



**Annual Report
2017**



LURN is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to bringing people together to design, build, and promote sustainable communities that allow everyone to live their greatest potential.

Many say that the journey is just as important as the goal. But, the act of building and the manner in which you do it, can be the goal itself.

LURN is a fast-paced environment, and often times we catch ourselves too focused on executing on our initiatives, hitting goals, and moving on to the next task at hand. But just as important as meeting our benchmarks is reflecting on HOW we are achieving those goals.

Coalitions. Thoughtful partnerships. Respect. Communication. Learning.

This year, we learned and grew a lot. We expanded our initiatives and our presence, but we also grew as professionals. We became a stronger team by constantly looking at not only how we can improve the work we're doing, but how can we treat each other with more respect and help each other to be better prepared for what is in front of us.

This learning even permeated into our annual board and staff retreat, where we met for a day and a half to take a fresh look at who we are, what we are doing, and how we can refine our identity and our work to better serve low-income communities in Los Angeles.

In this retreat, we realized that just 12 months before there was so much uncertainty. Our country was undergoing a dramatic shift in leadership, we were struck by the senseless killings at places like the Pulse night club in Miami or the highway in Minnesota (#philandocastile). We were concerned about the growing wave of gentrification in Los Angeles and the growing chasm of income inequality. We were bracing ourselves for 2017. We didn't know what to expect. But guess what?

We're still here.

And while some level of uncertainty (or a lot!) still exists, we learned, we hunkered down, and got to work with our partners. We deployed capital to entrepreneurs, we organized neighborhood markets together to address food access issues, we began the process of decriminalizing street vending, and more.

We hope that this annual report will give you a snapshot of the goals we achieved in 2017, and that you get the sense that behind these accomplishments is a dynamic team that is still reflecting, learning, growing, and caring deeply about the communities we serve.

Enjoy!

Alejandra, Azusena, Luis, Natalie, and Rudy
The LURN Team

Team

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LURN Labs

LURN Labs is the idea-generating and advocacy division of our organization. At LURN, we recognize that sometimes our systems are not working for the most vulnerable in our community, and we have to work together to change them. To this end, LURN advocates for policies that support strong, sustainable communities for the residents that live in them. To date, much of our advocacy work has focused on economic opportunity, especially to support low-income micro-entrepreneurs.



THE LA STREET VENDOR CAMPAIGN

This year marked the 4th anniversary since the motion to legalize street vending was introduced in Los Angeles City Council. It's been a long, frustrating road. During this journey, we've fortified relationships with the amazing organizations who are part of the LA Street Vendor Campaign, and we've recommitted ourselves time and time again to making sure we did not give up the struggle to create a citywide street vendor program. After the election in November of 2016, we saw a shift in interest towards street vending policy, and in February of this year, the LA Street Vendor Campaign celebrated the beginning of the "decriminalization" of street vending in Los Angeles.

But, street vending is still illegal. For the rest of the year, we advocated at City Hall to complete the decriminalization of street vending AND pressed for a proposal to establish a permit system. In November of this year, a joint committee of the City Council voted to recommend that the City Attorney draft an ordinance based on the most substantive proposal to legalize street vending to date. While this proposal is fraught with issues, we and our partners in the Campaign are eager to work towards a better one.



FREE LOTS ANGELES

This year, we continued our work with Free Lots Angeles - a coalition of organizations working to activate vacant lots all across the City into community-serving spaces for its residents. We dedicated much of our time to working on how our demonstration projects from years past could inform policy. As a result of our coalition's research, we developed a concept that would invite residents to "adopt" vacant, city-owned lots. The latter half of 2017 was spent working with the Mayor's office to identify city-owned lots that fit the program's parameters and building out a budget for our concept. We are hopeful that in 2018, our proposal will be reviewed and adopted in City Council.

Events & Convenings

Our events have become important spaces for us to convene a cross-section of leaders who are interested in making their communities better places to live.



PLANNING AND LAND-USE STRATEGIES SUMMIT (PLUS²)

This year, we hosted our 5th annual **Planning and Land-Use Strategies Summit (PLUS²)** with the theme “Healing the City.” For us, health and healing is an intersectional concept, one that must consider not only the state of our medical institutions to treat illnesses and how they care for patients, but also the types of jobs available in our communities, the development of our housing and its affordability, and even the design of our streets and parks. A healthy city is one where all of these factors are conspiring to help residents live their greatest potential. At PLUS² this year, over 350 attendees came to listen to 13 speakers from Los Angeles and all over the country (and even Mexico) who shared how their work contributes to healing communities and its residents. We hosted talks from notable speakers like Niki Okuk with her talk, “Capitalism is Making Us Sick,” and the astrologer Chani Nicholas, “Who Gets to Heal?” It was our most successful PLUS² to date, and we were thankful that it was able to add some value to the work of many of our partners.



SPEEDLURNING

Earlier this year, we resurrected one of our old event formats – **SpeedLURNing**. The event is a play on “speed dating” but instead of connecting strangers to talk about themselves, we assign attendees to groups where they can discuss different elements of our topic for the evening. At this year’s SpeedLURNing, we discussed property ownership and ways in which policies could be reimaged to support those most vulnerable of displacement.



SUMMER NIGHTS & CITY STARS

Our summer event, **Summer Nights & City Stars** hosted over 270 leaders and community development practitioners in Los Angeles. This year we honored three important leaders who don’t always get the lime light they deserve. Congratulations, again, to Luis Rivera (Mayor’s Office), Shmel Graham, (Mayor’s Office), and Kevin Ocubillo (Councilmember Huizar’s Office)!



HOLIDAY PARTY & MARKETPLACE

Our last event of the year was our first ever, **Holiday Party & Marketplace**, a mash-up of our previous artist marketplaces and our annual holiday party. To celebrate the year’s accomplishments, we hosted a gathering with tacos from our Semi’a Fund borrower, Zingo Tacos, craft cocktails, and 10 local



entrepreneurs who set up small stations to sell their hand-made products. For those who came, we hope you had a good time and left with not only a full stomach and good conversation, but also some unique gifts.

In addition to our formal events, LURN also hosted other organizations throughout the year for workshops, presentations, and other events including students from Oslo, Social Enterprise Alliance, and more!



KNOW YOUR CITY PODCAST

This year, we launched our very own podcast - [KNOW YOUR CITY](#). The goal of our podcast is to feature leaders who are helping to make our city a better place to live. Our hope is that our listeners will learn a bit about their city, but also the background and motivations of the important influencers who are shaping it. Thus far, we've featured mark! Lopez of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Jorge Madrid from Environmental Defense Fund, Clare Fox from the LA Food Policy Council, Romel Pascual and Tafari Bayne of CicLAvia, and Maria Elena Durazo. You can find us on [Soundcloud](#), [Tunein](#), or [iTunes](#).



EASTSIDE SOL

This year, we continued our work as part of **Eastside Sol**, a coalition of organizations who are committed to ensuring that low-income neighborhoods like Boyle Heights and East LA participate in the "green economy." In 2017, we produced our 3rd annual event, hosting over 500 local residents who learned about alternative energy resources while listening to live music and participating in interactive art workshops and education sessions.

Because California's transportation causes 40 percent of the state's air pollution every year, this year's Eastside Sol focused on zero-emission vehicles and their environmental, health, and economic benefits. Through Eastside Sol, 150 low-income residents learned about financial incentives and rebates to make these cars more affordable. Performers at the event were intentionally selected to represent the intergenerational and inclusive community we want to build, one that honors our history and our future. Classical Mariachis, tribute bands to iconic performers, and a cumbia/rock-and-roll fusion act headlined the event. Eastside Sol also featured QTPOC (queer and trans people of color) as performers and hosts, helping ensure that all community members felt welcomed and represented in our celebration.

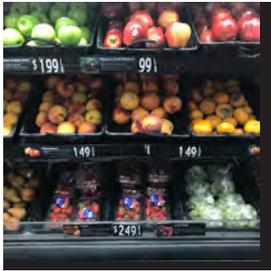






LURN Capital

LURN Capital is the organization’s economic development division that facilitates access to capital for low-income entrepreneurs and helps to bring resources to small businesses in neighborhoods like South Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, MacArthur Park and more. In 2017, LURN reached some important milestones.



COMPRA FOODS

COMPRA Foods (Community Markets Purchasing Real and Affordable Foods) is a produce distribution enterprise operated by LURN in partnership with LA Food Policy Council (LAFPC) and Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM). Every week, we organize the individual produce orders of our member stores, buy produce in bulk, sort orders, and deliver their individual orders directly to their establishment. This year, we were able to grow our COMPRA Foods entrepreneur network to 66 businesses, including mom and pop community markets, liquor stores and even daycare facilities located in low-income food deserts throughout Los Angeles. We distributed over 48,000 pounds of produce to our COMPRA Foods members. With every year that COMPRA Foods grows, we are continuing to address the produce service gap in low-income, food deserts by building the purchasing power of these small, often forgotten, businesses.

Our goal continues to be that COMPRA Foods becomes a sustainable enterprise, that supports small businesses by providing access to affordable and healthy products that can be made available to families in South Central LA, Koreatown, Pico-Union, and Boyle Heights. Towards the end of the year, we finally got close to “breaking even” on our enterprise, and we also began exploring how to diversify our client base to include anchor institutions such as schools and restaurants.



SEMI'A FUND

This year, we completed the deployment of \$150,000 through the Semi'a Fund – a low-interest micro-loan fund that supports entrepreneurs in the informal economy. All of the businesses we support sell healthy food or have begun incorporating healthy options into their business with the support of a loan. Each business that receives a loan from LURN also receives one-on-one business coaching. In addition to providing capital, we also focus on connecting our entrepreneurs with resources to help the growth of their businesses. For example, one of our borrowers, Zingo Tacos, worked with a nutritionist to introduce a vegan friendly option on their menu. Their new jackfruit taco was designed to mirror the flavoring of their traditional dishes of Puebla, Mexico. Another entrepreneur, Merced, who is the founder of Sammy's Elotes y Más, received

technical assistance from our team to develop branding and marketing materials that helped launch her catering business.

The fund was capitalized by a loan from the FreshWorks Fund, a statewide program that provides healthy food financing. With our capital deployed, we began the work of recapitalizing our fund so we can support more entrepreneurs. Our team spoke at conferences, and met with financial institutions and foundations, all in an effort to find investors who saw the value of supporting the entrepreneurs we work with.

We ended the year with \$250,000 in loan commitments, so we expect 2018 to be the year of expansion for the Semi'a Fund.



(RE)STORE FUND

In 2017, we completed two micro-investments through our (Re)store Fund. It was a long time coming! The (Re)store Fund is a micro-equity program that offers equity investments to entrepreneurs in low-income neighborhoods. The (Re)store Fund provides patient capital in exchange for a minority share in the business.

This year, we were intent on making sure we closed on a couple of deals. We worked closely with a team of attorneys who helped us develop a strong process for laying out an equity deal with an entrepreneur, creating term sheets, operating agreements, contributions agreements and more. We learned a lot! We ended the year completing two equity investments in two food-based businesses. Each of them will be using the capital to expand their enterprises, buying much needed equipment or obtaining permits to get their products in stores.

In addition to supporting these entrepreneurs, we look forward to refining our model and sharing our lessons learned with other mission-oriented lenders and investors who want to support the many entrepreneurs who don't have access to patient capital, but have great ideas.







LURN Advisors

LURN Advisors is LURN's in-house consulting practice that provides research and strategic-planning support to mission-oriented organizations. This year, we continued this work, providing research to a local foundation, expanding our consulting services to provide fee-for-service technical assistance to small businesses, and forging a new partnership with Concerned Capital, a B corporation that is helping companies transition ownership to their employees.





Our Funders

We're so thankful to all those who supported our work this year. We appreciate your investment in our team and our work. Thank you!

APA LA
Beneficial State Bank
California Community Foundation
Capital One
Circle Partners
CIT/OneWest Bank
Citi Community Development
City Labs Boyle Heights
City National Bank
Dickerson Employees
Durfee Foundation
Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco
First 5 LA
Genesis LA
Goldhirsh Foundation
Groundwork Coffee Co.
Kaiser Permanente
LISC

Mercury Public Affairs
Northgate Gonzalez Market
Oscar Mayer Foundation
PG&E
Philz Coffee
Resource Legacy Fund
Roschen Van Cleve Architects
Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation
Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP
SoCal Gas
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Thelma Pearl Howard Foundation
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
US Department of Agriculture (NIFA)
White Memorial Hospital
Whole Foods Market



Our Partners

LURN does little without the support of our partners in the field. We're so grateful for the various community-based organizations that work with us on our initiatives, who supported our events, and took our calls when we had a crazy idea or were simply trying to improve the way our initiatives were working in Los Angeles. Our partners this year include:

Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM)
Calo Youth Build
East LA Community Corporation
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
Environmental Defense Fund
Esperanza Community Housing
From Lot to Spot
Heath & Lejeune
Investing in Place
Koreatown Youth + Community Center (KYCC)
Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)
Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC)
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust (LANLT)
Los Angeles Regional Open Space & Affordable Housing Collaborative (LA ROSAH)
Multicultural Communities for Mobility
National Health Foundation
Public Counsel
Self Help Graphics & Art
Team Friday
T.R.U.S.T. South Los Angeles
Youth Policy Institute (YPI)





Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN) is a nonprofit, community development organization based in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights in Los Angeles. Founded in 2008, LURN's mission is to bring people together to design, build, and promote sustainable communities that allow people to live their greatest potential. LURN works towards this mission in three ways: advocating for thoughtful urban policy, designing and implementing economic development projects that support small businesses, and providing research and program design services to organizations on projects that align with our mission.

Photos by: Jon Endow, Natalie Kamajian, and Rudy Espinoza

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