

UPTOWN MARION

MARION, IOWA



MARKET STUDY AND STRATEGIES

2019



A Main Street Iowa District

INTRODUCTION

The economic landscape of traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial districts continues to change. Expanding retail competition, evolving technologies, and changing lifestyle trends continue to affect business opportunities and the way of life in our traditional downtown business districts .

The Main Street Iowa Market Study and Strategies service engages the market itself – community members, area residents, business persons and other stakeholders – to gain an understanding of local and regional market conditions and trends impacting the district’s position in the market and opportunities for the future. Insights and directions derived through the process serve to ground the community’s vision in the realities of the marketplace and provide a basis for projects and activities that align with, and are carried out as part of, a well-coordinated and congruent transformation strategy

This document summarizes key strategies for Uptown Marion economic development and enhancement initiatives based on an extensive review of background information and current market data; input provided via consumer and business surveys; and direction and leadership provided by Uptown Marion leaders, volunteers and community members.

Marion, Iowa is a Main Street Iowa Community.



The Market Study and Strategies process was completed with technical assistance and support provided by Main Street Iowa.

The mission of the Main Street Iowa Program is to improve the social and economic well-being of Iowa's communities by assisting selected communities to capitalize on the unique identity, assets and character of their historic commercial district.

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Limitations and Disclaimers

Retail market studies and analyses, their components (such as retail sales gap analyses and surveys interpretation) and derivative business development plans provide important guidance on how a commercial area should, theoretically, be able to perform and on the sales levels businesses should be able to achieve. However, a number of factors affect the actual performance of businesses and commercial areas, including the skills of the business operator, level of business capitalization, the quality of the physical environment, changes in overall economic conditions, the effectiveness of business and district marketing programs, and many other factors. The information in this document is intended to provide a foundation of information for making district enhancement and business development decisions, but it does not and cannot ensure business success.

As is true of all demographic, economic and market studies, our analysis' reliability is limited to the reliability and quality of the data available. Our research assumes that all data made available by and procured from federal, state, county, city, primary and third party sources is accurate and reliable.

Because market conditions change rapidly and sometimes without warning, the information and opinions expressed here represent a snapshot in time and cannot predict or gauge future changes or results.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Welcome to Uptown Marion

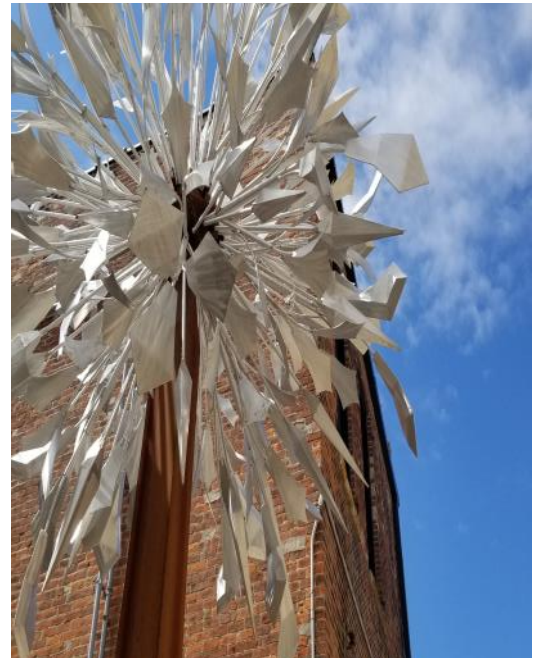
Today Marion is home to over 40,000 residents and is well known for its quality schools and exceptional quality of life initiatives. In the heart of the city you can still find the historic charm of the 1800s where yearly events take place in the original city square park lined by historic commercial buildings with a historic train depot as a backdrop.

City Square Park is filled in the summer with concerts, Farmer's Markets, and the Marion Art Festival, a nationally recognized juried Art Show. Marion, and the downtown city center, known as Uptown Marion, is quickly becoming known for their public art installations. Built in 2017, the Uptown Artway has become the "living room" of the community. What was once an under-utilized alley now features nine permanent art installations, a stage, and patio access to numerous bars and restaurants. The Uptown Artway has been a significant economic driver for the Uptown District, point of pride for the community, and has increased night life through the open container policy created.

What was once known as a bedroom community and antique shopping district, is now a thriving city center of its own. Uptown is home to the Giving Tree Live Performance Theater, and many restaurants, shops and boutiques providing an entire day of shopping and entertainment. Today, Uptown boasts women's clothing boutiques, floral shops, coffee and chocolate shops, museums and live music venues, unique home goods along with a handful of antique stores providing shopping options for just about everyone.

As Marion continues to grow, so too does the Uptown district. Each year 10-15 new businesses open in Uptown, historic properties are restored and infill projects are proposed. In short, people are investing in Uptown. Since becoming a Main Street Iowa designated district in 2013, the community has completed 32 building projects with a local investment over \$20 million.

As Uptown Marion continues to thrive and grow, city leaders are looking to the future with a new libr4ary in the works and plans for the development of a portion of City Square park into a plaza that connects six square blocks of the district into a pedestrian-friendly area primed for events and activities. A streetscape plan is also on the horizon to expand sidewalks, improve utilities, and provide for additional parking in the historic commercial district. Through this growth, Uptown maintains a historic charm vital to the identity of the district and cherished by its residents.



THE UPTOWN MARION MARKET

Uptown Marion Drive Time Market

Demographic Fast Facts ESRI 2018



POPULATION

20 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2018

197,061

Population	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2018 Estimate	21,973	82,707	197,061
Growth (2018-23)	0.95%	1.05%	1.00%



DAYTIME POP

20 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2018

207,912

Daytime Population	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
Total Daytime Pop	21,551	83,453	207,912
Workers	10,726	41,806	108,297



HOUSEHOLDS

20 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2018

80,449

Households	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2018 Estimate	9,225	34,140	80,449
Growth (2018-23)	0.86%	0.95%	0.95%



MEDIAN HH INCOME

20 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2018

\$61,588

Median HH Income	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2018 Estimate	\$64,780	\$65,892	\$61,588
Growth (2018-23)	1.62%	1.72%	1.37%



HOUSING UNITS

20 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2018

86,046

Housing Units	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2018 Estimate	9,800	36,188	86,046
- Owner Occupy	71.5%	68.5%	68.3%
- Renter Occupy	22.6%	25.9%	25.2%
- Vacant	5.9%	5.7%	6.5%
Median Home Value	\$157,958	\$170,742	\$160,900

Top Esri Tapestry LifeMode Groups

Uptown Marion Drive Time Areas | Esri 2018

Esri Tapestry LifeMode groups represent markets that share a common experience—born in the same generation or immigration from another country—or a significant demographic trait, like affluence.

Rustbelt Traditions [26% of 5 Min HH]

- ▶ Residents are a mix of married-couple families and singles living in older developments of single-family homes
- ▶ Work force is primarily white collar, with a higher concentration of skilled workers in manufacturing, retail trade, and health care.
- ▶ Most have graduated from high school or spent time at a college
- ▶ Family oriented, they value time spent at home
- ▶ Most have lived, worked, and played in the same area for years
- ▶ Median age of 39 with a median household income of \$52K

Soccer Moms [16% of 10 Minute Households]

- ▶ Affluent, family-oriented market with a country flavor
- ▶ Residents are partial to new housing away from the bustle of the city but close enough to commute to professional job centers
- ▶ 40% are college graduates
- ▶ Most households are married couples with children where family-oriented purchases and activities dominate their spending
- ▶ They favor time-saving devices and are connected with a host of wireless devices—anything that enables convenience, including paying bills and shopping online
- ▶ They carry a higher level of debt yet are well insured and invested
- ▶ Median age of 37 with a median household income of \$90K

Bright Young Professionals [15%-5 Min]

- ▶ Primarily located in urban outskirts of large metropolitan areas
- ▶ Young, educated, working professionals; 33% with a bachelor's degree or higher
- ▶ More than one in three householders is under the age of 35
- ▶ More renters than homeowners (57%); more than two-fifths of the households live in single-family homes; over a third live in 5+unit buildings
- ▶ These consumers are up on the latest technology
- ▶ They get more of their information from the Internet
- ▶ Concern about the environment impacts their purchasing decisions

THE UPTOWN MARION MARKET

Retail View ESRI 2018

Esri's Retail MarketPlace data provides a direct comparison between retail sales and consumer spending by industry. To capture a snapshot of an area's retail market place, a sales surplus or leakage, expressed in current dollars, is calculated to summarize the relationship between supply (retail sales by businesses) and demand (consumer spending by household). Deviations from potential sales, or demand, may reveal areas of opportunity in the trade area's retail sectors, keeping in mind any extenuating circumstances that may be driving the results.

Calculating Sales Surplus/(Leakage) Estimates

Estimated Actual Sales — Potential Sales = Surplus/(Leakage)

Example: Food Services & Drinking Places (NAICS 722)

Estimated Sales (Supply)	\$571,032,911
— Potential Sales (Demand)	<u>\$351,711,812</u>
= Surplus or (Leakage)	\$219,321,099

Esri estimates of actual sales reflect current dollars derived from receipts of businesses primarily engaged in selling merchandise. Potential sales is estimated by using Esri's consumer spending data, which provides estimated expenditures for more than 700 products and services that are consumed by U.S. households. The estimate of a trade area's, or drive time's, demand is based upon estimated expenditures by households within the defined trade area. The following table displays the total amount of estimated sales surplus or leakage for the three drive times.

UPTOWN MARION DRIVE TIME AREAS

Sales Surplus & Leakage (\$MM)	5 Minutes	10 Minutes	20 Minutes
Categories	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)
Retail Trade (NAICS 44 – 45)	\$199	\$600	\$843
Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	\$20	\$30	\$10
Total (NAICS 44 – 45, 722)	\$219	\$630	\$853

Source: Esri and Infogroup. Retail MarketPlace 2018. Copyright 2018 Infogroup, Inc.

Data Note: The Retail Gap (Sales Surplus/Leakage) represents the difference between Retail Potential and Retail Sales. In the table above, a positive value represents a surplus in retail sales, often indicating a market where customers are drawn in from outside the defined trade area.

Esri uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity. Retail establishments are classified into 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector, as well as three industry groups within the Food Services & Drinking Places subsector.

Potential Opportunities



Sales gap factors provide an at-a-glance means of assessing the relative strength of various retail categories within a defined geography. The factor is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total surplus) to -100 (total leakage). A positive value represents a surplus of retail sales and can be indicative of a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area. Categories showing the highest surplus factors may signal possible opportunities for expansion or the introduction of complementary product and service lines to build on market strengths or existing and evolving niche markets. Likewise, categories with negative value factors might offer an initial indication of gaps in the business mix and potential targets for expansion or recruitment.

SALES GAP FACTORS | 10 MIN & 20 MIN DRIVE TIME AREAS

Category—Factor	10 Min	20 Min
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	28.0	21.1
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	15.3	6.6
Electronics & Appliance Stores	(52.9)	(15.5)
Building Materials, Garden & Supply	34.9	25.8
Food & Beverage Stores	34.6	29.0
Health & Personal Care Stores	12.4	21.5
Gasoline Stations	(33.3)	(23.8)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories	26.5	(2.3)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music	26.0	11.1
General Merchandise Stores	16.7	5.5
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	17.1	(6.6)
Non-store Retailers	(68.5)	(15.6)
Food Services & Drinking Places	11.1	1.9

Note: The complete Uptown Marion Market Snapshot and source Esri reports are available as supplemental documents to this report.

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Uptown Marion Appeal and Uses

Overall visit rates cited by consumer survey participants reflect the broader attraction of Uptown created by a diverse mix of business types, uses and activities—and reinforce a position catering, primarily, to the everyday needs of Uptown Marion area residents.

86% Visited Uptown Marion for **Dining** within the past year.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Table 1
Q: For which of the following activities or purposes have you visited Uptown Marion within the past year?

Top Consumer Survey Responses	Percent
Dining	86.5%
Festivals/Special Events	74.6%
Shopping	60.9%
Public Library	55.1%
Nightlife	45.3%
Arts & Culture	45.0%
Banking/Financial Services	31.4%
Recreation	26.9%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

26% Visit Uptown Marion to do **errands or for office and service-related purposes** 1 or 2 times per week

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Consumer patterns depicting the multi-purpose nature and appeal of the downtown are reinforced by data showing more than 46% visit the downtown area on a daily or weekly basis to do errands or for office and service-related purposes; about 37% for eating, drinking and/or entertainment; and nearly 34% to shop.

Table 2
Q: How often do you visit Uptown Marion . . .

Frequency—Daily or Weekly	Percent
To do errands or for office and service-related purposes?	26.4%
For eating, drinking and/or entertainment?	19.7%
To shop?	6.5%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Big Data

Proposed strategies, directions and actions outlined in this document are rooted in current market information and community input collected via:

- ▶ Advanced market information analyzed in July 2019
- ▶ A consumer survey with a total sample of 704 participants
- ▶ A Uptown Marion business survey completed by 53 respondents
- ▶ Uptown Marion team members, partners and community members participating in a series of market study work sessions

Insights

- ▶ Uptown Marion appears to be a destination for dining and shopping and consumers also enjoy the festivals and special events hosted in the district.
- ▶ Arts and culture are important to the local market and should be explored further. The Marion Public Library along with key dining and nightlife options currently serve as anchors for the marketplace.

Directions

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Continue to expand the retail offerings in Uptown. Work to develop additional marketing campaigns to promote retail shopping in Uptown Marion.

Organization

- ▶ Continue efforts to engage partners from all sectors of the community in downtown enhancement initiatives.

Promotion

- ▶ Facilitate and encourage collaborative marketing and cross-promotion efforts to heighten awareness for the full range of goods and services available in Uptown Marion

Potential Activities

- (E) Building/Business inventory (w/ regular updates)
- (O) Presentations/updates to partners & community groups
- (P) Encourage/Facilitate cross-promotion efforts
- (P) Regular (weekly?) FB Business Highlight/Focus posts
- (P) Online Businesses & Services Directory

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Anchors and Traffic Generators

Consumers surveyed cited the Marion Public Library as the downtown business or place frequented most often, followed by the Uptown Snug. The Library is seemingly, in many ways, an Uptown institution, which along with other businesses and places most frequently visited, provides solid support for a locally-driven market position.

13% Named **the Marion Public Library** as the Uptown business or place visited most frequently.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Most Frequented Business or Places (Top 10)

1. Marion Public Library	6. Wit's End Coffee
2. Uptown Snug	7. Giving Tree Theater
3. Ramsey's	8. Brick Alley
4. Zoey's Pizza	9. Walgreen's
5. Urban Pie	10. Scout

Six of the top ten businesses mentioned fall into the food and drink category, suggesting that Uptown Marion is a destination for dining. Moreover, the results provide direction for strategies and activities that:

- ▶ Capitalize on existing anchor businesses and activity generators, including complementary business opportunities;
- ▶ Heighten awareness for the local nature of the business mix and the full range of products, services and experiences offered in Uptown; and
- ▶ Incorporate design features and enhancements to better define and promote the downtown district as a special place for dining and entertainment, including outdoor seating options.



Insights

- ▶ The relatively high frequency of business cited by consumers surveyed as eating or drinking places, suggests that consumers think of Uptown Marion as that “3rd Place”, a gathering place to meet friends and family, while enjoying a drink or a meal out.

Directions

Design

- ▶ Incorporate design features (i.e., gateway features, signage, furnishings, landscaping, décor, etc.) to create a strong sense of arrival and to better define the downtown district as a special place.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Explore opportunities for existing businesses to expand or reposition themselves to capitalize on existing anchor businesses and activity generators, and for new, complementary business types to join the mix.

Organization

- ▶ Identify and pursue possibilities to work with high traffic -generating businesses and attractions to disseminate information about Uptown Marion, its work and progress, and opportunities to participate.

Promotion

- ▶ Target higher-traffic generating locations identified, both within and outside the Uptown district, for display and distribution of Uptown Marion promotional materials.

Potential Activities

- (D) Increased opportunities for outdoor dining options
- (O) Explore partnership opportunities with the Marion Public Library
- (P) Uptown Marion promo displays/materials at anchors
- (E) Identify restaurant formats that are missing from Uptown and could be added to further enhance the district offerings

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Marketing and Communications Channels

Consumer preferences for social media and online applications, along with the adaptation of online channels by downtown businesses, appear to demonstrate the importance of, and potential benefits for, a strong online business presence.

94% Of those surveyed regularly use **Facebook**.
Source: 2019 Uptown Consumer Survey.

Table 3
Q: Which of the following social media networks or online applications do you regularly use?

Top Consumer Survey Responses	
Facebook	94.3%
Instagram	42.6%
Pinterest	33.5%
You Tube	26.3%
Twitter	19.3%
LinkedIn	16.1%
Etsy	11.2%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

68% Of businesses surveyed identified Social Media as one of the most effective sources for promoting their business
Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Table 4
Q: Of the following media, direct marketing and advertising resources, which two (2) are most effective for promoting your business?

Top Business Survey Responses	
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	68.6%
Internet Website(s)	49.0%
Newspaper	19.6%
Email or News Feeds	9.8%

Table 5
Q: Would you consider participating in a collaborative marketing campaign for Uptown Marion?

Responses	
Yes	82.7%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Insights

- ▶ Online usage rates among both consumer and business survey respondents, and the frequency of consumer survey respondents regularly using Facebook (94%), Instagram (42%), Pinterest (33%) and other social media applications, provides readily accessible channels for businesses and organizations to communicate with local consumers.
- ▶ Businesses with collectible, specialty, and custom merchandise lines, in particular, could potentially benefit further as social media platforms continue to integrate more robust retail showroom and targeted marketing applications (i.e., Etsy, Facebook’s Marketplace).
- ▶ Businesses of all types, including retailers carrying staple products, stand to benefit from a strong online presence as, more and more consumers use the Internet to shop and compare products and services, and then use it – in much the same way previous generations used the Yellow Pages – as a resource to find a local outlet or vendor to make their purchase.
- ▶ Eighty-two percent of businesses surveyed indicated they would consider participating in a collaborative marketing campaign for Uptown Marion, suggesting the time to introduce new collaborative and cross-marketing opportunities could be opportune.

Directions

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Share survey results demonstrating local consumers’ social media preferences with downtown businesses as a business visitation topic and/or as part of social media training.

Organization

- ▶ Continue to employ Facebook as a core component of Uptown Marion’s communications system and work, over time, to incorporate or enhance utilization of other social media platforms and applications into the mix (i.e., YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.).

Promotion

- ▶ Design downtown and collaborative marketing campaigns to be compatible with social media applications as a primary channel for events and downtown image enhancement messaging.

Potential Activities

- (E) Host social media trainings for businesses
- (O) Expand social media presence to other applications
- (P) Regular downtown updates via social media
- (D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Downtown Traits and Trends



Both the consumer and business survey groups showed the highest level of agreement with the statement, **“Special events create vibrancy in Uptown.”**

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer and Business Surveys.



Both survey groups also showed the highest level of disagreement with the statement, **“Uptown has things to do for many age groups.”**

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer and Business Surveys.

Table 6

Q: Using a scale from 1 (Disagree Completely) to 5 (Agree Completely), please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about Uptown Marion:

Consumers (C) and Businesses (B) Average Rating and (Rank)

Statements	(C)	(B)
Special events create vibrancy downtown.	4.52 (1)	4.58 (1)
Uptown Marion is a good investment.	4.12 (2)	4.19 (2)
I feel safe in Uptown, even at night.	4.15 (3)	4.19 (3)
Uptown Marion is clean and inviting.	3.99 (4)	3.83 (7)
Uptown presents a positive image to visitors.	3.82 (5)	3.88 (6)
Uptown Marion is pedestrian-friendly.	3.80 (6)	3.81 (8)
Customer service is exceptional in Uptown	3.80 (7)	4.13 (4)
Uptown Marion has things to do for many ages.	3.17 (8)	3.68 (9)
Uptown Marion is bicycle-friendly	3.08 (9)	3.14 (10)
I tell my friends and family to shop Uptown	3.03 (10)	3.94 (5)

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer and Business Surveys.

52%

Of businesses surveyed, and 49% of the consumer survey group, chose **“Improving or making progress”** to describe recent trends.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer and Business Surveys.

Table 7

Q: Which of the following best describes recent trends in Downtown [Town]?

Consumers (C) and Businesses (B) Percent

Recent Trends	(C)	(B)
Improving or making progress	48.8%	52.9%
Steady or holding its own	28.1%	29.4%
Declining or losing ground	23.1%	17.7%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer and Business Surveys.

Insights

- ▶ Events, like the Marion Arts Festival, Ladies Day Out, and the Uptown Get Down, held in Uptown Marion help “create vibrancy uptown,” and, as such, should be considered a wise investment. Events like these should also be embraced as one avenue to help address an expressed want for more family-friendly events, and to address the low ratings ascribed to the statement, “Downtown has things to do for many age groups.”
- ▶ Views on Uptown Marion as a good investment, along with positive takes on recent trends, can provide additional momentum for new and ongoing initiatives.
- ▶ Short term design-oriented strategies should consider ways to enhance and activate the downtown’s public realm and ways to improve sidewalks to improve walkability and access to local businesses.

Directions

Design

- ▶ Continue to work in partnership with local community organizations to implement clean-up, beautification and maintenance activities.
- ▶ Continue to expand on the public art projects already underway in Uptown Marion and look for opportunities to add new art in key locations including round-a-bouts.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Incorporate positive views on the downtown as a “good investment” and recent trends described as “Improving or making progress” in messaging and materials to promote business and investment opportunities.

Promotion

- ▶ Stage and support family-oriented activities with a strong local flavor to “create vibrancy downtown” and to strengthen an identity as the center of community life.
- ▶ Identify possible festival and event components that might be introduced, expanded, test-marketed and used to enhance Uptown’s “entertainment factor” and “stickability” on a more regular or even permanent basis.
- ▶ Enhance marketing efforts for current events to further build on the Arts & Entertainment brand for Uptown Marion.

Potential Activities

- (D) Downtown clean-up and beautification events
- (D) Placemaking activities focused on fun and “stickability”
- (P) Family events (i.e., ice cream social, movie night, etc.)
- (P) Enhance event marketing

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Retail Gaps and Potential Opportunities

47% Of all consumer survey responses cited a casual dining eatery as the type of new eating or drinking establishment that would make them visit Uptown Marion more often.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Table 8
Opportunities?
Q: What types of new businesses or attractions might make you visit Uptown Marion more often? (List up to three)

Top Responses—Categorized

Casual Dining Eatery	47.7%
Breakfast/Brunch Restaurant	40.7%
Ice Cream & Soda Fountain	30.9%
Farm-to-Table Restaurant	29.9%
General/Variety Store	35.6%
Arts, Crafts, & Hobbies	32.2%
Neighborhood Grocery	31.4%
Cards & Gifts	30.2%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

90% Of consumer survey participants made at least one online purchase, or left Uptown to make a purchase, within the past year.

Source: 2018 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Table 9
Q: What type(s) of products have you purchased online or left Uptown to purchase within the past year?

Products—Top 10 Shown	Count	Percent
Women's Clothing	343	54.01%
Gifts	282	44.5%
Books	248	39.1%
Beauty Supplies	249	39.3%
Electronics	238	37.5%
Home Furnishings	219	34.5%
Men's Clothing	201	31.7%
Hobbies & Crafts	196	30.9%
Sporting Goods	195	30.8%
Specialty Foods	177	27.9%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

Insights

- ▶ Products frequently purchased online or away from Uptown could provide queues for the potential expansion of services or merchandise lines, the repositioning of existing businesses, and the introduction of new product and service lines by both new and existing Uptown Marion area businesses.
- ▶ Expansion and recruitment targets, based on a review of Esri data, the current business mix and survey results, could include:
 - More casual dining options
 - Clothing and Clothing Accessories
 - Neighborhood Grocery or Specialty Foods
- ▶ Downtown eateries with a more casual atmosphere ranked high with consumers including options for breakfast/brunch, ice cream and soda fountain, or farm-to-table concepts.

Directions

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Share survey results on expansion and recruitment opportunities with existing businesses and discuss possibilities for businesses to expand or reposition themselves in the market.
- ▶ Share survey results with property owners and agents and discuss business types and models that might be targeted for vacant properties and spaces, along with improvements that might be required to accommodate targeted tenants.
- ▶ Continue the Commercial Real Estate Showcase program to highlight available properties in Uptown.
- ▶ Publicize and promote survey results identifying business types showing potential for expansion and recruitment to heighten awareness, appeal to local entrepreneurs, and help generate leads.
- ▶ Promote the Open 4 Business program to support expansion efforts to fill current gaps in the market.

Potential Activities

- (E) Business visits and roundtables to share survey results
- (E) Vacant property visits to identify targeted uses
- (E) Increase attendance at Real Estate Showcase event
- (E) Publicize survey results and list of “top prospects”
- (E) Increase participation in Open 4 Business program
- (E) ROI Building Owners presentation

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Housing Opportunities

The consumer survey group showed strong interest in downtown housing and the results could lend support for the rehabilitation and development of a variety of housing styles in the Uptown Marion area.

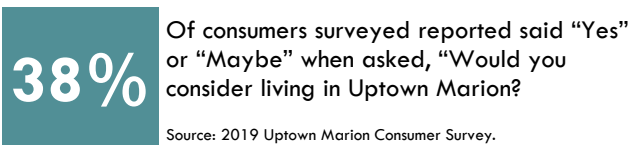


Table 10
Q: Would you consider living in Uptown Marion?

Yes	13.5%
Maybe	24.4%
No	56.2%
I live in Uptown	5.9%

Table 11
Potential Downtown Housing Market Profile
For those answering "Yes" or "Maybe"

Style of Housing	Percent
Condo	61.0%
Loft	39.8%
Townhouse	36.9%
Apartment	16.9%
Senior Housing	16.9%

Ownership Preference	Percent
Own	82.7%
Rent	17.3%

Monthly mortgage or rent payment	Percent
Less than \$600	8.7%
\$600 to \$700	7.4%
\$700 to \$800	16.6%
\$800 to \$900	10.9%
\$900 to \$1000	15.7%
\$1000 to \$1100	11.4%
\$1100 to \$1200	8.7%
\$1200 to \$1300	5.2%
\$1300 or more	15.3%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Insights

- ▶ Comparatively strong levels of interest expressed by the consumer survey group bode well for the potential rehabilitation and development of various styles of housing in the Uptown area.
- ▶ The benefits of housing in a traditional downtown district are multifold and align with a transformation strategy envisioning Uptown Marion as the center of community life.
- ▶ Possibilities for downtown housing could include a range of housing styles and price points catering to all walks of life and life stages, which could include:
 - The rehabilitation of vacant and underutilized upper levels of existing downtown buildings for a range of housing styles, such as apartments, lofts and live-work units, appealing to different segments of the market.
 - Mixed use development at potential downtown redevelopment sites; and
 - The development of urban housing styles (i.e., row homes, town homes, etc.) at appropriate sites in areas immediately surrounding the core historic Uptown district.

Directions and Actions

Design

- ▶ Facilitate pre-project walk-throughs involving Design Committee members, building owners, building officials and other relevant personnel to assess and troubleshoot potential challenges to the rehabilitation and development of downtown housing, especially as they may apply to the upper levels of existing historic structures.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Work with local government and community development and housing interests to further explore feasibility and identify possible programs, technical assistance and resources that might be appropriate to downtown housing development goals.

Promotion

- ▶ Host an annual "At Home in Uptown" or "Living it Up in Uptown" event to showcase area housing units in the before, during and after phases of rehabilitation or development.

Potential Activities

- (D) Pre-project walk-throughs
- (E) Inventory downtown housing units (existing & potential)
- (E) Identify and promote housing development resources
- (P) Uptown area housing showcase tours

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Priorities



The consumer survey group placed the highest priority on possible efforts to, **“Create incentives for new and expanding downtown businesses.”**

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.



The business survey group placed the highest priority on possible efforts to, **“Improve the downtown’s streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, green spaces, trails, etc.”**

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.



Table 12

Q: On a scale from 1 (Low) to 5 (High), what level of priority would you place on possible downtown enhancement efforts to:

Consumers (C) and Businesses (B) Avg. Rating

Enhancement Efforts	(C)	(B)
Create incentives for new and expanding Uptown Marion businesses	4.09 (1)	4.08 (2)
Improve Uptown Marion’s streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, green spaces, trails, etc.	4.07 (2)	4.48 (1)
Stage additional festivals and special events in Uptown Marion	3.90 (3)	4.08 (3)
Restore and preserve Uptown Marion’s historic character	3.84 (4)	3.92 (4)
Improve and/or create more housing in the Uptown Marion area	2.65 (5)	3.08 (5)

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer and Business Surveys.

First Things: The same patterns are seen in survey groups’ responses to the question, “What is the first thing you would do to improve Uptown Marion?”

Table 13

Q: What is the first thing you would do to improve Uptown Marion?

Categorized Topics	Responses
Add/Recruit Businesses; Diversify Mix	139 (1)
Recruit more restaurants	77 (2)
Improve streetscape/sidewalks	61 (3)
Improve parking	59 (4)
Restore historic buildings	43 (5)
Improve the strip mall	35 (6)

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey. Most frequent categorized responses shown.

Directions

Design

- ▶ Work in partnership with the City of Marion staff to address short- and long-term infrastructure needs and streetscape enhancements that convey a sense of vibrancy and community pride.
- ▶ Continue efforts to restore and preserve the downtown’s historic character, with an emphasis on improvements that showcase the community’s historic fabric and identify with local values, culture and characters.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Employ a volunteer-led business visitation program and host roundtables with downtown property and business owners, local government officials and staff, area developers and investors, and other community development interests to identify and address challenges and barriers posed to existing and prospective businesses, developers and investors.
- ▶ Engage local government, financial and educational institutions, and other appropriate entities in efforts to identify, develop and access incentives and technical assistance for new and expanding Uptown businesses, including programs supporting the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- ▶ Create a business assistance resources directory mapping out the process for starting a business and that includes a listing and contact information for business assistance providers, resources and programs.

Potential Activities

- (D) Plan for short- and long-term infrastructure needs
- (E) Incentives for buildings and new/expanding businesses
- (E) Business assistance resources directory
- (D) Assist in planning of future streetscape project
- (D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

MARKET INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Like Most



Environment; Character and Feel

Both survey groups identified features related to the environment, character and feel—showing a great affection for its small town atmosphere and friendly nature—as the things they like most about Uptown Marion.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Table 14

Q: What is the one thing you like most about Uptown Marion?

Categorized Responses	Consumers
Environment; Character and Feel	109 (1)
Marion Square Park	101 (2)
Historic building fabric	85 (3)
Festivals & Events	66 (4)
Marion Public Library	14 (5)

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey. Most frequent categorized responses shown.



Findings can lend direction for fine-tuning marketing messages and branding strategies that connect with Uptown Marion’s tangible and intangible features most liked by both consumers and businesses, and that help to distinguish and reinforce the Uptown’s position in the regional marketplace.



Insights

- ▶ Analysis of consumer survey responses can lend additional insight and direction for marketing strategies and campaign messages that leverage existing assets and resonate with the Uptown Marion audience.

Directions

Design

- ▶ Work with the City of Marion to improve and update the current Design Review guidelines and process for historic buildings

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Strengthen partnerships with city, businesses, and other local groups to enhance and expand the Entertainment District to strengthen festival and event offerings.

Promotion

- ▶ Continue to plan and promote events that are held in Marion Square Park and build upon this asset identified as a “Most Loved” location in Uptown.
- ▶ Work in concert with downtown businesses and community organizations to develop and deploy a customer-driven testimonial campaign that captures faces, images and quotes focused on the things local residents like, or love, most about Uptown Marion — expanding on the “Stories of Uptown” campaign that highlights the community-oriented nature of Uptown businesses, extraordinary customer service experiences, special features, favorite memories, and progress being made as part of the Uptown Marion revitalization initiative.

Potential Activities

- (D) Improve & update documents for design review process
- (E) Strengthen & enhance Entertainment District offerings
- (P) Marion Park Square events
- (P) Testimonial campaign (i.e., Stories of Uptown)

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

BUSINESS INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Inside the Data

The Uptown Marion Business Survey was completed by 53 participants operating within the designated Uptown Marion Main Street district.

Table 15

Q: Which of the following best describes your primary business type?

Responses

Retail	35.3%
Service	19.6%
Eating and Drinking Places	21.6%
Professional/Office	15.7%
Institutional/Non-profit	5.9%
Other	1.9%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Business Tenure

61% Of businesses surveyed have been located in the downtown for **10 years or longer**.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Table 16

Q: How long has your business been located in Downtown [Town]?

Responses

Less than 1 year	0.0%
1 to 4 years	27.5%
5 to 9 years	11.8%
10 to 20 years	33.3%
21+ years	27.5%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Table 17

Q: Do you own or rent your business location?

Responses

Own	34.6%
Rent	65.4%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.



Insights

- ▶ The Marion business climate appears to be conducive to business start-up and entrepreneurial activity, as evidenced by 27% of the business survey sample indicating they have been located in Uptown Marion for four years or less.
- ▶ At the other end of the spectrum, 27% of businesses surveyed indicated their business has been located in Uptown Marion for twenty-one years or longer. The figure can be viewed as an indicator of stability in the business mix, but it is also consistent with a possible need, and the desire expressed by 13% of survey respondents, for business succession planning.

Directions

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Uptown Marion and their community partners should work to identify, promote and facilitate access to partners, resources and technical assistance available for business succession planning.
- ▶ Use the proposed business visitation program and roundtables to share information on business succession planning resources and contacts.

Potential Activities

- (E) Business visits and roundtables > succession planning
- (E) Business succession planning resources referral sheet
- (E) Resources guide for new businesses

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

BUSINESS INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Changes in the Making?

Business survey results provide insight on the nature and scope of possible changes that could occur in the Uptown area within the next two years.

41%

Of businesses surveyed plan to **expand services or product lines.**

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

47%

Of businesses surveyed plan to **increase their number of employees.**

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Table 18

Q: In the next year or two, do you plan to change or modify your business in any of the following ways?

Increase marketing	61.4%
Increase number of employees	47.7%
Expand services or product lines	40.9%
Start and/or complete building improvements	29.6%
Expand hours of operation	15.9%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

Business Support Opportunities

The business survey group identified high levels of interest in possible design assistance and in social media, customer attraction & retention, and succession planning topics.

Table 19

Q: Would you be inclined to use any of the following Building Assistance programs and incentives?

Free/low-cost building improvement design services	73.3%
Low-interest building improvement loans	53.3%
Assistance to sell your building and/or business	26.7%

Table 20

Q: Of the following business seminar topics, which two would be of most interest and/or most useful to you?

Marketing for Small Businesses	60.9%
Social Media for Small Businesses	56.5%
Finding and Keeping Customers	32.6%
E-commerce for Small Businesses	19.8%
Business Succession Planning	13.0%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Insights

- ▶ The nature of changes being considered by downtown businesses, along with interest expressed in possible business assistance and training programs, suggests the timing could be opportune for Uptown Marion to:
 - Develop educational workshops or trainings to address areas identified by local businesses.
 - Share findings on business types, products and services that could offer opportunities for expansion or for businesses to increase market share.

Directions

Design

- ▶ Work with Main Street Iowa and local design professionals and partners to:
 - Explore resources and promote options for targeted design assistance and technical training services.
 - Promote and assist with Main Street Challenge Grant opportunities for building improvement projects in Uptown.
 - Continue to market and assist in scheduling Main Street Iowa design visits.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Share market study findings on product lines showing potential for expansion via the proposed business visitation program and roundtable discussions.
- ▶ Further explore the business community's interest for training—and the preferred training delivery method or format—in the social media and customer attraction & retention topics; and work with Main Street Iowa, area partners and technical service providers to identify, promote and facilitate training opportunities.
- ▶ Continue to promote and assist with an application to the Open 4 Business program to support business expansion projects in Uptown.
- ▶ Promote incentives available for targeted business expansion projects that will address gaps in the market place.

Potential Activities

- (D) Challenge Grant application
 - (E) Business visits & roundtables > expansion opportunities
 - (E) Business training series (social media, etc.)
 - (E) Maintain “Hotlist” of properties for sale or lease
 - (E) Promote Open 4 Business program
- (D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

BUSINESS INSIGHTS AND DIRECTIONS

Benchmarks and Tracking

Data collected and compiled as part of the business survey provides valuable insights on the Downtown [Town] business environment today and, in some cases, can be used to benchmark, track and measure changes and progress stemming from downtown enhancement initiatives. The information will also be valuable to prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs as they consider opportunities.

61%

Of businesses surveyed reported a 2018 increase in gross sales or revenues.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Table 21

Q: Which of the following describes the change in your business' gross sales or revenues in 2018 as compared to 2017? (If unsure, use your best estimate)

Responses

Increased by 1% to 5%	23.9%
Increased by 6% to 10%	19.6%
Increased by 11% or more	17.4%
Decreased by 1% to 5%	0.0%
Decreased by 6% to 10%	6.5%
Decreased by 11% or more	2.2%
Stayed about the same	23.9%
Not in business in 2017	6.5%

69%

Of businesses surveyed expect gross sales or revenues to increase in 2019.

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Table 22

Q: In your best estimation, how do you expect your gross sales or revenues to change in 2019 as compared to 2018?

Responses

Increase by 1% to 5%	25.0%
Increase by 6% to 10%	22.9%
Increase by 11% or more	20.8%
Decrease by 1% to 5%	6.3%
Decrease by 6% to 10%	2.1%
Decrease by 11% or more	2.1%
Stayed about the same	20.8%
Not in business in 2018	0.0%

Source: 2019 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

Insights

- ▶ Year-to-year increases in gross sales or revenues for 2018 reported by 61% of the business survey group, along with an optimistic outlook for continued increases in 2019 expressed by 69% of those surveyed, are consistent with upward trends and perspectives shared by the consumer survey group.
- ▶ Information on year-to-year sales and revenues is just one example of information that should be benchmarked and tracked on a consistent basis. Other information tracked on a regular basis by Uptown Marion (i.e., new businesses, new jobs, public and private investment, etc.) will be highly valuable in making the case for new and ongoing revitalization initiatives, and for marketing—and demonstrating—opportunities for prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs.

Directions

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Repeat the business survey on an annual or biennial basis to track economic conditions and business trends, and to identify business needs.
- ▶ Incorporate relevant tracking data in messaging and materials promoting downtown business and investment opportunities.

Organization

- ▶ Augment market study data with statistics and tracking data reported monthly to Main Street Iowa, along with other locally determined tracking measures that might be more unique to the Uptown Marion district and the selected transformation strategy, to measure progress, build support for new and ongoing revitalization initiatives, and promote opportunities.
- ▶ Incorporate relevant tracking data in messaging and materials promoting the Uptown Marion Main Street organization, its mission, and opportunities to invest in, and participate with, the organization.

Promotion

- ▶ Benchmark and track attendance estimates for downtown events to measure appeal and return on investment, and to incorporate in business attraction messaging and materials.

Potential Activities

- (E) Conduct business survey on annual or biennial basis
- (E) Fact sheet(s) for business attraction w/ tracking data
- (O) Annual report with tracking data and progress update
- (P) Event attendance benchmarking and tracking

(D) Design (E) Economic Vitality (O) Organization (P) Promotion

TARGETS

Retail Uses

Business types and merchandise lines that might be considered primary targets and candidates for expansion and recruitment, based on the downtown area’s existing business mix, trends in the marketplace and related findings from local input, consumer and business surveys and Esri retail data include:

Miscellaneous Store Retailers (NAICS 453)

Notes: Survey results point to potential opportunities in the Miscellaneous Store Retailers category, including the gifts, used merchandise and art galleries lines. Select lines from the home furnishings, hobbies, arts & crafts and specialty foods retail categories could also serve as “crossover” lines in various models and concepts finding a home in a more traditional 5 & Dime variety store concept or select lines might be packaged together with vintage/re-purposed, antiques and art-inspired gift shop and gallery lines to heighten appeal across a broad spectrum of consumer segments. Certain lines might also be conducive to Pop-up Shop and kiosk-style models, or might start as festival booths in order to experiment and test-market various concepts, models and product lines.

Foodservices and Drinking Places (NAICS 722)

Notes: Consumer and business survey results show demand for additional Eating & Drinking Places options is high. Consumer survey results showing 86% of participants already visit Uptown Marion for eating, drinking or entertainment on a daily or weekly basis suggest potential for complementary establishments that, along with existing offerings could heighten the area’s identity as a regional destination for food and fun. Categorized survey responses cited with higher frequency include breakfast and brunch options, casual dining and ice cream/soda fountain concepts. For example, a coffeehouse concept might also incorporate select desserts and sweets items or a limited soup, wraps & sandwich menu, and the setting might provide for a children’s play area, a student study bar and periodic entertainment spilling into the evening hours. Additional opportunities and concepts for both existing and new eating establishments might include menu options not currently offered in Uptown such as farm-to-table and the incorporation of various forms of entertainment, display or demonstration kitchens, tasting areas and events, and outdoor seating. Evening and nighttime establishments, in particular, might feature various genres of music and venues for local artists and storytellers to enhance the downtown’s “fun & entertainment factor.” Décor and themes might feature local art, history, culture and characters.



Opportunities Ahead?

Table 23

Q: What types of new retail establishments might make you visit Uptown Marion more often?

Top Consumer Survey Responses—Categorized

General/Variety Store	35.6%
Arts, Crafts, and Hobbies	32.2%
Neighborhood Grocery	31.4%
Cards and Gifts	30.2%
Specialty Meat Market	30.0%
Bookstore	27.4%
Women’s Clothing	26.3%
Home Furnishings	22.9%

Source: 2018 Uptown Marion Consumer Survey.

Table 24

Q: What type of new businesses or attractions, located in Uptown Marion would help your business and/or have the best chance to succeed?

Top Business Survey Responses—Categorized

Retail/Boutiques	16
Restaurants	15
New Housing	5
Professional Services	4
Grocery Store	4
Entertainment venue	4

Source: 2018 Uptown Marion Business Survey.

MOVING FORWARD > INTRO

The Main Street Approach to Revitalization

Main Street Iowa works with member communities and organizations to adapt a time-tested and proven approach to revitalization developed and promoted by Main Street America™, a program of the National Main Street Center. The approach provides a framework for communities to rebuild, preserve, and reinvigorate their historic and older downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts.



The Main Street Approach® consists of three essential and tightly integrated tools:

1. **Community Vision** that is informed by broad and inclusive community input *and* market understanding.
2. **Transformation Strategies** that incrementally create positive changes in the district's economy. These are implemented through simultaneous activity in four broad areas of work that, together, constitute the "Four Points." In brief:
 - ◆ **Design** encompasses improving all the physical and visual aspects of the district.
 - ◆ **Organization** involves cultivating partnerships and resources for the district.
 - ◆ **Promotion** is about marketing the district.
 - ◆ **Economic Vitality** focuses on capital, incentives and other economic and financial tools for business and property development.
3. **Impact measurement** includes monitoring quantitative and qualitative outcomes.



MOVING FORWARD > INTRO

Uptown Marion Transformation Strategy

This document summarizes market information and community insights to provide direction for potential projects, actions, and initiatives that support and align with the community's vision for Uptown Marion and the pursuit of the following two transformational strategies:

1. Expand on the Arts and Entertainment District with a focus on further developing a locally-driven mix of art, culture, history and entertainment.
2. Strengthening Uptown Marion to become a destination commercial district with a focus on history, dining, and unique retail experiences.



Transformation Strategies Explained

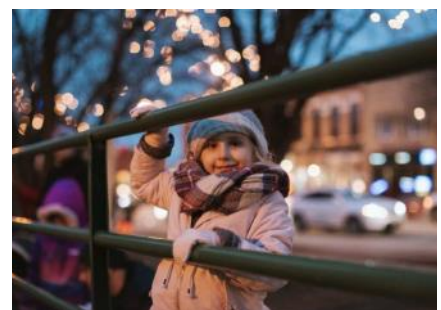
A *Transformation Strategy* articulates a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy. Grounded by both an understanding of the underlying drivers of the local and regional economy, as well as community feedback and engagement, a Transformation Strategy should describe a market position that the commercial district can successfully fulfill.

An effective Transformation Strategy serves a particular customer segment, responds to an underserved market demand, or creates a differentiated destination.

Simply stated, a *Transformation Strategy* is a comprehensive strategy that guides the direction of the revitalization initiative and, over time, transforms the district. Each Transformation Strategy has several important characteristics:

- ▶ It is **rooted in the community's vision** for the district.
- ▶ It is **based on a solid analysis and understanding** of the district's economy and its best economic opportunities.
- ▶ It is **comprehensive**, in that it is implemented through a broad range of activities that span the four broad areas of work represented by the Four Points.
- ▶ It is **measurable**, making it possible to track progress.
- ▶ It **provides guidance for program activities for a two- to five-year period**, after which the revitalization program should examine progress and make adjustments, as needed.

In general, a revitalization organization should work with one or two Transformation Strategies at a time. In some exceptional circumstances, it might consider tackling three Transformation Strategies—but more than three would be challenging.



MOVING FORWARD > ACTIVITIES

Transformation Strategy Activities

Activities proposed in this document and summarized on the following page serve as a good starting point and guide for moving forward. Still other ideas and activities are likely to grow out of this study's findings and those already contained in Uptown Marion's work plans and other planning documents. To that end, the ultimate selection and implementation of activities must also consider the organization's capacity to take on new projects, with an understanding that implementation—and change—will occur over a period of time.

Supporting and Sustaining Activities

The ability to move forward on the ideas and opportunities advanced as part of this study, along with those already in motion or contained in other planning documents, will also hinge on a strong organizational foundation and supporting activities that, while not explicitly spelled out within the context of any market study, are absolutely essential to the success of Uptown Marion and the community's downtown revitalization efforts.

Uptown Marion's role as partnership builder, resource locator and publicity machine will become even more important in the months and years ahead. In some cases this role may require the organization to locate or develop entirely new sources of funding to execute a new project, or to find a new volunteer source to ensure that a new festival or event is adequately staffed. In other cases, it might require the organization to re-assess priorities and existing budget allocations as priorities may shift based on the findings of this study, and as new opportunities emerge and conditions change in the future.

Looking Ahead

The completion of this market study is not an end, but rather another milestone in the evolution of the community's downtown enhancement initiative. While the process has served to help identify today's priorities, challenges, and emerging opportunities, it can not, and does not pretend to, anticipate next year's challenges or exciting and unanticipated opportunities on the horizon.

The diligent efforts undertaken by Uptown Marion staff and volunteers to help gather the input, to study the data, and to guide the development of market-driven actions have prepared the organization and the community well by providing a framework and sound basis for future planning and decision making—processes—and activities that align with the community's vision for Uptown Marion.



Examples: Supporting and Sustaining Activities

Board of Directors/Organization

- ▶ Fundraising and fund development activities to sustain the organization and implement projects and activities.
- ▶ Volunteer development activities including the recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers.
- ▶ Partnership and public participation efforts to involve a broad cross section of residents, business persons, elected officials, community leaders and representatives from other community organizations.
- ▶ Monitoring and tracking progress, evaluating processes, measuring results, and taking appropriate action, where and when necessary, to refine operations or implement changes.
- ▶ Public relations to enhance awareness of the Main Street [Town] organization and the importance of its work to the community, and to publicize plans, projects and results.
- ▶ Monitoring and evaluating executive staff performance, needs for support staff, and budgeting accordingly.
- ▶ Leadership development, including the allocation of sufficient funds for board member, staff and volunteer leadership development and training.

Economic Vitality

- ▶ Building/Business Inventory to track occupancy, identify underutilized space, benchmark and track property values, develop a contacts database for building and business owners, create and update a downtown business directory, etc.
- ▶ "Hotlist" of downtown properties and spaces available for sale or lease to help facilitate matches between property owners/agents and prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Business Resources Guide/Directory to help facilitate access to technical assistance and resources, to help prospects navigate development and permitting processes, etc.

MOVING FORWARD > ACTIVITIES

At-a-Glance: Current and Potential Transformation Strategy Activities

Current Economic Vitality Activities:

- Food Truck policy
- Real Estate Showcase
- Annual building owners meeting
- Open 4 Business application

Potential Activities:

- Regular business visits
- Share Market Study survey results with businesses
- Restaurant Week promotion with schools
- Social media training
- E-Commerce training for small business

Current Promotion Activities:

- Shop Small Saturday
- Holiday Open Houses
- Chocolate Walk
- Swamp Fox Festival
- Ladies Day Out
- Fall Fest
- Marion Arts Festival
- Peppermint Walk

Potential Activities:

- Webinar series for business education
- Create tourism committee to promote Uptown
- Social media training—hands on
- Identify ways to make events more family-friendly

Economic Vitality

Retail Promotion

UPTOWN MARION TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

Focused on further developing Uptown Marion as an Arts & Entertainment District providing a mix of art, culture, history, entertainment and commerce in a public space the entire family can enjoy.

Design

Organization

Current Design Activities:

- Project review
- Assist with grant applications
- MSI Challenge Grant application
- Spring/Fall clean-ups
- Spring décor in Uptown
- Sign inventory

Potential Activities:

- Streetscape Planning with City of Marion
- Interim communication regarding infrastructure
- Improve signage
- Wayfinding signs
- Arts in the Roundabouts

Current Organization Activities:

- Eat, Drink & Be Marion
- Volunteer Appreciation
- MSI Award applications
- Resource Recruitment
- Event Calendar

Potential Activities:

- Revisit mission/vision statements
- Enhance relationship with events staff
- Share Market Study report with key partners
- Market Study report updates to City Council

MOVING FORWARD > ACTIVITIES

At-a-Glance: Current and Potential Transformation Strategy Activities

Current Economic Vitality Activities:

- Documentation of infrastructure issues—streets, sidewalks
- Communication with City (streetscape)
- MSI Open 4 Business program
- Current activity

Potential Activities:

- Building & Business Inventory
- Regular business visits
- MSI Ready to Recruit Training (2021)
- Explore cross-marketing opportunities
- Support collaborative marketing campaigns

Current Promotion Activities:

- Shop Small Saturday
- Continue sharing social media posts
- Holiday Open Houses
- Ladies Day Out
- Peppermint Walk

Potential Activities:

- Develop social media calendar
- Enhance marketing materials for Uptown
- Create tourism committee to promote Uptown
- Attend State tourism conference
- Promote local events through the State of Iowa Tourism office on a regular basis



Current Design Activities:

- Sign & Awning grant program
- Spring/Fall clean-ups
- Veteran Banner program

Potential Activities:

- Wayfinding signage
- Continue planning with the City of Marion
- Uptown Development Strategy
- MSI Ready to Recruit Training (2021)

Current Organization Activities:

- Annual program stats report
- Quarterly updates to regional partners

Potential Activities:

- Enhanced communication with all partners
- Continue partnerships with City of Marion
- Image enhancement
- Long range planning of space
- Determine key priorities for the district