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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

Marion Re-designated as Iowa Great Place

Today, the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs announced that Marion is among eight other existing Iowa Great Places to be re-designated.

The Iowa Great Places program celebrates communities with a bold vision for the future. The program supports the development of new and existing infrastructure intended to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities of neighborhoods, communities and regions in Iowa.

“The Great Places designation is an endorsement of Marion’s continuing progress and the amazing potential that lies ahead,” said Marion Mayor Nicolas AbouAssaly. “The ImagiNEXT visioning process is giving thousands of residents a role in building the community they desire and helping to increase the opportunities for all people to enjoy a great quality of life.”

According to the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, the re-designation enables Marion to apply for funding this fall for projects that are tied to their community's vision plan. Funding comes from an annual appropriation from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund to the Iowa Great Places program by the Iowa Legislature. Currently, Iowa has 45 Great Places with 13 projects in progress. The average Iowa Great Places grant award from 2014 to 2018 was \$204,000.

“This announcement is a huge win for our community,” said Jill Ackerman, Marion Chamber President. “The original designation played a vital role in completing the Imagine8 projects over the past 10 years and re-designation accelerates the Future Four projects identified through ImagiNEXT. We’ve got a heavy lift ahead of us, but with a dedicated group of civic-minded leaders and volunteers I know we will be successful.”

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 to Marion’s historic district 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.

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!

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.

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.

Full descriptions of the The Future Four ImagiNEXT ideas and an opportunity to volunteer can be found at marionimaginext.org.

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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.