



# ALLEY ALLIES

Alleys in Portland are often considered a liability rather than a potential resource. The EcoDistrict Steering Committee has an interest in understanding the potential of local alleys to become active, vibrant spaces, identifying community needs and concerns regarding alley renovations, and determining how the effective transformation of these spaces can be achieved.

Mill Street Community Planning is a group of six graduate students from Portland State University working with the EcoDistrict to explore the revitalization of alley space within the Lents, Mt. Scott-Arleta, and Foster-Powell neighborhoods.

Alley Allies began as an engagement process in the Spring of 2013 to understand residents' values and priorities related to alley space in their community. At the end of this process three products were created to guide residents, non-profits, neighborhood organizations, and City of Portland agencies in making the vision of activated residential alleys a reality.

## Get Involved

Foster Green EcoDistrict is seeking implementation partners who are interested in being involved in the revitalization of the alleys in Mt. Scott-Arleta, Foster-Powell, and Lents neighborhoods.

The Alley Allies Toolkit has been designed to help residents with all steps of their projects. You can find this document on our website below.

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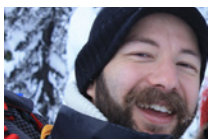
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Plan



ALLEY  
ALLIES

CONNECTING NEIGHBORS, REIMAGINING ALLEYS



# Alley Allies Overview



This Plan is part of a set of three documents produced by Mill Street Community Planning to provide the foundation for the Alley Allies project.

## Plan

The Plan is the guiding document for the project and sets the stage for the potential of alley re-use in the Foster Corridor. It includes: A 2020 vision statement; a project overview; context regarding the importance of alley revitalization; and our recommendations. The intended audience for this document is the leadership of the project, the non-profits and other organizations who will be involved in the project's implementation, and the City agencies who will play a critical role in facilitating the successful repurposing of these alleys.

## Background Report

The Background Report describes the development of the project during the planning phase, including the public engagement process used to develop the plan and the toolkit, and can be used as a resource for residents seeking grants, by City agencies wanting to understand the public engagement behind the project, or by the organizations leading the project.

## Toolkit

The Toolkit was designed from a six-month public engagement process with the goal of shaping the content around resident needs. The major goals of Toolkit are to clarify what can be done with alleys, who owns them, who is responsible for their maintenance, and to help residents overcome barriers for making alley improvements by providing them with the resources and tools to move forward.





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## Partners

Alley Allies began as a project of the Foster Green EcoDistrict and Mill Street Community Planning. As the project developed, it has grown to include a large network of supporting organizations and allies that will continue to be integral to the project during implementation.

**Foster Green EcoDistrict** is a long-term partnership among community organizations, local residents, and businesses based in an area around Foster Road in Portland, Oregon between SE 52nd Avenue and SE 122nd Avenue. The goal of the Foster Green EcoDistrict is to create triple bottom line solutions that promote economic resiliency, social equity, and environmental sustainability by building on existing community assets. Guided by a steering committee that includes a diverse set of local residents and organizations, Foster Green EcoDistrict is committed to supporting the local community in realizing their vision of the Foster corridor.

**Mill Street Community Planning** is a team of six Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) students at Portland State University with expertise in public outreach, public health, site planning, urban design, data analysis, green infrastructure, economic development, environmental justice, and transportation. We have a passion for neighborhood empowerment through community ownership of urban space, capacity building, and the development of more sustainable urban forms.



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Arleta Library Café  
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Bar Carlo  
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Daniel Toole, Tight Urbanism  
David Cohen, The Intertwine  
David Porter, Leach Botanical Garden  
Foot Patrol (MSA)  
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Northwest Institute for Community Enrichments  
Pieper Café  
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives (PCRI)  
Portland Mercado  
Portland Parks and Recreation  
Portland Youth Builders  
Prof Steven Allen, Alley Flat Initiative, UT-Austin  
Rex Burkholder  
Rose CDC  
Ryan Givens, Foster Green EcoDistrict  
Spencer Burton  
Steph Routh, Oregon Walks

**Cover:** Mt. Scott-Arleta Neighborhood Pilot Alley with potential improvements based on meeting resident needs and interests from Coffee Talk events. By Derek Dauphin.



# Executive Summary

This plan is the guiding document for the Alley Allies project and sets the stage for potential alley re-use in the Foster corridor. The intended audience for this document is the leadership of the project, the non-profits and other organizations who will be involved in the project's implementation, and the City agencies who will play a critical role in facilitating the successful repurposing of these alleys.

This document examines the potential for alleys to improve neighborhoods and address neighbor concerns in a variety of ways. Our major findings can be summarized as follows:

Alleys have very little value as drivable streets due to poor conditions and high costs of improvements, but represent a large area if repurposed as public space.

Alleys have great potential to support ongoing City goals and strategies including the Portland Plan, Portland Comprehensive Plan, the Portland/Multnomah Climate Action Plan, and the Foster-Lents Integration Partnership.

Alleys have significant economic development potential by serving as "low stress" pedestrian corridors to local businesses and as thoroughfares for accessory dwelling units.

Public outreach efforts highlighted the needs of residents in the Foster corridor neighborhoods, including: **Clean and safe alleys, Access to nature, Flexibility of uses, and Community connections.**

From our public outreach and best practices research we formulated the following recommendations for partner organizations and City agencies to facilitate community-led alley improvements:

1

Clarify the City's interest in the alleys and what residents can do in them.

2

Recognize the role alleys can play in meeting the City's current goals and targets.

3

Conduct an information campaign that educates the community about the potential for alley improvements.

4

Establish an organizing group to aid residents in the alley improvement process.

5

Establish a network of organizations, and clarify their roles and responsibilities for carrying out the Alley Allies program.



# Introduction





A visualization of one of the project's pilot alleys in the Lents Neighborhood depicting potential improvements that reimagine the alley as an area for children to play alongside a food garden.



## Alley Allies 2020 Vision

It's 8am on a Spring morning in Southeast Portland in the year 2020. Roberto is ten years old. His mom hands him his lunch as he scampers out the back door and down the alley towards Arleta School from his home on Boise and 66th. With the exception of crossing Foster, Roberto can make it from his door to the school grounds without ever hitting a busy street. Even on Foster, a raised and guarded crosswalk makes it safe to cross traffic. Two of his friends see him from the front window of their accessory dwelling units and scramble out to join him on his walk to school. Down Lupine Alley between 65th and 66th streets, Roberto watches the ambiance change as he makes his way through the alleys. Residents have given each alley a character and style that reflects their needs and interests. He likes the one between Boise and Holgate because it has a playset and apple trees. The cafés have expanded into the alley as he watches business people getting morning coffee, reading the paper, or meeting for an early chat in the sanctuary provided by the alley.

He hops along the cobbled surface, oblivious to the way the alleys used to be. Instead, he enjoys the art, flowers, green walls, benches, and natural environment. Crossing Foster, the alleys change. Now there's artwork and murals covering the fences. Bigger kids are heading to school as well, skateboards slung as they walk along the stone path. He passes the garden plots and produce beds with signs saying to "Take what you need and share the rest." Sometimes he grabs a carrot for a snack.

The alleys are another game for him and the children now, like a labyrinth that lets them explore the neighborhood. But they have other uses, too. Cars still amble through to get to garages, although many have been converted to attractive accessory dwelling units, providing a new source of housing for many and income for longer-term residents. Businesses along Foster were quick to see the potential of the alleys, and now there is a busy market of construction and landscaping companies competing for jobs redeveloping the alleys in Northeast Portland. Far from the underutilized spaces they once were, alleys have become a source of pride, cohesion and community that is unique to the neighborhoods along Foster Road. They have set an example for alley communities everywhere, with projects popping up in cities throughout the country.







**Alley Allies:** City agency staff (left; Source: OTREC), local residents (center), and local business owners (right).

## Who Are The Alley Allies?

Alley Allies is more than a project name. It refers to those who are committed to the revitalization of Portland's forgotten alleys. An Alley Ally is a resident who gardens or picks up trash in his or her local alley, a local organization who is financing an alley project, or a City agency committed to assisting local communities realize their alley visions. This project is a call to action to the reclaim these forgotten neighborhood spaces. Are you an Alley Ally?

## Mission

The Alley Allies project will promote and guide the implementation of alley improvements that result in alleys that are safe, well maintained, and an asset for the community. The project will transform alleys into spaces where neighbors can come

together. Alley improvements will reflect the collective values and meet the collective needs of the community. Improved alley spaces will also help to define the unique character of the Foster corridor neighborhoods.

## Project Overview

Alley Allies is a community driven project focused on the revitalization of the alleys in the Foster-Powell, Mt. Scott-Arleta and Lents neighborhoods. **The project began with a simple realization: Alleys can be more than places to hide garbage cans and utilities.** In fact, only the alleys in Ladd's Addition and a handful of alleys elsewhere in the city are still used for this purpose. In most of Portland, where alleys are still drivable, they serve only as access for rear facing garages, and where alleys have become so overgrown and muddy that they are undrivable, they serve little purpose at all. Foster Green EcoDistrict proposed





**Image:** Most Foster corridor alleys have become overgrown and serve little function other than garage access. Poor alley conditions like those in this image mean that even that function is lacking in many alleys.

this project following several community surveys and discussions that showed local alleys were playing host to drug use, illegal dumping, vandalism and a variety of other negative activities.

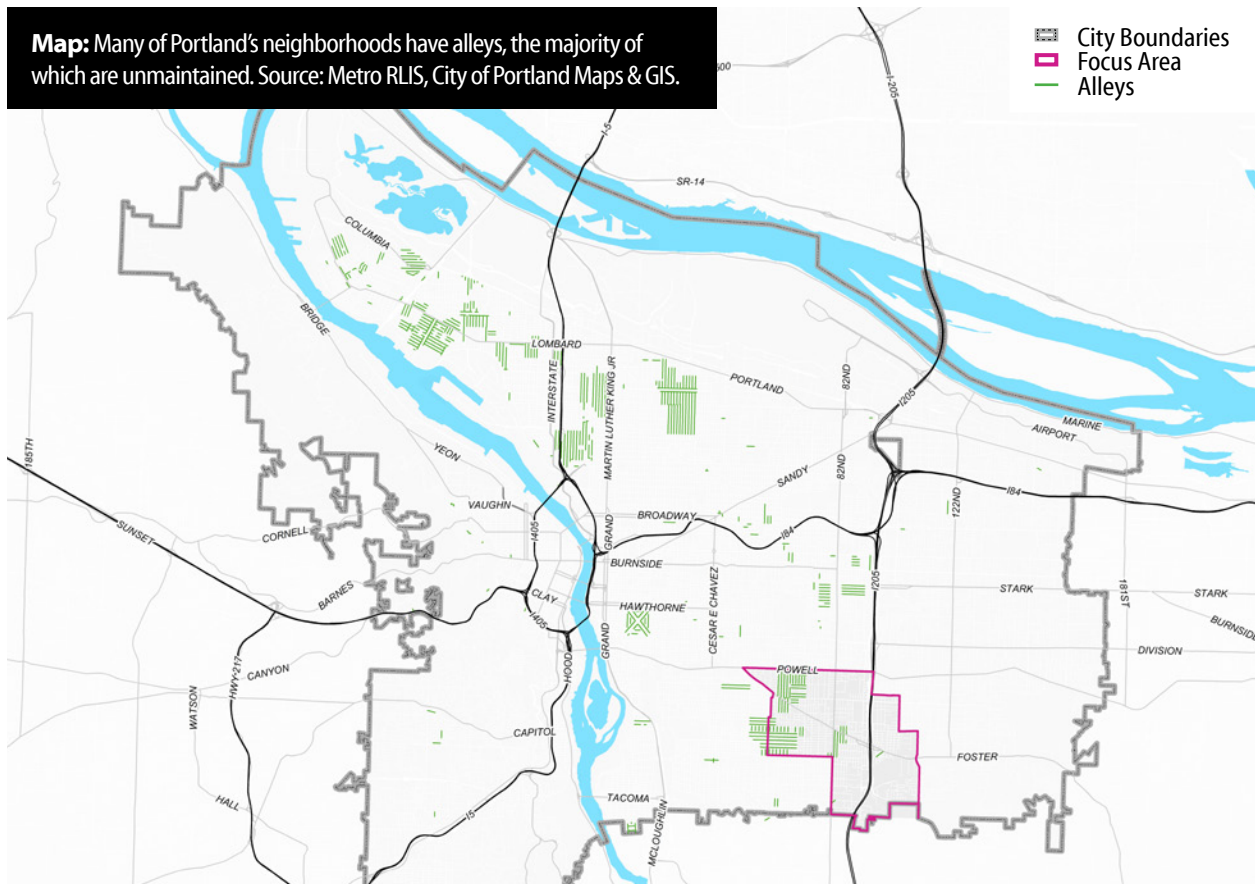
Alleys in these neighborhoods are considered a liability rather than a potential resource. The EcoDistrict Steering Committee has an interest in understanding the potential of local alleys to become active, vibrant spaces,

identify community needs and concerns regarding alley renovations, and determine how the effective transformation of these spaces can be achieved.

Our team was brought in to facilitate community involvement and conduct research to create the Alley Allies program with the goal of enabling community and local organizations to guide alley improvements.



**Map:** Many of Portland's neighborhoods have alleys, the majority of which are unmaintained. Source: Metro RLIS, City of Portland Maps & GIS.



## Focus Area

This project is focused on the alleys within the Lents, Foster-Powell, and Mt. Scott-Arleta neighborhoods. Together, these neighborhoods are host to over 12 miles of alleys. As one of the city's more historic communities, neighborhoods along the Foster corridor benefit from period features

including beautiful homes, public parks, and a dense network of alleys.

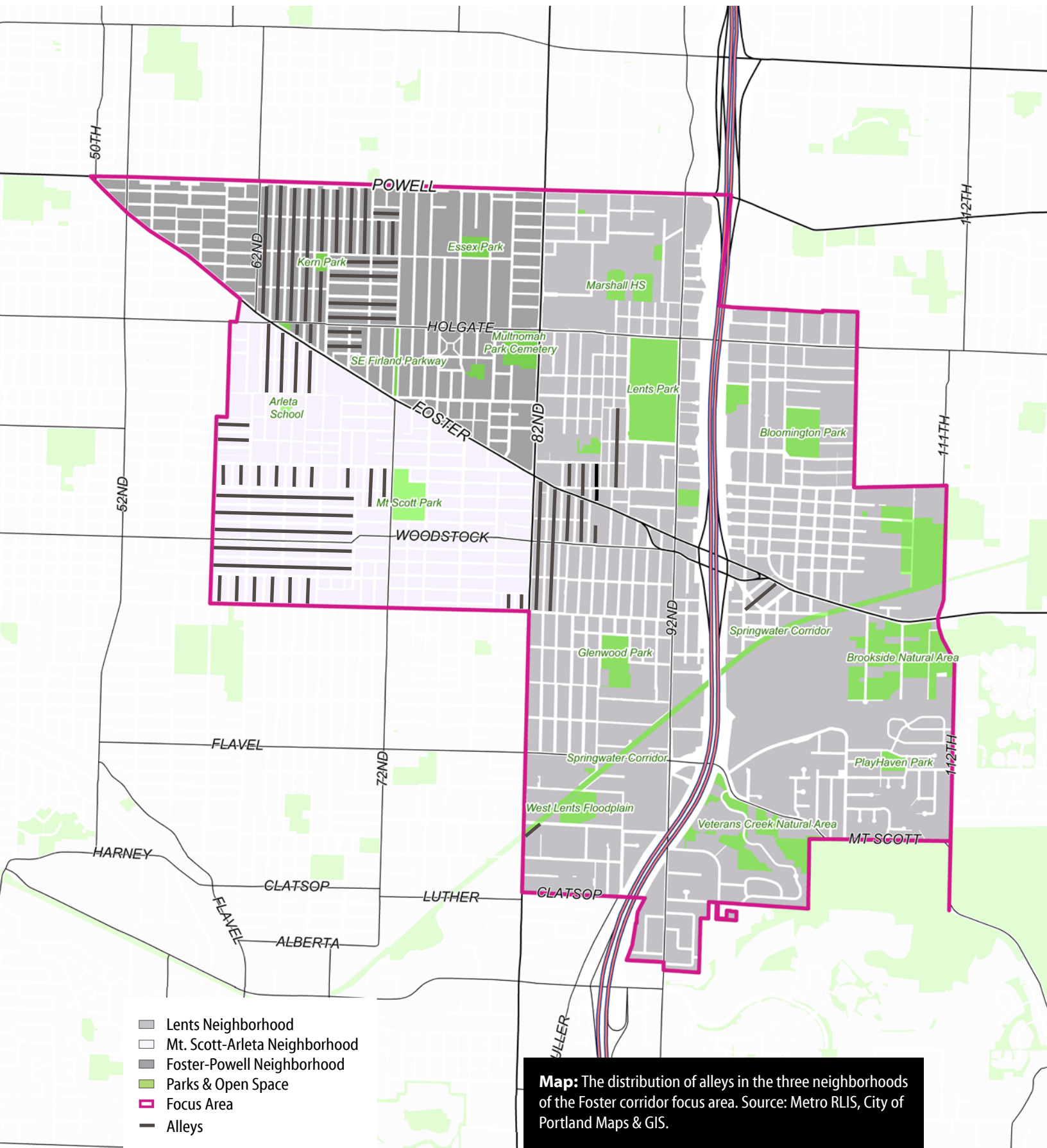
While this project focuses on three neighborhoods in Southeast Portland, the guidance and resources we provide are available for other neighborhoods and for other cities to utilize in their own alley revitalization efforts.

## Process



**Description:** Our process involved a combination of public outreach depicted along the top of the timeline, and research, expert interviews, data analysis, and an agency roundtable shown along the bottom of the timeline.







# Why Alleys?

The City of Portland has roughly 76 miles of alleys with approximately 12 of those miles in the focus area. The alley network within the focus area is quite extensive with Mt. Scott-Arleta and Foster-Powell neighborhoods ranking fourth and fifth out of all Portland neighborhoods in terms of neighborhoods with the most alleys.

Portsmouth

University  
ParkArbor  
Lodge

Piedmont

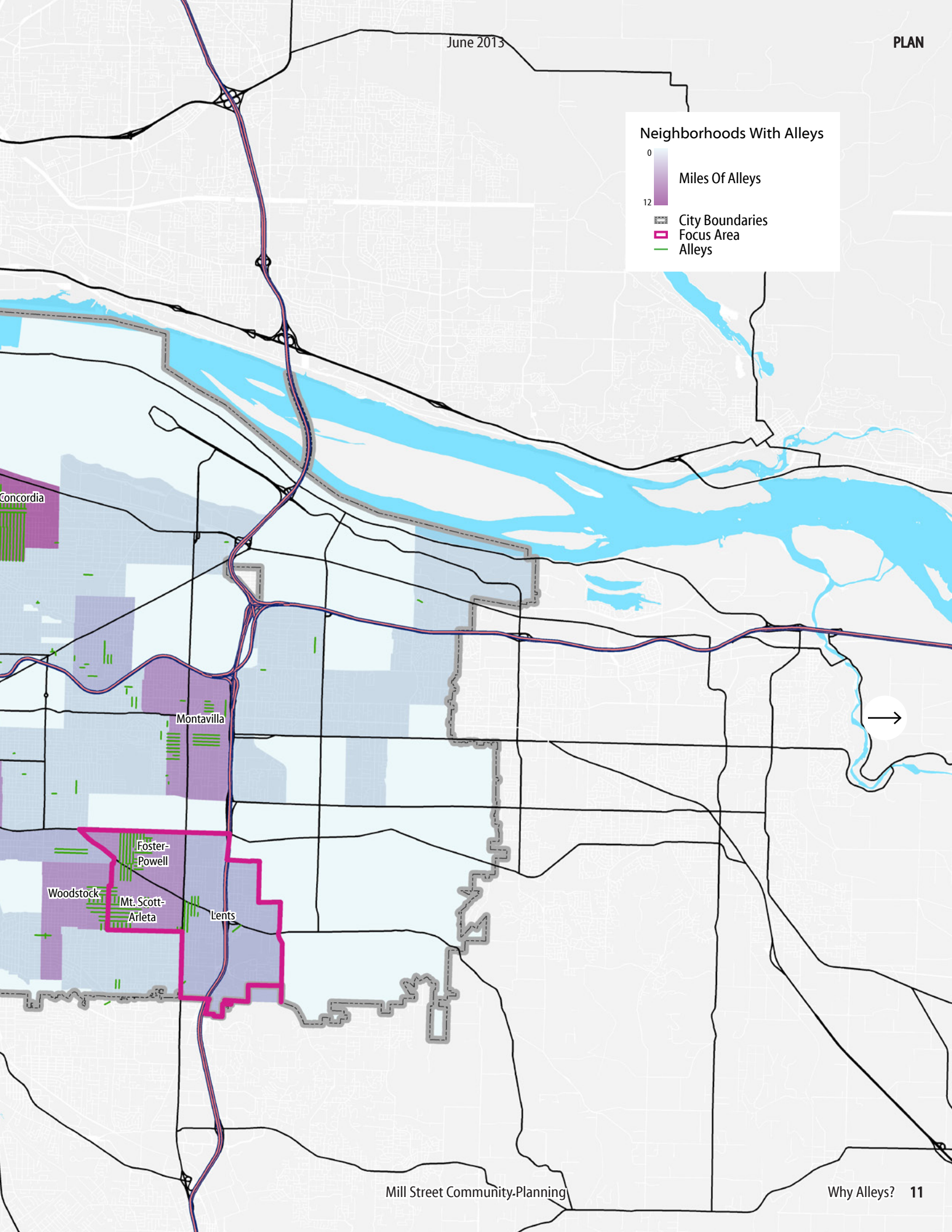
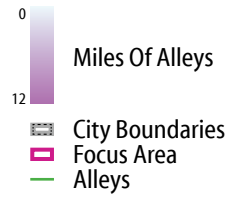
Humboldt

Boise

Hosford-  
Abernathy



Neighborhoods With Alleys





# Meeting City Goals

Alleys represent an insignificant portion of the city's public right of way. Most of Southeast Portland's alleys provide poor driving conditions because they are unpaved, uneven, muddy, and have overgrown vegetation. The city currently has insufficient funds to maintain alleys, let alone make the major investment required to bring the alleys into the street network. However, alleys have the potential to significantly increase the amount of open space available to residents in the Foster corridor community. The square footage of Portland alleys and alleys in the focus area are comparable to many popular local parks in the three neighborhoods

Alley projects have the potential to align with City goals and objectives described in The Portland Plan, The Portland Comprehensive Plan, and the Climate Action Plan.

## The Portland Plan

Full text: <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=58776&a=398384>

- Support the vitality of Portland's neighborhood-based businesses through increasing connections to businesses (Economic Prosperity Goal)
- Meet Portland's needs for quality, affordable homes for current and future residents by improving accessory dwelling unit access (Economic Prosperity Goal)

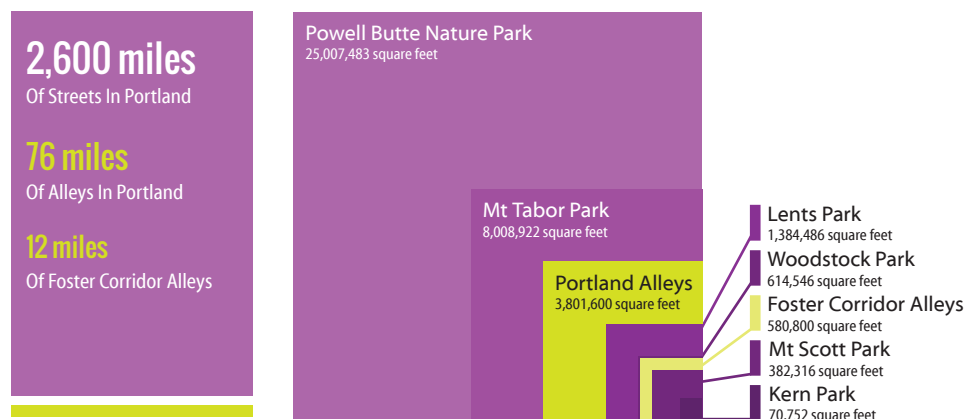
- Expand access to healthy food through community gardens planted in alleys (Healthy Connected City Goal)
- Provide parks and community gathering spaces by creating linear alley parks (Healthy Connected City Goal)
- Encourage the use of public art to beautify neighborhoods by painting murals or installing local art throughout alleys (Healthy Connected City Goal)
- Develop the network of habitat connections and neighborhood greenways by planting native plants in alleys (Healthy Connected City Goal)

## Portland Comprehensive Plan

Full text: <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=58776&a=398384>

- Support the vitality of Portland's neighborhood-based businesses through increasing connections to businesses (Economic Prosperity Goal)
- Meet Portland's needs for quality, affordable homes for current and future residents by improving accessory dwelling unit access (Economic Prosperity Goal)
- Expand access to healthy food through community gardens planted in alleys (Healthy Connected City Goal)
- Provide parks and community gathering spaces by creating linear alley parks (Healthy Connected City Goal)

**Description:** Alleys are a very small portion of the City's public right-of-way, but represent a large area of potential open space when compared to Foster corridor parks.







**Image:** Spraypainting and dumping are problems in this relatively well maintained Foster-Powell alley.

- Encourage the use of public art to beautify neighborhoods by painting murals or installing local art throughout alleys (Healthy Connected City Goal)
- Develop the network of habitat connections and neighborhood greenways by planting native plants in alleys (Healthy Connected City Goal)
- Reduce consumption of carbon-intensive foods by growing food in the neighborhood (Objective 14)
- Increase the consumption of local food by planting community gardens or orchards (Objective 15)

City of Portland and Multnomah County Climate Action Plan

Full text: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/>

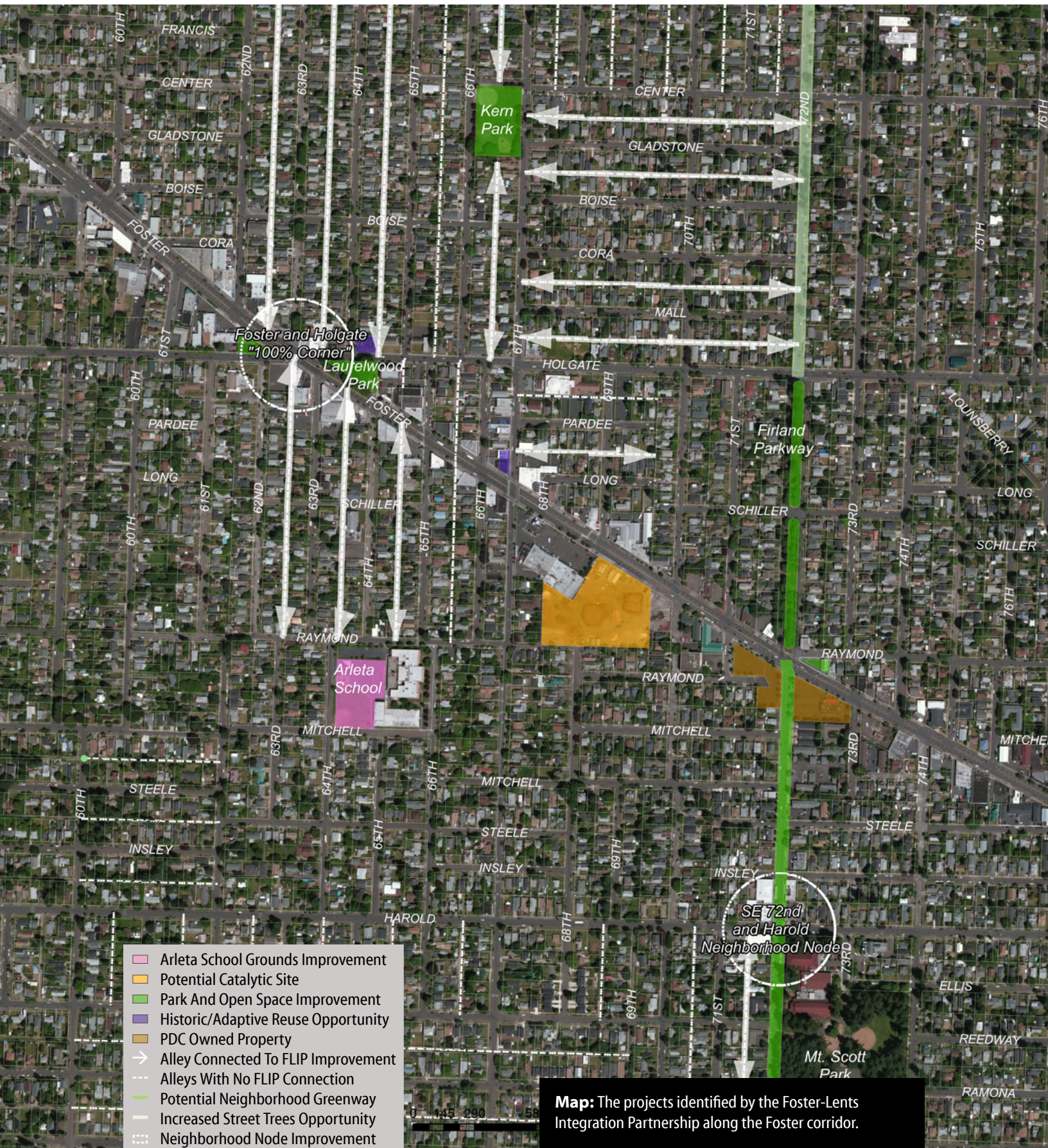
- Create neighborhoods where 90 percent of Portland residents and 80 percent of Multnomah County residents walk or bicycle to meet all basic daily, non-work needs by utilizing alleys for pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares (Objective 5)
- Safe pedestrian/bicycle access to transit by improving alley infrastructure (Objective 5)
- Reduce per capita daily vehicle-miles traveled by 30 percent from 2008 levels by increasing neighborhood connectivity (Objective 6)

### Foster-Lents Integration Partnership

<http://www.pdc.us/our-work/urban-renewal-areas/lents/current-projects/flip.aspx>

In 2012, the Portland Development Commission along with several other City agencies created the Foster-Lents Integration Partnership, as a part of the Lents Urban Renewal Area. The partnership was created to focus neighborhood revitalization efforts around sustainable infrastructure and neighborhood-based job creation. Alley revitalization was included as a priority project for the corridor. The following map illustrates the alleys that connect to key commercial corridors such as Powell Boulevard and Foster Road. The map also indicates alleys that connect to other Partnership focus projects.







# Why Now? Building Momentum

The Alley Allies project comes at a time of growing momentum in the community to make improvements to the corridor that will result in a more livable, vibrant place. With the establishment of the Foster Green EcoDistrict in 2010, the City's Comprehensive Plan Update, and investments from the Portland Development Commission, this is an ideal time for the Foster corridor community to come together around the revitalization and improvement of their neighborhoods.

- **2009:** The City of Portland and the Portland Sustainability Institute announced their intention to make the Foster corridor neighborhoods part of a citywide plan to create five pilot EcoDistricts throughout Portland
- **2010:** The Foster Green EcoDistrict Steering Committee was established representing a diverse group of interests including neighborhood and business associations, sustainability non-profits, farms and local food advocates, and community development organizations
- **2011:** Mt. Scott-Arleta neighbors undertook the “Alley-Oop” project as part of the Village Building Convergence, a place-making event held by Portland non-profit City Repair. The project identified an alley between 63rd and 64th adjacent to Foster Road and organized a neighborhood vision development workshop to gather community input for the alley's renovation.
- **2012:** The Portland Development Commission, Bureau of Environmental Services, Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Bureau of Transportation created the Foster-Lents Integration Partnership. The Foster Green EcoDistrict was asked to join the project to provide a community-based perspective. The goal of the partnership is to create an investment strategy that will focus neighborhood revitalization efforts around sustainable infrastructure and neighborhood-based job creation. Key elements of the partnership include a commercial property energy retrofit program and traffic safety and streetscape improvements along Foster Road between 52nd and 82nd Avenues. Alley revitalization was included as a priority project for the corridor.
- **2013:** The City extends its waiving of costly development fees for the building of accessory dwelling units until 2016, providing a window of opportunity for the establishment of housing off neighborhood alleys. The Foster Green EcoDistrict commissions graduate students at Portland State University to develop the Alley Allies program.



**Image:** A colorful mural on wall along an alley off Foster Road. Photo by Ryan Givens.



# Alley Potential





A visualization of a Mt. Scott-Arleta alley depicting potential improvements: Active bicycle use, street lights, benches, rain gardens to handle stormwater in the alley, and the addition of an accessory dwelling unit on the right.



Every city has unused or underutilized land that results in lost space. Alleys in Portland have remained underutilized for decades. These spaces can be used to improve the livability of neighborhoods and help meet a variety of community needs.

Our findings and recommendations are based on our work in the community over the last six months. We identified several neighborhood issues that alley improvements could address. We also mapped and analyzed data from a variety of sources including the City of Portland and Metro's Regional Land Information System. This analysis, briefly described in this chapter, allowed us to create a small number of alley types that were used for visioning and communicating with the public about the potential uses of alleys.



# Establishing Alley Types

To simplify our discussion of alleys with residents and focus our alley vision building process, we established a set of alley types based on an analysis of data from many sources. These included a large field inventory data set we created by surveying all alleys in the focus area, as well as existing data sets on crime, access to local amenities, and current land use in the parcels surrounding alleys.

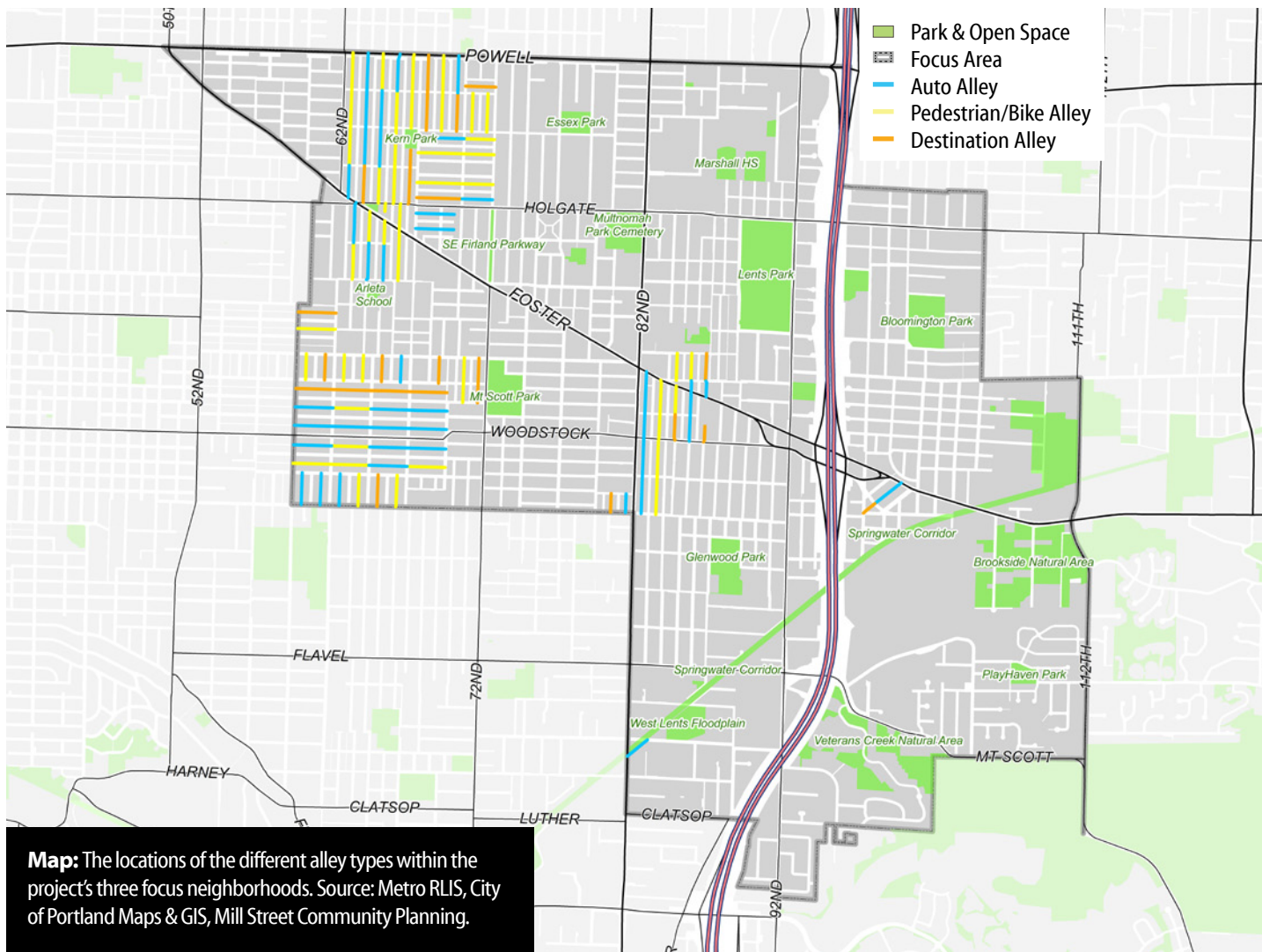
From this analysis we concluded that there are alleys that people travel through either on foot, bike or car, and there are also alleys that people may travel to, and enjoy the amenities provided by the space. This resulted in the following three alley types.

- **Auto Alleys** – These alleys have many auto access points such as garages and driveways and are used for auto access to homes. Additionally, they may be located along a major auto corridor such as Powell Blvd. or Foster Rd., making the frequency of auto traffic higher.
- **Pedestrian/Bicycle Alleys** – These alleys have high potential as a “low stress” and safe connector for pedestrians walking from their homes to neighborhood destinations according to our analysis of pedestrian scores. Additionally, the alleys are less traveled by autos than the auto-oriented alleys.
- **Destination Alleys** – These alleys generally show neither great importance for pedestrian nor auto connectivity. However, they hold potential for use beyond travel, such as community and neighbor activities. Some destination/amenity alleys are bordered by businesses that could use the alley space for commercial activities.



**Image:** Lined with garages and driveways, this alley is an example of a typical auto alley in Mt. Scott-Arleta.





## Findings

The project findings answer the following two questions:

- **What are the community's needs?**
- **How can alleys help?**

### 1. Safety and Maintenance

Findings from public outreach pointed to an overwhelming need for cleaner and safe alleys. The most common concerns identified in a survey of residents revolved around issues of dumping, drug use, lack of maintenance (primarily vegetation), graffiti, vandalism, litter

For more information on our process, public participation, and inventory analysis, review the **Background Report**.

and crime. One of the most common desires stated by respondents was simply that alleys become a clean and safe space. Findings from a community workshop reinforced this desire with lighting coming in as the top element participants desired and safety, vandalism and maintenance being the three most commonly discussed themes. Similar to the survey, workshop respondents identified lack of



maintenance, graffiti, vegetation overgrowth, dumping, and drug and alcohol use in alleys as some of the most common concerns.

### How Improving Alleys Can Help

Unused and unmaintained spaces can become spaces that attract crime, vandalism, and dumping. Well-maintained natural landscapes provide a sense of ownership and promote public participation in the community by having people come outside into public spaces and interact with each other. Alleys with high levels of

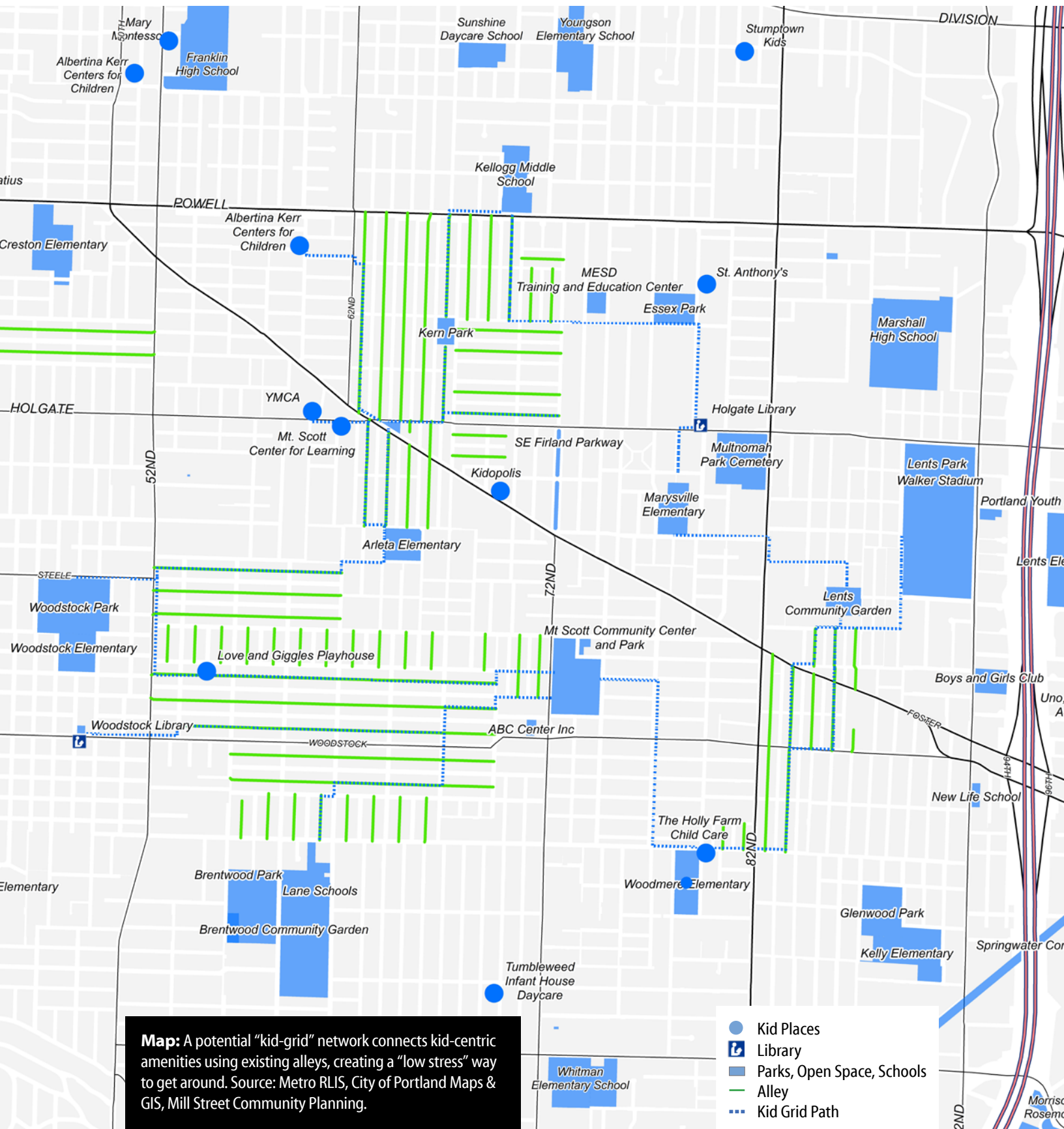
crime and dumping could be prioritized for improvements and maintenance plans to discourage these activities.

Alleys also have the potential to improve pedestrian and bicycle access for the community. By creating spaces that encourage more users, there would be more “eyes on the alley” to help discourage illicit activities. Improving alleys throughout the neighborhood can create a safe, walkable alley network. For example, alleys could become a “kid-grid” that connects important amenities for children such as schools and



**Image:** Lack of maintenance results in dumping and crime because outsiders assume no one cares about the alley. Signs of resident ownership can change this.







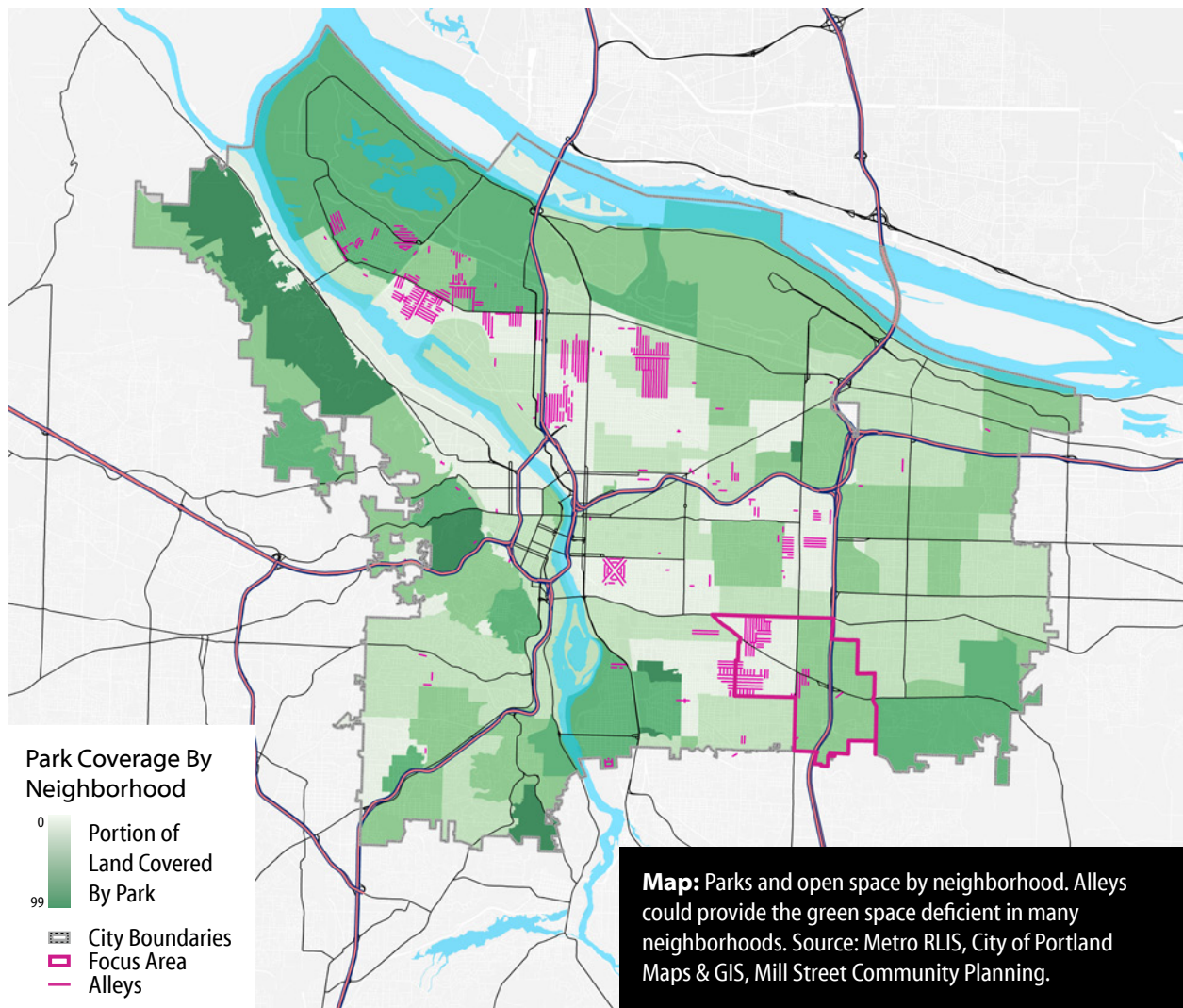
parks. A “kid-grid” is a concept utilized in Europe to create safe, well-connected, and “low stress” thoroughfares for young children to travel to and from home, school, and play areas.

## 2. Access to Nature

Our outreach shows that the community has a strong preference for alley improvements that retain a natural atmosphere. Though vegetation overgrowth was a commonly identified concern, we found that this was due to the perception that it restricted access and contributed to crime and safety issues. Participants also regularly reported that they liked the unpaved and natural

environment of alleys. We commonly heard that residents use alleys as a way to connect with nature and find a green refuge away from the urban environment. Some of the positive ways alleys are currently being used include activities such as gardening, growing flowers and urban foraging. These activities were featured prominently in the most desired alley improvements from the survey: gardening, food growth and green beautification.

Likewise, participants from coffee talk events on three pilot alleys identified the natural feel of alleys, gardening and blackberry picking as alley uses and aspects that should be preserved. They expressed the desire for some type of community ‘green space’ whether that







**Image:** City of Portland green connections, green space, and stormwater strategies can be served in the Foster corridor by the many unpaved alleys.

was provided with planter boxes, community gardens, urban orchards or a pocket park.

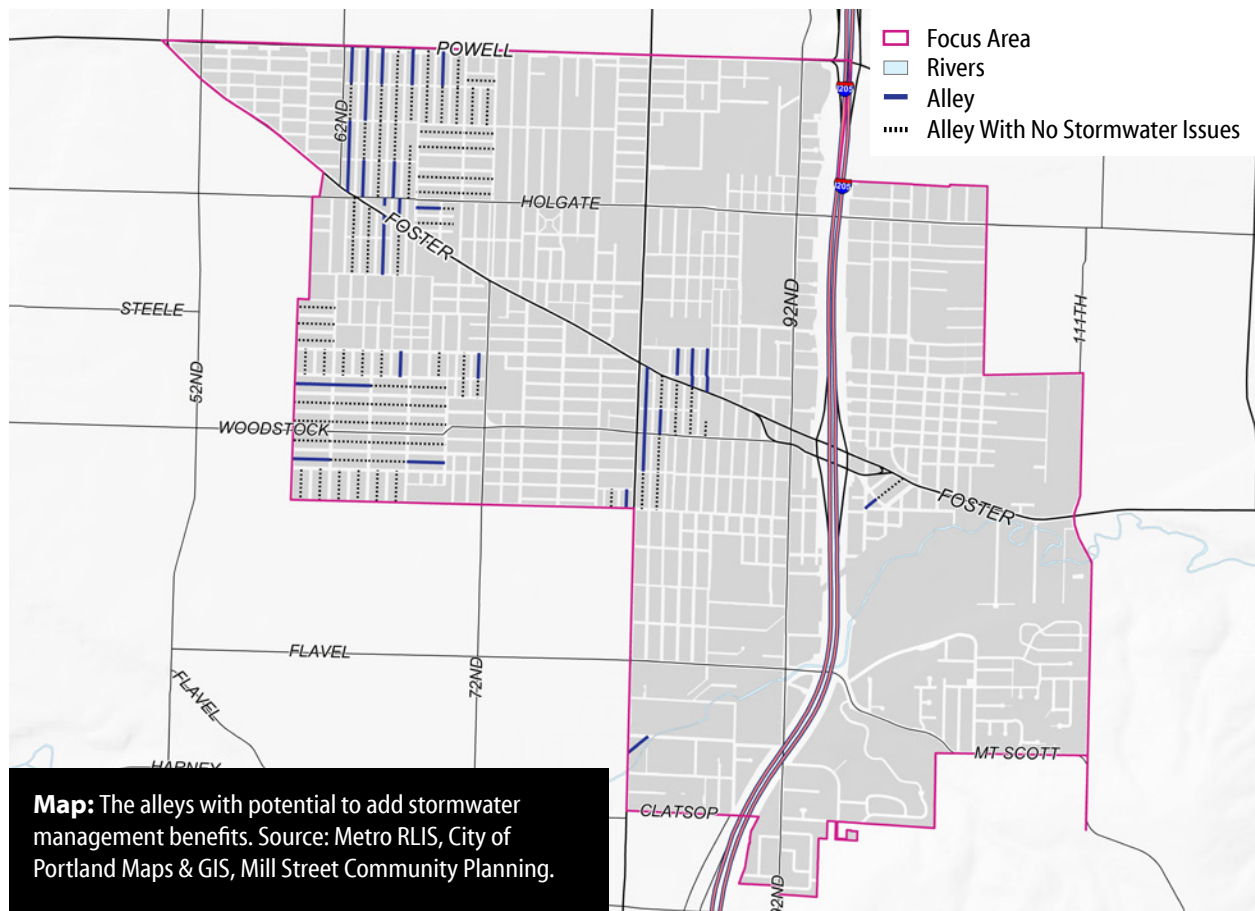
### **How Improving Alleys Can Help**

Alleys have the potential to create additional greenspace, serving as a valuable resource particularly in areas where residents have minimal access to park space and small or nonexistent yards on their property. If residents are interested in gardening or increasing their food security, food planters or fruit trees could increase green space while also providing for a

The **Toolkit** provides step-by-step guidance on creating greenspaces in alleys.

daily need. Alleys can also serve as ‘green’ connections by providing links to existing parks and natural areas. By identifying the location and quantity of these green spaces throughout the focus area, decision makers can identify which alleys can serve as additional green spaces and connections.





See the **Toolkit** for options that add amenities to alleys without the loss of garage access.

Along with the potential to provide additional green space and connections, reconceptualizing alleys as green infrastructure can provide numerous stormwater management benefits such as improving infiltration and groundwater recharge and heat island reduction. By mapping those alleys with potential stormwater management issues (those alleys identified as having large amounts of standing water or mud, a paved surface or a relatively low amount of vegetation and canopy coverage), decision makers can begin to identify which alleys would benefit most

from stormwater management solutions. Most green stormwater solutions involve planting a tree or utilizing native plants for rain gardens or swales. Residents can increase their access to natural spaces, while improving watershed health.

### 3. Alleys that Meet the Needs of a Variety of Users

Community input shows a desire for improvements that cater to a variety of uses and users. While speeding cars was a commonly expressed concern, participants still highly valued the vehicular access and parking services that alleys can provide. Importantly, participants were able to see the variety of uses that alleys can provide in addition to vehicle access. **Auto access does not preclude developing amenities**



### **in alleys that meet community needs.**

Residents also frequently identified safe and accessible routes for pedestrians and bicyclists as their ideal alley space and this was one of the most commonly listed desires that came out of the survey.

Community input also reflected a desire to use alleys as a way to connect with others. Suggestions that alleys be gated or vacated were few in comparison to the number of residents who wanted to see alleys turned into a shared space for the community to enjoy. Residents expressed concern about ‘unwanted users’ of alleys, including the homeless, trespassers, late night noise-makers, motorcycle drivers, and those engaging in various illegal or illicit activities. However, the desire to address these concerns did not seem to translate to a desire to privatize alleys. Our conclusion is that residents wish to address the negative use of alley spaces rather than exclude certain users. The focus is on providing community amenities.

### **How Improving Alleys Can Help**

Alley improvements can be small, medium, or large in scale and can be phased in over time. Strategies that improve connectivity and are affordable can meet a variety of needs.



**Image:** Small alley improvements, such as these vertical drawer gardens, can affordably bring beauty and art to an alley without encroaching into auto pathways. Source: Flickr - mazaletel.

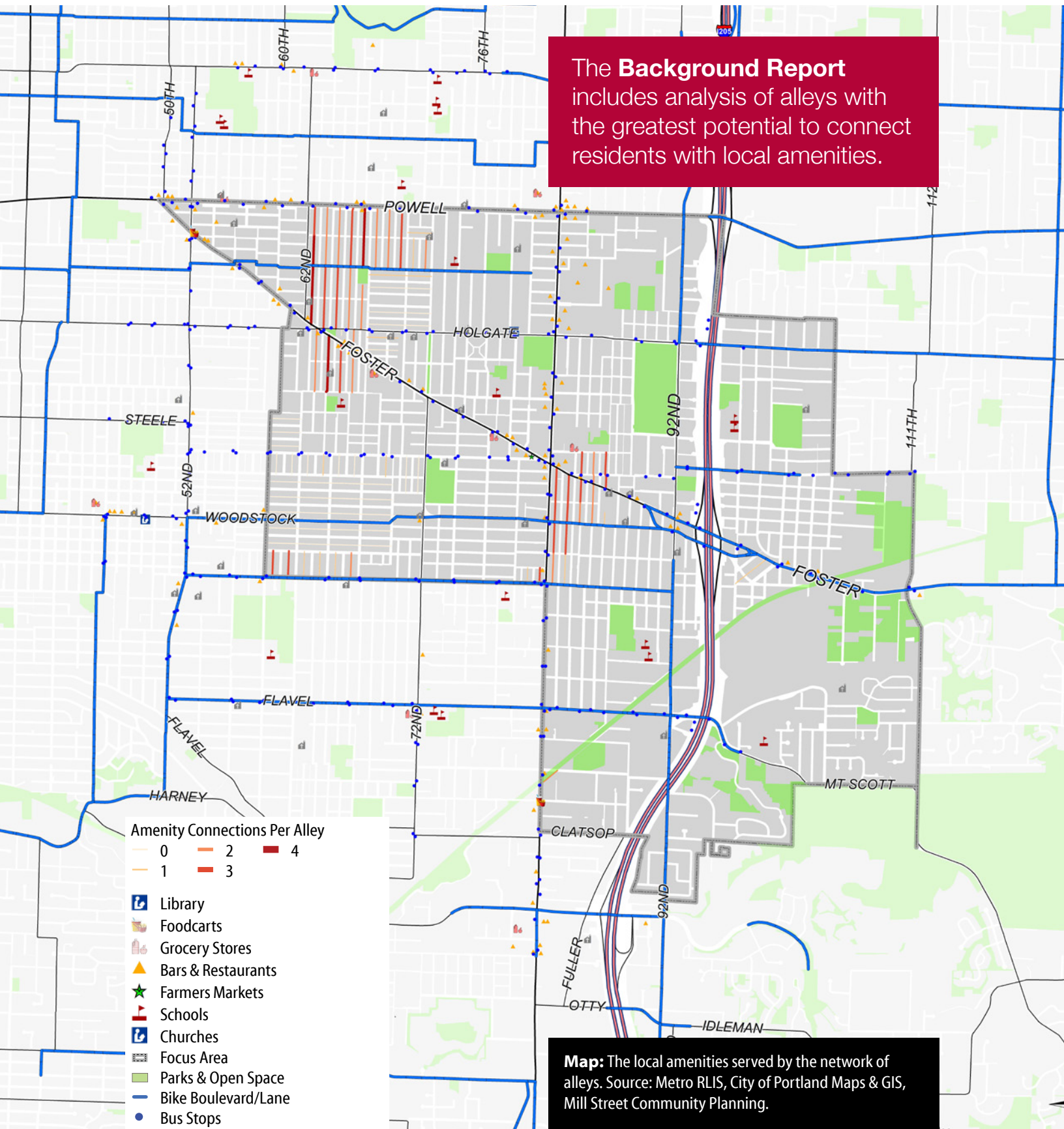
The alleys in the Foster Green EcoDistrict range in their potential to serve as important connectors to local amenities. Alleys near businesses could be great places for small café seating areas where neighbors can meet. Alleys could include wayfinding signs to guide people to community hubs or businesses, and could host community bulletin boards where neighbors could post local events or gatherings. By identifying local amenities and highlighting those alleys that directly connect to them, decision makers and implementers can begin to prioritize those alleys that would benefit most from improvements due to their location. The map on the following page shows the location of amenities in the Foster Green EcoDistrict (FGED) area and highlights those alleys that provide direct connections.



**Image:** Bulletin boards help connect neighbors and transform the alley into a community hub. Source: Flickr - cafemama.

Learn about different strategies  
in the alley improvement **Toolkit**.







Alleys are ideal access points for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). ADUs can provide affordable housing for individuals or families that desire or require a smaller, more affordable living arrangement. A majority of the properties in our focus area have enough space to build an ADU. Many North American cities have successfully recast alleys as important places for building and accessing ADUs. For example in Vancouver, BC, laneway houses along alleys are being looked to as a way to encourage sustainable development, density, affordability and aging in place. Many Portland residents are interested in constructing ADUs on their property to bring in rental income or create an additional space for family. The City of Portland has recently extended waived fees for the development of ADUs through 2016 to spur the local market for this housing. Early reports suggest an exponential boom in the construction of ADUs in Portland due to the achievable rents and the quick return on investment. Improved alleys could become quiet pedestrian streets lined with ADUs similar to the narrow roads of historic European cities.

Learn about the potential for ADUs on alleys in the **Toolkit**.

## A Broad and Diverse Array of Concerns and Desires

When it comes to alley improvements, the desires of the community are diverse. The survey showed the majority of participants sought clean and safe alleys. Findings from the community workshop showed a strong preference for a site plan that executed major changes to the existing condition of the alley, with the most common improvement being the resurfacing of

alleys. It seems natural that the community members themselves differ in terms of their needs and interests. Some residents are more inclined to focus on cleanup and improving safety while maintaining the allies' current uses. Other residents are interested in creating innovative public spaces that add new amenities to the neighborhood. We also observed age and socioeconomic differences in some cases in terms of the type and degree of improvements requested, however, we did not specifically analyze the interaction of these factors.

**Example Improved Alley**



**Current Alley Conditions**



This is just one example of what an improved alley can look like. Review the **Background Report** to check out all of our alley designs and our process for creating designs based upon resident concerns, values and needs. Read the **Toolkit** for guidance on how to implement a project like this in your alley.



# Recommendations





Attendees at the Alley Allies Community Workshop event on May 30th completed site plans and identified implementation barriers during a charette activity for a mock alley.

A group of people are seated around a long table in a workshop setting. They are focused on their work, with some looking at documents and others writing. The table is covered with various materials, including site plans, colored paper, and pens. The atmosphere appears collaborative and productive.

## Achieving The Alleys' Potential

Over the course of this project we conducted close to 40 expert interviews, made over 15 public presentations, held 10 of our own public events and had numerous informal conversations with other planners. Nearly every person said the same thing: This project is exciting and could reshape our neighborhoods – how can I be involved?





**Image:** Foster-Powell neighbors coming together to discuss their alley at one of the coffee talk events.

We have watched countless residents have the same ah-ha moment we had when we began this project, and realized the potential lying just beyond our own backyards. The passion and excitement of these activated residents reminds us that neighbors must be empowered to improve their own neighborhoods. Non-profits and organizational partners, and City agencies, must do their part by supporting residents with the vision and energy to reimagine their alleys. To help these groups move forward and capture the project's momentum, we have identified the following critical path for the next stage of the Alley Allies project. We must all do our part as Alley Allies, if we want to make the 2020 vision a reality.

## Our Approach

We framed our recommendations by asking what is preventing people from making alley improvements in their neighborhoods. This led to the core framework for our **Toolkit**

organization as well as the recommendation outlined below. These topics cover areas from policy to public education and capacity building.

## Recommendation 1: Create A City Policy On Alleys

While much of the information on how to undergo alley improvements can be found in city policies and standards, there are currently no clear policy measures for residents looking to improve their alleys. No standard operating procedures regarding alley improvements exist within the city agencies, and most staff have been unable to provide consistent advice. A streamlined policy framework would help give residents more confidence to improve their alleys while still allowing city agencies to play an active role in shaping alley redevelopment.



## Recommendation 2: Increase Awareness And Understanding

One of the primary barriers community members face in implementing projects is a lack of education about alleys and the benefits of alley improvements. We found repeatedly that many of the residents interested in our project had little knowledge about what could be done to improve their alley. It was easier for participants to identify and discuss the negative aspects of alleys than to envision the potential alley improvements.

The community also identified gaps in information they felt were essential to making alley improvements on their own. Community members highlighted the need for clarity on a variety of questions:

- Who owns the alleys?
- Who maintains the alleys and who would maintain improvements made?
- What type of improvements can be made? Is a permit needed for these improvements? Can improvements be made along entire length of an alley or only directly adjacent to property?
- What type of access do the utility companies and fire and safety services need?
- What if somebody damages the improvements made?
- Are improvements permanent or can the City come remove them whenever they like?
- Who can I talk to at the city to answer my questions?
- What are the potential roadblocks?
- How much is this going to cost?



**Images:** Neighbors learning about the possibilities for hosting events and making physical improvements to their alleys.

An important part of the project to-date has been public outreach and education. Through tabling at community hubs and events, holding public workshops and coffee talks, and presenting at neighborhood association meetings and local organizations, we have begun the process of answering these questions and informing the public about the potential of alleys. The **Toolkit** includes specific answers to each of the questions above in plain language that residents can refer to as they tackle their own alley projects. However, going forward, there is a clear need for an information campaign that reaches new members of the community and keeps those motivated who are already involved and excited.



## Recommendation 3: Address Limited Resident Capacity

Community members also stated a concern about their capacity to take on a seemingly complex and expensive process. Participants at the community workshop reported that they were busy and that if the process wasn't streamlined and manageable, improvements would be less likely to happen. Local residents made it clear that they would be more likely to participate if there was an organizing group that coordinated the alley improvement effort.

Participants at the workshop sought advice and information about various parts of the improvement process including:

- Determining what design options are suitable for their alley
- Collaborating with neighbors and reaching consensus on alley designs
- Navigating the permitting process and working with the City
- Seeking and obtaining funding
- Creating a maintenance agreement
- Determining costs
- Hiring and working with building professionals to implement projects

The **Toolkit** is part of the solution to these resident concerns. It provides information and guidance on nearly all elements, including neighbor agreements that can be adapted to specific projects. The other part of the solution will occur when local organizations and associations that seek to improve the community provide support to residents redeveloping their alleys.

The City agencies tasked with implementing the goals and objectives of

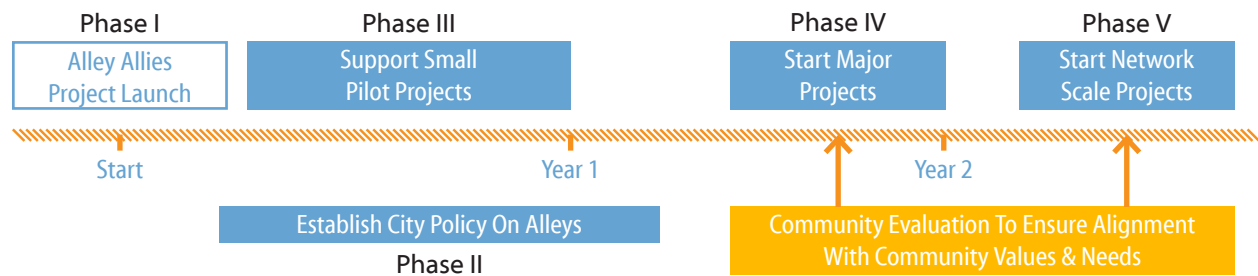
the City's Comprehensive Plan and other policies related to economic development, livability, and public health are also an important part of the solution. Alleys must be recognized for their potential to meet these goals. If their improvement meets City goals while reducing the City's responsibility for maintaining them, the project can be a win-win for agencies. The main thing needed is clarity of policy that provides the appropriate regulatory environment. City agencies should examine what interest they have in the alleys in the short- and long-term in their current unmaintained state, and whether improvements could be phased or incentivized to meet these interests while allowing residents to add needed amenities.

## Recommendation 4: Identify Project Roles And Responsibilities

We have identified steps that need to be completed in order to take the project through the next stage. Tasks include: Advocating for policies and collaborating with city agencies, conducting an information campaign, organizing neighbors, serving as a resource to neighbors for information and assistance and seeking funding. Interviews with Foster Green EcoDistrict Steering Committee members, Neighborhood Associations and other community organizations, show there is little clarity over which organizations have the capacity to carry out these tasks. **The success of the Alley Allies project will depend on the identification of an Alley Allies Lead organization to spearhead this process.** As the initiating organization for the project, Foster Green EcoDistrict could take on this role and/or delegate duties to others through this coalition.



# Critical Path



Based on our recommendations, we've created the critical path above for the Alley Allies Lead, partner organizations, agencies, and community members to follow. The release of this document marks the start of the Alley Allies Project Launch. **The tables on the pages that follow provide detailed actions for each phase along with proposed actors.**

## Detailed Breakdown

Alley improvements are likely to be a dynamic process. This critical path is meant to be a guide and starting off point. We hope that alley projects happen at all scales- some projects may be coordinated on a larger scale and some may happen more organically. We encourage the Alley Allies lead and other interested people and groups to seize opportunities when they arise.

### Phase I: Alley Allies Project Launch

Actors	Actions
Alley Allies Lead	Hire staff person (possibly Americorps position) to assist in leading and coordinating Alley Allies project.
	Copyright Alley Allies Name and Logo.
	Create a process for certifying those who wish to be official Alley Allies, possibly using signage to indicate alleys participating in the project.
	Build partnerships to support implementation of alley improvements.
Neighborhood Associations or Community Groups	Determine the role and level of involvement that each organization is willing to play in Alley Allies.
	Communicate this role and level of involvement with the Alley Allies lead.



## Phase II: Establish City Policy On Alleys

Actors	Actions
City Agencies Alley Allies Lead	Clarify agency policies and standard operating procedures regarding alley improvements, utilizing interagency coordination when relevant.
Neighborhood Associations or Community Groups	Pursue policy updates within the City Comprehensive Plan and ordinances which facilitate alley improvements. These should increase clarity without diminishing residents' freedom to improve their alleys.

## Phase III: Support Small Pilot Projects

Actors	Actions
Alley Allies Lead	Conduct an information campaign to generate awareness about ways people can become Alley Allies by improving their alleys or partnering with the project.
	Create a list of Alley Allies including volunteers, interested parties, and advocates.
	Link Alley Allies events and programming to existing events such as neighborhood cleanups and garden tours.
	Assist residents and businesses in pursuing the improvement strategies in the Alley Improvement <b>Toolkit</b> by providing information and links to particular organizations.
	Hold Alley Tours and celebratory events to highlight success.
	Place informational posters in alleys regarding the project.
	Work with City Repair, Portland Enrichment, or similar organizations to host DIY workshops for interested residents and businesses.
Neighborhood Associations or Community Groups	Help coordinate the creating of Alley Captains and Alley Committees for specific alleys.
	Help coordinate work parties in alleys participating in the project.



## Phase IV: Start Major Projects

Actors	Actions
Alley Allies Lead	Create Memorandum of Understanding outlining the Alley Allies project roles and responsibilities.
	Select pilot projects for major improvements with attention to neighbor willingness, equity, and alley potential.
	Create strategies for working with the three PBOT requirements for encroachment.
	Hold a design competition for pilot alleys.
	Pursue pilot project funding such as crowdsourcing, neighbor-to-neighbor funding, or grants.
	Hold an annual event to celebrate alleys.
	Implement major alley improvements in pilot alleys.
Neighborhood Associations or Community Groups	Encourage residents to take advantage of the system development charge waiver for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) set to expire in July 2016.

## Phase V: Start Network Scale Projects

Actors	Actions
Alley Allies Lead	Continue pursuing funding for alley projects (crowdsourcing, neighbor-to-neighbor funding, and grants).
City Agencies	Pursue zoning, code, and policy updates which facilitate alley improvements. For example, policies that could facilitate ADU construction along alleys or create an alley overlay zone for specific neighborhoods. Policy changes should address barriers faces and lessons learned in pilot projects and initial phase of the project that facilitate network wide alley improvements.

## Evaluation

Actors	Actions
Alley Allies Lead	Implement a community led evaluation to measure Alley Allies success and find areas for improvement.



# Conclusion

**Community members are excited about this project!** It's crucial that the project lead doesn't let that excitement fade due to a lack of presence. The Alley Allies Lead will need to ensure sure that this project stays on the minds of residents, local organizations and city agencies. They will need to continue to advertise the benefits alley improvements offer and provide information on how interested parties can become and stay involved.

**Conducting a pilot project is crucial in achieving the change needed to make the 2020 vision possible.** Pilot alleys can serve as a way to educate, verify the costs and benefits of improvements, test and build an implementation process and most importantly, build support for the project. If done properly, a pilot alley can serve as a model for the area, city and region.

**Those interested in making improvements shouldn't have to wait for institutional inertia or a change in the economic and political climate.** While advocating to city agencies for policy change is a vital step in achieving long-term change, some participants will not be content waiting for change sometime in the future. Many of the improvements outlined in the **Toolkit** are legal, feasible and offer benefits not only to adjacent residents but the community as a whole. The Alley Allies Lead will need to promote, encourage, and facilitate these types of changes to ensure community members feel supported.

**The potential for alley improvements to meet a variety of social, economic and environmental goals is high.** This project could easily link up with the goals

and objectives already held by City agencies and local organizations. Some of those potential links and partners have already been identified within the Plan but the Alley Allies Lead will need to continue to actively seek out potential partners for this project.

Some things are beyond the reach of local organizations. Regardless of partnership building, education campaigns and funding, some barriers can't be overcome without assistance from City agencies. **A supportive regulatory environment and a clear and logical process are essential in promoting change.** The Alley Allies Lead will need to actively pursue these issues and advocate to the city on behalf the project.

Small-scale, localized alley improvements can add vitality, increase pedestrian activity and in general, make the urban environment a better, more pleasant place. **The greatest achievement for this project would be to demonstrate that these positive results are scalable. Imagine a city where visually appealing, green and vibrant alleys are the norm.** Or a city where urban hikers could trek from one green space to the next on a network of linear alley parks. In order to do this the institutional involvement of the City and the inclusion of these activities into a long-term vision is essential.



# Thank You!

**Image:** Residents getting excited to start working on their own alley projects during the charette activity in May.

