

# STRATHCONA COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY | 11.14.18



# RECOVER

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*In July of 2017, City Council directed administration to develop RECOVER, Edmonton's Urban Wellness Plan, to better understand the cumulative impacts of all the different activities and systems that affect wellness in the urban core.*

**RECOVER** is about the wellness of every person, neighbourhood, community and the businesses, social services and environments that support them.

Our RECOVER team spent the last year working in the five core neighbourhoods, **Boyle Street**, **Central McDougall**, **Downtown**, **McCauley** and **Queen Mary Park**.

Based on the success of our first year, City Council asked us to **expand our work** south of the river in **Strathcona**.

To get started, we hosted our **first information workshop** in Strathcona on November 14, 2018 at the Varscona Hotel. This session was all about developing a deep and shared understanding of the challenge, so that we can work together cooperatively.



## Recover is tackling three problems

1. How do we best meet the needs of people who are highly marginalized?
2. How do we support thriving communities?
3. How do we plan wellness services that consider the cumulative effects on neighbourhoods and community?

# GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP

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Our goals for the workshop were:

1. **To introduce people to social innovation.**
2. **Create a safe space for conversation between diverse opinions.**
3. **Share what we learned from our first year of RECOVER**
4. **Hear from participants who else should we invite to join RECOVER.**

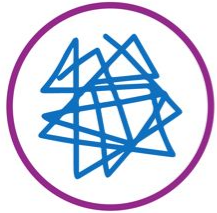
We started by asking everyone to share what they **loved** about their neighbourhood and what drove them **bananas**. We used these as a conversation starter to share our individual perspectives and then considered these from the perspective of others, uncovering commonalities and differences between them.

Then we shared an overview of RECOVER and our key learnings about **grounded research**, **strong relationships**, and **co-designing prototypes**.

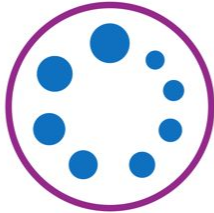
We had a quick taste of **social innovation**, quickly moving through the steps we will take to explore ideas to improve urban wellness.

We ended the evening by capturing what was most **promising**, what was **puzzling**, and what was **most alive**. We also asked for suggestions on other community residents, businesses or community organizations who our City team could reach out to for our next workshop in January.

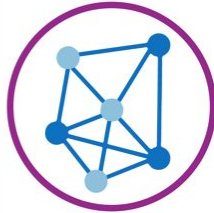
# WHY SOCIAL INNOVATION?



WELLNESS IS  
MULTIFACETED

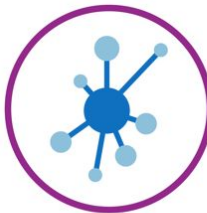


COMMUNITIES ARE  
CONCERNED ABOUT  
CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

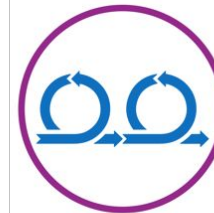


INSTITUTIONS  
NEED TO WORK  
TOGETHER

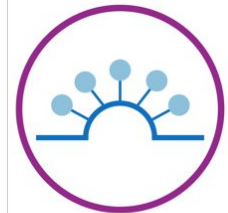
Urban wellness is complex for three main reasons: **wellness is multifaceted** and seemingly unbounded; communities have expressed **concern about cumulative effects**, meaning initiatives cannot be considered in isolation; and institutions need to **work together**, because no one organization can address wellness alone. This high complexity means a different approach is needed.



REQUIRES  
STRETCH  
COLLABORATION



PRACTICES  
ITERATIVE  
DEVELOPMENT



FINDS MANY  
RATHER THAN  
FEW SOLUTIONS

Recover takes a social innovation approach. This is a new way of working together: stretch collaboration **acknowledges disagreement as well as connection**; iterative development **rapidly tests** and continuously refines all aspects of the project with participants; and **many possible solutions are explored** in parallel rather than searching for a single silver bullet solution.

# FINDING NEW WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER

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Our first year of RECOVER highlighted many challenges in the community: **businesses** struggle to address cleanliness and loitering, neighbourhood **residents** are concerned about disorder, criminal activity and personal safety. **Social agencies** feel that they and the people they serve are unwanted in the community, further marginalizing them.

But, although there is tension, these neighbourhoods have **lots of assets to build on** and a **strong sense of community**.

Social innovation is about finding new ways to address a social need, with government, business unities working together to create better social outcomes. We're aligning the efforts of neighbourhood revitalization plans, committed and effective social agencies, dedicated residents who are all genuinely working to build community.

The process has been designed to put people at the centre and to move *quickly* - from primary **research** and building **shared understanding** to **experimentation** and **action**.

# LEARNINGS FROM OUR FIRST YEAR

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We spent some time sharing, what we learned from our first year and how will it frame our work going forward.

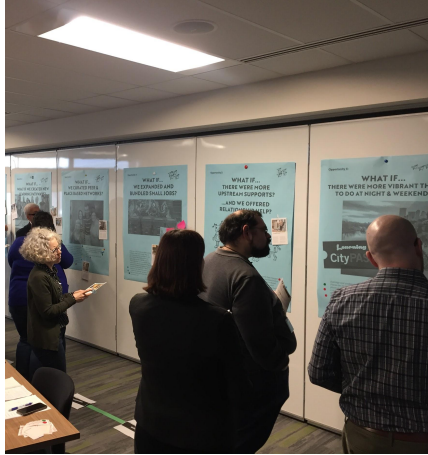
First, we'll use our **“framework” for urban wellness innovation**. That means creating space for this work to happen and ensuring that we keep people at the centre. For our City leadership, it also means a mindset shift that we're not creating another “plan”.

If RECOVER is going to make a difference, we need to disrupt the way we are currently working to improve urban wellness.

It's critical that we **ground our approach in data**, embracing both *quantitative* (big data) and *qualitative* (thick data aka ethnography).

We also need to make space for everyone at the table. RECOVER is all about co-design, and **uncovering tensions and building relationships** is of utmost importance.

Finally, we will ensure we are action-oriented and **test solutions with the community** using a rapid-prototyping approach incorporating multiple perspectives.



## LEARNINGS FROM OUR FIRST YEAR



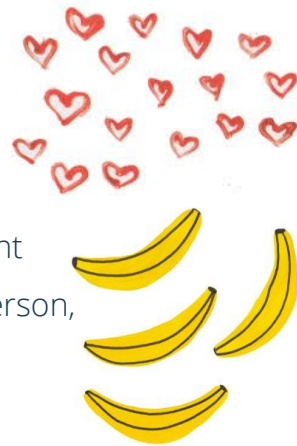
# STARTING WITH EMPATHY

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When we began our work in the core, we realized that one of the groups whose perspectives we better needed to understand were those of the people experiencing homelessness. We worked with a team of researchers from InWithForward to meet and talk with folks experiencing homelessness and capture their experiences, hopes and aspirations for a better future.

At the start of our session in Strathcona, we asked participants to share some things about their neighbourhood that they loved and something that drove them bananas. We used these hearts and bananas to frame our group work for the rest of the evening.

In small groups, we took a second look at these **hearts** and **bananas**. Using the profiles of folks the InWithForward team talked to from our first round of ethnography, we discussed how these hearts or bananas (things like the vibrant nightlife on Whyte Ave or public washrooms) might be experienced differently by another person, particularly by the very vulnerable.

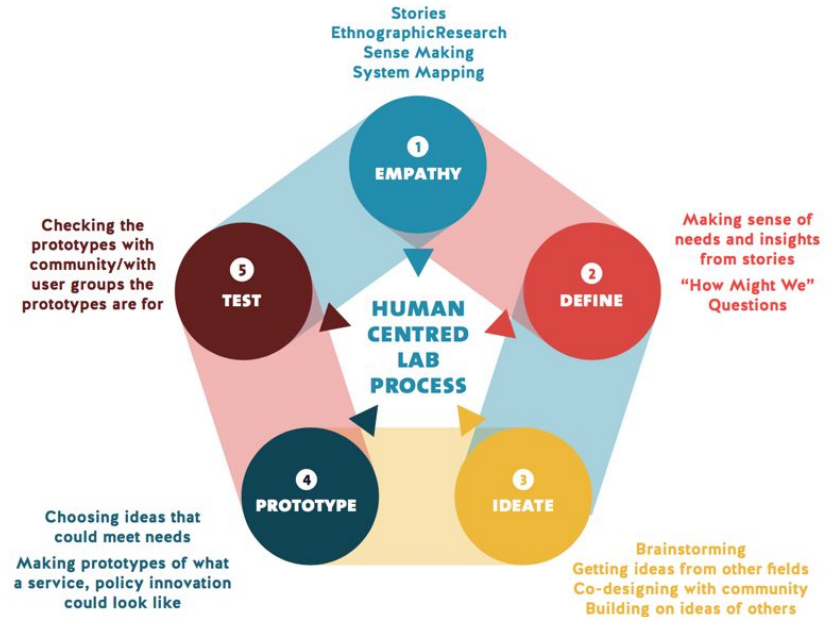


This conversation was all about building empathy. Empathy is a key component of building trust, and it is foundational to our work on RECOVER.

# A TASTE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social innovation is about creating and testing solutions to difficult problems and bringing a diverse group of voices together. With so many people and groups involved, we use a simple process to create a structure for everybody to contribute and able to voice their opinions and ideas.

Our actual process of building empathy, defining problems, ideating, prototyping and testing will be carried out over the next year, we did a quick and fun exercise using a *'banana'* from the start of the evening, to show how quickly we can start to generate ideas and refine them with different perspectives around the table.



# WORKING TOGETHER | WHO ELSE SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

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For this first workshop we invited representatives from the community including residents, local businesses and community and arts organizations, service agencies and the faith community. We also extended the invite to some folks who are experiencing homelessness.

We know having diverse participation is important, so we asked who else should we be inviting to future sessions.

## Here are your suggestions:

Apartment Dwellers

People Living Rough

Strathcona Community League

Neighbouring Community Leagues

EPS SE Division

YESS

Churches in Old Strathcona

Merchants/Old Strathcona

AHS Community Paramedics

Edmonton Strathcona Constituency Office

Edmonton Public Library

Post-Secondary Students

Edmonton Public Schools

Edmonton Catholic

Beljan Development

Wheaton Properties

Paths for People

# REFLECTION | WHAT'S PROMISING?

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We closed the session with some reflection on what's **promising**. Overall, participants were excited about what's to come.

*"Love grassroots community organizing approach (by different name), sense of ownership and investment for empathy and connection."*

*"Creative approaches to challenges issues."*

*"Building on research already done."*

*"Collaborative Solutions"*

*"Start small, gain traction and anything is possible. Let's make things happen."*

*"Prototyping"*

*"The 'bananas' will hopefully be addressed."*

*"The attempt to improve our community including the very vulnerable."*

*"Community members talking! Yay! Idea making! Yay!"*

*"Enthusiasm of staff for the project, community has been engaged at the preliminary stages."*

# REFLECTION | WHAT'S PUZZLING?

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We also asked what was **puzzling**, and there were fewer questions, most themed about the timing of work and how the broader community will be engaged.

*“Not much - this is the beginning, so willing to see where this goes.”*

*“How long till we see changes?”*

Our work in the first year of RECOVER reinforced the importance of a learning mindset. We recognize that many are still processing what was shared. As new questions arise, we'll keep working through what puzzles us, together.

*“Where the broader community can be genuinely engaged.”*

*“How past experience is being brought to the table.”*

*“What's really going to come out of all this? Will it work?”*

*“What is the ultimate goal for Old Strathcona specifically.”*

# REFLECTION | **WHAT'S MOST ALIVE?**

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Our final reflection was about what felt **most alive** for participants after this quick introduction to RECOVER.

Overall, there was strong sense of hopefulness that we can work together to make positive changes in the community. There's an eagerness and willingness to experiment and see what ideas will stick.

*"Collaboration"*

*"That positive changes will be coming."*

*"Learning more about community development and innovation. So cool."*

*"Test run lots of ideas."*

*"Positivity, spirit of collaboration."*

*"Desire to increase quality of life/wellness in the neighbourhood."*

*"Hope and opportunity, testing and pivoting"*

*"Building relationships."*

**For more information check out our Website and Community Report**  
[edmonton.ca/urbanwellness](http://edmonton.ca/urbanwellness)  
[urbanwellnessedmonton.com](http://urbanwellnessedmonton.com)

