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- Community Calendar
- For the Record
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- National
- International
- WebExtras
- RSS Feeds
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- Local Sports
- Sports Column
- National
- Submit

## Opinion

- Editorials
- Letters to the Editor
- Tell it like it is
- Submit

## Classifieds

- Classifieds
- National

## Features

- People in the News
- Crossword

## Special Sections

- Baby Brag Book 2006
- Bridal Guide 2007
- Dining & Entertainment 2006
- Farm &

## Overall, goals and initiatives met

By KEN BLACK

What kind of difference has five years made?

The question has a lot of answers, depending on your perspective. If you are a student, you may enjoy going to class now in updated facilities that are better able to meet the learning needs of those living in the 21st Century.

If you are a one of the individuals who was not living in Marshalltown five years ago, the reason you may be here now is because of a policy decision that was made half a decade ago.

If you are in a new home, or different home, maybe one thing that helped was the expansion of options in the community.

Driving to Des Moines has gotten easier, as has driving toward the Tama/Toledo area.

But some things have not changed. A parent looking for child care may be just as frustrated today as they were five years ago.

Whether or not there is a cohesive sense of community in Marshalltown may be debated, but if there is, it still has not led to things like a neighborhood watch program.

When coming up with a final grade as to how the community stacked up against the items outlined in the Marshalltown Community Vision and Five-Year Strategic Plan, a number of things were looked at.

The Times-Republican pulled a number of different parts out of the plan and analyzed them, but the plan encompassed more than just those parts. All that was taken into consideration, as well as input from community leaders.

For example, health care was a major part of the plan, calling for increased access to quality health care. Since that plan, the community now has the Primary Health Center and a new cath lab is planned, among other things.

“That is big,” said Joel Akason, president of the Marshall Economic Development Impact Committee. “We were the biggest city in Iowa without a cath lab. You never want to be the biggest city without something.”

Loras Neuroth, a local businessman who served on the committee for the five

REVIEW

Grade: B+

The goals outlined in the Marshalltown Community Vision and Five-Year Strategic Plan have, in large part, been met, especially in key areas such as job growth, transportation and education. Health care needs are also being better met now. However, housing issues are still a concern, though not nearly as much as before. And child care remains a proverbial thorn in the side.



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year plan, acknowledged there were still some parts that needed work before the committee’s vision was fully realized.

“But that’s not bad,” he said. “It means that the community still has some things they are coming together and working on.”

Still, overall, he was very pleased with how the plan turned out out.

“It’s almost like someone knew what was going to happen so he wrote the plan so he could take credit for it. It’s almost like that,” Neuroth said.

But he was not the only one who gave the work to make the plan a reality high marks.

“It’s astounding to me how much has been accomplished on all levels,” said Sue Martin, director of the Martha Ellen Tye Foundation and a member of the original committee.

She also mentioned another area discussed in the plan, an access to cultural and recreational activities.

“That is incredibly important to attracting and holding onto workers,” Martin said. “People want to live in an attractive community with lots of cultural and recreational opportunities.”

Work to improve those offerings in town over the last five years include a new aquatic center, new Community Y, expanded bike trails and the creation of the Marshall County Arts & Cultural Alliance, among others.

At the beginning of this series, the Times-Republican asked the question: How close did the community come to achieving the vision set forth in the plan?

“Somewhere in the neighborhood of 70 percent of the things in that plan were accomplished in one form or another. So it was very successful,” said former Marshelltown Mayor Floyd Harthun. “People talk about plans just sitting on a table, but that didn’t happen with this plan.”

A grade of an A-plus would denote that everything was accomplished in the plan as laid out. That did not happen.

As mentioned before, there are still significant issues that the plan recognized but were not addressed.

However, to say those involved with the plan were pleased with the results the community has seen may be an understatement.

And looking back at things like job creation and growth, transportation, education and others, there is plenty to be proud of.

These considerations, along with others, lead to a final grade of B-plus.

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