



Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan presents appropriate land uses for the future development of the City of Marion and its growth areas. The Land Use Plan is the result of community input, sound planning principles, and is influenced by local geography and existing land use. Marion's historic land use patterns have had a significant impact on the City's recent development and continue to influence land use decisions today.

The railroad became a significant contributor to the growth and prosperity of Marion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As in many railroad towns throughout the US, the rail corridor emerged as the locus of industrial, commercial, and residential development in the City. Though the rail corridor is no longer in service, industrial uses and brownfields still occupy much of the City's historic center. 7th Avenue, which parallels the rail line, now forms Marion's primary commercial corridor, however Highway 13 and Highway 100 are now also emerging. Residential development has spread in all directions from the City's historic center and homes have been built consistently throughout the last century, mirroring a steady rise in population.

Marion's most significant residential development has occurred in the last two decades. The construction of new single family home and townhome subdivisions has increased the local housing stock by over 40% since 1990. As the City continues to experience growth, Marion's rural and agricultural surroundings will accommodate the City with annexation and development opportunities to the north and east.

General Guide

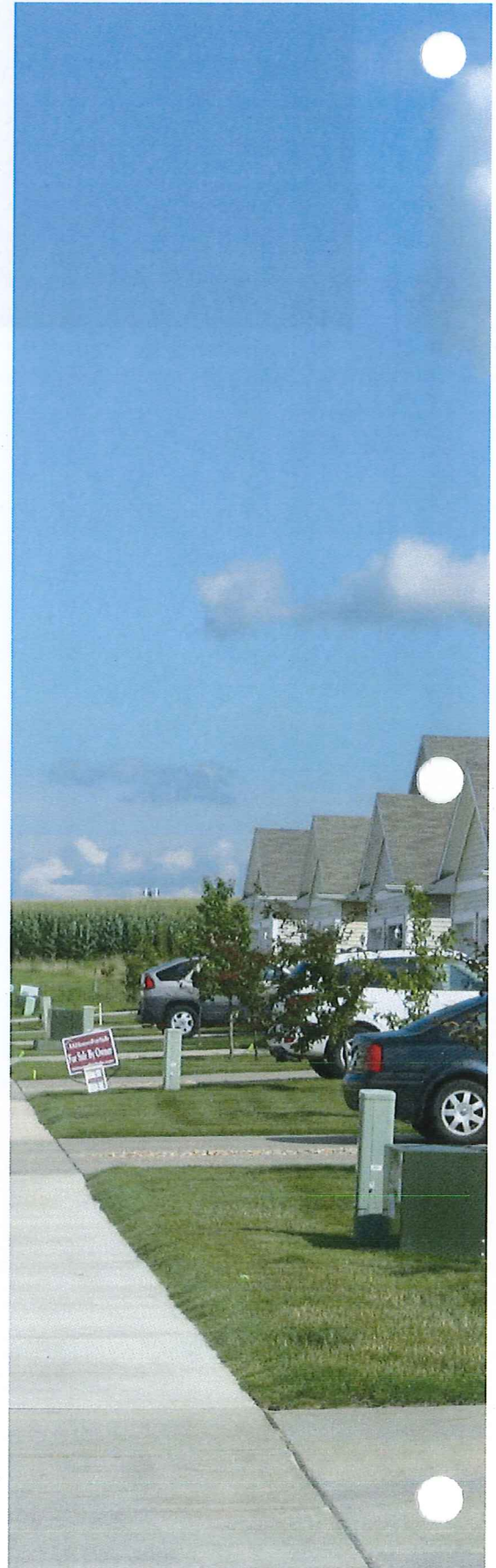
The Land Use Plan is intended to be a general guide to growth and development within Marion and *is not* a development plan of rigid and finite recommendations. The Land Use Plan presents recommendations for improving and enhancing existing land use designations within the City's current municipal boundaries as well as for parcels within the City's 2-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction as permitted by Iowa State Law (Title IX Local Government, Subtitle 4 Cities, Chapter 414 City Zoning, 2009 Iowa Code). This Plan allows for individual negotiations and the consideration of creative approaches to land development that are consistent with the policies and guidelines included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Building upon Marion's existing land use patterns, the goal of the Land Use Plan is to reinforce the historic character of Uptown Marion and strengthen the positive characteristics of the residential neighborhoods while supporting and improving the commercial and industrial development throughout the City. As Marion continues to experience infill development, redevelopment, and outward growth, the Land Use Plan should be used by City Staff, residents, businesses, and elected and appointed officials to inform future decision making.

Flexible Growth

This Plan strives to prevent over extending utilities and the premature conversion of agricultural land and open space, and promote programs and policies for improving and maintaining existing residential, commercial, agricultural and open space areas. As development occurs, it is important that residents, City officials and staff remain flexible with regard to what land uses are deemed appropriate for a given area. This is especially true of the City's growth areas where the majority of development will occur. While these areas will likely be predominantly comprised of single-family residential uses, they should also contain other types of land uses including multi-family development, commercial centers, schools, park, office development, churches, and other uses essential to meeting the needs of future residents.

The Land Use Plan identifies the appropriate uses throughout incorporated Marion and its growth areas that will result in the community's orderly and efficient development. The primary land uses identified in the Land Use Plan include five residential uses, six commercial uses, parks and open space, public utilities, and public and semi-public uses.





Residential Land Use

Residential uses occupy the majority of the land within the City's incorporated areas and Marion should continue to develop as a primarily residential community. The City of Marion currently contains a variety of housing options including single-family detached, single-family attached, multi-family, mobile home, and senior housing. Future residential development should further expand local housing options and enhance the image of Marion as a desirable place to live.

To meet these goals, the Land Use Plan identifies five (5) residential land use categories based on housing type and neighborhood character. These categories are:

- **Single-Family Detached Residential** – Detached single-family homes make up the predominant land use within the City and should continue to do so. Marion's existing single family neighborhoods should remain primarily single-family in use and be enhanced with the provision of new parks, an extensive network of sidewalks, street lighting, and other amenities where possible. Additionally, the City's growth areas should also be comprised primarily of single-family detached residential uses.
- **Single-Family Attached Residential** – Townhomes and duplex units are collectively referred to as single-family attached units. Single-family attached units provide additional housing options within the community and can be located in the same areas as single family homes. Several townhome developments are located throughout the City and these developments should be improved through the provision of new parks, an extensive network of sidewalks, street lighting, and other amenities where possible. Future single-family attached development could also be used to buffer single-family detached areas from more intense uses such as commercial corridors.
- **Multi-Family Residential** – This land use is comprised of a variety of housing types including apartments and condominiums. Although the majority of housing in Marion is single family detached or attached residences, and should continue to be, some isolated multi-family residential development has occurred throughout the City and additional areas are planned in the future. Multi-family residences should also be used as a transitional land use in residential areas adjacent to commercial and industrial areas.
- **Transition Residential** – Areas of intense use such as industrial parks or large commercial centers can have a negative impact on nearby single-family residential areas. Higher density residential uses should be used to buffer future single-family residential development from more intense uses. Transition residential uses could include a mix of single-family attached and multi-family development.
- **Conservation Development/Rural Residential** – The areas to the south of Highway 100 and Secrist Road contain significant environmental features and experience significant changes in elevation that should not be extensively developed. When development occurs in these areas, residential and limited agricultural uses are most appropriate.

Each of these residential land use categories is discussed in further detail in the Residential Areas Plan and Policies section.

Commercial Land Use

Commercial uses are currently and should continue to be concentrated along the major corridors of the City with appropriate nodes located within Marion's growth areas. Commercial development should exist throughout the City, providing a variety of venues in which to shop, dine, and work. The Land Use Plan identifies five (5) commercial land use categories that vary in scale and character, providing an appropriate range of goods and services to the residents of Marion. These categories are:

- **Neighborhood Commercial** – Retailers in a neighborhood commercial area provide goods and services local residents and serve day-to-day needs. Neighborhood commercial uses should be comprised of retail and service uses such as gas stations, dry cleaners, convenience stores, or banks, etc.

Neighborhood commercial areas should be established throughout the community to minimize the need for residents to travel long distances to meet routine retail and service needs.

Big and medium box stores are not encouraged in these areas, however mixed use development could be accommodated. Mixed-use development should be evaluated for appropriateness on a case by case basis.

Regardless of size, a high level of design is necessary to ensure the commercial structures blend into adjacent residential areas with regard to built form, scale, walkability and pedestrian connectivity. The design should be human in scale and pedestrian friendly; and all buildings should be architecturally attractive and add value to the adjacent properties.

- **Uptown District** – Uptown Marion is characterized by a traditional mix of commercial development. The uptown area has a mix of commercial service and commercial retail uses and provides a unique pedestrian atmosphere not found in other commercial areas. New development in Uptown should contribute, and not detract, from this atmosphere. Pedestrians travel is convenient in this area as one can easily walk from store to store without use of a vehicle. The unique character of this commercial district should be protected and enhanced, and consideration should be given to more detailed study of Uptown..
- **Corridor Commercial** – This land use consists primarily larger medium and big box retail stores intended to serve Marion residents as well as residents from nearby areas, and motorists passing through the community. Corridor commercial areas are located along the City's arterials including Highway 151, Highway 13, and Highway 100. The Highway 100 (Collins Road) corridor contains the most undeveloped land within the City of Marion and provides the largest opportunity for new commercial development. New commercial development opportunities are also likely to emerge as new arterial roads are developed.

- **Light Industrial** – Industrial areas are primarily concentrated in the southeast portion of the City. While industrial uses are generally supported, the current location of some industrial uses are in conflict with adjacent residential neighborhoods. Where possible these uses should be relocated to dedicated industrial areas elsewhere within the City. If relocation is not viable, appropriate screening and buffering is recommended to minimize any negative impacts to neighboring residential areas such as noise, light, or air pollution.

- **Business Parks/Office** – While office uses should be incorporated as small component of neighborhood, corridor and Uptown commercial areas, there may be opportunities for large scale office or business park development in the future. Much like industrial areas, business parks and office development can have a negative impact on neighboring residential areas if appropriate regulations are not in place or not carefully planned. These uses should be located in areas where they will have with easy access to the regional transportation network and minimal impact on less intensive uses.

- **Central Corridor Redevelopment** – Marion’s 7th Avenue corridor, also referred to as the Central Corridor, occupies a prominent location within the community. The Central Corridor possesses the potential to emerge as a regional destination and drastically transform the City. This development potential, however, is currently constrained by the presence of significant industrial users and brownfield areas. Residents view these brownfield sites as a blight on the community and detrimental to the health of their neighborhoods and the commercial activities in central Marion. The City has recognized the need to address this problem and has begun community outreach and planning efforts to do so.

The City has recently created a detailed sub-area plan for the properties located between 8th Avenue, 9th Street, 5th Avenue and 35th Street. The Central Corridor Master Plan includes a detailed land use plan and building design components in addition to streetscape and utilities plans. The Land Use Plan includes a separate category for the Central Corridor that is intended to accommodate the recommendations of the Central Corridor Master Plan which serves as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan.

Each of these commercial land use categories is discussed in further detail in the Commercial Areas Plan and Policies section.

Parks and Open Space

Parks and areas of open space should be located throughout the City of Marion. The Marion Park and Recreation Department oversees 19 parks and sports complexes throughout the residential areas of the community as well as several other recreational facilities. Some of the most notable parks within the City of Marion include the centrally located “City Park”, Donnelly Park, Elza Park, Thomas Park, Starry Park, Hanna Park, and the Lowe Sports Park Complex. The City is also served by Squaw Creek County Park, located directly south of Marion. Each of these parks, as well as new parks yet to be acquired and established, will play an important role in enhancing the quality of life in Marion.

The land use also includes creek corridors, floodplains, and other sensitive natural areas that should be preserved and protected within the City and its planning jurisdiction.

A detailed discussion of parks and open space uses can be found in the Parks & Open Space Plan.

Public/Institutional/Utility

The Land Use Plan designates areas for new and existing municipal facilities, schools, utilities, religious institutions, and other public agencies and service providers. These uses consist of publicly owned or publicly accessible property.

The City and other agencies should anticipate increased demand on infrastructure and services and plan for new facilities in growing areas. A detailed discussion of these uses, including specific City policies, can be found in the Community Facilities Plan.

Growth Strategy

The Comprehensive Plan has provided the opportunity to carefully plan for undeveloped areas, enabling the City to be proactive in guiding future development. Although development activity has subsided in the wake of a national recession and weak residential market, the pressure to develop and expand is likely to return and the economy rebounds. The Comprehensive Plan will be a tremendous asset for decision makers and will provide guidance for City staff and elected and appointed officials as new development and annexation requests are brought to the City.

To promote more efficient and sustainable development, the Land Use Plan presents a “Growth Strategy” the City should utilize as future development occurs. To plan for future development outside of the current municipal boundary, the Land Use Plan identifies a three tiered system comprised of a primary, secondary, and tertiary growth area. Infill and redevelopment should be encouraged within the primary growth area which should be substantially built-out before future development occurs within the secondary growth area. In turn, the secondary growth area should then be largely developed before development is to occur in the tertiary growth area.

The combined growth area (primary, secondary and tertiary) for the City is identified in the Residential Areas Plan, Commercial Areas Plan, and each of the subsequent plan figures related to the Land Use Plan. Each tier of the Growth Strategy is summarized below.

Primary Growth Area

New growth in Marion should be concentrated in the underutilized, vacant, agricultural or otherwise undeveloped areas that currently surround existing development within or adjacent to the City’s current municipal limits. Although most growth will be “green field” development, the redevelopment of older, marginal properties within Marion, including brownfield sites, should also occur. Near-term residential development should be accommodated within the primary growth area due to its proximity to existing development and adjacency to existing infrastructure.

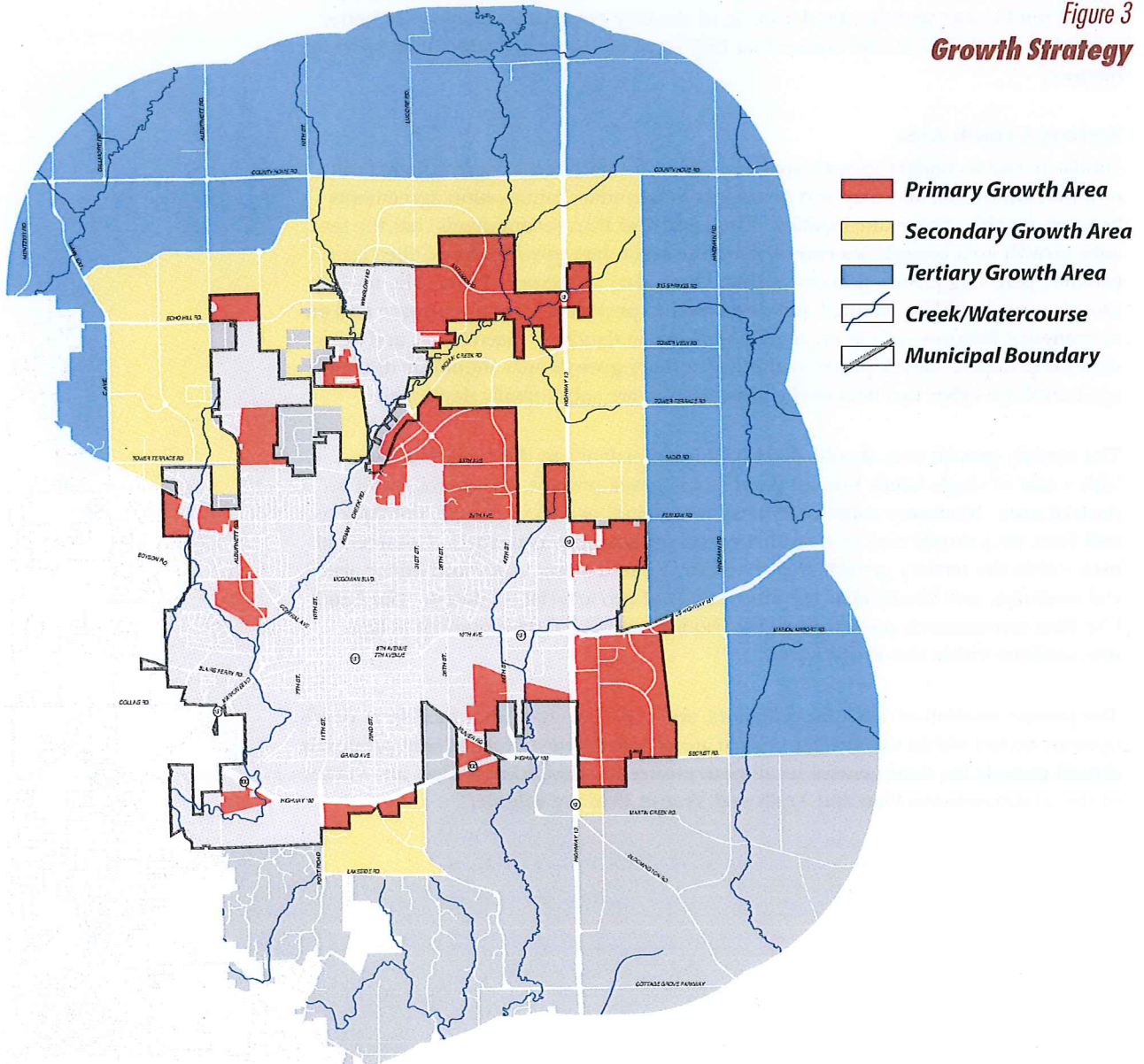
A goal of the Land Use Plan is to encourage and promote concurrent development within Marion and its primary growth area. This area is where City infrastructure and community facilities already exist or could be the most easily extended, thus limiting the potential costs of new development to the City and developer. Toward this end, the City should prioritize development in the primary growth area and consider adjacency requirements for future development. This strategy will aid the City in growing outwards from its geographic center, preventing what is commonly referred to as “leap-frog” development, and avoiding inefficient, uncoordinated development.

Although the primary growth area should be developed predominantly for single-family residential uses, it should not be developed exclusively as single-family residential area. The primary growth area should be developed to protect natural open space and environmental features; include high-quality multi-family housing; provide necessary community facilities (including parks, schools, fire stations, well sites, etc.); and incorporate commercial areas to provide more convenient access to goods and services.

Secondary Growth Area

Growth into the City's secondary growth area will require annexation. Future development in these areas should be carefully analyzed to identify potential infrastructure costs and conflicts with or requirements of boundary/annexation agreements with adjacent communities. Development within the secondary growth area should only occur after the adjacent primary growth area has been developed. This strategy discourages "leap-frog" development, prevents the premature conversion of agricultural areas, and reduces city infrastructure costs. For example, if development were to occur in an area adjacent to an undeveloped portion of the primary growth area, as well as a previously developed area, this would create an isolated pocket of undeveloped land and further limit that areas potential for future development.

Figure 3
Growth Strategy



The secondary growth area should be developed in accordance to the Land Use Plan and include single-family residential and other uses that support future residents including high-quality multi-family and commercial uses. These areas should also be planned in a manner that utilizes context sensitive design practices that protect natural open space and environmental features. New development in the secondary growth area should also be designed to provide necessary community facilities (including parks, schools, fire stations, police stations, infrastructure, well sites, etc.).

Targeted Annexation Areas

There are portions of the secondary growth area that should be targeted for annexation as the City grows and develops. The City's boundary is erratic in several areas, particularly in the north, forming peninsulas and islands of unincorporated Linn County surrounded by incorporated portion of the City of Marion. The current City boundary makes it difficult to supply incorporated areas with city services in an efficient manner and encourages incontiguous development and long term inefficiencies in land use. Targeted annexation of secluded portions of unincorporated Linn County and the standardizing of the City boundary will allow for better control of development and ensure that City services can be provided in an efficient manner.

Tertiary Growth Area

Similar to the secondary growth area, expansion into the tertiary growth area will require annexation, and may also be subject to boundary\annexation agreements between neighboring municipalities. The Land Use Plan recommends that the tertiary growth area boundaries extend from the secondary growth area to the City's two-mile planning jurisdiction or proposed boundary agreement lines. The tertiary growth area should be planned and developed to protect natural open space and environmental features such as creeks, floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, and areas with steep slopes. Development within the tertiary growth area should be discouraged until the other two tiers of the growth areas are substantially developed.

The tertiary growth area should developed in accordance to the Land Use Plan with a mix of single-family homes, multi-family developments, commercial, and industrial uses. Necessary community facilities (including parks, schools, fire stations, well sites, etc.) should also be provided in this growth area as needed. Commercial uses within the tertiary growth area should be located along major and minor arterial roadways, and ideally near the intersection of two arterial roadways. The Land Use Plan recommends nodes of neighborhood commercial development at key intersections within this growth area.

The precise location of arterials, collectors, and trails are somewhat flexible as development occurs within the tertiary growth area, however new development proposals should provide for their general location to ensure the desired objectives and routes of the Transportation Plan and Trails and Transit Plan are still met.