

Visioning Workshop | 10.30.17

EDMONTON'S URBAN WELLNESS PLAN



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 natural environments that support them.

While RECOVER is a city-wide strategy, the first project will focus on the 5 core neighbourhoods, **Boyle Street, Central McDougall, Downtown, McCauley** and **Queen Mary Park**.

Supporting this plan requires a process that can handle complexity.

The RECOVER team, along with **MaRS Solutions Lab** will facilitate a social innovation process - working with stakeholders to use systems mapping and systems design to create and test possible solutions.

We are starting our collective work on RECOVER by developing a deep and shared understanding of the challenge, so that we can work together cooperatively moving forward.

Collaboration is essential for the clear articulation of the challenge and for trialing of solutions.



*Visioning gets us to focus on the future
we actually want to get to together,
and work towards that,
without pre-defining the path.*



THE GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP

On October 30, 2017, the RECOVER team along with **MaRS Solutions Lab**, led a full day visioning workshop at the **Action Lab** of Skills Society.

Our goals for the visioning workshop were:

1. To introduce people to social innovation.
2. Create a safe space for conversation between diverse opinions.
3. Create a shared vision(s) for Recover.
4. Start to identify indicators of success and levers of change.

We started by asking everyone's to **visually explore** individual perspectives and uncovered the commonalities and differences between them.

Then we endeavoured to work together to **co-create stories** of a flourishing future Edmonton, post RECOVER.

We also collectively identified **indicators and data points** of urban wellness which will help measure the impact of future work.

We ended the day by building a collection of **levers**, which are things that we have control or influence over that we can change to bring about better conditions for urban wellness.

ENGAGING A DIVERSE GROUP OF EDMONTONIANS

As RECOVER is an urban wellness plan meant to serve the needs for all citizens, it was important for us to have a diverse group of attendees.

Participants included the **Community Advisory Committee** made of representatives from: Community Leagues, Business Improvement Area Associations, and Residents of the 5 neighbourhoods.

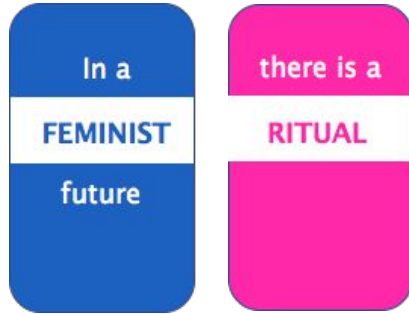
The **External Partners Committee**: Government, Provincial Partners, Indigenous Leadership, and Community Leaders

As well as the **Integrated Corporate Steering Committee**: a cross section of City staff from our data analytics group, our housing folks, those who work on poverty and related Council initiatives, communications and public engagement.

We want to engage more participants and more diverse participation. Participants in the first workshop asked for more indigenous, lived experience, and agency participation.



WE EXPERIENCED WHAT SOCIAL INNOVATION IS



Social Innovation is a result of the intentional work of people trying to make positive change by addressing complex problems at the roots.

RECOVER is a social innovation in-progress.

We are taking a systems view to accept collective responsibility for positive change and unlock the potential benefits of collaboration.

To allow participants to experience social innovation, lead facilitator Alex Ryan from MaRS guided participants through an exercise called "**The thing from the future**," using a set of cards like the ones on the left.

During a rapid fire brainstorming session, participants came up with a plethora of creative future things to improve wellness.

Attendees reflected on the experience and said that social innovation is:

- Egalitarian
- Fast/no filtering of ideas
- Iterative

Social innovation requires **stretch collaboration**.

This means welcoming different and even conflicting perspectives, experimenting our way forward, and stepping into the game.



"Because you didn't have a lot of time to think it stopped us from filtering our ideas."

"It was informative and collaborative."

"Felt egalitarian, it didn't matter which organization you are from."



“This initiative is very much in the spotlight. It is a great opportunity that Council has directed us to make the most of this opportunity to build and rebuild relationships, to envision, test and develop a new approach to urban planning, a collective approach, that uses a social innovation and systems lens.

We think we are collectively embarking here on a journey that is ambitious, and bold and very new. ”

Rob Smyth, Deputy City Manager

WE SHARED OUR OWN VIEWS ON WELLNESS

To surface personal visions of wellness, we asked participants to choose from a series of random photographs and abstract images that represented an aspect or definition of wellness to them.

By using this approach we hoped the images would evoke many facets of wellness that otherwise might be missed - and it did.

The varied responses were very informative.



An image of hands cradling fresh tomatoes represented to one participant the need for sustainable food production for the health of individuals, neighbours, and communities.



Ancient settlements on the mountainside represented space to connect to the great spirit that connects us all and symbolized relationships at the deepest level.

Participants discussed their chosen images with each other and connections were found between them.

After taking a look at all of the responses, we learned that participants had the following views of wellness in common.

Wellness is achieved in a community that supports one another in a way that respects individuality and diversity.

Wellness is beyond just physical and mental health. Safeguarding the environment and enabling access to clean water, clean air, and fresh food for everyone is important to many citizens.

Prosperity, growth, and opportunities for upward mobility and leadership especially for women were also on the minds of participants.



"Everyone chose images that spoke to their own values - and it started a conversation about what values we each share."

"It was all about people - people were what connected all the images, stories."

"The pictures all symbolized constant change and disruption and looking for opportunities."

WE ENVISIONED FLOURISHING FUTURES FOR EDMONTON

To help participants think about shared visions of wellness for Edmonton we asked them to create the media headlines and stories of the future.

We asked them to create human interest stories centred around a citizen of Edmonton and a part of RECOVER that supported and allowed them to flourish.

Here's a snapshot of three of the stories:

"Wellness Storytelling Festival Results in Transformative Recover Edmonton Wellness Plan"

Terwillegar and Glenora Community Leagues hosted a 2 day storytelling festival that brought together numerous community groups and residents to celebrate and relate stories. The dynamic event resulted in creation of a transformative Recover Edmonton Wellness Plan. health, income, and housing needs.

#wearehome

"Thriving Communities, Thriving Business"

One story centred around the opening of a new business by a daughter whose father, Mr. Ba and owner of Lucky 97 immigrated to Chinatown in the 80s.

It spoke about a rebrand of Chinatown that attracted more investors and resulted in a safer neighbourhood that attracted more business.

"Lives Have Changed 20 Years in the Making"

20 years ago Sumner, Sony, and Niqua had aspirations, the seeds of which were planted during their time at the Boys and Girls club. 20 years ago Niqua dreamed of one day being the Mayor of Edmonton. Sony was an artist in the making but the pressure of finding a sustainable income and lack of connection to his culture suppressed his dreams. Sumner wanted to be able to change lives on reserves. Today their dreams are realized.

GRITTY STREET PAVED ALL THE WAY TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

"I'll always love Aleppo, but Edmonton is my home."

In a landslide victory former Syrian refugee and successful business owner, activist, and philanthropist Amena Halabi prepares to move into retiring Mayor Iverson's chair.

Coming to Edmonton as a 15 yr old teen in the 2016 rescue of Syrian refugees Mayor elect Halbi fell into poverty, alienation, and homelessness. Survivorship led to consistent interaction with the EPS.

Now retired EPS Sergeant McDonald saw an opportunity for a better path for Ms. Halabi. As Sgt in charge of the Collaborative Policing Unit. Sgt. McDonald connected Halabi to the friendly staff at the youth navigation hub who specialize in connecting and supporting youth in finding housing, income, health, cultural, and spiritual supports. With a navigator by her side Ms. Halbi moved into her first apartment in Southwest Edmonton, and started her role as a mower with Diversity landscaping, a company she would

later own and grow to a national leader in sustainable greenspace maintenance and eco-protection.

Mayor Elect, Halabi's effort to support subsequent newcomers and inclusion as well as being a leader in bio-diversity and sustainability garnered her several local and national recognitions including the Order of Canada.

When asked about her journey from Syria to the Mayor's office. Mayor elect Halabi stated. "I'll always love Aleppo, but Edmonton is my home." Ms. Halabi commits to Edmontonians she will always champion our city's economic diversity, cultural inclusiveness, green forwardness, and treaty 6 sacredness as one community, one city, and one pursuit for humanness.

#SyrianWomenRising #MadeinEdmonton #Amena4Mayor



WE AGREED AND DISAGREED

Participants noticed common themes from the headlines of the future. They told stories of communities that empowered residents to reach their potential. They were not stories of lone heroes: **they were about working together.**

The stories represent a break from the present. **The future looks and feels different:** families and individuals impacted by poverty and exclusion are realizing their dreams. Government, agencies, business and civil society are mutually supportive and collaborate effectively. Social, cultural, economic and environmental values are not traded off against one another but rather are integral components of flourishing together.

The futures exercise **also uncovered differences, tensions, and polarities.** Previous actions and inactions by the City of Edmonton have eroded trust. Concerns around gentrification and revitalization and the location of social housing were raised.

The framing of inclusion and under-representation of indigenous and other perspectives in the room were also acknowledged. These and other tensions will **need to be addressed early** in the social innovation process if going to collaborate more effectively with one another.

WE SHARED QUESTIONS AND SOURCES OF DATA

Having engaged in visioning, we then asked:

HOW WOULD WE KNOW IF WE REALIZED OUR VISIONS?

We framed sub-questions, brainstormed indicators, and listed known data sets that could help us to answer this question.

Example sub-questions included:

- Is there diversity of housing?
- How engaged is the community in sustainable practices?
- How comfortable are people walking after dark?
- Are we reducing physical and mental health disparity?
- Do people feel connected to their community?
- What is the level of business investment?

Categories of Wellness Indicators	Count of Questions	Count of Indicators
Built Environment	25	14
Natural Environment	21	16
Personal Safety	24	17
Physical and Mental Health	25	22
Social Relationships	33	33
Work and Learning	23	20
Grand Total	151	122

WHAT'S NEXT?

The information gathered from this workshop will inform a first iteration of systems mapping.

If we are going to collaborate effectively, we need to have some shared maps to make sense of all the complexity.

The next workshop on **Monday December 4th 2017** will test and refine these maps based on further participant input. We will be expanding the circle of collaboration beyond participants in the first workshop to include new voices and perspectives.

Workshop 2 will also engage a productive discussion of the tensions and polarities that are operating just beneath the surface in this work. We will also give participants a chance to develop the first round of prototype solutions that will bring our collective visions to life.

