



**AURORA
COMMONS**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2022 - JUNE 2023





Aurora Commons cultivates belonging and community to foster health and healing among our neighbors experiencing poverty and homelessness.



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Since opening our doors in 2011, we have seen firsthand how **love is a catalyst for health and healing**. Fear is a powerful barrier that can bind people to their past and make overcoming the tyranny of daily survival insurmountable. **To be welcome, to belong, to be seen, to be loved, these have the power to restore and to cast out fear.** You can be bridged to housing but not stay inside because you do not have the tools needed to process and heal.

We are privileged to witness when our unhoused neighbors wrap themselves in love and belonging and begin to heal, sometimes from a lifetime of neglect, trauma, and abuse; this is what keeps us going and fills our hearts with hope. Love and belonging are in the widest part of the “Commons Hierarchy of Needs.”

March 2020 forced us to drastically shift our operations in order to continue to support our neighbors experiencing homelessness and poverty. Like many others during this season, all the changes led us to examine our identity.

“Love and belonging are in the widest part of the “Commons Hierarchy of Needs”.

Elizabeth Dahl Helendi

Aurora Commons Executive Director since 2012

Through a beautifully iterative process, with generous amounts of feedback from our community, neighbors, staff, and board, I am happy to introduce you to our new mission statement.

Aurora Commons cultivates belonging and community to promote health and healing among our neighbors experiencing poverty and homelessness.

Our vision is to **co-create an equitable third space in a holistically healing way** in our permanent home. We plan to expand into the other available spaces on our property to enhance and grow our programs, and to integrate health and healing into our daily activities in ways we have only dreamt of, guided by our core values of **Hospitality, Connection, and Empowerment.**

We have been deeply impacted and forever changed by the giving and receiving of friendship on Aurora Ave, and we look forward to this next season with gratitude and hope. We hope you'll join us somewhere along the journey, **thank you to all of you** who already have.



YEAR IN REVIEW

VISITS TO THE COMMONS

15,724

13,854 FY22

NEW NEIGHBORS AT THE COMMONS

329

456 FY22

**MALE & GENDER NONCONFORMING NEIGHBORS
ACCESSED ADVOCACY**

426

388 FY22

**FEMALE IDENTIFYING NEIGHBORS ACCESSED
ADVOCACY**

266

218 FY22

NEIGHBORS MATCHED WITH HOUSING

26

22 FY22



206

172 FY22

146

106 FY22

2,574

2,720 FY22

158

130 FY22

NEIGHBORS ACCESSED SHE CLINIC

NEIGHBORS ACCESSED AURORA CLINIC

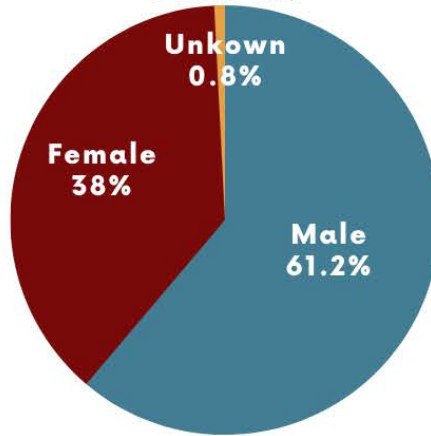
VOLUNTEER HOURS

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

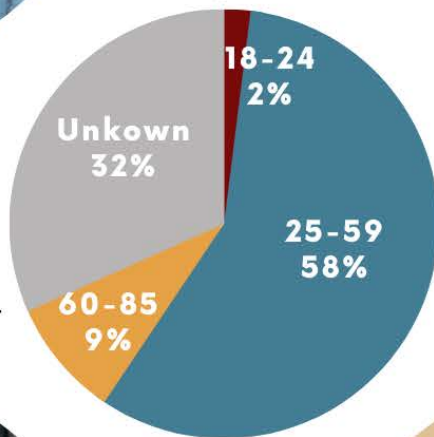
OUR NEIGHBORS



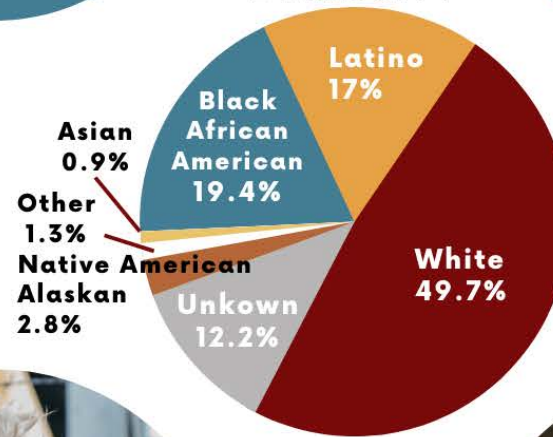
GENDER



AGE



ETHNICITY



“Thank you for accepting me even when I couldn’t accept myself”
-Commons Neighbor

“I just felt loved and wanted since I walked in the door.”
-Commons Neighbor



MEDIAN AGE
♀ 39 ♂ 50





We don't exist to fix anyone, but to provide space where others can see and lean into their own gifts and agency.
-Luke Sumner, Advocacy Manager

PROGRAMMING



15,797

Total visits to the Commons
12% increase from 2021

From our neighbors:
"It's good to be seen."

"Love is not a human right but a human condition."

HOSPITALITY

Curating a space where our neighbors feel seen, heard, and loved is at the heart of our drop-in programming. For much of the year, we continued to operate in a limited capacity with drop-in Monday-Thursday, 10 am-1 pm. In the last quarter, we were relieved to gradually phase out of COVID operations and welcome more people inside.

"Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place." - Henri Nouwen

"You guys are my home away from home."

"Thank you for accepting me even when I couldn't accept myself."

CONNECTION

We prioritize building trusted relationships with our neighbors experiencing homelessness over transactional ones.

EMPOWERMENT

We connect with our neighbors, and when they're ready our advocates connect them to resources to support their self-identified goals in their journey toward health & healing.

2,989

Total advocacy encounters:
number of times we met one-on-one with a neighbor



CLINIC PARTNERSHIP

Our clinic partnership with UW Harborview pioneered a new model of care being used as a framework for other low-barrier clinics throughout the city. Our clinics offer kind, non-judgmental, comprehensive healthcare.



Provides kind, quality, non-judgmental healthcare for **ALL** people living and working on Aurora Ave since November 2021.

578
TOTAL PATIENT
VISITS
146
UNIQUE PATIENTS



“I haven’t had a doctor for 15 years. Thanks to the Aurora Commons, I have a primary care physician...I’m now getting cured which is a huge thing for me.”

-Commons Neighbor



779
TOTAL PATIENT
VISITS
206
UNIQUE PATIENTS

Provides kind, quality, non-judgmental healthcare for **female-identifying neighbors** living and working on Aurora Ave since July 2018.



VOLUNTEERS



954 HOURS - DROP-IN SUPPORT

From keeping our space clean and supplies stocked for the day, to welcoming our neighbors with kindness and bottomless cups of coffee, drop-in volunteers support our community by in cultivating a welcoming space for our neighbors.



340 HOURS - AFTER HOURS CLEANING

Also known as our Space Beautification Teams, these volunteers help keep our drop-in space hospitable.

831 HOURS - HOT MEAL TEAMS

Our People's Kitchen has remained closed since March 2020. In the commercial kitchen at our partner Bethany Community Church, hot meal teams prepared over 15,000 meals to serve during drop-in programming!



238 HOURS - SORTING DONATIONS

Our community clothing closet is stocked by in-kind donations. Volunteers helped us sort **22,030 items** amounting to **\$159,610.14** worth of clothing donations.



Volunteering at the Commons has brought me in direct touch with my neighbors' humanity and in so doing, has deepened my own.
-Robin Di'Angelo

"My sentiments on these issues have up until now been abstract. I thought myself supportive but I did not actually interact with or come to know my unhoused neighbors or the women who work on Aurora; they have not been real people to me..."



Neighbors at the Commons provide what I like to call a "BS-free zone." That's a large part of why I'm there. I need to rejuvenate. **To re-center myself with creative, bright, and honest people who are experiencing life** and who welcome me into their journey. I'm so grateful.
-Mike Bass, Volunteer

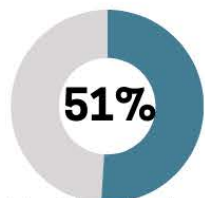
KNOWING THE NEED

HOUSING INSTABILITY & HOMELESSNESS:

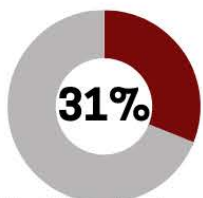
Looking around our city and neighborhoods, there is no question that our neighbors experiencing homelessness are in need of shelter. Looking more closely at the data, it is clear that the need for shelter is one among many challenges they're facing.

From the 2022 KCRHA Point-In-Time Count:

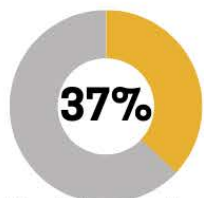
13,368 Individuals are experiencing homelessness in King County currently.



Identify as having a disability



Identify as having substance use disorder

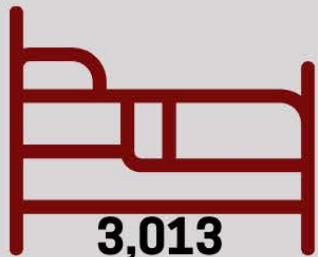
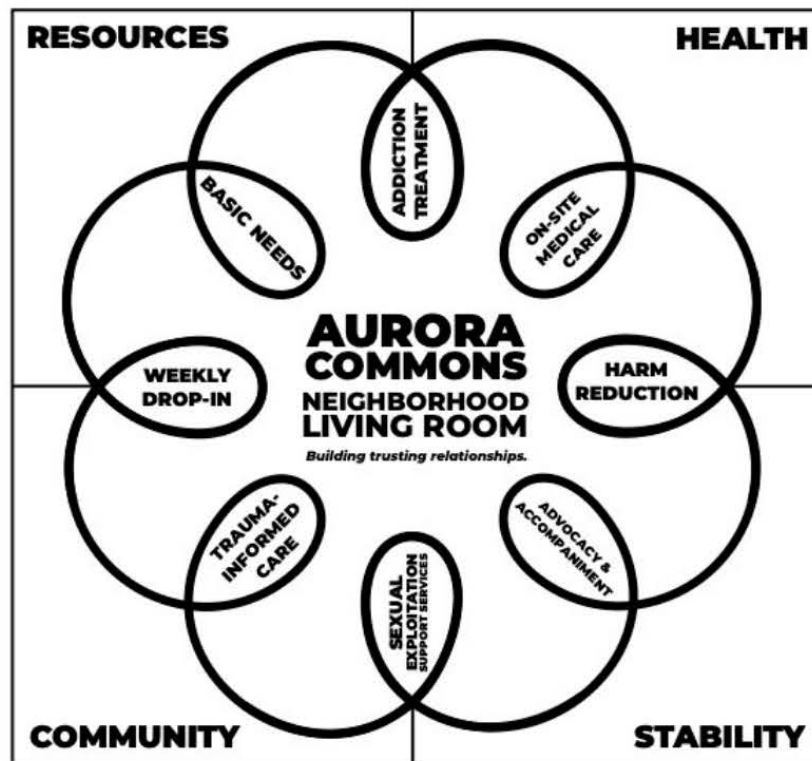


Identify as having mental health disorder

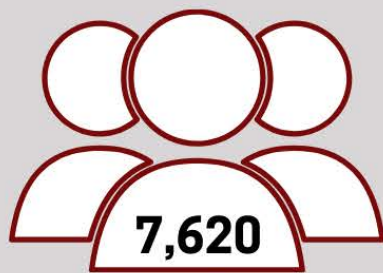
Rather than receiving shelter and appropriate care, unsheltered people with major health challenges are instead regularly engaged by police and emergency services.

-Testimony from Ann Oliva, Vice President of Housing Policy, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Addressing local challenges in Housing the Most Vulnerable

At the Commons, we know that housing instability is only part of our neighbors' stories. All of our programs, resources, partnerships, and open hours, are built around the strength of relationships and the needs of our neighbors, not the other way around.



Emergency shelter beds



Individuals in need of emergency shelter

127 Beds for individuals living with mental illness or co-occurring substance use disorder & mental illness

7 Beds for survivors of CSE (Commercial Sexual Exploitation)

84% of survivors of CSE seeking emergency shelter report having experienced homelessness

73 Beds for survivors of domestic violence

63% of homeless women have been victims of domestic violence as adults

WE REMEMBER OUR FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

KRISTI SERVATY

JENNIFER ESCOTO

ELIZABETH OLDHAM

GRETCHEN CAMP

JAMIE MONTGOMERY

ANNABEL SWANBERG

AL ELLIS

GARY BOVER

BOWSER

KEARAH SEDGWICH

APRIL LASON

JAMES PHITZNER

STEPHANIE "STEPH" BASAHM



PARTNERS

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Ballard Food Bank
Bethany Community Church
Beyond Project
Seattle Veterinary Outreach
UW Harborview Medical Center

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Catholic Community Services
Aurora Oaks (Lake City Partners)
DESC Host Program
Evergreen Treatment Services (ETS) REACH
Let Everyone Advance With Dignity (LEAD)
HOPE Team (City of Seattle)
Operation for Prostitute Survivors (OPS)
Real Escape from the Sex Trade (REST)
YWCA Gender-Based Violence Specialized Services
Salvation Army



THANK YOU for joining us in
cultivating belonging & community
with our neighbors.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

Aljoya Thorton Place
Awake Church
Bishop Blanchet High School
Black Market Skates
Bombas
Coyle's Bakeshop
Daniel Bagley Elementary
Divvyup
Emmanuel Anglican
Seattle Church
Emmaus Road CLC

Epic Life Giving Room
Family Works Food Bank
Fidalgo Coffee Roasters
Greenwood House Church
Hallows Church
I Support the Girls
Kavana Cooperative
Labels Consignment Clothing
Love Everyone As Neighbors
Meals Partnership Coalition
Mighty-O Donuts Tangletown
North Helpline

Northwest Harvest
OfferUp
Open Home Church
Phinney Neighborhood Association
Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church
Redemption Church
Robert Eagle Staff Middle School
Sackcloth & Ashes
Salmon Bay Friends Meeting
Sanctuary CRC
Seattle Biscuit Company
Seattle Central College

Seattle First Baptist Church
Seattle Humane Pet
Food Bank
Seattle School of Theology
& Psychology
Seattle Union Gospel Mission
Sea Wolf Bakery
Storyville Coffee
Super Jock 'N Jill
Woodland Park UMC

COMMONS STAFF

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALISTS & SUPPORT STAFF

Formally "Hosts", Community Engagement Specialists (CES) are often the first person neighbors meet in the space, they are the heartbeat of the Commons.

Jessica Liebenberg - Lead CES
Katie Ross, Lead CES
Charmayne Hanson, CES
Lea Mettier, CES
Bert Clapsaddle, Facilities Support

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

Community Advocates meet one-on-one with our neighbors to support them in pursuing their self-identified goals in their journey towards health & healing.

Mary Schmitz, Lead CSE Advocate
Natalie Neumiller, CSE Advocate
Sydney Diggs, Community Advocate

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Working together to keep the Commons on mission in our daily operations and in relationship with all members of our community.

Christina Smith, Development Manager
Colton Meo, Volunteer & In-Kind Donations Coordinator
Elizabeth Dahl Helendi, Executive Director
Lorie Ann Larson, Program Manager
Luke Sumner, Advocacy Manager
Sara Ewalt, Operations Manager



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Providing organizational oversight and accountability to our leadership team.

Brian Wyse, Board Chair
Jamie Clausen, Secretary
Mary Riski, Treasurer
Dan Wise, Director
Liza Skelton, Director
Carole Antoncich, Director
Laurie Olson, Director
Christin Gordanier, Director

CLINIC STAFF

UW Harborview offering quality, comprehensive healthcare at the Commons.

SHE CLINIC STAFF

Eve Lake, MD, Physician
Margaret Green, MD, MPH, Physician
Shireesha Dhanireddy, MD, Physician
Jessica Carrico, Nurse
Sherice Arnold, Medical Case Manager/Social Worker

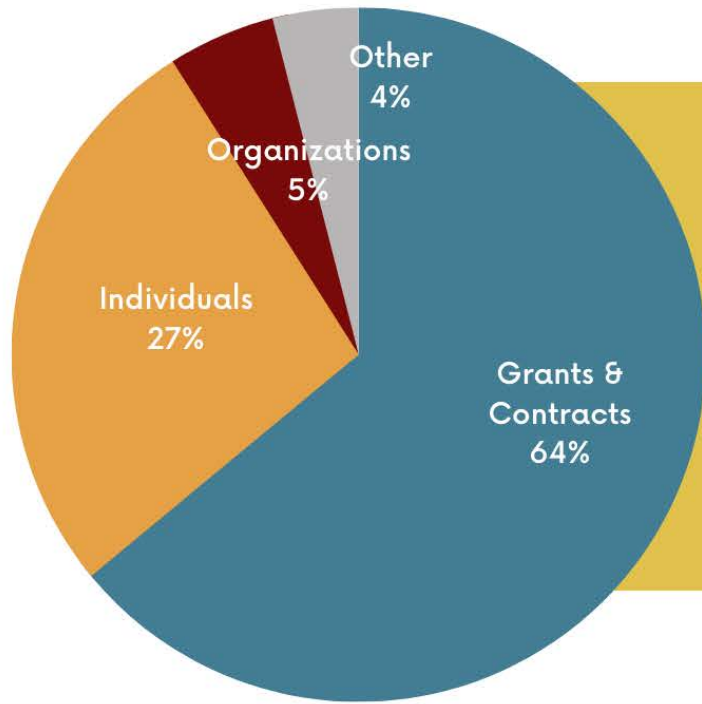
AURORA CLINIC STAFF

Maria Corcoran, MD, MPD, Physician
Raaka Kumbhakar, MD, Physician
Stacy Jones, Nurse
Tram Nguyen, Medical Case Manager/Social Worker

SHARED CLINIC STAFF

Matt Williams, Aurora & SHE Clinic Nurse
Ari Calderone, Clinic Program Coordinator

FY23 BY THE NUMBERS



INCOME

116 MONTHLY DONORS contributed 49% of our individual donor income. THANK YOU!

Our grant funding partners include:

WA State Dept of Commerce - Office of Crimes and Victims Advocacy

Public Health - Seattle & King County, Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative

City of Seattle - Human Services Dept, Mayor's Office of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

National Institutes of Health - University of Washington, Low Barrier Care

Program expenses include:

- \$59,132.35 in food purchases for the hot meals, to-go snacks & beverages offered to our neighbors.
- \$65,016.69 in program supplies which includes to-go paper products (lots of coffee cups), hygiene supplies, men's boxers to name a few.
- \$163,105.02 in neighbor assistance. Examples include new WA State IDs to qualify them for services through other agencies, phones to connect them their service providers, or emergency hotel stays to bridge them to services when there are no emergency shelter beds available.

EXPENSES

