

# COMMUNITY VISIONING PLANNING CONTEXT

Prepared by  
Oregon APA for  
Marion County +  
Mid-Willamette  
Valley Council of  
Governments

## Key Findings / Takeaways

- Need for on the ground community visioning processes that align with rebuilding efforts. Visioning processes currently underway, with support from Marion County Community Development Block Grant funds, will serve to provide a holistic regional visioning approach and provide templates and models for future work. Communities are encouraged to undertake their own visioning processes and goals as well.
- Existing and new efforts toward tourism and other economic development visioning work can help serve as a starting point for developing a wider, more cohesive vision for the future of the Santiam Canyon on a broader and larger scale.
- Because of the scale of the destruction, the Canyon will be different post-rebuild; planning for that will take time, money, and community consensus and support.

## Existing Plans, Policies, Projects, or Funding

### *Funding Opportunities*

- **Community Development Block Grants** - U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- **Grant Young Memorial Planning Assistance Grants** - Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD)
- **Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) AmeriCorps** University of Oregon - assigned to MWVCOG September 2021 with funding assistance from Pacific Power
- **Ford Family Foundation Community Economic Development Grants** (<https://www.tfff.org/program-areas/community-economic-development>) - \$50,000-\$250,000 Community Building Spaces Capital Grants
- Refer also to the **Mid-Willamette Valley COG grants webpage**, which includes known sources accessed by members in the past, <https://www.mwvcog.org/grants-2/>.
- Other philanthropic organizations supporting recovery and small communities in Oregon include: Oregon Community Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, Collins Foundation, Pacific Power Foundation, The Reser Family Foundation- Small Community Initiative, and The Healy Foundation.

## COMMUNITY VISIONING

### ***Programs/Projects***

- **Marion County Community Visioning RFP** (2021, sourced from State of Oregon's purchasing system) - The County has hired Better City consulting firm <https://bettercity.us/> to assist with developing community visions for the cities of Gates and Detroit. Marion County has secured funding for this visioning work and the task will be completed in 2022.
- **Oregon Tourism Studio North Santiam Community Workshops** [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kanSUs\\_r7NieyORb3pbhsILs7zaBkfdk/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kanSUs_r7NieyORb3pbhsILs7zaBkfdk/view?usp=sharing) (pdf) - The goal of the program is to raise awareness of the value of tourism, engage the community to identify strengths and opportunities, support community leaders, and connect community and business leaders with resources. During the workshops, participants established a 15-year vision for North Santiam tourism, identified business development opportunities, and identified gaps in resources. Participants also discussed project concepts, including creating a canyon-wide "passport to adventure" with a common identity and brand.
- **RARE AmeriCorps** - Based out of the University of Oregon, the Research Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) AmeriCorps program aims to increase the capacity of rural communities to improve economic, social, and environmental conditions with the assistance of trained graduate-level members who live and work in communities. The program matches members with communities based on the project quality, readiness, community support and capacity, commitment to social justice, location, and ability to provide match. Marion County, Willamette Valley Visitors Association, and the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments were all selected as hosts for RARE participants in FY20/21 to assist with wildfire recovery planning.
- **Resilient Headwaters** - A collaborative partnership between Willamette Valley Visitors Association and the Oregon Mountain Biking Coalition. This initiative seeks to expand amenities to recreationists, identify active transportation projects that link communities with walking and bicycling infrastructure, and further develop recreation networks.

### ***Pre-Disaster***

- **Resource Team Report for Detroit, Oregon** (2000, sourced from the MWVCOG) - Completed by the Oregon Downtown Development Association. Provides recommendations for strengthening Downtown Detroit's image and sense of community.
- **Canyon Journeys North Santiam Canyon Alternative Transportation Link Feasibility Study** (2004, sourced from MWVCOG) - Envisions a trail system that links residents and visitors to opportunities throughout the Canyon.

## COMMUNITY VISIONING

### ***Post-Disaster***

- **Gates Visioning Town Hall** (2021)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19ckcut06DOQk6Mej7TdYXb-19GGiazdo/view?usp=sharing> (pdf) - Provides future goals for infrastructure systems including water, storm and drainage, sewer, and parks. Also provides direction for emergency management, the public works department, city hall, the downtown core, businesses, and multi-family housing. The planning horizon is 2041.

## **Opportunities for Recovery**

While limited community visioning took place pre-disaster, there is renewed interest in engaging Santiam Canyon communities in visioning processes following the 2020 fires. With the help of a Community Development Block Grant, Marion County contracted a team of consultants to assist with community visioning for the cities of Gates and Detroit, along with other strategic planning efforts throughout the impacted areas of the canyon. Data collection and community surveys for this effort commenced in July 2021. This project may catalyze interest in community visioning in other Santiam Canyon communities and should be used as a case study for future efforts.

While the Cities of Gates and Detroit have previously undertaken independent community visioning processes, future visioning work should acknowledge the importance of shared assets and a comprehensive vision for Santiam communities. While each community in Santiam Canyon is unique, many are faced with similar challenges. A collaborative vision could highlight the ways cities can work together to leverage resources and increase long-term resiliency.

With strong interest in community rebuilding post-disaster, numerous opportunities exist for partnerships between the public, private, and non-profit sectors who are funding and actively engaging in recovery work. Building relationships with organizations that have previously completed visioning work, like the Oregon Rural Tourism Studio, Ford Family Foundation, Willamette Valley Visitors Association, Rural Development Initiatives, etc., will allow local governments to leverage resources and more efficiently engage communities.

## **Recommendations**

- Align the different community visioning processes in a cohesive format and report (no matter the consultant) in order to create and ensure a comprehensive, canyon-wide vision that highlights interdependencies, reduces the potential for duplicative efforts, and acknowledges the unique needs of individual cities.
- Build on existing visioning and community engagement efforts when launching new projects.
- Identify partnership opportunities to expand engagement and more equitably involve communities in visioning processes.