Dear Friends,

I’m pleased to share with you the 2018 Annual Report for the City of Marion. While last year’s report highlighted Marion’s amazing forward momentum, this year’s report focuses on how we’re using that momentum to make a positive impact on the lives of those who live and work in our community.

In recent years we’ve focused on reaching higher in everything we do and energizing our community for good. We’ve come together around a clear common purpose of serving the needs of people and giving them an unequaled quality of life.

➢ We see this in the Encore Café senior dining program, which has served more than 5,000 meals since opening in May.
➢ We see this in the task forces established to address issues of homelessness, housing and food insecurity and the needs of our youth.
➢ We see this in the excellent services and amenities provided by our city and in the higher quality development taking place.

In the midst of unprecedented growth and change, our city government, schools, business community, non-profit organizations and residents are collaborating to identify the right opportunities to build the community we all desire:
➢ A community that values and invests in education, arts and the environment;
➢ A community of people taking care of their neighbors;
➢ A community where all people feel safe, valued and cared-for;
➢ And a community where the sky is not the limit and where we all have great opportunities to achieve our personal goals in both business and in life.

Perhaps this is why in 2018 Marion received the Iowa League of Cities’ All-Star Community award for a second consecutive year, achieved re-designation as an Iowa Great Place and was one of only 20 cities nationwide to receive the Livability Award from the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

By reaching higher in everything we do we’re making a positive impact and shaping a community we’re all proud to call “Home”!

Thank you for taking the time to read this Annual Report. I hope you’ll agree that we have much to celebrate and a bright future ahead.

Nicolas AbouAssaly
Mayor
marionmayor@cityofmarion.org
The City of Marion is fortunate to collaborate with three economic development partners focused on making Marion the best place in Iowa to raise a family and grow a business. Here are some of the larger development projects supporting our local economy.

Prospect Meadows Sports Complex

Opening in May 2019, Prospect Meadows will be a world-class baseball and softball complex. Located just east of Highway 13 and south of County Home Road, it will eventually be home to 17 baseball and softball fields of various sizes, many of which will be designed to accommodate multiple skill levels and ages. The first phase features eight fields and one Miracle Field, an inclusive field for the special needs community, as well as modern concessions, restrooms, walking trails, gardens, and a pond.

Prospect Meadows will attract an estimated 60,000 traveling attendees annually when both phases are complete around 2023. Those 60,000 visitors will inject $20 million in direct spending into the Linn County economy each year. In addition to national and regional tournaments, Prospect Meadows will also host local tournaments, leagues and instructional camps.
Two thousand eighteen was another year of growth for the City of Marion with continued construction of traditional single-family and condominium neighborhoods. The City also began to experience commercial growth along the Central Corridor, at Highway 13 and 151 with the Squaw Creek Crossing development and along Tower Terrace Road with a new multi-tenant center. Tower Terrace Road will also be home of the future Marion YMCA, offering easy access to recreational facilities for Marion residents as well as those in north Cedar Rapids, Robins and surrounding communities.

Traditional housing development is expected remain at current levels with developers bringing many new housing products to the community that will bridge the gaps identified in the Housing Market Analysis. The Community Development Department is finishing the new zoning regulations and will begin work on the new zoning map. Design standards for the Central Corridor and the Neighborhood at Indian Creek will also be completed and adopted in spring 2019, which will create clear community goals as development progresses in those targeted areas.

Squaw Creek Crossing
Squaw Creek Crossing is Marion’s first large scale, multi-faceted development of over 20 acres to include potential development in retail, service, hospitality, commercial and residential uses at the northeast corner of Highways 13 and 151. Squaw Creek Crossing will stand as an entrance from the north, south and east as visitors enter into Marion. Dupaco Credit Union was the first building to open in this location followed by KwikStar convenience store. Plans for a Country Inn and Suites Hotel have been approved, along with an 88-unit, contemporary multi-family housing complex.

Central Corridor Redevelopment
Marion’s Central Corridor is one of the most prominent and identifiable areas within the community. The completion of 6th Avenue as a second main thoroughfare parallel to 7th Avenue will diffuse the heavy traffic and make our central business district safer, more walkable and attractive for retail, commercial and residential uses.

Kinseth Hospitality is constructing an 88-room TownePlace Suites by Marriott, on 7th Avenue in the heart of Marion’s Central Corridor. The $12.4 million hotel is designed to appeal to extended stay travelers with features that include an on-site fitness center, swimming pool, business center and suites with full kitchens. It is expected to open in 2019.

Uptown Marion Redevelopment
The Uptown Marion District spans over 20 blocks of Marion’s historic commercial district and includes 165 buildings, 135 businesses, 864 employees and more than 250 residents.

Three significant parcels in the heart of Uptown Marion are positioned for redevelopment. The proposed projects are part of an effort to secure the long term economic viability of Uptown Marion. They are designed to serve as a catalyst in response to market needs and will help make Uptown Marion attractive for future development.

Tower Terrace Road
Tower Terrace Road is a major east-west thoroughfare which will eventually connect Cedar Rapids, Hiawatha, Robins, Marion and Linn County from Interstate 380 to Highway 13. The communities are working collaboratively to encourage the Iowa DOT to move forward with the new interchange at I-380. Marion began construction of segments of this project in 2011, which will significantly enhance accessibility in north Marion. Marion has already seen millions in economic development along this corridor.
Marion is INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

ENGINEERING
18+ active subdivisions
20+ active commercial sites
15+ active Capital Improvement Projects under construction
10+ Capital Improvement Projects being designed

The Engineering Department is responsible for the construction and reconstruction of the city’s transportation network and underground infrastructure. In 2018, they conducted multiple traffic studies, sanitary sewer studies and reviewed site plans for a number of new subdivisions. Lucore Road reopened and the Northview Drive reconstruction project was completed. The department continuously reviews, designs, administers and inspects both City- and developer-initiated projects.

Progress occurred along the Central Corridor (6th Avenue from 13th to 19th Street) and Tower Terrace Road (Winslow to Lennon Lane) thoroughfares and work will resume in the spring. Construction of 6th Avenue from 19th to 26th Street is expected to wrap-up in 2019 and work is anticipated on Tower Terrace Road from C Avenue in Cedar Rapids to Alburnett Road. Airport runway reconstruction, the Indian Creek Sanitary Sewer Project and preliminary design work of 7th Avenue are also identified as priorities in 2019.
The Water Department upgraded its distribution system in 2018 to include a booster station along 29th Avenue, increasing water pressure for residents on the east side of the city. A water main was replaced from 8th Avenue to 13th Avenue and along Northview Drive and 11th Avenue. A new drinking water source came online with Silurian Well #10 and the department made steady progress on the meter change-out program. With only 1,200 units remaining in the radio-read conversion, this multi-year project should conclude in the fall of 2019. Additionally, three water main relay projects are anticipated, maintenance will occur on Well #6 and staff will develop plans for an iron removal plant at Site #5. The department also intends to purchase land for a future elevated water tower.

The Public Services Department is responsible for maintaining the City's infrastructure in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Department activities include street repair and maintenance, traffic signal maintenance, snow and ice control, street cleaning, stormwater and sanitary sewer maintenance and garbage collection. The department provides services to Marion residents as well as many of our neighboring communities. As the City of Marion continues to pursue the goal of becoming a leader in sustainability, this spring they will begin construction of a new Public Service Maintenance Facility that will incorporate renewable energy and alternative fuel infrastructure. The department looks forward to providing new services to residents as well as creating a partnership that will allow our community to achieve the goal of being zero waste.
Encore Café Caters to Seniors
A new partnership between The Heritage Agency, Marion Public Library and Marion Parks and Recreation Department is making nutritious meals and wellness programs accessible and affordable for older adults. Open for lunch at the library on Mondays and Fridays and at Lowe Park on Wednesdays and Thursdays, the cafe provides healthy meals catered by Marion Hy-Vee. On average, 40-50 attend daily and benefit from the nutritious meals, programming and social interaction. Since opening in May 2018, more than 5,100 meals have been served.

Marion Youth Coalition Established
To find positive solutions for issues facing our youth, a number of organizations have come together to create the Marion Youth Coalition. Participants include school district representatives and city leaders as well as members of law enforcement and non-profit organizations. Representatives have shared ideas and developed committees around tween/teen accountability and community initiatives, student programming/activities, parent/community education and the creation of a Marion Youth Center.

Marion’s Trails System Continues to Expand
With $10 million in federal grants designated for trails over the next few years, expansion of Marion’s network of trails continues. The City celebrated the completion of the Grant Wood Trail from 31st Street to Hwy 13 in December, and the County completed a paved surface trail from Hwy 13 to Waldo’s Rock Park. The remaining funds were secured for the 10th Avenue sidepaths, with construction anticipated in 2020. The Wellmark Foundation awarded $98,000 to fund sidepaths in the Marion Independent School District. Matching funds were received from Linn County, the school district, Delta Dental and the City of Marion. Trail design and grading also occurred for the trail running along the former railroad right of way behind the future TownePlace Suites on 7th Avenue.

In 2019, the Engineering and Planning Departments will focus on the Grant Wood Trail Extension, CeMar Trail and Indian Creek Trail.
PARKS & RECREATION

The Marion Parks and Recreation Department provides a wide range of recreational and educational opportunities for people of all ages that encourage healthy, active lifestyles and lifelong learning. Fifteen new recreation programs were added to the program catalog. Attendance at community events hosted at the Klopfenstein Amphitheater for the Performing Arts grew to an estimated 15,000 for the season. Two significant construction projects began in 2018 with the skate park at Butterfield Park slated to open in the spring of 2019 and an inclusive playground, pavilion and restroom facility expected to open in the summer of 2019 near the Irish Drive entrance of Lowe Park.

Looking ahead to 2019, 12 new recreation programs will be introduced, including senior water aerobics at the pool and four community bus trips. The Parks and Recreation Department will work closely with the YMCA to solidify a new programming partnership in anticipation of the construction of the Regional YMCA in Marion. Additionally, a deputy director will be hired to support the operations of the department. Anticipated construction projects include an addition to the maintenance facility at Lowe Park, a new pavilion at Lininger Park, development of Master Park Plans for Gill Park and a new park sited at 29th Avenue and 50th Street. Identified as a priority through the ImaginEXT community visioning process, an aquatics feasibility study will be initiated to look at future pool/aquatics needs.

MARION PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Marion Public library experienced a busy year marked with continued growth and change. In alignment with the city’s mission, the library remains focused on the needs of the community at large through services that provide information and support for health, wellbeing and an enhanced quality of life. Through partnerships, the library has been able to reach farther and provide not only essential needs but also unexpected delight.

Twice a week, Encore Café, in partnership with Hy-Vee and The Heritage Agency, transforms the conference rooms at the library into a senior meals dining room. Providing this congregate meal setting goes beyond addressing food security issues. It also provides social interaction, informational sessions and health check-ins for those that may not interact with anyone else during the week. The library also serves as a distribution site for a HACAP monthly mobile food pantry and participates in the Horizons summer meals initiative for youth.

The library continues to see an increase in citizens looking for assistance with employment, housing and social service resources. Recognizing this increase led to a partnership with Willis Dady Homeless Services and an outreach specialist now provides homelessness prevention services every Wednesday from noon to 4 p.m. Library staff has also been integral in forming a community-wide task force to address needs of residents affected by unstable housing. The task force is focused on identifying and solving critical needs for the citizens of Marion.

Other programs that improve the fabric of our community include child abuse prevention outreach and parent education classes. Additionally, weekly programs and events for teens are encouraging growth and development of our youngest citizens and provide a place where all are welcome and can feel like they belong.

With a new director and deputy director now on board, the library is looking ahead and planning for the future of library service in Marion. The library continues to see an increase in the number of people coming through its doors and increased demand for its services and programs.
Staff/Council Accessibility

Community engagement isn’t the responsibility of one division within the City of Marion; it is a way of doing business. From public meetings to social media interaction, there are countless opportunities for engagement between Marion’s public servants, elected officials and the residents who call Marion home.

Staff and Council Members strive to be accessible and want to gather feedback and ideas from residents. The Mayor and City Council members held weekly office hours in the lobby of the Marion Public Library. Nearly every Saturday, between 9:30-11:30 a.m. members were available for questions and conversation.

Engaging with members of the community continues to be a strong focus, with emphasis placed on meeting people in places where they are already gathering. The City hosted its third City Showcase in April and hosted an informational booth at the Linn County Fair, Swamp Fox Festival and each Uptown Marion Market through the summer. The City’s responsive website and social media sites provide access to city information at your fingertips.
Banner Program Honors Veterans

The City of Marion, Marion Chamber of Commerce and Uptown Marion District introduced a new banner program in 2018 to honor veterans and active duty servicemen and women in a very personal way. Fifty-one veterans and military personnel with ties to Marion were honored in the inaugural year of the program. The banners were on display from Independence Day through Veterans Day and will go up again in 2019. A portion of the proceeds also included a $2,500 donation to the American Legion Post 298 to support veteran affairs programs.

ImagiNEXT Nets Community Vision

ImagiNEXT, Marion’s most recent community visioning process, has announced the Future Four ideas that contribute to the quality of life. With over 3,000 ideas collected from community members, a 23-member selection committee worked to narrow the list to 60 ideas. These ideas were then put out for community vote. The selection committee used those results to determine the Future Four initiatives for the community to accomplish. They include:

➢ **Just Keep Swimming**, an exploration of new aquatics options

➢ **The Heart of it All**, enhancements to Marion’s historic Uptown district

➢ **Creekside Pride**, embracing Indian Creek by adding recreational and educational opportunities

➢ **It’s the Little Things**, simple ideas expected to have a significant impact on civic pride

ImagiNEXT

6,000 residents engaged

3,000 ideas submitted

4 future initiatives

1 Great Place!!
In 2018, the Marion Police Department (MPD) made a concerted effort to prepare for the growth that Marion is currently experiencing. The department implemented a new beat deployment structure to allocate its resources more effectively and efficiently. In turn, the MPD reached out to Marion business owners to develop a sense of ownership in the community. Dubbed the “100-Day Challenge” MPD personnel made in-person visits to over 900 businesses in Marion. The department also hired its first data analyst in 2018. Using crime data and statistics, MPD will be able to respond to crimes more proactively and have the necessary information to guide its strategies to keep Marion one of the safest cities in Iowa.

MPD developed its first 5-year strategic plan in 2018. This plan outlines a new mission and vision for the agency and sets six specific goals for the agency to attain over the next five years. To improve the way Marion delivers its 911 communication services, the council voted to establish the Marion Public Safety Communications Center and a governance board to oversee the operations. Through this new oversight model, the 911 Center will become an independent operation serving both Marion Police and Fire that will see significant investments in advanced training over the next five years.

Marion Fire Department (MFD) is charged with the responsibility of protecting the lives and property of the citizens of Marion, as well as the visitors to our community. Whether the emergency is fire, illness, or trauma, MFD maintains a trained staff and equipped vehicles to meet this responsibility. In 2018, the department installed mobile data units in all emergency vehicles, the International Fire Code was adopted and the city’s new 95-foot extension aerial truck was put into service. In October, the land was purchased for Marion’s newest fire station at the southwest corner of Tower Terrace Road and Irish Drive.

Construction of the new fire station and headquarters will occur in 2019, along with the reorganization of the command staff to accommodate the growth of the department and city. The Fire Department will focus on strategic planning and goal setting for the next five years and introduce new public safety/education campaigns. Additionally, as outlined in the Fire Station Location Study, staff will begin seeking land for Fire Station No. 4 as well as a fire training facility.
Marion Police & Fire Departments Collaborate on Tactical Medic Program

The Marion Police and Fire Departments partnered to develop Marion’s first Tactical Medic Program in 2018. This effort identified three MFD firefighters to receive advanced training on how to operate with the MPD SWAT team in environments that are extremely dangerous and unstable with the intent of providing advanced trauma care.

POLICE
MPD developed a 5-year strategic plan for the agency that includes 6 specific goals to attain over the next 5 years.

MPD officers made personal visits to over 900 businesses in Marion through the 100-Day Challenge.

FIRE
3,966 calls for service, 82% were medical calls
9.8% increase in call volume over previous year
Educated 4,360 people on fire prevention through public education events

BUILDING
9,522 inspections completed in FY2018
2,968 permits issued FY2018
232 new homes or housing units created from 180 permits issued

Building Inspection Division works to assure safe, secure and stable built environments through uniform and fair enforcement of all building and related codes. Inspectors are required to have a thorough knowledge of building codes and construction techniques. To maintain proficiency in all areas of the challenging field of building construction, inspectors are responsible for maintaining certifications and continuing education hours as well as understanding new technologies in an ever-growing industry.

In 2018, over 9,500 inspections were completed and the most current construction codes were adopted. A contractor meeting was held in the spring to educate contractors on the permit process and share common issues identified during inspections. This outreach allows builders to do their jobs more efficiently and reduces the time spent on each inspection; further enhancing customer service.

A housing inspector was hired to focus specifically on the more than 4,300 rental housing units within the city, without taking away from construction inspections.

Looking ahead, Building Inspection staff will facilitate review of the 2020 National Electrical Code by the Marion Construction Code Review Board and will make recommendations to City Council for amendments to the Marion Electrical Ordinance in early 2020. The next year will also see the completion of the reorganization of the housing registration and inspection process. In addition, staff will continue to attend training and participate in and influence regional, state and national building safety organizations to ensure safe built environment throughout Marion.
General Fund FY 2018

- Property Taxes: 13,254,349 (58.3%)
- Other Financing Sources: 6,688,230 (29.4%)
- Charges for Services: 534,336 (2.3%)
- Other City Taxes: 513,462 (2.3%)
- Use of Money & Property: 430,893 (1.9%)
- Misc Revenues: 296,175 (1.3%)
- Intergovernmental: 295,492 (1.3%)
- Total Revenues: 22,748,456 (100%)

- Public Safety: 11,766,335 (53.4%)
- Culture and Recreation: 4,503,442 (20.4%)
- General Government: 2,504,548 (11.4%)
- Community & Economic Development: 1,513,243 (6.9%)
- Public Works: 899,685 (4.1%)
- Other Financing Uses: 846,967 (3.8%)
- Total Expenditures: 22,034,220 (100%)

FY2019-FY2024 Capital Improvement Program

Capital project priorities are identified through the City's multi-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The FY2019-FY2024 CIP represents approximately $150 million in projects and establishes the City's blueprint for investments in its capital infrastructure. The CIP is used as a tool to ensure that the City’s long and short-term capital investments are made in the context of careful consideration of the City’s needs as well as the resources available to fund all projects.

Strong Bond Rating

The City of Marion continues to maintain its strong Aa1 bond rating, as assigned by Moody’s Investors Service. Marion has received this rating consistently since 2010 with each issuance of bonds.

This rating allows the City to borrow at lower rates and stretches taxpayer dollars further.

Our independent annual audit by Hogan-Hansen indicates that Marion’s financial statements are presented fairly and accurately in accordance with accounting principles accepted nationwide.

Operating Budget

The City Manager's office and the Department of Administrative Services are responsible for preparing an annual operating budget that is consistent with the objectives of the City Council and the Strategic Plan.
Marion is proud to be the best place in Iowa to raise a family and grow a business. Here we reach higher and achieve more; in business and in life.

Uptown Artway
Marion's Uptown Artway has transformed an underutilized alley in the central business district into a pedestrian destination and community “living room” that features nine permanent public art installations. The Uptown Artway received two prominent awards for the City in 2018; the City Livability Award by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the All-Star Community Award from the Iowa League of Cities.

Did you know?

- Marion was proud to receive the All-Star Community Award in both 2017 and 2018 from the Iowa League of Cities. Marion was among three of Iowa's 945 cities to garner such recognition. In 2017, the Klopfenstein Amphitheater for the Performing Arts at Lowe Park was recognized. In 2018, the community won the award for the Uptown Artway placemaking project.
- In July 2018, an effort led by the Marion Chamber of Commerce resulted in our community being re-designated as one of Iowa's Great Places. The program celebrates communities with a bold vision for the future and supports the development of new and existing infrastructure. Marion will be able to apply for funding for projects tied to the community's vision plan, established as part of the ImagiNEXT visioning process.
- In June 2018, Marion was one of 20 cities to be honored at the 2018 City Livability Awards Program during the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ 86th Annual Meeting in Boston. The award recognizes programs that improve the quality of life in America’s cities. Mayor Nicolas AbouAssaly accepted the award for the Uptown Artway placemaking project.
- Marion landed in the top 10 percent of Best Small Cities in America according to WalletHub in the fall of 2018. WalletHub's analysts compared more than 1,200 U.S. cities with populations between 25,000 and 100,000 based on 40 key indicators of livability. Marion secured the number four spot among all 1,200 communities for lowest housing costs.
- For the 18th year in a row, Marion was recognized as one of the safest cities in Iowa for cities with over 20,000 in population.
- In April 2018, the National Arbor Day Foundation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Bureau awarded Marion the Tree City USA Growth Award. Marion has achieved Tree City USA status every year since 1993.
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