



Goals & Objectives

The City of Marion's draft Comprehensive Plan is an expression of aspirations of the community and where the City wishes to find itself in the future. Through recommendations and established goals and objectives, the draft Plan becomes a reliable policy guide for decision-making and City action.

This section presents the Plan's goals and objectives, which provide the framework for planning recommendations, policies and future projects and actions:

Goals describe desired outcomes toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long-range. They represent an ideal to strive for and challenges the City should seek to overcome.

Objectives describe more specific actions that should be undertaken by the City in order to advance toward the overall goals. They provide more precise and measurable guidelines for planning action.

The goals and objectives presented are based on input received from: a) City staff and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee; b) community workshops; c) the resident questionnaire; d) the visioning workshop; and e) various other public meetings and discussions.

Goals and Objectives have been established for:

- Residential Neighborhoods
- Commercial Areas
- Business Parks & Industrial Areas
- Community Facilities & Services
- Parks, Open Space, & Recreation
- Transportation & Connectivity
- City Image and Identity
- Plan Implementation & Administrative Action

Residential Neighborhoods

Goal 1

Provide a diverse housing stock that meets the needs of local residents while accommodating future growth.

Objectives

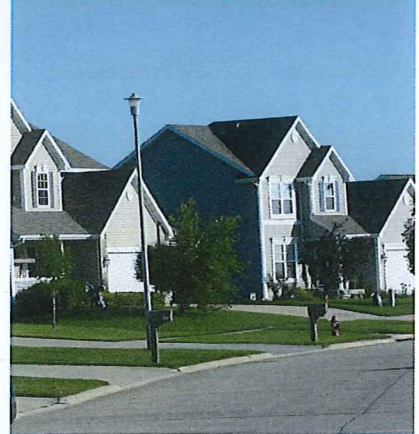
1. Protect residential areas from the adverse impacts of adjacent incompatible land uses.
2. Promote the repositioning of incompatible land uses in predominantly residential areas.
3. Ensure that residential areas have adequate buffering and/or screening from incompatible adjacent land uses.
4. Diversify the housing stock by allowing appropriately sized and scaled townhomes, condominium and senior housing development.
5. Promote the creation of new residential neighborhoods that are visually appealing and incorporate a wider range of architecture.
6. Ensure there is an adequate amount of high quality senior citizen housing options in new development or redevelopment.

Goal 2

Promote the desired character of established residential neighborhoods and enhance the overall health, quality, and image of Marion.

Objectives

1. Create context sensitive design guidelines that encourage new development and infill development to respect the scale and character of existing residential neighborhoods.
2. Promote the improvement and rehabilitation of deteriorating residential properties.
3. Preserve sound existing housing through regular, active code enforcement, and preventative maintenance programs.
4. Ensure that residents can safely walk or bike through their neighborhoods and have convenient access to local commercial areas, parks, and community facilities.



The City's housing stock should be diverse to accommodate residents with a wide range of age and income.



Pedestrian linkages should be provided through commercial area parking lots, to clearly demarcate pedestrian areas and to enhance pedestrian safety.

Commercial Areas

Goal 1

Maintain areas of healthy commercial development throughout the City that provide a range of goods and services to local residents and attract visitors from the larger region.

Objectives

1. Maintain a range of retail and service commercial activities throughout the City primarily along the major arterials and the commercial corridors.
2. Improve the land use pattern and zoning districts throughout the City's commercial areas to improve the use, appearance, and cohesiveness of development.
3. Encourage new commercial development to complement the scale and character of adjacent development.
4. Consider the use of incentives in attracting commercial development to select areas of the City.
5. Develop strategies to attract full-service restaurant and 'nightlife'/entertainment uses to the City's commercial areas, including Uptown.
6. Explore the demand for and feasibility of locating a convention facilities and/or a hotel with conference space within the City.
7. Encourage new and infill commercial development located at prominent intersections near the City's boundary to provide an easement for potential gateway enhancements that announce entry to Marion.
8. Establish a wayfinding signage system that directs motorists and pedestrians to key retail, office, industrial, and community facility destinations.
9. Encourage improved connectivity between adjacent commercial properties and minimize curb cuts along major commercial corridors.
10. Identify actions and strategies that will enhance the economic health of Uptown Marion and the City's commercial corridors.
11. Develop an Uptown Marion Master Plan that reflects the recommendations of the Central Corridor Master Plan, including detailed land use, design, and development recommendations as well as a detailed parking, access and circulation plan for the area.
12. Establish a white elephant ordinance for big box development within the City's commercial corridors to ensure that the demolition of vacated stores is provided for in the future.

Goal 2

Protect and enhance the environment and minimize the negative impacts of commercial development.

Objectives

1. Encourage new commercial development to utilize cost effective “green technology”, Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as green rooftops, solar energy, bioswales, and pervious paving materials to reduce stormwater runoff and improve stormwater quality.
2. Encourage projects to pursue LEED certification by incorporating monetary and procedural incentives into the development review and permitting process.
3. Improve connectivity between commercial areas and adjoining residential areas through context sensitive design and enhancements to pedestrian connectivity.

Goal 3

Enhance the appearance of commercial development throughout the City.

Objectives

1. Establish design and improvement standards for commercial areas to guide the scale, appearance, orientation, and overall character of new development.
2. Initiate programs to encourage the improvement and rehabilitation of older commercial buildings and areas which are, or are becoming, functionally obsolete including improvements to facades, signage, streetscaping, landscaping, and parking areas.
3. Repeal the existing landscaping ordinance and establish a new landscaping ordinance that promotes the use of plantings, trees, and other green elements.
4. Enhance major commercial corridors with streetscaping and gateway improvements.
5. Promote and require landscaping within commercial areas and require the upkeep of parking lots, opaque screening of service areas, drives, buildings, and incompatible uses.
6. Revise the signage ordinance to be more comprehensive, addressing a larger body of sign types, establishing context sensitive regulations, and utilizing illustrative examples to outline clear and concise guidelines.



To reduce visual clutter and enhance the image of the City's commercial areas, stricter signage regulations should be identified and enforced. Excess signage, as illustrated in the photo above, detracts from the character of a commercial corridor.



Bioswales are sustainable storm water management systems designed to remove pollutants from surface water runoff. These landscape elements can be used as buffers around parking areas in commercial centers, as well as along streets.

Business Parks & Industrial Areas

Goal 1

Improve the local economy and support the existing businesses and industrial parks within the City as high quality locations for light industrial, high-tech office, office park, and commercial service uses.

Objectives

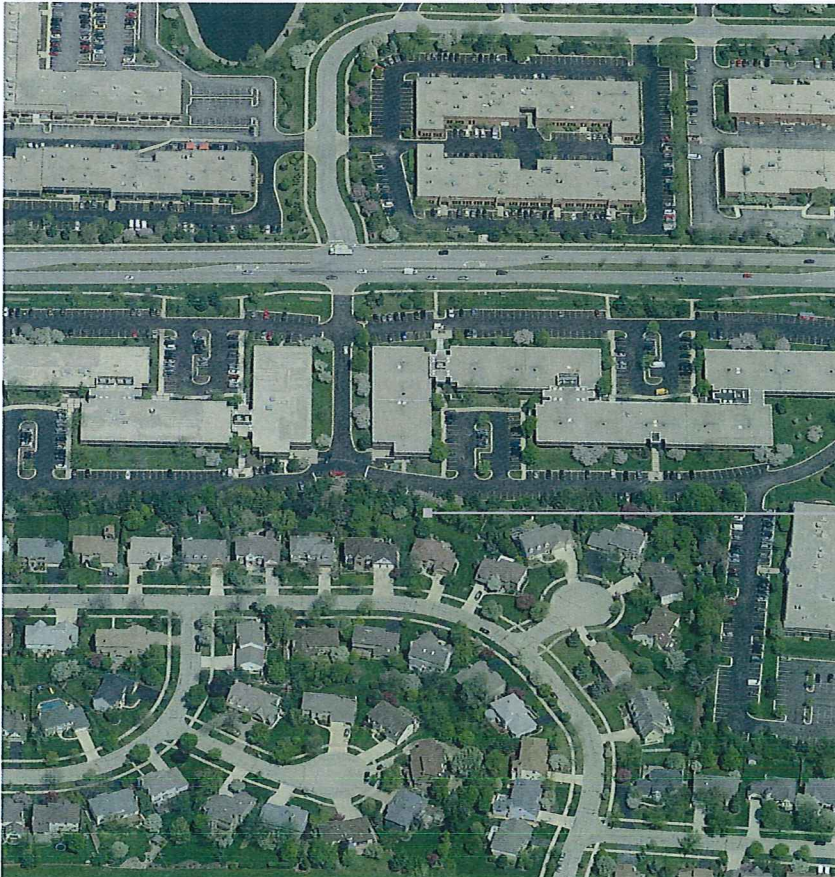
1. Continue to support local economic development efforts to retain, expand, and attract commercial and industrial businesses.
2. Assist the Marion Chamber of Commerce, MEDCO, and others in their efforts to market and promote the City, local businesses, and development opportunities.
3. Encourage and facilitate the remediation and redevelopment of brown-fields.
4. Improve access, exposure and visibility to business parks and industrial areas by installing directory signage at key points along the City's primary corridors and entry points to industrial parks and areas.
5. Continue to explore the feasibility of a plasma arc solid waste disposal facility.
6. Improve the appearance of the existing business parks and industrial areas including buildings, parking areas, streets, and screening/buffering.
7. Encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of functionally obsolete buildings to accommodate more appropriate and market viable uses.
8. Ensure new development occurs where adequate municipal services and facilities are present to serve the new development.
9. Ensure adequate infrastructure exists within all industrial areas including telecommunications (voice/data), water, waste water, electricity, stormwater detention, etc.
10. Encourage new business parks and industrial development to utilize "green technology", Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as green rooftops, solar energy, bioswales, and pervious paving materials to reduce stormwater runoff and improve stormwater quality.
11. Encourage industrial property owners to take steps to further protect on-site or adjacent natural areas such as streams and wooded areas, through the use of BMPs and improvements that treat these natural areas as an asset.
12. Promote the development of an entrepreneurial development center.

Goal 2

Promote a positive relationship between business parks and industrial areas, and adjacent or nearby commercial and residential areas.

Objectives

1. Encourage the relocation of incompatible commercial and industrial uses currently located in primarily residential areas to elsewhere in the City.
2. Ensure that all business parks and industrial uses are effectively screened from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way, through the effective use of screening and buffering with landscaping, fencing, or a combination of the two.
3. Ensure that new or expanded industrial and business park uses are concentrated in areas of similar or compatible use.
4. Require all business parks and industrial development to meet specific applicable performance standards for noise, air, odor and any other forms of environmental pollution.
5. Minimize traffic related to business park and industrial areas from cutting through adjacent residential neighborhoods.
6. Encourage new development to establish connections to existing or proposed paths and trails, such as the Grant Wood Trail, planned Marion Trail and proposed connections to Squaw Creek County Park.



Extensive buffering should be provided between residential areas and non-residential areas. Buffering should be both vertical and horizontal in nature, to ensure that private residences are not negatively impacted by adjacent uses.

Community Facilities & Services

Goal 1

Continue to provide high-quality City services and maintain adequate infrastructure and utilities throughout the community.

Objectives

1. Maintain adequate sites for the City Hall, Police Station, Public Works, Fire Stations, and other City facilities; constructing, renovating, expanding, and relocating facilities when necessary.
2. Work with other public agencies, including the Marion Public Library and the local school districts, to maintain adequate sites and facilities for the provision of public services.
3. Ensure an adequate level of fire and police protection throughout the City.
4. Identify sites for the expansion of community facilities as development occurs and demand for services increases.
5. Continue to work with the Cedar Rapids/Linn County Solid Waste Agency to examine alternatives to the expansion of the agency's County Home Road Sanitary Landfill.

Goal 2

Maintain balanced land use and an equitable distribution of the costs of growth, providing expected facilities and services.

Objectives

1. Establish and maintain mutually agreed upon boundary agreements with neighboring communities, including shared transportation plans, complementary land use plans and notification requirements.
2. Continue to work with regional agencies, such as Linn County and Corridor MPO, to coordinate development policies for areas outside of incorporated Marion.
3. Promote the coordination of infrastructure and utility projects with other agencies and neighboring communities to reduce City costs through economies of scale.
4. Identify potential well sites and areas where growth can be easily accommodated, requiring the least infrastructure investment.
5. Prohibit leap frog development and establish strategic annexation policies.
6. Establish impact fees to fully pay for the extension of City services and infrastructure improvements and expansion.
7. Require developers in future growth areas to oversize utilities and infrastructure to accommodate other planned growth and development and permit and facilitate the reimbursement of over sizing costs borne by the initial developer through recapture agreements.
8. Require developers to donate land and/or money to ensure the provision of necessary land for public improvements and facilities, in coordination with the district or service provider.
9. Continue to budget for and implement improvement, expansion and maintenance of infrastructure provided by the City of Marion.
10. Investigate options for implementing Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and Best Management Practices (BMPs) throughout the City to limit the amount of runoff and improve water quality entering local waterways and groundwater sources including Indian and Squaw Creeks.



A system of trails should be used to connect and travel within large areas of open space, and allow for interaction between pedestrians and other non-motorized forms of transportation and nature. The City should require developers to build new trails linking to existing and planned paths, parks, and areas of open space. These new trails should be designed and integrated into their respective developments.

Parks, Open Space and Environmental Features

Goal 1

Protect, enhance, and expand the City's parks, open space, and environmental features to improve the community's health, environment, appearance, character, and quality of life.

Objectives

1. Establish a Park Land Dedication Requirement to acquire park sites in new residential developments and a fee-in-lieu contribution where park donations not sensible or desirable to a park land fund for the purchase of park land elsewhere in the City.
2. Annually review and revise the cash in lieu of a parkland dedication to ensure cash donations accurately reflect the true cost of improved parkland.
3. Establish a functional classification system for parks and open space, recognizing the unique role and function of different types of open space.
4. Establish parks and recreation standards to guide future growth and development of the city-wide inventory of parks, open space, and recreation facilities.
5. Incorporate park land assessment within the design review process to ensure park land is of appropriate size, unencumbered, and linked to the existing network of parks and trails.
6. Do not accept open space related to stormwater management (e.g. detention/retention area) as a component of required park land dedication.
7. Create a Park Land Acquisition Program to explore opportunities for new park sites in established neighborhoods within the City that were developed prior to the creation of the proposed Park Land Dedication Requirement.
8. Continue to work with the local school districts and private recreation providers to provide appropriate recreational facilities and activities for residents.

Transportation & Connectivity

Goal 1

Improve the safety and efficiency of vehicular and pedestrian movement and improve connectivity within the City.

Objectives

1. Identify and continue to support roadway extension projects that enhance local circulation and connections to the larger region.
2. Identify and improve problematic intersections through realignment and enhanced signalization, signage, and streetscape.
3. Enhance and establish additional north-south connections throughout the City.
4. Enhance and establish additional east-west connections throughout the City.
5. Enhance linkages between the City's commercial areas and corridors.
6. Work with the Iowa Department of Transportation (IowaDOT) to improve traffic flow and circulation along routes under its jurisdiction.
7. Eliminate unnecessary and dangerous curb cuts throughout on arterial roads to improve the safety and efficiency of vehicular movement.
8. Establish a wayfinding signage system to direct motorists to key retail, office, industrial, community facility destinations, and other points-of-interest.
9. Budget for on-going maintenance and repairs of City-owned streets as part of the Capital Improvement Plan, including brick streets located in the City's three historic districts.
10. Promote the development of "Complete Streets" that safely accommodate all modes of travel along the City's key corridors.
11. Minimize non-local traffic within residential neighborhoods through better land use.
12. Work with school districts and residents to identify problems with roadway condition, congestion, circulation, and access on local streets surrounding schools.

Goal 2

Continue to expand the City's trails and connect various segments into an integrated trail network.

Objectives

1. Continue to link parks and open space through the expansion of the local multi-use trail system.
2. Establish local trail connections to the larger trail network and regional parks and natural areas.
3. Establish a universal signage system for the City's parks and local trails systems that utilizes the elements of the City's new marketing and branding efforts.

Goal 3

Provide a safe and coordinated pedestrian/bicycle transportation network that connects community residents to key amenities throughout the City.

Objectives

1. Work with school districts and residents to create safe “walk to school” routes
2. Establish a program to construct new sidewalks in established areas of the City where the sidewalk network is incomplete and unlikely to be significantly added to by new development, prioritizing identified “walk to school” routes.
3. Ensure that all new development provides sidewalks and sufficient street lighting on both sides of the street to promote pedestrian circulation and enhance pedestrian safety.
4. Budget for on-going maintenance and repairs of City-owned sidewalks as part of the Capital Improvement Plan.
5. Install pedestrian scaled street lighting in the Uptown district, providing, at a minimum, street lighting at each block intersection, to improve pedestrian safety and encourage pedestrian activity.
6. Establish a wayfinding signage system that directs pedestrians to key community destinations, including schools, parks, the library, City Hall, and Uptown.
7. Explore opportunities to expand the local trail network into commercial areas and improve pedestrian connections between the City’s residential neighborhoods and its shopping areas.
8. Continue to expand the City’s trail system and work towards an interconnected local trail system that connects to components of the larger regional trail system such as Grant Wood Trail, the proposed Bowman Woods Trail and Marion Trail, and Squaw Creek Park.

Goal 4

Expand the availability and use of public transit throughout the City.

Objectives

1. Identify key transit destinations within the community, including large areas of employment, dense residential areas, and shopping destinations including Uptown, that could be served or better served by public transit.
2. Promote the use of the Cedar Rapids Transit Department’s bus routes and para-transit service within the City and the connections they provide to employment and shopping destinations.
3. Work with the Cedar Rapids Transit Department’s and Corridor MPO to improve and expand bus service routes to better meet the needs of Marion’s residents and employment centers.
4. Install attractive bus shelters that are visually compatible with other streetscaping improvements and provide bus schedule and route information.
5. Ensure adequate bus service is provided to major employment centers such as business and industrial parks.

City Image and Identity

Goal 1

Enhance the appeal and image of the City and strengthen its identity through better design and development, visual improvements, new development, infill development, and redevelopment.

Objectives

1. Construct gateway features utilizing signage, monument walls, sculptures, pylons, thresholds, fountains, lighting, monuments, and/or landscaping elements at significant locations within the community to signify entry into Marion and to distinguish the City from adjacent communities.
2. Maintain and improve the quality of historic areas through streetscaping and economic development efforts that strengthen the City's turn-of-the-century character.
3. Rename 7th and 10th Avenues to Marion Boulevard to assist with branding, reduce motorist confusion, highlight the corridor's importance to the community and improve identity in the region.
4. Install banners and community signs throughout the City to reinforce the sense of place and community identity.
5. Install streetscape elements to unify the image of the community such as benches, bus shelters, trash cans, streetlights, way finding signage and other amenities.
6. Build upon the City's favorable reputation for its safe streets and excellent school districts by promoting and marketing these assets as well as the community's many other assets such as the Arts and Environmental Center, Uptown, and employment/business opportunities.
7. Improve communication with residents in an effort to increase awareness of, and participation in, programs, services and events within the City.
8. Establish an incentive program to encourage private property owners to implement screening, landscaping, façade, and signage improvements to their sites, buildings and businesses.
9. Improve the appearance of existing commercial areas, with an emphasis on the appearance of buildings, signage, site landscaping, and streetscape amenities.
10. Encourage unified, high-quality design and construction for all developments, with an emphasis on site design, building orientation, architectural style, building materials, and site improvements.
11. Continue to partner with the Marion Chamber of Commerce, MEDCO, and others in efforts to market and promote the City, local businesses, and development opportunities.
12. Improve and maintain relationships with the press and other media.

Plan Implementation & Administrative Action

Goal 1

Implement, monitor progress, and update the Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives

1. Undertake an annual review and maintain a five-year action plan to prioritize objectives and assess accomplishments of preceding years.
2. Make available existing and/or new financial resources to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Consider any input and involvement of the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, various City committees, local organizations, including school districts, and individuals during the Comprehensive Plan review and amendment process.
4. Make copies of the Plan document available for review at Marion City Hall and Marion Public Library.
5. Publish an electronic copy of the Comprehensive Plan on the City's website.
6. Utilize the Comprehensive Plan in the day-to-day operation of the City.
7. Identify and engage agencies and organizations willing to share in the responsibility for active implementation of the Plan.
8. Undertake a comprehensive review of city ordinances that will require updates to adhere to City policy established in the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 2

Provide a regulatory development environment that fosters high quality, appropriate, and contemporary redevelopment that sustains the economic vitality of the City's residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

Objectives

1. Adopt the Central Corridor Master Plan and incorporate its recommendations into the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Adopt the 29th Avenue Sub Area Plan and incorporate its recommendations into the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Update the Comprehensive Plan when a formal plan for the Tower Terrace Road corridor has been adopted/supported by the City.
4. Create neighborhood area plans that provide more detailed and site specific recommendations.
5. Continue to work with neighboring communities and Corridor MPO to plan for Lowe Park subarea and update the Comprehensive Plan when a formal plan this area has been adopted/supported by the City.
6. Update the City's Zoning Ordinance to accommodate the various land use and development recommendations of the updated Comprehensive Plan.
7. As part of the Zoning Ordinance update, consolidate the number of zoning districts into a smaller number of districts with increased flexibility.
8. Establish a process for the regular review and update of the City's Zoning Ordinance to appropriately meet the changing needs of the community.
9. Perform an assessment of the City's use of Tax Increment Finance (TIF) and institute staff and elected officials training on the appropriate and effective use of TIF dollars.
10. Repeal the existing landscaping ordinance and establish a new landscaping ordinance that promotes the use of plantings, trees, and other green elements.
11. Establish and maintain mutually agreed upon boundary agreements with neighboring communities, including shared transportation plans, complementary land use plans and notification requirements.
12. Revise the signage ordinance to be more comprehensive, addressing a larger body of sign types, establishing context sensitive regulations, and utilizing illustrative examples to outline clear and concise guidelines.
13. Establish a streamlined development process for projects pursuing LEED certification.