

Jane Finch Initiative: Community Advisory Committee Meeting

6:00-8:00pm, September 19th, 2023

OVERVIEW

On September 19th, 2023, a Jane Finch Initiative Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was hosted by the Jane Finch Community and Family (JFCF) Centre with support from the City of Toronto. This consultation is part of the [Jane Finch Initiative's](#) comprehensive engagement process and it was held online over Zoom. The agenda and project background can be viewed in the appendices.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Reflect on the role, the successes and the challenges of the Jane Finch Initiative CAC.
- Discuss a Community Partnership Circle model.

WHAT WE HEARD

This section includes the summaries of the feedback collected from the large group and small group discussions during the Zoom meeting. A full record of feedback received is available in Appendix C.

Key Themes

- Reflections on members' experiences of the CAC
 - A regular schedule for check-ins and reflections should be established.
 - Sharing comparative examples, case studies, and multiple options wherever possible can help CAC members provide more informed feedback and advice.
 - Members expressed that the CAC has taken a relatively passive role, acting as a sounding board for presenters.
 - Members expressed a preference for a more active, decision-making role in the CAC and future committees.
- The role of residents in implementing the Community Development Plan actions
 - Residents can take on multiple roles, including supporting advocacy, acting as an intermediary to inform the broader community of new initiatives, and working collaboratively with the City and other partners to develop and implement actions.
 - For residents to take on new responsibilities, training and capacity building opportunities should be provided by the City.

- The role of residents in a Community Partnership Circle
 - Residents should be involved in the early development of the governance model for the partnership circle
 - Residents can provide feedback on development applications, and can provide input on how a community benefits charge is applied.
 - Members expressed a desire for a more active, collaborative decision-making role in the partnership circle. Members expressed interest in participatory planning and open book management techniques.
 - Residents may take on a variety of roles in the partnership circle, including supporting outreach, advocacy, and facilitation.
- Representation and inclusion in a Community Partnership Circle
 - Members suggested various advocacy and service community organizations who may participate directly on the Community Partnership Circle, or act as intermediaries for outreach with difficult-to-reach individuals.
 - Small business owners should be represented.
 - Some groups that are often underrepresented in city-building, including youth, seniors, 2SLGBTQ+ community members, newcomers, people with disabilities, and unhoused people should be included.
 - Educational organizations and service organizations should be included

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

6:00 Participants join
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome, introductions, and land acknowledgement [Denelle]
6:15 CDP Update and Community Partnership Circle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation on the Community Development Plan draft actions and a Community Partnership Circle model. Staff shared a summary of the Community Development Plan draft actions and detailed actions on resources, partnerships, and engagement structures. Staff presented a proposed composition of the Community Partnership Circle, including a draft engagement structure [CoT staff] ● Group discussion [All] ● Breakout rooms, small group discussion [All] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The role of residents in implementing the Community Development Plan actions ○ The role of residents in a Community Partnership Circle ○ Representation and inclusion in a Community Partnership Circle
7:50 Closing notes

Attendees:

- 1 Jane/Finch Centre staff: Denelle Carvalho
- 4 City of Toronto staff: John Smith, Dan Rosen, Jedrick So, Zahra Joseph Wilson
- 14 CAC members: William Lopez, William Ballard, Maize Blanchard, Devayani Chitnis, Maria, Christine Le, Terry Knox, Sharon Taylor, Mena Hervieux, Edna Cofles Gualtero, Allan Ramsarran, Troy Budhu, Kemisha Thomas, Veronica Eastman

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**.

APPENDIX C: RECORD OF ENGAGEMENT

Group discussion: Reflections on the Community Advisory Committee

- The organizers, and particularly the Jane Finch Centre team, have been responsive to change, and have shown a willingness to improve when we do these check-ins. My suggestion is to establish a regular cadence and schedule for these check-ins and reflections to ensure that we are consistently improving.
- When CAC members are asked to provide feedback on projects and initiatives, it would be helpful for presenters to share multiple examples and case studies to help empower CAC members to provide informed feedback.

- It feels like the CAC's role has primarily been a sounding board. We should move away from the language of residents participating in a process, and think about how residents can help steer a process, because these things have the most significant consequences to us. The original idea of this group was for it to be a steering committee, but we pitched an advisory committee because we thought a steering committee would not be approved. The CAC doesn't have to be a steering committee, but we should move in that direction so that residents have a real say in the community.
- As a sounding board, it's good that groups can come and engage residents and get a checkbox in their own minds, but there needs to be a level of accountability where they come back and listen to the work, listen to what people say.
- I find the CAC has been semi-passive. Active in the sense of providing feedback in meetings, but otherwise passive. If we are to be more effective in terms of our roles and participation, it would be good to have some training on these things and refreshers on how the City works. This would also be a way to offer transferable skills for members.
 - Response from City staff: It sounds like the Community Partnership Circle (CPC) should be more active, but to reach this point there needs to be an investment in capacity building and empowerment. Future members of a CPC could be supported, trained, and compensated to take on this kind of a role.
- Having some sort of fact-checking mechanism in place would also be helpful, so residents can verify the accuracy of what is being presented and prevent potential manipulation. I know it would be difficult to implement something like this, but it would add transparency to presentations and discussions.
 - Response from City Staff: this could be a part of the process of vetting information. You often see examples where technically true information is presented in manipulative or misleading ways. Perhaps it's about developing an open-book approach
- Promoting long-term thinking and visioning is crucial. Many people tend to focus on immediate issues, but we need to encourage members to consider long-term visions.

Group Discussion: Community Partnership Circle Model

- There is potential for an uncomfortable power dynamic between residents, nonprofits, and business industry representatives in the Community Advisory Committee. It is important to make sure capacity building and information sharing is a part of the process, so that all participants can make informed decisions together. Showing multiple case studies, examples, and tradeoffs could be useful strategies
 - Response from City staff: Yes, we should have a process that is resident centered. We can begin by researching different approaches to community partnerships, forming recommendations, and ensuring that Community Partnership Circle members are at the centre of this.
- Rather than finding one perfect solution or process, we can try to pilot a bunch of feasible solutions on a small scale. The Partnership Circle could be an opportunity to try innovative new governance models

- Mount Dennis often has big community meetings with food and stuff like that. Have you looked at examples or learnings from there?
 - Response from City staff: Yes, Mount Dennis has a great history of utilizing their community gathering spaces. There are lots of learnings from there, lots of learnings from Parkdale, Regent Park, Thorncliffe and Flemingdon have also had different engagement strategies. It is important to find key principles and practices that promote inclusivity and community building.

Comments on residents' role in implementing Community Development Plan actions

- Residents need strong mentorship roles, and youth should be actively engaged in city building
- Prioritize safety and community well-being.
- Address needs of the large senior population, including long-term care homes, healthcare, accessibility, and disability needs.
- Improve accessibility for sharing information.
- Ensure that there are opportunities for seniors and youth to be engaged, while recognizing that excessive consultation can lead to community burnout.
- Empower the community's voice regarding development.
- Encourage residents to take a lead role while maintaining engagement.
- Advocate for increased Indigenous representation.
- Acknowledge the CAC's advocacy role in supporting the community and preventing resident displacement, and create space for resident advocacy in the Community Partnership Circle
- Work on reducing the negative stigma associated with Jane-Finch.
- Explore strategies for engaging all community members, including people who may be apathetic or uninterested.
- Consider large gatherings for effective information sharing.
- Recognize the CAC's role in providing residents with a voice in shaping the future.
- Promote capacity building.
- The Community Partnership Circle can support addressing misinformation and manipulative communication tactics.
- Identify appropriate spaces for information sharing.
- Establish a social media presence for residents on the Community Partnership Circle to share information about the CDP actions.
- Enable the Community Partnership Circle to provide information and updates to the community
- Address gentrification and displacement concerns through the CDP actions.
- Emphasize community-based outreach, led by the community for the community. The Community Partnership Circle can support this work.
- Use libraries, youth outreach centers (the spot), and grassroots organizations for outreach.
- Transform the CDP into a valuable resource and roadmap.

- Develop strategies to engage difficult to reach community members and counteract misinformation.

Comments on the role of resident members on a Community Partnership Circle

- Build CPC workshopping into community planning recommendations at the pre-application consultation stage.
- Residents should be involved in early workshopping/consultation for development applications.
- Encourage participation from newcomers and long-time residents.
- Involve knowledge keepers and individuals with a long history in the community in idea generation and action monitoring to ensure long-term relevance.
- Organize regular community townhall/update meetings led by CPC members to reflect action progress and upcoming engagement opportunities.
- Enable CPC members to act as advocates, soundboards, and facilitators in meetings.
- Promote more capacity building and mentorship for transferable skills.
- Model active citizenship and emphasize the value of community involvement.
- Clarify decision-making abilities to make participation more meaningful and attractive to residents.
- Ensure climate advocacy and equity are integral to CPC roles.
- Involve CPC members in decision-making processes, including early and frequent engagement with developers/landowners.
- Allow residents in the CPC to provide input on how a community benefits charge is used.
- Ensure support for participants who don't speak English as their first language to participate in the CPC.
- Include residents in the review of CDP actions to keep them relevant to changing community needs.
- Involve residents in determining the transition process and developing terms of reference for member appointments from various sectors.
- Maintain accountability for diverse representation on the CPC.
- Advocate for equity and social responsibility.
- Organize workshopping meetings on development applications.
- Express the strong need for a greater voice in development applications through the CPC.
- Explore CPC members' influence on the allocation of the CBC.
- Ensure the CPC is well-known in the community to have developers integrate CPC input before the PAC stage.
- Address the challenge of creating real accountability to community members as they are often accountable to shareholders or funding sources.
- Engage in collective advocacy to various levels of government regarding community conditions, housing, etc.
- Utilize traditional media, social media, and other platforms to maintain accountability.
- Speak out against any broken agreements from partners.

- Require partnership and legal agreements for proposals, CDP actions, and partnerships with residents' input.
- Advocate to councillors and government representatives to maintain accountability.
- Express interest in participatory planning.
- Consider incorporating open book management techniques for financial transparency and greater member involvement in decision-making processes.

Comments on representation on a Community Partnership Circle

- Advocates from Jane Finch Action Against Poverty can connect us with unhoused individuals. We should include representatives from the unhoused population in the community.
- Involve cultural heritage-based organizations.
- COSTI advocates for immigrants and newcomers can be a good contact to address settlement issues.
- Connect with Hinks Delcrest
- Engage with employers at supermarkets, which sometimes host community events and provide information through bulletin boards.
- Connect with Downsview services for seniors.
- Reach out to the Jane Finch Housing Coalition and ensure CMHC residents can participate.
- Collaborate with ACORN to address housing issues and align with Toronto's housing strategy.
- Ensure youth representation, as they are often vocal about housing affordability in the long-term.
- Local colleges and universities can contribute through their young adult and student representatives.
- Integrate youth into primary discussion tables, not just in a separate youth table.
- Represent student needs, including addressing school upgrades and liaising with trustees and educational organizations.
- Collaborate with School Board Trustees across all school boards.
- Prioritize Indigenous representation.
- 2SLGBTQ representation.
- Organizations that have an accessibility mandate should be represented, as well as individuals with experience living with disabilities. Members on the CPC should be able to identify locations that are difficult and unsafe to navigate, and advocate for accessibility measures.
- Engage with Black Creek Fair Economies.
- Local businesses, including banks and grocery stores, should be heard from and involved.
- Engage with small businesses affected by LRT construction.
- Unhoused individuals should be better represented.

- Consider the family needs addressed by the Jane and Finch Child and Family Centre. Connect with program and service providers in the community to get a sense of family needs.
- Connect with the Jane and Finch Education Action Group.
- Include the Black Creek Community Farm.
- Involve the York University Engagement Centre.