheets and directly on actions.
- Engagement with city agencies had tangible results, and the RapidTO CAC meeting stands out as particularly influential.

- Having connections to City staff and direct presentations from development applicants made members to be well-informed, and address misinformation outside of the community advisory committee, such as when misinformation about the Jane Finch Mall redevelopment was being shared widely on social media.
- There were some missed opportunities to leverage CAC members' networks and community relationships.
- Advisory roles were limiting at times. Residents hoped to influence decision making more directly.

Community Partnership Circle and Residents' Leadership Circle:

- Prioritize community involvement from the project's inception and emphasize advisory roles and decision-making authority from an early stage.
- Consider what it would mean in practice for a Residents' Leadership Circle to function as a steering committee. How can residents take on more dynamic, action-oriented roles?
- Ensure accessibility for all, including religious groups and non-English speakers, throughout the Community Development Plan (CDP) implementation. At an early stage, we should identify which groups were under-engaged in JFI and ensure that they are involved in the CPC.
- Use plain language and diverse learning tools to engage residents effectively. One role of residents in the CPC could be to review materials and ensure that they are accessible and readable.
- Maintain a diverse and representative committee membership for long-term planning horizons.
- Empower youth involvement in the CPC with additional support and clear communication channels. To cultivate a comfortable and empowering environment, it is important for the facilitator to have a strong relationship with youth on the Circle.
- Retain the CAC while considering its integration into the CPC and extending invitations to existing members.
- Hold developers accountable for effective communication and considerate feedback incorporation.
- Ensure aligned projects continue within the CDP implementation. Presenters who attended CAC meetings should be encouraged to return to the CPC, to create a sense of ongoing community accountability and to demonstrate how resident feedback has influenced practice.

Additional Comments:

- Prioritize staff continuity for effective project continuity. It has been important to have City staff continually attending meetings. The same staff members should continue to

be involved. Having opportunities for dialogue with the councillor and developers was also important.

- Address community concerns such as lighting for nighttime safety and park upgrades.
- Consider impacts on small businesses during development.
- Replicate effective communication tools like the information kiosk.
- Address concerns about incomplete development processes and potential impacts on existing businesses.
- Consider visual aids like billboards to illustrate development changes.
- Provide informative handouts for community members at development sites.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

6:00 Participants Join
6:05 Welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introductions, land acknowledgement, agenda [JFC]
6:10 City Planning Update
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 6:10 - 6:15 City Planning Update [CoT]
6:15 CDP Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 6:15 - 6:30 CDP Team Presentation [CoT]● 6:30 - 6:40 Update on outcomes of Community Partnership Circle discussions thus far [JFC]● 6:45 - 7:05, 7:10 - 7:30 Breakout room discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Breakout room 1: CPC Discussion○ Breakout room 2: CAC Reflections
7:30 Closing Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Next steps & things to look out for [JFC]<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Co-facilitation roles in upcoming engagement○ CDP at City Council March 20th○ Secondary Plan at EYCC June 3rd● Final thank you [JFC]
Attendees: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 2 Jane Finch Centre staff: Denelle Carvalho, Clara Stewart-Roberton● 3 City of Toronto staff: Janvere Lyder, Zahra Joseph-Wilson, Jedrick So● 11 Community Advisory Committee members: Maize Blanchard, William Ballard, Devayani Chitnis, Susel Munoz, Veronica Eastman, Christine Le, Troy Budhu, Sharon Taylor, Kemisha Thomas, Kayzie Sutton, Mena Hervieux.

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**.