

EDMONTON'S URBAN WELLNESS PLAN



# Year One: Participant Survey & Feedback

Prepared by:

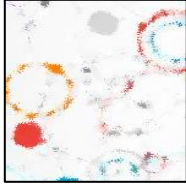




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## Background

In July 2017, City Council directed Administration to answer three questions:

1. How do we best meet the needs of very vulnerable people?
2. How do we support thriving communities?
3. How does government manage cumulative effects and plan wellness-services infrastructure throughout the city?

Council named this work *RECOVER: Edmonton's Urban Wellness Plan*. Many groups were invited to take part in creating the Urban Wellness Plan – residents, businesses, social agencies and government (municipal and provincial).

With so many people and groups involved, we needed to create a structure for everybody to be involved and be able to voice their opinions. Three committees were formed:

1. Community Advisory Committee – comprised of individuals representing neighbourhood residents, community leagues, business associations and social service agencies.
2. External Partners Committee – comprised of individuals representing Edmonton Police, Edmonton Public Library, social sector funding organizations and post-secondary educational institutions.
3. Integrated Corporate Team – comprised of City staff from various departments.

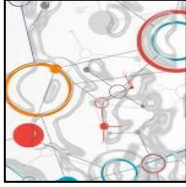
Over the past year, these committees and other individuals have taken on the challenge of achieving urban wellness with Social Innovation. This process led us to envision a future of urban wellness, develop a dashboard to measure change and success, formulate opportunities to test (prototype) and showcase what was done and what worked. Along the way, RECOVER has also engaged the general public through various means, listened to the stories of those with “lived experience” (ethnography), begun mapping the multitude of formal strategies and built the capacity of individuals and organizations to use Social Innovation.

In August 2018, four recommendations from RECOVER were presented to Council.

1. That the City continue RECOVER in the neighbourhoods of Boyle Street, McCauley, Central McDougall, Queen Mary Park and Downtown for up to 5 years, giving time to measure changes of the indicators measuring urban wellness.
2. That RECOVER begin work in Strathcona neighbourhood.
3. That the City in collaboration with partners, develop a RECOVER Governance structure to replace the three existing committees, and report back to Council in Q1, 2019.

4. That the City advance a distributed model for serving marginalized people to ensure facilities and services are available in other areas of the city where need is evident, and that the City explore tools and incentives – regulatory, policy and funding levers – that can contribute to more informed, human centered infrastructure to support wellness in the core.

Approval of these recommendations moves RECOVER into its next phase of work. However, before we launch into the process again, it's critical to learn from our first foray into Social Innovation and urban wellness. What can we do better? What do people need to support and engage with RECOVER? What difference has RECOVER made so far? These are the questions we aim to answer from feedback of people connected to RECOVER in the first year.



## Methodology

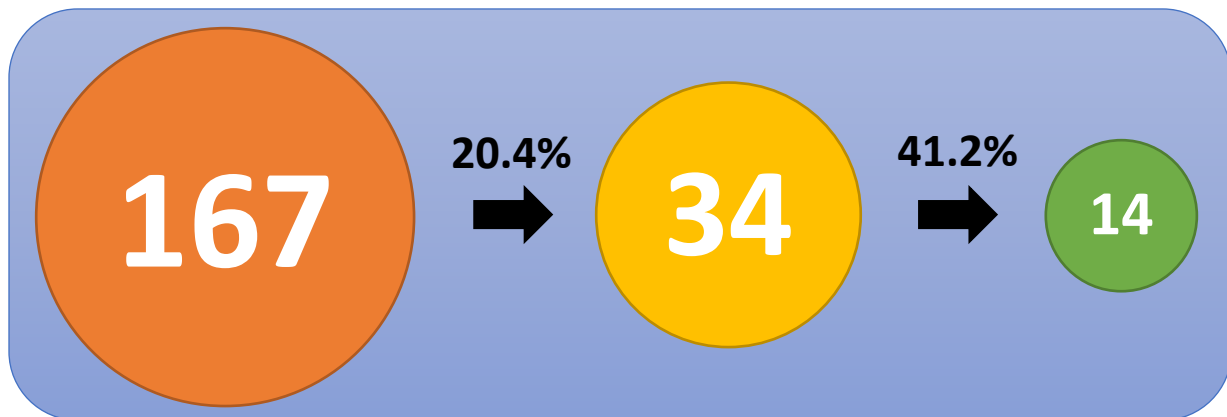
The RECOVER project team created an online survey and invited 167 individuals that were connected to the project (directly involved or supported) to respond. The survey asked the following questions.

1. How have you been involved with RECOVER? (Please select all that is appropriate.)
2. In your opinion, what is the most significant achievement of RECOVER to date?
3. Moving forward, what should RECOVER do differently?
4. What is the most significant difference between RECOVER and other collaborative projects you have participated in?
- 5a. Did the process build trust between participants?
- 5b. Reflecting on your personal experiences with this work, has the process helped build your trust with city projects?
- 5c. Please expand on your answers in 5a and 5b.
- 6a. Did the process generate new insights and opportunities to improve urban wellness?
- 6b. What insight or opportunity for urban wellness was the most memorable and impactful for you?
- 7a. Did the process lay a foundation for near-term action and progress?
- 7b. Please expand on your answer in 7a.
- 8a. In RECOVER, we developed a vision and measures, explored the state of urban wellness with ethnographic research, an indicator dashboard, and systems maps to help us decide where change is needed. We also collaborated with stakeholders to develop solutions through prototypes that focused on people-centred outcomes. Would you recommend these steps for making progress on other social challenges? Why or why not?
- 8b. If yes to 8a, what aspects of the social innovation approach can you apply in your day-to-day work?

Between August 29<sup>th</sup> and September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, there were 34 respondents to the online survey – a response rate of 20.4%. The survey also asked if respondents would be open to a follow-up conversation. Of the 34 survey respondents, 19 (55.9%) provided contact information for an addition feedback opportunity.

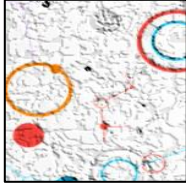
These 19 respondents were invited to schedule a telephone conversation between October 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Fourteen respondents (41.2%) completed the follow-up and answered the following questions.

1. What motivated you to stay involved and dedicate your time?
2. What eroded your motivation? (Or if you were motivated, what do you think might be some reasons others were not motivated?)
3. How could we improve the inclusiveness of the process?
4. What other opportunities do you see that could create more impact on urban wellness?
5. Can you share a point in the journey where you felt some strong emotions (either positive or negative)?
6. How are you approaching your work differently, if any, as a result of RECOVER?
7. Have you seen any examples of positive impact that is connected with RECOVER (resulted from, inspired by, or amplified by RECOVER)?



Feedback from the survey and follow-up conversations was also supplemented with a focus group of the Integrated Corporate Team. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, City staff involved with RECOVER came together to explore opportunities and risks related to the RECOVER project. The 21 attendees discussed what was needed for each member to stay engaged with RECOVER and what goals are desired collectively.

The feedback gathered from these methods have been analyzed to derive common themes and recommendations that can be integrated into the next phase of RECOVER. These results, themes and recommendations were presented to stakeholders on November 22, 2018. Attendees of this meeting included the RECOVER Core Project Team, members of the Community Advisory Committee, External Stakeholders Committee, and stakeholders that are new to RECOVER.



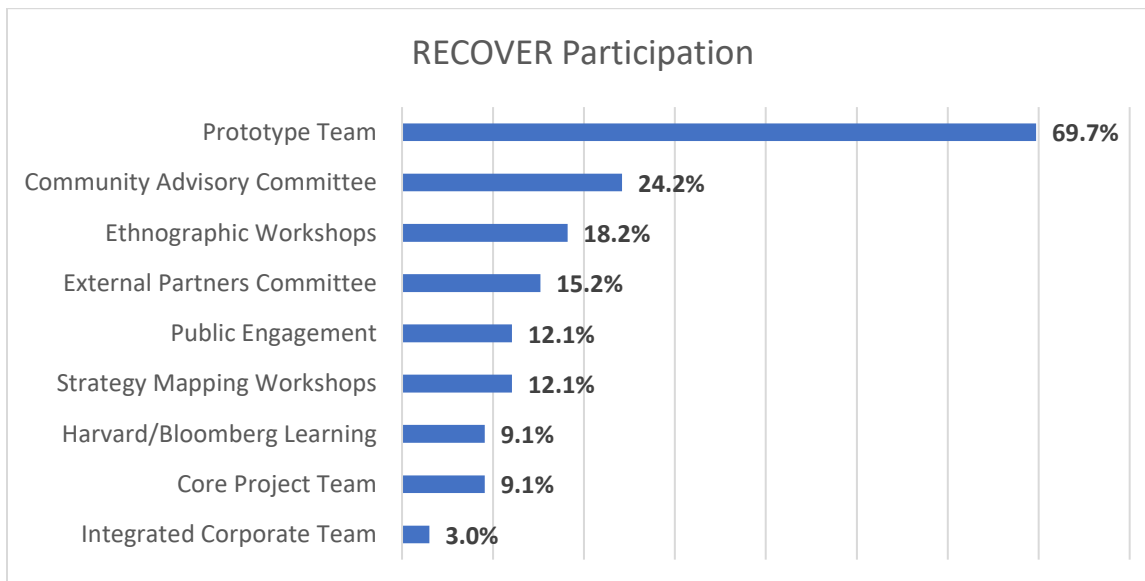
## Survey Results

Q1 – How have you been involved with RECOVER?

Most respondents were involved with RECOVER by way of the prototypes. However, many individuals were involved in multiple ways.

Type	Number	Percentage
Prototype Team	23	69.7%
Community Advisory Committee	8	24.2%
Ethnographic Workshops	6	18.2%
External Partners Committee	5	15.2%
Public Engagement	4	12.1%
Strategy Mapping Workshops	4	12.1%
Harvard/Bloomberg Learning	3	9.1%
Core Project Team	3	9.1%
Integrated Corporate Team	1	3.0%

(N=33)<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Of the 34 respondents, 33 provided roles they played in the RECOVER project. One respondent did not select any of the available options.

Q2 – In your opinion, what is the most significant achievement of RECOVER to date?

- Solutions & Problem Solving
  - Using “Social Innovation” – a different method to finding solutions
  - Incorporating feedback loops to learn, share and adapt
  
- Connections & Relationships
  - Healing and building trust in community
  - Collaboration – cross-sector and inter-disciplinary
  - Stakeholder voices (although some felt that it wasn’t complete)

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*“Gathering a group of people with similar interests, but different agendas and persistently and patiently having them focus on the client.”*

*- Survey Respondent*

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Q3 – Moving forward, what should RECOVER do differently?

- Stakeholders
  - Improve on the continuity of participants
  - Connect more with those of lived experience
  - Focus a group to tackle systems issues
  - Expand stakeholder groups to include: other City departments, provincial stakeholders (e.g. AHS), Elders, more public members; also consider the role of culture, income, etc.
  
- Prototypes
  - Use local experts/practitioners of Social Innovation
  - Allow more time to prototype
  - Incorporate an ethics review process
  - Develop structured measures and reporting
  - Have dedicated support (i.e. paid) for each of the prototypes

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*“More transparency; bring all of the groups together. Explain the process a bit better.”*

*- Survey Respondent*

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- Process
  - Define roles and responsibilities – as it pertains to City of Edmonton
  - Defined the mandate and scope for RECOVER
  - Clarify the process being undertaken – improve transparency
  - Revise the governance structure – develop a single committee

Q4 – What is the most significant difference between RECOVER and other collaborative projects you have participated in?

- Prototyping
  - Social Innovation
  - Human-centred design
  - Community development
  - Ethnographic research – evidence-based decision making
- Engagement
  - Inclusive of residents, community, social agencies and businesses
  - Valuing opinions and perspectives

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*“Everyone’s opinions are considered important and valuable.”*  
- Survey Respondent

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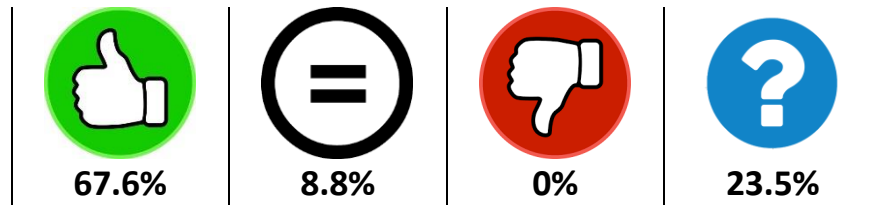
- Other Characteristics
  - Commitment and caring
  - Multi-disciplinary
  - Fast-paced
  - Big ideas
  - Risk-taking

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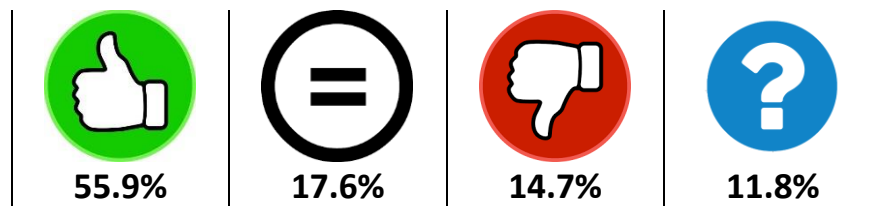
*“The openness of the issue area and willingness to explore more radical ideas.”*  
- Survey Respondent

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Q5a – Did the process build trust between participants?



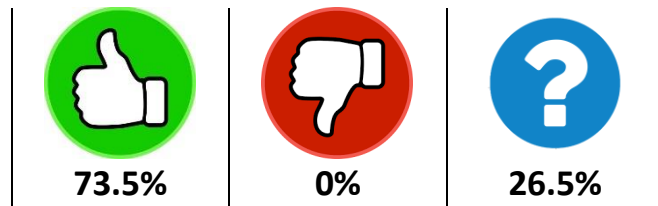
Q5b – Reflecting on your personal experiences with this work, has the process helped build your trust with city projects?



Q5c - Please expand on your answers in 5a and 5b.

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More honest</li> <li>• Trust built through the process with citizens</li> <li>• Transparency and two-way communication</li> <li>• Interest in Social Innovation and collaborations</li> <li>• Overcoming barriers for collaboration e.g. individual mandates, relationships</li> <li>• Catalog of plans/initiatives (i.e. strategy mapping)</li> <li>• Positive attitudes</li> <li>• Shared values are greater than differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felt some mistrusted the project</li> <li>• Felt the process was not genuine – rushed and lack of buy-in</li> <li>• Lack of updates and communication</li> <li>• Lack of movement forward</li> </ul>

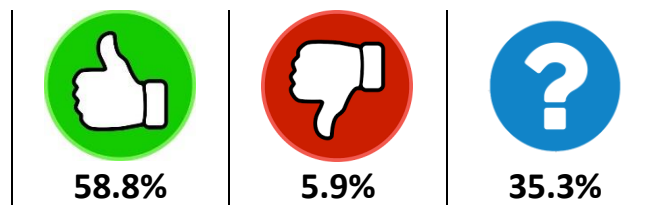
Q6a – Did the process generate new insights and opportunities to improve urban wellness?



Q6b – What insight or opportunity for urban wellness was the most memorable and impactful for you?

- Space to think differently
- Prototyping
- Opportunities for extra capacity
- Risk-taking opportunities
- Acting with people rather than for people
- Intergovernmental information sharing and action
- Co-designing solutions
- Ethnographic research
- General consensus that actions need to be different
- Potential distributed model of service delivery
- Project Welcome Mat
- Broad definition of urban wellness
- Genuine community consultation
- Engagement of Elders

Q7 – Did the process lay a foundation for near-term action and progress?



Q8a – In RECOVER, we developed a vision and measures, explored the state of urban wellness with ethnographic research, an indicator dashboard, and systems maps to help us decide where change is needed. We also collaborated with stakeholders to develop solutions through prototypes that focused on people-centred outcomes. Would you recommend these steps for making progress on other social challenges? Why or why not?

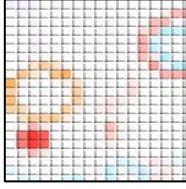
➤ 26 of 34 (76.5%) were positive responses



Why?	Why not?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believe in developing a vision and measures</li> <li>• Fair and deliberate process</li> <li>• Prototypes grounded in research</li> <li>• Support people centered outcomes</li> <li>• Reduced costs of administration and focuses services</li> <li>• More collaborative and creates holistic solutions</li> <li>• Good results for the very vulnerable</li> <li>• Thorough approach but time consuming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't feel part of the mission and vision</li> <li>• Have yet to see actions or outcomes</li> <li>• No space for different cultural communities</li> </ul>

Q8b – If yes to 8a, what aspects of the social innovation approach can you apply in your day-to-day work?

- Use of data
- Collaboration with stakeholders – client-centred outcomes
- Genuine discussion in formal processes
- Mixed methods to triangulate approaches
- Engagement practices
- Risk-taking – failing is okay
- Design research and co-designing practice
- Wellness lens to projects and goals
- Ethnographic research
- Valuing diversity
- Systems thinking



## Follow-up Feedback

### Motivation

Participants involved with RECOVER were motivated by various reasons. For some, involvement in the project was part of their job, being assigned to the tasks and meetings or fitting in with their portfolio. However, this is likely not be their only motivation. For many at the table, they have been part of similar conversations from other projects or initiatives. Continuing with RECOVER was a natural progression from those conversations and there a sense of obligation to be engaged. Others were motivated in using a different approach to engagement and problem-solving. Ultimately, most saw the alignment of goals. People saw that achieving one’s own goals could help others achieve theirs. It all came back down to people.

Other factors identified that could impact one’s motivation through the journey:

- Time commitment required
- Tensions between stakeholders – power dynamics, individual agendas
- Clarity of process and purpose
- Lack of communication or information sharing

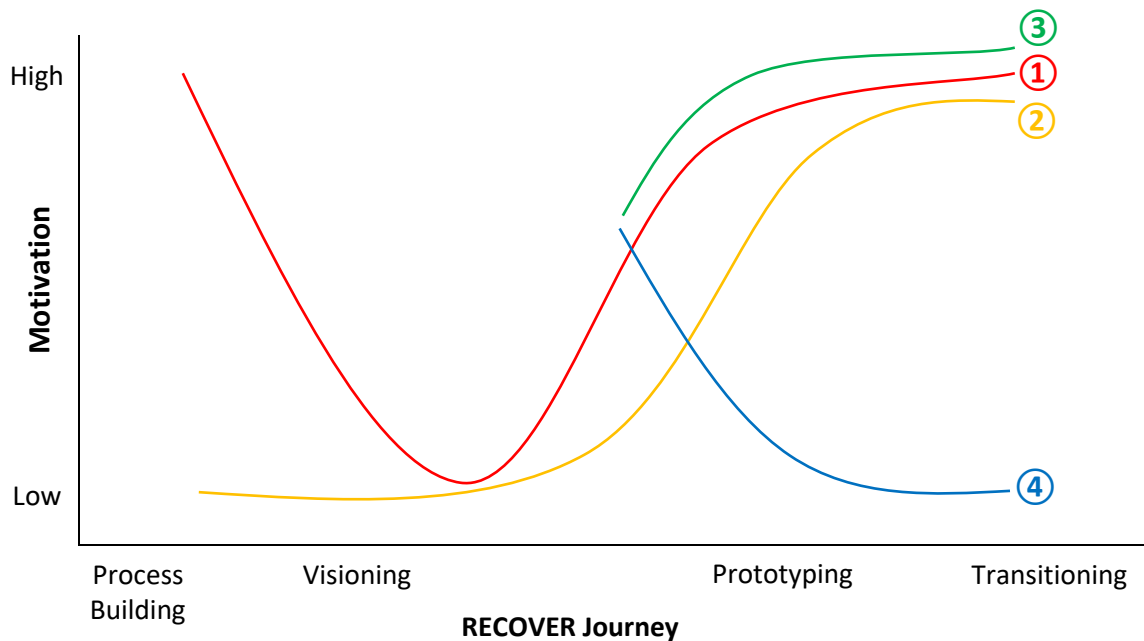
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*“[We] desire to offer a positive approach in solutions that works for everybody.”*  
*- Follow-up Respondent*

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Based on the 14 follow-up conversations, four motivational journeys emerged. These are differentiated by the point at which the individual joined the RECOVER journey – either from the beginning or when prototypes were starting.

- A. From the beginning: high-low-high
- B. From the beginning: low-high
- C. Engaging in prototypes: high-high
- D. Engaging in prototypes: high-low



There are as many journeys as there are individuals connected with RECOVER, but what this has identified are critical points in the journey that can be turning points that impact engagement, buy-in, motivation and most importantly, relationships and trust.

Critical points in the process:

- a) Process building – RECOVER began with a process defined as Social Innovation. However, the paradigm by which Social Innovation works may not fit within the world views and perspectives of stakeholders of different cultures (i.e. Indigenous and ethnocultural) or socio-economic status. We simply don't know because we didn't engage groups to develop the process. It may be a difference in framing the context or use of language. Or they may be incompatible frameworks.
- b) Visioning – Visioning is a critical process that requires significant time and effort. The exercise that was utilized for RECOVER wasn't enough to lead the stakeholders to a common vision for urban wellness, which is multi-faceted and complex.
- c) Prototyping – The prototypes were a moment for individuals to see themselves in a role where they could make an impact. Prototypes were a moment of action – moving from the philosophical to the tangible. For most, the experience was the highlight of the journey. Some prototypes didn't gain enough traction to move forward while others did, but that's okay. For those that were completed, questions began to arise. What next? What moves forward? Can we scale? Who decides?

- d) Transitioning – With the end of RECOVER’s first year, recommendations approved by City Council and the planning of the next four years, there is a sense of cautious optimism and yet a sense of uncertainty. RECOVER is in a “fragile position”, as one individual puts it. RECOVER has the potential to make a significant impact, but if it doesn’t live up to people’s expectations, it can damage trust and relationships with community.

### Inclusion and Engagement

There were varied perspectives on how well RECOVER was able to achieve inclusivity. Some felt RECOVER did a great job engaging different groups, while others felt some voices were missing from the table - namely Indigenous and ethnocultural groups. Comments suggested there needed to be more involvement by other City departments and provincial government.

The use of ethnography was a resounding success. Going out to meet people where they were, capturing their stories of lived experience, and providing a different lens to a common issue was viewed as a shift in thinking. It genuinely reflected people’s truths and personal goals. There is desire to do more ethnography and with different groups to broaden perspectives and understanding.

The following were suggestions for spaces for participation and engagement that can create urban wellness:

- Continued multi-stakeholder conversations in community
- Future planning activities
  - City bike plan
  - City’s next plan (Vision 2050)
  - LRT expansion
  - Neighbourhood revitalization (The Quarters and Norwood Blvd,)
  - Commercial/retail developments (e.g. ICE District)
- Other key initiatives (e.g. EndPovertyEdmonton)
- Grassroots and community-based projects
- Previous opportunities identified by RECOVER
- Inner city social agencies (e.g. Boyle Street Community Services, Hope Mission, Bissell Centre, George Spady Centre)

## The Impacts of RECOVER

Although RECOVER has only one year under its belt, some individuals do feel that there have been impacts. These generally fall in to three categories: personal, professional and community impacts.

- Personal:
  - Built personal skills and capacity.
  - New perspectives on issues.
  - Connected through the stories of lived experience.
  - Built relationships through engagement in RECOVER.
  
- Professional:
  - Defining organization's role in community impact.
  - Raises genuine engagement as a priority.
  - Integrate ethnographic research before design and delivery.
  - Re-examining current processes/issues in the organization.
  
- Community:
  - Project Welcome Mat changed the feel of the area and behaviours of people in the area. It is also leading others to think about the design of their spaces and streetscapes.
  - RECOVER has become a high-profile project that has garnered interest from other municipalities. MarsLab uses RECOVER as a case study in its other projects with municipalities. RECOVER was also a feature presentation at the Municipal Innovators Conference (September 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 in Calgary, Alberta).
  - Highlighted some of the great work and assets already in community.
  - Further building the sense of community.

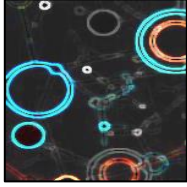
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*"Lots of people have talked about Project Welcome Mat and have asked when it's coming back."*

*- Follow-up Respondent*

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## Conclusion

Several themes have emerged from the survey and conversations. The feedback has offered opportunities for exploration, improvement and growth.

### Stakeholder Engagement

RECOVER has made deliberate efforts to be inclusive and diverse in its engagement – from public surveys to ethnography with individuals with lived experience. Ethnographic research and engagement are generally viewed as positive aspects of RECOVER. They have worked to create a better understanding of issues and a space to co-create solutions. However, the process may not fit the world views of particular groups and may have inadvertently created a barrier to engagement. Voices may be missing – Indigenous, ethnocultural, all levels of government.

We also need to keep people engaged and motivated in the process. Lack of representation and continuity can slow or halt the process.

*Recommendation #1. Confirm that Social Innovation as a framework is inclusive and not a barrier by having stakeholders engage in the design of the process.*

*Recommendation #2. Utilize an ethnographic approach to broaden the understanding of other stakeholder groups. After all, intersectionality influences experiences. Explore the dimensions of age, culture, socio-economic status and others.*

### Relationships and Trust

“Collaboration moves at the speed of trust.” RECOVER has made some headway on healing relationships and building trust amongst various stakeholders. It’s clear that tensions exist and there are trust issues that need to be resolved. Doing so would move our community by leaps and bounds, but baby steps first.

*Recommendation #3. Create time and space to identify and address the tensions between stakeholders. This requires us to be open and vulnerable – no easy task.*

## Communication

From the outset, individuals and stakeholder groups were unclear about the three P's – people, philosophy and process.

People: Who's involved? Leading the project? Are the right people here?

Philosophy: Social innovation? What is it? How do we do it?

Process: How many meetings? How often? What do we do at these meetings?

As the groups gained clarity on these things, RECOVER built momentum and began to move forward faster. But it's a fine balance between not knowing what's going on and feeling "out of the loop" (as some did) and being inundated and bombarded with information. What's the right balance?

*Recommendation #4. Develop a communication framework for stakeholders. What does one need to know? What does one want to know? How best can this information be given?*

## Governance

RECOVER, to this point, has been led by a Core Project Team of City staff members. We heard that structuring RECOVER into three committees creates an atmosphere of skepticism and mistrust. There are power dynamics (real and perceived) with this structure. Some also feel this isn't transparent as all stakeholders aren't part of all conversations. There are practical challenges to overcome – timing and scheduling, paid and volunteer positions, for example.

*Recommendation #5. Develop a single committee governance structure with representation from all stakeholder groups.*

In presenting the results and recommendations to stakeholders on November 22, 2018, there was general agreement and positive reaction to the findings. The stakeholders present did not indicate any significant gaps with the recommendations, but there was discussion to clarify the stated recommendations.

In regard to Recommendation #1, stakeholders commented that the Social Innovation "framework" needs to be defined explicitly, for not only communication purposes, but also to share with other stakeholder groups and co-design a shared understanding of the process. It was also suggested that the language being used (i.e. technical and jargon) can be a barrier in itself. Perhaps, the framework and world views are similar, but developing a common vocabulary is needed.

Recommendation #3 identified the need to address tensions and “elephants.” Most believe there is value to doing so, with the result being improved relationships and deepening in the level of trust. One of the “elephants” identified by a stakeholder was the real or perceived intention of stakeholder(s) participating in RECOVER with the intent of subverting the process. Clearly, this would be a highly sensitive and contentious conversation.

While Recommendation #5 suggests that a single governance committee be formed to oversee RECOVER, some stakeholders felt that the recommendation would circumvent the process of stakeholder engagement and co-designing the appropriate governance structure. It was pointed out that the recommendation to Council was to report back on the development of a governance structure in March 2019 and that recommendation was distinct from Recommendation #5 of this report. Individuals present at the session wanted more clarity on the role of the governance structure and indicated the structure should be developed to meet the needs and functions.

RECOVER is about social innovation and urban wellness – testing ideas and pivoting or scaling as needed. It makes sense that we apply the same philosophy to how we carry out RECOVER itself. Our community has stepped up to test the idea of RECOVER. This report highlights feedback gathered from stakeholders engaged in the first year’s journey. We have yet to write the next chapter, but the beauty of RECOVER is ... “that the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.” (O Me! O Life! – Walt Whitman)

**“[The] mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”**

*-Oliver Wendell Holmes*

