Marion County
Growth Services Department
Strategic Plan FY 2025-2029

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Marion County Growth Services Department

Strategic Plan FY 2025-2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Five-Year Operational Plan for the Department of Growth Services (GS) provides the current conditions and a detailed blueprint for future administration and management of the Department. The mission of the Growth Services Department is to guide existing and future development to continually improve the quality of life for the residents of Marion County. To meet this challenge, the Department provides a wide range of services through our Planning and Zoning Division as well as our Code Enforcement Division.

Planning and Zoning Division provides both long range and current planning services in accordance with the policy guidance in the adopted Marion County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. The Code Enforcement Division provides investigation, education, and compliance services to protect and improve the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

The Operational Plan provides a comprehensive review of existing programs, staffing levels, and policy requirements, and other topics relevant to the land development process. An analysis is conducted on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (i.e., a SWOT analysis) for improvement. Specific areas analyzed include Code Enforcement, Planning and Zoning, public outreach, information management, environmental protection, training, economic development, level of service, and organizational continuity and communication. The overall strategic direction for the Department over the next five years is defined in three goals: (1) provide quality customer service, (2) utilize the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to facilitate and promote an improved quality of life for Marion County, and (3) deliver an increasingly effective and efficient level of service. Measurable objectives and detailed strategies have been formulated to meet these goals.

STRATEGIC PLANNING METHODOLOGY

Staff began the process of developing the Five-Year Operational Plan in August 2023. Regular internal review meetings were scheduled to consider applicable data sources including budget documents, tactical statements, department statistics, and relevant material for graphical illustrations. Several sessions were held to discuss current conditions and opportunities for inclusion in the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. The staff who performed the review included the Growth Services

Director, the Deputy Director, the Code Enforcement Supervisor, the Zoning Supervisor, the Administrative Manager, and a Senior Planner with 30 years of experience within the Growth Services Department. Given the nature of how quickly things are changing in our County, the document is a dynamic document that will be continuously updated with different strategies to accomplish the mission and three objectives. But the mission and objectives will remain the same.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

A Brief History

The Growth Services Department was created as part of the overall county reorganization plan adopted by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners on April 13, 2009. Prior to the reorganization, the Growth Management Bureau comprised 5 departments including Zoning, Planning, Code Enforcement, Building Safety, and MSTU. With the reorganization, MSTU became a stand-alone department and Building Safety also became a separate department. The remaining departments were consolidated into integrated divisions under the newly formed Growth Services Department. The Department receives funding from the County's general fund budget.

Current Trends
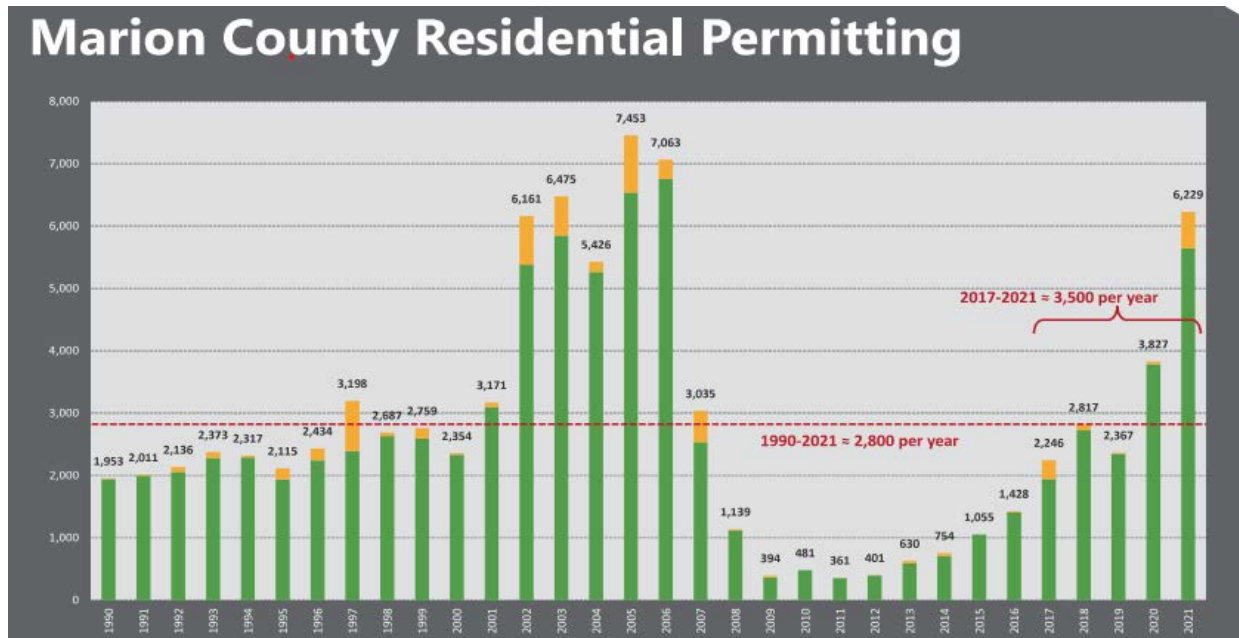
Permitting of land development activity reached a peak in 2006 and dramatically declined due to the 2007-2008 economic downturn with steady small increases after 2009. Since then, the economic

atmosphere has drastically changed, with the COVID-19 pandemic adding its own set of challenges. Today, Marion County is one of the fastest growing counties, attracting an increasingly diverse population who want to live, work, and play in the Horse Capital of the World.
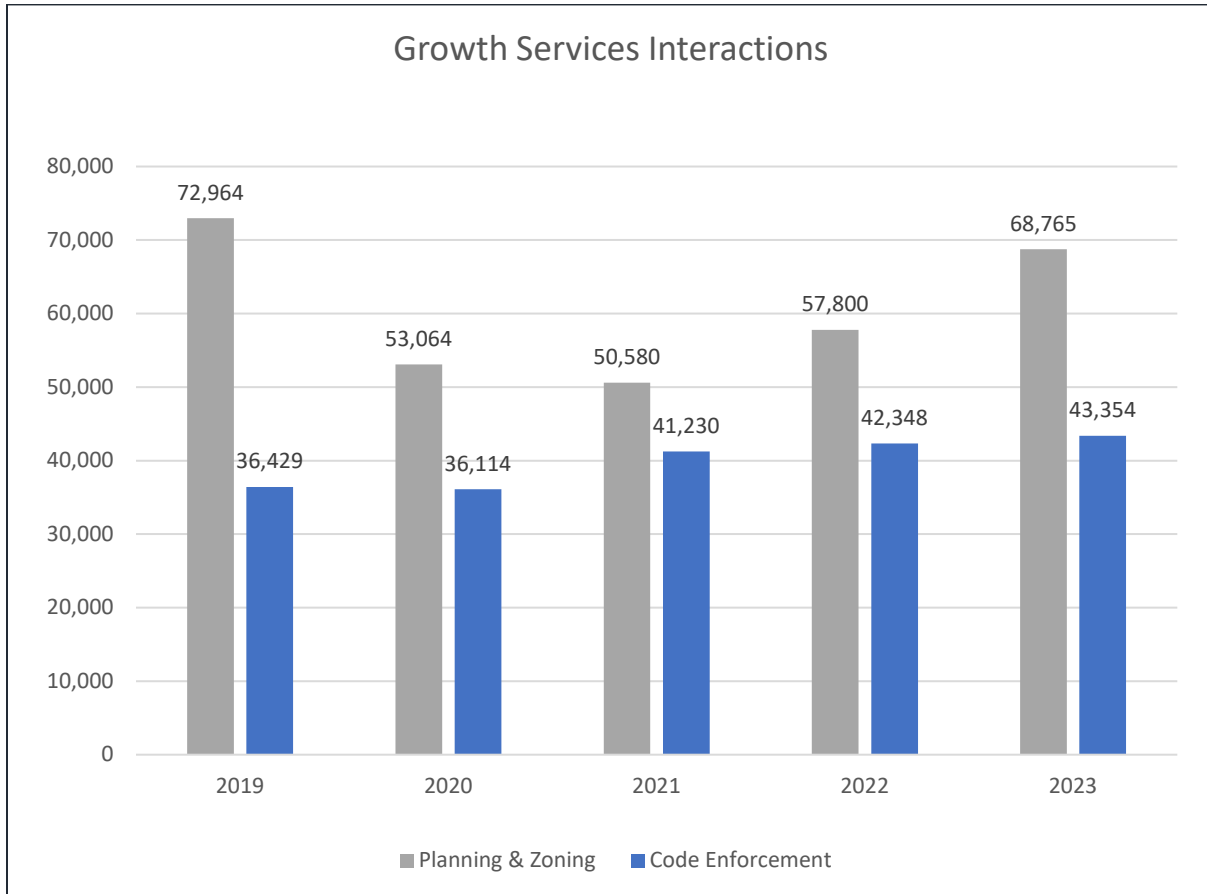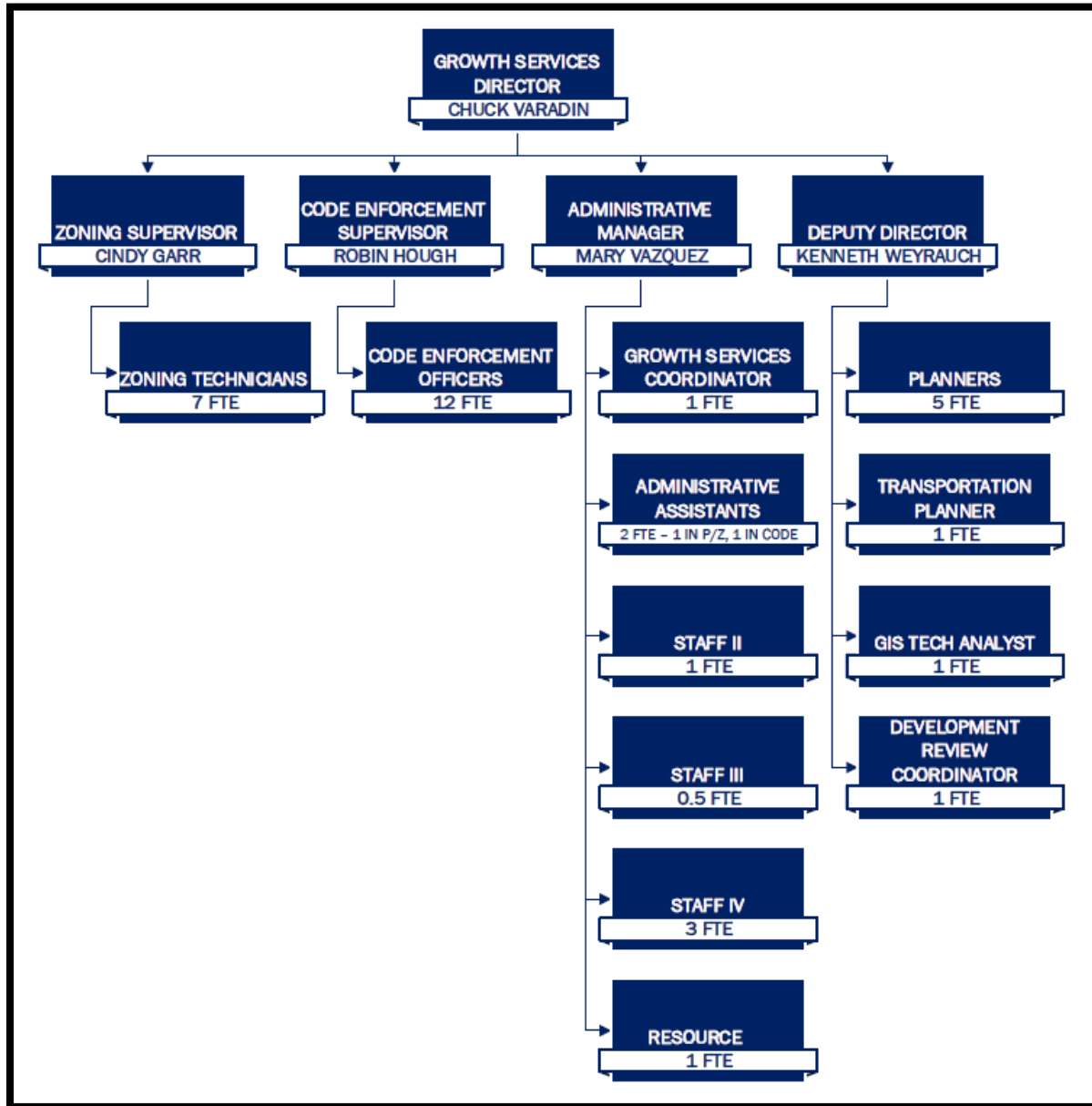

The above graph shows the Growth Services total interactions with our customers per year for the Planning and Zoning Division and the Code Enforcement Division for the last five years. (Total interactions include the total number of phone calls, emails, and in-person touchpoints with our customers.) The trend for Code Enforcement indicates a consistent increase in the number of interactions over the last five years. The trend for Code Enforcement has little variance over time, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The trends for Planning and Zoning, on the other hand, reveals more variance and sensitivity to significant events like the pandemic. We also see that the total number of touchpoints for 2023 of 112,119 exceeded the 2019 touchpoints of 109,393. The average number of combined touchpoints is 100,530. Therefore, the graphs and trends highlight the significance of customer service for Growth Services.

Staffing

The Growth Services Department is staffed with 39.5 total personnel divided between two divisions. (The 0.5 is from sharing a staff person with another department.) A current organizational chart is also included below. The chart indicates that we currently have seven zoning techs who handle many of the customer touchpoints. It also shows that we have twelve code officers reporting to one supervisor.

Growth Services Department Staff	
Title	FTE
Director	1.0
Deputy Director	1.0
Code Enforcement Supervisor	1.0
Zoning Supervisor	1.0
Administrative Manager	1.0
Planners	5.0
Transportation Planner	1.0
GIS Tech Analyst	1.0
Development Review Coordinator	1.0
Code Enforcement Officers	12.0
Zoning Technicians	7.0
Growth Services Coordinator	1.0
Administrative Assistant	2.0
Staff II	1.0
Staff III	0.5
Staff IV	3.0
Total FTE	39.5

Organizational chart:

- **GROWTH SERVICES DIRECTOR** — CHUCK VARADIN
  - **ZONING SUPERVISOR** — CINDY GARR
    - ZONING TECHNICIANS — 7 FTE
  - **CODE ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR** — ROBIN HOUGH
    - CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS — 12 FTE
  - **ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER** — MARY VAZQUEZ
    - GROWTH SERVICES COORDINATOR — 1 FTE
    - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS — 2 FTE – 1 IN P/Z, 1 IN CODE
    - STAFF II — 1 FTE
    - STAFF III — 0.5 FTE
    - STAFF IV — 3 FTE
    - RESOURCE — 1 FTE
  - **DEPUTY DIRECTOR** — KENNETH WEYRAUCH
    - PLANNERS — 5 FTE
    - TRANSPORTATION PLANNER — 1 FTE
    - GIS TECH ANALYST — 1 FTE
    - DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COORDINATOR — 1 FTE

Some Current Achievements

Despite the rapid growth, the Growth Services Department continues to provide a high level of service to the citizens of Marion County through a variety of achievements including the following:

- Reviewed an average of 704 development plan reviews per year in the last 5 years.
- Reviewed an average of 711 building permit zoning reviews per year in the last 5 years.
- Processed an average of 159 special use, variance, and rezoning cases per year in the last 5 years.
- Processed an average of 16 Comprehensive Plan amendments per year in the last 5 years.
- Maintained and updated the electronic zoning map (GIS), improving access.
- Created an approved development map to inform decision making.
- Developed and implemented staff development pipelines to improve growth and retention.

- Updated the Land Development Code
- Investigated an average of 4,342 Code cases per year in the last 5 years.
- Updated the local mitigation strategy
- Developed a Master Plan for the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).
- Participation in the FEMA Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System, which lowers insurance rates for our citizens.
- Staff has made significant headway in the configuration of the Enterprise Permitting and Licensing (EP&L) software to replace the CD Plus software.
- Increased team resiliency through the pandemic and leadership changes.

Core Functions

The lists below summarize the core functions for the Planning and Zoning Division and the Code Enforcement Division as well as identify the various volunteer boards and staff committees associated with our department. The next section explains more about the operations of each division.

Planning and Zoning:

- Building Permit Review
- Community Ratings Systems
- Community Redevelopment
- Comprehensive Plan amendments
- Current Planning
- Development Review and Site Planning
- Floodplain Management
- Geospatial Analyses
- Impact Fee
- Land Development Code

- Land Use and Zoning Determinations
- Long Range Planning
- Zoning, Variances, Special Use Permits

Code Enforcement

- Abandoned Vacant Property Registration
- Abatement for unsafe structures and junk and unserviceable vehicles
- Advanced Property Searches
- Bingo Licensing
- Code Enforcement Board
- Code investigation, education, and compliance
- Collection of liens

Boards and Committees

- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
- Board of Adjustments (BoA)
- Code Enforcement Board (CEB)
- Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
- Development Review Committee (DRC)
- Land Development Regulation Commission (LDRC)
- Local Mitigation Strategy Committee (LMS)
- Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z)
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Technical Working Group (TWC)

Planning and Zoning Division

The Planning and Zoning Division focuses on both long-range and short-range planning of Marion County's land use, transportation, infrastructure, housing, environmental protection, conservation, and recreation, including inter-governmental coordination with Federal, State, regional, and local agencies. Long-range planning focuses on updating and maintaining the County's governing Comprehensive Plan and implementing the Land Development Code (LDC). This process includes the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) that oversees changes to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code through public engagement and stakeholder feedback in creating a vision for the future of Marion County. Long-range planning also includes the development and implementation of area plans and community redevelopment area plans and programs.

Short-range, or current, planning includes the review of a variety of applications including rezoning, special use permits, special event permits, and temporary use permit applications. Activities include reviewing building permits, site plan applications, and subdivision-related applications. Additional responsibilities include overseeing the impact fee programs, concurrency management, and floodplain management. Short-ranging planning focuses on direct customer interactions providing information to the public and development professionals regarding Marion County.

The Planning and Zoning Division works together with other departments to provide planning support as needed. These activities include many things such as coordinating population data; analyzing, engineering, and distributing geographic information systems (GIS) data; tracking development data; and coordinating specialized planning needs for other departmental operations. Intergovernmental coordination also involves working with the Ocala/Marion County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), local governments, and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC).
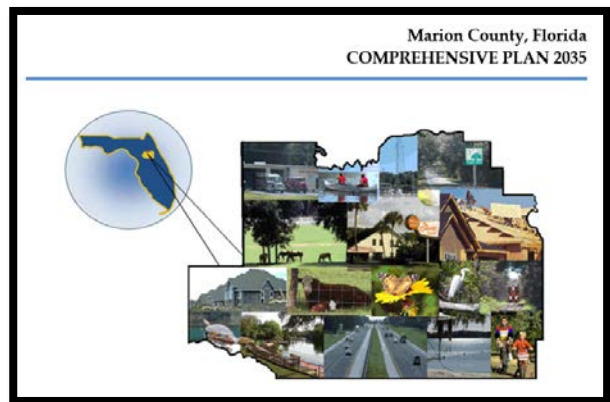
Short-term goals for planning and zoning focus on improving public information methods and streamlining review processes to improve efficiencies, while allowing citizens to directly access current data for active applications including comprehensive plan amendment, variances, development applications, as well as

zoning and special use permits. Long-term goals for planning and zoning focus on developing usable information and analyses that serve as a foundation for planning decisions and activities and provides guidelines for achieving the community's vision.

Code Enforcement Division

The Code Enforcement Division aims to promote, protect, and improve the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Marion County through an effective code enforcement program.

The primary responsibility of the Code Enforcement Division is to educate citizens about Marion County codes and is ordinances through a voluntary compliance program to protect the property values, health, safety, and welfare of the public.

The Code Enforcement Division is a general fund division and required to address Florida statutory requirements of Chapter 162. In addition to responding to citizen complaints, Marion County Code Enforcement Officers also take a proactive approach by addressing violations they observe while patrolling the County. Continuous cross training has led to increased efficiency, improved customer service, a greater presence in the field, improved communications, and better understanding by our citizens.

The Division has implemented a balanced and comprehensive approach to enforcement, allocating resources between public generated complaints and more proactive investigations of code violations. The primary goals for Code Enforcement have been to continue educating our citizens of the codes and ordinances to promote and gain voluntary compliance in a timely manner; to help enforce the County's mission to reduce litter; to increase proactive identification of violations and enforcement issues; to serve our customers with the utmost professional level of service

and integrity; to provide lien collections for Code Enforcement Board and abatement liens; and to reduce the time from the date of complaint received to initiate the investigation.

Customer Service and Public Outreach

Customer service, as highlighted above, is critical to the core functions of Growth Services. We facilitate interactions by e-mail, phone, and walk-in services that include a variety of permits, information, and inquiries to the department. Our customer service area provides the public with access to our Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement divisions.

The Department of Growth Services maintains an active public outreach program through its many boards, committees, and special events. All meetings are open to the public and advertised in accordance with the requirements of Florida Statutes. For cases involving rezoning, variances, or special use permits on a particular parcel of land, individual notices are sent by mail to nearby property owners as required by the Land Development Code. In addition to regular land use hearings, the department reaches out to the public through special programs:

- Educational presentations - The Department provides regular educational presentations to members of the public, Homeowner Associations (HOA's) and realtor groups to name a few.
- Citizens' Academy - Participation in the annual Marion County Citizens' Academy with other departments.
- National Planning Month - The Department sponsored an open house featuring special presentations to mark October as "National Planning Month."

Land Records and Demographics

The department maintains a substantial inventory of important electronic and paper documents related to land use, development review, and code enforcement. For example, before the establishment of formal platting requirements, the division of land was accomplished through the submission of a survey or sketch. The department maintains an inventory of unrecorded subdivision maps and surveys that are recognized for development purposes. Other important records include the following:

- 4-H & FAA Database
- Ag Lot Splits
- Agricultural Farm Buildings
- Annexation Records
- Community Redevelopment Areas
- Community Residential Homes
- Developer Agreements
- Development of Regional Impact
- Development Review Committee
- FEMA Flood Elevation Certificates
- Home Occupations
- Ordinances and Resolutions
- Plat Vacations
- Policy 10.1.5 Letters (AKA Policy 1.20)
- Reliance Letters
- Subdivisions

- Bingo Licenses
- Construction and Debry (C&D) Pits
- Cellular Towers
- Child Care Providers
- Code Violations
- Family Divisions
- Overlay Zones
- Home Occupations
- Junk Yard Research
- Mines
- Parcel Aggregation
- Planned Service Areas
- Planned Unit Development
- Special Events
- Special Use Permits
- Temporary Permits

In addition to paper records, a web-based data repository has been established that contains essential census, demographic, and economic data related to Marion County. As we digitize paper documents, the data contained in those documents becomes more accessible and searchable.

The Geographic Information System (GIS) is used extensively by the department to store important land data on zoning, future land use, floodplain data, and other topics. Below is a screenshot of the data that we make available online to our citizens so they can make more informed decisions regarding their property.
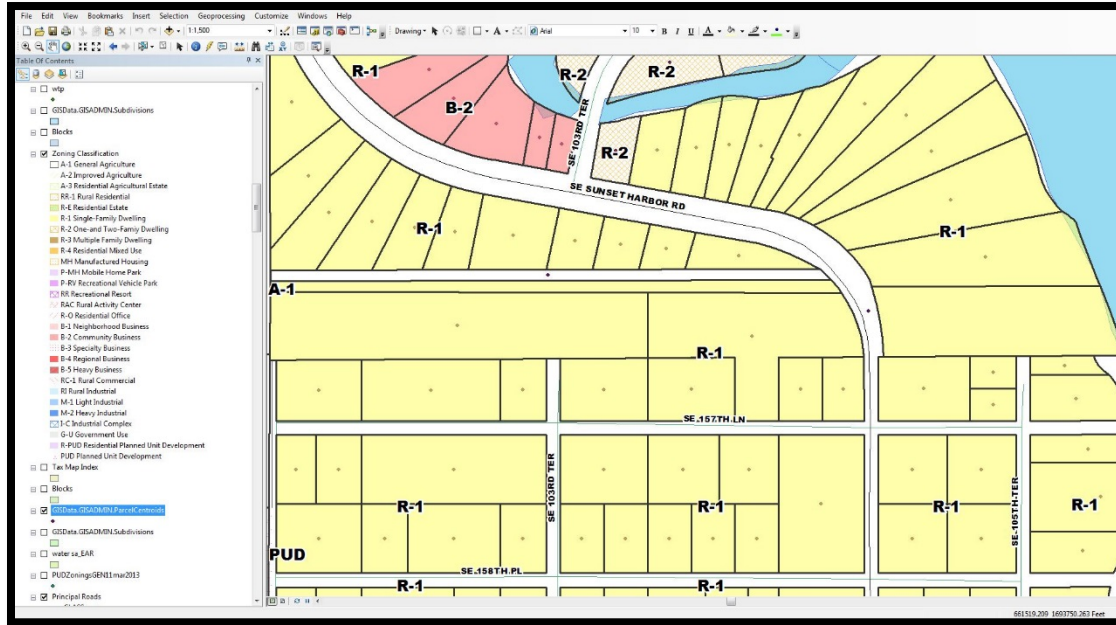
Environmental Protection and Natural Resources

The Comprehensive Plan identifies "Environmentally Sensitive and Locally Significant Natural Resources due special protection to minimize adverse impacts to the resources". Our resource protection efforts are largely implemented through the Land Development Code. Overlay districts have been established like the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay Zone (ESOZ) to help protect these areas and our natural resources. Other techniques include:

- Identification of natural resources on-site during development review;

- Design, construction, and management techniques to protect natural resources;

- Mapping of natural features such as karst areas; and

- Guidelines for extraction of commercially viable mineral resources.

In addition to established development review procedures, the Department has several ongoing initiatives, such as the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) for the Comp Plan, the Planned Service Areas market study, revising the County's buffer standards and requirements, the ongoing Silver Springs

Community Redevelopment Area, and building an inventory and projected build-out of the Urban Growth Boundary.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Many of the land development issues facing the Department require extensive coordination with adjacent local governments, state/regional agencies, and the federal government. In the area of transportation planning, staff participates in the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Ocala/Marion Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). The Department coordinates the Local Mitigation Strategy Committee consisting of local and state agencies, nonprofit groups, citizens, and other stakeholders involved in disaster preparedness planning. Growth Services staff have also served on the School Board's Interlocal Agreement Steering Committee and its current Technical Working Group (TWC). Numerous public meetings are scheduled each year.

Professional Development

 Through participation in conferences, seminars and webinars, staff can obtain continuing education credits and formal certifications in their field of expertise. Staff also take advantage of opportunities to network with other professionals from other communities to learn about the latest advancements in their respective fields. Below are the various professional associations Growth Service staff participate in:

- American Planning Association
- American Institute of Certified Planners
- Florida Planning and Zoning Association
- Florida Redevelopment Association Certified Professional
- "Planetizen" (online planning courses)

- Florida Association of Code Enforcement
- Florida Floodplain Manager Association
- Certified Floodplain Manager
- ESRI
- Central Florida GIS
- FLURISA

Internally, staff also coordinate lunch-and-learns to identify weaknesses and improvements to the department's everyday processes. The staff has also worked to improve application forms, report templates, field operations, officer safety, legislation and more.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Marion County has experienced substantial growth, and as our community grows, we aim to effectively manage the growth while maintaining the County's local character and continuing to provide timely and efficient services to keep Marion County a highly desirable place to live, work, and play. The Growth Services Department has experienced a range of opportunities and challenges associated with this sustained rapid growth. These opportunities and challenges include balancing economic development while maintaining our local character, keeping up with new and changing technology, developing, and maintaining a healthy team culture that produces future leaders, and adjusting to changing demographics.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
• Morale and culture • Good mix of experienced and new staff • Cohesive & resilient team • A team that is hungry to learn, willing to try new technology and processes • Getting and staying fully staffed • A good blend of new and experienced staff • A Visioning workshop that set a near-term vision	• The efficiency of our code enforcement process • A lack of a 2050 vision (we have 5-year plan but not a 2050) • Limited staff development plan and process • Lack of a succession plan and process • Onboarding process • Data mngt. process • Prioritization process • Public outreach process • High % of new staff to train and develop	• *Rapid growth* • *A changing population* • *Legislative changes* • *Technological changes* • Marion County is part of Florida's high-tech corridor • Social media • Local associations • Junk & litter campaign • Proximity to local colleges • Online and on-demand training opportunities	• *Rapid growth* • *A changing population* • *Legislative changes* • *Technological changes* • Economic uncertainty • Software (EP&L) changes • Increasingly divided public • Job market and retirements • Major weather events • Data security threats • Budget and time constraints

Note: that *italics* indicates items in more than one column.

The table above summarizes the SWOT analysis the team conducted as a bridge that connects our current conditions (as outlined above) with a vision for a future state. The SWOT analysis is broken down into internal and external items. The internal items consist of strengths and weaknesses we have agency over and have the most control over. The external items of opportunities and threats identify things that

impact our department, but we have little control over. The strengths highlight things we want to grow and do more, while the weaknesses identify things we need to address. Opportunities reveals things we should try to leverage, while threats identify items we should plan around. In the analysis below some items appear in more than one column. These items are italicized and indicate that they could be an opportunity or a threat depending on whether we are able to get ahead of it with our vision and leverage it to our advantage or if fall behind and it becomes a threat. Technological changes, such as artificial intelligence (AI), is a good example of this.

The table above provides a summary of our initial SWOT analysis. Moreover, some themes standout for each category: namely, for strengths the resiliency of our team is theme that we need to invest in and continue to build up. For our weaknesses, our processes standout as a theme that we need to improve over the next five years. For opportunities and threats, the theme that stands out is the number of items that show up on both lists, indicating that our vision and ability to get ahead of these things will be key to leveraging these items as opportunities and not letting them turn into threats.

VISION OF A FUTURE STATE

Mission Statement and Objectives

The mission of Growth Services is to guide existing and future development to continually improve the quality of life for Marion County residents. Our staff aims to balance community livability, economic viability, and environmental sensitivity through its two service divisions: Code Enforcement and Planning and Zoning. These teams use a variety of tools (e.g., plans, studies, policies, codes, processes, etc.) to guide growth, effectively enforce the code, foster the wise use of natural and physical resources, facilitate the provision of adequate services and facilities, and balance the

GROWTH SERVICES MISSION

"…guide existing and future development to continually improve the quality of life for Marion County residents."

needs of the community as the County moves into the future. These tools and objectives work together to ensure the County's position as a highly desirable community to live, work, and play. The Growth Services team aims to be humble, hungry, and smart both individually and collectively as a team—i.e., humble by how we think about others, hungry by doing whatever needs to be done when it needs to be done, and smart by being emotionally intelligent in our interactions. We want the values of being humble, hungry, and smart to guide every interaction with each other and our customers.

To advance the mission, the Department will implement the following goals, strategies, and objectives: Our goals for over the next five years can be summarized in three overarching objectives:

1. **Provide quality customer service.**
2. **Utilize the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code (LDC) to improve the quality of life for Marion County.**
3. **Continuously improve our level of service for our customers.**

It should be noted that customer service looks at customer interaction and how we work with our customers, while the level of service focuses more on what services we provide and the quality of those services. There is certainly overlap between customer service (the "how") and the level of service (the "what"), but we felt that they are distinct enough to be separate objectives. Below are the strategies associated with each objective that we suggest will help achieve each. When possible, we also included measurable steps, estimated timeframes, and additional resources that may be needed for each strategic step.

Implementation Strategies for Each Objective

1) **PROVIDE QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE**
   a) **Implement a customer service survey and metric.**
      i) Measure customer satisfaction over time and identify comparable metrics of other organizations/departments/etc. to put our customer satisfaction metric in context.
      ii) To encourage customers to take the customer satisfaction survey, we would use iPads for in-person conversations and follow-up emails or text messages for customer conversations on the phone or email.
         (1) Timeframe: 2026/2027
         (2) Resources: additional iPads and software that provide real-time analytics and results.
   b) **Annual Customer Service training** (soft-skills training in communicating with customers)
      i) Develop on-demand and annual training for phone etiquette and "verbal judo." Also, Implement mystery caller at random intervals.
         (1) Metric: Fewer hostile customer calls going to a supervisor.
         (2) Metric: Estimate the current rate and then set a target rate (e.g., < 5%)
         (3) Timeframe: 2025
         (4) Resources: TBD
   c) **Improve customer contact management system** (hard skills training in applying the code)
      i) Work with staff to ensure the team is equipped with the knowledge to answer most questions.
      ii) Set a 3-business day benchmark to return calls on the call log.
      iii) Appoint a planner and zoning tech to oversee the monitoring of the customer contact list.

   (1) Timeframe: 2026
   (2) Resources: TBD
d) **Increase avenues for customer contact.**
   i) Utilize more digital solutions (e.g., EP&L, MS Teams, etc.) versus in-person as generational changes and digital expectations increase. (e.g., utilize digital meetings with applicants)
   ii) Increase citizen empowerment through enhanced website and web maps. Create FAQ Sheet and development workflow.
      (1) Metric: Reduced calls for items included in the FAQ's
      (2) Timeframe: 2026
      (3) Resources: Time to compile and maintain FAQ's
   iii) Improve our application and review processes and create how-to-guides for the public and Staff to facilitate understanding and application of the Code. Create concise workflows for each application process to educate staff and citizens on the process from start to finish.
      (1) Timeframe: 2027
      (2) Resources: TBD
   iv) Improve collaboration and communication among the departments to improve customer care and service with each interaction. Facilitate interdepartmental workshops to discuss collaboration.
      (1) Timeframe: 2026
      (2) Resources: TBD

2) **UTILIZE OUR COMP PLAN AND LDC TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN MARION COUNTY**

   a) **Develop and implement PSA framework.**
      i) Work with a consultant to develop a PSA framework and 2 or 3 potential areas.
         (1) Timeframe: The PSA should be completed before the timeframe of this document begins but this is the proposed schedule: Start Oct. 30th, 2023, and complete 2024; and implementation 2025/2026
         (2) Resources: $150K
   b) **Evaluate the urban growth boundary (UGB)**
      i) Define the intent of UGB being a 20-year land use plan for development
      ii) Identify current development trends.
      iii) Inventory the UGB Determine if UGB boundaries need to be adjusted or if new UGBs need to be created.
      iv) Develop a 20-year plan for the UGB with regular evaluation schedule (this will be part of the Comprehensive Plan Update).
      v) Update polices and regulations to accomplish goals.
         (1) Timeframe: 2024-2025
         (2) Budget: TBD

   c) **Evaluate the Farmland Preservation Area (FPA)**
      i) Identify the long-term goals of the FPA
      ii) Update policies and regulations to accomplish those goals.
         (1) Timeframe: 2024-2025
         (2) Budget: TBD
   d) **Evaluate and update the transfer of development rights (TDR) program.**
      i) Evaluate whether a non-profit entity working as a public-private partnership (P3) would be a good option to facilitate a bank for managing the TDC's.
      ii) Identify metrics to measure its effectiveness.
         (1) Work in public-private collaboration to identify measurable and predictive metrics.
         (2) Analyze metrics and compare to other programs to develop.
         (3) Resources: TBD
   e) **Complete the Comp Plan EAR (Evaluation and Appraisal Report) and develop a 2050 vision.**
      i) Using a consultant to do the EAR for the comp plan, we will need to then update the land development code.
      ii) Side note: While this operational plan initiates the 5-year vision statement, the 2050 vision element might not be possible to complete by the time the EAR is due in 2025. But it is important to note for future reference as we update this document, remembering that we intend it to be a dynamic document that gets updated annually. When complete, the 2050 vision statement would speak to the comp plan updates and provide the long-term focus of our resources, efforts, plans, and strategies.
         (1) Timeframe: Letter of revision is due by February 2025.
         (2) Resources: Part 1 of $300K (over multiple 2 years)
   f) **Update the Comp Plan (based on the EAR)**
      i) Using a consultant to revise the Comprehensive Plan
         (1) Timeframe: Adoption due 10/2026
         (2) Resources: Part 2 of $300K (over multiple 2 years)
   g) **Update Land Development Code (LDC)** (based on the EAR and 2050 Vision)
      i) Work with the Commission to identify issues with the LDC
      ii) Hold workshops and community meetings for Commission and public input
      iii) Work with staff and other county departments for proposed changes
      iv) Continue to work with the Land Development Review Commission (LDRC) to update and streamline the Land Development Code.
   h) **Develop an ongoing process for simplifying the code and the associated application processes to make it more understandable to the common citizen.**
      i) *Ongoing*: Comp plan, LDC, and development review operations
      ii) This will be an ongoing project that would be part of a continuous improvement process.
         (1) Start by developing a process (where to start and why)

(2) Timeframe: ongoing

i) Implementing the Silver Springs Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) revised master plan

Identify the implementation actions and schedules for the CRA master plan.

(1) Timeframe:

(2) Resources: TBD

j) Develop a multimodal vision and plan.

i) Connectivity: develop vision, plan, and strategy for sidewalks, trails, and pathways for connectivity as e-bikes, golfcarts, and walkability increase in importance

(1) Timeframe: 2028/2029

(2) Resources: TBD

k) Area Study (i.e., the corridor study)

i) Work with the Commission to identify the corridor to study and then connect with a consultant to develop the study.

(1) The objective would be to identify an area most likely for future growth and then analyze the current conditions, determine the development potential, and provide options for how the area should develop based on surrounding activity.

(2) Timeframe: ongoing

(3) Resources: $100K

l) Economic Development Opportunities

i) Interdepartmental coordination to identify opportunities to create a supportive environment to promote a broad range of economic development opportunities to diversify the community's economic base.

(1) Timeframe: ongoing

(2) Resources: TBD

3) CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE OUR LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

a) Improve Growth Services Tools and Techniques

i) Continuous improvement of long-range planning activities, including the processing of Comprehensive Plan Amendments and responding to public requests for Comprehensive Plan and zoning information.

ii) Develop an "Experiment-Learn-Pivot" approach to process improvement. This is a framework for implementing new ideas to address complex issues and developing a culture of learning and innovation.

(1) Timeframe: ongoing

(2) Resources needed: buy-in and support by senior leaders and staff.

b) Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of our Code Enforcement Process

      i)   Adopt a 360-degree approach for identifying additional code violations when responding to citizen complaints.
- (1) Initiate training and development in doing a 360-degree approach.
- (2) Timeframe: 2024
- (3) Resources: TBD

c) Leverage Information Technology and Document Management

      i)   Utilize Tyler Content Management system as records management system for conversion of paper land records into a secure, searchable database.
- (1) Data and database management is becoming more of a priority as data becomes increasingly pervasive. Key metrics around access and security are needed.
- (2) Timeframe: ongoing
- (3) Resources: additional resource person

     ii)   Utilize GIS analyses to generate data and models to facilitate data-informed decision making for use in review and approval consideration.
- (1) Timeframe: ongoing
- (2) Resources: $4K per year plus additional undetermined costs

    iii)   Leverage the website to enable self-service along with interactive opportunities.
- (1) Timeframe: ongoing
- (2) Resources: TBD

    iv)   Examine implementing A.I. review processes.
Start the learning curve now and help identify when AI can provide consistent results.
- (1) Timeframe: 2027
- (2) Resources: TBD

     v)   Leverage Marion County as part of Florida's high-tech corridor, which runs from Tampa Bay to Jacksonville and looks to develop Florida's version of Silicon Valley that focuses on AI and machine learning companies. It is also worth noting that the University of Florida is hiring 500 professors associated with AI in their various fields, which equates to more than 5,000 students trained in AI. How do we as a County leverage these opportunities that are close to us? The strategy here would be to come up with a plan to leverage these opportunities.
- (1) Timeframe: 2027
- (2) Resources: TBD

d) Workforce Development, Succession Planning, and Training

      i)   Develop a succession plan for key positions that are transitioning soon.
- (1) Create time-limited positions to transition historical institutional knowledge into mentorship and training (i.e., the Principal Planner)
- (2) Timeframe: as soon as possible (2024/2025)
- (3) Resources: 1 time-limited position and 2 permanent positions

    ii) Utilize supplemental personnel services to meet fluctuations in demand and/or task specific projects.

    iii) Pursue advanced professional and technical certifications for staff, which would include dedicating time for professional training and development as well as creating incentives for staff to achieve professional and technical certifications.

        (1) Timeframe: ongoing

        (2) Resources: time and costs that depend on the specific training

    iv) Develop an internship program.

        (1) Note: Individual benefits (to intern): real world experience, coaching and development, professional connections, ability to tryout an area for a short time, and opportunities to contribute.

        (2) Note: Organizational Benefits: Interns bring energy and fresh ideas that keep our plans, processes, and structures relevant.

        (3) Timeframe: 2025

        (4) Resources: Estimate of ~$10K per intern per year

    v) Adopt flexible schedules and remote work options to improve morale, accommodate workload, and increase productivity and efficiency.

        (1) Work with HR and administration to set guidelines and standards.

        (2) Timeframe: 2028

        (3) Resources: TBD

e) Process Improvement

    i) Redefine our SOP process.

        (1) Identifying what needs a documented SOP.

        (2) Evaluate the relevance and usability of a SOP.

        (3) Develop a process for maintaining and updating SOPs.

        (4) Timeframe: ongoing

        (5) Resources: Time and possibly software

    ii) Onboarding process for new hires, interns, & contract support (resource and consultants)

        (1) Somewhat separate process for each type of new team member

        (2) Goal is that they climatize to our culture quickly and we multiply our culture.

        (3) Timeframe: 2025

        (4) Resources: TBD

    iii) Team development and leadership development processes

        (1) Develop an ongoing process for evaluating and refining the staff development pipeline. This helps the pipeline stay relevant as change happens (change is constant)

        (2) Timeframe: 2027

        (3) Resources: $40,000

iv) Develop and refine a process for maintaining a healthy culture. The 6 questions below come from Patrick Lencioni's materials for developing healthy teams. When teams are aligned around these six questions and effectively communicate them, a healthy culture is more likely to be maintained over time. Moreover, the answers to some of the questions are dynamic, meaning we need to return to them as a team periodically as indicated below. Also, the answers to questions 5 and 6 could be critical to helping us organize around our priorities.

(1) Answer, align, and continuously communicate answers to the 6 questions of clarity:

(2) The Questions:
1. Why do we exist? (Our "why" which equates to our mission statement)
2. How do we behave? (Our values of humble, hungry, and smart)
3. What do we do? (Our "what" – business definition that grandma understands)
4. How do we succeed? (Plan for success: ~3 anchors that guide decision-making)
5. What is most important right now?
   This answers the question of what must be true ~6 months from now for us to have a great half/year? —e.g., this can be where a 4DX process comes into play.
6. Who must do what? – identify, clarify, and communicate the division of labor, where we play to our strengths collectively and individually.

Note:
- Questions 5 & 6 need updating every 6 months or semiannually.
- Questions 3 & 4 need updating annually or biannually.
- Questions 1 & 2 should stay consistent over time.

(3) Resources: TBD

v) Play to our strengths both individually and collectively.
(1) Utilize the Working Genius assessment for the entire GS team.
(2) Use the working genius framework for building teams, meetings, and task assignments.
(3) Timeframe: Ongoing
(4) Resources: TBD

vi) Goal setting and execution process for new strategies, projects, objectives
(1) Evaluate what process would work best for our team (e.g., OKR, a hybrid version)
(2) Timeframe: 2025/2026
(3) Resources: TBD

vii) Database management: Develop, implement, and refine the process for managing data.
(1) Timeframe: ongoing
(2) Resources: $30,000 per year

Staffing Proposal

Additional staff support will be needed in the coming years to meet our objectives as indicated below. Many of these positions are dependent on changing circumstances and assumptions about continued growth and economic development.

The Principal Planner position in the chart below is a time limited position with an end date of April 1st, 2026. This position is being created to temporarily house the department's longest standing planner, who will be transitioning into a mentorship role until he retires. This will allow newer planners to absorb historical information from someone who has 30+ years of experience in Planning for Marion County. Along these same lines, we suggest creating two new assistant Code Supervisor positions, who would be field supervisors and provide for the future Code Enforcement Supervisor to take over when our current supervisor who has almost 30 years of experience retires on August 1st, 2028. This will allow time for some knowledge transfer and coaching to facilitate a relatively smooth transition. It also provides time to evaluate whether it is a good fit or not. With the number of code enforcement officers, we suggest that these two positions be permanent and be in the field, allowing the Code Enforcement Manager to focus on higher level issues, improve processes, and build future leaders.

Staff is proposing to add the above positions to accommodate growth, while also reclassifying some administrative positions to align the responsibility and titles more accurately.

Five Year Staffing Proposal to Meet our Goals and Objectives

Position	Paygrade	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Admin. Staff Assistant	108			Salary: $55,000 Loaded: $74,250		
Principal Planner (time limited-4/2026)	115*	Salary: $100,000 Loaded: $135,000		- $100,000 Position ending		
Planner	110-114			Salary: $75,000 Loaded:$101,250		
Code Enforcement Officer	103-110		Salary: $50,00 Loaded: $67,500			Salary: $50,000 Loaded: $67,500
Asst. Code Supervisor (2)	111*	Salary: $140,000 Loaded: $189,000				
Planning GIS Specialist	108		Salary: $50,000 Loaded: $67,500			
Development Review Tech	108*	Salary: $50,00 Loaded: $67,500				
Zoning Technician	105-108			Salary: $50,00 Loaded: $67,500		
Planning Supervisor	116*					Salary: $100,000 Loaded: $135,000
Flood Plain Coordinator	111*				Salary: $60,000 Loaded: $81,000	
Expected salary increase		$290,000	$100,000	$80,000	$60,000	$150,000
Expected total Budgeted Increase		**$391,500**	**$135,000**	**$108,000**	**$81,000**	**$202,500**
Intern/Mentor Initiative						
Planning Internship		X				
GIS Internship			X			
Admin. Intern				X		

Below is the proposed organizational chart with the additional staff reflecting the changes noted above.

Proposed 2029 Organizational Chart
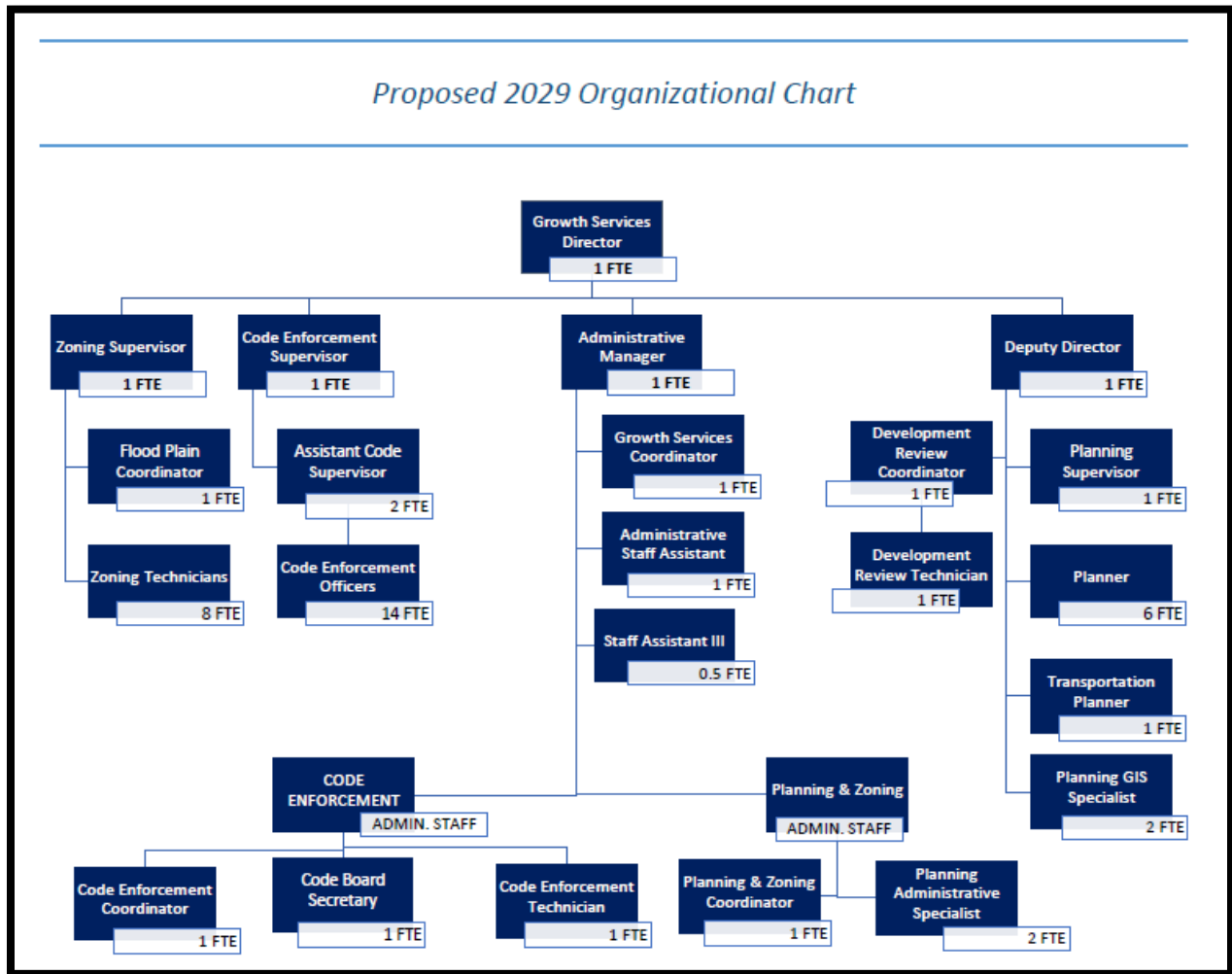
CONCLUSION

This five-year operational plan has outlined our current conditions and set a vision for the future state of Growth Services and proposed dynamic strategies to move the department toward future and make it a reality. The analysis of our current conditions (the SWOT analysis) identified strengths that need more investment, such as staff development, and our weaknesses like a lack of a succession plan that need a clearly defined process that addresses the most significant weaknesses. It also affirmed critical items like customer service that set a framework for the vision.

Our shared vision for the next five years is summarized in three overarching objectives: (1) provide quality customer service, (2) utilize the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to facilitate and promote an improved quality of life for Marion County, and (3) deliver an increasingly effective and

efficient level of service. As we meet these objectives, we move closer toward accomplishing the mission of guiding existing and future development to continually improve the quality of life for Marion County residents.

While the mission and objectives are unlikely to change over the next five years, the strategies for how we accomplish those objectives and mission will be continually refined over time as we experiment, learn, and pivot to more refined and effective approaches. Marion County is a safe and well-planned community with a thriving economy, that supports a high quality of life where families matter, and this operational plan represents how the Growth Services team plans to help the County continue to grow in this direction.

APPENDIX

The graph below shows the total number of cases processed over the last four years, where the top green line with its associated trendline represent the total number of cases. The line graphs below represent the breakdown of the total into the individual application types. When compared to the graph on page 5 above (entitled "Growth Services Interactions"), we see that applications for things like zoning changes, special use permits, and variances appear to increase during slower economic times like during the COVID-19 pandemic (June 2020 to August 2022), while total planning and zoning touchpoints (phone calls, emails, and walk-ins) with customers for planning and zoning decrease.