

# 3. AG, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

## INTRODUCTION

The Agriculture, Natural & Cultural Resources chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan focuses on preserving and enhancing the City's valuable resources. It addresses key aspects such as agriculture, natural resource conservation, and cultural heritage preservation. By prioritizing these areas, the City aims to ensure the long-term sustainability and enjoyment of its resources for generations to come.

## ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Community Events:** Berlin has a rich history of community events, providing opportunities for all members of the community to come, interact, and support one another. Community events are an integral way to preserve the cultural heritage through generations to come. Organizations like Achieving a Better Community, Inc. (ABC) offer opportunity for collaboration and preservation of local traditions.
- **Access to Natural Areas:** Many people feel that the landscape of Berlin is defined by the natural beauty of the Green Lake region, and the surrounding agricultural lands which have defined the region.
- **Historical Society:** The Berlin Area Historical Society has a museum and offers events and an archive to honor the history of the broader Berlin area; this organization can support the preservation of community character and history during periods of growth.



Berlin Quarry, Source: Berlin Area Historical Society

## VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

- When asked to evaluate community amenities, **80%** of survey respondents rated the parks and open space system as either "satisfactory" or "excellent."
- As the City grows over time, **83%** of survey respondents indicated support for requiring that new land be dedicated to greenspace, conservation, or recreational activity.
- Community members at the Public Input Meeting showed strong support for preserving the agricultural roots that have defined development in the region.

## AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

### GOAL 1 (Agriculture)

Ensure productive agricultural lands are preserved in balance with the City's development and growth.

### STRATEGIES

1. Promote infill and redevelopment initiatives on under-utilized sites with least possible impact to natural environments as the preferred development type, reducing development pressure on agricultural lands.
2. Limit development in agricultural areas identified within this Plan's Future Land Use Map and support farmland preservation programs at county and state levels.

### ACTIONS

- A. Initiate meetings with adjacent townships to discuss items of mutual concern, particularly related to preserving productive farmland and agricultural practices that protect natural resources from runoff and chemical contamination.

### GOAL 2 (Natural Resources)

Conserve, protect, and improve the City and its surrounding environmental resources.

### STRATEGIES

3. Preserve and protect key environmental corridors, native vegetation, and wildlife species.
4. Promote water management practices that mitigate stormwater impacts on surface waters, minimize erosion, and maintain ecosystem function.
5. Maintain naturally occurring floodwater storage areas and flood discharge mechanisms by preventing filling and construction in regional floodplains and encourage landscaping practices that help to filter and infiltrate rainwater.
6. Work with contiguous communities and state and county agencies to assure protection of Berlin's wetlands.
7. Encourage businesses and industries to adopt practices that limit pollution.
8. Engage the public through natural resources and recreational facilities planning to encourage recycling all possible household waste. Make sure that informational materials on recycling are available to visitors and residents alike.

## AG, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

### ACTIONS

- B.** Develop a stormwater management plan that pays particular attention to the areas adjoining development. The plan should also identify priority protection areas that are vital for the protection of the City's groundwater.
- C.** Continue to partner with the counties and other municipalities to proactively address flood mitigation, especially in implementing county natural hazards mitigation plans.
- D.** Consider purchasing properties within the floodplain as they become available and restore properties to natural vegetation for stormwater management and flood mitigation.
- E.** Develop and make available public education materials discussing practices and strategies to minimize runoff, chemical pollution and contamination to protect ground and surface water.
- F.** Develop and maintain a list of preferred native plants and trees for landscaping to be used for assistance in development review and project planning.
- G.** Review and consider revising the stormwater management (SWM) ordinance to allow for prairie/natural plantings around the stormwater management facility.
- H.** Encourage all landowners to maintain and enhance natural buffers along waterways and wetlands. Enforce stream and river setback requirements.
- I.** Encourage developers to recycle as much construction waste as possible.

### GOAL 3 (Cultural Resources)

**Create and actively use community spaces/ events that contribute to the identity of Berlin.**

### STRATEGIES

- 9.** Collaborate with Berlin Area School District, Berlin Area Historical Society, Achieving a Better Community, local churches, and other stakeholders as needed to promote historical and cultural activities.
- 10.** Support community events and programming year-round that activate the downtown, attracting residents and visitors from surrounding areas. Programming should be varied to appeal to a wide range of community members.

### ACTIONS

- J.** Adopt a zoning ordinance that will allow for adaptive reuse of buildings that cannot be used for their original purposes.
- K.** Identify local organizations with whom the City can partner to support the promotion and funding of community-wide events.
- L.** Maintain an inventory of historic, architecturally significant and culturally significant buildings.
- M.** Use city funding tools to support restoration of blighted properties when possible.
- N.** Pursue funds and assistance through both public and private sources, such as the State of Wisconsin's 'Main Street' program and other Wisconsin Historical Society programs, to support preservation work.
- O.** Commission local artists to create murals, sculptures, and other public art installations that celebrate Berlin's cultural heritage.

## AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

### FARMLANDS

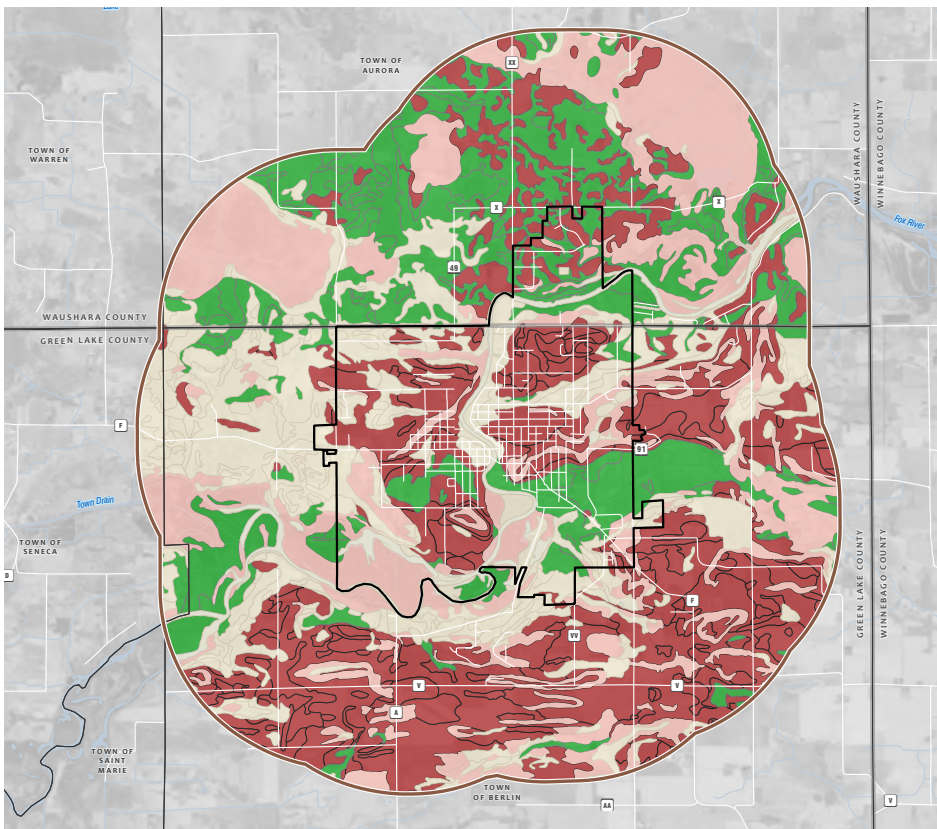
There are currently 0.2 acres of agricultural lands within the City. Most of the agricultural area is located in the planning area, on the outskirts of the City. The City Zoning Map identifies one Agricultural District located on the four corners of the City border.

### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### Soils

There are three predominant general soil types found within the City of Berlin: Willette-Poy-Poygan, Kidder-Rotamer-Grellton and Boyer-Oshtemo-Gotham Associations.

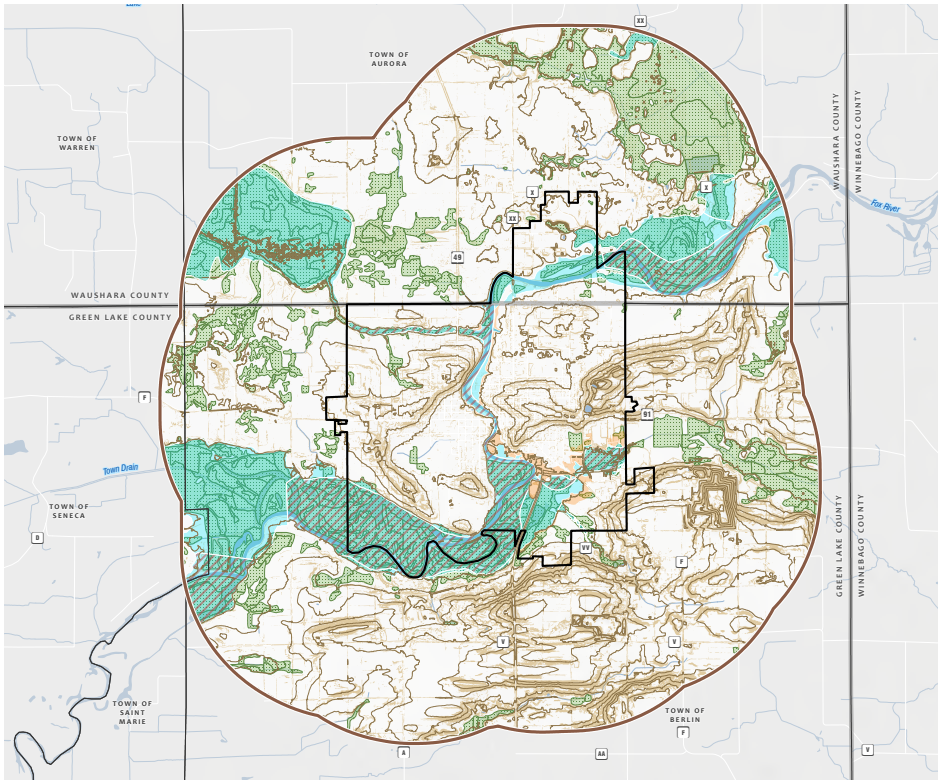
**Prime Farmland**, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas.



**MAP 3.1 - SOILS & PRIME FARMLAND**

- Planning Area (1.5 Miles)
- City of Berlin
- Surrounding Municipality
- County Boundary
- NRCS Farmland Classification**
- All areas are prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Not prime farmland

# AG, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES



**MAP 3.2 - DEVELOPMENT LIMITATIONS**

- Planning Area (1.5 Miles)
- City of Berlin
- Surrounding Municipality
- County Boundary
- 20-ft Contour
- Slopes Greater than 20%
- Wetland Areas (WDNR)
- Flood Zone Designation**
  - 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
  - Regulatory Floodway
  - 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

## Geology & Topography

The terrain in and around Berlin is moderately rolling to hilly with elevation change ranging from 150 to 200 feet.

Steep slopes exceeding a 20 percent grade are scattered throughout the City and concentrated in the south and east. Generally, slopes that have between 12 and 20 percent grade present challenges for building site development, and slopes that exceed a 20 percent grade are not recommended for any disturbance or development.

## Minerals

An abandoned pit quarry in the eastern portion of the City of Berlin was once an active granite quarry. According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, the quarry was founded in 1883 and closed in 1992.

## WATER RESOURCES

### Regulations

Water resources are regulated by the City's Floodplain Regulations, Shoreland-Wetland, and Erosion, Sediment and Water Runoff Control. Other local, state, and federal laws and regulations may apply.

### Groundwater

Groundwater is the source for all of the City's drinking water supply. Berlin Waterworks serves the City with three active wells.

### Surface Water

Berlin features several notable surface water features, including the Fox River and several lesser tributaries feeding into the river.

### Watersheds

The City of Berlin is located within the Upper Fox River Watershed in the Fox-Wolf River Basin,

which drains over 6,400 square miles across east-central Wisconsin. The Fox River, which flows through the heart of Berlin, is one of the Basin's most significant water resources, supporting both ecological diversity and recreational use.

### Wetlands

The City of Berlin contains more than 600 acres of wetlands (16% of the entire City). It is necessary to note that the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service's identification of wetlands located within farmed areas is not included within this approximate acreage. The majority of the wetland acreage located in the City is associated with the Fox River. The City of Berlin also contains several wetlands associated with Barnes Creek. These wetlands are often referred to as "floodplain" wetlands.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### Historic Places

The City of Berlin, nestled along the Fox River, has a rich and diverse history shaped by its natural waterways. Originally a travel route for Native American tribes, French fur traders, and Jesuit missionaries, the Fox River later became a vital corridor for commerce and settlement. Berlin earned recognition as the fur and leather capital and was the birthplace of Wisconsin's first commercial cranberry operations. Today, Berlin honors its past through two National Register Historic Districts and continues to thrive with a mix of historic charm and modern industry.

Some of the more historic buildings in the area include:

- Beckwith House Hotel (1863) – 101 W. Huron St
  - J. P. Luther Company Glove Factory (1904) – 139 S. Pearl St
  - Wisconsin Power and Light Berlin Power Plant (1930) – 143 Water St
  - Nelson F. Beckwith House (1858) – 179 E. Huron St
  - McClelland–Kasuboski House (1869) – W404 W. Hillside Rd
  - Huron Street Historic District– Roughly, Huron St. from Fox River to 124 E. Huron, including adjacent side streets
  - Nathan Strong Park Historic District– Roughly bounded by North Wisconsin, East Moore, North Swetting, and East Huron streets
- Johnny's Bar (1890) – 114-114A N Capron St
  - Berlin Post Office (1938) – 122 South Pearl St
  - Berlin High School (1918) – 289 East Huron Street



*Old Berlin High School Photograph, Source: WI Historical Society*

## AG, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Funding options should be explored for restoring historic buildings within the community. State level historic preservation programs that may apply to these buildings include:

- The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the Wisconsin Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office provides Historic Tax Credits to income producing historic buildings to assist in renovation costs. If approved, the program provides 20% of rehabilitation costs as a state tax credit.
- The Wisconsin Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office administers a Historic Homeowners' Tax Credit program that returns 25% of approved renovation costs of historic homes deemed eligible as an income tax credit. Homeowners must apply to the program through a tax credit application with the Historical Society.



*Christmas in the Park, Source: ABC Group*

### Major Community Events

#### Spring & Summer Events

- Berlin Farmers & Artists Market & Music in the Park (Tuesdays, June–September at Nathan Strong Park)
- VFW Post 2925 Brat Fry (Wednesdays, Memorial Day–Labor Day)
- Berlin Historical Society Open House (2nd & 4th Sundays, June–August)
- Eureka Locks Open Weekends (Late May–August)
- Let Freedom Ring Celebration (July 3, Riverside Park)
- Bugle Mouth Bass Tournament (Late July, Riverside Park)
- Berlin Boat Club Corn Roast (August, Pioneer Island)
- Street Cruzers Car Show (August, Riverside Park)
- Berlin Kiwanis Steve Coulson Memorial Pig Roast (August, Nathan Strong Park)

#### Fall Events

- City of Berlin Trick-or-Treat (Last Sunday in October)
- American Legion Chili Supper (Early November)
- Veterans Day Observances (November 11)
- ABC Group's Lighting of Nathan Strong Park (Late November)
- Lighted Holiday Parade (Late November)
- The Gobbler Turkey Day 5K & 1-Mile Run/Walk (Thanksgiving Day)
- Thanksgiving Dinner at All Saints Parish (Thanksgiving Day)

#### Winter Events

- Elf Extravaganza (Late November)
- Berlin Blitz Holiday Market (Late November)
- Berlin Lions Club Coupon Book Sale (Begins December 1)
- Berlin Kiwanis Christmas Dinner (December 25, BHS Commons)