



FAQ's Frequently Asked Questions

(1) Does Salem Community Vision support a new police facility and Civic Center renovations?

Absolutely. 100%. We just believe there is a better and less expensive way than what City of Salem officials are proposing. A new police facility should be built out in the community, not at the already-crowded Civic Center. And Salem Community Vision supports efficiently retrofitting the existing Civic Center buildings for seismic safety rather than doing unnecessary major cosmetic remodeling.

(2) What are the benefits of building a new police facility away from the Civic Center?

Saving about \$20 million, for one. The Civic Center site requires very expensive underground parking. A new police facility there also will disrupt existing green spaces and obstruct views of the riverfront. Plus, building at another location will stimulate economic redevelopment out in the community while supporting a community policing strategy.

(3) Why is the City so set on the Civic Center site?

It's difficult to understand why, early on, the Mayor and City Council decided that a new police facility should be at the Civic Center. Current reasons for preferring the Civic Center site aren't persuasive. For example, not taking private property off of the tax rolls. Saving \$20 million in construction costs will far exceed any lost property taxes and minor operational savings. (Note: leasing private property wouldn't result in any tax losses.) Another example: stationing a police officer at the Civic Center to provide security would be hugely less expensive than building a whole police station there for security reasons.

(4) Doesn't Salem Community Vision understand how important it is to seismically retrofit City Hall and the Library so lives are saved in a big earthquake?

We always have supported seismic upgrades to the Civic Center. Actually, it was the City of Salem that initially left out seismic retrofitting of the Library from its project budget. Salem Community Vision called for this before the City did. The City estimates that seismic upgrades to City Hall and the Library can be done for about \$10 million. We believe this is a reasonable cost.

(5) How does the City's proposal affect existing open spaces and trees at the Civic Center?

All, or almost all, of the trees would be cut down. Peace Plaza trees would be replaced with a parking lot at the west end and on the east by a new building that would house City Council chambers and a courtroom. Mirror Pond would become a drainage swale and have a large multi-story police facility looming over it.

(6) City officials deny that this project was planned in a secretive manner, but Salem Community Vision says otherwise. Who is right?

Well, we are. But don't believe us; believe the City staffer who wrote in 2011 meeting minutes that even members of the City Council weren't aware of what was going on with the project. And believe the *Statesman Journal* editorial board who said in 2013, "So far, one flaw is that officials, despite their good intentions, did not do enough to get the public involved from the outset." For several years citizens tried to get information about this project, but were rebuffed until full-blown plans were unveiled in the fall of 2013, too late for citizens to have genuine input into planning. From the start, project planning has not been done in an open way that would have allowed the public to easily follow and participate in the decision making process.



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(7) How much money can taxpayers save by pursuing the Salem Community Vision alternative to the City's \$80 million project?

Lots. The Salem Community Vision alternative would save taxpayers somewhere around \$64 million. Here's how we figure that. The City is planning a \$80.5 million bond levy that would end up costing taxpayers \$128 million, including 25 years of interest payments. Salem Community Vision's alternative plan for a police facility out in the community (\$20 million) and lower-cost Civic Center renovations (\$20 million) requires a \$40 million bond levy. Total cost with interest: about \$64 million. Which is also how much taxpayers would save: \$64 million. Half-price deal. Sounds good to us.

(8) Who are you guys, anyway? I've never heard of Salem Community Vision before. Are you a front group for somebody else?

No. Salem Community Vision was organized in November 2013 by local Salem citizens who have been involved in civic issues for many years. Most of us have served on City and Neighborhood boards and commissions in the past. We have no funding source other than our volunteer hours and out of pocket donations. Members of the steering committee represent a wide range of backgrounds, political views, and life experiences. Working to save taxpayers money and improve government decision-making are goals everybody agrees on. Salem Community Vision is open to anyone and charges no membership fee. Just go to our Facebook page and "Like" us to join.

(9) What's wrong with the City going ahead with its \$80 million proposal and letting voters decide whether to approve a bond levy for it?

The bond levy likely will fail. Polling done by the City of Salem shows that citizens are split on the need for the proposed project. The only hope for the bond levy is if it is as lean and cost-effective as possible. Currently, there is a lot of waste in the \$80 million proposal. Salem Community Vision wants a levy to pass. Given the near-certainty of another "Big One" earthquake, lives are in the balance. That's why we are pushing a \$40 million project for seismic retrofitting of the Center and a new police facility that has a good chance of being approved by voters.

(10) The City of Salem has put a lot of time, money, and effort into planning this project. Why should anyone believe Salem Community Vision has come up with a better way?

First, because two people deeply involved with Salem Community Vision, Geoff James and Gene Pfeifer, are a highly experienced architect and design/build specialist, respectively. They were instrumental in finding an affordable way to fix Marion County's Courthouse Square building. James and Pfeifer know how to cut waste and find more effective construction solutions. Second, (we'll frame this in the form of another question), have you ever heard of government officials being sure they're right about something, whereas they actually were wrong?

(11) City officials have been reaching out to the public, asking for ideas and comments on this project. Shouldn't we just trust the Mayor and City Council to do the right thing?

Bluntly put, no. So far officials at the City of Salem have viewed reaching out to mean this: "here's our \$80 million project proposal; reach out and accept it." While City of Salem staff have made numerous show-and-tell presentations to civic groups and neighborhood associations over the past couple of months, they have not been open planning sessions where the public can offer ideas. Excellent suggestions for building a new police facility and renovating Civic Center buildings at a much lower cost have been pushed aside.

For more information, check out the Salem Community Vision web site at www.salemcommunityvision.com and our Facebook page "Salem Community Vision".