Bringing Back the Love

The Emotional Connection of Growth and Change Through Multi-Community Local Area Planning in Calgary, AB, Canada.

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My Journey
01
Growth, Change and Feelings

How did we get here?
Moving away from Collective Gain

Mega public hearing expected on Calgary’s guidebook for communities

And still....... no love!
Calgary Local Area Plans

Local Area Plans (2022)
what does it all mean?
02

Practice-Based Exploration

Understanding my practice in a different way
Design-Science Research Methodology

Objectives:
To integrate emotional considerations of communities into the planning process.

Research Questions
- Codesign/ Coinvested: Foster the space for emotional connections
- Pilot and Pivot: Facilitate a culture of exploration and freedom
- Reflective Practice: Create an innovation of ways

Key Informants
The Handbook For Community Connection

Tools For Creating Empathy in Community Planning
Why bring back the love?

Just like humans... communities need connection.

As the authors of change, design practitioners need to think about the human factor in the work we do.

We cannot policy our way out of the challenges and conflict seen between communities and policy makers.

The emotional “signing on” of communities is foundational to the work we do.

Think about this relationship as the most important part of the process.

Think about your practice and how you currently facilitate community connection.

Positive experiences drive trust.
Negative experiences cause us to shut down.

Why think about love in the context of community change?

Humans define themselves through a number of different ways; their home or “place” is one of them. Our connection to our place is something deep inside our heart. It meets our emotions.

Remember: Emotions are not rationale. It is what makes us human. Emotions rise up even when our brain knows differently than the heart.

Considering emotion in the context of community change humanizes our practice. When we see ourselves as humans first, practitioners second, we can connect more easily with one another. Build understanding, instead of just anger.
Building Up Community Capacity

OVERVIEW: Support community to build skills and knowledge for local planning initiatives.

GOALS: Work with communities as a matter of habit and building relationships. When talking to communities, aim to build relationships rather than just asking for feedback.
- Scale up existing community networks (Community Associations, Business Improvement/ Revitalization Areas, interested parties, volunteers) with resources, support, and deeper conversations.

BENEFITS: Provides additional capacity for communities to participate in the growth and future of their community.
- Builds trust outside of adversarial frictions.

Think about this relationship in the long run. Nurture it. Give it time and effort.

- Think about a dedicated “Planning Liaison” in every community you work to help build these relationships outside of the “required” engagement.
- Give communities someone to call when they need to.

The Process is the WIN.
Using The Working Group Model

**OVERVIEW:** Designed to create a volunteer representative sample of community members.

**GOALS:** Use a working group to:
- Create local advocates/experts in the process.
- Empower decision making as a collective rather than just governmental.
- Share risk throughout the process.

**BENEFITS:** Agreeing on the process before starting helps to avoid surprises later on.
- Identifies community priorities.
- Defines the pain points openly.
- Works in a partnership to solve them.
Change is incremental and layered.

Get comfortable in your new layers.
So What's Love Got to Do With It?

Memorable Reflections and Conclusions
Memorable Reflections

1. Design Frameworks vs. Solutions
2. Immerse Yourself
3. Build Empathy Everyday
4. Reawaken the Early Days
5. Prioritize Relationships!
6. Embrace Risk Taking
7. Transparency is key
I will embody and carry forward the concept of being a deliberate, reflective practitioner while being one myself.