

# CITY OF WEST BRANCH



## **Five Year Recreation Plan 2016-2021**

*Prepared for:*  
*The Citizens of the City of West Branch*

# City of West Branch Five Year Recreation Plan 2016 – 2021

Prepared by the City of West Branch Recreation Committee and the City of West Branch  
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## City of West Branch



## **Introduction**

A Five Year Recreation Plan is a document that is prepared to assist the community in developing recreation and resource conservation goals. This makes it a very valuable tool, along with the fact that a Five Year Recreation Plan also assists the community by establishing grant eligibility with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

This Five Year Recreation Plan provides the City of West Branch with an opportunity to identify its recreational needs and determine its long range recreation goals. Once our Plan is approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, we plan to apply for grant funding which, if received, will be used along with our own funding sources to realize as many of the recreational goals and objectives outlined in the plan as is practicable.

## **Community Description**

The City of West Branch is located in Ogemaw County and is comprised of a single local unit of government. As the county seat of Ogemaw, the City of West Branch is a growing community. Situated in the southwest quadrant of Ogemaw County, the City of West Branch is conveniently located near Business Loop-I-75, M-55, and M-30. With its prominent location off of I-75 exits 212 and 215, as well as the pristine woodlands that surround the community, the City of West Branch has proudly earned the nickname “Gateway to the North”.

The City of West Branch is composed of 1.2 square miles that are located within the State’s northern recreational area. The City of West Branch is bordered by West Branch Township on the north, south and east and Ogemaw Township to the west.

Ogemaw County has fourteen townships in all: Foster Township, Rose Township, Goodar Township, Edwards Township, Horton Township, Mills Township, Richland Township, West Branch Township, Hill Township, Cumming Township, Klacking Township, Ogemaw Township, Logan Township, and Churchill Township. Two other governmental jurisdictions besides the City of West Branch also call Ogemaw County home: the City of Rose City and the Village of Prescott.

The City of West Branch is home to the only hospital in Ogemaw County and is the central shopping area for the county.

### **Social Characteristics**

#### **POPULATION**

In the early 1900's the City of West Branch exhibited a steady growth. In 1970 the City of West Branch had a population of 1,912 residents. The 2010 census shows a population of 2,139 residents. Over the past several years, the City has maintained its population with a very slight increase.

Much of the land within the City of West Branch has been developed. However, there is property that is suitable for multiple family dwellings with expected development within the next 10 years.

### **Natural Resources**

The City of West Branch enjoys a fairly mild climate, which is moderated by our proximity to Lake Huron. This results in the temperatures being milder. July tends to be the warmest month with the average temperature reaching 80 degrees. January is the coldest month with temperatures averaging around 23 degrees.

#### **WILDLIFE**

The City of West Branch is home to a variety of wildlife. There are ducks, rabbits, squirrels, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer and various bird species.

The City of West Branch surrounds the West Branch of the Rifle River with two streams/creeks that branch from the main river. The City of West Branch has a very popular, award-winning Riverwalk that is used year round to enjoy the scenery and the wildlife that benefit from the river. The Riverwalk, which in 2015 received the *Keep Michigan Beautiful, Inc.*

President's Award, runs along the river through our park, allows area and visiting youth to enjoy good fishing for a variety of fish. The annual fishing derby brings many youth to the river. The Optimist Club stocks the river for this event.

The Tolfree Wellness Park, located on the WBRMC campus, presents new opportunities for activities and improved health for people throughout the region. The park includes a three-mile trail system, a variety of gardens, picnic area, hydroponic and vermicomposting units, a teaching garden with raised beds, greenhouse and outdoor fitness equipment.

The dual vision for the Tolfree Wellness Park includes preventing illness while providing space for patients to enjoy the outdoors during their hospital stay. In addition to general exercise and education, the park's trail and gardens are expected to keep the "well" well, serve as a model for preventative care, host educational opportunities regarding healthy activities and nutrition, help with restorative therapy for nursing homes, provide a place for staff to take breaks and exercise, and offer a pavilion equipped with a full kitchen, restrooms and large gathering area for receptions, family reunions and other gatherings. All this has created the John Tolfree Health System to be much more than a hospital.

## **TOLFREE BIOBLITZ 2015**

**Tolfree Bio Blitz 2015** – During Michigan Trail Week this September, the Tolfree BioBlitz 2015 assembled the expertise of 20 experts, 14 educators, 20 community volunteers, 51 citizen scientists and 401 students from Surline Middle School, St. Joseph's Catholic School, OHHS & Surline Middle School Special Education, and Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School. This group made 921 observations and identified 222 unique species including: 33 trees; 18 insects; 2 spiders; 4 other invertebrates; 9 amphibians; 23 plants; 18 other plants; 56 fungi; 19 birds; 18 shrubs and 2 mammals. Live wildlife exhibits of amphibians, owls, reptiles, snakes and frogs were on display during the BioBlitz. The event was opened to all schools and the community.

*"I want to be part of a healthy community."*

Kindergarteners thru 8<sup>th</sup> graders came from Surline Elementary and Middle Schools, St. Joseph's Catholic School and the Ogemaw Kids Club to the Tolfree Wellness Park's first school



field trip this past week. Excitement was in the air as the students disembarked from their school bus. Foundation staff greeted the children and all walked together to see what our community has donated to teach the children how to stay healthy. The first stop was the teaching gardens. It was explained that this was the place where they would transplant the seedlings they already had started in the greenhouse that the Tolfree Foundation had donated to the school last May. Kids were enthused by the fact that they could grow, cultivate, cook and even sell their produce. “We want children to be inspired to learn about food, develop a positive relationship with fruits and vegetables, and understand how their diet coupled with physical activity can help them stay healthy,” says Cynthia Longchamps, Executive Director of Tolfree Foundation.

The excursion also included a demonstration of how to use the new Norwell outdoor fitness equipment and an explanation of the importance of physical activity. The children easily migrated to this equipment and each student had the opportunity to try it out. The tour ended in a short walk along the Tolfree Trail before boarding the bus and returning to school.

The concept of the Tolfree Wellness Park is to build a vibrant culture of health ... starting with our children. On October 24<sup>th</sup> local school administrators, educators, master gardeners, horticulturalists, hospital administration and its nutrition department met with Saginaw Valley State University’s, Louis Pressel to discuss how to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic and provide cross-sector solutions to build this culture. The Tolfree Wellness Park provides the venue for learning about healthy food, physical opportunities and bringing family and community together to build a healthier community.

This new addition of the Tolfree Wellness Park puts our community on the forefront of the nation’s investment and strategies in wellness. We are grateful to the Tim Searfoss family for their significant gift and encourage others to invest in the many commemorative opportunities ranging from \$25 and up that Tolfree Wellness Park has yet to offer. For more information on how to leave your legacy call: 989-343-3694.

## **City Inventory of Rivers and Streams**

The major river that runs through the City of West Branch is the West Branch of the Rifle River.

The two streams/creeks are Martin Creek and Nelson Creek. The total number of miles of river and creeks in the City of West Branch is approximately 3.63.

## **Topography and Soil**

The City of West Branch sits mostly in a valley with soil consisting mostly of clay with sand.

## **VEGETATION**

The City of West Branch originally was covered with pine and hardwood forests. This entire area was logged and slash burned. The present wooded areas stand smaller than the original stand but are still an important resource.

## **LAND USE PATTERNS**

Land uses for the City of West Branch compiled below are approximate figures: Total Acres: 768

Following are uses of land surfaces:

Urban	729.6 acres	Wetlands	7.68 acres	Other	7.68 acres
Industrial	15.36 acres	Water	7.68 acres		

## **Cultural Resources**

## **UTILITIES**

Consumers Energy supplies electrical power to the City of West Branch. DTE services the City of West Branch with natural gas, as do other third party suppliers, such as IGS Energy.

Many telephone companies service the City. They include AT&T, Charter, Verizon, Charter Communications is the source for cable TV service, with M-33 Access offering additional programming.

## **WATER, SEWER AND SOLID WASTE**

The City of West Branch has partnered with its neighboring municipalities, West Branch Township and Ogemaw Township, to form a “Wastewater Treatment Plant Authority.” This Board oversees the operations of the West Branch Area Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is located on Steve Norton Drive in West Branch Township. The Wastewater Treatment Plant consists of a Superintendent and several Water Systems Operators, who perform a wide variety of tasks all aimed at ensuring that both our surface water and our drinking water are safe and protected for future generations.

The West Branch Department of Public Works (or “DPW”, as they are commonly called), consists of a Superintendent, along with several heavy equipment operators and laborers. The list of services provided by this department is long and diverse, including: road and sidewalk repair, brush removal, leaf removal, snow removal, cleaning and maintenance of municipal parks and buildings, and much more. Some of their essential duties also include the monitoring and maintenance of water and sewer lines. In addition, the DPW Superintendent also oversees the water distribution systems in the City, as well as water safety testing and MDEQ compliance.

Republic Services is currently under contract for solid waste removal until March 31, 2016, after which the City will go out to bid for a new solid waste contract. With assistance from Ausable Valley Community Mental Health workers, the City of West Branch also operates a recycling center that is available for use by City residents, as well as residents of many neighboring townships.

## **MEDIA**

The City of West Branch is covered by two newspapers – The Ogemaw Herald and The Ogemaw Voice. Beginning in 2015, local television has also become available via M-33 Media.

Major television coverage is provided by WGKI Fox 33, WPNB NBC 4, WNEM CBS 5, WCMU PBS 6, WGTU ABC 8, WUCM PBS 19, WWTU CBS 9&10, WEYI NCB 25, WJRT ABC 12, and WSMH Fox66.

The City of West Branch has contracted through Charter, a local cable access channel. WBTV 191 is available for press releases and notices for community events.

Radio service is provided through many cities including: WKJC-Tawas City, WGND-Gladwin, WCEN-Saginaw, WSTD-Sterling, WBMI-West Branch and many other stations are available to our residents and tourists.

## **COMMON CARRIER PASSENGER TRAVEL**

Air: The closest general passenger airport is MBS International located in Freeland (Saginaw County), approximately 1 hour drive time from the City of West Branch.

However, the West Branch Community Airport, located in Horton Township, is another great resource that serves the City of West Branch. The approximate drive time to the West Branch Community Airport from the City of West Branch is about 5 minutes. The airport is jointly owned and operated by the City of West Branch and Ogemaw County.

Bus: The City of West Branch is serviced by the Ogemaw County Public Transit.

## **MAJOR ROAD SERVICE**

The City of West Branch has several main arteries. I-75 is immediately south of the City with the I-75 Business Loop leading into, through, and out of the City. M-55 runs East and West directly through the center of the City. M-30 runs North and South along the West side of the City.

### **City of West Branch Historical Population**

In 1920 the population in the City of West Branch was 1,105. The next recording was in 1970 with the number of residents up to 1,912.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1990	1,914
2000	1,926

In the year 2000, the population was divided into 910 males and 1,016 females. At the time, the largest proportions of individuals were between the ages of 25-39, with the second largest ratio between the ages 0-9. This may indicate that a number of residents were settling in the City and starting families. However, no matter the reasoning, this information indicates that recreational opportunities are needed for both children and adults.

### **Current City of West Branch Population Estimates**

(Source: Census.gov [available at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/26/26129.html>], and city-data.com [available at: <http://www.city-data.com/city/West-Branch-Michigan.html>]).

The US Census Bureau has no recent information specific to the City of West Branch, due to the fact that the agency only compiles such data for cities with populations over 5,000. However, the US Census Bureau has released updated data specific to Ogemaw County.

According to the US Census Bureau, Ogemaw County consists of 563.49 square miles, compared to the 1.3 square miles that make up the City of West Branch. The US Census Bureau also estimates that the population of Ogemaw County was 21,039 residents as of 2014. That is compared to a 2014 estimated population of 9,909,877 for the entire state of Michigan.

Individuals residing in Ogemaw County in 2014 were also estimated by the US Census Bureau to make up the following demographic sub-groups: 4.7% under the age of 5, 18.8% under the age of 18, 24.3% aged 65 or older, 50.4% female, 49.6% male, 95.2% non-Hispanic Caucasian, 0.4% African American, 0.9% Native American, 0.4% Asian, and 2% Hispanic or Latino. The US Census Bureau also estimated that: 86.1% Ogemaw County residents had been living in the same house for one-year or longer, 1.3% were born outside the U.S., 2.2% spoke a language other than English in the home, 85.1% had obtained a high school diploma or higher, and 11.3% had obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Other information compiled by the US Census Bureau for Ogemaw County includes the following:

- Number of Veterans residing within Ogemaw County = 2,343
- Average travel time to work in minutes for Ogemaw County residents = 23.1
- Housing units as of 2014 = 16,037
- Homeownership rate 2009-2013 = 82.8%
- Housing units in multi-unit structures 2009-2013 = 3.9%
- Median value of owner-occupied housing units 2009-2013 = \$89,500
- Total number of households 2009-2013 = 8,998
- Average number of persons per household 2009-2013 = 2.36

For Ogemaw County, the US Census Bureau estimates that in 2013 dollars, the average 12-month per capita money income for an Ogemaw County household was \$19,634 compared to the \$25,681 average for the state of Michigan. The 2009-2013 median household income for Ogemaw County residents was \$34,619 compared to the \$48,411 state median. In addition, the number of persons below the poverty level in Ogemaw County from 2009-2013 was estimated at

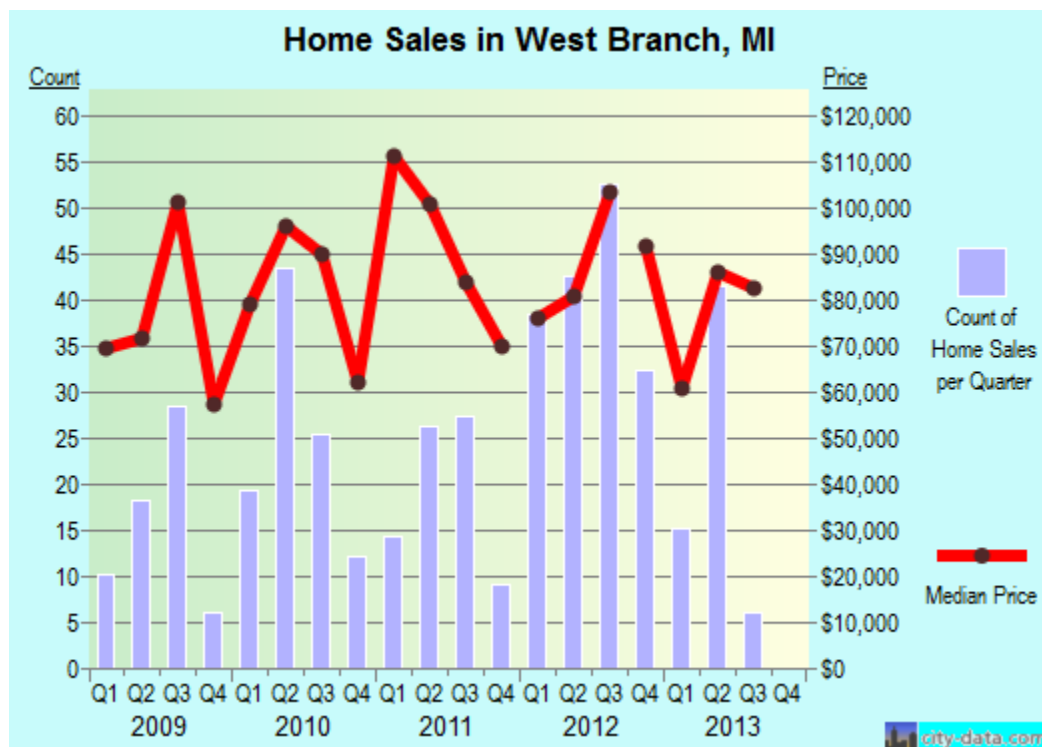
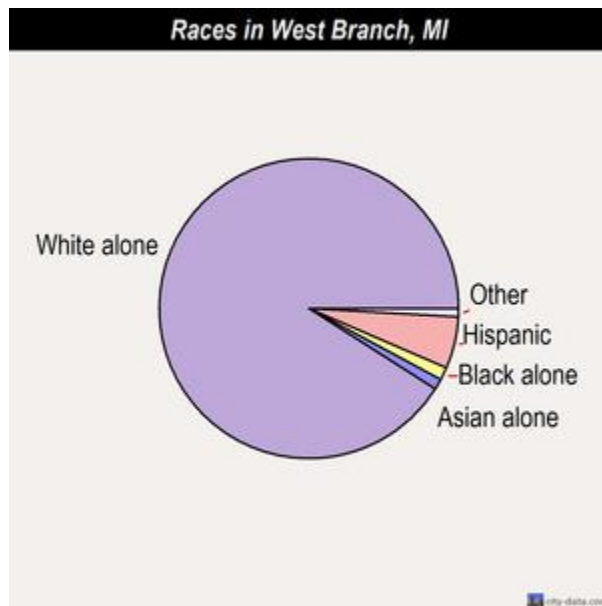
21.5% of the county's total population, which is significantly higher than the 16.8% levels estimated for the entire state of Michigan.

According to City-Data.com, the 2013 estimated population for the City of West Branch was around 2,089 which reflects a 8.9% increase in population since the year 2000, but a slight decrease in population since the year 2010.

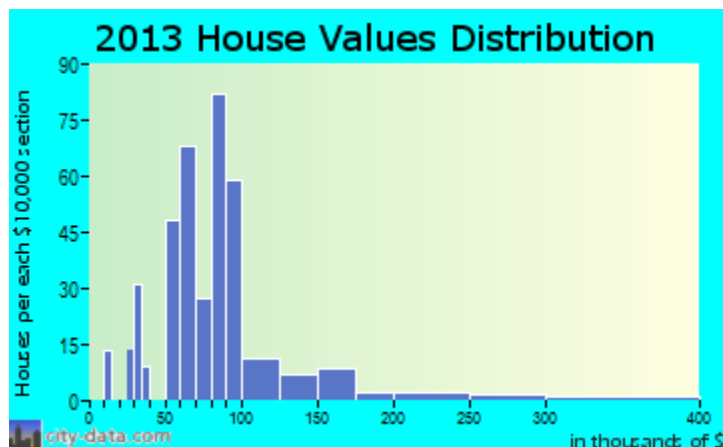
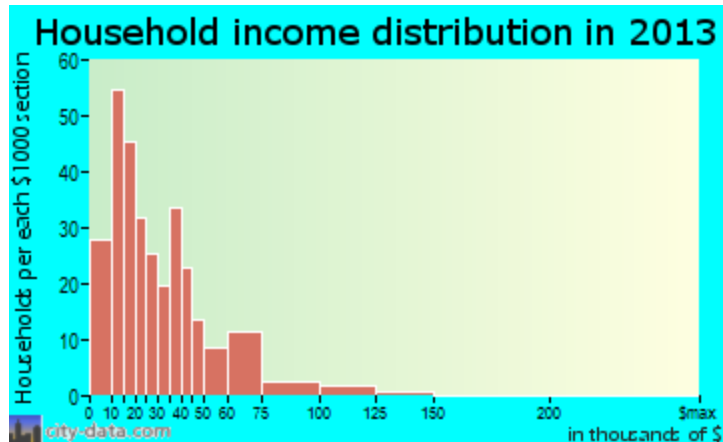
City-data.com also reports the following estimated data for the City of West Branch as of 2013:

- 884 males (42.1% of total population)
- 1,214 females (57.9% of total population)
- Median age of 42.4 years
- Population density of 1.577 people per square mile
- Median household income of \$24,929 (compared to \$30,132 in 2000)
- Per capita income of \$15,569 (compared to \$17,852 in 2000)
- Median house/condo value of \$81,873 (compared to \$67,500 in 2000)
- Median gross rent of \$656 per month
- Cost of living index of 83.1 (compared to the U.S. average of 100)
- Never married (of population aged 15 years and older) 30.4%
- Now married (of population aged 15 years and older) 29.2%
- Separated (of population aged 15 years and older) 0.8%
- Widowed (of population aged 15 years and older) 18.1%
- Divorced (of population aged 15 years and older) 21.5%
- Percentage of residents born outside the U.S. 3.5%
- Median real estate property taxes for housing units with mortgages \$1,403 (1.7%)
- Median real estate property taxes paid for housing units with no mortgages \$1,218 (1.5%)
- Daytime population change due to commuting is + 2.774 (+ 130.4%)
- Workers who live and work in this city is 509 (61.0%)
- Officers per 1,000 residents = 1.90 (compared to Michigan average of 1.72)

Additional information from City-data.com is reported in the graphs and charts included in the following pages:







## National Population Projections

(Source: US Census Bureau, *Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060*, by Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, issued March 2015).

By the year 2060, the U.S. population is projected to increase by approximately 30%, growing from a national population of approximately 319 million to around 417 million, with the 400 million mark expected to be reached by the year 2051. This reflects a slowing in population growth as compared to the recent past, as fertility rates are expected to decrease, as are net-immigration rates.

By the year 2030, the US Census Bureau estimates that one in five Americans is projected to be aged 65 or older, and that by the year 2044, more than half of all Americans are

projected to belong to a minority group (meaning any group other than non-Hispanic Caucasians). The US Census Bureau also projects that by the year 2060, nearly one in five of the total population of the United States will consist of individuals who were not born in the U.S.

## **PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME**

(Source: Census 2000 Demographic Profile)

In 2000, the City of West Branch had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$17,852. The national average PCPI is \$21,857.

## **MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

(Source: MSU Extension Profiles)

### **MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

Over the past 30 years, the median household income for Ogemaw County has tripled and the State median household income has doubled. However, Ogemaw County median household income is still approximately **\$15,000 lower** than the State median household income.

## **OVERALL EMPLOYMENT**

Over the past several years the labor force has increased, as has the population. However, it is important to note that these statistics do not always reflect the actual labor force or total unemployment. Often, there are people who have dropped out of the labor force for one reason or another and are not included in the employment statistics. The chart below shows Ogemaw County rates from 1990 through 1998. (Compiled by: MSU Extension KCC Partnership).

### **Ogemaw County**

Labor Force	6625	7025	7000	7250	7450	8200	8200	8325	8625
Employment	5950	6300	6175	6350	6675	7350	7350	7525	7925
Unemployment	675	725	825	900	750	850	850	825	700
Rate	10.3	10.2	11.8	12.3	10.2	10.3	10.4	9.8	8.2

## **HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING UNITS**

The number of households in the City of West Branch in 2000 was 833. The average number of persons per household in the City in 2000 was 2.24. The average family size was 2.95 in 2000.

Of 1,926 people in the City in 2000, 1,870 lived in households and 56 lived in group quarters, including 47 institutionalized and 9 non-institutionalized.

Household Units: In 2000 there were 916 housing units in the City of West Branch. Of these total housing units 90.9% were year round units, 449 are owner occupied and 384 renter occupied.

## **AGE DISTRIBUTION**

(Source: US Census Bureau)

### **AGE DISTRIBUTION**

2014 estimated population of Ogemaw County was 21,039. Broken down by age, the population of Ogemaw County looks as follows: 4.7% under the age of 5; 18.8% under the age of 18; and 24.3% 65 years or older.

## **UNIQUE POPULATONS**

Persons with Disabilities: According to the 2000 census there are 200 persons, between ages of 21-64, with disabilities in the City of West Branch. This is slightly less than one quarter of the City's population.

Race: In 2000, 75.1% of the US population listed themselves as white. The City of West Branch has a much higher homogeneous population with 95.2% of the population indicating their ethnicity as white.

Low Income: The 2007 Michigan Low & Moderate Income Communities list (HUD designated) included six of Ogemaw County's seventeen governmental jurisdictions as being 50% or more low to moderate income.

## **POVERTY RATES**

(Source: MSU Extension Profiles)

### **POVERTY RATES OF ALL PERSONS OGEMAW COUNTY**

The percentage of people living in poverty within Ogemaw County is **18.5%**. The number of children living in poverty in Ogemaw County was 1,771 as of 2013—amounting to **30.5%** of all children living within the county. Poverty rates in Ogemaw County during 2013 for people between the ages of 18 and 64 was **22.3%**. Meanwhile, **11.6%** of seniors over the age of 65 were living in poverty in Ogemaw County during the same time period.

## **TOURISM**

The City of West Branch is a community that depends on tourism dollars. The City continues to be a travel destination that attracts tourists at all times of the year. In the summer for fishing, swimming, camping, golfing, shopping and in winter for snowmobile riding, cross country skiing and other winter adventures.

The City of West Branch is the pass through to access some of the finest golf courses in northern Michigan. Including the West Branch Country Club, which has a fine food restaurant, Green Briar Golf Course, Apple Valley Golf Course, The Dream Golf Course, and The Nightmare Golf Course, all within a few minutes from town.

Located in Irons Park is a modern play structure, Fort Austin, which draws children from all over the County and beyond.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

The City of West Branch has a Wellhead Protection Plan that lists the areas of potential hazards and contaminated sites.

Following is an excerpt from the Wellhead Protection Plan:

### **PLAN FORM 3: GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Mission Statement: City of West Branch

- To insure a safe drinking source for residents and businesses by identifying past, present, and future threats to the public water supply.
- To work with other governmental and private agencies to promote a cooperative effort to protect and maintain our water sources.
- To educate residents, businesses, and children on how to preserve our drinking water.
- To develop a plan of procedures in the event that a harmful substance threatens the drinking water.

Goal	Ideas to accomplish goal
Prevent the pollution of surface and ground water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Plan and develop land uses that will not threaten the water supply</li><li>-Educate the public on the effects pesticides have on the water supply</li><li>- Evaluate current land issues and identify threats to the surface and ground water</li></ul>
Promote intergovernmental cooperation to insure protection of water sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Include other governmental agencies in the planning of the Wellhead Protection Program</li><li>-Ask for assistance in the planning and development of land uses from other government</li></ul>

	agencies
Promote residential and commercial cooperation to protect surface water	<p>-Include people from both sectors in the planning, development, and implementations of the Wellhead Protection Plan</p> <p>-Educate the public on the effects pesticides, oils, paints, etc. have on the surface and ground water</p>
Develop and implement planning provisions to protect ground water and surface water	-Work with the Planning Commission to develop and implement planning documents aimed at groundwater protection
Educate the public on the need to protect ground water and surface water	<p>- Coordinate education efforts with the school</p> <p>-Produce or purchase educational material to be distributed through special events</p> <p>-Send information to residents and businesses via the quarterly newsletter.</p>
Plan and prepare for water supply emergencies	-Set up a plan and update it annually, which sets forth guidelines to follow in the event of an emergency
Protect the public health	<p>-Ask all involved to watch and inform City Hall of any potential problems</p> <p>-Provide educational materials to residents and businesses</p> <p>-Have an emergency plan</p> <p>-Revisit abandoned well management in the WHPA to determine if further action is needed to inventory and properly abandon wells.</p>

## **Administrative Structure**

### **Roles of City Council, Planning Commission, and Recreation Committee Advisory Board**

The City of West Branch Recreation Committee has jurisdiction over recreational items that pertain to the residents of the City; however, their authority is merely advisory in nature. All decision making authority remains vested in either the Planning Commission or the City Council, depending on the situation (zoning issues generally fall to the Planning Commission, whereas all other issues generally fall to the City Council).

City Councilmembers are duly elected to their positions. Planning Commissioners are City residents who are appointed to their positions by the City Council. Members of the Recreation Committee are also City residents who are appointed to their positions by the City Council.

### **Department, Staff Description and Organizational Chart**

The parks and recreation department for the City of West Branch consists of the Department of Public Works, working under the direction of the City Manager. The City Manager works at the pleasure of the City Council, who accepts the advice and guidance of the Planning Commission as well as the Recreation Committee. In addition, the City Manager and one City Councilmember are also members of the Planning Commission, as per the West Branch City Charter.

## **City Recreation Committee**

Dan Weiler  
Tony Novak  
Ruth Ferguson  
Lois Berquist  
Kris Schubert  
Dora Zapczynski

**West Branch City Council**

William Ehinger, Mayor

Rusty Showalter, Mayor Pro Tem

Kim Ervans

David Lucas

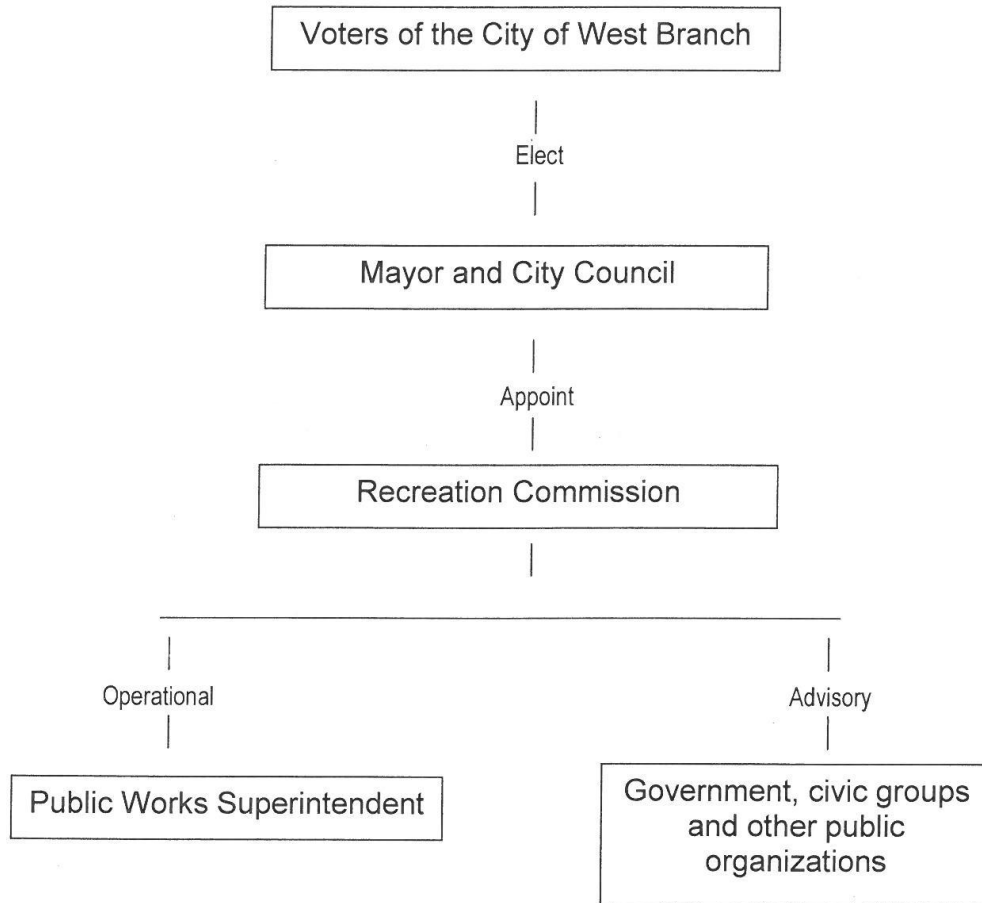
Denise Lawrence

James Hasty

Tim Schaiberger



**City of West Branch Administrative Structure  
for  
Recreation Committee**



## **Annual & Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements & Recreation Programming**

The annual and projected budgets for operations, maintenance, capital improvements, and recreation programming are determined each year through the City's budgeting process, which, for the 2016/2017 fiscal budget, is underway at the time of the drafting of the Five Year Recreation Plan. Any updated budget figures that are available by the time this document is ready for submission to the Department of Natural Resources will be included as a supplement to the Appendix of this Plan. Budget figures for the 2015/2016 fiscal budget for the City of West Branch parks and recreation department are as follows: (1) \$40,500 original budget; (2) \$32,427 actual through February 2016; (3) \$40,500 amended budget; (4) \$47,553 prior year actual; and (5) \$405,044.77 projected fund balance for general Fund [parks and recreation department is a general fund department within the budget of the City of West Branch].

## **Current Funding Sources**

The City of West Branch maintains all of its parks, including its main park, Irons Park, through the expenditure of public funds budgeted in the Department 751.000 ("PARKS AND RECREATION") of Fund 101 (the "GENERAL FUND"). The City does not have a park millage or other funding source for recreation, other than donations, which are generally received for specific recreational projects, such as the City's "Summer Music Series" (a series of free concerts offered at Irons Park throughout the summer). We maintain our park through the general obligation millage. The City will continue to budget for park improvements, as well as park maintenance.

## **ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS**

The City of West Branch is fortunate to have a number of volunteer individuals and groups who have assisted the City with a variety of parks and recreation related projects.

The West Branch Creative Arts Association sponsors the highly successful annual Victorian Art Fair at Irons Park. Another volunteer group, West Branch Optimist Club, sponsors an annual fishing derby for children and an annual Easter Egg Hunt, both at Irons Park. The West Branch Entertainment Committee sponsors a summer music series at the Irons Park Pavilion. Throughout the years, a number of citizens have volunteered in assisting with general cleanup of Irons Park. City staff assists in coordinating activities with volunteers to provide recreation related activities for the citizens.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS, PUBLIC AGENCIES AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS**

As is mentioned in this plan, the City leases approximately 10 acres of property located along N. First Street behind the Middle School from the West Branch-Rose City School District. Due to the proximate location of this property to the Middle School, the City will work closely with the school district in planning and developing recreational facilities that will be mutually beneficial.

There has also been discussion with two adjacent townships, West Branch Township and Ogemaw Township, to meet on a regular basis regarding provision of recreation facilities and programs so there is no duplication of services to the community. These discussions have also included suggestions by the City to the neighboring townships that a committee be formed to explore the benefits of regional planning, such as the creation of a joint recreation plan. It is anticipated that such efforts may yield results in the coming months.

The City of West Branch also enjoys great relationships with private organizations that offer great assistance towards recreational projects in the City as well. For instance, groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and private businesses work with the City to sponsor an annual “Winter Family Fun Day” at Irons Park. Our local “Fabulous Fridays” committee, in conjunction with our local “Downtown Retail Merchants” group, also collaborate with the City to bring many recreational activities to our downtown area almost every Friday evening all summer long.

## PARKS AND RECREATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The City of West Branch generally regulates activities conducted in its parks via Chapter 93 of the City of West Branch Code of Ordinances, which can be found online at the following web address:

[http://www.westbranch.com/government/ordinances\\_and\\_charter/title\\_ix\\_general\\_regulations.php#parksandrecs](http://www.westbranch.com/government/ordinances_and_charter/title_ix_general_regulations.php#parksandrecs)

Following is Chapter 93 titled Parks and Recreation from the City of West Branch Code of Ordinances.

### **CHAPTER 93: PARKS AND RECREATON**

#### **Section**

#### **General Provisions**

- 93.01 Definitions
- 93.02 Compliance Required
- 93.03 Hours of Operation

#### **Permit Requirements**

- 93.15 Permit required: application
- 93.16 Social permits, agreements and contracts
- 93.17 Exclusive use of parks
- 93.18 Granting of permits
- 93.19 Clean up by permittee
- 93.20 Honoring special permits

#### **Prohibited Uses and Acts**

- 93.30 Injuring or defacing park equipment or facilities
- 93.31 Building fires
- 93.32 Use of playground equipment by adults
- 93.33 Restricted sections of parks
- 93.34 Hindering or resisting park police or employees in performance of duties
- 93.35 Firearms: bows and arrows, fireworks and other devices

- 93.36 Disorderly conduct
- 93.37 Public intoxication: intoxicating liquors
- 93.38 Animals
- 93.39 Removal of soil, trees and shrubs
- 93.40 Drinking fountains
- 93.41 Sleeping in parks
- 93.42 Throwing stones
- 93.43 Dumping articles in park
- 93.44 Disregarding posted signs, rules and regulations
- 93.45 Public meetings: parades
- 93.46 Posting or distributing advertisements
- 93.47 Games and sports
- 93.48 Sale of display of merchandise
- 93.49 Use of ice skating rink
- 93.50 Operation of motor vehicles
- 93.97 Civil Liability
- 93.98 Penalty
- 93.99 Effective Date: Publication

## **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

### **93.01 DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply unless the context clearly indicates or requires a different meaning.

**MOTOR VEHICLE.** Any vehicle which is self-propelled, by any means whatever, including all devices in, upon or by which any person or property may be transported or drawn, excluding only devices moved exclusively by human power.

**PARK.** Any area or plat of land owned or operated by any municipal or public corporation and developed and used for public recreational purposes, including, but not limited to, landscaped tracts, picnic grounds, playgrounds, athletic fields, stadiums, camps, foot and bicycle paths, motor vehicle drives, ice rinks and other recreational structures and facilities for the use and benefit of the public.

**PARKING.** Standing a vehicle, whether occupied or not, when not loading or unloading, except when making necessary repairs.

**PARKING LOT.** Any off street area, whether paved or not, located outside the boundary lines of any public street or highway and used by the public for parking of motor vehicles.

**PERSON.** Any natural person, firm, partnership, club, association, corporation, company, organization or group of any kind.

### **PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

#### **93.15 PERMIT REQUIRED: APPLICATION**

Any club, school, association or recognized group desiring the use of specific areas of any park, such as picnic areas, athletic fields or ice rinks, shall file an application with the City Council through the City Clerk and shall not use the park or area until the permit is granted.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

#### **93.16 SOCIAL PERMITS, AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTS**

Any club, school, organization, association or recognized group desiring the use of a portion of the park system for a money raising affair whether to cover the cost of operation or for profit, shall file an application with the City Council and pay to the Council such fees, charges, rents or percentages as required by the City Council for such activities and events. The applications, among other information, must designate the portion of the park desired, where ticket sales will be set up or if money is to be collected and how much per person or other unit of measurement and the location of which shall be under the control of the City Council. Any fees for the permit may be waived or refunded at the discretion of the City Council.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76)

#### **93.17 EXCLUSIVE USE OF PARKS**

No permit shall be issued for the exclusive use of any park and no permittee shall exclude the public from the parks charge any admittance fee, sell tickets or otherwise require anyone to pay any fee for entering any park except as provided in 93.16.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

#### **93.18 GRANTING OF PERMITS**

The authority for granting permits shall be with the City Council.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76)

#### **93.19 CLEAN UP BY PERMITEE**

All permits shall require the permittee to clean up the park area after activity has terminated and all applications for permits must give the name, address and phone number of the permittee or person responsible for the necessary policing thereof.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76)

### **93.20 HONORING SPECIAL PERMITS**

All persons shall honor any special permit issued by the City Council, for certain areas, days and times to clubs, organizations, teams or any other groups, including but not limited to public grounds, ball fields, skating rinks or stadiums, provided the permit is presented on official forms.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76)

## **PROHIBITED USES AND ACTS**

### **93.30 INJURING OR DEFACING PARK EQUIPMENT OR FACILITIES**

No person in any park owned or operated by the City shall willfully mark, deface, disfigure, cut, injure, tamper with, break, displace, or remove any buildings, cables, benches, tables, fireplaces, grills, light poles, fountains, tennis nets, trees, playground equipment, public utilities or parts or appurtenances thereof, signs, notices or placards, whether temporary or permanent, monuments, flag poles, stakes, posts, fences or other boundary markers, or other structures or equipment, facilities or park property or appurtenances whatsoever, either real or personal.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty see 93.97

### **93.31 BUILDING FIRES**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person shall kindle, or build or cause to be kindled or built a fire in any park except in places designated by the City Council. In those areas where fires are generally permissible, such fires must be contained in a receptacle designed for the purpose of building a fire and must be attended at all times. No person shall set fire to trash or garbage or the contents of trash receptacles at any time. Exceptions to any of the above must have written approval from the City Council.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord , passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.32 USE OF PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT BY ADULTS**

No adult person shall in any manner use any of the playground apparatus or devices meant exclusively for the use of children.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.33 RESTRICTED SECTIONS OF PARKS; RESTRICTIONS ON SMOKING IN PARKS**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person, other than City employees, shall enter upon any area of the park system where persons are prohibited from going as indicated by signs, notices or secured by fences and gates. No person shall smoke in areas other than those indicated by signage to be designated smoking areas. No person shall dispose of smoking paraphernalia, including cigarettes and cigarette butts, anywhere other than in receptacles specifically designed for such disposal.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord , passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.34 HINDERING OR RESISTING PARK POLICE OR EMPLOYEES IN PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES**

(A) No person shall resist any police officer or City employee exercising his or her duty within the park area or fail or refuse to obey any lawful command of any such police officer or park employee or in any way interfere with or hinder or prevent any such police officer or park employee from discharging his or her duty.

(B) No person shall interfere with or in any manner hinder any employee of the City while engaged in construction, maintenance, repairing or caring for any park property.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.35 FIREARMS; BOWS AND ARROWS; FIREWORKS AND OTHER DEVICES**

No person shall carry or discharge firearms of any description, sling shots, bow and arrows, or discharge fireworks, firecrackers, rockets or any types of fireworks, or things containing any substance of any explosive nature within the park system.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.36 DISORDERLY CONDUCT**

No person shall make or excite any disturbance or contention on any public grounds or park. No person shall use any indecent, immoral, obscene, vulgar or insulting language in the presence or hearing of any other person.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.37 PUBLIC INTOXICATION; INTOXICATING LIQUORS**

No intoxicated person shall either enter or remain in the park system. However, alcoholic beverages will be permitted for consumption in the picnic areas only.



(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.38 ANIMALS**

No person shall bring in, cause, or allow any dog, cat or other pets or animals which he owns or has permission to control within the confines of any park unless such animal is attached to a leash not to exceed six feet in length; such leash to be of sufficient strength to hold such animal in constant check. No person shall intentionally allow any animal to deposit waste in any area of the park system unless the person in control of that animal immediately removes and disposes of such waste in the proper sanitary manner.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.39 REMOVAL OF SOIL, TREES AND SHRUBS**

No person shall dig or remove soil, rocks, stones, trees, shrubs or plants, nor pick flowers, nor attach any rope, wire or other device to any tree, plant, post, public utilities or any other structure.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.40 FOUNTAINS**

No person shall throw, discharge or otherwise place in the waters of any water fountain, drinking fountain, washbasin, toilets, any substance, liquid or solid, which may result in water pollution or create a health hazard to the public. No person shall urinate in, defecate in, vomit in, or otherwise foul the water in any water fountains or washbasins. No person shall climb on or in any water fountains, including decorative fountains. No person, other than City employees, shall remove money or coins from any water fountains, including decorative fountains.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord.

, passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.41 SLEEPING IN PARKS**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person shall sleep, whether in a vehicle, trailer, tent, hammock or other manner in the park system during the hours the park is closed to the public.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord. , passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.42 THROWING STONES**

No person shall throw or cast any stones within the City Park system.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.43 LITTERING IN PARK**

No person shall deposit any litter, rubbish, garbage, cigarette butts, broken glass, cans, bottles, or refuse matter of any kind, in or upon any part of the park system other than such refuse accumulated from organized and acceptable activities within the park, an such refuse must be deposited in receptacles provided for that purpose.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord. , passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.44 DISREGARDING POSTED SIGNS, RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person shall willfully disregard posted signs, which regulate the days, hours for various activities, or any other signs installed, posted or attached for control, maintenance, safety or any other purpose within the park system. This includes signs prohibiting climbing on fountains, as well as signs establishing designated smoking areas.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord. , passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **63.45 PUBLIC MEETINGS; PARADES**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person, organization, club or group shall hold or participate in any parade, drill, exhibition, political meeting, religious meeting, concert, lecture or public entertainment of any kind within the park system.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord. , passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.46 POSTING OR DISTRIBUTING ADVERTISEMENTS**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person shall display any placard or advertisement of any kind in the park system, nor shall any person distribute, cast, throw or place any handbill, pamphlet, circular, advertisement or notice of any kind, nor post, stencil or otherwise affix any notice or bills, advertisement or other papers, upon structure or things in or about the park premises.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord., passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.47 GAMES AND SPORTS**

Unless permission is given by the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent, no person shall engage in any sport, game, exercise or amusement in the park system except such portions thereof as may be designated by the City Council and then only under such rules and regulations as my be prescribed by the City Council.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord., passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

#### **93.48 SALE OF DISPLAY OF MERCHANDISE**

No person shall carry on any trade or business or sell or display any goods, wares or merchandise in the park system without permission from the City Council, the City Manager, or his/her designated agent.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord., passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

#### **93.49 USE OF ICE SKATING RINK**

No person shall draw, push or slide any sled, toboggan or any other device on any ice skating rink, nor shall hockey be played or hockey sticks be allowed on the ice during the time hockey is prohibited, nor shall items used for marking goals, such as boxes, cans, milk cases, broken cement, boards, or any other items used for such purpose remain on the ice when the game is over. No person shall throw snowballs, break bottles or glass upon the ice surface or surrounding park area.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76) Penalty, see 93.97

#### **93.50 OPERATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

(A) The operation of motor vehicles in any park is prohibited except in that area laid out and appropriated as a driving lane or lanes, parking area, or for motor vehicles used in the maintenance of park areas. No motor vehicle shall be driven or operated on said lane or lanes at a speed greater than ten (10) miles per hour.

(B) No person shall stop, stand or park a motor vehicle except in such areas as may be laid out and designated as a parking area by the City Council.

(C) No person shall operate a motor vehicle on any land or service drive, whether protest or not, which is laid out as a means of access for maintenance employees to the various sections of the park system.

(D) No person shall park or store any motor vehicle during the hours the park is closed, in any park, parking area or driving lane owned or operated by the City. Members of the Police Department are hereby authorized to remove any vehicle so parked or stored, at owner's expense.

(E) It shall be unlawful for any person, whether a pedestrian or whether operating a motor vehicle of any type to fail to obey any such applicable traffic control sign, signal, lane marking

or other device, whether permanent or temporary, unless otherwise directed by a police officer or City personnel conducting City business.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord., passed 8-17-2015) Penalty, see 93.97

### **93.97 CIVIL LIABILITY**

In addition to the penalties provided in this chapter for violating its provisions any person convicted of an act of vandalism (or the parent/s of a juvenile so convicted) shall reimburse the City for up to three times the amount of the damage as determined by the court. If two or more defendants are convicted of the vandalism the judgment for the damage shall be entered against them jointly. In those cases wherein a convicted defendant is a minor the judgment shall be entered against his/her parents. All persons violating any provisions of this chapter, other than vandalism, which is governed by the aforesaid, shall be jointly and severally liable for all damages done to the park while that person is so in violation.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord. 149, passed 9-10-79; Am. Ord., passed 8-17-2015)

### **93.98 PENALTY**

Violation of this chapter is a Municipal Civil Infraction, pursuant to 10.99 of the City of West Branch Code of Ordinances, whereby violators of this chapter may be subject to civil fines as established by resolution of Council.

(Ord. 133, passed 2-16-76; Am. Ord. 149, passed 9-10-79; Am. Ord. 01-04, passed 6-18-01; Am. Ord., passed 8-17-2015)

### **93.99 EFFECTIVE DATE; PUBLICATION**

This ordinance shall become effective upon publication of a notice in a newspaper circulated in the City, stating the date of the enactment and the effective date of the ordinance, a brief notice as to the subject matter of this ordinance, and such other facts as the City Clerk shall deem pertinent, and that a copy of the ordinance is available for public use and inspection both on the city website and at City Hall.

(Ord., passed 8-17-2015)

## **RECREATION INVENTORY**

### **Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory**

Previous City Five Year Recreation Plans were relied upon, and then reviewed by City Staff, as well as Recreation Committee members for needed updates. GIS mapping software was also utilized in this endeavor.

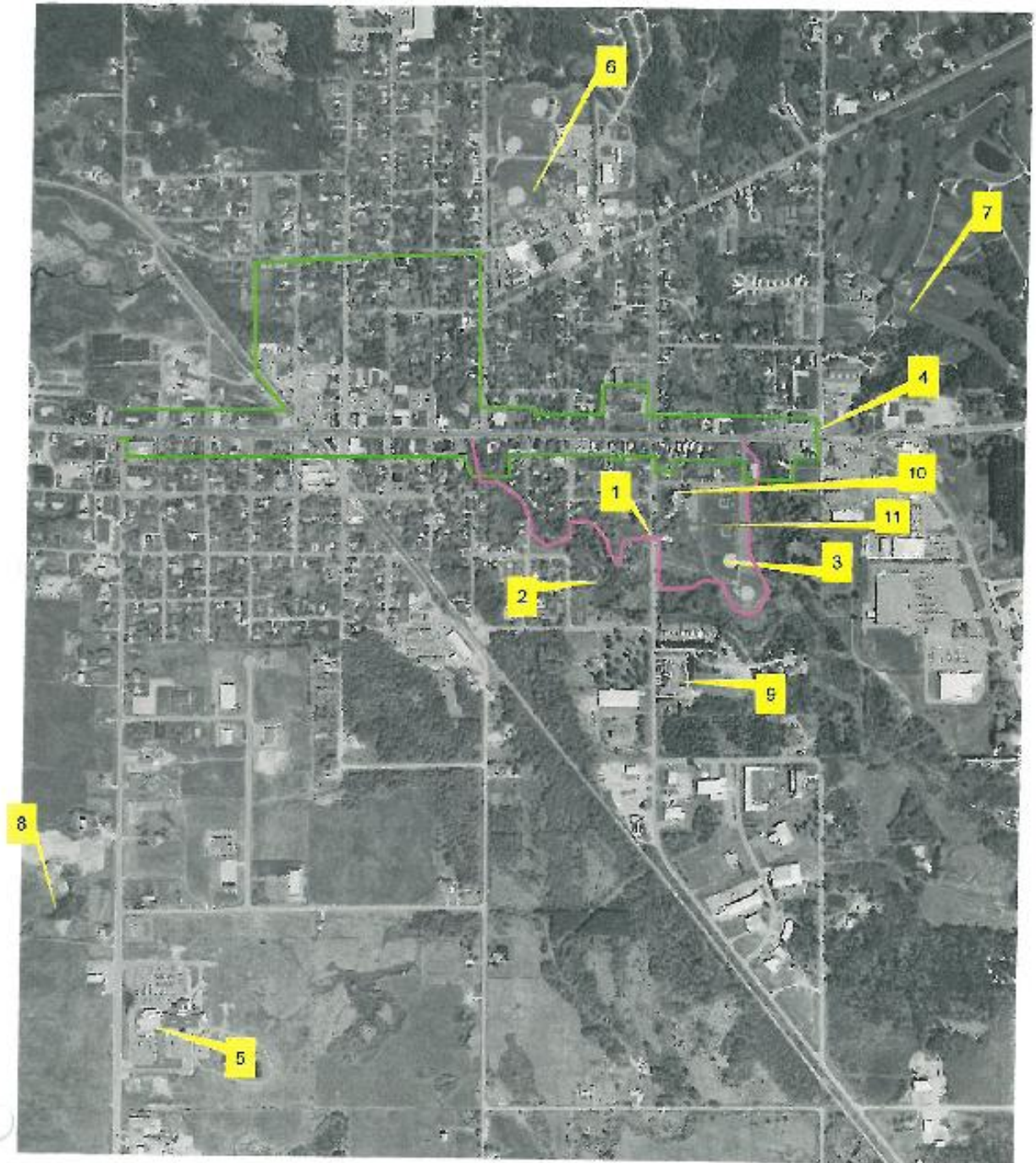
### **Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities, Including Natural Areas and Recreation Facilities**

The City Recreation Committee felt that the best way to organize our recreation inventory would be to utilize a location map (see below) and then also utilize a map inventory key (also below).

### **Location Maps**

[See next page]

## Recreation Inventory Map



## **RECREATION INVENTORY MAP KEY**

1. Riverwalk
2. Irons Park
3. Lyle Wilcox Little League Fields
4. Historical District
5. West Branch Regional Medical Center
6. Surline Elementary & Middle Schools
7. West Branch Country Club (West Branch Township)
8. The Brook (Assisted Living Facility)
9. The Villa Nursing Home
10. Maplewood Manor (Senior/Disabled complex)
11. Victorian Trails (Assisted Living Facility)

## **DESCRIPTION OF INVENTORY**

1. **Riverwalk** – Located along the West Branch of the Rifle River. The City of West Branch is very proud to have taken an aggressive strategy to enhancing our park while maintaining the aesthetic and natural qualities of the recreation inventory. During the 1990's, the City worked with the DNR to create an urban park landscape to take full advantage of our primary natural resource – the West Branch of the Rifle River.

In 1996, we were successful in bringing the Riverwalk to the citizens of West Branch with the most recent Phase IV completed in 2010. The Riverwalk runs from the Lyle Wilcox Little League Fields to the downtown district, through a fully developed municipal park system, Irons Park, crosses Houghton Avenue and continues to follow the river ending at North Fourth Street.

Both Irons Park and the Riverwalk experience high use, especially in the spring, summer and fall seasons. The Riverwalk has proven very popular with walkers, joggers and bicycle enthusiasts. The lights installed along the Riverwalk allow extended use during evening hours. The



Riverwalk has been a great asset to our community and as the County seat for Ogemaw County, thousands of residents and nonresidents use the Riverwalk for recreation and as a means to get around town.

Most recently, August 2015, the Riverwalk was awarded the President's Award for Keep Michigan Beautiful Inc. KMB annually recognizes programs, projects, and activities that substantially contribute to beautification, clean-up, environmental enhancement, site restoration, and historic preservation of the state.

### **SCENIC PICTURES OF THE RIVERWALK**







2. **Irons Park** – Located off South Valley Street, south of Houghton Avenue (M 55), Irons Park includes basketball courts, Pickle Ball Courts, a massive “playscape” facility, a beautiful deck/bridge overlook enhancement, three picnic pavilions, a gazebo, horseshoe pits and volleyball pit. . Irons Park is the location for the well-attended Victorian Art Fair and also home to the Summer Music Series. Many local organizations hold summer picnics at Irons Park.







**3. Lyle Wilcox Little League Fields** – Located off Page Street, south of Houghton Avenue (M 55) is home to four ball fields, a covered picnic shelter, concession area and batting cages. These fields serve more than 550 children a year. The City’s Lyle Wilcox Little League Fields have been chosen several times for the State finals.





4. **Historical District** – Located along Houghton Avenue (M 55) to the north and south. This area contains the Downtown District and is dressed in a Victorian theme. The city itself is home to many great attractions, including our downtown Victorian shopping district, as well as Beautiful Irons Park and our new Downtown Victorian Park. A beautiful place to live, work and play, we invite you to come and discover “Victorian West Branch”.



5. **West Branch Regional Medical Center & Seton Cancer Center** – Located at 2463 S. M30. The mission of the West Branch Regional Medical Center is to provide quality healthcare services to improve the health status of the communities we serve. West Branch Regional Medical Center has undergone a multitude of revolutionary changes since its inception in 1929 as the Tolfree Memorial Hospital, but has maintained true to the ideal that everyone deserves access to quality healthcare. The brand new medical center and the Seton Cancer Institute were opened in 1999 to accommodate growth and area needs for care. West Branch Regional Medical

Center is an integral part of the John Tolfree Health System serving West Branch and the surrounding area.



**6. Surline Elementary & Middle School** – Located at 147 State Street, north of Houghton Avenue (M 55). It serves West Branch area students and is part of the West Branch/Rose City School District. West Branch-Rose City Area Schools, with involvement of parents and community, acknowledge the responsibility to educate all students. Through innovative and aggressive strategies, they prepare students to become knowledgeable, caring, and responsible citizens. The vision is to provide a challenging learning environment that maximizes individual potential and ensures students of all ability levels are provided with quality education that equips them to meet the challenge of education, work, and life.



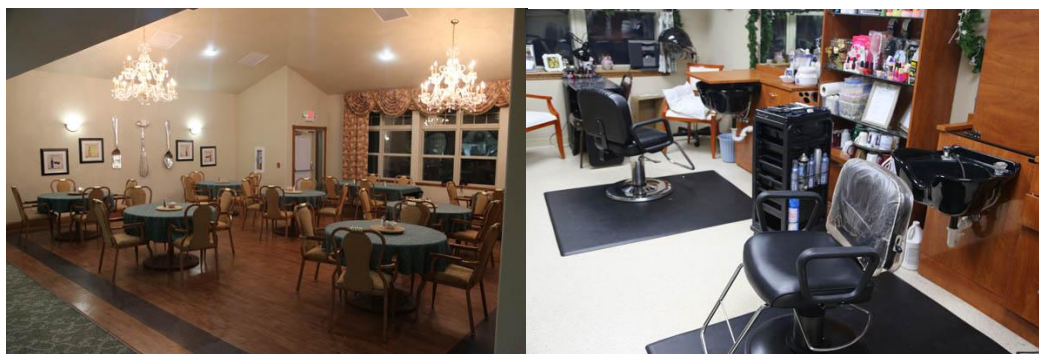
7. **West Branch Country Club** – Located at 1905 Fairview Road, north of M 55 (in West Branch Township). The Club features a PGA Professional to welcome visitors to the clubhouse and a well-stocked shop and restaurant. The front nine is more open with velvety smooth greens, while the back nine is sculpted from mature forest.



8. **The Brook** – Located 646 Court (M 30). Assisted living, independent living, and retirement living without the upkeep of a household, with the security of a health care staff. The Brook Retirement Communities offer affordable retirement options with all the comforts of a home.







9. **The Villa Nursing Home** – Located at 445 South Valley, south of Houghton Avenue. This facility serves patients and families in West Branch and surrounding areas. Clinical Liaisons meet with patients and families at the hospital before discharge. They maintain close working relationships with physicians, nurses and discharge planners from all the area hospitals.



**10. Maplewood Manor** – Located at 200 South Valley, south of Houghton Avenue.

Maplewood Manor of West Branch has a total of 51 units, all of which are Section 8 assisted living units. Maplewood Manor was developed and operates with Federal Housing financing. The property utilizes the Project Based Sec. 8 Federal Housing Program to make rent affordable to lower income tenants.



**11. Victorian Trails** – Located at 232 South Valley Street, south of Houghton Avenue. It is an affordable senior community for 55 and older. The City walk wraps around from the park and around the building. Section 8 vouchers are accepted.



## **INVENTORY OUTSIDE CITY OF WEST BRANCH**

### **Ogemaw County Recreation Inventory Includes:**

County Fairgrounds/Antique Village  
West Branch Area Travel Trailer Park  
Pointer Hill Park  
Cleveland Park  
Prescott Village Park  
TJ Crowley Memorial Park & Ball Field  
Logan Township Park  
Newman Park  
Elbow Lake Beach  
Skidway Lake Beach  
Ogemaw Township Park  
Hardwood Lake Campground  
Rifle River Recreation  
Alley Memorial Snowmobile Park  
Ogemaw Game Refuge  
Black Lake Nature Preserve  
Ogemaw Hills Recreation Complex  
George Smar Soccer Complex  
Beasley Soccer Complex  
Camp Timbers  
Coles Canoe Boy Scout Camp

### **CAMPGROUNDS**

Troll Landing  
Lake George  
Beaver Trail  
Bloomfield Landing  
Driftwood  
Grand Lake



Lost Valley  
Styles Lake/Logan Hill  
Ogemaw Pines

### **GOLF COURSES**

Green Briar  
The Dream  
The Nightmare  
Apple Valley  
Edgewood  
Cedar Brook Driving Range

#### **Accessibility Assessment**

The City of West Branch will work to appoint a Barrier Free Committee. This committee will consist of City staff and individuals with disabilities. This committee will conduct evaluations to verify compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as make recommendations regarding barrier free design and universal design suggestions. The Barrier Free Committee will also inspect public facilities in the City to make recommendations to help ensure compliance with the ADA.

#### **Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities**

In October of 2015, the City of West Branch confirmed compliance with Department of Natural Resource requirements in relation to grant-assisted parks and recreation facilities. This compliance was confirmed by DNR Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund Board Assistant Linda Harlow.

#### **Resource Inventory**

The City of West Branch has undertaken efforts to identify open space land that is desirable for protection and/or public access through acquisition or other means due to the natural features present, as well as an accounting of land that is already protected. Through this process, the City has identified land owned by two local churches, the Trinity Episcopal Church, and the First United Methodist Church, whereby negotiations are underway to determine whether mutually beneficial arrangements might be possible to enable public access to these lands.

Discussions have also been had regarding land outside the City limits, whereby arrangements may be made with either neighboring West Branch Township or neighboring Ogemaw Township, by virtue of a future Joint Recreation Plan, to enable public access to those lands as well. In addition, privately held land within the City that may become City-owned by virtue of future blight enforcement proceedings may also become available.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

The City of West Branch, in planning for its recreational needs, has reviewed the following items, among others: past City Five Year Recreation Plans; the Ogemaw County Recreation Plan; the City of West Branch Master Plan; the Ogemaw County Master Plan; City of West Branch General Ordinances; City of West Branch Zoning Codes; Ogemaw County Zoning Codes; and the Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans. The City of West Branch also sought and received input from the following sources: the public, City Council, the Planning Commission, and the Recreation Committee. The City staff assisted as well.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

#### **Description of the Methods Used to Solicit Public Input Before or During Preparation of the Plan, Including a Copy of the Survey or Meeting Agenda and a Summary of the Responses Received**

Public input for this Plan was solicited in many ways. It was solicited by the holding of multiple public hearings, which were advertised in the local newspaper, the Ogemaw County Herald, as well as on the City website and the City Facebook page. Public input was also requested via recruitment requests made, asking that any City residents interested in City recreation please consider joining the City Recreation Committee. Several City Facebook page posts were also utilized to engage the public. In addition, the City Manager had a speaking engagement at the local Kiwanis Club that was utilized as a platform to encourage public input regarding the Plan.

#### **Copy of the Notice of the Availability of the Draft Plan for Public Review and Comment**

A copy of the notice of the availability of the draft plan for the public review and comment is attached as an Appendix to this Plan. The date of the notice was 09/09/2016. The type of notice was a written posted notice. The Plan location was West Branch City Hall, 121

North Fourth Street, West Branch, Michigan, 48661. The duration of the Plan public review period was thirty (30) days.

**Copy of the Notice for the Public Meeting Held after the One Month Public Review Period and Before the Plan's Adoption by the Governing Body**

A copy of the notice for the public meeting held after the one month public review period and before the plan's adoption by the governing body is attached as an Appendix to this Plan. The date of the notice was 01/28/2016. The name of the newspaper was the Ogemaw County Herald. The date of the meeting was 02/01/2016.

**Copy of the Minutes from the Public Meeting**

A copy of the minutes from the public meeting referenced above are attached as an Appendix to this Plan.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The recreational goals and objectives for the City of West Branch over the course of the next five years, in order of priority, are as follows:

- Extensions of the existing riverwalk systems, specifically to include a connection towards the new indoor recreation center that was built in the City's industrial park
- A sidewalk extension to connect the riverwalk to the 4-H Children's Garden
- Create a designated area for a Dog Park/Run.
- Maintenance of existing recreational facilities and structures
- Skateboard Park - Joint project with West Branch and/or Ogemaw Townships
- The addition of another gazebo to Irons Park - possibly a 3-season pavilion attached to current restrooms
- The addition of an amphitheater to the area surrounding Irons Park
- The addition of a splash-pad zero-depth water park to Irons Park
- A yearly art competition modeled after the Grand Rapid's Art Prize
- A dedicated Pickleball Court and relocation of Tennis Courts

- A possible partnership with the First United Methodist Church to potentially allow for the building of a gazebo or similar structures, as well as potential playground equipment and possible community garden - Joint project with West Branch Township
- Better location for a Farmer's Market that could be utilized year-round, even in bad weather
- Remote Control Vehicle Park and Drone Racing - possible Joint project with West Branch and/or Ogemaw Townships
- Rehabilitation of stream beds in the creek through town
- Geocaching
- Scavenger Hunts
- More festivals
- More fairs
- More circuses

### **Plan of Action**

To address the above-named recreational goals and objectives, the City of West Branch's plan of action is to apply for various grants through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and apply City matching funds, to then contract to complete as many of the above named projects as possible over the course of the next five years.