

## OVERVIEW

Community character is determined by the people, characteristics, landmarks, and intangible elements that make the community a great place to live. While there is no exact formula for community character, a community's unique characteristics are often a key reason of why people choose to live where they do or why they choose to visit certain locations.



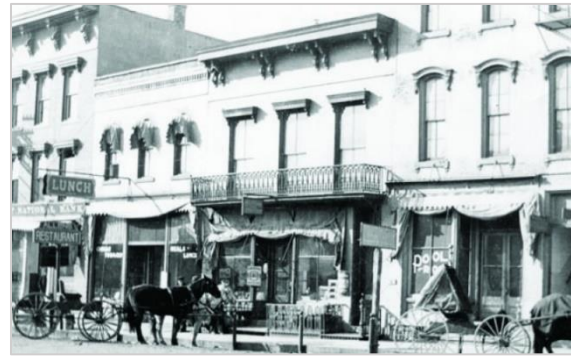
*Crossroads to Opportunity welcome sign  
Source: City of DeWitt*

DeWitt has the character of a small, Midwestern hometown. The relatively small population gives DeWitt the feel of a close and connected community. The historic root of DeWitt is its agricultural industry. DeWitt has developed at an excellent access point to road and rail transportation. This has contributed to increased access to surrounding areas and markets, allowing DeWitt to thrive. At a time when less than 10% of the U.S. population lives in true rural areas and at a time when many of those rural places throughout the nation are shrinking and disappearing, DeWitt continues to add residents, businesses and employment opportunities.

The goal of the Community Character chapter is to identify and build on the unique elements that make DeWitt – the “Crossroads to Opportunity” -- a special place.

## COMMUNITY HISTORY

DeWitt was founded in 1836 by settlers from the eastern United States. It originally was known as Vandenburg. Later, the community was renamed DeWitt, after DeWitt Clinton, who served as a U.S. Senator and governor of New York. DeWitt saw a population boom of nearly 5,500 people around 1856 when the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska railroad (now known as the Union Pacific) came to DeWitt.



*West side of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue -- 1905  
Source: DeWitt Chamber & Development Company*



*6th Avenue looking north – Summer 1924  
Source: DeWitt Chamber & Development Company*

Between 1841 and 1869, DeWitt served as the county seat for Clinton County. The county seat then was transferred to Clinton, a rapidly growing rail and industrial center at that time. By the 1870s, DeWitt was a thriving, self-sustaining community with numerous hotels, markets and a variety of shops and services.

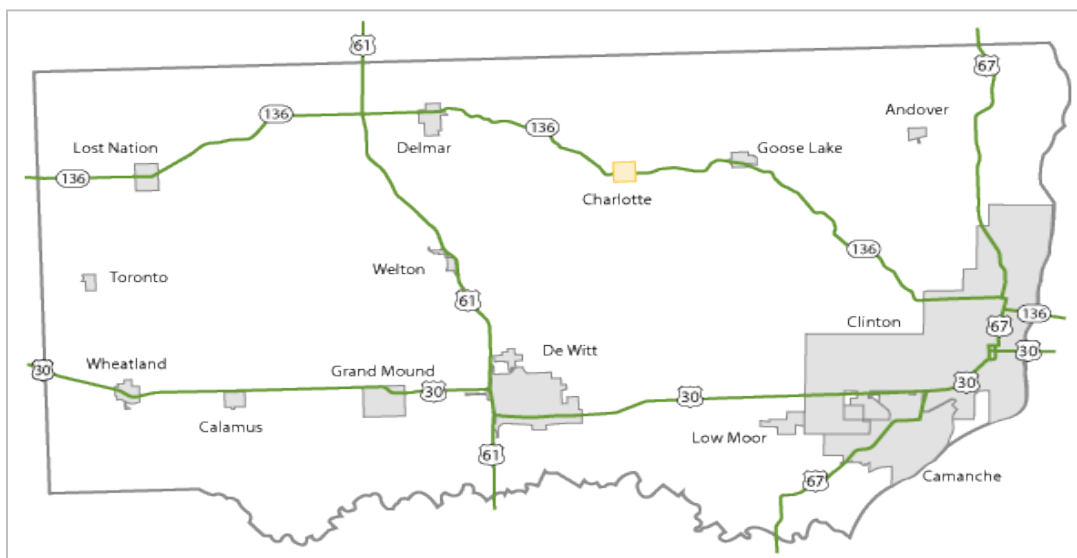


**“Shucking Corn” mural by artist John Bloom in DeWitt’s City Hall**

Source: DeWitt Chamber & Development Company

John Bloom, born in DeWitt in 1906, was one of the great American artists of the Regionalist movement. He participated in Grant Wood’s Stone City Art Colony of 1932-33, where he worked alongside his mentor. His art depicts rural settings and agricultural life, often inspired by his life experiences within DeWitt. Several of his works of art are exhibited throughout DeWitt. The idealized small-town life portrayed in his art is reflective of the character of DeWitt. Bloom died in 2002.

Today, DeWitt is the second largest city in Clinton County by population after Clinton, and the third largest in land area after Clinton and Camanche. DeWitt is located at the intersection of four-lane U.S. Highways 30 and 61 (see Figure 3-1). The historic crossing of these two original transnational highways, historically known as the Lincoln Highway (U.S. 30) and the Blues Highway (U.S. 61) is marked with a crossroads emblem at the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and a placard in Lincoln Park in Downtown DeWitt as part of the Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway (learn more at <https://www.prrcd.org/lincoln-highway-heritage-byway/>).



**Figure 3-1. Map of Clinton County: Cities and Highways**

Source: Iowa Department of Transportation

## POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

A fundamental part of understanding a city is understanding the people that make up the community. Analysis of demographic information and understanding trends revealed by that information is key to understanding the community and planning for its future needs.

DeWitt has experienced steady population growth at a fluctuating rate since 1900 largely due to agricultural expansion, development in the surrounding area, and its geographic location at the intersection of U.S. Highways 61 and 30. Figure 3-2 shows DeWitt’s historical population.

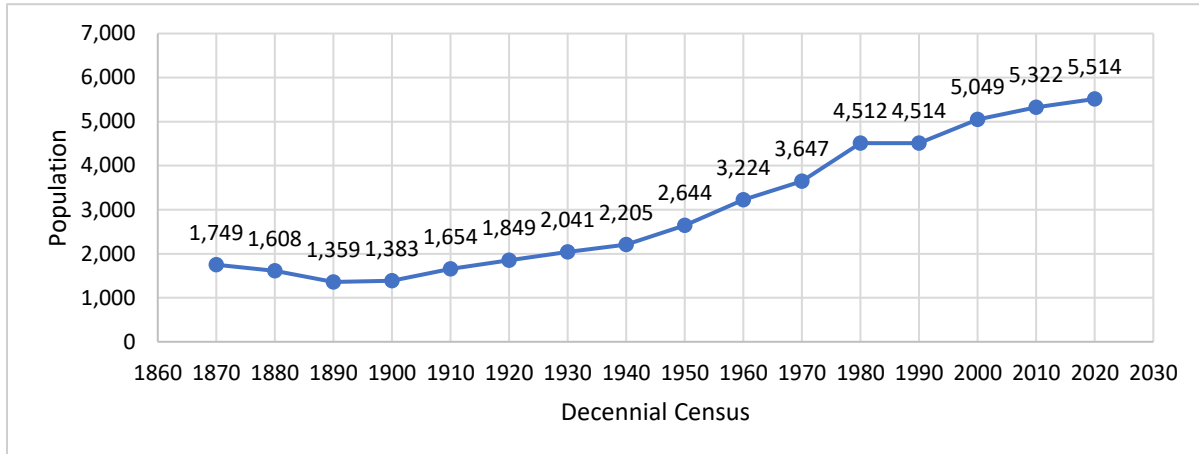


Figure 3-2. DeWitt Historical Population by Decennial Census, 1870 to 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau -- Decennial Census

### Population Change

DeWitt is the second largest city in Clinton County, next in size to Clinton. Due to its central location within the county, DeWitt serves the western third of the county with goods and services and is an active agri-business center, as well as a small industry-oriented community. Table 3-1 shows the population change in the 14 incorporated cities in Clinton County from 2010 to 2020, ranging from largest decrease to largest increase. Nine cities lost population, and five cities gained population.

Table 3-1. Population Change in Cities, 2010 to 2020

Name of City	2020	2010	Change	% Rate
Welton	121	165	-44	-26.7%
Calamus	356	439	-83	-18.9%
Toronto	102	124	-22	-17.7%
Low Moor	250	288	-38	-13.2%
Clinton	24,469	26,855	-2,386	-8.9%
Grand Mound	615	642	-27	-4.2%
Lost Nation	434	446	-12	-2.7%
Charlotte	389	394	-5	-1.3%
Goose Lake	239	240	-1	-0.4%
Wheatland	775	764	11	1.4%
Camanche	4,570	4,448	122	2.7%
Delmar	542	525	17	3.2%
DeWitt	5,514	5,322	192	3.6%
Andover	109	103	6	5.8%

Source: Iowa Community Indicators Program

According to the U.S. Census, from 2010 to 2020, DeWitt’s land area grew from 5.98 to 6.22 square miles and the population density per square mile decreased from 890.1 to 886.2.

From 1970 to 1980, DeWitt’s population increased by 24%. This period of high growth was followed by a period of negligible increase between 1980 and 1990, due in large part to the most severe agricultural recession affecting the State of Iowa in recent years. DeWitt also was affected by the closing of the Caterpillar plant in north Davenport. From 2000 to 2020, both DeWitt and the State of Iowa increased in population while Clinton County declined. Table 3-2 is a population comparison for DeWitt, Clinton County, and Iowa from 1970 to 2022.

**Table 3-2. Population Comparison for DeWitt, Clinton County, and State of Iowa, 1970 to 2020**

Jurisdiction	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<b>City of DeWitt</b>	3,647	4,512	4,514	5,049	5,322	5,514
<b>Clinton County</b>	56,749	57,122	51,040	50,149	49,116	46,460
<b>State of Iowa</b>	2,825,368	2,913,808	2,776,755	2,926,324	3,046,355	3,190,369

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Decennial Census*

### *Housing Development*

Attracting new residents and maintaining population is important for small communities. Population growth encourages economic growth through by creating demand for housing and expanding the customer base and workforce for local businesses. Population growth can also help the city financially. Increased economic activity ultimately leads to a larger property tax base that allows the community to expand services while keeping property tax rates low.

Building permits for new privately-owned residential units are good indicator of estimated growth and development. Using information from the 2020 Clinton County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Table 3-3 shows the number of building permits issued for Clinton County and the Cities of Camanche, Clinton, and DeWitt from 2016 to 2020 by number of buildings and number of housing units. The Cities of Camanche, Clinton, and DeWitt showed spikes in construction of multi-unit structures in 2017, but those numbers tailed off from 2018 through 2020.

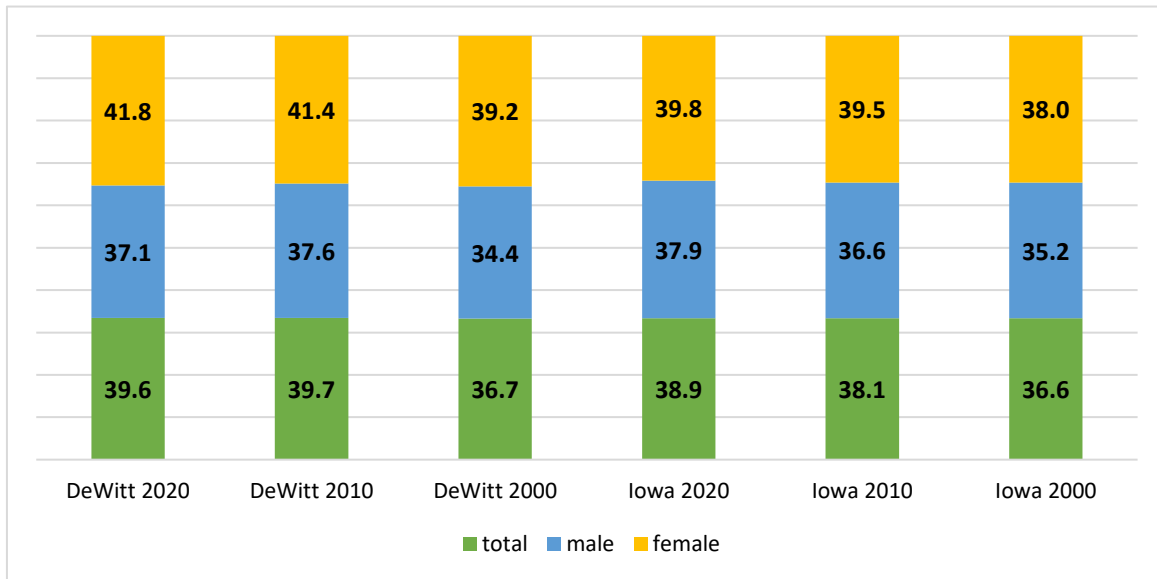
**Table 3-3. Building Permits Issued in Clinton County, 2016-2020**

Jurisdiction	2016 Total		2017 Total		2018 Total		2019 Total		2020 Total	
	Bldgs	Units	Bldgs	Units	Bldgs	Units	Bldgs	Units	Bldgs	Units
<b>Clinton County</b>	27	27	14	14	12	12	16	16	15	15
<b>Camanche</b>	6	6	17	66	12	18	9	11	4	5
<b>Clinton</b>	7	24	30	115	18	40	14	41	14	28
<b>DeWitt</b>	14	21	9	41	14	14	22	22	7	7

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau Building Permits Survey, New Privately-Owned Housing Unit Authorizations, 2016-2020.*

*Age and Gender*

Median age describes the midpoint of the population distribution. Half of the population is younger than the median age and half of the population is older. Figure 3-3 shows the median age for DeWitt and the State of Iowa from 2000 to 2020. Iowa’s median age increased for the total population as well as for males and females by almost two years from 2000 to 2020. In comparison, DeWitt’s median age decreased slightly for the total population and for males; however, the median age for females increased slightly from 2000 to 2020.

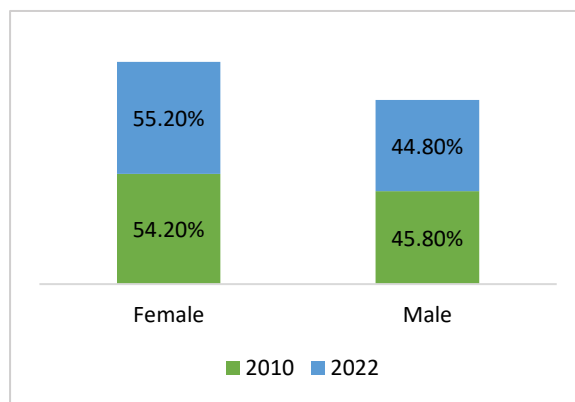


**Figure 3-3. Median Age by Gender for DeWitt and State of Iowa, 2000 to 2020**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau -- Decennial Census

Figure 3-4 shows that the percentage of females that comprise DeWitt’s population increased one percent from 2010 to 2022. Data is from the 2010 and 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

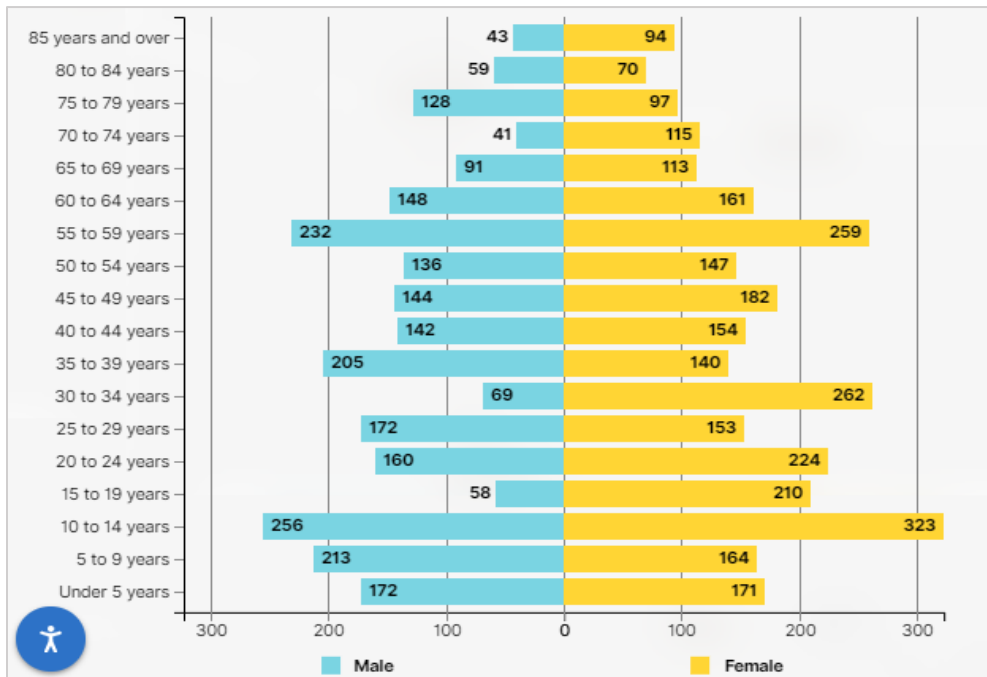
*The ACS provides data every year about social, economic, demographic, and housing characteristics of the U.S. population. The 5-year estimates represent data collected over a period of time for increased statistical reliability of the data for less populated areas and small population subgroups.*



**Figure 3-4. DeWitt: Gender Split, 2010 to 2020**

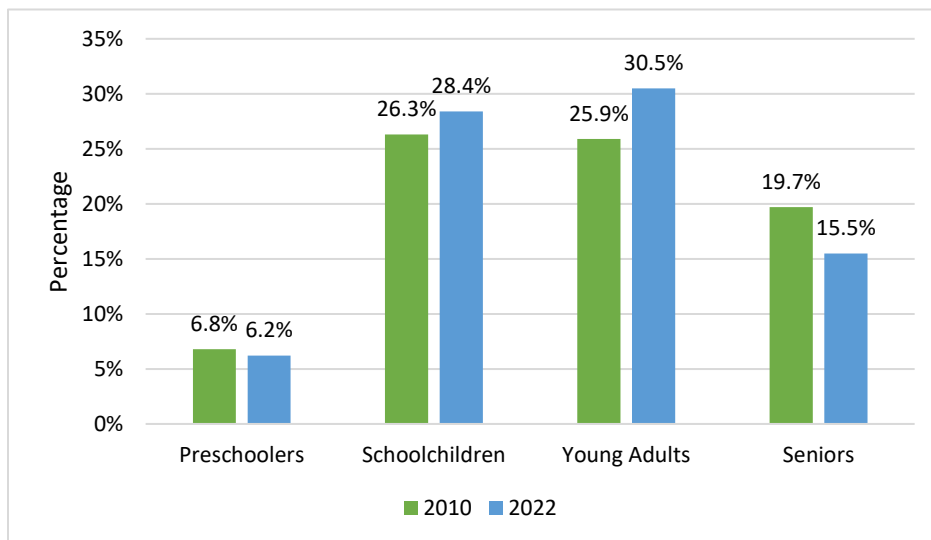
Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 & 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

A population pyramid illustrates the distribution of the population by 5-year age groups and by gender. Figure 3-5 is DeWitt’s population pyramid based on the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates.



**Figure 3-5. DeWitt Population Pyramid by Age and Gender**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 3-6 compares selected age groups in 2010 and 2022. The percentages of Schoolchildren (under 18 years) grew by 2.1% and Young Adults (20 to 44 years) increased by 4.6%, while Preschoolers (under 5 years) decreased by 0.6% and Seniors (over 65 years) dropped by 4.2%.



**Figure 3-6. DeWitt: Selected Age Groups, 2010 to 2022**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 & 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates



*Income and Poverty*

Income is the gauge many use to determine the well-being of a community’s population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the households falling below the median income and one-half above the median. For households and families, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families including those with no income.

The 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates indicated the median household income (in 2022 dollars) was \$66,653 for DeWitt, about 10% higher than \$61,080 for Clinton County, and a little less than \$69,588 for Iowa. Per capita income in the past 12 months (in 2022 dollars) was \$39,529 for DeWitt, about 20% higher than \$33,979 for Clinton County, and a little higher than \$37,949 for Iowa. Table 3-4 shows the median income by type of family in DeWitt in 2022.

**Table 3-4. Median Income by Types of Family, 2022**

Type of Family	Median Income
Families	\$91,557
Married couple - families	\$101,981
Nonfamily households	\$36,375

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

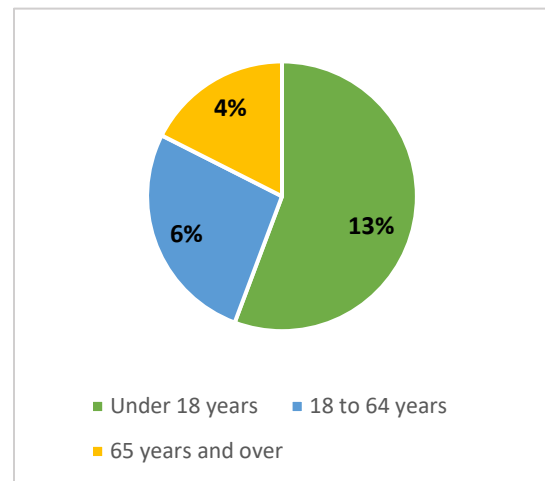
The population estimate for poverty in DeWitt is 7.6%, which is about three-fifths of 12.4% in Clinton County, and about two-thirds of 11.0% in Iowa. Figure 3-7 shows the poverty by age in DeWitt. Children under 18 years (13%) make up the largest age group experiencing poverty.

The United States measures poverty based on how an individual’s or family’s income compares to a set federal threshold. Table 3-5 shows the 2024 Federal Poverty Level issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Table 3-5. 2024 Federal Poverty Level**

Family size	2024 income numbers
For individuals	\$15,060
For a family of 2	\$20,440
For a family of 3	\$25,820
For a family of 4	\$31,200
For a family of 5	\$36,580
For a family of 6	\$41,960
For a family of 7	\$47,340
For a family of 8	\$52,720
For a family of 9+	Add \$5,380 for each extra person

*Source: HealthCare.gov*



**Figure 3-7. Poverty by Age, 2022**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

*Households*

The 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates indicated there were 2,019 households in DeWitt with an average of 2.7 persons per household, which is about 10% higher than 2.4 in Clinton County and 2.4 in Iowa. Table 3-6 compares population by household type for the City of DeWitt, Clinton County, and State of Iowa in 2022.

**Table 3-6. Population by Household Type, 2022**

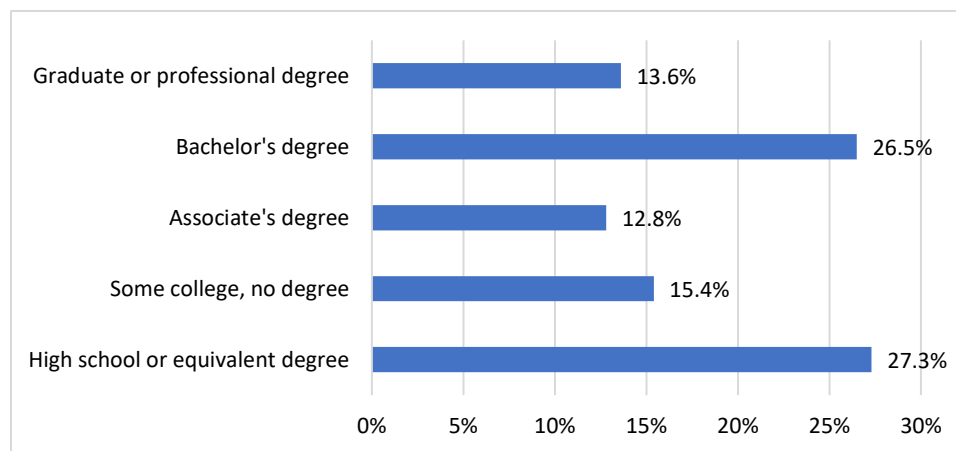
Household Type	City of DeWitt		Clinton County		State of Iowa	
Married couples	68.8%	3,710	58.4%	26,720	62.0%	1,916,410
Male householder	11.0%	594	9.2%	4,191	5.8%	177,798
Female householder	8.1%	437	14.0%	6,396	12.3%	380,690
Non-family	12.1%	650	18.4%	8,424	19.9%	615,422

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

According to the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the predominant ancestry in DeWitt was 44.4% German and 16.1% Irish. Population with a language other than English spoken at home was 5.2% in DeWitt and 8.9% in Iowa. In addition, the foreign-born population was 4.5% in DeWitt, compared to 2.1% in Clinton County and 6.0% in Iowa. The veteran population was 9.2% in DeWitt, compared to 9% in Clinton County and 6.4% in Iowa.

*Education*

According to the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the educational attainment for persons 25 years and over as a high school graduate or higher was 95.6% for DeWitt, a little higher than 92% for Clinton County and 93% for Iowa. Also, 40.1% in DeWitt had attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher, nearly double the 21.6% in Clinton County and higher than 32.3% in Iowa. Figure 3-8 breaks down the 2022 educational attainment for persons 25 years and over in DeWitt.



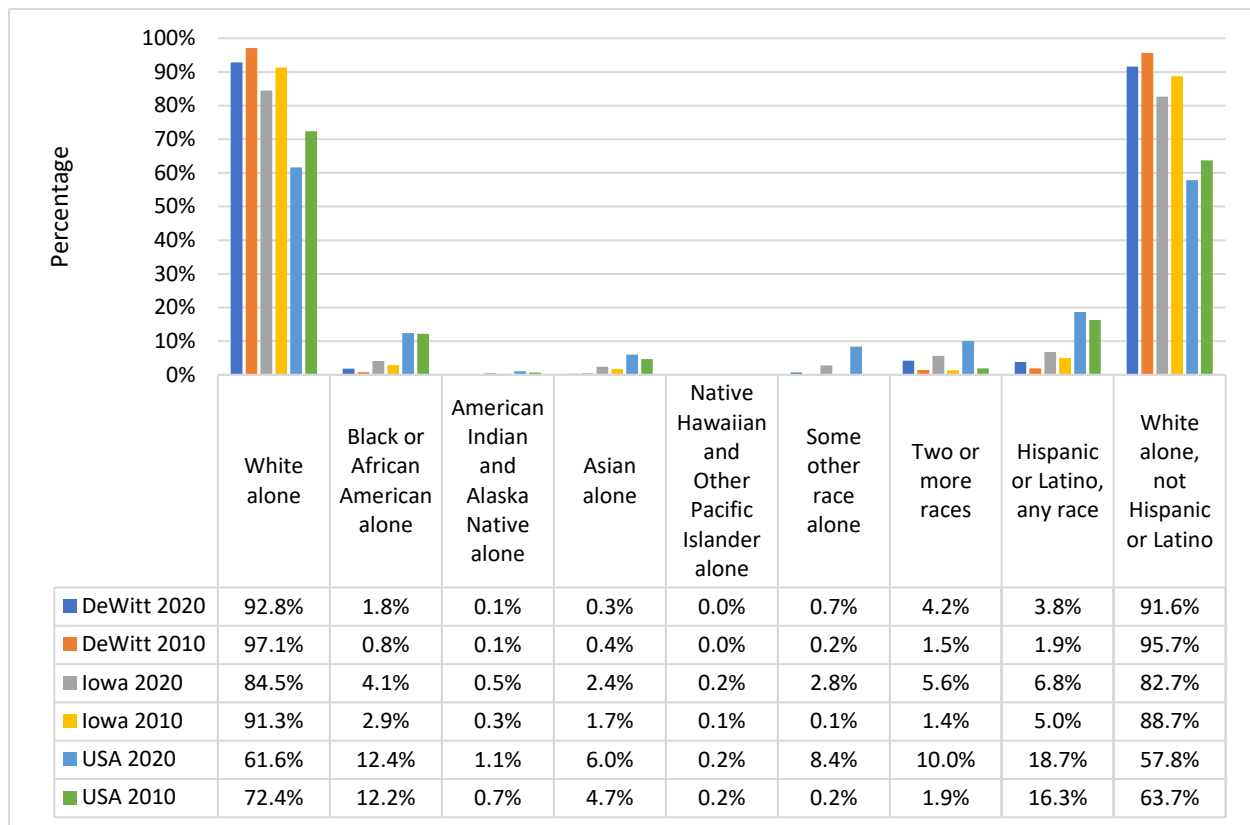
**Figure 3-8. DeWitt Educational Attainment (25 years and over), 2022**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*



*Race and Ethnicity*

The U.S. Census Bureau uses six categories for race: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Some other race. Respondents may report more than one race. A category using the word “alone” includes persons reporting only one race; for example, White alone. The U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanic or Latino origin as an ethnicity, not as a race. A person of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race, including white. Figure 3-9 shows that DeWitt remains predominantly white and has less racial and ethnic diversity than Iowa, which in turn is less diverse than the USA in 2020.



**Figure 3-9. Comparison of Race and Ethnicity in DeWitt, Iowa, and USA, 2010 to 2020**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau -- Decennial Census

From 2000 to 2020, DeWitt’s population of White alone dropped to 92.8%; any other race alone or in combination grew to 7.1%; and Hispanic, any race grew to 3.8% (see Table 3-7).

**Table 3-7. DeWitt Race and Ethnicity, 2000 to 2020**

Categories	2020	2010	2000
White alone	92.8%	97.1%	98.1%
Any other race alone or in combination	7.1%	2.9%	1.9%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	3.8%	1.9%	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau -- Decennial Census

## ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

DeWitt offers a variety of arts and entertainment for residents and visitors alike. Detailed information about shopping and dining, attractions and entertainment, community festivals and events in DeWitt is available online from the DeWitt Chamber & Development Company (DCDC), including a Visitors Guide, at <https://www.dewittiowa.org/community/>. DCDC is a private, non-profit organization whose focus is to support existing businesses, attract new businesses, and assist in enhancing the quality of life for the DeWitt community.

### *Shopping and Dining*

Within the four-block **Downtown District** DeWitt has a unique blend of shopping and dining – from specialty retailers, antiques and boutique shops, restaurants, caterers, baked goods, and a local supermarket -- to spa amenities, professional offices, and a variety of service businesses all. Outside of the Downtown District on the **11<sup>th</sup> Street Business Corridor** are additional shopping, lodging, and dining options.



**Downtown DeWitt**

Source: DeWitt Chamber & Development Company

### *Attractions and Entertainment*

DeWitt offers several museums, historical landmarks, golf, bowling, a local winery, and a performing arts center, as listed below.

- Central Community Historical Museum
- Central DeWitt Performing Arts Center
- Clinton County Fair
- DeWitt Area Veterans Memorials
- DeWitt Community Library
- DeWitt Lanes
- German Hausbarn Museum
- Springbrook Country Club
- TYCOGA Vineyard & Winery



**German Hausbarn Museum**

Source: DeWitt Chamber & Development Company

### *Community Festivals and Events*

DeWitt offers festivals and celebrations year-round, as listed below.

- DeWitt's Autumn Fest
- DeWitt Crossroads Youth & Adult Triathlons
- Downtown Wine Walk

- Hometown Christmas
- John Bloom Arts Festival
- Leprechaun Leap Wine and Beer Walk
- Paul Skeffington Memorial Race
- Pumpkin Fest
- Travelogues—Presented by the DeWitt Noon Lions
- Tunes in Town
- Summer Movies



Source: DeWitt Chamber & Development Company.

### *Parks and Recreation*

The City of DeWitt Parks and Recreation Department provides many recreational activities throughout the community, at parks and other facilities, as listed below.

- Aquatic Center
- DeWitt Dog Park
- Disc Golf Course
- Lincoln Park
- Mountain Bike Trail
- Paul Skeffington Memorial Trail
- Westbrook Park

Detailed information about parks and recreational opportunities in DeWitt is available online from the City of DeWitt at <https://www.cityofdewittiowa.org/>.



*DeWitt Aquatic Center*

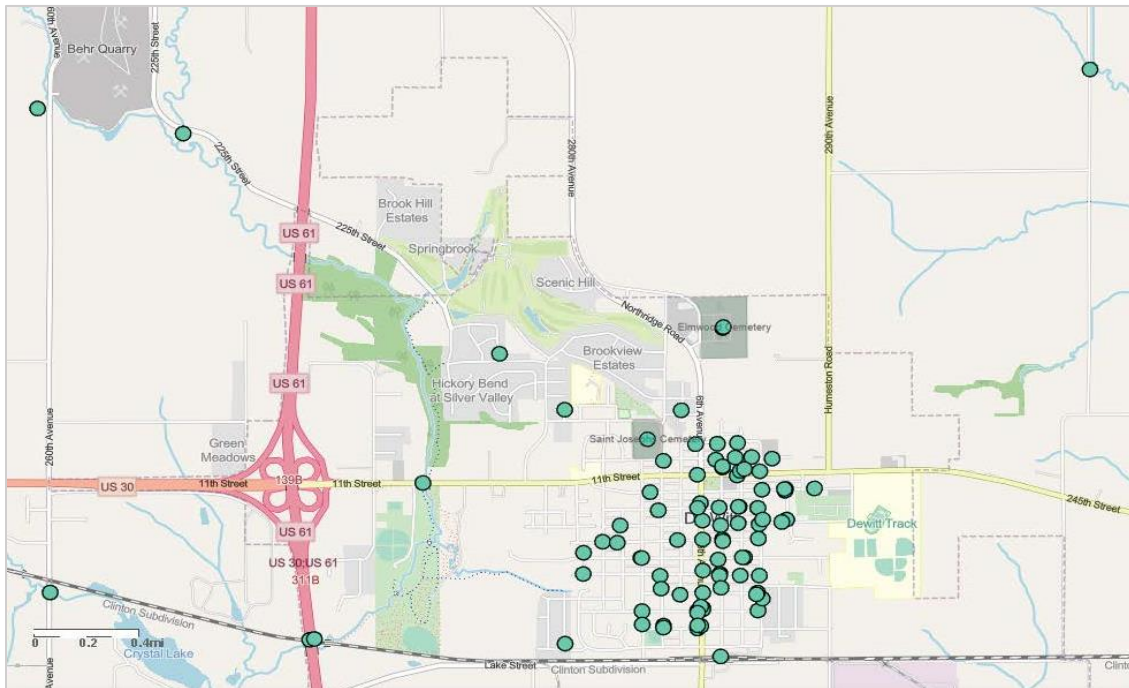
Source: City of DeWitt Parks and Recreation Department

Information on DeWitt’s parks and recreation facilities is provided in Chapter 7. Infrastructure, Services, and Facilities of this comprehensive plan.

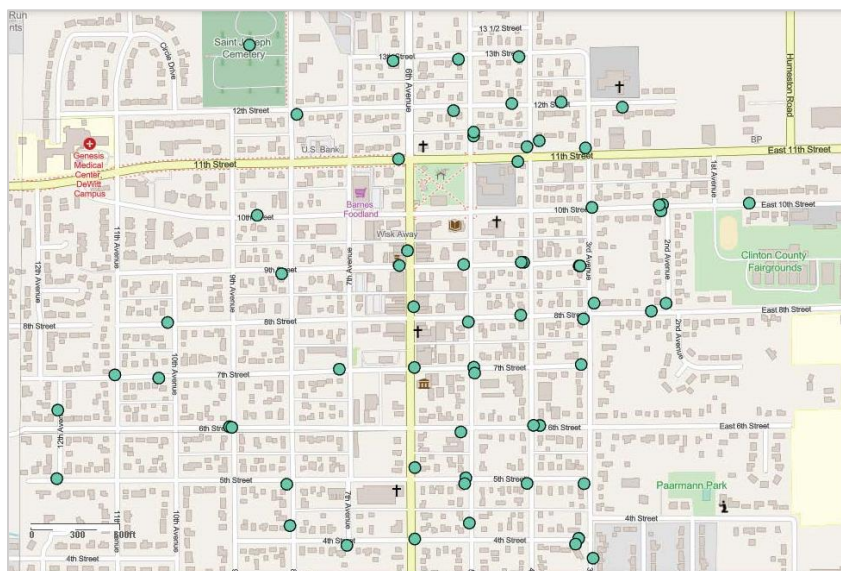


*Historic Resources*

Historic resources play a big role in community character. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is a federal-level inventory of places of local, state, and/or national significance. As of April 2024, there were no NRHP listings in the city limits of DeWitt. Figure 3-10 is a map of cemeteries and surveyed historic sites in the City of DeWitt and environs. Figure 3-11 is an inset map of the surveyed historic sites in the historic core of the city.



**Figure 3-10. Map of Cemeteries and Surveyed Historic Sites in City of DeWitt and Environs**  
Source: Office of the State Archaeologist -- I-Sites Public online database accessed April 2024



**Figure 3-11. Inset Map of Surveyed Historic Sites in the Historic Core of DeWitt**  
Source: Office of the State Archaeologist -- I-Sites Public online database accessed April 2024

The NRHP listing does not provide legal protections at the local level, unless the property is involved in a project that receives Federal assistance, usually funding, licensing, or permitting. Listing in the NRHP provides owners with opportunities for federal and state preservation incentives.

An example is the Iowa Mutual Lofts project, which will utilize a 20% federal tax credit and a 25% state tax credit for the \$16 million historic rehabilitation of the Iowa Mutual Insurance Building in downtown DeWitt. Built in two stages between 1924 and 1974 at 509 9th Street, this historic office building will be converted into 53 residential units. The use of historic tax credits requires the project to follow federal regulations for rehabilitation of historic buildings.

The City of DeWitt has a historic preservation easement for the exterior facade of the former Carnegie Library at 822 6th Avenue in downtown DeWitt. The building has been repurposed as a bar, restaurant, and event venue known as “The Old Library.”



*Historic Carnegie Library*

*Source: Clinton County Beacon GIS accessed May 2024*

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Preserving the community’s community character requires effort from the community and funding from incentive programs. The programs discussed below are focused on Downtown DeWitt. Additional information about financial resources utilized in DeWitt is provided in Chapter 4. Economic Development of this comprehensive plan.

### *DeWitt Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District*

The “DeWitt Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District” was established by the City of DeWitt in accordance with Chapter 386 of the Iowa Code, which authorizes a city to impose additional property taxes on a special district for specific purposes within that district, including an operation fund. The DeWitt SSMID was created to support the design and construction of improvements, and the administration, redevelopment and revitalization of the District, for the benefit of the property owners and the community.

The District is zoned for a broad mix of retail, service and business uses, as well as public and quasi-public facilities. The District Operation Fund uses the annual taxes collected within the District for non-residential property at a rate not to exceed \$6.00 per \$1,000.00 of taxable

valuation, in addition to all other taxes. The collection of District property tax began on July 1, 2007. The tax parcels within the DeWitt SSMID are mapped in Figure 3-12.12.



### *DeWitt Downtown Improvement District Grant Program*

The City of DeWitt works with property owners in the DeWitt SSMID to retain the historic facades of their buildings through the DeWitt Downtown Improvement District (DDID) grant program. Its purpose is to promote economic development, promote aesthetic improvements, and preserve the historical character within the District. The goal is to accomplish these objectives by providing financial incentives to beautify and improve commercial buildings in the District. These incentives are designed to assist in retaining the occupancy of commercial buildings and to promote the occupancy of vacant commercial buildings in Downtown DeWitt. Business and property owners in the District are eligible for a grant of up to \$5,000.

The DDID grant program is financed primarily by City's General Fund and partially by the DeWitt SSMID tax. The grant program has been suspended due to financial constraints caused by the State of Iowa's legislation pertaining to property tax.

## **COMMUNITY CHARACTER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations to be added later