

**COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE  
TORONTO STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY 2020:  
WHAT NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT LOOKS LIKE  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESIDENTS IN JANE-FINCH**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE TORONTO STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY 2020: WHAT NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT LOOKS LIKE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESIDENTS IN JANE FINCH” was prepared by a research team embedded within the larger Jane-Finch TSNS Task Force. The Task Force comprises representatives from a number of community organizations, social service agencies and grassroots groups in the Jane-Finch community (see full list below). The Research Team includes additional academic partners, the City Institute and the Urban Studies program at York University, as well as two independent research consultants. The Task Force first mobilized in April 2014, in response to the City of Toronto’s newly devised Neighbourhood Equity Index in the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (TSNS) 2020. It met a number of times subsequently forming into the “Jane-Finch TSNS 2020 Task Force” in November 2014. Since then the group has met regularly to address serious concerns about the TSNS strategy and how it is presently laid out and the fact that the current strategy may not enable meaningful and sufficient changes in our communities. The group has also been actively supporting the Research Team to produce this report.

This participatory action research would not have happened without the amazing commitment and dedication of many community residents and organizations. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their extensive contributions to this initiative. Professor Linda Peake was an informative and supportive partner and Loren March and Shelby Kennedy worked vigorously to seek out relevant data that provided us with deeper knowledge. Nicola Holness and Farid P. Chaharlangi worked with passionate students, Erinn Oh and Kim Radford, and Maryama Ahmad, a community member and advocate, to explore other models and experiences in cities that have been struggling to overcome systemic barriers, and Nathan Stern masterfully took on coordination and compilation of information from the 8 Community Group Interviews reaching 83 enthusiastic residents who contributed valuable information. Wanda MacNevin, on behalf of the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, played an instrumental role coordinating the overall initiative.

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Community Organizations Involved in the Jane-Finch TSNS Task Force

Across Boundaries

Belka Enrichment Centre

Black Creek Community Health Centre

Community and Legal Air Services Programme (CLASP)

Elsbeth Heyworth Centre for Women

Friends in Trouble

Jamaican Canadian Association

Jane-Finch Action Against Poverty

Jane-Finch Community Legal Services

Jane-Finch Community Ministry

Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre

JVS Toronto

York U -TD Community Engagement Centre

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Next Step

The Task Force will be developing an Action Plan to ensure implantation of the recommendations proposed in this report.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Table of Contents	5
List of Figures	6
List of Photographs	6
Acronyms	7
Executive Summary	8
Introduction	17
The Community of Jane-Finch	22
The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 and its Policy Context	29
Methodology and Research Methods	40
Analysis	43
Community Demands and Policy Recommendations	49
Conclusion	54
Bibliography	55
Appendix A: Timeline of development of the land currently occupied by the Jane/Finch neighbourhood	64
Appendix B: Community Group Interviews	67



# LIST OF FIGURES

Map 1 The location of the Black Creek Neighbourhood	18
Map 2 The location of Jane/Finch	18

# LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1 Dancing at the JFAAP street party to raise the minimum wage, 2013	17
Photo 2 Bridge in Derrydown Park behind Yorkwoods Library	21
Photo 3 Dancing at the JFAAP street party, 2013	23
Photo 4 10 San Romanoway, 2014	25
Photo 5 Jane-Finch community May Day protest, 2015	27
Photo 6 Freedom Fridays Community Event	30
Photo 7 Inside a Jane Finch Action Against Poverty meeting, 2013	33
Photo 8 Community Mural, 2014	34
Photo 9 May Day community meeting, 2015	39

# ACRONYMS

CAMH	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
CSP	Community Service Partnership
DWAC	Downsview Weston Action Community
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
NIA	Neighbourhood Improvement Area
OHRC	Ontario Human Rights Commission
PAR	Participatory Action Research
TCHC	Toronto Community Housing Corporation
TDHC	Toronto District Health Council
TR	Tower Renewal
TSNS	Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy
TTC	Toronto Transit Commission
Urban HEART	Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to produce a Jane Finch community-led response to the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 (TSNS), produced by the City of Toronto. The aim of this research-based project has been to define what “improvement” of Jane-Finch should look like, from the community residents’ point of view according to the City’s three key indicators: Healthy Lives, Economic Opportunities and Social Development.

Each neighbourhood in the TSNS study was given a potential score, based on a range from 0 to 100, with actual scores ranging from 92.0 to 21.38, and with communities with a score below 42.89 identified as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. The lowest score of 21.38 is that of the Black Creek neighbourhood, while the second lowest score of 24.39 is of the Glenfield – Jane Heights area, both of which are located within Jane Finch.

## THE COMMUNITY OF JANE AND FINCH

Jane-Finch is a community with huge human assets and strong desire for positive systemic change, but there is a shortage of resources to facilitate this change. This is a community where economic opportunities and social services have not developed in pace with need, and the effects have been extremely detrimental for the people who call Jane-Finch home. Residents in Jane-Finch deal with higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of income than those in the rest of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and are faced with racism, discrimination and the stigma of being from Jane-Finch.

The persistence of lack of economic opportunities shows that poverty is tied inextricably to structural factors that result in many residents in Jane-Finch being left with few options outside of part-time work, often working more than one job, with no benefits or job security, leaving little time for any necessary skill training or upgrading.

In addition to this, the community’s large immigrant population is confronted with extreme challenges every day, experiencing difficulty with the settlement process, language barriers, and finding suitable work.

Media sources have referred to the area as Toronto’s “most dangerous” place (Pagliaro, 2013), and its “least liveable” neighbourhood (McKnight, 2014). These same kinds of crisis and security narratives not only propagate fear and racism, apply broad negative stereotypes to residents, and downplay or erase all of the positive aspects of the community, but have also been used in the past to justify interventionist government policies such as revitalization initiatives and programs like TAVIS.

Since at least the 1980s there has been a significant lack of sustained funding, of tangible long-term improvement goals, of success-gauging benchmarks, and of any kind of cultural strategy or funding. From as far back as the early 1970s, countless reports have emerged on unmet community needs, on problematic development strategies, on shortage of services, and on overcrowding. There is also an equally long history of the government ignoring the recommendations of many of these reports.

While issues of poverty and racism are unquestionably a part of everyday life for members of the community, we emphasize that the community is also one characterized by a high level of civic engagement, witnessed by its numerous community organizations, high levels of activism, and arts programs.

## THE TORONTO STRONG NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGY 2020 AND ITS POLICY CONTEXT

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy is a social development plan which sets a 2020 target date for “strengthening the social, economic, and physical conditions” in all of its 31 designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA). Currently still in consultation stages, the strategy has City of Toronto staff working with residents, community groups, funders, and “other key stakeholders” to develop a plan of action.

The 2012 TSNS undertook new community consultation, and determined five key indicators: Economic Opportunities, Social Development, Participation in Decision Making, Healthy Lives, and Physical Surroundings (City of Toronto, January 28, 2014)

The TSNS is situated within a broader provincial, federal and international policy milieu that is characterized by austerity, unstable federal commitment to urban development, municipal restructuring and fiscal crisis (Bradford, 2007). The convergence of these macro dynamics profoundly limits the capacity of municipalities to respond to concentrated poverty and neighbourhood inequities.

The geographic patterning of the city’s investment in socially mixed redevelopment projects, which are premised upon attracting middle-class resettlement in order to restore social balance, demonstrates the complacency of those groups responsible for the building and planning of Toronto’s urban fabric in consolidating gentrification trends, rather than fostering policy responses to the issues underpinning concentrated poverty.

Toronto communities’ experiences of targeted neighbourhood policies include revitalization projects and tower renewal projects, both of which are of relevance to Jane-Finch.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

Because our study is rooted in an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-colonial base, from a structural standpoint that values equality, equity, and dignity, it is important that our findings not be used to justify crisis-based interventions and solutions that do not take into account the security, needs, and demands of the existing community.

The research model that was applied to this project is that of community-based participatory action research, which conducts research with the community, rather than in the community. This research model also addresses and decentralizes power in the production and dissemination of knowledge by allowing community members to have ownership of the research process, from the conceptualization of the research questions to knowledge mobilization. With ownership of and authorship throughout the research process, community members can propose solutions that are responsive to their needs.

We sought to facilitate ten group interviews, and conducted eight of these, encompassing diverse cultural, ethnic and age groups in the Jane-Finch community. The group interviews consisted of conversations with approximately six to eighteen community members recruited from the community through referrals from our community partners. The Resident Facilitators engaged each community group in small group questions and activity sessions to help them identify and explore their understanding and experiences of health and wellness, social development, and economic opportunities in their local areas.

## ANALYSIS

### *HEALTHY LIVES*

- A. Health care quality and access in Jane-Finch proved to be issues that were cited at length in all eight group interviews. Many people saw the lack of doctors and the long wait times as discouraging and a deterrent to going to the doctor. A further point of contention was that of the often-present language barriers between doctors and patients, which was perceived as detrimental to receiving quality health care in the community.
- B. With regard to mental health services, many participants spoke to the lack of awareness of such programs existing in the neighbourhood. When asked about positive and negative experiences many of those who engaged with mental health issues claimed that their experiences of ill health were exacerbated by the professional they consulted not being proactive or not understanding the full range of factors that could contribute to mental health.
- C. Our analysis of the responses generated by the set of questions administered in our group interviews found that accessibility to healthy food in Jane-Finch has proven to be a paramount barrier to a healthy life. Residents discussed how difficult it is to sustain healthy eating practices when healthy food is more expensive in this part of the city and is of a lower quality.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- A. Modes of public and private transportation were raised a number of times. In the adult-aged groups, one theme that recurred throughout all the groups was the high price of car insurance for Jane-Finch residents. Residents said this deterred them from purchasing a car that would have allowed them to take employment in areas that are inaccessible by public transit.
- B. Another barrier to economic opportunities was that most of the blue-collar factory and warehouse jobs available to residents were based outside of the City of Toronto in the York and Peel regions. Accessibility to these regions was hampered in particular by inadequate public transportation, particularly at night-time, and due to the extra fare charged each way to connect to York Region Transit from the Toronto Transit Commission. Specifically in regards to transportation, research participants brought up issues with the TTC that spoke to the rising cost of public transit.
- C. A lack of economic opportunities is further exacerbated by a lack of businesses within the Jane-Finch community that are in a situation of being able to hire new employees. It also needs to be mentioned that, for women especially, the high costs of child care and the long waiting list for a subsidized child care spot were major barriers to women's gainful employment.
- D. Private temporary employment agencies have also proven to be a huge barrier to economic prosperity for many residents in Jane-Finch. Most of the jobs available to community members provided through these agencies can only offer underpaid and unstable employment to community members, with no medical benefits or paid sick days.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Questions relating to social development were mentioned the most frequently in the group interviews.
- B. The quality of education in schools in the Jane-Finch area was an issue that was discussed at length. Also of interest to the research participants were the barriers that exist to adults returning to school. These barriers included unstable finances, lack of child care, and lack of information about existing programs. In the adult-aged groups, there was a pervasive theme of a lack of programs in the community targeted at supporting adults in their educational endeavours in opposition to the many programs supporting youth.
- C. Residents were concerned about a lack of accountability on the part of landlords (both public and private) to provide high quality housing. This lack of accountability has led to issues such as rodent infestations, eroding infrastructure, and residents being exposed to other health hazards due to a backlog of work orders.
- D. Groups also expanded on security issues within the community, and how community safety impacts other aspects of life. They also spoke of over-policing in the community, and the profiling of black youth, and that the increased police presence in the area has not left them feeling more safe but more anxious.

## POLICY & COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the shortfalls spoken about in the research groups encompass programs at all three levels of government; government programs that poorly run and inadequately funded programs can directly affect the mandate of a municipally or provincially administered program. It follows that all levels of government are culpable and implicated; a cohesive and collaborative approach across levels of government to funding and mitigating the barriers faced by residents is needed. Hence, while the TSNS is a municipal level report, the indicators used in the report require us to be aware that sole responsibility cannot rest with the municipal government.

Following are the highlights of the demands made by residents from the group interviews for progress by 2020.

### *ECONOMIC DOMAINS*

- Provide universal child care
- Provide free Wheel Transit for seniors and people with disabilities
- Reduce auto insurance by insurance companies for residents of Jane-Finch
- Eliminate the extra charge for transit across the GTA border
- Put restrictions on temporary employment agencies and enforce regulations and require them to offer •
- Secure employment and reduce insecure and sporadic work, with no paid benefits and low wages
- Provision of other sources of employment other than those provided by employment agencies
- Recognition of accreditation and work experience outside Canada
- Wage equity for all workers (for instance no separate minimum wage for students)

### *HEALTHY LIVES DOMAINS*

- Remove the \$50 ambulance fee
- Reduce wait times for ambulances
- Increase the availability of free or affordable dentists.
- Creation of a publically funded drug/alcohol rehab centre
- Improve access to health care needs in terms of the increased availability of doctors and providing translators for medical personnel
- Increase numbers of family physicians and reduce the number of walk-in clinics
- Access to better quality food in both stores and food banks
- Increase the number of food banks to serve the needs to the community

### *SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAINS*

- Open more shelters, community spaces and support groups for women and LGBTQ community members
- Create more subsidies for landlords to increase the quality of buildings and not increase rent
- Create more mixed-income housing
- Increase the accountability of the TCH and the issues to which this gives rise (For instance health hazards repairs and maintenance)
- Increase the amount of quality TCH accommodation
- Provide more security in residential areas; for instance, many security doors in TCH units are broken and not repaired
- Increase and enforce rent control
- Revitalize community housing, “don’t just fix outside”
- Increase the poor quality of primary and secondary education
- Increase the resources in schools for both students and parents
- Have smaller class sizes in schools
- Eliminate barriers to adults returning to high school and post-secondary education
- Stop over policing in the neighbourhood
- Provide sports and recreation facilities
- Provide facilities for intergenerational care
- Engage youth in leadership roles; i.e. more youth representatives in decision-making

### *GOVERNMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS*

- Increase funding for community programs
- The city should report annually on how they spend money in NIAs and show how they spend all the money that comes to Jane-Finch
- Agencies need to be more transparent
- More dissemination of knowledge about services available to residents
- Political representatives (City Councillors, MPPs, MPs and school trustees) must be held accountable on an ongoing basis
- Increase funding and other resources from government institutions to enhance the quality and accessibility of social services within the NIAs
- There should be a system to track work orders in TCH buildings
- Less quick fixes, band aid solutions, and more real change

## The Research Team of the Jane Finch TSNS recommendations:

### ECONOMIC DOMAINS

- A. Increase minimum wage to reflect the cost of living.
- B. Create living wage and job quality standards.
- C. Temporary private employment agencies must be regulated to support local residents in securing decent jobs i.e., at minimum wage or above with some degree of permanency
- D. The City of Toronto must create and implement specific plans on job development within the NIAs.
- E. Any construction in Jane-Finch must have a Community Benefits Agreement that ensures at least 50% of those hired are local people who (if needed) receive training and are subsequently hired for the job.
- F. Increased funding for social infrastructure to be part of any new or expanding developments within the NIAs.
- G. Large stakeholders (York University, Seneca College, public library, hospitals, and City of Toronto organizations) need to enter into an agreement to increase their involvement in the Jane-Finch Community with a focus on specific social and economic targets including increased access to post-secondary education and the creation of hiring practices with specific targets whereby local residents have priority for hiring into new jobs.
- H. The City to develop and implement a city-wide universal child-care program.
- I. The City to increase access across regional transportation boundaries by eliminating double fares.
- J. Free and accessible Wheel Transit for seniors and people with disabilities.

### HEALTHY LIVES DOMAINS

- A. Funds relating to Section 37 of the Ontario's Planning Act, which guarantees the right to a healthy environment to the people of Ontario, must be equitably distributed across all neighbourhoods, with special considerations given to the NIAs.
- B. All health care providers present within the local area (including Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN), hospitals, CAMH, and private practitioners) must coordinate planning and policy objectives to ensure increased availability of:
  - (i) family doctors (and not walk in clinics)
  - (ii) nurses
  - (iii) accessible mental health service providers and facilities
  - (iv) The expansion of free dental services to low income adults
- C. The LHIN must play a more central and inclusive role in health planning in Jane-Finch.
- D. An emergency mental health centre (such as that of CAMH) and a rehabilitation centre both be established within the area.
- E. Increased enforcement of public health and safety bylaws to protect tenants of both social and private housing in the community.
- F. Create a network of community-based food bank distributors to coordinate, monitor and implement distribution of quality, healthy, accessible and culturally appropriate food.
- G. Walk-in clinics to provide free translation services to ensure accessibility.
- H. Establish a working group consisting of Toronto Public Health, the Humber River Regional Hospital and Black Creek Community Health Centre and other community based service providers to review the above health recommendations and to establish a work plan to implement the relevant recommendations.
- I. Meet with the Central Local Health Integrated Network to share the report and prioritize the feasibility of our recommendations.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAINS

### HOUSING

- A. The City to provide information to community residents, organizations and city services providers about its policies related to the “Sanctuary City” in order to proactively allow undocumented migrants in Toronto to access services regardless of immigration status without fearing any consequences.
- B. The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC):
  - (i) Develop a transparent social housing waiting list and make this accessible to applicants and advocates.
  - (ii) Ensure that 100% of its housing and subsidized units in Jane-Finch are in a state of full repair, and are ready for habitation by 2020.
  - (iii) Make accessible a tracking system for repairs, whereby tenants and TCHC management can check the status of their TCHC work orders.

### EDUCATION

- A. An equitable allocation of services and resources to schools in Jane-Finch, which would include more teachers, special education classes, and smaller classes, in order to improve graduation rates.
- B. Develop and support projects that aim at increasing awareness within the community about educational opportunities.
- C. Maximize local enrolments and improve graduation rates of local residents in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions in the area (such as York University and Seneca College).
- D. Develop free College and University bridging programs for residents of Jane-Finch, both youth and adults.
- E. Increase the number of scholarships offered to residents in the community.
- F. Provide additional financial support to students that live in TCH.
- G. Enhance transitional programs for internationally trained professionals and tradespeople to facilitate the recognition of international accreditation within the shortest period and increased employment opportunities in their related fields.

## GOVERNMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

- A. Politicians from the three levels of government - municipal, provincial and federal - must work collaboratively with the community to ensure improvement in the three equity domains: Economic Opportunities, Social Development and Healthy Lives.
- B. Institutions and community agencies develop a more transparent and creative accountability systems and framework to allow for stories and indicators of success to be disseminated on an ongoing basis.
- C. Establish a Working Group to explore the feasibility of a central Community Hub, School Hubs, and other information or service centre opportunities that provides access to information in the community.
- D. Task Force members will meet with relevant government officials from the CHLIN, Ministry of Children and Youth, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Ministry of Labour to share the research and to determine how their ministries will support the recommendations
- E. Distribute this report to relevant governments, social service agencies and community organizations so that it may be utilized for action and social change initiatives.
- F. Establish Working Groups on Economic Opportunity, Social Development and Healthy Lives to ensure implementation of the above recommendations. Each Working Group must have a minimum of two residents participating and funding will be secured to ensure they are appropriately reimbursed for their participation and associated costs (childcare, TTC).

## CONCLUSION

What we can gather from our data is that community residents in Jane-Finch have very clear goals and specific concerns in mind when it comes to neighbourhood improvement in their area. However, there is a critical disjuncture between the TSNS priority indicators, the specific needs identified by the community, and the ability of the City to address those needs. A major flaw within the TSNS itself is that the domains it seeks to improve frequently fall outside the sphere of municipal control. There promises to be a great deal of difficulty in actually implementing any kind of meaningful long-term intervention plans unless these disparities are addressed early on.

Our idea is that with a strong power-base and plan within the community, with the help of community leaders and organizations, and with sustained financial resource allotment, the community can gain considerable power and influence over the outcomes of decisions concerning their futures. Our report's final recommendations are based on what local stakeholders are concerned about and what they want to see in Jane-Finch by the TSNS 2020 target.

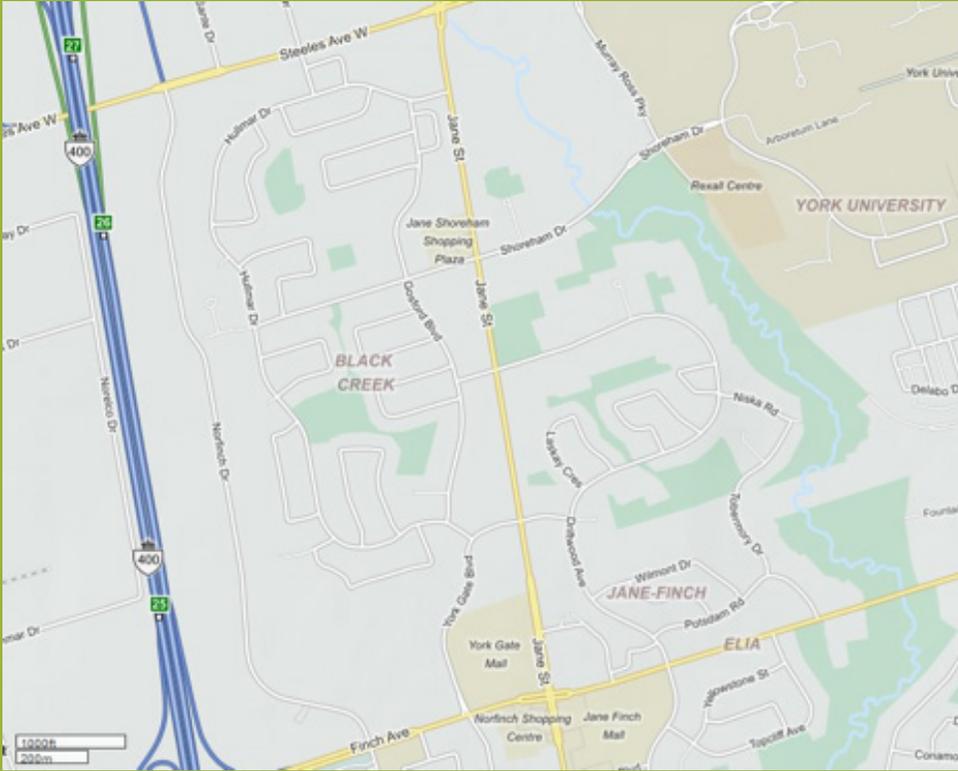
# INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to produce a Jane/Finch community-led response to Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 (TSNS). The most current version of the TSNS states that of the 140 neighbourhoods in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) 31 have been identified as “Neighbourhood Improvement Areas” in need of significant improvements. Each neighbourhood is given a potential score, based on a range from 0 to 100, with actual scores ranging from 92.0 to 21.38, and with communities with a score below 42.89 identified as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. This lowest score of 21.38 is that of the Black Creek neighbourhood, while the second lowest score of 24.39 is of the Glenfield – Jane Heights area, both of which are located within Jane-Finch (see Maps 1 and 2). The community of Jane-Finch is bordered by Highway 400, Steeles Avenue, Sheppard Avenue, and Black Creek, and is home to over 81,825 residents who live on an area covering just over twenty square kilometres (City of Toronto, 2011). It is this public recognition of the equity issues facing Jane-Finch and the need to say what improvement looks like from a local perspective that underscores this report.

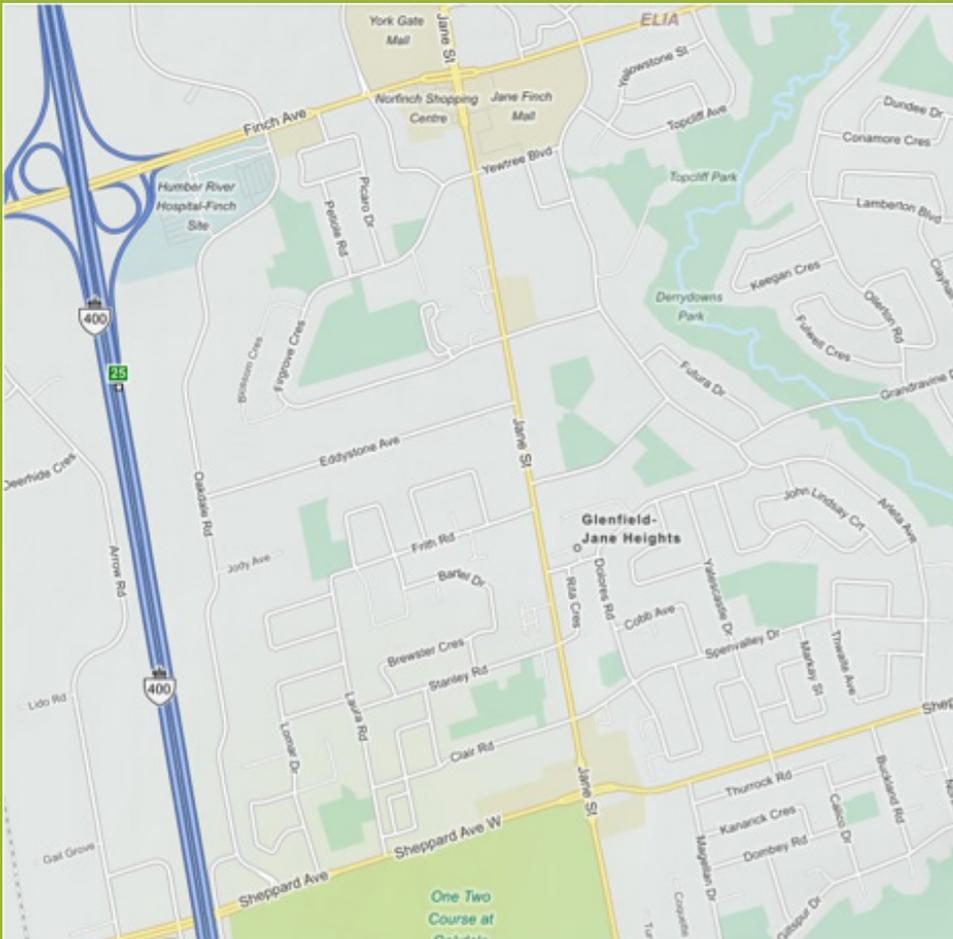


Photo 1 Dancing at the JFAAP street party to raise the minimum wage, 2013.  
(Photo courtesy of Errol Young, JFAAP.wordpress.com)

Our vision is to provide residents and community organizations with tools for successful advocacy; our research is intended to increase resident capacity and raise awareness of the interplay between social resources and legislative obligations, enabling advocacy for more equitable distribution of resources. We recognize that the definitions of needs and values undergirding this process are political ones that require ongoing discussion within the Jane-Finch community and that research led and interpreted by community members would most optimally capture and represent our needs. Further, collaboration with agencies and academic institutes supported the contextualization of findings within existing service and policy structures, establishing relevant recommendations for change.



Map 1: Location of the Black Creek neighbourhood



Map 2: The location of the Glenfield - Jane Heights Neighbourhood

The City's identification of Jane-Finch as an area in need of improvement has made it eligible for special funding and focused policy efforts, but it is important to note that in the past many of these strategies offered only short-term solutions and have not provided any sustained, long-term funding. Ultimately what we have encountered is a lack of real interest in investing in Jane-Finch, a lack of clear policy initiatives that are informed by community input, and a repetitive and tiresome string of reports, recommendations, and weak government improvement policies that have led to our own present research initiative. "Improvement" initiatives that have truly engaged the City's interests and resources have been focused in the downtown area where cultural and community investment is more likely to generate revenue, growth, and to ultimately pay off in the end. The focus on the downtown as a more rewarding investment is symptomatic of profit-driven policy-making that is serving to only worsen the spatialization of poverty and the life quality of marginalized citizens in Toronto.

In a context where the TSNS has labelled Jane-Finch a "Neighbourhood Improvement Area," (NIA) the aim of this project has been to define what that "improvement" should look like, according to the community who live there. The TSNS Task Force has itself acknowledged "revitalization must start from the ground up—with the residents who live and work in neighbourhoods and who have a vested interest in what happens in their communities" (United Way, 2005 p.3). In this report we have put forward what an improved Jane-Finch might look like in 2020, alongside a set of community-based recommendations that can feed into the TSNS. Each of these NIAs is graded according to 5 domains: Economic Opportunities, Social Development, Healthy Lives, Participation in Decision Making, and Physical Surroundings. Our primary objective has been to document how community members in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood conceptualize the first three of these five domains. The focus on health and wellness, social development, and economic opportunities results from these being the three domains on which Jane-Finch achieved its lowest scores. We also aimed to provide Jane-Finch residents with concrete knowledge about these three domains by making connections to their lived experiences. A second objective of the research was to learn about the factors that impact the quality of life of residents of the Jane-Finch community, while also identifying barriers that prevent access to appropriate support. Our report identifies current and potential support, and proposes new opportunities that will raise awareness and generate support for residents to advance their individual and collective needs. Our final objective was to produce an analysis that is easily accessible to and usable by the community as a catalyst for future projects, funding and actions.

This report was compiled by conducting research through community group interviews, with residents who participate in local community-based organizations, during the first five months of 2015 (between January and May), and has been produced through a collective effort of members of the Jane-Finch community and York University.

The format of this report is as follows: Immediately following this Introduction is a description of the neighbourhood of Jane-Finch, providing the necessary context for understanding the community's response. This is followed by a section that provides a policy contextualisation into the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 within the larger context of neoliberalism, and urban restructuring in relation to gentrification and concentrated poverty. Targeted anti-poverty strategies in the federal, provincial and municipal contexts as well as their impacts, critiques and comparisons are also included within this section. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology and research methods used for this project, as well as the analysis of the data collected. The last portion of this report is allocated to recommendations that derived from this research as well as an overall conclusion.



# THE COMMUNITY OF JANE FINCH



Photo 2. Bridge in Derrydown Park behind the York Woods Library, 2013.  
(Photo courtesy of Angelo Furlan, [www.jfotm.com](http://www.jfotm.com))

As Photos 2 and 3 shows, Jane-Finch has more to offer than the negative stereotypes about it presume. In recent years, the community has been characterized by a high level of civic engagement, witnessed by its numerous community organizations, high levels of activism, and arts programs; however, it has also traditionally been propagated as one that has been marked by negative, racialized stereotypes. Issues of poverty and racism are unquestionably a part of everyday life for members of the community. There is a huge capacity for change in the neighbourhood, but there is a shortage of resources to facilitate this change. This is a community where economic opportunities and social services have not developed in pace with need, and the effects have been extremely detrimental for the people who call Jane-Finch home.

Notably, Jane-Finch has one of Toronto's largest youth, immigrant, refugee, and low-income populations (ACT For Youth, 2013). Youth account for 13.8% of the population and unemployment rates for residents between ages 15-24 are disproportionately high (City of Toronto, 2006). In North York, new immigrants make up two thirds of the region's total "poor" population (United Way & CCSD, 2004. pp. 48) and in Jane-Finch 61% of the population are immigrants, 31% of whom have immigrated to Canada since 2001. Over 70% of the population identify as visible minorities (City of Toronto, 2008: 1).

## ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The persistence of lack of economic opportunities shows that poverty is tied inextricably to structural factors that result in many residents in Jane-Finch being left with few options outside of part-time work, often working more than one job, with no benefits or job security, leaving little time for any necessary skill training or upgrading. The presence of private temporary employment agencies in low-income neighbourhoods such as Jane-Finch has promoted precarious employment in the area. In addition, employment preparation programs do not necessarily improve this situation, as many provide only very basic assistance (such as elemental resumé-writing, networking, or interview preparation).

## HEALTHY LIVES

There has been a great deal of research linking poor socio-economic conditions to both poor physical and mental health. Residents in Jane-Finch deal with higher levels of unemployment and low-income than the rest of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and are faced with racism, discrimination and the stigma of simply being from Jane-Finch itself. In addition to this, the community's large immigrant population is confronted with extreme challenges every day, experiencing difficulty with the settlement process, language barriers, and finding suitable work. It is important to note that within the newcomer population there are also individuals who experience additional or heightened inequities due to gender, sexual preference, age, and legal status. All of these factors can and do cause significant amounts of stress, depression, and put the community's families at higher risk of poor physical and mental health (CAMH, 2012; United Way, 2002; United Way, 2004).

The implications of this are far-reaching. For example, studies have found that the children of low-income families are higher than twice more likely than those of high-income families to experience problems with basic abilities such as speech, vision, hearing, and mobility, and are at greater risk of chronic stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, hyperactivity, and aggression (United Way, 2002. pp. 14). This is of considerable importance in a community with a very large youth population.

The 2001 Toronto Health System Monitoring Equity Analysis Report noted that populations with significant numbers of recently immigrated families, low-income households, and seniors are especially likely to require hospital services (TDHC, 2001). Thus, of particular concern in Jane-Finch has been the questionable decision to move the Humber River Hospital from its Finch Street site to a new, high tech, and fully digital Keele Street and Wilson Avenue location. While the old hospital reported some of the worst wait times in the GTA, and the second-worst patient death rates in the country in 2006-2007 (Yang, 2011), residents have expressed dismay about the future of accessible health care in Jane-Finch, and the Toronto District Health Council's (TDHC) review of the redevelopment proposal found "no compelling argument" in favour of relocation (TDHC, 2001. pp. 47). The move, in fact, was predicted to have a "detrimental effect" on the provision of health services within the community (TDHC, 2001. pp. 47).

## SOCIAL ISSUES

### *STIGMA & CRISIS NARRATIVES*

Over the years, the media narrative has consistently presented Jane-Finch as a crime-ridden slum. A quick overview of newspaper headlines will reveal countless mentions of shootings, crime, and poor relations between the community and the police (Winsa, 2014). Media sources have referred to it as Toronto's "most dangerous" place (Pagliaro, 2013), and its "least liveable" neighbourhood (McKnight, 2014). These same kinds of crisis and security narratives not only propagate fear and racism, apply broad negative stereotypes to residents, and downplay or erase all of the positive aspects of the community, but have also been used in the past to justify interventionist government policies such as revitalization initiatives and programs like the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS).

In 1982, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) and the North York Committee called attention to the existence of "poor interrelationships" between the ethnic groups in the North York region (specifically between the Latin American, South Asian, Black, and Italian communities). However, it is important to note that in spite of possible divisions between Jane/Finch's numerous ethnic communities, the neighbourhood has demonstrated an amazing ability to find solidarity, organize, and mobilize itself, as Photo 3 shows. In a 2010 report, young people in the neighbourhood described it as "close like a family," "diverse," and "multicultural" (ACT for Youth, 2010). Residents have consistently described Jane-Finch as a "tight-knit" community that is both "strong and resilient in the face of adversity" (CAMH, 2012; Nguyen, 2004).



<sup>1</sup>In past studies, youth in Jane-Finch have reported being "turned down for jobs once employers learned where they lived" (United Way, 2002, p.43).

## *NEW ARRIVALS & INTEGRATION*

Large numbers of immigrant families have been moving to the Jane-Finch area since the 1960s, when the community expanded rapidly. Its affordable housing made the area attractive to immigrants, many different waves of which have moved into the neighbourhood over the years. With as many as 50,000 newcomers arriving in the city each year, for immigrants there are many challenges to integrating into Toronto's socio-economic life (United Way & CCSD, 2004, pp. 19, 48). Many newcomers in Jane-Finch have difficulty transferring their work accreditation in Canada, and experience high levels of discrimination both while seeking employment, and subsequently in the workplace (United Way, 2004, pp. 48).

## *THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT*

A part of what was initially appealing to many residents about Jane-Finch, and what now is being considered a source of many of the community's difficulties, is the presence of high levels of subsidized housing—one of the highest in the city (ACT for Youth, 2013) (see Photo 4). One of the most densely populated parts of the city, it contains one of Toronto's highest concentrations of high-rise dwellings, which stand out from the surrounding landscape of single-detached and semi-detached dwellings (ACT for Youth, 2013; Stewart, 2014). It is perhaps a testament to the City's past interest in affordable, public, and subsidized housing development that in the 1970s, half of Jane-Finch's population lived in such developments (Ede, 1978). However, the buildings are now largely in disrepair, and many list vermin, broken elevators, broken entry locks, trespassers, and vandalism as recurring problems (United Way, 2011). Another issue of many residents in these high-rise neighbourhoods is their lack of access to a car, and their dependence on walking and public transit to perform their daily activities in a built environment that is not conducive to walking and has poor links to an integrated public transit system.

## *RESEARCH, REPORTS & COMMUNITY FATIGUE*

In conducting the research for this report Jane-Finch groups have been mindful of the need to not feed into the negative and stereotyped representations of the Jane-Finch community and neighbourhood. Depicting a community as being in "high-need" can contribute to highly problematic consequences. It also leads to questions about the TSNS equity scores and benchmarks. There is moreover no shortage of research seeking to gather resident input in order to determine community need in Jane-Finch. In reality, the community has become a laboratory for academics and researchers seeking to examine marginalization, poverty, stigma, and associated blight. From as far back as the early 1970s, countless reports have emerged on unmet community needs, on problematic development strategies, on shortage of services, and on overcrowding. There is also an equally long history of the governments ignoring the recommendations of many of these reports. While many initiatives have been put forward, and targeted funding has been allocated to the community (Jane-Finch, after all, has been identified sequentially, under a constantly shifting nomenclature, as being a "high-need," "priority," and an "improvement-area" neighbourhood). However, since at least the 1980s, there has been a significant lack of sustained funding, of tangible long-term improvement goals, of success-gauging benchmarks, and of any kind of cultural strategy or funding.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the current circumstances observed in Jane-Finch can be explained by the inability of the 1969 District 10 Plan to anticipate the large population growth that was to take place in the area. The Plan was devised and implemented before the rapid growth of the 1970s. The community was to be developed over a 20-year period, but by the time the Plan was into its seventh year, 80% of the proposed development was completed. No reviews or revisions of the Plan were ever made however, even though between 1969 to 1973 the population grew from 30,000 to 46,438 (Ede, 1978).



**Jane-Finch.com**

Photo 4. 10 San Romanoway, 2014.  
(Photo courtesy of Ornella Sofia, Jane-Finch.com)

# THE TSNS 2020 AND ITS NEOLIBERAL POLICY CONTEXT

## THE TORONTO STRONG NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGY 2020

An outcome of collaboration between politicians and community-based advocates, the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy 2020 (TSNS) is a municipally-led policy response to the inequitable socioeconomic and geographic distribution of wealth and public infrastructure across the city's neighbourhoods (Horak, 2010). The TSNS is a social development plan (initially 2005, with an updated 2012 version, (see Appendix A) that sets a 2020 target date for "strengthening the social, economic, and physical conditions" in all of its 31 designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA). Currently still in consultation stages, the strategy has City of Toronto staff working with residents, community groups, funders, and "other key stakeholders" to develop a plan of action. The strategy sets a goal of "ensuring that every Toronto neighbourhood has the public, private and community infrastructure required for equitable resident opportunities, and to ensure broader municipal, regional, provincial and national policies, programs, and funding priorities are informed by a neighbourhood's perspective" (Brillinger, February 8, 2012, p.1). The recommendations put forward stress the importance of (a) public-private partnerships, and (b) youth engagement and employment in achieving this goal (Brillinger, 2013; Toronto City Council, 2005).

Under the 2005 version of the TSNS, "Priority Neighbourhoods" were identified using three main criteria: "whether the neighbourhood lacked community facilities and programs; whether there were more residents who would benefit from community programs than there were in other neighbourhoods; and whether the neighbourhood was experiencing more gun and gang violence than other neighbourhoods" (Brillinger, 2013, p. 6). The amended 2012 strategy changed the identification to "Neighbourhood Improvement Areas," proposing new ways to target funding, and listing new ways to determine priority (Brillinger, 2013, p. 3). The updated TSNS is now a part of the joint initiative Urban HEART @ Toronto.

The 2012 TSNS undertook new community consultation, and determined five key indicators: Economic Opportunities, Social Development, Participation in Decision Making, Healthy Lives, and Physical Surroundings (City of Toronto, January 28, 2014). These indicators are to be used to monitor the impacts of the strategy and develop future goals. Our concern here is that "improvement" in these key indicators can and will look very different depending on geographical and social context. There is no universal scheme that can be applied to every situation, and different members of different communities will imagine different futures for the places they live. Moreover, the TSNS report does not specify a strategy for implementation, nor a minimum budgetary requirement for such an undertaking.

While the TSNS initiative has been lauded for its development in collaboration with communities, a growing body of research exploring previous neighbourhood development projects suggests that its impacts are experienced differently from what policy-makers claim and anticipate. Further, it is unclear whether these initiatives reflect the most pressing needs and values of residents. Undoubtedly, the macro policy infrastructure restricts the capacities of municipalities to address structural inequities; however, this does not preclude the possibility for greater collaboration between communities and policy makers as existing projects unfold.

There is an obvious need to situate the TSNS within the broader neoliberal policy context that informs its emergence and limitations, which we do below while also outlining the communities' experiences of related city interventions, such as the revitalization of Regent Park, Lawrence Heights, Don Mount Court,

<sup>3</sup>Urban HEART (an acronym for "Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool,") is a project of the World Health Organization, launched in 2010 to help organizations, communities, and governments address inequity. Their focus takes in five main areas: physical environment and infrastructure; social and human development; economic opportunity; governance; and general population health (Toronto Community Health Profiles Partnership, 2001-2015). Indicators of neighbourhood health within the Urban Heart criteria were required to be "clear, feasible, locally actionable, responsive, comparable, analytically sound, and salient within a Toronto context" (Brillinger, 2013, p. 5).



Photo 5. Jane-Finch community May Day protest, 2015.  
(Photo courtesy of Errol Young, JFAAP.wordpress.com)

## NEOLIBERALISM, GENTRIFICATION & CONCENTRATED NEIGHBOURHOOD POVERTY

The TSNS is situated within a broader provincial, federal and international policy milieu that is characterized by austerity, unstable federal commitment to urban development, municipal restructuring and fiscal crisis (Bradford, 2007). The convergence of these macro dynamics profoundly limits the capacity of municipalities to respond to concentrated poverty and neighbourhood inequities. Within the Canadian context, federal withdrawal from funding provinces, municipalities, and community-based organizations, as well as Toronto's struggle to function within an underdeveloped post-amalgamation framework, have resulted in insufficient resources and associated policy infrastructure to support progressive socioeconomic development (Horak, 2010; Bradford, 2005, 2007).

Labour market trends further compound the impact of public policy withdrawal. For instance, between 2004 and 2009, labour had higher unemployment rates than the national rate, a situation that had not occurred since 1987. Levels of working poverty are also rising. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of working people reporting low earnings increased by 42%, a burden that 73% of new immigrants experience (Stapleton, Murphy and Xing, 2012). More readily available service sector jobs do not pay a living wage, while the costs of rent and housing have skyrocketed. The United Way and the Canadian Council on Social Development published a report in 2004, examining the geography of poverty across the City of Toronto, which revealed that, between 1992 and 2002, the average rent in the city increased by 42.1%, and that 43.3% of tenant households across the city were spending more than 30% of their income on rent (United Way, 2004. pp. 15-18). The research suggested that income gaps have been progressively worsening and that the highest levels of poverty have been concentrated within the city's inner suburbs. Between 1981 and 2001, the number of higher poverty neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs increased from 15 to 28, with the highest concentrations of poverty being found in North York, East York, and York (United Way, 2004. pp. 26). By 2001, Toronto's inner suburbs held 77% of the city's higher poverty neighbourhoods, with the highest levels of poverty being found in Flemingdon Park (57.8%), Glenfield-Jane Heights (50.1%), Black Creek (49%), Thorncliffe Park (44.3%), and Parkwoods Donalda (40%) (United Way, 2004. pp. 26-29).

This should not be particularly surprising. An announcement by the Toronto Real Estate Board on March 4, 2015 put the average selling price for a single detached house in downtown Toronto at over \$1,000,000 dollars (Toronto Real Estate Board, 2015). Another United Way report from 2002 suggested that the supply of public housing units, affordable rental stock, and rooming houses are what has attracted such a large contingent of low-income residents to the inner suburbs (United Way, 2002. pp. 25), indicating that there are both push and pull factors at play.

Unsustainable homeownership costs and the decline of alternative housing options have shifted many individuals and families away from the central city into neighbourhoods where the cost of living is more reasonable. Indeed a later report revealed a growing trend of concentrated and intensified poverty within the so-called "U-shaped ring of public housing developments surrounding Toronto's central area (United Way, 2004. pp. 18). As a result, we can observe a startling trend, beginning in the 1980s, of increased levels of poverty across all of the city's inner suburbs, with one in every five families being in a low-income bracket by 2001 (United Way, 2004). In contrast, the household income of families in higher income strata has increased. Additionally, the concentration of public infrastructure within these wealthier neighbourhoods reveals how inequities manifest within both public and private mechanisms of resource distribution (Hulchanski, 2010). In Toronto, gentrification astutely exemplifies this dynamic, characterizing the investment of wealth in downtown areas that were once perceived as undesirable given their proximity to industry.

This dynamic has left the once desirable post-war inner suburbs open to settlement by new immigrants. Between 1945 and 1984, 1,200 high-density apartment towers were built to accommodate this mass transition of new immigrant arrivals from downtown locations to inner suburban locations. However, the public infrastructure needs of these new communities have been inadequately understood and addressed in policy terms in unsustainable and superficial ways. For example, the Priority Neighbourhood initiative responded to escalating gun violence in particular inner suburban areas. Acknowledgement of the macro level issues informing crime and violence, such as unemployment, failing infrastructure, and pervasive police violence was entirely absent. Analysis of shifts in subsidized housing shows that the sale of public housing further pushes low-income neighbourhoods to the outskirts (Walks, 2012). The geographic patterning of the city's investment in socially mixed redevelopment projects, which are premised upon attracting middle-class resettlement in order to restore social balance, demonstrates the complacency of those groups responsible for the building and planning of Toronto's urban fabric in consolidating gentrification trends, rather than fostering policy responses to the issues underpinning concentrated poverty.

<sup>4</sup>The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives states that the minimum wage in Ontario is not enough to cover such basic necessities as housing, food, transportation, child care, and health care (CCPA, 2015). While a living wage is supported by many community organizations and labour groups, and there are many active campaigns to incorporate it into policy, it is not currently supported by the Ontario or Toronto governments. The current minimum wage at the time of writing is \$11.25.

## FEDERAL POLICY RESPONSE: THE NEW DEAL FOR CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

In 2003, Prime Minister Paul Martin's New Deal for Cities and Communities represented Canada's first federally led urban development plan (see Appendix A). Prime Minister Martin called his New Deal "a national project for our time," equal in significance to earlier "generational" federal railway and welfare state commitments" (Bradford, 2007, p. 9). Premised upon establishing stronger tripartite intergovernmental collaboration, it held the promise of securing increased and more sustainable funding for municipalities. Between 2000 and 2005, a number of Toronto-based community groups including the Toronto City Summit Alliance, the Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development, and the United Way, identified concentrated neighbourhood poverty as a priority social issue, while advocating for socially progressive policy responses (Horak, 2008).

Informed in part by this advocacy, Mayor David Miller secured the Canada-Ontario Framework Agreement, which resulted in the Stronger City of Toronto for a Strong Ontario Act. Targeted neighbourhood policy is a policy paradigm whose emergence coincided with this new structural framework. Importantly, the Regent Park Revitalization Project and the Tower Renewal Project were pitched as key priorities within Miller's initial negotiations with the provincial and federal authorities (Bradford, 2005 & 2007). However, in 2006, the Harper government withdrew its commitment to the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Framework Agreement, and it remains unresponsive to renewing support. While the targeted neighbourhood development projects initially proposed by Miller have continued, they have unfolded with markedly less federal and provincial backing than needed and anticipated (Bradford, 2007).

## TORONTO COMMUNITIES' EXPERIENCES OF TARGETED NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICIES

### *Revitalization Projects*

Socially mixed redevelopment is the philosophy guiding the city's revitalization projects, which include a number of strategically placed Toronto Community Housing units, including: Regent Park, Don Mount Court, Lawrence Heights, and South Parkdale. Social mix proponents argue that social issues commonly associated with concentrated poverty, such as crime, underemployment, drugs, gangs, and prostitution, are an outcome of high density, low-income neighbourhoods (August, 2014; Thompson et al., 2013). Middle-class resettlement is seen as a way of alleviating these issues through interactions that will foster social inclusion, upward social mobility, and joint social capital (August, 2014; Thompson et al., 2013; Walks and Maaranen, 2008). It is framed as the cure to improving disadvantaged communities.

In the community of Lawrence Heights, for example, research that supported ideas of the neighbourhood as crime-ridden, dangerous, badly designed, and populated by people who were unemployed and/or poor, was ultimately used to justify what has been hailed TCHC's "largest Revitalization project yet" based on the idea of social mix (TCHC, 2015). And yet many of the same issues of displacement, lack of community consultation, stigmatization of long-term residents, and lack of integration continue to rank high on the list of resident concerns (Bhuiyan, 2015). Moreover, a focus purely on negative aspects of daily life in Lawrence Heights - crime, safety, unemployment, poor health, and poor design - has been justified by the TCHC and developers to rationalize the revitalization and the gradual social restructuring of Lawrence Heights as a mixed income neighbourhood (Bhuiyan, 2015), resulting in displacement of some of the original residents. The TCHC has stressed that what is taking place in Lawrence Heights is about "Revitalization" and not "redevelopment," and has been careful about how the ongoing process is framed.

<sup>5</sup> This legislation enables the city to leverage revenue through limited forms of taxation, a mechanism that was previously prohibited (Shabas, 2011).

Before any further consideration of the benefits of social mix, it is important to consider the relationship between the racialization of precarious labour and the concentration of poverty evident in contemporary public housing. The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity and the Martin Prosperity Institute reported that 45% of employment in Toronto is low-paid, part-time or temporary, precarious work, as well as that racialized groups are overrepresented in this type of employment (Block, Galabuzi and Weiss, 2014). This pattern, coupled with the aforementioned pattern of wealthy families' incomes increasing, illustrates the increasingly widening gap between the rich and the poor. Currently the inner suburbs have a concentration of racialized poor residents, while the downtown core has become increasingly more affluent and white (Cowen and Parlette, 2011). This is important to note as it demonstrates that the concentration of poverty is a result of structural issues embedded in society, and that merely recruiting middle-income populations into poor neighbourhoods will not solve the core problems of poverty. Instead this strategy acts more as a band-aid solution where poverty will be relocated to other areas, rather than be reduced (Cowen and Parlette, 2011).



Photo 6. Freedom Fridays Community Event, 2013.  
(Photo courtesy of Roman Millor, [www.thespotyouth.org](http://www.thespotyouth.org))

Although middle-class resettlement can contribute to de-stigmatizing neighbourhoods, there are a number of ethical issues that accompany this project. Social mixing has had the detrimental impact of pushing many long-term residents out of the community through municipal policies that have led to rent increases and the eviction of low-income tenants (Slater, 2004), or through middle-class residents pushing tenants out by increasing surveillance. New middle-class residents, whose voices are prioritized over long-term low-income tenants, have increased surveillance in these neighbourhoods by reporting "incidents" to police, and advocating for increased "eyes on the streets" (James, 2010).

In Regent Park, concerns have risen that by placing middle-income homeowners adjacent to low-income tenants, it has essentially "marked" minority groups as different, with stigmatization intensifying within the community (August, 2014). Other themes that have arisen with redevelopments of this kind have been the maintenance of stigma surrounding low-income tenants, the misuse of power, social divisions, and the inequitable construction of space (Slater, 2004; Thompson et al., 2013).

Interactions in mixed-income communities are often superficial, as residents' worlds run parallel to each other, rather than becoming integrated. Individuals' lifestyles and realities are vastly different, and as such, social contact with each other only goes so far as minimal interactions on the street (Slater, 2004).

In these neighbourhoods, racialized bodies, especially those of black male youth, are perceived as "dangerous" or affiliated with drugs and gangs, and low-income minority groups are viewed as the source of neighbourhood problems (August, 2014; Thompson et al., 2013). Power relations in newly mixed communities are influenced by class, race, and gender hierarchies, in which the new, predominantly white middle-class individuals (market residents) assume power and privilege, which becomes especially evident in community meetings (Slater, 2004). In both South Parkdale and South Riverdale, meeting agendas are catered to market residents' interests, often conflicting with those of long-term tenants, whose voices are silenced, as control of their community is wrestled away from them. For example, one meeting was taken over by a market resident in Don Mount, who focused a community meeting on security concerns, while rendering tenants' concerns regarding park design and youth programming, among other concerns, insignificant (August, 2014). This led to discomfort in tenants as these meetings focused on identifying problems and reporting "incidents" that implicated tenants as the source of neighbourhood issues (August, 2014). These tensions have contributed to the creation of social divisions where social cohesion and strong community ties were once prominent (Slater, 2004; Thompson et al., 2013).

Over-policing and surveillance in socially mixed neighbourhoods are legitimized through dominant representations of the stigma surrounding such neighbourhoods, as well as individuals, specifically those occupying racialized bodies, as dangerous and affiliated with criminal activities. This is problematic as through increased surveillance, coupled with negative constructions of particular residents, racial profiling ensues. This results in not only increased policing but also increased surveillance, performed by market residents themselves, who argue that racialized bodies are inappropriate users of public space and should be removed from the community or confined to their homes (August, 2014). Such notions of stigma hide the power dynamics at play, shaped by class and racial hierarchies, while serving to influence whose voices are heard and whose are silenced.

## Tower Renewal

The majority of Toronto's current apartment towers were built during the post-war era (1945-1984), and are mainly occupied by low-income families and renters (City of Toronto, 2011; McClelland, Stewart and Ord, 2011). This is important to note, as while these buildings are old, they house 50% of all renters in Toronto. Of these, 67% are within tower clusters of high poverty, and 17% of the units in these towers are overcrowded (Levy, 2013). As such, these post-war era towers are in need of revitalization and a new initiative has been launched by the City of Toronto to tackle the social and economic issues faced by those living in these disadvantaged dwellings. The Tower Renewal Project claims to take a holistic approach in revitalizing these buildings and surrounding areas as it intends to address environmental and economic issues, as well as to foster healthier communities through social and cultural change (City of Toronto, 2011; McClelland et al., 2011).

This initiative has the potential to be successful in improving neighbourhoods. However, the policies driving tower renewal remain vague, and there are various questions that must be considered throughout the project so that it does not follow the same inequitable pathway into gentrification as other neighbourhood development strategies. A main concern is of post-revitalization, and how the City plans to ensure rent control for current tenants, and to maintain affordable housing. As mentioned, these buildings are old, and revitalization is necessary, however, with such redevelopment it is inevitable that market values will increase. Another important related question regards how the City will carry out tower renewal while simultaneously ensuring that residents will not be displaced, disrupting their lives, during renovations. The tower renewal policies regarding local business creation are vague, and it is important to question how the City will ensure that these businesses remain local, or hire youth from within the community. Such questions are necessary to consider at the outset.

## IMPACT AND CRITIQUE

In light of these macro trends, as well as new initiatives such as the Urban Heart @ Toronto Equity Index, the City increasingly acknowledges that neighbourhood level inequities are present and persistent. However, a structural framework for addressing issues that require a macro response is absent. In turn, criticisms of the TSNS recognize this profound disjuncture between local and macro-level responsibility. The provincial government is a major player in these issues, and must be held accountable. Examination of communities' experiences of existing targeted neighbourhood policies, such as the Revitalization of Regent Park and the TR Project, offers insight into this dynamic.

# METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH METHODS

As a major part of our research, we wanted to look at what “improvement” means to the community in Jane-Finch, as it is important that this research be used to advance community interests, and not those of outside stakeholders. Currently, we see the City of Toronto being used as a place of neoliberal experimentation, which is intertwined with discrimination, marginalization, poverty, class, and power inequities. Because our study is rooted in an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-colonial base, from a standpoint that values equality, equity, and dignity, it is important that our findings not be used to justify crisis-based interventions and solutions that do not take into account the security, needs, and demands of the existing community. Jane/Finch is a strong and tightly knit community with a wide skill-base – not the least of these being organizing and mobilizing – and it is important to remember the agency and power of individuals and groups to produce change within systems of power and struggle.

We have approached our data through the lens of critical theory, in order to understand the social phenomena taking place in a particular context, and to effect positive social change. Throughout this process it has been critically important to be aware of power relations and to be respectful of difference, and aware of the needs, concerns, ideas, and goals of all members of the community. We have stressed recognition of context and the importance of not giving in to meta-narratives or “one size fits all” policies that fail to appreciate the subtleties and differences in each unique community.

The research model that was applied to this project is that of community-based participatory action research, which conducts research with the community, rather than in the community. Participatory action research (commonly known as PAR) seeks to involve residents from the community in the research process itself from the very first to the very last stages. Moreover, this model best fit our project as it also facilitates co-learning between partners, and builds respect and support for collaborative partnerships between researchers and community members. The design of this model can provide community members with a space and place to voice their lived experiences, which are integral to the emergence of sustainable interventions that can transform their social, cultural, and economic conditions. This research model also addresses and decentralizes power in the production and dissemination of knowledge by allowing community members to have ownership of the research process, from the conceptualization of the research questions to knowledge mobilization. With ownership of and authorship throughout the research process, community members can propose solutions that are responsive to their needs.

For the data collection, two community members from the Jane-Finch community were hired and trained to be “Resident Facilitators,” responsible for leading group interviews with other community members. The group interviews consisted of conversations with approximately six to eighteen community members recruited from the community through referrals from our community partners. They were run by one of the Resident Facilitators, and each ran for approximately two hours each. We sought to facilitate ten group interviews, and conducted eight of these, encompassing diverse cultural, ethnic and age groups in the Jane-Finch community. These groups included: youth at a local drop-in centre, a resident-created tenants association in the community, a support group for newcomer women, a group supporting neighbourhood change, a parent support group, a Tamil group, and a Latino group (see Appendix B).



Photo 7. Inside a Jane Finch Action Against Poverty meeting, 2013.  
(Photo courtesy of Errol Young, JFAAP.wordpress.com)

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<sup>6</sup> Also referred to as “citizen participation,” “community or resident engagement,” “bottom-up” research and “grassroots philanthropy” (Ruesga and Knight, 2013, p. 13).

the community through referrals from our community partners. They were run by one of the Resident Facilitators, and each ran for approximately two hours each. We sought to facilitate ten group interviews, and conducted eight of these, encompassing diverse cultural, ethnic and age groups in the Jane-Finch community. These groups included: youth at a local drop-in centre, a resident-created tenants association in the community, a support group for newcomer women, a group supporting neighbourhood change, a parent support group, a Tamil group, and a Latino group (see Appendix B).

In order to make the group interviews accessible, community members were provided with transit, child-care costs and refreshments. Each participant was also given a gift card as a small token of our appreciation for their participation. The Resident Facilitators engaged each community group in small group questions and activity sessions to help them identify and explore their understanding and experiences of health and wellness, social development, and economic opportunities in their local areas.

Participants were posed three sets of questions, which were developed with input from various community members. A final question was also posed to the groups, intended to provide participants with the opportunity to make suggestions about new and needed programming and supports. Their responses were recorded on chart paper. Afterwards, the participants came together to present their discussions to the larger group. Keeping the key principles of PAR in mind, researchers took a secondary role in the interview process, taking notes and assisting with clarifying group processes. All notes taken by the community members and researchers were incorporated into the data analysis.



Photo 8 Community Mural, 2014.  
(Photo courtesy of Ornella Sofia, Jane-Finch.com)

# ANALYSIS

Research consistently demonstrates that poverty, working poverty and low-income rates of employment in Toronto in the 2010s are rising. The burden is experienced disproportionately by new immigrants, as well as racialized individuals and families, who live in the city's inner suburbs (Galabuzi, 2005, 2006; Smith and Ley, 2005; Stapleton, Murphy and Xing, 2012).

The narratives, data and experiences recorded and analyzed through conducting the group interviews reaffirm this existing research. Moreover, many of the barriers faced by community members in Jane-Finch interlock to magnify their negative impact on the lives of those in the community. Below we discuss the data collected in relation to the three themes identified in the TSNS 2020 report, namely economic opportunities, healthy lives and social development.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

A number of themes in this section that are worth expanding on at length include; job opportunities, transportation, and lack of recognition of accreditation.

Modes of public and private transportation were raised a number of times as a particular problem for the participants. In the adult-aged groups, one theme that recurred throughout all the groups was the high price of car insurance for Jane-Finch residents. Residents spoke of rates being \$200 to \$400 cheaper per annum for the same car if it was insured outside of the Jane-Finch neighbourhood. Residents said this deterred them from purchasing a car that would have allowed them to take employment in areas that are inaccessible by public transit.

Another barrier to economic opportunities was that most of the blue-collar factory and warehouse jobs available to residents were based outside of the City of Toronto in the York and Peel regions. Accessibility to these regions was hampered in particular by inadequate public transportation, particularly at night-time, and the extra fare charged each way to connect to York region transit from the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).

Specifically in regards to transportation, research participants brought up issues with the TTC that spoke to the rising cost of public transit. While participants spoke positively of overall bus service, wait times, and the implementation of free transit for children 12 and under, they were concerned about a lack of similar benefits for seniors, who spend much of their income on transit.

A lack of economic opportunities is further exacerbated by a lack of businesses within the Jane-Finch community that are in a situation of being able to hire new employees. It also needs to be mentioned that, for women especially, the high costs of child care and the long wait list for a child care spot were major barriers to women's gainful employment.

Private temporary employment agencies have also proven to be a huge barrier to economic prosperity for many residents in Jane-Finch. Most of the jobs available to community members provided through these agencies can only offer underpaid and unstable employment to community members, with no medical benefits or paid sick days. This part-time and temporary work, often a day at a time, provided only sporadic opportunities for employment, causing residents problems with being able to budget or make regular financial commitments.

Another barrier for new immigrants in the Jane-Finch community has been the lack of recognition of accreditation, education and employment experience gained outside Canada. A number of newcomers felt as though they were streamed into low-paid fields of employment because their education and experiences were not deemed valid in Canada. While there are programs that seek to help internationally educated professionals, respondents spoke of an abundance of ESL programs but of a lack of other specific programs tailored to help them with skills to acquire jobs in fields that would provide stable employment, such as nursing, teaching, and accounting.

## HEALTHY LIVES

Health care quality and access in Jane-Finch proved to be pervasive issues that were cited at length in all eight group interviews. Community members in every group interview spoke of the outrageous length of time it took to see a general practitioner in the Jane-Finch community. Some respondents said that a visit to a doctor in Jane-Finch was a whole-day activity, involving waiting times that ranged from one to three hours, even with a booked appointment. Many people saw the lack of doctors and the long wait times as discouraging and a deterrent to going to the doctor. Community members also spoke of the disproportionate number of walk-in clinics compared to family doctors who are willing to accept new patients, and were unhappy at what they saw as an inferior level of service provided by walk-in clinics. A further point of contention was that of the often-present language barriers between doctors and patients, which was perceived as detrimental to receiving quality health care in the community. There is only one community health centre in the community that incorporates translators as a part of their working team, and the vast majority of many walk-in clinics do not have resources for translators. In addition to concerns about the lack of doctors, there were also concerns about dentists that focused more on their affordability, with requests for free or affordable for all groups on a sliding scale within the community. There were also concerns about the lengthy wait for ambulances to respond to emergencies and shootings in the community.

With regard to mental health services, many participants spoke to the lack of awareness of such programs existing in the neighbourhood. Many people said that they would not know where to go or who to ask about these programs. They also spoke to the issue of those agencies that provide these services not being forthcoming with promotion of these programs and services. When asked about positive and negative experiences, many of those who engaged with mental health issues claimed that their experiences of ill health were exacerbated by the professional they consulted not being proactive or not understanding the full range of factors that could contribute to mental health.

Our analysis of the responses generated by the set of questions administered in our group interviews found that accessibility to healthy food in Jane-Finch has proven to be a paramount barrier to a healthy life. Research participants spoke of high prices for healthy produce and of easy access to fast food in the Jane-Finch area. They discussed how difficult it is to sustain healthy eating practices when healthy food is more expensive in this part of the city and is of a lower quality. They spoke, for example, of their experiences buying fruit that lasted only two days, and comparing this to fruit and other fresh produce bought in establishments outside Jane-Finch that lasted longer.

In a number of the groups, particularly groups with a higher concentration of mothers, the topic of food banks was an emerging theme that generated insightful responses. Food banks were used by members of the research groups, who voiced their displeasure both with the insufficient number of food banks to serve the increased need for free food, as well as with the poor quality of food available from these food banks. Many felt that such food would not improve healthy eating, but contribute to the maintenance of an unhealthy lifestyle. Residents also spoke of receiving expired food from community food banks, and of receiving food, such as Kraft Dinner, Uncle Ben Rice meals, Campbell's Soup, and Animal Crackers, that did not allow them to make healthy meals for themselves and their children.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Questions relating to social development generated the most discussion in the majority of the group interviews. A number of pressing issues and intersecting themes emerged. In relation to education, the quality of education in schools in the Jane-Finch area was an issue that was discussed at length. Research participants spoke of large class sizes and the lack of resources in schools as barriers to children's education and of the impact of the poor quality of education on the neighbourhood.

Also of interest to the research participants were the barriers that exist to adults returning to school. These barriers included unstable finances, lack of child care, and lack of information about existing programs. In the adult-aged groups, there was a pervasive theme of a lack of programs in the community targeted at supporting adults in their educational endeavours in opposition to the many programs supporting youth aged 15-29. To the adult research group participants, these barriers acted as deterrents to them seeking to engage in further education.

The quality of housing in Jane-Finch was another issue discussed by the research participants. Residents were concerned about a lack of accountability on the part of landlords (both public and private) to provide high quality housing. This lack of accountability has led to issues such as rodent infestations, eroding infrastructure, and residents being exposed to other health hazards due to a backlog of work orders. Residents who lived in TCHC housing spoke of an abundance of vacant units in their buildings that are deemed unliveable. In spite of an increasing waiting list for TCHC housing, little has been done to fix these units. Residents feel that more work has been done to "revitalize" their community in terms of exterior face-lifts to TCHC housing, but that little has been done to fix critical concerns in relation to housing. For those residents who owned their own homes, high property taxes were also a major concern.

Groups also expanded on security issues within the community, and how community safety impacts upon other aspects of life. Residents were concerned about the numerous drug houses in the area, but also about the non-existence of security personnel, including non-functioning security cameras. They also spoke of over-policing in the community, and the profiling of black youth, and that the increased police presence in the area has not left them feeling more safe but more anxious.

Other issues that emerged included the lack of sports and recreation facilities, and the extra social and economic burdens placed upon those residents having to support other family members beyond their immediate nuclear family, in particular supporting elderly parents.



# COMMUNITY DEMANDS AND TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the shortfalls spoken about in the research groups encompass programs at all three levels of government; poorly run and poorly funded programs from a federal standpoint can directly affect the mandate of a municipally or provincially administered program. It follows that all levels of government are culpable and implicated; a cohesive and collaborative approach across levels of government to funding and mitigating the barriers faced by residents is needed. Hence, while the TSNS is a municipal level report, the indicators used in the report require us to be aware that sole responsibility cannot rest with the municipal government.

Needless to say there are also interactions between economic, social and health spheres. It is clear, for example, that both mentally and physically unhealthy children and communities can have extremely negative interactions with an unresponsive and a disproportionately underfunded education system. The themes and issues that emerged in our research should not be entirely surprising, and the kinds of change that the residents of Jane-Finch hope to see over the next five years are not out of reach. In addition to longer-term and comprehensive demands, many simple demands were made that could see the overall quality of life in Jane-Finch improve in considerably shorter period of time. Based on community demands, the TASK Force has made a series of recommendations that will inform our actions within the next five years.

Following are the highlights of the demands made by residents from the group interviews for progress by 2020.

## ECONOMIC DOMAINS

- Provide universal child care
- Provide free Wheel Transit for seniors and people with disabilities
- Reduce auto insurance by insurance companies for residents of Jane-Finch
- Eliminate the extra charge for transit across the GTA border
- Put restrictions on temporary employment agencies and enforce regulations and require them to offer secure employment and reduce insecure and sporadic work, with no paid benefits and low wages
- Provision of other sources of employment other than those provided by employment agencies
- Recognition of accreditation and work experience outside Canada
- Wage equity for all workers (for instance no separate minimum wage for students)

## HEALTHY LIVES DOMAINS

- Remove the \$50 ambulance fee
- Reduce wait times for ambulances
- Increase the availability of free or affordable dentists
- Creation of a publically funded drug/alcohol rehab centre
- Improve access to health care needs in terms of the increased availability of doctors and providing translators for medical personnel
- Increase numbers of family physicians and reduce the number of walk-in clinics
- Access to better quality food in both stores and food banks
- Increase the number of food banks to serve the needs to the community
-



Photo 9. May Day community meeting, 2015.  
(Photo courtesy of Errol Young, JFAAP.wordpress.com)

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAINS

- Open more shelters, community spaces and support groups for women and LGBTQ community members
- Create more subsidies for landlords to increase the quality of buildings and not increase rent
- Create more mixed-income housing
- Increase the accountability of the TCH and the issues to which this gives rise (For instance health hazards repairs and maintenance)
- Increase the amount of quality TCH accommodation
- Provide more security in residential areas; for instance, many security doors in TCH units are broken and not repaired
- Increase and enforce rent control
- Revitalize community housing, “don’t just fix outside”
- Increase the poor quality of primary and secondary education
- Increase the resources in schools for both students and parents
- Have smaller class sizes in schools
- Eliminate barriers to adults returning to high school and post-secondary education
- Stop over policing in the neighbourhood
- Provide sports and recreation facilities
- Provide facilities for intergenerational care
- Engage youth in leadership roles; i.e. more youth representatives in decision-making
- 

## GOVERNMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

- Increase funding for community programs
- The city should report annually on how they spend money in NIAs and show how they spend all the money that comes to Jane-Finch
- Agencies need to be more transparent
- More dissemination of knowledge about services available to residents
- Political representatives (City Councillors, MPPs, MPs and school trustees) must be held accountable on an ongoing basis
- Increase funding and other resources from government institutions to enhance the quality and accessibility of social services within the NIAs
- There should be a system to track work orders in TCH buildings
- Less quick fixes, band aid solutions, and more real change

## The Research Team of the Jane Finch TSNS recommendations:

### ECONOMIC DOMAINS

- A. Increase minimum wage to reflect the cost of living
- B. Create living wage and job quality standards
- C. Temporary private employment agencies must be regulated to support local residents in securing decent jobs i.e., at minimum wage or above with some degree of permanency
- D. The City of Toronto must create and implement specific plans on job development within the NIAs
- E. Any construction in Jane-Finch must have a Community Benefits Agreement that ensures at least 50% of those hired are local people who (if needed) receive training and are subsequently hired for the job
- F. Increased funding for social infrastructure to be part of any new or expanding developments within the NIAs
- G. Large stakeholders (York University, Seneca College, public library, hospitals, and City of Toronto organizations) need to enter into an agreement to increase their involvement in the Jane-Finch Community with a focus on specific social and economic targets including increased access to post-secondary education and the creation of hiring practices with specific targets whereby local residents have priority for hiring into new jobs
- H. The City to develop and implement a city-wide universal child-care program
- I. The City to increase access across regional transportation boundaries by eliminating double fares
- J. Free and accessible Wheel Transit for seniors and people with disabilities

### HEALTHY LIVES DOMAINS:

- A. Funds relating to Section 37 of the Ontario's Planning Act, which guarantees the right to a healthy environment to the people of Ontario, must be equitably distributed across all neighbourhoods, with special considerations given to the NIAs
- B. All health care providers present within the local area (including Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN), hospitals, CAMH, and private practitioners) must coordinate planning and policy objectives to ensure increased availability of:
  - (i) family doctors (and not walk in clinics)
  - (ii) nurses
  - (iii) accessible mental health service providers and facilities
  - (iv) The expansion of free dental services to low income adults
- C. The LHIN must play a more central and inclusive role in health planning in Jane-Finch
- D. An emergency mental health centre (such as that of CAMH) and a rehabilitation centre both be established within the area
- E. Increased enforcement of public health and safety bylaws to protect tenants of both social and private housing in the community
- F. Create a network of community-based food bank distributors to coordinate, monitor and implement distribution of quality, healthy, accessible and culturally appropriate food
- G. Walk-in clinics to provide free translation services to ensure accessibility
- H. Establish a working group consisting of TPH, HRRH, BCCHC and other community based service providers to review the above health recommendations and to establish a work plan to implement the relevant recommendations
- I. Meet with the Central Local Health Integrated Network to share the report and prioritize the feasibility of our recommendations

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAINS:

### *Housing*

- A. The City to provide information to community residents, organizations and city services providers about its policies related to the “Sanctuary City” in order to proactively allow undocumented migrants in Toronto to access services regardless of immigration status without fearing any consequences.
- B. The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC):
  - (i) Develop a transparent social housing waiting list and make this accessible to applicants and advocates.
  - (ii) Ensure that 100% of its housing and subsidized units in Jane-Finch are in a state of full repair, and are ready for habitation by 2020.
  - (iii) Make accessible a tracking system for repairs, whereby tenants and TCHC management can check the status of their TCHC work orders.

### *Education*

- A. An equitable allocation of services and resources to schools in Jane-Finch, which would include more teachers, special education classes, and smaller classes, in order to improve graduation rates.
- B. Develop and support projects that aim at increasing awareness within the community about educational opportunities.
- C. Maximize local enrolments and improve graduation rates of local residents in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions in the area (such as York University and Seneca College).
- D. Develop free College and University bridging programs for residents of Jane-Finch, both youth and adults.
- E. Increase the number of scholarships offered to residents in the community.
- F. Provide additional financial support to students that live in TCH.
- G. Enhance transitional programs for internationally trained professionals and tradespeople to facilitate the recognition of international accreditation within the shortest period and increased employment opportunities in their related fields.

### *Policing*

The over-policing of the Jane-Finch community must be urgently addressed. Police should immediately cease the practice of carding and work with the City to end the policy altogether.

## GOVERNMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

- A. Politicians from the three levels of government - municipal, provincial and federal - must work collaboratively with the community to ensure improvement in the three equity domains: Economic Opportunities, Social Development and Healthy Lives.
- B. Institutions and community agencies develop a more transparent and creative accountability systems and framework to allow for stories and indicators of success to be disseminated on an ongoing basis.
- C. Establish a Working Group to explore the feasibility of a central Community Hub, School Hubs, and other information or service centre opportunities that provides access to information in the community.
- D. Task Force members will meet with relevant government officials from the CHLIN, Ministry of Children and Youth, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Ministry of Labour to share the research and to determine how their ministries will support the recommendations.
- E. Distribute this report to relevant governments, social service agencies and community organizations so that it may be utilized for action and social change initiatives.
- F. Establish Working Groups on Economic Opportunity, Social Development and Healthy Lives to ensure implementation of the above recommendations. Each Working Group must have a minimum of two residents participating and funding will be secured to ensure they are appropriately reimbursed for their participation and associated costs (childcare, TTC).

# CONCLUSION

What we can gather from our data is that community residents in Jane-Finch have very clear goals and specific concerns in mind when it comes to neighbourhood improvement in their area. However, there is a critical disjuncture between the TSNS priority indicators, the specific needs identified by the community, and the ability of the city to address those needs. A major flaw within the TSNS itself is that the domains it seeks to improve frequently fall outside the sphere of municipal control. There promises to be a great deal of difficulty in actually implementing any kind of meaningful long-term intervention plans unless these disparities are addressed early on.

Our Research Team has stressed and prioritized the involvement of community organizations and members, and hopes to offer results that are not only valid, but to present them in a way that is accessible and above all useful to the community. We hope to avoid participating in an empty ritual, and to engage the community in a meaningful process, facilitating and supporting their critical engagement with the daunting labyrinth of government that controls planning, and to help to influence policy-makers and those who have been given the power to make decisions.

We hope we have created a comprehensive, useful roadmap to help inform future policy concerning Jane-Finch. Our idea is that with a strong power-base and plan within the community, with the help of community leaders and organizations, and with sustained financial resource allotment, the community can gain considerable power and influence over the outcomes of decisions concerning their futures. Our report's recommendations are based on what local stakeholders are concerned about and what they want to see in Jane-Finch by the TSNS 2020 target. We present what we believe to be realistic goals that will hopefully inform future policy-decisions in our community.



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# Appendix A

## TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAND CURRENTLY OCCUPIED BY THE JANE-FINCH NEIGHBOURHOOD

Pre-colonization: Settlement in this area is known to date back to between 1450-1550 AD (and may well predate this time). What came to be known as Parson's Site was an Iroquois/Huron Wendat village where evidence of several longhouses (each accommodating up to fifty people) dating back to between 1400s onwards. (DWAC et al., 1986, p. 5; Williamson, 2010). Later excavations of the Parson's Site near York University's campus revealed that the space was home to over 2,000 people for over 20 years (Van Nierop, 2013; Smith, 2011; University of Toronto Department of Anthropology, [Parsons], 2000).

1650s-1701: The Mississauga conquered much of the southern Ontario region, dispersing and expelling the Iroquois (Karcich, 2013). Between 1699 and 1701, intense negotiations between the Wendat, the Algonquin, the French, the Iroquois and the British led to treaties of "assistance and cooperation" (Karcich, 2013). Over the next hundred years, the British colonial administration gradually appropriated land from the Mississauga through treaty signage, eventually gaining total control over this important trade region (Karcich, 2013).

1798: Homesteaders begin to settle the area, arriving mostly after the American Revolution, lured by First Lieutenant Governor General John Graves Simcoe's promises of free 200 acre lots to any "law abiding Christian who was capable of manual labour" (Downsview Weston Action Community et al., 1986, p. 7).

1800: The community of Kaiserville (later Elia) is established, and becomes a home to many German and Dutch settlers arriving from Pennsylvania. By 1843 a village has begun to emerge around a mill (at what is now Steeles Avenue and Jane Street).

1853: The railway comes to the North York area.

End of the 19th century: Kaiserville declines, and Edgeley, a village in Vaughan Township, begins to develop more rapidly.

1922: The township of North York is created.

1950s: This period marks the end of rural zoning in North York. Cheap housing and rapid commercial development erupt.

1955: The Black Creek area is acquired by the Toronto Conservation Authority and becomes a protected area.

1960s: Construction begins on new subdivisions in the area. Five new neighbourhoods are identified in the original plans: University Heights, Jane Heights, Black Creek, Humbermede, and Humber Summit. In 1962, city planners proposed development of remaining farm lots in the area into a "model suburban community with a mixture of low-, medium-, and high-density housing, employment, commercial, and social services" (Inner City Outreach, 2014).

1965: York University opens. It expands until 1972, not quite succeeding at integrating itself into the surrounding community.

1969: District 10 Plan is released, allowing for the construction of a "substantial number of multiple family dwellings commensurate with the anticipated demand in this area over the next decade or two" (District 10 Plan, 1969, pp. 5).

1970s: Rapid population growth leads to the construction of numerous high-rise apartment blocks along the Jane-Finch corridor. There is a gradually increasing concentration of low-income residents in the neighbourhood, and the area consequently suffers from overcrowding in its schools, as well as a lack of services and well-paying jobs.

1976: Downsview Weston Action Community (DWAC), first instituted in 1973 by a local alderman as an umbrella organization of community organizations providing support services in Jane-Finch, is incorporated.

1978: As early as 1978, a Jane/Finch Community & Family Centre report identified structural problems in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood Planning: Social Evolution of Jane-Finch Area report describes accounts of residents describing housing as “aesthetically displeasing, depressing,” and “sterile,” due to features such as “limited living area, a lack of private space, identical design.” Reports detailing community concerns such as poor design, youth unemployment, health problems, insufficient program funding, a lack of services, and overcrowding emerge, revealing “a suburban setting with all the problems of a deteriorating inner city core” (Ede, 1978).

1980: Peter McLaren’s *Cries From the Corridor*, is published. This popular national bestseller detailed McLaren’s experience as a teacher in Jane-Finch. McLaren himself later criticizes his own work, calling it a “journalistic description of my experience with little analysis that could have been—and was—read as blaming the students and their families for the violence that permeated their lives outside of the school context” (Poza, 2003, p.1).

1990s: Under its “Common Sense Revolution”, Mike Harris’ Progressive Conservative provincial government implements reforms, focusing on four goals: “tax reduction, balancing the budget, reducing the size of government, and greater emphasis on individual economic responsibility” (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2010). Programs and services in Jane-Finch, especially health services, become less functional. Hospitals are directed to be self-governing. Responsibility for social housing is downloaded to the municipalities, affecting Jane-Finch’s disproportionately high stock of public housing.

1997: Humber River Regional Hospital (HRRH) is founded, merging three major hospitals: Humber Memorial, North Western, and York Finch (Agnew Peckham, 2015).

1998: Toronto amalgamates its municipalities.

Early 2000s: A United Way report finds that throughout the 1990s, a large number Toronto’s families experienced severe declines in income, a trend which did not occur across Canada as a whole (United Way, 2002). The income gap between neighbourhoods grew sharply, implying that “trickle down” economics, rising rents, low vacancy rates, and the government withdrawal from housing, a low minimum wage, and increased part-time and self employment, were having detrimental effects on certain neighbourhoods (United Way, 2002).

2002: Between 1992 and 2002, the average rental cost in Toronto nearly doubles.

2003: Prime Minister Paul Martin puts forward the New Deal for Cities and Communities.

2005: Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy is released, identifying thirteen “Priority Neighbourhoods” (also referred to as “Priority Areas” and “Priority Improvement Neighbourhoods”).

2006: Prime Minister Stephen Harper withdraws federal support for the New Deal project.

2012: An updated and amended version of the TSNS is released.

# Appendix B

## Community Group Interviews

A call out for participants through our contacts was sent out mid-January 2015;  
Interested parties were contacted during the first week of February and meeting times and locations for research group meetings were determined;  
Two resident group facilitators were hired and trained;  
Research group interviews were conducted from mid February to mid April.  
Letter sent to prospective groups:

Thank you for your group's interest in participating in our project. Our focus groups are a part of a grass-roots initiative spearheaded by the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre. The initiative is in response to a publication (Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy) in which Jane-Finch as a community scored the lowest in city rankings when looking at employment, health and social determinants of health. What was even more frightening was that Jane-Finch is the most underfunded area in the City of Toronto. Our focus groups which will be led by residents from the community and will focus on gathering information from residents about what changes need to be made in this community and how should we go about these changes. With the City of Toronto and United Way at the table in our meetings, this report will serve as a resource for them when they revisit funding distribution over the next 5 years leading up to 2020. We would love to have your support in this initiative. The 8-10 participants from your group chosen will receive gift cards, snacks, bus tokens and access to child care during the meeting.

Group Interview participants were recruited through the following community initiatives and programs

Parents' Advisory Group, Early Years Centre - JFCFC, February 17, 2015 (7 participants)  
The Spot, Where YOU(th) Want To Be – JFCFC, February 17, 2015 (6 participants)  
New Path Tamil Group – JFCFC and Across Boundaries, February 18, 2015 (8 participants)  
Immigrant Women Support Group - Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women, March 12, 2015 (15 participants)  
Firgrove TCH Tenant Association, March 27, 2015 (12 participants)  
Advocacy For Change – Black Creek CHC, March 31, 2015 (8 participants)  
Jane-Finch Residents' Association for Action for Neighbourhood Change – JFCFC, April 16, 2015 (17 participants)  
Spanish-speaking Seniors' Program - JFCFC, April 22, 2015 (10 participants)

Questions for community group interviews

### SMALL GROUP 1: HEALTHY LIVES

- a. What are some of the challenges in Jane-Finch to being healthy?
- b. What is your knowledge of mental health services (ex. counselling, support groups) in the area?
- c. What are some of your positive and negative experiences with health care and healthy living in Jane-Finch?

### SMALL GROUP 2: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- a. What is your experience with local businesses in regards to employment?
- b. What barriers do youth face to securing employment?
- c. What are the barriers that lead people in Jane-Finch to end up on Ontario Works?
- d. What have been your own expected and unexpected barriers to succeeding financially in Jane-Finch?

### SMALL GROUP 3: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- a. What are some of the barriers that make it harder in Jane-Finch for youth to graduate high school?
- b. What are some of the barriers that make it harder for adults to return to high school?
- c. What are some of the barriers that make it hard for youth and adults to continue onto college/university education?
- d. What are some of the housing issues in Jane-Finch (landlords, safety)?

(Feel free to use your own experiences)

### FINAL QUESTION:

What will 2020 and onwards look like in Jane-Finch?

If Jane -Finch received increased funding over the next five years, what type of services in relation to healthy lives, jobs, and education would you like to see? Give specifics!

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