



**MARSHALLTOWN**  
AREA CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE

**Chamber of Commerce**

**Economic Development**

**Tourism**

**Workforce Dev.**

**Community Dev.**

**Plan 2026**

# Chamber of Commerce

“Buy-in” to our mission requires a larger boat and more paddles. How can we activate our networks to be relentless advocates resulting in increased membership, higher event participation, greater sponsorships, and a more robust representation of the business community?

## Immediate Steps (End of 2024 Goal):

- Benchmark “market penetration” against peer communities. Evaluate cost, structure, and services with those communities. (Clinton, Mason City, Fort Dodge, Muscatine, Burlington, Ottumwa, Aspirational Chamber – Urbandale)
  - **Goal: Benchmark Report – Determination of next steps based on report.**
- Update sales strategy and collateral. Educate Chamber Board and Ambassadors on process with dedicated sales training to equip them in Membership Recruitment.
  - **Goal: Host Training for Board of Directors and Ambassadors by 12/31/2024.**
- Conduct a focus group with existing Latino owned business members, soliciting feedback on Chamber value statements. Identify missing services and resources needed.
  - **Goal: Following the release of the Small Business Resource Guide, host a focus group with at least twelve participants.**

## 2025 – 2026 Focus:

- Increase overall membership.
  - **Goal: 525 members with annual recurring revenue (ARR) through membership dues of \$220,000. (Dues, New Dues, Voluntary Dues)**
- Increase the number of annual connections and visits with existing members utilizing volunteer support.
  - **Goal: 95% retention rate.**
- Invite additional participation in events. Begin tracking participation in all events, networking, ticketed, and others. Through active engagement from Board Members, Ambassadors, and staff.
  - **Goal: 25% increase in attendance year over year.**
- Grow programming and services to support our diverse business leadership, based on feedback from existing Latino owned business members.
  - **Goal: Grow membership of Latino owned businesses to fifty total.**
- Prioritize funding resources to add a fluent Spanish speaker to the team, either through additional training or new hiring, and provide additional compensation for this skill.
  - **Goal: Have one staff member able to speak Spanish fluently by end of 2026.**
- Grow annual sponsorship through the Total Resource Campaign. Focus on expanding the number of businesses sponsoring.
  - **Goal: Add ten new event sponsors annually.**

# Tourism

With increased staff capacity, more precise data sets, and more comprehensive branding, how can we grow visitor spend, recruit additional hotel nights, and build capacity for additional events and activities that we are currently unable to compete for?

## Retain:

- Retention of existing is crucial. We must quantify and measure our competitive advantage within our current areas and continue to broadcast our unique strengths.
  - **Goal: Document existing facilities based on capacity, cost, accessibility, and renovation or construction date.**
  - **Goal: Benchmark our facilities against other comparable facilities in Iowa.**
- Implement full retention and expansion strategy. Develop an annual survey to connect with current groups on needs, wants, and positives about hosting in Marshalltown.
  - **Goal: Develop a survey and produce a report with these findings annually.**

## Capacity:

- If we wish to recruit and retain, we must work on capacity of facility development. Hotel diversification is important, and our business travel is diminishing with current offerings. We must identify the need, build a targeted solution, and work on implementation without jeopardizing our existing assets.
  - **Goal: Recruit and build a new full-service Marriott hotel.**
- Youth sports continue to be the largest growing Tourism segment. As we market existing assets for those opportunities, we must identify limiting factors in our recruitment efforts and niche opportunities that we can work to assist in capacity development.
  - **Goal: Produce report identifying facility limitations with new demands.**
- Current event spaces limit our potential conference markets based on size and breakout capabilities.
  - **Goal: Conduct analysis of existing space compared to conference space in other Iowa communities of comparable size. Compare development structures, management agreements, and financial support.**

# Tourism

## Recruit:

- Recruitment of new events and activities for multi-year commitments takes considerable time and resources. We must identify two annual targets for multi-year commitments to pursue with this limited time, based on unique community assets that provide us with a competitive advantage.
  - **Goal: Two annual targets identified, and specific proposals provided.**
- Continue to build out our CRM for future opportunities with an emphasis on youth sports, annual rotating conferences, and business travel.
  - **Goal: Thirty customized proposals for new activities yearly.**

## Industry Support:

- We must ensure a great customer experience throughout Marshalltown and Marshall County. The launch and growth of “Welcome Marshalltown!” will be a premier professional development opportunity for front line retail, restaurant, and hospitality workforce.
  - **Goal: Launch “Welcome Marshalltown!” in 2024. In 2025 begin hosting twice yearly with classes of twenty-five.**
  - **Goal: Based on feedback from classes, evaluate opportunity for 201 class to elevate our customer experience further.**
- The Chamber will offer support for all community festivals with staff capacity, fiscal backing, or coordination subject to approval from our Board of Directors and fit with overall mission.
  - **Goal: Engage all community festivals to determine the Chamber’s best role to support these events and activities.**
- Hosting large scale events takes careful work and planning for both for-profit businesses and volunteer efforts. We will be the repository of best practices for hosting these events in Marshalltown.
  - **Goal: Rollout these strategies through workshops and a published guide.**
- When hosting large events, we will ensure adequate marketing for local businesses is in place to capture more consumer spending in our local economy.
  - **Goal: In 2024, we will develop a pilot strategy for a select number of events with a limited number of businesses to evaluate this opportunity.**
  - **Goal: Based on results from pilot, evaluate a potential ongoing program to drive more spending from visitors at these events.**



# Workforce Development

Workforce availability & limitations continues to be the number one issue facing business & industry partners. We must utilize our position, network, and resources to develop robust and specific initiatives around recruitment, retention, and development of workforce? This is an essential effort to supporting our existing business and industry and demonstrating these assets are a requirement for new business and industry recruitment.

## Recruitment:

- Development of comprehensive recruitment package for new potential employees including:
  - Recruitment tours
  - Trailing spouse/family tours
  - Trailing spouse job support
  - New resident welcome event
  - Relocation packet
  - Welcome liaison
    - **Goal: Develop marketing materials to highlight the variety of services we can provide and distribute these materials to HR leaders and Chamber Members.**
- Increase marketing awareness regarding Home Base Iowa.
  - **Goal: Recruit ten new veterans to Marshall County.**
- Continue our partnership with the Iowa Economic Development Authority on Workforce Attraction Strategy and maximize the return on investment with this initiative.
  - Development and deployment of the workforce video series.
    - **Goal: Three videos**
  - Timely and relevant follow-up will take place with all interested candidates.
    - **Goal: Five relocations through the program**

# Workforce Development

## Retention:

- Through our bi-monthly HR Roundtable efforts, continue solicitation of feedback from employers regarding high turnover positions and develop strategies and support to assist our businesses in overcoming these issues.
  - **Goal: Develop an Annual Survey for HR Leaders and produce a report on findings from the survey.**
- Dedicate marketing efforts and resources to commuters currently coming to Marshalltown for work with specific messaging to move to Marshalltown.
  - **Goal: Based on data from the US Census Bureau's OnTheMap tool, 2021 data has 8,241 in-commuters. Reduction of that number to 7,500 by 2026.**
- Support childcare resource development including available space, stability, reliability, and availability with
  - **Goal: Develop sustainable best practices guide.**

## Development:

- Maximize class participation in Leadership Marshalltown to educate and develop the next community leaders. Engagement in our community from these professionals will offer a more compelling reason to stay in the future. Specific Alumni engagement tactics will include:
  - **Goal:**
    - **Two times annual alumni feature newsletter.**
    - **Annual Alumni networking event**
    - **Engagement with alumni in the current Leadership Marshalltown class**
- Support growth and expansion of the Iowa Valley Community College Career Academy while ensuring alignment of programs to high need positions within our local business and industry.
  - **Goal: Expand outreach and participation in K-12 school systems within Marshall County, beyond the Marshalltown Community School District.**
- Assist in promoting and maximizing the Iowa Valley adult education program and facility to provide individuals and families with economic stability. Currently, Marshalltown's High School Attainment Rate is 79.6%.
  - **Goal: Raise High School Attainment Rate to 82% with plans to continue increasing this through innovative programs.**

# Economic Development

Marshalltown's industrial and employment base must be nurtured, supported, and grown to remain competitive and grow our local economy. How can we best position Marshalltown and Marshall County for recruitment, retention, small business growth, and recruitment of quality retail and restaurant offerings?

## Recruitment:

- Availability of land assets that are "Development Ready" is the necessary first step for attraction of new opportunities. We will develop large site (50+ acres) land assets with abundant utility availability to attract new opportunities.
  - **Goal: Development of 2 new land tracts of 50+ acres**
- With existing land assets, we will continue to market them appropriately.
  - **Goal: 50 New High-Quality Jobs, \$250 Million Capital Investment**
    - Examples of this includes the following:
      - Pursue site certification when appropriate.
      - Location One Information System (LOIS), our property listing service, will be kept current.
      - Prompt RFI response and follow-up.
      - Participation in trade shows and marketing opportunities within targeted industries, including food production, advanced manufacturing, and pet food production.

## Retention:

- Conduct the annual business retention and expansion survey visits with our twenty largest employers engaged in interstate commerce.
  - **Goal: Produce an annual report with compiled results from the survey.**
- Find new ways to build bridges between industry leaders.
  - **Goal: Host an annual gathering of industry leaders to align around community engagement opportunities.**

# Economic Development

## Small Business Development:

- Develop a small business resource guide in both English and Spanish to assist and guide entrepreneurs on steps to take to launch their business, in Marshalltown.
  - **Goal: Develop and launch Small Business Resource Guide.**
  - **Goal: Assist fifteen business per year in navigating startup resources.**
- Develop a mentorship program for entrepreneurs to assist and encourage them through their entrepreneurial journey.
  - **Goal: Launch a mentorship program with ten advisors with varying backgrounds to support entrepreneurs.**
- In partnership with Iowa Valley Community College District investigate local increase in small business support services and programming.
  - **Goal: Launch a new, dedicated resource to work with small businesses here in Marshalltown/Marshall County.**
- Develop programming to assist agri-business development, specifically focusing on small scale production and local sales channels.
  - **Goal: Document all existing local producers in Marshall County**
  - **Goal: Support new production, either new producers or expansion with new products, to grow the small-scale agri-business development by five new products annually.**

## Retail/Restaurant Recruitment:

- Annually benchmark against comparative communities for chain development opportunities and local development in new markets.
  - **Goal: Produce an annual report on performance against other markets.**
- Through the International Council of Shopping Centers Membership, develop and routinely connect with location experts for national and regional chains.
  - **Goal: Have semi-annual conversations with all chains identified in the annual report, plus additional identified chain opportunities.**
- Relaunch Chamber's grant program to support and grow local and regional business in opening or expanding in Marshalltown.
  - **Goal: Relaunch program and expend remaining resources.**
- Facilitate redevelopment plans for the Marshalltown Mall, while supporting ongoing operations of businesses currently located in the facility.
  - **Goal: Full plans have been created for redevelopment of the mall, with a path forward for this investment to take place.**



# Community Development

The vibrancy of the community is as important as it has ever been. Dealing with our community's unique challenges is necessary to address workforce challenges and grow our local economy. How can we best direct our time and energy to tackle immediate challenges like housing, downtown redevelopment, and creative placemaking throughout Marshall County? We must create a community that people want to live and work in.

## Housing:

- Every housing opportunity will be considered for Marshalltown and Marshall County. Specific and dedicated efforts will be expended to pursue market rate housing opportunities.
  - **Goal: 125 additional units.**
- Continue and accelerate the deployment of Make Marshalltown Home resources.
  - **Goal: Expend remaining funds, and complete fundraising on remaining to reach the \$1 million investment goal.**
- Update our housing study to understand progress since the previous housing study. Special focus will be applied to understanding commuting traffic and our market potential with this audience.
  - **Goal: Evaluate existing housing study's strengths and weaknesses, commission a new study to be completed by Summer 2025.**

## Downtown:

- A vibrant downtown is essential to a thriving community. We will continue to assist and support building rehabilitation efforts and find ways to get underutilized buildings to maximum utilization.
  - **Goal: Reduce vacancies on Main Street to less than 10% by the end of 2026.**
- During the upcoming Main Street reconstruction efforts, in partnership with the MCBF, find unique ways to drive revenue and foot traffic to those impacted businesses.
  - **Goal: No construction related closures of impacted businesses.**
- Support hospital and clinic redevelopment projects.
  - **Goal: Redevelopment plans in place and campus is under construction.**
- Lead downtown lot in-fill development opportunities for new multi-story development.
  - **Goal: New buildings at the corner of Main Street & Center Street, and Main Street & 1st Street.**

# Community Development

## Creative Placemaking:

- Continue to support and assist Linn Creek District Projects and Iowa Rivers Edge trail development.
  - **Goal: Projects are fully funded, and construction is completed.**
- Support educational efforts around the value of creative placemaking. Identify and assist development of small-scale projects to demonstrate this value throughout Marshall County.
  - **Goal: Documented economic value of creative placemaking projects.**
  - **Goal: Identify two small scale projects to pursue within Marshall County.**
- Support community efforts for beautification.

# Organizational Sustainability

The sustainability of our organization is the fuel allowing us to accomplish the work outlined in this plan. How do we wisely increase our revenue and capacity, allowing us to perform the work outlined in this plan, but ensure that we minimize exposure to market swings and resource pinches?

## Revenue:

- Our revenue resource will grow as our performance continues to prove value back to the community. We must continue to pursue new revenue growth opportunities and diversification of our revenue to give us the organizational capacity necessary to achieve big goals.
  - **Goal: Grow annual revenue to \$1.2 million**

## Staffing:

- Annual evaluation of organizational effectiveness and capacity will provide clarity on necessary staffing levels for our organization. Internally, we will continue to analyze the team in terms of the right people in the right seats. To maximize organizational performance, we will strive for a highly effective team.
  - **Goal: Conduct an annual review and evaluation with each team member.**
- We prioritize the professional development of our team and will continue to provide these opportunities.
  - **Goal: Ensure a minimum of 1.5% of the annual budget is allocated to professional development.**
- To maximize the impact of dollars put to work to grow and develop the community, we will continually analyze external partnerships or organizational restructuring to minimize duplication of efforts or resource expenditures, if these opportunities will be mutually beneficial for achieving results.
  - **Goal: Compile a report of potential partnerships for the board to evaluate and consider, should opportunities come available.**

## Local Politics:

- The number one risk identified in achieving the progress outlined in this plan is the willingness of local elected leaders to prioritize growth and progress. We must invest time and resources in broader community education on the impact of the work we aim to accomplish to ensure appropriate leadership actions are taken to advance this work.
  - **Goal: Develop a strategy for engagement and the resources to support this effort.**