



Action Plan

AUBURN BOULEVARD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION



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Prepared by MMS Strategies

Background

The Auburn Boulevard Business Association (ABBA) was founded in 2016 as a volunteer, non-profit membership association that represents business and property owners between Sylvan Corners and I-80 with a common interest of re-energizing the Auburn Boulevard Corridor. In partnership with the City of Citrus Heights (City), ABBA partnered with MMS Strategies to produce an action plan to attract growth to the organization and revitalization to the Corridor. This plan builds upon previous completed work including:

The Boulevard Plan

In February 2005, the City Council approved The Boulevard Plan: Reinventing the Auburn Boulevard Corridor. The Boulevard Plan is intended to guide the revitalization and enhancement of Auburn Boulevard between Sylvan Corners and I-80. This 1.75-mile stretch of Auburn Boulevard was once part of historic State Highway 40, which carried traffic between Sacramento and Auburn.

Sylvan Corners: A Success Story

To bring the Boulevard Plan to life, the City began work on the Auburn Boulevard Complete Streets Project (ABCS). In 2005, the City completed Phase I, Segment I of the ABCS project. This success was the first of several milestones in the implementation of the Boulevard Plan. This project transformed Sylvan Corners from a low-density commercial area into a vibrant neighborhood shopping center. The intersection that once consisted of auto repair shops and underutilized or vacant lots now enjoys new businesses including a bank, financial advisor offices, Starbucks, Bearpaw Shoes headquarters, and more. As part of the improvements, pylons mark the historic Lincoln Highway, once traveled by gold prospectors traveling from San Francisco to Auburn. In February 2012, crews dismantled the giant billboard that once stood prominently in front of the Goodwill Industries store on the northeast corner of Sylvan Road and Old Auburn Road — known as Sylvan Corners. The removal of the billboard was a major aesthetic improvement that visually opened the intersection and truly completed the redevelopment of Sylvan Corners.

Auburn Boulevard Complete Streets Project

Phase I, Segments II and III was completed in July 2014. These segments consisted of undergrounding utilities and roadway improvements from Sylvan Corners to Rusch Park. Phase II of the ABCS Project will focus on improvements to Auburn Boulevard from Grand Oaks Boulevard to Whyte Avenue. Phase II is currently in the design phase with construction expected to begin in 2018/2019 pending funding availability.

Survey

- In August 2017, a survey was mailed to all property owners within the ABBA boundaries which asked questions relative to contact/ownership information, prioritizing areas of concern, identifying areas of success and allowing open ended thoughts on the future of Auburn Boulevard. We received 45 returned surveys.
- The survey was also e-mailed out by ABBA and City staff.
- Results from the survey were tabulated and used to prepare for the first workshop held Sept 12, 2017. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit the input of Property Owners and Businesses on the broad issues and concerns they encounter on the Boulevard.

Workshops

- Two workshops were held, September 12 and 19, to identify areas of concern and to discuss opportunities and potential solutions. All property and business owners in the Corridor were invited to attend. The workshop on Sept 12 focused on gathering what problems or impediments to doing business as well as ranking them in order of priority to address.
- There were approximately 40 to 45 people in attendance at each workshop.
- Prior to the workshop on Sept 19, the problems identified at the previous workshop were grouped into four related categories: Clean and Safe, Vacancies, Homelessness, and Branding/Marketing. A specific breakdown on each item is provided below:
 1. *Clean and Safe*: Concerns focused around traffic speeds, unsafe crossings, the need for additional public safety enforcement, litter, illegal dumping (tires, couches, mattresses, etc.), code enforcement issues, and streetscape input.
 2. *Homelessness*: Concerns on illegal camping, abandoned campsites, sanitation issues, unclear reporting process on how to handle and concerns on the impacts to business.



3. *Vacancies*: Owners felt the vacancies were a symptom of bigger issues in the Corridor. Upkeep of properties, lack of code enforcement, and owner participation were all cited as areas of concern. Owners believe that an understanding of what the market would allow the Corridor was missing and that a greater diversity of businesses may be needed.
4. *Marketing and Branding*: Key themes included lack of a brand, lack of cohesiveness or variety in architecture, lack of identity and uniqueness and little consistency on landscaping or building facades.

At the September 19 workshop, owners gathered to discuss solutions to the stated concerns. After the workshop the solutions were documented and categorized based on timing and responsible agency. The solutions were arrayed within the four problem categories. Time frames for accomplishing the solutions were assigned based on the complexity of the solution and on the availability of funding for the effort.

Auburn Boulevard Business Association Action Plan

Property owners along the Auburn Boulevard Corridor have coalesced to be proactive in determining the future of the Corridor, to attract new business and investment throughout the area and to create a unified voice for the Corridor.

The outreach undertaken as outlined above has given way to three distinct areas of focus, including:

1. Maintenance and Security,
2. Land Use and Advocacy
3. Events/Marketing and Communication

To further ABBA's goals, a plan has been outlined with specific objectives in the specified areas of interest.

It should be recognized that funding for most of these solutions does not exist within ABBA's budget and creative solutions will be needed.

I. Maintenance and Security

It is the desire of owners to create an enhanced maintenance program, building upon existing public services. The enhanced maintenance program could include graffiti removal, street sweeping, pressure washing, regular litter pickup, and bulky item clean-up.

Additionally, owners expressed a desire to have enhanced security along the Corridor. This could be a private

security operator or augmented police patrols. Included in this category would be security visits to businesses to work with them on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to reduce nuisance issues.

ABBA ACTIONS:

1. Work with properties to identify on-going nuisance issues.
2. Work closely with Code Enforcement to address issues created by nuisance properties.
3. Collaborate with the City traffic engineer to identify traffic calming opportunities and location of additional crosswalks.
4. Work with Citrus Heights Police Department on speed enforcement.
5. Implement best practices in delivering maintenance services for the Corridor.
6. Explore ways to provide additional security to patrol the Corridor to reduce crime and related transient issues. This can be done by funding off-duty police officers or contracting with a private firm.
7. ABBA should coordinate with Citrus Heights PD on programs to help curb theft/drug use in the Corridor.
8. ABBA could explore grants to purchase Police Operation Devices (POD's).

9. Work with the City to explore hiring a dedicated Navigator for the Corridor.
10. ABBA should coordinate litter removal, weed abatement and bulky item removal in the Corridor by: reporting issues to the City, coordinate community litter pick-up days or hire contract maintenance.
11. Hold workshops for property and business owners to educate and encourage crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). This includes best practices for lighting, landscaping, removing unsecured outside electrical outlets/water faucets etc. that reduce crime opportunities.
12. Prepare an information brochure that explains how to report issues such as graffiti, illegal dumping, illegal camping, etc.
13. Work with business and property Owners in the Corridor to collect signed Notice of Agency forms to streamline the ability to issue trespass notices.

II. Land Use and Advocacy

Auburn Boulevard should have an organized voice to represent the property and business owners in the Corridor. Someone to represent owners in front of public bodies, advocate for additional funding for the area, advocate for additional police presence and other services vital to the well-being of the Corridor, as well as works to expedite development projects beneficial to the Corridor.

ABBA ACTIONS:

1. Monitor state and local policies/bills.
2. Work with code enforcement to identify out of compliance properties, both health and safety as well as lighting and signage.
3. Market and encourage the use of the façade/signage improvement grants offered by the City.
4. Share information with property owners about the changes made to the City's planning and zoning to create flexible standards for building design, orientation and zoning.
5. Identify vacant for sale/rent properties to:
 - i. Post these properties on the ABBA website
 - ii. Disseminate electronically (newsletter/ social media)
 - iii. Create a one pager to show neighboring amenities as a selling point for the properties
 - iv. Generate interest in properties by placing articles in local media outlets.
6. Work with Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and the City to identify grant opportunities to improve the Corridor.
7. Form a Business Recruitment Committee that includes brokers and business leaders to work together to fill the vacant properties. Conduct a Market Analysis and create the necessary marketing materials.

Events/Marketing/Communications

Owners expressed a desire to have a strong marketing program as part of an overall effort to economically enhance the Auburn Boulevard Corridor. Marketing efforts would aim to support business retention and recruitment efforts as well as encourage both locals and visitors to explore the Corridor.

ABBA ACTIONS:

1. Create opportunities for quarterly special events, including events featuring ABBA businesses.
2. Create a plan to create more public art and urban places in the Corridor.
3. Create a monthly electronic newsletter.
4. Create a database of business and property owner email listing.
5. Create a brand for the Corridor (logo, tagline, website, etc.).
6. Ensure brand consistency.
7. Monthly website updates (agendas, news articles, vacancies, etc.).
8. Create a welcome kit for new businesses.
9. Actively create additional news and editorial coverage about the Corridor's renewal efforts, completed projects, and opportunities.
10. Develop a marketing plan and materials such as a website, social media, flyers, street banners and monument signs.
11. Take advantage of the Auburn Boulevard history, both the unique history of the properties and its former life as Route 40.

With leadership from the City and ABBA the Action Plan identified here will help to set the Corridor on its way to achieve its goal of vibrancy and sustainable revitalization. Next steps should include a frank discussion regarding the different alternatives to funding the actions.