

– AGENDA –

REGULAR MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION TO BE HELD AT THE WEST BRANCH CITY HALL, 121 N. FOURTH ST. ON TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024, BEGINNING AT 6:00 PM

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance.**
- IV. Additions to the agenda**
- V. Public Hearing**
- VI. Public Comment – Agenda Items Only – 3 Minute Limit (general rule)**
- VII. Approval of Minutes from the meeting held February 13, 2024**
- VIII. Site Plan review**
- IX. Sign Permit**
- X. Unfinished Business**
 - A. Economic Development Strategy**
- XI. New Business**
 - A. 2023 Review of Masterplan**
- XII. Communications**
- XIII. Reports and/or comments**
 - A. Chairperson Report**
 - B. Member Reports**
 - C. Zoning Administrator Report.**
- XIV. Public Comment – Any Topic – 3 Minute Limit (general rule)**
- XV. Adjournment**

Next meeting: Tuesday, April 9, 2023, 6:00 pm

REGULAR MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024.

Chairperson Cori Lucynski called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Bob David, Yvonne DeRoso, Josh Erickson (arrived at 6:05 pm), and Cori Lucynski.

Absent: Kara Fachting, Mike Jackson, and Rusty Showalter

Others officers in attendance: Acting secretary/zoning administrator, John Dantzer

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

John Iacoangeli from Beckett and Raeder was on hand to begin work on the City’s Economic Development Strategy. The Board reviewed a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis that was computed from a survey that went out prior to the COVID pandemic. The Board reviewed the responses and offered suggestions for changes to the results. The Board also discussed a business summary report and an At Risk Population Profile. Mr. Iacoangeli noted he would take the responses from the meeting and incorporate them into the plan and would move onto the next phase at the next meeting.

MOTION BY DEROSO, SECOND BY LUCYNSKI, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS HELD JANUARY 9, 2024 AND FEBRUARY 5, 2024..

Yes — David, DeRoso, Erickson, Lucynski

No – None Absent –Jackson, Fachting, Showalter Motion carried

The Board reviewed the 2023 Annual Report and noted one typo on the Zoning Board of Appeals hearings with the heading incorrectly noted as 2022, not 2023

MOTION BY LUCYNSKI, SECOND BY DEROSO, TO APPROVE THE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT AS PRESENTED WITH THE CORRECTION TO THE ZBA HEADING NOTING 2023.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Erickson, Lucynski

No – None Absent –Jackson, Fachting, Showalter Motion carried

MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY LUCYNKI TO EXCUSE MEMBERS JACKSON, FACHTING, AND SHOWALTER FROM THE MEETING.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Erickson, Lucynski

No – None

Absent –Jackson, Fachting, Showalter

Motion carried

Member David commended the City DPW for their prompt repairs to the water main break on Houghton Ave.

Member DeRoso discussed the annual marijuana license renewals and updated the Board on the creation of a County Housing Committte which she is serving on.

Member Erickson spoke on the traffic flow with the road closures due to repairs currently taking place on Houghton Ave.

Chairperson Lucynski closed the meeting at 6:57 pm.

Executive Summary - Call Outs

48661 (West Branch) 3

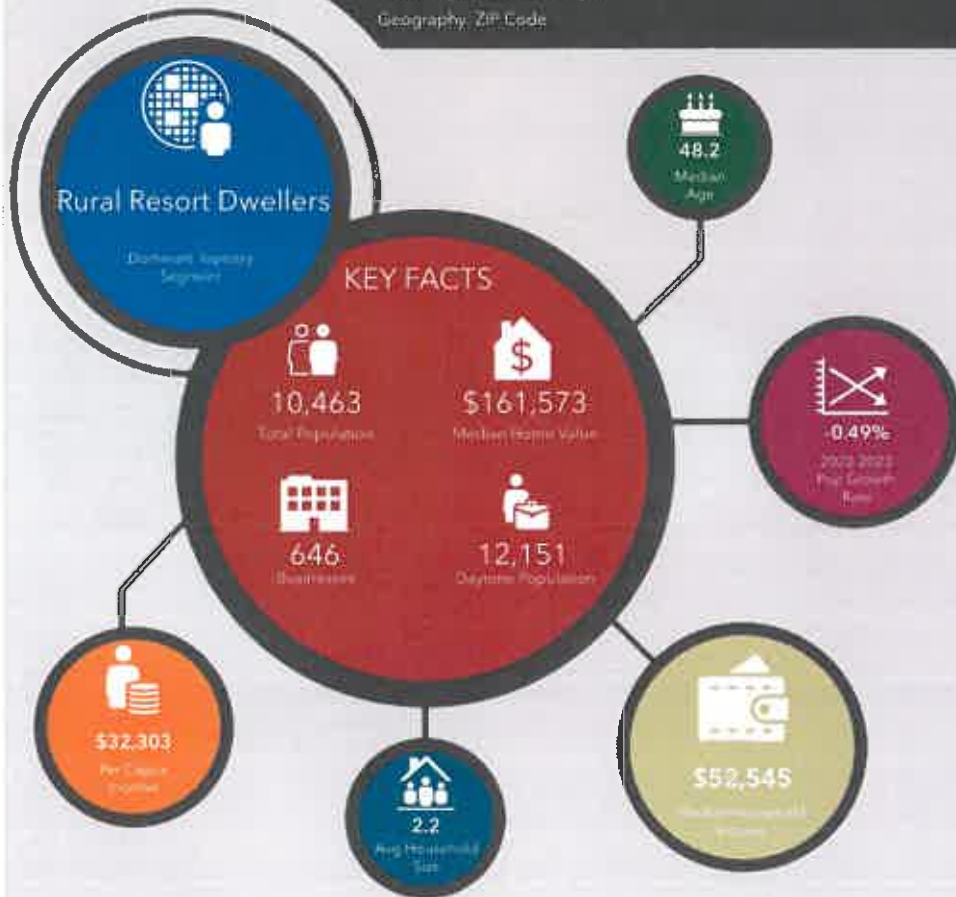
48661 (West Branch)

Geography: ZIP Code

Prepared by Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

48661 (West Branch) 3

Geography: ZIP Code



KEY SPENDING FACTS



Beckett & Raeder

Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2023, 2028), Esri Data Analyst (2023), Esri U.S. BLS (2023)

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Geography: ZIP Code 48661 (West Branch) 3

Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2023, 2028), Esri Data Analyst (2023), Esri U.S. BLS (2023)

2.0 COMMUNITY ECONOMICS

A strong understanding of a community's economic trends and characteristics is key if informed decision making is the goal of economic planning. Because of the singular importance of labor in local economies, this chapter first examines the City of West Branch's population in the context of the East Central Michigan region and the State of Michigan. This chapter then inventories the City's economy, including major industries, employment sectors, and earnings by industry, and examines how these measures have changed over time. Last, this chapter describes the West Branch community's major economic organizations and assets.

DATA SOURCES

Unless otherwise specified, the information in this chapter was retrieved from the following sources, in order of preference.

2000, 2010 and 2020 U.S. Decennial Censuses: This is considered the most accurate source of demographic data in the United States. It measures 100% of the population and offers comparable data points at regular intervals throughout most of the United States' developed history. However, available data is limited to population and housing information, and the ten-year interval between data points means it is rarely "fresh."

American Community Survey. The ACS program replaced the "long form" Census questions beginning in 2000, collecting the same types of detailed information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a rolling basis instead of

once per decade. The statistical validity of the ACS depends on sampling. In communities with populations of 65,000 or more, it is possible to gain a valid sample within twelve months, which the ACS calls a "one-year estimate." For smaller communities, data is collected over 60 months to achieve a valid sample size, called a "five-year estimate." This system shows the statistical tradeoff between the reliability gained by increasing sample size and the currency that is sacrificed in the time it takes to do so. The dataset used for this project was the 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

ESRI Business Analyst. This proprietary software presents privately generated market research data. In addition, it estimates Census and ACS data for geographic configurations other than Census-defined tracts, blocks, and places.

POPULATION

The availability of quality labor remains a fundamental determinant of economic activity in the 21st-century. In some respects, it is becoming increasingly important, as businesses in technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and other growing sectors increasingly rely on skilled and educated workers. More broadly, enhancing residents' welfare is the goal of economic development planning, and so understanding households' unique needs is key. Considering the importance of demographics, this section examines the City of West Branch's population, describes its social attributes and discusses the implications for the economy.

According to the American Community Survey estimates, the City of West Branch had a population of 2,014 people in 2022. The table “Population Change” shows that the City lost population before that year, a pattern similar with its neighbors. West Branch Township each lost about 53 residents, while the population in Ogemaw Township and across Ogemaw County as a whole held approximately constant. Population growth in West Branch also differs from the East Central Michigan region overall, where population loss has depleted the workforce, incentivized firms to relocate, and led to declining tax revenue.¹ The City’s modest decline is likely due to decreased household size and an aging population.

of people living together in a dwelling unit. According to the 2022 American Community Survey estimates, the City had an estimated 978 households in that year. The Census Bureau uses the term “family household” to describe multiple individuals related biologically or through marriage living in a dwelling unit. The table shows that less than half of West Branch households were families with respect to that definition. Further, the percentage of families with children under 18 years old, long the emblem of economic stability in the United States, is smaller (13.0%) compared with the State of Michigan (17.5%), although the share of these households declined across both geographies since 2000.

Across Michigan, young individuals are more frequently choosing not to have children, or to have fewer, which has major implications for local economies. The table “Households and families” shows these patterns in the City of West Branch. The Census Bureau uses the term “household” to describe any grouping

Economic patterns underlie the trend. The loss of manufacturing jobs and resulting wage stagnation, coupled with rising childcare and college costs, has made family formation impractical for young residents that have stayed in Michigan. According to a recent analysis, the State’s 1.7 births per woman has fallen below

TABLE XX: POPULATION CHANGE

GEOGRAPHY	2000	2010	2017	2022	CHANGE 2000 - 2022(%)
CITY OF WEST BRANCH	1,926	2,139	2,288	2,014	+4.56
WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP	2,628	2,593	2,511	2,575	-2.01
OGE MAW TOWNSHIP	1,118	1,223	1,153	1,103	+1.34
ROSE CITY	721	653	647	489	-32.08

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2022

TABLE XX: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	WEST BRANCH		
	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	SHARE OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (%)	SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS COMPARED TO SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN MICHIGAN
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	978		
MARRIED COUPLE FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS	128	13.0%	SMALLER
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS, SOLE FEMALE HOUSEHOLDER WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS	13	1.3%	SMALLER
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.06		SMALLER

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2022

2.1, often considered “replacement rate” fertility, or the number of births needed to sustain a level population.² This has many implications, including declining school enrollment, and an insufficient workforce to support elderly residents. In 2015, the Eastern Michigan Council of Governments reported that many school districts in the region struggled to sustain themselves.³

Meanwhile, the table “Households and Families” shows that the share of economically vulnerable groups in West Branch, including elderly residents over 65 years old living alone, is larger than the share of those households statewide. Sole-person elderly households are vulnerable to health emergencies and often struggle to meet basic needs including nutrition. Support for these individuals is, therefore, an important concern. The table also shows that the share of families with a sole female householder is also larger in the City than in the State. The availability of stable work for female householders presents another concern, considering that

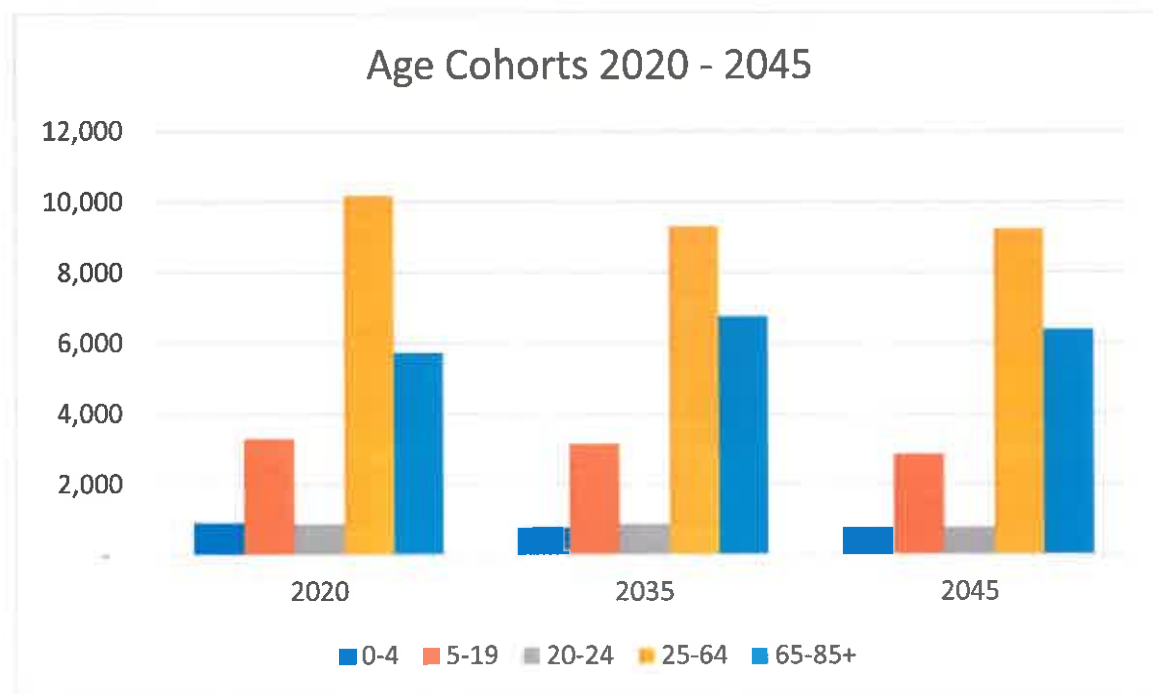
the region’s traditional manufacturing jobs are often held by men.

Age

An aging population, coupled with the loss of young individuals poses an economic challenge throughout Michigan, and the City of West Branch epitomizes this pattern. The graph “Age Cohorts 2020-2045” shows the percentage of County residents in each age range between 2020 and 2045. Overall, the pre-school and young adults cohorts remain fairly stable at 4%. The School K-12 and the Family cohort slightly decreases and the mature adult cohort increase from 27% in 2020 to 32% in 2045.

According to recent census estimates, Michigan sustained a net outmigration of 23,670 residents in 2019 - an increase in that annual figure from the middle of the decade. The median age of those leaving was just under 30 years and more than 45 percent had a college degree.⁴

FIGURE XX: WEST BRANCH AGE COHORTS OVER TIME



Source: Michigan Population Projections by County through 2045, published 09-2019

Not only are these young working years typically the most productive of an individual's career, young workers with specialized training form the linchpin in technology, professional services, healthcare, and similar emerging industries. More broadly, young workers will form the local labor pool over subsequent decades. The loss of these residents in West Branch thus portends economic decline. Further, the growing imbalance between retirees and workers foretells fiscal hardship as social needs rise and the capacity to finance services declines. Retaining and attracting young households will be a key issue in West Branch.

Summary indicators put the community's aging in context. The median age in the City of West Branch was estimated at 43.9 years in 2017, which is a dramatic increase from 34.7 years in 2000. While the City's 2017 median age is high compared with the statewide figure in that year (39.6 years) it is young compared with neighboring West Branch Township (50.6 years), and Ogemaw County as a whole (49.7 years). These numbers suggest that the City may have a younger population compared with its neighbors, which could present an advantage.

Workforce

With the retirement of Michigan's large baby boomer demographic, a shrinking workforce presents a challenge across the

state. The table "Workforce Indicators" shows these striking patterns in the City of West Branch. The "population in labor force" row refers to the number of residents either employed or able to work. This figure has steadily waned in West Branch; the community had a workforce of 963 residents in 2000, which fell to an estimated 637 in 2017. With the City's unemployment rate of 10% in 2017, this meant that fewer than 800 residents were employed in that year. Without viable workers, the local economy will stagnate. These trends further illustrate the central importance of retaining youth to anchor the economy.

Meanwhile, the American Community Survey tracks "disconnected youth," individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 years who are not employed and not enrolled in high school or college. The share of Ogemaw County individuals in this age range classified this way was concerningly high in 2017 (9.4%), although estimates suggest it declined from 11% in 2010.⁵ Youth unemployment could signify continued workforce issues if local government and schools do not act.

Education

In today's economy, workforce education is a central driver of firms' decision to locate geographically. The new "jobs follow people" economic pattern is associated with the needs of firms in technology, advanced manufacturing,

TABLE XX: WORKFORCE INDICATORS

GEOGRAPHY	LABOR FORCE INDICATOR	2000	2010	2017	2022
WEST BRANCH	POPULATION IN LABOR FORCE (%)	64.3	58.6	47.2	38.2
	POPULATION WITH SOCIAL SECURITY INCOME (%)	29.9	39.6	48.8	53.9
	NUMBER OF EMPLOYED RESIDENTS	880	1,004	779	637

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017, U.S. Decennial Census SF1 100% Data 2000, 2010 & 2020

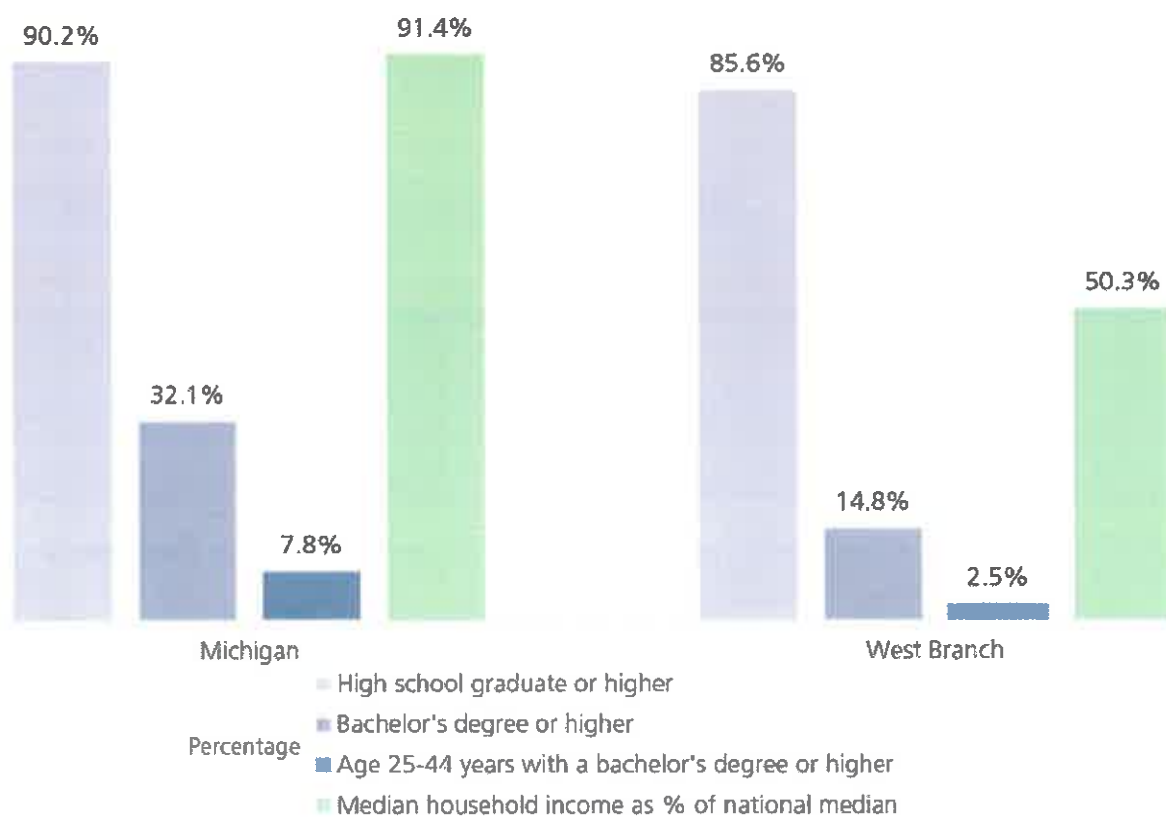
healthcare, and other emerging sectors that are more dependent on workers and specialized talent. This has largely replaced the “people follow jobs” pattern that characterized Michigan’s manufacturing economy of the past, in which firms relied more on physical infrastructure and natural resources. Although both models are simplifications to an extent, the importance of education and training in today’s economic landscape is certain.

That said, low educational attainment among workers is a defining weakness in the East Central Michigan region. The graph “Education, Age, and Income” shows that the City of West Branch exemplifies this pattern.⁶ A large share of the community’s adults, an estimated 330 individuals, did not have a high school diploma in 2017. Meanwhile, only about the same number of adults in the community (338 individuals) had a bachelor’s degree. Correspondingly,

the share of college-educated City residents was less than half the share statewide. Although West Branch has a new extension of Kirtland Community College, the community is in the center of rural Michigan’s “educational desert”, where limited access to postsecondary education inhibits the workforce, lowers economic opportunity, and prevents the growth of new industries.⁷ Partnerships with educational institutions, including Kirtland Community College and the region’s universities present opportunities to promote education.

These trends notwithstanding, a large segment of the West Branch community has skilled trades training. In 2017, about one third (33.8%) of the community’s adults had either “some college, no degree” or an associate’s degree.⁸ This type of technical training is among

FIGURE XX: EDUCATION, AGE, & INCOME



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

the region's strengths, yet employers increasingly report shortages of skilled labor in occupations including electricians, HVAC professionals, and systems engineers. Multiple trends underlie the emerging talent gap; the retirement of the baby boomers with these skills has created job openings, while a lack of interest in trades among young workers leaves positions unfilled.⁹ Inadequate resources for youth to learn about these professions compounds the problem. If workforce shortages continue, the exodus of firms will likely worsen, and so cooperation between employers, schools, and government to promote training will be paramount.

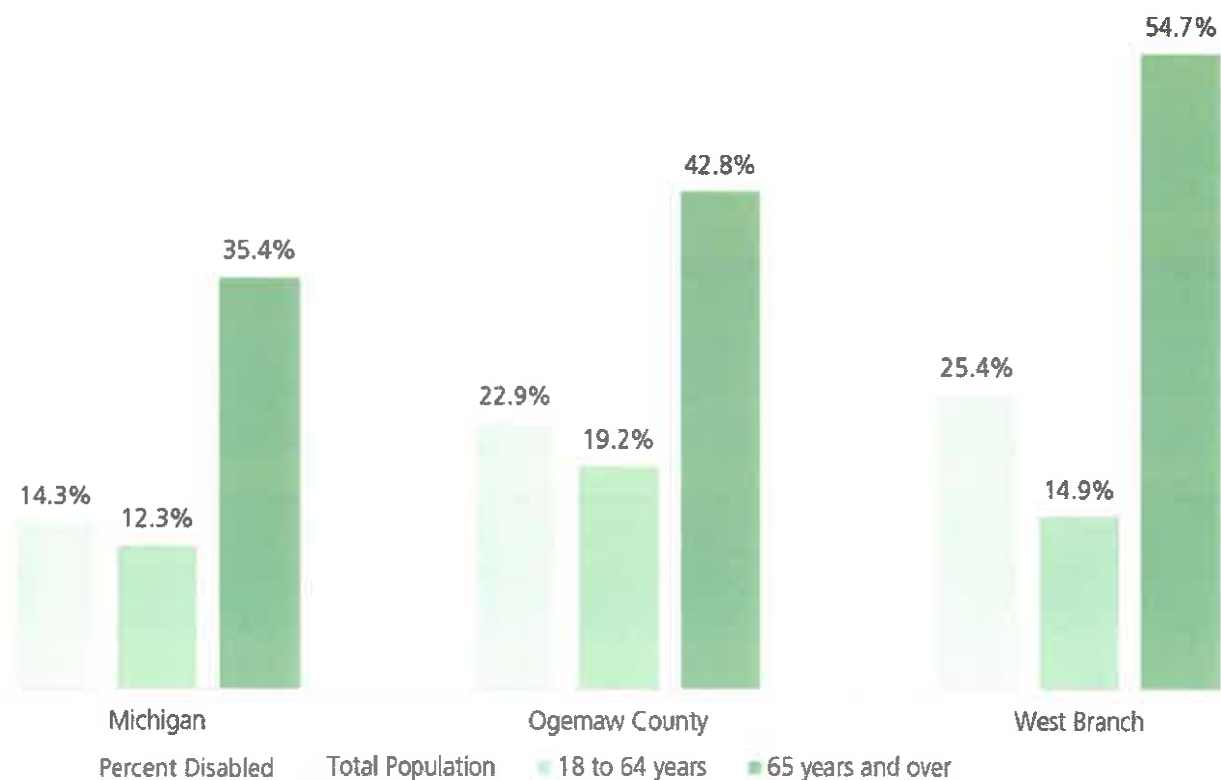
Disabilities

The City of West Branch is in the center of a region some observers have termed Michigan's own "Disability Belt" - a stretch of counties between the state's central

and northern portions where aging adults with health concerns left the workforce en masse during the Great Recession and continue to subsist on disability and social assistance. In many instances, this is because they are unable to find work that is less physically demanding and has low educational requirements.¹⁰ The graph "Disabilities" conveys the percentage of disabled individuals in each age group in the City of West Branch and across aggregate geographies. It shows that disability rates in the City and the County are far higher than those statewide.

In 2017, about one-quarter of West Branch's population, more than 500 individuals, had some form of disability. These conditions are concentrated among older individuals; over half (54.7%) of the community's residents over the age of 65 years had a disability, which equates to nearly 300 people. Elderly residents with these conditions require healthcare, social

FIGURE XX: DISABILITIES



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

support, and specialized services, whether they live independently or not. High disability rates also affect the community's workforce; the share of individuals between the ages of 18 and 64 years with a disability was higher in West Branch and Ogemaw County compared to the state.¹¹

Substance Abuse and Community Health

Drug abuse and poor health also weaken the community's economic potential. Michigan's District Health Department that serves Ogemaw, Oscoda, Iosco, and Alcona Counties administered a survey to residents in 2016 to understand the public health issues facing communities. The survey garnered 475 responses total, 170 of which were residents living in the West Branch zip code.¹² When asked to rank the top three mental health concerns in their community, "Adult drug use and abuse" and "Adult alcohol use and abuse" were the two most common answers; they garnered votes from 58.5% and 47.6% of respondents, respectively.¹³ "Youth Drug Use and Abuse" and "Youth Alcohol Use and Abuse" also earned large shares of responses. Regarding personal health, the department estimated that over one-third of Ogemaw County adults were obese. Poor education and low incomes often underlie substance abuse and poor health, which in turn weaken the workforce, thereby perpetuating the cycle.

LOCAL ECONOMY

If promoting welfare by growing employment is the goal in economic planning, it is key to first understand local economic trends; the industries that comprise community employment, the sectors that are growing and those that are declining, and the local industries that generate wealth by exporting products to other markets. This section inventories the major components of Ogemaw County's economy.

Industries in Ogemaw County

The graph "Industries in Ogemaw County 2006-2016" conveys three key pieces of information regarding the County's

economy. Each bubble represents an industry in the County. The size of the bubble is proportional to the number of jobs in that industry. The graph shows that the retail trade, healthcare and social assistance, accommodation and food services, and wholesale trade sectors were the four largest segments of the economy in 2016. These four industries provided 1,424, 1,086, 813, and 517, jobs respectively. Meanwhile, Ogemaw County had only an estimated 5,268 jobs across all industries in that year, which means that these four sectors combined made up nearly three quarters (72%) of the total economy. Emerging industries in the United States including professional, and technical services, information, finance and real estate, and other producer services comprise only small shares of the County's economy.

The graph's horizontal axis conveys the change in employment in each industry between 2006 and 2016. Industries on the left side of the vertical axis lost jobs in that timeframe, while those on the right gained jobs. The overall leftward position of the bubbles shows the area's economic stagnation. Manufacturing took a major hit across Michigan in those years, however, the industry's decline was pronounced in Ogemaw County; there were an estimated 853 manufacturing employees in 2006, which fell to only 300 a decade later. Meanwhile, healthcare employment, which grew throughout the United States, also declined in Ogemaw County; there were an estimated 1,308 healthcare jobs in 2006, 200 of which were lost over the following decade. The County had an estimated 6,236 jobs across all industries in 2006, which makes the 2016 total of 5,268 jobs a heavy loss of 15%. Wholesale trade was the only local industry to record growth over those years; the County added an estimated 266 jobs in that sector.

The graph's vertical axis conveys the percentage of industry employment in Ogemaw County compared with the percentage of industry employment nationally, a value termed "location quotient". Any number greater than one indicates an industry that exports goods

and services to regional, national, or international markets, hence generating local wealth. These are segments of the economy where additional investment could create value rapidly. The graph shows that Ogemaw County's four largest industries (retail trade, healthcare and social assistance, accommodation and food services, and wholesale trade), had location quotients greater than one. Manufacturing's position below the horizontal axis shows that the sector is less concentrated in the County relative to the nation. While this is true, some segments of "manufacturing" are concentrated locally. Many Ogemaw County manufacturing jobs were in "fabricated metal product manufacturing" (119 jobs), which made the local share of industry employment double the national share. These businesses may export products and thus present an opportunity.

East Central Michigan Target Industries

Higher Education + Research

Professional Services

Healthcare

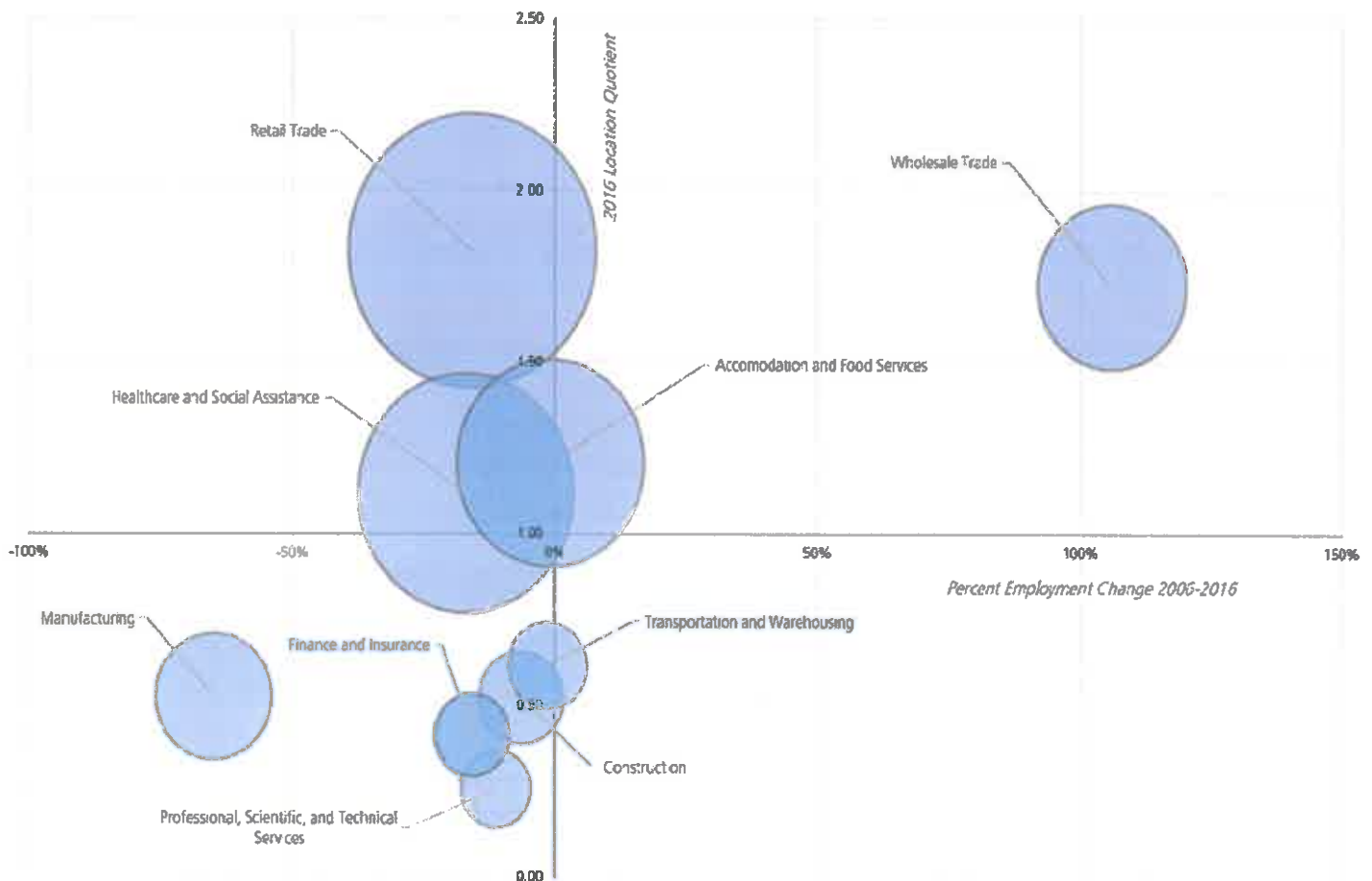
Advanced Manufacturing

Value-added Agriculture

Regional Target Industries

In 2014, the East Central Michigan region's planning organization published a report titled "Regional Prosperity Strategy", which defined five target industries that are positioned for growth. These sectors are higher education and

FIGURE XX: INDUSTRIES IN OGEMAW COUNTY 2006 - 2016



Source: American Fact Finder - County Business Patterns

research, professional services, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and value-added agriculture.¹⁴ Firms in these sectors are either concentrated locally or could be enticed to the area by leveraging its existing assets, including underused transportation infrastructure and robust higher educational institutions. The table “Ogemaw County Employers” shows that businesses in several target sectors are present in the County. MidMichigan Health, which has a staff of approximately 350 employees, is in the City, as well as diverse manufacturers in steel fabrication, tool production, and machining.¹⁵ The City should seek to understand and anticipate these firms’ needs, including workforce, infrastructure, and facilities, and align its service provision, strategic partnerships, and zoning accordingly.

Earnings

The low wages offered by Ogemaw County employers cause skilled workers with mobility to seek jobs in other regions. The table “Median Annual Earnings by Industry” compares the median annual earnings between County and State of Michigan workers and shows that wages among County workers are lower in all but two major sectors. Earnings among Ogemaw County residents working in healthcare and social assistance were

substantially lower (-6%) than residents employed statewide in that sector. This is an industry where incomes range widely depending on the position; consider the earnings of a doctor versus a nurse’s assistant for instance. Because accurate estimates of these different healthcare jobs in the County and State are not readily available, the wage comparisons between the two may not be entirely commensurable. That notwithstanding, low pay offered locally could stymie employers’ ability to fill positions, even in healthcare, where demand for services will remain steady because of an older population. In 2014, stakeholders throughout the East Central Michigan region reported difficulty recruiting talent for professional jobs, especially from outside the midwest.¹⁶

The “Median Annual Earnings by Industry” table also reveals concerning low pay in Ogemaw County’s service sector occupations. The annual median income among the many residents employed in retail was an estimated \$20,400 while it was estimated at only \$13,600 among workers in arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation. By comparison, the median monthly rent for housing in Ogemaw County was \$664 in 2017, which makes the rent figure 39% and 58% of the monthly incomes in

TABLE XX: OGEMAW COUNTY EMPLOYERS

EMPLOYER NAME	LOCATION	TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT
MIDMICHIGAN MEDICAL CENTER WEST BRANCH	WEST BRANCH	ACUTE CARE FACILITY
SANDVIK HYPERION	WEST BRANCH	METAL CUTTING & MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY
AMERICAN THERMOFORMING MACHINERY	WEST BRANCH	STEEL FABRICATION
SUPERIOR MACHINING SERVICES LLC	WEST BRANCH	MACHINING & FABRICATION
LAHTI FABRICATION INC.	WEST BRANCH	METAL FABRICATION, MACHINING, WELDING
VANTAGE POINT MANUFACTURING	WEST BRANCH	MACHINING
WEST BRANCH-ROSE CITY AREA SCHOOLS	WEST BRANCH	K-12 EDUCATION
ATF	ROSE CITY	MACHINING
AMERICAN PLASTIC TOYS	ROSE CITY	TOY MANUFACTURER
TAYLOR ENTRANCE SYSTEMS	WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP	DOORS AND ENTRANCE SYSTEMS

Source: Ogemaw County Economic Development Strategy and Google Maps

those two industries, respectively. Both industries are associated with tourism and recreation, and so West Branch will need to plan for affordable amenities if it seeks to grow these segments of the economy.

CITY OF WEST BRANCH ECONOMY

Commuting

The United States Census Bureau hosts an online application called “On the Map” that sources publicly available data to estimate workers’ commuting between different geographies. The tool shows that West Branch is a “job center” within Ogemaw County. According to the application, an estimated 1,630 workers were employed in the City in 2021, 1,487 of whom resided outside the community’s boundary. Meanwhile, the application shows that 553 West Branch residents leave the City daily to get to their job. The difference between the number of workers traveling into the City and residents

traveling out is 934, which means that the City’s daytime population grows by about that many individuals.¹⁷ Resultingly, the community’s daytime population increases by about half (40%) of it’s full-time residential population. This work-related population increase work could perhaps be leveraged to support more business if workers could be enticed to spend time and money at businesses near their place of employment.

Industries in the City

The graph “City of West Branch Resident Employment” shows the City’s industries ordered by the total number residents employed in descending fashion from right to left. The top segment of each bar represents the estimated residents employed part-time or seasonally in each industry, while the bottom segment conveys the number of residents employed full-time and year-round. The labels are the raw number of residents in each

TABLE XX: EARNINGS BY INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY	MICHIGAN (\$)	OGEMAW COUNTY (\$)	DIFFERENCE (%)
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING AND HUNTING, AND MINING	26,546	25,875	-3
CONSTRUCTION	38,356	33,188	-14
MANUFACTURING	47,872	35,806	-25
WHOLESALE TRADE	42,215	31,397	-26
RETAIL TRADE	20,127	20,403	1
TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING, AND UTILITIES	44,650	37,419	-16
INFORMATION	40,398	32,917	-19
FINANCE AND INSURANCE, AND REAL ESTATE AND RENTAL AND LEASING	42,331	32,083	-24
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND MANAGEMENT, AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES	37,107	23,860	-36
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	36,532	26,964	-26
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	32,072	30,142	-6
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION, AND ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	12,584	13,696	9
OTHER SERVICES, EXCEPT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	22,573	15,625	-31
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	52,016	30,568	-41
MEDIAN ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES	33,371	26,734	-20

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

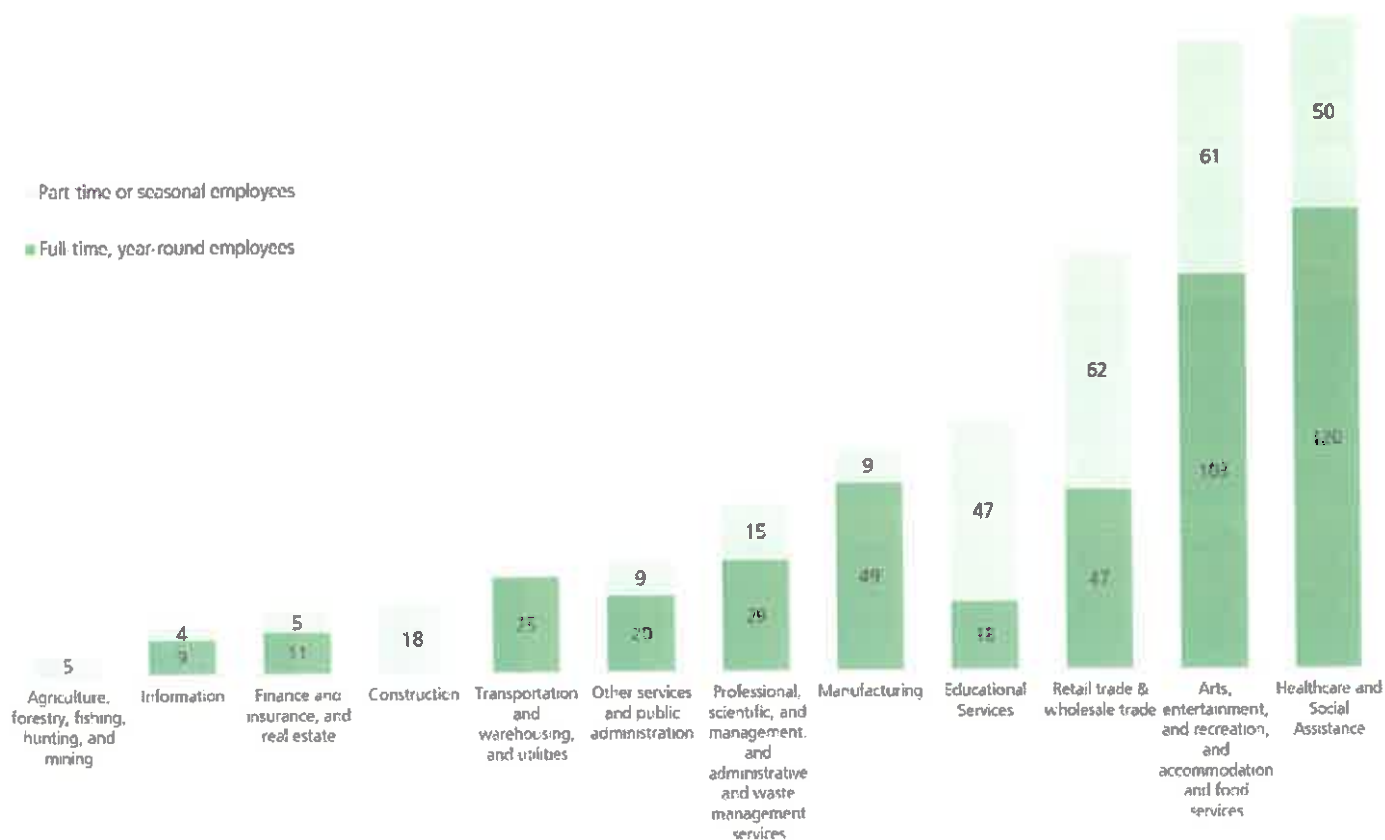
segment of the bar. In 2017, a total of 779 West Branch residents were employed. The graph shows that the largest shares of residents were employed in the sectors of healthcare and social assistance, arts, entertainment, and recreation and accommodation and food services, retail trade, and wholesale trade. Together, these four industries comprised over half (56%) of the community's employment. The table "Earnings by Industry" shows that healthcare and social assistance and educational services offered some of the higher local wages, while service sector jobs yielded low pay.

A lack of stable, year-round employment is a major weakness in central and northern Michigan, and the graph "City of West Branch Resident Employment" shows this pattern in the community. Well over one third (39.8%) of employed residents had part-time or seasonal jobs in 2017.

Part-time or seasonal employment is concentrated in the service occupations of arts, entertainment, and recreation, accommodation and food services and retail. Intermittent work weakens local economies by causing seasonal declines in economic activity, making credit difficult to obtain, and because many jobs don't provide benefits. In 2017, nearly one-fifth (19.5%) of employed West Branch residents had no healthcare coverage, which was much higher than the proportion statewide (9.3%).¹⁸

The graph "Ogemaw County Unemployment" shows monthly unemployment in the County since the Great Recession and adds more detail the picture of the community's seasonal economy. The County's unemployment grows substantially in the winter months and declines in the summer; the percentage of unemployed workers is

FIGURE XX: CITY OF WEST BRANCH RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

typically between two and six percent higher in January than in September. The pattern differs from the State of Michigan overall, where employment fluctuates far less seasonally. Although Ogemaw County's unemployment rate generally declined throughout these years, it stood at 4.7% in September 2018; slightly higher than the statewide rate of 3.9% in that month.

Income and Poverty

Household incomes in West Branch are modest relative to the State of Michigan overall. ACS data suggests that the City's median annual household income was \$29,010 in 2017, which was about half the figure statewide (\$52,668) in that year. A major segment of the community (43% of households) has very low incomes of less than \$25,000 annually, while approximately another third (33.6%) has annual incomes of between \$25,000 and \$49,999. These low-income households are vulnerable to economic downturn and personal emergencies and likely correspond with the community's retirees and service-sector workers. Meanwhile, a relatively small portion

of households (16.5%) had moderate annual incomes between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and only a small share (6.6%) had incomes of over \$100,000 annually. These moderate-income households are likely the community's healthcare and manufacturing workers.

With West Branch's low incomes, poverty is a persistent economic challenge. The United States Census Bureau determines poverty status for households by comparing their annual incomes with the number of individuals in the household. Approximately 630 West Branch individuals, more than one-quarter of the community, were in poverty status in 2017. The graph "Poverty" shows that the City's share of impoverished residents was far higher than the share statewide in that year. Further, the community's poverty is concentrated among youth; nearly half of residents under 18 years old, about 240 individuals, were in poverty status. Resultingly, over one-third (38%) of impoverished West Branch residents were under 18 years old. The community also has a relatively large share of households characterized by a single female householder with children under 18 years

FIGURE XX: OGEMAW COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Saint Louis

old (estimated 94) and over half of these households were in poverty.

United Way organizations in Michigan also track ALICE households (asset limited, income constrained, employed), which are those with incomes above poverty, but who struggle with basic needs including childcare, healthcare, and nutrition and often have no savings or long-term assets. The share of ALICE households has risen statewide since the Great Recession, as wage growth has not kept pace with the rising costs of nutrition, childcare, education, and other consumer goods. According to 2015 data, financially vulnerable households in either poverty or ALICE status made up an estimated 61% of West Branch's total in that year.¹⁹

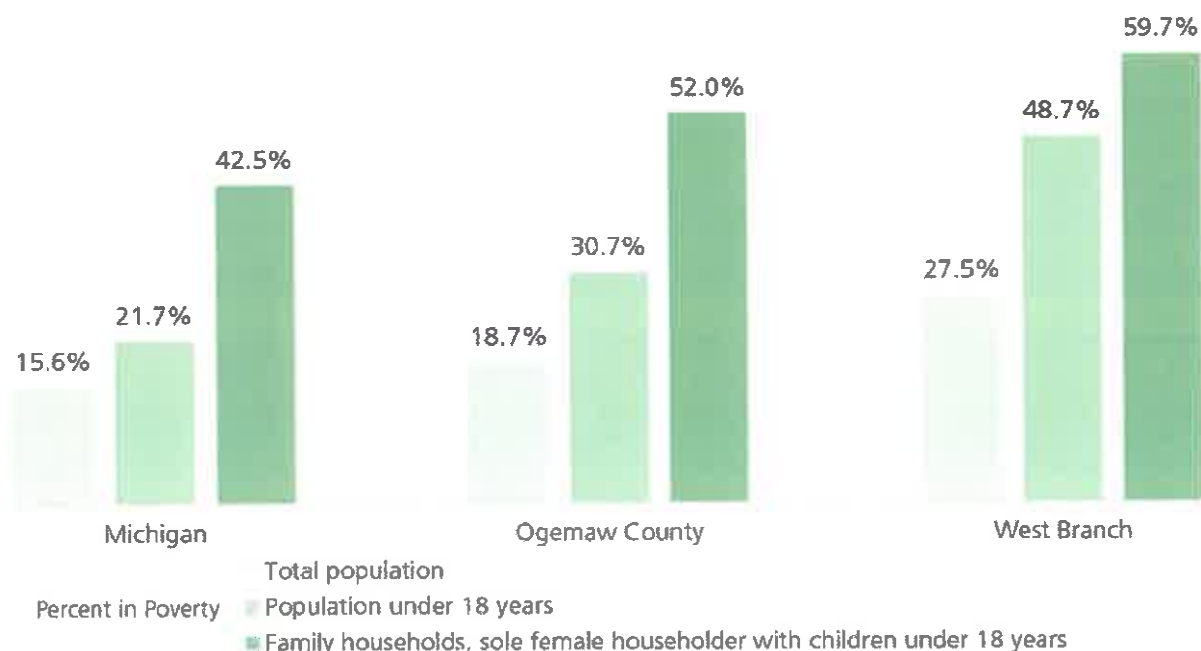
Retail Markets

The Environmental Systems Research Institute's (ESRI) proprietary software estimates the number and type of commercial establishments by geography. The table "Commercial Establishments" shows these figures in the City of West Branch and in West Branch Township, which encompasses two miles of Cook

Road, the area's major freeway exit, between I-75 and the City. The interstate has an estimated daily traffic count of nearly 10,000 vehicles and so businesses in the City and Township have the potential to attract patronage from long-distance traffic in addition to residents' spending.²⁰ ESRI's software also estimates the gap between local supply and demand across retail markets, which is shown for the City in the graph "City of West Branch Annual Surplus and Leakage." Surplus markets are those in which community businesses garner annual sales in excess of residents' spending on the corresponding products. Conversely, "leakage" markets are those wherein residents' annual spending on a particular product market exceeds City businesses' sales of those products.

The table "Commercial Establishments" shows that the City of West Branch had fewer businesses overall than West Branch Township; 51 establishments compared with 71, respectively. Businesses in the City tilt heavily toward low-end service and retail establishments. "miscellaneous retailers", including florists, discount retail, and used merchandise stores, was the single largest commercial segment in the

FIGURE XX: POVERTY



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

community; about one quarter (25.4%) of establishments were in this category. Likewise, "general merchandise stores", which includes variety and dollar stores, also comprised another substantial share (7.8%) of City businesses. Both segments were among the highest-grossing surplus commercial markets in the community; City businesses accumulated over \$5 million and nearly \$15 million in sales in excess of community residents' spending in those two markets, respectively.

These figures suggest that discount retail, superstores, and variety stores hold a prominent position in West Branch's commercial tapestry. While affordable retail certainly has an important role in a community of modest incomes, an abundance of these stores presents drawbacks. Namely, national chain retailers leverage scale economies in logistics and supply chains that enable them lower prices and divert spending that might otherwise occur at local businesses. Further, these chains often construct low-quality and impermanent structures that could impair land values in the long run. If

promoting small business is a goal in West Branch, the community could consider zoning provisions to limit these businesses. Limiting permissible building footprints or allowable building setbacks, or mandating architectural quality could discourage large-scale chains and ensure that new construction enhances the community.

Nearly one-fifth of the City of West Branch's establishments, a total of ten businesses, were "health & personal care stores". This retail segment has increased over the years as the number of chain pharmacies has grown and the share of local businesses has fallen. Stores in this category accrued an estimated \$7.5 million in excess of local spending and signify another surplus market. Automotive-related establishments including "motor vehicle parts dealers" and "gasoline stations" comprised another 10% of West Branch businesses. Abundant automotive businesses are common in northern Michigan business districts, however their inappropriate siting can cause harm. Specifically, these establishments can segment otherwise inviting pedestrian

TABLE XX: COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

RETAIL MARKET	WEST BRANCH CITY ESTABLISHMENTS		WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP ESTABLISHMENTS	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
MOTOR VEHICLE & PARTS DEALERS	2	3.9	5	7
FURNITURE & HOME FURNISHINGS STORES	2	3.9	1	1.4
ELECTRONICS AND APPLIANCE STORES	1	1.9	4	5.6
BUILDING MATERIALS, GARDEN EQUIPMENT, & SUPPLY STORES	3	5.8	5	7
FOOD & BEVERAGE STORES	2	3.9	9	12.6
HEALTH & PERSONAL CARES STORES	10	19.6	3	4.2
GASOLINE STATIONS	3	5.8	3	4.2
CLOTHING & CLOTHES ACCESSORIES STORES	2	3.9	8	11.2
SPORTING GOODS, HOBBY, BOOK & MUSIC STORES	1	1.9	0	0.0
GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	4	7.8	3	4.2
MISCELLANEOUS STORE RETAILERS	13	25.4	9	12.6
NONSTORE RETAILERS	0	0.0	2	2.8
FOOD SERVICES & DRINKING PLACES	8	15.6	19	26.7
TOTAL	51	100.0	71	100.0

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

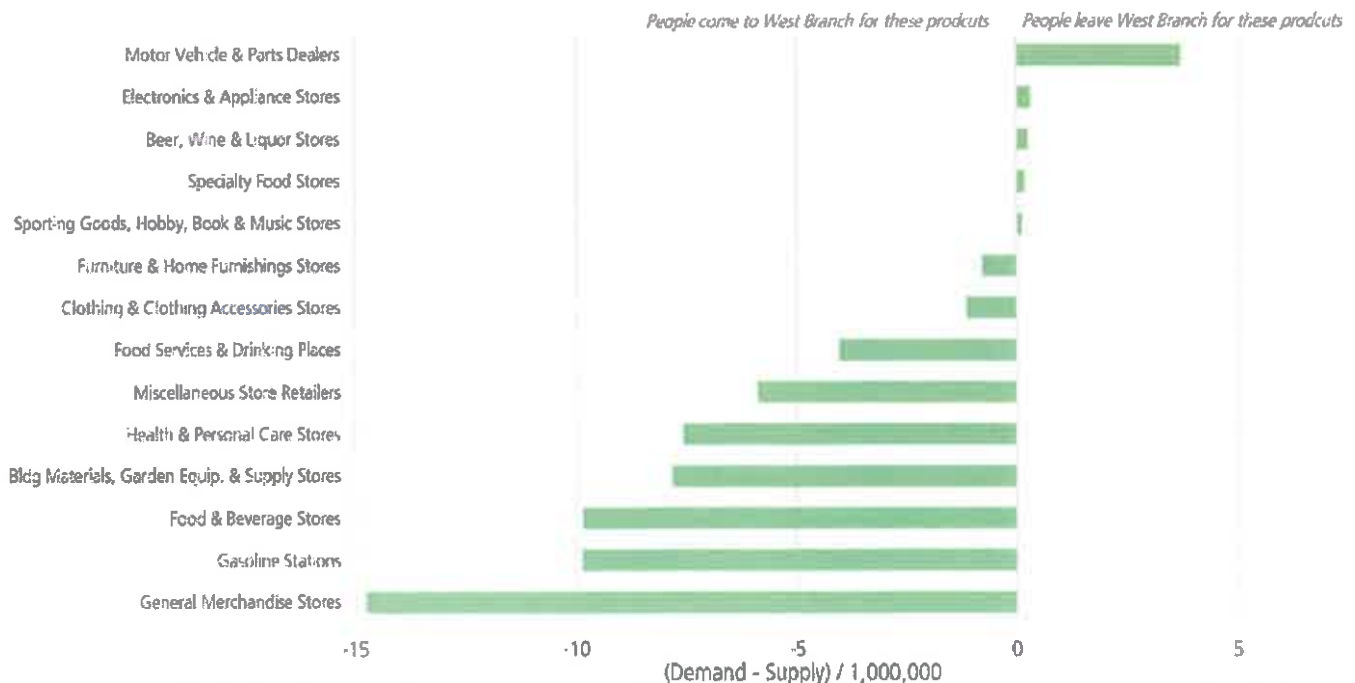
environments and degrade the density of commercial districts designed for entertainment, food service, and retail uses. The City could consider limiting automotive accessory establishments in its Central Business District zoning, which encompasses downtown properties.

Meanwhile, specialized retail traditionally located in downtowns, including “clothing stores,” “home furnishings stores,” and “sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores,” comprised a small share (5%) of City of West Branch businesses. Further, the latter of these two markets were among the community’s leakage markets wherein residents spent more annually than local businesses earned. This is perhaps symptomatic of the community’s declining shopping and retail scene. If promoting a vibrant business district is a goal, some actions are under the City’s control; the physical environment and construction of buildings along Houghton Avenue for instance. The City of West Branch should codify design standards for

buildings, deploy wayfinding signage, and enhance its streets to promote an inviting pedestrian environment. These actions could enhance the district’s desirability as a “place” to visit.

The City of West Branch has a modest number of restaurants; an estimated eight businesses were categorized as “food services and drinking places.” This number has increased as new craft beverage and food establishments opened downtown preceding 2020. Restaurants are also among the City’s surplus commercial markets; these businesses earned over \$4 million in annual sales in excess of residents’ spending, which suggests that existing businesses are relatively prosperous. That notwithstanding, West Branch Township has over twice as many food service and drinking establishments as the City. Correspondingly, the Township’s surplus in that market (over \$11 million) was over twice that of the City’s. The City and local economic organizations could work to promote food service businesses to residents and

FIGURE XX: CITY OF WEST BRANCH ANNUAL SURPLUS AND LEAKAGE



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

nonresidents alike, as long-distance traffic comprises the car travel on I-75.

Broadband

Internet connectivity allows modern businesses to operate efficiently and is an increasingly important quality of life factor. That said, high-speed internet is limited in some areas of northern Michigan, and in places where it is available, slow adoption and lack of knowledge among residents impedes use. In 2017, 62.9% of the 1,084 households in West Branch had a broadband subscription, which was lower than the share of households statewide (76.3%) in that year. The website “Broadband Now” indicates that three to four providers deliver cable or DSL broadband service in the City of West Branch. Meanwhile, three providers, including Spectrum and AT&T, offer residential and commercial service at maximum speeds of over 25 megabits per second in the West Branch zip code, which is often considered a benchmark for adequate service.²¹

Despite having adequate baseline service, barriers inhibit broadband adoption and use. In 2014, Ogemaw County partnered with the State of Michigan to complete a technology action plan, which assessed access to broadband throughout the County. The study defined insufficient speeds and competitor variety and a lack of public computers as barriers to broadband use, particularly for low-income households.²² The plan defined strategies for communities to improve broadband access, including the expansion of wireless hotspots to improve mobile broadband availability, and the establishment of a “Community Technology Academy” to expand public computers. The City of West Branch should review the strategies in the technology plan, and partner with organizations to implement them.

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

The City of West Branch has a variety of resources and organizations that support the community’s economy. This section inventories these resources, including educational and workforce development entities, business support resources, and

tax incentive programs.

Kirtland Community College

Kirtland Community College has campuses in Roscommon and Grayling approximately 40 miles northwest of the City of West Branch and is the major postsecondary educational resource in the area. The college offers a variety of associates degree programs and technical certifications in automotive technologies, computer information systems, health sciences including nursing, and industrial technologies including welding, fabricating, and HVAC.²³ The college also offers four-year degree transfer programs. Its in-district tuition rates are some of the lowest in the state.

Ogemaw County Economic Development Corporation and Michigan Works!

The Ogemaw County Economic Development Corporation supports the local economy by linking municipalities and businesses, assisting firms with site selection, and functioning as a clearinghouse of information. The organization operates under a board of directors appointed by the Ogemaw County Board of Commissioners and employs a full-time business director. This professional role is the result of a partnership with the Michigan Works! Office in West Branch, which improves the workforce by connecting job seekers and employers.

Municipal Tax Incentives

The City of West Branch is authorized under Michigan’s public act 198 of 1974 to offer property tax abatements to industrial firms seeking to locate in the City. The municipality grants incentives at the discretion of City Council to encourage business growth, retention, and attraction, and to increase the availability of local jobs.²⁴ Supporting and expanding the City’s tax incentives for industrial expansion was established as a community priority in the City’s 2019 master plan.²⁵

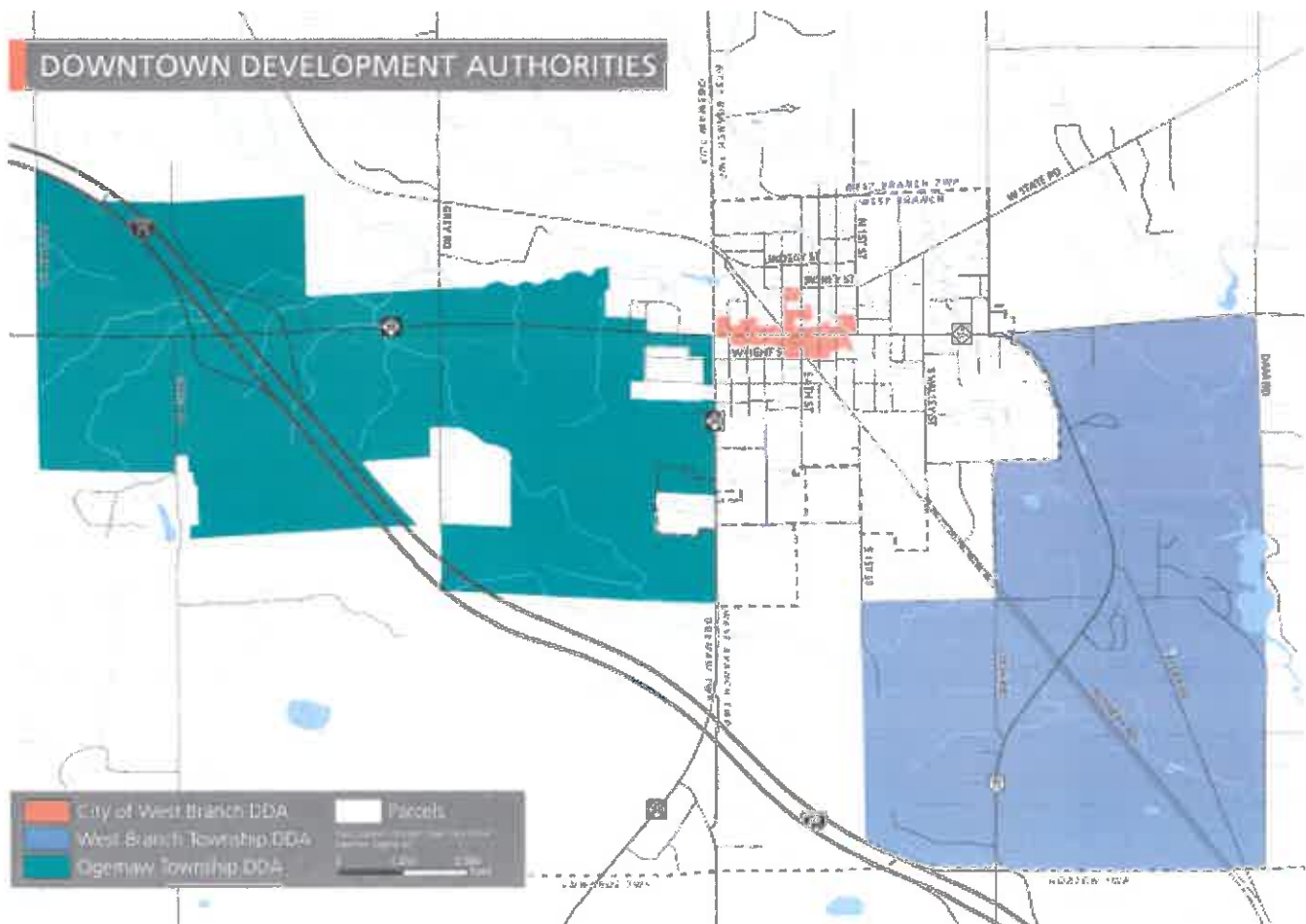
West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce

The West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit membership-based organization with the purpose to attract, retain, and promote business in the West Branch area. The organization provides resource sharing and promotional opportunities for local businesses and hosts networking events including “business after hours” and “chamber connections.”²⁶

Downtown Development Authorities

The City of West Branch and West Branch and Ogemaw Townships each have separate downtown development authorities (DDAs). The map “downtown development authorities” shows the geographic extent of each one, while individual DDA maps for each community show each on a refined geographic scale. The City of West Branch DDA extends for approximately a half-mile along seven blocks M-55 in the community’s downtown. The West Branch Township DDA district encompasses land around

MAP XX: DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES



the I-75 business route, and the Ogemaw Township DDA is along M-55 east of the City. Each organization is a volunteer board with the purpose to promote commerce through beautification, historic preservation, and economic development initiatives. The DDAs undertake tax increment financing, wherein they capture future increases in property tax revenue from properties in their districts to finance these projects. The City of West Branch DDA has created a new Downtown Victorian Park prior to 2020 and manages

the district's lighting, flowers, street seating, and other streetscape elements.²⁷

Tax Revenue Potential

An important aspect of the community's fiscal health is understanding where tax revenue is generated and which properties contribute the most to tax revenue. This information is shown in West Branch in the map "Tax Revenue Generating Power Per Acre". The color of each City property conveys the dollar amount of tax revenue it generates per unit area.

MAP XX: CITY OF WEST BRANCH DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

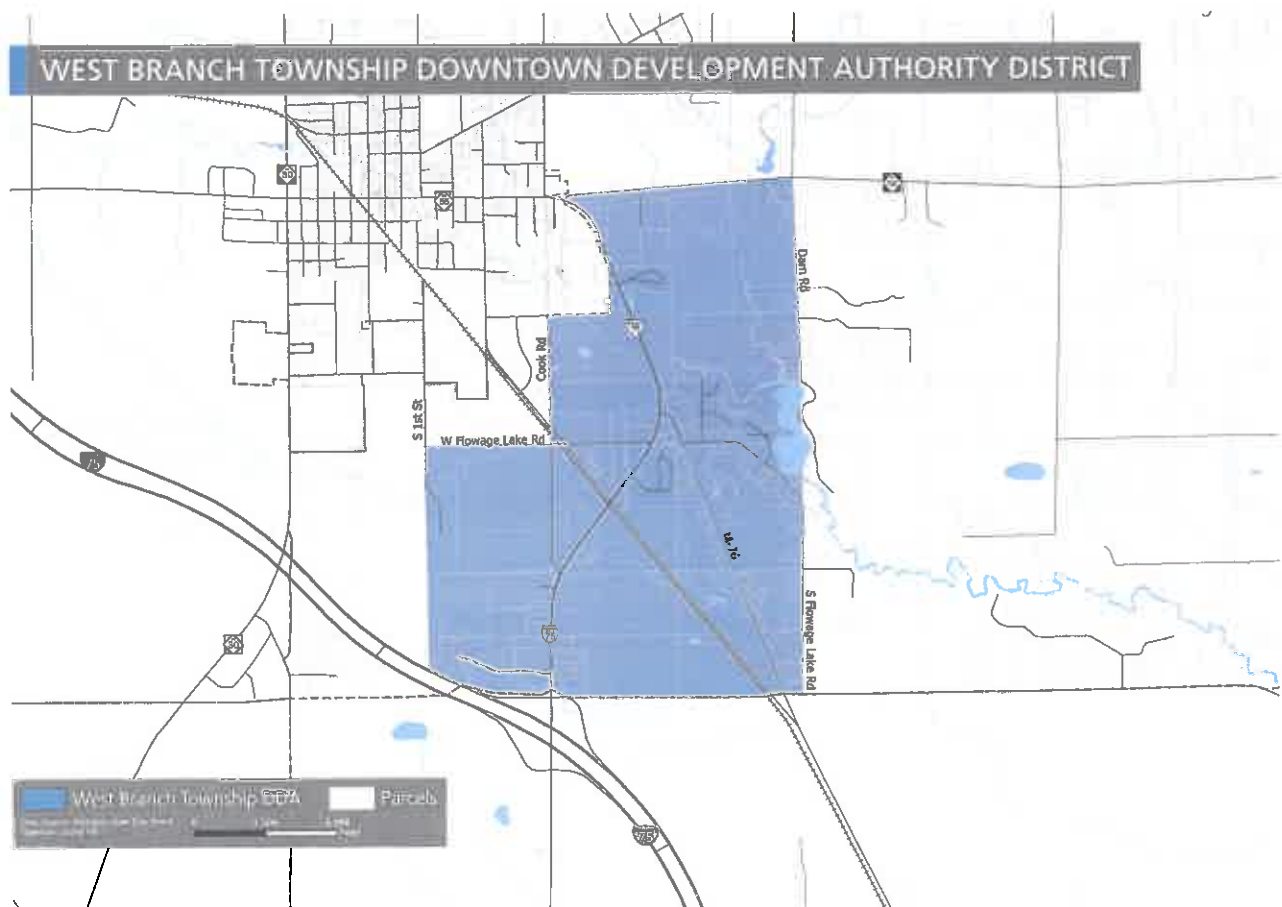


This value is determined by dividing the taxable value of each property by its acreage. Properties in blue generate greater average tax revenue per acre, relative to the average City property, while those in orange generate less tax revenue per acre. High tax revenue generating areas include the commercial properties in the City's southeast, most of which fall under the City's "General Business District" zoning. This zoning designation permits regional-serving retail and service uses and promotes automobile access to properties along major roadways.²⁸ The City's downtown commercial lots along M-55 are also high tax revenue generating per acre. This area has small

lots, which makes their value per unit of land particularly high. Many of these properties are under the City's "Central Business District" zoning, which allows for a variety of commercial service and retail uses and promotes pedestrian access to structures.²⁹ Most of these downtown properties also within the City's DDA district, which means the organization can collect increases in tax revenue. Several industrial properties in the City's south are also high tax revenue generating.

The table "State Equalized Value in West Branch" shows the equalized value of City of West Branch properties following the Great Recession between 2012 and 2015, the year most recent assessment data is available. State equalized value refers to

MAP XX: WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



the value of properties as calculated by local governments for tax assessments, which equals 50% of their true market value, as mandated by Michigan law. The table's bottom row is the equalized value across all property types, regardless of use, and shows that overall value of City property rose tepidly by \$135,700 (less than 1% increase) between these years. This overall value increase came exclusively from the City's commercial properties; the equalized value of parcels in this category grew by over \$2 million in that timeframe, a change of 7.5%. Meanwhile, the value of industrial property declined slightly (less than 1% decrease), and residential property lost value most rapidly (8.5%

decrease). This pattern contrasts with those across the State of Michigan overall, where residential property values generally rebounded following the recession.

TABLE XX: STATE EQUALIZED VALUE IN WEST BRANCH

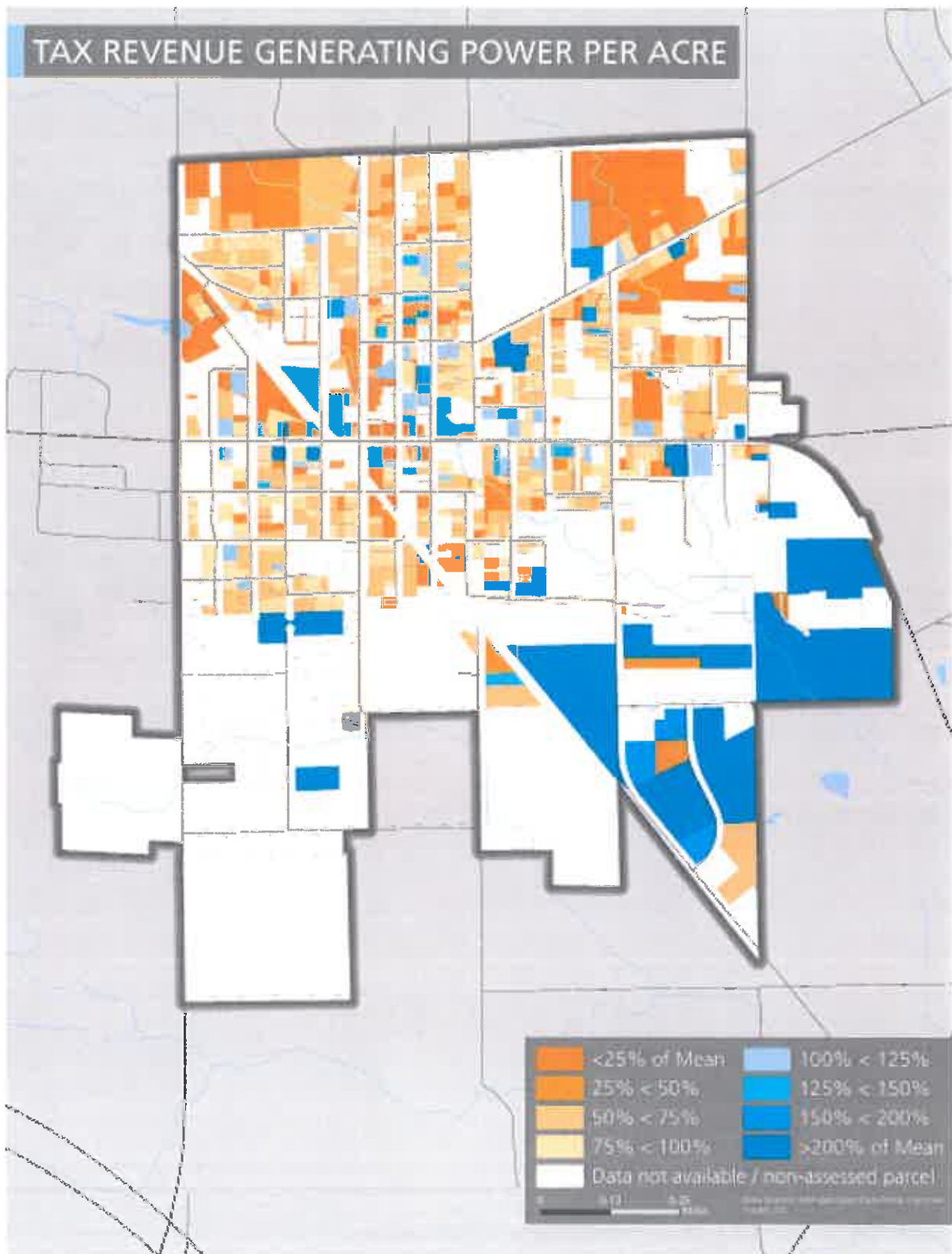
REAL PROPERTY TYPE	STATE EQUALIZED VALUE (\$)	
	2012	2015
COMMERCIAL	32,024,500	34,461,500
INDUSTRIAL	2,811,100	2,789,700
RESIDENTIAL	26,828,400	24,548,500
TOTAL REAL PROPERTY	61,664,000	61,799,700

Source: Ogemaw County Equalization

MAP XX: OGEMAW TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



MAP XX: TAX REVENUE GENERATING POWER PER ACRE



CHILDCARE

Recent increases in the cost of childcare has increasingly pervasive economic impacts. In 2018, the average annual costs of center-based care in Michigan were estimated at \$10,281 for an infant, while the costs were around \$17,561 for two children.³⁰ By comparison, these two figures would swallow 20% and 36% of the State's median annual household income (\$52,668), respectively. One result is that young residents are waiting longer to start families, or are having fewer children when they do, which contributes to population loss. Another is that low-income households, many of whom work busy work schedules and often need childcare services most, are unable to access them. In 2019, the director of Lansing facility reported that weak public subsidy programs often don't cover the costs for modest-income families and that many have ceased enrollment in the program as a result.³¹ Inadequate childcare services also affect employers. The executive of a Ludington area company recounted that a lack of available childcare for employees' families limited their work schedules.

Relatedly, parts of the state struggle with baseline availability of childcare services. A 2018 study by the Center For American Progress defined "childcare deserts" across the United States - areas with few licensed child care providers relative to the number of children under 5 years old. Although the West Branch census tract does not qualify as a desert, it still has a shortage of facilities; there were eight licensed childcare providers, which amounted to a capacity of 112, while there were an estimated 269 residents under the age of five years in the same geography.³² Rural areas are some of the most underserved; three in five rural communities in the United States lacked childcare in 2019.

Childcare Survey

The City of West Branch administered a survey to area residents in 2019 to assess access to childcare services and understand households' needs. The survey was designed as a 28-question form

and was available online through the website SurveyMonkey, which allowed respondents to submit candid answers on their own schedules. The survey garnered a total of 275 responses from area residents. Most of the respondents (72.3%) had children under the age of 12 years or were and expecting children, and these respondents answered questions regarding the quality and availability of local childcare services.

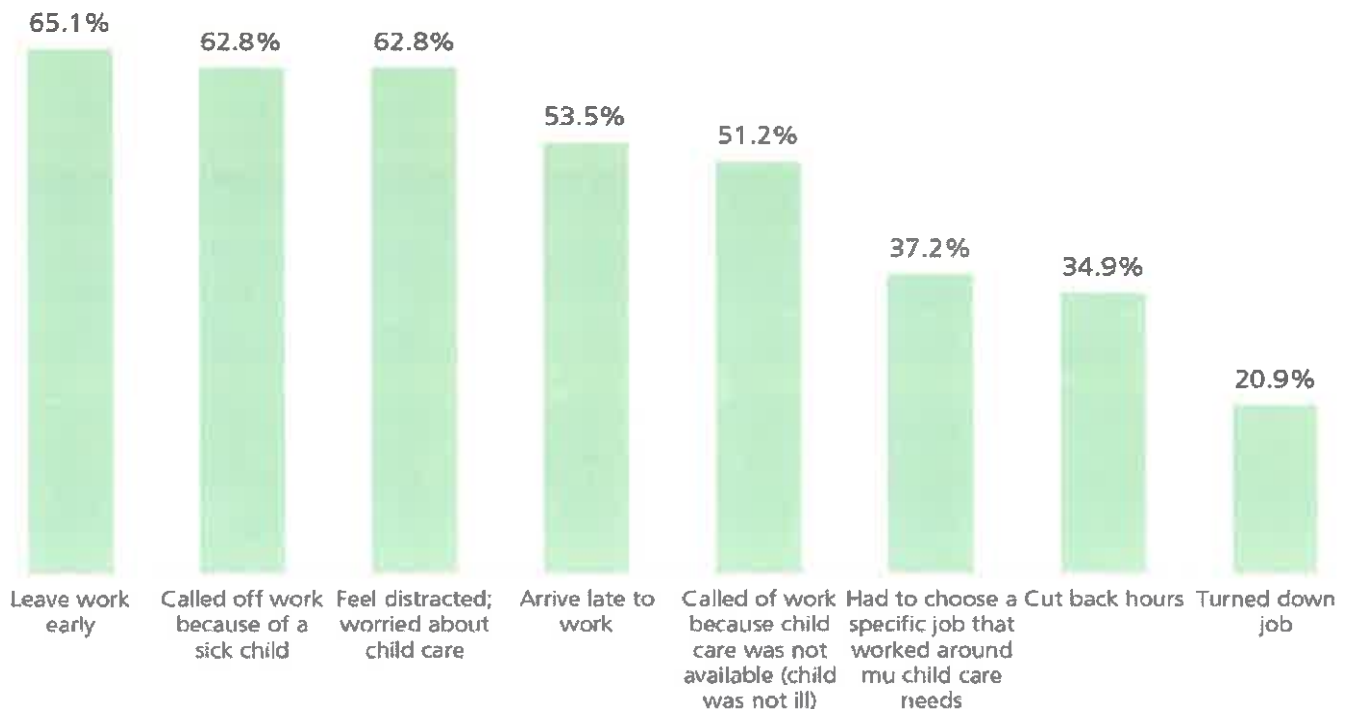
Several questions asked how households currently use childcare services. 77% of respondents with children under 12 years, or expecting children, used childcare services. Moreover, among the 167 respondents that answered the question "How many days a week do you normally use childcare?" more than three quarters (76.4%) indicated three days per week or more, while over half (52.7%) indicated five days per week or more. When asked how many hours each day they use childcare, a large share (62.8%) indicated eight or more hours a day, while the vast majority (85.5%) indicated four hours or more a day. The survey also asked the type of childcare that respondents most often use. "Relative" was the single most common response; it garnered 40.8% of the total. Using family for childcare often eases the financial burden, which makes it a common strategy. Responses indicating professional facilities such as "Licensed child care center" or "Licensed childcare family home or group home" also garnered a nearly equally large share (39%) of responses to the question.

Many respondents indicated some dissatisfaction with their childcare services, while others reported that inadequate service causes financial challenges. When asked "Are you satisfied with your current childcare?" nearly one third (31.45%) indicated "No", while the remaining 68.5% replied "yes." When asked to indicate the reasons for dissatisfaction 136 respondents replied to the question. "Hours and days available" was the most frequent answer, garnering votes from 32.3% of respondents, while "Cost" was also frequently selected, earning votes from over one quarter (26.47%) of respondents. Survey takers recounted that

complications with childcare also affected their job performance, as shown in figure XX. The question allowed respondents to select all the answers that they had done. The responses show that inadequate childcare affects the availability of workers and work performance. Other questions show that cost is a major issue; over half of the respondents reported spending \$100 per week or more on childcare. This would amount to \$4,800 annually if a household used childcare for an entire year. That annual expense would, in turn, be 16% of the median annual household income in West Branch.

The results of the 2019 childcare survey show that the City of West Branch should work with local partners to expand childcare services in the community. Lowering cost and widening the service hours could decrease the economic burden for households and increase the workforce's availability. Further, adequate childcare services could enhance the community's appeal for new households.

FIGURE XX: HAVE YOU NEEDED TO TAKE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS DUE TO THE UNAVAILAILAVILITY OR COMPLICATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD CARE IN WEST BRANCH?



Source: 2019 West Branch Childcare Survey

SECTOR ANALYSIS

Economies are diverse and complex web of relationships. Products on the shelf often go through multiple stages of manufacturing, source materials globally, and were designed, engineered, and built by many people. IMPLAN, an input-output economic modeling tool, was used to illustrate the interdependency of sectors in the 48661 zip code. The analysis was performed at a zip code scale to better capture a regional economy while retaining relevance to the City of West Branch which is the economic center of the zip code. In total, 546 unique industries were included in the analysis. Data used in the analysis was sourced from various governmental sources including the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Census Bureau, and Internal Revenue Service. IMPLAN models upstream economic activity, including the resources, supply, and manufacturing of goods and services. It does not model sales, use, and disposal activity.

INPLAN models several elements of economic output, including labor income, intermediate output, and value add as seen in the figure titled “Economic Output.”

“Intermediate inputs” include the purchase of goods and services used to produce other goods and services. For example, a computer manufacturing company would need to buy metal, plastic, and electronic parts in order to produce the final computer, all of which would be considered intermediate inputs.

“Value Added” represents the contribution to the gross domestic product.

“Labor Income” is the total cost of labor and includes wages and all benefits.

“Proprietor Income” is the income of the corporation/proprietor.

“Taxes on Production & Imports” includes all taxes on goods and services including tariffs, property taxes, and sales taxes. Government subsidies and other tax exemptions are also included as negative values.

“Other Property Income” is the remaining dollars after taxes, labor income, and intermediate inputs are purchased, essentially profit.

Total economic output is the combined value of labor income, value added, and intermediate outputs. The illustration on the next page graphically depicts the various economic components that create the economic output model.

The results of the IMPLAN Model for the 48661 zip code estimate that 190 of the 543 different industry sectors are represented in the zip code. The total economic output for the zip code is estimated at \$1.086 billion, employing 7,086 individuals. The sector with the highest economic input (\$83.3 million) is the wholesale-non durable goods merchant wholesalers with an employment base of 257. This industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in the merchant wholesale distribution of farm supplies, such as animal feeds, fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, pesticides, plant seeds, and plant bulbs. The next highest economic output industry is electric power transmission and distribution with an economic output of \$74.5 million and 50 employees. This U.S. industry comprises electric power establishments primarily engaged in either (1) operating electric power distribution systems (i.e., consisting of lines, poles, meters, and wiring) or (2) operating as electric power brokers or agents that arrange the sale of electricity via power distribution systems operated by others.

Figure XX, 2021 Twenty Top Employment by Industry Type lists the highest industries by type based on employment. As noted, full service restaurants, retail-general merchandise stores, hospitals, and home health care top the list. The chart also indicates each of the top twenty industry

FIGURE XX: IMPAN ECONOMIC MODEL

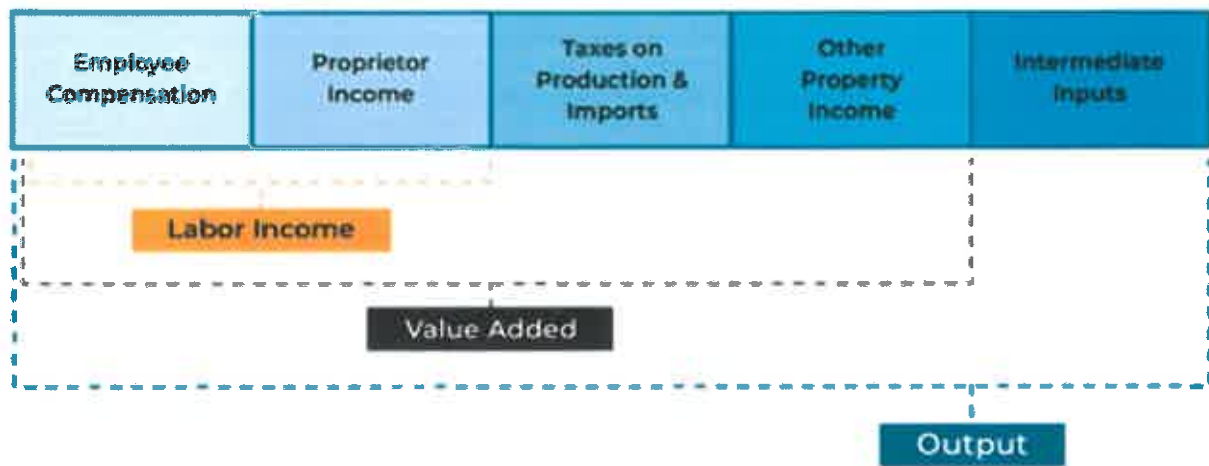


FIGURE XX: 2021 TWENTY TOP EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY TYPE

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYEES	ECONOMIC OUTPUT	OUTPUT %	LQ	% GROWTH SINCE 2019
FULL-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	410	\$31,015,536.71	2.85%	2.30	73%
RETAIL - GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	400	\$42,366,382.18	3.90%	3.84	64%
HOSPITALS	338	\$67,964,183.67	6.25%	1.38	-6%
HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICES	307	\$14,281,666.52	1.31%	5.74	95%
OTHER REAL ESTATE	259	\$44,398,993.28	4.09%	1.04	36%
WHOLESALE - OTHER NONDURABLE GOODS MERCHANT WHOLESALE	257	\$83,345,383.91	7.67%	7.85	75%
LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	200	\$18,679,798.33	1.72%	1.04	34%
RETAIL - NONSTORE RETAILERS	200	\$54,111,600.68	4.98%	2.37	521%
PERSONAL CARE SERVICES	198	\$3,743,571.34	0.34%	3.24	32%
LOCAL GOVT, OTHER SERVICES	194	\$12,047,670.09	1.11%	1.45	30%
COURIERS AND MESSENGERS	184	\$9,777,887.15	0.90%	2.15	23%
NURSING AND COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES	171	\$14,449,726.74	1.33%	2.04	-9%
RETAIL - BUILDING MATERIAL AND GARDEN EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES STORES	147	\$18,737,272.50	1.72%	2.57	35%
WAREHOUSING AND STORAGE	135	\$17,101,033.51	1.57%	2.54	33%
RETAIL - CLOTHING AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES STORES	130	\$14,435,426.90	1.33%	3.41	-12%
AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE, EXCEPT CAR WASHES	127	\$12,939,595.85	1.19%	1.64	31%
TRUCK TRANSPORTATION	113	\$24,403,379.55	2.25%	1.32	57%
STATE GOVT, OTHER SERVICES	112	\$12,541,418.19	1.15%	0.99	63%

Source: 2021 IMPLAN; Beckett & Raeder

FIGURE XX: 2021 TWENTY TOP INDUSTRIES BY LOCATION QUOTIENT

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYEES	ECONOMIC OUTPUT 48661 ZIPCODE	OUTPUT % 48661 ZIPCODE	LQ	% GROWTH SINCE 2019
WOOD PRESERVATION	6	\$4,416,616.44	0.41%	22.64	82%
WHOLESALE - OTHER NONDURABLE GOODS MERCHANT WHOLESALERS	257	\$83,345,383.91	7.76%	7.85	75%
METAL WINDOW AND DOOR MANUFACTURING	14	\$3,977,084.36	0.37%	7.73	100%
DAIRY CATTLE AND MILK PRODUCTION	56	\$25,586,843.65	2.35%	7.27	44%
IRON ORE MINING	6	\$1,725,385.94	0.16%	5.81	100%
HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICES	307	\$14,281,666.52	1.33%	5.74	95%
COMMERCIAL LOGGING	27	\$2,817,786.54	0.26%	5.64	59%
ALL OTHER CROP FARMING	34	\$1,126,890.51	0.10%	5.27	56%
OTHER NONMETALLIC MINERALS SERVICES	3	\$2,203,287.19	0.20%	7.28	140%
BEEF CATTLE RANCHING AND FARMING, INCLUDING FEEDLOTS AND DUAL-PURPOSE RANCHING AND FARMING	36	\$4,415,123.59	0.41%	4.76	13%
SHEET METAL WORK MANUFACTURING	23	\$6,883,943.30	0.63%	4.71	221%
ELECTRIC POWER TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION	50	\$74,483,778.93	6.85%	4.53	23%
COFFEE AND TEA MANUFACTURING	5	\$2,755,237.22	0.25%	4.32	-24%
METAL MINING SERVICES	3	\$2,317,654.44	0.21%	4.28	133%
RETAIL - GASOLINE STORES	105	\$42,366,382.18	1.44%	3.94	64%
RETAIL - GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	400	\$42,366,382.18	3.90%	3.84	64%
WIRED TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS	55	\$21,006,732.26	1.93%	3.58	53%
RETAIL - CLOTHING AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES STORES	130	\$14,435,426.90	1.33%	3.41	-12%
CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY MANUFACTURING	4	\$2,715,528.99	0.25%	3.30	-49%
PERSONAL CARE SERVICES	198	\$3,743,571.34	0.34%	3.24	32%

Source: 2021 IMPLAN; Beckett & Raeder

types by economic output, a percent of the total zip code economic output, its location quotient, and growth rate compared to 2019.

Market Specialization

Market specialization is based on a locale's economic output or employment by industry type compared to the region, state, or nation. This analysis uses what is known as a location quotient. A location quotient (LQ) is an analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit. An LQ is computed as an industry's share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, GDP by metropolitan area, employment, etc.) divided by the industry's share of the national total for the same statistic. For the 48661 zip code the location quotient (LQ) compared the percentage of employment by industry to the total employment within the 48661 zip code, and then compared this to the employment by industry type at the state level. The result of this computation renders the LQ. A LQ of 1.00 means that the percent of employment is equally represented at the zip code level and the state level. A LQ lower than 1.00 represents an under representation, and a LQ higher than 1.00 an over representation. Typical a LQ above 1.50 or 2.00 indicates a degree of specialization.

Figure XX, 2021 Twenty Top Industries by Location Quotient lists those industries with a high LQ.

Although wood preservation has the highest LQ is only contributes four tenths of one percent to the total economic output. Clusters of specialization involve agricultural related enterprises such as dairy cattle and milk production, wholesale-other nondurable goods, cattle ranching, and all other crop farming. These three industries contribute approximately \$114.4 million to the local economy. Another cluster is retail consisting of general merchandise stores, and clothing and clothing accessory stores. These two industries contribute approximately \$56.8 million to the local economy and provide 530 jobs.

Although not in the top twenty industries by LQ, full-service restaurants contribute \$31.0 million to the local economy and employ 410 people. Coupled with retail-gas stations, this two inter-related business generate \$51.5 million in economic output and employ 515. Their presence in the West Branch market is also represented in the retail surplus and leakage analysis which shows West Branch as capturing significant sales from these businesses.

The IMPLAN analysis shows that the West Branch (48661) market is represented by a rural cluster of related businesses, and an urban cluster of retail and health care related businesses. Further, the City is positioned as the focal point of the market due to the predominance of retail, restaurant and health care.



Endnotes

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City of West Branch Master Plan 2019

West Branch, Michigan

Ogemaw County

www.westbranch.com

Adopted: March 4, 2019





WEST BRANCH CITY COUNCIL

Paul Frechette	Mayor
John Dantzer	Clerk/Treasurer City Manager (2021)
Dan Weiler	Council Member
Chris Powley	Council Member (2021)
Michael Jackson	Council Member
Joanne Bennett	Council Member
Cathy Zimmerman	Council Member
Ellen Pugh	Council Member
Bill Ehinger	Council Member
Tiffany Schmieder Kups	Council Member (2021)
Rusty Showalter	Council Member (2022)
Carol Adair	Council Member (2022)

CITY OF WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION

Robert David	Chairman
Michael Jackson	Member
Kara Fachting	Member
Jan Hasty	Member
Yvonne DeRoso	Member
Corine Lucynski	Member
Lisa Jensen	Member
Rusty Showalter	Member (2021)
Evelyn Schenk	Member
Tiffany Schmieder Kups	Member (2021)
Josh Erickson	Member (2022)

CONSULTANTS

2014 Master Plan: Lapham Associates

2019 Master Plan Update: NEMCOG (Northeast Michigan Council of Governments)



www.nemcog.org

Action Items

The following table contains strategies for implementing the primary goal and objectives found in the six focus areas listed above. It is important to note that, while responsible parties are listed, the City will make every effort to collaborate with partner organizations, other local units of government, and members of the public in order to ensure that the correct mix of stakeholders are involved in each item.

TIMEFRAMES

SHORT: Low cost, easy implementation, directly addressing top priorities, or critical to the advancement of other strategies, and to be implemented within the next 1-5 years.

MEDIUM: Important actions that have some level of significant cost and can be implemented within the next 5-10 years.

LONG: Actions that often require significant amounts of funding that must be planned for over time or require other strategies to be completed prior to their implementation.

ON-GOING: Actions that have no beginning and end period but which are continuously on-going in the City.

MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES			
OBJECTIVE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
1 Citizen Involvement	Involve West Branch citizens in activities of the City that will advance the primary goal of this plan.		
	1. Use the City website to provide meeting agenda and minutes of all council, committee, commission, and other bodies as well as to explicate issues and matters of importance before these boards.	ON-GOING	City Staff
	2. Include as many interested citizens as possible on committees on other boards. Encourage members of various boards to participate with other boards to increase communication among all the City government divisions. These boards may also include county and regional groups.	ON-GOING	City Staff City Council Planning Commission
	3. Follow the West Branch Public Participation Plan to maximize citizen involvement.	ON-GOING	City Staff City Council Planning Commission
2 Housing	Maintain the City's high quality residential neighborhoods and encourage new appropriate development.		
	1. Ensure that the City zoning ordinance provides for sufficient areas for the construction of high quality dwellings, multi-family, townhouse, single family, and two-family, of varying densities and types including tiny homes and accessory dwelling units.	SHORT ON-GOING 21	Planning Commission
	2. Enforce the blight ordinances to eliminate conditions that discourage the upkeep of existing housing and the construction of new high-quality developments.	ON-GOING	City Staff
	3. Continue and promote the housing rehabilitation program for improving existing housing stock. Identify funding sources available for residential improvements and make property owners aware of such rehabilitation programs.	SHORT ON-GOING 21	City Staff County Housing Dept
	4. Partner with realtors/builders to attract developers that can construct desired housing developments.	MEDIUM SHORT 21 ON-GOING 22	City Staff and Planning Commission
	5. Ensure the zoning ordinance allows for areas of mixed use development, where appropriate.	SHORT COMPLETE 21	Planning Commission
	6. Consider the necessity of a rental inspection program.	MEDIUM	City Council

MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES			
OBJECTIVE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
3 City Services & Infrastructure	Maintain and improve City services and infrastructure.		
	1. Continue to provide quality police and fire protection service to residents.	ON-GOING	City Council City Staff
	2. Continue to maintain, improve and plan expansion of water, sewage, and stormwater facilities, if needed.		
	3. Provide for adequate streets, and the maintenance thereof, that ensure safety while facilitating orderly growth.		
	4. Continue sound budgeting by departments with a goal toward fiscal responsibility to the residents.		
	5. Ensure infrastructure is in place for desired development.		
	6. Maintain the sidewalk repair/replacement program.		
	7. Explore options (i.e. tax abatements) that would further assist with business recruitment. Encourage City Staff to participate in programs, seminars, and conferences which educate on available opportunities.		
	8. Incorporate Complete Streets design concepts into the City's planning efforts and into the zoning ordinance to ensure all forms of transportation are adequately provided for.	SHORT ONGOING 21	Planning Commission
	9. Revise zoning to require sidewalks and standards for pedestrian connections to all new developments, and work to connect all existing developments along the corridor with sidewalks.	SHORT ONGOING 21	Planning Commission
	10. Designate neighborhood areas and create a neighborhood betterment plan pursuant to the Neighborhood Area Improvements Act (PA 208 or 1949).	LONG	City Council Planning Commission City Staff

	11. Continue to make the downtown area “pedestrian friendly” and attractive by continuing to install streetscaping features including street lights, trees where appropriate, benches, wayfinding signage, parks, and well-maintained sidewalks/paths.	ON-GOING	City Council/DDA/Planning Commission
	12. Ensure pedestrian connections existing throughout the City to connect residential neighborhoods to commercial and recreational areas.		
	13. Review and revise zoning to ensure that development of property within the City is not unnecessarily burdensome.	SHORT COMPLETE 21	Planning Commission
	14. Continue to negotiate with the Michigan Department of Transportation to re-surface Houghton Avenue and at the same time to replace aged sewer and water infrastructure in the right-of-way.	LONG SHORT 21 COMPLETE 22	City Council City Staff Planning Commission MDOT
	15. Continue to investigate, with MDOT, an alternative parking strategy in the downtown area. Work with MDOT to determine if a road diet is applicable.	LONG SHORT 21 COMPLETE 22	
	16. Have installed traffic controls along the I75 Business Loop (Family Fare and Brian’s area). Include signage for the service drive in this area.	LONG	
	17. Fill the gap between the City and the West Branch Township pedestrian and bicycle trails at the former Kmart property.	LONG SHORT 21	
	18. Consider developing access management standards for M-55 and other high-traffic city streets.	LONG SHORT 21	
	19. Participate in the Community Development Board.	ON-GOING	Community Development Board
	20. Incorporate “green” zoning into the Zoning Ordinance, as appropriate.	SHORT COMPLETE 21	Planning Commission
4 Economic 1 (Sustainability)	Promote and support existing businesses in the City and region to thrive and grow.		
	1. Continue to support tax incentives for industrial expansions.	ON-GOING	City Council
	2. Establish guidelines for landscaping, including screening standards.	SHORT COMPLETE 21	Planning Commission
	3. Develop downtown design standards to achieve a collective identity of the downtown.	SHORT	Planning Commission n DDA

	4. Work with the DDA to implement strategies contained within the current downtown plan.	ON-GOING	Planning Comm, DDA City Council City Staff Surrounding Twps
	5. Continue programs to enhance façades and rear entrances of buildings, including potentially the MEDC/CDBG grant program.	MEDIUM ON-GOING22	Planning Commission DDA
	6. Make changes to zoning ordinance and signage regulations to allow for greater flexibility in downtown area – mixed-use CBD district.	SHORT COMPLETE 21	Planning Commission DDA

MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
5 Economic 2 (Attraction)	Market the City and the region to attract additional commercial and industrial enterprises.		
	1. Work toward development of the priority redevelopment and infill development areas.	LONG	Planning Commission City Staff
	2. Inventory with local realtor's available buildings and properties and their conditions for sale or lease (utilize City and other websites to portray). Develop a database that contains specific information pertaining to each commercial/industrial property that can be used as a marketing tool for redevelopment.	MEDIUM SHORT 21	City Staff Local Realtors Planning Commission
	3. Market redevelopment ready properties through the RRC program with assistance from the State.	MEDIUM ONGOING 21	Planning Commission City Staff
	4. Determine the best mix of businesses needed in the downtown and identify needs and market to them.	MEDIUM	City Staff DDA
	5. In the Zoning Ordinance, include allowances for all types of mixed land uses in appropriate areas. Implement buffering and lighting standards where residential abuts non-residential.	SHORT COMPLETE 21	Planning Commission
	6. Support and monitor programs for rehabilitation by the DDA and Ogemaw County (Façade Improvements Program, Brownfields, etc.).	MEDIUM COMPLETE 22	City Staff DDA Ogemaw County
	7. Support and monitor marketing of the downtown with regional partners.	SHORT	City Staff, DDA Planning Commission
	8. Ensure a strong marketing message is		City Council

	created and displayed on the City's website and on other local websites.	SHORT	Surrounding Townships Ogemaw EDC
	9. Create a marketing pamphlet.	SHORT	Chamber of Commerce Tourism Bureau Other Partners
	10. Consider the expansion of the industrial park or a second industrial park, if needed.	COMPLETE 22	City Council
	11. Ensure development approval processes are easy to follow, seamless, and predictable.	COMPLETE 22	Planning Commission City Staff
	12. Implement and maintain the practices outlined by the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Program.	ON-GOING	City Council Planning Commission City Staff

MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
6 Tourism	Market the City and its environs to draw visitors and tourists to support local businesses and the local economy.		
	1. Continue special events that entertain residents and bring visitors to the City.	ON-GOING	City Council DDA Chamber of Commerce
	2. Continue to work with neighboring townships to market the downtown and adjoining commercial areas with the current brand of the community.	ON-GOING	City Staff West Branch Chamber of Commerce West Branch Tourism Bureau DDA
	3. Develop and install wayfinding signage that will direct visitors to the West Branch Downtown and to other special sites in the City and elsewhere.	MEDIUM	City Staff City Council MDOT DDA
	4. Continue to cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corp., and neighboring DDA's to promote the City and its attractions	ON-GOING	City Staff Chamber of Commerce Tourism Bureau Ogemaw County EDC Surrounding Townships
	5. Maintain and improve City recreational facilities and expand where needed.	ON-GOING	City Staff City Council Planning Commission