

*North Aurora Studio*

# **PLACEMAKING REPORT**

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University of Washington  
Department Of Urban Design & Planning  
Master of Urban Planning Program

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## INTRODUCTION

### ***Background***

The North Aurora Initiative is a City of Seattle multi-departmental undertaking that aims to create a community vision and plan action steps for North Aurora's future. The initiative addresses public safety, community advocacy concerns, leverages the RapidRide E Line for housing and jobs, improves pedestrian infrastructure and connectivity, and addresses displacement risk to businesses and residents. The Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD) is leading engagement, visioning, and strategy development for the program. OPCD's goals are to:

- Develop a Community Action Plan for North Aurora
- Conduct broad, equitable, and coordinated community engagement
- Coordinate across departments to implement early wins such as placemaking, greening, tactical urbanism, public safety improvements, and arts projects

In Winter 2026, the University of Washington's North Aurora Planning Studio, under the guidance of OPCD, developed an Existing Conditions Report (ECR) to support the work for the North Aurora Initiative. The report surveyed the many community assets, challenges and opportunities in the assigned study area between N 85th St and N 145th St and Greenwood and Meridian Avenues N.

This Spring 2026, the studio used the existing conditions report to develop ideas and recommendations for two main subject areas, placemaking and mobility, as well as support OPCD's community engagement efforts. Together, these efforts explored ways to improve the public realm, strengthen connections, and support future growth along the corridor. This report documents the *Placemaking* component of the studio's work.

### ***Placemaking Approach***

*Placemaking* refers to a collaborative, community-driven approach that connects places to the people in it. It aims both to capitalize on existing assets and shape the public realm to create new opportunities for turning *spaces* into *places*.

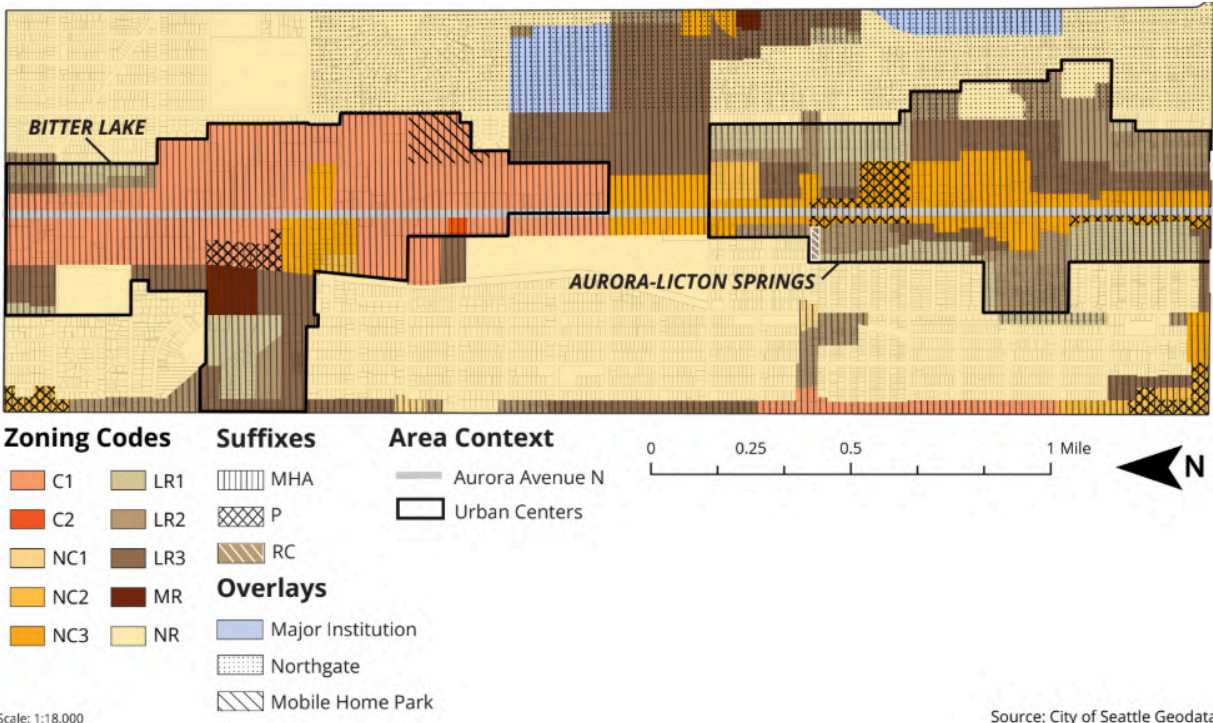
The Placemaking team conducted site visits, precedent research, and concept development to generate a range of placemaking strategies focused on identifying opportunities to active public spaces, develop community programming, celebrate culture and history, and create opportunities for recreation, gathering, and stewardship. These efforts culminated in five project concepts located throughout the study area: a community walking loop highlighting local destinations and history; an activation of Oak tree Village as a food truck

plaza and gathering space; a community gathering space at Washelli Cemetery; a green alley project in Licton Springs; and a street activation event called SEA-Clovvia Aurora.

Placemaking is inherently about the community, and community engagement was a central component of this work. The team developed strategies to engage community members in order to better understand community members’ experiences, priorities, and ideas through interactive activities and informal discussions. At two outreach events, Pop-In Community Connections Parties, in Licton Springs and Bitter Lake, the team met the community and engaged them in conversations about public space, neighborhood identity, and placemaking opportunities, including the five project concepts.

**Land Use Context**

Land use provides the context in which both placemaking and mobility recommendations were developed, shaping where growth occurs and how people might move through the corridor and neighborhoods. The study area contains a mix of Commercial (C), Neighborhood Commercial (NC), Midrise (MR), Lowrise (LR), and Neighborhood Residential (NR) zoning. There are also overlays which include the Major Institution Overlay (MIO), Mobile Home Park (MP), and Northgate (NG) Overlay Districts. Additionally, there are three suffixes embedded into the zoning code that add additional provisions: Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA), Residential Commercial (RC) and Pedestrian (P) (Figure 0-1).



Scale: 1:18,000

Source: City of Seattle Geodata

Figure 0-1: Existing Zoning & Overlays.

Seattle's urban growth strategy targets growth in urban centers, including the Bitter Lake and Aurora-Licton Springs Urban Centers located within the study area (Figure 0-1). Bitter Lake has a greater concentration of Commercial zoning, while Aurora-Licton Springs contains more Neighborhood Commercial zoning.

In January 2026, an update to the *One Seattle Plan* changed Single-Family zones to Neighborhood Residential (NR), and all Residential Single Lot (RSL) zones to Lowrise 1 (LR1) in December 2025 (City of Seattle, 2026b). This change allows development of up to 4 units per lot, or 6 units per lot if the lot is located within a quarter mile of a major frequent transit stop (Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, 2025), marking increased density. Phase 1 of the plan changed Urban Villages to Urban Centers, and future changes will occur within the next two years as Phase 2, 3, and 4 are implemented. These changes will rezone land in newly designated Neighborhood Centers, in new and expanded Urban Centers, and transit-oriented development along frequent transit corridors or around well-served bus stops (City of Seattle, 2026a). Figure 0-2 displays quarter-mile walksheds from the RapidRide E Line Stops, where there may be increased density in the future, and additionally displays the neighborhoods in the study area.

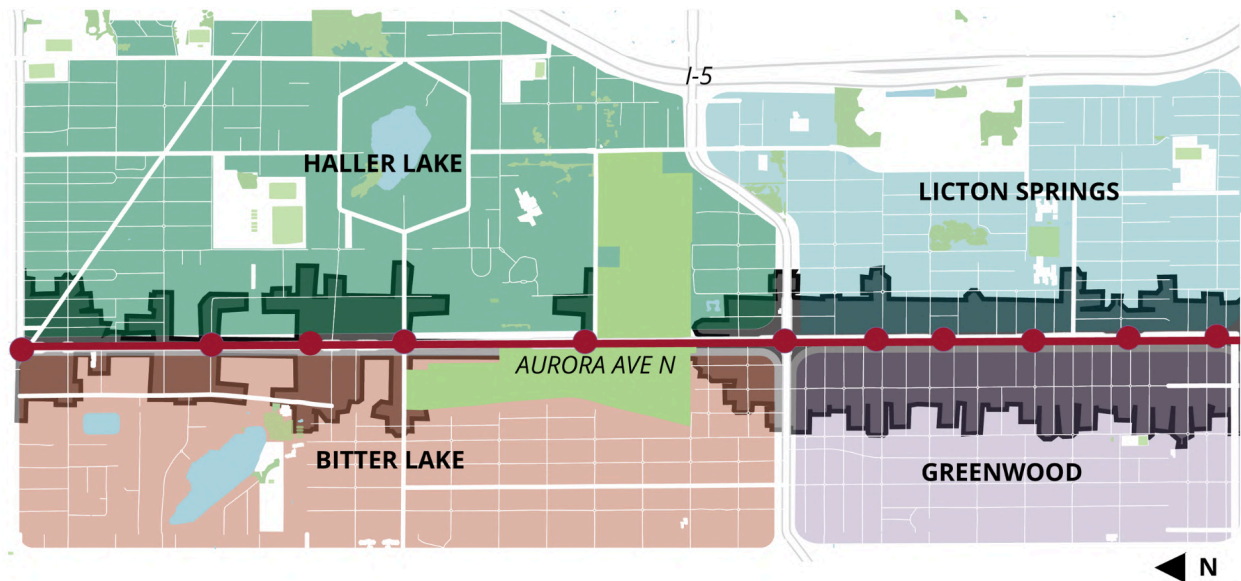


Figure 0-2: Neighborhoods and Quarter-Mile Walksheds from Major Transit Stops.

# 1: WALKING TOUR

## A. Project Description

### *Objective*

The purpose of this proposal is to develop a set of walking routes in the North Aurora study area that provides for recreation, community building, and the contextualization of cultural and historical sites and objects within the built environment. These walking routes will be directed toward participants within and outside of the neighborhood and will ideally use mapping, wayfinding, and thematic grouping of destinations along routes to orient those using the walking paths.

### *Project Goals*

In the context of anticipated increased development in the North Aurora area, it is likely that elements of the built environment considered marginal, ancillary, or unrelated to incoming uses will be removed or concealed during this development. Such changes would follow the trajectory of development over the last twenty years: in places where redevelopment has already occurred, some number of historical signs and vernacular architectural features have been erased. The purpose of this project is to identify which of these elements are valued by members of the community, to preserve them by including them as sites of interest along walking loops, and to contextualize them within the area's history and cultures (Figure 1-1). Instrumental to this process is taking advantage of the burgeoning popularity of urban walking/hiking, which has thus far brought groups of people to places like Green Lake, the Waterfront, and along the length of Seattle for the Super Saunter (Seattle Super Saunter, n.d.). Inducing community building, through engaging with urban walkers in the North Aurora study area, and intracity tourism, through engaging with urban walkers outside the study area, will assist with the project of improving the North Aurora corridor's image and



*Figure 1-1: The Puetz Golf Store sign, an example of the neon signage once prevalent on Aurora Ave N. Image credit Naraelle Barrows, via UW Library Digital Collections.*

through establishing more informal surveillance through the presence of more people.

**Case Study Precedents**

Several precedents exist, formally and informally, for walking loops in Seattle. The Cheshiahud Loop, whose master plan was developed in 2009, recalls a proposal from the original Olmsted Plan for a walking path around Lake Union that connects the area’s many and diverse natural, historical, and cultural amenities. As urban walking has gained popularity over the last two decades, a variety of independent walking route proposals have been developed, best illustrated by David B. Williams’ *Seattle Walks* and Cathy and Jake Jaramillo’s *Seattle Stairway Walks*. Currently, there is no such path in the North Aurora area. This proposal outlines a network of walking paths to create robust, well-used walking destinations for community members and those travelling from other places.

**Walking Loop Map**

This map shows the various sites and paths selected for the walking tour. A larger version of the map is available in the Appendix (Figure A-1).

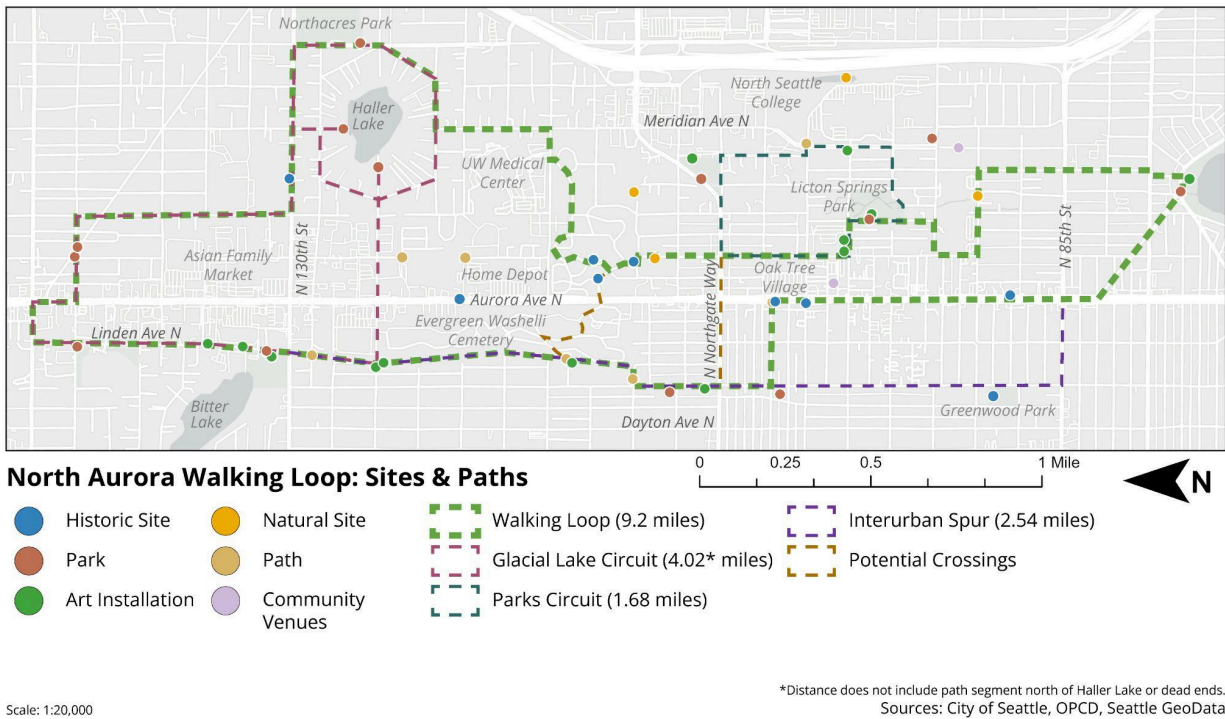


Figure 1-2: Final map for the North Aurora Walking loop.

**Process**

Sites suitable for inclusion in early versions of the walking routes were collected from Seattle GeoData layers listing parks, natural sites, and public art, to which sites found

during site visits, with satellite imagery, and through preliminary archival research were added. These places of interest were added to an ArcGIS map that was then refined through Adobe Illustrator. An initial path was developed to include as many sites as possible, with special attention paid to sidewalk continuity and accessible infrastructure along the path. This path was then audited through a walk, with adjustments made to address accessibility shortcomings. The walking path was broken into shorter, self-contained routes themed into the following categories: the Parks Circuit, the Interurban Spur, and the Glacial Lake Circuit.

- **North Aurora Walking Loop** (9.2 miles): This path comprises the largest and initial walking loop and is designed to include as many historical and cultural sites as possible regardless of theming. Starting from the north side of Green Lake Park, it moves through Licton Springs, Washelli Cemetery, Haller Lake, Bitter Lake, and Greenwood before returning to Green Lake. While the loop is nearly ready in terms of walkability and accessibility, it is not turnkey: there is some unavoidable missing sidewalk infrastructure on the east side of the loop between 97th and Washelli Cemetery and a few missing curb cuts along Green Lake Drive.
- **Glacial Lake Circuit** (4.02 miles, excluding dead ends and the northern connection between 125th and Meridian): This loop connects the Haller and Bitter Lakes and neighborhoods, currently separated by Aurora Avenue N, based on their similarity as glacial lakes. Many parks exist on the eastern side of the loop near Haller Lake, while on the western side there is a cluster of art installations along Linden Ave. This loop also encloses a shopping center and runs past a variety of restaurants and community centers that could be included in publicity material about the loop. There is a public restroom at Northacres Park.
- **Parks Circuit** (1.68 miles): This loop is intended to be the most accessible in terms of ability, given its short length and the range of places along the route where resting and lingering are permitted. It is thematically anchored by Licton Springs Park, a protected cultural site of the Duwamish people, and by Mineral Springs Park and the several green spaces on or near the North Seattle College campus. There are several art installations here, as well as precedents for community involvement such as the nearby Burke Street Play Street and Piling's Pond. There is a public restroom at Licton Springs Park.
- **Interurban Spur** (2.54 miles): This linear segment follows the Interurban Trail from the north trailhead within the Seattle city limits to Greenwood Park, where the southern terminus of the track is located. This route provides background into the history of the Interurban Rail that connected Seattle to Everett in the first half of the twentieth century. The trail currently has a moderate amount of parks and public art

along the path, and the portion adjacent to Washelli Cemetery could be advertised as a place to watch urban wildlife. While there is no restroom on the route with the restroom in Greenwood Park being non-functional at this time, there is a restroom inside the Bitter Lake Community Center just north of the start of the trail.

## **B. Community Engagement**

### ***Engagement Activities & Feedback***

For community engagement meetings, a large map of the walking paths and sites was placed on a table with color-coded Post-It Notes that allowed for participants to add any sites of interest the developer of the proposal missed. During the Licton Springs event, community members identified five additional sites of interest and questioned the inclusion of one site. During the Bitter Lake event, participants focused on existing personal uses of space that contextualized the walking tour with proximal amenities, such as street furniture and activities like paddleboarding, and on describing current limitations of knowledge of which areas are walkable. Feedback was neutral or positive, given an increase in safety interventions in the North Aurora area generally. The feedback received was included in the final map (Figure 1-2 & A-1).

### ***Feedback from OPCD***

During meetings with OPCD, several ideas were proposed to increase legibility of the walking paths and to enhance the project's integration with the public. Early feedback from OPCD noted the possibility of guided tours as a way to generate initial publicity and assist with the contextualization of sites. In later meetings, it was proposed to include community organizations in the process of creating guided tours, in hopes that local residents may become leaders and stewards of guided tours. In a similar vein, the use of Sparks Grants from the Department of Neighborhoods was suggested as a method of increasing both the number of sites of interest along paths and to increase senses of community ownership of the projects. Both these suggestions should be included in any implementation of the project. Community members will bring a crucial local and experiential element to the walking tours and increase organizational buy-in. The use of Sparks Grants among cohorts of residents to reimburse for materials used for activation, art, and placemaking along the path will increase continuity and visual interest between sites and increase residential buy-in.

## C. Recommendations

### Short-Term Recommendations

- **Audit** all path segments not coterminous with the North Aurora Loop for accessibility, lighting quality, and sidewalk continuity. Ensure all crossings at Aurora have streetlights.
- Locate **archival data** regarding the origins and histories of sites included along the walking paths. Include this information on **wayfinding** interventions (Figures 1-3 and 1-4).
- Build an ArcGIS StoryMap that describes the loop project and provides broader historical information about the North Aurora area.
- **Collaborate** with **local community groups** for:
  - The location of additional sites of interest
  - Assistance organizing in-person group tours
  - Assistance finding locals who may be interested in serving as tour guides



Figure 1-3: Wayfinding intervention in Capitol Hill. Image credit Dante Morelli.

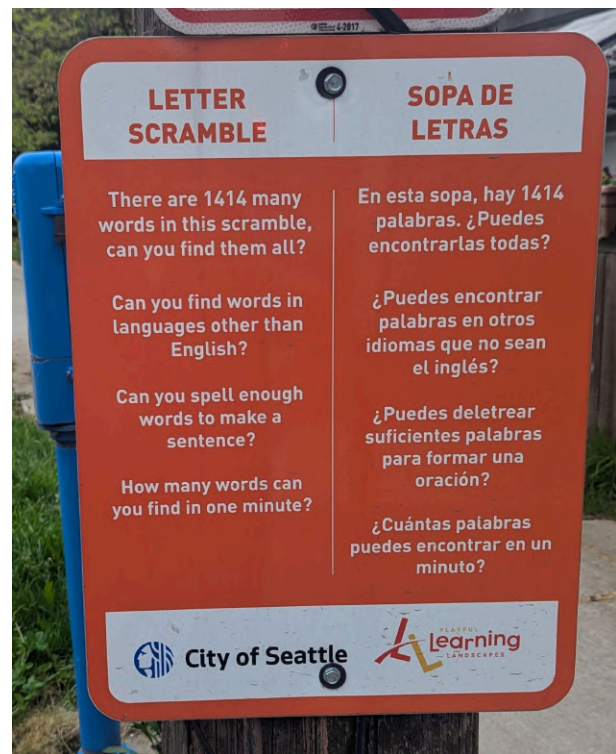


Figure 1-4: Wayfinding intervention and activity at bus stop located at N 115th St and Meridian Avenue N. Image credit Sophia Hardin.

### ***Long-Term Recommendations***

- Remediate identified **accessibility** and **lighting** issues by constructing sidewalks, curb cuts, and streetlights where missing.
- Publicize the opening of Sparks Grants for community members and groups to produce **art** and **street furniture** along walking paths.
- Establish **connections** with other walking loops in the area, both those that are official walks that use municipal property and unofficial walks that may develop in nearby neighborhoods.

### ***Directions for Future Implementation***

In the event that this project is adopted by OPCD, a few steps need to be implemented to make the project workable. Wayfinding signage that contextualizes and describes the sites' histories should be created, whether in the form of signage or QR codes that direct users to a website listing relevant information about the sites. In the event that OPCD holds events along segments of the walking paths, four areas should be highlighted: the Interurban Spur following Linden Avenue, the Interurban Trail, and Dayton Avenue; the Parks Circuit that is anchored by Licton Springs Park, Mineral Springs Park, and the green areas of the North Seattle College campus; and the Glacial Lake Circuit that moves between Bitter Lake and Haller Lake.

## 2: BUILDING ROOTS AT OAK TREE VILLAGE

### A. Project Description

#### *Objective*

At its core, this project aims to formalize a **community gathering space** through the installation of placemaking infrastructure and cultural elements that tie it to the community and reflect local identity. This project focuses on activating Oak Tree Village, specifically by transforming underutilized space into a food truck plaza and community hub. Food trucks and vendors have been staples at community events and farmers markets, but there has been a recent growing trend of establishing and semi-formalizing dedicated spaces where community members can gather, socialize, and support local businesses. Oak Tree Village has already been identified as an existing community gathering space and contains underutilized spaces that are well-suited for community building and expanded public use. This project proposes to establish such a space, starting with **temporary** vendors, furniture, and food trucks, and potentially transitioning to a more **permanent** destination over time. The proposed location that would be conducive to public gatherings lay in between the AMC theater and the Saar's Super Saver grocery store (Figure 2-1).



*Figure 2-1: Space identified for potential development at Oak Tree Village.*

### **Case Study Precedent**

A food truck plaza project in Kihei, Maui turned a vacant lot behind an existing shopping mall into a food truck plaza, with an attached community gathering space. The space transformed from an empty, underutilized area with held potential, to a beautiful space that people could actively utilize and enjoy. As a precedent, it highlights the potential for a food-centered placemaking to activate a space and support local businesses.



*Figure 2-2: Before and after the Kihei food truck plaza project.*

## The Vision



Figure 2-3: Rendering of Oak Tree Village activation vision.

This rendering shows a vision of a transformed Oak Tree Village that is full of life, activity, and can bring communities together. Added elements to the space include:

- **String lights**, wrapped around tree trunks and hanging between trees
  - Both for safety and for aesthetic beauty to help the space feel more welcoming
- **Food trucks**
  - Would include local businesses
- Temporary **furniture** and **plants**, including benches, tables, and chairs
  - To encourage lingering and staying rather than just passing through
- Wall mural **art** on the AMC wall
  - Could be art from local artists
- **People** filling the space
  - Using the facilities, engaging with each other, eating food, talking, and children playing



In addition to cutouts people placed on the boards, we also received comments and ideas on sticky notes, including ping-pong tables, tables for chess or mahjong, and a big playground (Figure 2-5). Overall, we noticed a theme of play that repeatedly came up in community members' responses and their cutout choices.



Figure 2-5 & 2-6: More images of the Build Your Own Public Space activity board.

Finally, we also shared a flyer with community members. People were overall really excited to reimagine the space!

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## OAK TREE VILLAGE: REIMAGINED

*This project aims to formalize a community gathering space at Oak Tree Village, through the installation of temporary to permanent placemaking infrastructure, as well as cultural elements to tie it to the community. This reimagining looks to take inspiration from other food truck plazas found in Seattle.*

### FOOD TRUCKS



### WALL ART



### STREET FURNITURE



Figure 2-7: Flyer we shared with community members (Oak Tree).

### C. Recommendations

As the owners of Oak Tree Village have been unresponsive to the city's ongoing efforts, this project may be purely hypothetical. However, members at community events have expressed interest in seeing this underutilized space turned into a space where they can play and linger. Influenced by additional community interest, the proposed next steps can serve as a roadmap for future proposals to Oak Tree Village.

In order to set the groundwork for a potential project like this, several elements would need to be identified, such as:

- Local food trucks and vendors, particularly of any that have catered to events in this area previously (will need food permits)
- Volunteer groups in the area (such as Boy Scouts and high school Key Clubs) that participate in community service opportunities
- Collaboration and further engagement with the community, Oak Tree Village, and AMC

This project would involve identifying **local businesses** and vendors interested in setting up in this space, especially those that would be popular with the community. This includes engaging **local artists** to paint murals or asphalt art. Additionally, the AMC has ample space for artwork that could draw people into the theater, so this is an opportunity to work with the AMC and benefit both parties. The installation of these activation elements could involve **other local groups** such as local Boy Scout Troops or school clubs, both of which usually seek volunteer opportunities for their members.

We recommend prioritizing **lighting** and **seating** as first steps for physical additions to the space, as this would encourage people to use the space and feel comfortable in it. This could also be coupled with **event programming**, like farmers markets, that expose people to the space so they may begin to use it as a gathering space and for events outside as well.

### 3: WASHELLI CEMETERY GATHERING SPACE

#### A. Project Description

##### **Objective**

At its core, this project aims to leverage Evergreen Washelli Cemetery's location in the corridor to establish a focal point and **community gathering space**. Washelli's place in the North Aurora corridor serves as an ideal community gathering spot. Its central location between the Licton Springs and Bitter Lake urban areas lends itself to being an ideal gathering/meeting place for everyone in the community in the summertime, and can bridge the gap between the neighborhoods that is currently exacerbated by roads like Aurora Ave N. Parks and open spaces provide refuge from urban environments by creating physical distance and blocking traffic noise, as well as offering a peaceful environment for recreation and enjoyment. However, the major hurdle to turning Washelli into a community gathering space is its "image". Cemeteries have long been seen as unwelcoming spaces, open only to those burying or visiting a loved one.

##### **Site Background**

Washelli stakeholders Aaron and Nikole are very open to evolving the cemetery's place in the community going forward. Meetings with these stakeholders informed how open the cemetery staff was to using their land as a community gathering space. They discussed that there have been baseball and jazz festivals on the property in the past and that they are currently using the property as an events space, including larger celebrations of life, the Day of the Dead festival (Figure 3-1), and flag placements.



Figure 3-1: Day of the Dead festival flyer, an existing indoor event at Washelli.

### ***Case Study Precedent***

This project draws inspiration from the Hollywood Forever Cemetery in Los Angeles, California. Hollywood Forever's place in history and its place geographically lends itself to being a spot for community events, such as movie screenings, concerts and the "largest Day of the Dead Festival in the country." While events at this scale may not be possible at Washelli Cemetery for a number of reasons, it nonetheless serves as an inspiration for potential. Notably, Hollywood Forever has different connotations and context, and Washelli may not be able to host extremely loud live performances, as this could be seen as disrespectful to the cemetery's environment. However, a community play, family movie night, or Sunday jazz may be more appropriate.



*Figure 3-2: Examples of events held at Hollywood Forever Cemetery.*

## The Vision



*Figure 3-3: Rendering of a potential event at the amphitheater space*

This rendering shows the Washelli amphitheater being activated for live music, and crowds of community members joining to enjoy the music and the space. This rendering is based on an image of an event at another park showing that the same sentiment can apply for parks and cemetery green spaces— a cemetery can be utilized in the same way as other large parks that have space for large events and gatherings.



We also shared a flyer with community members to show them our vision.

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**(A)LIVE EVENTS! AT WASHELLI**

*This project aims to leverage the Washelli Cemetary's location in the corridor to establish it as a focal point and community gathering space. Washelli is already a community gathering space to celebrate life, and the staff has indicated that they are interested in expanding their role as a venue for people to gather and interact in a more recreational position.*

**MOVIE SCREENINGS**




**LIVE MUSIC**



Live events taking place at Hollywood Forever Cemetary in Los Angeles, CA.  
A potential source of inspiration for what events could take place here.

**CULTURAL EVENTS**



The Day of the Dead Festival, the largest one of its kind in this city, taking place at the cemetery

Figure 3-5: Flyer we shared with community members (Washelli).

### C. Recommendations

We recommend working with Washelli to develop a public **engagement plan** for them to address the sentiment of surprise and unfamiliarity that echoed throughout conversations with community members. Engagement can help clarify the community's desires for the space and what would make people feel more comfortable using it, like another park or green space. Importantly, this serves as a form of **marketing** that exposes the community in North Aurora to the available space and the beauty and peace that the cemetery can offer as a refuge from the urban environment of the rest of the corridor.

**Lighting** is also an important concern when activating the amphitheater space, as community members emphasized. It currently doesn't have any lighting fixtures in the area that would be able to light up the area for nighttime or after-dark events. This presents two options:

- 1) More daytime events and summer events, as pictured in the render and is more viable in the short-term, or
- 2) Installing light fixtures to open up the possibility of events at nighttime, which may be a long-term endeavor and requires consultation with Washelli.

Finally, when beginning event programming at Washelli, we recommend treading slowly and carefully. While Washelli already hosts some indoor events, additional outdoor programming could change the character of the space. We recommend that events start at smaller scales, with lower volumes and smaller crowds. This can be a sort of test period to see how the community might react, especially since cemeteries can be sensitive locations. This project concept is primarily meant to bring the North Aurora community together and bridge gaps between neighborhoods, but it may also eventually bring in people from other neighborhoods in Seattle. As such, it has the potential to grow into larger events and festivals and become a popular destination in Seattle. However, this may not be what the North Aurora community wants. Further engagement can help answer this question, and we recommend that any expansion of programming be guided by ongoing community feedback and implemented **incrementally**, in line with demonstrated community interest and comfort. This will ensure that increased visitation does not compromise the character of the space or the needs of nearby residents.

## 4: GREEN ALLEYS & STREETS (*SHARED SPACES*) CONCEPT

### A. Project Description

#### ***Objective***

This concept project aims to gauge and inspire community interest in multi-benefit **green stormwater infrastructure** (GSI) projects, specifically related to activating alleys, streets, and other underutilized public right-of-way elements, as shared, green spaces.

#### ***Background***

Through the early 20th century, the study area was dotted with mineral springs, bogs, and marshes, many of which had spiritual significance to the Duwamish people (North Seattle College, n.d.). While the land has been paved over and built on, water still tries to find its way into the ground and people still seek spaces to gather and find connection.

Seattle's Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Analysis considers flooding on Aurora Ave N to be one of the most likely outcomes of the major storm events that hit Seattle on a regular basis (Seattle Office of Emergency Management, 2014). Furthermore, SPU estimates that approximately 285 acres in the study area are at risk of flooding due to storms overwhelming the drainage system (Seattle Public Utilities, 2023). The southern portion of the study area below Evergreen Washelli Cemetery is at higher risk of flooding from these events. As such, the study area, and particularly the southern portion, is ripe for stormwater management investments to safely capture and filter stormwater before it enters the drainage system and eventually Lake Union and Puget Sound.

#### ***Case Study Precedent***

Given the particulars of the North Aurora study area, the most applicable precedent is South Los Angeles' Avalon Green Alley Demonstration Project. The Avalon Project is grounded in stormwater best management practices. Through consultation with the community, it also aims to create safe, shared green spaces that encourage walking, gathering, and playing, reduce crime, and strengthen connections between residential areas and amenities along nearby higher-traffic corridors (Lindt, et al., 2014). Taking inspiration from the Avalon Green Alley Project, this concept offers ideas for community members to adopt or modify as needed to fit their own visions for the North Aurora area.



Figure 4-1 (left): Avalon Green Alley Project site plan, & Figure 4-2 (right): Project features at Towne Ave.

## Goals

- **Activate** existing, yet underutilized public realm infrastructure elements like alleys, streets, and planting strips
- Safely capture, filter, and infiltrate **stormwater**
- **Engage** the community about urban stormwater management and increase stewardship opportunities
  - Foster more **equitable** distribution of green investments
  - Increase opportunities and incentives for community **stewardship** of public space
- Create opportunities for lower-cost, more community-imagined **shared spaces** between a “Festival Street” and “People Street”
- Build **inviting** spaces that can be modified by the community to meet their needs and desires
- Foster **community connections**
- Inject greater **permeability** into the land-use framework through non-grid pedestrian connectivity opportunities
- Create safe, direct connections between residential areas and amenities

## Digital Concept Renders & Potential Project Location



Figure 4-3: Green / shared alley project concept renders including gathering space with community amenities & edible landscaping (left) and traffic calming elements (right).



Figure 4-4: “T-alley” and adjacent spur (see yellow box in image) in the Licton Springs area identified as a potential site for a green / shared alley demonstration project.

## B. Community Engagement

### **SME Feedback**

SPU voiced concerns about accessing grey infrastructure assets in alleys that are relatively hard to maintain. They also expressed concerns about allowing / encouraging projects without guarantees that partners (property owners, etc.) will take on long-term, full maintenance responsibility.

### **Community Feedback**

Residents expressed safety concerns regarding the particulars of what alley use might look like (who, when, & how). On the other hand, we also heard excitement about activating underutilized public space in the area for connecting, gathering, and greening. Likewise, the public expressed interest in more opportunities (and less bureaucratic hoops) for community stewardship of these spaces.

## C. Recommendations

### *Short Term Recommendations*

- Clarify the permit process for individual and community-led actions in the public realm and right-of-way.
- Connect community members interested in activating local spaces with Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) dollars.
- Identify local community **partnership programs** (like DIRT Corps) focused on community-based ecological restoration, green infrastructure, and urban forestry, with the capacity to close gaps in green infrastructure implementation and maintenance.
- Develop GIS-based needs assessment **toolkits** to help identify project opportunities, prioritize locations, and assess environmental and public health concerns.
- Formalize community **stewardship** opportunities, such as tree planting and watering, or maintaining rain gardens and bioswales.

### *Long Term Recommendations*

- Identify priority locations for a **network** of green / shared spaces and non-grid connectivity projects based on development patterns in the study area.
- Identify and convene a cohort of **community members**, CBOs, and Tribal groups with strong local ties and long-established community trust to provide technical assistance and build these partners' capacity to fund and implement community-led multi-benefit green infrastructure projects.
- Develop **action plans** to provide the information community groups and partners need to sustain forward momentum for green infrastructure projects. Action plans would include an area-specific project scope and budget to support potential grant applications for 100% design. Action Plans would also include a toolkit of resources for continued community-led / managed green infrastructure education such as: understanding project conception through post-construction monitoring and maintenance; various calculation tools to estimate project benefits; sources of funding for project design and construction; and references for local, state and national green infrastructure organizations.

## **5: SEA-CLOVIA: OPEN STREETS PROGRAMMING**

### **A. Project Description**

#### ***The Case for North Aurora: Beyond a Livable Street***

Aurora Ave N, also known as State Route 99, is one of the highest-volume streets in Seattle's city limits. It is a north-south corridor parallel to Interstate-5 that is critical for freight movement and offers connections to dense housing, businesses, social services and employment opportunities in North Seattle (SDOT, 2022). Previous community engagement conducted by SDOT found that North Aurora neighborhoods want enhanced comfort and access for walking along the corridor, reduced collisions for all users, and improvements to the quality and efficiency of transit service.

North Aurora is not only home to the Bitter Lake and Aurora-Licton Springs neighborhoods, it also boasts a variety of diverse neighborhoods within and around urban centers that include many cultural and ethnic groups. Because North Aurora is an extremely diverse area, the businesses and restaurants reflect the community and offer a variety of services, amenities, and offerings. However, there is a lack of cultural programming and events that build upon and foster the same diversity and community experience found in these businesses and neighborhoods.

During project development at the beginning of the spring term, our studio group recognized that the area's diversity and culture deserve to be celebrated, highlighted, and uplifted. This realization came through observations walking along Aurora Ave N, and visiting Saar's Super Saver grocery store, a cultural grocery store. Through these conversations came the idea of SEA-Clovia, a Seattle spin on traditional ciclovías and open streets events. Ciclovías and open street events are often lumped in with health initiatives, where success is measured by increases in physical activity; however, SEA-Clovia's main purpose is to promote social capital for the melting pot of diverse populations living along the North Aurora corridor. A cultural street fair along the central road that currently divides neighborhoods would provide the community celebration it desires and deserves, centering on the cultural diversity of its residents rather than the stereotypes and misconceptions of North Aurora.

#### ***Brief Literature Review***

Ciclovía originated in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1974 as a way to open streets to cyclists and pedestrians. Beginning in the early 2000s, Ciclovías have expanded to many cities worldwide, occurring in a variety of settings, from metropolises to small towns, and at

small- and large-scale events (Sarmiento, 2017). In the United States, CicLAvia in Los Angeles is the most expansive event with over 1.8 million participants attending since 2010, pre-pandemic (CicLAvia, 2020). Ciclovia programming benefits the community in a myriad of ways beyond the leisurely physical activity promotion associated with such events. These benefits are summarized below based on a brief literature review on the subject:

1. Promote physical activity by providing a suitable environment to decrease unequal access to recreational opportunities (Teunissen et al., 2015)
2. Promote social capital (Torres et al., 2013)
3. Improve population's quality of life (Sarmiento et al., 2010b)
4. Advocates for cycling as transport (Torres et al., 2013)
5. Reduces particulate pollution and street noise (Sarmiento et al., 2010a; Shu et al., 2015)
6. Increases business activity (Chaudhuri and Zieff, 2015)
7. Encourage exploration of new communities, bringing attention to local businesses and neighborhoods that may be viewed as dangerous and unfavorable (Chang, et al., 2026)
8. Foster demographic mixing and have positive impacts on ethnic diversity, providing a sense of urban inclusion (Chang, et al., 2026)

### ***Case Study Cities***

To develop an in-depth understanding of Ciclovías and open streets events, we identified three American cities that host(ed) similar events to serve as case studies for North Aurora: Eugene, Oregon; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles County, California. We developed overarching themes and questions about how each event began, who organized the events, how each event was run, and the overall feasibility of planning an open streets event in North Aurora. We contacted leadership for each event and met virtually to discuss our project and ask questions.

Below, brief overviews of each event and what we learned are outlined. The resources and perspectives that these case studies provided serve as evidence that SEA-Clovia is a feasible possibility and can be achieved through various contexts.

#### ***1. Eugene, Oregon - Eugene Sunday Streets***

From 2011 to 2019, the City of Eugene, Oregon hosted *Eugene Sunday Streets*, a series of "open streets events [aiming to] promote healthy, active living by opening the city's largest public space – its streets – for people to ride, roll and walk and to discover active transportation in a fun, carfree environment" (City of Eugene, 2019). Throughout its run,

*Eugene Sunday Streets* hosted a variety of neighborhood open streets events, but the biggest was the downtown route and loop. This event began with the EUG Parade and brought in thousands of viewers and hundreds of participants to the area. The open streets events themselves featured activities, shows, and booths put together by local businesses, government departments, nonprofits, and a variety of other groups and organizations aiming to “invite the whole community to come downtown... [enjoy] public spaces, celebrat[e] local artists and support local businesses... [so] that people [left] with a sense of what is possible when [people] come together downtown!” (City of Eugene, 2019). Despite having a good run and being a popular public feature in Eugene, the event was left behind due to COVID-19 budget cuts and organizational changes.



Figure 5-1. *Eugene Sunday Streets* in 2017 (*Eugene Sunday Streets*, 2018).

Because of some similarities between the goals of our project and the culture in Eugene and Seattle, *Eugene Sunday Streets* was a good starting point for beginning to develop our understanding of how open streets events work, especially when they are a City-led event. In Seattle, the Cascadia Bicycle Club has expressed high interest in open streets programming in North Seattle. This type of organization is similar to the GEARs in Eugene, Oregon that helped spearhead *Eugene Sunday Streets*, highlighting an exciting opportunity for OPCD to help foster and support this endeavor. We contacted Shane Rhodes, City of Eugene Transportation Options Program Manager, to answer a few questions that we had regarding the background of *Eugene Sunday Streets*, public and non-profit coordination, and general feasibility.

## 2. Los Angeles County, California - CicLAvia

CicLAvia is a nonprofit based in Los Angeles County that puts on open streets events in cities across LA County year-round with the goal of connecting people, places, and possibilities in Los Angeles. These events are “made meaningful by the neighborhoods that host them [because] each event offers new ways to experience Los Angeles by creating connections to local stories and community pride” (CicLAvia, 2025). CicLAvia’s events have been temporarily closing major arterials to car traffic and opening streets to people since 2010, creating over 365 miles of open streets and bringing in over 1.8 million people over the past 16 years. CicLAvia focuses on bringing people to new parts of LA to walk, roll, play, and explore (CicLAvia, 2026).



Figure 5-2. CicLAvia Event (CicLAvia, 2026).

CicLAvia is a perfect case study for SEA-Clovvia on North Aurora, representing a successful open streets event that takes place on a major arterial. We contacted Rachel Burke, CicLAvia’s Chief Program Officer, to gain more insights about their programming. During our meeting, we learned a lot about traffic control plans and the importance of having a strong non-profit/city relationship. Collaboration and coordination between the two are integral to the success of CicLAvia events in large part due to the scale of each event and the sensitivity of funding. Having a non-profit organization that operates open streets events allows the community to have events and programming while the city is not overwhelmed by the scale and manpower necessary for the event to be successful. Additionally, we learned that CicLAvia places a big emphasis on hosting open streets events on major routes, arterials, and commercial strips, not neighborhood streets. By hosting events on commercial strips, this centers the community rather than using them as a backdrop.

### 3. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - OpenStreetsPGH

BikePGH launched OpenStreetsPGH in 2015 as Pittsburgh’s version of the model. This event emerged out of a working group composed of a Downtown developer, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, a person working in local philanthropy, and BikePGH. Previous work organizing Bike to Work Day, BikeFest, and PedalPGH gave the foundation for taking these events to the next level. OpenStreetsPGH’s main goal is to “invite Pittsburghers to reimagine their streets as places for people [by] walking, running, biking, skating, rolling, dancing, and enjoying the road at their own pace (OpenStreetsPGH, 2026). Events are accompanied by free group fitness classes and support for local businesses.



Figure 5-3. OpenStreetsPGH event in 2025 (BikePGH, 2025).

OpenStreetsPGH places a large emphasis on promoting cultural diversity and local businesses, similar to the goals for Aurora Ave N’s SEA-Clovio. We contacted Scott Bricker, the cofounder of BikePGH who has led the organization as executive director since 2005 to answer a few questions about BikePGH. We learned that BikePGH’s events are intentionally routed through diverse neighborhoods and collaborate with cultural performances, food vendors, and community organizations that reflect those communities. Another similarity between OpenStreetsPGH and SEA-Clovio is that OpenStreetsPGH events have been routed through high-volume corridors or state-owned roads which require additional coordination between PennDOT and the City’s traffic engineers.

Appendix Table A-1 shows a summary of learnings and details from the case studies that can be applied, including information on funding, volunteers, and attendance.

## Feasibility

Combining insights, feedback, and logistical information we gathered from the City of Eugene, CicLAvia, and OpenStreetsPGH, we have developed an overview of key findings relating to feasibility that can help OPCD conceptualize the cost, effort, and needs associated with an open streets event.

The following list describes general costs and effort associated with an open streets event.

- **Engagement:** Outreach such as door to door canvassing to connect with residents and businesses, paired with community meetings, multilingual materials, and partnerships with neighborhood organizations.
- **Staff:** Staff time is noted as the biggest single cost putting on open streets events. Preparation spans for months and includes planning, coordination, communication, and execution and executive leadership time. Day-of events staff, communications, and coordination is also included.
- **Volunteers:** Volunteer recruitment and coordination itself takes staff time leading up to the event and the day of the event, even if the labor is donated.
- **Facilities:** Staging, temporary signage, tents, porta potties, tables, chairs, sound equipment, permits, power, water, etc.
- **Traffic Control and Major Signage:** This is also a significant line item. A formal traffic control plan is required no matter the scale of the event. Police, traffic operations staff, signage, barricades, and cones add additional costs.
- **Insurance:** Event liability insurance is required and is a meaningful cost, particularly for street closures at larger scales.

## B. Activation Strategies

In order to develop realistic routes for this proposal, we created three tiers of activation strategies ranging from low to high scale activation routes. It became apparent during our meetings with case study cities that relying on a single route along Aurora Ave N was unrealistic so early in planning, so the scales of activation offered a way to start small and think big. We conceptualized three 'buckets' each with specific criteria that helped us finalize three routes:

Table 5-1. Activation Strategy Criteria		
Low	Medium	High
Route on neighborhood	Route on a minor arterial or	Route on Aurora Ave N

streets	collector street	
Capitalizes off of existing healthy streets and neighborhood greenways	Capitalizes off of City plans for de-arterialization, road diets, bike lanes, etc.	Opens up a main arterial to people
Has the space to foster community participation and programming (e.g. lemonade stands, sports games, garage sales, etc.)	Has the space to foster community participation and programming (e.g. lemonade stands, sports games, garage sales, etc.) but also has space for local businesses and non-residents	Brings in neighbors, non-residents, and business owners to participate in a variety of activities and experiences
Near parks and schools	Embedded in the neighborhoods but serves as an important connection	Connects neighborhoods and has a variety of connections
Minimal disruption of traffic and bus routes in the area; variety of alternative routes and few businesses impacted	Moderate disruption of traffic and bus routes in the area; variety of alternative routes and few businesses impacted	High disruption of traffic in the area, but no disruption of bus routes. Alternative routes available and many businesses 'impacted' but invited to participate in festivities

The low and medium scale activation routes would be classified as open streets events, while the high scale activation would be classified as a *ciclovía*, or rather a SEA-Clovía, due to the differences in route types and impacts. Low and medium routes are embedded in neighborhoods and build upon existing neighborhood infrastructure like healthy streets and neighborhood greenways, avoiding Aurora Ave N and main bus route closures. Based on the criteria developed above, we identified the following as hopeful and effective routes for SEA-Clovía:

**1. Low Scale Activation Strategy: Licton Springs Park Loop**

- a. Loop around Licton Springs Park connecting Robert Eagle Staff Middle School and Oak Tree Village the surrounding neighborhood

**2. Medium Scale Activation Strategy: Roosevelt Way Northeast**

- a. Roosevelt Wy NE between Aurora Ave N and 1st Ave NE

**3. High Scale Activation Strategy: Aurora Ave N**

- a. On Aurora Ave N from Green Lake to Aurora Shopping Center near Bitter Lake

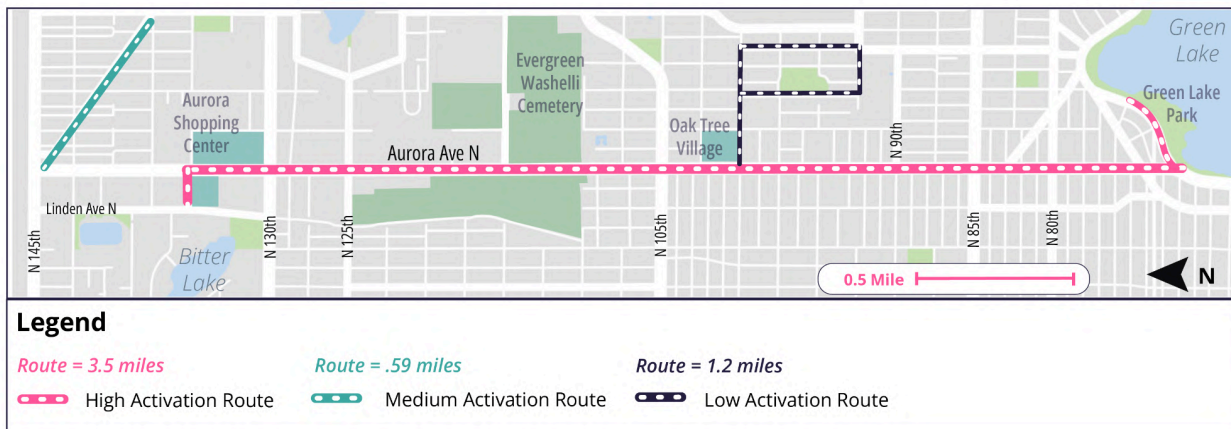


Figure 5-4. Low, Medium, and High Scale Activation Strategies Routes Overview.

**Low Scale Activation Strategy: Licton Springs Park Loop**

The low scale activation strategy proposes an open streets route that loops around Licton Springs Park connecting Robert Eagle Staff Middle School and Oak Tree Village to the surrounding neighborhood. The loop is located on the neighborhood greenway Ashworth Ave N, the healthy street N 100th St, N 92nd St, and Wallingford Ave N and is a total of 1.2 miles around. This open streets proposal capitalizes on existing designated infrastructure, does not cross Aurora Ave N, and does not interfere with any bus routes in the area. The loop also connects three main community hubs (Licton Springs Park, Oak Tree Village, and Robert Eagle Staff Middle School) to the surrounding neighborhoods that otherwise have little to no events and programming centered around the community.

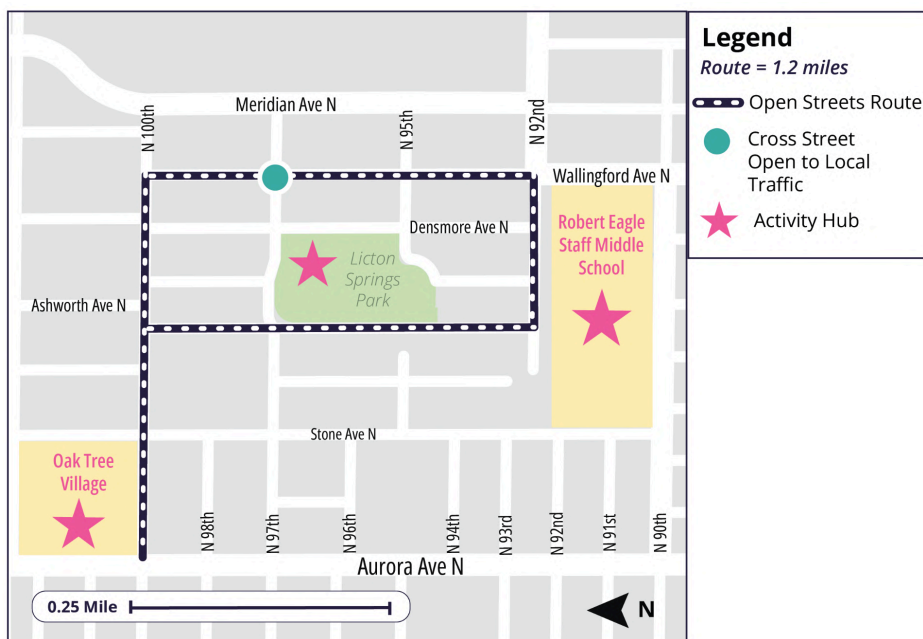


Figure 5-5. Licton Springs Park Loop Open Streets Route.

The main goal of this activation strategy is to bring the neighborhood together, providing low impact programming to the community utilizing existing infrastructure to foster fun and connection. Similar to Eugene Sunday Streets events, the open streets route is a loop contained in a neighborhood. We imagine that this event could have activities including garage sales, lemonade stands, group dance classes, sports, card games and board games, and a variety of other quick and easy things to set up at community members' houses. There would also be the hope that local organizations and businesses would join in on the fun, possibly through tabling, sponsorship, or activity production and support. This route would serve as the Aurora-Licton Springs community SEA-Clovia event.



Figure 5-6. Sample Licton Springs Open Streets Poster.

### **Medium Scale Activation Strategy: Roosevelt Way Northeast**

The medium scale activation strategy proposes an open streets route on Roosevelt Wy NE from Aurora Ave N and 1st Ave NE. The route is located in the Licton Springs neighborhood and is .59 miles long. While this strategy doesn't utilize existing greenways and healthy streets, it does build upon the proposed dearterialization of Roosevelt Wy NE. Additionally, the route does not cross Aurora Ave N and would not interfere with any major bus routes in the area. This activation strategy would require more intensive community outreach and

traffic control planning compared to the low scale strategy due to the current arterial nature and lack of existing activity hubs like parks and schools.

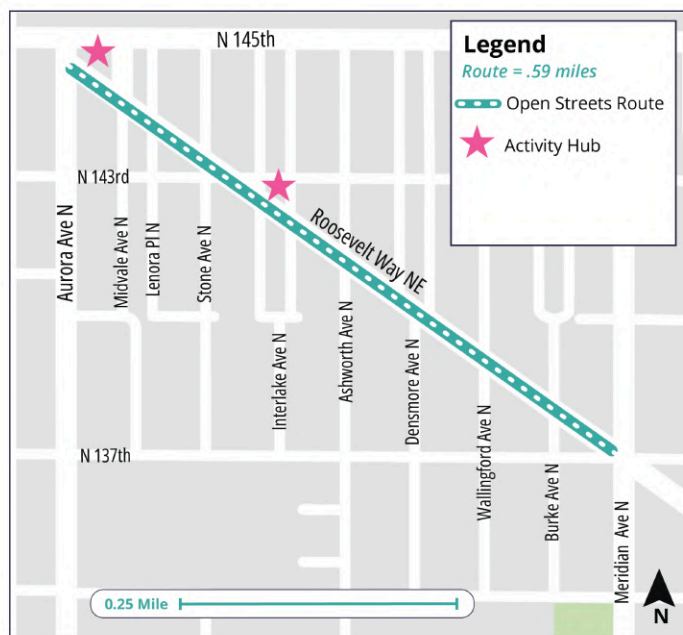


Figure 5-7. Roosevelt Wy NE Open Streets Route.



Figure 5-8. Sample Bitter Lake Open Streets Poster.

Similar to the low scale activation strategy, the main goal of this proposal is to bring the neighborhood together, providing low impact programming to the community. This route is in a neighborhood area and mainly consists of residential housing, lending to a neighborhood oriented event highlighting community and connectivity. Again, we imagine that this event could have a variety of low-effort activities that are quick and easy to set up. Local organizations and businesses on and around Aurora Ave N could join or support the event by tabling, sponsoring, or bringing an activity. This route could even extend East creating a connection between Aurora Ave N and the new Pinehurst Link Light Rail Station slated to open this year. This route would serve as the Bitter Lake community SEA-Clovía event.

**High Scale Activation Strategy: Aurora Ave N**

The high scale activation strategy is the biggest and most intense route strategy, proposing a ciclovía on Aurora Ave N between Green Lake and Aurora Shopping Center. The route spans 3.5 miles and unifies three urban centers, drawing attention to the businesses and art directly on Aurora Ave N.

This strategy specifically targets Aurora Ave N because of its major arterial nature, aiming to close the corridor to car traffic while avoiding any disruptions to bus routes in the area. This activation strategy would require the most intense community outreach and engagement due to the sensitive nature of closing a major corridor and impacting business, car travel, and freight. Businesses and residents would need to be consulted and engaged, and an extensive traffic control plan would need to be prepared to ensure rerouting and adequate care crossing points along the route.

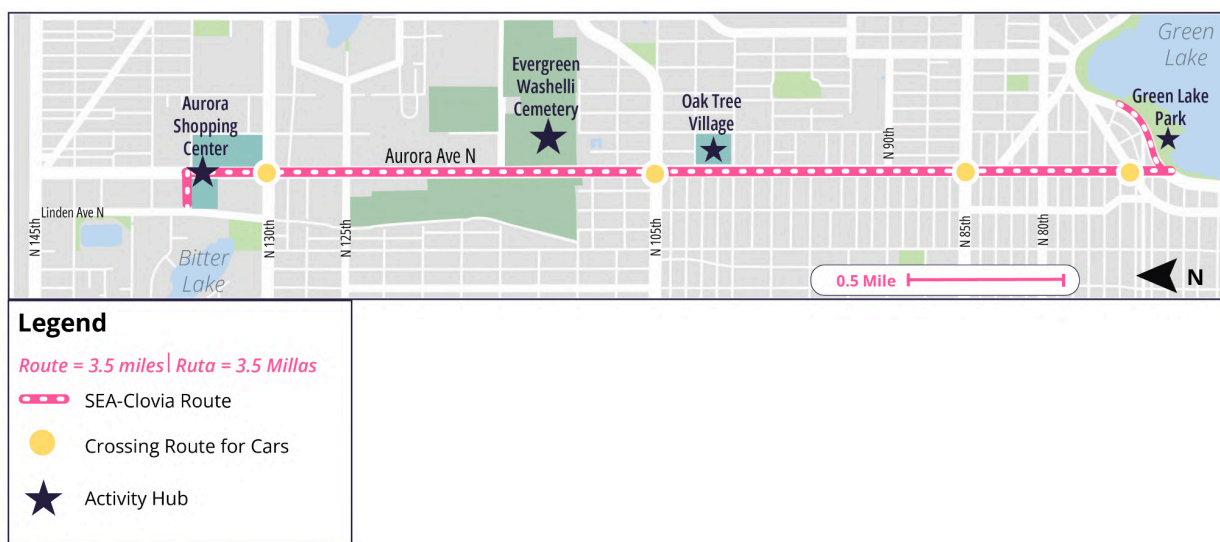


Figure 5-9. Aurora Ave N SEA-Clovía Route.

The main goal of this proposal is to bring neighborhoods together, uplift small businesses and businesses in the area, and highlight the diverse and unique cultures and residents in North Aurora. This high impact programming would greatly benefit a community that currently lacks programming and events at this scale that aim to bring together neighbors and non-residents for a Sunday of outdoor fun. This route is both residential and commercial and has many connections to surrounding neighborhoods, making it a central location for such an event. An open streets event at this scale would have a variety of low- to high-effort activities and programming along the route, ranging from dance classes to food trucks to tabling. For example, the Aurora Shopping Center contains both LA Fitness and Planet Fitness gyms that could provide fitness classes. Local organizations, businesses, and residents alike would be invited to come together to celebrate each other and North Aurora. Ultimately, this SEA-Clovvia would serve as a large-scale community SEA-Clovvia for North Seattle, connecting Green Lake, Aurora-Licton Springs, and Bitter Lake communities together.



*Figure 5-10. Student Render of North Aurora SEA-Clovvia.*

Using SDOT's road segment data available on Seattle Open Data, we extracted vehicle counts across four main road segments in the study area that overlap with the high scale activation strategy

- N 90th St- N 91st St

- N 117th St - N 125th St
- N 130th St - N 135th St
- N 141 St - N 143rd St

Appendix Figures A-5 and A-6 show charts displaying the data.

Data between N 90th St- N 91st St was counted on March 30, 2025 and data between N 117th St- N 143rd St are from counts on March 22, 2026. Data was cleaned to reflect counts on Sundays from 8AM- 4PM, the relative time SEA-Clovia would be held. On average, vehicle counts NB were 692 while average vehicle counts SB were 629. Based on these findings Sundays present lower vehicle counts compared to weekly averages. Due to time constraints, we cannot conclude that these vehicle volumes can be sufficiently rerouted, but with further research, the City could find that there are reasonable alternative major arterials and routes in the area that have the capacity. We hope this data can be used as a starting point to inform SDOT and OPCD.



Figure 5-11. Sample North Aurora SEA-Clovia Poster.

## C. Community Engagement

During the two North Aurora Initiative Community Connections Pop-Up Parties, we engaged a wide variety of community members to see what they thought about SEA-Clovia. Generally, the community had mixed opinions about the high scale activation route on Aurora Ave N but feedback leaned positive. Reservations were mainly centered around the potential of losing **access** to Aurora Ave N, even if it was temporary. Some community members reasoned that the road serves as an important north/south connection for those living in Ballard and around the area who do not want to use I-5. More specifically, elderly folks were opposed to this option but were **open** to the low and medium scale activation strategies centered in neighborhoods and were more like open streets events than ciclovías.

Some negative feedback was received due to the rendering inaccurately depicting our vision for SEA-Clovia. It looked too permanent, but with clarification, the event idea was received well. Reactions during the Bitter Lake engagement event were more positive compared to the event in Aurora-Licton Springs. Regardless of perceptions about SEA-Clovia specifically, conversations with community members highlighted their deep interest and **desire to have more events and festivals** in North Aurora.

## D. Recommendations

Based on the literature review, meetings with case study cities, and community feedback, we have developed short-term and long-term recommendations for the City of Seattle to seriously consider presently and in the future.

### *Short-Term Recommendations*

- Incorporate programming and events into **community engagement** to better understand where the community identifies gaps and opportunities.
- Coordinate a meeting with SPD, Aurora Commons, and other local community outreach organizations to discuss strategies for fostering a safer community environment that would be conducive for events and programming.
- Develop a working relationship with Cascadia Bicycle Club to support **small scale open streets events** in North Seattle.
- Forge stronger **relationships** and **partnerships** with cultural groups, businesses, and nonprofits that highlight the **diversity** of identities and perspectives in North Aurora.
  - Leverage their community connections and visions in event programming and planning.

- Identify Citywide or Statewide grant opportunities that the City could pursue to support events and programming being put on by community organizers.
  - Programming could become annual and the City could eventually be a partner or sponsor.
- Identify specific **neighborhoods and cultural groups** in North Aurora that would benefit from cultural programming and support.
  - This could turn into events similar to the Thai Festival, a cultural event already taking place at North Seattle College

### ***Long-Term Recommendations***

- Pursue community **programming** as a major goal in placemaking. Regardless of whether it is a SEA-clovia or similar activation program, partnering with **cultural groups** and **non-profits** to promote events and activities in the area would greatly benefit resident's sense of community and belonging. Some Seattle-based organizations to consider:
  - Somos Mujeres Latinas
  - Latino Community Fund of Washington
  - Casa Latina
  - TAWA Thai Association of Washington State
  - Cascadia Bicycle Club
  - Aurora REImagine Coalition
  - Seattle Neighborhood Greenways
  - Youth organizations (activation/ activities) such as North Seattle Youth Sports, Boys and Girls Club, Friends of Ingraham, Friends of Robert Eagle Staff Middle School
- Identify local, state, or federal **grants** and **funding sources** to ensure that local programming and events is securely funded annually in North Seattle.
- Identify streets in North Aurora that could become **festival streets** or **block party/play streets**.
  - There is a lack of these street types in North Seattle, leaving it up to community members to figure out alternative ways of hosting events. Doing this for the community would make programming and events easier and more streamlined.

## 6: PLACEMAKING ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### A. Event Summary

The North Aurora UW student studio group attended two in-person engagement events in the study area. The group split into two topic areas, Mobility and Placemaking, with each having their own table. The Placemaking table focused on sharing project proposals with the overall goal of activating underutilized spaces in the corridor and helping community members envision their neighborhood through activations and gathering spaces. The project proposals we shared with the community were the North Aurora Walking Tour, Building Roots at Oak Tree Village, Washelli Cemetery Gathering Space, Green Alleys and Streets Concept, and SEA-Clovia.

#### Event Details

	Licton Springs	Bitter Lake
<b>LOCATION</b>	Robert Eagle Staff Middle School	Bitter Lake Community Center
<b>ADDRESS</b>	1330 N 90Th St Seattle, WA 98103	13035 Linden Ave N Seattle, WA 98133
<b>DATE</b>	Wednesday, May 27, 2026	Saturday, June 6, 2026
<b>TIME</b>	5 PM–7:30 PM	11 AM–1:30 PM
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Middle schoolers, families, neighbors	Families, children, community members



Figure 6-1: Licton Springs event at Robert Eagle Staff Middle School.

To measure the engagement, we used clicker counters. We logged every interaction (conversations, looking at display boards, participating in activities) between the student group and eventgoers. The Licton Springs event had 96 interactions, and the Bitter Lake event had 24 interactions with eventgoers.

Our engagement approach was to lead with curiosity, asking community members what they think makes their neighborhoods unique, what they value, and what they want to see in the future. The guiding questions we had for engagement were:

- What makes you want to live and stay in your neighborhood?
- What makes your neighborhood/Aurora unique to you?
- What do you want to see preserved and enhanced in your neighborhood?
- What do you think about our project proposals? Do you have other ideas; spaces/events you want to see in Aurora?

## B. Activities

The placemaking community engagement activities we shared were designed to be intuitive, interactive, and easy to document.

### **Walking Tour Map**

The Walking Tour Map activity is an extension of the Walking Tour project proposal. Participants were encouraged to discuss the locations we identified on the map that we consider landmarks based on our research. We provided sticky notes and markers for people to label locations in the map that we missed and they think are worth including in a prospective walking tour. For more details about the project, see Project 1: North Aurora Walking Tour. See Appendix Figures A-2 to A-4 for responses from participants.

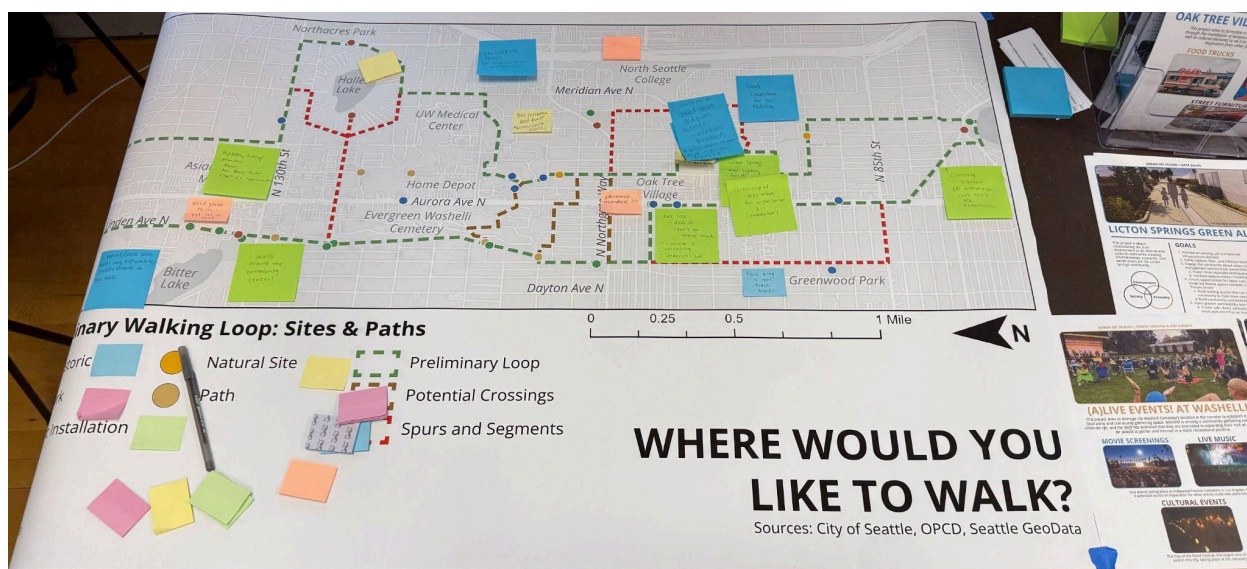


Figure 6-2: Walking Tour Map activity at the end of the Bitter Lake event on Saturday, June 6, 2026.

### **Build Your Own Space**

In this activity, participants are given the opportunity to design an underutilized public space in their neighborhood using cutouts of outdoor furniture that are easy to install and remove and activities. Each event had a different public space they could decorate. The

underutilized spaces we identified in our research were Oak Tree Village by AMC and Washelli Cemetery. The Licton Springs event used Oak Tree Village by AMC, and the Bitter Lake event used Washelli Cemetery. Events were assigned spaces based on their proximity to these locations.



Figure 6-3: A completed *Build Your Own Public Space* activity during the Licton Springs event on May 27, 2026.

The format of the events and the activity made it challenging to document each interaction separately, as participants would add to an existing board rather than start from an empty one. The most frequently added furniture was: picnic tables, street lights, basketball courts, playgrounds, and benches. We received additional comments and ideas on sticky notes: ping-pong tables, tables with chess or mahjong and a big playground.

### C. Engagement Conclusion

An overwhelming majority of community members were excited that we identified underutilized spaces in the community that can be activated. They were particularly

interested in outdoor pop-up events that gave the community opportunities to gather and feel connected.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY	RECOMMENDATION FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTIONS
<p>The most popular proposal was the Washelli Cemetery Gathering Space because a lot of the folks did not know that there is public access to green space without having “relatives” in the cemetery.</p> <p>Something to note is that people gravitated towards fun taglines like, “(A)Live at Washelli” and “Cemetery for the Living”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with Washelli Cemetery and work towards organizing year-round recurring community events like outdoor cinema, Trick or Treat, Spooky Christmas, Silent New Year’s Eve, etc.</li> <li>• Develop an educational campaign for what green spaces are available for residents in the area.</li> <li>• Work with Washelli Cemetery to see if they have adequate operational capacity for staff if there is additional foot traffic in their property.</li> </ul>
<p>People recognize that Oak Tree Village is an underutilized space that can be turned into a third space for the community. We were surprised at how many residents knew that the property was being leased by Seattle Public Schools to a private company and were disappointed that there has been no perceived action by the City to improve Oak Tree Village.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider an economic analysis to see if Oak Tree Village can continue to be economically viable for the current lease-owner if sections of the open-area space is converted to a gathering space for the public.</li> <li>• Conduct community outreach to gather ideas and feedback from the community on how the Oak Tree Village can be converted to public space and what use they want out of it around 5 to 10 years before the current lease ends.</li> </ul>
<p>Residents expressed safety concerns regarding alley use and interest in more opportunities (and less bureaucratic hoops) for community stewardship of these spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand RainWise in the study area and work with the community on greenspace stewardship.</li> <li>• Provide equitable access to the Department of Neighborhoods Sparks Fund.</li> </ul>

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY	RECOMMENDATION FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTIONS
<p>The most commonly used items in the Build Your Own Public Space activity were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Picnic table / public seating</li> <li>● Play spaces (playground, basketball)</li> <li>● Park pavilion / gazebo</li> <li>● Streetlights</li> </ul> <p>Participants expressed their desire to have places to “play” and hangout while feeling safe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Look at what can be incorporated into the neighborhood from Occidental Park, Hing Hay Park, Pier 58, and Seattle Center. These parks were mentioned many times for their unique playgrounds and permanent fixtures like ping-pong tables.</li> <li>● Have a workshop with families with children and schools on designing their own playground.</li> <li>● Set up temporary outdoor furniture that is easy to transport and remove like slip and slides, picnic tables, large chess pieces, ping-pong tables, benches, etc during the spring-summer season and observe their usage.</li> <li>● Burke Street Play Street was suggested by Aurora Commons as a model for small scale activation</li> </ul>
<p>There is a strong desire among long-time residents and senior citizens on how to make the neighborhoods in North Aurora “their own” while acknowledging the safety issues that have been attributed to the area for generations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use the 1% for Art Fund budget from capital improvement projects to make unique public art that celebrates the diversity and history of North Aurora while enhancing public safety through design by incorporating Crime Prevention through environmental design (CPTED).</li> <li>● Partner with local tribes and organizations like History Link and University of Washington to create wayfinding signs that share the history of the area.</li> </ul>
<p>There are many community groups and organizations that are invested in the North Aurora corridor that spent time listening to our placemaking project concepts. The groups were: Aurora Commons, Greenwood Community Council, Haller Lake Community Club, and Cascade Bicycle Club</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work with these local organizations and identify if their interests align with the community and City vision for the Aurora Initiative.</li> </ul>

## 7: ANTI-DISPLACEMENT STRATEGIES

### A. Background

The City of Seattle published an Anti-Displacement Action Plan in March 2025 that “seeks to measure and address how the City can better support the immediate and individual needs of residents facing economic and physical displacement pressures to move involuntarily,” (City of Seattle, 2025a). The report defines displacement as the involuntary movement of households forced to move for economic or physical reasons, or prevented from moving into a neighborhood because of high rents or home prices. According to the Anti-Displacement Action Plan, there are four types of displacement scenarios (City of Seattle, 2025a).

- **Physical Displacement:** Occurs through eviction, acquisition, rehabilitation or demolition of housing, or when leases expire on rent-restricted housing. Climate impacts can also lead to physical displacement.
- **Economic Displacement:** Occurs when housing becomes less affordable, and residents can no longer afford to stay in their homes. Homeowners can also experience economic displacement, with the rising costs of homeownership like property taxes, maintenance costs, and insurance.
- **Cultural Displacement:** Occurs when residents relocate because their cultural community is moving. Cultural displacement also occurs when ethnic stores or culturally relevant businesses lose their customer base or membership.
- **Commercial Displacement:** Occurs when these pressures affect small businesses, subject to market prices and rental increases.

The report states that the occurrence of these various types of displacement can be accompanied by neighborhood change and gentrification, as defined in the report indicated below (City of Seattle, 2025a):

- **Neighborhood Change:** the changes that occur when a neighborhood experiences a changing economic, ethnic, or racial structure, which can be both positive and negative.
- **Gentrification:** is the transformation of areas home to marginalized groups which include racial, ethnic, or class groups, into areas used by the dominant class or racial or ethnic group. This is usually characterized by increased investments in areas that have seen long-term disinvestment.

## B. Key Findings from Existing Conditions Analysis

**Bitter Lake:** Households living in the north end of Bitter Lake are overwhelmingly renters, and more than half pay more than 30 percent of their income towards housing costs, making them cost-burdened. This indicates a risk of economic and cultural displacement as almost 70% of the neighborhood are persons of color (City of Seattle, 2026). Bitter Lake contains almost twice the share of extremely low-income households (46%) relative to the City of Seattle (25%). These renters are at higher risk for displacement because they spend a greater proportion of their income on housing, and have less money to spend on food, transportation, and other essentials (City of Seattle, 2026).

**Licton Springs:** Licton Springs homeowners face displacement pressures as rapidly increasing home prices signal increasing economic exclusivity for homeownership opportunities in this neighborhood. The Aurora-Licton Springs corridor is home to many small and medium businesses, including family-owned automotive businesses and independently owned motels. These businesses face economic displacement pressures as investment opportunities in Aurora-Licton Springs balance the different needs between legacy businesses and neighborhood development.

## C. Localized Anti-Displacement Strategies

The majority of the following anti-displacement strategies were referenced in the Anti-Displacement Action Plan (City of Seattle, 2025a) and applied to the Seattle Downtown Regional Center Draft Plan through the Anti-Displacement Strategies Report (City of Seattle, 2025b). This report describes various physical and economic anti-displacement strategies that can be applied to the Aurora study area as well. For the purposes of this section, cultural and commercial anti-displacement strategies unique to the Aurora study area will be explored. These strategies are drawn from the appendices from the Downtown Regional Center Draft Plan as well as the Little Saigon Action Plan. This includes "*Envisioning an Indigenous Downtown Seattle*," "*Anti-Displacement Strategies Report*," and the "*Little Saigon Action Plan 2030 Executive Summary*," (Peak Tahoma Solutions, 2025; BAE Urban Economics, 2025; and Friends of Little Saigon, 2022).

### **Cultural and Commercial Anti-Displacement Strategies**

1. Develop an anti-displacement focused working group in anticipation of planned transit and other infrastructure improvements.
  - a. Work with SDOT's Aurora Ave Project Community Advisory Group to create displacement strategies rooted in the community.



- Involve Indigenous/BIPOC folks in the design process, and increase Indigenous and BIPOC representation in the art, built environment, architecture, design, spaces, plants, and landscape of Aurora.
  - E.g. Indigenous Placemaking to create cultural programming.
    - Incorporate cultural history and implement cultural activations in the proposed projects.
    - Indigenous residents in Downtown Seattle stated that areas that felt welcoming to them had seating near bus stops, parks, and plazas in order to promote gathering.
  - Collaborate and partner with existing organizations doing cultural work, like Chief Seattle Club, Seattle Indian Health Board, Aurora Commons, and Densho.
- b. Utilize narrative change strategies that honor the cultural history of Aurora and foster community power for its future.
  - Contribute to a liberatory narrative of Aurora as a unique place with important Seattle history, where residents want to continue building community, play outdoors, and live in their homes. A regressive narrative of Aurora only paints the neighborhood as an unsafe corridor with no solutions for community investment.
  - Utilize walking tours, oral histories, and careful communication about the neighborhood.

#### **D. Placemaking and Anti-Displacement**

Placemaking by itself is not an anti-displacement strategy. However, if paired with cultural, arts, and social programming, it can be. All of the ideas presented expand access to arts, cultural, and social programming that the Aurora community says is lacking in the corridor.

- *Washelli* and *Oak Tree* aim to reimagine existing underutilized spaces as places for gathering and connecting.
- *Green Alleys* and *SeaClovvia* both imagine a community where it's safe and comfortable to walk and roll through.
- The North Aurora Walking Tour aims to highlight the well-known (and lesser-known) cultural and historical assets of the corridor to strengthen connections between the community they live in and the place they live.

### ***Anti-displacement Narrative Change Strategies for Aurora***

Narrative change strategies are social change strategies that aim to reframe entrenched narratives about a place, a group of people, or challenges and opportunities (Frameworks Institute, 2025). Narrative change strategies tell stories that shift perceptions that define cultural norms. They are used to address harmful narratives and ultimately create long-lasting, equitable change. Governments play an important role in shaping public perception of a place, while implementing policies that may cause changes and emotional and physical impacts.

A core concept of narrative change strategies is the ability to identify liberatory narratives versus regressive narratives. For example, a regressive narrative about the Aurora corridor would be: "All neighborhoods must change so displacement on Aurora is inevitable." In contrast, a liberatory narrative would be: "When neighborhoods change, displacement on the Aurora corridor can lead to physical, cultural, and economic loss."

Narrative change strategies are important to consider especially in regards to changes coming to Aurora and the safety issues that persist. During the Licton Springs Pop-in Party engagement event on May 27, 2026, some residents expressed skepticism about whether the ideas our team presented would address the safety challenges they face. Some of the questions prompted are as follows: *How does this public plaza ensure safety and legal activities? I think this could be a good idea, but how do I even get there when I can't walk around safely?* These strategies are a way to acknowledge the lived experiences and valid perceptions of reality and link them to placemaking strategies that aim to contribute to a more connected and livable Aurora. Consider identifying narrative change strategies through project proposals, while addressing the current narrative that the community aims to challenge.

### ***Examples of Narrative Change Strategies***

- Anti-Displacement Comics: visual narratives (comic-based stories) about urban displacement and anti-displacement focused on people from the neighborhood and their stories (Anti-Displacement Studio, 2023).
- Placemaking Histories: archival research on Aurora placemaking histories to inform vacant parcels and underutilizes spaces that take control of planning and development at the neighborhood/local scale (Anti-Displacement Studio, 2023).

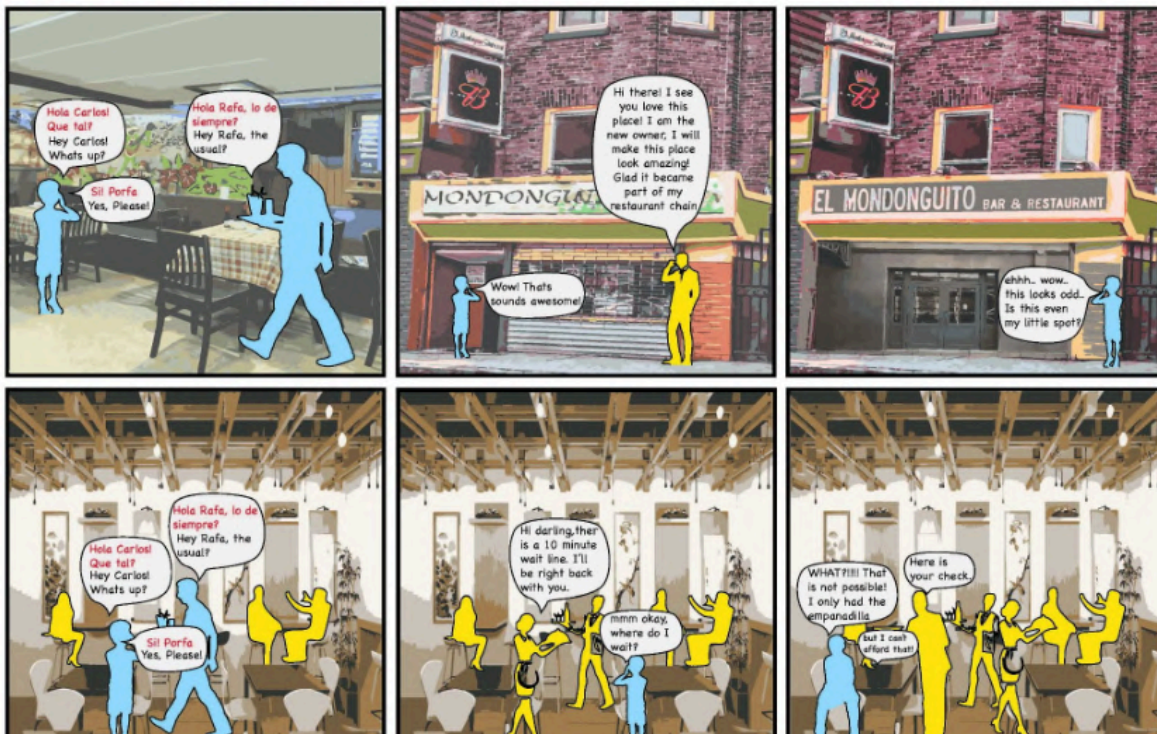


Figure 7-1: NE University's Anti-Displacement Studio created visual graphics and comics for coalition building purposes, titled "How I Lost My Local Spot."



Figure 7-2: NE University's Anti-Displacement Studio conducted archival research to map historic health clinics in one neighborhood.

## D. Community Engagement

The Greenlining Institute is a public policy, research, and advocacy organization based in Oakland, CA. The organization developed an engagement toolkit to guide and empower Oakland communities to build a collective vision for preventing economic, cultural, and physical displacement in their neighborhoods (The Greenlining Institute, 2019). As Oakland’s racial composition is comparable to that of some neighborhoods along Aurora (like Bitterlake), this toolkit has the potential to be applied similarly to engage and empower Aurora communities.

### **Development without Displacement Engagement Toolkit**

This toolkit would be best utilized in a workshop setting. This activity is meant to simulate the process of working with neighbors and community activists on collectively deciding how to strategize against displacement in their own neighborhood, which includes the displacement of residents, small businesses and cultural institutions on frontline communities. This activity taps into the community sentiment about displacement strategies of various difficulties.

### **Choose 9 policies total**

- Easy policies - at least 2
- Medium policies - max 7
- Hard policies - max 2

### **Place on board**

Sort policies by timeframe and difficulty. One example is shown below.

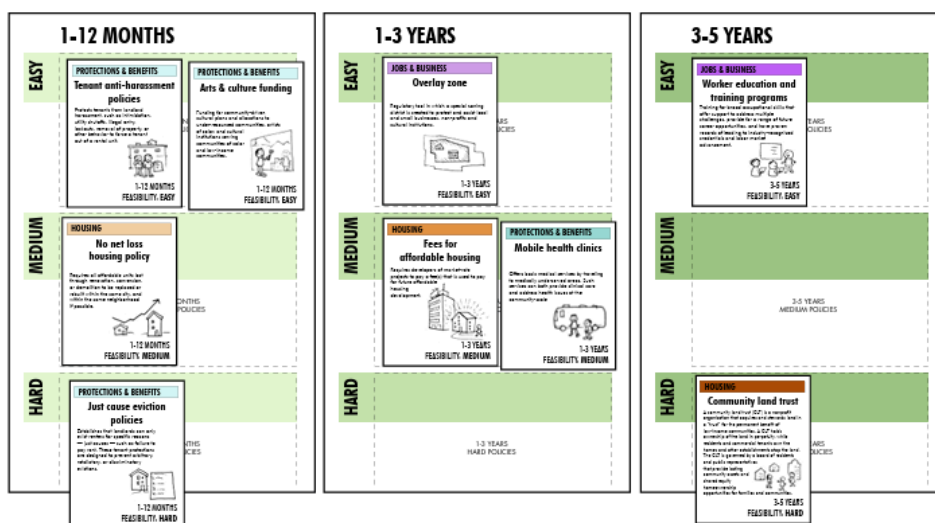


Figure 7-3: The Greenlining Institute created an anti-displacement engagement activity focused on collective action and decision-making.

### **Engagement Events at Licton Springs and Bitter Lake**

Before the event, we thought of a few future-oriented guiding questions intended to tap into the pulse of placemaking concepts and anti-displacement strategies:

- *What elements of these activations (or other ideas) would help you build community here for the long term?*
- *What do these images of an imagined Aurora bring up for you?*
- *What is something that culturally roots you here in Aurora currently?*
- *What elements of these ideas are culturally revitalizing for you? Something that could sustain and steward you in this community?*

We intended to frame these questions within our work on cultural displacement strategies. However, as community engagement always surprises, the strategy did not go quite as planned. There was little time to dive deeper into these questions and the participants moved on quickly. We instead focused on the elements of the renderings that people were drawn to, and why.

One notable theme concerns a question about long-term investment. When one community member was asked whether they see themselves in the neighborhood long-term, they answered, "Certainly." They purchased a property near to Robert Eagle, and want to see more mobility connections and walkable infrastructure. Another community member answered differently: they were unsure. They said their residency depended on safety factors, community improvement initiatives, and also, walkability improvements.

### **Future Engagement**

In our research on engagement questions, we drew on housing justice engagement strategies to inform staff in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties (Let's Talk Housing, n.d.). An overarching theme was exhibiting caution around this topic that is sensitive and emotional. Asking whether anti-displacement work should be a priority is not productive; instead, focus on the best course of action. Future engagement can ask:

1. Who are we excluding?
  - a. In order to include, planners must know who and how we are excluding.
2. What forms of displacement are you seeing in your community?
3. What factors do you think are contributing the most to the displacement your community is seeing?
4. How is displacement affecting you, the people you know and our community overall?
5. How is this neighborhood changing for you, the people you know, or your community overall?

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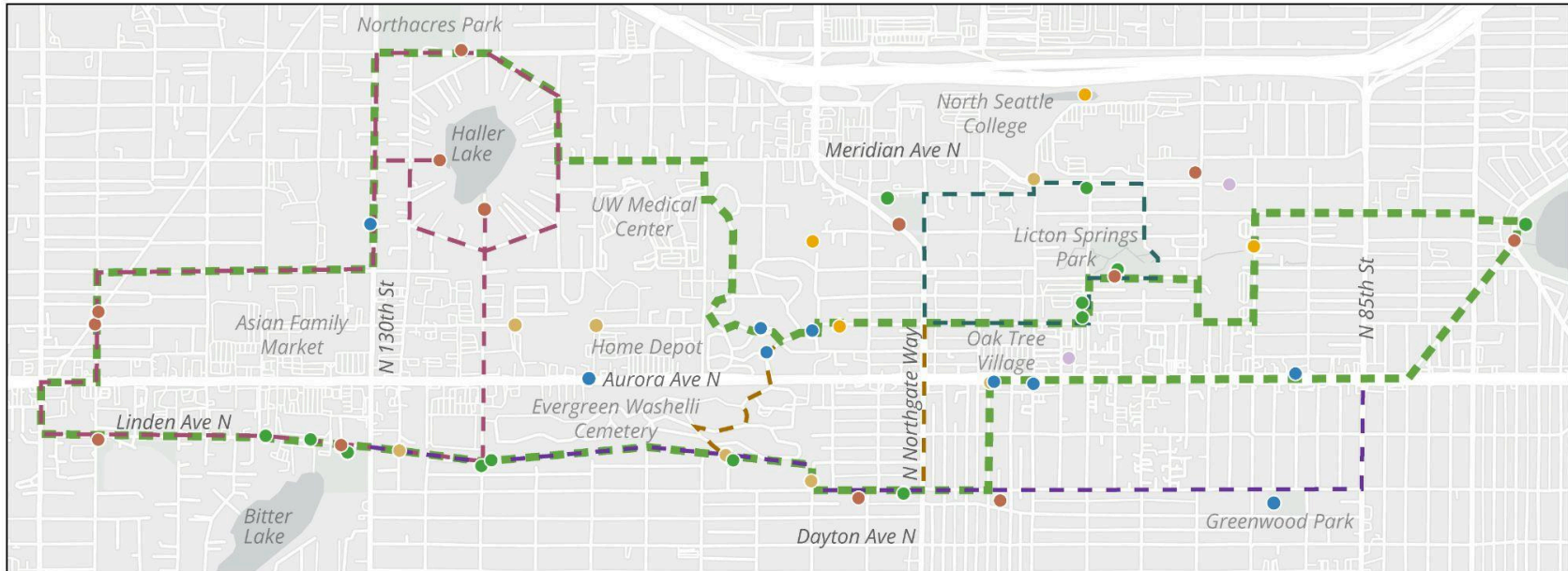
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# APPENDIX

Figure A-1: North Aurora Walking Loop Final Map.



## North Aurora Walking Loop: Sites & Paths

- |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  Historic Site    |  Natural Site     |  Walking Loop (9.2 miles)           |  Interurban Spur (2.54 miles) |
|  Park             |  Path             |  Glacial Lake Circuit (4.02* miles) |  Potential Crossings          |
|  Art Installation |  Community Venues |  Parks Circuit (1.68 miles)         |  |

Scale: 1:20,000

\*Distance does not include path segment north of Haller Lake or dead ends.  
Sources: City of Seattle, OPCD, Seattle GeoData

Figure A-2: Photograph of notes of community engagement responses and conversations (1)

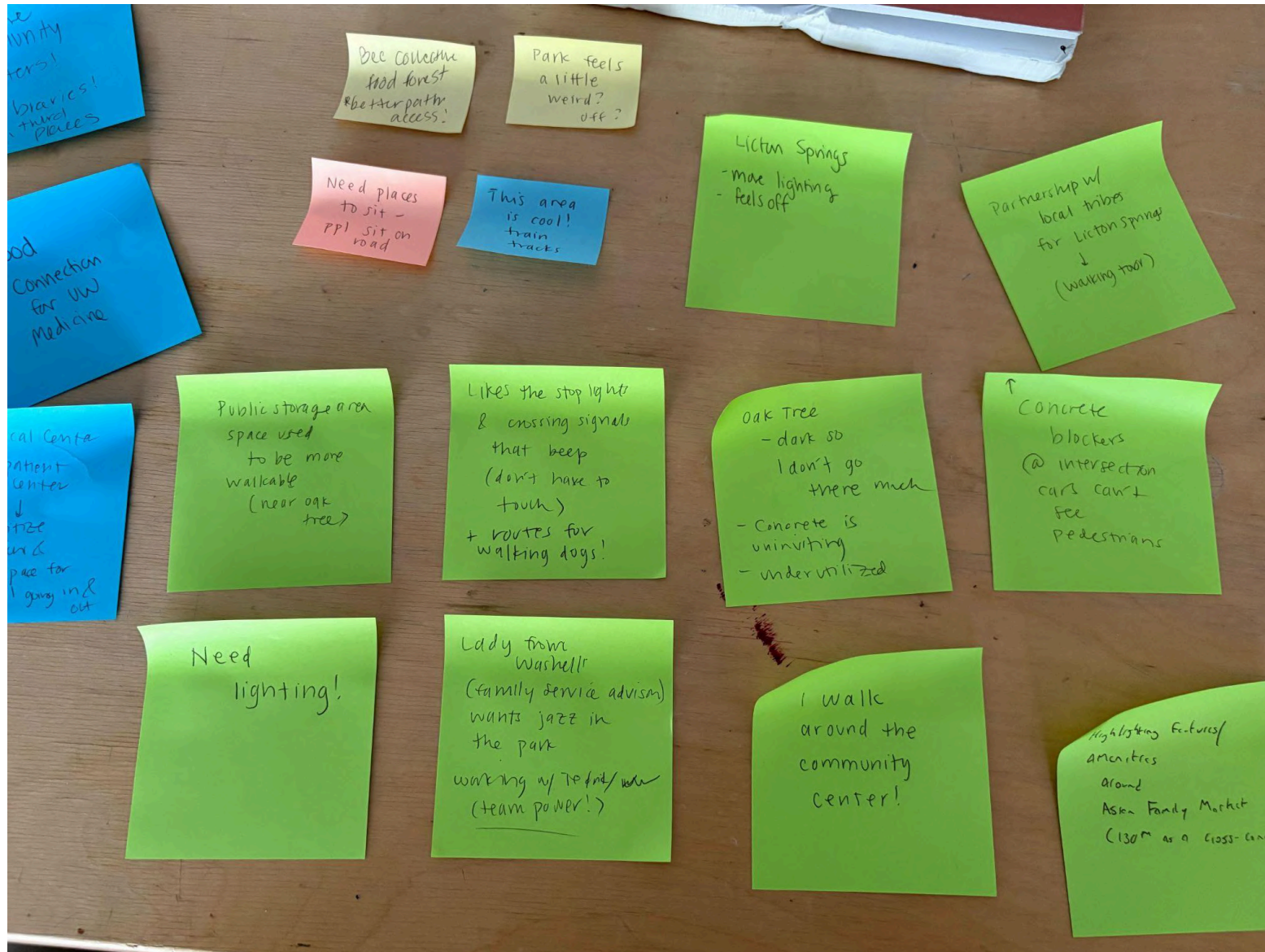


Figure A-3: Photograph of notes of community engagement responses and conversations (2)

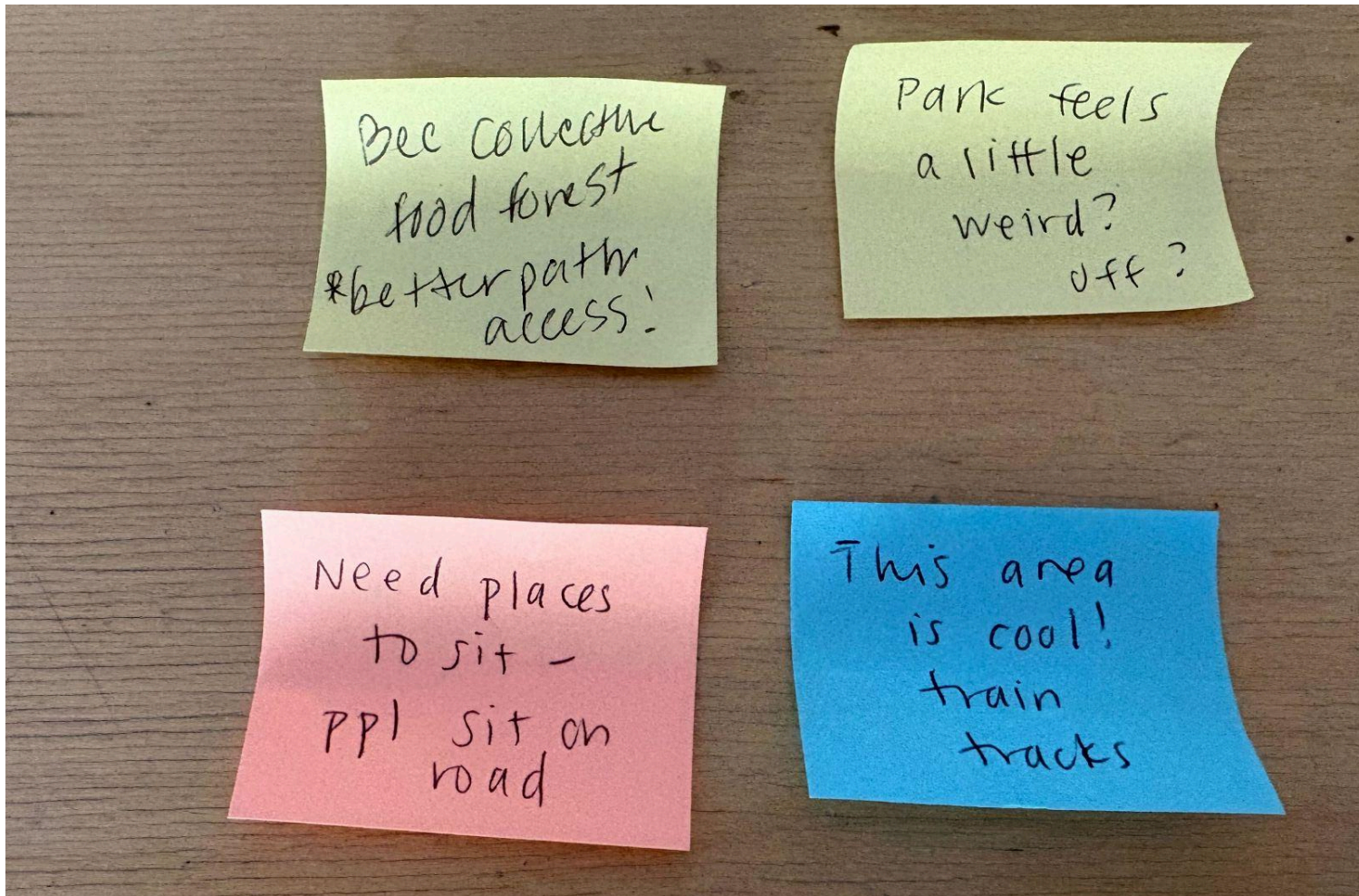
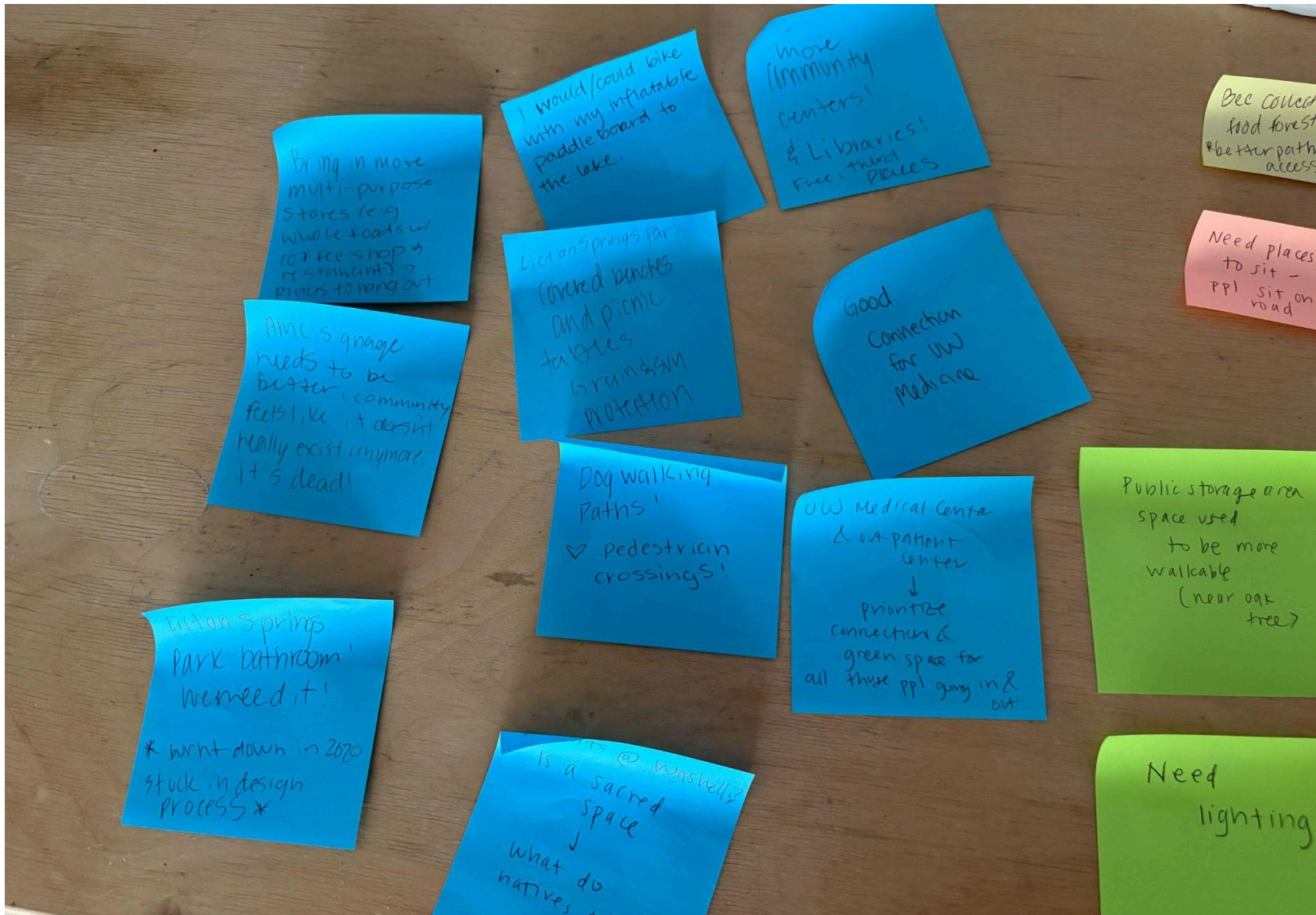


Figure A-4: Photograph of notes of community engagement responses and conversations (3)



<b>Table A-1. Case Study Cities Events Overview</b>			
	<b><i>Eugene Sunday Streets</i></b>	<b><i>CicLAvia</i></b>	<b><i>Open Streets Pittsburgh</i></b>
<b>Years</b>	2011-2019	2010-Present	2015-Present
<b>City Effort</b>	Main leader/organizer	Important partner	Critical partner
<b>Non-Profit Effort</b>	Important partnerships	Main leader/organizer	Organizer and event producer
<b>Funding</b>	State & Federal grants + allocated transportation programming funding  Extremely sensitive, lost during pandemic	Avg. Event Cost: \$500,000-\$700,000  Grants from different cities in LA county  Very sensitive, events dependent on city support and participation	Significant funding from corporate sponsorships alongside foundation support
<b>Time of Year</b>	Summer	Year-round	Summer
<b>Avg. Time</b>	Sundays - 4 hours (12pm-4pm)	Sundays - 7 hours (9am-4pm)	Sundays - 4 hours (10am-2pm)
<b>Avg. Length</b>	~2-3 miles	~3 to 6 miles	~2 to 3 miles
<b>Staffing</b>	Largest cost including events staff, traffic control, and year-round planning for the summer	Big cost, mostly made up of non-profit and city staff. Staff is assigned along the route and in	Largest single cost including events staff, communications, and executive leadership time

		critical roles  Additional costs stem from public safety (e.g. police presence)	
<b>Volunteers</b>	Important, used to fill in gaps from staffing for non-critical roles	No volunteers in critical roles  Mostly used for booths and car crossings  Assigned groups and shifts	Important, used to fill in gaps from staffing for non-critical roles  Important for day-of operations
<b>Foot Traffic &amp; Attendance</b>	4,000 in 2019, short of the goal of 10,000	Difficult to track due to lack of start/end  Low/short route = 5,000-10,000  Bigger route = 20,000-60,000  More popular routes/connected to transit = higher participation  Cameras to count people/collect data: avg speed of travel and avg amount of time	7-8,000 on a rainy day to well over 10,000 participants
<b>Things to consider</b>	Highly recommended finding a nonprofit or local bike club/organization to spearhead the effort!  Plan ahead! Neighborhood outreach	Event Insurance \$\$\$!  Big emphasis on opening major routes and arterials, not neighborhood streets  Connect people to communities and	Intentionally route the event through diverse neighborhoods  Center these neighborhoods in the event and in outreach  Collaborate with and program

	<p>including social media, mailers, flyers, etc. is time consuming and can add up \$\$</p> <p>Leverage Safe Routes to School</p>	<p>areas they may not have thought of visiting, especially by bike, bus, or walking</p> <p>Forge strong relationships with city departments, local businesses, and neighborhoods to ensure collaboration and programming is smooth and inclusive!</p>	<p>cultural performances, food vendors, and community organizations that reflect those communities</p> <p>Ensure the event is free and open to everyone!</p>
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Figure A-5. Aurora Ave N - NB Vehicle Counts on Sundays, 8am-4pm, 2025-2026. (Seattle Open Data, 2026)

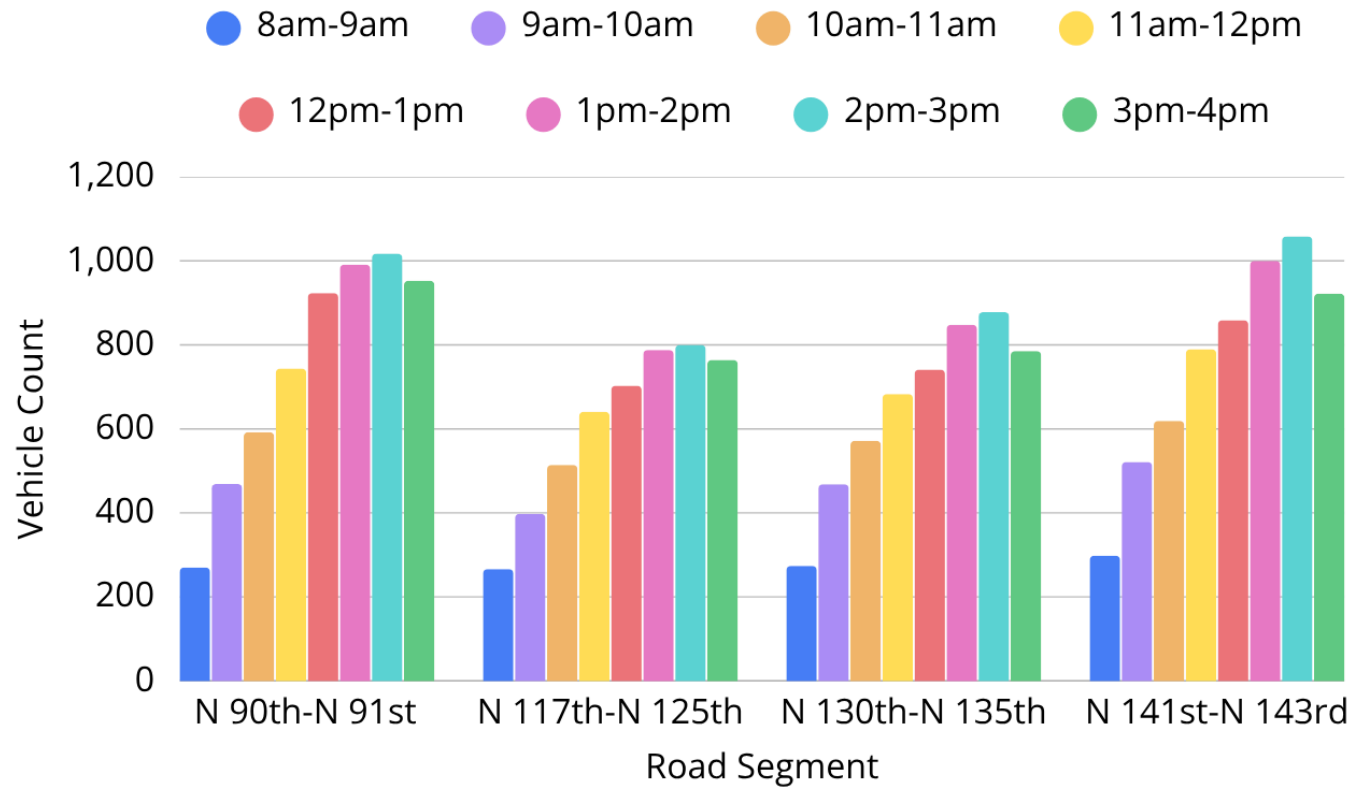


Figure A-6. Aurora Ave N - SB Vehicle Counts on Sundays, 8am-4pm, 2025-2026. (Seattle Open Data, 2026)

