

Community Partnership Case Stories

City of Salem, Oregon

2010–2011

**Salem staff re-energized by over
\$8 million in faculty and student efforts**

Program Details

**Sustainable City Year
Program**

University of Oregon
204 Pacific Hall
6206 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

sci.uoregon.edu
541.346.3582



University partnership found solutions to Salem's complex problems

City of Salem, Marion
County, Oregon,
United States

Community Size:
2017: 169,798

Status: Completed

Successful financial management during the financial crisis contributed to the city's ability to invest in a unique community-university partnership program at the University of Oregon. The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a multi-disciplinary year-long effort directing faculty and their students towards the issues faced by a community.

As a member of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), SCYP brought in about 500 students in architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, urban planning, public administration, arts administration, law, product design, journalism, and business from the University of Oregon as well as a civil engineering course from nearby Portland State University to focus on making Salem more socially and economically inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and democratic.

SCYP 're-energized the whole city workforce' to tackle issues of sustainability

By partnering with SCYP, Salem accessed expertise and labor on a large-scale to advance toward sustainability without incurring steep costs.

Of the 2010-11 year, Courtney Knox Busch, the city's Strategic Initiatives Manager, said the experience "propelled conversations within the city forward by two to three years...The students re-energized the whole city workforce. We could not have done that by ourselves," she said.

SCYP delivers great ideas, furthering work among local consultants.

Salem officials estimate that, based on standard rates, SCYP gave them over \$8 million worth of service. Since the projects completed, the City of Salem was able to use the work with local consultants to immediately begin putting ideas into practice. The 18 projects completed during the partnership ranged from street lighting to civic engagement and more. Four of the greatest benefits were:

- **Five designs to redevelop** the city's North Downtown Waterfront.
- **A bike system study** that detailed the diversity of bicyclists in the community and recommended how to build a more connected system of in-street (sharrows), dedicated on-street (bike lanes, bike boulevards), and off-street trail connections. Since the project completed, city officials report student work greatly influenced the current transportation system plan in the comprehensive plan.
- **All new LED streetlights used throughout the city that are aimed to save the city money for future years.** A public administration capstone project provided Salem an adjustable model for a proposed streetlight fee which analyzed complex ownership of Salem's streetlight infrastructure, fee structures, and their impact on plans to convert current street lights to LED. When Portland General Electric asked Salem if it wanted to continue buying its (non-LED) lights, the city was "able to say no because it didn't make financial sense because the students had given us such a good model," Knox Busch said.
- **Students proposed three project ideas to reuse industrial byproducts at the City of Salem Willow Lake Treatment Facility.** After matching one local waste generator to Salem's wastewater treatment facility, the city gained immediate and unanticipated revenue from tipping fees and increased power generation for the plant.

Some officials suggest the real impacts of the SCYP occur after the program ends. For example, after students turned in their work for the Willow Lake site, Salem completed a market study for hauled waste with a consultant and received over \$3 million in incentives from Energy Trust of Oregon and other partners. The funding is for continued expansion efforts of the cogeneration facility at Willow Lake to power more of the plant. Besides the obvious benefits of the contributions from students, the SCYP initiatives have given Salem officials a new way of looking at sustainability.

This program allowed us to "open our eyes widely to concepts and ideas that will shape the city's future."

— Rick Scott, former Director of Urban Development, City of Salem





28

Classes



500

Students



80,000

Hours



18

Projects



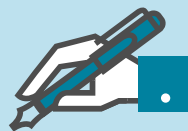
11

Disciplines



24

Faculty
Members



14

Assistants, Staff,
& Report Writers

***“These strategies move
our community closer
to our goals of a safe
and livable community.”***

— Rick Scott, former Director of Urban Development, City of Salem

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City of Lemon Grove, California

2016–2017

**Five comprehensive development plans
provide service opportunities in the midst
of budgetary woes**

Program Details

The Sage Project

San Diego State University
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1623

sage.sdsu.edu
sage.cesc@sdsu.edu



Partnership with Sage at SDSU put Lemon Grove on a path for growth

City of Lemon Grove,
San Diego County,
California, United States

Community Size:
2010: 25,320
2016: 26,860

Status: Completed

Lemon Grove, California, has suffered a budget shortfall for many years. Over 10 years ago, general fund reserves fell 19 percent and soon the city was slashing positions, merging its management personnel in the fire department with nearby cities, eliminating its recreation department, and reducing services like street sweeping and animal control. Things have not fared much better since; in July 2018, the city's budget shortfall is projected at \$1.5 million over the next five years. If things don't improve, bankruptcy could be next. "We are at the point where we really have to make some tough decisions to generate revenues," Mayor Racquel Vasquez said.

As the city struggles to figure out how to confront big issues like shoring up tax revenue and delivering basic services, it found a partner to help keep its eye focused on important long-term priorities like sustainability and green spaces that might have otherwise fallen through the cracks.

Sage develops five areas of sustainability projects critical to Lemon Grove's future

Enter the Sage Project. As a member of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), the Sage Project specializes in providing learning opportunities through community-based projects. The Sage Project, as part of the university's Center for Regional Sustainability, represents hundreds of students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines from campus including political science, civil engineering, and graphic design.

In the 2016-2017 school year, Sage started working with Lemon Grove officials to establish comprehensive planning documents on five critical areas of development:

Climate, Health and Social Issues. Such as air quality, climate change planning, and homelessness.

Urban Planning and Development. For issues like street signage, downtown redevelopment, and alternative transportation.

Infrastructure. Handling drainage and parking issues.

Public Spaces. Installing community gardens and green spaces.

Public Art and Image Development. Finding ways to highlight and beautify areas through photography and murals.

The partnership, which extended into the fall of 2017, gave the city planning and development resources it could not otherwise afford — things the city, at this critical juncture, says has been critical to its ongoing survival. “Each student that’s partnering with us is able to help the city because we only have 52 employees and half of those are firefighters,” said Mike James, Assistant City Manager and Director of Public Works.

City Manager Lydia Romero called Sage’s involvement “a blessing.” “They’re jump-starting a lot of programs that I don’t have the resources to allocate for... It’s a godsend to have the energy and the enthusiasm of students to work on projects,” she said.

Lemon Grove gets 800 percent ROI through the partnership

Sage provided the city with research, designs, solutions, connections to government resources, and important recommendations — all measures that gave Lemon Grove “a remarkable 800 percent return on the initial investment,” according to James.

The programs planted deep seeds for Lemon Grove so it could one day regain control of its future. For example, among the benefits the city gained were:

- **An urban agriculture analysis** showing feasibility in creating a healthier and more secure community for the city.
- **Expanding GIS mapping** from a dated inventory of existing street signs.
- **The revitalization of two downtown locations** through a development plan.
- **Reimagined ideas** to solve the city’s growing homelessness problem.
- **New community gardens** from plans created by Sage students.
- **Greater social media interaction** due to a development plan by students to inform and engage residents about Lemon Grove.
- **Two brand-new murals and designs for welcome signs** developed by students to brighten downtown and points of entry
- **Recognition as the first city in North America** to work with a **United Nations toolkit** to address climate change.

In fact, Lemon Grove joined only Vilankulo, Mozambique, and Glasgow, Scotland, to adopt a United Nations toolkit which is intended to help cities with their climate action planning process. Through Sage’s intervention, Lemon Grove is now able to meet their goal of reducing 15 percent of greenhouse gases by the state-mandated deadline, as well as achieve international accolades at climate change symposia around the world.

“All the pieces are finally fitting together.”

— Lydia Romero, City Manager, City of Lemon Grove





30

Classes



700+

Students



30,000+

Hours



13

Disciplines



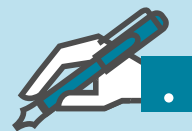
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Projects



19

Faculty
Members



27

Assistants, Staff,
& Report Writers

***“It’s a godsend to have
the energy and the
enthusiasm of students
to work on projects.”***

— Lydia Romero, City Manager, City of Lemon Grove

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Lawrence County, Indiana

2017–2018

Seeking to harness innovative opportunities to modernize industry and quality of life, rural Indiana county launches new strategies

Program Details

Sustaining Hoosier Communities

Indiana University Bloomington
Maxwell Hall
750 E. Kirkwood Avenue
Bloomington, IN 47405

shc.indiana.edu
iushc@indiana.edu



Indiana County uses university partnership to combat opioid epidemic

Lawrence County,
Indiana, United States

Community Size:
2017: 45,518

Status: Completed

Like much of the U.S. and the State of Indiana, Lawrence County faces a challenging opioid epidemic. In 2016, the state declared a public health emergency in response to rising hepatitis C rates and the county averaged nearly 50 nonfatal overdose visits to local emergency rooms per 100,000 people, according to the Indiana State Department of Health. In 2017, opioid deaths reported three times their 2014 total.

SHC work a "tremendous asset" for Lawrence County towns

The county turned to the Sustaining Hoosier Communities program (SHC) from Indiana University's Center for Rural Engagement. As part of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities (EPIC-N) Network, SHC brought in about 550 students during the 2017-2018 school year to focus on projects community members from Lawrence County prioritized, ranging from opioid abuse to tourism to economic development to public health.

Bedford, Mitchell receive proposals, budgets, prototypes spanning public health to economic development

More than 14 projects resulted from the single year of development. The projects all involved at least a key stakeholder within the community and were all aimed at helping the country get ahead in critical areas such as public health and economic development.

Bedford Mayor Shawna Girgis called the initiative “a tremendous asset” to the community. “We are putting many of the plans that have been developed into action,” she said. Work on the area’s endemic opioid abuse problem was especially relevant.

“We are especially grateful that we can continue our collaboration to determine how local leaders and organizations can best assist individuals and families that are impacted by addiction, given the ramifications that this issue has on every aspect of our community,” she said.

- **Analysis** on the health, environmental, and economic impact of the opioid epidemic, residents’ perceptions, and medical treatment options.
- **10-year plan to revitalize closed businesses**, such as the Avoca Fish Hatchery and limestone quarrying company, with new public spaces and stores in Bedford.
- **Prototype mobile application** for Mitchell, Indiana that links the sites of hometown hero Gus Grissom, the second American to travel to space.
- **Prototype for a forest-based light monitoring device** for the Hoosier National Forest.
- **Fundraising, marketing, and community engagement plans** for the Mitchell and Bedford Community Gardens.
- **Three, 45-minute financial literacy lesson plans** for middle school students in the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence County.
- **Four surveys and five reports with recommendations** to address racial and cultural diversity in Bedford.
- **Educational materials with multiple recommendations for health programs** to address high rates of hypertension and cardiovascular disease in Mitchell.
- **Memorandums for the Indiana Coalition for Court Access** that examine current access to legal services for underserved residents of county.
- **27 design proposals** for redeveloped co-working space.
- **Multiple logo proposals** for towns of Bedford and Mitchell.
- **Recommendations on implementing public awareness** strategies for transportation improvements in Bedford.
- **Budget proposal for completion of Highway 50** bypass in Bedford.

The county estimates that time spent by IU students preparing ideas to alleviate health problems and other community issues totaled more than 300,000 hours—an equivalent of nearly \$7.1 million in consulting. The scope of the work was comprehensive and helped better position the communities in Lawrence County for any economic and public health challenges they may face in the future.

“I hope other cities throughout rural Indiana are inspired to engage with the university to make their communities the best that they can be.”

— Shawna Girgis, Mayor, City of Bedford, IN





18

Classes



550

Students



300,000

Hours



11

Disciplines



14

Projects



16

Faculty
Members

“The faculty and students are such a resource and an inspiration, to us as professionals as well as residents.”

— Shawna Girgis, Mayor, City of Bedford, IN

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City of Frederick, Maryland

2014–2015

**Population boom has Frederick, Maryland
seeking sustainable path forward**

Program Details

**Partnership for
Action Learning in
Sustainability (PALS)**

University of Maryland
1112 Preinkert Field House
Building 054
College Park, MD 20742

umdsmartgrowth.org



A university partnership gave Frederick assets to help improve its downtown

Frederick, Frederick
County, Maryland,
United States

Community Size:
2017: 71,408

Status: Completed

Frederick, Maryland is the second largest city in the state, and also the fastest growing area in the region. In 2010, for example, the population was nearly 66,000 people; was projected to grow 15 percent to 76,000 people by 2022, according to the city.

But like any area where the population is accelerating, there are growing pains. Country-wide, more than 35,000 households in the county, or 39 percent of total households, struggle to afford housing, food, transportation, child care and health care. There are also environmental concerns: The city recently completed a \$45 million upgrade of its wastewater treatment plant after finding it was not compliant with the federal Clean Water Act.

To continue to address these challenges, the city joined with the University of Maryland's Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability (PALS) in 2014-2015 to provide analysis ranging from the impact of climate change on the City's watershed to engaging low-income and minority communities in efforts to reclaim abandoned properties. As part of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities (EPIC-N) Network, PALS brought in about 350 students who worked on 30 projects that covered planning and development, energy and the environment, and social issues.



Frederick gets reports to improve accessibility, protect environment

Frederick received architecture, landscape, and real estate development models to equitably utilize the city's downtown and abandoned property around the city. They included:

- **Architectural tour plan** that can be utilized by lead tourists to discover Frederick's oldest buildings.
- **Shared use study** to the nearby Carroll Creek floodplain for use to implement a path trail network for bikes and walking trails.
- **Study to improve neighborhood** identification using GIS mapping and online surveys.
- **Mapping analysis to improve accessibility** between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Report to explore adaptive reuse** of an abandoned site for an "art-centric 120 key hotel."
- **Proposal to build a Marriott hotel** and conference center in downtown.
- **Project that explores ways to increase revenue** at local airport.
- **Invasive species survey** at Frederick City Watershed.
- **Studies to reimagine downtown** retail corridors.

The plans helped lead paths forward in reviving the city's economy, strengthening its environmental assets, and making the city more accessible and welcoming to, not just residents, but to others visiting or interested in relocating there.



“PALS has been a great partnership and has provided invaluable information for our City — we’ll be able to use it for a long time coming.”

— Randy McClement, Mayor, City of Frederick, MD



25
Classes



350
Students



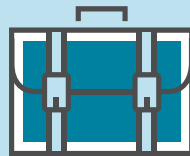
50,000
Hours



8
Disciplines



30
Projects



16
Faculty
Members

***The University of
Maryland provided the
city with “the best bang
for our buck.”***

— Kelly Russell, Alderman, City of Frederick

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City of Auburn, Washington

2016–2017

**Auburn addresses the challenges
of growth**

Program Details

**Livable City Year
Program**

University of Washington
410A Gould Hall
3950 University Way NE
Seattle, WA 98195

washington.edu/livable-city-year
uwlcyr@uw.edu



A university partnership helped a rapidly growing city.

City of Auburn, King
County, Washington
United States

Community Size:
2017: 80,776

Status: Completed

Between 2006–2016, the city's population swelled more than 30 percent, from 58,700 to 76,300 people; by 2020, the population will grow to 85,000 people, an 11 percent increase. The boom corresponds with the breakneck speed of growth in Seattle, the state's biggest city. In fact, Auburn and nearby Redmond are among the state's fastest growing cities with populations of at least 50,000 residents, according to the US Census Bureau.

The rapid growth brought problems: crime, homelessness, traffic gridlock, limited access to alternative transportation, and tensions among long-time residents. The city also faced persistent problems such as flood risk from the Green River and management of its wetlands, as well as the lack of synergy between the city's different public social spaces.

In short, Auburn was growing too fast and was struggling to keep up.

For those reasons, Auburn officials decided to partner with the Livable City Year program (LCY), a multi-disciplinary organization at the University of Washington. As part of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities (EPIC-N) Network, LCY brings university resources to meet community needs. In Auburn, LCY coordinated 170 students in urban design and planning, landscape architecture, and public health to identify and deliver meaningful roadmaps during 2016–2017 to help Auburn find a holistic path forward, and not just in dealing with its current population, but in drafting ideas to use growth for success.

Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus described the experience as a “groundbreaking year.”

“This program is an incredible example of what higher education can do for our community,” added Auburn Deputy Mayor Largo Wales. “Not only does this give students a unique hands-on learning opportunity, it provides the city with the opportunity to complete valuable projects that we would not have been able to otherwise.”

Auburn gets a valuable return on its investment in student learning

Over the year, LCY produced several deliverables for Auburn, which included:

- **A connectivity plan** that included suggestions for code updates and infrastructure improvements.
- **A website and mobile app** to help local businesses market directly to local residents.
- **A list of recommendations and consensus items** on how to develop strategies to mitigate the area's problem of homelessness.
- **A strategy and tools to track, monitor, and maintain** the city's housing stock in an effort to maintain affordability and reduce pressure on resources.
- **A strategy plan** to educate residents about issues associated with the improper disposal of pet waste, fats, oils, grease, wipes, and pharmaceuticals to prevent clogging and environmental issues.
- **The creation of an inventory** of geographic information system (GIS) maps and mock road diagrams to inform and enhance future urban planning projects.
- **Community profiles** of Auburn's five neighborhoods that identify shared issues in an effort to boost community engagement.
- **A report that assesses current LID stormwater equipment and technology** — current costs, challenges, and benefits.
- **A pilot school food share program** that helps identify waste reduction strategies in public school cafeterias throughout the city.
- **A framework** for the city to implement strategic recommendations of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to boost healthy food options for residents.
- **The redesign of an alley** running between the Auburn Avenue Theater and Auburn Arts and Culture Center to provide the community with a public gathering space and public art display — an effort that will contribute to the revitalization of the city's downtown.

City officials praised the outcomes and said that the ROI of working with LCY was significant. “For the money community development put into these projects, we got a good bang for the buck. There was a lot more we got out of these projects than we would have gotten out of the private sector,” said Jeff Tate, interim Community Development Director.

“An incredible example of what higher education can do for our community.”

— Largo Wales, Deputy Mayor, City of Auburn





16

Classes



170

Students



19,335

Hours



17

Projects



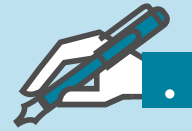
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Disciplines



11

Faculty
Members



20

Assistants, Staff,
& Report Writers

“The dedication that UW students put toward the partnership with Auburn is beyond compare.”

— Nancy Backus, Mayor, City of Auburn

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