

Save Lives. Wear a Purple Sticker.

“Why should I care?” Great question. About so many causes that clamor for our attention, time, money, commitment.

Every day I get many emails from groups warning that if I don't ACT NOW, something horrible is going to happen. I delete most of them.

But don't delete this column, bro. Give me a chance to explain why you should care about a local issue that, if left on its current course, really could lead to some nasty things happening.

Lots of taxpayer money wasted. Downtown riverfront area uglified. Many lives being lost.

I'm talking about the City of Salem's \$80 million plan to build a new police headquarters at the Civic Center, along with renovating City Hall and the Library.

With financing costs added, the total balloons to \$128 million. Who pays? You do, if you live in Salem.

The good news is that Salem Community Vision (SCV), a group I'm involved with, has come up with a half-price alternative, \$40 million, or \$64 million including financing.

Build the police headquarters out in the community, not at the Civic Center.

This eliminates the need for expensive underground parking. Mirror Pond wouldn't be converted to a drainage swale. Views of the riverfront would be preserved instead of being blocked by a massive three story structure adjoining Pringle Creek.

More money would be saved by focusing on essential seismic upgrades to City Hall and the Library, rather than unnecessary niceties.

The City Council Chambers can be remodeled, rather than being torn down and rebuilt adjacent to Peace Plaza as the current plan proposes. The

SCV alternative preserves trees and green spaces at the Civic Center that would be removed in the \$80 million scheme.

The bad news? City of Salem officials, including Mayor Anna Peterson and City Manager Linda Norris, haven't shown any sign of changing course.

Even after hearing the excellent reasons to build a new police facility away from the Civic Center, Peterson doubled-down on this doubly-expensive plan in her recent State of the City speech.

When government won't listen to good ideas, citizens must speak louder.

The Salem City Council is going to discuss this issue at its Monday, March 24, 6:30 pm meeting. Salem Community Vision wants concerned citizens in the audience to speak silently — by wearing purple “Yes \$20M Police Facility” stickers (available at the meeting).

I'll be there. Join me. Lives are at stake. For real. This is a big reason why you should care.

Currently the Library and City Hall aren't earthquake safe. Likely they'll “pancake” in the Big One that is a matter of when, not if, it hits Oregon.

Seismic upgrades are essential to save the lives of visitors and staff.

But Salem voters probably won't approve a wasteful \$80 million bond measure. A lean \$40 million measure has a much better chance of passing: \$20M for a new police facility, \$20M for Civic Center renovations.

If you want to speak non-silently, contact City officials:
citycouncil@cityofsalem.net

Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city's Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like. Brian Hines blogs at hinesblog.com