

# BERLIN 2046

## Comprehensive Plan

A 20 YEAR GUIDE FOR THE FUTURE



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## CITY STAFF

TIM LUDOLPH, *ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*  
JESSI BALCOM, *CITY ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK-TREASURER*

## PLAN COMMISSION

MAYOR CATRINA BURGESS, *CHAIRPERSON*  
PAUL HANAN  
MARY KUBIAK  
VACANCY  
VACANCY  
KAYLA REEVES, *PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSIONER*  
TERRY PRZYBYL – *LIAISON*

## MSA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

This document was prepared by MSA Professional Services, Inc. with assistance from the above Plan Commission members.



## PLAN CONTENTS

- |          |   |           |  |
|----------|---|-----------|--|
| <b>1</b> | <b>INTRODUCTION</b><br><i>P. 1 - 6</i>                                      | <b>6</b>  | <b>TRANSPORTATION &amp; MOBILITY</b><br><i>P. 32 - 36</i>        |
| <b>2</b> | <b>PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT</b><br><i>P. 7 - 13</i>                                | <b>7</b>  | <b>UTILITIES &amp; COMMUNITY FACILITIES</b><br><i>P. 37 - 43</i> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, &amp; CULTURAL RESOURCES</b><br><i>P. 14 - 20</i> | <b>8</b>  | <b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION</b><br><i>P. 44 - 47</i>        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>HOUSING</b><br><i>P. 21 - 25</i>   | <b>9</b>  | <b>LAND USE</b><br><i>P. 48 - 69</i>                             |
| <b>5</b> | <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b><br><i>P. 26 - 31</i>                            | <b>10</b> | <b>IMPLEMENTATION</b><br><i>P. 70 - 74</i>                       |

## APPENDIX

- |          |                                       |          |                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|
| <b>A</b> | <b>PLAN ADOPTION &amp; AMENDMENTS</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS</b> |
| <b>B</b> | <b>ACTION PLAN TABLES</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>MAPS</b>                     |

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO THE CITY OF BERLIN'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN!

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide decisions and actions affecting City budgets, ordinances, and growth. The 2046 Plan looks 20 years into the future to describe what the City would like to achieve over time, offering goals and strategies for implementation in order to realize its long-term vision. As a broad-based plan, it sometimes relies on other more detailed plans or budget processes to determine when or how implementation will occur.

The Plan's recommendations are intended to:

- Create a collective and consistent vision for the future of Berlin.
- Establish priorities for public investment, including the City's Capital and Operating Budgets.
- Provide or inform policies that guide City decision-making.
- Align the work of City staff around the issues that matter most to our residents and stakeholders.
- Create a framework for topic-specific plans and initiatives that will expand on the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations.
- Guide private development through the Future Land Use map and policies.
- Foster partnerships with other stakeholders to address shared goals.



### WHY PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to establish a shared vision for Berlin to guide future actions and decisions, improving the City's ability to work cohesively and consistently over time.

### PURPOSE & INTENT

The Comprehensive Plan is a resource for managing growth. It is designed to be a working document for City officials to direct community development decisions, assist with capital and operational budgeting, stimulate private housing, business and industrial investment.

A Comprehensive Plan functions as an umbrella document that encompasses issues most frequently affected by City governance, and it is to be used in coordination with other documents and ordinances. The Plan references other plans and studies that address specific topics in greater detail.

The Plan will be implemented via ordinances, especially zoning and subdivision ordinances. This Plan is intended to help the Plan Commission and City Council apply those ordinances; in fact, Wisconsin state statutes require that certain decisions must be consistent with this Plan.

## PLAN ADOPTION & THE CONSISTENCY REQUIREMENT

Under Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning statute, a comprehensive plan must receive a public hearing prior to adoption, be recommended for adoption by the Plan Commission and be adopted by ordinance updating §52.1 – Comprehensive plan adopted by the City Council.

Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning law requires that if a local government unit enacts or amends any of the following ordinances, the ordinance must be consistent with the comprehensive plan:

- Official map
- Local subdivision regulations
- Zoning ordinance
- Shoreland/wetland zoning ordinance

Under Wisconsin law, “consistent with” is defined as “furthers or does not contradict the objectives, goals, and policies contained in the comprehensive plan.” Wis. Stat. 66.1001(1) (am)

Though adopted by ordinance, the plan itself is not an ordinance or regulation. This plan is not intended to be a literal “road map” for the City that provides a clear path from the present to a point twenty years into the future. Rather, it is intended to guide decision making in the years to come toward a unified vision expressed in this plan. Over the course of time many factors will arise that will significantly influence local decisions. This plan should continue to be consulted to ensure that such decisions contribute to the vision established by this plan.

## PLAN MAINTENANCE

This Plan represents the City’s efforts to address current issues and anticipate future needs, but it can and should be amended as conditions warrant reconsideration of policies. The plan can and should be amended from time to time to adjust to changing conditions, and it should be fully updated with new data every ten years.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

This Plan is an introduction and the nine required plan elements as outlined by state statute:

1. Introduction
2. Public Engagement
3. Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources
4. Housing
5. Economic Development
6. Transportation & Mobility
7. Utilities & Community Facilities
8. Intergovernmental Cooperation
9. Land Use
10. Implementation

Each section includes Issues and Opportunities (identified during the planning process), Voices from the Community (public input gathered), policy content organized into Goals and Strategies, Action items for the City to implement over the Plan’s lifespan, and a 2025 Data Snapshot of existing conditions in the community.

The Plan Appendix provides the following supplemental content for future reference:

- Appendix A:** Plan Adoption & Amendments
- Appendix B:** Action Plan
- Appendix C:** Community Engagement Summary
- Appendix D:** Maps

## COMMUNITY VISION

Berlin's vision statement is intended to set the general tone for the rest of the plan. It encapsulates the major themes woven throughout the plan and provides a goal post for the future of the community. The vision statement was developed through stakeholder interviews, community survey, public meetings, and discussion with City staff.

### BERLIN 2046 VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

**Vision:** *“Berlin successfully balances a rural, small town feel with abundant opportunities for growth and community connections.”*

**Mission:** *Berlin values the past while purposefully planning for the future, delivering safe, reliable and professional services that improve the quality of life for the community.*

## GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

The community's vision will be implemented through policy (organized into goals and strategies) and actions.

**Goals:** Long-term, ideal outcomes/conditions related to the vision statement. Goals provide a “big idea” and direction for strategies and actions.

**Strategies:** Guidelines in support of a corresponding goal. Strategies recommend improvements but do not include details or answer “how” to be achieved.

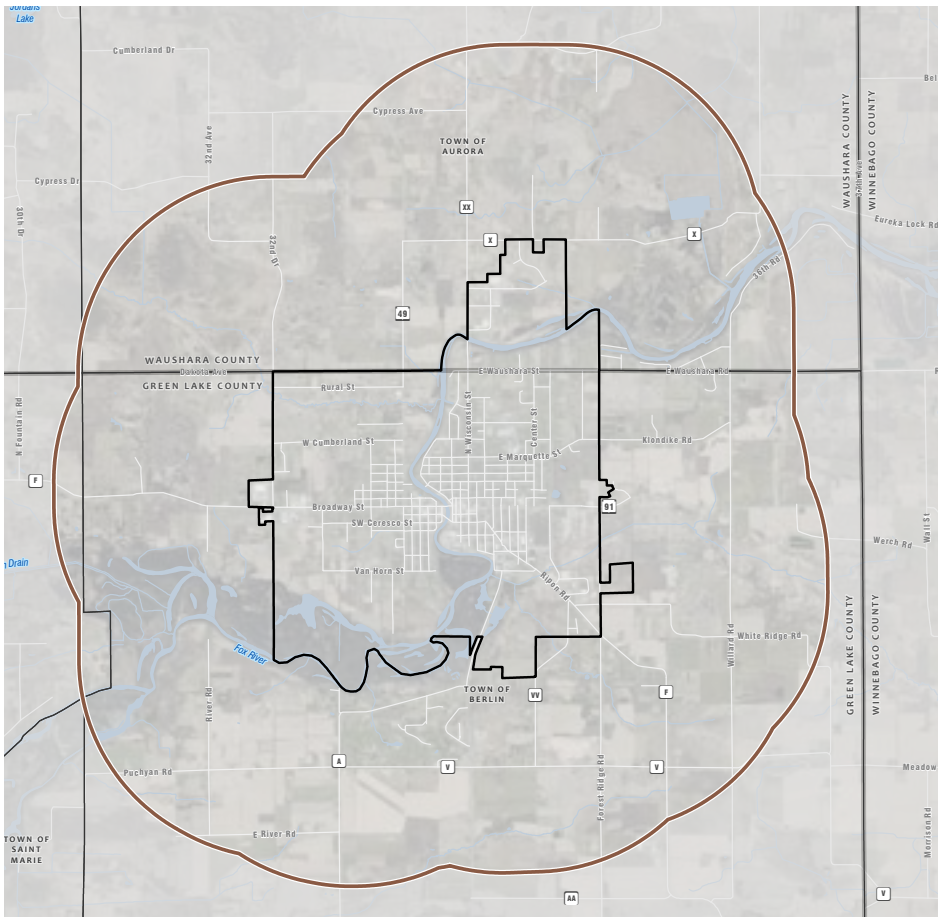
**Actions:** Clear directives for implementing a strategy or goal. Actions answer the “how” and can have a measurable target for completion. See **Appendix B** for complete Action Plan tables.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT





Berlin is a community of approximately 5,571 residents, located in Green Lake and Waushara Counties in east-central Wisconsin. Situated along the Fox River, Berlin offers scenic waterfront views and recreational opportunities while maintaining its small-town character. The City benefits from proximity to regional hubs like Oshkosh and Fond du Lac, with access via state highways. Berlin's layout includes a historic downtown commercial district surrounded by residential neighborhoods, open spaces, and agricultural lands. The City also features a variety of parks and public spaces, contributing to its vibrant community life and connection to nature.



# INTRODUCTION



MAP 1.1 - PLANNING AREA

-  Planning Area (1.5 Miles)
-  City of Berlin
-  Surrounding Municipality
-  County Boundary

## PLANNING JURISDICTION

The study area for this plan includes all lands in which the City has both a short-and long-term interest in planning and development activity.

Wisconsin law divides cities into four classes relating to government administration and local governmental power. Berlin corresponds to a 1.5-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction. The City encompasses approximately 6.53 square miles. The planning area includes all of the incorporated land within the City and land within the 1.5-mile Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Limit (ETJ) of the City.

## 2025 COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Data used for the City of Berlin Comprehensive Plan includes 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) data, 2000 & 2020 Decennial Census, and Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) 2020-2050 household projections. In most cases, the data is specifically focused on the context of the City; however, county and state, as well as comparable communities are also highlighted to give an effective analysis of the data overview.

**2024 TOTAL POPULATION: 5,571**

## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Race & Ethnicity:** In 2020, the City of Berlin had about 11% of the total population as Hispanic or Latino with Other and Two or More Races residents representing 4.7%. Most of the population is White at 83%.

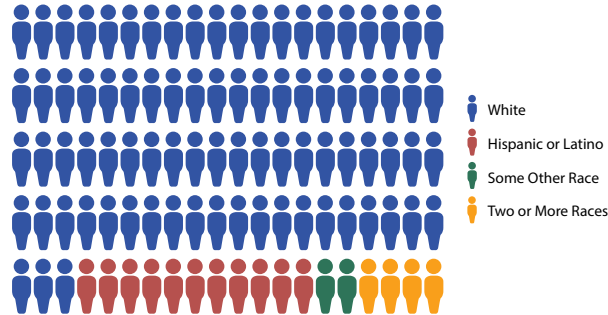
**Median Age:** From 2020 to 2023, the median age in Berlin increased from 38.2 to 41.5. This trend is different than Green Lake County and Waushara County, where the median age remained relatively the same.

**Income:** The 2023 ACS data shows that about 17% of households earned over \$100,000, while about 44% earned less than \$50,000. Another 38% of households earn between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually.

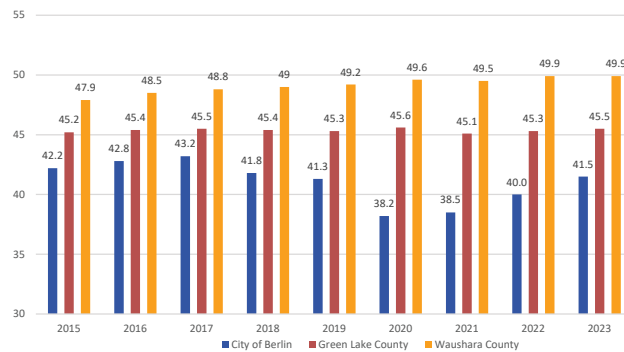
### Population Change by

**Decade:** The City experienced a 4.1% population increase from 2000 until 2010. However, from 2020 to 2050, the City's growth rate is projected to decrease from 0.9% to -5.1%.

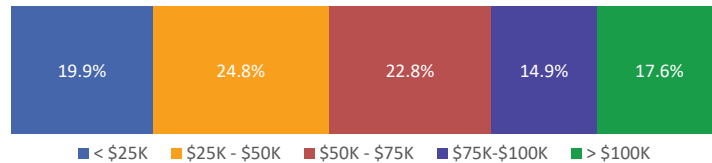
**Figure 1.1 - Race & Ethnicity Trends (2020 Dec. Census)**



**Figure 1.2 - Median Age (2015-2023 ACS)**



**Figure 1.3 - Income Distribution by Households (2023 ACS)**



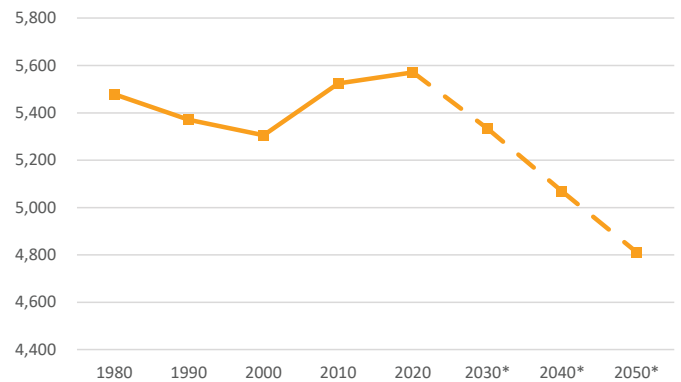
**Table 1.1 - Educational Attainment (25 years and older) (2024 ACS)**

| EDUCATION LEVEL                  | CITY OF BERLIN | TOWN OF BERLIN | GREEN LAKE COUNTY | STATE OF WISCONSIN |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Less than High School Degree     | 10%            | 6%             | 8.5%              | 6.3%               |
| High School Graduate             | 40.0%          | 32.7%          | 36.6%             | 28.8%              |
| High School Graduate or higher   | 89.9%          | 94.4%          | 89.6%             | 93.7%              |
| Some College - No Degree         | 26.1%          | 23.4%          | 22.8%             | 18.7%              |
| Associate's or Bachelor's Degree | 23.9%          | 38.3%          | 32.1%             | 46.2%              |

# INTRODUCTION

**Household Projections:** Based on updated State of Wisconsin projections, the City is expected to experience a decline in both population and households by 2050. The projected population decreases from 2,369 residents in 2020 to 2,028 residents in 2050. The total number of households is projected to decrease from approximately 1,021 households in 2020 to approximately 870 households in 2050, a loss of about 151 households. This indicates that the City's projected population decline is expected to result in fewer households overall.

**Figure 1.4 - Population Growth by Decade (U.S. Census 1990-2020, WDOA 2024)**



**Table 1.2 - Population Growth & Projections (U.S. Census 1990-2020, WI DOA 2024)**

|      | CITY OF BERLIN | CITY OF RIPON | GREEN LAKE COUNTY | WAUSHARA COUNTY | WISCONSIN |
|------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1980 | 5,478          | 7,111         | 18,370            | 18,526          | 4,705,767 |
| 1990 | 5,371          | 7,241         | 18,651            | 19,385          | 4,891,769 |
| 2000 | 5,305          | 6,828         | 19,105            | 23,154          | 5,363,675 |
| 2010 | 5,524          | 7,733         | 19,051            | 24,496          | 5,691,047 |
| 2020 | 5,484          | 7,863         | 19,018            | 24,520          | 5,893,718 |
| 2030 | 5,253          | 7,429         | 18,420            | 23,320          | 5,890,915 |
| 2040 | 4,996          | 6,941         | 17,725            | 21,615          | 5,841,620 |
| 2050 | 4,747          | 6,316         | 17,035            | 19,700          | 5,710,120 |

**Table 1.3 - Household Growth & Projections (U.S. Census 1980-2020, WI DOA 2026)**

|      | CITY OF BERLIN |                | GREEN LAKE COUNTY |                | WAUSHARA COUNTY |                | WISCONSIN    |                |
|------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
|      | NUMBER OF HH   | PERSONS PER HH | NUMBER OF HH      | PERSONS PER HH | NUMBER OF HH    | PERSONS PER HH | NUMBER OF HH | PERSONS PER HH |
| 1980 | 2,043          | 2.62           | 6,734             | 2.69           | 6,904           | 2.65           | 1,652,261    | 2.77           |
| 1990 | 2,138          | 2.48           | 7,189             | 2.56           | 7,616           | 2.52           | 1,822,118    | 2.61           |
| 2000 | 2,153          | 2.39           | 7,652             | 2.45           | 9,312           | 2.44           | 2,084,544    | 2.5            |
| 2010 | 2,355          | 2.29           | 7,940             | 2.40           | 10,330          | 2.25           | 2,274,611    | 2.41           |
| 2020 | 2,369          | 2.32           | 8,099             | 2.32           | 10,173          | 2.29           | 2,377,935    | 2.38           |
| 2030 | 2,302          | 2.28           | 7,963             | 2.28           | 9,934           | 2.23           | 2,606,485    | 2.26           |
| 2040 | 2,180          | 2.29           | 7,635             | 2.29           | 9,282           | 2.21           | 2,810,016    | 2.08           |
| 2050 | 2,028          | 2.33           | 7,191             | 2.33           | 8,417           | 2.22           | 3,013,547    | 1.89           |