



CITY *of* MARION

**DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION PLAN 2019**

RESOLUTION #10-2019

LOCAL RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MARION DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STUDY XX-XX-XX

WHEREAS, the City of Marion, Indiana had identified adequate reason to analyze the City of Marion's Downtown Revitalization Plan dated, September 2019 and,

WHEREAS, the City of Marion has hired SB Research and Planning and Rundell Ernstberger Associates to define and describe the issues, advise us of our options and make recommendations to address this issue in the near future, and

WHEREAS, the City of Marion has reviewed the process and plan and is satisfied with the services performed, information contained therein, and methodology applied; and

WHEREAS, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs' Community Liaison for Marion has reviewed this document and is satisfied with the services performed, and that approval of this document is required for the City of Marion to pursue an Indiana Main Street Revitalization Program grant for further work downtown; and

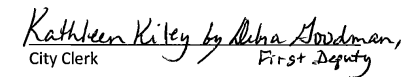
WHEREAS the City of Marion has received electronic copies of this document for future reference,

BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Marion that the final document is hereby approved.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Common council of the City of Marion, Indiana, this 15 day of October, 2019.


Presiding Officer

ATTEST:


City Clerk First Deputy

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Marion, Indiana, this 16 day of October, 2019.


City Clerk First Deputy

APPROVED by me as Mayor of the City of Marion, Indiana, this 16 day of October, 2019.

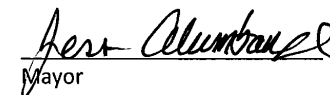

Mayor

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Many groups contributed to the plan during various phases. The list in alphabetical order includes: Affordable Housing Corp., City of Marion, Downtown Impact Group, Community Foundation of Grant County, Grant County Economic Growth Council, Indiana Landmarks, Main Street Marion, Marion Design Co., Marion Roundtable, Save Our Stories, Inc., Thriving Families - Thriving Grant County.

Steering Committee:

Mayor Jess Alumbaugh
Main Street Marion Executive Director Heidi Peterson
Grant Administrator Jacquie Dodyk of Affordable Housing Corporation
Executive Director Cathy Weatherspoon of Thriving Families, Thriving Grant County
Architect Michelle Doyle of Halstead Architects.
City Planning Director Sam Ramsey, City of Marion

Funding Organizations:

The City of Marion
The Grant County Economic Growth Council
Indiana Michigan Power

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Rundell Ernstberger Associates: *Cecil Penland, Samantha Bronowski*

Design Team:

Marion Design Co: *Jizelle Miller, Principal*





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

At the root of any downtown revitalization plan are two key questions:

- ▣ What do we want to change?
- ▣ What do we want to protect?

Marion residents are clear about their goals on both counts. For **change**, they want to reverse the slow decline of the central business district as the city's economic engine and cultural heart. This means transforming not only its underutilized storefronts and streets, but also changing people's opinion about what revitalization can achieve downtown.

For **protect**, they are deeply committed to preserving downtown's architectural jewels and their role in the community.

Another purpose of this plan is to support all the commercial and housing development underway around the courthouse square. Traditionally, public investment precedes private investment, meaning that a city must first spend money restoring the streets, sidewalks and other public spaces in order to lure development. In Marion, however, while there has been some public investment, it is the private sector now hard at work.

This plan provides everyone – elected officials, development groups, local businesses and investors – with a shared vision of the city's future. It can serve as an advisory tool for the mayor's office, city council, plan commission, Main Street organization, redevelopment commission, and interested citizens as key decisions about downtown's direction are made.



SCOPE OF THE PLAN

Downtown is integrated into the whole of Marion's economy, but for this study it was treated as a separate entity. The general study area for this project borders the courthouse square; 3rd Street, S. Adams Street, 4th Street and S. Washington Street. Also reviewed were parallel streets nearby, especially the two blocks to the north connecting downtown to the Mississinewa River.

This revitalization plan unfolds in stages, starting with the main elements – infrastructure, buildings and the economy – and then combines those elements into a unified implementation plan. The plan is long-range in orientation – intended to reach out 10 or more years – but also proposes projects that can be launched today.



PLANNING PROCESS

Intense interest in downtown Marion's future led to a busy and crowded public input process. For example, there were five stakeholder meetings just within the first 90 days of the project. Those meetings were held at different locations and included an ever-widening set of participants. It was not surprising to see 40 or more people attending.

Key stakeholder meetings included:

- Sept. 9, 2018 at the Grant County Economic Growth Council (GCEGC).**
- Oct. 10, 2018 at a downtown walking tour for developers from around the state.**
- Nov. 5, 2018: Over 45 individuals gathered in the first floor of a recently purchased downtown building, known colloquially as the “Beatniks” building, and now Halstead’s. The majority of the individuals present were property owners of a building in Downtown Marion as well as leaders of organizations engaged in downtown revitalization efforts, however there were also a number of individuals who attended as engaged and active community members and elected officials who cared about the future of downtown Marion.**
- Dec. 5, 2018: about 50 individuals gathered in a conference room in Marion City Hall to participate in a presentation on the Downtown Plan, the OCRA MSRP grant process, and historic preservation. The participants at this meeting included the stakeholders that attended the first Downtown Stakeholders meeting as well as several new participants from the community and local elected positions. Attendees filled out surveys about their interest in participating in either a façade grant program or streetscape project and participated in a group discussion at City Hall including representatives from Indiana Landmarks and OCRA.**
- Additionally, there were numerous meetings of the Downtown Revitalization Planning Committee (DRPC) and the revitalization plan was discussed at regular meetings of the Downtown Impact Group and Marion Roundtable.**

PLAN SUMMARY

Simply stated, people make downtowns successful. This means people living, recreating, and working downtown.

Historically, this is why downtown Marion developed and was the heart of the city for nearly a century. Unfortunately, like other communities throughout Indiana and across the country, downtown Marion has been battling to maintain its people and to stabilize and rejuvenate itself. This struggle began in the 1970s and can be primarily attributed to automobile oriented development which increased the convenience of commuting and drove businesses, housing, and residents away from the city's core and to the outskirts of the community. The SR 9 bypass is the primary cause of the decline in the core of Marion.

Today, the result of this automobile oriented development is apparent in the decline of the downtown. With the exception of the Courthouse Square, once building-lined blocks have been reduced to seas of asphalt parking lots intended to accommodate automobiles and support remaining, struggling businesses. As buildings have been razed and historic structures lost, so too has been much of the friendly pedestrian scale and density that made the downtown an attractive place to begin with. The resultant domino effect has created a pattern and rhythm of decline that has been a struggle to break away from and correct.

Fortunately, current trends regionally and nationally are providing renewed interest in our nation's downtowns. People, young and old, are being drawn back to urban centers and the more traditional development that downtowns such as Marion's once offered... the friendly density and scale, walkability, entertainment and retail opportunities. The affects of this are evidenced by the downtown investment taking place on a level that hasn't been seen for several decades.



While this is excellent news for Marion, this does not mean that redevelopment will occur naturally and without strategic intervention. Just like the downtown has declined similarly to other downtowns throughout the State and Country, Marion's downtown is now competing with communities nationally for redevelopment.

This begs the question, "What is the key for attracting redevelopment to Marion?" Well, in addition to restoring historic buildings and constructing new infill, creating programs and incentives that support existing businesses, and attract new ones, this means creating amenities that are unique to the community and compelling enough for a developer/entrepreneur/business person to risk investing their money into the community.

This does not mean simply providing basic infrastructure such as newly paved streets, sidewalks, adequate lighting, and storm and sanitary sewers; any community can offer these items.

This means creating an "amenity infrastructure" of downtown gathering spaces that can be programmed with events, festivals, and gatherings that are active throughout the year. It means linking these spaces with trails that connect the cultural assets of the community to capitalize on the City's natural assets. It means creating the quality of life improvements that attract people to want to live, recreate, and work in the downtown.

Fortunately, Marion has many great assets. Space downtown is available. Excessive parking creates opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Large street right-of-ways provide space that allows for on-street parking, trails, and on-street retail and dining space. Cultural assets are abundant including the County Courthouse, downtown restaurants, businesses, churches, and the library among others.

In addition, natural and recreational amenities near the downtown are abundant. People are naturally attracted to water. The Mississinewa River, although largely ignored currently, flanks the downtown on the north and east within a few blocks of the courthouse square. This major waterway offers regional connections and recreational opportunities that are unique opportunities for the City.

Located on the banks of the Mississinewa River, Ballard Field is located immediately adjacent to the east side of the downtown and provides opportunity for organized sports and passive recreation. Additionally, the downtown is within close proximity to the Cardinal Greenway, a regional greenway connecting communities throughout Indiana. It is planned to be a part of the larger Great American Rail-Trail which will ultimately travel from Washington D.C. to Seattle, Washington.

KEY GOALS, STRATEGIES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

The DRPC, after months of public input, determined the goals and measurable strategies that will help sustain the downtown business district. Broadly, the key goals are in the areas of:

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

These broad goals were sharpened into specific project areas:

- **Promote economic development**
- **Increase downtown housing**
- **Provide more evening and dining opportunities**
- **Create Plaza Spaces**
- **Embrace the Mississinewa River**
- **Improve streetscapes, facades and signage**
- **Improvements**

And finally, the plan recommends an Action Agenda of specific steps including:

- Complete application for Main Street Revitalization Program construction grant.
- Develop a Main Street workplan.
- Take Road Trips to other successful downtowns for inspiration.
- Increase the number of people living downtown in lofts, apartments and hotel rooms by investing in amenity infrastructure
- Form a Business Development Team.
- Do a retention and expansion survey of local businesses.
- Create an entrepreneurial roundtable.
- Recruit new businesses.
- Build public-private partnerships.
- Build regional partners into your future.
- Lead community discussions on design standards, gentrification and other important topics.
- Pursue smaller grants to keep momentum going.



GENERAL BACKGROUND

GENERAL BACKGROUND

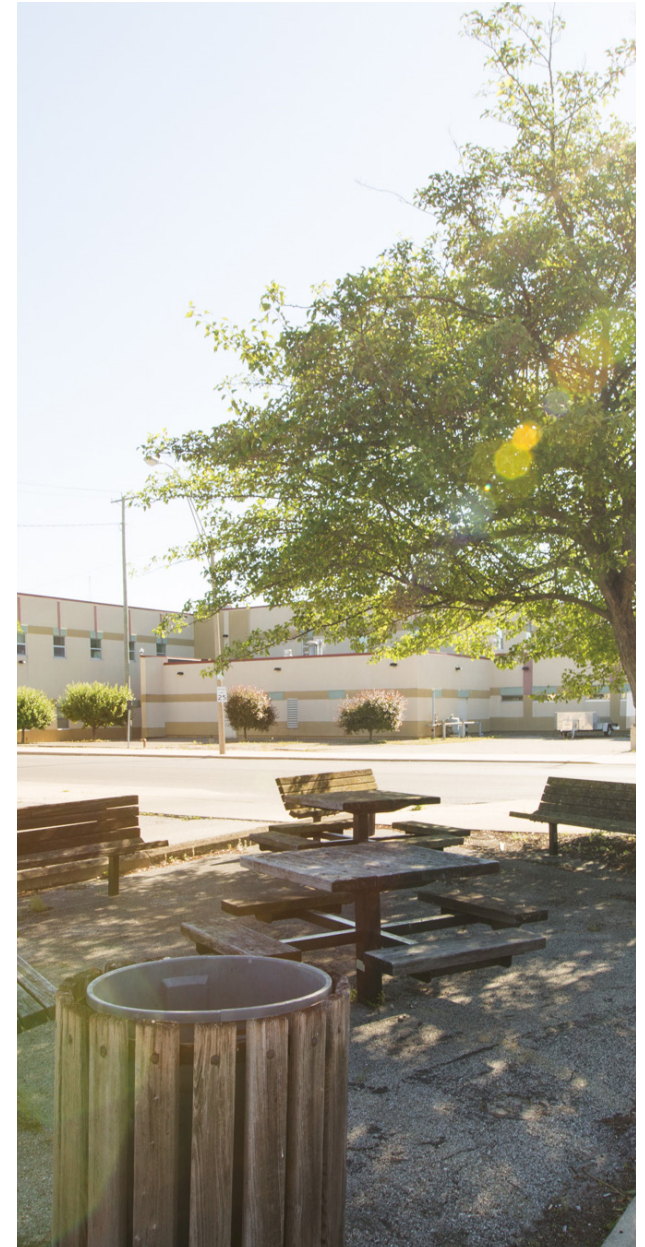
This section provides an overview of Marion's key population features, economic base and anchor institutions.

KEY POPULATION FEATURES

This section includes a snapshot of the main demographic features of Marion, including the trajectory of population growth, income and other factors. The first table lists common variables for Marion and Grant County.

At a Glance (2017)

| Topic | Marion | Grant County |
|------------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Population | 28,490 | 67,615 |
| Total Housing Units | 13,427 | 30,453 |
| Median Household Income | \$32,879 | \$42,046 |
| Poverty Rate | 26.3% | 19.1% |
| Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes) | 15.5 | 23.3 |



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



The second table looks at key economic indicators. Some indicators are not positive, but the statistics do not take into account the energy and determination of the community.

Economic Vitality Indicators

| Topic | Marion, IN | Comparison Year/State | Difference |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Population¹ | 29,948 <i>2010 Census</i> | 28,490 <i>2017 estimate</i> | -4.6% <i>Change '10-'17</i> |
| Per Capita Income level² | \$17,361 <i>Marion 2017</i> | \$27,305 <i>Indiana 2017</i> | -54% |
| Educational Attainment | 82% <i>H.S. Diploma or More '17 Marion</i> | 82% <i>H.S. Diploma or More '17 Marion</i> | - |
| | 14% <i>Bachelor's or More '17 Marion</i> | 19% <i>Bachelor's or More '17 Marion</i> | -% |
| Population 3+ Enrolled in School⁴ | 7,974 <i>Marion 2010</i> | 8,013 <i>Marion 2017</i> | .4% |

Grant County Population Projections

| | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Population Projections | 70,061 | 68,626 | 67,253 | 65,827 | 64,175 |
| Change Since 2010 | | -1,435 | -2,808 | -4,234 | -5,886 |
| Pct. Change Since 2010 | | -2.0% | -4.0% | -6.0% | -8.4% |

Sources for Economic Vitality Indicators: 1: U.S. Census 2010 and 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. 2: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5--Year Estimates. 3: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. 4: Indiana Department of Local Government Finance, Certification of Net Assessed Values by District Report 2016-2017 | Source for Grant County Population Projections: Indiana Business Research Center

Population:

The resident population of a community reflects the magnitude of the local demand for goods and services, including the labor force. A decrease in population may be indicative of key demographic changes resulting from outmigration or the aging of the population, or the result of major jobs losses in the area. Marion's population has dipped almost 5% in seven years.

Per Capita Income:

Per capita income includes wages and salaries, other labor income, proprietor's income, rental income of persons, personal dividend income, and transfer payments (from such sources as Social Security, TANF, etc.). Marion's rate is considerably below the state average.

Public High School Graduation Rate:

This indicator tracks how well counties are doing in terms of ensuring the timely completion of a high school degree by students. High rates of graduation from high school infers that schools are equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to move into their young adult roles (be it work or postsecondary education opportunities). Marion's rate is equal to the state's for high school graduates, but below the state's for people with a bachelor's degree or more.

Public School Enrollment:

Public school enrollment as a percent of the population under 18 years of age captures the reach of the elementary, middle, and high schools in the community. This indicator does not encompass the entire school-aged population, such as students who may be attending private schools, are home tutored or enrolled in some alternative educational program. This variable also serves as an indirect proxy of the vitality of a community. Schools with growing enrollments tend to be viewed as high quality educational institutions and/or located in places that are realizing population expansion. Marion's enrollment has held steady since 2010.



ECONOMIC BASE

Grant County Largest Employers

| Rank | Company | # of Employees | City |
|------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1 | General Motors Co. | 1,160 | Marion |
| 2 | Indiana Wesleyan University | 1,216 | Marion |
| 3 | Marion General Hospital | 1,200 | Marion |
| 4 | Veterans Hospital | 850 | Marion |
| 5 | Walmart Dstrbtn Ctr | 824 | Gas City |
| 6 | American Woodmark | 770 | Gas City |
| 7 | Marion Community Schools | 667 | Marion |
| 8 | Dollar General Distribution Center | 604 | Marion |
| 9 | Cafe Valley | 421 | Marion |

Grant County Business Patterns (2016)

| # of Employees | Estb. | # Chg. '10 - '15 | % Chg. '10 - '15 | % of Total |
|----------------|-------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1-9 | 875 | -123 | -12.3% | 68.6% |
| 10-19 | 183 | -24 | -11.6% | 14.3% |
| 20-49 | 128 | -13 | -9.2% | 10.0% |
| 50-99 | 50 | 8 | 19.0% | 3.9% |



Source for Grant County Largest Employers: Department of Workforce Development (year of data and number of employees not provided) | Source for Grant County County Business Patterns U.S. Census Bureau via Stats Indiana

Jobs & Earnings for Grant County (2017)

| Sectors (NAICS) by place of work | Earnings (\$) | Avg. Earnings Per Job | Jobs | %Dist in County |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Earnings by place of work - 35 | \$1,578,497 | \$45,229 | 34,900 | 100.0% |
| Wage and Salary disbursements - 50 | \$1,143,283 | \$38,594 | 29,623 | 84.9% |
| Proprietors' income - 70 | \$131,698 | \$24,956 | 5,277 | 15.1% |
| Farm proprietors' income - 71 | (\$2,980) | (\$7,028) | 424 | 1.2% |
| Nonfarm proprietors' income - 72 | \$134,678 | \$27,751 | 4,853 | 13.9% |
| Farm earnings - 81 | \$460 | \$893 | 515 | 1.5% |
| Nonfarm earnings - 82 | \$1,578,037 | \$45,893 | 34,385 | 98.5% |
| Private earnings - 90 | \$1,337,762 | \$44,339 | 30,171 | 86.4% |
| Forestry, fishing, activities & other - 100 | \$0 | N/A | 0 | 0.0% |
| Mining - 200 | \$0 | N/A | 0 | 0.0% |
| Utilities - 300 | \$0 | N/A | 0 | 0.0% |
| Construction - 400 | \$48,248 | \$47,488 | 1,016 | 2.9% |
| Manufacturing - 500 | \$359,305 | \$73,900 | 4,862 | 13.9% |
| Retail Trade - 700 | \$108,232 | \$29,881 | 3,622 | 10.4% |
| Transportation and warehousing - 800 | \$115,666 | \$48,928 | 2,364 | 6.8% |
| Information - 900 | \$10,282 | \$42,139 | 244 | 0.7% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)



KEY ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Following is just a sample of Marion's key cultural and civic features and attractions:

Cardinal Greenway Rail-Trail Project

W 2nd St and S Miller Ave, Marion, IN 46952

Community School of the Arts

305 S. Adams St., Marion, IN 46952

Gardens of Matter Park

1 Matter Park Circle, Marion, IN 46952

Indiana Wesleyan University

4201 S. Washington St., Marion, IN 46953

Ivy Tech Marion

261 S. Commerce Drive, Marion, IN 46953

Marion Civic Theatre

509 S Washington Street, Marion, IN 46953

Marion Community Schools

Little Giants Preschool, Allen Elementary School, Frances Slocum Elementary School, Kendall Elementary School, Riverview Elementary School, Justice Thurgood Marshall Intermediate School, McCulloch Junior High School, Marion High School, Marion Regional Career Center.

Marion General Hospital

441 N. Wabash Ave., Marion, IN 46952

Marion-Grant County Senior Center

503 S Gallatin Street, Marion, IN 46953

Marion Philharmonic Orchestra

P.O. Box 272, Marion, IN 46952

Marion Public Library & Museum

600 S. Washington Street Marion, IN 46953-1992

Mississinewa 1812

Mississinewa Battlefield Society Inc., P. O. Box 1812, Marion, IN 46953

Splash House Water Park

2601 S Adams St, Marion, IN 46953

Quilters Hall of Fame

926 S Washington Street, Marion, IN 46953





DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLANNING COMMITTEE

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLANNING COMMITTEE

As detailed throughout this report, renovation is underway in downtown Marion. The community is responding by supporting local developers as they build new housing units and restore buildings in the central district.

Initially, it took time to get organized. Before recent redevelopment projects began, and while Main Street Marion's executive director's position was open, several different groups explored revitalization efforts. These included the Grant County Economic Growth Council, Downtown Impact Group, Marion Roundtable, Thriving Families - Thriving Grant County, Save Our Stories, Inc., Affordable Housing Corp. and the Grant County Community Foundation.

Other groups were actively involved such as Indiana Landmarks, the Marion Public Library and the developers themselves, which included the Marion Housing Authority and Halstead Architects.

Mayor Jess Alumbaugh and City Hall unified these efforts by increasing funding for Main Street Marion's new, full-time Executive Director Heidi Peterson. Fortunately, bringing everyone together was made easier by the fact that in Marion many of the same people served with these different groups.



DRPC's Role

The DRPC was faced with making two decisions that involved all of the above-listed groups. The decisions were:

- ❑ Should the community start fresh and apply for an OCRA grant to fund a downtown revitalization study, or should it save time and money by hiring a consultant to assemble one from existing downtown reports? After two public meetings and discussions with our OCRA liaison, the committee choose the latter option.
- ❑ Looking ahead to the MSRP implementation grant, should the revitalization plan first focus on a façade project or a downtown landscape design project? Many more meetings were held on this topic, with particular attention given to the opinions of downtown business owners. The community decided to first focus on landscape design projects, although both issues are covered in the plan.

As work continued on the revitalization plan, a small design team was formed to coordinate the existing groups. That team included:

- Mayor Jess Alumbaugh
- Main Street Marion Executive Director Heidi Peterson
- Grant writer Jacquie Dodyck of Affordable Housing Corporation
- Executive Director Cathy Weatherspoon of Thriving Families, Thriving Grant County
- Architect Michelle Doyle of Halstead Architects.
- City Planning Director Sam Ramsey, City of Marion



The groups mentioned above met regularly during the planning process, but there were many other meetings including:

- Sept. 7, 2018: Initial meeting with consultants
- Oct. 10, 2018: Historic Downtown Tour for Developers
- Oct. 29, 2018: DRPC meeting to finalize planning process
- Nov. 5, 2018: Downtown Stakeholder Meeting 1 (public hearing)
- Dec. 5, 2018 Downtown Stakeholders Meeting #2 (public hearing). Included presentation by OCRA Liaison Andrea Kern.
- Feb. 28 2019: DRPC meeting to discuss MSRP grant
- May 13, 2019: DRPC meeting on priorities
- June 25, 2019: DRPC meeting on priorities
- A final public hearing before the city council



EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING CONDITIONS: MARKET CONDITIONS

SUMMARY

This chapter examines downtown Marion's economy, focusing on the trade of goods and services. In short, what people are selling and buying. The chapter also looks at the economic challenges downtown faces, and how its capacity for growth can be increased.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Broader information about city and county trends were captured in the previous General Background Chapter, but to restate one key fact: Marion's population is declining, as shown in Figure 1.

**POPULATION CHANGE:
MARION 2000-2017**

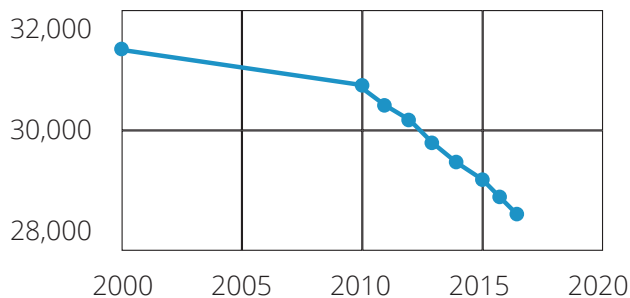


Figure 1

Figure 2, produced by the Indiana Business Research Center, shows that decline is projected to continue through 2025 and beyond. In fact, they anticipate the entire region around Grant County will lose residents. This obviously is not a positive economic indicator, but neither is it a guaranteed outcome. Many variables can alter those numbers, not the least of which is revitalizing downtown to attract residents and shoppers.

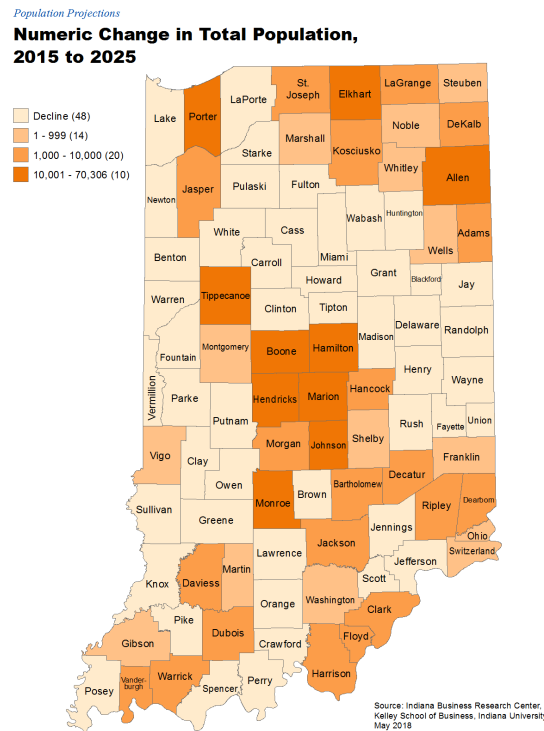


Figure 2



Next, it is useful to review commuting patterns, which show how many Grant County residents leave the county for their jobs, and how many residents of other areas come into the county for work.

The following two maps, by the Indiana Business Research Center, show Grant County is an importer of workers. About 3,864 people live in Grant County but work outside, as shown in Figure 3. About 5,396 live in another county but work in Grant County, as shown in Figure 4. Commuters into the county can be considered as potential future residents, if Grant County offers them the types of homes and amenities they would need to leave their current residence and move closer to work. They are also customers for local shops and services.

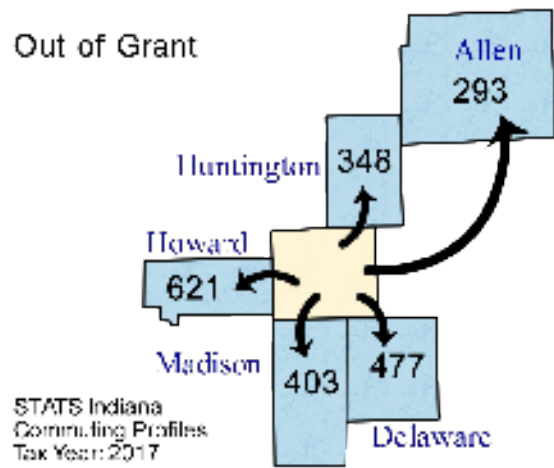


Figure 3

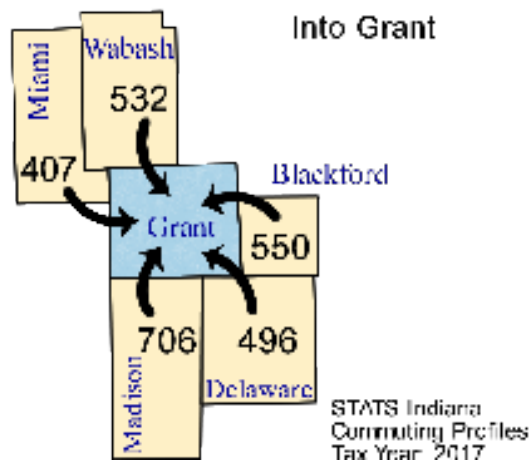


Figure 4





The next set of data zooms in on the central business district. Basic demographic information on downtown includes the following facts, as provided by the national data collection firm ESRI. Within a mile of the courthouse square:

- 8,025 people live, a decrease from 9,727 in 2000.
- 5,629 people work during daylight hours.
- 40% of the housing units are owner occupied, a decrease from 52% in 2000.
- 37.9% of the housing units are renter occupied, an increase from 35% in 2000.
- The percent of vacant housing units increased from 12% in 2000 to 21% in 2018.
- The median household income is \$31,024.
- The median home value is \$78,101.
- The median age is 38.5, which is ticking upward.
- 55% of the households earn less than \$35,000 annually.
- 77% of the population is white, 15% is black.



It is also interesting to note how many people work in selected employment sectors within a mile of downtown: almost 6,000, according to ESRI, a national data gathering company. A sampling of businesses and employees include:

| TYPES OF BUSINESS | # OF BUSINESSES | # OF EMPLOYEES |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Apparel & Accessory Stores | 6 | 14 |
| Eating & Drinking Places | 18 | 233 |
| Education Institutions & Libraries | 5 | 140 |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate | 48 | 316 |
| Furniture & Home Furnishings | 4 | 55 |
| General Merchandise Stores | 4 | 47 |
| Home Improvement | 4 | 21 |
| Hotels & Lodging | 2 | 18 |
| Other Categories (non-retail, etc.) | 354 | 5,026 |
| Total | 445 | 5,870 |

Source: ESRI

The 1-mile radius is important because it speaks to a key consideration when promoting downtown: is it walkable? The company, Walkscore.com, measures for each American city its walkability and whether the location is good for biking.

In both cases Marion receives a score of 51/100, meaning it is “Somewhat Walkable: Some errands can be accomplished on foot,” and “Bikeable: Some bike infrastructure.”

WALK SCORE
51

BIKE SCORE
51

RETAIL TRADE ANALYSIS

A trade analysis looks at the shops and services offered in a community, and the people who use them. It captures a snapshot of downtown Marion's economy, including types of stores and services provided, along with the spending and income patterns of customers and business owners.

Understanding the existing retail outlets and preferences of consumers is the first step toward crafting an effective revitalization plan. This information can be leveraged to decide the best use of empty storefronts or how to attract new business. The following steps are needed for a retail trade analysis:

1. Inventory existing businesses
2. Define retail trade area
3. Perform retail analysis
4. Determine buying habits of local consumers

The analysis starts with an inventory. There are 1,539 business establishments in The City of Marion, according to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD). They range in size from General Motors, with 1,614 employees, to A Locksmith Shop, with one. There are 215 retail businesses in the city and 93 food service businesses, according to IDWD.

This exact number shifts month to month. For example, the IDWD statistics do not yet reflect new businesses set to open around the courthouse square.



Defining the Trade Area

A trade area is an imaginary line drawn on a map that captures approximately 75% of an area's current customers. A trade area can be thought of as the farthest distance consumers are willing to travel to regularly purchase retail goods and services. Various factors determine a trade area including:

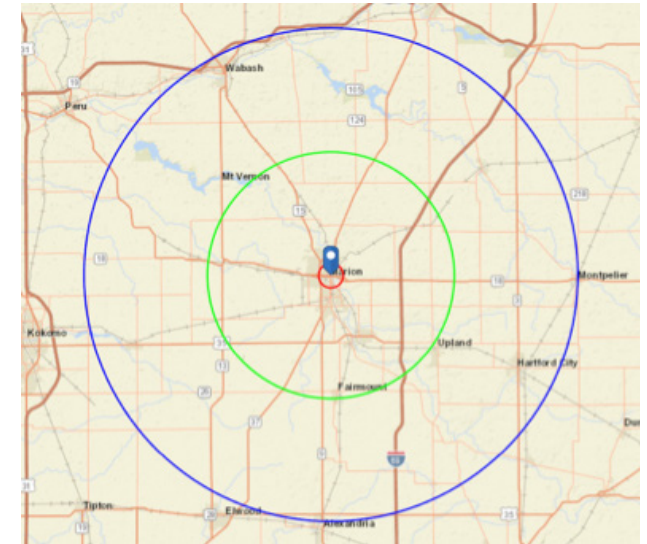
- Population:** Generally, the larger the community's population, the bigger the trade area.
- Proximity:** Typically, there is a cutoff point where customers are drawn to a competing center instead of your community.
- Mix of businesses:** A critical mass of businesses pulls customers from a further distance than a more limited mix of businesses.
- Destination attractions:** A significant destination business (such as a large discount department store or regionally famous restaurant or community attraction) can expand the trade area—drawing customers from farther distances.
- Traffic patterns:** Each region has distinct traffic patterns strongly impacted by its network of streets and highways, as well as major landforms such as rivers, lakes, etc.

The size of a retail trade area depends on the variety of goods and services it offers and on competing retail markets. For instance, many Marion residents are willing to occasionally drive to Kokomo or Fort Wayne for bigger shopping excursions. They don't go to those cities for gas or for weekly shopping, which they can do locally, but to purchase specialty items or for specific events.

As shown in the following map, Marion's trade area is broken into three sections based on the distance from the center of town: 1 mile, 10 miles and 20 miles. The 1-mile radius is filled with people who live near downtown. Reaching out, the 20-mile radius includes people we want to visit downtown more regularly: Marion's core customers. These include residents of smaller towns such as Upland, Fairmount and Hartford City.

There is a tremendous potential to capture more spending in downtown Marion from the 120,226 people living within a 20-mile radius. If you move to a 25-mile ring there are 146,247 potential customers.

The population beyond the 20-mile radius is increasingly less likely to drive into Marion for daily errands but might be drawn to unique businesses or well-known restaurants.



Retail Analysis

Understanding Marion's retail economy begins with two questions:

- 1.How much do local people spend on food, clothes, etc.?
- 2.How much do local businesses earn on food, clothes, etc.?

The first question starts with retail market potential, data about what percentage of local consumers buy specific products. ESRI offers more than 100 categories, but here is a sampling of how many people recently bought clothes, jewelry, organic food, gambled, went to the movies, etc. Entrepreneurs can start to brainstorm business ideas with the statistics. For example, what kind of store or service might be offered to the 50,000 people who used a dietary supplement or 35,000 who own a cat or dog.

| RETAIL GOODS OR SERVICES | EXPECTED # OF ADULTS | % OF ADULTS |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Bought any men's clothing in last 12 months | 45,350 | 47.1% |
| Bought any women's clothing in last 12 months | 40,291 | 41.9% |
| Bought clothing for child <13 years in last 6 months | 25,224 | 26.2% |
| Bought any shoes in last 12 months | 49,126 | 51.1% |
| Bought any fine jewelry in last 12 months | 16,401 | 17.0% |
| Spent \$1,000-\$1,499 on recent home computer | 3,541 | 7.5% |
| Attended a movie in last 6 months | 50,120 | 52.1% |
| Gambled at a casino in last 12 months | 11,452 | 11.9% |
| Visited a theme park in last 12 months | 12,837 | 13.3% |
| Used organic food in last 6 months | 7,206 | 15.2% |
| Used vitamin/dietary supplement in last 6 months | 50,345 | 52.3% |
| Purchased big ticket HH furnishings in 12 months | 9,556 | 20.1% |
| Bought any small kitchen appliance in 12 months | 10,238 | 21.6% |
| Household owns any cat | 13,908 | 29.3% |
| Household owns any dog | 22,147 | 46.6% |

Source: ESRI

Considering that many revitalized downtowns emphasize food and drink, the next table has information on the potential market for restaurants. It shows, for example, that many more people go out for dinner than breakfast or lunch and that 74% went to a family restaurant within the past 6 months.



| RETAIL GOODS OR SERVICES | EXPECTED # OF ADULTS | % OF ADULTS |
|--|----------------------|-------------|
| Went to family restaurant/steak house in last 6 months | 71,416 | 74.2% |
| Went to family restaurant/steak house 4+ times/month | 23,849 | 24.8% |
| Spent at family restaurant/30 days: <\$31 | 9,697 | 10.1% |
| Spent at family restaurant/30 days: \$31-50 | 10,149 | 10.5 |
| Family restaurant/steak house last 6 months: breakfast | 10,834 | 11.3% |
| Family restaurant/steak house last 6 months: lunch | 17,117 | 17.8% |
| Family restaurant/steak house last 6 months: dinner | 45,117 | 46.9% |
| Family restaurant/steak house last 6 months: snack | 1,325 | 1.4% |
| Family restaurant/steak house last 6 months: weekday | 28,132 | 29.2% |
| Family restaurant/steak house last 6 months: weekend | 40,478 | 42.1% |
| Went to fine dining restaurant last month | 6,764 | 7.0% |
| Went to fine dining restaurant 3+ times last month | 1,904 | 2.0% |
| Spent at fine dining restaurant/30 days: <\$51 | 1,614 | 1.7% |
| Spent at fine dining restaurant/30 days: \$51-\$100 | 2,360 | 2.5% |
| Spent at fine dining restaurant/30 days: \$101-\$200 | 1,673 | 1.7% |

Source: ESRI

The market potential data can also be used as a cautionary note. For example, only about 1,900 people ate at a fine-dining restaurant 3 or more times in the last month. That number implies that a new, higher-end restaurant should also market to people beyond the trade area to widen its customer base.

The next table shows how much local people spend, on average, for typical items within a year. When spread across everyone in the 20-mile radius, the average \$2,495 spent on food away from home becomes \$118 million.

| RETAIL GOODS OR SERVICES | AVERAGE AMOUNT SPENT | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Alcoholic Beverages | \$378 | \$17,972,887 |
| Apparel | \$1,521 | \$72,281,894 |
| Drugs | | |
| Nonprescription Drugs | \$108 | \$5,143,796 |
| Prescription Drugs | \$313 | \$14,892,155 |
| Entertainment & Recreation | \$2,425 | \$115,201,454 |
| Food Away from Home | \$2,495 | \$118,511,576 |
| Furniture | \$432 | \$20,538,016 |
| Major Appliances | \$280 | \$13,330,024 |
| Personal Care Products | \$349 | \$16,600,597 |
| Pets | \$536 | \$25,486,423 |
| Smoking Products | \$389 | \$18,481,564 |
| Toys/Games/Crafts/Hobbies | \$83 | \$3,967,502 |

Source: ESRI



Retail Leakage/Surplus

Ideally, local businesses would receive nearly all the dollars spent by nearby residents. However, this rarely occurs because of internet sales and an individual's willingness to travel to obtain specific items.

Money is said to "leak" from downtown if residents of a trade area spend more for goods and services than local businesses earn. For example, if people inside the area spent \$11 million on computers and electronic devices, but local businesses only earned \$7 million from sales of those devices, then \$4 million leaked from the local economy. The goal for local shop owners is to capture more of what local people are already spending.

Surplus is when local business owners earned more than what local people spent. Sometimes this is simply a matter of positioning, such as a gas station on the edge of town that captures traffic along a busy state road. But regional shopping centers, specialty stores with a great reputation and well-known restaurants can also cause surpluses.

The leakage/surplus factor enables a one-step comparison of supply against demand - and a way to identify an opportunity for new retailers to enter the trade area or for existing retailers to extend their marketing outreach to accommodate the excess demand.

The following table tightens the trade area radius to 1 mile, showing what most businesses downtown capture in retail sales. The table shows, for example, that the 4 health and personal care stores had a \$3.3 million surplus; money earned from people living beyond a 1-mile radius of downtown. In the Retail Market Place Profile report, by ESRI, leakage is indicated by a green, and surplus is indicated by a red.

| GROUP | DEMAND (RETAIL POTENTIAL) | SUPPLY (RETAIL SALES) | RETAIL GAP | NUMBER OF BUSINESSES |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores | \$1,871,970 | \$2,921,720 | -\$1,049,750 | 2 |
| Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores | \$342,007 | \$387,391 | -\$45,384 | 1 |
| Health & Personal Care Stores | \$4,471,026 | \$7,840,775 | -\$3,369,749 | 4 |
| Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages | \$234,730 | \$339,425 | -\$104,695 | 2 |

Source: ESRI

The next table shows leakage, where local consumers spent more on products than local businesses earned. For this table, the radius was moved out to 10 miles, indicating what people were spending who still lived a short distance from downtown.

One example of identifying a business opportunity would be noting that the 5 lawn & garden equip & supply stores were not capturing almost \$900,000 that local people are spending. What changes in inventory or marketing might help them recapture some of that money? The same could be said for the shoe stores or florists.

| GROUP | DEMAND (RETAIL POTENTIAL) | SUPPLY (RETAIL SALES) | RETAIL GAP | NUMBER OF BUSINESSES |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Other Motor Vehicle Dealers | \$16,817,400 | \$7,231,437 | \$9,585,963 | 5 |
| Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers | \$41,145,275 | \$21,690,853 | \$19,454,422 | 17 |
| Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores | \$3,332,295 | \$2,444,005 | \$888,290 | 5 |
| Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores | \$8,185,609 | \$4,170,116 | \$4,015,493 | 4 |
| Shoe Stores | \$4,545,988 | \$3,135,423 | \$1,410,565 | 4 |
| Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores | \$4,340,719 | \$3,166,524 | \$1,174,195 | 4 |
| Florists | \$1,295,058 | \$3,166,524 | \$606,155 | 5 |
| Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores | \$4,819,870 | \$3,038,126 | \$1,781,744 | 3 |

Source: ESRI



Buying Habits of Local Consumers

Shops and services provide one side of business transactions and customers provide the other. When a national chain is looking for a new store or restaurant location, they examine the buying habits of the local population.

ESRI also collects data from credit card purchases and a variety of other sources to group people by their consumer habits – called market segments - giving each a nickname. For the 20-mile trade area, Table 7 indicates the top 10 market segments for Marion.

| MARKET SEGMENT | % OF POPULATION |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Salt of the Earth | 25.3% |
| Heartland Communities | 22.1% |
| Small Town Simplicity | 13.3% |
| Midlife Constants | 8.4% |
| Traditional Living | 6.6% |
| Green Acres | 4.8% |
| Hardscrabble Road | 3.8% |
| Comfortable Empty Nesters | 3.4% |
| Rooted Rural | 2.9% |
| Golden Years | 2.3% |
| Total | 92.90% |



SALT OF THE EARTH

25% of population

Median Age: 44

Median Household Income: \$56,300

- Outdoor sports and activities, such as fishing, boating, hunting and camping trips are popular.
- To support pastimes, truck ownership is high.
- Own equipment to maintain their lawns and tend to their vegetable gardens.
- Residents often tackle home remodeling and improvement jobs themselves.
- These conservative consumers prefer to conduct their business in-person rather than online. They use an agent to purchase insurance.

HEARTLAND COMMUNITIES

22% of population

Median Age: 42

Median Household Income: \$42,000

- Traditional, they choose to bank and pay their bills in person.
- Most have high-speed Internet access at home or a cell phone but aren't ready to go paperless.
- Many have paid off their home mortgages but still hold auto loans and student loans.
- To support their local community, residents participate in public activities.
- Home remodeling is not a priority, but homeowners do tackle necessary maintenance work on their cherished homes.
- They enjoy country music and watch CMT.
- Motorcycling, hunting, and fishing are popular; walking is the main form of exercise.
- To get around these semirural communities, residents prefer domestic trucks or SUVs.
- Skeptical about their financial future, they stick to community banks and low-risk investments.

SMALL TOWN SIMPLICITY

13% of population

Median Age: 40

Median Household Income: \$31,500

- Small Town Simplicity features a semi-rural lifestyle, complete with trucks and SUVs (domestic, of course), ATVs, and vegetable gardens.
- Residents enjoy outdoor activities like hunting and fishing as well as watching NASCAR and college football and basketball on TV.
- A large senior population visit doctors and health practitioners regularly.
- However, a largely single population favors convenience over cooking—frozen meals and fast food.
- Home improvement is not a priority, but vehicle maintenance is.

A large percentage of consumer segments in the Marion trade area are “middle-class to lower-middle class homeowners,” according to ESRI classifications.

These customer segments lead to a discussion about price points, which focus on what a business can charge for a product in a given market. Put simply, business owners can’t charge more for their pizza, sporting goods or jewelry than local people are willing to pay – they must either lower their prices, change merchandise or close shop.

New business owners, reviewing this data, must either sell lower-priced items, work hard to capture the smaller percentage of local, high-income shoppers or attract more affluent visitors from elsewhere. In Marion, there are pockets of higher-income groups. About 3% of the population are “Comfortable Empty Nesters,” with median household incomes of \$75,000. This group is “physically and financially active.”



Analysis of Commercial Development Opportunities

The following principles provide a framework for understanding the development potential for a downtown.

The principles are a blend of history and current trends that underlie much of the work being done to restore central business districts across America. The following section briefly describes these national trends and then compares them against Marion's current market.

Local Investment

Business owners can't be expected to pour their livelihoods into a struggling downtown unless they see the city is actively backing them up. Are the streets clean and policed? Is the city doing anything about empty, crumbling buildings? Is the city's own property well maintained?

As a general rule, public investment must come before private investment.

In Marion: Local entrepreneurs have flipped this rule; private investment is driving much of the current activity. This is encouraging, especially because city leaders are working to acquire grants to, in turn, support local businesses. By continually investing in downtown, local leaders will be in a much stronger position to recruit and steer new private sector growth in the central business district.



Sweeten The Pot

Marion, like the United States as a whole, is a free market system. The local mix of businesses downtown is based on supply and demand with little or no government control.

Individuals make economic decisions based on their self-interest: for example, do I want to open a sports bar on the courthouse square? So far, the answer has been no. The free market has already done everything it wants to do downtown, yet local leaders don't have the mix of shops and services they want.

Something has to break that deadlock. Downtown supporters must change the economics in order to lure new investment. This is most often done by offering incentives, subsidized, rents, tax abatements or other support that minimizes risk for new business owners.

In Marion: The city and local economic development professionals already offer most of the standard incentives, as detailed in the section below called Recommendations on Commercial Uses. Main Street Marion has also made recruiting new businesses a top priority.

Local Money Vs. Out-Of-Town Money

When recruiting new businesses, a key decision is knowing who the new business will serve: local residents or out-of-town visitors? Will the new enterprise make life easier for residents by providing the goods and services they now leave town for, or will it lure tourists with specialty stores or regional attractions?

If a business serves mostly residents, it means that dollars are just circulating from local customer to local business owner; there is little outside money enriching the community. On the other hand, there are many examples where a small restaurant or specialty store attracts loyal customers from far away. There are some inspiring examples nearby, such as the Jefferson Street BBQ restaurant in Converse, which attracts customers from several counties. It is great to have money come into town from outside the community, of course, but a downtown must also make sure to also provide opportunities to capture local money.

In Marion: The city is fortunate because it is relatively large, is the county seat and there are almost 150,000 people living within a 25-mile ring. In other words, it has the potential to create offerings that would attract both local customers and out-of-towners. Recent discussions of possible new businesses – sports bars, brew pubs, etc. - reflect this potential.

New local businesses, such as Grains and Grill and Bad Dad Brewery draw in outside people, as do events such as the James Dean and Duck Tail Run festivals.

Risk And Experimentation

The decline of America's small downtowns happened over many years and was not an unforeseeable accident. Changes in consumer shopping and commuting patterns – and the business community's adaptation to them – will not be reversed in the immediate future. In other words, waiting for “the good old days” to return is not a productive strategy.

Instead, some boldness is required, and boldness involves risk. What's at risk is not only money and time, but morale. It can be discouraging to see the community launch a new business only to see it fail. Too many of these unsuccessful launches can lead to paralysis; where business owners grow increasingly reluctant to take a chance and residents don't give them much encouragement.

A community can break this cycle in one of two ways. They can get lucky; someone with all the right skills and resources starts a business at just the right time in just the right place and is smashingly successful.

If that seems like a long-shot, a community must create an atmosphere of experimentation in the recruiting and support of new businesses.

In Marion: Once again, the city is fortunate that established local business people have decided to invest in downtown, not just in shops and restaurants, but also in housing. The newly reformed Main Street organization should continue to focus on supporting these entrepreneurs and others. The city is fortunate to have a mayor and administration that has made downtown redevelopment the top priority.



Locally Grown

National chains will show interest in a community when – and only when – all the correct variables are in place. These factors include traffic, population density and spending patterns. National chains don't all have the same requirements, but few vary from their patterns. For example, have you ever seen a Cracker Barrel any place except off a busy interstate or a Dollar Store at a thriving urban mall?

Because their requirements are so exact, these chains use their own researchers to determine when and where to put their next store. This means it is very difficult to recruit them.

That leaves smaller regional chains, independent business owners and entrepreneurs as the prime candidates for recruitment. Generally speaking, regional chains are the hardest to attract because they have the biggest investments to protect. Independent business owners, in order to move, would have to increase the size of their business or relocate the whole operation to the new location. Entrepreneurs can be the most flexible and ready to go but often carry the risk of having unproven business skills.

In Marion: For the reasons listed above (30,000 size, etc.), downtown Marion has huge potential. This potential has already been recognized and acted upon by local entrepreneurs. Sensing the momentum, the Grant County Economic Growth Council invited a group of out-of-town developers to tour available buildings.

Although there will undoubtedly be hits and misses, there has been more activity downtown in the last year or so than at any time in recent memory. As momentum continues, it seems very likely that local business owners who triggered the new growth will be joined by regional and statewide developers.





The Lone Pioneer Syndrome

After a long dry spell, a community may rejoice when a new business, such as a restaurant or coffee shop, finally opens. In their excitement, the new owner may decide to be the only business downtown that's open evenings or on Saturdays.

Sometimes the owner can make it work, but more often they find themselves stranded. There is not enough supporting business to buffer them. If other businesses don't follow along, the pioneer may be forced to cut back on hours or days. Some businesses survive the scale-back and some don't. Any new business in a fragile economy needs a support system from the community.

Individual businesses left entirely to the mercy of market forces is one reason that many downtowns struggle.

In Marion: Downtown isn't facing the "lone pioneer syndrome." Instead, the central business district is facing a sudden transformation, with many developments underway including loft apartments, larger apartment units, new restaurants, etc. There might be, however, a bit of a "chicken-or-egg" problem: will local customers change their habits, which don't include visiting downtown, in time to support the first wave of new businesses? This is a delicate balance that is addressed later in this report.

Expectation Management

It took decades for most downtowns to sink into underuse and it will take years to even partially restore them. In some cases it may not be possible at all.

It is important, though, to coldly study local conditions in order to not be discouraged. Simply realizing that it's a long, steep hill – with guaranteed setbacks – can help the community settle in for the long haul.

Recommendations on Commercial Uses

Before going too far down the exciting path of business recruitment, it is vital that communities first take stock of what support they offer to business people thinking about launching a new shop downtown.

Many new, small businesses are undercapitalized and lack a basic business plan. The same, unfortunately, is true for many existing businesses. For this reason, communities without a strong, well-advertised system to find, launch and support entrepreneurs play a very passive role in what succeeds or fails downtown.

As shown below, Marion already offers many support programs and incentives, and the newly re-energized Main Street Marion plans to add more services.

City of Marion/ Grant County Council

- Tax abatements
- TIF districts/financing

Downtown is one of 18 TIF districts in The City of Marion. Although the downtown TIF has not built up a reservoir of money to re-invest, it is likely to start generating income after big projects such as renovation of the old Marion Bank Building are complete.

Grant County Chamber of Commerce

- networking events
- government lobbying

Grant County Economic Growth Council

- Business Visits
- Grant's Got Talent
- Tax Abatement / TIF Financing Assistance
- Manufactures Council
- The CHARM Grant
- Community Job Fair
- Community Pitch Night
- Grant County Local Business Resource Guide
- I69 Collegiate Innovation Challenge
- One-on-One Consulting
- Revolving Loan Fund
- BYOC²
- Site Consultant Forums
- Industry Showcase
- Community Job Fair



The importance of having a top-notch support system that increases the probability of a new business succeeding far overshadows any recommendation on “what new business downtown really needs.” The opposite is also true: even inexperienced business owners can survive (or at least get a fighting chance to learn as they go) with the right support.

The absence of a particular downtown business – say a bakery or micro-brew – is not evidence in-and-of-itself that a new bakery or brewery will be successful. While there will probably be local interest in the new business, the most common reasons for new business failures, particularly food service ones, include:

- Low start-up capital (for instance, cash in reserve for the first 12-16 months)
- Poor knowledge about competition
- Wrong location
- Poor restaurant promotion
- Bad partnerships relations
- Poor inventory and staff management
- Lack of original ideas

So, in answer to the question: “Will a new micro-brew (or bakery, or shoe store or pet shop) succeed in downtown Marion?,” the answer is: “Maybe, but the odds of it succeeding will increase greatly if it has a solid business plan, adequate capital, etc.” Local leaders can assist with those components.

One more key word about recommendations on commercial uses: housing. A mix of housing options is critical to the overall revitalization of downtown and of Marion in its entirety. The energy generated from varying age groups living and working downtown round the clock, contributing to the local economy, can support a variety of businesses.



PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Primary Challenges

As this segment has shown, many exciting things are happening in Marion, but the downtown hasn't reached that tipping point of sustained revitalization – yet. Here are the main reasons why:

- **Chicken vs. Egg:** People won't come downtown in large numbers until there is a greater variety of offerings, but shop owners are hesitant to open new businesses until downtown pedestrian traffic picks up. Breaking this deadlock takes a strategic, long-term plan. The quickest solution to this problem is to not rely on visiting shoppers. Instead, increase the number of people living downtown.

- **Lack of regional shopping, eating and tourism destinations:** Although there has been progress made promoting the arts downtown, there is still not the mix of attractions, stores, dining and services that pulls in a steady crowd.

- **Competition from within:** The previous tables showed how some local businesses have been successful attracting both local customers and those from outside the trade area. However, few of those businesses are downtown. Many are along Baldwin Avenue, which offers to the heavy traffic miles of fast food, hotels, shops and services. Downtown does not have the available parking and building mix to attract many of those businesses, nor should it want to. Instead, it must build upon its historic charm, walkability and unique dining and shopping opportunities.





Primary Opportunities

Local leaders have a unified and consistent vision of what's needed to jumpstart downtown. They also have a widely supported set of implementation plans already underway. Main Street Marion, The Grant County Economic Growth Council, City Hall, business owners and others are committed in their efforts to:

- Move people back downtown by creating not only living spaces, but also jobs, shops and recreational opportunities.
- Link downtown to an equally revitalized Mississinewa River and connect it to the Cardinal Greenway.
- Plan and build an amenity infrastructure.
- Create plazas, streetscapes, parks, trails, and festival spaces, and actively program events for those spaces.
- Provide employment opportunities and services to residents by aiding in business expansion and retention, while also growing and recruiting new industries.

Recent comprehensive land use plans, downtown plans, Stellar applications and other documents go into exciting detail about goals, objectives, action plans and even the illustrations needed to imagine a recharged central business area.

One consistent thread is to create a “downtown district” by physically linking existing educational, creative, business and health resources. This could be accomplished with a regional arts and cultural district anchored by a growing Community School of the Arts campus and partnerships with Indiana Wesleyan University.

For a downtown to thrive, it must be an attractive place where people want to live, shop, dine and recreate. It must become a place where investors are willing to take a calculated risk, to invest in building new housing and mixed-use developments

These are not just economic development theories, but are underway right now in downtown Marion as both new housing and new businesses come on-line. Recent developments include:

- **Ridley Tower: 30 market-rate apartments**
- **123 E Third: 1 two-bedroom market rate apartment**
- **139 E Third: 2 two-bedroom market rate apartments**
- **141 E Third: 5 market-rate apartments**
- **Hotel Marion: being developed into mixed development housing/ commercial building**
- **Cecelian/Danmar/Mecca: former apartments being development into senior living**
- **Boston Hill Center (former Centrum Mall): rebranding, new businesses moving in**
- **5th Street Commons: downtown gathering space**
- **Restaurant coming into first floor of 123 E Third St.**
- **Three new downtown restaurants opened up in 2019: Train Station Café, Georgie's Red Roof Café, and Los Amores.**
- **Thrift store opening in 2019 in 702 S Adams.**
- **New Wiggly Field dog park.**
- **Sender Wellness (100 S Washington St) started in 2018 (yoga studio, café coming)**

For information on specific next steps, see the Downtown Revitalization Implementation Options Chapter.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: EXISTING PLAN CONDITIONS

SUMMARY

Local leaders have poured a lot of thought, public input and formal planning into downtown revitalization over the last 5 or so years. Although these local plans contain important insights, sometimes they were not implemented because of changes in leadership, lack of resources or the general feeling that “the time isn’t quite right.”

For that reason, this downtown revitalization effort began with a search for previous reports, which were mined for goals, objectives and strategies.

Following is a summary of key points from these documents:

- **Marion Downtown Revitalization Color Palette** (*JG Bowers Inc/2009*)
- **Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update** (*City of Marion/2010*)
Special Study Area: Downtown Marion
- **Central Marion Revitalization Plan** (*City/2014*)
- **Marion Letter of Intent for Indiana Stellar Program** (*City of /2015*)
- **Researched Based Guidelines/Downtown Marion** (*Design Research/2017*)
- **Groundwork for Growth Design Guidelines** (*Marion Design Co./2018*)
- **Marion Parks and Recreation Plan 2015-2019** (*City of Marion/2015*)





MARION DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COLOR PALETTE | 2009 | JG BOWERS INC.

This 63-page proposal was created by the general contracting firm of JG Bowers Inc. in Marion and addressed to the firm Halstead Architects.

It lays out the scope of work and estimated costs for repairing buildings in the Marion Courthouse Square. The scope is detailed, outlining needed work and costs for painting, awnings, masonry, signs and other items. The buildings listed were:

Salin Bank
Plum Building
Roskin Jewelers
J.C. Penny
Webb's hallmark
Two Brothers
Jerry's Shoes

Yellow Building (on Fourth Street)
Playhouse
Computer Solutions
Titan Building
Church Building (on Third Street)
Old Beatniks
Stephen Wolfe

The report also contains photos of the buildings at that time and illustrations/elevations of what they would like after restoration. There are also some historic photographs.

MARION 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE | 2010 | CITY OF MARION

As advertised, this is a comprehensive document that “sets long-range goals and policies” for the city.

The 116-page plan focuses on nine elements including Land Use + Zoning, Transportation + Circulation, City Image + Tourism, Economic Development and Implementation. Its mission statement includes goals tied directly to downtown:

- **Promote and market the city to potential investors and visitors through a positive branding strategy.**
- **Promote and enhance the unique character of the city and strive to preserve individual neighborhood identities.**
Special Study Area: Downtown Marion
- **Provide employment opportunities and services to residents by aiding in business expansion and retention, while growing and recruiting new industries.**

Of particular interest is the Special Study Area: Downtown Marion, which runs from pp. 69-90. Active downtown organizations were listed as the Chamber of Commerce, Historic Marion Neighborhood Association, Grant County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Main Street Marion and the Marion Urban Enterprise Association.

The city does not have a Capital Improvement Plan or Long-Range Transportation Plan, however zoning, site plan review and design review are all referenced in the comprehensive plan. The city is currently considering updating its regulations for signage downtown.



CENTRAL MARION REVITALIZATION PLAN 2014 CITY OF MARION

This 36-page document stemmed from various planning efforts, beginning with the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update. Central Marion is a large area radiating from the courthouse reaching north of the river and down to Indiana Wesleyan University.

The introduction reads: “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.”

LETTER OF INTEREST FOR STELLAR PROGRAM | 2015 CITY OF MARION

This was the city's fifth application to the Stellar Communities Program. “The process has challenged us collectively to ask tough questions about the economic and cultural state of our City. Now, we are excited to continue our Stellar Vision to meet the needs of our community and address those obstacles head-on.”

The letter also summarizes the city's approach: “Our Stellar Vision is to 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.



RESEARCH BASED GUIDELINES DOWNTOWN MARION | 2017 | IWU

This handsome report from Indiana Wesleyan University Art+Design and Marion Design Co. focuses on design issues and includes:

- SWOT Analysis**
- Demographics**
- Literature Review**
- Focus Group**
- Observational Research**
- Personas**
- Survey**

The IWU report also contained results from a survey distributed to the community via social media outlets. It was answered by 98 individuals.

MARION PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN 2015 | CITY OF MARION

This 98-page document was created for the City of Marion Parks and Recreation Board by Kieser Consulting Group.

Section 6: Plan and Recommendations includes items for Ballard Field, Hogin Park and Matter Park. Those items include tree planting, ADA compliance, sale of excess park land, improvements for soccer fields, shelters and restrooms, outdoor kitchen and pickle ball courts.

Of interest to downtown is plans for the Riverwalk extension and plaza, Odie Dog Park and Mississinewa Whitewater Park.



CENTRAL MARION REVITALIZATION PLAN 2014 | CITY OF MARION

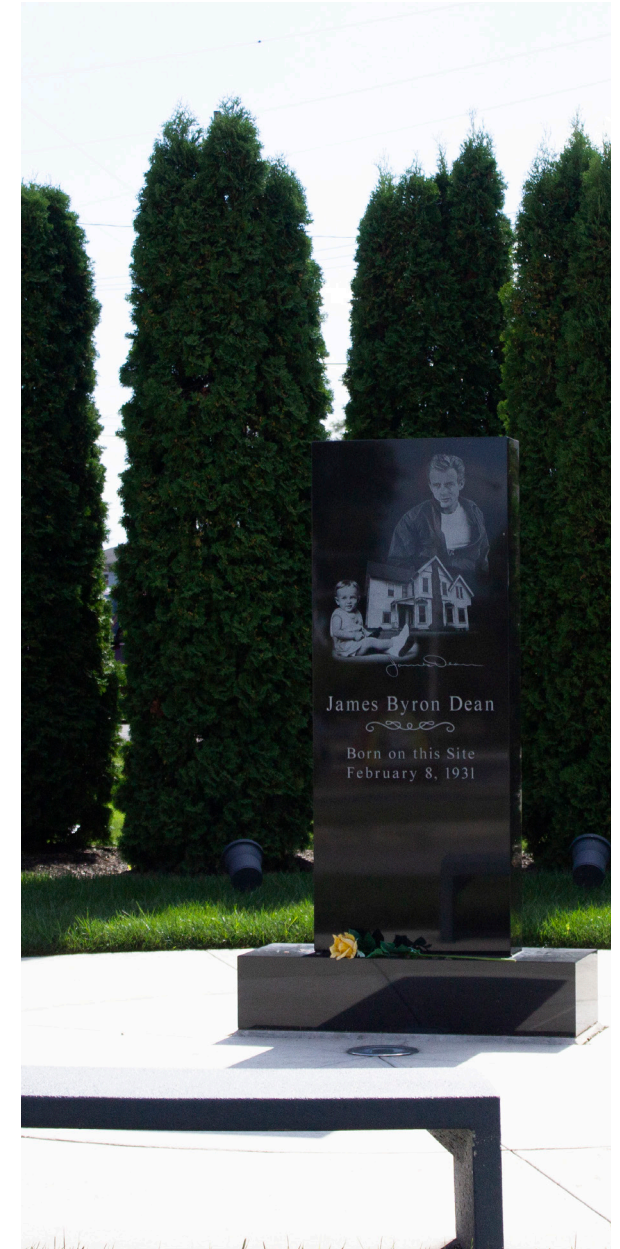
This 145-page report from Indiana Wesleyan University's Marion Design Co. is a visually beautiful depiction of what downtown Marion could look like. Using drawings and photo compositions it shows a bustling, verdant and multi-purposed central business district.

The report includes principles, rules for success and guidelines for the following topics:

Facades
Signage
Sidewalks
Screening
Utilities
Fixtures
Lighting
Trash Receptacles
Green

Raised Planters
Landscape Strips
Gather
Seating
Alleys/ Infill Spaces
Street Corners
Cafe Spaces
Public Art
Special Event Spaces

The introduction states: "Groundwork for Growth is an initiative to help improve and strengthen Downtown Marion, by opening it up for businesses and laying the groundwork for a revitalized and active downtown. In the pages of this book you will discover ways in which we can help Marion redevelop a booming downtown, flourishing with growth and commerce."



EXISTING CONDITIONS: PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

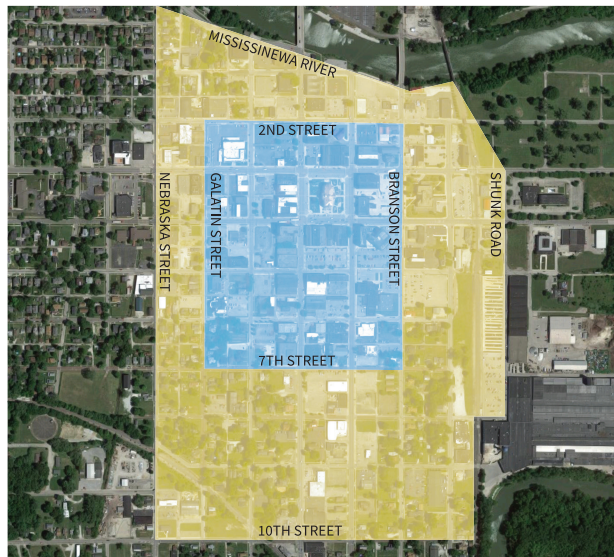
LAND USE

District and Sub-Areas:

Marion's central business district has a cultural and economic impact that extends far beyond the city's boundaries. However, for research purposes, this report focuses on the historic and commercial downtown areas, as shown in the map below.

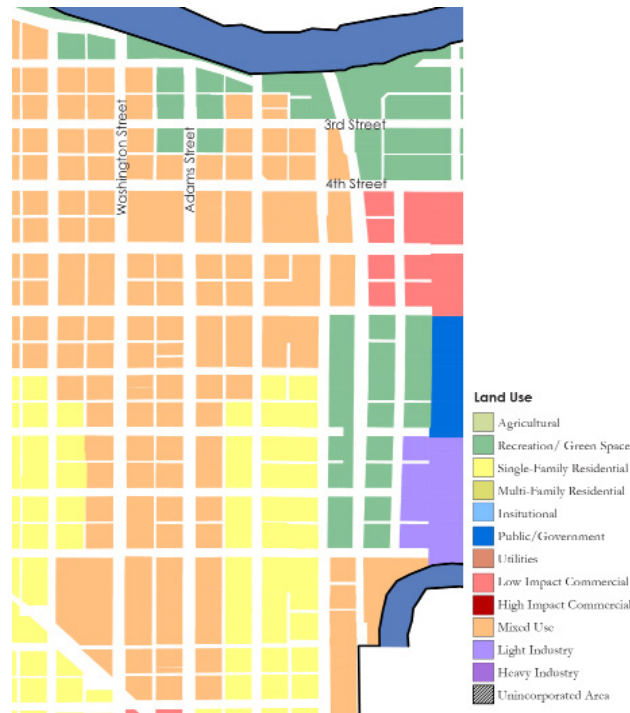
These combined areas are filled with historic building stock for first-floor commercial and upper-story housing as well as empty and underutilized lots and buildings available for imaginative reuse.

For a more detailed look, the following Land Use Map and District Map from the Marion 2030 Plan provide a visual guide to land uses in this neighborhood. Its categories include Mixed Use, which encompasses commercial, service and residential buildings.



- HISTORIC DOWNTOWN
- COMMERCIAL DOWNTOWN

District Map

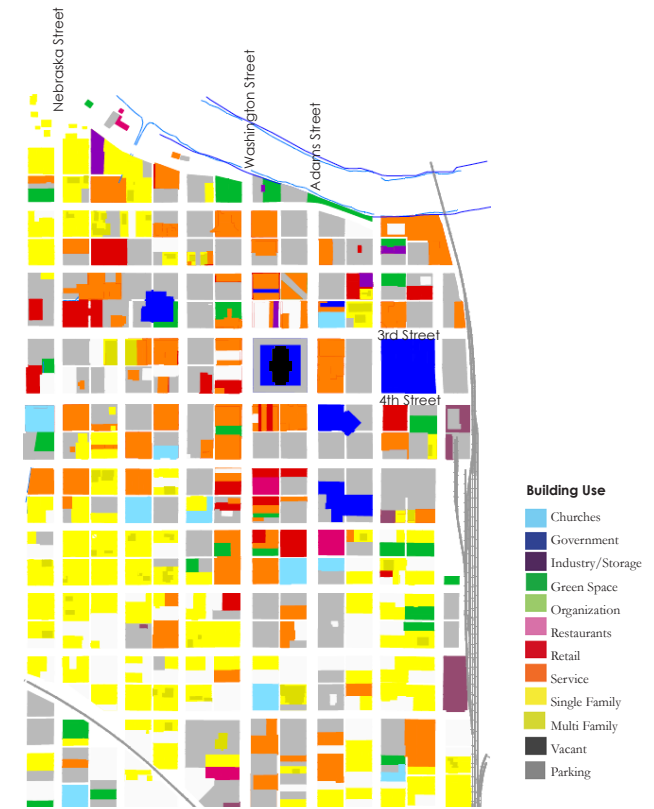


- Agricultural
- Recreation / Green Space
- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Institutional
- Public/Government
- Utilities
- Low Impact Commercial
- High Impact Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Light Industry
- Heavy Industry
- Unincorporated Area

Land Use Map

Inventory of Current Building Stock and Their Uses :

Capturing the mix of downtown uses is a moving target, but the following map from the Marion 2030 Plan - Special Study Area - Downtown Marion gives a good overview. Building use can be seen on this map as it shows the main arteries of 'activity' within the Historic Marion District. Corridors of service and retail for consumers and parking lots are also shown.



- Churches
- Government
- Industry/Storage
- Green Space
- Organization
- Restaurants
- Retail
- Service
- Single Family
- Multi Family
- Vacant
- Parking

Building Use Map

ENTRANCES AND GATEWAYS TO DOWNTOWN

Downtown Marion is situated between east-and-west running segments of SR 18, and Adams and Washington streets running north-south. While the city has “Welcome to Marion” signs posted at key areas, such as SR 18 east of town, it has been contemplating creating signage that makes a bigger splash.

For example, the Researched Based Guidelines document by Marion Design Studio suggests, “The Marion Gateway sign should be placed where it will have the most impact on the viewer. This is not necessarily at the entrance to town. The sign should be well maintained and clear, with a minimum lettering of eight inches tall. There should be beautification elements around the sign, such as flowers, grasses, decorative rocks, etc.”

The city’s most recent Stellar application states, “Enhance the downtown square to serve as a gateway into Marion along State Road 18. Regionally, Marion has the potential to be an important part of the economic strategy for central and northeast Indiana. Located halfway between Indianapolis and Ft. Wayne, and ideally situated minutes from the Interstate 69 corridor, the opportunities are endless in terms of regional impact. State Road 18 beckons visitors to our city, so we have to ask ourselves, ‘What is our greeting? What does our gateway and downtown say about our city?’

“Not only are we trying to capture regional dollars day-to-day from visitors, we want to leave a lasting impression on all those who visit in the hopes that Marion is in the broader discussions about where to live and do business. The SR18 Gateway is the first step toward telling visitors our story, and a revitalized downtown would further that narrative. The Stellar process provides us the real opportunity to make an impact locally and across the central Indiana region.”



OPEN SPACES

An overview of open spaces can be found in the Building Use Map in the previous section, which includes open spaces.

Because downtown Marion is on the cusp of revitalization, there are many empty and under-utilized buildings. Additionally, the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan mentions that south of the courthouse square there are several vacant lots that could be developed as mixed-income housing to serve downtown employees.

Focus groups conducted during the Researched Based Guidelines report uncovered several common themes about downtown buildings:

- **“One participant said the reason why people are not thinking downtown is safe is because they see the blight and empty houses.”**

GREEN SPACE

A study discovered that there is only 7% land dedicated to green space in the downtown, according to the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan. “Not only was this a vast discrepancy for most downtowns, a lack of street trees and parking lot landscaping creates an uninviting atmosphere where the pedestrian does not feel comfortable,” according to the document.

An overview of green spaces can be found in the Building Use Map in the previous section, “Inventory of Current Building Stock and Their Uses.”

CIRCULATION FOR VEHICLES AND PEDESTRIANS

Concerning vehicular traffic, SR 18 is the busiest street in downtown Marion, according to the Researched Based Guidelines report. “It also happens to be located in the downtown square. The cars of this traffic are a mixture of old beat-up vehicles, newer common cars and large semi-trailer trucks. The semi-trucks are quite loud, which can be distracting and annoying at times. Few cars stop in the downtown area,” according to the report.

Focus groups conducted during the Researched Based Guidelines report uncovered several common themes about traffic:

- **A major issue that was addressed about the downtown is that street signs cannot be read, there are lights out on streets, and that people fly down some of the roads.**
- **One possible future asset mentioned was the traffic in Marion. The problem is that people pass through Marion, but do not stay and see what Marion has to offer.**

Improving the walkability of downtown is a key revitalization goal, as demonstrated by proposed projects in the city’s most recent Stellar application, including:

- **Streetscape improvements focusing on the courthouse square and Washington Street Corridor.**
- **Extension connecting the existing Riverwalk through the proposed River Rock Arts Plaza to Gateway Park.**
- **Improvements to Washington Street and Branson Street bridges, focusing on pedestrian safety and ADA compliance.**
- **Street and signal conversions surrounding the proposed River Rock Arts Plaza to improve circulation.**

Vehicular Traffic

Traffic counts are useful to business owners who want to know how many cars drive past their storefront. Entrepreneurs also use traffic counts when scouting for ideal locations for their new shop or service.

In Marion, traffic counts are conducted on state roads by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), using a system called Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), which represents the average of all daily traffic using the road throughout the year in both directions.

One traffic count is made at Washington Street just south of SR 18 eastbound – in the heart of downtown. About 3,861 vehicles pass that spot daily, according to a 2018 INDOT report.

Another key count is taken on SR 18 westbound, near the intersection of Nebraska Street. About 7,904 vehicles pass that spot daily, according to a 2018 INDOT report. The number of automobiles has increased at that spot since 2017, according to INDOT.

Marion also has a large pool of potential visitors from traffic along I-69. About 28,577 vehicles were counted on the interstate between the U.S. 35 and SR 18 exits in 2017.

PARKING

A downtown parking study showed “an abundance of parking (both private and public),” according to the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update. The central core of downtown had a total of 2,954 parking spaces, the report said. That includes 576 public parking spaces.

The report states: “Although there is a perception of a lack of parking in the downtown, a study was conducted that discovered that 40% of buildable land area was dedicated to parking.” The parking plan recommended:

1. Work with the county to relocate employee vehicles to surrounding lots.
2. By creating 2-hour parking (north of the courthouse), one of the first things that visitors traveling the main corridor of SR 18W will see is a large public parking lot. This lot should be well landscaped to preserve the height and definition of the square and paved in a transitional surface that can also be used as public plaza space when needed.
3. A lot for public use should be acquired along SR 18E (preferably lot AU or AT). If no lot is acquired, directional signage should be placed at 4th and Washington to Lot P, the “Super Lot.”



INFRASTRUCTURE

The following assessments were made by city officials:

Sidewalks: A sidewalk study in the Marion 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update found that most walkways immediately surrounding the courthouse square were in good to excellent shape, but that the condition drops off for some sidewalks nearby, such as South Border Street.

Streets: The main roads serving downtown are East 3rd Street, S. Washington Street, E. 4th Street and S. Adams St. Moving out from the courthouse square, other roads include S. Branson Street, S. Boots Street and E. 2nd Street.

According to an update done for this report by the city's Engineering & Traffic Department, most of those streets are in good condition. Planned road repairs in the downtown area include repairing brick pavers around the square.

Future plans that might impact downtown include the consideration of changing Washington Street to 2-way from SR 18 west to 1st Street, and possibly adding bike lanes from downtown to the south business district.

Alleys: Alleys can play an important role in downtown revitalization. Their scale - often too narrow for substantive vehicular traffic - makes them excellent walkable thoroughfares. They can be repurposed to include seating and a mural, and be used for public recreation and a venue for Main Street events. Additionally, alleys have value relative to bike storage, recycling and other functional possibilities.

Main Street Marion is working on a Placemaking Indiana Alley Activation grant for an alley off the courthouse square. Other work on alleys by the city includes a previous project that converted an alley off SR 18 westbound to a pocket park.

Utilities: According to an update done for this report by the Marion Utilities Department, there are not any impending water, wastewater, or storm water projects planned for the downtown area. Looking ahead, they will continue maintaining the existing infrastructure there which is adequate to support normal commercial/residential development of the area.

Broadband: The following section was provided by AT&T: AT&T is a telecommunications company authorized to provide local exchange services in Marion. AT&T currently has a robust fiber outlay in the downtown Marion area. With this fiber outlay, AT&T can provide both ASE and ABF services to downtown businesses. New fiber locations can be built out in a 4-6 week time frame. Any locations that currently have fiber to them can generally get service in around a 2 week time frame. AT&T also has diverse fiber paths which includes being able to serve customers from the Marion North central office and the Marion South central office.

DRAINAGE

According to an update done for this report by city officials, no major drainage work is planned or needed around the Courthouse Square in the immediate future.

However, another possible issue has been identified. Downtown Marion, like many cities at the turn of the century, was heated by steam distributed through piping located in vaults under the public sidewalks. When the steam system was deactivated, these vault spaces were abandoned in place and the concrete sidewalks which cap the top of the vaults remained in place.

Over the last century, the structural rebar which supports the sidewalk has been damaged by water intrusion and has started to rust and corrode. In areas which were accessible for underground observation, particularly at the building renovation at 4th and Washington Street, the lower, corroded rebar has led to the cracking and spalling of the concrete cover. This exposed condition shows the deteriorated reinforcing supporting the downtown sidewalks, which if not corrected over time could lead to failure.



PUBLIC SIGN SYSTEMS

The following assessments were made in the Researched Based Guidelines document:

Signage/Way Finding: Signs of downtown Marion are pretty standard. There are street name signs, one-way signs, business signs and pedestrian signs. As for wayfinding, newcomers would have difficulty finding where to go to find a business or store they were searching for. There are some Marion signs, but the titles are separated from background and hang over the edges. Not to mention the arrows directed where to go are either wrong or confusing. An improvement in wayfinding would help downtown immensely.

Street-Name Signs: Street-name signs are not an issue in downtown Marion. There are large green background, white-lettered signs above each stoplight bearing the name of the street it is parallel to.

One-Way Signs: There are two one-way signs positioned at each of the four intersections on the downtown square. One sign is fastened to a post ahead of the driver and the other is positioned off to one side.

Business Signs: Of the buildings on the square that are not vacant and have some sort of identification, there are varieties of styles of business signs. For instance, the Pregnancy Help Center and Music & Sound both have light-up signs. Others have flat, quadrilateral signs that have been bolted directly to the brick façades. The rest of the buildings are either unmarked or left with disintegrated signage and lettering. Overall the business signs are far from cohesive.

Pedestrian Signs: These include parking, handicap, and rule signs. The parking signs are mostly restrictions, but are rather confusing. The top of each sign says “2 hr parking” and then underneath are stated hours “8am – 5pm.” Yet, underneath those signs there is another sign that reads “except Sundays.” An updated sign combining the two could work well.

There are handicap-parking signs positioned on each corner of the courthouse parking. These signs serve their purpose and don't necessarily need to be changed. There is also a “Wheelchair Ramp” sign with an arrow pointing at the ground. There are also Rule signs. These are signs that state, “Do not” or “no” followed by what is not allowed. There are two visible No Skateboarding Allowed signs downtown. Both are located on Third Street. One is visible on a fence next to the old Beatniks building. The other is across the street on the courthouse lawn, but it is faded and very hard to read. It could be disposed of or updated.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The City of Marion Transit System, whose terminal is downtown, offers routes throughout the community including IWU, General Motors, Ivy Tech and VA Hospital. People with a disability which prevents them from using the regular bus service may be eligible for the ADA Para-transit Service.



FACADES

Following is a panoramic view of all the buildings surrounding the courthouse square.









STREET FURNITURE

The following assessments were made in the Researched Based Guidelines document:

Bike Racks: There are four bike racks, one located in the middle of each side of the square. SR 18 going West is particularly busy with traffic, so biking may not be ideal on that side of the square.

Benches: There are 23 benches around the square. This seems like a good number, but it is not enough to hold the future pedestrians that would be walking around the square. Benches around the courthouse square are made of concrete and some of them have been broken. If new benches were utilized they would need to be composed of material not quite as hard as concrete.

Trash Cans: There are eleven trashcans on the sidewalks surrounding the downtown square. They are easily accessible and easily seen. This is ideal for passerby's who've maybe stopped for a bite to eat before going to the Museum or Music shop.

STREET LIGHTING

A streetlight inventory was done for this report by American Electric Power. The study includes downtown, Matter Park and along the trail to the elementary school and "Breene Acres. It concludes:

Breene Acres has approximately 124 pole-mounted fixtures that can be converted to LED for an estimated one-time cost of \$1,830. This is subject to order submittal and field verification of the fixture type/count. The monthly cost of a flat-rate LED fixture is slightly higher than the existing fixtures, however, the flat-rate LED fixtures are still subject to riders, and with the decrease in consumption, the LED's may have the same monthly cost as the current fixtures.

Downtown has approximately 30 poles. The top fixtures are flat rate, owned & maintained by I&M, the bottom fixtures are flat rate, owned & maintained by the city. To replace the downtown poles with a decorative pole / fixture, the new service would be customer owned & maintained, and charged for electrical service by metered usage.

Matter Park and entry trail has approximately 60 poles with lights, and an additional 20 poles to maintain service to those lights. The park lights are on the Outdoor Light flat-rate tariff.

The park had decorative lights until approximately 3 years ago when they were removed and replaced with the current wood poles. It is my understanding this was due to several accidents involving park maintenance equipment. To replace the park poles with a decorative pole/fixture, the new service would be customer owned & maintained, and charged for electrical service by metered usage.

Both the park and downtown require engineering to determine the installation costs. As for determining cost estimates for customer-owned decorative street lights, the city would need to engage a civil engineer/design firm to find a solution that best meets their needs within the context of the streetscape.

PLANT MATERIALS

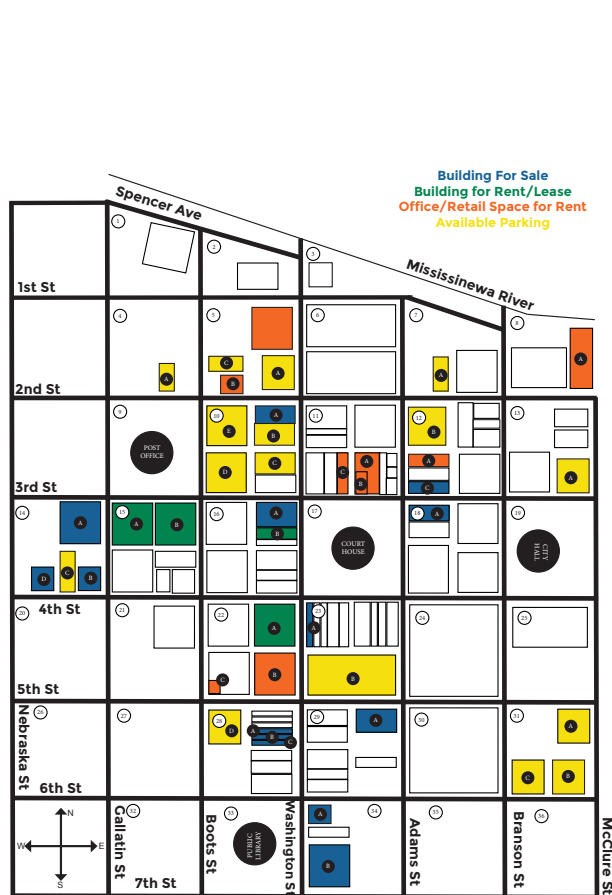
The following assessment was made in the Researched Based Guidelines document:

Flower Pots/Planters: Flowerpots are placed on sidewalks around the downtown square of Marion. There are 15 large planters, two medium-size planters and 18 smaller planters. All the flowerpots are full of mulch and dirt, but are left empty of any plant life during the colder seasons. If perennial plants were utilized there would be no seasons of empty planters, and the city would only need to buy new plants every couple of years, saving money.

PRIVATE PROPERTY CONDITIONS

Patterns of ownership are shown in the following Map of Available Spaces, which includes building for sale, building for rent/lease, office/retail space for rent and available parking. It shows that a majority of properties downtown are privately owned and available for rent or sale.

The previous section, K. Facades, includes photos of key buildings. While some need cosmetic or structural repair, other buildings – particularly around the courthouse square – are undergoing renovation by private property owners.

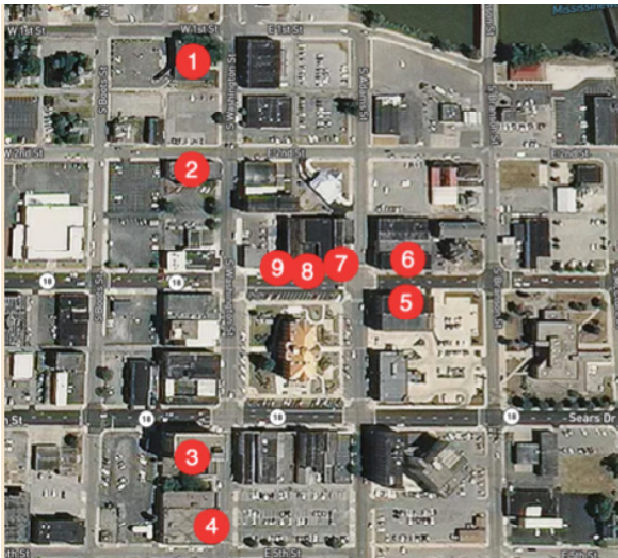


- 4 A. Parking Lot**
- 5 A. Parking Lot
B. Office Space for Rent/Lease (122 W 2nd St)
Linda Witts || (765) 661-1069
C. Parking Lot
D. Office Space for Rent/Lease
(100 S Washington St)
Home of Sander Wellman. Office space available.
Bill Meece || meece@billmreece.com**
- 7 A. Parking Lot**
- 8 A. Office Space for Rent/Lease (319 E 2nd St)**
- 10 A. Building for Sale (200 S Washington St)
Harry Finch - grcoabstf@aol.com
B. Parking Lot
C. Parking Lot
D. Parking Lot
E. Parking Lot**
- 11 A. Building for Rent/Lease (741 W Third St)
All terms are negotiable.
Steve Kopp || steve@macintosh.com
B. Building for Rent/Lease (128 W Third St)
All terms are negotiable.
MDF Meal Estate || jmc@thepennsylvanians.com
C. Building for Rent/Lease (121 W Third St)
All terms are negotiable.
Mike Hahnstiel || MGHahnstiel@hahnstiel-architects.com**
- 12 A. Office Space for Rent/Lease (215 E Adams St)
Kylie Jackson || kylie@macintosh.com
B. Parking Lot
C. Building for Sale (225 S Adams St)
Brand new roof. Asking \$125,000.
Jesus Fellowship Church || (765) 664-7488**
- 13 A. Parking Lot**
- 14 A. Building for Rent/Lease (204 S Gallatin St)
Jacquie Dodyk || jacquie@shaggydoddy.com
B. Building for Sale (316 S Gallatin St)
City owned property. Asking \$11,000.
Joan Peterson || jpeterson@cityoflincoln.in.gov
C. Parking Lot
D. Building for Sale or Lease (216 W 4th St)
Building hosts 4-5 office spaces. Asking sale price \$104,000. Asking lease price: \$900, including utilities.
Philip Reckinger || (765) 661-9824**
- 15 A. Building for Rent/Lease (239 W 3rd St)
Jacquie Dodyk || jacquie@shaggydoddy.com
B. Building for Rent/Lease (201 W 3rd St)**
- 16 A. Building for Sale (302 S Washington St).
Board of Commissioners || (765) 668-4736
B. Building for Rent/Lease (510 S Washington St)
Wood Brothers || (765) 683-8515**
- 18 A. Building for Sale (201 S Washington St).
Four story building. Asking price: \$150,000.
Bill Meece || billmreece@comcast.net**
- 22 A. Building for Rent/Lease (408 S Washington St)
Former Marion National Bank building.
Mike Hahnstiel || MGHahnstiel@hahnstiel-architects.com
B. Office Space for Rent/Lease
(428 S Washington St)
Centrum Mall. Home of Marion Co. Space and Bri H
Boutique. Office/retail space for lease.
Biley Torgerson || BTorgerson@macintosh.com
C. Building for Rent/Lease (122 W 5th St)**
- 23 A. Building for Sale (102 E 4th St)
Geoff Elzroth || geoffme67@gmail.com
B. Parking Lot**
- 28 A. Building for Sale (508 S Washington St)
Sherry French || (765) 673-4663
B. Building for Sale (510 S Washington St)
Sherry French || (765) 673-4663
C. Building for Sale (512 S Washington St)
Sherry French || (765) 673-4663
D. Parking Lot**
- 29 A. Building for Sale (502 S Adams St)
Sherry French || (765) 673-4663**
- 31 A. Parking Lot
B. Parking Lot
C. Parking Lot**
- 34 A. Building for Sale (501 S Washington St)
B. Building for Sale (625 S Washington St)
Firestone || 1 (844) 249-5812**

VACANT BUILDINGS

Local leaders have been heavily promoting available downtown buildings, including The Grant County Economic Growth Council last fall hosting 15 representatives from Indiana-based developers to generate interest in Marion's historic downtown buildings.

The following map shows key properties highlighted for development, along with photos, dimensions and square footage.



- 1 100 S Washington St
- 2 200 S Washington St
- 3 402 S Washington St
- 4 428 S Washington St
- 5 301 S Adams St
- 6 225 S Adams St
- 7 141 E Third St
- 8 139 E Third St
- 9 123 E Third St

EXISTING LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Marion has a number of groups dedicated to community development including:

- *Mayor's Office and City Hall*
- *Marion Main Street*
- *Downtown Impact Group*
- *Grant County Economic Growth Council*
- *Indiana Landmarks Northeast Field Office*
- *Redevelopment Commission*
- *Thrive Grant County*



SUMMARY OF LIABILITIES AND ISSUES

Marion Design Studio conducted a SWOT analysis for The Researched Based Guidelines document. Their findings include:

Weaknesses: The underdevelopment of the downtown square leads to a number of different design issues. The emptiness and lack of participating businesses means that successful implementation of any design standards or guidelines will take a number of years to complete.

Because design standards are not already in place, current business owners may not see the value in participating or investing in the new rules. Another potential weakness could be lack of enforcement or funds to make change possible. Other weaknesses:

- *No cohesion.*
- *Dilapidated/blighted buildings.*
- *Misleading signage.*
- *Constant construction.*
- *Stigma of being “dangerous.”*
- *Plants are always dying.*
- *No dining options.*
- *Landlords often leave town.*
- *Weak economy.*
- *There are no awnings, just frames.*
- *Physical brokenness.*
- *Inconsistent paint color/quality.*
- *Ignorance of architectural history.*
- *Lack of a 3rd place*

Threats: Major threats against the creation of design guidelines could be lack of finances and lack of follow through. Because negative perceptions towards the downtown already exist, individuals might not see the value in creating or repairing if no entities are present to start and sustain it. Age differences present in Marion’s population may also contribute to contrasting motivations and ideas about the future direction of the downtown area. Other threats include:

- *Unwillingness to change.*
- *Finances.*
- *Negative perceptions.*
- *Businesses don't want to move here.*
- *Unwillingness to receive help.*
- *Lack of customers/patrons.*
- *Heroin epidemic*
- *Apathy/indifference.*
- *Ongoing racial struggles.*
- *Preference to the bypass.*
- *Wide age gap in residents.*
- *Indiana weather/long winters*



SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Marion Design Studio conducted a SWOT analysis for The Researched Based Guidelines document. Their findings include:

Strengths: The city of Marion has great potential for guidelines to be implemented. There are plenty of parking opportunities with multiple lots and convenient spaces all around the square. Vacant buildings and clean alleyways allow for potential business and popups to reside. The vacancy allows potential business owners to abide by the design standards before any new construction or repair takes place. In terms of audience and market, there is a community of young families that visits the downtown area regularly for creative after-school activities that could be catered to further. Other strengths:

- *No financial pressure on businesses.*
- *Property is available.*
- *Tons of parking.*
- *Steady traffic flow.*
- *Location to courthouse.*
- *Clean, open alleys.*
- *The arts are prevalent.*
- *Plenty of non-profit organizations.*
- *The Folkie's community.*
- *Family-driven businesses.*

Opportunities: One of downtown Marion's greatest design opportunities is its rich history within the architecture along the square. The historic facades could be restored to their original beauty and other aesthetic elements could be drawn from them. There is potential to develop the riverwalk and visuals connected to that area of the downtown. Vacancies allow for any type of business or organization to create customized spaces. The recent increase of involvement from Marion Design Co. and other organizations affiliated with Indiana Wesleyan University opens new doors of opportunity as well. Other opportunities:

- *Downtown is a blank page.*
- *New aesthetics.*
- *Available collaborations.*
- *Chance to integrate rich history.*
- *Riverfront potential.*
- *Cheap to rent.*
- *Lots of empty buildings to rent.*
- *Increasing IWU involvement.*
- *There is wealth in Marion.*
- *Marion is a very giving community.*



EXISTING CONDITIONS: CULTURAL/SOCIAL CONDITIONS

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES

Downtown business district events: The central business district has a long history of events, with plans for even more in the future.

Activities and venues include Marion Philharmonic Orchestra performances, Marion Community School of the Arts, Marion Civic Theatre performances, Mississinewa 1812 re-enactments, Quilters Hall of Fame exhibits, Walk of Cancer Home Run/Walk, Kids to Parks Day at the Salamonie, CSA Festival of Shorts, Hog Daze Motorcycle Rally, Color Me Pink Breast Cancer Run/Walk and Christmas City Walkway of Lights.

Save Our Stories hosts annual events highlighting downtown buildings and history and the Marion Public Library hosts a variety of events, including museum exhibits and kids-reading events. The Farmer's Market is downtown as is First Friday, which highlights local shops.

A new event, which will be held for the second time this October, is Discover Downtown, which features pop-up art galleries, vendors, food trucks, live music and tours of historic buildings.

Another exciting event is "Community Pitch Night," a shark-tank style business competition sponsored by the GCEGC in which entrepreneurs, businesses and start-ups from across Indiana compete for an all-inclusive "Business Start-Up Prize Package." The prize includes all the key ingredients to starting a business in downtown Marion: one-year free lease; legal, strategic planning, tax, and IT consulting; branding, social media, signage, promotional materials and more. The one-year free lease is in Ridley Tower, a \$7-million-dollar redevelopment downtown underway by Halstead Architects.

Upcoming events will use the 5th Street Commons, across from the redeveloped Boston Hill Center.

The downtown business district's cultural institutions: Downtown is the cultural heart of the city with groups including the Marion Philharmonic Orchestra, Marion Community School of the Arts, Marion Civic Theatre, Mississinewa 1812, Quilters Hall of Fame, Cardinal Greenway Rail-Trail Project, Gardens of Matter Park, Marion General Hospital, Marion Public Library & Museum and Hostess House restaurant, gift shop and event center.

Future plans include pursuing a state designation for an Arts & Entertainment District. Additionally, the downtown planning committee is working on revisioning downtown, particularly the riverfront and how it can be tied to the courthouse square. This proposed public space will be a major attraction itself and will be supported by a downtown multi-use path linking the central business district's attractions. This trail will become a linear park flowing past restaurants, shops and downtown residences.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT'S IMAGE

Until recently, the image of downtown Marion has been rather bleak among many residents. For instance, Marion Design Studio conducted a focus group for The Researched Based Guidelines document and participants described downtown as having “a lack of businesses, neglect and abandonment of empty buildings, blight, no cohesiveness and even the complex traffic created from the one-way streets.”

Other comments from the group include “expectation and fear of failure needs to leave the minds of the community members. The people of Marion expect failure, which means that they are unwilling to begin new businesses. When the fear of failure is gone, more people will be willing to begin new businesses in the area.”

However, a recent wave of interest in downtown, including renovation of existing business, has greatly increase local optimism and energy levels. As an editorial in a local newspaper said in November 2018, “We have a great and rather rare opportunity to improve our downtown and our quality of life in Marion. For the first time in memory there are several people with resources apparently prepared to invest in central Marion.”

The editorial stated: “Indiana Wesleyan University is moving closer to the center of the city by buying the former Tucker Career Center. Local entrepreneur Bill Reece, who has met with much success on the East Coast, has purchased the former Old National Bank and is building a 21st century place of rest and recreation downtown.

He is also developing a hydroponic produce business converting an old warehouse near downtown for the agricultural business. Architect Michael Halstead has purchased the city's tallest building, the former Marion National Bank building and will repurpose it in addition to remodeling a building on Third Street, which houses his new offices and an apartment. And there are others similarly involved.”

One of the local developers bringing back a historic building, Phil Bowers of BDP Development, told reporters, “Marion is part of a big comeback right now.”

During the focus group, participants had suggestions on how to move forward: “People are making plans, but there is not enough energy or participation in order to move the plan along and make the improvements. There needs to be “different energies”, such as businesses or organizations, working together in order to implement all the plans that are being made.”

The participants thought the “biggest asset in downtown Marion was the community arts centers or the potential of resources through the empty buildings and the river walk, courthouse, etc.”.



ANALYSIS OF AVAILABLE HOUSING

There is tremendous interest in downtown housing right now. The key questions are “how many housing units can downtown support?” and “what is the right mix of studios, 1-bedrooms, etc.?”

Unfortunately, there are no quick answers to those questions and a detailed analysis of the downtown housing market is beyond the scope of this report. That is because a housing analysis is a complex blend of formulas and statistics that usually get intermingled with hunches and wishes. In fact, several developers interested in building in downtown Marion said most market studies are so subjective that they skip them entirely.

The problem is that downtown doesn't exist in a vacuum. Downtown housing demand is influenced by population density, school-district boundaries, transportation linkages, shopping and service linkages and distance to major employers.

Additional factors include penetration rates (the degree to which a market is either underserved or saturated), the absorption period (the time necessary for a newly constructed or renovated property to achieve the stabilized level of occupancy) and capture rate (percentage of age, size, and income-qualified renter households in the primary market area that the property must capture to fill the units.)

But one thing is clear even without a formal study: Downtown Marion is probably poised to benefit from something called “move-up and latent demand.”

“Move-up” is the market force generated by the upward mobility of lower-income households. As the economy improves in Marion, Grant County and the country, an increasing number of people will explore improving their current housing.

Latent demand, also called pent-up demand, results from under-building downtown. If, for example, over the last few years, apartment buildings have not kept pace with the population and an increasing rental market, latent demand might be present. It can be analyzed by studying the types of housing that major market segments are choosing in comparable communities. The most exciting thing about a new, market-rate housing complex is not just the bedrooms, it's the additional investments generated by having people living downtown. Latent demand is particularly intriguing for downtown Marion because – until recently – there had been no construction and because of the success of downtown apartments in other Indiana communities. See the accompanying case study.



Case Study: Frankfort, Ind.

Frankfort, IN, is a city about half the size of Marion a few miles from I-65 in Clinton County. In 2016, it completed a downtown revitalization plan that emphasized building a downtown park and other amenities to attract new residents to the central business district.

A developer saw the plans and told city leaders if they built the park, he would put in a downtown, market-rate housing complex. The city agreed, and last year the new 74-unit Nickel Plate Flats apartment complex opened in the heart of downtown with a 92% occupancy rate.

Additional private investment since the revitalization plan includes: the development of 3 new boutique shops, a new café and coffee shop (Frankie's), a new music store featuring an outdoor patio (Creekside Music), a downtown brewery expected in the coming year, a new pizza restaurant (Greek's Pizza) and the development of a new event and conference center (51 West).

The high occupancy rate at Nickel Plate Flats led the way for 10 new hotel rooms in the upper stories of one historic downtown building and 15 additional apartments in another. There has been more economic activity in Frankfort in the past few years than there's been in the last few decades.

There are many reasons to believe that the strategy of moving people downtown that worked in Frankfort can work in Marion. In fact, private developers are already investing heavily in downtown housing.



Available housing downtown:

Available housing downtown: Until recently, Marion's courthouse square had only a few apartments.

- **Castle Apartments: 20 market rate apartments**
- **123 East Third St.: 1 market-rate apartments**
- **326 S Washington St.: 2 market-rate apartments**
- **214 S Adams St.: 2 market-rate apartments**
- **101 E 3rd St.: 2 market-rate apartments**



Mixed-use and second story residential

opportunities: The shortage of downtown housing options is about to change dramatically. Even as this report is being written new units are under construction including:

- **139 East Third St.: 2 market rate apartments**
- **141 East Third St.: 5 market rate apartments**
- **Ridley Tower:** The proposed development is the former Marion National Bank, built in 1917. Standing at 7 stories, the 75,000-square-foot building is a gem on the southwest corner of the downtown square. It is Marion's first and only skyscraper.

The plan is for 30 market-rate units, and the developer has signed leases with tenants. The interior main lobby is a two-story volume with a barrel vault central arcade, plaster ornamentation, marble floors and wainscot, plaster columns and marble teller stations. The upper floors have a central corridor with transom windows lined with marble wainscot, terrazzo flooring, plaster walls and ceilings.

- **Hotel Marion,** the Marion Housing Authority's long-term project to rebuild in the spot of the old Hotel Marion and create a mixed-use development. It will include a combination of market-rate and low-income units, with commercial use on the bottom floors.



Plans are in the works for other units including:

- **Dan-Mar Building:** Assuming the remainder of building is structurally sound after partial demolition, the existing space will be sold for redevelopment into market rate apartments (probably 10-15 units) and commercial space.
- **Cecilian Building:** The original configuration of apartments (10-15 units) has been retained and could be restored.



One asset that will likely contribute to new downtown housing is its walkability. In order to be walkable, a neighborhood must include a network of pathways designed for pedestrians and cyclists, and it must include the different services necessary for everyday life.

If a neighborhood only has housing, then it's not walkable because there's no place to walk to. But if a neighborhood has housing, restaurants, shops, libraries places of worship and a place for groceries, residents will be able to meet their everyday needs on foot. For this reason, downtown revitalization must continue pressing with a two-pronged approach of housing units and services.

Additional concerns include parking. There is ample parking in downtown Marion now, as shown in the infrastructure chapter, but leaders should start planning now for continued growth. For example, some cities have designated parking or permits for downtown residents. It is also a good idea to work with local police to change patrol patterns to accommodate a busier downtown. A final word about new housing in Marion involves the neighborhoods around the central business district. As shown in the accompanying photos, some of the houses have been neglected or even abandoned. But restoring older homes or building new, modest ones in empty lots will offer another option for a wide spectrum of income levels, particularly if rents in the newly restored historic buildings downtown run for a higher cost than what the local is used to paying. In other words, there should be room for all income levels supporting downtown.





DOWNTOWN VISION AND KEY GOALS

DOWNTOWN VISION AND KEY GOALS

OUR VISION

We intend to reclaim downtown as the cultural and commercial center of Marion, replacing terms like “neglected” and “gloomy” with “restored” and “vibrant.”

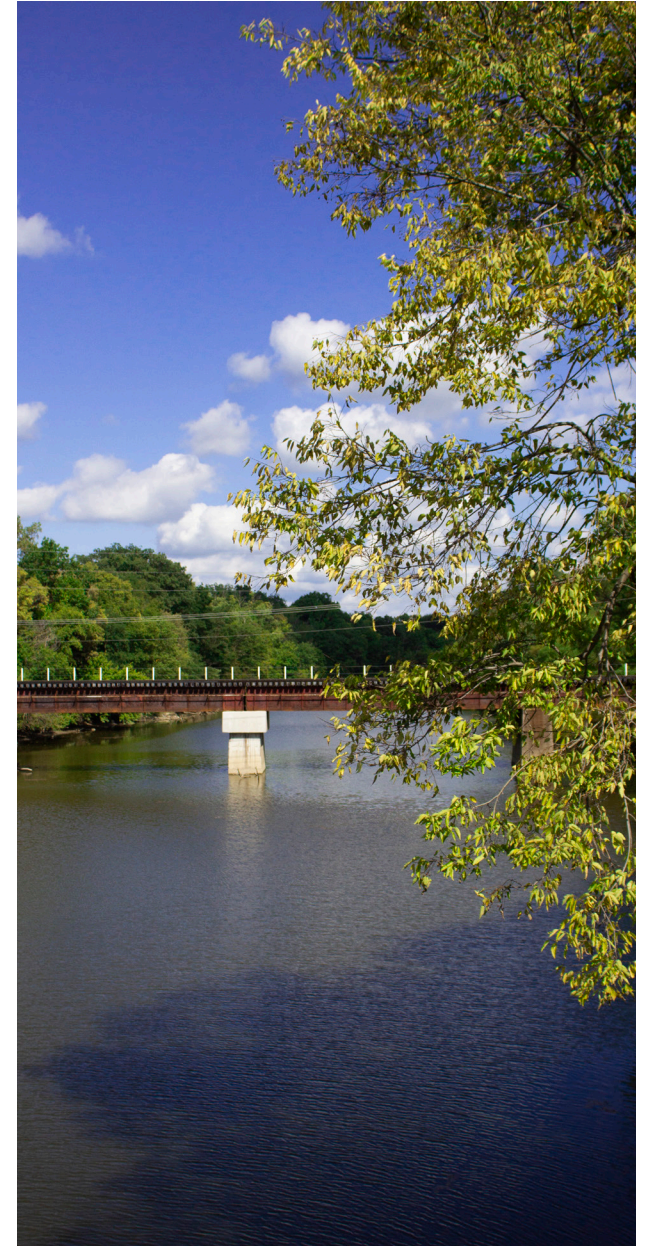
“We want to build something to take pride in,” one DRPC member said.

Although our plan looks ahead 5 to 10 years, keys elements of our vision are already underway. One major component is downtown as an arts and entertainment district. “We don’t want people to have to drive an hour for entertainment,” one team member said. We will build upon the existing foundation of local groups such as the Community School of the Arts, Marion Civic Theatre and Marion Philharmonic Orchestra.

A second key component is restoration of our historic buildings. Once again, pioneering work is already underway, including converting the long-abandoned Marion Bank Building into market rate apartments. Renovations can be seen all around the courthouse square.

The third key component is linking all our downtown gems with a bike/walk trail. The trail will start with a large public space on the riverfront and then thread past the cultural and commercial amenities before connecting to the Cardinal Greenway Rail-Trail.

Our plan emphasizes economic development and community engagement. Put simply, we want people downtown. Shoppers and visitors are crucial, but we’re also aiming for people to live in the central district. Our projects will create an environment where developers are willing to take a risk. We are focusing on amenities - urban hardscape and softscape spaces in a variety of sizes that are connected to trails and transportation networks; places where the citizens can gather, entertain and celebrate.



OUR GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The DRPC, after months of public input, determined the goals and measurable strategies that will help sustain our downtown business district. Broadly, the key goals are in the areas of:

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

We used the following table as a launching point for specific projects.

| MOST NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS | TOP DESIRED BUSINESS |
|--|--|
| 1. Property maintenance | 1. Restaurant (outdoor seating, open after 6pm, ethnic, upscale, steakhouse) |
| 2. Sidewalks/ Curbs | 2. Specialty Retail (open after 6 pm, shoe, art supply, hat, music, flower, jewelry) |
| 3. Vacant Homes | 3. YMCA |
| 4. Facade/ standards | 4. Home Business with no outside impact |
| 5. Crime (ex. drugs & vandalism) | 5. Night Life |
| 6. Streets (infrastructure) | 6. Mom & Pop Shops |
| 7. Parking (user friendly around courthouse) | 7. Clothing (men's / women's) |
| 8. City Ownership of properties/ upkeep | 8. Book store |
| 9. Occupancy of buildings | 9. Childcare |
| 10. Lights | 10. Grocery |

Economic Development: Provide employment opportunities and services to residents by aiding in business expansion and retention, while growing and recruiting new industries. Objectives include:

- **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.**

Housing: Another opportunity is the available building stock and vacant properties. Currently, most of the upper levels are empty or used as storage for the primary businesses.

City code needs to be changed to make it easier to convert these levels into condos and apartments. Once occupied, they would add permanent residents downtown looking for increased amenities and nightlife, which would attract more restaurants and retail. There are also a few pockets of vacant property where new mixed-use commercial, retail and residential development may be appropriate. A commonly identified area was from 5th to 10th Streets along Washington and Adams Streets.

Evening + Dining Opportunities: The current number of government and professional service employees downtown from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday thru Friday are an underutilized opportunity. Restaurants would have a large lunch crowd to cater to if they located downtown. Public seating should be provided to encourage outdoor dining. However, to encourage business and restaurants that cater to the dinner crowd, there needs to be activities downtown in the evening. Currently, The Civic Theater, CSA and multiple dance studios does a good job of doing so, but more evening activities and dining are needed.

Plaza Spaces: The parking lots located between the bridges could be turned into a plaza and festival space. This plaza would also provide a place for outdoor vendors when festivals and other activities are not taking place. Having this outdoor area would produce foot traffic and attract complimentary business to the space.

Embrace Mississinewa River: The Mississinewa River provides another opportunity, due to its strategic location through downtown Marion. To help attract restaurants and evening entertainment, a River District can be created. A river district is basically an invisible line drawn within a certain distance of the floodplain that allows for a greater availability and lower cost of liquor licenses. This would allow restaurants and taverns to purchase a liquor license at a cheaper price and encourage them to locate within a targeted area.

Trail Connections: The river also allows for a variety of recreational activities. The Riverwalk can be expanded to the Branson Street Bridge and on to Ballard Field, which would allow for a great public plaza, with the closing of First Street and the addition of Boardwalk-type railing along the river's edge. This continuation of the Riverwalk would provide a great opportunity to connect the Downtown to the Cardinal Greenway.

The most desired path is through downtown to the Cardinal Greenway and the Splash House. The area where Adams Street commences at the River would become a hub for local activities and help draw people off the greenway to the downtown. If a public plaza was created between Washington and Branson bridges, equipment rental and drink shops would become a more viable option.



Streetscape Improvements: 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.

Façade Restoration: This program will target structures near and around the courthouse square. Local business owners will be recruited to the process.

Signage: Downtown Marion has approximately 32 businesses with non-existent or inadequate signage to draw visitors. Attraction and visitor signage will be aesthetically pleasing, as well as informative.

Parking: One step is to work with the county to relocate employee vehicles to surrounding lots. By creating 2-hour parking (north of the courthouse), one of the first things that visitors traveling the main corridor of SR 18W will see is a large public parking lot. This lot should be well landscaped to preserve the height and definition of the square and paved in a transitional surface that can also be used as public plaza space when needed.

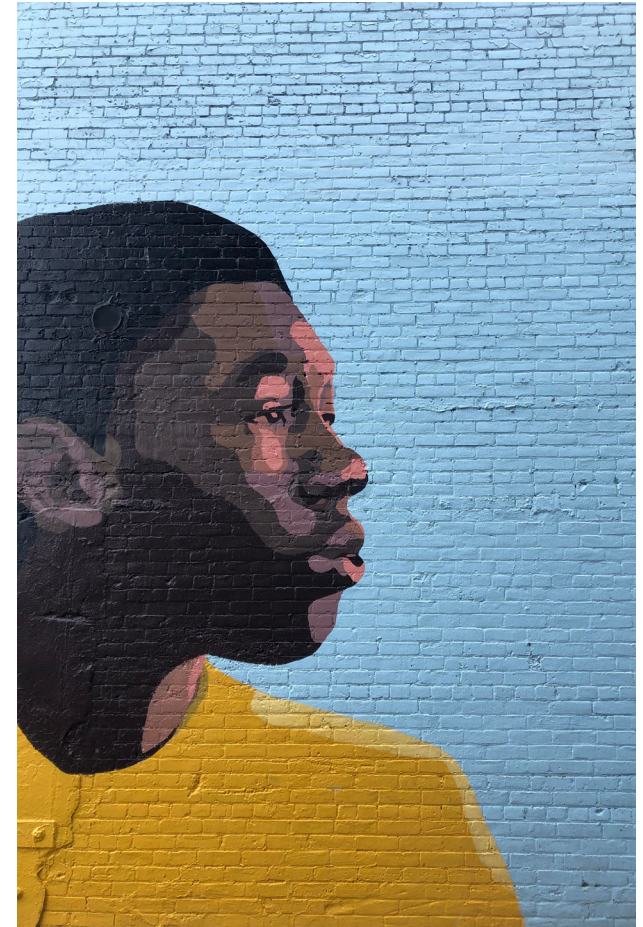
Bridge Improvements: Washington and Branson Streets have bridges across the Mississinewa River that allow both vehicles and pedestrians into and out of Downtown. However, the sidewalks along the bridges are not ADA accessible and are very dangerous in adverse weather.

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.

Traffic Study: 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 could be changed to two-way traffic. This project involves the conversions of intersections and roadways to allow for new traffic patterns.

Public Transportation Upgrades: 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.

ADA Improvements: Inventory and fix ADA accessibility violations throughout downtown, particularly along sidewalks, at street intersections, and at various public facilities or spaces. Strive to meet state and federally mandated accessibility requirements.





DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DOWNTOWN ACTION AGENDA

Downtown has more projects underway today than it has in decades - apartments, shops, restaurants; all the requisite activities for revitalization.

Will these businesses be successful? What type of store or service should come next? Approaches that answer these questions were discussed in the D1 Market Conditions, but can be summarized here by saying that the grand opening of new stores is terrific, but it's more important to the long-term vitality of the downtown to create a system that supports the success of new businesses.

The Downtown Action Agenda is a series of capacity-building projects that will ensure the district presents itself as an inviting place to do business, to shop and eat and to reside.

Main Street Marion (MSM) Priorities

- Because MSM went without a director for a period of time and it is now rebuilding, the organization is not financially stable, so resources must be directed toward fundraising. Therefore, any project that requires considerable resources must have the potential for a return on investment.
- The organization is still designing its overall vision and how it partners with other local groups. One goal is clear: "Have laser-like focus" on recruiting or developing new businesses.
- There are opportunities to work closer with existing local events such as Mississinewa1812, which draws 60,000 people.
- Agri-Tourism might also offer partnership and programming opportunities.



MAIN STREET MARION ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS

Action Step - Complete Application for Main Street Revitalization Program Construction Grant:

One of the main goals of this planning process has been to prepare the community for applying for the MSRP construction grant. The revitalization team has been working with a grant administrator on preparing the application.

Action Step - Develop a Main Street workplan:

This document details enough goals, objectives, strategies and plans to consume many years of work, but MSM staff and volunteers must gauge their current resources and then prioritize steps for the next six months, 12 months, etc. Fortunately, MSM is partnering with OCRA for a community development pilot project, which will help the community keep revitalization efforts on track.

Action Step - Road Trips:

Nothing fires up the imagination and optimism more than seeing success stories from other similar sized Indiana towns. For example, nearby Converse (population 1,148) landed the new Jefferson Street BBQ Restaurant after doing a downtown plan, which draws people from around the region. Farmland (population 1,333), offers a virtual playbook on downtown restoration (learn more at <https://www.facebook.com/HistoricFarmlandUSA>). Kirklin reinvented itself as an antique center and attracted a great new restaurant.

Another great resource is OCRA's Main Street Exchanges. These gatherings allow various community leaders to learn from their peers about best practices.

The remaining 2019 schedule is:

- Oct. 11, in Crawfordsville
- Dec. 6, in Pendleton



ACTION ITEMS REQUIRING BROAD COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Action Step - Increase the number of people living downtown in lofts, apartments, and hotel rooms:

This demographic shift will not only fill the underused upper-story floors and empty lots on Main Street, it will also create around-the-clock customers for downtown restaurants, shops and services.

Having more people live downtown sounds like a great idea, but it raises the question: Why aren't they living there now? What are the barriers? Removing potential roadblocks to residential development downtown, in addition to creating new housing incentives, will speed up Marion's revitalization, entice new developers and bring in permanent residents.

Steps:

1. Zoning:

- a. Review zoning ordinances: Residential units may not be a permitted use in the zoning districts applied to the downtown. Amending current ordinances would also ensure density, lot size, floor area, building height and other requirements can be met for intended redevelopment uses. Updating zoning and permitting would simplify the development process by minimizing the required approvals or variances.
- b. Rezone to a mixed-use live/work space or other appropriate zoning district.

2. Parking:

- a. Assess current minimum parking requirements: Make sure that on-site and off-site parking is not difficult, cost prohibitive, or too far away to be useful.
- b. Reduce or waive parking requirements for projects that meet city-defined objectives, and for current/future residents.

3. Make downtown housing affordable:

- a. Reduced fees: reduction or waiver of permitting fees for projects that meet city-defined objectives.
- b. Loan programs: grants, low-interest loans, and revolving loan programs for residents.
- c. Tax incentives: tax credits, deductions, or abatements; TIF funds where applicable.

4. Review current permit and impact fees, as well as code compliance to encourage the redevelopment of downtown buildings.

5. Create a robust marketing strategy to fight any public misperceptions about living downtown, especially since Marion hasn't had a downtown population for some time.

6. Form a downtown liaison to keep building owners, tenants and trade professionals informed about codes, ordinances, and other regulatory issues.

This project sheet along with the other proposals are intertwined and mutually inclusive.

Downtown residents will be enticed by the full package of cultural and natural amenities, activities and events and healthy lifestyle that they will enjoy just by living downtown.

Action Step - Form a Business Development Team:

If a “laser-like focus” on recruiting or developing new businesses is a primary goal, then it’s key to remember that sustained, new business development will not be accomplished without a group of action-oriented problem solvers.

Training for the team might be needed, but start with a group of 5-7, which might include:

- **Established (and retired) business owners**
- **Local real estate professionals**
- **Current building owners who are interested in exploring various uses for their property**
- **Bankers**
- **Local entrepreneurship and development organization representatives**
- **Elected officials**
- **Representatives from MSM, City Hall, GCEGC, etc.**

When it comes time to begin recruiting, the community should keep in mind the four basic arenas to lure new businesses from:

- **Local business owners who want to expand**
- **Entrepreneurs**
- **Branch offices of nearby, larger businesses**
- **National or regional chain stores**

Action Step - Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses:

This is a fundamental concept of economic development: before searching for new businesses, first determine the goals and problems of existing business owners. For example, is any local business owner planning to retire or move soon? Maybe a local business is thinking about expanding?

There are many creative and inspiring examples of business owners experimenting with new enterprises. Again, referring to Converse, the owner of the successful Jefferson Street BBQ started by selling handmade soap, but saw an opportunity to try something new.

Action Step - Create an Entrepreneurial Roundtable:

This is a crucial step in nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit already at work in Marion. What kind of support is needed? An entrepreneur’s chances of success increase with their mastery of these three skills:

1. Providing items or services that people want at a price they’re willing to pay.
2. Marketing themselves, not only through ads and social media but also by setting the right store hours, strategic co-marketing partnerships with other local businesses, etc.
3. Managing the money, including raising capital, balancing debt, knowing when to hire new staff, etc.



Action Step - Recruit:

Start by preparing simple marketing material, including content from this report, about available buildings, incentives, marketing data, traffic patterns, etc. An attractive document prepared for the Fall 2018 Developer's Tour of Available Buildings might serve as a foundation.

Other materials might include:

- **Letter of introduction including compelling reasons to consider your district**
- **General information and photos of the community highlighting its assets**
- **Wish list of new businesses supported by market demand and supply data**
- **New developments demonstrating investment downtown**

After you've prepared the marketing materials, join in the time-honored tradition of "borrowing" businesses you want from other communities. When you see a micro-brew, dentist, restaurant, etc., located in a similar community, visit or send them information about Marion. Follow-up with a call.

Action Step - Build Public-Private

Partnerships:

In small towns across America, large and idle buildings present a high hurdle to new investment and revitalization. When the private sector can't or won't act, but the community cherishes an iconic historic building, local leaders must act to preserve and leverage the asset. Controlling real estate gives a community control over its assets.

Often, this means that local leaders (Main Street, city council) must assume the role of property owner/developer and then work with the private sector to transition keystone properties into sustainable business enterprises.

These are complex transactions requiring the services of architects, accountants, lawyers and funders, but they are routinely being done. This is particularly true if the programs listed above (fully formed Main Street, entrepreneurial roundtable, etc.) are already in place. More information on these partnerships (along with a treasure trove of other guides) can be found on the National Main Street group's member site, www.mainstreet.org.



Action Step - Build Regional Partners into your Future:

State agencies have been pushing a regional approach to economic development, including the Regional Cities Initiative and their decision to convert the Stellar program from grants for single communities to regional or grouped communities.

This relatively new state initiative is logical: joining forces with other communities maximizes limited resources associated with small communities. Collaborating and working together increases everyone's chance of prospering. Regionalism can take many forms, from promoting each other's events to pooling money for projects.

There is plenty of precedence for this locally, including The Garfield Trail and James Dean Trail, but there are always new and creative possibilities to explore.

Action Step - Lead Community Discussions:

As revitalization efforts gain steam in Marion, there are several topics worth discussing with a wider cross-section of the community. The Main Street group will need buy-in from the city council and others to really make progress.

Possible topics for discussion include:

- **The pros and cons of creating design guidelines and standards for downtown buildings.**
- **How a façade program might function for downtown.**
- **How to protect against gentrification in the central business district and surrounding neighborhoods.**

Action Step - Pursue Smaller Grants:

Marion intends to pursue a Main Street Revitalization Program (MSRP) grant from OCRA to tackle big ticket items such as streetscapes and downtown infrastructure rehabilitation. However, there are also smaller grants that can help keep things moving forward.

A list of possible funding sources is in the appendix, but some programs include:

- **Downtown Enhancement Grants**
- **Historic Renovation Grant Program**
- **CreAtINgPlaces**
- **EfroymsonFamily Endangered Places Grants**



MARION VISIONING RATIONALE

Simply stated, people make downtowns successful. This means people living, recreating, and working downtown.

Historically, this is why downtown Marion developed and was the heart of the City for nearly a century. Unfortunately, like other communities throughout Indiana and across the country, downtown Marion has been battling to maintain its people and to stabilize and rejuvenate itself. This struggle began in the 1970s and can be primarily attributed to automobile oriented development which increased the convenience of commuting and drove businesses, housing, and residents away from the City's core and to the outskirts of the community. The State Road 9 upgrade ultimately became the single most influential factor contributing to the decline of the downtown.

With the exception of the Courthouse Square, many formerly active blocks have been reduced to asphalt parking lots intended to accommodate automobiles to support the remaining, struggling businesses. As buildings have been razed and historic structures lost, so too has much of the friendly pedestrian scale and density that historically made the downtown an attractive place. The resultant domino effect has created a pattern and rhythm of decline that has been a struggle to correct.

Fortunately, current trends regionally and nationally are providing for renewed interest in our nation's downtowns. People, young and old, are being drawn back to urban centers and the more traditional development that downtowns such as Marion's once offered....the friendly density and scale, walkability, entertainment and retail opportunities. The effects of this are evidenced by the downtown investment taking place on a level that hasn't been seen for several decades.

While this is excellent news for Marion, this does not mean that redevelopment will occur naturally without strategic intervention. Just like other similar-sized downtowns have declined throughout the State and Country, Marion's downtown is now competing with communities statewide for redevelopment.



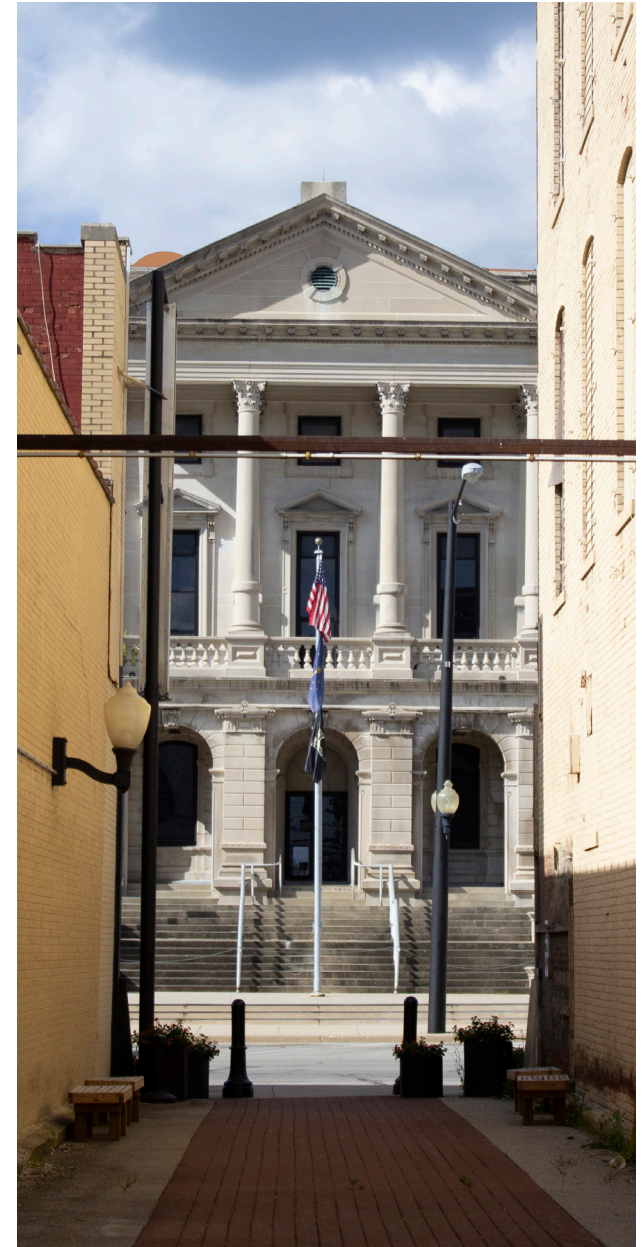
This begs the question, “What is the key for attracting redevelopment to Marion?” Well, in addition to restoring historic buildings and constructing new infill, creating programs and incentives that support existing businesses, and attract new ones, this means creating amenities that are unique to the community and compelling enough for a developer/entrepreneur/business person to risk investing their money in to the community. This does not mean simply providing basic infrastructure such as newly paved streets, sidewalks, adequate lighting, and storm and sanitary sewers; any community can offer these items.

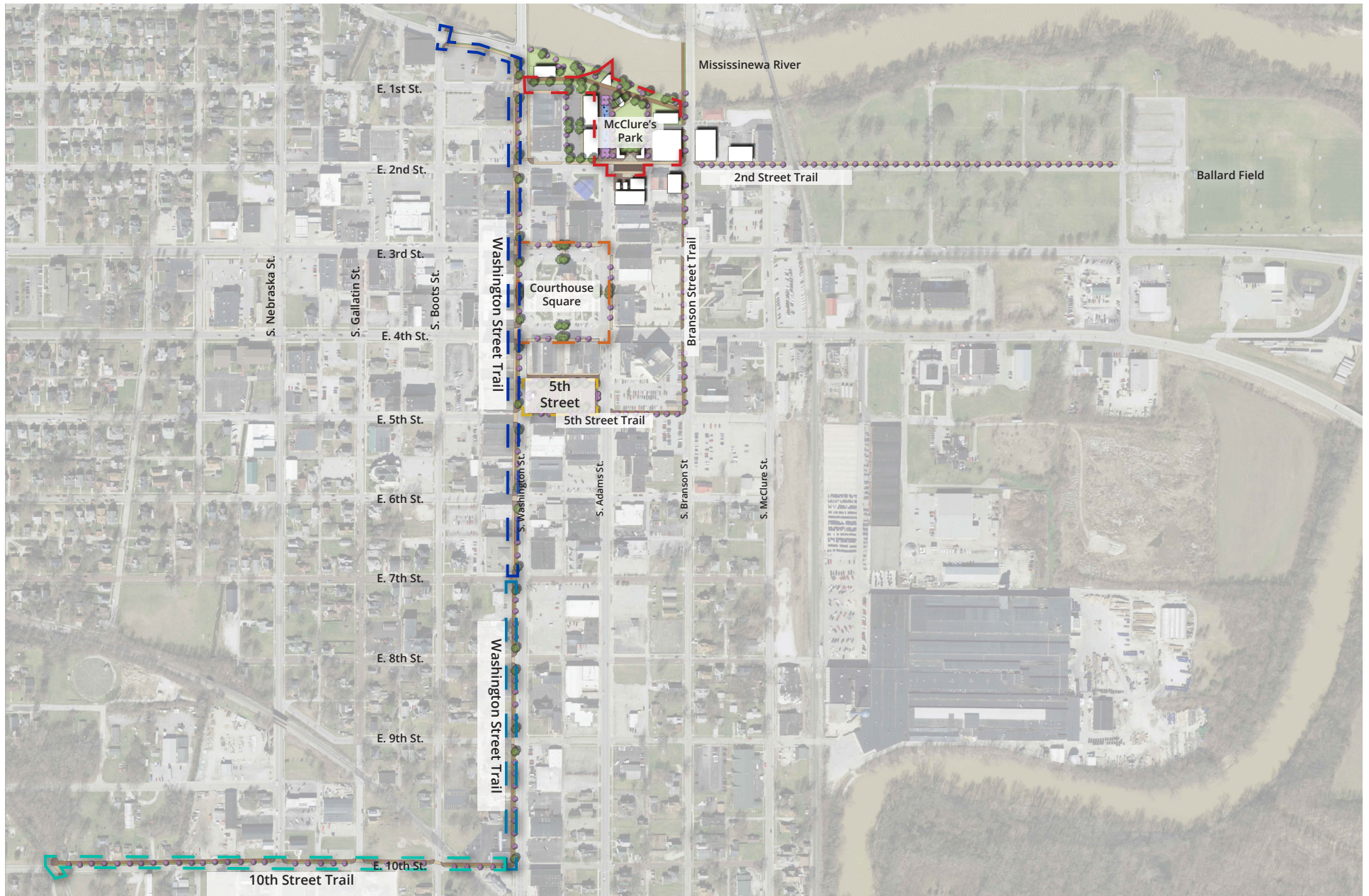
This means creating an “amenity infrastructure” within downtown. Simply put, an amenity infrastructure is a network of pedestrian open spaces, streetscapes, cultural assets, and popular destinations linked by a non-motorized trail system. Gathering spaces within the network can be programmed with events, festivals, and gatherings that are active throughout the year. It means creating the quality of life improvements that ultimately attract people to want to live, recreate, and work in the downtown.

Fortunately, Marion has many great assets to begin with. Space downtown is available and excessive parking creates opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Large street right-of-ways provide space that allows for on-street parking, trails, and on-street retail and dining space. Cultural assets are abundant and include the County Courthouse, downtown restaurants, businesses, churches, and the library among others.

In addition, natural and recreational amenities near the downtown are abundant. People are naturally attracted to water and the Mississinewa River, although largely ignored currently, flanks the downtown on the north and east within a few blocks of the courthouse square. This major waterway offers regional connections and recreational opportunities that are unique opportunities for the City.

Located on the banks of the Mississinewa River, Ballard Field is located immediately adjacent to the east side of the downtown and provides opportunity for organized sports and passive recreation. Additionally, the downtown is within close proximity of the Cardinal Greenway, a regional greenway connecting communities throughout Indiana, and which is planned to be a part of the larger Great American Rail-Trail which will ultimately travel from Washington D.C. to Seattle, Washington.





Design Projects

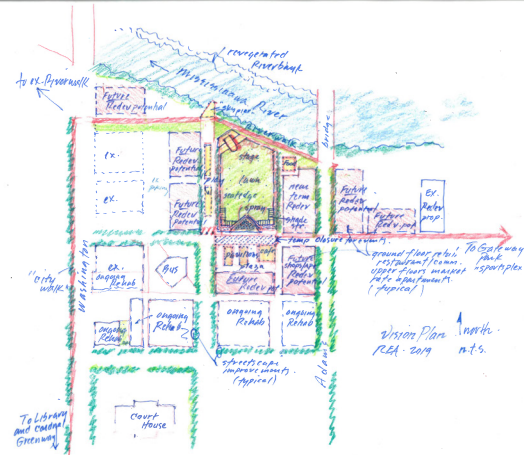
The previously listed Action Steps will go a long way toward revitalizing downtown, but they are mostly “behind the scenes” projects. Equally important are the physical improvements that are needed. This means creating an “amenity infrastructure” of downtown gathering spaces that can be programmed with events, festivals, and gatherings that are active throughout the year. It means linking these spaces with trails that connect the cultural assets of the community and capitalize on the City’s natural assets. It means creating the quality of life improvements that attract people to want to live, recreate, and work in the downtown.

The goal now is to capitalize on these aforementioned assets and to create new ones that help strengthen and improve the amenity infrastructure. Doing so will build on the existing synergy in Marion’s downtown redevelopment and create the compelling reason for continued, new development and investment within the downtown.

Outlined within the following pages are a series of amenity infrastructure projects that seek to do just that. While these projects represent significant public investment, economic research and case studies indicate the private investment return will far outweigh the initial project cost.

First steps for each of these projects will be very similar and will include:

- Discuss project goals with stakeholders (i.e. property owners, business owners, investors, general public, etc.)
- Commission design professionals to assist in the public space design.
- Refine project budgets based on schematic design.
- Fund raise and/or allocate funds.
- Prepare construction documents.
- Market projects/community to investors.
- Construct projects



Amenity infrastructure projects recommended for completion include:

- McClure Park: A new downtown gathering space on the banks of the Mississinewa River capable of hosting several thousand people for programmed events.
- 5th St. Commons Improvements: Functional and aesthetic enhancements to an existing parking lot currently used for downtown gatherings of several hundred people.
- Courthouse Square Improvements: Traffic calming, pedestrian lighting, and landscape enhancements to improve the core downtown’s aesthetic and repair failing infrastructure.
- Washington St. Trail: A new bicycle and pedestrian facility connecting the Mississinewa River, proposed McClure Park, 5th St. Commons, and downtown businesses to the library and proposed 10th St. Trail.
- 10th St. Trail: A new bicycle and pedestrian facility connecting the Washington St. Trail to the Cardinal Greenway, local churches, and redevelopment opportunities along the way.
- 5th St./Branson St. Trail: A new bicycle and pedestrian facility connecting McClure Park, the Washington St. Trail, 5th St. Commons, and Mississinewa River to one another.
- 2nd St. Trail: A new bicycle and pedestrian facility connecting Ballard Field to the Branson St. Trail and McClure Park.



Performance Lawn and Spray Plaza



Spray Plaza and Public Art



McCLURE PARK

Project Description:

An expanse of underutilized property sits on the banks of the Mississinewa River, located a block north of the Courthouse Square and immediately adjacent to the City's primary bus transportation hub. Redeveloped into an urban park, this gathering space would be capable of hosting large, programmed events that could attract thousands of residents and visitors to Downtown Marion.

Designed to attract individuals and families of all socio-economic backgrounds, recommended features of the park would include a performance stage, flexible gathering lawn, cafe(s), shade structures, spray plaza, botanical display, playgrounds, scenic river overlook, and a riverwalk.

The riverwalk would connect to the proposed Washington St. and Branson St. trail systems. This would link destinations including Ballard Field, the Courthouse Square, the River, 5th St. Commons, the library, residential neighborhoods, and ultimately link up with the Cardinal Greenway.

One can easily imagine farmer's markets, evening concerts, 4th of July celebrations, weddings, and other similar activities occurring regularly in this space.

As evidenced by similar developments in other communities throughout the country and State, an amenity such as this park would be a primary attraction for a developer looking to invest in housing and retail opportunities. The amount of underutilized property surrounding the parcel would also be a major attraction.

Critical to the success of the park would be ensuring the appropriate type of development immediately adjacent to the park. In order to achieve the walkability, friendly density and scale, and overall potential of the park, adjacent buildings should be sited immediately next to the park. Recommended development would include multiple stories with lower levels being dedicated to retail and commercial space, while upper floors would be dedicated to a variety of housing options. New structures should be a minimum of (3) stories in height and not exceed (5) stories. The roofs of the new structures could be outfitted with rooftop gardens, bars, and other attractions that, in conjunction with apartment balconies below, could overlook the park. Parking would be separate from the park and could occur underground, in above-ground parking structures, and on adjacent streets.

Bicycle parking would be readily available at the perimeter of the park and enhanced pedestrian connections would be made to the adjacent bus station.

A park such as this would complement the activities of 5th St. Commons, providing an anchor to the north side of downtown reinforced by the River.

Project Budget:

\$6 - 8 million.



*Riverwalk & Redevelopment
Greenville, SC*



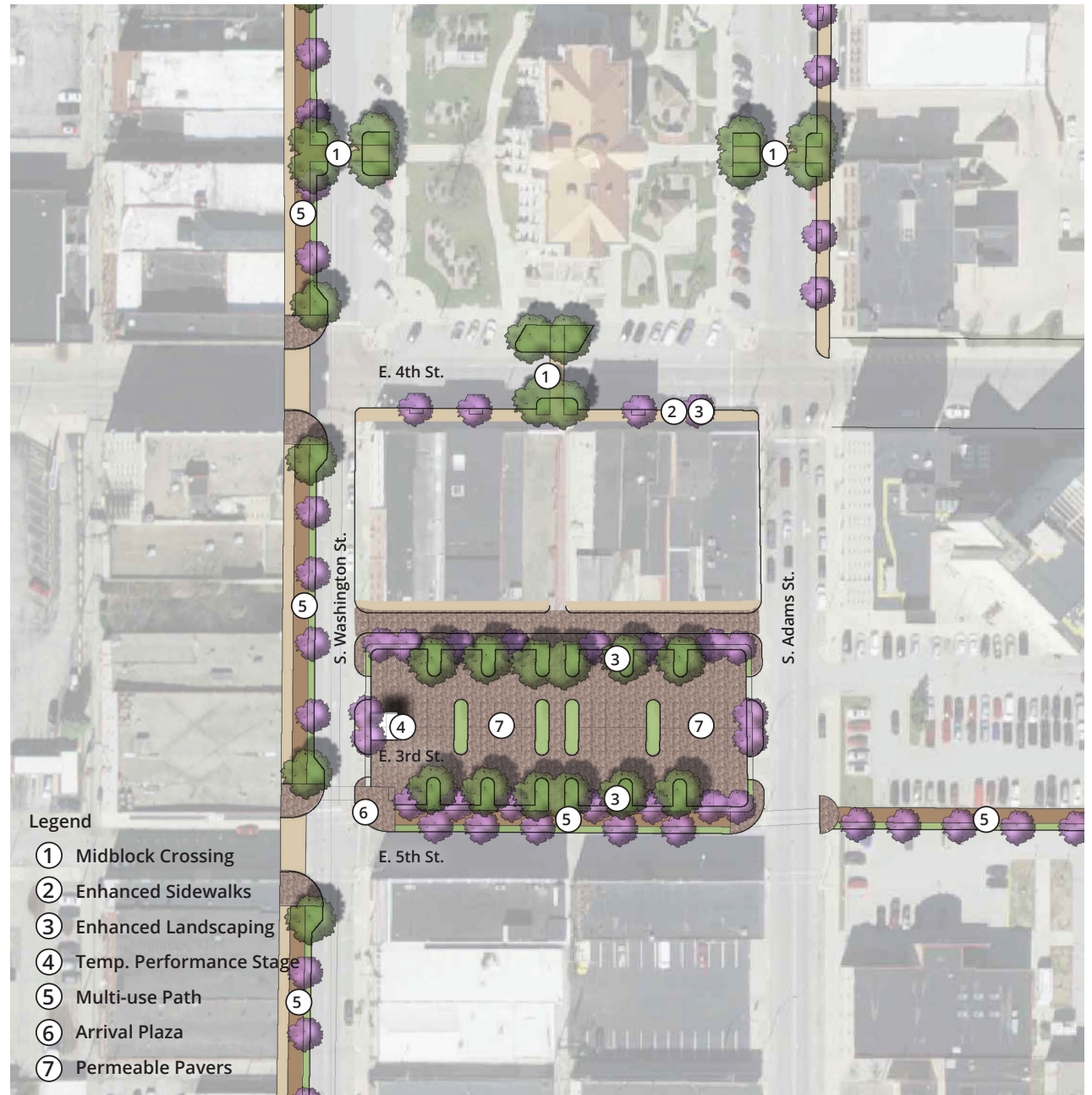
*Pittsburgh Strip District & Riverfront Trail
Pittsburgh, PA*



Farmer's Market
Jack Elstro Plaza, Richmond, IN



Midblock Crossing & Street Fair
Prairie Street Brewery, San Antonio, TX



5th STREET COMMONS IMPROVEMENTS

Project Description:

Serving as the downtown's community gathering space, 5th St. Commons is a parking lot located a half block south of the Courthouse Square. Hosting events such as farmer's markets and concert series, 5th St. Commons is regularly activated and brings hundreds of patrons to the downtown during an event.

In an effort to expand the space's success, recommended improvements include additional utility infrastructure, permeable pavers, and additional landscaping. Additional utilities would support concerts, food trucks, and other activities. Additional landscaping and the replacement of asphalt pavement with permeable pavers would improve the aesthetics of the space while reducing the urban heat island effect and allowing for the implementation of green infrastructure.

Furthermore, bike parking would be provided and direct connections would be made to the proposed, adjacent Washington St. and 5th St. Trails. Pedestrian improvements to the north/south alley would provide a direct connection to the Courthouse Square. The east/west alley immediately north of 5th St. Commons would be improved to expand the capacity of the park and offer opportunities for ancillary activities such as food trucks and staging.

Improvements to this southern anchor of the downtown in conjunction with the development of McClure Park as the northern anchor of the downtown would provide multiple spaces capable of hosting events that would complement one another. At any given time of the year, concurrent events could be held at each of these spaces that would be easily accessible via the urban trail system.

This activity through the downtown would support and encourage redevelopment between these two spaces.

Project Budget:

\$500,000 - \$800,000



Performance Lawn Concert Series



Permeable Pavers



Wayfinding & Streetscape Plantings



Stormwater Planters & Downtown Landscaping



COURTHOUSE SQUARE IMPROVEMENTS

Project Description:

The Courthouse Square, for purposes of this project, is defined as the courthouse structure, surrounding grounds, and immediately adjacent streets and buildings, and is comprised of expansive right-of-ways, on-street parking, and mostly intact historic structures and blocks.

Fortunate to be the county seat for Grant County, the historic and architecturally significant courthouse is sited at the genesis of downtown Marion. Attracting hundreds of people to the downtown on a daily basis to conduct business, this structure and civic place has served an integral role in the history and development of the city.

While the Courthouse Square remains the nucleus of activity in the downtown, is comprised of the most concentrated amenities in the city, and is arguably the most friendly scale and walkable mixed-use district in the community, retail businesses continue to struggle and housing opportunities are limited.

The development of the amenity infrastructure and quality of life improvements described within this chapter will attract new people, interest, and investment to the core of the downtown. For this reason, it is important for the City of Marion to make public investment in the Courthouse Square infrastructure.

Recommended improvements to the Courthouse Square include: conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets to increase business exposure and decrease traffic speed; resurfacing of existing roadways; infill of old, abandoned steam tunnels; addition of street trees and plantings; installation of new bike racks, benches, lighting, and other site furnishings; development of mid-block crossings and alley improvements to increase connectivity in all directions; and implementation of traffic calming techniques such as curb bump-outs, lane narrowing, speed limit reduction, and others to slow down traffic on adjacent roads, specifically the state roads, and to reduce noise.

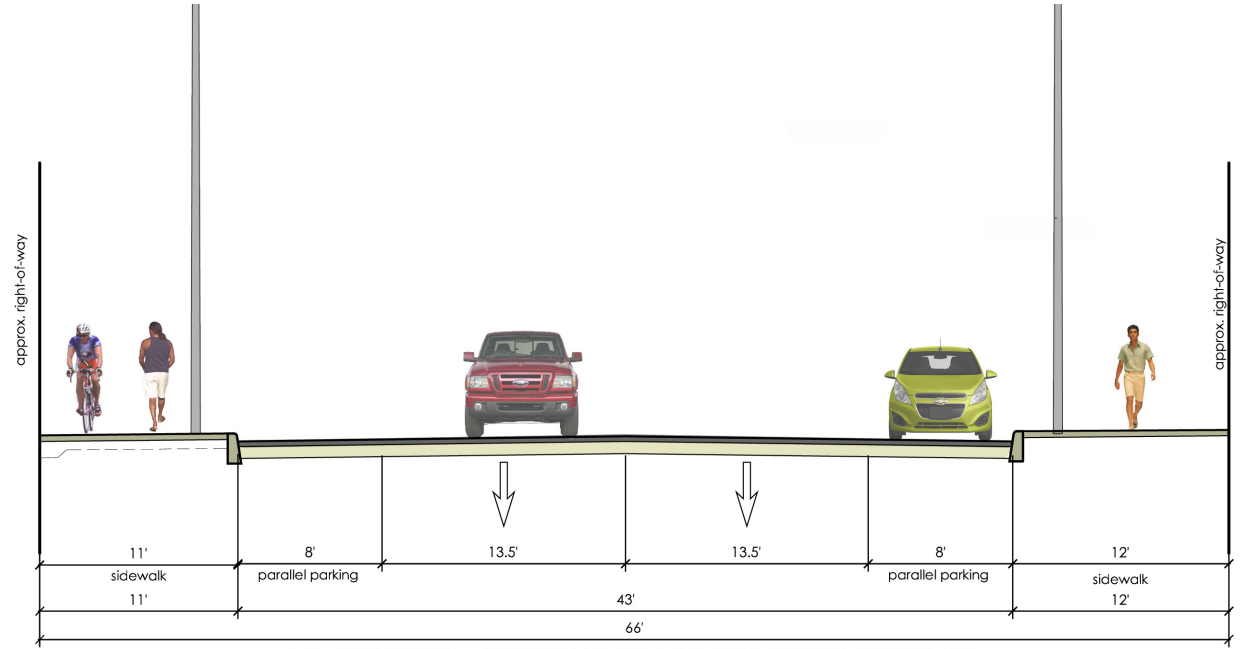
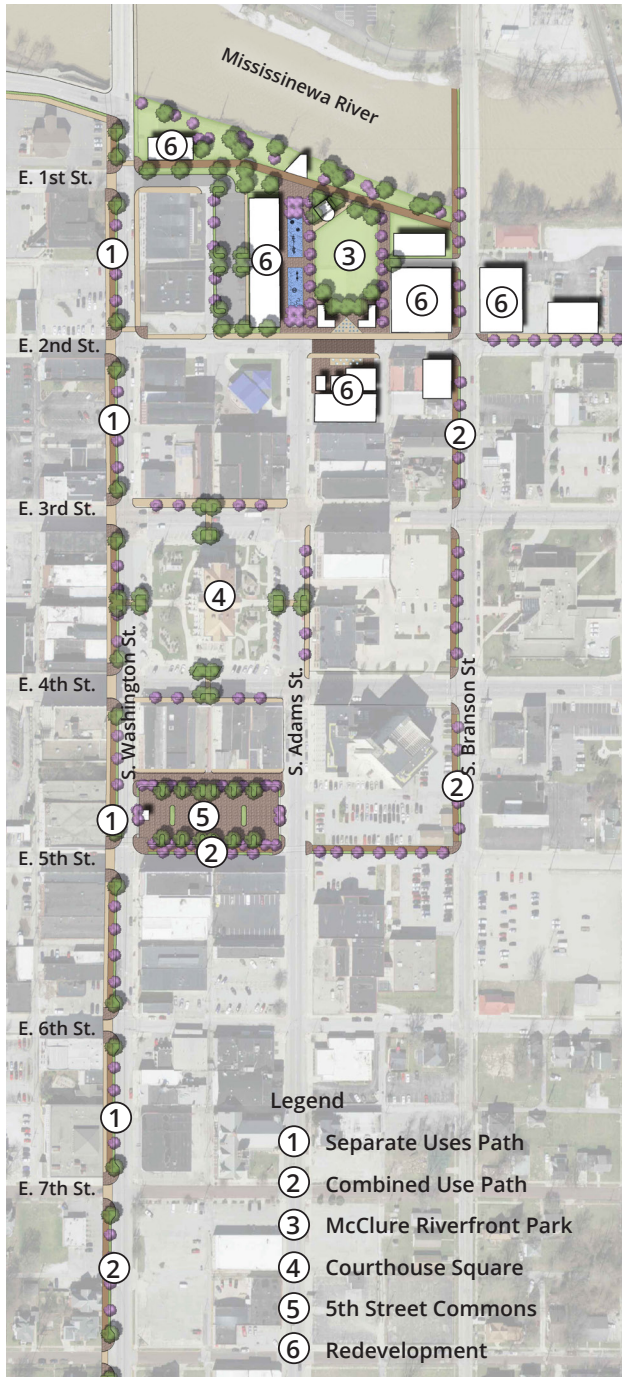
Implementation of these recommended improvements in coordination with the other suggested, amenity infrastructure projects, will improve quality of life and help create an environment that people want to be a part of. As this happens and more people are present downtown, private investment will follow and lead to sustainable business and housing options in the downtown core.

Project Budget:

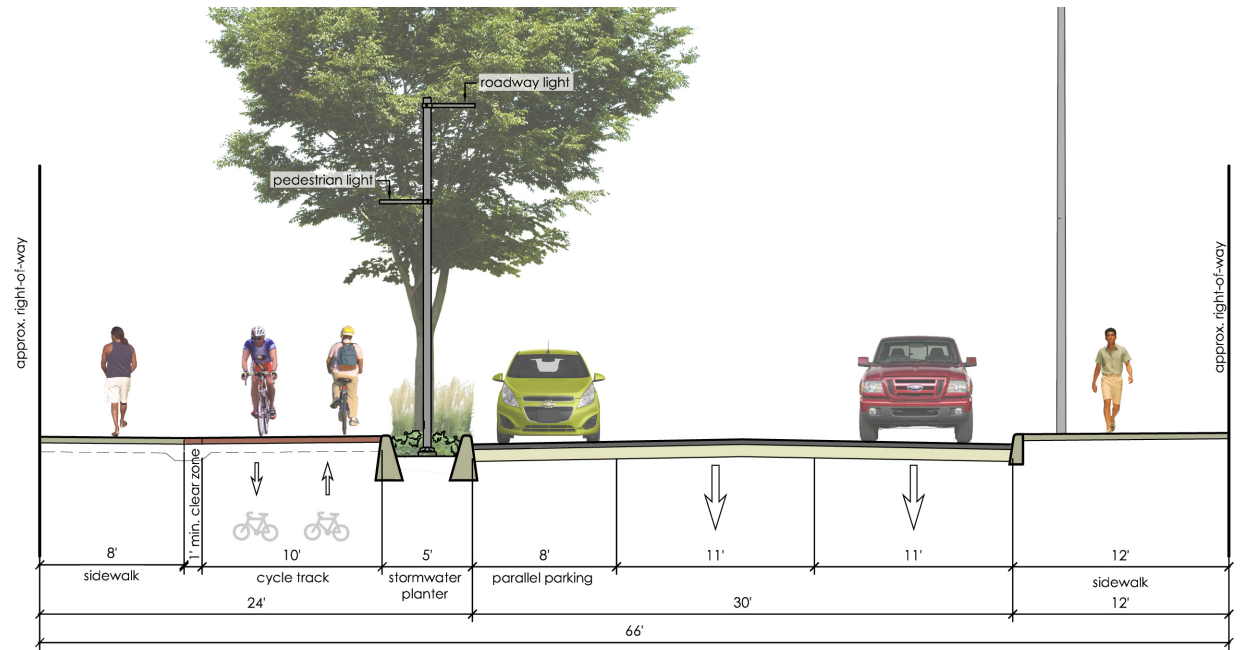
\$700,000 - \$2.5 million



Complete Streetscape



WASHINGTON STREET NORTH OF 7TH STREET (EXISTING)



WASHINGTON STREET NORTH OF 7TH STREET (SEPARATED USE)

WASHINGTON ST. TRAIL

Project Description:

Creating an urban trail network within a community is a key ingredient in an amenity infrastructure plan. While an urban trail is an amenity in and of itself, it is also the conduit that physically links all of the other individual amenities within a city.

As a national trend geared towards healthy living and community interaction, individuals and families alike are seeking alternative modes of transportation from automobiles such as urban trails. People want to be able to safely and comfortably commute through a community on foot and bicycle. When these systems are able to connect to larger, regional systems, the trails become even more successful and create regional tourism opportunities. Additionally, statistical data has shown that facilities such as these raise property values and encourage economic development.

Within Marion, numerous amenities are connected by the Washington St. corridor. These include the Mississinewa River, the portion of the community north of the river, the proposed McClure Park, the existing and proposed riverwalk, downtown, the library, Courthouse Square, 5th St. Commons and other governmental offices among other items of interest.

For this reason, it is recommended that Washington St. be considered one of the first and primary corridors for implementing the urban trail system.

Implementing a successful trail takes careful planning and design to ensure that it is safe and user-friendly. Within the downtown area, specifically between the River Walk at the north and 7th St. on the south, a separated trail is recommended along the west side of the street.

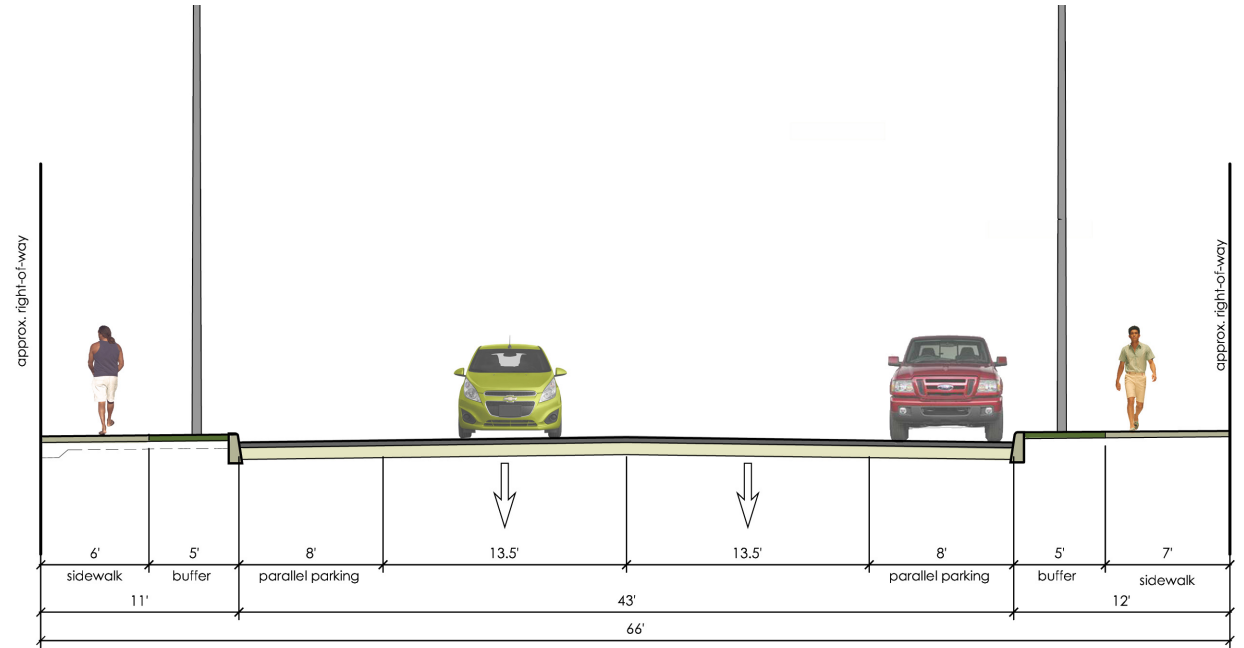
Essentially, a separated trail means separating bicyclists from pedestrians. This is an important consideration in high volume areas and commercial and retail districts where development occurs immediately adjacent to the right-of-way. For example, it would not be comfortable to have a bicycle trail immediately adjacent to a restaurant or retail store where a person opening the door could be clipped by a cyclist. A separate, pedestrian sidewalk should be located immediately adjacent to the building to act as a buffer between the businesses and bicycle facility.



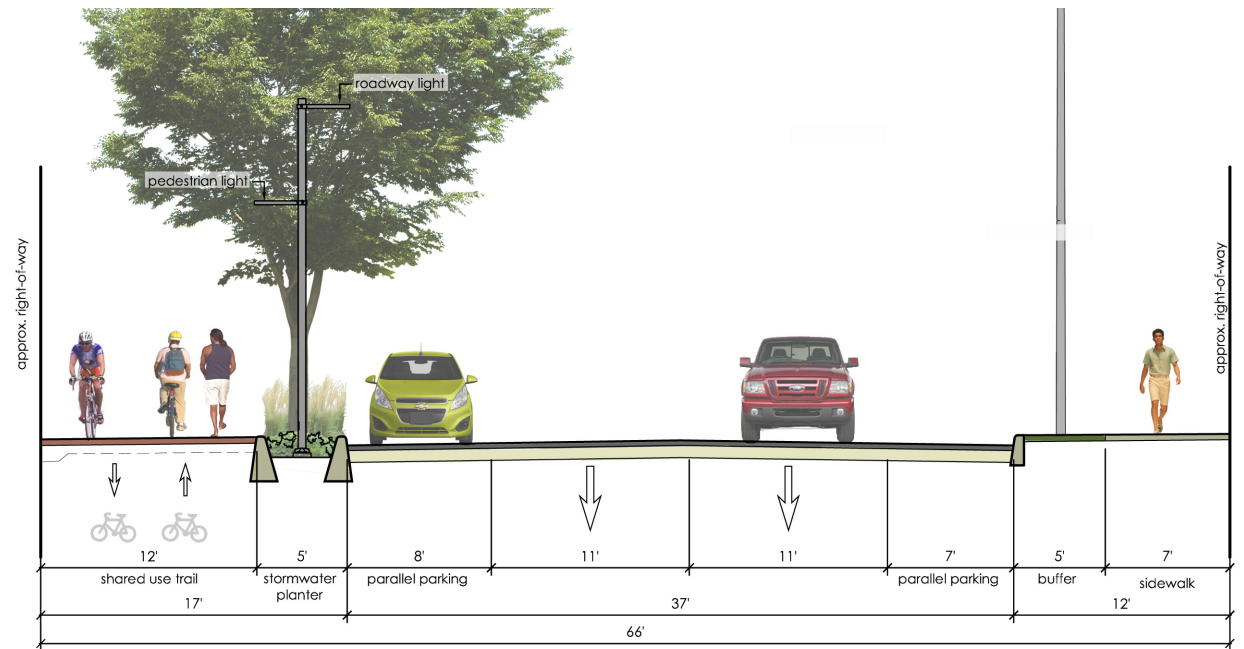
Separated Trail



Separated Trail



WASHINGTON STREET SOUTH OF 7TH STREET (EXISTING)



WASHINGTON STREET SOUTH OF 7TH STREET (SHARED USE)

WASHINGTON ST. TRAIL (cont.)

South of 7th St. and extending to 10th St., the density drops off and housing and business development is further set back from the right of way line. In this stretch of Washington St., a combined use, or shared use, trail would be effective along the west side of the street. Essentially, these types of trails are used by pedestrians and cyclists concurrently.

In addition to the general layout of the trail, consideration should be given to its materiality. If the trail is unique and utilizes unique materials such as pavers and unique lighting, it will become intuitive to the user when they are on the trail system, regardless of where they are in the community. Consideration should also be given to wayfinding and branding signage, signalization, intersection treatments, traffic calming, public art, landscaping, and implementation of green infrastructure components such as stormwater planters. Specific to Washington St. and the Courthouse Square area, existing, abandoned steam tunnels will need to be surveyed, investigated, and dealt with accordingly.

It is also recommended that early conversations begin with adjacent trail property owners to make them aware of the project, fully understand any concerns or special considerations they may have, and to garner public support.

As with all amenity infrastructure project, good communication with stakeholders throughout the process is critical to the overall project success.

Project Budget:

Separated Use Trail: \$2.5 - \$3.5 million

-River to 7th Street

Shared Use Trail: \$1 - \$2 million

-7th Street to 10th Street

Total: \$3.5 - 5.5 million.



Combined Use Trail



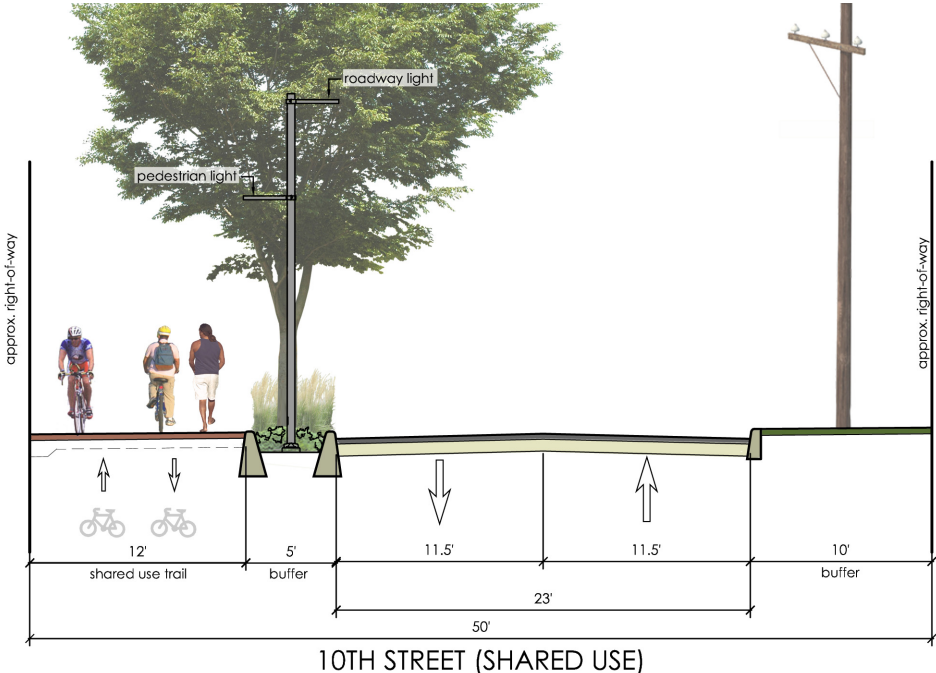
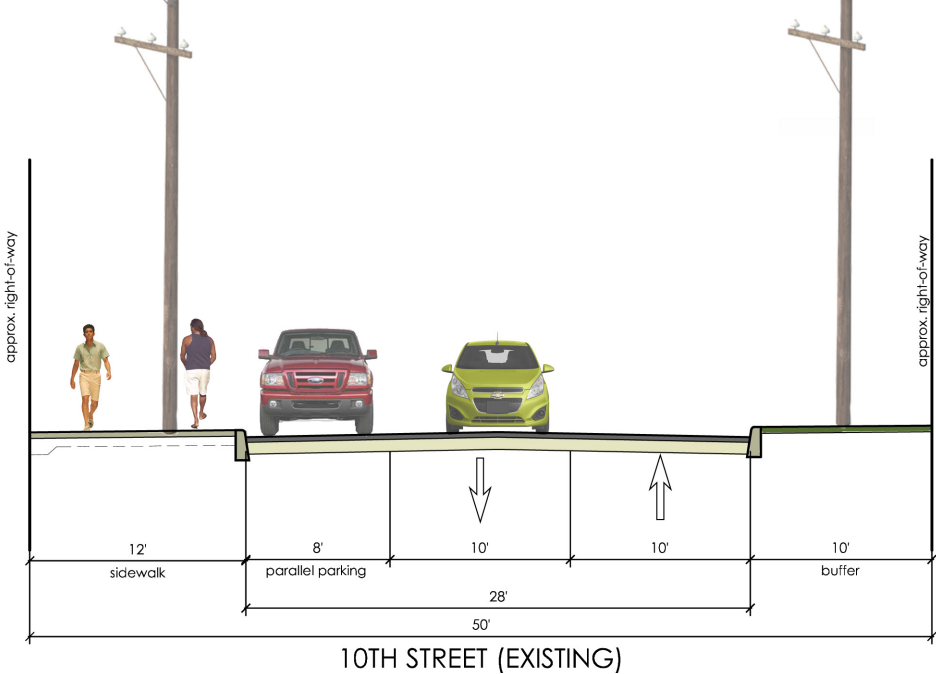
Combined Use Trail



Combined Use Trail & Trailhead



Combined Use Trail



10th STREET TRAIL

Project Description:

10th St. Trail should also be considered one of the first and primary corridors for implementation of the urban trail.

10th St. provides the critical link to the regional trail system, the Cardinal Greenway. Additionally, restaurants, churches, and residential neighborhoods are located along 10th St. and vacant and underutilized property provides opportunity for redevelopment.

Because of the relatively low density and buildings being set back from the right-of-way, a combined, or shared use, trail is recommended for this segment along the north side of the roadway.

Due to variations in the right of ways and parcel line alignments, some right of way acquisition may be needed along this corridor. It is recommended that coordination with property owners begin early to raise awareness and garner public support.

Design of this trail segment should be done in coordination with the rest of the urban trail system to create an easily identifiable and intuitive experience.

Project Budget:

\$1.8 - 2.5 million.



5TH STREET/BRANSON STREET TRAIL

Project Description:

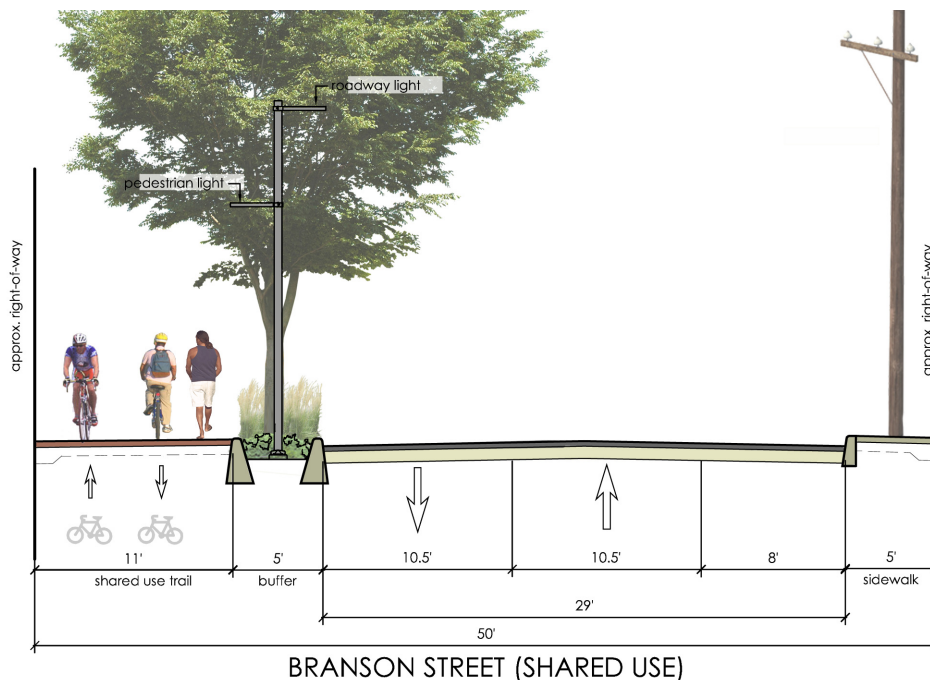
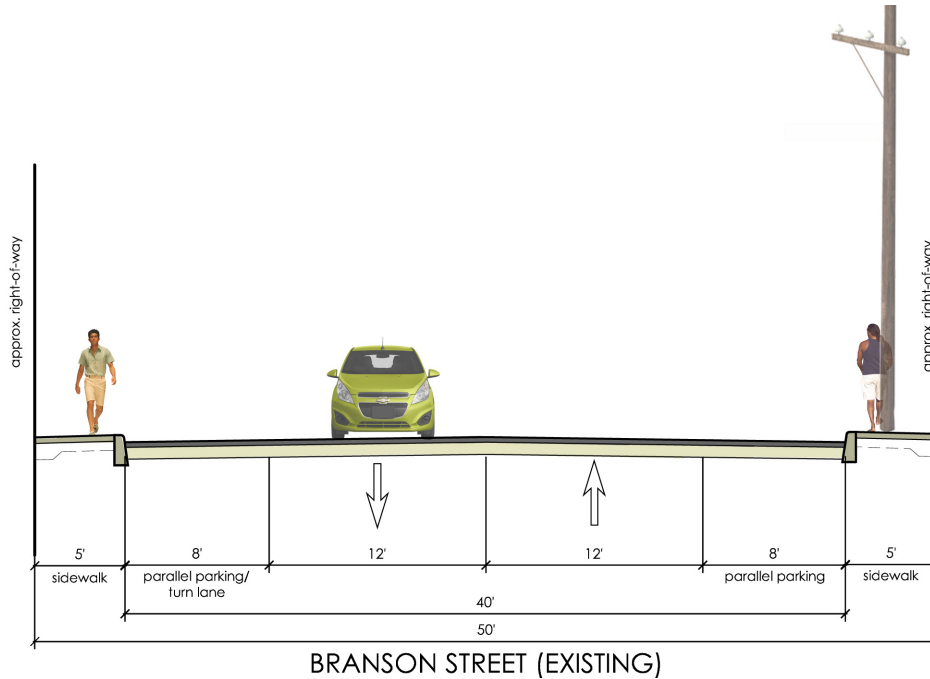
Secondary corridors for the urban trail system are 5th Street from Washington St. to Branson St., and Branson St., from 5th St. to the riverwalk. These corridors provide vital connections to 5th St. Commons, downtown businesses, potential redevelopment, the proposed McClure Park, the riverwalk, Mississinewa River, and neighborhoods north of the river. Additionally, these corridors would complete a loop within the downtown. This loop facilitates better circulation and access to the above destinations, creating an intuitive trail experience and an opportunity for measured exercise.

5th Street, along the north curb line, and Branson Street, along the west curb line, are recommended for improvements with a shared use trail. While these trails are located within the commercial district of the downtown, the density is lower in these areas. As redevelopment occurs and density increases, a separate pedestrian sidewalk would be recommended between the bicycle facility and future infill to create a separated trail.

Design of these trail segments should be done in coordination with the rest of the urban trail system to create an easily identifiable and intuitive experience.

Project Budget:

\$2.2 - 3.5 million.

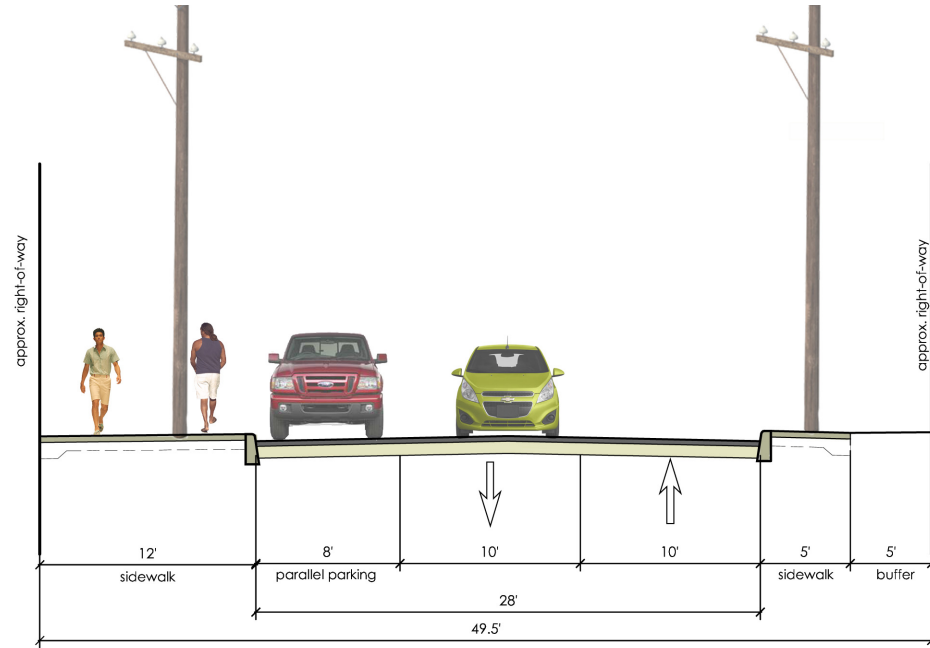




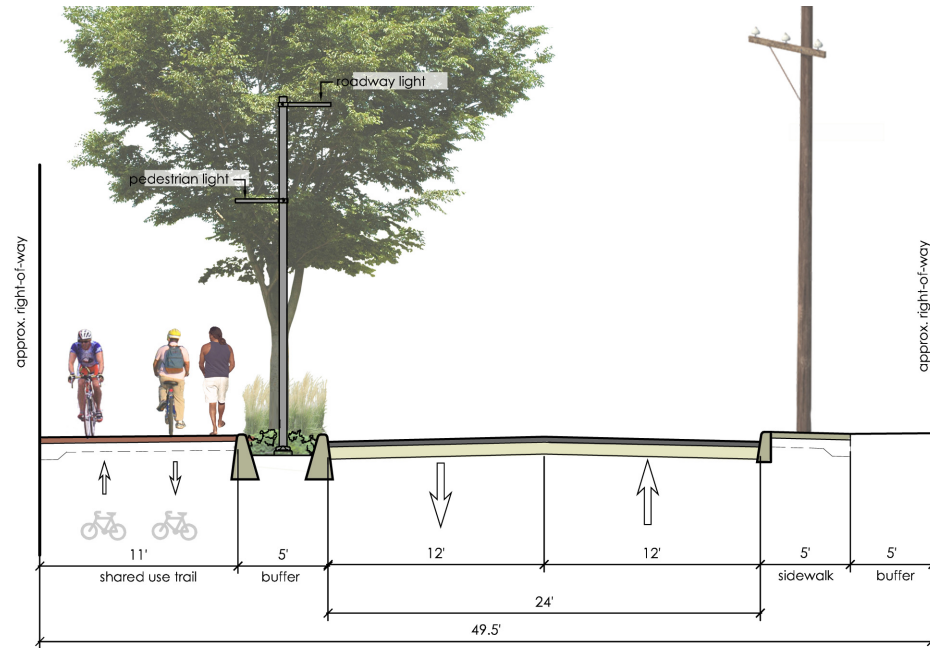
Combined Use Trail



Combined Use Trail



2ND STREET (EXISTING)



2ND STREET (SHARED USE)

2ND STREET TRAIL

Project Description:

A vital connection for the urban trail system would be the link between the downtown loop and Ballard Field along 2nd Street.

Completion of this segment along with the others would create a physical conduit between all of the downtown's parks and open spaces including the existing park, proposed McClure Park, Mississinewa River, 5th St. Commons, and Cardinal Greenway.

This trail segment would be designed as a combined, or shared use, trail along the north side of 2nd Street.

As recommended for all of the segments, design of this trail segment should be done in coordination with the rest of the urban trail system to create an easily identifiable and intuitive experience.

Project Budget:

\$2 - 3 million





ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

OPERATIONALIZATION OF KEY PROJECT

A key project of this planning process is applying for a MSRP grant for infrastructure improvements and creating a multi-use trail linking the riverfront and downtown amenities, as detailed in the previous chapter.

Buy-in for the program was gained during numerous discussions with business owners and other downtown stakeholders during numerous meetings.

The next few steps will be:

1. Submit the plan to OCRA for review and approval.
2. Hold a public hearing and submit the plan to the Marion City Council for approval.
3. Apply for the MSRP grant in October 2019.
4. Review city's TIFF Districts and/or organize to find funds for improvements.

The city is assembling its match for the MSRP grant, which includes a generous donation from the Grant County Community Foundation.





APPENDIX

APPENDIX

FUNDING SOURCES

The Main Street Revitalization Program

(MSRP) is administered by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. Funded by Community Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), it encourages communities with eligible populations to focus on long-term community development efforts. Eligible applicants have a designated active Indiana Main Street group in their community and the project must be a part of the Main Street's overall strategy. MSRP projects include streetscapes, façade renovations, and downtown infrastructure rehabilitation. Maximum award is \$400,000 with 20% local match of which up to 5% may be in-kind.

The Public Facilities Program

(PFP) are to improve the Quality of Place and to generate jobs and spur economic revitalization through improving community facilities or historic preservation projects. Eligible community facilities include community centers, daycares, libraries, museums, senior centers, and performance spaces. Funds cannot be used on or within a government building.

The ***Downtown Enhancement Grant (DEG)*** program is designed to foster innovative approaches to activities, which support and promote community based planning, pre-development, and research initiatives. The goal of these projects is to improve the quality of life and opportunities for increasing private investment and employment in Indiana Main Street (IMS) communities.

Qualifying projects are ones which promote economic development in the downtown areas and will enhance the quality of life in the community. Ideal projects could include, but are not limited to: façade renovations or rehabilitations, creation of wayfinding signage, streetscape, landscaping, mural restoration and other more permanent initiatives as they relate to the grant purpose. Eligible projects must have a 1:1.5 match with a minimum of 1:1 being cash match and the other 0.5 comprised of eligible in-kind and/or cash. Federal and other state funds may not be used as a local match. Grant requests between \$5,000 and \$10,000 will be accepted.

Historic Renovation Grant Program (HRGP)

The goal of this programs is to preserve and rehabilitate the exterior of historic properties in order to further incentivize downtown economic development. Funding is available until all funds are awarded. In December 2017, Indiana Legislature allocated over \$1 million to this grant program for distribution to qualified projects.

Eligible applicants must meet the following requirements:

- **Building must generate revenue**
- **Located in Indiana within a designated Main Street city or Town AND/OR Non-entitlement**
- **community in accordance with HUD listing**
- **Building is at least 50 years old and is listed or eligible for listing in the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures**
- **Eligible requests must be no more than 35% of eligible project costs**
- **Local match must be greater than or equal to 65% of total eligible project costs**

Those applying under the Main Street community eligibility must have the properties located within their defined downtown district. Grant requests between \$10,000 and \$100,000 will be accepted.

Place Based Investment Fund. The PBIF program is a competitive matching grant program administered as a partnership between OCRA and the Indiana Office of Tourism Development that supports community and economic development projects across the state. Initiatives that promote quality of life, improve tourism experiences and develop multipurpose gathering places are specifically targeted for this grant program.

Performance-based quality of place initiatives that maximize investment and collaboration by local governments, economic development organizations, convention and visitor bureaus, Indiana Main Street organizations, public or private schools and community foundations are the intended recipients of these grants. The aim of the program is to provide funding opportunities for unique projects and programs that seek to create jobs and further establish a diverse local, regional and state economy.

If interested in PBIF, contact your Community Liaison, as they can be great resources in helping you to achieve your goals for community and economic development.

CreatINg Places. The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) in conjunction with Patronicity.com, launched “CreatINg Places,” a place-based crowdfunding grant program. CreatINg Places employs a donation and reward-based method of crowdfunding called “crowdgranting”. In crowdgranting, citizens actively support projects and activities through web based donations which, if the fundraising goal is reached within a set time, are matched by a sponsor.

CreatINg Places aims to help generate public involvement in the selection of creative improvements within their own communities, help provide the funding to see the project through completion, and instill community pride when citizens become invested in their surroundings. The CreatINg Places program is available to projects located in Indiana communities or neighborhoods which contain a traditional downtown or traditional neighborhood commercial node. Projects may include but are not limited to:

- **streetscape beautification & walkability, public plaza**
- **development/activation and park enhancements.**

Efroymson Family Endangered Places Grants Indiana Landmarks awards Efroymson Family Endangered Places Grants to nonprofit organizations for professional architectural and engineering studies and restoration cost estimates—often the first step in saving a historic structure—as well as for organizational development. The grants may not be used for brick-and mortar restoration work. For more information, contact the Indiana Landmarks regional office nearest you.

The grants offer a favorable four-to-one matching requirement—four dollars from Indiana Landmarks matches each local cash dollar up to 80% of the total project cost or a \$2,500 maximum or \$3,500 for affiliate organizations.

Home Investment Partnership Program.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) provides formula grants to States and localities that communities use - often in partnership with local nonprofit groups - to fund a wide range of activities including building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income people.

HOME is the largest Federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households.

HOME funds are awarded annually as formula grants to participating jurisdictions (PJs). The program's flexibility allows States and local governments to use HOME funds for grants, direct loans, loan guarantees or other forms of credit enhancements, or rental assistance or security deposits.

The program was designed to reinforce several important values and principles of community development:

- **HOME's flexibility empowers people and communities to design and implement strategies tailored to their own needs and priorities.**
- **HOME's emphasis on consolidated planning expands and strengthens partnerships among all levels of government and the private sector in the development of affordable housing.**
- **HOME's technical assistance activities and setaside for qualified community-based nonprofit housing groups builds the capacity of these partners.**
- **HOME's requirement that participating jurisdictions match 25 cents of every dollar in program funds mobilizes community resources in support of affordable housing.**

A Community Development Financial

Institution (CDFI) provides capital, credit, and financial services to markets and populations that are underserved by traditional financial institutions. Communities can rebuild their physical environments and help businesses create jobs by accessing the capital and services of a CDFI.

CDFIs provide a unique range of financial products and services in economically distressed target markets, including mortgage financing for low-income and first time homebuyers and non-profit developers, flexible underwriting and risk capital for community facilities, and technical assistance, commercial loans and investments to start-up or expanding businesses in low-income areas.

In order to capitalize better places and brighter futures, the Community Investment Fund of Indiana, Inc. (CIFI) provides development services and loans in qualified investment areas and to low income individuals that lack access to financial products or services throughout the state. Its purpose is to generate positive change by increasing financial and social capital flows across the state by directly financing projects, assisting in leveraging additional capital, and facilitating access to program services. CIFI's primary customers are individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, community service providers and affordable housing developers.



ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

Economic Incentives A federal tax incentive to encourage real estate developers to renovate, restore and reconstruct old buildings. Federal Historic Investment Rehabilitation Tax Credits are utilized within the rehabilitation of commercial, mixed-use and residential rental property.

The **Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)** is a dollar-for-dollar tax credit in the United States for affordable housing investments and gives incentives for the use of private equity in the development of affordable housing aimed at low-income Americans.

New Market Tax Credits can help finance commercial, industrial, retail, mixed-use and other real estate developments, historic rehabilitations, and loans to small businesses in low-income communities.

Economic Improvement Districts (EIDS) also known as business improvement districts (EIDs), are public-private partnerships in which local property and business owners elect to make a collective contribution to the maintenance, development and promotion of their property.

TAX INCENTIVES FOR PRESERVING HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A **20% income tax credit** is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to be “certified historic structures.” The State Historic Preservation Offices and the National Park Service review the rehabilitation work to ensure that it complies with the Secretary’s Standards for Rehabilitation. The Internal Revenue Service defines qualified rehabilitation expenses on which the credit may be taken.

The 10% tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic buildings placed in service before 1936. The building must be rehabilitated for non-residential use. In order to qualify for the tax credit, the rehabilitation must meet three criteria: at least 50% of the existing external walls must remain in place as external walls, at least 75% of the existing external walls must remain in place as either external or internal walls, and at least 75% of the internal structural framework must remain in place. There is no formal review process for rehabilitations of non-historic buildings.

