

The Mission of the Jackson County Fair Board and Expo

The mission of the Jackson County Fair and Expo is to: Provide social, cultural, recreational, agricultural, commercial, and educational opportunities for the citizens of Jackson County.

The Vision of the Jackson County Fair Board and Expo

The Jackson County Expo facility shall expand to meet the increasing recreational, entertainment, cultural, educational and commerce needs of the citizens in the county and the region as well as visitors to the region. The facility will emerge as a primary driver of economic development in the area. The facility will be differentiated by being a unique destination as defined by its product, services and aesthetic offerings.

This expansion is based on a series of 30-year planning cycles to entice private investment as well as on an understanding that the citizens and the government retain title and ownership of the property and the facilities. Management of operations and expanded operations will move to a nonprofit reporting structure. This nonprofit enterprise will have the interface and the contractual powers to operate as granted via a long-term lease agreement with Jackson County. This lease arrangement would be reviewed by the County Commission–appointed Jackson County Fair Board.

To meet this expanding role and be financially solvent, the Expo must start a series of income-generating projects. Initially, this needs to focus on maximizing the existing infrastructure and leveraging the physical site and its proximity to I-5 and the Rogue Valley International Airport. The frontage exposure, scale of the property and untapped resources such as the water features are natural starting points. Attaining economic mass via private investment is essential. While the expansion will be driven by private investment, the partnerships with the City of Central Point, Jackson County and some state agencies will be essential.

The vision will honor the historical past of the 100-year-old county fair institution and includes a contractual commitment to annually afford opportunities to all citizens to learn through competition. This would include 4-H, FFA and what is known as open-class programs. The vision needs to add learning through competition and the development of life skills in categories germane to a globally competitive marketplace, such as the technology and engineering fields.

Historically, fairs and expos started as social and educational events for rural agricultural communities. With slight adaptations, that role still exists and should be part of the vision. The vision should include consideration of an equine/bovine complex, as our facility lends itself to becoming a West Coast destination for these types of events. The vision should also include a means of showcasing value-added foods and beverages, as our regional wine, cheese, beer and fruit industries compete internationally. Communities need to understand where their food comes from, and they want to buy and eat locally when they can. The vision of the Expo should include a showcase for these industries year-round, as food tourism is an emerging market.

The vision should consider as potential income streams new investments that bring synergy. An RV park, for example, with a range of price points and service offerings could accelerate our horse show business. Such a park could also enhance our trade show business and potentially offer us revenue generation 365 days per year. A hotel, with meeting space of scale, could fill a much-needed niche in expanded trade shows and conventions, again on a 365-day basis. Investments in our water features could draw new competitions and offer differentiation and broader appeal to some of our existing events. Refurbishing some existing facilities could create multipurpose uses for added recreation, sporting and trade show events.

The vision recognizes that branding and marketing rights will be part of the new horizon and likely part of the private-investment package. That said, a stream of dedicated income to the Expo seems a reasonable trade-off. It is important to note that the precedent has been set with the operation of the Family Fun Center on Expo grounds for the past 12 years. That revenue stream has been used to provide part of the programming at the Fair and the Expo.