



City of West Branch, Iowa
Park & Recreation
Master Plan
Fiscal Years 2025 - 2029

Acknowledgements

The City of West Branch would like to acknowledge and thank all the people that contributed to the development of this plan.

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Date Approved & Adopted: _____

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Introduction

Purpose & Need

The purpose of the West Branch Parks Plan is to develop a plan that will guide the City of West Branch as it maintains and develops its park systems. Since the previous plan was completed in 2013, many park improvements and even additional parks have been added to the City's inventory. In the past ten years, some objectives remain while new ones have been added. West Branch saw the need for a new plan that will set the course for the next five to ten years.

Community Overview

West Branch is a growing community located in Cedar County, Iowa and is the hometown of Herbert Hoover, the 31st president of the United States and is home to one of only 13 presidential libraries in the nation. West Branch is primarily a residential community, with many residents working in the Iowa City metro area. The community's surrounding landscape is characterized by hills, bluffs, limestone outcroppings, with the Cedar River a few miles east of West Branch. Downtown has many historic buildings, a pocket park, and is adjacent to greenspace that provides visitors with a wide range of amenities. The downtown area is compact, walkable, and provides visitors access to restaurants, museums, and a unique shopping experience. West Branch's 2020 census population was 2,509 up from 2,332 in 2010.

City of West Branch Park and Recreation Commission

The Park and Recreation Commission was created to make recommendations to the West Branch City Council concerning plans for and oversight of City parks and recreation activities. The Park and Recreation Commission serves as the steering committee for the development of the West Branch Parks Master Plan. The Commission consists of seven members appointed by the West Branch City Council. The Park and Recreation Commission members at the time the plan was developed were:

- Adrienne Howard
- Jenna Maxson
- Kristin Rood
- Shane Staker
- Rich Stout
- Evie White

Plan Objectives

The process of establishing the objectives of the West Branch Parks Master Plan began with a review of the City's existing plans. The review included the *City of West Branch Comprehensive Plan (2019)*, the *City of West Branch Strategic Plan for Parks & Recreation Capital Improvements (2013)* and a community wide *City of West Branch Community Park & Recreation Survey (2023)*. Through these documents the City has established its vision for the future and identified goals and objectives that will help the community realize that vision. The objectives established in the *City of West Branch Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2024* will provide a more specific focus on parks and their amenities while helping move the City closer to achieving the broader goals outlined in its existing plans.

City of West Branch Comprehensive Plan

The City of West Branch's comprehensive plan provides a guide for the future of the city over a 20-year period. The 2019 comprehensive plan updates the 2013 plan for the city. The update identifies issues and opportunities on such topics as land use, infrastructure, parks and recreation, economic development, and the use of environmental resources.

City of West Branch 2019 Vision Statement:

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

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Park and recreation related goals and objectives from Chapter 11 from the comprehensive plan include:

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

The following section provides a summary of the park-related objectives contained in the previous Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

City of West Branch Strategic Plan for Parks & Recreation Capital Improvements Final Report

The *City of West Branch Strategic Plan for Parks & Recreation Capital Improvements Final Report*, adopted in 2013, evaluated the needs of each of the six parks that existed at that time, and developed a phased approach to the overall park development system including, proposed schedules for implementing improvements, funding recommendations, and cost estimates for the respective phases. Based on Project Stakeholder input, the public survey results, and design charrette process, the following phasing was recommended for the plan:

Table 1: Status of Capital Improvements from 2013 Strategic Plan		
Park	Project	Status
Phase 1		
Beranek Park	Add sand volleyball courts and lighting upgrades.	Complete in 2016
Lions Field	Add public restroom, ADA access from parking to field, and soccer field renovation.	Complete in 2016
Wapsi Park	Trailhead parking lot, public restroom, future playground.	Playground and parking lot complete in 2016. Restroom not started.
Cubby Park (The name of this park was changed from Pedersen Park. All references in this plan to Cubby Park and Pedersen Park are the same location.)	Softball/baseball complex, concession stand, batting cage, Pickleball court, playground and walking trail.	Complete in 2020
Phase 2		
Wapsi Park	Create bridge and trail.	Not started
Cubby Park	Build new recreation center.	Not started
Phase 3		
Beranek Park	Add water feature	Not started
Lions Park	Install terraced, sloped seating	Not started
Wapsi Park	Tennis courts	Not started
Cubby Park	Build a new library	Not started
Phase 4		
Meadows Trail	PCC Trail, restrooms	Not started
Lions Field	Trail expansion with bridge crossing	Not started
Wapsi Park	Amphitheater	Not started— location will not work, but remains goal of interest.
Cubby Park	Indoor/outdoor swimming pool(s)	Not started
Dog Park	Water line, public restrooms	Not started
Phase 5		
Cubby Park	Construct a new City Hall	Not started
Cubby Park	Construct a multi-directional access to Pedersen Park (Scott Drive and Gilbert Drive).	Not started

OTHER Park facility updates since 2013 not in previous plan:

Park	Improvement
Beranek Park	Permanent horseshoe pitches. Completed by Eagle Scout Jeremy Budreau
Beranek Park	Cement trail. (50% complete.) Complete in 2020
Beranek Park	Resurfaced parking lot, installed shelter railing and re-poured shelter floor. Complete in 2020
Lions Park	Small open-air pavilion constructed- Completed by Eagle Scout Tyler Dean
Wapsi Park	New playground – Complete in 2016
Wapsi Park	Permanent corn hole sets – Completed by Eagle Scout Jeremy Budreau
Cubby Park	Three baseball/softball fields added with a centralized, multi-use concession facility. One pickleball court, trail, and pond.
West Branch Mural Park	A new pocket park was created in a vacant lot, mural was installed in 2022.



**New play equipment at Beranek Park and
Sand volleyball courts at Beranek Park**

Public Survey 2023

Development & Content

The Public Input Survey was developed by ECIA with the assistance of the West Branch Parks & Recreation Commission and City staff. Questions were developed based on past project experience, existing park features and amenities, and other planning surveys. Each survey included brief demographic information, and questions regarding satisfaction with current features and amenities at each of the six parks. Questions regarding funding support were also included. There was a public meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission to discuss the outcomes of the survey and to gain further input for the Master Park Plan 2024.

Distribution

Both paper and digital copies were made available to the community. Electronic links were provided on the City's websites, and various other social media outlets. Hard copy surveys were available at City offices and QR codes on posters were placed at high traffic locations throughout the city.

Analysis & Results

The public survey was closed on April 27, 2023, with 91 surveys completed. Analysis of the surveys was completed through SurveyMonkey®. Each question's results were compiled into graphs or charts depending on their format to display the public response. The full survey can be found in Appendix A.

Parks Plan Objectives

The City Park and Recreation Commission conducted a citywide survey to update a list of objectives for the park plan. From the survey, the Commission developed an initial list of objectives early in the plan development process and continued to review and revise the list based on the information collected through the planning process and input from the community.

The objectives guided the development of this plan and will continue to guide the community's future park and trail activities. The final Parks Plan Objectives are listed below.

Parks & Recreation Objectives

Provide recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Conserve the community's open spaces and natural resources.

Acquire land for future parks to meet the community's needs.

Maintain high standards for the city's existing recreation facilities and ensure that new facilities are built to last.



Existing Conditions

This section provides an overview of the City of West Branch's existing parks.

Parks

BERANEK PARK

Beranek Park is located at 320 Beranek Drive which is on the east side of town. The West Branch Wapsinonic Creek is nearby. Beranek Park has a shelter with tables, four sand volleyball courts, horseshoe pitches, a playground, and a basketball court, all of which are lighted. The shelter at Beranek Park can be reserved and has ADA-accessible restrooms.



CUBBY PARK

Cubby Park is located at 301 Scott Drive on the north side of West Branch. At over 19 acres, it is West Branch's largest park. Park amenities include three baseball/softball fields with concessions, restrooms, playground, ½ mile walking trail, pickleball court, and batting cage.



LIONS FIELD

Lion's Field is located at 221 Pedersen Street on the west side of town. Nestled in a residential area, Lion's Field is a 3.4 acre space that has restroom facilities, soccer fields and a small shelter with a picnic table.



WAPSI CREEK PARK

Wapsi Creek Park is a small park located at 201 N. 2nd Street. This park features a playground, corn hole, picnic tables and parking for the 3.5-mile limestone Hoover Trail.



HERITAGE SQUARE – DOWNTOWN

Heritage Square is located at the intersection of Main and North Downey Street, in the heart of historic downtown West Branch. You can also access the Herbert Hoover National Park and Museum also known as the Downey Trace from Heritage Square. The park is used for the local farmers market, festivals and other City events.



Heritage Square Park showing link to Hoover Presidential Library and the West Branch Farmer's Market.

WEST BRANCH DOG PARK

The dog park is located at Baker Avenue on the north end of town along Herbert Hoover Nature Trail.



MURAL POCKET PARK

The Mural Project started as an idea developed in a Cedar County Great Places Grant application and was popular with several Cedar County communities to promote tourism, improve aesthetics and increase business traffic. Mural Park was established in 2021 at the former Casey's General Store site. Currently, the park is green space and a quiet place to reflect and have your picture taken with the mural.



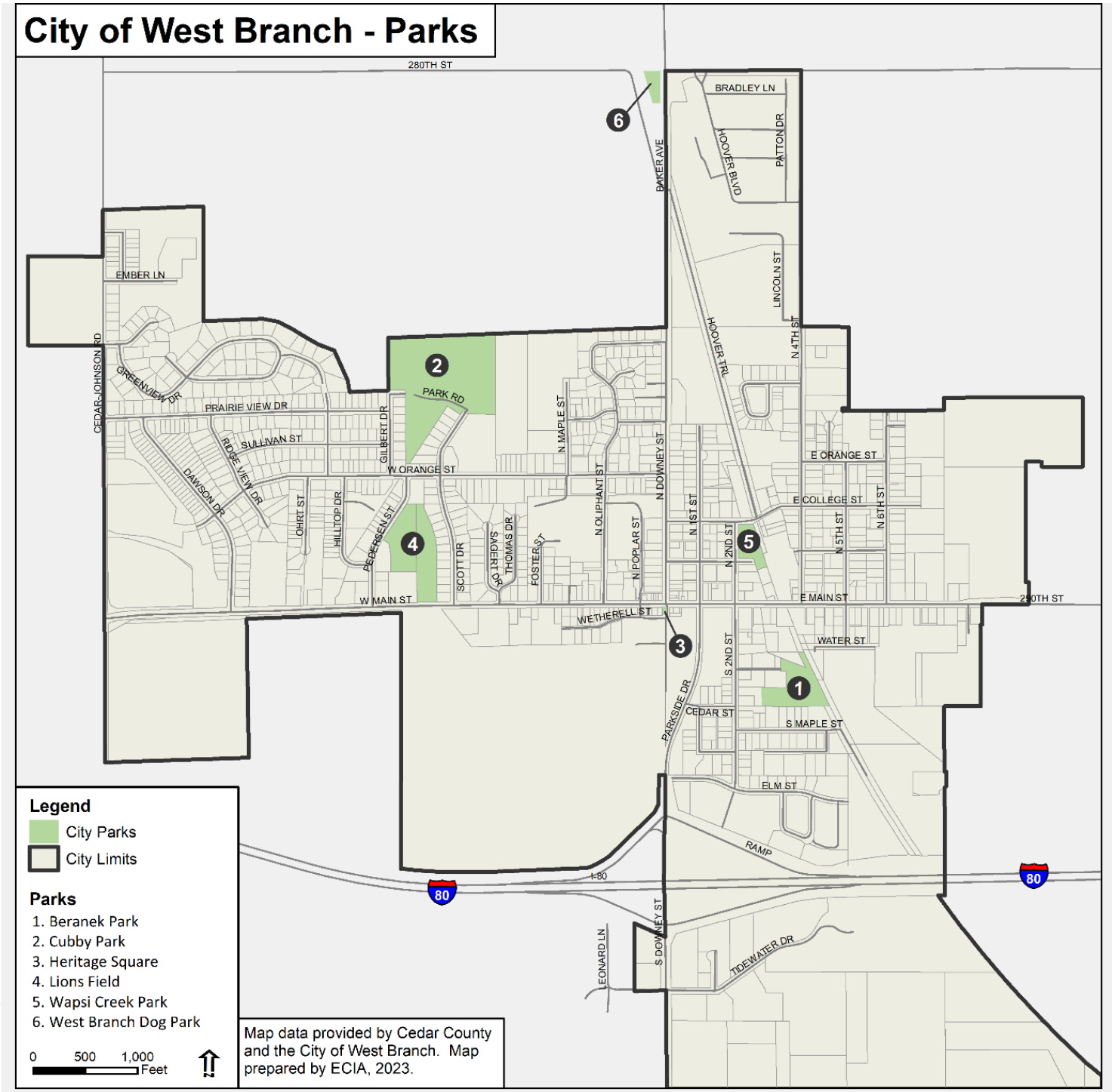
PARK AMENITIES

The City of West Branch’s parks offer a wide range of recreational amenities. The below graphic provides a summary of West Branch’s current park amenities. All municipal parks are open daily from 7am to 10pm.

Park Amenities	Beraneck Park	Cubby Park	Lion's Field	Wapsi Creek Park	Heritage Square - Downtown	West Branch Dog Park	Mural Pocket Park
Baseball / Softball Fields		X					
Basketball Court	X						
Batting Cage		X					
Concessions		X					
Dog Friendly						X	
Fishing							
Grills	X			X			
Mountain Bike Trail							
Multi-Use Trail, Paved	X	X					
Multi-Use Trail, Unpaved	X			X			
Natural Areas		X					
Parking		X	X	X			
Pavilions	X		X				
Pickleball		X					
Picnic Areas	X	X		X	X	X	
Playground	X	X		X			
Pond		X					
Restrooms	X	X	X				
Soccer Fields			X				
Splash Pad							
Tennis Court							
Volleyball, Hard Surface							
Volleyball, Sand	X						
Other/Horseshoe/ETC	X					X	

PARK MAPS

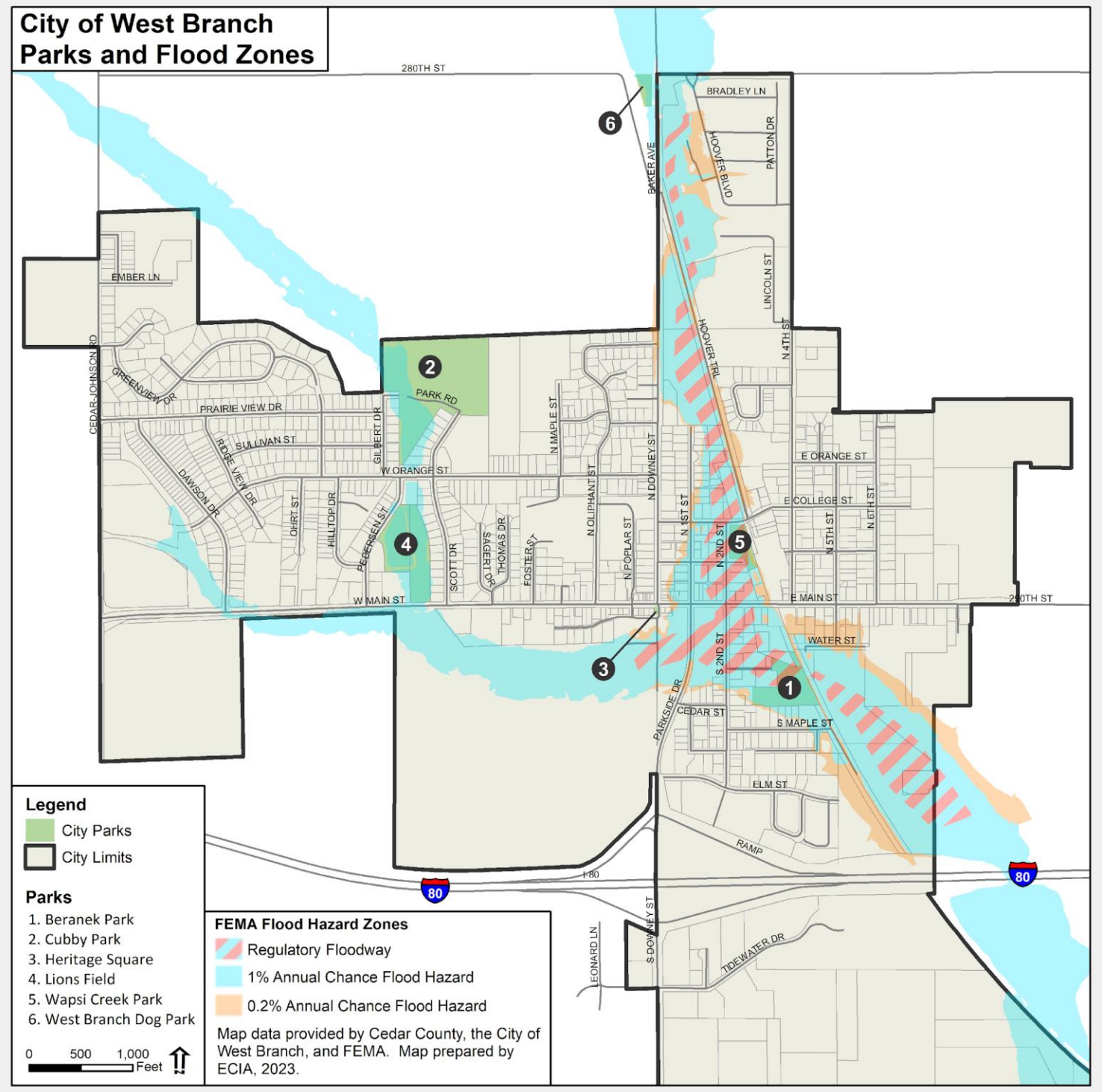
Figure 1 maps the City of West Branch's current parks.



ONGOING RESTRICTIONS & CONFLICTS

Floodplain Encroachment

All seven parks associated with this plan are impacted in some way by floodplain encroachment. The Wapsinoc Creek runs through, or adjacent to, six of the parks, with some floodplains creating restrictions on what and where features and amenities can be located. Below are flood plain maps that show an overview of the flooding limits in these locations.



Gas Pipeline Easement

In addition to the floodplain impacts, the Enterprise Gas Pipeline runs at an angle through Cubby Park. This pipeline exists within a 60' easement and intersects the Cubby Park parcel at an angle from northeast to southwest. See Appendix B for a plat of the existing pipeline easement.

Notes from previous Park Plan:

- Depth of pipeline was evaluated in 2014. See Appendix B.
- Allowable fill over the pipeline is a maximum of eight feet.
- Ball field fencing can be installed within the pipeline easement, with spacing at a 5' minimum from the outside wall of the pipeline. Fences may not parallel the pipeline within the easement.
- Pipe relocation will be needed for any future structural crossings that invite loading over the pipeline (i.e., streets, parking lot).
- Pipe relocation costs are the responsibility of the City of West Branch.
- Enterprise may trim or remove vegetation as necessary to maintain rights-of-way.

City of West Branch Park & Recreation Issues and Needs

The planning process identified the following needs for the community's parks and recreation system.

Through the plan development process, the West Branch Parks and Recreation Board compiled a list of the community's park needs. This section of the plan lists the needs along with some discussion of potential methods for addressing them.

Projects

Survey results indicated that the community is much more "big goal" focused, rather than simply small improvement park projects. 82% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more taxes (in the range of \$30/month or \$360/year) to support of proposed park projects.

Supporting this response, more than 57% of surveys indicated support for a new combined Recreation/Community center, while more than 25% indicated the desire for an Outdoor Aquatic Center.

The City of West Branch also identified a list of smaller, key projects to balance the large, more costly investments that will help the community achieve the objectives established in this plan. This section of the plan provides a project description, a project location map, and prioritizes the project list.

Project Priorities

Through the planning process, the City of West Branch evaluated the existing conditions of the City's park facilities, collected input from members of the community, and identified gaps and needs. The city used the information collected to develop a list of improvement projects designed to fill the gaps and elevate the quality of the community's parks overall.

After compiling the project list, the community's final task was project prioritization. West Branch organized its projects into two groups: Top Priority Projects and Opportunity Projects.

TOP PRIORITY PROJECTS

The projects in the top priority group are the most important projects for the future development of the park and trail systems and are projects that should be implemented first. Projects in the top priority category should also be ready to implement soon. Top priority projects should be considered short to medium term objectives that should be targeted for implementation over the next ten years. Table 1 lists the City of West Branch's top priority projects.

OPPORTUNITY PROJECTS

The projects in the opportunity group are projects that will help move the community closer to its long-term goals, but are not considered immediate needs. The City does not expect to be able to implement this quickly. Opportunity projects are to be considered long-term objectives, that would be implemented between ten and twenty years down the road.

However, with opportunity projects the implementation timeline can be moved up if an opportunity presents itself. For example, a road reconstruction project could provide an opportunity to add a new bike lane or trail. Table 2 Lists the City of West Branch’s opportunity projects.

Table 1. Top Priority Projects

Project	Description
Pickleball/multi-use court	
Park amenities	
Programming for all demographics	
Bike Repair/air station	
Clearing trails in the winter	

Table 2. Opportunity Projects

Project	Description
Recreation Center with pool or splash pad	
Additional trails	
Connect Cubby Park to Gilbert via a pedestrian bridge	
Amphitheater	

Large Projects

1. Recreation Center with pool or splash pad
2. Additional trails
3. Connect Cubby Park to Gilbert via a pedestrian bridge

Medium Projects

1. Pickleball/multi-use court
2. Park amenities: shade awnings at Cubby Park, shelters, bike racks, lighting, benches, tables, landscaping, trees, water fountains, bathrooms, playgrounds
3. Amphitheater

Small Projects

1. Programming for all demographics
2. Bike repair/air station
3. Clearing trails in the winter