

Dear Stellar Communities Review Team,

Marion is proud to submit our fifth application to the Stellar Communities Program. Since 2011, the Stellar process has provided us with a platform to engage the community in new and insightful ways. The process has challenged us collectively to ask tough questions about the economic and cultural state of our City. Now, we are excited to continue our Stellar Vision to meet the needs of our community and address those obstacles head-on.



OUR STELLAR JOURNEY

The Stellar Communities Program has inspired public and private community stakeholders to collaborate on an ambitious vision for what our City could become with the Stellar designation. Through passion and persistence, we have worked toward accomplishing our Stellar Vision, completing projects year after year. In that regard, the Stellar process has been an integral part of our comprehensive development strategy. However, it became clear that we needed to refine our approach and focus on a concentrated initiative that could serve as a catalyst for both short-term and broader long-term revitalization. We needed to rethink how we could leverage our partnerships and assets to maximize the overall impact of our community's investment plan.

We are eager to demonstrate to the State Team how our plan has evolved into a more focused, deliverable, and equally impactful development strategy. Our 2015 Stellar Plan will concentrate efforts on a visible impact to residents and surrounding regions, attract future economic investment, continue to leverage community assets, and foster local support and participation in the Stellar Communities Program. We are energized because now, more than ever, we have the capacity, feasibility, and leverage to deliver a transformative Stellar initiative.

focused
deliverable
IMPACTFUL
development
strategy

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN

For well over 100 years, downtown Marion showcased the best our City had to offer. Downtown was not just a County Seat; it was the heart of Marion. It was the lifeblood from which culture, business, entertainment, and philanthropy thrived. Downtown Marion was a source of pride, hope, and opportunity. But, as industry and manufacturing gave way to modernization, Marion struggled to keep pace. Over the course of the last few decades, the downtown square has suffered the consequences of time and circumstance.

And yet, there is a beacon of hope and opportunity for downtown Marion. There are currently over 80 businesses and organizations located downtown, with over 1,300 people employed in the area. Last year, six businesses opened up downtown locations, and there were over 220 events hosted in the heart of downtown.

Our Stellar Plan focuses on revitalizing approximately nine blocks of the downtown core and the adjacent riverfront area. Although we have refined and refocused our plan, our overall Stellar Vision remains the same. We envision a place where residents and visitors of all ages live, work, play, learn, and grow in the downtown grid once again. We strive to make downtown Marion a center for innovation and success.

9 blocks
of the
downtown
& adjacent
riverfront

STELLAR VISION

Our Stellar Vision is to leverage existing resources to transform the landscape of the downtown core into an interactive and engaging regional arts campus and entertainment venue – and to visually connect the millions in investment in the area to spur new development.

- Encourage a much needed “district mentality” by physically linking existing educational, creative, business, and health resources
- Develop a regional arts and cultural district anchored by a growing Community School of the Arts (CSA) campus
- Enhance the downtown square to serve as a gateway into Marion along State Road 18
- Improve walkable areas that encourage healthy activity and stimulate imagination
- Implement beautification efforts that feature engaging public spaces
- Collaboratively design venues that eliminate current electric, lighting, and ADA limitations
- Increase capacity to host regional entertainment

over
\$23 million
public and
private
INVESTMENT
SINCE 2011

STELLAR PROJECTS: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Marion’s focus on downtown redevelopment is evident in the more than \$23 million in public and private investment since our first application in 2011. Downtown was highlighted as a special focus of the Comprehensive Plan adopted in May 2010. As a result of the planning process from our 2014 Strategic Investment Plan, we have refined our downtown plan, recently adopting a supplemental amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, the Central Marion Revitalization Plan. The Stellar Project Matrix highlights recently accomplished downtown projects that stem from our plan.

Outside of our 2015 focus area, but crucial to our 2014 Strategic Investment Plan, we are currently implementing a Blight Elimination Program (“hardest hit” residential demolitions) and Project STAY (owner-occupied rehab for elderly/disabled). Both projects were awarded by IHCD in late 2014 and would not have moved forward without the Stellar planning process. After collaboration with INDOT, our downtown wayfinding signage has been approved and is awaiting installment in the spring. Within the past year, a new downtown dance studio, Faith in Motion, has put in over a quarter of a million dollars in private investment. Since our 2014 SIP, a local partnership interested in the arts has formed and taken ownership of the Stellar Citizens Art Campaign and is in the planning and fundraising stage. Other projects soon to be underway within the year include the relocation of Fire Station #1, emergency viaduct improvements, and parking lot improvements.

FUTURE STELLAR PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- River Rock Arts Plaza, a multi-purpose plaza, festival space, and entertainment venue with a permanent stage
- Gallatin Street Apartments, an affordable housing project that was not awarded an allocation of tax credits from IHCD in the 2015A-C round but only missed scoring high enough due to technical corrections in the application
- Signage and façade improvements focusing on the Courthouse Square and Washington Street Corridor
- Streetscape improvements focusing on the Courthouse Square and Washington Street Corridor
- Extension connecting the existing Riverwalk through the River Rock Arts Plaza to Gateway Park
- Improvements to Washington Street and Branson Street bridges, focusing on pedestrian safety and ADA compliance
- Street and signal conversions surrounding the River Rock Arts Plaza to improve circulation

Our Stellar projects center on community revitalization and economic development, in turn driving many of our complementary projects, including the Community School of the Arts Annex and the Marion Public Library Museum renovation project, “History Made Here.” See the Stellar Project Matrix for a more complete list of proposed complementary projects.

downtown
resources
THAT ROCK!

3rd Street
Courtyard

Community
School of the Arts

Creative
Community

Dance studios

Family Service
Society

Grant County
Economic Growth
Council

Grant County
Family YMCA

Local
photographers
and designers

Main Street
Marion

Marion Civic
Theater

Marion Grant
County Chamber
of Commerce

Marion Music
& Sound

Marion
Philharmonic
Orchestra

Marion Public
Library &
Museum

Martial arts
studios

Quilter’s Hall
of Fame

LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION

A vibrant downtown creates a sense of place and identity for a community, which provides a ripple effect toward a broader impact locally and regionally. Cities yearn for a place where residents and visitors can come together to celebrate life, family, health, and community pride. Although there are smaller-scale amenities in Marion that serve this purpose well, creating the River Rock Arts Plaza in the heart of what will be the downtown River Rock Arts District would be a catalyst for economic development and a substantial quality of life improvement for residents. Additionally, it would create the type of vibrancy and identity that brings intangible benefits, such as hope, pride in ownership, and accountability to make our community better. Building better communities is about inspiring people to raise the bar. With the resources of a Stellar designation, the River Rock Arts District would be transformed from a tired downtown to a lively place to shop, dine, and do business.

Regionally, Marion has the potential to be an important part of the economic strategy for central and northeast Indiana. Located halfway between Indianapolis and Ft. Wayne, and ideally situated minutes from the Interstate 69 corridor, the opportunities are endless in terms of regional impact. State Road 18 beckons visitors to our city, so we have to ask ourselves, "What is our greeting? What does our gateway and downtown say about our city?" Not only are we trying to capture regional dollars day-to-day from visitors, we want to leave a lasting impression on all those who visit in the hopes that Marion is in the broader discussions about where to live and do business. The SR18 Gateway is the first step toward telling visitors our story, and a revitalized downtown would further that narrative. The Stellar process provides us the real opportunity to make an impact locally and across the central Indiana region.

catalyst
FOR
economic
DEVELOPMENT
AND
improved
quality of life

THOUGHTFUL, FOCUSED, AND DELIVERABLE

Marion is a city of unapologetic ambition. There's a local saying that perhaps best sums up our city's mentality: "Giants Fight, Never Die." To outsiders, this is possibly just a hokey chant at the Friday night Marion Giants basketball game, but to the people who live and work here, it's about always giving 100%, never giving up, and always believing we can reach our goals. Once again, we are applying for the Stellar designation in the genuine belief that we can and will deliver on our Stellar Plan.

TIMEFRAME: For years, we have focused on land acquisition, site control, and preparation, particularly at the riverfront. Combined with our narrower target area and scope, we are confident that our projects can be completed within four years. Our dedication to refining our downtown plan over the years proves that we are flexible and will do whatever is necessary to reach our goals. This includes phasing projects as necessary to make them feasible within time constraints.

COST FEASIBILITY: We have spent countless hours over the past several years developing a sound, feasible budget for our Stellar projects. Our team of local engineers, contractors, and architects donated much of their services and developed our project estimates into detailed budgets for our 2014 Strategic Investment Plan. In 2015, we hope for an opportunity to refine our budgets once again. Also contributing to our cost feasibility, we have site control for every project and pre-engineered plans for many projects. However, our project designs are flexible and can be scaled back or phased, if necessary.

LOCAL FINANCING: To leverage enough public funding for our 2015 Stellar Plan, the City of Marion proposes to dedicate approximately \$3 million over the next four years from a future PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) from Marion Utilities toward Stellar projects. Other avenues of public funding may also be used, including TIF, CReED, and CEDIT.

LEVERAGED RESOURCES: When we were named a finalist in 2014, a "Stellar Angels" investor group of prominent citizens and community stakeholders formed, committing approximately \$2 million toward specific Stellar projects pending designation. If we are named a finalist in 2015, we expect that previous community stakeholders will continue their support. With a more focused and achievable 2015 initiative, there is enormous potential to leverage additional private resources.

focus on
community
revitalization
ECONOMIC
development

MARION
is a city of
UNAPOLOGETIC
AMBITION

—OUR—
TIME
is NOW

Each year, the Stellar process has made us better. This year, more than ever, we are ready to deliver on our promises. All of the key elements are aligned, clear, and attainable. From the focused initiative, to the doable cost, to the implementation of the projects, our team is ready to take our plan from concept to reality.

- ✓ COMMUNITY SUPPORT
- ✓ PUBLIC/PRIVATE INVESTMENT
- ✓ LEADERSHIP
- ✓ FOCUSED PLAN
- ✓ EXPERIENCED DEVELOPMENT TEAM
- ✓ DELIVERABLE GOALS

compliant
WITH ALL
STELLAR
AGENCIES
and proud to be
partners

LEADERSHIP FROM OUR COMMUNITY TEAM

Since 2011, the Stellar process has continued to strengthen our team and collective vision. Many of our team members have been deeply involved in downtown visioning sessions and community forums stemming back to the development of the Comprehensive Plan and the \$9 million renovation of the historic Coliseum into the state-of-the-art downtown YMCA. Our passionate team members have consistently proven their ability to execute large development projects.

President and Director of Engineering at Randall Miller & Associates (RMA), JASON MILLER and his engineering team have dedicated their civil engineering expertise toward our Stellar Plan. RMA is instrumental in the community, having led the way in the development of large, local projects like Ivy Tech Community College, the Dollar General Distribution Center and University Marketplace. If awarded, Miller has agreed to be the program manager and Stellar liaison to the public and state agencies.

Primary grant administration for Stellar projects would be managed by the Affordable Housing and Community Development Corporation (AHC). JACQUIE DODYK and her team with AHC have financed millions of dollars in housing and community development projects and have consistently proven successful in administering federal grants awarded by multiple agencies.

MIKE HALSTEAD of Halstead Architects and his local architectural team have shown diligence and devotion in designing each project included in our Stellar Plan. They have executed multiple housing projects from design to completion similar to the housing component in our plan, and have demonstrated expertise in a wide variety of large projects they have completed across the state.

JUSTIN WILEY, Vice President of Bowman Construction and our construction management expert, has executed the development of large-scale projects such as the Marion General Hospital South Marion Medical Park, the Grant County Family YMCA and the Indiana Wesleyan University South Dormitory.

Marion native, SHELBY BOWEN, is joining the City of Marion Stellar team this year, bringing with him his experience of being on the development teams for the Carmel City Center and the Fishers Nickel Plate District public/private projects. With experience in both the private and public sector, Bowen has demonstrated experience in large-scale downtown redevelopment projects.

The Marion development team is a collaboration of proven leaders who have a strong portfolio of success in their respective professions. Collectively, they are committed to the Stellar Vision and the delivery of our multi-project objectives. This team has the resumes and professional experience with a track record of success in the types of projects defined in our scope.

dynamic
EXPERIENCED
HEMGROWN
community
TEAM

consistently
PROVEN
ABILITY
to implement
projects

PREPARED BY AND FOR THE COMMUNITY

Our community engagement regarding downtown began with public meetings during the Comprehensive Plan Update process from 2008-2010. When we were named a Stellar finalist in 2014, we held meetings with community stakeholders to gather fresh input. Although a smaller team assembled the Strategic Investment Plan, hundreds of community members played vital roles in preparing for and orchestrating our site visit with the State Team. Throughout the entire process, and as we have made progress toward accomplishing Marion's Stellar Vision, we have kept the public informed via social media (www.facebook.com/MarionStellar and Twitter @marionstellar), and various news media, and public events. We held a public "2015 Stellar Launch" meeting in conjunction with the Stellar Communities Program webinar on January 30th. Community engagement remains a priority for our 2015 Stellar Plan.

Make
MARION
a better place
NOT JUST TODAY
but for GENERATIONS
to come

ONWARD AND UPWARD

Since 2011, the Stellar process has been an ongoing tool to improve our community. Because our team is comprised of local, passionate members, we are dedicated to seeing the Stellar designation maximized in a way that we can all be proud of. A Stellar designation would not be a singular objective; it would be the continuation of our comprehensive development strategy that has no defined end date. Furthermore, a Stellar designation would provide many other opportunities not yet foreseeable. That is our sincere hope as we plan to make Marion a better place not just today but for generations to come.

THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

Thus far, the Stellar process has undoubtedly helped foster community discussions and partnerships. As a result, we've implemented nearly every project from our first Strategic Investment Plan in 2011 and are working toward accomplishing several projects included in our 2014 SIP. Our most important community revitalization pieces have yet to fall into place, justifying our need for a 2015 Stellar Plan. Receiving a Stellar Community designation would truly be a game-changer for Marion. We would be an example to other communities, proving the importance of persistent planning for the future. Our implemented plan will foster quality of life initiatives that existing and prospective residents deserve, while our downtown economic development strategy will create an ideal environment for new businesses. Accomplishing our Stellar Vision would help create a true sense of place in our downtown River Rock Arts District; this renewed identity will help us to market our community regionally and nationally.

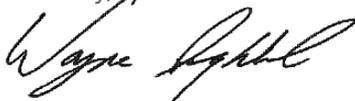
creating
a true sense
of PLACE
in our downtown

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

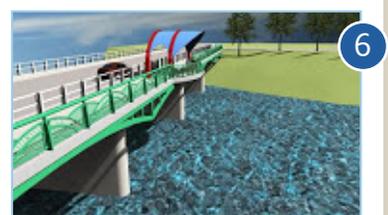
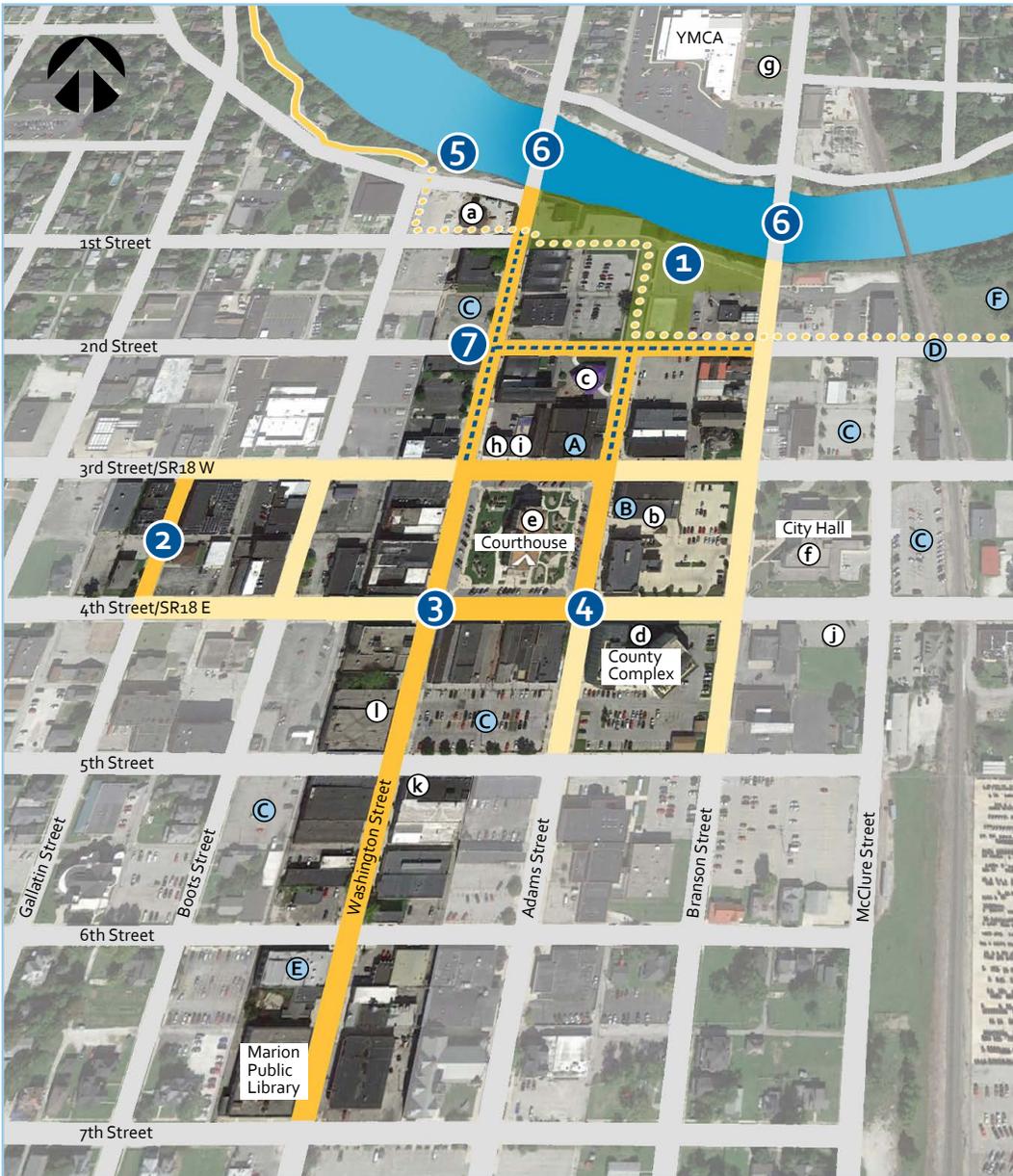
To Marion, Stellar is about challenging our city leaders, community stakeholders, and residents to work together to make our city the very best we can be. To expect more for ourselves – FROM OURSELVES. Our Stellar journey has been about creating a vision, collaborating with great partners, finding the right path, and then utilizing our community resources to achieve our plans. The journey does not start or end here; it continues on from previous years into a bright future for our city. We are inspired by the opportunity and committed to seeing it through. It is our sincere hope that we get the opportunity to share in more detail our focused, deliverable, and significantly impactful Stellar Vision.

BEGIN
with the
END IN MIND.

Sincerely,



Mayor Wayne W. Seybold
City of Marion



STELLAR PROJECTS

- 1. River Rock Arts Plaza
- 2. Gallatin Street Apartments
- 3. Signage & Facade Program
- 4. Streetscape Improvements
 - Phase 1
 - Phase 2
- 5. Riverwalk Extension
- 6. Bridge Improvements
- 7. Street & Signal Conversions

COMPLEMENTARY PROJECTS

- A. CSA Annex
- B. CSA Alternative Online Public School
- C. Public Parking Lot Improvements
- D. Emergency Viaduct Access
- E. MPL Museum, "History Made Here"
- F. Gateway Park

COMPLETED & UNDERWAY PROJECTS

- a. Riverside Community Federal Credit Union
- b. CSA feature wall
- c. Bus depot redevelopment
- d. County Complex & Corrections renovations
- e. Courthouse renovation
- f. City Hall improvements
- g. Brenda's Dream Bed & Breakfast
- h. Glickfield Building
- i. 3rd Street Courtyard
- j. James Dean Memorial
- k. Faith in Motion dance studio remodel
- l. Creative CommUnity