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SPECIAL
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, June 25, 2019 • 7:00 p.m.
West Branch City Council Chambers, 110 N. Poplar St.
Council Quorum May Be Present

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approve Agenda/Move to action.
 - a. Approve minutes from the May 28, 2019 Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting.
4. Public Hearing/Non-Consent Agenda. /Move to action.
 - a. Approve Chapter 1; Introduction
 - b. Approve Chapter 2; Smart Planning
 - c. Approve Chapter 3; Vision Statement, Goals & Objectives
 - d. Approve Chapter 4; Community Profile & Character
 - e. Approve Chapter 5; Land Use
 - f. Approve Chapter 7; The West Branch Economy
 - g. Approve Chapter 9: Transportation
 - h. Approve Chapter 12; Intergovernmental Cooperation
 - i. Discuss West Branch's Future Land Use Map (review current map in advance)
 - j. Review Marion, Iowa's fireworks ordinance
5. City Staff Reports
6. Comments from Chair and Commission Members
7. Next regular Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Tuesday, July 23, 2019.
8. Adjourn

Planning & Zoning Commission Members: Chair John Fuller, Vice Chair Ryan Bowers, Sally Peck, Emilie Walsh, Tom Dean, Brad Bower, Vacant • **Zoning Administrator:** Terry Goerdts • **Deputy City Clerk:** Leslie Brick
Mayor: Roger Laughlin • **Council Members:** Jordan Ellyson, Colton Miller, Brian Pierce, Nick Goodweiler, Jodee Stoolman
City Administrator/Clerk: Redmond Jones II • **Fire Chief:** Kevin Stoolman • **Police Chief:** Mike Horihan •
Public Works Director: Matt Goodale

(These minutes are not approved until the next Commission meeting.)

City of West Branch Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
May 28, 2019
West Branch City Council Chambers, 110 North Poplar Street

Chairperson John Fuller opened the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting at 7:12 p.m. welcoming the audience and following city staff; Zoning Administrator Terry Goerdts, Deputy City Clerk Leslie Brick and Mayor Roger Laughlin. Commission members Ryan Bowers and Brad Bower were present. Emilie Walsh was present via phone. Tom Dean and Sally Peck were absent.

APPROVE AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA/MOVE TO ACTION.

Approve the agenda for the May 28, 2019 Planning & Zoning meeting. /Move to action.

Fuller requested to amend the May 28, 2019 Planning & Zoning agenda by reviewing all chapters of the Comprehensive Plan then proceed with the other remaining agenda items and also to amend item 4b to approve Chapter 11.

Motion by Bowers, second by Bower to approve the amended agenda as requested. AYES: Bowers, Bower, Fuller, Walsh. NAYS: None. Absent: Dean and Peck. Motion carried.

Approve minutes from the February 26, 2019 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. /Move to action.

Motion by Bowers, second by Bower to approve the minutes. Motion carried on a voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING/NON-CONSENT AGENDA

West Branch Comprehensive Plan Update

Fuller provided a summary of the individual chapters of the Comprehensive Plan updates noting which ones were in progress, not started and ones complete. Fuller suggested that a public input session be held to review each of the chapters to gain community input for the Comprehensive Plan. Fuller said that much of the work has been done by his students at the University of Iowa so it is important that the commission members, Mayor, Council, city staff and West Branch residents are informed of the updates to the Plan. Fuller said he would work with staff to choose a date when a public input meeting could be held.

Fuller provided updates on the following chapters;

Chapter 1 – Introduction (complete - except for needing public involvement which will be provided following the public session later this summer)

Chapter 2 – Smart Planning (complete) provides an overview of the Smart Planning principles and elements for comprehensive plan development. To be approved at the next meeting.

Chapter 3 – Vision Statement (in progress) focus to be on goals of individual chapters and public input

Chapter 4 – Community Profile (complete). To be approved at the next meeting.

Chapter 5 – Land Use (in progress) needs updated present land use and future land use maps. Commission input needed.

Chapter 6 – Housing – (complete) – Approved by P&Z February 26, 2019)

Chapter 7 – The West Branch Economy – (complete) To be approved at next meeting.

Chapter 8 – Public Infrastructure, Utilities, Facilities and Finance– (complete) To be approved at this meeting.

Chapter 9 – Transportation – (in progress, a few changes needed). To be approved at the next meeting.

Chapter 10 – Environmental Stewardship – (complete) Approved by P& Z August 14, 2018

Chapter 11 – Parks, Recreation and Facilities – (complete) To be approved at this meeting.

Chapter 12 – Intergovernmental Cooperation – (complete, except for fringe area agreement)

Chapter 13 – Implementation (formerly Ch. 14) - (not started)

Approve Chapter 8 of the revised Comprehensive Plan. /Move to action.

Motion by Bowers, second by Bower to approve Chapter 10. AYES: Bowers, Bower, Fuller, Walsh.
NAYS: None. Absent: Dean and Peck. Motion carried.

Approve Chapter 11 of the revised Comprehensive Plan. /Move to action.

Motion by Bowers, second by Bower to approve Chapter 11. AYES: Bowers, Bower, Fuller, Walsh.
NAYS: None. Absent: Dean and Peck. Motion carried.

Discussion – Johnson County Fringe Area Agreement

Fuller recapped his conversation with Nathan Mueller from the Johnson County Planning department who approached Fuller regarding a possible fringe area agreement with West Branch. Fuller provided an email and sample fringe area agreements and asked staff to forward to the city attorney for his comments and possible draft agreement.

Discussion – Ordinance suggestion for location of fireworks sales

Brick said the city had been contacted earlier this spring by a fireworks vendor wanting to set up and sell fireworks at the BP gas station and questioned zoning requirements. Brick said currently, the city code does not have any restrictions on where fireworks could be sold within the city limits. Brick suggested that the commission consider a similar ordinance that Marion Iowa recently adopted that only allows sales in industrial zones. Brick said she would reach out to the City of Marion to obtain a copy of their ordinance. Fuller suggested that the ordinance include a five hundred foot setback from any gas station or area where people gather (such as a hotel) and approval by the fire chief.

STAFF REPORTS:

No reports.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR AND COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Chairperson Fuller requested a special meeting in June to approve additional chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. June 25, 2019 was set for the next commission meeting.

Bowers asked for an update on the Croell redevelopment site and RFP progress. Laughlin said that the city had recently been awarded a fifty thousand dollar derelict grant to assist with removing the metal buildings on the property. Laughlin said the RFP had not yet been drafted but would follow up with City Administrator Jones. Laughlin said he hoped the site would be cleared of the buildings and extra concrete later this fall. Laughlin said the city had been contacted by a few interested developers as well.

Adjourn

Fuller adjourned the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting at 8:50 p.m. Motion carried on a voice vote.

*No videography services were available for this meeting.

Submitted by:

Leslie Brick

Deputy City Clerk

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction.

The City of West Branch's comprehensive plan provides a guide for the future of the City over a 20-year period. West Branch, with a 2010 census population of 2,322¹, is located on the western border of Cedar County and the eastern border of Johnson County in the State of Iowa. This comprehensive plan updates the 2013 plan for the city. The update identifies issues and opportunities on such topics as land use, infrastructure, parks and recreation, economic development, and the use of environmental resources. Chapters in the plan provide detailed information about the current situation in each topical area, goals in each case and action steps, termed objectives, to be taken to implement a shared community vision. An executive summary to this plan update collects the goals and objectives from each chapter for easy reference.

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 for the future. Second, to present a unified and compelling vision for a community and establish the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision. The recommendations in this plan are designed to take advantage of West Branch's unique location, resources and heritage to build an optimal 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 its municipal boundaries. Where multiple municipal jurisdictions overlap, the authority is generally split at the half-way point between those 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, as in the case of West Branch, 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, West Branch Comprehensive Plans to date have planned to the existing City limits.

¹ The American Community Survey population estimate for 2017 is 2,294 and creditable population estimates for 2020 range from 2,370 to 3,198. For details see Chapter 4.

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 a 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.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A complete comprehensive plan provides 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: **Reuben—elsewhere we have bullet points, why not here?**

- ◇ 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 or other externalities are controlled from new and existing development;
- ◇ The available revenues to support capital improvements and public services;
- ◇ The employment, housing, recreational and shopping opportunities for the community plus methods of access to those opportunities;
- ◇ 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 accepted and applied. It is unrealistic that all ideas presented in the comprehensive plan will receive complete agreement. However, to the extent that West Branch's planning process is all inclusive and included a wide range of ideas and opinions, the comprehensive plan becomes a unifying element for decisions.

Public participation in West Branch's 2013 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. An open house for public input 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. Those survey results are in Appendix A.

For this plan update, the Planning & Zoning Commission held open meetings on each chapter of the plan, and then forwarded approved chapters to the City Council for their comments and input. The update incorporated information from an October 3, 2017 public meeting in West Branch that was also input to a 2018 Cedar County Comprehensive Plan. Last, the Commission held a public meeting on the plan update in West Branch **(on a date to be determined)** and incorporated comments and recommendations from that meeting before the update was presented to the West Branch City Council for adoption.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT Chapter 2: SMART PLANNING

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 legislation articulated 10 Smart Planning Principles and 13 Comprehensive Plan Elements for application to local comprehensive plan development and public decision-making. These are guidelines intended to promote economic opportunities, preserve the natural environment, protect community quality of life and ensure equitable decision-making processes.

This updated plan accepts and incorporates the state principles and plan elements to the fullest practical extent.

Ten Smart Planning Principles.

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, and; in 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 be 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, and expanded entrepreneurial opportunities.

- Revitalization:

The redevelopment and or reuse of established town centers and neighborhoods should be facilitated by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, and 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.

- 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 and Agricultural Protection:

Emphasize the protection, preservation and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, as well as 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.

13 Comprehensive Planning Elements

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 updates to comprehensive plans for cities or counties. Nor does the state of Iowa provide funding or guidance for incorporating the ten smart planning principals or the thirteen comprehensive planning elements. This plan update for West Branch was produced by Professor John W. Fuller of the University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning, with the strong assistance of graduate students in that School, with the help of West Branch city staff, and under the guidance of the West Branch Planning and Zoning Commission.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 3: VISION STATEMENT, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Vision 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.

Goals and Objectives.

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 an 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 using one's own individual system of values.

While 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.

To be revised based on chapters.

Economic Development Goals:

Concentrate on retaining and expanding existing local business.

1. Cooperate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.
 - a. Develop a business registration program, which includes an information packet, in conjunction with Main Street West Branch.
 - b. Develop a "Welcome West Branch" brochure for distribution to residents and visitors highlighting businesses in West Branch, in conjunction with Main Street West Branch.
2. Promote assistance to local firms in finding appropriate development sites for expansion.
 - a. Develop a "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 the revolving loan fund to benefit local business expansion.
3. Promote retaining existing manufacturing firms and facilitating their expansion.
 - a. The Mayor, Council, Administration and Main Street West Branch will engage with existing manufacturing firms to encourage growth.
 - b. The Mayor, Council, Administration and Main Street West Branch will engage with Iowa City Area Development (ICAD) to encourage the growth of existing manufacturing firms.

4. 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.
5. Encourage diversified services and retail shopping.
 - a. Work with Main Street West Branch to bring in diversified services or retail establishments, such as a pharmacy, hardware store, a recreation/community center, an assisted living center, a grocery store, a laundromat and a family restaurant.
 - b. The park and recreation department is 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.

1. 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. The Mayor, Council, Administration and Main Street West Branch will engage with ICAD to encourage industrial park growth.
2. 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 the revolving loan fund to the benefit of start-up businesses.

Promote vacant, development-ready land for industrial use.

1. Market development-ready sites.
2. Evaluate potential future industrial sites.
3. 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.

1. 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.
 - b. Encourage the work of non-profit entities such as Habitat for Humanity.
2. Provide for a variety of housing types, costs and locations.
3. 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, such as a pharmacy, hardware store, a recreation/community center, an assisted living center, a grocery store, laundromat and a family restaurant.

- b. The park and recreation department will 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.

- 1. Strive to maintain efficient and effective solid waste collection.
 - a. Examine a new solid waste provision contract at the end of the current contract which runs through June of 2015.
 - b. Establish solid waste rates so that the service is self-supporting.

Provide, maintain, and improve a cost-effective, safe and functional surface transportation system.

- 1. 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 the property tax levy to fund these improvements.
- 2. Seek alternative funding sources for construction and maintenance.
 - a. Consider the use of a local option sales tax for future projects.
 - b. Consider the use of tax increment financing for future projects in the industrial park.
 - c. Consider increasing the property tax levy to fund future projects.
- 3. 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. Perform in-house (Public Works Staff) work to repair a portion of the streets where appropriate.

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

- 1. Support maintaining the integrity of the sewer system.
 - a. Complete the lift 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 a wastewater treatment facilities plan that would meet increased contaminant requirements.
 - f. Complete sump pump inspections.
- 2. Meet all local, state and federal regulations.
- 3. 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.

- 1. Support maintaining the integrity of the water system.
 - a. Replace aging water mains and water mains smaller than 6 inches.

- b. Make improvements to the water plant, including fencing around the existing plant.
2. Encourage efficient operation of the water system.
 - a. Investigate the need for abandoning or developing new wells.
3. Meet all local, state and federal water quality standards.

Promote the creation and adoption of a complete streets policy.

1. Seek to become a bicycle-friendly community.

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

1. Promote cooperation and coordination among emergency services agencies
 - a. Continue to develop positive partnerships between the police and fire departments.
 - b. Increase the partnership with National Park law enforcement.
2. Support provisions of responsive, high-quality emergency services
 - a. Hire an 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.

1. 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.

1. Continue using nonrecurring revenues only to fund nonrecurring expenditures.
2. Monitor changing conditions, trends and legislation appropriate to the City's fiscal position and promote the City's sound fiscal condition.
3. Minimize program costs by using sound purchasing practices.
4. Maintain adequate reserves to positively impact the City bond rating and provide flexibility to implement projects as opportunities occur.
5. Use City Council goals and priorities to guide the budgeting process.

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

1. Maintain and review administrative, management and personnel capacity for effective support and implementation of municipal services.
2. 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 the future location of the library.

1. Work with FEH Associates and George Lawson Consulting to evaluate sites in West Branch and the surrounding area.

2. Select a site, acquire the property and achieve funding for library renovation or construction.

Acquire funding for library renovation or construction.

1. Work with FEH Associates to construct designs for a future library.
2. Promote the library project among local social groups and community members.
3. Work with the Friends of the Library to conduct fundraising events.
4. Acquire grants and donations for building construction.
5. Hire a professional fundraiser to assist in fundraising efforts (if needed).
6. Work to pass a bond referendum (if needed).

Carry out renovation or construction.

1. Work with FEH Associates to create site construction plans.
2. Conduct a bidding process to select the building contractor.
3. Hire a contractor to conduct the library renovation or construction.
4. Work with FEH Associates and selected contractors to conduct the building renovation or construction.

Land Use and Zoning Goals:

Encourage redevelopment opportunities to revitalize unused property.

1. Encourage redevelopment or adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings and sites.
2. Promote infill development.
3. Promote affordable commercial space for small start-up, new or growing businesses.
4. Encourage reinvestment in our existing neighborhoods (i.e., smart growth).
5. 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.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 4: COMMUNITY PROFILE AND CHARACTER

Picture 4.1. Main Street West Branch on a Summer Day.



Source: Reuben Grandon, August 2018.

Community Profile.

To understand future directions for a city it is important to examine its past. A community profile describes the demographic characteristics of a city's residents and changes over time. Information contained in a community profile often includes population, gender, race, ancestry, age, employment, income, education, and housing characteristics. A profile can also include information about the economy and the natural and/or cultural resources available within the community.

The data provided in this chapter paints an overall picture of West Branch. These data also serve as a resource for city officials and the public in creating policy for the implementation of plans and projects, and in making business decisions.

Many of the data presented in this chapter come from the federal 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2010 U.S. Census and from publications by Iowa State University Extension. To show the relevance and significance of the data presented, comparisons are made between the City of West Branch and other similar cities. This includes towns in Cedar County and other Iowa communities which share several comparable characteristics with West Branch.

This chapter begins with a list of goals, followed by objectives. These goals derive from the data presented in the chapter. Next come information on peer cities, on population, populations projections and characteristics, and on the West Branch economy.

Picture 4.2. Aerial Photo of West Branch.



Source: WestBranchIowa.org.

Goal 1: Help achieve an increased city population by 2040, closer to projections for Johnson County than to projections for Cedar County.

Objectives

- 1.1 Ensure that quality of life enhancements are provided efficiently in West Branch, while maintaining relatively low rates of local taxation.
- 1.2 Improve affordable housing choices in West Branch for an increased number of city residents.
- 1.3 Pursue infill development and consider annexation if needed to allow for additional residents.
- 1.4 Continue to provide effective city services.
- 1.5 Track city population change as measured by the 2020 Census and by American Community Survey estimates.

Goal 2: Maintain and seek to improve West Branch's pull factor for retail sales.

Objectives

- 2.1 Promote the West Branch communities' establishments and encourage additional businesses to locate in West Branch.
- 2.2 Pay special attention to filling the West Branch Industrial Park and to promoting activity around the Interstate 80 interchange.
- 2.3 Encourage specialized destination businesses to pull retail activity from elsewhere, in particular the greater Iowa City area.
- 2.4 Conduct periodic market analysis to better understand retail gaps and seek to attract new businesses to fill the identified gaps.

Goal 3: Encourage racial diversity in West Branch and younger residents, while providing services for the higher population of elderly citizens.

Objectives

- 3.1 Consider special city incentives and services to attract new young residents.
- 3.2 Encourage new residents to take part in West Branch activities and to volunteer in the community.
- 3.3 Pay particular attention to the needs of elder citizens to ensure they remain active in the community and their needs for services are met.
- 3.4 Encourage public events that are welcoming and engaging across all cultures.

Peer Cities.

Comparing the City of West Branch to the peer cities identified in the Iowa State University (ISU) “Retail Trade Analysis and Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2017” can help identify the City’s strengths and weaknesses relative to its peer cities. The cities used in the Retail Analysis as peer cities are Ackley, Bellevue, Clarksville, Columbus Junction, Durant, Mechanicsville, Pleasantville, State Center, and Toledo. In addition to the peer cities identified by ISU, several small cities which share similar attributes or are located within close proximity were chosen by the Planning and Zoning Commission. These include Wilton, Tiffin, and Tipton, and provide a more robust comparison.

Population History and Characteristics.

Examination of the population history reveals important changes in the characteristics of West Branch citizens. Table 4.1 contains a comparison of population changes among the selected peer cities, while Table 4.2 summarizes historical population change in West Branch over the period of the 1990 census to the most recent federal estimate for 2017. Table 4.1 and 4.2 indicate the following trends:

- 1) West Branch’s population growth of 20% exceeded that of the median peer city (11%) and the average peer city (14%, excluding Tiffin) from 1990 to 2017.
- 2) West Branch’s population grew each year from 1940 through 2010, but estimates suggest it recently realized a small decline. Data on housing permits issued in 2018 and 2019, though, indicate growth has resumed.¹

Table 4.1. Population for West Branch and Peer Cities.

Populations, 1990-2017.

| Town | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2017 | % Change 1990 to 2017 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| West Branch | 1,908 | 2,188 | 2,322 | 2,294 | 20% |
| Ackley | 1,696 | 1,809 | 1,589 | 1,729 | 2% |
| Bellevue | 2,239 | 2,350 | 2,191 | 2,315 | 3% |
| Clarksville | 1,382 | 1,441 | 1,439 | 1,413 | 2% |
| Columbus Junction | 1,616 | 1,900 | 1,899 | 2,330 | 44% |
| Durant | 1,549 | 1,677 | 1,832 | 1,812 | 17% |
| Earlham | 1,157 | 1,298 | 1,450 | 1,496 | 29% |
| Mechanicsville | 1,012 | 1,173 | 1,146 | 1,020 | 1% |
| Mitchellville | 1,670 | 1,715 | 2,254 | 2,258 | 35% |
| Pleasantville | 1,536 | 1,539 | 1,694 | 1,727 | 12% |
| Roland | 1,035 | 1,324 | 1,284 | 1,336 | 29% |
| State Center | 1,248 | 1,349 | 1,468 | 1,361 | 9% |
| Tiffin | 460 | 975 | 1,947 | 2,746 | 497% |
| Tipton | 2,998 | 3,155 | 3,221 | 3,191 | 6% |
| Toledo | 2,380 | 2,539 | 2,341 | 2,201 | -8% |
| Wilton | 2,577 | 2,829 | 2,802 | 2,815 | 9% |

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2017 5-Year Estimate).

¹ Gregory R. Norfleet, “West Branch Experiencing Exciting Increase in New Construction,” *Spring Home and Garden*, May 1, 2019.

Table 4.2. Historic Population in West Branch.

Population Changes by Decade, 1880-2017.

| Year | Population | Decade | Percent Change |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1880 | 501 | | |
| 1890 | 474 | 1880-1890 | -5.4% |
| 1900 | 647 | 1890-1900 | 36.5% |
| 1910 | 643 | 1900-1910 | -0.6% |
| 1920 | 688 | 1910-1920 | 7.0% |
| 1930 | 652 | 1920-1930 | -5.2% |
| 1940 | 719 | 1930-1940 | 10.3% |
| 1950 | 769 | 1940-1950 | 7.0% |
| 1960 | 1,053 | 1950-1960 | 36.9% |
| 1970 | 1,322 | 1960-1970 | 25.5% |
| 1980 | 1,867 | 1970-1980 | 41.2% |
| 1990 | 1,908 | 1980-1990 | 2.2% |
| 2000 | 2,188 | 1990-2000 | 14.7% |
| 2010 | 2,322 | 2000-2010 | 6.1% |
| 2017 | | | |
| (ACS 5-Year Estimate) | 2,294 | 2010-2017 | -1.2% |

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2017 5-Year Estimate).

Population Projections.

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

- 1) Trend-line analysis, and;
- 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 because a small portion of the City is in Johnson County and West Branch is within the commercial and employment orbit of Iowa City.

Table 4.3. Population Projection.

West Branch, 2020-2040.

| | 2020 | 2030 | 2040 |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Trend-Line Analysis | 2,253 | 2,403 | 2,553 |
| Relative Proportion Cedar County | 2,370 | 2,422 | 2,469 |
| Relative Proportion Johnson County | 3,198 | 3,788 | 4,381 |

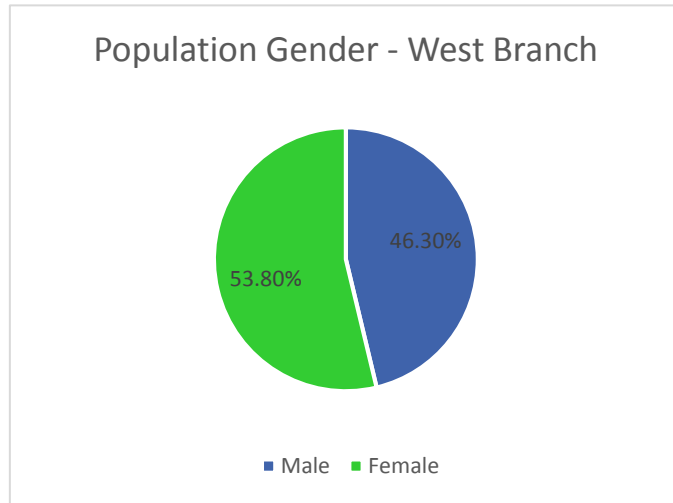
Updated May, 2019.

Which projection is best for future city planning and policy making is uncertain, but a scenario where changes in population fall between the trend-line analysis and the relative proportion for Johnson County would appear most likely, so that West Branch's population would approximate between 3,000 and 3,500 by the conclusion of the current 20-year plan. An update based on the 2020 U.S. Census is recommended, followed by another update after the 2030 Census information is released.

Gender.

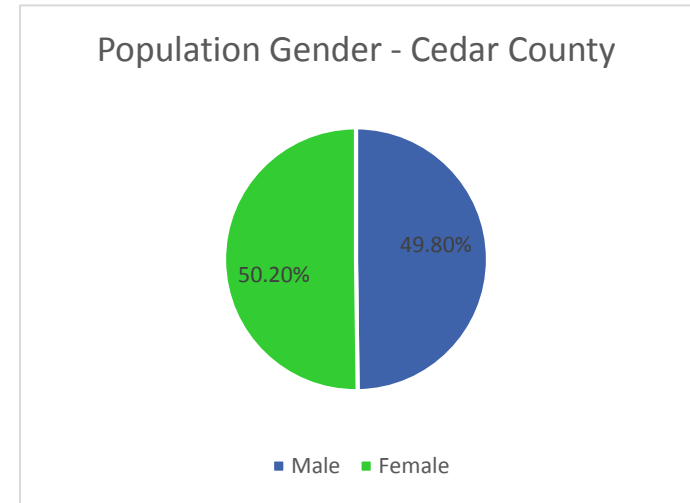
According to the ACS 2017 five-year estimates, West Branch's population most recently was 46.3 percent male and 53.8 percent female. These ratios are slightly different from the 2010 census, which showed 49 percent male and 51 percent female. The gender split in Cedar County shows almost an equal split of genders.

Figure 4.1. Population by Gender, West Branch.



Source: ACS 2017, 5 Year Estimate.

Figure 4.2. Population by Gender, Cedar County.



Source: ACS 2017, 5 Year Estimate.

Race, Ancestry, Age and Gender.

Census data can show diversity within a population that is not always perceptible to the general public. The latest figures show West Branch's population to be fairly homogenous in terms of race with 96 percent of the population identified as white. The next highest racial minorities are persons identified as "some other race alone" and "Asian alone," each at two percent of the population. The final one percent is identified as persons of two or more races.

Cedar County's racial diversity is similar to West Branch's in that 97 percent identify as "white alone" and 1.3 percent as "two or more races". The remaining 1.7 percent is black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and "some other race alone".

Ethnicity.

Respondents to the American Community Survey (ACS) 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 149, or 6.5 percent of the population.

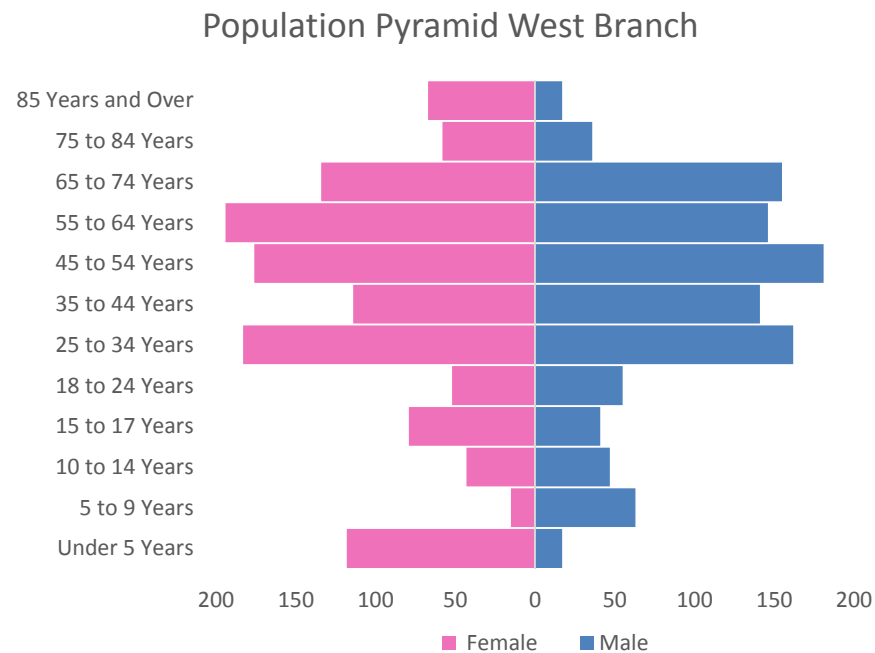
Age and Gender.

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 Census and ACS data show that the median age for West Branch has been steadily increasing from 29.0 in 1980 to 38.7 in 2010 and 45.5 in 2017. Cedar County's median age also increased steadily from 31.9 in 1980 to 42.4 in 2010. In 2017, the Cedar County median age declined to 41.9, lower for the first time in the period reviewed.

The population pyramids in Figure 4.3 provide an illustration of the age distribution within the City by gender. 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.

Although the numbers may be small, such population pyramid information may be useful for commercial enterprises, schools, and those investigating housing demand.

Figure 4.3. Population Pyramid, West Branch.



Source: ACS 2017, 5 Year Estimate.

Economy.

A Retail Trade Analysis Report for West Branch in the Fiscal Year 2017 was created by the Iowa State University Department of Economics. It provides an extensive look at the retail activity occurring within West Branch for that period. In Fiscal Year 2017, West Branch generated \$17.7 million in taxable sales. This was second in Cedar County to Tipton (\$46.5 million) and very slightly more than Durant (\$17.6 million). Table 4.4 contains retail sales per capita data and “pull factors.”

A pull factor is a measure that describes how well a community serves 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 serving 100 percent of its population’s retail needs. A pull factor of greater than 1 indicates the customers are being drawn from beyond the community’s borders. The 2017 West Branch pull factor was 0.63. This is an increase from 0.53 in Fiscal Year 2011 as reported in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, perhaps due to additional commercial establishments located near the Interstate 80 interchange. While West Branch accounts for 13 percent of the Cedar County population, it counted for 17 percent of taxable sales in the county in Fiscal Year 2017.

Table 4.4 shows how West Branch compares to its peer cities with regard to retail sales per capita and pull factor in Fiscal Year 2017. Also of interest is the Iowa City pull factor in 2017 of 0.96 and the Coralville factor of 3.10. (see this website for more information:

<https://www.icip.iastate.edu/retail/city>).

Table 4.4. Retail Sales in West Branch and Peer Cities.
Fiscal Year 2017.

| Town | Taxable Retail Sales Per Capita | Pull Factor |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| West Branch | \$ 7,569 | 0.63 |
| Ackley | \$ 8,209 | 0.69 |
| Bellevue | \$ 9,958 | 0.84 |
| Clarksville | \$ 3,818 | 0.32 |
| Columbus Junction | \$ 6,484 | 0.59 |
| Durant | \$ 9,629 | 0.78 |
| Earlham | \$ 9,185 | 0.75 |
| Mechanicsville | \$ 3,811 | 0.32 |
| Mitchellville | \$ 2,810 | 0.23 |
| Pleasantville | \$ 3,973 | 0.34 |
| Roland | \$ 2,880 | 0.23 |
| State Center | \$ 5,074 | 0.44 |
| Tiffin | \$ 4,058 | 0.31 |
| Tipton | \$ 14,449 | 1.22 |
| Toledo | \$ 15,484 | 1.38 |
| Wilton | \$ 12,724 | 1.06 |

Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade Analysis Report FY 2017.

References.

- Iowa State University, Department of Economics. "Retail Trade Analysis Report Fiscal Year 2017." Iowa Community Indicators Program: Iowa State University, 2017. Accessed May 1, 2019. <https://www.icip.iastate.edu/retail/city>.
- Norfleet, Gregory R. "West Branch Experiencing Exciting Increase in New Construction." *Spring Home and Garden*. May 1, 2019.
- U.S. Census Bureau. "American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates." Generated by Reuben Grandon, using Social Explorer, April 2019.

Chapter 5: Land Use

The Iowa Land Use Planning Notebook defines land-use planning as showing “the existing and proposed location, extent and intensity of development of land to be used in the future for varying types of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational and other public and private purposes or combination of purposes.” In other words, land use describes how and why the land is being used for a particular purpose, or expected to be used in the future. Existing land uses are those in place at the time the information was recorded or surveyed. Future land use addresses the desired use of land within the planning period and planning boundary. The West Branch Comprehensive Plan’s planning period is 20 years with a planning boundary of roughly the existing corporate limits.

This land-use chapter provides a 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, 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. Park and recreation land is dedicated to parks and recreational facilities such as multi-use trails. An agricultural land use is land used for agricultural production of either crops or livestock, or land that has been left as open space.

To plan the use of land for West Branch’s needs over the next 20 years it is important first to understand what the existing conditions are. Map 5.1 shows the existing land use in West Branch as of 2019. Table 5.1 provides a detailed breakdown of the existing land use by acres in the incorporated areas of the City of West Branch.

| Table 5.1 Existing Land Use for West Branch in 2019 | | |
|---|-------------|------------|
| 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

Having a map using the anticipated future growth areas and expected future land uses allows for preferred future growth patterns to occur. Such a map provides a guide for where development activities might best occur to maximize the city's resources and provide city services efficiently. 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 residents. 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 expected land use for the City, based on the future land-use map developed from public input surveys, meetings and Commission discussion.



Table 5.2 Future Land Use for West Branch in 2039

| Land Use Type | Total Acres | Percentage | Expected Acre Change 2019 - 2039 |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Residential | 473 | 38.3% | 115 |
| Commercial | 363 | 29.4% | 50 |
| Industrial | 90 | 7.3% | 0 |
| Institutional | 212 | 17.1% | 0 |
| Agricultural & Open Space | 53 | 4.3% | -166 |
| Parks and Recreation | 45 | 3.6% | 0 |

Land-Use Goals

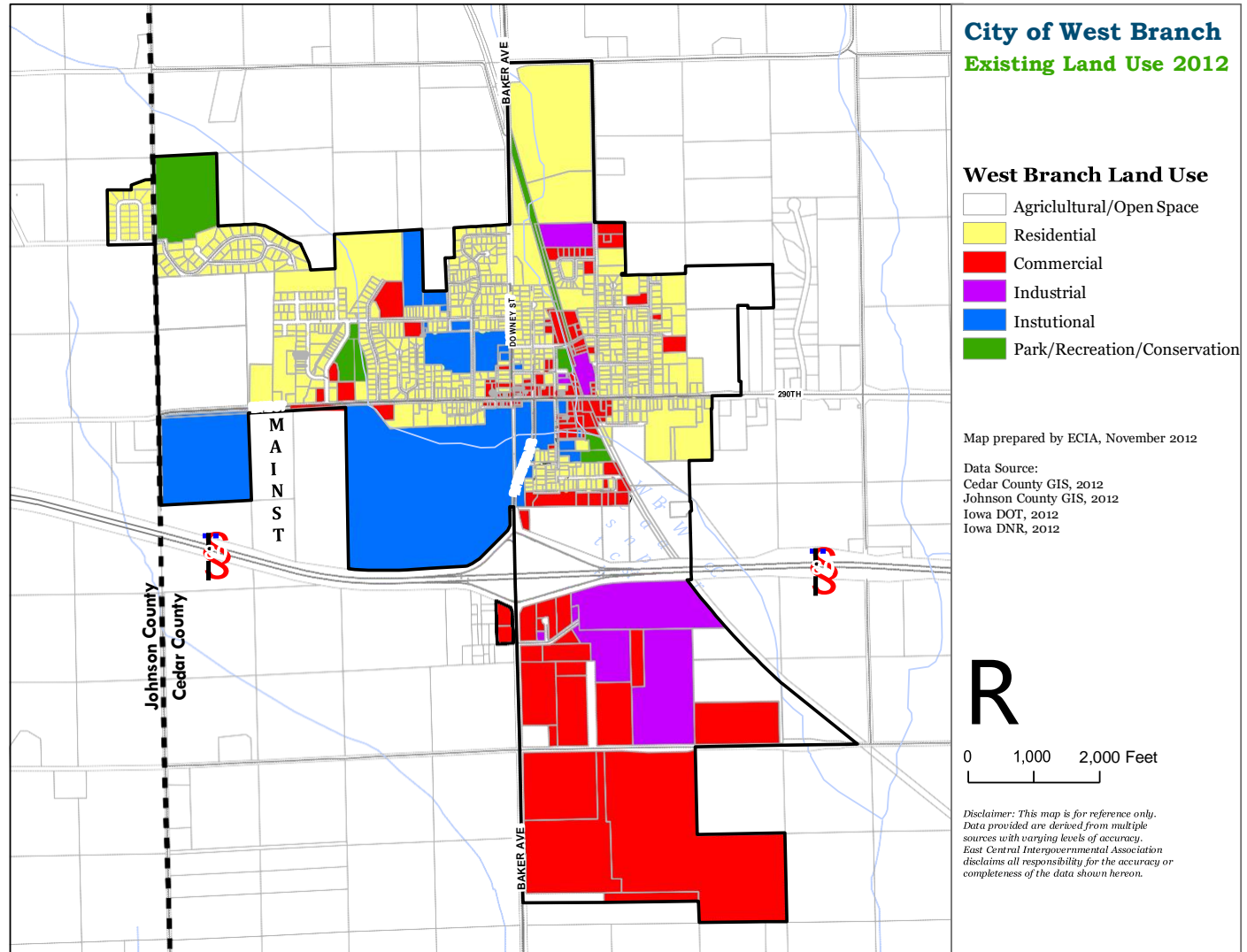
The land use-goals of the City of West Branch are meant to provide continuity on how land use matters are addressed over the next 20 years in the City of West Branch. Using these goals is a means to protect identified valuable resources and preserve what truly makes the City of West Branch a great place 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

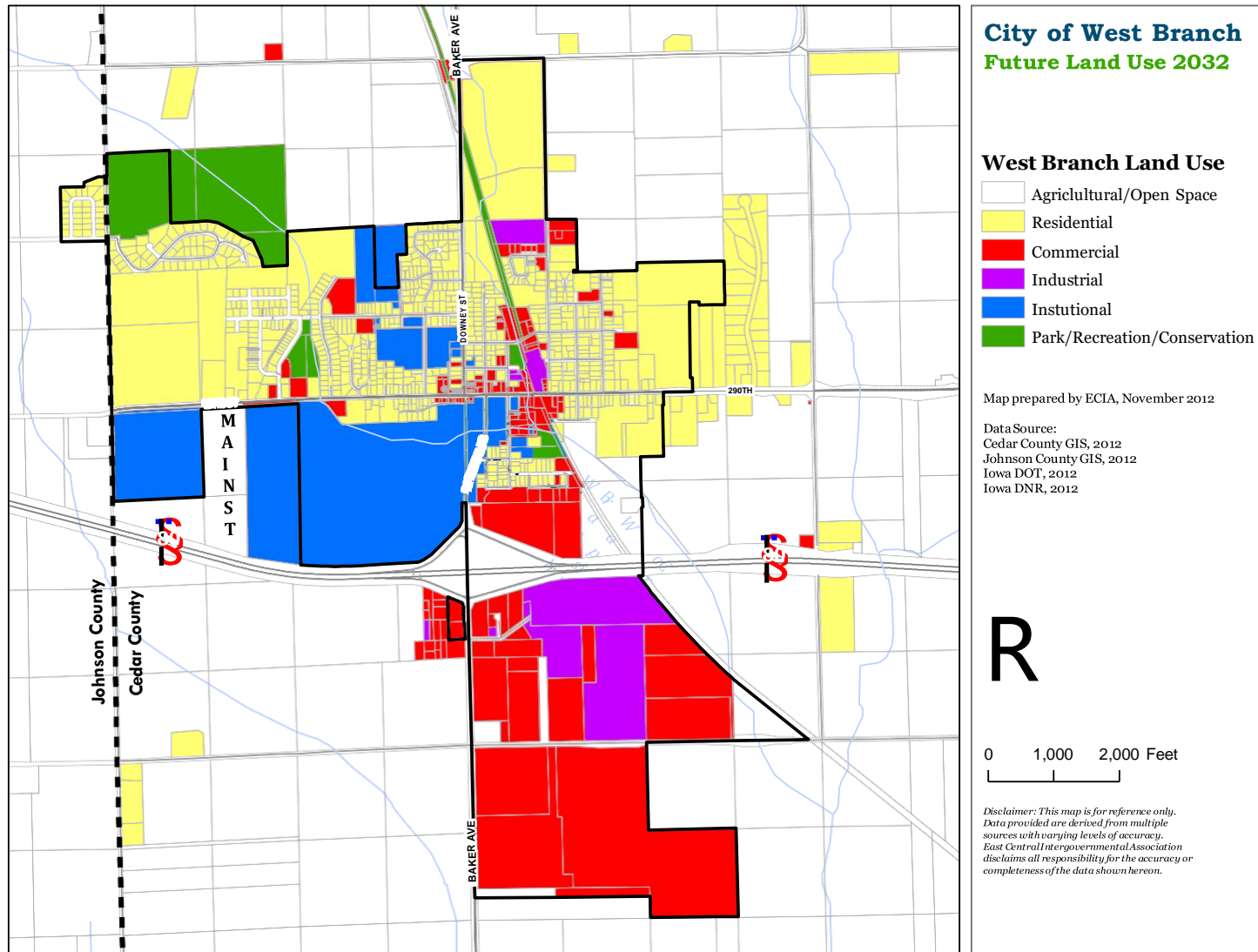
The public input survey found that respondents of the survey thought the City of West Branch needed more commercial uses (shopping, services, food/beverage establishments, and offices). Land for natural areas, open space and wildlife habitat was found to be about right. Survey respondents believed there are too many condominium-style residences. The survey also found that City of West Branch needed more civic spaces (parks, pedestrian plazas, outdoor entertainment).



Map 5.1
Existing Land Use in
West Branch (only
land use within the
City limits is shown)



Map 5.1
Future Land Use in
West Branch



WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 7: THE WEST BRANCH ECONOMY

Picture 7.1. Main Street West Branch.¹



Introduction:

This chapter first lists the economic development goals determined to be suitable for West Branch, and describes appropriate objectives for achievement of those goals. It then presents the economic data and information used to develop those goals.

Economic Development Goals

Goal 1: Reuse, Revitalize, and Redevelop Underutilized Commercial Properties.

Objective 1: Consider using underutilized commercial spaces as regional attractions or future housing developments in coordination with the 2017 West Branch Market Study.

Objective 2: West Branch should adopt a mixed-use or form-based zoning code, or utilize a planned unit development, in areas close to the central city.

Objective 3: Develop an Economic Development Master Plan for guidance.

Objective 4: Coordinate with the West Branch Community Development Group and businesses to effectively promote and encourage investment.

Objective 5: Collaborate with the Cedar County Economic Development Commission and other regional organizations that will help assist and promote commercial revitalization.

Picture 7.2. Old Casey's General Store in West Branch.



Source: Photograph on September 25, 2017 by Chris Kofoed.

Goal 2: Improve the Local Shopping Atmosphere.

Objective 1: Promote annual promotional events that encourage small town shopping.

Objective 2: Analyze recommendations in the 2017 West Branch Market Study for implementation.

Objective 3: Start a local advertising campaign that encourages local shopping and increases regional tourism.

Objective 4: Promote the reuse, revitalization, and redevelopment of commercial properties.

Objective 5: Recruit one or more unique businesses that serves residents and draws new regional customers to West Branch.

Objective 6: Use the city-owned Croell Redi-Mix site on 4th Street as an anchor for local economic activity.*

Objective 7: Consider using art and better-block techniques to encourage economic development.²

*The Croell Redi-Mix site was purchased by the City of West Branch through a land swap in 2017. There are many opportunities here such as mixed-use development, creating a regional economic draw, and entrepreneurial activities.

Picture 7.3. Croell Redi-Mix Site on 4th St.



Source: Photograph September 25, 2017 by Chris Kofoed.

Goal 3 Promote a Community-Based Economic Development Approach.

Objective 1: Take an Economic Gardening approach.

“Economic gardening is an entrepreneurial approach to economic development that seeks to grow the local economy from within.”³ 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.⁴

Strategies for establishing Economic Gardening:

1. Discover your community's assets and invest in it.
2. Develop collaborative effort among common partners.
3. Define clear roles and responsibilities among partnerships.
4. Know your targeted audience.
5. Develop a system to provide services to your targeted audience.
6. Develop a marketing system to create community “buy in”.

Source: Edward Lowe Foundation, 2016. Edward Lowe Foundation
http://edwardlowe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EG_GREENrgb.jpg

Picture 7.4. Economic Gardening Graphic.



Source: Edward Lowe Foundation.

Goal 3, continued: Promote a Community-Based Economic Development Approach.

Objective 2: Continue to work with and support local economic groups such as the West Branch Community Development Group to begin small-business-startup education classes.

Objective 3: Assist in providing promotional material to new businesses and future residents.

Objective 4: Establish regional partnerships for the purpose of entrepreneurial networking among young adults.

Objective 5: Support revolving low-interest-loan programs for small businesses and promote their benefits to potential users.

Picture 7.5. West Branch Community Development Group



Source: W.B. Community Development Facebook. Accessed Feb. 2018.

Goal 4: Utilize Outside Resource Opportunities to Improve and Fund Economic Development.

Objective 1: Research, seek, and apply for grants that will improve economic development, marketing, and historic preservation.⁵ As an example, for 2018 Alliant Energy offers community and business charger rebates for Level 2 charging stations.⁶ West Branch could apply for such a rebate.

Objective 2: Encourage local businesses to seek low-interest loans and promote the opportunities available.

Objective 3: Increase partnerships with small banks to continue low-interest loan programs for West Branch businesses.

Objective 4: Explore fundraising opportunities for revitalization and beautification.

Picture 7.6. The Brick Arch Winery has often been used as a spot for fundraising and community events.



Source: Brick Arch Winery website. <http://www.brickarchwinery.com/>
Accessed Feb. 2018.

Goal 5: Invest in West Branch's Historic Tourism Advantage.

Objective 1: Coordinate economic activity between local businesses, the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, and the National Park Service. Collaborate to establish electric charging stations to bring visitors to the Hoover Complex and local commerce.

Objective 2: Seek out businesses that will serve tourism, such as increased lodging opportunities.

Objective 3: Consider using the Croell Redi-Mix site as a tool to keep Hoover Site tourists in West Branch longer.

Objective 4: Adopt an Interim Development Ordinance that requires corridor commercial sites along Main Street to have architectural and material designs similar to West Branch Historic District.

Objective 5: Investigate the possibility of highlighting the Underground Railroad as an economic driver.

Objective 6: Collaborate with West Branch's Historic Preservation Commission on economic activity.

Objective 7: Utilize Townsend's Traveler's Rest as an additional historic tour site in West Branch.

Picture 7.7. Townsend's Traveler's Rest.



Source: [The First 150 Years](#) by West Branch Sesquicentennial Book Committee, p.29 West Branch: West Branch Heritage Museum.

"The Traveler's Rest, the Inn where John Brown stopped in 1856, was built in 1855 by James Townsend, one of West Branch's first settlers. The Inn was a well-known station on the Underground Railroad. A trap door in the floor of the addition to the left opened onto a passage that led to a small cave where four or five escaped slaves could hide. The Inn, located on the east end of town, still stands as a residence on East Main Street." (Hidlreth, 2001).

Economic Background

Peer Cities

Seven peer cities in Iowa were chosen for comparison with West Branch. They are Durant, Earlham, Mitchellville, Roland, Tiffin, Tipton, and Wilton. All have comparable populations, are located near Interstate 80 or 35, and have similar workforces.

West Branch's economic statistics were compared with the most recent available data from those cities. The results follow.

Employment

As of 2016, West Branch had an unemployment rate of 2.5% among the 2,040 residents in the labor force.⁷ Many economists believe a suitable frictional unemployment rate is 5%⁸, which indicates West Branch had a lower percentage of its population unemployed than the state's 4.5%. However, one age group--those 35-44--experienced unemployment at a rate of 9.2% compared with 3.6% statewide.⁹ It is recommended that West Branch pay special attention to job opportunities for residents in this age group.

Picture 7.8. Downtown West Branch at Night.



Source: W.B. Community Development Facebook. Accessed Feb. 2018.

West Branch residents work primarily in the following industries: education, manufacturing, retail trade, professional services, and finance. Table 7.1 compares the workforce in West Branch to its peer cities by industry of employment. The education/health care sector is by far the largest employer at 34.1% of West Branch residents. This relatively high rate in West Branch is attributable to providing K-12 public school education and the city's convenient location to The University of Iowa, the state's flagship public research institution.¹⁰ The University has 22,827 employees and the UI Hospitals and Clinics, a top-ranked¹¹ teaching hospital, employs 11,551, making them the #1 and #3 largest employer in the State, respectively.^{12 13} While Tiffin shares similar education and location characteristics, the peer town with the next highest rate of employment in the education/health care sector is Roland, which is located 16 miles from Iowa State University.

West Branch also has higher employment proportions than its median peer city in the information, finance, professional, and arts/entertainment sectors. This indicates the economy in West Branch is more concentrated in these industries than its peers. Employment in agriculture, manufacturing, and in both wholesale and retail trade falls below the median peer city. This difference is especially notable in manufacturing, where West Branch's percentage of employment of 10.4% is exceeded by every peer city except Earlham and Mitchellville, and is in contrast with the state-wide figure of 15.2%.

Table 7.1.
Percent, Employment by Industry
(Primary Jobs)

| | <i>West Branch</i> | <i>Durant</i> | <i>Earlham</i> | <i>Mitchellville</i> | <i>Roland</i> | <i>Tiffin</i> | <i>Tipton</i> | <i>Wilton</i> | <i>Median Peer City</i> |
|--|--------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Agriculture | 0.7% | 1.1% | 1.7% | 0.2% | 1.2% | 0.8% | 1.9% | 5.9% | 1.2% |
| Construction | 6.8% | 6.9% | 7.3% | 7.6% | 5.2% | 7.5% | 3.1% | 4.9% | 6.9% |
| Manufacturing | 10.4% | 20.9% | 8.0% | 8.9% | 17.2% | 13.0% | 18.7% | 20.3% | 17.2% |
| Wholesale Trade | 2.7% | 3.7% | 6.1% | 5.5% | 0.9% | 3.9% | 2.2% | 4.9% | 3.9% |
| Retail Trade | 9.2% | 14.1% | 14.0% | 15.1% | 6.9% | 6.1% | 16.5% | 12.8% | 14.0% |
| Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities | 5.9% | 6.5% | 8.9% | 9.6% | 6.9% | 4.6% | 5.7% | 6.9% | 6.9% |
| Information | 1.7% | 0.3% | 0.6% | 1.7% | 2.4% | 0.7% | 0.8% | 2.3% | 0.8% |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate | 7.9% | 4.2% | 16.8% | 8.9% | 4.2% | 6.0% | 3.5% | 3.9% | 4.2% |
| Professional, Scientific, Administration | 8.3% | 5.8% | 8.8% | 5.5% | 9.6% | 8.1% | 12.5% | 4.9% | 8.1% |
| Education, Health Care, Social Service | 34.1% | 23.5% | 15.7% | 21.9% | 28.0% | 35.0% | 20.0% | 18.8% | 21.9% |
| Arts, Entertainment | 6.5% | 6.5% | 3.6% | 5.7% | 4.6% | 8.5% | 5.9% | 6.2% | 5.9% |
| Other Services | 1.8% | 2.9% | 5.2% | 3.0% | 4.0% | 1.7% | 5.0% | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| Public Administration | 4.1% | 3.5% | 3.4% | 6.3% | 8.8% | 3.9% | 4.2% | 4.1% | 4.1% |

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012-2016

Table 7.2, below, shows the number of West Branch residents working in various industries compared with peer cities. An estimated 480 residents worked in education/health care during the most recently available year compared to the median peer city figure of 249. The data in Tables 7.1 and 7.2 suggest that West Branch should prioritize the following:

- Strengthen its relationship with the University of Iowa and UI Hospitals and Clinics.
- Promote the city to University students, faculty, employees and visitors to recruit future residents and encourage tourism.
- Promote the entrepreneurial opportunities existing in West Branch such as lower business rental costs, its convenient location on I-80, and readily available commercial land.

Table 7.2.
Count, Employment by Industry
(Primary Jobs)

| | <i>West Branch</i> | <i>Durant</i> | <i>Earlham</i> | <i>Mitchellville</i> | <i>Roland</i> | <i>Tiffin</i> | <i>Tipton</i> | <i>Wilton</i> | <i>Median Peer City</i> |
|--|--------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Agriculture | 10 | 12 | 14 | 2 | 8 | 12 | 33 | 88 | 12 |
| Construction | 95 | 73 | 61 | 62 | 35 | 115 | 53 | 74 | 62 |
| Manufacturing | 146 | 222 | 67 | 72 | 115 | 199 | 318 | 305 | 199 |
| Wholesale Trade | 38 | 39 | 51 | 45 | 6 | 60 | 37 | 74 | 45 |
| Retail Trade | 129 | 150 | 117 | 123 | 46 | 93 | 281 | 193 | 123 |
| Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities | 83 | 69 | 74 | 78 | 46 | 71 | 97 | 104 | 74 |
| Information | 24 | 3 | 5 | 14 | 16 | 11 | 14 | 35 | 14 |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate | 111 | 45 | 140 | 72 | 28 | 92 | 59 | 59 | 59 |
| Professional, Scientific, Administration | 117 | 62 | 73 | 45 | 64 | 124 | 213 | 73 | 73 |
| Education, Health Care, Social Service | 480 | 249 | 131 | 178 | 187 | 534 | 340 | 283 | 249 |
| Arts, Entertainment | 91 | 69 | 30 | 46 | 31 | 130 | 101 | 93 | 69 |
| Other Services | 25 | 31 | 43 | 24 | 27 | 26 | 86 | 60 | 31 |
| Public Administration | 58 | 37 | 28 | 51 | 59 | 60 | 71 | 62 | 59 |

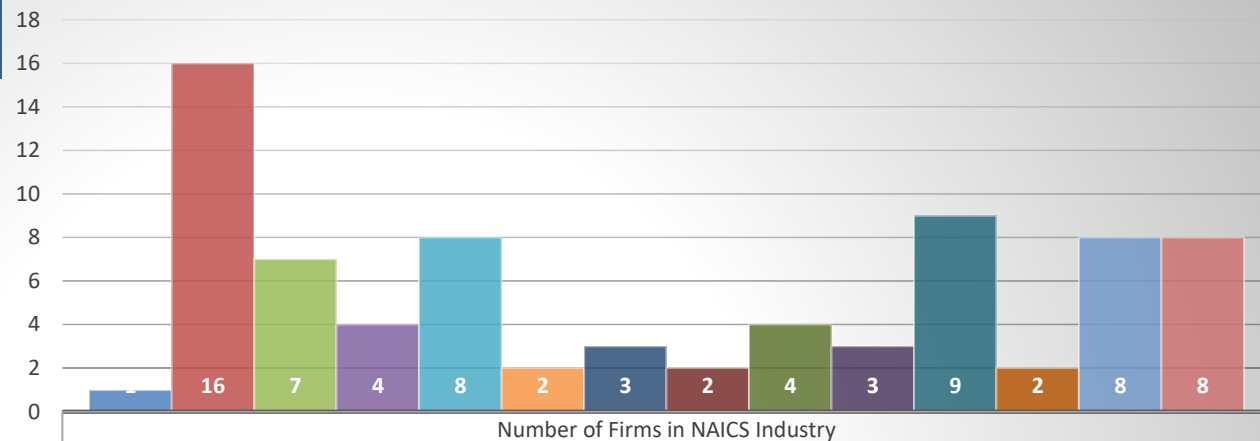
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012-2016.

County Business Report Indicators by Zip Code

Figure 7.1. Number of Firms in NAICS Industry by Zip Code 52358 in 2015.

High Number of Construction Firms

FIGURE 7.1 INDICATES THE NUMBER OF CONSTRUCTION FIRMS EXCEEDS ANY OTHER BUSINESS IN WEST BRANCH. OTHER SECTORS WITH HIGH NUMBERS OF ESTABLISHMENTS INCLUDE HEALTH, FOOD SERVICES, RETAIL TRADE, OTHER (WHICH INCLUDES AUTO REPAIR) AND MANUFACTURING.



| | Number of Firms in NAICS Industry |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| ■ Agriculture | 1 |
| ■ Construction | 16 |
| ■ Manufacturing | 7 |
| ■ Wholesale Trade | 4 |
| ■ Retail Trade | 8 |
| ■ Transportation, Warehousing | 2 |
| ■ Finance, Insurance | 3 |
| ■ Real Estate, Rental, Leasing | 2 |
| ■ Professional, Scientific, Technical Services | 4 |
| ■ Administrative | 3 |
| ■ Health Care, Social Assistance | 9 |
| ■ Arts, Entertainment, Recreation | 2 |
| ■ Accommodation, Food Services | 8 |
| ■ Other Services (except public administration) | 8 |

Source: American Community Survey, 2015.

Median Income

The 2016 median income for West Branch was \$61,493. This was greater than the state average and \$2,743 above income in the median peer city. While overall median income is fairly high in West Branch, Table 7.4 illustrates that most of the income gains from 2010 to 2016 went to individuals 45 and older. Younger West Branch residents in 2016 had rather substantially lower incomes than in 2010 compared to peer city and state residents.

| Table 7.3. Median Household Income | |
|---|--------------------|
| City | 2016 Median Income |
| West Branch | \$ 61,493 |
| Median Peer City | \$ 58,750 |
| State of Iowa | \$ 54,570 |
| Source: American Community Survey, 2016 | |

Real Median Income Changes

Table 7.4 measures how income, corrected for inflation, changed in West Branch from 2010 to 2015, compared to peer cities and the state of Iowa. What stands out is how in 2015 individuals aged 25-44 earned substantially less in West Branch than elsewhere.

It is recommended that the City investigate why younger adults were not better off in 2015, and seek solutions to increase their standards of living.

Table 7.4. Real Median Income Changes by Age Groups for West Branch, Peer Cities, and Iowa

| City and Householder Age | 2010* | 2016 | 6 Year % Change |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| West Branch Under 25 | \$ 21,365 | NA | NA** |
| West Branch 25-44 | \$ 68,333 | \$ 58,661 | -14.2% |
| West Branch 45-64 | \$ 65,924 | \$ 77,875 | 18.1% |
| West Branch 65 and Over | \$ 30,612 | \$ 48,125 | 57.2% |
| Median Peer Under 25 | \$ 38,688 | \$ 45,781 | 18.3% |
| Median Peer City 25-44 | \$ 61,875 | \$ 72,917 | 17.8% |
| Median Peer City 45-64 | \$ 70,813 | \$ 69,773 | -1.5% |
| Median Peer 65 and Over | \$ 36,300 | \$ 31,750 | -12.5% |
| Iowa Under 25 | \$ 28,600 | \$ 27,458 | -4.0% |
| Iowa 25-44 | \$ 61,636 | \$ 62,191 | 0.9% |
| Iowa 45-64 | \$ 67,254 | \$ 67,143 | -0.2% |
| Iowa 65 and Over | \$ 34,750 | \$ 38,140 | 9.8% |

Source: American Community Survey, 2016.

*2010 values adjusted for inflation to 2016 values per the Bureau of Labor Statistics rate of 1.10.

**2016 and 2015 Data Unavailable

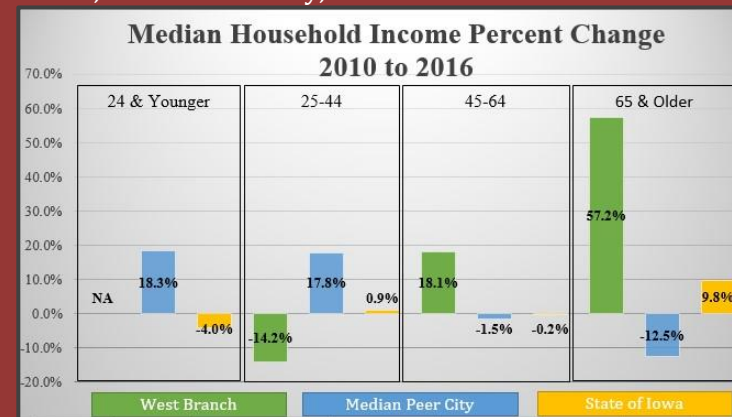
Figure 7.2 is a graphical representation that shows real income changes from 2010 to 2016. The figure illustrates that individuals in West Branch between 25 and 44 years of age had income declines of 14% compared with income increases of 18% for those living in the median peer city. Residents in West Branch older than 65, however, had income increases of 57% compared to the median peer city decrease of 13%.

The City of West Branch should:

Seek ways to improve income levels in adults below age 44.

- Some possible solutions include:
 - Networking with the University of Iowa's Entrepreneurship program.
 - Helping young adults access educational opportunities at Kirkwood Community College.
 - Connecting young adults with potential business owners who may be retiring soon.

Figure 7.2. Real Median Income Percentage Change in West Branch, Median Peer City, and Iowa. 2010-2016.



Source: American Community Survey, 2015.

Tourism

West Branch is home to the Herbert Hoover Presidential Museum and the National Herbert Hoover Birthplace Historic and Burial Site. These major attractions are vital parts of West Branch's economy as these sites received 152,000 visitors in 2016 who spent more than \$8.9 million and supported 145 jobs. Of the \$8.9 million total, about \$3.7 million went toward labor income.¹⁴

In the last decade businesses located in West Branch experienced the importance of historic tourism to the local economy, when, in 2013, several businesses suffered losses during government shutdowns.¹⁵ The national shutdowns included the National Parks, such as the Hoover Library Museum and Historic Site. West Branch's coffee shop, winery, and antique stores suffered the largest declines in business, while some of the local restaurants experienced small declines.¹⁶

In order to improve or support tourism, West Branch should strive to:

- Plan events for peak tourism dates by coordinating with the Hoover Museum and National Park Service.
- Encourage and support businesses that enhance West Branch's competitive advantage in historic tourism.
- Promote historic tourism and regional attractions which improve both the City's economy and its key attractions.

Picture 7.9. An Exhibit at the Hoover Library Museum.



Source: Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Website.
<https://hoover.archives.gov/exhibits/Hooverstory/gallery06/>,
Accessed February, 2018.

Revolving and Low Interest Loans

The city of West Branch entered an agreement with Main Street West Branch in 2011 to coordinate a revolving loan program.¹⁷ In the City's 2011 comprehensive survey, 83% of respondents "agreed" that providing incentives to small businesses and building improvements greatly improves their quality of life. In response, the Revolving Funds program has been used to help business owners improve sidewalks and basic infrastructure needs. This, in turn, improves the attractiveness and walkability of Main Street. Proceeds from a new hotel/motel tax passed in 2018 could also be used for community improvements and promotion.

The West Branch Community Development Group works with local banks to help offer low-interest loans. The East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) has a revolving loan program which offers loans at about 4% interest to certain industries.¹⁸ ECIA provides application assistance for Section 504 loans aimed at small businesses while requiring a reduced down payment of 10%.¹⁹

Picture 7.10. ECIA Logo.



Source: http://www.ecia.org/images/ecia_1.png,
Accessed February, 2018.

Commuting in West Branch

Inflow-Outflow of West Branch Workers

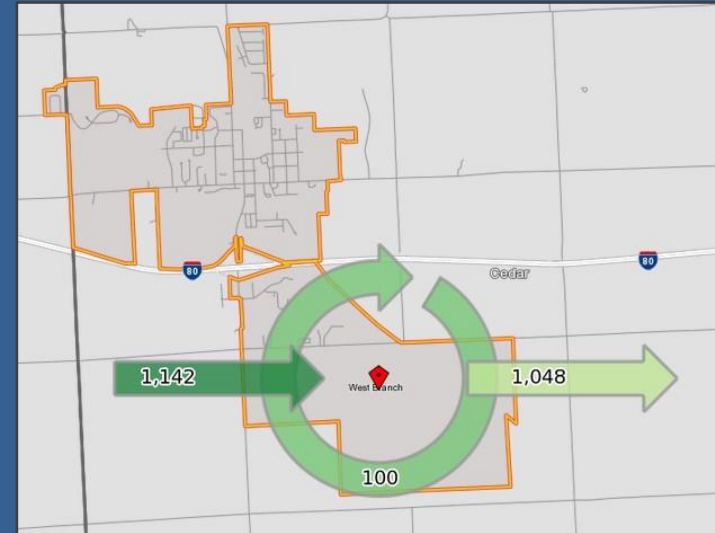
Figure 7.3 shows the following primary jobs data for 2015:²⁰

- 1,142 workers traveled daily to West Branch for work.
- 1,048 residents left West Branch daily for work.
- Despite having a good housing-jobs balance, only an estimated 100 residents stayed in West Branch to work.

An inflow-outflow analysis provides a general idea of traffic patterns and identifies possible recruitment targets. Based on observations from the “On the Map Census,” West Branch was the only city among its peer cities that had a positive worker inflow.²¹ This indicates recruitment potential and demonstrates West Branch is providing jobs to the region. (Source: On the Map Census 2015.)

An improved, more detailed understanding of West Branch’s inflow could help the community plan commuting routes, promote a better regional marketing plan, determine services needed for those commuting to the city, and help prepare a healthy, smart recruitment plan for new residents. It is suggested that West Branch monitor the inflow data as it is updated annually.

Figure 7.3: Inflow/Outflow Diagram of West Branch in 2015.¹



Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

Table 7.5 below describes the net inflow and outflow characteristics of workers by age distribution, income and type of industry.

| Table 7.5. | | | | |
|---|----------|--------|---------|----------------------|
| | Internal | Inflow | Outflow | Net Inflow (Outflow) |
| Age 29 or Younger | 18.0% | 20.1% | 21.8% | -1.7% |
| Age 30 to 54 | 51.0% | 57.3% | 52.0% | 5.3% |
| Age 55 or Older | 31.0% | 22.6% | 26.2% | -3.6% |
| Annual Earning Less than \$15,000 | 27.0% | 15.9% | 15.6% | 0.3% |
| Annual Earnings \$15,001 to \$39,999 | 31.0% | 34.0% | 30.4% | 3.6% |
| Annual Earnings More than \$40,000 | 42.0% | 50.1% | 53.9% | -3.8% |
| Industry: | | | | |
| Goods Producing | 18.0% | 14.0% | 23.0% | -9.0% |
| Trade, Transportation and Utilities | 24.0% | 46.6% | 18.4% | 28.2% |
| All Other Services | 58.0% | 39.4% | 58.6% | -19.2% |
| Source: On the Map Census https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/ . ²² | | | | |

- “Goods Producing” industry includes Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing/Hunting, Mining/Quarrying/Oil/Gas, Construction, Manufacturing, and Trade.
- “Transportation and Utilities” industry includes Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Transportation/Warehousing, and Utilities.
- The “All Other Services” industry category includes Information, Finance/Insurance, Real Estate, Professional/Scientific/Technical, Management, Administrative, Educational, Health Care, Arts/Entertainment/Recreation, Accommodation/Food Services, Public Administration, and Other Services.²³

What stands out in Table 7.5 is the approximately 3.8% net outflow of workers leaving West Branch to seek higher-paying jobs, those paying over \$40,000 per year. Jobs outside of West Branch appear to offer better pay and likely increased diversity of opportunity. For a town like West Branch, which is located close to numerous shopping opportunities in Iowa City, it is difficult to support a large variety of stores and industries. However, West Branch has comparatively low startup costs; encouraging entrepreneurial endeavors could improve both wages and diversity in West Branch’s economy. The high number of commuters who work in education services and health care indicate that the city should strive to build more connectivity with the University of Iowa.

- It is a strength to have a 5.3% inflow of workers aged 30 to 54.
- Only 18% of internal jobs are held by those 29 or younger.
- 27% of primary jobs within West Branch pay less than \$15,000 per year.
- 53.9% of primary jobs pay more than \$40,000 a year for outflow commuters.

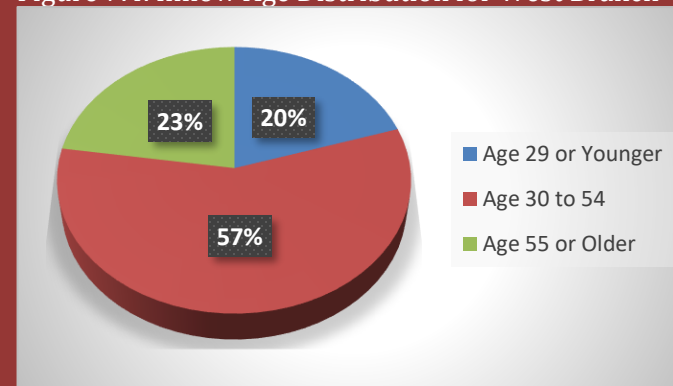
Workforce Demographics

This purpose of this section is to highlight key workforce demographic characteristics. First, the ages of the 1,142 workers who live outside of the community and commute to West Branch for work are displayed in Figure 7.4. The majority (57%) are between 30 and 54 years of age, almost one fourth (23%) are 55 and older, and about one fifth (20%) are aged 29 or younger. Figure 7.5 displays the age distribution of workers who live in West Branch and commute outside of the City for their primary job.

By comparison, 5% more workers aged 30 to 54 are commuting to West Branch for work than are leaving their residences in West Branch to work outside of town. This indicates there may be an opportunity for the mid-range-aged population to establish their homes in West Branch, and suggests supporting opportunities to make West Branch more attractive to adults in this age range. Note: in 2014, there was a 5% net inflow (18% outflow vs 23% inflow) of workers aged 29 or younger, which had changed to a 1.7% net outflow in 2015.

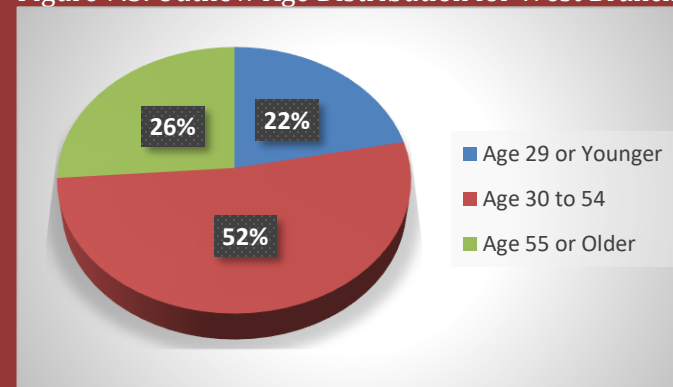
Approximately 16% of inflow commuters make less than \$15,000 a year, which implies that about 1 in 6 jobs in West Branch are low-paying jobs held by inflow workers. However, some 50% of inflow workers have jobs paying more than \$40,000 a year.²⁴

Figure 7.4. Inflow Age Distribution for West Branch



Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

Figure 7.5. Outflow Age Distribution for West Branch

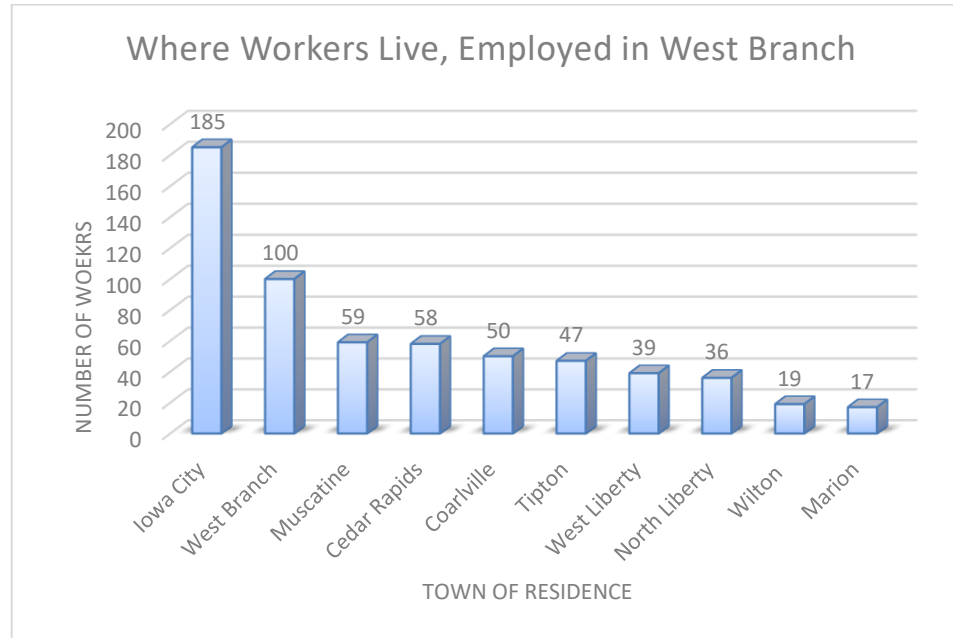


Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

Origin of Inflow Workers

Where do inflow workers come from? Figure 7.6 shows the 2015 estimate of 1,242 people who worked in West Branch daily, and it shows where many of these workers came from. West Branch workers lived primarily, in order, in Iowa City, West Branch, Muscatine, Cedar Rapids, Coralville, Tipton, West Liberty, North Liberty, Wilton, and Marion. In the future West Branch could use such information to recruit new residents or encourage regional advertising. Figure 7.6 accounts for 610 of the 1,242 persons working in West Branch; the remaining 50.9% are from “all other locations.”

Figure 7.6. Where West Branch Workers Live by Count, 2015.

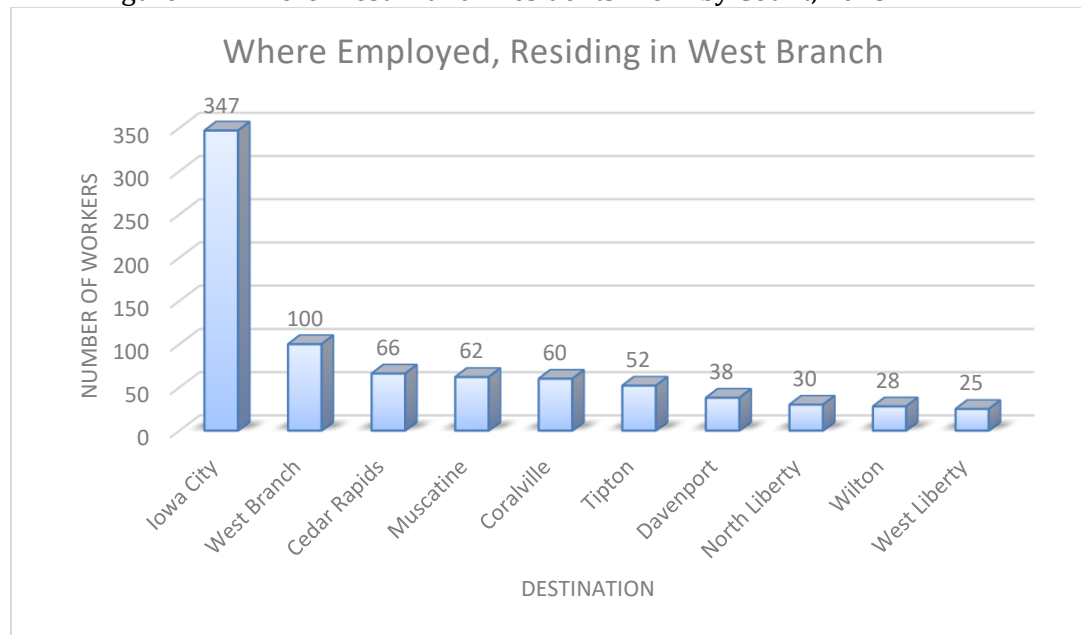


Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

Destination of Outflow Workers

Figure 7.7 shows an estimate of where people in West Branch worked in 2015. Data in the figure account for 808 of the 1,148 outflow workers; the remaining 29.6% commute to other locations. As expected, a large percentage (30.2%) of West Branch residents worked in Iowa City. From 2002 to 2015, the percentage of West Branch commuters traveling west to work increased each year. Although West Branch is conveniently located near Iowa City, the higher cost of living in Iowa City likely causes some residents who work in Iowa City to live in West Branch. The city should expect some of the cost of living pressures, such as lack of affordable housing in Iowa City, to make West Branch a more attractable place to live in future years. In addition, the city should plan for tourism from Iowa City.

Figure 7.7. Where West Branch Residents Work by Count, 2015.



Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

Retail and Taxable Sales Trends

Key Retail Indicators for West Branch

One way to measure West Branch's economy is to observe key retail indicators. These include real total taxable sales, number of reporting firms, population, average sales per capita, and average sales per firm.

The key retail indicators shown in Figure 7.8 are mostly positive over a ten-year period. Some reasons why the economy is doing well in West Branch include its location next to Interstate 80, the presence of car dealerships, various local specialized services, and the city's location next to the Herbert Hoover Museum and Historic Site.

Key indicators for West Branch from 2010 to 2016 show:

- Real taxable sales increased by 18%.
- The number of reporting businesses decreased slightly (by 1).
- Average sales per capita increased by 9%.
- Average sales per firm increased by 19%.
- Peer Cities outperformed West Branch in average sales per capita by 6 percentage points.
- Peer Cities outperformed West Branch in number of reporting firms by 20 percentage points.

Figure 7.8. Key Retail Indicators for West Branch in 2016.

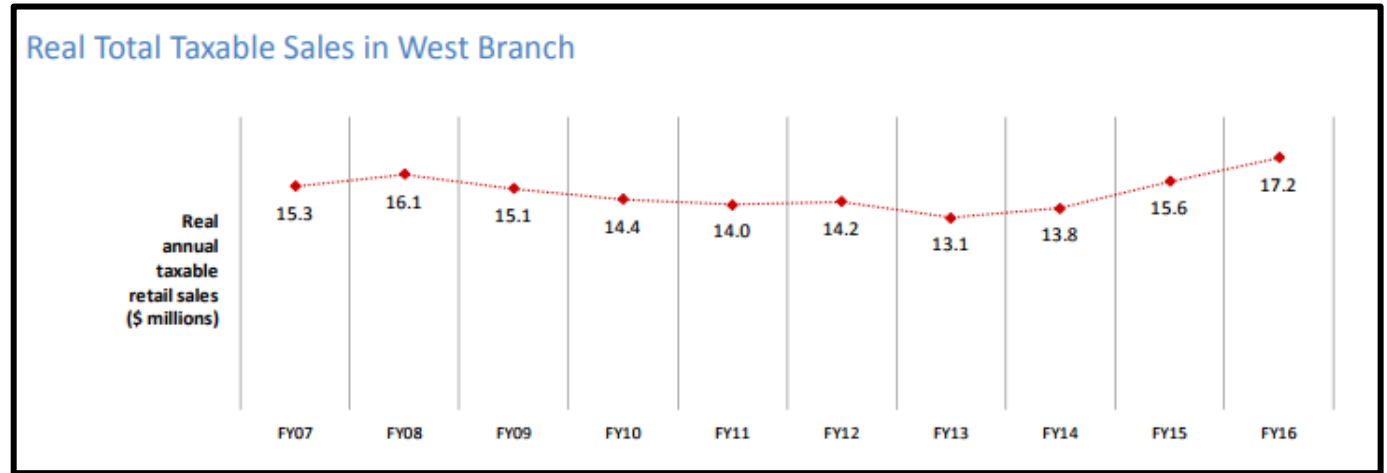
| Retail Indicators for West Branch | 2006 | 2016 | 10 Year Change |
|---|------------|------------|----------------|
| Real Total Taxable Sales | 14,551,349 | 17,184,788 | 18% |
| Number of Reporting Firms (annualized) | 97 | 96 | -1% |
| Average Sales per Capita | 6,707 | 7,331 | 9% |
| Average Sales per Firm | 149,628 | 178,543 | 19% |
| Retail Indicator for Median Peer Cities | 2006 | 2016 | 10 Year Change |
| Real Total Taxable Sales | 9,404,085 | 10,731,641 | 14% |
| Number of Reporting Firms (annualized) | 42 | 50 | 19% |
| Average Sales per Capita | 6,727 | 7,721 | 15% |
| Average Sales per Firm | 213,740 | 226,247 | 6% |

Source: Retail Trade Analysis for West Branch by ISU, 2016.

History of Taxable Retail Sales in West Branch

Figure: 7.9. History of Real Total Taxable Sales in West Branch from 2007 to 2016.²⁵

Figure 7.9 shows how real total taxable sales fluctuated in West Branch from 2007 to 2016. What stands out is the recovery of taxable sales following the 2008 recession. West Branch experienced sales growth after 2013 with increased retail sales of 5.3%, 13% and 10.3% in FY 14, FY 15 and FY 16 respectively.



Source: Retail Trade Analysis for West Branch by Iowa State University, 2016.

The City of West Branch should strive for the following:

- Monitor and continue to increase real annual taxable sales.
- Increase the amount of commercial or retail space available.
- Develop and implement a marketing plan based on the 2017 Market Study.

Trade Breakeven Analysis

It is important to note West Branch competes with larger cities which have specialize retail economies at a larger scale. As such, it is expected West Branch will experience trade leakage. While it may be difficult, the city, local businesses, and the West Branch Community Development Group should seek ways to lower the trade leakage. Note from Figure 7.10, the leakage was slightly less in 2016 than in any other year in the past decade.

Figure 7.10. West Branch Breakeven Analysis in 2016.²⁶

| West Branch Breakeven Analysis | FY07 | FY08 | FY09 | FY10 | FY11 | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Statewide average per capita spending (\$) | 12,154 | 12,260 | 12,216 | 11,445 | 11,524 | 11,759 | 11,619 | 11,743 | 12,126 | 12,281 |
| <i>x Local income adjustment</i> | 0.99 | 0.98 | 0.98 | 0.97 | 0.97 | 0.97 | 0.96 | 0.96 | 0.96 | 0.96 |
| = Average spending (anywhere) by residents (\$) | 11,983 | 12,041 | 11,952 | 11,154 | 11,187 | 11,370 | 11,190 | 11,264 | 11,586 | 11,734 |
| <i>x City population estimate</i> | 2,274 | 2,290 | 2,308 | 2,318 | 2,323 | 2,327 | 2,328 | 2,335 | 2,341 | 2,344 |
| = Breakeven sales target (\$000s) | 27,250 | 27,575 | 27,585 | 25,855 | 25,987 | 26,458 | 26,051 | 26,302 | 27,122 | 27,505 |
| City actual sales (\$000s) | 15,253 | 16,058 | 15,075 | 14,354 | 14,003 | 14,211 | 13,113 | 13,760 | 15,582 | 17,185 |
| Surplus estimate (\$000s) | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Leakage estimate (\$000s) | (11,997) | (11,517) | (12,510) | (11,500) | (11,984) | (12,247) | (12,939) | (12,542) | (11,540) | (10,320) |

Source: Retail Trade Analysis for West Branch by Iowa State University, 2016.

To help reduce trade leakage the City of West Branch should:

- Promote specialized services which meet the population's basic needs such as dentists, accountants, lawyers, and others.
- Increase collaboration between storefront businesses and the Herbert Hoover Museum and National Park Service. This will encourage tourists to stay longer.
- Support a specialized economy which encourages historic tourism businesses to locate in West Branch.
 - For examples, a clustering of antique stores near West Branch's historic sites can encourage more visitors and promote longer stays. More lodging and destination restaurants can support tourism.
- Utilizing events to promote West Branch's businesses.
 - The City of Marion promotes a chocolate walk and bar crawl which encourages local shopping. The proceeds go to revitalization and beautification.
- Implement a plan that takes into account the 2017 Market Study.

Economic Development References

By Footnote:

-
- ¹ Photograph from <http://www.travbuddy.com/West-Branch-travel-guide-39029/photos#2>.
- ² For more information on the Better Block Foundation and their strategies see the following link: <http://betterblock.org/about/>.
- ³ 2010 “Seven Steps to Developing an Economic Gardening Implementation Strategy” by International City Management Association: <https://icma.org/articles/seven-steps-developing-economic-gardening-implementation-strategy>.
- ⁴ 2012 Small Business Administration FAQs: https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ_Sept_2012.pdf.
- ⁵ Some grant opportunities can be found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>. It is recommended that an entity applying for a grant research the types of grants and select a grant program that the entity has the ability to work with. Grants may not support your specific project but tailoring a program to fit a grant has a higher chance of getting funded.
- ⁶ See: <https://www.alliantenergy.com/InnovativeEnergySolutions/SmartEnergyProducts/ElectricVehicles/EVHomeChargersandRebates>.
- ⁷ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2012-2016: <https://factfinder.census.gov/>
- ⁸ January 3, 2013 “Morning Edition,” National Public Radio: <http://www.npr.org/2013/01/03/168508910/what-is-a-good-unemployment-number-really>.
- ⁹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2012-2016: <https://factfinder.census.gov/>.
- ¹⁰ <https://www.forbes.com/colleges/university-of-iowa/>.
- ¹¹ <https://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/area/ia>.
- ¹² Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance: <https://www.cedarrapids.org/our-region/regional-stats-data>. Accessed May 23, 2018.
- ¹³ Email communication with Matthew Kodis, Iowa Economic Development Authority, May 22, 2018.
- ¹⁴ June 22, 2017 *West Branch Times*, “Spending, Tourism, and jobs up about 20 percent at Hoover site.”
- ¹⁵ “Business owners hurt by federal shutdown share concerns with Iowa congressman.” By Michelle Corless of KWWL, October 6, 2013. <http://www.kwwl.com/story/23622470/2013/10/Sunday/business-owners-hurt-by-federal-shutdown-share-concerns-with-iowa-congressman>, and “Government shutdown hits Iowa small business,” by Shane Simmons of WQAD, October 7 2013.
- ¹⁶ October 11, 2013 *West Branch Times*, “Businesses Feel Impact of Shutdown:” <http://www.westbranchtimes.com/article.php?id=9832>.
- ¹⁷ Resolution 1291, April 20, 2017: <http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/Res1291.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ East Central Intergovernmental Association 2017: <http://www.eciabusinessgrowth.com/loans/eciarlf.cfm>.
- ¹⁹ East Central Intergovernmental Association 2017: <http://www.eciabusinessgrowth.com/loans/sba504.cfm>.
- ²⁰ Figure from 2015 On the Map Census Inflow/Outflow report: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- ²¹ General observation using 2015 On the Map census of each peer city. <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- ²² Observation using 2015 On the Map census of each peer city: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- ²³ North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), U.S. Census: <https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>.
- ²⁴ 2015 On the Map Census: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- ²⁵ Figure from Iowa State University Extension Retail Analysis: http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/retail/retail_1983595.pdf.
- ²⁶ Figure from Iowa State University Extension Retail Analysis: http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/retail/retail_1983595.pdf.

By Author:

Hildreth, Thomas. 2001. “John Brown’s Army,” in *The First 150 Years* by West Branch Sesquicentennial Book Committee, p.29. West Branch: West Branch Heritage Museum.

DRAFT Chapter 9: TRANSPORTATION

Introduction.

The City of West Branch's transportation system is vital to everyday life within the city and for access throughout the region and beyond. Locally, the transportation system facilitates the movement of people as well as goods. The system allows residents to get from their homes to employment, education, medical care, recreation, and shopping opportunities. Good transportation allows people and goods to move efficiently and reliably to and from the city. Connections to regional transportation networks allow businesses to import and export goods quickly and efficiently, give access to the city by tourists, 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 their quality of life for local residents. In addition, some segments of the population such the disabled, the elderly, and low-income persons are not able to utilize portions of 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.

Goal 1: To provide efficient and affordable transportation for city residents and businesses, while striving to minimize negative effects.

Objectives

- 1.1 The City Council adopt the Complete Streets section in this chapter as city policy, and, in particular, ensure that all future street projects on new or existing streets encompass complete streets practices unless explicitly excluded by action of the City Council.
- 1.2 The City should work to encourage city residents and/or staff to become members of RPA 10 committees to encourage full consideration of West Branch projects in future RP 10 transportation plans and TIPS.
- 1.3 West Branch should continue to work with state and regional transportation staff to improve safety for its road users.

Goal 2: It is City policy to increase children’s physical activity to benefit their short- and long-term health and improve their ability to learn.

Objectives

2.1 Children are to be given safe and appealing opportunities for walking and bicycling to school in order to decrease rush-hour traffic and fossil fuel consumption, encourage exercise and healthy living habits, and reduce the risk of injury to children through traffic collisions near schools.

2.2 The City will partner with the West Branch School District to encourage programs such as Walk and Bike to School Days, as well as “Walking School Bus”/ “Bike Train” programs at elementary schools, where parents take turns accompanying a group of children to school on foot or via bicycle. Both parties will encourage educational programs that teach students safe walking and bicycling behaviors and educate parents and drivers in the community about the importance of safe driving.

Goal 3: Trails as both transportation and recreation facilities should be planned and implemented within West Branch and as connections to surrounding areas.

Objectives

- 3.1 The City Council should adopt a trails vision and support production of a map indicating desired trail connections.
- 3.2 West Branch should plan a trails system to serve transport and recreation users, and seek financing to implement the system.

Goal 4: The city should monitor changing transportation circumstances, such as evolving technology, to ensure the city has adequately and efficiently provided transportation for its future needs.

Objectives

- 4.1 Publicize and promote paratransit services. Strive for cost effectiveness in service provision, perhaps using volunteer support.
- 4.2 Be attentive to the needs for freight service and ensure trucking needs are accounted for in street planning, design, and administration.
- 4.3 Keep abreast of changes in transport services and technology that impact the city, and in particular prepare for network service operations and the emergence of electric and autonomous vehicles.

Transportation Planning.

The City of West Branch coordinates with a regional transportation planning agency, Regional Planning Affiliation 10 (RPA 10—staffed by the East Central Iowa Council of Governments). RPA 10 is a seven-county region that includes Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties. RPA 10 was first formed in 1964 and 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. RPA 10 has a 14-member policy committee with two members from each affiliated county and a technical advisory committee with three members from each county; in 2019 none of the Cedar County members on either committee were from West Branch.¹

The City of West Branch's 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) for passenger transport. 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 (such as a trails plan) are available for download at www.ecicog.org under plans. The plan that was current in 2019 covers 2016-2020, and the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), adopted in 2018, covers 2019-2022. That TIP lists one bridge replacement project in West Branch, over Wapsinonic Creek. The City desirably should work to encourage city residents and/or staff to become members of RPA 10 committees to encourage full consideration of West Branch projects in future plans and TIPS.

Roadways.

The predominant transportation system in West Branch is a network of streets and highways that carry cars and trucks, but also can be utilized by bicyclists. These roadways serve the circulation needs of local residents and those of visitors from outside the area. The following section describes the roadway system in and connecting the City in terms of functional classification, capacity, congestion, and safety. Following that section is information on complete streets and sections about alternative forms of transportation and intercity transportation connections.

¹ For more information about RPA 10 see <http://www.ecicog.org/region-10-rpa.html>.

Functional Classification.

Functional classification is commonly used to describe roadways based on the type of service that they provide. 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 section describes functional classifications.

Map 9.1 displays West Branch roads by Functional Classification.

Principal Arterial roadways primarily serve a mobility function with minimal land access. The primary purpose of principal arterials is the relatively rapid movement of people and goods for extended distances. Principal arterials are higher-capacity, higher-speed roadways with restricted land access. Although not meeting all those criteria, the closest roads to principal arterials in West Branch are Main Street (and its extension out of town to the west as Hoover Highway), Parkside Drive, and Baker Avenue. An important highway for passenger and freight transportation that serves the function of a principal arterial borders West Branch to the south, Interstate Highway 80. I-80 is expected to increase its traffic over the span of this comprehensive plan, particularly its heavy truck traffic.² A capacity expansion for I-80 from four to six lanes by the Iowa Department of Transportation was in the planning process in 2019, together with reconstruction of the I-80 interchange at Hoover Highway.

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. Main Street in West Branch, together with its connection to the Hoover Highway, is best described as a minor arterial.

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, may have some parking restrictions, and permit somewhat higher speeds than the local street network.

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.

² Main Street and Parkside serve as detours to I-80 when crashes on the Interstate occur, limiting the use of I-80. In recent years I-80 has been shut down several times annually.

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 9.2 displays the AADT for West Branch area roads. The data used in Map 2 was collected by the Iowa DOT in 2014 (and was the latest information available at https://iowadot.gov/maps/Digital-maps/traffic/city_trafficmaps in May, 2019). Main Street and Parkside Drive were the most heavily traveled West Branch city streets in 2014 (the most recent year for which the Iowa DOT had data in 2019) with 4,610 and 3,980 AADT respectively. Interstate 80 had the highest traffic volume in the area with an AADT of 34,400.

Roadway Safety.

Roadway safety is an important consideration when planning for the future of a 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, a local government may take action to correct the problem. The Iowa Department of Transportation provides crash data for all counties in the state at <https://iowadot.gov/crashanalysis/data.aspx>, but unfortunately show data only for larger Iowa cities (5,000 population and above). However, rural Cedar County data for 2007-2011 are available at https://iowadot.gov/crashanalysis/data/county/general/_counts/counts20072011/images/jpegs/cedar20072011.jpg.

For the 2013 plan, using DOT data from 2008-2010, ECICOG staff created a map to illustrate the distribution of crashes. Map 9.3, which is included in this chapter from the 2013 plan, identified locations of crashes for that period. During the three-year time period 43 crashes occurred within city limits. The crash data suggest 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. By observation in 2019, it is to be noted that Hoover Highway, continued to Main Street, has been experiencing increased bicycle traffic between the Iowa City area and West Branch. Limited sight distances and minimal shoulders on Hoover Highway suggest potential conflict with motor vehicles and an emerging safety problem. West Branch should continue to work with state and regional transportation staff to improve safety on Hoover Highway and throughout the city.

Complete Streets.

While functional classification may be helpful in describing a city's roadways, transportation planners and many localities increasingly find an additional concept more useful when describing and implementing the role of their street networks. This concept is termed "complete streets," and a policy of promoting complete streets was first discussed on 5/24/16 by the Planning & Zoning Commission, then further discussed and the following vision statement and policy approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 2017. Such a policy requires that design and implementation practices for city streets follow a policy of careful and individualized evaluation of street construction, reconstruction and maintenance procedures using current design options that comply with state and federal requirements in the following manuals, as well as others when feasible, to ensure access for all users:

- AASHTO Green Book: A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials;
- AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials;
- Urban Street Design Guide, by the National Association of City Transportation Officials;
- Urban Bikeway Design Guide, by the National Association of City Transportation Officials;
- and, the Iowa Statewide Urban Design Standards, by the Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University.

As necessary, West Branch street ordinances should be revised to accord with complete streets policies.

The Commission's complete streets vision and policy statement follow. Nearby communities and the MPO of Johnson County also incorporate the concept in their plans and ordinances.¹

It is proposed that the Commission recommend that the City Council adopt this Complete Streets section as city policy, and, in particular, ensure that all future street projects on new or existing streets encompass complete streets practices unless explicitly excluded by action of the City Council.

Transportation Vision Statement

West Branch envisions a transportation system that encourages healthy, active living; promotes transportation options and independent mobility; increases community safety and access to healthy food; reduces environmental impact; mitigates climate change; and supports greater social interaction and community identity by providing safe and convenient travel along and across streets through a comprehensive, integrated transportation network for pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders and drivers, motor-vehicle drivers, emergency vehicles, freight, and people of all ages and abilities, including children, youth, families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities.

Complete Streets Policy

It is the policy of the city of West Branch to provide safe and comfortable routes for walking, bicycling, and, in the future when practicable, public transportation, to increase the use of these modes of transportation, enable convenient and active travel as part of daily activities, reduce pollution, and meet the needs of all users of the streets, including children, families, older adults, and people with disabilities.

The City will integrate complete streets infrastructure and design features into street design and construction to create safe and inviting environments for all users to walk, bicycle, and use public transportation.

In planning, designing, and constructing complete streets: to the greatest extent practicable West Branch will include infrastructure that promotes a safe means of travel for all users along the right-of-way, such as sidewalks, shared-use paths, bicycle lanes, and paved shoulders.

West Branch will include infrastructure that facilitates safe crossing of the right-of-way, such as accessible curb ramps, crosswalks, refuge islands, and pedestrian signals; such infrastructure must meet the needs of people with different types of disabilities and people of all ages. The City will ensure that sidewalks, crosswalks, and other aspects of the transportation right-of-way are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and meet the needs of people with different types of disabilities, including mobility impairments, vision impairments, hearing impairments, and others.

West Branch will consider incorporating street design features and techniques that promote safe and comfortable travel by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation riders, such as traffic-calming circles, additional traffic-calming mechanisms, narrow vehicle lanes, raised medians, road diets, high street connectivity, and physical buffers and separations between vehicular traffic and other users.

To the extent practicable, West Branch will provide pedestrian-oriented signs, pedestrian-scale lighting, benches and other street furniture, and bicycle parking facilities. The city will encourage street trees, landscaping, and planting strips, including native plants where possible, in order to buffer traffic noise and protect and shade pedestrians and bicyclists. The City's long-term goal is to reduce surface water runoff by reducing the amount of impervious surfaces on the streets. It is the City's intent to have all future street projects on new or existing streets encompass complete streets practices unless explicitly excluded by action of the City Council.

Transportation for Youth.

It is City policy to increase children's physical activity to benefit their short- and long-term health and improve their ability to learn. Children are to be given safe and appealing opportunities for walking and bicycling to school in order to decrease rush-hour traffic and fossil fuel consumption, encourage exercise and healthy living habits in children, and reduce the risk of injury to children through traffic collisions near schools.

The City will partner with the West Branch School District to pursue encourage programs such as Walk and Bike to School Days, as well as "Walking School Bus"/"Bike Train" programs at elementary schools, where parents take turns accompanying a group of children to school on foot or via bicycle. Both parties will encourage educational programs that teach students safe walking and bicycling behaviors, and educate parents and drivers in the community about the importance of safe driving.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.

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.²

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. 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 in accord with complete streets policies. 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 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.

In this update to the comprehensive plan, the Commission adopts the following vision statement for trails. That statement was created at an October, 2017, West Branch Trail Meeting, chaired by Mayor Roger Laughlin, and attended by interested West Branch citizens and city staff.

Trails Vision Statement

West Branch will have a trail system linking city parks, schools, National Park Service, West Branch Public Library, business districts, neighborhoods and other communities, enhancing the lives of residents, and attracting more visitors to enjoy our community.

At the 2017 meeting, it was proposed that elements of the system should be as follows.

1. Verbal Statement of destinations to be connected.
 - a. West Branch Public Schools, West Branch Public Library, NPS, Business District, Beranek Park, Wapsi Park, Cubby Park, West Branch Dog Park and Hoover Nature Trail were all discussed as destinations within the city limits.
 - b. There is a desire to connect the West Branch trail system to other communities such as West Liberty, Iowa City, Solon, and Tipton.
2. List of existing trails and desired trail connections not yet built.
 - a. Beranek Park Connection
 - b. Cubby Park Connection
 - c. Improve sidewalk long north side of Main Street creating a connection to Hoover Park at Parkside Drive
 - d. Trail through the Meadows to Greenview
 - e. Eventually asphalt Hoover Nature Trail.
3. Map of the items mentioned above.

Superintendent Pete Swisher will check with the NPS resources and see if they can assist with the map. Mayor Laughlin will contact Cedar County GPS department and determine if they will be able to assist with mapping. *Map to be forthcoming.*
4. List of near-term priorities
5. General discussion of funding sources.

The 2011 City Trails Plan has a list of potential trail funding sources.

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%.³

Distance – West Branch’s semi-rural character means that walking or bicycling to a destination can be difficult because of the 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, cluster 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 adopting new sidewalk and Complete Streets policies. 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. West Branch should also collaborate with Cedar County, Johnson County and surrounding communities to improve trail infrastructure, both for the use of city residents and to economically support local businesses through tourism.

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 (RBT) provides transit services to persons with disabilities, the elderly, and the general public (see <https://riverbendtransit.org/about>). According to RBT’s website, “RBT was Iowa’s first regional consolidated transit system, starting public transit operations in 1978.” In Johnson County, transit services are provided by Johnson County SEATS.⁴

There are a few rural transit services that operate primarily using volunteers. One such example is OATS Transit in Missouri (see <https://www.oatstransit.org/annual-report>). Although such a volunteer-supported service does not appear likely for West Branch, investigating prospects for greater use of volunteers to provide mobility should be kept in mind over the planning period.

While West Branch is not expected to have a sufficiently large population to support conventional bus transit services over the period of this comprehensive plan, a few city residents do currently participate in paratransit services through a University of Iowa (UI) vanpool program. According to a representative of the UI’s Parking and Transportation Division, “Over the years we have had three (3) vanpools

from West Branch. One maxi-van and two mini-vans. The maxi-van was the first to start and is the only one that is still operating.” That current maxi-van operates at 7:30 AM daily from West Branch, returning from Iowa City at 4 PM. Vanpool usage data for 1996 through early 2019 are available in a spreadsheet provided to city staff as part of preparing this plan update. Promoting such low-cost and environmentally friendly service that is provided by employers should be a city objective.

Taxicab and transportation network companies (such as Uber and Lyft) currently provide service to and from nearby communities. As technology develops, autonomous vehicles may provide mobility services for West Branch residents.

Freight

The efficient movement of goods is one of the keys to effective competition in world markets. As a result, policy makers, industry specialists, and transportation planners have recognized that an efficient freight system is fundamental for economic development in cities such as 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. Air freight service is available through the Cedar Rapids and Moline airports. The rail system that passes through the region may also be a valuable but more limited resource. Iowa Interstate Railroad operates an east-west line that runs approximately 2.5 miles south of West Branch.

Business establishments need attention to freight pick-up and delivery services in order that they be efficient and reliable. Often a city needs to give attention to loading and unloading areas and to special regulations for truck activity. West Branch should be alert to freight needs as it plans, designs and administers its street facilities.

Airport

The Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids provides commercial air transportation services for West Branch. Recently thirty-five daily departures (with 14 non-stop destinations) have provided service from American, United, Delta Frontier and Allegiant Air. The Airport also features increasing cargo activity with Fed Ex, DHL, and UPS and serves 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 380.³

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 11 nonstop hubs or connecting cities.⁴ The airport is owned by

³ See <https://flycid.com/airlines-nonstops/>.

⁴ See <https://www.qcairport.com/airlines-serving-mli.html>.

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 an intermodal facility the freight is transferred to another mode for door-to-door delivery. The closest rail facility to the City of West Branch is located in West Liberty, Iowa. The Iowa Interstate Railroad passes through West Liberty although its intermodal service is currently available only in Council Bluffs and Blue Island, IL.⁵

West Branch Intercity Passenger Transportation

Greyhound

The closest Greyhound station to West Branch is in Iowa City. One bus leaves each day for Chicago with tickets costing \$43 per seat in 2019. One bus leaves each day for Omaha; tickets cost from \$79 to \$87.⁶ Below is a map of the regional Greyhound routes from Iowa City:



⁵ See <https://iaisrr.com/ship-with-iais/intermodal/>.

⁶ See <https://www.greyhound.com/en/ecommerce/schedule/>.

Burlington Trailways

The closest Trailways stations to West Branch are Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. Its intercity options have had the greatest numbers of destination and frequencies.⁷ The table below summarizes the recent prices and service frequencies from Cedar Rapids and Iowa City to Chicago, Des Moines and Minneapolis:

| Origin | Destination | Price | # Daily |
|--------------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Cedar Rapids | Chicago | \$57 | 3 |
| Cedar Rapids | Des Moines | \$34 | 1 |
| Cedar Rapids | Minneapolis | \$99 | 1 |
| Iowa City | Chicago | \$32 | 4 |
| Iowa City | Des Moines | \$25 | 5 |
| Iowa City | Minneapolis | \$80 | 2 |

Routes for Trailways extend to Denver, St. Louis and Indianapolis. See route map:



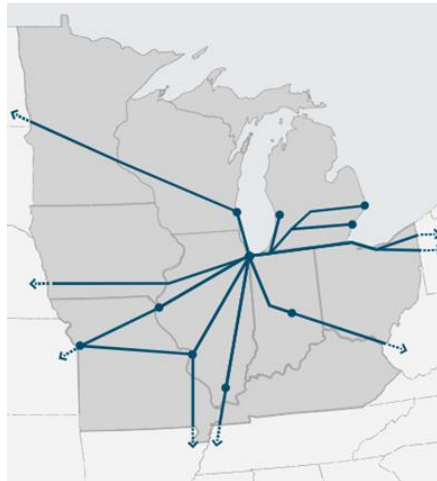
⁷ See <https://webstore.trailways.com/buy-bus-tickets/ia>.

Megabus

Megabus (Windstar Lines) is a newer carrier accessed in Coralville (at the Coralville Transit Intermodal Facility, 906 Quarry Rd., Coralville, near Iowa City) with daily service to Chicago, Des Moines, and Omaha. These buses have a variety of passenger amenities. Fares are variable.⁸

Passenger Train

The closest train station is in Mt. Pleasant, where one can catch Amtrak's California Zephyr line. Amtrak travels daily east to Chicago (\$41) and west to Denver (\$108) and Oakland (\$203).⁹ Daily service is also newly available from Chicago to Moline with fares in 2019 starting at \$42.¹⁰ A regional map for Amtrak follows:



⁸ For information see <https://us.megabus.com/route-guides/des-moines-to-iowa-city-coralville-bus>.

⁹ See <https://iowadot.gov/iowarail/Iowa-Passenger-Rail/Todays-Passenger-Rail> and

¹⁰ See <https://www.amtrak.com/stations/mli>. Also <https://www.amtrak.com/midwest-train-routes>. Service may eventually be extended to downtown Iowa City, but without intermediate stops in Iowa.

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 that the majority of residents supported the replacement of College Street Bridge, followed by repaving 4th Street and repaving County Line Road. Sidewalks were the second mode of transportation cited by citizens as in need of attention. Residents would like to see sidewalks throughout the entire community, and identified the following areas that for sidewalk improvement: College Street Bridge, College Street, Poplar and Oliphant, downtown, Cedar Street, Johnson Street, and pointed out the need to build missing sidewalks and address steps. Refer to appendix A for a detailed map of street conditions in the City of West Branch. This map should be used in identifying future street projects within the City.

Another project identified as needed is a connection between Pedersen Valley and Greenview. When the land that had been in agriculture between Pedersen Valley and Greenview is developed into residential housing, the City Council should ensure that the developer provides a street connection between the two neighborhoods. This will allow for an improved public safety response time for residents in Greenview, and provide for better circulation of traffic in this area. A majority of survey responses collected on this issue supported a connection between the two neighborhoods. In 2019 it was anticipated that the extension of Orange Street in the near future would satisfy this need for connection.

Transportation Technology and Electric Vehicles

At their joint meeting of October 24, 2017, the Commission and the City Council discussed emerging changes in the nation's vehicle fleet and the desirability of quickly responding to those anticipated changes, particularly to the emergence of greater numbers of electric vehicles. As a result, the Mayor agreed to explore with Alliant Energy and potential local partners the prospects for installation of electric charging stations in West Branch at an early date, and the publicizing of station locations as a city attraction. As transport technology such as automated vehicles continues to evolve the city should keep abreast of new developments to track mobility opportunities and to determine their impact on city facilities.

¹ Selected complete streets references in addition to the Johnson County and Cedar Rapids complete streets ordinances presented to the Commission at its meeting of 4-18-17 include <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/> (accessed 1-22-18) for the National Complete Streets Coalition, with information on the 1140 agencies that have adopted Complete Streets policies as of 12-26-17; the American Planning Association with Best Policy and Implementation Practices at <https://www.planning.org/research/streets/> (accessed 1-22-18); the U.S. Department of Transportation at <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/complete-streets> (accessed 1-22-18), and; the Des Moines MPO at <https://dmampo.org/complete-streets/> (accessed 1-22-18).

² 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. These data are to be updated.

³ 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>. This information is to be updated.

⁴ Current information on paratransit services and funding is to be provided.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE

Chapter 12: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION



Introduction

Intergovernmental cooperation provides opportunities for increased communication and cost-saving measures across multiple jurisdictions within a region. Cities are part of broader regions and cooperation provides opportunities for cost sharing and the sharing of approaches to common problems or issues.

The City of West Branch should periodically review existing and potential intergovernmental agreements to provide more efficient and cost-effective public services. This topic was included in the recently approved Cedar County Comprehensive plan to encourage further improvement in collaboration and cooperation throughout the County.

Chapter 12 outlines opportunities for coordination among local groups, organizations, county, state and federal governments. A number of local entities with intergovernmental interests are listed below:

- Cedar and Johnson Counties
- Cedar County Economic Development Commission
- East Central Intergovernmental Association
- East Central Iowa Council of Governments
- Iowa City Area Development
- Lower Cedar Water Management Authority
- Main Street Iowa
- National Park Services
- River Bend Transit
- West Branch Community School District

Image 13.1. Cedar County Comprehensive



Purpose

It is important for City leaders to periodically review existing intergovernmental agreements and proactively pursue opportunities to create new agreements. The need for intergovernmental collaboration opportunities is great as local funding is stretched further and state and federal funding becomes more and more competitive.¹

The public demand for some services may not be that strong, or citizens may not be willing or able to pay. Cooperative or joint agreements with other public agencies could be a way to cost-effectively provide these services. What is termed in Iowa as a 28E agreement is a way to broaden a service area and share the costs.²

A section of the new Cedar County Comprehensive Plan describes the legality and process of establishing intergovernmental agreements between communities. This plan was accepted by the Cedar County Planning and Zoning Commission in August, 2018. That commission indicated the intergovernmental cooperation chapter should be a high priority for implementation. The County Plan was forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

28E Agreements

The essence of this state legislation is to permit any governmental agency to undertake any activity jointly with any other agency, so long as each agency has the power to undertake that particular activity on its own. As an example, because cities, townships, counties, and schools can establish libraries, it is possible for a library to be a joint undertaking by a combination of those local governments.³

Formal Municipal agreements are known as “28E Agreements” under chapter 28E of the Iowa Code. The stated purpose is to permit:

“State and local governments in Iowa to make efficient use of their

*powers by enabling them to pro
with other agencies and to coo
advantage. This chapter shall be*

28E Examples

Joint and cooperative arrangements ha
and popular way of providing services a
agreement with other cities, a county

¹ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015).

² (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015).

³ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015).

⁴ (State Code of Iowa 1965)

⁵ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015)

agency could make many projects possible.⁶

General examples of 28E intergovernmental cooperation include: Councils of Governments, Economic Development, City Utilities, Fire

Protection/Prevention, Emergency Agencies, Community Development, Public Transit Agreements, Library Services and

28E Agreements in West Branch

It is typical for 28E Agreements to cover a wide range of jurisdictions and issues such as sewer, road systems, economic development, emergency response agreements, and health services. The most common agreements are between townships and municipalities where municipalities help provide fire and police services to nearby townships.

Most 28E utilization in West Branch has been for fire protection services with nearby communities. Other common agreements are with the West Branch Community School District, and concern matters such as street maintenance. For example, the City and School District entered into a joint agreement to maintain the pedestrian bridge and trail south of Main Street, between 827 W. Main Street and West Branch High School.⁸

In 2017, West Branch joined 7 counties, 24 municipalities and 7 soil and water conservation districts in the Lower Cedar Watershed Management Authority. The purpose is to provide avenues for members to cooperate with one another to successfully plan for and implement improvements within the watershed, such as flood risks and water quality.⁹

The municipal adoption process is described in Image 13.2.

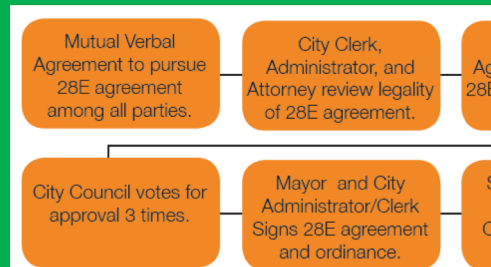
⁶ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015)

⁷ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015)

⁸ (Iowa Secretary of State 2017a)

⁹ (Iowa Secretary of State 2017b)

Image 13.2. Municipal Adoption Process



Note: Since an ordinance is being passed with a 28E agreement, public hearing requirements, including three open hearings, are not required.

Note: Cities have 60 days to change their mind on 28E agreement.

Regional Organizations

The Cedar County Comprehensive Plan identifies several regional organizations active in West Branch that present opportunities for cooperative arrangements.

Cedar County Economic Development Commission

CCEDC is a Cedar County Board aimed to improve economic development throughout the County. The Board is made up of County Supervisors and City Council members of the communities it represents. The Cedar County Comprehensive Plan identifies that greater communication between the County, its communities, and the public can give businesses greater access to economic development tools (i.e. small business start-up resources, low-interest revolving loans, and financial assistance).¹⁰

East Central Intergovernmental Organization

ECIA is a membership-sponsored organization of local governments in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. West Branch is one of 66 member communities.¹¹ Through ECIA membership, local governments share resources they could not afford individually. The services and programs provided by ECIA include: community development, economic development, housing assistance, employment and training, transportation, and planning.¹² The Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority (EIRHA) is a division of ECIA which works to provide decent, safe and affordable housing for in the region. The Cedar County Plan suggests sharing resources and coordinating discussions of common concerns may improve the quality and consistency of solutions to local and regional problems.

Image 13.3 and 13.4 – Logos



ECIA



Source: www.ecia.org, Ac

¹⁰ (The University of Iowa: Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities et al. 2018)

¹¹ (East Central Intergovernmental Association 2018)

¹² (East Central Intergovernmental Association 2018)

East Central Iowa Council of Governments

East Central Iowa Council of Governments is a regional planning affiliation which provides transportation planning and administrative services for Cedar, Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington Counties. ECICOG provides local governments a variety of technical assistance on land-use planning, zoning, and local government financing. Their website identifies historic preservation, recreation planning, downtown revitalization, and urban renewal special taxation districts as areas where they can provide information.¹³ They also assist local governments in securing and administering state and federal funds for local infrastructure improvement and community facility projects.

River Bend Transit

River Bend Transit provides full ADA door-to-door service to the public in Cedar, Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott Counties. The Cedar County Plan encourages increased cooperation among different providers and agencies. Transportation is covered more in-depth in Chapter 9 of this plan.

Federal Entities

West Branch is home to the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum and the Herbert Hoover Historical Site. These two entities are managed by the National Archives and Records Agency and the National Park Services, respectively. Together, they are an integral part of the West Branch community. Further opportunities to collaborate on projects should be proactively pursued. One such example is the implementation of an electric vehicle charger. As detailed in Chapter 7 of this plan, this could provide a public service while also promoting economic development. Another example is storm-water management.

Image 13.5, 13.6, 13.7 – Logos



¹³ (East Central Iowa Council of Governments 2018)

Practical Implementation

Joint and cooperative arrangements have proved to be an efficient and popular way of providing services at a reasonable cost.¹⁴ A 28E agreement with other cities, a county, the West Branch School District, or some agency could make more projects possible.¹⁵

Land Use

It is important for the City to be proactive in its communication with Cedar County and with Johnson County regarding land use. As the Cedar County Plan identifies, future conflicts may arise between cities, counties, and unincorporated rural areas. It is important the two entities remain in communication about annexation plans when rural development occurs. Iowa Code 28E gives cities with an adopted subdivision ordinance the option to review subdivision plats that are within a two-mile radius of their boundary. The Cedar County Plan encourages smaller communities to adopt zoning policies to create compatibility between smaller towns and Cedar County.

Fringe agreements between cities and counties provide road maps for future planning and development. They are a useful tool that identify future annexation areas and prioritize where development should occur. The Cedar County Plan recommends entering into these agreements to avoid future conflicts, and the last section of this chapter describes such agreements more fully.

Fringe Area Agreement with Johnson County

One of the land-use goals for West Branch's 2013 Comprehensive Plan

Development Codes

Another application of 28E agreements is development codes. The County plan suggests that a code be utilized to secure a county-wide benefit and to effectively reduce costs for this position by sharing across several municipalities. It is an opportunity to improve the efficiency of current ordinances.

Coordinated Tourism

As identified in Chapter 7 *Economic Development*, the West Branch is an economic driver. The County plan suggests that residents want improved collaboration to minimize event conflicts. The County plan suggests that it is beneficial for an organization to develop a community events strategy to increase tourism participation.

Purchasing

One area that should be explored is the possibility of joint purchasing. Communities could go to bid together on certain items with bulk pricing and with the development of a strategy that may be eligible for joint purchasing of office supplies or maintenance supplies.

was to increase cooperation with Cedar County regarding planning and development two miles outside West Branch.

¹⁴ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015)

¹⁵ (The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs 2015)

¹⁶ (City of West Branch 2013)

Johnson County, falls under Johnson County's planning authority. (West Branch has extraterritorial authority within a two-mile limit.) In order to pursue future land use goals of West Branch, a fringe area agreement with Johnson County should be instituted as a useful tool in the event of growth over our 20-year horizon. Such an agreement should be followed by a similar agreement with Cedar County.

Johnson County has established fringe area agreements with many towns within that county. The goal of such agreements is to designate an undeveloped area surrounding the town or city as a potential growth area in which future development would need to be reviewed by both the city and the county. The purpose is to ensure that future development falls within future land use plans of both the city and the county. Typical language of these agreements follows:

Johnson County, the County plans to create or update Fringe Area Agreements for use planning with and between Johnson County and mutually beneficial development projects. The County is expected to promote and protect sustainable development and direct future commercial and industrial development in Johnson County.

*"The Fringe Area Policy Agreement is intended to provide for orderly and efficient development patterns appropriate to a non-urbanized area, protect and preserve the fringe area's natural resources and environmentally sensitive features, direct development to areas with physical characteristics which can accommodate development, and effectively and economically provide services for future growth and development."*¹⁷

According to Chapter 5, Section 3, of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan of

¹⁷ (Johnson County Board of Supervisors 2006)

¹⁸ (Johnson County, Iowa 2018)

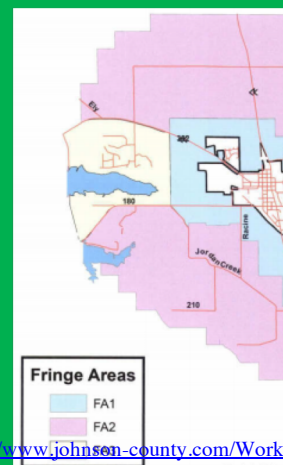
What Would a Fringe Area Agreement Look Like?

The City of Solon, Iowa, a city that has many of the same land-use characteristics and a scale similar to West Branch, has a Fringe Area Agreement with Johnson County. The FA1, FA2, and FA3 areas illustrated in Figure 13.1 are potential annexation areas identified by the City.¹⁹ Future development standards have been identified within the Fringe Area Agreement as ones that are conducive to both Solon and Johnson County land-use goals and objectives.

A second example is the City of Tiffin and Johnson County Fringe Area Agreement. Illustrated in Figure 13.2, Tiffin has established areas (in green) that would best support growth and future annexation. Recommended land uses for these areas are residential subdivision, industrial, and commercial. In addition, the green areas are identified within the agreement as ones that support expansion of City infrastructure (sanitary sewer and water).²⁰ Any future developments proposed in the green areas, under the agreement, are at the discretion of the City, while development in the blue should be submitted for approval to the County and are unlikely to be annexed.

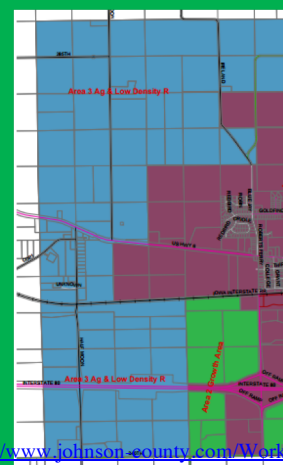
Beyond coordinating planning efforts, one of the goals of Johnson County's Fringe Area Agreements is to "discourage the creation of unincorporated islands."²¹ Establishing a Fringe Area Agreement with Johnson County would ensure long-term development west of West Branch fits with future land-use plans of the City and would identify where development would be welcomed. Similarly, a fringe-area agreement should be investigated with Cedar County.

Figure 13.1 Solon and Johnson County



Source: <http://www.johnson-county.com/Work>
Accessed 9/24/2018

Figure 13.2 Tiffin and Johnson County



Source: <http://www.johnson-county.com/Work>
Accessed 9/24/2018

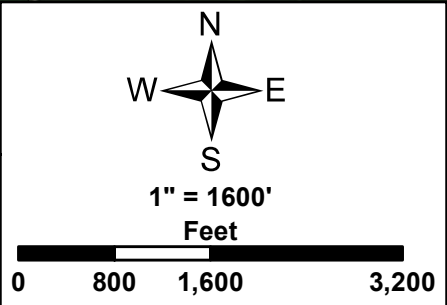
¹⁹ (Johnson County Board of Supervisors 2008)

²⁰ (Johnson County, Iowa 1997)

²¹ (Johnson County, Iowa 2018)

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LEGEND

ZONING DISTRICTS

A-1

 AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

R-1

 SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE DISTRICT

R-2

 TWO FAMILY RESIDENCE DISTRICT

R-3

 MULTIPLE RESIDENCE DISTRICT

RB-1

 RESIDENCE/BUSINESS DISTRICT

B-1

 BUSINESS DISTRICT

B-2

 BUSINESS DISTRICT

CB-1

 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

CB-2

 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

HCI

 HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

I-1

 INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

I-2

 INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

CI-2

 CENTRAL INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

P-1

 PUBLIC USE DISTRICT



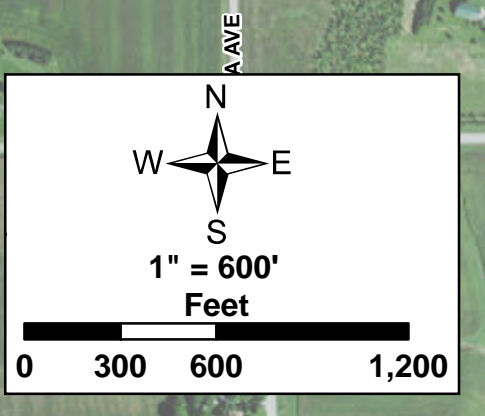
VEENSTRA & KIMM, INC.

PROJECT NO. 368100
MARCH 13, 2014

ZONING MAP

CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA

Sources: Swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



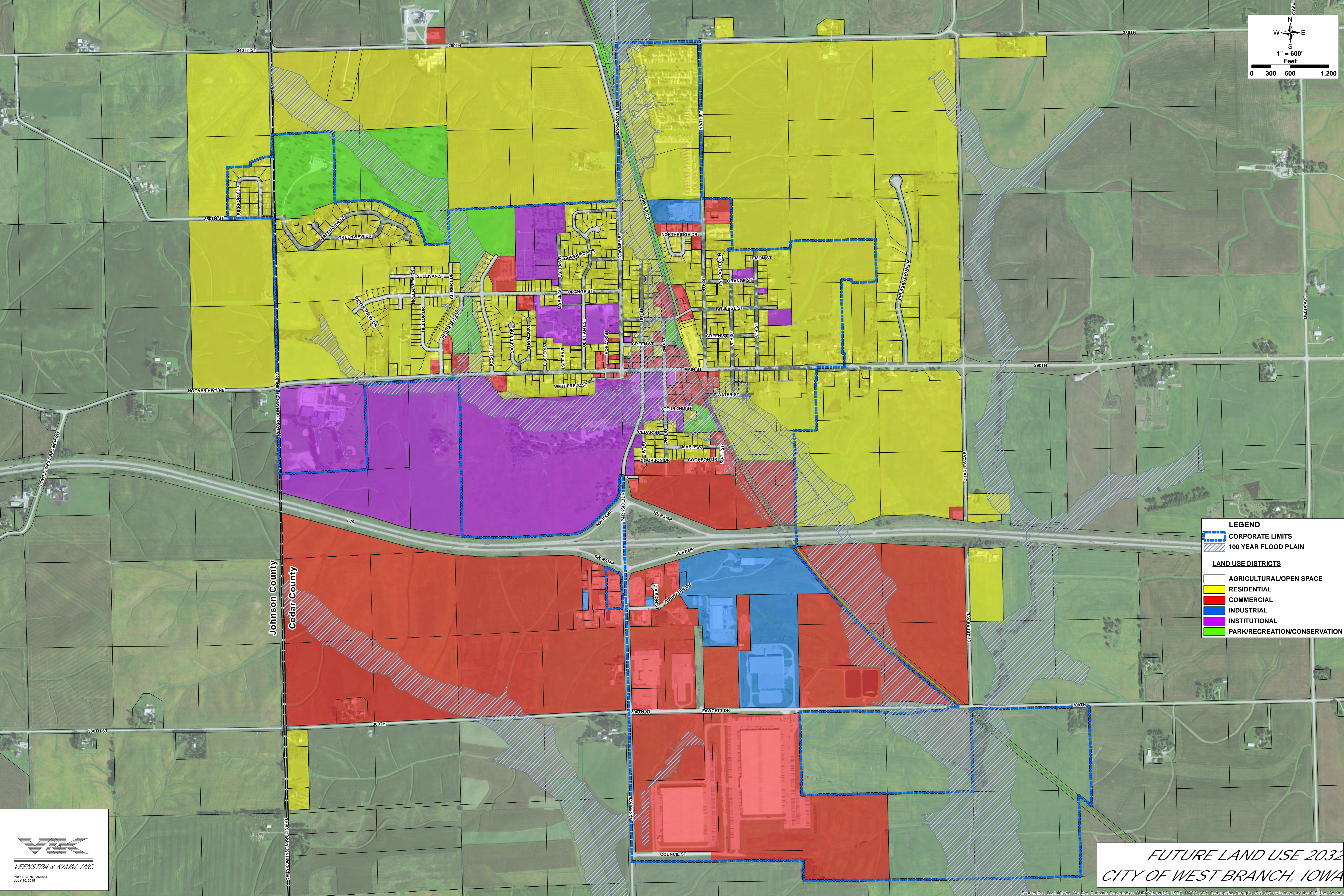
LEGEND

CORPORATE LIMITS
 100 YEAR FLOOD PLAIN

LAND USE DISTRICTS

AGRICULTURAL/OPEN SPACE
 RESIDENTIAL
 COMMERCIAL
 INDUSTRIAL
 INSTITUTIONAL
 PARK/RECREATION/CONSERVATION

FUTURE LAND USE 2032
CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA



VEENSTRA & KIMM, INC.
PROJECT NO. 368154
JULY 10, 2015

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, IGC, and the GIS User Community

ORDINANCE 19-05

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO SECTION 176.25 OF THE MARION CODE OF ORDINANCE TO ALLOW THE SALE OF CONSUMER FIREWORKS IN THE I-1, RESTRICTED INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARION, IOWA:

Section 1. That Section 176.25(1)(C) be deleted in its entirety and replaced as follows:

C. Commercial uses:

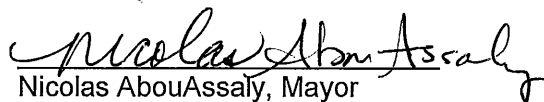
- (1) Retail businesses, personal services, and business services permitted in the C-4 District.
- (2) Restaurants including drive-in and drive-through service, but not including the serving of beer and alcoholic beverages.
- (3) Office buildings and meeting halls.
- (4) Nurseries.
- (5) Hotels and motels.
- (6) Consumer Firework Sales

Section 2: That all other chapters shall remain unchanged by this ordinance.

Section 3: That all ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict with the same are hereby repealed.

Section 4. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and publication as provided by law.

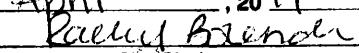
Passed and approved this 4 day of April, 2019.


Nicolas AbouAssaly, Mayor

ATTEST:

I, Rachel Bolender, City Clerk of the City of Marion, Iowa hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.


Rachel Bolender, City Clerk

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
The undersigned City Clerk of Marion, Iowa certifies that the ordinance shown immediately above was published in the Marion Times on the 11 day of April, 2019.

City Clerk

165.49 HCI DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS.

1. Permitted Uses.

Tow truck service business and impound lots, provided that there shall be no dismantling of vehicles or permanent storage on the premises. Permanent storage is defined as storage on the lot for more than 60 days. All outdoor storage shall be conducted entirely within an enclosed fence, wall or other solid screen. Such solid screen shall be constructed on or inside the front, side and rear lot lines and shall be constructed in such a manner that no impounded vehicles or other items shall be visible from an adjacent property, street or highway. Storage, either temporary or permanent, between such fence or wall and any property line is expressly prohibited.

All uses allowed in the Business B-2 District and all uses allowed in the Industrial I-1 District.

Adult entertainment establishments, adult bookstores, adult motion picture theaters, and adult mini-motion picture theaters, subject to the following regulations: The following provisions shall govern the location and spatial separation of adult entertainment establishments, adult bookstores, adult motion picture theaters, and adult mini-motion picture theaters in the Highway Commercial Industrial (HCI) district. Said establishments are permitted uses only within a Highway Commercial Industrial district. (Ord. 635 – Oct. 07 Supp.)

Sale of consumer fireworks