

# City of Phoenix, Oregon

## Strategic Plan

### October 2021



#### City Council

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“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

- Abraham Lincoln

# City of Phoenix

## Strategic Plan

The City of Phoenix, Oregon, was one of the earliest pioneer settlements in Southern Oregon. Many vestiges of its rich past are still visible today.

The impressive Colver House was located on Highway 99 at the south end of town before it burned down in 2008. The Colver House was built in 1855 by one of the first settlers, Samuel Colver. Colver came west from Ohio in 1850, taking up a donation land claim of 640 acres on a site where Phoenix now stands. The town site of Phoenix was laid out on property he donated to the city in 1854.

Back in the 1850s, Phoenix was the hub of the Rogue Valley. The Rogue River and Modoc Indian Wars, the Northwest gold rush and the onset of the Civil War all played a part in the growth of this frontier town.

With the completion of the Oregon & California Railroad through Phoenix in 1887, travel and trade changed in the region forever. For the first time, agricultural products could reach markets across the country and world. Fruit orchards, particularly pears, grew to become one of the leading industries in Phoenix and still cover many of the rolling hills just outside the city.

Over time, Phoenix became a commercial and residential center in Jackson County. Located eight miles north of Ashland and three miles south of Medford (the largest city in Jackson County), Phoenix is just close enough to surrounding destinations to be convenient, yet still secluded enough to maintain the best of rural Oregon.

But even as Phoenix was bracing for rapid growth, unimaginable tragedy struck the city on September 8, 2020. A fire that started at about 11 a.m. in a grassy field at the



Ashland BMX Park, swept into the Bear Creek Greenway, where overgrown blackberries and shrubs and ground covers rendered tinder dry by ongoing drought conditions created a fast-moving inferno. The fire raced through unincorporated Jackson County and the City of Talent then reached and burned through Phoenix.

Before being stopped just short of Medford's southern boundary, the Almeda Fire left in its wake an unprecedented path of destruction. The fire wiped out 3,400 structures, 2,800 of them residences, displacing thousands of people and destroying hundreds of businesses. In Phoenix, 116 single-family homes, 149 multi-family homes, 284 manufactured homes and 41 businesses were lost. As this strategic

plan is being written, permits have been issued to rebuild more than 70% of the single-family homes, more than 80% of the multi-family homes and work is underway to rebuild the Bear Lakes Estates (now Oak Ridge) mobile home park, one of the largest mobile home parks in Jackson County. It is no wonder, then, that much of the Council discussion in the meetings that built this strategic plan centered on emergency management, disaster preparedness, drought mitigation and public safety.



Looking ahead, after the ongoing rebuild, rapid growth is predicted for Phoenix. The City's population will grow by an estimated 50% by 2035, and large urban growth areas to the north and east of the City are a prime area for commercial and light industrial development.

The City employs a Council-Manager form of government. The City Council, led by a directly elected mayor, sets policy and direction for the City and hires a City Manager who supervises staff and runs the day-to-day affairs of the City. The City provides Police, Public Works (Water, Streets, Parks) and Planning/Building services. Sewer and fire protection services are offered by independent special districts.

## The strategic planning process

On July 23 and 24, 2021, the City Council held day-long sessions at the Phoenix Civic Center to create the goals and objectives that are at the heart of this strategic plan.

The planning process began by conducting a SWOT analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. When an organization understands what its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are (and leadership agrees on them), they become the basis for development of the strategic plan. The plan seeks to maximize and build on strengths and opportunities while moving to address weaknesses and threats. At its first strategic planning session, the Council agreed on the following:

### **Strengths**

1. Strong, capable staff
2. Council works well together – culture of respect
3. Phoenix Plaza and Civic Center
4. City Parks (Blue Heron, dog park)
5. City infrastructure
6. Urban Renewal properties
7. Safe city; low crime
8. Coordination with school district and other agencies on fire rebuild



9. Police force
10. Active community volunteers

### **Weaknesses**

1. Not making full or best use of communication channels (internal and external); lack of interaction with citizens; lack of citizen trust in governing body
2. Emergency preparedness; Everbridge citizen alert notifications
3. Budget: Available funding; High levels of debt; Previous money management
4. Unpaved roads without gutters
5. Lack of Chamber of Commerce
6. Sustainability and unknown availability of staff resources

### **Opportunities**

1. PH-3 and PH-5
2. Funding for new building
3. Phoenix is the center of the valley
4. Exit 24 of I-5
5. Bear Creek Greenway (improve safety)
6. Fire created strong interest from developers and in commercial business and housing
7. Phoenix Phoodery project
8. Follow up to LOC Council roles/responsibilities facilitation; continue to improve leadership
9. Grant funding; Use of \$1 million ARPA funding
10. Blue Heron Park
11. Promote growth; New investment and reinvestment in the community

### **Threats**

1. Drought and wildfire risk
2. Redevelopment after Alameda Fire; Significantly higher housing construction cost, making it difficult for those who lost housing in the fire to replace to same standard
3. Lack of affordable housing
4. High cost of living
5. Loss of property tax base due to fire and other fire financial impacts
6. Homelessness
7. Challenges to attract new businesses
8. Employee turnover; retention
9. Crime

Drawing on the common themes identified by the SWOT analysis, the Council settled on four major focus areas from which goals and objectives would flow in the strategic plan. Those major focus areas are as follows:

**City Leadership  
Infrastructure/Growth and Development  
Public Spaces/Public Safety  
Budget/Finance**

Over the course of the two day-long planning meetings, the Council created a comprehensive set of goals within these focus areas, along with objectives for meeting the goals<sup>1</sup>. After creating and agreeing on its goals, the Council categorized each of the goals as “important and urgent,” “important but not urgent,” “urgent but not important,” or “not urgent and not important.” Categorizing the goals in this way is important because organizations are naturally drawn to work on whatever is urgent, even if it is not necessarily important. Knowing and agreeing on what’s important helps keep the organization focused. In addition, if there had been a goal that the Council agreed was not important and not urgent, it’s a sign that the goal should be removed from the plan. There are some goals in the plan that are shown as “Not Categorized.” That only means the Council did not reach consensus on the importance or urgency of the goal. There are no goals in this plan that were categorized as not important and not urgent.

In the list of goals and objectives that follows, six goals are listed as “Priority Goals.” These are the goals the Council determined should be first in line for staff and budgetary resources in the near term. “Priority Two” goals are those that are next in line to become priority goals. While staff can and will work on these as time allows and opportunities arise, these goals are more likely to be achieved in a longer time frame. The remaining goals are longer-term goals that need to remain in the City’s consciousness, but were not deemed to be a priority for staff time or budgetary resources in either the short-term or intermediate term. That does not mean those things won’t be done. Rather, it means they will be done as opportunities present themselves.

The Council’s goals and objectives were subsequently presented to the department heads for their review and input. The department head team made numerous suggestions for new objectives and revisions to the Council-adopted objectives. All these proposed changes were approved by the Council in September 2021.

The final piece of the strategic planning process was the creation by the department heads of action plans for achieving the priority goals identified by the Council. The action plans contain the tactics staff will use to implement the objectives within those goals and identify the department responsible for the tactic and a timeline within which the Council and the community can expect the action to be completed.

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<sup>1</sup> A goal is an aspirational statement about an idealized future outcome. It is not measurable or time-limited. Rather it is a statement that answers the question “what do we want in our idealized future?” Objectives are the “how are we going to achieve the goal?” statements. Unlike a goal, objectives are measurable and often time-limited. An objective is tangible in that you can stop and ask whether it has been achieved and if not, what else needs to be done to achieve it.

Some of the actions are identified as “ongoing.” There are also numerous objectives in the plan that are ongoing (although not specifically identified as such). That is, they’re comprised of tasks that the City routinely does as part of its regular activities and that the City will continue to do regardless of their inclusion in the goals and objectives. That these objectives or tactics are ongoing does not mean it is not valid to include them in this list. To the contrary, it shows that the Council is aware of the importance of these activities. For example, the first objective under Goal 15, a priority two goal, is “Ensure a balanced budget.” This is something the city will achieve regardless of whether it is included in this strategic plan. However, the inclusion of this objective highlights its importance to the city.

# City Council Goals and Objectives, 2021

## FOCUS AREA: City Leadership

**Goal 1: PRIORITY GOAL** Concise, transparent and frequent communication to build a culture of respect, accountability and excellence. Leadership that is accessible, responsive and proactive. (Category: Important/Not Urgent)

Objectives:

- 1.a** Follow City Charter, Council Rules of Procedure and Roberts Rules of Order. Avoid closed sessions.
- 1.b** Create new and more effective communication and citizen input channels.
- 1.c** Publicize Council Rules of Conduct to raise awareness among citizens.
- 1.d** Update the city web site.
- 1.e** Provide volunteer boards with training and education on roles and responsibilities.



Action	Dept./Timeline
1.a.1. Update Council rules of Government when necessary. Train new Councilors and complete refresher training at the beginning of each year.	CM/CR - ongoing
1.b.1. Create City newsletter to be mailed with water bills quarterly.	CEDEV/CM/Fin. - Jun. 2022
1.b.2. Redesign water bill.	Fin. - Mar. 2022
1.b.3. Monthly public announcements via website, Facebook, etc.	CR ongoing
1.d.1. Contract for services to rebuild website.	CR – Dec. 2022
1.e.1 Schedule Roberts Rules of Order training for City Council and volunteer boards.	CM/CR - ongoing
1.e.2. Community and Economic Development Dept to identify training opportunities for Planning Commissioners through APA, League of Oregon Cities, etc.	CEDEV - ongoing

**Goal 2: PRIORITY GOAL** Hire and retain knowledgeable, educated and trained staff. Set standards for excellence. (Category: Important/Urgent)

Objectives:

- 2.a** Ensure competitive salary and benefits.
- 2.b** Complete timely performance evaluations.

- 2.c Explore and, as appropriate, provide incentive pay for extra skills and education.
- 2.d Investigate the efficacy of interest-based bargaining.
- 2.e Review and, as necessary, update all job descriptions.
- 2.f Proactively monitor and adjust staffing levels in light of grant funding and growth.

Action	Dept./Timeline
2.a.1. Conduct salary survey.	CM - Dec. 2022
2.a.2. Adjust pay scale based on results of salary survey.	CM - Jun. 2023
2.b.1. Ensure standardized process for performance evaluations.	CM - ongoing
2.b.2. Use timely performance evaluation completion as a performance indicator for Dept Heads/City Manager.	CM - ongoing
2.c.1. Complete incentive pay survey.	CM - Mar. 2022
2.e.1. Use existing IGA with RVCOG to complete review of job descriptions.	CM - Dec. 2022
2.f.1. Use existing IGA with RVCOG to complete standardized performance evaluations, salary and incentive pay surveys, update job descriptions, etc.	CM - Dec. 2022
2.f.2. Amend General Unit collective bargaining agreement to add Senior Planner and Associate Planner positions.	CEDEV - Dec. 2021
2.f.3. If budget is available, hire limited duration Senior/Associate Planner position to aid with long-range planning efforts related to fire recovery and UGB expansion.	CEDEV - Jan. 2022

**Goal 3: PRIORITY TWO GOAL Work as a team. Respect teammates; listen and support.** (Category: Important/Not Urgent)

Objectives:

- 3.a. Provide team-building training through LOC or local consultants
- 3.b. Emphasize the importance of listening skills in recruitments for volunteer board positions and in recruitments and evaluations for staff.

**Goal 4: Build regional partnerships while retaining community identity and improve interaction with the School District** (Category: Important/Not Urgent)

Objectives

- 4.a. Ensure regular liaison reports at Council meetings.
- 4.b. Annual commemoration of Alameda Fire.





## FOCUS AREA: Infrastructure/Growth & Development

**Goal 5: PRIORITY GOAL** Facilitate the highest and best use of Urban Renewal Agency properties. (Category: Important/Not Urgent)

Objectives:

- 5.a** Seek proposals for use of the property to enliven downtown.
- 5.b** Provide education and training on Urban Renewal and the Urban Renewal Plan for the Council and volunteer commissions.

Action	Dept./Timeline
5.a.1. Work with Phoenix Phoodery to reach an agreement for development of one or more PHURA properties.	CEDEV/CM - Dec. 2021
5.a.2. Based on outcome of (1), consider listing remaining PHURA properties and/or otherwise soliciting proposal for development.	CEDEV/CM - Jan. 2022
5.a.3. Investigate using money raised through PHURA property sale and or refinancing civic center bond to develop shared parking that could benefit the development of other PHURA properties along with the development of other properties within the urban renewal district boundary.	CEDEV/CM - Dec. 2022
5.b.1. Improve website information for PHURA.	CEDEV - Mar. 2022

**Goal 6: PRIORITY GOAL** Build the new public safety building on time and on budget (Category: Important/Urgent)



Objectives

- 6.a** Maximize use of local contractors.
- 6.b** Explore and report on contracting methods (low bid, CM/GC, design/build).
- 6.c** Identify additional financing sources.
- 6.d** Minimize disruption of services while transitioning to temporary facilities during construction.

Action	Dept./Timeline
6.a.1. Communicate the desire to use local firms in design and build to project managers and other collaborators.	CEDEV/CM - ongoing
6.a.2. As much as possible, provide preference to local experience in selection process.	CEDEV/CM - ongoing
6.b.1 Report to Council on the available contracting options and the pros and cons of each.	CEDEV/CM - Dec. 2021

6.c.1. Pursue State, Federal and private grants.	CEDEV/CM - ongoing
6.d.1. Investigate options for siting of temporary facilities and their relative strengths in providing continuation of City services.	CEDEV/CM - Mar. 2022
6.d.2. Use hybrid work schedule with remote work when possible while using temporary facilities.	CEDEV/CM - Dec. 2023

**Goal 7: Increase sidewalks and controlled intersections and improve road conditions. Address parking issues, especially downtown.** (Not categorized)

Objectives

- 7.a** Update the pavement management plan.
- 7.b** Seek and secure grant funding.
- 7.c** Evaluate the need for standards for surface parking for new development.
- 7.d** Enhance pedestrian safety at crossings.
- 7.e** Create a downtown parking plan, including investigation of a downtown parking district.

**Goal 8: PRIORITY TWO GOAL. Promote and encourage developers. Maintain responsive and effective planning and building services.** (Not categorized)

Objectives

- 8a** Provide electronic permitting.
- 8.b** Direct outreach to property owners and real estate brokers.
- 8.c** Ensure that Planning staff is engaged regionally and current on land use laws/trends.

**Goal 9: Continue to advocate for PH-3 and PH-5 inclusion.** (Important/Not Urgent)

Objectives

- 9.a** Follow up with Jackson County on applications for PH-3 and PH-5 inclusion.
- 9.b** Ensure that PH-5 bike path connects to Bear Creek Greenway.
- 9.c** Plan for bringing city water to areas currently served by Charlotte Ann W.D.
- 9.d** Work with City of Medford to develop a joint plan for the development of infrastructure in PH-5 and MD-5.

**Goal 10: Drought mitigation; maintain optimum water availability in cooperation with Medford Water Commission.**

Objectives

- 10.a Explore and report back on drought mitigation measures used by other cities.
- 10.b Find opportunities for shared regional conservation/drought mitigation resources.
- 10.c Update development standards for new construction.

**FOCUS AREA: Public Spaces/Public Safety**

**Goal 11: PRIORITY GOAL** Build, create and maintain the best, safest and most family-friendly park system in the Rogue Valley. Enhance opportunities for recreation, functionality and civic engagement in public spaces. (Not categorized)

Objectives

- 11.a Ensure sufficient funding.
- 11.b Enforce the no-camping ordinance.
- 11.c Replace the playground in Blue Heron Park.
- 11.d Prioritize park improvement projects and seek funding.
- 11.e Adequate law enforcement in city parks.
- 11.f Explore creation of family friendly events (music, movies, etc.).



Action	Dept./Timeline
11.a.1. Continue to utilize existing grant funds and to investigate the possibility of additional funding to help with park development/redevelopment.	CEDEV/CM/PW - ongoing
11.b.1. The Police Department actively enforces the no camping ordinance.	PD - ongoing
11.c.1. Use funding available through FEMA, Business Oregon and insurance to replace the playground while also providing for enhanced accessibility and fire resiliency.	CM/PW - Jun. 2022
11.c.2. Create ad-hoc committee to help in fund raising for other playground enhancements not covered by grants.	CM/PW - Jun.2022
11.c.3. Use ad-hoc committee to help organizing ground breaking, grand opening, and other events related to playground replacement.	CM/PW - Jun.2022
11.d.1. Update Park Master Plan to account for UGB expansion.	CEDEV - Jun. 2023
11.d.3. Use updated Parks Master Plan as the basis for grant funding to improve park system.	CEDEV - ongoing
11.e.1. When the new facilities are completed, activate a Volunteer In Police Services (VIPS) program and use volunteers to patrol parks and greenway areas.	PD - Jun. 2024

<p>11.f.1. If budget is available, hire limited duration Senior/Associate Planner position to aid in developing Community Development events focused on emergency preparedness and resiliency, and also aid in the development of smaller, more frequent, family friendly events.</p>	<p>CEDEV - Jun. 2022</p>
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**Goal 12: Support organizations that support the Bear Creek Greenway and riparian areas. (Not categorized)**

Objectives

- 12.a** Participate in the Bear Creek restoration initiative.
- 12.b** Study the feasibility of lighting the Greenway through Phoenix.



**Goal 13: PRIORITY TWO GOAL Best trained and educated public safety officers in the Rogue Valley. (Not categorized)**

Objectives

- 13.a** Determine what training is available and ensure adequate training dollars are budgeted.

**Goal 14: PRIORITY GOAL Create and maintain the best disaster preparedness and fire-resistant community in the Rogue Valley. Enhance public participation. (Category: Important/Urgent)**

Objectives

- 14.a** Coordinate with Jackson County Emergency Preparedness.
- 14.b** Educate the public re: Everbridge and ensure that all citizens sign up. Educate the public about evacuation zones.



- 14.c** Review the development code to promote fire-resistant new construction.
- 14.d** Educate property owners on how to create defensible space.
- 14.e** Coordinate with Talent and Fire District 5 on a joint emergency operations plan.
- 14.f** Secure grant funding for creation of a fire and flood mitigation plan for Bear Creek Greenway and wetland areas adjacent to Bear Creek Drive.

Action	Dept./Timeline
14.a.1. Regular meetings/discussion with regional partners to seek opportunities for planning and projects of mutual interest.	CM - ongoing
14.b.1. If budget is available, hire limited duration Senior/Associate Planner position to aid in developing family friendly events in Phoenix that can also educate the public about Everbridge and evacuation zones.	CEDEV/PD - Jun. 2022
14.b.2. Provide information about Everbridge and evacuation zones in City newsletter and monthly public announcements.	CR/CEDEV/PD - ongoing
14.c.1. If budget is available, hire limited duration Senior/Associate Planner position to aid with long-range planning efforts related to fire recovery and UGB expansion.	CEDEV - Jan. 2022
14.d.1. Provide information about defensible space in City newsletter and monthly public announcements.	CR/CEDEV - ongoing
14.e.1. If budget is available, hire limited duration Senior/Associate Planner position to aid with emergency operations planning.	CEDEV - Jan. 2022
14.f.1. If budget is available, hire limited duration Senior/Associate Planner position to aid with long-range planning efforts related to fire recovery and UGB expansion.	CEDEV - Jan. 2022

**FOCUS AREA: Budget/Finance**

**Goal 15: PRIORITY TWO GOAL** Live within our means. Prioritize resources. Encourage savings for future investment. Reduce debt when possible. (Category: Important/Urgent)

Objectives

- 15.a** Ensure a balanced budget.
- 15.b** Reflect strategic plan priorities in the budget.
- 15.c** Earn the GFOA Award for Financial Reporting.

**Goal 16:** Continue pursuit of all available grant funding – public and private. (Category: Important/Urgent)

Objectives

**16.a** Regular reporting on status of grants and potential grants.

**16.b** Regular reporting on fire-related state appropriations and public assistance grants.