



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Keith Stahley, City Manager

SUBJECT:

The City of Salem is partnering with the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for the 2023 - 2024 academic year to advance City Council and community priorities.

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Result Areas - Good Governance; Natural Environment Stewardship; Safe Community; Safe, Reliable and Efficient Infrastructure; Strong and Diverse Economy; Welcoming and Livable Community.

SUMMARY:

The City of Salem is partnering with the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for the 2023 - 2024 academic year to advance City Council and community priorities to include implementation of Climate Action Plan strategies, principles of equity, communications and civic engagement, active transportation and mobility, and furthering 2022 Community Safety and Livability Bond priorities.

ISSUE:

Receive an update on the City of Salem's partnership with the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for the 2023 - 2024 academic year.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a year-long partnership, based out of the University of Oregon (UO), to help communities solve the problems of today and lay the groundwork for a

sustainable, livable future. The SCYP also help students prepare for the workforce through applied learning. For more, see: <https://sci.uoregon.edu/>

For the 2023-2024 academic year, beginning Fall 2023, staff are working directly with the UO SCYP to match high priority project ideas with available courses in the current academic year. The goal is to move further and faster than we would do without professor and student engagement. While we don't anticipate the student work will lead directly to construction of a building, for example, we do find that the work propels visioning to a state where we can take the next step.

Final reviews for fall courses took place in early December 2023. Winter quarter courses started in early January 2024. Spring quarter courses are set to begin in April. Below, find a listing of the courses completed to-date and those anticipated for Winter and Spring.

- **Climate Action Plan Implementation** Students researched a variety of priority topics from the City's 2021 Climate Action Plan.
 - **Marketing campaign (Fall)** The student team developed a positive community education campaign focused on "The Lowest Hanging Cherry - Stop Idling." The students prepared simple positive messaging of taking action to stop idling that could have a huge impact on the community - starting with a defined focus and strategies to include:
 - City employees leading by example through employee training sessions and communications efforts.
 - Educating youth, who in turn can help influence their caregivers, through school assemblies and a sticker drawing competition in partnership with local businesses.
 - Spreading awareness on the health risks associated with vehicle idling.
 - **Marketing campaign (Winter)** The student team will take on another community education campaign focused on adoption of heat pumps, in partnership with Salem's electricity providers. The campaign framework will center around heat pump equipment, equitable distribution, and installation.
 - **Planning for electric vehicle charging** within public rights of way throughout Salem. In a winter course, Transportation Policy students will identify electric vehicle charging opportunities within the public right-of-way. To support these efforts, student groups in will work on: (1) charging station allocation in through spatial analysis and quantitative analysis; and (2) identifying implementation opportunities and challenges with existing land use and other policy guidance for each area.
 - An Architecture/Environmental Engineering course this Spring will re-think Civic Center to integrate **passive cooling into Civic Center redesign** for seismic strengthening.
- **Equity in Operations Fee**
 - As we consider new utility billing software, students in this Fall quarter Public Budgeting course considered new ways of thinking about how to differentiate customer classes based on equity considerations.
- **Volunteerism and civic engagement**
 - This Fall, a Journalism course began thinking about what the **next wave of volunteers** look like and how do we engage them now (do we need to change) in volunteer opportunities (Library, Parks, Center 50+, etc.), Neighborhood Associations, Board and Commissions, etc.

- A Winter quarter course will consider **civic engagement and the digital divide**. To prepare, in December, the professor hosted conversations with media outlets and marginalized groups. This Engaged Journalism course will consider where people in Salem get their information and what tools and methods Salem can apply to better connect with our younger population and members of our cultural communities.
- **Transportation planning, policy and design**
 - A Fall quarter GIS course conducted initial **walkability assessments** (and gaps) of pedestrian corridors. In a follow-on Winter using GIS mapping, students will identify sidewalk or pedestrian-centered area gaps in: 1) Proposed Walkable Mixed-Use Areas (also referred to as Climate Friendly Areas); 2) Areas that have characteristics associated with traditionally under-represented populations; and 3) Salem Area Mass Transit District (Cherriots) Core Network.
 - In a spring **Ideas for Enhanced Bicycle Corridors** course students will review, evaluate, and propose recommendations for a variety of active transportation topics such as: enhanced bikeway corridors, family-friendly bikeway signage, and a bicycle counting program.
- **Planning for age-friendly community.** As the percentage of people age 60 and over is expected to increase at twice the rate of the entire population by the year 2030, intentional planning will be required to help this group remain healthy and engaged. Students from a variety of disciplines will support Salem in their efforts to make Salem a great place for people of all ages.
- **Parks system assets**
 - **Temporary neighborhood-scale pavilion.** UO Architecture and OSU Wood Science and Engineering students designed, fabricated timber modules, and constructed a temporary shading canopy to be assembled and disassembled seasonally. The temporary installation was designed for Salem's Highland Park for small-scale neighborhood park performances. Attached slide deck chronicles the students' assembly and presentation of final project (Attachment 1) and [article regarding the course <https://design.uoregon.edu/uo-and-osu-work-together-create-new-concepts-park-shelters-salem>](https://design.uoregon.edu/uo-and-osu-work-together-create-new-concepts-park-shelters-salem).
 - **Parks Conditions Assessment and mapping.** This winter and spring, landscape architecture students in a Spatial Justice Seminar and interior architecture students will provide recommendations on how to delineate park service areas and where there may be gaps in its facilities to effectively serve the people within the service areas, based on socioeconomic status, environmental benefits and burdens within the service areas. This will help shape need-based equity in developing the next Comprehensive Parks Master Plan, and allocating funding for renovations and development of new parks and recreation facilities. The analysis and recommendations will support the City of Salem's goal of incorporating equity considerations into the development of future parkland.
 - **Salem Parks Foundation Board diversity assessment.** This winter and spring, through a partnership between the UO's Nonprofit Management Consultancy and the all-volunteer Salem Parks Foundation Board, students will help the organization with board development including a greater representation of diverse groups that more fully

reflect the Salem community. Project deliverables would focus on a board assessment and diversity plan, to include a best practice review and staged plan with a timeline to guide implementation. Together, they'll answer key questions like: What does the next wave of volunteers look like and how do we engage them now and into the future? How can the Salem Parks Foundation grow and strengthen its board, especially with an eye toward diversifying membership (geographic and ethnic representation)? What elements of board best practice need to be considered to make leadership more accessible for new members?

- **Geer Park solar potential.** Students will collaborate with the City to investigate and contribute to the city's solar initiative by evaluating the feasibility of installing solar panels within Geer Park. This project is designed to offer insights and recommendations with a particular emphasis on policy considerations, neighborhood inclusion and trust building, cost analysis, and a comparative study with similar projects across the United States. Research questions to assess solar capacity and potential additional use cases include: What is the solar capacity of the park? What added benefits could potentially connect with other sustainable infrastructure goals? How could a similar project be replicated at other city sites?
- **Boardwalks for beavers.** Located in the Willamette River floodplain, with low areas are subject to frequent flooding, trail connections in Minto Brown Island Park are often submerged. Beaver recovery throughout the region has led to more extensive periods of flooding of selective trails - including a path around the East Field, which is currently inundated throughout most of the year due to nearby beaver dam establishment. A master plan for Minto-Brown Island Park, completed in 2015, identified the potential addition of a boardwalk to elevate and detour the East Field path around the problem area. The potential boardwalk would need to have a continuous width not less than ten feet and comply with Salem Public Works Design Standards for Shared Use Path. To allow for greater utilization, the project seeks to develop an elevated bypass approximately 0.25-miles in length as a boardwalk or causeway. Students from Portland State University Civil and Environmental Engineering will design alternatives that could be used to estimate probable construction cost and secure funding for final design and construction. Deliverables will include a site plan and typical cross-section for multiple project alternatives and a matrix differentiating alternatives based on key criteria (e.g., capital cost, maintenance cost, environmental impacts, user experience, other criteria identified by students).

BACKGROUND:

This year's SCYP partnership includes a funding match, through a grant the program secured from the federal Department of Education. Through an intergovernmental agreement, up to 20 courses at the University of Oregon will work on high priority projects for City Council and our community. The City of Salem last worked with SCYP in the 2010-2011 academic year. In all, we had 27 courses with more than 500 students thinking about our community that year. SCYP hosts the [final reports](https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/11432) <<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/11432>> and [media](https://www.dropbox.com/s/p7z464p2wgdu4nl/Salem_Press_Book.pdf?dl=0) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/p7z464p2wgdu4nl/Salem_Press_Book.pdf?dl=0> from that year on their website.

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Attachments:

1. Assembly of temporary park pavilion.