

# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 4: COMMUNITY PROFILE AND CHARACTER

Picture 4.1. Main Street West Branch on a Summer Day in 2018.



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 paint 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 expected 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.<sup>1</sup>

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).

<sup>1</sup> 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	2,294	2010-2017	-1.2%

(ACS 5-Year Estimate)

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

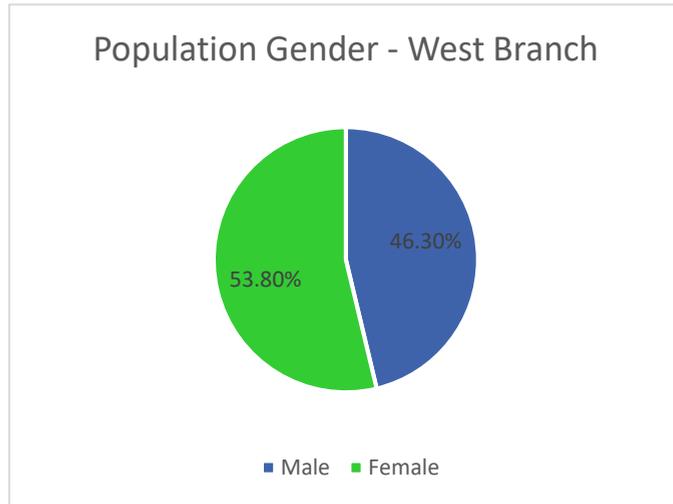
Updated May, 2019.

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.

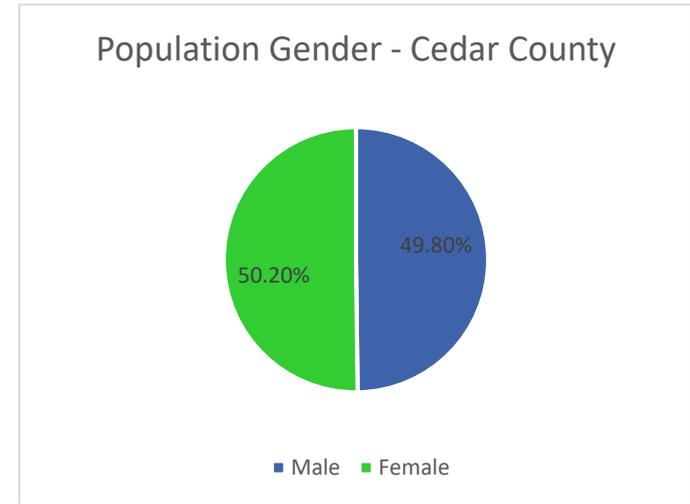
According to the ACS 2017 five-year estimates, West Branch's population most recently was 46.3 percent male and 53.8 percent female. These ratios are slightly different from the 2010 census, which showed 49 percent male and 51 percent female. The gender split in Cedar County shows almost an equal split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

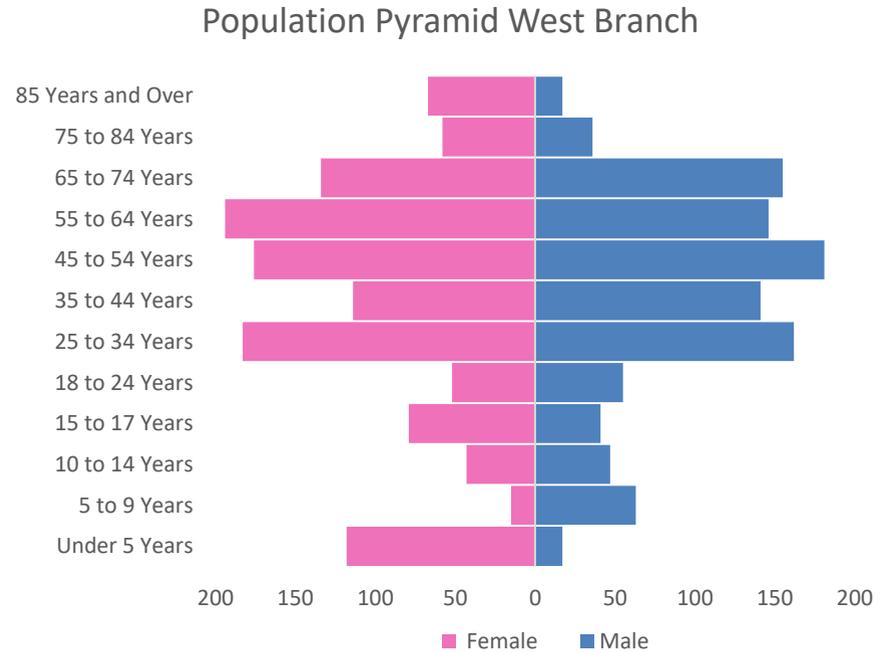
### Age and Gender.

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.

# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 5: LAND USE

## Introduction

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. The map is the same as in the 2013 plan, except as updated by the addition of two areas designated as planned unit developments.

### 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.

#### Goal 1: To Support Economic Development, Reuse, Revitalize, and Redevelop Underutilized Commercial Properties and Public Land.

For objectives to achieve this goal see Chapter 7 of this plan.

#### Goal 2: Strive to Maximize Infill Development

Objective 1: Survey vacant lots that offer opportunities for infill development, and maintain a city inventory of such properties for potential users.

Objective 2: Consider promoting the development of auxiliary living units such as “granny flats” to densify development with minimal public-service cost.

#### Goal 3: Conserve the Historic Nature of West Branch

Objective 1: Consider a housing rehabilitation program for historic properties, as detailed in the West Branch Historic Preservation Plan.

## Land-Use Background

There are six types of land uses identified in this 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 (either crops or livestock), or land that has been left as open space.

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%

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 the most up-to-date detailed breakdown of the existing land use by acres in the incorporated areas of the City of West Branch.

## Future Land-Use

Having a map illustrating the anticipated future growth areas and expected future land uses allows for preferred future growth patterns to occur. Such a map serves as 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.

Picture 5.1. House in West Branch.



Source: Author, 2019.

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

### Other Items for Consideration

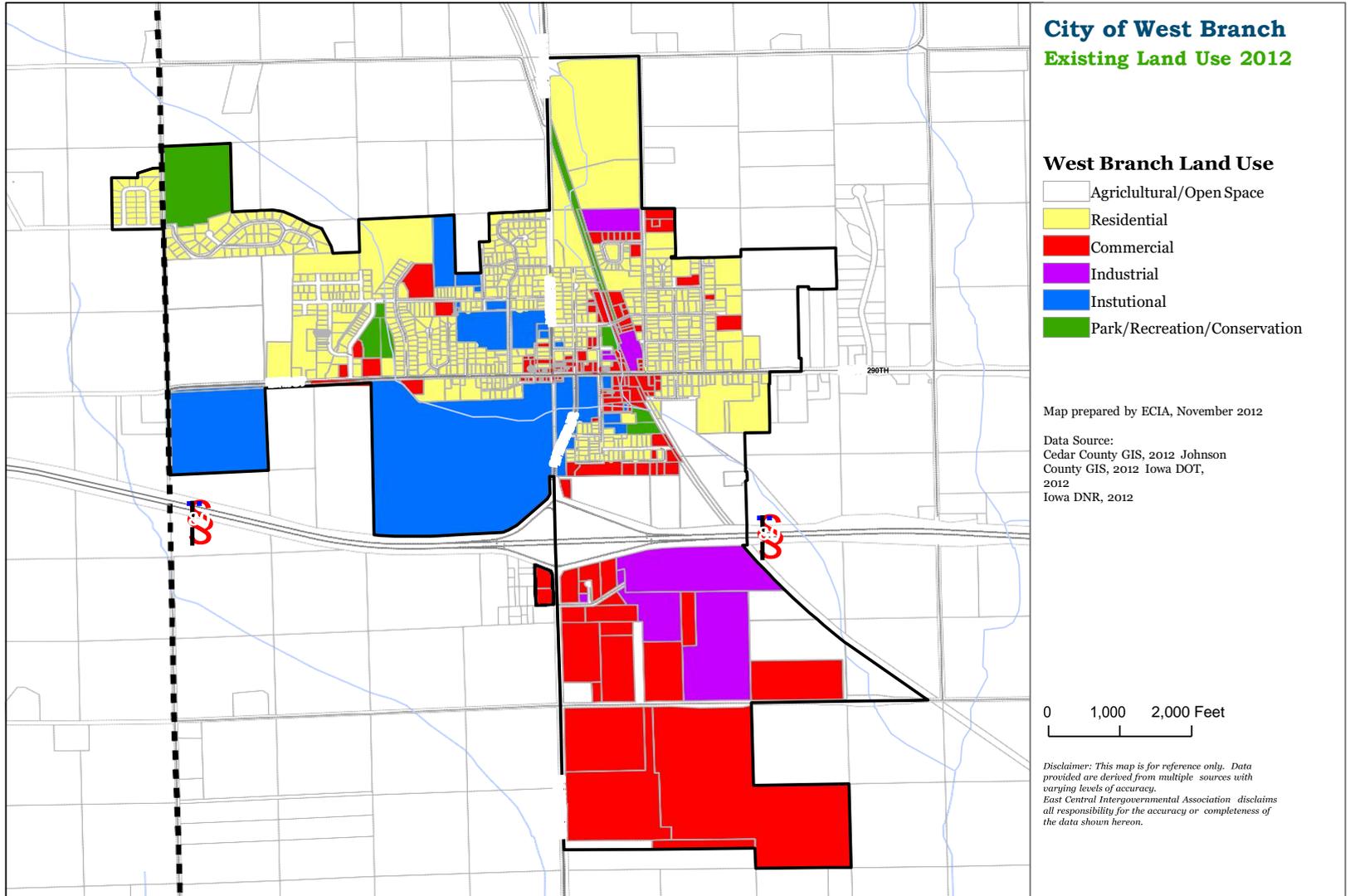
The public input survey done for the 2013 plan found that respondents of the survey thought the City of West Branch needed more commercial uses (shopping, services, food/beverage establishments, and offices). Land for natural areas, open space and wildlife habitat was found to be about right. Survey respondents believed there are too many condominium-style residences. The survey also found the City of West Branch needed more civic spaces (parks, pedestrian plazas, outdoor entertainment). On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 7 on Economic Development, West Branch is geographically close to a diversity of shopping opportunities in Iowa City and Cedar Rapids that exhibit economies of scale, making it uneconomic to produce the variety of establishments many citizens desire. Too, as discussed in Chapter 6 on Housing, the city is challenged by housing affordability and likely will need to serve its forecasted population with more rather than fewer condominiums, zero-lot-line residences, and rental apartments.

Picture 5.2. Jack and Jill Grocery Store..

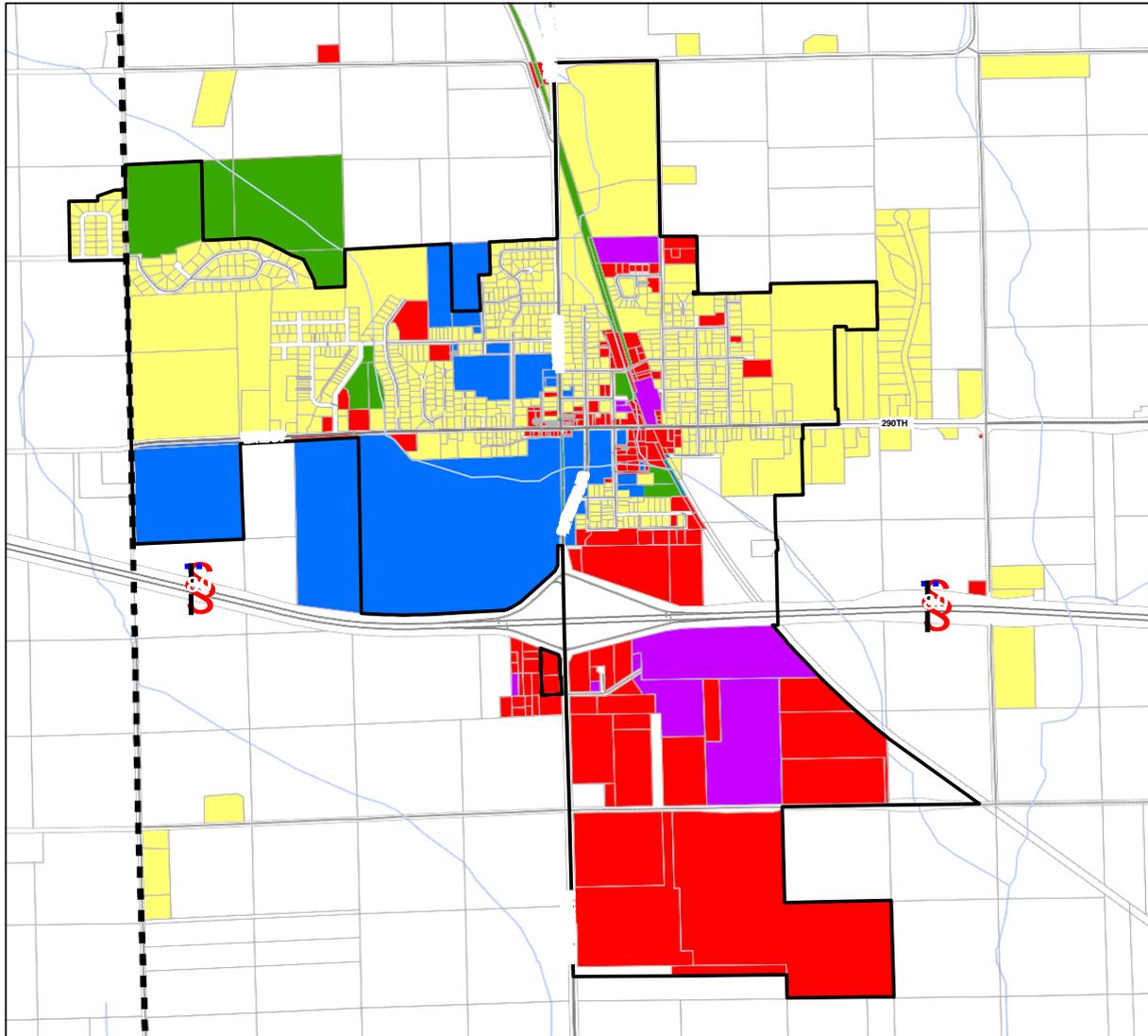


Source: Author, 2019.

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



Map 5.2  
Future Land Use  
in West Branch



**City of West Branch**  
**Future Land Use 2032**

**West Branch Land Use**

- Agricultural/Open Space
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Park/Recreation/Conservation

Map prepared by ECIA, November 2012 Data

Source:  
Cedar County GIS, 2012  
Johnson County GIS, 2012 Iowa  
DOT, 2012  
Iowa DNR, 2012

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

*Disclaimer: This map is for reference only. Data provided are derived from multiple sources with varying levels of accuracy. East Central Intergovernmental Association disclaims all responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the data shown hereon.*

# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 6: Housing in West Branch

Picture 6.1 North Downey Condominiums constructed in 2005.<sup>1</sup>



## Introduction.

Housing is the most important item in the household budget, and a key element of livable neighborhoods and cities. This chapter begins with a number of recommended goals for West Branch, followed by explanations of why those goals are suggested and information about the status of housing in the city.

## West Branch Housing Goals.

### Goal 1: Maintain and Revitalize Older Housing Options.

The City of West Branch will strive to maintain and rehabilitate older housing. Older housing usually is associated with lower mortgage and property tax costs, which makes homeownership and housing rentals more affordable for median-income, or below-median-income, families.

West Branch should lead the way in supporting a variety of older housing units to meet a wide range of housing needs. According to the Cedar County Assessors Website in 2017, the median value of houses over 100 years in West Branch was \$108,800.<sup>ii</sup> With the right amount of maintenance and rehabilitation, such older homes, making up of almost 15% of the housing supply, can provide affordable home ownership options. West Branch has a comparably large number of housing units built after 1970 and after 1999. However, as of 2015, the latest date available in 2018, West Branch had only a moderate number of new units compared to some of its peer cities. West Branch should strive to maintain and revitalize older housing, constructed before 1970, in order to make available a variety of options for affordable homeownership.

Figure 6.1. Year Structures were Built in West Branch, Peer Cities, the State of Iowa, and the U.S., as of 2015, by Percentage of Housing Stock.



Source: American Community Survey 2015.

## Goal 2: Reduce Exposure to Hazardous Construction Materials and Lower Energy Costs in Older Housing Units.

The City of West Branch should search for innovative ideas and financial support to reduce health-related issues among children. In Iowa, and in communities with an abundant amount of older housing, lead-based paint can exist and be hazardous to families. In 1978, lead-based paint was banned from housing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lead-based paint is one of the most hazardous sources of lead in children.

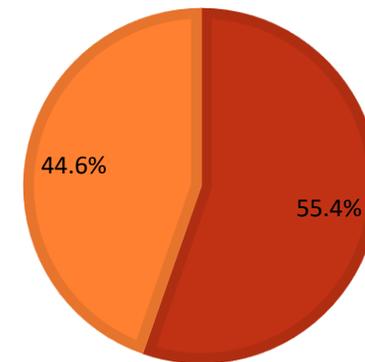
As noted in Figure 6.2, 55.4% of the housing units in West Branch built before 1980 have a high probability or likelihood of having lead-based paint. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in Cedar County alone there were roughly 3 to 8 cases of high lead-blood levels per year from 2005 to 2012.

Asbestos was a concern expressed at a July 25, 2017 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. Asbestos usage in the United States peaked from 1973 to 1977<sup>iii</sup> but asbestos use is still permitted in the United States.<sup>iv</sup> Materials made from asbestos after the 1970s were artex, a decorative stipple finish from the 1980s to 1990s, and siding.<sup>v</sup>

Many older homes are less energy efficient. This can be for a number of reasons such as poor insulation or less efficient energy appliances. West Branch should support and investigate ways to help reduce energy costs among homeowners and renters.

Figure 6.2 Housing Units Built Before 1980.

- Houses with a High Likelihood of lead-based paint
- Houses without lead-based paint



Source: American Community Survey, 2015.

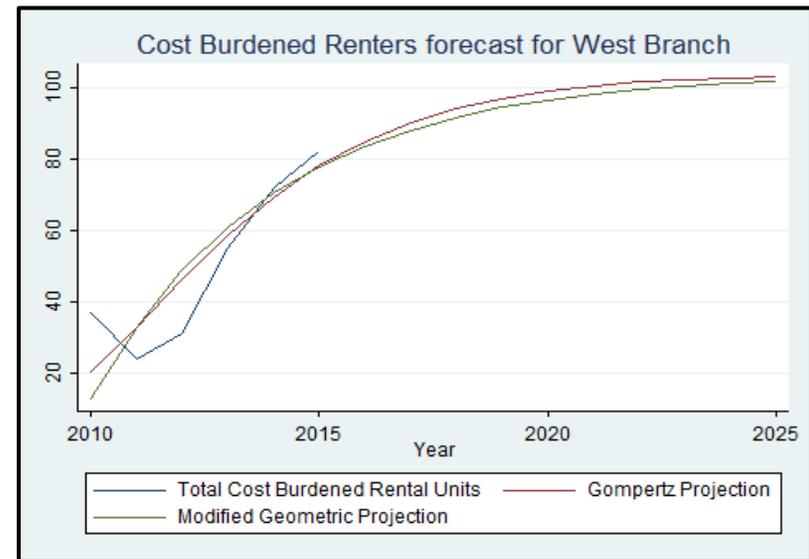
### Goal 3: Address Affordable Housing Needs by Increasing Aging-in-Place Ownership and Rental Options.

West Branch should address its expected issues with affordable housing by investigating solutions to improve housing affordability for all age groups.

Trends indicate the number of cost-burdened renters will continue to increase in West Branch, spurred by an expected increase in young adults who earn less, competing in a rental market that is not increasing in number of units in accord with the population.

At the same time, senior rental and ownership options have been limited, leading to financial stress on some seniors who no longer are paying a mortgage. Forecasts of cost-burdened renters to the year 2025 are provided in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3 Forecasted Cost-Burdened Renters in West Branch.vi



Source: American Community Survey 2015.

Table 6.1 Rental Gap Analysis for West Branch in 2015.

Rental Gap Analysis	0-30% AMI (less than \$18,015)	30-50% AMI (\$18,015- \$30,025)	50-80% AMI (\$30,025- \$48,040)	80-110% AMI (\$48,040- \$66,055)	110%+ AMI (more than \$66,055)
Maximum Affordable Rent	<\$450	\$451-751	\$752-1201	\$1202-1651	>\$1651
Number of Units	40	124	21	23	0
Number of Renters	30	68	59	43	32
Gap in Units	10	56	-38	-20	-32

Source: American Community Survey 2015.

A rental gap analysis measures the supply of rentals by price and compares it with the demand of rental price based on renters' income. The analysis indicates downward pressures from higher income renters on medium income renters indicating a strong demand for both medium (\$752-\$1,201) and higher priced rents (>\$1,200).

The City should encourage more construction of rentals in the 50% -80% AMI range (\$752-\$1,200) to reduce downward pressure from higher income renters.

## Recommended Strategies to Achieve Goals.

### Coordination.



Investigate establishing a Housing Task Force or Commission to help the city.

Improve older housing, increase affordability, encourage more rental properties, and help the city seek grant funding.

Establish incentives to encourage more housing development.

Assist developers and building owners to apply for grants that encourage affordable housing for individuals earning 50 to 80% of the area median income, and investigate provision of an inclusionary zoning ordinance.

### Housing Diversity.

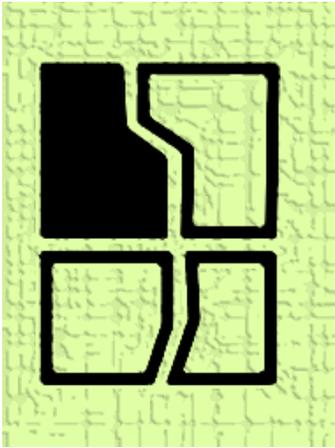


Strive to build one rental or “middle housing” unit for every three housing units built.

Increase the number of rentals and condominiums available in West Branch.

Encourage aging-in-place renting or ownership to reduce the income burden on seniors and improve the competitive renting market for young adults. This includes: allowing second small buildings to be built in the backyard, often termed “granny flats,” and larger rental facilities which are compatible with seniors and young adults.

### Innovative Zoning Policies.



Reexamine zoning policies to encourage more affordable lot sizes, reduce street width to lower development costs, allow for small dwelling units for seniors to live separately but on the same lot as their children, and reduce restrictions on apartment complexes.

Reduce zoning restrictions to make rentals or innovative housing options easier or less expensive to develop.

Update the future land-use map to allow for more rentals, middle-cost housing such as duplexes and town homes, and a possible expansion of mobile home facilities.

Cluster zoning and planned unit developments should be considered.

### Improve Older Housing Quality.



Join with the Historic Preservation Commission to investigate adopting a Revitalization District or revitalization programs to encourage the maintenance and revitalization of older housing units.

## Improve Housing Affordability.



Consider requiring 10% of the City's new housing developments to be low-income, or an in lieu payment be made to support lower-income housing. This would be accomplished through an inclusionary zoning ordinance (such as adopted in Iowa City).

Encourage developers to apply for Community Development Block Grants and Rural Housing Grants that will enable more affordable housing among those at 50-80% of the Area Median Income (\$29,000-\$48,000).

Reduce the minimum lot-size requirements to allow for more affordable ownership housing among those at 50-80% of the Area Median Income (\$29,000-\$48,000).

## Housing Background.

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

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

The second reason that housing is addressed in this plan is to meet the intent of Iowa Smart Planning legislation enacted by the Iowa Legislature. The Smart Planning legislation defines components that are suggested content for comprehensive plans. These components are presented in Chapter 2 as ten Smart Planning principles, one of which

addresses housing. The housing principle stresses housing diversity. It states:

“planning, zoning, development and resource management should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers.”<sup>vii</sup>

The legislation further states that when developing or amending a comprehensive plan the following are desirable; “objectives, policies and programs to further the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods and new residential neighborhoods and plans to ensure an adequate supply of housing that meets both the existing and forecasted housing demand. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include an inventory and analysis of the local housing stock and may include specific information such as age, condition, type, market value, occupancy, and historical characteristics of all the housing within the municipality. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of new housing and maintenance or rehabilitation of existing housing that provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of the residents of the municipality.”<sup>viii</sup> This chapter provides these housing components for West Branch's comprehensive plan.

## Characteristics of the Existing Housing Supply.

### Assessed Value.

Table 6.2 shows the assessed value of residential properties in West Branch, according to 2015 American Community Survey data.

- Roughly 78% of West Branch's housing has an assessed value between \$50,000 and \$200,000.
- Over 48% of the City's housing is valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000, a range that is considered affordable for middle-income households.
- Over 25% of the housing valued below 100,000 is in the affordable category for lower-income households.

In most cases, the assessed value of a given home closely correlates with its age of construction. Residential units lying to the west of the city, in Johnson County and in the newer subdivisions on the Cedar County side of West Branch, generally have higher assessed values than properties located in downtown and in older areas of the City.

Table 6.2 Assessed Value of Owner Occupied Housing in City of West Branch for 2015.

Assessed Value	# of Units	Percentage
<\$50,000	171	19.90%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	74	8.60%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	230	26.80%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	195	22.70%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	159	18.50%
> \$300,000	30	3.50%

Source: 2015 5 Year American Community Survey.

### Year Housing was Built.

With 61.5% of the total units in West Branch built since 1970, the housing stock is considered relatively new.<sup>ix</sup>

Over 39% of the City's housing stock was built prior to 1970 with the majority of those, 21.5%, being built before 1940.

- Homes constructed prior to 1960 will require increasing amounts of ongoing maintenance.

### The city will need to:

- Continually monitor overall housing quality to ensure the long-term integrity of its older neighborhood areas.
- Moreover, as discussed in the City's Historic Preservation Plan (an appendix to this comprehensive plan), the city may wish to consider establishing a program of financial assistance for the maintenance and rehabilitation of older structures, so as to encourage the continuance of established neighborhoods.

Picture 6.2 North 4<sup>th</sup> St House in West Branch. Built in 1900.



Source: Google Maps 2013.

### Housing Types and Availability.

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

Picture 6.3: An example of a row housing development.



Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cityofedmonton/6996193260>.

Row housing, attached houses, and townhomes are good options to provide housing for a broad range of resident looking to both rent and own. The picture provided on the left is an example of row housing development which could take place in more dense areas of West Branch.

### Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Inventory.

Table 6.3 contains an inventory of the types of housing located in West Branch, in comparable cities, and overall in Iowa. Owner-occupied housing is by far the dominant form of housing within West Branch accounting for 74.8% of the total. This is consistent with Tipton but is slightly higher than most comparable or peer cities and nearly 10% higher than for the state of Iowa. A higher percentage of owner-occupied housing tends to be an indication of a traditional small town, and is to be expected in a more rural area. The lower percentage in Iowa is attributed to the high demand for rental units in or near Iowa’s metropolitan areas and its Universities. Although it is a moderate difference, **West Branch should strive to have its rental percentage (currently 20.2%) closer to the median peer city (23.3%) through encouraging the construction of new rental units.**

Table 6.3. Housing Units in 2015 West Branch Compared with Peer Cities and Iowa.

City	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied		Vacant	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
West Branch	859	74.76%	232	20.19%	58	5.05%
Durant	620	70.06%	203	22.94%	62	7.01%
Earlham	493	73.25%	142	21.10%	38	5.65%
Mitchellville	469	65.87%	149	20.93%	94	13.20%
Roland	425	80.04%	68	12.81%	38	7.16%
Tiffin	690	64.91%	332	31.23%	41	3.86%
Tipton	1054	74.28%	301	21.21%	64	4.51%
Wilton	822	60.26%	402	29.47%	140	10.26%
Median Peer City	655	70.24%	217.5	23.32%	60	6.43%
State of Iowa	883,308	65.22%	352,601	26.04%	118,355	8.74%

Source: American Community Survey 2015.

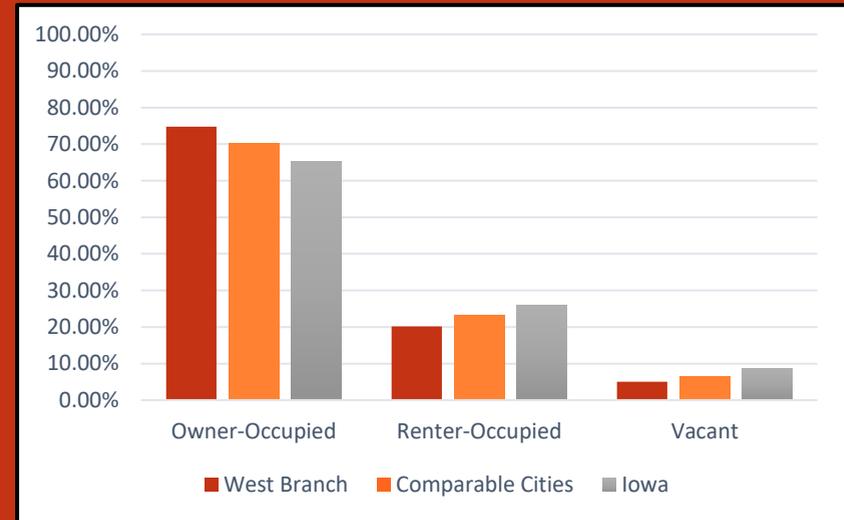
### Rental and ownership balance needed in West Branch.

A low supply of rentals could lead to upward pressure on the local rental market as the population ages. To compare West Branch to its peer cities see Table 6.3 and Figure 6.4.<sup>x</sup>

Figure 6.5 below shows the distribution of housing units in West Branch. West Branch has 74.8% of its homes classified as owner-occupied and 20.2% as rental units. The American Community Survey shows that West Branch has 1,149 housing units. The HUD vacancy standard is that 5% of the total housing units would be available for sale or rent.

The 2015 Five-Year American Community Survey shows: 31 units available for rent, which is more than a reasonable expectation. There are numerous reasons rental units are available. This might include a larger margin of error that comes with the American Community Survey. The 2014 survey estimated there were 13 rentals available and the 2013 survey estimated there were 6 rentals units available. Surveys before 2013 indicate there were 0 available rentals. Based on the other survey years, there likely was a low vacancy rate for rentals in 2015.

Figure 6.4. Housing Unit Types as a Percentage in West Branch, Comparable Cities, and Iowa in 2015.



Source: 2015 5 Year American Community Survey.

## A Shortage of Housing Units for Sale.

**A 5.0% vacancy rate within West Branch was experienced in 2015 (Figure 6.5).**

This is slightly lower than expected and may be even lower because newly bought and rented homes are still considered vacant until the new householder moves in. West Branch's rate matches the 5% the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers a "normal vacancy rate".<sup>xi</sup> This vacancy rate may be the result of stable growth. The West Branch rate is substantially lower than the average state rate of nearly 9% and lower than the rates for most of West Branch's peer cities.

Based on a HUD standard, West Branch should have:

- **58 units available.**<sup>xii</sup>
- **Of the 58 units, 42 would be available for sale.**
- **16 would be available for rent.**

The 2015 Five-Year American Community Survey shows:

- **There were only 4 Units for Sale**
- **Based on HUD standards, there should be an additional 38 housing units for sale.**

The City should:

- Encourage new housing lot developments.
- Maintain its building incentive program

Picture 6.4 New House Construction on Ridgeview Drive.



Source: Picture taken by Lisa Kofoed August 18, 2013.

### Mobile or Manufactured Homes.

Although mobile homes are in relative decline nationally<sup>xiii</sup>, they are still a large part of housing in West Branch. The 2015 American Community Survey estimates that roughly 15% of the city's housing supply consists of mobile homes.

Most mobile homes come in two different sizes, often referred to as "single wide" or "double wide", and are parked in a rented space commonly referred to as a mobile home park.

Mobile homes are an affordable housing ownership option for many families as the median mobile home in West Branch is valued at \$20,000.

Picture 6.5 Single-Wide Manufactured Home.



Source: 2010 Cedar County Emergency Hazard Plan.

### Community Surveys.

In the community survey conducted for the comprehensive planning process in 2011, housing was an issue of concern to residents. The housing issues of highest importance focused on property maintenance and a lack of senior housing availability. Other areas of less concern included high purchase prices, a lack of choice in moderate price ranges (for move-up housing units), and a lack of affordable housing. Similar results were found in a Cedar County comprehensive plan public workshop held in West Branch on October 3, 2017 and centered on local issues. **The issues brought up in both surveys are a focus of this housing chapter as indicated in the housing affordability section and goal three of this housing chapter.**



**The 2011 survey showed over 40% of respondents believed a lack of affordable housing options was a top-three issue of concern in West Branch.**

**In the 2017 survey, over a third of the participants (34%) pointed to a lack of affordable housing. The second important concern was a lack of senior housing (21%), while the third concern was too few rental housing units (17%).**

### A Community of Well-Maintained Housing.

An analysis of the age of West Branch's housing stock showed that a significant portion of the housing in the community was built before 1960. Homes that are over 50 years old tend to require more maintenance. The Comprehensive Plan surveys noted concerns about property maintenance. It is possible that some deteriorating housing units may be located in prominent locations. When such properties deteriorate they negatively impact the image of the community. In some cases, property owners defer desirable maintenance due to a lack of funds. The City may consider implementing a property maintenance code and applying for grant funding to assist grant-eligible property owners. Efforts should also concentrate on property maintenance and enforcement in all areas of the City. Neighborhood deterioration due to abandoned vehicles, peeling paint, junk storage, etc. can be addressed with property maintenance standards.

### Housing Development that Respects the Natural Environment.

The City of West Branch has a topography that includes slopes and floodplains. Environmental regulations, such as the City's Floodplain Ordinance, strive to protect these features for safety reasons or as distinct benefits for community "quality of life." Too much of the land west of the city is being developed with large-lot, single-family homes. Such development must be designed in a manner so as to preserve and protect natural features, and to the extent possible provide community parkland and continue to allow some agricultural pursuits. West Branch's land-use plan is committed to preserving the existing character of this estate area through less intensive land development, including Low-Impact Design and other sustainable urban practices. These practices seek designs that will manage storm water runoff, thereby reducing flooding and minimizing impacts on the development and neighboring properties to maintain the predevelopment status to the extent possible. One such practice is to restore topsoil removed during development, as discussed in chapter 10.

### Housing Affordability.

HUD standards indicate that households spending more than 30% of their income on housing are “housing cost burdened”.<sup>xiv</sup> Households spending more than 50% of their income on housing are termed “heavily cost burdened”. Every community, big or small, has households who are cost burdened by housing. The section below explains how the City of West Branch compares to other peer cities regarding housing for cost-burdened households.

Table 6.4. Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income for West Branch, Peer Cities, and the State of Iowa in 2015.

City	Renters					Homeowners					Homeowners Without Mortgage				
	Cost Burdened		Heavily Cost Burdened		Total	Cost Burdened		Heavily Cost Burdened		Total	Cost Burdened		Heavily Cost Burdened		Total
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Percent
<b>West Branch</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>39.5</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>19.8</b>
Durant	0	0.0	49	24.9	24.9	9	2.7	21	6.3	9	12	4.2	25	8.7	12.9
Earlham	16	12.0	4	3.0	15	21	5.7	56	15.1	20.8	0	0	4	3.4	3.4
Mitchellville	0	0.0	50	33.6	33.6	31	9.7	56	17.5	27.2	8	5.4	6	4	9.4
Roland	3	5.5	9	16.4	21.9	10	3.2	22	7	10.2	0	0	6	5.6	5.6
Tiffin	42	12.7	51	15.4	28.1	37	7.2	57	11.1	18.3	7	3.9	12	6.7	10.6
Tipton	8	2.8	107	37.7	40.5	30	5.3	34	6	11.3	0	0	50	10.3	10.3
Wilton	23	6.0	93	24.4	30.4	45	8.7	56	10.8	19.5	0	0	10	3.3	3.3
<b>Median Peer City</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>9.4</b>
State of Iowa	27,286	8.5	116,611	36.1	44.6	81,334	15.1	34,870	6.5	21.6	9,456	2.8	28,812	8.5	11.3

Source: American Community Survey 2015.

### Cost-Burdened Renters in West Branch.

According to HUD standards, 39.5% of renters were cost burdened in West Branch in 2015.

- That is 40% higher than the peer city median.
- 11 percentage points lower than the state of Iowa average.
- American Community Survey data suggest there is a high portion (20.7%) of West Branch renters paying 30-35% of their income on housing costs.
  - This is 276% higher than the median peer city.

### Cost-Burdened Seniors in West Branch.

Affordability is a struggle for some West Branch homeowners. However, the 98 cost-burdened homeowners with a mortgage fare well in West Branch, where only 16.3% of such homeowners are cost burdened, fewer than the median comparable city (18.3%) or overall in the state of Iowa (21.6%).

The 49 cost-burdened homeowners without a mortgage show a higher cost-burden rate in West Branch. Some 19.8% of West Branch residents owning a home without a mortgage are heavily cost burdened, which is 110% higher than the median peer city and 75% higher than the state average.

Figure 6.5 Affordable housing graphic.



### Fair-Market Rent.

Fair-market rent is a tool the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses to measure how much a household should pay for rent.<sup>xv</sup> Although the calculations are only done by county, it can still be used as an indicator for West Branch. For the purposes of this evaluation we used only the peer cities located in Cedar County.

Figure 6.6 compares the 2015 rent averages in peer cities located in Cedar County and compares those averages to the 2015 and 2017 fair-market rent calculator provided by HUD. This table shows the rent for one, two, and three bedroom apartments adjusted to 2015 dollars.

What stands out is that 2015 West Branch rents for 1-bedroom and 2-bedrooms (\$575 and \$684) are higher than the 2015 (\$472 and \$639) and 2017 (\$513 and \$682) fair-market rates in Cedar County.

However, 3-bedroom rentals in West Branch are below the fair-market rate and are lower than for peer cities in Cedar County. There are a number of possible reasons, such as; 3-bedrooms are cheaper to construct or maintain in West Branch, the rent for these units is more equitable between renters and landlords, or the housing quality of 3-bedroom rentals might be lower in West Branch.

Table 6.5 2015 Monthly Rent Averages for West Branch and Cedar County Peer Cities Compared to Cedar County Fair Market Rent in 2015 and 2017.

City	One Bedroom	Two Bedrooms	Three Bedrooms
	Cost	Cost	Cost
<b>West Branch</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>790</b>
Durant	581	666	863
Tipton	410	710	843
Wilton	425	607	832
Median Peer City	425	666	843
<b>2015 Cedar County Fair Market Rent</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>827</b>
2017 Cedar County Fair Market Rent	513	682	918

Source: American Community Survey and HUD Fair Market Rent Calculator.

### Future Affordability Trends.

To better address the needs of its community, West Branch should track trends in affordable housing. By addressing changes in the affordability of housing, West Branch has the opportunity to improve the future market for such housing. From 2010 to 2015, cost-burdened homeowners with a mortgage dropped from 29.6% to 18.3%, which indicates a better homeownership market after the 2008 housing crisis. <sup>xvi</sup> In that same time period, affordability for homes without a mortgage stayed relatively the same (19.2% in 2010 and 19.8% 2015).<sup>xvii</sup>

As shown in Table 6.6, West Branch should expect an increase in renters who are housing cost-burdened. From 2010 to 2015 cost-burdened renters increased from 37 rental units (15.9%) to 82 (39.5%). If the five-year trend continues, forecasts<sup>xviii</sup> indicate that by 2025, West Branch will have 103 rental units that are cost burdened which will be roughly 45.6% of the rental market.

### Why Affordability is Worsening.

Decreased affordability in West Branch is due to a number of reasons. From 2010 to 2015, the population increased by 248 people, yet the number of rentals increased by roughly 20 units.<sup>1</sup> During this five-year period about 18-24% of the population lived in rentals. However, the new housing growth over this period, indicates that only 10% the population living in new housing was living in rentals. This indicates a shift in homeownership among the new population, but it also likely suggests there are not enough rentals being constructed. Such changes strain the rental market, as an increasing population will demand more rentals and without an adequate increase in rental units, which did not take place from 2010 to 2016, rent prices will increase. The median rent rose by 10% in five years, which is a moderate increase, suggesting other factors are involved.

Forecasted Total Cost Burdened Renters.		
Table 6.6.	Cost Burdened	
Year	Units	Percent
2010	37	15.9
2011	24	11.2
2012	31	14.9
2013	55	20.6
2014	72	34
2015	82	39.5
2016*	85	40.7
2017*	90	42.8
2018*	94	44.3
2019*	97	45.2
2020*	99	45.7
2021*	100	46.0
2022*	101	46.1
2023*	102	46.0
2024*	103	45.8
2025*	103	45.6

\* indicates forecasts

### Young Adult Affordability Issues.

Much of West Branch's population increase was due to more residents in the 25-34 year range. That population group rose by 119 people, which was responsible for 48% of the population increase in West Branch. At the end of this period there were 35 more rental units being rented by that age group, and most of them are renting in larger complexes consisting of five or more rental units. In 5 years the rental population in large complexes increased by 147 people, indicating these renters have more dependents.

With 119 more people aged 25-34, earning about 10% less, with more dependents, higher rents, and little change in the number of rental housing units, West Branch has more cost-burdened renters. Without change, this situation can be expected to worsen. It is recommended that West Branch investigate strategies to improve rental housing affordability.

In 2010, individuals aged 15-24 earned roughly \$40,156 while people aged 25-44 earned \$61,121 on average. But their salaries in 2015 dropped to \$17,000 and \$56,607, for an income reduction of -57.7% and -8.9%. The salaries in this age group are below 2015 Iowa Averages (\$26,513 and \$60,591) and below 2015 United States averages (\$26,228 and \$58,985).<sup>1</sup> The 2015 American Community Survey indicates rental units where the household income is \$20,000 to \$24,999 and \$30,000 to \$34,999 increased by 11 and 39 units.

<sup>1</sup> According to five, five-year American Community Surveys from 2010 to 2015, these two age groups made relatively the same across the United States, and in Iowa the age group's income increased with inflation.

Figure 6.6. Family Housing.



Source:

[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_op/FHLaws/yourrights](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_op/FHLaws/yourrights).

### Aging Population Affordability Issues.

Housing affordability is also a problem for some of those aged 60 and over in West Branch. Table 6.4 shows 49 cost-burdened homeowners without a mortgage in 2015. Few older residents of West Branch rent, which could mean there are few rental options for seniors. The population aged 60+ has been increasing in West Branch, and by a 4-to-1 ratio people in that age group own rather than rent.

The respected Urban Institute has stated that people aged 55 and over are renting at higher rates, and the 2017 State of the Nation’s Housing Report found rental demand in America is strong, even after recovery from the 2008 recession.<sup>xix</sup>

In West Branch there was an increase from 38 to 45 households owning a house but with an annual income under \$10,000. This information suggests some older individuals are staying in their houses, perhaps due to lack of rental options. West Branch should consider city policies to encourage aging-in-place housing planning principles<sup>xx</sup>, policies to increase rental options so as to reduce burdens on both seniors and young adults.

Picture 6.6. Senior Housing Example.



Source: <https://www.jabacares.org/content/affordable-housing>.

## Housing Incentives.

Housing incentives are a useful tool to encourage more housing development and improve the existing housing stock. This section describes the current building incentive programs available in West Branch, lists potential available funding options, and describes programs offered in other cities which West Branch may be able to duplicate.

### Building Incentive Program.

The West Branch Building Incentive Program provides up to \$5,000 in property tax rebates as well as reduced permit fees. The program was developed by a group of builders, realtors, bankers, and associated professionals who reside and work professionally in the West Branch Community and was approved by the City Council in May, 2015. After the homeowner receives an occupancy permit, that homeowner is eligible to receive a 100% rebate on the City of West Branch portion of the homeowner's tax bill.

The rebate is available for up to \$5,000 or five years from the date of the occupancy permit, whichever comes first.<sup>xxi</sup> Since inception, 59 eligible homes had been constructed (or were currently in progress) as of February, 2019. Builders had saved more than \$86,000 on permit fees, the water and sewer fund had lost \$42,000 in revenues, and just over \$12,000 in homeowner rebates had been paid out. The City plans to make changes to the program to continue to meet future infrastructure needs.

In Iowa, over 100 cities and counties are using historic preservation as a tool for community survival, stabilization, and development. Often the local historic preservation commission works in partnership with the local Main Street organization. In addition, some cities have utilized historic preservation incentive and grant programs to revitalize older neighborhoods and downtowns.<sup>xxii</sup>

Picture 6.7. Building Incentive Program.



Source:[http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/BuildingIncentiveDoc\\_2.pdf](http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/BuildingIncentiveDoc_2.pdf). Accessed January, 2019.

### Historic Preservation Plan.

The Historic Preservation Plan (HPP) from 2017 reflects the values of West Branch residents and their desire to preserve historic resources, including residential properties. The seventh goal of the HPP is to establish a residential historic preservation program for housing and neighborhood development.<sup>xxiii</sup> One available action item to achieve this goal is to encourage historic preservation and revitalization of local residential properties by establishing a historic housing incentive and financing program. As stated in the HPP, incentives such as tax abatements, tax credits, freezing assessed home values over a number of years, and financial aid all help reduce possible burdens of owning historic homes and will therefore tend to increase the quality of housing in West Branch.

Additionally, the 2017 Historic Preservation Plan lists the following incentive programs for historic preservation:

Resource	Purpose
Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits	Gives tax credits to property owners for qualified historic property rehabilitation projects. The credits are available for income-producing properties that are National Historic Landmarks, that are listed in the National Register, and that contribute to National Register Historic Districts and certain local historic districts.
Charitable Contributions for Historic Preservation Purposes	Available for partial-interest contributions in historic properties.
Historic Resource Development Program	Provides grants to those in the CLG program for rehabilitating city or county-owned properties that are listed on the National Register. One potential structure is Town Hall.
Certified Local Government Grant Program	Competitive, matching program to be used to underwrite historic preservation activities other than building rehabilitation.

### Housing Rehabilitation Incentive Programs.

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) administers the Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Rehabilitation Fund.<sup>xxiv</sup> IEDA provides rehabilitation grants for housing rehabilitation, especially for low and moderate-income families. Small cities can be eligible for “non-entitlement grants”. With sufficient technical support, these programs may facilitate improving some of the deteriorating historic housing stock in West Branch. One example includes Dubuque, Iowa, which has received numerous state tax credits to improve its historic district.

The City of Iowa City created the General Rehabilitation Improvement Program (GRIP) to assist homeowners with low-cost loans for home improvements. Qualified homeowners are eligible for 20-year loans at 2.75% interest. Iowa City also created the Housing Exterior Loan (H.E.L.P.) program for income-qualified homeowners to make exterior improvements to their homes. This program provides a zero-interest loan for half of the cost of eligible improvements, up to \$10,000.<sup>xxv</sup>

The town of Fairfield, Iowa, created an “Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption” program. This provides strong incentives for homeowners to invest in improvements to their properties and incentivizes developers and contractors to pursue new housing construction. The City offers a three-year, 100% property tax exemption on the first \$75,000 of actual value added by the improvements.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Picture 6.8. Iowa Economic Development Authority Logo.



Source: <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/>. Accessed January, 2019.

Fairfield also offers a refund of state sales, service, or use taxes paid during construction and an investment tax credit for construction and rehabilitation in “enterprise zones”. The program is eligible for developers within these zones who rehabilitate at least four single-family homes or at least one multi-family building containing three or more units.<sup>xxvii</sup>

The Fairfield Revitalization Loan Program provides low-interest loans for the improvements of buildings within three blocks of the Fairfield town square. This was developed through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and local lenders. Finally, the housing trust fund which serves Fairfield allocates funds toward owner-occupied housing rehabilitation.

### EIRHC.

The Iowa Finance Authority administers the State Housing Trust Fund to ensure decent, safe, and affordable housing through the Local Housing Trust Fund Program.<sup>xxviii</sup> Cedar County is within the Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Corporation Housing Trust Fund (EIRHC). It is administered by East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) to promote the general social welfare of eligible occupants of rental housing. Their mission is to acquire, construct, provide and operate rental housing and related facilities suited to the special needs and living requirements of eligible occupants.<sup>xxix</sup> The 2018 FY budget for the EIRHC Housing Trust Fund allocated \$211,718 for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation and an additional \$296,309 for rental rehabilitation.<sup>xxx</sup>

Each year, the EIRHC prepares a Housing Assistance Plan (HAP) to describe regional needs for housing, identify organizational goals and objectives, outline planned activities, and communicate the program guidelines to potential funding applicants. The 2018 HAP states ECIA has developed and secured funding for over 91 owner-occupied rehabilitation and down payment programs in the last 23 years.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Within Cedar County, 33.2% of existing housing stock was built before 1940. By comparison, approximately 26.5% of the housing stock across the state was built before 1940.<sup>xxxi</sup> Among the counties served by ECIA, only Jackson County has more housing stock built before 1940, at 33.3%. Within the ECIA service region, over 50% of the population earn less than \$50,000 per year.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Given housing age and residents' income, the EIRHC concluded that the residents' ability to afford rehabilitation of the older housing stock is diminished. Based on housing need assessments, ECIA concluded owner-occupied

rehabilitation is the most common need in the EIRHC housing service area.

Picture 6.9. Iowa Finance Authority Logo.



Source: [www.iowafinanceauthority.gov](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov). Accessed January, 2019.

The EIRHC HAP allocates 30% of the Housing Trust Fund to owner-occupied rehabilitation activities. The Fund provides financing to low and moderate-income households for general rehabilitation activities. The focus is on major health and safety concerns, including repairs of furnaces, electrical infrastructure, plumbing, roofs, and energy efficiency items (i.e. windows, insulation, weatherproofing). The repayment schedule for owner-occupied rehabilitation funding is a forgivable 5-year loan for those below 80% of the median household income level.

There is no housing rehabilitation program listed with ECICOG for Cedar County in 2018. Per discussion with Mark Culver at ECICOG, Cedar County is not within their jurisdiction for housing rehabilitation programs.<sup>xxxiv</sup> While there is overlap with ECICOG for transportation programs, Cedar County is solely in the ECIA district for housing programs. The Iowa Finance Authority allocates funding to the respective agencies for disbursement within the counties they serve.

## Housing References

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- <sup>i</sup> Picture taken by Adam Kofoed in 2010
- <sup>ii</sup> Taken by running a housing search at <https://cedar.iowaassessors.com/showResBldgSearch.php> and using the median value.
- <sup>iii</sup> Information found at <https://www.asbestos.com/asbestos/history/>
- <sup>iv</sup> 947 F. 2d 1201 – Corrosion Proof Fittings v. Environmental Protection Agency. Openjurist.org. Retrieved 31 July 2017.
- <sup>v</sup> <http://www.asbestossurveyingltd.co.uk/> “Where can asbestos be found”, Asbestos Surveying Ltd, Birmingham, UK 2008 and <http://www.artex.com/>, Click the "Asbestos in Artex" button.
- <sup>vi</sup> Projections were made by the authors of this updated chapter using a number of calculations in order to measure trends from 2010-2015 of cost-burdened renters from American Community Survey data. A mean percentage error (MAPE) calculation was used to determine the forecast or most accurate scenario based on how accurate the calculations were compared with data from 2010 to 2015. A Gompertz formula was used to project the forecasted calculation using the MAPE formula.
- <sup>vii</sup> March 2011 University of Iowa Smart Planning Guide to the State of Iowa’s Legislative Guide, [https://rio.urban.uiowa.edu/sites/rio/files/Iowa\\_Smart\\_Planning\\_Overview\\_0.pdf](https://rio.urban.uiowa.edu/sites/rio/files/Iowa_Smart_Planning_Overview_0.pdf)
- <sup>viii</sup> March 2011 University of Iowa Smart Planning Guide to the State of Iowa’s Legislative Guide, [https://rio.urban.uiowa.edu/sites/rio/files/Iowa\\_Smart\\_Planning\\_Overview\\_0.pdf](https://rio.urban.uiowa.edu/sites/rio/files/Iowa_Smart_Planning_Overview_0.pdf)
- <sup>ix</sup> All statistics on this page are from the 2015 five year grouped American Community Survey.
- <sup>x</sup> 2015 5 Year American Community Survey from Census American Fact Finder website <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.
- <sup>xi</sup> Taken from HUD Unit Vacancy and Resident Turnover Report found here: [https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC\\_35528.pdf](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_35528.pdf)
- <sup>xii</sup> Taken from Unit Vacancy and Resident Turnover Report found here: [https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC\\_35528.pdf](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_35528.pdf)
- <sup>xiii</sup> 2011 *Americas Most Dying Business* by Derek Thompson of The Atlantic <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/09/the-greater-recession-america-suffers-from-a-crisis-of-productivity/242704/>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Found on the Department of Housing and Urban Development website affordable housing section in 2017: [https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/affordablehousing/](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/)
- <sup>xv</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#2017>
- <sup>xvi</sup> An observation from five, five-year American Community Surveys from 2010 to 2015.
- <sup>xvii</sup> An observation from five, five-year American Community Surveys from 2010 to 2015.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Projections were made by the authors of this updated chapter using a number of calculations used to measure trends from 2010-2015 cost-burdened renters from the American Community Survey. A mean percentage error (MAPE) calculation was used to determine the

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forecast or most accurate scenario based on how accurate the calculations were compared with data in 2010 to 2015. A Gompertz formula was the forecasted calculation using the MAPE formula.

<sup>xxix</sup> The State of the Nation's Housing 2017 [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state\\_nations\\_housing](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state_nations_housing) and

2015 Urban Institute Housing Report <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/headship-and-homeownership-what-does-future-hold>.

<sup>xx</sup> 2008 Aging in Place: A toolkit for local governments by M. Scott Ball

<http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/plan/planning/aging-in-place-a-toolkit-for-local-governments-aarp.pdf>.

<sup>xxxi</sup> City of West Branch. (2018). *Building Incentive Program – West Branch, IA*. Retrieved from Building Incentive Program: Accessed 10/23/2018. <https://westbranchiowa.org/community/building-incentive-program/>

<sup>xxxii</sup> State Historical Society of Iowa. (September, 2015). *Iowa's Certified Local Government Program: How to Apply and Maintain Status*. Program Guide, State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa. Retrieved from Accessed 10/21/2018.

<https://iowaculture.gov/about-us/about/grants/certified-local-government-grant-program>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Bagby, T., Kofoed, A., & Mohammed, A. (08/18/2017). *West Branch Historic Preservation Plan, 2017*. The University of Iowa, School of Urban and Regional Planning. Iowa City: The University of Iowa.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Iowa Economic Development Authority. (2018). *Community Development*. Retrieved from CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Fund: Accessed 10/21/2018. <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/CDBGHousing>

<sup>xxxv</sup> City of Iowa City. (2018). *Housing Assistance and Rehab Opportunities*. Retrieved from Accessed 10/21/2018.

<https://www.icgov.org/housingassistanceandrehab>

<sup>xxxvi</sup> City of Fairfield; Area 15 Regional Planning Commission. (February, 2014). *Housing Needs Assessment*. Retrieved from Accessed 10/21/2018. [https://growfairfield.com/wp-content/uploads/fairfield\\_housing\\_needs\\_assessment.pdf](https://growfairfield.com/wp-content/uploads/fairfield_housing_needs_assessment.pdf)

<sup>xxxvii</sup> (Ibid., 30).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Iowa Finance Authority. (2018). *State Housing Trust Fund*. Retrieved from State Housing Trust Fund: Accessed 10/21/2018.

<http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Public/Pages/PC80LN18>

<sup>xxxix</sup> Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority. (2018). *Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority*. Retrieved from Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority: Accessed 10/21/2018. <http://eirha.org/>

<sup>xxx</sup> Iowa Finance Authority. (FY 2018). *Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Corporation Trust Fund State Housing Trust Fund Exhibit B - Project Budget*. Des Moines: Iowa Finance Authority. Retrieved from Iowa Finance Authority provided via email to the author in November 2018.

<sup>xxxi</sup> EIRHC Housing Trust Fund Board. (08/24/2017). *Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Corporation Housing Trust Fund: Housing Assistance Plan 2018*. Housing Assistance Plan. Retrieved from Iowa Finance Authority provided via email to the author November 2018.

<sup>xxxii</sup> (Ibid.)

<sup>xxxiii</sup> (Ibid.)

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See <http://www.ecicog.org/housing-rehabilitation.html> for list of participating counties.

# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 7: THE WEST BRANCH ECONOMY

Picture 7.1. Main Street West Branch.<sup>1</sup>



## 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 redeveloping underutilized commercial spaces as regional attractions or future housing 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: Support 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 serve residents and draw new regional customers to West Branch.

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

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

\*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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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](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.

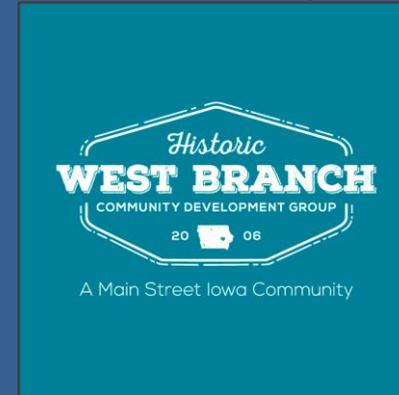
Objective 2: Continue to work with and support local economic groups such as the West Branch Community Development Group to begin small-business-startup education classes.

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.<sup>5</sup> As an example, for 2018 Alliant Energy offered community and business charger rebates for Level 2 charging stations.<sup>6</sup> West Branch could apply for similar such rebates.

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 those of the 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.<sup>7</sup> Many economists believe a suitable frictional unemployment rate is 5%<sup>8</sup>, 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> The University's overall employment measured by full-time employment was 24,752 in 2018, making it the largest employer in the state. Of these, 13,249 were Health Care employees and 11,503 were non-Health Care workers.<sup>11</sup> 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.

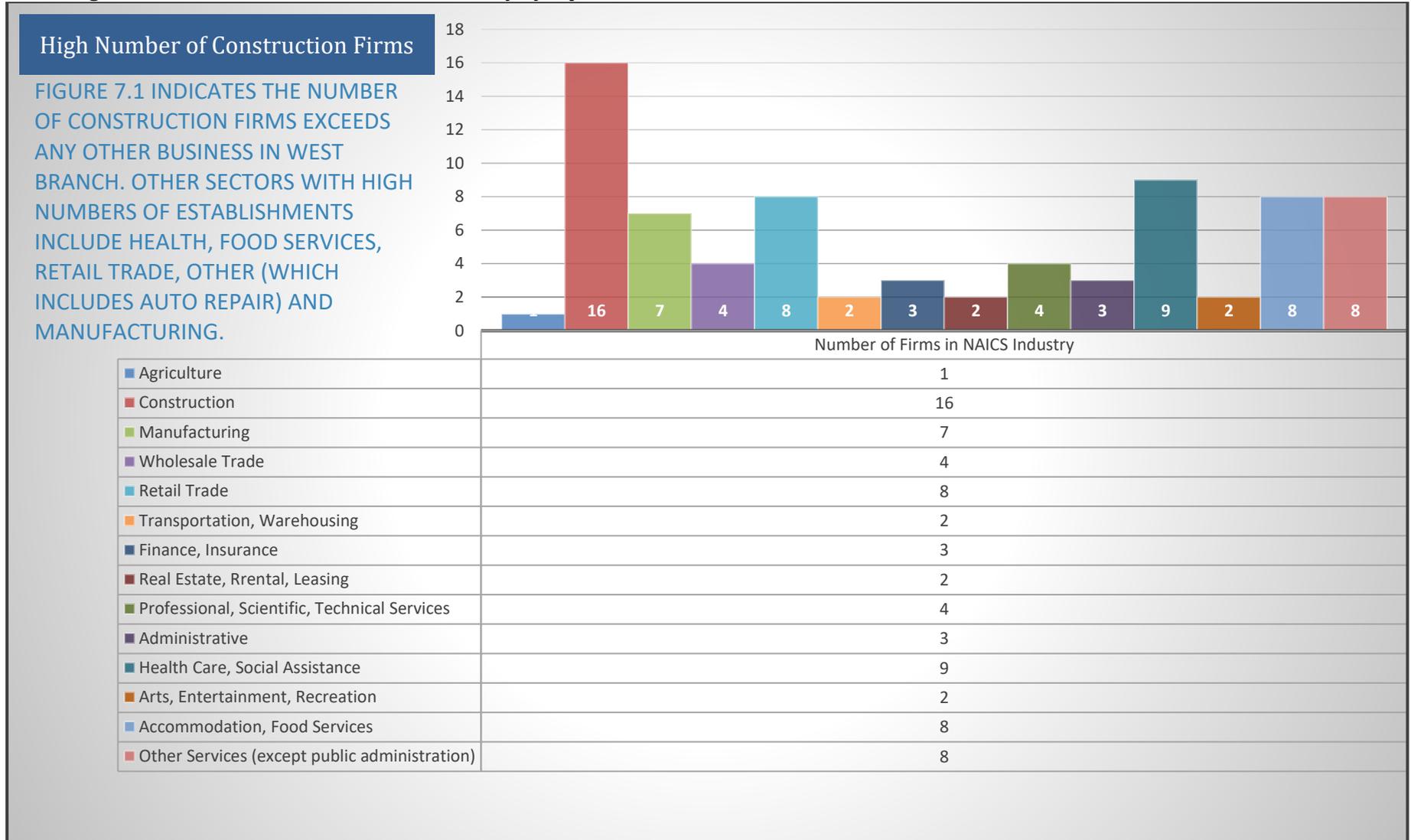
**Table 7.2.**  
**Number of Persons Employed by Industry**  
**(Primary Jobs)**

	<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.



Source: American Community Survey, 2015.

## Median Income

The 2016 median income for West Branch households 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.

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

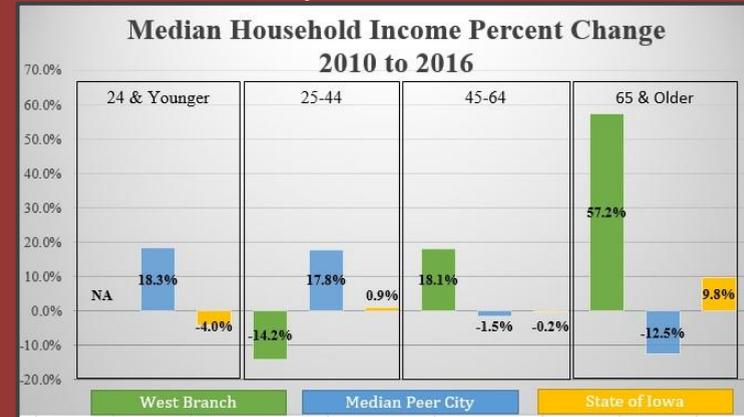
Figure 7.2 is a graphical representation that shows real income changes from 2010 to 2016. The figure illustrates that individuals in West Branch between 25 and 44 years of age had income declines of 14% compared with income increases of 18% for those living in the median peer city. Residents in West 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.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> ECIA provides application assistance for Section 504 loans aimed at small businesses while requiring a reduced down payment of 10%.<sup>17</sup>

Picture 7.10. ECIA Logo.



Source: [http://www.ecia.org/images/ecia\\_1.png](http://www.ecia.org/images/ecia_1.png),  
Accessed February, 2018.

## Commuting in West Branch

### Inflow-Outflow of West Branch Workers

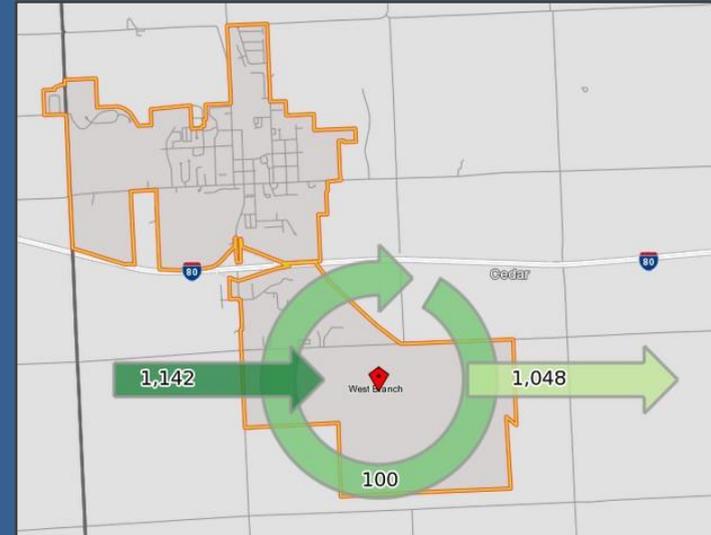
Figure 7.3 shows the following primary jobs data for 2015:<sup>18</sup>

- 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>



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.

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

Source: On the Map Census <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.<sup>20</sup>

- “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.<sup>21</sup>

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.

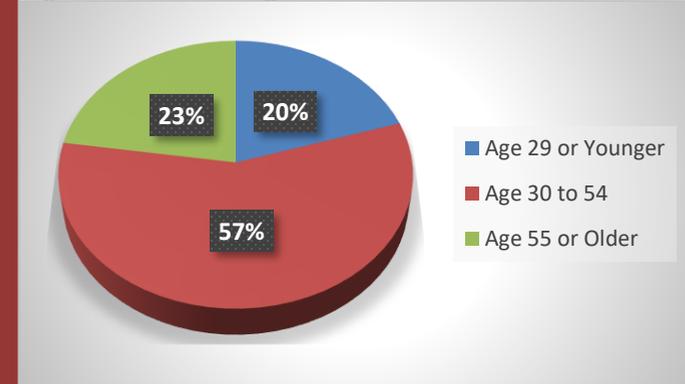
## Workforce Demographics

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.

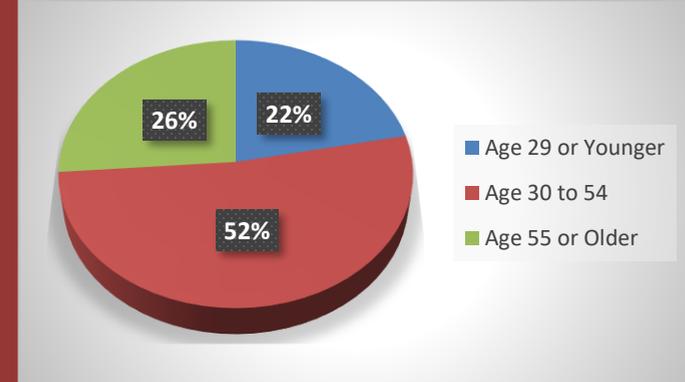
Approximately 16% of inflow commuters make less than \$15,000 a year, which implies that about 1 in 6 jobs in West Branch are low-paying jobs held by inflow workers. However, some 50% of inflow workers have jobs paying more than \$40,000 a year.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 7.4. Inflow Age Distribution for West Branch



Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

Figure 7.5. Outflow Age Distribution for West Branch

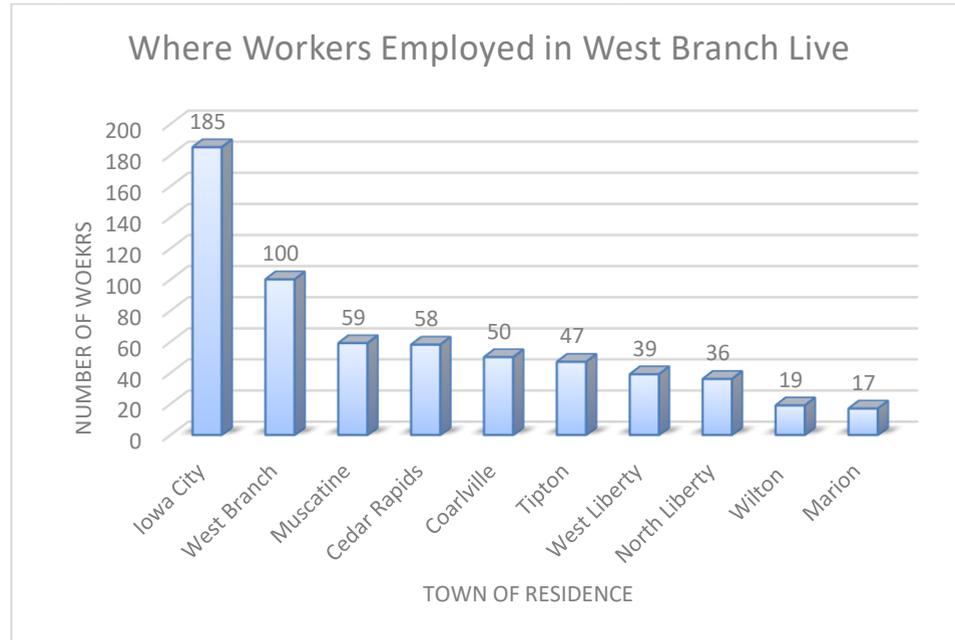


Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

## 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.

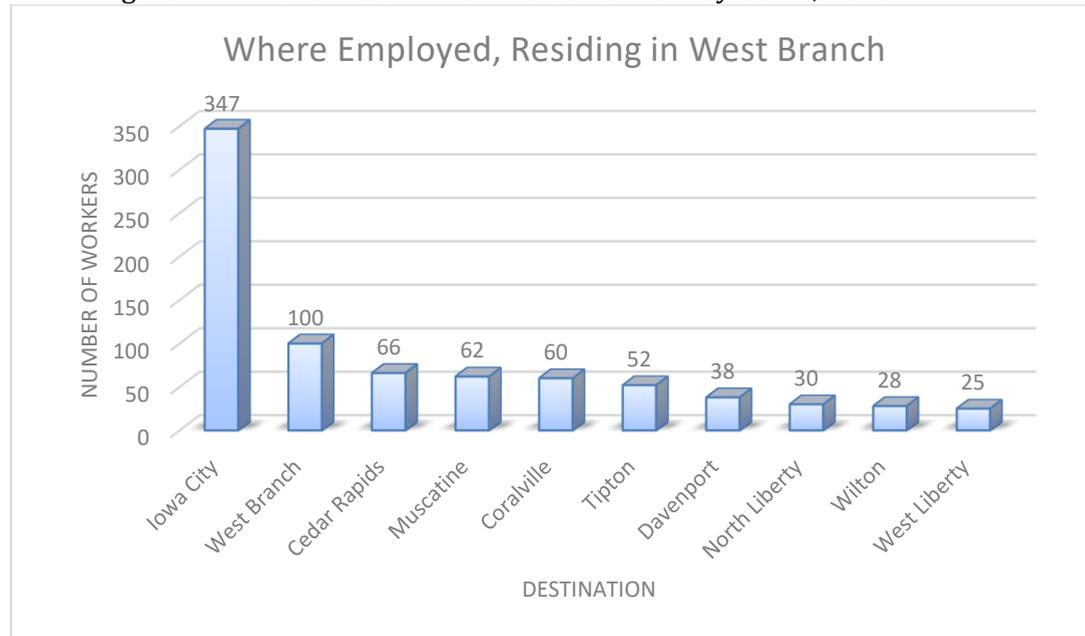


Source: On the Map Census, 2015.

## 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.

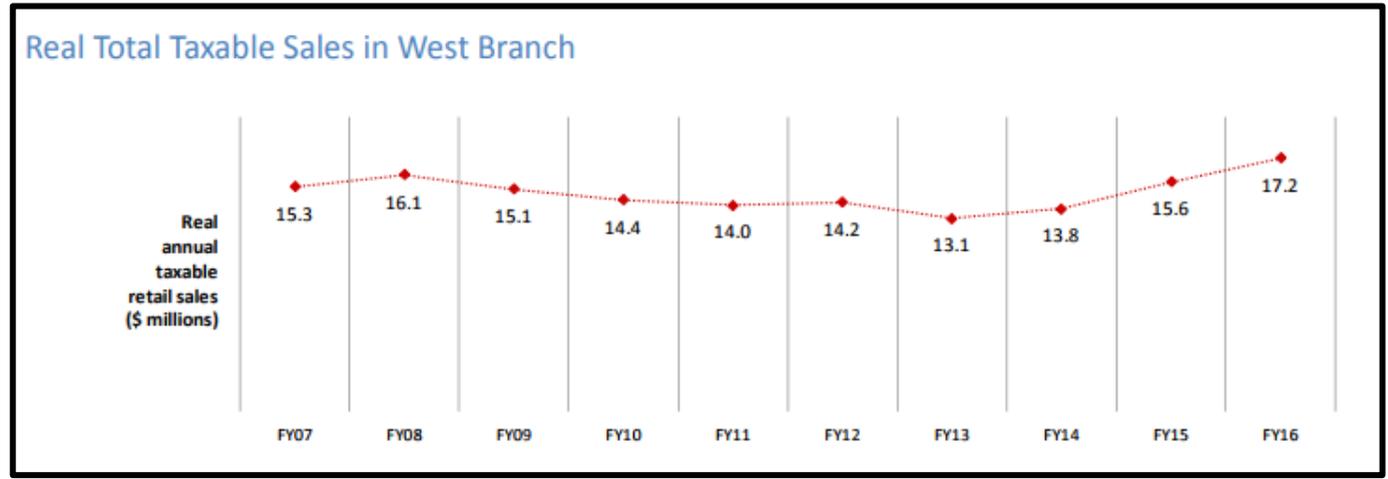
Retail Indicator	2006	2016	10 Year Change
Real Total Taxable Sales	\$ 14,551,349	\$ 17,184,788	18%
Number of Reporting Firms (annualized)	97	96	-1%
Average Sales per Capita	\$ 6,707	\$ 7,331	9%
Average Sales per Firm	\$ 149,628	\$ 178,543	19%
Retail Indicator	2006	2016	10 Year Change
Real Total Taxable 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.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup>

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:

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- <sup>1</sup> Photograph from <http://www.travbuddy.com/West-Branch-travel-guide-39029/photos#2>.
- <sup>2</sup> For more information on the Better Block Foundation and their strategies see the following link: <http://betterblock.org/about/>.
- <sup>3</sup> 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>.
- <sup>4</sup> 2012 Small Business Administration FAQs: [https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ\\_Sept\\_2012.pdf](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ_Sept_2012.pdf).
- <sup>5</sup> 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.
- <sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.alliantenergy.com/InnovativeEnergySolutions/SmartEnergyProducts/ElectricVehicles/EVHomeChargersandRebates>.
- <sup>7</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2012-2016: <https://factfinder.census.gov/>.
- <sup>8</sup> January 3, 2013 “Morning Edition,” National Public Radio: <http://www.npr.org/2013/01/03/168508910/what-is-a-good-unemployment-number-really>.
- <sup>9</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, 2012-2016: <https://factfinder.census.gov/>.
- <sup>10</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/colleges/university-of-iowa/>.
- <sup>11</sup> Email received by the Author from Trevor Glanz, University of Iowa Director of HR Data Management, May 30, 2018.
- <sup>12</sup> June 22, 2017 West Branch Times, “Spending, Tourism, and jobs up about 20 percent at Hoover site.”
- <sup>13</sup> “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.
- <sup>14</sup> October 11, 2013 West Branch Times, “Businesses Feel Impact of Shutdown:” <http://www.westbranchtimes.com/article.php?id=9832>.
- <sup>15</sup> Resolution 1291, April 20, 2017: <http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/Res1291.pdf>.
- <sup>16</sup> East Central Intergovernmental Association 2017: <http://www.eciabusinessgrowth.com/loans/eciarlf.cfm>.
- <sup>17</sup> East Central Intergovernmental Association 2017: <http://www.eciabusinessgrowth.com/loans/sba504.cfm>.
- <sup>18</sup> Figure from 2015 On the Map Census Inflow/Outflow report: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- <sup>19</sup> General observation using 2015 On the Map census of each peer city. <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- <sup>20</sup> Observation using 2015 On the Map census of each peer city: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- <sup>21</sup> North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), U.S. Census: <https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>.
- <sup>22</sup> 2015 On the Map Census: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Figure from Iowa State University Extension Retail Analysis: [http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/retail/retail\\_1983595.pdf](http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/retail/retail_1983595.pdf).
- <sup>24</sup> Figure from Iowa State University Extension Retail Analysis: [http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/retail/retail\\_1983595.pdf](http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/retail/retail_1983595.pdf).

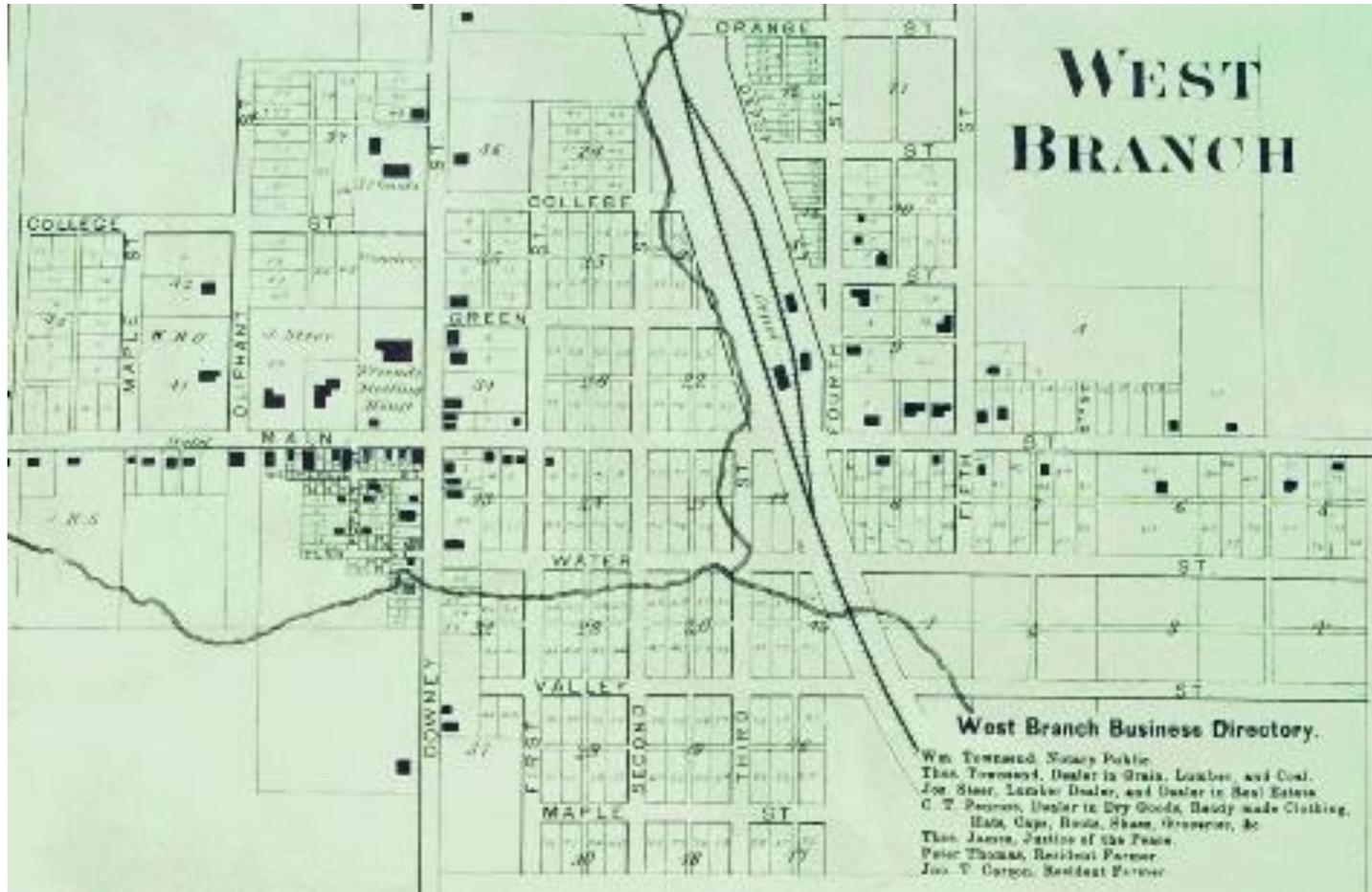
### By Author:

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# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 8: PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND FINANCE.

Picture 8.1. West Branch in 1872.



Source: 1872 Atlas of Cedar County Iowa<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harrison & Warner, *Atlas of Cedar County Iowa*, Town maps (Marshalltown, Iowa: Harrison & Warner, 1872), Accessed November 10, 2018. See: <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/atlas/id/2895/show/2891/rec/1>.

## Introduction.

The 2013 West Branch Comprehensive Plan dealt with public infrastructure and utilities in Chapter 8 and public and community facilities in Chapter 12. This updated chapter combines those two chapters and also includes city finance.

High quality and dependable basic public services, such as clean water and reliable sewer and stormwater management services, are essential to West Branch's future success. Cost-effective and dependable services improve the quality of life, as well as affordability, and make West Branch a more attractive place in which to live and do business. Well-built and well-maintained facilities also help the City recover from damaging natural events and emergencies. In addition, the City's public facilities and services can help create a vibrant place to live and work.

The West Branch public facility system provides water, sewer, parks, and civic services. Public facilities include the varied, extensive, and growing network of streets and pipes. In addition, several parks and natural areas help provide access for recreation, as well as stormwater and flood management. Public services include police, fire, and emergency response. Access to internet, electricity, natural gas, refuse and recycling services is essential for households and businesses.

The maintenance and operation of a complex system of services requires the collective and coordinated effort of multiple entities and regulated utilities to provide these necessities for West Branch. This chapter provides a list of goals and objectives for public facilities, followed by information on the existing situation plus recommended actions.

Picture 8.2. West Branch Public Library.



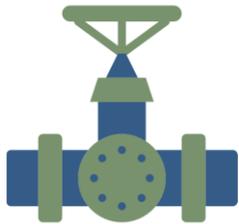
Source: West Branch Public Library Facebook Page.  
<https://www.facebook.com/WestBranchPublicLibrary>. Accessed Nov., 2018.

Picture 8.3. West Branch Fire Department.



Source: Google Maps. Accessed Nov., 2018.

**Goal 1: Provide public facilities, service investments, and operations that improve service equity, support economic prosperity, and enhance human and environmental health.**



**Objectives**

- 1.1 Provide public facilities and services to alleviate potential service deficiencies and meet-level-of service standards for all, including individuals, businesses, and property owners.
- 1.2 In areas of the city that are not expected to grow significantly, but have existing deficiencies, invest to reduce disparity and improve livability.
- 1.3 In areas of the city that lack basic public services and have significant growth potential, invest to enhance neighborhoods, maintain affordability, and accommodate growth.
- 1.4 In areas of the city that are not expected to grow significantly and already have access to complete public services, invest primarily to maintain existing facilities and services and retain livability.
- 1.5 Invest in public facility systems to maintain and improve system capacity, resolve service deficiencies, and properly manage assets.
- 1.6 Establish, improve, and maintain public facilities and services at levels appropriate to support land-use patterns, population densities, and anticipated growth.

**Goal 2: Ensure water, wastewater, and stormwater systems are managed, conveyed, and/or treated to protect public health, safety, and the environment, and to meet the needs of the community on an equitable, efficient, and sustainable basis.**



### Objectives

- 2.1 Manage wastewater and stormwater systems in ways that meet federal and state regulations. Use watershed health as a guide, and treat the entire watershed as an interconnected hydrologic system.
- 2.2 Evaluate future needs for wastewater treatment and plan facility improvements to meet expected population demands and Iowa DNR requirements.
- 2.3 Ensure private sewage treatment systems and septic systems demonstrate that all necessary state and county permits are obtained and they function properly.
- 2.4 Prioritize sewer system extensions or repairs in areas that are already developed and where health hazards exist.
- 2.5 Prevent pollution and reduce the need for waste water treatment capacity through land use programs and public facility investments that manage pollution as close to its source as practical.
- 2.6 Implement green infrastructure, such as landscaping, rain gardens, bio-swales, trees, and natural areas to assist stormwater management. Promote investments, education, and community stewardship to reduce the impact of stormwater discharge on water and habitat quality of streams and rivers.

**Goal 3: Review and update the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) annually and produce a new plan every five years to help coordinate capital costs and financing, while working towards the long term goals of the community.**



**Objectives**

- 3.1 Maintain long-term capital improvement programs that balance acquisition and construction of new infrastructure and public facilities with maintenance and operations of existing infrastructure and facilities.
- 3.2 Implement the CIP passed in 2015 for FY 2016 to FY 2020. Encourage directors from each city department and the city administrator to thoroughly review the CIP annually.
- 3.3 Department directors effectively manage a two year CIP that includes funded and unfunded projects. This allows the City to program key investments to accomplish community goals.
- 3.4 Partner with other nearby cities to share the cost of expensive personnel. For example, if a waste-water treatment plant is required in West Branch, perhaps technical and management staff could be shared with a nearby city which currently operates a sludge and waste-water treatment facility.
- 3.5 Encourage the preservation of viable existing infrastructure and promote the economical extension of new infrastructure and services.
- 3.6 Support cost-effective management practices to deliver services and facilities to residents. Utilize a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure an equitable sharing of the costs of investing in and maintaining the City's public facilities.

## Public Infrastructure.

This section provides an inventory and analysis of West Branch's current infrastructure systems, including water distribution and storage, sanitary sewer collection and treatment, and storm water conveyance. Consideration for the growth of these systems is also covered.

## Water System.

The City of West Branch provides water to businesses and residents by tapping four wells - three in the Silurian aquifer and one in the Jordan aquifer. The three wells in the Silurian aquifer have capacity of 425 gallons per minute (GPM), 340 GPM, and 45 GPM. The well in the Jordan aquifer has a capacity of 700 GPM. Therefore, the total pumping capacity with all wells in operation is 1,510 GPM.

West Branch's treatment facility plant has two 8-foot-diameter vertical pressure filters rated at 100 GPM each and one 3-cell horizontal pressure filter rated at 300 GPM. The treatment facility uses pressure filtration to remove iron.

The City has two water towers. The first was built in 1970 and has a capacity of 250,000 gallons, the second water tower was built in 2006 and has a capacity of 300,000 gallons.

In 2019, the City had two aeration/detention tanks with a capacity of 470 and 1,040 GPM. The water system currently has 3 high service pumps. Only 2 of the 3 pumps run at a time while the other pump serves as a back-up.

Picture 8.4. West Branch Water Tower on Orange Street.



Source: <http://www.dalejtravis.com>. Accessed Nov., 2018.

## Sanitary Sewer System.

Like many other small communities in Iowa, West Branch operates an aerated lagoon to treat wastewater prior to discharge into a nearby stream. The West Branch sanitary sewer system is made up of a collection system, a sewage lift station located in the southeast part of the City, and an aerated lagoon. The collection system consists of sanitary sewer pipe, manholes and sewer mains. Currently the system treats between 6,000,000 gallons and 14,000,000 gallons of water per month in the lagoons. The City has been proactive in evaluating the future needs of its water and sanitary sewer systems.

While the current system is operating as intended, there are new state and federal standards that require the City to extend operations beyond current technological limits.<sup>2</sup> In August, 2017, the Iowa DNR gave West Branch a 52 month notice to design, finance, and construct a wastewater treatment facility that will address high amounts of ammonia, nitrogen, and e. coli in the city's wastewater discharge.<sup>3</sup> Initial project costs were estimated at roughly \$5 million.<sup>4</sup>

In fall of 2017, the City established a Wastewater Task Group to evaluate available options to resolve the issue presented by the Iowa DNR. The purpose of the taskforce is to review the current state of operations, research new processes and/or infrastructure to meet state water quality standards, and provide a recommendation to City Council.<sup>5</sup>

Picture 8.5. Wastewater Treatment Lagoons Aerial.



Source: Google Maps. Accessed Nov., 2018.

Picture 8.6. Wastewater Treatment Lagoons Sideview.



Source: 2017 State of the City Address. Accessed Nov., 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Redmond Jones II and Mayor Roger Laughlin, "West Branch: State of the City" (Event at Community State Bank: City of West Branch, November 8, 2017), Accessed November 10, 2018. <https://westbranchiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/State-of-the-City-2017.pptx-Autosaved.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> City Administrator, "City Administrator's Report 8/21/2017," Report to City Council (West Branch: City of West Branch, August 21, 2017), Accessed November 10, 2018. <https://westbranchiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/City-Council-Update-08212017-1.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> City Administrator, "City Administrator's Report 10/16/2017," Report to City Council (West Branch: City of West Branch, October 16, 2017), Accessed November 10, 2018. <https://westbranchiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/City-Administrators-Report-10162017.pdf>.

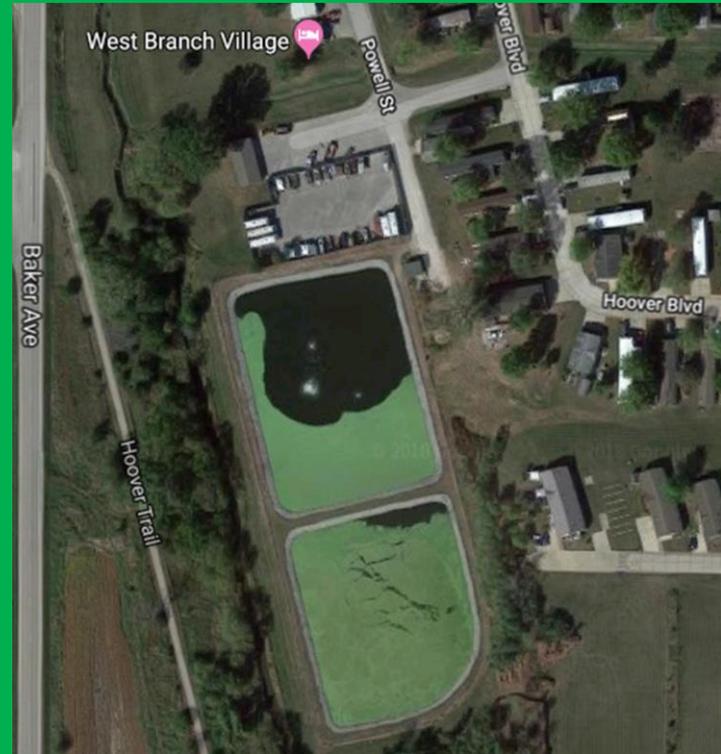
The Task Group will strive to identify alternative solutions and financing strategies, participate in pilot case studies, and create Iowa DNR compliance strategies. Processes and facilities which emphasize reuse, ecological benefits, and revenue generation are preferred.<sup>6</sup> The Task Group expects there will be cost savings from an alternative wastewater treatment process, such as a Revolving Algal Biofilm treatment system available through Gross-Wen Technologies<sup>7</sup>, in comparison to another alternative, an Aero-mod Wastewater Treatment Plant. It is expected the facility planning process will verify the assumption that an alternative lagoon process is more cost-effective. The deadline to satisfy the Iowa DNR permit requirement is 12/31/2021.

In addition, city consultant V&K Engineering is preparing a Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan. This plan will determine which process is financially viable and effective in meeting state requirements.<sup>8</sup> V&K Engineering has indicated the current lagoon system is operating at or over capacity. As such, any alternative wastewater process would require a projected \$1 million cost to add an additional lagoon.<sup>9</sup>

The West Branch Village Mobile Home Community has its own wastewater treatment facility. The requirement for the City to expand its wastewater treatment may provide an opportunity to merge this treatment lagoon with the City facility. Currently, the Village is one of the largest water customers in West Branch.

**Recommendation: Evaluate creative funding and practical system solutions to address the regulations imposed by the Iowa DNR to provide increased health, safety, and welfare for residents today and future generations.**

Picture 8.7. West Branch Village Wastewater Treatment Lagoon



Source: Google Maps. Accessed Nov., 2018.

<sup>6</sup> City Administrator, "City Administrator's Report 7/9/2018," Report to City Council (West Branch: City of West Branch, July 9, 2018), Accessed November 10, 2018. <https://westbranchiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/City-Administrators-Report-7092018.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> City Administrator, "City Administrator's Report 7/23/2018," Report to City Council (West Branch: City of West Branch, July 23, 2018), Accessed November 10, 2018. <https://westbranchiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/City-Administrators-Report-7232018.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> City Administrator.

<sup>9</sup> City Administrator, "City Administrator's Report 7/9/2018."

Picture 8.8. Rain Garden Example.



Source: [www.epa.gov/soakuptherain](http://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain). Accessed Nov., 2018.

Picture 8.9. Bio Swale Example.



Source: [www.iowastormwater.org](http://www.iowastormwater.org). Accessed Dec., 2018.

## Storm Water.

Storm water is water (which comes in the form of rain, melted snow, or melted ice) collected as it “runs off” impervious surfaces, including buildings, roads, parking lots, and fields. In the undeveloped portions of the City of West Branch, storm water naturally flows across the surface and is either absorbed by the ground or runs into creeks and streams. In the developed areas of the City, storm water is channeled across roofs, gutters, parking lots and streets and into pipes which discharge into local streams and creeks.

Storm water management revolves around three main issues: drainage, water quality, and flooding. Public input during the 2013 Comprehensive Plan recognized sustainability and/or being a “green” community as an important value to many residents of West Branch. One way for the City to become more sustainable is to encourage “green” infrastructure in new and existing developments.

One of the most practical solutions to stop storm water pollutants being carried into the streams is to manage the run off as close to the source as possible. There are several methods which percolate storm water back into the soil, such as rain gardens, bio swales, planter boxes, permeable pavements, and green roofs. These methods provide practical solutions while also providing attractive vegetation and landscaping.

The City implemented a storm water utility fee beginning July 1, 2014. The City uses the fee to administer the construction and operation of the utility system, including capital improvements designated in the comprehensive drainage plan.

**Recommendation: Pursue educational opportunities, grants, and partnerships to encourage residents and businesses to adopt green infrastructure that protects the watershed by limiting stormwater pollution runoff.**

### Private Utility Providers.

The services available in West Branch in 2019 for natural gas, electricity, phone, internet, and cable television are summarized below.

Service	Service Provider
Electricity	Alliant Energy Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative Moxie Solar Eagle Point Solar
Natural Gas	Alliant Energy
Phone, Cable, Internet	Liberty Communications Mediacom Communications

### Electricity and Natural Gas.

Alliant Energy Cooperation is an energy holding company providing electric and natural gas services to communities throughout Iowa and Wisconsin. They serve 900,000 electric customers, 410,000 natural gas customers, and have approximately 4,000 employees.<sup>10</sup> Alliant is the main service provider in West Branch.

Two other suppliers serve West Branch customers. Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative organized on July 8, 1938 as a private, non-profit electric utility that is owned by the members it serves. It was established to provide electric service at the lowest price possible. It serves more than 28,000 members in portion of six counties in eastern Iowa.<sup>11</sup> Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative is an electric utility headquartered in Marion, Iowa and owned by the members it serves. It was established more than 80 years ago to provide electric services at cost. It serves more than 14,000 members in nine counties in eastern Iowa.<sup>12</sup>

### Solar.

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) worked with Johnson County and six partner cities to host a group solar buy in 2018. This leverages the power of volume purchasing, which significantly reduces the up-front costs of installing solar.<sup>13</sup> The group buy was open to all Johnson County and West Branch homeowners and the solar installer for this program was Moxie Solar. A total of seven arrays were installed in West Branch through the program, including six residential and one commercial.<sup>14</sup> Moxie was founded in 2008 to bring new energy options to Iowa and has completed over 500 projects. Their mission is to provide the financial and environmental benefits of solar power to farms, homes, and businesses.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Alliant Energy, "2017 Annual Report," Annual Report, 2017, Accessed November 2, 2018. <https://www.alliantenergy.com/AboutAlliantEnergy/AnnualReport>.

<sup>11</sup> Linn County REC, "Cooperative Information: About Us," Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, 2018, Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://www.linncountyrec.com/your-cooperative/cooperative-information/>.

<sup>12</sup> Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, "Cooperative Profile," Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, July 10, 2013, Accessed October 5, 2018. <http://www.mvec.com/home/cooperative-profile>.

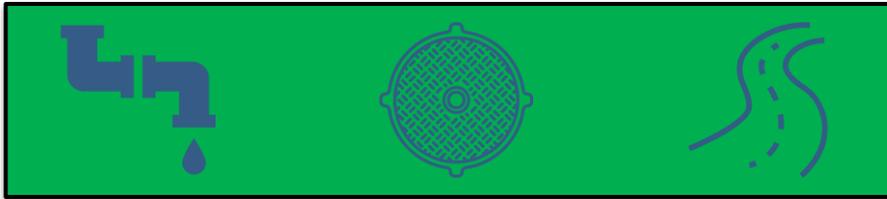
<sup>13</sup> Grow Solar, "Solarize Johnson County," Grow Solar: A Midwest Partnership to Move Markets, 2018, Accessed November 10, 2018. <https://www.growsolar.org/solarize-johnson-county/about/>.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Murphy, Midwest Renewable Energy Association, Phone Call, January 4, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Moxie Solar, "Moxie Solar: The Leading Solar Provider in the Midwest," Moxie Solar, 2018, Accessed November 3, 2018. <https://moxiesolar.com/about/>.

### Phone, Internet, Cable.

Two firms supply phone, internet, and cable services to West Branch residents: Liberty Communications and Mediacom. Liberty provides cable, telephone, and internet service to West Branch and West Liberty. Liberty Communications began as the West Liberty Telephone Company in 1899. In January of 1997 the name was changed to Liberty Communications.<sup>16</sup> Mediacom Communications is the nation's fifth largest cable television company. Mediacom's focus is providing cable, internet and phone service to America's smaller cities and towns. They serve customers in 22 states and have a workforce over 4,600.<sup>17</sup>



### Capital Improvement Plan.

The city's first Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) covering FY 2016 to FY 2020 was adopted in February, 2015, approximately two years after recommendations in the most recent Comprehensive Plan (2013). The two basic components of a CIP are to identify projects and the estimated costs of each, then develop method(s) to pay for each project. A CIP links together the City's comprehensive plan and its annual budget.

The City has completed numerous capital improvement projects in recent years. For example, all four of the capital improvement projects for FY 2015-2016, which were street and intersection improvements, are completed. In addition, the City has completed two of the five phases of repairs to the sanitary sewer system. The third phase was in progress as of 2019.

Several projects are either in progress or slated for the near future. The park at Pederson Valley (now Cubby Park) is currently under construction and expected to open by summer of 2019. The College Street bridge replacement is expected to begin in early 2019.

There are some projects which have fallen in priority due to lack of funding. For example, extensive renovations to Town Hall, estimated at \$400,000 for FY 2018-2019, have been deemphasized in favor of basic upkeep and maintenance. In addition, the plans for Cubby Park do not yet call for a recreation center and new library.

### Library Strategic Plan.

Separate from the CIP, the Library has engaged the community and identified the goals and objectives for the Library's future growth. These are contained in the 2018 Public Library Strategic Plan, which built upon the 2016 Long Range Plan.

**Recommendation: The Capital Improvement Plan should be thoroughly reviewed and updated on an annual basis by City administration and department directors. The ideal time to update the CIP is in October or November of each year prior to the preparation of the next city budget. Basic upkeep and maintenance projects should be balanced with long-term projects and goals.**

<sup>16</sup> Liberty Communications, "Communities Served," Liberty Communications, 2018, Accessed November 10, 2018. See: <http://www.libertycommunications.com/index.php/history>.

<sup>17</sup> Mediacom Communications Corporation, "Mediacom Communications Corporation," Mediacom, 2018, Accessed November 10, 2018. See: <https://mediacomcable.com/about/rocco-commisso>.

### Infiltration & Inflow (I&I).

Reducing I & I, or storm water entering the wastewater system, saves sewer rate payers in two ways. First, by reducing the amount of storm water that enters the wastewater system, the amount of wastewater which needs to be pumped from the lift station to the lagoons is lessened. This results in large energy costs savings associated with operating the pump. Second, documenting reduced wastewater flows to the Iowa DNR regulators allows cost savings on future treatment solutions. The design of future treatment systems can be created for lower capacities, which saves design, construction, operating, and maintenance costs.

I&I work continues in West Branch. In fiscal year 2018, approximately 6,000 feet of sewer lines were lined. This is the second phase of five phases.

### City Facilities.

The City of West Branch operates a wide variety of facilities to carry out services for the residents. West Branch manages and maintains the following buildings and facilities:

- Fire Station (105 S. Second Street)
- Public Works (338 Cookson Drive)
- Town Hall Municipal Building (113 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street)
- City Offices (110 N. Poplar Street)
- Cemetery Building (N. Maple Street)
- Public Library (300 N. Downey Street)
- Several parks and recreation facilities (see Chapter 11)

Picture 8.10. West Branch Public Works Department.



Source: [www.westbranchiowa.org](http://www.westbranchiowa.org). Accessed Nov., 2018.

Picture 8.11. West Branch City Hall.



Source: [www.westbranchiowa.org](http://www.westbranchiowa.org). Accessed Nov., 2018.

## City Finances.

Financial resources will be needed to continue existing programs and services as well implement many of the strategies outlined in the Capital Improvement Plan. Within the City of West Branch's Fiscal Year 2018-2019 budget, the major budget categories and amounts for expenses and revenues are listed below:

### Expenditures:

- Public Safety = \$761,642
- Public Works = \$396,053
- Culture and Recreation = \$626,113
- Community and Economic Development = \$66,960
- General Government = \$186,341
- Debt Service = \$1,063,762
- Capital Projects = \$4,747,000
- Business Type Propriety = \$740,136
- Total Transfers Out = \$870,185

Total = \$9,458,192

### Revenues:

- Taxes Levied on Property = \$1,737,833
- TIF Revenues = \$406,058
- Other City Taxes = \$196,570
- Licenses and Permits = \$39,500
- Use of Money and Property = \$7,000
- Intergovernmental = \$1,384,539
- Charges for Fees and Services = \$1,092,375
- Miscellaneous = \$36,250
- Proceeds of Debt and Capital Asset Sales = \$1,035,185

Total = \$5,935,310

Total revenues and other income are \$5.9 million while total expenditures and fund transfers out are \$9.5 million. The full budget summary is in Table 8.6 below. Thus, in FY 2019, it is estimated expenses will exceed revenues by just over \$3.5 million.<sup>18</sup> This is largely due to the \$4.7 million allocated to capital projects in the FY 2019 budget. The amount allocated to capital projects in FY 2018 and FY 2017 was \$1.0 million and \$1.7 million respectively. Capital projects represented 60.5% of Total Government Activities Expenditures in FY 2019. This is an increase from 22.3% in FY 2018 and 35.4% in FY 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Iowa Department of Management, "Adoption of Budget and Certification of City Taxes" (West Branch, Iowa, March 5, 2018), November 15, 2018. [https://dom.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/08/WEST\\_BRANCH19.pdf](https://dom.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/08/WEST_BRANCH19.pdf).

### Property Tax Rates.

The total regular property tax rate for the City of West Branch for the FY 2018-2019 budget was \$13.09246 per \$1,000 in value.<sup>19</sup> This is a \$0.50 increase per \$1,000 in valuation over prior year. All contributing rates are summarized in Table 8.2. This is based on property tax valuations as of January 1, 2017.

Total property tax revenue was \$1.7 million. Total taxable valuation was just over \$130 million for regular property. The tax levy rate per \$1,000 valuation of agricultural land was 3.000375¢.

Table 8.2. - City Property Tax Levy		
Property Tax Rates for FY 2018-2019		
Levy	Property Tax Dollars	Rate per \$1,000
General - \$8.10 Limit	\$ 1,055,520	\$ 8.10000
City-Owned Civic Center	\$ 15,233	\$ 0.11690
Insurance	\$ 44,605	\$ 0.34230
Support Local Emergency Mgmt Com	\$ 8,418	\$ 0.06460
Emergency	\$ 35,183	\$ 0.26999
Employee Benefits	\$ 279,514	\$ 2.14498
Debt Service	\$ 297,688	\$ 2.05369
Total Regular Tax Rate		\$13.09246

Source: Iowa Department of Management

### Water and Sewer Fees.

The City passed an increase in City water fees to be phased in over several years from 2012 to 2016. The objective was to raise sufficient revenue for the water fund and sewer fund to be financially self-sufficient. The user is billed the same amount for sewer and water use fees. Water rates increased as displayed in Table 8.3 to the right. From 2012 to 2016, the rate increased by \$2.56 per 1,000 gallons in total.

The water and sewer fund are not entirely self sufficient. The water fund borrowed \$139,000 from the general fund for repairs in FY 2017-2018.

Table 8.3. - City Water Rates		
Rate Increases by Year		
Charge per 1,000 Gallons	Effective Date	
\$ 4.59	6/20/2006	
\$ 5.23	7/1/2012	
\$ 5.87	7/1/2013	
\$ 6.51	7/1/2014	
\$ 7.15	7/1/2015	
\$ 7.79	7/1/2016	

Source: City of West Branch

<sup>19</sup> Iowa Department of Management, "City of West Branch Certification of Property Tax Rates for FY 2018/2019 Budgets" (Department of Management, June 11, 2018), Accessed November 10, 2018. [https://dom.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/07/citycertifications\\_fy2018-2019.pdf](https://dom.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/07/citycertifications_fy2018-2019.pdf).

### Storm Water Fees.

The City implemented a storm water utility fee beginning July 1, 2014 at the rate of \$2.00 per month per equivalent residential unit (ERU). The rate increased to \$3.00 per ERU by 2018. In FY 2017 total revenue from the storm water utility was \$49,800 while total expenditure was \$65,823. The revenue has been used for storm-water-related projects, such as for storm-water-pipe replacement on Main Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Street and analysis of streams south of town with the USGS. In the future, this funding may be allocated to widening and maintaining stream banks which will allow storm water to discharge more quickly and thereby alleviate flooding in town, such as at the fire department building.

Annual Revenue and Expenditure		
Fiscal Year	Expenditure	Revenue
2016-2017	\$ 65,823	\$ 49,800
2015-2016	\$ 74,292	\$ 45,605
2014-2015	\$ 19,666	\$ 35,427

Source: City of West Branch

### Peer Cities.

It is useful to compare West Branch property tax levies and city utility rates with peer cities to identify any key differences. In addition, these cities may be useful resources for city administration to share ideas and perhaps resources. During this analysis, it was identified that the City of Roland is also exploring options to expand their wastewater treatment facility due to DNR compliance requirements. As demonstrated in Table 8.5. below, West Branch continues to have one of the lowest property tax levies among its peer cities.

Charges for Water, Sewer, Stormwater Utility, Property Taxes, Garbage, and Recycling									
	Water Greater of Charge per 1,000 Gallons or Minimum Charge	Sewer Greater of Charge per 1,000 Gallons or Minimum Charge	Stormwater Utility Charge	City Property Tax Levy	School Property Tax Levy	Consolidated Property Tax Levy	Garbage	Recycling	
Durant	\$ 18.54	\$ 45.09	NA	\$14.77977	\$10.65976	\$ 32.87573	\$19.00 Large \$17.00 Small	Free	
Earlham	\$ 24.21	\$ 19.09	\$ 3.00	\$12.99288	\$16.74933	\$ 39.70000	\$ 16.83	Free	
Mitchellville	\$ 19.15	\$ 10.57	NA	\$13.83465	\$19.48372	\$ 41.80005	\$ 10.10	\$ 3.00	
Roland	\$ 13.70	\$ 19.78	NA	\$11.01829	\$14.27149	\$ 32.08326	\$ 18.00	NA	
Tiffin	\$ 12.50	\$ 24.25	\$3 Residents \$5 Businesses	\$11.80205	\$16.95949	\$ 36.61639	\$13.50 Large \$11.50 Small	\$ 5.50	
Tipton	\$ 18.16	\$ 18.16	\$ 5.00	\$13.71054	\$12.12238	\$ 32.31184	\$22.25 Large \$18.25 Small	Free	
Wilton	\$ 15.51	\$ 22.57	NA	\$14.24170	\$14.81696	\$ 37.73289	\$ 13.00	Free	
West Branch	\$ 13.25	\$ 13.25	\$ 3.00	\$13.09246	\$13.75022	\$ 32.10178	Sticker System*	\$ 4.75	

Note: Water, Sewer, Stormwater, Garbage, and Recycling charges are all collected monthly. Property tax levies are all annual based on January 1st property valuation.  
\*Residents purchase stickers for weekly garbage collection. Each sticker cost \$1.25. A 20 gallon bag requires one sticker while a 35 gallon can requires two stickers.

**FY 2018-2019 Budget.**

Table 8.6. City Budget.

West Branch Budget Summary for FY Beginning July 1, 2018 and Ending June 30, 2019.

(A)	(B)	GENERAL (C)	SPECIAL REVENUES (D)	TIF SPECIAL REVENUES (E)	DEBT SERVICE (F)	CAPITAL PROJECTS (G)	PERMANENT (H)	PROPRIETARY (I)	BUDGET 2019 (J)	RE-ESTIMATED 2018 (K)	ACTUAL 2017 (L)
<b>Revenues &amp; Other Financing Sources</b>											
Taxes Levied on Property	1	1,125,448	314,697		297,688	0			1,737,833	1,635,553	1,613,353
Less: Uncollected Property Taxes-Levy Year	2	0	0		0	0			0	0	0
Net Current Property Taxes	3	1,125,448	314,697		297,688	0			1,737,833	1,635,553	1,613,353
Delinquent Property Taxes	4	0	0		0	0			0	0	0
TIF Revenues	5			406,058					406,058	250,000	152,449
Other City Taxes	6	10,914	183,057		2,599	0			196,570	196,308	271,648
Licenses & Permits	7	39,500	0		0	0		0	39,500	41,897	25,159
Use of Money and Property	8	7,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,000	4,150	19,289
Intergovernmental	9	269,865	296,793	0	14,281	803,600		0	1,384,539	645,407	597,068
Charges for Fees & Service	10	97,375	0		0	0		995,000	1,092,375	1,082,074	1,041,547
Special Assessments	11	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	12	34,250	0		0	0	2,000	0	36,250	40,910	148,647
Sub-Total Revenues	13	1,584,352	794,547	406,058	314,568	803,600	2,000	995,000	4,900,125	3,896,299	3,869,160
<b>Other Financing Sources:</b>											
Total Transfers In	14	74,606	32,104	0	763,475	0	0	0	870,185	828,159	889,326
Proceeds of Debt	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,200,000	1,886,751
Proceeds of Capital Asset Sales	16	165,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	165,000	0	7,576
Total Revenues and Other Sources	17	1,823,958	826,651	406,058	1,078,043	803,600	2,000	995,000	5,935,310	8,924,458	6,652,813
<b>Expenditures &amp; Other Financing Uses</b>											
Public Safety	18	658,052	103,590	0			0		761,642	1,334,740	592,082
Public Works	19	127,575	268,478	0			0		396,053	475,000	467,682
Health and Social Services	20	0	0	0			0		0	0	0
Culture and Recreation	21	536,109	90,004	0			0		626,113	644,765	610,792
Community and Economic Development	22	66,960	0	0			0		66,960	87,770	655,123
General Government	23	168,151	18,190	0			0		186,341	193,317	273,886
Debt Service	24	0	0	0	1,063,762		0		1,063,762	741,571	532,538
Capital Projects	25	0	0	0		4,747,000	0		4,747,000	1,000,000	1,716,035
Total Government Activities Expenditures	26	1,556,847	480,262	0	1,063,762	4,747,000	0		7,847,871	4,477,163	4,848,138
Business Type Proprietary: Enterprise & ISF	27							740,136	740,136	1,244,435	669,566
Total Gov & Bus Type Expenditures	28	1,556,847	480,262	0	1,063,762	4,747,000	0	740,136	8,588,007	5,721,598	5,517,704
Total Transfers Out	29	32,104	251,415	423,263	0	0	0	163,403	870,185	828,159	889,326
Total ALL Expenditures/Fund Transfers Out	30	1,588,951	731,677	423,263	1,063,762	4,747,000	0	903,539	9,458,192	6,549,757	6,407,030
Excess Revenues & Other Sources Over (Under) Expenditures/Transfers Out	31 32	235,007	94,974	-17,205	14,281	-3,943,400	2,000	91,461	-3,522,882	2,374,701	245,783
Beginning Fund Balance July 1	33	539,869	171,556	104,481	897	3,988,628	164,919	2,514	4,972,864	2,598,163	2,352,380
Ending Fund Balance June 30	34	774,876	266,530	87,276	15,178	45,228	166,919	93,975	1,449,982	4,972,864	2,598,163

Source: Iowa Department of Management<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Iowa Department of Management, "Adoption of Budget and Certification of City Taxes."

### Debt Capacity.

The General Obligation (GO) debt limit ranged from \$10.1 million in FY 2017-2018 to an anticipated almost \$12 million for FY 2022-2023. The remaining GO debt capacity is projected to increase from \$1.7 million in FY 2017-2018 to \$7.9 million in FY 2022-2023. The projections are displayed in Table 8.7 below.

Table 8.7. City Debt Capacity.						
West Branch General Obligation Debt Capacity.						
	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
<b>Property Valuation at 100% (Actual/Projected)</b>	\$202,291,560	\$216,856,596	\$222,287,236	\$227,844,417	\$233,540,527	\$239,379,040
<b>Statutory GO Debt Limit at 5% of 100% Value</b>	\$10,114,578	\$10,843,280	\$11,114,362	\$11,392,221	\$11,677,026	\$11,968,952
<b>Remaining GO Debt Capacity (Not Obligated)</b>	\$1,747,905	\$3,335,864	\$4,442,362	\$5,564,221	\$6,718,026	\$7,893,952
Source: City Council Agenda Packet November 19, 2018, Speer Financial Inc.						

**Recommendation: Provide cost-effective management practices to deliver services and facilities to residents. Utilize a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure an equitable sharing of the costs of investing in and maintaining the City’s public facilities.**

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# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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](http://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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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](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](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.<sup>3</sup>

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.

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<sup>3</sup> 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).

### 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

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<sup>4</sup> 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](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_5YR_B08301&prodType=table). These data are to be updated.

## 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%.<sup>5</sup>

**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

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

bicycle and pedestrian network working to obtain funding for trails and other facilities, and by adopting new sidewalk and Complete Streets polices. Complete Streets are designed to allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit to travel safely alongside automobiles. West Branch communities should continue to work to improve the quality of its residents by supporting programs that make walking and biking safer and more convenient. 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.

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<sup>6</sup> Current information on paratransit services and funding is to be provided.

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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> The airport is owned by Rock Island County and is operated by the Metropolitan Airport Authority. The airport also has cargo activity with Fed Ex, DHL and UPS. General aviation airports are located in Iowa City, Muscatine, and Tipton.

### Intermodal Facility

Railroads through their connections with other transportation modes are involved in many intermodal traffic movements. Rail typically provides the long-haul portion of the movement and at 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.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://flycid.com/airlines-nonstops/>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.qcairport.com/airlines-serving-mli.html>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://iaisrr.com/ship-with-iais/intermodal/>.

## 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.<sup>10</sup> Below is a map of the regional Greyhound routes from Iowa City:



<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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:



<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

## 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).<sup>13</sup> Daily service is also newly available from Chicago to Moline with fares in 2019 starting at \$42.<sup>14</sup> A regional map for Amtrak follows:



<sup>12</sup> For information see <https://us.megabus.com/route-guides/des-moines-to-iowa-city-coralville-bus>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://iowadot.gov/iowarail/iowa-Passenger-Rail/Todays-Passenger-Rail> and

<sup>14</sup> 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

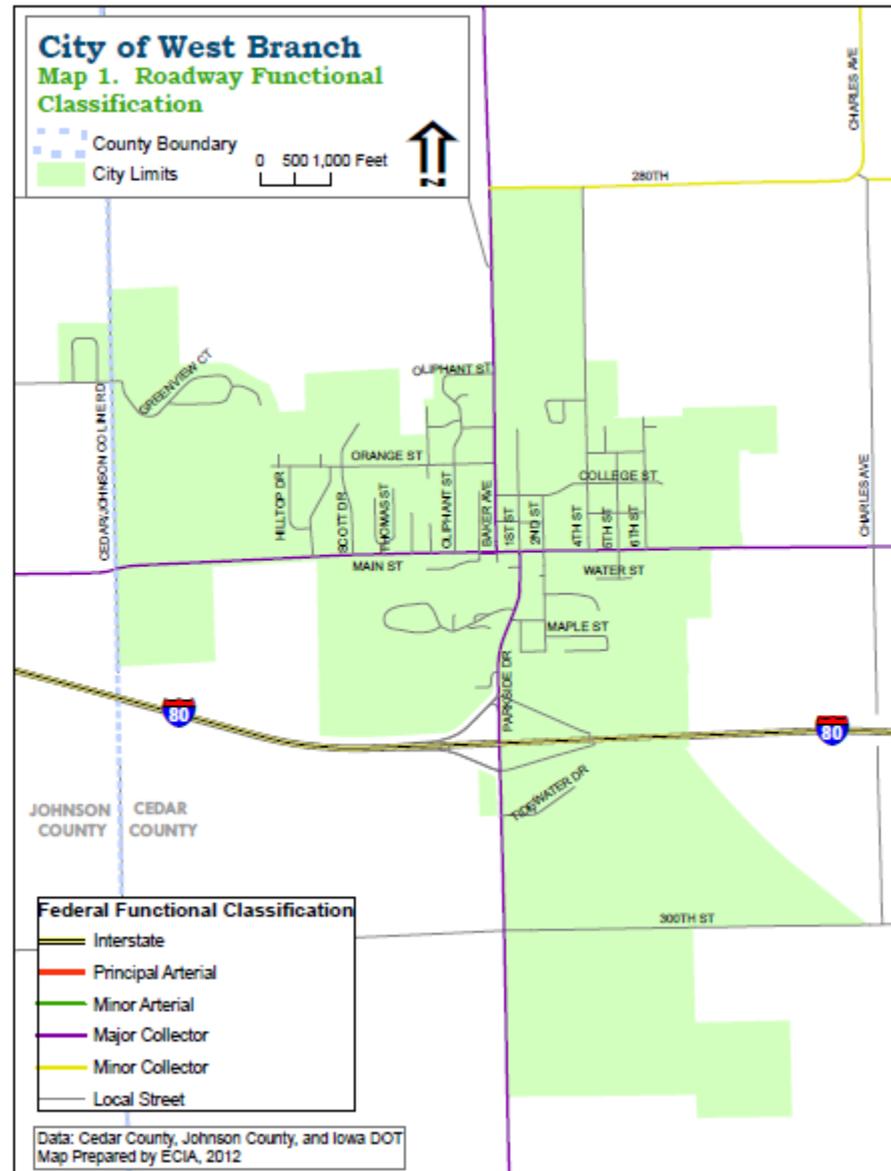
Transportation is extremely important to the citizens of West Branch. The primary transportation mode is vehicle travel on streets and roads. The public input survey found that the majority of residents supported the replacement of College Street Bridge, followed by repaving 4th Street and repaving County 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.

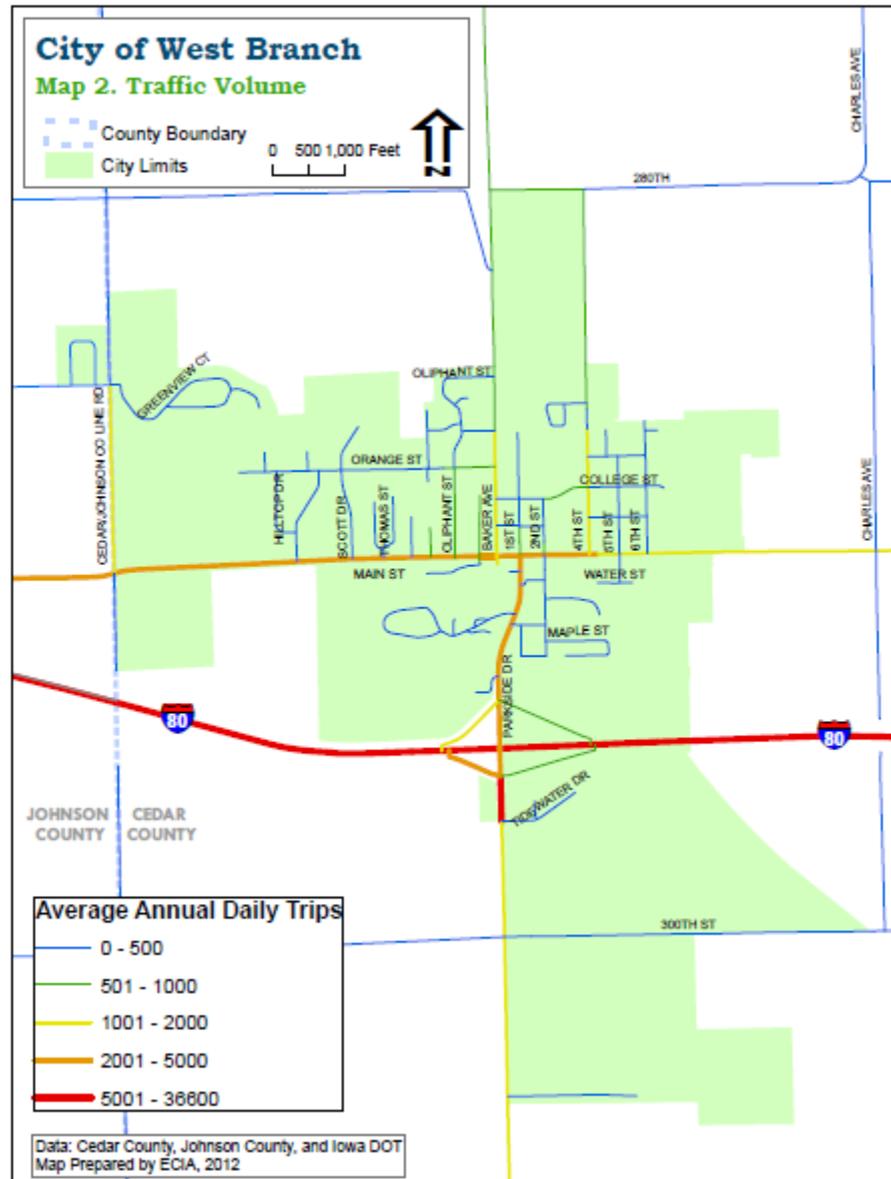
## Transportation Technology and Electric Vehicles

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.

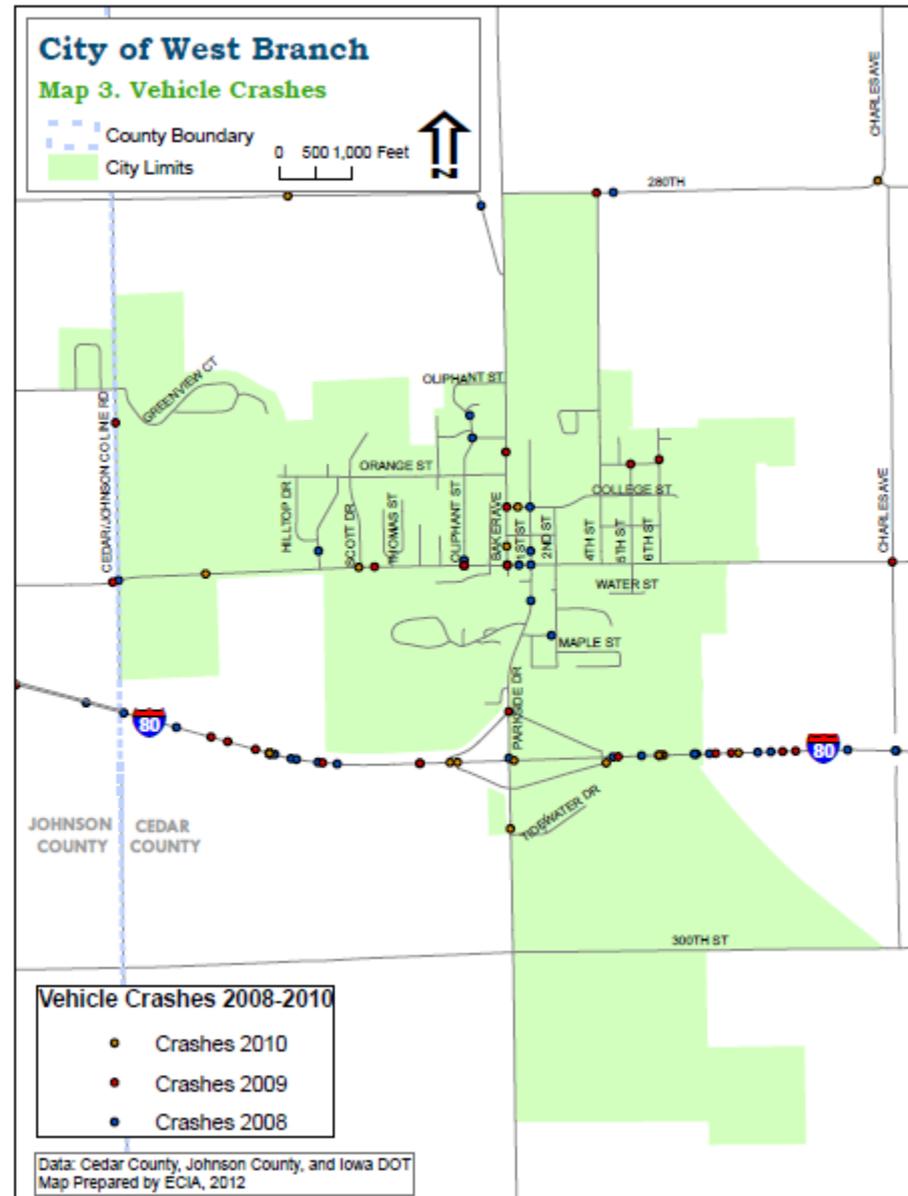
Map 9.1. West Branch Roads by Functional Classification



Map 9.2. AADT for West Branch Area Rods.



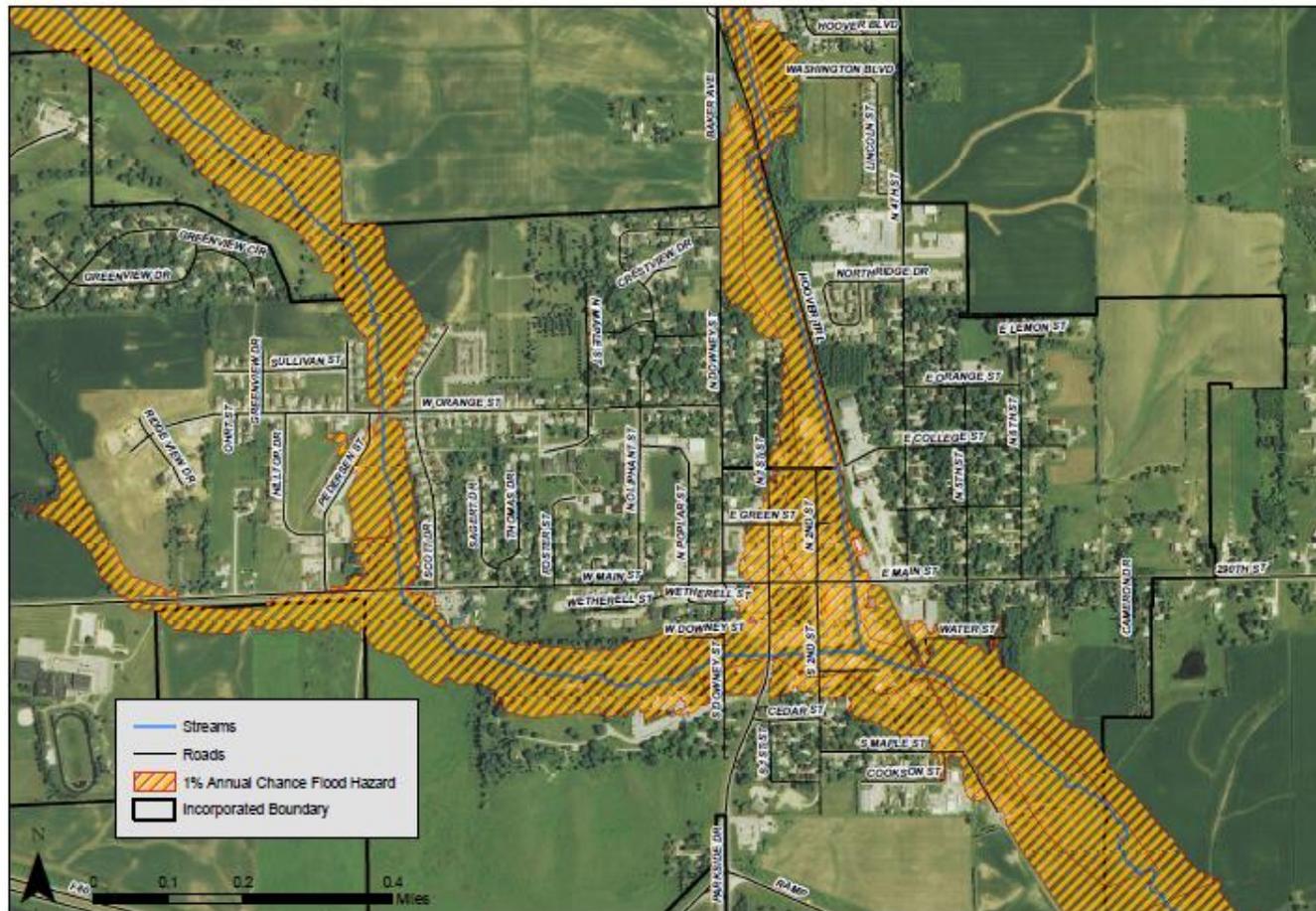
Map 9.3. IA DOT Crash Data.



# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 10: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### FEMA's National Flood Hazard Map West Branch, IA



Source: Iowa GIS Data Repository, Iowa Counties Information Technology. Compiled by Tara Cullison, May, 2018.

## Introduction:

Chapter 10 of West Branch's 2013 Comprehensive Plan dealt with hazardous mitigation. This is an important city topic, but there are other concerns that an updated plan should address. The chapter is now retitled "Environmental Stewardship" and covers the additional topics of:

- The National Flood Insurance Program
- Derelict and Abandoned Buildings
- Urban Forestry
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Solid Waste and Compost
- Light Pollution
- Green Energy
- Brownfield Redevelopment and Remediation
- Topsoil

Each topic is described, and recommendations are made for action.

Picture 10.1. West Branch Hoover Nature Trail



Source: Source: Cedar County Conservation Board  
<http://cedarccb.org/hoovertail1.html>. Accessed June, 2018.

## Goal 1: Increase Community Based Environmental Outreach

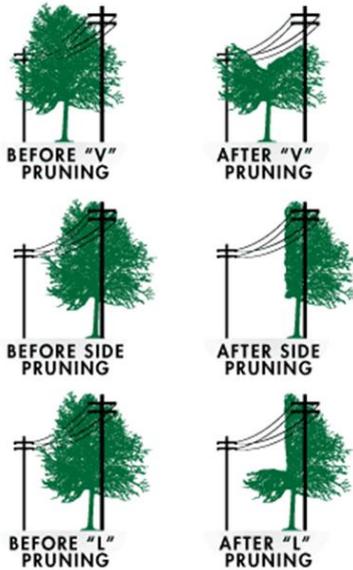


1. Publicize the federal flood insurance program so that residents become more aware and can participate if they choose.
2. Continue to partner with organizations such as Trees Forever and Alliant Energy and look for grant opportunities such as the Alliant “Branching Out” grants to increase the number and variety of trees in West Branch. This includes seeking opportunities that would allow the community to provide trees for private homeowners as well as to plant new trees in public spaces

3. Form a tree committee comprised of 6 to 7 community members to provide direction for future tree projects within the community.
4. Seek to become designated a “Tree City U.S.A.”

5. Establish a brownfields inventory by identifying possible brownfields sites. Coordinate with the East Central Brownfield Coalition (ECBC) to produce a brownfield land bank. These recommendations are especially pertinent to redevelopment of the Croell Cement site.

## Goal 2: Improve Creative Guidelines



1. Research and adopt an ordinance to properly manage derelict buildings.
2. Adopt a tree policy meant to build a robust green infrastructure. This should encourage the community to complement and support other key goals established for a city in the Comprehensive Plan.

3. Expand and continue to diversity the City's tree-planting practice and canopy.
4. Continue to trim overhanging branches up to a height of 14 feet over every street and up to a height of 9 feet over every sidewalk in town annually.
5. Continue annual efforts to remove unhealthy trees on public ground that pose a hazard to nearby structures and passersby.
6. Continue annual efforts to monitor ash trees for signs of Emerald Ash Borer, and remove infected trees.

7. Continue to monitor developments in topsoil management. Consider adopting a best-practices ordinance.

### Goal 3: Embrace Green Technological Advances

1. Pursue the instillation of one or two EV-2 Charging Stations within the next year.
2. Track green energy programs, particularly in the Midwest, and go on record as supporting and publicizing renewable energy programs. An example of such an energy program is “Solarize Johnson County”.



3. Be attentive to the virtues of dark skies, and as opportunities present themselves take advantage of newer technologies in lighting to reduce light pollution in our city. In this effort, the City should coordinate with the West Branch School District.

4. Investigate compost and recycling service for apartments.



## National Flood Insurance Program

Nearly 650 Iowa communities currently participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). To participate in the program, a community must adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances meant to reduce damage from future flood events. In exchange, the NFIP makes federally-backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters and business owners in these communities, regardless of whether their property is in the current floodplain or not. Community participation in the NFIP is voluntary, but there are many advantages to participating.<sup>1</sup>

West Branch is participating in the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 160 "Flood Plain Regulations" of the West Branch municipal code addresses and enforces floodplain management. Specifically, Chapter 160 Section 8 addresses flood damage minimization. Per FEMA, as of 3/31/2018, there were 26 homes in West Branch which had NFIP insurance. However, the Flood Hazard Map on the initial page of this chapter suggests that rather more homes in the city might be eligible for insurance. The total annual premium paid for policies in force ("premium written in-force") was \$38,435 and the total coverage amount for policies in force ("insurance in-force") was \$3,531,100.<sup>3</sup> This is summarized in Table 10.1., following.



Picture 10.2. 2008 Flooding in Cedar Rapids, Iowa



Source: Time Magazine 2008.

<http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1815178,00.html>.

Accessed June 12, 2018.

Table 10.1. National Flood Insurance Program Statistics			
NFIP Policy Statistics as of 3/31/2018			
	Homes Insured	Total Written Premium In-Force	Total Insurance In-Force
West Branch, Iowa	26	\$38,435	\$3,531,100
State of Iowa	12,547	\$12,812,897	\$2,591,614,000
Source: Federal Emergency Management Association, 2018			

To purchase insurance, residents can contact an insurance agent or an insurer participating in the NFIP. It is not possible to buy the insurance directly from FEMA. To assist in finding an insurance agent, residents can call the NFIP referral call center at 800-427-4661. One local agent, Matt McCall State Farm (563-886-6120) in Tipton sells the NFIP policy. According to their estimate, annual premium quotes range from \$600 to \$4,000 per policy, which is determined based on location and value of the home.<sup>4</sup>

**Recommendation: The City should publicize the federal flood insurance program so that residents become more aware and can participated if they so choose.**

### Derelict and Abandoned Buildings

There is currently no West Branch ordinance that deals with derelict and abandoned buildings. It is recommended the City research and adopt a code to ensure all rehabilitations and demolitions of derelict or abandoned buildings are performed with sensitivity to the environment. As a reference, the Cedar Rapids code, Chapter 33A – “Moving or Demolition of Buildings; Use of Streets” addresses their process to deal with abandoned buildings. The code requires a permit to demolish or wreck a building. The chapter explains the application, issuance, validity, expiration and permit fees. The full code is available online and at the City of Cedar Rapids website “Building Services Codes”.<sup>5</sup>

**Recommendation: The City should research and adopt an ordinance on derelict and abandoned building.**

## Urban Forestry

A core responsibility of any city administration is to provide for and maintain the community's infrastructure, which comprises the physical assets that support the city's basic functions. Many communities have started to think of infrastructure as having two components: gray infrastructure (buildings, roads, utilities) and green infrastructure (trees, shrubs, grass). Doing so recognizes that green infrastructure works in tandem with the gray infrastructure and impacts the functioning of systems critical to the community.

Another form of environmental stewardship is to increase the number of trees throughout the city. Trees yield many benefits to a community such as providing wind breaks, reducing home cooling costs, preventing erosion, adding value to properties and providing food for wildlife. A 2017 publication on the health and energy benefits of trees in cities is available at the following website:

<https://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/pressreleases/urban-trees-can-save-tens-of-thousands-of-lives-globally.xml>. It should also be noted that trees enhance the historic nature of West Branch.

Picture 10.3. Urban Forestry Example



Source: Ten-year urban forestry action plan for the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council and the Community of Practice: 2016-2026. <https://urbanforestplan.org/the-urban-forest/>. Accessed May, 2018.

### City Forestry Data and Iowa DNR

West Branch is a community that embraces the benefits trees provide, as evidenced by planting additional trees each year. In the past four years, the city has planted over 200 trees. In 2014, approximately 140 trees were planted on the municipal cemetery grounds. In 2015, 45 trees were planted in Beranek Park. In 2016, approximately 35 trees were planted on Main Street. It is suggested that tree species diversity should be sought with these plantings. Ideally, the goal should be to achieve ISU Extension best practices for community tree cover: no more than 10% of public trees should be a single species, no more than 20% should be a single genus, and no more than 30% should be a single tree family.

In 2011, a report prepared by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) that inventoried and assessed trees in West Branch determined that the community's trees provide \$75, 851 (\$81,887 in 2017, adjusted for inflation) in total annual benefits. The specific values can be viewed in Table 10.2. below. The report also contained recommendations for a maintenance plan that included removal of problem trees, planting and replacement, trimming activities, and monitoring/addressing incidents of Emerald Ash Borer. Current practices, as reported by Public Works Director Matt Goodale, meet or exceed all annual benchmarks recommended by IDNR.



Table 10.2. Value of Ecosystem Services Provided by Trees in West Branch		
Benefits	Value in 2011	Value in 2017 adjusted for inflation
Annual Storm water Benefits	\$21,115	\$22,795
Annual Air Quality Benefits	\$2,200	\$2,375
Annual Carbon Benefits	\$24,659	\$26,621
Annual Aesthetic Benefits	\$13,302	\$14,361
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$75,851</b>	<b>\$81,887</b>
Source: Calculated by IDNR, 2011		

The Public Works Department (PWD) performs all tree maintenance and coordinates all plantings. It has been popular to do larger plantings around Earth Day in the spring in order to engage the community. Students from local schools have helped support successful plantings to date. In turn, this provides a great opportunity for relationship building between city employees and school-aged youth.

The PWD expects to continue to seek partnerships and grants to assist in acquiring additional trees. In the past, both Alliant Energy and Trees Forever have supported tree plantings throughout the community. There is potential to establish a volunteer committee in West Branch which would assist the PWD with their tree planting initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

### Economic Environmental Incentives

As an economic development incentive and a welcoming gift to new homeowners it has been suggested that the city provide and plant a tree for each new house in town, if the owners desire it. Homeowners would be asked to pay a small portion of the tree cost and commit to tree maintenance.

There is an opportunity to become officially designated as a "Tree City USA". By doing so, the community would demonstrate its leadership and commitment to the environment and its residents who benefit daily from the cleaner air, shadier streets and improved beauty that urban forests provide. There are eighty such designated communities in Iowa, including smaller cities such as Tipton.

To qualify as a Tree City USA community, a town or city must meet four standards established by The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters. These includes having a tree board, department, or committee, adopting a tree-care ordinance, establishing a community forestry department with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita, and observing Arbor Day each year. Such a tree committee could report to the City's Recreation Commission or to the PWD. As a reference, the City of Marion has established a thorough City Code regarding tree care, planting and maintenance.<sup>7</sup> If any additional staff are needed in order to fulfill these standards, there may be an opportunity to partner with nearby cities or Cedar County in order reduce costs.



Picture 10.4. Example of Neighborhood Trees



Source: Arbor Day Foundation.  
<https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/>. Accessed June, 2018.

### Environmental Incentive Recommendations

In West Branch, a tree policy meant to build a robust green infrastructure for the community can complement and support other key goals established for a city in the Comprehensive Plan. For this reason, the following policies are recommended to codify the informal policies – and, where appropriate, build upon their successes – as already practiced in West Branch presently.

#### Recommendations:

1. Continue to partner with organizations such as Trees Forever and look for grant opportunities like the Alliant “Branching Out” grants to increase the number of trees in the city. This includes seeking opportunities that would allow the community to provide trees to private homeowners as well as to plant trees in public spaces.
2. Expand tree-planting practice and continue to diversify the community tree canopy, planting fewer maples and increasing the number of other tree species.
3. Continue to trim overhanging branches up to a height of 14 feet over every street and up to a height of 9 feet over every sidewalk in town annually.
4. Continue annual efforts to remove unhealthy trees on public ground that pose a hazard to nearby structures and passersby.
5. Continue annual efforts to monitor ash trees for signs of Emerald Ash Borer, and remove infected trees.
6. Form a tree committee comprised of 6-7 community members to provide direction for future tree projects within the community.
7. Seek to become designated a “Tree City U.S.A.”
8. Integrate these measures into the West Branch Comprehensive Plan and other planning documents for the community as appropriate.



Picture 10.5. Alliant Energy Reaching Out



Source: Trees Forever. [http://www.treesforever.org/App\\_ABO](http://www.treesforever.org/App_ABO). Accessed June, 2018.

## Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

As Electric Vehicle (EV) ownership increases, there will be a growing demand for EV charging stations. Currently, Alliant Energy is investing more in regional charging stations and EV charging infrastructure throughout the region. Providing public charging stations in West Branch could be an economic development tool to attract visitors, as well as demonstrate the community's leadership in environmental stewardship.

In 2018 Alliant started to offer rebates for community charging stations. Fast, level-2 stations for use by city employees or the public are eligible for \$1,500 from Alliant for a dual-prong unit. This amount will largely cover the equipment costs for non-networked charging stations, which means the city need only cover installation costs. Alliant can supply a field engineer to help identify locations where the installation costs would be lowest due to an adequate existing power supply. Rebates are available on a first-come basis for up to two stations. Additional support for charging stations may become available for mitigation activities from the state of Iowa resulting from a settlement from Volkswagen concerning settlements under the Clean Air Act being applied in 2018-19.<sup>8</sup> (See <https://www.iowadot.gov/vwsettlement/> and <https://www.epa.gov/enforcement/volkswagen-clean-air-act-civil-settlement>). The funds are to be administered by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

A charging station may attract regional residents as well as persons traveling through along I-80. While many EVs currently have fairly limited battery ranges, the next closest charging stations are Iowa City (North Dodge St. Hy-Vee) and Davenport. The east side of Iowa City has one of the highest densities of electric vehicle ownership rates in Iowa.<sup>9</sup>

The average charge time is 1 hour 38 minutes. This provides the user of the electric charging station with time to visit the shops and restaurants in downtown West Branch while they are waiting for their vehicle to charge. As a result, foot traffic in the area surrounding the charging station would be expected to increase. An ideal location for a charging station may be in the parking lot just south of the City offices, on the northwest corner of West Main and Poplar St, because of its proximity to the retail shops and restaurants. A future potential location is within the development of the Croell cement plant area. Another possibility would be the Hoover complex. Inquiries suggest there is interest on the part of the Department of the Interior, and funds available but the process to apply for the funds may be lengthy.

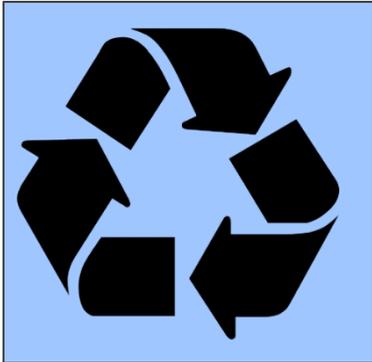
There are several options to select from with regard charging infrastructure, software and user rates. While some communities offer charging stations free to the user, others charge a small fee that is managed by a third-party contractor. Both Centerville (pop. 5,924) and Mt. Vernon (pop. 4,444) have worked with Alliant on their charging station programs, so the company has a good track record of working with smaller communities. Ames has two stations available for public use and charge \$2 per hour, or \$1 per hour for Ames residents.<sup>10</sup> According to ChargePoint data in 2015, the average charging session cost the hosting entity \$0.50.<sup>11</sup>

**Recommendation: The City should pursue the installation of one or two EV 2 Charging Stations in 2018.**

## West Branch Solid Waste and Compost

### The Current Recycling Program

Johnson County Refuse, a locally owned operation serving Johnson County and surrounding areas, provides garbage and recycling pickup every Friday morning in the City of West Branch. Garbage that cannot be recycled is placed in garbage bags or cans with one or two \$1.25 yellow stickers attached. These stickers can be purchased at the City Offices, Dewey's Jack & Jill, and Kum & Go, or year-round stickers can be purchased directly from Johnson County Refuse. Curbside recycling is mandatory in the City of West Branch. A monthly fee of \$4.75 is included in the water and sewer bill, and recycling bins are provided gratis to each residence. Service is not currently provided to apartment complexes.



Picture 10.6. Johnson County Refuse Recycling Action Picture



Source: Cedar Rapids Gazette 2015, "Rural Residents Face Limits to Recycling." <http://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/rural-residents-face-limits-to-recycling-20150214>. Accessed June, 2018.

### Curbside Compost Pick-up

In efforts to become more sustainable and reduce volume at local landfill sites, communities have started implementing curbside pick-up programs for compost. The compost can then be used by residents for agriculture, horticulture, and erosion control. Today, in cities where curbside programs do not exist, residents can voluntarily bring their food scraps and other compostable material to a facility or can compost in their yard. The closest facility to West Branch is the Iowa City Landfill and Recycling Center. Here they collect commercial organics for composting, ultimately diverting organic material from the landfill. A 2017 statewide study found that approximately 30% of landfill material was compostable.<sup>12</sup>

An investigation was done to determine whether compost pick-up curbside might be possible for West Branch through Johnson County Refuse. As of 2017, the owners stated that curbside compost pick up service in West Branch was not feasible. They explained that the compost pick-up they currently provide to North Liberty is done because of the City's proximity to their facilities. They are currently not interested in expanding curbside compost pick-up service to other cities that use their solid waste/recycling services.

The City should continue to monitor the availability of curbside recycling options in the region.

### Video 10.1. Composting Tips, Education, and Outreach



Source: City of Iowa City Organics. <https://www.icgov.org/foodwaste>. Accessed June, 2018.

## Municipal Compost Examples

Two nearby municipalities that provide curbside composting services to residents are Iowa City and North Liberty. Iowa City provides the service to residents receiving City of Iowa City garbage, recycling, and yard waste services. These residents simply use the annual yard waste stickers (\$12.50) on a 20-35 gallon, upright garbage bin and place it on the curb on their normal garbage pick-up day. A list of accepted curbside items is below.

The City of North Liberty, like West Branch, uses Johnson County Refuse services for garbage and recycling. North Liberty residents receive curbside compost pick up along with solid waste and recycling services. This program is voluntary and residents must sign up with the City to be provided the pick-up service. As of 2017, there were 170 residents participating in the program. This program is different from Iowa City's because rather than having an annual sticker on a container, the participants put their compostable material in a North Liberty yard waste bag (\$1.65 each) and place it on the curb in the compost container (obtained from the city for a \$25 deposit). The material is transported to Iowa City's Commercial Compost facility.

### Iowa City Compost Items

- All fruits and vegetable matter
- All grain products
- Non-liquid dairy products (no milk)
- Meat and seafood (raw or cooked, including bones and shells)
- Eggs and eggshells
- Pizza and used pizza boxes
- Coffee grounds/filters, tea and tea bags
- Leftovers, plate scrapings
- Spoiled foods
- Paper leftover containers from restaurants, but NOT plastic or foam containers
- Uncoated paper that has been in contact with food: napkins, paper towels, pizza boxes, uncoated paper plates, uncoated paper cups
- Small quantities of grease and fat
- Compostable service ware such as spoons, forks, plates, etc. that are certified ASTM D64001

### North Liberty Compost Items

- Fruit and vegetables
- Meat (raw or cooked, including bones) and seafood (raw or cooked, including shells)
- Grains, bread and baked goods
- Dairy, eggs, coffee grounds and filters
- Mixed plate scrapings
- Wood produce crates
- Floral waste
- Leftovers past the point of re-serving
- Spoiled foods
- Paper that has been in contact with food such as:
  - Napkins
  - Parchment bakery tray liners
  - Pizza boxes
  - Uncoated paper plates

### Compost Pilot Program

More locally, before the Iowa City curbside pickup was launched in March 2017, a pilot study of fifty participants was completed in 2014. They found that in 6 weeks, 1,000 pounds of material was composted rather than transported to the landfill under the then-available waste services.

There are only three facilities in the State of Iowa that accept food waste into their composting operations. These include Metro Waste Authority (Des Moines), Cedar Rapids/Linn County Solid Waste Agency, and Iowa City Commercial Composting facility.

Because Johnson County Refuse finds compost recycling infeasible, another option for the City of West Branch is to compost its own material. The Iowa DNR provides a helpful toolkit for communities interested in collecting and producing their own compost. If a parcel of land is available and enough residents are interested, a compost facility could easily be set up to meet the needs of the City. If material coming in is less than two tons per week, the in-house facility would meet the “Permit by Rule” exemption.<sup>13</sup> If a curbside compost program collects more than two tons per week, the municipality must obtain the appropriate permit from the Iowa DNR. The final composted material could be used for City landscaping and soil quality restoration, or perhaps for use in a community garden. West Branch could also begin partnerships with local farmers or register with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) Feed and Fertilizer Division to legally sell the compost. The curbside pickup could be contracted out, while the City owns and operates the composting services, and would allow residents a solution to sustainably rid themselves of yard waste and food scraps.

Picture 10.7. Compost System Diagram.



Source: City of Glendale, California.

<http://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/public-works/integrated-waste-management/refuse-trash-recycling/backyard-composting>. Accessed June, 2018.

### Apartment Solid Waste/Recycling Service

Iowa City passed a resolution (Nov. 2016) that requires all multi-family apartments and condominiums to provide recycling to their tenants. Landlords, apartment owners, managers and condo associations have until their next scheduled City inspection to comply. As such, the mandate will roll out through the end of 2018. The enforcement mechanism mirrors existing solid waste requirements

and compliance will be enforced in conjunction with the next rental permit renewal issuance.

**Recommendation: City of West Branch take the opportunity of observing recycling in Iowa City to further investigate compost and recycling service for apartments.**

### Light Pollution

Astronomers have preached the virtues of dark skies for years. Modern cities, they say, use far more artificial light during nighttime than necessary, much of it emanating into the sky where it does no good.

So-called light pollution erases our view of stars and, to a degree, the wonder they bring at our place in the cosmos. High-intensity lights at night can actually do harm to humans, by suppressing hormones that help people fall asleep. For these reasons cities have begun replacing sodium high-pressure street lights with dark-sky-compliant LED bulbs.

**Recommendation: West Branch be attentive to the virtues of dark skies, and as opportunities present themselves take advantage of newer technologies in lighting to reduce light pollution in our city. In this effort, the City should coordinate with the West Branch School District.**



## Green Energy

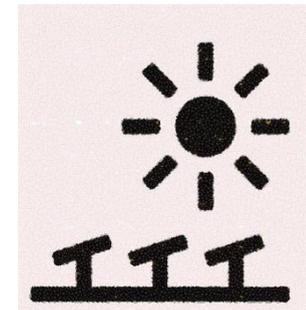
Small cities may find it difficult to envision a future in which their energy consumption is more “green” than today, but many larger U.S. cities are making strides towards reducing the environmental impacts of the energy they consume. In 2017, over 20 cities had determined they would transition fully to renewable energy by various future periods of time. One such Midwestern city is Madison, Wisconsin.<sup>14</sup>

Communities need not be large to benefit from policies aimed at energy efficiency and green energy. The town of Columbus, Wisconsin has a population just under 5,000 residents and has adopted energy policies that have resulted in cost savings for municipal buildings, added to the quality of life within the community, and served as an important economic development tool. Efforts within Columbus began with several energy-efficiency projects for city facilities, including the public works department, senior center, police station, fire department, city hall and library. This included converting to LED lighting and energy-efficient windows. A solar array was installed at the community high school and integrated into industrial arts curriculum. The community also committed to reducing its non-renewable energy usage 25% by 2025. Steve Sobiak, the former economic development director for Columbus, credits the energy efficiency programs as a major factor in the decision by Enerpac to expand its manufacturing operations in Columbus rather than relocate to another community.<sup>15</sup>

Some residents in West Branch receive energy from Linn County REC rather than from Alliant. Most of the housing in West Branch that uses Linn County REC is located near the golf course in the Bickford and Greenview Drive neighborhoods. Linn County REC follows state regulations for interconnecting with alternative renewable energy systems such as solar. Nearly 60% of Linn County REC "Generation Mix" electricity is from carbon free sources. Their generation mix is composed of coal, nuclear, hydro, landfill gas generation, wind, natural gas, and oil resources.<sup>16</sup>

A relatively new program, Solarize Johnson County, has been established to promote solar energy in the region. Offered by Johnson County, homeowners throughout West Branch may participate in the program to pool their buying power and secure significant discounts that make installing solar more affordable.<sup>17</sup> There have been two meetings in West Branch to date, which have received a fair amount of interest. In 2018, California passed a requirement for all new homes to have solar power.<sup>18</sup>

**Recommendation: The West Branch Planning and Zoning Commission should monitor green energy activities, particularly in the Midwest. West Branch may also wish to go on record as supporting and publicizing renewable energy programs engaged in by its largest energy supplier, Alliant Energy.**



## Brownfield Redevelopment Policy

Brownfields are defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” However, brownfield assessment and redevelopment is often hindered by confusion as to what is and is not a brownfield (a small, abandoned gas station may be, while an active manufacturing site often is not). The stigma associated with contaminated sites further compounds the problem, creating barriers to redevelopment.

Although generally assumed to be an urban problem, brownfield sites are pervasive across the U.S. and pose particular challenges in rural areas where many developers find it easier to build in the ample greenspaces on the outskirts of town rather than redevelop closer in. Brownfield sites in Iowa commonly take the form of former filling stations with underground storage tanks and older commercial spaces suspected of containing asbestos. Although concerns about these sites can leave them sitting empty and unused, communities may not realize they are brownfields and, as such, eligible for site assessment and cleanup funds through the EPA. In the majority of cases, environmental site assessments (ESAs) are sufficient to remove the stigma of contamination.

Picture 10.8. Croell Redi Mix Site in West Branch



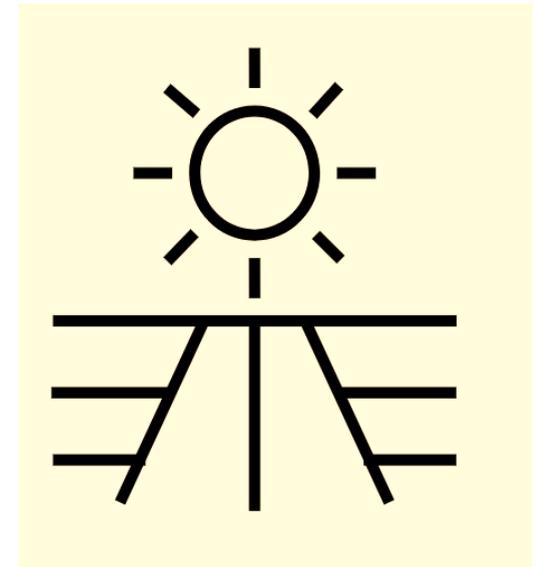
Source: Google Maps August 2013. Accessed June, 2018

## Financial Help with Brownfields

The East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA), which serves governments in a five-county area of eastern Iowa – including the government of West Branch – in 2016 received a \$600,000 grant from the EPA to support ESA activities in its service area. These funds must be used by 2019. To help disburse the grant money, ECIA has formed the East Central Brownfields Coalition (ECBC) with the intention of identifying brownfield sites and assisting with their redevelopment. More about ECBC can be found here: [ecia.org/Brownfields/coalition](http://ecia.org/Brownfields/coalition) and here: <http://ecia.org/Brownfields/>.

Participating in the ECBC can complement and support key goals outlined in the West Branch Comprehensive Plan, particularly goals related to downtown revitalization and business development in Chapter 7, Economic Development. For this reason, the following policies are recommended for West Branch in regards to brownfield sites within its jurisdiction:

- 1) Create an inventory of potential brownfield sites within West Branch in cooperation with ECIA and ECBC. A group of graduate students from the University of Iowa recently developed software available through ECIA to help communities create a brownfield inventory, assess redevelopment potential, identify priority sites, and request grant funding for ESAs.
- 2) Work with owners of unused commercial sites to determine whether they may be brownfield sites, assist with creating redevelopment plans, and apply for assistance from ECBC for those owners willing to consent to environmental site assessment.
- 3) Integrate brownfield assessment and redevelopment goals into the West Branch Comprehensive Plan, situating these policies within the context of broader economic development and environmental priorities.
- 4) Coordinate efforts with ECBC to obtain and convey brownfield sites to a brownfield land bank for redevelopment.



**Recommendation: Embrace the above recommendations on a brownfields inventory, determination of possible brownfields sites, and coordination with ECBC to produce a brownfield land bank. These recommendations are especially pertinent to redevelopment of the former Croell Cement site.**

## Topsoil Concerns in East-Central Iowa<sup>19</sup>

### Introduction

Over the past several years, Johnson and Linn County, Iowa, municipalities have held an array of debates about dirt, or more specifically, topsoil. Topsoil is defined as the upper, outermost layer of soil containing the majority of a plant's roots.<sup>20</sup>

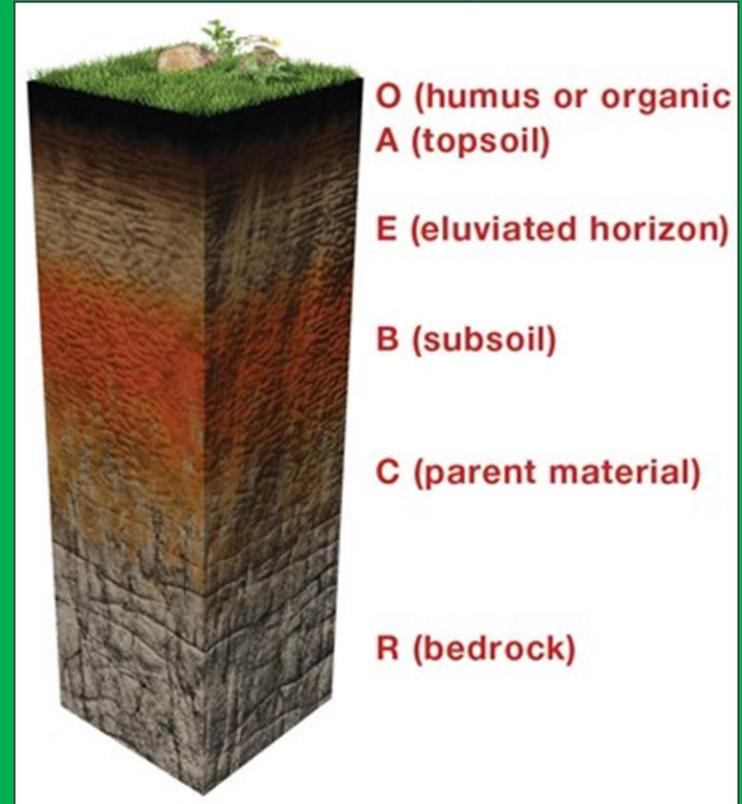
Iowa, historically a prairie state, is known and valued for its deep, nutrient-rich topsoil. When land is developed for construction, developers typically grade that land, altering the topography to make it suitable for buildings and infrastructure, and accommodating to storm water drainage requirements. During this process, topsoil is often compacted and stripped from the land. Contractors may then sell the topsoil to excavation companies or dispose of it. As buildings near completion, grass turf is generally placed directly on the top of the exposed and compacted land.

### Why is this a problem?

When there is very little to no topsoil foundation, and a compacted surface area, grass turf roots cannot adequately establish themselves in the ground. This makes it challenging for a homeowner to grow vegetation on his or her lawn. It also hinders rainwater from infiltrating the ground at maximum capacity and increases the chance that water will run off the land. Such runoff, combined with runoff from paved land, stresses the storm sewer system. In addition, runoff carrying added chemicals is introduced to Iowa waterways. The turf is more easily eroded, so homeowners may face turf replacement or soil aeration costs.

In short, a lack of post-construction topsoil regulation reduces the ability of the land to hold vegetation, may inconvenience the homeowner, contributes to major and minor flooding events, and can pollute Iowa's water supply.

Picture 10.9. The Horizons on Soil Graphic.



Source: Soil Science Society of America. <http://www.soils4kids.org/about>. Accessed June, 2018.

## State Regulation

For these reasons, in October 2012, Iowa was inspired by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to adopt a state topsoil rule. The state worked together with homebuilders to write a rule requiring developers to maintain up to four inches of topsoil on a site if the site had that much topsoil before construction started. If the site had less, only that prior amount needed to be maintained.<sup>21</sup> In 2013, developers stated the topsoil regulation was too costly and proposed a change. In 2015, the state Environmental Protection Commission voted to set aside the four-inch topsoil rule. Instead, communities may adopt their own topsoil rules, if they choose. Two nearby cities have adopted such rules.

### Coralville, Iowa's Topsoil Ordinance

Coralville's topsoil ordinance is within Chapter 159 of the Code, listed as part of the post-construction storm water ordinance that new development applications must meet. The topsoil regulation states that *site design shall address the preservation and replacement of existing topsoil in an uncompact manner*, and that *existing topsoil must be preserved and reapplied on site in a uniform and uncompact manner*.<sup>22</sup> This simple language is phrased similarly to the DNR staff's originally proposed wording for the state regulation in 2012. If little or no topsoil is present before construction, builders can use a variety of options (such as inexpensive compost mixtures, etc.) to recover the site. Coralville's topsoil requirement is only one piece of their vigorous post-construction storm water ordinance.

### North Liberty, Iowa's Topsoil Ordinance

North Liberty's topsoil regulation is codified as part of its required storm water management permit. It states that *topsoil shall be preserved at all construction sites unless land use precludes the practice*, and requires developers to conduct soil testing to determine the original existing depth of the topsoil before site disturbance. This original topsoil depth must then be replaced at the project's end.<sup>23</sup> Other relevant requirements meant to address issues with storm water runoff include: builders are not allowed to export any topsoil away from site; topsoil must be set aside and not be mixed with clay during construction; and, the builder must till the site's compacted clay at the project's end.

North Liberty chose to exclude the 4-inch minimum that was originally part of the state's 2012 topsoil regulation, in order to prevent developers importing new dirt onto sites where four inches did not exist to begin with. However, typical sites in North Liberty have been reported to have anywhere from 5 to 24 inches of topsoil. As a result, many believe that North Liberty's regulation will prove to be sufficient.<sup>24</sup>

Enforcement of the topsoil ordinance will fall to North Liberty's building department in conjunction with its contracted engineering firm. A city inspector will assess site topsoil depths at a project's end to ensure it complies with the initial permit documentation.

## Pros and Cons of Topsoil Regulation

### Costs of topsoil regulations

Developers' primary argument against topsoil regulation is that it's too challenging and costly to comply. They emphasize their concern with making homes affordable for buyers, and declare that topsoil regulation adds costs to construction. In an appeal to homebuyers, developers emphasize that instead of developers sacrificing profits for topsoil replacement, it's the homeowners who will have to pay for replacement through increased housing prices.<sup>25</sup>

However, so far in debates over regulation no one seems to be able to agree on *how much* extra cost it will require. City officials in Cedar Rapids estimate that a 4-inch topsoil requirement could add \$1,000 to \$1,500 to a new home's cost.<sup>26</sup> Developers are conflicted: some say an 8-inch restoration on a 0.4 acre home lot would cost \$3,300 at most, while others estimate \$10,600 for an 8-inch restoration, and \$7,375 for 4-inches restoration on the same 0.4 acre lot.<sup>27</sup> In reality, the cost of topsoil replacement varies according to each individual site's grading, compaction, soil conditions, and the practicality of the developer to stockpile the site's topsoil during construction.



Others interpret topsoil regulation differently. Dan Holderness, the Coralville City Engineer states: "topsoil regulation protects unsuspecting new homeowners who are unfamiliar with construction process and the importance of topsoil."<sup>28</sup> Some point out that topsoil replacement is a *need* comparable to windows and plumbing that should not be considered an option that impairs affordability. In addition, it is to be noted that developer acceptance of topsoil regulation may depend on the type of developer. Residential developers construct and then transfer ownership to homebuyers, making them less likely to accept any "added costs" of topsoil replacement. On the other hand, commercial developers often maintain ownership of the property after development and prefer to have an attractive, low-maintenance lawn, which makes them more likely to support topsoil regulation.

Some developers argue that most new homebuilding happens at the edge of the city where storm water practices such as detention basins are already required to detain runoff.<sup>29</sup> While this may be true, storm water detention basins are intended to accommodate only the run-off from impervious surfaces. They may become overwhelmed when required to handle additional run-off from grass surfaces. An overwhelmed sewer system results in additional infrastructure costs for the municipality. Developers are quick to point out the increased costs to the homeowner. However, they fail to recognize that the combined impact of topsoil runoff from multiple developments can strain a city's sewer system, resulting in increased costs for the city and its taxpayers. For example, Cedar Rapids' storm sewer system has a backlog of 90 projects totaling \$50 million.<sup>30</sup> Finally, topsoil provides environmental services, such as increased vegetation health, water quality, and infiltration, which not all storm water detention basins are built to handle.

### Willingness to Purchase Homes

In a recent debate between Cedar Rapids developers and city staff on topsoil regulation, developers argue that topsoil regulation will prevent people from wanting to live in Cedar Rapids. City officials in nearby Marion and Hiawatha are closely following the Cedar Rapids topsoil debate, from the contrary view that Cedar Rapids has the potential to make the city a regional leader in topsoil regulation.<sup>31</sup>

Good topsoil provides a substantial foundation for grasses and other vegetation. A homeowners' quality of life can increase with the ability to grow healthier, low-maintenance lawns that better support garden, trees, landscaping, and prevent localized flooding. Despite being short-lived, the state's topsoil ordinance has already served to educate prospective homebuyers on the benefits of having topsoil on their lawn. Thanks to the rule, homebuyers have begun asking about topsoil and soil quality as they decide on which homes to buy.<sup>32</sup> Publicity on this issue has brought to light stories from residents, who describe their challenges with attempting to grow vegetation on a foundation of compacted clay, gravel, and no topsoil. Although topsoil replacement may add upfront costs to the house, the cost for an owner to continually aerate the soil over their years of ownership may be much higher. It is possible that by rejecting a topsoil ordinance, Cedar Rapids could actually deter residents from purchasing homes within its boundaries.

Picture 10.10. An Example of a Well Maintained Lawn



Source: Atlanta Lawn Care Services, 2013.

The above picture helps explain why better topsoil may be more desirable to future homeowners who wish to have high quality landscaping and gardening.

## Improved Water Quality and Reduced Flooding

While a healthy supply of topsoil allows the proper establishment of vegetation, other benefits accrue community wide. Lawns will require less chemical treatment, increase water infiltration into the ground, and slow and reduce storm water runoff and erosion. This helps prevent and mitigate flash flooding events and the contamination of waterways.

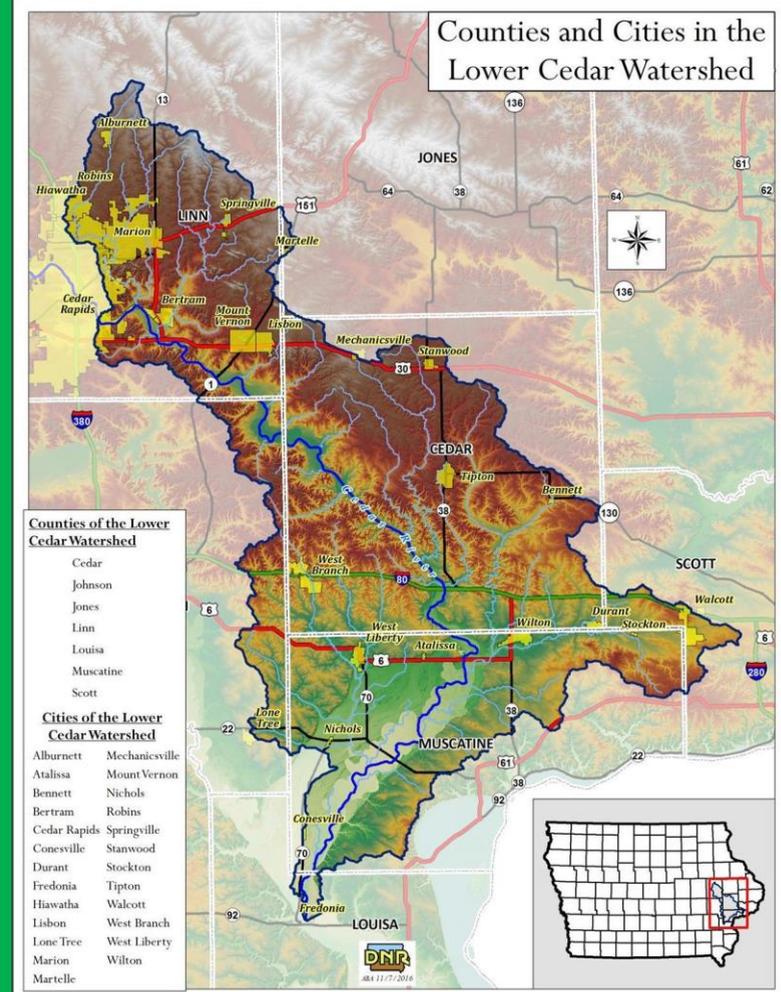
Although topsoil regulation cannot single handedly reverse Iowa's impaired water situation or prevent flooding events, it is a piece in the large picture of regional and community sustainability. While improving the water quality and runoff from a single development may not make much difference, improving the water quality and runoff from hundreds of developments does make a difference. In addition, because Iowa communities are asking farmers to improve the way they handle runoff, it's appropriate that municipal residents also contribute.<sup>33</sup>

## Strategies for Preservation and Replacement of Soil

Best management practices for topsoil involve both the preservation of the construction site's native soil, and the restoration of soil disturbed or removed by development to a state as close as possible to the original site. Although best management practices for topsoil may vary by location, the following methods have been adopted by a variety of state and local governments across the nation.

Builders can restore soil to meet topsoil replacement rules in a variety of ways. Most regulations and best practices suggest the four options described below. Strategies can be used individually or in combination at a single site.<sup>34</sup>

Picture 10.11. Counties Located in Lower Cedar River Watershed



Source: Muscatine Journal 2017, "Muscatine County approves creation of Lower Cedar Watershed Authority".

## Topsoil Composition

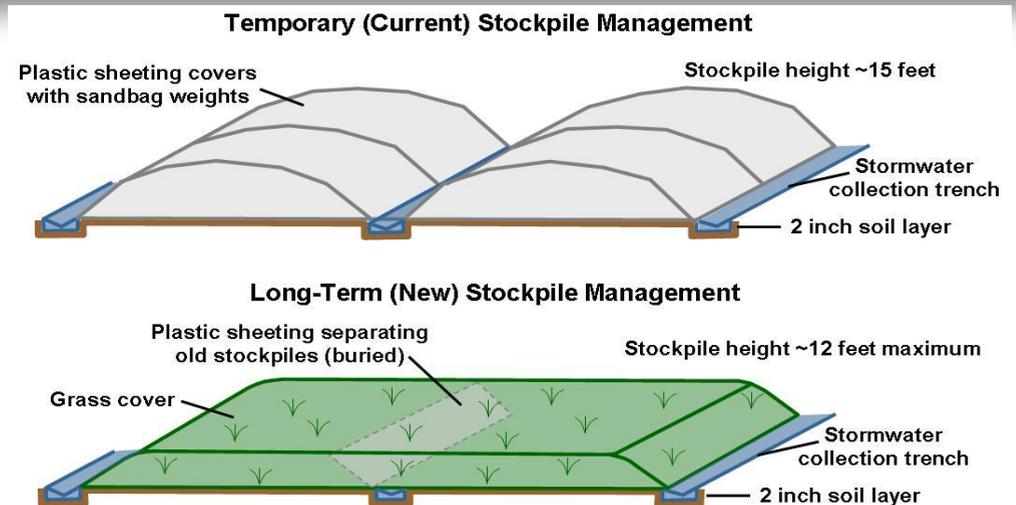
Material that should *not* be mixed in topsoil includes: wood bark, wood fiber, grass hay, or grain straw. Topsoil may be mixed with organic material such as “compost and rock mulch for added slope protection and to improve the growing capability of seeded and planted vegetation.”<sup>35</sup>

## Reusing Stockpiled Topsoil

Stockpiling topsoil can result in the disruption and loss of beneficial soil microorganisms if stockpiled over a length of time (+/-6 months). If topsoil is stockpiled prior to placement, the top one foot of the stockpile material should be mixed with the remainder of the stockpile to ensure that living organisms are distributed throughout the topsoil material at the time of final placement.<sup>36</sup>

Following construction, stockpiled topsoil should be uniformly redistributed for placement to a depth of 6 inches. Placed topsoil should be cat-tracked vertically to the slope to compact the topsoil and to create horizontal pockets (safe sites) to hold seed and water.<sup>37</sup>

1. Plan site development to leave native soil undisturbed and protect from compaction during construction. Fence off areas that do not need to be stripped, logged or graded and protect these areas from disturbance;
2. Amend the existing soil by rototilling compost into the existing soil;
3. Import topsoil mixes with 5-10% organic matter for turf areas and planting beds;
4. Stockpile, reapply, and amend original-site soil.



Source: <http://ecologywa.blogspot.com/2013/08/around-sound-work-underway-at-rayonier.html>

### Restoring Original Site Soil Moisture

Some municipal, county, and state regulations require that unless covered by an impervious surface, areas cleared and graded be restored with an original soil moisture holding capacity equivalent to that of the original undisturbed native site soil.<sup>38</sup>

### Restoring Original Site Organic Matter Content and pH

Best practices suggest that replaced topsoil have an 4-5% organic matter content (dry weight) for turf applications, 8-13% organic content for planting, and a pH that is suitable for the proposed landscape plants.<sup>39</sup>

### Replacement Thickness

Several regulating agencies, such as the state of Minnesota, the City of Seattle, and King County, Washington, require that a minimum of four to eight inches thick of soil be restored to the site. In addition, they recommend that that compacted subsoil be tilled or plowed before the placement of topsoil.<sup>40</sup> Leaving the topsoil in a roughened condition reduces erosion and creates a safe environment for seeds to establish and grow. In addition, best practices recommend that subsoils below the topsoil be scarified at least four inches.<sup>41</sup>

Picture 10.12. Soil



Source: London Lawn Turf 2018. <https://www.londonlawnturf.co.uk/turf-lawn-seeding-soil.html>. Accessed, June, 2018.

### Topsoil Conclusion

The debate on topsoil replacement regulation for construction sites need not be “another tired showdown between builders and environmental interests. It can and should be a cooperative model that seeks and values input from a broad array of citizens, not just those able to wield clout behind the scenes.”<sup>42</sup>

Topsoil replacement regulation’s potential front-end cost impact on an individual lot is important. But also important are the burdens for homeowners who must struggle with an unproductive yard. Perhaps more important are the broader costs, borne over time by all city residents, associated with soil runoff, water quality, and the wear and tear of the municipal sewer systems that must handle quantities of runoff from inefficient land.

Employing best management practices for topsoil preservation and replacement, can help moderate development’s impact on the land. A city can be both open to development and interested in maintaining its land in a way that provides social, economic, and environmental benefits through carefully construed topsoil regulation.

**Recommendation: West Branch continue to monitor developments in topsoil management, to the end of adopting a best-practices ordinance.**

Picture 10.13. Soil – Hummus



Source: Cherry Hill screened top soil 2016. <https://www.cherryhillinc.com/top-soil-rock-stone-process-aggregate>. Accessed June, 2018.

## Storm Water Management

### Best Management Practices

West Branch has developed the Storm Water Quality Best Management Practices Reimbursement program to promote residential installation of storm-water quality BMPs and improve water quality. Financial assistance is given to applicants who install BMPs on their property that improve the quality of storm-water runoff entering the City storm sewer system, creeks or streams. Typical projects include rain gardens, bio-retention, rain barrels, and pervious paving systems, among other practices.<sup>43</sup>

**Recommendation: West Branch should monitor the program's effectiveness and make adjustments as warranted.**

### Permeable Pavers

Permeable pavers transform traditional transportation surfaces to allow water to soak down through the gaps between pavers and percolate into the soil. This system recharges the ground water, filters out pollutants, and cools the water while releasing it slowly. Benefits include a reduction in the volume of runoff and amount of pollutants in storm-water treatment facilities and streams, as well as no ponding of water in periods of freeze and thaw.<sup>44</sup>

Several small towns in Iowa have successfully implemented permeable pavers. By example, West Union (population 2,395) has converted their entire business district, approximately six blocks, from store front to store front.<sup>45 46</sup> Charles City (population 7,500) has converted 26 blocks to permeable pavers, including a new planned unit development.<sup>47</sup> Hills (population 808) has installed permeable pavers for parking along their main commercial street.<sup>48</sup>

Picture 10.14. Storm Water BMPs



Source: West Branch Iowa, Storm Water Best Management Practices. [https://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/Stormwater\\_BMP\\_Program\\_Form\\_Final.pdf](https://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/Stormwater_BMP_Program_Form_Final.pdf). Accessed July, 2018.

Picture 10.15. Permeable Pavers in Downtown West Union, Iowa



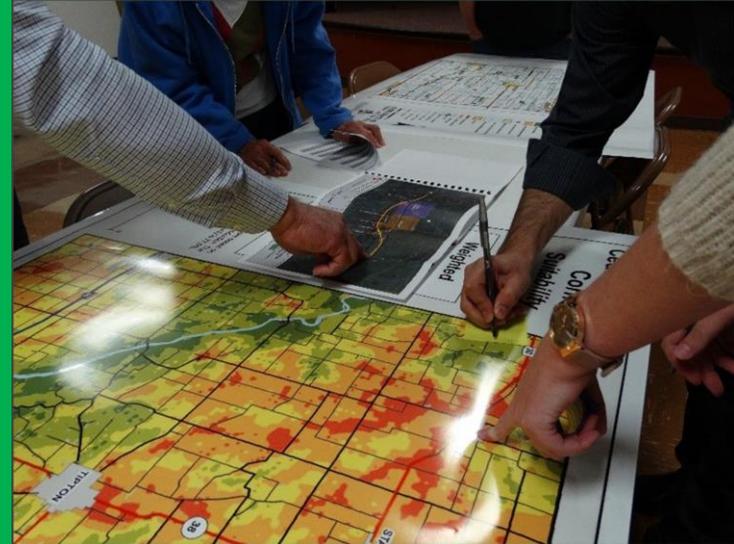
Source: Rain Scaping Iowa. [www.rainscapingiowa.org](http://www.rainscapingiowa.org) Accessed July, 2018.

## Hazard Mitigation

Hazard Mitigation is critical to the comprehensive planning process, and hazard concerns are integrated throughout this document. In order to facilitate review of the West Branch plan for compliance with Iowa’s smart planning grant parameters, this section uses the “safe growth audit questions” from the FEMA publication Hazard Mitigation: Integrating Best Practices into Planning as a framework to collect and present the hazard mitigation elements of this plan. The West Branch comprehensive plan focuses primarily on flooding issues for its hazard mitigation recommendations, as this is the hazard most likely to be affected by the decisions of the comprehensive plan (namely, land-use and environmental decisions).

The efforts to minimize the impact of hazards in West Branch should be evaluated annually and be considered an on-going effort. The questions below will help the City of West Branch address and identify ways to minimize devastation from hazards.

Picture 10.16. 2017 Cedar County Community Workshop at Mechanicsville, Iowa



Source: Adam Kofoed, Cedar County Planning Team at Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities. Fall. 2017.

## Land-Use

Does the future land-use map clearly identify natural-hazard areas?

Map 10.1 shows the planned future land-use with the current floodplain. Development should be discouraged in the floodplain.

Do the land-use policies discourage development or redevelopment within natural-hazard areas?

Yes, as described above, existing structures in the floodplain areas are noted and mitigation continues to be processed through an ongoing cost- benefit analysis.

Does the plan provide adequate space for expected future growth in areas located outside of natural-hazard areas?

Map 10.2 shows the planned future land-use for the City of West Branch. With redevelopment of existing sites and looking at infill lots as the first priority of development there is adequate land outside of natural-hazard areas for development

## Transportation

Does the transportation plan limit access to hazard areas?

Yes. The transportation plan does not encourage access to hazardous area. For example, any new roads and streets proposed for growth areas would be discouraged not to enter the floodplain, but rather would access higher ground.

Is transportation policy used to guide growth to safe locations?

Yes. Proposed new roads would connect to areas of town that have areas of non-hazard land available for development. Providing access to these areas will encourage development in safe areas. The West Branch floodplain ordinance stipulated that subdivisions should have means of access during flood.

Are movement systems designed to function under disaster conditions (e.g., evacuation)?

Yes. One of the primary features of the set of proposed transportation changes (Chapter 9) is the provision of multiple access routes to all developed areas, and accommodation of multiple modes of transportation, including auto, bike, and pedestrian. By limiting single access developments (such as dead-end cul-de-sacs), the proposed system allows for greater evacuation possibilities. Most new growth areas have multiple street outlets and all new growth areas have at least one proposed street connection to the existing street network that does not cross a floodplain. A more connected street system also makes safety services such as ambulance/fire service more efficient. Providing multiple mode choices improves safety by allowing options for evacuation and mobility during disaster conditions, particularly for those without vehicles. Proposed street extensions also reduce the load on existing streets, which increases mobility for safety purposes such as ambulance/fire service and other emergency services.

## Environmental Management

Are environmental systems that protect development from hazards identified and mapped?

Yes. Map 10.1 shows floodplains and wetlands. These areas contribute to the natural drainage system that can help prevent flooding in developed areas by moving and dispersing storm water properly.

Do environmental policies provide incentives to development that is located outside of protective ecosystems?

Yes. The future land-use map (Map 10.2) located new development in areas outside of protective ecosystems and shows areas inside those eco systems as non-developable (greenways). This map is presented as a guide for the planning and zoning commission and city council in deciding where new development should be allowed. Additionally, the City of West Branch floodplain ordinance places restriction on development in the floodplain.

## Public Safety

Are the goals and politics of the comprehensive plan related to those of the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan?

Yes. The goals and policies of the comprehensive plan are in agreement with the 2011 Cedar County, Iowa Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). The comprehensive plan primarily addresses floodplain issues, as this is the hazard most likely to be affected by the decisions of the comprehensive plan (namely, land-use and environmental decisions). The land-use plan and storm-water plans in this document correlate directly to several mitigation actions identified in the Cedar County HMP that are fully outlined on the following page. Cedar County in general, has had significant issues with flooding in the past decade and many of the County's mitigation goals are related to flooding, which in turn become crucial to this comprehensive plan in terms of zoning, construction, roads and watershed preservation and restoration. Other factors that correlate from the HMP to the comprehensive plan are in terms of necessary safety systems that relate to mitigation, such as fire and safety personnel, systems and equipment.

Is safety explicitly included in the plan's growth and development policies?

Yes. Public Safety facility development is covered in chapter 12, while safety concerns regarding natural hazards are referenced as part of the "Comprehensive Planning Principles" and "preservation of Natural Areas" in chapter 5.

Does the monitoring and implementation section of the plan cover safe-growth objectives?

Yes. Chapter 14 outlines a plan and broad timeline for implementation of the safe-growth objectives, including: new residential developments connect well to existing neighborhoods, and guide growth to non-hazard areas of the city. Chapter 14 also provides possible funding sources to help the City of West Branch accomplish these goals.

## Other Hazards

While avoiding floodplain development is one of the biggest hazard prevention the City of West Branch can do, being aware of other hazards is important too. Even though there is little the City of West Branch can do to prevent natural disasters caused from tornadoes, windstorms, hailstorms, and thunder and lightning being aware of these hazards and have a storm preparedness plan in place can reduce the chaos if such a storm strikes the City of West Branch. The City should as be aware of manmade hazards from brownfields, and interstate highway for example. Having an understanding of these potential hazards and having a response plan in place if such a hazard occurs can limit the destruction caused by these manmade hazards. An investigation of possible brownfield sites in the City could be done so the City has a better understanding of where these potential hazards are. For a comprehensive look at all the potential hazards the City of West Branch could be exposed to please refer to the Cedar County, Iowa Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan January 2011.

### **Specific action steps for hazard mitigation from the Cedar County multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan included in the comprehensive plan:**

***Storm Water System and Drainage Improvements*** – these improvements can serve to more effectively convey runoff within cities and towns, preventing interior localized flooding. May also reduce the risk of illness/disease by eliminating standing water.

***Stream Bank Stabilization/Grade Control Structures/Channel Improvements*** – which can serve to more effectively protect structures, increase conveyance, prevent down cutting, and provide flooding benefits.

***Drainage Study/Storm Water Master Plan*** – Protective steps to identify all potential problems/issues can lead to effectively addressing improvements and prioritizing the projects to improve conditions. These improvements can serve to more effectively convey runoff within jurisdictions, preventing interior localized flooding resulting in damages. This ensures that the most beneficial projects are done first and could possibly eliminate the need for others.

***Flood-prone Property Acquisition*** – Voluntary acquisition and demolition of properties prone to flooding will reduce the general threat of flooding for communities. Additionally, this can provide flood insurance benefits to those communities within the NFIP.

***Drainage Districts*** – Improve land for agricultural and sanitary purposes on a regional basis.

## Map 10.1. Flood Risk

### Regulation and Enforcement Updates

Ensures that no new structures built will be vulnerable to flooding. Reducing damages and health risks associated with flooding.

### Floodplain Management

Continue compliance with the NFIP. Good standing enables participants to apply for PDM and HMGP cost-share.

### Civil Service Improvements

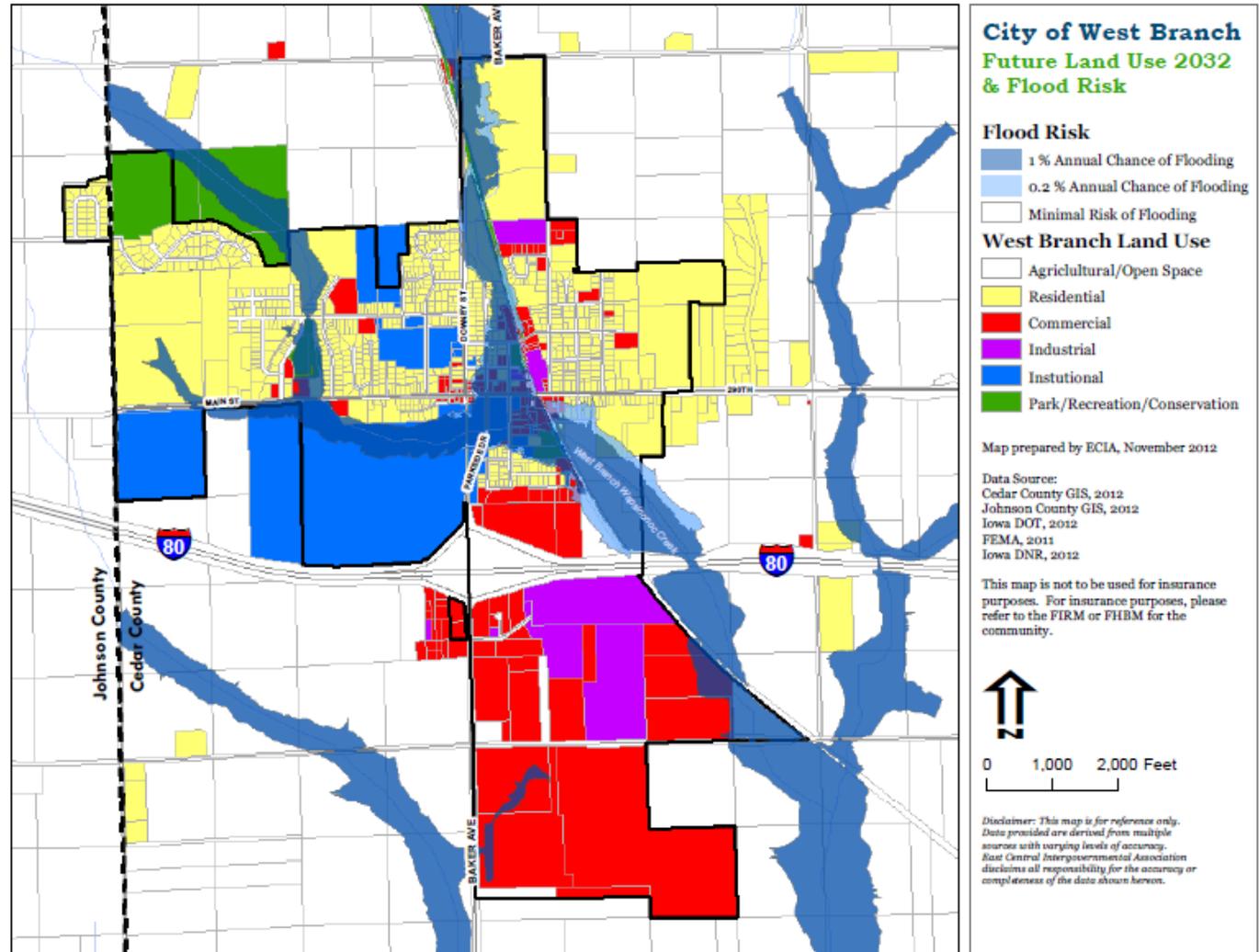
Having appropriate and up to date equipment along with adequately trained and numbered personnel increases safety and reduces the risk of damage.

National Flood Hazard Map<sup>49</sup>  
West Branch, Iowa



Figure 1: Source: Iowa GIS Data Repository, Iowa Counties Information Technology. Compiled by Tara Cullison.

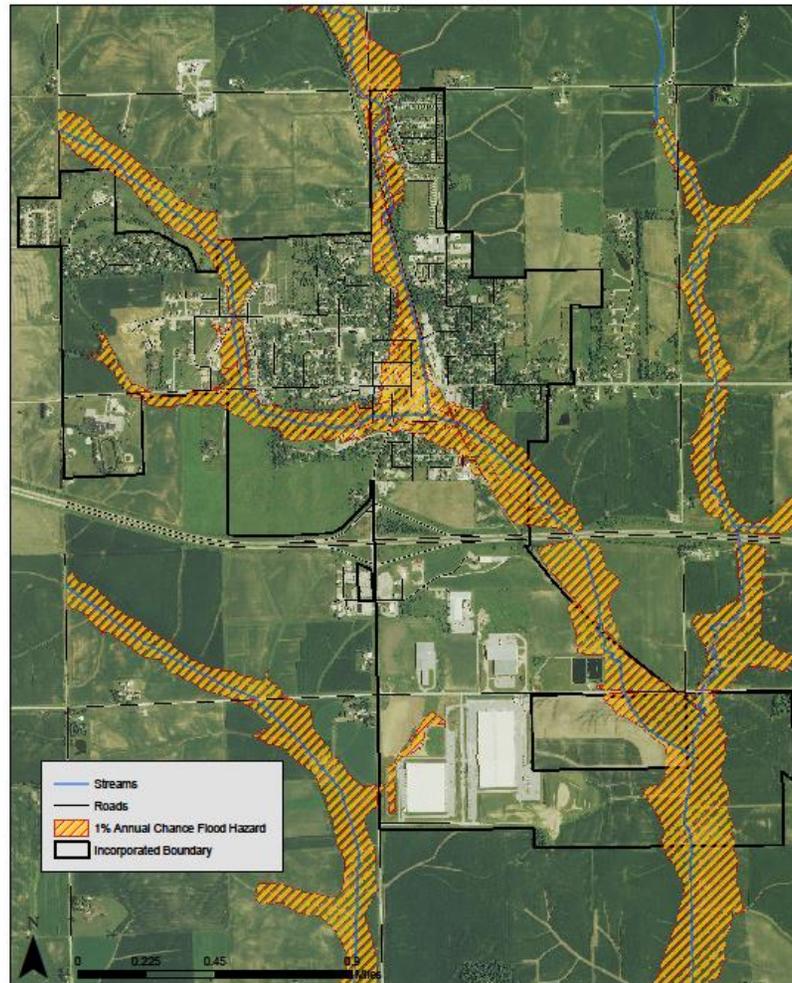
## 10.2. Future Land-use With Flood Risk



# Appendix

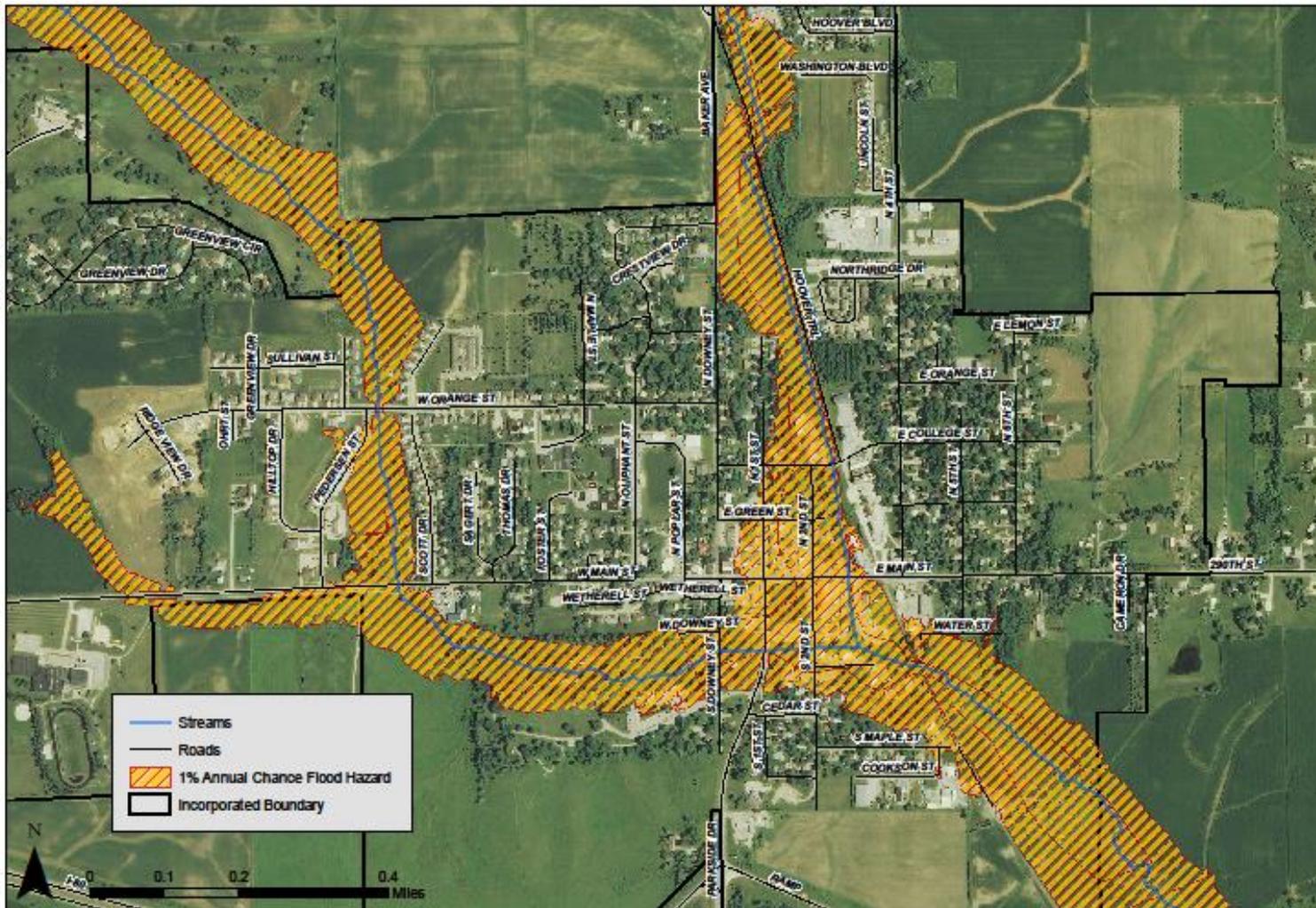
## Appendix 1 - FEMA Flood Hazard Maps

FEMA's National Flood Hazard Map  
West Branch, IA



Appendix Figure 1: Source: Iowa GIS Data Repository, Iowa Counties Information Technology. Compiled by Tara Cullison.

## FEMA's National Flood Hazard Map West Branch, IA



Appendix Figure 2: Source: Iowa GIS Data Repository, Iowa Counties Information Technology. Compiled by Tara Cullison.

# FEMA's National Flood Hazard Map West Branch, IA



Appendix Figure 3: Source: Iowa GIS Data Repository, Iowa Counties Information Technology. Compiled by Tara Cullison.

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- <sup>2</sup> (Federal Emergency Management Association, 2018) <https://www.fema.gov/cis/IA.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2018) <https://bsa.nfipstat.fema.gov/reports/1011.htm#IAT>.
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- <sup>6</sup> Such a West Branch Tree Committee existed in the 1990s, and held plant sales to support tree purchases, with plants supplied by local residents. City staff planted the trees. Currently West Branch High School sells annual plants in the spring to support their Future Farmers chapter.
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<sup>43</sup> “City of West Branch Stormwater Quality BMP Reimbursement Program.” City of West Branch. July, 2018.

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<sup>44</sup> “Permeable Pavers.” Clean Water Iowa. Accessed July, 2018. <https://www.cleanwateriowa.org/permeable-pavers>.

<sup>45</sup> “Permeable Pavers: Transportation and Stormwater Infrastructure”. Rainscaping Iowa. Accessed July, 2018.

[http://www.rainscapingiowa.org/documents/filelibrary/permeable\\_pavement\\_systems/PermPavemtBrochure\\_1CDC21254C1A6.pdf](http://www.rainscapingiowa.org/documents/filelibrary/permeable_pavement_systems/PermPavemtBrochure_1CDC21254C1A6.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> “A Sustainable Vision for West Union”. Conservation Design Form and Conservation Research Institute. September 12, 2008. Accessed July, 2018.

[http://www.westunion.com/uploads/PDF\\_File\\_67184288.pdf](http://www.westunion.com/uploads/PDF_File_67184288.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> “Iowa Water Conference 2016: Permeable Paving and Riverfront Development.” Diers, Steven and Fallis, John. March 23, 2016. Accessed July, 2018.

<http://www.water.iastate.edu/sites/www.water.iastate.edu/files/iowawatercenter/Breakout%20Diers%20Charles%20City.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> “Hills debuts permeable pavers to slow runoff, improve water quality”. Arnold, Madison. June 27, 2018. Accessed July, 2018.

<http://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/government/hills-debuts-permeable-pavers-to-slow-runoff-improve-water-quality-20180627>.

<sup>49</sup> FEMA Map Shapefiles and ArcGIS Software

# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 11: PARKS, RECREATION AND FACILITIES

Picture 11.1. Hoover Nature Trail in West Branch.



Source: [www.trailink.com](http://www.trailink.com). Submitted by moonlightrose44. Accessed Feb., 2019.

## Introduction.

Parks, recreational facilities and programs are vital components in a community's quality of life. Active living, or the integration of physical activity into daily life, is becoming increasingly popular. Walking, bicycling and hiking are the most common ways to participate in active living. Providing facilities that support active living has a variety of social, health, economic, and environmental benefits for a community. These benefits include: a better quality of life, improved livability (which is a positive factor in attracting new residents, businesses and workers), and reduced energy consumption.

As the community manages anticipated continued growth, the integration of parks, trails, open spaces, and other recreational facilities such as playing fields will be an important factor in West Branch's overall health and attractiveness.

Picture 11.2. Heritage Square, Main Street, West Branch.



Source: Reuben Grandon, August 2018.

**Goal 1: Provide and maintain an adequate supply and variety of parkland and recreational facilities to serve the city's current and future population, based on identified standards and community needs.**

Objectives

- 1.1 Prepare a comprehensive master parks plan. Update the plan annually.
- 1.2 Invest in acquisition and development of parks and recreation facilities.
- 1.3 Maintain a long-range park capital improvement plan (CIP) and budget for identified priorities through an annual CIP.
- 1.4 Provide opportunities for public input. Identify potential partners and build coalitions of people or agencies with a mutually beneficial interest in parks, trails, and open space.
- 1.5 Utilize creative and flexible financing strategies to invest in acquisitions and maintain facilities.
- 1.6 Monitor and evaluate neighborhoods for local service-level deficiencies.
- 1.7 Encourage public-private partnerships to develop and operate publicly-accessible recreational facilities that meet identified public needs.

**Goal 2: Improve parks, recreation facilities, natural areas, and greenspace through strategies that reflect user needs, development priorities, development and maintenance costs, program opportunities, financing strategies, and community input.**

Objectives

- 2.1 Preserve, enhance, and manage City-owned natural areas and resources to protect and improve their contribution to ecological health and to provide compatible public access.
- 2.2 Manage urban trees as green infrastructure with associated ecological, community, and economic functions through planning, planting, and maintenance activities, education, and regulation.
- 2.3 Consider developing master or management plans for properties that lack guiding plans or strategies.
- 2.4 Establish and manage specialized facilities within the park system that take advantage of land assets, and that respond to diverse, basic and emerging recreational needs.
- 2.5 Review and update subdivision and parkland dedication ordinances and supporting administrative practices to effectively provide neighborhood parks and trails in association with new development.
- 2.6 Explore creating partnerships with nearby recreation facility and programming providers. Pursue partnerships to expand park and recreation facilities regionally.

**Goal 3: Establish, improve, and maintain a complete and connected system of public trails that provides recreational opportunities and that can serve transportation functions.**

Objectives

- 3.1 Operate the citywide trail system so that it connects and improves access to neighborhoods, Main Street and commercial areas, schools, parks, recreation facilities, and the regional trail system, among other key places residents wish to access in their daily lives.
- 3.2 Be attentive to opportunities to attract visitors to trails and other recreation facilities to promote the city and economic opportunities.
- 3.3 Coordinate planning, design, improvement, and maintenance of the trail system among City departments, other public agencies, non-governmental partners, and adjacent landowners.
- 3.4 Promote a variety of trail types to reflect a trail's transportation and recreation roles, requirements, and physical context.
- 3.5 Support active living by establishing a greenway system of distinctive pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets and trails, enhanced by lush tree canopy and landscaped stormwater facilities.
- 3.6 Utilize the trail system to plant and preserve trees, increase tree species and tree age diversity, and contribute to an urban tree canopy.
- 3.7 Connect local trails to regional public trails that are a component of a larger network of facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians, and recreational users.
- 3.8 Update the existing trails plan every five years to coordinate with the parks plan.

## History.

West Branch had two informal parks in the early 1900s. Both parks were located on Main Street between two buildings. Horseshoe Park, pictured below, was located on the north side of West Main Street. Peanut Park was on the north side of East Main Street.<sup>1</sup>

Beranek Park was established in the 1980s after Ruth Beranek donated her half of a three-acre tract of land for a park on South Second Street. A service club, the Jaycees, fundraised and purchased the other half. Through volunteer labor, grants, and fund-raisers the club developed Beranek Park (pictured to the right) and then donated it to the City.<sup>2</sup> Beranek Park continues to be an important part of West Branch's recreation facilities and now contains a large picnic shelter and sand volleyball facilities.

Picture 11.3. Horseshoe Park in the Early 1900s.



Source: [West Branch: The First 150 Years](#).

Picture 11.4. Beranek Park in the 1980s.



Source: [West Branch: The First 150 Years](#).

<sup>1</sup> Dwight E. Jensen and Lisa K. Abel, *West Branch: The First 150 Years* (West Branch, Iowa: West Branch Heritage Foundation, 2001), 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

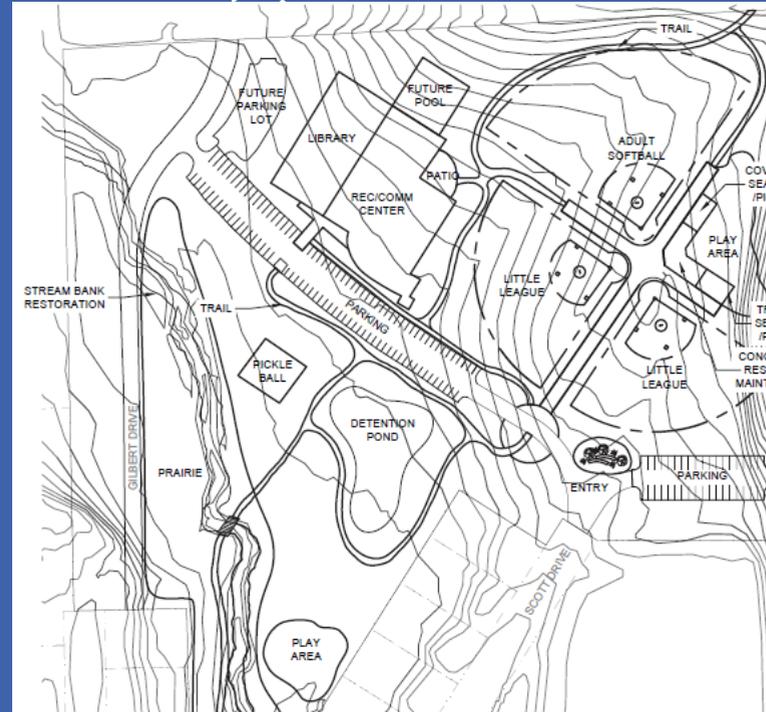
## Community Input.

After the most recent Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2013, the City of West Branch through its Parks and Recreation commission engaged the public to identify what types of park improvements and future parks the community desired. A survey was conducted in January and February of 2014 in partnership with HBK Engineering from Iowa City. (See <http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/WB%20Final%20Report%207%2014%202014.pdf>.)

The survey helped the City identify and prioritize improvements to existing public parks. In addition, the community showed high interest in having a local community center, indoor swimming pool, and outdoor swimming pool. It was also identified that combining a new public library in the same building as a community and recreation center was favored by survey respondents and City staff.

To address these needs, the City created the Pedersen Valley Recreation Complex. This project was to be developed in four phases at the Pedersen Valley site (now Cubby Park). The first phase included baseball and softball diamonds with concessions stands, a playground, trails, and all initial exterior site work. This phase is expected to be completed in 2019. Phase two included a recreation and community center while the third phase added a library attached to the same building. The fourth phase involved indoor/outdoor swimming pool additions.<sup>3</sup> The original site plans are presented in the image to the right.

Figure 11.1. Original Pedersen Valley Site Plans Based on Community Input.



Source HBK Engineering, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> HBK Engineering, "Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation Capital Improvements Final Report," July 14, 2014, <https://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/WB%20Final%20Report%207%2014%202014.pdf>. Accessed 2/18/2019.

### Park Facility Updates Since 2013.

There have been several existing parks have been updated with new equipment or recreation facilities. The following is a short list of the major accomplishments realized since 2013.park updates since the city’s most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2013. In addition to the creation of a dog park on the north side of town, several

#### Beranek Park

- ◇ Added sand volleyball courts;
- ◇ Updated lighting;
- ◇ Added playground equipment.

#### Lions Field

- ◇ Built public restrooms;
- ◇ Created ADA access from the parking lot to the field.

#### Wapsi Creek Park

- ◇ Added a playground;
- ◇ Created parking on the south side, used for the Hoover Nature Trail as well as the park.

#### Cubby Park (Formerly Pedersen Valley)

- ◇ Completed all exterior site work;
- ◇ Phase I of Cubby Park is in progress.

Picture 11.5. New Bathrooms at Lions Field.



Source: [www.romtec.com](http://www.romtec.com). Accessed Feb., 2019.

Picture 11.6. New Playground at Wapsi Creek Park.



Source: Reuben Grandon, April 2019.

## Raising Revenue.

The City held a bond and optional sales tax referendum on the November 2014 ballot to improve four community parks in West Branch. Those are Beranek Park, Lions Field, Wapsi Creek Park, and Phase One in Pedersen Valley (now named Cubby Park).

Two votes were conducted. The first vote allowed the City to borrow \$4 million to make all of the proposed improvements to the parks. The second vote extended the 1% local option sales tax (LOST) for ten years to provide funding for the improvements. The \$4 million in new debt was to be paid for by LOST and Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Neither the LOST nor bond would have caused property taxes to increase.<sup>4</sup>

The LOST vote passed with a simple majority, however the bond referendum required 60% of those voting plus one to pass. With 57.3 percent of the voters in support, the bond failed to pass in 2014.<sup>5</sup>

The bond referendum for park improvements was placed on the ballot during the next City-wide election in November of 2015. Just as before, the City requested voter approval to borrow funds toward park and trails improvement and development. Satellite voting was made available leading up to the election, which also included races for Mayor and City Council. This time, the \$4 million parks improvement bond referendum was approved by voters.<sup>6</sup>

The park improvements were proposed to improve the quality of life for existing West Branch residents. Specifically, the new enhancements would encourage both residential and commercial growth. At the same time, having more facilities available locally would allow for residents to participate in local events rather than travel to larger nearby communities.

Picture 11.7. Flyer for 2015 Parks Ballot Initiative.



Source: City of West Branch Parks Informational Guide 2015.

<sup>4</sup> City of West Branch, "City of West Branch Parks, Ballot: November 4th, 2014," October 2, 2014, [https://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/Park\\_Information\\_14\\_10\\_02.pdf](https://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/Park_Information_14_10_02.pdf). Accessed 2/15/2019.

<sup>5</sup> Rick DeClue, "LOST OK'd, but \$4M Bond Fails," *West Branch Times*, November 6, 2014, <http://www.westbranchtimes.com/article.php?id=11050>. Accessed 2/15/2018.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory Norfleet, "\$4M Parks Bond Approved, 17 Days after City Election," *West Branch Times*, November 25, 2015, <https://www.westbranchtimes.com/article.php?viewID=12189>. Accessed 02/15/2019.

### LOST Revenue.

The revenue generated from LOST was projected to be approximately \$1.8 million over ten years (FY 2016 to FY 2025), or \$180,000 per year. There are limitations on how this funding can be budgeted and spent. LOST funding can only be spent as it is collected and can only be spent on park improvement projects.<sup>7</sup> Total actual revenues from LOST are shown in Table 11.1 to the right. The LOST has generated more revenue than expected to date.

### Bond Issue.

The City issued General Obligation bonds for parks and recreation in 2016 and 2017. In July of 2016, \$500,000 of the \$1,000,000 issued was for parks and recreation. In 2017, a portion of the \$4,200,000 issued was for parks and recreation while the other portion was to fund general Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The portion of the bonds for park and recreation activities is repaid with LOST (46%) and TIF revenues (54%). The CIP portion is repaid with general tax revenues.

Year	Amount	Actual / Budget
FY 2016	\$ 183,721	Actual
FY 2017	\$ 219,609	Actual
FY 2018	\$ 193,266	Actual
FY 2019	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
FY 2020	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
FY 2021	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
FY 2022	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
FY 2023	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
FY 2024	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
FY 2025	\$ 180,000	Budgeted
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,856,596</b>	

Source: Iowa Department of Management and City of West Branch.

<sup>7</sup> City of West Branch, “Minutes Park and Recreation Commission,” Meeting Minutes (West Branch, November 20, 2014), [http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/14\\_11\\_20%20Minutes.pdf](http://westbranchiowa.org/sites/default/files/14_11_20%20Minutes.pdf). Accessed 2/15/2019.

## Facilities Analysis.

It is important to conduct a facilities analysis when the comprehensive plan is updated. Such an analysis examines the City’s existing park and recreation system, including all city-owned and operated recreation areas and public parks. The facilities are evaluated based on standards for park classification and population service standards.

### Existing Park System Overview.

West Branch has 38.45 acres of park that the City is responsible for managing. Of those, Cubby Park (19.5 acres) is currently under construction and the Meadows Park (4.2 acres) was slated for future development as of 2019. Table 11.2 below lists each park, its size, and available amenities. This does not include parks and recreation facilities managed by the National Park Service (which operates 186 acres at the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site) or West Branch Community Schools.

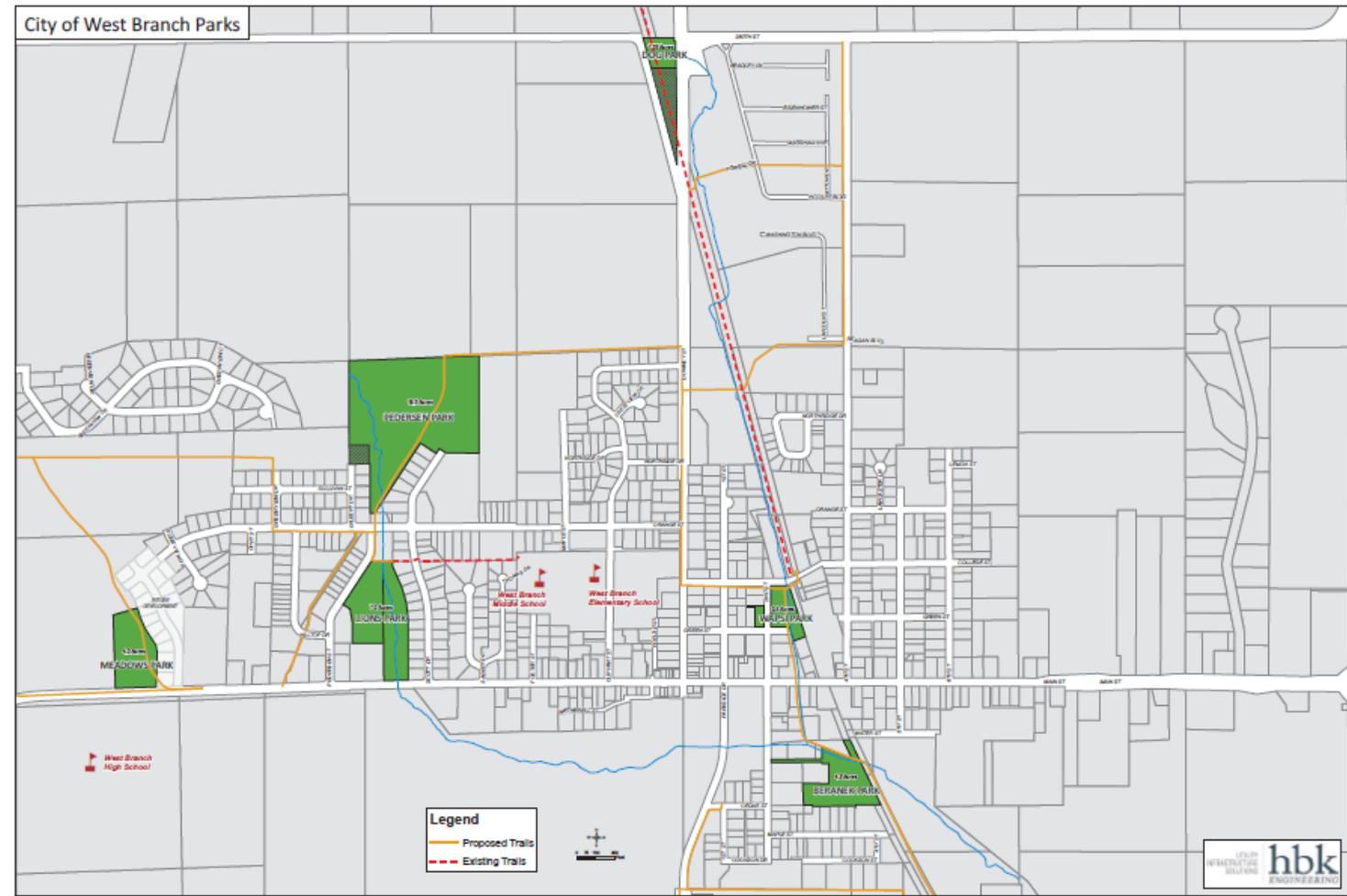
Table 11.2. - West Branch Parks.		
Park Name, Acres, and Amenities.		
Name	Size in Acres	Amenities
Beranek Park	4.3 Acres	3 Sand Volleyball Courts Playground Basketball Court Large Shelter Restrooms
Cubby Park (Formerly Pedersen)	19.5 Acres	In Progress 3 Baseball/Softball Fields Concessions
Dog Park	1.25 Acres	Drinking Water Barrel for Dogs
Heritage Square	Under 1 Acre	Picnic Area
Hoover Nature Trail	3.5 Miles	Trail from West Branch to Oasis 0.5 Miles Paved 3 Miles Crushed Limestone
Lions Field	7.2 Acres	Soccer Fields Small Shelter Restrooms
Meadows Park	4.2 Acres	Planned for Future
Wapsi Creek Park	2 Acres	Playground Picnic Tables Parking for Hoover Nature Trail

Source: City of West Brach Website. Accessed Feb., 2019.

## Map of Parks.

The map below shows each of the City owned and operated parks throughout West Branch. This map does not include the pocket park adjacent to the public library.

Map 11.1. City Parks and Trails in West Branch, 2014.

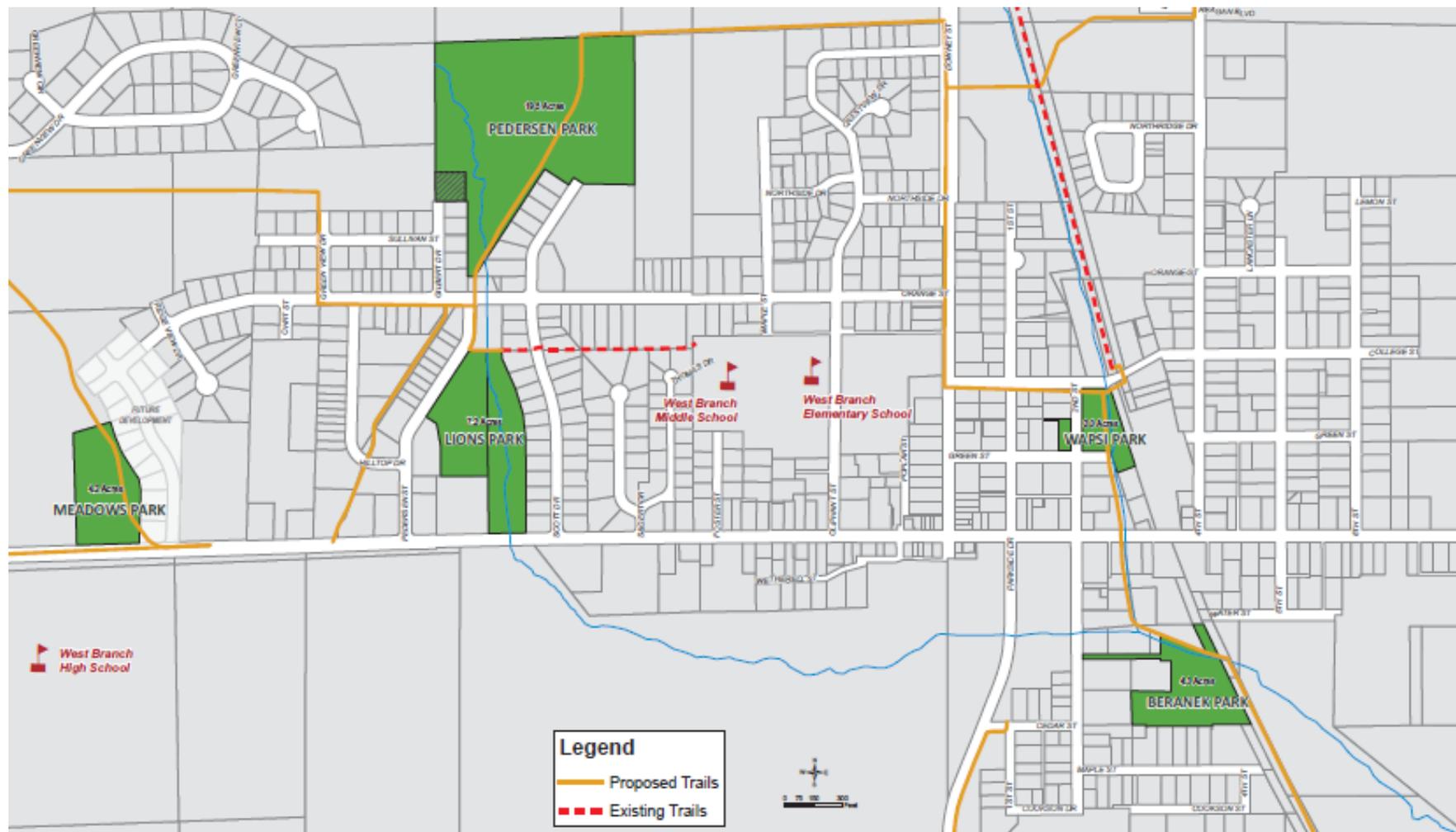


Source: HBK Engineering.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> HBK Engineering, "Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation Capital Improvements Final Report." Accessed Feb., 2019.

Map 11.2 below is the same as Map 11.1, except it zooms in on the cluster of parks near the center of town, which excludes the dog park.

Map 11.2. City Parks and Trails in Central West Branch, 2014.



Source: HBK Engineering.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> HBK Engineering. Accessed Feb., 2019.

## Park Classifications.

A complete and well-developed system of neighborhood and community parks is vital to a healthy, growing community. Such a system provides ample opportunities for exercise, recreation, and neighborhood events. Parks are important to provide a high quality of life and connection to nature.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has created a classification system for communities to utilize in park and recreation planning. Their system defines several categories of parks, recreation areas and open spaces that together make up a municipal park system.<sup>10</sup> Several of the park classifications are based on city population. West Branch's population was 2,393 as of 2017. The estimated population by 2040 is 3,167.<sup>11</sup>

While national standards are useful, it is important to ensure they are reasonable for the community, given factors such as participation trends, user characteristics, demographics, socioeconomic, climate, natural environment, and other considerations. It is important that the standards represent the interests and desires of the community. In instances where the existing parks in West Branch do not meet all of these criteria, the development of future parks should be guided by these standards.

The National Recreation and Parks Association believes that parks and recreation:

- ◇ Enhance the human potential by providing facilities, services, and programs that meet the emotional, social, and physical needs of communities.
- ◇ Articulate environmental values through ecologically responsible management and environmental education programs.
- ◇ Promote individual and community wellness that enhances the quality of life for all residents.
- ◇ Utilize holistic approaches to promote cultural understanding, economic development, family public health, and safety by working in coalitions and partnerships with allied organizations.
- ◇ Facilitate and promote the development of grassroots, self-help initiatives in communities across the country.

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association

<sup>10</sup> James D. Mertes and James R. Hall, *Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* (Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Parks Association, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> City Administrator, "West Branch City Council: City Administrator's Report" (City of West Branch, December 3, 2018), <https://westbranchiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/City-Administrators-Report-120318.pdf>. Accessed 2/23/2019.

### Mini Parks.

Mini-parks are used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. A mini-park is the smallest park classification and is used to address limited or isolated recreational needs. Examples include concentrated or limited populations, isolated development areas, and unique recreational opportunities.

Mini-parks may meet unique recreational needs such as a landscaped public use area in a commercial area, scenic overlooks, or a play area adjacent to a shopping district.

- ◇ Size: 2,500 sq. ft. to 1 acre
- ◇ Service area: less than ¼ mile radius

Heritage Square is a mini park on Main Street. It provides picnic tables for folks to congregate, a showcase of local history, and hosts the weekly farmers market in warmer months. At one time, community concerts were held here. See Picture 11.8 to the right and Picture 11.2 on page two of this chapter. At two acres, Wapsi Creek Park is also classified as a mini-park.

As neighborhoods continue to develop in West Branch, it may be desirable to include more mini-parks throughout those neighborhoods, particularly on the east side of town. Pocket parks are a version of mini parks that are desirable for the greenery provided, a place to sit outdoors, and perhaps the inclusion of a piece of art, monument, or historic marker.

Picture 11.8. Historic Heritage Square on Main Street.



Source: [West Branch: The First 150 Years](#).

### Neighborhood Parks.

Neighborhood parks serve as the recreational and social focus of a neighborhood with emphasis on informal and passive recreation. Ease and safe access from surrounding neighborhoods, central location, and pedestrian/bicycle linkages are key characteristics. They are intended to meet the daily recreation needs of nearby residents.

- ◇ Size: 5 to 10 acres
- ◇ Service area: ¼ mile to ½ mile radius
- ◇ Amenities include: restrooms, playgrounds, small shelters, multi-use play courts, open play areas approximately 200' x 300', trees, vegetation, parking, fountains, bike racks, and a connection to the community trail network.
- ◇ Acreage standard: 1 acre per 1,000 residents. 5 acres is considered minimum size.

West Branch neighborhood parks currently include Beranek Park and Lions Field, for a total of 11.5 acres. This exceeds the recommended acreage per 1,000 residents, or the 5-acre minimum. Furthermore, as the Meadows subdivision Phase IV is completed, Meadows Park is expected to be created on the southwest side of town. This park will provide an additional 4.2 acres of neighborhood parks. Therefore, West Branch exceeds the recommended 5 acres by approximately 10.7 acres.

Picture 11.9. Park Shelter at Lions Field.



Source: [www.westbranch.org](http://www.westbranch.org). Accessed Feb., 2019.

Picture 11.10. Entrance to Beranek Park.



Source: Reuben Grandon, April 2019.

### Community Parks.

Community parks are intended to function on a large scale, serving the park and recreation needs of an entire community. They are typically larger in size and include facilities and improvements for area-wide activities. They may also preserve unique landscapes and/or open space. Typical examples include sports facilities, aquatic facilities, dog parks, and event parks.

- ◇ Size: 10 to 50+ acres
- ◇ Service area: a radius of ½ mile to 3 miles
- ◇ Acreage standard: 5 acres per 1,000 residents
- ◇ Amenities may include: a restroom, playground, large shelter or lodge, multi-use play court, open play areas, trees, vegetation, parking, drinking fountains, bike racks, and a connection to the community trail network

In West Branch, the new park being developed in Pederson Valley – Cubby Park – meets the guidelines to be considered a Community Park. Two little league baseball diamonds, one softball diamond, a concession stand, a pickle ball court, and a playground are currently being developed in the first phase of construction. The final park rendering is displayed in Figure 11.2 to the right.

Figure 11.2. Site Plans for Cubby Park.



Source: Parks and Recreation Department Director, April, 2019.

### Specialty Parks or Open Spaces.

In addition to the three park classifications listed above, the National Association describes a number of specialty parks which are applicable to West Branch. The opportunity for expanded greenways, aquatic centers, and community gardens are covered in this section of Chapter 11.

### Greenways.

A Greenway is effectively the park system components that together form a continuous park environment. The location criteria depend on resource availability and opportunity. The size criteria are variable from one community to another.

One example of a greenway in Iowa is the Lower Fourmile Creek in Polk County. Representatives from Polk County, the Polk County Conservation Board, the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, the City of Des Moines, and the City of Pleasant Hill formed a stakeholder committee. Together they developed a master plan that aims to create a greenway that assists in flood management, protects habitat, educates citizens, and connects to regional trails.<sup>12</sup> See picture 11.11 to the right for an example of the greenway trail.

West Branch is a place of great beauty with charming natural resources. The City should identify and protect unique and critical natural resource areas within the community. Greenways are one natural resource area that typically follow waterways throughout the community. Greenways could be used to tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment that also helps manage storm- water. The size of greenways is variable, typically ranging from 25 feet wide to 200 feet wide.

The City should maintain and enhance a system of fully functional greenways throughout the community. This can be done through property acquisition and in conjunction with stream maintenance, flood mitigation, and development restrictions.

The City could also look to partner with and educate private property owners regarding the benefit of preserving functioning greenways. The County Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the County Conservation Boards, for both Johnson and Cedar counties, and the Lower Cedar Watershed Management Authority may provide resources and support for this activity.

Picture 11.11. Lower Fourmile Creek Greenway in Polk County



Source: <https://www.snyder-associates.com>. Accessed Feb., 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Snyder and Associates, "Greenway Master Plan: Lower Fourmile Creek," Snyder and Associates, accessed February 24, 2019, <https://www.snyder-associates.com/projects/lower-fourmile-creek-greenway-master-plan/>. Accessed 2/23/2019.

## Aquatics.

Aquatics facilities are important recreation resources in a community and are often identified as one of the quality of life amenities that attract new residents. However, they are increasingly difficult and expensive to operate. NRPA guidelines suggest 1 pool facility per 20,000 residents. West Branch residents currently use pool facilities primarily in Iowa City, Coralville, and North Liberty. West Branch should work to partner with other communities, organizations, and/or the school district in order to fund a future aquatic center, if desired.

Splash pads are areas for water play that have little to no standing water and generally do not require the presence of a lifeguard. They include a slip proof deck and a variety of spray features. They can even be interactive with users controlling sprays through valves or sequences of movements.

Splash pads can be developed in a variety of sizes and complexity. They require far less capital investment and operating expense than traditional pools. Splash pads provide a great option for neighborhood-scaled aquatic facilities in a community.

A splashpad was proposed for Beranek Park in the 2015 ballot initiative. See Figure 11.3 for the proposed site within Beranek Park. A splashpad could also be located within other parks, including Cubby Park or future pocket parks.

Figure 11.3. Proposed Splashpad Site in Beranek Park.



Source: City of West Branch Parks Informational Guide 2015.

### Community Gardens.

A distributed network of community gardens throughout the City can promote sustainability, local food production, and civic interaction. They can also be important sources of food for people in need of assistance. Locations for community garden(s) in West Branch should be selected carefully based on neighborhood interest. Placement of a community garden for children might be located near the public library. Ideally, local gardens will be sponsored and monitored by neighborhood organizations.

The City should consider providing land, defined plots, and water sources. The pictures to the right show examples of community gardens in Iowa City and Coralville. Both gardens are managed directly by the respective City. Annual rent for a 10' x 20' plot is \$20 in Coralville and \$15.75 in Iowa City, for residents. Coralville also offers 8' x 4' accessible raised beds for \$10.

Picture 11.12. Iowa City Community Garden.



Source: [www.icgov.org/gardenplots](http://www.icgov.org/gardenplots). Accessed Feb., 2019.

Picture 11.13. Coralville Community Garden.



Source: [www.littlevillagemag.com](http://www.littlevillagemag.com). Accessed Feb., 2019.

### Effective Park Land Dedication.

Provisions of parks should occur primarily through the Subdivision Regulations found in City Ordinance Chapter 170. The City should consider passing a Parkland Dedication Ordinance to codify a specified amount of land the city expects developers to dedicate to the city for public use or park development. The 2013 comprehensive plan suggested a requirement of 5% of useable subdivided land or its value. This suggestion has been utilized by the City. As an alternative, a developer might provide a sum equal to the developed value of the land for the city to use for park purposes. In addition, the City may choose to purchase parcels to create parks of adequate size. Creating effective neighborhood parks when typical subdivisions within the community are small presents a challenge. This can result in the City acquiring several small parcels that increase the cost of maintenance and may lower the overall effectiveness of the open space.

The ordinance should enable the City to work collaboratively with developers to allow for monetary donations in lieu of dedication. This could, for example, be applied to the development of a neighborhood park or trails in a given service area. The City should not allow dedications required for stream buffer protection and management to be substituted for park land dedications.

*The appendix to this chapter follows, with photos of West Branch parks in 2019.*

## Appendix

### A.1 Cubby Park Rendering – Full Size



Source: Parks and Recreation Department Director, April, 2019.

A.2 Beranek Park Playground



A.4 Beranek Park Shelter and Basketball Courts



A.3 Beranek Park Trails



Source: Images A.2 through A.12 provided by Reuben Grandon, April 2019.

A.5 Dog Park Sign



A.6 Dog Park in Motion



A.7 Lions Field Sign



A.8 Lions Field Ready for Soccer



A.9 Cubby Park Progress Softball Field



A.10 Cubby Park Progress Ball Fields and Trail



A.11 Cubby Park Progress Playground



A.12 Cubby Park Progress Retention Basin and Trail



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# WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Chapter 12: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION



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## 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 in order to provide more efficient, 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 13 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 Plan 2038



Source: Cedar County Comprehensive Plan, May 2018.

**Goal 1. Proactively investigate prospects for efficient governance via agreements with other governmental units.**

**Goal 2. Actively involve the city with regional organizations to promote cooperative efforts.**

**Goal 3. Establish fringe-area agreements with Johnson County and Cedar County to ensure effective land-use and development.**

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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 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 has been forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

## 28E Agreements

The essence of this state legislation was 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 these types of local governments.<sup>3</sup>

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 provide joint services and facilities with other agencies and to cooperate in other ways of mutual advantage. This chapter shall be liberally construed to that end.”<sup>4</sup>*

## 28E Examples

Joint and cooperative arrangements have proved to be an efficient and popular way of providing services at a reasonable cost.<sup>5</sup> A 28E agreement with other cities, a county, a school board, or some agency could make many projects possible.<sup>6</sup>

General examples of 28E intergovernmental cooperation include: Councils of Governments, Economic Development, City Utilities, Fire Protection/Prevention, Emergency Medical Response, Landfill Agencies, Community Development, Public Works Equipment, Public Transit Agreements, Library Services and Housing Authorities.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

<sup>2</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

<sup>3</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

<sup>4</sup> State Code of Iowa, 1965

<sup>5</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

<sup>6</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

<sup>7</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

## 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 St., between 827 W. Main St. and West Branch High School.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

The municipal adoption process is described in Image 13.2.

Image 13.2. Municipal Adoption Process 28E



Source: Cedar County Comprehensive Plan, May 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Iowa Secretary of State, 2017a

<sup>9</sup> Iowa Secretary of State, 2017b

## 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 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, financial assistance).<sup>10</sup>

### 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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



Source: [www.cedarcountvia.org](http://www.cedarcountvia.org). Accessed 9/10/18.



Source: [www.ecia.org](http://www.ecia.org). Accessed 9/10/18

<sup>10</sup> The University of Iowa: Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities et al., 2018

<sup>11</sup> East Central Intergovernmental Association, 2018

<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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 U.S. National Park Service, 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 charging station. As detailed in Chapter 7 of this plan, this could provide a public service while also promoting economic development.

Image 13.5, 13.6, 13.7 – Logos



Source: [www.ecicog.org](http://www.ecicog.org). Accessed 9/10/18.



Source: [www.riverbendtransit.org](http://www.riverbendtransit.org). Accessed 9/10/18.



Source: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). Accessed 9/10/18.

Source: <https://www.archives.gov/>. Accessed 9/24/18.



<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> A 28E agreement with other cities, a county, the West Branch School District, or some agency could make more projects possible.<sup>15</sup>

## Land Use

It is important for the City to be proactive in its communication with Cedar County and Johnson County regarding land use. As the Cedar County Plan identified, 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-area agreements between cities and counties provide road maps for future planning and development. They are a useful tool to 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.

## Development Codes

Another application of 28E agreements includes addressing development codes. The County plan suggests 28E agreement could be utilized to secure a county-wide building inspector. This would effectively reduce costs for this position because the cost would be shared across several municipalities. Further, this would provide an opportunity to improve the efficiency and consistency of development ordinances.

## Coordinated Tourism

As identified in Chapter 7, *Economic Development*, tourism in West Branch is an economic driver. The Cedar County Plan discovered residents want improved collaboration between cities in order to minimize event conflicts. The County Plan suggests it would be beneficial for an organization representing Cedar County to develop a community events strategy that increases public and tourism participation.

## Purchasing

One area that should be explored is the development of joint purchasing. Communities could go to bid together on items, which will save money with bulk pricing and with the development of bid specifications. Items that may be eligible for joint purchasing could be, but are not limited to, office supplies or maintenance supplies such as salt or sand.

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<sup>14</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

<sup>15</sup> The University of Iowa: Institute of Public Affairs, 2015

## Fringe Area Agreement with Johnson County

One of the land-use goals for West Branch’s 2013 Comprehensive Plan was to increase cooperation with Cedar and Johnson Counties as regards planning and development.<sup>16</sup> Currently, any new development two miles outside West Branch’s city limits, and within 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.

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:

*“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.”<sup>17</sup>*

According to Chapter 5, Section 3, of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan of Johnson County, the County plans to work with individual cities to create or update Fringe Area Agreements in order to coordinate land use planning with and between local governments to achieve mutually beneficial development policies.<sup>18</sup> Such agreements are expected to promote and protect sustainable agriculture land use and direct future commercial and industrial development in Johnson County

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<sup>16</sup> City of West Branch 2013

<sup>17</sup> Johnson County Board of Supervisors, 2006

<sup>18</sup> Johnson County, Iowa, 2018

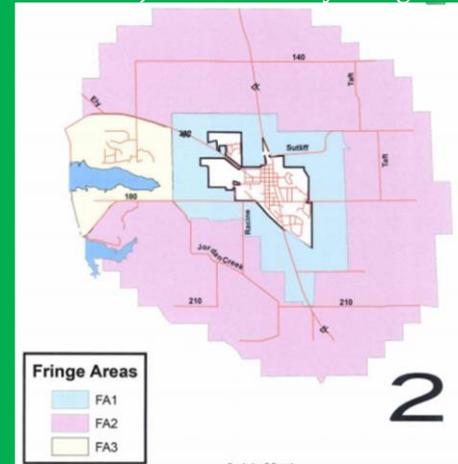
### What Would a Fringe Area Agreement Look Like?

The City of Solon, Iowa, a city that has many of the same land-use characteristics and a scale similar to that of 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.<sup>19</sup> 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 Fringe-Area Agreement for the City of Tiffin and Johnson County, 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).<sup>20</sup> 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.

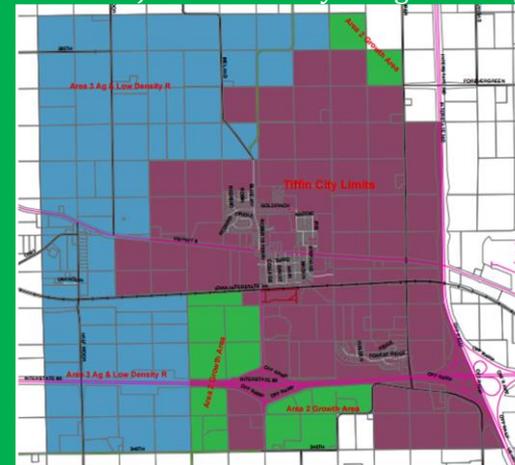
Beyond coordinating planning efforts, one of the goals of Johnson County's Fringe Area Agreements is to "discourage the creation of unincorporated islands."<sup>21</sup> Establishing a Fringe Area Agreement with Johnson County would ensure long-term development west of West Branch fits with future land-use 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 Fringe Area Agreement



Source: <http://www.johnson-county.com/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=4905>. Accessed 9.24.18.

Figure 13.2 Tiffin and Johnson County Fringe Area Agreement



Source: <http://www.johnson-county.com/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=4915>. Accessed 9/24/18.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson County Board of Supervisors, 2008

<sup>20</sup> Johnson County, Iowa, 1997

<sup>21</sup> Johnson County, Iowa, 2018

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