

## **4. WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE? A VISION OF THE NEXT TWO DECADES**

The strategies we outline here stem from a vision of Oregon that we are well positioned to achieve. Here is the essence of that vision:

### **The Best Would Be Retained**

Oregon's values would be much the same. As summarized in 1986 by the Oregon Futures Commission, Oregonians value sustained and well managed economic development, innovation and creativity, pride in our natural heritage, quality education for all citizens, individual energy and spirit, and strong ethical leadership.

Oregon's quality of life would be undiminished. Well-located industrial land would be available and competitively priced, especially compared to settings like Seattle and Los Angeles. Power would be plentiful and affordable. Water would be clean and abundant. The work force would be well educated and productive. Our communities would boast excellent, affordable housing, efficient services, good schools, and minimal congestion. Our buildings, bridges, and roads would be well maintained. Our communities, streets, and highways would be uncongested. Both east and west of the Cascades, our natural environment would remain unspoiled and accessible, offering year-round outdoor recreation.

### **A New Economy and Cultural Life Would Be Evident**

It would be evident two decades from now that Oregon's process of diversification had continued. Forest products and agriculture would still be important industries, but Oregon would be refining its woods and crops into smaller finished goods, creating more jobs for Oregonians and a larger export market.

Industries requiring skilled, knowledgeable workers would abound, and Oregon would be a noted producer of products in microelectronics, computer software, biotechnology, specialty metals, and light manufacturing. Oregon's professional services would rank among the best in the country, and would be sought out by clients in other states and regions. Oregon would boast a wealth of tourist attractions throughout the state and would be a popular destination for foreign and domestic visitors. At the Portland International Airport, one would hear visitors and Oregonians conversing in international languages. Significantly, healthy economic enterprise would be evident throughout Oregon -- not just in the Willamette Valley, but in Pendleton, Burns, Coos Bay, Medford, and other points on the compass.

---

*...healthy economic enterprise would  
be evident throughout Oregon...*

---

The work force would be Oregon's pride. Children who were toddlers in the late 1980s would be entering the work force with self-confidence and an array of skills suited to the challenges of Oregon's industries. Older workers would also be securely employed in knowledge-intensive industries, including workers displaced by the contraction of traditional resource industries. Such workers would result from investments begun in the late 1980s -- programs to strengthen families and enrich the development of young children; increased attention to basic skills, problem solving, and foreign languages in our grade schools, high schools, and post-secondary institutions; and retraining for older workers displaced from low-skilled jobs.

---

*...The work force would be Oregon's pride ... Quality would be the hallmark in all phases of Oregon life...*

---

Individual Oregonians would be more prosperous. Since the turn of the century, income per capita will have equalled or exceeded the national average, a rate Oregonians hadn't enjoyed since the late 1970s. While the quality of Oregon's work force will have grown significantly, its size will have grown moderately. Oregon will not have had to grow its economy by importing workers to take low-skilled, low-paid jobs.

Quality would be the hallmark in all phases of Oregon life -- quality jobs, workers, products, attractions, communities, environment, and overall quality of life. All these hallmarks of quality would be present alongside and within a dynamic, competitive, internationally oriented economy.

## GOALS THAT REFLECT THIS VISION

Achieving this vision will require that we pursue clearly stated goals and monitor our progress in this undertaking. Goals that fit our vision include the following:

- **Raise the state per capita income to the extent that it equals or exceeds the national average.** The incomes individual Oregonians earn represent one of the most significant measures of well being. By increasing labor and industry productivity, we propose to raise income levels during the 1990s.
- **Decrease the number of Oregonians in poverty.** One of the most disturbing trends in the United States during the 1980s is the shrinkage of the middle class. It is important to reduce the number of Oregonians forced into low paying jobs.

- **Stabilize employment levels in all regions of Oregon.** Stimulate economic opportunity in all areas of the state and minimizing further decline of rural economies.
- **Stimulate sufficient job expansion to accommodate increases in labor force participation and modest employment growth.** Modest growth in jobs remains an important statewide goal. However, Oregon's success in economic development should not be measured entirely by the number of jobs created. In the decades ahead, a significant growth in jobs accompanied by modest growth in the labor force would create in-migration, which is a mixed blessing for the state.
- **Maintain and enhance Oregon's livability.** The livability of a region is, of course, a matter of subjective judgement. However, it is possible to develop a battery of measures to gauge Oregon's quality of life. These include such indicators as crime rates, air and water quality, parks, libraries, housing costs, and commute times. On each indicator we want to see stability or improvement over time.
- **Increase literacy, math, and science skills among Oregonians as well as functional work place skills in listening, communicating, solving problems, and working cooperatively with others.** In order to achieve all the goals stated above, it will be critical to make sure that Oregonians have the capabilities to work in an advanced economy. A measurably superior work force with a range of productive skills is critical to the achievement of this vision and strategy.