LINCOLN PARK CRAFT BUSINESS DISTRICT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM
SUMMARY
DECEMBER 2016

OVERVIEW

On December 5, 2016, representatives of the Lincoln Park community, businesses, institutions, the City of Duluth, and other interested stakeholders participated in an Economic Development Forum on the future of the Lincoln Park Business District. The meeting was sponsored by Duluth LISC, Ecolibrium3, and the Entrepreneur Fund (the “Sponsors”) to share information, discuss plans, priorities, and projects, and to begin to answer the following questions:

- What have we accomplished so far?
- What do our organizations have planned for the coming year to improve the Business District? How can we support each other’s work?
- What are the most important priorities for the improvement of the Business District in the year ahead?
- How do we attract the kinds of businesses, investment, and customers that will most benefit the community and our neighborhood businesses?

Over the past few years, the Lincoln Park Business District has experienced a dramatic resurgence. New businesses are locating on the corridor. Properties are being renovated. Longstanding companies are investing. Craft businesses are setting up shop and expanding.

The Economic Development Forum was facilitated by Joel Bookman of Bookman Associates, Inc., a national economic development consultant for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Working with LISC and its economic strategy and analysis affiliate LISC MetroEdge, Bookman has assisted over 20 cities and 40 neighborhoods in developing and implementing economic strategies for their commercial and industrial corridors.

The Lincoln Park Forum was intended to convene several organizations and individuals actively involved in the Craft Business District to establish a process, a set of strategies, and work plans for 2017. In recent years, these organizations have participated in a variety of activities to improve the District, culminating in October with the first Lincoln Park Open House. Building upon that success, the sponsor organizations organized the Forum to identify and coordinate next steps in the development of the Lincoln Park Craft Business District.

ATTENDEES

A cross-section of stakeholders participated in the Economic Development Forum, representing businesses, residents, social service organizations, and the City of Duluth, including the following individuals:
### Recent Activities & Accomplishments

Participants introduced themselves and reported on recent activities and accomplishments of area organizations in improving the Craft Business District. Following are some of the highlights that were noted:

- The Lincoln Park Open House was an inclusive event that attracted community and business participation and has begun to change the narrative about Lincoln Park.
- The Open House brought together LISC, Ecolibrium3, and the Entrepreneur Fund in a cooperative effort with businesses and residents.
- A marketing grant to Eco3 has been used to publicize the District and prepare brochures and promotional materials.
- The Lincoln Park Business Group is invigorated with new leadership and increased participation.
- Eco3 has implemented a program to provide energy solutions for businesses.
- Community Action Duluth has had increased sales and vendors in its Farmers Market.
- Community Action Duluth, with 30 employees and 3,000 clients annually, serves a large portion of the customer base for the Lincoln Park Business District.
- The Entrepreneur Fund is providing long-term and a mix of small business financing for area small businesses, partnering with LISC on a storefront improvement program, counseling growing small businesses, and supporting Advancing Lincoln Park in creating a compelling vision for the Craft Business District.
- Zeitgeist is leading an effort to eliminate barriers to Fair Food Access in coordination with 4 other organizations, supporting farmers’ markets, access to food outside the neighborhood, and the development of retail food stores within the neighborhood.
- The Advance West Pilot Loan Program is a gap financing program being implemented by the City of Duluth to revitalize old commercial buildings and create jobs in Lincoln Park, West Duluth/Spirit Valley business districts.
- The Duluth Grill is a major employer and revenue generator in the District, and the owner is about to open a new restaurant.
- LISC, Eco3, the Entrepreneur Fund and others have begun to “re-brand” the district. The Pop-up Event last year and the Open House this year are a part of those efforts.
- The Economic Development Forum is a vehicle to bring new partners to the table and become more inclusive in planning and improving the District.
- The Lincoln Park Business Group (LPBG) and Bent Paddle Brewing sponsored the Elephant Rock Art Project this fall.
- LPBG is expanding its promotions and events schedule and planning projects to improve the corridor’s appearance.
- The Duluth Art Institute is expanding its programs, serving more than 40 artist renters and providing free classes. The Institute hopes to increase connections between artists, businesses, and the community.
- LISC is supporting the Business District with loans, grants, technical assistance, capacity building and operating support to nonprofit organizations, including AlCHO, Community Action, Ecolibrium3, Entrepreneur Fund, and One Roof Community Housing.
- The City of Duluth provides grants, project funding, infrastructure support, and works with developers interested in acquiring and improving commercial property.

**ONE-ON-ONE SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS – SHANNON LAING, ECO LIBRIUM3**

During the past 60 days, Shannon Laing conducted 21 interviews with stakeholders in the district to learn their perceptions of the neighborhood and the business district, its assets, challenges, and opportunities. Interviewees were a mix of residents and nonresidents, business owners, property owners, newcomers and longtime owners. A complete summary is available from Shannon Laing (shannon@ecolibrium3.org). Following are highlights from her report at the Forum:

**ASSETS**

*The people of the neighborhood: it is diverse, people are working together, people look out for each other. There are emerging maker businesses and there is a feeling of forward momentum.*

*New leadership on LPBG and potential synergy with Advancing Lincoln Park offer opportunities for growth.*

*The neighborhood is affordable, with “good bones” – quality housing and commercial properties, unique housing stock, great starter home location with fixer-upper opportunities.*

*The “Main Street” is intact with available parking and land.*

*The area is close to downtown, with good east/west bus access, and proximity to schools and daycare.*

*The Farmers Market, the new Middle School, the Heritage Center, and the Harrison Center all are institutions that strengthen the community.*

*The area is pedestrian friendly and kid-friendly. There is easy access to trails (COGGS, SHT, LP) and Miller Creek*

**CHALLENGES**

*There is a negative perception of the neighborhood.*

*Absentee & non-responsive landlords contribute to blight. Many older buildings contain empty storefronts that decrease property values and contribute to a feeling decline.*

*Interested investors are discouraged because of the “value gap” – the amount required to fix properties exceeds the appraised value and the willingness or ability of banks to lend on them.*

*It is not yet a “habit” for business owners to locate here. There is a psychological barrier to come to the district – there is no intuitive entry into the neighborhood and accessibility is not clear.*
Basic convenience goods and services are lacking (grocer, drug store, clinic, library).

There is a lack of communication and coordination between and among organizations. More inclusiveness is necessary.

There is a lack of strategic beautification. Many sidewalks are in disrepair; trees, trash cans, and recycling bins are lacking, and there is garbage, litter, and illegal dumping.

**IDEAS & OPPORTUNITIES**

Place more public art on the corridor. Paint murals and electrical boxes. Beautify the Pocket Park and the Cross City Trail.

Fill empty storefronts – even if they are filled temporarily with pop-ups or displays for upcoming events or “Coming Soon!” signs. Fix up storefronts with a “vanilla shell” to entice new businesses. Wash store windows – even empty ones.

Promote and market the area more broadly. Connect the neighborhood with area destinations (e.g., “Visit the Children’s Museum in Lincoln Park!”).

Get multiple groups working on Lincoln Park to work together and centralize their efforts. Consider a quarterly luncheon to touch base with each other and connect resources. Send monthly updates to neighborhood partners.

Employ a fully funded neighborhood coordinator to support coordinated efforts. Clarify who is doing what in the neighborhood for more effective and coordinated efforts.

Figure out how to connect jobs with people who need them in the neighborhood. Engage residents more actively in the redevelopment of the Lincoln Park Business District.

**5-YEAR VISION FOR THE LINCOLN PARK CRAFT BUSINESS DISTRICT**

Participants discussed their vision for the future of the commercial corridor. They responded to the questions:

**WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE LINCOLN PARK CRAFT BUSINESS DISTRICT?**

**WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE IN 2022?**

**HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE HAVE SUCCEEDED?**

Stakeholders identified 7 elements to their vision for the Business District.

**5-YEAR VISION**

A destination neighborhood with competitive businesses that attract customers from across the region because of its unique craft establishments and its mix of independent entrepreneurs that serve customers from the community and beyond

A commercial corridor that serves basic neighborhood needs with “every day” businesses, including a grocer, drug store, and other convenience uses
A visually appealing corridor with renovated, occupied storefronts, activated second story spaces, and, in cooperation with local artists, “useful art,” including attractive benches, trash containers, painted utility boxes, and public art displays

A business district with an engaged, inclusive group of businesses and residents who participate in their organizations, communicate regularly with each other, and who cooperate in efforts to improve the community and the corridor

A safe and vibrant commercial district with regular events and promotions that attract shoppers and residents and cause them to want to return

A Craft Business District that coexists harmoniously with a surrounding mixed-income community with quality, affordable housing, and that offers opportunities for residents to access a “pipeline” of living wage jobs in neighborhood businesses

A business district with improved transportation access and amenities that take advantage of the surrounding environment, including access to the water, expanded walking trails on unused railroad lines, and a restored Lincoln Park

GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND WORK PLANS FOR 2017

Lincoln Park leaders participated in an exercise to identify a set of goals and strategies for 2017. Based upon their vision, each participant was asked to prioritize his or her top 3 goals for the Lincoln Park Craft Business District for the year. Their goals were grouped into categories. They are summarized on the chart on the following page.

It was agreed that a high level of activity already is underway to improve the Business District. Multiple organizations are engaged in promoting and marketing. Ecolibrium3 is engaging community residents and businesses toward creating a healthy and sustainable community. The Entrepreneur Fund partners with entrepreneurs to stimulate the growth of successful businesses. Duluth LISC supports local organizations to build healthy sustainable neighborhoods, convenes @Home in Duluth and supports the Business District with loans, grants, and technical assistance. Lincoln Park Business Group plans events, promotions, and physical improvements. The City of Duluth invests in infrastructure, administers the Advance West Pilot Loan Program, and provides planning and business development services. Community Action Duluth supports residents with employment services, financial counseling, the Farmers Market, and other services. The Duluth Art Institute contributes to placemaking strategies and area beautification through its relationships with artists and arts programming. Advancing Lincoln Park is developing a compelling long-term vision and leading business development for the Craft Business District.

Organizations represented in the Forum share a similar commitment, values, and approach toward the future of the Business District. Three challenges were apparent in the discussion:

1. Activities to improve the Lincoln Park Business District are at times planned independently of each other. With a more coordinated approach, partners can support each other’s initiatives, use their resources more efficiently, and accomplish more.
2. Many of the same people are attending multiple meetings with multiple organizations around similar subjects. They are not interested in forming another new organization to manage the corridor.
3. There is a compelling need to clarify roles and responsibilities of the various organizations involved in the corridor, agree on priorities, and ensure that resources are available to sustain the implementation of goals and strategies to improve the Business District.
# Lincoln Park Craft Business District
## Goals & Strategies - 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Strategy</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Planning Timeframe</th>
<th>Potential Strategies &amp; Projects</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups are clear on priorities</td>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planning Timeframe</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential Strategies &amp; Projects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential Partners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity roles &amp; responsibilities</td>
<td><strong>Implementation Strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planning Timeframe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 in designated funding for district</td>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planning Timeframe</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential Strategies &amp; Projects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential Partners</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Potential Strategies & Projects

- **Goals**
  - Implement Public Art
    - Useful art
  - Signage & public art reinforcing neighborhood identity
    - Resident communication
  - Make parklets next to Holiday Station a positive draw
    - Inclusive community forums
  - Public art project property funded
    - Adopt-a-Block
  - 3-5 examples of public/private art
    - New businesses that can be accessed by walking

- **Coordinating Partners:** Eco3, Entrepreneur Fund, LISC

- **Goals**
  - Community Inclusion
    - Resident involvement
  - Enhancing Lincoln Park Events
    - 2 community events to promote inclusion
  - Changing the Narrative
    - PR to override outdated perceptions
  - Driving Business Development
    - 7 new craft businesses open
  - Infrastructure Improvements
    - Repair/replace current streetlights and street signs
  - Driving Investment
    - Complete Historic Survey
  - Resolve Food Desert Problem
    - Incentivize, stimulate investment in building/housing stock

- **Potential Strategies & Projects**
  - Building exterior enforcement (signage, facades)
  - Identify water access points & how best to utilize them
  - Explore formalized corridor management

- **Potential Partners**
  - LP Business Group, DPAC
  - Eco3, CA Duluth, Churches
  - Advancing LP, Entrepreneur Fund, LP Business Group, LISC
  - LISC, Zeitgeist, CA Duluth, FFP, SFA
WORK PLANS: PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

The following activities were identified as possible “Next Steps” to be accomplished in 2017:

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY – JANUARY - MARCH**

- Each organization reviews goals & projects with its board
- Groups identify projects they are leading or would like to lead
- Groups identify activities in which they would like to partner or support other organizations

**Organizations review plan, goals, & projects**

- Each organization identifies 2 or 3 projects that they intend to prioritize - emphasizing visible projects to be completed in 2017
- Groups indicate expected timing for completion of projects
- Shannon & Lars collect & compile information from each group

**Groups identify their priority projects for 2017**

- Leaders of LISC, Ecolibrium3, & Entrepreneur Fund review priorities, identify duplication & gaps, & communicate proposed activities & outcomes to partner organizations
- Sponsoring organizations draft proposed roles & responsibilities & communication process for review by each group

**Sponsoring organizations review goals & communicate results to each organization**

- Shannon & Lars work with partner organizations to support & assist in project implementation
- Sponsor organizations communicate progress to each partner organization
- Sponsors convene partners to resolve conflict or duplication if needed

**Partner organizations implement projects, coordinate with each other, & communicate progress**
**PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES**

In the Forum discussions, participants indicated their organizations’ current roles and activities, as well as those anticipated for their organizations in the year ahead. Following is a draft based upon that conversation, proposing the primary organizational drivers of the goals that were identified at the Forum. These are presented for review and discussion. They are intended to assist each of the organizations in determining the role that it chooses to play in future development of the Lincoln Park Craft Business District and are not intended to limit the choices of any participating organization.

It is suggested that participants review these potential roles, clarify and revise them as appropriate during January and February, and submit them to Shannon or Lars to compile and distribute to the partner organizations.

**PRIMARY ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES IN LINCOLN PARK BUSINESS DISTRICT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advancing LP</th>
<th>LP Business Group</th>
<th>Ecolibrium3</th>
<th>Entrepreneur Fund</th>
<th>LISC</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Community Action Duluth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driving business development</td>
<td>Infrastructure improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing the narrative</td>
<td>Public art</td>
<td>Enhancing LP events</td>
<td>Enhancing LP events</td>
<td>Driving investment</td>
<td>Driving investment</td>
<td>Resolving food desert problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer network &amp; open forum</td>
<td>Enhancing LP events</td>
<td>Implementation strategy</td>
<td>Implementation strategy</td>
<td>Implementation strategy</td>
<td>Driving business development</td>
<td>Job &amp; financial coaching &amp; employment services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry point for new businesses</td>
<td>Changing the narrative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resolving food desert problem</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The 3 sponsoring organizations (LISC, Ecolibrium3, and Entrepreneur Fund) have agreed to coordinate the initial *Implementation Strategy* work plan in January and February to help clarify roles and responsibilities, assist organizations in identifying their priorities for the Business District, and exploring ways to sustain implementation of programs and projects for the Lincoln Park Craft Business District.