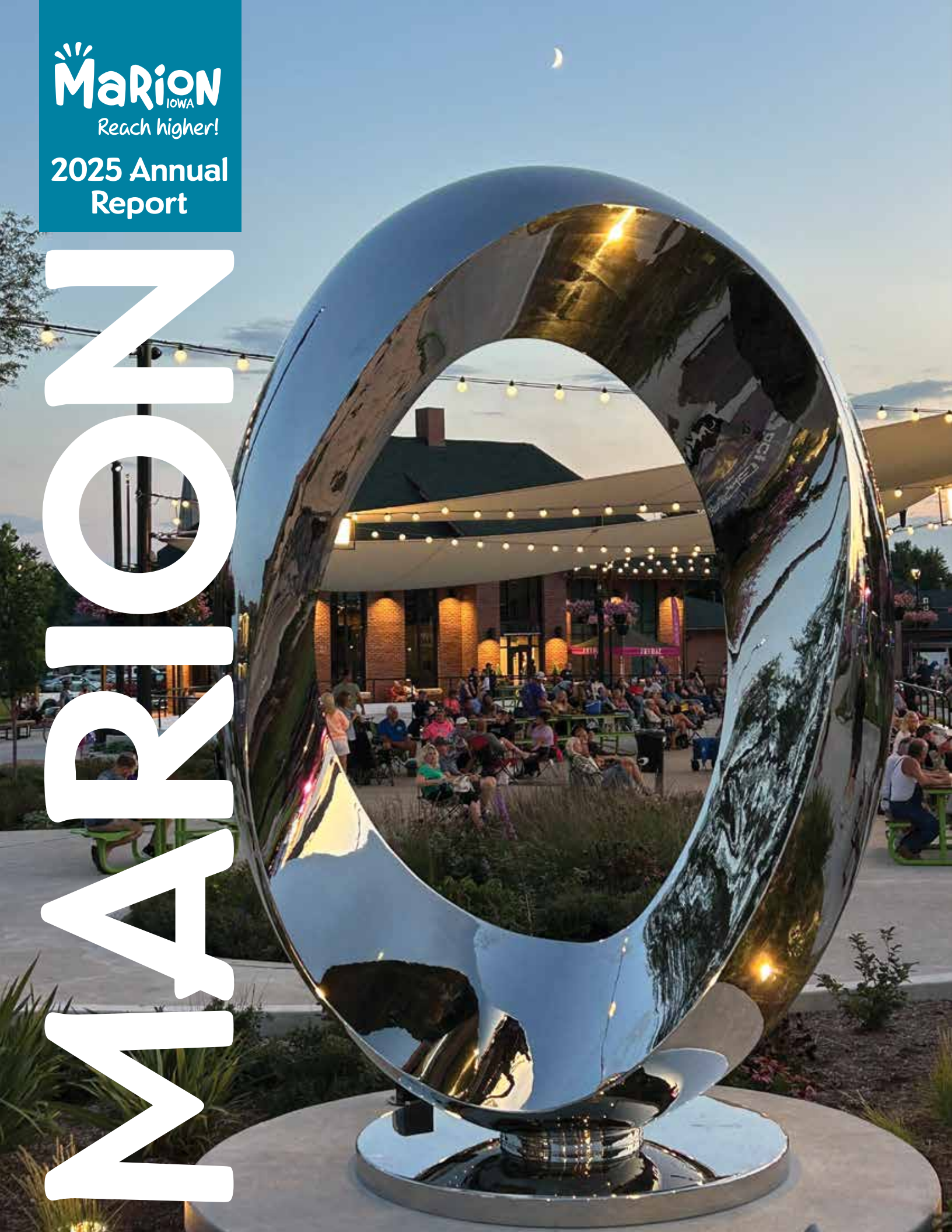


**MaRion**  
IOWA

Reach higher!

**2025 Annual  
Report**

# MARION





**MEET THE MARION  
CITY COUNCIL**

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Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present the 2025 City of Marion Annual Report on behalf of the City Council, our City Manager and the entire City team.

Marion continues to drive exceptional growth and progress as we raise the bar for ourselves and for communities across Iowa. With a strong focus on delivering excellent services and elevating both quality of life and quality of place, we are delivering on our core promise: to be the best place in Iowa to raise a family and grow a business.

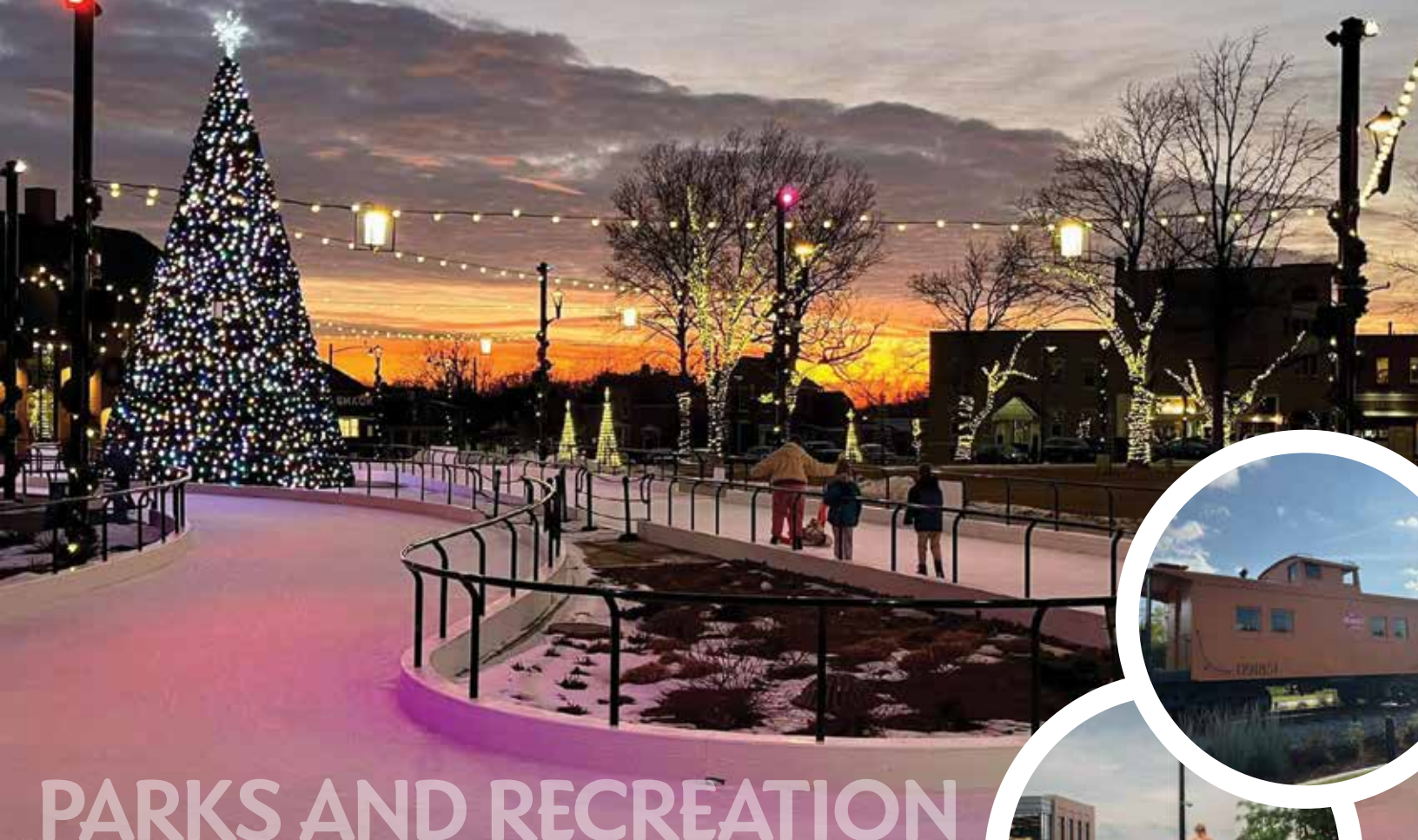
I'm proud to say that Marion exemplifies responsible, responsive and accountable local government committed to serving people and investing in their futures. That commitment is reflected in the confidence of our residents. In our most recent community survey, 88 percent give high marks to the overall customer service by Marion employees, and 93 percent rate Marion as a "good" or "excellent" place to live.

Thank you for your part in Marion's success. Together we are leading the way and shaping a "City of Opportunity," where people and businesses can thrive.

Let's continue reaching higher, together!

Nicolas AbouAssaly  
Mayor

# MARION



# PARKS AND RECREATION

## CENTRAL PLAZA AT CITY SQUARE PARK:

A reimagined Central Plaza at City Square Park grew from the community-driven ImagiNEXT visioning process, reflecting residents' desire for a welcoming, active gathering place in the heart of the community. Designed as a year-round gathering space, it features a refrigerated ice-skating loop that has attracted over 5,000 visitors in its inaugural season, along with an interactive water feature, a performance space, public art and the enclosed Depot Pavilion. The \$8.35 million project was funded through broad public and private support, including a \$3 million Destination Iowa grant and a \$1.3 million capital campaign led by the Marion Parks Foundation. Since its completion in May 2025, the Central Plaza has boosted foot traffic for nearby businesses and created a vibrant hub for all seasons.

## PLANTS AND TREES:

Urban forestry efforts advanced with the planting of 1,000 trees citywide and continued implementation of the Reforestation Master Plan. The horticulture division planted and tended to 4.25 acres of planting beds throughout Marion's park system. The Central Plaza added 38 baskets and 11 planters for a total of 86 hanging baskets and 100 planters in the Uptown Marion District, creating an inviting gathering space for residents and visitors.

## PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS:

In 2025, new playgrounds were installed at Ascension Park and Taube Park/Wilkins Elementary. By working together, the City and Linn-Mar Schools combined resources to upgrade the playground and surfacing. The finished project supports both school-day use and public access outside of school hours. Additionally, Draper Park, Marion's new pocket park, was completed. It honors Marion's railroad history and serves as a destination along the Grant Wood Trail. Neighborhood park master plans for Willow Park, Willowood Park, the Lucore Road park property and the Waterlinn Park property east of Mullion Way were developed.

## OUTDOOR AQUATICS OPTIONS:

Last fall, Marion City Council voted to hold off on putting the proposed outdoor water-park style aquatics facility on the November ballot. Council members cited the overall project cost, a compressed timeline and survey findings showing less than 60% support for the possible bond referendum to fund the project as reasons for the decision. City Council directed City staff and the resident-appointed steering committee to continue to explore other opportunities related to aquatics services in Marion.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2026, Parks and Recreation will focus on improving the quality and efficiency of existing assets while advancing key initiatives, including:

- ▷ Gill Park playground replacement
- ▷ Implementation of Site 1 of the Indian Creek Master Plan
- ▷ Lowe Park pond development, in conjunction with the Lowe Farm Preserve development
- ▷ Continued evaluation of outdoor aquatic services for Marion



### WHAT'S NEXT?

Library staff are looking forward to another year of providing excellent service across Marion, including:

- ▷ Introducing a food pantry at the library in the spring
- ▷ Coordinating a community-wide read in the fall of 2026 to coincide with America's 250th anniversary

The library saw  
**180,378**  
VISITS

last year, from school children and families to seniors and teenagers.

Over  
**73,000**  
PATRONS  
attended a library program.

**3,720**  
PATRONS  
signed up for a library card.

### LIBRARY SERVICES:

In 2025, the Marion Public Library delivered meaningful progress and expanded service to meet community needs. The first full year of bookmobile service brought library access to neighborhoods across the city, while the launch of a new strategic plan – recognized with a PR Xchange Award from the American Library Association – set a clear, community-driven vision for the future.

### PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL FOOTPRINT:

As demand for affordable, shared resources continues to grow, the library expanded both its physical and digital footprint to ensure residents can access materials, technology and opportunities for learning. Investment in patron-focused services included expanding MakerSpace hours through the addition of a full-time MakerSpace library assistant, empowering creativity and hands-on exploration for patrons of all ages. The library also reached a milestone of 1,000 children enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, offering families the gift of early literacy.

# LIBRARY



# PUBLIC SAFETY

## NEW POLICE DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP:

In August, Jeremy Sprague joined the City of Marion as its new chief of police. Sprague brings 25 years of dedicated law enforcement experience to the position, including 19 years with the Des Moines Police Department. Since joining the City, he has been leading a comprehensive strategic planning process, including a thorough review of the organization's structure and daily operations to ensure the Marion Police Department is serving the community as efficiently and effectively as possible. Staff recruitment for police officers and operators in the 911 Communications Center continues to be a priority.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND STANDARDS OF COVER STUDIES:

2025 saw a thorough review of emergency medical services from the time 9-1-1 is called until the arrival of the patient at the hospital. Several recommendations were identified, and Team Marion is working towards implementation for a safer community.

The Standards of Cover study helps the Fire Department identify and address community risks by analyzing local demographics, geography, hazards and service delivery capabilities and limitations. This process is essential for creating a data-informed framework for decision-making and assessing performance against measures. Several recommendations were identified to help the Fire Department more effectively plan for the future.

## ENHANCED OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

The new Public Safety Training Center features live fire and technical rescue training and advances training capabilities for Marion and beyond. Construction of the two structures on the training center campus, the two-story live fire structure and four-story training tower, was completed in 2025. The total project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2026 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS THROUGH EDUCATION:

The Marion Fire Department made 7,736 in-person contacts, teaching community members how to be safer in their homes and from fire. The department trained 1,022 community members in Hands-Only CPR. Bystander CPR triples the chance of survival when compared to no CPR being administered before the arrival of first responders.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2026, the Police and Fire Departments will focus on the following initiatives:

- ▷ Continuing progress on staffing and recruitment for police officers and communication operators
- ▷ Establishing a Crisis K9 Program
- ▷ Introducing a 2026 Citizens Police Academy to foster transparency, build partnerships and educate and empower residents
- ▷ Pursuing Police Department Accreditation and Policy Review
- ▷ Pursuing Fire Department Accreditation

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▷ Expanding the housing options available in the community
- ▷ Exploring new parking strategies and continuing to implement the parking study in partnership with the Uptown Parking Implementation Taskforce
- ▷ Developing subarea plans to engage future development and redevelopment along major corridors



## MARION 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

Marion 2045: A Plan to Reach New Heights is a comprehensive plan adopted in March 2025. It serves as the City of Marion's official policy guide for physical improvement and development. The plan considers not only the current needs and issues within the community but also presents a plan for guiding new improvements and developments for the next 20 years.

To support the new comprehensive plan, Marion 2045: Design Standards Guide was developed to assist stakeholders, providing a visual representation for design requirements.

Marion 2045 is an important tool that guides sound and efficient community growth patterns based on the vision of community stakeholders. The plan establishes the ground rules for private improvements and developments, and provides the framework by which the City can review and evaluate private development proposals. In addition to private improvements, the plan presents a number of public improvements that can help ensure that local dollars are spent effectively.

## HOUSING NEEDS:

Marion's population continues to grow, and so does the need for different types of housing. Maxfield Research and Consulting, LLC completed a Housing Needs Analysis in 2023 and assessed demographic/economic data and housing market conditions for Marion. The report highlighted a need for an additional 2,739 housing units in Marion through 2030.

Several housing projects made significant progress in 2025, including Broad & Main on 6th, Belltower Lofts and Hoth Flats, all located in Uptown Marion. These three projects will provide a combined 120 additional housing units upon completion. The final phases of East Town Crossing, at the northeast corner of Highways 13 and 151, and Green Park Apartments, at the corner of 31st Street and 10th Avenue, are also underway. Together, they will provide an additional 119 market-rate apartments with indoor parking and high-end amenities.

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



## UPTOWN MARION:

In 2025, the Uptown Marion District hosted events and built partnerships that drew people into the district. Grounded in the Main Street Iowa framework, Uptown Marion deepened collaboration with the City, volunteers, property owners and community partners to ensure long-term value and sustainability. They remained responsive to changing conditions, proactively addressing construction, parking and access concerns with clear communication, and maximizing limited resources through efficiency, adaptability and strong partnerships.

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:

The Chamber experienced one of its strongest membership growth years in recent history through intentional outreach, improved onboarding and expanded engagement. The Marion Business Academy enhanced the Chamber's networking and professional development offerings through refreshed programs, new-member mixers, speed networking and a strategic partnership with Kirkwood Corporate Training.

Additionally, the Chamber team successfully produced and supported a robust calendar of free, community-focused events that enhanced quality of life, drove tourism and supported local businesses. Investments in event infrastructure and creative placemaking elevated the experience for residents, visitors and sponsors while reinforcing Marion as a vibrant destination.

## MEDCO:

At its core, Marion Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) is built around four essential business units that drive sustainable progress in Marion. They include community development, workforce development, retention and expansion, and business attraction.

MEDCO welcomed MacArthur Company and Telcom Construction to Marion in 2025 and celebrated with ESCO Electric as they broke ground on their new facility east of Highway 13 and south of Highway 151. Area Ambulance Service completed its new facility, and Parry Labs, a defense technology firm, expanded its footprint in Uptown Marion. Additionally, McGrath Volkswagen Service Center, located near Thomas Park, completed its expansion and remodel, adding a new service drive and updated facilities designed to enhance the customer experience.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▷ Launching a new Uptown Marion Business Support Grant to directly invest in local businesses and encourage growth, reinvestment and long-term success

### WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▷ Building on the membership momentum created in 2025 with a renewed focus on retention and service
- ▷ Rolling out the 17-foot by 10-foot portable screen that was purchased in 2025 and made possible through the City of Marion's Hotel/Motel Grant Program

### WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▷ Adding an additional staff member to focus on new business attraction
- ▷ Launching the Business Voice Call initiative for corporate headquarters

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▷ Updating the City's Strategic Plan to incorporate the National Community Survey™ results for Marion
- ▷ Completing the five-year Strategic Plan for the IT Department aimed at enhancing technological capabilities and aligning them with the City's long-term objectives
- ▷ Improving budget transparency and facilitating expense allocations and performance tracking through further implementation of the cost allocation methodology

# ADMINISTR.



## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:

The Paul Draper Spirit of Marion Award was established to recognize a City employee who best exemplifies public service, teamwork, a strong work ethic and humility, all combined with a sense of humor. In 2025, Matt Tielebein, solid waste and recycling manager with the Public Works Department, was recognized with the Paul Draper Spirit of Marion Award. Tielebein spearheaded the transition of the City's manual waste collection process to automated garbage, recycling and yard waste collection. This highly anticipated and complex project involved coordinating truck deliveries, implementing new software and ensuring the availability of various container sizes. Despite the challenges, Tielebein remained dedicated to modernizing waste management for our community. He went above and beyond, spending weekends at farmers markets and other events to educate and engage residents.

The quarterly recipients of the Reach Higher! Award are eligible for the Paul Draper Spirit of Marion Award. In 2025, the following individuals received Reach Higher! Awards:

- Q1: John Hughes, Public Works Department
- Q2: Ashley Osborn, Marion Public Library
- Q3: Brian Davis, Marion Police Department
- Q4: Eric Freese, Community Development Department



# ATION



## WEBSITE REFRESH:

A year-long redesign process of the City website took place in 2025. The refresh provides a new look/feel, updated community imagery, improved ADA accessibility, a new Service Directory widget and enhanced mobile functionality. Additionally, new text and email notification capabilities were incorporated. Residents and others are invited to stay up to date on City services and upcoming events by signing up to receive text alerts or emails from the City of Marion.

## COST ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY:

In collaboration with consultant Cost Advisory Services, Inc., a cost allocation plan was completed earlier this year. This initiative helps ensure property taxes are not subsidizing shared service costs for utility funds, enhancing financial transparency and defining methodologies for budgetary allocations across City departments. The developed methodologies were incorporated into the proposed FY 27 budget using a phased approach.

## 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.

## PROPERTY TAX DISTRIBUTION:

In FY 2025, the owner of a \$100,000 home in Marion paid \$686 annually (\$57.16 monthly) for City services. This includes public safety, public works, culture and recreation, and more. Below is how the funds generated by the City's portion of the property tax bill were distributed:

|                                       |        |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Police .....                          | \$ 172 |
| Fire.....                             | \$ 169 |
| Emergency 911.....                    | \$ 25  |
| Animal Control.....                   | \$ 1   |
| Engineering .....                     | \$ 13  |
| Streets.....                          | \$ 21  |
| Library.....                          | \$ 57  |
| Parks & Recreation.....               | \$ 63  |
| Community & Economic Development..... | \$ 15  |
| Bus Services.....                     | \$ 11  |
| General Government .....              | \$ 28  |
| Debt Service .....                    | \$ 111 |

## FY 2025 OPERATING BUDGET:

The Finance Department prepares an annual operating budget that is consistent with the objectives of the City Council and the Strategic Plan. The table below depicts the General Fund budget from FY 2025. The General Fund is one of several funds in the City's annual operating budget. The total operating budget would also include utility funds, road use tax collections and all other funds. In FY 2025 this added \$106,698,180 in revenues to support city services and accounted for \$107,534,577 in expenditures. Additional budget information is available at [www.cityofmarion.org](http://www.cityofmarion.org).

## GENERAL FUND

| Revenues:               | FY 2025           |             |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Property Taxes          | 17,467,415        | 46%         |
| Other Financing Source  | 12,490,106        | 33%         |
| Charges for Services    | 782,496           | 2%          |
| Licenses & Permits      | 873,083           | 2%          |
| Other City Taxes        | 3,060,654         | 8%          |
| Intergovernmental       | 829,817           | 2%          |
| Use of Money & Property | 1,619,022         | 4%          |
| Misc Revenues           | 1,258,743         | 3%          |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>   | <b>38,381,337</b> | <b>100%</b> |

| Expenditures:                    |                   |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Public Safety                    | 17,166,523        | 49%         |
| Public Works                     | 882,601           | 3%          |
| Bus Services                     | 490,380           | 1%          |
| Culture & Recreation             | 6,617,085         | 19%         |
| Community & Economic Development | 1,700,418         | 5%          |
| General Government               | 3,197,554         | 9%          |
| Other Financing Uses             | 4,886,883         | 14%         |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>        | <b>34,941,444</b> | <b>100%</b> |



## INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE:

### STREETS

- ▷ 7,630 feet of new concrete subdivision streets
- ▷ 1,846 feet of reconstructed concrete streets
- ▷ 11,280 feet of hot-mix asphalt (HMA) overlaid streets
- ▷ 8,818 feet of major patched concrete streets

### SANITARY SEWER

- ▷ 17,173 feet of sanitary main installation, including interceptor replacement/oversizing, replacement under reconstructed streets and new subdivision construction

### STORM SEWER

- ▷ 25,551 feet of new storm sewer installed as part of street reconstruction projects, new subdivisions and new drain tile extended to existing neighborhoods

## PUBLIC WORKS GEOTHERMAL ENERGY CREDIT:

In its commitment to responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars, the City installed a geothermal system in the new Public Works Facility. The project's energy efficiency rating resulted in the City of Marion being awarded a rebate of more than \$2.5 million by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

## STREETLIGHT CONVERSION:

The City of Marion took a major step toward a more sustainable future by completing the conversion of 129 streetlights from outdated high-pressure sodium (HPS) to modern light-emitting diode (LED) technology. Funded by a Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, this upgrade was executed by Public Works staff and completed in September 2025. This upgrade directly supports the City's goals to reduce energy use, achieve significant operational cost savings and provide better, clearer lighting for residents, enhancing safety and visibility. This investment will deliver both immediate budget savings and long-term environmental benefits for the City of Marion.

## CDL TRAINING:

Marion Public Works successfully developed and launched an internal CDL training program, graduating over 30 employees with Class A Commercial Driver's Licenses.

## TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPROVEMENTS:

Public Works received a \$653,840 grant award from the Iowa Transportation Commission through Iowa's Clean Air Attainment Program for traffic signal system improvements. The grant will fund the installation of fiber connections between intersections, enabling cross-communication and improved system coordination.

## WATER TOWER CONSTRUCTION:

The Marion Water Department hired Gerard Tank & Steel to construct a new one-million-gallon elevated water tower at 6401 Lucore Road. This tower will increase pressure on the north and east sides of Marion and provide additional water storage for Marion's growing population. The piers and concrete foundation were completed last fall. Work will commence on the concrete pedestal and tank this spring, with anticipated completion in October 2027.

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.



# AWARDS & DESIGNATIONS

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ▷ The City of Marion and Shive-Hattery, Inc. were recently honored with the **2025 Excellence in Energy Efficient Design Award for Marion's Public Works Facility**. This award, presented at the 2025 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Iowa Convention, celebrates projects that demonstrate outstanding efforts to reduce energy use for new construction, building additions or major renovations. The facility achieved a 66 percent annual energy savings compared to the Commercial New Construction (CNC) program baseline.
- ▷ For the past 25 years, based on population and reported crimes, Marion continues to be **one of the safest cities in Iowa**.
- ▷ The Marion Public Library won a national **PR Xchange Award** from the American Library Association for its 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. The publication won the top honor for born-digital annual reports and strategic plans in the library operating budget category of \$1-5 million.
- ▷ In May 2025, with support from the Friends of Marion Parks, Marion was redesignated a **Bird Friendly Iowa Community**. Marion is proud to contribute to the creation and preservation of wildlife and bird habitat in our community.
- ▷ In April 2025, 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 and has received the Growth Award since 1994.
- ▷ The **Marion Fire Department Headquarters**, and its use of biophilic design principles to support firefighter physical and mental wellness, continues to earn national and international recognition.
- ▷ Marion was recognized for its commitment to resident-centered decision-making with five **Voice of the People (VOP) Awards** in late 2024. Marion was recognized for excellence and transformation in community design, transformation in parks and recreation, transformation in mobility and transformation in the natural environment. The VOP Awards are the only nationally recognized honors given to local governments based on resident input, government performance and the use of community data in decision-making.



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