

# **CITY OF BERLIN**

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN**

Prepared by the  
City of Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission  
and the  
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

June 2002  
Revised 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, & 2016  
Most Recent Revision 2020

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WORKING DRAFT

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East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

In 2014, the City of Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission approved and recommended for Common Council adoption the 2014 revised *City of Berlin Open Space and Recreation Plan*.

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The City of Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission is an appointed board of concerned citizens who make recommendations to the Common Council on Parks and Recreation matters. The Parks and Recreation Commission meets once a month on the first Wednesday at 4:30 PM in the Council Chambers. Meetings are open to the public and residents are encouraged to participate and make suggestions to improve programming or facilities. Members of the Commission are listed below:

#### 2020 Revised Draft Parks and Recreation Commission

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## ABSTRACT

TITLE: CITY OF BERLIN OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION  
PLAN

AUTHOR: Fred Scharnke, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: City of Berlin long-range recreation plan and five-year action  
program.

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LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY: City of Berlin Plan Commission

REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY: East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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The *City of Berlin Open Space and Recreation Plan* includes a detailed revised/updated action program beginning in 2008 along with a number of long-range considerations beyond the planning horizon. The plan affirms past goals, objectives, and standards for Berlin's park system; describes existing conditions; assesses existing and future recreational needs; and offers recommendations for the future development of the city's park and recreation system. Major plan proposals include land acquisition, waterfront development, and additional shoreline improvements.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **RECREATIONAL PLANNING**

More leisure time and a growing interest in the environment and physical fitness continue to place greater demands on recreation facilities in the City of Berlin. In recognition of the ongoing need to provide for these demands and to protect and enhance the existing environment for future generations, the City, with the assistance of the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, has prepared this update of the *City of Berlin Open Space and Recreation Plan*. The plan replaces and builds upon earlier open space plans prepared by the City. The City's last plan was adopted in 2008. Developed in conjunction with the City of Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission, the City of Berlin Plan Commission, and various interested local organizations and citizens, this new plan continues a planning process that has long served as a guide for the development of Berlin's park and recreation system. In addition, the plan, after local approval, will allow the City to compete for cost sharing funding programs available through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other outside funding sources for park acquisition and development.

### **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW**

The City of Berlin, the largest city in Green Lake County, population 5,305, is located in the northeastern portion of the county approximately 20 miles west of Oshkosh and 12 miles northwest of Ripon. A small portion of the city lies in Waushara County. In total, the city's corporate boundary encompasses approximately six square miles. STH 49 is the primary north-south route through the city while STH 91 links Berlin with Oshkosh to the east. Berlin is also served by CTHs F, XX and VV. The city serves as a subregional shopping center for area residents, particularly for outlying rural areas to the west.

Berlin has witnessed many of Wisconsin's important historical events. First settled in 1847 as Strong's Landing, it was a major crossing of the Upper Fox River, experiencing the rise and fall of the Fox as a major transportation corridor, the lumber boom, and ultimate evolution of the area to an agricultural based economy. The city also was the destination for a wide cross section of European immigrants. Known as the "Fur and Leather City," many of Berlin's leather industries date back 100 years or more.

### **LAND USE**

Typical of most small cities, Berlin's commercial core is located in the center of the community. Its downtown business district, enhanced by the completion of a number of historically accurate renovation projects during the past decade, is bisected by the Fox River. Other businesses are generally found along major routes leading into the downtown. Among the most significant of these is a shopping center and nearby businesses located on Broadway (CTH F) near the west edge of the city.

Berlin's residential development accounts for over half the city's developed acreage. For the most part, residential areas lie within about a mile of the centrally located downtown. About two-thirds of the city's residents live east of the Fox River. Recent residential growth has been slow and primarily scattered on the perimeter of the city with areas on its northeast periphery experiencing the most growth. Renovation of existing residences in many of the city's long-standing neighborhoods has also increased in recent years.

## POPULATION

Although Berlin has generally demonstrated a slow but steady pattern of growth, the city has experienced a slight population decline since its peak in 1980 (Table 1). This gradual decline is expected to continue during the next twenty years. By the year 2020, Berlin's population is projected to be 5,038, down 5.0 percent from 5,305 in the 2000 census. The surrounding towns of Berlin and Aurora will continue to contribute about 2,000 additional residents to the population of the Greater Berlin area, which is projected to have a total population of 7,266 in the year 2020.

**TABLE 1**  
**POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS**  
**Greater Berlin Area**

Year	City of Berlin	Surrounding Towns	Total	Percent Change
1960	4,838	1,546	6,384	+ 3.8
1970	5,338	1,684	7,022	+10.0
1980	5,478	1,955	7,433	+ 5.9
1990	5,371	1,842	7,213	- 3.0
2000	5,305	2,116	7,421	+ 2.9
2010*	5,279	2,273	7,552	- 1.8
2020*	5,038	2,228	7,266	- 3.8

Source: U.S. Census, 1950-2000; ECWRPC.

\* ECWRPC Projections

Note: Berlin's population has actually been going up and not declining as was projected in the chart above. \*According to the 2010 U.S. Census the City of Berlin's population is 5,524.

In 2000, Berlin's population by age group closely paralleled that of Green Lake County (Table 2). Compared to the State of Wisconsin, the city had a slightly lower percentage of residents in all age groups under 65 and nearly half again as many elderly residents. These ratios are consistent with many other Wisconsin communities of similar size.

**TABLE 2**  
**POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUP**  
**City of Berlin**

Age Group	Berlin	Green Lake County	State
Under 5	6.9	5.5	6.0
Age 5 to 19	21.0	22.9	22.8
Age 20 to 24	5.1	4.3	6.7
Age 25 to 44	24.8	21.3	29.5
Age 45 to 64	25.7	30.0	22.2
65 and Over	16.5	20.3	14.8

Source: U.S. Census, STFIA, 2010.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Berlin Parks and Recreation Department is to provide high quality leisure time services and facilities to the residents of Berlin and surrounding communities. This is accomplished through department programs and services, as well as the preservation and improvement of the local environment.

Department programs and services encourage a high quality of life for all residents and non-residents alike regardless of economic background. The Parks and Recreation Department through diverse programs and services tries to provide a clean and safe environment. The goal of the Department is user satisfaction. Communication between user and provider is encouraged. The Department responds to citizens’ requests and continually strives to improve upon its services. Employees take pride in the quality of services that they provide, which directly reflects upon the image of the Department projects.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

As its initial task, the Parks and Recreation Commission reaffirmed the following goals and objectives from earlier plans. The goal and objectives are intended to serve as a guide for the type of park and recreation system community residents would enjoy. The goal is a desirable condition to strive for in the future - a common ideal of the community that can be achieved through the actions of government leaders, private organizations, and individual citizens. The corresponding objectives specify in greater detail how this desired goal can be achieved. Together, the goal and objectives provide a basis for establishing City policy regarding the planning, acquisition and future development of park and recreation facilities. The Parks and Recreation Commission hopes this goal and its companion objectives will be looked upon often by community leaders and citizens as they plan the city's growth.

**Goal: To ensure that adequate open space and recreational facilities are provided for and made accessible to all residents of Berlin, with emphasis on preserving unique historic and natural features.**

## **Objectives:**

1. To make full use and to preserve where possible all the natural beauty and resources available to our city.
2. To constantly look into potential opportunities for acquiring new land to provide additional park space to meet community needs.
3. To incorporate into our park system any historical asset that defines or describes our city's history and culture.
4. To provide safe accessible programs and facilities for all activities, community events, and daily use for all segments of the community to enjoy.
5. To provide programming and accessibility for all ages in the areas of sport, travel, arts, music, special events, culture, and nature programming.
6. To develop and market a Parks Program that encourages and attracts people to our community to visit and live permanently.
7. To encourage the public to take an active interest in the ongoing development of our Parks and Recreation Program.
8. To ensure that parks and recreation development will always be a priority for future members of our community.
9. To explore the possible development of trails within the city for bicycling, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.
10. Endowment – Explore alternative sources of funding sponsorships/foundation

## **RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The terrain in and around Berlin is moderately rolling to hilly with elevation changes ranging from 150 to 200 feet. The average elevation is approximately 800 feet above mean sea level. The Fox River, which flows south to north through the city, is the dominant natural feature. Averaging between 100 and 200 feet in width as it passes through the city, the river is used extensively for recreational boating and fishing and three of Berlin's parks lie along its banks. While some steep slopes exist along its west bank in the northern portion of the city, extensive wetlands are found along the river both upstream and downstream from the city. An abandoned granite quarry in the eastern portion of town is another prominent feature of the Berlin landscape. Areas of extensive treecover generally correspond with these two features.

### **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Public open space and recreational land in the City of Berlin comprises a total of 110.4 acres. The City maintains seven parks with a combined area of 45.6 acres. The City also leases about 39 acres of DNR land adjoining the former Berlin lock site. In addition, the Berlin School District owns about 64.8 acres in conjunction with its school sites and school forest; much of this land serves as open space and recreational land for local residents. A portion of the combined 2.0 acres found at the city's parochial schools also provides area for recreational activities (Table 3 and Figure 1).

#### **City Parks and Recreation Sites:**

##### **Riverside Park**

Riverside Park, one of the premier community parks in east central Wisconsin, stretches nearly three-quarters of a mile along the east bank of the Fox River in the northern portion of the city. At 38 acres, the park is Berlin's largest developed park facility. The park is heavily used by boaters, fishers, campers, picnickers, and athletes and provides access to the Fox River for snowmobilers during the winter months. It also accommodates softball and volleyball leagues and youth programs and hosts a number of community events and festivals.

The park features nearly 2,000 lineal feet of sea wall with boat moorings; a boat launch; 22-unit RV camping area with electric hookups, picnic tables, water supply, and dump station; three shelter houses with restrooms and electricity; extensive picnic facilities; and off-street parking areas for both cars and car-trailer units. Facilities for active recreational activities include two lighted softball diamonds, an unlighted youth baseball diamond, a concession stand, a state-of-the-art basketball court with glass backboards, five volleyball courts, 8 horseshoe courts, and several playground areas. The parking area serving the south diamond is unsurfaced and used for snow storage during the winter months. An open area in the central portion of the park serves as a venue for outdoor concerts. Other features include flowerbeds, the Clarke School Museum, a state historical marker, and the park department's maintenance facility, which is housed in the city's old wastewater treatment plant at the north end of the park. Frisbee Golf is played throughout the Riverside Park sporting 9 chain baskets for this golfing activity.

There are two monuments set up at Riverside Park. Between the north and south shelters at the flagpole on the hill is a monument commemorating the people who donated the land for the park, and the second monument is dedicated to Berlin area Veterans who have served. In 2012, the Berlin Veterans' Foundation, Inc. erected a pentagon-shaped gazebo to honor the five branches of service – Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and Air Force.

Local civic groups have made major contributions towards the park's development. Because Berlin residents rely so heavily on this park to meet many of their recreational demands, it is periodically overcrowded and has little potential for further development unless additional acreage can be acquired. An exception is the relatively underutilized south end of the park, where a small shelter could expand picnic opportunities in this area, thereby dispersing some activity from more heavily used portions of the park. Acquisition of a tract north of the present park would significantly expand the amount of valuable riverfront and offers potential to provide additional camping sites. Adequate space may also be available in the southeastern portion of this area to create an additional ball diamond. Possible expansion may also include a cross country ski trail, bike trail, and snowmobile trail.

**TABLE 3**  
**EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION ACREAGE**  
**City of Berlin**

Name	City Ownership	School District Ownership	Parochial School Ownership	Other Sites
A. Riverside Park	38.0	-	-	-
B. Longcroft Park	3.1	-	-	-
C. Nathan Strong Park	1.6	-	-	-
D. Forsyth Park	1.3	-	-	-
E. Firefighters Park	0.3	-	-	-
F. Mound Street Park	1.3	-	-	-
G. Volunteer Park	0.2	-	-	-
N. Walkush Street Conservancy Park	5.07			
H. Berlin H. S./Clay Lamberton Elem.	-	47.5	-	-
I. Berlin Middle School	-	3.3	-	-
J. Berlin School Forest	-	12.0	-	-
K. Boys and Girls Club	-	-	-	2.0
L. St. John Lutheran School	-	-	0.9	-
M. Berlin Catholic School	-	-	0.3	-
P. Berlin Lock and Dam Public Fishing Area	-	-	-	62.1*
Q. Mascoutin Country Club	-	-	-	157.7
	50.87	64.8	1.2	219.8

\* 39 acres leased by City from DNR

### **Nathan Strong Park**

Formerly known as East Side Park, this 1.6-acre neighborhood park is located on the north side of East Huron Street east of the downtown. Surrounded by many large and historically important homes from Berlin's past, the park is a focal point for local parades, the annual Farmer's and Artist's Market and passing motorists. Facilities in the park include a Victorian gazebo with electricity, a Civil War Memorial, ornamental fountain, picnic tables and benches, a large play structure, drinking fountain, lighted walkways, two authentic Civil War cannons, a flagpole, and an official state historical marker. A past threat to this park was the demise of many of its mature maple trees. With the help of "Friends of the Parks," a Memorial Tree Program has been established and many new trees have now been planted. The gazebo roof is currently in good condition, however the gazebo roof and railings are in need of repair soon. The park sign is in good order. The ornamental foundation has had all new electrical work installed, and is still in need of paint and a new pump. The playground equipment is in adequate condition and will need some repairs in the future. Other considerations include lighting the civil war monument, PA system for the Gazebo, and playground surfacing.

### **Forsyth's Park**

Located west of the downtown, this 1.3-acre site functions as a small neighborhood park for residents in this portion of the city. Facilities include play equipment, picnic tables and benches, flowerbeds, lighted walkways, and a drinking fountain. Many residents still refer to this park as West Side Park. Tree planting should be a priority in this park to replace some that have come down. Periodic removal of evergreens and replacement of deciduous hardwoods would help the park appear less cluttered. Most evergreens are gone and the dead maples are now gone. Addition of some focal point such as a shelter, gazebo, etc., should also be considered. A complete park plan may include looking into leveling of or creating rolling land.

### **Longcroft Park**

Longcroft Park is located on the west side of the Fox River in the downtown area. The park features the Berlin Aquatic Center, which has become an areawide attraction since its construction in 1993. Other facilities at this 3.1-acre park include a small boat launch, a play structure, and shed. Since completion of the 1997 plan, a pedestrian bridge linking Longcroft Park to the other side of the Fox River has been constructed. In 2000, the City stabilized the shoreline along a portion of the riverfront and upgraded the present shoreline elsewhere. Attention was paid to the eroding shoreline at the park. A project was undertaken to stabilize the shoreline and create natural plant and fish habitat along the park. As part of this project, benches and fishing areas were developed along the park. The relocation of the existing play equipment to a more central location would expand the amount of open area near the shelter. On a longer-term basis, the City should begin to address the potential for major expenditures for mechanical and other systems related to the operation of the aquatic center.

### **Firefighter's Park**

Located near the east edge of the downtown on the southeast corner of East Huron and South Spring Streets, this attractively landscaped 0.3-acre site serves primarily as a rest area. A large memorial, which was completed to honor the city's past and present firefighters, provides a centerpiece for the park. Other features include a small roofed display panel, built-in benches, a drinking fountain, a flagpole, and a flowerbed. A nativity scene graces the park during the holiday season. Upkeep and materials for this park are donated by the Berlin Fire Department.

## **Volunteer Park**

The City maintains a small 0.2-acre site on Huron Street in the central downtown area that serves primarily as a mid-block pass-through to a municipal parking lot. An extensive renovation was undertaken in 2001 to make the area more attractive as a resting spot. The flower planters and flowerbeds are maintained by The Friends of the Parks.

## **Mound Street Park**

Mound Street Park is a small neighborhood park serving residents of the southwestern portion of the city. The play equipment has created an opportunity for constructing a small shelter in the southwestern portion of the park. Other facilities at the 1.3-acre site include a picnic table, and open play area. The park is in need of additional landscaping to better define its boundaries. Opportunities for making the park more accessible to residents of the nearby residential care facility should be explored. A paved path linking Mound Street with South Brooklyn Street with curb cuts at each end and accessible sitting areas would be one way these opportunities could be provided as well as a small picnic shelter area.

## **Berlin Lock and Dam Public Fishing Area**

The City of Berlin leases about 39 acres from the DNR, which owns 62.1 acres of land adjacent to the Fox River and former lock and dam site south of the city. Although both the lock and dam have been removed, remnants of each remain. A major investment has been made to develop the shoreline fishing potential of this site and provide improved boating access to the Fox River. Facilities include two boat launches with side docking, wharves, a handicapped accessible fishing pier, parking areas, surfaced nature trails, and picnic tables. The former locktender's house, a historically important structure and a gauging station are also located on the site. Construction of permanent restrooms, upgraded parking areas, paved walking trails, and an information kiosk were completed in 2002.

With the recent transfer of the navigational lock system along the Lower Fox River from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the State of Wisconsin, the first step has been taken in establishing the Fox River Heritage State Parkway. The parkway is a planned partnership between the DNR, State Historical Society, Division of Tourism, and local units of government. The concept is to utilize the abandoned lock sites, other former Corps of Engineers holdings along the river, local parks, and other publicly owned land to create a series of "parklets" stretching from Portage to Green Bay. With the improvements that have been made at the Berlin lock site, it is anticipated that it will be an important interpretive and informational stop along the river. This may offer potential primitive campground areas and shelter.

## **Tri-County Recreational Trail**

Berlin is the northern terminus of the Tri-County Recreational Trail, an off-road facility for hikers, bicyclists, and snowmobilers that connects Ripon as part of the statewide bike route system. There may be an opportunity for the City to develop other multi-purpose off-road recreational trails in existing parks and along the Fox River as well. Although Berlin has no officially designated bike routes, national studies indicate that local residential streets typically provide an adequate level of safety for bicycling. With this in mind, most of the city's existing streets serve the basic purpose of guiding riders safely to destinations within and through the community, particularly now that the pedestrian bridge spanning the Fox River at Longcroft Park has provided an



## **Public School Facilities:**

### **Berlin High School/Berlin Middle School/ Clay Lamberton Elementary School Complex**

Located in the northeastern part of the city, this 47.5-acre tract has traditionally served as the primary athletic field for Berlin High School sports. About half of the total site is available for outdoor recreational activities. Facilities include a lighted football field and eight-lane asphalt track, four unlighted tennis courts, four basketball standards, play equipment, recreational soccer fields, and an indoor swimming pool. The football field contains extensive bleacher seating, press box area, and electronic scoreboard. The reduction in the amount of open space resulting from the construction of the new high school has resulted in the elimination of two unlighted ballfields and several open practice and playfield areas. The loss of the two ballfields has been severely impacted the City's recreational programming efforts. Exploring options to replacing these two diamonds elsewhere in the city are an ongoing activity. Also, tennis court lighting could be considered. Clay Lamberton School's Miller Natatorium, operated by the Parks and Recreation Department during the school year, makes an important contribution to the offerings provided by the City. There are soccer fields at Clay Lamberton. With community support, a lighted soccer field complex has been erected.

About 3.3 acres of open space is available adjacent to the former high school, which is located on Berlin's east side. The school's primary recreational facility is a lighted baseball diamond, which serves as the high school playing field. Enclosed by a wall of locally quarried stone constructed during the Great Depression, the field is a landmark that has served at least three generations of Berlin athletes.

### **Berlin School Forests**

Located on North Hunter Street in the extreme western portion of the city, one Berlin School Forest is a 12-acre wooded tract that provides opportunities for nature study, hiking, picnicking, and informal play. A second school forest is located approximately 10 miles out of the City of Berlin on Cty. E. The Vertical Venture Ropes Course held within this 20-acre school forest helps provide team building, self-esteem, and problem solving skills. A third forest is located on Cty. Trk. A south of Berlin on the Mascoutin golf course grounds. A small building structure is located on this property.

## **Private Facilities:**

### **Boys & Girls Club**

Boys & Girls Club of America, located on the city's west side, provides about two acres on open space. A new building now houses the local Boys and Girls Club. Facilities include play equipment, an open play area that provides informal baseball and soccer opportunities, two basketball standards, a volleyball court.

### **St. John Lutheran School**

Play equipment including a new large play structure and an open area accommodating a small soccer field are available on the 0.9 acres of open space at St. John's Lutheran School, located on Mound Street west of the Fox River.

### **Berlin Catholic School**

Located in the western portion of the city, the 0.3 acres of land at St. Michael's contains play equipment, a small paved play area, and basketball standards. During the school day, the street is closed for additional play space.

### **Mascoutin Country Club**

Although not within the Berlin corporate limits, this 27-hole course is included in the inventory of recreational sites because of its proximity and importance to the community. Located directly south of town on a 158-acre site, the course is open to the public during non-club events. Extensive building of homes around the course has been ongoing.

## **RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING**

The City of Berlin Parks and Recreation Department presently offers an extensive range of recreational programs and activities throughout the year for all age groups. These range from non-organized activities such as open gyms to classes in hobbies, and arts and crafts and a variety of sports and games. The Parks and Recreation Department also coordinate a number of other special events. The Department also helps coordinate programs operated under the jurisdiction of a variety of community organizations offered by the School District, the Berlin Library, the Boys and Girls Club and a large number of community ran sports leagues. The City of Berlin website [www.cityofberlin.net](http://www.cityofberlin.net) provides an excellent overview of available programs.

The use of school gymnasiums is essential to the success of indoor programming activities. Among these programs are basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, open gym, and other programs such as theater, arts, and aerobics. An ongoing concern is that facilities are unavailable when superseded by school functions.

Miller Natatorium at Clay Lamberton Elementary School also plays a vital role in meeting recreational programming needs as an indoor aquatic facility. The Parks & Recreation Department handles the scheduling of non-school times as well as lifeguards for Early Bird Swim, Open Swims, and Swimnastics (water aerobics).

## **RECREATIONAL NEEDS**

Park and recreation needs may include the need for additional parkland to accommodate new facilities, the need for additional parks in new residential growth areas or in areas not adequately served by existing facilities, or the need for new or improved park facilities and equipment. Generally, recreation standards are used to identify these needs. However, in communities the size of Berlin, citizen input is equally useful when identifying park and recreation needs.

## **LAND NEEDS**

Although the commonly accepted planning standard of 10 acres of publicly owned open space for every thousand residents suggests that Berlin has adequate parkland to meet the recreational needs of its residents, this would be misleading. The numbers suggest that, with about 150 acres of public open space maintained by the City of Berlin and the school district, there is more than ample area to accommodate the present needs of its 5,524 residents. Additionally, with little population change expected during the next twenty years, the acquisition of additional parkland

by the City would not be required through the year 2020.

Neither of these assessments is correct. The reality is that little open space is available to accommodate the demand for active recreational activities in Berlin's existing parks. One reason is that only one city park - Riverside Park, at 38 acres - is large enough to accommodate sports fields and similar venues. Since residents expect this park to serve many other purposes than merely accommodating ball games and other athletic activities, it can be justifiably argued that additional development of this type in Riverside Park would seriously compromise its setting and attractiveness. Another cause for concern is that the community has not been able to replace the two ball diamonds lost when the new high school was constructed. This reduction in available facilities is particularly acute in Berlin, with its diverse recreational programs and high participation rates.

## **LOCATIONAL NEEDS**

Even in communities the size of Berlin, it is desirable that a range of recreational opportunities be within convenient walking distance of each resident. Convenience, however, cannot be measured only in time and distance. It must also consider the presence of natural barriers, such as waterways, and man-made barriers, such as busy streets, which can make a walk from home to park or school unsafe and/or inconvenient. These barriers are particularly restrictive for children and disabled or elderly residents. The major barriers within Berlin include the Fox River (only three bridge crossings in the city) and several major streets (generally state highways and other collectors carrying 2,000 or more vehicles per day), which barriers divide Berlin into seven areas. Ideally, a range of recreational opportunities should be available on publicly owned open space within the confines of each of these areas, particularly those that are large enough to be considered a neighborhood.

To determine if existing parks and other open space areas adequately serve individual neighborhoods, the recreational opportunities available at specific sites were analyzed. Parks are generally classified by the role they serve in meeting a community's overall recreational needs. While in many communities this classification is not clear-cut, community parks are generally considered to be of community-wide importance or have facilities that are used by residents of the entire community. Unless they are specialized facilities, community parks are considered to fully meet the recreational needs of residents of the neighborhood in which they are located.

Neighborhood parks and playgrounds, on the other hand, are expected to meet the day-to-day recreational needs primarily for residents of the surrounding neighborhood. These types of parks typically require at least five acres of open space to provide a full complement of facilities but should, at a minimum, have adequate area for play apparatus and open play area. If adequate area exists, a modest amount of picnic facilities is also highly desirable. In many cases, the elementary school site can serve as a neighborhood playground.

Other smaller more specialized parks and rec-lots are also found in many communities. While these may provide a limited range of recreational opportunities for residents of the immediate area, they typically do not provide adequate area or facilities to meet the recreational needs of the entire neighborhood.

In Berlin, Riverside Park and the Berlin Middle & High School/Clay Lamberton Elementary School complex are considered to be community recreational facilities. Although the Berlin Aquatic Center in Longcroft Park is a community recreational facility, the park itself is generally too small to serve more than a neighborhood function for most activities. Other parks and playgrounds classified as

neighborhood facilities include Nathan Strong Park, Forsyth's Park, Mound Street Park, and some of the schools. In truth, most of these parks are actually too small to provide the range of recreational facilities ideally found in a neighborhood park. Berlin's two smallest parks (Firefighter's Park and Volunteer Park) are considered "vest pocket" parks, too limited in size and facilities to accommodate most recreational uses and activities.

A comparison of the types of recreational facilities available to residents throughout the city reveals that most neighborhoods contain at least one site where a range of recreational facilities is available. A notable exception is the area south of Huron Street (STH 49 and 91) and east of the river where no recreational facilities currently exist to serve area residents, who comprise an estimated 15 percent of the city's population. It should also be noted that the recreational sites serving most other neighborhoods are located in that portion of the neighborhood closest to the central portion of the city. As these neighborhoods continue their outward development, these existing sites will become more removed from an increasing percentage of the neighborhood's residents.

## **FACILITY NEEDS**

Although completion of the Berlin Aquatic Center, installation of the pedestrian bridge across the Fox River at Longcroft Park, a major upgrade of play equipment and other facilities throughout the park system have met many of the park and recreational needs identified in earlier plans, the Parks and Recreation Commission has identified a number of remaining facility needs in Berlin's present park system. While some of these can be accommodated in existing parks, others would require the acquisition of additional parkland.

Listed below are a number of general facility needs that have been identified as desirable to provide a more well-rounded park system. Of these, additional baseball/softball fields are considered the two most pressing needs facing the community.

- Cross-country ski trails/Bike Trail/Bike Lane on Streets/Snowmobile Trail
- Development of riverfront habitat restoration and Sportsman (boating/fishing) opportunities.
- Additional lighted softball diamonds
- Additional youth-sized baseball fields
- Additional open play areas
- Areas for nature study and appreciation
- Campground expansion
- Skateboard park
- Racquetball court
- Update Pedestrian Bridge
- Create "Information Stations" at Rented Shelter Houses
- Create ADA accessibility within all parks

Some of the needs and opportunities specific to individual parks as well as the potential acquisition and development of new recreational sites and facilities are addressed as recommendations in the following chapter. At those parks and other recreational sites where significant new development is proposed, a site master plan should be prepared to optimize each site's recreational potential and to ensure that placement of new facilities does not compromise future site development.

## **PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

The plan recommendations for the City of Berlin are intended to serve as a guide for the future development of park and recreation areas in the community. They are also meant to meet the existing recreational needs of local residents. Some of the proposals may not be feasible in the near future, but they represent courses of action that should be taken if the opportunity or need arises. Proposals that are feasible for implementation within the next few years are included in the community's five-year action program. A number of other proposals should be viewed as long range projects. Plan proposals should be reviewed annually by the Parks and Recreation Commission and the general public to accommodate the changing needs of the community.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

General recommendations that should be implemented throughout the city's park system include:

- Continue to improve and maintain existing playgrounds; focus on replacing obsolete and deteriorated play equipment and developing safer landing areas.
- Continue to increase accessibility to all park areas by improving parking areas, constructing walkways, and updating restroom facilities, drinking fountains, picnic tables, etc. to make them usable for disabled and other physically impaired individuals.
- Give priority to acquiring river frontage when it becomes available to expand parkland.
- Support local efforts to keep the Eureka lock open.
- Continue efforts to promote the city as a boating destination.
- Acquire property for additional recreational facilities.
- "Friends of Berlin Parks" was established, which can be used both as a source of funding and manpower in providing and/or maintaining certain improvements.
- To assist potential benefactors, compile and keep up-to-date a list of potential park-related projects that may be of value to residents of the community.
- Make aggressive effort to maintain and plan for possible deterioration of BAC.

## **EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATIONAL SITES**

Specific recommendations for existing park and recreational facilities as well as other potential projects that could enhance the quality of life and make Berlin a more attractive place to live include:

### **Riverside Park:**

Although Riverside Park has limited room for additional recreational development, there are several actions that can be taken to further improve this park. These include:

- Evaluate the merits of acquiring the vacant "L"-shaped parcel located southeast of the South Diamond for use as a skating rink and warm-up area for ballgames.
- Continue maintenance of shoreline improvements for erosion control, boating enhancement, aesthetics and paved walking trail along the river.
- Install boat washing station at boat landing.
- Consider paving the present gravel campground road from the shop to the parking lot.
- Fence the shop area for security reasons.
- Pave and stripe the parking area that serves the South Diamond and continue to maintain the surface and striping of existing paved parking areas. If this area is paved, an alternative site for the City's snow storage area should be found.
- Maintain the open area between the North Shelter House and the South Shelter House for outdoor concerts and other unobstructed open space activities.
- Install additional picnic facilities and erect a small shelter in the open area along the river in the southern portion of the site to alleviate heavy user pressure in other areas of the park.
- Cross-country skiing is allowed in the park during winter months.
- Upgrade campground sites with water and/or sewer

### **Longcroft Park:**

- Continue shoreline improvements with a goal to have a stable shoreline. Create both fish and natural vegetation habitat for stability of shoreline ecosystem.
- Develop an enclosed sand volleyball court, which would be accessible from the pool. Install a showerhead to minimize the tracking of sand onto the pool deck and into the pool.
- Consider the installation of additional picnic facilities and a small shelter.
- Undertake a tree-maintaining program.
- Establish a capital improvements program to identify the anticipated cost and timing of

undertaking major expenditures needed for mechanical and other systems related to the operation of the aquatic center.

### **Nathan Strong Park:**

- Undertake a tree-maintaining program to minimize the inevitable loss of mature maple trees.
- Continue to further develop the Victorian character of the park by installing historically accurate benches.
- Replace/repair the gazebo railings and stairs and paint the gazebo on a regular schedule.
- Continue maintenance of ornamental fountain as needed.
- Offer restroom facilities
- Install sun screen shade to gazebo

### **Forsyth's Park:**

- Upgrade playground surface.
- Consider the construction of a band shell or other feature (gazebo, shelter, etc.) as a way of creating a "feature" facility that could play host to local cultural events and activities.

### **Mound Street Park:**

- Install curb cuts and construct a hard surfaced path between the two streets.
- Undertake a tree-maintaining program and install additional landscaping.
- Install a limited amount of picnic facilities.
- Install fencing to provide definition to the perimeter of the park. As an option, install short segments of fence at each of the park's six corners. A split rail fence would be adequate and appropriate. Plant a six-foot buffer of wild flowers to add beauty and better define borders.

### **Volunteer Park:**

- Install a drinking fountain.
- Develop some centerpiece to have erected in the planter in the middle of the park.

### **Berlin Lock and Dam Public Fishing Area:**

- Look into removal of Lock tenders house.

### **Berlin High School/Clay Lamberton Elementary School Complex:**

- Continue to cooperate with the Berlin School District to ensure that both community and school-based recreational needs can be addressed.
- Light the existing tennis courts to permit evening use.
- Continue joint use of baseball/softball complex

### **NEW PARKS AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES**

Acquisition and development of new sites is a key if the City of Berlin is to provide the range and quantity of recreational facilities desired by its residents. New sites will provide area to develop recreational facilities identified to be in short supply as well as to ensure that recreational facilities are convenient to residents in all parts of the community. In addition, acquisition of strategic parcels such as Fox River shoreline areas would allow the City to preserve important natural areas and potentially create unique recreational opportunities not presently available.

#### **New Community Park:**

The City of Berlin should actively pursue acquisition of a parcel at least 20 acres in size for development of a new community park. This park could be designed to serve several important functions and would address major needs that cannot be met in existing parks. To ensure efficient utilization of the site, a master plan should be prepared prior to any development activity. The East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission would be able to prepare this plan at no cost to the City.

Foremost, the site should be planned for ultimate (and phased) development of at least four ball diamonds (adult softball and/or youth baseball) and adequate parking and restroom facilities. A site of 20 or more acres would also provide ample acreage to accommodate picnic areas, play equipment, and other facilities typically found in a community park. Additional acreage or a second site will be required as the demand for soccer facilities increases in the area.

From a locational standpoint, a site in the relatively undeveloped northwestern part of the city (perhaps along Barnes Creek) would also address the need for a neighborhood park in this area. In the southwestern portion of the city, sizable tracts are available. However, because much of this area is underlain by soils with severe limitations for structures and many types of recreational activities, care should be taken in the site selection process. One possible site in this area is located by the well station between Van Horn, McKittrick, Ceresco, and Washington streets. Although this area has wet soil conditions, it presents an excellent opportunity for integrating stormwater detention basins into the site's development. Excavated material from areas designed for detention could be utilized to elevate and achieve proper drainage of ball diamonds, soccer fields, and other activity areas. Possible use of detention (dry basins) as a joint ice skating area.

The conservancy area adjacent to the river in the North Industrial Park also may hold potential for development as a community park. Although much of this site is subject to flooding and has wet soils, making it best suited for passive recreational activities, it may be possible through grading and drainage improvements to create an area suitable for development of athletic fields and other recreational facilities commonly provided in a community park. An undeveloped parcel in the industrial park may hold short to intermediate term potential for an adult softball diamond, particularly if nearby industries "buy in" and perhaps assist with development costs. If not for development of softball complex, the riverfront areas should be stabilized and additional picnic areas developed with walking trails, etc.

The City should also open discussions with the Berlin School District regarding the possible use of a tract it recently acquired in the northeastern portion of the community. While this site likely would not provide a full range of facilities typically found in a community park, it may be possible that the parcel would be available for softball diamonds and other sports-related fields on an intermediate term basis. Soccer fields, in particular, require little investment that would need to be sacrificed if and when the land is needed for a school site. If care is taken in siting other types of facilities (i.e., softball fields), it may be possible that their location would enable them to remain intact following the school's construction.

### **New Neighborhood Park (End of Spring Street):**

It may be difficult to provide a neighborhood park in the southeastern portion of Berlin without infringing on valuable industrial land or designated wetland areas. One potential location is a tract of vacant land along the Fox River south of River Street at the south ends of South Spring and South Adams streets. While this area is too small for active recreational development, it would make an attractive area capable of accommodating sitting benches and a limited amount of picnic facilities and play equipment. There would also be opportunities to provide greater access to the water's edge for shoreline fishing and perhaps snowmobile access. Acquisition and development of this site would be consistent with stated objectives to better utilize the Fox River shoreline for recreation.

### **Wetland Park:**

The City should investigate the potential for acquiring the large wetland area along the river directly south of the downtown. This tract is undevelopable but would be an excellent resource for nature study and trail oriented activities. It could also be readily integrated into the proposed Fox River trail system. Opportunities to utilize this site for environmental education should be explored with the Berlin School District.

### **Fox River Trail:**

Although full implementation may be well off into the future, the City should set in motion a plan to acquire land and/or secure easements across private property along the banks of the Fox River to accommodate development of a multi-use recreational trail or walkway. Such a trail could extend from the Berlin locks to Riverside Park, a distance of nearly three miles. Opportunities to integrate the downtown business district, Longcroft Park, and other potential recreational sites into the trail should be investigated.

### **City Parking Lots:**

A landscaping/tree-maintaining program should be undertaken to “soften” municipal parking lots. For the parking area on the west side of Water Street near City Hall, improvements should focus on softening the visual impact of the pavement and upgrading the shorewall by providing pedestrian access and short term boat mooring along the riverfront. The municipal lot connected to Huron Street via Walk-Thru Park would also benefit from additional landscaping. Integrating an upgrade to the parking area adjacent to the river south of Huron Street with the construction of the new bridge should be viewed by the City as an excellent opportunity to create an important “gateway” to the downtown business district. Appropriate development would include a paved shoreline riverwalk, flowerbeds and other attractive landscaping, benches, shorewall, and accommodations for short-term mooring. Encouraging both existing and new retail establishments to orient and/or access the riverwalk/river would help stimulate retail activity in the downtown. A project of this nature would also position Berlin to become the centerpiece for the Upper Fox portion of the Fox River Heritage State Parkway.

### **New Bridge Park:**

With the introduction of a new bridge gives Berlin the opportunity of developing a new park between the existing downtown bridge and the new bridge. This area would house a public restroom.

### **Waterfront Initiative Project Plan:**

A downtown Fox River Waterfront development project located in the central business district of Berlin, will open the view to the Fox River, develop a stronger pedestrian connection to the waterfront and provide flexible and programmable space along the riverfront, offering an array of possible activities. Once a successful activities program is complete, the opportunity and ease to recruit targeted businesses to fill vacant storefronts in the downtown becomes a much easier endeavor.

Acceptance of the Berlin Downtown Riverfront Master Plan implementation was accepted at the Parks and Recreation’s April, 2010 meeting.

## **ACTION PROGRAM**

The projects listed on the following pages have been identified by the Parks and Recreation Commission for implementation during the next several years and beyond. This action program, its components, and priorities, are meant to serve as a guide to local officials as they develop and further improve Berlin’s park system. The action program also helps service clubs and organizations select potential park improvement projects. Another important role of the action program is to target bequests and other memorials that periodically are made available for park improvements. This is an excellent way to fund many smaller projects and even some larger projects that may otherwise go unaccomplished. As acquisition and/or development nears, more refined costs should be researched to assist in project budgeting. Because unforeseen needs and opportunities may cause priorities to change, the action program should be reviewed annually.

The selection, acquisition, and initial development of a new community park and continued shoreline improvements along the Fox River are considered high priority projects. Development of

a new community park would allow the City to provide needed ball diamonds for youth baseball and adult softball leagues and would be large enough to accommodate other recreational facilities.

Other projects that would enable the City to provide additional public open space and recreational opportunities along the Fox River are also addressed in the action program. Among these are selected improvements at each of the city's existing parks, development of the Fox River trail, and creation of a new neighborhood park in the southeastern portion of the city, and continued waterfront projects in the downtown.

Many of these projects are potential candidates to receive cost sharing monies available through DNR. Others could be developed through the efforts of volunteers and other community organizations. Downtown projects may be feasible with a partnership between the City and downtown businesses while other projects are well suited for City/School District cooperation.

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY OF BERLIN  
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Berlin has deemed it in its best interest and that of its citizens to develop and adopt an Open Space and Recreation Plan that would address the recreational needs of the municipality, and

**WHEREAS**, the plan was developed with input from the Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission, composed of private citizens from the municipality, and

**WHEREAS**, the plan was presented at a public meeting of the Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission, and

**WHEREAS**, the plan inventories existing recreational facilities, identifies deficiencies and needed improvements in the facilities, makes recommendations for future improvements and development in the various facilities and establishes a five year plan for the municipality, and

**WHEREAS**, upon local and state approval, this plan will make the City eligible for recreational funding programs administered by the State of Wisconsin

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Berlin Common Council that the *City of Berlin Open Space and Recreation Plan* be and hereby is adopted as the official open space and recreation plan for the city.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2014.

CITY OF BERLIN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Schramer, Mayor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jodie K. Olson, City Admin/Clerk/Treasurer