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CONTACT INFORMATION:

Contact Person: Jill Ackerman
Title: President
Marion Chamber
Telephone Number: 319-743-4721
319-431-1242
Email Address: Jill@marioncc.org

ImagiNEXT Announces the Future Four Marion’s Community Visioning Process

ImagiNEXT, Marion’s community visioning process, has announced the Future Four ideas. Since kicking off the project in October, 2017, over 3,000 ideas were collected to help enhance our already thriving community.

“We are thrilled to announce these Future Four initiatives for Marion,” said Jill Ackerman, Marion Chamber President. “Each initiative is made up of several ideas that the community identified they would like to see, and represent opportunities for placemaking and quality of life.”

The Future Four ImagiNEXT ideas include:

The Heart Of It All - Marion’s historic district has always served as the city’s hub of civic and community life. Residents would like to see creative updates that will enhance the year-round curb appeal and functionality of this special area. They understand that dramatic changes will be occurring here over the next few years and have offered a wide range of ideas for improvements. Below are the most often suggested:

- Develop a plaza for year-round outdoor gathering, along with activities for all ages
- Install lighting that enhances public safety & ambience
- Create focal points such as a fountain or water feature with gardens for summertime
- For wintertime, install an ice rink, enclosed fire places and innovative light displays
- Create a performance space in City Square Park
- Upgrade the depot, maintaining its history while making it more useful year-round
- Expand the Uptown Artway to the east & west
- Add more public seating in the shopping area

Just Keep Swimming... - Since Marion’s population is growing and the municipal pool is aging, new aquatics options need to be considered. In fact, a pool with cool waterpark features is the number one idea offered by residents. Marion’s national ranking as a top 10 place for families should be supported by outstanding public amenities that meet or exceed expectations for recreation, education, fitness and fun! Below are design features residents have suggested for a new pool:

- Unique slides

- Zero entry edge
- Infant/toddler section
- Fountains & waterfalls
- Diving boards of various heights
- Wave pool
- Splash pad area
- Engaging features for all ages, including programming

Creekside Pride - As one of Marion's most significant natural features, Indian Creek offers both challenges and opportunities. Since most residents live within the creek's watershed, they are well positioned and motivated to help prevent regional flooding. Marion citizens are also keenly interested in recreational and educational ideas that embrace their creek. An innovative project that combines these concepts would enjoy widespread support by the community.

- Develop recreational options in and around Indian Creek
- Build a man-made lake/pond
- Offer educational opportunities & amenities while installing wetlands and trails
- Enhance existing green space with gardens
- Expand year-round outdoor recreation options & amenities (i.e. beach in summer, heated spaces in winter)

It's the Little Things - Marion residents have expressed the desire to collaborate with city leaders in the creation of policies that can be put into place relatively quickly. Small ideas can have a big impact, and citizens who are informed and empowered become good stewards of the place they call home. Below is a sampling of their ideas:

- Expansion of curbside recycling
- Marion fireworks on the 4th of July
- Development of an app or text alert system to publicize events
- Expansion of the open container area in Uptown
- Installation of kiosks and/or welcome centers in high traffic areas in Marion

These Future Four ideas will be part of an application to Iowa Great Places. Designation is given to communities with a strong vision for innovation, and enhancing vitality and quality of life. The program supports the development of new and existing infrastructure intended to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities of regions in Iowa.

ImagiNEXT ideas were determined through community vote and a 23-member Selection Committee. Thank you to Martin Gardner Architecture for design assistance, Iowa BIG, and sponsors: Blue Sky Productions, City of Marion, Farmers State Bank, and KCRG TV9.

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The mission of the Marion Chamber of Commerce is to be a leading advocate for the business community, creating an attractive environment where business will flourish and citizens achieve the highest quality of life.