

Marion County Mission Statement

We serve the public to protect, promote, and enhance a positive quality of life in Marion County.

Marion County Vision Statement

Marion County is a healthy, safe and vibrant place to live and work.

Marion County Motto

Delivering excellence every day.

Marion County Statement of Values

Our commitment to citizens and fellow employees is to deliver top-quality service by community-focused professionals who demonstrate the following values:

Customer Service - We treat our customers and one another with courtesy, respect, dignity, fairness, and understanding. We work to make Marion County accessible and responsive to a wide range of individual and community needs and interests. We promote flexible, creative, solutions-oriented approaches to resolving customer problems and meeting customer needs.

Professionalism - We hire, train, and develop our employees to be knowledgeable and expert in their respective roles. We strive for the highest levels of accuracy and quality in carrying our responsibilities to the public.

Integrity – We are honest, forthright, and ethical in our dealings with others and on behalf of the public trust. We follow through on our commitments and we hold one another and ourselves personally accountable for doing what we promise.

Stewardship - We seek to make the most efficient and effective use of public resources, and we work to continuously improve our services through collaboration, innovation, and competence. We strive to create and maintain a fair, transparent and open process of government that actively seeks citizen participation and recognizes the diverse and competing interests of all of the county's constituencies.

Strategic Issues

Note: The strategic issues identified in this section were developed with broad input from Marion County employees, constituencies, and communities during the spring, summer and fall of 2005. The issues described here came up repeatedly as the most significant challenges, opportunities, and concerns facing the county in the near-term and long-term future. The issues are listed in no particular order.

Description of Marion County

Marion County stretches from the Willamette River to the Cascade Mountains encompassing nearly 1,200 square miles. Most of its population of 300,000 can reach the Pacific beaches in less than two hours.

Marion County has 20 cities including Salem, the state capital. The largest producer of agricultural income among Oregon's 36 counties, Marion County's economy is also based on government, with 38 of the largest state agencies based here, and on education as the site of Willamette University, Corban College and Chemeketa Community College.

Issue Statement #1: Growth and Infrastructure

Aging infrastructure, a growing and diverse population base and increasing costs for maintenance require the county to identify deficiencies and impediments that detract from sustainable/smart/healthy growth, to prioritize needs, and to develop creative solutions for consideration by Marion County citizens.

One of the emerging issues for Marion County is rapid growth and the need for adequate infrastructure to support current and anticipated growth. Population forecasts show that Marion County is expected to grow from its current population of just over 300,000 residents to a population of nearly 350,000 by the year 2015. Growth shows a steady upward trend for the next 25 years following 2015, with population levels forecasted to reach 450,000 by the year 2040. While the population is growing, it is also becoming more diverse. The county has the largest percentage of Hispanics in the state, approaching 20 percent.

Land supply is another critical issue. As the county's population has grown, developers have moved quickly to keep pace with the increasing demand for housing and commercial facilities. Challenges to Oregon's land use system and the need to balance competing interests including agricultural and commercial development will be felt most strongly in Marion County, which is the largest producer of Oregon's agricultural income.

As population growth continues, the county will be faced with questions about the shared urban growth boundaries between the cities of Keizer and Salem and the need for land to serve residential, business and economic development interests of both communities. Because of these challenges, it will become increasingly important for Marion County and its communities to do comprehensive land use planning that seeks to balance urban and rural interests and to collaborate on the planning and

development of infrastructure such as water systems, drainage, and waste disposal.

While the urban areas of the county are experiencing rapid growth, some rural communities are facing decreasing population and the challenge of becoming more isolated with less access to services given the increasing demand to target resources to the areas where there is more growth. Some smaller communities also face the challenge of paying the costs of maintaining infrastructure with decreased revenue available to pay for needed improvements.

Affordable housing will be another challenge, particularly in the urban areas. The county's Housing Authority shows a shortage of affordable housing for all eligible populations in the face of level or reduced funding from federal sources.

Issue Statement #2: Public Safety
Increase the capacity of Marion County's public safety system through a balanced and coordinated approach to ensure the safety and security of all citizens.

The majority of communities, citizen groups, and county employees have identified public safety, specifically the interlinked issues of drugs (methamphetamine, in particular), gangs, juvenile services, adequate jail space, and law enforcement resources, as the most significant issue facing Marion County now and in the future.

Eliminating the manufacture, distribution and use of illegal drugs in Marion County, providing the necessary jail space to house the criminals who engage in drug, gang, and related activities, providing adequate substance abuse treatment alternatives, and preventing harm to children, youth, adults and families in the county's communities will continue to be significant issues for the near future.

More than 30% of all adult offenders in jail are mentally ill pointing to the need for adequate mental health treatment programs and services. Ensuring balance across the criminal justice system and adequate capacity among all of the components of the public safety system is another challenge.

Emergency preparedness is another area needing additional focus. The floods of 2006 and seismic activity in the area during the past 10 years have created a higher level of awareness of the need for better preparedness. The threat of natural hazards such as floods, landslides,

high winds, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and drought and the resulting destruction of life and property, disruption of essential services, and water supply problems place a large number of Marion County's population at risk. Marion County is also subject to technological and human-caused hazards such as fire, dam failure, transportation accidents, and hazardous materials spills. While Marion County has a basic plan in place, developing a more coordinated and comprehensive response will be needed.

Issue Statement #3: Economic Development

A fragile economic recovery, high unemployment and under-employment, crime, loss of major employers, and lack of family wage jobs reduce quality of life and erode the county's economic stability thus creating the need for strategies that promote a vibrant, stable, and diversified economy.

During the recent national recession, Oregon was among the hardest hit states economically. While the overall economic picture is looking better, Oregon's economy is still in a fragile recovery. In Marion County, several large employers have closed down or left the area, resulting in large holes both in the workforce and in the local tax base. Per capita personal income for Marion County, while on the rise since 1981 still lags behind the state and the nation. Since 1990, per capita income has risen from about \$24,000 to about \$26,000, an increase of only \$2,000. Average annual wages have risen to about \$31,000 from a low of about \$27,500 in the late 1980's. However, when adjusting for inflation, average wages are still below where they were in 1977. Keeping our workforce skilled so that the county can attract and retain employers who offer family wage jobs will need to be a continuing focus.

With a resource-based economy, Marion County, which is the top agricultural producer in the state, is subject to market changes. Diversity in the economy is necessary for stability, and while the focus of many economic development efforts has been to promote family-wage traded sector jobs, keeping the county's economy diversified remains a challenging issue.

Issue #4: Transportation

The impact of increased vehicle usage due to population growth, development, and life style changes on the deteriorating infrastructure will require the county to implement its plan for prioritizing road development and improvement and to seek increased resources dedicated to transportation use.

The need for traffic flow and safety improvement projects is increasing quickly. At the same time, funding levels are not keeping pace with demand. The county's urban areas cited transportation and traffic issues as their number one concern, specifically freeway access, Highway 99 and 22 improvements, the safety and viability of bridges, street improvements, and traffic congestion. Fourteen of the county's 20 cities are anticipating significant growth. To meet the demands caused by growth, cities have proposed \$100 million in transportation projects, while at the same time facing transportation funding shortfalls. Many cities are observing the growing negative effects of traffic congestion on main routes through town. As a result, some cities are proposing bypass routes and others are requesting investigation of alternative routes.

Connectivity issues such as walking trails, sidewalks, bike paths, and pedestrian safety have been cited by several communities in the county as issues of significant interest. Some cities would like increased intercity transit service. Freight rail traffic is expected to increase significantly, and will require a significant funding increase to maintain service levels.

Issue #5: Health and Community Services
Population increases and long-standing higher-than-average social needs coupled with declining public funding, are causing problems in accessing health care shortage of mental health and substance abuse services, sub-standard school achievement, lack of skilled workers, homelessness, increased crime, lack of family bonding and attachment, child neglect, a continuing cycle of poverty, and public health problems.

Many of the health and human services issues facing the county are due to the effects of drug and alcohol abuse on children and families and lack of affordable health care. High levels of drug and alcohol use lead to increases in child and spousal abuse and an increased demand for foster care, mental health, crisis, and prevention services. Increases in substance use and gang activity that is often linked to drug production and trafficking point out the need for better access to recovery programs for teens involved with gangs or substance abuse and increased capacity in programs and services that help keep kids out of trouble. The county will also need to provide a continuum of services for juvenile offenders that offer the chance of rehabilitation and keep these youth out of the corrections system.

Along with these issues there is the need to provide prevention support and intervention services that address educational failure. Preventing

school failure is essential to preventing substance abuse, juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, welfare dependency, and other lifelong problems.

Access to affordable health care is essential to protecting the health of community members. The demand for county health care services will continue to increase, particularly as access to other public assistance programs becomes more limited. Healthcare services must be as effective and efficient as possible to assure maximum benefit for the available funding. Services to vulnerable individuals such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and those with disabilities need to be maintained and, where possible, enhanced by leveraging community resources.

Nearly every community in the county said that more community-based activities are needed for children and youth to promote their health, well-being, growth, and development.

Strategic Goals

Goal #1: Develop adequate infrastructure to provide needed services and support growth and economic development.

Tactics

1. Assess and evaluate current service delivery and explore alternative funding strategies to sustain and maximize resources for future generations.
Timeline: 12 months to assess service delivery; two years to explore and document alternatives
2. Develop a communication plan to educate the public regarding critical infrastructure needs.
Timeline: Six months to develop the plan; 12-18 months to educate the public
3. Develop a long-range infrastructure plan that is inclusive of communities and interest groups to balance urban and rural perspectives.
Timeline: Two years

Goal #2: Increase the overall balance and capacity of the county's public safety system to ensure the safety and security of all citizens.

Tactics

1. Design an initiative to reduce addiction and criminal activity driven by methamphetamine.
Timeline: 12 months
2. Conduct an assessment of the public safety system to identify gaps and needs.
Timeline: 12 months
3. Develop a long-term public safety strategy that anticipate and respond to changes in the dynamic drivers and predictive indicators.
Timeline: Two years

Goal #3: Create a business-friendly economic environment with the goal of retaining and attracting businesses with family-wage jobs.

Tactics

1. Review strategies already identified.
2. Inventory present county resources. (What do we have to offer?)
3. Assess gaps. (What do we need to do?)
Timeline: Two years for all of the above
4. Develop and implement a coordinated strategy with cities and economic development organizations.
Timeline: Two-five years

Goal #4: Build and maintain an efficient system of roads to support growth and to preserve the existing transportation infrastructure.

Tactics

1. Continue collaboration with federal state and local jurisdictions in developing a list of priorities for urban and rural transportation projects.
Timeline: Two years
2. Develop and implement a communication strategy to educate residents on the status and cost to improve the transportation system.
Timeline: Two years
3. Select financing strategies to increase revenue and propose to citizens.
Timeline: Two years
4. Implement improvements resulting from increased funding.
Timeline: Five years

Goal #5: Expand and enhance available supports and services to ensure the health of individuals, families and the wider community.

Tactics

1. Engage key business and community leaders, public and non-profit agencies and faith-based organizations in a collaborative process that leverages support and resources to assist in strategically delivered evidence-based programs and practices that mitigate substance abuse, addiction and mental illnesses and support recovery.

Timeline: Twelve months – Two years

2. Develop and deliver evidence based prevention services that promote and strengthen the health of communities, individuals and families, reduce the costs of health care, public safety, and other social services, safeguard public health, enhance the effectiveness of other social services and increase school success and school readiness.

Timeline: Two – Three years

3. Develop community understanding, education and supports that assist in increasing access to effective mental health, substance abuse and other health and social services that protect vulnerable populations, reduce disparity, promote choice and determination and enable people to live in the least restrictive environment.

Timeline: Two – Four years