



## Outdoor Aquatics Status Update & FAQs

For nearly 40 years, the Marion Pool at Willowood Park has been a community gathering place where residents learn to swim, stay active and create memories. After decades of service, the pool is coming to the end of its useful life, and increasingly costly repairs have become an annual challenge.

Last summer, community members were surveyed to understand the level of investment, if any, Marion taxpayers were willing to support related to the construction of a new outdoor aquatic facility. Based on the findings showing less than 60% support for the possible bond referendum to fund the project, a compressed timeline and overall project cost, Marion City Council opted not to pursue a referendum last fall.

Still, the City of Marion is continuing to develop a long-range plan for a new, family-friendly outdoor aquatic center in partnership with a resident-appointed steering committee.

Currently, staff and project consultants are evaluating the future of public aquatics through three active project tracks:

1. Assessing the capabilities and lifespan of the existing pool at Willowood Park
2. Determining private sector interest in an outdoor aquatics park
3. Refining the scope and scale of the previous outdoor aquatics park proposal

### 1. Why is the City reevaluating the aquatic center project?

The City is reevaluating the aquatic center project to ensure any future investment is financially responsible, sustainable and aligned with community needs. Since the original concept was developed, construction costs, operational costs and economic conditions have significantly changed.

### 2. What process is the City currently following?

The City is currently working through three parallel tracks:

1. Marion Pool at Willowood Park Assessment
2. Private Sector Exploration
3. Aquatic Center Refinement

### 3. What is included in the assessment of the existing Marion Pool at Willowood Park?

This assessment will help determine:

- The remaining lifespan of the existing pool
- Major repair and replacement needs
- Estimated costs for future repairs
- The cost of replacing the existing pool with a similar neighborhood-scale facility

The assessment is intended to help provide a clearer understanding of the long-term viability of the existing facility.

### 4. What is private sector exploration?

The City has continued discussions and outreach regarding potential private-sector involvement and partnership opportunities connected to the development of a regional outdoor aquatic center.

This process helps evaluate:

- Potential partnership interest
- Long-term operational considerations
- Economic feasibility
- Opportunities and limitations associated with private-sector participation

At this time, no formal partnership agreements or commitments have been made.

### 5. What is included in the aquatic center refinement process?

The City continues to work with consultants to:

- Refine the existing regional aquatic center concept into a more community-scale facility
- Explore more affordable options
- Evaluate potential phasing opportunities
- Prioritize amenities most important to Marion residents

The goal is to better understand what type and size of facility best serves the community while remaining financially responsible.

**6. What could fit at the Willowood site if a new pool was built?**

Current planning estimates show the Willowood site could support a neighborhood-scale aquatic facility with approximately:

- 12,000–14,000 square feet of water surface area
- Estimated construction costs are between \$13 million and \$17.5 million

These estimates do not currently include:

- Additional site improvements
- Utilities
- Stormwater infrastructure
- Traffic or parking improvements

**7. Why would the pool at Willowood Park likely remain a neighborhood-scale pool?**

Due to the surrounding neighborhood conditions, parking limitations and traffic impacts, the Marion Pool at Willowood Park would likely function as a neighborhood-scale aquatic facility rather than a larger regional destination.

**8. Has the City decided which option it will move forward with?**

No. No final decisions have been made at this time.

The purpose of the current work is to provide updated information regarding:

- Costs
- Site limitations
- Facility sizing
- Community impact
- Long-term operational considerations
- Potential phasing opportunities

This information will help guide future discussions and decisions.

**9. Is the pool at Willowood Park closing?**

No decisions have been made regarding the future of the Marion Pool at Willowood Park. The current assessment is intended to help determine the pool's remaining useful life and future maintenance needs.

**10. Why not simply rebuild the existing pool at Willowood Park?**

That is one of the options being evaluated. The City is currently comparing:

- Maintaining the existing facility
- Replacing the facility with a similar neighborhood-scale pool
- Refining the aquatic center concept
- Exploring phased construction

**11. What amenities are being considered in future concepts?**

Previous community engagement has shown strong interest in:

- Lazy rivers
- Water slides
- Zero-depth entry
- Family-focused recreation areas
- Shallow water play opportunities
- Flexible programming spaces

Future concepts will continue to evaluate how amenities align with community priorities and project affordability.

**12. How can residents stay informed or provide input?**

The Aquatic Center Steering Committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 5 p.m. at Marion City Hall. In addition, monthly project updates are provided to the Marion City Council during regularly scheduled meetings.

Additional project information, updates, presentations and meeting materials can also be found at [www.cityofmarion.org/aquaticspark](http://www.cityofmarion.org/aquaticspark).

**13. What happens next?**

In the coming months, the City expects to receive:

- Willowood Pool assessment findings
- Refined aquatic center concepts
- Updated cost estimates
- Potential phasing scenarios

Additional updates will continue to be shared with City Council and the public as information becomes available.