

July 19, 2000

To Tillamook County Residents:

As you know, Tillamook County is a unique and special place to both its residents and many long time visitors. From its rocky capes, which loom over rich and productive seas, to the peaks of the Coast Range, where towering Douglas-fir stand watch over lowland prairies, the lands of Tillamook County have nurtured a healthy economy and vibrant society. Since the county's settlement in the middle part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, local residents have taken pride in their communities, developing a rich cultural heritage.

Tillamook County is not without problems, however. Instances of development pressures, declining natural resources, and economic instability have all presented community members with challenging decisions. Driving these decisions is the common desire among local residents to maintain and enhance Tillamook County's unique social, economic, and environmental character. That desire provides the impetus for this publication.

In your hands is the first edition of *Measuring Progress: 2000 Tillamook County Benchmarks*, created by the Tillamook County Futures Council. This report presents a series of benchmarks indicating the health of Tillamook County in terms of its growth and development, natural environment, economy, and society and culture. The Futures Council derived these benchmarks as a means of evaluating the County's success in achieving the goals contained in the *Tillamook County Strategic Vision*. Completed in 1998, the Strategic Vision is an examination of how residents and landowners want their county to look in the year 2020.

*Measuring Progress* presents a snapshot of the condition of Tillamook County using a wide variety of benchmarks from the high school dropout rate to the rates of owner-occupied housing to the abundance of salmon in county rivers. Where possible and appropriate, the Futures Council has presented relevant trends as well as comparisons to the state and/or other rural counties. At regular intervals, the Futures Council will revisit the benchmarks contained in this publication to measure the County's progress in reaching its goals. With a focus on outcomes, policy makers and community decision makers can use these benchmarks to guide them towards finding solutions and making decisions that benefit Tillamook County over the long term.

For well over a century, generations of Tillamookians have enjoyed the environmental, economic, and cultural benefits of living in communities nestled between a boundless ocean and forested mountain range. Our forefathers left us with a legacy of pride in and respect for ourselves and our communities. By evaluating our goals and monitoring our progress, we insure our children the same gifts.

Sincerely,

Shirley Kalkhoven  
Chair, Tillamook County Futures Council

# **Tillamook County Futures:**

## ***Measuring Progress: 2000 Tillamook County Benchmarks***

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Tillamook County, Oregon

Located on the Pacific coast of northwest Oregon, Tillamook County is a land dominated by natural features including coniferous forests, farmland, rivers, bays, and shoreline. Its population of just 24,000 is concentrated primarily in small communities that dot the north-south coastal artery of Highway 101. Incorporated communities range in size from Nehalem with 260 residents to the county seat, Tillamook, which has a population of roughly 4,400. This relatively small population lives a rural lifestyle, and the economy is based in great part on natural resource-driven industries. Demographics have changed in recent years, however, as Tillamook County becomes increasingly recognized for its high standard of living for second homeowners and retirees. Such shifts are having an impact on the economy, which is diversifying and becoming increasingly service-oriented.

## The Tillamook County Strategic Vision

In February of 1999, the Tillamook County Futures Council released the Tillamook County Strategic Vision. Based on extensive resident and landowner input, the Strategic Vision sets forth a shared vision of the desired condition of Tillamook County in the year 2020. Specifically, the Vision establishes community goals and strategies concerning the county's growth and development, natural environment, economy, and society and culture.

## Benchmarks

This benchmarks report is a follow up effort by the Futures Council to assess the condition of Tillamook County by quantitatively evaluating the Vision's goals. Its purpose is to establish baseline data and trends, which will aid policy makers in working toward Tillamook County's Strategic Vision. As a significant portion of the data presented here is derived from the 1990 U.S. Census, the Futures Council will continue to track these and other benchmarks to update the publication and further establish county-wide trends.

Like the Vision, this report is divided into growth and development, natural environment, economy, and society and culture. The following summary provides an overview of this report's findings. Arrows indicate positive or negative countywide trends and/or comparisons to statewide figures.

## Growth and Development

The Growth and Development section evaluates goals relating to concentrated growth, improved infrastructure, affordable housing, and alternative transportation. Findings include the following:

- ↑ Since 1973, Tillamook County has converted less than one percent of its wildland forest and mixed forest/agricultural land to other uses. Since 1970, three percent of land has been converted statewide.
- ↑ In 1990, over 71% of Tillamook County residents owned their homes (outright or with mortgage). Twenty-nine percent of residents rented. Statewide, 64% of residents owned the homes in which they resided.
- ↔ Throughout the nineties, approximately one percent of all on-site wastewater disposal (septic) systems failed in Tillamook County. The impact of failures is largely a function of the proximity of septic systems to surface and underground water bodies.
- ↔ The percentage of permits written inside of urban growth boundaries remains fairly stable. Approximately 70% of all structures built in Tillamook County are constructed within designated urban growth areas.
- ↔ Seventy to seventy-five percent of Tillamook County residents commute to and from work using a single-occupancy vehicle.
- ↔ In 1990, 68% of renters and 32% of owners reported that their homes created a “cost-burden” (defined as a resident spending more than 30% of his/her income on housing). Although these figures are better than results seen at the state level, there is considerable room for improvement.
- ↓ Tillamook County has converted more than 10% of its agricultural lands to other uses since 1987. This is more than five times the rate seen at the state level.
- ↓ In 1997, only 66% of Tillamook County residents were served by community-based water systems that met health based standards. Statewide, 89% of residents were served by systems meeting standards. The Environmental Protection Agency and the state of Oregon have established a goal of 95% by 2005.
- ↓ Tillamook County roads maintained by the state are in better condition than those maintained by the county. In 1997, the Oregon Department of Transportation estimated that just under 30% of county-maintained roads were in “poor/very poor” condition. Only 19% of roads received a “good/very good” rating.

## Natural Environment

The Natural Environment section evaluates goals relating to the management of riparian zones, water quality, forest habitats, the abundance of salmonids and wildlife, and recycling. Findings include the following:

- ↑ Tillamook County is making a concerted effort to improve the condition of its riparian corridors. In 1998, federal, state and local entities restored over 36 miles of streambank county-wide. In 1997, roughly 10 miles were restored, while just over 1 mile was restored in both 1995 and 1996.
- ↑ In 1998, Tillamook County landfilled or incinerated 1,278 pounds of waste per resident. This is approximately 81% of the per capita amount landfilled or incinerated statewide.
- ↓ However, the rate of tons of waste produced per residence has been increasing throughout much of the decade. Tillamook County households produced roughly 20% more waste in 1998 than in 1992.
- ↔ Under the Oregon Water Quality Index (1986-1995), five of the eight Tillamook County streams assessed measured in fair condition. The other three were deemed poor, good, and excellent.
- ↓ Sediment and bacteria loading continue to degrade Tillamook County's surface water bodies causing frequent closures to shellfish harvest and the degradation of fish and wildlife habitat.
- ↓ Although numbers fluctuate yearly, populations of the federally listed wild coho salmon have shown a steady decline within Tillamook County's rivers and streams.

## Economy

The Economy section evaluates goals relating to the maintenance, expansion, and diversification of business and industry; per capita income; and the inclusion of youth in economic development activities. Findings include the following:

- ↑ In 1998, employment in the forest industry increased by 35% since a low of 400 jobs in 1990. Wages have climbed steadily in excess of the inflation rate since 1987. Jobs and wages may continue to rise as more land becomes available for harvest in the Tillamook State Forest.
- ↑ Non-farm employment has risen steadily since 1984 indicating greater diversity in Tillamook County's economy. The service sector has experienced the greatest gains, which may reflect the benefits of increased tourism.
- ↑ The Tillamook County Creamery continues to be one of the most popular tourist stops in Oregon. In 1998, over 900,000 people visited the Creamery.
- ↑ Each year between 1994 and 1998, increasing numbers of students completed skills training courses at the Tillamook Bay Community College.
- ↑ Between 1990 and 1998, Tillamook County's total unemployment rate has fluctuated along with the state rate (averaging 6.0%) while remaining well below other rural counties (8.5%).
- ↔ Net job growth in Tillamook County has fluctuated throughout the 90s. Average job growth has been better than other rural Oregon counties but less than the state as a whole.
- ↔ Total farm employment and agricultural employment have remained stable with moderate fluctuations throughout the 1980s and 90s.
- ↔ In 1995, 13.7% of Tillamook County residents had incomes below 100% of the poverty level. This is better than other rural Oregon counties (16.5%) but worse than the state as a whole (12.8%).
- ↓ The average annual payroll per covered worker has risen slightly this decade, but remains below other rural Oregon counties and the state as a whole.
- ↓ Per capita income (reported as a percentage of U.S. per capita income) lags behind the state of Oregon and other rural counties. Tillamook County residents make 75% of the U.S. per capita income; the state of Oregon makes 94%.
- ↓ Each year since 1994, increasing numbers of Tillamook County students have become eligible for federally assisted school lunch programs. Eligibility is determined in large part by total household income.

## Society and Culture

The Society and Culture section evaluates goals relating to the health and welfare of county youth, community involvement in schools, and citizen participation in local government. Findings include the following:

- ↑ Tillamook County's dropout rate has varied throughout the 90s from a high of almost six percent of high school students to a low of just over three percent. These rates have remained consistently below the state average. Unlike other rural counties throughout the state, Tillamook County's rate has declined yearly since the 1995-96 school year.
- ↔ The percentage of eighth graders who achieve established skill levels shows mixed results. Proficiency in reading has declined relative to both the state and other rural Oregon counties. However, Tillamook County eighth graders are improving in math and show increases relative to other rural counties.
- ↔ Between 1990 and 1998, both the number of registered voters and the total number of voters who voted in non-presidential election years has increased. The *percentage* of those registered who actually voted has decreased, however.
- ↓ Twenty-seven percent of all Tillamook County students grades six through eight reported using alcohol within the last month. Nineteen percent have smoked cigarettes and nine percent marijuana during this period.
- ↓ Despite steady improvement throughout the early 90s, Tillamook County's pregnancy rate for females age 10-17 has increased dramatically since 1994. In 1998, the rate was just under 19 per 1,000 females, which was higher than both the state rate and rural county rate.
- ↓ Since 1990, Tillamook County's juvenile arrest rate has steadily increased for both behavioral and person to person crimes. In addition, the county's arrest rate is higher in these areas than other rural Oregon counties. Juvenile arrest rates for property crimes have been decreasing since 1994, however, and are now just below the rural Oregon rate.



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# TILLAMOOK COUNTY, OREGON

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## From the “Land of Many Waters” .....

Used by the Killamuck tribe to define the richness of a land shaped by water, today the word “Tillamook” defines not just a place but an identity. When, in the mid eighteenth century, European settlers first arrived in the Native Americans’ “land of many waters”, they encountered a region of apparently endless natural resources. Coastal rivers, which teemed with salmon, roared down the western slope of coastal mountains dominated by towering coniferous forests. Where they met the sea, these rivers fed fertile valleys and estuaries rich with aquatic and terrestrial life. These resources, and the water that continues to sustain them, have characterized this place and its inhabitants for centuries.

## .....to “Cheese, Trees, and Ocean Breeze”

Since its settlement by Europeans in 1853, Tillamook County has utilized its abundant supply of natural resources to build its economy and carve a special way of life into the coastal lands of Northwest Oregon. Logging and fishing have provided long term economic benefits to Tillamook’s communities, but in a county where cows outnumber people, it is dairy farming that defines this region. Made fertile through centuries of riverine deposition, settlers found Tillamook County’s lowland areas ideal for pastureland and small dairies. In 1938, local dairymen allied to create a cooperative known as the Tillamook County Creamery Association. Today, the “Creamery”, as it is known locally, is a mainstay of Tillamook County’s economy and has become nationally recognizable for its high quality cheeses and other dairy products.

A direct link to Tillamook County’s past, ironically the Creamery also provides a look at the county’s future. In addition to providing high quality dairy products, the Creamery has also become one of Oregon’s most-visited tourist destinations (often ranking only behind Multnomah Falls, Crater Lake, and/or tribal gaming casinos, depending on the year). This fact reflects an important trend in Tillamook County’s economic and cultural development. Over the past decade or so, the county has witnessed a gradual shift from an economy comprised primarily of resource extraction industries to one which also maintains a growing service industry.

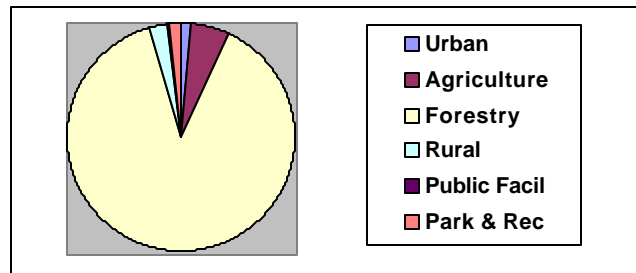


What has spawned this change? First, although resource-based industries have almost single-handedly developed the county economy, it has not come without cost. Many salmonid runs have been in steep decline for decades, diminished water quality often closes bays to recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting, and resource-based industries have fallen under increasing scrutiny from the environmental community and government regulators. Second, throughout the West, many will explain that “the secret of the Oregon coast is out.” Breathtaking coastal vistas combined with moderate winters and warm, sunny summers have made Tillamook County increasingly popular for seasonal tourism, second home development, and retirement living. Together these circumstances continue to transform the county’s economic, political, and cultural landscapes. Like the steady breezes that blow off its coast, these trends will continue to bring change to Tillamook County and its residents.

## The Land.....



Located west of Portland, Tillamook County comprises 1,125 square miles of forests, farms, and small communities. The majority of Tillamook County is zoned for forest use followed by agriculture, rural residential, parks and recreation, urban zones, and public facilities.



Source: T.C. Department of Community Development



Coniferous forests dominate virtually all of the land found within the Tillamook County coast range. The Oregon Department of Forestry owns roughly 310,000 acres of forestland within the Tillamook State Forest. A large portion of these lands were held in trust for the county after they were burned in a series of fires known collectively as the “Tillamook Burn”. The four major fires occurred at six year intervals between 1933 and 1951. Virtually all of the lost forest has regenerated, and much of it stands ready to harvest.



Dairy farms and a small amount of cropland comprise the majority of Tillamook County’s unurbanized low elevation lands.



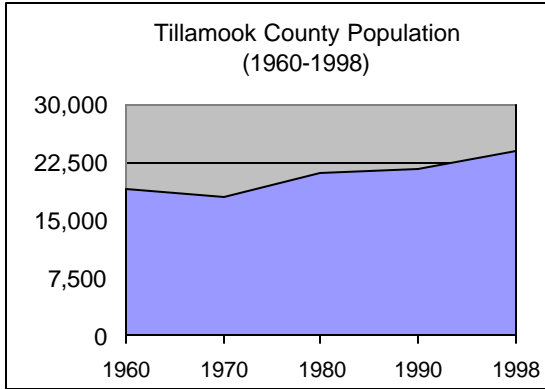
In addition to several small unincorporated communities, the county contains seven incorporated communities ranging in population from Nehalem with 260 residents to the City of Tillamook with 4,400. All of these communities lie on or near Highway 101, which runs along the Tillamook County coastline.



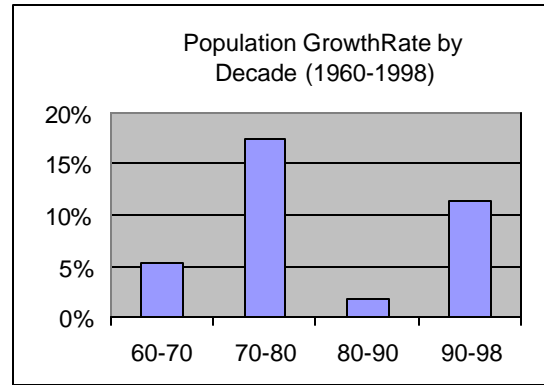
Eight major rivers systems drain Tillamook County, and five major estuaries provide critical habitats for a range of aquatic and terrestrial species. Tillamook County’s northernmost estuary, Nehalem Bay is fed by the Nehalem River. To the south, the Tillamook Bay basin is drained by the Miami, Kilchis, Wilson, Trask, and Tillamook Rivers. Small coastal systems drain into Netarts Bay and Sand Lake, while the Nestucca and Little Nestucca Rivers empty into the Nestucca Bay in southern Tillamook County. All of the rivers boast runs of anadromous salmonids, though the numbers of these fish has declined considerably as a result of ocean harvest and alterations to terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

## .....and its People

E Tillamook County's population of 24,000 ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> among Oregon's 36 counties. Since 1960, the county has witnessed a population increase of more than 26%. The rate of growth over this period has varied, however, with relatively slow growth occurring in the

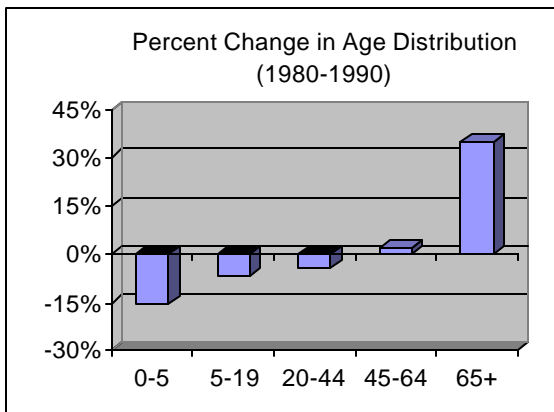


Source: Oregon Blue Book



Source: Oregon Blue Book

1960s and 80s, followed by higher growth rates the 1970s and 90s. County planners expect the current trend of 10-12% growth per decade to continue into the next decade.



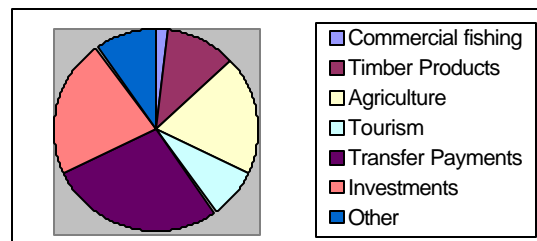
Source: Oregon Blue Book

E According to 1990 U.S. Census data the average age of Tillamook County's citizenry is climbing rapidly. In 1980, just over 38% of Tillamook County citizens were over the age of 45. In 1990, almost 44% of Tillamook County citizens were over 45.

Accordingly, Tillamook County's youth population has declined. From 1980 to 1990, the population of children ages newborn to five declined by more than 15%. The figure on the left summarizes changes in county age distribution.

E According to the 1990 U.S. Census, in 1989 97.4% of Tillamook County's population was White, 1.7% Hispanic, and just less than 1% African American or Native American. County planners estimate an increase in the Hispanic population since the 1990 census.

E Reflecting the growing retiree population, Tillamook County's two largest sources of personal income include transfer payments and investments. These are followed by agriculture, timber, and tourism,



Source: Oregon Economic Development Department

respectively.

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# INTRODUCTION TO BENCHMARKS

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## Background: Strategic Visioning in Tillamook County

In October 1997, the Tillamook County Commissioners appointed a 12 member *Futures Council* to create the Tillamook County Strategic Vision. The commissioners charged the group to “develop a long range vision for the county through broad-based citizen input representing the various geographic regions and full range of interests that exist within the county”.

To engage Tillamook County residents and landowners in the Visioning exercise, the Futures Council initiated a six-month public outreach process. This process focused on defining issues common throughout Tillamook County communities. Specifically, it used local input to devise countywide *goals* as well as the *strategies* that should be implemented to achieve them. During the Visioning process, the Futures Council:

- Conducted 17 focus groups meetings to identify the insights and concerns of community stakeholder groups;
- Distributed a survey to over 4,000 homes to insure widespread input; and
- Held a series of public meetings, which used electronic voting, to identify and prioritize strategies that would help the county reach its Vision.

This process yielded feedback from over 1,000 Tillamook County residents and landowners. Using their input, the Futures Council created the *Tillamook County Strategic Vision*. Published in February of 1999, the Strategic Vision or *Big Book*, as it has come to be known, represents Tillamook County residents’ views on a wide range of issues. The Vision is divided into four sections representing economy, community growth and development, the natural environment, and society and culture. Within each of these four sections, the Vision defines long-range community goals. In support of these goals, the Vision lays out strategies that can be implemented to achieve them and benchmarks that will measure the county’s progress. These benchmarks are the subject of this report.

Shortly after the release of the Vision, the Futures Council initiated an effort to quantify the benchmarks contained in the Vision. The objective of the benchmarking process was to establish baseline data that reflects the current status of the county *in regard to the goals contained in the Vision*. The benchmarks contained in this report present this baseline data and, where possible, provide past data to show recent trends.

## Purpose of Benchmarks

Will Rogers once said, “you can’t figure out where you are going until you know where you’ve been.” As Tillamook County works towards its 2020 Vision, the community must first assess its current condition. Benchmarks provide the tool for this. In simplest terms, benchmarks provide numerical measurements of some part of the world in which we live. Whether they count the numbers of fish in our rivers or the percentage of residents living above the poverty line, benchmarks measure some element of our community that is of value to us. As a community measuring stick, they are vital then to the long term visioning process. By assessing our condition in the present, benchmarks help guide policies in the future. Through tracking benchmarks over the long term, we insure that our steps take us in the right direction and our communities develop according to the values of their residents. Ultimately, benchmarks tell us how we are doing as a society in the present and provide a yardstick for the future.

This publication represents the first in an ongoing series of benchmarking efforts. Over the years to come, the Futures Council will periodically revisit (and perhaps revise) the benchmarks contained here. Through this ongoing process, the Futures Council will determine trends in the community’s overall health and welfare. As an unbiased advisory board, they will then be able to counsel policy makers on the county’s success in responding to those issues that are most vital to area residents and landowners.

## Methods Used in Creating Benchmarks

The benchmarks contained in the Strategic Vision follow the Oregon Progress Board model. Like the Progress Board, the Futures Council uses benchmarks as a means of monitoring the success of achieving its Vision. Consequently, the Futures Council attempts to use the Oregon Progress Board’s benchmarks wherever they are appropriate and local data is available. It should be noted that unlike those contained in *Oregon Shines* (the state of Oregon’s Strategic Vision), the benchmarks contained within this report do not prescribe numerical targets to reach at a future date. The Futures Council views its role in public policy as an organization that monitors the Vision and facilitates processes that help achieve it. The Council leaves the task of prescribing targets to those who are most actively involved with the policies touched upon in the Strategic Vision.

In selecting benchmarks to assess the goals contained in the Strategic Vision, the Futures Council applies two primary criteria. First, they use those benchmarks for which data is consistently and readily available. Because they are eager to show trends, it is vital that the data selected for the benchmarks will be available in the future. (See Appendix A for further discussion on benchmarks that will be evaluated through future data collection efforts.) Second, benchmarks must reflect the goals contained in the Vision. The Strategic Vision is based entirely on public input. As a result, benchmarks must assess indicators vital to the interests of the community.

## Organization of this Report

This report is divided into four sections, each corresponding to the four major elements of the Strategic Vision: economy, the natural environment, community growth and development, and society and culture. Each of the four sections begins with a summary of the benchmarks and how they relate to the goals contained in the Vision. An important part of this discussion is a summary of the unique obstacles encountered in quantifying the benchmarks found in a given section.

Following this introduction, each section details the benchmarks analyzed by the Futures Council. Specifically, each benchmark contains the following information:

- Background information including why it is important to Tillamook County and what goal it relates to;
- Data sources including a reference to the corresponding Oregon Progress Board Benchmark (if appropriate); and
- Findings including a brief discussion and tables and figures.

## A Final Note on this Report - The Limitations of Benchmarks

Many policy makers are attracted to benchmarks because they provide a relatively quick and accurate report card on the effectiveness of policies. Failure to recognize the obstacles discussed above can prove costly, however. Because some goals are easily assigned a corresponding benchmark and data is readily available, the potential exists for the importance of those goals to become inflated relative to less measurable goals. Likewise, policy makers run the risk of diminishing the importance of those goals that cannot be easily measured through benchmarks. In monitoring the goals contained in the Strategic Vision, policy makers must not lose sight of the fact that poorly measured goals are no less important to the community's interests than those which allow for quick and easy measurement.

No simple solution exists for this problem. Policy makers will be tempted to focus only on those goals for which their investments of time and money show clear and measurable benefits. Likewise, they may be tempted to discard benchmarks all together because of the inconsistencies that exist. Instead of 'throwing the baby out with the bath water', however, policy makers must recognize the importance of those goals that cannot be easily measured. To address all of the goals contained in the Strategic Vision, which means including both those that are easy and difficult to measure, policy makers must focus on implementing the *strategies* contained in the Vision instead of working solely towards individual benchmarks. Implementation of the strategies will insure that even those goals not easily measured will be pursued through on the ground efforts. For those community goals that cannot be measured, the Futures Council will continue to seek the appropriate benchmarks.

