



DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES THAT WORK

An Appreciative Approach

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Disconnect:
neighbourhoods and
development

2

It's All About
Participation

3

What's Happening Here?
A situation analysis
workbook

4

Tried, Tested and
(mostly) True:
traditional methods that
(sometimes) work

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An Appreciative
Approach

6

Building Success:
an appreciative
approach workbook



CHANGES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
Development Processes that Work

Changes in the Neighbourhood: Development Processes that Work

booklet 5 An Appreciative Approach

booklets in this series:

- 1 Disconnect: neighbourhoods and development
- 2 It's All About Participation
- 3 What's Happening Here? a situation analysis workbook
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- 5 An Appreciative Approach
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These booklets are also available as pdf files at:

www.mycommunityinformation.com/housing

About This Series

Changes in the Neighbourhood: development processes that work is a series of booklets designed to assist organizations and communities struggling with development issues. Its focus is on redevelopment – changes that are proposed for existing neighbourhoods in our cities and towns. We define development broadly to mean any significant change in the structure or use of buildings or areas within a neighbourhood. So a social service agency introducing a half way house and a real estate developer proposing an upscale condo are both engaged in ‘development proposals,’ even though the former may not involve any physical change in buildings. We seek to engage citizen leaders, developers, planning officials and others.

This series was created as part of the Housing Research Action Project in Red Deer, AB, Canada. As such, its primary focus was on addressing how organizations can develop affordable housing in Red Deer. The project found, however, that effective public participation processes are broadly applicable to many scenarios and many communities.

In many ways, these booklets seek to bring together the learning that has taken place in property development, with its focus on lands and buildings, and community development, with its focus on people and relationships.

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An Appreciative Approach

When a development or land use change is proposed for a neighbourhood, and people begin to question the proposed change, it may seem natural to adopt a problem solving approach to try to move the project forward. Using this approach, the developer tries to respond to and neutralize all the problems or concerns identified by those responding to the change.

While problem solving is one approach to addressing community concerns, it is certainly not the only way forward, nor even, perhaps, the best. Emerging from the fields of organization development and community development are alternatives based on assets and strengths. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) focuses on people’s skills, resources, and capabilities rather than their deficiencies and ‘needs.’

A closely linked approach, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), helps people discover positive perspectives and explore new ways of working together towards the common goals that motivate all stakeholders.

As one article notes, Appreciative Inquiry is a natural progression in the evolution of development which, in broad strokes, looks like this:

- 1950-60 Do development to the people
 - 1960-70 Do development for the people
 - 1970-80 Do development through the people
 - 1980-90 Do development with the people
 - 1990 – present Empower people for development
- (Booy & Sena, 1997)

Appreciative Inquiry is particularly useful in the early stages of a project, when a collaborative approach can produce genuine new options and opportunities. If, instead of looking at “problems,” people look at the strengths of their organization(s) and community, they typically discover many shared values.

In an overview of the key success factors in communities, one team of consultants notes the importance of starting “with shared values and a shared vision”:

“Values provide the thread for the fabric of our communities. A vision, basically a statement of values projected as a future reality, can articulate where a community wants to go and what it desires.



Two Approaches to “Managing” Change

Problem Solving Approach
 Asks: “What are the problems here?”
 Focuses on: Problems, deficiencies, what’s wrong, what’s broken, what isn’t working. Seeks “fixes” to problems.

“Appreciative” Approach
 Asks: “What works well here?” What is this organization like when it is at its best?”
 Focuses on: Peak experiences, best practices, life giving/life enriching forces.



Effective communities identify their values and generate a shared vision of the ideal future of their community. They follow this visioning with a specific action plan and implementation strategy.” (Roulier, 1997).

Appreciative Inquiry is an extremely powerful method for helping people create and implement those kinds of community visions. Astute developers will recognize that there is significant value in encouraging and even leading the use of constructive community processes such as AI.

In this booklet, we give an overview of AI, how it has been used in addressing housing and development issues, and how it might be used in your community. We encourage readers to refer to the resources listed at the end of this booklet for more thorough explanations of Appreciative Inquiry – a practice with a rich history of success and a wealth of skilled practitioners.

What Is “Appreciative Inquiry”?

Developed initially for the world of business, Appreciative Inquiry is a paradigm for discovering what is needed to make life better in organizations. “Organizations” can be interpreted very broadly, because AI has been effective in a wide range of settings, from Fortune 100 companies, to neighbourhoods, to villages in India and Africa. The approach can even be used in families and other interpersonal relationships.

The practice of Appreciative Inquiry began, more or less, with the 1987 publication of “Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life” in the journal “Research in Organizational Change and Development.” It was written by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, professors at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

The “inquiry” part of the term refers to “seeking to understand through the asking of questions.” “Appreciative” comes from “appreciate”, which has several meanings, including “to value or admire highly,” “to recognize with gratitude” and “to increase in value” (like money in a savings account appreciates in value). David Cooperrider, the ‘father’ of AI, notes that “inquiry” should take precedence over “appreciative” – appreciation without inquiry is not much more than ‘happy talk’ and lacks any real power to foster change in organizations. However, because AI is solidly grounded in research, it can bring about dramatic positive transformations in organizations, neighbourhoods and communities.

Appreciative Inquiry involves making very conscious and deliberate choices about the kinds of questions we ask when initiating change in organizations

“AI is based on a deceptively simple premise: that organizations grow in the direction of what they repeatedly ask questions about and focus their attention on.”

- Gervase Bushe



or communities. By focusing on people's experiences of 'the best', Appreciative Inquiry brings life to our pursuit of positive change.

Who Uses Appreciative Inquiry

A strength of Appreciative Inquiry is its flexibility: as noted above, it has been used in groups as diverse as corporate boards and third world villages. In India, the process has offered a degree of empowerment to the most disenfranchised groups in the community, giving a voice to low caste women whose input is not usually sought. After participating in a half-day AI process, participants offered these comments:

"We are a 13-year old group, and we have been through many training programs. But this is different. We want to know what took you so long to conduct this kind of a program? We had no idea of our strengths. If you had done this a few years ago, imagine where we might have been today. You must promise us that you will do similar programs for other groups in our village." *Comments from members of the Mahalakshmi self-help group of Kariri, India after spending five hours conducting AI exercises.* (Graham & Patkav, 2001).

Several large American cities are also undertaking city-wide AI processes to help engage citizens in an inclusive and democratic planning process to shape the future of their cities. Citizens are called upon to "imagine" the kind of future they want for their cities. "Imagine Chicago", "Imagine Dallas" and "Imagine Los Angeles" are three such projects currently under way.

In a three-year initiative in Dubuque, Iowa, Appreciative Inquiry was successfully used to bring together diverse stakeholders with interests in housing. The relationships between these stakeholders were "contentious" prior to holding an Appreciative Inquiry summit and working collaboratively on a new housing plan. Following the project, the city reported a number of specific, and positive, outcomes such as "neighborhoods have become more liveable" and "agencies have improved their outreach to youth" (City of Dubuque, 2002, p. 3).

This project won two "HUD" awards from the United States Housing and Urban Development Agency, a federal Best Practice Award, and an Iowa HUD Best Practice Award.

More recently, the Housing Research and Action Project in Red Deer, AB, Canada (the source of this guidebook series) has effectively used an appreciative approach to explore housing issues among people with housing difficulties and key stakeholder groups.

"The questions we ask set the stage for what we 'find,' and what we 'discover' (the data) becomes the stories out of which the future is conceived, conversed about and constructed."

- David Cooperrider



What Makes Appreciative Inquiry Such a Powerful Agent of Change?

Appreciative Inquiry is effective as an agent of change because its grounding in formal research takes it far beyond 'the power of positive thinking' (which in no way is meant to diminish or disparage the power of positive thinking!). From the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and organizational development, core principles emerge that give AI its power to facilitate radical, positive transformations in organizations, neighbourhoods and communities.

In simple terms, Appreciative Inquiry is based on the following observations about how people behave:

1. In every society, organization or group, something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality.

(Hall & Hammond, 1998)

“AI does not focus on changing people. Instead, it invites people to engage in building the kinds of organizations they want to live in. That's hard to resist.”

- Gervase Bushe

Let's look at each of these points.

1. *In every society, organization or group, something works.*
Though our training often tells us to focus on 'what's broke,' in doing so it's easy to ignore the many things that work. In fact, when we look at organizations or communities, it is almost always the case that there are more things that work than things that don't work. What are the assets, the strengths, the accomplishments of the community? Furthermore, why has the community had such success in so many areas? What are the factors contributing to that success? By focusing on these, we can generalize the circumstances and factors to other areas where we have had less success.
2. *What we focus on becomes our reality.*
People who spend their time trading stories of what doesn't work, and all the terrible things that happened to them or their neighbourhood in the past, will inevitably end up with a mindset that focuses on those negatives. Individually and collectively, we are all capable of focus-



ing our intellectual and emotional energies on one matter to the exclusion of many (or all) others. In fact, our reality is based on what we experience, and where we direct our attention.

Therefore, in a neighbourhood development scenario, it will serve both parties best if they can focus their attention and energies on envisioning the kind of neighbourhood they want to create, rather than to spend a lot of effort defining what they don't want.

3. *Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.* Individuals and groups hold differing perceptions, based on the reality of their experiences. Because we are changed by experience, our 'reality' changes over time.

Anyone who has ever been on the inside of an organization or group knows that things look very different on the inside than they do from the outside.

Organizations involved in a change proposal – such as a development proposal – are well served to recognize that there is no one set of 'facts' that will be universally true to all participants.

4. *The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.* Inquiry and change occur simultaneously. It is not the case that 'first we do the analysis and then we decide on change.' The very process of inquiry/analysis creates its own changes.

Consider a company such as Avon Mexico (whose experience is described more fully in the pages that follow). Avon decided to examine gender issues in the company's Mexican operation. In doing so, it sent a message that gender issues were significant. This in itself begins to change the organizational culture. Avon recognized that it could not do a traditional study followed by 'implementation.' It had to learn and implement simultaneously.

Thus, a change initiative, far from being an objective and analytical exercise, creates its own changes that are a product of processes it uses. This is especially true in a development scenario. The mere opening of discussions about potential development begin to change a community.

Of course, an inquiry process which engages people in a search for positive forces in a community or situation is going to generate more constructive changes than one which focuses on what is 'broken' or 'lacking.'

“ I have been struck by the appreciative inquiry. Instead of getting bogged down in the negative like other communities, we focused on what has worked and how that can catapult us into envisioning the future.

We focused on the positives instead of focusing on what is dysfunctional, which actually creates conflict. ”

- Dubuque Iowa project participant



5. *People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).* Fear of change is rooted in our fear of the unknown. This is a natural reaction – caution about the unknown is often a very healthy human response. Yet people can move confidently into the future by recognizing elements of their past experience that have prepared them for that future. Our lives are full of success stories, and key elements / themes from those stories are often applicable to the future activity that we would otherwise find threatening.

Furthermore, the recognition that we did something successfully in the past generates confidence in our ability to do similar things in the future.

6. *If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.*

What stories do we tell about the past? What events do we remember and recount? Our past (as individuals and communities) contains many more success stories and achievements than it does failures. Why not carry the best experiences forward into the future? Appreciative Inquiry encourages participants to do this by having them share their best experiences, tell those stories, and use them as themes for the future.

7. *It is important to value differences.*

The goal of collaborative processes is not to create a single mindset. Instead, creative collaborative processes can discover ways in which difference is accommodated and even honoured. Some of the most productive Appreciative Inquiry projects have been ones, such as Imagine Chicago, where a wide spectrum of people were involved, and people from extremely divergent backgrounds found themselves connected with one another. If a process does not value those differences, the people who feel excluded will become non-participants, and potential critics of the entire process.

8. *The language we use creates our reality.*

The way we see the world and think about it is a product of our many conversations about it.

If people or groups are in conflict with others, they will often assume, in ambiguous situations, that their 'opponent' has negative motives guiding his or her decision making. Later, through conversations with people who were privy to a decision, they may learn that the decision was a perfectly reasonable and honourable one, given the information that it was based upon. As a result of a 'new conversation,' a person may change entirely his perspective on the decision that was



made and the motives of the person who made it. For that person, the reality of the situation has totally changed; it has been 'socially (re)constructed' based upon new information.

Furthermore, our sense of what is real is evident in the language of those conversations. A development proponent may be frustrated when their "community residence" is constantly referred to as a "half-way house" by people living in a neighbourhood. For those people, though, the proposal involves a half-way house. The proponents will know they have made a breakthrough in acceptance when they hear people's language shifting – perhaps beginning to use terms like "the townhouses" or "the apartment."

How to Engage in Appreciative Inquiry

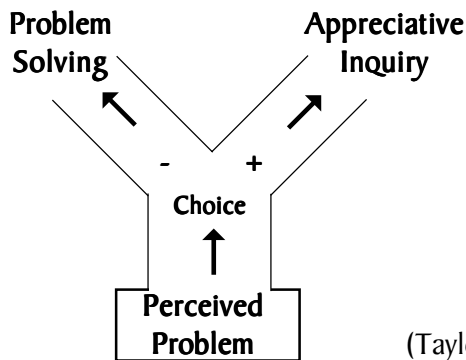
There are several different models that guide how Appreciative Inquiry is practiced in the "real world", but all of them draw on five generic processes:

1. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry
2. Inquire into stories of life-giving forces
3. Locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry
4. Create shared images of a preferred future
5. Find innovative ways to create that future.

We will look at the first principle, then examine the remaining four within the context of the main AI models

Choose the positive as the focus of the inquiry.

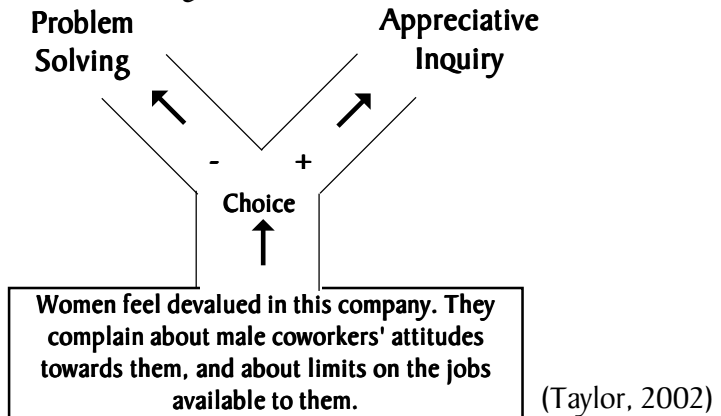
When an organization, (neighbourhood/community etc.) decides to undertake an Appreciative Inquiry into their situation, it is usually in response to some perceived problem. The questions asked at the very beginning will determine the shape and spirit of everything that follows.



(Taylor, 2002)

If the group decides to explore its situation by focusing on what is 'wrong' or what is lacking, it will be led in the direction of problem solving, and all that goes with that frame of reference. If, on the other hand, the group decides to take an appreciative approach, it will be led towards new possibilities and positive outcomes.

This is perhaps best illustrated with an example. As noted earlier, the cosmetics firm Avon Mexico initiated an inquiry into gender issues with the assistance of consultant Marg Schiller. (Watkins & Mohr, 2001).



If Avon had decided to use traditional problem solving to address this issue, it would have begun by asking typical "problem solving" questions:

"Problem Solving" Questions to Address Gender Inequality

What can we do about sexist male attitudes? When are women experiencing sexual harassment? Who's doing it? Where? When? What kind of sexual harassment policies should we have? Why aren't women able to move up into senior management? What are the barriers and how can we remove them?

These kinds of questions used to address gender issues will lead to a great focus on harassment, negative gender roles, blame, and barriers. As a result, those very qualities can become further entrenched.

In addressing its gender issues, the company did not use the problem solving approach. Instead, it worked with AI consultants and posed completely different types of questions:

"Appreciative Inquiry" Questions to Bring About Gender Equity

What are the very best work experiences men and women have had working together in this company? What examples do we have from our own experience, where both parties felt fully engaged, valued and productive? What circumstances made this possible? How can we recreate these circumstances so that men and women have more "best" experiences working together?

These questions lead in a more positive direction – toward solutions, and toward the ideal scenarios where things ‘work.’

Now imagine that you are a man working for Avon Mexico when the company decides to address gender issues. How would you feel about a study which begins with the first set of questions? How would you feel about starting with the second set of questions?

One of the great strengths of AI is the climate that the process itself fosters. Choosing the positive leads the inquiry in the direction of positive forces in the organization, group, community. In so doing, it energizes the participants who engage with it while avoiding provoking defensiveness - the ‘blame game’ that problem solving can sometimes lead to, with its endless hot debates over “Whose problem is it anyway?”

In 1997, when Avon Mexico completed its AI process, it was given a prestigious Catalyst Award for being the best place in the country for women to work.

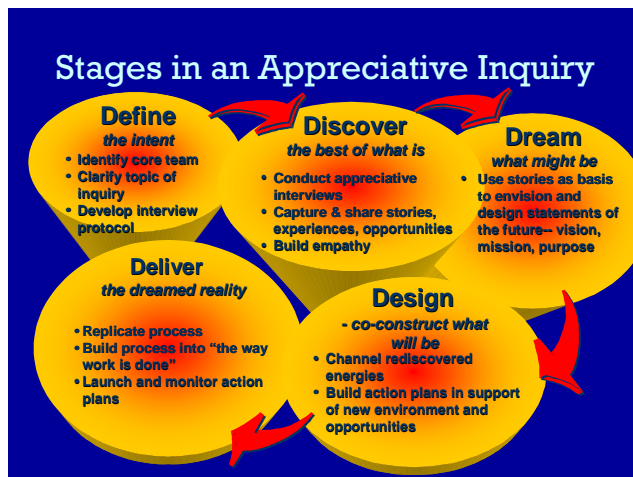
Stages in an Appreciative Inquiry

A variety of models have emerged for Appreciative Inquiry processes, using ‘4D’, ‘5D’ or ‘4I’ structures. Each of the models shares some key elements, and communities will want to explore which approach most effectively fits their situation. Ideally, AI is a “circular” process which fosters a continual process of organizational (or community) development and renewal. In this booklet, we will give an overview of a ‘5D’ model that can be used in development scenarios, and briefly show a ‘4I’ process used in the Dubuque, Iowa, housing project.

Our 5D model, modified from those developed by other practitioners, is action oriented: participants are encouraged to Define > Discover > Dream > Design > and finally Deliver.

“Appreciative Inquiry can get you much better results than seeking out and solving problems. That’s an interesting concept for me—and I imagine most of you—because telephone companies are among the best problem solvers in the world....Don’t get me wrong. I’m not advocating mindless happy talk. Appreciative Inquiry is a complex science designed to make things better. We can’t ignore problems—we just need to approach them from the other side.”

Tom White, President, GTE
(Vital Speeches of the Day, Tom White, 1996)





Define
the intent

- Identify core team
- Clarify topic of inquiry
- Develop Interview protocol

Define

In a '5D' model, the first stage – Define – incorporates the principles, noted above, of choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry. The Define stage begins with the formation of a core team. It is important here to build awareness of appreciative processes and approaches within the team. See the section later in this booklet for hints on the conditions that must be present for a successful Appreciative Inquiry.

The team will work on clarifying the topic of inquiry. This is a crucial step because what we focus on becomes our reality. In a development scenario, it would be easy to focus on a topic that is too narrow to allow people opportunities to dream up new ways of doing things. Perhaps, for example, a developer has begun to enquire about converting an unused public building in a neighbourhood into condo residences. In seeking a topic of inquiry, it is best to go back to the key values, principles, and interests of the various stakeholders. Focusing an inquiry around 'how can the empty public works building best be turned into condos' will restrict participants, and many people – those who think the condo route is the wrong one - may simply choose not to participate.

What are the broader interests of the stakeholders? Perhaps a more fruitful topic of inquiry might be 'How can Development Company X, the neighbourhood of Pine Grove, and other stakeholders work together?' Or 'What is the best future for the vacant public works building(s) in Pine Grove?' There is no single 'right' topic, but it will take some exploration to discover the topic that is right for your community, your times, and your circumstances.

As noted earlier, it is also important that the initial topic be phrased in the positive.

At this stage, the core team will also develop interview protocols. The questions people ask in an Appreciative Inquiry will shape the answers you receive, so question-writing is an important and extended process. A useful guide is the book 'The Encyclopaedia of Positive Questions' (Whitney, 2001).

Discover
the best of what is

- Conduct appreciative interviews
- Capture & share stories experiences & opportunities
- Build Empathy

Discover

The "Discover" stage uses one-on-one interviews to learn about the very best of *what is*. It creates opportunities for people to share stories about their "peak experiences" in organizations (or neighbourhoods or communities), about their organizations (or neighbourhoods or communities)



when they function at their very best, and about their own individual strengths and resources. The interview may begin with a phrase like: “Tell me a story about” The participants interview one another to seek positive stories of personal experiences. They then identify “themes” in the stories told and the circumstances that gave rise to the excellence and achievement, and analyze the unique factors that contributed to the peak experiences.

If the focus of the Appreciative Inquiry is community development, questions such as the following might be asked during a discovery stage exploration:

Tell me a story about a time when a community you were familiar with came together and accomplished something remarkable. What were the circumstances? How did the community work effectively together to achieve this? What roles did different groups or individuals play? How did these roles contribute to the overall achievement? What was the most enduring aspect of the community’s accomplishment? What made it sustainable?

In a land rezoning or development context, questions such as the following might be asked:

Tell me a story about a time when you noticed a developer and neighbourhood working well together. What were the circumstances? How did the neighbourhood people and the developer work effectively together? What roles did different groups or individuals play? What was the most important learning that the neighbourhood people and developer gained as a result of working together effectively?

In the Red Deer Housing Research and Action Project, one Appreciative Inquiry ‘Discovery’ was held with people who had experienced difficulty in finding suitable housing. The interviewers worked from the following questions:

1. Think of a time when you or someone you know about had a really great place to live that met all or most of your/their needs. What was so great about that situation? Be as specific as possible.
2. Imagine you are a designer of housing for people just like you. You just got asked to design the perfect housing situation. What does it include? Be specific, please.
3. Imagine that you help people to find housing. What would you do to help them find exactly what they want? What would you ask them to do? Please be specific.
4. What do you think would need to happen in Red Deer to be sure there was enough of the right housing for you?



In another group, college students interviewed one another about their housing experiences and expectations. Interview questions included:

1. Think of a time when you or a college/university student you know about had a really great place to live (other than their family home) that met all or most of your/their needs. What was so great about that situation. Be as specific as possible.
2. Imagine you are a designer of housing for college students just like you. You just got asked to design the perfect housing situation. What does it look like? Be specific, please.
3. Imagine that you help college students to find housing. What would you do to help them find exactly what they want? What would you ask them to do? Please be specific.

Once the interviews are complete, the next stage is to mine the data in search of themes, and the most positive forces in the organization (or neighbourhood or community). As these themes are identified, they may reveal new questions that should form part of the inquiry.

In the Red Deer project, participants identified a number of themes that were common to their stories of 'best housing experiences.' Under the theme of "Support," for example, people shared their interest in "non-invasive support," "mentorship," and "companionship but with privacy." In describing their preferred Neighbourhoods, the participants talked about places where "people take responsibility for their actions" and "neighbours help one another."

Student groups talked about access to transportation, spaces that individuals could share while maintaining privacy, and affordability

The purpose of the discovery process is to focus participants' attention on the very best of what they have experienced in a neighbourhood or community, and by focussing attention on it, cause those characteristics to appreciate.

A secondary but significant benefit of the one-on-one interviews is that they build relationships, empathy, and tolerance. Essentially, the interviews re-create some of the social capital that (as noted in booklet I) is often lacking in our society.

Dream
what might be

- Use stories as basis to envision and design statements of the future - vision mission, purpose

Dream

While the Discover stage focuses on the best of *what is*, the Dream stage focuses on *what could be*; people challenge the status quo by imagining a better, more vibrant, and positive future. It is idealistic in that it creates an image of an ideal future, while at the same time, it is grounded in the best



of what has already actually occurred in the organization/neighbourhood/ community. Building upon the extraordinary moments from past experiences and the themes identified in the “Discover” stage, people create a shared image of their organization ‘at its best.’

Participants in the exercise may use music, drama, art, sculpture, or other artistic forms to free up their imaginations and create a compelling image of a ‘preferred future’ for their organizations. People think big thoughts and dream big dreams for the future. Then, based on the image they create together of their preferred future, they formulate ‘provocative propositions’ that will guide them towards that future.

A provocative proposition is a bridge between the best of ‘what is,’ as learned through the Discover process, and the idealized vision of ‘what could be’ that has grown out of the Dream process. A provocative proposition provides a clear direction that will guide the activities of the organization.

A good provocative proposition is:

- written in bold, affirmative language in the present tense
- “provocative” - it stretches and challenges (but is achievable)
- grounded in the best of what the organization has already achieved
- a reflection of people’s highest aspirations for their organization; it is highly desired and provokes passion

In the Dubuque, Iowa, project, participants chose to use the term “future goal statements” instead of provocative propositions. They created statements with phrases such as “We have a vital partnership between landlords, tenants, potential homeowners, the government, and the business community” and “the neighborhoods in Dubuque have formed an aesthetically pleasing community by improving conditions of properties...”. (EnCompass, 2000, sec. 5 p. 4, 5).

Design

The Design stage focuses on determining *what will be*; participants work to discover innovative ways to bring into existence the preferred future they envisioned in the Dream stage.

The work in this stage helps participants to develop the structures and strategies to implement short-term and longer term goals. Alternative strategies and fall-back options are created. The strategies are broken down into sets of doable activities that can be taken over a period of time. Action plans are linked back to the provocative propositions to ensure that actions match the goals that have been set. Goals and action plans are prioritized and documented so that they can be referred back to as implementation proceeds.

Design
co-construct what will be

- Channel rediscovered energies
- Build action plans in support of new environment and opportunities



Any one or combination of planning tools may be used in this stage. One simple structure is to use the seven (WSH2) questions that guide newspaper reporters in covering a story; these are Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? and How much? (budgets and costs).

The Design stage can proceed using either Individual Action approaches, or Whole System Change approaches or a combination of the two. One effective Individual Action approach is the "Requests, Offers, & Commitments" approach.

Using this method, each individual participating in the Design stage makes:

- a *Request* (e.g. to meet with other "sections" of the organization to discuss a topic of mutual interest),
- an *Offer* or "gift" to the process (e.g. to share knowledge or resources), and
- a *Commitment* to take specific actions that are within his/her ability to deliver.

Deliver
the dreamed reality

- Replicate process
- Build process into "the way work is done"
- Launch and monitor action plans

Deliver

In the Deliver stage (referred to in some literature as the *Destiny* stage), group members mobilize resources, form new relationships, acquire new skills and implement their action plans. Organizational and individual commitments are made to ensure that the design statements are implemented. Collective vision directs collective action. The more the AI process is 'given away' and shared with all members in an organization, the faster people in the organization move spontaneously towards their vision of a preferred future. Ideally, in the Deliver stage, an appreciative learning culture is created, and the process becomes self-sustaining. Implementation of positive solutions gives rise to new peak experiences which can be brought to light through a new Discover phase, leading to new Dreams and so on.

Adapting Appreciative Inquiry Processes

As noted earlier, in 1998 the City of Dubuque, Iowa, launched a three-year process to improve housing for its citizens. Using Appreciative Inquiry, the community brought together diverse stakeholders – including landlords and tenants - who had been experiencing significant conflicts.

The Dubuque process began with the training of 60 volunteers as AI interviewers; more than 200 one-on-one interviews were conducted.

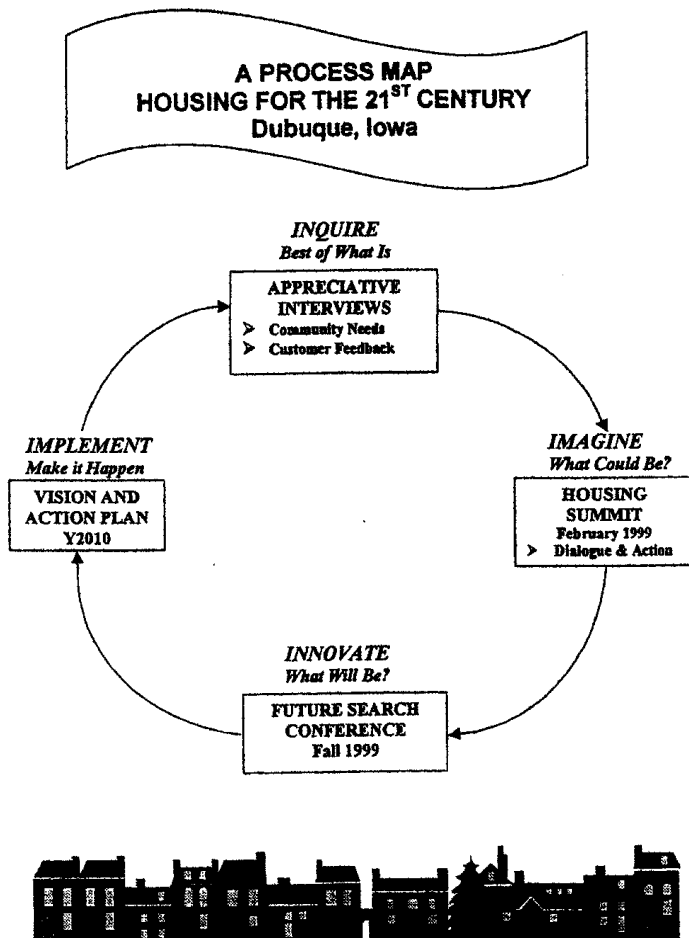


Stories from the interviews were shared and discussed at a “summit” with stakeholders in 1999. Following the summit, a conference was held to develop strategies and action plans for the next five years.

The Dubuque project received a National Award of Merit for administrative innovation from the (U.S.) National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. Perhaps most importantly, it generated the following outcomes in the City:

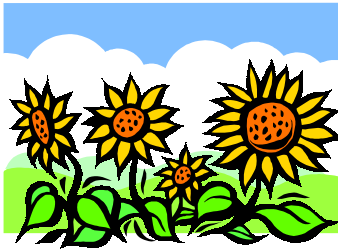
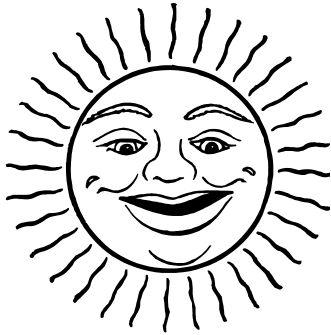
- neighbourhoods were described as “more vital”
- tenants began organizing to better represent their interests
- initiatives were begun to increase affordable housing
- the City formed new partnerships to share information
- agencies improved their youth outreach
- the City initiated a downtown planning process.

In using Appreciative Inquiry, the Dubuque group chose to create a ‘4-I’ model: Inquire, Imagine, Innovate, and Implement. Shown here is the ‘Process Map’ for the Appreciative Inquiry process used in Dubuque.



“Accomplishments of the Appreciative Inquiry process are tangible and measurable.”

- Appreciative Inquiry final report, Dubuque, Iowa



Heliotropic Hypothesis

“Social systems evolve toward the most positive images they hold of themselves.”

- David Cooperrider

Because of its power to facilitate substantive change, and its processes which steer conflicting interests away from confrontation and blame, the AI approach offers enormous potential to help developers and community people come together to discover areas of common interest and common vision.

The key in the community context, as in all other applications of Appreciative Inquiry, is to start by framing the issues facing the community in a positive context (for example, see *The Discovery Stage* on pages 9 and 10.)

A neighbourhood engaged in development issues may not find it necessary (or possible) to conduct a full-fledged Appreciative Inquiry into their situation, but they can certainly use components of the process to great advantage.

Necessary Conditions for Success Using Appreciative Inquiry

In order for an AI process to be truly successful, several conditions must be present:

1. Stakeholders who are committed to a genuinely participative process and are willing to allow the process to unfold.
2. Broad participation from all levels of the organization or community.
3. An openness by all participants to multiple interpretations of the 'data.'
4. A willingness to commit the necessary time to the inquiry.
5. A willingness to trust the process and its outcomes.

AI is appropriate when groups of people want to achieve optimum solutions to 'people' problems, and the outcomes of the decision-making process are truly open and not predetermined. If one of the parties to the discussion of a development scenario has the power to impose his or her will on the outcome of the discussion, and if he reserves for himself the right to "make the final decision", then AI is probably not advisable.

Similarly, AI is not recommended where the issues are of a technical, rather than human, nature - under these circumstances, conventional / technical problem solving may be more suitable.

Developing an Appreciative Approach

In essence, participants in an Appreciative Inquiry need an appreciative mindset. Dr. Gervase Bushe, a business administration professor at Simon Fraser University and organization development consultant has written extensively about this mindset in a paper called *The Appreciative Self* (2001). He uses two metaphors to describe how an appreciative mindset can be cultivated: through “tracking” and “fanning.”

Before either of these “techniques” can be used, however, the person must know what s/he wants more of. Too often in conflict situations, people can only think of what they don’t want – for example, “We don’t want this project/developer to run roughshod over community interests.”

But tracking and fanning cannot be used to eliminate behaviour; they can only amplify behaviour, (i.e., make it “appreciate”). If, for example, a group wants a developer to listen to and take seriously community concerns, then that is the behaviour they want to “track” and “fan.”

An “appreciative self” starts with the assumption that whatever we want to “appreciate” already exists, even if in very small quantities. “Tracking” is the process that will help you to find it. Bushe describes the tracking process this way:

“Once you know what you want more of then you start “tracking” it. The image here is of a hunter tracking game in the jungle. It takes constant attention, a light step, and seeing the clues hidden in the surrounding foliage. It is, most profoundly, the ability to see what you want more of as already being there. After ten years of teaching managers (and myself) the skills of the Appreciative Self I’ve concluded that this is the toughest part; developing your ability to see what you want more of already in the people and systems you work in. Sometimes you just have to start with a leap of faith.”

Once the desired behaviour has been identified and “tracked”, the next step is to “fan” it. This metaphor comes from blowing air onto a small fire to turn it into a roaring blaze. Simply focusing one’s attention on what wants more of will help it to grow. In addition to just “paying attention”, Bushe offers three more strategies for fanning the kind of behaviour you want to increase:

“...you can fan through “praise”, “blessing” and “asking for more.” Praise refers to appreciating something that has already happened. When we are praising we are calling attention to something that has already been done and appreciating it....



The same is true of blessing. While praise is about the past, blessing is about the future. When we bless something or someone we are giving them license to continue being what they are. Again, getting a “blessing” from a manager who just attended a course and is following his “3 blessings a day” program doesn’t have much kick. But a blessing from a leader who sincerely appreciates what you are doing has an impact. And when blessing comes wrapped in tangibles, like money or resources to increase what you are doing, amplification is assured.”

Moving Forward with Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is not a prescription. Rather, it is a philosophy and a way of looking at situations that allows groups of people to work effectively together. You are encouraged to explore the possibilities of this approach through the resources listed at the end of this booklet.

In booklet 6, *Building Success: an Appreciative Approach* workbook, we offer some guiding questions that can help your group take an appreciative approach to your development situation.



General Sources

The following books and web sites are good starting points to learn more about Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry Commons <http://appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu/>
 Appreciative Inquiry Canada www.appreciativeinquiry.ca

Whitney, D., Trosten-Bloom, A., & Cooperrider, D. (2003) *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*. New York: Berrett-Koehler.

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Roulier, M. (1997). *Local community: seedbed of civil society*. In: From Beyond Prince and Merchant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society (Ed. John Burbidge). The Institute of Cultural Affairs International. Available at: <http://www.communityinitiatives.com/articl20.html>

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Please briefly describe your use of these booklets - what project, workshop, or situation are you working on/participating in?

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