



# THE STATE OF ALLEGAN COUNTY 2014

JULY 10, 2014



## Allegan County Strategy Map

To achieve our vision and ensure Allegan County continues to progress and prosper, we **MUST...**

Maintain our **FINANCIAL STABILITY**

- Develop and maintain a balanced operational budget
- Maintain reserve funds
- Execute long-term financial planning

Provide valuable and necessary quality services to our **CUSTOMERS**

- Deliver affordable and accessible services
- Engage and educate our citizenry
- Collaborate locally and regionally



Continuously improve our **PROCESSES**

- Be efficient and cost effective
- Measure and learn from outcomes
- Seek and implement innovative solutions

Support a united and **ENGAGED WORKFORCE**

- Foster a positive, team-based work environment
- Employ and retain high-performing, quality employees
- Promote safety and wellness

**Vision:**  
*Provide our citizens superior and innovative services, be judicious and efficient in the expenditure of resources and promote a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to live, work and play.*

**Mission Statement:**  
*The Allegan County Board of Commissioners shall plan, develop and evaluate the necessary policies and resources to ensure our county continues to progress and prosper.*

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## Introductory Letter

We are proud to present the 2014 State of Allegan County, in which we will reflect on accomplishments of the past year and discuss current and future initiatives aligned towards Allegan County's and prosperity. This report comes as a result of the County's strategy map that was constructed based on the organizational mission and vision.

At the center of our continuous improvement culture are R.I.C.H. values: Respect, Integrity, Commitment, and Honesty. We have four overarching strategic goals all of which were identified to guide the organization:

- Support a united and engaged workforce
- Continuously improve our processes
- Maintain our financial stability
- Provide valuable and necessary quality services to our customers

In 2012, we provided the first State of Allegan County report. At that time, it was intended to provide the Board of Commissioners with an annual update on organizational initiatives resulting from the County's strategic planning. As the report continues to evolve we hope it will also serve as tool to keep our citizens, customers, employees and other stakeholders informed as well.

Several improvements have been made to this year's report:

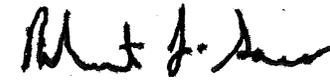
- As a result of feedback, we provided more detailed data, graphs, charts photos and measurable outcomes.
- A team representing the various service areas of the organization was established to deliver a richer report. While we have the privilege of presenting this report to you (Board of Commissioners) all credit should be given to County personnel who work to keep these initiatives moving forward and specifically to the SOC Project Team who coordinated this effort.

Our success is best measured through the level of satisfaction and value we deliver to our citizens and overall customers. This report is just one of many ways in which we will continue to provide transparent results. After reading this report, please provide us with your feedback via the short survey at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AC\\_SOC2014](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AC_SOC2014).

We thank everyone for the unified efforts resulting in the many accomplishments summarized here.

Sincerely,

  
Mark DeYoung  
Board Chair

  
Robert J. Sarro  
County Administrator

## United and Engaged Workforce

The first strategic goal, to **Support a United and Engaged Workforce**, is a fundamental building block for Allegan County. We interpret “United” as viewing the County holistically. Each service area does not stand alone—it is part of a bigger entity: the County. “Engaged Workforce” is defined as employees’ willingness and ability to help their organization succeed by giving that extra effort on a continual basis. Understanding these two concepts tells us that without everyone seeing the vision and supporting it with their collective passion, Allegan County will not reach its potential.

To reach Allegan County’s potential three strategic priorities were developed in 2011 (reviewed annually) and are aimed at supporting a united and engaged workforce. Specific projects or initiatives have been developed to:

- Foster a positive, team-based work environment.
- Employ and retain high-performing, quality employees.
- Promote safety and wellness.

To successfully reach these strategic priorities, accomplishments and initiatives are detailed below.

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### Employee Engagement Team

The Employee Engagement Team (EET) listens to and learns from employees. As a result, the EET suggest ideas and changes to the workplace culture, which will support leadership in its quest to nurture the total wellbeing and talent of employees. EET initiatives currently include efforts toward team building, recognition, and skill development.

#### Team Building

Team Building provides opportunities for employees to come together and share common non-work-related interests and is a powerful way to build relationships across service areas. This helps break down barriers and builds a sense of belong-

ing within the broader organization, not just within the service area.

One way the EET has been providing team-building opportunities is through hosting six employee luncheon events throughout the year. These events offer recognition and/or learning opportunities for the attendees.



**Employee Engagement Luncheons provide a welcoming place for employees to connect with each other and share information and experiences they may otherwise not have had the chance to.**

#### Recognition

After pay and benefits, recognition is the greatest motivator keeping an employee on the job. Successful recognition is frequent, consistent, timely, specific, and done in a way that is appropriate and meaningful to the employee. Recognition must have support and participation from leaders throughout the organization and span all levels.

The EET’s recent recognition-related efforts include:

- Assisting with leadership recognition training where a banner recognizing various employee efforts and accomplishments was displayed in all County buildings.
- Holding a special recognition lunch at no charge for all County employees, paid for by the EET fundraisers and donations.
- Organizing Board of Commissioners recognition for retiring employees in November 2013.
- Organizing a peer-to-peer recognition process and selecting candidates to attend the 2013 Leadership Conference in October. The selected candidates were recognized for their work ethics aligning with Allegan County's core R.I.C.H. values: Respect, Integrity, Commitment, and Honesty.
- Developing and implementing recognition cards for use throughout the entire organization.
- Developing a process for recognizing new or retiring employees through the "Hail and Farewell" portion of the internal, online employee blog used to engage employees on a variety of topics.

### Skill Development

Interpersonal communication between managers and employees was identified as a major focus

area in an organization wide employee survey conducted in 2011. Two initiatives that begin to address this area of improvement include:

- Redesigning job descriptions to reflect competencies based on the County's strategic plan.
- Beginning to develop a recruitment program that includes learning and growth plans.

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### Leadership Conference

The second annual Allegan County Leadership Conference was held in October 2013 with 86 in attendance, including County representation from in and outside the organization. The goal of the conference was to drive home the importance of continuous process improvement, which is an integral part of the County's overall organizational strategy and commitment to driving results.

Leaders constantly face the challenge of meeting the needs and expectations of citizens or customers through existing practices and processes. Results are best realized by driving innovation and efficiency.

At the conference, attendees were introduced to the concept of Lean practices. For further information on Lean see page 7 of this report.



2014 Allegan County Leadership Conference attendees participate in one of several hands-on activities designed to reinforce the lessons learned.

## Safety

In 2012, the organization launched an ongoing initiative to increase drills, provide education, and perform ongoing evaluations aimed at improving our emergency preparedness. This included the development of Facility Emergency Response Plans (FERPs), which resulted in:

- Modifications completed to the notification process for all County buildings.
- Scheduling of the next round of drills for 2014.
- Restructuring the Emergency Evaluation Team into a cross-functional team for 2014 as part of the County’s continuous improvement process.
- Security measures being added to daily operations as a result of conducting drills.

## Wellness

On October 21, 2013, Allegan County contracted with Holtyn & Associates to administer the organization’s Wellness Plan. The objective of the plan is to manage healthcare costs and help em-

ployees’ balance their personal and work lives through a holistic approach to health, wellness and well-being.

Initiatives developed based on an employee survey and research data incorporate the following:

- Reducing obesity
- Increasing nutritional health
- Increasing physical activity
- Reducing tobacco use
- Improving all seven “dimensions of wellness”
- Improving the mental and emotional health status of employees and their families

### Allegan County Wellness Participation

	January 2014	April 2014
<b>Total Enrolled</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>BMA*/Coaching &amp; Health Survey</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Participation Rate (based on 329 eligible)</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>34%</b>

\*BMA: Biometric Assessment

## Continuously Improve Our Processes

The County's second strategic goal is to **Continuously Improve Our Processes**. Through continuous evaluation and improvement of support processes and service delivery, the organization will increase efficiency and cost effectiveness maximizing value for citizens.

Three strategic priorities have been developed and are aimed at the continuous improvement of processes:

- Be efficient and cost effective.
- Measure and learn from outcomes.
- Seek and implement innovative solutions.

To meet these strategic priorities, the County engaged in a variety of projects and initiatives, several of which are detailed below.

### Project Management

Allegan County's Project Management Team (PMT) continues to manage over 100 projects that require coordination between multiple service areas, need support from central services, require capital expenditures, or involve service contracts. The PMT is also helping teams continue to measure their own capacity, prioritize needs, and maintain focus on critical projects particularly within central services areas.

In 2013, the PMT worked with the Application Development Team to deploy a Microsoft SharePoint content management solution to hold all project-related documents and enable online collaboration between project team members. It also provides quick and easy reference points for project status updates and announcements of next steps for stakeholders. Refinement of the project sites and training for project managers and decision makers will continue throughout 2014.

### Continue Using Lean Concepts

Using Lean practices improves operational efficiency by identifying, and eliminating non-value-added activity (waste) associated with systems and

processes. Lean concepts actively engage everyone participating in a process, not just managers, in finding ways to minimize resources spent on those processes. As a result, more time and energy can be devoted to customer service.

With the deployment of a new phone system, the County deployed a "unified communication solution" to integrate telephone, instant messaging, and voicemail into a single interface for each user. We believe the use of these technologies increases efficiency and reduces time by up to one to two hours per week, per person. In addition, these solutions have been extended for use on tablets and smart phones as well. This further increases efficiency of offsite employees by enabling them to stay connected to the County's network.

In 2013, Information Services assumed a more central role in the purchasing process and completely revamped the entire Request for Proposal (RFP) process. By integrating contractual components, scope of work specifications, and project management activity schedules into a single published RFP packet, the entire process has been streamlined. This has yielded a 20-30% decrease in the time required for the approval and acceptance process. In addition, standardized custom RFP templates have been developed to make it easier for service areas to write RFPs themselves. This, too, has greatly reduced the development time by up to 50%, depending upon the complexity of the RFP.

Additional information on Lean concepts can be found at the following websites:

**GoOnline:** [Lean Government \(U.S. EPA\)](http://www.epa.gov/lean/government/)<sup>1</sup>

**GoOnline:** [Lean Government Services \(Conn.\)](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/lean/)<sup>2</sup>

**GoOnline:** [Lean Tools & Resources \(Oregon\)](http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/TRFM/Pages/resources.aspx)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/lean/government/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/lean/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/TRFM/Pages/resources.aspx>

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### Performance Measurement Dashboard

A performance measurement dashboard has been implemented and fully deployed on the County's website. The items on the dashboard represent key metrics in areas of economy, education, health, and public safety. The County will continue to expand on these as well as other metrics from additional service areas.

Beyond the dashboard, in the spirit of transparency, a citizen's guide to finances, the 2013 project budget report, a consolidation of services plan, and a 2013 debt service report were all published and made available to citizens.

*GoOnline:* [Performance Measurement Dashboard](#)<sup>4</sup>

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### Continued Web-based Service Development

The Website Development Team is progressing in its effort to allow employees to quickly and efficiently add or update information on the County's website themselves, allowing them to get timely and accurate information to the public faster than ever. The time and effort necessary to post position advertisements and job descriptions to the Human Resources website, for example, was cut by 90 percent! With 47,132 visits in 2013, the Human Resources website is among the top six most-accessed areas on the County website and comments from the public indicate the new site is easier to use and has saved them time. The recycling website has provided immediate announcements of changes to services and the latest information available.

These websites are also mobile-friendly, making it even easier to access important and helpful information for those connecting with the County using cellular phones and tablets. Additionally, the team has provided improved maps and additional GIS-related content, launched a new website for Allegan County Economic Development Commission, and debuted a Legal Assistance Center website as part of Michigan's Self-Help effort.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.allegancounty.org/Dashboard/Index.asp?pt=>

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### Electronic Health Records Software

New Federal rules and regulations require the County to begin using electronic health records (EHR) to improve healthcare delivery and service billing. To meet these regulations, bill for services and receive Meaningful Use incentives, the Health Department has implemented a new EHR solution. This solution has allowed for increased efficiency in providing quality health care services while reducing the duplication of data entry into different databases. The Health Department demonstrated compliance with the Meaningful Use initiatives and received over \$21,000 in incentives for meeting Federal government requirements.

Looking forward, this EHR solution will be able to provide a way for clients to access their health care records online at their convenience. The Health Department will continue to refine its health care service delivery to meet the Meaningful Use Stage 2 requirements and assure that Allegan County residents continue to have access to quality, efficient health care services.

*GoOnline:* [Meaningful Use \(CMS.gov\)](#)<sup>5</sup>

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### Electronic Document Management

By 2012, the Friend of the Court (FOC) records storage vault housed about 1.5 million sheets of paper and was within 83% of its capacity. This made retrieving files difficult and time consuming. Paper systems also tend to lack sufficient disaster recovering plans.

After a year of planning and process engineering, a document management solution was implemented for the FOC in October 2012. Since then, the Records Management Team has scanned and eliminated approximately 725,000 pieces of paper from the vault. This has opened up much needed vault space. In addition, by the FOC staff scanning all incoming documents, 117,000 new pieces of paper have been eliminated and will not need to be stored in the vault.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Meaningful\\_Use.html](http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Meaningful_Use.html)

More importantly, the document management solution has given caseworkers the ability to quickly access case file information from anywhere and at any time. Rather than checking out paper case files from the vault to take with them to court, caseworkers can easily access the digitized record. Furthermore, the digital file can be viewed by multiple staff simultaneously, if needed, thereby increasing efficiency and productivity office-wide.

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## **Videoconferencing**

Videoconferencing equipment has been installed in numerous conference rooms in both the Courthouse and the new correctional facility to allow attorneys to confer with their incarcerated clients without having them be physically transported to the Courthouse. The same technology is being installed in courtrooms.

Virtually every county and most courts now take advantage of this technology. This allows courts to remotely conduct arraignments, pleas and other hearings with defendants in jail and prison facilities inside and outside of the County without sending jail transport personnel to pick them up and bring them to the Courthouse. It also allows for remote testimony of expert witnesses and the use of language interpreters from remote locations.

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## **Service Area Collaboration**

Continued collaboration between service areas is an ongoing initiative. The following are a few examples of collaboration.

Senior and Veteran Services have continued to look for ways to improve on services and utilize all available resources to their fullest extent. In August of 2013, they began collaborating with the Health Department to unify the reception area and phones for both service areas. The Health Department Receptionist now supports both areas, which allows staff to focus on direct service provision while the clients are still greeted personally when they call or visit the offices.

In the fall of 2013, Facilities Management (FM) began assisting with buildings and grounds maintenance at county parks to alleviate a staff shortage. This initial cross-training effort was so successful it was decided facilities staff will continue to maintain the buildings and grounds at all county parks through the 2014 season. It resulted in increased efficiency as greater pools of skilled resources are now aligned to perform building and grounds maintenance collectively.

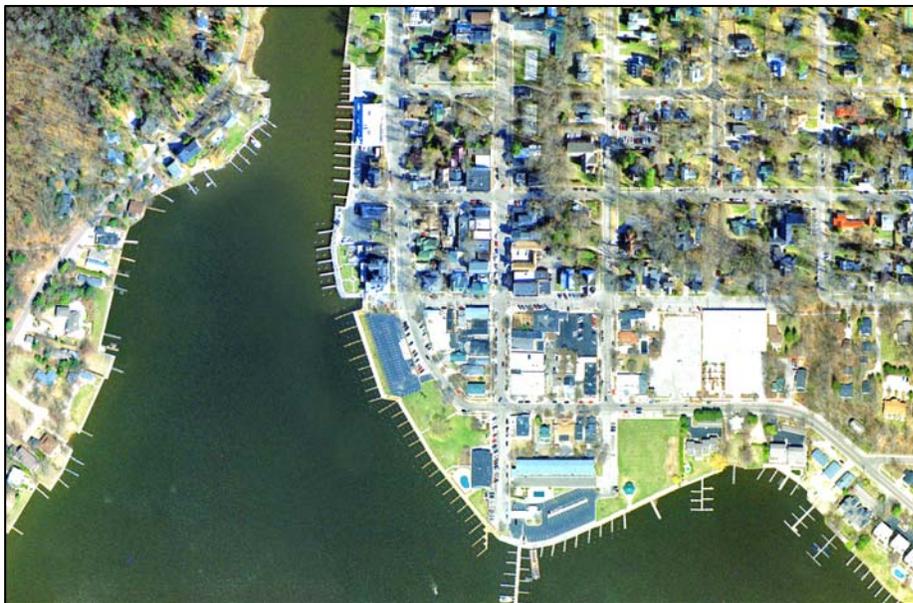
Cross-training proved to be equally beneficial to FM through the jail construction project. In order to meet construction deadlines, two part-time Parks staff members were brought in to assist the full-time FM team. The Parks staff was already familiar with FM operations and certain aspects of building maintenance. This allowed them to begin right away as opposed to having to orient and train new staff members in these operations. The collaboration was instrumental in completing several key activities of the new corrections facility on time.

The County Leadership Team, consisting of five elected officials, three court administrators and the County Administration, meet monthly to discuss policy, budget, and service area topics. One need identified through these discussions was improving grant compliance and coordination. It was determined a centralized resource was necessary. In June 2013, the Board of Commissioners approved the establishment of a full time Grants Coordinator. The position was filled in March 2014, with the responsibility of implementing financial reporting driven by a program performance matrix for all grant-funded programs and ensuring grant compliance.

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## **Aerial Imagery**

Every five years, the County contracts to acquire new aerial imagery to improve our Geographic Information System (GIS) dataset. GIS data and applications are used in a variety of services such as law enforcement, transportation, drain district assessments, tax administration, and emergency management. Aerial photography is collected from an aircraft flying over the County and taking continuous pictures as it travels.



A portion of the County-wide aerial photo coverage showing downtown Saugatuck. Since 2009, the aerial photography of Allegan County has been in color, which has greatly enhanced its value and made the compiling and maintenance of GIS databases easier.

For each of the past three aerial photography acquisitions, the County has successfully partnered with local units of government, adjacent counties and the State of Michigan to acquire and share the imagery and contribute to the costs at considerable savings to each partner. Through these collaborations, all partners benefit from the project at a substantially reduced cost. With a total project cost of over \$100,600, the County's \$27,600 share demonstrates a savings of approximately 75% versus not collaborating. The fly-over occurred in April and the new imagery will be available in the fall 2014.

*GoOnline:* [Allegan County Geographic Resources](http://www.allegancounty.org/Government/LIS)<sup>6</sup>

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### New Telephone System

In August 2013, the County telephone system suffered significant damages due to a lightning strike. Even though preventive equipment helped minimize damage it would not have been cost effective to repair the existing system. Although the 20 year-old phone system had performed reliably prior to the incident, it lacked many of the advanced features that new phone systems now possess.

The County chose to deploy a Cisco-based Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) solution with complete system redundancy and failover capability. Along with the standard calling features included in enterprise phone systems such as voicemail, voice menus, call forwarding, and conferencing, the “integrated presence notification” and instant messaging (IM) application Jabber was also deployed. The new system includes advanced features such as unified messaging and video calling. The unified message application alone is estimated to enhance services by 200 hours annually.

The new telephone system has been installed throughout the County Services Complex (Health Department, Community Mental Health and Animal Shelter) and will be completed by the end of the summer for downtown users in the Courthouse and Sheriff's Department. When fully deployed, this new system will help increase reliability and bolster cohesion for the entire County.

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### VHF Coverage Enhancement

To comply with FCC requirements, the County's fire radio communications system was “narrow-banded” in the fall of 2012; migrated from a 25 kHz bandwidth system to a 12.5 kHz system. As part of this “narrowbanding” process, coverage in

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.allegancounty.org/Government/LIS>

four areas of known poor pager reception, in the County, were identified for enhancement.

A project to increase VHF paging coverage in portions of Laketown and Leighton Townships to a minimum of 95% was implemented in 2013. Construction was completed in the summer, and testing concluded shortly thereafter. From post-implementation testing, coverage was found to have increased to the required levels of 95% for the identified areas.

At the conclusion of the VHF Coverage Enhancement project, the County then turned its attention to the Lakeshore to address VHF coverage issues there as well. Two additional projects were initiated to install VHF repeaters at two key locations along the lakeshore. The project was completed in May of 2014. Preliminary testing performed in early spring showed significant improvement in coverage.

*GoOnline:* [FCC Narrowbanding Mandate Info](#)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.wirelessradio.net/>

## Maintain Our Financial Stability

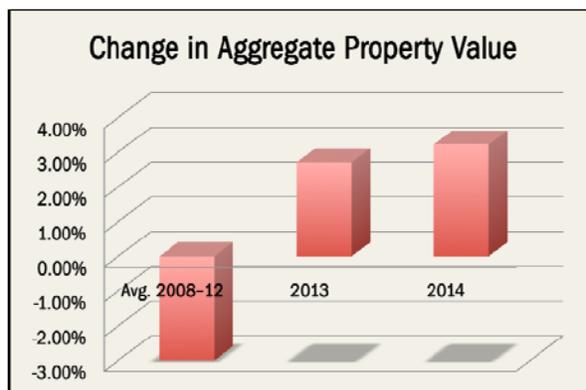
The third Strategic Goal, to **Maintain Our Financial Stability**, is another critical element of the overall vision and mission of the County. Three strategic priorities have been developed and are aimed at maintaining the County’s financial stability:

- Develop and maintain a balanced operational budget.
- Maintain reserve funds.
- Execute long term financial planning.

To meet these strategic priorities, the County has engaged in various projects and initiatives, several of which are detailed below. Background on the present state of Allegan County finances is also included.

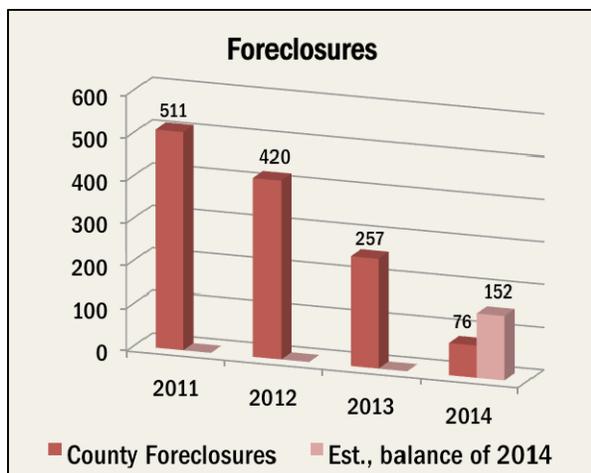
### Background

The aggregate market value of real estate property within Allegan County is approximately \$10.6 billion. During the recent economic downturn the County endured several consecutive years of declining property values. As reported by the County Equalization Director, this trend has now reversed as the economy has improved over the last few years.

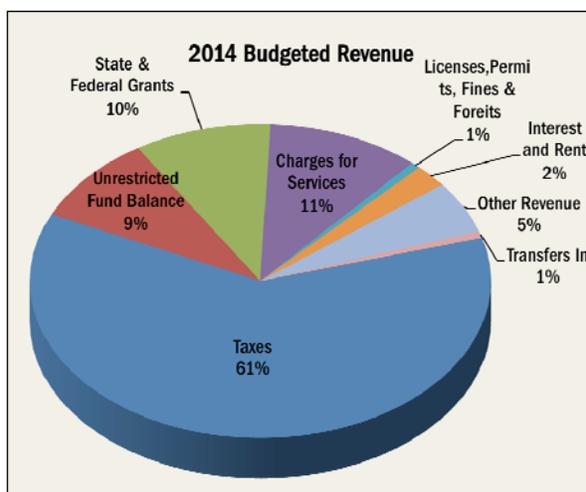


Allegan County’s finances remain both healthy and stable as a result of its practical decision to follow a few reasoned fiscal principles. The County maintains an unreserved General Fund fund-balance of 10% of General Fund budgeted expenditures. The County’s budget stabilization fund is maintained at the maximum level allowed by law. The Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund (DTRF) is used to settle delinquent taxes that were not received by local taxing units. The settlement process is the vehicle by which the County provides funds to the local units covering their delinquent tax amount. This enables the County to continue collection of those taxes directly from the property owner and receive interest and fees. The DTRF is set at 150% of the current County-wide tax year’s settlement. Allegan County also maintains a considerably low level of debt.

Allegan County’s 2014 General Fund operating budget was adopted at \$29,731,946. The General



This upward movement in property values is likely to continue and is supported by a sharp decline in property foreclosures across the County since 2011, as illustrated by the chart at upper right.



Fund 2014 budget includes property tax revenue of \$20,096,779, a slight increase over the prior year's budget.

*GoOnline:* [A Public Guide to County Finances](#)<sup>8</sup>

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## Budget Policy

Allegan County continues to review and amend its comprehensive budget policy each year. The 2015 budget process will build on the previous year's three-year plan and expand to a five-year operational budget. In addition, the County has commenced the development of a 15-year budget for capital projects to include buildings, upgrades and replacement of equipment. Together, the County's five-year operational budget and 15-year capital budget will result in improved planning. In addition, it will enhance the County's ability to make informed, transparent decisions on the type and the level of services we provide our citizens.

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## Capital Improvement Plan

The County's Project Management Team (PMT) continues to plan, schedule, coordinate and monitor the execution of approved annual capital projects. As these projects are executed, the PMT continues to inventory and document details about each asset group for inclusion in the County's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This information is critical to developing accurate maintenance plans and replacement schedules for each asset, such as major equipment and infrastructure.

When combined with extensive cost estimates, the CIP is projecting an increasingly complete and accurate picture of future capital budget requirements for a five-year operational and 15-year infrastructure window of time.

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<sup>8</sup>[http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/FIN/Dashboard/AC\\_2013CitizensGuideFinances.pdf](http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/FIN/Dashboard/AC_2013CitizensGuideFinances.pdf)

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## Maintain or Increase Bond Rating

In capital investment, a credit rating, or "bond rating," represents the credit worthiness (or credit risk) of corporate or government bonds. Credit risk refers to the probability that a borrower will make all required payments to the lender or investor when those payments are due. The bond rating is a critical element of County's "financial report card."

Allegan County is currently rated "AA" from Standard & Poor's. The "AA" rating indicates the County has excellent capacity to meet its financial commitments. When local units of government within Allegan County use the County as the issuer of their municipal bonds, those municipalities benefit by paying a slightly lower interest rate due to the County's bond rating. For example, in 2013 Fillmore Township was able to access lower interest rates utilizing Allegan County's bond rating to refinance the outstanding debt on its public works projects.

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## Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL)

Allegan County presently has an Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) in the defined benefit pension plan of approximately \$19 million. For more than a decade the County has taken action to reduce the growth of its UAL going forward, including:

- Defined benefit plans will remain closed to all new hires;
- All new hires to the Police Officers Labor Council Command coming to the unit without a defined benefit plan are provided a defined contribution plan. This was effective as of January 1, 2014;
- All new hires to the Police Officers Labor Council Deputies coming are provided a defined contribution plan, rather than a defined benefit plan. This was effective as of January 1, 2014;
- The County contributes to the existing defined benefit plan at an actuarially determined rate and was 71% funded as of December 31, 2012—the most recent valuation date.

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- Going forward the County will continue to contribute 100% of its actuarially determined annual pension cost to fund the legacy cost of both former and existing employees that remain in a defined benefit plan.

Finally, in order to fix the required contributions to its UAL and potentially save up to \$3 million over the long-term, Allegan County is pursuing feasibility of a pension bond financing under Public Act 329.

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### Courthouse Square

Allegan County's new Sheriff's Office and Correction Center will be fully occupied by late summer 2014, leaving the current jail, constructed in 1961, vacant. Planning efforts within the Courthouse Square, where this building resides, have already begun. The long-term use for this space and the Courthouse Square is being evaluated.

On November 14, 2013, the County held a pre-charrette (Board Planning Session) to discuss the Courthouse and Courthouse Square study. Input on the future interior and exterior facility needs was collected from interested citizens and County employees. The County has hired a consultant to conduct a study which includes defining the 20-year space and facility needs in addition to exploring possible additions, renovations and reconfigurations for the square. Follow-up planning charrette will be held end of July. Citizens and various stakeholders will be invited to participate.

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### Economic Development

The purpose of the Allegan County Economic Development Commission (EDC) is to take a higher-level view of the County's economic development program and offer guidance and leadership to County staff in addressing stakeholder needs.

In the fall of 2013, Allegan County contracted with the Allegan Area Educational Service Agency (AAESA) to provide economic development services, which established a new Director of Economic Development for Allegan County. This has allowed for central coordination of Economic De-

velopment services both within the County and for outside entities seeking information. In addition, this move provides a means for building relationships with other economic development entities in the region and active participation in discussions and initiatives that go beyond the borders of Allegan County.

A primary goal of the economic development contract requires at least 50 business retention visits within Allegan County. Within the first seven months, 32 business connections have been made along with 50 local partner and regional meetings and events. Key partner connections include The Right Place, Lakeshore Advantage, Southwest Michigan First, Michigan Economic Development Commission (MEDC), Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), the Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Michigan Economic Developers Association (MEDA), and all local cities and chambers of commerce.

Looking ahead the members of the EDC are preparing to develop a community assessment process that would provide a strategic plan for the county and move forward the expansion of economic development services and establish Allegan County Economic Development as a recognized brand within the community.

*GoOnline:* [Allegan County Economic Development Commission](http://www.allegancountyedc.org/)<sup>9</sup>

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### Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority was established for the purpose of assisting development projects that face economic challenges due to environmental constraints.

In 2010, it was awarded two \$200,000 EPA Environmental Assessment grants, one for hazardous substances and one for petroleum. Both grants have been expended with 10 sites benefiting from the hazardous substance grant and five sites for petroleum. The two largest projects were the Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority in the Sauga-

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.allegancountyedc.org/>

tuck/Douglas area and the Rock-Tenn Paper Mill in Otsego. In addition, Rizzo Packaging was a site identified to receive assessment funds. Paul Rizzo, President, provided the following recent testimonial:

“Rizzo Packaging is very appreciative of the partnership with Allegan County’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. With the BRA’s assistance, we were able to acquire a vacant piece of land and have

begun strategic planning for expansion and investment.”

Going forward, the Authority will be reviewing options for remediating the environmental conditions discovered through these assessments in an ongoing effort to return these properties to economic use. The Authority will also submit for continuing assessment grants as they become available for application later in 2014.

## Provide Valuable and Necessary Quality Services

The final strategic goal is to **Provide Valuable And Necessary Quality Services To Our Customers.**

The demand for human services continues to increase as funding continues to lag behind. With a focus on customer service and meeting the needs of citizens, Allegan County continues to find ways to make services more readily available.

Three strategic priorities have been developed and are aimed at providing valuable and necessary quality services to the County's customers:

- Deliver affordable and accessible services.
- Engage and educate our citizenry.
- Collaborate locally and regionally.

A few selected projects and initiatives centered on these priorities are detailed below.

### Senior and Veteran Services

#### Senior Services

The responsibilities of Senior Services includes distributing the senior millage funds to service providers chosen to provide access, community, in-home services, and nutrition services. The current millage will expire end of 2014. A renewal question has been placed on the August 2014 ballot. To help illustrate the impact Senior Services has on the customers they serve, below are some of the service level statistics for 2013 and the first five months of 2014:

#### Senior Services Service Levels

	2013	2014 Jan-May
Home-Delivered Meals served	47,722	21,302
Adult Day Care hours	13,060	5,149
In-Home Support hours	27,237	12,481
Transportation (miles)	137,581	83,533
PERS (units)	36	56

#### Veteran Services

Through a partnership with the Veterans Administration, Allegan County was able to host the first Annual Homeless Veteran Stand Down in August of 2013. This outreach event assisted 45 veterans who were homeless or struggling with housing and other financial issues. More than 30 community and Veterans Administration service programs were on hand to perform HIV testing and other health screens, distribute comfort and surplus items, and provide information and assistance to allow the veterans to work towards independence.

Unfortunately only veterans with wartime service can receive emergency assistance services that are provided by local and state resources. This leaves a large population of "peace time" veterans with no available support for emergent situations. In October of 2013, Senior and Veteran Services established a partnership with the West Michigan Veterans Assistance Program (WMVAP), a non-profit program that provides emergency assistance to all honorably discharged veterans. The WMVAP board conducts face-to-face interviews with veterans in Allegan County on a monthly basis, and has provided over \$2,000 to date in emergency support to veterans that otherwise would not have been possible.

#### Resource Expo

Formerly the "Human Services Expo," the 2014 Resource Expo was held at the Human Services Building on May 15. The main focus of the Expo was to bring the County's Human Service agencies together to share information on their services and to provide training opportunities on topics relevant for human service providers. It also gave an opportunity for County Commissioners, County employees, and members of the public to learn about the various Human Services offered by the County and partner agencies.

Highlights of the event included exhibits by fifteen agencies representing most of the Human

Services offered by the County, a morning training workshop on Emergency Preparedness for home or business, and an afternoon session on the Energy efficiency in the home and business. This year's event also included a static display in front of the building that included transportation, SWAT, and other law enforcement vehicles.

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## Citizen Engagement

The County continues to deploy initiatives designed to collect input from customers on the services provided. For example, Health Services provides paper and online opportunities for all clients to be able to submit. Client satisfaction survey results are analyzed quarterly to recognize exemplary service, identify areas of concern, evaluate the usefulness of data being returned, implement changes and share results with other managers and county leaders. One example of how the data is used to drive process changes occurred in the vision and hearing clinic where comments were received about long wait times. The vision and hearing clinic went from a walk-in clinic to an appointment-based system to reduce wait times.

In 2012, there were 453 client surveys were returned and 447 were received in 2013.

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## Animal Shelter

Wishbone Pet Rescue Alliance continues to col-



**Dr. Lisa Applegate and Licensed Veterinarian Technician Lori VanRyswyk treat a frozen cat brought to the Shelter by a citizen.**

laborate with the County through an agreement to manage the animal shelter and the animals brought to the shelter. After just three years, the animal shelter has transformed from a holding facility to a vibrant animal adoption shelter, adopting out more than euthanizing. Staff and volunteer enhancements have improved both health and mental care of the animals. In 2013, intake was 2,003 cats and dogs. With adoptions, transfers and reclaims, 2,040 animals were able to leave the shelter. A portion of those animals adopted were from intake at the end of 2012.

Animals adopted are not only current on vaccinations, but also spayed or neutered and micro-chipped. Donations to the animal shelter have increased and public support to volunteer and adopt has increased. The Animal Shelter is a bright spot in the County for care and re-homing of lost pets.

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## Self Help Legal Assistance Center

The primary purpose of the Legal Assistance Center (LAC) is to give County residents access to legal information on civil proceedings related to divorce, child custody and child support cases as well as other non-criminal matters. The LAC helps individuals locate relevant legal information using the Michigan Legal Help Program website, navigate the legal process and fill out necessary forms. The LAC also makes referrals to community agencies for non-legal assistance and has a list of attorneys with fee schedules if legal representation is desired. The LAC does not provide legal advice.

By providing these services, the LAC attempts to streamline court proceedings by ensuring that litigants are better prepared for their day in court. Services are offered on a walk-in basis. Since opening its doors in July of 2012, the LAC has assisted 1,740 visitors.

**GoOnline:** [Allegan County Legal Assistance Center](http://www.allegancounty.org/Government/LAC/Index.asp)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.allegancounty.org/Government/LAC/Index.asp>

### Drug Treatment Court

Allegan County is in its third year of providing a Drug Treatment Court (DTC). DTC has a specially designed docket, the purpose of which is to achieve a reduction in recidivism and substance abuse among non-violent offenders and to increase their likelihood of achieving a drug-free productive life. DTC utilizes early, continuous and intensive judicially supervised treatment, mandatory periodic drug and alcohol testing, community supervision and the use of appropriate sanctions, incentives and rehabilitation services to achieve this goal.

The program is appropriate for cases where the judge has some discretion in sentencing based on the offense and the individual and can use the DTC as an alternative to sending someone to state prison. The DTC has been successful in obtaining additional grant money for the state this year, which allows for additional participants. The DTC continues to review applications to make sure that community safety concerns are addressed.

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### Mental Health Treatment Court

The Mental Health Treatment Court (MHTC) in Allegan County was formed in September of 2009, funded by a grant obtained by the Allegan County Sheriff Department and the Allegan City Police. Beginning this fiscal year, the court is funded by the State Court Administrators Office and the Michigan Department of Community Health through the Michigan Mental Health Court Grant Program.

MHTC is modeled after the drug treatment court and was developed in response to the overrepresentation of people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system. The MHTC diverts select defendants with mental illness into judicially-supervised, community-based treatment. Defendants are invited to participate following a specialized screening and assessment and they may choose to decline to participate in the program. A team of court staff and mental health professionals work together to develop treatment plans and to supervise the participants in the community. Participants appear at regular status hearings be-

fore the judge and receive incentives and sanctions as appropriate. The MHTC has a capacity of 25 participants and is currently supervising 14 participants.

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### Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program

The Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (SSSPP) is a new program in the Allegan County Circuit Court. It is an intensive probation supervision program that targets high-risk felony offenders with a history of probation violations or failures. SSSPP participants are closely monitored, including being subjected to frequent random testing for drug and alcohol use, and are required to meet regularly with probation and/or case management staff. SSSPP aims to improve probationer success by promptly imposing graduated sanctions, including small amounts of jail time for probation violations. SSSPP is modeled on Hawaii's HOPE program, which has proven to be very effective in improving the rate of successful completion of probation among high-risk probationers.

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### Veterans Treatment Court

The West Michigan Veterans Regional Treatment Court (WMRVTC) is new to Allegan County this year. It is the first regional veterans treatment court in Michigan. It serves military veterans from Allegan and Van Buren counties and has veteran clients from Ottawa and Kent counties as well. The court uses Drug Court and Mental Health Court principles to treat veterans. WMRVTC promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response that involves the collaboration of the traditional partners found in drug and mental health courts as well as the Veterans Administration, Allegan County Senior and Veterans Services, volunteer mentors and others. It is funded by a grant from the State Court Administrators Office.

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## Truancy Direct Referral Diversion Program

The Allegan County Family Court is implementing a new program for dealing with school truancy. Truancy has been identified as an early indicator of potential delinquent activity, social isolation and/or educational failure. Truancy is a serious issue in Allegan County and the court realized that a more structured and intensive diversion program was needed to deal with the problem. This new program, Direct Referral Diversion, involves a close collaboration between family court and the schools. When a child is identified as high risk to be truant by the designated school official, the school will call the diversion officer directly, preferably before the child accumulates a large number of absences. This early intervention and

direct referral process is intended to immediately identify barriers to attendance and provide an array of services to the child and family to help remove those barriers without requiring the child to undergo the formal court process.

One of the biggest challenges to participants in each of our problem solving courts and programs is transportation during the treatment and recovery process. While some participants have been able to use their personal vehicle under the Ignition Interlock System, Allegan County Transportation has been a great resource to assist those that do not have other transportation. The courts also utilize the Veterans Administration, private foundation money and grant based funding when available.

## 2013 Closed Projects

Completed projects or initiatives previously highlighted in past State of the County reports are included here for quick reference.

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### Health Initiative

In compliance with Public Act 152 of 2012 Allegan County chose the “hard cap” option, which regulates the amount of health insurance premium government employers can pay. Every employee group participated and of the 16 healthcare plans considered, three were chosen by County employees. Those new health care plans were implemented effective January 1, 2013.

In the first year of implementation, the effect of the Health Initiative was twofold. County employees were able to retain more control of, and responsibility for, the level of healthcare costs incurred in a given year as a result of the new healthcare plans. The cumulative healthcare costs (including medical, prescription drug, dental, vision, hearing, HSA contributions and various fees) for Allegan County, as the employer, were reduced by 19% on a total cost basis and reduced by 21% on a per-employee, per-month basis when compared to 2012.

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### Community Development Block Grant Program

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is designed to help eligible homeowners in non-entitlement areas of the County to carry out certain home repairs and improvement projects. Allegan County is finalizing the completion of the last grant cycle (January 1, 2012–December 31, 2013). Estimated amount spent to rehabilitate houses for 2013 was \$15,000.

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### Electronic Medical Records Software

Both the Medical Care Community and the Community Mental Health agency successfully

implemented their respective electronic medical records applications. Through continued evaluation and monitoring of the solution, both organizations are expanding the use of the applications. Specifically, laptops and tablets have been deployed for mobile users, including nurses and caseworkers, to be able to more efficiently access the information in areas where the services are actually being provided.

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### Client Management for Senior Services

The client management software was deployed successfully to our Senior Services office in the summer of 2013 and deployed to five external providers that interact with the County’s system remotely. With this new software, Allegan County has been able to generate higher quality and more timely reports. In addition, final project costs for the chosen solution were 30% less than original budgeted amount.

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### Comprehensive Technology Network Security Audit

The April 18, 2013 report from the auditors came back very positive and only noted a few minor issues. Many of those issues were corrected within 24 hours of the report review process at no cost to the County. The County continues to enlist the services of the State of Michigan to perform monthly Internet security audits of external-facing servers in order to ensure any new solution deployed is as safe as possible.

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### Automated Vehicle Locator

The Allegan County Transportation automated vehicle locator (AVL) project from spring of

2013 has shown improved outcome in several areas:

- Office staff can add or delete customer trips via the tablet each driver uses for each route.
- Every driver can be located at any time should the driver not respond to a radio call or when a customer calls and states their bus has not arrived yet.
- Drivers can familiarize and view for themselves their entire route on the tablet before they leave the facility.
- Usage of tablets provides proof of pick-up and drop-off for every trip provided. From 2012 to 2013 rides increased by 5.1% and miles have decreased by 7.1% showing improved efficiency.

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## Negotiations

In 2012, collective bargaining groups came to the table to negotiate and the County was able to settle all labor contracts (with the exception of one long overdue contract, which was also settled out of arbitration through mutual agreement). We continue to strive to make the contracts materially equitable.

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## Voluntary Separation Plan

As part of a County's budget strategy, the organization offered voluntary separation plans (VSPs) for 2010, 2011, and 2012. In early 2013, a decision was made to discontinue the VSP for the 2014 budget process. This direction continues through future budget preparation. The statistics from past years can be found in the 2013 State of the County report.

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## Narrowband Radio Compliance

This project resulted in narrowband radio compliance for Allegan County law enforcement, fire and EMS. The objective was met with compliance prior to 2013 deadline.

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## Health Assessment

Allegan County is designated a Health Professional Shortage Area for certain ZIP Codes. To help address this issue, the Health Department secured a planning grant from the Health Resources Services Administration to engage the community in identify health needs. This assessment, completed in August 2012, identified health priorities for the County and geographic locations where services are needed the most. The grant provided a report on the needs and Allegan General Hospital System was seen as a viable organization to pursue a Federal Qualified Health Center. They were unable to pursue it at this time, however, due to competing priorities.

Going forward the data collected through the Federal Qualified Planning Grant will assist with identifying health priorities in the future.

*GoOnline:* [Health Professional Shortage Areas](#)<sup>11</sup>

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## State Revenue Sharing

Over the years, the State of Michigan's Revenue Sharing program with the counties of the state has been an unpredictable source of revenue, making planning difficult for county governments. Prior to the State's hold on the County Revenue Sharing allocation (CRS), Allegan County received approximately \$2.2 million annually. In addition, beginning in 2012 the County became part of the State's newly formed Economic Vitality Program (EVIP). EVIP consists of three components each of which requires that specific information be provided to the state and made available to the public in a consistent format. Allegan County successfully completed each component within the required timeframe and received CRS and EVIP funding in the amount of \$1.87 million in 2012. During 2013, the County received approximately \$1.79 million in combined CRS and EVIP funding in 2013, down \$80,000 from the prior year. Planning and budgeting revenues using

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<sup>11</sup> <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/hpsas/index.html>

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CRS and EVIP program may continue to present challenges for Allegan County in the years ahead.

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### Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded mandates on the County's budget and the funding ratio between the parties place an increasing burden on the services provided by Allegan County. For example, when adding the General Fund portion of judicial expenditures to the Child Care Fund, judicial expendi-

tures total more than \$10 million. However the County receives only approximately \$3 million from State and Federal sources. Health Services is another example, where Allegan County collects significantly less than the 50% funding level hypothetically in place for counties in the state. Unfunded mandates have the potential to continue to place an increasing demand on many Allegan County services in the years ahead.

## Major Projects

### County Law Enforcement

In September of 2012 the, County Law Enforcement Project Team presented a modified precinct road patrol plan to the various townships, cities, and villages of Allegan County to help balance Sheriff's Office coverage with municipal police agencies and township contracts. The strategy presented continues to be a goal of the Sheriff's Office in providing a Community Based Policing model.

Changes in the staffing and geographic responsibilities of our law enforcement partner, the Michigan State Police, have resulted in challenges in fully implementing the Community Coordinated Operational Precinct Plan (CCOP). While these challenges may have prevented the full implementation and benefits of the CCOP plan, it has been successful in initiating continued dialogue and coordination of services helping to ensure Allegan County citizens are receiving fair and equitable police service.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to work with its law enforcement partners to evaluate and improve police services throughout Allegan County. Additionally, upon completion of the Corrections Center Project, the Sheriff's Office hopes to refocus its resources towards the evaluation and improvement of the CCOP Plan.

Short-term plan goals include:

- Complete the field training of recently-hired deputies to bring road patrol staffing levels to 24 positions.
- Encourage increased involvement by the Sheriff's Office and our Project partners.
- Continue to work with Information Services to provide better statistical information to the townships, cities, and villages.
- The Sheriff's Office will continue seeking input from the representatives of the communities it serves for the purpose of developing specific enforcement strategies and community policing initiatives relevant to their location within Allegan County.

### Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center

Allegan County has faced major challenges operating the jail facility built in 1961, which has undergone four renovations with a final rated capacity of 173 inmates. In addition, the building houses all other Sheriff operations.

Over time, challenges continued to grow within the facility and the population the County managed continued to change. These challenges included a high operating cost for the facility, limited ability to safely separate inmates based on need and circumstance, limited visibility of inmates, and various health and safety risks for staff, visitors and inmates. Adversity regarding finances, site location and even misperception of needs all presented obstacles to moving forward toward a solution. Despite the growing challenges, County personnel



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motivated by serving others managed to safely operate a building that otherwise could be considered inoperable.

In 2001, a vision for Allegan County Government was established. At that same time, consistent with this vision, County leaders also established shared philosophies for how corrections and law enforcement should be conducted in Allegan County.

By 2007, the County organization began to focus on the development of strategies to move toward this vision. While the jail and Sheriff's Department facility in which the County operated may not have been reflective of the vision, philosophies, or shared values, the heart, passion and actions of those serving was. The County visibly moved forward together with a commitment towards continuously improving processes and services to achieve the vision of "Providing our citizens superior and innovative services, being judicious and efficient in the expenditure of resources and promoting a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to live, work and play."

In 2008, with leaders moving forward together, a resolution by the County Board of Commissioners gave the definitive direction to construct a facility—one that would be consistent with the County's vision.

Construction began on the County's new Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center at 640 River Street on the north side of Allegan in February 2012. Construction on the facility is nearing completion and the estimated date of occupancy is the late summer of 2014. The initial cost of the facility was projected to be approximately \$20.2 million.

This new facility exemplifies the County's Vision:

- Repurposing of an existing vacant manufacturing facility saved at least \$14 million as opposed to new construction.
- The use of advanced technology such as video visitation court proceedings will minimize transportation costs both within and outside the facility and aids in safety within the community.
- High visibility of inmates from a central point through direct line of sight and through the use of technology.

### Allegan County Jail Timeline

A town jail was built in 1840 for \$1,568 on the west side of the public square. In 1862 a replacement was built for \$4,890 adjacent to the church/courthouse on the south side. The jail housed four cells on the ground floor, six on the upper floor, with a jailer's residence in the front. In 1906 a new jail was constructed in the same location for \$24,940 which we now call the County Museum.



In 1961 the existing jail was built with construction and furnishing costs at more than \$700,000. There were three major renovations done to the building within the first 20 years of its service.



Construction on the current Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center facility began in February 2012 and will be fully open and operational by the end of summer 2014.



- Single-site operations promote collaboration and sharing of resources within the organization and even within the region.
- Adequate and secure evidence storage.
- Improving health and safety through the ability to appropriately separate inmates, improved ventilation, and adequate medical space.
- Expansion and growth opportunities to ensure the organization can adapt and improve to meet ever-changing needs.

The Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center that stands today provides Allegan County with improved tools to "...innovate services, be judicious and efficient in the expenditure of resources and promote a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to live, work and play."

On March 8, 2014, the community celebrated this collaborative and commendable project by hosting the Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center Dedication Ceremony and Tours with 727 people in attendance.



At the dedication ceremony (left to right): Commissioner Jessup, Commissioner Kapenga, Commissioner Black, Sheriff Koops, Commissioner Storey



At the ribbon-cutting ceremony (left to right): Sheriff Koops, Commissioner DeYoung, Commissioner Storey, County Administrator Rob Sarro

**GoOnline** for additional information and resources on this project:

- [Allegan County Sheriff's Office and Corrections Center: Questions and Answers](http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/SD/COR_Jail/JP20120330_FAQs.pdf)<sup>12</sup>
- [Collaboration, perseverance built new corrections center](http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/news/BOC20140311_PressRelease_SheriffCorrectionCenterDedication.pdf)<sup>13</sup> – Press release, March 11, 2014
- [Allegan County Debuts New Jail](http://www.correctionalnews.com/articles/2014/03/11/allegan-county-debuts-new-jail)<sup>14</sup> – March 11, 2014 article from *Correctional News*.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/SD/COR\\_Jail/JP20120330\\_FAQs.pdf](http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/SD/COR_Jail/JP20120330_FAQs.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/news/BOC20140311\\_PressRelease\\_SheriffCorrectionCenterDedication.pdf](http://www.allegancounty.org/docs/news/BOC20140311_PressRelease_SheriffCorrectionCenterDedication.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.correctionalnews.com/articles/2014/03/11/allegan-county-debuts-new-jail>

### Conclusion

Reflecting on the many accomplishments and current initiatives outlined in this report, it is important to recognize the connectivity of all elements to the County's strategy. Each strategy is an interrelated building block to the next enabling us to achieve results.

One of our goals in delivering this type of report is to keep you informed on the results of the services being provided. Results are possible in all focus areas through the continuous improvement model obtainable through excellent communication, accountability, transparency, and feedback.

We hope you enjoyed reading the 2014 State of the County. True to our spirit of continuous improvement, feedback is essential to our success. To assist in collecting our customer's feedback a short survey is available at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AC\\_SOC2014](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AC_SOC2014).