Market Study & Strategies

West Branch, Iowa

Historic

WEST BRANCH

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

20 06

A Main Street Iowa Community

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This report was created by West Branch Main Street with technical assistance provided Main Street Iowa and Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA).

PUTTING A PLAN ON THE FUTURE

The economic landscape of traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial districts continues to change and evolve. Expanding retail competition, life-altering technologies, and shifting lifestyle trends will continue to affect business opportunities and the ways in which people interact within the traditional downtown environment.

The key to improving the economic performance of the West Branch downtown business district ultimately lies in the development and implementation of market-driven business development and marketing strategies that capitalize on our community's assets and emerging opportunities.

The West Branch Community Development Group spearheaded the downtown market analysis process to promote an in-depth understanding of local and regional market conditions and trends impacting the downtown district's current economic performance and opportunities for the future. Information and direction gained throughout the market analysis process will provide a sound basis for local decision-making processes and strategies aimed at enhancing the West Branhc downtown business district.

West Branch was selected by Main Street Iowa to receive market analysis training and technical assistance. The self-help process engages local leaders, business persons, residents and stakeholders. Key steps in the process include:

- Site visits and work sessions with the Main Street Iowa team.
- The collection and review of background information.
- The analysis and summary of trade area demographic and economic data provided by Main Street Iowa.
- The performance of consumer and business surveys.

An extensive amount of information and data was compiled and analyzed throughout the course of the market analysis process. This report has been prepared to highlight key information and findings that could be particularly relevant to our community's ongoing downtown enhancement efforts.

IOWA economic development®

This market study report was completed with assistance from Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and Main Street Iowa.

The mission of the IEDA is to engender and promote economic development policies and practices which stimulate and sustain Iowa's economic growth and climate that integrate efforts across public and private sectors. The IEDA conducts training and provides technical assistance to designated Main Street programs, including market analysis. These services include capacity building on understanding the regional marketplace and how to develop and proceed locally with an implementation plan.

MAIN STREET IOWA

Limitations and Disclaimers

Retail market analyses, their components (such as retail sales gap analyses) and derivative business development plans provide important guidance on how a commercial area should, theoretically, be able to perform and on the sales levels businesses should be able to achieve. However, a number of factors affect the actual performance of businesses and commercial areas, including the skills of the business operator, level of business capitalization, the quality of the physical environment, changes in overall economic conditions, the effectiveness of business and district marketing programs, and many other factors. The information in this document is intended to provide a foundation of information for making business development decisions, but it does not and cannot ensure business success.

As is true of all demographic, economic and market studies, our analysis' reliability is limited to the reliability and quality of the data available. Our research assumes that all data made available by and procured from federal, state, county, city, primary and third party sources is accurate and reliable.

Because market conditions change rapidly and sometimes without warning, the information and opinions expressed here represent a snapshot in time and cannot predict or gauge future changes or results.

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Historic WEST BRANCH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 20 06

A Main Street Iowa Community

Community Profile

Located in Cedar County, Iowa, West Branch is a city of approximately 2,360 people. West Branch was plotted and settled between 1869 and 1875 by Ohioan Quakers, and derives its name from the Quaker Meeting House that was located on the west branch of the Wapsinonac Creek. Prior to the American Civil War (1861-1865) areas in and around West Branch served as a stopping point on the Underground Railroad. Abolitionist John Brown also maintained his headquarters at William Maxson's house near the small community of Springdale located just to the east of West Branch, while planning his October 16, 1859, raid on Harpers Ferry.

West Branch developed quickly as a commercial center for the surrounding farm area with the introduction of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad (1876-1903). The downtown district still retains a core of small businesses and shops with a citywide total of some 110 establishments at present.

A portion of the downtown core was named a Nationally Registered Historic District in 1987, with 15 commercial buildings on the National Registry of Historic Places.

West Branch has been a member of the Main Street Iowa program since 2006, and is one of fifty-four Main Street Communities in the State of Iowa. Accomplishments to date include:

- 41 business starts or expansions
- 63 net new jobs created
- 34,101 volunteer hours toward revitalization efforts
- $1,882,050 invested in local building projects

The 31st President of the United States (1929-1933), Herbert Hoover, was born in West Branch on August 10, 1874. Hoover remains the only native -born Iowan to be elected president. His Presidential Library-Museum was dedicated in 1962 by longtime friend Harry S. Truman, and is one of fourteen Presidential Library-Museums in the United States. The library-museum is located within the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site. The National Park is one of two National Parks in the State of Iowa, located just north of Interstate 80 at Exit 254, and is one of the top tourist designations in Iowa with over 100,000 annual visitors. Both President Hoover and his wife Lou's final resting place is located a short walk from the Presidential Library-Museum.

West Branch is located to the east of the Johnson/Cedar County line (including a subdivision in that county). Iowa City, the sixth-largest city in the state, home to the University of Iowa and the University of Iowa Health Care with a metro-area population of 150,000, is approximately 10 miles to the west. Many West Branch residents work in Iowa City or in communities along the Interstate-380 Corridor between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, IA. West Branch is also within a 45-mile commuting distance to both the Quad Cities International Airport, Moline, IL, and the Eastern Iowa Airport, Cedar Rapids.

"The heart of West Branch rests in its downtown. The focal point of the downtown commercial district is our Historic District, which serves as a conduit from which everything flows in the community.

The West Branch Community Development Group has been instrumental in strengthening the downtown district's economy through business retention and recruitment, along with preservation of the historic attributes of the district."

Benefits of this program to the entire community are immeasurable because we choose to work with other organizations in the community and involve everyone."

— Kevin A. Rogers
Executive Director, West Branch CDG

Community Profile

Development Patterns

West Branch is bisected by county highways F44 (Herbert Hoover Highway) extending west to Iowa City, becoming Main Street within the city limits, and X30 which leads north to the county seat located in Tipton. The community is concentrated at the intersection of those highways, with its central historic downtown district which contains 15 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.

West Branch Community Schools is a PK-12 school system of approximately 800 students. The school system has a reputation of producing graduates with the capacity to be highly successful in post-secondary educational settings, as well as being life-long learners and positive contributors to their communities. The elementary and middle schools along with the Oliphant Street Field (locally known as The Little Rose Bowl) are centrally located in the community, with the high school located to the west of the city center. Also to the west of the city is The Village Community. The Village is a place where people with intellectual disabilities are nurtured and valued, a place where they will be engaged in all aspects of their lives, learning and working alongside their friends, family, and members of the community. To the east of the community is Scattergood Friends School. Scattergood is a diverse, college preparatory Quaker based community of motivated and open-minded learners, who value simplicity, equality, and non-violence. They bring forth the strengths of each individual through a rich and varied set of experiences which prepare students for higher education and life-long learning.

Centrally located in the community are the city offices, the public library, the Town Hall, a federal post office and the fire and police stations.

The city is home to five churches and several parks. Pederson Valley and The Meadows provide ample space for new residential development as well as areas in and around the Cedar Edge Golf Course and Country Club to the north and west of the city core.

The City of West Branch maintains an industrial park immediately to the south of the Interstate 80 at exit 254, which is home to major businesses such as Procter & Gamble warehouses facilities, Tidewater Direct (Printing), Plastic Products, Altorfer Ag Products, Croell Redi-Mix, Inc., and Nordex On-Line/Acciona Windpowe

Aesthetics and Appearances

The Historic Downtown Commercial District of West Branch is largely comprised of maintained buildings from the late 19th century and early 20th century. Since 2006 more than $3,000,000 in private investments have been invested in preserving and or restoring the Italianate and Anglo-Italianate style buildings scattered throughout the downtown district. Efforts continue throughout the district when interior renovations are undertaken that as much of the original character and charm of the building remains.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of West Branch in June 2012 embarked on a multimillion dollar project to improve the infrastructure of the Main Street District. The improvements included replacement of water and sewer lines, storm sewer upgrades, installation of ADA compliant sidewalks, and numerous street improvements. In 2017 the City of West Branch also installed wayfinding signs throughout the downtown district, as well as acquiring a grant for multiple tree plantings on the edge of the downtown commercial district.

The City of West Branch holds cleanliness and of the downtown district and community as a high priority, regularly cleaning streets, keeping streets free of snow and ice, and hosts a bi-annual community-wide cleanup day.

The West Branch Community Development Group (CDG) manages the planters throughout the Main Street District and the seasonal decorations, as well as the light pole banners. The CDG also sponsors community-wide events throughout the year which include Simply Summer (June), Fall Festival (October), Shop Small Saturday (in cooperation with American Express) (November), and A Christmas Past (December). Additionally, the CDG is a co-sponsor of the communities Hoover Hometown Days (August) and Music in the Village Green, an open-air summer concert series held in June & July each year. Local merchants continue to host numerous special events throughout the year adding to the retail shopping experience in West Branch.

The National Park Service continues to maintain a park-like setting along the main entrance to the city, creating a welcoming gateway entrance from the Interstate 380 interchange. Heritage Square, located in the heart of the Main Street District, serves as a conduit between the National Historic Site and the Historic Downtown Commercial District. The square features a replica of the gazebo that once housed the main water supply (at the intersections of Downey and Main) for the downtown district and surrounding around in earlier years. Discussions continue with regards to further transforming Heritage Square into a more attractive and inviting place for residents and visitors alike to congregate.

"Herbert Hoover National Historic Site was thrilled to have Cotton Creek Mill and its patrons connect with the park and the National Park Service during our centennial celebration by creating a National Park Quilt. This project allowed several people to use their own creative talents to piece together squares which artistically represent various parks around the country."

Pete Swisher
Superintendent
Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Business Mix and Climate

The primary business district is located in and along the Historic Downtown Commercial District. The tenant mix of the downtown district consists of independent, locally-owned food and beverage establishments, retail shops and various service establishments. A secondary business district is located just north of Interstate 80 at exit 254, and includes both corporate manufacturing, industrial, and specialty retail services. The business composition of the community leans heavily towards service oriented business with restaurants, retail, and lodging establishments that welcome travelers to the area.

While the community of West Branch boasts a number of locally-owned eateries, everything from homemade Mexican fare to burgers, subs to homemade pizza, there remains gaps in this service offering. A deli, a pastry shop, and an American fare sit down restaurant have long been on the wish list of local consumers and could be a compliment to current offerings.

Challenges area businesses face include competition from the nearby communities of Iowa City and Coralville, larger populated college towns within 10-12 miles to the west. Another challenge facing local businesses is the effect of online shopping and social media, which cater to uniquely different generations and their shopping preferences. Providing *innovation and creativity* to business strategies will help guide local businesses to more fully utilize the internet and social media marketing opportunities.

The economic climate of the community has continued to evolve over the last several years. Rebranding the local Main Street program in December 2016 to reflect more of a community atmosphere in combination with developing a stronger partnership with the City of West Branch has resulted in an increased understanding of the local businesses community and the integral part the business community is to a healthy and prosperous community. Since 2015, there has been a steady increase of new businesses relocating in the area, which is important given the ever-changing economic climate.

"Having our shop in the same location for 42 years we are one of the longest established businesses in the community. There's always been a steady flow for consumer foot traffic, although sometimes more than others. We've had to adapt to the changing times to find different ways to attract people to our shop in West Branch."

— Lou and Colleen Picek, Owners Main Street Antiques and Art.

Competitive Analysis

The analysis of market data summarized in this report is supportive to understanding the market for not only the historic downtown district but the business community on a whole in West Branch. Input provided by community businesses and the community in general, reveals assets and distinctive features associated with West Branch that could be spun as competitive advantages in the market place.

- The reach and influence of the West Branch Community Development Group's community and economic development efforts extend beyond the historic downtown core. In particular they strive to engage all businesses in the community in 'shop small' campaigns and the Community Ambassador's Program.

- With fifteen buildings listed on that National Registry of Historic Places, historic and architectural significance of the downtown core reinforces small town values and lifestyles.

- The historic main street district continues to sustain a 95% street-level store front occupancy rate with no business closings in over two years. Smaller independently owned businesses are definitely the attraction.

- Eating and drinking establishments clustered in the downtown commercial district continue to evolve, attracting visitors from throughout the region.

- The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum (one of only fifteen presidential museums in the United States), and the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site (one of two National Parks in the State of Iowa) continue to remain a draw to the community.

- Strong and evolving partnerships exist between the City of West Branch and numerous community organizations.

West Branch is strategically located along the Interstate 80 corridor which stretches east to west across the entire State of Iowa, and within close proximity to the Interstate 380 corridor – known as the Avenue of the Saints, which connect the southernmost part of the state to the northern most. But more:

- West Branch is located less than ten miles from Iowa City.
- Twelve miles from Coralville.
- Approximately 30 minutes from Cedar Rapids.
- Approximately 45 minutes from the Quad Cities.

Strategies for positioning West Branch must also recognize challenges that influence consumer perceptions and behavior. In many cases, challenges could also be viewed as opportunities and could provide valuable direction for primary research and/or "first steps" implementation strategies designed to respond to specific issues and shortcomings.

"West Branch offers opportunities other communities don't offer. West Branch is one of those 'well-kept secrets' and when people realize what we have to offer, they are in awe.

West Branch offers unlimited opportunities."

— Donna Zender
Owner, It's New Once Again

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Input provided by West Branch stakeholders in 2017 suggests that attention should be directed toward:

- Recognizing gaps in the business mix, including but not limited to:
    - General merchandise store
    - Expanded dining options
    - Fine dining
    - Pharmacy
    - Hardware Store
    - Bakery
    - Coffee Shoppes

- Capitalizing upon the existing and evolving eating and drinking establishments.

- Working to collect and track information on visitor trends revolving around community tourism assets – and working to better capitalize on visitor/tourism activity.

- Continuing to develop and implement marketing and advertising strategies that create awareness of available businesses, goods and services, capturing the attention of consumers in the region.

- Continuing to develop and implement festivals and cultural events.

DOWNTOWN WEST BRANCH MARKET SNAPSHOT

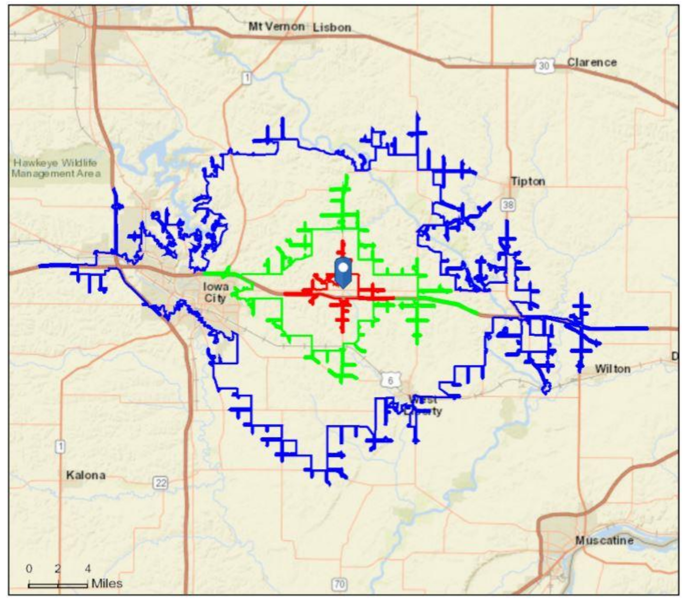
Demographic Snapshot

The demographic snapshot compiled for the Downtown West Branch Drive Time Markets benchmarks and tracks changes in the marketplace. Analysis and comparison of data for the three drive time areas reveal:

- Projections for the population and households across the study area geographies anticipate small increases of within a range of .70% for both population and households, with the largest percentage gain predicted for the twenty-minute drive time area. At the state level, population and number of households are expected to grow at five-year rates of .66% and 2.33%, respectively.
- Consistent with the "Greying of America" phenomenon, average household size is anticipated to decrease slightly across the drive time areas and median age is expected to increase by just less than one year through 2019.
- The median age of the population in the twenty-minute drive time is comparatively young and likely reflects the influence of the more urban and college student populations from the University of Iowa. Median age for the Iowa population in 2017 is estimated at 38.9 years compared to the U.S. median age of 38.2.
- The concentration of renter-occupied housing is higher in the twenty-minute drive time, estimated at 45.3% in 2017. Between 4.6 % and 7.2% of housing units across the study area were classified as vacant in 2017 which is lower than most Iowa communities. Statewide figures for 2017 and 2022 projections assigned a vacant status to 8.8% - 9.3% of all Iowa housing units.
- Median income figures are highest in the ten-minute drive time area and are expected to increase slightly by 2022. Projected five-year growth rates for the various income categories are below those projected for the state.

Iowa Income	2017	2022	+ %
Median HH	$54.8K	$59.8K	8.75%
Average HH	$71.5 K	$80.4K	11.9%
Per Capita	$28.9K	$32.4K	11.6%

Note: The complete Downtown West Branch Market Snapshot is available as a supplemental document to this report.



Downtown West Branch Drive Time Market

Fast Facts

Population	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2000 Census	2,261	1,492	74,822
2010 Census	2,482	1,835	82,479
2017 Estimate	2,522	1,911	91,241
2022 Projection	2,529	2,034	97,304
Change 2017—2022	0.30%	6.3%	6.5%
Households	**5 Min**	**10 Min**	**20 Min**
2000 Census	890	516	30,076
2010 Census	1,006	711	33,029
2017 Estimate	1,022	748	36,626
2022 Projection	1,022	801	39,193
Change 2017—2022	0.00%	1.38%	1.36%
Median HH Income	**5 Min**	**10 Min**	**20 Min**
2017 Estimate	$59,899	$71,074	$53,112
2022 Projection	$67,103	$76,785	$56,794
Change 2017—2021	2.30%	1.56%	1.35%
Source: Esri			

DOWNTOWN WEST BRANCH MARKET SNAPSHOT

Lifestyle Profile

The Esri Community Tapestry consumer segmentation system adds color to the "black& white" demographic description of residents and households within drive time areas.

The Tapestry Household Distribution Report identifies prevalent segments and describes the population's likes, dislikes, lifestyles and purchase behaviors for households within the defined geographies. The information can be particularly helpful for assessing opportunities for business growth and for designing marketing strategies and messages to reach targeted consumer segments.

The following tables show concentrations of the three most prevalent Tapestry household segments found within the Downtown West Branch 5, 10 and 20-minute drive time areas.

5 Minute Drive Time Households	Count	Pct.
Parks and Rec (5C)	541	50.3%
Middleburg (4C)	451	44.1%
Green Acres (6A)	57	5.6%
Count/Pct. of 5 Minute Drive Time	**1022**	**100.0%**

10 Minute Drive Time Households	Count	Pct.
In Style (5B)	352	47.1%
Green Acres (6A)	316	42.2%
Exurbanities (1E)	67	9.0%
Count/Pct. of 10 Minute Drive Time	**735**	**98.3%**

20 Minute Drive Time Households	Count	Pct.
In Style (5B)	7,628	20.8%
Dorms to Diplomas (14C)	5,989	16.4%
Green Acres (6A)	1,628	3.6%
Count/Pct. of 20 Minute Drive Time	**14,945**	**40.8%**

Information on Esri Tapestry methodology along with descriptions for prevalent Downtown West Branch Drive Time Market Tapestry segments is available in the complete Downtown West Branch Market Snapshot—a supplemental document to this report; and at the Esri website at: http://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation.htm.

Top Consumer Lifestyle Segments | Esri 2017

Parks and Rec (#1 in 5-Minute Drive Time)

These practical suburbanites have achieved the dream of home ownership. They have purchased homes that are within their means. Their homes are older, and town homes and duplexes are not uncommon. Many of these families are two-income married couples approaching retirement age; they are comfortable in their jobs and their homes, budget wisely, but do not plan on retiring anytime soon or moving. Neighborhoods are well-established, as are amenities and programs that support their now independent children through school and college. The appeal of these kid-friendly neighborhoods is now attracting a new generation of young couples.

Market Profile

- Cost and practicality come first when purchasing a vehicle. More likely to buy domestic SUVs or trucks.
- Budget-conscious consumers stock up on staples at warehouse clubs.
- Pass time at home watching documentaries on Animal Planet, Discovery or History channels.
- For an outing, they choose to dine out at family-style restaurants and attend movies.
- Convenience is important in the kitchen, they regularly use frozen or packaged main course meals.
- Residents take advantage of local parks and recreational activities.

In Style (#1 in the 10- and 20-Minute Drive Times)

In Style denizens embrace an urbane lifestyle that includes support of the arts, travel, and extensive reading. They are connected and make full use of the advantages of mobile devices. Professional couples or single households without children, they have the time to focus on their homes and their interests. The population is slightly older and already planning for their retirement.

Market Profile

- Partial to late model SUVs and trucks
- Homes integral part of their style; invest in home remodeling/maintenance, DIY or contractors, housekeeping hired.
- Prefer organic foods, including growing their own vegetables.
- Financially active, from a variety of investments to home equity lines of credit.
- Meticulous planners, both well insured and well invested in retirement savings.
- Generous with support of various charities and causes.
- Actively support the arts, theater, concerts, and museums..

DOWNTOWN WEST BRANCH MARKET SNAPSHOT

Retail Performance

Esri's Retail MarketPlace data provides a direct comparison between retail sales and consumer spending by industry. To capture a snapshot of an area's retail market place, the leakage and surplus factor summarizes the relationship between supply (retail sales by businesses) and demand (consumer spending by household). Deviations from potential sales may reveal areas of opportunity in the trade area's retail sectors, keeping in mind any extenuating circumstances that may be driving the results.

All estimates of actual sales (supply) reflect current dollars derived from receipts of businesses primarily engaged in selling merchandise. Potential sales (demand) is estimated by using Esri's consumer spending data which provides estimated expenditures for more than 700 products and services that are consumed by U.S. households. The estimate of a trade area's demand is based upon estimated expenditures by households within the trade area.

Leakage within a specified trade area represents a condition where supply is less than demand. Retailers outside of the trade area are fulfilling demand for retail products. Surplus within a specified trade area represents a condition where supply exceeds demand. Thus retailers are attracting customers that reside outside the trade area.

Sales Surplus and Leakage Estimates

Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink demand versus sales estimates for the drive times show sales leakage for the five- and ten-minute drive time areas, ranging from about $7.6 million to $9.5 million. Conversely, the twenty-minute drive time area shows overall sales surplus totaling more than $837 million. The dramatic swing in figures in the twenty-minute drive time reflect the close proximity to the Iowa City metro area.

Sales Surplus & Leakage ($MM)	5 Minutes	10 Minutes	20 Minutes
	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink (NAICS 44 – 45, 722)	($9.5)	($7.6)	$837.6
Total Retail Trade (NAICS 44 – 45)	($9.4)	($6.8)	$693.9
Total Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	($1.1)	($736,241)	$143.6

Drive time estimates for Total Retail Trade are consistent with overall figures, with sales leakage ranging from about $6.8 million to $9.4 million in the five- and ten-minute drive time areas, and sales surplus estimated at $693.9 million for the twenty-minute drive time.

Estimates for Food & Drink sector sales in comparison to projected demand show an estimated sales leakage in the five- and twenty-minute drive time areas of about $1.1 million and $736,000, respectively; and sales surplus estimated at about $143.6 million in the twenty-minute drive time area.

Retail Sales

Drive Time Market ($MM)		
5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
($9.5)	($7.6)	$837.6

Source: Esri Retail MarketPlace Report 2017

Totals shown for all North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Retail categories (NAICS 441—454) and Foodservice and Drinking Places (NAICS 722).

Retail Pull

Categories and subcategories with some of the highest and lowest pull factors—an indication of relative strength or possible opportunities in the market—include:

Category/Subcategory	Factor*
▲ Drinking Places – Alcoholic Beverages	43.4
▲ Automotive Dealers	39.8
▲ Motor Vehicle & Part Dealers	31.0
▲ Office Supplies, Stationery & Gifts	8.0
▲ Gasoline Stations	7.2
▼ Florist	(100.0)
▼ General Merchandise Stores	(100.0)
▼ Furniture & Home Furnishings	(100.0)
▼ Lawn & Garden Equip	(100.0)
▼ Clothing & Accessories	(100.0)
▼ Shoe Stores	(100.0)
▼ Special Food Services	(100.0)
▼ Health & Personal Care Stores	(100.0)
▼ Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	(100.0)
▼ Sporting Goods/Hobby/Music	(56.7)

* Factor shown for five-minute drive time area

Source: Esri

The factor is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total surplus) to -100 (total leakage). A positive value represents a surplus of retail sales (often indicative of a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area).

Community Insights

The process behind the completion of this study and the resulting strategies consider findings from background research, current market data and stakeholder input provided via:

- A business survey completed by 42 downtown West Branch area businesses
- Consumer online and intercept surveys completed by 229 participants

Following are examples of key findings which provide insights and a sound basis for proposed strategies outlined in this document.

The West Branch Market

Comparison of consumer intercept and online survey data reflects the "pull" of West Branch across a broader geographic region. More than 21% of consumer intercept survey participants indicated their residence was located more than ten miles from West Branch—or nearly two times the 30% of online survey participants who indicated the same.

The findings are consistent with Esri Retail MarketPlace data showing strong retail sales surpluses in the five- and ten-minute drive time geographies and which suggest that, overall, local retail and foodservice sector establishments in are effectively capturing the local market and pulling consumers from outside the ten-minute drive time area. Growth strategies should seek to build upon retail sector strengths and West Branch presence as a retail hub or destination for certain retail and foodservice sector lines.

Traffic Generators and Visit Frequency

Overall visit rates indicated by consumer survey respondents show that more than 35% visit the downtown on a daily or weekly basis to shop, or for eating and drinking, compared to over 48% for errands, office and or service-related purposes. The results could demonstrate the need for the Community Development Group to sponsor additional creative marketing workshops.

Consumer online survey results show that participants visit the downtown less frequently to do errands (i.e. City Hall, Post Office, banks, etc.). Visitor frequency for those shopping in the downtown area on a daily or weekly basis, measured at more than 36.05% of online respondents, is comparatively high and likely impacted by the presence of a full-service grocer, a pet groomer, and a quilt and fabric shop in the downtown area.

Marketing strategies designed to increase visit frequency across the various business sectors should serve to heighten awareness for the full range of products and services available. Cross-marketing and promotion strategies should consider opportunities to intercept visitors, and for the delivery or placement of messages and collateral (i.e., posters, banners, brochures, etc.) at street level, and at both retail and non-retail traffic-generating attractions.

Table 1

Question

How far is your residence located from Downtown West Branch?

Consumer Intercept Responses	Percent
In downtown or within 2 miles	46.01%
2 to 5 miles	19.47%
5 to 10 miles	12.83%
More than 10 miles	21.68%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Intercept Survey.

Table 2

Question

How often do you visit Downtown West Branch…

Frequency—Daily or Weekly	Percent
For errands, office and/or service-related purposes?	48.88%
For eating, drinking and/or entertainment?	35.43%
To shop?	23.21%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Online Survey.

Media Preferences and Effectiveness

Consumer rankings of media preferences demonstrate the exceptionally strong presence of internet and Social Media applications as their resource for news, and researching products and services. The Internet can be a particularly valuable resource for businesses because it provides the potential for businesses to expand their trade area well beyond local or regional geographies. Businesses with collectible, specialty, and custom merchandise lines, in particular, can use the Internet, and sites such as Amazon, eBay, Pinterest, and Etsy, to market to the entire United States or even globally. Even traditional retailers and businesses carrying "staple" products are reaping benefits as, more and more, consumers use the Internet to "shop and compare" products and services, and then use it – in much the same way previous generations of consumers used the Yellow Pages – as a resource to find a local outlet or vendor where they can make their purchase.

West Branch's promotion and collaborative marketing efforts should continue to consider how the Internet and various social media applications might be most effectively used to communicate with consumers and to further downtown promotional goals. The growing popularity of Facebook, Twitter and other social media applications is evident in consumer survey results that show 81.08% of all respondents selected social media and 22.07% selected internet websites as one of their top two sources for news and information.

The West Branch branding system should continue to be developed and consistently deployed across a variety of medium—including Internet-based sites and applications—to enhance further awareness and to create business connections to the Downtown West Branch brand. Businesses should be encouraged to "plug in" to the West Branch website and social media sites which serve as portals, and to apply branding elements and extensions in their own electronic and print media applications to reinforce connections with the brand—and build brand equity.

Strategies and applications designed to use the West Branch Community Development Group's Facebook pages and website as portal sites, of sorts, to feature and easily share postings highlighting new and unique products, local personalities, special offers, events and other features which reinforce the West Branch brand should continue. Facebook advertising applications should continue to be employed and experimented with to build traffic to these sites. Businesses should be encouraged to maintain fresh content and to share links and posts to leverage traffic generated by the West Branch portal pages and the pages of other area businesses.

Businesses should also be encouraged to experiment with other social media applications, where appropriate. For example, more than 36% of consumers surveyed indicated they regularly use Pinterest, more than 39% use Instagram and over 44% use YouTube, yet only 27.5% of businesses surveyed currently have a presence on these platforms.

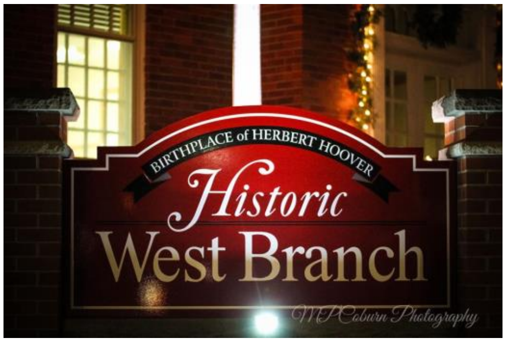


Table 3

Question | Consumer Survey

Of the following, which two (2) media and information sources do you most rely on for West Branch area news and information?

Top Consumer Survey Responses	
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	81.08%
Newspaper	48.65%
Word of Mouth	36.00%
Internet Website(s)	22.07%
Email Marketing and News Feeds	9.91%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Surveys.

Table 4

Question

Which of the following social media networks or online applications do you regularly use?

Top Consumer Survey Responses	
Facebook	86.60%
You Tube	44.19%
Instagram	39.29%
Pinterest	36.16%
Twitter	29.46%
eBay	10.96%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Survey.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Opportunities Ahead?

Suggestions revolving around additional restaurants and coffee/bakery/deli were popular with consumer survey participants and could lend support for new and expanded eating, drinking and specialty foods entries in West Branch.

Other business types and attractions frequently identified as candidates for expansion or recruitment in consumer survey responses included entries in the clothing, expanded retail, hardware store, and pharmacy categories.

Products frequently purchased online by consumer survey participants could also provide queues for the potential expansion of merchandise lines and complementary product lines for new and existing Downtown West Branch businesses.

Table 5

Question

What type(s) of products have you purchased on the Internet within the last three months?

Products	Count	Percent
Jewelry	32	14.61%
Flowers	20	9.13%
Women's Clothing	106	48.40%
Sporting Goods	49	22.37%
Pharmacy	42	14.61%
Electronics	62	28.31%
Home Furnishings	52	29.97%
None & Other	47	21.46%
Beauty Supplies	74	33.79%
Books	83	37.90%
Gifts	25	42.92%
Men's Clothing	42	19.18%
Specialty Foods	26	11.87%
Children's Clothing	51	23.29%
Hobbies and Crafts	49	22.37%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Surveys.

Surveys were among a number of tools used to help identify and gauge the potential for possible business expansion and recruitment prospects in downtown West Branch. The information is helpful in assessing business opportunities and in identifying possible gaps in the downtown business mix. Consumer survey responses could provide additional insight and help to gauge how the trade area might respond to various types of new and expanded businesses.

Table 6

Opportunities?

What types of new businesses or attractions would make you visit West Branch more often.

Top Responses—Categorized	
Restaurants—All	30.28%
Coffee/Bakery/Deli	14.07%
Clothing and Clothing Accessories	3.98%
Expanded Retail (General)	11.32%
Hardware Store	7.04%
Pharmacy	7.65%
Expanded Grocery	4.59%
Drinking Places—Alcoholic Beverages	2.45%
Community/Recreation Center	6.73%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Surveys.

Table 7

Question

Do you transact sales on your website or through another website (i.e., eBay, Etsy, etc.)?

Business Survey Responses	Percent
Yes	36.59%
No	63.41%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Leveraging Assets

Consumer survey participants gave West Branch high marks for a variety of identifiable—and marketable—qualities and traits which provide a solid foundation for images and messages to be reinforced as part of a downtown branding strategy and system.

Table 8

Question

How does West Branch compare to other places you frequently shop and do business in terms of:

Consumers Rating	A. Stronger	B. Equal	A + B
Cleanliness	27.35%	58.74%	85.65%
Customer Service	29.15%	54.71%	83.86%
Quality of Festivals and Events	33.63%	38.84%	72.77%
Attractiveness	30.63%	44.59%	70.72%
Quality of Products and Services	6.79%	41.18%	58.37%
Quality of Dining	7.69%	50.68%	58.37%
Variety of Dining	2.28%	14.16%	16.44%
Variety and Selection of Shopping	2.26%	12.67%	14.93%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Surveys.

Downtown West Branch marketing and branding strategies should emphasize images and messages which capitalize on "known" qualities and assets to deliver a powerful statement and resonating impressions. Leveraging assets already identified as strengths in the marketplace provides opportunities to make natural connections with consumers, and enhances the ability for the Downtown West Branch brand to readily gain traction through repeated and consistent applications and extensions.

A Work in Progress

Consumer and business survey participants place a high priority on business expansion and the restoration and preservation efforts—including proposals for creating incentives for new and expanding businesses in the downtown area. The two groups differ on possible efforts to restore and preserve the downtown's historic character, with business survey participants providing a significantly higher ranking.

Efforts to stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area are also viewed favorably by consumers and businesses alike.

The ranking of priorities provides direction for new and ongoing downtown enhancement initiatives. In some cases, a divergence in the opinions of consumers and businesses regarding possible enhancement efforts could suggest a need to share information and perspectives with businesses as a means of more closely aligning with, or responding to, the market.

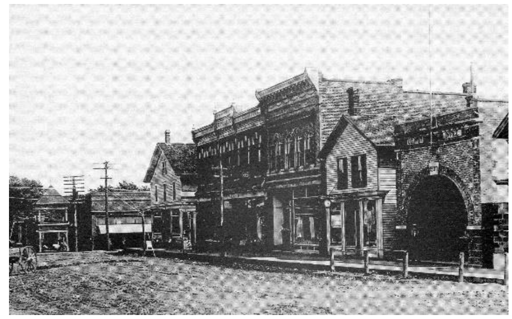


Table 9

Question

Would you place a high, moderate or low priority on possible Downtown West Branch enhancement efforts to:

Consumers (C) and Businesses (B) Rating as a "High Priority"

Enhancement Efforts	(C)	(B)
Create incentives for new and expanding downtown businesses	60.73% (1)	42.11% (2)
Restore and preserve the downtown's historic character	43.24% (2)	51.35% (1)
Improve the downtown's streets, sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, green spaces, trails, etc.	37.27% (3)	34.21% (3)
Stage additional festivals and special events in the downtown area	33.63% (4)	28.95% (4)
Improve and/or create more housing in the downtown area	16.74% (5)	21.05% (5)

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer and Business Surveys.

First Things

Input regarding priorities for the downtown district generally aligns with suggestions offered by consumer and business survey respondents when asked, "What is the first thing you would do to improve Downtown West Branch?" Economic Vitality initiatives, dominated by business recruitment, business enhancement and efforts to diversify the business mix, ranked highly, followed closely by design-oriented subjects and topics.

Table 10

Question

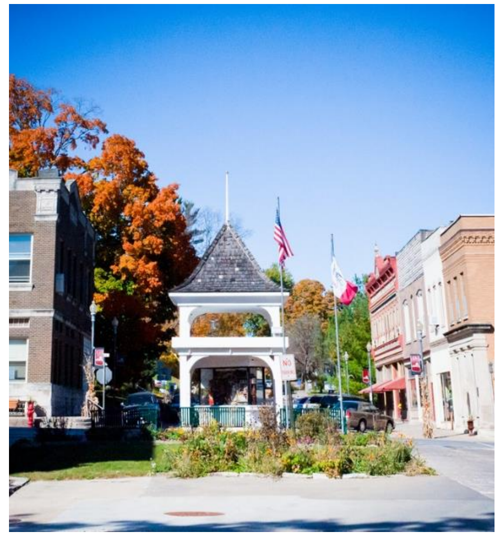
What is the first thing you would do to improve Downtown West Branch?

Categorized Topics	Consumers	Businesses
Expanded Eating/Dining	24.54%	—
Add/Recruit Businesses/Mix	21.93%	14..29%
Buildings and Appearances	7.06%	10.71%
Parking, Traffic and Transportation	6.69%	14.29%
Streetscape and Public Spaces	7.81%	17.86%
Festivals and Events	7.81%	3.57%
Public Relations	3.35%	7.14%
Development/Redevelopment	2.2%	10.71%
Programs/Programming	7.81%	10.71%
Marketing	9.67%	10.71%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer and Business Surveys. Most frequent categorized responses shown.

Parking, Traffic and Transportation-related concerns and suggestions were cited nearly two times more frequently by business survey participants. With specific regard to parking, the findings could suggest that parking for business owners and employees is troublesome; and/or that business owners may be their own worst enemy by, in essence, "promoting" parking concerns which do not appear to be as apparent or a barrier to consumers.

There is ample parking available outside the immediate downtown Main Street district however the West Branch Community Development Group needs to do a better job in terms of marking the community as a "walkable community".



What is the first thing you would do to improve West Branch?

Economic Vitality initiatives, dominated by business recruitment, business enhancement and efforts to diversify the business mix, ranked highly, followed closely by design-oriented subjects and topics.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Most Loved

Consumers and businesses surveyed overwhelmingly identified features associated with the downtown's environment, character and feel as the things they love most or would never change, showing a great affection for the small-town atmosphere and friendly nature of downtown. The findings can lend direction for marketing and branding strategies which connect with the downtown's tangible and intangible features most loved by both consumers and businesses, and help to distinguish West Branch in the regional marketplace.

Table 11

Question

What is the one thing that you love most, or that you would never change, about Downtown West Branch?

Categorized Responses	Consumers	Businesses
Environment; Character and Feel	33.74%	50.00%
Business(es); Business Mix	16.27%	—
Appearances; Décor & Special Features	21.69%	33.34%
History and Historic Character; Buildings	22.29%	16.68%
Festivals and Events	6.03%	—

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer and Business Surveys. Most frequent categorized responses shown.

Consumers and businesses show a great affection for the small-town atmosphere and friendly nature of downtown.

Features identified as most loved can lend direction for marketing and branding strategies which connect with the downtown's tangible and intangible features, and help to distinguish West Branch in the regional marketplace.

BUSINESS INSIGHTS

Business Tenure and Climate

Over fifty-nine percent of the business survey participants indicated their business has been located in West Branch for ten or more years. The figure could be viewed as an indicator of stability, but it could also suggest the need for a certain level of succession planning given that 17 businesses (43.6%) indicated they have been located in West Branch for 21 or more years.

The business climate also appears to be conducive to business start-up and entrepreneurial activity, as evidenced by 25.6% of the business survey sample indicating they have been located in West Branch for four years or less.

Customer Base

More than 90% of businesses surveyed identified Local/Regional residents as their primary customer base. The findings are consistent with the overall consumer survey sample showing that over 78% of all respondents live within ten miles of West Branch. The findings are also consistent with a market that tends to be loyal to local brands and businesses, and that values customer service, reputation and quality.

Table 12
Question
Which of the following best describes your primary customer base?

Responses	
Local/Regional Residents	90.63%
Downtown Area Employees	3.13%
Visitors and Tourists	12.50%
Other	21.88%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Connections

The majority of West Branch businesses appear to recognize the value and importance of the internet and social media trends. More than 69% of business survey participants have a website and fifteen businesses (nearly 36%) indicated they engage in sales over the internet. Over seventy-two percent of businesses indicated their business has a Facebook page.

Given the relatively high internet presence of businesses, and high levels of interest in marketing topics and potential programs, internet and social media applications could be an obvious—and important—component of West Branch's collaborative marketing programs and campaigns.

Table 13
Question
How long has your business been located in Downtown West Branch?

Responses	
Less than 1 year	2.56%
1 to 4 years	23.08%
5 to 9 years	15.38%
10 to 20 years	15.38%
21+ years	43.59%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Table 14
Question
Which of the following best describes the main reason for customers to do business with you?

Responses	
Customer Service	48.48%
Reputation	39.39%
Convenience	18.18%
Price of goods and services	15.15%
Selection and variety	3.03%
Other	12.12%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Table 15
Question
Would you consider participating in a collaborative marketing campaign for West Branch?

Responses	
Yes	72.22%
No	27.78%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Changes Ahead?

More than 61% of business survey respondents indicated the likelihood for their business to expand within the next one or two years as being moderate, high or very high. Other business survey results provide insight on the nature of potential changes that could occur within the downtown area and the business mix based on affirmative responses to a list of possible modifications.

Table 16

Question

In the next year or two, do you plan to change or modify your business in any of the following ways?

Responses	
Increase marketing	48.48%
Increase number of employees	45.00%
Expand services or product lines	33.00%
Start and/or complete building improvements	27.27%
Expand hours of operation	18.18%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

The nature of changes being considered by businesses, along with interest expressed in possible business assistance and training programs, suggests that the timing could be opportune for the West Branch Community Development Group to introduce or escalate efforts to:

- Facilitate collaborative marketing programs, possibly including a social media-based “meet your neighbor” campaign that focuses on the downtown’s personalities and/or a cooperative advertising program designed to extend and reinforce the Downtown West Branch and community-wide brand.
- Share market study data and findings regarding product lines showing potential for expansion.
- Explore interest in, and identify resources for, marketing and clientele development for small businesses, business succession planning, and employee management topics.
- Work with the West Branch Community Development Group’s Design Committee, the Main Street Iowa Design Specialists, City of West Branch and other partners to:
    - Promote Main Street Iowa design assistance and technical training services.
    - Develop, review or fine-tune design guidelines
    - Explore and pursue opportunities for financial and technical assistance to promote high quality building and business improvements, and to catalyze business expansion opportunities

Table 17

Question

Of the following business seminar topics, which two would be of most interest and/or most useful to you?

Responses	
Finding and Keeping Employees	38.89%
Marketing for Small Businesses	36.11%
Social Media for Small Businesses	33.33%
Finding and Keeping Customers	27.78%
Business Succession Planning	11.11%
Employee Benefits	8.33%
E-commerce for Small Businesses	8.33%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Table 18

Question

Would you be inclined to use any of the following Building Assistance programs and incentives?

Responses	
Low-interest building improvement loans	73.33%
Assistance to sell your building and/or business	26.67%
Free/low-cost building improvement design services	20.00%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey. Most frequent responses shown.

Benchmarks

Certain data collected and compiled as part of the business survey provides valuable insights on the West Branch business community today and can be used to benchmark, track and measure changes and progress stemming from West Branch downtown enhancement and economic development initiatives. The information can also be valuable to prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs as they consider opportunities in West Branch.

Downtown Sales and Revenues Trends

Survey results show more than fifty percent of business survey respondents reported an increase in gross sales or revenues in 2016 as compared to 2015, and 15% reported gross sales or revenues stayed about the same.

Table 19

Question

Which of the following describes the change in your business' gross sales or revenues in 2016 as compared to 2015? (If unsure, use your best estimate)

Responses	
Increased by 1% to 5%	9.09%
Increased by 6% to 10%	36.36%
Increased by 11% to 15%	9.09%
Increased by 16% to 20%	3.03%
Increased by more than 20%	15.15%
Stayed about the same	15.15%
Decreased by 1% to 5%	3.03%
Decreased by 6% to 10%	3.03%
Decreased by 11% to 15%	0.00%
Decreased by 16% to 20%	3.03%
Decreased by more than 20%	3.03%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Business survey participants expect the positive trends in sales and revenues reported by business survey participants for 2015 to 2016 to continue in 2017. All told, over 72% of business survey respondents indicated they expect gross sales or revenues to increase in 2017 as compared to 2016, with 50% anticipating increases within a range of 1% to 10%. Only three business survey respondents (8%) expect gross sales or revenues to decline in 2017, while 19% anticipate sales or revenue figures will stay about the same.

Table 21

Question

Do you rent or own your business location?

Responses	
Rent	42.50%
Own	57.50%

Source: 2017 West Branch Business Survey.

Less than 50% of business survey participants indicated they rent their business location. Business assistance programs should consider special needs of owners and renter-occupied businesses; and development strategies should monitor, consider and promote investments and opportunities for mixed-use development to accommodate future demand by commercial tenants.

OPPORTUNITIES

Retail Uses

Business types and merchandise lines that might be considered primary targets and candidates for expansion and recruitment, based on the downtown area's existing business mix, trends in the marketplace and related findings from local input, consumer and business surveys, Esri retail data, and the sales surplus & leakage analysis performed as part of this study include:

Foodservices & Drinking Places (NAICS 722)

Subcategories:

7225 Restaurant/Other Eating Places

7223 Special Food Service

Notes: Input from the consumer and business surveys suggest demand for additional Eating & Drinking Places options is high. Expansion opportunities and new entries would be compatible and complementary to existing category entries and might include additional limited service food options, with coffee house, bakery and deli/sandwich concepts, all scoring high in surveys. Additional opportunities and concepts for both full service and limited-service eating establishments could feature locally grown, produced and inspired products and specialties, along with order-ahead, pick-up, delivery, catering and take-out services; and limited-service entries, including deli and coffee house concepts, might also feature selections of fresh and packaged specialty foods. Evening and nighttime establishments might feature various genres of music and venues for local artists to enhance the downtown's "fun & entertainment factor" and the expressed desire of consumers for additional recreation and entertainment. Décor and themes might feature local art, history and heritage.

Sporting Goods, Hobby, Books and Music (NAICS 451)

Subcategories:

4511 Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instruments

Notes: The most immediate opportunities in the sporting goods category would likely capitalize on the health and fitness movement, and on market characteristics favoring outdoor recreation and activities. Concepts and product lines might package and feature high levels of service and local expertise (i.e., bicycle repairs, fitness training programs, outfitter and guide services, etc.) and capitalize on traffic generated by walking and hiking trails, and other recreational attractions.

Table 21

Opportunities?

What type of new business or attraction located in West Branch would help your business succeed?

Top Responses—Categorized	
Restaurants—All	35.2%
General Merchandise Stores	7.4%
Hardware Store	3.7%
Professional Services	7.4%
Rec Center/pool	3.7%
Lodging	9.2%
Pharmacy	3.7%
Flower Shop	3.7%
Other	3.7%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Surveys. Most frequent responses shown.

OPPORTUNITIES

Miscellaneous Store Retailers (NAICS 452 & 453)

Subcategories:

- 4529 Other General Merchandise Stores
- 4539 Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers
- 4531 Florist

Notes: Sales surplus & leakage analysis, the existing downtown business mix, and consumer survey results lend support for certain subcategories; and generalized responses indicating a preference for general retail and/or unspecified "boutique" and "specialty" shops, suggest this category could be targeted for expansion and recruitment. Well merchandised resale boutiques featuring lightly worn clothing resale and consignment boutiques specializing in lines such as maternity wear, children's wear, antiques, etc., might offer an opportunity to take advantage of "green" re-wearing/recycling trends and also help, via more well-defined niches, to fill demand and/or expand upon existing entries in Clothing & Clothing Accessories and Home Furnishings categories. Gift, novelty and souvenir lines might include specialty and art-inspired lines catering to the gift shopping needs of local and visitor markets seeking the unusual or one-of-a-kind gift; and also incorporate handcrafted products and art, select home furnishings, West Branch/Cedar County-branded products and apparel, and educational toys and games.

Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores (NAICS 448)

Subcategories:

- 4481 Clothing Stores

Notes: Entries would build on the evolving niche of specialty clothing boutiques already located in the downtown. Concepts and product lines would complement and offer expansion opportunities for the downtown area's growing cluster of women's and children's clothing and accessories specialty retailers. Entries would feature a high-level of personal services (i.e., custom design/tailoring, VIP trunk showings, in-home consultations, etc.) and might be packaged with salon, health & beauty services. Special accessories collections might feature local fashion designers, custom-made products and "wearable art." Collaborative efforts and events, such as downtown fashion/style showcases and/or downtown diva or ladies' night out events that package VIP shopping, food, art, entertainment, salon services and product demonstrations or unveilings, could be important to efforts to position Downtown West Branch as a destination for fashion and further serve to enhance the downtown's arts-based economy and "entertainment factor."

The retail business targets listed and described here serve as a starting point. Downtown West Branch stakeholders must infuse local knowledge and expertise into the process of analyzing market information contained in this study to further develop profiles for business types and uses which are a good fit for West Branch, and which appear to have the very best chance to succeed.

Business types targeted for expansion and recruitment consider consumer demand and potential gaps in the business mix, capitalize on existing strengths, and build on existing or evolving niches in the business mix to solidify West Branch's market position and enhance its destination-oriented appeal.

OPPORTUNITIES

Office and Service Uses

Trends and projections pointing to continued growth in the market area's population and number of households through 2019 suggests demand for new service and office uses in the downtown area could increase, accordingly. Other trends could also serve to essentially change the behavior of the market and generate demand for additional office and service uses including:

- Continued transition to a service-oriented society.
- Increasing demand for personal care and medical services related to the "Graying of America" phenomenon.
- The downtown's appeal to office, service and residential uses that will continue to grow as success is realized from West Branch Main Street and community downtown enhancement efforts – and the possibility that existing office and service businesses currently located in other parts of the region will seek to relocate in or within close proximity to West Branch.

The importance of, and opportunities for, new and expanding office and service uses in West Branch may best be demonstrated by:

- Over twenty-six percent of consumer online survey respondents indicated they visit Downtown West Branch at least once or twice a month for office and service-related purposes.
- When asked what type of new businesses or attractions, located in Downtown West Branch, would help your business and/or have the best chance to succeed, fifteen percent of business survey responses fell within the services category —making it the second highest ranked survey category.
- Interest expressed on the part of consumers in new housing that could be developed in the downtown area, and the close proximity of potential redevelopment sites which could be ideally suited for mixed-use development.

Office and services uses in West Branch already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district's economy and sense of vitality. Predictably, office and service uses will continue to be important to downtown in the future. These uses should continue to be encouraged to locate within the downtown district and, where appropriate and applicable. West Branch Community Development Group and community development partners should work to locate these uses in buildings and spaces that are conducive to creating and maintaining a strong sense of retail vibrancy throughout the district.

Office and services uses in West Branch already play an important role in generating consistent traffic to support the district's economy and sense of vitality.

Table 22

Question

How often do you visit Downtown West Branch for office and service-related purposes? (Examples: library, city hall, salon/barbershop, dentist, doctor, chiropractor, attorney, accountant, dry cleaning, auto repair, etc.)

Top Responses—Categorized	
Daily	16.14%
1 or 2 times a week	32.73%
Once or twice a month	26.46%
A few times a year	11.21%
Seldom or never	13.45%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Survey.

Housing

Consumer survey results show interest in potential downtown housing options. The findings could lend support for the rehabilitation of existing housing and the development of new, mixed-use concepts in Downtown West Branch.

Demographic data for those indicating interest in downtown housing options reveal a market which would likely demand more upscale downtown housing styles and options.

Table 23

Potential Downtown Housing Market | Demographic Profile

For Consumer Survey participants indicating interest in new or renovated Downtown West Branch housing.

Age	Percent
24 or younger	6.25%
25 to 34	20.83%
35 to 44	22.92%
45 to 54	18.75%
55 to 64	20.83%
65 or older	10.41%

Household Size	Percent
1	16.67%
2	31.25%
3	27.08%
4	18.75%
5 or more	6.25%

Household Income	Percent
Less than $35,000	23.91%
$35,000 to $49,999	13.04%
$50,000 to $74,999	23.91%
$75,000 to $99,999	15.22%
$100,000 to $149,999	17.39%
$150,000 and greater	6.52%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Online Survey.

The best prospects for new downtown housing might be directed toward the development of units that are quite different from the current inventory of housing options available in the broader community – including styles that might take advantage of the unique dimensions, layouts and materials found in the upper levels of downtown commercial buildings to create distinguishable and even “funky” living and/or live/work spaces; and for higher-density mixed-use development at potential redevelopment sites in the downtown district and immediate surrounding area.

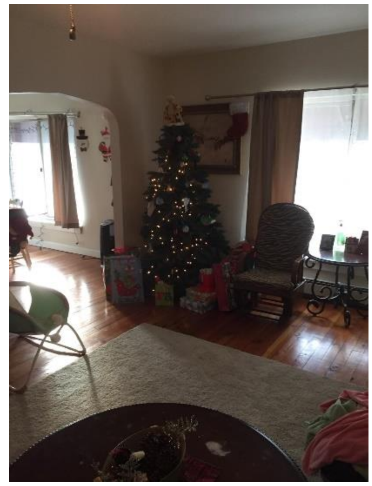


Table 24

Q: Would you consider living in Downtown West Branch?

Responses	
Yes	12.24%
Maybe	22.45%
No	55.10%
I live downtown	10.20%

Table 25

Q: Would you prefer to own or rent housing in Downtown West Branch?

Responses	
Own	73.47%
Rent	26.53%

Table 26

Q: What kind of housing in Downtown West Branch would you look for or consider?

Responses	
Apartment	21.28%
Loft	40.43%
Condo	42.55%
Townhouse	55.32%
Senior Housing	23.40%

Source: 2017 West Branch Consumer Online Survey.

CONCLUSION

For the West Branch Community Development Group and the entire community of West Branch, the completion of this market study is not an end but rather the beginning of a new phase in the advancement of the community's downtown revitalization and enhancement initiatives. What we see on a daily basis is the charm and historic character of our community – the bricks and mortar as it were. This market study allows us to see the challenges that exits and the opportunities that lie before us.

This summary report serves to highlight only a small sample of the knowledge and direction that can be synthesized from analysis of data collected during the market analysis process. Similarly, the implementation strategy outlined in the document is only a starting point for a more comprehensive slate of projects that is likely to emerge as local leaders and stakeholders work together and continue to study the local market.

As the West Branch Community Development Group moves forward, we will continue to involve partners, community leaders, business persons and residents in efforts to analyze and interpret the information collected through the market analysis process in order to develop a complete understanding of the findings and results – and the implications for downtown and the commercial community as a whole. The ensuing process will "dig deep" into the results, their meanings, and incorporate local knowledge into the analysis and interpretation of the study's findings. Such a process will serve to aid in the development and implementation of strategies that are both market-driven and intrinsic to our community's goals and aspirations for West Branch.

Indeed, the detailed market analysis process orchestrated to date may be, in and of itself, one of the most important "results" to emerge in recent years. While the process has served to help identify present-day priorities, existing and looming challenges, and immediate and emerging opportunities, it cannot, will not, and does not serve to anticipate tomorrow's priorities, next year's challenges, or exciting and unanticipated opportunities still over the horizon.

Now, and in the future, the West Branch Community Development Group and the entire community will be able to use these results for the betterment of West Branch commercially and otherwise. It will serve as a useful and flexible tool for business recruitment and retention, as well as serve as a "living and breathing" document. Our ability to update and change this document in accordance with the times and trends of our community, will be very useful in aiding the Community Development Group's enhancement of the downtown area as well as the surround areas.