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WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 1: Introduction

The City of West Branch comprehensive plan provides the City a guide for the future. West Branch, with a 2010 census population of 2,322, is located on the western border of Cedar County and the eastern border of Johnson County in the State of Iowa. The comprehensive plan identifies issues and opportunities in such areas as land use, infrastructure, parks and recreation, economic development, and the use of environmental resources. The comprehensive plan will also provide a road map for implementation to achieve the shared community vision.

Purpose of the Plan

The comprehensive planning process is designed to be a transparent public process in which citizens create a shared vision to promote the health, and prosperity of the community. A comprehensive plan has two fundamental purposes: First, to provide a legal basis for land use regulation by analyzing existing conditions and developing growth goals. Second, to present a unified and compelling vision for a community and establish the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision. The recommendations of the plan are designed to take advantage of West Branch's unique location, resources and heritage to build an optima future for the citizens of West Branch.

Legal Role

Iowa Code 2003: Section 414.4 enables communities to plan. A municipality is empowered to plan future land uses within a 2-mile radius of their actual municipal boundaries. Where multiple municipal jurisdictions overlap, the authority is generally split at the half-way point between the municipal boundaries. However, municipalities often plan to the 2-mile radius limit even if there is an overlap. This is to indicate their desired land use pattern as a basis for boundary agreements, review of plans for unincorporated areas, and the reservation of public sites and open space corridors. If a city chooses to adopt zoning and subdivision ordinances, which recognize that people in a city live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to coordinate and harmonize the uses of private property, the Iowa Code requires that these ordinances be in conformance with a comprehensive plan and its corresponding vision for the community's physical development. The West Branch Comprehensive Plan provides the legal basis for the city's authority to regulate land use and development. To maximize resources the West Branch Comprehensive Plan will plan to existing City limits.

Community Vision

Comprehensive planning is important because it helps solve and avoid problems, meet the needs of the future, and realize new opportunities for the overall benefit of the entire community. A comprehensive plan helps achieve the community's vision of the future in accord with local priorities and resources. Many of the opportunities of the future may be beyond the current resources of the City or require conditions which do not exist at the time the plan is created. Comprehensive planning provides the basis for shaping the decisions within the City's control and for reacting effectively as changes occur through external factors.

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A complete comprehensive plan will provide the framework for both public and private decision makers to choose end results that are in the best interest of the entire community. The foundation of the plan is based upon principals that make it valid regardless of the exact rate or extent of growth. Comprehensive planning can be vital in determining:

- The quality of life in the community;
- The character, health and accessibility of open space and natural resources;
- The degree to which storm water runoff is controlled from new development;
- The available revenues to support capital improvements and public services;
- The employment, housing, recreational and shopping needs of the community;
- The current and future demands on infrastructure and;
- The compatibility of development, especially that which occurs adjacent to existing or proposed residential land uses.

Public Involvement:

Public involvement is critical to building consensus in the planning process. If the full community is involved in the planning process the comprehensive plan is more likely to be applied. It is unrealistic that all ideas presented in the comprehensive plan will receive complete agreement. However, since the planning process was all inclusive and included a wide range of ideas and opinions, the comprehensive plan becomes the unifying element for decisions.

Public participation for West Branch's comprehensive plan was sought through a variety of measures. First, a community wide comprehensive plan informational meeting was held on July 18, 2011. This meeting was designed to inform the planning and zoning commission as well as residents about the purpose and importance of the comprehensive plan. A public input open house was held on October 12, 2011. It was designed so that participants could come and go in hope it would be convenient for participants and more input would be received. A community wide survey was conducted in late March and early April of 2012. Over 400 surveys were received. The survey results are in Appendix A.



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Chapter 2: Vision Statement, Goals & Objectives

Mission Statement: To maintain and enhance the City of West Branch as an historically significant community with a safe small-town, family atmosphere, whose financial and physical resources are managed wisely through policies and programs which assure the long term health and vitality of the community.

The comprehensive plan goals will help guide future development and growth within the planning boundaries of the City of West Branch. These goals and objectives are to be used for guidance for proposed development and redevelopment.

Goals are considered to be a series of guides to consistent and rational public and private decisions used in the development of our urban and rural lands. A goal is an ideal and expresses the purpose that underlies the action. As such, it is expressed in abstract terms and deals with subjective values. It is open to a variety of interpretations and must be interpreted by one's own individual system of values.

Whereas goals are abstract, specific ends must be attained in order to reach these goals. These ends are called objectives, and unlike goals, can be measured to a certain specificity or standard. The objective is either reached, or it is not; it is a matter of fact, not a matter of opinion. The objectives of the plan take the form of Policy recommendations.

Economic Development Goals:

Concentrate on retaining and expanding existing local business.

- i. Cooperate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.
 - a. Develop business license program, which includes information packet, in conjunction with Main Street West Branch.
 - b. Develop "Welcome West Branch" brochure for distribution to residents and visitors highlighting businesses in West Branch, in conjunction with Main Street West Branch.
- ii. Promote assistance to local firms in finding appropriate development sites for expansion.
 - a. Develop "West Branch at a Glance" brochure for distribution to existing and potential businesses highlighting economic development facts about West Branch in conjunction with Main Street West Branch.
 - b. Work with Main Street West Branch to utilize revolving loan fund to benefit of local business expansion.

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- iii. Promote retaining existing manufacturing firms and facilitating their expansion.
 - a. Mayor, Council, Administration and Main Street West Branch to engage with existing manufacturing firms to encourage growth.
 - b. Mayor, Council, Administration and Main Street West Branch to engage with ICAD to encourage growth of existing, manufacturing firms.
- iv. Encourage downtown revitalization and business development.
 - a. Provide community policing services in the downtown district, to include officers on foot, receiving feedback from business owners.
 - b. Work with Main Street West Branch and business owners to repair sidewalks in the Main Street business district.
 - c. Repave Downey Street from Wetherell to Main Street.
 - d. Work with the Historic Preservation Commission on enhancing the appearance of Heritage Square and other public downtown areas.
 - e. Work with Main Street West Branch to obtain new wayfinding signage.
 - f. Work with business owners, the National Historic Site and Main Street West Branch to identify parking solutions that will provide for both residents and commercial activity.
- v. Encourage diversified services and retail shopping.
 - a. Work with Main Street West Branch to bring in diversified services or retail establishments, including a pharmacy, hardware store, a recreation/community center, an assisted living center, a grocery store, laundromat and a family restaurant.
 - b. Park and recreation department to expand activities for youth and teens.
 - c. Investigate the viability of a movie theater, pool, community-recreation-senior center, splash pool, adult education programs, shuttle service to Iowa City, and expanded trails.

Increase the number of firms by fostering local entrepreneurship.

- i. Cooperate with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new business in West Branch.
 - a. Examine a potential renewed partnership with Cedar County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDCO) and make a decision within the next two years on whether or not reengagement with CCEDCO would benefit West Branch.
 - b. Mayor, Council, Administration and Main Street West Branch to engage with ICAD to encourage industrial park growth.

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- ii. Support start-up businesses with both financial and technical assistance.
 - a. Work with Main Street West Branch and/or possible CCEDCO to provide training for start-up businesses.
 - b. Work with Main Street West Branch to utilize revolving loan fund to the benefit of start-up businesses.
- Promote vacant, development-ready land for industrial use.
- i. Market development-ready sites.
 - ii. Evaluate potential future industrial sites.
 - iii. Redevelop existing vacant, underutilized and brownfield properties for industrial development.

Housing Goals:

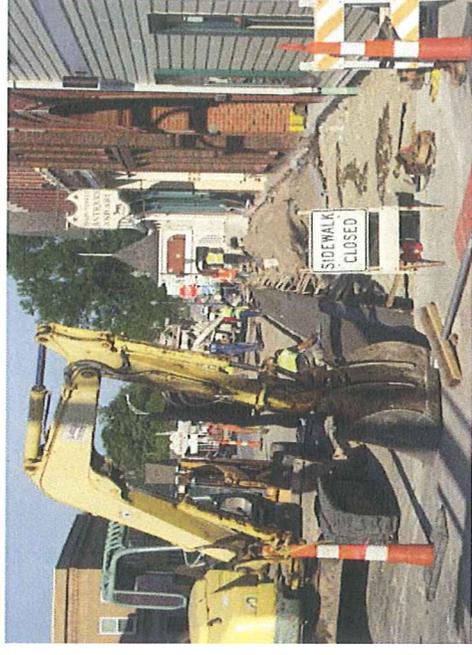
Promote preservation, rehabilitation and investment in our city housing stock and neighborhoods and improve housing opportunities.

- i. Encourage a range of affordable, accessible, and decent, safe and sanitary rental housing options throughout the city.
 - a. Work with ECIA on housing assistance programs appropriate for West Branch.
- ii. Provide for a variety of housing types, costs and locations.
- iii. Become more aggressive in attracting new residents to live in West Branch.
 - a. Work with Main Street West Branch to bring in diversified services or retail establishments, including a pharmacy, hardware store, a recreation/community center, an assisted living center, a grocery store, laundromat and a family restaurant.
 - b. Park and recreation department to expand activities for youth and teens.
 - c. Investigate the viability of a movie theater, pool, community-recreation-senior center, splash pool, adult education programs, shuttle service to Iowa City, and expanded trails.

Public Infrastructure and Service Goals:

Provide, maintain, and improve solid waste collection and disposal infrastructure and services.

- i. Strive to maintain efficient and effectiveness of solid waste collection system.
 - a. Examine new solid waste provision contract at the end of the current contract which runs through June of 2015.



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- b. Increase solid waste rates so that the service is self-supporting.
- Provide, maintain, and improve a cost-effective, safe and functional surface transportation system.
- i. Support ongoing street reconstruction, rehabilitation, and maintenance overlay programs, ensuring the timely maintenance, repair and reconstruction of the city's streets and bridges.
 - a. Develop comprehensive CIP Plan to include street reconstruction and repair.
 - b. Increase property tax levy to fund these improvements.
 - ii. Seek alternative funding sources for construction and maintenance.
 - a. Consider use of local option sales tax for future projects.
 - b. Consider use of TIF for future projects in the industrial park.
 - c. Consider increasing property tax levy to fund future projects.
 - iii. Support extending the life and improving the quality of the city street system through preventative maintenance programs.
 - a. Continue seal coating.
 - b. Fix failing streets.
 - c. In-house (Public Works Staff) work to repair portion of streets where appropriate.

Provide, maintain and improve a safe and functional storm sewer system.

- i. Support maintaining the integrity of the storm sewer system.
 - a. Complete life station.
 - b. Complete I and I phase I repairs.
 - c. Complete I and I studies on the remainder of the sewer system.
 - d. Complete I and I repairs identified in future studies on an ongoing basis.
 - e. Complete wastewater treatment facilities plan that would meet increased contaminant requirements.
 - f. Complete sump pump inspections.
- ii. Meet all local, state and federal regulations.
- iii. Identify existing and potential flood prone problem areas, and alleviate with appropriate mitigation strategies, where possible.

Provide, maintain and improve a cost-effective, functional and self-supporting water system.

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- i. Support maintaining the integrity of the water system.
 - a. Replace aging water mains and water mains smaller than 6 inches.
 - b. Make improvements to water plant, including fencing around existing plant.
- ii. Encourage efficient operation of the water system.
 - a. Investigate the need for abandoning or developing new wells.
- iii. Meet all local, state and federal water quality standards.



Promote the creation and adoption of a complete streets policy.

Promote cost-effective emergency services and facilities that enhance and protect the lives of residents

- i. Promote cooperation and coordination among emergency services agencies
 - a. Continue to develop positive partnerships between police and fire.
 - b. Increase the partnership with the National Park law enforcement.
- ii. Support provisions of responsive, high quality emergency services
 - a. Hire additional full-time police officer.
 - b. Increase the salaries of full-time police officers by 20%.
 - c. Fully fund the fire department's capital improvement plan.

Provide public facilities and services at levels which support a "desirable quality of life" for current and future residents.

- i. Provide facilities and services in locations compatible with planned uses, populations and needs.

Administration Goals:

Promote the fiscal soundness and viability of City government operations.

- i. Continue using nonrecurring revenues only to fund nonrecurring expenditures.
- ii. Monitor changing conditions, trends and legislation appropriate to the City's fiscal position and promote the City's sound fiscal condition.
- iii. Minimize program costs by using sound purchasing practices.
- iv. Maintain adequate reserves to positively impact the City bond rating and provide flexibility to implement projects as opportunities

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Operate municipal facilities and services in an accountable manner and encourage positive public relations with residents and others.

- i. Maintain and review administrative, management and personnel capacity for effective support and implementation of municipal services.
- ii. Pursue a variety of revenue sources to offset flat-line budgets as well as examine ways to reduce costs and increase fund balances for municipal facilities and services.

Provide adequately developed park areas and continue to develop a pedestrian/bicycle trail system that links the parks, historical, and natural resources of the City while providing opportunities for recreational activities.

Library Building Project Goals:

Determine future location of the library

- i. Work with FEH Associates and George Lawson Consulting to evaluate sites in West Branch and surrounding area.
- ii. Select site and acquire the property and achieve funding for library renovation or construction

Achieve funding for library renovation or construction

- i. Work with FEH Associates to construct designs for future library
- ii. Promote library project among local social groups and community
- iii. Work with the Friends of the Library to conduct fundraising events.
- iv. Acquire grants and donations for building construction.
- v. Hire a professional fundraiser to assist in fundraising efforts (if needed).
- vi. Work to pass a bond referendum (if needed).

Carry out renovation or construction

- i. Work with FEH Associates to create site construction plans
- ii. Conduct bidding process to select the building contractor.
- iii. Hire contractor to conduct the library renovation or construction.
- iv. Work with FEH Associates and selected contractors to conduct the building renovation.

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Land Use and Zoning Goals:

Encourage redevelopment opportunities to revitalize unused property.

- i. Encourage redevelopment or adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings and sites.
- ii. Promote infill development.
- iii. Promote affordable commercial space for small start-up, new or growing businesses.
- iv. Encourage reinvestment in our existing neighborhoods (i.e., smart growth).
- v. Consider incentives for smart growth.

Encourage cooperative effort between the City of West Branch, Cedar County, Johnson County and any other bodies or agencies involved with the planning, administration or enforcement of plans, codes, ordinances, regulations, etc., that are in effect in the West Branch area.

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Chapter 3: Smart Planning

The "Iowa Smart Planning Act" was signed into law in the spring of 2010, as a way to guide and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans. The bill articulates 10 Smart Planning Principles and 13 comprehensive plan elements for application in local comprehensive plan development and public decision making. These guidelines are intended to improve economic opportunities, preserve the natural environment, protect quality of life and ensure equitable decision-making processes.

The 10 Smart Planning Principles are as follows:

- **Collaboration:**
The comprehensive plan should have a proactive strategy to gain public participation from governmental, community and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction in planning, zoning, development and, resource management deliberations, decision making and implementation processes.
- **Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency:**
The comprehensive planning process should be transparent. The decision making process should follow clearly defined standards, be consistent and documented.
- **Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy:**
Efforts to incorporate clean, renewable and efficient principals into design standards, ordinances and policies should be looked at and addressed in the comprehensive plan.
- **Occupational Diversity:**
Planning, zoning and development should promote increased diversity of employment, business opportunities, access to education and training, expanded entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Revitalization:**
Facilitate the redevelopment and or reuse of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility and integrated mixed uses of properties. Redevelopment and reuse of existing sites, structures and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in under developed areas.

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- **Housing Diversity:**
Promote a multitude of housing types, styles, and price ranges. Look at areas where rehabilitation might be a good fit and identify new housing developments close to existing transportation and employment centers.
- **Community Character:**
Identify the characteristics that make the city what it is. Then develop a strategy to promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community.
- **Natural Resources & Agricultural Protection:**
Emphasize the protection, preservation and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, cultural and historic landscapes while also looking to increase the availability of open spaces.
- **Sustainable Design:**
Promote developments, buildings and infrastructure that utilize green design and construction practices with the goal of conserving natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, water, air, and energy.
- **Transportation Diversity:**
Promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options and development that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality.



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The 13 Comprehensive Planning Elements are as follows:

- Public Participation:
- Issues and Opportunities
- Land Use
- Housing
- Public Infrastructure and Utilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Agricultural and Natural Resources
- Community Facilities
- Community Character:
- Hazards
- Intergovernmental Collaboration
- Implementation

Currently there is no state funding for the creation of comprehensive plans or comprehensive plan updates for cities or counties to incorporate the ten smart planning principals or the thirteen comprehensive planning elements.



Chapter 4: Community Profile/Character

Community Profile

To understand where the future of the City is heading, it is good to examine its past. A community profile includes information on the demographic information which includes: total population, gender, race, ancestry, age, employment, income, economy, education, housing and natural/cultural resources. The data presented should provide an overall picture of the community. This data is meant to provide a resource for City officials and the public in the creation of policy, implementation of capital improvement projects, and making of business decisions.

Much of the data for this chapter comes from the 2010 Census, Iowa Workforce Development, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and from Iowa State University Extension. To show relevance and significance of the data presented, comparisons are made between the City of West Branch and other areas including, Cedar County, and other communities that are geographically and similarly comparable to the City of West Branch.

Peer City Reasoning

Comparing the City of West Branch to the peer cities identified in the Iowa State University Retail Sales Analysis and Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2011 can help identify the City's strengths and weaknesses relative to its peer cities. The cities used in the Retail Sales Analysis as peer cities are the cities of Ackley, Bellevue, Clarksville, Columbus Junction, Durant, Mechanicsville, Nora Springs, Pleasantville, State Center, and Toledo.

Population History and Characteristics

Examination of the population history reveals important changes in the personality and characteristics of West Branch. Table 4.1 summarizes the historical population change in West Branch. Table 4.2 includes a comparison with the cities of Ackley, Bellevue, Clarksville, Columbus Junction, Durant, Mechanicsville, Nora Springs, Pleasantville, State Center, and Toledo. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 indicate the following trends:

- West Branch population grew consistently from 1940 -2010
- Population increased 5.77% from 2000 to 2010

Year	Population	Decade	Percent Change between Decade
1880	501		
1890	474	1880-1890	-5.70%
1900	647	1890-1900	26.74%
1910	643	1900-1910	-0.62%
1920	688	1910-1920	6.54%
1930	652	1920-1930	-5.52%

1940	719	1930-1940	9.32%
1950	769	1940-1950	6.50%
1960	1,053	1950-1960	26.97%
1970	1,322	1960-1970	20.35%
1980	1,867	1970-1980	29.19%
1990	1,908	1980-1990	2.15%
2000	2,188	1990-2000	12.80%
2010	2,322	2000-2010	5.77%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
West Branch	1,053	1,322	1,867	1,908	2,188	2,322
Ackley	1,731	1,794	1,900	1,696	1,809	1,589
Bellevue	2,181	2,336	2,450	2,239	2,350	2,191
Clarksville	1,328	1,360	1,424	1,382	1,441	1,439
Columbus Junction	1,016	1,205	1,429	1,616	1,900	1,899
Durant	1,266	1,472	1,583	1,549	1,677	1,832
Mechanicsville	866	989	1,166	1,075	1,173	1,146
Nora Springs	1,275	1,337	1,572	1,505	1,532	1,431
Pleasantville	1,025	1,297	1,531	1,536	1,539	1,694
State Center	1,142	1,232	1,292	1,248	1,349	1,468
Toledo	2,417	2,361	2,455	2,380	2,539	2,341

Source: U.S. Census

Population Projections

Population projections can help West Branch plan efficiently for future land use and community service needs. These projections are formed by first evaluating West Branch's historic trends in population and then projecting these trends out toward the future. The methods implemented to predict the future population of West Branch are:

1. Trend line analysis
2. Relative proportion

The trend line analysis method utilizes the community's historic census population figures to calculate a "best fit" trend line of past growth. Once the trend line is developed, it is then extended to show projected future growth. This method assumes that West Branch's growth rate will continue at a rate similar to the past.

The relative proportion method assumes that the total population of a municipality can be projected based on the total population of its surrounding county. By using Woods and Poole population projections for Cedar County a ratio of West Branch's Population to Cedar County's population can be established. It was also asked by the West Branch Planning and Zoning Commission to conduct the relative proportion method compared to Johnson County since a

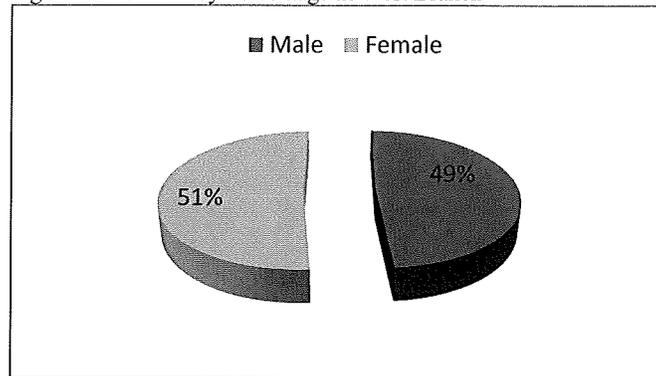
small portion of the City limits is in Johnson County. Table 4.3 below shows the results for the City of West Branch from the two methods.

Table 4.3 Population Project West Branch, 2020-2040			
	2020	2030	2040
Trend Line Analysis	2227	2374	2521
Relative Proportion	2370	2422	2469
Relative Proportion (Johnson County)	3,198	3,788	4,381

Gender

As of the 2010 Census, West Branch’s population was 49% male and 51% female. These numbers are consistent with the majority of U.S. cities. Cedar County shows a similar division of male and female population with 49% male and 51% females according to the 2010 Census.

Figure 4.1: Gender by Percentage in West Branch

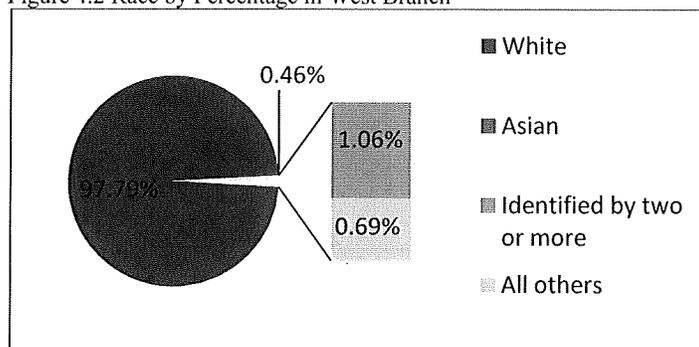


Source: 2010 US Census

Race, Ancestry, Ethnicity, Age & Gender

Census data can show diversity within a population that is not always perceptible to the general public. The latest U.S. Census figures show West Branch’s population to be fairly homogenous in terms of race with 96.99% of the population identified as white. The highest racial minority are persons of two or more races or 1.29% of the population followed by African American at 0.43% of the population. Cedar County’s racial diversity is similarly situated to West Branch in that 97.79% of the population identified as white, two or more races was 1.06% followed by Asian at 0.46%.

Figure 4.2 Race by Percentage in West Branch



Source: 2010 US Census

Ethnicity

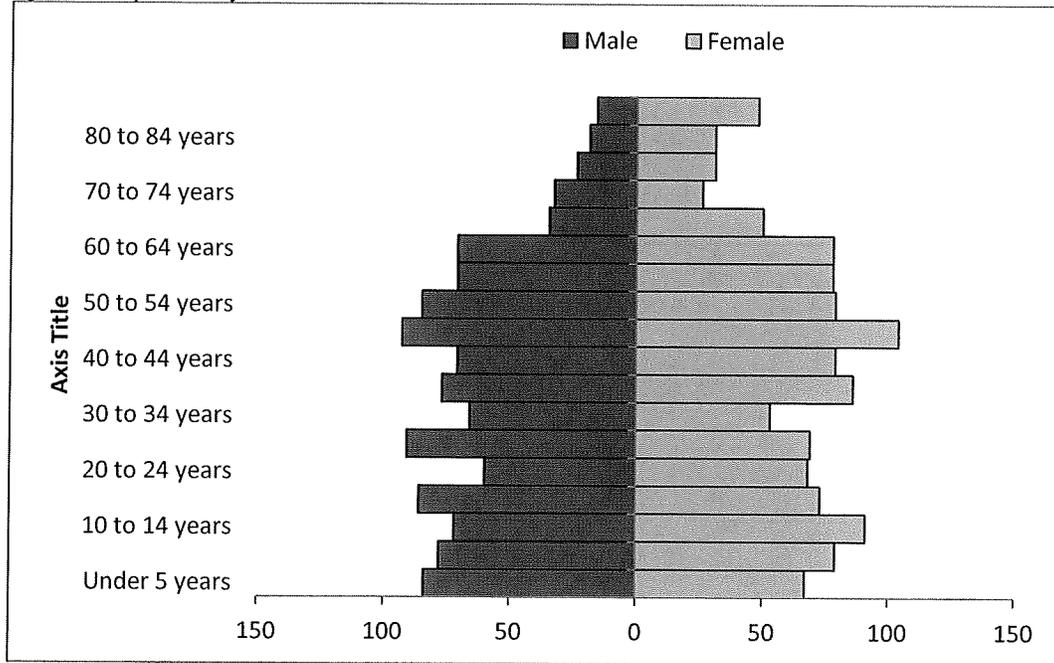
Respondents to the decennial census can indicate if they have Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Persons identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino can be of any race or ancestry. West Branch has a Hispanic/Latino population of 49 or 0.2% of the total population.

Age & Gender

The best evaluation of the population's overall age is the median age. The U.S. Census Bureau defines median age as the "measure that divides the age distribution in a stated area into two equal parts: one-half of the population falling below the median value and one-half above the median value." The higher the median age the older a population, and conversely, the lower the median age the younger the population. The U.S. Census Bureau data shows that the median age for West Branch has been steadily increasing from 29.0 in 1980 to 38.7 in 2010. Cedar County's median has also been steadily increasing from 31.9 in 1980 to 42.4 in 2010.

The population figures provide an illustration of the age distribution within the City. On graphs of this type, younger communities will be wider at the base and narrower at the top. The opposite is true for older communities.

Figure 4.3 Population Pyramid for West Branch



Source: 2010 US Census

Economy

The Retail Sales Analysis & Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2011 created by Iowa State University Department of Economics provides an extensive look at the retail activity occurring within West Branch. In fiscal year 2011 West Branch generated \$13,074,548 in real taxable sales. In comparison the ten peer cities range from \$7,769,448 to \$30,801,767 in real taxable sales for fiscal year 2011.

A pull factor is a measure that describes how well a community is servicing its population in terms of retail trade or the ability to attract business from beyond its borders. A pull factor of 1 indicates a community is servicing 100% of its population's retail needs. A pull factor greater than 1 indicates that customers are being drawn from beyond the community's borders. The 2011 pull factor according to the Retail Sales Analysis & Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2011 is 0.53. In comparison Cedar County has a pull factor of 0.46.

The table 4.4 below shows how West Branch compares to the peer cities identified in the Retail Sales Analysis & Report.

City	Taxable Retail Sales Per Capita	Pull Factor
Ackley	\$5,533	0.55
Bellevue	\$7,471	0.53
Clarksville	\$3,884	0.53
Columbus Junction	\$5,572	0.53

Durant	\$8,525	0.53
Mechanicsville	\$3,022	0.53
Nora Springs	\$3,963	0.53
Pleasantville	\$2,930	0.53
State Center	\$4,265	0.53
Toledo	\$11,295	0.53
West Branch	\$5,599	0.53

Source: Retail Trade Analysis Report Fiscal Year 2011, West Branch

Chapter 5: Land Use

The Canadian Institute of Planners defines land use planning as the “the scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities.” In other words, land use describes how and why the land is being used for a particular purpose. Existing land uses are those in place at the time the information was recorded or surveyed. Future land use addresses the desired use for land within the planning period and planning boundary. The West Branch Comprehensive Plan planning period is a 20 year time period with a planning boundary of roughly existing corporate limits.

The land use chapter provides the framework and statement of land use policy. The future land use map, presented in this chapter provides guidance to local officials on the quality and character of the development that may take place within the next 20 years.

There are six types of land uses identified in the comprehensive plan. They are residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and open space, park and recreation and governmental. Residential land use is land that has a home or dwelling on it for the purpose of human habitation. Commercial land use is land used primarily for wholesale/retail sales, office use, which relates to professional services and business activities. Industrial facilities include manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale trade, construction and utilities. Institutional land use is defined as land dedicated for government buildings, schools, and cemeteries. Parks and recreation is land dedicated to parks and recreational facilities such a multi-use trails. An agricultural land use is land used for agricultural production either crop or livestock production or land that has been left as open space.

To plan what types of land use West Branch will need in the next 20 years it is important to understand what the existing conditions are. Map 5.1 shows the existing land use in West Branch. Table 5.1 provides a detailed breakdown of the existing land use by acres in the incorporated areas of the City of West Branch.

Land Use Type	Total Acres	Percentage
Residential	358	28.9%
Commercial	313	25.3%
Industrial	90	7.3%
Institutional	212	17.1%
Agricultural and Open Space	219	17.7%
Park and Recreation	45	3.6%

Future Land Use

Providing a map of the anticipated future growth areas and expected future land uses allows for preferred future growth patterns to occur. This provides a guide for where development activities should occur to maximize the city's resources. Map 5.2 is the Future Land Use Map for the City of West Branch and displays the city's preferred future growth patterns and future land uses. In preparing for the future it is essential to identify ways to encourage, attract and/or retain residential. Ways to encourage long-term residents are:

- Retain and encourage locally owned businesses
- Encourage home ownership
- Provide a variety of housing options
- Offer quality-of-life amenities; such as multi-use trails

Table 5.2 provides a detailed breakdown of the future land use needs for the City of West Branch.

Table 5.2 Future Land Use for West Branch in 2032		
Land Use Type	Total Acres	Percentage
Residential	473	38.3%
Commercial	363	29.4%
Industrial	90	7.3%
Institutional	212	17.1%
Agricultural & Open Space	53	4.3%
Parks and Recreation	45	3.6%

Land Use Goals

The land use goals of the City of West Branch are meant to provide continuity on how land use matters are addressed over the next 20 years in the City of West Branch. Using these goals is a means to protect identified valuable resources and preserve what truly makes the City of West Branch a great place to live, work and play. The City should look into ways to incentivize redevelopment within the City of West Branch. For example a housing rehabilitation program should be considered.

Other Items for Consideration

The public input survey found that respondents of the survey thought the City of West Branch needed more commercial uses (shopping, services, food/beverage establishments, and offices). Natural Areas, open space and wildlife habitat was found to be about right while respondents thought condominium style residences there was too much of. Another area that survey found was that City of West Branch needed more was civic spaces (parks, pedestrian plazas, outdoor entertainment).

Chapter 6: Housing

Housing is the dominant form of development in West Branch. A significant amount of land in West Branch's 2032 Land Use Plan is earmarked for residential uses. The housing supply plays an important role in shaping the community. To a large degree, the size, form and type of housing units determine who lives in West Branch. The quality and character of West Branch's neighborhoods plays an important role in shaping the identity of the community and its stature as a place to live.

Including housing policies and initiatives in the comprehensive plan is appropriate for two reasons. First, the housing needs of a community are not completely met by private market forces or by land use control. Community plans and ordinances create the framework for private land development, land development that is almost universally profit-driven. Private market forces need to be supplemented by programs and funding sources that bridge the financial gap segments of the community that can't afford market-rate housing. Accordingly, this chapter can help identify housing needs and provide a foundation for local decision making to guide residential development and redevelopment efforts in West Branch.

The second reason that housing is addressed in this plan is to meet the intent of recent Iowa Smart Planning legislation enacted by the Iowa Legislature. The Smart Planning legislation defines components that are suggested content for comprehensive plans. These components are presented as ten Smart Planning principles, one of which addresses housing. The housing principle addresses housing diversity. It states, "planning, zoning, development and resource management should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers."

The legislation further states that when developing or amending a comprehensive plan, "objectives, policies and programs to further the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods and new residential neighborhoods and plans to ensure an adequate supply of housing that meets both the existing and forecasted housing demand. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include an inventory and analysis of the local housing stock and may include specific information such as age, condition, type, market value, occupancy, and historical characteristics of all the housing within the municipality. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of new housing and maintenance or rehabilitation of existing housing that provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of the residents of the municipality."

Characteristics of the Existing Housing Supply

Assessed Value

Table 6.1 shows the assessed value of residential properties in West Branch according to 2012 Cedar County Assessors data. (NEED JOHNSON COUNTY) Over 75% of West Branch's housing has an assessed value between \$75,000 and \$200,000. In most cases, the assessed value of a given home closely correlates to its age of construction. Residential units lying to the west, in Johnson County and in the newer subdivisions in the Cedar County side of West Branch generally have higher assessed values than properties lying in downtown and older areas of the City.

Assessed Value	# of Units	Percent
< \$75,000	56	8.0
\$75,000 - \$99,999	141	20.1
\$100,000 - \$149,999	228	32.5
\$150,000 - \$199,999	168	24.0
\$200,000 - \$249,999	72	10.3
\$250,000 - \$299,999	24	3.4
> \$300,000	12	1.7

Year Built

With 75% of the total units in West Branch less than 50 year’s old the housing stock is considered relatively new, (see Table 6.2). Over ¼ of the City’s housing stock was built prior to 1960 with the majority of those, 18.2%, being built before 1940. Homes constructed prior to 1960 will require increasing amounts of ongoing maintenance. The city will need to continually monitor overall housing quality to ensure the long-term integrity of its older neighborhood areas.

From 2000 to 2012, much, but not all, of West Branch’s new housing growth has occurred on the west side of town. This area is closer to Iowa City, making a shorter commute for citizens who work outside the City to the west but desire to reside in West Branch.

Table 6.2 shows the distribution of housing units in the community by year of construction.

Year Built	# of Units	Percent
< 1940	197	18.2
1940 – 1949	30	2.8
1950 – 1959	58	5.4
1960 – 1969	118	10.9
1970 – 1979	203	18.8
1980 – 1989	125	11.6
1990 – 1999	186	17.2
> 2000	163	15.1

Housing Types and Availability

The availability of affordable, quality housing is an important factor in a community’s ability to maintain, expand, or develop a healthy economy. The availability of housing can be an important location factor for new industries when considering a community. A community that is better prepared to meet these needs may have an edge in attracting new development, along with retaining current residents. Housing must be made available for the low-to-moderate income households, the first-time home buyer, residents looking to upgrade homes within the community, and for those looking to move to or retire in the community.

Table 6.3 provides an inventory of the types of housing located in West Branch, Cedar and Johnson Counties, and the state of Iowa. Owner-occupied housing is by far the dominant form of housing within West Branch accounting for 77.6% of the total. This is consistent with Cedar County and the state of

Iowa. The higher percentages of owner-occupied housing tends to be an indication of a traditional county, which is expected in a more rural area. The lower percentage in Johnson County is attributed to the high demand for rental units with the transient university student population. A 4.3% vacancy rate within West Branch was experienced in 2010. This is slightly lower than expected and may be even lower as homes for sale and rental units that have been rented but were vacant at the time of the census were included in this figure. West Branch is lower than the 5% the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers to be a normal vacancy rate. This vacancy rate may be the result of the traditional nature of residents, or the poor economy experienced in recent years and many households refinancing or households being hesitant to not move in poor economic times.

TABLE 6.3 - Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Housing Units

	Owner-occupied		Renter-occupied		Vacant	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
West Branch	735	77.6%	212	22.4%	43	4.3%
Cedar County	5,903	78.6%	1,608	21.4%	553	6.9%
Johnson County	31,299	59.4%	21,416	40.6%	3,252	5.8%
State of Iowa	880,635	72.1%	340,941	27.9%	114,841	8.6%

Table 6.4 shows the distribution of housing units in West Branch. The HUD vacancy standard is that 5% of the total housing units would be available sale or rent. One would assume that the HUD vacancy standard would be equally reflected in the percent of owner occupied housing versus rental units in the community. (West Branch has 77.6% of its homes classified as owner-occupied and 22.4% rental units. One would assume that 49 units would be available for to purchase or rent.) The census shows that West Branch has 990 housing units. (The number is higher in 2012 due to additional units being constructed since the time of the census.) Based on the HUD standard, West Branch should have 49 units available. Of the 49 units, 38 would be available for sale and 11 would be available for rent. The 2010 census shows 14 units available for rent, which is within a reasonable range of expectation. However, the 8 units for sale are much lower than expected. *The lack of houses for sale indicates a potential need for additional homes in the communities.* While there does not appear to be a need for rental units, options within rental units assuring the availability of independent living units should be examined to fill the vacancy need.

TABLE 6.4 - STATUS OF HOUSING UNITS, 2010

	Owner	Renter	For Sale	For Rent	Seasonal	Other Vacant
West Branch	735 77.6%	212 22.4%	8 0.8%	14 1.4%	3 0.3%	18 1.9%
Cedar County	5,903 78.6%	1,608 21.4%	99 1.2%	95 1.2%	47 0.6%	312 3.8%
Johnson County	31,299 59.4%	21,416 40.6%	810 1.4%	1,173 2.1%	327 0.6%	942 1.7%

State of Iowa	880,635	340,941	18,405	31,812	21,020	43,604
	72.1%	27.9%	1.4%	2.4%	1.6%	3.2%

Source: 2010 Census

Table 6.5 details the property sales in West Branch during 2011 (Cedar County). The vast majority of all property sales in West Branch within the Cedar County part of the City (91.2% residential property sales) were less than \$200,000 with a high percent of 35% of the sales being less than \$100,000. This further confirms prior data that the majority of the existing homes with lower values are in the Cedar County part of the City. The lack of sales above \$250,000 indicates few of these sales were new construction as the majority of homes built today sell for \$200,000+. The significant percent of homes sold under \$100,000 likely indicates older, existing homes that are being sold and may further indicate the City's need to monitor housing quality to ensure the long-term integrity of its older neighborhood areas as previously noted.

Total Sales	Lots	\$0	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$250,000	>
		-	-	-	-	-	-	>
		\$74,999	\$99,999	\$149,999	\$199,999	\$249,999	\$299,000	\$300,000
34	0	8	4	9	10	3	0	0
	0.0%	23.5%	11.8%	26.5%	29.4%	8.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Cedar County Assessor

In community survey conducted for the comprehensive planning process, housing was an issue of concern to the residents, but not a major concern. The issues of highest importance were focused on property maintenance and lack of senior housing availability. Other areas of less concern included high purchase prices, lack of choice in moderate price ranges (move up housing units), and lack of affordable housing. These issues form the basis for the housing plan.

Traditional single-family detached housing has always been a strong component of the community's housing stock. Development in West Branch over the past ten years has been varied. The moderately priced housing units tend to be zero lot line, single-family attached units. The balances tend to be higher priced single-family detached units ranging from the upper \$100's to \$400,000. As the community looks forward to the next two decades, this comprehensive plan assumes that efforts will be made to maintain housing diversity. Future housing constructed in West Branch will either occur as infill housing in the developed portion of the community or new housing in the developing, west and northeast areas of the city. In infill situations, housing types will need to be compatible with surrounding housing types and lot sizes. In the developing area, more flexibility exists. The land use pattern in the community promotes housing diversity. However, it may require some effort on the part of the City to promote moderately priced single-family detached housing.

A Community of Well Maintained Housing

An analysis of the age of West Branch's housing stock revealed that a significant portion of the housing in the community was built before 1960. Homes that are over 50 years old tend to require more maintenance. The Comprehensive Plan surveys noted concerns about property maintenance. It is possible that some deteriorating housing units may be located in prominent locations. Such properties

sometimes deteriorate and negatively impact the image of the community. In some cases, owners of property sometimes defer required maintenance due to a lack of funds or other reasons. The City may consider implementing a property maintenance code and applying for grant funding to assist grant-eligible property owners. Efforts should also concentrate on property maintenance and enforcement in all areas of the City. Neighborhood deterioration due to abandoned vehicles, peeling paint, junk storage, etc. can be addressed in these property maintenance and standards.

Housing Development that Respects the Natural Environment

The City of West Branch has topography that provides physical features including slopes and floodplain. Environmental regulations strive to protect these features as distinct benefits for community “quality of life.” In addition, a significant amount of land west of the city continues to be developed with large-lot single-family housing. This must be designed in a manner to preserve and protect natural features and preserve ag land to the extent possible. This estate residential area is expected to remain substantially less dense than the rest of the city, in part, because of the excessive costs associated with extending utilities to this area in the future. Also, the city is committed to preserving the existing character of the estate area through less intensive land development.

Improvement of Linkages Between Housing and Employment and the Provision of Services to Residents

West Branch is a community with strong east-west transportation corridors. Interstate 80 is the most significant east-west roadway. Most of the commercial uses in the city have located along Interstate 80. Industrial employment is also in the south and northwest areas of the City. North-south connections across the city are more limited. Most employers are located in Iowa City which tends to cause a portion of residents to funnel out of the city for retail goods and services.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 7: Economic Development

Economic Development involves every facet of the community, from parks and trails, to technology infrastructure, to strong leadership. West Branch must attend to all these facets in order to support existing businesses, maintain a quality workforce, and foster new economic ventures. Other chapters of this plan outline strategies for preserving natural resources, maintaining a diverse transportation network, providing quality recreational opportunities and public facilities, supporting a reliable infrastructure system, revitalizing existing neighborhoods, and developing land efficiently, profitably, and responsibly. All of these pieces fit together to form a strategy that will support a vibrant, enduring economy. These strategies contribute to the declared economic development goals of West Branch, which are outlined below.

CURRENT CONDITION

Residents of West Branch are fairly satisfied with the current appearance of their community, specifically with the downtown business district. Resident's opinions about the appearance of West Branch were gathered in a survey. Of the 401 surveys submitted, 84% (336) of respondents lived in West Branch while 65 respondents or 16% did not. The survey revealed that 64% of those surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that the City's appearance through tree plantings, flowers and landscaping is adequate. Survey respondents were also satisfied with the City's signage and Main Street facades (68%). The Design Committee as part of West Branch Main Street program strives to improve the physical appearance of the downtown district. The committee works on attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping. This work, along with other community efforts has resulted in a pleasant community appearance. Seventy-four percent of survey respondents reported that the City's efforts to preserve and enhance historic buildings are also thought to be adequate. This can partially be attributed to the National Historic District formed by the downtown buildings. Lastly, just under half (49%) of individuals responding to the survey reported that the City's building and zoning codes adequately maintain the character of the community.

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WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WEST BRANCH'S ECONOMIC GOALS

The economic development goals of West Branch were developed from the various public input methods. These goals are meant to foster economic growth through expansion of existing business and new economic partnerships.

Concentrate on retaining and expanding existing local business.

In tough economic times, retaining existing business becomes even more critical. Existing business retention and expansion is a crucial component in an overall economic development plan. National economic development studies have shown that 60-80% of future job growth results from the expansion of existing industries. While business retention and expansion may not be as glamorous as business attraction, it is a critical piece. The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) believes that business retention and expansion programs are best performed as a locally driven effort. West Branch has adopted the following goals to ensure the continued success of existing businesses:

Partnerships

Cooperate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.
Development Sites
Promote assistance to local firms in finding appropriate development sites for expansion.

Facilitation

Promote retaining existing manufacturing firms and facilitate their expansion.

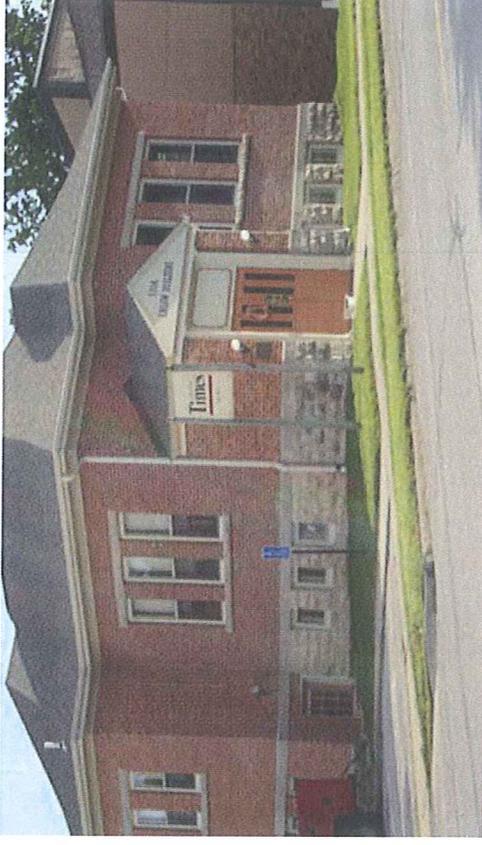
Revitalization

Encourage downtown revitalization and business development.

Diversification

Encourage diversified retail shopping.

Increase the number of small firms by fostering local entrepreneurship.



WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Locally grown, small firms have enormous growth potential. The Small Business Administration reports that small businesses represent 99.7% of all employers and provide approximately 75% of the net new jobs added to the economy. Growing local entrepreneurship will lead to homegrown small businesses in West Branch. Companies started by local entrepreneurs bring new wealth and economic growth to a community. Local entrepreneurs are also likely to remain, grow, and invest in the home community, thus cultivating businesses that are invested in the community. West Branch has adopted the following goals to ensure the continued success of existing business:

Partnerships

Cooperate with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new small business.

Financial and Technical Assistance

Promote support for start-up businesses with both financial and technical assistance.

ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Vibrant and Active Downtown Area

A vibrant and active downtown area is important to West Branch residents. Of the 401 survey respondents, 83% or 326 individuals reported that a vibrant downtown was very important or important. People want to be where they can live, work, and play. Fostering a vibrant and active downtown will require the continued success and expansion of local businesses, a multi-modal transportation system, and partnerships with area civic groups. Providing social activities in addition to ensuring the success of retail businesses will be important in coming years.

Incentives for Small Businesses

The Great Recession has had a significant effect on small businesses, specifically in terms of financing. Banks are making fewer loans to businesses and the loan amounts are also decreasing. According to the Small Business Administration, from 2007 to 2011 the number of loans to commercial and industrial small businesses fell 10% and the total dollars lent to this group declined by 13%. This further demonstrates the need for incentives and loan programs targeted at small businesses. Eighty-three percent of West Branch survey respondents reported that incentives for small businesses to improve their buildings and properties are very important or important. Currently, West Branch Main Street offers a revolving loan fund with 0% interest for loans amounting between \$500 and \$2000. Additional incentive and loan programs are available through the Small Business Association and other state and federal programs. Additional research should be conducted to determine if additional gap financing or incentives are needed to assist businesses in West Branch.

Sustainable or “Green” Community

Sustainability is defined by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Long lasting sustainability requires a balance between the environment, social equity, and economic development. Sustainability or a "green" community was identified as very important or important to 71% of West Branch survey respondents. There are a number of tools West Branch can utilize to cultivate a culture of sustainability among West Branch residents and the business community. Planning is the first step towards a more sustainable community. ICLEI offers a number of tools for members including a Sustainability Planning Toolkit. East Central Inter-governmental Association also coordinates the Petal Project green business certification program. The program offers businesses a simple framework for saving money and resources while establishing a community-wide definition of a green business. Utilizing these programs and others can guide the West Branch sustainability plan. Green infrastructure programs such as the promotion of rain gardens should be developed to encourage the implementation of green infrastructure.

Diverse Shopping

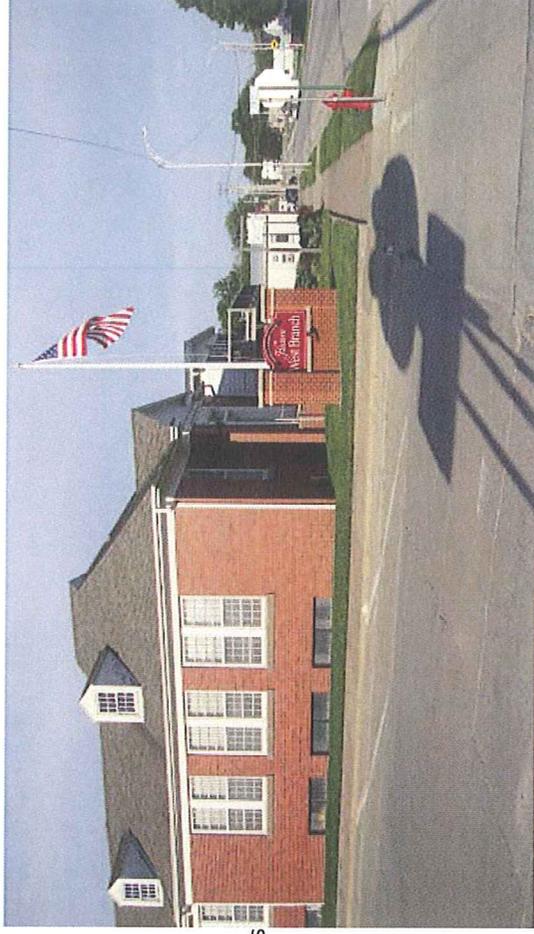
A vibrant and active downtown area requires diverse shopping options. Sixty-one percent of West Branch survey respondents identified diverse shopping opportunities as very important or important. Attracting or growing from within diverse businesses will require the continued development of all of the goals listed above in addition to the availability of infrastructure. Recruiting and retaining these businesses will require constant communication with potential leads and existing business, access to incentives and financing, a vibrant downtown and citizens with a "buy local" mindset. Meeting this goal will require collaboration amongst business leaders, government officials, and other civic organizations.

Other:

Hoover Complex

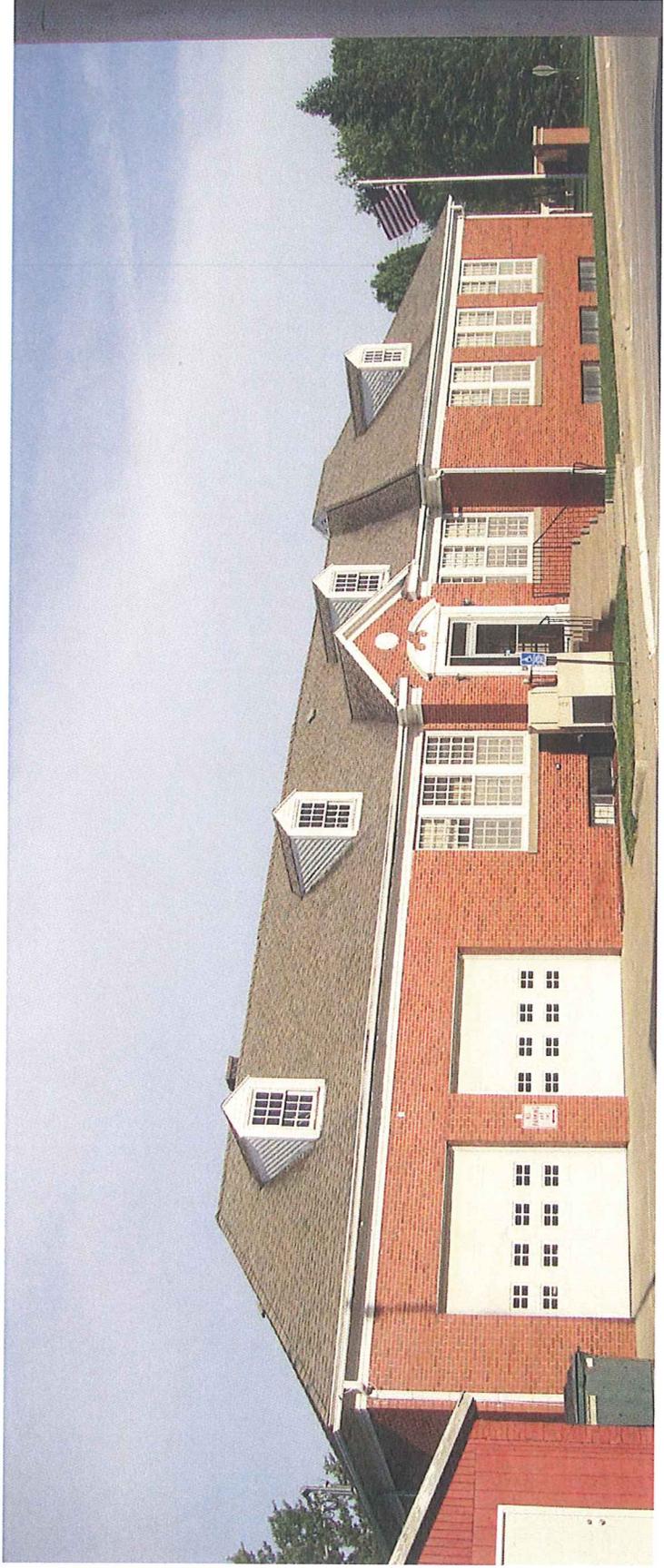
Tourism is an area of economic development that the City of West Branch should capitalize on. West Branch is the birthplace of the 31st President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. West Branch is home to the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site and Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Museum. The Herbert Hoover National Historic Site tells the story of the 31st President by preserving historic buildings and landscape that commemorates his life and accomplishments. The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Museum visitors can learn about Herbert Hoover's life and career through exhibits. The library museum has had nearly three million visitors since it opened over forty-years ago. That is approximately 75,000 visitors each year.

Iowa City Area Development Group



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The Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) works to the quality of its communities by serving businesses and economic development needs in the cities of Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Solon, Tiffin, Tipton, the Amana Colonies, West Branch, Kalona, West Liberty and Johnson County. ICAD is an economic development resource to the City of West Branch. ICAD's purpose is to create, collaborate and lead regional economic development that will result in the creation and growth of companies, quality jobs and wealth.



Chapter 8: Public Infrastructure and Utilities

This section provides an inventory and analysis of West Branch’s infrastructure system, including water distribution and storage, sanitary sewer collection and treatment and storm water conveyance. Considerations for the growth of these systems are also covered.

Inventory and Analysis

Water System

The City of West Branch has 4 Silurian wells. Wells 1 and 2 have a capacity of 300 GPM each and Wells 3 and 4 and a capacity of 100 GPM each. However the total pumping capacity with all wells in operation is only 800 GPM. The City currently has aeration/detention tank that has a capacity of 500 GPM. The water system currently has three high service pumps. Only two of the three high service pumps run at one time, the other pump serves as back up. The treatment facility uses pressure filtration to remove iron. The treatment facility plant has two 8-foot diameter vertical pressure filters rated at 100 GPM each and one three cell horizontal pressure filter rated at 300 GPM.

Sanitary Sewer System

The City of West Branch sanitary sewer system is made up of a collection system, one sewage lift station located on the southeast part of the City and an aerated lagoon. The collection system consists of sanitary sewer pipe, manholes and sewer mains.

Storm water

Storm water is water (rain, melted snow, melted ice) collected at it “runs off” impervious surfaces, including buildings, roads, parking lots and fields. In the undeveloped portions of the City of West Branch, storm water naturally flows across the ground and is either absorbed by the ground or runs into creeks and streams. In the developed areas of the City, storm water is channeled across roofs, gutters, parking lots and streets: through pipes into local streams and creeks. Storm water management revolves around three main issues: drainage, water quality and flooding.

Private Utility Service Providers

Service	Service Provider
Electric	Alliant Energy & Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative (Greenview and Brickford Drives)
Gas	Alliant Energy
Phone	Liberty Communications
Cable	Liberty Communications and Mediacom
Garbage and Recycling	Johnson County Refuse

Alliant Energy Cooperation is an energy holding company providing electric and natural gas services to communities throughout Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Service is provided to more than 1.4 million customers and nearly 4,000 people are employed by Alliant Energy.

Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative organized on July 8, 1938 as a private, non-profit electric utility that is owned by the members it serves. It was established to provide electric service at the lowest price possible. Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative is headquartered in Marion, Iowa and membership covers homes, farms, and businesses in Linn, Johnson, Jones, Cedar and Benton Counties.

Liberty Communications is a local communications company that provides cable, telephone and internet service. Liberty Communications began as the West Liberty Telephone Company in 1899. In January of 1997 the name was changed to Liberty Communications. Liberty Communications serves the Cities of West Branch and West Liberty.

Mediacom Communications is the nation's eighth largest cable television company. Mediacom's focus is providing cable, internet and phone service to America's smaller cities and towns. They serve over 1,500 communities nationwide and have a workforce over 4,400.

Johnson County Refuse provides garbage and recycling pickup every Friday in the City of West Branch. Johnson County Refuse is locally owned and operated and serves all of Johnson County and surrounding areas. Garbage that cannot be recycled must be placed in garbage bags or cans with a \$1.25 yellow sticker attached. Year round stickers can also be purchased. Curbside recycling is mandatory and a monthly \$4.75 fee is included on the monthly water and sewer bill. Each resident is provided with a green and red recycling bin. Currently service is not provided to apartment complexes.

Future Needs

Utility System	Need	Cost inflated to 2012 dollars
Water	New Jordan Well	\$984,450
Water	Aeration/Detention Tank Improvements	\$142,382
Water	Vertical Pressure Filters	\$398,666
Water	300,000 gallon Elevated Storage Tank	\$1,016,171
Water	12" Water Main Looping	\$788,365
Sanitary Sewer	System Rehabilitation Phase 1	\$538,805
Sanitary Sewer	New Lift Station & Force Main	\$750,000
Garbage	Service extended to apartment complexes	

The City of West Branch has been proactive in evaluating the future needs of its water and sanitary sewer systems. For a more detailed analysis of each systems future needs please view the West Branch,

Iowa Water System Analysis Final Report November 6, 2002 and the Report on Sanitary Sewer Collection System Investigation – Study Area 1 City of West Branch, Iowa February, 2012.

Chapter 9: Transportation

The City of West Branch's transportation system is vital to everyday life within the region. Locally, the transportation system facilitates the movement of people and goods within the region. The system allows residents to get from their homes to employment, education, medical care, and shopping, and it allows people and goods to move in and out of the region. Connections to regional transportation networks allow businesses to import and export goods quickly and efficiently, and allow the region to compete in the global marketplace.

Along with the benefits from transportation, come unintended negative impacts. If left unchecked, pollution, noise, congestion, safety, and high maintenance costs can diminish quality of life for local residents. In addition, some segments of the population such as the disabled, the elderly, and low-income populations are not able to access the transportation system. Through this Comprehensive Plan, the City of West Branch will strive to provide efficient and affordable transportation to residents and businesses while striving to minimize negative impacts. The City of West Branch will work to provide diverse and interconnected modes of transportation, accessibility, safety, and improved environmental quality.

Transportation Planning

The City of West Branch coordinates with a regional transportation planning agency, Regional Planning Affiliation 8 (RPA 10). RPA 10 is a seven-county region that includes Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties. RPA 10 facilitates coordination among local, regional, state, and federal agencies on transportation issues and plans. RPA 10 is responsible for planning for the development of a seamless system for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods within and between modes of transportation including streets, highways, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, rail, water, and air.

The City of West Branch Comprehensive Plan provides an overview of the City's transportation system. More detailed transportation information is included in the RPA 10 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The RPA 10 LRTP focuses on transportation related issues over a 20-year period. In accordance with Iowa DOT recommendations, RPA 10 updates its LRTPs every five years. The LRTP provides an explanation of the area's current transportation trends, and a forecast of future transportation issues. Through the LRTP planning process, local residents create the vision and goals that will guide transportation investment within the region over the next 20 years. The RPA 10 LRTP and other transportation planning documents are available for download at www.ecicog.org.

Roadways

The predominant transportation system in West Branch is a network of streets and highways that carry cars and trucks. These roadways serve the circulation needs of local residents and visitors from outside the area. The following section describes the roadway system in the City in terms of functional classification, capacity, congestion, and safety.

Functional Classification

Functional classification describes a roadway based on the type of service that it provides. Roadways provide two basic types of service: land access and mobility. The degree to which a roadway provides access and/or mobility determines its functional classification. The key to planning an efficient roadway system is finding the appropriate balance between mobility and accessibility. The following defines the functional classifications found in West Branch.

Principal Arterial roadways primarily serve a mobility function with minimal land access. The primary purpose of principal arterials is the rapid movement of people and goods for extended distances. Principal arterials are high capacity, high-speed roadways with restricted access. Currently there are no principal arterials located in the City of West Branch.

Minor Arterials interconnect with and augment principal arterials. Minor arterials within urban areas serve inter-community trips of moderate length. Although the primary purpose of the minor arterial is mobility, this functional class provides more access points and more land access than a principal arterial. Currently there are no principal arterials located in the City of West Branch.

Collector streets channel trips between the local street system and the arterials. Collectors serve a balance between mobility and land access. Parking and direct driveway access to the street are typically allowed on collectors. Collectors are usually wider, have higher capacity, and permit somewhat higher speeds than the local street network. Main Street in West Branch is a collector street.

Local Streets primarily provide local land access and offer the lowest level of mobility. Characteristics of local streets include uncontrolled intersections, posted speed limits of 25 miles per hour or less, and few restrictions on parking. Local streets include all streets not classified as principal arterial, minor arterial, or collector.

Map 1 displays West Branch roads by Functional Classification.

Traffic Volume

Traffic volume is an important measure for the transportation system. Understanding traffic volume helps engineers and transportation planners design a road system that is appropriate for the community. Traffic volume is measured in Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT). AADT is the total traffic volume on a road for a year divided by 365 days. Map 2 displays the AADT for West Branch area roads. The data used in Map 2 was collected by the Iowa DOT in 2010. Main Street and Parkside Drive are the most heavily traveled West Branch city streets with 4,070 and 3,900 AADT respectively. Interstate 80 has the highest traffic volume in the area with an AADT of 36,600.

Roadway Safety is an important consideration when planning for the future of the transportation system. Outdated or deteriorating infrastructure, high traffic volumes, or unsafe driver behavior are all potential causes of safety issues that can lead to serious injury or death. Transportation planners use crash data to identify areas on the road network where the

number of crashes is higher than expected. Once identified, the local government can take action to correct the problem. Iowa Department of Transportation provides crash data for all counties in the state. Using data from 2008-2010, staff created maps to illustrate the distribution crashes. The maps are used identify locations experiencing more crashes than would normally be expected. See Map 3 for Iowa DOT crash data. During the three year time period 43 crashes occurred within city limits. The crash data shows that while the City is relatively safe, there are some problem areas. Injuries and fatalities from auto crashes can place a burden on local residents and can reduce the overall quality of life in the City. West Branch must continue to work with state and regional transportation staff to improve safety for its roadway users.

Transit

East Central Iowa (ECI) Transit provides demand-responsive rural transit service in the counties of Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties. ECICOG is responsible for administration, coordination, and planning of ECI Transit. ECICOG does not directly operate the transit service. ECICOG contracts with a transit service provider in each affiliated county. In Cedar County River Bend Transit provides transit services. In Johnson County transit services are provided by Johnson County SEATS.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Non-motorized transportation is a key component of a multi-modal transportation system. Good walking and biking facilities can improve quality of life by reducing the number of vehicles on the road, promoting an active lifestyle, attracting visitors to the area, and providing a low cost mode of transportation. In recent years, the City of West Branch has worked to integrate bike and pedestrian facilities into its transportation network. However, according to 2010 Census estimates, only 3.2% of the population walks to work, and only 0.47% rides a bike.¹

West Branch's bike and pedestrian facilities fall into two categories, separated and on-street facilities. A separated facility is a bikeway/walkway physically separated from motorized traffic by open space or barrier either in the highway right-of-way or in an independent right-of-way. Separated facilities are suitable for all pedestrians and bicyclists. In an on-street route, bicyclists share space with motorized vehicles. On-street routes can take several forms including bike lanes or shared roadways. In some cases, striping, signing, and pavement markings designate a portion of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists by. In other cases, an on-street route signage indicates that the route is safe for bicyclists.

When planning a bicycling, hiking, and walking system, local governments should design a system that will accommodate as many users as possible. The system should take into consideration the differing abilities of the potential riders using the system. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) uses the following categories of bicycle users to assist in determining the impact that different facilities and roadway conditions will have on the bicyclist. Group A riders have the most experience, and are comfortable riding on most city streets. Group B bicyclists are less experienced and prefer riding on separated trails or low

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey.
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_5YR_B08301&prodType=table

speed low traffic volume streets. Group C bicyclists are children. Children often use bicycles to get to school or recreation, but require well defined separation from motor vehicles.

The Bicycle Federation of America estimates that out of nearly 100 million people in the United States that own bicycles, roughly 5 percent qualify as Group A bicyclists, with the remaining 95 percent as Group B and C bicyclists. See **Map 1.6** for the bike and pedestrian facilities in West Branch.

Safety – Improving bicycle and pedestrian safety will be a primary concern for West Branch. According to Iowa DOT, the state averages 5 bicyclist and 21 pedestrian fatalities each year. In West Branch, City injury hospitalization data shows bicycle and pedestrian accidents as one of the leading causes of injury and death for residents between the ages of 1 and 34. The Iowa DOT recommends the following to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety:

- Young children need supervision in the traffic environment.
- Children should learn bicycle and pedestrian safety from an early age
- Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85%.²

Distance – West Branch’s rural character means that walking or bicycling to a destination can be difficult because of the long distances involved. Local governments can help reduce travel distances by encouraging compact development that reduces sprawl and promotes land use patterns that create more walkable neighborhoods. Examples of this include conservation subdivisions, mixed-use development, and infill development.

Infrastructure – Incomplete infrastructure prevents many West Branch residents from walking and biking. Local governments can fill the gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian network working to obtain funding for trails and other facilities, and by exploring new sidewalk or Complete Streets polices. Complete Streets are designed to allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit to travel safely alongside automobiles. West Branch communities should continue to work to improve the quality of its residents by supporting programs that make walking and biking safer and more convenient.

Freight

The efficient movement of goods is one of the keys to effective competition in the world market system. As a result, policy makers, industry specialists, and transportation planners have recognized that an efficient freight system is fundamental for economic development in West Branch. This section focuses on the three freight modes which are most active in the West Branch: truck, rail, and air. The freight modes are described separately, but the different modes are often used in combination, which is referred to as intermodal freight transport.

Interstate 80 passes through West Branch. This highway provides a ground connection to the rest of Iowa, the region, and the nation. The rail system that passes through the region is also a valuable resource. Iowa Interstate Railroad operates an east west line that runs approximately 2.5 miles south of West Branch.

² Iowa Department of Public Health. 2002-2006 The University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center. <http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/iprc/resources/reports/Cedar-County.pdf>

Airport

The Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids provides commercial air transportation services for West Branch. Thirty-five daily departures include service from American, United, Delta and Allegiant Air. The Airport also features increasing cargo activity with Fed Ex, DHL, and UPS; and an active general aviation community. The Airport is owned by the City of Cedar Rapids and operated by the Cedar Rapids Airport Commission. The Airport is located between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City along Interstate 380.

The Quad City International Airport also provides commercial air transportation services for West Branch. The Quad City International Airport is located in Moline, Illinois and currently has four airlines serving 10 nonstop hubs or connecting cities. The airport is owned by Rock Island County and is operated by the Metropolitan Airport Authority. The airport also has cargo activity with Fed Ex, DHL and UPS. General aviation airports are located in Iowa City, Muscatine, and Tipton.

Intermodal Facility

Railroads through their connections with other transportation modes are involved in many intermodal traffic movements. Rail typically provides the long-haul portion of the movement and at the intermodal facility the freight is transferred to another mode for door-to-door delivery. The closest intermodal facility to the City of West Branch is located in West Liberty, Iowa. The Iowa Chicago and Eastern is the railroad that services this intermodal facility.

Transportation Projects

Transportation is extremely important to the citizens of West Branch. The primary transportation mode is vehicle travel on streets and roads. The public input survey found at the majority of residents supported the replacement of college street bridge followed by paving 4th Street and paving County Line Road. Sidewalks were the second mode of transportation used by citizens. Residents would like to see sidewalks throughout the entire community and identified the following areas that need sidewalk improvement: College Street Bridge, College Street, Poplar and Oliphant, downtown, Cedar Street, Johnson Street, and add missing sidewalks and address steps.