**Community development**: The study suggests that TNO is well placed, through its depth of history and connection with the many strands that comprise its core neighbourhood, to have a direct impact on overall neighbourhood health and vitality by focusing on a community development model. The study showed both how connected TNO was with much of the neighbourhood and at the same time showed how much more could be done to embed the agency more deeply as a resource to all. It showed the impact that the organization has on community life and the reality that TNO alone cannot take that further and achieve its mission.

Fully achieving TNO’s goals requires collaboration and partnership with residents, service providers, institutions, businesses and policy makers. The study suggested that, as the demographics shift, as TNO engages and as its overall profile rises, an intentional, transparent approach to the neighbourhood would be necessary to be effective, and to avoid the pitfalls of being perceived as serving only one segment of the community. The higher the profile of the agency, the greater the scrutiny, and the greater the need for a community development strategy that maximizes inclusion, transparency and consistency of messaging.

5. **Community Development Framework**: -

The information that follows is extracted from a longer document that was prepared for TNO. The task that the organization requested, as described in the summary above, was to assist TNO in exploring how a community development approach would benefit Thorncliffe Park, and what kind of resources, training and related implications would result for the organization. The following should allow the reader to explore the approach outlined in the document, and how the findings of the study support the benefits of “thinking and acting CD.”

a. **Definitions of Neighbourhood Based Community Development**

Community Development is not a static term or process, and so definitions shift over time. Two that are useful to the current process are as follows: -

1. **Toronto Neighbourhood Centres**: -

*Community Development is working collaboratively to create connections that mobilize people and resources to resist, reduce and end social and economic inequality. Through this activity, capacity is built continuously to improve collective well being.*

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1 Toronto Neighbourhood Centres –
[http://neighbourhoodcentres.ca/torontocd/resources#cd-renewal](http://neighbourhoodcentres.ca/torontocd/resources#cd-renewal) (see also Appendix)
TNC goes on to describe five principles that shape a community development approach. Community development is:

a. **Group focused**: connects individuals sharing common concerns;
b. **Bottom-up**: engages those affected by challenges, ensuring they set and drive the agenda for change;
c. **Inclusive**: ensures that community members of diverse backgrounds and capacities are able to participate in meaningful ways;
d. **Empowering**: facilitates an understanding about broader structures that people experience individually as exclusion and disadvantage;
e. **Seeks system change**: addresses root causes and systemic barriers that create conditions of inequality and exclusion.

*Note: Some examples of CD activities that flow from this definition are included in the Appendix.*

2. **Federation of Community Development Learning (UK)**: -

*Community Development is the process of developing active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about influencing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives.*

*Community workers facilitate the participation of people in this process. They enable connections to be made between communities and with the development of wider policies and programmes.*

*Community Development expresses values of fairness, equality, accountability, opportunity, choice, participation, mutuality, reciprocity and continuous learning. Educating, enabling and empowering are at the core of Community Development.*

Both of these definitions stress a set of elements that are essential to an organization’s community development strategy.

a. Working directly in partnership with the community to build its capacity and create the

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2 Federation of Community Development Learning [http://www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk)
opportunities to achieve its goals;
b. Working to build connection, cohesion between groups and connections with decision-makers.
c. Working to remove the systemic barriers that impede individuals, groups and the neighbourhood itself from thriving. The organization is in a privileged and legitimate place to identify and act on these barriers.
d. Building sustainability and lasting impacts. There are two major ways to achieve this. Firstly, system changes (public policy/legislative changes - for example a change to housing legislation to protect tenants). These system changes will not require future organizing by the community (other than to monitor any threats to the legislation) and will have a positive impact over time. The second, is to build the systems, the capacity and the opportunities for community members to continue to work together to reach common goals – not just one time successes but the networks, connections, trust and resources that will last beyond the people who are currently active.

b. TNO - Community development in a neighbourhood setting

“Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office is committed to building a safe and healthy community through supporting and strengthening the quality of individual and community life in Thorncliffe Park.”

By focusing on building community, TNO’s mission is already inherently devoted to community development. The values TNO espouses, such as empowerment, participation and open dialogue also support this goal.

TNO is first and foremost a neighbourhood organization. The mission statement as it currently stands commits the organization to focus its energies on building the quality of individual and community life, with “community” here referring to the various groups and institutions that together comprise the neighbourhood. This requires us to think not just about individual population groups or issues but to understand and act on the interaction between all the strands that make up a neighbourhood and its relationship with the world. A healthy neighbourhood depends on a complex interacting range of social and economic factors – for example, if people do not feel safe to leave their homes, then their children may not have the opportunity to access programs that would benefit them. The path to supporting children may therefore lie in working with community members on community safety issues. Family relationships may be extremely strained because of the economic and social challenges of lack of accreditation of non-Canadian credentials and/or work experience, and the efforts of the agency might be best placed to focus on these issues. And so on. It is necessary to look at any issue in the context of
all of the factors that affect it, and by doing so, the issue can be addressed effectively on multiple levels. This might require collaboration across various parts of the organization, and requires the structures to support this approach.

The goal of all of this is to build enduring structures into the organization that maximize the opportunities of a neighbourhood and its constituent groups to access the information, supports, entitlements and opportunities that they deserve without barriers. These structures should allow them to anticipate and to resolve challenges and to seize opportunities for equity, inclusion and positive change. It focuses on building a neighbourhood where people are aware of and can exercise their democratic rights and assume their responsibilities; where people are connected and involved in decision-making processes; where there are the support systems built in that allow all residents to understand and exercise their choices and where the various groups have the ability and the opportunity to communicate with one another effectively. Using all of this, we can start to build a picture of a healthy neighbourhood as a place:

- Where everyone feels safe, included and has access to the resources they need to be healthy and productive;
- Where individuals and groups have access to information and opportunities to plan and achieve their objectives, individually and collectively;
- Where people are linked together in networks that have the ability to address local issues and work toward shared goals;
- That is seamlessly integrated into the fabric of the city and the region socially, economically, culturally;
- Where everyone has equitable access to the full range of rights, entitlements and opportunities of Canadian society.

**c. So what does this mean for TNO?**

TNO’s commitment to a community development approach to neighbourhood work involves being connected to a constantly shifting landscape, one that is never static. To be effective, therefore, the organization must tailor what it does to anticipate and reflect changes in the population, in the physical and social infrastructure, and in the economy. The bedrock of what TNO does may not need to change. The core programs that have developed over time for children, youth, families and seniors, may stay solid, but some aspects of how it delivers them may change. TNO will need to ensure that the implementation meets the objectives of maximizing community participation in the solution and working to address the barriers and challenges at a broader structural level. In addition, a significant part of the organization’s energy must be focused on maintaining depth of engagement, creating opportunities that support the kind of linkages and actions that will support the building of a healthy
neighbourhood. This could involve:

- Supporting an emerging group of tenants that are starting to organize by providing them with space, with information, perhaps linking them with a community legal clinic or tenant advocacy group;
- Responding to an influx of refugees from a war-torn environment and all of the careful support required to assist them individually and collectively, to support each other in addressing their past troubles and future challenges;
- Helping deal with the impact of a factory closure on individuals, families and the neighbourhood, through support for organizing, advocacy, economic development activities etc;
- Assisting groups to develop mechanisms to resolve conflict;
- Taking the opportunity to support a group of residents with a business startup.  

To meet these needs you must be constantly aware of who you are not connected with and why. The focus must always be on all of the constituent groups and all of the factors that ensure inclusion, opportunity and cohesion. It is all too easy, when staff, programs and services are at capacity and beyond, to let this crucial part of the organization’s work slide. This is why an ongoing engagement strategy built into the organizational cycle is so important – in addition to improving the quality of service and response to the existing client/community base, it is necessary to identify continually who is not using services and why. Have there been shifts in the population? Do groups that are not accessing the agency have separate support systems? Do they perceive your organization as not accessible or relevant to them? Is your organization by its very success in serving one population group excluding others? These questions need to be answered and addressed to ensure a focus on inclusion and on neighbourhood health.

As important is an orientation beyond simply providing services and toward helping people play a role in the structures and systems around them to enable them to serve their own community and their own needs and objectives more effectively.

The framework also explores how to manage expectations, and how to be transparent with community stakeholders about the role of a non-profit organization, its governance structure that supports inclusion of community members, and its accountability to its funders.

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3 Also see Appendix for TNC’s suggestions on CD activities
The document concludes with two tables, which are reproduced here. The first is designed to assist the organization in “mapping out” the various factors that impact the vitality of a neighbourhood.

The table provides a list of various aspects of community life that impact health and vitality for individuals, families and for the collective identity and relationship of the neighbourhood with the world around it. For each indicator, a list of factors is included that support achievement of the healthy outcome – this includes programs and services, but it also includes other contributing factors to a neighbourhood that functions well – safety, public spaces, communications, participation. Finally, some of the ways that an agency such as TNO can support the neighbourhood through community development are listed.

One objective here is to encourage us to recognize that, where possible, the role of the agency is to help create the conditions where neighbourhood life runs smoothly for everyone, where people have access to what they need, and if they do not have it, have access to the information, networks and resources to address the gaps and challenges. In this way, the organization’s role as facilitator, as capacity-builder, as partner with the various groups that comprise the neighbourhood in addressing systemic barriers to equity and participation, becomes integrated into every strand of its work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood Health Indicator</th>
<th>Adverse impacts when compromised/absent</th>
<th>Influencing conditions/Supporting Infrastructure</th>
<th>Agency role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Employment** (high employment levels; jobs match skills) | • Unemployment  
• Under-employment  
• Underground economy  
• Occupational health issues increase  
• Poverty  
• Health issues  
• Family stress/instability | • Accreditation issues  
• Effective Networks  
• Access to labour market information  
• Access to affordable Day Care  
• English Language Skills  
• Neighbourhood Links with local economy/ relevant employers  
• Access to skills training | • Research  
• Advocacy  
• Programming  
• Community Engagement  
• Network development  
• Social enterprise |
<table>
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</table>
| Income Security               | • Poverty                              | • Provincial/Federal legislation (EI/ODSP/CPP/OW/Minimum Wage)  
• Precariously housed/evictions  
• Health compromised  
• School performance compromised  
• Information/advocacy re rights (local networks; legal clinics etc)  
• Rent banks | • Research  
• Advocacy  
• Linkages with services (space, referral, engagement, etc.)  
• Community Education/ Capacity-building |
| Housing                       | • Precariously housed  
• Maintenance issues  
• Overcrowding  
• Evictions  
• Homelessness | • Access to legal clinic  
• Tenant organizing  
• Information re: rights and remedies | • Service linkages  
• Information/  
Educational/  
Capacity building  
• Research  
• Advocacy  
• Organizing support |
| Education                     | • High drop-out rates and resultant social disruption  
• Challenges securing accreditation  
• Lack of services in schools (ESL, counselling) | • Active parent involvement in schools  
• Professional networks  
• Flexibility of school system | • Engagement/  
Capacity-building  
• Work with schools addressing barriers to participation  
• Youth programming  
• Research  
• Advocacy |
| Health Care                   | • Health compromised short and long-term  
• Impact on employment/income  
• Developmental issues for children  
• Mental health issues increase  
• Increased hospitalization | • Links with hospitals, CHC’s FHT’s and other primary care services  
• Advocacy | • Linkages  
• Research  
• Advocacy  
• Programs and services |
| Child Care                    | • People unable to work  
• Stress on parents  
• Children lack opportunity to socialize  
• Pre-school developmental preparation missing | • Parent relief programs  
• Informal drop-ins  
• Childcare subsidies  
• Advocacy | • Programs  
• Research  
• Advocacy |
| Recreation                    | • Health compromised (all ages)  
• Stress  
• Youth lack constructive opportunities-increased tensions | • Community organized activities  
• Advocacy | • Capacity  
• Programming  
• Research  
• Advocacy  
• Linkages |
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and Cultural Opportunities, inclusion and cohesion</td>
<td>• Isolation • Intergenerational tensions • Intergroup conflict • Community safety compromised</td>
<td>• Cultural events • Creation of public gathering spaces • Recreational space</td>
<td>• Engagement • Organizing • Conflict resolution • Mediation • Trusteeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Economy (access to goods and services)</td>
<td>• Few employment opportunities • Higher priced produce • Transportation issues • Neighbourhood isolated</td>
<td>• Farmers’ markets • Community gardens • Bus service to shopping centres • Local economic development initiatives (BIA, social enterprise etc.) • Local hiring practices</td>
<td>• Linkages • Engagement • Organizing • Collaborative economic development initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>• Community services/planning decisions may not reflect community needs/perspectives • Sense of alienation • Low voter turnout/political participation lead to lack of political attention/support</td>
<td>• Planning bodies/governance structures have effective inclusion mechanisms • Political literacy programs</td>
<td>• Capacity building • Linkages with planning bodies, non-profits, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>• Fear and Isolation • Decreased utilization of programs and services • Stigma • Increased crime rates</td>
<td>• Regular Safety Audits • Effective CPLC • Social recreational programming</td>
<td>• Linkages • Research • CD support • Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with surrounding communities/region</td>
<td>• Isolation • Stigma</td>
<td>• Social connection (schools, faith communities, community events) • Local planning links areas</td>
<td>• Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second table provides a list of areas of organizational activity that are relevant or required in order to maximize the organization’s role and effectiveness in community development. For each activity, examples and an indication of the resources required are provided.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/ Activity area</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Resource Requirements/ Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Community Engagement   | Maintain/monitor community profile/trends  
Hire/utilize community animators  
Participation in community events  
Stay aware of community networks and groups  
Crisis response strategy | CD strategy depends on engaging effectively with the breadth of stakeholders  
Staff support/resources for animators  
Network development projects  
Flexibility to respond to community issues  
Communications budget  
Training |
| Programs and services linked to CD strategy | Program content linked to community issues/capacity-building  
Programs work with participants to identify barriers  
Participants involved in program planning and development  
Inter-team collaboration to identify trends, issues, opportunities and responses | Curriculum materials  
Guest speakers  
Discussion sessions  
Cross-team discussion of emerging issues/opportunities/strategies |
| Community Organizing   | Provide space and other material resources to community groups  
Facilitation support where requested  
Link groups with decision-makers  
Communications/outreach support  
Build connections | Space use  
Staff time  
Training  
See also Capacity-Building |
<table>
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</table>
| **Capacity-Building** | Disseminating Information/knowledge transfer  
Skill building  
Conflict resolution  
Leadership training  
Support to community groups  
Trusteeship | Multilingual materials/web-site  
Staff Training  
Staff time to support trustees to build their capacity  
Policy and procedural guidelines for trusteeship  
Workshops for community members |
| **Research, Public Education and Advocacy** | Research partnerships (participatory models where possible)  
Community Forums, Town Halls  
Networks, coalitions, letter-writing, deputations | Dedicated management/staff time to develop appropriate research partnerships  
Resources for community education initiatives  
Board time devoted to advocacy  
Flexibility to seize opportunities |
| **Inclusion in Governance and Operations** | Active membership structure  
Board and committee recruitment  
Active volunteer program  
Advisory committees  
Program evaluation | By-law amendments  
Board membership committee  
Mentoring system  
Board training |
| **Facilitating Civic Engagement** | Civic literacy  
Inclusion in program curriculum/activities  
Facilitating inclusion in municipal and other urban and social planning functions | Curriculum development  
Staff time to run workshops, work with planning bodies and community |
| **Organizational Planning Cycle** | Incorporate community sweeps/ Town Halls/ discussion groups  
Inclusion of community members in program planning and evaluation | Staff, volunteer time, materials production for sweeps  
Program evaluation tools revised, training and additional time resulting from inclusive process |
<table>
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</table>
| **Human Resource Strategy** | Local hiring practices  
Job descriptions that reflect skills and activities of CD  
Professional Development opportunities  
Performance Appraisal based on CD objectives (strategic directions and annual operational plan) | Resources for professional development  
Staff time to develop revised job descriptions and performance appraisal tool |
| **Partnership**        | Collaborative community development initiatives (agency as lead, as partner, as Trustee)  
Participation in planning bodies, networks and coalitions  
Research partnerships | Dedicated staff time for participation in collaborative initiatives  
Staff position with responsibility for research |

**Managing the process to make it successful**

As mentioned above, TNO is a busy, effective organization, already engaged in significant ways with many of the people, agencies, institutions and processes that impact the health of its primary neighbourhood. The process of developing and acting on a community development strategy should be a careful one, managed to ensure that it is realistic, relevant, inclusive and effective. It must be realistic, as many or most community members are busy surviving, and may have little time and not much faith in the change process. It must be relevant, again because people will only and should only be asked to invest in meaningful activities. It must be inclusive, because that is the driving principle of ensuring relevance, building capacity and sustainability. It must be effective, because trust and momentum are built through tangible outcomes, frequently small successes at first, and because effectiveness and demonstrable success will create further opportunities.

This framework will be used as a basis for discussion and planning to build a community development strategy for TNO.