EnVISIONing the 21st Century Community Plan

Guiding the Future of Marion City and County

ABSTRACT

The EnVISIONing Community plan sets an action plan for directing the future development of the Marion Area. Representatives from numerous organizations, agencies, community volunteers and public bodies identified goals and objectives based on a community wide visioning process. The process identified four theme areas critical to the growth and development of the community. These four areas include Economic Sustainability, Educational Sustainability, Social Sustainability and Environmental Sustainability. The plan is now presented to the community to assist participating organizations, agencies, citizens, businesses and public officials as they guide the future of the community.

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Report Produced 2013

INTRODUCTION

Phase One

The organization EnVISIONing the 21st Century began a community comprehensive planning process based on sustainability principles to establish a coordinated approach to the future development of the Marion area. The first phase of this planning effort involved the identification of resident's goals and objectives through an inclusionary community information collection process. A community Visioning Report was completed identifying specific items residents' felt should shape the future of the Marion Community. From this list identified by residents a number of themes emerged.

Phase Two

Specific goals and objectives were linked to the appropriate theme in a document entitled "Vision Direction." Cooperating Partners included Envisioning the 21st Century, Marion County United Way and Marion Area Chamber of Commerce. This document was used to guide organizations and agencies that chose to participate in moving forward with the implementation of a plan. The effort resulted in a number of additional organizations and individuals who wanted to contribute to the final development and implementation of a community plan.

Phase Three

Along with Phase Two Cooperating Partners, the League of Women Voters of Marion took a leadership role in organizing a community forum to assess interest and commitment to moving forward on a final community plan. Area public officials, organizations, agencies and interested citizens participated in the community forum. It was decided to move forward with a final plan. Additional community meetings were held to revisit the Vision Direction developed in Phase Two and revise it to meet current community themes. Workgroups were formed around these themes to further identify and develop goals, objectives, and action steps within each of four sections of the plan:

- Economic Sustainability
- Educational Sustainability
- Social Sustainability
- Environmental Sustainability

Dr. James Barney gave leadership for the planning process. The four workgroups included interested citizens and professionals working within each of the four sections. Each workgroup met independently at their own pace to finalize their section.

The following sections of the *EnVISIONing the 21st Century Community Plan* begin with an Existing Conditions section explaining the unique elements present within the Marion community for success. The next four sections outline the goals, objectives and action steps for each sustainability section. The final section of the plan identifies some Next Steps necessary to move forward with the successful implementation of the elements contained in this plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Marion Community is uniquely positioned to develop a vibrant community and regional economy. Chart 1 lists a number of community factors needed by businesses to operate successfully. These key community factors necessary to support the successful development and growth of businesses are all present in the Marion area.

Chart 1: Supporting Entrepreneurs

Supporting Entrepreneurs
Source: Center for Study of Rural America Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

What factors support entrepreneurial activities?

What Can Rural Areas Do to Build a Deeper Entrepreneurial Base?

Breadth: Quantity

- Scenic places
- High educational attainment
- Sparsely populated
- Low levels of economic activity
  - Employment
  - Per capita income
- Low levels of infrastructure
  - Interstates
  - Broadband

Depth: Quality

- Scenic places
- High educational attainment
- Densely populated
- High levels of economic activity
  - Employment
  - Per capita income
- High levels of infrastructure
  - Interstates
  - Broadband
- Colleges
- High levels of information, arts, and recreation employment (creativity)

Centre for the Study of Rural America, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

Businesses classified as Breadth are smaller operations that serve a local area and add to the quality of life within the community. The Depth classification is businesses that have a more regional, national and even international market creating a significant number of jobs and investment. As a rural Ohio community Marion is uniquely positioned regarding each factor.

- Scenic places: Marion captures the sense of America's Heartland, with the beauty of an agricultural setting mixed with unique natural resource areas like Big Island Wildlife Area, Tallgrass Prairie Trail and proximity to Killdeer Plains. The built environment of the community has attractive facilities like the Harding Memorial and Palace Theatre.

- High Educational Attainment: 12% of Marion County residents age 25 and over have a Bachelors degree or higher. This trails the Ohio average of 24.1% based on 2010 Census figures. A short-term strength for the community is the fact that Delaware County has a 49.5% rate that means employers can find a highly educated workforce from the area. In the longer term the presence of Marion Technical College with approximately 2700 full and part-time students as well as The Ohio State University at Marion enrolling approximately 1500 students means access to recent graduates and continued increase in percentage of residents with college degrees.
- Densely Populated: A rural community that is within a 45 minute to 1-hour commute to a densely populated area is considered to fit this factor. Marion is easily within that distance to not only the region encompassing Columbus but also a densely populated area that is a leader in economic growth in the state.
- High Levels of Economic Activity: The latest unemployment rates for Ohio Counties show the Central Ohio area counties to be well below the state average of 6.9% with many counties at 5.6% or below. The Central Ohio Area is also one of the fastest growing economies in the state.
- High Levels of Infrastructure: US Route 23 is a four-lane north/south route that links the community to Central Ohio. Broadband access is easily accessible within the community to meet the needs of even the largest businesses.
- College: The City of Marion is the location for both The Ohio State University at Marion (OSUM) and Marion Technical College. OSU at Marion has a unique commitment to outreach to businesses and the community through the economic development work of The Alber Enterprise Center. The Center provides services to businesses and access to OSU Faculty and Research.
- High Levels of Creativity Employment: State historical sites, entertainment at the Palace Theatre, private museums like Wyandot Popcorn Museum, recreational trails and Downtown Marion development provide local cultural and recreational opportunities for work and enjoyment. Within the surrounding region additional museums, nature areas, recreational trails, historical sites and educational institutions provide cultural experiences and employment.
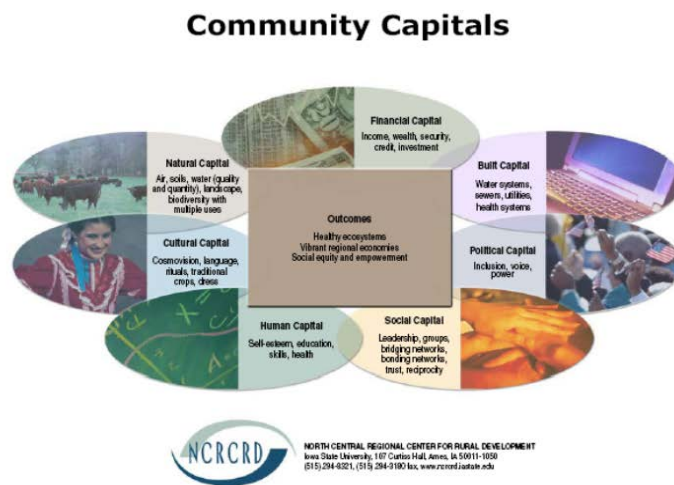
The presence of these key community factors is only the beginning.

Community organizations, agencies, businesses and government units are doing good and great things individually. However, if leaders wish to maximize the potential within the community two incremental advancements must be accomplished:

- ✓ *Think, Act Regionally.* Local governments, institutions and private sector organizations in the Marion Community need to think regional to create a coordinated approach focused on acting beyond existing jurisdictional lines and to build a network of collaboration. No one political jurisdiction or organization can supply the needs of current or future residents or business ventures.

- ✓ *Manage a Coalition of Community Capitals.* Chart 2 shares the capitals present within all communities. Businesses and residents need all of these capitals to successfully operate and thrive. Local governments, businesses, agencies and private sector organizations that manage these capitals must work daily as a single venture to maximize the access as well as benefits to residents and business from of all these items.

Chart 2: Community Capitals

Community Capitals

Capital is a resource that is invested to produce additional or new resources. There are seven capitals in each community that create economic vitality, social inclusion and healthy eco-systems.
- Financial Capital focuses on financial resources
- Built Capital focuses on infrastructure present within the community

- Political Capital focuses on the public sector of the community and the ability to influence decisions
- Social Capital focuses on the connections between organizations and individuals
- Human Capital focuses on the talents and skills of people including ability of leadership
- Cultural Capital focuses on the values and behaviors of the community
- Natural Capital focuses on the environmental resources of the area

Successful communities pay attention to and support all seven capitals. Simply paying attention to each capital is not enough. Those communities that foster the interaction between the seven capitals and the capacity of each capital to support assets in the other six are more likely to reach the community's potential.

The focus of the Marion EnVISIONing Community Plan is to bring together elected government officials, appointed government officials, organizational leaders, institutional leaders, volunteers, businesses and residents into a regional and collaborative coalitional format to maximize the economy and well-being of the community. This plan's ultimate success is based on leadership ability to maximize the interaction between the seven capitals to support the factors that build the economic vitality of Marion County.

The next four sections of this plan provide detailed goals, objectives and action steps to implement the development of the Marion community as a sustainable community. As a sustainable community businesses and residents will find a balanced approach to economic opportunity, social development and a healthy environment. Sections included are:

➢ Economic Sustainability
➢ Educational Sustainability
➢ Social Sustainability
➢ Environmental Sustainability

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Economic Development

Summary of Future Recommendation

Marion is geographically located and has in place a number of assets that can position the community far into the future as a regional rural economy. Increasing the collaboration and coordination of the various governmental units and non-profit organizations that work in economic development will lead to increased investment, employment opportunities and quality of life for area residents. The economic development section of this community plan focuses on a number of key initiatives to move economic potential into economic reality. The first initiative develops a shared plan that clearly identifies the direction for a regional economic emphasis through targeting collaboration and responsibilities within the various economic development organizations. In addition this section supports the strengthening of support for the agricultural and healthcare areas of the Marion economy to continue their priority as important growth sectors of our economy. The final initiative seeks to build on the historical success of the region as a place that entrepreneurs begin and thrive with clearly defined support facilities, programs and services from the community. Through the leadership of visionary leaders, local governments and residents we will be positioned to maximize the economic vitality of the community.

Planning Issues
- Create a coordinated and collaborative approach to economic development among the various Marion economic development offices/boards with increased sharing of information
- Support current economic sectors of the community that serve as drivers for investment and employment
- Establish the most supportive community in the region for the development and growth of entrepreneur based companies
- Identify targeted economic sectors to promote potential location and expansion in the community
- Operate from a regional approach in economic development
- Strengthen the skills and abilities of the area workforce particularly within growth sectors of the local economy

Goals and Objectives

The following list of goals and objectives are intended to address the identified community economic development planning issues. The attached implementation plan identifies the action steps necessary to fulfill the intentions of each objective.

Goal 1: Create an economic development plan for the community

Marion currently has a number of organizations that address economic development activities within and beyond the local community. Examples of these organizations include Marion CanDo, Downtown Marion, Marion Area Chamber of Commerce and Alber Enterprise Center. Each organization has it's own plan of work which address the organizations priorities, clientele and activities. A shared economic development plan will make possible a collaborative economic development approach sharing information to maximize the community's potential as each organization wishing to participate can identify their role as they support the total community economic development effort.

Objective 1: Create a formal coalition of economic based organizations and businesses to provide community economic development leadership.

Objective 2: Identify emerging growth industries to determine skills, competencies and local resources needed to develop a successful attraction, creation and expansion program to increase investment and job creation/retention

Objective 3: Implement the overall economic development plan

Goal 2: Marion supports entrepreneurs in agricultural products and livestock businesses

The agricultural community in Marion is an economic sector of the community that provides job opportunities and income for a trained workforce. Agriculture also provides a scenic quality to the community and a specific cultural presence to defining the region. Caring for this valuable economic engine and expanding future growth of the industry is a wise priority for the region.

Objective 1: Create a community brain trust to mentor agricultural entrepreneurs

Objective 2: Create a community finance fund to assist agricultural entrepreneurs

Objective C: Establish agricultural science as a discipline within the science program at Ohio State University at Marion campus

Objective D: Educate the general public on the value of and opportunities in agriculture

Goal 3: Marion increases the availability of healthcare services by becoming a regional hub

Healthcare is a growing economic driver in our nation and the local community. The local healthcare industry has seen growth in facilities, services and employment while identifying specializations to meet increasing demand. Identifying the healthcare industry as a sector for regional growth in employment and investment will also add to the quality of life for area residents.

Objective 1: Open communications between healthcare providers and community leaders

Objective 2: Expand existing healthcare training and education

Objective 3: Increase attractiveness of the Marion community to physicians as a place to locate

Goal 4: Marion is a magnet for entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs are the creators of tomorrow's businesses and the implementers of new technologies that sustain today's businesses. This creative group of individuals has unique demands for support services from the local community. They are higher risk investments, which carry with them a greater return on investment in the long run. The Marion community has historically been fortunate to be the location where many past entrepreneurs have started and grown their businesses. Focusing on supporting the entrepreneurs of the future will bring similar benefit to this community.

Objective 1: Provide resources and support to attract, grow and retain entrepreneur-based businesses

Objective 2: Locate an incubator to support entrepreneur start-ups

Goal 1: Create an economic development plan for the community	
Objective 1: Create a formal coalition of economic based organizations and businesses to provide community economic development leadership	
	Action Steps
1.1.1	Identify each organizations specific expertise and resources they can contribute
1.1.2	Initiate and complete a Business Retention and Expansion Survey (BR&E)
1.1.3	Train local leadership in Economic Development Strategies and activities discovered through BR&E Survey
Objective 2: Identify emerging growth industries to determine skills, competencies and local resources needed to develop a successful attraction, creation and expansion program to increase investment and job creation/retention	
1.2.1	Establish a research roundtable to gather, analyze and report information
1.2.2	Prioritize economic sectors and business types with highest potential for successful operation in the community
1.2.3	Create a marketing plan that identifies targeted industries with identified ad hoc teams with skills pertinent to support services and needs of targeted industries
Objective 3: Implement the overall economic development plan	
1.3.1	Create success indicators
1.3.2	Identify ambassadors to market and promote the community to targeted industries
1.3.3	Obtain feedback from targeted industries regarding Marion assets and challenges as a place to do business
1.3.4	Evaluate, improve and continue to execute the plan

Goal 2: Marion supports entrepreneurs in agricultural products and livestock businesses	
Objective 1: Create a community brain trust to mentor agricultural entrepreneurs	
Objective 2: Create a community finance fund to assist agricultural entrepreneurs	
	Action Steps
2.1.1	Recruit the local Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Ohio Meat Producers and local Farmer's Cooperative to help establish mentoring and finance program
2.1.2	Hold a organizational meeting to set the charge and initiate the group
2.1.3	Provide local tax incentives and infrastructure to agricultural business development projects
Objective 3: Establish agricultural science as a discipline within the science program at Ohio State University at Marion	
2.2.1	Meet with Ohio State University Marion Administration to discuss the topic
2.2.2	Meet with Marion Technical College Administration to discuss the topic to learn about existing curriculum
Objective 4: Educate the general public on the value of and opportunities in agriculture	
2.3.1	Establish the use of agricultural curriculum in appropriate classes like science in K-12
2.3.2	Provide teaching materials to teachers
2.3.3	Enlist commodity groups to make presentations in classrooms
2.3.4	Meet with current agricultural teachers in K-12 to develop materials to teach opportunities in agbioscience
2.3.5	Encourage faculty at OSU Marion and Marion Technical College to create Agricultural teaching materials for K-12

Goal 3: Marion increases the availability of healthcare services by becoming a regional hub	
Objective 1: Open communications between healthcare providers and community leaders	
3.1.1	Meet with hospital administration to discover potential expansion of services
3.1.2	Locally market the advantages of the Marion healthcare system and services
Objective 2: Expand existing healthcare training and education	
3.2.1	Assist educational institutions in expanding current LPN and RN education
3.2.2	Assist educational institutions in expanding current training for EMT, EMT-P
3.2.3	Provide intern opportunities in Marion for physicians within the regional healthcare provider network
Objective 3: Increase attractiveness of the Marion community to physicians as a place to locate	
3.3.1	Establish group practices to attract physicians
3.3.2	Assist area educational institutions that are training healthcare professionals in placing graduates locally
3.3.3	Inventory availability of housing and activities for healthcare professionals and families
3.3.4	Establish a fund to assist in paying educational costs for physicians

Goal 4: Marion is a magnet for entrepreneurs	
Objective 1:Provide resources and support to attract, grow and retain Entrepreneur-based businesses	
	Action Steps
4.1.1	Establish a "one stop" consultation location for entrepreneurs with a list of available local, state and national resources
4.1.2	Establish an entity that provides local financial resources to growing and emerging entrepreneurs, including public tax incentives
4.1.3	Develop an integrated marketing and communications plan to promote Marion as fertile ground for entrepreneurship
4.1.4	Recruit in large communities promoting advantages of rural community
Objective 2: Locate an incubator to support entrepreneur start-ups	
4.2.1	Research models for providing entrepreneurs start-up space and services including shared space, donated space, shared resources and services.
4.2.2	Select the best method or combination of methods to establish an incubator model for the Marion Area
4.2.3	Seek funding to begin the operation of selected methods
4.2.4	Operate identified facilities

Efficient, Effective Services and Government

Summary of Future Recommendation

Coordination and quick response to disasters rather naturally or human initiated are increasingly becoming a critical element of community service delivery. A significant number of these emergencies require the support of services by a number of separately operated public safety departments. This section of the plan is developed to enhance the ability of public service providers to communicate effectively, citizen's ability to quickly communicate their need for assistance and maximize the effectiveness of public and private funds available for public safety activity. Through the establishment of a countywide communications command center the listed targeted outcomes are possible.

Planning Issues
- Establish and equip a facility to centralize communication regarding public safety services
- Use the $500,000 Local Governments Initiative Loan Funds awarded Marion Local Government to enhance emergency communication
- Discover a method to jointly fund such a facility within the multiple methods of obtaining funding currently used by each public safety provider
- Reduce the time and complexity necessary for citizens to communicate their need for services
- Maximize the use of public funding to efficiently and effectively provide public safety services at a reasonable expenditure for service rate

Goals and Objectives

The following list of goals and objectives are intended to address the identified efficient, effective services and government planning issues. The attached implementation plan identifies the action steps necessary to fulfill the intentions of each objective.

Goal 1: To increase the effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of local emergency communications through the consolidation of current separate operations within a single emergency communications command center including dispatching and 911 services

Public safety and well-being is greatly increased when all safety units work in coordination and collaboration to provide emergency services to residents and businesses, especially in a state of a severe disaster. The same is true also for individuals who are facing an emergency needing immediate response by safety services. Currently the area 911 services, although very effective in the skills and abilities of current staff and equipment, are hindered by the lack of a single

response system that identifies the person's need and location then dispatches a response team.

Objective 1: All local government bodies, including Townships, City of Marion and Marion County will jointly operate and participate in the use of a single countywide emergency communications command center

Goal 1: To increase the effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of local emergency communications through the consolidation of current separate operations within a single emergency communications command center including dispatching and 911 services	
Objective 1: All local government bodies, including Townships, City of Marion and Marion County will jointly operate and participate in the use of a single countywide emergency communications command center	
	Action Steps
1.1.1	Submit Local Government Initiative Grant Proposal to obtain no interest loan for a command center renovation and equipment project Appointed Committee Jan 2012
1.1.2	Bring a committee together encompassing public officials from safety services and elected officials within Townships, County and City governments
1.1.3	Establish an operational funding method for the command center
1.1.4	In the event an agreed upon plan is not prepared EnVISIONing will provide leadership with other organizations to prepare an initiative to place before the voters to mandate consolidation of current services into a single emergency communications center

EDUCATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Summary of Future Recommendation

Recent conversations with area employers indicate they have employment opportunities for persons who have successfully completed their education and have employability skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Increasing the number of individuals who have the credentials employers are seeking will lead to more residents being employed while increasing the standard of living for individuals and families. Expanding the number of pre-school aged children in programs to prepare them for their formal educational experience will lead to increases in the number of residents reaching graduation. In addition addressing the needs of high-risk children in math and reading skills plus the importance of regular school attendance will further prepare youth for success. As youth move through the educational years targeting their graduation on time and gaining some tools needed to transition into the workplace will increase both the available workforce and individuals continuing their education to gain post secondary degrees. Existing adults who have not completed graduation or it's equivalent are valuable members of the community and workforce. Meeting their needs to allow their successful return and completion of a degree will benefit not only their lives but also the potential labor market of the community.

Planning Issues
- Educational success in the community provides youth opportunities for meaningful employment and family stability
- Being prepared to start a formal education increases the students chances for successfully completing their educational experience
- Area employers are seeking adults who have graduated high school and are prepared to enter the workforce
- Available transportation is important to the successful participation in educational experiences

Goals and Objectives

The following list of goals and objectives are intended to address the identified education planning issues. The attached implementation plan identifies the action steps necessary to fulfill the intentions of each objective.

Goal 1: Children enter school developmentally on track in the areas of literacy and social, emotional and intellectual skills

Research demonstrates that children who participate in learning activities before entering school have a greater success in their first years of attending school. Expanding programs that provide assistance in literacy and interpersonal skills will increase the number of area youth prepared to succeed as they begin their educational experience.

Objective 1: Increase community awareness of the importance of early learning on kindergarten readiness

Objective 2: Increase the number of children who attend preschool

Goal 2: Students are prepared to succeed in later grades

It is important to create a positive learning environment throughout a child's educational experience. Providing role models and mentors give youth a peer for positive interaction. Parents that are involved in a child's education are critical to continued educational success. Youth also need a health environment to assure the opportunity for regular attendance and classroom participation.

Objective 1: Improve school attendance in high-risk children

Objective 2: Improve math and reading skills in high-risk children

Goal 3: Young adults make a successful transition from high school to post secondary academic, vocational or military training

Preparation for future educational and career goals increases the rate of successful transition to higher education and career placement for youth. This preparation begins no later than middle school with experiences designed to help a youth understand and prepare a course of study to meet their ultimate educational and career goals.

Objective 1: Ensure that public high school students graduate on time

Objective 2: Ensure that high school students have the tools and support necessary to transition successfully to work

Goal 4: Adults earn their high school diploma or equivalent and credentials needed for employment

Discussions with area employers indicate the need for residents to meet educational requirements to compete for vacant jobs. Providing opportunities for area residents to complete academic requirements necessary to obtain the appropriate educational credentials will increase the number of successful local job applicants hired within the community.

Objective 1: Increase percentage of adults earning a high school diploma or equivalent

Objective 2: Increase percentage of adults earning credentials leading to employment

Goal 1: Children enter school developmentally on track in the areas of literacy and social, emotional and intellectual skills	
Objective 1: Increase community awareness of the importance of early learning on kindergarten readiness	
	Action Steps
1.1.1	Implement county-wide Born Learning media campaign on early learning
1.1.2	Investigate and possibly implement 211 as a tool for parents seeking early learning tools and care-providers
1.1.3	Widen reach of Value of Education (VOE) campaign and materials
Objective 2: Increase the number of children who attend preschool	
1.2.1	Investigate options for transportation to preschool for low-income families
1.2.2	Advocate with legislators for mandatory preschool and expansion of Head Start
1.2.3	Develop incentive program for low-income parents who send their children to preschool

Goal 2: Students are prepared to succeed in later grades	
Objective 1: Improve school attendance in high-risk children	
	Action Steps
2.1.1	Recruit and match community mentors with high-risk children through Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) after-school programming
2.1.2	Investigate incidence of lice infestation and methods of combating health issues if necessary
2.1.3	Educate parents, students and other community members on the importance of school attendance
Objective 2: Improve math and reading skills in high-risk children	
2.2.1	Recruit and match community tutors with high-risk children through BGC & SACC after-school programming
2.2.2	Tailor BGC after-school programming to target improvement in math and reading
2.2.3	Develop pilot program with one appropriate MCS building
2.2.4	Liaise with Ohio State University at Marion and Marion Technical College for tutors

Goal 3: Young adults make a successful transition from high school to post secondary academic, vocational or military training	
Objective 1: Ensure that public high school students graduate on time	
	Action Steps
3.1.1	Monitor Harding High School Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Program for success and expansion
3.1.2	Research best practices for additional programming
Objective 2: Ensure that high school students have the tools and support necessary to transition successfully to work	
3.2.1	Monitor Marion Harding High School I CAN programming for success and expansion
3.2.2	Monitor Tri-Rivers PASS programming for success and replication
3.2.3	Research best practices for additional programming

Goal 4: Adults earn their high school diploma or equivalent and credentials needed for employment	
Objective 1: Increase percentage of adults earning a high school diploma or equivalent	
	Action Steps
4.1.1	Develop strategies to increase awareness of potential participants regarding opportunities
4.1.2	Recruit an outreach volunteer to follow up and maintain contact with ABLE participants
Objective 2: Increase percentage of adults earning credentials leading to employment	
4.2.1	Develop strategies to increase awareness of potential participants regarding opportunities
4.2.2	Develop resource listing of scholarship resources for adults wishing to earn credentials

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Summary of Future Recommendation

The Marion Area has a number of qualified social services agencies, educational institutions and faith-based organizations to provide quality training and development to area residents. Focusing an advocacy approach to raise funders' knowledge of the successful programs and seeking grant funding should increase the availability of both financial and human resources needed to meet the current and growing demand from area residents. Volunteers currently provide valuable services that multiply the services provided by public and non-profit agencies. Working with volunteer organizations to identify their availability and expertise will expand the range of services. Mentoring services increases the success rate of individuals participating in programs. Building a stronger mentoring resource base will maximize further the successful transition of individuals. This plan identifies the growth of cooperation between area employers and social service providers to address desired employability skills and the need to overcome drug abuse issues so individuals can be fully employed. A great deal of work has been completed to assess area public healthcare needs. This plan guides the completion of a healthcare plan based on this gained knowledge leading to the increased health and well being of area residents.

Planning Issues
- Additional financial and human resources are needed to provide the programs and assistance needed by existing and potential residents
- Area employers are seeking individuals who can meet employability standards and successfully complete testing requirements
- Individuals that have adequate healthcare services, reliable transportation and healthy living environments have the greatest opportunity to lead productive lives within the workplace and home
- Collaboration and coordination among the various social service agencies, faith based community and area employers will lead to more efficient use of resources and greater number of residents transitioning to successful careers and families

Goals and Objectives

The following list of goals and objectives are intended to address the identified social services planning issues. The attached implementation plan identifies the action steps necessary to fulfill the intentions of each objective.

Goal 1: Marion County social services will increase their capacity to provide needed programs and services

Current programs delivered by the area social services agencies are highly successful in achieving targeted impacts. Additional programs could also be

implemented that would accomplish further success in reaching desired impacts. Sustainable funding, support for social service agencies, and additional human resources are critical elements necessary to increase the number of individuals reached and greater impact community-wide.

Objective 1: Increase financial resources for identified programs and services

Objective 2: Increase human resources for identified programs and services

Objective 3: Improve education and information on available resources

Goal 2: The number of Marion County residents in poverty will decrease

A number of critical factors to address in decreasing the local poverty level have been identified through research and experience. These factors include positive mentors, available transportation, appropriate interpersonal skills within the workplace, avoidance of substance abuse and safe and affordable housing.

Objective 1: Increase number of mentors available for Marion Matters Getting Ahead Classes

Objective 2: Provide reliable transportation to and from employment opportunities

Objective 3: Increase the number of potential Marion County employees with soft employability skills

Objective 4: Increase the percentage of potential Marion County employees who can pass drug test

Objective 5: Provide safe affordable housing for potential Marion County employees

Goal 3: The health status of Marion County residents will improve

A healthy lifestyle with access and financial resources needed for health care services is another critical element in successful employment for residents. In addition, a healthy lifestyle also leads to stronger families providing support for each family member in achieving their potential.

Objective 1: Develop a community health improvement plan

Goal 1: Marion County social services will increase their capacity to provide needed programs and services	
Objective 1: Increase financial resources for identified programs and services	
	Action Steps
1.1.1	Develop formal advocacy effort for identified programs and services
1.1.2	Seek grants to fund identified programs and services for the short-term
Objective 2: Increase human resources for identified programs and services	
1.2.1	Begin discussions with faith-based community about volunteer needs and opportunities
1.2.2	Begin discussions with Ohio State University at Marion and Marion Technical College about volunteer needs and opportunities
1.2.3	Develop strategies for volunteer recruitment from general community
1.2.4	Expand common repository for information on volunteer needs and opportunities
Objective 3: Improve education and information on available resources	
1.3.1	Institute bi-monthly community meetings for social service providers to educate one another on services
1.3.2	Investigate and implement 211 as a comprehensive information and referral tool for all residents
1.3.3	Expand Charity Tracker for use in coordinating better and more holistic use of services

Goal 2: The number of Marion County residents in poverty will decrease	
Objective 1: Increase number of mentors available for Marion Matters Getting Ahead Classes	
Action Steps	
2.1.1	Begin discussions with faith-based community about mentor needs and opportunities
2.1.2	Begin discussions with Ohio State University at Marion and Marion Technical College about mentor needs and opportunities
2.1.3	Begin discussions with service groups about mentor needs and opportunities
2.1.4	Begin discussions with business, healthcare and other industry about mentor needs and opportunities
2.1.5	Begin discussions with retiree community about mentor needs and opportunities
Objective 2: Provide reliable transportation to and from employment opportunities	
2.2.1	Support and assist Marion Matters Transportation Action Team efforts regarding reliable transportation options

Objective 3: Increase the number of potential Marion County employees with soft employability skills	
3.3.1	Support and assist current employability efforts by Marion County Job and Family Services and affiliate organizations
3.3.2	Support and assist Value of Education efforts to educate and transition children into the workplace successfully
Objective 4: Increase the percentage of potential Marion County employees who can pass drug test	
3.4.1	Educate Marion County on issues of substance abuse
3.4.2	Advocate for funding to increase treatment access for substance abusers
3.4.3	Begin discusses with Occupational Health about Recovery to Work and Prime for Life programming
3.4.4	Develop partnerships with employers on using existing programming as hiring strategies
Objective 5: Provide safe affordable housing for potential Marion County employees	
5.1.1	Support and assist Continuum of Care efforts to provide safe affordable housing

Goal 3: The health status of Marion County residents will improve	
Objective 1: Develop a community health improvement (CHIP) plan	
	Action Steps
3.1.1	Support and assist CHIP Committee with research and to establish priorities
3.1.2	Support and assist CHIP Committee with plan implementation

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Summary of Future Recommendation
Natural Environment – Built Environment & Transportation – Parks and Recreation

The environment that makes up the Marion area community is an attractive agricultural and natural resources mix of land uses. It is through these environmental qualities that the area is able to maintain a rural quality of life that provides economic opportunity and an attractive place to live. Recreational activities support this rural lifestyle though outdoor and indoor activity. Increasing the use of the parks and recreational facilities within the community will provide for an even stronger and healthier mental and physical state of being for area residents. Collaboration between park districts and organizations will help residents understand the array of activities available for their use. Carefully planned and alternative forms of transportation will make access to these facilities easier for residents of all ages. Completion of the Tall Grass Trail is a specific method to enhance this goal. The beauty of our community and the enhancement of our environmental quality will be raised as we move to being a zero waste community. This will also increase the productivity of area businesses through reductions in waste management costs. Another way to assist local businesses and provide new products to residents is through the discovery of green products to be produced locally. As people increase their demand for recreational activities and a healthier natural environment a transportation plan will help bring about alternative forms of transportation and traffic management. Finally a well-designed transportation plan will provide for greater safety for area children as they travel to and from school and associated activities.

Planning Issues
- Address residents' need for healthy lifestyles through exercise and outdoor activity
- Utilize the existing recreational facilities and parks in the area
- Involve residents in the care and use of area parks and recreational facilities
- Identify and complete development of potential outdoor activity areas
- Address the cost of waste management for businesses and residents
- Improve the visual and natural quality of the area
- Provide environmentally friendly goods and services to the community
- Address issues of congestion and variety of transportation methods within the community
- Provide safe and secure transportation routes and methods for youth traveling to and from school

Goals and Objectives

The following list of goals and objectives are intended to address the identified environmental planning issues. The attached implementation plan identifies the action steps necessary to fulfill the intentions of each objective.

* = Term Definitions at end of section

Goal 1: Marion City and County residents have increased awareness, opportunities for, and commitment to physical activity, recreation, and healthy lifestyles through the community's excellent parks and recreation facilities and programs

The Marion area has a number of outdoor and indoor recreational facilities and parks for the enrichment of individuals. Plans are also being developed for the further expansion of facilities that will provide new experiences for area residents.

Objective 1: Develop a comprehensive strategy addressing the effective use of existing parks and recreational facilities and the development of new parks and recreational facilities to meet resident's needs for healthy lifestyles

Objective 2: Increase public use and knowledge of parks and recreational facilities throughout the county

Objective 3: Engage community residents as caretakers of their neighborhoods by increasing their commitment toward the care and expanded use of their parks and recreational facilities

Objective 4: Complete Tall Grass Trail and connect it to the City of Marion

Goal 2: Marion County is a "zero waste" community

The reuse of products and materials currently disposed of in landfills has the potential to increase economic opportunities, reduce waste disposal cost and make the landscape of the area a more attractive place.

Objective 1: Increase public, residential, and business recycling rates to reach the zero waste definition

Goal 3: Marion County supports and includes green industry, business, and infrastructure

The world is discovering innovative new methods to use renewable materials for current product and resource development. These evolving technologies mean new job opportunities, improved products for consumers and an enhanced lifestyle for the Marion area.

Objective 1: Green products are produced in Marion County

Objective 2: Educate shoppers regarding the importance of shopping green

Objective 3: Have green, sustainable buildings and public areas

Goal 4: Marion County is a clean, healthy, litter and pollution-free community

People seek a place to live that provides a healthy and pleasant natural environment. Removing waste from the landscape while providing a clean environment will make the Marion area a desirable community for living and working.

Objective 1: Currently littered and polluted areas are cleaned and maintained

Goal 5: Marion County has a sustainable active transportation plan that includes all people

Reliable transportation is critical for getting people to work, play and needed services. New forms of transportation are emerging and require carefully planned integration into the current transportation grid. Providing a variety of transportation methods means people can choose to live in a community that accommodates their personal preferences.

Objective1: Develop a regional active transportation* plan

Objective 2: Implement policy that when roads are constructed or rebuilt/repaired, a complete streets* design will be used

Objective 3: Transportation systems will work with employers on fulfilling needs and will develop partnerships with employers and merchants

Objective 4: Create safer routes to schools

Objective 5: Construct a bike trail connecting Villandry Drive to Wellness Drive

Objective 6: Create bicycle trail that connects Richland Road to the campus of Ohio State Marion and Marion Technical College

Term Definitions

Active Transportation Plan – Active transportation is activity that meets the dual purposes of transportation and exercise. Walking to the bus stop, biking to the store, or skateboarding to a friend's house are examples of active transportation. Complete Streets – Complete streets are roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transport users of all ages and abilities.

Goal 1: Marion City and County residents have increased awareness, opportunities for, and commitment to physical activity, recreation, and healthy lifestyles through the community's excellent parks and recreation facilities and programs	
Objective 1: Develop a comprehensive strategy addressing the effective use of existing parks and recreational facilities and the development of new parks and recreational facilities to meet resident's needs for healthy lifestyles	
	Action Steps
1.1.1	Explore opportunities for collaboration between the various park districts and organizations
1.1.2	Explore the benefits and negatives of park district mergers
1.1.3	Bring together city and county parks and recreation officials to discuss opportunities for collaboration
1.1.4	Identify a reliable source of operating funds for parks
1.1.5	Conduct an inventory of all parks and recreation facilities and programs within the city and county
1.1.6	Conduct a resident survey to determine needs and desires
Objective 2: Increase public use and knowledge of parks and recreational facilities throughout the county	
1.2.1	Develop a plan to encourage biking, walking and public transportation access to Lincoln Park Aquatic Center while also addressing auto access
1.2.2	Improve signage and public access to park for walkers, bikers and cars
1.2.3	Revise funding for public transportation to Aquatic Center on evenings and weekends
1.2.4	Limit parking to encourage other forms of transportation
1.2.5	Encourage walkability by adding crosswalks and walking paths in key locations
1.2.6	Encourage walkability/bikeability by widening/improving/overhauling North Prospect Street north of the Fairgrounds
1.2.7	Inventory all parks and recreation facilities in county
1.2.8	Create a county wide web site with information on every park and recreation area, including location and accessibility by bicycle, walking and other alternative transportation means
1.2.9	Develop Kiosks at each park to provide visitor information, such as locations of trails, equipment, key features and attractions

1.2.10	Improve public access through signage and parking
1.2.11	Raise awareness and knowledge of city and county residents regarding available parks and recreational facilities
1.2.12	Improve access to Sawyer-Ludwig Park by supporting efforts to create vehicle and bicycle access from Bellefontaine Avenue
Objective 3: Engage community residents as caretakers of their neighborhoods by increasing their commitment toward the care and expanded use of their parks and recreational facilities	
1.3.1	Develop and implement programs/strategies in Marion City neighborhoods to involve residents in their parks and other green spaces
1.3.2	Conduct resident surveys in Marion City to identify/define neighborhoods
1.3.3	Create neighborhood advisory boards
1.3.4	Organize neighborhood engagement programs centered around parks and green spaces, including Adopt a Park Groups, Neighborhood Block Watches, and Others
1.3.5	Involve neighborhood groups in identifying potential sites for community gardens
Objective 4: Complete Tall Grass Trail and connect it to the City of Marion	
1.4.1	Raise local matching funds
1.4.2	Obtain grant funding
1.4.3	Mark a route on Holland Road between the trailhead and the Marion bike loop, and consider a future off-road route into the City of Marion

Goal 2: Marion County is a "zero waste" community	
Objective 1: Increase public, residential, and business recycling rates to reach the zero waste definition	
	Action Steps
2.1.1	Promote environmental education
2.1.2	Encourage elected officials, community leaders, businesses and individuals to promote recycling
2.1.3	Invest in public recycling containers and collection programs
2.1.4	Set policies regarding use of disposable items in government offices and schools
2.1.5	Get villages to form a village-wide, curbside recycling program by finding one village to begin program
2.1.6	Institute cost avoidance measures, such as pay-per-bag to reward recycling

Goal 3: Marion County supports and includes green industry, business, and infrastructure	
Objective 1: Green products are produced in Marion County	
	Action Steps
3.1.1	Work with existing and new businesses to identify possible green products
Objective 2: Educate shoppers regarding the importance of shopping green	
Objective 3: Have green, sustainable buildings and public areas	
	Action Steps
3.3.1	Educate community of benefits of green, sustainable buildings
3.3.2	Identify and list brownfield areas and other polluted sites

Goal 4: Marion County is a clean, healthy, litter and pollution-free community	
Objective 1: Currently littered and polluted areas are cleaned and maintained	
	Action Steps
4.1.1	Promote current cleanup efforts
4.1.2	Increase litter law enforcement efforts
4.1.3	Enlist community support through environmental education
4.1.4	Identify and list brownfield areas and other polluted sites

Goal 5: Marion County has a sustainable active transportation plan that includes all people	
Objective1: Develop a regional active transportation plan	
	Action Steps
5.1.1	The regional active transportation plan is adopted by all government entities and includes all forms of transportation
5.1.2	Develop a complete street priority list that would provide government leaders targets for any potential grant funding
5.1.3	Complete City of Marion bicycle routes
Objective 2: Implement policy that when roads are constructed or rebuilt/repaired, a complete streets design will be used	
Objective 3: Transportation systems will work with employers on fulfilling needs and will develop partnerships with employers and merchants	
5.3.1	Encourage employers to promote biking to work
Objective 4: Create safer routes to schools	
5.4.1	Create travel plans for each school building to attract support and resources from grants
Objective 5: Construct a bike trail connecting Villandry Drive to Wellness Drive	
Objective 6: Create bicycle trail that connects Richland Road to the campus of Ohio State Marion and Marion Technical College	

NEXT STEPS

Organizations within each workgroup area of the EnVISIONing Community Plan are implementing selected action steps that pertain to their particular organizational charge. Some examples include

- Social Sustainability: conversations have begun between social service agencies and the faith community regarding mentoring programs. Information has been organized to discuss the importance of funding successful social service programs that increase residents potential for meaningful employment.

- Economic Sustainability: Marion was one of the first communities in the state to receive a no interest loan from the State of Ohio Local Governments Initiative Program. The funds can be used to develop the physical space for the Emergency Communications Command Center. Partners in local economic development community have suggested and are reviewing targeted industry sectors where Marion holds a significant advantage to advance on a regional basis.

- Educational Sustainability: To reach the goal of increasing local students success with math and science curriculum tutors, including college students, have been matched with students. To increase the number of high school students that graduate on time the Marion Harding Closing the Achievement Gap Program is being monitored to better understand the method to expand it's success.

- Environmental Sustainability: A summit of park organizations throughout the county was held to discuss greater countywide coordination, information sharing, and public education about park facilities, and resource distribution for park improvements. This group will continue to collaborate.

The success of these individual organizations and small groups of organizations working collaboratively clearly demonstrates the professional competency and success of Marion Area service providers. As mentioned in the Current Situation section of this plan Marion continues to see critical accomplishments from area service providers. The strength of this plan makes it now possible for the Marion area to take these accomplishments and coordinate them into a holistic approach that integrates the focus of all service providers into a common platform. To take this next step, leadership is needed to help each service provider communicate with all other service providers in the community and to challenge each other to participate in the successful implementation of shared goals. Each organization and agency, including governmental units, has a specific charge towards which they must focus daily their financial and human resources. For that reason, the

potential of any current service provider guiding the integration of all of these efforts is unlikely to happen.

The establishment of a position assigned specifically to guide the integration and communication of all area service providers toward reaching critical goals will make possible the successful implementation of the elements of this plan. An individual who is seen by the community as a neutral partner who supports and further enhances the mission addressed by each service provider through integration of their efforts with all other service providers will help to slowly build a community that uniquely links community capitals. The individual in this position will help service provider administrators and governmental officials identify the current focus opportunities within the plan. They will help these organizations communicate with each other, particularly across the various community capitals. Another key component of this individual's responsibility is to help these providers find their place and contribution within various goals of the plan's sustainability sections. For example the work of a social service agency, a local government office, an educational office and an economic development office will be integrated to provide a more holistic approach to completing each goal so potential firms will understand the unique aspect of being in the Marion area. Finally this position will help service providers take advantage of additional competitive financial and human resources available on a state and national level.

Moving forward in the direction this plan encourages and identifies, with the leadership of a position responsible for supporting and integrating service providers, the Marion area will be positioned fully to capitalize on the resources present in the community. The courage and commitment to advance in this targeted way will take Marion to a unique economic, social, educational and environmental future vitality.

Acknowledgements

Larry Morse for his leadership in implementing and completing a Visioning Report identifying residents views regarding the current assets of the Marion community and those specific hopes they have for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren's future. From this intensive list community goals were identified to create the community desired by Marion residents.

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