

Planning Commission 2023 Annual Report



Commissioners

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Lisa Heller

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Michael Slater

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Commissioners through 2023

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Lisa Anderson-Ogilvie

*Deputy Community Planning and Development
Director and Planning Administrator*

Fred Wilson

Assistant City Attorney

Jennifer Biberston

Administrative Analyst



Overview

The Planning Commission consists of nine members appointed by the City Council. The Commission acts as an advisory commission to the City Council with a broad scope of concern in promoting the growth and orderly development of the City. Salem Revised Code Chapter 6 states that the Commission shall make and file a report with the City Council of all transactions of the Commission for the preceding year.

In the last year, the Commission had public hearings on three quasi-judicial land use applications including Comprehensive Plan/Zone Changes. The Commission also had public hearings on updates to the Unified Development Code covering various items as well as the Sign Code and the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) rule making.

Legislative Work

Code Amendments

Sign Code Updates: The Planning Commission has been working on the sign code re-write since 2022, when they held a series of work sessions to review draft language and receive testimony from the public. The Commission provided direction to staff that resulted in the proposal that came before the Commission as a proposed code amendment in early 2023. The proposed amendments, which were ultimately adopted by City Council at the end of 2023, were needed to address changes to technology, zoning, and community desires. The amendment streamlined the code, addressed mixed-use zones created in Our Salem, created a better process for limited deviations from the sign code, provided a better way to regulate sign brightness, limited billboards, and generally limited the size and number of signs allowed across the city to limit sign and light proliferation. The City Council requested Planning staff return to them with information on light proliferation and further restrictions on billboards, which may result in additional legislative work for the Planning Commission in the upcoming years.

CFEC: The Planning Commission also held a public hearing on amendment to the zoning code that was required to comply with new State requirements for Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) rules. This specific amendment was related to large parking lots and park and ride uses in the city.



Figure 1: Proposed multi-tenant signage

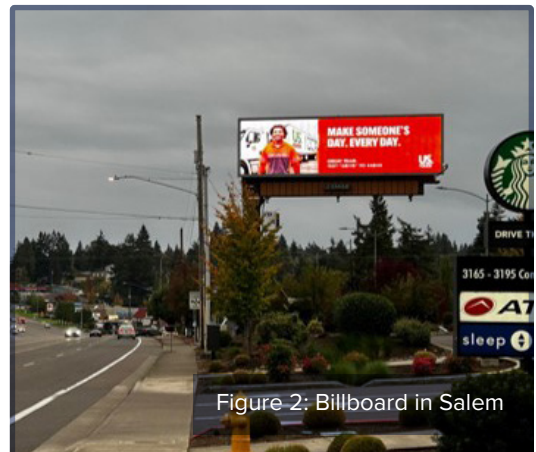


Figure 2: Billboard in Salem

Legislative Work (continued)

The purpose of the CFEC rules is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and to promote equity. The rules include multiple parts that the City will have to, or already has, complied with, including removing minimum parking requirements, creating walkable, mixed-use areas, and conducting regional scenario planning with our regional partners.

This proposed amendment, which was adopted by the City Council in late 2023, implemented two parts of CFEC rules: requiring large new parking lots to mitigate climate impacts and allowing existing parking lots to be converted to park and rides. The new requirements apply to new off-street surface parking areas larger than ½ acre and require the developer to provide a certain tree canopy coverage and either solar panels, or a fee in lieu. Fees collected will be provided to the Salem Housing Authority for climate mitigation projects.

Additionally, the amendment package allowed park and rides more broadly across the city and expanded where and how Single Room Occupancy (SRO) uses can be located. Both were required to comply with newly amended State law.



Figure 3: CFEC compliant parking lot

Legislative Work (continued)

Presentations

The Planning Commission sought multiple presentations to enhance their comprehension of ongoing projects and issues influencing development in Salem. These presentations served as occasions to offer constructive feedback to the staff on various projects, refine City Council recommendations, and deliberate on legislative policies.

City staff gave presentations on upcoming long-range projects that are expected to span several years and impact City policy. Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) rule making, phase 1 of the Salem Transportation System Plan (Salem in Motion) and the Goal 5 update were presented. The presentation covered the State requirements for these projects, the proposed timelines, outreach plans and how the Commissioners can be involved. Commissioners provided feedback to staff on the direction of these projects and plan to be involved throughout.

Public Works staff were invited to present on the design of McGilchrist Street, specifically the bicycle and pedestrian improvements that



Figure 4: Mahonia Crossing Development

Legislative Work (continued)

are planned. Street improvements are underway and additional improvements are funded in the Safety and Livability Bond. Public Works staff also presented an update on the Climate Action Plan and the Greenhouse Gas Inventory. Commissioner Slater was appointed to the Climate Action Plan Committee, as the only non-Council member.

The Commission had two non-staff presentations last year. Robert Delmar from the Oregon Department of Energy (ODE) provided a presentation on the 2022 Study of Small-Scale and Community-Based Renewable Energy Projects. The Commission engaged in dialogue with Robert on how small-scale and community-based renewable energy projects can benefit Salem.

The Commission extended an invitation to Dave Mojica and his team from Scott Edwards Architecture to deliver a presentation on the Mahonia Crossing development—a 313-unit affordable housing project located in south Salem. The presentation comprehensively addressed the design concept, funding sources, amenities and services offered, as well as the land use and permitting procedures. The Commission is actively seeking ways to contribute support to affordable housing developments within Salem.

The Commission explored the option of conducting a feasibility study for implementing solar panels, battery storage, and a microgrid at Salem Airport. Concurrently, the Airport staff is in the process of revising the Salem Airport Master Plan. Following discussions, the Commission decided to endorse the integration of the feasibility study into the ongoing Master Plan update and subsequently sent a letter to the City Council recommending this course of action. The City Council received the recommendation and approved the request.

Lastly, the Commission received a training on the roles and responsibilities of Commission members including ex-parte, parliamentary rules, and conflicts of interest.

Subcommittees

The Commission created three new subcommittee in 2023 to allow Commissioners to dive deeper into topics of interest. The subcommittee meet outside of Commissioner meetings and brought information to the full Commission. Subcommittees covered community design standards, riparian corridors, and energy conservation.

Upcoming Work

Housing Production Strategy

The City is embarking on a Housing Production Strategy (HPS) in 2024. The HPS which will lay the roadmap for City promotion of housing production. It will outline a list of specific tools, actions, and policies that the City plans to take to address the housing needs identified in our Housing Needs Analysis (HNA). Salem adopted its HNA in 2022 with the adoption of the Our Salem project. That multi-year project re-designated and rezoned enough land to accommodate Salem's projected housing needs, including land for multifamily housing.

Developing a HPS is the next step in helping meet Salem's housing needs by furthering the City's efforts to encourage housing choices, access, and affordability, while promoting equity and mitigating displacement. It will also help the City coordinate and advance housing priorities that have been established in Salem's updated Comprehensive Plan, the State's Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities rules, the Salem Climate Action Plan, the City's Annual Action Plan for federal funding, and other housing-related work. It is expected that the Planning Commission will participate in two joint work sessions with the City Council to discuss strategies for housing production.

Goal 5 – Riparian Corridor Update

Staff are preparing to launch the Riparian Corridor update project this year. The project came about due to a Planning Commission request to City Council to fund this project and direct staff to inventory Salem's waterways and adopt protections for them. It is anticipated to be a two-phase project, spanning multiple years. Planning Commission will be consulted at key points of the project.

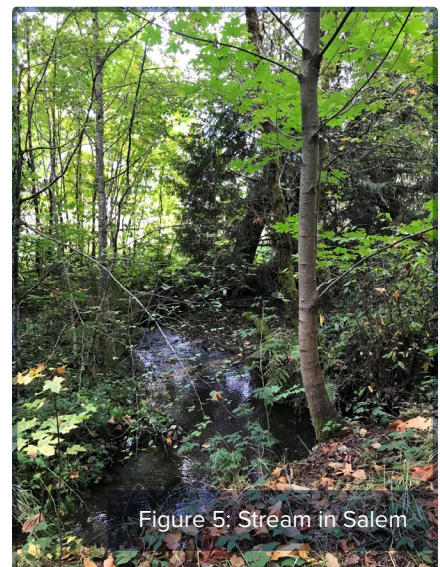


Figure 5: Stream in Salem

Upcoming Work (continued)

Salem in Motion

Staff have kicked off the update to the Salem Transportation System Plan (TSP), which is expected to be a multiple phase, multi-year project. The project – titled Salem in Motion – will address a variety of existing and emerging challenges and priorities, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and addressing equity in transportation investments and impacts.

This project will build on the goals and policies adopted through the Our Salem project and the transportation actions included in the Climate Action Plan. This project also addresses new State requirements for transportation and land use planning that resulted from the Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) rulemaking project. Phase 1, which is scenario planning with our regional partners, has begun.



Figure 6: Pedestrian crossing

Housing Developments

Although land divisions and housing permits are not frequently brought before the Planning Commission, the Commission actively oversees the housing land supply by reviewing annual staff reports.

This evaluation occurs particularly in the context of site-specific Comprehensive Plan Map and Zone Changes and during the review of appeals. The Commission has acknowledged the persistent demand for additional multi-family units in Salem, as evidenced in the City's Housing Needs Analysis. To tackle land supply challenges, the Commission has implemented site-specific zone changes and embraced zone changes established in the Our Salem project.

Throughout 2023, the development of middle housing, encompassing duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, and cottage clusters, has sustained growth since its initial permitting in 2020. Last year saw the issuance of permits for thirty-seven middle housing units, predominantly consisting of twenty townhouses and ten duplexes. The rise is further evident in the emergence of new subdivisions, particularly townhouse subdivisions and large developments mandated to allocate 15% of their units to middle housing. As a result, the projection indicates a continued upswing in the development of middle housing.



Figure 7: Duplex 661-663 Boone Rd SE



Figure 8: Duplex 6033 Fircrest St SE

Housing Development (continued)

The number of permitted Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) has once again risen, reaching 62 units in 2023, a notable increase from the 30 units permitted in 2022. Since the authorization of ADUs in 2018, the City has granted permits for a total of 211 units. Ongoing efforts are in place to promote increased ADU construction within the city. Notably, the City has temporarily waived System Development Charges (SDCs) for these permits, with the expiration of this waiver scheduled for this year. However, the City Council retains the option to extend or make this waiver permanent. In an initiative launched last fall, the City introduced ready made plans for ADUs in both English and Spanish, aiming to alleviate construction barriers associated with ADUs in the City.

Furthermore, the permitted additional housing comprises 311 single-family dwelling units, 33 manufactured dwellings, and 377 multi-family units. Notably, out of the 377 multi-family units, 171 were designated as affordable housing. In total, the year 2023 saw the issuance of permits for 820 new housing units.

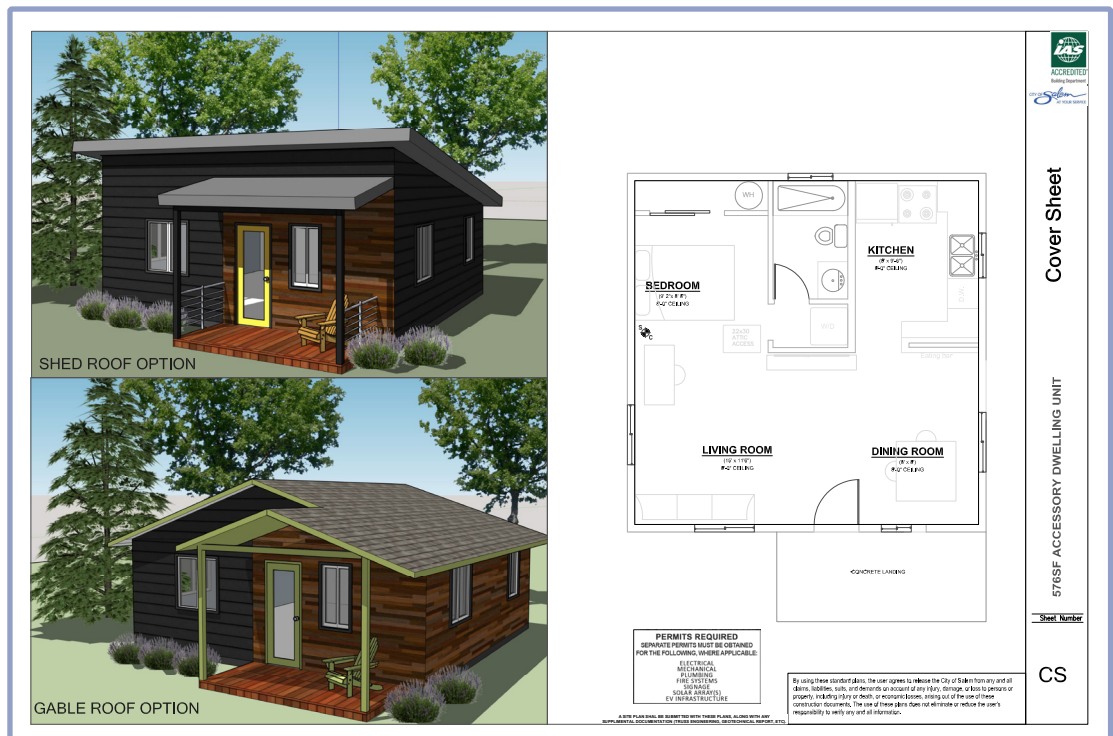


Figure 9 Ready made plans for ADUs

Ron Eachus

(August 17, 1947 – October 13, 2023)

In the previous year, Commissioner Ron Eachus tragically passed away during his vacation in Bhutan. Throughout his tenure on the Commission, Ron advocated fervently for an increased emphasis on energy efficiency in new developments and the implementation of more robust regulations to tackle climate change. Leveraging his substantial knowledge of Oregon's energy landscape, regulatory expertise, and legislative background, Ron made significant contributions during his two-year term. His dedication showcased his profound affection for Salem and commitment to shaping its future.

