

Building community together

# **BUSINESS DISTRICT VISIONING PROJECT**



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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Aurora Licton Urban Village (ALUV) economic development outreach project was completed during the summer and fall of 2017. Convened by members of ALUV, it was shaped by the ideas, insights, and passions of the ALUV business and residential community. ALUV is grateful to everyone who participated, whether through interviews, focus groups, surveys, or casual conversations.

This visioning project was funded in part by a grant from the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development and facilitated by BDS Planning & Urban Design.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

From July through October 2017, members of the Aurora Licton Urban Village (ALUV), a neighborhood alliance, launched an effort to reach out to local businesses within the urban village and create a common vision for a more vibrant and safe neighborhood business district for residents, businesses and visitors alike. Through this process, these Project Principals wanted to identify ways residents and businesses could collaborate to support the business district while also meeting resident needs. With the help of a grant received from the City of Seattle's Office of Economic Development, they interviewed 37 businesses, surveyed 200 community members, and hosted three focus groups with business owners and managers.

Through this process, the Principals found that business and residents alike voiced many common values, challenges, and aspirations for ALUV. The community agreed upon the following near- and long-term recommendations for improving the business district.

#### **NEAR-TERM**

- 1. Capacity Building & Staffing
- 2. Information Sharing and Networking
- 3. Clean-up & Safety

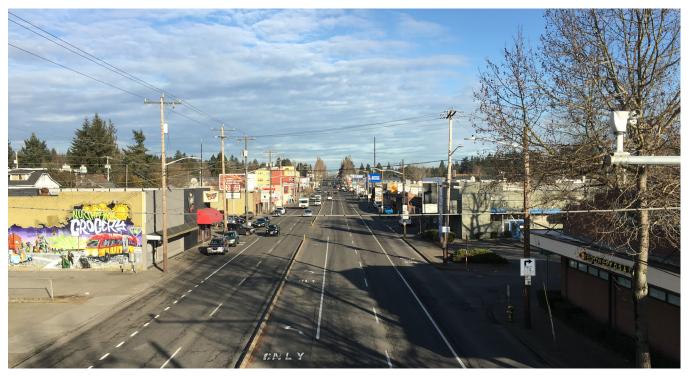
# LONG-TERM

- 1. Advocacy to City
- 2. Curating Business Mix
- 3. Activating Space
- 4. Urban Design Framework

The following report details the process of convening the Project Principals, outreach to the community and businesses, and the findings from that outreach. These findings informed the near and long-term recommendations for the business district, which will lay the groundwork for future planning.

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# **BACKGROUND**

Aurora-Licton Springs is a Residential Urban Village designated as such by the City of Seattle. Boundaries are:

- North 84th Street (southern);
- North 110th Street (northern);
- Fremont and Linden Avenues (western); and
- Wallingford Avenue (eastern).

The Aurora Licton Urban Village (ALUV) is an alliance of residents, businesses, and organizations advocating for a more vibrant and livable urban village. Since the 1994 Residential Urban Village designation, the urban village has experienced significant increases in residential density. Despite this increase in residential density, Aurora-Licton Springs is still missing key characteristics of sustainable urban villages, including pedestrian infrastructure, local-serving businesses, community meeting places and facilities and well-designed streetscapes. ALUV seeks collaboration to make the urban village unified and complete.

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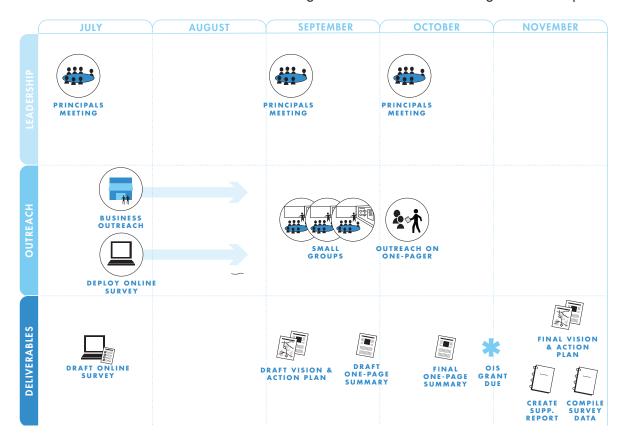


#### **VISIONING PROCESS**

From July through October 2017, the Principals convened and worked to develop their leadership, conduct outreach with the help of consultants, and develop a vision and survey report for community and stakeholders. Starting in July, the Principals conducted outreach in-person and online with the purpose of engaging the business and residential community in developing a near- and long-term vision for the business district.

The outreach included online surveys and in-person interviews. Thirty-seven business were interviewed and an additional 200 community members responded to an online community survey. Lastly, three focus groups were conducted with business owners and managers, as well as a few key residents and partners within the urban village.

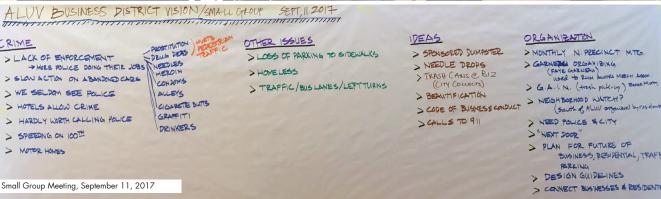
The findings from the survey, interviews, and focus groups were reviewed and analyzed by the Principals, providing the rationale and background for the near- and long-term action plan.















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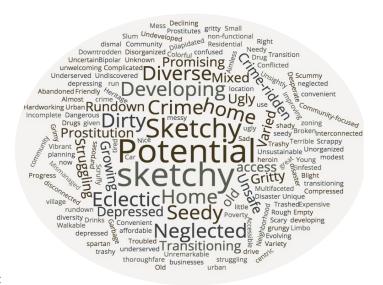
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#### **SURVEY FINDINGS**

Through outreach to businesses and the community, the following common sentiments, opportunities, and challenges in ALUV were expressed:

- 1. Business owners like the location of ALUV and are generally here to stay for at least five years because:
  - ALUV is a convenient and central location to customer base.
  - There is a great community of fellow business owners and diverse customers.
  - They own property or have signed a long-term lease.
- 2. Crime, vandalism, and theft are challenges and are connected to homelessness, prostitution, and drug activity. The issue is complex and widespread for the following reasons:
  - Businesses are experiencing a financial impact of vandalism and theft and the perceived lack of safety is deterring customers.
  - There is no consensus on how to solve this complex issue; solutions can range from stronger law enforcement to improving urban design.
- 3. There is interest in identifying a business organization to support neighborhood improvements, but the details will determine likely success.
  - There is skepticism about the benefit and success of such an organization because existing organizations have dwindled due to lack of involvement.
  - Early indicators are that an organization that couples businesses with residents has a stronger chance of success, and it hasn't been tried before.
  - Future development will be a major challenge as it has the potential to significantly alter the landscape, including reducing parking, removing turn lanes, expanding bus lanes, and limiting customer access to businesses.
  - There could be a change in businesses and consumer base as a result of gentrification and displacement.

# What is one word that describes ALUV?



# What do you value about ALUV?



#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **NEAR-TERM**

# 1. Capacity Building & Staffing

- Contract with an organization or individual for hourly or part time staff support
- Build a business directory for distribution
- Support communication among businesses

# 2. Information Sharing and Networking

- Establish networking opportunities to facilitate information sharing for public safety
- Help host one large community-building event
- Include residents, businesses, police department, church, schools, etc. in network and event

# 3. Clean-up & Safety

- Establish regular clean-ups with businesses and residents
- Install trash cans, sharp containers (for needles) with support from the city
- Encourage businesses and residents to install property lighting for increased public safety
- Foster shared sense of personal responsibility and accountability among business owners

#### **LONGER-TERM**

# 1. Advocacy to City

- Create shared agenda between businesses and residents
- Increase public safety

# 2. Curating Business Mix

- Attract new businesses and mitigate chronic nuisances
- Recruit retail, restaurants, entertainment in response to the need for more gathering spaces
- Continue integrating existing businesses into the "Urban Village" vision

# 3. Activating Space

- Re-establish neighborhood events, building on one event in first year
- Create farmers market
- Increase business district foot traffic

# 4. Urban Design Framework

- Guidelines for future development
- Address traffic speeds, pedestrian safety, parks and gathering spaces
- Improve sidewalks, lighting & street furniture

#### **CONCLUSION**

The Aurora Licton Urban Village is described by many as eclectic, diverse, and full of potential. Community members value the community and access to businesses but are concerned about crime, neglect, and the uncertain future of development. Together, the Principals have a vision to see the community and business district thrive.

The businesses and residents of ALUV are eager to work together to strengthen the local business district and improve the safety of the neighborhood overall.

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