

# BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION REPORT



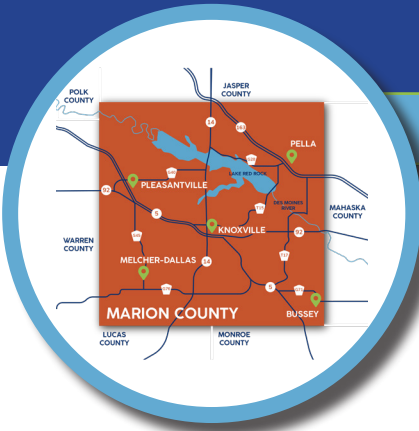
2024 MARION COUNTY, IOWA



# REPORT BACKGROUND

Marion County Development (MCD) for the past two decades has annually conducted a Business Retention & Expansion program. We know the importance of our existing industry is driving growth within the county. This program includes meetings with primary sector companies. The information gained from these meetings helps Marion County Develop, our regional partners and the Iowa Economic Development Authority to identify growth opportunities, potential business challenges, and needs of the business community.

In addition, in 2024, MCD started also conducting quarterly surveys of all businesses within the county called THE PULSE SURVEY to gain more timely input on the trends within the business sector. This survey is open to all businesses located in Marion County, Iowa. To be included in THE PULSE SURVEY contact MCD to be added to the list.



## MARION COUNTY OVERVIEW

2023  
**33,770**  
 POPULATION

2013-2023  
**+0.4%**  
 POPULATION GROWTH

2023  
**\$79,709**  
 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

2000-2023  
**77.1%**  
 INCOME GROWTH

2023  
**19,409**  
 Jobs

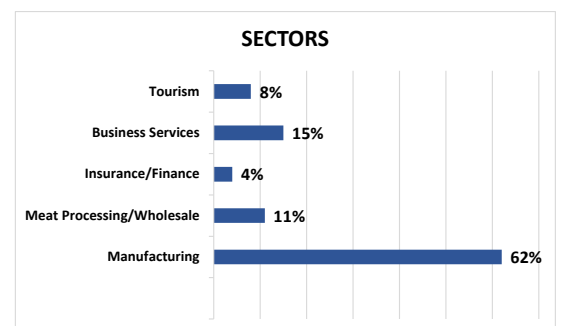
2013-2023  
**17%**  
 JOB GROWTH

Marion County ranks 9th out of 99 counties in Iowa for percentage of residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher education. Unlike many rural counties, the population age 25-44 is estimated to grow by just over 21%. Most rural counties only see population growth in residents over the age of 65. Since 2020, Marion County's population has increased by a higher percent and number, than it did from 2010 to 2020. The gross regional product increased by 73.7% in Marion County from 2012 to 2022 as compared to a 58.4% growth within the US. Marion County's employment is estimated to grow to over 21,000 jobs by 2030.

## 2024 PARTICIPANTS

**28**  
 COMPANIES

REPRESENTING  
**11,622** Marion County  
**71,563** Companywide  
 EMPLOYEES



## KEY FINDINGS

### Businesses cite the following needs to keep them growing in Marion County:

- Increased efforts are needed to upskill, attract and retain talent
- Improved access to I-80
- Enhanced recreational opportunities
- Housing
- Reduced regulatory barriers
- AI, robotics and automation implementation & resources

## IT'S A FACT...

**29%**

of residents leave Marion County each day for employment somewhere else

**37%**

of the people employed in Marion County commute in from outside the county

## TOP ISSUES FACED BY COMPANIES:

### Competitive Job Market

The slowing of the economy in 2024 has done little to change the need for talent. Companies continue to struggle. There remains a high demand for workers, but a limited supply of qualified candidates. There is also a mismatch between the skills businesses are seeking and the skills available. Smart companies are focusing energy on talent retention strategies which are adapting when possible to hybrid, remote and flexible work environments. Companies have invested in technology and training to increase worker productivity.

### Demographic Trends

The growing number of older workers has influenced the availability of labor. Early retirement trends have compounded the impact. Companies who find ways to employ older workers by flexible work schedules and providing benefits to part-time workers may be able to lessen the impact of this demographic shift. The growth in older residents in Marion County and across the state of Iowa also provides opportunities for new services and products.

### Market Instability

New US policies toward international trade could limit opportunities for companies who export and provide challenges for companies purchasing components from foreign countries. Regulatory restrictions have impacted business growth in some sectors which drive product costs higher.

### Economic Instability

Inflation is impacting consumer spending. Layoffs are also having an effect in certain regions of the state. Agriculture is being impacted by lower commodity pricing and higher input costs. Governments are decreasing taxes which could boost the economy, but local governments are faced with new policies that limit growth. Interest rates and building costs remain high which has slowed new housing purchases and increased the threshold for new buyers to enter the market.

**TOP  
10%**

Of US counties for average wage per job

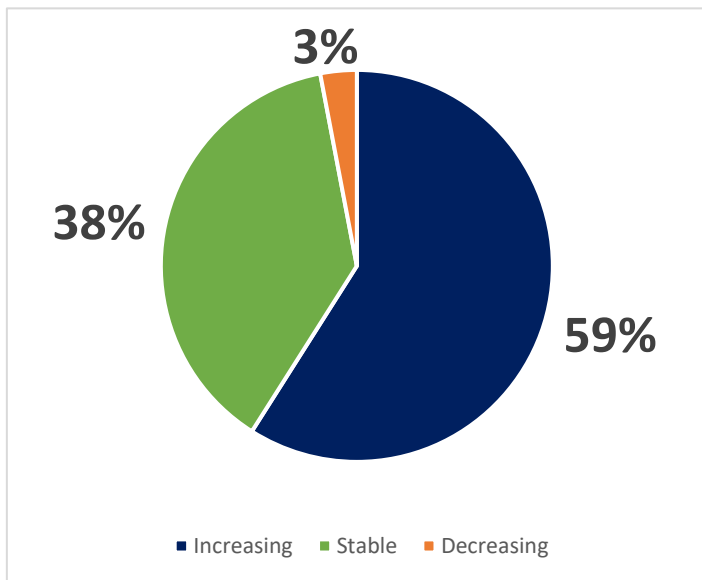
**TOP  
1%**

Of US counties for percentage of jobs in manufacturing



# BUSINESS GROWTH & INNOVATION

## BRE-Company Sales Anticipated To...



Half of the companies visited plan to expand in the next year. These expansion plans include the addition of 325 new jobs and and estimated 141,000 square feet of space.

BRE Companies were asked where their primary product or service is in it's lifecycle. The responses were that 54% of companies had primary products in the growth stage, 14% in the emerging stage, 32% in the mature stage and 0% in the declining stage. Sixty five percent of the BRE Companies predicted that their company would be expanding over the next 12 months. This is a mixture of expansion space, new markets, additional jobs and new product lines. Only 12% of companies predicted a contraction of their business.

# 39%

Of Companies do NOT have an Exit Plan

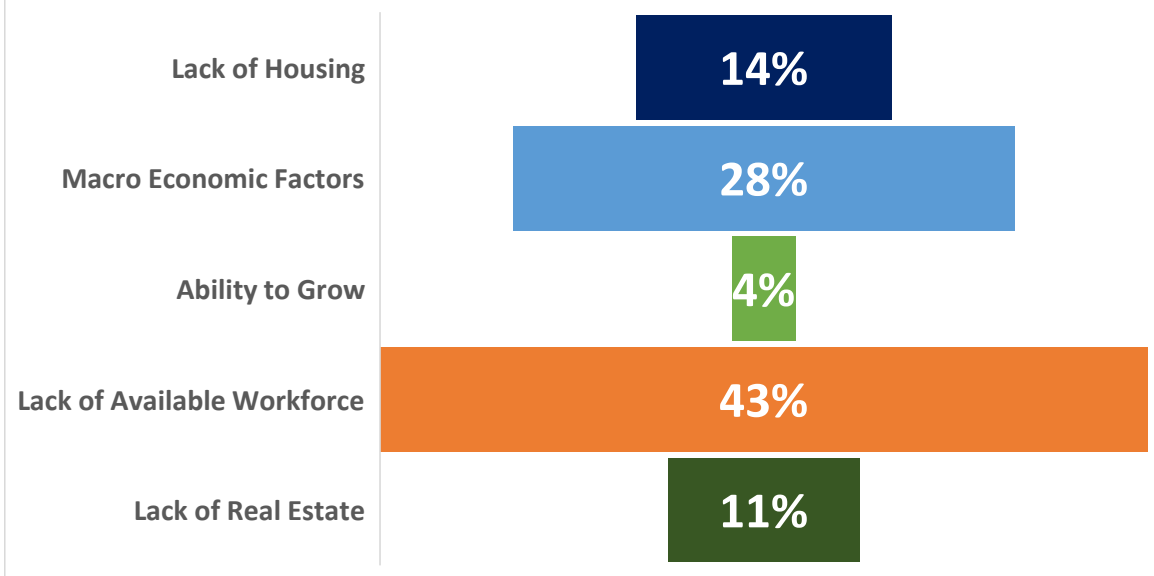
# 86%

Of Companies are using some type of AI or Automation

# 50%

Of Companies plan to introduce a new product in the next year

## BRE-Why companies will not expand in community?



**43%** Marion County

**27%** Iowa

Companies with international sales

BRE Companies were asked if there were reasons their current community would not be considered for future expansion and nearly 64% indicated their current community would be considered for future expansions. But, 36% indicated their Marion County location would not be considered for expansion which compares to only 23% statewide. This number is cause for concern. As illustrated above, the chief concern when expanding in Marion County is finding the workforce to meet company needs. This is a key finding and points to a need to build stronger efforts to recruit and retain talent. Telling Marion County's progress driven story is important to both attract/retain talent, while also shaping the perceptions of local businesses as the best choice for their growth plans.

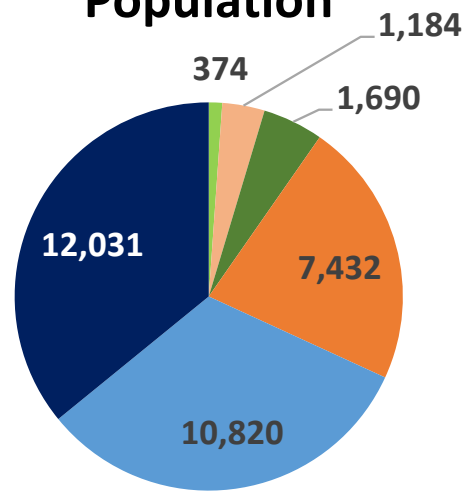
Sector	Establishments	Jobs	Annual Average Wage Per Job
Manufacturing	59	8,533	\$87,986
Health Care & Social Services	116	2,179	\$53,464
Education	34	1,727	\$41,445
Retail	115	1,699	\$29,695
Accommodation & Food Service	76	1,137	\$16,461
Construction	97	604	\$66,200
Information	28	141	\$58,520
Finance & Insurance	59	310	\$77,048
Professional Services	101	389	\$60,383
Public Administration	22	577	\$46,506
Other Services	87	420	\$36,710
Management of Companies	13	45	\$86,968
Utilities	7	40	\$103,946

# OUR PEOPLE

Marion County's population has grown by 1.1% since 2020. Jobs in Marion County have grown by 17% over the past 10-years according to BLS.



## Population



■ Bussey      ■ Melcher-Dallas      ■ Pleasantville  
■ Knoxville      ■ Pella      ■ Other

### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**\$79,709**  
Marion County

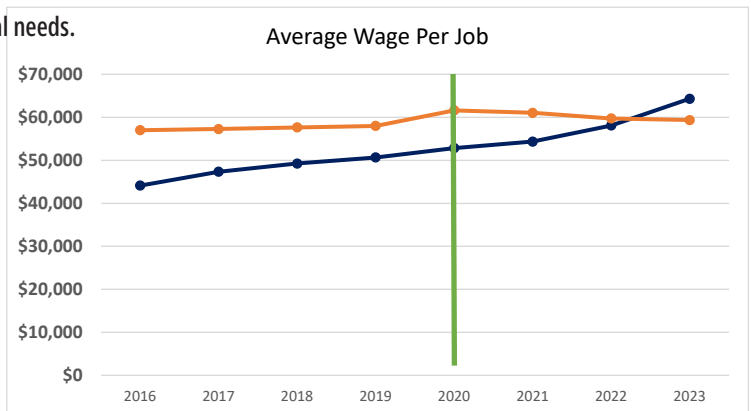
**\$73,147**  
Iowa

**\$80,610**  
US

**57%**  
Of companies anticipate adding new positions within the next year

Of the BRE companies visited 37% indicated they were having difficulty recruiting and retaining talent. This is a dramatic change from 2017 when over 91% of employers indicated they were having difficulties in recruiting and retaining talent. This could be because few employers are seeking employees or that talent strategies have made the search less difficult.

Occupations most commonly cited as difficult to fill include: skilled nursing, custodial, skilled assembly labor, equipment technicians, welders, second shift, line supervisors, sales and engineering. The soft skill most in demand is workers that show up on time every day. 47% of companies are engaged with local K-12 school districts in work-based learning programs to address solutions for talent gaps. The most common strategies for attracting & upskilling talent include: internships, apprenticeships, and workbase learning opportunities for k-12 students. Strategies for attracting and retaining talent include flexibility in work schedule, elevated company culture, increase in pay/benefits and the addition of on-site amenities. Tuition reimbursement or enhanced training funding is offered by 54% of companies visited. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being excellent, companies rated their current workforce at 8.1 in meeting their organizational needs.



Location	Percent of workers who work at home
US	11.7%
Iowa	9.3%
Marion County	7.4%
Pella	5.4%
Knoxville	8.1%
Pleasantville	11.3%

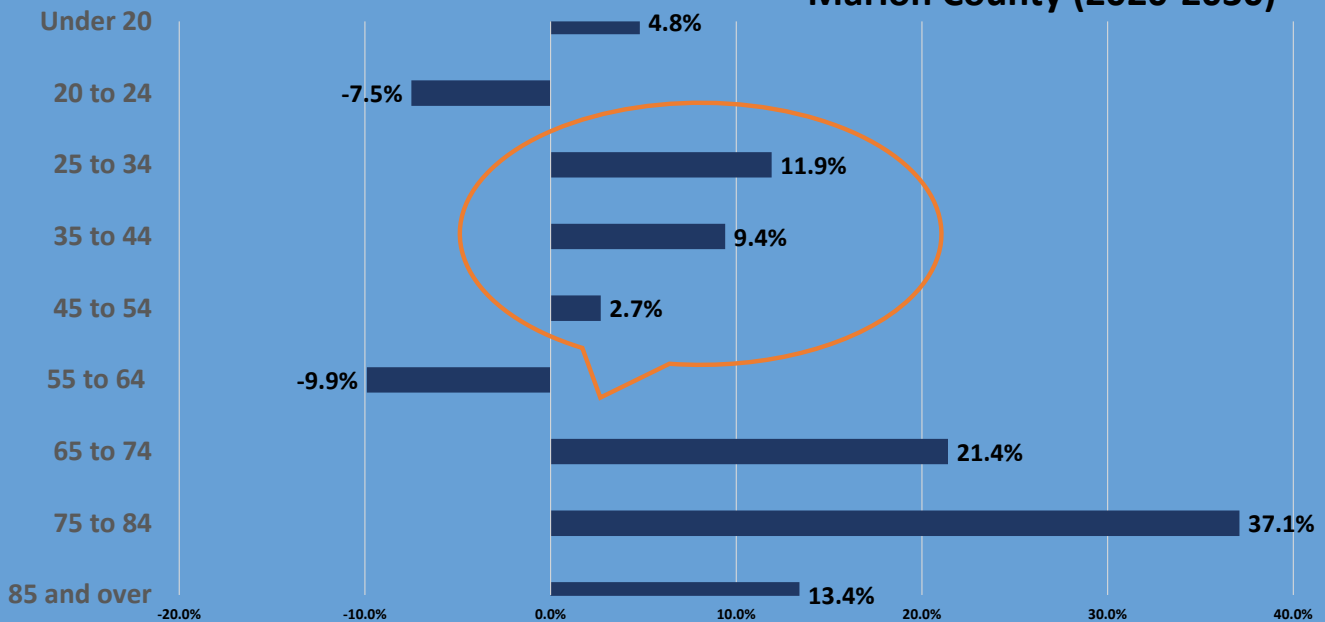
**98%**  
Of Marion County's laborforce is employed

**8%**  
Poverty rate in Marion County, Iowa (11% US)

**36%**  
Of Marion County's households are married without children (29% US)

There are 1,064 establishments within Marion County that employ 19,409 people. Of the Marion County residents provide a laborforce of 19,395. The annual unemployment rate in December 2024 for Marion County was 2.2%.

### Population Growth by Age Group Marion County (2020-2030)

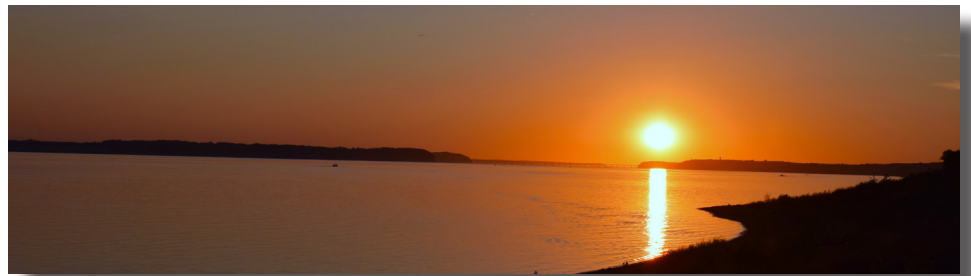
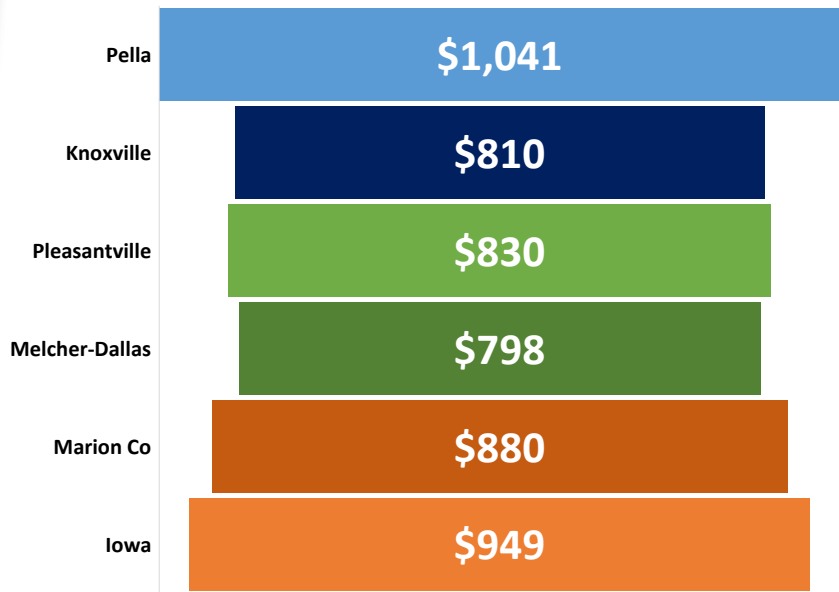




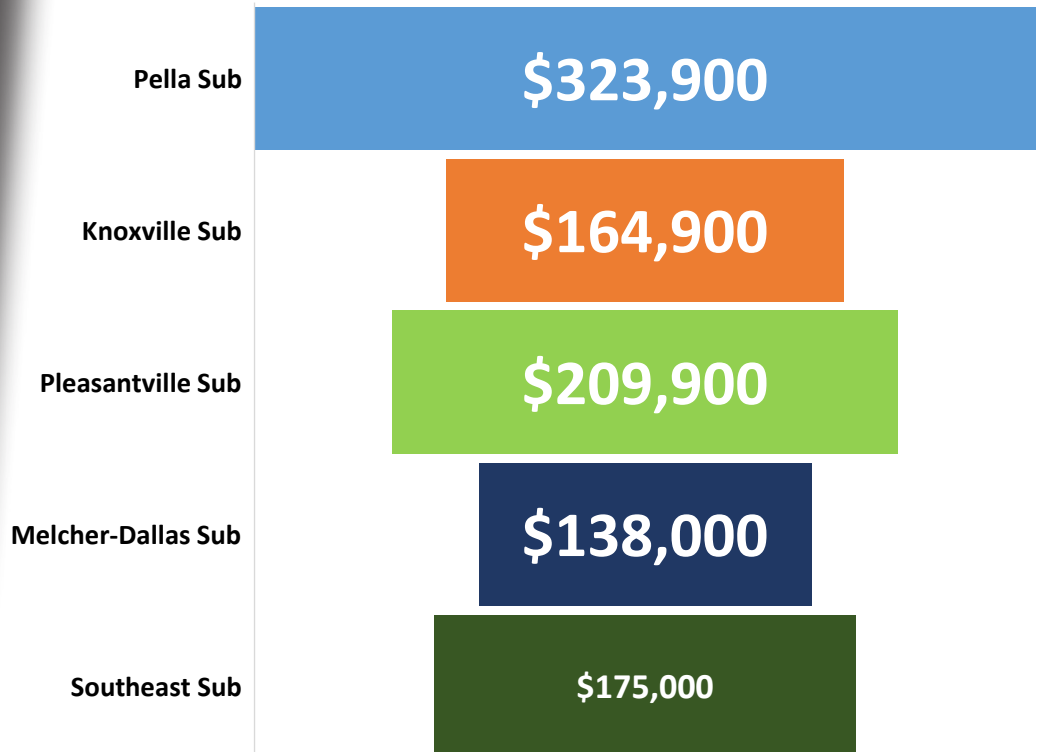


# OUR PLACE

## Median Home Rent

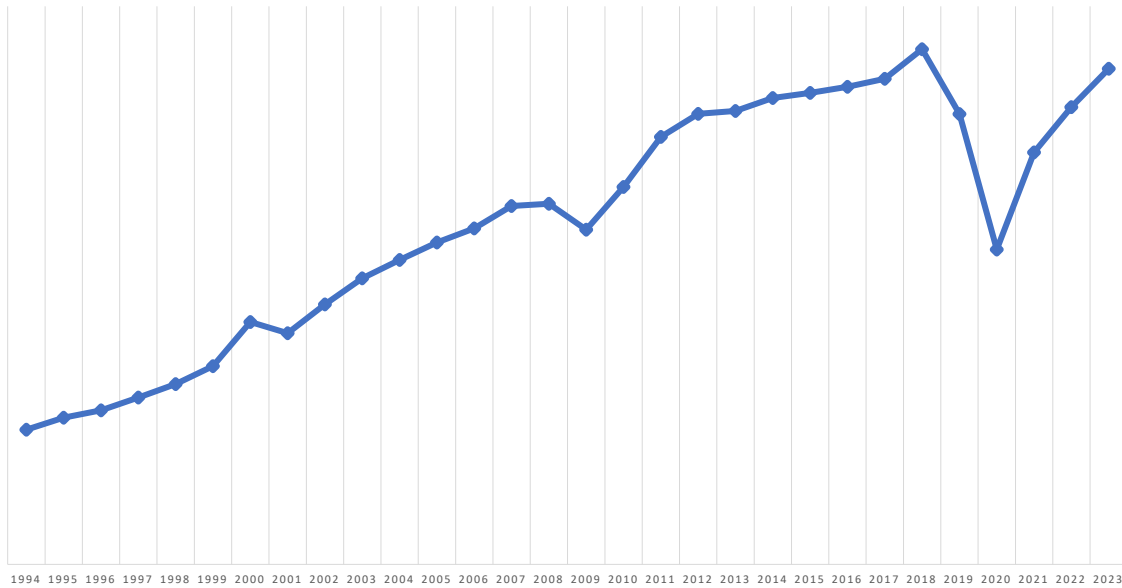


## Median Resale Price by Submarket, 2023



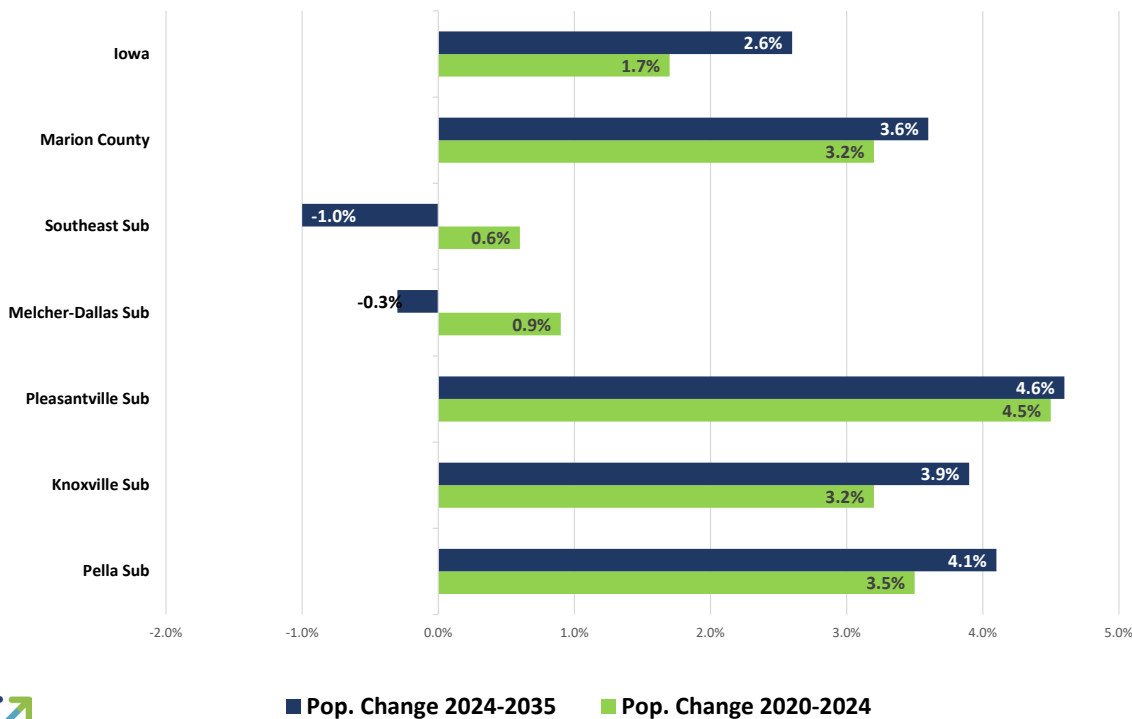


## MARION COUNTY TRAVELER EXPENDITURES



BRE Companies indicated the top factors that make Marion County a great place for business are (71%) the business climate, (14%) location access, (11%) proximity to customers and 4% local amenities. Companies indicated there were several amenities that could be added to improve the competitiveness of the area for business such as better housing options, restaurants for families and fine dining, high speed internet access in homes, more shopping options, better indoor recreation options during bad weather, more options for bars with live music, child care, trails and sports facilities. Many indicated that young professionals are looking for ways to connect both at work and in the community.

## Population Percentage Growth Projections



■ Pop. Change 2024-2035    ■ Pop. Change 2020-2024



# OUR FUTURE

## LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE COMPETITIVENESS;

- Increase Housing Options
- Improve the Tax Climate
- Enhance the Infrastructure
- Reduce Waste

Reduce Number  
of Residents who  
leave Marion  
County for  
Employment



Increase the  
Number of  
Workers who  
Live in Marion  
County

## NEEDED TO KEEP GROWING:

- Talent & Housing
- Improved I-80 access
- Enhanced recreation
- Reduced regulatory barriers
- Resources for AI, robotics, & automation

**MARION**  
COUNTY DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRESS DRIVEN IIII

[ [MarionCountyIowa.com](http://MarionCountyIowa.com) ]