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PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN

DATE: **October 6, 2017**
TO: **City of Salem**
FROM: **BDS Urban Planning & Design**
SUBJECT: **September 2017 Engagement Summary**

This memorandum provides a summary of community and Council engagement activities that supported the development of Salem’s Strategic Plan during the month of September 2017. During this period, the City Council held a Work Session to consider the recommendations for actions from the Council Work Groups and the community responded to an on-line survey and participated in an Open House to offer their priorities on these proposed actions.

City Council Work Session

On Saturday, September 9, 2017, the City Council held a Work Session to consider the recommendations of the City Council Work Groups on seven priority issues for the Salem Strategic Plan. Over the summer months, City Council Work Groups were tasked with defining the goal or desired outcome in each area and identifying key actions to help the City make progress toward each goal. In many cases, community members and City staff worked directly with Councilmembers in the Work Groups discussions. The goal areas addressed included the following topics:

- Vision for Growth and Development
- Affordable Housing, Social Services, Homelessness
- Economic Development and Downtown
- Critical Infrastructure
- Sustainable Service Delivery
- Public Transportation
- Environmental Action

At the September 9 Work Session, the City Council heard public testimony, reported on the progress of the Work Groups, and considered proposed actions in each goal area. Following lively discussion, the City Council reached consensus on the language for the goals and actions. Members of the Council participated in a prioritization exercise in which they used a limited set of green dots to identify priority actions, a yellow dot to identify their highest priority action and a red dot to note an action which generated some concern. The results of this exercise are in the photograph below.



Community Survey

More than 670 people completed the survey either online or in hard copy at the at the September 19, 2017 Open House. The survey was intended to help identify community priorities among the proposed 35 actions in the draft Strategic Plan.

Some key learnings from the survey data were:

- The goals appear to be on the right track, ranging from a high of 88% “extremely important” or “very important” for fiscal sustainability, to 77% for affordable housing and social services and 65% finding the environmental action to be “extremely important” or “very important”.

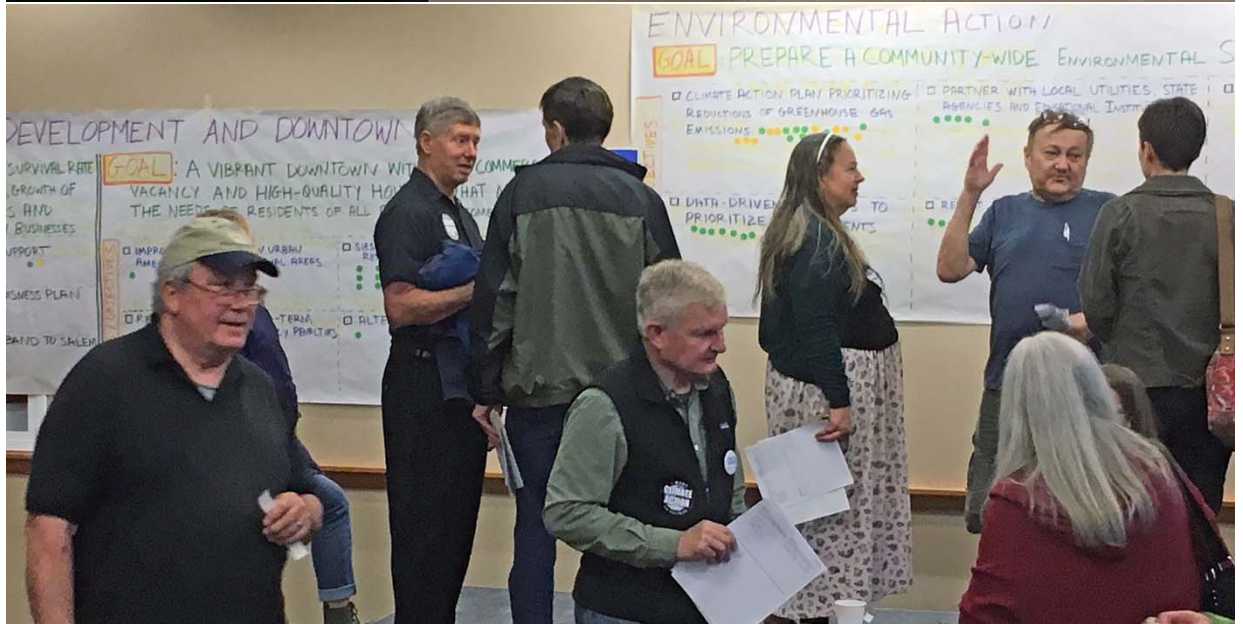
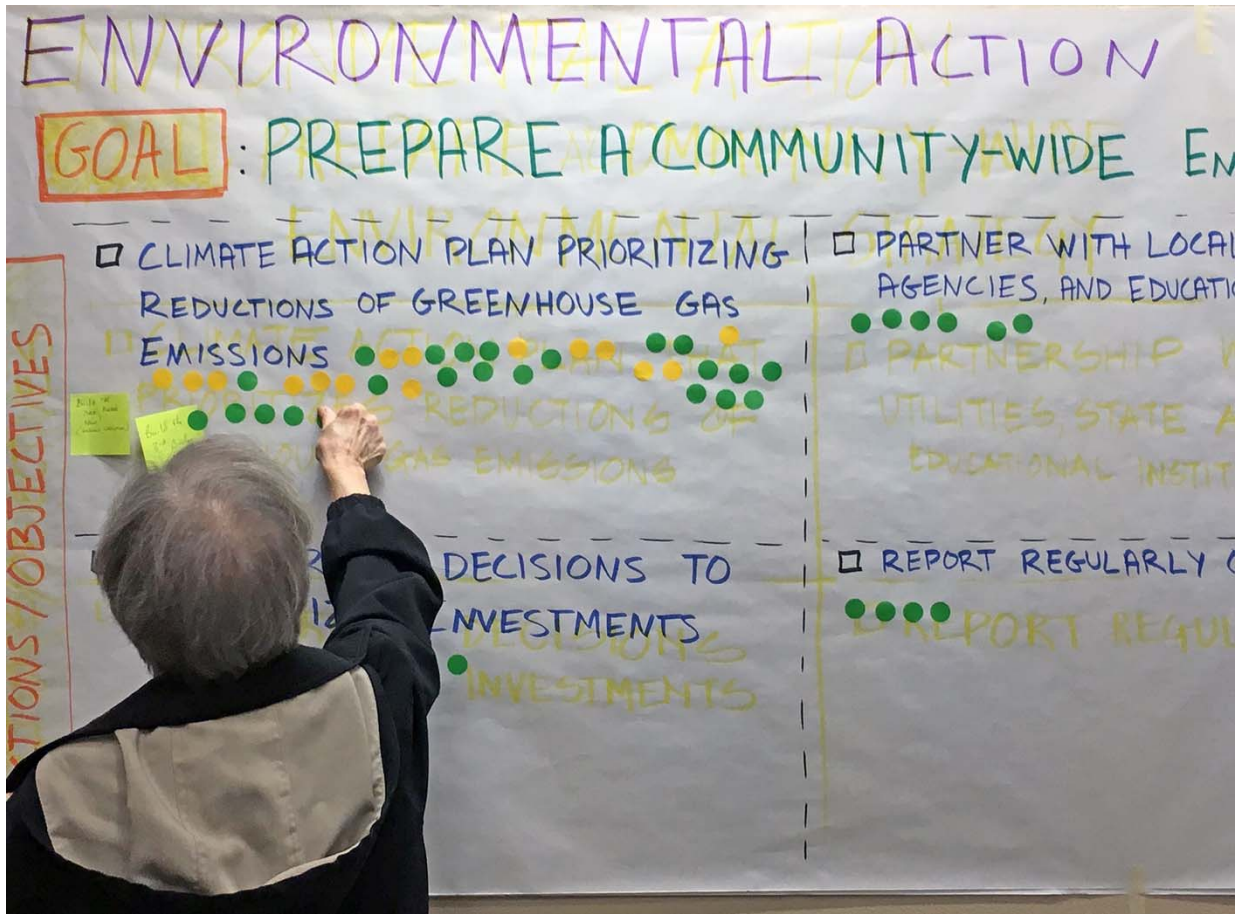
Goal	“Extremely Important” and “Very Important” Responses
Fiscal	88%
Vision for Growth and Development	86%
Economic Vitality (Job Creation)	84%
Critical Infrastructure	83%
Economic Vitality (Downtown)	82%
Affordable Housing, Homelessness and Social Services (Housing Security)	81%
Affordable Housing, Homelessness and Social Services (Housing Security)	77%
Environmental Action	65%

- The actions outlined in the Strategic Plan make respondents feel better about Salem being “on the right track and moving in the right direction.” At the beginning of the survey, 30% responded “completely agree” or “agree” to this question. At the end of the survey, 76% of respondents agreed that these goals and actions would set the City on the right track.
- The prioritization question, in which respondents were asked to identify their top three priorities for action among the more than thirty ideas, was not answered consistently by participations. The low response rate may show that the language was complicated, the task of assigning priority was difficult, or that people are clear about the intent of the outcomes (goal areas) and may not really be sure about how best to accomplish the goals (the actions).
- Of the 300 comments included in the survey responses, most address:
 - An interest in more public transportation.
 - An interest in addressing the needs of the homeless population.
 - An interest in building or in not building a new vehicle bridge across the Willamette River (these respondents offered suggestions for spending funds on other projects such as those which would build more sidewalks, bike lanes or bicycle infrastructure, etc.) An additional 27 surveys were turned in at the Open House which addressed only the respondent’s interest in a new vehicle bridge across the Willamette River.

Open House

More than 90 people invested their time to participate in an Open House on September 19. The somewhat lower attendance compared to the previous two Strategic Plan open houses may be a result of the online survey being made available in advance of the Open House, between September 11 and

September 25. It also may be indicative of overall satisfaction with the strategic priorities as drafted (or at least an absence of strong concerns over these priorities).



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At the Open House, participants were asked to consider the proposed actions for the Salem Strategic Plan at seven stations within the meeting space and, like Council, provide their priorities with green and yellow dots. Each station was staffed by a City of Salem employee who explained the goals and actions in more detail and was available to answer questions.

As in previous Open Houses, a few advocacy groups helped to drive public participation in the meeting. This helped to draw attendance, but also had the effect of skewing the in-person prioritization exercise toward one or two issue areas (specifically, the Third Bridge and Environmental Action).

Next Steps

- On October 23, City Council will consider feedback on the goals at the September 19 Community Open House, make revisions as necessary, and seek to adopt the Strategic Plan
- Moving forward, City Council will revisit the Strategic Plan each year in January, to consider feedback from the community, a residential satisfaction survey, and whether changes in policy direction are required to meet desired outcomes. The City Council's Annual Policy Agenda will provide direction to staff for the FY 2018-2019 Budget.