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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Marion 2045 is a shared vision, built together. Comprehensive planning offers a vital opportunity for all Marion residents to shape a shared vision for our future. Through inclusive collaboration, residents and City Staff identified opportunities and challenges related to Marion's land use, infrastructure, public facilities, natural resources, and more. These broad range of voices form the foundation of Marion's community vision and establish our public priorities.

The Plan serves three primary roles:

- 1. A Shared Vision.** Comprehensive planning provides an opportunity for residents to create a shared vision for the future. Many residents and City Staff identified opportunities and challenges for Marion's land use, infrastructure, public facilities, natural resources, and more. The community voices create a community-driven vision for Marion and set public priorities.
- 2. Guidance for Decision Makers.** The Plan serves as a guide for City staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, and other City boards and commissions as they set policies, make public investments, and deliberate land use decisions.
- 3. Legal Basis for Land Use Regulations.** The Code of Iowa allows cities to adopt land use regulations, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances, to promote the "health, safety, and general welfare of the community." These regulations govern how to develop land within the city and it's extra-territorial jurisdiction. Land use regulations recognize that people live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to coordinate and harmonize private property issues. Marion 2045 provides a legal basis for these regulations.

WHO USES THE PLAN?

While the primary user of this Plan will be the City of Marion, the document offers guidance well beyond the city government. Achieving the vision articulated in the Plan requires broad-ranging collaboration. Users include:

- **The General Public.** Marion 2045 is a summary of the shared aspirations. The Plan was authored with input from diverse stakeholders in the community. The public should raise the vision expressed in the Plan in public forums and their actions to support improving the community.
- **City Staff.** City staff will refer to the Plan when assessing alterations to development regulations, zoning appeals, and when suggesting additions to or enhancements of facilities, services, and capital projects. Department heads will use the Plan's recommendations to guide capital improvement projects, budgets, and future planning initiatives.
- **Community Leaders.** Policymakers, notably the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission, should use the Plan as a reliable guide for making decisions related to large-scale policies and individual projects.
- **Developers and Landowners.** The Plan serves as a guide to landowners and developers who want to invest in the City of Marion. By understanding the community-driven vision for the future, these stakeholders can approach projects with collaboration to avoid unnecessary delays and negotiations.
- **Partners Implementation.** Many partners to the City of Marion will be continually engaged in implementing the Plan. Essential partners include Linn County, the City of Cedar Rapids, the Chamber of Commerce, MEDCO, Corridor MPO, Linn County Solid Waste Agency, the State of Iowa, and more.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

Marion 2045 is the guiding document for planning for the City of Marion. The Plan is a living document intended to be consulted often, used as a tool for collaboration, and a guide for many user groups. The Plan should be the first resource to consult when developing other plans or initiatives. Other plans, studies, and reports provide additional context to the vision and goals of Marion 2045.

This Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic tool for shaping Marion's future. Recognizing that our community is constantly evolving, the Plan is designed for flexibility, adapting to changing conditions, resources, and opportunities. The land use and other maps provide policy guidance, not strict zoning regulations, empowering the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Staff, and the City Council to thoughtfully consider how proposals align with the Plan's long-term vision.

THE PLAN IS *NOT*

1. A development plan - individual landowners still lead property development.
2. A zoning map - instead it informs and guides zoning decisions.
3. Static or rigid - the plan should change with the changing conditions over time.
4. A capital improvement plan - the plan guides priority investments, but does not prescribe public investment decisions.
5. Only for the City - all residents, organizations, and stakeholders with a vested interest in the future of Marion should want to advance Marion 2045.

TEN IOWA SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In 2010, the Iowa State Legislature passed the “Iowa Smart Planning Act” to guide and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans. The legislation outlines ten smart planning principles that shall be considered and 13 comprehensive plan elements that Iowa cities may use to develop comprehensive plans. Though the sets of elements and principles may look similar, they differ in that the ten Smart Planning Principles are meant to be overarching values that inform each of the 13 elements:

- » *Public Participation*
- » *Community Character*
- » *Land Use*
- » *Housing*
- » *Utility Services*
- » *Transportation*
- » *Economic Development*
- » *Natural Resources*
- » *Community Services*
- » *Quality of Life*
- » *Hazard Mitigation*
- » *Collaboration*
- » *Implementation*

Marion 2045 was created to comply with the Iowa Smart Planning Act guidelines. It addresses all 13 required elements of a comprehensive plan and is organized in a format best suited to Marion’s needs.



1. Collaboration

Marion has many stakeholders. Making sure they are involved in the process is embedded into this plan.



6. Housing Diversity

Marion will encourage varied housing options to meet the diversity of all residents’ needs.



2. Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency

Marion will provide equitable and reliable development guidelines and implementation.



7. Community Character

Marion will promote its uniqueness in design and culture.



3. Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy

Marion promotes land use and transportation design that mitigates environmental impact.



8. Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection

Marion will balance urban and rural transitions and create access to natural spaces.



4. Occupational Diversity

Marion’s economy will be diverse in response to economic changes.



9. Sustainable Design

Marion will promote sustainable design and development at all scales.



5. Revitalization

Marion will reinvest in its current infrastructure.



10. Transportation Diversity

Marion will develop systems that allow diverse transportation options that help promote health.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Since the adoption of Marion's most recent comprehensive plan in 2010, the City has completed and adopted many different plans. These ongoing planning efforts are the product of a community constantly striving for improvement. Marion 2045 is written in a way that complements recent planning efforts and is intended to be implemented alongside them. Some recent plans include:

2016 Parks & Recreation Master Plan

The 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan completed a needs assessment for the over 502 acres administered by the City Parks and Recreation Department. The plan also lays out recommendations for several parks and recreational facilities, identifying areas of improvement and reinvestment, along with an implementation strategy.

2020 Sanitary Sewer Capacity Study

The 2020 Study provides the City with an overview of performance of the sanitary sewer system within the City and informs the potential need for system improvements for existing and future land use conditions.

2022 Housing Needs Analysis

The 2022 Marion Housing Needs Analysis studied the community's existing housing stock and identified housing gaps needing to be filled at all sizes and price points. The analysis identifies a total demand of 2,739 additional units between 2022 and 2030.

2024 Reforestation Plan

With the devastating impacts of the 2020 derecho, Marion lost 36.7% of the community's tree canopy. Four years later, the Reforestation Plan structured a path forward to recover these losses. The plan identifies priority parks and areas to reach a goal of growing the community's tree canopy by 35% by 2055.

And others incorporated into Marion 2045:

2019 The Neighborhood at Indian Creek Design Guidelines

2021 Uptown Master Plan Update

2021 Aquatic Feasibility Study

2022 Indian Creek Master Plan

2022 Highway 100/13 Subarea Plan

2023 C Avenue Alburnett Road Growth Area Study

2023 Lowe Park Master Plan

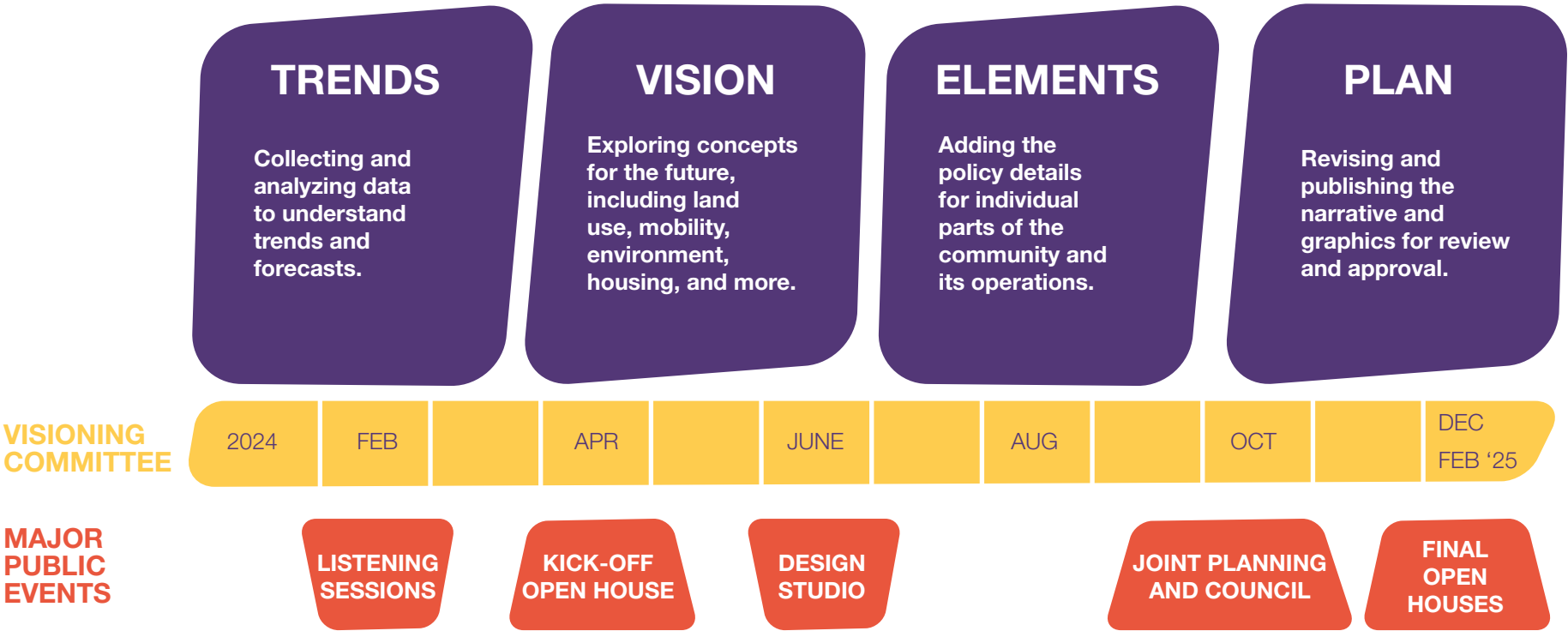
2024 Proposed Major Streets Plan

2025 Stormwater Master Plan

CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

Several other planning efforts were occurring during the process of creating Marion 2045. These include a wayfinding master plan and master planning for several new and existing parks. These efforts are incorporated into Marion 2045.

PLANNING PROCESS



PUBLIC COLLABORATION

Marion 2045 relied significantly on listening to the wants and needs of the community. Throughout the process, community members were invited to contribute their ideas and feedback both in-person and online. Features of the process included:

- *Visioning Committee*
- *Planning/Technical Team Meetings*
- *Project Website*
- *Online Interactive Map*
- *Online Community Survey*
- *Small Group Listening Sessions*
- *Kick-off Open House*
- *Design Workshops*
- *Final Open Houses*

120+

Attendees at Events

12

Month
Process

433

Surveys
Completed

2,100+

Visits to Project Website

Visioning Committee

The Visioning Committee was an important team of 27 members representing all aspects of Marion and the metro. The Visioning Committee met every other month throughout the planning process, guiding the process overall and ensuring the concepts reflect the community's vision.

Planning/Technical Team

The planning team, including City staff and consultants, met regularly throughout the planning process to ensure the project stayed on track and outcomes reflected the voices of the community. A Technical Team of all Marion City Department heads met every other month to discuss plan details.

Project Website

The website received over 2,100 views. Visitors could learn about the process and upcoming events. Also, they could offer input through the interactive map and survey.

Online Interactive Mapping

Throughout the process, the public offered their ideas and concerns through an interactive map, where people could “drop pins” and comment on specific areas of Marion.

Online Community Survey

Any Marion resident could take a survey to provide insight into current and future needs. The survey questions corresponded with the objectives and goals of Marion 2045. The survey received 433 responses.

Listening Sessions

A diverse range of community organizations, businesses, residents, and subject matter experts were invited to share their perspectives on Marion's future. In early 2024, the planning team met with over 50 stakeholders representing the following groups:

- Council Members, Chairs of Boards and Commissions
- Realtors, Property Managers, and Landlords
- Service Providers and Non-Profit Leaders
- High School Students
- Arts and Entertainment Organizations
- Parents
- Teachers and School Staff
- Major Employers
- Economic Development Groups
- Developers
- Property Owners in Growth Areas



Kick-Off Open House

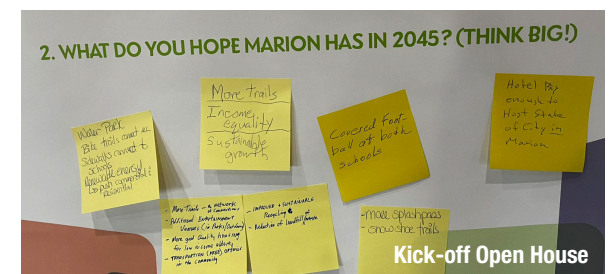
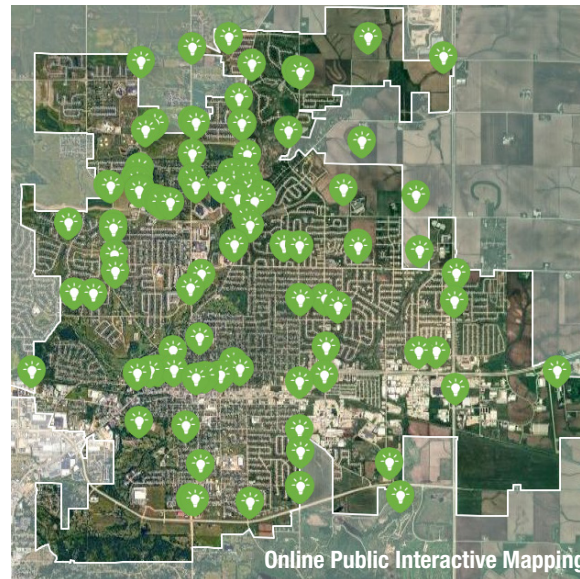
In April 2024, anyone could attend a Kick-Off Open House at the Lowe Park Arts and Entertainment Center. The event had displays for attendees to learn about the planning process and give their ideas for Marion's future. The event welcomed 23 people and received over 70 notes and comments.

Design Workshops

In June 2024, a series of design workshops were hosted for the public to give input on growth and enhancements throughout the community. These focused on directions for future land use growth.

Public Open House

In December 2024 and February 2025, the public was invited to learn about the refined goals and initiatives to be included in the plan before finalizing recommendations for approval.



PLANNING FRAMEWORK



VISION STATEMENTS



Land Use

Marion will be thoughtful and intentional about the use of land throughout the city. Land use decisions will enhance and capitalize on existing strengths, while expanding new opportunities to mix uses and amenities for all residents and visitors. As Marion grows in population and diversity, amenities will be accessible and equitable.



Centers and Corridors

Marion will have plans for intentional improvement and redevelopment along future, existing, and growing corridors. Development along corridors will be accessible by all transportation modes and uses along corridors will be conducive to one another.



Mobility

Marion will be well-connected, easy, and safe to navigate by all modes of transportation – driving, biking, walking, and rolling.



Neighborhoods

Marion will offer safe, attainable homes for people of all ages, income levels, and abilities. The neighborhoods in Marion will be intentionally planned with multi-modal choices to access nearby services and amenities.



Parks, Trails, and Nature

All residents will have access to a park or natural area within walking distance of their home, with safe, connected, and practical trails for both transportation and recreational use. Marion will have activities that people of all ages and abilities can indulge in year-round.



Facilities

Marion will have well maintained facilities and infrastructure that adequately supports and provides for all residents and visitors to the city. Facilities and infrastructure will be regularly inspected and proactively updated for efficiency.



Equity

Marion aspires to be a place where access to opportunity isn't limited by background or circumstance. The Plan commits to working towards a more level playing field where everyone has the resources and support, they need to thrive – to learn, grow, work, and play. Marion will actively work to identify and reduce challenges, striving to create a truly inclusive community where people of all ages and experiences feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate. Marion's community vision is to be a place where everyone feels a deep sense of belonging and pride.