

Draft



Claremont City Center Project Focus Group Summary

City Center Residents

April 14, 2012

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

**Marion Phillips Apartments
243 Broad St, Claremont NH**



Summary notes prepared by UVLSRPC

Narrative Summary: City Center Residents

WORLD CAFÉ GROUP DISCUSSION MODEL

This Focus Group session sought to gain input from the residents of the City Center Project study area. The process model for gaining input from attendees is called, “World Café.” The process is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting group dialogue. The process focuses on small groups discussing and recording discussions prompted by questions by the session moderator. This session was moderated by Christine Walker with assistance from Mike McCrory, both from Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission.

The moderator posed three questions in the following sequence:

1. What makes a community?
2. What activities are important for you to do within your neighborhood?
3. How do you feel about the physical structures in your neighborhood?

Each question was discussed for 20 minutes by small groups of four to five individuals. Participants were encouraged to write or doodle on sheets of paper at the tables. After each question participants were instructed to relocate to a new table with one participant remaining at the table to share a summary of the prior discussion.

The following Executive Summary outlines common themes and principal findings derived from the Focus Group discussions based on notes recorded by the participants. The hand-written notes from the Focus Group session have been transcribed and are included in this summary report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Physical Connections and Spaces in the City Center

Participants identified the availability of services and access to those services as very important in a community. Focus Group participants consistently focused on walking and biking as important modes of travel in the community – in this case, Claremont’s City Center. The opportunities and barriers to safely walk from one place to another was a common topic of discussion throughout the session.

- It is important to feel safe
- The City Center is an area that is pedestrian-oriented – walkability between residences, commercial uses, and services is important
- The poor condition of sidewalks impedes mobility and access to services (keep sidewalks maintained and clear)
- A person should be able to walk anywhere
- Road shoulders, where no sidewalks are available, should be maintained
- Walking is good for recreation – an activity that is valuable in itself
- Bike facilities along City streets

- Heavy trucks in City Center have a negative impact on walkability
- Good to have amenities along sidewalks: trash cans and benches

Part of the physical environment in a community includes public or private spaces, which allow for congregation and group activities. These spaces may range from parks to storefronts, socializing at a businesses, or cultural events. These spaces help reinforce a community.

- Well-maintained parks (observed vandalism at parks); parks are great asset to City, places to play
- Government structures and services (post office, library, community center, schools, etc.)
- Places of worship
- Pleasant Street as a pedestrian mall
- There are distinct areas in the City Center – there is an opportunity to have activities with connections between the places to encourage people to recognize the spaces between these places (e.g. Visitor Center, City Green, Moody Park, Pleasant St)
- Maintain trash cans
- Events and assemblies important as part of a community: music, dances, art events, sports.
- Private spaces can support community assembly and socializing: coffee shop, low-cost performances, businesses and community grocery/co-op market
- Public information kiosk for all community activities would be a great asset in the City Center

Social Connections and Activities in the City Center

Focus Group participants discussed social interactions as a very important aspect of a community. One participant noted that a community should be about the people, not just business. The following bullets summarize positive and negative aspects of these social connections:

- Diversity in the community is good (age/economic/cultural)
- Social groups/congregation important (variety of events and locations – public and private) including a community-based labor-sharing network (work exchange)
- Lack of respect by some in the community (of property, of individuals, etc.)
- Promote pride, shared interests, intergenerational contact, and personal relationships – public activities and involvement
- Community-based media: local TV, newspaper, E-Ticker, Web sites
- Socializing in the course of doing business – working/shopping/living (mixed uses – commercial/residential – reinforce this interaction)
- Events about the City's history (Historical Society)
- Events and assemblies important as part of a community: music, dances, art events, sports.

Government, Economic Development and Revitalization

Many discussions touched on barriers and opportunities surrounding successful businesses and revitalization of the City Center. This topic goes beyond attracting new commercial interests and

addresses the local government, social issues, employment, community involvement, and revitalizing the historic downtown.

- People in the community – not strictly business
- Zoning and regulations – reinforce the City Center, mixed uses and proximity of different uses
- Shopping for necessities in City Center important – Grocery/Co-Op, clothing, basic needs
- Mulberry St commercial property – an opportunity for neighborhood commerce
- Restaurants and cafés for social atmosphere
- Important to maintain retail spaces in the City Center – discourage big box shops away from City Center – economic/commercial diversity
- Jobs/commuting out of Claremont – jobs elsewhere reduce opportunity for civic engagement at home
- Many older buildings are vacant and in need of repair – fill the storefronts
- Art as an economic model – “Money follows art” – develop an arts center that can utilize an old mill buildings and promote activities and artist studios
- Common Man and mill building renovations stunning
- Diversity of housing types (single family and multi-family) important
- Grants needed to improve buildings/residences
- Taxes on renovated buildings are a disincentive to renovating
- Attract tourists into City Center
- Self-regulation, personal responsibility to common interest/benefit of community

Historic Assets and Aesthetics

There was consensus among attendees that the City Center is a beautiful, historic landscape that is a ‘jewel’. The group recognized that there are dilapidated buildings and parts of the City Center in need of repair and/or general clean-up and maintenance.

- Claremont is not a ‘cookie cutter’ town – honor the history of the City Center
- Like the old building materials like brick (do some buildings have brick underneath facades?) and stone – encourage these materials
- Connection to the natural world important – river walk, parks, plantings, gardens, street trees – small city, rural flavor
- Place vegetation to screen ‘ugly places or utilities – transformers, old vacant sites, etc.
- Existing building heights are good
- Maintain high-value, ‘key’ historic buildings, get businesses to occupy them
- City landscape ‘run-down’ – trash, poor road conditions, poor sidewalks, lighting, deteriorating buildings

Draft

Claremont City Center Project Claremont City Center Study Area Residents Transcribed Focus Group Notes: April 14, 2012

The following notes have been transcribed from hand-written tablet pages. The following statements, concepts, and ideas were generated during a public work session by the participants.

[PAGE: RESFG_041412-1]

Physical Environment

- Sidewalks
 - Poor condition impedes mobility
- City Center Hub
 - Ped center
 - Pleasant St (cobble stone base?) could be an attractive pedestrian mall
 - Cobble stones an attractive feature
 - Historic/community identity
 - Honor City's past
 - Zoning to craft/reinforce City Center
- Aesthetics
 - Landscaping & Stone walls

[PAGE: RESFG_041412-2 – CONT'D]

- Brick & stone buildings
 - Historic character
 - Structure vs façade (important to dig under the skin to see building's history)
- Housing in the City Center
 - Neighborhood – diversity of uses (comm/res mix) in downtown
 - Diversity of housing types
 - Renovating houses/structures
 - Economic barriers (financing doesn't work)
 - Consequences to improving a property: higher taxes – unattractive, even disincentive to work on structures.
- Travel & Uses
 - Commercial/residential uses ← → walkability
 - Proximity of uses important
 - Mix of uses within a building

[PAGE: RESFG_041412-3 – CONT'D]

- Folks move here because of the houses
- Claremont is a pretty town, a “jewel.”

Note: Moderators for this Focus Group listened into the conversations occurring after each discussion question was asked. The following pages are lists of words and phrases recorded by the moderators.

[PAGE RESFG_041412-4]

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY?

- Harmony
- Shared interests
- Responsibility
- Co-Op/community investment
- Gov't & social services
- Comfort level
- Pride
- Public facilities & common space
- People – not just business
- Diversity
- Feeling Safe

[PAGE RESFG_041412-5]

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY?

- Businesses
- Respect
- Connection between education and jobs
- Ethnic & age diversity
- Pride & belonging
- Shared interests
- Library
- Church
- Schools
- Intergenerational
- Social
- Physical structures
- Work
- Creativity
- Arts & culture
- Feeling safe
- Connected
- Harmony
- Responsibility
- inclusion

[PAGE RESFG_041412-6]

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO DO WITHIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

- Walk
- Music
- Worship
- Maintenance of parks
- Shopping
- Food co-op/farm market/fresh foods
- Connecting merchants (Pleasant St) with the Village Green and the Visitor Center
- Arts/Social/Group Events
- Gathering place, “Meet new people”

[PAGE RESFG_041412-7]

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO DO WITHIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

- Getting to my neighbor's home
- Social congregation
- Another Green Acres
- Conversation
- Driving to resources (parking)
- Walk to the Stone Arch
- Walking safely
- Sports
- Worshipping
- Places to convene
- Arts community
- Shopping – basic needs, interesting food – fresh – outdoors

[PAGE RESFG_041412-8]

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

- Old buildings need restoration
- Historic
- Home-y
- Streets unkempt
- Beautiful structures
- Pedestrian Pleasant Street
- Jobs outside city reduce civic time for individuals
- Labor pool 'co-op' (job exchange)
- Old fruit stand along Mulberry Street – artist studios, art locations, 'money follows art'
- Ped important – cobble stones great idea

[PAGE RESFG_041412-9]

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

- Not a cookie-cutter town
- Like history
- Like diversity
- Connection to natural world
- We like the brick
- Need to fill vacancies
- Our Main St is beautiful
- Sidewalks safe
- Love the bridge
- Use trees to block the 'ugly' spaces – buffers
- Would like amenities for walkers – trash cans, benches, etc.
- Poor/inconsistent sidewalks
- Mill buildings could be used for new businesses, arts, etc.
- Like & honor mill building past

[PAGE RESFG_041412-10]

Angela Biggs
Jeremy Biggs
Danna Montenegro
Pride
Belonging
Welcoming Committee
Personal relationships – names
Comfort level
Communal investments
Shared interests
Musician
Sports + Rec
Farrow's Market
Low-cost arts events
Events
Farmers markets

Independence makes us more able to support
the community instead of draining it
Farmer's markets
Low-cost arts events
Trash on streets cleaned-up
Parks
Co-op
We lost Granny's Garden
Parades
Churches
Library
Schools
Theater/chorus
Restaurants
No 24-hour store in neighborhood areas

[PAGE RESFG_041412-11]

James Shoot (?)
Marty

People
Commucation (networking)
Commerce
Activities (social)
Schools
Library
Government stricter com level
Public services
Infrastructure
Social org
Media
Newspaper
Arts culture
Diversity – age/economic/cultural
Holidays – celebrate
More jobs
More opportunity
Biking
Gardening
Walking – maintained sidewalks, road
shoulders
Recreation – Arrowhead, Golf, Parks

Sports
Shopping in neighborhood
Touristy?
Co-op?
Obtain basic necessities in City Center
People
Commerce
Schools
Library
Community/sports
Gov't – structures, services, infrastructure,
self-gov, administrative
Churches
Public involvement
Social organizations
Media (local) – local TV, Paper, E-ticker
Diversity – age/race/cultural/economic
Coffee house/poetry readings
Opera house
Garden
Be proud of property
Worship
Walking – keep sidewalks clear
Serving needs of people
Shop in neighborhood

Draft

Outside recreation within city
(golf/arrowhead)
Tourist
Shop - type of places we need – basic needs,
clothing, shoes

[PAGE RESFG_041412-12]

Home-y
'work' co-op
Historic>>>needs TLC
Needs buffers >> industrial
Sidewalk installation repair
“Bones” of city center are awesome
Downtown area

[PAGE RESFG_041412-13]

Tom Rock
Ray Gagnon

What makes a community
People
Communication (networking)
Commerce
Social activities – schools, libraries, stores,
sports, comm. Ctrs
Gov't structure – public svcs, infrastructure,
self gov – elected, administrative
Churches
Public interaction and involvement
Clubs + organization
Media (local)
Arts + culture
Walkability
Worship
Community service
Recreation(golf)
Arrowhead – parks

[PAGE RESFG_041412-14]

Steve Picano
Kelly LeBlanc
Clmt – 3 event venues
'positioning bins'

Care for animals
Walk
Small city – rural flavor
Music/teaching

Needs restoration
Unkempt
Sidewalks need restoration
My neighborhood
Clean well established

Shopping
Walk w/animals
Sports activities
Opera house
Arts – visual
People
Networking
Commerce
Sports
Schools
Libraries
Gov't structures
Public services
Infrastructure
Churches
Public involvement
Clubs + social org.
Local media – arts + culture
Diversity in pop – age – ethnicity – etc.
Economic diversity

Definitions are imp.
Up front or infer
Neighborhood

None, except advocacy against civic things that negatively
Concept of neighborhood
Going outside of Clmt
Taxes
Disrespect from the top
Filtering down
Web site design
Clmt comm word of month
Manage – self
Performances
Educational lectures
River walk
Post office
Library
Health club
Green Acres was a great place to meet people

Reality vs projected reality
Zoning consistency
Traffic flow in residential area/business hours
People in community – not strictly business
Quality of life
Safety/ feeling safe
Security
Groceries or transportation to a store – esp for elderly
Exercising
Socio-econ
Sporting events
Transfer station
Kiosk
Going to the park
Institutional places – PO, school, arts

[PAGE RESFG_041412-15]

Pastor Patricia Wells
E. Montenegro
Living together
Harmony
City>>zoning – respect, responsibility
Identify problems and solutions
What it looks like what we want it to look like
Don't need any more big box stores
Every new 'big box' causes more taxes?
Why?
Responsibility –
Time limits to biz operating times
People not just bizness
Economic consideration
Quality of life

Safety (esp. in center feeling safe)
Use of roads by heavy trucks
Respect of property
Dif in people – lifestyles
Respect by younger people
Activities
1. Going to church
2. Parks
3. Affordable performances
 a. Opera houses
4. In town grocery store
5. Conversation
6. Community center
7. River walk

[PAGE RESFG_041412-16]

Bernie Folta
Tracey

Theatre
Music
People want others to be like themselves

Newcomers
Trash on streets
DIVERSITY
Known people – friends, support
Angela you don't feel you make a diff
What makes a community?

Draft

Define community
Territory
Shared interests
Respect of differences
Comparing with other communities
By library slam with Newport
Cultural aspects
Where people come from
N.E. suspicion
Sports + recreation
Independence vs commonality

Activities – walking downtown sidewalks
Community ctr
Cultural ctr
Co-op
Places to play
Civic engagement
Common interest/spaces
Community events
Institutional spaces
Heart of Claremont

[PAGE RESFG_041412-17]

Co-op
Walking anywhere
Church/worship
Arts
Community center
Green Acres
Comfortable gathering place
Inviting
Outdoor recreation
Take care of parks
Green Acres – place
Important to me
Activities
Resources
Necessities
Shopping
Sports center
Parks – condition
Music
Safe walking environment
Sidewalk condition

Library
Food stores
Eat
Buy
Arts center
Incorporate the --- with Pleasant Street
Walking distance
Neighborhood
Redefine the core as the neighborhood “The Hood”
Activities –
Walking – problem w/ sidewalks
Bike shoulders
Churches
Arts
Community center that is intergenerational
Another “Green Acres” – socialization
Food co-op
Indoor year-round farmers market

[PAGE RESFG_041412-18]

Fill closed buildings w/ new businesses
Block power stations with trees
Streets can be horrible
Keep repatching, breaks down quickly
Historic buildings are great, some need restoring

Physical structures
Sidewalks
Building ht
Safety
Maintenance of retail bldgs

[PAGE RESFG_041412-19]

Better sidewalks
Bike paths along city streets
A Pleasant Street from state highway to pedestrian walkway
Beautiful buildings – enhance
Not cookie-cutter town
Lot of trash + garbage
Vandalism at park
Convert city hall
Opera house 2nd floor
Lower hall 1st floor
Move city offices to saucier bldgs. or old bank
Get someone to renovate the old bank near city hall
Expand into city hall
Fix buildings on lower main street – expose brick
More plantings, flowers, trees
Dances
Good diversity
Brick required on the city center buildings?
Mulberry St property usefulness?
Historical presence through city – kiosks?
Signs?
Maintained trash cans
Pedestrian only Pleasant Street – historical cobble stones under current tar

[PAGE RESFG_041412-20]

Sidewalks are bad
Historical
Blue collar work elsewhere
Base of beauty
Some well-planned places
Long commute
Must work
Rental units
Blue collar community
Poor lighting
Building height ok
Inconsistent sidewalks
Connection to natural world

Vandalism
Chess tables in visitors center park
Money follows art
Arts as a tool for revitalization (music)
Café Cubano – latin night – live music
Grants to renovate
Dance floor
More historical society events to invite people and educate them about the city's history
Money follows art
Empty mill buildings for artists
Idle law for trucks
Landscape run-down
Buildings areas >> stone walls – use native shale
Nelmar Heights – x-mas lights snow sculpture competition – I saw a wonderful polar bear
This year
Love the bridge
Common Man Renovation stunningly beautiful
Thank you, Rusty

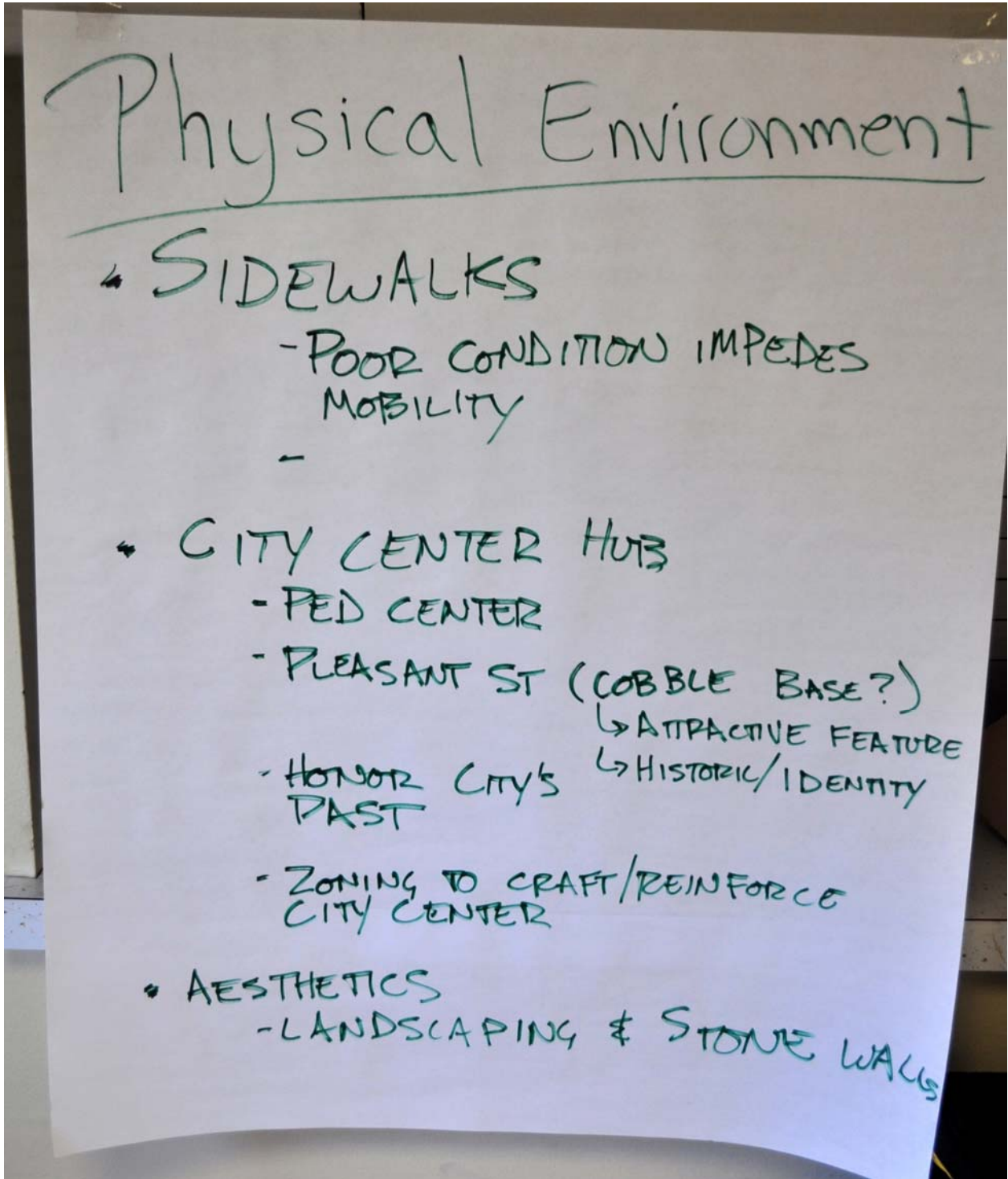
Single family / multi
Vacant/foreclosure
Jobs/commuting out of Clmt
Absentee landlords
↓bldg quality
Living units?
Owner – single family
Renter – multi-family
Getting out of Clmt
Jobs elsewhere require commute takes civic time away
Improvements result in higher taxes
Sidewalks

Draft

They're fine
They're diverse
Mix residential + commercial

Mix of uses

RESFG_041412-1



Physical Environment

- SIDEWALKS

- POOR CONDITION IMPEDES MOBILITY
-

- CITY CENTER HUBS

- PED CENTER
- PLEASANT ST (COBBLE BASE?)
 - ↳ ATTRACTIVE FEATURE
 - ↳ HISTORIC/IDENTITY
- HONOR CITY'S PAST
- ZONING TO CRAFT/REINFORCE CITY CENTER

- AESTHETICS

- LANDSCAPING & STONE WALLS

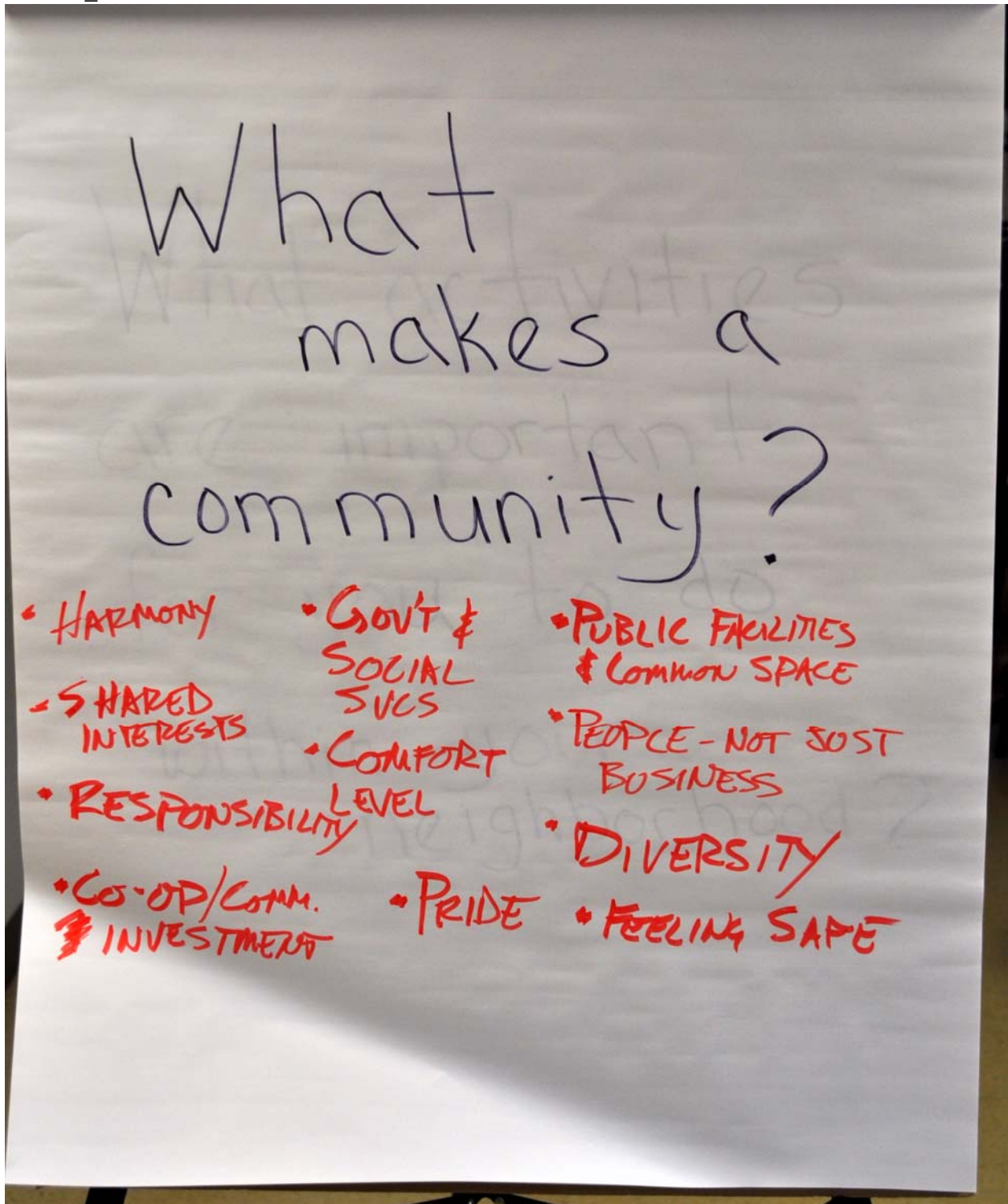
RESFG_041412-2

- BRICK & STONE BUILDINGS
 - HISTORIC CHAR
 - STRUCTURE VS FACADE (DIG UNDER THE SKIN)
 - HOUSING IN THE CITY CENTER
 - NEIGHBORHOOD - DIVERSITY OF USES (COMM/RES MIX) IN DOWNTOWN
 - DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES
 - RENOVATING HOUSES/STRUCTURES
 - TRAVEL & USES
 - COMM/RES ↔ WALKABILITY
 - PROXIMITY OF USES
 - MIX W/IN A BUILDING
- Diagram notes:*
ECONOMIC BARRIERS
TAXES/CONSEQUENCES TO RENOVATION

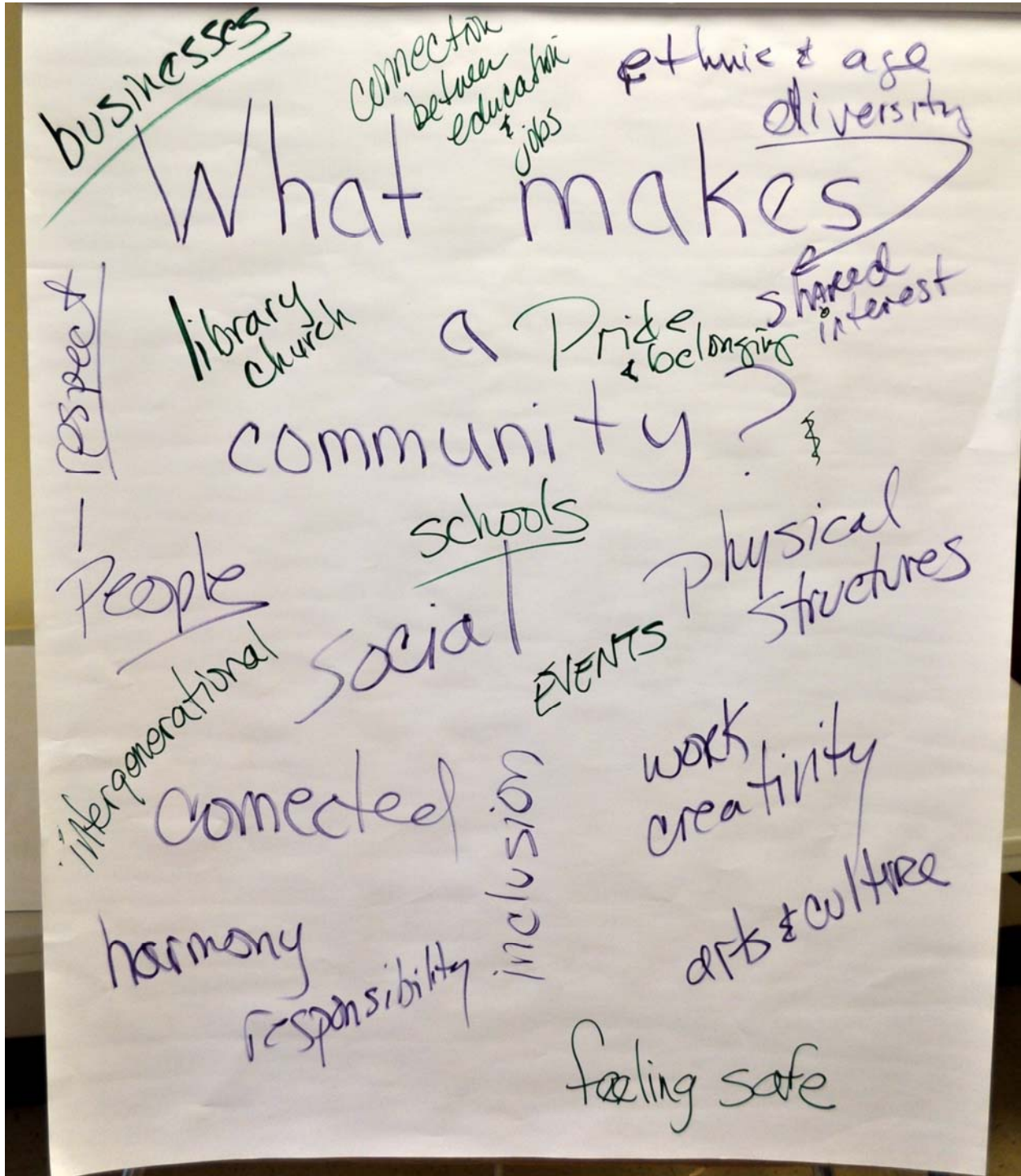
RESFG_041412-3

- FOLKS MOVE HERE BECAUSE OF THE HOUSES
- CLAREMONT IS A PRETTY TOWN - A "JEWEL"

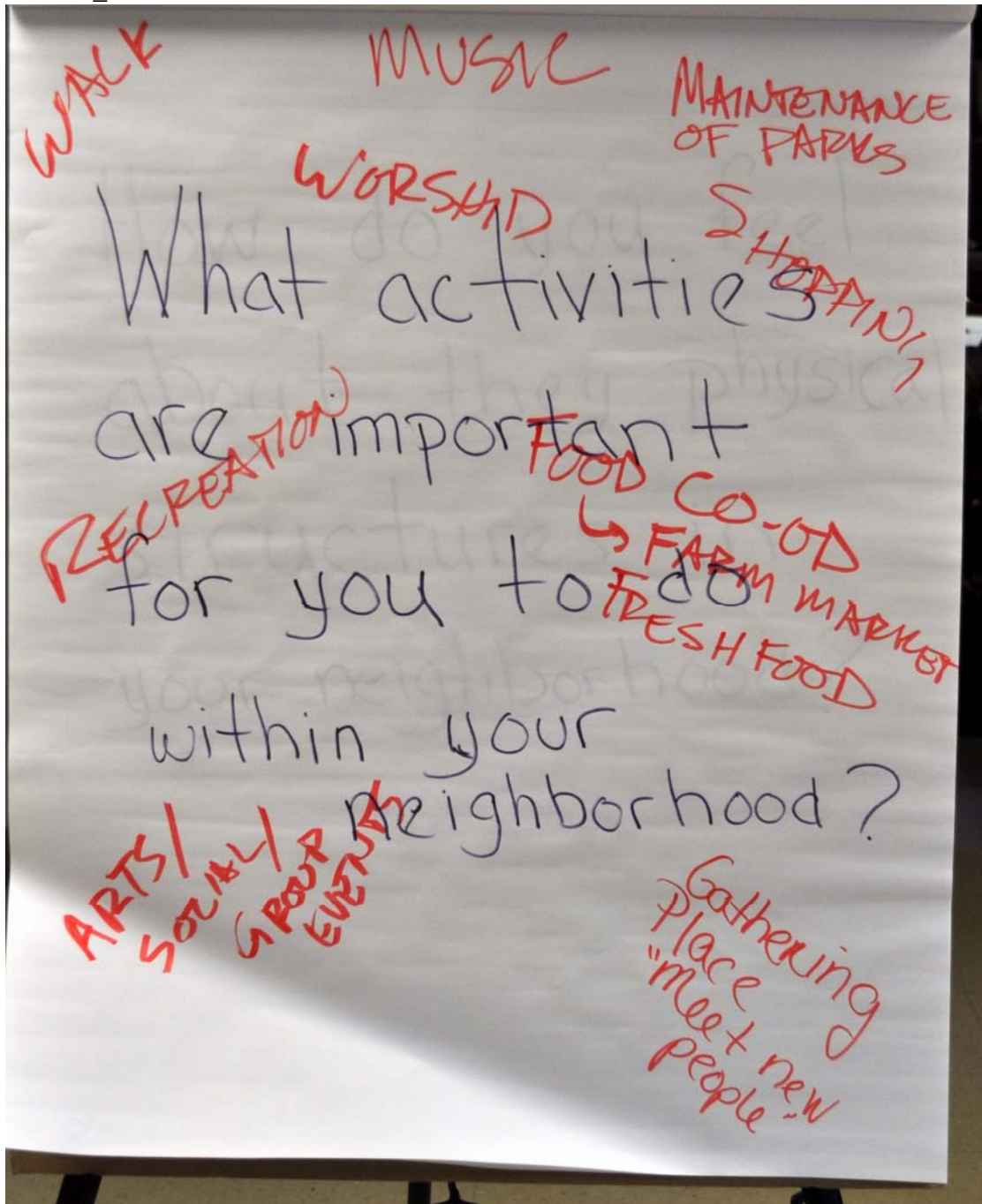
RESFG_041412-4



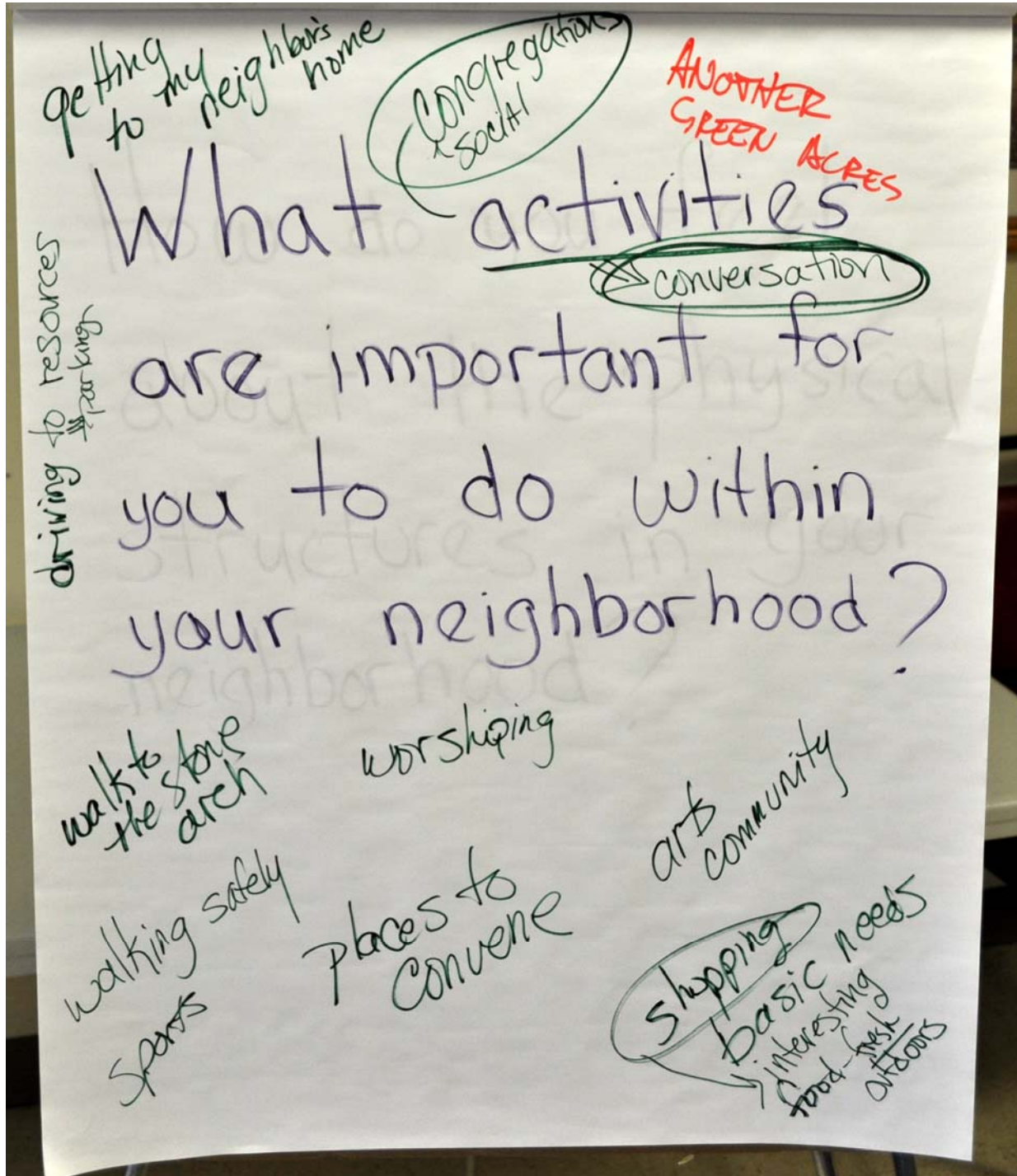
RESFG_041412-5



RESFG_041412-6



RESFG_041412-7



RESFG_041412-8

OLD BUILDINGS NEED RESTORATION

HISTORIC

How do you feel about the physical structures in your neighborhood?

BEAUTIFUL STRUCTURES

STREETS UNKEMPT

LABOR POOL "CO-OP" (JOB EXCHANGE)

PLEASANT ST

SOBS OUTSIDE CITY REDUCE "CIVIC TIME" FOR INDIVIDUALS

ARTIST STUDIOS/ ART LOCATIONS "MONEY FOLLOWS ART"

101 MULBERRY ST

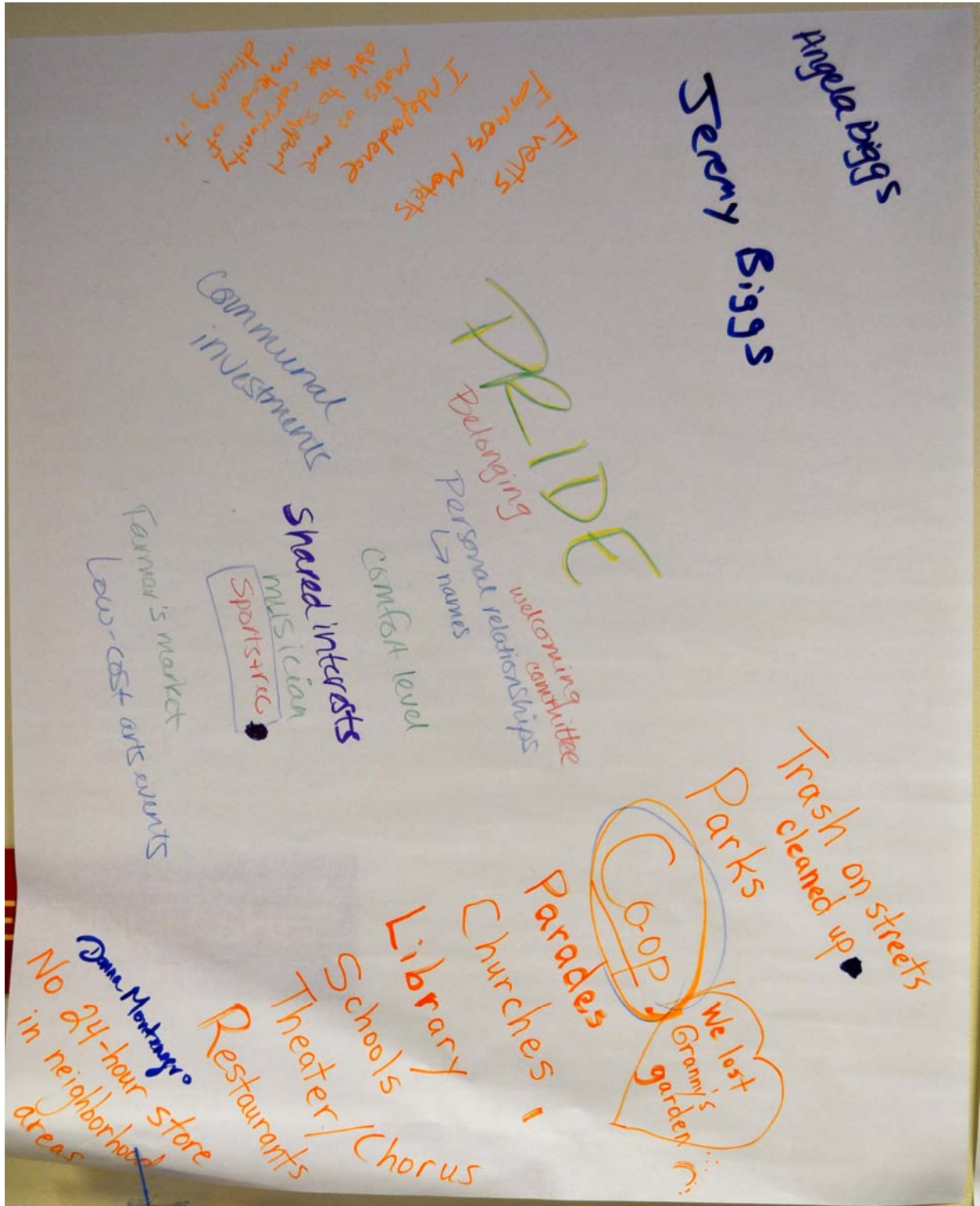
RED IMPORTANT

COBBLE STONES GREAT IDEA

RESFG_041412-9

NOT A COOKIE-CUTTER TOWN
 like history
 like diversity
 CONNECTION TO NATURAL WORLD
 How do you feel about the physical structures in your neighborhood?
 we like the brick
 important to have dense housing
 need to fill vacancies
 Our Main St. is beautiful
 sidewalks safe
 POOR/INCONSISTENT SIDEWALKS
 Love the bridge
 use trees to block ugly spaces
 buffers
 would like amenities for walkers
 → handicaps etc. benches
 Mill Buildings could be used for new businesses
 art etc
 like to honour mill buildings past

RESFG_041412-10



RESFG_041412-11

Coffee House / Poetry Readings

James Short

- Public Services
 - People in business
 - Communication
 - Self-reliance
 - Churches
 - Public involvement
 - Social orz
 - Media
 - Network
 - Network
- Commerce
 - Activities (social)
 - Schools
 - Library
 - Government structure
 - Com care
 - Art's
 - Culture
 - Art's
 - Culture
- Diversity - celebrate
 - Holidays
 - More jobs
 - More opportunity
 - Art's
 - Arts
- Biking
- Gardening
- Walking
- Caring for animals
- Recreation
- Arts
- Golf
- Parks
- Sports
- Shopping in neighborhood
- Community?
- Obtain basic necessities in city center

MARTY

Age Race/Cultural/EComm

People Commerce

Not working

Schools

Library

Arts

Gov't - STRUCTURAL SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

SEE GOV ADMINISTRATION

Cultural lives

Public involvement

Social network

Med in (Lack)

Lack T.V.

PAPER

e-Ticket

Small city - rural flavor music teaching

care for animals - walk

social in within city

outside

Focus on within city

Walking

Worship

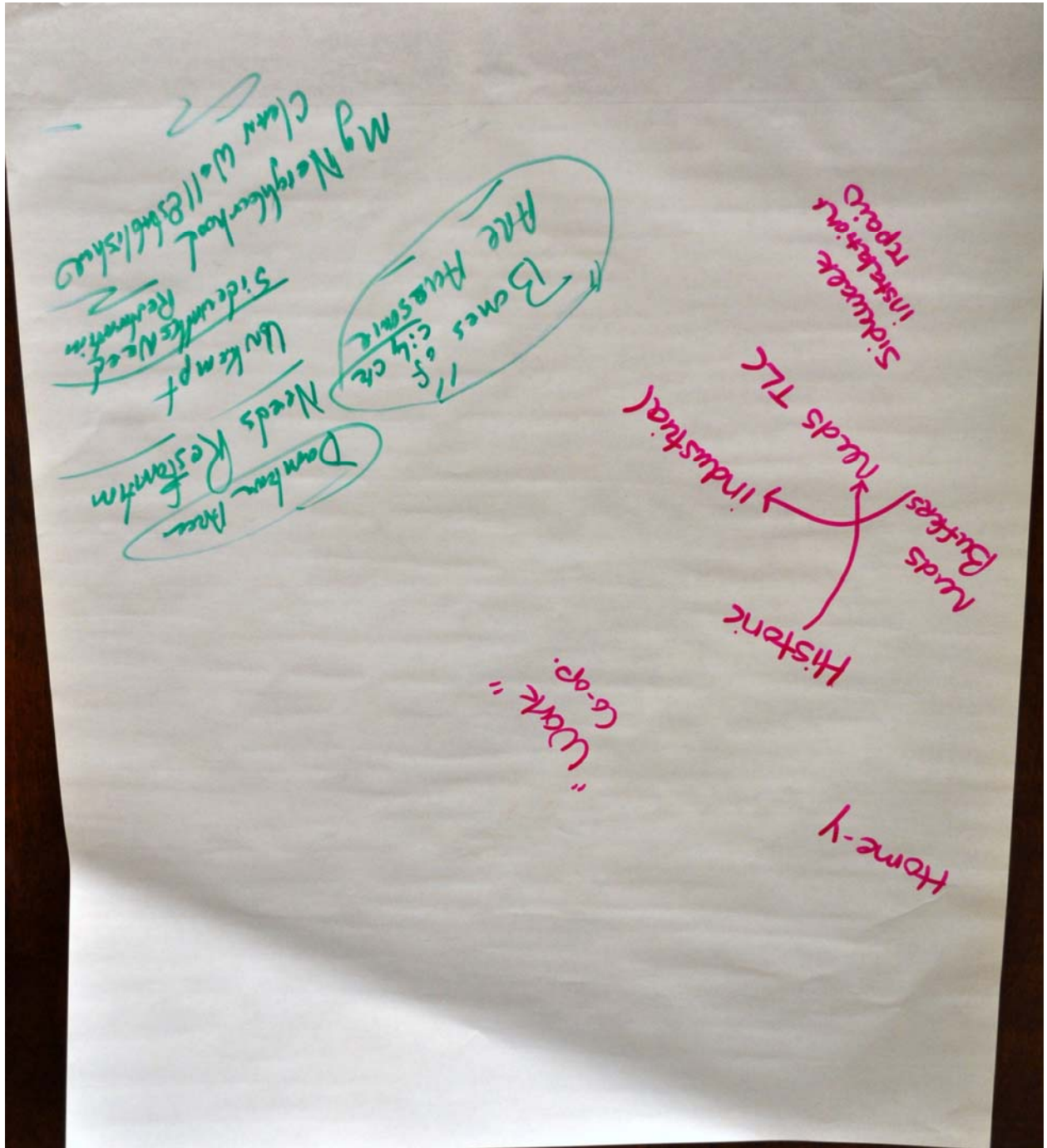
Shop in neighborhood serving needs of people

Garden - on grad of property

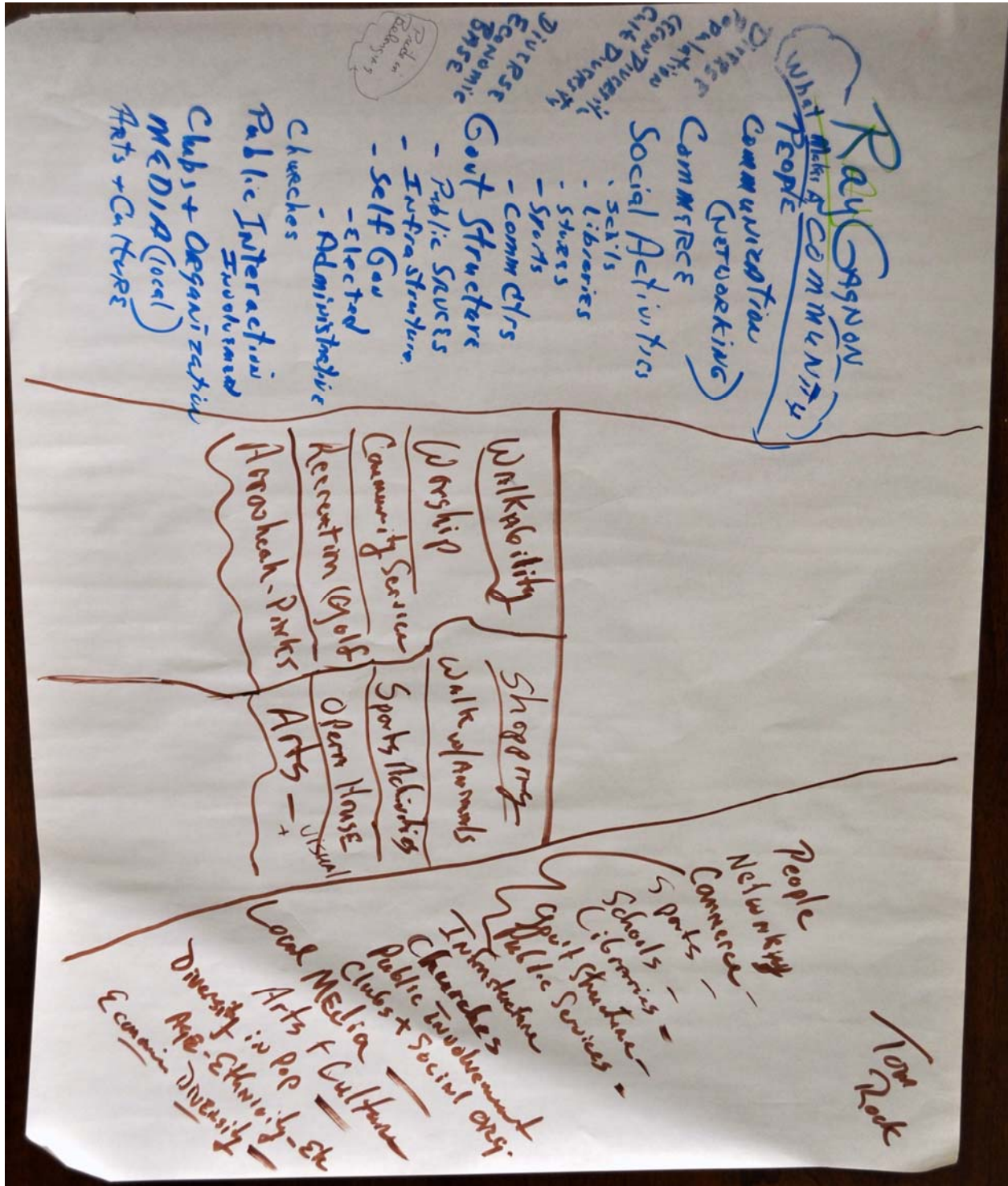
Open House

Draft

RESFG_041412-12



RESFG_041412-13



RESFG_041412-14

Clm-3 event venues

"positively" Steve Picerno

Except advocacy against civic things that negatively targets disrespect from the top filtering

Concept of neighborhood

going outside of street word of mouth

performance educational lectures post office library health club

River Walk

Definitions are imp. up front or later

NONE Neighborhood

Green Acres was a great place to meet people.

Sporting events

Look

transfer station.

going to the park

instituting places S.P.O. School Arts

Quality of life

Safety / feeling safe

Security

People in Community - not strictly business

Traffic flows in residential area / Business hours

Narrowing consistency

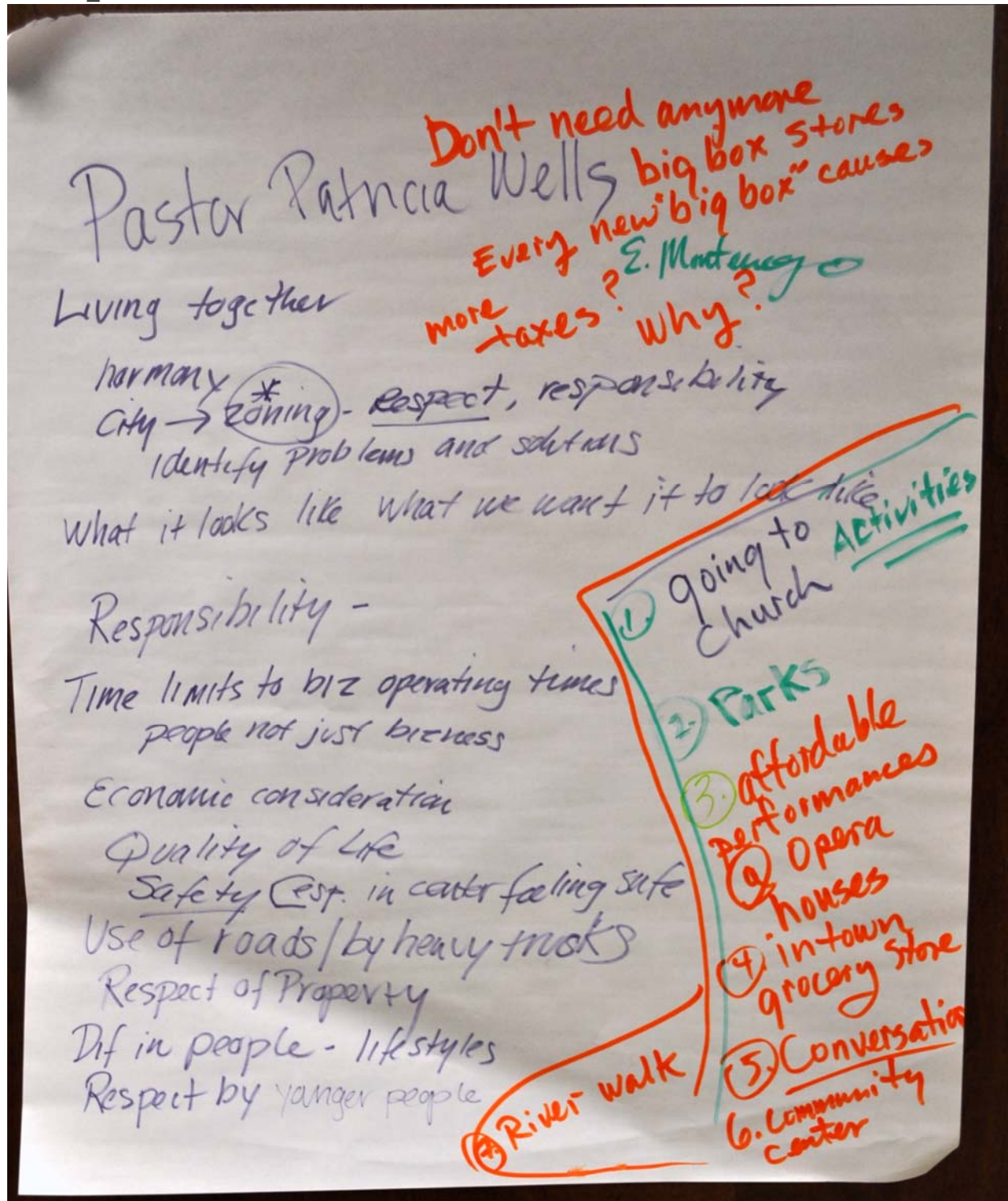
Quality of life

Groceries or transportation to a store - esp. if elderly

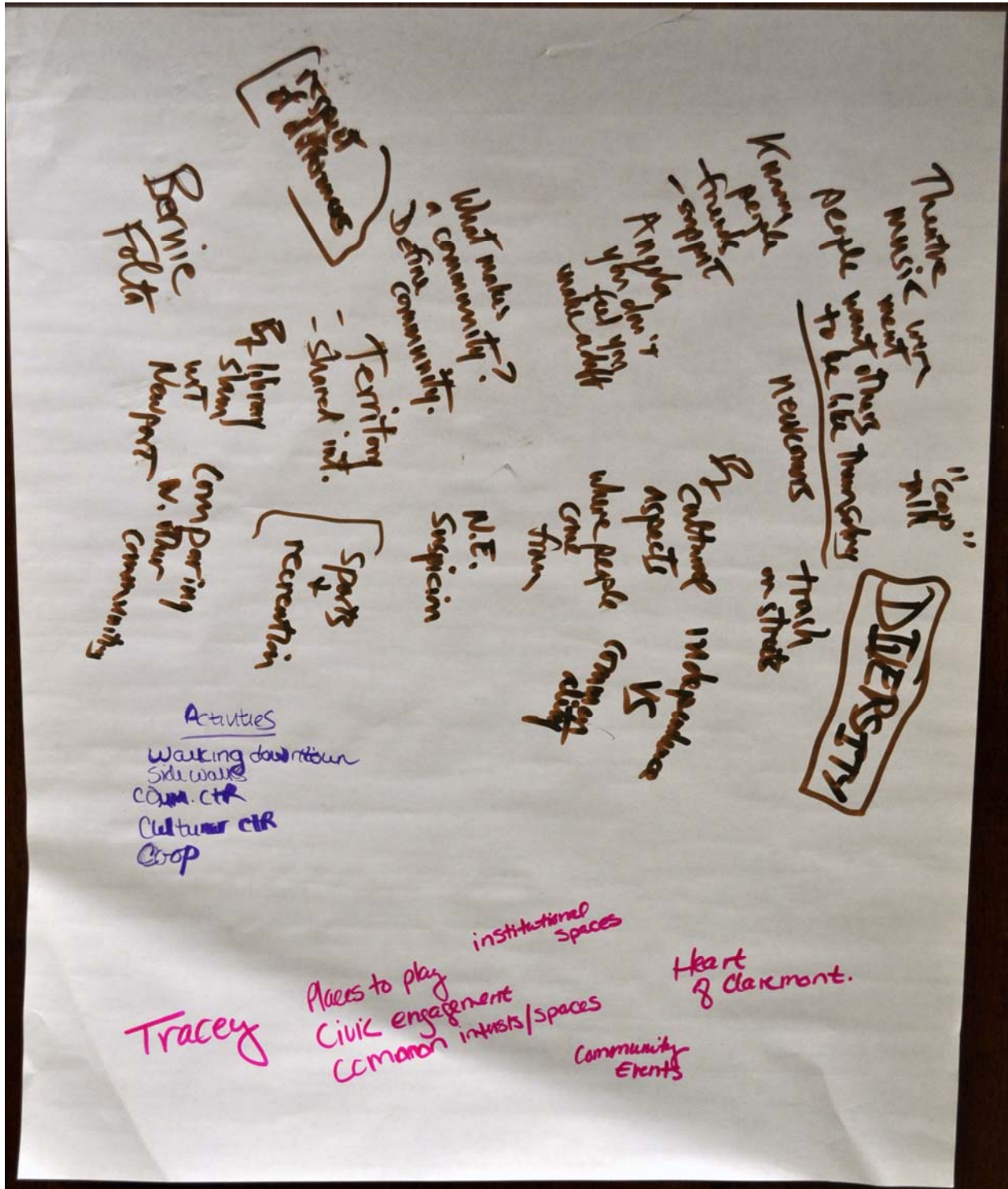
Exercising

solid.

RESFG_041412-15



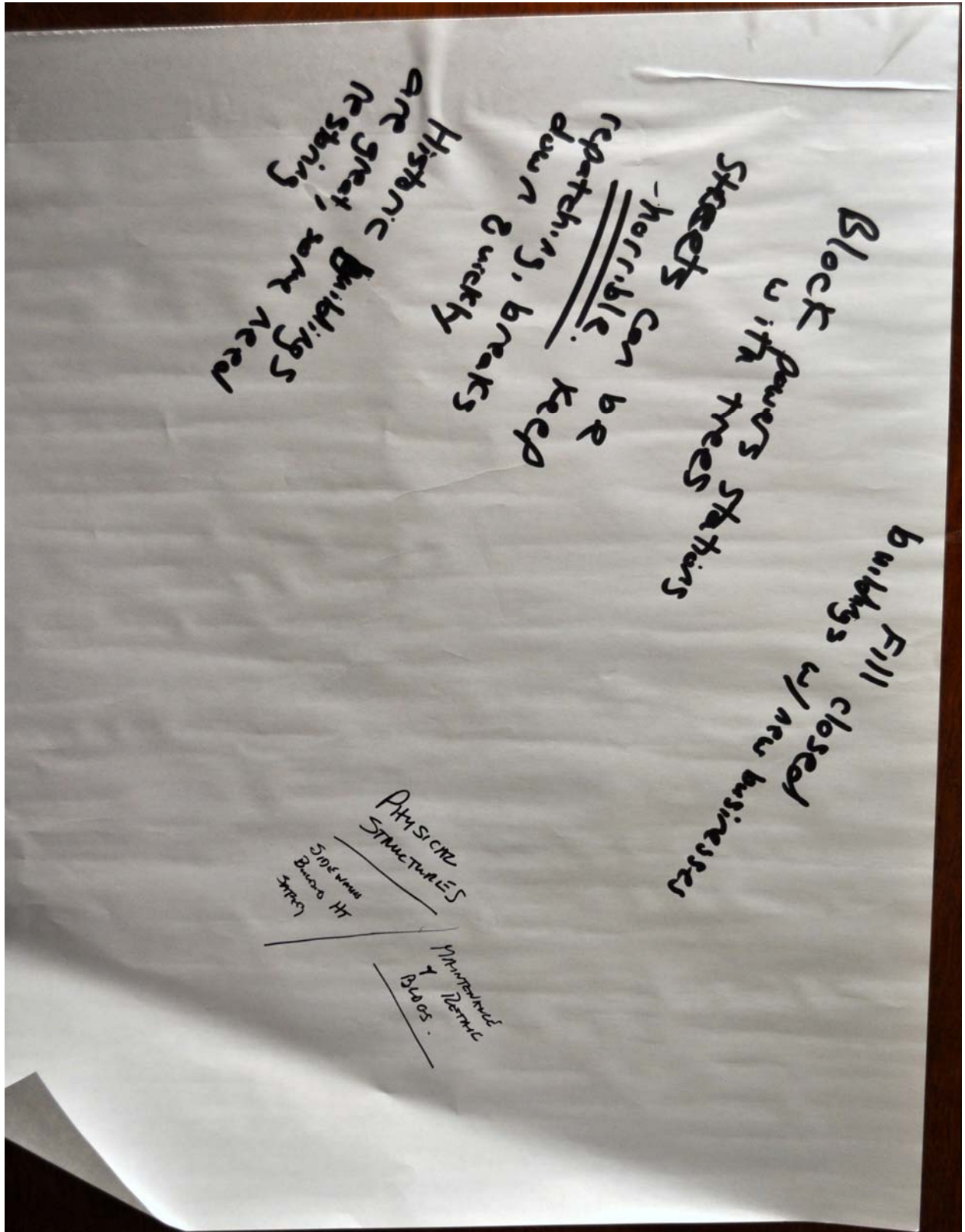
RESFG_041412-16



RESFG_041412-17



RESFG_041412-18



RESFG_041412-20

Side walls are good

rental units

base of beauty long concrete
Some well planned work

Historical blue collar work
elsewhere

living ~~rental~~ units?
owner-occupied rental
Single fam - multi fam?

job-elsewhere
require ^{commute} time away

Unit pretty torn

improvements result in higher types

They're fine

They're diverse
+ mix Residential
+ commercial
mix of uses

Blue Oaks care
for lighting
Building height - or
incongruous to natural
vacant / residential
units
Preserve - 1 old
landmark - 1 old
Quality

get out of unit