

Source: Schiner, 1989; potentiometric contour map showing study of the Silver Springs basin and surface of the Upper Floridian Aquifer, May 1989.

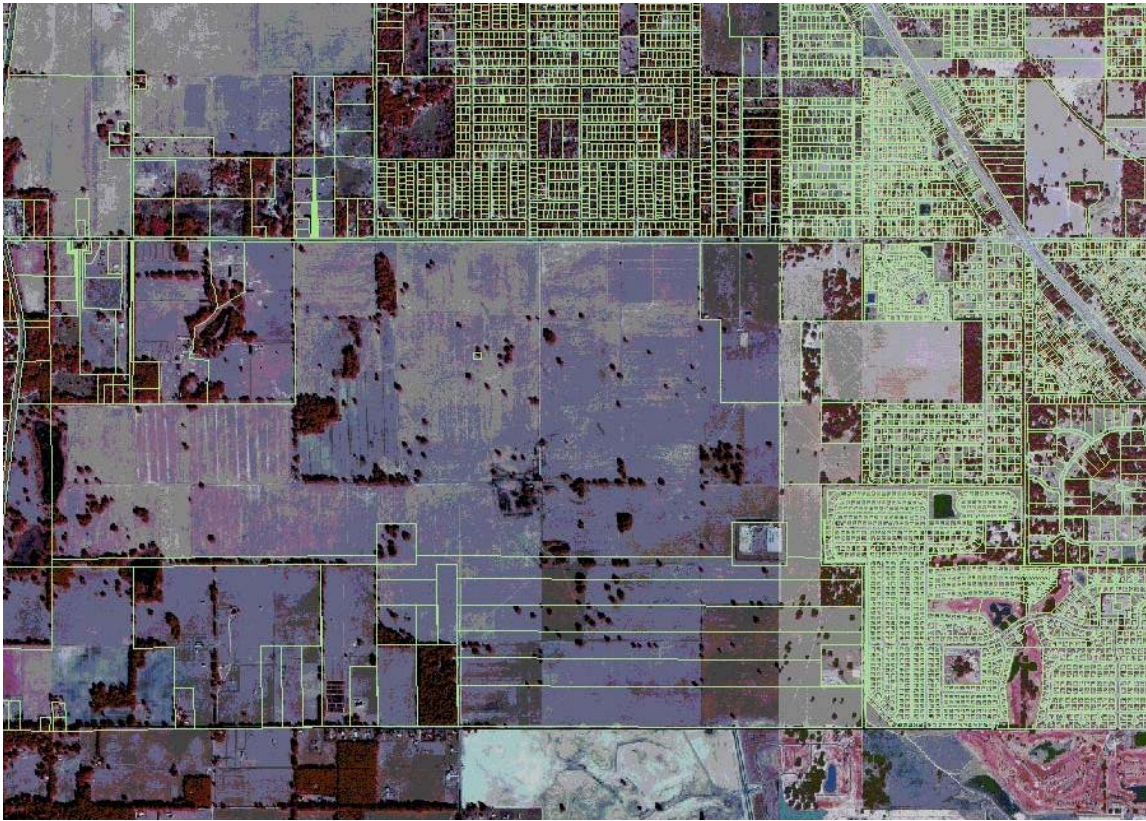
GROWTH: Costs and Consequences

A Public Policy Institute Study

A Report to the Citizens of Marion County

Spring 2003



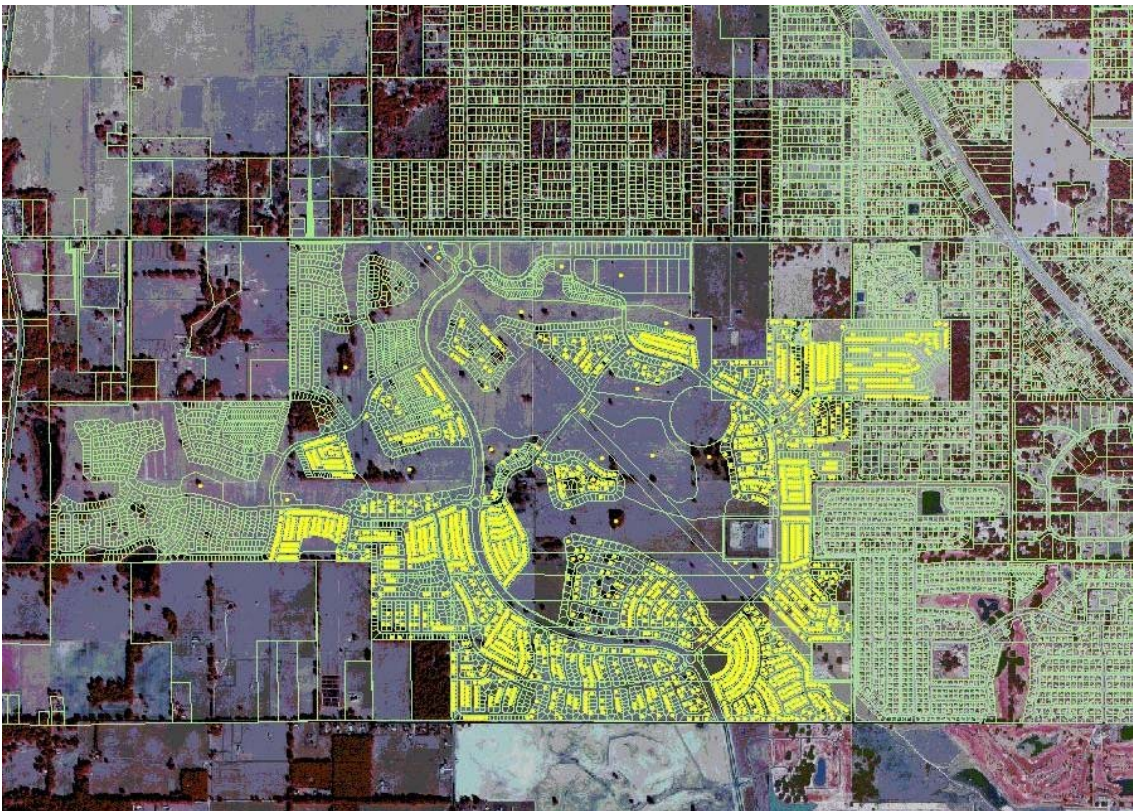


Top photo: Southeast Marion County in 2000.

GROWTH

Bottom photo: Yellow highlighted parcels show construction by 2003.

(Photos courtesy Marion County Property Appraiser's Office.)





Vision:

To provide leadership in helping develop and implement short-term and long-term goals and solutions for an improved community.

*Join us as we
chart the course
for Marion County
into the 21st Century.*

Public Policy Institute
currently housed at:



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Mission Statement:

To give the community a sense of hope and optimism by creating a broad base of community involvement in identifying, researching, and establishing dialogue in community-wide issues, and then in recommending and helping to implement timely solutions.

**The 2002-03 PPI of Marion County Study
Growth: Costs and Consequences**

I. Scope of the Study

Growth in Marion County has been significant. During the decade of the 1990s, the population of Marion County grew by one third; projections indicate the trend will continue.

Along with the many positive results of population growth come significant challenges. This study addresses those challenges and the increasing concerns the citizens of Marion County have raised about the cost and consequences of growth on the quality of life in our communities.

II. The study will:

1. Document demographic trends to determine makeup of area in next 10 years.
2. Outline current funding structure (city, county and region) to analyze its adequacy and to recommend a possible framework for the funding of future growth.
3. Review effectiveness of the current comprehensive plan in managing growth.
4. Research best growth management practices of counties of similar demographic characteristics and recommend possible best practices for adoption in Marion County.
5. State quality of life goals that a growth management plan should seek to achieve.
6. Present the recommendations to the community for implementation.

Previous Studies

Youth Violence, Spring 2000

Senior Issues, Spring 2002

Background

Accelerated demand for housing and supporting commercial uses is putting Marion County on “the map” for both regional and national builders/developers. Inexpensive land, increasing demand for retirement and conventional housing and scarcity of land in other desirable locations in Florida all contribute to favorable business conditions for development. These inexorable market forces will soon change the landscape of the area. Once this dramatic growth happens, the results will be forever.

The question is will leadership stand by with a “business as usual” approach or take bold steps to shape the face of this development consistent with the very clearly defined desires of the citizens of Marion County.

The Public Policy Institute has, over a six month period, studied the issues surrounding growth. The Study Group has heard the perspectives of environmentalists, developers, governmental agencies, economists and planners. All of these participants expressed valid perspectives regarding the forces shaping the county’s future, for better or for worse. This process has revealed that there is no panacea. To move forward in a meaningful way, a balanced land use approach needs to be defined to accomplish key goals. Citizens and presenters repeated these concerns time and again through the course of this study.

Concerns:

- 1. Preservation of open space and the rural character of the area.** This is what brings people to Marion County and it is key to maintaining the unique quality of life and economic vitality.
- 2. Creation of a vibrant downtown.**



January 15: **Richard McGinniss**, standing, introduces representatives from the Renaissance Group to discuss the county’s current corridor studies.

The downtowns “are everybody’s neighborhood” that provide focal points of community pride and create a greater sense of community. A vibrant downtown also enhances property values (and tax revenue) in the county by creating a more desirable place to live.

3. Aesthetic planning in development projects. If big box retailers and land developers (both large and small) are going to do business in Marion County they need to recognize the enormous civic responsibility they have to deliver quality projects. A prototype to be considered is the Heathbrook commercial center recently built on SR 200. Landscape buffers, attention to detail, preservation of trees, etc. make it appealing despite its size and quantity of parking. It is an excellent example of a market driven project delivered with a sense of responsibility.

4. Protection of the environment. Water, natural springs and water quality are hallmarks of Marion County and essential to the long-term sustainability of the county. These

resources are in jeopardy and trends strongly suggest accelerated deterioration. These resources must be protected.

Growth will not be managed with one solution. Both “Greenfield” and “Infill” development will be necessary. Regulators, environmentalists and developers have valid points of view which need to be incorporated to create a balanced approach to growth. It is also clear that the challenges facing Marion County are enormous.

*In short,
boldness and balance
need to drive
future land use policy
for effective growth.*

Contents

Executive Summary

Pages 6 - 7

Highlights and Recommendations

Pages 8 - 15

Findings and Documentation

Pages 16 - 31

Land Ethics

Page 32

Sources

Pages 33 - 35

About the Cover

The “footprint” of the Silver Springs Recharge Basin shows where **all** the water is generated for Silver Springs, quantity and quality.

“Like politics, spring recharge is local”

Jim Stevenson, now retired, speaking to the PPI study group as Chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force and the Governor’s coordinator, Florida Springs Initiative, April 17

“If you flush inside the basin, it goes to Silver Springs”

Trudy Phelps, scientist in charge, United States Geologic Survey’s study of Silver Springs.

Executive Summary

This study, *Growth: Cost and Consequences*, was convened under the auspices of the Public Policy Institute of Marion County, an organization dedicated to promoting public dialogue on key issues. More than 50 citizens volunteered their time in weekly meetings from November 18, 2002 to July 17, 2003 to gather input from 30 speakers, including a land use specialist, government staff and management, and commercial and private developers. All of this and countless pages of reports were thoroughly analyzed and the results are presented in this report.

During all its deliberations as it considered **how** to respond to the county's challenges, the study group focused on:

- **Respect** for the will of the people
 - Respect for the process
 - Respect for advisory and citizen groups
 - Respect for staff
 - Respect for input and suggestions
- Doing things **right** becomes the gold standard. It's not about pro-growth; it's not about anti-growth; it's about doing things right.

The conclusions and recommendations of the study are:

- Transportation/Mobility—costs are increasing, but gas tax revenues have not been adjusted for inflation and the requirement for impact fees to be spent in the quadrant where they are collected. The County Commission has the responsibility to address these concerns.
- Downtown Vibrancy—with adequate planning and professional marketing, Ocala can once again become the hub of activity.
- Economy/Excellence In Education—competitive wages and high-standard education are vital to sustaining Marion County. An analysis of eco-tourism, including an educational component in the comprehensive plan, is required.
- Open Space—understanding the critical nature of land use needed to sustain and enjoy life in Marion County is required. A master plan to protect the environment while respecting private property rights is needed.

The following findings/documentation are provided in the report:

- Rate of Growth—population is skyrocketing and the demand for current and new services is increasing at an even greater rate.
- Land Use—market demand and environmental issues must be balanced for effective use of this valuable resource.
- Cost/Effectiveness of Government—as growth occurs, the true cost of providing appropriate infrastructure and services is not well understood.
- Education—Additional education facilities are required to keep pace with expanding growth.
- Cost of Living—compared to other Florida counties, Marion has a cost of living slightly below average.
- Natural Resources—Marion County’s unique and rich supply of springs and habitats gives it a greater responsibility for protection.
- Land Ethics—the role of open space for the sustainability of the most precious resource for survival—water requires the balance of urbanization and preserving the rural landscape.

What Do We Value?

Based on discussions, readings and presentations, the Study Committee felt it was important to capture its sense of the things Marion County residents value:

- Sense of place/small town feel • Rural/scenic/green space/significant landscapes and vistas • Recreational opportunities • Cultural opportunities • Excellent educational opportunities • Diversity in people, housing and employment • Water, quantity and quality

Information presented in this report represents the committee’s best attempt to capture the essence of many hours of presentations and discussions. While every attempt is made to assure accurate information, the Public Policy Institute can not necessarily validate all information presented to the committee.

Highlight: Transportation

Problem

Increasing costs and diminishing resources:

The local option gas tax, instituted in the late 1980s at six cents per gallon, has not been adjusted for inflation. Today the tax is worth about four cents on the gallon.

Since it's still relatively easy to get from Point A to Point B in Marion County by car, there's a reluctance to use alternative transportation.

Transportation impact fees must be spent within the quadrant where they are collected, whether or not traffic has actually reached a point where more infrastructure is needed.

Conclusion

Drive times are inching up. Marion County, relatively speaking, has not yet reached a crisis.

In keeping with "small town" values, however, planners should be proactive in looking at ways to lower traffic on the roads. Staggered work days? School days? Incentives for shopping at certain hours?

Demographics show an increasing aging population which would also support the advisability of traffic reduction and traffic calming devices.

As the "psychology of roads" is gaining acceptance among planners, small ideas offer creative solutions for Marion County. Aesthetics can influence driving behavior. If a 10-lane freeway can invoke road rage, trees in the median of a narrower road can, perhaps, slow drivers down.

Roads can be better striped to moderate traffic.

Solution

Raise the gas tax or amend the existing language of the local option gas tax to include automatic cost of living increases.

Amend the regulation to allow for priority spending or redefine the quadrants to include areas where critical mass for additional infrastructure has been reached.

Recommendation: Plan for Mobility

<u>Action</u>	<u>Who Should Do It</u>	<u>By When</u>
Investigate local option gas tax language to see if it can be amended to allow for inflation.	County commission	<u>ASAP</u>
Revisit the quadrant system for transportation impact fees. Consider allowances for priority spending or redefine the quadrants to include areas where critical mass for additional infrastructure has been reached. Some communities use small traffic planning zones instead of quadrants.	County Commission	Second quarter of 2004

Highlight: Downtown

Problem

Downtown Ocala, once the hub of activity and a common experience for Marion County, no longer unites the whole community.

The good news, however, is that the desire, the components and the demographics seem all to be in place to create a focal point in support of a sense of pride and a sense of place.

- Renaissance Corridor Studies all call for a healthy downtown.
- EDC reports that visitors judge the county by the downtown areas.

Positives for Downtown Development:

- Traffic concurrency is grandfathered in.
- Retention ponds are in place
- Infrastructure has been built
- No impact fees

Negatives for Downtown Development:

- Tracts must be assembled for sizes attractive to developers.
- Parking issues
- Building UP is a logistical as well as a psychological factor.

Conclusion

Without a signature destination pulling citizens together for a common experience, Ocala has earned the moniker “Slocala.” Downtown should set the pace, stir the soul, and help to create a “sense of place” for Marion County.

- Explore big ideas.
- Embrace creative thinking.
- Read the demographics.
- Think and market in a way that ensures downtown is conducive and inviting to quality developers.

1. Define the vision.
2. Develop a business plan.
3. Create a professional marketing plan.

Solutions

Recognize that it’s “everyone’s downtown” and that it’s critical to the collective identity to “do it right.”

Build on the market opportunity that lies ahead: the fastest growing segment of the population, both in sheer numbers and in percentages, is the 45 to 64-year-olds. These are the “boomers,” the new urbanists, who are attracted to the “lofty” architecture and boutique culture of shops and entertainment.

Jacksonville Mayor John Delaney said you must fill the “hole in the donut” (downtown surrounded by neighborhoods, fanning out to agriculture and open space) with a good place for people to live and work.

Recommendation: Promote Vibrancy

<u>Action</u>	<u>Who Should Do It</u>	<u>By When</u>
Create a master plan.	City of Ocala along with the private sector	Already under way. Report due in September, 2003
Sell the concept that Ocala is “everyone’s downtown.”	Coalition of city, county and local advertising firms	Beginning in the fall, 2003
Encourage development where infrastructure already exists. According to national studies, tax dollars from agricultural land return money to the coffers; residential dollars do not. With careful planning there should be no loss in revenue to the county.	County Commission, City Councils should continue their efforts in this regard.	An outline of understanding should be developed in the first quarter of 2004.
<u>Assemble downtown land in</u> tracts attractive to developers; and provide connectivity. Develop a fast track approval process.	City of Ocala in cooperation with local developers	Upon acceptance of downtown revitalization plan
Make downtown development appealing and economically feasible for the creative, professional developer.	Coalition of planners and local developers	First quarter of 2004, with an eye to the developing downtown plan

Highlight: Economy

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>Solution</u>
The county's economy is below national and state averages.	While bigger is not always better, efforts must be made to keep the local economy moving, with jobs that improve average earnings per worker and enhance the overall economy.	Establish goals based on national, state and local averages so as to target new jobs that will add to the economy and not be a drain.
The financial impact of eco-tourism is not clear in Marion County.		Conduct a survey to quantify eco-tourism in dollars brought to the community. Put a value on the benefit of this noninvasive industry.
The economic value of land use is unclear.		Investigate models and apply quantification.

Highlight: Education K-12

<p>Educational facilities are not keeping pace with growth in population.</p> <p>Although there is a relatively new state requirement that an inter-local group be established to consider education needs, there is no actual educational component in the county's comprehensive plan.</p>	<p>It is imperative that the current inter-local group be proactive in the planning process.</p>	<p>Coordinate growth needs of schools with growth plans of comprehensive plan.</p> <p>Use the inter-local group to "put teeth" into the intent of the law and initiate an educational component for the comprehensive plan.</p>
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Recommendation: Push for Excellence

<u>Action</u>	<u>Who Should Do It</u>	<u>By When</u>
Establish goals, with wages, living needs, and educational concerns all considered.	Economic Development Council, Inc. in concert with local governments and Chamber of Commerce.	Already under way; look for results in first quarter of 2004.
Commission an analysis of the impact and potential of eco-tourism in Marion County.	Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council, Inc., should work together to seek funding.	First quarter of 2004
Establish values of different land uses so that we know how much commercial and agricultural land it takes to balance the residential deficit. Quantify value of agricultural land in product, cost to service, and water protection.	Marion County Soil and Water Conservation Board.	First half of 2004

Recommendation: Push for Excellence

Amend comprehensive plan to include an educational component.	New inter-local organization is currently addressing the challenge of a coordinated approach.	By the end of 2004
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Highlight: Water and Open Space

Problem

Open space has been cited consistently as one of Marion County's values.

Water, quantity and quality, is dependent on open space which is diminishing. Because the county is divided between two water management districts, a consistent policy is difficult. A more coordinated effort must be established.

Agricultural or rural land that provides food, contributes to water recharge, and costs government just pennies on the revenue dollar, is disappearing at what many consider an alarming rate. The county's comprehensive plan inventories agricultural land at 468,155 acres. From 1991 to 1998 the county saw a decrease in that category of 18%, or 84,268 acres. (Source: Marion County Planning, 1998 Future Land Use Element of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report.)

Vesting and private property rights present process and legal concerns under the state's Bert Harris Private Property Rights Act. The act provides a legal remedy for private property owners who can prove government regulations have inordinately burdened their property, but the process does not seem to be working well.

Aesthetics: Many people say they moved to Marion County because of its rural appeal. Preserving this rural character while accommodating growth is a major issue.

Conclusion

Greater understanding of the critical nature of land use specific to Marion County is necessary. The community must set goals to ensure sustainability and values, especially with regard to water. These goals must address aesthetics and life sustaining qualities of open space. Life style in Marion County must be the guiding principle, not comparisons with other counties.

- There is value in a vista, an uninterrupted landscape.
- There is food, water recharge value, and net revenue in agriculture.
- There is nourishment for body and soul in a park.
- There is clean water in a well managed basin.
- All of the above exist in a national forest. Consider this a bonus.
- Private initiatives to protect rural land and open space are developing worthwhile models. **Land Ethics is as important as Business and Social Ethics.**

Solution

Inventory and publicize local needs for conservation areas, water recharge, user parks, and green infrastructure to tie communities/neighborhoods together, unique habitats, rural lands and agricultural endeavors.

Water management districts should be redirected from current developmental mode to conservation mode as Marion County, in conjunction with regional planning efforts, develops a plan to keep its water local.

Conduct a conservation, agriculture, soil, topography and environmental audit as guideline to future building and development. Identify and focus on spring sheds, targeting critical portions for preservation. Define benchmarks and appoint a monitoring team.

Recommendation: Protect Open Space

<u>Action</u>	<u>Who Should Do It</u>	<u>By When</u>
Create a master plan for water and sewer utilities.	Marion County, municipalities, and private utility owners	Within a year
Provide Geographic Information System (GIS) map showing No. 8 soils, springs, spring sheds, recharge areas, urban reserve boundaries, agricultural areas, natural areas, areas of development, greenways, horse farms, wildlife habitats, wetlands and other environmental issues.	Economic Development Council, Inc., in cooperation with Marion County	Approximately 60 days
Share results with the public.	Local media, such as the Star-Banner, could educate the citizenry by publishing a map of the Silver Springs water basin in iron-on transfer ink for T-shirts.	In conjunction with upcoming tabloid on Growth
Create lesson plans for schools, youth groups and <i>Matt Manatee</i> to instill understanding in tomorrow's generation.	Marion County Public Schools Foundation and St. John's River Water Management District's WAVE program	January, 2004
County should develop a Transfer of Development Rights program to protect open land. Acquire land outright if necessary to protect water. Investigate clustering or density bonuses with specific language to develop in LESS sensitive areas. Partner with rural stewardship programs and conservation trusts.	Marion County with assistance from state and private stewardship groups.	As soon as possible, with an eye to appropriate and timely changes in the comprehensive plan, begin changes to comprehensive plan now; follow with land development regulations later.
Elected officials as well as administrative staff at both city and county levels should set the example by learning as much as possible about the importance of land use in the protection of water.	County and city officials should invite Jim Stevenson to Marion County for his field trip project tailored for public officials.	This could be done in conjunction with the upcoming Chamber of Commerce seminar on water, Sept. 12, 2003, when Jim Stevenson will be in town.
Learn more about the Bert Harris Private Property Rights Act.	Good topic for PPI seminar. Clay Henderson, an attorney with Holland & Knight and one of the authors of the act, is a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker.	Fall of 2003 or spring of 2004

Findings/Documentation

Rate of Growth

Population is skyrocketing in Marion County as we move from a primarily agrarian economy with rural challenges to a more sophisticated, urban community replete with urban challenges.

“Urbanization resulting from population growth will likely increase demand for current and new services at a rate greater than the population growth,” said Michael Tomich, budget director in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, in a presentation on funding he made to the Public Policy Institute last year.

Tomich said the budget will be most affected in five areas:

- Law Enforcement, Corrections, Judiciary
- Water and Wastewater Utilities
- Solid Waste
- Transportation, Mass Transit
- Culture, Recreation

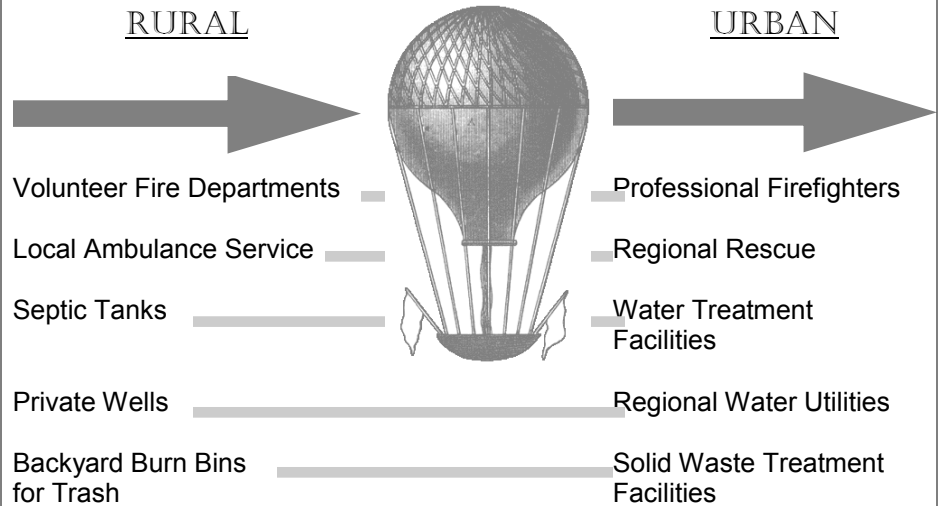
County revenues have gone up, in constant (2002) dollars, from \$139,089,238 in 1988 to \$336,224,277 in 2002.

Per capita revenue, from taxes, special assessments, licenses, fines, etc., has climbed, again in constant (2002) dollars, from \$513 in 1988, to \$723 in 2002.

Taxes are growing at a greater percent than the population, according to Villie Smith, Marion County Property Appraiser.

- Per capita property taxes (ad

Growing From Rural to Urban Constitutes a Change in Scale



Like a balloon payment on a mortgage, increased expenditures are required.

valorem and non ad valorem) have increased, in constant (2002) dollars, from \$552 in 1988 to \$779 in 2002.

- Total property taxes (city, county and school board) have risen from about \$25.5 million in 1980 to \$205 million in 2002.
- Parcels on the assessment roll have grown from about 145,000 in 1980 to 260,000 for 2003.
- Amendment 10, the homestead “cap,” was approved by the voters. Under this amendment, increase in the annual assessed value of homestead properties shall not exceed the lower of either 3% of the assessed value of the prior year or the percentage

increase in the consumer price index for all urban consumers in the United States. It limits valuation increases to 3% or the CPI for the life of a homestead exemption. The amendment reduced tax revenue in Marion County by \$11.5 million in 2002.

- New construction value has gone from \$100 million in 1980 to about \$320 million in 2002. That figure shot up to \$480 million in 2003 due, in part, to building by The Villages, Smith said. New construction value is expected to hit nearly \$800 million by the year 2013 he predicted.

Traffic is also one of the visible signs of growth. Residents experience longer drive times across town and older residents are confused by too many lanes, too many lights, and too many choices.

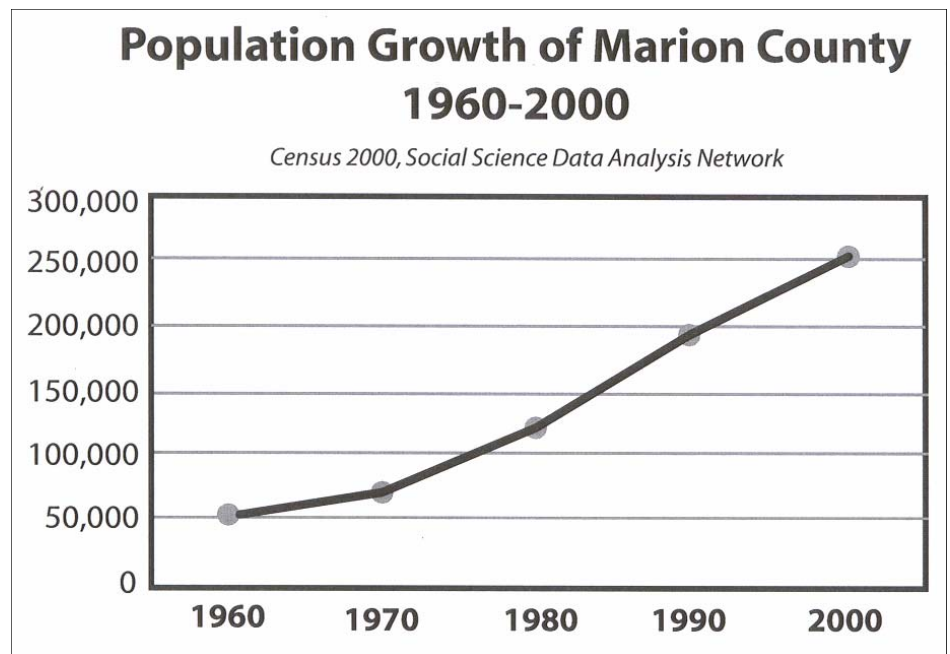
“We need to think more in terms of mobility,” said Greg Slay, director of the Metropolitan Planning Organization. This would include cars, public transportation, sidewalks, bike lanes, and connectivity issues, like how to get from Point A to Point B in the most efficient manner possible.

Money is always a problem, he said, exacerbated by the fact the local option gas tax is not adjusted for inflation. When it was instituted in the late 1980s, early 1990s, it was worth six cents on the gallon. Today it’s worth four cents.

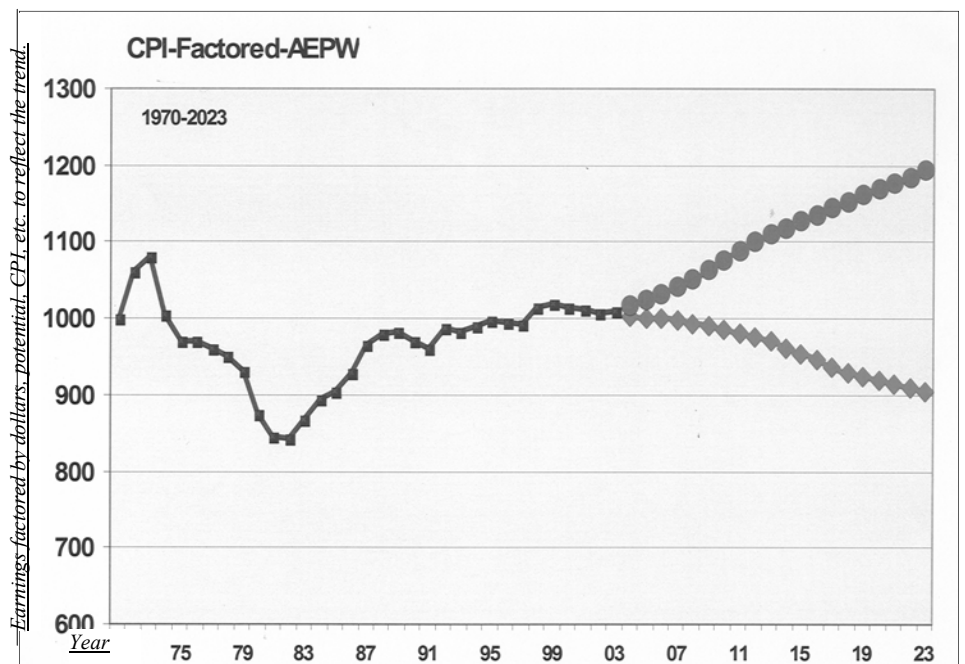
Slay says that equates to \$200,000 a year if the local option taxes were indexed. An “educated guess,” he said, could put that figure closer to an additional \$1 million if all gas taxes (federal at 18.4 cents, state at 14.1 cents and local at 12.6 cents per gallon) were indexed.

The requirement that transportation impact fees be used in the quadrant where they were collected can also be a problem, according to Slay. Often times a particular quadrant has not reached critical mass in terms of demanding infrastructure upgrades. Some solutions cited include changing boundary lines and providing more flexibility with regard to establishing priorities in adjacent quadrants or across quadrant boundaries.

In some cases there are viable projects to be built, like the extension of Martin Luther King Blvd. to 441, but the final decision has yet to be



Average Earnings Per Worker, Marion County



Growth in wages, on a decline since 1999, with trend line out to 2023 if Marion County continues on its current path. Top line in the bifurcation shows potential based on past performance and national economic indicators. Graph is from Bill Fruth, keynote speaker at the May 28 EDC conference on Balancing Green and Gold. For more information about the local economy, see page 30.

made. This project has been designed to provide an alternative to the congested Pine Avenue from the north to shopping along SR 200. Cost of right of way is another area of expense. Current costs are always

higher than yesterday’s but buying out too far in advance is frowned on by the state. The concept of beltways is now an outdated approach. “It’s “passé,” said Slay. The new thinking is to

improve what you already have, both environmentally and economically.

“We need to expand and improve existing roads,” said Slay, adding that Marion County is trying to minimize new roads through virgin land.

The psychology of roads is beginning to be recognized, Slay said, with more emphasis on aesthetics and traffic calming devices. Trees imply a more rural environment and tend to slow drivers. Multiple lanes encourage faster speeds and increase anxiety, a particular problem for the aging population of Marion County.

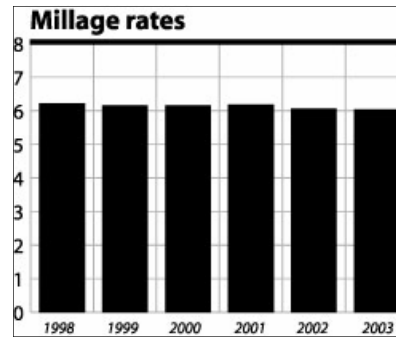
Slay said there are even ways to stripe roads so they look narrower. “As the stripes get closer you think you’re going faster,” he said.

Delays in drive times, also indicate the impact of growth on infrastructure. Anecdotal evidence shows it takes longer to get from the courthouse to the college, from the house to the hospital. Traffic department statistics show that in 1990 the average speed in the county was 32 mph. In the year 2000 it had dropped to 21 mph as a result of increased traffic. Arithmetic reflects a 10 mile trip that took 20 minutes in 1990 would take 30-35 minutes today. Project that another 10 years and the time it takes to travel 10 miles by car will have doubled since 1990.

Delays also have an impact on business economics. Slay said a study in Orlando showed a local delivery system had to double and then triple its fleet in just a few years to handle the same customers with the same level of service, all due to traffic congestion.

“You cannot build your way out of congestion,” Slay said.

Millage Rates Down, Taxes Up

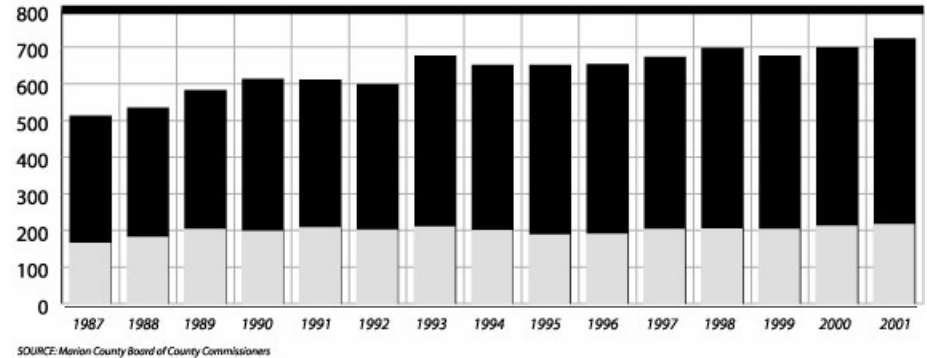


Millage rates have dropped slightly from 6.22 in 1998 to 6.04 in 2002-03.

Source: Finance Office, Marion County

Marion County tax totals per capita (by year)

■ Total taxes □ Property taxes only



County revenues, CPI adjusted, coming from property taxes, licenses & permits, charges for services, etc., have increased, per capita, from \$513 in 1988 to \$723 in 2002. If administrative transfers, debt proceeds and balances forward were included, the per capita cost would go from \$763 in 1988 to \$1,241 in 2002.

Source: Finance Office, Marion County.

Rate of growth in the economy is slowed by the types of jobs that serve an aging population. With 24.5% of the county 65 years of age and older, it is the service industry, with lower paying jobs, that grows, said Economist William Fruth. He spoke at the Economic Development Council (EDC) seminar on balancing green and gold on May 28. In the last seven years the average earnings per worker have dropped in Marion County, he said. Potential exists, however, for improvement based on past

performance and national economic trends.

(Please see comment from Ann Spang, EDC, on page 29.)

Land Use

Listen to the land.” That’s the lesson Ken Colen, owner and developer of Colonnades at On Top of the World (OTOW), learned from his father, he said, as he passed it on to the PPI study on “Growth: Costs and Consequences.”

“Marion County is about space,” he said. “This is not a condominium community.”

With that understanding, and seeking balance between market demand and environmental issues, Colen began, in 1997, to develop OTOW in a natural way. He took his “in perpetuity” vesting rights through a four and a half year process to become a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) in order to gain greater densities in certain areas and preserve natural habitats in others. He says you must consider what’s an appropriate use of the land, pointing out his efforts to preserve upland habitat, sand hills for water recharge, and wildlife.

“If you want quality growth, you create incentives to get there,” said Colen:

1. Review and implement storm water regulations
2. Traffic: set goals for internalization and set a commercial index (*amount of traffic contained within the community providing convenient services within project boundaries*).
3. Encourage open space, perhaps with bonus densities in return.

Colen sees three hot button issues for Marion County:

1. Water resources
2. Traffic
3. Solid waste

Colen also said:

1. The comprehensive plan is beginning to work; if developments don’t fit the vision they’re not

The Challenges:

***Market Demands
Environmental Issues
Economic Factors***

- getting approved;
2. Community Development Districts (CDD’s) are a near perfect democracy in that users pay for services used.

Some members of the group questioned the advisability of a CDD, citing Carl Hiassen’s non-fiction book [Team Rodent, How Disney Is Devouring the World](#).

Local planners say Marion County should “embrace the DRI” as a way of creating individual local neighborhoods with high standards of development.

Greg Slay, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Pete Lee, planner for the City of Ocala, said that as new developments respond to market demand they will provide more self contained and environmentally aware communities.

A grocery store in the middle of a developed community, for example, reduces traffic on the main highways. More open space within the development provides baby boomers with space for their recreational preferences of hiking and biking. And, said Slay, when commercial development occurs between a main highway with residential behind it, there are requirements for access from the rear as well as for frontage; again, keeping some residential traffic off the main highways. Both planners said the real challenge in using land appropriately is not so much in the new; it’s more of a question of how to

handle the old, the vested, the zoned, and the privately owned that will determine the landscape of Marion County reaching half a million in population by the year 2028.

Economics is another critical growth issue as communities realize where the money comes from by land use categories and how much it costs to provide services to the various categories.

Organizations like the Hillsborough Agriculture Task Force, the Lake Soil and Water Conservation District, the American Farmland Trust, the Doris Duke Foundation and the Northern Forest Lands Council have looked at the three traditional categories of agricultural, commercial/industrial and residential and researched the costs to provide services in each.

For every dollar that comes in from residential revenue, or taxes, the American Farmland Trust says the cost to provide services ranges from \$1.02 to \$2.11. Data on service costs in Florida include:

Hillsborough County	\$1.53
Collier County	\$1.20
Lake County	\$1.56
Palm Beach County	\$1.10

While not all houses require disproportionate services, the cut-off level is not clear. Lake County has determined it takes a \$300,000 house to pay its own way.

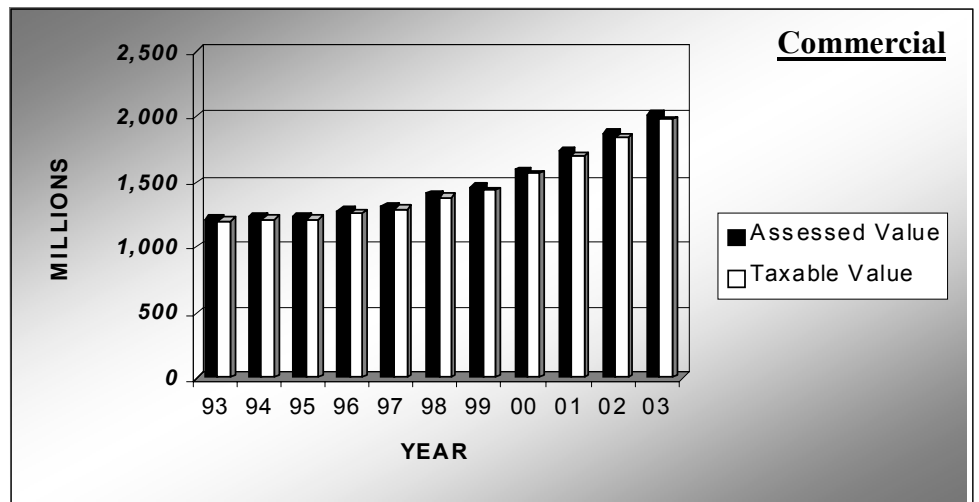
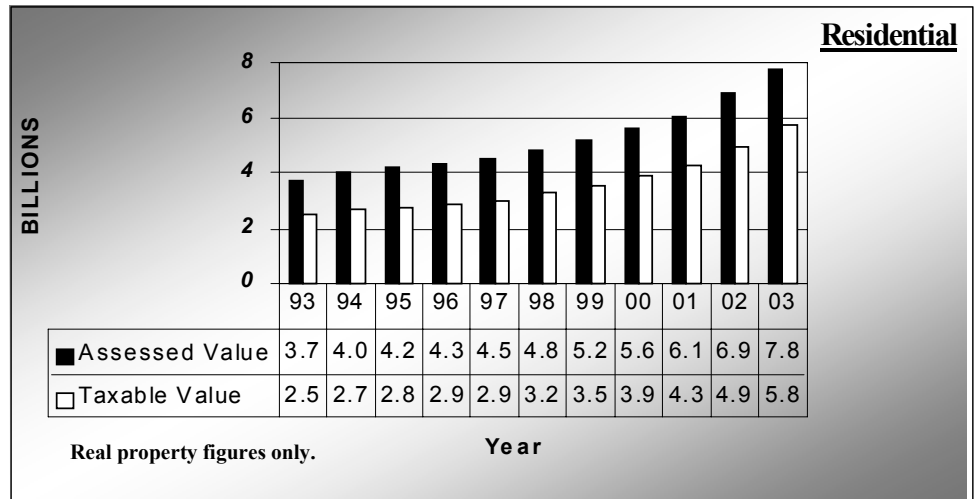
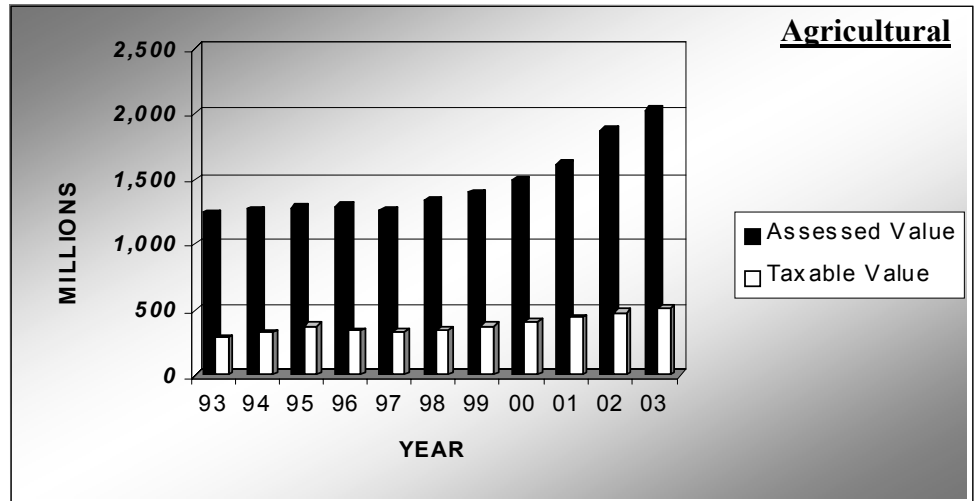
Mitzi Perry, director of the Marion County Homebuilders Association, said she had not heard of that figure.

Farmland loss raises local taxes, according to the Doris Duke Foundation. Farmers and ranchers pay more in local tax revenues than it costs local government to provide services to their properties. Residential land uses, in contrast, are a net drain on municipal coffers.

With an 18% loss of Marion County farmland from 1991-1998, County Commissioner and PPI speaker Andy Kesselring indicated an analysis of the economic return on land in Marion County might be useful as he looks for “factors we can all agree on.”

Eco-tourism is another topic for study in the economics of land use. While a study specific to Marion County has yet to be done, it is estimated that the annual sales tax revenues generated from wildlife watching activities in the state could pay the yearly tuition for up to 34,300 state residents to the University of Florida and Florida State University. Other points from the 2003 summer edition of the Sierra Bulletin:

- Wildlife watching, photography and feeding is enjoyed by 2.86 million Florida residents.
- With 490,000 visitors per year, more people travel to Florida to view wildlife than any other state.
- The amount spent on wildlife watching in Florida in 2001 was five times larger than the tolls collected by the Florida Turnpike System.
- The total spent annually in Florida for watchable wildlife recreation is twice as much as the value of the state’s annual orange crop harvest — \$786 million in 2001, according to the USDA Economic Research Service.



Source: Marion County Property Appraiser’s Office

Katie Mulhearn, Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce, said “wildlife viewing in Florida generates more income than Disney.” She said “eco tourism has a huge economic impact without the overhead.”

“They look and then go home,” she said, citing sustainability in nature based tourism. She said there is no funding stream currently available for a study of the tourism impact on Marion County specifically, but she did have figures on the Silver River State Park in 2002:

- 92,730 visitors
- \$2,961,000 in local revenue
- 59.2 jobs within the county

While Marion County’s

Comprehensive Plan promises to ensure the unique character of urban, rural, and environmentally sensitive areas, study member Gail Stern said she’s worried that we’re not looking at the cumulative effects of land use changes, amendments to the comprehensive plan, waivers, exemptions, exceptions, etc.

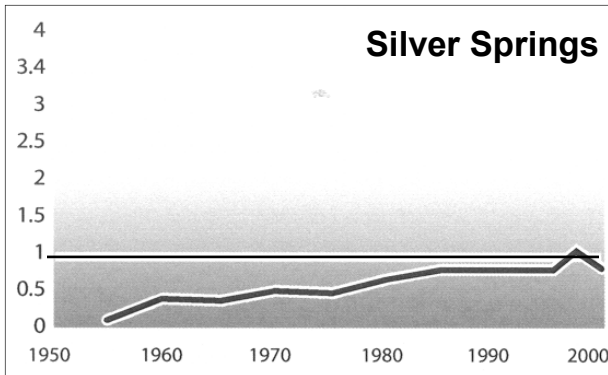
“Beware the death of a thousand cuts,” said Richard McGinniss, director of community development for On Top of the World.

Land use is also a critical component in the health of our springs, said Jim Stevenson, speaking to the group on April 17th as coordinator of the governor’s initiative on springs. He emphasized:

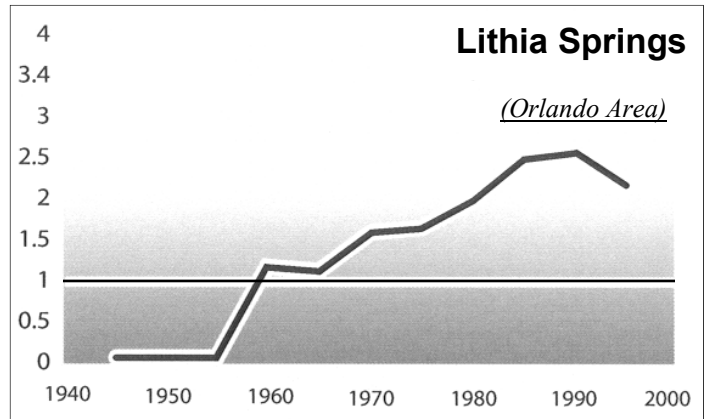
- Land acquisition is a very important strategy for Silver Springs.
- Redirect storm water (Weeki Wachee is a good example).
- Education — once people know what’s happening they’ll do the right thing.

“Trees give us healthy springs,” Stevenson said. “The quest for perfect lawns gives us sick springs.”

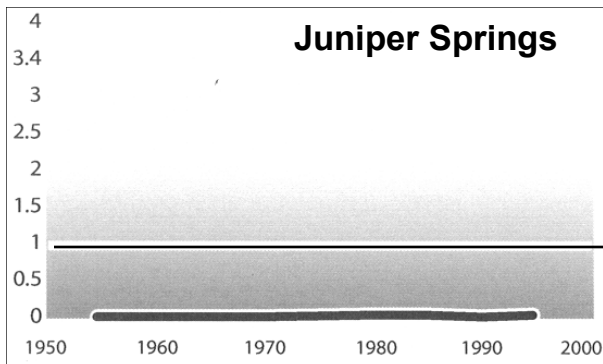
(Please see Natural Resources, page 30, for more information on springs.)



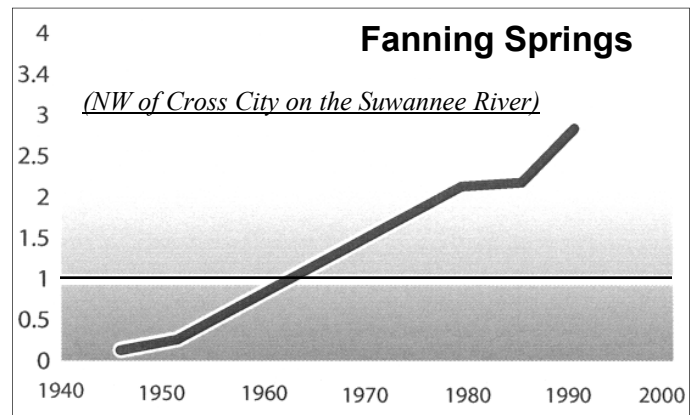
Urban land use is “likely” the source of nitrates in Silver Springs, which in 1998 nudged over nature’s “norm.” This would include lawn fertilizer, septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.



Source of nitrates in Lithia Springs: fertilizers in citrus groves.



Nitrates remain at the natural background level in Juniper Springs, protected by the surrounding Ocala National Forest.



Nitrates in Fanning Springs come from dairies, septic tanks.

Dotted lines in Dept of Environmental Protection graphs show background levels of nitrates found in nature.

Cost/Effectiveness of Government

In December of 2000, Florida Trend Magazine outlined 10 steps to a more livable Florida. “True-cost accounting,” Step No. 10, challenges us to “require truthful accounting of growth’s costs.” This challenge seems particularly applicable to Marion County as officials grapple with the true cost of growth in a burgeoning county.

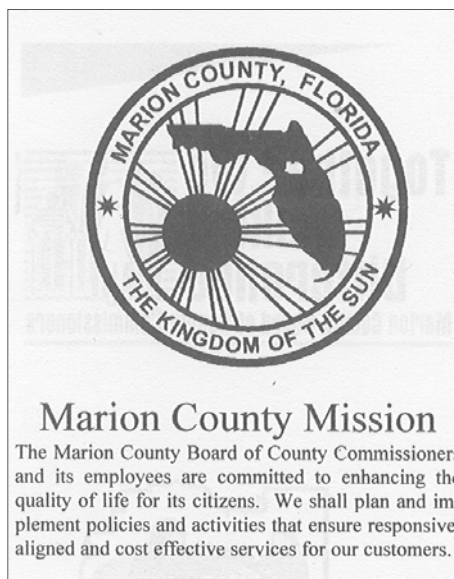
“Every time a county approves a development, it spreads the costs of building sewer and water lines, widening roads and constructing schools to all its property taxpayers, no matter where they live,” said the writer.

Marion County is probably not alone in lacking a clear picture of its costs. Traditional accounting methods seem not to lend themselves to an easy comparison.

For instance, should the last three categories on the budget sheet, administrative transfers, debt proceeds, and balances forward, be included in a per capita trend analysis of taxes?

If you say yes, the growth in the per capita tax burden in Marion County, in constant dollars, goes from \$763 in 1997-98, to \$1,241 in 2001-02. That’s a 63% increase in the last 15 years.

If you say no, the growth in per capita taxes, again using 2001-02 dollars, goes from \$513 to \$723, a



41% increase, according to Mike Tomich, Budget Director, Clerk of the Court.

Other outstanding figures from the county’s finance department, all in constant 2001-02 dollars in the time period 1997-98 to 2001-02:

- Millage rates have declined, from 6.22 to 6.04.
- Property taxes have increased, from \$33,999,811 to \$65,815,158. The per capita increase goes from \$186 to \$243, a 31% increase.
- Special assessments have also grown, in the same time period, from \$2,063,353, to \$20,819,588. Per capita increase went from \$11 to \$77, a seven fold increase.

As the hue and cry goes out to “get more land onto the tax rolls,” the question arises as to what types of

land would generate net increases.

Several studies (*please see Land Use, p. 19*) indicate that residential land use costs more in services than it generates in revenue. Study group members wondered if this would be an effective planning tool for the county. Agricultural land traditionally provides the largest net gain in revenue, followed by commercial/industrial although no figures were available for Marion County.

In 1996, the Lake Soil and Water Conservation District determined, for every dollar generated in revenues, the following costs to provide services:

	COST TO PROVIDE SERVICES	NET REVENUE
Agriculture	\$0.07	\$0.93
Commercial/ industrial	\$0.13	\$0.87
Residential	\$1.56	-\$0.56 (a deficit)

“Commercial and industrial development typically costs less in public services than it pays in taxes, but tends to increase residential development, with a net loss of public revenues,” according to information from the Gulf Coast Conservancy, a local, not-for-profit land trust in Aripeka, FL.

In a report to the Public Policy Institute last year, Michael Tomich, budget director in the office of the clerk of the circuit court, projected population in the county to jump to 366,600 in the year 2030.

“Urbanization resulting from population growth will likely increase demand for current and new services at a rate greater than the population growth,” he said.

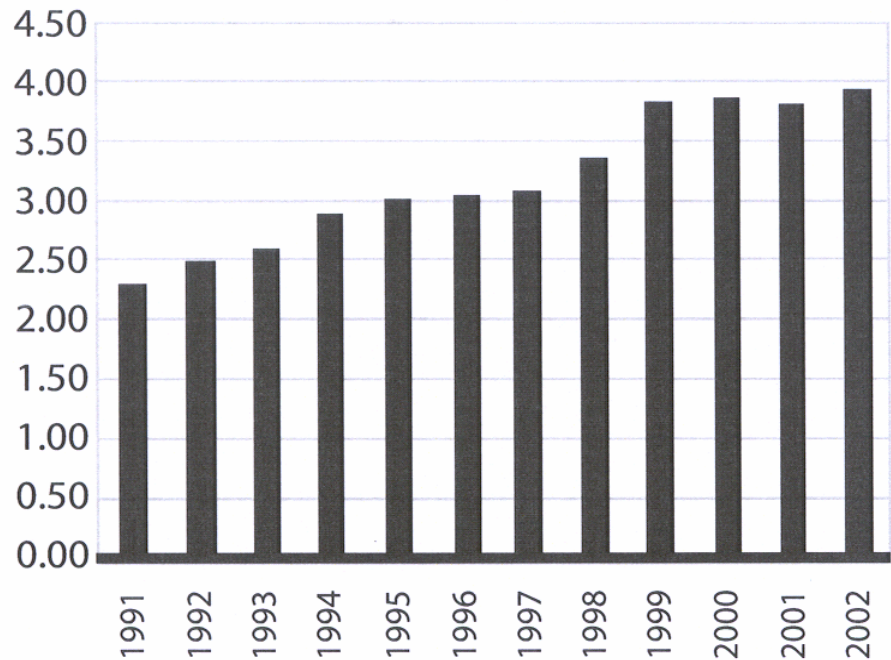
Tomich listed several additional revenue sources available to county government:

- Ad Valorem Taxes
4 mills still available
- Local Option Sales Tax
Each 1/2% would generate \$13,237,812 to be shared with municipalities
- Local Option Gas Tax
1 - 5 cents per gallon
Each 1 cent = \$1,269,964 to be shared with municipalities
- Special Assessments
- Franchise Fees (phone, cable, etc.)
Each 1% = \$997,000
- Impact Fees
- Tourist Development Tax
1% or 2% of transient rental transactions (hotels, motels)
Each 1% = \$319,000

In the City of Ocala, the goal is to provide “great service at a conservative cost.” That’s how Susan Miller summed up her

Marion County Government

Number of employees per 1,000 residents



Source: finance department, Marion County.

City of Ocala:

Expenditures Up, Personnel Down

(a measurement of efficiency according to City Manager Susan Miller)

Expenditures Per Capita

Fiscal Year	Real Dollars	Constant Dollars
1998	647.42	647.42
1999	696.32	681.70
2000	721.02	689.52
2001	749.77	701.57
2002	852.67	778.26

Positions Per Capita

Fiscal Year	City Wide	City Wide Less Electric	General Fund
1999	0.0237	.00201	0.0130
2000	0.0234	.00198	0.0126
2001	0.0227	.00190	0.0124
2002	0.0227	.00191	0.0125
2003	0.0226	.00189	0.0123

Source: City of Ocala

responsibility as city manager.

“We’re not in the business of providing jobs,” she said, “our role is to provide services people cannot provide singly for themselves.”

Taking control of its own destiny, Miller said the city has been working on:

- Land use plan
- 20-year master plan for water and sewer
- 10-year transportation plan
- Master plan for electric

All departments have five-year business plans that include “how we need to meet our growth requirements,” she explained, adding that while the county is growing about 3% per year, the city’s growth has been less than 1%. She cited tools in place at the city to monitor performance:

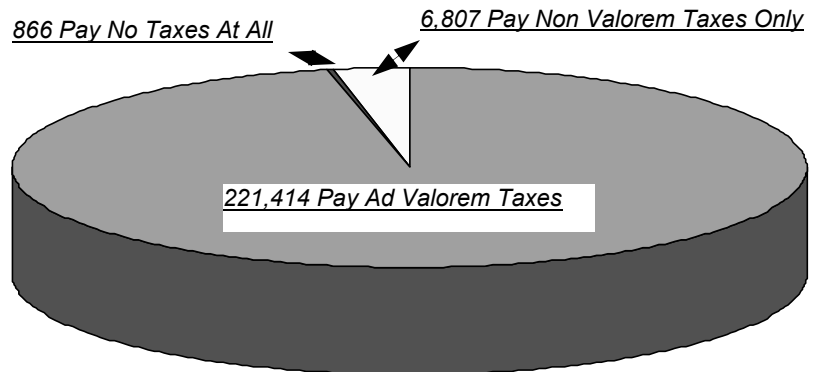
- Operational Plans
- Benchmarks
- Trend Lines

Future goals include:

- All roads will be paved, with sewer hookups
- Fire response time down to 4 minutes anywhere in the city
- More developer agreements that result in impact reduction

**Marion County Has 229,087 Privately Owned
Real Property Parcels**
(As of July 19, 2003)

More than 99%
Contribute Ad Valorem
and Non Ad Valorem Taxes



Source: Marion County Property Appraiser’s Office

The Florida Sierra Club believes
Florida has the ability to sustain: **5 - 6 million people**

Other estimates go as high as: **55 million people**

Florida population is currently at: **15 million people**

Eight million more are expected
in Florida by year 2030 for: **23 million residents**

The total of comprehensive plan
build-out from all 67 counties
implies existing approval for: **101 million people**

(Reported by Michael Browning, Palm Beach Post, October 20, 1999)

[More information on sustainability available at www.flsuspop.org/docs/footprint.htm](http://www.flsuspop.org/docs/footprint.htm)

Education

As Marion County grows, so, too, must its schools — elementary, middle, high school, community colleges, and continuing community as well as technical education.

In the 1996-97 school year Marion County saw an increase of 1,178 students. The figure for 2002-03 showed growth at 273 students but projections for 2003-04 are for 600 additional students. The average number of new students per year since 1984-85 is 865.

According to Tony Burke, director of management information services for Marion County schools, a new school must be built for every 600 new students, assuming full capacity of existing facilities exclusive of replacement needs. Average life for a school building is fifty years, while portables last, on average, 20 years.

Adding to the expense of new schools is a state mandate that calls for a large block of land on which to build a school.

A middle school, for example, requires 20 acres, a high school 80. The state also requires that infrastructure like water, sewer and roads be in place before construction begins. If that has not been provided by the county, the school board assumes the costs which adds to the total cost of construction.

When new developments are approved without school board input, construction becomes a

Marion County Public Schools			
Student Enrollment growth			
School Year	Enroll PK-80th day	one-year growth	Aggregated Growth
2002-03	394,111	273	16,428
2001-02	391,750	838	16,155
2000-01	38,337	374	15,317
1999-00	37,963	433	14,943
1998-99	37,530	999	14,510
1997-98	36,531	1,010	13,511
1996-97	35,521	1,178	12,501
1995-96	34,343	1,221	11,323
1994-95	33,122	1,277	10,102
1993-94	31,845	1,080	8,825
1992-93	30,765	969	7,745
1991-92	29,796	735	6,776
1990-91	29,061	992	6,041
1989-90	28,069	1,683	5,049
1988-89	26,386	958	3,366
1987-88	25,428	695	2,408
1986-87	24,733	592	1,713
1985-86	24,141	790	1,121
1984-85	23,351	331	331
1983-84	23,020	n/a	n/a

knee-jerk reaction, resulting in higher costs, explained former school board member Leslie Scales. “Using the Steeplechase Apartments on SW 27th Avenue in Ocala as an example,” she said, “Marion County schools had to react quickly to unexpected growth at College Park Elementary, necessitating the building of Saddlewood Elementary only a few miles away.” At the same time, other projected needs in line for funding were delayed because of the unexpected growth. Proactive participation in the growth planning process can soften the effects of tremendous growth. While a recent state law requires some cooperation between public bodies in planning for schools,

the effort for effective, cooperative planning must be proactive.

(Please see Highlights and Recommendations.)

Representatives from Lake County, who are making news for taking a tough stand on the escalating pressure of growth on education, shared their experiences from a demographically similar perspective. They concluded that growth wasn’t paying for itself and decided to take action. Research had indicated that unless a house cost \$300,000 to build, it was a net drain on the county.

Using the Martinez Plan, initiated in Orange County as a reaction to out-of-control growth as a prototype, a moratorium on development was instituted by Lake County while school board members and county commissioners addressed the growing pressure on schools. That exercise took about six months, at which time the moratorium was lifted.

With a comprehensive plan that addresses school capacity, county policy makers have the option of rejecting development that would increase capacity needs beyond current projections.

Example: if the Acme Construction Company proposes a development which will bring 500 families to an area which does not have adequate space in its schools, the school board and county commission can use that as the basis for denial of approval to develop the area.

Lake County officials (school board and county commission working together) took a stand that quality education was their first priority.

They raised impact fees to more than \$4,000 per house with the stated, and now accomplished goal, of having the highest impact fees for education in the state.

School board member Scott Strong says having a good school system improves the ability to sell houses.

The director of development of a large north Lake County development has said that the new impact fees have had “no impact whatsoever” on his ability to sell new homes. He further stated that home buyers and businesses look for areas where quality education is a priority.

As education prepares a community for its future, so too can it honor its past, said Pamela Stafford from Historic Ocala Preservation Society (HOPS).

With the recent renovation of the Eighth Street School in Ocala, a neighborhood and its larger community united in a goal to preserve and honor the past.



With the recent renovation of the Eighth Street School in Ocala, a neighborhood and its larger community united to preserve and honor the past. Historic preservation is people-oriented, and so with the success of the Eighth Street School project, Ocala can now be proud of having the oldest, continuously used for instruction, school in Florida.

Historic preservation is people-oriented, and so with the success of the Eighth Street School project, Ocala can now be proud of having the oldest, continuously used for instruction, school in the state of Florida, Stafford said. The history lesson begins with the school itself and extends to the surrounding downtown historic district with walking classroom tours. Historic preservation efforts are also under way in Tuscawill and West Ocala and the City of Ocala is preparing a master plan for downtown, preserving buildings from the past.

A charter school in McIntosh, known for historic preservation, is incorporating walking classrooms, too. McIntosh was a dying community 30 years ago

but with introduction of a fall festival the community realized what it had and became a historic village “destination.” Belleview and Dunnellon also have historic preservation efforts under way and the site of the original Ft. King has now been declared a national landmark.

Local history includes Indian cultures and Spanish settlers (Catholic Church letters from the 1600s talk about missions on the Ocklawaha River). The land also yields evidence of the prehistoric, with examples on exhibit at the Silver River Museum.

While Marion County has participated in some historic preservation, it has not officially

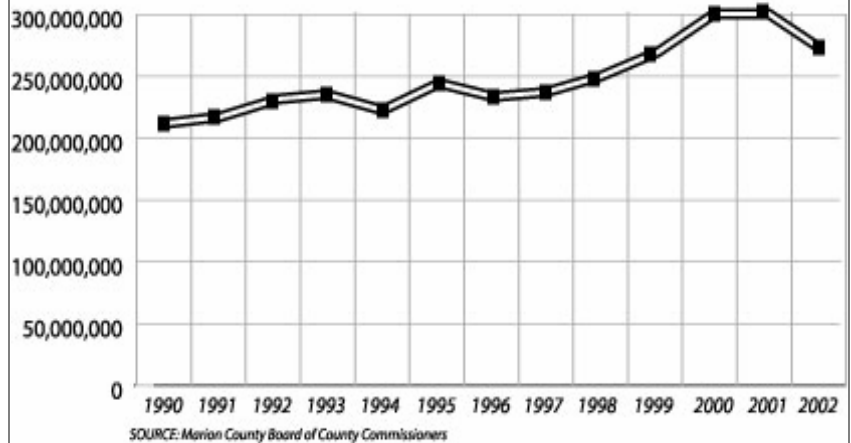
joined the effort, having opted out of the historic preservation component of its comprehensive plan.

These points from HOPS, the Historic Ocala Preservation Society, address why preservation is important as a means to educate:

- Provides a unifying point for communities, enhancing education about local events and places
- Serves as an asset to tourism, attracting people to towns that realize an economic impact
- Improves and preserves housing and housing values
- Builds community pride and preserves values
- Stimulates quality housing in older neighborhoods as important to revitalizing a community
- Encourages people to live in or near-by historic district
- Is people oriented.

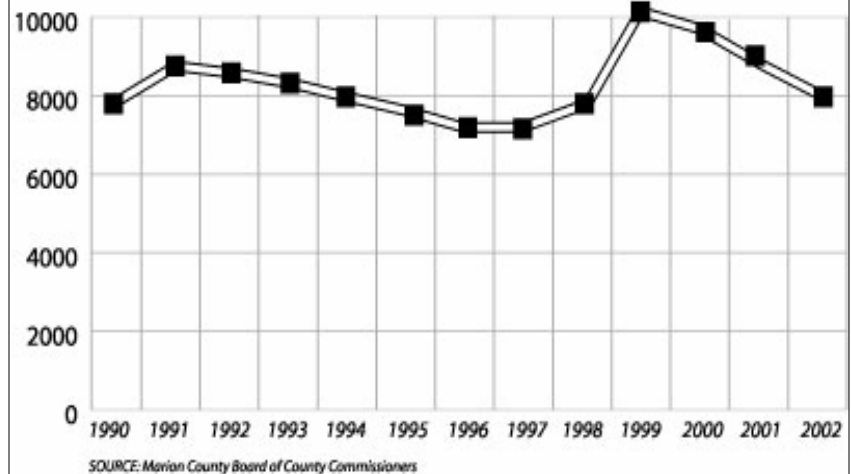
Marion County School Board Overall Expenditures

(in Constant, 2002 Dollars)



Marion County School Board Expenses Per Student

(In Constant, 2002 Dollars)



Cost of Living

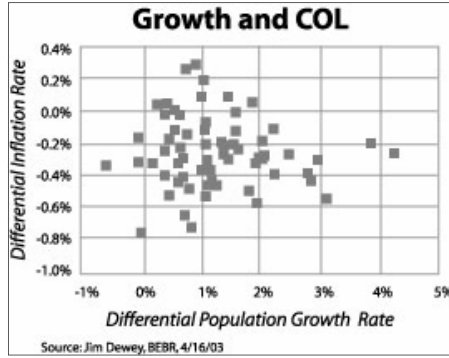
The Florida Price Level Index (FPLI) was identified as the best source for correlating Cost Of Living (COL) to growth. The Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida has developed this index over time for use by the State of Florida to distribute funds to local school districts. Dr. Jim Dewey, economist with BEBR, prepared an Economic Analysis Program using FPLI to answer the PPI study question:

What is the relationship between growth and COL?

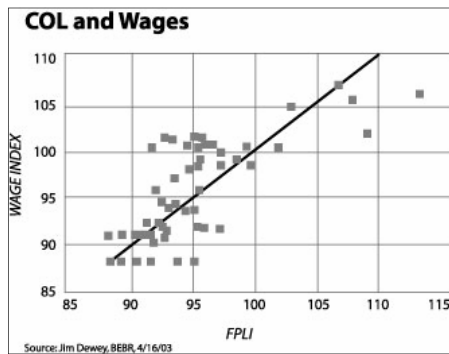
According to Dr. Dewey, a strong relationship is not apparent between population growth and COL. Graph A (at right) shows the relation between growth and COL for Florida counties that have grown faster over the past fifteen years. Note the scattering of the data. No common line can be constructed from the data.

At first blush the lack of correlation between growth and COL is difficult to accept. Members of the study group felt that as Marion County has grown, costs have increased. Health care, food, taxes, transportation, entertainment and housing all seem to cost more today than fifteen years ago. The inclination is to blame these increases on growth.

Yet from 1987 to 2002, Marion County's price level index has remained fairly constant despite the fast growth experienced by the county. Chart A (page 29) shows the Marion County price index compared to selected other counties in the state. Relative to other



Graph A: 4/16/03 Jim Dewey, BEBR 19



Graph B: 4/16/03 Jim Dewey, BEBR 24

counties, Marion has a COL slightly below average. Note that counties with denser populations have a higher index meaning that costs are slightly above the average. This higher index has been attributed to the availability of land.

When population pressures reach high levels, undeveloped accessible land provides a relief valve for the upward pressure on housing cost which has the heaviest weight on the cost of living. Marion County is a good example of how the availability of developable land has helped moderate increases in housing costs. How long can this last?

Dr. Dewey believes that transportation infrastructure boosts supply, increasing growth but likely reducing COL. However, he also pointed out that COL and wages

move at the same pace. (Please see Graph B at left.)

So does this mean that growth may actually work to keep wages lower?

According to William Fruth, presenter at the Quality Growth Conference co-hosted by the Economic Development Council and the Star Banner, wage levels are a function of the types of jobs available in a locale. His projections of wages in Marion County, given the historical employment and economic development patterns, suggest a downward trend in the average earnings per worker over the next twenty years. (Graph C is on page 29 - Fruth/ Where the Money Is/ CPI Factored – Average Earnings Per Worker).

Dr. Jim Nicholas, a professor at the University of Florida who holds a different view on the economics of growth, was unable to address either the PPI group or the EDC conference. A debate between Nicholas and Dewey might be an interesting seminar for PPI in 2004.

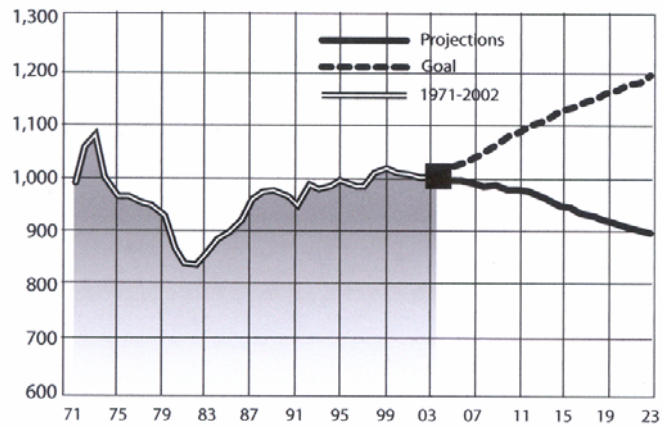
The Earnings Challenge

From Ann Spang, VP/Corporate Relations
Economic Development Council, Inc.

“The only way to reverse the trend of a decline in the quality of our economy is to offset the influx of low paying service jobs with the creation of 700-800 contributory jobs paying an annual average wage of \$36,000 per year for the next 20 years.”

“This is a lofty goal,” Spang said, citing a multi-year project that will require partners from workforce development and educational institutions, elementary through college.

CPI-Factored AEPW 1970-2023



Graph C (Fruth/ Where the Money Is/ CPI Factored -AEPW).

Florida Price Level Index (FPLI)

YEAR	MARION	ALACHUA	DADE	HILLSBOROUGH	LEVY	ORANGE	SUMTER
1987	93.98	96.30	106.50	99.51	92.48	99.21	93.23
1988	92.15	94.90	107.03	100.58	92.29	97.72	93.57
1989	92.07	94.86	107.30	98.93	89.01	98.23	91.53
1990	92.38	95.91	105.00	100.61	89.38	98.52	92.31
1991	92.37	94.32	107.99	99.52	90.91	98.91	92.40
1992	94.00	94.55	106.67	100.20	90.43	101.36	91.56
1993	93.41	93.78	108.88	99.11	89.20	98.41	93.66
1994	94.10	95.68	108.56	98.24	88.98	99.07	91.19
1995	92.05	96.69	106.74	100.28	89.98	98.41	91.28
1996	92.52	97.00	107.09	100.78	91.70	99.38	91.25
1997	93.11	95.68	107.18	99.16	91.67	101.83	92.45
1998	94.10	96.13	106.21	100.80	90.77	98.98	89.60
1999	93.21	94.15	106.73	100.38	91.84	99.11	88.48
2000	93.25	94.04	106.42	100.32	92.03	98.69	92.58
2001	93.75	95.29	107.10	99.86	92.77	97.67	92.42
2002	93.14	93.61	109.24	99.53	91.69	96.71	91.72

SOURCE: Jim Dewey, BEBR, 4/16/03

Chart A: 4/16 Jim Dewey, BEBR 14

Natural Resources

Water and the land needed to keep it clean made page one headlines as the PPI study group looked at natural resources in Marion County.

The fact that all of the water coming out of Silver Springs is generated locally was a surprise to many in the group.

“Protection of the springs is in the recharge area BEFORE the water reaches the spring,” said Jim Stevenson, the state’s recognized expert on springs. “The springs are not the beginning of our water supply, but rather the end of the pipe,” he said, adding that “by chance and good fortune Marion County’s springs are the best in the state because their recharge areas are protected, in large part, by the Ocala National Forest.”

“However,” he warned, “our studies show that DEET, a chemical in mosquito repellent, is now coming out of every portal of Silver Springs.” Trudy Phelps, scientist with United

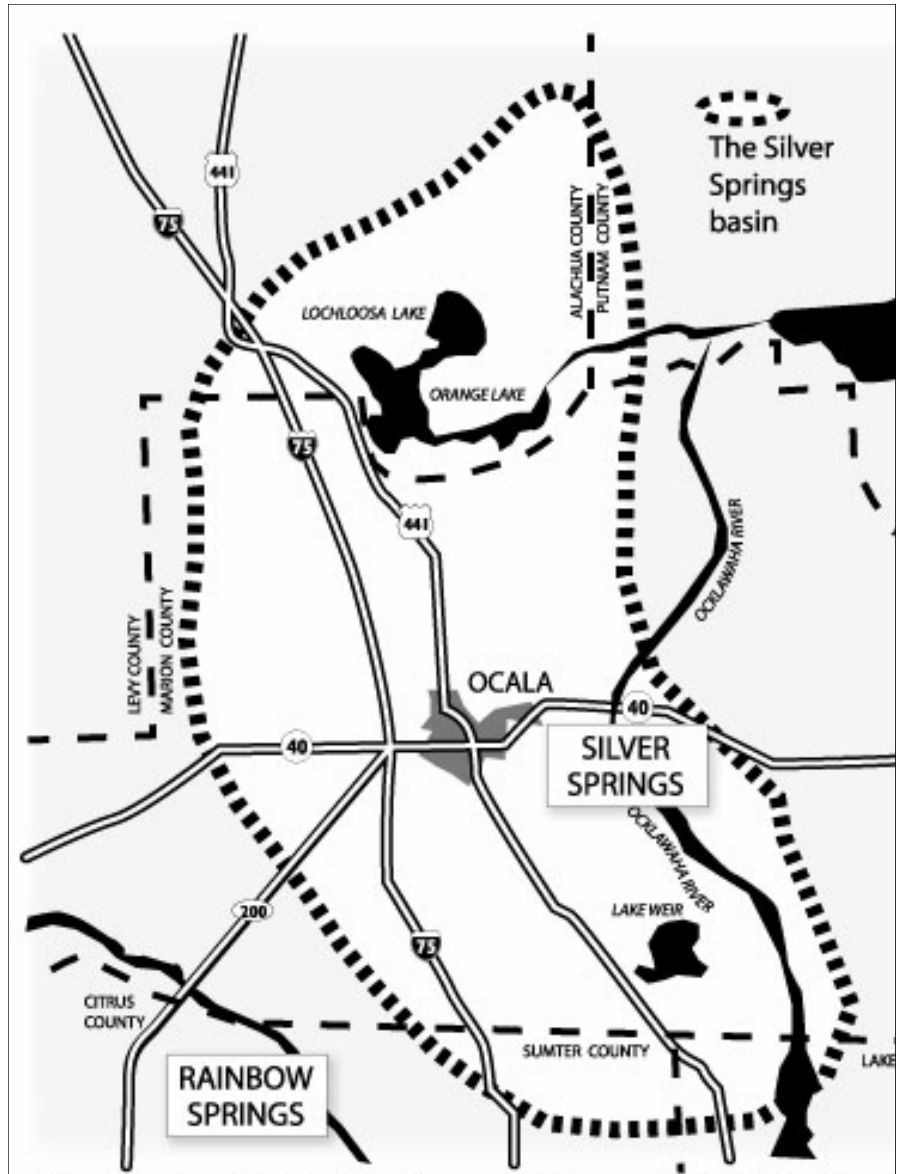
“How much protection is enough?”

*asked County Commissioner
Andy Kesselring.*

“Your grandchildren will know,”

*answered local attorney
Ben Ayres, study member.*

States Geological Survey in Orlando who is wrapping up a study of contaminants in the Silver Springs basin, noted that the level of nitrates has just nudged over the “norm,” the level normally found in nature. Stevenson had previously made the



Source: Schiner, 1989; potentiometric contour map showing study of the Silver Springs basin and surface of the Upper Floridian aquifer

connection between population growth and increased contaminants in the aquifer.

“What goes into the basin comes out in the springs,” Phelps said. “If you flush inside the basin, it goes to Silver Springs.”

Phelps said the wells around the county are not showing a clear pattern related to land use but she

voiced concern about the “slippery” definition of land uses and she acknowledged that it takes a long time, sometimes as long as 27 years, for water to make its way from the land to the aquifer.

On water quantity, Stevenson noted there are no longer any springs in south Florida and that by 2020 the flow at Silver Springs will be down 18%.

“Turn off a faucet and Silver Springs will whisper ‘thank you,’” he said.

Stevenson said there is still time, and cited several best management practices to employ in the Silver Springs Recharge Basin. *(Please see page 19 under “Land Use.”)*

“This isn’t about blame,” said Stevenson, “let’s:

1. Fix the problems that were created unknowingly, and
2. Let’s not make more mistakes.”

“The issue of North Florida’s springs is the equivalent of the issue in South Florida — the Florida Everglades,” said Stevenson.

“What makes Marion County special is its springs,” he continued. “In my opinion, Marion County has the finest set of spectacular springs to be found anywhere — Rainbow, Silver, Juniper, Sweetwater and Silver Glen.”

As a first magnitude spring that produces 820 cubic feet per second, approximately 350 million gallons per day, Silver Springs is the third largest in Florida, and the most famous in the world.

The subject of parklands generated a discussion of definitions. While it is commonly repeated that “40% of Marion County is already in parks,” the study group quickly learned that while that may be true as an overall

“Conservation land should not be included in the park inventory,”

Jimmy Massey, senior planner for Marion County, explaining that conservation lands serve a different purpose.

Of the more than one million acres in Marion County, 408,114 are considered “parkland,” a combination of conservation and user parks:

<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Federal	321,989
State	83,194
County owned/managed	2,149
City	781

“Conservation lands are primarily used to protect natural resources; User parks are primarily used for citizen recreation,” said Massey.

statement, it does not necessarily paint an accurate picture.

When Jacksonville Mayor John Delaney, speaker at the May 28 Economic Development Council seminar on blending gold and green, said he was proud of his county’s 17% in parks, he also acknowledged they have less to protect. “We get our water from you,” he said.

Marion County’s unique and rich supply of springs and unique habitats gives it a greater responsibility for protection, hence the industry-recognized differences in definitions.

User parks and conservation lands serve two different purposes and, according to industry standards, do not “count” one for the other. Conservation lands are defined as “areas that are protected,

environmentally sensitive, critical to water recharge, unique habitats or eco-systems,” according to the National Recreation and Parks Association, Florida Recreation and Parks Association and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Department of Environmental Protection. User parks, on the other hand, are primarily recreation or user/activity based parks.

Again, by professional definition, federal and state-owned lands are deemed “conservation.” Under Marion County management there are **1,525 acres defined as conservation land. That leaves 624 acres or .06% of the more than a million acres in Marion County as “user,” or activity based, parks.**

The current comprehensive plan, again using industry norms, calls for four acres of “user” parkland per 1,000 population. That would call for 1,032 acres. Marion County is at 61% of that goal.

- ***How much conservation land is needed depends on the natural resources to be protected?***
- ***How much user park acreage is needed depends on how many people you serve?***

A move to lower the 4 acres per 1,000 population goal to 3 or even 2 acres is currently under consideration by the county but the study group found no objective or published rationale for the proposed change.

Land Ethics

Marion County is rich with land. Many thousands of acres are preserved and many thousands more need to be preserved for the overall benefit of the health and welfare of the entire state of Florida. The PPI *Growth: Costs and Consequences* Study has identified that the county is at a critical juncture relative to future land use. Urbanization has replaced the rural landscape to the extent that future generations are less likely to have a land ethic that recognizes the role of open space for the sustainability of the most precious resource for survival, water.

Conservation education is paramount in this period of increasing urbanization and loss of human-land relations. The best way to educate about conservation is to bring people of all ages in direct contact with the land. Only then will the dialogue about land use reflect a land ethic of sustainability. Marion County has a golden opportunity to lead the State in the development of such a land ethic due to its vast areas of unspoiled rural lands. Marion County can offer direct contact

with the land to people of all ages.

However, direct contact with the land is not enough. The PPI *Growth: Costs and Consequences* Study Group believes that developing a land ethic of sustainability for Marion County will require focus by local educators at all levels. The challenge will be to include land ethics, not simply environmental science, in the curriculum. Ethics guide thinking for action and can relate the myriad of competing forces to a common goal. Thus, the advisability of incorporating land ethics into the dialogue of philosophy and ethics should be considered.

Suggestions for PPI:

- Look at existing curriculum for the study of land ethics.
- Investigate the recently funded ethics program initiated by the University of North Florida in cooperation with and gifting by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Inc.

More than 50 citizens volunteered their time in weekly meetings from November 18, 2002 to July 17, 2003, to consider PPI's third study, **Growth: Costs and Consequences**.

Several individuals did additional research in the areas of rate of growth, land use, cost/effectiveness of government, education/culture, cost of living, and natural resources, reporting their findings back to the committee as a whole.

The writing of the report was a shuttle process between the committee whole and a smaller, volunteer group that met additional days for the last six weeks of the study.

Committee members who carried forward with the study are listed below. A "management team" met prior to the study, in October of 2002, to set the agenda and recommend speakers. The management team* is indicated in **bold**.

Committee Members

Terry Hopkins, Chair

Karen Jensen, Staff

Ben Ayres
Jaye Baillie
Jeri Baldwin
Charles Bell
Paul Bielling
Margy Bielling
Evelyn Birkenfeld
Terry Blaes
Steve Bowling
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Kyle Kay
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Monte Martin
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Dawson Ransome
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Cindy Schad
Michael Schfield
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Pete Tesch
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Pat Gabriel
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Terry Hopkins
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Toni James

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Sharon Jones
Trish Kilgore
Beth McCall
Kevin McDonald
Richard McGinniss
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Joe Mills
Curt Nelson
Bill Patten
Cash Pealer
Mary Sue Rich

Brad Rogers
Leslie Scales
Charlie Stone
John Taylor
Frank Washington
Mark White



Resources: People and Publications

The PPI study process relies upon information supplied by knowledgeable resource people in addition to published reference materials. We wish to thank the following persons for their contributions to the study:

Stephen Barrett, Finance
Marion County School Board

Tony Burke, Director
Management Information Services
Marion County School System

Lanie Claudio
Property Appraiser's Office

Jason Lee Claxton, Planner II
Marion County Planning Dept.

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Colonnades at On Top of the World

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Fred Goodrow, Vice President
Berryman & Henigar
Member, Study Group

Clay Henderson, Esq.
Land Use Attorney,
Holland & Knight

In addition to references cited within the report and dozens of articles about growth brought in by members of the study group, the committee considered information from:

- **Star Banner Surveys**
- **Florida Trend**
- **Vision 2020**
- **Quality of Life Reports**
- **Business of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida**
- **Florida Department of Environmental Protection**
- **Sierra Club**
- **Marion County Builders' Association**
- **County and City Budgets, Comprehensive Plans**
- **Marion County School Board**

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Andy Kesselring, Commissioner
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Nancy Roberts**
Renaissance Group

Scott Strong
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Lake County School Board

**Michael E. Tomich, CPA
Budget Director**
Marion County Clerk's Office

Lisa Walsh, Planner II
Marion County

Clay Henderson, attorney with Holland & Knight and one of the authors of the Bert Harris Private Property Rights Act, held court with the PPI study on growth March 20. He said many public officials are afraid of the act for fear they will be sued if they say no to development. He said the intent was to protect private property but not at the expense of what's best for the people and for Florida's fragile environment.



Susan Miller, Ocala City Manager, addressed the PPI study group May 29, talking about Ocala's benchmarks and efficiency ratings. With 2002 property taxes at \$287 per capita, Ocala is ranked seventh highest of 15 comparable cities. Debt service as a percentage of operating revenue has decreased by nearly 70% over a five-year period. Miller is proud of a AA financial rating from Standard & Poor's and Moody's which allows for advance funding for things like building the first city swimming pool in 52 years.



Jimmy Massey, principal planner for Marion County Planning Department and a member of the study group, explained the difference between "user parks," those which are used primarily for recreation, and "conser-vation lands," saying they serve different purposes. By definition, which excludes federal and state owned land from the "user" category, Marion County has 624 acres in recreational parks.

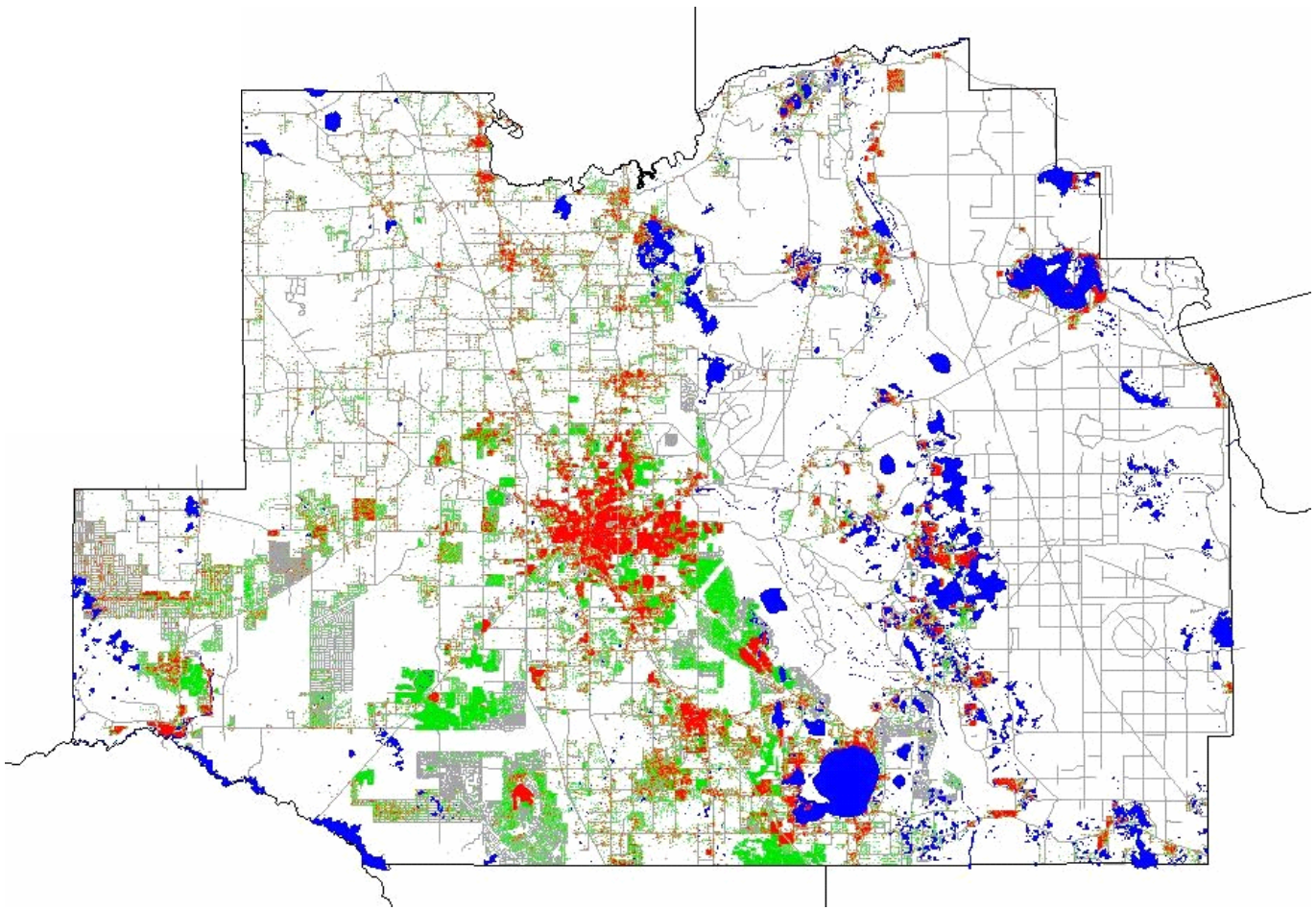


"Conceive of it," said Ken Colen, president of On Top of the World, "it's fantastic." Behind him is a map of the DRI approach to his development showing "rivers of green." Colen was excited about preservation of open space with the Greenways to the south and railroad right of way to the north. He spoke to the PPI study on "Growth: Costs and Consequences" March 13.

162% Increase

*In Improved Parcels in Marion County
From 1980 - 2003*

Red, 1980 **Green added, 1980 - 2003**



Map Courtesy Marion County Property Appraiser's Office

1980 — 44,200 Improved Parcels

2003 — 116,000 Improved Parcels