



**Public  
Input**





## Public Input

### **Introduction**

A comprehensive plan is a shared vision for a community, therefore this plan is based heavily on public input. The results of nearly 1,300 surveys and over 13 public meetings were used to guide the focus of the plan. The following are the primary results. Complete meeting and survey results can be found in the Appendix.

### **Chapter Content**

- Community Meeting Results
- Community Survey Results

## Community Meeting Results

### Process

Seven public meetings were held in the Spring of 2009 in the different ‘sectors’ of the city: North Marion, Northeast Marion, East Marion, Southeast Marion, South & Southwest Marion, West Marion, Northwest Marion.

Each Meeting followed a similar format:

1. Description of the ‘sector’ or study area
2. Brainstorming about the city
  - Marion’s strengths and opportunities
  - Threats to Marion’s success as a city
3. Brainstorming about the sector
  - Strengths of the sector
  - Weaknesses of the sector
4. Voting to rank top issues and priorities in each category
5. Focus groups to brainstorm ideas and solutions to common issues
  - Economic Development
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Maintaining the Sectors’s Character and the City’s Image
  - Transportation and Circulation
  - Land Use and Zoning

The following are the city wide results of each topic, as compiled from all meetings and categorized into main themes.

The complete citywide results and voting tallies are located in the Appendix. Results from each meeting can be found in each individual sector study. The results of the focus groups have been used to guide the comprehensive planning process and are highlighted throughout this document.

Sector Strengths	Rank
Parks and Recreation/Tourism	1
Neighborhood Character/ Image	2
Location/Proximity of services and resources	3
Neighbors/Citizens	4
Attractions/Major Employers	5
Shopping	6
Community Services	7
Economic Development	8
City Services	9
Infrastructure	10

Parks and Recreation was voted the top strength of the city. Top voted elements of Parks and Recreation include the Mississinewa River, neighborhood parks, Matter Park, Splash Park, YMCA and the Trail System (Riverwalk and Cardinal Greenway). Under Neighborhood Character/ Image, the strongest elements included family friendly neighborhoods, quiet and low crime rates. Location proximity were also voted as a top strength in the city due to walkable proximity to schools, services and necessities.

<b>Sector Weaknesses</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Infrastructure	1
Economic Development	2
Neighborhood Character/ Image	3
Code Enforcement/ Blight	4
Crime	5
City/ Community Services	6
Economy	7
Apathy/ Citizen Participation	8
Circulation/ Traffic	9
Parks and Recreation/ Entertainment	10
Education System	11

Infrastructure was voted the largest weakness for the city; more specifically curb and sidewalk conditions and needs, street conditions and needs, and stormwater drainage. Economic development was another weakness, including poor restaurant selection with an emphasis on fast food chains, availability of commercial properties and vacant industrial lands. Character and Image, including vacancy rates, rental property maintenance (absentee landlords) and abandoned house conditions/deterioration, were voted as the third largest weakness.

<b>City Opportunities</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Parks and Recreation	1
Tourist/ Attractions/ Events	2
Economic Development	3
Higher Education	4
Community Services	5
Culture/ Arts	6
Healthcare	7
Location/ Proximity to Resources	8
Neighborhood Character/ History/ Place	9
Gateway/ City Image	10
People/ Neighborhood	11
City Services	12
Infrastructure	13

Parks and Recreation was voted the largest opportunity. The YMCA, trail system (the Riverwalk and Cardinal Greenway) and the Parks (Matter Park, Splash Park and overall Park system) were voted top elements within Parks and Recreation. Tourism/ Attractions/Events had the second highest including First Friday, Walkway of Lights, Bike Race and the Quilters Hall of Fame. Economic development opportunities included the expansion to I-69, University Marketplace potential, Five Points Mall and available factory and industrial sites. Higher education was also voted a top opportunity, more specifically educational institutions such as IWU and Ivy Tech.

<b>City Threats</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Jobs/ Employment	1
Residential & Neighborhood Concerns	2
Infrastructure	3
Economic Development	4
Code Enforcement/ Blight	5
Economy	6
City Services	7
Crime	8
Educational System	9
Government	10
Apathy/ Citizen Participation	11
Downtown	12
Entertainment	13
Demographics	14
Gateway/ City Image	15

According to public votes, the top threat within the city include Jobs/Employment. More specifically, a loss of jobs in the industrial field, a lack of jobs, and low paying/ loss of higher paying jobs. Residential and Neighborhood concerns included abandoned and vacant homes, commercial buildings and run down properties, and property maintenance of rentals. Infrastructure was also voted a top threat including failing infrastructure, pavement repair (potholes), dam and levee conditions, an overall lack of sidewalks and inadequate storm drains.

## Community Survey Results (2009)

The following are the general results of the city-wide survey administered throughout the Spring of 2009. The survey was sent to every property along with the monthly trash bill, and available at the Marion Public Library, City Hall, Marion High School, several churches and service organizations, and online. A total of 1296 surveys were returned and tallied. This totals an average of 9% of households within the city or 6% of the population over the age of 18. The complete results of the survey can be found in the Appendix.

Age	
3%	Under 18
2%	18-25
7%	26-35
9%	36-45
21%	46-55
56%	56 +

The majority of surveys (85%) were returned by homeowners that live within the city limits of Marion (83%). Respondents were asked in which sector of the City they lived or owned property. All sectors of the city were represented, but the most responses came from the Northwest, Central, South and North sectors of the City.

77% of respondents were over the age of 46, which is higher than the of the general city population, but may explain the reason for the high number of homeowners.

Employment:	
42%	Employed full-time
10%	Employed part-time
2%	Full-time student
38%	Disabled / retired
7%	Unemployed

The majority of those that responded were either employed full-time or disabled and/or retired. This may be attributed to the age of the average respondent and the location of the VA Medical Health Center within city limits.

Household Income:	
16%	\$0 - \$20,000
29%	\$20,000 - \$40,000
18%	\$40,000 - \$60,000
9%	\$60,000 - \$80,000
12%	\$80,000 +

With nearly a third earning between \$20-40,000, the respondent pool is well in-line with the city's overall median income of \$29,882. The 16% of those earning less than \$20,000 are most likely unemployed, disabled and student respondents. The number of respondents earning \$80,000+ may be attributed to the multiple health care and higher education employees throughout the County and those that have retired from high-paying manufacturing careers.

### How long have you lived/ worked in Marion?

1%	Less than a year
8%	1 - 5 years
6%	6 - 10 years
12%	11 - 20 years
11%	21 - 30 years
59%	31 + years

A large portion of respondents have lived or worked in Marion for 20+ years. Of these, over half were born or raised here, and 28% have lived in their current neighborhood for more than 31 years.

36% of survey respondents had no knowledge of their Neighborhood Association, but only 14% said they weren't interested in being involved. This leaves a significant portion that may be more involved if given the opportunity and meeting information.

**Why did you choose to live/work in Marion?**

1	Born or raised here
2	Offered a job / To find work
3	Quality of life / Small town atmosphere
4	Affordable housing
5	Safe place to live

Many respondents were born or raised in Marion, but many came for work, Quality of Life and atmosphere. The cost of living/high taxes, a lack of job opportunities and loss of community character were the most popular reasons that would cause someone to leave Marion.

**Please rate the following in your Neighborhood:**

1	Our neighborhood is generally safe
2	I would recommend my neighborhood to others to live
3	Our neighborhood is safe at night
4	There should be minimum standards for rental housing regarding appearance, safety, and public health concerns
5	Police protection is adequate

Of the top five responses, 86% felt safe within their neighborhood, but the number dropped to 70% feeling safe at night in their neighborhood. 70% felt that there should be minimum standards for rental housing. 36% of survey respondents had no knowledge of their Neighborhood Association, but only 14% said they weren't interested in being involved. This leaves a significant portion that may be more involved if given the opportunity and meeting information.

**What should be the City's priority to invest public funds to improve the city?**

1	Encourage industrial development/expansion
2	Encourage retail & service development/retention
3	Encourage creative/technology growth
4	Improved/additional streets & sidewalks
5	Focus on design/overall cleanup

Although 39% were interested in restoring Downtown Marion, only 13% were interested in historic preservation as a priority in the next 20 years.

**What major issues should the City of Marion focus on in the next 20 years?**

1	Local job opportunities
2	Neighborhood improvements
3	Restore downtown Marion
4	Retaining youth to live here
5	Population growth
6	Housing for elderly/retirees

Respondents were also asked to identify from a list of features for what they are willing to pay "slightly higher taxes." With 35% of respondents stating not to raise taxes for any reason, 65% noted one or more improvement or service warranting a hypothetical tax increase.

It is suggested that a survey similar to this be readministered on a semi-regular basis to gauge the desires and concerns of the public. In the future, extra effort should be made to engage renters. Many of the questions refer to attracting and retaining youth, college graduates and families. For this reason, it is important to also seek out responses from those new to the community and those between the ages of 18-45.

