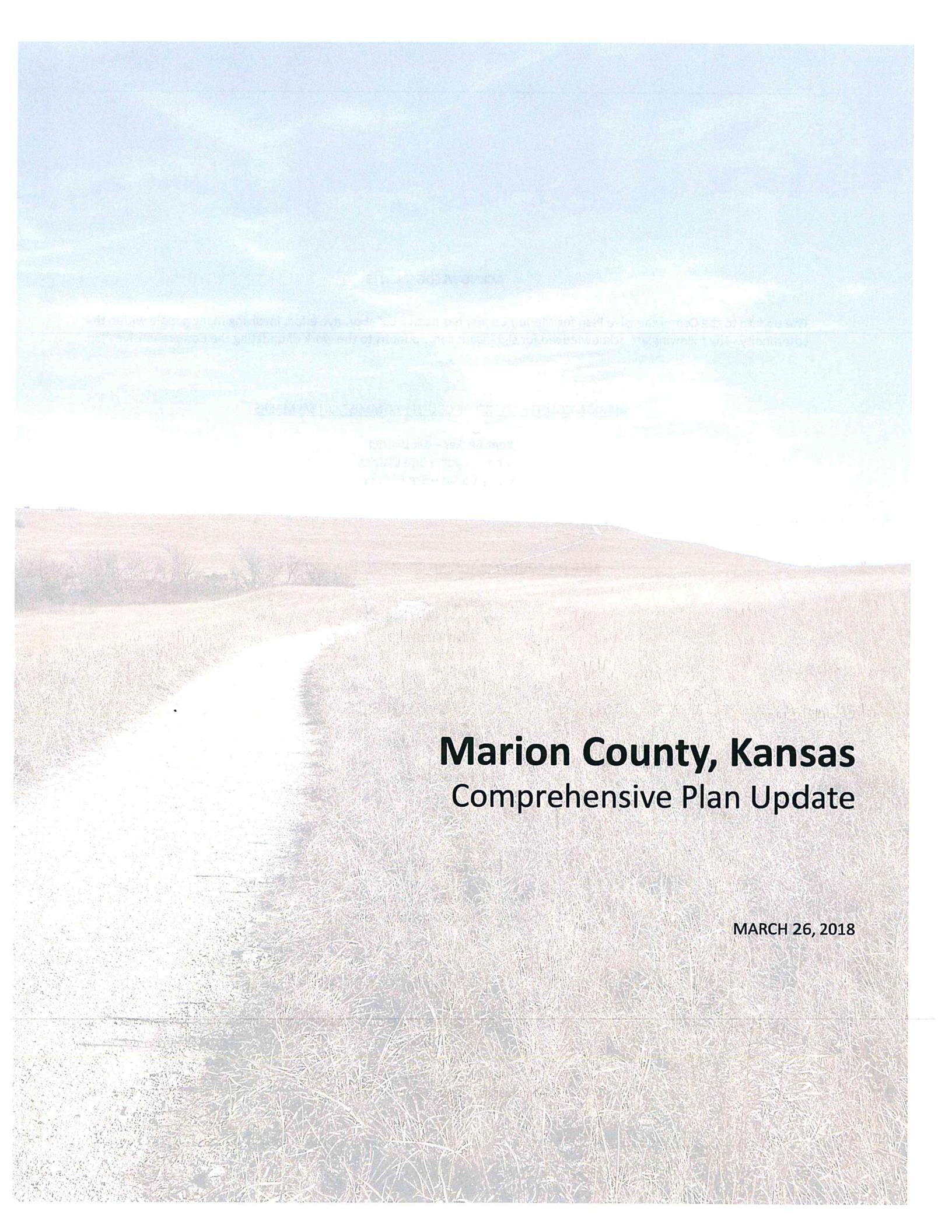


A photograph of a dirt road winding through a field of tall, dry grass under a cloudy sky. The road is light-colored and curves from the bottom left towards the center. The grass is a mix of brown and tan, indicating it is dry. In the background, there are rolling hills and a line of bare trees. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

Marion County, Kansas

Comprehensive Plan Update

MARCH 26, 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marion County, Kansas has established and maintained a planning and zoning program for land use regulation. The County has done a good job defining land use issues in context of a Marion County “Community.” The county now seeks to influence land use development—in the public interest—by preserving its strengths and implementing new community objectives:

- Balancing property rights with community rights;
- Defining and preserving a “Sense of Place” in Marion County;
- Accommodating development while implementing new planning policies; and
- Applying new development review standards to meet newly defined land use policies.

The county has the opportunity to build on its strengths as it manages land use change. Growth is encouraged near the small cities within the “Areas of Urban Influence.” When urban development is approved outside the cities, it will be reviewed based on new planning standards.

The values of Marion County—for example, the preservation of a “sense of place”, or the protection of a farmer’s right to farm—can be enhanced by the plan. The timing and phasing of growth can be paced through the planning process. The way growth “fits” into the county—the appearance, the preservation of open space and farmland—can be influenced, as well.

The Comprehensive Plan calls for the county to continue regulating growth in the unincorporated areas based on the objectives within this Plan and the standards of its local zoning and subdivision regulations. With each new development application, an evaluation of the “highest and best use” for the land in question should be considered before farmland is converted to other uses. This Plan also seeks to guide much of the future development within Marion County towards those cities with the local capacity to serve urban growth while maintaining the majority of productive farmland for agricultural use or other uses that directly support agricultural production.

The county seeks to coordinate with the area cities when regulating extraterritorial land uses near the cities. The county plan is recommending joint ventures with the cities in order to apply building codes in rural areas. The county needs the support of the cities in order to adopt and enforce building codes that would apply to non-agricultural buildings. Strengthening established communities is a major challenge for Marion County. The cities and the County should continue coordinating in order to attract urban development to the “Areas of Urban Influence.”

Also of importance to development in Marion County is the timing and phasing of growth so that limited financial resources can support the dual demands: maintaining what is here now, balanced with extending services in response to growth. A key recommendation of the plan is to establish a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) that ranks projects in phases by five-year periods.

Finally, the plan calls for initiatives that must be taken by many groups and not just the county government. “Policy Steps” are detailed for the entire Marion County community. The development objectives, for example, are challenges for the entire community. Better coordination among public and private groups, including developers and the Army Corps of Engineers, will support local values articulated in the plan.

The plan calls for new rules and new ways of administering them. It can be implemented only through cooperation with other public entities and private sector support.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The Marion County Comprehensive Plan creates a process for applying new public policies to development review. The following objectives are intended to help guide County decision makers with their review and approval of development applications within the unincorporated areas of the County:

- Compare the application to the Goals, Objective, and Policy Steps of the Plan.
- Evaluate development proposals relative to the planning principles of the Plan.
- Utilize the Site Plan Review procedures and standards found within the Zoning Regulations.
- Amend the county Zoning Regulations, as necessary, to incorporate new standards for future land uses not currently regulated.
- Review Subdivision Regulations to address new platting requirements and to ensure site planning standards are applied to future projects.
- Present the plan to the cities of Marion County to continue building support for joint ventures, such as a county-wide code enforcement administration and related cooperative efforts.