A) Ethnographic Research

InWithForward

InWithForward uncovered that there are some surprisingly welcoming and humanizing third spaces in the inner city, where anyone can feel legitimate, without stigmatizing line-ups or eligibility criteria. These **dignified spaces** are important and we need more of them.

Evenings and weekends often stretch on. Places like the Mustard Seed are roaring places at night - and with the vibe of a music hall, rather than a service, it's an attractive place to be. There are few other options for places to go at night that feel 'normal' and 'dignified.' **What if there were more physical spaces with a vibe of normalcy, where people might start to build other networks and find activities to fill their day?**

• What if there were pubs modeled after those in The Netherlands and Nordic countries where beer / wine is made by members, and dosage is facilitated?

• What if there were supper clubs, shared meals, and neighbourhood dinners for small groups of peers who could access a kitchen and subsidized food?

• What if there was a 'City Learning Pass' that brokeredfolks on the streets to cultural excursions - like art galleries, symphonies,

• What if every new business application had to meet community benefits criteria?

• What if there were dedicated fun bus service that takes families after school to the rec centres or seniors to spots in the city for fun, to people watch, or to volunteer?

• What there were family fun passes at the library that gives free admission to the theatre, museum, and gyms?

B) Community ethnography
MaRS Solution Lab

It's about access to recreation, arts, culture along with access to affordable fresh food. It's about activating the latent human, physical and cultural assets in our communities - the vacant lands, the empty storefronts, even rooftops.

Vibrant Neighbourhoods

WHAT IF we increased accessibility of recreational activities and affordable fresh food for families and for seniors?
- *What if there was roaming food van that brought fresh produce to each neighbourhood?*
- *What if we expanded the Green Shack program in the inner city neighbourhoods?*
- *What if we could find a way to clear snow and ice from sidewalks better?*

WHAT IF the neighbourhoods became known as destinations for cultural exploration, social businesses, and great places to live at all stages of life?
- *What if individuals & families as well as businesses & organizations could adopt a street to improve cleanliness?*
- *What if every new residential building had to have a mix of market and non-market housing?*
- *What if we create a social enterprise incubator?*
- *What if we incentivized building owners with empty storefronts to temporarily support new social business while they test ideas?*
- *What if we built a network of support for business owners to share ideas and advice on how to manage tension and conflict with patrons?*

WHAT IF there were more vibrant things to do at night & weekends?
- *What if there was a night mayor responsible for supporting nightlife culture like in European cities?*

- *What if there was a night market showcasing different cultural street foods?*
- *What if there were spoken word poetry or art workshops outdoors in multiple spots downtown?*
- *What if we had solar powered light installations across main corridors?*
- *What if we had wayfinding signs that highlighted areas and paths to go to throughout the 5 neighbourhoods?*
- *What if we had bike shares and bike tours?*

Community Supports

WHAT IF we activated the latent human, physical and cultural assets in our communities?
- *What if we used empty, vacant lots and rooftops as spaces for community raised garden beds, urban bee farms, greenhouses, or places for new playgrounds?*
- *What if we filled empty storefronts with public art installations that families in the neighbourhood create together or with pop-up gyms, jam spaces, or markets?*

WHAT IF the city provided more support for community grassroots initiatives to spread?
- *What if we could create community hubs that also serve as back-offices for grassroot community initiatives and also serve as places to gather and to store supplies for programming?*

C) Public engagement

Calder Bateman

Community conversations and doorstep interviews led to a series of neighbourhood walks, generating four themes related to place: safety; vibrant community space; accessible public services; and transportation options.

Safety concerns often relate to the physical design of spaces. There is significant appetite for improving the **walkability** of these neighbourhoods as a way to improve safety. Currently, roads and vehicle traffic are prioritized, often to the detriment of pedestrians. And where pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks, lighted crossings, and bus stops do exist, they are designed in ways that are unsafe for people walking.

- *What if we widened and repaired damaged sidewalks, installed more and better lighting, lowered speed limits, and improved pedestrian crossings?*

Public art - arts festivals, visual art installations like sculptures and graffiti walls - create **destinations within communities** and help to beautify otherwise unwelcoming spaces. The neighbourhoods are some of Edmonton's oldest, with a rich history waiting to be told. These heritage opportunities should tell the story of Edmonton's Indigenous history, both from modern times and from long before this place became Edmonton.

- *What if there were more public art and heritage installations?*

Parks and natural green spaces were commonly identified as valuable assets in the community that contribute to community wellness. They provide free, accessible spaces for residents to be active and enjoy the outdoors. They frequently have programmed events or festivals that can be enjoyed by residents, and they offer a way for Edmontonians to experience nature without having to leave the city. Street trees and other natural elements provide relief and calmness in a mostly concrete environment. Many people spoke of the lack of recreational amenities for children in the City's core and the great value that parks hold for young families and children in strengthening the wellness of their community.

- *What if there were more parks and green spaces?*

Vibrant spaces are **well maintained** spaces. Buildings in various states of disrepair and unmaintained streets and sidewalks make spaces feel unwelcoming, unused, and uncared for. Both the City and private landlords need to do their part to maintain their facilities in these neighbourhoods. Well-maintained spaces have an impact on the broader community and help people take pride in where they live.

- *What if we could find new ways to improve public space and property maintenance?*

Providing **basic services and amenities** – public washrooms, proper garbage disposal, water fountains, etc. - for the large numbers of people experiencing homelessness in the inner city is critical. Not only will this improve the dignity of vulnerable people, it will help reduce social disorders like littering and public urination.

- *What if there were more public washrooms, water fountains and better garbage disposal?*

For many, quality of life is linked to the ease of **public transportation**. They choose the core of the City to live in because of the many bussing options available to them which made their access to work and schooling easier. Walking and biking need to be supported through well-designed infrastructure. This is particularly important in the core, as many residents do not own private vehicles. **Active transportation** options are also seen as important in drawing people to an area and creative vibrant spaces.

D) Public realm research
Situate Planning + Placemaking

Guided by the Community Wellness Framework, stakeholder workshops explored the many existing tools and levers, programs and/or assets that can be used to improve wellness related to public realm in the Recover neighbourhoods. Over 100 solution ideas were generated; they can all be found in the Situate report.

Changing the Narrative Using Arts & Culture
There is a need to change the underlying stories about the core neighbourhoods. They have a lot of assets - history, culture, and unique elements.
- *What if we amplified these through storytelling and arts (installations and events), celebrating successes and pulling in the human touch?*

Changing Approaches
- Communities within the core neighbourhoods would like the City to be more open to trying new ideas.
- People would also like to see the City become more flexible and generous with its granting programs. Also there is a desire for the City to leverage some of its existing programs, such as Green Shacks, better.
- People want more incentives for developing vacant/derelict properties, and more disincentives for failing to do so.

Cutting Red Tape
What if the City relaxed some of its permit requirements to make it easier to try new ideas, especially if they are temporary?

Community Standards / Enforcement
There is a perception that lower community standards are somehow acceptable in the core neighbourhoods. This should change, and the public realm should be maintained to the same high standards as other areas of the city.
- *What if the City amended Community Standards bylaws and practices, including training and performance metrics?*
- *What if main streets received enhanced services on sidewalks?*

Nature
People want more nature in the neighbourhoods on vacant lots and boulevards - and more than grass.
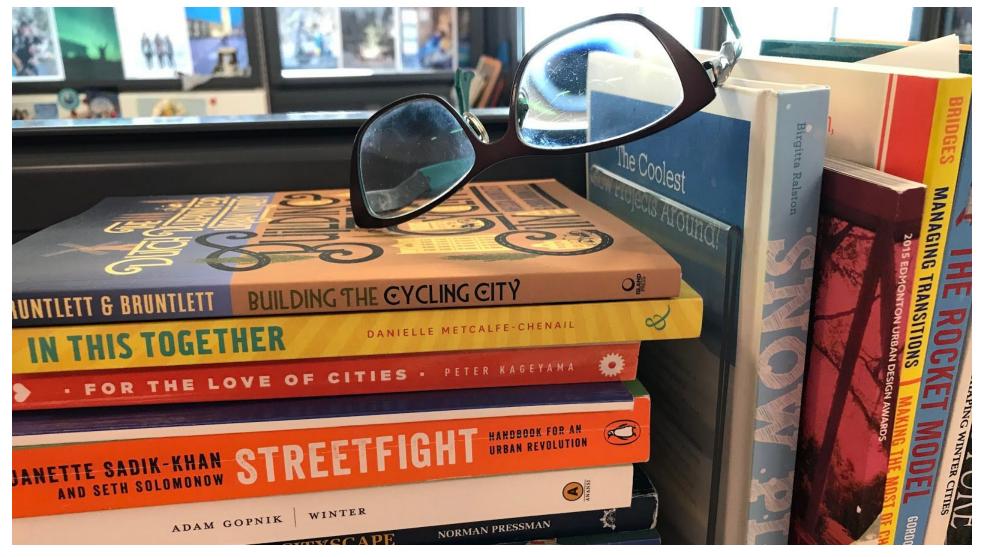- *What if there were edible parks or landscaped gardens?*

Active Transportation
There is a recognition that neighbourhoods that support urban wellness include pedestrian and cycle-friendly street networks and favour active modes of transport. How can we shift priorities to active transportation and close major streets to cars periodically?

E) Literature review
University of Alberta

The researchers reviewed academic articles and grey literature from Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. One focus area was about built and natural environments. Key messages from this work include:

- Built and natural environments can be developed, used, and repurposed to facilitate health behaviours such as physical activity, healthy eating, and social interactions.
- Community participation is important for the sustainability of interventions. Diverse, interdisciplinary, cross-departmental community collaborations are recommended to ensure mutual benefit, the effective use of community strengths and resources, shared decision-making, and sustainability.
- When planning and implementing changes to the built and natural environments, it is important that the unintended consequences be considered. Changes should therefore be made in tandem with policies that account for, and prioritize, the health inequities among underserved or disadvantaged groups. These policies must also recognize, and account for, the impact of political will, competing interests, and market demand.