

# City of West Branch



## Master Plan

Adopted September 2009

# City of West Branch Planning Commission

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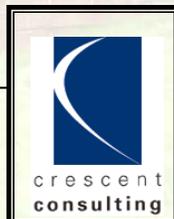
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# Introduction

## HISTORY

(Source: West Branch Area, First One Hundred Years)



**Figure 1. Early West Branch**

Originally called Springvale, the City of West Branch was eventually renamed to reflect its location – on the west branch of the Rifle River. West Branch had its beginnings in the early 1870s when the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad built a line to the area for transporting lumber. In 1873 the City was given a US Post Office. By 1874 the area had added a school, hotel, house, train depot, and a doctor and lawyer. The hotel, originally called the Weidmans and Wright Hotel was renamed the West Branch Hotel. Also in 1874 Edward Washington opened a general store. It was in his honor that Houghton Avenue was called Washington Avenue for a time. By 1884 the village included several stores, a bank, mill, and newspaper. West Branch was formally organized as a village in 1885 and was reorganized as a fourth-class city in 1905. By 1920, there were 1,105 people living in the City of West Branch.



**Figure 2. The West Branch Hotel (l) and Corner of Houghton Avenue and Third around 1940 (r)**

## THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING

A Master Plan is a tool used by municipalities to analyze the current state of their communities and plan for their future growth, development, and needs. This document attempts to address this issue by detailing the City of West Branch's current conditions and looks to the future to take specific actions to address the needs of the community.

A Master Plan can generally be described by the following key characteristics:

- **Future Oriented:** The Plan concerns itself with long-range planning in guiding growth and land use needs. The plan is not only a picture of the community today, but a guide to how the community should evolve over the next five to ten years in response to growth.
- **General:** The plan establishes broad principles and policies to address future growth and land use needs.
- **Comprehensive:** The plan addresses all types of land uses and the practical geographic boundaries of each.
- **A Plan:** The land use plan is a tangible document which consists of both text and maps, with maps typically illustrating the policies set forth within the text.

The purposes of the Master Plan are intended to preserve and create a community that is best for its residents and its neighbors. In order to achieve this, the Plan is written as an analysis of what the community has, and a guide regarding how to use it when making land use decisions.

**Master Plans** serve to:

- **Seek** citizen input on needs and services
- **Provide** an overall perspective of the land, how it is being used, and how it should be used in the future
- **Create** a general statement of the goals and objectives of the community
- **Preserve** the quality of life in the community
- **Promote** public health, safety, and welfare for the region's citizens
- **Guide** the use of limited resources and preservation in the most effective manner possible through clear and logical zoning decisions

Master Plans do not have the force of law. ***As guides, they are intended to be referenced and kept current.*** The Future Land Use plan is the key feature of the plan when making zoning decisions, capital improvement decisions, utility expansions, land divisions and all decisions with neighboring communities. It is important to remember however, that *as a guide, as opposed to an engineering tool*, the maps contained in this document are not intended to be used to scale property lines, be a definitive source for tax purpose, or determine the exact boundaries of flood plains or wetlands, for example.

The Plan only has value if it is used and it has more ongoing value if it is used in conjunction with all the other planning efforts that are going on in the City of West Branch and the surrounding communities. Coordinated planning helps each group leverage their individual

funds, knowledge and momentum toward an outcome. Some of these efforts are:

- West Branch Downtown Development Authority Plan
- Growth Analysis Planning group
- The Ogemaw Economic Development Corporation
- The Historic District Committee
- The I-75 Business Loop Market Study and Plan (includes a Transportation Study)
- The Brownfield Authority

# Regional Location

## LOCATION

The city of West Branch is located at the junction of M-55 and M-30 in Ogemaw County and is the largest city in the county. It is the county seat and encompasses approximately 1.3 square miles. The northern edge of the City is bounded by Willow St. Court St. runs along the western city limits, and Fairview along the east. The southern boundaries are irregular.

There are several smaller cities within 20 miles of West Branch. Distances to these and other Michigan cities are listed in the table below.



**Table 1. Distances to other Michigan Cities**

<b>Cities:</b>	<b>Distance from West Branch (miles)</b>
Rose City	13.1
St. Helen	13.8
Skidway Lake	14.7
Prescott	21.8
Sterling	22.5
Gladwin	26.6
Mio	27.2
Standish	27.9
Saginaw	62.3
Detroit	152.1

## **TRANSPORTATION ROUTES**

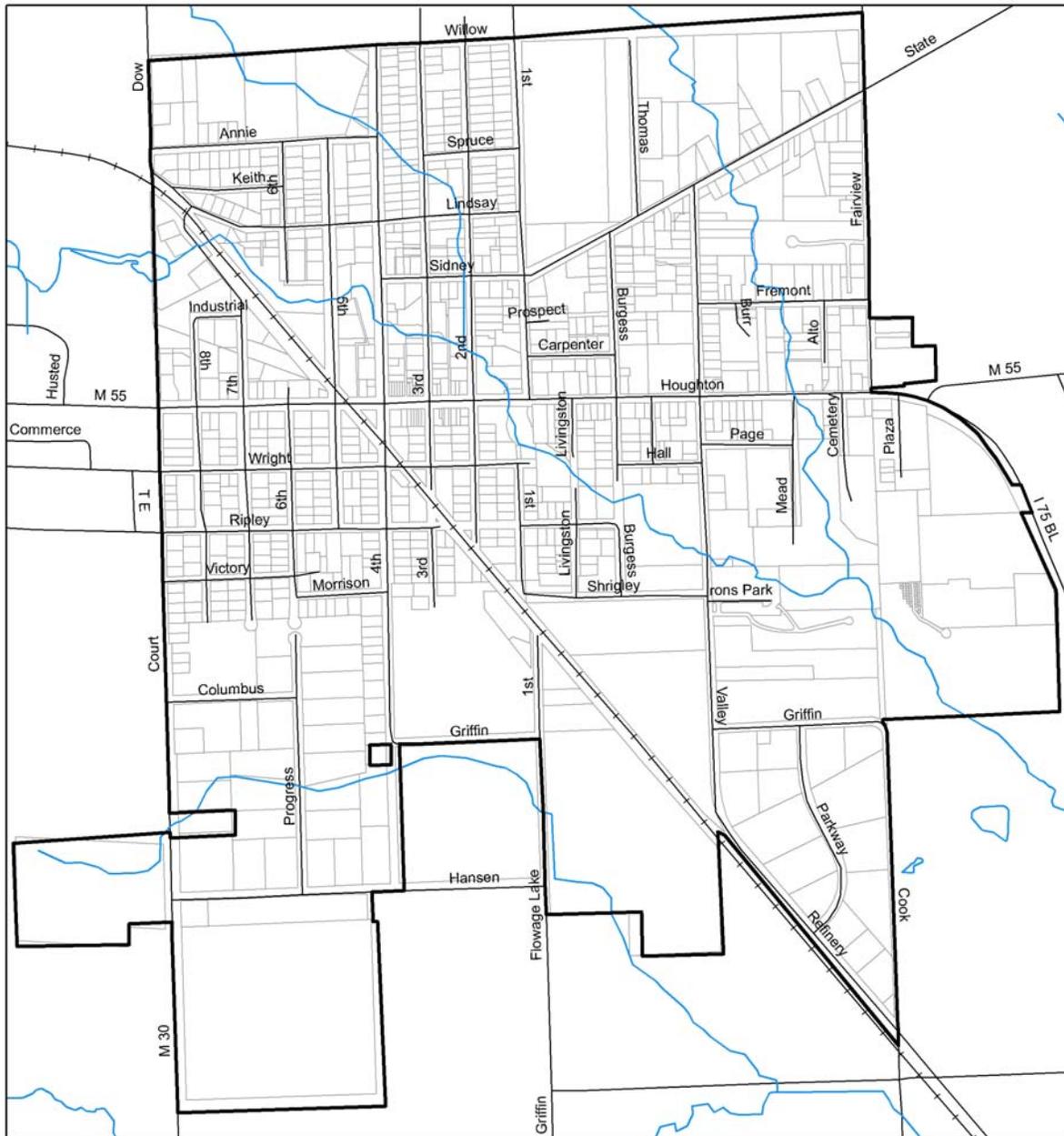
Interstate 75 Business Loop (BL I-75) runs east-west through the center of West Branch on M-55 (Houghton Ave). The loop uses a portion of the former M-76 and the current M-55. M-30 (Court St.) runs along the western border of the City, north-south. Two I-75 interchanges provide access to the City of West Branch, Exits 212 and 215.

Most of the roads within the city limits are paved. There still remain however, a few dirt roads, the east end of Willow Street for example. Both Houghton (M-55) and Court (M-30) carry substantial amounts of traffic.

The I-75 Business Loop Market Study and Plan Transportation Review and Report has identified average daily traffic volumes, crash statistics and road capacities and speed limits through West Branch and the corridor. While it is not necessary to repeat this work here, it is worth noting that traffic volumes entering West Branch on Houghton Street (M-55) are close to 8,000 vehicles per day as of 2007, making this a heavily travelled thoroughfare that merits close traffic control and management. Average daily traffic volumes in the center of town at Houghton and Fifth Street, have remained between 14,600 and 17,600 over the last seven years although they have been decreasing slightly, but steadily, during this time period. Commercial traffic on M-55 through town appears to have remained more constant, at roughly the same percentage of total traffic volume, roughly 4.4% to 4.9%, at the east and west city limits and 3.7% in the center of town. (Source: MDOT AADT, <http://apps.michigan.gov/tmis/Search.aspx>)

The Corridor Plan has isolated vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic issues to study. Of these concerns, many access management, vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic related recommendations emerged and are detailed as part of that study. Those that impact the City of West Branch most are expressed in goals in this plan.

**Map 1. City Map**



Map Prepared by:

ENP & ASSOCIATES  
crescent consulting

Last updated: 3/13/08  
Data source:  
Michigan Geographic Data Library

**West Branch Base Map**

**Legend**

City Limits	Railroads	Parcels*
Rivers	Roads	

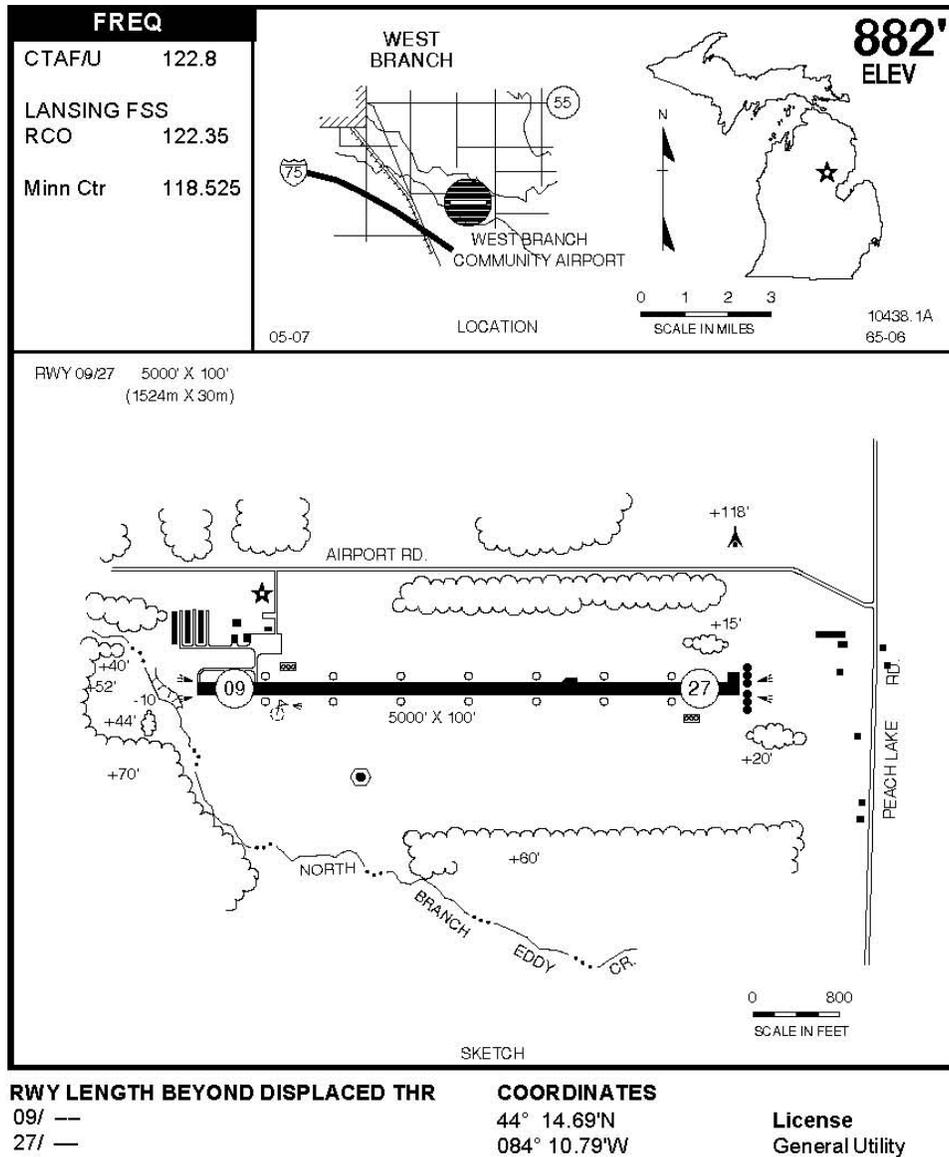


1 inch equals 1,000 feet

\*Accuracy of parcel lines is not guaranteed and should be used for planning purposes only

A community airport, 2 miles southeast of the town, accommodates private airplanes. Bus service by Ogemaw Public Transit Organization serves the area with a demand/response for the City.

**Map 2. West Branch Community Airport**



Additionally, the area is served by freight shipping, especially as there is a United Parcel Shipping service office in town.

(Source: [http://www.michigan.gov/aero/0,1607,7-145-6777\\_7036---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/aero/0,1607,7-145-6777_7036---,00.html) )

The City is also almost bisected by the old Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad line running from the southeast corner to the northwest corner of through the city. Lake State Railway freight trains still use this rail several times a week.

(Source: [http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9622\\_11033---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9622_11033---,00.html) )



Map 3. Michigan Railway Map

# Community Characteristics

(All demographic data from various US Census Bureau sources.)

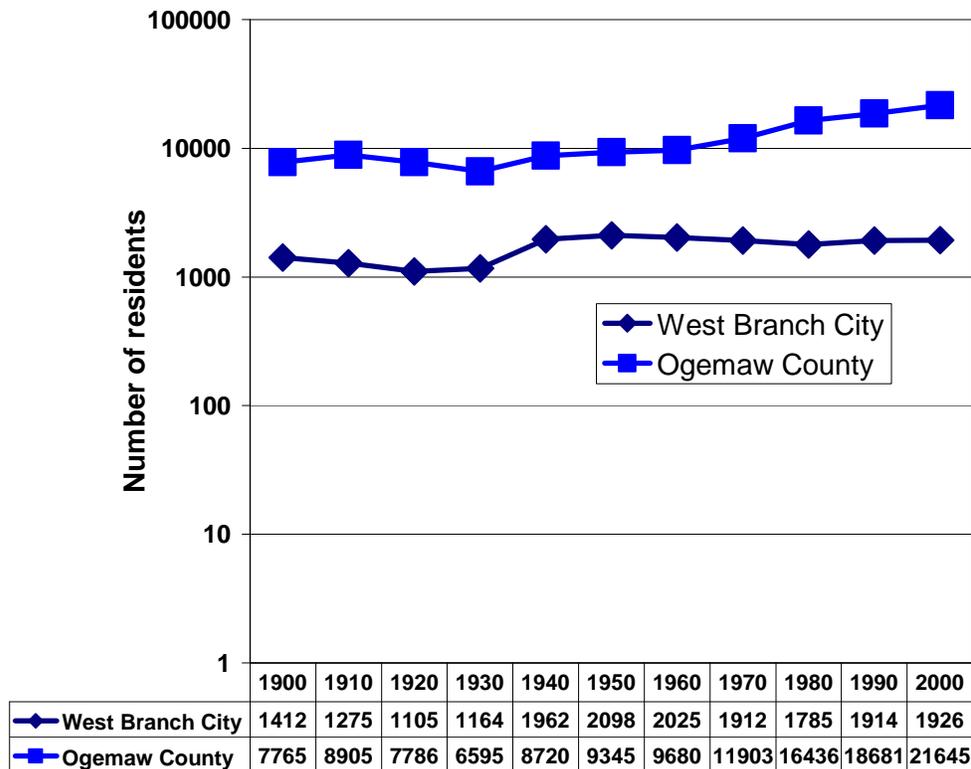
## POPULATION

The population of the City of West Branch has changed little for almost 6 decades. In 1940 the population was 1,962 and in 2000 the population was 1,926, a 1.8% decrease over the 60 years. Historically, the highest population was in the 1950s with 2,098 residents.

When compared to the population of Ogemaw County during the 1900s, West Branch seems to have matched a similar growth pattern up until the 1960s. From the 1970s through 2000 Ogemaw County's rate of growth was ahead of the City of West Branch. Predictions of substantial population growth from the 1970s, based on an anticipated influx from people from the Detroit area, were not realized. Additionally, there was a 6.6% drop in population from the 1970s to the 1980s. This drop was attributed to the economic recession of the times. By the 1990s the population was back up to 1,914.

Estimates for 2006 show a further decrease in population to 1,881. (-3.09%)

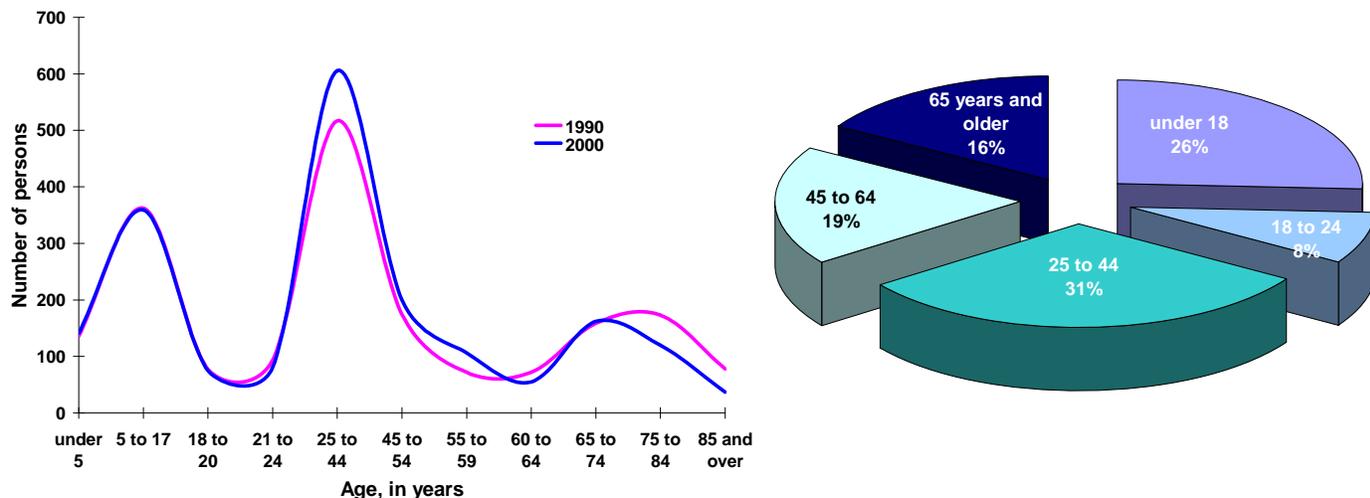
**Figure 3. Population 1900-2000**



According to the 2000 US Census, 47.7% percent of the City's residents are male, and 52.3% are female. The age distribution of residents has remained almost the same from 1990 to 2000. In general, the community seems quite balanced with 31% of the residents between the ages of 25 and 44, 26% under the age of 18, and 16% over the age of 65. In 1970 the median age for

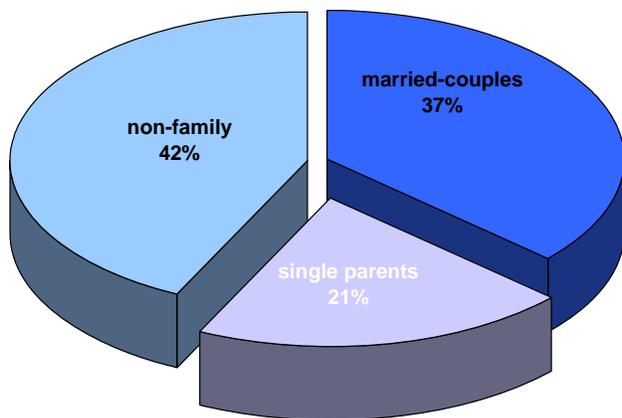
residents was 31.9 years, while the median age for Michigan was 26.3 years. By 2000 the median resident age was 35 years, closely matching the State median age of 35.5 years.

**Figure 4. Age Distribution of Residents**



Almost all of the residents are of the white race (94.8%). The remaining 5.2% are Asian, American Indian, or two or more races. One-third of the population comes from German origins. Other top ancestral nationalities are English, Irish, and French.

**Table 2. Household Data**



There were 850 households in the City of West Branch in 2000. This was an increase of 12.4% from 1990. Of these 850 households, 486 (58%) consider themselves family units, versus 364 who live in “non-families”. Family households are composed of married couples, both with and without children; single parents with children; and other related individuals. Non-families are people who live alone or with people who are unrelated.

Households	1990	2000
<b>With Children</b>	268 (35.4%)	256 (30.1%)
<b>Without Children</b>	488 (64.6%)	594 (69.9%)

The number of households with children in 2000 was down approximately 5% from the 1990 Census numbers. There were 256 households with children, and 594 without. The average household size was 2.26 persons, as compared to 2.6 for the state of Michigan. This is down 27.8% from the 1970 average of 3.13, and a 3.4% decrease from the 1990 average of 2.34.

## HOUSING



**Table 3. Tenure of Housing Units**

Households	1980	1990	2000
Owner Occupied	447(61.5%)	425 (52.1%)	445 (47.9%)
Median Value	\$27,400	\$41,000	\$67,200
Renter Occupied	209 (28.7%)	338 (41.5%)	391 (42.1%)
Median Gross Rent	n/a	\$322	\$416
Vacant Units	71 (7.8%)	52 (6.4%)	93 (10.0%)

In 2000, there were 929 housing units. Of these, 836 were occupied, and 93 (10%) vacant. Owner-occupied housing accounted for almost 48% of the available housing units with a median value of \$67,200. Renters have a median monthly rent, including utilities and fuel costs (gross rent) of \$416 and account for approximately 42% of occupied housing. In the State overall the percentage of people occupying rental units is 35.5%. This percentage is significantly lower than in West Branch due to two senior citizen apartment buildings.

Single units account for 69.7% of the occupied housing units while multi-family units comprise 28.1%.

**Table 4. Type of Housing Units**

Housing Units	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Single Unit	420	420	131	163
Duplex	5	4	56	42
Multiple Units - 3 and up	NA	3	145	186
Mobile Home/Other	NA	18	6	0





The median year the City’s housing units were built was 1956. That means that half of the City’s units were built before 1956. And, in fact, 30% were built before 1940. There were 90 units built from 1990 to 1998, and 42 units built from 1999 to March 2000. Very few new single housing units are visible on a drive-through of the city in 2008. More evident are the newer condominiums on the east side of the city on Victorian Court and on Fairview close to Houghton. This change in the characteristics of newer housing units is representative of a constant, but aging population and smaller family size. Additionally, more people are choosing life styles and living units that require less maintenance.

**Table 5. Age of Housing**

<b>Year Structure Built</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
1999 to March 2000	NA	42
1990 to 1998	NA	90
1989 to 1990	15	NA
1980 to 1989	142	122
1970 to 1979	114	101
1960 to 1969	79	69
1950 to 1959	66	112
1940 to 1949	94	112
1939 or earlier	305	281
<b>Median year structure built</b>	<b>1951</b>	<b>1956</b>



The median number of rooms for housing units in the city is 5.1. Only 18% of the housing has 3 rooms or less, while approximately 40% of the housing has 4 or 5 rooms, and 42% has 6 or more rooms. Of the occupied housing, 97.8% has 1 occupant or less per room.

No houses were reported to be lacking plumbing or kitchen facilities in 2000, however 13 reported not having telephone service. This statistic is likely to indicate the growing trend toward people having only cellular phone service and wireless internet service instead of land lines, but is not able to be substantiated with the 2000 census information. Homes are generally heated with utility gas (77.3%), while electricity, fuel oil, wood, propane, and other fuels sources account for the remaining 22.7%. The City of West Branch provides city water and sewer systems to all but a few residents who remain on a well for water supply.

The median house value in 2000 was \$67,200. It has been estimated that the median value in 2005 was \$87,200. The State median house value for 2005 was \$149,300.

**Table 6. Housing Values**



Housing Values	2000
Less than \$50,000	83
\$50,000 to \$99,999	258
\$100,000 to \$149,999	38
\$150,000 to \$199,999	11
\$200,000 to \$299,999	0
\$300,000 to \$499,999	5
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0
\$1,000,000 or more	0
<b>Median (dollars)</b>	<b>\$67,200</b>

## EMPLOYMENT

Of the 1498 residents 16 years and over in 2000, 963 (64.3%) were part of the labor force. People considered in the labor force are those who are employed or actively looking for work. Of these, 880 (91.4%) were employed and 83 (8.6%) were unemployed. In 1990 the comparable unemployment rate was 10.2% and in 1970 the rate was 8.6%. What is more notable, however, is that in 1970 more than 90% of those eligible to work were part of the labor force – either employed or unemployed. By 1980 this had dropped to just over 53%, and in 2000 64% of those over 16 years old were considered part of the labor force. In Ogemaw County, 52.2% of the population over 16 years was part of the labor force in 2000. Of the county’s labor force, 8.5% were unemployed.

In 2000, 31% of those employed were part of the management/professional occupation group. This sector showed the largest increase from 1990. There are very few of the City’s residents employed in farming, fishing or forestry. Additionally, the number of those employed in the

construction industry has decreased since the 1990s. Almost 80% of the work force was employed in management/professional, sales/office, or service occupations in 2000. This compares with 68% for those employed in these occupations in Ogemaw County.

There were 110 residents who did not have access to a vehicle in 2000. However, 658 had one or two, and 68 residents had more than 3 vehicles.

Over one-third of workers traveled between 5 and 9 minutes to get to work. The mean travel time for all workers was 14.5 minutes. Most workers (88%) used a car, truck or van to get to work.

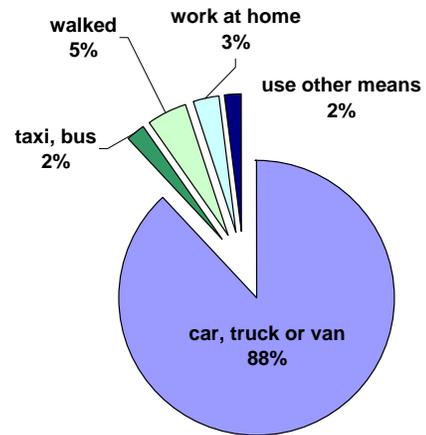
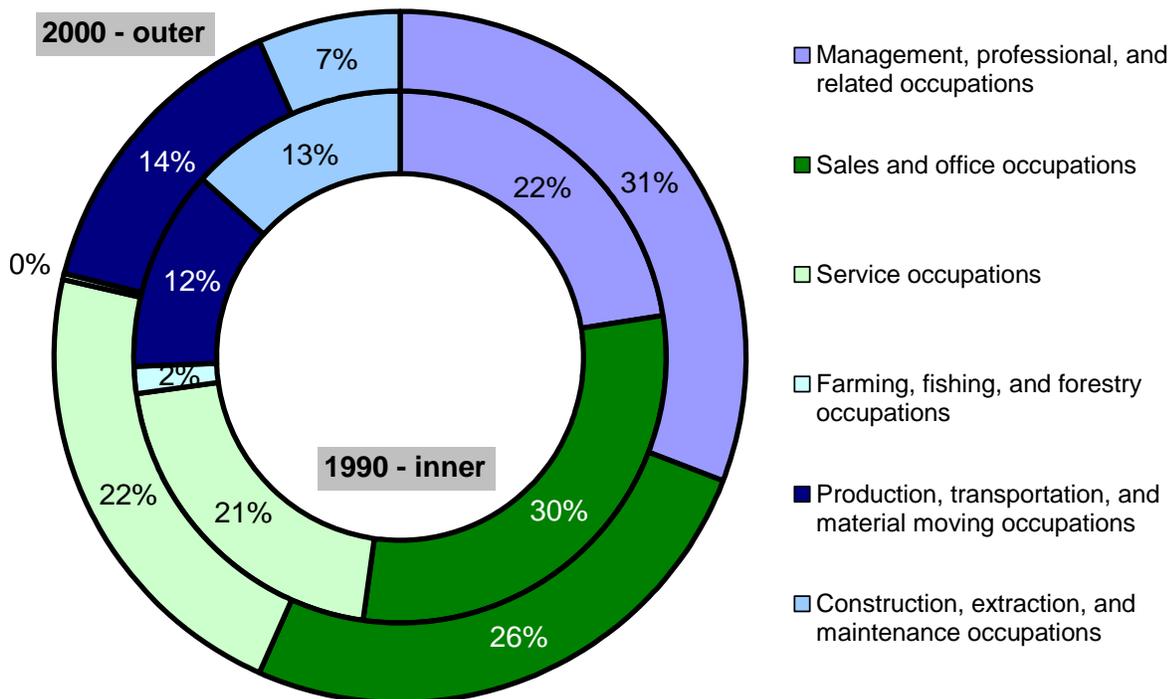


Figure 5. Means of Travel to Work

Figure 5. Occupations



The largest industry in West Branch is Educational, Health, and Social Services accounting for almost one-third of the jobs. A 2008 drive-through of the City notes a substantial growth in medical facilities and clinics in the City. It appears that West Branch serves the medical care needs for a wide area of northeast Michigan. Another area showing growth from the 1990s is the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food services sector. In 1990 this

sector accounted for 2% of the employment, while in 2000 more than 10% of the labor force worked in this industry. The Service industry, of which these occupations are a part, is growing state wide as well. Ogemaw County is a recreational area and tourism accounts for substantial income to the communities in the County, as is evidenced by the employment data.

**Figure 6. Employment Industry Sectors**



Local government is another key employer in the City. In March 2006 there were 338 full-time and 100 part-time employees on the payroll. These jobs ranged from police officers to hospital employees.

**Figure 7. Local Government Employment, March 2006**

Function	Full-time	Part-time
Police	6	5
Government administration	0	7
Financial administration	3	2
Street and Highways	5	0
Hospitals	316	81
Sewerage	3	0
Housing and community development	3	1
Library	2	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: [www.city-data.com/city/West-Branch-Michigan.html](http://www.city-data.com/city/West-Branch-Michigan.html)

## INCOME

The median household income in 2000 was \$30,132. In Ogemaw County the median was \$30,474 and in Michigan it was \$44,667. However, in 2005, the West Branch median was estimated to be \$29,900, as compared to \$46,039 for Michigan.

**Table 7. Income**

Income Category	1990 Census	2000 Census
Less than \$10,000	261 (34.5%)	126 (14.8%)
\$10,000 to \$14,999	94 (12.4%)	92 (10.8%)
\$15,000 to \$24,999	152 (20.1%)	142 (16.7%)
\$25,000 to \$34,999	99 (13.1%)	133 (15.6%)
\$35,000 to \$49,999	101 (13.4%)	143 (16.8%)
\$50,000 to \$74,999	34 (4.5%)	123 (14.5%)
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3 (0.4%)	50 (5.9%)
\$100,000 to \$149,999	6 (0.8%)	26 (3.1%)
\$150,000 or more	6 (0.8%)	15 (1.8%)
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$16,150</b>	<b>\$30,132</b>
Families in Poverty	96 (20.8%)	48 (9.9%)
Persons in Poverty	377 (21.2%)	266 (14.0%)

Almost 21% of the City's households were considered to be in poverty in 1990. By 2000, this number had fallen to less than 10%, just under the 11% number for Ogemaw County.

## SOCIAL

There was a dramatic increase in the education level from 1990 to 2000. Approximately 50% of residents over the age of 25 have some college education. This compares with 33% for 1990. The Michigan 2000 US Census percentage of people who have obtained some college education is 44%.

### 2000 Household median income

City of West Branch	\$30,132
Ogemaw County	\$30,474
Michigan	\$44,667

### 2000 Persons in Poverty

City of West Branch	14%
Ogemaw County	14%
Michigan	10.5%

**Table 8. Population**

<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	<b>1990 Census</b>		<b>2000 Census</b>		<b>1990-2000 Percent Change</b>
Less than High School	430	(34.5%)	209	(16.3%)	<b>-51.4%</b>
High School Graduate	402	(32.3%)	433	(33.7%)	7.7%
1-3 Years College	237	(19.0%)	400	(31.1%)	68.8%
4-Year College Degree	114	(9.2%)	173	(13.5%)	51.8%
Advanced Degree	62	(5.0%)	70	(5.4%)	12.9%



**Kirtland Community College**

## UTILITIES

The City is served by a municipal water and sewer system. Recent concerns over water contamination have led to the need to construct additional treatment facilities and modify some aspects of the distribution network. There are two water towers in the City, one, the famous smiley face and the other an older tower slated for removal when the water issues have been resolved. The City also has full cable and cellular service provided by private companies.



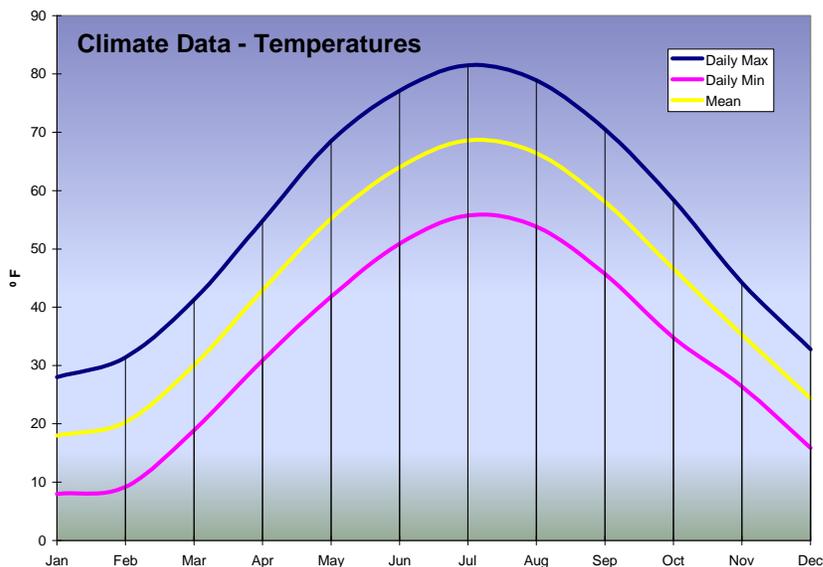
# Natural Features

## CLIMATE

Climate Data - 1971-2000 from the West Branch Station [www.ncdc.noaa.gov](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov)

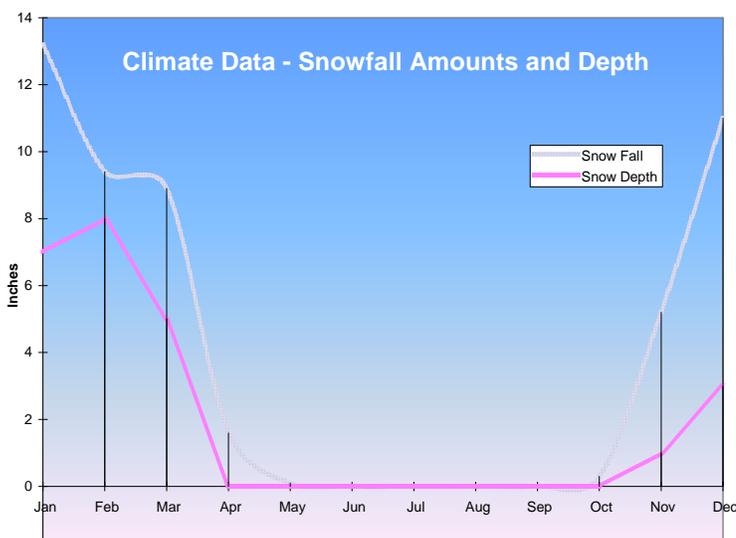
The temperature in West Branch ranges from a daily maximum of 28°F in January to 81.5°F in July. The lowest daily minimum temperature of the year is usually recorded in January and is 8°F. The average annual temperature for the area is 55.6°F.

Total annual rainfall is just over 30 inches. August tends to have the highest amount of rainfall with an average of almost 4 inches. However, May, June, July and September have mean rainfall amounts of approximately 3 inches or more each month.



**Figure 9 Climate Data - Temperatures**

The variation in climate and four distinct seasons makes West Branch and the region desirable for water, biking and other summer sports as well as snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing in the winter. These activities draw tourists and visitors to the area, accounting for much of the seasonal fluctuations in daytime population in the City and the increase in the number of workers associated with the Accommodations and Service industries.



**Figure 8. Climate Data - Snow Fall**

Normally, January has the most amount of snowfall with an average of 13.2 inches. The next highest snowfall month is December with 11 inches. Both January and February have the highest amount of snow cover with average depths of 7 and 8 inches, respectively. Total annual snowfall is almost 50 inches.

## TOPOGRAPHY

The average elevation of the City of West Branch is 955 ft. There is little elevation change in the City with several sections at 950 ft while there are portions at the northwest, northeast, and southwest corners that are 970-980 ft above sea level. (Source: EPA EnviroMapper <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/wme/>)

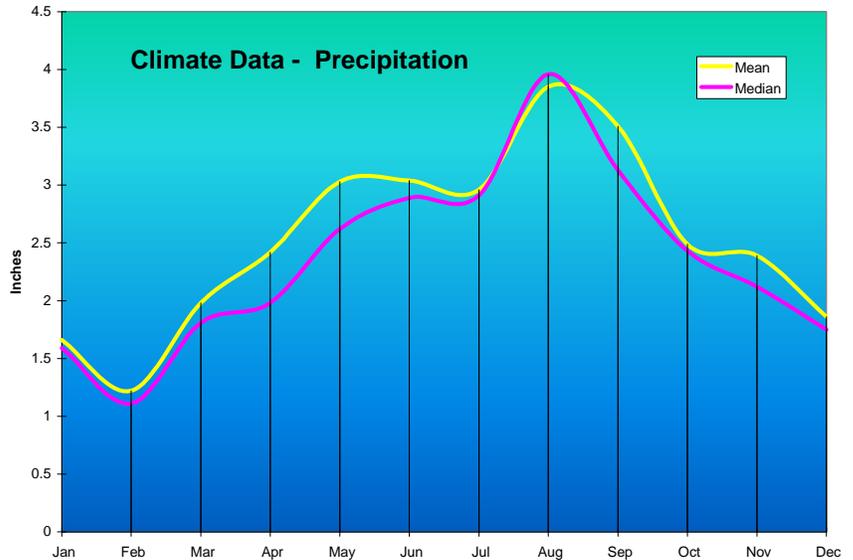
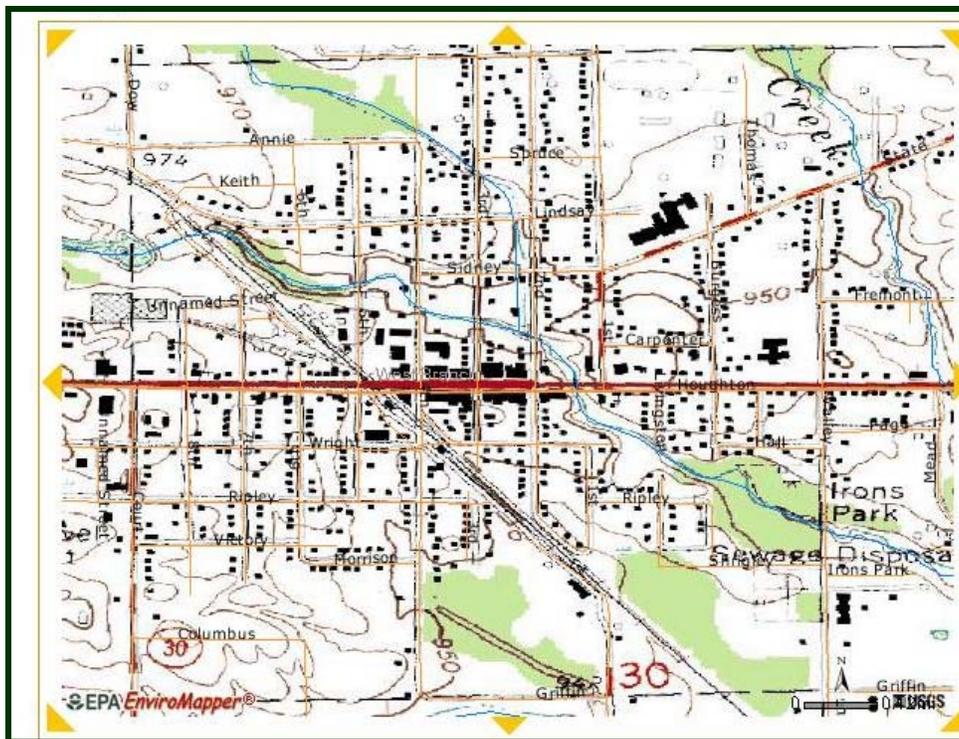


Figure 10 Climate Data - Precipitation



Map 4. Topography

## **SOILS**

Data from the Web Soil Survey Database, <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

Approximately 56% of the soils in the City are considered to be some type of sand and therefore percolate well and have low runoff potential. Sandy loam comprises 34% which gives these areas a moderate run-off potential. The southwest corner of the City has a very high run-off potential in the areas where the soils are mostly loam. Run-off classifications by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are based on assessments of soils, slope, climate and vegetation cover.

Soil composition and drainage are important considerations for the construction of basements. In West Branch, 85% of the soils are unfavorable for basements without major soil reclamation or special design. The remaining soils are moderately favorable for basement use with special planning or design. These soils are located in the southwest corner of the City.

Ponding is defined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as standing water in a closed depression. Unless a drainage system is installed, water is removed only by percolation, transpiration or evaporation. "Frequent" ponding means that it occurs in the area more than once in 2 years. Areas considered to have frequent ponding are located in the southeast and northeast quadrants.

The river and creeks are banked by Evert sand and are considered to be areas of frequent flooding. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) "frequent" means that flooding is likely to occur often under normal weather conditions. This means the chance of flooding is more that 50% in any year, but less that 50% in all months of any year.

The rest of the areas in the city are not considered to be flood prone. The chance of flooding in these areas is near 0 percent in any year, with flooding occurring less than once in 500 years.

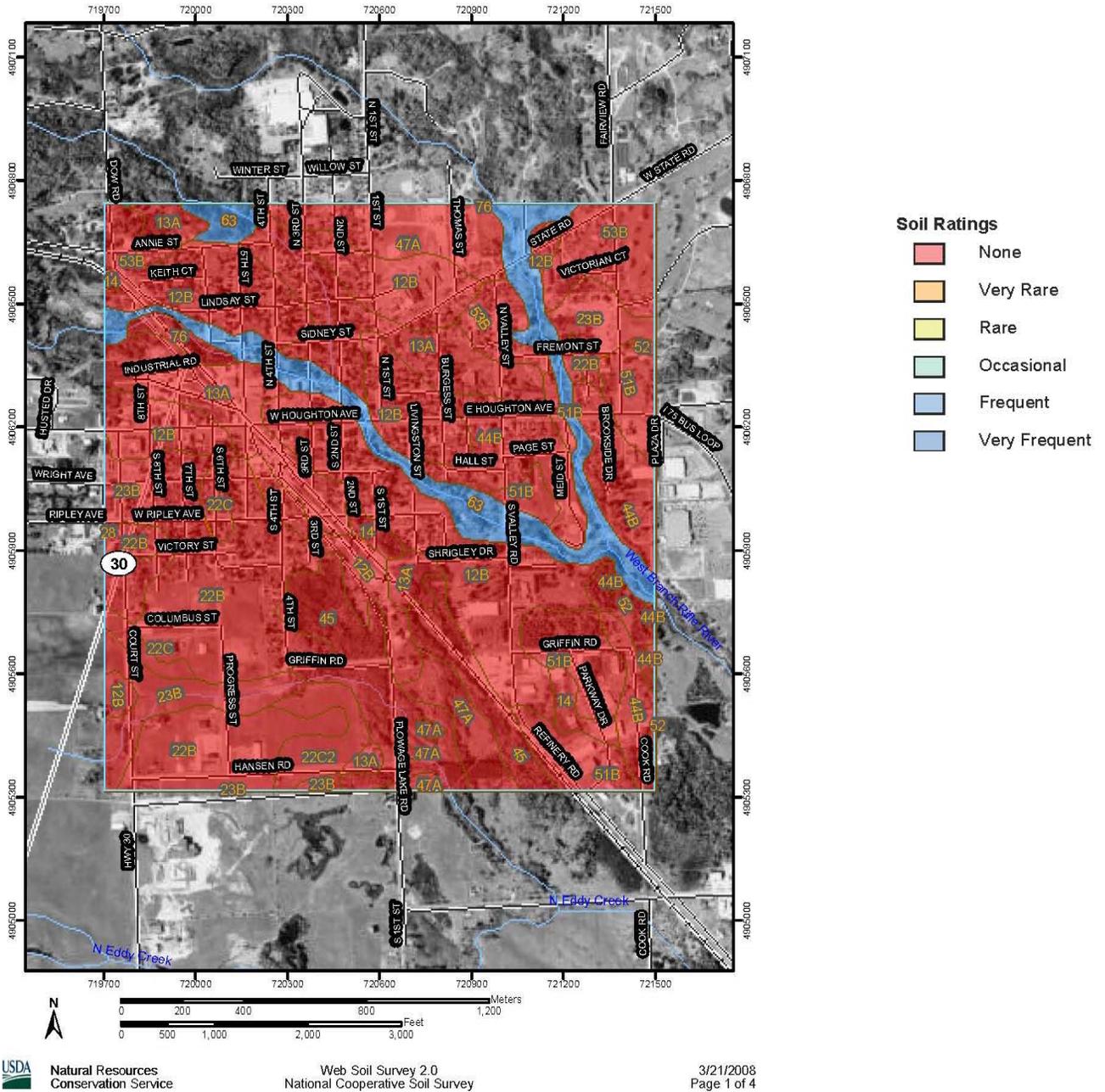
The Federal Emergency Management Administration has not mapped the City of West Branch so no federally produced flood maps are available at this time. Soil analysis is being used in this Master Plan to discuss flood prone areas.



## Map Unit Legend

Ogemaw County, Michigan (MI129)			
Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
12B	Croswell sand, 0 to 4 percent slopes	201.0	23.5%
13A	Au Gres sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes	96.9	11.4%
14	Roscommon mucky sand	10.5	1.2%
22B	Nester fine sandy loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	103.4	12.1%
22C	Nester fine sandy loam, 6 to 12 percent slopes	9.3	1.1%
22C2	Nester loam, 6 to 12 percent slopes, eroded	15.5	1.8%
23B	Kawkawlin loam, 0 to 4 percent slopes	68.1	8.0%
28	Udorthents, loamy, nearly level	0.2	0.0%
44B	Croswell sand, loamy substratum, 0 to 3 percent slopes	64.3	7.5%
45	Wheatley mucky loamy sand	62.6	7.3%
47A	Gladwin sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes	47.8	5.6%
51B	Iosco sand, 0 to 4 percent slopes	54.3	6.4%
52	Brevort mucky loamy sand	8.2	1.0%
53B	Manistee loamy sand, 0 to 6 percent slopes	39.3	4.6%
63	Ewart sand	66.2	7.8%
76	Lupton muck	5.9	0.7%
Totals for Area of Interest (AOI)		853.6	100.0%

**Table 9. Soil types (Map Legend)**



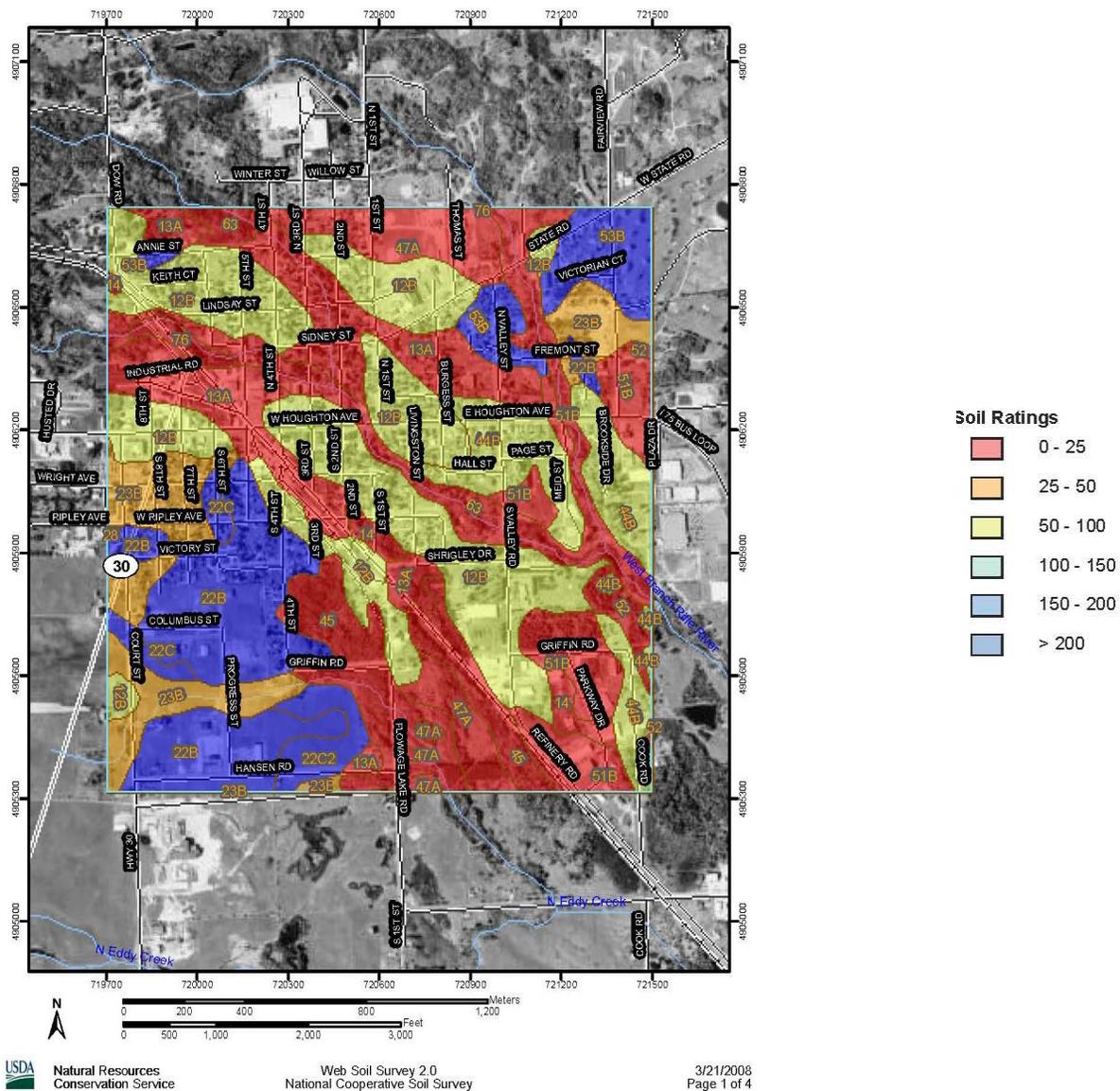
Map 6. Flooding Frequency

## SURFACE WATER

Data from the Web Soil Survey Database, <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

The City of West Branch is in the Au Gres – Rifle River Water Shed. The west branch of the Rifle River runs through the City from the southeast corner to the northwest corner. Ogemaw Creek branches off from the main river in the northwest quadrant of the City. Other small branches occur off the main river. Approximately 18% of the City's land borders waterways.

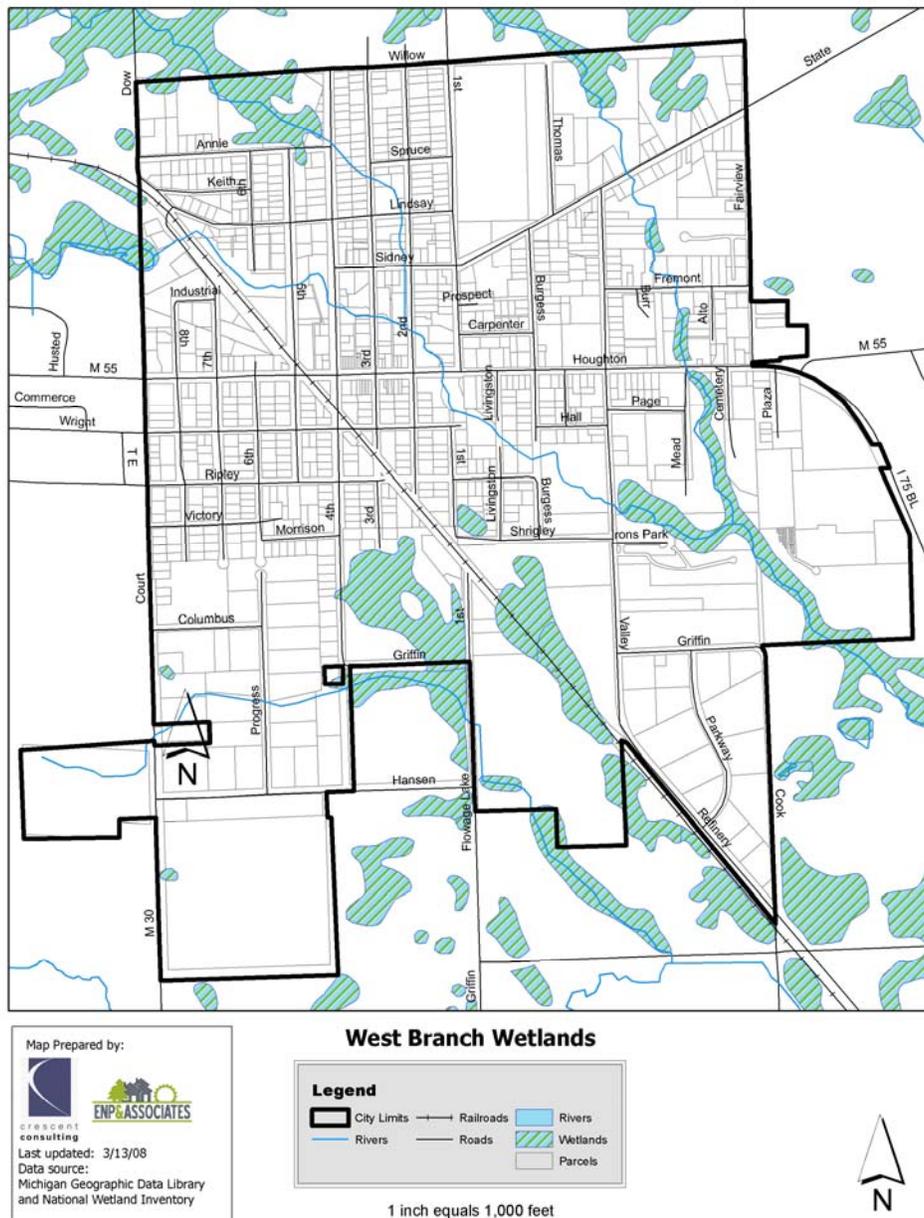
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) defines water table as a saturated zone in the soil which lasts for more than a month. The majority of the City's land is between 50 and 100 cm above the water table; while 20% of the land, notably in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the city is more than 200 cm from the water table.



Map 7. Soil Depth to Water Table

## WETLANDS

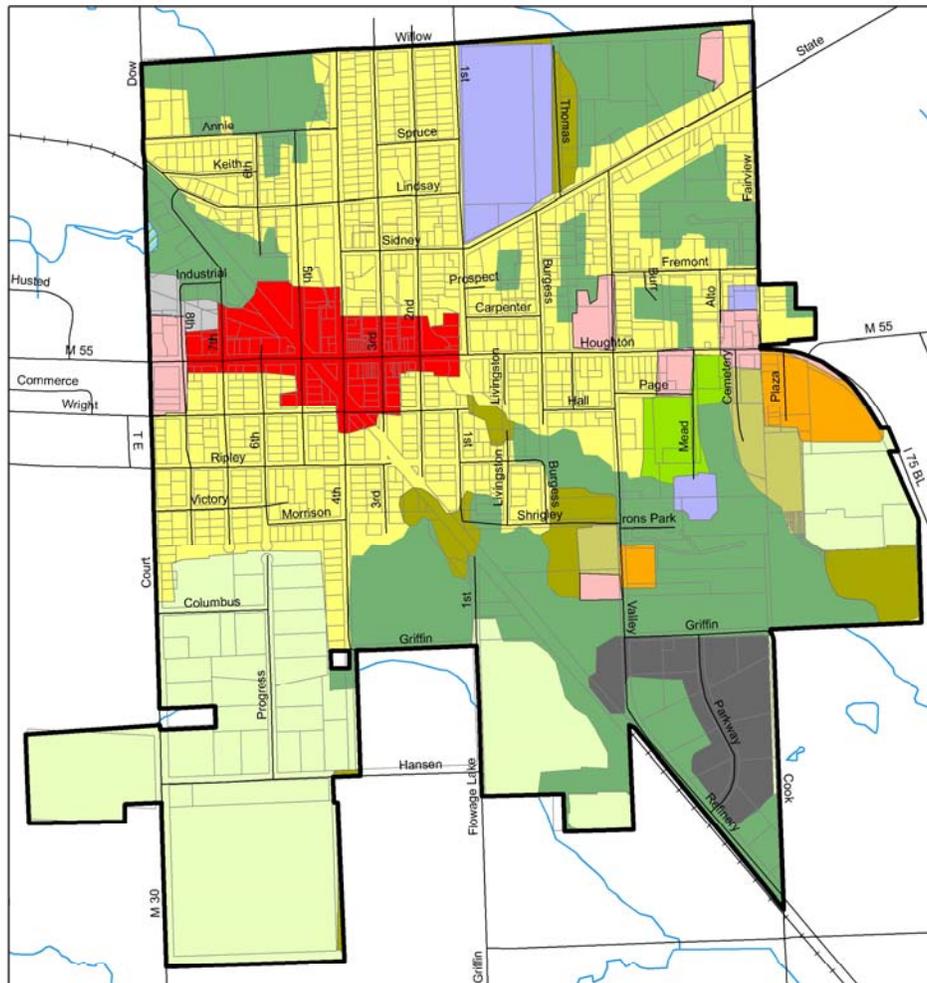
The National Wetland Inventory classifies several areas in the City as wetlands. These areas are designated on the following map. Most of these wetlands are categorized as Freshwater Forested Shrub and are predominately along the river banks toward the edges of the City, most notably in the southeast, northwest and northeast corners. (Note, not all of the river/creek banks in the City are considered to be wetlands.) Additionally, there are wetlands close to the southeastern section of the railroad tracks and a large area just north of Griffin Road bounded by First and Fourth Streets.



**Map 8. Wetlands**

# Existing Land Use

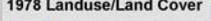
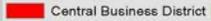
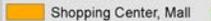
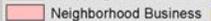
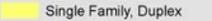
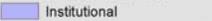
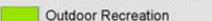
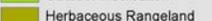
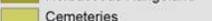
The current land uses in West Branch have changed significantly since they were last studied in 1978. The most significant changes have occurred in the south half of the City where there has been extensive commercial and medical center development. Multiple family housing has been added throughout the City. Once vacant land is now almost entirely consumed up to the City limits.



Map prepared by:  
  
 crescent consulting  
 Last updated: 4/17/08  
 Data source:  
 Crescent Consulting  
 Michigan Geographic Data Library  
 Michigan Resource Inventory System

**West Branch 1978 Land Use**

**Legend**

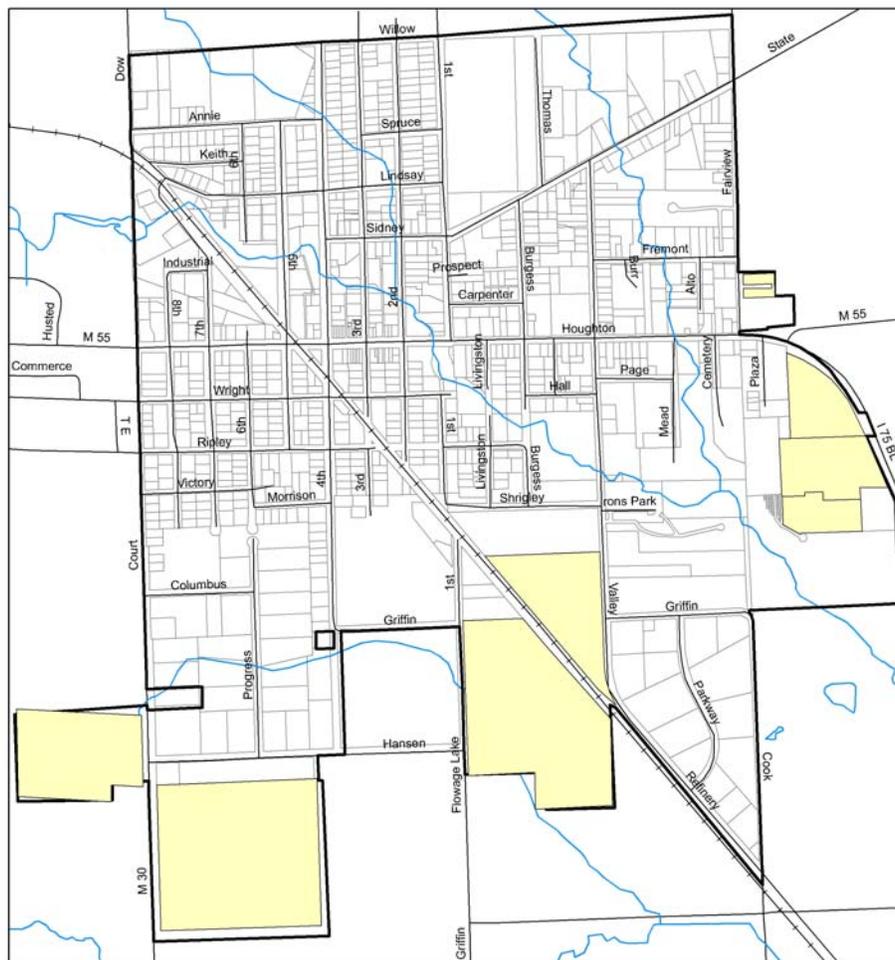
	Single Family, Duplex
	Central Business District
	Shopping Center, Mall
	Neighborhood Business
	Industrial
	Industrial Park
	Institutional
	Cropland, Rotation, and Permanent Pasture
	Outdoor Recreation
	Herbaceous Rangeland
	Cemeteries
	Woodlands/rangelands

  
 N  
 1 inch equals 1,000 feet

Map 9. 1978 Land Use

The City has grown geographically since 1978 through various annexation agreements, commonly known as “425 agreements.” Public Act 425, of 1984, permits cities to enter into annexation agreements to provide utility and other services to neighboring townships in return for sharing tax revenues on that land. Typically these agreements last for an extended period of time, 50 years, in the case of West Branch, at which time the City acquires full tax revenues on the property. In the interim, the City has full control over the use of the land. The following map shows the land that is being annexed through 425 agreements. While not technically annexed at this time, the land and population that are contained in these agreements are shown as part of the City of West Branch for purposes of the census and legal descriptions.

**Map 10. Annexation Areas**



Map Prepared by:



ENP & ASSOCIATES  
CONSULTING

Last updated: 6/16/08  
Data source:  
Michigan Geographic Data Library  
City of West Branch

**West Branch Annexation Map**

**Legend**

- Annexations
- Rivers
- Roads
- City Limits
- Railroads
- Parcels\*



1 inch equals 1,000 feet

\*Accuracy of parcel lines is not guaranteed and should be used for planning purposes only

An aerial view of the City gives a visual indication of the current land use. Residential uses account for approximately 43% of the land, with rest being a mix of Commercial, Industrial, Public, and Undeveloped lands.

Map 11. Aerial View



Map Prepared by:  
  
 crescent consulting  
 Last updated: 3/13/08  
 Data source:  
 Michigan Geographic Data Library

**West Branch Base Map**

**Legend**

 City Limits	 Railroads	 Parcels*
 Rivers	 Roads	

\*Accuracy of parcel lines is not guaranteed and should be used for planning purposes only

  
 N

1 inch equals 1,000 feet

## LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS



### **Residential – Single Family**

This classification is for areas with single family dwellings and accessory structures.



### **Residential – Multiple Family**

This classification is used for multiple family dwellings and accessory structures.



### **Commercial**

This category includes all parcels containing commercial facilities and religious institutions.



### **Industrial**

Included in this category is land used for processing, extractive, manufacturing, fabrication, assembling materials, utilities or for the outside storage of equipment and materials.



### **Public/Quasi Public**

This classification is used for public and government buildings, parks, and cemeteries. Schools – public and private – are also added to this classification.



### **Vacant/Undeveloped**

All existing vacant or undeveloped parcels are included in this category including forested areas and wetlands.

## LAND USE ANALYSIS

The Existing Land Use map on the following page is described here.

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential Single Family	30.74	35%
Residential Multi family	5.38	6%
Commercial	19.59	22%
Industrial	8.43	10%
Public/Quasi Public	10.68	12%
Vacant/Undeveloped	12.31	14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87.13</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Residential Single Family:** Residential land is located in the northern two thirds of the City. Low density residential land comprises about 31 acres or 35% of all land area in the City. This is the largest use of land in the City and it interspersed with some commercial, office and multifamily uses.

**Residential Medium Density:** Four and a half acres of land is medium density housing in West Branch. This is just over 6% of all land uses. Medium density housing is mainly on the eastern half of the City with a large development near Iron’s park. Two of the largest structures are managed by the City of West Branch as senior citizen housing. Survey results indicate that there is a demand for more multifamily housing at higher income levels.

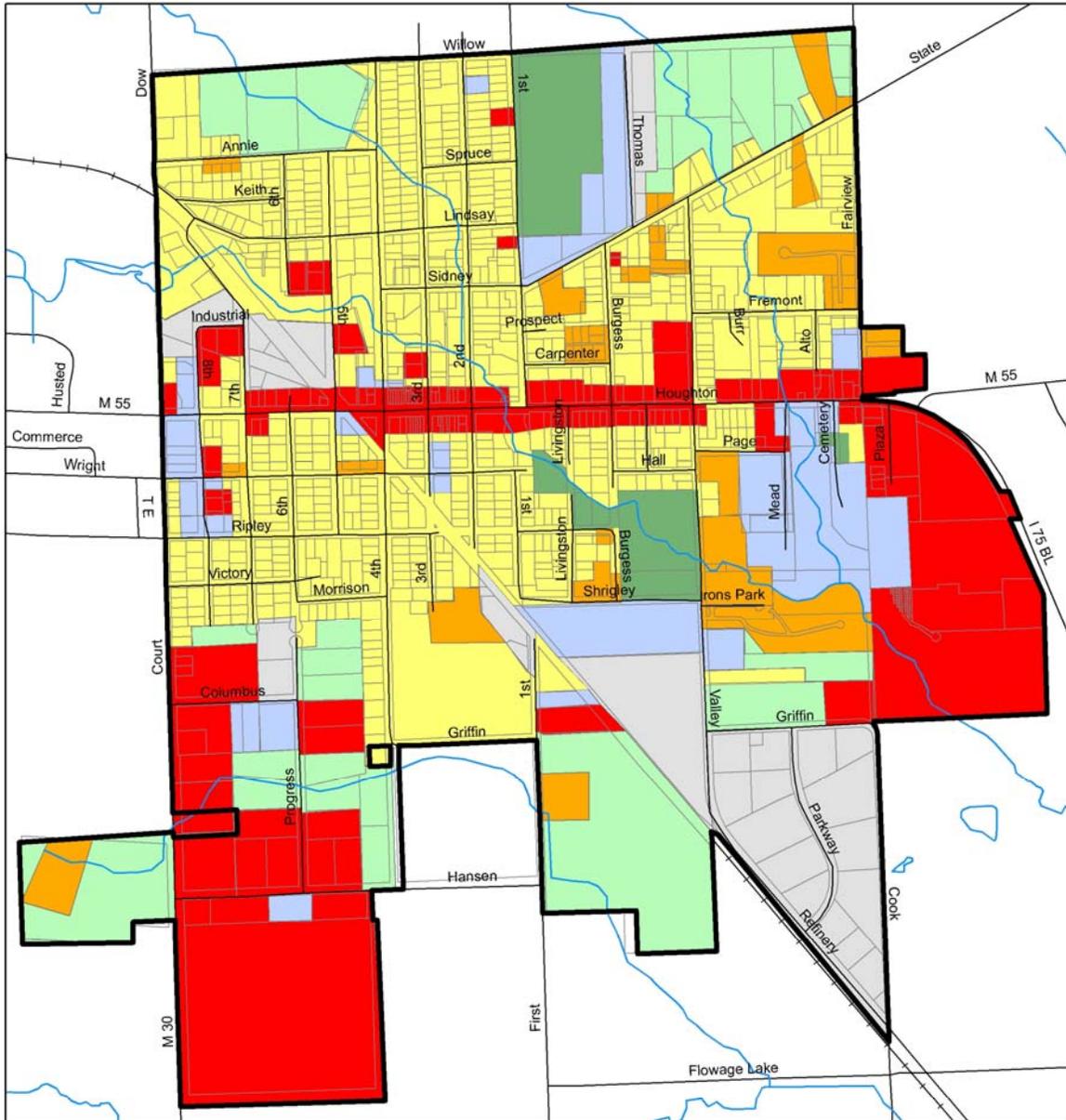
**Commercial:** Commercial land uses are located in the downtown area along Houghton (M-55), on I-75 business loop on the east side of town and at the medical complex on the southwest corner of the City. Office commercial uses are also located throughout the community in homes. Commercial uses vary in type from independently owned shops in historic structures to typical franchise developments. Commercial uses are located on 19 acres and make up 22% of land area. Religious institutions are generally classified as commercial or quasi public, depending of the desires of the community. In West Branch they are included in this classification.

**Industrial:** There are 8 acres of industrial land which is almost 10% of the entire City. About half of the industrial land is undeveloped. Industrial uses are located in an industrial park at the southeast corner of the City that abuts the rail line, near the northwest corner of the City, also on the rail line and on Thomas Street across from the school complex on the northern edge of town. Some of these uses are original rail-related uses such as an elevator but the majority of uses are distribution-related due to West Branch’s proximity to I-75, M-30 and M55.

**Public/Quasi Public:** Almost 11 acres of land are classified as public or quasi public. In West Branch this includes all the land for schools, parks and government offices. These uses are located throughout the City and use about 12% of land area. There is one public and one private elementary school and one middle school in the City.

**Vacant/Undeveloped:** Vacant land is the third largest land use in the City with over 12 acres and 14% of land area. This is a deceiving figure from the view of a driving survey since it appears that the City is almost fully developed, however there are large tracts of undeveloped land near the borders of the City on the north and south sides and as part of park. Some of this land is wooded or overgrown so it is not apparent that it is actually in the City’s boundaries.

Map 12. Existing Land Use



Map prepared by:  
  
 crescent consulting  
 Last updated: 4/17/08  
 Data source:  
 Crescent Consulting  
 Michigan Geographic Data Library  
 Michigan Resource Inventory System

**West Branch Existing Land Use**

**Legend**

City Limits	Commercial	Public/Quasi-Public	Railroads
Rivers	Industrial	Single-Family	
Roads	Multi-Family	Vacant/Undeveloped	
Parcels	Parks		

1 inch equals 1,000 feet





**The top reason given by 21% of the respondents was:  
Being close to extended family**

The next three most frequently chosen reasons were:

- Because of my job
- Housing choices fit my needs
- Pleasant neighborhoods

The most frequently mentioned positives and negatives about living in West Branch were:

<b>Positives +</b>	<b>Negatives -</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Small town, friendly environment</li><li>❖ Convenient location – close to schools, medical, shopping, work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Lack of activities – recreation, entertainment</li><li>❖ Too great a police presence</li><li>❖ Lack of jobs</li><li>❖ High property taxes</li></ul>

**The most important issue for respondents was the continued growth and development of job opportunities.** This was voiced several times throughout the survey both as the need to attract and retain businesses and the importance of providing more job opportunities.



## **HOUSING**

The majority of respondents was satisfied with the variety of housing currently available and felt that there were adequate housing alternatives for future residents. Should additional housing be needed, respondents thought that housing should either be built on undeveloped land in the City or outside of the City.

## **LAND USE**

Many respondents commented that the City is lacking community activity centers - cultural, social, and recreational. Otherwise, they thought that the current density of development in the City was just about right.



## TRANSPORTATION

Most respondents did not feel that truck traffic was a problem and understood that it was necessary for commerce. However, 27% did think that truck traffic caused a problem – contributing to noise, pollution and traffic congestion.

The intersection of Valley and Houghton was mentioned the most as having traffic issues. Several other streets that cross Houghton – including Fairview, South Seventh, and Court - and the downtown intersections were mentioned by many. Other congested points seemed to be near Glen's and Brian's Markets.



In general, the respondents did not feel that parking was an issue for them. Of those that commented, near the downtown area and the area around the Courthouse were mentioned as areas for potential increased parking.

## RECREATION



Although 77% of those who responded to the question felt that the City has enough parks and open spaces, many comments were made throughout the survey concerning the lack of community facilities.

The respondents expressed a need for the community to have areas that residents could interact socially – whether it was for recreation, exercise, cultural pursuits, etc. They viewed this as an opportunity to keep the community ties strong while providing activities for its

residents. Residents seemed to be mixed on where they thought this type of development should happen; listing north side, center, close to town, and along the river as potential locations.

## **BLIGHT AND NONCONFORMITIES**

The majority (84%) of respondents were not concerned about non-conforming uses or code enforcement near their homes. Just over half of respondents felt that the City should, however, do more to require property owners to keep their properties clean, safe, and well-maintained.

Residents were split on whether they were concerned about the number of vacant properties in the City.

The majority (80%) of respondents did not feel there was a problem with businesses locating in residential neighborhoods. However, several strong comments were made by those opposed to turning homes into businesses.



## **GENERAL DEVELOPMENT**

Only 5% of respondents felt that the City was developing too fast, while 56% felt the City has a clear vision for guiding new development.

Additionally, respondents were mixed on whether the sanitary sewer upgrade should be paid through property taxes or user fees. And only about half were aware of the Sprinkling Meter program.

# Goals

The following nine goals have been identified:

- Retention and Infill in Commercial Areas
- Encourage Growth of Businesses and Commercial Activities
- Encourage Retention and Growth in Industrial Districts
- Increase and Maintain High Quality Residential Units
- Improve Transportation Function in CBD
- Encourage Citizens to Become Actively Interested in the Functions and Future of the City
- Pursue State and National Recognition for Downtown Historic Features
- Continue to Develop a Business Community that Supports the Victorian Theme
- Encourage New Development to Uphold a Victorian Feel

These goals have been divided into various objectives and are prioritized in the tables on the following pages. Additionally, details on the parties and costs involved are also provided.

**GOAL: RETENTION AND INFILL IN COMMERCIAL AREAS**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Date completed</b> <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Maintain and rehabilitate commercial structures</b>	Increase code enforcement to ensure compliance with property maintenance and fire codes	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission	Cost of hiring a code enforcement officer (or contractor)
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Remove dangerous structures</b>	Conduct an inventory of downtown structures to determine which structures have non-conformities or other code issues	<b>City Staff/Council/</b> Planning Commission	Designate staff time or cost of hiring a consultant
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Remove dangerous structures</b>	Increase inspection and code enforcement to tag, condemn and demolish unsafe structures	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission	Cost of hiring a code enforcement officer (or contractor)
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Utilize other groups' efforts to market downtown</b>	Set up regular joint meetings with neighboring Planning Commissions and the DDA to discuss marketing the region and traffic issues	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	None

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Become active in Brownfield Authority</b>	Designate a Brownfield representative to attend regular meetings	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA)	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Become active in Brownfield Authority</b>	Create a package of information to give to people interested in redeveloping these properties	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA, BRA	Consultant to develop package, printing costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Establish voluntary design guidelines</b>	Gather model ordinances from other municipalities to frame your goals and objectives for the guidelines	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Establish voluntary design guidelines</b>	Hire a planner or architect to write the guidelines	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Maintain and rehabilitate commercial structures</b>	Evaluate structures for potential designation as "Obsolete Properties", which are eligible for tax abatements as an incentive for rehabilitation under the Michigan "Obsolete Properties Rehabilitation Act"	<b>City Staff/Council/</b> Planning Commission	Designate staff time or cost of hiring a consultant

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Utilize other groups' efforts to market downtown</b>	Gather these studies in electronic format and publish on the web	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission	Staff/consultant time
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Utilize other groups' efforts to market downtown</b>	Create executive summaries of other studies and publish in a marketing booklet	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Staff time for assembly; printing costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Establish voluntary design guidelines</b>	Consider a façade grant or sign incentive program to help business owners meet design guidelines	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission	Potential grant funds
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Maintain and rehabilitate commercial structures</b>	Work with the DDA to establish a façade grant program	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission	Funding for the grant (from DDA), consultant to write the program guidelines

**GOAL: ENCOURAGE GROWTH OF BUSINESSES AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Discourage strip or linear commercial development</b>	Establish discrete nodes in the Master Plan where commercial areas are desired	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Include in master plan update
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Discourage strip or linear commercial development</b>	Create landscaping standards within the zoning ordinance that include parking lot landscaping minimums	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Encourage public and private investment to enhance the CBD</b>	Provide referrals and technical assistance for business owners/property owners interested in investing in their properties	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission, City Council	None, other than potential consulting costs

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Promote the CBD through mixed use zoning, and other ordinances</b>	Create a mixed use CBD district (Town Center)	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Promote the CBD through mixed use zoning, and other ordinances</b>	Require back entrances to businesses in the CBD	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Promote the CBD through mixed use zoning, and other ordinances</b>	Include landscaping standards for the rear facades, to create a welcoming environment for people parking behind the buildings	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Promote the CBD through mixed use zoning, and other ordinances</b>	Implement screening standards for trash receptacles	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Included in zoning ordinance update

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Promote the CBD through mixed use zoning, and other ordinances</b>	Revise parking standards to limit curb cuts and require shared parking where feasible	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Advertise for businesses that are lacking but where a market has been proven</b>	Utilize the West Branch Community I-75 Business Loop plan for goals and strategies	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Potential advertising costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Discourage strip or linear commercial development</b>	Establish design guidelines or form-based code elements to shape the look and feel of new commercial developments	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Significant consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Discourage strip or linear commercial development</b>	Create access management regulations to limit curb cuts and require shared parking and access drives where feasible	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Additional consulting costs, after current zoning update is complete

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Encourage public and private investment to enhance the CBD</b>	Work with the DDA to create incentive programs and/or matching grants for business owners wishing to upgrade their properties	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Funding for incentive programs; consultants to develop program guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Promote the CBD through mixed use zoning, and other ordinances</b>	Create a sign ordinance to ensure that new signs are at a proper scale and add to the character of the City	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Consulting costs to write ordinance
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Work with the EDC to promote community awareness and development/redevelopment opportunities</b>	Create a marketing website that includes information on available properties as well as existing businesses	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission, City Council	Web consulting costs, data gathering (could be done by staff)
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Work with the EDC to promote community awareness and development/redevelopment opportunities</b>	Include Brownfield information on the website	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission, City Council	Web consulting costs, data gathering (could be done by staff)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>2</sup> <b>Work with the EDC to promote community awareness and development/redevelopment opportunities</b>	Designate a liaison to the EDC to communicate concerns and report back to the Planning Commission regularly	<b>Planning Commission</b>	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>3</sup> <b>Actively solicit Kirtland Community College to locate a campus or classes in downtown</b>	Designate a liaison to communicate with the College	<b>Planning Commission</b>	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>3</sup> <b>Actively solicit Kirtland Community College to locate a campus or classes in downtown</b>	Suggest specific properties where the City would like them to locate	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Cost of assistance finding properties

**GOAL: ENCOURAGE RETENTION AND GROWTH IN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b><sup>1</sup> Promote diversity in the size and type of industry</b>	Examine industrial districts within the zoning ordinance to ensure that there is appropriate flexibility and performance standards for industrial development	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Consultants	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b><sup>1</sup> Work with the EDC, Chamber of Commerce, IDC, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to attract new activities, provide assistance to established activities and promote coordination of development efforts</b>	Schedule bi-annual joint meetings with these bodies to go over development activities and projects	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  EDC, BRA, IDC, Chamber of Commerce	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b><sup>1</sup> Work with the EDC, Chamber of Commerce, IDC, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to attract new activities, provide assistance to established activities and promote coordination of development efforts</b>	Coordinate communication with prospective new industries	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  EDC, BRA, IDC, Chamber of Commerce	None

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Date completed</b> <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Promote diversity in the size and type of industry</b>	Conduct an inventory of all existing industries within the City, including size and type of activities	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City staff, consultants	Allocation of staff time, potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Promote diversity in the size and type of industry</b>	Publish information on available industrial properties, including what size and type of industry they are most appropriate for	<b>Planning Commission</b>  City staff, consultants	Web consulting costs, staff time
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Encourage existing industry located in the northeast district to relocate in one of the existing industrial areas away from schools and residences</b>	Promote establishing IFT districts as incentives	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Consultants	Potential consulting costs for assistance setting up IFT
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Encourage existing industry located in the northeast district to relocate in one of the existing industrial areas away from schools and residences</b>	Actively market available properties in existing industrial areas and ensure that appropriate levels of public services are available to new industry looking to relocate	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City Council, consultants	Advertising costs

**GOAL: INCREASE AND MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY RESIDENTIAL UNITS**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Date completed</b> <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Construct middle to high income multi-family housing on vacant areas in the northern areas of town</b>	Ensure that the master plan future land use map and zoning map are compatible with this type of development	Planning Commission/ Consultants	Included in master plan and zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Designate locations for two-family housing instead of through special use permits</b>	Revise the zoning ordinance to allow two-family residential units as a permitted use rather than a special use in certain districts	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Emphasize rehabilitation of existing housing stock</b>	Make sure the zoning ordinance allows appropriate modifications to existing houses so that owners do not have to obtain variances to upgrade their homes	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Included in zoning ordinance update

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Increase and maintain a supply of quality housing for all income and age levels</b>	Consider the adoption of a property maintenance code to ensure that all residential properties are well kept	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission, consultants	Consulting costs to draft ordinance
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Increase and maintain a supply of quality housing for all income and age levels</b>	Ensure that a wide variety of densities and housing types are allowed in the zoning ordinance and on the zoning map	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>1 Remove marginal or temporary housing units in deteriorating condition</b>	Write temporary housing out of the zoning ordinance	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Consultants	Included in zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b>2 Construct middle to high income multi-family housing on vacant areas in the northern areas of town</b>	Work with realtors of available property to communicate the City's goals for the property.	<b>Planning Commission/</b> City Council, staff	None

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>2</sup> Increase and maintain a supply of quality housing for all income and age levels</b>	Consider inclusionary zoning for new housing projects, that would require a certain percentage of new units be affordable	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City Council, consultants	Potential additional consulting costs after zoning update is complete
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>2</sup> Remove marginal or temporary housing units in deteriorating condition</b>	Implement a property maintenance code and rental ordinance so that housing believed to be marginal can be inspected and owners can be required to repair them	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City Council, consultants	Consulting costs to draft ordinance after zoning update is complete
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Assist needy low to moderate income and elderly citizens in maintaining and acquiring housing through CDBG and other subsidies</b>	Consider establishing a City Housing Authority to administer subsidized housing and create and maintain low to moderate income housing	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City Council	Cost of staff/consultants to obtain CDBG funding, set up authority
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Emphasize rehabilitation of existing housing stock</b>	Consider a housing rehab grant program, perhaps through the establishment of a local housing authority	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission	Costs of establishing authority, hiring staff or consultant to administer

**GOAL: IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION FUNCTION IN CBD**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>1</sup> <b>Encourage pedestrian movement downtown through crosswalks, benches, well maintained sidewalks and pocket parks</b>	Include potential pocket park areas in the master plan (future land use map) and zoning ordinance	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Consultants	Included in master plan and zoning ordinance update
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>2</sup> <b>Annually update short and long-range capital improvement program to include transportation projects</b>	Conduct an annual review of the CIP	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City Council, staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs for CIP assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>2</sup> <b>Annually update short and long-range capital improvement program to include transportation projects</b>	Work with City engineers and consultants to include appropriate transportation projects	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City staff	Potential consulting costs for CIP assistance

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Annually update short and long-range capital improvement program to include transportation projects</b>	Seek assistance from the County Road Commission and MDOT	<b>Planning Commission/</b> City staff	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Close driveways and improve traffic signals at Glenn's and Brian's shopping area</b>	Collaborate with the County Road Commission to conduct a traffic study at this intersection	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Road Commission	Costs for traffic study (shared with the County)
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Close driveways and improve traffic signals at Glenn's and Brian's shopping area</b>	Include traffic control improvements in the City's CIP	<b>Planning Commission/</b> City Council	Staff/consulting costs for writing the CIP
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Promote traffic control at Houghton and Valley</b>	Include traffic control improvements in the City's CIP	<b>Planning Commission/</b> City Council	Staff/consulting costs for writing the CIP

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Close driveways and improve traffic signals at Glenn's and Brian's shopping area</b>	Work with property owners to develop a plan for shared driveways	<b>Planning Commission</b>	Potential consulting costs or allocation of staff time
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Encourage pedestrian movement downtown through crosswalks, benches, well maintained sidewalks and pocket parks</b>	Establish a sidewalk maintenance program (and schedule) implemented in the CIP and with collaboration from the DDA	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Potential consulting costs for CIP assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Encourage pedestrian movement downtown through crosswalks, benches, well maintained sidewalks and pocket parks</b>	Pursue grant funding with the DDA to implement crosswalks in the downtown	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Investigate shuttle service from outlet mall area to downtown during the summer</b>	Meet with representatives from the outlet mall, DDA and Chamber of Commerce	<b>Planning Commission/</b> City Council	None

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Date completed</b> <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Investigate shuttle service from outlet mall area to downtown during the summer</b>	Develop cost estimates and work on a cost sharing agreement	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Chamber of Commerce, DDA	Staff/consulting time
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <b><sup>3</sup> Promote traffic control at Houghton and Valley</b>	Collaborate with the County Road Commission to conduct a traffic study at this intersection	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  City Council, Road Commission	Consulting costs for traffic study



**GOAL: ENCOURAGE CITIZENS TO BECOME ACTIVELY INTERESTED IN THE FUNCTIONS AND FUTURE OF THE CITY**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>1</sup> <b>Use City's website to convey all agendas, minutes and proposals before the City Boards and Councils</b>	Assign a staff person or consultant to regularly (at least monthly) post minutes and agendas to the website	<b>City Council/</b> City Staff	Staff time, potential web consulting assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Encourage the formation of committees and advisory groups to educate citizens and move towards City improvement</b>	Reach out to existing neighborhood and civic groups to make them aware of City functions and current issues and actively solicit their feedback	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission	Staff time
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Encourage the formation of committees and advisory groups to educate citizens and move towards City improvement</b>	Create specific advisory boards and seek out volunteers to serve on them	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission	Staff time

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <sup>2</sup> <b>Encourage the formation of committees and advisory groups to educate citizens and move towards City improvement</b>	Include liaisons from City boards and commissions on subcommittees who are assigned to attend neighborhood and civic group meetings	<b>City Council/</b> Planning Commission	Staff time



**GOAL: PURSUE STATE AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR DOWNTOWN HISTORIC FEATURES**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <sup>3</sup> <b>Perform an historic features study</b>	Create a study committee for the downtown area	<b>City Council</b>	Compensation for committee members, consultant to staff the committee
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <sup>3</sup> <b>Perform an historic features study</b>	Conduct a study, with the help of citizens and consultants, of resources and their possible contributions to the historic character of the area	<b>Study Committee/</b> City Council, staff	Compensation for committee members, consultant to staff the committee
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <sup>3</sup> <b>Promote stronger participation in the Michigan Historic Markers Program</b>	Provide applications to the owners of significant properties	<b>Study Committee/</b> City staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <sup>3</sup> <b>Promote stronger participation in the Michigan Historic Markers Program</b>	Offer technical assistance to property owners wishing to apply	<b>Study Committee/</b> City staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Seek National Register status for significant properties</b>	Once significant properties and resources have been identified by the Study Committee, work with SHPO staff and property owners on nominations to the National Register	<b>Study Committee/</b> City staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Seek National Register status for significant properties</b>	Provide technical assistance and communicate the benefits of the program using materials available from SHPO	<b>Study Committee/</b> City staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs

**GOAL: CONTINUE TO DEVELOP A BUSINESS COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS THE VICTORIAN THEME**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>1 Create an educational outreach program</b>	Hold a joint meeting with business owners, DDA and Chamber of commerce to demonstrate the benefits to business owners	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission, Chamber of Commerce	None
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>2 Create an educational outreach program</b>	Develop educational materials in hard copy and digital format	<b>DDA/</b> <b>Planning Commission, City staff, consultants</b>	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>2 Create an educational outreach program</b>	Publish resources on the City web site and DDA website	<b>DDA/</b> City staff	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ___/___/___ <b>2 Create incentives for businesses to make improvements in accordance with a Victorian theme</b>	Work with the DDA to establish a façade grant program	<b>DDA/</b> Planning Commission	Consulting costs for drafting program guidelines

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Date completed</b> <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____  <b><sup>2</sup> Create incentives for businesses to make improvements in accordance with a Victorian theme</b>	Create design standards with illustrations and resources for property owners	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Consulting costs for writing the guidelines



**GOAL: ENCOURAGE NEW DEVELOPMENT TO UPHOLD A VICTORIAN FEEL**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Develop design guidelines</b>	Use SHPO publications as a guide to starting the design guideline process	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Consulting costs for writing the guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Develop design guidelines</b>	Hold joint planning commission meetings with other communities along the loop to define the scope of the guidelines	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Consulting costs for writing the guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>2</sup> <b>Develop design guidelines</b>	Enlist the help of a preservation professional to write the guidelines	<b>Planning Commission/</b> DDA	Consulting costs for writing the guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Include traditional downtown and beautification features along the entire loop to help promote a unified Victorian identity</b>	Install sidewalks along the entire corridor	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Adjoining planning commissions, city staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: 1 2 3)	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Include traditional downtown and beautification features along the entire loop to help promote a unified Victorian identity</b>	Continue thematic lampposts along entire corridor	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Adjoining planning commissions, city staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Include traditional downtown and beautification features along the entire loop to help promote a unified Victorian identity</b>	Implement a bus-trolley service	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Adjoining planning commissions, city staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Include traditional downtown and beautification features along the entire loop to help promote a unified Victorian identity</b>	Install pedestrian gazebos as resting points or trolley stops	<b>Planning Commission/</b>  Adjoining planning commissions, city staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date completed <b>Objective</b> (priority: <b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> )	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Party/</b> Other parties	<b>Costs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Include traditional downtown and beautification features along the entire loop to help promote a unified Victorian identity</b>	Install flowerbeds along the corridor	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Adjoining planning commissions, city staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs
<input type="checkbox"/> ____/____/____ <sup>3</sup> <b>Include traditional downtown and beautification features along the entire loop to help promote a unified Victorian identity</b>	Install gateway and way-finding signs	<b>Planning Commission/</b> Adjoining planning commissions, city staff, consultants	Potential consulting costs

## Future Land Use

The future land use discussed in this Plan is intended to look ten years into the future; but as a plan, influenced by many variables, it is also intended to be flexible. A meaningful Master Plan should be reviewed at least every five years, preferably with strong community participation to determine if modifications are necessary to reflect current needs and conditions.

All goals stated in this document will not be achieved, nor will every parcel of land be developed as shown. These proposed future land uses shown on the Future Land Use map and stated in the goals and objectives are intended to be used as a guide for zoning decisions, infrastructure plans and as a basis for evaluating other community needs. The Future Land Use map has no force of law causing these plans to happen, rather, any change in land use can only happen following a change in the zoning for that parcel. Conversely, zoning decisions that are made in conflict with the planned use of land shown on the Future Land Use map should be well justified and result in an immediate change the Master Plan map.

### LAND USE GOAL SETTING

There are plenty of opportunities for positive land use change in the City of West Branch.

To achieve positive land use planning there must be a push to learn about the land by:

- learning about the natural and physical features each community controls,
- establishing a determination about how those features should be preserved or enhanced,
- drafting a plan to achieve this, and
- persevering to follow the plan while being willing to rethink mistakes.

The Master Plan is a guide toward learning about the land. The next steps are up to the City, hopefully as a collaborative effort with their neighbors. The most important aspect of this effort is to have a decision-making process, focused on making positive land use decisions. This means assessing the impact of land use change during every rezoning proposal, site plan, land division, driveway and sign installation. Every land use change has an impact, some of which can never be undone.

The **Michigan Association of Planning** has adopted a set of community planning principles that merit restating in this document. This is an excerpt of the full set of principles.

1. The community planning decision making process should, first and foremost, be concerned with the long-term sustainability of our communities, environment and economy.
2. Common challenges that should be addressed by community planning are:
  - a. Increasing opportunities for reinvestment in established urban centers;
  - b. Encouraging appropriate intensity and location of new development served by adequate public facilities;
  - c. Minimizing the spread of low density, noncontiguous development;

- d. Encouraging a wide range of housing opportunities which serve all segments of our diverse population;
  - e. Recognizing the value and encouraging the preservation of agricultural lands and natural resources;
  - f. Encouraging the preservation and/or restoration of our natural and built heritage environments;
  - g. Encouraging development in accordance with the adopted community master plan and
  - h. Recognizing that land use decisions may have impacts beyond community boundaries.
3. The community planning process should involve a broad based citizenry, including public and private sector leaders, community interest groups, and multi-disciplinary professionals. A positive relationship between development and the making of community should be established through a citizen-based planning and design process.
  4. Public policy and development practices should support development of communities that are:
    - a. diverse in land use, population and character;
    - b. designed for pedestrians and nonmotorized transit as well as for motorized transit;
    - c. shaped and physically defined by parks, open space and other natural resource areas;
    - d. structured by physically defined, accessible public space and community institutions; and
    - e. based on local history, climate, ecology, and building practices.
  5. Physical solutions by themselves will not solve all problems. A coherent and supportive physical framework should be established to provide economic vitality, community stability and environmental health.
  6. The quality of life for the citizens of Michigan can be enhanced by developments that:
    - a. support and restore existing community centers;
    - b. reconfigure existing low density, centerless communities into communities of diverse neighborhoods and districts;
    - c. preserve and protect natural environments;
    - d. maintain and build a positive social and strong economic climate and
    - e. improve the physical design and condition of our region, cities, villages, townships, neighborhoods, districts, corridors, parks, streets, blocks, and homes.

## FUTURE LAND USE CHANGES

**Residential:** The total of all land being designated for residential uses has changed less than 1% of the total land area and under 1 acre in size from the existing status to that proposed on the Future Land Use map. This is primarily due to designating most of the now vacant and/or undeveloped land as either single or multiple-family residential.

- Single family residential has been extended to the northwest up to the City boundary and north of State Street in the northeast corner of the City. These two additions of future single family land uses account for the greatest change in location of single family dwellings, but overall, the percentage and acres of land designated for single family remains almost constant.
- Multiple family uses area now shown south of the railroad tracks and east of First Street and encompassing the blocks between Carpenter, Burgess, State and First streets in the north center of the City. Many areas shown as having multiple family now on the existing land use map are shown as single family on the future land use map, meaning that there is no intention of expanding the multiple family uses in these areas.

The existing land use is roughly a half and half mix of single and multiple family dwellings.

The City of West Branch has a large number of multiple family units per capita for a community of its size with .35 units for every person, compared to roughly .1 units in communities such as the cities of Beaverton, Clare and Auburn. (Source: 2000 US Census of Population and Housing) West Branch also has a large population of senior citizens living in the multiple family units in the City. This population is generally considered the most stable type of renter, meaning they move less frequently than other age groups. The community survey indicates that there is additional demand for senior housing and higher-end multiple family units. These indicators, combined with a vacancy rate of 19%, a rate that is somewhat higher than the state overall for multiple family units, appears to show that there is a consistent market for these units, making it reasonable to plan for additional areas for multifamily.

**Commercial:** This is the category that shows the most change in area from the existing land uses to the future land uses. The existing land use map did not classify commercial land among the office, downtown and general categories as the future land use map does so the changes are somewhat more difficult to envision.

Overall there has been an increase of 32 acres in commercial land, most of this being reflected in the change from vacant status, on the Existing Land Use Map, to commercial status, on the Future Land Use map, in several locations. There has also been a change from an existing undeveloped industrial area to commercial status in the Future Land Use Map, located north of Houghton and west of 6th Streets. These changes, among many smaller designations, show an increase of 14% of all land area in the City now classified as some form of commercial.

- The downtown commercial category has been extended to run the full length of the City along M-55, eventually intending on eliminating residential uses that now dot the main road. Seven acres or 8% of land is categorized this way.

- Office uses have also been expanded significantly as the once platted industrial park surrounding Progress and Columbus streets is now designated for office uses. Office uses are almost 9 acres in total and 10% of total land use in the City.
- Office uses have been officially designated along Court and Wright streets and along Burgess, just north and abutting the existing downtown commercial uses on Houghton. The purpose of this is to officially designate office locations in the City to prevent future infringement of office uses in the residential areas.
- General Commercial uses are shown along the highways at the edges of the City. These include business route I-75 and portions of M-30/Court Street. General Commercial uses comprise 16 acres and about 18.5% of land uses.

**Industrial:** Proposed industrial land use decreases with this Master Plan by a small amount. An area along the rail road tracks in the central western portion of the City is currently being used, albeit very underused as an industrial area. The consensus of the community is that this area is better suited and more likely to develop as commercial in the future.

An industrial area on Thomas in the northern portion of the City that is now being used as a beverage distribution warehouse is also shown as changing from industrial to parks and public uses. This area is directly across from school property and situated among residential and vacant land use that is planned for residential. Both of these changes total a decrease of 3.5 acres and a decrease of almost 3% in total industrial uses.

**Parks/Public:** The Future Land Use map shows these two uses as dark green. Statistically, there is a two acre decrease in the mapped land shown for Parks and Public land, comparing the Existing Land Use map to the Future Land Use map. The decrease is due to changing the land use designation for some public offices, such as the courthouse, to commercial land uses on the Future Land Use map. The purpose of this is to eliminate the ownership distinction on the Future Land Use map so that the map can be used as a basis for zoning decisions, which are use based. The uses in this category are parks, a cemetery, public schools and the river walk.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MASTER PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE

One of the fundamental purposes of a Master Plan is to guide zoning decisions in a clear and logical manner. In order to do this, it is important to know how the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance districts are related to each other. The Future Land Use categories used in this plan and shown on the Future Land Use map are very similar to the zoning categories. The Zoning Map is included as part of the Zoning Ordinance.

Future Land Use Map	Zoning Map
Single Family Residential	Single Family Residential
Multi Family Residential	Multiple Family Residential
Downtown Commercial	Downtown Commercial
Office Commercial	Office Commercial
General Commercial	General Commercial
Industrial	Industrial
Parks/Public	Single Family Residential Multiple Family Residential Downtown Commercial Office Commercial General Commercial

In each case except the Parks and Public designation, the same names are used for Future Land Use districts and zoning districts. The category of Parks and Public is used on the Existing and Future Land Use maps but is a permitted use, sometimes with restrictions, in almost all districts in zoning and does not have its own mapped district on the zoning map.

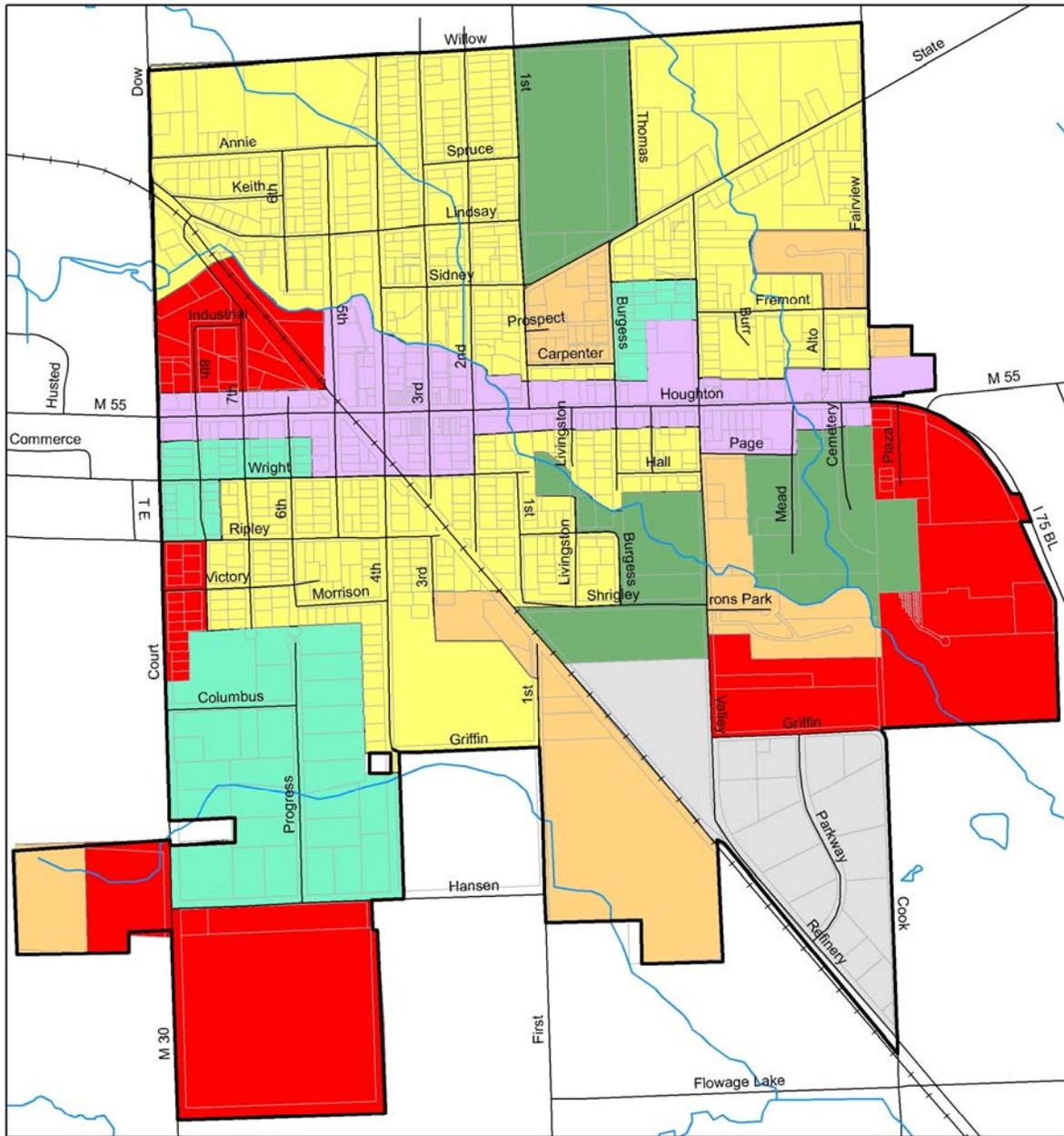
While the Master Plan is intended to be a somewhat fluid document, it must also continue to reflect a statement of the community's needs and desires. In order to achieve this, and to comply with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, the Plan the must be reviewed at least every five years for both accuracy in data and in a consensus of community opinion.

The Zoning Ordinance includes development requirements such as dimensional standards for each district and what types of uses may be located in each district, among many others. The development requirements contained in the zoning ordinance are only referenced here instead of reprinted, so that changes in the zoning requirements do not create the need to change the Master Plan or give the appearance of conflicting regulations in the City, even though a Master Plan is not a regulatory document.

Specific standards should be used when evaluating a proposed rezoning using the Master Plan and Future Land Use Map. A Planning Commission needs to assess the following things at a minimum before coming to a zoning decision:

- **Will the intent and purpose of the proposed zone be consistent with the Master Plan goals?**
- **Is the proposed rezoning consistent with the Master Plan map?**
- **Will the change be consistent with surrounding land uses?**
- **Are there other areas within the city that are suitably zoned for this use?**
- **Does the change afford one person a benefit not available to others?**
- **Is there infrastructure necessary to service the new district? Will the change cause a logical extension of existing infrastructure?**

On occasion there may be justification to rezone a parcel or area that is not consistent with the Future Land Use Plan or the possibly the Master Plan's goals and objectives. If this happens it should only be done with significant thought and study as well as written justification for the diversion from the Plan to avoid setting a precedent of ignoring or downplaying the importance of the Master Plan's intent and the community's desires. If the change requires an amendment to the Master Plan, the process should start immediately or concurrently with the zoning action.



**West Branch Future Land Use Map**

Map Prepared by:  
  
 crescent consulting  
 ENP & ASSOCIATES  
 Last updated: 9/14/08  
 Data source:  
 Michigan Geographic Data Library  
 and City of West Branch

Legend			
	Rivers		Single-Family Residential
	Roads		Downtown Commercial
	Parcels*		General Commercial
			Multi-Family Residential
			Parks/Public
			Office
			Industrial



\*Accuracy of parcel lines is not guaranteed and should be used for planning purposes only

1 inch = 1,000 feet

**Map 13. Future Land Use**

# Implementation Plan

**Implementing the recommendations, goals, and objectives of this plan is an ongoing and changing endeavor.**

The tools for implementation available include:

- Planning
- Zoning
- Code Enforcement
- Policy Development
- Education
- Regional Cooperation and Communication
- Committee involvement
- Grant solicitation

## IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

The following section reviews options and strategies for Planning Commissions and Boards to implement their Master Plan. It is essential to keep planning related ideas and documents current and more importantly, reflecting and responding to the people they represent and serve. This section has *To Do Items* highlighted throughout the text as discussion starting points or Planning Commission agenda items to consider throughout the year that will help to keep the Master Plan current. The Michigan Planning Enabling Legislation, effective September 1, 2008, mandates that a formal review of the Master Plan take place at least every five years.



***What is your first step as a community?***

**Check your community's Master Plan for age and content. Does your plan showcase the best and have a strategy to improve the worst of the City?**

- Does the plan contain the minimum necessary elements? (Demographic Review, Geographic Review, Community Participation, Goals and Objectives, Action Plan, Future Land Use Map)
- Are the demographics up-to-date? Are there other statistics that would be useful to have? Where can they be found?
- Is your map readable? Do the categories make sense as when they are used to guide zoning decisions?

The recent amendments to planning legislation now require communities to notify and include, if requested, neighboring communities in the master planning process. The purpose of this change is to encourage coordinated planning among jurisdictions and minimize conflicting land

uses and priorities, recognizing that municipal boundaries are only lines and have little purpose from a land use perspective.



**Meet with neighboring municipalities to compare plans, goals and strategies (share a meal, stay for the band).**

- What are the primary goals that you share with your neighbors? What goals don't you share?
- Are there projects you can undertake as a group?
- Does it make sense to combine or contract together for any services?
- Think locally about your needs, think regionally about your neighbor's needs and plan together.



**Take a look at your Future Land Use Map.**

- Are there potential inconsistent land uses with neighboring municipalities? Hot spots for discussion?
- Does your map reflect the consensus of the community?
- Can your map be used to guide zoning decisions? Do the land use categories make sense given the zoning categories?



**Lower your blood pressure. Assess what it will take to update your plan. Consider getting some help.**

- Is your plan in digital format? If not, is it worth putting in digital format or is it too old?
- Do you need guidance about basic plan elements?
- Does your group want to undertake and updating the plan themselves? Who would participate?
- Does your budget allow for professional help?
- Where do you *really* need help? Can the project be done with your labor and professional guidance?



**Do the goals summarized in your Plan represent your community? Are yours different than these? Do you perceive them as different? How do you know?**

- Think critically about what your community wants to achieve and why.
- Were your goals really written by the citizens of the community? How were the goals determined?
- Do your goals conflict with the goals of a neighboring community? Are they identical? If either of these is true, why?
- In what way was the public input process carried out? How long ago did this happen? If the process is more than five years old, it is time to hold a formal citizen participation process.
- Give citizens at least two opportunities to participate in goal-setting.



**Have you done an infrastructure status check? What is under, over and on top of the ground or is operating in your community?**

- What infrastructure is in the City now? Do not forget to include water, community wells, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, community septic, county drains, roads, rail, trail, cable, natural gas. Is it mapped?
- What infrastructure needs to be improved? Does any infrastructure currently present a health hazard?
- What does the citizenry want?



**Think about the Decision-Making Process**

This section includes tips to help the decision making process that can accompany land use goal setting. This process is intended to help communities inventory the natural environment for features that need to be preserved or are not conducive to development and assess all potential human impact of development such as visual impacts, transportation impacts and land use compatibility.

- Do you use a standard process to analyze and come to decisions in meetings?
- Do you use forms where possible to promote consistency and good minute taking? Use forms for recording zoning, site plan, zoning board of appeals, text changes, and land divisions.
- Is the public involved in all decision-making at meetings?
- Do the elected and appointed people have a good relationship with residents?
- Are your meetings properly promoted and noticed?



## Read, Discuss, Adopt and Implement these Community Planning Principles

- Follow the guidance of the American Planning Association (APA).
- Encourage residents to learn about planning.
- Good planning is a group effort. Put “Nay Sayers” on a committee. Reward good effort *and* good work.
- Hear everyone.
- Think differently.

The first step toward achieving any planning principle is to know what you have to start the process. This is the data collection step. The first half of this document collects the most basic objective data each municipality should have to begin. This data includes the physical profile, socioeconomic profile and transportation profile. The next data item is a compilation of the opinions gleaned through community participation – the subjective data.

Armed with the facts and opinions, the next step is to turn this information into goals and objectives. What do we want? How will we achieve it?

Finally, decisions about what to do to achieve these goals need to be made. As with any decision process, questions bubble to the surface along the way, and that is part of the learning process. What should be considered? What is most important? Who should be involved? How long will it take? What if it doesn't happen this way? Why have we never talked about this before?

## ***Using Goals to Make Planning Decisions***



### **Pick Your Battles**

Not every issue is planning related. Eliminating the Emerald Ash Borer is important but Land Use Planning does not address it. Prioritize your efforts. Try a list that starts with:

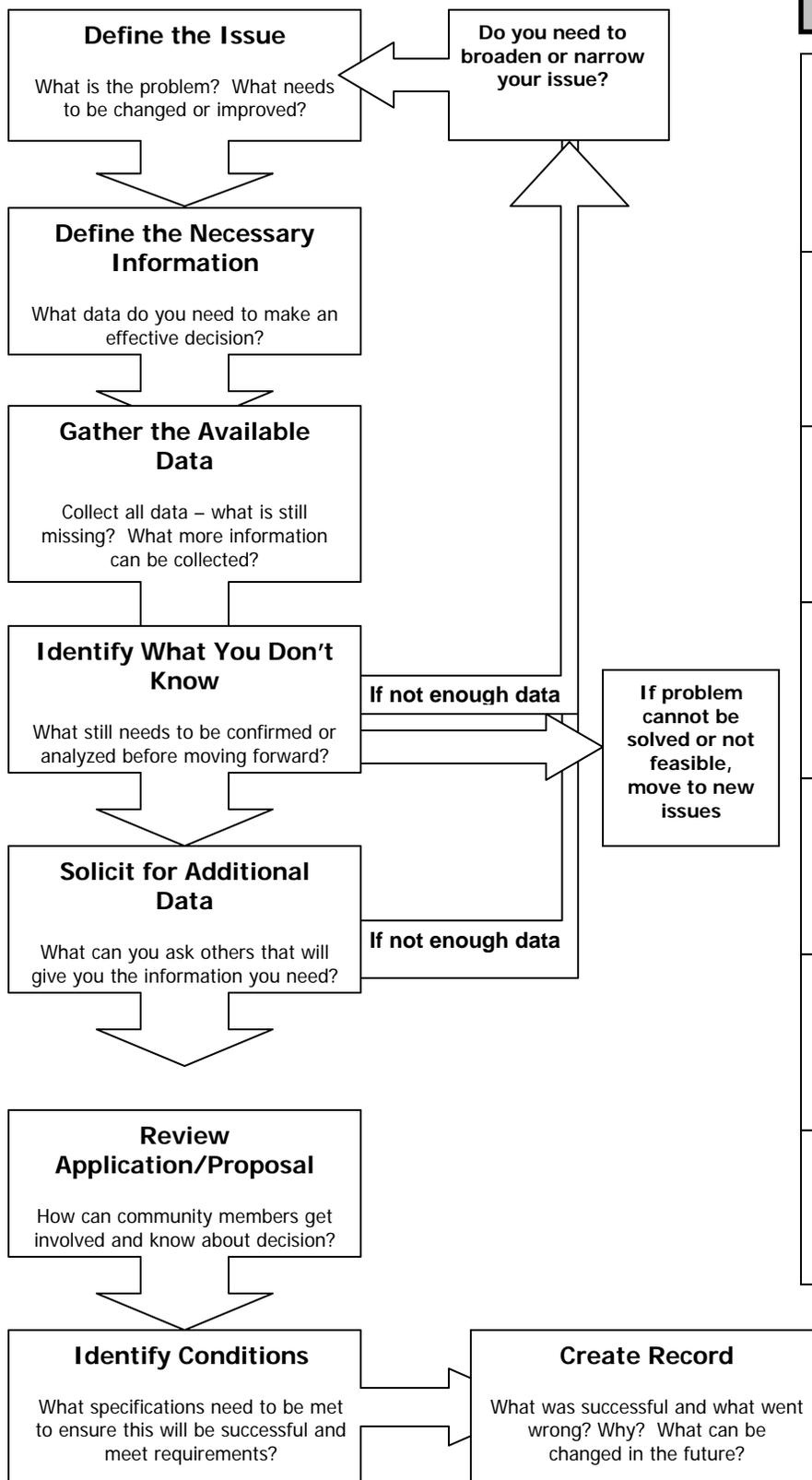
- **Safety Related issues:** Towing operation is a nonconforming use that is a fire hazard and surface contamination is leaking into adjacent wells. Get the code enforcement officer and the Health Department out there – today!
- **Urgent issues:** A zoning district with permitted uses that is regulated in the text but not shown on the zoning map. Exclusionary, this is urgent!
- **Relentless issues:** The Master Plan needs updating but where will the money come from?
- **Insidious issues:** Undefined use requests a zoning permit – Just what is a massage parlor?
- **Never-Ending issues:** Junk cars, junk barrels, junk collections, junk, junk, junk.

There are many tools that can be used to help guide decisions. A decision tree is a common one that has been adapted to land use decisions as an example for this guide. Often these are a set of “if → then” questions that are used with numerical data. Often one variable is being correlated with several others. In the case of planning issues, the decision tree is based on the goals on the community.

### **Decisions have three main components:**

- The **starting point** is the issue
- The **process** is the questions and answers along the way
- The **ending** point is the outcome

Arriving at meaningful and effective answers requires clearly defining the issue and asking the right questions.



**Real World Examples**

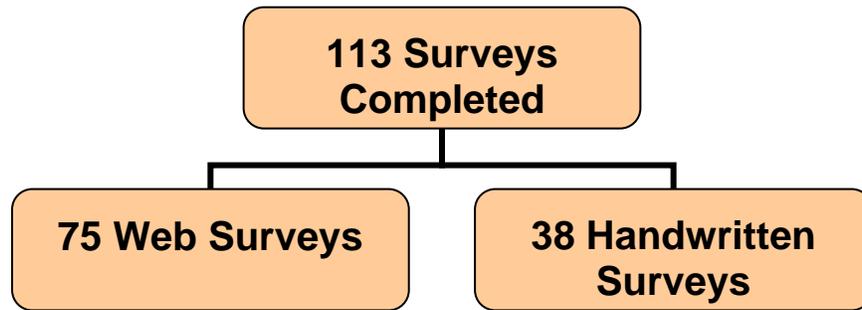
<p><b>DEFINE THE ISSUE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rezoning</li> <li>• Text Amendments</li> <li>• Administrative Decisions</li> <li>• Undefined Land Use</li> <li>• Land Division</li> <li>• Master Plan Changes</li> </ul>
<p><b>DEFINE THE NECESSARY INFORMATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property Location</li> <li>• Legal Description</li> <li>• Natural Features</li> <li>• Master Plan consistency</li> <li>• Master Deed</li> </ul>
<p><b>GATHER THE AVAILABLE DATA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master Plan</li> <li>• Land Use Guideline</li> <li>• Zoning Ordinances</li> <li>• Applicant's Material</li> <li>• Census Information</li> </ul>
<p><b>IDENTIFY WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land is suspected wetlands</li> <li>• No room for septic system</li> <li>• Potential ROW infringement</li> <li>• School district impact</li> <li>• Zoning change request</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOLICIT FOR ADDITIONAL DATA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out surveys</li> <li>• Return application to applicant</li> <li>• Ask / hire professional</li> <li>• Contact government agencies</li> <li>• Get proof of ownership</li> </ul>
<p><b>REVIEW APPLICATION / PROPOSAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise public hearing</li> <li>• Notify property owners</li> <li>• Keep accurate and detailed lists, notes, etc.</li> <li>• Use consistent checklists or outlines</li> </ul>
<p><b>IDENTIFY CONDITIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to obtain variance to review</li> <li>• Must have proper permits</li> <li>• Good side of fence facing out</li> <li>• Timeline for completion being kept</li> </ul>

# Appendix A

*City of West Branch*

*Citizen Input Survey April 2008*

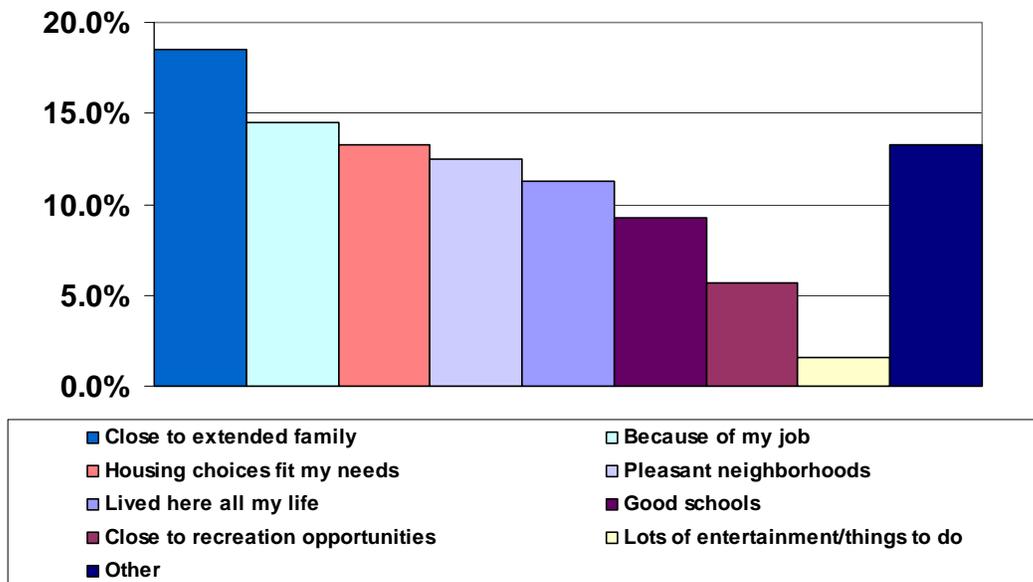
## CITY OF WEST BRANCH CITIZEN INPUT SURVEY APRIL, 2008



*Unless otherwise noted, numbers presented are the number of responses for the question.*

### 1. Why do you live in West Branch? (check all that apply)

<b>Close to extended family</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Good schools</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Because of my job</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Close to recreation opportunities</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Housing choice fit my needs</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Lots of entertainment/things to do for the kids</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Pleasant neighborhoods</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Lived here all my life</b>	<b>28</b>		

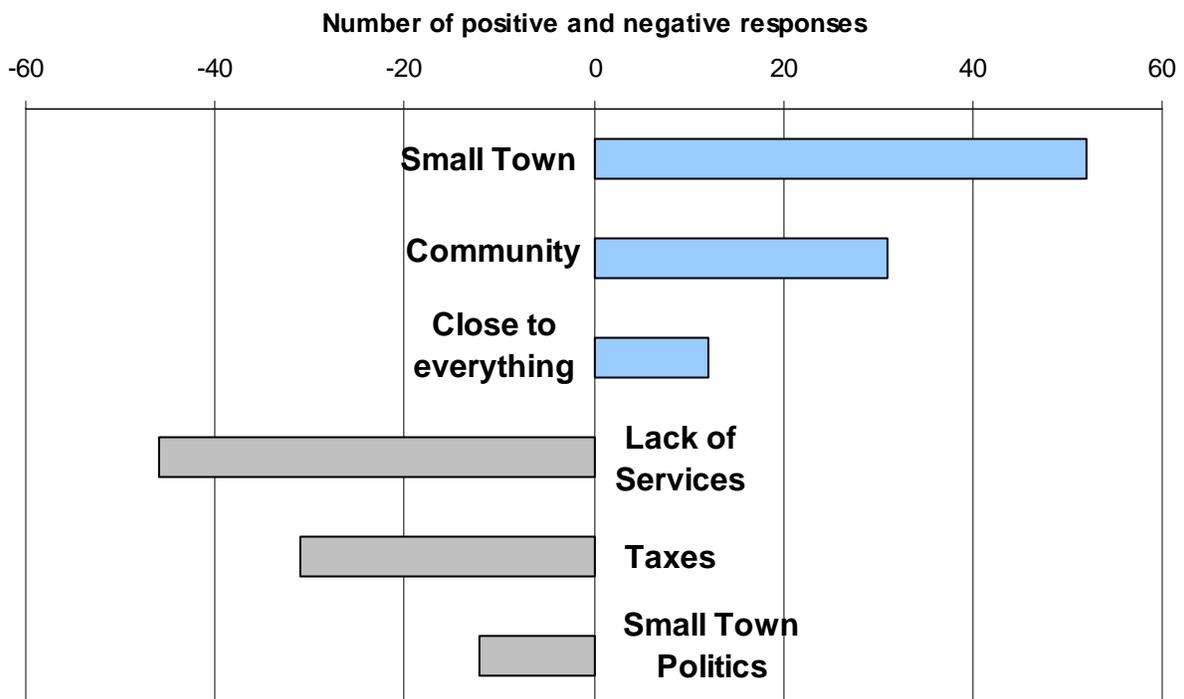


### 2. What three things do you like about living in West Branch?

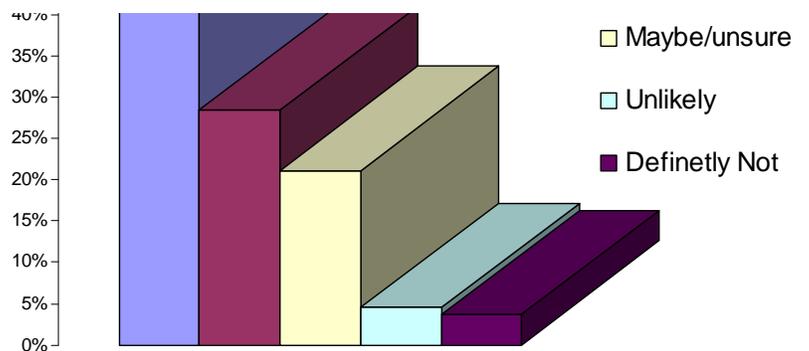
- Positives +**
- ❖ Small town
  - ❖ Community - friendly environment
  - ❖ Convenient location – close to schools, medical, shopping, work

**3. What three things don't you like about living in West Branch?**

- Negatives -**
- ❖ Lack of activities – recreation, entertainment
  - ❖ High property taxes
  - ❖ Small town politics



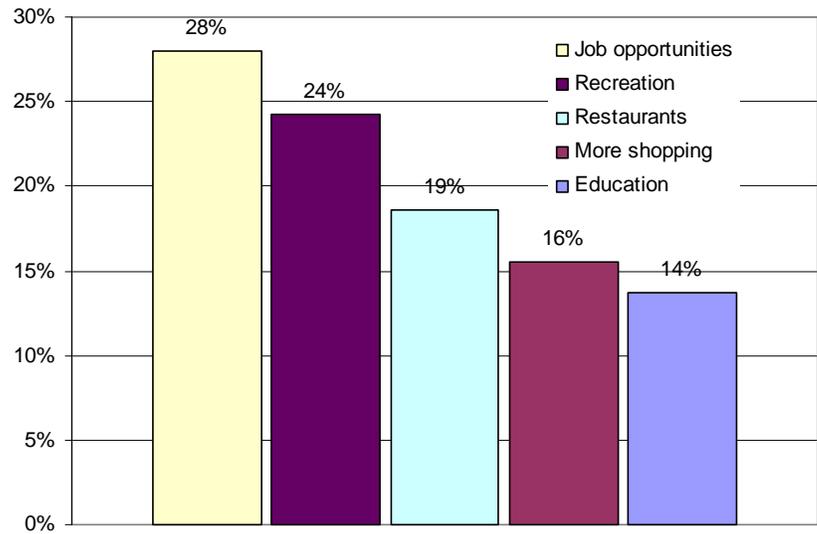
**4. Do you see yourself living in West Branch in 10 years?**



<b>Definitely</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Likely</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Maybe/unsure</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Definitely Not</b>	<b>4</b>

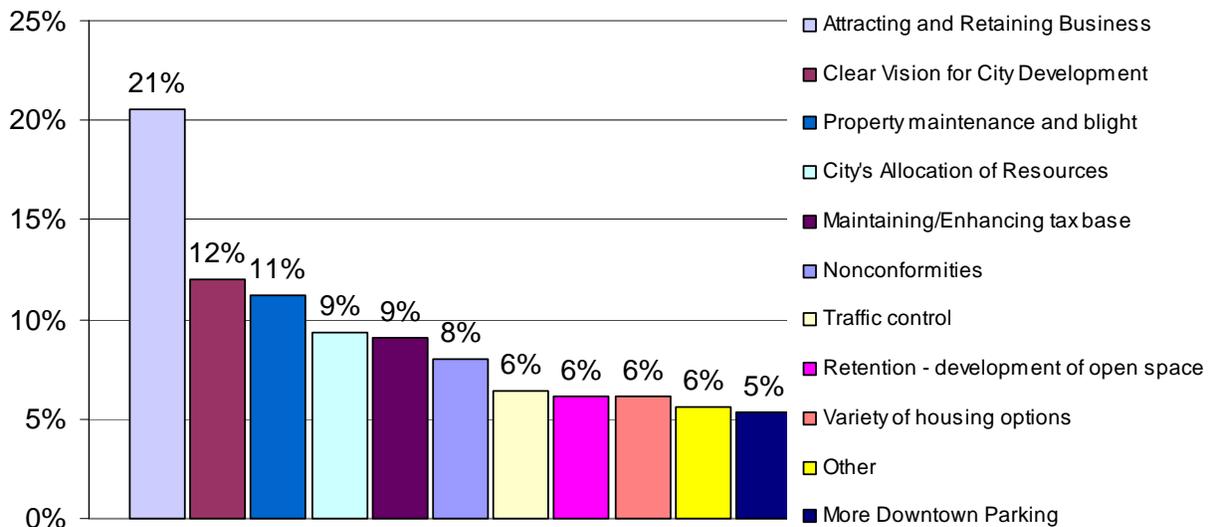
**5. What services and opportunities need to be available for you to continue to reside in West Branch?**

<b>Job Opportunities</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Restaurants</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>More shopping</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>22</b>



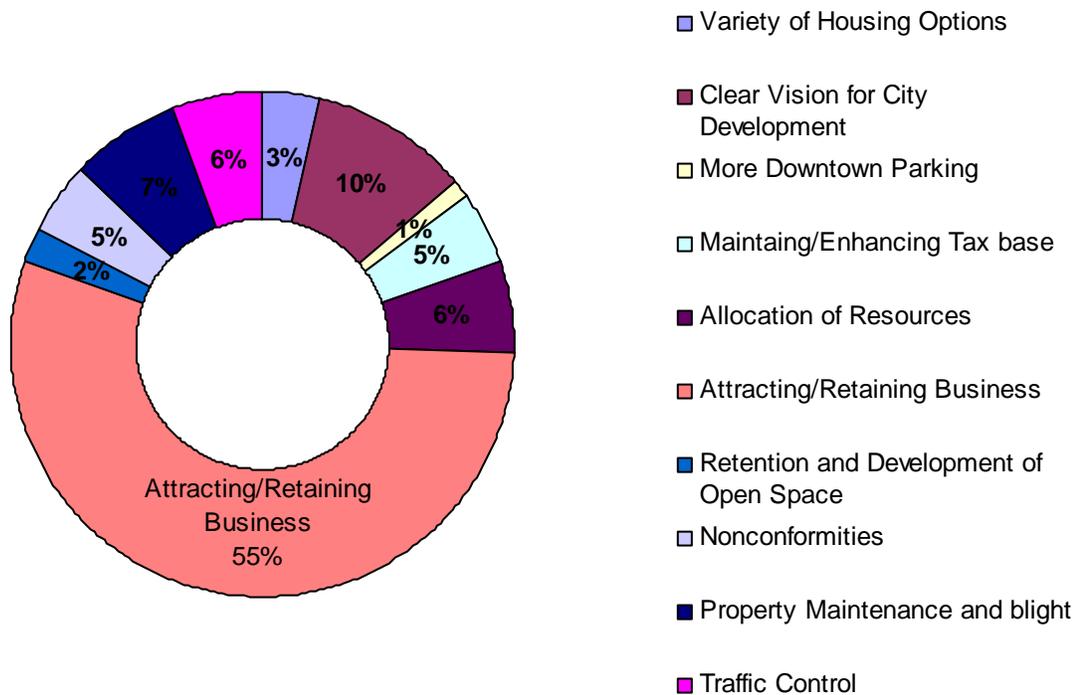
**6. Which of the following general issues are you concerned about when you think about the future of West Branch?**

<b>Attracting and retaining business</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>Traffic control</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>The need for a clear vision for how the City develops</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Retention and/or development of open space</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Property maintenance and blight</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Availability of a wide variety of housing options</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>The City's allocation of resources (tax dollars, personnel, etc.)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Maintaining and enhancing the tax base of the community</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Need for more downtown parking</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>How to deal with uses that do not comply with current ordinances (junk, non-residential activities in residential areas, etc.)</b>	<b>30</b>		

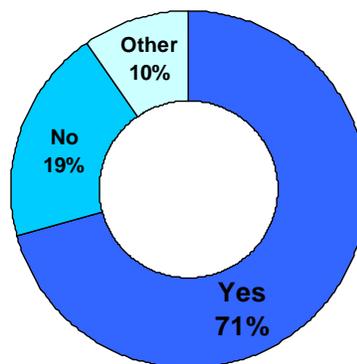


**7. What is the one MOST important issue to you as you consider the future of West Branch?**

Availability of a wide variety of housing options	3	Attracting and retaining business	47
The need for a clear vision for how the City develops	9	Retention and/or development of open space	2
Need for more downtown parking	1	How to deal with uses that do not comply with current ordinances (junk, non-residential activities in residential areas, etc.)	4
Maintaining and enhancing the tax base of the community	4	Property maintenance and blight	6
The City's allocation of resources (tax dollars, personnel, etc.)	5	Traffic control	5



8. Are you satisfied with the variety of housing that is currently available in West Branch?

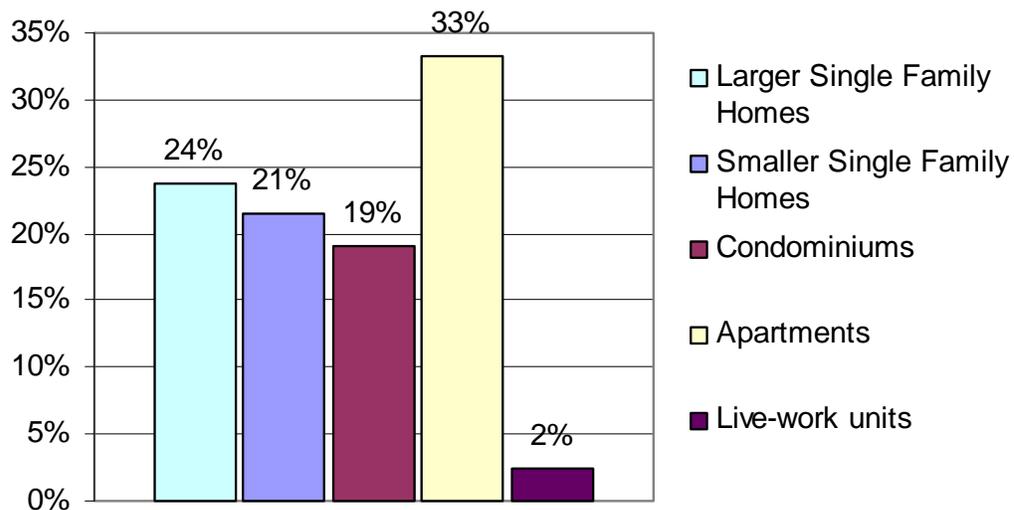


in West

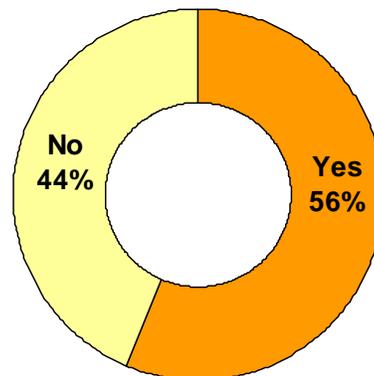
<b>Yes</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>10</b>

9. If not, what types of housing would you like to see more of?  
(check all that apply)

<b>Larger Single Family Homes</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Smaller Single Family Homes</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Condominiums</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Apartments</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Live-work units</b>	<b>1</b>		



10. Do you think there are housing alternatives for all future residents?

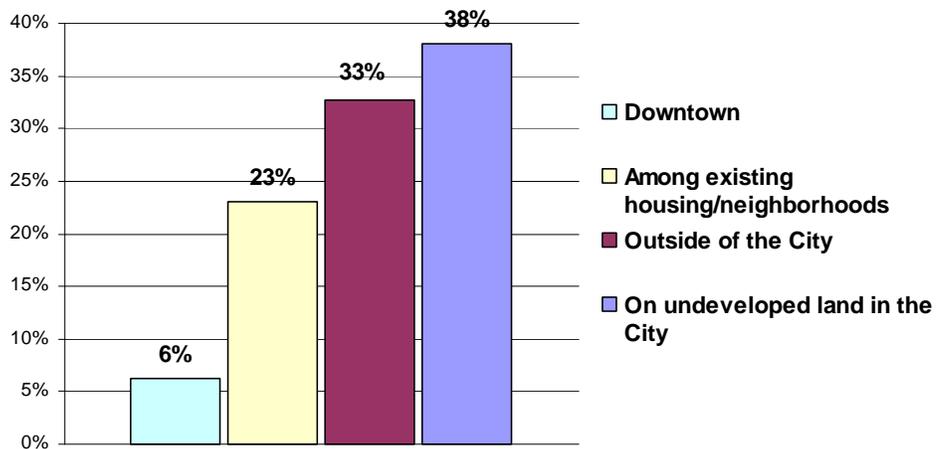


adequate types of

Yes	54
No	42

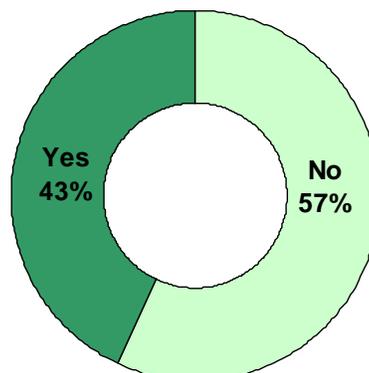
**11. Where do you think additional housing should be built?  
(check all that apply)**

Downtown	7	Among existing housing/neighborhoods	26
Outside of the City	37	On undeveloped land in the City	43



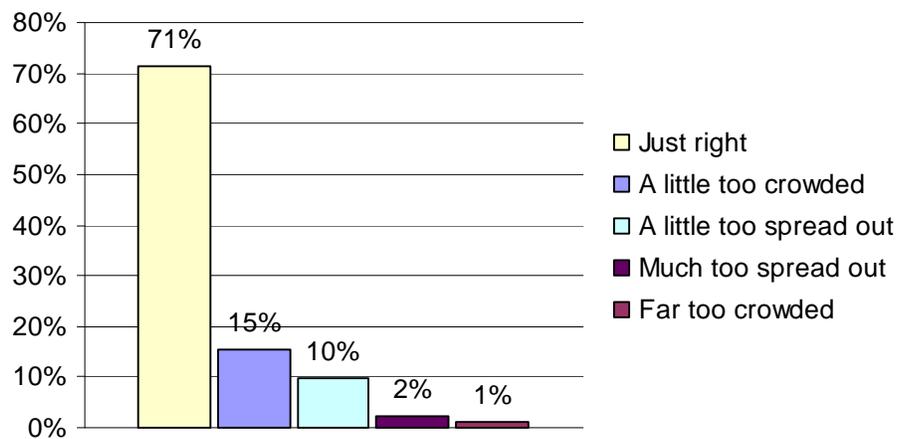
**12. When thinking about the mix of land uses in the City, are there things you think West Branch needs that it doesn't currently have?**

Yes	34
No	45



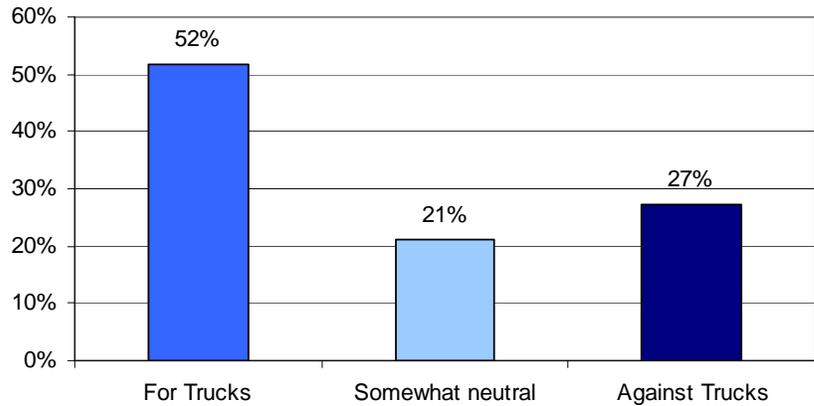
**13. Thinking about the overall density of the City, do you think that the density of development is:**

<b>Just right</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>Much too spread out</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>A little too crowded</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Far too crowded</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A little too spread out</b>	<b>9</b>		



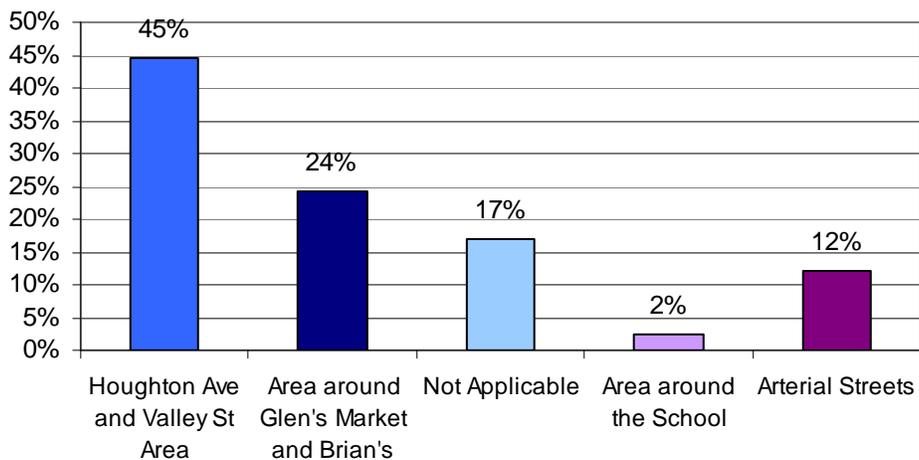
**14. What do you think about truck traffic in West Branch?**

<b>For Trucks</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Somewhat neutral</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Against Trucks</b>	<b>22</b>



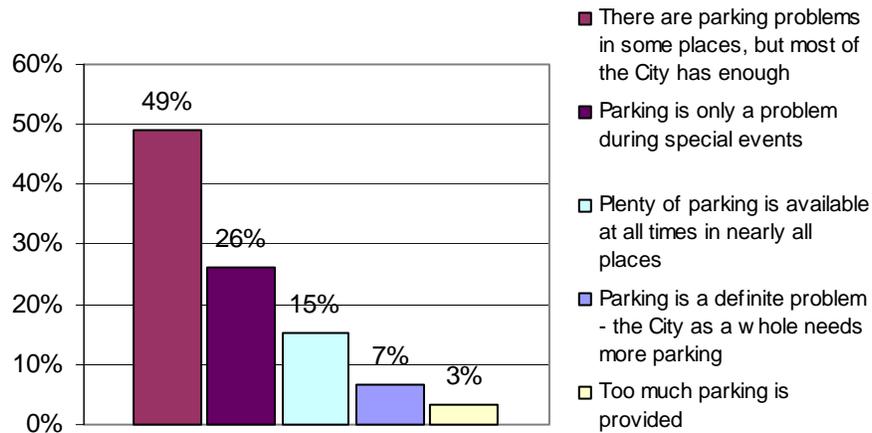
**15. Are there any areas where traffic is an issue?**

<b>Houghton Ave and Valley St Area</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Area around Glen's Market and Brian's</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Area around the School</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Arterial Streets</b>	<b>10</b>



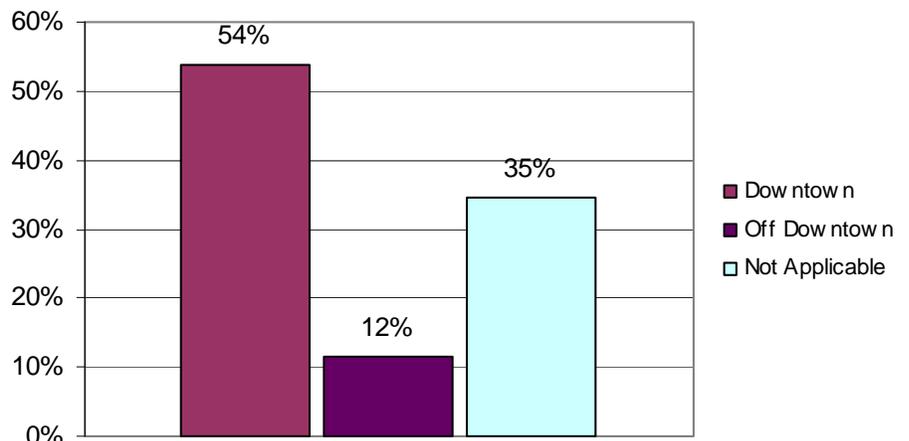
**16. Which statement best describes the availability of non-residential parking in West Branch?**

<b>There are parking problems in some places, but most of the City has enough</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Parking is only a problem during special events</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Plenty of parking is available at all times in nearly all places</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Parking is a definite problem - the City as a whole needs more parking</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Too much parking is provided</b>	<b>3</b>



**17. If you think parking is a problem in the City, where do you think the City needs more?**

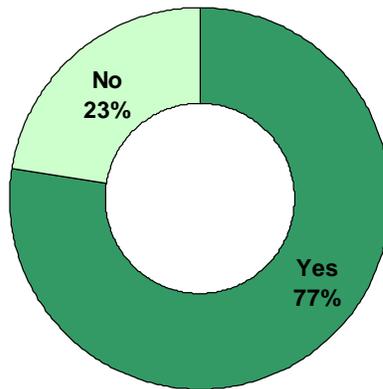
<b>Downtown</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Off Downtown</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>9</b>



**18. Do you think the City has enough**

**parks and open space?**

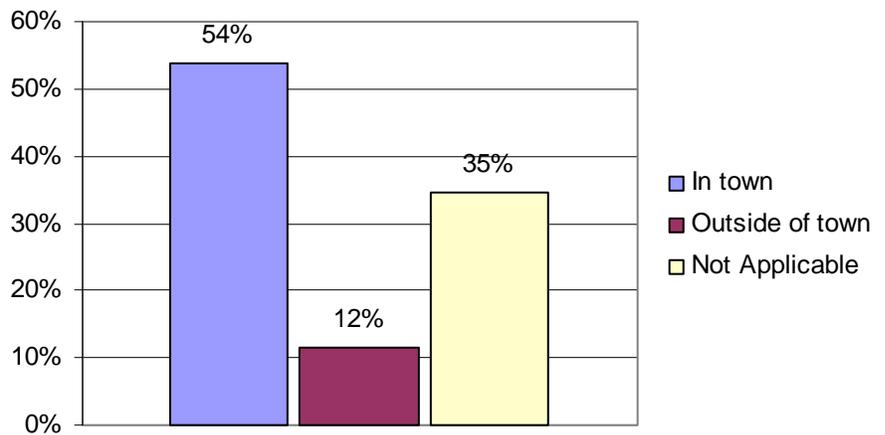
Yes	77
No	23



**19. If you think the City or open spaces, where see them?**

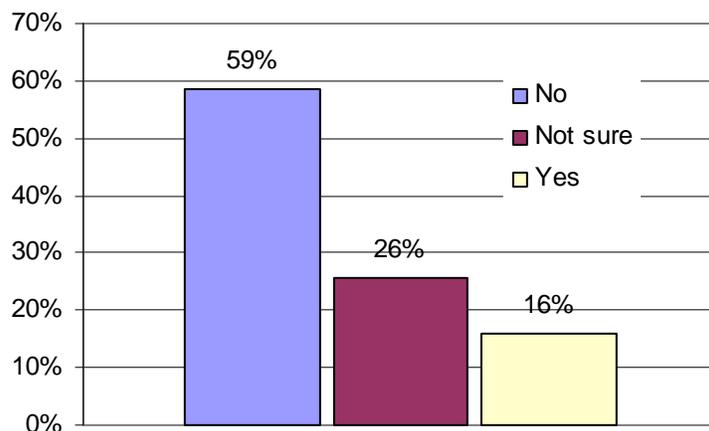
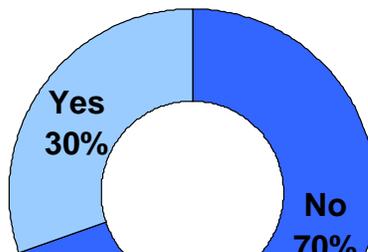
**needs more parks would you like to**

In town	14
Outside of town	3
Not Applicable	9



**20. Do you think the City needs more recreation facilities?**

Yes	13
No	30



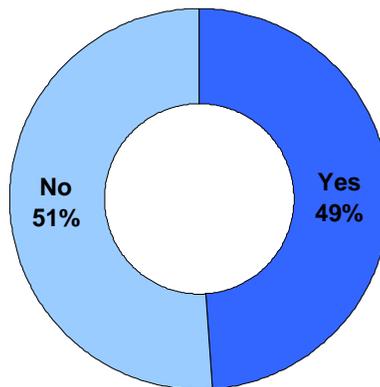
**21. Are you concerned about any non-**

**conforming uses or code enforcement near your home?**

No	55
Not sure	24
Yes	15

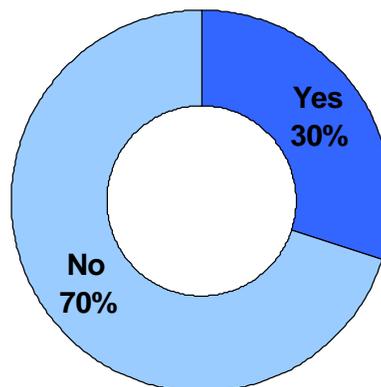
**22. Are you concerned about the number or condition of vacant properties in the City?**

No	48
Yes	46



**23. Do you think that the City has a problem with businesses locating in residential neighborhoods?**

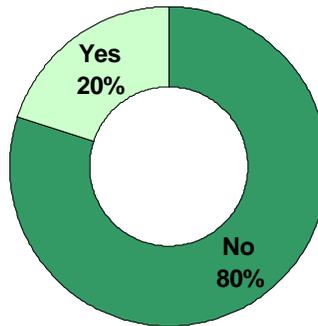
No	65
Yes	28



**24. Do you think that home businesses are becoming a problem in**

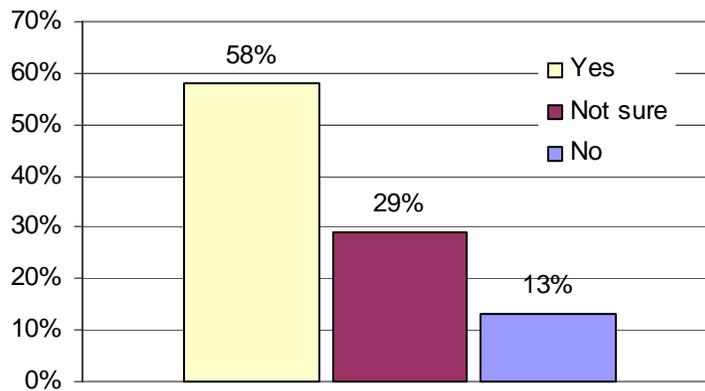
**West Branch neighborhoods?**

No	72
Yes	18



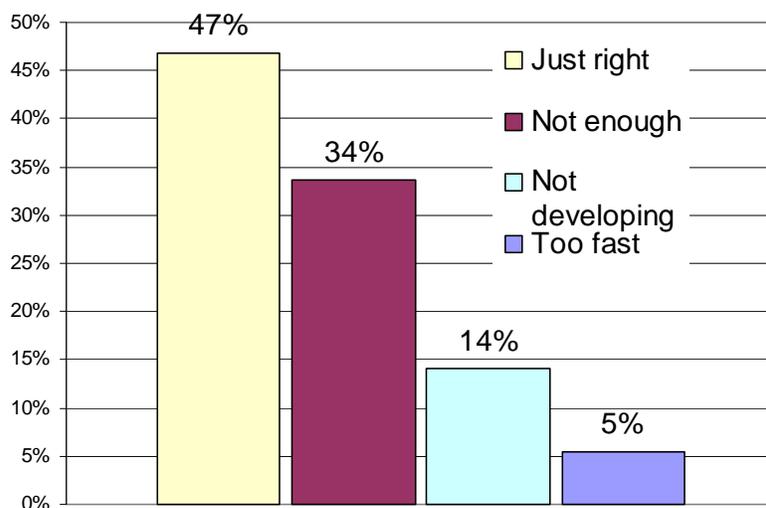
**25. Do you think that the City should do more to require property owners to keep their properties clean, safe and well-maintained?**

Yes	58
Not sure	29
No	13



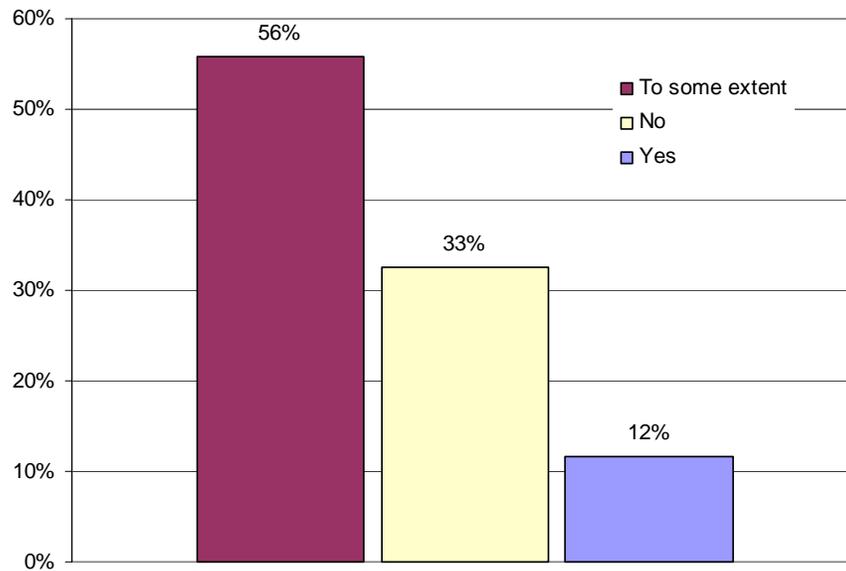
**26. How do you feel that the City is developing?**

Just right	43
Not enough	31
Not developing	13
Too fast	5



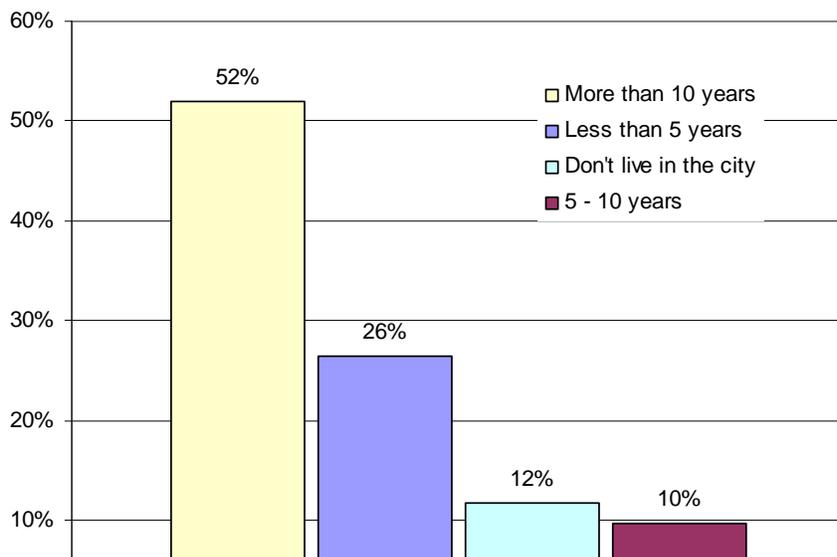
**27. Do you feel like the City has a clear vision for guiding new development?**

Yes	11
To some extent	53
No	31

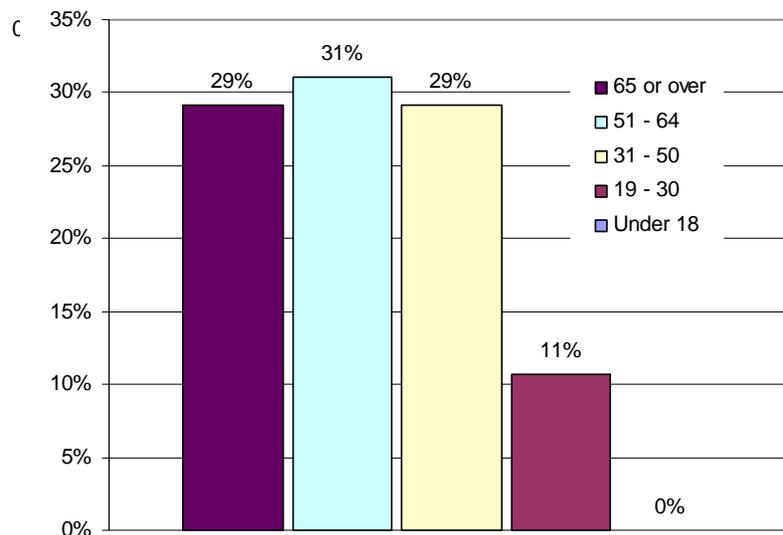


**28. How long have you lived in the City of West Branch?**

Less than 5 years	27
5 - 10 years	10
More than 10 years	53
Don't live in the city	12



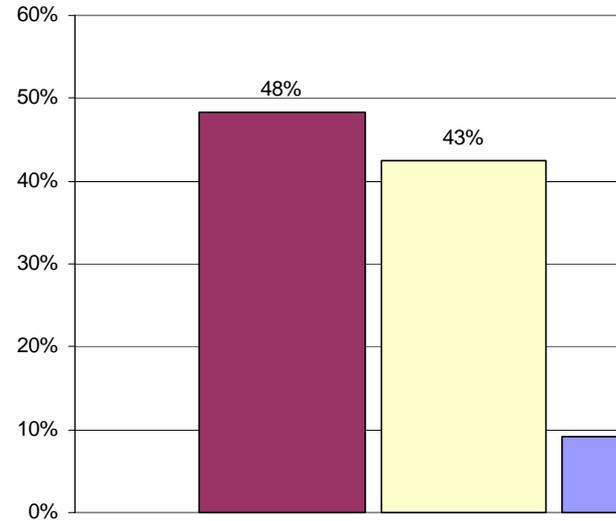
**29. How old are you?**



<b>Under 18</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>19 - 30</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>31 - 50</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>51 - 64</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>65 or over</b>	<b>30</b>

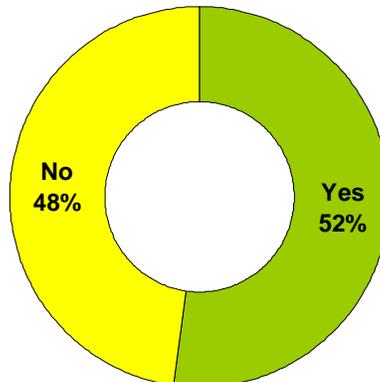
**30. The City is beginning a sanitary sewer upgrade to meet the requirements of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality guidelines. Costs for this project should be paid through:**

<b>User fees</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Property taxes</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Income taxes</b>	<b>8</b>



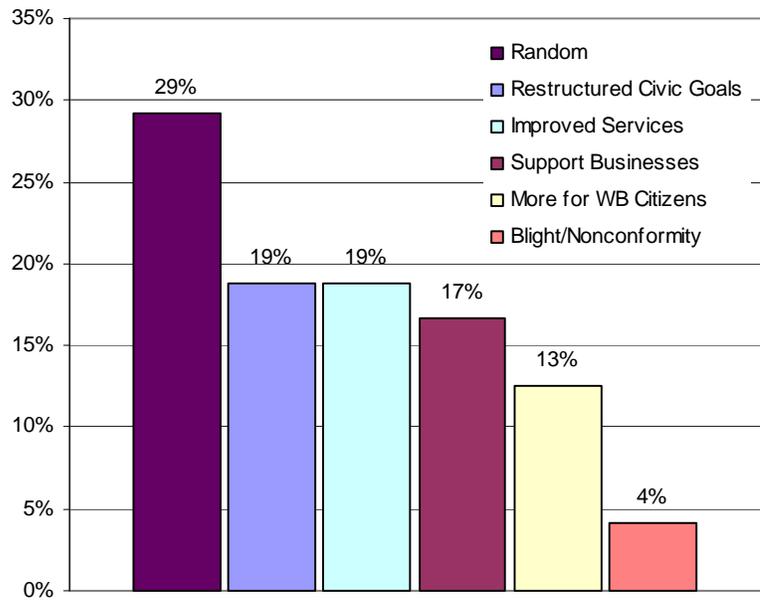
**31. Are you aware of the Sprinkling Meter Program?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>43</b>



**32. Suggestions for the City as we plan for the future:**

<b>Random</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Restructured Civic Goals</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Improved Services</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Support Businesses</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>More for WB Citizens</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Blight/Nonconformity</b>	<b>2</b>



## **RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH MASTER PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the City of West Branch Planning Commission, under the provisions of MCL 125.38 of PA 285 of 1931 and MCL 125.3807 of PA 33 of 2008 of the State of Michigan may adopt a Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS** MCL 125.38a of PA 285 of 1931 and MCL 125.3845[45]2 of PA 33 of 2008 requires the Planning Commission to review and, if necessary, revise or amend the Plan at least once every five years and the current West Branch Development Plan was adopted in 1975; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of West Branch Planning Commission recognized the need to revise and adopt a Master Plan, including establishment and support of visions, goals, actions, implementations and the Future Land Use Plan as described within the document; and

**WHEREAS**, in connection with the preparation of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission carefully and comprehensively surveyed and studied present conditions, projections of future growth of the City of West Branch, and the relation of the City of West Branch to neighboring areas and jurisdictions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Master Plan has been prepared for the purpose of guiding and accomplishing coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the City of West Branch and its environs; and

**WHEREAS** the Planning Commission forwarded copies of the Draft Master Plan to all adjoining jurisdictions, Ogemaw County Planning and the City of West Branch DDA, and to all utilities and railroads operating within the City; and

**WHEREAS** Preparation of the Master Plan included \_\_\_ public meetings, a written and web based survey, an open house and the required public hearing held by the Planning Commission; and the Planning Commission was assisted by Crescent Consulting, Inc. and ENP and Associates, and others in the preparation of the Master Plan; and the Planning Commission considered the testimony presented at the public hearing, and written testimony received prior to the closing of the public record; and

**WHEREAS** the Planning Commission gave notice of the time and place of the Public Hearing by giving notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the City, on the City's website, and regular mail to surrounding communities and concerned entities; and The Planning Commission held the required public hearing on the Master Plan in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 121 N 4th Street, West Branch Michigan on September 8,2009 at 7pm.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City West Branch, Michigan, that Council concurs with the Planning Commission and adopts the Master Plan, pursuant to MCL 125.38 of PA 285 of 1931 and MCL 125.3843 of PA 33 of 2008.

**IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Council directs the City Clerk to record this Resolution with the Ogemaw County Register of Deeds and forward it to Ogemaw County Planning office.

This Resolution being put to vote on roll call, Council voted as follows:

**AYES:**

**NAYS:**

**ABSENT:**