



Central Marion Revitalization Plan

2014

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PLAN INTRODUCTION

PLANNING EFFORTS

The Central Marion Revitalization Plan stems from various planning efforts, beginning with the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Comprehensive Plan process began in 2008 with a community planning process to develop a Plan for Historic Marion (Downtown). The goal was to reintroduce the community to the planning process and gather information that would later form the Central Marion sector study and Downtown area chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. As of 2010, 30+ public meetings had been held and a community-wide survey distributed the previous summer had resulted in 1,300 responses.

Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update

The final Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan consists of 5 main sections: Community Profile, Plan Elements, Action Plan, Sector Studies, and Appendix. The plan was adopted by City Council resolution in May 2010 and is continually used as a basis for other plans, including Marion's 2014 Stellar Communities Program Strategic Investment Plan Submittal.

2014 Stellar Communities Program Submittal

Begun in 2011 as a pilot program through the Indiana Lieutenant Governor's office, the Stellar Communities Program bestows a designation upon two eligible communities each year. Participating state agencies - the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHDA), and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) - commit to assist these "Stellar" communities in achieving their long-term comprehensive strategic goals for targeted areas within the community. The Stellar Communities Program is not a grant, but it does open the door for invaluable project funding for awarded communities for several years to come.

The City of Marion has submitted an application to the Stellar Communities Program each year since 2011. Each application in the Stellar Communities process has made us a stronger team, helped sculpt a focused reinvestment plan and opened up new partnerships. The members of our planning and development Stellar Team were involved in our extensive Comprehensive Plan in-house process before Stellar was launched as a pilot program. They have been involved in visioning sessions and community forums outside of Stellar, are committed to the vision, and are personally invested in the area. Many are the same community members that assisted in the \$9 million dollar renovation of the historic Coliseum into a state-of-the-art downtown YMCA. Members of those teams were integral in the compilation of this Revitalization Plan.

We are extremely proud of our community for many reasons.

- **Arts Community.** Downtown Marion is unmistakably an arts community. The area is home to the following organizations: Marion Civic Theater, Community School of the Arts, Marion Music and Sound, Creative CommUnity, Marion Philharmonic Orchestra, Cosmetology Spa Academy, and several dance studios.
- **Community School of the Arts (CSA):** This unique arts business incubator and school was born in a church basement in 1995, quickly outgrew its location and moved to the former Leath Furniture building on the square, which it is rapidly outgrowing. CSA has fostered countless private arts programs, studios, and professional dancers and actors. More than 1,000 students of all ages attend 200+ classes in dance, art, acting. This has doubled since last year! The classes draw students from hours away, with approximately 40% commuting from outside of the city limits. These classes are not only fun, but are taught at a world-class level. As the agency strives for future charter school status, CSA has the opportunity to attract more families and employ additional artists. CSA currently occupies two buildings on the courthouse square and is ready for an expansion into a third adjacent building to allow for recording studios and additional classroom space. The evolution into a downtown campus is imminent.
- **YMCA:** A great example of community vision, fundraising and capacity to manage a multi-year, multi-partner project. A \$9 million state-of-the-art facility now occupies the former Coliseum. The organization focuses on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. (6,500 members, 1,400 youth members)
- **Main Street Marion (MSM):** This downtown management agency has recently relocated to the riverfront. Their improvements to a chronically abandoned property may serve as a visitor center and the cornerstone of future riverfront development. The organization will continue to provide the leadership, promotion and programming to activate the riverfront and downtown venues - bringing 1000's of local and regional visitors to downtown Marion.

- **Reducing Blight.** The City of Marion's Building Department has torn down over 600 dilapidated structures and cleaned up over 3,000 properties since 2004. In 2010, the City assisted with demolition of the former Emily Flinn nursing home, paving the way for additional improvements in center city neighborhoods. In January 2011, City Council approved an incentive package for a \$13 million senior living facility to be constructed on the site of the former nursing home.
- **Property Program.** In 2010, Marion began acquiring parcels with delinquent property taxes from the county and then selling them for redevelopment. Sales proceeds help defray costs associated with the properties.
- **Neighborhood Associations.** Marion has 20+ Neighborhood Associations and a City employed Coordinator.
- **Community Gardens.** The Marion Community Garden Association formed in 2010. Volunteers from 6 public gardens sell produce at the Marion Open Air Market each weekend.
- **Free Bus Transportation.** The Marion Area Public Transportation System (MAPTS) currently operates fixed-route and handicapped route-deviation transit services with five buses daily. Free fares have resulted in a nearly 100% increase in monthly ridership.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City of Marion feels strongly that our plan is based on input from the public, stemming from the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan update process that officially began in the spring of 2008. We've since been honing in on the plan for Central Marion since the 2011 Strategic Investment Plan review process after our first Stellar submittal. We launched a very popular Facebook page and several YouTube videos about the projects and have hosted community celebrations to thank the community for their passion and involvement in our planning processes (see Figure 1). We look forward to further community engagement as we move forward with the projects described in this plan.



Figure 1: Thanking community members for their support during the Stellar planning process.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

LOCATION

The City of Marion lies in north-central Indiana, north of Indianapolis, and is the county seat of Grant County. The Central Indiana region has been called the “Crossroads of America” because of its location at the intersection of many shipping routes (see Figure 2). Because Marion is located approximately halfway between Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, residents can drive approximately an hour and have access to abundant resources. Marion’s proximity to Interstate 69 makes it easily accessible from most locations within the region.

Regional Significance

Marion is home to multiple regional anchors that will benefit from an expanded downtown cultural arts campus. We’ve had more than \$130 million dollars in private commercial investment in the community since 2009. We strive for an increased quality of life to help us retain many of these new additions to the community and attract further development.

The realization of Marion’s vision for a Riverfront District will change the character of the entire region. Marion is a regional employer, drawing workers from surrounding communities and states to work at GM, Marion General Hospital, the VA, and WalMart and Dollar General Distribution Centers.

Marion serves as a regional education and workforce development center thanks to Indiana Wesleyan University, Ivy Tech and nearby Taylor University. The potential projects outlined in our Central Marion Revitalization Plan will redefine the entire region and enhance the quality of life for thousands of residents and visitors.

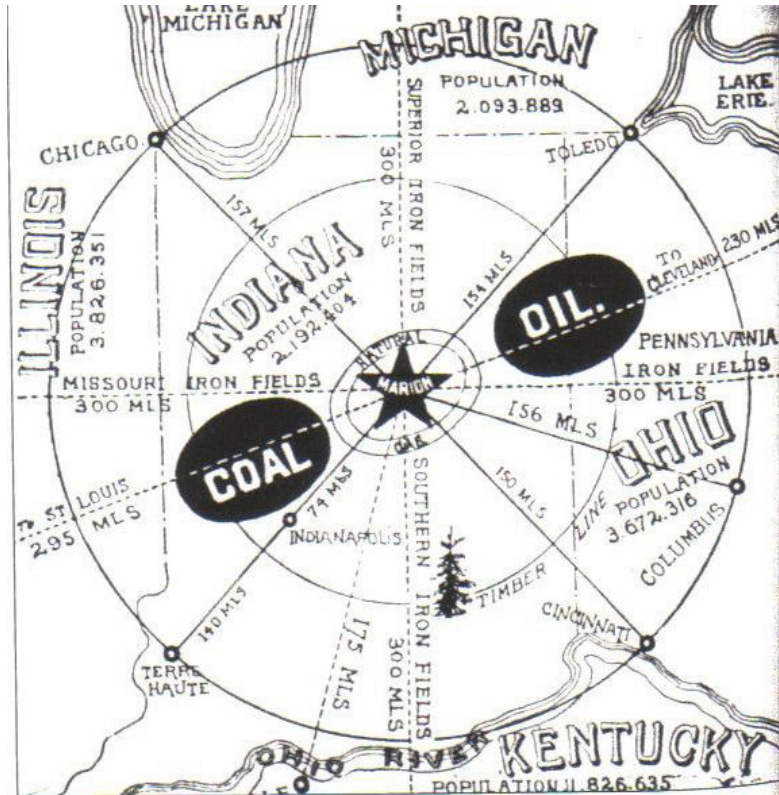


Figure 2: Historic advertisement showing Marion’s regional connections and natural resources, originally from *Bazaar* magazine.

BRIEF HISTORY OF MARION

The City of Marion was named for Francis Marion, a Brigadier General from South Carolina during the American Revolutionary War. Before the first settlers, Marion and the rest of North-Central Indiana was originally covered in dense forest. The first settlers included Martin Boots and David Branson in 1825 and 1826, respectively. Marion became connected to other communities in Indiana with the construction of new roads in the 1860s and railroad transportation in 1867.

Marion saw a major increase in population from 1887 to 1894 as a result of the natural gas and oil boom in the Midwest. The population jumped from 3,500 to 21,000, flourishing for many decades. Downtown Marion was most vibrant through the 1930s, but began to decline in the 1940s as development shifted to the “by-pass.” From 1970 to the present time, chain retail and fast food establishments continued to occupy the by-pass corridor, drawing traffic and interest away from downtown. In 1977, the North Park Plaza (now known as Five Points Mall) enticed several downtown merchants to relocate.

Downtown Marion is historic Marion, but in its declining years, many of the historic structures have been torn down. Downtown is now at a tipping point. If decline continues and more structures are eliminated, the district may not be able to recover. For this reason, now is the time to reinvest in historic downtown.

DEMOGRAPHICS

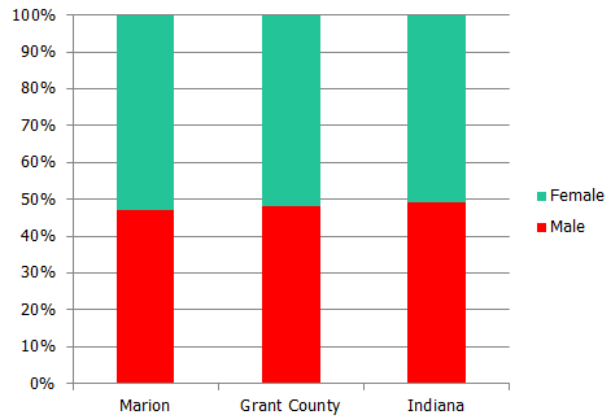
Population Total

Marion	Grant County	Indiana
29,948	70,061	6,483,802

Source: STATS Indiana

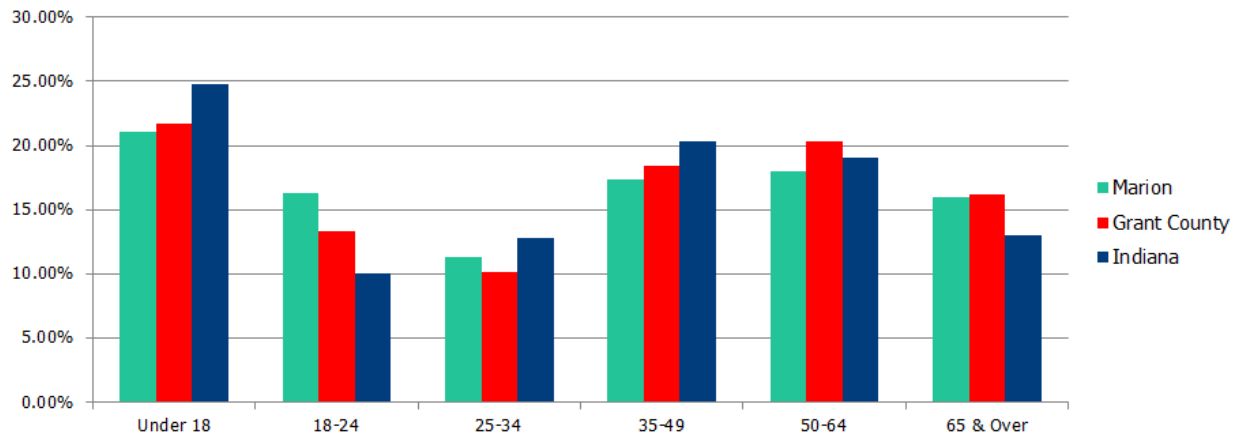
Marion's population peaked around 1970 at 39,607 and has gradually declined. The total population has declined by approximately four percent since 2000. Similarly, Grant County's population peaked around 1970 at 83,955. Since 2000, the population has declined by approximately five percent. In contrast, Indiana's population has steadily grown, increasing by about seven percent since 2000.

Population by Gender



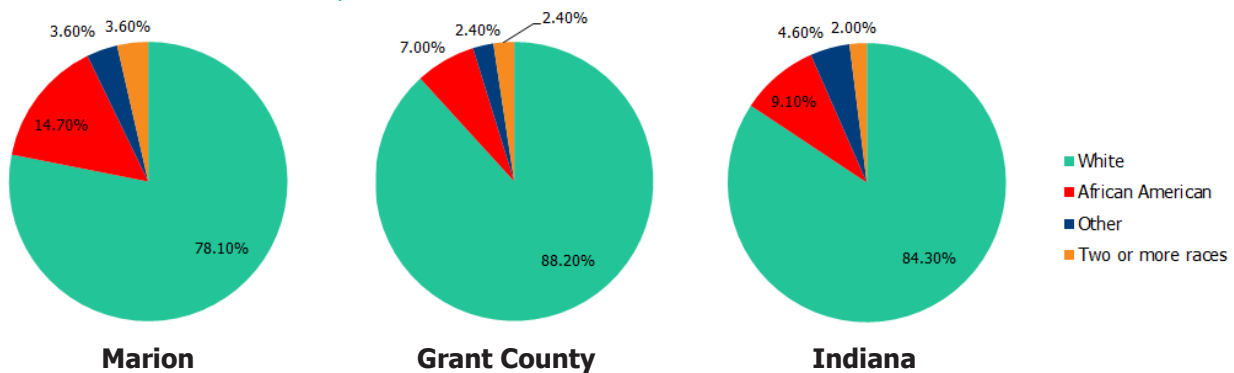
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Age Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Racial & Ethnic Diversity

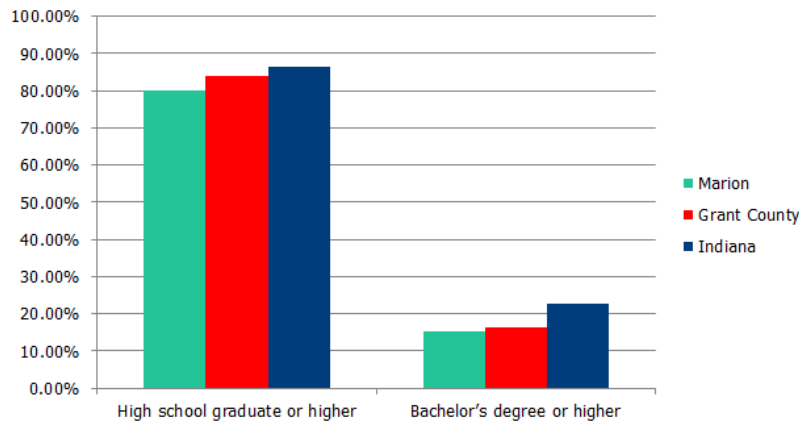


Ethnicity	Marion	Grant County	Indiana
Hispanic or Latino	5.5%	3.6%	6.0%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	94.5%	96.4%	94.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

The racial and ethnic diversity in Marion is similar to that of Grant County and Indiana. There is a slightly higher percentage of African Americans in Marion than Grant County and Indiana.

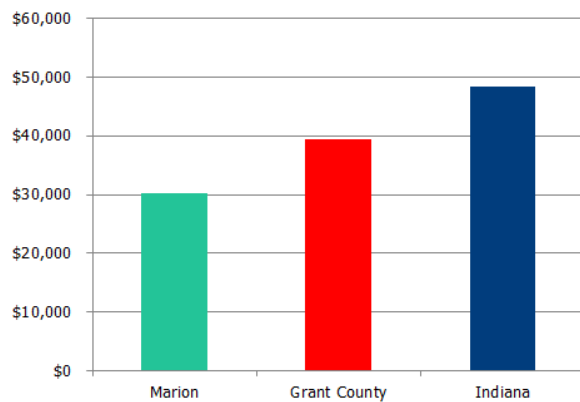
Educational Attainment



For residents 25 years of age and older, a smaller percentage of Marion residents graduate from high school or graduate from college with a bachelor's degree or higher compared to Grant County or Indiana residents. Future Marion projects might include initiatives to improve educational attainment.

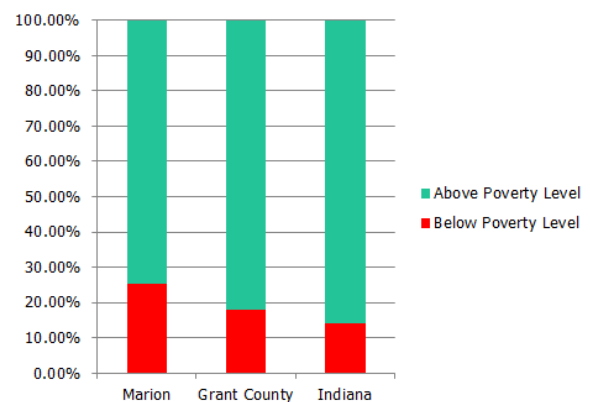
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011

Median Household Income



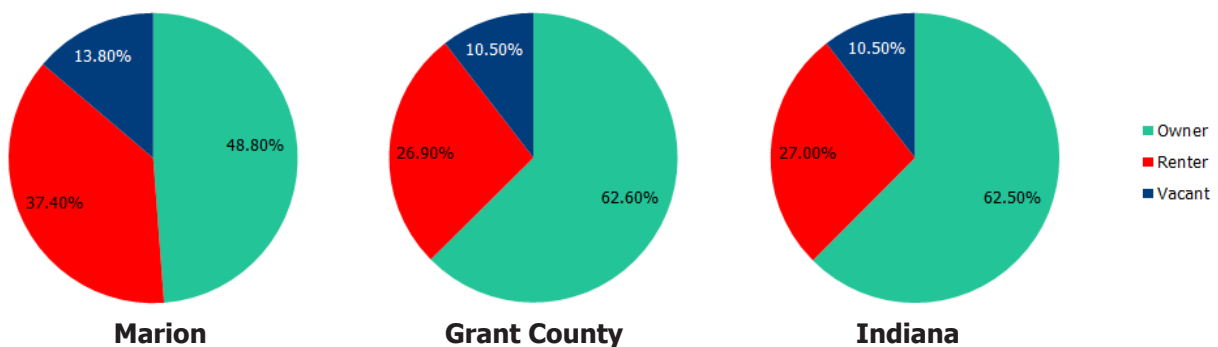
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Population Below Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2013

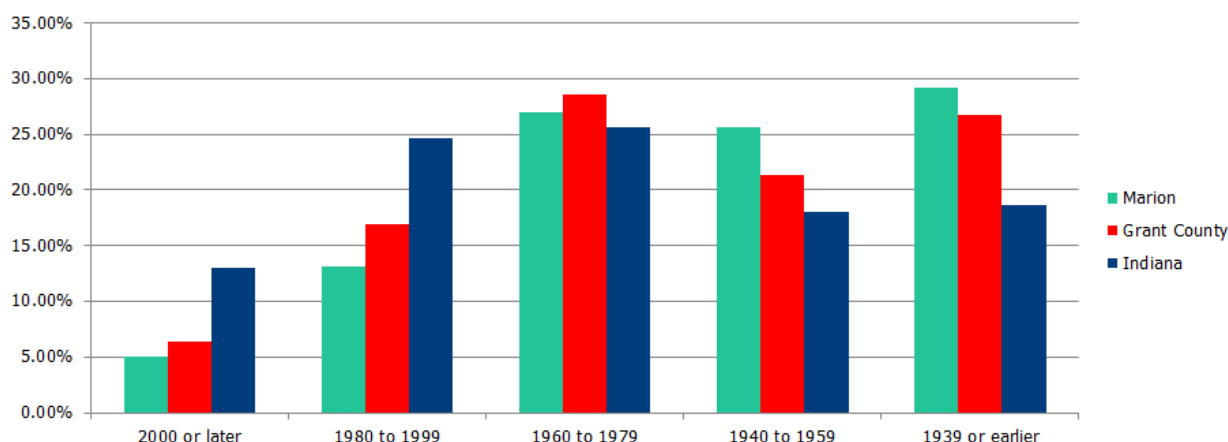
Housing Status



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

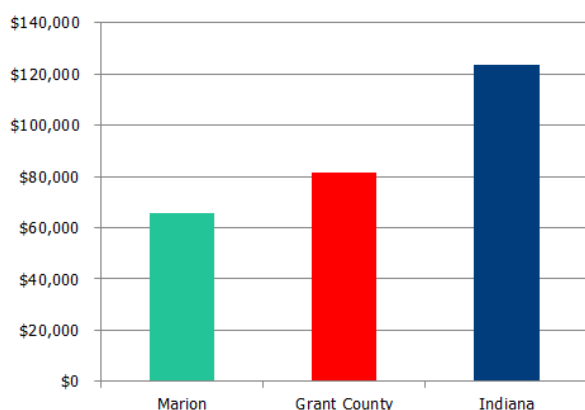
As suggested by the Median Household Income graph, the average Marion household makes nearly 23 percent less than the average Grant County household and nearly 37 percent less than an average Indiana household. In addition, 25 percent of Marion residents live below poverty level, which is 8 percent more than Grant County residents and over 10 percent more than Indiana residents. Being aware of and sensitive to citizens' financial situations might help future projects succeed. In addition, about 37 percent of Marion residents rent houses, while only about 27 percent of Grant County and Indiana residents rent houses. Home vacancy is also slightly higher in Marion compared to Grant County and Indiana as a whole. This information is particularly relevant to housing goals and corresponding projects.

Year Structure Built



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Median Value of Housing Units



Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2014

Housing structures in Marion are significantly older than housing structures in Grant County and Indiana. Nearly 30 percent of Marion's housing stock were built before 1940, and only 5 percent were built since 2000. Older homes create unique challenges, including issues with dangerous building materials and accessibility limitations. The median value of the housing units in Marion are also significantly lower than Grant County and Indiana housing units. The average Indiana housing unit is nearly double the value of the average Marion house. This information is important to consider for future housing and neighborhood revitalization projects.

INVENTORY

The following is an inventory of some of the many arts, cultural, and historical resources and features in Marion, particularly those within Central Marion.

Historical Features

The following chart represents some of the most significant historical features in or near the Central Marion Target Area.

Historical Feature	Address	Description
Aaron Swayzee-Love House	224 N. Washington St.	Historical home in the Bend of the River neighborhood
Abijah C. Jay House	118 W. 7th St.	Historical home near downtown Marion
Grant County Jail & Sheriff's Residence	215 E. 3rd St.	Renovated into the Castle Apartments
James Dean Birthplace	Corner of 4th and McClure Streets	Potentially the future site of a James Dean Memorial
Marion Downtown Commercial Historic District	Downtown Marion	National Registry of Historic Places Historic District



Figure 3: Swayzee-Love House.
Source: City Planning Dept.

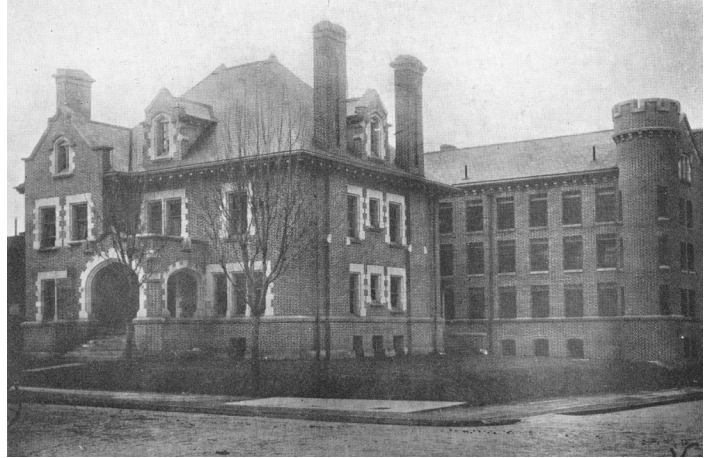


Figure 4: Historic photo of Grant County Jail & Sheriff's Residence. Source: Marion Public Library.

Arts & Cultural Resources

For a listing and map of Marion's arts, cultural, and even educational resources, particularly those within the Central Marion Target Area, please refer to page 31, Arts & Culture Map.

Recent Investment

To see a map and listing of recent investment in Marion, please refer to page 30, Recent Investment Map.

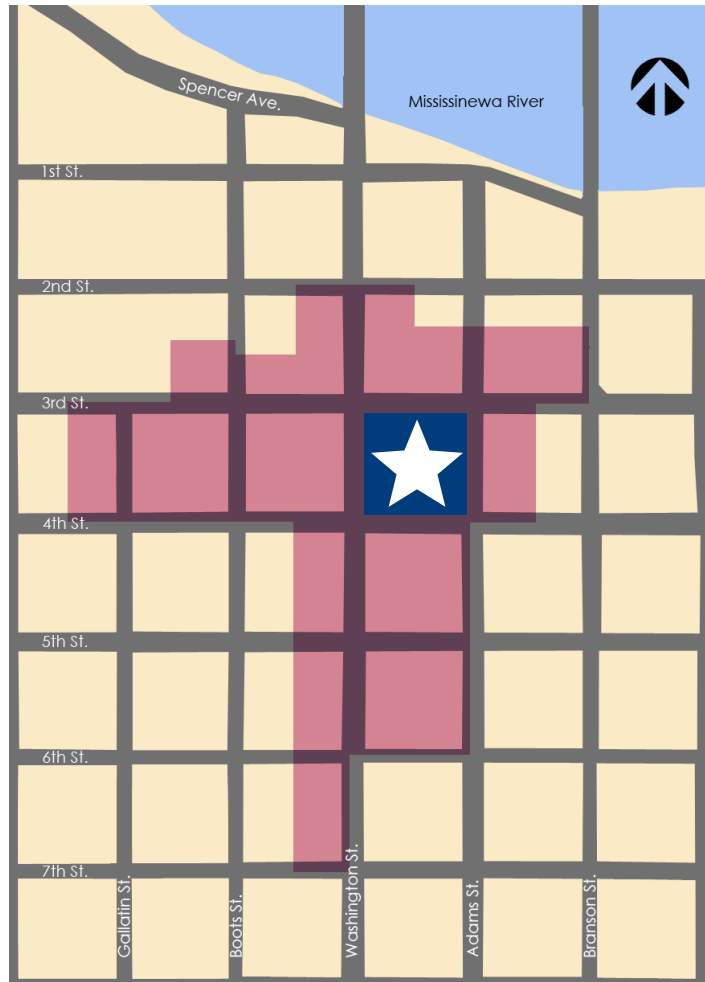


Figure 5: Downtown historic district, based on Grant County Interim Report.

FUTURE OF CENTRAL MARION

CENTRAL MARION VISION

"Leverage existing resources to transform the landscape of the downtown core into an interactive and engaging regional arts campus and entertainment venue - and to visually connect the millions in investment in the area to spur new development."

- Regional cultural district anchored by an expanded Community School of the Arts (CSA) campus
- Enhance the downtown square as the primary gateway into Marion along SR18
- Encourage a much needed "district mentality" by physically linking existing educational, creative, business and health resources
- Walkable areas that encourage healthy activity and stimulate imagination
- Educational, interactive art for the whole family inspired by children's museums throughout the country and beautification efforts that feature engaging public spaces
- Collaboratively designed public venues that eliminate current electric, lighting and ADA limitations
- Increased capacity to host regional entertainment and tournaments
- Offer housing opportunities for special needs populations, young professionals, mixed incomes, etc.

ARTS & CULTURE DISTRICT

Community School of the Arts
Civic Theater
Marion Philharmonic Orchestra
Marion Music & Sound
Multiple Dance Studios
Multiple Martial Arts
Marion Library+History Museum
National Quilter's Hall of Fame
Creative Community Arts Co-op
Beatnik's Music Hall
Open Air Market
3rd Street Courtyard Stage

CENTRAL MARION TARGET AREA



Figure 6: Map depicting project target area, downtown Marion. See page 29 for a more detailed Central Marion Target Area Map with potential projects.

PROJECT OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

We perceive project outcomes and impacts as observable changes that will potentially contribute to the long-term sustainability of improvements in people's lives in the community and region, as well as long-term changes in the condition of people or the state of the environment and culture that reduce poverty, stabilize neighborhoods, improve well-being and protect and conserve natural resources.

Arts & Culture

- Attract artists, educate children, draw people downtown
- Educate all ages through diverse methods of arts
- Attract new students to CSA and local arts education
- Increase arts and education opportunities
- Enhance quality of life
- Reduce poverty
- Enhance the image of the downtown arts district
- Identify east central Indiana as a hub for arts education
- A new generation of children growing up downtown

Public Spaces & Community Development

- Regional hub for sports
- Increased options for physical activity
- Provide cultural gathering places
- Improve gateways to downtown and the county seat
- Placemaking encourages gathering
- Happier, healthier citizens
- Attract quality families to our schools and major employers
- Landmarks established

Housing

- Increased mixed-use and affordable housing options
- Stabilized neighborhoods
- Beautification and decreased blight
- Attract renters and owners with ties to our schools and major employers

Targeted Investment

- Preserve elements of Marion's history
- Generations able to enjoy downtown into the future
- Increase tourism to downtown Marion and the Region
- Landmarks established
- Attract and retain additional businesses and entrepreneurs

Revitalization

- Beautification efforts
- Improve district image
- Increased safety
- Increased pedestrian opportunities
- Increased commerce and vitality of business district
- Instill pride in community
- Reduce poverty
- Improved regional economy
- Additional feet and eyes on the street
- Additional employment opportunities
- Blight elimination

Public Safety & Infrastructure

- Increased accessibility options
- Connect and guide people smoothly from place to place
- Safety improvements
- Increased diversity of visitors
- Safer and healthier neighborhoods and residents
- Increased downtown investment
- Cooperation between local, state and region
- Reduced reliance on automobiles and parking
- Improvements are safe, pedestrian-friendly and socially stimulating

PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives for our Central Marion projects best align with the following 6 goals, mission statements and objectives derived from the City of Marion's Comprehensive Plan (adopted May 2010):

"It is the Mission of the City of Marion to..."

1. TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

"Connect neighbors and visitors to essential services and attractions via a multi-modal transportation system."

Objectives:

- Provide transportation options and connections for pedestrians and all mobility types.
- Encourage a multi-modal transportation system that ensures safety, full connectivity and accessibility.
- Establish an integrated wayfinding system that is clear and concise on a resident and visitor level.
- Site-specific circulation and wayfinding programs that are sensitive to the city's image and surroundings.

2. CITY IMAGE & TOURISM

"Preserve and enhance the city's image, character and quality of life."

Objectives:

- Increase and promote elements of a higher quality of life to attract urban tourism, economic development opportunities and residential growth.
- Market the city to visitors and potential investors through a positive branding strategy.
- Maintain awareness of history and preservation during development and redevelopment efforts.
- Promote cohesive design through development and redevelopment.
- Emphasize importance of citywide character and maintenance.

3. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

"Promote and enhance the unique character of the city and strive to preserve individual neighborhood identities."

Objectives:

- Promote neighborhood character at the citizen level through Neighborhood Associations.
- Encourage sensitivity to neighborhood character through infill and development based on the local design context.
- Preserve neighborhood character through active zoning and code enforcement.
- Promote responsible home ownership.
- Provide housing opportunities for all levels of income and need.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"Provide employment opportunities and services to residents by aiding in business expansion and retention, while growing and recruiting new industries."

Objectives:

- Cultivate and promote small businesses by encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit and providing access to resources.
- Facilitate existing business expansion and retention.
- Attract a variety of industries and business types to the community.
- Encourage development and redevelopment that is aesthetically and technologically advanced.

5. NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

"Protect, preserve and promote the natural landscape for the City of Marion in a long term planning effort for a healthier environment and more sustainable future."

Objectives:

- Ensure sustainability by promoting alternative and renewable energy practices.
- Pursue preservation of open space, the natural environment and wildlife habitats by protecting environmentally sensitive areas.
- Promote a higher quality of life through environmentally sensitive best practices.

6. PARKS & RECREATION

"Provide safe and accessible parks, greenspaces and recreation opportunities to Marion residents and visitors."

Objectives:

- Trail system connections to parks, schools, senior centers and other recreational opportunities.
- Access to park opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and creeds.
- Safe opportunities for parks and trail uses.
- Provide a higher quality of life to residents.

TARGET POPULATION

The Central Marion Revitalization Plan proposes capital projects in direct response to the priorities identified by the community. Priorities were established in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan based on multiple opportunities for public input. Residents of the Central Marion target area are particularly supportive of the following recommendations:

- Clean, Safe, and Walkable Downtown and Neighborhoods
- Affordable Housing and Preserving Downtown and Neighborhood Character
- Wayfinding/Signage
- Downtown, Gateway and Riverfront Redevelopment

Marion is centrally located between Indianapolis and Ft. Wayne just off of I69. Our location helps us draw regional sports teams and entertainment visitors from both major cities and surrounding counties. Downtown Marion is bisected by SR18 and defined by the banks of the Mississinewa River and railroad tracks. Our Central Marion Revitalization Plan focuses on approximately 9 blocks of the downtown core, including the riverfront, the courthouse square, and primary corridors and gateways.

Because the scale and complexity is more manageable at the neighborhood/sector level, community investment projects can be genuinely comprehensive and integrated. The process and product of neighborhood projects also sets the stage for residents to effectively visualize and tackle regional challenges.

Each proposed project/activity will benefit, at a minimum, the target populations outlined below:

- Youth and Families
- The Arts Community
- Low/Moderate Income Persons
- Persons with Disabilities
- Senior Citizens

Diverse new and rehabbed mixed-income housing options have also been identified within walking distance of the district offered through partnerships with Affordable Housing Corporation and Habitat for Humanity. The neighborhood immediately across the river is working on an Artist Village marketing strategy to attract Community School of the Arts (CSA) teachers and families.



Figures 7-9: Examples of artist talent in Marion. Top right - CSA pottery student; bottom left - Marion Music & Sound student playing guitar; bottom right - CSA acting students.

OBJECTIVES & POTENTIAL PROJECTS

POTENTIAL PROJECT CATEGORIES

The City of Marion and partners have highlighted the need or opportunities for projects in the following areas based on public and private input:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. ARTS & CULTURE | 4. TARGETED INVESTMENT |
| 2. PUBLIC SPACES & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT | 5. REVITALIZATION AND |
| 3. HOUSING | 6. PUBLIC SAFETY & INFRASTRUCTURE |

We believe strongly that this is a comprehensive approach to revitalization based on our community's needs and that we have the local capacity for success. We're a large community with multiple resources to serve as project management and tried and tested experience with the sites.

All project categories and corresponding projects described in this plan are suggestions. Each project, as well as the scope of each project, is subject to change.

1. ARTS & CULTURE

Marion is a historic community where many talented individuals have lived, worked, imagined and played. In our vision, daily life in Marion is infused with art and culture, and visitors will know immediately that Marion is a place that fosters youth and creativity. The following potential Arts & Culture projects reflect Marion's aspiration to grow our regional arts and entertainment district into an arts education anchor for the state. Many of these potential projects may increase our tourism potential and expand our youth education opportunities.

Arts & Culture Objectives

- 1.1. Education through interactive public art.
- 1.2. Support growth of the Community School of the Arts and other artistic individuals/organizations.
- 1.3. Increase Marion's tourism potential through arts and cultural attractions.



Figure 10: Community School of the Arts feature wall, an arts and culture landmark in downtown.

Project 1. Stellar Citizens Art Campaign (Comprehensive Plan Goal #2)

- Inspire youth education through hands-on learning.
- Multiple local organizations have joined forces around the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets.
- The Stellar Citizens Art Campaign would highlight the 8 categories of Assets in interactive art installations throughout downtown. The 40 Assets may also be taught in a Marion-opoly board installation where one would progress through 40 activities.

Project 2. CSA Expansion (theater and music) (Comprehensive Plan Goal #2)

- Expansion into the adjacent building would allow for much needed space to grow art programs (see Figure 11).
- The buildings share an existing elevator; the 2nd floor was a previous radio station and is already equipped with soundproof walls for music studios. The 3rd floor features elaborate architecture and high ceilings ideal for a theater space.



Project 3. CSA Annex (culinary, martial and visual arts) (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 4)

- The growing interest in the arts has created a need for expansion.
- CSA has acquired a second historic building on the City square, non-adjacent to the main CSA building, which will be rehabilitated and become the home of the visual arts programs, as well as the culinary and martial arts (see Figure 12).
- The addition of a culinary arts program would vastly improve our tourism potential, as the addition of a commercial kitchen will enable us to host conferences and events.



Figures 11-12: Existing CSA Expansion and Annex buildings

Project 4. James Dean Memorial (Comprehensive Plan Goal #2)

- The International James Dean Fan Club and a local private investor are investigating the possibility of planning a memorial on the site of James Dean's childhood home.
- The group has site control and is in the planning and fundraising stage.

Project 5. Museum Upgrades (Comprehensive Plan Goal #2)

- In an effort to attract more visitors, the Marion Public Library is working on rebranding its museum to create more interesting and cohesive exhibits that reflect the history of Marion.
- Currently, they are exploring different themes, a name change, and the possibility of rotating exhibits highlighting the unique stories of Grant County.

Project 6. Faith in Motion Dance Studio Remodel (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 4)

- Faith in Motion Dance Studio recently purchased the former Priscilla & Perry Furniture Store at 5th and Washington, which had been vacant for a few years.
- The new owner is in the process of renovating the building into a faith-based dance studio that will contribute to Marion's growing downtown arts and cultural district.

2. PUBLIC SPACES & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Public Spaces & Community Development category features projects that provide gathering spaces for athletics, passive and active recreation, eating, celebrating and more. Each of these projects meets several Comprehensive Plan goals by improving city image, beautifying surrounding neighborhoods, and provided economic development opportunities and, most importantly, providing safe and accessible parks and recreation opportunities to Marion residents and visitors. Marion has already seen the benefits of similar projects, such as the widely-used 3rd Street Courtyard pocket park music venue on the courthouse square, which replaced a hole left by the demolition of a condemned property on the courthouse square. The Grant County YMCA also boasts a newly renovated state-of-the-art facility for recreation, youth development, and healthy living. On a smaller scale, the six new Marion Community Gardens provide public spaces for neighborhood residents to congregate and cultivate gardens.

Public Spaces & Community Development Objectives

- 2.1. Repurpose abandoned or city-owned property for public recreational use.
- 2.2. Plan future park and plaza spaces with multi-use goals for diverse users.
- 2.3. Transform underutilized riverfront property into a community asset.



Figure 13: Conceptual rendering of Project 8. Riverfront Promenade & Stage.

Project 7. Gateway Park (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 4, 5 & 6)

The Gateway Park Project involves the addition of 18 acres to the City of Marion's existing Ballard Field Soccer Fields. The project includes ADA upgrades, 7 additional sports fields, updating existing and creating new parking areas and a multi-purpose trail (see Figure 14).

- Reclaimed from a blighted residential area with a history of catastrophic flooding.
- Within walking distance to the proposed Riverfront Promenade and Stage along a planned connection to a multi-purpose Riverwalk used by people of all ages from every walk of life.
- Located on important I69 gateway across from Complementary proposed Odie Dog Park project.
- Will be used by multiple area youth soccer teams and family recreation for all family members .
- Will earn income through use as a major concert venue and by attracting local and regional sports tournaments.
- Has been used in current state for 3 years of Hog Daze, a motorcycle rally attracting visitors from 13 states and Canada. Based on this experience, Main Street Marion has a clear vision of what is needed on the site.



Figure 14: Conceptual rendering of Project 7. Gateway Park.

Project 8. Riverfront Promenade & Stage (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

Our river remains an integral part of our community, connecting us with nature, as well as with our past. The Riverfront Promenade and Stage Project will create a space the community can use for a wide-range of activities. The project will convert existing roadways into an open walking path and hardscape features to enjoy music from the new stage, views of the Mississinewa River and playing in and around a new splash pad water feature. Additionally, many landscaping features and other amenities will make this space usable for various events and activities (see Figure 13 on the previous page).

- The Riverfront Promenade and festival space will be anchored by the local Main Street managing office.
- This location serves as a natural trailhead to an existing 2.5-mile Riverwalk that will extend into the 35-acre park to the west (Project 7), and the future Imagination Trail connecting downtown to the IWU campus.
- The area is also connected to North Marion via two bridges (Project 33).

Project 9. Odie Dog Park (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 5 & 6)

- The City is planning an Odie Dog Park at the eastern SR18W gateway to downtown, across from the proposed Gateway Park, which complements a new Garfield Park located at the western gateway along SR18E.
- Working through a downtown-based steel fabricator, 3 public pavilions and 2 stage covers for Odie Dog Park and Gateway Park would be designed to match wayfinding signage to be installed in fall 2014.

Project 10. University Gateway Health Trail/Pocket Parks (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 5 & 6)

- Several pocket parks were developed along the corridor between downtown Marion and the Indiana Wesleyan University campus as part of the Magnificent Se7en revitalization project.
- Washington, Adams and/or Nebraska Streets would be perfect corridors to connect the two major areas of attraction with a trail.
- The neighborhoods along the corridor would benefit from health, wellness and activity opportunities.

3. HOUSING

Data supports Marion's need for safe, decent, and affordable housing for people of all needs and financial capabilities. According to the American Community Survey (2014):

- From 2013 to 2018, a net increase of 8.6 percent in the number of renters and a net decrease of 2.8 percent in the number of owners across age groups is projected.
- A large majority of renters are one- or two- person households, while the distribution of owners with households of various sizes is relatively normal.
- Median household income was \$32,828 in 2013 and is projected to decrease by 6.3 percent to \$30,759 in 2018.

Potential housing projects 11 through 13 help address Marion's housing needs, building off of the successes of other recent housing projects. From 2011 to 2014, several successful projects led by residents of Central Marion neighborhoods were completed with support from the City, private foundations, and non-profit agencies, including in-person neighborhood canvassing to learn what residents would like to see happen on vacant lots. The results included, "affordable housing," "parks" and "gardens." Residents completed over 200 "listening sessions" (neighbor-to-neighbor) with the goal of completing a Quality of Life Plan. Ten units of affordable housing and a community building were constructed on adjacent vacant lots; vacant lots were replaced with a fitness park, picnic area, and community garden. In addition, over 100 homes were weatherized with the help of 1,400 hours of volunteer labor.



Figure 15: Existing Danmar and Cecelian Apartments, to be restored as part of Project 11. Gallatin Historic Housing.

Housing Objectives

- 3.1. Provide opportunities to develop a variety of housing types and sizes that meet the needs, preferences and financial capabilities of Marion's present and future residents.
- 3.2. Develop strategies to encourage affordable housing downtown and in other areas designated for mixed-use and high residential densities.
- 3.3. Increase opportunities for renters, homebuyers, homeowners and special needs populations to occupy safe, decent and affordable housing

Project 11. Gallatin Historic Housing (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 3)

- Built at the turn of the century, these buildings were once prime examples of fashionable living.
- Through the economic downturn of the past decades, the Danmar and Cecelian apartments and Mecca Club were permitted to degrade to a dangerous point (see Figures 15 & 16).
- Unwilling to consign these historic structures to just another memory, Affordable Housing Corporation negotiated the purchase of this bank-owned property to rehabilitate and restore them to their former stately condition and address the need for affordable housing.



Figure 16: Historic Mecca Club.

Project 12. Owner-Occupied Rehab (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 3)

- Provides assistance to homeowners who otherwise lack the resources to make needed home repairs.
- Enables homeowners to remain in their homes, aging in place, rather than abandoned blight that invites crime.
- Gives homeowners a sense of pride and improves the neighborhood, as seen in Figures 17 & 18.
- Affordable Housing Corporation and the City launched this initiative in late August 2014 and plans to target approximately 25 to 30 homes per year.



Figures 17-18: Successful example of an owner-occupied rehabilitated home in Marion.

Project 13. B&B Opportunities (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 3 & 4)

- A local investor has purchased two historic properties in downtown Marion with the vision of developing B&B locations.
- Efforts should be made to cleanup the abandoned and/dilapidated structures around the properties to entice tourism.
- The developer has investigated a tie-in with Marion's Quilting legacy.

4. TARGETED INVESTMENT

The Targeted Investment projects focus on specific properties in or around downtown with development potential. These projects offer opportunities for partnering with the community to create new places of interest downtown. In recent years, other dilapidated downtown properties have seen successful reinvestment. The former Hotel Marion property has undergone much repair. As of summer 2014, the Riverside Federal Credit Union Headquarters is replacing a vacant property near the riverfront. An upcoming business on the square, Ride 'n Leather, may soon transform a chronically vacant structure and help celebrate Marion's motorcycle history with its merchandise. Capitalizing on this momentum, Projects 14 through 19 offer new ideas to continue our downtown revival.

Targeted Investment Objectives

- 4.1. Stabilize and encourage growth in existing downtown businesses or organizations.
- 4.2. Encourage the development of public/private partnerships to reinvest in downtown properties.
- 4.3. Create a downtown business incubator to assist aspiring businesses.



Figure 19: Conceptual rendering of Project 19. Marshall Building Incubator.

Project 14. Main Street Marion Headquarters Improvements (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 4)

- Main Street Marion is investigating the renovation of their location at the intersection of Washington and 1st, which was a chronically vacant and dilapidated older structure.
- The renovated headquarters might include a stage to the east of the building, improvements to the building exterior, and interior remodeling to better suit Main Street Marion's needs.

Project 15. Radio Station Relocation to Downtown (Comprehensive Plan Goal #4)

- The local radio station is investigating a move to the downtown square in response to strong community interest. A move like this would strengthen downtown's economic and creative presence and encourage other businesses and community partners to move downtown.

Project 16. Dilapidated Building Acquisition

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 4)

- As part of our continued downtown reinvestment, especially along the square, a key goal includes acquiring the dilapidated building on the square at 139 E 3rd St, shown in Figure 20.
- Upon acquisition, various end uses may be considered. The exterior may be renovated until a future investor or end user is identified. Also, the building may be demolished to create a courtyard space for CSA's Sophia Salin Center.



Figure 20: Dilapidated building on the square.

Project 17. Indiana Wesleyan University Graduate Housing Partnership

(Comprehensive Plan Goal #3)

- Foster a potential partnership between IWU to make available graduate housing in downtown Marion.
- Investigate the feasibility of renovating one of the large, underutilized historic downtown buildings for this purpose.

Project 18. YMCA Gym Expansion

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #4 & 6)

- A YMCA gym expansion will allow the historic riverfront facility to function as a needed community center and regional convention space, without interrupting.
- The expansion will allow the organization to offer increased youth after-school programs and daycare.

Project 19. Marshall Building Incubator

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 4)

- Local business owner of Clique Photography and Main Street Marion President, Eric Marshall has expressed interest in transforming the historic Marshall building into a business incubator and renting up to three units to other local businesses or entrepreneurs. An illustrative concept is shown in Figure 19 on the previous page.

5. REVITALIZATION

The Revitalization projects focus on creative ways to boost economic activity downtown and stabilize Marion's neighborhoods. The first two projects, the Signage Program and the Facade Program both aim to aesthetically improve local businesses and draw more activity downtown. Currently, many of our local businesses lack adequate signage. In addition, many facades are in such a state of disrepair that visitors and residents alike may not realize that there are successful businesses in those buildings. Other Revitalization projects focus on managing blighted or troublesome properties around downtown. Building off the success of our property program, which has resulted in the elimination of over 500 blighted houses, we hope to strengthen the management and maintenance of our city-owned properties and continue the city's efforts to tear down chronically vacant and blighted residential structures.

Revitalization Objectives

- 5.1. Stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods through blight elimination.
- 5.2. Improve the process of acquiring, managing, and determining end uses for abandoned properties.
- 5.3. Revitalize existing downtown businesses through new signage and facade improvements.



Figure 21: Conceptual rendering of restored facades and improved signage along the courthouse square.

Project 20. Signage Program (Comprehensive Plan Goals #1, 2 & 4)

- Not everyone has access to GPS in their car.
- When places of interest are easy to find, residents and tourists are more likely to frequent and return.
- When someone is looking for one thing and becomes aware of others, a multiplier effect is created by the signs.
- Downtown Marion has approximately 32 businesses with non-existent or inadequate signage to draw visitors, as shown in Figure 22.
- Attraction and visitor signage will be aesthetically pleasing, as well as informative.



Figure 22: A downtown business in need of signage.

Project 21. Facade Program (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 3 & 4)

- Attractive buildings/businesses are inviting to people; a welcoming downtown promotes economic development.
- In addition to 2 new structures and a pocket park, this program will target many other structures along the courthouse square (see Figure 21 on the previous page for a conceptual rendering).

Project 22. Property Program (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 3 & 5)

- Akin to a land bank, improve upon the existing property program to acquire, manage, and sell blighted, abandoned, or foreclosed properties within the city for redevelopment.

Project 23. Blight Elimination (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 3)

- Decreases crime and the potential for public health and safety issues.
- Provides clean building sites, greenspace or community gardens (see Figures 23 & 24).
- Improves neighborhood identity and self-image.
- The City and AHC submitted an application to the IHCA Blight Elimination Program in July of 2014 focusing on the Central Marion area and Indiana Wesleyan University gateway. The City of Marion scored 2nd overall in the state for our application and will be taking down at least 49 of the worst city-owned structures in the next year.
- Non-city-owned properties and blighted properties along the University Gateway will be considered in the future.



Figures 23-24: A blighted home in Marion, and the Curfman Community Gardens, an example of successful blight elimination and redevelopment.

Project 24. Greenway Crossing/Magnificent Se7en Revitalization (Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 3 & 4)

- In May 2011, Vectren Corporation assembled a strategic partnership with the City of Marion, including representatives from City Hall, businesses, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and faith-based communities, to develop a unified, collaborative approach for revitalizing economically-challenged neighborhoods.
- The Magnificent Se7en project is focusing on an area ranging from 6th St. to 17th St. between Western Ave. to Adams St. and from 17th to 38th St., between Nebraska St and Adams St.

Project 25. Bend of the River Revitalization Plan Initiatives

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #2 & 3)

- One of the most active neighborhood associations in Marion, the Bend of the River Neighborhood Association is launching various initiatives to revitalize and rebrand their neighborhood as a riverfront district.
- These initiatives include, but are not limited to, a branding campaign, increasing neighborhood activities, addressing blighted neighborhood properties, improving circulation, and opening up vistas and access to the river.
- As part of their branding campaign, they've put up neighborhood banners along Washington and Branson Streets, shown in Figure 25.



Figure 25: Bend of the River banners.

Project 26. Special Districts

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #2, 3 & 4)

- Downtown Marion being the original and oldest settled area in the city, several of the surrounding neighborhoods have historical value. The Martin Boots and Garfield neighborhoods, in particular are known for traditional architecture, a high-density of large single-family homes, and a true neighborhood feel.
- There is an opportunity to preserve the unique character of these neighborhoods through the creation of historic districts that set guidelines for infill development, subdivision of large structures and minimum design standards.
- Several structures and streets are highlighted in the Grant County Interim Report as Historic, Notable, Contributing and Outstanding examples.
- There is also an opportunity to encompass much of Downtown Marion in a "River District." The proximity to the River gives Marion the opportunity to take advantage of this State program to incentive food and entertainment through reduced liquor licensing requirements.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Projects 27 through 36 pertain to issues of public safety, particularly emergency vehicle access and response times; circulation improvements throughout downtown; beautification of public streets and lots; improved accessibility for individuals of all abilities; and utility upgrades. Each Public Safety & Infrastructure project is essential for continued citizen safety and efficient infrastructure. Many projects address long-standing issues, including limited fire truck access under the viaduct east of downtown or the extremely poor ADA accessibility along the Washington and Branson Street bridges.

Public Safety & Infrastructure Objectives

- 6.1. Improve emergency vehicle access and circulation downtown.
- 6.2. Improve safety and circulation for pedestrian while complying with ADA standards.
- 6.3. Beautify public parking lots, streets, and downtown bridges.

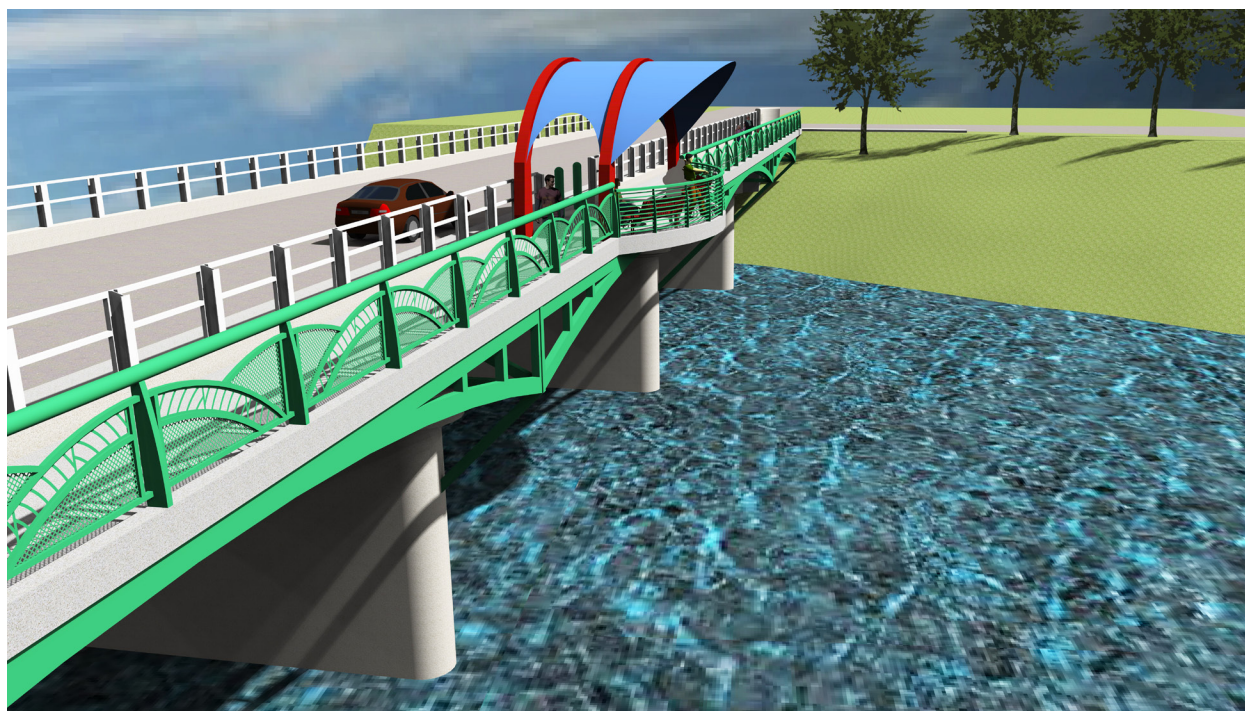


Figure 26: Conceptual rendering of the Washington Street bridge from Project 33. Bridge Improvements.

Project 27. Fire Station #1

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #1, 2 & 4)

- A new downtown fire station will allow our firefighters to continue serving and protecting to the best of their ability after catastrophic storm damage to the existing structure.
- Located at the corner of 4th and Boots Streets downtown Marion.
- Station #1 responds to 800 calls per year.
- Current station was constructed in 1962 and currently is the oldest station in Marion.
- In a vital area of our community, as it is centrally located and surrounded by a dense collection of historic buildings with outdated fire systems.

Project 28. Streetscape Improvements

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #1 & 4)

- The condition of our streetscape is directly related to the sense of pride it instills in community members.
- Streetscape elements will add beauty and functionality to the City of Marion's Downtown corridor.
- Landscaping, bike racks, benches and trash receptacles will be added, in addition to repairing the roadways, curbs, and sidewalks of streets in the core of the city.

Project 29. Public Parking Lot Improvements (Comprehensive Plan Goals #1 & 4)

- Downtown Marion has several parking lots, totalling 2,954 spaces (576 public and 2,378 private). Yet, residents and visitors still complain about the parking situation.
- This project will update and improve 6 lots with landscaping, safety features, better layouts and signage (see Figures 27 & 28).
- These improvements will make it abundantly clear that there is ample free parking within walking distance to every downtown amenity and business.



Figures 27-28: Two existing public parking lots by City Hall. The lot to the left is in need of improvements.

Project 30. Riverwalk Extension (Comprehensive Plan Goals #1, 2 & 6)

- The first section of the Riverwalk was built in 1989.
- Currently, the City of Marion's Riverwalk extends from Matter Park on the North end of the City along the river 2.25 miles into Downtown.
- The Riverwalk extension project will also ensure the ability to travel safely through Downtown Marion into Gateway Park East of the Downtown area.

Project 31. Emergency Viaduct Access (Comprehensive Plan Goals #1 & 6)

- This project will allow emergency vehicles to travel under the railroad track just east of Downtown Marion, in addition to safe pedestrian connections of Gateway Park to the Riverwalk extension.
- The existing viaduct (shown in Figure 29) does not provide sufficient height clearance for emergency vehicles, especially in winter, and this project will lower the grade of the road and install a pedestrian sidewalk and safety features at the viaduct.



Figure 29: Existing viaduct.

Project 32. Street & Signal Conversions (Comprehensive Plan Goals #1, 2, 4 & 6)

- Three streets around the riverfront will be converted to two-way for ease of circulation and business exposure.
- Washington Street and 2nd Street in the Downtown area are one-way travel. In order for traffic to flow better after the Riverfront Promenade Project is constructed, portions of Washington Street and 2nd Street will be changed to two-way traffic. Commerce will benefit in general from these conversions.
- This project involves the conversions of intersections and roadways to allow for new traffic patterns.

Project 33. Bridge Improvements

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #1, 3 & 6)

- Washington and Branson Streets have bridges across the Mississinewa River that allow both vehicles and pedestrians into and out of the Downtown area. However, the sidewalks along the bridges are not ADA accessible and are very dangerous in adverse weather.
- These improvements will add an additional pedestrian walking path to the East side of the Washington Street Bridge and will also add new handrails to the Branson Street bridge railing (see Figure 26 on page 24 for a conceptual rendering of the Washington Street bridge with improvements).
- Improvements will enable pedestrians from the neighborhoods on the north side of the river and YMCA to safely connect to Downtown and the Riverwalk on the south bank.

Project 34. Emergency Pre-emption Signals

(Comprehensive Plan Goal #1)

- Continue to upgrade existing traffic signals to allow for emergency pre-emption, temporarily halting normal traffic flow to allow any emergency vehicle right-of-way through the affected traffic signals.
- Emergency pre-emption signals improve traffic safety and emergency response times.

Project 35. Public Transportation Upgrades

(Comprehensive Plan Goal #1)

- Improve circulation in south central Marion through committed bus depot at 30th and Washington Street (aka the Triangle lot).
- Install additional bus depots in strategic locations.

Project 36. ADA Improvements

(Comprehensive Plan Goals #1 & 6)

- Inventory and fix ADA accessibility violations throughout downtown, particularly along sidewalks, at street intersections, and at various public facilities or spaces (see Figure 30).
- Strive to meet State and Federally mandated accessibility requirements.



Figure 30: A downtown sidewalk that is not ADA accessible.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

PURPOSE OF AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

These objectives and their respective priority levels are recommendations to help guide future decisions made by public and private individuals in Marion. Priorities may change as new opportunities become available. The following chart is a timeline identifying the priority levels for each objective identified in this plan.

Priority Levels

Each objective is assigned a different priority level. Although all objectives are important, not all can be achieved at once. Immediate priority objectives are those that need to be addressed within 1 year, possibly for safety reasons, or because meeting these objectives are essential for other objectives to be met. Short-term objectives are those that will be addressed within 2 to 3 years. Long-term objectives are those that will be addressed within 4+ years.

Central Marion Objectives	Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
1. Arts & Culture Objectives			
1.1. Education through interactive public art.		X	
1.2. Support growth of the Community School of the Arts and other artistic individuals/organizations.	X		
1.3. Increase Marion's tourism potential through arts and cultural attractions.			X
2. Public Spaces & Community Development Objectives			
2.1. Repurpose abandoned or city-owned property for public recreational use.	X		
2.2. Plan future park and plaza spaces with multi-use goals for diverse users.			X
2.3. Transform underutilized riverfront property into a community asset.		X	
3. Housing Objectives			
3.1. Provide opportunities to develop a variety of housing types and sizes that meet the needs, preferences and financial capabilities of Marion's present and future residents.		X	
3.2. Develop strategies to encourage affordable housing downtown and in other areas designated for mixed-use and high residential densities.	X		
3.3. Increase opportunities for renters, homebuyers, homeowners and special needs populations to occupy safe, decent and affordable housing.			X
4. Targeted Investment Objectives			
4.1. Stabilize and encourage growth in existing downtown businesses or organizations.	X		
4.2. Encourage the development of public/private partnerships to reinvest in downtown properties.		X	
4.3. Create a downtown business incubator to assist aspiring businesses.			X
5. Revitalization Objectives			
5.1. Stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods through blight elimination.	X		
5.2. Improve the process of acquiring, managing, and determining end uses for abandoned properties.		X	
5.3. Revitalize existing downtown businesses through new signage and facade improvements.		X	
6. Public Safety & Infrastructure Objectives			
6.1. Improve emergency vehicle access and circulation downtown.	X		
6.2. Improve safety and circulation for pedestrian while complying with ADA standards.		X	
6.3. Beautify public parking lots, streets, and downtown bridges.			X

