

2014

Economic
Development
Strategic Plan



BERLIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

City of Berlin, Wisconsin

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Executive Summary

This report provides a strategic economic development plan for Berlin over the next five years in order to best position the City to capitalize on local economic opportunities. This Plan is intended to be used by the City and its civic and business partners to maximize efficiency and coordination of activities to focus on initiatives which have the greatest chance of improving the economy in meaningful and measurable ways.

This report also highlights past successes that the City has experienced as a result of economic development efforts to illustrate the potential for success. These achievements have included the retention, expansion and recruitment of new industrial businesses, the opening and expansion of several nationally recognized retail tenants, and continued efforts to promote private investment in commercial and residential properties. The City continues to stay active with regard to economic development. Recent initiatives include: revitalization of its historic downtown, improved connections to the Fox River, sale of the remaining lots in the North Business Park, and improved connections with local and regional economic and business leaders.

Recommendations in this report are based on past market performance, emerging opportunities identified in the 2013 market study, and stakeholder outreach conducted over the past year. Economic development opportunities in the City include the potential for:

- Increased residential development to cater to a changing demographics;
- Development of professional and retail space best suited to the types of goods and services with unmet market demand; and
- Attracting additional small employers to available properties in the North Business Park to help diversify and promote future employment growth in the community.

Initiatives and programs developed to pursue these opportunities will need to be communicated effectively to City stakeholders, prospective businesses and private investors. This plan represents a holistic economic development strategy which can be used as a tool to help coordinate, guide, and track future economic development initiatives.



This document is separated into chapters based on the distinct set of sectors which make up Berlin's economy. The first chapter provides a summary and history of existing programs and successes, while subsequent chapters focus on individual market segments.

The final pages of the document contain a detailed work plan which identifies appropriate partnerships and funding sources that can be leveraged to implement the plan. A set of benchmarks is also provided to facilitate more detailed and longer term indicators of program success. These benchmarks include economic factors such as: net new construction, share of new home starts, business retention, storefront occupancy, and increased engagement of local residents and businesses. Together, these benchmarks will provide a system of measurable outcomes to be used in demonstrating the City's commitment to, and success of, its economic development efforts. Demonstrating the ability to consistently follow a plan and provide measurable results not only will influence real economic growth but also establish the City as a credible and reliable partner for private investment activity.

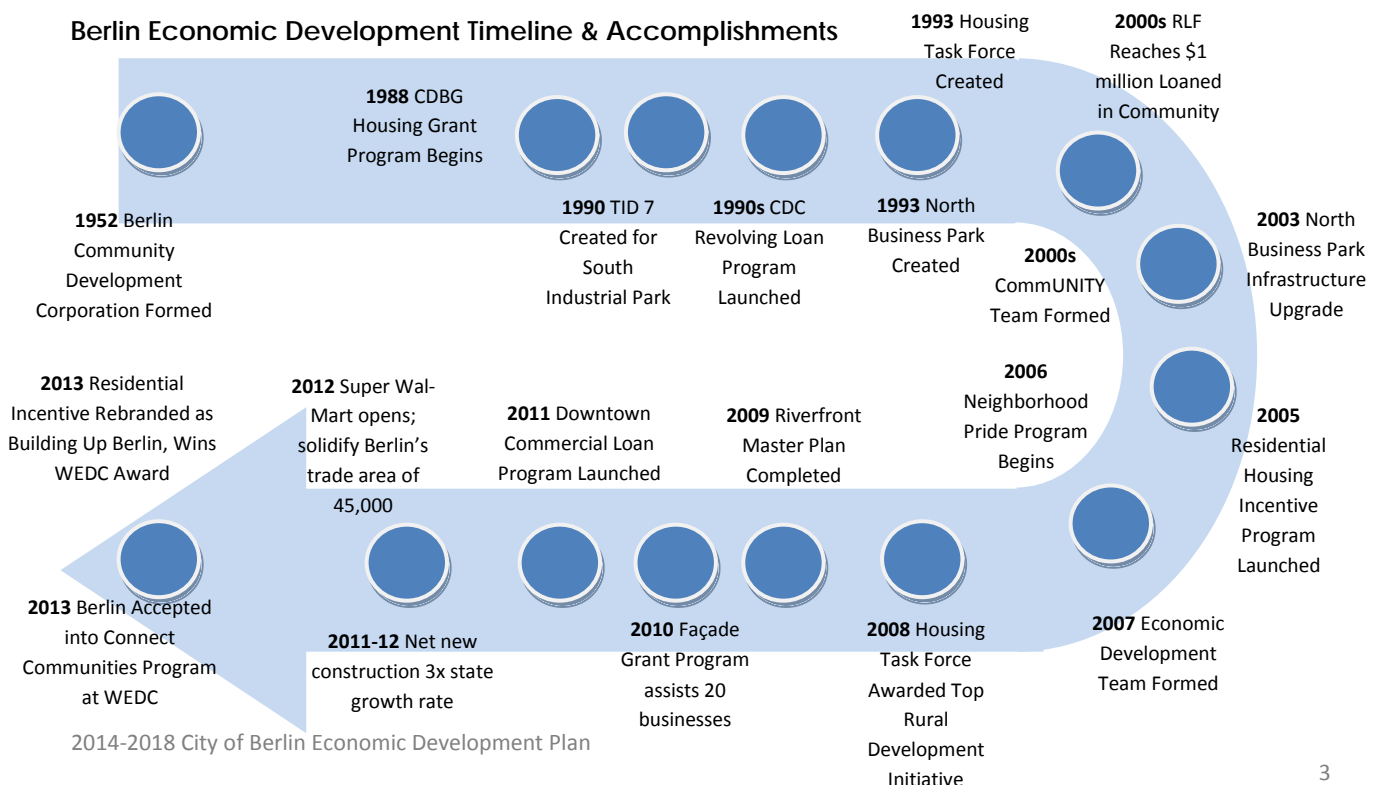
Chapter 1: Overview of Berlin Economic Development Program and Achievements

The City of Berlin has a long history of proactive economic development initiatives. As shown in the Chart below, the City's efforts date back to the formation of the Berlin Community Development Corporation in 1952, and have gained momentum over subsequent decades, reflecting a true team approach to economic development. The 2013 Market Study and this Economic Development Strategic Plan represent the most recent attempt to address changing market fundamentals and strengthen the local economy. Some notable changes have included post-recessionary economic shifts favoring consolidated travel patterns and greater residential options, opening of the new Wal-Mart Supercenter and related expansion of the City's retail trade area, and the dissolution of the downtown Business Improvement District. This plan will serve as a tool for City Staff and partner agencies as they evaluate existing programs and establish new strategies to grow the City's regional economic presence.

As a complement to the release of this study, and to increase the number of individuals actively working with existing and prospective businesses, the City contracted with Vierbicher to boost staff support for economic development programming. In addition to providing office hours in the community, Vierbicher staff conducted business retention visits, generated educational programming, and provided marketing assistance to increase awareness and exposure of Berlin businesses and programs in the region.

The final component of this expanded economic development initiative is this document, which serves as an economic development plan for the next 5 years while also identifying some long-term objectives. The plan provides a path for initiatives started over the last year, recommends new initiatives which capitalize on emerging opportunities in the marketplace, and identifies resources and tactics which will help set the stage for larger scale development efforts in key areas in the City.

Berlin Economic Development Timeline & Accomplishments



Existing Programs and Performance

In order to effectively build on existing programs, an inventory of available resources and programs was developed, including the target audience and any available information on the program’s utilization, measurement and success. Where appropriate, recommendations include revisions to established programs that are recognized within the community to address identified community needs. This strategy avoids creating additional administrative duties, streamlines program offerings and ensures that existing programs are fully utilized and meeting the needs of their target audience. The range of existing economic development programs, together with objectives and audiences, are identified during this review are included in the following table.

Program	Target Audience	Program Overview	Success	Additional Information
New Business Welcome Program	New businesses to Berlin	Members of CommUNITY group visit new businesses, including media coverage.	The group visits new businesses as well as businesses which have transitioned ownership or expanded within the City. Media attention of the visits has had a positive impact on business activity.	Businesses are also featured in CommUNITY newsletter, which is a coordinated effort of the City and Chamber.
CDBG Housing Block Grants	Low to moderate income homeowners.	Qualifying homeowners apply for funding to undertake household improvements. In return, the City holds a mortgage on the property until the loan is repaid or the property sold.	The City has loaned \$3.1 million to nearly 300 property owners over a 24 year period. Just under half of those loans have been fully repaid.	The CDBG housing programs have been transitioned to regional operations, and will now be managed out of Waupaca County.
Residential Housing Incentive	Single & Multi Family Home Builders	4% of assessed improvement value of new home, up to \$10,000, awarded to owner at certificate of occupancy.	For 2013, it is anticipated that the availability of program dollars for multifamily will encourage investment despite a slow single family market.	Began Summer 2005, excluding single year in 2012.

Program	Target Audience	Program Overview	Success	Additional Information
Berlin Landlord Group	Owners and managers of leased residential properties.	There is a \$10 registration fee for leased residential properties within the City. This allows the City to identify and track all 310 rental properties and 1,335 rental units.	The group meets regularly to address educational topics including legal, accounting and marketing topics.	The group has the ability to work with businesses recruiting new employees or hosting temporary workers to help secure rental units in the community. It also helps to reduce unruly tenants from circulating within the community by identifying individuals and communicating information to other landlords.
Berlin Community Development Corporation Revolving Loan Funds	All businesses in Berlin that are seeking funding for activities that will result in job retention or creation in the City, especially those making jobs available to low and moderate income individuals.	The Berlin RLF program is a locally managed loan program which provides a 50% match and up to \$250,000 for businesses seeking capital for real estate, working capital or equipment purchase.	2012 lending of \$650,000 to two local businesses. There are 6 additional active loans out of a \$1.2 million total fund.	Berlin's program has been tremendously successful, providing funding to a wide variety of business types. They also partner with Tri-County's loan program for larger projects.
Downtown Commercial Building Loan Program	Downtown building owners and tenants (subject to collateral).	Fixed 2% interest rate up to \$25,000 for 5 years. Option to roll renovation costs into purchase loan.	No loans have been made due to economic climate.	Partnership with Farmers & Merchants, First National and Baylake Bank to generate \$550,000 in program dollars.

Program	Target Audience	Program Overview	Success	Additional Information
Neighborhood Pride Loan Program	Home owners in City seeking exterior beautification projects, subject to property inspection.	Partnership with AnchorBank, Baylake Bank, Bank Mutual, Farmers & Merchants and First National Up to \$15,000 at 6% interest for 5 years or paid at time of sale of home.	The program has loaned \$377,000 to 36 homeowners over the past 6 years. One third of these loans have been fully repaid.	The program has had 18 applicants who were denied based on project scope, with 3 referred to the CDBG program.
TID #15	Downtown Property owners creating new assessed value.	10% of increment targeted for development assistance.	Vierbicher hired (using TIF funds) to provide economic development assistance for the downtown.	Negative Increment currently. Had originally projected 2 projects and \$3.9m in new increment.
Other TID Districts (7,9,10,11,14)		City TIF incentives are used to fund infrastructure or as a developer-financed incentive over time.	Districts have supported the creation of the North Business Park and other infrastructure projects which supported commercial development.	All are projected to have positive cash flow, but limited existing increment to fund projects.
Travel & Tourism Program	Potential visitors to Berlin.	City funds this Chamber program using 100% of room tax collections (~\$10,500).	Establish a presence for Berlin within the travel & tourism industry	The Chamber's website streams a list of upcoming local events, and provides links to the City website and the Green Lake County Visitors Bureau website.

Chapter 2: Business Retention and Support

Business recruitment and retention efforts are the number one element of any Economic Development Plan. Small Business Administration research shows that 60-80 percent of all new jobs are created by existing firms. Although employment growth has been positive for the community in recent years, periods of growth and expansion can also place pressure on firms to relocate, either to areas with greater labor supply, or for more flexible space. Similarly, declining market conditions can create similar pressure by pushing businesses to consider lower cost markets or more efficient space. This chapter discusses multiple strategies which Berlin can use to more effectively identify and facilitate these business transitions within the community. Large employers and smaller retail and service firms are discussed separately due to the significant difference between the two types of operations.

Industrial and Professional Firms

Berlin is fortunate to have a number of large employers within the community. The presence of stable employers has created comparatively positive jobs picture, with only a slight decline in local jobs following the recession (see chart below). Berlin's role as a regional job center has contributed to its net positive construction number, and also placed it on a short list of Wisconsin communities identified as economic centers and prioritized for the development of workforce related housing, discussed further in chapter 4.

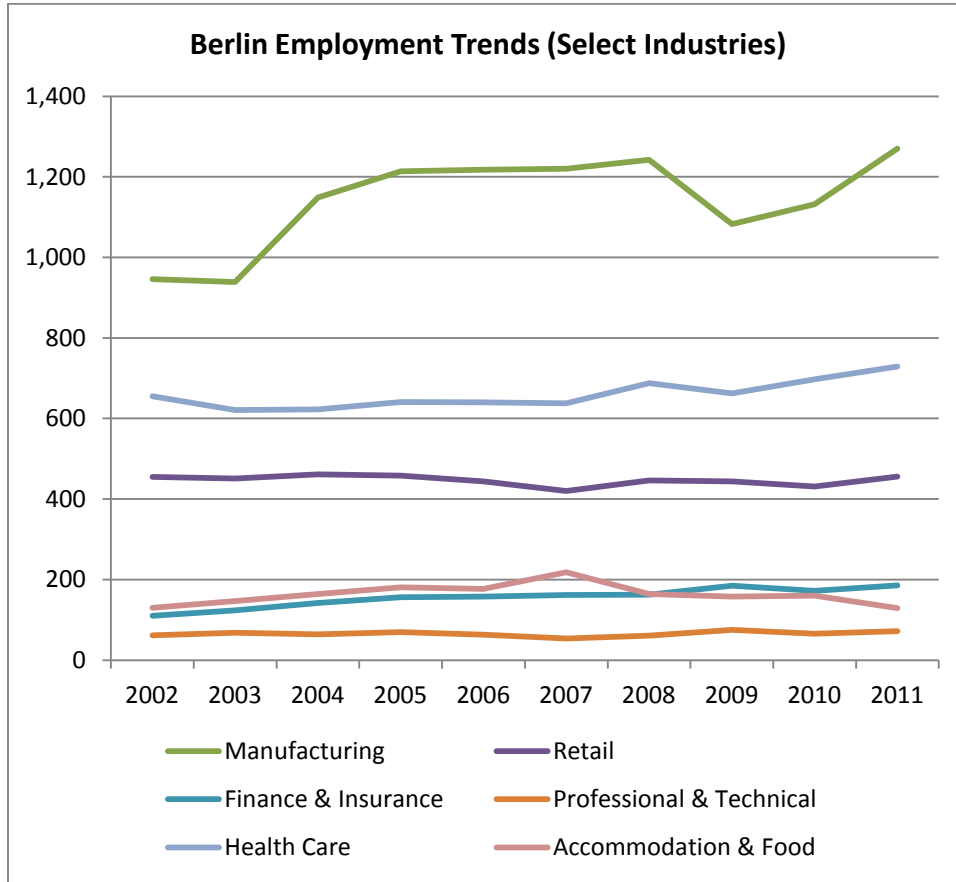


Source: Economic Census

Although the overall employment trend is positive, there are a few additional observations which are important to note which will influence business retention and recruitment strategies:

- 1) Berlin functions as a local economic unit, which means local indicators tend to rise and fall together, as shown in the graph on the following page. In this way, net job growth is the result of many factors, and not influenced by any one industry or combination of industries. This reinforces the notion of retention as a primary economic development

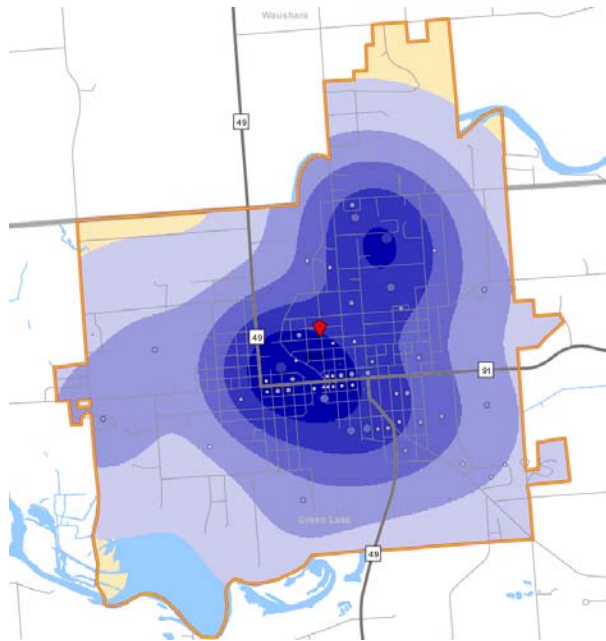
strategy – Berlin’s economy is well balanced, and growing businesses together will have the greatest local benefit.



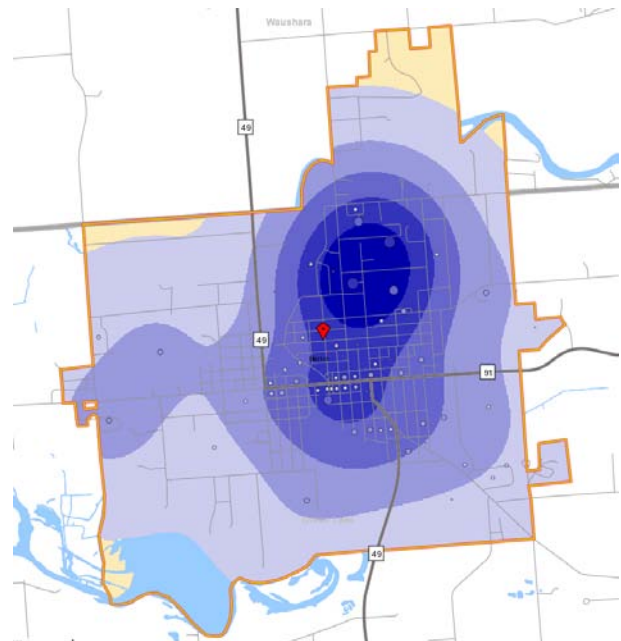
Source: Economic Census

- 2) Although the actual concentration of jobs within individual industries has not changed, a dramatic shift occurred in the local labor market in 2006. This was the year that the center of employment shifted away from downtown and toward the North Business Park. The two maps on the following page clearly show the change in employment density from 2005 to 2007. Although this shift in jobs did not have a net impact on the local economy (the number of jobs remained stable), this shift in overall employment and commuting pattern has impacted downtown businesses by reducing the number of daytime workers in close proximity. Strategies to address this impact will be explored in the second half of this chapter.

Job Concentration 2005



Job Concentration 2007



Source: Economic Census

Despite Berlin's relatively small pool of large companies and overall generous contributions made by these employers to the City's civic organizations, there is limited interaction among major employers. Although many are members of the Chamber, most businesses interviewed stated that they participate in few in-person business events within the community, instead attending events such as the Tri-County Regional Economic Development Corporation's Summit. While this type of regional collaboration is important to support regional workforce development and industry focused support, there are many advantages which can arise from a local employer network. These benefits include:

- The ability for the City to receive continual feedback from local employers,
- Increased efficiencies gained through effective and targeted communications,
- Increase in financial or strategic resources and civic partnership opportunities.

Additionally, businesses often benefit from semi-regular dialogue regarding workforce issues, shared vendor or supplier connections and other local business climate discussions.

Berlin has been proactive in creating infrastructure to support its manufacturing base. The development of North Business Park from 1993 through 2001 allowed for the expansion and relocation of Magnum and Phoenix Coaters, while creating opportunities to attract additional businesses. The business park has a number of improved lots remaining at reasonable prices based on increment and job creation. Currently, brokers indicate that rail-served distribution facilities are experiencing the greatest demand, with some evidence of manufacturing expansion underway. Berlin does have a shortage of small industrial spaces, with no existing facilities available under 10,000 square feet. A number of communities have help to finance

speculative small user facilities to address similar challenges. Such a program could help create a small user market in Berlin. Municipal assistance is necessary to offset the long initial lease up period to attract enough users within a smaller market. Communities that have assisted in the construction of smaller projects include Columbus and Beaver Dam, which both contributed to mid-sized facilities which can accommodate 4-8 tenants of 1,500 to 4,000 square feet. This type of facility can also serve as a home for a more formalized business incubator, when coupled with the availability of professional services and resources to assist companies with business planning needs.

An additional challenge facing Berlin's industrial sector is the number of underutilized or vacant industrial properties as a result of corporate consolidations, downsizing or expansion. The result of this practice is that Berlin has less business churn than would be expected, and has reduced opportunity to recruit new businesses into these spaces. In many cases, businesses engage in 'building banking' when they anticipate a potential future need to re-enter the market and anticipate difficulty securing suitable properties. In order to deter this type of practice, Berlin can employ two different strategies:

1. Encourage businesses which have unique facilities and a strong likelihood of re-entering the market to make their vacant buildings available for lease for a relatively short period (i.e. 1-3 years). This can help build local business opportunities while improving the balance sheet of the owner. Working with businesses to identify likely tenants and quantifying potential income available through this strategy is beneficial.
2. A second strategy is to reassure businesses that suitable real estate can be made available if and when a business is ready to re-enter the market. The presence of the established and highly-regarded Berlin Community Development Corporation creates the opportunity for build-to-suit and lease-back development, and the City has adequate industrial land to accommodate multiple years of demand. Connecting ownership companies with City and CDC representatives to discuss future real estate options and tools (up to and including first right of refusal on preferred business park parcels) may help overcome a perceived lack of opportunity in the market and will secure a company's connection to the City while freeing up existing real estate for productive uses. In many industries, newer space actually has many opportunities for cost savings through more efficient space utilization and/or energy efficient features which can result in increased productivity in the long run.

Professional and Industrial Business Retention Recommendations:

- 1) Coordinate with County and Regional Economic Development groups to participate in annual business retention visits for local employers. Encourage one City staff person and an elected official to participate in all County visits with local businesses, and consider conducting additional local visits at a reasonable rate (i.e. one per month).
- 2) Create a local manufacturer's group. Invite local manufacturing company representatives and representatives from other large employers to participate in periodic business summit (at most 4 times per year). Agendas should be no more than one hour in length and include networking time, municipal updates, and new information on a topic

of interest to businesses (i.e. grants for export training, new training programs in the region, school to work partnerships, revolving loan fund, etc).

- 3) Consider partnerships to encourage the development of small industrial condominium spaces within the business park. These spaces can meet a current gap in the market and provide a source of future business expansion.
- 4) Discourage 'building banking' through individual business assistance which supports the decision to fully utilize existing structures while retaining the incentive to return to Berlin in the future. Explore creative use of municipally-owned business park land or other incentives to provide market-supported industrial facilities.

Retail and Service Businesses

Because of its location within a fairly large trade area with minimal competition, Berlin is home to a full complement of small and mid-sized retail and service businesses. Additionally, Berlin has attracted interest from a number of national chains which have also chosen to enter the market over the past five years, increasing the geographic size of the consumer trade area and frequency of visits. Berlin has a number of existing programs which support this sector, including the Revolving Loan Program, which has funded real estate and capital equipment costs for businesses of all types. The Business Welcome Program and associated publicity is also especially beneficial in helping new retail and service businesses get the word out.

Because of the focus on net new construction as a means of increasing local tax base under Wisconsin statutes, Berlin should continue to focus on leveraging the draw of Wal-Mart to accommodate larger regional and national retailers on the western edge of town. There are already a number of businesses considering the location, although many will wait to determine if Wal-Mart's expansion achieves projected revenues. Many national retailers will determine a feasible rental rate based on a set percentage of anticipated sales. The ability to base sales projections off of known customer traffic provides more accurate figures. As more retailers locate and are successful in the area, sales projections will become easier to gauge and time to development faster. The 2013 market analysis identified specific demand for health and personal care, full-service restaurants, fast food restaurants, and home goods retailers within the community. These categories represent potential recruitment targets for outlot locations.

While the larger regional market will increase Berlin's stature as a retail and service hub, fully leveraging the increased customer pool will require coordination of small locally owned businesses. The Chamber currently provides significant exposure for businesses in the immediate market through a variety of marketing, event and outreach initiatives, but Berlin businesses often have limited exposure within the larger regional trade area. A merchant's group or informal network of related businesses could take advantage of bulk ad rates to target a large audience in a consistent and coordinated fashion. Timing ad buys to coincide with local events will further enhance the visitor experience and increase the potential for return visits. From the City's perspective, allowing businesses to utilize creative signage during set timeframes (i.e. during events, one weekend per month, or for one month after opening, etc) to attract attention from commuters and other passing audiences can help gain exposure for local businesses.



Allowing expanded temporary signage for new business openings, or limited outdoor merchandising (i.e. one day per month) can help small businesses gain exposure to additional audiences and vehicular traffic.

An emerging trend in many rural areas is the increased presence of self-employed and work-from-home individuals. With the increase in broadband speeds and the spread of virtual networks, more employers and employees are willing to consider remote work options for certain positions. As of the 2011 census, 4.4 percent of Berlin residents worked primarily from home (131 individuals). This is a higher percentage of residents than is found in many areas regarded as entrepreneurial hubs such as Dane County (4.1 %) and the City of Milwaukee (2.8%). The large gap between resident skills and local employment discussed in the 2013 market analysis also creates a pool of more than 1,000 residents who commute daily to the Fox Cities, which suggests the presence of a number of other residents working from home on a more limited basis. Based on this strong local demand, a co-working space may be supportable within the local community. This type of space would be best suited for downtown and could increase daytime foot traffic in key areas. The case study at right profiles one co-working startup in a similarly sized Midwestern community.



Case Study: Grand Rapids CommonSpace

Location: Grand Rapids, MN

Overview: The brainchild of a local web developer looking for an entrepreneurial office environment, CommonSpace is a membership based office option for professionals in Grand Rapids. Co-housed with the Chamber, members have 24/7 access to the facility which has 8 furnished workspaces, including AV equipment and secure storage space. Perks include high speed wireless internet, coffee, casual and formal work areas and a conference room. Membership is \$150 per month for full time workers and \$75 for part time members. The drop-in rate for daily users is \$15.

Outreach conducted with local businesses during the past year identified a need for additional small business training on a variety of topics. Access to information and instruction on specific concerns affecting small business was identified by many businesses as a hurdle to growth. The most commonly requested information topics included marketing, Internet and social media strategies and business succession planning. In response to these requests, a series of local workshops were held during the past year. However, follow-up programming and/or individualized follow-up assistance is recommended.

Although there is significant entrepreneurial and new business activity present in the City, there are also a significant number of established businesses whose proprietors are approaching retirement age. This is especially prevalent among downtown store owners. A full 25 percent of retail workers City-wide is over the age of 55, tied with manufacturing for the highest percentage of older workers. Although there are also a number of retail employees at the younger end of the spectrum, the transition of retail companies to future generations is significantly more challenging than in other industries. This difficulty is due to the need of incoming managers to purchase expensive inventory and assets, as well as the higher overall risk associated with the retail business model, especially for relationship-based sectors. Additionally, transition of client relationships and institutional knowledge is often more important for this type of business, increasing the lead time required for a successful transition of ownership.

Berlin is not the only community dealing with this issue, which is closely related to the overall aging of the population. The successful transition of locally owned retailers is important to the community and downtown, as businesses without a viable succession plan will frequently experience a gradual decline as proprietors choose or are able to work fewer hours. In other cases, a sudden illness or family issue can result in a sudden closure. In both cases, there is limited opportunity for new management to step in, and many businesses ultimately close, potentially eliminating the only business of its kind in the community. The presence of locally available personal and professional services is an important element of the overall sense of community and may be critically important for older individuals or those with limited mobility.

Fortunately, there are a number of examples of programs which have successfully addressed this issue in other communities. In many cases, grant funding has been made available to

Case Study: Business Succession Planning
*Fillmore County
Economic Development Office*

Business Succession Planning Program



Location: Fillmore County, MN

Program: The program was initiated by the Spring Valley EDA and was targeted at succession planning for local farmers. The program has participants attend a series of four courses intended to walk businesses through major issues associated with business succession and transition.

Partners: Spring Valley EDA, Fillmore County, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Rochester Community and Technical College, SBDC, local attorneys and financial planners.

Funding: The program is funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation with a local match by the County Economic Development group. Participants in seminar sessions pay a small fee of \$10 per business or farm.

Comments: The program utilizes local knowledge to develop customized programs for individual businesses. Some of the plans which have been successfully implemented have included the marketing and sale of a business to an entrepreneur, a plan to relocate an existing employee to pursue management training, and a local bank which developed a board succession plan.

businesses to encourage them to seek out the services of attorneys, lawyers and accountants to better plan for the future of their business. These funding sources are largely unavailable in Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin operates the Family Business Center, which provides networking and resources on this topic, but most events are in Madison and would be unlikely to appeal to local proprietors. The case study on previous page highlights one successful program which utilized local talent.

Retail and Service Business Support Recommendations:

- 1) Identify a space suitable for startup of a co-working facility, ideally in or adjacent to downtown. The Chamber would be an ideal partner for this type of facility, especially if they can serve as a permanent tenant of the space.
- 2) Facilitate discussion between large national and small local retail managers to develop a coordinated advertising schedule and explore the potential to facilitate strategic local marketing efforts by existing businesses to increase exposure and visibility.
- 3) In coordination with technical colleges, business organizations and civic groups, coordinate a regular business education series addressing topics of interest to local small businesses. Organizations such as WWBIC, the SBDC and technical colleges can facilitate group training on a variety of topics. This activity could be developed in coordination with the Chamber, or potentially expanded to a broader County-wide initiative to provide a broader array of topics.
- 4) Explore partnerships and/or funding sources which would facilitate and encourage business succession planning activity within the community. As a future phase, Berlin could work with other partners to match entrepreneurs with aging business owners interested in selling.

Chapter 3: Business Recruitment and Market Growth

Although a majority of economic growth and development will come from existing businesses, the availability of existing multiple new and infill development sites presents an opportunity to recruit additional businesses into the City. These sites include opportunities in each of the retail, professional and industrial sectors. Additionally, as a regional employment and retail center, Berlin has an ongoing opportunity to attract new residents, businesses and investment to the community from the broader Fox Valley area. Accomplishing this will require marketing and outreach initiatives to establish a broader awareness of Berlin's accomplishments and opportunities.

Recruitment Opportunities

The 2013 market analysis identified several industry and business sectors which are a good fit for Berlin based on consumer spending, workforce skills and geographic location. These opportunities are summarized below based on the type of space required.

Office/Professional:

Significant workforce talent exists in finance, insurance, health care, and professional services. Large companies in these sectors headquartered in the Fox Valley may consider satellite facilities in Berlin to better serve a broader population base or facilitate recruitment of talented workers. Additionally, the already high number of work-from-home individuals in the community is expected to continue to grow, creating potential for executive suite type arrangements as companies look to retain qualified workers in light of the more competitive labor environment created by a surge of retiring baby boomers.

Much of the new professional establishment growth has occurred on the east side of the community, between Huron Street and CHN Hospital. This location provides convenient access for many local residents and a direct connection to Oshkosh for regional visitors. This steady traffic and proximity to hospital activity creates a natural location for a professional services cluster. Continued facility investments by the hospital also create a positive impression for visitors to businesses in this area. Given the lack of existing modern professional space in the community, most new businesses to Berlin will need to invest in interior improvements to existing structures (as in downtown), perform similar upgrades to residential structures or build a new facility to create suitable office opportunities. The City can work with businesses already planning new development to encourage them to incorporate a small amount of expansion space into the structure which could be leased to third party businesses in the near term in order to increase space options for existing or prospective businesses.

Case Study: Shovel-Ready Building Planning



Location: Rock County, WI
Overview: Although the County had previously pursued shovel-ready recognition for more than 600 acres of business parks, they recognized that low industrial vacancy limited prospect activity in the County. Rock County 5.0 worked with regional partners to develop an online portfolio of building designs and site plans for various types of facilities which meet building codes and zoning requirements in each park. Prospects can select from among these plans for expedited construction planning.
www.rockcountyalliance.com

Industrial:

The regional industrial market has begun to recover post-recession. However, excess space still exists in the region, especially for large facilities, which limits demand for new construction. Some development activity has begun for logistics and distribution space, but Berlin's lack of an active rail line and distance from major 4-lane highways makes this an unlikely target for the City. In the near term, smaller user spaces and leased space are likely to be in greater demand, and a shortage of these spaces currently exists within the market. Ensuring that small businesses can locate and grow in Berlin is important because it encourages a diverse business mix and provides space for small and mid-size businesses to grow and remain in the community. Many smaller businesses cannot afford to purchase space, and smaller lease options are minimal, especially for space with adequate loading and power.

The BCDC has historically been aggressive in pursuing users for the industrial parks and facilitating transactions for available land and buildings. An emerging trend in industrial expansion is the shrinking relocation period, as companies which have put off expansion during the recession are now looking for immediate expansion and/or relocation space. Many companies have observed a large quantity of available space in the market over the past several years but are now discovering that suitable facilities may not be readily available as activity has increased. Developers and Community Development Corporations are responding by creating one or more shovel-ready building designs for vacant parcels. This process includes development of building plans for commonly demanded facilities which are then pre-approved and can be constructed in as little as six months. For companies with fairly traditional space requirements, these pre-approved facilities can save time and money, creating a competitive advantage for business parks which provide this option.

Retail:

The most immediate market supported retail and service uses include full and limited-service restaurants, household furnishings and home goods, and health and personal care.

Future retail growth is likely to occur in both downtown and on the west side of the community. The two districts offer distinctly different amenities and will attract a unique mix of businesses. Some businesses value the sense of identity and proximity to numerous additional businesses that is found in a downtown setting, while others prefer to locate near major traffic generators in order to maximize traffic volume. Downtown businesses typically cater to a clientele who is traveling specifically to their business, and small businesses can take advantage of unique (and often affordable) space options. West side business growth will be led by regional and national chains which focus on a predictable customer pattern and require specific store and parking requirements which are typically only possible with new construction.

Although a majority of specialized retail development can be expected to be attracted to the west side, there are several sites in and adjacent to downtown which are currently undeveloped or contain parking lots or one-story structures. These locations represent an opportunity to accommodate mixed-use development and space for market-supported uses. Introducing additional residential and daytime employment within walking distance is important to help address storefront vacancy and support economic vitality. Working with property owners in these locations to create large-scale development opportunities which can be marketed to businesses and developers can help create additional destinations and activity centers for downtown. In some cases, this may require purchase of the property by the City or Community Development Authority (CDA), but can also be achieved through purchase options or other methods of establishing a solid asking price to facilitate development planning. The promise of new investment on adjacent properties can also be a catalyst for renovation and restoration of existing properties. Although Berlin has relatively few vacant storefronts compared to the large geographic size of its downtown, there are a number of properties which are underutilized, both in terms of ground floor uses as well as second floor spaces. Connecting interested property owners with the Commercial Building Loan Program as well as the new Wisconsin Historic Tax Credit (described in the inset) can provide the incentive needed to initiate a project. Identifying local accountants, architects or lenders willing to work with property owners to plan the project for minimal up front costs can also make the project more likely for property owners concerned about investing in a project that may not be feasible.

Development opportunities on the west side of the community are largely controlled and marketed by national firms, and are easily acquired by interested businesses. However, Berlin's small size occasionally creates a hurdle for national tenants who are unable to accurately project sales for sites within the community. This limited market information reduces the amount they are willing to commit in rent for the first few years. In turn, this reduced rent makes new development difficult given sustained high construction costs. Berlin's revolving loan fund has a substantial track record in facilitating all types of business growth and development, and should be marketed to developers of these spaces to help fill the remaining gap between guaranteed rents and construction costs. As the area becomes

Historic Tax Credits 101



Project Requirements:

- Total project cost of \$5,000 or greater, and completed within a 2-year period.
- Project needs to be a commercial use (including apartments).
- Project needs to adhere to Historic Preservation standards (i.e. preserve historic features such as windows)
- 20% of project cost can be written off of State income taxes over 5 years.
- Building needs to be built prior to 1936.
- Owner needs to retain ownership for 5 years (or repay credit).

Credits can be received for investments toward structural elements (floors, walls, ceilings, windows, doors, HVAC, electrical, etc). Acquisition costs, fixtures, design services and exterior site elements are not eligible.

increasingly developed and existing tenants are able to establish a track record, modeling returns should become easier and reduce the impact of this phenomenon.

The Revolving Loan Fund is also an underpublicized asset for overall business recruitment. Berlin's long-standing utilization of the RLF for a wide variety of business types and funding requirements makes it one of the most-used RLFs in the region. Promoting the City's successful use of this fund as evidence of its commitment to economic development can help demonstrate the City's economic potential. Additionally, tracking and honoring business successes as a result of the RLF program provides positive publicity for the City and its business citizens. As additional funds become available, locally or through a regional RLF structure, the City should consider hosting an annual event for regional partners to promote the program and recognize past recipients.

Market Growth Potential

Although Berlin is a regional economic hub, it also competes with larger Fox Valley communities for business activity, residents, retail and tourism. Capitalizing on the regional market opportunities requires a positive and top of mind reputation in the broader region. Regional coverage of activities within the City has historically focused on negative news items, and many individuals in the Fox Valley are unaware of what Berlin has to offer. Building and reinforcing a positive reputation requires a concerted effort to increase outreach to the broader region, and also establishing a public infrastructure which creates opportunities for non-residents to experience the community as more than a pass-through or one-stop destination.

Berlin has a number of assets which could be more fully utilized as regional attractions. The Fox River is an asset, which the City is only just beginning to embrace through the introduction of boat docks. Future development of riverfront park space as proposed in the Riverfront Plan will increase access to the river, as will continued engagement in Fox River Heritage group activities which can attract downstream users to visit the community as part of boating events. The city campground is also underutilized, and lacks the capability for online or advance reservations and amenities such as showers. A more aggressive marketing campaign to boating or other groups as well as more readily accessible information on sites and amenities could help bring overnight traffic to the City. The Nathan Strong Park Historic District is an outstanding example of historic preservation and has been home to a variety of events including the farmer's market and concerts in the park, but is off the beaten path and information on these historic treasures is not readily available to visitors. Adding an internet based QR code tour is a cost effective way to engage a broader audience and include additional local highlights.

Case Study: GR Tag Tour



Location: Grand Rapids, MI
Overview: In order to provide additional attractions for downtown visitors and to link downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods, the City of Grand Rapids developed an arts and historic walking tour. However, signage and installation proved costly. In order to minimize costs and increase the interactive appeal of the tours, the community used QR codes, which are scannable by smartphone, to access tour information. The stories, photos and text information provide a wealth of information on the City and its culture, easily updatable and with Foursquare check in options.
Learn more: grtagtour.org

Investments in aesthetic enhancements are critical to enhancing regional market growth. Visitors to the community are more likely to notice and seek out public spaces as part of their trip, and to use public amenities (parks, restrooms, etc) in order to extend their stay in the community. Highly visible improvements also increase confidence in Berlin as a business destination by demonstrating the City's commitment to invest in its business climate. Although many such investments do not have an immediate corollary in taxable value increase, they demonstrate a commitment to long term community enhancement which increases confidence in the community overall. Planned improvements should include regular support for small ongoing improvements such as refreshing downtown plantings and banners, public art programs, and larger projects which can be included in capital planning efforts. Smaller programs can be achieved through business-supported adopt-a-pot programs or custom art banner auctions, while planning for larger projects should be integrated with grant writing and infrastructure improvement plans.

For areas where plans are already in place, such as the Riverfront, the City should incorporate elements of this plan in any instance where existing infrastructure work is being conducted downtown. This coordinated approach to implementation increases funding potential and maximizes efficiencies. For instance, streetscape enhancements and contrasting crosswalks should be incorporated to any improvements on S. Capron Street, and any floodway or stormwater improvements should also include improved riverfront access and amenities. Improving the public amenities around downtown will create additional opportunities for spontaneous or planned events and encourage visitors to linger in downtown.

Business Recruitment and Market Growth Recommendations:

- 1) Explore opportunities to provide a shovel-ready building option for one or more parcels of land in the North Business Park. Solicit preliminary approval from municipal bodies to create potential for fast-tracked development to meet short term business needs.
- 2) Promote new construction of market-supported spaces and renovations of historic storefront through targeted use of RLF and matching grant programs.
- 3) Work with local partners to improve and enhance public amenities and downtown aesthetics to encourage visitors to linger in Berlin and to increase access, utilization and awareness of existing community assets.

Chapter 4: Residential Development

Berlin's proximity to large Fox Valley employment centers coupled with small town amenities creates the opportunity for Berlin to serve as a bedroom community for the region. Although bedroom communities create more limited retail and commercial demand than traditional neighborhood development, attracting these new residents does create opportunities for attracting additional sources of private investment, consumer dollars and professional talent into the community. Additionally, changing demographics will result in demand for more and different residential unit types than are currently available in the City. Recognizing and accommodating these types of demand drivers can help boost investment in Berlin's housing infrastructure.

Single Family

Berlin has a number of well-designed and well-utilized programs targeted at improving and enhancing the City's single family housing stock. These include the Building UP Berlin program, which provides incentives to encourage new home development, and the Neighborhood Pride program, which supports renovation and upgrades to existing homes. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to capitalize on these programs' successful track record to leverage additional private investment. The City has a number of remaining improved lots available in several subdivisions. With low interest rates and relatively high construction costs when compared to existing home prices, home buyers have little incentive to build a new home in the current economic climate. Additionally, most small builders are still limited by financing restrictions, and unable or unwilling to borrow funds for speculative home construction in an untested market such as Berlin. If current land owners are able and willing to defer payment for lots until speculative homes are sold, Berlin subdivisions could present an opportunity for small builders to enter the market which may be lacking in other communities.

Until recently, the Neighborhood Pride program had been paired with a CDBG funded revolving loan fund to facilitate home ownership and upgrades for low income individuals. With the transfer of the CDBG program to a regional fund, there may be an opportunity to provide additional local support for housing renewal. As TIF districts close, the City may also be able to take advantage of legislation allowing one year of increment to go towards housing renewal, with a focus on older neighborhoods and upper floor downtown housing. Marketing other similar and existing programs such as the USDA Home Renewal program can also be successful, especially if done in partnership with area

Leverage BUB Program



Berlin recently won an award through the WEDC Connect Communities program for its Building Up Berlin program. Moving forward, the fact that this program is eligible for multifamily construction, coupled with the presence of a high-priority census tract under WHEDA scoring, the City may be able to attract apartment home builders to fill current gaps in residential supply.



Similarly, supplementing the neighborhood pride program with housing renewal funds from a closing TID can help capitalize this program to pursue additional projects. Expansions could include curb appeal projects such as landscape and exterior paint/siding enhancements.

churches and civic organizations. Ultimately, rolling out neighborhood led initiatives will create a network of individuals throughout the community that can serve as a conduit for resident concerns and City notices. Long term, the City can also capitalize on an impending tax increment district closure to create a locally managed housing renewal loan program. Wisconsin statutes allow a community to use one year of increment from a closing district to fund housing renewal efforts anywhere within the City. With additional funding, the neighborhood pride program could be expanded to promote curb-appeal type improvements in addition to health, safety and maintenance concerns.

Although marketing will be more directly discussed in Chapter 5, spreading the word about unique residential programs is important. The recent home builder association presentation and planned local builder tour are two positive steps in this direction. Additional reinforcement through community videos and testimonials available online can support additional outreach and provide tools for partner organizations to use in promoting Berlin to a regional audience.

Multifamily

The Building UP Berlin initiative, which provides reimbursement of up to \$10,000 for new residential construction, is also available to multifamily developers. Although the maximum award is small, community investment can signal to developers and lenders that the City is an active partner in the development and help cover costs during property lease-up. In addition, the City is identified in WHEDA's scoring criteria as a high-priority location for new affordable housing development due to its status as a regional employment center. The competitive nature of Section 42 tax credits largely limits development of WHEDA-funded projects to communities which fall into one of these pre-identified locations, making Berlin a desirable candidate for affordable housing projects. In order to attract developers, the City will need to identify a suitable site, ideally located in or adjacent to downtown, which provides additional scoring points for the project. The tax credit funding system provides no funding for site acquisition, so a low-cost or subsidized site is often required. In return, WHEDA projects frequently incorporate desirable elements such as high quality materials and underground parking, which can have a significant impact on the downtown aesthetic at key locations. Similar opportunities may exist for senior housing opportunities, especially due to the presence of Community Health Network within the community. Although CHN intends to relocate and expand its existing nursing home facility in the near future, there will likely be additional demand for independent and assisted living alternatives in the community over the next few decades.

An additional tool available to the City is its Landlord Group, which is comprised of owners of rental properties within the City. These individuals are required to pay a nominal fee and register with the City in order to simplify code violation or criminal reporting. In addition, the group holds regular meetings to discuss common topics such as legal or financial issues and to address tenant issues. Moving forward, this group could be part of a third party confidential survey to determine vacancy and rental rate trends within the community. This would allow individual landlords to compare their properties to the market average, and also provide valuable information on opportunities and challenges in the residential market. Not only would this information be useful to prospective residents and developers, but may also help the City keep a pulse on the local economy and job market.

Resident Engagement

With the exception of the housing renewal program, most of the previously mentioned residential initiatives are primarily focused on new residents to the community. However, it was identified during the planning process that there are a significant number of existing residents who may not be engaged in or aware of community issues. As with many Wisconsin communities, Berlin has a large percentage of families which have been in the community for several generations. Newer residents often are not connected to this network, making it more difficult to gain information on the community, especially if new households work outside the community or do not have children in local schools. Although reaching these populations can be more difficult, they are a critical audience for marketing efforts, as they represent households which chose to relocate to the community. As such, they can provide valuable feedback on the experience of researching and relocating to the community as well as realistic perspectives on outside competitive advantages and perceptions of the community. Although this activity will be largely focused on marketing and outreach (discussed in Chapter 5), there are a number of policy and programmatic elements which may also be helpful in increasing meaningful resident engagement.

Berlin has several groups dedicated to coordinating community development efforts. For example, the CommUNITY program includes representation from municipal, civic and corporate partners. The group works to coordinate events, marketing, and awareness of Berlin activities, and produces a regular newsletter. This group is active and represents a wide cross section of individuals and organizations. However, by virtue of its meeting time and membership base, the group attracts older participants and lifelong residents. This situation is reflective of the situation found in many aging communities. In order to purposely foster engagement from younger demographics and newer residents, the group may want to consider holding several of its meetings during evening or weekend hours, and challenge existing members to bring an emerging leader to the meeting. Semi-annual events could represent brainstorming sessions or marketing planning meetings to identify additional initiatives or tactics which the group might consider to increase effectiveness and audience size in its communications.

Residential Recommendations:

- 1) Promote alternate financing strategies to jump start new home building activity in the community and achieve regional market share of new residential construction.
- 2) Maximize the Building Up Berlin incentive, and potential for tax credits to recruit multifamily housing developers. Identify likely sites for multifamily and senior housing development to meet community needs over the next several decades.
- 3) Utilize TIF districts and existing programs at USDA and HUD to fund complementary residential renewal programs.
- 4) Work to engage, inform and educate broad spectrum of local residents to recruit the next generation of leaders within the community.

Chapter 5: Marketing and Outreach

The biggest impediment to greater success in the City is that few people are aware of the City's numerous economic development achievements. The best marketing tool to support community growth is the support and understanding of residents and businesses within the community. Opinions have a significant influence on the perceived attractiveness of a community as a destination for residential and business investment. Although strategic marketing and outreach can attract the attention of businesses and investors, most prospective businesses will ultimately reach out to existing businesses and residents to gain local market insight. If feedback from such conversations is overwhelmingly negative, few investors will move forward with an investment in the community. By regularly reaching out to key groups of community members, listening, addressing concerns, and informing groups of successful programs and opportunities, the same group can become a marketing asset. Although not every business or individual will be responsive, cultivating relationships with well-respected and successful businesses, employers, and residents with large networks can have a dramatic effect on community perception. By providing these individuals with updated and useful information on the Berlin economy, local market opportunities, and available incentives, the City can achieve far greater benefits than from traditional marketing channels.

The most crucial element of a marketing and outreach program, regardless of audience, is the ability to provide consistent, updated and readily available information and messaging. In today's digital environment, the most critical first point of contact will be the City's website. A study by the Site Selectors Guild discovered that more than 80 percent of first round searches by businesses exploring new locations are conducted exclusively online. Similarly, more than 60 percent of households exploring communities will first explore online resources to identify potential communities. Although Berlin's website has a great deal of content, it often requires multiple clicks to access specific information, and is also not mobile friendly, which is a concern when nearly 40 percent of all web searches are done on a mobile device (Pew Research). As part of any larger marketing effort, the City should consider upgrading and streamlining its site to be mobile friendly and easier to navigate.

Regular communication of relevant information is essential for remaining top of mind in the marketplace, and is also useful for maintaining a positive overall perception. Once a distribution system for reaching existing residents, local influencers and key regional contacts (such as media, economic development organizations, and public sector partners) has been developed, certain types of activities should generate automatic messages to this group, such as:

- Economic Development Program Achievements (new businesses, loans granted, grant receipts, goals achieved);
- Marketing information on newly available properties;



The City's current website as viewed on an iPhone.

- Testimonials from businesses expanding or relocating; and
- Market updates (i.e. job creation totals, net new construction, private investment).

The already occurring business visits and profiles in the CommUNITY newsletter already cover many of these topics and can easily be converted into a short digital press release or social media post. This regular, one-topic style of communication is more effective in building a long-term positive message than larger newsletters because they do not require readers to interpret or browse multiple messages, or even open a document. If marketing is done through social media, tools like HootSuite can make this type of regular communications possible with less work by pre-writing and scheduling future updates to distribute information in a regular fashion.

Once a communication system is established which adequately reaches existing residential, business and civic audiences, there are a number of external audiences that the City and its partners may target to attract specific types of investment and talent to the community to achieve more specific objectives.

Developers and Investors

Although a significant portion of professional and industrial demand will originate through local companies and investors familiar with the community, larger scale speculative or multi-tenant commercial and residential developments are likely to involve developers and investors from the broader region. At least in the near term, larger well-capitalized firms are leading new development initiatives, with smaller developers focused on regional niche developments in familiar markets. Addressing larger scale development needs or more complex sites and projects may require firms specializing in a certain type of tenant mix or financing program. Attending annual meetings of relevant groups such as the Home Builders Association, the Oshkosh Chamber and Oshkosh Area Economic Development Corporation, as well as private sector real estate or banking events will provide opportunities to interact with larger developers and funding organizations on a regional basis.

Corporate Community

Although the CommUNITY team has done an admirable job of shining the spotlight on existing businesses in its profile section, non-merchant businesses have been less involved in municipal efforts. Although there are many reasons to engage this group, as discussed in Chapter 2, one of

Case Studies: Community Marketing

Sun Prairie 365

In order to focus attention on community and business successes and to recruit partners to help market the community as a business destination, Sun Prairie's Community Development Department launched a full year of blog posts. The department achieved its goal of compiling 365 individual business profiles, property summaries and informational pieces about the market, in the process introducing its 100 key partners to the many sides of Sun Prairie's business community.

Denver E-Force

Recognizing the need for greater communication with the broader community, the Denver Metro Economic Development Corporation created an E-Force (electronic task force) comprised of civic and business partners which have agreed to collaborate on messaging about Denver's economic opportunities. Partners will agree to re-tweet, post or pin positive messages about the Denver economy on a regular basis.

the strongest from an overall marketing perspective is their ability to serve as a conduit to the nearly 4,000 employees in Berlin. These workers represent potential customers, residents, investors, and a source of intellectual capital, and are a valuable asset. In the future, partnerships with large employers may support the opportunity to host worker appreciation or other days which recognize local workers while also introducing them to area businesses. Effectively engaging this audience is most easily achieved initially through human resources contacts, evolving into individual outreach as the program evolves. Human resource contacts can also benefit from participation through the ability to advertise open positions through the City's network.

Local and Regional Visitors/Customers

A majority of Berlin residents no longer live and work entirely within the community, and many do not have family or other ties to the City. These individuals have chosen Berlin for their residence, but often feel out of touch with events and information, and are not connected to existing traditional communications networks. One of the most effective ways to reach these individuals is through the use of social media, which reaches individuals where they are, whenever they are. Although the City does not have an active Facebook page, nearly 12,000 people have 'liked' the City of Berlin on Facebook. The Chamber also has a minimal presence on social media, with 140 'likes'. As local businesses continue to specialize and target individual customer segments from a broader geographic area, it will be increasingly important for potential customers to be able to find Berlin businesses and access community information online. For many customer-based searches, Facebook results are some of the highest ranking results, and provide a simple way to establish an active business presence with relevant information on operating hours and product mix. By leading the way, a civic or municipal page can help coordinate and cross-market local businesses on a social media platform, expanding the overall audience for Berlin businesses.

Marketing & Outreach Recommendations:

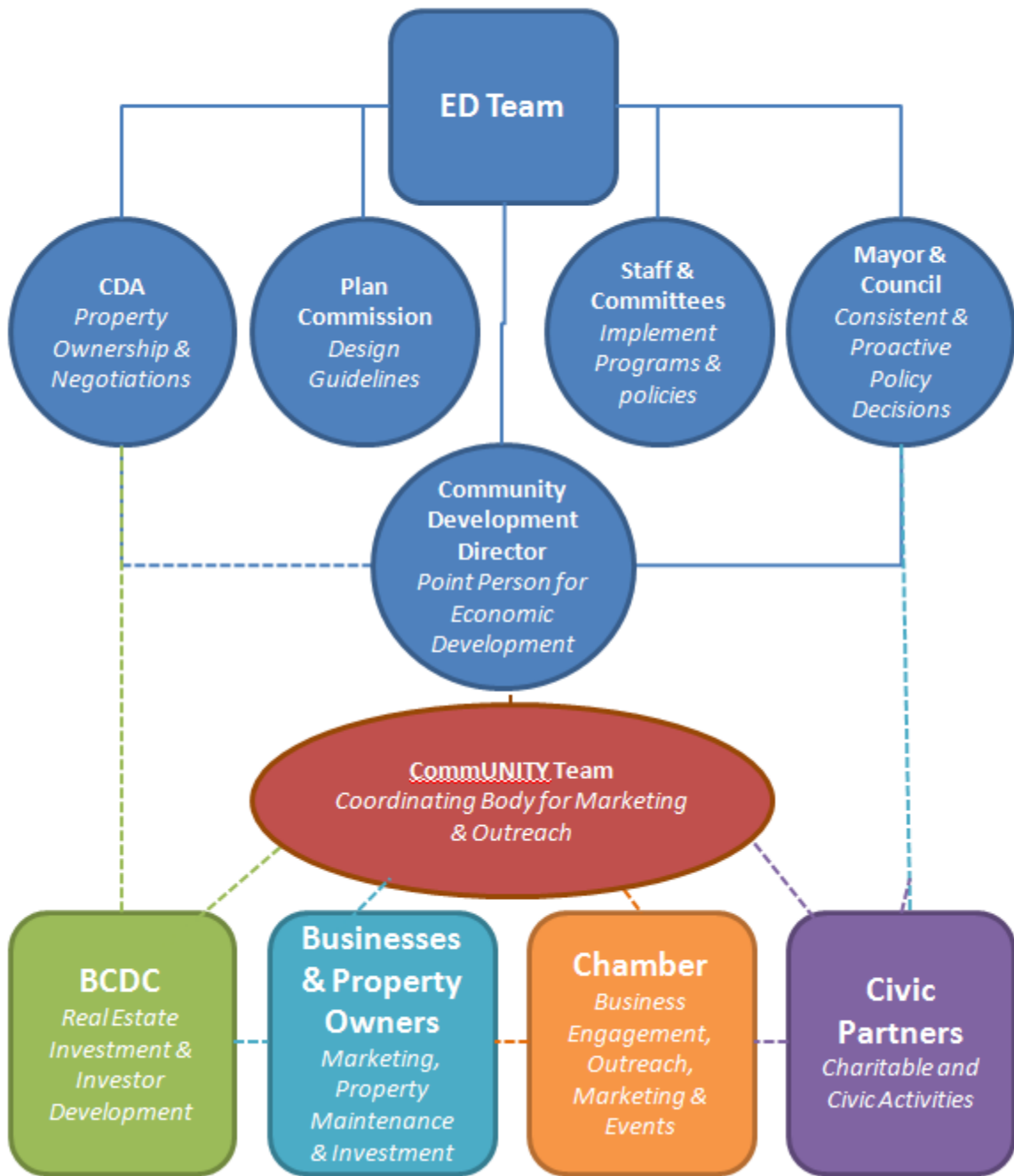
- 1) Identify and establish a regular system for communicating with key groups of individuals, including existing residents, local employers and business and civic leaders.
- 2) Create a system for ensuring that regular information and messages are communicated to this target group in an effective manner, and gradually expand to include targeted messages to individuals and groups with a particular interest.
- 3) Work to expand Berlin's online and social media presence, and to encourage cross-marketing and promotions between businesses and among individual customer groups and 'followers.'

Chapter 6: Implementation Plan and Benchmarking Success

In order to be successful in the four objectives outlined in this document, the City and its partners will need to work together to achieve common goals. From an economic development standpoint, Berlin is competing with communities that are larger and better capitalized, and will need to work efficiently to continue to grow and expand in the region. The work plan presented in this chapter clearly defines the role of each of the organizations which will play an essential part in moving the plan forward. These organizations include the City, BCDC, Economic Development team, Chamber and Community team as well as other civic organizations and individual businesses and property owners. The relationship of these organizations is illustrated in the graphic on the following page.

The graphic also incorporates two new roles which will be instrumental in executing the plan. The first new position is the proposed Community Development Director. This individual will serve as the point person for economic development and community development initiatives, and will be a liaison to businesses, property owners and other groups working to promote and grow Berlin's economy. As the point person, the individual will also be responsible for tracking and monitoring local market information, including work plan progress. The second new role is a re-invigorated Community Development Authority. Although the presence of a CDA does not create additional access to funding or financial resources, a CDA has the ability to undertake property negotiations and acquisitions, and can provide strategic oversight for City-owned properties. As a separate decision making entity, the CDA can also be more responsive to private sector needs than the Council, which is more conducive to policy making. The CDA can also partner with the BCDC as needed to address brownfields or other property related issues, and could also help administer some of the revolving loan funds, as needed. In order to effectively carry out these duties, the CDA will need to include individuals with strong accounting, lending and real estate backgrounds who can appropriately advise the City and manage any properties in its portfolio.

Economic Development Partners & Primary Responsibility



In order to provide a system for tracking progress and measuring success of individual initiatives, this chapter includes a detailed work plan, timeline, and budget for implementing the recommendations provided in this document. The work plan clearly identifies the entities or partnerships which are best suited to achieve each task, and will also serve as a tool for pursuing

future funding sources and partnerships by making these tasks part of a broader strategic plan. In addition to providing specific tasks for near-, mid-, and long-term efforts, tasks are prioritized according to their potential to influence measurable economic change. This will provide flexibility for the City and its partners to focus on high priority initiatives first, or to solicit partnerships to coordinate lower priority activities if staffing or budgets present limitations to implementing additional tactics in a given year. This work plan is located beginning on page 31 and is intended to serve as a reference guide for the City to use in work planning discussions.

As the City evolves its economic development strategy, including new staffing, it will be important to maintain a work plan which ensures a sustained focus on economic development. Economic development can be easily be pushed to the back burner by tasks which require immediate attention. This economic development work plan includes a broad spectrum of required activities, including recruitment, retention, outreach and development. Development will require a long term approach, as many projects require 24 months to 5 years of lead time for site selection, project planning and construction. Having a long term view of planned projects and investment or financing triggers which would support various projects is important.

To provide focus and demonstrate commitment to economic development as a core municipal function, the following 15 core work plan elements have been identified. Each of these tasks should be completed on an annual basis, and can be specifically measured to indicate a consistent approach to economic development initiatives.

15 Core Economic Development Tasks

Task	Completed
1) Meet with top 10 private sector employers	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Respond to all inquiries within 24 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Contact all outstanding/inactive prospects at least twice	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Directly assist at least 6 businesses (financing, reporting, permitting)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) Facilitate planning for at least 1 infill or redevelopment project	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) Meet with at least 10 real estate and development professionals to discuss City opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) Conduct at least one listening session with small businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) Facilitate at least two business training sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Update available property and land inventory	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) Update business and economic data on Berlin	<input type="checkbox"/>
11) Update Grant Writing and Capital Planning schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>
12) Meet with Landlord Group, Wal-Mart, Hospital and others to discuss industry trends/opportunities/challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>
13) Send monthly communications to marketing database highlighting Berlin achievements and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
14) Participate with COMMUNITY, Tri-County and other groups to coordinate services, marketing and community initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
15) Track and update key economic indicators and benchmark matrix items	<input type="checkbox"/>

In addition to these annual objectives, a five-year set of benchmark objectives has been identified. These benchmark measurements represent quantitative economic and performance measures which represent the specific outcomes desired by Berlin from its economic development program. Benchmark goals have been identified for 1 and 3-year time horizons to provide reasonable and attainable goals for the City and its partners to work toward. Where possible, benchmark goals are structured to compare Berlin's progress with regional drivers to reflect the potential for impacts from broader economic conditions. By tracking and measuring progress on these key indicators, the City will be able to measure the success of its efforts. The ability to demonstrate the success of individual initiatives will be useful as the City pursues grant funding or needs to justify future project investment. A benchmark indicator report detailing annual goals and current progress is provided on page 35.

STRATEGIES, TIMING AND INVESTMENT

Task (sorted by strategy)	Description	Timeline				Lead Party & Partners	Cost & Funding Source
		First Year	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	Long-Term (5+ Years)		
Goal: Business Retention & Support							
Business Retention Visits	Visit annually with 10 largest employers, and establish a schedule for visiting with other large businesses. Consider partnerships with WEDC or Tri-County to conduct business surveys, and consider inviting Council members to participate in visits.	●				BCDC, City, WEDC, Tri-County	\$0
Manufacturer's Group	Establish a local manufacturer's council, meeting quarterly or semi-annually to discuss business climate concerns, market issues and provide a forum for presenting funding opportunities or other services.		●			BCDC, City	\$0
Small Industrial Space	Explore development of small industrial condominium or leased space to fill a current gap in the market for small tenant options. Additional space options can accommodate a range of business sizes, promoting future industrial growth.	●				BCDC	\$1,000,000 USDA, CDBG
Maximize Facility Utilization	Work with owners of vacant or underutilized properties to help market space for temporary users or on a short term basis to support business recruitment. Facilitate lease negotiations, equipment storage or other arrangements to maximize economic benefit to existing owner and prospective tenants.		●			BCDC	\$0
Co-Working Options	Explore use of vacant storefront space for a co-working facility to accommodate satellite and work from home individuals as well as startup businesses. Increase daytime population in downtown. Private sector space formatted for co-working. Evaluate feasibility - how many home workers would use co-working space? Will require significant promotion & networking to draw out home workers.		●			Chamber, City	\$5,000 (start-up rent reduction)
Coordinated Advertising	Increase Berlin's regional brand by encouraging coordinated advertising by local businesses. Explore opportunity to partner on regional advertising to increase market reach and encourage coordinated sale/merchant events.			●		Chamber, City	\$5,000
Business Training	Coordinate a regular business education series addressing topics of interest to local businesses (i.e. social media, marketing, health care, etc)	●				Chamber, City	\$500 In-Kind, Fee for Attendance/ Sponsorship
Succession Planning	Work with Tri-County, WWBIC and WEDC to establish a business succession planning initiative to address rapidly aging population of small business owners. Market businesses for sale and provide resources to facilitate business succession.		●	●		Tri-County, WWBIC, WEDC, City	\$20,000 In-Kind, Fee for Service, CDBG, WWBIC

STRATEGIES, TIMING AND INVESTMENT

Task (sorted by strategy)	Description	Timeline				Lead Party & Partners	Cost & Funding Source
		First Year	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	Long-Term (5+ Years)		
Goal: Business Recruitment & Market Growth							
Shovel-Ready Facility Options	North Business Park has a number of available parcels, but there are few existing buildings available for sale or lease by new tenants. Working with local design build firms to develop a building plan which can be pre-approved for rapid development can improve Berlin's competitive position, and also provide more marketable site information.		●			BCDC, City	\$10,000 In-Kind or Deferred Payment
Downtown Redevelopment	Work with property owners at key locations in and adjacent to downtown to establish sale prices and market sites to developers with relevant experience.	●				CDA, City	\$0
West Side Redevelopment	Address potential gaps between projected rents and construction costs through creative use of RLF, and work with existing businesses to provide market benchmarks which support higher rents in Berlin.		●			City	TBD
Professional Space Options	Work with professional sector businesses considering new construction to consider including future expansion space which can be used to recruit additional small business activity in the near term.	●	●	●	●	City	\$0
Revolving Loan Fund	More aggressively market the RLF and its significant successful track record to demonstrate Berlin's commitment to economic development and business growth. Host an annual summit of regional finance, insurance and real estate professionals to market the fund and honor successful projects utilizing RLF dollars. Consider partnership with regional fund to increase lending capacity and project options as opportunity arises.		●			City, Regional RLF Manager	\$1,500 Loan Administration Fund
CDA Property Planning	Re-engage the CDA to facilitate strategic planning and development negotiations for key infill and redevelopment sites. The CDA should hold title to and develop a plan for all excess municipal owned property and work with the county on tax-delinquent properties to maximize economic opportunity.		●			CDA	\$0
Enhance and Market City Tourism Opportunities	Continue to pursue initiatives which connect the river to downtown, including introduction of riverfront park/event space, partnerships with regional Fox River Heritage events and increased marketing of riverfront camping facilities. Create online and user-friendly methods for accessing destinations, including online reservations, QR code historic tours and facebook pages for events and attractions.	●				Chamber, Historic Society, Boat Club, County Tourism	\$0

STRATEGIES, TIMING AND INVESTMENT

Task (sorted by strategy)	Description	Timeline				Lead Party & Partners	Cost & Funding Source
		First Year	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	Long-Term (5+ Years)		
Improve Downtown Aesthetic and Pedestrian Amenities	As funds become available, create a matching grant program to promote downtown façade improvement, including signage, maintenance, restoration, awnings and storefront treatments. Consider adopt-a-pot, banner contests or other methods of increasing downtown streetscape amenities. Explore potential for pedestrian activated stoplight or additional traffic signal to improve pedestrian crossing.		●			City, Downtown Businesses, Arts Groups	\$2,500 (custom art banners) Auction banners at end of year to fund next year.
Goal: Residential Development							
Speculative Home Development	Work with existing subdivision owners to provide deferred payment structures to encourage home builders to develop new single and two-family housing within the community on existing permitted lots. Participate in home builder trade shows and other events to attract builders to the community.	●				City, Real Estate Community, Home Builders & Subdivision Owners	\$0
Expand Housing Renewal	Expand the successful neighborhood pride program through partnerships with other existing housing renewal funds such as USDA and HUD for households that qualify. In the future, use TIF district closure to create a housing renewal loan fund to expand the program and consider offering incentives for curb appeal-type projects.	●	●	●	●	City, CDA	\$50,000 Future TIF Closure
Attract Multifamily Development	Market Building Up Berlin and WHEDA credit availability to attract multifamily developers to the community. Identify multiple suitable sites and create one-page flyers on potential development sites, residential market options and incentives.	●	●			City, CDA	Unknown - May require TIF assistance for demolition or cleanup
Engage Landlord Group	Engage Landlord Group members to conduct confidential apartment market surveys on an annual basis to establish vacancy and rental rate statistics for the community. This survey can also be used to identify opportunities or challenges in the marketplace and develop strategies to address problem properties.	●	●	●	●	City	\$0

STRATEGIES, TIMING AND INVESTMENT

Task (sorted by strategy)	Description	Timeline				Lead Party & Partners	Cost & Funding Source
		First Year	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	Long-Term (5+ Years)		
Goal: Marketing & Outreach							
Reliable Market Information	Continue to serve as a source of reliable market information on the community. Collect and distribute local market information, maintain updated economic and community overview materials on the website and distribute regular updates to business, real estate and community leaders, along with key messages about market opportunities.	●	●	●	●	City, Market Data Firms	\$500 (custom reports)
Available Property Marketing	Assist local businesses and property owners to effectively market available properties (and/or businesses) within the community. Provide relevant market information to real estate professionals with listings in the community, and encourage/assist individual property owners to actively market properties on commercial listing systems, craigslist or with professional firms. Maintain a listing of available properties at the City to provide to prospective businesses and developers.	●	●	●	●	City, Real Estate Professionals, WWBIC	\$0
Encourage Future Leaders	Make a concerted effort to encourage participation from younger and/or newer residents on COMMUNITY and other groups to ensure that marketing, activities and initiatives are meeting the needs of residents and to foster the next generation of leaders.		●	●	●	City, Civic Partners	\$0
Marketing Database	Build a marketing database (preferably for digital and print outreach) including residential, business and civic leaders as well as media and economic development partners. Ensure that this audience receives regular (goal of 1x per month) information about Berlin initiatives or opportunities.		●	●	●	City, Civic Partners, Businesses	\$0
Expand Online Presence	Work to expand City, Civic and Business presence online, and to encourage cross-promotion and marketing of Berlin assets, events and businesses to a broad local and regional customer base.		●	●	●	City, Civic Partners, Businesses	\$0
SUBTOTAL	Note: costs may be shared among partner entities or supported through grants or other funding sources.						Year 1: \$21,000 Year 2: \$29,000

STRATEGIES, TIMING AND INVESTMENT

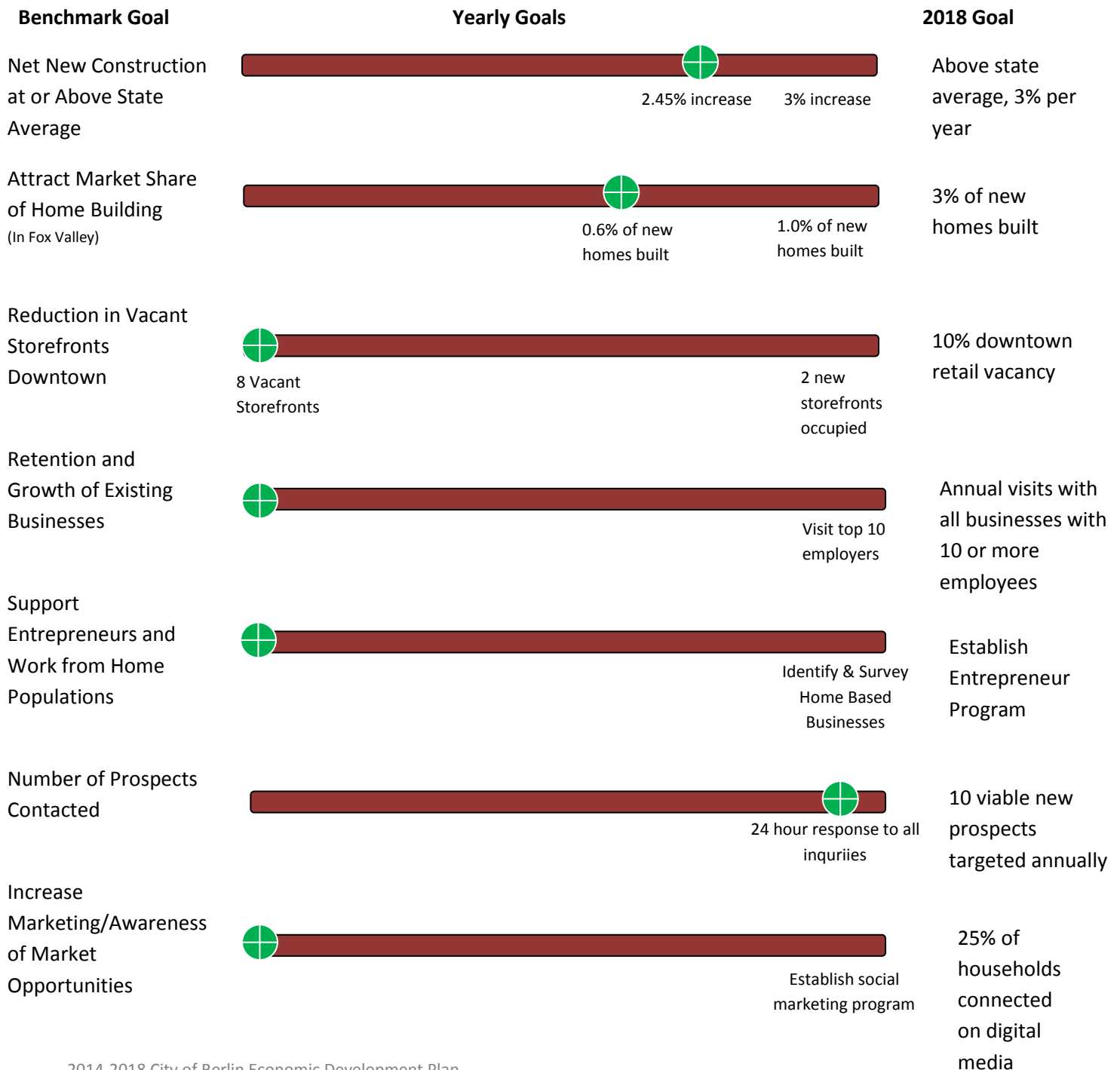
Task (sorted by strategy)	Description	Timeline				Lead Party & Partners	Cost & Funding Source
		First Year	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	Long-Term (5+ Years)		

Guide to Funding & Partner Agency Abbreviations:

- BCDC Berlin Community Development Corporation
- CDA Community Development Authority
- CDBG Community Development Block Grant
- DNR Department of Natural Resources
- DOT Department of Transportation
- SBDC Small Business Development Center
- TIF Tax Increment Finance
- TCEDC Tri County Economic Development Corporation
- USDA United States Department of Agriculture
- VHBA Valley Home Builders Association
- WEDC Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
- WHEDA Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority
- WWBIC Wisconsin Womens Business Initiative Corporation

City of Berlin Economic Development Program

The City of Berlin’s economic development program is focused on improving the local economy through support of existing businesses, promotion of available real estate and development opportunities, and providing timely and accurate information to businesses and investors seeking to make an investment in our community. By focusing on programs and activities in these core areas, we plan to achieve the following goals over the next five years. These goals have been specifically chosen to promote Berlin’s position within the region, capitalize on its strengths, and provide a competitive business climate to support continued private sector investment.



Guide to Funding & Partner Agency Abbreviations:

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