

# HERMISTON CITY COUNCIL

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Work Session

July 12, 2021

Mayor Drotzmann called the work session meeting to order at 6:00pm. Present were Councilors Hardin, Peterson, Barron, Primmer, Davis, Spicerkuhn, Duron, and Myers. Staff members in attendance were City Manager Byron Smith, Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan, City Attorney Gary Luisi, Chief Edmiston, Finance Director Mark Krawczyk, Planning Director Clint Spenser, Hermiston Energy Services (HES) General Manager Nate Rivera, and City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong.

## **City of Hermiston Digital Infrastructure Strategic Planning Roadmap**

HES General Manager Nate Rivera spoke regarding the Digital Infrastructure Strategic Plan (PowerPoint Presentation attached) that the Council established as a goal during this year's Goal Setting Session, also known as Council Goal #6. Mr. Rivera spoke regarding: Fiber Broadband infrastructure options; connectivity issues between city owned facilities and the community, as a whole, that were intensified with the COVID pandemic; the multiple providers and various types of infrastructure; the work being done with Strategic Network Group (SNG) to assist in the effort to create a Digital Infrastructure Roadmap for the City; Hermiston's Overall Readiness Assessment and how it can be improved, and the lack of community knowledge of broadband needs and availability in the City.

After much discussion and answering questions from the Council, Mr. Rivera stated the Council, during the regular City Council meeting, will be asked to accept the Digital Needs and Readiness Assessment and authorize staff to proceed with a Digital Infrastructure Economic Case Assessment as presented or amended by the Council.

## **Emergency Plan Discussion**

City Manager Byron Smith and Chief Edmiston reviewed the Emergency Plan as presented in the Agenda Packet. The lack of Emergency Plan was brought forward while Chief Edmiston worked on accreditation for the Police Department. The Plan has been closely worked on with Umatilla County Fire District #1 leadership and would come into play during large scale emergency events, where the City would also work closely with the Hermiston School District as well. While preparing this Plan, it was brought to attention that more frequent tabletop exercises and meetings would be beneficial for emergency preparedness, especially for individuals new to their position. And, unfortunately, while Umatilla County has an Emergency Preparedness Manager, that individual did not interact with City staff on preparing this plan; much information was obtained through the FEMA website and other roles and command structures to help construct the Plan appropriately.

Umatilla County Fire District #1, Deputy Chief of Operations, Jimmy Davis, stated Fire Chief Scott Stanton has been involved in this Emergency Plan process from the very beginning and is supportive of the Plan as presented.

After much discussion and answering questions from the Council, City Manager Smith stated staff would return to the Council with the Emergency Plan, at the next meeting, for possible Council adoption.

Mayor Drotzmann adjourned the work session at 7:01pm and stated the City Council would take a short break and convene the regular City Council meeting at 7:05pm.



# DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIC PLANNING

Council Work Session – July 12, 2021



# Digital Infrastructure

- Council Goal 6
- Strategic Networks Group (SNG)
- Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment
- Next Steps

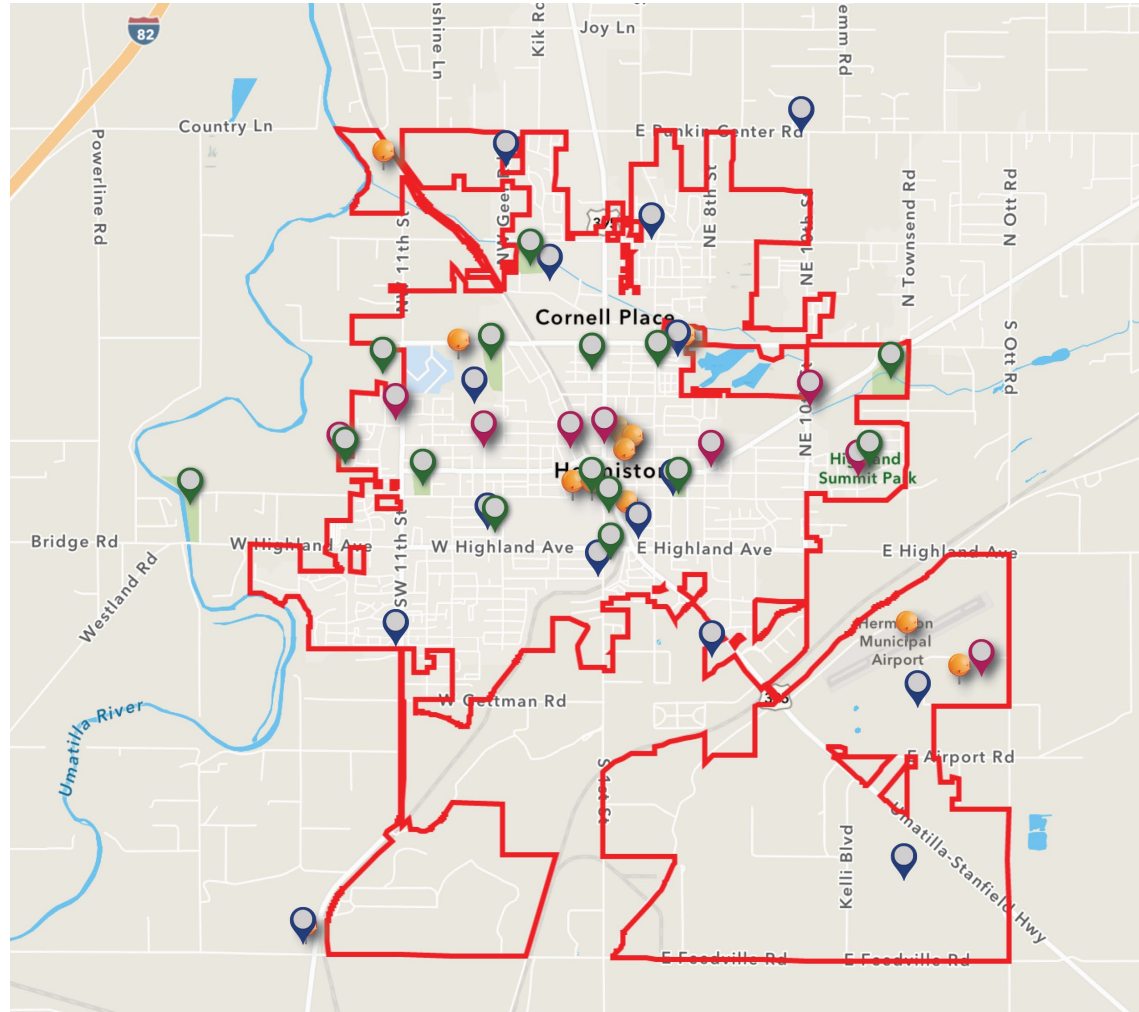




# Council Goal 6

## Plan for City Facilities That Meet Current and Future Needs.

- Over the past year, staff has started researching Fiber Broadband Infrastructure options due to connectivity issues between city-owned facilities.
- Currently, few City facilities are served
  - Multiple providers over various types of infrastructure.



# Council Goal 6

## **Plan for City Facilities That Meet Current and Future Needs.**

- Even before the pandemic, broadband issues with availability, speed, and reliability were identified as barriers to staff and departments collaborating and deploying new technology within the city.
- These problems have been exacerbated by the pandemic and stand to deepen issues providing services to the citizens of Hermiston.
- This situation creates an opportunity for Hermiston to develop and deploy a more comprehensive, equitable solution for broadband access to the city and possibly the community.



# Council Goal 6

## **Plan for City Facilities That Meet Current and Future Needs.**

- The staff has been working with Strategic Networks Group (SNG) to assist in strategic planning as we investigate connecting City of Hermiston facilities.
- This work will create a Digital Infrastructure Roadmap for the City of Hermiston to assist in long-term planning to maximize infrastructure investment(s) within the city.
- Tonight we are going to review the the first phase of this process outlining Hermiston's current Digital Needs and Readiness.



# SNG

- Founded in 1998, Strategic Networks Group (SNG) helps communities and regions transform their economies through broadband, digital infrastructure, and smart community services.
- SNG's mission is to help clients benefit from technology investments. They assess whether economic growth and community benefits outweigh the costs of broadband and digital infrastructure investments.
  - The Oregon Statewide Broadband Assessment and Best Practices Study
  - Broadband Economic Feasibility: Ammon Municipal Fiber.
  - Broadband Impact and Market Assessment: Custer County.
  - Broadband Market Assessment: City of Highland, Illinois.



**strategic**  
**networks group**

advancing economies in a digital world



# Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment

- **Twenty-three** community leaders participated in the Digital Needs and Readiness Assessment in **June**.
  - Nine City Councilors
  - Three County Commissioners
  - Four City Administration Staff
  - Nine Key Stakeholder Organizations





# Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment

## Overall Assessment For Hermiston

63%

Ready to Proceed
----- 71% -----
In Progress
----- 50% -----
Actions Needed

- The overall assessment for the City of Hermiston's readiness for a digital infrastructure initiative falls short of the recommended level of 71 percent.



# Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment

Based on the [Digital Needs and Readiness Assessment](#), Hermiston is in progress to being ready for a broadband investment based on the following findings:

- Alignment on Priority Goals for the Community
- Understanding of the Rationale Needed to Drive a Broadband Initiative:
  - Overall, a strong consensus on the **goals** centering on:
    - **Economic Growth**
    - More **Robust Broadband** Access
    - Expanded **Education** and **Training** opportunities.
- Economic Growth is Also Reflected in the Top **Needs and Issues** Regarding:
  - **Workforce Skills**
  - **Attracting** and **Retaining Businesses**
  - Improving **Job Opportunities**.



# Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment

- Wide Range of Opinions as to Which **Issues** and **Needs** are of High Importance and Urgency.
  - The current state of broadband is inadequate to community needs, with at least 25 percent underserved.
- Vision for the Value of Digital Infrastructure Needs to be Developed
  - Buy-In From Local Leadership and the Community at Large.
    - From this, a mandate can be given to an organization who can lead a digital infrastructure and transformation initiative.
- The Leaders are Prepared to Take Action.



# Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment

## **Broadband Readiness for the City of Hermiston Can be Improved in the Following Areas:**

- While There is a Recognition of Strong Leadership in the Community
  - Lack of a Clearly Stated and Formal Vision for Addressing Broadband and Digital Infrastructure.
- Better Understanding of the Gaps in Current Broadband Service Availability.
  - Leaders need to understand the value of digital infrastructure
- Anchor Applications for the Community Benefit:
  - Education
  - Health
  - Smart Community Services.
- Better Understanding of the Needs and Benefits of Digital Infrastructure for:
  - Hermiston Residents
  - Businesses





# Digital Needs & Readiness Assessment

## **Broadband Readiness for the City of Hermiston Can be Improved in the Following Areas:**

- The Ability to Fund/Finance/Maintain a Digital Infrastructure Initiative is a concern stated by several participants through open comments.
- Other readiness issues can be addressed over time once an economic case for digital infrastructure initiative has been developed.



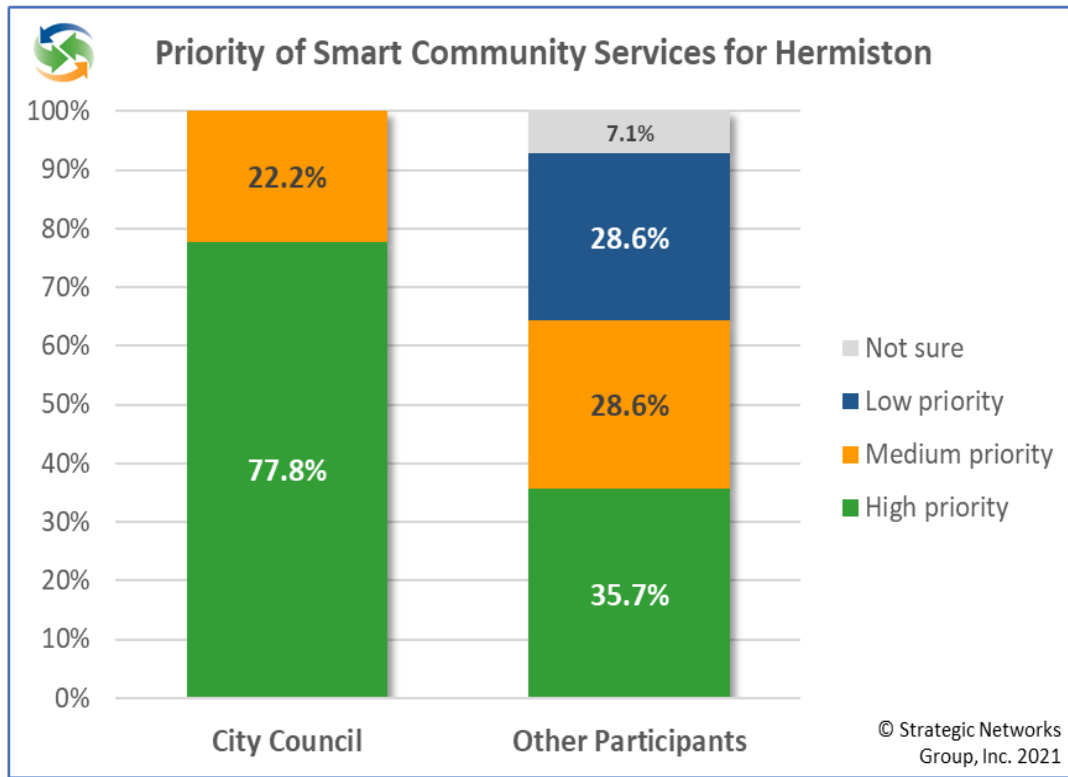
# Goals

	Top Five Goals	Score	Convergence
1	New Opportunities for Work and Economic Growth	91.3%	71.0%
2	Access to Robust and Competitive Broadband	88.4%	68.1%
3	Expanded Online Education and Training Opportunities	87.0%	69.3%
4	Remote and Better Integrated Access to Health Services	79.7%	61.7%
5	Improved Monitoring and Management of Clean Water and Sanitation	78.3%	61.7%



# Goals

While **Smart Community Services** did not make the top 5 goals, it is a priority for City Council as demonstrated in the following comparison of responses.



- Given that the City of Hermiston is investigating a city-wide digital infrastructure to connect municipal facilities, consideration should be given to how that infrastructure can be leveraged for smart community services.



# Goals, Issues & Needs

Three goals show a significant difference in **high priority** selection between City Council and other participants:

- Smart Community Services (**Council 78% vs 36%**)
  - More communication and consultation on smart community services is needed with Hermiston stakeholders.
- New Ways of Working Together on Community Goals (**Council 56% vs 14%**)
- Access to Robust and Competitive Broadband (**Council 78% vs 57%**)





# Issues & Needs

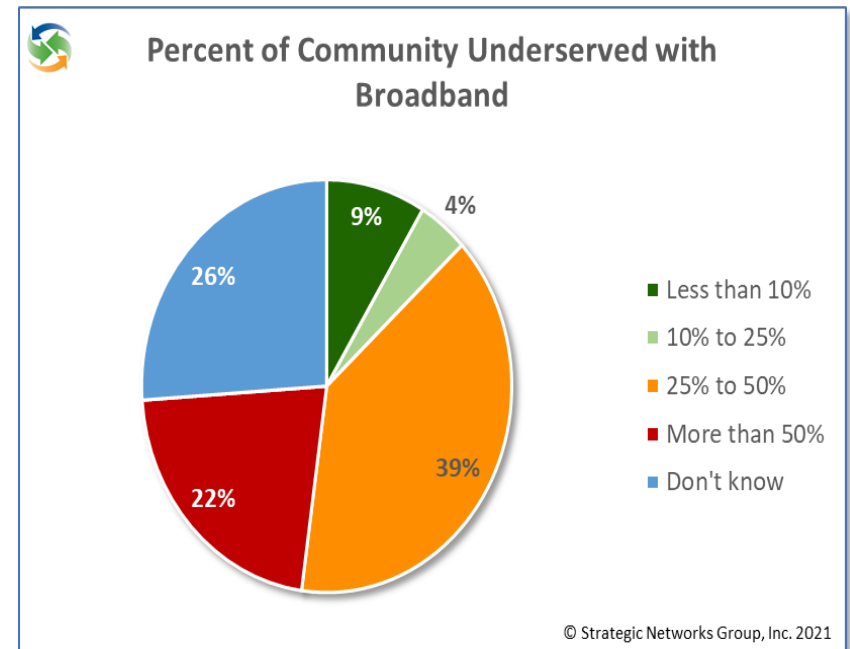
	Top Five Issues and Needs	Score	Convergence
1	Expanding Local Workforce Skills	79.7%	55.1%
2	Retaining and Attracting Businesses and Population	79.7%	50.5%
3	Increasing Good-Paying Job Opportunities	75.4%	53.2%
4	Stimulating Local Business Growth and Innovation	75.4%	44.5%
5	Improving Emergency Services Response (Health, Fire, Police)	60.9%	42.9%

- Low convergence scores indicates a wide range of opinions on which issues and needs are of high importance and urgency.
  - Put effort into achieving a greater consensus on the priority issues
  - This will help to set a clear vision and goals while engaging stakeholders in effort moving forward.



# Broadband Quality & Availability

- Broadband service availability varies significantly across Hermiston.
  - Multiple Service Provider Choices with High-Quality Options
  - Areas That Have Very Little Service Choice or Quality.
- This is reflected in the wide range of opinions of participants when it comes to current broadband speed, value, and availability.
- Of most significance is the variation in understanding the level to which Hermiston residents and businesses are underserved.



# Broadband Quality & Availability

- There is a wide variation in opinions on the degree to which Hermiston is currently underserved with broadband.
- Majority of responses feel at least 25% of residents are underserved and possibly more than 50%.
- ¼ of respondents, including four City Councilors, indicated they “Do Not Know” and could not provide an opinion on the level that Hermiston may be underserved with broadband.
  - This needs to be better understood in order to define the scope of the problem and its impacts on the community.



# What's Next?

- Recommend accepting the Digital Needs and Readiness Assessment
- Authorizing staff to proceed with a Digital Infrastructure Economic Case Assessment.
  - This assessment will aid staff and Council in determining if the community benefits outweigh the costs of investing in digital infrastructure.
    - 8-week process.







# Questions

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