



## Annual Report 2018





*LURN is a community development organization whose mission is to bring people together to design, build, and promote sustainable communities that allow people to live their greatest potential.*

2018! What a year! For us at LURN, this year was a year of “transitions.” A year that facilitated opportunities for us to think about our organization’s capacity, legacy, and future work, as well as a chance to think about what makes our organization unique and valuable to the field.

Internally, the year was marked by the transitions of several staff members who helped build the organization over the last 5 years. Two team members transitioned to new opportunities that will propel their careers in exciting ways and the other left to pursue a PhD at one of the region’s best universities.

**These internal changes gave us an opportunity to think about how we build an organization for the future based on the foundation we’ve built so far.** By understanding our strengths and identifying our weaknesses, we hired five new associates that we felt would best expand our work: two to build out our Semi’a Micro-Loan Fund and our COMPRA Foods fresh produce distribution enterprise; one to continue and expand our research and advocacy; and two to invest in our internal management practices as well as our development and communications strategies to best tell the story of our work.

While we were invested in developing our team, our Board of Directors also put in work to strategize on how they can thoughtfully support the sustainability of the organization. They spent time working on efforts to develop leadership internally, create space for new voices, and lay the groundwork for an organization that will thrive well into the future.

2018 was a good year for our organization, but also for the work we’ve been advancing for many years with our partners. As you’ll see in this report, we achieved important milestones in two multi-year policy initiatives with our partners, and we positioned our economic development programs for long-term success that we believe will be recognized for their progress and ingenuity in 2019.

In this next year, we will begin celebrating our 10 year anniversary. It’s hard to believe that it all started in the summer of 2008, when a group of new friends began to have regular lunches to talk about how to help the city. Now our organization has an entire team that is dedicated to advancing our mission of bringing people together to support our most vulnerable communities. We expect that in 2019, our work together will delve deeper, reach farther, and expand faster than ever before. With the onset of two new programs LURN will be co-leading, as well as numerous other initiatives we are eagerly awaiting to jump into, 2019 is looking like our best year yet. We’re looking forward to growing with you as we enter this next stage of LURN’s journey.

Enjoy!



Rudy Espinoza  
Executive Director



Azusena Favela  
Director of Programs & Operations

## **Team**

Rudy Espinoza  
*Executive Director*

Maribel Garcia  
*Associate*

Azusena Favela  
*Director of Programs & Operations*

Kateri Gutierrez  
*Associate*

Lyric Kelkar  
*Associate*

Julissa Plascencia  
*Administrative Associate*

Julie Jung  
*Associate*

## **Board of Directors**

Alfred Fraijo Jr.  
*Chairman*  
Partner, Sheppard Mullin  
Richter & Hampton LLP

Ricardo Mireles  
Executive Director, Academia Avance

Ginger Hitzke  
*Treasurer*  
President, Hitzke Development

Ami Pascual Spear  
Regional Director of Philanthropy  
of Southern California, Mercy Housing  
California

Vikram Jadhav  
*Secretary*  
Chief Technology & Engagement Officer  
LA Office of Finance

Bill Roschen, FAIA  
Principal, Roschen Van Cleve  
Architects

Edgar Aguirre

Christopher Goett, MSW  
Senior Program Officer,  
California Community Foundation

Monique Chavoya  
Project Director, Texas Office  
McCormack Baron Salazar

Jorge Garrido  
Vice President,  
Mercury Public Affairs

Jeanmarie Hance  
President, Collaborative Planning

Reagan Maechling  
Development Analyst, Enterprise  
Community Investment, Inc.

Sarah Magana Withers  
Director of Development, WSS





## LURN Labs

LURN Labs is the advocacy and idea-generating division of our organization. At LURN, we recognize that the systems that govern us often leave out some of the most vulnerable in our communities. We need to be intentional about transforming these systems in an equitable way. To accomplish this, LURN advocates for policies that support strong, sustainable, and resilient communities for the residents that live in them. This year we achieved major milestones in our advocacy work including two major policy accomplishments.

## THE LA STREET VENDOR CAMPAIGN

This year, Los Angeles finally legalized street vending!

After 10 years of advocacy with our partners in the LA Street Vendor Campaign, the City Council voted to establish a regulatory system for street vendors in Los Angeles. As many of our supporters know, it was a long fought struggle that culminated in the passing of a policy that isn't perfect, but is a step in the right direction for the thousands of street vendors in the City.

The success this year of the LA Street Vendor Campaign was the result of years of collaborative work. It's hard to imagine the success we've had without the fierce street vendor leaders who organized vendors all over the City, and the tenacity of our allies: the East LA Community Corporation, Public Counsel, and the LA Food Policy Council. The Campaign was also bolstered by many other leaders and organizational allies who were willing to show up to City Council to provide public comment or join us in signing on to letters in support of an equitable system for sidewalk vendors.

While our work in Los Angeles was dear to our heart, this milestone was preceded by another major win: the passage of Senate Bill 946. In February, Senator Ricardo Lara introduced SB 946, a bill that decriminalized street vending in California and asks that cities that would like to regulate vending, also create a legal pathway for vendors to comply. The policy also sets parameters for cities to follow if they'd like to set up a regulatory system; new rules should not be discriminatory in nature, but respond solely to public safety and health concerns. The LA Street Vendor Campaign mobilized to support the bill by reaching out to allies across the State of California to visit legislators and write letters. These efforts resulted in the successful passage of SB 946 in August, which was subsequently signed by Governor Jerry Brown in September, decriminalizing sidewalk vending across the state and allowing for the erasure of any criminal sidewalk vending violations that vendors had received prior to the bill.

These two successes were a major win for the thousands of vendors across California.

---

### **2018 MARKS THE YEAR WE LEGALIZED SIDEWALK VENDING IN LOS ANGELES, AND DECRIMINALIZED IT ACROSS THE STATE.**

---

## LOOKING FORWARD

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

With the legalization at the City level and decriminalization at the State level, there will be a strong need for these programs to be implemented in an equitable way.

### **EDUCATION**

Vendors and allies will need education on the new rules, how to comply, and, in turn, support on gaining compliance with the new laws.





## FREE LOTS ANGELES

Almost five years ago, the Free Lots Angeles collaborative was formed to identify vacant lots in low-income neighborhoods and activate them into spaces that can positively impact the life of existing residents. This year, our collaborative celebrated an important milestone: the passing of a policy that turned our work into a city program.

Free Lots Angeles consists of five partners: Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI), LA Neighborhood Land Trust, Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, TRUST South LA, and LURN. In the early years, our collaborative activated five lots across South Los Angeles through one-day pop-up events. Each activation was preceded by weeks of community outreach and neighborhood meetings to gather information from community members on what they'd like to see in their community. These one day activations served as an opportunity to imagine what is possible when the community has access to the hundreds of vacant lots in Los Angeles that are owned by the City, but our goal was always to establish an initiative that would streamline the process to get access to these lots.

Two years ago, we began working with the Mayor's Office to develop a framework for our efforts that could be embedded in the City. As a result of our collaborative ideation, the "adopt a lot" pilot program was conceived. This program identifies city-owned vacant lots that could not otherwise be used for emergency housing or other city priorities, and places them under the jurisdiction of a master lease that is held by Free Lots Angeles. As part of the program, an established application process allows community members to apply to access and activate lots that are part of the program's master lease. Community members will have an opportunity to choose from a "kit of parts" to build a community garden, benches, gathering spaces and more, and they will have access to the lot for 3-12 months. The goal of this "pilot" is to demonstrate that residents can activate and manage city-owned properties.

This year, the City Council voted to establish this pilot program. Six lots have been selected across Los Angeles, ranging from the San Fernando Valley to South Los Angeles; we're looking forward to working with our partners to engage these communities to activate the lots.

## LOOKING FORWARD

### **ADMINISTRATION**

With the new pilot program established, in 2019 we will focus on administering the program and tracking the progress of what's working best for communities.

### **CONTINUED ADVOCACY**

Through this new program we will gain insights on more city processes, and more importantly, the needs of community members. We will continue to advocate for the neighborhoods we are working with and see to it that what they need is at the forefront of our work.





# Events & Convenings

Our gatherings are spaces for community leaders to come together to learn and forge partnerships that benefit the community development field.



## **PLANNING AND LAND-USE STRATEGIES SUMMIT (PLUS²)**

The annual Planning and Land-Use Strategies Summit (PLUS²) is our biggest event of the year, where we bring together our network of partners and friends to hear from leaders who are working to transform the systems they are operating in. This year, PLUS²'s theme was "The Resilient City: Forging an Inclusive Economy." At this event, we had a keen interest in exploring resilience in cities through a broad lens that included the policies and practices that lifted up communities in the face of tremendous income inequality, rising housing costs, and a changing economy.

At this year's PLUS², we hosted thought provoking talks on the threat of gentrification in our cities, land value capture as a tool to support affordable housing, the development of workforce channels from low-income communities to the tech industry, and how we can support job development opportunities for the trans community that faces some of the most severe unemployment numbers. To read more about this event, check out our [PLUS² report](#).



## **SUMMER NIGHTS & CITY STARS**

Every summer, our organization hosts the Summer Nights & City Stars event that celebrates Los Angeles and a select few "unsung government heroes" who work behind the scenes to build a better city for everyone. This year, we hosted over 200 guests in downtown Los Angeles and we had the privilege of honoring Gabriela Medina from the Office of Councilmember Buscaino, Jenna Hornstock from LA Metro, and Nat Gale from the Department of Transportation.



## **HOLIDAY PARTY & MARKETPLACE**

Our last event of every year is one of our favorites; it's an opportunity for us to bring our partners together to celebrate the year while also supporting local entrepreneurs. This year, we hosted over 150 friends and hosted eight entrepreneurs who provided their handmade crafts.



# KNOW YOUR CITY

## KNOW YOUR CITY PODCAST

LURN's [KNOW YOUR CITY](#) podcast is a fun endeavor that allows us and our partners an opportunity to get to know leaders who are doing amazing things in the region. This year, we released a few more episodes that featured people like Linda Griego, Jacqueline Waggoner, and Maria Cabildo. In the coming year, we're excited to produce more episodes with leaders who are addressing some of the biggest issues our city is facing. You can find us on [Soundcloud](#), [Tunein](#), or [iTunes](#).











## 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 others. With the passing of SB 946 and legalization of sidewalk vending in Los Angeles, there has been a greater demand for these services across the LA region. This year we expanded our operations to accommodate some of the demands, while also branching out our programs to businesses and areas we hadn't serviced before.

## COMPRA FOODS

This year, our produce distribution enterprise, COMPRA Foods continued to expand. In total, we had 61 convenience stores place orders through our initiative with 39 new stores added this year. We also made important internal adjustments to the enterprise that resulted in a drop in food “shrinkage” (the amount of food waste). Most notably, we completed the year by expanding the amount of delivery days for our convenience stores from one day to three days, providing better, more responsive services to our stores so they can sell more healthy produce to low-income communities without access to a mainstream grocery store. In total, we distributed over 83,722 pounds of produce to our COMPRA Foods members, a 75% increase from 2017.

### PROGRAM QUICK FACTS

**83,722 lbs.**

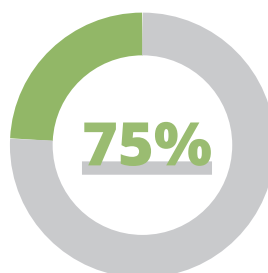
Of Produce Sold This Year

**2X Delivery**

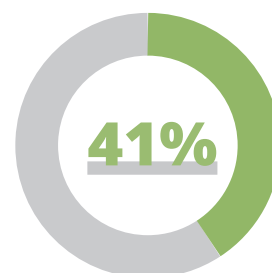
Dates Offered

**61 Stores**

Ordered This Year



Increase in lbs of  
Produce Sold



Of Stores Ordered  
Every Week





## SEMI'A FUND

This year, the Semi'a Fund expanded tremendously. The Semi'a Fund is our low-interest, micro-loan program that provides capital and coaching to entrepreneurs who can't access low-interest capital from other sources. Many of our clients to date are street vendors and micro-entrepreneurs who have been turned down by mainstream financial institutions or simply don't have the credit history to apply for a loan. In 2018, we deployed 17 loans with an average of \$8,000. We also invested in the development of new systems to track the effectiveness of our loans over time, including applying (and securing) a lender's license from the State of California. In the coming year, we hope to continue to grow our fund and are positioning ourselves to apply for CDFI certification from the U.S. Treasury.

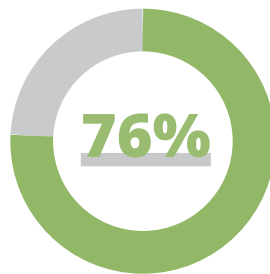
### PORTFOLIO QUICK FACTS

**\$139,000**

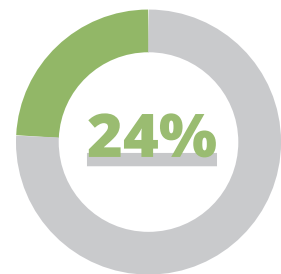
Deployed This Year

**\$265,000**

Deployed To Date



Street Vending  
Operations Loans



Brick and Mortar  
Business Loans















## LURN Advisors

This year, LURN maintained its in-house consulting services in support of mission-aligned organizations and initiatives. In 2018, we generated research on home ownership rates in target neighborhoods in East and South LA, we helped develop an outreach strategy to engage community members, as part of a regional community development effort, and we completed a project that surveyed small businesses in Southeast LA to understand how they were preparing for new public investment in their community.









## Our Funders

We're grateful to all the donors who contributed to our work this year. Thank you for your contributions to our organization!

American Heart Association  
Annenberg Foundation  
APA LA  
Arnada Salazar Foundation  
Bank of the West  
Beneficial State Bank  
California Community Foundation  
California Endowment  
California Wellness Foundation  
Capital One  
CBS  
Circle Partners  
CIT/OneWest Bank  
Citi Community Development  
City Labs Boyle Heights  
City National Bank  
Dickerson Employees  
Durfee Foundation  
First 5 LA  
Genesis LA  
Goldhirsh Foundation  
Insurance Clerk, Inc.

Kaiser Permanente  
Liberty Hill Foundation  
LISC  
Mercury Public Affairs  
Northgate Gonzalez Market  
Oscar Mayer Foundation  
Pluto Partners  
PG&E  
Ramboll  
Roschen Van Cleve Architects  
Roy & Patricia Disney Family Foundation  
S2Partners  
Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP  
SoCal Gas  
Studio MLA  
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation  
Thelma Pearl Howard Foundation  
The Tides Foundation  
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs  
US Department of Agriculture (NIFA)  
Weingart Foundation  
White Memorial Hospital





## Our Partners

LURN is a “hyper-collaborative” organization. We love to work with other organizations who align with our values and our mission. Through partnerships, we’re able to leverage our resources for larger impact. Our partners this year included:

Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM)  
 Chinatown Service Center  
 East LA Community Corporation (ELACC)  
 Environmental Defense Fund  
 Esperanza Community Housing Corporation  
 FreshWorks  
 From Lot to Spot  
 Heath & Lejeune  
 Investing in Place  
 Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)  
 La Cocina  
 Latham & Watkins  
 Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)  
 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)  
 Milbank  
 National Health Foundation  
 Opportunity Fund  
 Para Los Ninos  
 Public Counsel  
 Self Help Graphics & Art  
 South Central LAMP  
 Thai CDC  
 T.R.U.S.T. South Los Angeles  
 Vermont Slauson CDC  
 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, Mike Dennis, Charlotte & Joshua Lamb, and Rudy Espinoza

**[www.LURNNetwork.org](http://www.LURNNetwork.org)**  
**[info@LURNNetwork.org](mailto:info@LURNNetwork.org)**  
**[@lurnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/lurnetwork)**