



**Hail bombardment**

West Branch Public Works Director Matt Goodale holds two large pieces of hail that fell on his Rochester property on Sunday. Goodale said he saw damage to his cars, siding and likely his roof, but none of the windows on his car or home cracked or broke. He said the hail storm lasted about 10 minutes sometime after 9 p.m., with one of the larger pieces falling in roughly every five square feet of his yard. The National Weather Service issued a tornado watch early Sunday evening and changed that to a thunderstorm warning later that night, but the bad weather largely missed West Branch while angling toward Rochester, roughly 11 miles to the east. **Photo courtesy of Matt Goodale**

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**STUDENT OF THE WEEK**  
Gabriella Rushton

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Gabriella is the daughter of Phil and Amanda Rushton. Her high school activities include Band, jazz band, marching band, show choir, choir, basketball, golf, cheer and NHS. Her hobbies and interests include hiking, traveling, spending time with family, reading, and trying new things. Gabriella plans to get a degree in Paramedic Associates of Applied Science. Her biggest inspiration throughout high school has been her parents. "They have always been there for me and always have my back when I need them most." One accomplishment Gabriella is proud of is seeing all 50 states before I graduated high school.

**CONGRATULATIONS GABRIELLA!**

**Spending habits**

How much West Branch spends annually per person and per household on clothing & services, travel & transportation, entertainment & recreation, and home. "Home" includes mortgages, furnishings, equipment, childcare, repairs, maintenance and supplies (not utilities). Average household: 2.4 people

<b>\$808</b> Individual average spent on clothing	<b>\$5,699</b> Individual average spent on home	<b>\$1,244</b> Individual average spent on entertainment	<b>\$3,092</b> Individual average spent on transportation
<b>\$1,961</b> Household average spent on clothing	<b>\$13,836</b> Household average spent on home	<b>\$3,020</b> Household average spent on entertainment	<b>\$7,508</b> Household average spent on transportation

Source: 2022 West Branch Market Snapshot

**Snapshot**

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town's center. Some data also encompasses people who live within 10 minutes of the town's center, or even 20 minutes.

City Administrator Adam Kofoed said he appreciates the data but believes the report "under-represents our growth and vacancy rates."

"Based on what we've had going through Planning and Zoning (our population) will be quite a bit larger," he said, referring to expected new housing developments. "I think we'll be quite a bit higher than those initial estimates."

Kofoed said that if interest rates continue to rise, that may slow down West Branch's growth closer to what the Market Snapshot predicts. The Federal Reserve plans to increase interest rates again this year and some predict the 2.25 to 2.5-percent rate could reach 4 percent by year's end.

"Overall, it's positive news," the city administrator said, adding that West Branch is growing faster than most other Iowa cities.

The report states that residents average 40.4 years old, and 98.2 percent of residents aged 16 and up hold down jobs.

The average age increases when the report adds in residents living within 10 minutes, up to 41.6 years old. However, it drops significantly when it adds in

Iowa City, the University of Iowa, and others within 20 minutes, to 30.5 years old. The state average is 39.5 years old.

Salaries follow that same fluctuation, with those within 10 minutes increasing the average to \$41,120 a year, then dropping to \$39,257 when grouping in the Iowa City area. The state average is even lower at \$36,238.

However, the percentage of those employed lowers the farther away one gets from West Branch. The 98.2 drops to 97.6 for those within 10 minutes, then 97 percent for those within 20 minutes. The state employment rate stands at 95.7 percent.

**Overall spending**

The report includes a section, Retail Demand Outlook, that shows data on spending for people who live inside West Branch or live within 10 minutes of the center of town (close to Corridor Home Redesign).

This section shows the community spends about \$53.3 million in 12 key retail areas, from housing to food to health to transportation.

It estimates that figure will increase by nearly 12.8 percent in just five years to \$60.1 million.

The five largest spending categories:

- Home, including mortgages and "the basics." Residents will spend nearly \$12.5 million in 2022, or 23.4 percent of that \$53.3 million. The report estimates that number will increase to \$14.1

million, or 23.5 percent, of the \$60.1 million total for 2027.

- Food at home comes in second, with the community spending \$9.8 million on groceries, or 18.5 percent of its retail dollars. While the total will increase by nearly 13 percent in five years, the percentage of retail spending will remain the same.

- Insurance comes in third at \$7.9 million, or 14.9 percent of retail spending. That figure will rise to \$8.9 million in 2027, dipping to just over 14.8 percent.

- Transportation comes in next at \$6.5 million, some 12.3 percent of retail spending. That percentage will dip slightly to 12.2 percent, but increase to \$7.4 million of the total in five years.

- Coming in fifth is a noteworthy sign of West Branch culture: We spend \$4 million, or 7.5 percent of our retail dollars on eating out. The Market Snapshot actually labels this, "Food away from home," and estimates this figure will grow to \$4.5 million in five years.

**Spending v. income**

However, while spending will increase by nearly 12.8 percent overall, the average household income will increase by about three-quarters of a percent, from about \$73,100 to \$73,750, or by about \$650 annually.

Kofoed said he does not know how those data points reconcile and won-

Chart by Gregory R. Norfleet

ders if MSI's report cannot account for side jobs or secondary incomes like selling products online.

He said that if incomes do not increase, he does not see how spending could grow proportionately.

"The numbers don't add up in that perspective," he said.

Main Street Iowa Business Specialist Robin Bostrom, responding to the Times by email, said the Retail Demand Report is new to the Market Snapshots provided to each Main Street chapter. The data replaces a "Sales Surplus & Leakage" report by Esri, a data-collection company.

"The Retail Demand Report is a new report that we have just started to look at, so I am also learning the ins and outs of this report as well," Bostrom wrote. "We will be learning as we go."

Still, Kofoed predicts that with more homes and more people, more businesses will follow, which will draw more people into town from farther away.

"Iowa City is growing our way, and we're growing toward Iowa City," Kofoed said. "There will be more buzz around the town so we should see possible increased economic activity. ... I think we'll see less retail leakage to other communities, but the internet is still a big factor for where people get goods and services."

The full report appears on the City of West Branch's website, at west-branchiowa.org.

**Citywide Clean Up set for Oct. 1**

West Branch residents can get rid of large, unwanted items during the fall City-Wide Clean Up 7-10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 1, at the Water Street parking lot

across from the fire station. You must receive a water bill from the City of West Branch to participate in this event. Businesses are not eligible to participate.

Acceptable items include (but are not limited to): furniture, mattresses, dressers, steel, carpet, bicycles, broken toys, clothing, and other household items.

A \$10 charge per item will be required for: washing machines, dryers, television sets, a/c units, printers, computers and lawn mowers (gas must be drained).

Items not accepted include: items from businesses, commercial appliances, construction debris, household garbage, large metal items, paint or toxic waste, tires and yard waste.

For more information, please contact West Branch City Office at (319)-643-5888 or Johnson County Refuse at (319)-665-4498.

The next City-Wide Clean Up will be Saturday, May 6, 2023.

**I-80**

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Baker Avenue.

Kofoed said that Croell got the contract for cement from the Iowa Department of Transportation and suspects it will also get the contract for the roundabout intersection at the corner of Hoover Highway and Cedar-Johnson Road.

At the end of the two years, Croell can ask for an extension on its permit if the extra volume continues or it must clean up the site.

**Join the Cedar County Democrats at the West Branch Town Hall for our FALL FUNDRAISER AND DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FORUM Sunday, September 25**

Dinner will be served at 5:00 pm and candidates will speak at 5:30 pm.

Speakers scheduled are: Deidre DeJear (Governor), Michael Franken (U.S. Senate), Christina Bohannon (U.S. Congress) and Deb VanderGaast (State Senate).

Attendees are able to participate in the Q&A session by written ballot. Each candidate will randomly draw a question from the pool of ballots.

The other candidates will also have the opportunity to answer the question and expand their platform.

*Free will donations for dinner are appreciated. Each of the candidates will also be accepting donations to their campaigns. Yard signs and campaign literature will be available for supporters.*

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