



**Staff Report**

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**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**THROUGH:** Steve Powers, City Manager  
**FROM:** Peter Fernandez, PE Public Works Director

**SUBJECT:**

Salem Climate Action Plan Work Session

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Service Area(s): Safe Community; Welcoming and Livable Neighborhood; Good Governance; Natural Environment Stewardship

**SUMMARY:**

A City Council work session on the Salem Climate Action Plan is scheduled for September 20. To assist City Council in advance of the work session, this report summarizes the project approach, progress to date, and implementation strategies to meet the City's Greenhouse Gas reduction goals.

**ISSUE:**

Salem Climate Action Pla.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Information only.

**FACTS AND FINDINGS:**

Salem began developing its Climate Action Plan (CAP) in August 2020. In October 2020 Council established two goals:

1. Reduce Salem's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions 50% from 2016 levels by 2035; and

## 2. Be carbon neutral by 2050.

Verdis Group, a consulting firm specializing in climate action planning, was hired to assist in developing the CAP. A 33-member Task Force was established with a broad cross-community representation (Attachment 1). The Task Force has conducted five workshops that focused on vision, vulnerability, GHG forecast modeling, strategy development, and strategy priorities. The public has been engaged and informed throughout the process via online activities, public presentations, community events, radio interviews, public service announcements, and social media posts. Information was provided in both English and Spanish.

Salem is vulnerable to climate change impacts, including flooding, drought, excessive heat days (days with temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit), and wildfires in the region. These impacts can cascade, disrupting transportation, agricultural production, food supplies, and public health.

People of color, residents living in poverty, seniors, children, and people who work or live outdoors are impacted disproportionately by extreme weather. The CAP includes guiding equity principles to assist with implementation across the community.

To reach the goals set by Council, the Task Force, consultants, and residents of our community worked together to develop a variety of strategies for both GHG reduction and community resilience. Over 170 strategies in seven different action categories have been proposed (Attachment 2). Action areas include transportation/land use, energy, natural resources, economic development, materials and waste, food, and community/equity. The drafted strategies are still open for refinement and new strategies may be added. Each strategy is qualitatively assessed for GHG reduction potential, cost, lead agency, co-benefits, and timeframe for implementation.

A detailed, triple bottom line (social, environmental, financial) benefit-cost analysis was undertaken for ten strategies that have the City as the lead implementation agency and have high GHG reduction impacts. These ten strategies were selected by the three Councilors serving on the Task Force. The analysis showed that three of the 10 strategies had a positive benefit-cost ratio. These strategies were increasing parking fees, improving building weatherization, and expanding the urban tree canopy (Attachment 3). The benefit-cost ratios of the other selected strategies were more nuanced due to variables such as rates of adoption by Salem residents.

The next step in developing Salem's CAP is to prioritize the strategies based on their impacts on reducing GHG emissions; the City's ability to undertake the actions as a municipal government; and the ability to fund and staff the actions. Many of the strategies rely on partnerships with other organizations, such as Cherriots, Portland General Electric, and Energy Trust of Oregon.

Implementing Salem's CAP has a long timeframe; therefore, it will be essential to actively monitor progress towards the goals. The CAP should be considered a roadmap toward a desired future. This roadmap will need to be updated and amended to address emerging technologies, as well as changing state and federal regulations and initiatives. Priorities for implementation may shift over time and the CAP should be adjusted to stay current and maintain progress.

Reducing GHG emissions will require many actions by the City, businesses, nonprofits, partner organizations, and residents. Based on recent GHG forecast modeling it will be difficult for the City to reach the 2035 and 2050 goals without making significant changes in regulations, policies, practices, and behavior.

**BACKGROUND:**

Work on the Salem CAP began in August 2020. To date, five Task Force workshops have been held, and a final, sixth workshop is planned for October 27. In October, the Task Force meeting will focus on plan implementation.

All Task Force meetings are recorded and materials from the meetings are posted on the project website under the heading "project resources" at:

[.<https://salemclimateactionplan.com/project-resources>](https://salemclimateactionplan.com/project-resources).

Work on the Salem CAP is being closely coordinated with the Our Salem Comprehensive Plan update. Both plans will influence development and transportation patterns in the City, and both have the ability to reduce GHG emissions.

The goal is to present the final draft Climate Action Plan to Council on December 6 for approval.

Robert D. Chandler PhD, PE  
Assistant Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. Salem Climate Action Plan Task Force Members
2. Proposed Strategies for Salem Climate Action Plan v.16
3. Benefit-Cost Analyses for Ten Climate Action Plan Strategies