

City of West Liberty



CITY OF WEST LIBERTY
MAYOR'S STATE OF CITY REPORT
MAY 12, 2023

Presented by
Mayor Ethan Anderson

Population and Diversity

- Current Population - 3,858
Hispanic Population - 2,250
18 years + Population - 2,723
- From comparing the 2010 Redistricting Data to today's, we have a 3.3% increase in overall population, and a 15.3% increase in citizens identifying as Hispanic or Latinx.
- The 18 years and over population has held steady at approximately 71% over the last decade, however the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate Profiles from 2021 show this dropping closer to 63% with an increase in youth, but no overall increase in population.
- One Race - 3,116
Two or More Races - 742
- The number of citizens identifying as two or more races has increased from 2.9% to 19.2% since 2010.
- We have seen slight increases in people identifying as Black/African American, as well as American Indian/Alaska Native, with a decrease in our Asian population.
- Concerning languages, ACS estimates 48% of the population, aged 5 & older, speak a language other than English at home (the overwhelming majority being Spanish), with estimates for the 18 years & older population sitting at about 40%.
- An estimated 17.9% of West Liberty households are receiving food stamps or SNAP benefits.

Unique and Interesting Facts

- The original town was located half a mile north, but was relocated closer to the railways, prior to incorporation.
- The town of West Liberty was incorporated in 1868 but the following appears in the Weekly Enterprise of Feb. 22nd, 1884: "The City Recorder has recently discovered that the town of West Liberty was never legally incorporated. There is nothing on the State records to show that our city was ever incorporated or ever wanted to be. The presumption is that the incorporation papers were sent to Muscatine and properly recorded but never reached the state office. A certified copy of the original paper has been forwarded to Senator Pliny Nichols at Des Moines, where this, has taken steps to rectify the blunder."
- In the Weekly Enterprise of May 2nd, 1884 appears: "Chapter 90, An Act to Legalize the Corporation of the Town of West Liberty, was published in the State Register of Wednesday."

State of the City:

Fiscal Management/Financial:

- 2011-2016 City's Fiscal Cash/Budget average was \$5.3 Million.
- Continued growth and fiscal management the current City's Fiscal Cash/Budget growth is now \$14.3.
- Success is by implementing fiscal management policies/procedures, training, grant funding opportunities, debt management and planning.
- 2020 City Council adopted a Capital Improvement Plan and Equipment Revolving Plan establishing a procedure to plan and fund for road, infrastructure, buildings, utility improvements, equipment, and tools to serve the West Liberty Community.
- Debt Management, City currently has Debts/loan/bonds to pay for the capital projects upgrading streets, city buildings/structures, and utility.
- **City Debt 9-2022**
 - General Obligation: 3,425,000.00
 - Utility Revenue Bonds: 6,584,000.00
 - Sewer State Revolving and Lease: 2,656,000.00
 - **Total as of 9-2022: 12,665,000.00**
- Debt percentages: 73% of debt utility/sewers: 18% streets: 9% public buildings.
- As of September 2022, current debt for general obligations allows 46.79% of debt capacity to fund future projects.
- Budget planning with following debt and project improvements allows the City of West Liberty to maintain a consistent debt levy limit for taxpayers. The average total debt levy is 13.50% and the City only collects about 29% of 100% of taxable valuations paid by the property owners within the city limits.
- **Property Tax dollars fund the General Fund programs:**
 - Public Safety (Police, Fire/EMS, Animal Control, and Building Inspections) 44% general fund budget
 - Streets (Sidewalk programs) 2% of general fund budget
 - Culture (Library, Parks/Recreation, Cemetery, and Pool) 38% general fund budget
 - City Government (City Hall, City Administration/Mayor and Council, Economic Development) 16% general fund budget

The City remains in a good fiscal position despite the volatility in city expense due to the current economic environment. Material costs have increased by 20-40%, continued high fuel costs, insurance, vehicle/equipment, staffing training, and employee benefits. Consistency, policy, and procedures provide the fiscal management required of city to sustain the economic environment.

Capital Projects/Upgrades/Equipment:

Current City projects include:

Street Projects: Rainbow/ Maxson Street Improvement Project 2.3 million project (bond)

Knotty Circle Drive/Gibson Street Project: 875,000 projects (Road Use Tax and
Local Option Sales Tax)

The two projects will include a multipurpose sidewalk with lighting adjacent to Dutton Sports Complex. This is a continued effort to provide safe walking ability for the community members of West Liberty.

Utility Projects: Well #2 Project to access an existing well and rehab to add an additional well as back up to the City's existing wells located at the water plant. This will also provide a roof improvement to the powerhouse where the well is located. (\$800,000 project utility revenue cash)

Equipment: American Rescue Dollars provided additional funding for the following:

\$100,000 towards new ambulance

\$100,000 two police vehicles

\$67,000 for security cameras to city surveillance

\$48,000 upgrade to City financial software to include online customer access to
billing, billing processing, permits, and payroll processing.

In addition, this past year we have purchased a new rear load garbage truck, water truck, wastewater truck, dump truck and plow equipment.

Future equipment proposed includes new leaf vacuum equipment, Dutton Complex lighting, Railroad Park playground equipment, and upgraded breaker box equipment for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Future Capital Improvement Projects prosed for the future include, facility study of the Kimberly Park Pool, Street, Sidewalk, and Sewer intake improvements, and phase II with the extension of City Hall to include public safety section for the police department and City Council Chambers. The West Liberty Public Library roof and building improvements are also in the planning stages for consideration of approval by the Library Board.

Economic Development:

In 2020 the West Liberty City Council adopted a TIF funded City matching improvement grant program. This allows city businesses and property owners to apply for a matching grant towards the improvement and new build projects. The City certifies taxes annually in the amount of \$100,000 to provide increments up to \$25,000 per building as a matching grant. Currently, to date the City has granted a total of \$ 200,000 matching grants with \$150,000 expensed.

The City has also been awarded IEDA (Iowa Economic Development Authority) for three major building projects for a total of matching grants of \$500,000. SGA Construction for the Columbus

Street Project (new building) \$100,000 for WLFE (Geertz/Wagner) 115 E 3rd Street Remediation Catalyst \$100,000 and Brooke Ventures 317 N Spencer \$200,00. The IEDA, City and Developers investments combined provide over 1 mil for providing new and renovated buildings for additional residential and commercial space for the community.

Housing Projects:

Buyse Subdivision adjacent to Dutton Sports Complex: GHS Development, providing a 1.9 mil residential project to include 38 units of single family and mixed residential homes. The development has applied and been approved for tax increment financing based on taxable valuation for reimbursement of the project over a period of 10 years.

Meadows Community Development: Brad Akers development that will be located on S Calhoun St adjacent to Oakridge Cemetery. This will be a manufactured home community with 41 units. The development will be located on private property and the city will consider incentives to offset the cost for the developer.

Ganesh Chowk Phase 3 & 4 as the addition to the Phase 1 & 2 of Short Street residential homes. Deepak Giri has proposed units with 3 bedrooms, additional parking space, and security cameras to monitor the property.

Columbus Street Remediation Project: SGA Development as an IEDA grant project with City and Developer matching funds the project will consist of apartments on the top floor, handicap accessible apartments on the first floor and commercial space for a proposed coffee shop. Project investment \$500,000.

317 Spencer Street Project: Brooke Ventures Development as an IEDA catalyst grant will allow the building to be remodeled to provide residential apartments on the second floor and commercial space on the first floor. The project investment is approximately \$500,000 with IEDA, City and Developers providing matching funds.

103 E 3rd Street Project: WLFE Development owned by Frank Wagner and Emily Geertz continue their catalyst grant project at this location by completing the second floor with a residential apartment. WLFE has also completed 115 E 3rd Street and the investment has been with IEDA, City and Developer with nearly \$500,000 per project.

We Lead Economic Development is also provided with tax increment finance dollars to assist with financial support to provide the connection between business relationships and city for economic growth. All the projects the city has before us with housing and commercial are due to the hard work of the We Lead Director and We Lead Board of providing marketing of the West Liberty and promotion of opportunities we offer. The City provides an annual contribution of \$53,500 with additional incentives to increase the funding through the city's tax increment financing. The City Council recently approved the City's FY 2023-2024 Budget to increase the investment with WE LEAD by adding \$25,000 from the utility funds to sustain and grow the marketing opportunities for our community towards commercial and residential development.

Vision/Future:

The City of West Liberty has faced many challenges in the last decade to include retirement workforce with over 30 years of longevity, numerous management position turnover, city leadership change, staff shrinkage, pandemic, natural disasters, rising costs to operate, and government relationship disconnect.

Despite the challenges the city has dedicated staff who have remained and have been working to improve, re-build relationships, create new partnerships, create policy and procedures for consistency practices, and modern government environment.

The Mayor and City Council have set the expectation with City Management to bring stability to the organization. Fiscally the City is in a good position, but now the City needs stabilizing the staffing and leadership. The success of our community will rely on the personnel structure of our city staffing by providing policy and procedures to establish consistent practices, safety for staff, training, succession planning for sustainability, competitive wage/benefits, alignment of duties, and segregation of work.

The vision of the city starts with the foundation of staffing and from there we will build on the success of development of community, customer service relationships, fiscal responsibility, efficiency to serve customers in a timely manner with limited errors. A well-trained and engaged staff will provide the essential information allowing the Mayor and Council to make the critical and fiscal decisions for the West Liberty Community.

To close:

Mayor and Council will be developing policies and procedures with staff over the next 6 months to include:

- Council Conduct Policy and Procedure
- City Emergency Preparedness Plan
- Employee Handbook/Job Descriptions/Performance Program with wage practices
- Development Procedures and Marketing Tools

Planning:

- Strategic Planning with Mayor, Council and City Staff
- Comprehensive Plan Study Update
- Utility Infrastructure Improvements
- Park Improvements
- Industry and Commercial Development
- City Building Improvements
- 28 E Agency Agreement

There are so many good things to come, and the good part is we are all moving forward with the same goals to succeed West Liberty with growth, activities, safety, and the unknow opportunities before us.