West Branch 2028 – 2032 Capital Improvement Plan & Fiscal Policies

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Project Team & Acknowledgements

Project Team

This report was prepared in partnership between the City of West Branch and the University of Iowa's Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities. The project team consists of University of Iowa Master of Public Affairs (MPA) students Fern Bultema, Yihan Li, Allie Tubbs, and Erik Woolsey. Under the guidance of faculty advisors Phuong Nguyen and Travis Kraus, the MPA capstone team combined academic analysis with applied planning practices to support informed, transparent, and sustainable capital and fiscal recommendations for West Branch, Iowa.

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- Heidi Van Auken, West Branch Finance Officer

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- Jessica Schafer, West Branch Public Library Director
- Dave Schechinger, City Contracted Engineer
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- Matt Goodale, West Branch Public Works Director
- Erin Laughlin, West Branch Parks and Recreation Director
- Jessi Simon, Head of Main Street West Branch

A special thank you to the volunteer members of the CIP Review Committee:

- Michael Anderl, Resident Member
- Ryan Bowers, Planning & Zoning Commission Representative
- Tom Dean, West Branch City Council Member
- Roger Laughlin, West Branch Mayor
- Kelli Rozinek, Resident Member
- JJ Wombacher, Resident Member

Executive Summary

The City of West Branch is entering a critical period of planning for future growth, infrastructure investment, and long-term fiscal stability. As a small but steadily growing community located along the I-80 corridor, West Branch is facing increasing pressure to balance residential expansion, public service demands, and aging infrastructure. The purpose of this Fiscal Policy and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is to create a multi-year, strategic framework to position the City of West Branch for future growth and prosperity. The CIP serves as a key planning tool to help the City identify capital priorities, evaluate funding options, and align public investments with community goals and operational capacity. A comprehensive fiscal policy framework ensures consistency across financial decision-making, reduces administrative burdens, and enhances transparency and accountability.

This project integrated multiple sources of information, including a community-wide survey, two community engagement events, department interviews, and case studies to review best practices in capital improvement planning and fiscal policies. This research was foundational in developing a participatory capital improvement planning process, which involved project proposals from department heads, a resident CIP Review Committee, structured evaluation criteria, and resident survey. Together, these data sources captured both resident perspectives and institutional constraints, which allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of infrastructure capacity, service demands, and fiscal conditions. The MPA capstone team also completed a gap analysis of West Branch's fiscal policies in comparison to several Iowa cities to identify critical missing policies.

This report provides West Branch decision-makers and residents with an overview of the City's growth, community needs, and fiscal health, which were critical in the development of the CIP and fiscal policies. In addition to outlining the project's methodology and research, this report details the project's final recommendations. Based on CIP Review Committee scoring, resident feedback, and financial feasibility, the MPA capstone team recommends the completion of 11 capital improvement projects ranging from public infrastructure to recreational amenities from fiscal year (FY) 2028 to 2032. The MPA capstone team also recommends restructuring and expanding the City's fiscal policies to create a more comprehensive framework, including 11 new policies and 11 revised policies. The MPA capstone team also created a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) application for developers and recommends 17 new TIF-specific policies to enhance communication and ensure responsible allocation of taxpayer dollars.

Chapter 1: Community Profile

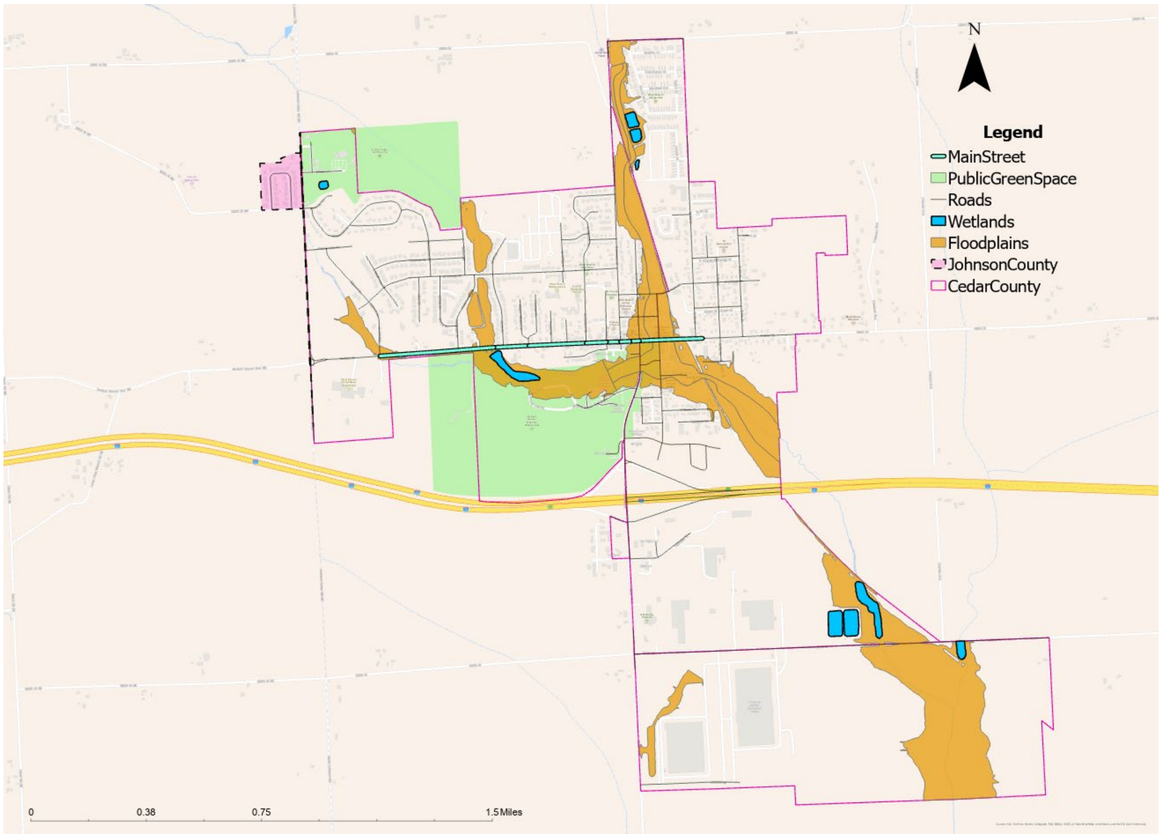
Understanding the makeup of a city is crucial for delivering services in an efficient and effective manner. This community profile presents the demographic characteristics of West Branch, Iowa, and its evolution over recent decades. By examining West Branch's historical background and its transformations, the CIP and fiscal policies can meet the current needs of the community and anticipate future requirements.

Community Profile

Quaker settlers from Ohio established the City of West Branch in the late nineteenth century.[1] While nearly all of the city lies within Cedar County, recent growth has extended its boundaries into Johnson County. Figure 1.1 illustrates West Branch's municipal limits and details the portions located in both counties.

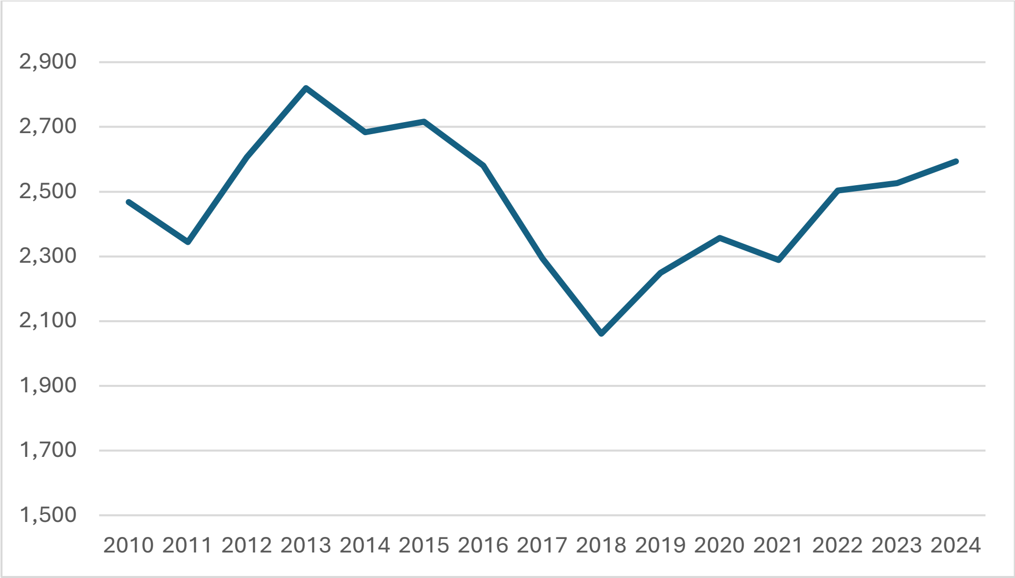
West Branch's location along Interstate 80 makes it a convenient hub for commuters traveling to Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and the Quad Cities. West Branch residents had a mean travel time to work of 23.9 minutes in 2024, which is slightly higher than the state mean travel time of 20.4 minutes. Additionally, 74% of West Branch residents work outside of the city. Comparatively, 41% of employees throughout Iowa do not work and live in the same city.[2]

Figure 1.1. Map of West Branch[3]



As of 2024, West Branch has a population of 2,594 people.[4] However, the city's population peaked at over 2,800 people in 2013. Figure 1.2 shows the fluctuations in West Branch's population from 2010 to 2024. While there was a 27% decrease in the population from 2013 to 2018, the population has since grown by 26%.[5]

Figure 1.2. West Branch Population (2010 – 2024)[6]



West Branch's median household income has jumped from $62,652 in 2014 to $92,209 in 2024.[7] The city's employment rate saw a slight dip, with 75.6% of residents employed in 2014 and 73.2% in 2024. This is above Iowa's employment rate of 64.3%.[8] Despite the increase in the median income, West Branch's poverty rate has only slightly decreased from 7% in 2014 to 6.4% in 2024. The city's poverty rate is below Iowa's average of 11%.[9]

In response to increased income and subsequent growth, the average property value has experienced a substantial rise. In 2014, the median property value in West Branch was $154,800. The property value has grown to $250,300 in 2024. [10] This growth may be attributed to the new housing developments in West Branch, which could be driving up the cost of housing.

West Branch's median age has also seen recent fluctuations. Figure 1.3 illustrates the change in West Branch's median age from 2010 to 2024. The city's median age peaked in 2018 at 46.6 years old. However, the city's median age has since decreased to 36.7 years old in 2024. Over 50% of West Branch residents are between the ages of 18 to 63.[11] Figure 1.4 reveals that the age of West Branch residents is slightly younger compared to the state but has an older population than Iowa City.[12]

Figure 1.3. West Branch Median Age (2010 - 2024)[13]

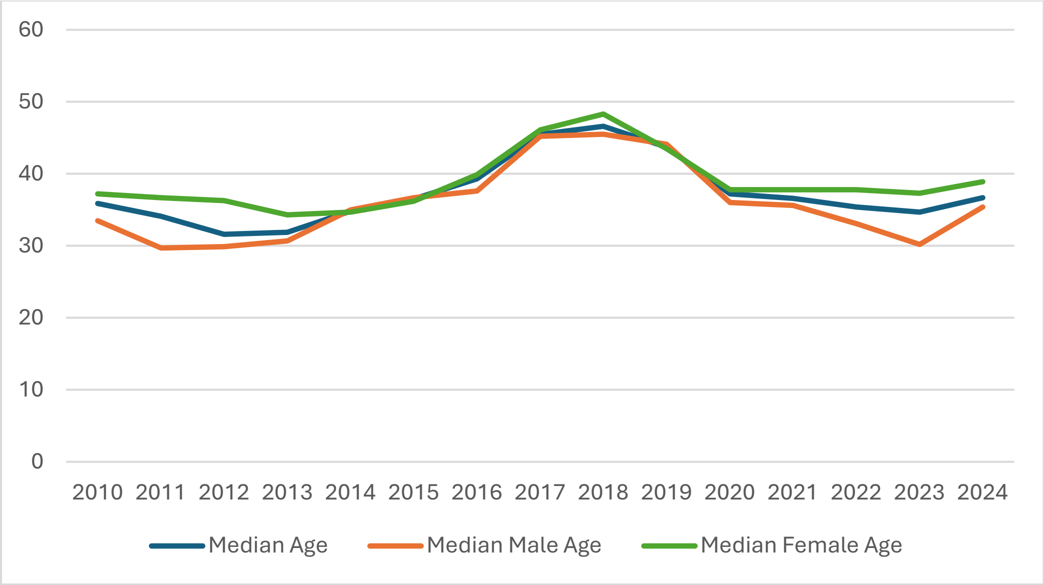
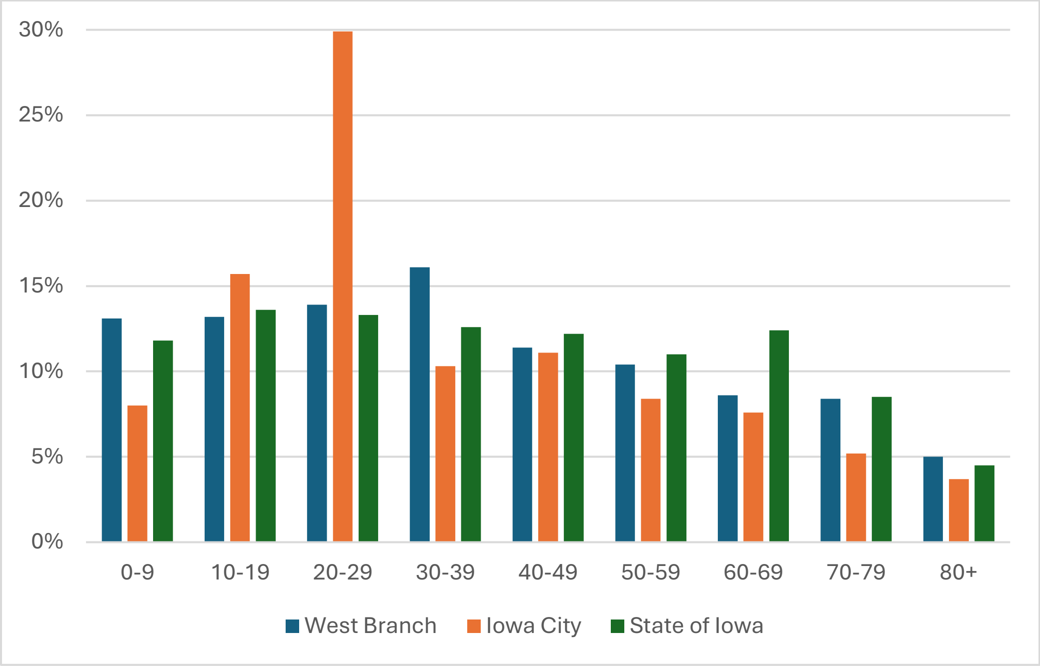


Figure 1.4. West Branch, Iowa City, and State of Iowa Age (2024)[14]



Over the past 10 years, the white population in West Branch has slightly decreased. Specifically, the white population has decreased from 96.8% to 96.0%. The Black population saw a minor increase from 0% in 2014 to 0.3% in 2024.[15] In West Branch, there has been a small estimated decline of 6 residents who identify as Hispanic from 2014 to 2024,and the Hispanic population makes up 3.7% of the total population.[16] However, it is important to note that this percentage may encompass members from other racial backgrounds.

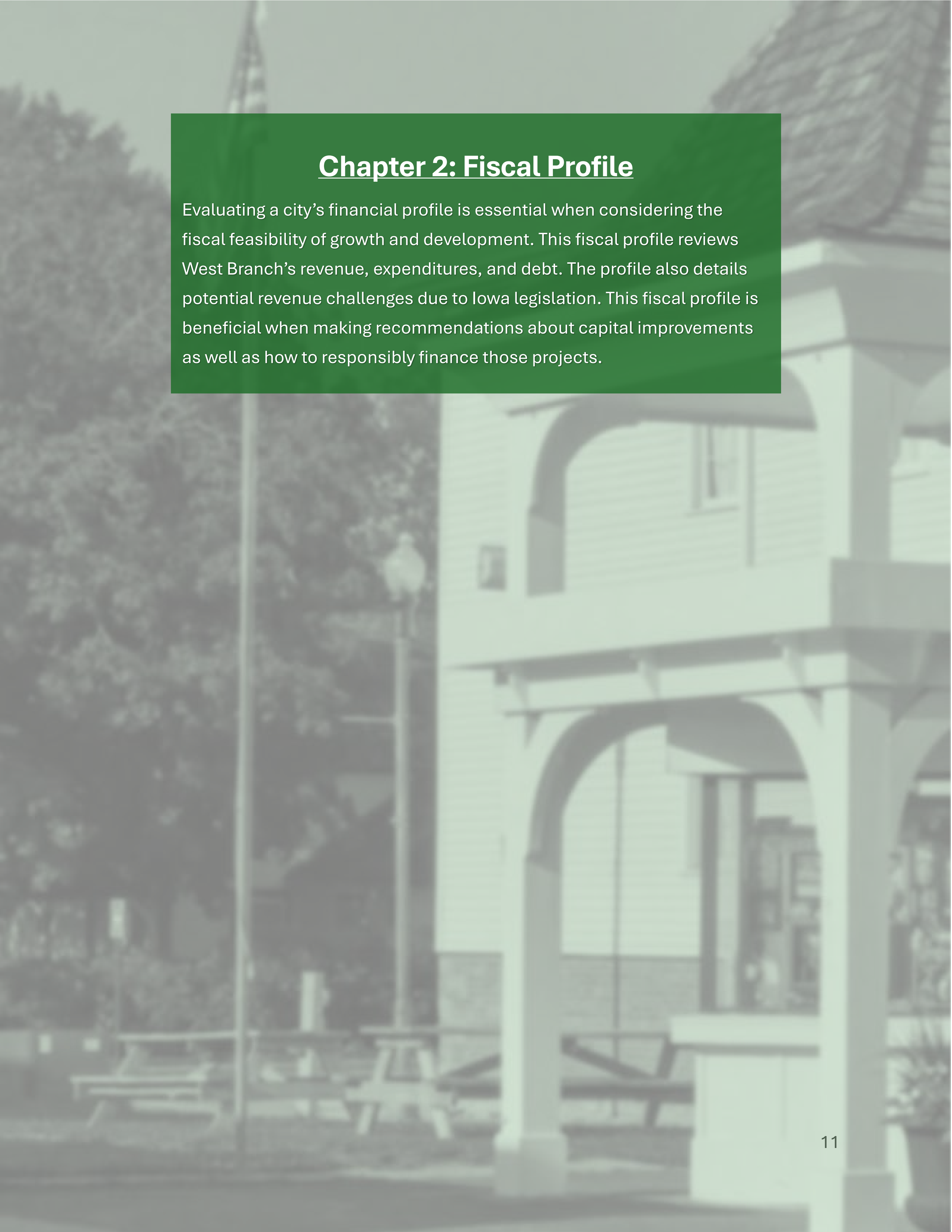
Political Profile

Iowa has four Congressional Districts, which align with Iowa's four elected officials in the United States House of Representatives. West Branch belongs to District 1, which covers the southeastern part of Iowa. Republican Mariannette Miller-Meeks is the representative for District 1. Republican Senators Chuck Grassley and Joni Ernst also represent Iowa at the federal level.[17] At the state level, West Branch is part of Iowa Senate District 41 and Iowa House District 82. Republican Kerry Gruenhagen represents District 41 and Republican Bobby Kaufmann represents District 82.[18]

West Branch has a diverse political makeup. According to the 2024 election results, 57% of West Branch residents who voted cast a ballot for the Democratic presidential candidate. A little under 40% of West Branch voters were for the Republican candidate. This trend continued with 62% of voters in favor of the Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives and 56% voting for the Democratic candidate for the Iowa House of Representatives.[19]

Takeaways

The data indicates that West Branch has historically been a small town but has experienced population growth in recent years. Current and predicted future population growth is likely a contributing factor to the increase in both median household income and mean property value. An expanding population can grow the city's tax base, generating additional revenue to finance capital improvement projects. However, growth may also require additional investment in public infrastructure, which increases expenses.



Chapter 2: Fiscal Profile

Evaluating a city's financial profile is essential when considering the fiscal feasibility of growth and development. This fiscal profile reviews West Branch's revenue, expenditures, and debt. The profile also details potential revenue challenges due to Iowa legislation. This fiscal profile is beneficial when making recommendations about capital improvements as well as how to responsibly finance those projects.

Fiscal Year Review

West Branch has projected $15,061,391 in revenue and budgeted $14,723,824 in expenditures for fiscal year 2026, which spans from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. This represents a 31% increase in revenue and a 29% increase in spending compared to fiscal year 2025. However, fiscal year 2026 is more aligned with fiscal year 2024, with only a 1.6% increase in revenue and an 18% increase in expenditures.[20] Figure 2.1 demonstrates these changes throughout the three fiscal years.

Figure 2.1. West Branch Revenue and Expenditures (FY 2024, 2025, 2026)[21]

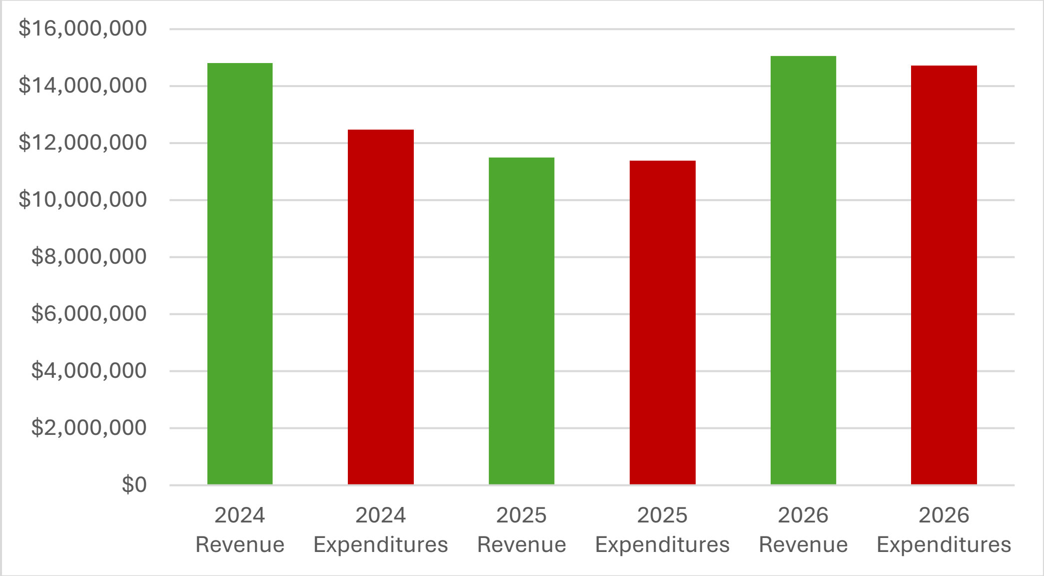


Figure 2.2 illustrates West Branch's revenue sources and their proportion of the budget across fiscal years 2024, 2025, and 2026. Other financing sources, which consist of debt proceeds and sale of capital assets, make up the largest revenue source in fiscal years 2024 and 2026. However, property taxes were the largest revenue source in fiscal year 2025.[22] Notably, West Branch increased its property tax rate in fiscal year 2025 to fund additional public safety employees.[23]

Figure 2.2. West Branch Revenue Sources (FY 2024, 2025, 2026)[24]

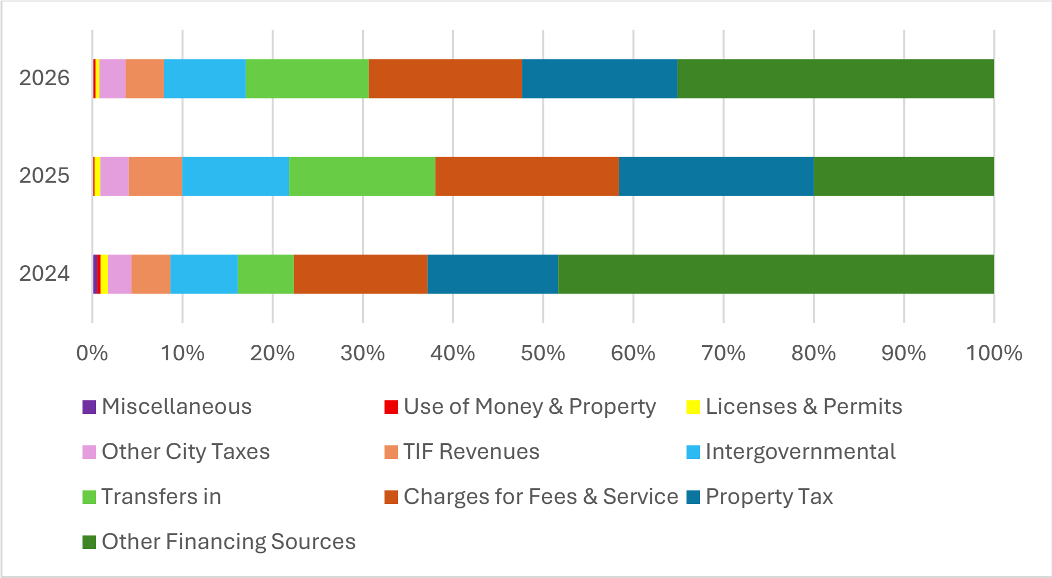
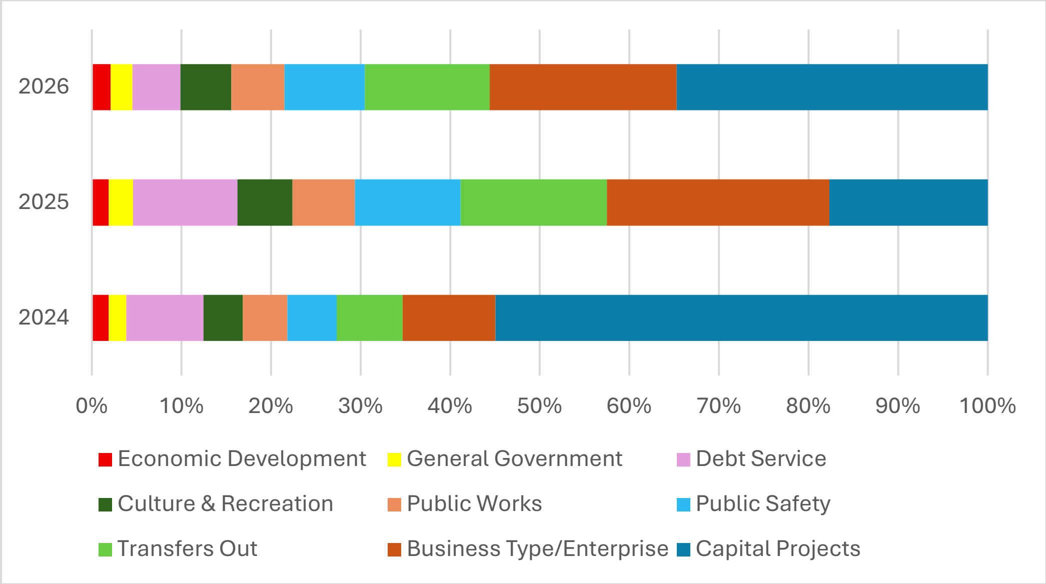


Figure 2.3 details the expenditure categories and their corresponding budget percentages for fiscal years 2024, 2025, and 2026. Capital projects were the most significant expense in fiscal years 2024 and 2026. Contrastingly, enterprise expenses, which are used for water, sewer, and storm water utilities, were the largest expenditure in fiscal year 2025.[25]

Figure 2.3. West Branch Expenditures (FY 2024, 2025, 2026)[26]



West Branch's largest expenditure category in fiscal year 2026, capital projects, is expected to cost over $5 million. Even though this is a significant cost, capital projects in fiscal year 2024 accounted for a larger proportion of total expenditures. 2024 projects included the roundabout on Cedar Johnson Road, completion of the wastewater treatment facility, moving utility pipes due to I-80 construction, and water main maintenance. The water main maintenance has continued into fiscal year 2026, but the City has also planned to complete construction on the Cedar Johnson Road, milling on West Main Street, and widening of the Wapsi Creek. While 70% of the Wapsi Creek project is financed through grants, the remaining projects are funded through general obligation (GO) and revenue bonds.[27]

Revenue

West Branch implemented three changes to revenue streams for fiscal year 2026. First, West Branch will increase utility rates by 2% annually until 2029. West Branch will also start collecting a 1% franchise fee for cable, electric, and gas.[28] Cities collect franchise fees from companies that use public property to deliver utilities, such as electricity, within the city. However, the company may pass on the fee to consumers as part of a utility bill.[29] The franchise fee will fund infrastructure, safety, and parks and is projected to generate $74,400 in fiscal year 2026.[30] Lastly, while West Branch has had a 1% Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), this revenue was previously used for park projects. Starting in fiscal year 2026, the City is allocating this revenue to fund police, fire, parks, and infrastructure. West Branch has projected $300,000 in LOST revenue in fiscal year 2026.[31]

Despite these changes, the State of Iowa has limited potential revenue growth for cities, especially regarding property tax income.

- House File 2552, passed in 2022, made the Business Property Tax Credit permanent and implemented an automatic rollback reduction for commercial, industrial, and rail property owners on the first $150,000 of property tax valuation. The rollback reduces the amount of the property's value that is taxed. The reduced rollback will match the residential property rate, and the remaining value will be taxed at the full commercial, industrial, or rail rates. This change was estimated to create a loss of $50 million for all local governments in Iowa combined starting in fiscal year 2025.[32]
- House File 718, passed in 2023, created an adjusted city general fund levy that is capped at $8.10 per $1,000 assessed value starting in fiscal year 2029. This adjusted levy combined the general fund levy, which was already limited to $8.10, emergency levy, and several other levies like memorial buildings, bridge construction, and public library support. However, debt service levies, capital improvement reserve funds, emergency service districts, and several other levies are not included in this cap. HF 718 also created a homestead property exemption

for homeowners over the age of 65 and increased the military service exemption. These exemptions will result in a reduction in taxable value.[33]

- Legislation proposed during the 2026 session would limit annual increases in property tax levies to a 2% increase. However, there are exceptions for new construction.[34]

While it is difficult to predict exactly how these restrictions will impact West Branch, identifying potential ways to fund capital improvement projects requires considering these pieces of legislation.

Effective Tax Rate Comparison

While local governments rely heavily on property tax revenue to fund their services, cities must also ensure property taxes are not a significant burden for residents. Effective property tax rate is an important indicator for measuring the real tax burden on property owners. While the nominal rate is how much a property owner legally has to pay in taxes, the effective tax rate is used to compare tax burdens across communities. Data from the Cedar County Assessor was used to both calculate and map the effective tax rates across agricultural, commercial, and residential properties in West Branch.[35]

Figure 2.4 is the agricultural property tax map, which shows that most agricultural parcels in West Branch have relatively low effective tax rates. The majority of these parcels fall between 0.97% and 1.66%, with only a small number exceeding 2%. Contrastingly, Figure 2.5 is the commercial property tax map, which reveals a higher effective tax rate. Many commercial parcels fall between 1.66% and 2.38%, and a significant number exceed 2.38%, reaching 3.23%. Lastly, Figure 2.6 is the residential property tax map. Most residential parcels fall between 1.66% and 2.38% effective tax rate. This is slightly higher than both the state average of 1.23% and the effective tax rate of 1.7% in Des Moines.[36] However, the map shows a fairly even spatial distribution with outliers potentially being explained by assessment errors. Overall, these three maps show differences in tax burden across land use types in West Branch.

Figure 2.4. West Branch Agricultural Effective Rate[37]

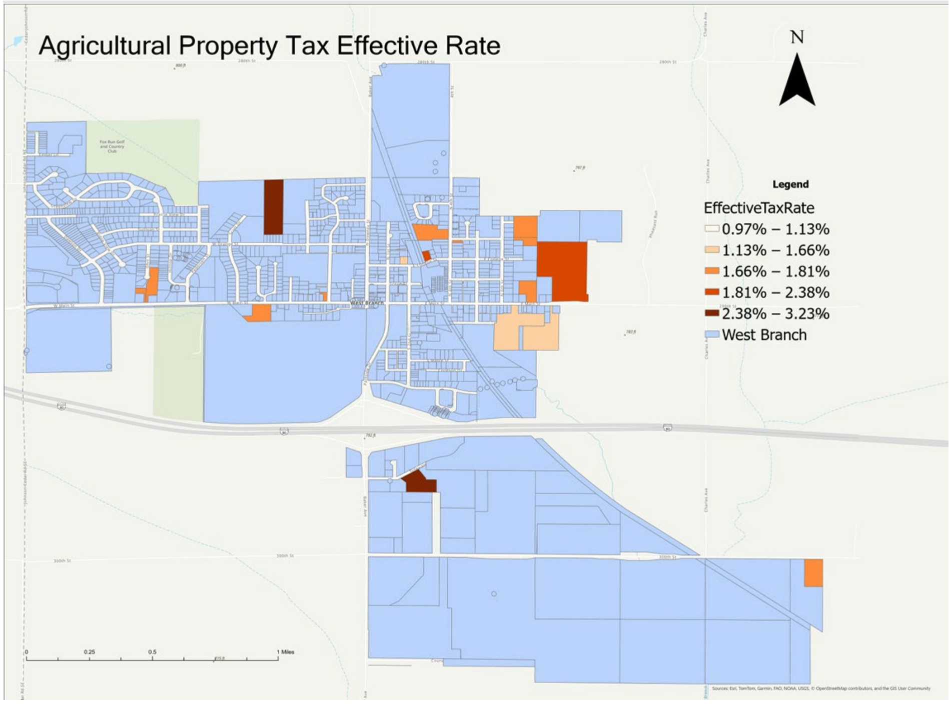


Figure 2.5. West Branch Commercial Effective Rate[38]

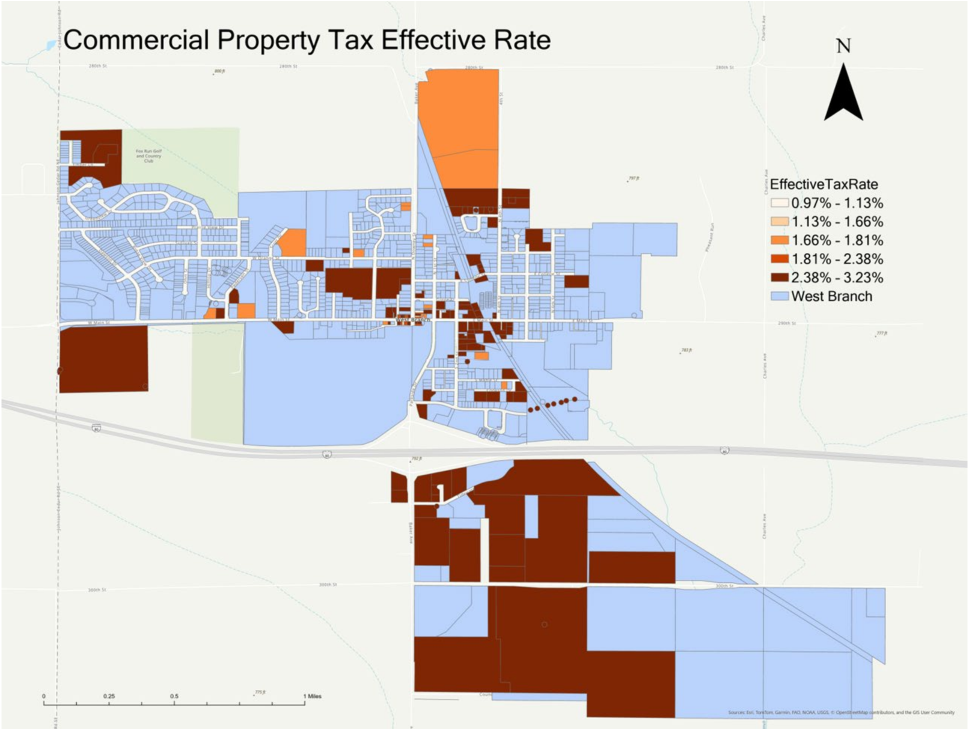
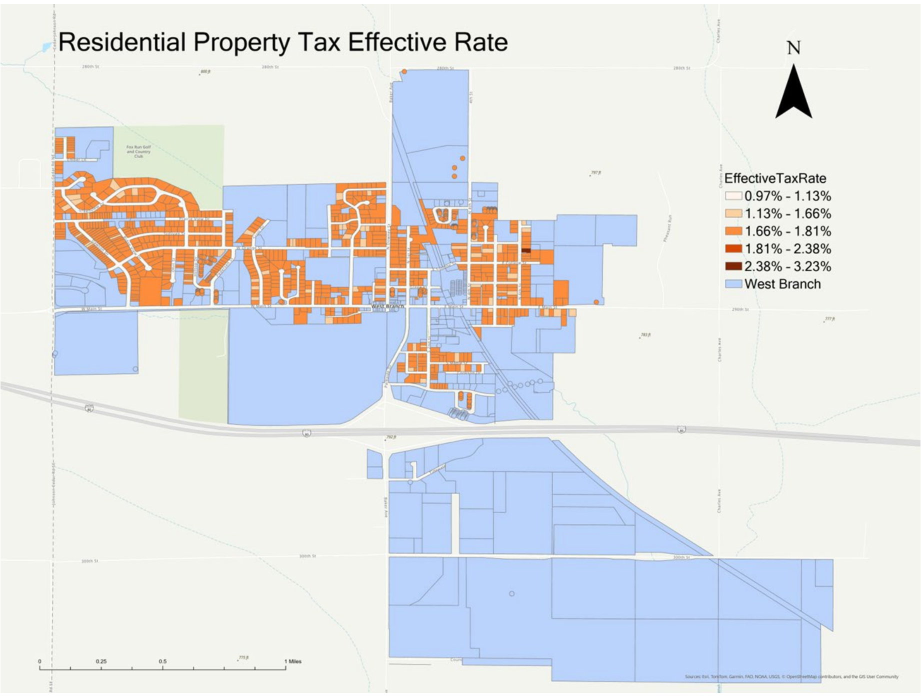


Figure 2.6. West Branch Residential Effective Rate[39]



Debt

According to the Iowa State Treasurer, West Branch has almost $14.4 million in outstanding debt obligations as of 2025. With a population of over 2,500 people, these obligations are equal to $5,536 per person. West Branch has the 79th highest debt per capita out of 939 cities in Iowa. Figure 2.7 compares West Branch's debt with peer communities Solon and Tiffin as well as Dougherty as it has the highest debt per capita in Iowa. More than 200 cities in Iowa report having no outstanding debt.[40] Per capita is useful to analyze as it normalizes the debt across varying population sizes.

Figure 2.7. Outstanding Debt Per Capita in Select Iowa Cities (2025)[41]

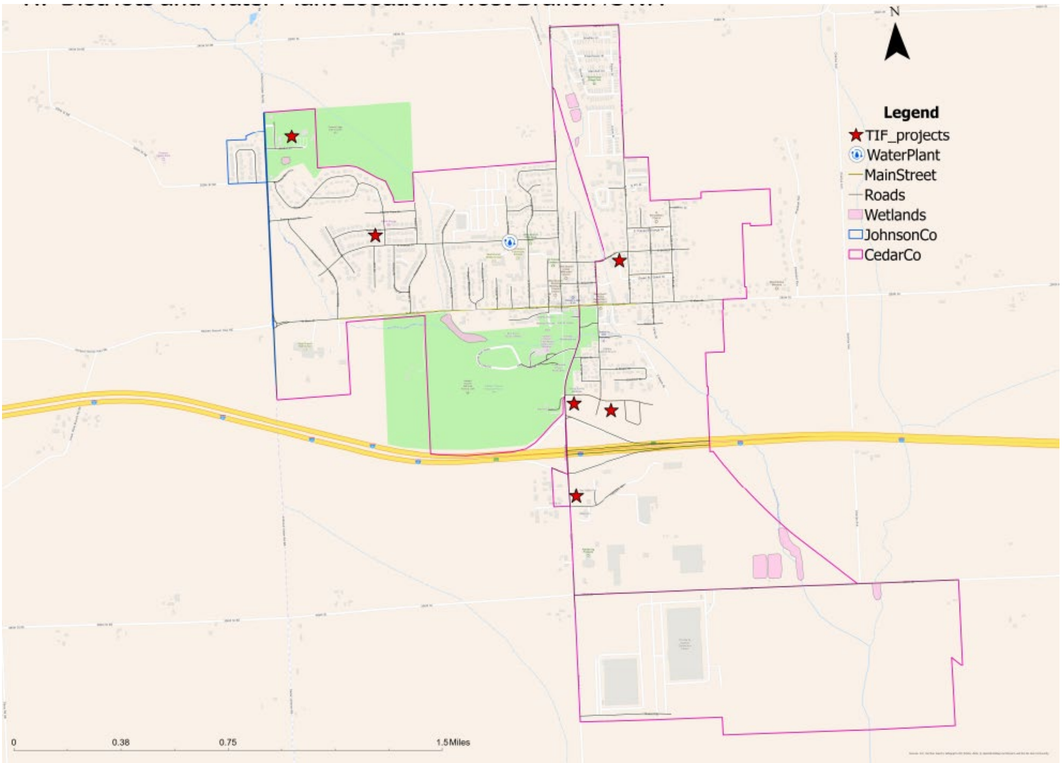
City	Total Debt	Population	Debt Per Capita
Dougherty	$1,640,295	62	$26,456
Tiffin	$29,961,647	4,512	$6,640
West Branch	$14,359,753	2,594	$5,536
Solon	$6,459,000	3,018	$2,140

The $14.4 million in debt obligations consist of three different types of debt: revenue bonds, general obligation (GO) bonds, and capital leases. GO bonds are backed by the credit of the City, so they are repaid through property taxes. Revenue bonds are not backed by the City's credit, so the interest rates are often higher, and they are paid back through service fees or specific revenue sources, such as utility payments. Capital leases are when municipalities lease a project and buy it at the end of its useful life.[42] West Branch has four revenue bonds, which total over $9 million. Over 30% of debt obligations are from GO bonds, which equate to more than $5 million. Lastly, capital leases make up less than 1% of obligations.[43]

The State of Iowa mandates that GO bond debt is less than 5% of the city's total property value.[44] With a total taxable property base of over $220 million, West Branch has a debt capacity of $11,152,664 as of fiscal year 2025.[45] This leaves a $6 million gap in the legal debt capacity. However, it is important to consider the City's financial capacity to reduce its other forms of debt before recommending additional GO bonds. As West Branch grows its taxable property base, this debt capacity will continue to increase.

West Branch also has $4.6 million in outstanding Tax Increment Financing (TIF) obligations as of fiscal year 2024.[46] TIF is an economic development tool where a city uses the additional property tax revenue from a new development to pay for the development. West Branch will spend over $170,000 on TIF rebates in fiscal year 2026 for the following projects: Casey's, Little Lights on the Lane, The Meadows, Parkside BP, and Heritage Hill. The Meadows and Heritage Hill are both housing developments, Casey's and Parkside BP are gas stations, and Little Lights on the Lane is a wedding venue. [47] At the October 6th, 2025 City Council meeting, the City also approved a TIF tax rebate for the Parkside multi-family housing development.[48] Figure 2.8 depicts the location of these projects.

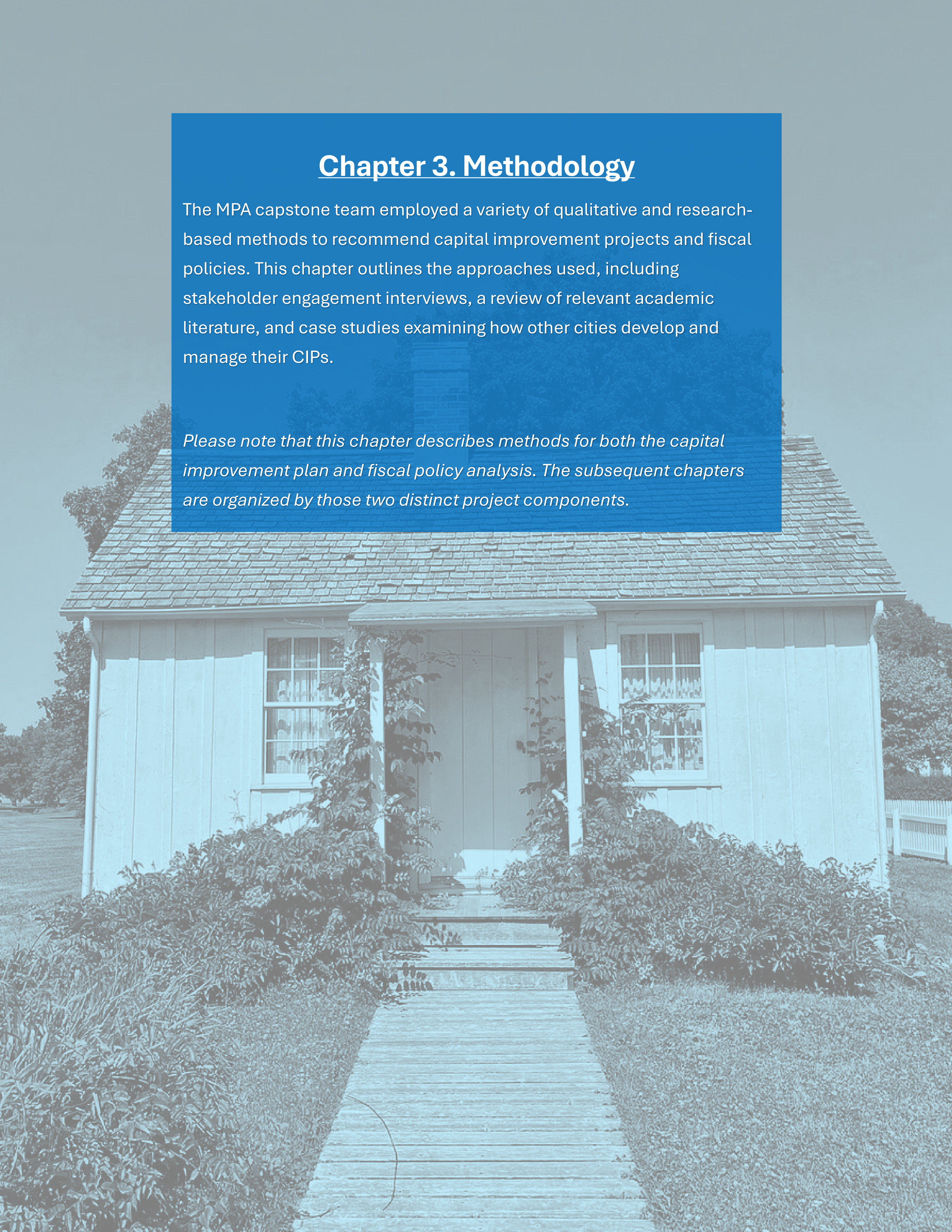
Figure 2.8. West Branch TIF Projects



Chapter 3. Methodology

The MPA capstone team employed a variety of qualitative and research-based methods to recommend capital improvement projects and fiscal policies. This chapter outlines the approaches used, including stakeholder engagement interviews, a review of relevant academic literature, and case studies examining how other cities develop and manage their CIPs.

Please note that this chapter describes methods for both the capital improvement plan and fiscal policy analysis. The subsequent chapters are organized by those two distinct project components.



Stakeholder Engagement

The MPA capstone team contributed to the development of a community-wide survey in collaboration with the West Branch Comprehensive Plan team. This survey invited West Branch residents to share their perspective on current successes, areas of growth, and their vision for the future. The survey contains several relevant questions for this project, including the most urgent investments, challenges to economic development, a household's financial burden from taxes and fees, and willingness to pay for recreational amenities. By collecting a respondent's demographic information, the MPA capstone team utilized analytical tests to compare residents' priorities based on different sociodemographic characteristics.

Residents also provided feedback during two community engagement events. The first was an Open House hosted on November 18, 2025, which featured several activities. The MPA capstone team's activity involved budgeting for capital improvement projects. Residents had eight tokens to spend on 12 potential projects ranging from water infrastructure and public safety to a new library and a community recreational center. Projects were categorized into essential and discretionary, and participants were encouraged to spend five tokens on essential projects. Projects were also classified as high, medium, and low costs, which correlated with the number of tokens residents needed to spend. A high project cost three tokens, medium cost was two tokens, and a low project cost one token. The purpose of this activity was to identify high priority projects as well as inform residents about budgetary constraints. The second community engagement event was a webinar on April 2, 2026. A recording of the webinar was posted on the City's website to receive resident feedback through April 16, 2026.

Department heads for the City shared their needs and prospective capital improvement projects during individual, structured interviews. West Branch has six different departments: Administration, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Police, Public Library, and Public Works. The interview contained four sections. The first section covered the department's anticipated capital improvement needs for fiscal years 2028 through 2032. Second, the interview evaluated the department's current staffing as well as their staffing needs to operate at full capacity. Third, department heads shared how they collaborate with other departments and organizations or any partnerships they aim to develop in the future. Fourth, the interview considered how the department measures its quality effectiveness. These interviews identified potential capital improvement projects that informed community engagement activities, such as the Open House, to receive resident feedback.

Literature Review & Case Studies

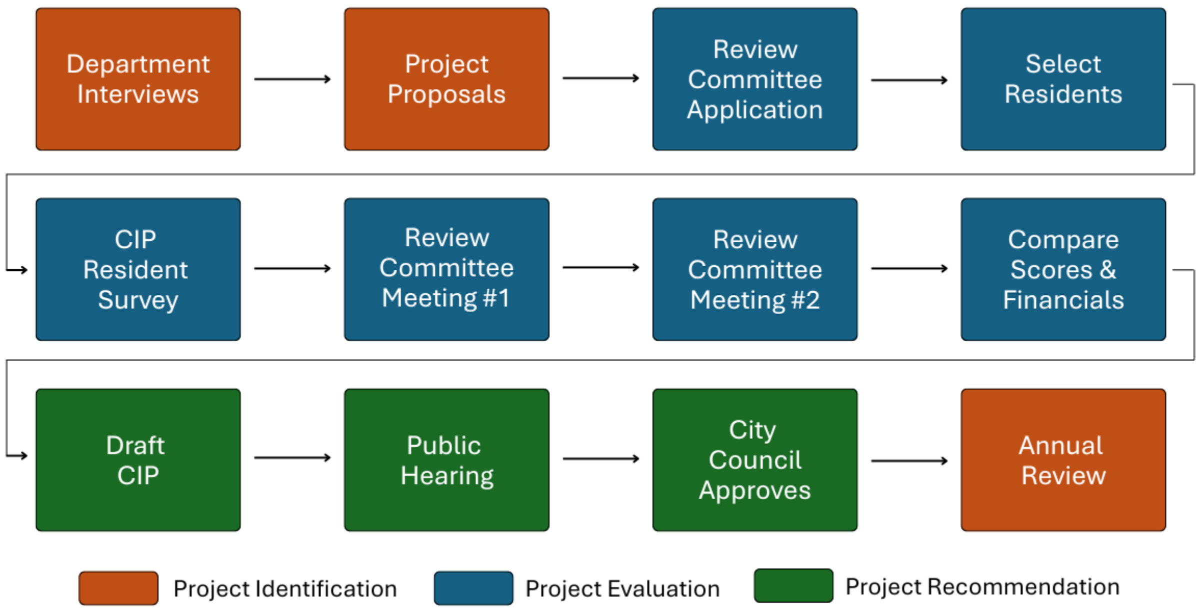
The MPA capstone team completed a literature and case study review to determine best practices for a CIP. The case studies examined how other cities identify and prioritize capital improvement projects. The MPA capstone reviewed CIP best practices from cities within Iowa, such as Ely, Urbandale, and Rock Rapids, due to their comparability with West Branch and innovative resident engagement practices. Cities across the nation were also included as they served as examples for resident engagement and project evaluation. These cities included Marion, Massachusetts, Chino Valley, Arizona, Bryan, Texas, Brentwood, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland. In addition to these examples, the literature review analyzed the Cost-Benefit Analysis, Fiscal Impact Analysis, and 4 E's frameworks to craft evaluation criteria for West Branch's CIP. The literature review also assessed the advantages of Participatory Budgeting to increase community engagement and transparency.

Similarly, fiscal policies from several cities served as case studies to expand and improve West Branch's policies to ensure consistent and efficient resource allocation. The MPA capstone team compared fiscal policies between West Branch, Iowa City, and Cedar Rapids. These cities were selected due to their size as larger cities are more likely to have robust fiscal policies to identify policies West Branch was missing. For specific TIF policies and the application, the West Branch Finance Officer recommended reviewing Urbandale, Des Moines, Grimes, Peosta, and Hiawatha as examples.

Capital Improvement Planning Process

Based on this research, the MPA capstone team developed a capital improvement project identification and evaluation methodology that West Branch can continue to utilize for future CIPs. This 12-step process is detailed in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Capital Improvement Planning Process



The CIP process involves:

1. Department Interviews: These interviews with department heads are intended both to introduce the needs of each department as well as communicate potential capital improvement projects.

2. Project Proposals: Several cities, such as Iowa City, the City of Ely, and the City of Muscatine, have department heads complete project proposal forms to suggest potential capital improvement projects. The MPA capstone team used Iowa City's form as an example to craft a digital project proposal form, which is included as Appendix A. This form asked department heads to identify estimated costs, regulatory needs, potential funding options, and other project details. This form was distributed to West Branch department heads on January 1, 2026, with a deadline of submitting a proposal for each requested project by January 31, 2026.

3. Review Committee Application: The CIP Review Committee consisted of the West Branch Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, a representative from the Planning and Zoning

Commission, and three West Branch residents. As West Branch officials have expressed a desire to increase citizen engagement and transparency, the inclusion of residents is modeled off the City of Urbandale's review process. Interested residents submitted applications to serve on the committee, which is included as Appendix B. These applications were advertised online through the City's website and social media pages as well as physically at the City's offices and public library. The flyer is attached as Appendix C.

4. Select Residents: West Branch's City Administrator and Finance Officer selected three residents from 21 applications. Residents were selected based on the professional and personal perspectives they would bring while prioritizing representation across age, gender, and geography of where residents lived.

5. CIP Resident Survey: To gauge overall public support for potential projects, West Branch residents were able to share their comments and concerns in an online survey, which was available during March 2026. The survey briefly summarized the proposed projects and asked residents whether they were strongly in favor or in strong opposition to any projects. The survey was advertised through the City's social media, the West Branch local newspaper, and flyers at the City's offices and public library. The flyer is included as Appendix D, and the survey is Appendix E.

6. Review Committee Meeting #1: The CIP Review Committee was tasked with evaluating project proposals based on specific scoring criteria. This evaluation criterion was discussed during the first committee meeting held on February 19, 2026. Committee members reviewed project proposals over the next week and submitted their preliminary scores by March 2, 2026.

7. Review Committee Meeting #2: At the second committee meeting held on March 5, 2026, members were able to ask questions about the proposed projects. West Branch's City Administrator, Finance Officer, Public Works Director, and Parks and Recreation Director attended this meeting to answer these questions. Committee members were allowed to change their preliminary scores based on this supplemental information and submitted their final scores by March 13, 2026.

8. Compare Scores & Financials: After the CIP Review Committee submitted their final scores, the highest and lowest scores for each project were removed before averaging the remaining four scores to eliminate the potential influence of outliers. Additional research was completed to identify external funding sources, such as grants, during this stage. Comparing the CIP Review Committee scores, resident survey feedback, and financial feasibility through different funding sources allows the City to determine the recommended projects for the CIP.

9. Draft CIP: Recommended projects, phasing, and funding sources are finalized to draft the CIP for the public hearing and City Council approval.

10. Public Hearing: Iowa code 384.15 requires municipalities to hold a public hearing before approving the plan.[49]

11. City Council Approves: The City Council adopts the five-year CIP after considering resident feedback from the public hearing.

12. Annual Review: West Branch's City Administrator reviews the CIP annually with the City Council to assess the overall progress of the recommended projects. The City should also compare estimated and final costs as well as projected and completed project timelines. The City may alter the phasing or prioritize new projects throughout the five years based on urgent needs or new financing opportunities.

Fiscal Policy Planning Process

The planning process for both the general fiscal and TIF policies was the same but involved comparing policies from different cities. The process included:

1. Policy Identification: By comparing fiscal and TIF policies from several Iowa cities, the MPA capstone team developed a comprehensive list of possible policies. This list included specific gaps West Branch officials previously identified.

2. Community Partner Review: The West Branch City Administrator and Finance Officer reviewed the comprehensive list of policies to determine which ones were necessary. This step also involved deciding which policy to adopt when multiple versions were identified.

3. Faculty Review: Faculty advisors reviewed the policies and recommended further wording changes for clarity, consistency, and eliminating redundancies.

4. Community Partner Approval: After implementing edits from community partners and faculty, the condensed fiscal policies were given to West Branch officials for additional comments and concerns.

5. Finalize Fiscal Policies: Final edits were completed to develop the comprehensive fiscal and TIF policy documents as well as the TIF application.

The completed policy draft then goes to city officials for review and approval:

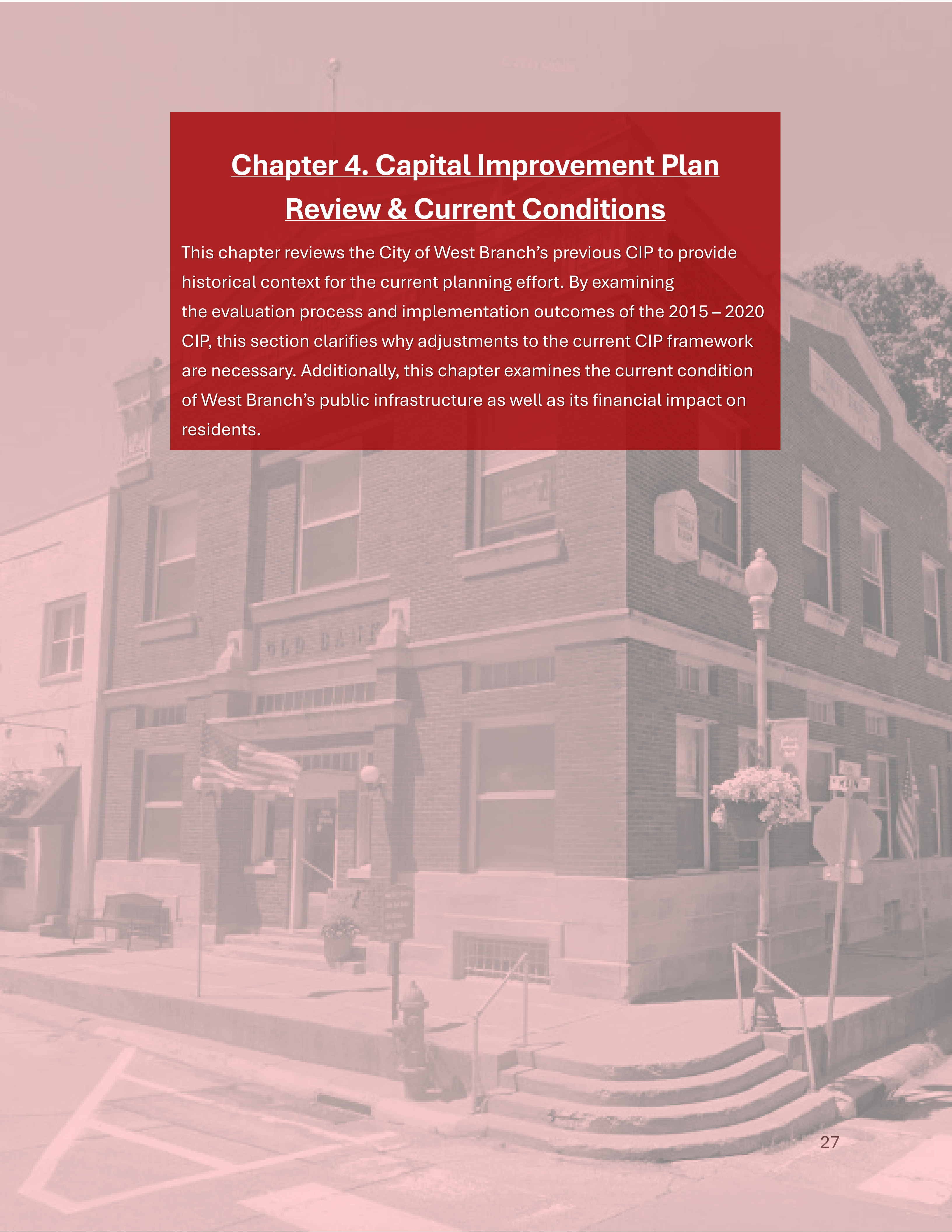
6. Fiscal Advisor Review: Final policies were sent to West Branch's Fiscal Advisor to review specific dollar amounts. For example, policies like contract bidding have dollar thresholds that require ensuring the amounts are sufficient for West Branch.

7. City Council Approves: The City Council adopts the new fiscal policies after implementing feedback from the Fiscal Advisor.

8. Review: The fiscal policies and TIF application will not have a formal annual review process. Rather, the policies can be altered as needed.

Chapter 4. Capital Improvement Plan Review & Current Conditions

This chapter reviews the City of West Branch's previous CIP to provide historical context for the current planning effort. By examining the evaluation process and implementation outcomes of the 2015 – 2020 CIP, this section clarifies why adjustments to the current CIP framework are necessary. Additionally, this chapter examines the current condition of West Branch's public infrastructure as well as its financial impact on residents.



West Branch Capital Improvement Plan FY 2015 – 2020

The City of West Branch's previous five-year CIP covered fiscal years 2015 to 2020. To evaluate and schedule investments, the City adopted an A, B, C, and D project rating system with the Mayor and City Council ultimately approving the projects. The rating system reflected a combination of project priority and timeline with each category indicating an expected implementation window:

- Projects with an A ranking were considered high priority and were scheduled within the first two fiscal years (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017).
- Projects with a B ranking were still high priority but could be scheduled for the subsequent two fiscal years (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019).
- Projects with a C ranking were moderate priority and could be scheduled for the final fiscal year if funding was available (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020).
- Projects with a D ranking were low priority and designated for implementation beyond July 1, 2020.[50]

The CIP proposed a total of 19 capital projects, which focused primarily on road improvements and the renovation of Town Hall. However, only nine of the proposed projects have been completed. Most completed projects involved road and pedestrian crossing upgrades, including the College Street Bridge expansion.[51] Several projects were deferred due to financial limitations or changing priorities, such as delaying Town Hall renovations to allocate funding towards a new athletic complex.[52]

This CIP is intended to guide capital planning, and projects may be adjusted, delayed, or reprioritized during implementation. As a result, the CIP functions primarily as a strategic planning framework rather than a guarantee of project delivery. The gap between proposed and completed projects in the 2015 – 2020 CIP highlights several limitations of the previous planning approach. Reliance on a primarily time- and priority-based rating system may have limited the City's ability to systematically account for multi-dimensional considerations such as infrastructure conditions, long-term maintenance needs, funding feasibility, and strategic alignment. These limitations provide important context for understanding the rationale behind revisions to the current CIP methodology.

Among the uncompleted projects, Town Hall and Main Street remain especially relevant. While Town Hall still requires first-floor renovations and accessibility upgrades, City officials have significantly expanded the scope of renovations for Main Street. The fiscal year 2015 – 2020 CIP included overlay on Main Street, meaning an additional pavement layer applied to extend the life of the existing road surface. However, the Main

Street project would now involve surface reconstruction as well as replacement of aging utilities beneath the roadway. In addition, sidewalk improvements along the northern side of the street are necessary to enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility for adjacent businesses. The need to coordinate infrastructure replacement with roadway reconstruction underscores the importance of cross-sector planning in future CIPs.

Existing Public Infrastructure

Wastewater Infrastructure

One of West Branch's largest infrastructure investments has been the wastewater treatment facility. In 2008, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources did not renew West Branch's wastewater treatment permit due to new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules which limited the discharge levels for certain pollutants like ammonia and E. coli. In 2009, West Branch estimated a new treatment plant would cost $5 million. However, the project was delayed due to the high cost. In 2019, West Branch decided to use the Submerged Attached Growth Reactor system to address the issue with a new estimated project cost of almost $9 million. Construction of the new treatment plant began in 2022 and was completed in 2024. As of 2024, West Branch has $8.29 million of the facility paid off, leaving half a million dollars of debt remaining.[53] This project exemplifies the importance of considering potential risks, such as increasing costs, as well as regulatory compliance when evaluating capital improvement projects.

Water Infrastructure

West Branch is currently facing several issues with their water system: necessary maintenance to their water treatment facility, yearly increases in water leakage in the system, and possible contamination concerns in its water source.

West Branch's water treatment filters require upgrades. The City relies on five water filters. However, two of the filters have exceeded their recommended lifespan of 20 years as they are reaching 50 years old. West Branch staff have explained that "older filters do require more frequent backwashing and may be in need of rehabilitation."[54] The backwashing process to clean the filters requires closing that pump room. Consequently, this process temporarily decreases the water treatment plant's capacity to provide services for West Branch residents. While the water treatment plant currently has the capacity to serve all residents, the completion of the new Parkside multi-family housing complex will potentially put the treatment plant at capacity. There are additional concerns that the system will become overloaded during a fire or flooding event, according to the head of Public Works.

Leaks have also been a source of growing concern for West Branch's Public Works Department. Figure 4.1 details West Branch's water loss from 2018 to 2022 according to a 2023 engineering report. Water loss in West Branch has increased from 19.6 million gallons per year, or 25% of total output, to 42 million gallons per year, or 39% of the total output. A well-maintained system of a similar size would be expected to have a 15% water loss. Water output has also increased from 78.5 million gallons per year to 107.3 million gallons per year.[55] Currently, the City is testing water meters to determine if the water loss issue lies with overreporting meters. The alternative explanation is leaky pipes. However, the City engineer believes that the water meters are underreporting the amount of water piped into houses. This means that residents are receiving water they are not paying for, which means remedying that issue would likely increase water bills for some households.

Figure 4.1. Historical Water Loss in West Branch (2023)[56]

	Total Output	Total Water Sold	Unsold	Unbilled Water Use*	Water Loss	Water Loss
Year	(Gal)	(Gal)	(%)	(Gal)	(Gal)	(%)
2018	78,531,000	56,857,400	28%	2,000,000	19,673,600	25%
2019	80,163,000	57,776,200	28%	2,000,000	20,386,800	25%
2020	89,714,000	61,929,900	31%	2,000,000	25,784,100	29%
2021	95,942,800	63,116,700	34%	2,000,000	30,826,100	32%
2022	107,391,000	63,068,00	41%	2,000,000	42,323,000	39%
Average	90,348,360	60,549,640	32%	2,000,000	27,789,720	30%
Maximum	107,391,000	63,116,700	41%	2,000,000	42,323,000	39%

* Accounts for hydrant flushing and estimated unbilled water usage.

The 2023 engineering report also includes an analysis of pipe infrastructure in West Branch. The City's water system has 120,176 total linear feet of water main pipes. More than 6,500 linear feet of these pipes are outdated four-inch pipes as opposed to the recommended six-inch pipes. Of the 42.3 million gallons of water loss in 2022, the report estimates that 35.9 million gallons of water loss is due to these older four-inch pipes. The report suggests that replacing the four-inch pipes with six-inch pipes would fix 65% of the City's water loss. If replacing the pipes had the expected effect on water loss, this project would decrease the City's water loss from 42 million gallons to 27.3 million gallons of water. This project would decrease strain on the water treatment facility as less water would be lost to waste and would decrease the overall amount of water the plant would need to process and pump.[57] Revenue bonds and the Iowa Clean Water State

Revolving Fund financed the total project cost of $1.4 million. The replacement of four-inch pipes has been completed through the east side of the city but is still in progress on the west side.[58]

The quality of water from West Branch's water source is another source of concern. West Branch draws water from two main aquifers: the Silurian and the Cambrian-Ordovician. West Branch's 2024 water quality report had concerns that the Silurian Aquifer is susceptible to contamination from leaking underground storage tanks, contaminate spills, and fertilizer runoff.[59] Nitrates, which are a known carcinogen, were one of these chemicals. Nitrates are introduced to the water from fertilizer runoff and are in particular a growing concern in Iowa due to rising cancer rates.[60] The Cambrian-Ordovician aquifer is less susceptible to contamination. In the City's 2024 water quality report, all assessed chemicals in the water system had values within acceptable limits. West Branch's water system was in violation of EPA standards as it did not test for levels of haloacetic acids and total trihalomethane, both of which are known carcinogens.[61] Both substances are now being tested for regularly.

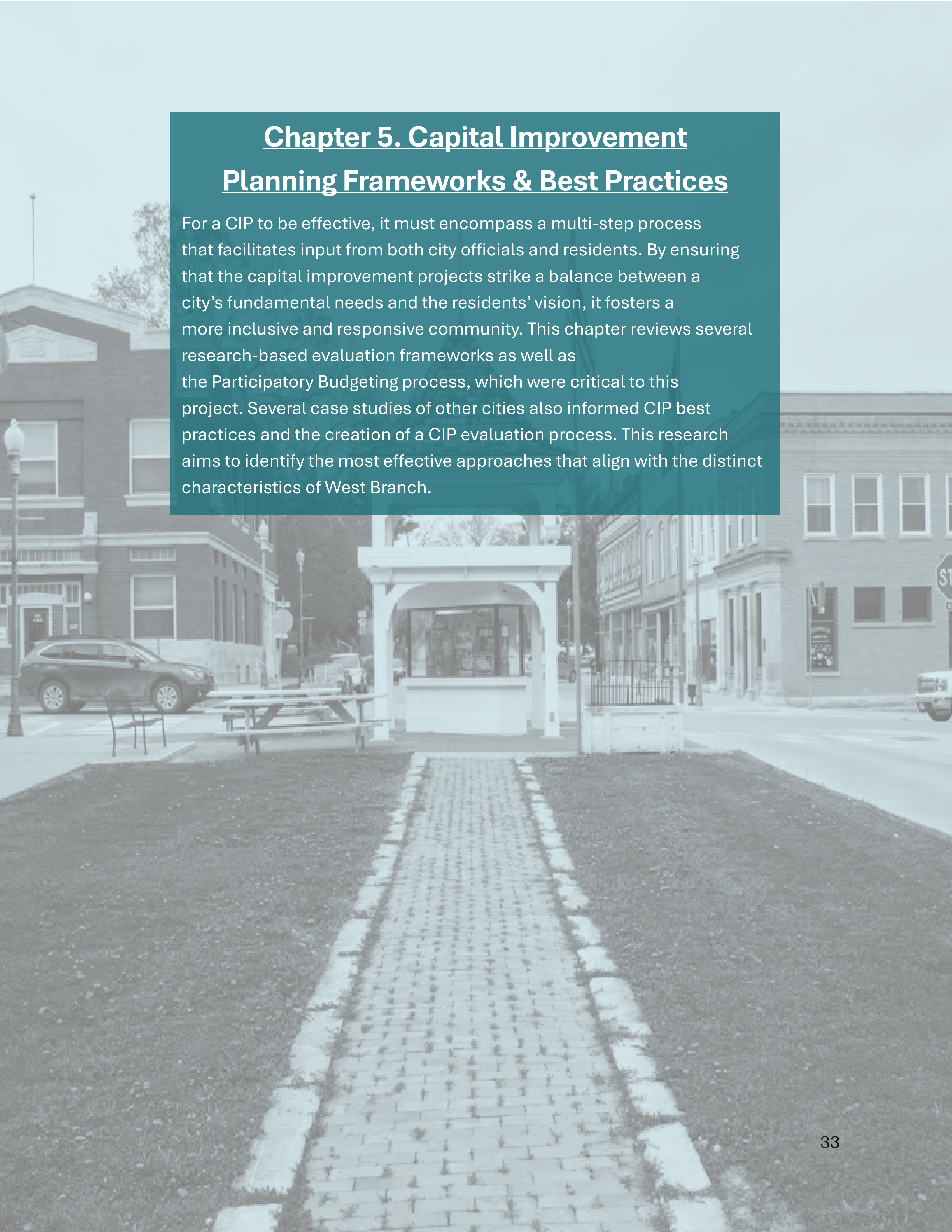
Utility Rates

For many years, West Branch maintained stable water utility rates. This stability was primarily due to the absence of system updates and the ability to keep pace with inflation. However, the City needed to increase utility rates to fund infrastructure investments, especially with the new wastewater facility. According to the Iowa League of Cities' Water and Wastewater Dashboard for Iowa communities in 2023, a one-person household in West Branch can expect to pay $39 to $58 per month for water. Comparatively, a one-person household in the similarly sized community of Solon will pay $19 to $30 per month for the same amount of water. Tiffin has higher rates of $42 to $52 per month for a one-person household.[62] On average, a single individual will use between 1,500 and 2,200 gallons of water per month. Two people will typically use between 3,000 and 4,400 gallons of water per month.[63] Figure 4.2 compares water expenses for residents in West Branch, Solon, Tiffin, and the state average based on water usage.

Figure 4.2. Water Rates Comparison (2023)[64]

	West Branch	Solon	Tiffin	Iowa Average
One-Person Household (average per month)	$39 - $58	$19 - $30	$42 - $52	N/A
Two-Person Household (average per month)	$69 - $104	$35 - $50	$57 - $73	N/A
5,000 Gallons (average per month)	$115.40	$55.75	$77.75	$91.60

As usage rates increase, West Branch becomes progressively more expensive compared to Solon, Tiffin and the state average.[65] Additionally, West Branch's rates will continue to increase as the City plans to raise utility rates by 2% annually until 2029 to repay the bonds used for the wastewater treatment plant. The potential water meter underreporting would also lead to higher utility bills. These two factors may present a financial burden to West Branch residents as they already pay higher water rates compared to peer communities.



Chapter 5. Capital Improvement Planning Frameworks & Best Practices

For a CIP to be effective, it must encompass a multi-step process that facilitates input from both city officials and residents. By ensuring that the capital improvement projects strike a balance between a city's fundamental needs and the residents' vision, it fosters a more inclusive and responsive community. This chapter reviews several research-based evaluation frameworks as well as the Participatory Budgeting process, which were critical to this project. Several case studies of other cities also informed CIP best practices and the creation of a CIP evaluation process. This research aims to identify the most effective approaches that align with the distinct characteristics of West Branch.

CIP Case Studies

Grading Systems

Numerous CIPs utilize grading systems to ascertain essential projects. West Branch and Ely utilize two distinct grading systems that share similarities in project collection methods but differ in the evaluation process. The MPA capstone team's foundational research included reviewing various CIPs across Iowa. However, this analysis focuses on West Branch to review its previous process and the City of Ely due to the clarity of its evaluation metrics.

West Branch, Iowa: As previously discussed in the CIP Review chapter, West Branch's CIP prioritization scale ranges from A to D. West Branch employed an internal department ranking system as well as allowing the City Council and Mayor to score the projects. A project's final grade was determined based on the consensus of these grades. For instance, the Trailhead Parking Lot received four A grades, one B grade, and one D grade. The project's overall grade was an A as four out of five City Councilors and the Mayor awarded it an A grade. The projects with the highest grades were then considered for the CIP. Even if a project received an A rank, the project was not automatically included in the CIP.[66]

Ely, Iowa: Ely used a point system which ranges from 0 - 12 for nine different evaluation categories. Some of these categories include future costs, improvements in the quality of life, and economic development. The department heads score their own proposed projects based on this scoring system. The City Council also labels each project as high, medium, or low priority. This score and prioritization are combined to rank a project one through four. However, there are inconsistencies with these ranks and when the project is subsequently scheduled in the CIP. For example, the department head scored the Community Center Park Shelter project 36 out of 108 points and the City Council assigned a medium priority. These scores equated to a ranking of two and the project was scheduled for the fifth year in the CIP. However, the Downtown Area Road and Utilities Design was given a score of 38 out of 108 points and a medium priority. Yet, this project received a ranking of one and was scheduled within the first year of the CIP. [67]

Best Practices for Grading

Figure 5.1 summarizes the different ranking systems for West Branch and Ely. The various ranking systems examined in these case studies exhibit distinct advantages and disadvantages. For example, numerical values simplify scoring calculations. However, limiting the score range from one to three could avoid excessive variation. A potential drawback of this point system is its inability to effectively prioritize projects across a multi-year plan. Most projects received scores that qualified as top priority. Yet, the grading system was inconsistent as to when a high priority project was scheduled within the CIP. Examining and refining these existing ranking systems leads to a more efficient process for West Branch in future planning.

Figure 5.1. West Branch & Ely Ranking Systems

	West Branch, Iowa	Ely, Iowa
Letter Grading System	X	
Number Grading System		X
Departmental Grades	X	X
Council Consensus Grade/Rank	X	X

Citizen Involved CIP Review Committees

While involving citizens in the CIP review process is not universal, West Branch officials' interest in increasing community participation lends itself to this practice. As West Branch and the City of Ely did not involve residents in their previous CIPs, this analysis focuses on case studies of communities that effectively include citizens, even if the city was outside of Iowa. Reviewing several different variations of a citizen review committee assists in determining which process is most suitable for West Branch.

Urbandale, Iowa: The City's CIP Committee is comprised of two members from the City Council, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, one representative from the Planning and Zoning Commission, and five residents. Residents submit an application to become a committee member, and the City Council approves their appointment. These nine committee members are responsible for reviewing and modifying the CIP plan. The committee serves as the preliminary step before the plan is sent to the City Council for final approval.[68]

Marion, Massachusetts: The Capital Improvement Planning Committee is made up of six residents, two non-voting representatives from the Select Board, which is the same as a City Council, and finance staff. The committee members are not affiliated with the town government, but they do serve specific term limits. The Select Board appoints committee members. The committee's primary responsibility is to evaluate potential capital projects. Committee members convene with the town administrator and department heads to determine which projects warrant consideration. Ultimately, this committee only recommends projects to the Select Board, which means they do not possess the authority to make final decisions.[69]

Chino Valley, Arizona: This capital improvement planning process actively engages with the community through a Citizen's Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of five to seven residents. The eligibility criterion for membership is to reside within the town and to receive service through the town's public infrastructure. The Town Council appoints residents to the committee. The committee serves as a platform for residents to express recommendations and provide unique insights. The committee does not make final decisions and does not submit a recommended CIP to the Town Council. Instead, the committee functions in an advisory role that facilitates the decision-making process. [70]

Best Practices for CIP Review Committees

Figure 5.2 summarizes the different citizen review committees in Urbandale, Marion, and Chino Valley. The most prevalent method of citizen-led engagement involves the establishment of a CIP subcommittee. The committee includes a combination of members from either municipal staff, the municipal elected body, or appointed residents. This committee usually approves a draft CIP before the elected body formally votes on the plan. Typically, these committees have two sessions to evaluate and prioritize projects before the plan is approved. However, this approach presents challenges for a small town like West Branch. For example, allowing the City Council to select residents for the review committee may create conflicts of interest.

Figure 5.2. Urbandale, Marion, & Chino Valley Citizen Committees

	Urbandale, Iowa	Marion, Massachusetts	Chino Valley, Arizona
Elected Body Appoints Citizens to Review Committee	X	X	X
City Staff Included in Committee	X		
CIP Submission Requirement	X	X	
Citizen Advisory Role for CIP	X	X	X

Evaluation Criteria

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation of proposed CIP projects, an evaluation criterion was established for the CIP Review Committee. As depicted in Figure 5.3, five municipalities were selected for analysis to identify diverse evaluation categories. While the precise wording of these categories varied, they were subsequently categorized into the respective sections. Notably, despite variations in categories among municipalities, two consistent areas emerged in all plans: Regulatory Mandates and Public Safety, Health, and General Welfare.

Figure 5.3 Comparison of CIP Project Evaluation Criteria's

	Ely, IA[71]	Bryan, TX[72]	Brentwood, MO [73]	Baltimore, MA[74]	Rock Rapids, IA[75]
Future Costs/Impact on Operating Budget	X	X	X		X
Alignment with Comprehensive Plan	X		X		X
Population Served	X			X	
Regulatory Mandates	X	X	X	X	X
Public Safety, Health and General Welfare	X	X	X	X	X
Quality of Life	X	X	X		X
Economic Development/ Growth	X	X		X	X
Timing or Location		X	X		X
External Funding	X	X	X		
Asset Condition or Current Infrastructure	X	X		X	X
Efficiency and Coordination with Another Project				X	X

Project Frameworks

In addition to case studies from other cities, the MPA capstone team analyzed different academic frameworks to inform how to evaluate potential capital improvement projects as well as ways to increase community engagement. The following section details the frameworks and approaches that influenced the MPA capstone team's CIP planning process.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Cost-Benefit Analysis is an assessment method to evaluate how a policy or project affects society. Cost-Benefit Analysis aims to support public decision-making by comparing a project's total social benefits to its total social costs. Cost-Benefit Analysis considers a project's costs through opportunity cost and the benefits by accounting for willingness to pay. Opportunity cost weighs how the resources used for a project, such as labor, resources, land, and more, could have been used for other community projects. For example, a city deciding to use an empty piece of land for a park would examine the opportunity costs of using that same piece of land for a parking lot, commercial development, or other projects. Willingness to pay reflects how much a resident values a specific project based on what they would be willing to pay to receive that project's benefits.[76]

Although efficiency is often the primary focus of a Cost-Benefit Analysis, public projects usually address multiple goals. Consequently, a multi-goal analysis considers social values, goals, and specific impact categories to evaluate projects and make recommendations.[77] Goals belong in two broad categories. First, substantive goals are values that society cares about, such as human dignity and equity. Second, instrumental goals are conditions that increase the likelihood of achieving substantive goals. Political feasibility, government revenue and expenditures, as well as administrative capacity are all examples of instrumental goals.[78]

Research shows that Cost-Benefit Analysis is often underutilized for water infrastructure projects, even though these investments support positive health and environmental outcomes. Ratnaweera et al. argues that Cost-Benefit Analysis can assist decision-makers in better understanding these benefits by accounting for factors, such as potential profits, health impacts, and ecosystem outcomes.[79] The American Water Works Association (AWWA) also recommends considering risk management for water infrastructure. The AWWA process compares project scenarios with and without capital investment, assesses public safety and regulatory compliance risks, and assigns projects scores based on risk reduction factors. Factors may include public safety, critical project timing, and regulatory consequences of not completing the project. Budget constraints also play a role in determining the most appropriate timing for public projects.[80]

Fiscal Impact Analysis

A Fiscal Impact Analysis is a commonly used framework in urban planning that estimates a development's potential costs and benefits. Analysts can conduct a Fiscal Impact Analysis using either the marginal or average method. The marginal method involves detailed information from local experts. For example, the public works director may assess whether existing infrastructure, such as sewer or water, would have the capacity to support population growth. The average method uses budget-based multipliers like per-capita costs, to estimate expenditures and revenue. For example, this method would calculate the average cost of public safety services per resident and then multiply by the expected population growth to project additional expected spending. While the average method is faster and easier to apply, the marginal method accounts for more specific capacity limitations or funding constraints. As a result, analysts recommend a marginal approach for small, growing cities to better account for infrastructure capacity.[81]

This recommendation of a marginal approach aligns with the Decentralization Theorem, which explains that local governments are in the best position to respond to residents' needs and spending priorities. While a city may recognize the need to supply infrastructure, such as sewer and water to residents, studies have found that infrastructure also has demand-side effects. These demand-side effects involve a resident's willingness to pay for infrastructure investment, which is not often considered. [82] Incorporating both the demand and supply considerations in a Fiscal Impact Analysis ensures that communities can make responsive and financially sound infrastructure developments.

4 E's

Another evaluation framework used in public decision-making is the 4 E's: economy, efficiency, equity, and effectiveness. Economy focuses on the careful use of government resources to deliver public services. Efficiency examines how well those economic resources produce quality outputs for the public. Effectiveness measures whether a project achieved its intended goals. Lastly, equity considers how fairly the project's benefits are distributed across a community.[83]

Historically, infrastructure developments have predominantly emphasized economy and efficiency, which sometimes come at the expense of equity. Previous infrastructure projects, such as interstates and industrial facilities, have disproportionately harmed marginalized communities through displacement and environmental exposure. Chen et al. address this issue by using the Social Vulnerability Index to measure how infrastructure investments align with socially vulnerable areas. This index accounts for factors such as poverty, age, housing, disability, minority status, and more. Their findings show that equity-focused investments lead to improved socioeconomic outcomes. As a result, Chen et al. advocate for planners and policymakers to consider equity when assessing infrastructure projects.[84]

Application of frameworks

These frameworks collectively informed the evaluation methodology used to select capital improvement projects for West Branch. While conducting a comprehensive Cost-Benefit Analysis for each potential capital improvement project was not feasible, Cost-Benefit Analysis principles help identify key benefits, risks, and long-term impacts to consider, especially for water infrastructure. The Fiscal Impact Analysis ensures that project selection includes local knowledge, fiscal capacity, and residents' priorities. Utilizing the marginal approach, such as inviting city department heads to complete project proposals, allows local experts to assess realistic costs, potential funding, and current system constraints. Finally, the 4 E's framework reveals the importance of ensuring an equitable approach to infrastructure investments. Together, these frameworks balance community need, risk management, equity, and financial constraints to select capital improvement projects.

Participatory Budgeting

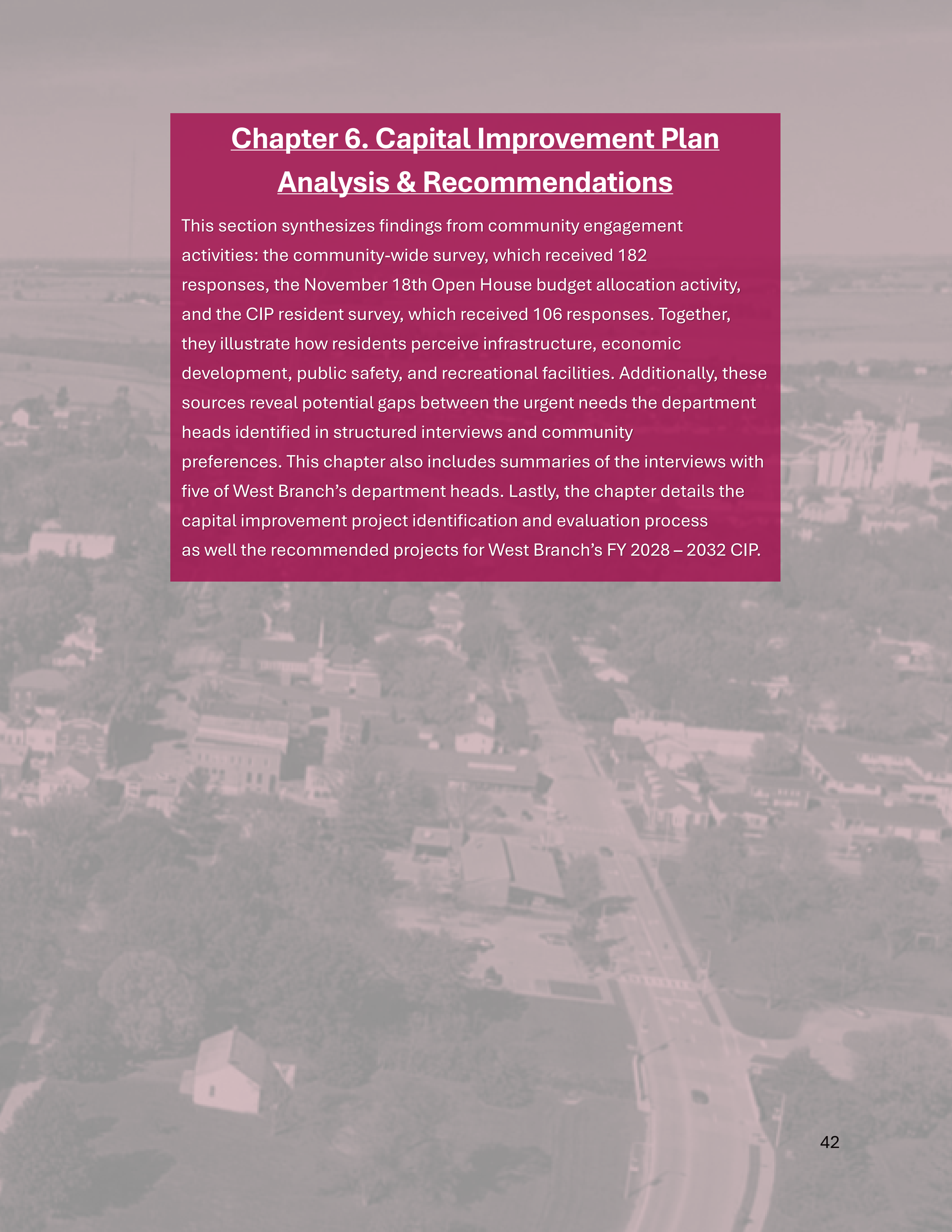
Participatory Budgeting is a process that allows community members to directly take part in deciding how public funds are spent. The goal is to make budgeting more transparent, fair, and responsive to local needs. Participatory Budgeting gives residents a chance to share their priorities and work collaboratively with government officials.[85] Participatory Budgeting processes generally include idea collection, proposal development, public voting, and project implementation. The St. Louis ReCAST Toolkit emphasizes that successful Participatory Budgeting requires intentional community engagement and lowering barriers to participation, such as providing childcare, transportation, and stipends when needed.[86]

Participatory Budgeting has several important advantages. First, it increases transparency in government budgeting by allowing the public to see how funds are allocated and why certain projects are selected. This also improves accountability, because officials must explain and justify their decisions.[87] In addition, Participatory Budgeting helps ensure that public resources better reflect the real needs of the community, especially the needs of groups that may not always have a strong voice in traditional decision-making processes. It also encourages civic participation, helping residents feel more connected to their local government and to each other. As a result, Participatory Budgeting can strengthen community trust and improve relationships between the government and the public.[88]

However, Participatory Budgeting also faces several challenges. Participation levels can vary, and some groups may be less involved due to a lack of time, awareness, or access to information. This can lead to unequal representation in the process. In addition, many residents may not have enough background knowledge about budgeting or project evaluation, which can make discussions and decision-making more difficult. Another challenge is that Participatory Budgeting usually only applies to a small portion of the total budget, which means that the impact of selected projects may be limited.[89] Finally, because different community members have different priorities, it may be difficult to reach agreement and coordination among stakeholders. Successful Participatory Budgeting, therefore, requires careful planning, public education, and continuous support.[90]

Application of Participatory Budgeting

For West Branch, Participatory Budgeting highlights the importance of designing engagement strategies that fit the City's small-community context and existing civic networks. Participatory Budgeting’s advantages are particularly relevant for West Branch as the City continues to expand public facilities and plan for future growth, which makes resident input essential for prioritizing limited capital funds. However, Participatory Budgeting’s challenges suggest that this approach would require strong outreach efforts, multiple communication channels, and simplified tools to help residents evaluate projects within the City’s CIP framework.



Chapter 6. Capital Improvement Plan Analysis & Recommendations

This section synthesizes findings from community engagement activities: the community-wide survey, which received 182 responses, the November 18th Open House budget allocation activity, and the CIP resident survey, which received 106 responses. Together, they illustrate how residents perceive infrastructure, economic development, public safety, and recreational facilities. Additionally, these sources reveal potential gaps between the urgent needs the department heads identified in structured interviews and community preferences. This chapter also includes summaries of the interviews with five of West Branch's department heads. Lastly, the chapter details the capital improvement project identification and evaluation process as well the recommended projects for West Branch's FY 2028 – 2032 CIP.

Community Survey Results

The MPA capstone team contributed to a community-wide survey to gain feedback from West Branch residents. The survey was available from November to January 2025 with the goal of receiving broad resident input early in the planning process. Flyers with a QR code to the survey were distributed to every household in West Branch as well as advertised through local businesses and social media. The survey received a total of 182 responses. After cleaning the data to only include survey responses with at least a 95% completion rate, 123 survey responses remained. Of the 59 responses removed, the majority had less than a 50% response rate to questions.

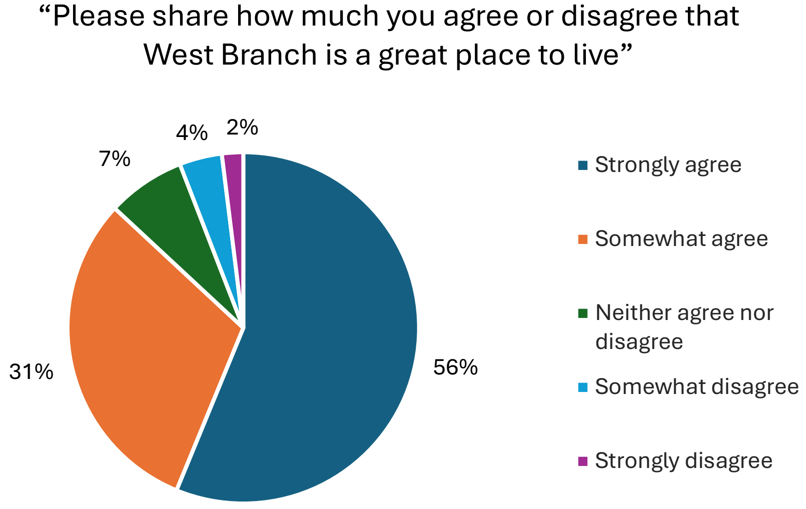
Survey Representativeness

As not all residents completed the community-wide survey, it is important to determine if survey respondents are representative of the larger West Branch population. Analyzing the representativeness of survey respondents is important to determine if overall results can be generalized for all residents. To test for representativeness, the MPA capstone team used both descriptive statistics and One-Way Chi-Squared tests. These statistical tests reveal survey respondents were representative of West Branch's age and racial makeup, but women were a larger proportion of respondents than of West Branch's population. The full results from these tests are included as Appendix F.

Survey Analysis

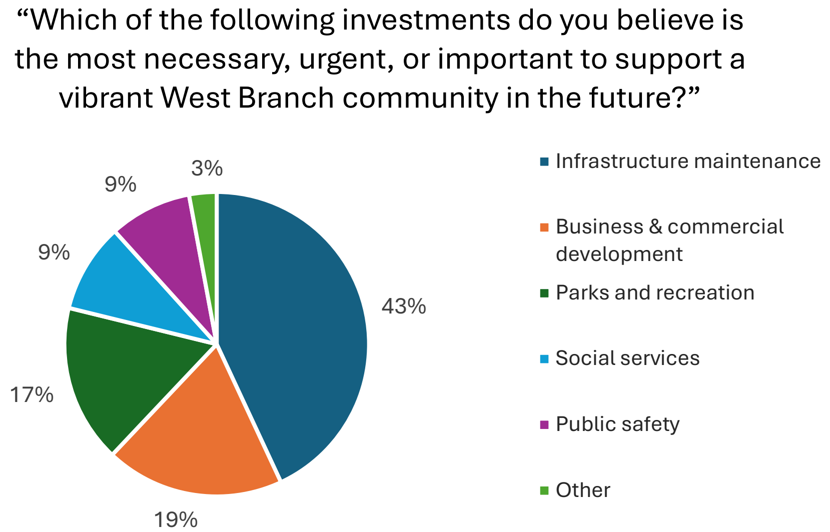
Overall, survey respondents express a high level of satisfaction with quality of life in West Branch. As shown in Figure 6.1, 56% of respondents strongly agree and 32% somewhat agree that West Branch is a great place to live. Open-ended responses reinforce this finding with respondents frequently highlighting community safety, strong schools, an active Main Street, and access to high-quality parks and natural spaces. Collectively, these responses indicate that respondents value West Branch's small-town character and sense of community cohesion.

Figure 6.1. Survey Responses



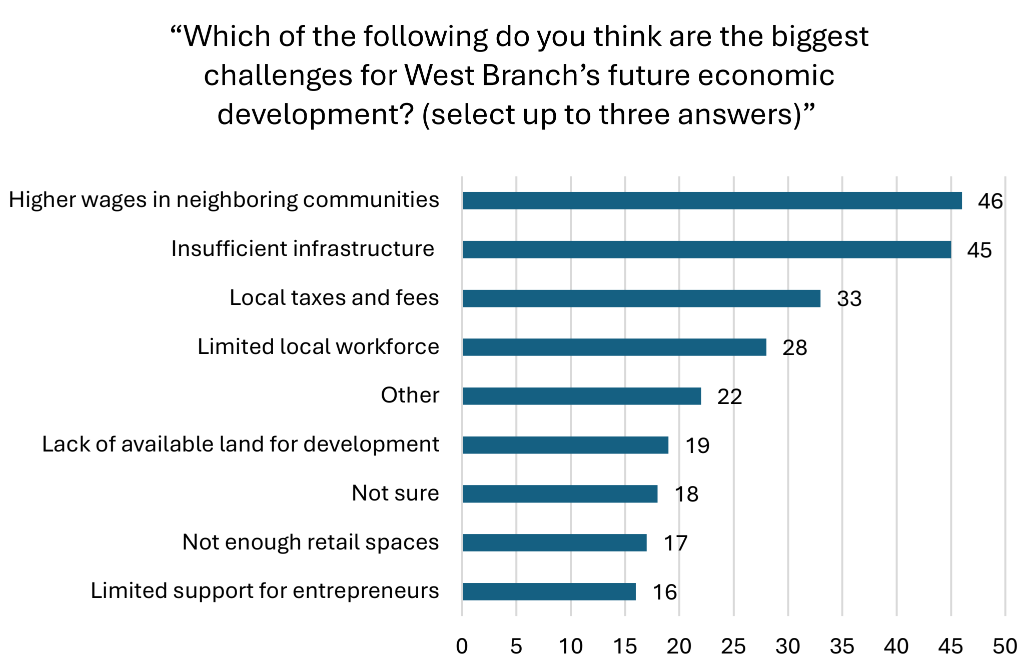
Despite this overall satisfaction, the survey results also reveal growing concern about the City's infrastructure capacity. Figure 6.2 illustrates that 43% of respondents identified water, sewer, roads, and sidewalks as the most urgent investment priorities for the City's future. These investment priorities exceeded preferences for economic development, recreational amenities, and social services. Open-ended comments frequently referenced water quality issues, aging water and sewer pipes, recurring repairs, inadequate drainage, and rising water and sewer rates as prominent concerns. Several respondents explicitly questioned whether existing systems can adequately support continued residential and commercial growth. These concerns closely align with department head's professional assessments. City engineers have noted that current limitations in the water system stem primarily from the treatment plant's capacity. In addition, underground water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure in the Main Street corridor is aging, which makes system upgrades a necessary prerequisite to roadway improvements. Public Works staff further emphasized that while current systems can accommodate planned development, the addition of large residential subdivisions would quickly strain water treatment capacity. These technical assessments provide operational context for respondents' prioritization of infrastructure investment.

Figure 6.2. Survey Responses



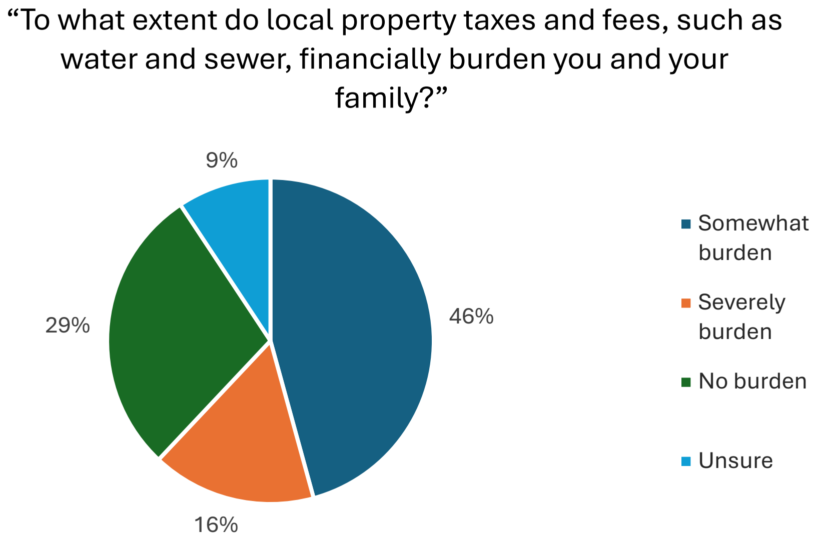
Survey respondents similarly view infrastructure as a key constraint to economic development. As shown in Figure 6.3, the most frequently identified economic challenges include higher wages in neighboring communities, insufficient infrastructure, local taxes and fees, and a limited local workforce. These responses suggest that infrastructure insufficiencies are not only perceived as quality-of-life issues but also as barriers to business attraction and long-term economic vitality.

Figure 6.3. Survey Responses



In terms of household financial impacts, respondents report noticeable cost pressures. As indicated in Figure 6.4, 62% of respondents believe that local taxes and utility fees pose a financial burden on their household. Specifically, 46% report they are somewhat burdened and 16% report they are severely burdened. This financial burden is critical to consider when identifying equitable ways to fund capital improvement projects.

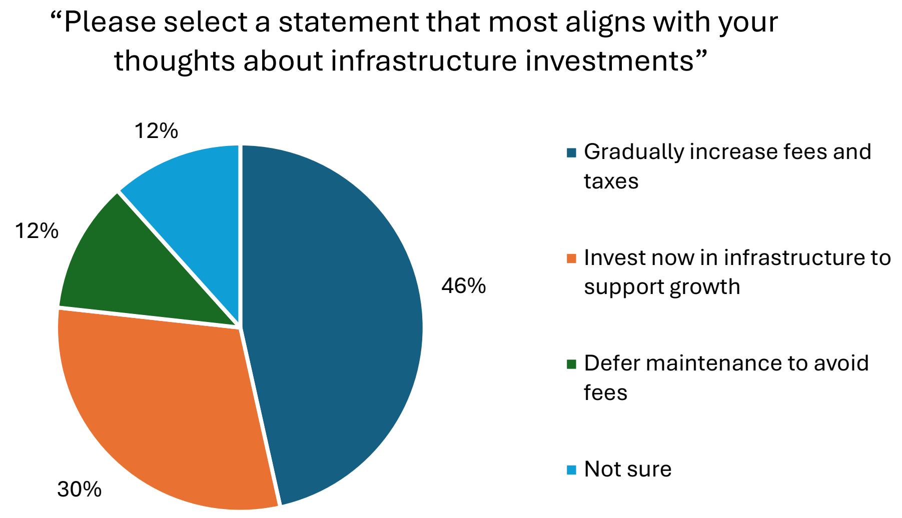
Figure 6.4. Survey Responses



To better understand which respondents were most impacted by taxes and fees, the MPA capstone team ran a Kruskal-Wallis test comparing household income and level of burden from taxes and fees. The test reveals that all household income survey groups have the same median response of burden level: slightly burdened. Survey respondents with a household annual income greater than $150,000, most often reported they were not burdened by taxes and fees. The full test results are also included in Appendix F.

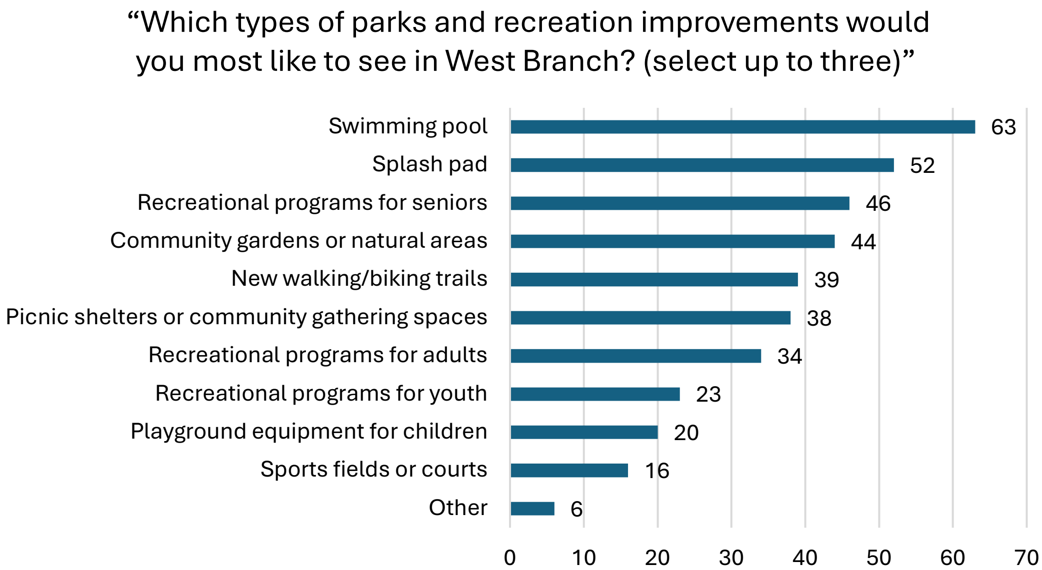
This financial burden also relates to respondents' preferences related to infrastructure investment strategies. Figure 6.5 reveals that 46% of respondents favor gradually increasing fees and taxes to spread the cost of future infrastructure needs. While 30% support investing immediately in critical infrastructure to support growth and expand the tax base, only 12% prefer deferring maintenance to avoid near-term cost increases. These findings suggest that while respondents are cost-conscientious, many prioritize long-term reliability and sustainability of infrastructure systems.

Figure 6.5. Survey Responses



Beyond core infrastructure, respondents also place a strong emphasis on parks and recreational amenities. As illustrated in Figure 6.6, swimming facilities, splash pads, senior programming, community gardens or natural areas, and walking or biking trails received the highest levels of support. Respondents were asked an open-ended question about how much they would be willing to pay per month (given a range of $0 to $30) to support their preferred parks and recreation improvement. Among 72 respondents, the average reported amount was $12.29 per month, with responses ranging from $0 to $30 and a standard deviation of $9.23. These findings suggest some willingness to financially support parks and recreation amenities, although the wide variation in responses indicates that support was uneven across respondents. Interviews with Parks and Recreation staff suggest that these preferences align with departmental planning efforts, particularly for trail expansion and water-based recreation features, though implementation is currently constrained by staffing and revenue limitations.

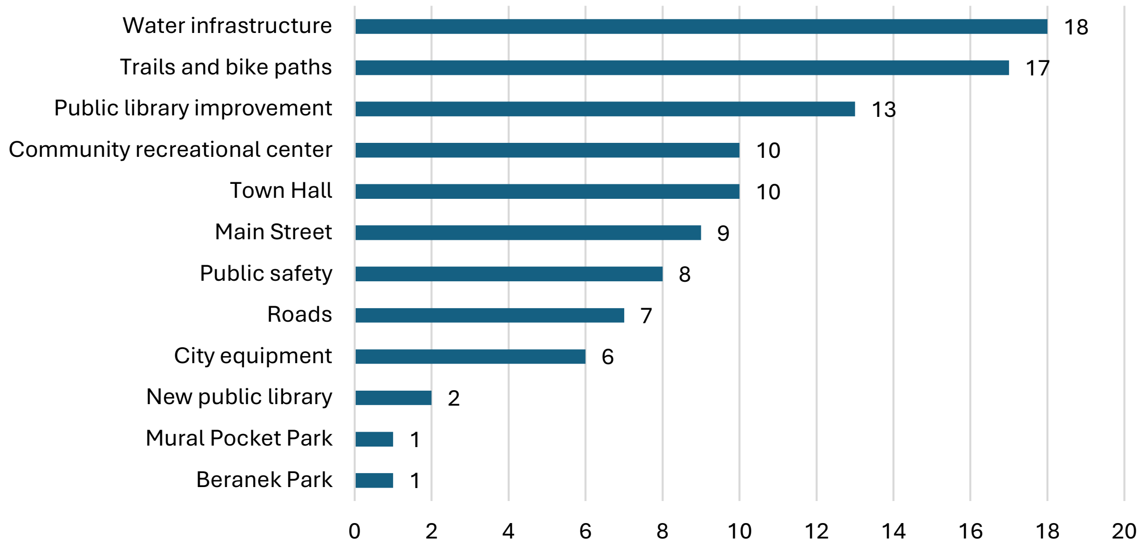
Figure 6.6. Survey Responses



Open House Results

The Open House, hosted on November 18, 2025, featured several community engagement activities. As discussed in the methodology chapter, the MPA capstone team's activity involved budgeting for capital improvement projects. Figure 6.7 shows that participants allocated the greatest level of capital spending to water infrastructure, followed by trails and bike paths, library improvements, Town Hall improvements, and a community recreation center. In contrast, lower levels of support were directed toward new library construction, the Mural Pocket Park, and Beranek Park. This distribution suggests that 27 participants in this activity prioritized maintaining and upgrading existing public assets over pursuing new high-cost facilities, except for the community center. Departmental interviews support this interpretation. For example, the Public Library Department indicated that current needs are focused on outdoor improvements, sidewalk repairs, and minor safety upgrades with a desire to construct a new facility in the long-term. In contrast, public safety investments received comparatively lower levels of support in both the survey and Open House exercise. However, both the Fire and Police Departments identified increasingly urgent equipment and staffing needs. These concerns were not strongly reflected in the Open House activity.

Figure 6.7. Open House Budget Activity Results



The survey and Open House results help to illustrate community priorities. According to survey respondents and Open House participants, infrastructure reliability emerges as the most urgent concern, while recreational trails and multi-purpose community spaces remain highly valued. Survey respondents view Main Street development as central to long-term economic growth. Although survey respondents report financial pressure, many support necessary public investments to ensure future stability. At the same time, Open House participants' understanding of public safety needs remains limited. As a result, future CIP development will need to consider community values while proactively addressing infrastructure capacity and operational sustainability to support long-term resilience and growth.

West Branch Department Head Interviews

West Branch department heads shared their department's capital needs during one-hour structured interviews. West Branch has six departments: Administration, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Police, Public Library, and Public Works. The responses below are notes from those interviews.

Fire Department – Fire Chief Kevin Stoolman

Capital Improvement Projects	The Fire Department requires a ladder truck, which can cost up to $2 million. West Branch currently does not have a ladder truck but will need one with the construction of multi-story apartments in the Parkside development. The current fire station does not have a facility to park a ladder truck and will need a new station to house the truck once purchased. This project may cost up to $5 million. If this is not accomplished, there will be significant safety concerns around the new developments.
Staffing	Kevin Stoolman has served as the Fire Chief in West Branch for years and is looking to retire soon. The current compensation for the position is $7,000 per year, and none of the current volunteers are interested in the position at that price point. The Fire Department is also understaffed as it is 10 volunteers short of the 35 volunteers they seek to have on their roster. The Fire Department also provides Emergency Medical Services, so lack of staffing is a serious health concern for the community. They are also experiencing increased call volume. While the department used to receive 200 to 300 calls per year, they received 700 calls last year.
Collaboration	The Fire Department coordinates with other departments in both Cedar and Johnson Counties to assist each other during emergencies and with training. They also coordinate with every department in the city depending on needs.
Quality Metrics	The Fire Department uses call response times, number of calls, and fills out detailed metrics that go into a federal system after each call. They are satisfied with their current metrics.

Since the interview with Kevin Stoolman, West Branch has posted the job position for a full-time Fire Chief. The hiring scale is $80,000 to $95,000.[91]

Parks and Recreation – Department Head Erin Laughlin

Capital Improvement Projects	The Parks and Recreation Department is looking to improve current parks with new play structures, shade structures, and new trails. In the future, they are looking to add a splash pad or a community recreation center.
Staffing	Staffing is an area of concern as Erin Laughlin is the only employee in her department. She would like to have one part-time employee or one full-time employee split with Public Works. If staffing was increased, the Parks and Recreation Department could add expanded programing and facilitate more park upgrades and repairs.
Collaboration	Local community groups, such as the Lions Club and the West Branch High School, fund parks and recreation projects. The Parks and Recreation Department does extensive collaboration with community groups and other city departments, especially Public Works which provide repairs and landscaping. They also collaborate with nearby communities, such as Iowa City, to construct trails.
Quality Metrics	The main metrics that the Parks and Recreation Department uses are participation in programming and the cost of programming. The department wishes to explore other avenues of communication to spread awareness about their programming. West Branch used to have a monthly flier of activities, but there is limited staff capacity to maintain this communication.

Police Department – Police Chief Greg Hall

Capital Improvement Projects	The Police Department is preparing to expand to meet the demand of new residents, especially with the Parkside housing development. To support new officers, they would need a new police station, additional squad cars, and equipment.
Staffing	There is a federal police staffing model which requires two and a half to three officers per 1,000 people in a city. The West Branch Police Department currently has five officers. With a population over 2,500, this ratio means they are slightly understaffed. With the new housing developments, they will be significantly understaffed. By 2028, the Police Department would like to add five new officers, which would make them overstaffed by the federal staffing model. Currently, the Police Chief is the only officer on call from 2 am to 6 am. The Police Chief must wake up and get dressed to respond to any calls, which is an unsustainable practice. In the last year and a half, calls from West Branch Village, which is the manufactured home park, have increased.
Collaboration	The Police Department collaborates with Cedar County for dispatches and has several joint response forces that collaborate with other police departments. They also collaborate with Parks and Recreation and Public Works for events. Due to the nature of the department, other collaborations are unsuitable.
Quality Metrics	The Police Department tracks calls per shift. They are currently satisfied with quality metrics but may look to add other metrics as they increase the department's size.

Public Library – Library Director Jessie Schafer

Capital Improvement Projects	The West Branch Public Library needs repairs, especially on the outside of the building. The sidewalk is cracked, and Jessie Schafer would like to add outdoor seating, a solar powered charging station, and landscaping. The current size of the library is insufficient, and a new facility will have to be constructed in the future. With a new building, the Public Library Department will be able to offer more programming, especially for different age groups at the same time. The current library only has two rooms, so youth and adult events cannot be offered simultaneously.
Staffing	The Public Library Department is also concerned about staffing. They would like to have two to three full-time staff. Currently, they have one to two part-time staff. With this shortage, they can keep the library running. However, they are overworked, and burnout is a worry. They are also unable to maintain good customer service and complete administrative tasks in a timely manner.
Collaboration	The Public Library Department collaborates with other libraries in Cedar County for programming ideas. They also work closely with Main Street West Branch and the Lions Club. The Public Library Department used to be more active in these groups. However, this has decreased since the library has lost staff. They also used to collaborate more with the Parks and Recreation Department, but these programs have been cut with understaffing in both departments.
Quality Metrics	The Public Library Department tracks many statistics regarding event participation, book checkouts, and computer usage. They would like to have more metrics regarding what programming people would like to see as well as find better ways to inform citizens about current programs.

Public Works – Public Works Director Matt Goodale

Capital Improvement Projects	The Public Works Department is considering many projects in the coming years: road projects, sewer system modernization, Main Street revitalization, water filter replacements, and general modernization of the south half of the water treatment plant. All these projects will require capital funding. Matt Goodale noted that the north half of the water plant should be suitable to meet demand when the south half is being refurbished. If these upgrades to the water treatment plant do not happen, there may be a concern for water access.
Staffing	The Public Works Department is currently understaffed. They have five employees but would ideally have five-and-a-half to six. Without this additional staff member, the Public Works Department must delay projects until they have capacity to complete them in-house.
Collaboration	The Public Works Department has extensive collaboration with other departments, especially Parks and Recreation and the Public Library. They also collaborate with other public works departments in eastern Iowa.
Quality Metrics	The Public Works Department primarily evaluates their work through resident, City Council, and City Administration satisfaction. Additional metrics include comparing time spent on a project with what was achieved. They would like to have a system to track projects, but do not have the time to get acclimated to a new system. The Public Works Department relies on Google Documents to track projects. Alternative project management services require a subscription, and the department lacks the necessary funding.

The MPA capstone team also interviewed prominent community groups and representatives, such as Main Street West Branch and the City's contracted engineer. Several departments, such as Parks and Recreation and the Public Library, discussed collaborating with these community groups, which prompted these interviews. Main Street West Branch provided insight about ways to increase community engagement. The City's engineer also provided critical information about West Branch's water system and other infrastructure capacity concerns that could limit population growth. Adam Kofoed, the

City Administrator, was also interviewed, but was not asked the same questions due to the consistent collaboration with the MPA capstone team. Instead, Adam Kofoed's comprehensive knowledge of the City's planning efforts was used to verify proposed projects and identify any gaps. Interviews with the City Administrator and contracted engineer provided a holistic review of West Branch's infrastructure needs to discuss any projects that department heads had not already highlighted.

CIP Findings & Analysis

Project Identification

As discussed in the methodology chapter, department heads completed project proposal forms, which were a central part of the project identification phase of the planning process. City department heads submitted 21 project proposals, which primarily involved infrastructure and maintenance, new construction or equipment purchase, and trails and recreation. The project proposals are included as Appendix G. The following projects in Figure 6.8 were proposed.

Figure 6.8. Proposed Projects

Project Name	Description
300 Street Renovations	Located South of Interstate-80, this gravel road is often used by sewer vehicles. The gravel road is making snow removal and general maintenance difficult. This project would involve sealcoating the road from the end of the pavement to the bridge by the lagoons.
Beranek Park Playground	Beranek Park has been around for nearly 30 years and is one of the most popular playgrounds in West Branch. There have not been any major upgrades to the park during these 30 years. A new playground would involve replacing the playset, swings, and installing rubber tile.
Cemetery Expansion	The City of West Branch is currently selling the last open lots in the cemetery. There are already some grassy fields that would allow for an expansion. This project would ensure that loved ones can be buried in West Branch.
North Loop of Greenview Water Main Replacement	This section of water main has seen repeated breaks in the past 10 years, which cause interruptions in service, water loss, and water quality issues. Replacing the water main would alleviate those issues.

Herbert Hoover Highway Trail	Currently, Johnson County is funding a trail from Iowa City to the county limits. This project would extend the trail through West Branch to allow residents a safe and high-quality trail with access to hundreds of miles of trails. This project would serve as an opportunity for economic growth as the trail could create an even greater connection from Iowa City to West Branch.
Ladder Truck	Current fire equipment is not suited for the apartment buildings in West Branch that exceed 50 feet. A new ladder truck is necessary to serve the higher multi-family apartment buildings. The ladder truck will also require a separate building to store it as the current fire station is not tall enough.
Main Street Super Project	This will be a long-term, multi-phased project that aims to make Main Street's sidewalks accessible for families and people with disabilities as well as replacing the road and underground utilities. The initial phase of the project would involve redoing the corner near West Main Street and North Downey Street to redo utility lines as well as make sidewalks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Main Street Water Main	This water main serving the downtown is one of the oldest in town. This project will increase water quality and reduce the chance for breaks and service disruptions. The specific location for this project is along Thomas Drive and Heritage Drive. This work would have to be done before any overlay or street scaping is done with the Main Street Super Project.
New Fire Station / Police Department	The current fire station was built in the 1960s. The department quickly outgrew the building. Much of the fire equipment does not fit in the station and there are no living quarters, limiting the hours of service. As the station is currently in a flood zone, it is not possible to build onto the current structures. A new combined station would allow for more staffing and equipment as well as avoid future flooding issues.
New Library	Renovations cannot currently be completed on the building due to safety concerns with the current locations. While there were some plans for a new building at the time, the anticipated location near Cubby Park has been utilized in different ways. A new library will increase community spaces, such as study rooms and makerspace, but the potential location is currently unknown.

North Downey Water Main Replacement	This water main is aging and has many breaks or leaks, which impact water quality. Replacing would resolve this issue and increase water capacity.
Pedestrian Bridge from Cubby Park to Gilbert Street	A pedestrian bridge allows for overflow parking to address congested parking and traffic issues during events at Cubby Park. Such a bridge would allow for overflow parking to the nearby neighborhood and reduce traffic issues that are already present in Cubby Park during busy times.
Rail Trail	This project would complete a trail that would connect West Branch to Iowa's 465-mile-plus trail route that goes throughout the state. There is about 3,000 feet left of a trail that needs to be finished, which is located from College Street to Baker Avenue. Along with connecting this trail to the rest of Iowa’s Rail Trail, it would also provide safe and high-quality trails to residents.
Rec/Community Center	A Rec/Community Center would allow for more athletic activity spaces. Currently the school is used for most activities, but this has created limiting factors which a recreation center would resolve. The Center would be a space for residents of all ages. A potential Rec/Community Center could include a small community room, concession stand, batting cages, elevator, basketball court, volleyball courts, track and weight/cardio room. Due to the high cost of a project like this, it would likely require voter approval for the bond.
Phase 4 and 5 Televising of Sewer Mains	With the aging sewer infrastructure, maintenance or replacements need to be done to keep sewers up to code. Unknown damage to pipes could cause sink holes, damage to streets, and other issues. Surveying sewer mains allows the City to locate such issues and repair the sewer mains at a manageable cost. These surveys will occur near Main Street and the north city limits and from 2nd Street to Scott Drive.
South Baker/Downey Street Rehab Overlay Evaluation	These roads are highly used roads in town, and the evaluation of the street surface will be used to determine whether a replacement, resurfacing, or renovation is needed. Due to the road also being shared with Cedar County, the replacement will need to be coordinated with them.
Splash Pad	A splash pad is an interactive water play area for children. This serves as a more cost-effective water attraction than a pool. Having a splash pad could attract families looking for

	amenities, whether it is for people to visit or to live in the City.
Thomas Drive Sewer Main Replacement	This sewer main backs up on a regular basis, which costs West Branch lots of time and money. These backups affect many homeowners and hurt the quality of life for these people. Replacing the sewer main would resolve these issues.
Town Hall Upgrades	The West Branch Town Hall serves as a rental space for the community, but over time the condition of the facility has been deteriorating. There are many areas of the building that need to be fixed from the doors, windows, and lighting. Upgrades to the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning system, wheelchair ramp, and other improvements would serve as ways to extend the useful life of the building. With the variety of areas that are needed for improvement, it is likely that these upgrades will take place over an extended period.
East Green Street Reconstruction/Truck Route	With the construction occurring around West Branch, there have been a lot of large trucks driving through Main Street. This type of traffic has the potential to cause significant road damage. The renovation of this road will allow for trucks and semi-traffic to be routed through East Green Street instead of Main Street to reduce wear and tear on the road.
Water Plant Renovations	While the current Water Treatment facility meets all current requirements, two water filters are past their useful life. These filters require extra maintenance costs to keep the filter clean, so this project ensures the treatment plant can provide clean, safe drinking water. The renovations to the south half of the plant also require opening part of the building to replace the tanks, electrical work, and new flooring, which increases the project's costs.

CIP Review Committee

The CIP Review Committee used a ranking criterion with nine different categories to score the 21 project proposals. The criteria were developed by reviewing other cities' CIP evaluation processes, as discussed in the CIP frameworks chapter, as well as academic frameworks and specific needs for West Branch. The nine categories included:

- **Comprehensive plan** (15 points): how well the proposed project aligns with the goals, policies, and future land use vision outlined in the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- **Regulatory compliance** (15 points): whether the project is necessary to meet compliance with regulatory mandates, such as Environmental Protection Agency standards, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and City ordinances.
- **Resident impact** (15 points): whether the project makes West Branch a favorable place to live by improving residents' quality of life, access to services, and overall community well-being.
- **Operational budget** (10 points): short- and long-term impacts of the project on the City's operating budget, including staffing, maintenance, utilities, and supplies.
- **External funding** (10 points): whether the project leverages funding from sources outside the City, such as grants, developer contributions, or private donations.
- **Public health and safety** (10 points): whether the project improves essential public health and safety services, such as emergency response, infrastructure reliability, water quality, transportation safety, or flood protection.
- **Project timing** (10 points): urgency of the project and the potential consequences of delaying it, including increased costs, service disruptions, or safety concerns.
- **Project feasibility** (10 points): practicality of implementing the project, including readiness, zoning requirements, site conditions, staffing capacity, and availability of resources, such as land.
- **Reviewer's discretion** (5 points): reviewers may use their personal and professional knowledge to consider the overall value of the project to the City and its residents.

The categories together totaled 100 possible points. Appendix H further details the ranking criteria and scoring system.

Figure 6.9 reveals the CIP Review Committee's average scores for each of the proposed projects. The highest and lowest scores for each project were removed before averaging the remaining four scores to eliminate the potential influence of outliers.

Figure 6.9. CIP Review Committee Scores

Project Name	Comp. Plan	Regulatory	Resident Impact	Budget Impact	External Funding	Public Health	Project Timing	Project Feasibility	Reviewer Discretion	Total
Water Plant	15	14	13	8	2	10	8	8	4	82
Beranek Park	15	10	13	7	7	8	8	8	5	81
Thomas Drive Sewer	13	11	12	9	3	10	10	9	5	81
Main Street Super Project	15	15	13	4	6	9	5	6	4	77
Sewer Televising	13	15	10	8	3	7	7	9	4	76
Greenview Water Main	13	9	11	9	2	8	9	9	5	75
Herbert Hoover Highway Trail	15	4	12	7	10	6	7	9	4	74
Main Street Water Main	14	10	9	7	5	8	7	8	4	72
Rail Trail	14	5	12	6	8	6	6	9	4	70
Splash Pad	12	2	14	5	6	8	7	6	4	64
Town Hall	11	6	10	8	7	5	6	8	3	64
North Downey Water Main	13	5	8	8	3	8	7	7	3	62
Truck Route	14	2	12	6	3	7	6	8	4	62
Ladder Truck	12	7	9	3	3	9	6	5	3	57
New Fire/Police Station	15	4	6	4	2	9	5	3	2	50
Rec/ Community Center	12	1	13	2	5	7	3	3	4	50
New Library	11	5	12	4	4	3	3	3	3	48
Pedestrian Bridge	13	2	9	3	3	4	3	7	4	48
300 Street Renovation	9	4	6	6	1	2	8	9	2	47
South Baker/ Downey Overlay	5	3	8	6	2	5	5	9	3	46
Cemetery Plots	6	2	4	5	3	1	3	8	2	34

CIP Resident Survey

Although the CIP Review Committee provided resident perspectives, the MPA capstone team sought to increase community feedback opportunities. Consequently, this survey enabled residents to express their support or opposition to a project and provide relevant comments. The data collected from this survey played a role in assessing the level of support for specific projects. While comments from only a select few projects are detailed in this section, Appendix I contains all survey responses.

The water treatment plant received overwhelming support (98.9% strongly in favor) through the survey, with nearly all comments expressing a strong desire for improvements in West Branch's water quality. Some of the comments include:

- "We need to ensure there is enough water and enough quality of water available for a growing town."
- "Having a secure water supply and safe water is a core responsibility of government."
- "Clean water is a non-negotiable need for the community."

Beranek Park is a central recreational destination within West Branch, and the survey results demonstrate respondents' support (72.2% strongly in favor) for its enhancement. While there was slight resistance due to the abundance of alternative playground options available in West Branch, the overall sentiment was one of enthusiasm for revitalizing the park. Multiple comments also show a potential willingness for private fundraising within the community. Notable comments include:

- "In order to continue supporting West Branch's growth, young families need to have reason and attraction points in town. Cubby Park is often crowded in nice days."
- "Another project for Lions Club, or GoFund Me project."
- "Take care of the kids."
- "We already have two newer playgrounds, Cubby and Wapsi, not including the schools playgrounds I don't see this getting much more use then it already is."

Both the Herbert Hoover Highway Trail and Rail Trail projects received large amounts of support from the survey with 84.5% and 77.8% strongly in favor respectively. Respondents expressed their desire for more recreational options within West Branch and discussed how connecting the trail could promote tourism and economic development. Comments include:

- "YES! This adds great recreation options for locals and would positively impact access and appeal for visitors that could support local economic vitality."

- “This would be a higher priority for me.”
- “This would be great but not a priority.”

The support for the construction of a new combined police and fire station was evenly divided with 50% strongly in favor and 50% strongly opposed. While some individuals prioritized the project due to the current fire station’s location in a floodplain, others argued that the project was unnecessary given the City’s efforts to mitigate flood risks, such as the Wapsi Creek widening project. Notable comments include:

- “Current project is supposed to eliminate the flooding issue.”
- “Creek widening project should solve the flooding issue.”
- “Police and Fire should be higher priorities as well.”

Despite the substantial financial investment required for the establishment of a community center, survey respondents endorse its development (76.6% strongly in favor). Comments highlight the prevalence of similar centers in other communities and suggest integrating additional amenities, such as the Public Library. However, there are also comments expressing concerns about the potential for numerous major projects within a single five-year timeframe, acknowledging the City’s fiscal limitations. Some of the comments include:

- “This has been needed for years.”
- “In addition include library space.”
- “We must be able to meet basic needs, like water main repairs, before such amenities are considered.”
- “I could get behind a major building project for West Branch, but I can’t get behind 4 major building projects.”

Overall, the survey responses largely align with the CIP Review Committee scores. Specifically, survey respondents and the committee both prioritized investment in public infrastructure, especially the water plant. The most significant difference was survey respondents’ support of the cemetery expansion project. The cemetery expansion received the lowest average score from the CIP Review Committee, but almost 66% of respondents were strongly in favor of the project. These differing perspectives reveal the importance of both the scoring committee as well as broad community engagement when prioritizing capital improvement projects.

CIP Recommendations

Recommended Projects & Financing

When determining the recommended projects and phasing for West Branch's CIP, the CIP Review Committee scores, resident feedback, and financial feasibility were all considered. Projects which earned an average score greater than 60 points from the CIP Review Committee were given top priority. This narrowed down the 21 project proposals to 13 potential projects. Of these 13 projects, the splash pad and Main Street water main were ultimately not included in the FY 2028 – 2032 CIP because both projects are later phases of larger projects: a community center and the Main Street Super Project. Consequently, 11 projects remained for inclusion in the CIP. These 11 projects were phased throughout the five years with consideration for ensuring responsible debt management, timing of multi-phased projects, and balancing critical infrastructure with recreational amenities. Figure 6.10 details the projects recommended for inclusion in West Branch's FY 2028 – 2032 CIP based on the committee's scores, resident survey, and available financing. Figure 6.11 illustrates the locations of these recommended projects on a map of West Branch. The full 2028-2032 Capital Improvement Plan has been shared as a separate document with the City of West Branch.

Figure 6.10. Recommended CIP Projects

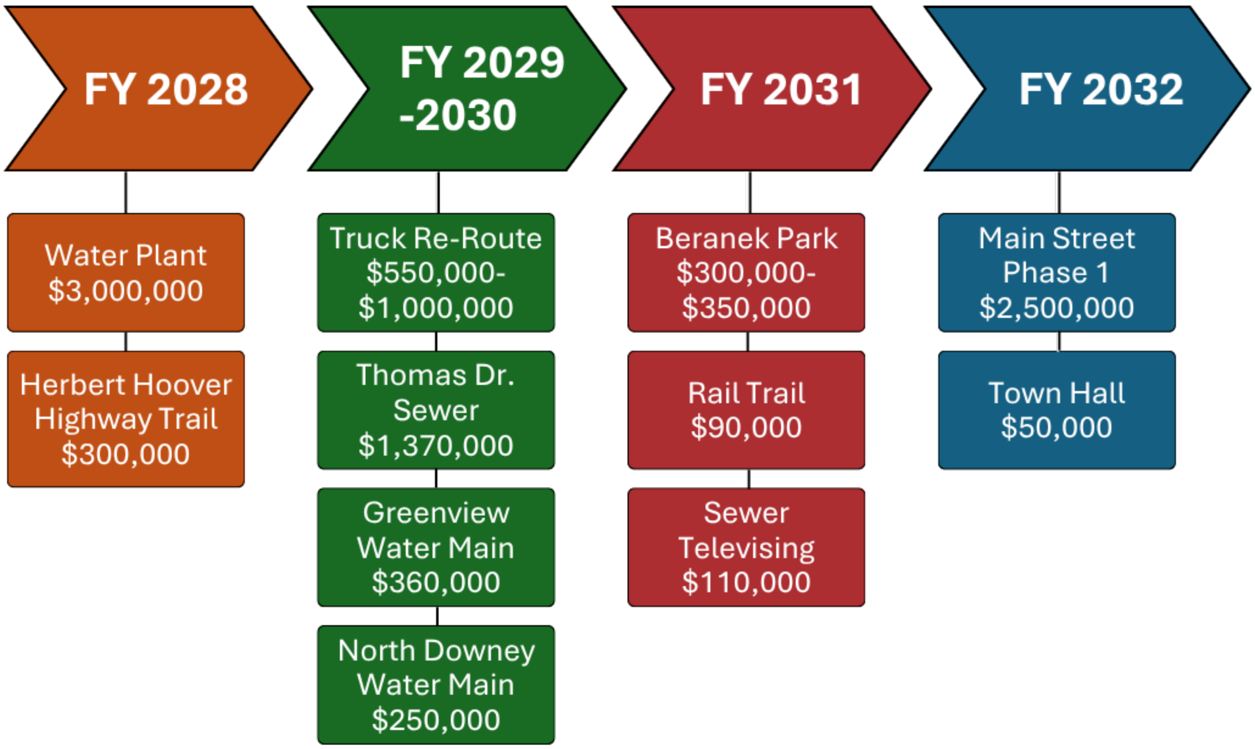
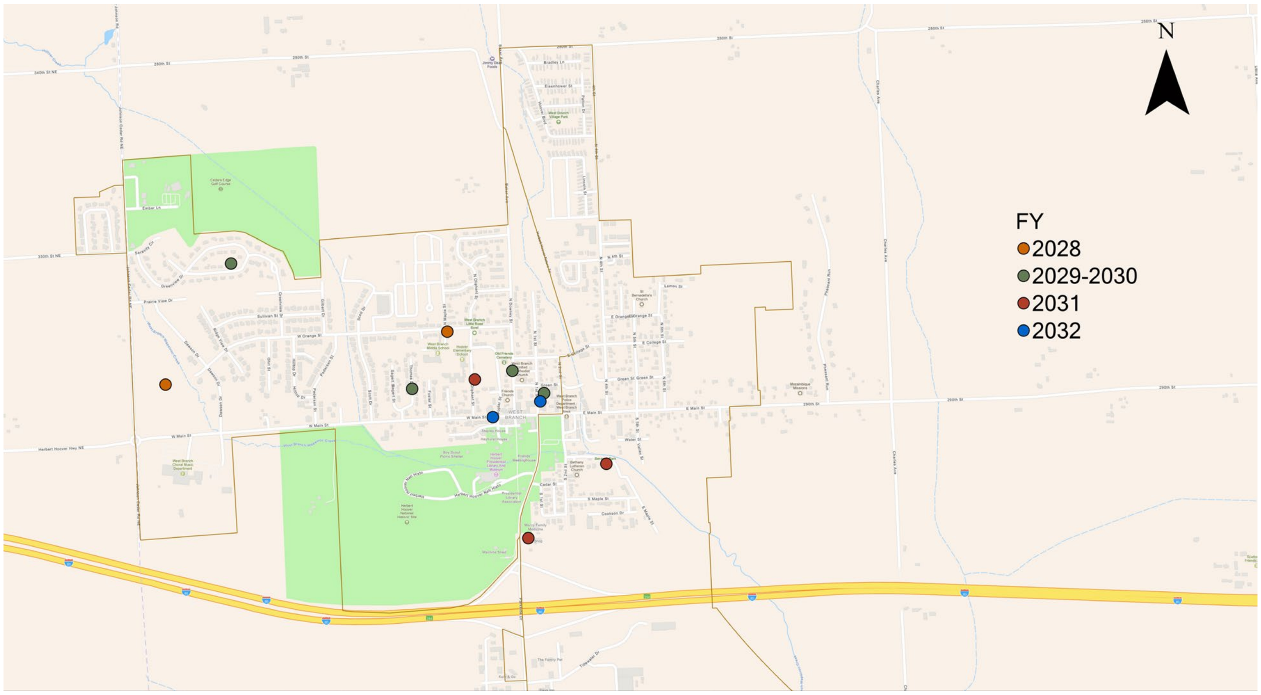


Figure 6.11. Map of Recommended CIP Projects



Potential Financing

Leveraging several financing sources is critical to ensuring the fiscal feasibility of the recommended projects. Figure 6.12 includes different potential funding sources ranging from loans and bonds to City revenue and grants.

Figure 6.12. Potential Funding Sources

Project Name	Potential Funding
Water Plant	Loan from Iowa's State Revolving Fund[92]
Herbert Hoover Highway Trail	Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) revenue
Truck Re-Route	General Obligation (GO) bond (with water and sewer mains), Iowa Department of Transportation's Safety Improvement Program grant[93]
Thomas Drive Sewer	GO bond (with water mains and truck re-route)
Greenview Water Main	GO bond (with sewer mains and truck re-route)
North Downey Water Main	GO bond (with sewer mains and truck re-route)
Beranek Park	LOST revenue, Capital Improvement Levy reserves, Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Land & Water Conservation Fund, Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Resource Enhancement and Protection grant, private fundraising[94]
Rail Trail	LOST revenue, Iowa Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives grant, Iowa Department of Transportation's State Recreational Trails grant[95]
Sewer Televising	West Branch Sewer Fund
Main Street Phase 1	GO bond, Community Project Funding, Iowa Department of Transportation's Pedestrian Curb Ramp Construction grant[96]
Town Hall	West Branch Town Hall Fund, Iowa Economic Development & Finance Authority's Community Catalyst Program[97]

Future CIP Recommendations

The 2028 – 2032 CIP does not include all 21 proposed projects due to fiscal and operational constraints, low committee scores, or lack of resident support. The following projects have not been prioritized in this plan: splash pad, ladder truck, new police/fire station, community center, 300 street renovation, new library, pedestrian bridge, South Baker/Downey overlay, and expanded cemetery plots. However, the City should consider these projects for future CIPs, especially to ensure public safety and expand recreational amenities. Many of these projects are also important to consider to support the City's future growth.

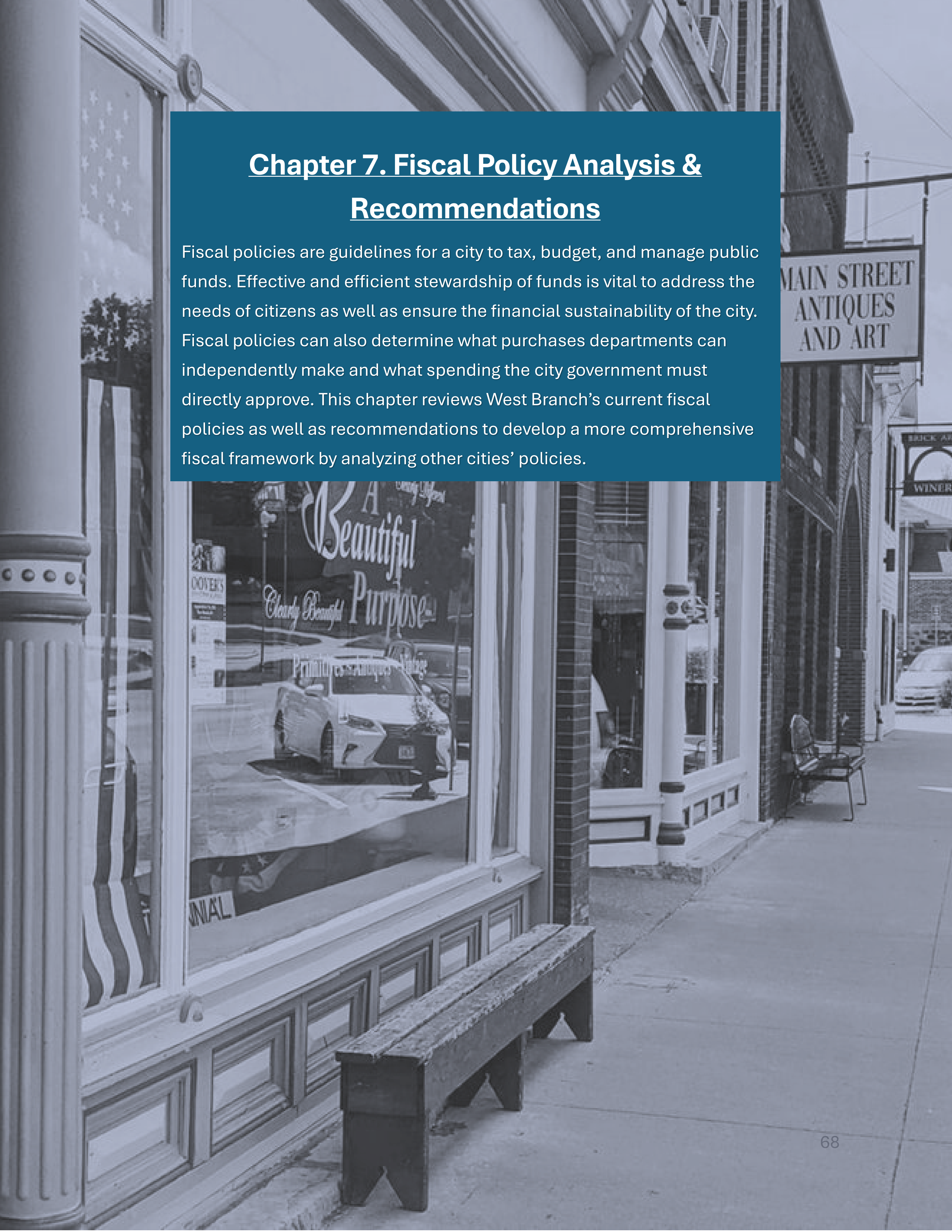
West Branch residents have consistently expressed a desire for a community center, but the City would need to leverage multiple grants and private fundraising as this project may cost up to $10 million. The North Liberty Community Center could serve as a model for how West Branch could combine several project proposals and reduce the cost of new construction. The North Liberty Community Center includes a library, an indoor and outdoor aquatic center, two gymnasiums, indoor track, exercise equipment, meeting rooms, and a kitchen.[98] Lone Tree's Wellness Center is another example with a basketball court, weight and cardio areas, as well as a workout studio class. This project is smaller in scope than North Liberty's but still costs $3.4 million.[99] While West Branch's Community Center does not need to include this full scope of amenities, it could include the new library and splash pad project proposals. West Branch could utilize Iowa Economic Development & Finance Authority's Community Attraction and Tourism Grant, Iowa Economic Development & Finance Authority's Destination Iowa grant, public-private partnerships, and local fundraising for this project.[100]

As the City continues to grow, it may need to expand its public safety services with a new fire and police station. A new station will prevent future flood risks as well as increase the space for additional staff and equipment. West Branch could utilize U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program to fund both the station and purchase a ladder truck.[101]

The City can continue to utilize the 12-step planning process for future CIPs. In keeping with a five-year cycle, the City would begin planning in July 2031 for its FY 2033 – 2037 CIP. Starting the process in July will align the project identification and evaluation stages with the annual budgeting and strategic planning timeline.

Chapter 7. Fiscal Policy Analysis & Recommendations

Fiscal policies are guidelines for a city to tax, budget, and manage public funds. Effective and efficient stewardship of funds is vital to address the needs of citizens as well as ensure the financial sustainability of the city. Fiscal policies can also determine what purchases departments can independently make and what spending the city government must directly approve. This chapter reviews West Branch's current fiscal policies as well as recommendations to develop a more comprehensive fiscal framework by analyzing other cities' policies.



Fiscal Policy Findings & Analysis

The purpose of developing a new fiscal policy framework for West Branch is to provide a structured and comprehensive set of policies that support responsible financial management, transparency, and long-term stability for the City. These policies are intended to guide decision-making across major financial areas, including debt management, budgeting, financial reporting, procurement, and investment practices. A well-defined fiscal policy framework is essential for ensuring consistency in financial operations and improving accountability. By clearly outlining how financial decisions should be made, these policies help reduce uncertainty, support efficient resource allocation, and strengthen the City's ability to manage both routine operations and long-term financial obligations.

Fiscal Policy Comparison

This project examines fiscal policies across selected municipalities to identify practices that may help strengthen West Branch's long-term financial management. The analysis focuses on the content, organization, and scope of local fiscal policies, with particular attention to areas such as debt and financial administration. Because these policies are shaped by local conditions and institutional structures, comparing them across cities presents several challenges. When analyzing fiscal policies across different municipalities, one major challenge is the absence of a standardized framework that clearly defines what a comprehensive fiscal policy system should include. Fiscal policies are often developed based on local governance structures, legal requirements, and administrative needs. As a result, cities organize their fiscal policies differently, and the level of detail varies significantly across municipalities. These differences make direct comparisons between cities more difficult and also limit the ability of researchers to evaluate how specific policies contribute to the long-term fiscal stability of local governments.

Although there is no universally accepted theoretical framework for municipal fiscal policy, previous research has attempted to categorize local fiscal structures into several major areas. For example, Brookings Institution's research suggests that urban fiscal analysis often focuses on several key domains, including governance structures, expenditure responsibilities, local revenue sources, intergovernmental transfers, and debt and asset management.[102] These areas provide an important foundation for understanding fiscal governance and fiscal sustainability in cities. While this framework was originally developed to analyze urban fiscal systems, it can also serve as a useful reference for comparing fiscal policy structures across municipalities. However, some policy areas, such as procurement governance and bond disclosure policies, do not always fit neatly within traditional fiscal categories but still play an important role in promoting financial transparency and accountability.

Due to the absence of a unified policy framework, this study compares the fiscal policy structures of several municipalities in Iowa to identify differences in fiscal governance. This study examines three Iowa cities: West Branch, Iowa City, and Cedar Rapids, as well as other large cities as needed to fill policy gaps. These cities publicly provide fiscal policy documents and differ significantly in terms of population size and administrative capacity. Therefore, they provide a meaningful basis for comparing how municipalities structure and implement fiscal governance policies.

West Branch

West Branch's current fiscal policies have been made on a case-by-case basis. The City Council approved individual fiscal policies for specific circumstances as necessary. Consequently, these fiscal policies apply to some but not all situations. West Branch's fiscal policy document did not exist until several years ago. To create this document, City officials gathered all the fiscal policies from the individual City Council resolutions when they were passed.

West Branch's fiscal policy framework is relatively concise and primarily focuses on general financial management principles. The City's fiscal policies are mainly contained in three categories: Fiscal Management Policy, Investment Policy, and Credit Card Policy. Together, these policies are approximately 18 pages in length.[103] The Fiscal Management Policy emphasizes responsible budgeting practices, long-term planning through the CIP, and basic financial oversight. However, compared with larger municipalities, West Branch lacks several formalized governance procedures that are commonly included in more comprehensive fiscal policy frameworks. For example, the City does not currently maintain a formal debt management policy, investment diversification requirements, a dedicated procurement policy, or a bond disclosure compliance policy. As a result, West Branch's fiscal policy framework mainly provides general guidance rather than detailed administrative rules for financial governance.

West Branch officials have identified several gaps in its current fiscal policies. The absence of an asset inventory management policy creates challenges in tracking available resources and anticipating future needs. West Branch also requires adequate policies to ensure transparency and accountability in the bidding process for City contracts. Another critical gap is TIF evaluation policies. While West Branch uses TIF for many new developments, the City does not have any policies to determine when TIF is necessary. City officials also requested a new surplus, gift and contribution, and bond proceeds policy.

Iowa City

Iowa City adopts a more comprehensive and structured fiscal policy framework by organizing fiscal governance into multiple specialized policy documents. These documents include the Bond Disclosure Policy, Debt Management Policy, Financial Policies, Investment Policy, Post-Issuance Bond Compliance Policy, and Purchasing Policy. Together, these policy documents exceed 60 pages and cover a wide range of fiscal governance areas.[104] The policy framework in Iowa City clearly defines several important financial management procedures. For example, the Investment Policy establishes key investment objectives such as safety, liquidity, and return. The Debt Management Policy includes guidelines for evaluating debt affordability and aligning borrowing with long-term capital planning. In addition, the Purchasing Policy requires competitive procurement procedures to promote fairness and transparency in public spending. The Bond Disclosure Policy also requires the City to submit annual financial information and report material events through the Electronic Municipal Market Access (EMMA) system in accordance with federal security regulations. By organizing fiscal governance into multiple specialized policies, Iowa City provides a more structured approach to financial management. This approach helps standardize administrative procedures, strengthen financial accountability, and provide clearer guidance for fiscal decision-making.[105]

Cedar Rapids

Cedar Rapids maintains a relatively structured fiscal governance framework and has adopted several formal policy documents, including a Debt Policy, a Bond Disclosure Policy, and related financial reporting procedures.[106] The City's Debt Policy establishes several key principles for debt issuance. For example, the policy restricts the use of long-term debt for operating expenditures, requires the City to evaluate alternative financing options before issuing debt, and emphasizes that the term of the debt should correspond to the useful life of the capital assets being financed. In addition, Cedar Rapids has adopted a Bond Disclosure Policy to regulate the City's disclosure procedures during both the issuance and the life of municipal bonds. This policy requires the City to submit annual financial information and report material events through the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board's EMMA system. Such events may include credit rating changes, bond calls, or payment defaults. These policies help improve financial transparency and strengthen investor confidence in the City's fiscal management.

Takeaways

Overall, the fiscal policy structures of these cities differ significantly in both policy scope and level of detail. Larger municipalities, such as Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, typically establish more comprehensive, specialized fiscal governance systems and regulate different financial management functions through multiple dedicated policy documents. In contrast, smaller cities, such as West Branch, tend to rely on more simplified policy documents to guide fiscal management. Although the length of policy documents does not necessarily determine the quality of governance, a more detailed policy framework often indicates a stronger fiscal risk management structure. Such frameworks commonly include mechanisms such as debt capacity analysis, investment diversification requirements, formal procurement procedures, and bond disclosure compliance policies, all of which help improve fiscal transparency and strengthen long-term financial sustainability.

Fiscal Policy Recommendations

Before the capstone project, West Branch's policies were clustered into three categories: Fiscal Management Policy, Investment Policy, and Credit Card Policy. Each category contained 15, 12, and 5 policies respectively. The MPA capstone team's Fiscal Policy document suggests four distinct categories: Debt Management Policy (6 policies), Fiscal Management Policy (16 policies), Purchasing Policy (5 policies), and Investment Policy (12 policies). This represents a significant growth in fiscal policies for West Branch as 22 of the total 39 policy subsections are new or revised. While it is not possible to judge the quality or comprehensiveness of fiscal policies by their number, the request from the City was to find additional policies to strengthen fiscal controls.

All requested policies from City officials were included in the final fiscal policy framework. These policy recommendations are intended to support decision-making for city staff and elected officials and do not necessarily represent adopted policies.

Figure 7.1 includes an overview of the justification for adding or revising policies within the four overarching policy sections.

Recommended.fiscal.policies.resulting.from.this.study.are.included.on.a.separate. document¡.Consult.city.officials.for.the.most.current.status.of.adopted.fiscal.policies¡.

Figure 7.1. Fiscal Policy Justification

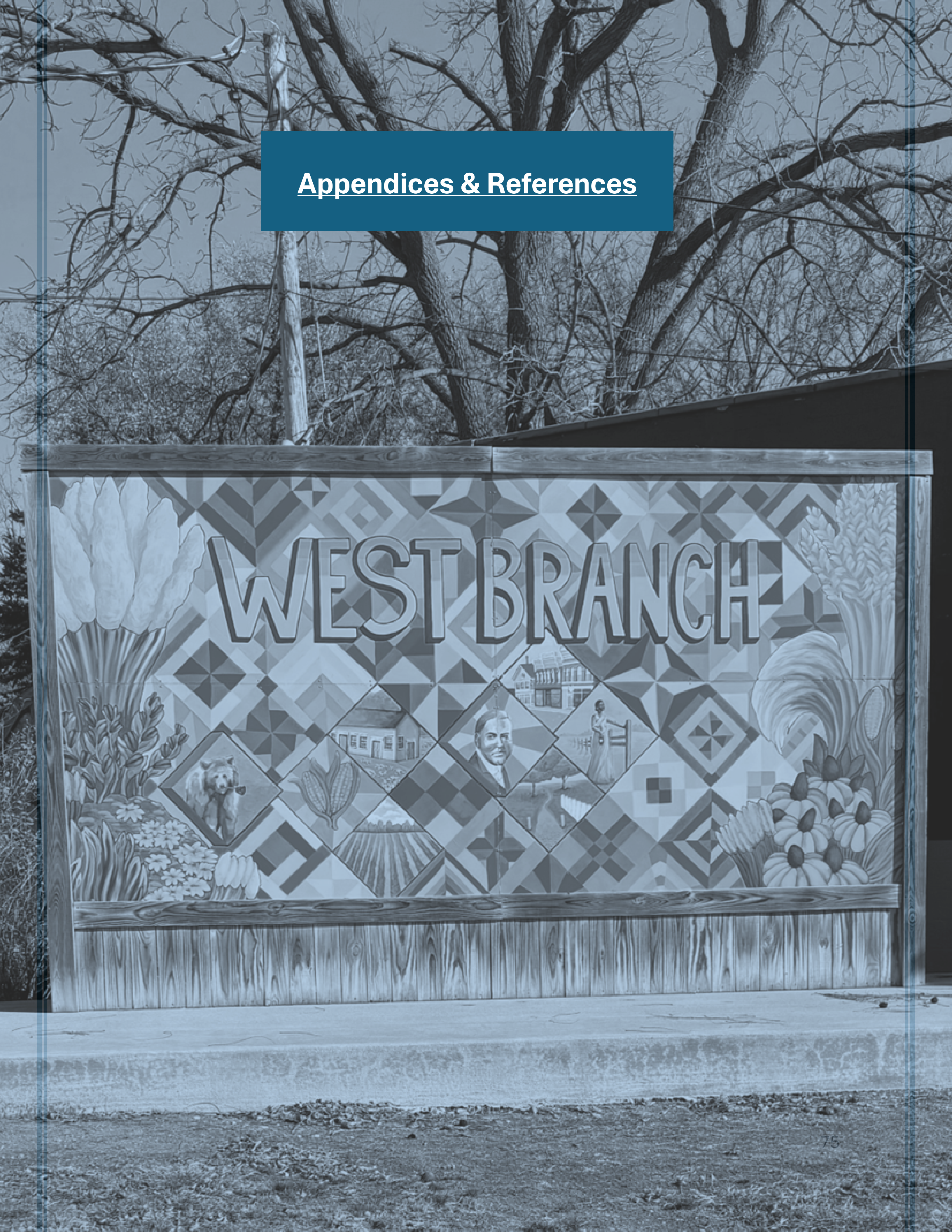
Policy Section	Recommended Policies	Revised / New	Justification
Fiscal Management Policies	Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting	Revised	Mandates certain actions the City must take that are best practices for responsible fiscal management, such as: • A Financial Plan • Annual Financial Reporting • Annual CIP Budgets Independent Auditing
	Cash Reserve Policies	Revised	Mandates what Cash Reserves in specific funds may be used for.
	Donation Acceptance	New	Provides guidelines on how donations should be managed.
	Surplus Terms of Sale	New	Provides guidelines on how surplus items from City departments should be handled and sold. Includes Asset Inventory policy.
Debt Management Policies	Debt Purpose	New	Determines what projects debt can be incurred to fund.
	Debt Procedure	New	Covers what sort of debt or bonds should be preferred by the City.
	Debt Administration	Revised	Provides guidelines on how debt should be managed: • How much debt the City can incur as a percentage of assessed value • How much of the property tax levy can be put towards debt service
	Advance Refundings	New	Covers the repayment of bonds and other debt before the term of said debt.
	Arbitrage Compliance	New	Legal compliance policy.
	City's Debt / Credit Rating	New	Covers where the City can borrow from, and how much to maintain best credit rating.
Purchasing Policies	Contract Bidding	New	Adds a contract bidding process for public projects.
	Competitive Quotation Process	New	Covers procedure for contract bidding when threshold is less than required for a full contract bidding process ($100,000).
	Contract Administration	Revised	Guidelines on how public contracts should be administered, when contract re-negotiation is necessary.

	Emergency Repairs	New	Covers what the City may contract without normal procedures in case of an emergency.
Investment Policies	Scope of Investment Policy	Revised	Initial section was based on Iowa City policies. Updated with current wording of Iowa City policy.
	Objectives of Investment Policy	Revised	Provides further clarification on specific goals for return on investment.
	Prudence	Revised	New guidelines on what prudence means in terms of public investment.
	Instruments Eligible for Investment	New	Specific list of investments that are safe enough for public funds.
	Investment Maturity Limitations	Revised	Covers investment of operating funds that are not immediately required for expenses.
	Safekeeping and Custody	Revised	Expands policy to stay legally compliant.
	Ethics and Conflicts of Interest	Revised	Adds actions that must be taken if a conflict of interest is present.
	Reporting	Revised	Make fiscal reports to City Council quarterly rather than annually.

TIF Policy & Application Recommendations

The MPA capstone team recommends 17 TIF policies as well as a new application for developers. The TIF policies are largely regulatory in nature as they aim to disincentivize the use of TIF if the project does not require this funding or if the project does not provide significant benefits for the City. For example, the policies implement a "but for" condition that prevents the use of TIF if developers cannot prove the project could not happen without TIF. The policies are also necessary to increase transparent and consistent communication between developers, City administration, and City Council. TIF can be used to accomplish the City's goals, such as necessary public infrastructure, by requiring that incremental revenue first fund the infrastructure before paying developer rebates. Other TIF policies address ensuring developers are not receiving multiple tax abatement programs, the approval process, timelines for application, cost-sharing of various fees, and how to handle Low- and Moderate-Income set-aside funds. A full list of TIF policies is included in Appendix K.

Appendices & References



Appendix A: CIP Project Proposal Form

Capital Improvement Plan Project Proposal Form

The City of West Branch is preparing a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for fiscal years 2028–2032 (July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2032). A capital improvement project can include construction, upgrades to public buildings, streets, or parks, equipment purchases, utility system improvements, and similar investments. While not all projects will be included in the five-year plan due to budget constraints, all submitted projects will be included in a comprehensive list for the City to consider in future plans.

Please **complete one proposal form per project**. All project proposal forms are **due by January 31, 2026.**

1. Department:
2. Project Contact:
3. Project Description:
4. What is the project type? (select all that apply)
   ☐ New construction
   ☐ Renovation of current facility
   ☐ Equipment
   ☐ Park/ Trail
   ☐ Road
   ☐ Other:
5. What is the location of the project?
6. How long do you expect the project would take to complete? (i.e. less than a year, two years, etc.)
7. What is the expected useful life of the project?
   ☐ 1-10 years
   ☐ 11-20 years
   ☐ 21-30 years
   ☐ 31+ years
   ☐ Unknown
   ☐ Not applicable
8. Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
   ☐ Unsure
9. If the project is required to meet a regulatory mandate, please briefly explain. If not, you may skip this question.
10. Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No
    ☐ Unsure
11. If the project increases the City's ability to serve residents, please explain. If not, you may skip this question.
12. Are there potential risks or negative impacts if this project is not completed?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

13. If there are potential risks, please briefly explain. If not, you may skip this question.
14. Which statement most aligns with your department for this project?
    ☐ Department has enough staff to complete the project in-house
    ☐ Department would require additional staff to complete the project
    ☐ Department would work with contractors to complete the project
15. What groups does this project primarily serve? (select a maximum of 5)
    ☐ Children and families
    ☐ Older residents
    ☐ Working-age residents
    ☐ Racial minorities
    ☐ Low-income households
    ☐ People with disabilities
    ☐ Business owners
    ☐ Tourists
    ☐ Targeted neighborhoods
    ☐ All West Branch residents
    ☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
    ☐ Other:
16. Estimate total project cost:
17. If the estimated total project cost is greater than $150,000, please provide a breakdown of project costs.

a. Please detail the total project costs based on the project timeline (i.e. first, second, third year, etc.). Please list the types of expenditures required like construction, design, equipment, inspection, contingency, etc.

18. What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs of the project?

a. You can write “unsure” if maintenance costs are unknown or “N/A” if there are no long-term costs.

19. Are you aware of any external funding opportunities for this project, such as grants, public-private partnerships, etc.?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No
    ☐ Unsure
20. If there are external funding opportunities, please briefly list them. If not, you may skip this question.
21. Project Description

a. Please provide a short description of the project with any relevant details that have not already been discussed. You can write N/A if there are no additional details.

22. Project Justification

a. Please provide a short description of the project with any relevant details that have not already been discussed. You can write N/A if there are no additional details.

Appendix B: CIP Review Committee Resident Application

CIP Review Committee Resident Application

The City of West Branch is preparing a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2032. A capital improvement project can include construction, upgrades to public buildings, streets, or parks, equipment purchases, utility system improvements, and similar investments.

The City is looking for residents to serve on a CIP Review Committee. Residents will work alongside the Mayor, City Council members, and a representative from the Planning & Zoning Commission to evaluate and prioritize projects for this plan. The City seeks to involve a broad representation of residents so that projects align with community needs and enhance the overall quality of life.

Applicants must reside within West Branch city limits and be at least 18 years of age. Interested residents should complete the following application **by January 31, 2026**.

1. Full first and last name:
2. Full home address:
3. Email or phone number:
4. Qualifications

a. There are no eligibility qualifications beyond living within West Branch city limits and being at least 18 years old but please share what would make you a successful member of this committee.

5. Potential conflict of interest

a. Section 362.5 of the Code of Iowa generally prohibits, with certain important exceptions, a member of a City Board or Commission from having an interest in a City contract. Please specify any connections you have to West Branch businesses and your current employer (if applicable).

6. What is your general availability for meetings?

a. The committee will meet twice between late February and early April.

☐ Mondays after 5:30pm
☐ Tuesdays after 5:30pm
☐ Thursdays after 5:30pm

Appendix C: CIP Committee Recruitment Promo

The City of West Branch

Wants to Hear From You!

The City is creating its **5-year Capital Improvement Plan,** which guides upgrades to streets, parks, buildings, utilities, and more.

Join the **CIP Review Committee** and help ensure our priorities reflect the needs of our whole community!

Apply here!

- Applicants must live within West Branch city limits and be at least 18 years old.
- Paper applications are available at the City Office and Public Library.

Appendix D: CIP Resident Survey Promo

The City of West Branch

Wants to Hear From You!

The City is creating its **5-year Capital Improvement Plan,** which guides upgrades to streets, parks, buildings, utilities, and more.

Complete the **Capital Improvement Plan Survey** to share what projects are most important to you!

Complete the survey by **March 27th**!

Appendix E: CIP Resident Survey

Resident Input – Capital Improvement Projects

The City of West Branch is preparing a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY 2028 to 2032. A capital improvement project can include construction, upgrades to public buildings, streets, or parks, equipment purchases, utility system improvements, and similar investments.

The City is looking for resident input on these potential projects to help inform the final plan. While not all of these projects can be completed in the five-year CIP due to budget constraints, the City will use resident feedback for long-term planning.
The following questions ask whether you are in favor of or oppose the proposed projects for the CIP. **You are NOT required to answer the question or comment for any projects you have no strong feelings about.**

1. Replace water filters in water treatment plant
   Two water filters are past their useful life. These filters require extra maintenance costs to keep the filter clean, so this project ensures the treatment plant can provide clean, safe drinking water.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about the replacement of water filters in the water plant

2. Renovate Main Street road, utilities, and ADA sidewalks
   This will be a long-term, multi-phased project that aims to make Main Street's sidewalks accessible for families and people with disabilities as well as replace the road and underground utilities.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about the renovation Main Street road, utilities, and ADA sidewalk

3. Replace old water mains on Main Street from Thomas Drive to Heritage Drive
   This water main serving the downtown is one of the oldest in town. This project will increase water quality and reduce the chance for breaks and service disruptions.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about replacing old water mains on Main Street

4. Replace sewer main on Thomas Drive to prevent reoccurring backups
   This sewer main backs up on a regular basis, which costs the City time and money. Replacing the sewer main would resolve these issues.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about replacing the sewer main on Thomas Drive

5. Replace water mains on north loop of Greenview to correct repeated main breaks
   This section of water main has seen repeated breaks in the past 10 years, which cause interruptions in service. Replacing the water main would alleviate those issues.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about replacing the water mains on Greenview

6. Replace water mains on North Downey to update infrastructure and increase capacity
   This water main is aging and has many breaks or leaks, which impact water quality. Replacing would resolve this issue and increase water capacity.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about replacing water mains on North Downey

7. Survey sewer mains in the north and central parts of town
   These surveys will occur near Main Street and the north city limits and from 2nd Street to Scott Drive. Surveying sewer mains allows the City to locate issues and repair leaks at a manageable cost.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about the survey for the sewer mains

8. Build pedestrian bridge from Cubby Park to Gilbert St
   A pedestrian bridge allows for overflow parking to address congested parking and traffic issues during events at Cubby Park.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about the pedestrian bridge

9. Renovate East Green Street and re-route semi-trucks
   The renovation of this road will allow for trucks and semi-traffic to be routed through East Green Street instead of Main Street to reduce wear and tear on the road.
   ☐ Strongly in Favor
   ☐ Strongly Opposed
   Please share any comments about the re-route of semi-trucks from driving through downtown

10. Evaluate South Baker/Downey Street to determine timeframe renovation
    The evaluation of the street surface will be used to determine whether a replacement, resurfacing, or renovation is needed.
    ☐ Strongly in Favor
    ☐ Strongly Opposed
    Please share any comments about the South Baker/Downey Street evaluation

11. 300 Street road renovations from end of pavement to the bridge

This project would involve sealcoating the gravel road from the end of the pavement to the bridge by the lagoons.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about the 300 St. road renovations

12. Update and install new playground equipment at Beranek Park
Beranek Park is one of the most popular playgrounds, but is reaching 30 years old. Updating and installing new playground equipment will increase the useful life of the playground for children.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about Beranek Park

13. Create Herbert Hoover Highway Trail from Johnson County border to West Branch
Johnson County is funding a trail from Iowa City to the county limits. This project would extend the trail through West Branch to allow residents a safe and high quality trail with access to hundreds of miles of trails.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about the Herbert Hoover Highway Trail

14. Create Rail Trail (Herbert Hoover Nature Trail)
This trail would connect West Branch to Iowa's 465-mile-plus trail route throughout the state.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about the Rail Trail

15. Expand cemetery through the northwest section
The City is currently selling the last open lots in the cemetery. This expansion ensures that loved ones can be buried in West Branch.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about the expanded cemetery

16. Renovate Town Hall
Town Hall is in need of repairs, such as a new HVAC, windows, flooring, lighting, and more. This renovation would also ensure the building is accessible for people with disabilities.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about a renovated Town Hall

17. Build new combined Fire and Police Station
The current Police and Fire Station is located in a flood zone. A new combined station would allow for more staffing and equipment as well as avoid future flooding issues.

☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about a new combined Fire and Police Station

18. <u>Purchase new Fire Ladder Truck</u>
A new ladder truck is needed to serve the higher multi-family apartment buildings in West Branch.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about the purchase of a new fire ladder truck

19. <u>Build Recreation Community Center</u>
A potential new recreation center could include: small community room, concession stand, batting cages, elevator, basketball court, volleyball courts, track and weight/cardio room. The cost of this project would be extremely high and require voter approval.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about the purchase of a Recreation Community Center

20. <u>Create Splash Pad for children</u>
A splash pad is an interactive water play area for children.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about a splash pad

21. <u>New Public Library</u>
Renovations cannot be completed on the current building due to its location. A new library will increase community spaces, such as study rooms and makerspace, but the potential location is currently unknown.
☐ Strongly in Favor
☐ Strongly Opposed
Please share any comments about a new Public Library

Appendix F: Community-wide Survey Analysisi

Community Survey Statistical Results

A One-Way Chi-Squared test reveals if there is a significant difference in expected and observed frequencies. In this case, the test was to determine if there is a significant difference in known demographics for the West Branch population from 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) data and the demographics of survey respondents. Specifically, the frequencies of gender, race, and age were considered for representativeness.

Gender

Of West Branch residents, 51% are male and 49% are female according to the ACS.[107] The survey had a total of 117 respondents complete the question about their gender. This is a 98.3% response rate. Of these responses, 91 were female, 24 were male, and 2 preferred not to answer. This means 77.8% of survey respondents were female and 20.5% were male.

Running a One-Way Chi-Squared test on the data shows a probability (p)-value of 0.00. A p-value of less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant. This test reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between the expected gender frequency and the observed gender frequency for respondents. Women were more likely to answer the survey than men, which may be due to the timing of door canvassing and the higher likelihood of a stay-at-home spouse answering.

Race

According to the ACS, 94% of West Branch residents are white, 4% are Hispanic, and 2% are other races.[108] The survey had a 100% response rate of all 119 respondents. One respondent selected both white and prefer not to answer (and will be counted as just white), five respondents selected only prefer not to answer (4.2%), two respondents selected Hispanic (1.68%), and 112 respondents selected white (94.11%). Removing the “prefer not to answer” from the dataset leaves the remaining response percentages: 98.24% white and 1.75% Hispanic.

A One-Way Chi-Squared test reveals a p-value of 0.23, which is not statistically significant. This signifies there is not a statistically significant difference between the expected racial frequencies and the racial frequencies for respondents. However, a Chi-Squared test requires at least five respondents in each category. With only two Hispanic respondents, this requirement is not met, so the test is inconclusive. Yet, the descriptive statistics of 94% of respondents being white aligns with the ACS data.

Age

Age was broken down into six categories and had a 100% response rate. The figure below shows the differences between age ranges for survey respondents and the total West Branch population. A One-Way Chi-Squared test yields a p-value of 0.21. As a result, there is no statistically significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies of age. This means survey respondents are largely representative of the broader age categories in West Branch.

Age Range	Survey Responses	Responses (%)	West Branch Population[109]	Population (%)
18-24	4	3.36%	246	12.4%
25-34	19	15.97%	303	15.3%
35-44	35	29.41%	475	24.0%
45-54	21	17.64%	235	11.9%
55 – 65	18	15.12%	289	14.6%
65+	22	18.49%	434	21.9%

Financial Burden

A Kruskal-Wallis test is used to compare the ranks between three or more categories to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in ranks. This test would reveal whether there is a statistically significant difference in ranks of financial burden between the different income groups. As the data for both the income groups and range of financial burden are categorical data, the MPA capstone team assigned numerical codes to each category.

The 123 responses were further cleaned to remove respondents that selected either "prefer not to answer" for household income or "unsure" for water/sewer fee/taxes. These points were removed because they could potentially compromise the results. After removing 22 responses with these answers (12 for N/A for income and 10 for unsure for utility burden), 98 completed responses remained.

All household income survey groups had the same median response of burden: slightly burdened, which was coded as 2. The highest income group, $150,000+ yearly household income, responded most often with no burden. There were not enough respondents in the lowest two income groups (less than $25,000 and $25,000-$49,999) to have quadrants. However, 75% of responses in the remaining income groups were either no burden or slightly burdened with the upper quadrille reaching up to severely burdened for all four of the groups. This test had a p-value of .213, which is not statistically significant. Consequently, no relationship between different income groups and their financial burden from taxes and fees can be inferred.

Project Name: 300 Street Road Renovations			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	300 Street from the end of the concrete to the bridge	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility, Road
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	1 - 10 years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	No
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Unsure			
N/A			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Daily driving on the road makes our trucks dirty, more difficult for snow removal, gravel maintenance, and dust issues with the sewer plant blowers are caused by the gravel road.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☒ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☐ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☐ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☒ Other: Upgrade for staff use and the local area	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$45,000 + 2nd year recoat. Every 4-5 year recoat $15,000 each time
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Maintenance will require a follow up recoating 2nd year and every 4-5 years after $15,000 per recoat
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
N/A			
Additional project information and justification:			
Sealcoat the gravel road on 300th Street from the end of the pavement to the bridge by the lagoons. Clean and reshape ditches prior to road repairs. Work with county on 28E agreement. The agreement in place pertains to gravel maintenance, and we would have to remove this section of road from their maintenance responsibilities.			

Project Name: Beranek Park Playground			
Department:	Parks & Recreation	**Project Contact:**	Erin Laughlin
Project Location:	320 Beranek Drive	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility, Park / Trail
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	21-30 years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
Beranek Park is one of the top two most popular playgrounds in the city. This playground is around 30 years old, and parts are becoming unreplaceable. The sand pit is moldy and overgrown with weeds as well as the wood edging rotting away. Kids who played on this playground when it was new now have kids of their own on the playground. It is time to upgrade and provide a new safe and fun feature for this busy park that hosts many events in the warm months.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
This playground has nearly served its life, and the longer it is left in use, the higher the liability it is to the City and the greater the risk of injury is to the users. Some cities even end up having to 'close' playgrounds, which leaves another issue to patrol.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☒ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☒ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☒ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☐ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☐ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☒ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$300,000-$350,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Minimal
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
Playset-$100,000, install-$30,000, demo-$10,000, swing set-$15,000, rubber tile-$175,000.			
Additional project information and justification:			
N/A			

Project Name: Cemetery Expansion			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	Northwest section of the cemetery	**Project Type:**	Layout new plots on existing land in the cemetery
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Completed In-House	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
It will provide more area for residents to bury loved ones.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Family members will eventually need to be buried in a cemetery outside of the City, causing residents to not have close proximity to other family members who have passed.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$25,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Similar to costs we already have for maintenance in this area.
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
N/A			
Additional project information and justification:			
Mark out plots on the property already inside the cemetery, which is currently a grassy field. Need for the future as we are currently starting to sell the lots in our last open section.			

Project Name: North Loop of Greenview Water Main Replacement			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	The north loop of Greenview	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
This section of watermain has seen over 15 main breaks in the last 10 years causing repeated interruptions in service. Replacement would alleviate those issues.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Water loss, repeated interruptions, and increased changes in water quality issues.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☒ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☐ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☐ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$360,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Unsure
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
Guess from previously completed projects that are similar.			
Additional project information and justification:			
1,050 feet of water main to be replaced from the intersection of Greenview Circle to Greenview Court along the north side of the loop. This has been a well-known issue for several years and did not receive funding during the east side water main replacement projects due to monetary restraints.			

Project Name: Herbert Hoover Highway Trail			
Department:	Parks & Recreation	**Project Contact:**	Erin Laughlin
Project Location:	900 W. Main St.	**Project Type:**	Park / Trail
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
This would allow residents a safe and high-quality trail with access to everything in Iowa City and beyond.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Johnson County will have their portion completed and West Branch will have this short stretch coming into the City with no sidewalk that will have a lasting negative impression on the City. This should be a great opportunity for economic growth as well as an exciting new amenity for residents.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☒ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☒ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$300,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
$210,000 construction, $40,000 engineering, $26,000 glow, $24,000 benches/lights/signs.			
Additional project information and justification:			
This is planned for calendar year 2027 with heavy financing from grants. Johnson County has committed to doing their portion.			

Project Name: Ladder Truck			
Department:	Fire	**Project Contact:**	Kevin Stoolman
Project Location:	Unknown	**Project Type:**	New construction, Equipment
Project Completion:	1 year	**Useful Life:**	N/A
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? Yes			
West Branch is building a lot of 12 Plex and multifamily units that have rough heights exceeding 50 feet. It should be the City's obligation to supply public safety to these buildings.			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
A new ladder truck is needed to provide services because buildings are getting too tall for equipment we have.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Not having adequate equipment for tall buildings.			

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)	
☐ Children and families	☐ Business owners
☐ Older residents	☐ Tourists
☐ Working-age residents	☐ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☒ West Branch and surrounding areas
☐ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$2 million
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	N/A
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:	
Ladder truck would cost around $2 million.	
Additional project information and justification:	
New ladder truck is needed because high density housing development with taller buildings. Needed for the safety of West Branch community.	

Project Name: Main Street Super Project			
Department:	Administration	**Project Contact:**	Adam Kofoed
Project Location:	W Main Poplar St to N. 1st	**Project Type:**	Road
Project Completion:	2-5 years for each phase	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants

Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? Yes

ADA sidewalks for downtown.

Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes

Would make downtown safe for elderly, more foot traffic to support downtown businesses, beautification to bring a higher sense of community.

Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes

Redesigning some of the sidewalks will require drainage improvements as Heritage Square could flood if not done properly.

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)

☒ Children and families	☒ Business owners
☒ Older residents	☒ Tourists
☐ Working-age residents	☐ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☒ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$20 million for super project over 20+ years
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	Less street maintenance, vehicular and pedestrian incidence claims, updating outdated infrastructure.

Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:

An average of $2.5 million for each phase.

Additional project information and justification:

Downtown is the heart of West Branch. It's what makes us unique from Tiffin & North Liberty.

Project Name: Main Street Water Main Project			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	Water main located between Thomas Drive and Heritage Drive on Main Street	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility
Project Completion:	1-2 years	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
Increased water quality, upgrade to very old infrastructure, reduced chance for breakages that lead to service disruptions.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Long term, this is one of the oldest water mains in town and serves the downtown/historic district. This water main should be replaced prior to or as part of a downtown streetscape.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☒ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$1.2 million
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Unsure
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
Requires significant pavement removal for install and service connections			
Additional project information and justification:			
Replacement and upsize of 2,700 feet of water main from Thomas Drive to Heritage Hill. This should be completed prior to or as part of an overall downtown streetscape project or prior to an overlay of this area if that is the direction it goes. Very old main that serves the downtown/historic district, businesses/store fronts, and provides a loop to the water system for this area and the surrounding areas. The NPS receives water to portions of the park from this water main as it ties into Poplar Street and Downey Street.			

Project Name: New Fire Station / Police Department			
Department:	Police	**Project Contact:**	Greg Hall
Project Location:	Unknown	**Project Type:**	New construction
Project Completion:	1-2 years	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	No
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
New facilities will accommodate for increases in staffing and better care for equipment. New Fire Station would be required because there is not enough room to put a new ladder truck inside.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Current FS / PD is in a flood area and has completely flooded in the resent years.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$4 - $6 million
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Unknown
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
Unknown			
Additional project information and justification:			
Purchase or acquire land and build a new Public Safety Building to house the Fire Department and Police Department. Current facilities are old, small, and in a flood prone area. Fire Station was built in the early 60s, and we have outgrown it. Our equipment will not fit in the station. We also would ideally like living quarters in the Fire Station for 24 hour service.			

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Project Name: New Library Building</td></tr>
<tr><td>Department:</td><td>Public Library</td><td>Project Contact:</td><td>Jessica Schafer</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Location:</td><td>Land would most likely need to be purchased (prior plan was on Scott Drive)</td><td>Project Type:</td><td>New construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Completion:</td><td>5+ years</td><td>Useful Life:</td><td>Unknown</td></tr>
<tr><td>Completed By:</td><td>Contractors</td><td>External Funding:</td><td>Unsure</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Unsure</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">It would improve the ability to serve some residents (e.g. more meeting spaces) but potentially decrease the ability to serve others (e.g. new location might be farther from the elementary school/downtown).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? No</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Children and families</td><td colspan="2">☐ Business owners</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Older residents</td><td colspan="2">☐ Tourists</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Working-age residents</td><td colspan="2">☐ Targeted neighborhoods</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Racial minorities</td><td colspan="2">☒ All West Branch residents</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Low-income households</td><td colspan="2">☐ West Branch and surrounding areas</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ People with disabilities</td><td colspan="2">☐ Other</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What is the estimated total cost of the project?</td><td>$5 - $10 million</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?</td><td>Unsure (larger building will cost more for operations than current library, more staff will be needed, etc.)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Unknown</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Additional project information and justification:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Studies were done in 2010-2015 to investigate possible additions/remodeling of the current building and it was determined that such projects would not be feasible/cost effective. At that time, plans were started to build a new library/community center. However, funding was not passed and the land intended for the new building near Cubby Park has been utilized in different ways. Location remains an important concern. While the current library building is sufficient for current needs, prior space needs assessments and community feedback indicate that more functional spaces would be beneficial (study rooms, dedicated program spaces, makerspace). Recent planning sessions have indicated that a new library might be in a 10+ year plan.</td></tr>
</table>

Project Name: North Downey Water Main Replacement			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	Located on North Downey Street from East Green Street to Northside Drive and East College Street from North Downey Street to North 1st Street	**Project Type:**	New construction, Renovation of current facility
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
Increased water capacity.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Aging infrastructure, breaks, leaks, and water quality issues can occur in old pipes.			

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)	
☐ Children and families	☐ Business owners
☐ Older residents	☐ Tourists
☐ Working-age residents	☒ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☐ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$250,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	Unsure
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:	
Guess based off of previously completed projects.	
Additional project information and justification:	
1,200 feet of 8" pipe replaced. Aging infrastructure. Needs replaced and extended to Northside Drive to provide a looped system on North Downey Street. Small diameter pipe at the north end of the existing main with minor leak that we have been unsuccessful at locating.	

Project Name: Pedestrian Bridge from Cubby Park to Gilbert St			
Department:	Parks & Recreation	**Project Contact:**	Erin Laughlin
Project Location:	301 Scott Drive	**Project Type:**	New construction, Park / Trail
Project Completion:	1 year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
Covered under potential risks			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Unsure			
When Cubby Park is full of activity (from a tournament), parking tends to overflow into the grassy area to the East which will become more limited with the pickleball courts and if someday a rec center or splash pad go up there. There has been an idea to do a pedestrian bridge to Gilbert Drive to allow for overflow parking to better extend into that neighborhood because any additional infrastructure at Cubby Park will add to the traffic issues already present.			

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)	
☐ Children and families	☐ Business owners
☐ Older residents	☐ Tourists
☐ Working-age residents	☒ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☐ People with disabilities	☐ Other
What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$400,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	No project maintenance costs
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:	
Unknown	
Additional project information and justification:	
N/A	

Project Name: Rail Trail				
Department:	Parks & Recreation	**Project Contact:**	Erin Laughlin	
Project Location:	Herbert Hoover Nature Trail	**Project Type:**	Park / Trail	
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years	
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants	
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No				
N/A				
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes				
This would allow residents a safe and high-quality trail with access to hundreds of miles of trails.				
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes				
If not completed, our community will be highlighted nationwide as a spot on the map that can't get the job done. https://www.railstotrails.org/site/greatamericanrailtrail/content/iowa/.				
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)				
☐ Children and families		☒ Business owners		
☐ Older residents		☒ Tourists		
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods		
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents		
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas		
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other		
What is the estimated total cost of the project?				$90,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?				Minimal - already have to maintain the brush along the trail
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:				
N/A				
Additional project information and justification:				
The City will only have about 3,000 ft that it owns that need paved, from College St to Baker Ave. The stretch that the City owns along Beranek Park is already in the works to be paved in the next 2 years and beyond that is not owned by the City.				

Project Name: Rec/Community Center			
Department:	Parks & Recreation	**Project Contact:**	Erin Laughlin
Project Location:	301 Scott Drive	**Project Type:**	New construction
Project Completion:	1-2 years	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants and donations

Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No
N/A
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes
There is currently a major space deficit for athletic activities as everybody is dependent on the school. This limits options for adults, non-competitive, and younger kids.
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Unsure
Residents or potential future residents may choose to live in communities with rec centers or similar amenities instead if it is important to them.

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)	
☒ Children and families	☐ Business owners
☒ Older residents	☐ Tourists
☒ Working-age residents	☐ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☒ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☒ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$5 - $10 million
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	Extraordinary with a pool, high without a pool

Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:
Site work/fill 31,000 CY x $20 - $25/SQ.FT. $620,000-$775,000. 45,706 SQ. FT. x $190/SQ. FT. $8,684,140
Additional project information and justification:
Based on Tiffin's: Main level has 2 offices, storage, locker rooms, small community room, concession stand, turf batting cages, elevator, 2 basketball courts with outlines of 4 pickleball courts and 2 volleyball courts. Second level that is open to the main level has a walking track and weight/cardio room. Could have a potential for future addition to include a pool, could also include a library.

Project Name: Phase 4 and 5 Televising of Sewer Mains			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	Phase 4 and 5 are located between Main Street and the north City limits, and from 2nd Street to Scott Drive. Central and northern portions of town	**Project Type:**	Maintenance
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	1-10 years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? Yes			
We are required by DNR to operate our wastewater system with minimal interruption and effectively use funds to manage the system. Televising gives us the means to locate issues for repairs at a manageable cost.			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Unknown damages in pipes can lead to service disruptions, sink holes, damage to streets and infiltration into the sewer system which must then be treated at our lagoons.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☒ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☐ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☐ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$110,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			N/A
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
N/A			
Additional project information and justification:			
Televise sewer mains for a large portion of the central and northern portions of town. Necessary tool to target and repair sewer mains.			

Project Name: South Baker/Downey Street Rehab Overlay Evaluation			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	South Baker from the DOT ROW to the south City limits	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility, Road
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	1-10 years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Unsure			
N/A			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Evaluate the surface of this road to set a time frame for replacement, resurfacing, or renovation.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☐ Children and families		☐ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☐ Other	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			$4,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			Unsure
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
Construction cost is unknown.			
Additional project information and justification:			
Evaluate South Baker from DOT ROW to the south City limits. This is a highly used road entrance for the south of West Branch and for access to the Industrial Park. It is in need of an evaluation by engineers to give us an approximate timeframe for rehab. This is a shared road with Cedar County, so future rehab will need to be coordinated within their budgeting as well. The road is currently in decent condition, but is showing signs of wear that has been accelerated by the interstate projects, Nordex expansion, creek widening project, WWTP expansion, and other projects that have caused higher than normal use on these roads.			

Project Name: Splash Pad			
Department:	Parks & Recreation	**Project Contact:**	Erin Laughlin
Project Location:	301 Scott Drive	**Project Type:**	New construction, Equipment, Park / Trail
Project Completion:	1 year	**Useful Life:**	21-30 years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants and donations

Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No

N/A

Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes

This is a much more cost-effective water feature option than a pool.

Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Unsure

There may be some families that choose to live in communities that offer amenities such as a pool or splash pad.

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)

☒ Children and families	☐ Business owners
☐ Older residents	☒ Tourists
☒ Working-age residents	☐ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☒ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☒ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$300,000 - $1.2 million
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	$35,000-$40,000

Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:

Site prep & infrastructure, water management systems, water features, shade & seating.

Additional project information and justification:

2,500-3,000 SQ FT with shade and seating, family bathrooms, interactive water features, handicap accessible, flow-through or repurpose system, self-activated features.

Project Name: Thomas Drive Sewer Main Replacement			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	Thomas Drive	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure

Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? Unsure

We are required by DNR to maintain logs and report back ups or other issues which have been very common on this stretch of sewer main.

Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes

Currently this sewer main backs up on a regular basis, costing city resources (time and money) to correct. We also devote significant time to flushing this line. Backups affect the local homeowners.

Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes

Damage to homes.

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)

☐ Children and families	☐ Business owners
☐ Older residents	☐ Tourists
☐ Working-age residents	☒ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☐ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$1.37 million
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	Unsure

Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:

This would require design, bid, and construction to meet current regulations/codes/standards.

Additional project information and justification:

Replace 835 feet of sewer main, 3-4 manholes and tie in services on Thomas Drive. The last few years there have been multiple times this line has backed up into homes. Slow toilets and sewage on basement floors detract from quality of life. Replacing this main would remedy these issues.

Project Name: Town Hall Upgrades			
Department:	Administration	**Project Contact:**	Adam Kofoed
Project Location:	115 N First St	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility, Equipment
Project Completion:	Very dependent, does not all have to be done at once	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Potential grants
Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? Unsure			
N/A			
Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes			
Town Hall is an affordable rental space that this community doesn't have much in ways of alternatives for but its condition is dwindling.			
Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes			
Some items are going to need repair regardless, such as the HVAC and if we don't budget for it we will have rentals scheduled and we are looking for tens of thousands of dollars with no notice. There are already broken windows, and a breeze comes in them, or they rattle when trucks go by. People have keys and doors are left unlocked. The handicap accessible door features don't work.			
What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)			
☒ Children and families		☒ Business owners	
☐ Older residents		☐ Tourists	
☐ Working-age residents		☐ Targeted neighborhoods	
☐ Racial minorities		☒ All West Branch residents	
☐ Low-income households		☒ West Branch and surrounding areas	
☐ People with disabilities		☒ Other: Local organizations	
What is the estimated total cost of the project?			Greatly depends how far we are willing to go with renovation, 50K for HVAC is needed in the next 5 years but could spend 6 figures and really do things right
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?			No new maintenance costs
Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:			
50K for HVAC, windows, flooring, lighting, seating replacements, table replacements, keypad/smart lock access, technology & AV, fans & thermostat upgrades, signage, replace exterior lights, storage solution, acoustic improvements, paint and finishes, working wheelchair accessible ramp.			
Additional project information and justification:			
N/A			

Project Name: East Green Street Reconstruction/Truck Route			
Department:	Public Works	**Project Contact:**	Matt Goodale
Project Location:	East Green Street between North Downey Street and North Second Street	**Project Type:**	Renovation of current facility, Road
Project Completion:	Less than a year	**Useful Life:**	31+ years
Completed By:	Contractors	**External Funding:**	Unsure

Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? No

N/A

Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes

Removes truck/semi traffic from the downtown area.

Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes

Damage to downtown streets, street lights, and other infrastructure.

What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)

☐ Children and families	☒ Business owners
☐ Older residents	☐ Tourists
☐ Working-age residents	☒ Targeted neighborhoods
☐ Racial minorities	☐ All West Branch residents
☐ Low-income households	☐ West Branch and surrounding areas
☐ People with disabilities	☐ Other

What is the estimated total cost of the project?	$650,000
What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?	Unsure

Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:

I don't have a breakdown of costs, just a guess based off previous road project costs.

Additional project information and justification:

Replace 2 blocks of sealcoat street with concrete curb and gutter. Sealcoat adds to our yearly maintenance costs, clogs storm sewers with rock, and makes neighborhoods appear less desirable. The downtown area should not have semi traffic traveling through there on a regular basis as turning radius, parked vehicles, and pedestrians make it difficult for their movement and can be dangerous. A truck route would mitigate some of this.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Project Name: Water Plant Renovations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Department:</td><td>Public Works</td><td>Project Contact:</td><td>Matt Goodale</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Location:</td><td>Water Plant</td><td>Project Type:</td><td>Renovation of current facility</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Completion:</td><td>Less than a year</td><td>Useful Life:</td><td>31+ years</td></tr>
<tr><td>Completed By:</td><td>Contractors</td><td>External Funding:</td><td>Unsure</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Is this project necessary to meet a regulatory mandate? Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">We are currently meeting all requirements, but we are required by DNR to maintain our facilities and provide clean, safe drinking water. This would help satisfy those requirements.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Does this project increase West Branch's ability to serve its residents? Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Public facilities should be kept up ahead of actual need to ensure we can provide for the current and future residents.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Are there potential risks / negative impacts if this project is not completed? Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Loss of use of portions of our water plant. Water with poor taste or clarity.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">What groups does this project primarily serve? (select 5 maximum)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Children and families</td><td colspan="2">☐ Business owners</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Older residents</td><td colspan="2">☐ Tourists</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Working-age residents</td><td colspan="2">☐ Targeted neighborhoods</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Racial minorities</td><td colspan="2">☒ All West Branch residents</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ Low-income households</td><td colspan="2">☐ West Branch and surrounding areas</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">☐ People with disabilities</td><td colspan="2">☐ Other</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What is the estimated total cost of the project?</td><td>$2 - $5 million</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What are the expected annual and/or long-term maintenance costs?</td><td>Unsure</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Cost breakdown for projects over $150,000:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Additional project information and justification:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Replace the oldest sand filters in our water plant. The filters are necessary for treatment of our drinking water. They generally put a 20-year life on water and wastewater plant improvements, and these filters are closer to 50 years old.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix H: CIP Ranking Criteria

CIP Ranking Criteria

Project Categories

1. **Comprehensive Plan** – Reviewers should consider how well the proposed project aligns with the goals, policies, and future land use vision outlined in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Projects that clearly advance stated priorities, address identified needs, and support long-term planning objectives should receive higher scores.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 14	15
The project is not part of the Comprehensive Plan.	⟷	The project is included in the Comprehensive Plan and is a high priority.

2. **Regulatory Compliance** – Reviewers should consider whether the project is necessary to meet compliance with regulatory mandates, such as Environmental Protection Agency standards, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and City ordinances. Projects that address mandatory improvements or reduce regulatory risk should score higher.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 14	15
The project is not necessary to meet a regulatory compliance issue.	⟷	The project is necessary to meet a pressing or long-term regulatory compliance issue.

3. **Resident Impact** – Reviewers should assess how directly the project makes West Branch a favorable place to live by improving residents' quality of life, access to services, and overall community well-being. Projects that improve the quality of life and equitably support the community should score higher than projects with limited or indirect public impact.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 14	15
The project does not impact quality of life or West Branch's ability to serve residents.	⟷	The project increases overall quality of life and West Branch's ability to serve residents.

4. **Operational Budget –** Reviewers should evaluate the short- and long-term impacts of the project on the City's operating budget, including staffing, maintenance, utilities, and supplies. For example, a new facility will need to be staffed and supplied, which will have an impact on the operational budget for the life of the facility. Projects that reduce operating costs in the long term or are cost neutral should receive a higher score.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 9	10
The project will increase spending on the yearly budget.	⟷	The project will decrease spending on the yearly operating budget.

5. **External Funding** – Reviewers should consider the extent to which the project leverages funding from sources outside the City, such as grants, developer contributions, or private donations. Projects that have identified or secured external funding should receive higher scores.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 9	10
The project does not have external funding opportunities.	⟷	The project is completely financed through external opportunities.

6. **Public Health & Safety** – Reviewers should consider whether the project improves essential public health and safety services, such as emergency response, infrastructure reliability, water quality, transportation safety, or flood protection. Projects that directly enhance community safety or reduce health risks should receive higher scores.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 9	10
The project does not affect the public health and safety of West Branch.	⟷	The project has a significant positive impact on the public health and safety of West Branch.

7. **Project Timing** – Reviewers should consider the urgency of the project and the potential consequences of delaying it, including increased costs, service disruptions, or safety concerns. Projects that address immediate needs, must be completed before another project can begin, or prevent more costly future repairs should score high.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 9	10
The project does not have any negative impacts or potential risks if it is delayed.	⟷	The project has significant positive impacts or potential risks that require it to be completed immediately.

8. **Project Feasibility** – Reviewers should consider the feasibility of implementing the project, including readiness, zoning requirements, site conditions, staffing capacity, and availability of resources, such as land. Projects that are achievable within the proposed timeframe and budget should receive higher scores.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 9	10
The project does not have adequate land or resources to be feasible in the short term.	⟷	The project has adequate land and resources to be feasible in the short term.

9. **Reviewer's Discretion** – Reviewers may use their personal and professional knowledge to consider the overall value of the project to the City and its residents.

Scoring Scale

1	2 - 4	5
I am not in support of this project.	⟷	I am strongly in support of this project.

Appendix I: CIP Resident Survey Results

CIP Resident Survey Results:

Project Name	Strongly in Favor	Strongly Opposed	Total Respondents
Water Plant	98.9%	1.1%	92
Main Street Water Main	88.2%	11.8%	76
Greenview Water Main	87.3%	12.7%	71
Sewer Televising	86.4%	13.6%	66
North Downey Water Main	85.5%	14.5%	69
Main Street Super Project	85.1%	14.9%	87
Herbert Hoover Highway Trail	84.5%	15.5%	84
Thomas Drive Sewer Main	83.3%	16.7%	72
Rail Trail	77.8%	22.2%	81
Splash Pad	76.7%	23.3%	86
New Rec/Community Center	76.6%	23.4%	77
Beranek Park	72.2%	27.8%	72
Truck Re-Route	71%	29%	69
Town Hall	67.1%	32.9%	70
Cemetery Plots	65.5%	34.5%	55
New Fire Ladder Truck	65.1%	34.9%	63
South Baker/Downey Street Overlay	54.9%	45.1%	51
New Public Library	54.3%	45.7%	70
Pedestrian Bridge	52.7%	47.3%	74
New Fire/Police Station	50%	50%	68
300 Street Road Renovation	28.6%	71.4%	49

Comments:

Water Plant:

- Our water quality desperately needs to be improved as it is always at the high end or exceeds federal limitations.
- We need better water in West Branch!
- Water is so bad that skin, hair and overall health are greatly affected. This also affects fixtures and appliances that use water..that no one has money to continue to replace.
- Having a secure water supply and safe water is a core responsibility of government.
- Clean water is a non-negotiable need for the community.
- How is this even optional? Filters should be budgeted as part of our utility fees.
- water quality is important but if these filters aren't going to reduce nitrate levels or other chemical levels that are linked to cancer then don't do it
- Our water tastes terrible and we should do whatever we can to improve it.

- Iowa water is already terrible, let’s be better.
- West Branch has the worst water!
- Given the water quality in Iowa. This is at the top of our list of priorities for our family. Please ensure we have safe water here
- Does the WTP have enough firm capacity where filtration can still occur while each filter is offline being addressed/replaced? If the WTP does not have enough firm capacity would plant expansion be considered?
- I would also be all for investments needed to shore up firm capacity in other aspects (like source water/water storage)
- We need to ensure there is enough water and enough quality of water available for a growing town.
- We already pay increased rates for our water and sewer. This money should come from the contractors who are building the multifamily homes. As this housing is adding burden to the water treatment.
- This should be a certainty and not up for debate. If currently past useful life, for safety reasons, these must be changed and done so on a schedule and not capital poll.
- With cancer rates on the rise in Iowa, water quality is extremely important to me.
- I am all for this, as I would prefer we are being proactive in providing clean water as well as treating our waste in an environmentally friendly way.
- This should be a planned expense.
- We drink and use water every day, so this should be a priority for health and safety.
- Why is providing clean and safe water a survey topic vs expected?
- Water quality should be city priority - tons of adverse health effects from poor water quality.
- All the houses that have huge retention ditches that haven’t had water flow in 5+ years or even come close to needing the drains should get support for these ditches to be filled in or at least not as big as they are in backyards. Or offer solution for residents with these…. They haven’t been an issue on Sullivan st and could definitely be readdressed. Offering homeowners chance to fill in the huge gap themselves with city approval or raising the drain to ground level…. So the drain is still there if ever needed but there isn’t a huge hole. Similar to other residents on Sullivan st who have drain ground level.

<u>Main Street Water Main</u>

- How do these compare to water mains elsewhere in the city. Are there others that are older and need replaced
- Again, clean drinking water is essential.
- I don’t know that it’s strongly in favor as much as just I’d rather budget it when it can be planned and done for less cost than before it becomes an emergency and costs more. But lower priority than other projects for sure.
- Please do this before any road work begins
- Before things get worse.

- Aging infrastructure needs to be dealt with stop kicking the can down the road and letting the next generation deal with it
- Yes if this lowers water maintenance costs overall. Water costs in west branch are exorbitant and difficult to swallow. Also when considering potential growth in our town there does come a point when people can choose to live somewhere else when the cost is so high compared to surrounding communities.
- Fix it now or the repairs will be even more costly.

Greenview Water Main

- Access to water is necessary for everything and it is appalling that this is still under consideration after 10 years. Not to mention the wasted water each time this happens.
- This section of town seems to be getting more attention/tax dollars allocated than other parts of town.
- It would seem our water system has been long neglected, bring the entire system up to a point where reliability is high.
- Greenview has been neglected
- Does this go hand in hand with repairing the sewer on Thomas
- Also no brainer?
- Repeat the same comment or maybe the people in office now should be a held accountable later on for not dealing with the problems and issues we have now
- Sounds like it would be cheaper to spend the money and fix it.
- This is a no brainer since it is a recurring problem.

Sewer Televising

- Have developers cover this cost as part of the approvals process
- Repeat
- Doesn't the town already do this on a regular basis

North Downey Water Main

- Same
- Capacity is a development issue and not a taxpayer issue in my opinion. If capacity needs increased, that should be considered before approving further developments served by those mains.
- Same statement as above
- A good idea but might not be the highest of the high priorities
- Water quality issues continue to be an issue for West Branch and Cedar County.
- This is a no brainer since it is a recurring problem.
- What's up with the overall water pressure? I live in a newer home on Cedar Johnson and the water pressure is awful. The city said there is nothing wrong with it.

Main Street Super Project

- Please! Having babies makes it so hard to navigate downtown wb I can't even imagine if I were someone wheelchair bound
- Main St. Business District is very inaccessible
- There are still areas in town without completed sidewalks, that happen to be some of the most dangerous areas for walking. I.e. the tops of hills where cars and people alike cannot clearly see eachother.
- What does this entail Sidewalks are in good condition. Seems there are other improvements to spend tax dollars on.
- I'm really not strongly in favor nor opposed. I do however believe our Main Street (the literal street) doesn't reflect the quality of our community.
- This seems like it will become an unavoidable emergency project if basic utilities are not updated sooner than later. The longer it's delayed the more expensive it will be. Also the project must be paired with a true streetscape aspect to ensure the finished project supports economic vitality, placemaking and small businesses, not JUST the long-overdue infrastructure elements.
- Although the funding should be weighted to come from downtown businesses that directly benefit from this project.
- Downtown is in desperate need of renovation sidewalk and street wise!!
- Yes yes please! The current sidewalks are not stroller friendly
- Our town is so cute…let's make it better to sustain what has already been established.
- Special needs child. We want a community to be accessible.
- This is a safety issue
- If there was a middle options that's what I would pick. I think there are things that need done way before this.
- I am tired of people tripping in front of my shop
- Only do this at a time when interstate, on/off ramps and bridges FULLY functional. The deverted traffic with heavy trucks/traffic causes alot of wear on our streets,etc.
- Utilities work yes. ADA sidewalk work needs done in high traffic area only.
- It's one of the last things holding back the appearance of down town
- Sidewalks especially need updated and are inaccessible to families and people with disabilities in many areas of town. This would go along way to increasing the community and exploitability of our town.
- the concrete is very uneven and difficult to pass even for able-bodied people in many places. This would really make downtown look better and be better for the events held there for the community.
- We either choose to be an inclusive community or we don't.
- This is crucial. Even just pedestrians the steps are dangerous.

Herbert Hoover Highway Trail

- Since the trail is already being completed in Johnson we need to accommodate those coming off the trail to avoid traffic issues.

- Our kids need a better path to the high school
- YES! This adds great recreation options for locals and would positively impact access and appeal for visitors that could support local economic vitality
- But the trail must be wide enough and built to accommodate the cyclists and UTV traffic that creates hazards on the highway
- please for the love of God connect the Herbert hoover trail to johnson count and Solon. it will bring in so much more bike tourism and allow residents a free outdoor cycling ability instead of them going to Iowa city, Solon, or Davenport
- I would use a great walking trail daily and I am certain it would not just be me.
- If this gets bicyclists off the highway, all for it.
- Huge!!
- just another thing where i feel like we already have many other trails and this money could be put towards other things
- This would be a higher priority for me
- If Jo Co is willing to spend the money to WB I guess we should be willing to invest in the trail too.
- Would bring bikers into town and hopefully support our business
- If the trail is paved on shoulder of hoover highway It would be a hazard. Need the trail from I C. to be at least 6ft. from shoulder of road pavement on Hoover Highway and ran through to Oasis to connect with the existing trail into West Branch.
- Bike trails have had great success in other communities and many people travel the country to ride trails. I think this and the nature trail should be priorities to invigorate downtown and also pairs well with the national park draw into town without greatly increasing vehicle traffic.
- Love a good trail
- This would be great but not a priority
- Coordinate with western Main Street improvements
- Sure it's nice, but money can be better spent.
- Can wait

<u>Thomas Drive Sewer Main</u>

- This is our highest priority as we live on Thomas Drive. We would much rather have this issue be permanently fixed than have to keep calling the city, on weekends a well, to fix the lines when they back up.
- I dont even know why this hasn't been done. No one should have to live with repeated sewage backups or be required to deal with it themselves or out of pocket costs
- Replace is only option to correct backups?
- This is my main concern.
- It is important but maybe slightly less than the others in my opinion.
- Seems like no brainer?
- Same as above
- Depends on costs as it will only benefit a small number of homes.

- This is a no brainer since it is a recurring problem.

<u>Rail Trail</u>

- Would help bring traffic to local bars & restaurants as well
- This needs to be funded as $$s are available-not infringe on other projects that are more urgent
- This would provide strong economic value and safety for cyclist that currently have to ride HHH to link in to trails.
- Bring the bike riders into town for a pizza lunch or smoothie
- Bring more to the community and big for families!
- we already have so many trails in west branch alone, i feel like for right now that would be a waste of money that could be put towards other things.
- A great idea but too many other needs first.
- Ideally paving or black top the trail.
- That would be incredible.
- This would be ok but not priority
- Nope.
- Can wait

<u>Splash Pad</u>

- If water quality improves
- Depends on cost. Benefit is to narrow population. If it can be done cheaply, sure. If expensive, not worth it
- Parents can fundraise if they want it now. See amenities comment above about needs ahead of wants.
- Give our kids something to do
- Great idea until ypu see how inefficient they are and costly. The only way to make them efficient is to have a recirculation system and then you will have to have someone with CPO licenses it sounds great but bad rabbit hole to go down
- Put it downtown for town celebrations.
- There are so many private pools in town. Waste of water to continually run. Hazards of slipping and burns to feet.
- It'd be nice if it was multi-generational, instead of just focused on children. With the temps going up, all residents would benefit from this!
- Establishing a destination pool would demonstrate an interest in making West Branch a destination for growth
- This would be HUGE for community but also need safe water....
- Depends on cost and location

<u>New Rec/Community Center</u>

- If it had a pool I might change my mind, but otherwise don’t feel like this is adding to what is currently available. Batting cages would be nice, but that could be done elsewhere.

- We must be able to meet basic needs, like water main repairs, before such amenities are considered.
- we are one of the few small communities that doesnt have a community center but again it will grow west branch community involvement, keep money in community, and improve school athletics
- Yes please
- Needed
- This has been needed for years
- #1 with splash pad!! Reason we decided to move & build here while starting a family! Have thought about moving because it hasn't happened!
- It sounds like there is consideration for needing significant improvements/replace to all of the various department facilities. Has there been consideration that some of these departments could build together as a hopeful cost save? (I.e new library with rec center, new police/fire including town hall?) I could get behind a major building project for West Branch, but I can't get behind 4 major building projects.
- Use Lone Tree as an example.
- west branch needs something like this, with our growing community so many people have to search out of town just to find a place like that, would give more space for events and fundraisers too.
- We have a fitness center in town now. We wouldn't want to put them out of business.
- Where would this be built?
- In addition include library space.
- Don't forget Senior exercise park
- How about a pool? I'm all for this.
- I think this would be good but not a huge priority
- Combine library with this building
- Other items are way more pressing.
- Can wait
- Senior affordable housing is needed, there are only a few available. Seniors move to surrounding communities to be able to afford to live.

Beranek Park

- Another project for Lions Club, or GoFund Me project
- Please! Or at least upgrade or add more to Wapsi park, that park is the saddest park I've been to. There isn't even a baby swing or a swing for a toddler, super disappointing park
- West Branch needs more green space other than Beranek Park and Cubby Park.
- This needs to be a priority
- Add splash pad
- Raise money from public for this
- Is there any way we could have a splash pad installed at this park with a bathroom? Or place a bathroom there during the warm season?
- Take care of the kids

- we already have two newer playgrounds, cubby and wapsi, not including the schools playgrounds i don't see this getting much more use then it already is.
- Not every baby is cute. This park is not
- Fund raising could support this need.
- In order to continue supporting West Branch's growth, young families need to have reason and attraction points in town. Cubby park is often crowded in nice days.
- I would like to see the update include a Senior Exercise Park
- Beranek could be a nice park but it needs better more inviting accessibility(sidewalks especially. The park also feels neglected and would be more inviting if it felt less forgotten.
- My kid uses the playgrounds in town so I definitely support this.
- Would like to see adult exercise equipment included in all parks.

<u>Truck Re-Route</u>

- Large vehicles should not be permitted to travel on Main Street to Downey. There is not enough room and there have been way too many near miss collisions when they try to turn.
- Is this fair to residents this will affect.
- Semi traffic through downtown causes a danger and nuisance.
- This seems like a fairly "easy" project to check off this list and heavy trucks downtown continually seem to cause issues. Not only does truck traffic in the downtown make it less inviting but trucks have caused damage to property on various occasions.
- this would make no sense, lots of unnecessary turns, more at risk to drivers to not see children/takes them right past waspi park. also feel like it would cause more backed up traffic especially with no stop sign turning onto Second st.
- This should come first before any main street projects. I don't think it will work the other way around.
- This makes sense
- This should be coordinated with paving projects. Do Green all the way to 2nd Street
- I see too many trucks ignoring this. Especially when we are used as an I80 alternate. More wear and tear on several roads instead of just one. Waste of resources IMO.

<u>Town Hall</u>

- Cost?
- Without a true Recreation Center in town this is the closest thing we have to a space for community gathering, events, etc… the longer the maintenance is deferred the more expensive it will be. As a historic building this should qualify for various types of grant funding to assist the City in this much-needed project.
- Yes yes yes yes!!!!!!!! Priority #1!!!
- Not as timely as other projects
- This is a focal point coming into town & is used by some many.
- i just don't see how we can really make this better, i see the community center being a good (not replacement) but alternative for town hall.

- This would be lower priority for me
- If it's in the floodway, why invest in it.
- Is there any future vision of relocation of Town Hall as the community has grown?
- Town hall is an atractive building and one of the first buildings you see when you come into town and should be taken care of and its historic appeal maintained. The building also appears to be underutilized and a remodel could help this.
- Let's not go crazy with the costs

Cemetery Plots

- Consider vertical cremane options.
- Should also include and encourage columbaria and mausoleums, urn and scattering gardens. More financially and environmentally sustainable options for families and the city.
- I guess? I'm not opposed but this is low priority.
- Why is the city involved in the cemetery?

New Fire Ladder Truck

- I do not think we need a new truck, I believe we can re-life an existing truck from a sister city
- Why wasnt this considered when allowing for these multi story complexes
- Is it actually "needed"... we don't even have an Ambulance and it seems like that's more of a NEED for the general public than a ladder truck to serve just a few units. Could this be called in from Iowa City in the same way we rely on other EMS services from outside West Branch?
- Do we have funds for a brand new chief position AND a new ladder truck?
- If we keep building up and high density the ISO Rating will fall and insurance will go up. Its the cost of growth
- with new complexes coming into west branch and already having multiple alarms calls we don’t have a truck to reach high enough incase of an emergency.
- Police and Fire should be higher priorities as well
- The likelihood of WB needing one is extremely low. Just partner with Iowa City. We can't have everything.
- Shouldn’t developers bear some of the costs if they build what the city is not equipped to service?
- With the new apartment building going up behind BP and along 4th street West Branch’s ladders won’t reach past the second story which then West branch fire would have to call Tipton or Iowa city for there ladder trucks which could take 20+ minutes for them to get over here
- Curious as to who else contributes to our fire dept since it's used by other communities and the interstate.

South Baker/Downey Street Overlay

- No Comments

New Public Library

- Oh absolutely for how much the library does for this community I can not think of anything more important other than a splash pad
- Overall, I think the city needs to have a complete plan as things seem to be on the fly. What will happen to the library building? Can this be combined with the recreation center as a hub? A strategic plan is desperately needed and projects, like making our water safe, should be prioritized. The nonsense about high-schoolers not being able to cross a street that has a 25mph limit and multiple crosswalks should be less of a priority.
- Current library adequate, would prefer other projects
- Long term future after police/fire and town hall space needs and community basic infrastructure needs are fully funded.
- There is room to expand to the SW
- Didn't this place have a mudslide last year?
- Can we put the library and community center in the same place. Like North Liberty?
- Library should be considered as part of recreation structure.
- The current library needs better hours and better books. Library's are important but enlarging the current library does not make sense until it maximizes it current potential.
- Didn't the city council get rid of a library worker and reduce the budget of the library? If this is the case, how would this work? Not staffing it?
- The library does a lot for our community.
- Need to combine this with Rec center in 1 building
- What about the old school?
- Can wait

Pedestrian Bridge

- This should be the next Lions Club, or GoFund me project… Want, not a must
- Depends on cost. Would be nice for families that live in that area of town. Although there isn't really parking over there so not sure how it would help with parking problems. People are lazy & if they are carrying chairs, coolers, etc, they are going to drive. Maybe money should be spent on paving additional parking at cubby park instead of ppl parking in the grass
- This would be an ideal senior year or scout project
- Let make it safe and memorable for all the amazing events and people visiting.
- I don't get how a pedestrian bridge helps parking.
- That will add to flooding issues down stream
- I heard it will be too expensive
- Until this park is used 85% of capacity all spring thru fall, don't see a need right now.
- This would alleviate traffic.
- Bridges are expensive
- I've been wondering why this has already not been done.
- This park is completely empty 98% of the time. Seems like a project that can wait
- This would be good but not priority

- Better use of funds somewhere else, like infrastructure

New Fire/Police Station

- Please no
- Current project is supposed to eliminate the flooding issue.
- Need to fund a full time Fire Chief first
- Explore options to expand current location or add a second garage nearby and spare the massive expense of building all new AND avoid the issue of the likely vacant space you'd create at a prime spot downtown.
- Could this be expanded to include town hall offices rather than a separate renovation? Potential for leveraging economies of scale and a centralized location for all city services is more convenient for residents. We are still a small enough community geographically and by population to support this logistically.
- Creek widening project should solve the flooding issue
- The flood issue should be resolved & the current building is newer.
- I'm in favor of fire station. Police have enough they do not need to combine them with fire.
- renovation would be better, relocating the fire station would not be smart in my opinion, it’s right in the center of town. or just build new police station only since they don’t hold as many events/ aren’t ever stationed just at the station.
- Police and Fire should be higher priorities as well
- I only agree because its in the floodplain
- The town just did major work to avoid flooding. Let’s see how that works first
- If current building is replaced it would be nice if the replacement reflects the historic/small town aesthetic and is less industrial looking.
- Maybe instead of giving public funds to Browns, the city should have bought their location for emergency services
- Put these two agencies together with the Rec Center
- West Branch’s fire department is growing and starting to run out of room along with fire trucks getting bigger some fire trucks can only go in and out of certain doors
- How often does this flood? I've not seen it. The engineers that did cedar johnson rd and the orange st extension did a poor job. Let's hope this is done better.

300 Street Road Renovation

- Maybe not as timely as other projects
- This doesn't help a lot of people. Doesn't 300th st. mean its a county road.
- Depends on cost and fit within current budget.
- I have no idea where this is, but I'm all in favor of fixing gravel roads.
- Would be good
- Rural area. Does traffic really justify the cost?

Appendix J: TIF Policies

Tax Increment Financing Policies

The following 17 policies should be read carefully by potential developers. Submitting an application is consenting to the following policies, which will oversee the distribution and management of TIF funded projects.

1. TIF is not an entitlement program. This policy shall not be construed as obligating the City to use TIF for all projects that satisfy the criteria set forth in this policy. The final decision to provide economic development incentives shall be at the sole discretion of the City and shall be determined on a case by case basis. The application can be denied at any step of the process detailed on page (insert procedure page #).
2. Each project shall pass the "but for" test. The “but for” test, means the project would not occur as designed or envisioned, “but for” the availability of the TIF funding.
3. TIF shall not be provided for projects that would place extraordinary demands on city services or for projects that would generate significant adverse environmental impacts.
4. TIF assistance should be evaluated for all projects on an equitable basis, while recognizing that the amount of TIF assistance may vary among projects based on project size, type, location, community impact, and market condition.
5. No TIF Agreements shall be formally approved if they depend on other projects that have not been formally approved.
6. Upon receiving an application for financial assistance, the City will determine if any public infrastructure is necessary in order to complete the project. If it is determined that public infrastructure is necessary, the costs associated with constructing said improvements will be paid for first with any increment generated off of the project. Any increment remaining after the public improvement costs have been covered may be eligible for rebate. Any costs associated with public improvements will have been fully evaluated and agreed upon by the City and the Developer during negotiation of the Development Agreement.
7. Applicants should submit the required documentation as early in the development review process as possible. An application received after the approval of said project by the Planning and Zoning Commission agenda will not be considered

for the upcoming meeting. No applications will be considered for currently ongoing or finished projects.

8. Any project making an application for TIF funds must be located in a designated TIF district.

9. Speculative projects (with no guarantee of type of businesses to locate in the project or type and quality of jobs) shall not be considered for funding.

10. TIF projects will be funded on a “pay-as you go, and/or pay for performance” basis. Once the improvement is made and the owner/developer pays their taxes, the City shall refund a portion of their incremental property taxes according to the criteria established in the Development Agreement.

    a. In the Development Agreement, performance metrics & dates will be designated and clearly outlined.

    b. Failure to meet the terms & conditions of the development agreement is grounds for revocation of the TIF assistance.

11. The City shall have complete and sole discretion in determining eligibility for rebates and in computing the amount of each and any rebate. The Developer shall only apply for Tax Increment Rebates under one of the incentive programs for any particular Project, and under no circumstances shall any Project receive tax increment rebates under more than one of the incentive programs.

12. No prefunding of tax obligation is allowed. All incremental taxes must be paid to the County, remitted by the County to the City pursuant to Iowa Code Section 403.19, and then rebated pursuant to and conditioned on the terms of the Development Agreement entered between and among the Developer and the City.

13. All documentation will be retained by the City as the official application and record for this program. All documents are subject to verification, and properties must be in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance, Building Codes, and all other applicable laws, ordinances, or regulations.

14. Developer will be required to pay to the City one half (1/2) the sum costs incurred by the City in connection with the drafting and execution of the Development Agreement. The developer will pay the entirety of: publication fees for legal notices, actual costs associated with City Council meetings relating to the TIF application, and reasonable legal fees of the City relating to the TIF application. Developer must pay the City within 30 days of the date on which the City presents a statement to the

Developer demonstrating such costs, or if not previously paid the costs shall be deducted from the first Tax Increment Rebate(s).

a. (IF APPEAL PROCESS IS LEGALLY REQUIRED) If the TIF application is denied at any step detailed on page (), a fee of $X can be paid to send the application to the City Council for (re)deliberation.

b. Miscellaneous studies, such as Traffic Control, Infrastructure Annexation etc., will be decided on a case-by-case basis in the Developer Agreement.

15. If the project does not meet all of the above standards, TIF funding may still be considered for a project if one or more of the following actions are taken:

    a. A financial impact statement is prepared that shows the Taxpayer Return on Investment justifies the exception,

    b. An impact statement is prepared that demonstrates a significant positive impact on the community such as job creation/retention, increased amenities, or a visual enhancement,

    c. A finding is made that there exists extraordinary environmental remediation costs for which sufficient funding source is not otherwise available,

    d. A finding is made that the project will support an adopted neighborhood plan or public objective, or will cause a significant removal of slum and blight.

16. Projects receiving TIF are ineligible to receive tax abatement.

17. Residential TIF projects that are not in a Slum or Blight district will have a percentage of the total awarded funds set aside for LMI (Lower Middle Income) housing projects as pursuant to Iowa Code & HUD. The percentage that must be set aside changes year on year.

TIF Application

Name of Business: ____

Mailing Address: ____

Organization's HQ City, State, Zip: ______________________________________

Name of Applicant: ____

Type of Entity: ____

Location of the proposed project: ________________________________

County Assessor's Parcel Numbers:________________________________

Do you already own this property?: ________________________________

Type of business for which TIF funds are requested: _______________________

Current zoning of the parcel: ____________________________________

Will the parcel zoning change? If yes, to what: ___________________________

Is the proposed project in a slum or blight zone? __________________________

For what type of project are TIF funds being requested:

Residential ☐ Commercial ☐ Infrastructure ☐ Property Redevelopment ☐

Amount of TIF funds being requested:

Building: ____

Infrastructure: ____

Property Redevelopment: ____

Estimated start and end date: ____________________________________

How many jobs will this project add to West Branch? ________________________

What are the expected pay ranges of these positions?

____

Description and History of the Business:

____

____

____

____

____

____

Description of the Project:

____

____

____

____

____

How will this development benefit the West Branch Community:

____

____

____

If the applying business employs over 50 individuals, answer the following section:

Estimated water consumption (In gallons/month):

____

Estimated monthly sanitary sewer use:

Flow: ____

Biochemical oxygen demand: ____

Suspended solids: ____

Other: ____

On a separate document please detail:

1. A Pro Forma that shows evidence that the project requires TIF to be economically viable
2. Are you applying for any funding from the state? If yes, attach applications
3. Utility needs for the project
4. IRS w-9 form

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