

Appreciative Inquiry Final Report
Tremont West Development Corporation

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Introduction

This Final Report on the Tremont West Development Corporation (TWDC) Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process builds upon the information shared in the Preliminary Report of December 30, 2010 and does not repeat the full content of that report. For the most full reporting on the process that led up to the January 15, 2011 Mini-Summit, please review the December 30 report (See Appendices listed below.).

The content of this document focuses on updating key elements of the December 30 report, reports fully on the January 15, 2011 Mini-Summit at which the AI interview data was engaged by a group consisting of TWDC staff, and business owners and residents who were interviewed by the consultant, Kathy Skerritt; describes some of the Mini-Summit outcomes overlap with the 2008 Strategic Investment Initiative goals; and concludes with recommendations for next steps and overarching strategic consideration for further discussion by the TWDC Board as well as recommendations for implementation at the community level.

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Revisiting the Project Purpose & Scope

The overarching purpose of this project has been to assist TWDC prepare for the design and launch of a strategic planning initiative in 2011. TWDC invited Kathy Skerritt to utilize the methodology of AI to uncover, draw conclusions about, and identify actionable recommendations as to how to build Tremont's capacity to be resilient in the face of the local and regional changes that are anticipated over the next three to five years. It was also intended to help TWDC leverage existing opportunities and create new means and methods for continuous and proactive citizen engagement, and to "call out" and empower the community to intentionally define and build its desired future.

Phase I stakeholders for the AI interview process were identified through a combination of recommendations from TWDC and block club leadership and residents, with one person included as a result of Kathy Skerritt's relationship with a former Tremont resident. Forty-one interviews were conducted (the goal was a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 50). The intention was to have as broad a representation of Tremont as possible but with such a small interview pool it was not possible to have as diverse a group as was hoped. Even so, the resulting data brings clarity to underlying values, needs, and opportunities that can shape the direction of an expanded AI in support of the strategic direction the Board and Executive Director ultimately choose and provides action recommendations that may support continuous and proactive citizen engagement.

Kathy Skerritt met with Tim Jenkins on a regular basis, as well as with Chris Garland in person or by phone on a frequent basis, to make inquiries that would keep the process aligned with TWDC expectations and to share and explore emerging data. Two Phase I Progress Reports and a Preliminary Report were submitted to TWDC between the start of the project and December 30, 2010 (see list of Appendices). In January an AI Mini-Summit was held at which the interview data was presented to Phase I stakeholders and worked with by that group to identify principle themes.

Process Summary

The Appreciative Inquiry interview protocol consisted of twelve questions designed to stimulate dialogue around experiences interviewees have had in the community or elsewhere in which positive instances of cooperation, community, and neighborliness could be recalled. The questions also explored what is of greatest importance to those living and working in Tremont, and what interviewees value most about themselves in whatever context they felt moved to share. These questions were intended to help uncover the unique gifts, talents, and qualities of the citizens of Tremont to demonstrate the values that cut across formal and informal social categories within the community.

The first people to be interviewed included Chris Garland, Chris Alvarado, and Tim Jenkins in order that they have an opportunity to provide feedback to strengthen the interview protocol as needed. Following their approval of the protocol, the full interview process began and a total of 41 interviews were conducted over a period of six weeks by Kathy Skerritt. The process culminated in an AI Mini-Summit on January 15, 2011.

The Mini-Summit

The Appreciative Inquiry Mini-Summit took place at St. Theodosius Church in Tremont. Three TWDC staff members assisted (Kristen Trolio, Scott Rosenstein, and Michelle Davis, who also managed logistical arrangements.). TWDC intern Alex Finnarn took responsibility for follow up calls to those invited. These staff members were also participants in the Mini-Summit process itself.

There were twenty-nine reservations and twenty-three confirmed participants in the Mini-Summit, plus external consultants Jean Appleby and Nancy Jacobson who provided Kathy Skerritt with on-site assistance. The facilitator's version of the Mini-Summit Agenda may be found in the Appendices.

The purpose of the Mini-Summit was for those interviewed, along with others associated with TWDC, to engage in collective meaning-making with the data from the AI interviews and do so in the context of the group's understanding of potential threats and opportunities facing Tremont over the next three to five years (extended to ten as feedback on events came forward). Led by Chris Alvarado and Chris Garland, the participants identified major events to which they think attention should be given. The intent was not to spend a significant time defining whether any particular item is a threat or opportunity but to create a general sketch of what the group sees on the horizon as potential.

Year One (2011) Threats & Opportunities

- Steelyard Commons, Phase 2
- Gateway Animal Clinic relocation due to InnerBelt bridge construction
- Canal Kiosk – Lincoln Park
- New county government
- Hotel growth
- InnerBelt bridge shutdown (3 years beginning 2011)
- Can our plan be tied into Cleveland's Long-range Plan? (leveraging funds)
- Upgrading Professor Avenue
- CMSD – transformation plan, new CEO, finances
- Activities of other organizations
- New and expanding businesses in Tremont
- Maintaining a residential neighborhood/community
- Forming partnerships
- Forming alliances
- Developing a Tremont identity that includes South of I-490 & West of I-90
- Addressing crime
- Self-organizing
- Social advocacy via the churches

Years Two to Three (2012 -- 2013) Threats & Opportunities

- Casino downtown/Flats
- Medical Mart opening
- InnerBelt bridge construction (requires social advocacy through churches for those displaced, including the homeless who frequent the neighborhood)
- Skate Park construction in the Flats
- Gay Games planning for 2014
- Council redistricting

- Metro Health
 - Attracting employees to live in Tremont
 - Facilities development
- Developing a Tremont identity that includes South of I-490 & West of I-90
 - Attracting more 20-somethings to live in Tremont
- Draw from maturing downtowners, too
- Development of Grace Hospital
- Clark Field as an asset
- Will we lose our charm?
- Tremont-Ohio City-Flats flow of people, events, etc.
- Addressing crime
- New/expanding employment opportunities downtown/Flats
- Self-organizing
- Ensure retention of the new folks
- Attract families to live in Tremont – need youth!
- Opportunities around new immigration?
- Ensure that elders can continue to live in Tremont
- Attract empty-nesters to live in Tremont
- Professor Avenue development
- CMSD
- Westside Market's 150th anniversary
- Develop collaborations with other CDCs around regional improvements

Year Five (2015) Threats & Opportunities

- Gay Games are in 2014, year four.
- Towpath Trail, Phase 4
- Extension to Whiskey Island
- Canal Basin Park development
- Emerging Bed & Breakfast sector
- InnerBelt bridge if not completed in original three year timeline
- Social advocacy (churches)
- CMSD
- Steelyard Commons continuing development
- W. 25th Street redevelopment
- Marketing Tremont to the young and to seniors
- Addressing crime
- Grassroots involvement
- Keeping people here!
- Attracting new families and youth!
- Developing a Tremont identity that includes South of I-490 & West of I-90
- Tremont Montessori

Year Ten (2021) Threats & Opportunities

- Opportunity Corridor
- Port of Cleveland Relocation
- InnerBelt bridge work ongoing?
- Social advocacy (the churches)
- CMSD
- W. 25th Street redevelopment ongoing?
- Addressing crime
- Grassroots involvement
- Keeping people here!
- Attracting new families and youth!
- Developing a Tremont identity that includes South of I-490 & West of I-90
- Tremont Montessori

Following the development of the Threats and Opportunities lists, the AI interview data was studied. It was presented in the form of six sets of data grouped by original interview question or one that represented a consolidation of questions when it was evident that the responses were tending to be part of a theme that spanned questions.

During the process of organizing into subgroups to work with the data, one set of comments was mistakenly combined by a participant with another data set. This led to some confusion as one group found it was working with two different sets of data. This was resolved by having that group choose the data most compelling for them and setting the other aside.

This left five data sets. Participants were asked to discuss the interview data within the subgroups and to identify themes that stood out for them. Each subgroup was asked to agree on one stand-out theme for the data set that they had been given and write it on a sheet posted on the wall. Because the data were so rich, it was agreed that sub-themes could be chosen if the subgroup felt the data were particularly compelling, i.e. would expand upon the central theme or help define the theme more clearly. This process resulted in the identification of five principle themes.

In the next step each subgroup presented its findings and invited the larger group to comment. Participants were asked to stand by the theme they each found most compelling, resulting in the formation of new groups known as the Theme Task Forces. The Theme Task Forces met over lunch to begin discussing their favored themes. After lunch the Theme Task Forces engaged in a cooperative process to identify actions that can activate and support their theme at any level of the community. These were then posted alongside the original theme/subtheme postings on the walls and large group discussion followed.

Finally, participants were asked to “vote” for the actions which they felt most important to Tremont, or which they found personally compelling, by placing stickers next to those items on the wall sheets containing the themes, subthemes, and recommended actions.

The Five Principle Themes

Note: The themes are in order of most important to least per participant feedback; however, this does not mean that there is significant difference between the one at the top of the list and the one at the bottom. All five principle themes were strongly endorsed by both the Theme Task Forces that brought them forward and the overall group. A closer look at the subthemes and recommended actions for each principle theme reveals extensive overlap in terms of potential for action and relative to the values that drive the community.

1. Productive Citizen Engagement
2. Community
3. Unification
4. Communication
5. People!

Theme One: Productive Citizen Engagement

Subthemes identified for this theme include *Defines the Community*, *Social Inclusiveness*, *Collaboration (residents & businesses together)*, and *Safety*.

This Theme Task Force provided additional comments including that one of the ways productive citizen engagement defines the community is through the social services infrastructure, i.e. Merrick House, St. Augustine, TWDC, halfway houses and that civic engagement and action are important for the social well-being of the community. They also shared that collaboration requires micro-action with all levels of the community (corporate, small business, residents) working together and that social inclusiveness and diversity are important for there to be productive civic engagement. They noted that there is a grassroots response against gentrification in Tremont yet people look out for each other and are highly self-organizing, both strengths of the community overall. Further, people in Tremont are willing to give of themselves – there is much generosity in the community – and most feel that getting things done is an important aspect of sustaining civic engagement.

Action recommendations to animate this theme in the community include a) building stronger feedback loops for instance, the already initiated quarterly Block Club leadership meetings, launching a second TWDC community-wide membership meeting to share information, building a better website to support Internet communications, and recognizing and celebrating successes; b) doing community outreach such as taking AI to unmet groups and improving communication mechanisms within these groups; c) ensuring a diverse housing supply; d) strengthening school-based civic engagement by, for instance, linking the Tremont History Project to the schools curricula; and e) increasing intergenerational activities, resources, and education.

Participant voting resulted in *strengthening school-based civic engagement* as the most favored action.

Theme Two: Community

Subthemes identified for this theme include *Home is the Core (family & friends) of a Circle of Arts, Theatre, Diversity, Convenience, Safety, Schools, Work, and Play*. Discussion of the theme with the larger group pulled forward *Action That Gives Neighbors A Sense of Ownership*, and *Ask for Forgiveness, Not Permission – Just Do It!* as additional subthemes.

Action recommendations to animate this theme in the community include a) making opportunities for celebration with free events, block parties, and in the bars and restaurants; b) keeping Tremont safe with cameras on the street (only at key boundary points), eyes on the street (watching out for each other), and Block Clubs fostering continuous dialogue among the neighbors to build real trust; and c) ensuring diverse participation through strong schools, finding ways that all voices can be heard and active, reaching out to and actively engaging with under-represented groups, building TWDC representation to be more representative of the neighborhoods, and creating TWDC board outreach to the neighborhoods.

Participant voting resulted in *keeping Tremont safe* as the most favored action.

Theme Three: Unification

Subthemes identified for this theme include *Building Community, Social & Economic Inclusion, Respectful Interaction*, and *A Livable Community* as factors in creating a unified community. Discussion of the theme with the larger group pulled forward *Safety* as a subtheme and the strong admonition to make Unification as defined here a specific goal in the strategic plan.

Action recommendations to animate this theme in the community include a) establishing at least one community garden in each Block Club area; b) Creating alliances with/among the Farmer’s Market, Tremont Urban Food System, Hooper Farm, and Fresh Fork; c) within Block Clubs, creating core groups of new plus established residents who will create and maintain open lines of communication with residents; and d) compiling, maintaining, and making available a comprehensive list of social services available in Tremont.

Participant voting resulted in a tie for most favored action between *keeping Tremont safe* and *establishing at least one community garden in each Block Club area*.

Theme Four: Communication

The Theme Task Force for this theme began by sharing a proposition to explain their theme, that *“Through open and honest communication we identify and build shared values and needs and appreciation of differences to achieve and make use of inclusivity, tolerance, community involvement and appreciating human resources.”*

Subthemes identified for this theme include *Shared Values & Needs, Appreciation of Differences, Inclusivity, Tolerance, Community Involvement*, and *Appreciating Human Resources*. Discussion of the theme with the larger group pulled forward *Safety* as a subtheme

and the statement “*The capacity for debate and coolness (emotionally) is important to the type of communication desired.*”

Action recommendations to animate this theme in the community include a) communication gatherings to share what is happening, i.e. social gatherings with ice cream, beer (non-lite!), and world cafes!; b) data collection such as surveys, finding the Grace Hospital babies who might become residents, finding the church parishioners who have moved to the suburbs and inviting their engagement, etc.; c) finding more new faces to participate; d) connecting disparate parts of Tremont; and, d) developing more social communications and informing people about the strategic planning process.

Participant voting resulted in *communication gatherings to share what is happening, i.e. social gatherings with ice cream, beer (non-lite!), and world cafes* as the most favored action.

Theme Five: People!

Subthemes identified for this theme include *Diversity, Residents (long-time & new), and Sense of Community*. Discussion of the theme with the larger group pulled forward *Safety* as a subtheme.

Action recommendations to animate this theme in the community include a) have efficient, factual dissemination of information through multi-level communications techniques, including mailings, flyering, door-to-door, email, newsletter, Block Club outreach, phone tree, church bulletins, Welcome Wagon (through the Block Clubs), Block Watch, block parties, responding to questions, feedback, concerns so people are “feeling heard”, and creating a “buddy system” to watch out for each other and keep all informed.

Participant voting resulted in *having efficient, factual dissemination of information through multi-level communications techniques* as the most favored action.

Threats & Opportunities and the Five Principle Themes

During the Mini-Summit process of meaning-making with the AI data, the Threats and Opportunities lists that had been built by the group during the morning remained visible throughout the room. While the day’s process was not intended to specifically revisit that information it was understood that another step in the process would be to eventually look at the Threats and Opportunities in light of the community’s aspirations, needs, and values as identified in the Five Principle Themes. This is the challenge – to decide as a community how the Five Principle Themes, or other community value statements that might yet emerge, can be functionally related to “shovel in the ground” projects as well as to regional events that might have a significant effect on life in Tremont.

Ultimately, an assessment of the Threats and Opportunities list through the lens of the community’s aspirations, needs, and values is one that should involve multiple stakeholders as part of the strategic planning process. However, a preliminary search for patterns between them suggests the following:

1. The top voted theme of Productive Citizen Engagement points to a willingness in the community to participate in meaningful ways in the decision-making processes of TWDC as well as in the day-to-day cultivation of a shared life where safety, straight forward communications in multiple formats, respect for the inherent dignity of others regardless of differences, building connections across generations, ethnicities, and economic status, and celebration of the distinctive qualities and people of Tremont are the presumed operating values of the community.

The value of this relative to the Threats and Opportunities list is there is energy for forming partnerships and alliances at the micro-level of the street and the block that can support the patterning of partnerships and alliances needed at the “top” between TWDC and other CDC’s and regional entities. If TWDC takes on partnerships and alliances and invites the community to do likewise at-scale, teaching the community the benefits of leveraging their voices in an organized way on a regional scale in cooperation with TWDC when difficult discussions must be engaged relative to regional development forces that may exert themselves in or around Tremont, there is a strengthening of community influence altogether.

This is about intentionally equipping the community to act on its own behalf as it did when saving Tremont Montessori through finding ways to support the self-organizing tendency that already exists and not taking it for granted. Many of the action recommendations made by the Theme Task Forces serve to support this self-organizing tendency by building pathways of communication and direct person-to-person interaction in positive contexts.

2. The interviewed group is very articulate about the need to intentionally attract new residents, including employees of Metro Health and other institutions, as well as empty-nesters, 20-somethings, the anticipated increased number of tourists, and the expected employees of the anticipated downtown and Flats projects. Providing tangible help to launch some or all of the action recommendations associated with the Five Principle Themes supports this intention to attract new citizens to Tremont by magnifying person-to-person and neighborhood-to-neighborhood social and cultural bonds that are among the positive attractors that draw in new residents and commercial visitors, and contribute to newcomers making a commitment to stay.

The community valuing of diversity, supported at the street and block levels through person-to-person actions and events that ensure that diversity of all types is intentionally celebrated and cultivated, may help TWDC strengthen its case to community development funders for expanded financial and other support for restoration of existing, and development of new, infrastructure. Supporting action on the street and block levels may help to focus the citizens on the link between what the community demonstrates in terms of being community and the enriched quality of life that may result as more opportunities are made available to Tremont because of its commitment to diversity as a value-in-action.

3. In Theme One is the sentence "... one of the ways productive citizen engagement defines the community is through the social services infrastructure, i.e. Merrick House, St. Augustine, TWDC, halfway houses...

The inclusion of TWDC in this list points to "mission confusion" as to the purpose of TWDC, or perhaps even CDCs in general. The perception that TWDC is a social services agency contributes to resistance to the organization when people feel they are not being heard or their needs met in certain ways unrelated to community development. This could become very limiting in terms of garnering community support in the face of a strong push from outside Tremont to create changes not suited to its community qualities or internal development agenda, for example, if arise at the borders or in Tremont as a result of regional goals to develop the urban core. In the face of such pressures an internally divided community is more easily exploited by outside interests.

Relative to the social services and community support systems, Mini-Summit participants identified community processes (i.e. buddy systems, phone trees, door-to-door contact of some frequency, etc.) that if implemented might relieve some of the expectations that TWDC act as a convener of social systems or provide emergency help to people in times of trouble, i.e. when their furnace quits on a cold day and they cannot afford a technician. Block level knowledge and networking that provides neighbor-to-neighbor help to connect with appropriate agencies will go a long way toward recalibrating expectations of what is to be provided by TWDC as a perceived social services agency and seat of governance in Tremont, and what the people can do to help each other.

TWDC helping to set up alternative systems, consolidate information about available services, and support efforts at the Block Club level to create more intimate and "got your back" community spirit-in-action through the launch of some of the action recommendations within the next six months will support this shift.

This is about resilience at the level of TWDC via minimizing the redirecting of its energy to worthy but not mission-specific needs of the community. What TWDC is, and what it can/will do and not do, clearly and repeatedly stated, will free it up to respond at the macro-level with less misunderstanding at the micro-level.

Alignment of AI, Five Principle Themes, & 2007 Strategic Investment Initiative

In 2007 TWDC was competitively selected by Neighborhood Progress, Inc. as one of six CDCs to receive additional financial support and staff resources as part of the Strategic Investment Initiative (SII) (funded by The Cleveland, Gund and Mandel Foundations and Enterprise Community Partners). The SII "...introduces change on many fronts, taking a broad, holistic approach to neighborhood development...(it) concentrates resources in smaller target areas and give community organizations incentives to work toward the full spectrum of neighborhood success: measurable change in property values, homeownership and occupancy rates, and additional private investment."

The AI process was intended to probe more deeply into the community values dynamic of the neighborhood to bring forward its “positive core” when it is at its best rather than to validate the SII goals and objectives which are more oriented to the physical development of Tremont as the means to build a sense of community identity. However, there are several points of alignment that bear mentioning. While not intended to be a point-by-point comparison of SII to the AI data, this section does bring forward some of the key factors that might be further considered in strategic planning for 2011.

1. The SII goal of establishing “...a clear identity that represents the social, cultural and physical characteristics that are uniquely Tremont.” continues to be a desired outcome as can be seen in the Threats and Opportunities list (“Developing a Tremont identity that includes South of I-490 & West of I-90”) and implied throughout the Five Principle Themes in terms of social and cultural aspirations toward more vibrant community at the street and block levels. When speaking about creating identity, most people named ways of behaving, qualities of leadership, looking out for each other, making sure everyone knows what is happening, etc. as they experience community identity. More than one person stated that “Tremont the brand and Tremont the lived experience are two different things.” The branding of Tremont’s geography, infrastructure, and commerce for marketing purposes is not the identity that defines most residents experience and that, therefore, drives their decision-making relative to when and how to engage productively (See Principle Theme One). Aligning the brand with the lived experience is the challenge.
2. The SII goal of establishing “...themes for sub-neighborhoods that give them an identity in the greater neighborhood” and the repeatedly mentioned issue in the AI interviews of some areas of Tremont not feeling part of the larger community are aligned. While the SII plan provides the needed framing of physical defining characteristics of the neighborhoods, those interviewed tended to speak instead of the psychological attributes and other human qualities that make a neighborhood a neighborhood, or by which specific neighborhoods are known. This is not in opposition to the physical defining characteristics. The AI data can inform the development orientation to the neighborhoods in a variety of ways, in particular by providing a basis for addressing the sub-themes of the SII plan.

Duck Island’s defining characteristics in the SII plan include “predominantly residential development supported by commercial and green space, adjacent to the Rapid Transit Station, transit oriented development potential, great views, and direct connections to Downtown, Ohio City and the Cuyahoga Valley.”

In the AI interviews the neighborhood was described as being “...almost a Tremont-in-miniature in the heart of Cleveland but completely quiet...Duck Island’s contribution remains a possibility – there’s something there but I don’t know how to draw it out... Duck Island is a little bit isolated, very independent, and strong...”

Lincoln Height’s defining characteristics in the SII plan include a “strong foundation of residential structures, history – first of the neighborhood districts to be settled/developed,

the historic Liminis Theatre, affordable housing options available, and large-scale new development opportunities to expand the housing styles offered.”

In the AI interviews the neighborhood was described as having “... many people who have lived their lives there and who are passionate, very frank and have a real fighting spirit – they have backbone... Lincoln Heights is very protective of itself and a little contrary...”

North Tremont is not a “neighborhood” that is recognized by residents. Tremont neighborhoods tend to be defined by residents in the context of Block Clubs or long-established names. The SII plan’s description of North Tremont includes what is known as the Central Tremont neighborhood (Professor Street), and the neighborhood more widely known as South of Jefferson. It is described in SII as having the “... Professor Avenue business and entertainment district, Lincoln Park and the neighborhood festivals, unique infill housing that adds new housing types – Valley View, townhome developments, Gospel Press, etc., a growing economic diversity, an established artist community, and a regional draw.” It may also include North of Literary.

In the AI interviews the South of Jefferson neighborhood was described as having “...had difficult discussions around property development for example – there’s lots of yelling and it gets really polarized...” and the Central Tremont neighborhood was described as being “...the core of the overall neighborhood...” but little in the way of human qualities expressed. North of Literary was described as “...great at volunteerism... (they) turned their club into a fun experience and they are positively supportive of everything...”

SoTre, like North Tremont, is not a neighborhood name recognized by residents. It is described in the SII plan as having “...strong institutional presence (with) MetroHealth, Public Library branch, three schools, multiple churches, family oriented residential streets, mixture of ethnic heritages, historic blocks along Scranton Road, and convenience retail to support the community.”

In the AI interviews, the neighborhoods that Skerritt thinks are contained in the SoTre designation are MetroHealth, described in the interviews as “an opportunity waiting to happen” and Mentor/Castle/Clark which “...is about families...”

Other comments that can be used as lenses when assessing the neighborhoods from the SII plan point-of-view include:

“There is a sense throughout Tremont of history being intact and that people have lived here a very long time – it has a kind of mid to late 20th century character & this sense of who lived here before and what it looked like is easier for me to access.”

“The South end is where the “real residential Tremont” occurs...”

“Tremont’s neighborhoods are so cut up by the highways that some people on the other side really feel disconnected and seem to fight so hard to prevent things from happening – it gets really ugly and I hope that we can learn to care about each other more.”

“Auburn is the Energizer Bunny, a real workhorse...”

“Old Tremont attends to its business and doesn’t have much to do with things outside the neighborhood...”

These more qualitative characteristics are shared as a reminder that when taken into account the “lived experience” of Tremont can point to ways of working with residents that may increase cooperation – when communications reflect intimate knowledge of the unique needs and aspirations of a neighborhood it may be possible to more specifically articulate the mutual benefits to be gained by any action that affects that neighborhood. It may also provide insight into how to design implementation of overarching development goals in ways unique to each neighborhood such that residents see that in the midst of necessary and significant change, decisions are made and actions taken in ways that demonstrate a deep regard for their dignity -- a core community value.

The groups that call themselves “neighborhoods” by virtue of shared histories or world views and dismiss the definitions that make marketing sense from a meta-perspective may, when approached in ways that honor and cooperate with their unique talents, inclinations, and very human aspirations, provide real energy and innovative ideas for important development actions. The alignment of people’s “right to be”, seriously acknowledged and accounted for by those who hold the “right to act” on behalf of Tremont, may ease the way when difficult decisions have to be made. The challenge is in understanding in any given situation what definitions are being used by those involved to define what is happening and ensuring that everyone is working off with the same understandings and presumptions.

3. The SII goal of embracing “...the fact that in urban neighborhoods that are both established and evolving, economic and social diversity should be celebrated.” is firmly endorsed by the AI data. When asked about what is the single most important thing Tremont has contributed to their lives, several commented on diversity. Typical is the following: “...the many forms of diversity including economic, ethnic, longevity of residency (without that there is no shared history to bind the community)...the neighborhoods would be dead without an age mix...there is a resonance of opinions and viewpoints that exists all the time – it is the antithesis of the sterile, homogeneous suburban community...” It was also noted that this cannot be taken for granted, that sustaining diversity while also building Tremont as a brand is an artful matter that requires skillful leadership (defined in part in the interviews as respectful, knowledgeable, and emotionally mature) and a willingness on the part of residents and business owners to be intentional in both welcoming new residents and visitors and sustaining relationships over time. This “getting to know you”, persisted in over time. is identified in the data as a foundation for trust.

Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect Kathy Skerritt's summary thinking on what will best position TWDC to respond to the aspirations of the community in its relations and move toward fulfillment of the organization's development goals. These are suggested as foundational to creating a sustainable organizational practice that is continuously accountable, flexible, and innovative in the face of the enormous changes already occurring on Tremont's borders. Part I contains ten items for Board and Executive level consideration and action. Part II contains seven initial action recommendations drawn from the Five Principle Themes data for implementation at the Block Club and community-wide levels.

Part I

1. Complete the SII workplan update and in particular utilize the metrics in the plan (measurable change in property values, home ownership and occupancy rates, and additional private investment) to assess the health of the community prior to the start of the next strategic planning round and as compared to the same metrics from 2008.

VERY IMPORTANT: How does the three-year closing of the InnerBelt affect plan implementation?

2. Commence strategic planning discussions at the Board and Executive level to determine the central idea(s) to be addressed in the next strategic plan, the process to be used, and what the plan will ultimately contain; determine if an expanded Appreciative Inquiry is the best methodology to support this round of strategic planning and/or if it is potentially viable as an ongoing process for citizen engagement and input on issues and decisions; decide how that should be staffed and structured for ongoing implementation.
3. Document TWDC's active partnerships and alliances and what they are producing for Tremont; identify partnerships and alliances that need to be formed at the organizational level and with the City of Cleveland and other regional entities, including why they are important.

Link this step with Block Club or ad hoc community-based processes for leveraging on behalf of Tremont altogether. For example, the Five Principle Themes mention aligning community gardening and with the Farmer's Market, City Fresh, etc. This is an opportunity area to intentionally develop a hyperlocal partnership that links up with the citywide movement in sustainable urban agriculture such as The Cleveland Foundation's Evergreen Initiative (which includes building a greenhouse in East Cleveland).

4. Update Councilmen Cimperman and Cummins on the AI outcomes and planning process; invite their questions; ask them who from the City of Cleveland besides them should be "at the table" for the next TWDC strategic planning process.

5. Engage an internal conversation about leadership as understood through the lens of the Five Principle Themes, including the practice of leadership qualities as well as the exercise of influence at the Board, Executive, and Staff levels of TWDC.
6. Engage an internal conversation regarding TWDC communications in terms of the Five Principle Themes; establish who speaks for TWDC in what contexts, and the necessity for Board, Executive Director, and Staff to be “on message” as to the organization’s mission, and relative to any specific projects or issues; continuously revisit the message relative to emerging projects or issues.
7. Determine how to free Chris Garland to spend up to 50% of his time in direct cultivation and stewardship of relationships with other CDC’s, business people in Tremont and the City of Cleveland, residents, funding partners, and the media. The positioning of the Executive Director in direct relationships with frequency of contact will go far toward building resilience and influence at the organizational level.
8. Consider and address “mission drift” to help keep TWDC focused on its role as a CDC; how can TWDC facilitate linking people to the services or supports of true social service agencies or from within the community itself at the neighborhood/Block Club level?
9. Further define the Threats and Opportunities list by sorting items as internal to Tremont or regional in nature; develop more full descriptions of the events or processes; engage a discussion at the Board level as to which should be considered threats and which opportunities, and why. Document the results.
10. At the Executive and Staff levels, review the Five Principle Themes, identify immediately actionable items, and determine who will implement them and by when; continuously engage with the Block Clubs around what can be taken on at the Block Club level relative to shaping the qualitative experience of residents through their relationships and other interactions; continuously inquire into what TWDC can be doing to support such efforts without creating confusion in the community about its core mission.

Part II

1. With community participation, build stronger feedback loops, for instance, the already initiated quarterly Block Club meetings. Engage Block Club leadership with the data on actions at the street and block level to identify what each neighborhood feels it can take on as a pilot program to test new or better ways of communicating; intentionally share the results of these efforts across the clubs.
2. Working with the Block Club chairs, determine pathways for communicating across levels of the community; identify and document under-served groups that have special communications needs and ways to begin to connect with them through the Block Clubs; for example, does communicating with the Hispanic community on a regular basis require a Spanish-speaking staff member dedicated to that population? Can TWDC funders fund such a position?

3. Determine how to strengthen school-based civic engagement by partnering with, for instance, the Oral History project to bring Tremont history into the curriculum in appropriate ways, i.e. to tell Hispanic youth the story of Hispanic immigration in the context of Tremont's overarching history. Prepare a white paper on various options to consider with parents, teachers, the Cleveland Public Schools, funders, and others.
4. Determine how to facilitate or otherwise support the creation of Block Club and other community-based partnerships and collaborations include, for instance, one among the Farmer's Market, Tremont Urban Food System, Hooper Farm, and Fresh Fork. Focus on the hyperlocal first to build a base of legitimacy to connect up-scale with City-wide and/or regional efforts.
5. At the Block Club level, create teams of new plus established residents who will create and maintain open lines of communication with residents; ask the residents what this might look like neighborhood-by-neighborhood, what they hope it would accomplish, and how to foster it on a continuous basis; how will such a process be established? How will it be accountable to the neighbors? How will those who do not want to participate benefit from the "noticing eye" of the neighbors? Is neighborhood training needed in peer-to-peer engagement (NOT mediation training)?
6. Ask residents to help design a process to locate former residents who now live in the suburbs but still attend church in Tremont and others who have roots in Tremont (such as the babies born at Grace Hospital) and to lead a consideration of what would be the purpose of reconnecting with these groups and how would that be sustained? What would be the role of residents and businesses in cultivating and stewarding relationships with those having such roots in Tremont?
7. Plan social events in many parts of the community and strongly encourage residents and business owners to participate; provide resident car pooling to Clark Field for a community party; what are the means and methods to make it as easy as possible for people to participate socially, particularly seniors who cannot get around well, etc?

Conclusion

In the end, what happens next comes back to having absolute clarity as to what is the mission of TWDC and the will and skill to align "soft" community values and human aspirations with "hard" development goals pertaining to the physical reconfiguring of the community. It may be helpful to notice again the emergent value propositions of the community. This list contains only those items that seem to permeate the data rather than all specifically expressed values. They have been framed as value statements.

- The practice of *social inclusiveness* is an expression of our valuing diversity and our demonstration of respect for others.

- Our capacity to self-organize around a shared intention on behalf of the Tremont community or our streets and blocks is essential to our sense and experience of community identity.
- We look out for each other no matter what – we embrace the good and the bad as family.
- Action that results in real changes or accomplishments motivates us to continue to engage with each other on behalf of our neighborhoods – when we get our hands dirty to create a livable community we build strong relationships and ownership in what is happening that affects us individually and collectively.
- “Through open and honest communication we identify and build shared values and needs and appreciation of differences to achieve and make use of inclusivity, tolerance, community involvement and appreciating human resources.”
- We value full and honest communication as the means to ensure inclusion of the many and diverse voices of our community in the life and decision-making of the community.

In simplest fashion, whenever planning and decision-making are done TWDC and the community might always ask one agreed upon aligning question. Perhaps it is something like, “How do we structure this project/process/system in ways that demonstrate commitment to the values of a shared life where safety, direct communications of diverse types, respect for the inherent dignity of others regardless of differences, building connections across generations, ethnicities, and economic status, and celebration of the distinctive qualities and people of Tremont are the working presumptions that underlie our success?”

One question asked consistently across levels of the community, backed by the will to align action with expressed community values, will help TWDC and the community to cooperatively build a Tremont identity of integrity and cooperative human culture, and sustainable means and methods for community development that align values with development goals. This alignment of the expressed community values with development-purposed communications, decision-making, and “shovel in the ground” action is the sought after energy of a living community resilience.



TremontWest
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Board Development February 26, 2011

<p>2007-2010 Strategic Initiatives' Three-Year Workplan Goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identity 2. Unity 3. Diversity 4. Quality of Life 	<p>2010 TWCD Board Goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen community organizing/neighborhood participation 2. Fund raising and fund diversification 3. Continue moving towards fiscal responsibility. 4. Better internal/external Communications 5. Establishment of strong policies and procedures 6. TWDC more proactive in expanding its role throughout Cleveland's West Side. 	<p>2011-2013 Strategic Initiatives 3 Year Workplan Goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic Investment Initiative 2. Sustainability 3. Neighborhood Stabilization 4. Collaboration 5. Events 	<p>2010-2011 Appreciative Inquiry Process</p> <p><i>The Five Principle Themes</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Productive Citizen engagement 2. Community 3. Unification 4. Communication 5. People!
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**TWDC Board of Trustees
Widening the Appreciative Circle**

Name	AI Interviewee	AI Mini-Summit
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Key: New Board Members

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Christopher Alvarado	Yes	Yes
Yvonne Bruce	No	No
Susan Coy	Yes	Yes
Herb Crowther	No	Yes
Brooke Deines	Yes	Yes
Jeffrey Eizember	No	No
Jesse Grant	No	No
Tim Jenkins	Yes	Yes
Patrick S. Kabat	No	No
Kurt Leeper	No	No
Sarah Lundeen	No	No
Hon. Judge Lynn McLaughlin-Murray	Yes	No
Henry Senyak	Yes	Half-day
Lorraine Thwaite	No	No
Josh Zielaskiewicz	No	No

EX OFFICIO

Donovan Duncan	No	No
Georgiann Franko	Yes	Yes