

East Side News

The Results Are In

BY MAX MOLINE

In late 2016 the Mount Vernon Triangle (MVT) Community Improvement District (CID) conducted its annual Neighborhood Perception Survey, and the 555 responses shattered the previous record number (last year netted 448). According to Kenyattah A. Robinson, president and CEO of the CID, the survey focuses on four aspects of life: cleanliness, safety, the seven-person CID Clean Team Ambassadors, and the sense of civic engagement and community pride.

Cleanliness

"We've always been pretty high on cleanliness," Robinson noted. The neighborhood is clean or very clean according to 78 percent of respondents, down just three points from 2015's number. While Robinson noted that the Clean Team is always striving for 100 percent, the fact that four out of five residents are satisfied shows that the CID is performing well. "Clean and safe is our core mission," he said. "One way you know if a neighborhood is safe is if it's clean."

Safety

Unsurprisingly, safety and cleanliness ranked as the most important issues for respondents. While the numbers on cleanliness stayed strong in 2016, the safety perceptions dipped from 58 percent feeling safe or very safe in 2015 to 49 percent in 2016.

As a result Robinson and the CID have initiated a safety council, made up of one property manager or representative of each of the neighborhood's commercial and residential buildings, as well as retail establishments, to address the concerns of those who live, work, do business, or otherwise patronize the MVT CID.

"Thankfully we have almost no violent crime," Robinson said as he knocked on the table, praising the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) for keeping those numbers low. But he went on to say that at times there were a few noticeable upticks in property theft in 2016, specifically car break-ins. One way the CID has addressed this issue is by working with MPD to increase police presence and spreading the word that people should not leave valuables in plain sight in their cars, which according to MPD is a thread common among many of

MVT car break-ins.

Another reason for the dip in perceived safety, Robinson pointed out, was an isolated incident last year that took place shortly before the perception survey was disseminated and that influenced the numbers from one building.

The Clean Team

Consistent with previous years, two-thirds of survey takers reported seeing representatives of the MVT Clean Team Ambassadors around regularly, cleaning up trash and beautifying the neighborhood.

Community Identity

Another area needing improvement according to residents is the sense of community within MVT. The proportion of residents feeling that sense is down 10 percent from last year's survey. Robinson said that one reason may be the increasing number of new apartment buildings, which attract a younger population. "Those apartments typically signal a transient population," he said, "which makes it somewhat more difficult to build that unity. You're consistently marketing to a new population."

The CID is addressing unity through outdoor activities. For example, the Freshfarm farmers' market will be moving to I Street NW and expanding in size. In terms of outdoor space, Robinson mentioned being somewhat surprised by the way respondents prioritized the different types of open space. "The number-one priority for residents was public art, gardens ... aesthetics, really," he said. "After that was dining in the form of outdoor cafes and food service, followed by simple relaxation with park chairs, picnic tables, umbrellas; that sort of thing."

Of the seven types of open space offered, the least important according to the survey results was open playing fields for sports, with children's recreation coming in at number six.

Reflecting on the survey, Robinson commented that Mount Vernon Triangle's "brand" is its location, growth, and "vibrancy." People choose the neighborhood, he said, because of its proximity to downtown and other popular areas of the District. Most re-



MVT residents reported a desire to see more outdoor activities. The 2017 relocation and expansion of the Freshfarm farmers' market will help to accomplish this goal.

spondents noted two specific areas that are most important to them: "They're telling us," Robinson said, "your mission is clean and safe."

ESN's Guide to MVT Happy Hours

Mount Vernon Triangle has one of the biggest concentrations of excellent happy hours. Below is a guide to some of the best of the best.

Alta Strada, at 465 K St. NW, has a happy hour every day, 3-7 p.m., plus 11 p.m.-1 a.m. on weekends. Grab a pizza for \$7, a snack for \$8 or \$9, or a drink. Cocktails are \$5-\$8, and wine and beer \$3-\$6.

Ottoman Taverna, at 425 I St. NW, offers an excellent list of \$5 options, all classic Mediterranean choices, from 4 to 7 p.m. They range from basics like hummus and falafel to less known sigara boregi - feta and parsley wrapped with dough. The draft beers and some wine options are covered under the happy hour.

Busboys and Poets, at Fifth and K streets NW, has its happy hour at the same times as Ottoman Taverna (only on weekdays). It offers several appetizers at half price, including the deliciously filling vegan "beef" sliders, and good drink deals including the signature DC Tap Water: vodka, peach schnapps, blue curacao, and black razz with pineapple juice, lemon lime soda, and sour mix.

Mandu, at 453 K St. NW, offers mandu (Korean dumplings) from 4 to 7 p.m., along with Sojutini, a selection of flavored cocktails made with soju, a distilled Korean liquor (options include aloe, mango, and yogurt), and beers and rail drinks, each for \$4, seven days a week.

Silo, at 919 Fifth St. NW, will tempt you, from 4 to 7 p.m. daily and all night on Sunday and Monday, with a selection of discounted snacks like pickle fries, drunken doughnuts, and bacon-wrapped shrimp, as well as \$5 draft beer, house wines, and rail drinks. On Tuesday wine bottles are half-price; on Wednesday, Ladies' Night, get free bottomless champagne with any appetizer. Thursday features \$1 oysters from 5 to 7 p.m. and 9 to 10 p.m. ♦