

**1. Using a letter grade (A to F), how would you grade Salem’s economic climate? What is done well in Salem, and what could improve?**

There are a number of recent signs that indicate that Salem’s economic climate is somewhat improving, such as Garmin’s \$14 million expansion in 2015, NORPAC Foods’ recent addition of a \$25 million cold storage warehouse. However, I believe Salem would need sustained economic growth to catch up with the rest of Oregon. [Statistics](#) indicate that median household income in Salem in 2013 was \$43,436, but for the rest of Oregon it was \$50,251. Likewise, the median household income rose by 11.7% in Salem between 2000 and 2013, but it rose by 22.8% for the rest of Oregon.

In my opinion, there is a vibrant relationship between government (state, county, and city) and the nonprofit sector, especially in the social services arena. For instance, there are dozens of nonprofits in Salem serving inmates and their families alone.

I believe if we saw similar cooperation and coordination between public and private sector organizations, we could improve regional economic conditions. In particular, we need to foster this relationship to attract higher wage jobs and capital investments, alleviate infrastructure deficiencies, and remove regulatory barriers.

Overall, I’d give Salem a grade C.

**2. It has been indicated that West Salem will be the fastest growing portion of our community in the coming years. What is your vision of transportation connectivity to West Salem as growth occurs?**

Currently, the Marion Street and Center Street bridges in Salem are the only crossings of the Willamette River in the Salem-Keizer urban area. Unfortunately, increased traffic is causing congestion and the bridges and adjacent streets often operate near capacity. In my opinion, it is important to reduce the congestion and allow for free flowing traffic between West Salem and the rest of Salem. The most reasonable solution appears to be to build a third bridge.

It seems that economists generally agree that infrastructure spending boosts economic activity and employment, and it also results in private-sector productivity growth because it enhances productivity and makes firms competitive.

**3. Salem’s Police Department is currently serving the crime prevention needs of our community in an antiquated facility. A “Blue Ribbon Task Force”, led by Mayor Anna Peterson, recently came to the conclusion that a new police facility is a community necessity. What is your vision for the location and community investment level of such a project?**

I recently took the initiative to request a tour of the current police facility, which was built in 1972 when Salem’s population was about half of today’s population. I was astounded at the cramped quarters for officers and staff, lack of storage for evidence, privacy, locker rooms, interview rooms, holding cells, etc. The existing space is clearly insufficient for officers and staff to efficiently and effectively serve Salem citizens. I believe that a larger, modern, and up-to-date facility is desperately needed. And, the new facility must allow for a few decades of growth in Salem.

In my opinion, a new police facility should be centrally located for easy access, and, if possible, in somewhat close proximity to city hall. In addition, I believe it should be located on (or very close to) one or several major thoroughfares. This increases visibility and allows for shorter response times.

Public officials must be prudent in their expenditure of public funds. In my opinion, this does not necessarily mean aiming for the lowest possible acquisition cost. Other factors to take into consideration are life cycle cost (maintenance, lost opportunity cost, etc.) and eventual replacement cost. It is important Salem citizen understand this as they’re asked to vote on a bond and may experience initial sticker shock. (For comparison’s sake, the new [South Cooper Mountain High School](#) in Beaverton will cost about \$148 million when completed later this year. It has 330,000 sq ft.)

**4. The homeless in Salem – particularly in our downtown core – continue to be underserved. How does the City integrate into a better solution toward caring for those in need?**

The 2015 [Homeless Count Report](#) for Marion and Polk counties indicates that there were approximately 1,660 homeless at the time, 346 of which were chronically homeless. These are staggering numbers. At the core of homelessness is the inability to afford or maintain housing. Any plan to end homelessness must include the creation of affordable housing. Secondly, in order to maintain housing and leave homelessness, citizens must have income.

The city cannot solve this issue by itself, but it can connect and ally itself with other local and state government entities in the area, as well as the non-profit and for-profit sector. I believe the Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative is a step in the right direction.

In addition to immediate help, I believe the city needs to work with the business community to attract businesses to Salem and stimulate investment. Furthermore, the city can help promote workforce development, for instance, by supporting the new Career Technical Education Center. This will require a long-haul commitment.

**5. City of Salem’s retiree benefits create unfunded liabilities in future budget projections. As an elected City leader, what would be your approach within this reality?**

In April 2015, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that the legislature cannot retroactively decrease pension benefits that were previously promised to public employees. Consequently, the City of Salem will have to increase the percentage of payroll expenses it contributes toward expenses.

Unfortunately, this leaves the city with two choices: Increase its revenue stream, or resort to cost cutting; obviously, neither is a pleasant option. In reality, the solutions may lay somewhere in between.

I believe that current leadership may not have exhausted all available options for increasing revenues. For instance, the city may want to consider opening up to advertising, such as selling ad space on downtown garbage bins , or selling naming rights to a public facility, such as a pool or parkade. (These arrangements could be temporary.)

Secondly, I believe the city can optimize collections by making it easier for citizens to pay for items like parking tickets, citations, or permit fees. For instance, the city’s current vendor CitePayUSA maintains a website that is not cell phone compatible. Citizens who wanted to pay a parking ticket on the spot are currently not able to do so. What if citizens could remove a parking ticket from their windscreen, immediately scan a 2D barcode or QR code with their cell phone that automatically takes them to a screen to pay the fee?

**6. The North Campus of the Oregon State Hospital is currently for sale. What is your vision for this piece of real estate?**

I believe the 44 acre site that formerly housed the psychiatric hospital is the largest single property currently for sale within city limits. This is an incredible opportunity for Salem to design an entire “inner city” neighborhood from scratch.

In my opinion, it is important to add substantial portions of the property back unto the property tax rolls, possibly through the development of a mix of single and multifamily homes—including affordable housing that lines up with question #4-, retail, as well as light commercial businesses that serve the residents, for instance, banks, dentists, boutiques, cafes, etc.

**7. Would you support or oppose establishing a business license and where should the revenues generated from the fee be spent?**

I’m not opposed to a business license philosophically. However, citizens and City Council need to be aware of several issues: Fees, like taxes, impact the cost of doing business and have an effect on business decisions, such as whether to incorporate, and how and where to invest. In addition, they impose barriers on the expansion of small companies.

Also, city council would have to be clear on the purpose of a license fee. If the purpose of the fee is to regulate businesses and provide consumer protection (similar to, say, licensing of massage therapists, attorneys, or CPAs), then the fee should not exceed the cost of administering the program.

However, if the purpose of a fee is to increase general fund revenues, I believe it is important that a connection is established between those who pay the fee and those who receive a benefit from the services the fees finances. So, if a business license fee is established it must have a positive net effect on Salem's economic health.

**8. Would you support an ordinance [similar to Corvallis'](#) requiring businesses inside the City of Salem to pay a living wage?**

I believe this question is somewhat incorrect. ORS 653.017 currently prohibits cities to institute a local minimum wage law akin to San Francisco in 2014 or Seattle in 2015. It is important to clarify that the Corvallis Living Wage ordinance is not a minimum wage law.

The Corvallis ordinance does not impact all businesses in the city. It applies solely to businesses contracting with the city, the actual contract, and only if the contract exceeds \$10,000. Businesses that don't contract with the city are unaffected, even if they are within the city limits.

In my opinion, any instance of government interference with the dynamics of a free economy generally has unintended consequences. For instance, the Corvallis ordinance also establishes a complaint process allowing employees to request an investigation if they feel entitled to -but did not receive- a Living Wage. These investigations require additional FTE and divert city employees from their regular duties. This impacts city services.

Another consequence is that Corvallis now pays more for services involving workers earning low wages. Consequently, Corvallis has to either raise revenues or provide fewer services in order to make up for the increased cost.

For these reasons, I would be very hesitant to support a similar ordinance for Salem. At a bare minimum there would have to be a comprehensive analysis of the potential consequences and a thorough exchange with affected stakeholders.