Assisting an Urban Sustainability Transition: Exploring the Partnership Between the Sustainable City Year Program at the University of Oregon and the City of Salem, Oregon

by

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Abstract

Each year, the Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) partners with local governments in Oregon to provide support to sustainability projects. In attempting to understand the potential for change toward sustainability within the SCYP-Salem Partnership, this paper finds the case is best explained with reference to the philosophy of American pragmatism which focuses on the central role of social experience in identifying and framing problems and taking action on solutions linked to durable visions. From the pragmatic perspective, the Partnership shows evidence of having stimulated new directions in actual practice which may prove to produce more sustainable outcomes. Leveraging the potential of the SCYP centers on using the partnership: a) to unpack complex problems and abstract social aspirations into real, implementable projects and proposals; and b) to demonstrate and stimulate the formation of community dialogue about the actually existing opportunities for incremental improvement and the visions which flow from them.

Keywords: Service-learning, city-university partnership, local government, urban planning, sustainability, sustainability transition, communities of inquiry, American pragmatism
Dedication

To my son, and to all the sons and daughters who inherit the world. May we succeed in preserving what is here.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my wonderful wife for encouraging me and doing *everything* else so that I stayed focused.

Thank you to my senior supervisor, Meg Holden, for giving feedback that kept me reaching higher and asking more challenging questions. My reasoning and my writing has grown sharper because of you.

Thank you to the staff at the City of Salem and especially to my liaison for happily giving so much of your time and making it possible for me to do this research.

Thank you to all the teachers and guides that I have had on my academic journey: Anthony Perl, Karen Ferguson, Janet Moore, Patrick Smith, Erich & Barbara Schellhammer.

Thank you to the folks at the SCYP and at the City of Salem for striking out in an exciting new direction. I hope your work inspires many others.
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List of Acronyms

AES  Actually existing sustainabilities
SCYP Sustainable City Year Program
UO   University of Oregon

Glossary

city When spelled with a lower-case “c”, city refers to the urbanized region.
City When spelled with an upper-case “C”, City refers to the incorporated local government. This is the more common usage of City in this paper.
1. Introduction

This paper undertakes a case study of the Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) at the University of Oregon (UO). Each year, the SCYP partners with one or more local governments in Oregon to provide support to sustainability related projects. Over three consecutive academic quarters, classrooms at the UO focus on advancing research and design projects put forward by the partner. The SCYP’s website reports that, in a typical year, over 400 students from 10-12 disciplines contribute over 40,000 hours to the partnership. In their words:

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a simple and yet radical re-conceptualization of the public research university as catalyst for sustainable community change. Through our innovative service-learning model, the SCYP helps small and medium-sized cities transition to more sustainable frameworks. ...

The SCYP addresses … the problem of outdated problem framing and a shortage of local professionals with sustainability and livability knowledge...through a multidisciplinary effort to assist each partner city with its sustainability-oriented goals and projects. Students and professors work on topics developed jointly by instructors and city staff, ensuring that student ideas are relevant to communities. ... Our partner cities benefit directly from bold ideas that propel fresh thinking, improve livability for residents, and invigorate city staff (SCI, 2012).

This research study explores the 2010-2011 iteration of the SCYP when it partnered with the City of Salem in Oregon (hereafter referred to as the SCYP-Salem partnership). Of the three cities which have partnered with the SCYP at the time this research started, Salem was the best choice for an exploratory research study. The first partnership with the City of Gresham in 2009-2010 was a pilot test, and the partnership with the City of Springfield in 2011-2012 had not been completed.

The SCYP aims to be a resource for accelerating the transition to more sustainable frameworks but it does not prescribe any particular framework. During an interview with one of the co-founders of the SCYP, I asked about the conversations that
have occurred on the matter of defining sustainability within the program. When they were conceiving of the SCYP, the co-founders decided not to spend much effort talking about the meaning of sustainability because they felt this would be a drain on their effort. The co-founders and the faculty who are involved feel that their teaching and research work is related to sustainability in that it focuses on reducing environmental impacts, reducing carbon emissions, increasing social equity, and enhancing economic development. As for the process of change, the co-founders of the SCYP see sustainability, not as a definitive end state, but as a direction that city-regions need to go. In their view, the core problem is that the city-regions with which they aim to partner are struggling to make progress toward sustainability because of “outdated problem framing and a shortage of local professionals with sustainability and livability knowledge” - the immediate challenge, as the SCYP sees it, is overcoming inertia.

The partner cities' perspectives on sustainability have been varied. For Gresham, the first partner, sustainability plays an important role in its strategy to develop an identity which is not simply as a suburb of Portland. On the other hand, Salem and Springfield were clear at the start of the partnership that, while they wanted the engagement with students on sustainability related issues, they had to be very careful in their use of the word sustainability because it was caught up locally in controversy around climate change and the so-called Agenda 21 conspiracy (more on this in Chapter 3). The staff at the SCYP acknowledged the political reality in Salem and Springfield, saying that labels didn't matter, what mattered was that work got done and that there was a sense of movement in the community and for City staff. In the SCYP co-founder's words:

We said “no problem”, we're perfectly fine talking about economic efficiencies, community quality of life, and those types of things that are all related to issues of sustainability. I mean when it come down to the day to day things that you implement at a local level, whether they are policies, or new building practices, or new urban design, or new ways of community engagement, they are only [related to] sustainability because they add up to something big. The individual decisions are always about something else, about improving a part of the neighborhood, or using resources more efficiently, or tilling the soil for new redevelopment to happen but in a different way.
This perspective on sustainability echoes an argument made by Krueger and Agyeman (2005) in a paper titled “Sustainability Schizophrenia or Actually Existing Sustainabilities?”. In their paper, the authors argue that, at present, the implementation of urban sustainability in North America is more accurately viewed as an incremental evolution of existing practices. These practices - which they term ‘actually existing sustainabilities’ - are “those existing policies and practices not explicitly linked to the goals of or conceived from sustainable development objectives but with the capacity to fulfil them” (Krueger & Agyeman, 2005, p. 411). The authors propose a new, more hopeful, way to assess the progress that city-regions are making toward sustainability; rather than looking for overarching paradigm shifts in local governance and planning, an approach which Evans and Jones suggest is “doomed to discover failure” (2008, p. 1421), the actually existing sustainabilities perspective looks at the potential for existing practices to evolve, to add up to something big. Throughout the essay, Krueger and Agyeman are careful to point out the provisional nature of their argument, that existing practices may lead to a more sustainable city-region and they place emphasis on the processes by which existing practices and actor relations are evaluated, transformed, and linked. In other words, sustainability initiatives could result in incremental progress toward a more sustainable city-region but they could also result in an incoherent mishmash of practices and projects which make no difference to City staff or to residents. This is the converse of the perspective quoted above from a co-founder of the SCYP: that individual activities which do not add up to something big are not related to sustainability despite the virtue of the original intent or the apparent rationality of the ideas which inspired the activities.

While there is merit to avoiding a prescriptive approach to sustainability (because, as the experience with the City of Salem reveals, it could potentially alienate City staff, City Councillors, and residents for whom the term is problematic, and because, as Krueger and Agyeman (2005) propose, a prescriptive view may miss important opportunities for change which flow from existing practices and policies) some framework is still needed in order to assess the potential for a set of initiatives to contribute to change toward sustainability. This research study aims to deepen understanding about how the SCYP can contribute to change that adds up to something big, that makes a difference in the work of City staff and in the lives of residents.
One comment made by a co-founder of the SCYP during our discussion about conceptualizing sustainability underscores the core rationale for this research study: “[When conceiving of the SCYP] we knew [sustainability] was not a definitive thing, it's a direction that we're trying to go; and once we get closer to achieving something that we might all agree is sustainable, well we can worry about the details then.” How will actors be able to assess, at some future moment in time, that their communities and practices are more sustainable than they were before? What will be the core criteria? When asked about their definition of sustainability, one staff member at the City of Salem commented that many people define a sustainable city as “one whose budget covers its cost and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future.” When asked what was unsustainable about Salem, another staff interviewee responded that nothing was unsustainable. There are community members who do not see sustainability as a desirable policy framework. How will these differences be integrated such that the details of further change can be worked out? The central goal of this research study has been to ground the SCYP-Salem partnership, and by extension my own analysis of the partnership, in a conceptual framework for evaluating the potential for change toward sustainability. I have pursued this aim using an inductive approach beginning with the questions: What took place during the partnership, how do those involved perceive the outcomes and benefits, and what are the central problems being addressed? I then undertook an extensive search through the literature on a diversity of topics related to urban sustainability in order to identify a conceptual framework which helps explain this case.

I argue that American pragmatism, in the tradition of John Dewey, is best suited to explaining the SCYP's implicit program theory and to understanding the broader processes of decision making and social change which the SCYP and Salem aim to effect. Pragmatism is relevant to the SCYP-Salem partnership because it has been interpreted and used within planning theory for at least as long as planning has been interested in addressing sustainability (e.g. Holden, 2008a; Scott, 2007; Hoch, 1984) and arguably much longer considering Dewey's relationship with Jane Addams and the settlement house movement which influenced the development of urban and social planning practice in the US (Shields, 2003).

A pragmatic process of inquiry can help the city arrive at a locally relevant agenda for action. The final vision of Salem as a sustainable city and the action plan to
move toward that vision will be justified by the democratic process out of which it emerges rather than by an appeal to abstract or decontextualized principles of sustainability (Thompson, 1996, p.187). Pragmatism's central tenet of finding meaning through action, of learning, reframing problems, and generating knowledge through observation of the difference that actions make, is implicit in the SCYP's program philosophy. Sustainability related initiatives (or in Krueger and Agyemans's terminology, actually existing sustainabilities) are those activities which are viewed by a diversity of communities to make a difference in the longer-term project of transition to a more sustainable city-region. The proposals contained within the SCYP-Salem reports could play a role in helping to reframe and widen the dialogue about urban change and sustainability. The key is whether the City can use the experience of the SCYP-Salem partnership to increase engagement and dialogue on goal setting and action planning and avoid polarization on big-picture issues, a diminution of options and creativity, or simply the reproduction of the status-quo.

Chapter 2 of this paper outlines the research methodology. Chapter 3 elaborates the pragmatic philosophy which guides my analysis. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 employ pragmatism to describe and evaluate the key outcomes of the SCYP-Salem partnership.
2. Research methods

The guiding research question is: **What is the SCYP's implicit framework for linking the projects to the longer term process of urban-regional change toward sustainability?** The unit of analysis is the partnership between the two entities, the SCYP and the City of Salem. The partnership includes the reports, along with the perspectives of staff at the City of Salem and the SCYP who were involved in the partnership. The study was conducted via a mixed case study methodology which included the researcher's experience at an SCYP event, semi-structured interviews with key informants, and content analysis of the City Council goals between 2007 and 2013 and the 26 reports which constitute the substantive results of the SCYP-Salem partnership. This approach was chosen to capture a diversity of perspectives on what took place during the partnership, how those involved perceived the outcomes and benefits, and the central problems being addressed. Within this mix of methods, I focus heavily on the reports because they are the product left behind with which City staff, citizens, and other stakeholders will continue to engage now that the formal partnership is over. In pragmatic terms, individuals and groups in Salem will experience the SCYP partnership through the ideas (e.g. case studies, design proposals, research, and policy recommendations) contained within the SCYP reports; the process going forward is the processing of the collection of ideas.

This study began in April, 2012 when I attended a two day “Replication” workshop held by the SCYP at which educators from 22 universities across the US and Canada heard from the co-founders of the SCYP, from students, from faculty and from lead staff at each of the past SCYP partner cities of Gresham, Salem and Springfield. I learned about the process that each City went through, collected documentation, and met the people who would be my primary contacts. Following the workshop, I interviewed the project manager at the SCYP to get more detail about the partnership process. This interview was very open-ended starting with the basic question: How does
the SCYP program work? I did not transcribe or code this interview because much of the information could be found in documents that were subsequently shared with me.

I then arranged interviews with nine staff members at the City of Salem to learn about their perceptions of the SCYP-Salem partnership, the benefits which it brought to their work and the primary problems facing Salem local government. With the help of my liaison at the City of Salem, I selected a sample of nine staff out of the seventeen who had led SCYP projects. The goal was to catch a diverse cross-section of projects and the City departments with which they engaged. I also interviewed the City Manager. The first interview, with my liaison, lasted ninety minutes and was used to test and refine the questions and explore the history of the City's application to become an SCYP partner. Each subsequent interview lasted between thirty and forty minutes and explored the following interview questions. The interviews were open-ended to allow for the exploration of new topics and details as they came up but I ensured that each of the high-level questions was asked in the same order and with the same basic wording:

1. Which SCYP projects were you involved in directly or indirectly?
2. For each project: did the project exist or was it created for the SCYP application? If the project existed: What was its status at the time of application? If project did not exist: In what ways does it fit into Council goals or the current workplan?
3. Was the project completed to your satisfaction? Please explain.
4. Has the project helped you in your own work? Please explain.
5. In retrospect, which aspects of the SCYP process stand out to you as providing value to Salem? What were the benefits? Please explain.
6. What are the key problems facing Salem? Please explain.
7. How would you characterize the confidence that exists around meeting each of the problems?
8. Where must leadership come from to implement solutions?
9. Are the SCYP projects helping address the key problems you identified and contributing to change in Salem? Please explain.
10. Considering what we have been talking about, what are the connections to sustainability?

I transcribed each interview and then coded the discussion according to the categories shown in Table 1.
**Table 1: Interview code categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems as reported</td>
<td>This captures parts of the conversations in which interviewees talked about or alluded to problems facing them or the city more generally or things that appeared to be connected to problems already brought up. I created sub-codes specific to each problem mentioned. E.g. aging infrastructure, General Fund imbalance, changing demographics, short-term focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in addressing the problem.</td>
<td>I used this to code the responses to question #7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program benefits as reported</td>
<td>This captures parts of the conversations in which interviewees talked about or alluded to benefits, outcomes, products, or value resulting from the SCYP partnership. I created sub-codes specific to each benefit mentioned. E.g. idea machines, youthful perspective, useful products, improved morale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptions of sustainability</td>
<td>This captures parts of the conversations in which interviewees talked about or alluded to ways of understanding sustainability and what is needed to achieve it. I created sub-codes specific to each connection to sustainability. E.g. sustainability as cost savings, sustainability as maximizing existing assets, sustainability as affordable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>This concept emerged from the discussion about problems, asking the question: where does leadership on key issues need to come from? I created sub-codes specific to each aspect of leadership being discussed. E.g. trust in city management, staff changing the dialogue, business community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, I turned my attention to the main phase of data collection which involved reading and coding the 26 SCYP reports delivered to the City of Salem. The reports generally fall into two categories, those which provide design proposals (e.g. site design, building design, lighting design) and those which provide engagement and communication strategies. Each report ranges from 50 to 100 pages not including the appendices which often contain detailed research results, survey instruments, and additional case studies. In my initial review of the reports, I looked for common elements that would allow me to compare and contrast the reports and a strategy for condensing and summarizing the contents. I drew inspiration from a study by Berke & Conroy (2000) which looks at the integration of sustainability principles in local government comprehensive planning. In the Berke and Conroy study, the authors code and compare the various “planning elements” such as housing, transportation, and parks. I generated a similar list of planning elements from what was apparent in the text of the SCYP-Salem reports. Planning elements contained in the Executive Summaries were coded as primary and secondary planning elements based on the assumption that the most
important, or central, elements of the reports – those planning elements which the reports primarily aimed to affect - would be mentioned in the Executive Summary. Planning elements found within the remainder of each report were coded as tertiary planning elements. Three reports were coded with more than one primary planning element because it appeared that these reports aimed at each equally. Two reports had a very short executive summary which only indicated the primary planning element so I also looked for secondary planning elements in the introduction. I did not code the appendices of any report. I also coded Salem's official Council Goals in a similar manner but focused only on the primary planning element that each objective aimed to address (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). This coding process produced text segments grouped according to the planning elements they engage with for comparison with one another. The final set of planning elements is shown below in Table 2, listed in order of their frequency (primary, secondary, and tertiary combined) across all the SCYP-Salem reports.

Table 2: All planning elements extracted from the SCYP-Salem reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget (funding and cost reduction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and job development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian and bike mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and public spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, stormwater, and sewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cityscape and arts &amp; culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site redevelopment and urban renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income housing and homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy efficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
market housing
buildings
peace and safety
legal and incentive frameworks
comprehensive planning and urban growth boundary
solid waste
airport

Finally, I conducted two open-ended followup interviews part-way through the writing process to test my understanding of events and collect more detail on several projects. One followup interview was with my liaison at the City of Salem and the other was with a co-founder and current director of the SCYP.
3. Salem, Oregon

Salem is the capital of Oregon, located on the Willamette River spanning Marion County and Polk County one hour south of Portland by car on the Interstate 5 Highway (Figure 3). It has the third largest population in Oregon at 157,000, just slightly smaller than Eugene and about one-third the size of the City of Portland. City staff described Salem to me as a conservative city whose identity is predominantly bound up with being the capital of the State of Oregon. The dominant industries are state and local government, trades / transportation / utilities, manufacturing, and professional / business services (BLS, 2012). According to the Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority, the manufacturing sector is composed of food processing, electronics, and metal fabrication.

*Figure 3: Overview of Salem within the region*

Note: Source: Google Earth, Retrieved November 26, 2012
Structurally, Salem City government is made up of a Mayor who serves a two year term and eight City Councillors who represent the city's eight wards on four year terms. Several staff interviewees referred to this as a weak mayor form of government because of the difference in terms between the Mayor and the Councillors. The Mayor and Council hire the City Manager who directs the work of staff. The City's website lists sixteen departments ranging from Legal, to Information Technology, to Public Works. The SCYP primarily engaged the Urban Development, Public Works, and Community Development departments. The other two main public agencies with which the SCYP engaged, the Salem Housing Authority and the Urban Renewal Agency, while each having distinct mandates and sources of funding, are also directed by the Mayor and Councillors who, in the words of a staff interviewee, “just gavel in and gavel out” of the different meetings.

Each year, Salem City Council sets goals (Council Goals) which provide direction to City staff. The Council Goals are drafted by the City Council during an annual workshop and then sent to the City Manager for feedback. The City Manager provides two annual updates to Council on the progress of each goal. Each Council Goal document contains a number of high-level goals, typically organized into broad themes such as “peace and safety” or “vibrant economy”. Each goal contains a set of specific business objectives (see example in Table 3) and it is to these objectives that the City Manager's work updates are directed. Prior to 2008, the Council Goals had tended to be lists of projects that Councillors brought to the table on behalf of their ward constituents. Since the 2008 recession, however, the City Manager has been working more closely with Council to reduce the City's budget and bring the number of Council Goals in line with the City's capacity. This process has steadily reduced the number of business objectives over the last three sets of Council Goals. The 2007-2008 Council Goals contained 81 objectives, the 2010-2011 goals contained 40 objectives, and the 2011-2013 goals contain 22 objectives. Additionally, the last two sets of Council Goals have attached priority indicators to the objectives.

Table 3: Example from the 2010-2011 Council Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livable Community: A well planned community that promotes strong and vibrant neighborhoods; provides opportunities for artistic, cultural, and recreational pursuits; offers an adequate supply of affordable housing; and preserves its historical assets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal
Create a multi-year approach to addressing public infrastructure needs.

Objective
(Top Priority) Complete asset management program to include an assessment and prioritization of improvements for all City facilities.

To get a sense of the changes in Council's priorities, I coded the last three Council Goal documents (which cover the period from 2007 to 2013) according to the primary planning element targeted by each objective. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 4 which shows a narrowing of focus toward economic development, budget stabilization, peace and safety, homelessness, mobility, and the maintenance of public assets (i.e. buildings, parks, and roads).

Table 4: Distribution of objectives across recent Council Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>% of 2007-2008 objectives</th>
<th>% of 2010-2011 objectives</th>
<th>% of 2011-2013 objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peace and safety</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business and job development</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedestrian and bike mobility</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public buildings</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low-income housing and homelessness</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budget (funding and cost reduction)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roads</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban growth boundary</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parks and public spaces</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>airport</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>market housing</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public transit</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civic engagement</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cityscape and arts &amp; culture</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site redevelopment and urban renewal</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
environmental protection & 8% & 5%  
water, stormwater, and sewer & 5%  
solid waste & 2% 

The reduction in the total number of objectives and the effort to prioritize goals can be explained by the economic stress which the City of Salem is experiencing. When asked about the key problems facing Salem, nearly all interviewees mentioned the City’s General Fund. More specifically, the problem is a structural imbalance between the revenues and the expenses of the General Fund resulting from ballot initiatives passed in the 1990s which place limits on the amount that property taxes can be raised each year. The General Fund pays for police and fire service, city staff, facilities, economic development, libraries, parks, and street maintenance. Property tax supplies 60% of the General Fund and is not keeping up with cost inflation. Between the fiscal year which began on July 1, 2012 and the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year, Salem must cut an additional 9.3% ($10.5 million) from the General Fund budget. In the last three years there have been staff layoffs, the closure of a fire station, unfilled police positions, deferred infrastructure maintenance, and stalled development projects. The City is now considering additional staff layoffs and closing Salem’s one branch library. One City staff interviewee commented that they expected it to “get a little bit worse before it gets better” due in large part to the 2008 recession which has exacerbated the effects of the structural imbalance. For example, the redevelopment of blighted areas could increase the City’s property tax revenue but many private owners are unwilling to redevelop their properties in the current economic climate.

Several interviewees alluded to an additional challenge in that the term sustainability had become controversial, caught up in the increasingly polarized public dialogue on climate change in the US and in the so-called “Agenda 21 conspiracy”. For this reason, they instructed the SCYP to approach the term cautiously. This view reflects a larger trend in which the normalization of sustainability into governance practice is being challenged by a small but vocal public who have so far succeeded in disrupting

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1 For a more complete discussion of the Oregon ballot initiatives (Measures 5 and 50) and property tax compression, see http://www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo/article/405080 or search “Oregon property tax compression”.  

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the implementation of sustainability related projects and policies in California, Florida, Dallas, and elsewhere (Whittemore, 2012). These experiences have caused alarm among some urban planning and policy makers. In a June 2012 research summary (APA, 2012, p. 5), the American Planning Association says:

Two opposing trends have emerged in the planning field in recent years: significant new support and investment in sustainable community planning grants by the federal government, driven by strong local interest and demand for good planning, and a large counteroffensive with well-funded, highly orchestrated campaigns against planning from small but highly vocal groups, especially centered among new "tea party" activists.

As these trends have played out, local government budget cuts and the drying up of private investment dollars because of the economic crisis have required planning departments to make tough fiscal tradeoffs in terms of staffing and project selection.

Tough fiscal tradeoffs in project selection may mean that some local governments and communities avoid those projects which attempt to redirect dominant growth and mobility patterns. Some staff members at the City of Salem began pursuing sustainability projects prior to the SCYP-Salem partnership in the form of an Environmental Action Plan (2009) which contains conservation and pollution reduction goals in the areas of energy (electricity, natural gas, and fuel), drinking water, stormwater, solid waste, parks and open space. Yet the terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable' are not used in at least the last three sets of Council Goals nor in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Thus it appears that sustainability in Salem prior to the SCYP-Salem partnership was more about energy efficiency and pollution control and less about messy topics like growth and development.

Given the discussion above, the loss of civic engagement as an agenda item in the Council Goals stands out because the loss of focus on engaging a diversity of voices could be a significant hinderance to enacting plans that make a real difference. Several staff interviewees echoed this point when referring to the need for a wider dialogue on city issues as a central problem facing the City. According to one interviewee, the City perceives that it is good at engaging the immediate stakeholders such as the neighborhood around a specific park project, but that it is not as good at engaging the broader public in discussion about the park system in relation to other systems. In
relation to regional development, one interviewee talked about Salem struggling with its own identity. The interviewee believes that, although Salem has been known, historically, as the capital city of Oregon and not much else, it could become, like Austin, Texas or Desmoines, Iowa, a vibrant cultural destination which also happens to be the State capital. The interviewee shared an example of the engagement structure that he was part of while working as a planner in another city during a flood recovery effort:

... in Cedar Rapids we created what was called the Reinvest and Rebuild Coordinating Team (RRCT). That was a cross-section of the city where we got not-for-profits groups together, faith based organizations, United Way, the Chamber, the Convention Bureau ... the media, education, the school district, and we sat down and as a community decided how we were going to rebuild ourselves. I think any community can benefit from having that cross-functional group that cuts across ... all the key community groups.

Bringing that experience to bear on Salem will require that the City address the fact that some resident groups are chronically under-represented in civic engagement activities, the most visible in Salem being low income residents and Latino residents. Latino residents account for up to 30% of the population of some neighborhoods and approximately 20% of the Salem-Keizer region (IFA, 2012). One interviewee comments:

[T]here are other groups in the community who don't tend to be as involved with local government or to follow that as closely, many of whom are struggling financially themselves and who don't want to see any additional revenue measures. So that's one of the struggles, how we have those conversations with people who don't tend to come to public meetings or don't tend to be very involved with the community.

These two problems, economics and engagement, are powerful contextual forces in the planning and policy arena; on the one hand the specter of prolonged economic stress compels the City to seek new forms of urban development and service delivery while on the other hand sustainability is being undermined as a holistic governance paradigm. The SCYP's pragmatic reframing of these dual challenges is that there is an imperative to improve local economic conditions - to stabilize the City's budget, to create jobs, and to encourage redevelopment and innovation - in ways that accord with residents' visions and values and ultimately add up to something bigger.
4. Conceptual framework

4.1. Stumbling toward a conceptual framework

Inquiry on this research project began with the questions: What took place during the partnership, how do those involved perceive the outcomes and benefits, and what are the central problems being addressed? It became clear during the early investigation of the SCYP-Salem partnership that the concept of sustainability did not occupy a central place in the City of Salem’s official Council Goals, and that the SCYP’s approach to sustainability transition was somewhat vague. There is a political rationale for this ambiguity but it was problematic to explain how this approach could add up to a more sustainable city-region. What emerged as a central problem was the need to ground the SCYP-Salem partnership in a conceptual framework for evaluating the potential for change toward sustainability. I undertook an extensive literature review into such topics as sustainable development, agenda setting, public sector performance, organizational learning, and institutional change, attempting, in each case, to apply various theoretical frameworks to the SCYP-Salem partnership - but the fit always felt forced. It became apparent that the task at hand was not to apply some external theory against which the SCYP-Salem partnership could be assessed but to elaborate the theory which seemed implicit in the SCYP’s program design. This approach mirrors the SCYP’s logic that sustainability must be locally defined and relevant to communities. Thus, relevance became the core criteria for determining the validity of an analytical framework. This can be seen in the SCYP’s self-description as quoted in Chapter 1:

The SCYP addresses ... the problem of outdated problem framing and a shortage of local professionals with sustainability and livability knowledge ... through a multidisciplinary effort to assist each partner city with its sustainability-oriented goals and projects. Students and professors work on topics developed jointly by instructors and city staff, ensuring that student ideas are relevant to communities. ... Our partner cities benefit directly from bold ideas that propel fresh thinking, improve livability for residents, and invigorate city staff. (emphasis added)
In this description, relevance has two dimensions. First, ideas must address real problems as perceived by City staff and by residents and they must be grounded in local knowledge and experience. They must be relevant now. Second, ideas must provide new ways of looking at problems and they must push the boundaries of what is known and even what is desirable. They must be relevant to the goal of longer term change. Actually existing sustainabilities are those present practices which have the potential to straddle two worlds – to be both instrumental and visionary (Figure 1). In hindsight, we will say that they made a difference.

*Figure 1: Ideas which are relevant to social change must straddle two worlds*

This conception of the relevance of an idea is echoed in John Dewey’s description of philosophy as “an intellectual wish, an aspiration subjected to rational discriminations and tests, a social hope reduced to a working program of action, a prophesy of the future, but one disciplined by serious thought and knowledge” (Dewey, 1919/1998, p. 72). The concept of sustainability can remain embedded as a social aspiration without requiring predefinition and it will become relevant to the city of Salem and its residents through action and experimentation. This seems to be what the SCYP is getting at.

### 4.2. American pragmatism

I begin this section by repeating the central perspective discussed in Chapter 1. Projects and practices are related to sustainability because they add up to a more sustainable city-region than existed at the time of their implementation. This perspective, which is offered by the SCYP and reflected in Krueger and Agyeman’s (2005) actually existing sustainabilities assessment framework, is forward looking, concerned primarily
with the consequences of projects and practices rather than with the principles that
drove them. A sustainable society is the eventual accumulation of practices and policies
within that society which have proven to produce more sustainable outcomes. This
perspective is at the core of John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy of how people make
decisions. Dewey refers to pragmatism as a “doctrine of the value of consequences”
(Dewey, 1925/1998, p. 8) meaning that pragmatism is focused on the consequences of
action rather than on foundational principles. People do not act based on foundational
principles, people act based on their experiences of the consequences of their and
other's actions.

Sustainability is an abstract principle which aims to guide decision making. The
most common conception of sustainability views it as having three dimensions:
environmental protection, economic development, and social equity. Scott Campbell
(1996) argues that these three goals are in constant tension with one another and that
the task of planning for sustainability is to confront and negotiate the conflicts which
arise between interests which prioritize one goal over the others. Campbell categorizes
the types of conflicts as property conflict (between economic development and social
equity interests), development conflict (between social equity and environmental
protection interests), and resource conflict (between environmental protection and
economic development interests). Campbell unpacks the abstract concept of
sustainability into elements which can be more readily applied to the analysis of a
particular policy or planning scenario. For example, the question of how to implement
alternative transportation options can be described in terms of a property conflict
between those who see vehicle mobility as essential to economic development and
those who see transit and bicycle access as essential to reducing roadway greenhouse
gas emissions. The role of the planner is to "manage and resolve conflict and to promote
creative technical, architecture, and institutional solutions" (ch. 4). This basic formulation
of sustainability remains popular now although the role of conflict has certainly become
more nuanced.

A significant challenge with this view is that the centrality of the language of
conflict combined with the over-generalization of interests into these three dimensions -
social equity, economic development, and environmental protection – has a tendency to
polarize the dialogue, and as discussed in the previous chapter, polarization of the
dialogue around sustainability could undermine our collective capacity to take action. In the popular view, sustainability is unpacked into three seemingly incompatible positions which are in conflict over the 'right' balance of priorities, and, in this kind of conflict, economic goals tend to win (Evans & Jones, 2008, p. 1417-20). Using two examples of conflict over water rights, Paul Thompson (1996) describes the danger of solidifying positions through clarification of the moral principles that can be used to justify each disputant's argument. Instead of the three pillars of environmental protection, social equity, and economic development, Thompson refers to the moral pillars of egalitarianism, utilitarianism, and liberalism. This type of formulation entrenches actors' positions and makes the possibility of empirical inquiry more remote because moral principles are difficult to falsify. Meg Holden (2008b) makes the same point about the danger of working from first principles and generalized, ideological categories in planning for sustainability by exploring the dualisms of "ecological" and "humanist" perspectives on sustainable development, or whether a local government is "serious" or "not serious" about sustainability. Holden argues that framing the problems of sustainability as discrete principles or 'world-views' emphasizes antagonism, encourages actors in the public sphere to choose sides, and confounds creative thinking about solutions. This perspective was echoed by a co-founder of the SCYP when asked about the relationship of conflict to sustainability and the role that the SCYP may have played in mitigating conflict. According to the interviewee, dialogue around proposals for neighborhood change or policy reform often become polarized between those who are for the change and those who are against. The options get reduced to simply yes or no to a specific proposal when, in reality, "cities evolve over time and are more nuanced than one vision or another." Campbell agrees that sustainability will be achieved incrementally, in an evolutionary manner, but he sees it as a process in which a common vision of a sustainable future emerges out of contestation. Campbell says that "planners will find their vision of a sustainable city developed best at the conclusion of contested negotiations over land use, transportation, housing, and economic development policies, not as the premise for beginning the effort" (1996, ch. 3). A vision of a sustainable future is work for later, it is the product of contested negotiation. But if a conflict over land use, transportation, housing or economic development policy has already taken place, if the negotiation is over (perhaps before it even began because policy makers shied away from messy topics), hasn't the next step along the path of sustainable development already been taken? What role can a vision of the future play if it always emerges after
the status quo has been reasserted? How can we ever free ourselves from political and technical lock-in?

American pragmatism offers an alternate perspective. John Dewey was wary of foundational principles, he argued that people do not act from principle but from experience. In other words, people make choices based on past experiences and then rationalize their choices by attaching principles and methods after the fact. At the core of pragmatism is the idea that the value of a concept - such as sustainability – comes from its application to real life. In Dewey's words:

In order to be able to attribute a meaning to concepts, one must be able to apply them to existence. Now it is by means of action that this application is made possible. And the modification of existence which results from this application constitutes the true meaning of concepts. (Dewey, 1925/1981, p. 4)

The applicability, or relevance, of a particular concept is continuously tested through action and reflection on the question: what difference has this action made? The pragmatic perspective suggests that Campbell (1996) and others who have attempted to unpack sustainability had the correct intent but should have aimed to unpack sustainability into experiential content rather than ideological abstractions. In order to get what we want, to make progress toward our goals, unpacking the concepts which frame our goals (such as sustainability, social equity, peace, or freedom) is a critical step but it must be done in ways that give those concepts instrumental value, in ways that infuse our aspirations into the present moment (Thompson, 1996, p. 203). Experience in this sense includes not only the conscious memory of past experiences but also visceral experiences, beliefs, and custom (Menand, 2001, p. 341/2). Consequently, the meaning we take from concepts such as sustainability is unlikely to be uniform or static since experience is neither. This begs the question: how do we find common ground in order to move forward? As Krueger and Agyeman (2005) argue, sustainability initiatives could result in incremental progress toward a more sustainable city-region but they could also result in an incoherent mishmash of practices and projects originally intended to be about sustainability but which make no difference to City staff or to residents. The key is how the experiential content is continually reconstructed into a common vision of life against which plans and the consequences of action can be assessed. In Holden's words, “[i]n terms of social reform, the goal for pragmatism is to determine the
differences that our world formulas make to our recommendations for change, and the
effectiveness of those prescriptions.” (2008a, p. 481).

At the core of this process of pragmatic transformation is the establishment of
communities of inquiry which actually undertake this work. For Dewey, science and the
generation of knowledge and meaning were communal projects because experience is
fundamentally relational (Thompson, 1996, p. 203), we experience through interaction
with our environment which includes the social and the physical world. This can be
thought of as social learning whereby individual experience is shared within communities
of inquiry so that information can find its way to the people who are best positioned to
use it and so that our collective experience and beliefs about what is possible may be
broadened. As Holden says:

Pragmatic inquiry works towards fixing belief in an ever-expanding
community of inquirers, establishing a systematic approach to testing,
adjusting, and adapting to new truths that can be agreed upon by an
increasingly diverse group of people. A pragmatic method of learning
consists in setting up real-world experiments, publicly arriving at results,
and debating and making incremental changes based on these results.
(Holden, 2008b, p. 11)

Viewed through the lens of American pragmatism, social change is seen as a
process of transforming complex and often abstract concepts and problems into action
by communities of inquiry. This process is at the core of what the SCYP has done for the
City of Salem. Each project which partnered a classroom (a group of students and a
faculty member) at the UO with one or more staff members at the City of Salem
constituted a community of inquiry around a specific planning problem such as how to
redevelop a neglected site, or how to integrate bicycle infrastructure within the
restrictions of current transportation planning. These communities of inquiry have helped
to unpack the complex problems of sustainability and social change into content which
City staff and residents can relate to – concept drawings of how real places could look
and function, case studies from other communities, communication strategies, and
work-plans. In the words of a co-founder of the SCYP:

… the most important thing that the SCYP does with communities is ... to
put hundreds and hundreds of ideas out into the public discourse around
ways that cities ... can be retrofitted to help make this transition to
sustainability .... [The students] can put ideas out there in the public
domain that can help spur conversations that are less threatening. They don’t have to worry about the political risk of putting ideas out into the public domain. …. a lot of what gets left behind [for our partners] is a change in the way these conversations can happen about what the future of the city can look like, of what’s actually possible.

Bringing abstract social aspirations down to the level of experience can help to depoliticize the dialogue around change. Instead of reacting to predetermined agendas for action, participants can consider options and ideas. But in order to contribute to change toward sustainability (as opposed to just a series of interesting conversations), to make a difference, this collection of ideas must be reconstructed into an action plan. Seen as a whole, the students in the SCYP-Salem partnership have unpacked the abstract problem of sustainability into a collection of specific proposals which contain the seeds of a common vision of the future. Most importantly, they have helped to broaden the conversation about sustainability to include some of the messier, more complex issues of growth, land use, and social assistance. The goal of this process in terms of change toward sustainability is not one comprehensive plan, but a collection of smaller plans and experiments for continuous improvement. Each unique community of inquiry may last for a little or a long time, it does not matter. What matters is that each one makes some progress (Sheppard, 2003) and that the ideas and plans flow from the actually existing aspirations of community members. Figure 2 amends Figure 1 slightly to emphasize the iterative nature, the potential for social learning, and a gradual build up of local sustainability knowledge and experience through this process of inquiry.

Figure 2: Communities of inquiry bridge the instrumental and the visionary
5. The Case Study

5.1. The SCYP-Salem Partnership

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is an initiative of the University of Oregon (UO), based in Eugene, that partners with one or more local governments in Oregon each year to bring implementation support to sustainability related projects. Over the course of an academic year classrooms at the UO focus on advancing research and design projects proposed by the partner City. The projects vary in size and duration: some projects are designed to be completed in a single ten-week academic quarter while others span two or three quarters. Table 5 provides an overview of the timeline of the SCYP-Salem partnership which formally began in the spring of 2010 when the SCYP selected Salem as the partner City. The bulk of each City’s application to the SCYP is a set of project proposals which are reviewed by a selection committee composed of faculty from the UO. In the case of the SCYP-Salem partnership, the selection committee was composed of faculty in the fields of architecture, planning, law, journalism and business - all professionally oriented disciplines.

Table 5: SCYP-Salem partnership timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 2009</th>
<th>The SCYP sends requests for proposals to city managers in Oregon.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2010</td>
<td>City of Salem submits its application to the SCYP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Selection committee peer reviews and selects the partner city. Provide feedback to the host city on proposed projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Receive final project proposals from the host city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – May 2010</td>
<td>Match projects to courses - “interested faculty”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Sign intergovernmental agreement between the City &amp; the State of Oregon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July – August 2010</td>
<td>Complete individual project scopes of work &amp; prepare for start of quarter. Scope documents are produced by the faculty after consulting with the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Period</td>
<td>Project Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September – December 2010</td>
<td>Work on term-1 and year-long projects. Deliver final reports in December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January - April 2011</td>
<td>Work on term-2 and continue year-long projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April - May 2011</td>
<td>Deliver all remaining reports and wrap-up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SCYP's criteria for judging the applications are that i) the projects must be supported by City Council, the City Manager and at least two department heads, ii) the application must contain evidence that the projects were chosen by the City for their potential to include sustainability themes, and iii) the City has identified sources of funding for the partnership. On the second criterion, the local governments which apply to the SCYP are not expected to know the full extent of the ways in which sustainability themes can be integrated into the projects; “sustainability knowledge” is generated during the partnership through the student’s attempt to apply academic knowledge and best practices to the specific problems posed by the City.

Once the partner City has been selected, a process of 'match-making' begins in which the City's project proposals are matched to undergraduate and graduate courses at the UO which will devote one, two, or three terms to that particular project. This process begins when the project proposals are sent around the UO to faculty members who may be interested. In some cases a faculty member simply accepts a project as originally proposed by the City. In other cases an interested faculty member sees a partial fit and then negotiates a modified project proposal with the City staff member who is leading the project. In yet other cases, an interested faculty member does not see a fit with any of the proposed projects but wants to be involved and submits his or her class curriculum back to the City for consideration for a totally new project proposal. The match-making process is iterative, involving back and forth between interested faculty members and the City staff who are leading each project. This process ends with the production of a set of documents that summarize the scope of work and the cost for each project. The scoping of each project is done by the faculty member who is leading the project within the UO and the City staff member who is leading the project within the City. Students are not involved during this phase. The faculty members are expected to oversee each project and provide a reasonable guarantee of quality.
The monetary cost to the City is based on the SCYP’s cost to manage the partnership including the time of a dedicated coordinator, travel stipends, a graphic designer to lay out the students’ final reports, and a modest markup to cover contingencies. Students are not paid and the faculty are paid their normal salary by the university. The total cost of the partnership to the City is calculated per project with projects ranging from $4000 to $50,000. The total cost of the partnership to the City of Salem was $329,000 or an equivalent of $8.00 per hour for the student work. Contributions for the fee came from the City of Salem ($160,000), the Salem Urban Renewal Association ($125,000), and the Salem Housing Authority ($44,000). Additionally, the City is expected to dedicate one staff member per project to act as project lead and to follow through on other responsibilities as negotiated during the scoping phase (e.g. convene community meetings, provide documentation on such things as City processes or related work projects, connect students to other City staff as needed, provide mid-term reviews). As the projects are scoped and costed, an Intergovernmental Agreement is created between the State of Oregon’s Board of Higher Education (which contractually represents the UO) and the relevant funding partners. In the case of the SCYP-Salem partnership, the funding partners were the City of Salem, the Salem Urban Renewal Agency and the Salem Housing Authority.

The SCYP has attracted media attention including the local Statesman Journal, the New York Times and Forbes and has won an award from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. Moreover, the cities which have worked with the program are enthusiastic about the outcomes. I experienced the enthusiasm first hand at the two-day Replication Workshop held by the SCYP in April 2012 at which educators from 22 universities across the US and Canada heard from the co-founders of the SCYP, from students, from faculty, and from staff at the partner Cities of Gresham, Salem and Springfield. During the workshop I heard City staff talk about benefits such as the students being “idea machines”, helping to “unstick” projects, educating staff and citizens about sustainability, and providing “political cover” for a wide exploration of ideas. At present, the SCYP is exploring ways to work at different scales of local governance by partnering with multiple cities, with counties, with transit agencies, or with any other governmental body that has a work portfolio which is compatible with faculty interests and can provide students with meaningful projects.
The model on which the SCYP is based can be found in an increasing number of instances around the world - universities focusing effort on helping their local communities become more sustainable. I have been involved with three related initiatives in British Columbia, Canada: City Studio in Vancouver which partners students from six universities with the City of Vancouver on sustainability themed projects; Ready, Set, Solve in Victoria which partners students from three universities with local governments in the Capital Region on sustainability themed projects; and the Policy Studies in Sustainability undergraduate program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University which focuses student effort on one or more community partners each term. Research on these types of models can be found under the keywords community-university partnership, campus-community partnership, community-based research, participatory action research, experiential education, place-based education, and service-learning in a range of subject areas including education, public health, policy studies, urban studies, planning, architecture, resource management, and regional economic development. For simplicity, I use the term service-learning to encompass the range of projects. Although there are subtle differences between the keywords, they all refer to an education model which views the university as having a responsibility to improve its regional community. Early theorists of service-learning, such as Paulo Freire, Robert Coles, and Benjamin Barber, envisioned service-learning as a form of democratic education. They ultimately saw it as “a small part of a much larger movement to create stronger democracies” (Forsyth et al., 2000, p. 240). The potential impact takes place over the longer-term as students (hopefully) become lifelong change agents in their communities. This is undoubtedly one of the aims of the SCYP but partner cities like Salem, although sympathetic to the learning needs of students and to the aim of strengthening democracy through education, enter the partnership and spend resources in order to improve urban policy and service delivery and ultimately to benefit their local communities in a more immediate and direct way.

Forsyth, Lu, and McGirr (2000) draw two conceptual distinctions between service-learning programs in urban planning and design education which help to

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2 http://citystudiovancouver.com
3 http://www.crd.bc.ca/climatechange/readysolvesolve.htm
4 http://kwantlen.ca/arts/policy-studies.html
5 Many published articles do not use these terms but can be found by searching for higher education, university, and college in combination with civic responsibility, civic engagement, community engagement, citizen learning, and community learning.
describe the SCYP. The first is between elite partners and community-based partners. In both cases, the focus of the service is to solve urban problems; the difference is whether the students engage directly with members of the community or whether the students engage through an intermediary such as a local government or NGO. The second distinction is between professional projects and placements. With professional projects, most of the work is done in the classroom and then a product, such as a report, is provided to the partner. Interaction between the students and the partner tends to be intermittent and for the purpose of collecting information needed to continue work in the classroom. Placements, on the other hand, put students directly into the community and interaction between the students and the partners is continuous. This can take the form of students volunteering to build an urban garden or as interns with a local NGO – and the partners may be elite or community-based. The SCYP works with local governments, an elite partner, and the interactions with the community tend to be intermittent with most of the work done in the classroom. In this respect, the partnership has the flavor of a professional consulting relationship although the students have considerably more freedom to innovate and the partner City expects that some projects may prove less useful than others. The professional nature of the relationship is emphasized by the fact that the SCYP charges a fee to the partner City – albeit at a significant discount compared with those of professional consultants.

5.2. Community benefits of service-learning

Within a subset of the service-learning literature which focuses on the benefits to community partners, Sandy and Holland (2006) documented the perspectives of 99 nonprofit and public community organizations throughout California which their study considers to be "experienced" at working with college and university service-learning partnerships. The authors categorize the benefits described by the partner organizations as i) direct benefits6, ii) enrichment, and iii) social change7. I will elaborate each of these next and relate them to the SCYP.

6 Sandy and Holland (2006) use the term "direct impact" but I have substituted the term "direct benefit" because I consider the word impact to refer to longer-term effects. To use a very simplistic example of the difference: an employer may provide matching retirement savings plan contributions, which is a benefit, whereas the longer-term impact comes in the form of a better quality of life upon retirement, assuming you continue to make contributions and don't cash it in early. The conversion of a benefit into longer-term impact is contingent.
In most cases, a service-learning partnership ought to produce some direct benefit in terms of the partner’s desired outcomes. For example, in a partnership focused on small business development for low-income families, the immediate measurement of what has been accomplished may be the number of workshops delivered or the number of businesses started; the direct benefit is, ultimately, the added capacity which the students bring to the partner. In the case of the SCYP, most of the projects undertaken were described by staff at the City of Salem as linked to Council Goals but “on hold” due to resource constraints, so the additional capacity provided by the SCYP constitutes a direct benefit. One interviewee referred to the SCYP as a “staff multiplier”. Since the 2008 recession, the City’s aspirations have exceeded its capacity in terms of staff hours and money to hire consultants. Another interviewee comments:

If we had [hired a consultant to look at these projects], it would have cost us a great deal of money to have churned out the hours that the students devoted to us, and we weren’t sure [the projects were] even feasible to start with.

Much of the pent up demand is for visioning work - time spent examining the possibilities for redevelopment in specific sites around the city. When I asked City staff about the benefits that the SCYP has brought to the City and to their own work, the most frequent response was the quantity of ideas that the students generated. One interviewee referred to the students as “idea machines”. In many cases, students worked in small teams or individually to generate design concepts. One report had as many as 24 different design ideas. From this wealth of ideas, the City is able to prioritize and select the top designs to move forward with. Some of these ideas, as with the site redevelopment projects, provide long-term visions of what the city could look like in thirty or forty years. Others are short-term and can be implemented now, or as soon as funding becomes available. For example, one report provided design ideas for more efficient street lighting and a companion report provided ideas on how to fund the operation and maintenance of street lights to ease pressure on the City’s General Fund. Another example mentioned by several staff regards the long-standing need to build a new police facility because the existing one is too small and is seismically unsafe. The City’s past attempts to begin the design process resulted in costs that were unfeasible.

Sandy and Holland (2006) use the term “social justice” but the community partners that they quote use the term “social change” so I have opted for the later since it is captures a wider variety of the dimensions of change.
and the project languished. The students' effort has helped to move this project forward by providing a range of design concepts for consideration and by proving that the new facility could fit on the existing civic center campus, saving the City money in acquisition costs.

The second category, enrichment, refers to the staff, organizational, and community development that may occur as a result of the partnership. According to Sandy and Holland (2006, p. 36), “When partnering with higher education institutions and supervising service-learners, partners reflect more on organizational practices, and gain from the intellectual assets of the academic institution by learning new information from students and obtaining greater access to academic research.” Using the business development example from above, enrichment may come in the form of discovering new ways to deliver training more efficiently, or gaining new perspectives on the core needs of the program's clients. Enrichment in the SCYP-Salem partnership can be seen in the following comment from a City staff member:

...the city of Salem, we have a lot of employees, it's still a closed system. We only have a certain amount of institutional knowledge. We only have a certain amount of people who can make observations. A lot of the times we're so close to a problem that looking at it freshly and objectively when you come to work on a Monday morning is difficult and you don't actually understand that you can't see the problem correctly. Having somebody come in from the outside, having somebody with young fresh eyes, somebody with ideas that probably people in the city would not have thought of, having them examine a problem like that is a tremendous benefit...it's very valuable and it's something that the city could not have come up with on our own.

The pragmatic value of the influx of new ideas to the City of Salem is that, in many cases, they have helped staff think about problems differently. Here we see the formation of a community of inquiry which can begin to guide incremental change. Two examples of this form of enrichment emerged from the interviews. Before the SCYP-Salem partnership, staff in the City's Urban Development Department had viewed their role in economic development as being limited to Urban Renewal Areas (a legal designation which allows the Salem Urban Renewal Agency to fund redevelopment in those areas by borrowing against the anticipated increase in property tax revenue for a specifically designated geographic area within the city) while regional economic development was contracted to the Strategic Economic Development Corporation
(SEDCOR) and Business Oregon. As a result of some of the students’ ideas, staff are now beginning to view themselves as playing a much more central role in regional economic development by building stronger relationships with the business community, focusing on business retention as much as business recruitment, and coordinating the work of their economic development partners rather than just establishing contractual goals. One interviewee says:

It was not considered part of my job to call businesses to see how they were doing, now it is. … We're talking to businesses that are here, trying to figure out how to help them stay here. We're not just chasing after the big thing that may or may not come to our community because somebody else is offering better incentives. We're actually engaging with who we have here and looking for opportunities to help build the supply chain for them so that they're buying more local stuff, so that they're more invested in our community, so that they stay in Salem and expand in Salem and create jobs for our residents.

In the second example, students’ ideas around ways to increase industrial efficiency and reuse waste in the City-operated Willow Lake Water Pollution Control Facility helped City staff have a different dialogue around excess capacity at the facility. Before the SCYP-Salem partnership, the Willow Lake Facility was viewed as just a standard municipal wastewater treatment plant and excess capacity was just a matter of fact. The students’ ideas helped to create a dialogue around the opportunities associated with the concepts of resource recovery and industrial ecology which has resulted in new revenue to the City of around $700,000 in the 2012 fiscal year from tipping fees for treating the waste from several local businesses. The Willow Lake Facility is also exploring ways to generate energy from the waste streams in order to reduce its own energy costs.

There is one more point to be made about communities of inquiry. Communities of inquiry are enlivening for the participants. Most of the interviewees reported being energized by their engagement with the students. In a climate of restraint and recession, it can be difficult to justify spending staff resources on work which produces no immediately visible outcome for the community when there is so much other work with pressing deadlines. Communities of inquiry can help mitigate the risk of falling into a reactive, risk-averse mindset, a “seige mentality” as one interviewee described it,
because mental and professional invigoration can occur as a result of being part of a visionary project. The following comment from an interviewee illustrates:

The other thing I think we got out of it was a tremendous amount of energy. The students just brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm and that couldn't help but carry over to the staff who were working on the job. We were fortunate enough to get our elected officials and department heads and the City Manager all involved in some of the [SCYP-Salem project] design reviews and the energy that came from the students carried over to all those folks and got them excited about the project.

Another interviewee says:

...some staff felt this capacity to dream in a way that we don't often get to because we're focused in that consulting relationship, on delivering what we've been asked to deliver and no more. So there were a lot of intangibles about the process, new enthusiasm for old jobs, old work.

Several staff interviewees at the City of Salem mentioned another reason they found the experience enlivening was because they got to play a mentorship role to the students. Although there was a great degree of freedom for the students to be creative in their designs and the City expected that some designs would be unfeasible, there was still an expectation of quality from the work. For this reason, the students communicated frequently with staff in order to gather information and test their ideas. This reciprocity between the students and the staff whereby each learned from the other's experience describes a pragmatic community of inquiry.

The third category of benefits to community partners in a service-learning program refers to the role that the partners together can play in the larger process of social change. This part of Sandy and Holland's (2006) typology is the least developed but it is linked to the idea of using social learning to change practice and policy more broadly. In their words, service-learning partnerships “can transform knowledge by bridging the gap between theory and practice, providing opportunities for reflection and furthering new theory that can change both our knowledge and practice” (p. 36). This idea links back to Krueger and Agyeman's (2005) conception of sustainability transition as an incremental evolution of existing practice. Through a combination of the direct capacity and ideas that the SCYP brought to the table and the community and organizational enrichment that occurred as a result of the partnership process, actually
existing sustainabilities have been revealed within the City of Salem which represent real opportunities for sustainable development.

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret Sandy and Holland as saying that service-learning partnerships can contribute to social change by transferring theoretical knowledge developed in the university out into the wider social arena because this kind of one-way knowledge transfer would overlook important processes of mutual learning and reciprocity. Half the purpose of service-learning is to improve students’ opportunities for learning and skill development so there must be an exchange of experience if service-learning is to deliver on its promises. Pragmatists would underscore the point that we are all constantly generating theory to explain our experiences and that the adaptability of a theory to an unfolding context is the better measure of successful knowledge creation than the inverse, the matching of contexts to existing theories (Hoch, 2002, p. 55-6). A pragmatist asks: Does this theory make a difference?

Keith Morton, a professor of Public and Community Service and American Studies at Providence College and a past director at the Campus Compact, offers a perspective which helps link the more immediate benefits of service-learning partnerships identified by Sandy and Holland (2006) with the longer-term project of social change. Morton (1995) suggests that, no matter how you categorize the forms of service-learning partnerships, whether as focused on providing direct benefits or enrichment, or organized around direct placements or professional projects, all forms can be implemented in a thin or a thick manner leading to tokenism on the one hand or meaningful and potentially transformative action on the other. At its best, a service-learning partnership, whatever form it takes, should strive for continuous improvement. The potential for service-learning partnerships to exemplify communities of inquiry is the key to such continuous improvement toward desired and desirable social change. Returning to the example of the Willow Lake Pollution Control Facility in the SCYP-Salem partnership, an interviewee spoke of the partnership helping staff to have a new kind of dialogue around the opportunities associated with existing assets. As a

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8 "Campus Compact is a national coalition of almost 1,200 college and university presidents [in the U.S.] ... who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. ... Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students’ citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum" (Campus Compact, 2013).
result of this conversation, the staff have started to view waste as an asset rather than just the stuff that flows through the treatment plant. One interviewee comments:

What SCI did for us out here, ... the recommendations weren't necessarily technical pieces of mastery. The fact is that ... just the intent educated the city at large to look at their treatment plant differently and it created a culture shift, a shift in how they look at the plant. The plant has been in operation for 48 years and most treatment plants, not just Salem, ... are in the defensive mode. Waste comes in and they treat it and it goes out to the receiving stream. That's all they do. Now there's a wider shift in the industry ... to start looking at the treatment plant as an opportunity for resources recovery. So [the treatment plant industry is] talking about stuff that we've already started on. We're probably ten months ahead of most large agencies, and a lot of the reason why is because [the SCYP] came in and gave this report and it opened a lot of people's eyes.

Staff at the Willow Lake Facility have even put a name to this culture shift, they call it Sustainable Continuous Improvement (SCI - a 'tip of the hat' to the Sustainable Cities Initiative which is the parent program of the SCYP within the UO). This shift in perspective has already saved the City money and an interviewee mentioned that the Public Works department has eight new projects under review for Willow Lake in addition to the sixteen which were in the SCI Master Planning document that was shared with me. These ideas are being generated entirely from within the department and the Willow Lake Pollution Control Facility is now in a position to influence the wider industry. Taken as a whole, these changes have the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants through improved treatment of industrial waste – they could be the first steps in dramatically changing how city-regions treat their waste. At the core of the change which has happened at the Willow Lake Facility is a reevaluation of public assets, a theme which cropped up in several other interviews with City staff. There appears to be a growing idea that sustainability in Salem entails making the most of the assets that they have, be they public buildings, historical features, ecological amenities, or the existing small business sector, and that this objective is at least as important as overall regional growth. This is the foundation of a vision of the future which is grounded in present practices, in stuff that is actually happening, in changes that are not the subject of contested negotiation.

Interviewees’ comments on the benefits of the SCYP-Salem partnership provide one final lesson about social change. Within the description of students as idea
machines is the concept of idealism. Most interviewees commented that some of the students’ ideas were simply not feasible but that was an expected outcome. In order to generate all of these new ideas, to encourage the students’ creativity, City staff had to let go of control of the outcomes in a way that is unfamiliar. Idealism on the part of individuals and embracing idealism on the part of the City is central to generating creative solutions to perennial problems. This idealism can be interpreted through the pragmatic perspective as a necessary condition to the creation of a vision of a sustainable city-region. Idealism is necessary to escape the political and technical lock-in of the present moment, to envision a radically different future, and then enact plans to move in that new direction. A vision of a sustainable city-region is not, as Campbell (1996, p. 304) suggests, “developed best at the conclusion of contested negotiations”. Rather, vision comes from the momentary laying aside of present political realities. As one interviewee put it:

...that's the beauty of it. You're trying to get ideas outside the box but we would not pay for ideas outside the box if we're building a road product. We want it designed to the land use that's in place. Don't dick around. With students envisioning 30 years from now, land use is no constraint. We're trying to figure out what it is we can do so maybe we adjust land use to fit the vision that you recommend.

What visions of the future of Salem has the SCYP-Salem partnership produced? What, according to the SCYP-Salem reports, might a sustainable Salem look like?
6. Unpacking the SCYP-Salem reports

In this chapter, I describe the results of my analysis which involves unpacking the SCYP-Salem reports into the planning elements with which they engage. In the first section, I describe the reports in terms of how they group according to their primary planning elements. This provides a summary view of how the concept of sustainability as a broad social aspiration is transformed in the reports into concrete proposals for real places and problems. These proposals are linked to present practice, meaning that they are, to varying degrees, implementable, while also advancing visions of redevelopment and renewal in specific neighborhoods, communities and urban subsystem. The proposals contain and point to actually existing sustainabilities in Salem. In the second section, I reconstruct the individual proposals into one possible set of visions of a sustainable Salem. This second analysis is an attempt to develop a city-region scale vision of sustainability out of the whole set of implementable ideas. These two analyses together can provide input to further the inquiry that is ongoing as Salem continues down the path of seeking sustainability.

6.1. The reports and their planning elements

Figure 4 shows how the SCYP reports\(^9\) group according to the primary planning elements they engage with and it provides an overview of the other domains contained in each report. For example, Figure 4 shows that the largest group of reports focuses on site redevelopment and that the civic engagement group touches the narrowest range of planning elements. This first subsection deals with the instrumental world, the substantive ideas put forward by the SCYP students and the ways that sustainability is grounded in the present.

\(^9\) All of the SCYP-Salem reports can be found online at [http://sci.uoregon.edu/salem-reports](http://sci.uoregon.edu/salem-reports)
Figure 4: SCYP reports grouped by primary planning element

Note: Planning elements are listed on the y-axis and the SCYP reports are listed on the x-axis. Black squares represent primary, grey squares represent secondary and light grey squares represent tertiary planning elements. The horizontally adjacent black squares delineate groups of reports based on their primary planning element. The blue and red background is a simply a visual aid to help distinguish the report groups.
6.1.1. **Site redevelopment**

The site redevelopment reports provide design concepts for six sites in Salem: i) the Second Street site in West Salem; ii) the O'Brien site in North Downtown; iii) the Epping site, a vacant suburban lot in the Northgate neighborhood; iv) the North Downtown Waterfront district; v) the South Waterfront site; and vi) the South of Mission site. As can be seen in Figure 5, five of these sites are in or immediately adjacent to the downtown core, and one site, Epping, is three kilometers northwest of downtown. All six sites lie along major roads through the city leading to the Interstate 5 highway and to settlements west of Salem. The six reports in this group are titled: i) *Development Proposals for Three Targeted Sites in Salem, Oregon*; ii) *North Downtown Waterfront Development: Building Design Proposals*; iii) *Salem North Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Concept Plan*; iv) *North Downtown Waterfront Development: Urban Design Proposals*; v) *Brownfields/Green Neighborhoods: Integrating Riverfront Park with Pringle Creek*; and vi) *South of Mission*. The output of this group of reports is a collection of proposals for future redevelopment projects. I will describe each of the redevelopment sites next and the proposals put forward by the six reports in this group.
Second Street Site

The Second Street site is part of a transportation corridor which runs along the Willamette River in West Salem bringing traffic to and from the downtown. Immediately south of the redevelopment site is the Dallas Highway leading to settlements to the west of Salem and eventually to the coast. North of the redevelopment site is a large residential community. An interviewee described the site as a struggling small retail corridor (Figures 6). It is a former industrial site evidenced by the abandoned rail right of way which runs down the middle of Second Street and by several remaining industrial buildings at the east end of the site. The residences to the north are older homes, some of which do not meet current building codes. According to the SCYP report, the median household income is $28,281 which is $16,000 less than the city-wide average. Bus
service to downtown is every 45 minutes on weekdays. The SCYP proposals focus on commercializing Second Street which, at present, is little more than the 'back-side' of the commercial strip running along Edgewater (see Figure 7). There is some existing multi-family residential within the site and the proposals consider adding more. The four-block site is to become a town center, the “heart of West Salem”, a vibrant and walkable mixed-use destination.

**Figure 6: Edgewater Street looking northeast toward downtown**

Note: Commercial site on the left. Source: Google Earth, Retrieved November 26, 2012

**Figure 7: Second Street looking northeast toward downtown**

Note: The back-side of the commercial site shown in Figure 4. The commercial site is on the right, and residential on the left. Source: Google Earth, Retrieved November 26, 2012
North Downtown Waterfront

The North Downtown Waterfront (Figure 8), the focus of three reports, is spatially the largest site in the group of redevelopment projects. It is located in the northwest quadrant of the Central area. The Willamette River is the waterfront. Like many US cities, the downtown waterfront area contains ageing industrial buildings close to a quarter of which are vacant. Figure 9 shows the view down Front Street, the last street before the river. Sprawling parking lots and car dealerships are another dominant feature of this area. There is currently no residential property in the North Downtown but the City hopes to change that by turning the area into a vibrant waterfront district. There are residences immediately north of the site across Mill Creek. The SCYP projects responded with proposals for a mixed-use neighborhood that includes multi-family market and affordable housing, a recreation center, restaurants, pubs, museums, retail, a public market, a River Research Center, and access to transit and bicycle routes. All three reports also placed emphasis on restoring the ecology of Mill Creek as a habitat and public amenity. A significant barrier to redeveloping this area is the current traffic especially along Commercial Street which is a major arterial through the city running vertically down the center of the site. Additionally, there is an active rail line which runs down Front Street near the water. The potential for reconfiguring the traffic in this area is being reviewed as part of a Mobility Study being conducted by the City.

Figure 8: Aerial view of the North Downtown area

Source: Google Earth, Retrieved November 26, 2012
O'Brien site

The O'Brien site is a smaller lot located within the North Downtown area near several major transportation routes which connect Salem to the Interstate 5 highway. It is currently occupied by a car dealership. According to the SCYP report, the few residents who live in the immediate area are predominantly renters and are lower in age and income than the city-wide average. The City envisions that this site can become the gateway to the new “near North neighborhood” that they hope will help drive demand for downtown services because of its proximity to downtown. The SCYP's redevelopment concepts envision a walkable, vibrant destination with a mix of incomes and uses including multi-family residential, retail, entertainment, commercial and public green space along Mill Creek. As with the North Downtown Waterfront area, traffic is a significant barrier to redevelopment. An interviewee described the intersection immediately to the north of the O'Brien site as a “nightmare” for pedestrians (see Figure 10). The local street network suffers from congestion and bus service is infrequent at 30 to 45 minute intervals on weekdays only. According to an interviewee, it is unlikely that a developer will be interested in taking the risk until the traffic is reconfigured.
Epping site

The Epping site is an undeveloped, grassy lot three kilometers northeast of downtown along the Portland Road arterial (see Figure 11). Industrial and commercial activity occurs to the west across Portland Road and to the south. An interviewee reported that the area has earned the nickname “gasoline alley” and that the City has been involved in remediating contaminated sites up and down that corridor so there may be some contamination on the Epping site as well. To the west is a residential neighborhood which, according to the SCYP report, has a median income of $27,000 which is $7500 under the city-wide median of $34,500. The report proposes developing a mixed-use site containing multi-family housing, amenities for the residential community, and retail and commercial space to serve the surrounding residents and businesses. Ideas include live-work studios and a food-cart hub. The largest barrier to developing the Epping site is traffic along Portland Road, much of which is freight. There is no intersection in front of the site and apparently there is not likely to be one in the future so a new access road must be built first. Bus service along Portland Road is infrequent at 40 minute intervals on weekdays only.
South Waterfront

The South Waterfront is an abandoned industrial site in the southwest quadrant of the Central area (Figure 12) between the Willamette River and Commercial St (a main arterial through the city). To the west of the site is Minto-Brown Island, Salem's largest park, and to the north is Riverfront Park which was also an industrial site prior to 1996. Immediately to the east is the Civic Center campus which includes the library and the central police and fire stations and to the south is commercial activity. Pringle Creek runs west through the center of the lot. For 150 years the site's location provided water for industrial use and access to freight transportation along the Willamette River. Now, the area is being re-imagined as a gateway to downtown and to Minto-Brown Island. The SCYP proposals envision connecting this site to the Riverfront Park, developing a mixed-use, high-density, transit hub, and restoring Pringle Creek as a wildlife habitat and public amenity. The site itself poses a barrier to redevelopment. The surface of the site has been cleaned and is approved for certain kinds of above-ground uses but there may be contamination underground requiring further remediation before it can be used for residences.
South of Mission

The South of Mission site is located near the Willamette river in the South Central area (Figure 13). The site is bounded on one side by Commercial Street which is a major traffic route through the city. To the west of the site is a small residential neighborhood, to the east are more residences (some of which have been converted to office space) and then further east is Bush's Pasture Park. According to an interviewee, the neighborhoods surrounding the South of Mission site are higher-income than in the other sites discussed, especially the properties near Bush's Pasture Park. The main goal of this project is to encourage economic development in the area. It is envisioned that the site, along with the South Waterfront site to the north, can become a mixed-use gateway to downtown. The SCYP proposals for this site include multi-family housing with retail and commercial at street level, public and green spaces, and a focus on walkability and access to transit and bicycle routes.
Each of the redevelopment sites summarized above is located within an urban renewal area. Urban renewal is a legal designation which allows the Salem Urban Renewal Agency to fund redevelopment by borrowing against the future tax revenue (called the tax increment) which will result from redevelopment. Urban renewal is enabled by chapter 457 of the Oregon Revised Statute (2011) to deal with blight, defined in the statute as:

... areas that, by reason of deterioration, faulty planning, inadequate or improper facilities, deleterious land use or the existence of unsafe structures [...], are detrimental to the safety, health or welfare of the community.

In all of the redevelopment sites, blight seems to refer primarily to economic underutilization - the judgement that an area could be performing better. Additionally, in the South Waterfront site and in the Epping site, blight also refers to the possibility of environmental contamination. The formula put forward for dealing with underutilized urban sites is to create walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, to protect and restore the natural amenities and habitats along the Willamette River, Mill Creek and Pringle Creek, and to improve and connect parks and green spaces. Walkability is an important feature of the redevelopment sites because pedestrians are viewed as key to generating the
“vibrant neighborhoods” envisioned in the proposals. This sentiment was echoed by an interviewee who cited the lack of walkability downtown as a central problem facing the city in its economic development efforts. The interviewee felt that the built form of Portland’s downtown encourages walking because it is more “human-scale” while Salem’s downtown is primarily designed to move traffic. The reports also emphasize bicycle and transit connectivity, the integration of mixed-income, multi-family housing, commercial and retail within the sites, and the preservation or addition of cultural amenities such as museums, festivals, public space, and the downtown’s historic buildings. These strategies are seen as a way to entice people and businesses into the areas to stimulate further development.

6.1.2. Parks and public space

Five reports focus on improving the quality and access to parks and public space. Figure 14 provides an overview of the main parks. Salem sits in the lush Willamette Valley and is home to over 4000 acres of parks. Not surprisingly, parks and public spaces play an important role in the redevelopment visions discussed in the previous section and in Salem’s goal to provide a high quality of life for its residents. This group of reports feeds into Salem’s Comprehensive Parks and Recreation System Master Plan and Transportation System Plan. Additionally, the two companion lighting reports in this group are motivated primarily by the City’s desire to reduce the cost of operating and maintaining public lights. The five reports in this group are titled: i) Minto-Brown Island Park Studio; ii) Minto-Brown Island Park Citizen Communications Strategy; iii) Downtown Parks Connectivity Analysis with Geographic Information Systems (GIS); iv) Efficient Public Lighting Options; and v) Salem Streetlights: Solutions for a Sustainable System.
The first report, *Minto-Brown Island Park Studio*, provides trail designs and a master plan proposal for Minto-Brown Island, Salem’s largest park at 900 acres. Unlike many of the other design oriented projects in the SCYP-Salem partnership in which students worked individually or in small groups to generate a collection of ideas and concepts, students in this class worked collaboratively to develop a comprehensive proposal. The original scope of work anticipated a set of proposals for new trail connections, wayfinding options, and improved connectivity of the park to downtown Salem. As a result of their investigation, the students concluded that, in order to breathe new life into Minto-Brown Island, “to help restore Minto Brown Island to a more natural state” as worded in the scope of work, more was needed than new trails and better access. The students prepared a set of proposals in five areas: habitat, city access, trails and wayfinding, themed public activity areas, and sustainable agriculture. These proposals came together to form a comprehensive master plan for how Minto-Brown Island could be transformed into a socially and ecologically diverse and productive area.
The second report, *Minto-Brown Island Park Citizen Communications Strategy*, also focuses on Minto-Brown Island and provides the City with communication and signage strategies for encouraging responsible use of the park. The proposals aim to address four issues that the City is experiencing with the park: off-leash dogs outside of the designated areas, unsafe cycling on shared trails, littering, and recruitment and retention of park patrol volunteers. These problems are primarily dealt with through signage and messaging, the ideas for which are drawn from other cities. In a few cases, the students also propose partnering with local organizations that have a connection to the specific user groups such as local bicycle shops and pet supply stores.

The third report, *Downtown Parks Connectivity Analysis with Geographic Information Systems (GIS)*, contains proposals for connecting the many parks around Salem by bicycle and pedestrian routes and by public transit. Emphasis is placed on the parks in the downtown area. The focus of these proposals is on route selection rather than on specific infrastructure options or trail designs. Consequently, the proposals make heavy use of GIS information and provide a large collection of maps which assess route options from different perspectives including walking / biking time to various destinations, difficulty and accessibility, and safety. With regard to transit, the proposals examine the degree to which different parks are accessible by transit and recommend rerouting or extending existing lines as being more cost effective than adding new bus lines. The regional transit system is not run by the City of Salem but by a separate agency called Cherriots so the City is only able to act indirectly on this particular proposal. This report also discusses the economic development potential of the park system through tourism. Proposals include hosting a marathon, improving access to Minto-Brown Island, and organizing regular bicycle tours to various parks and destinations around Salem. Finally, the report examines issues of equity and engagement. Bicycle and pedestrian routes are considered as a means to connect schools and as a transportation option for low-income residents. Mobile GIS technology is proposed as a tool for bringing different voices into the planning process by allowing people to submit route proposals, highlight areas that they feel are unsafe, and preplan their routes.

The fourth report in this group, *Efficient Public Lighting Options*, provides design concepts for more efficient public lighting along streets, in parks, and elsewhere. The
proposals consider the benefits and costs of new lighting technologies such as LED and induction lighting, clever design strategies for making it easier to change light bulbs, ways to achieve better visibility while reducing light pollution, and options for solar powered lights and lights which increase or decrease their output based on the actual presence of people. In preparing the proposals, students undertook surveys, case studies, technical and cost analysis, and built models and prototypes of different design ideas.

The fifth report, *Salem Streetlights: Solutions for a Sustainable System*, is a companion report to the lighting design report which assesses ideas for how to fund the operation and maintenance of Salem's streetlights in order to ease pressure on the City's General Fund and to allow 100% of the gas tax revenue to be used for road maintenance. The report focuses on three aspects of lighting cost: the revenue sources, the ownership arrangements, and the energy efficiency. The report recommends that, in order to immediately stabilize streetlight funding, the City should adopt a $1.50 per month user fee to be levied as an electrical pass-through. To achieve long-term sustainability, the report also recommends that the City consolidate ownership of the streetlights (many of which are currently owned by Portland General Electric and by Salem Electric), and switch to LED technology.

### 6.1.3. Civic engagement

This group contains three reports that focus on improving communication and engagement between the City and two specific citizen groups: Latino residents who make up twenty percent of the population in Salem; and the Neighborhood Associations which, according to one City staff interviewee who works directly with the Associations, had been seriously underrepresenting their communities in the years leading up to the SCYP-Salem partnership. The three reports in this group are titled: i) *Cultural Mapping in Northeast Salem: A Civic Engagement Study*; ii) *Engaging the Latino Community in Salem*; and iii) *Advancing Sustainability by Fostering Civic Engagement*. This group of reports is the most narrowly focused among all the SCYP reports in terms of the range of planning elements engaged. There are two apparent motivations for these reports. One motivation is the need for compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) which requires the City to take affirmative action to include stakeholders with diversity of
“race, color and national origin” for input in decision making processes associated with federally funded projects. The other motivation is a perceived need on the part of City staff and council to broaden the scope of dialogue about a range of issues which are ultimately linked to the City's changing economic environment. Several interviewees reported that, although the City is good at engaging the immediate stakeholders around a specific project, there is a growing recognition that the City is hearing from the usual suspects in community dialogue. The interviewee elaborates:

[W]e're not hearing from the large Latino population that we have that's pretty much invisible in our community dialogue. ... [W]e the city are really, really good at identifying the constituent groups that have interest ... but what that does is isolate conversation so it doesn't have any benefit to the broader community. If we're talking about, let's say for example, a park project, we'll go to the neighborhood association and we'll go to the park group if there is one for that area and we'll have them engage with us about what the park should or could look like, but that means we get something that's driven by that immediate neighborhood, but it doesn't mean that we're getting a discussion about that park in relationship to the park system and it doesn't mean we're having a broader dialogue about weighing park improvements across the system.

Two full reports and part of the third report focus on increasing the quantity of interactions with Latino residents. One of these reports aims at mapping the cultural resources in Northeast Salem which contains the city's largest community of Latino residents (in the area around the Epping site discussed earlier). According to the Cultural Mapping in Northeast Salem report, a cultural map is intended to identify existing resources and also “gaps that may be negatively contributing to the livability, sustainability, diversity, and social equity of a place” (p. 8). Unfortunately this project did not live up to its potential because of a critical flaw in the design of the primary survey. The second and third reports assessed opportunities for improving engagement with Latino residents, the two main themes of which are that: i) the institutional model of civic engagement used by the City of Salem tends to view Latino residents as a homogenous population (“the Latino population” or “the Latino community”), which they are not; and ii) that structural differences which may prevent individuals and households from participating must to be taken into account. Although staff interviewees reported no immediate outcomes from the Latino engagement proposals, one recommendation, to increase Latino representation on City staff and in other positions of political influence, could help to generate momentum behind this issue. The primary barrier, however, is
funding. The City is in a mode of downsizing so affirmative action in hiring is only likely to happen as key positions become vacant.

The third report in the civic engagement group has two additional objectives: to provide City staff with a public participation manual - which it did - and to improve engagement with the Neighborhood Associations. The Neighborhood Associations are authorized under Chapter 64 of the *Salem Revised Code* for the purpose of engaging citizens in local planning and decision making. Neighborhood Associations were intended to serve as participatory community institutions which assess development proposals and advise City Council on neighborhood interests but they have ceased to adequately represent their communities. One interviewee says:

There are nineteen [Neighborhood Associations], they meet regularly, they do all these things that are prescribed by our municipal code. They publish these newsletters and mail them. I started attending all of these meetings and I noticed that there are only like five or eight people at each of these meetings that represent this entire neighborhood. ... I knew something was wrong but I didn’t know how to go about making any changes to it. And taking a look at our system, it was essentially started in 1972 and has been run exactly the same way since 1972, relying heavily on US mail, photocopying, actually physically meeting places. It was definitely cutting edge in 1972 and it was probably an old-hat way to do stuff in the 1990s but it was certainly outdated in this century.

In addition to the problem of representation discussed by the interviewee above, the City spends approximately $75,000 each year to print and mail the Neighborhood Associations’ newsletters and meeting agendas with no apparent benefit to actual neighborhood engagement. This one report provides two simple recommendations to address these problems. The first recommendation is to rebrand the Neighborhood Associations to portray them as “relevant, fun, and engaging”. The second recommendation is to dispense with paper correspondence and use electronic and social media to communicate and engage. Not only did this recommendation save the City money, it influenced the interviewee to think about the Neighborhood Associations differently, as less of an institution with members and more of a “cloud of people who are committed to helping”, and to contemplate the ways in which the old funding arrangement may have been undermining engagement. The City has now enabled the Neighborhood Associations to raise their own revenue through charitable donations. Part of the goal is to save the City money but another motivation is to encourage them to
seek the support of their communities in order to stimulate engagement. The interviewee sees this as a more “mature” model of engagement and is hopeful about the future of neighborhood engagement while also acknowledging that there is a long way to go.

6.1.4. **Public buildings and building code**

Three reports focus on increasing the performance of buildings. Two of these reports are companion reports which focus on the Civic Center, a four block campus directly adjacent to the South of Mission redevelopment site in the South Central area. The Civic Center campus contains the City’s administrative departments, the central library, the central police station and the central fire station. Together, these two reports address a number of pressing issues with the campus. These three reports are titled: i) *Salem Police Station*; ii) *Salem Civic Center - Interior Architecture*; and iii) *Environmental Law: Green Building, Graywater, and Stormwater*.

The motivation behind the first report, *Salem Police Station*, is that the police currently operate out of the basement of the Civic Center which is seismically unsafe with visible cracks and stalactites growing in the parking garage. As one interviewee put it, “in an earthquake our first responders are going to be pancakes.” The police facility report provides 24 design ideas for a new station on the Civic Center campus to better serve the needs of the police department and the public. The primary question that the students grappled with was where on the Civic Center campus to locate the new police building. Each proposal provided a different answer along with the pros and cons. Some ideas situated the police station to emphasize daylight and solar gain while others emphasized street visibility. In this way, the report did not constitute a unified recommendation based on extensive research but rather a basket of visions which proved that a new police station could fit onto the existing site and which can stimulate further dialogue among the City and its stakeholders. That being said, a key theme of all the design ideas was to increase the sense of connection between the police department and the public realm. This was done by creating more public and green spaces inside and outside the building, by improving wayfinding, and by improving vehicle access and parking. Most design ideas attempted to incorporate Pringle Creek which runs through the north end of the Civic Center campus, either directly by providing access to the green space along the creek or by alluding to water in various design
elements. Sustainable design principles were sprinkled throughout the report which touched on the use of natural sunlight to reduce electrical consumption, recycling graywater, and reusing material.

The other report, Salem Civic Center - Interior Architecture, provides design ideas to improve the function, safety and style of the main building which houses the City's service departments and council chambers. Unlike the police station which is to be rebuilt from the ground up, this report focuses on renovating the existing Civic Center building. As such, many of the design ideas attempt to retain the original 1970s aesthetic. The design ideas focus at three levels: at the building scale, at the department scale, and at the human scale. Building scale proposals focus on addressing seismic issues with the current building through such solutions as adding a structural “wrap” around the building and adding new stairwells inside the building. Building designs also focused on the large atrium at the main entrance to the Civic Center which is, at present, little more than a very large walkway into the building but which students envision as a vibrant public space. Department scale proposals focus on rearranging departments based on how they are accessed by the public, improving circulation among departments, creating more shared work space, and generating a more welcoming and accessible layout for the public. Human scale proposals focus on the furniture and desk space, the reception areas, and lighting. Like the police station report, the Civic Center report does not provide a unified design proposal but rather a basket of ideas to work with.

The third report in this group, Environmental Law: Green Building, Graywater, and Stormwater, addresses the regulatory framework surrounding sustainable building practices and water management in Salem and provides recommendations to encourage the construction of greener buildings. This report was motivated by work that the City was required to do by the Federal Clean Water Act (1972) and it supported work that staff were already doing. If the police station and Civic Center design concepts were somewhat light on environmental sustainability then this third report helps to correct that deficiency by providing recommendations for changes to building codes and bylaws that discourage or even prevent sustainable building and stormwater management practices. The report focuses heavily on the potential to integrate the LEED green building rating system (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) into Salem's building codes
and incentive frameworks and the report links this proposal upward to existing and anticipated state-level initiatives to encourage greener building practices. The report also compares the use of various stormwater management tools such as greenroofs and permeable pavement in several cities across the US. The report concludes with five recommendations which focus primarily on creating soft incentives for green building and stormwater management such as engaging the community through newsletters and information on the City's website, creating a guide of the stormwater management tools available to property owners, and adding language to the Salem Revised Code which allows for the use of permeable surfaces in public right of ways. According to an interviewee, this report helped by supporting the direction that staff were going in anyway and by freeing up a bit of time for other pressing business, but it has not changed their work or thinking in any significant way.

6.1.5. **Economic development**

This group contains two companion reports which provide the City with research and action plans to support economic development. These two reports were motivated by a desire on the part of the City to be more proactive in their economic development efforts. One report, the *Target Industries Analysis*, assesses four target industries as potential growth industries in Salem. The other report in this group, the *Strategic Economic Prosperity Plan*, provides staff in the City's Urban Development Department (UDD) with a five-year internal work plan which takes into consideration the results of the target industries analysis and an organizational analysis of the UDD.

Building on the region's existing manufacturing base, the *Target Industries Analysis* focuses on primary metal and industrial machinery manufacturing to serve regional demand, manufacturing solar and wind components to serve Oregon's growing renewable energy industry, and manufacturing medical devices to capitalize on the State of Washington's investment in the bioscience industry. The report also targets the food processing industry for growth, building on a history of regional agriculture, several successful food brands and a growing local food movement. The *Target Industries Analysis* advocates activities and policies which support the formation of business clusters as a way to increase productivity and stimulate innovation. The strategies aim to support the formation of business clusters by providing incentives to businesses wanting
to grow or relocate in Salem, working with local schools to improve workforce training in
the target industries, prioritizing local businesses in local government procurement, and
improving Salem's brand as a great place to do business with a high quality of life.

The Strategic Economic Prosperity Plan aimed to develop a five-year work plan
for the UDD and its economic development partners – SEDCOR, Business Oregon, the
Salem Chamber of Commerce, and others – by conducting an assessment of the
functions and roles which the partners play in economic development plus an
assessment of Salem's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT
analysis) in relation to economic development. The work performed included a review
of relevant documents, interviews with City staff, economic development partners, and
business leaders, and a survey to gauge local businesses' perceptions of doing business
in Salem. All of this information was used to generate a set of 52 actions and 18
indicators to help the UDD and its partners encourage business and job development in
Salem. In line with the Target Industries Analysis, the Economic Prosperity Plan focuses
on growing the manufacturing base. This focus is supported by the composition of the
local workforce and by the abundance of undeveloped, potentially industrial land within
the urban growth boundary. The report finds that Salem's weaknesses in economic
development are lack of emphasis on retaining business (the corollary of which is an
overemphasis on recruiting large businesses to the area), lack of emphasis on small
business development, and inefficiencies in coordinating the various economic
development partners. Additionally, the report finds that Salem's greatest threat to
economic prosperity is the wider economy and a lack of access to investment capital.

As mentioned, an important input into the writing of the economic development
reports was a survey conducted by the students to measure local businesses' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the business environment in Salem.
The survey was distributed to members of the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce and
SEDCOR and received 61 complete responses and 44 partial responses. Survey
respondents ranked quality of life, access to medical facilities, access to recreation
opportunities, and environmental quality as the main characteristics that most positively
affect their view of the local business environment. Respondents also ranked quality of
life as Salem's main strength in terms of business development. The results of this
survey should be interpreted cautiously because the sample method allowed
respondents to self-select and because 42% of the surveys returned were only partially complete, but the emphasis on quality of life as a key factor in economic development is mirrored in the Council goals, suggesting that the concept resonates with many people in Salem. In the SCYP economic development reports, quality of life is expressed through historic preservation, parks, environmental protection, and public health.

6.1.6. Road infrastructure

This group contains two reports which assess parking requirements and intersection safety respectively. The reports are titled: i) Salem Transportation Safety Analysis; and ii) Controlling Congestion Through Parking Policy: Minimums, Maximums, and the Road to an Efficient Future. The parking report provides a comparison of the off-street parking requirements in eleven US cities. The primary recommendation in this report is to eliminate minimum parking standards and, instead, introduce maximum parking standards. City staff described the parking report as a “sort of add-on” project to the SCYP, the motivation for which is unclear although the report briefly mentions the larger goals of increasing “pedestrian mode share” and reducing automobile dependence. At seventeen pages, not including the appendix, it is easily the shortest of all the SCYP reports. One interviewee told me that the City did not receive much value from this report and that it is rarely discussed.

The motivation for the transportation safety report is to support the goal in the Salem Transportation System Plan to reduce the number of vehicle and pedestrian accidents. The report also feeds into the Bike and Walk Salem Plan which is a part of the Transportation System Plan. This report, therefore, is supportive of the bicycle and pedestrian projects discussed in the next section. The report provides recommendations to improve safety at ten specific sites around Salem which fall into three categories: neighborhood intersections; major intersections; and Interstate-5 intersections. The proposals include new stop signs and yield signs, roundabouts, curb extensions, vegetation removal to improve visibility, the removal of street parking, the installation of elevated crosswalks, and the construction of pedestrian bridges. The recommendations cover a wide range of possible solutions in terms of cost and complexity and all require further study by the City, but the report provides a solid basis for further dialogue and prioritization.
6.1.7. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

This group contains two reports which focus on improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Salem. The reports are titled: i) Bicycle Transportation; and ii) Downtown Salem Circulation Study. The City's focus on developing a system of parks, trails and other green spaces is connected to the broader effort to redevelop and revitalize areas of Salem, in particular the downtown core. An integrated system of parks, green spaces, and bicycle and pedestrian routes is seen as an important part of site redevelopment and is connected to the larger goal of improving quality of life and ultimately business development and job creation.

The Salem Bicycle Transportation report opens by noting that currently only 1% of Salem's residents bike to work. The report then aims to increase this share by improving connections between parts of the city with an emphasis on routes that connect parks, green spaces and other key destinations. Proposals are provided for infrastructure improvements such as bicycle bridges, improving shared use paths, addressing safety issues at intersections, traffic calming, removing parking to make room for bicycle lanes, wayfinding, and beautifying bike paths. The report also includes recommendations for improving people's acceptance of and behavior toward cycling as a mode of transportation so as to support and overall culture of cycling in the city. The proposals include advertising campaigns aimed at developing an ethic of “sharing the road”, organizing cycling events such as 'bike to work' days and bike tours of the city, reaching out to residents to better understand their perceptions around cycling and safety, promoting bicycle clubs, encouraging cycling as a family activity, encouraging City staff to cycle, and increasing enforcement of traffic laws. One proposal in particular looked at the attitudes of women toward cycling, suggesting that: i) you can reach the broadest possible audience if you can make cycling safe and attractive to women; ii) that you are more likely to engender cycling in children because women tend to be responsible for transporting children to schools and to activities; and iii) that increasing cycling among women may help to increase economic and social equity among struggling families and especially single mothers.

The second report, the Downtown Salem Circulation Study, is an engineering study of traffic patterns in the downtown core, the aim of which is to encourage “active transportation” downtown while minimizing any disturbance to existing traffic circulation.
and parking capacity. The proposals take into account safety, cost, environmental impact, aesthetic, and practicality and offer both short term and long term solutions. Short term proposals include creating shared vehicle-bike lanes marked by 'sharrows', installing raised crosswalks where only painted crosswalks exist, redirecting cyclists from main streets to newly created bicycle boulevards on less trafficked side streets, and transitioning cyclists to the sidewalk to circumvent high-risk intersections. Over the longer term, the report recommends that major systemic reconstruction will be required along specifics routes. Proposals include removing vehicle lanes to make room for dedicated bike lanes, converting one-lane streets into two-lane streets in order to increase pedestrian access to local businesses, installing high-intensity crosswalk beacons at dangerous crossings, completely reconstructing high-traffic intersections which are unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians, and building a bike and pedestrian overpass over a major traffic route,

### 6.1.8. Low-income housing

This group contains two reports which provide “re-use and redevelopment” proposals for three public housing sites managed by the Salem Housing Authority (SHA): Glenn Creek Village in West Salem, Meadowlark Village in South Salem, and Orchard Village in Northeast Salem. The first two sites are presently occupied while the third, Orchard Village, is vacant. The Salem Housing Authority is a public agency which provides a variety of public and supportive housing options within the Salem-Keizer region. The broad motivation for these projects is economic and demographic changes which are taking place in Salem. According to one report, Salem’s population is expected to increase 27% by 2030. Currently, 66% of Salem residents spend more than 35% of their income on housing which is considered by the report to be “unaffordable”. Additionally, homelessness is growing across Oregon and many cities are struggling to provide emergency shelter and affordable housing. The two reports are titled: i) Green Cities; and ii) High Performance, High Density, High Ambitions: Housing for the Salem Housing Authority. The ideas and proposals contained in these reports provide the Salem Housing Authority with ideas for environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable public housing and they have the potential to inform other housing developments.
The low-income group of reports engages a wide range of planning elements in comparison to the other groups and explores environmental design strategies such as using reclaimed and recycled building materials, passive solar heating and cooling, greywater recycling, increasing density, community gardening, composting toilets, bioswales, pervious surfaces and even the possibility of turning unused parking space into green space. These proposals aim to provide a vision for public housing which costs less to operate, is long-lasting and is adaptable to future demands. One report calls this “future-proof housing”. Many of the physical design concepts resemble those found in the site development group and in the public buildings group discussed above and these features account for a majority of the design elements in these two reports. The most interesting features of these reports, however, focus on increasing the self-sufficiency of the residents. Three strategies are considered toward this goal. The first strategy is to provide community gardens to the residents so that they can grow at least a portion of their own food. The reports envision that community gardening (also referred to as urban farming) can help residents reduce their cost of living, increase social activity and provide a sense of ownership and stewardship over the site. One site in particular, Glenn Creek Village, is currently zoned for agricultural use and can potentially provide food year-round. The reports note that Salem already has a well established community garden program with waiting lists for many of the garden plots around the city so this strategy for increasing self-sufficiency is well connected to existing practice. According to a staff report dated June 2012 which updates council on the ways in which the SCYP projects are being utilized by the City, the Salem Housing Authority is moving forward with the recommendation to build community gardens. The reports also recommend that the City link community gardens to the national Farm to School program which aims to educate youth about agriculture, environment and healthy eating, and provide skills and possibly even summer employment. Similarly, the reports suggest that community gardening could also involve homeless people as a way to provide skill and a connection to community. Community gardening is seen by the reports as a way to integrate social, environmental and economic objectives. The second strategy, related to community gardens, is to provide communal spaces in order to empower residents and encourage social cohesion. This “social infrastructure” includes playgrounds, a community center, a goods-exchange center, sitting areas, pathways and a communal cooking and dining area. Engagement in the community is seen as vital to the ultimate success of these redevelopment projects and public housing more generally.
The third strategy is to improve mobility. The three public housing sites are considered suburban and are not well connected to downtown or to local services by anything other than automobile. This is not a fault of the public housing sites but of the overall transportation system which is heavily car dependent. One report describes two of the sites as "islands in a sea of disconnect". Local transit service is typically every 45 minutes on weekdays only. Additionally, there are concerns about bicycle and pedestrian safety at two of the sites given their location along major roads. The reports note that the lack of transportation options can impact residents' access to basics good and services like groceries and medical care, especially for parents with children, the elderly, and the disabled. Increasing the mobility of residents is seen to enhance opportunity and self-sufficiency.

6.1.9. **Industrial ecology**

This group contains one report. The *Industrial Ecology* report examines opportunities for saving money by reducing waste, reclaiming energy and other forms of industrial symbiosis in two cases: Salem's Willow Lake Water Pollution Control Facility which is operated by Salem's Public Works Department; and NORPAC Foods Inc, a private fruit and vegetable canning and processing company. The report is divided into five unique projects, three of which focus on Willow Lake and two of which focus on NORPAC.

The first project investigates options for replacing the current methane gas generator at Willow Lake. This generator, which is showing signs of aging, burns the methane gas produced as a result of digesting the wastewater that comes into Willow Lake and produces electricity and heat, both of which are used by the facility. The generator produces roughly one quarter of the facility's electricity needs and two thirds of the facility's heat needs. Three options are assessed in terms of their relative upfront cost, operating and maintenance costs, efficiency, and greenhouse gas emissions. The first option is a slightly larger capacity generator which uses the same conventional combustion technology to convert methane into electricity. The second option uses fuel cell technology (which uses a chemical reaction to convert methane to electricity instead of combustion) and has a little over twice the energy generation capacity as the existing system. The third option combines a slightly larger conventional generator with a smaller
fuel cell generator. Despite the potential environmental benefits, the study finds that there are still serious technical challenges to using fuel cell technology as well as much higher capital and maintenance costs. The study recommends that Willow Lake continue with conventional generator technology.

The second project assesses the potential for Willow Lake to treat the grease byproduct of a nearby biofuel processing business (SeQuential-Pacific Biodiesel). At the time of the study, SeQuential shipped its grease waste to Portland to be dehydrated and spread on land. Students used case studies along with environmental and financial analysis to determine the feasibility of rerouting the waste product to Willow Lake. The results of this analysis were positive and the students recommend that a partnership be pursued. The potential benefits to Willow Lake include an increase in methane to electricity production which helps the facility reduce its own electricity costs, and an additional revenue stream in the way of a tipping fee from SeQuential. The partnership also reduces SeQuential's costs for disposing of the waste and significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions associated with trucking and land spreading. This project is moving forward and the benefits realized. Additionally, the lessons learned are opening up new avenues for cost savings and revenue generation at the treatment plant. It is quite literally changing their business model.

The third project assesses the potential for reclaiming Willow Lake's wastewater for reuse. This project anticipates that future environmental changes may create a strong business case for water reclamation. The study concludes that water reclamation is not currently cost effective but that, in order to position itself as an environmental leader and prepare for the effects of climate change, the City of Salem could begin encouraging demonstration projects, stimulating dialogue among economic development and utility partners, and installing basic infrastructure such as 'purple pipe' - the pipe infrastructure which is used to distribute reclaimed or recycled water, named because it is literally colored purple.

The fourth project assesses the potential for NORPAC to reclaim nutrients, reduce costs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its organic waste which is currently being spread on land as fertilizer, a practice which produces significant methane. Three options are considered: i) converting the organic waste into methane which can then be burned to produce electricity for use by NORPAC; ii) conventional
composting; and iii) worm composting. In the last two options, the output of the composting process could be sold as fertilizer and provide a revenue stream. For each option, students considered on-site solutions as well as potential partnerships. The students recommended that NORPAC pursue the worm composting option in partnership with the Oregon Soil Corporation because it offered the largest environmental and revenue benefits.

The fifth project assessed the potential for recycling the defective cans from NORPACs four canning facilities and reducing landfill costs. Three options were considered: i) NORPAC establishing a central can recycling facility which could, theoretically, process 100% of the defective cans rather than relying on plant workers to open and recycle cans in their downtime; ii) partnering with Recology, a private recycling business, to open and recycle the defective cans; iii) using a digester. All of the options will require an investment in labor and equipment and the report was inconclusive about longer term cost savings given the uncertainty of future landfill and energy costs. The students recommended a phased approach that involves managing as much of the recycling internally for up to six months and then pursuing a partnership with Recology.

6.2. Vision of a sustainable Salem built from actually existing sustainabilities

This subsection deals with the visionary world – the ways in which the ideas contained in the reports can be linked to a longer term vision of a future. In order to reconstruct the whole set of proposals contained within the SCYP-Salem reports into the vision of a sustainable Salem derived through this process, I looked within each planning element group for aspirational statements, statements that seem to suggest a desired quality of life. These aspirational statements and the proposals to which they are linked can be viewed as the building blocks of a pragmatic vision of the future of Salem. I grouped the aspirational statements together based on similarity (see Figure 15) referring often to the original text of the reports to ensure that I understood their intent. As the groups evolved, I also considered them in light of the discussions with staff at the City of Salem about their perceptions of sustainability, quality of life, economic development, and other key concepts with the goal of keeping the final set of
visions as relevant as possible to City staff. This process produced three high-level visions out of a large basket of real, implementable proposals. I discuss each in terms of the key themes advanced under each, below.

**Figure 15: Aspirational statements grouped into three high-level visions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUSTAINABILITY</th>
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<th>Resilient Communities</th>
<th>Vital Regional Economy</th>
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<td>strong urban fabric</td>
<td>buildings (infrastructure) that last</td>
<td>economic &amp; cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
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<td>vibrant neighborhoods and commercial centers</td>
<td>no homelessness</td>
<td>economic vitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vibrant spaces</td>
<td>dignity for those living in public housing</td>
<td>economic equality &amp; ease</td>
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<tr>
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<td>vibrant urban center</td>
<td>healthy citizens</td>
<td>prosperity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vibrant neighborhoods</td>
<td>affordability</td>
<td>productive sites</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>unique places</td>
<td>strong sense of ownership within communities</td>
<td>productive city</td>
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<td>access to parts of the city</td>
<td>better engagement with residents</td>
<td>culture of interdependence</td>
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<td>comfortable living</td>
<td>even development / connected city</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sense of stewardship and concern for natural env</td>
<td>sense of safety</td>
<td>equitable balance of objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>protect agriculture land</td>
<td></td>
<td>connectivity / mobility</td>
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### 6.2.1. Salem is a vibrant city which offers a high quality of life for all

**Increase street activity.** First and foremost this means encouraging more walking and biking overall. More people on the streets is seen to draw more people to the area as well as reduce crime and add to the sense of safety. Specific actions which can be taken include encouraging street food, creating cultural, restaurant, and entertainment districts, hosting festivals and other public events, and supporting more neighborhood oriented businesses. Specific policy strategies include altering traffic patterns in order to minimize pedestrian-vehicle interactions, increasing density, encouraging mixed-use development, reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements, and creating a sense of unity in the built form.

**Increase ecological amenities.** Salem is blessed with many waterways and green spaces and the city is working hard to restore and protect these natural assets
from the impact of past and future development activity. Actions include reducing litter in
the parks, managing stormwater in a more ecologically sensitive way, restoring and
protecting natural habitats, daylighting creeks, and reducing light pollution. A key
objective here is to foster a sense of stewardship of these assets among the residents of
Salem through ecological education and physical design. A river research center, for
example, may provide a destination that helps to achieve this purpose.

**Attract people to Salem.** Salem desires to be seen as more than just the capital
city of Oregon. The reports address this through proposals which seek to attract people
to Salem. Many of the redevelopment proposals focus on creating destination sites that
draw tourists from around the region. The features of a destination include those
discussed above such as green amenities and cultural assets but there is an additional
emphasis placed on ensuring connectivity between the destination sites and to
downtown Salem from the Interstate 5 highway. More specifically, this means reducing
congestion by expanding road capacity and maintaining parking capacity in the
downtown core. In fact, the necessity to minimize disruptions to traffic flow and maintain
parking capacity was the only absolute restriction placed on the students’ creativity.
Herein lies a key challenge to moving forward with the vision of Salem as a vibrant city.
Traffic calming and minimizing pedestrian-vehicle interactions is proposed as an action
toward increasing street activity yet disruptions to traffic flow are also seen as having a
negative impact on tourism and on local businesses.

### 6.2.2. Salem’s communities are resilient to unexpected events

**Conserve energy and resource use.** The theme of conservation runs
throughout and is seen a way to save money and reduce pollution. Emphasis is placed
on reusing existing materials and assets and designing new buildings and other civic
infrastructure that physically lasts a long time and is adaptable to changing needs.
These principles could be embedded in a green building program. Other proposals focus
on the energy used by transportation. Encouraging mode switch from automobile to
transit or cycling is a key way to reduce energy use associated with transportation.
Policy tools include traffic calming, improving transit and cycling infrastructure,
eliminatong minimum parking requirements, and encouraging mixed-use development so
that there is less need to drive. It is argued that if organizations and the City overall can
reduce energy and material use then there will be more money and resources for other projects and services. A conservation city is a more productive and resilient city.

**Provide excellent homes for all.** This objective places emphasis on improving the conditions of public housing and reducing homelessness. Sustainable design (in line with the energy conservation proposals discussed above) and a focus on improving the aesthetics of public housing are seen as a way to increase the sense of ownership that residents have which will in turn cause them to take a more active role in maintaining their communities. It is proposed that excellent design in public housing can influence the private market as well, increasing the sustainability, beauty and longevity of the city's housing stock. Additionally, community gardens and other public spaces may be used as a way to engage the homeless in community activities, helping to generate social connections and develop life skills.

**Increase citizen engagement and social capital.** Social capital and social cohesion are seen as desirable attributes for building resilience because they enable communities to work together to solve problems. Public spaces, community gardens, shared facilities, and open and accessible public organizations (such as neighborhood associations and City Hall) are seen as a form of social infrastructure which can help to encourage greater citizen engagement. As with proposals that aim to engender a sense of ownership for public housing, greater engagement with the public realm is linked to a sense of ownership and stewardship for communities and the city as a whole.

### 6.2.3. Salem contributes to a vital and diverse regional economy

**Attract large employers to Salem.** Job growth is a top priority for Salem. Even before the 2008 recession, unemployment was slightly above the national average and earnings were slightly below the national average. The formation of industrial clusters is seen as a long-term solution to stimulating the economy and creating jobs. The City of Salem and its economic development partners are refocusing on food processing, metal manufacturing, renewable energy, and biosciences as possible growth industries. Each of these has some historical or regional justification. Proposals for encouraging growth in these industries focus on developing vacant land within the urban growth boundary, providing incentives to businesses that wish to relocate to Salem, marketing Salem's geographic position along the Interstate 5 highway and its proximity to Portland,
partnering with regional colleges and universities on workforce development programs, and creating opportunities for cost savings through greater integration of supply chains and reuse of waste streams.

**Increase the diversity of Salem's economy.** Although a great deal of emphasis is being placed on attracting large employers and developing industrial clusters, there is a recognition within the reports that it would be unwise for Salem to put all its 'eggs in one basket'. Economic diversity can be achieved by encouraging local consumption and therefore local production. The City could, for example, institute a local procurement policy and encourage larger businesses to do the same. Low-income and Latino residents could be encouraged and incentivized to start community oriented businesses. The cost saving potential of energy conservation and recycling could play a role in improving the competitiveness of small businesses. Many of the proposals discussed as contributing to a vibrant and livable city are also seen as playing a role in attracting creative, small business entrepreneurs. Mixed-use development policies could help small businesses compete with big-box chains by ensuring an ultra-local customer base. Finally, many respondents to the business perception survey conducted as part of the **Prosperity Plan** recommended placing more emphasis on business retention rather than just on business development.

**Increase mobility.** As with the proposals for creating a vibrant and livable city, mobility and connectivity are seen as central to economic development. The key difference here is that emphasis is placed on the free and unrestricted flow of freight into and out of the city. Additionally, Salem is placing a great deal of emphasis on improving the municipal airport.

**6.2.4. Discussion**

The pragmatic point of view is that a vision of the future which is derived from present practice and people's own conception of what constitutes desirable incremental progress (i.e. local experience) is more likely to be acted on and to be successful than a vision which is derived from abstract ideals. If members of the community who are disinterested in abstract debate about sustainability or who oppose it as a development framework can get behind some of the ideas put forward by the SCYP students (perhaps because SCYP forum for ideas is less politically charged, perhaps because of the sheer
diversity of ideas put forward), then we may have a stronger foundation for action than we had before – we may have a way to construct a vision of the future which is more transparent, in which citizens are more engaged, and which is ultimately acceptable to a wider base of people. This synthesis leads me to make several recommendations.

To the SCYP

1. Consider adding one 'synthesis' project for each partnership, the goal of which is to take a wide and critical view of the whole set of reports and to provide some recommendations on how to leverage the experience. The final deliverable may be a summary of the whole partnership and the students' recommendations for using it as a springboard. Alternatively, you could offer a shorter follow-up partnership which engages the community in scenario planning using the collection of ideas laid out in the initial partnership. Providing a synthesis of the reports may also be a way to draw in additional disciplines such as philosophy, history or computer technology.

2. One way to evaluate the program is to consider the ways in which you have helped to stimulate dialogue around the messier, more controversial issues of sustainability. This can be done through content analysis of the partners' goals over time (not unlike the method used in this paper) or the usage of sustainability and related concepts in local media. A baseline case study may be done to identify the diversity of ways that sustainability is discussed and acted on or the issues which have become stuck. Over time, the degree to which local dialogue around urban change begins to exemplify an SCYP partnership in terms of the diversity of ideas being considered and the relative ease of dialogue will be the signature of your success.

To the City of Salem

1. Keep doing what you are doing. Keep having regular meetings to discuss the SCYP-Salem outcomes and keep engaging the community in discussions about the budget and the imperative to make incremental progress toward long-term solutions. Use the SCYP ideas to connect those conversations to visions of the future of Salem which are relatable and to reframe conflict. I propose that you
can continue to use the neutrality of the students' ideas as a 'home base' for depoliticizing conversations and reengaging groups in forward looking decision making. Have the reports translated into all local languages.

**To people interested in the City-University partnership model**

1. The conceptual framework presented in this paper suggests that it is critical in the public dialogue on urban change for there to be a constant dynamic between present practices and a vision of the future and that this bridging should be done by diverse groups of people because it provides a method and a forum for social learning. If you are inspired by the SCYP to design or engage in a related partnership, consider what will be left behind for the partners and the ways in which they may be able to use that experience as a springboard for improving local dialogue and knowledge creation about urban change. Consider the difficult question of how to link present practices, contexts, and ideas with a collaboratively generated vision of the future.

2. Attend the SCYP's annual Replication Conference – it is growing into a diverse community of inquiry, many of whom are also experimenting with this model in their cities.
7. Conclusion

Each year, the Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) at the University of Oregon partners with local governments to provide implementation support to sustainability projects. Through an attempt to understand the potential for change toward sustainability within the SCYP-Salem Partnership, this paper finds the case is best explained with reference to the philosophy of American pragmatism which focuses on the central role of social experience in decision making. From the pragmatic perspective, the Partnership shows evidence of having stimulated new directions in actual practice which may prove to produce more sustainable outcomes. Further, these new directions may be linked to the formation of 'communities of inquiry' between students, City staff and members of the community. Leveraging the SCYP centers on using the partnership: a) to unpack complex problems and abstract social aspirations into real, implementable projects and proposals; and b) to demonstrate and stimulate the formation of new communities of inquiry which guide the work of testing and implementing the ideas. I conclude by drawing out the pragmatic implications contained within the SCYP’s self-description which was quoted in the Introduction to this paper.

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a simple and yet radical re-conceptualization of the public research university as catalyst for sustainable community change. Through our innovative service-learning model, the SCYP helps small and medium-sized cities transition to more sustainable frameworks. ...

The SCYP addresses … the problem of outdated problem framing and a shortage of local professionals with sustainability and livability knowledge…through a multidisciplinary effort to assist each partner city with its sustainability-oriented goals and projects. Students and professors work on topics developed jointly by instructors and city staff, ensuring that student ideas are relevant to communities. … Our partner cities benefit directly from bold ideas that propel fresh thinking, improve livability for residents, and invigorate city staff (SCI, 2012).
First, “sustainable frameworks” in the pragmatic view are those which provide a process for arriving at a locally relevant conception of sustainability rather than a content oriented model of how a sustainable city ought to look or function. Second, problem framing becomes outdated because it ceases to be relevant to the experiences of local actors and, perhaps most importantly, to the creation of an implementable vision of the future. Attaching sustainability as a social aspiration to the problem of negotiating conflicting world-views is outdated because it offers no escape from political and technical lock-in. The SCYP helps sidestep this pitfall by exposing the potential for existing practices to link to more sustainable outcomes. Louis Menand says of John Dewey that he was a reformer, “and reform is about improving the quality of life under a given regime, not about overthrowing the established order” (2001, p. 373). The 'problem' of sustainability, then, is one of finding leverage within the existing order. Third, the SCYP addresses the “shortage of local professionals with sustainability and livability knowledge” by providing a wealth of ideas and a demonstration of creative social inquiry that empowers anyone, be they City staff or community members, to generate sustainability knowledge. What the SCYP leaves behind are the seeds of social learning which feed on experience and the incremental development of expertise rather than on a sufficient quantity of 'experts' in sustainability. Finally, the “benefits” to the partner cities, the bold ideas and the fresh thinking, must add up to something bigger, they must make a difference. For this reason, the wealth of ideas and proposals which are produced out of the SCYP partnership must be continually reconstructed into a larger vision against which the consequences of implementing the ideas can be evaluated. This vision, derived from the locally and temporally relevant proposals, holds the process of implementation accountable, it gives structure to a sustainability transition.
References


