

City of Auburn, Washington

2016–2017

**Auburn addresses the challenges
of growth**

Program Details

**Livable City Year
Program**

University of Washington
410A Gould Hall
3950 University Way NE
Seattle, WA 98195

washington.edu/livable-city-year
uwlcyear@uw.edu



A university partnership helped a rapidly growing city.

City of Auburn, King
County, Washington
United States

Community Size:
2017: 80,776

Status: Completed

Between 2006–2016, the city’s population swelled more than 30 percent, from 58,700 to 76,300 people; by 2020, the population will grow to 85,000 people, an 11 percent increase. The boom corresponds with the breakneck speed of growth in Seattle, the state’s biggest city. In fact, Auburn and nearby Redmond are among the state’s fastest growing cities with populations of at least 50,000 residents, according to the US Census Bureau.

The rapid growth brought problems: crime, homelessness, traffic gridlock, limited access to alternative transportation, and tensions among long-time residents. The city also faced persistent problems such as flood risk from the Green River and management of its wetlands, as well as the lack of synergy between the city’s different public social spaces.

In short, Auburn was growing too fast and was struggling to keep up.

For those reasons, Auburn officials decided to partner with the Livable City Year program (LCY), a multi-disciplinary organization at the University of Washington. As part of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities (EPIC-N) Network, LCY brings university resources to meet community needs. In Auburn, LCY coordinated 170 students in urban design and planning, landscape architecture, and public health to identify and deliver meaningful roadmaps during 2016–2017 to help Auburn find a holistic path forward, and not just in dealing with its current population, but in drafting ideas to use growth for success.

Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus described the experience as a “groundbreaking year.”

“This program is an incredible example of what higher education can do for our community,” added Auburn Deputy Mayor Largo Wales. “Not only does this give students a unique hands-on learning opportunity, it provides the city with the opportunity to complete valuable projects that we would not have been able to otherwise.”

Auburn gets a valuable return on its investment in student learning

Over the year, LCY produced several deliverables for Auburn, which included:

- **A connectivity plan** that included suggestions for code updates and infrastructure improvements.
- **A website and mobile app** to help local businesses market directly to local residents.
- **A list of recommendations and consensus items** on how to develop strategies to mitigate the area’s problem of homelessness.
- **A strategy and tools to track, monitor, and maintain** the city’s housing stock in an effort to maintain affordability and reduce pressure on resources.
- **A strategy plan** to educate residents about issues associated with the improper disposal of pet waste, fats, oils, grease, wipes, and pharmaceuticals to prevent clogging and environmental issues.
- **The creation of an inventory** of geographic information system (GIS) maps and mock road diagrams to inform and enhance future urban planning projects.
- **Community profiles** of Auburn’s five neighborhoods that identify shared issues in an effort to boost community engagement.
- **A report that assesses current LID stormwater equipment and technology** — current costs, challenges, and benefits.
- **A pilot school food share program** that helps identify waste reduction strategies in public school cafeterias throughout the city.
- **A framework** for the city to implement strategic recommendations of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to boost healthy food options for residents.
- **The redesign of an alley** running between the Auburn Avenue Theater and Auburn Arts and Culture Center to provide the community with a public gathering space and public art display — an effort that will contribute to the revitalization of the city’s downtown.

City officials praised the outcomes and said that the ROI of working with LCY was significant. “For the money community development put into these projects, we got a good bang for the buck. There was a lot more we got out of these projects than we would have gotten out of the private sector,” said Jeff Tate, interim Community Development Director.

“An incredible example of what higher education can do for our community.”

— Largo Wales, Deputy Mayor, City of Auburn





16

Classes



170

Students



19,335

Hours



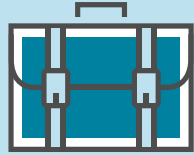
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Projects



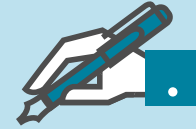
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Disciplines



11

Faculty
Members



20

Assistants, Staff,
& Report Writers

“The dedication that UW students put toward the partnership with Auburn is beyond compare.”

— Nancy Backus, Mayor, City of Auburn

Contact Us

info@epicn.org
epicn.org

PO Box 44069
Madison, WI 53744-4069