

CITY OF BERLIN

Description of the Community's Challenges

The City of Berlin is a small community that is struggling to keep interest in its downtown. Luckily several new local businesses have been established and are doing well. The City administration is interested in creating a market square in front of City Hall. This location was the site of a major market more than 100 years ago. Currently there is just parking in front of City Hall. The river is close by, but the approach to it is not welcoming. A private property owner has a park-like space along the river near the City Hall, and they are open to having it considered for a park.

What Ayres Provided

Ayres met with City staff and a few community leaders in the morning and discussed what was going well in Berlin and what was not. The group all agreed that new community space would be useful. Ayres then toured the space and developed drawings for a new market square in the afternoon. Ayres staff also looked at City-wide connections that could bring more people downtown. Ayres made a presentation to some returning stakeholders in the afternoon.

Key Recommendations

The workshop and report:

- Generated plans and sketches for the market square.
- Showed how the space could be designed for multiple functions.
- Suggested a new treatment to the riverfront and generated ideas for the privately owned greenspace to work as part of whole space with the market square.
- Left the City with some ideas for potential funding options.



November 28, 2022

Sara Rutkowski
Administrator
City of Berlin
108 N. Capron Street
Berlin, WI 54923

Dear Sara,

It was a pleasure to meet you and visit Berlin last month. The Ayres team and ECWRPC staff enjoyed the opportunity to visit your downtown and talk with community leaders. As you know, our visit was designed to provide a quick strengths and weaknesses analysis and to generate ideas for a market square in front of City Hall.

I've attached a more refined version of the presentation we produced during our visit. This presentation summarizes several design concepts. In addition, below I've outlined some of the overall opportunities that are broader and not easily captured with graphics.

The history of the market square area is amazing, and the concept of recreating this space with the city hall in the background and park space along the river is a strong one. We believe this could become a strong focal point for the city. It could be supported by a walking loop using the Broadway Street Bridge and the pedestrian bridge to the north. This could be promoted with wayfinding that could even link people to the Mascoutin Valley State Trail. While we understand that parking is a valuable resource, ample parking exists to the south of Broadway Street, and an enhanced intersection treatment at S. Capron Street and Broadway, could allow for safe pedestrian crossing and draw attention to the market square.

The design concept included in the attached presentation allows for community events using a stage and an portion of N. Capron Street that could be closed off. With the proposed design, we have attempted to connect the potential green space along the river and the market square space, making them function as one destination.

Overall, we believe there is great potential for the market square concept, and we hope this document is a good resource for the City as you plan for further design and implementation. Please contact me at 608-441-3564 or ArnoldA@Ayresassociates.com if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Ayres Associates Inc



Amanda Arnold, AICP
Urban Planner/Project Manager

Cc: Kevin Englebert, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

BERLIN MARKET SQUARE

The place to be



BERLIN, WISCONSIN

ASSETS



**HISTORIC
ARCHITECTURE**



**SMALL BUSINESS
VARIETY**



**EVENTS/FARMERS'
MARKET**



RECREATION/TRAILS

HISTORIC RESOURCES



SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH



RECREATION/TRAILS



FARMERS' MARKET/EVENTS



BERLIN, WISCONSIN

CHALLENGES

**LACK OF
COMMERADERY**

**DISCONNECTED
BUSINESSES**

PARKING

LIMITED TOURISM

CONNECTIONS

1 mile to camping

SEE MAP 1 - FOCUS AREA

Walking loop

Intersection improvement to a closed off Capron St. with more parking

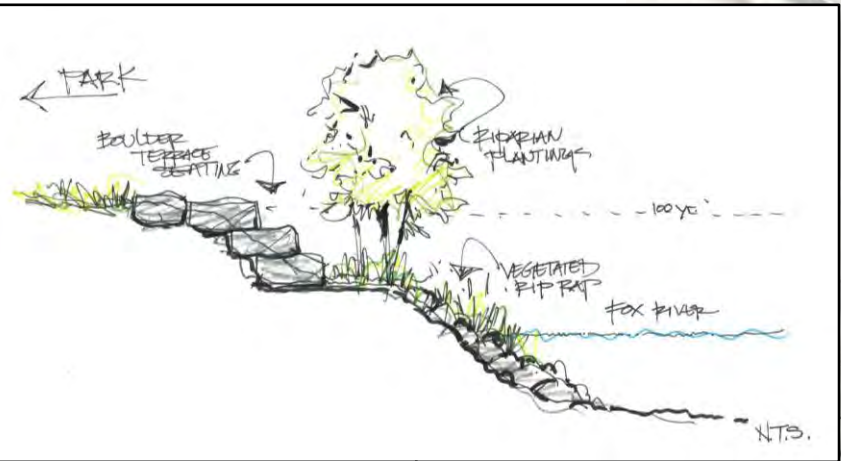
1 mile to Mascoutin Tr.

MAP 2

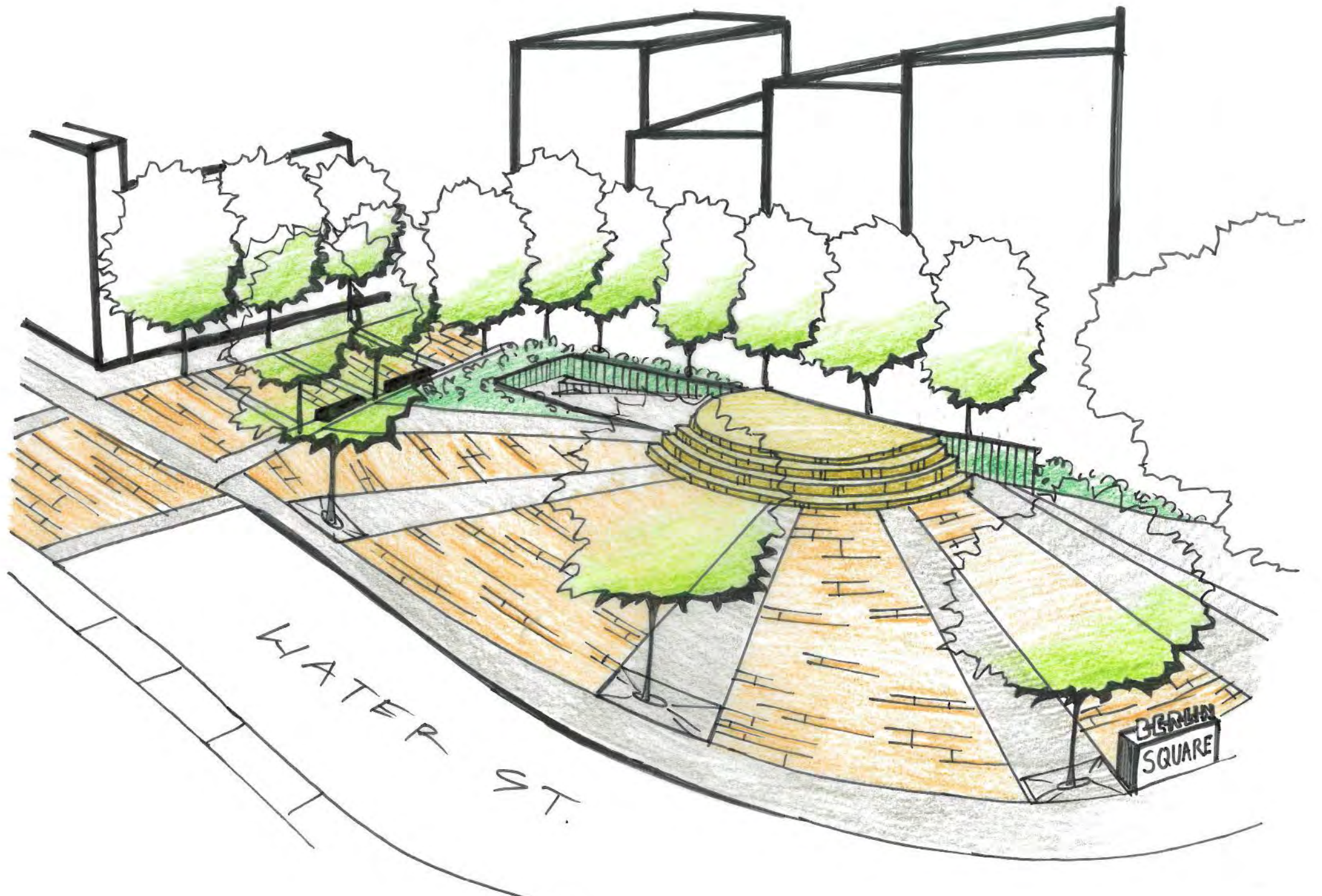
SCALE: 1"=20'

(AT 36"x48")





- This design concept:
- Provides a space for festivals/markets
 - Includes a stage
 - Connects City Hall and other buildings to the river
 - Enhances the current open space/river edge



WATER ST.

BERLIN SQUARE

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Grants play a key role in small communities' ability to advance intriguing projects. Here's a list of some grant possibilities to help get you started:

- Main Street Bounce Back Grants – Administered by the East Central Wisconsin RPC, these grants provide \$10,000 to new and existing businesses to move into vacant properties. 10 grants in Berlin to date.
- The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation has a variety of grant and technical assistance programs. Community Development Investment Grant funds for shovel ready downtown projects. New Vibrant Spaces grants fund public open spaces up to \$50k.
- DNR funds – Water Access, Stewardship Funding, potential BIL infrastructure funding.



QUESTIONS?



December 14, 2022

Sara Rutkowski
Administrator
City of Berlin
108 N. Capron Street
Berlin, WI 54923

Dear Sara,

My colleagues and I have had a chance to think more about Berlin's concept for a market square, and I wanted to offer you some thoughts on potential phasing and funding. I can imagine that the investment in a downtown space can be overwhelming. Our thought is that your project could be broken up into at least two components. You could design and fund the paved plaza area separately from the park space along the river.

Assuming you can get the land for the park space donated, or the owner is an open seller, that would likely be the easier project to implement. While the proposed waterfront reconstruction would be costly, the rest of the park concept is rather basic. As I'm sure you are aware, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has several grant programs that fund parks (<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/Grants.html>). DNR Stewardship funds can be used for park land acquisition, and DNR Land and Water Conservation funds can be used for park development. There are also several DNR grants focused on water quality improvement. That may be a possibility for the proposed redesign of the river edge.

Funding for plazas can be more of a challenge. The first step will be the development of a more detailed design. In a design like what Ayres suggested, the type of materials used can make a very large impact on the cost. The design is relatively simple, but, for example, paving choices could make it more or less expensive. There is also the potential to phase the construction. The flat paving work could be done first, and the stage could be added later.

If the market square can be linked to economic development, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation Vibrant Space Grant may be an option ([Vibrant Spaces | WEDC](#)). Also, it appears that Berlin has been eligible for Community Development Block Grant funds in the past. Plazas can be funded with CDBG funds if a link to improving neighborhoods can be established.

I have attached a brochure that Ayres created about grant funding. There may be other creative funding options. I hope this additional information is useful to the City of Berlin as you plan for your market square. Please contact me at 608-441-3564 or ArnoldA@Ayresassociates.com if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Ayres Associates Inc



Amanda Arnold, AICP
Urban Planner/Project Manager

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