

BERLIN 2046

Comprehensive Plan

A 20 YEAR GUIDE FOR THE FUTURE

DRAFT



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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.

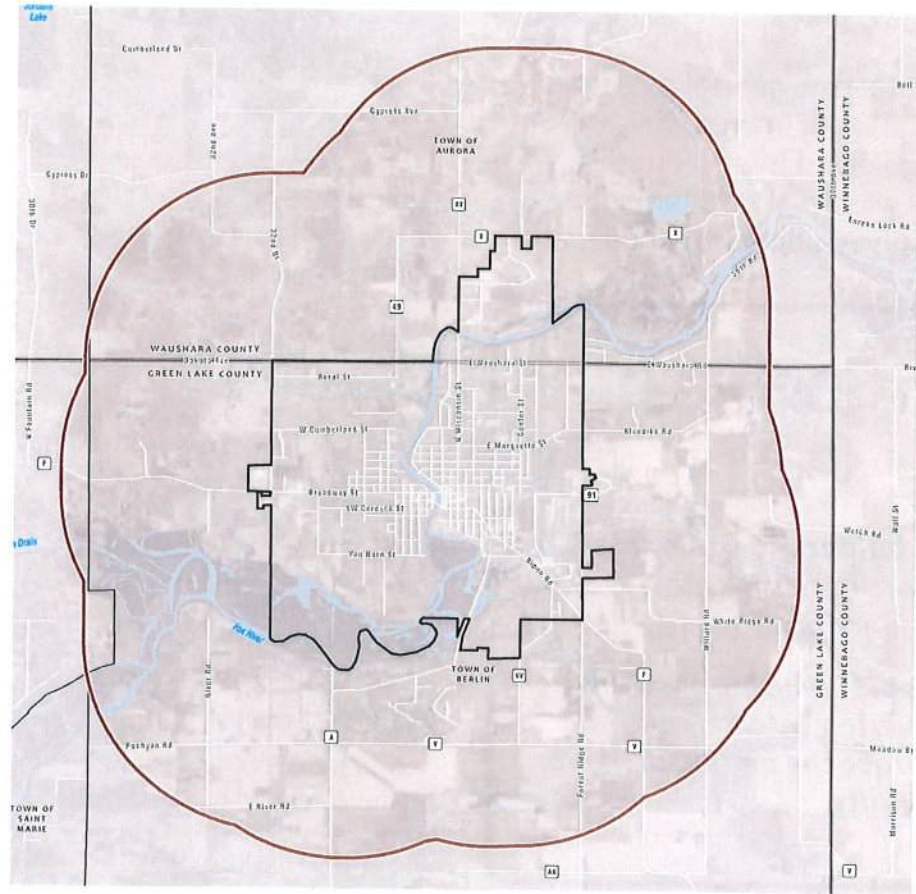
Actions: Clear directives for implementing a strategy or goal. Actions answer the “how” and can have a measurable target for completion. See *Appendix B* for complete Action Plan tables.

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)

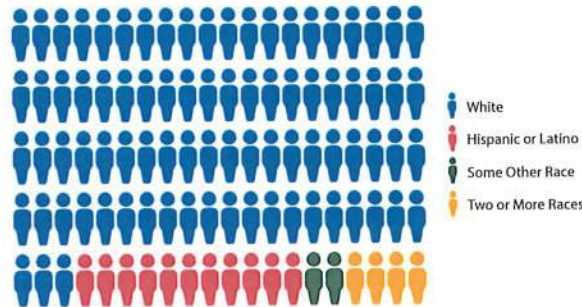


Figure 1.2 - Median Age (2015-2023 ACS)

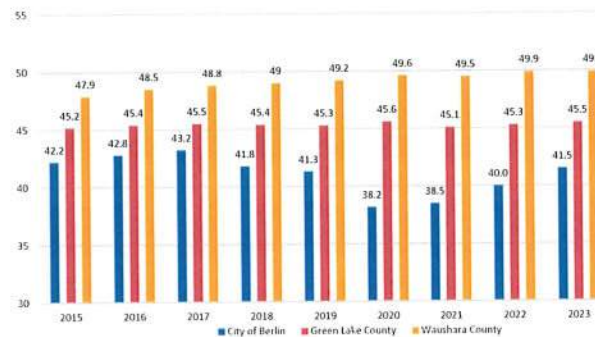


Figure 1.3 - Income Distribution by Households (2023 ACS)

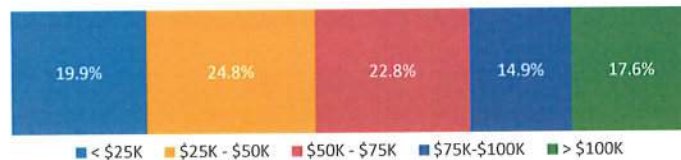


Table 1.1 - Educational Attainment (25 years and older) (2024 ACS)

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%
Associates or Bachelor's Degree	23.9%	38.3%	32.1%	46.2%

INTRODUCTION

Household Projections: Based on State of Wisconsin projections, the City will experience a growth of about 296 households by 2050. Despite overall population loss, the total number of households is projected to increase due to the decline in household size and the increasing prevalence of single-person households. This is similar to the national and regional trends driven by demographic changes such as increased life expectancy and delayed childbearing.

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

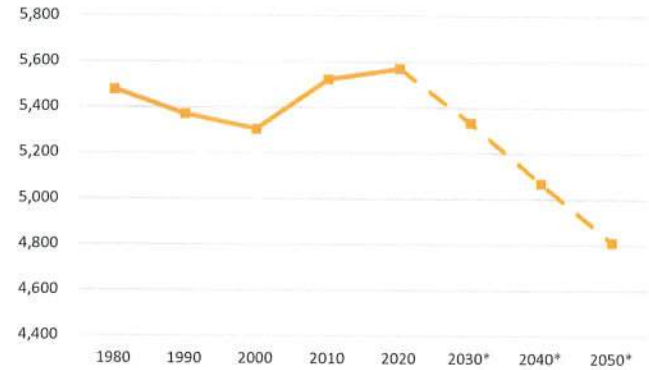


Table 1.2 - Population Growth & Projections (U.S. Census 1990-2020, WDOA 2024)

	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	5,571	7,863	19,018	24,520	5,893,718
2030	5,333	7,429	18,420	23,320	5,890,915
2040	5,068	6,941	17,725	21,615	5,841,620
2050	4,811	6,316	17,035	19,700	5,710,120

Table 1.3 - Household Growth & Projections (U.S. Census 1980-2020)

	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	2.4	10,330	2.25	2,274,611	2.41
2020	2,244	2.38	8,024	2.31	10,053	2.28	2,377,935	2.38
2030	2,371	2.25	8,488	2.17	11,380	2.05	2,606,485	2.26
2040	2,456	2.06	8,916	1.99	12,395	1.74	2,810,016	2.08
2050	2,540	1.89	9,344	1.82	13,409	1.47	3,013,547	1.89

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the efforts to engage community members throughout the comprehensive planning process, which aimed to gather diverse community input to shape the vision, goals, and strategies for the City's future development.

PUBLIC INCLUSION PLAN

The public inclusion plan included the following activities and events:

1. **Project Meetings:** Plan Commission, Public Hearing, and other committee meetings to review and give feedback on plan development
2. **Public Input Meeting & Visioning Workshop:** In-person community meeting to obtain input and direction on a new/updated mission and vision statement for the City
3. **Online Engagement:** Community survey
4. **Promotional Methods:** Use of City website, fliers/posters, newspaper, emails, and social media platforms to reach community members on updates during the planning process
5. **Public Hearing:** Steps for recommendation and adoption of the updated Plan

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The City of Berlin facilitated a variety of efforts to garner input for the Comprehensive Plan:

PROJECT MEETINGS

A project kick-off meeting was held on July 10, 2025. The discussion highlighted issues and opportunities in Berlin for the City to address in the Comprehensive Plan. Through the rest of the planning process, meetings were held with the Plan Commission to review draft elements of the plan as it was developed.

At the kickoff meeting with the Plan Commission, key priorities for the Comprehensive Plan included:

- Strengthening community trust through active engagement and listening to residents' priorities.
- Revitalizing underutilized downtown commercial spaces by promoting diverse, vibrant retail and business offerings with enhanced curb appeal.
- Reestablishing the Economic Development Corporation and fostering strong public-private partnerships.
- Identifying and addressing opportunities for improvement across the community.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online community survey was active from September 10, 2025 through November 2, 2025 and received 108 responses. The survey provided 31 questions with some open-ended responses to inform the Plan’s policy direction. A link to the survey was provided on the City’s website, posted on the City Facebook, and shared out to community members through the other engagement opportunities. Full survey results are provided in Appendix A of this Plan.

Seventy-three percent (73%) of survey responses came from City of Berlin residents. In comparison to the greater community, most respondents were between 35-54, more female, and mostly homeowners. Overall, the responses reflect a strong appreciation for Berlin’s small town character and sense of safety, along with a clear desire for improve housing options and reinvest in the downtown area—while preserving the City’s character.

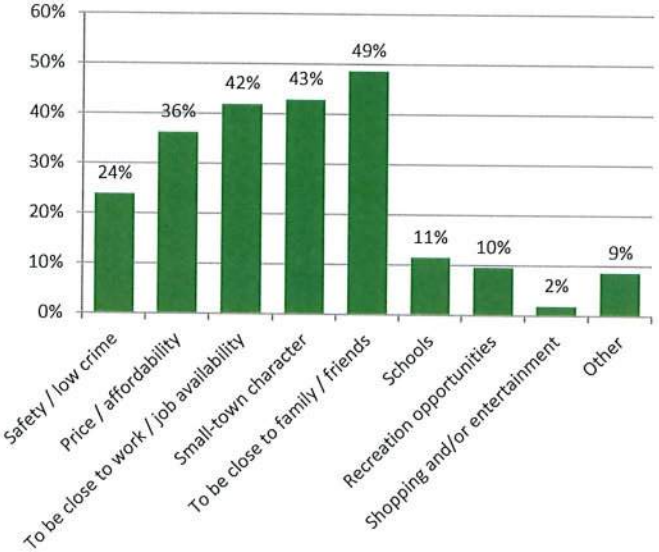


Flyer advertising the online survey

Living in Berlin

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents reported that they have lived in the Berlin area for over ten years. The most frequently cited reasons for living in Berlin included proximity to work, proximity to family and friends, small-town community character, and the sense of safety provided. Respondents commonly expressed satisfaction with the City’s street trees, property upkeep, and public utility services; City parks, safe walking routes, and personal safety were highly rated. Respondents were not satisfied with the overall appearance of the downtown area and parking convenience within downtown.

Figure 2.1 - Top Reasons for Living in Berlin



Housing

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents are homeowners. If respondents were to move in the next five years, 65% would prefer to purchase a home over renting a home, with 79% of respondents preferring single-family detached housing over other unit types; respondents indicate desire for larger housing options with 2-3 bedrooms (68%) or 4+ bedrooms (29%).

The table below highlights survey responses to the question, “Rate the following housing conditions in Berlin.” Categories rated overall as “satisfactory” included ownership housing costs, ownership housing quality, rental housing costs, and rental housing quality. The results indicate room for improvement in housing supply for both owners and renters, with open comments highlighting cost and quality concerns for rental stock in addition to need for stronger building code enforcement.

For the development of new housing supply, responses showed support for single family homes on small lots (79%), duplexes (61%), and apartments (52%); many respondents are open to learning more about options for accessory dwelling units (40%).

Figure 2.2 - Avg. Rating City Services & Facilities



Table 2.1 - Survey Responses on Housing Conditions

	POOR	UNSATISFACTORY	SATISFACTORY	EXCELLENT	N/A
Ownership housing costs	10%	23%	54%	5%	9%
Ownership housing supply	13%	29%	50%	1%	7%
Ownership housing quality	12%	28%	52%	2%	6%
Rental housing costs	20%	25%	19%	2%	34%
Rental housing supply	28%	32%	11%	1%	29%
Rental housing quality	22%	32%	13%	1%	32%

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Employment

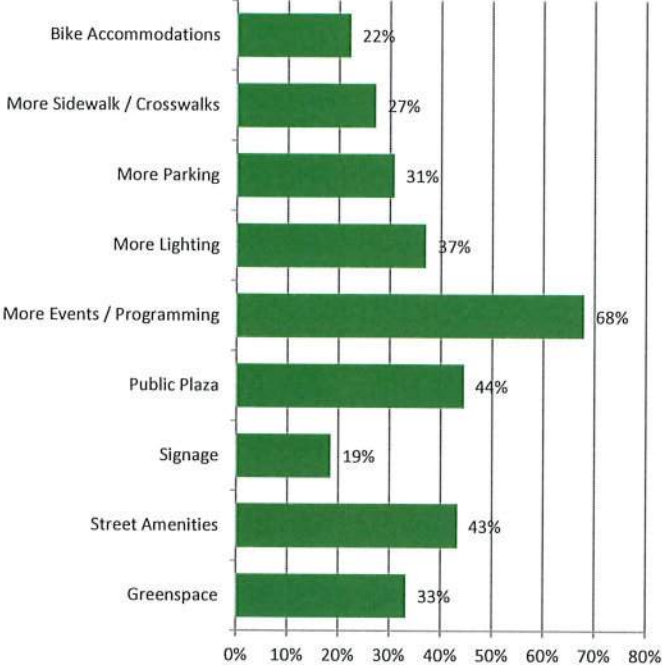
The employment share response indicates 88% of respondents work full-time; 80% of respondents work one day or less from home, while 14% work remotely for 4-5+ days per week; this aligns with the national trend shifting towards hybrid employment. Of those respondents who want to work remotely, most would benefit from more flexible work options and better internet service. Within non-working respondents, 4% identified as retirees.

Additional Investment & Development Needs

Street repair and maintenance, sewer and water services, and sidewalks were identified as the highest priorities for future City investments. Respondents indicated dissatisfaction with retail shopping, entertainment, and drive-thru restaurants in the City; responses indicate overall satisfaction with the City's gas stations, pharmacies, medical / dental care, and broadband internet. Respondents would like to see the City prioritize reinvestment in downtown sites and existing homes.



Figure 2.3 - Top Amenities/Improvements you would want to see in Downtown Berlin



PUBLIC VISIONING WORKSHOP

About twenty-three members of the public attended a community visioning workshop on October 28th, 2025, twenty-one of whom identified as Berlin residents. The workshop featured a presentation and a series of activities to introduce attendees to the comprehensive planning process and garner public input.

Crafting a Vision Statement

During discussions with community members in the workshop, attendees were asked to reflect on a vision for Berlin 20 years from present. Community members reflected on the roots of the community and desire to balance growth and small-town feel. Berlin has a rich history and community members emphasized the welcoming community atmosphere. Many identified their vision specifically for the downtown area, hoping that in twenty years, Downtown Berlin has active storefronts with local businesses to support the economy and attract residents and visitors.

Feedback Wall

Attendees were asked to identify Berlin's Strengths, Issues, and Opportunities by adding comments to sticky notes on a wall. The responses are summarized below:



Strengths

(What you want to preserve in Berlin)

- **Strong Community and Volunteer Spirit:** Many residents care deeply, assist when asked, and maintain active volunteer groups that support local initiatives.
- **Quality Education and Youth Opportunities:** Good schools, accessible facilities, and programs like Boys & Girls Club encourage youth involvement and participation.
- **Health, Safety, and Essential Services:** Hospital and emergency services, food pantry, and a safe environment where kids can walk to school contribute to community well-being.
- **Vibrant Cultural and Social Life:** Family events, farmers markets, library programs, and traditions like tree lighting foster connection and attract visitors.
- **Small-Town Charm and Identity:** Historic character, older-style homes, and a welcoming atmosphere create a sense of belonging and pride.

Issues

(What you want to change in Berlin)

- **Affordable and Quality Housing:** Increase affordable housing options for seniors, low-income families, and young families, while balancing multifamily development and holding landlords accountable for property upkeep.
- **Youth and Community Programs:** Restore and expand recreational programming, childcare, and enrichment activities for all ages—especially for youth outside of the Boys & Girls Club.
- **Infrastructure and Transportation:** Repair streets, address potholes, improve public transportation access, and manage traffic flow (e.g., truck bypasses, apartment traffic concerns).
- **Public Services and Engagement:** Enhance City employee interaction with residents, enforce ordinances, and support services like the senior center, homelessness programs, and tree maintenance.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- **Economic Development and Local Business:** Attract better-paying jobs, diversify retail and restaurant options, limit oversaturation of similar businesses, and explore creative funding opportunities.
- **Community Identity and Inclusion:** Foster a positive self-image, ensure newcomers feel welcome, and revitalize Main Street and civic institutions like the chamber of commerce.

Opportunities

(Your ideas to make Berlin better)

- **Community Amenities & Recreation:** Maintain and improve the recreational offerings for community members of all ages and abilities.
- **Youth Engagement & Education:** Offer opportunities for youth programming and enhance collaboration between the City of Berlin and the Berlin Area School District
- **Local Economy & Downtown Revitalization:** Attract diverse businesses, restore historic storefronts and foster new retail and commercial offerings.
- **Childcare & Senior Support:** Increase housing options, including options for seniors, and attract high-quality childcare options for families.
- **Environmental & Aesthetic Improvements:** Plant more trees, beautify roads and entrances, and leverage the riverfront as a focal point for the City

Mapping Activity

Attendees were given the opportunity to identify community assets (areas to preserve), challenges, and opportunities for redevelopment on various maps of Berlin. General comments from this exercise addressed:

- Desire for increased activity in Downtown Berlin
- Prioritization of greenspace and amenities, including signage towards the Mascoutin State Trail, including space for parks and green space in development and redevelopment in the City
- Identifying opportunities for connecting the City of Berlin to the Fox River.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT KEY TAKEAWAYS

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Housing Availability:** There is a clear need for more housing options, and considering a range of options, including single-family homes, duplexes, apartments, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), would provide added support and options for first-time buyers, renters, and the local workforce.
- **Downtown/Commercial Revitalization:** The community sees downtown as integral to the City, and wants to see new retail and commercial businesses that encourage foot traffic and evening/weekend activity.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Aging infrastructure, particularly water mains, streets, and sidewalks, is a major concern. Residents support investments that improve safety, accessibility, and long-term sustainability.
- **Economic Development:** There is a desire to attract and retain businesses, residents support small business growth, entrepreneurship, and manufacturing jobs which have been the backbone of stable employment for City residents.
- **Workforce and Employment:** Limited job opportunities and the City's distance from neighboring job centers pose challenges for workforce attraction. Fostering engaged relationships with local institutions like the hospital and schools are seen as key to addressing this.

COMMON THEMES

- **Community Character:** Residents deeply value Berlin's small-town charm, safety, and sense of connection. There is a strong desire to preserve these qualities while allowing for thoughtful and sustainable growth.
- **Downtown Revitalization:** The community envisions a more vibrant and walkable downtown with diverse businesses, restaurants, cafés, and public gathering spaces that encourage activity throughout the day and into the evening.
- **Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Upgrading aging infrastructure, particularly water mains, streets, and sidewalks, is a top priority. Residents also want improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to better link neighborhoods, parks, schools, and commercial areas.
- **Youth and Families Support:** The need for more youth-oriented spaces, family-friendly programming, and childcare services was a recurring theme. Residents want Berlin to be a place where families can thrive and young people feel engaged.
- **Public Spaces and Events:** Enhancing parks, trails, and public amenities, along with hosting more community events, will be essential to fostering social connection and improving quality of life.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Residents recognize the value of working with local institutions like the hospital, schools, and reviving the Chamber of Commerce to address economic development needs.

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.

GOAL 2 (Natural Resources)

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

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.

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.

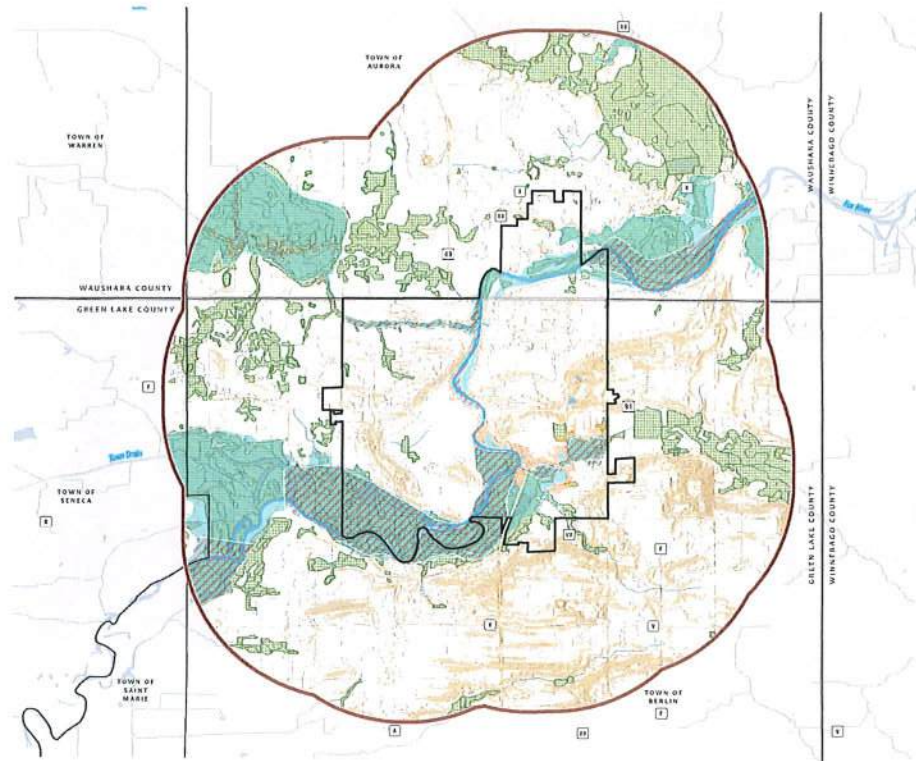
Prime Farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, 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 (Wetland Delineation National Register)
- 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,

AG, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

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:

- 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

- 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



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)

INTRODUCTION

The Housing chapter focuses on ensuring accessible and diverse housing options for City residents. It addresses challenges and strategies to promote affordability, availability, and quality. By encouraging a range of housing types and revitalizing older properties, the City aims to meet the needs of its residents while preserving its unique character. Through partnerships and community engagement, the City seeks to create a vibrant and sustainable housing environment for all.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Variety in Housing Types:** Current housing options in the City are primarily limited to owner-occupied, single family detached housing predominantly built prior to 1939. Potential residents who would otherwise choose to live in Berlin may seek more diverse housing options elsewhere.
- **Limited Housing Turnover:** Lower turnover in the housing market is limiting opportunities for existing residents to move within the City, and for new residents to move into the community.
- **Affordable Housing:** Ensuring affordable housing options is a key priority for residents in the City. Housing is generally considered affordable when monthly housing costs (rent or mortgage plus utilities) are no more than 30% of a household's income. Affordable housing options typically include entry level or starter homes such as refurbished older homes, smaller single-family homes, duplexes, or townhouses.
- **Regulatory Constraints:** There is an opportunity to review and revise the City's existing zoning ordinances to increase density and allow more diverse housing stock (such as ADUs).

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

58% of survey respondents rated the rental housing supply as poor or unsatisfactory. **42%** of respondents rated the ownership housing supply as poor or unsatisfactory.

79% of respondents support the development of small-lot single family homes, **46%** support accessory dwelling units (also known as granny flats), **53%** support townhouses, and **61%** support duplexes.

Community members stressed the importance of well-planned residential growth that complements local businesses and community life. They also highlighted the need for more affordable starter homes to support new families and incoming residents, including teachers in the Berlin Area School District.

HOUSING GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

GOAL 1

Support a range of housing options to retain and attract City residents.

STRATEGIES

1. Work with Realtors and developers to develop a variety of housing types to meet the housing needs and wants of current and potential residents.
2. Ensure developments are carefully designed to accommodate potential changes in traffic and stormwater management.
3. Promote development patterns that offer a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses. This approach creates vibrant neighborhoods, providing residents with convenient access to amenities, services, and employment opportunities.
4. Evaluate infill and redevelopment opportunities within the City for both single family and multiple-family residential uses.
5. Evaluate increased residential densities within the downtown area to support new commercial development efforts in the downtown area.
6. Support the development of housing options that are specific to the needs of senior citizens and empty nesters.

ACTIONS

- A. Annually track key housing market trends and metrics that can be utilized by City leadership to measure potential program/development impact.
- B. Update the City of Berlin Housing Study at least every 10 years to assess long-term changes in the local and regional housing market.
- C. Address housing affordability through the following steps:
 - i. Promote the availability of Wisconsin Housing & Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) and other state and federal down payment assistance programs.
 - ii. Review and amend the zoning ordinance as appropriate to enable development of housing formats that limit cost – such as smaller lots, smaller homes, ADU's, attached units (duplexes) and “cottage court” clusters of detached homes—and identify appropriate locations for these housing formats in the City.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are secondary (accessory) living structures, designed to be independent from the primary residence. Often referred to as “granny flats” or “in-law suites,” ADUs can be attached or detached structures, have separate entryways, and include their own kitchen and bathroom facilities. ADUs provide a flexible housing option that helps address housing shortages, promotes intergenerational living, and optimizes existing infrastructure by increasing density without the overall need for relatively larger capital improvements.

GOAL 2

Develop and maintain quality housing to ensure safe and healthy neighborhoods for all City residents.

STRATEGIES

7. Ensure both homeowners and landlords are aware of program and financing options for upkeep on properties, including energy efficiency.
8. Support infill development that respects the scale, proportion and architectural style of nearby homes to a reasonable extent.
9. Encourage and support investments that strengthen a sense of cohesion and community throughout the City.
10. Actively protect areas that have been locally identified as historically important through a Historic Preservation Committee and local regulations.

ACTIONS

- D. Review and approve housing development proposals based on consistency with the Land Use chapter of this Plan, including the Future Land Use Map and associated policies.
- E. Update and maintain the City's Architectural/Historical Survey Report as a method of determining which buildings should be preserved and recognized due to historic significance.

- F. Investigate implementing programs and incentives to preserve and rehabilitate existing housing stock, particularly historic homes or buildings. Consider using Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) to offer financial assistance for repairs and renovations, especially for older homes with desirable character.
- G. Encourage and support reinvestment in existing housing, including:
 - i. Work with developers experienced in rental housing renovation to pursue State and Federal 4% tax credit funded renovation of aging units to reinvest in units while protecting their affordability.
 - ii. Apply for grants through State and Federal Programs including HOME Investment Partnership Program and WHEDA programs to support community development projects, including housing rehabilitation.
- H. Update the City website to promote local, neighborhood level events in support of neighborhood organizing.
- I. Continue to provide and regularly update the City's Capital Improvements Plan for maintenance of public utilities and services in all residential areas.



Homes on Wisconsin Street, Source: Google Earth

HOUSING

HOUSING COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The following numbers illustrate those conditions in Berlin most relevant to the formation of housing goals and policies for the next 10 years.

All data is sourced from the 2023 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau unless otherwise stated.

HOUSING TENURE

2,689 - The total number of housing units as of 2023.

64% - The percentage of units that are single-family detached housing, compared to 81% in Green Lake County and 84% in Waushara County.

59% - The percentage of all units that are owner-occupied.

\$143,800 - The median home value in Berlin as of 2025, according to Zillow.

16% - The percentage of all units that are single-unit attached and two-unit, based on the ACS. Attached and two-unit building forms are becoming more common and are important for adding gradual density.

3% - The vacancy rate in 2023 for rental units, which is below the estimated rate in 2013 of 5.5%. Healthy vacancy rates are between 5% and 7%.

Figure 4.1 - Housing Units by Type (ACS 2023)
2,689 Total Housing Units

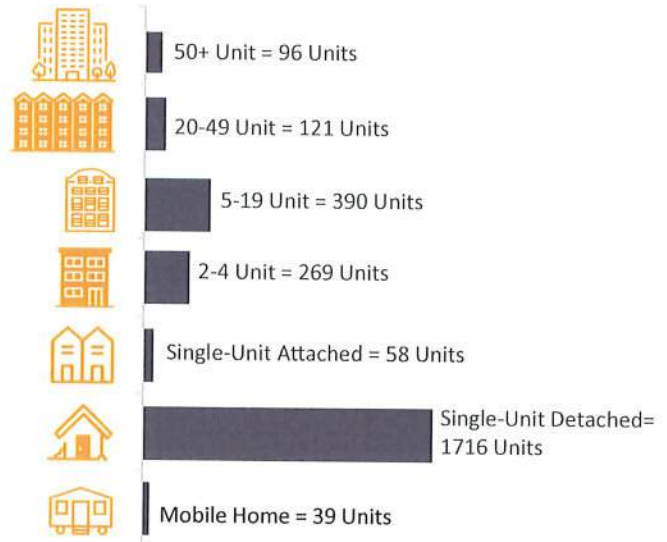


Figure 4.2 - Renter- vs Owner-Occupied Units (ACS 2023)

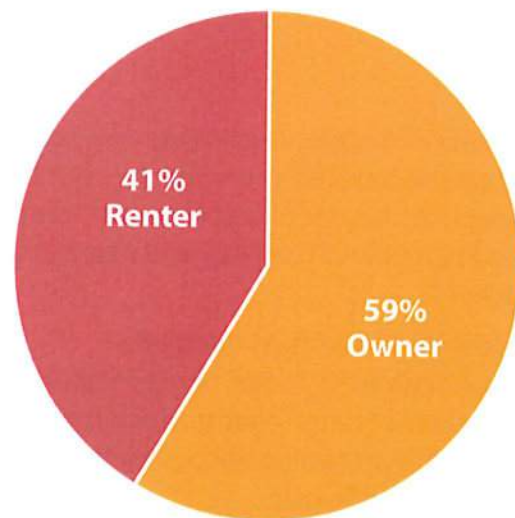


Figure 4.3 - Rental Vacancy Rate (ACS 2023)*



Note: Rental vacancy estimates for small communities often carry high margins of error due to the limited sample sizes used in the American Community Survey (ACS). In communities with relatively few rental units, even small changes in the number of surveyed households can lead to large year-to-year fluctuations in reported vacancy rates. Despite these limitations, the ACS remains the most reliable and consistently collected dataset available for measuring rental vacancy conditions across U.S. communities. These figures should be interpreted as general indicators of trend and direction, rather than precise point estimates.

Table 4.1 - Median Home Value by Year Built (ACS 2023)

YEAR	MEDIAN VALUE
2020 or later	-
2010 to 2019	-
2000 to 2009	\$290,900
1990 to 1999	\$252,100
1980 to 1989	\$178,400
1970 to 1979	\$164,700
1960 to 1969	\$142,800
1950 to 1959	\$97,700
1940 to 1949	\$94,400
1939 or Earlier	\$117,200

Figure 4.4 - Median Home Value (ACS 2023)

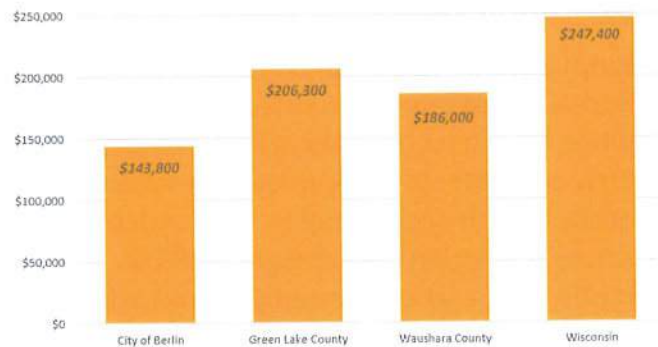


Table 4.2 - Rental Cost by Bedroom Size (ACS 2023)

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS	MEDIAN GROSS RENT	NUMBER OF UNITS
No bedroom	\$773.00	97
1 bedroom	\$486.00	269
2 bedrooms	\$858.00	644
3 bedrooms	\$1,020.00	903
4 bedrooms	-	332
5 or more bedrooms	-	193

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on fostering a vibrant local economy. It outlines strategies to support entrepreneurship, attract investments, and create a favorable business environment. The City aims to stimulate economic growth, job creation, and enhance residents' well-being through targeted initiatives and collaboration with stakeholders.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Downtown:** Downtown Berlin is a community strength and important source of economic activity. There are opportunities to revitalize Downtown for pedestrian-friendly businesses and development on both sides of the Fox River. However, parking/traffic flow issues limit Downtown business accessibility; targeted improvements (signage, one-way street conversions, etc.) could alleviate this strain.
- **Employment Opportunities:** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, most employed Berlin residents work outside the City, while most people working in Berlin commute from other areas. Sixty percent (60%) of survey respondents felt that Berlin lacks adequate job opportunities. Respondents reported working across the region, including in Oshkosh, Ripon, the Appleton metro area, and other nearby municipalities.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Members of the community expressed desire to have an active Chamber of Commerce that can advocate in the best interest of business owners in the City.

Reinvestment in downtown buildings and sites was ranked the highest development priority; community members envision an activated, walkable downtown with diverse businesses, gathering spaces, and public programming/events.

76% of survey respondents indicated that they visit local businesses in the City of Berlin at least 1-2 times per week. Respondents indicated that the highest visited businesses in the City were gas stations, food services, and the Walmart.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

GOAL 1

Provide a robust local economy for residents and visitors through diverse employment opportunities in commercial, industrial, and recreational sectors.

STRATEGIES

1. Develop marketing and/or incentive strategies to encourage new businesses to locate in Berlin, such as retail stores, commercial service businesses, and restaurants.
2. Work cooperatively with public and private entities to promote economic development, especially including the following groups/organizations:
 - i. Green Lake County Economic Development Corporation
 - ii. Local real estate professionals
 - iii. Green Lake & Waushara Counties
 - iv. State agencies (WI DNR, WisDOT, etc.)
 - v. Future economic development organizations, such as a chamber of commerce
3. Support financial incentives, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Facilities Funds, for business development meeting one or more of the following criteria:
 - i. Increases the tax base without adding significant service costs.
 - ii. Improves existing neighborhoods through redevelopment and/or expanded access to employment and services.
 - iii. Adds affordable and workforce housing units.
 - iv. Creates new living-wage jobs.
 - v. Supports small businesses.
 - vi. Improves conditions that will attract future quality development, such as a catalytic project in a new redevelopment area.
 - vii. Provides public amenities in a relevant location, such as pocket parks not otherwise required, etc.
4. Support affordable and workforce housing initiatives that expand economic and employment opportunities for City residents of all income levels. See Housing Chapter for strategies to support this initiative.



ThedaCare Medical Center - Berlin Source: ThedaCare

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5. Support childcare and after-school/summer programming that meets the needs of income-limited employees and prospective City residents.
6. Promote the redevelopment of underutilized, vacant, or brownfield commercial and industrial areas.
7. Encourage development that is financially sound, environmentally friendly, fits the community character, and does not create land use conflicts.
8. Invest in the City's labor force development and opportunities to meet current and future skill needs by working with local businesses and the Berlin School District to establish training programs.

Streetscape is a term that is used to describe the natural and built environment of the street, including the roadway and the sidewalk terrace. It is typically defined as the design quality and visual character of the street. The concept recognizes that a street is a public place where people engage in various activities and experiences. Streetscapes and their visual impact largely influences public places where people interact. Making targeted streetscape improvements will ultimately help define a community's aesthetic quality, economic activity, public health, and environmental sustainability.

ACTIONS

- A. Meet regularly with the counties and neighboring municipalities to ensure that efforts for economic development activities in the region are coordinated.
- B. Identify appropriate areas for additional industrial/manufacturing operations to expand the City's tax and employment base.
- C. Review and revise the City's Tax Increment Finance policy (as needed) to prioritize business attraction, retention and expansion; conduct further internal review of City codes and ordinances every five years to address economic/commercial concerns.
- D. Regularly (at least once per year) meet with industry leaders to ensure that existing businesses have tools and resources to expand and remain in Berlin.



GOAL 2

Prioritize the Downtown area as a pedestrian-friendly and attractive center of economic activity designed to meet community needs.

STRATEGIES

9. Support locally owned businesses, small businesses and start-up businesses that are ideal for downtown locations, such as retail and restaurants which encourage foot traffic.
10. Encourage pedestrian-oriented development in Downtown on both sides of the Fox River.
11. Maintain an adequate amount of public parking in the downtown area.
12. Maintain existing infrastructure to support current and potential commercial activities, providing an adequate supply of development/redevelopment sites ready for new business investment.
13. Continue to provide a mix of residential and commercial uses within Downtown.
14. Promote the Fox River for tourism and the location of riverfront businesses.
15. Actively support festivals, recreational and community events that attract visitors and spending at local businesses.
16. Address ways to improve the appearance of downtown and gateways to the City to attract new businesses, visitors, and residents.
17. Explore options to fund, promote, and support the redevelopment of vacant lots/buildings and historic preservation in the Downtown area.

ACTIONS

- E. Create a Business Improvement District (BID) and improvement plan for Downtown to fulfill a vital role in retail district success by organizing a professional management or volunteer structure for the commercial area. An improvement plan will provide funding mechanisms through special assessments for:
 - i. Upgrades for public utilities
 - ii. Facade improvements
 - iii. Establishment of downtown development criteria
 - iv. Streetscape amenities such as benches, lighting, etc.
- F. Work with local businesses and the counties to market the Berlin area as a tourist destination via brochures, websites, and signage.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT**

Economic development activities play a key role in the quality of life of the community and the City’s long-term viability. This explores the City’s current economic environment and inventories efforts that support community development.

TIF DISTRICTS

This program helps cities and villages in Wisconsin attract industrial and commercial growth in underdeveloped and blighted areas. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a technique that municipalities use to attract private development and investment to areas that have not seen appropriate growth. TIF may only be used when private development would be too difficult or costly without improvements and incentives sponsored by the municipality. The cost of the improvements or incentives funded by the TIF are repaid by the increased property tax revenues that arise when new development occurs.

The City has four active Tax Incremental Districts (TIDs). All four of the TIDs (No. 1E, No. 2E, No. 15, No. 16, No. 17) are in Green Lake County.

**EMPLOYMENT & GROWTH
INDUSTRIES**

Table 5.1 highlights employment changes in Berlin from 2010 to 2023. The fastest-growing industry is Retail Trade, which increased by 70%, more than doubling over the past decade. Public Administration and Manufacturing also experienced modest growth, rising by 11% and 9%, respectively. In contrast, all other industries declined during this period. Despite limited growth, Manufacturing remains the City’s largest civilian employer, accounting for approximately 32% of total industry employment.

Figure 5.1 - Commuting Patterns
(U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap, 2022)



- **1,793** - people who work in Berlin but live outside of the City
- **537**- people who both work and live in Berlin
- **2,131** - people who live in Berlin but work outside of the City

Table 5.1 - Top 5 Growth Industries
(U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2010, 2023)

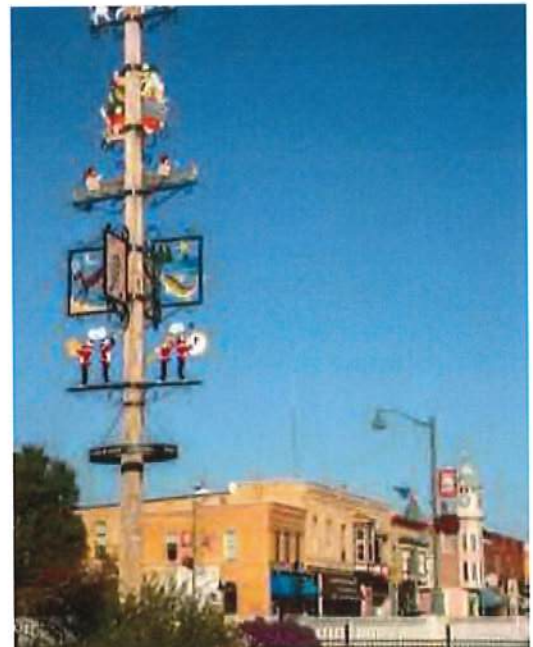
INDUSTRY	INCREASE %
Retail trade	70%
Public administration	11%
Manufacturing	9%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	-19%
Construction	-25%

Table 5.2 - Employment by Industry (ACS 2022)

INDUSTRY	CITY OF BERLIN	GREEN LAKE COUNTY	%DIFF
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	3%	5%	7%
Construction	7%	10%	8%
Manufacturing	32%	24%	23%
Wholesale trade	0%	2%	2%
Retail trade	19%	11%	9%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2%	4%	5%
Information	0%	1%	1%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5%	4%	3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2%	6%	6%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	19%	18%	19%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6%	7%	7%
Other services, except public administration	0%	3%	5%
Public administration	4%	5%	6%

Table 5.3 - Top Employers in Berlin
(WisConomy, WI Department of Workforce Development)

MAJOR EMPLOYERS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES (RANGE)
Walmart Supercenter	100-249
Berlin Area School District	100-249
Fortifi Bank	100-249
Ripon Jacket Co	100-249
Wilson-Hurd Manufacturing Co	100-249



6. TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

INTRODUCTION

It is important to have a safe, accessible, and cost-effective transportation system in the City of Berlin for residents and visitors. This chapter considers various types of transportation and mobility, from traditional vehicular traffic to pedestrians and alternative modes of movement throughout the City.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Traffic Congestion:** Current flows through the City result in heavy vehicle traffic on Broadway Street and Huron Street.
- **Street Repair and Maintenance:** While most Berlin's residential and commercial areas feature sidewalks, enabling community members to walk across the community, residents note that many local sidewalks and roadways need repair and regular maintenance.
- **Regional Trails:** The Mascoutin Valley State Trail offers about 21 miles of total trail mileage and runs from the edge of the City of Berlin to Ripon. Any future paths for cyclists or snowmobiles should build off and connect to the existing trail network.



VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Of those who responded to the survey, **44%** regularly walk around the City and **20%** bicycle around the City. Improving safety and enhancing pedestrian and bicycle amenities and addressing gaps in the existing sidewalk network can improve the quality of life for residents.

As the population ages, elderly and disabled residents have noted they face challenges accessing essential services such as pharmacies and grocery stores.

When survey respondents were asked to rank priorities for City-wide investments, street repair and maintenance was the top choice. Sidewalks were also identified as an area of need for improvement.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

Goal 1

Increase mobility and access for all through a well-integrated, multi-modal transportation system.

STRATEGIES

1. Continually move toward the implementation of a Complete Streets (see sidebar below) network that is safe, convenient and attractive for everyone regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.
2. Provide bicyclists with a well-designed space to ride and/or park their bicycles throughout the City, especially Downtown.
3. Collaborate with the Berlin Community School District on safe transportation for students, including walking, biking, and bussing, both within neighborhoods and near the schools.
4. Seek compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (see sidebar below) whenever an existing facility (sidewalks, trails, etc.) is reconstructed.
5. Provide adequate downtown public parking to support business growth while maintaining a compact downtown environment with a variety of uses to encourage walkability.
6. Ensure that subdivision and development applications provide adequate streets for safe and efficient traffic movement and include necessary bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, trails).

Complete Streets are streets that provide safe, convenient, and comfortable routes for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. A network of complete streets makes the transportation network safer and more efficient for everyone, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. A “Complete Street” right-sizes infrastructure based on functional classification and traffic volumes and may include sidewalks, multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, automobile lanes, street trees, public transportation facilities, and traffic calming devices.

The *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities, similar to other civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

ACTIONS

- A. Biennially evaluate City roads using the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) program.
- B. Annually review and update the City's Official Map, or as needed.
- C. Evaluate road performance and traffic concerns on a regular basis, considering need for narrow streets or other traffic-calming measures to slow traffic through neighborhoods, minimize construction, stormwater, and maintenance costs, and maximize safety.
- D. Work with the Berlin School District to provide bicycle education in grade schools and middle schools every year.
- E. Every 2-3 years, evaluate the availability of publicly provided parking (especially in Downtown and other commercial areas) to maintain a healthy supply of parking spaces. If the evaluation suggests an undersupply of parking, consider improvements such as short-term parking, compact car spaces, better signage to under-utilized parking lots, and expanding/building new parking lots.
- F. Review the City's off-street parking requirements periodically (at least every five years) to assess their effectiveness in making efficient use of land for vehicle parking.

Goal 2

Provide safe travel options to and from the City through a cost-effective transportation network that conserves resources and is coordinated with other governing agencies.

STRATEGIES

- 7. Repair and maintain existing transportation infrastructure to the greatest extent possible. Evaluation of existing infrastructure should consider financial feasibility, Plan goals and objectives, County and State transportation plans, and other utility needs.
- 8. Use the City's Official Map to plan for new portions of the transportation system to be compatible with existing and future land use patterns, maintaining safety and operational efficiency.
- 9. Encourage development of a transportation system that minimizes environmental impacts, including:
- 10. Consider the use of Green Street (see sidebar below) principles in new and reconstructed streets to mitigate the stormwater runoff impact of the street.
- 11. Leverage new technology to improve safety and reduce the environmental impact of the City's transportation system.



12. Work with State and County agencies to integrate transportation plans that will benefit City residents and develop efficient transportation infrastructure throughout the region.
13. Connect any future trails and sidewalks in the City with regional (County/State) trails, as opportunities arise.

ACTIONS

- G. Work with the Town of Berlin and Green Lake and Waushara Counties to promote the addition of bicycle accommodations along town and county roads, including exploring funding opportunities through the Department of Transportation [e.g., Transportation Alternative Program (TAP)].
- H. Consider steps on an annual basis to complete connections with the regional bikeway network. Work with neighboring jurisdictions, WisDOT, Wisconsin DNR and other key stakeholders to plan, study and fund expansion of the regional network.
- I. Identify a system of truck routes throughout the City and mark them with unique signs to enable them to be easily identified.

Green Streets are a stormwater management approach that incorporates vegetation (perennials, shrubs, trees), soil, and engineered systems (e.g., permeable pavements) to slow, filter, and cleanse stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces (e.g., streets, sidewalks). Green streets are designed to capture rainwater at its source, where rain falls, whereas a traditional street is designed to direct stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces into storm sewer systems (gutters, drains, pipes) that discharge directly into surface waters, rivers, and streams.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

ROAD NETWORK

Regional Highway System

Berlin is served by a network of highways regulated by the DOT that support regional connectivity and local mobility. The primary route is State Highway 49, which runs north-south through the City and functions as a major arterial, facilitating access to local employment centers and neighboring communities. Complementing this are several major and minor collectors that link Berlin to nearby towns such as Aurora, Warren, and Seneca. This system plays a vital role in supporting Berlin's industrial base and commuting patterns across the region.

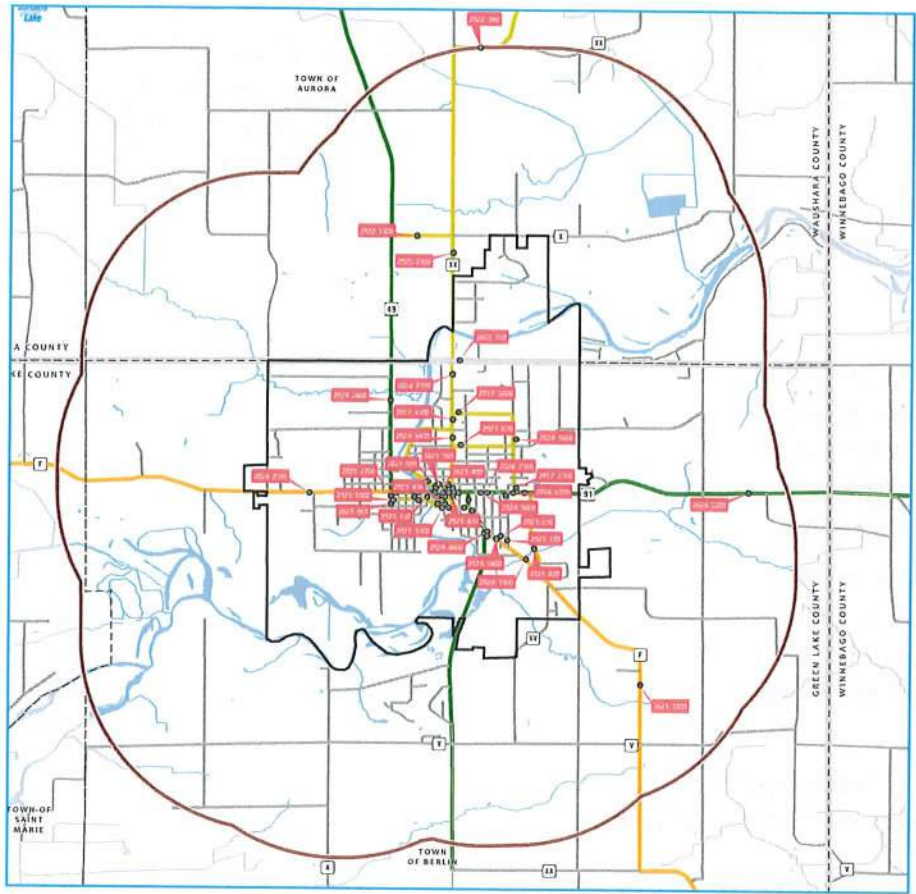
Local Roads System

Berlin, Wisconsin's local road system is owned and maintained by the City of Berlin and is composed primarily of minor collectors and local streets. These roads support local traffic flow and link neighborhoods to major routes like State Highway 49.

RAIL NETWORK

The Wisconsin and Southern Railroad (WSOR) runs through parts of Green Lake County and has lines that pass near Berlin in the neighboring City of Ripon, supporting regional freight movement.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY



MAP 6.1 - TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- Planning Area (1.5 Miles)
- City of Berlin
- Surrounding Municipality
- County Boundary
- Traffic Count Site (YEAR: AADT)

Functional Classification (WisDOT)

- Major Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Street
- Not Classified/No Data

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Berlin maintains a modest but functional sidewalk network that supports pedestrian movement within the City, particularly in residential neighborhoods and near schools, parks, and the downtown area. These sidewalks provide safe routes for walking and are essential for local connectivity, though some gaps remain in coverage, especially in newer developments or along busier corridors.

Berlin is also connected to several regional trail systems that enhance recreational and non-motorized travel options. Notably, the nearby Mascoutin Valley State Trail runs through Green Lake County and offers a scenic crushed limestone path for walking, biking, and snowmobiling. While the trail does not enter the City directly, it is accessible within a short drive and provides a valuable link to the broader network of Wisconsin’s multi-use trails.

Bicycle facilities in Berlin are limited, with some shared roadways that accommodate cyclists.

7. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Utilities and Community Facilities chapter of the comprehensive plan focuses on ensuring the efficient provision of essential services and the development of necessary infrastructure to support the needs of the City of Berlin. It addresses a wide range of utilities and community facilities, including water supply, wastewater management, solid waste disposal, energy systems, telecommunications, public parks and municipal facilities.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Aging Infrastructure:** Throughout Wisconsin, aging community infrastructure burdens taxpayers and arrests progress. The City needs to balance and plan for future upgrades carefully to minimize negative impacts on the community.
- **Facility Enhancements:** There are opportunities to increase outdoor community facility use through improvements to parks, trails, and public amenities—such as benches, lighting, and outdoor seating.
- **Community Programming and Events:** Public engagement showed a strong desire to preserve and add programming through the School District, Library, and Senior Center.
- **Public / Private Partnerships:** The City provides community services through a combination of publicly owned utilities and partnerships with private companies; these partnerships should be continued to ensure access to services throughout the community.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

At the Public Input Meeting, community members identified the Hospital, School District, and Library as key assets that should be preserved in Berlin.

Community members expressed concern and need for improved roadways and code enforcement on blighted properties.

When asked to rate community facilities, **77%** of survey respondents described public utilities—such as water, gas, and electricity—as “satisfactory” or “excellent.” Regarding cost, **66%** rated it as “satisfactory,” while **24%** rated it as “poor” or “unsatisfactory.”



UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

Goal 1 (Community Facilities)

Provide community facilities and services that create a safe, attractive, and healthy environment to meet the needs of current and future City residents.

STRATEGIES

General

1. Collaborate with private organizations that are serving the recreation needs of families, especially those that focus on the needs of seniors, youth and lower-income families.
2. As feasible, locate public-use community facilities where they would be accessible to a majority of expected users via walking or bicycling.
3. Provide adequate facilities in which to house City offices and equipment.
4. Assure health and medical facilities are available to meet the needs of all residents.

Parks & Trails

5. Pursue as needed opportunities for acquiring new land for the development of additional parks and open space needs. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association, the national standard is about 10.4 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents.
6. Incorporate historically significant areas and buildings into park expansion/improvement efforts.
7. Develop and maintain safe, attractive community gathering spaces and parks facilities that meet a wide range of recreational needs, both passive and active.

Emergency Services

8. Continue to evaluate performance of public safety services and facilities (police, fire and EMS) to respond to the needs of the community; encourage volunteerism associated with Fire and EMS services.
9. Ensure that public safety facilities are optimally located for acceptable response times to existing development and future growth areas.
10. Partner with neighboring jurisdictions to sustain high quality public safety services and facilities (police, fire, and EMS), in balance with budget constraints.

Waste Management Services

11. Maintain contracts with waste disposal services to require the recycling of domestic and commercial waste in a manner that is environmentally sound and cost-effective.
12. Continue to encourage recycling and minimize waste.
13. Continue to provide public education and awareness of recycling opportunities for all waste streams, including computers, electronics and appliances (e.g. hazardous waste and e-cycle pickup).

Coordination with Non-Government Organizations

14. Explore new public/private partnerships and maintain communication with private organizations to increase efficiency.
 15. Collaborate with private and non-profit organizations that provide community services for vulnerable populations, particularly the youth, the elderly, and those with special needs (e.g., daycare, healthcare, senior services etc.).
 16. Collaborate with organizations that provide resources to expand community facilities, like Green Lake Greenways and local and state organizations.
 17. Work with the Berlin Area School District to maintain a high level of service and adequately plan for the growing needs of the community.
- C. Make major project-specific capital decisions by the Common Council through the adoption of the City's operating budget and the Capital Improvement Plan.
 - D. Annually review the police, fire, and emergency medical services in the City and continue to review all options for providing services that meet the needs of residents. Meet with neighboring jurisdictions, as necessary, to review fire protection and ambulance service mutual aid and/or contractual intergovernmental services.
 - E. During the annual capital improvement planning process, consider budgeting for implementation of the recommendations in the City's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
 - F. Review subdivision ordinances for requirements of parkland dedication, considering dedication fees for all rezones that increase the number of dwelling units.
 - G. Update the City's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan every five years to maintain grant eligibility.
 - H. Develop a strategy to encourage and recognize community involvement in volunteer services by people of all ages.

ACTIONS

- A. Identify representatives from local organizations, such as sports clubs, churches, and youth groups, to foster collaboration and:
 - i. Develop a unified parks and recreation program.
 - ii. Coordinate shared use of parks, recreational facilities, public buildings, and community spaces, along with programming accessible to all residents.
- B. Require fiscal impact analyses of all major capital projects considered for funding. Such analyses should include, but not be limited to, one-time capital costs, life cycle operating and maintenance costs, revenues from the project, and costs of not doing the project.

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Goal 2 (Utilities)

Provide adequate water, sewer, and other infrastructure to support the orderly and cost-effective development of the community.

STRATEGIES

Infill & New Development

18. Maximize the efficiency of investments to existing infrastructure by channeling growth into already served/planned service areas (infill development) and regulating new growth and development.
19. Discourage inefficient “leapfrog” development that results in infrastructure constructed before there is adequate customer base in place to support its maintenance.
20. Maintain and improve utility infrastructure, planning for adequate capacity/integrity to serve both existing users and potential new service areas (maintaining the reliability of existing systems/services is the highest priority).
21. Avoid environmentally sensitive areas when planning the location of utilities to minimize adverse impacts (to the greatest extent possible).
22. Discourage suburban development served by septic systems (i.e. residential densities greater than one unit per 35 acres, non-agricultural commercial, industrial and institutional) within the City’s planning area wherever possible/feasible.

Leapfrog development refers to a pattern of urban growth where new developments bypass existing properties and infrastructure, often resulting in scattered, discontinuous development. This phenomenon can exacerbate urban sprawl, increase infrastructure costs, and create challenges for efficient land use and community cohesion.

Electrical System

23. Continue to bury existing utilities, where feasible, as redevelopment and street reconstruction occur, and continue to require utilities in new developments to be underground.
24. Maintain City ordinances and/or plans that decrease light pollution while promoting public safety (more efficient street lighting, maintaining guidelines/restrictions for commercial and residential exterior lighting, etc.).

Data

25. Continue to support public/private partnerships to co-locate telecommunication facilities (e.g., antennas on a water tower, small cells on/in street light poles, etc.).
26. Explore opportunities to improve internet connectivity through state and federal grant programs (e.g., Wisconsin Public Service Commission).

Water Supply Services

27. Continue to evaluate and identify capacity concerns with existing City wells when new development is proposed.
28. Locate future municipal wells in areas where there will be minimal impact on groundwater and groundwater recharge, including outside of capture zones for springs.
29. Encourage water conservation methods and practices through public education and awareness, such as:
 - i. Use of no-flush restroom fixtures in commercial businesses
 - ii. Replacing older fixtures with low-flow fixtures

Sanitary Sewer & Wastewater

30. Provide adequate services for the disposal and recycling of solid waste.
31. Improve the quality of surface water runoff by implementing best stormwater management practices, maintaining the stormwater management system, and expanding facilities as necessary in accordance with the City's policies and ordinances.
32. Encourage residential and nonresidential properties to implement additional stormwater management techniques to reduce the impacts of stormwater discharge (e.g. rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs, bioretention basins, oil and grease filters) on surface and groundwater resources.

ACTIONS

- I. Require new development proposals be reviewed by all City departments to ensure that essential utilities can be provided to the subject area in a timely and efficient manner.
- J. Require new development to pay the full cost of new municipal services needed to support the development, so that the existing taxpayers are not burdened with inequitable taxes or service costs. Consider methods to recover the costs of utility facilities necessitated by new growth, such as impact fees.
- K. Annually review existing data relative to the conditions and capacity of municipally provided facilities (water and wastewater); repair/upgrade facilities as needed to serve both existing and future populations.
- L. Promote available incentives, energy audits and appliance recycling offered through Berlin Water/Sewer Utility, Focus on Energy, or other sources to assist individuals and businesses with energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.
- M. Conduct an Impact Fee Needs Assessment on all potential municipal utilities and facilities in order to impose impact fees on any new development which impacts the level of service within the system; review and potentially update every ten years, at a minimum.

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

This section inventories current facilities and public utilities that are vital to maintaining City operations and community quality of life.

PUBLIC FACILITIES / SERVICES

Public Safety, Health, and Welfare

- **Fire & EMS:** Fire protection for the City as well as the surrounding communities is provided by a volunteer fire department. Being centrally located in the City of Berlin their district extends into the Towns of Berlin, Seneca, and St. Marie in Green Lake County, the Towns of Aurora and Warren in Waushara County, and the Town of Nepeuskun in Winnebago County. Although a separate organization, the City also has EMT's that provide ambulatory medical care to the community, with three facilities in Green Lake County.
- **Healthcare Facilities:** For medical, dental, chiropractic, and mental health services, residents of the City of Berlin have access to a range of healthcare providers located within the City. ThedaCare Medical Center–Berlin serves as the primary hospital, offering emergency care, inpatient services, and specialty clinics. Additional services are available through ThedaCare Physicians.
- **Senior Care:** The Berlin Senior Citizen Center provides programs, meals, transportation, and social activities aimed at empowering older adults to maintain independence and stay actively engaged in the community.

Parks and Open Spaces

- Riverside Park
- Nathan Strong Park
- Forsyth's Park
- Longcroft Park
- Firefighters Park
- Volunteer Park
- Mound Street Park
- Berlin High School Park
- Berlin Middle School Park
- Clay Lamberton School
- City Forest
- Berlin School Forest
- Berlin Locks
- Bohn Farm, City Wildlife Area

Trails

- Mascoutin Valley State Trail

Schools & Education

- **Berlin Area School District:** The City of Berlin is served by the Berlin Area School District. Schools within the system include Clay Lamberton (pre-K-5), Berlin Middle School (6-8), and Berlin High School (9-12). All schools are located in the City limits.

UTILITIES

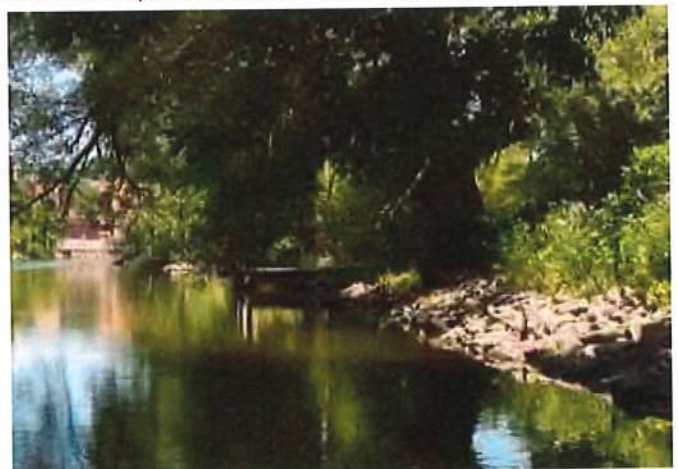
- **Electric:** Alliant Energy provides electrical power to the City of Berlin.
- **Natural Gas:** The City is served by Alliant/Wisconsin Power and Light Company for natural gas services.
- **Refuse/Recycling Collection:** The City contracts with Waste Management to handle curbside garbage and recycling for all residential properties with four or fewer units. Commercial buildings and residential buildings with over five units must contract for their own refuse and recycling pickup.
- **Telecommunications:** Cellular and mobile service is provided to residents throughout the City by Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T, and U.S. Cellular. Wireless and satellite high-speed internet can be obtained through HughesNet and Viasat, while traditional wired and wireless broadband internet access is available through Spectrum and Brightspeed.
- **Water:** The City of Berlin has a public water distribution system under its control provided through three municipal wells and two water towers.
- **Wastewater:** The City's sanitary treatment facility is located in the north industrial park.
- **Stormwater:** The current stormwater system is designed throughout the City to handle the 10-15 year storm. Major outlets for this system empty into the Fox River.



Berlin Senior Citizen Center, Photo Source: City of Berlin



Berlin Fire Department, Photo Source: City of Berlin



Fox River, Photo Source: City of Berlin

8. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter emphasizes the vital role of collaboration and partnership between the City of Berlin and other government entities. By fostering relationships with neighboring municipalities, county agencies, and state authorities, the City aims to maximize efficient use of resources, coordinate planning efforts, and pursue shared goals.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **School District:** The Berlin Area School District serves several counties and is in significant need of additional staff. It will be important to continue collaboration between the City and School District to plan for additional land and facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents.
- **ThedaCare Medical Center:** This is a critical access hospital for the region that provides primary, emergency, and specialty care to residents in Berlin and the surrounding communities.
- **Communication and Community Trust:** It is vital for successful growth to maintain transparency with nearby towns and promote cooperative development efforts.
- **Economic Support:** City businesses rely on customers from neighboring communities.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** Amenities including the Mascoutin Valley State Trail extend beyond the City into surrounding townships and are maintained by the Wisconsin DNR.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Residents highlighted opportunities for cooperation between City departments and key local entities to address shared challenges in housing, workforce development, and economic growth.

Participants in the visioning workshop expressed a need for better coordination with neighboring municipalities, especially around transportation infrastructure, recreational trail connections, and shared services.

There is interest in exploring grants and cooperative funding opportunities—particularly for infrastructure upgrades, public facilities, and community programming—that could be pursued through intergovernmental collaboration.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

GOAL 1

Collaborate with neighboring communities and other government entities to achieve sustainable growth patterns in the Berlin area.

STRATEGIES

1. Protect natural systems and the City's ability to grow by exercising plat approval authority within the City's 1.5-mile jurisdiction and consider adopting extraterritorial zoning.
2. Work closely with the Berlin Area School District to foster communication, relationships and knowledge about planning and growth activities.
3. Openly communicate and involve non-governmental organizations that have a mutual interest in land use planning.
4. Promote the continued development of non-motorized trail networks between Berlin and surrounding communities.
5. Openly communicate and work closely with surrounding local government entities to:
 - a. Manage land use/zoning, environmental/stormwater, and extraterritorial boundary issues
 - b. Identify and resolve conflicts and inconsistencies between local plans and resolve key countywide issues affecting the City.
 - c. Coordinate efforts during outdoor recreation planning to identify complementary recreation investments where service areas overlap and work to avoid duplication of unique amenities.
 - d. Educate the residents of both the City and the towns about available community activities and facilities in the area.

ACTIONS

- A. Meet annually with representatives from neighboring municipalities, Green Lake County, and Waushara County to discuss common issues related to planning, zoning, and land use
- B. Work with the Town of Berlin to develop an intergovernmental agreement that protects future growth areas and utilities extensions routes for the City, protects stormwater/ environmental corridors, and defines the jurisdiction and maintenance of certain roads that serve both jurisdictions.
- C. Distribute development plans to contiguous local governments and the Berlin Area School District when there is mutual interest.
- D. Consider working with the town to develop extraterritorial zoning to manage growth, smooth transitions, and prevent conflicting land uses.



School Grounds, Source: Berlin Area School District

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

GOAL 2

Enhance the efficiency and quality of public services by collaborating with other governmental entities in the region.

STRATEGIES

6. Work cooperatively with other units of government and seek intergovernmental agreements that can provide cost-effective and/or higher-quality public facilities and services.

ACTIONS

- E. Meet annually with the Berlin Area School District involving elected officials and key City/district staff to discuss opportunities for collaboration and issues of concern.
- F. Review existing intergovernmental agreements at least every five years and amend the agreement as needed.
- G. Explore opportunities for state and federal grants to develop joint services with contiguous municipalities to reduce costs and improve services.

Wisconsin Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) are public agencies formed by executive order of the Governor. Wisconsin state statutes specify that regional planning commissions are to provide intergovernmental planning and coordination for the physical, social, and economic development of the Region. Their mandate includes conducting research, developing comprehensive plans, and providing advisory services to local governments.

RPCs aim to enhance regional collaboration, promote sustainable development, and address issues such as land use, transportation, and environmental protection, ensuring that growth aligns with community needs and resources.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

JURISDICTIONS

Local Jurisdictions

- Town of Berlin (Population 1,264)
- Town of Aurora (Population 958 people) - Waushara County
- Town of Seneca (Population 377)

County Jurisdictions

- Green Lake County
- Waushara County

School District

- Berlin Area School District

Regional Jurisdiction

- East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC)

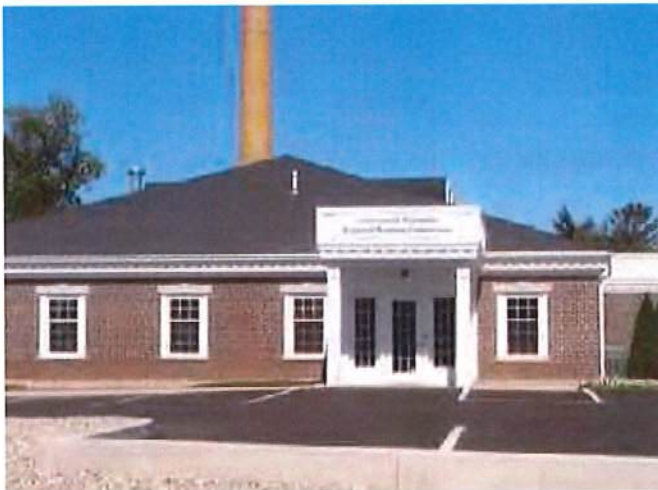
State Authorities

- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (*WisDOT*)
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (*DNR*)

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Cooperative Agreements

- Berlin Police Department share services with the County Sheriff's Department
- Shared fire protection services with Towns of Berlin, Seneca, and St. Marie in Green Lake County, the Towns of Aurora and Warren in Waushara County, and the Town of Nepeuskun in Winnebago County



ECWRPC Building in Menasha, WI, Source: ECWRPC



Berlin Police Department



Berlin Fire Department, Source: Berlin Fire Department

9. LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

The Land Use chapter of the comprehensive plan outlines the City of Berlin's vision for sustainable development and community well-being through effective land use planning. It aims to strike a balance between residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational land uses while preserving open spaces and protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Reinvestment Opportunities:** Reinvesting in existing neighborhoods and downtown properties can enhance community character, increase housing supply, and support local businesses.
- **Underutilized and Blighted Properties:** Vacant lots and underutilized buildings—particularly in the downtown and commercial corridors—are opportunities for revitalization and economic activity.
- **Growth Pressure vs. Preservation:** As Berlin grows, residents want to ensure that new development is thoughtfully integrated and doesn't compromise community identity.
- **Incompatible Uses:** Early development patterns in the City did not always properly buffer between heavy industrial uses and residential uses. These sites—both current and former—pose an environmental contamination risk where remediation should be prioritized.
- **Strategic Commercial Expansion:** Thoughtful planning in commercial corridors can enhance visibility, access, and economic vitality.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

33% of all survey respondents ranked Reinvestment in Downtown buildings and sites as the top priority for development and property improvement

Overall, survey results show strongest support for small lot single family homes (**79%** support or strongly support), majority support for duplexes, townhomes, and apartments, and comparatively greater uncertainty (**46%** support or strongly support, **44%** unsure or need more information)—for accessory dwelling units.

Residents want to ensure that new development aligns with Berlin's small city charm and community values; there is a desire to balance growth with preservation of historic character.

A majority of survey respondents (**83%**) support requiring greenspace, conservation, or recreational areas in new developments.

LAND USE GOALS, STRATEGIES, & ACTIONS

GOAL 1

An economically and environmentally sustainable development pattern.

STRATEGIES

1. New development within the City's jurisdiction should support the efficient use of public services and infrastructure.
 - i. Coordinate development plans between staff for efficient public facilities and services.
 - ii. Infill development that uses existing infrastructure is strongly encouraged. Leapfrog development that requires costly infrastructure extensions through undeveloped lands is discouraged.
 - iii. The City will collaborate with the County and adjacent townships to enable new development within the City's growth areas that is compatible with the use, density, and configuration recommendations of this Plan; the City cannot regulate use outside its boundaries (unless extraterritorial zoning is established in cooperation with a township) but will seek outcomes that are compatible with future urban development and could someday be served efficiently by the full array of urban services. Any development in the planning area should be consistent with City Ordinances.
2. Encourage development that uses land efficiently.
 - i. Encourage infill development that fit the density of the surrounding properties on sites already surrounded by urban uses.
 - ii. Promote the inclusion of residential where appropriate that minimize land consumption, including small lots and attached units.
3. Protect and respect natural resources and systems in all development decisions.
 - i. Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, floodplains, wetlands, ground water recharge areas, and steep slopes (greater than 20%), through the enforcement of the City's Subdivision Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance and Official Map.
 - a. Developers should be encouraged to design developments in such a manner so as to preserve mature vegetation, particularly along the street and highway rights-of-way.
 - b. Require environmental corridor features to be accurately depicted on all site plans, certified survey maps, preliminary plats, and final plats.
 - ii. Encourage landscaping practices in new and existing neighborhoods that protect ground water and surface water resources.
 - iii. Encourage the clean-up of contaminated sites to foster redevelopment of brownfields.

LAND USE

4. Make land use decisions in accordance with this approved and adopted Comprehensive Plan, as well as any other pertinent development plans that are approved and adopted. Consider long-term implications of land use decisions.

ACTIONS

- A. Meet annually with representatives from contiguous government entities and Green Lake and Waushara County to discuss land use issues as needed.

GOAL 2

Established, balanced neighborhoods throughout the City.

STRATEGIES

5. Provide a mix of housing types to accommodate every stage of life (see also Housing goals and policies).
6. Use city review processes to encourage design for land use compatibility. Consider the following design guidelines in these reviews:
 - i. **Land Use Planning.** Maintain adequate physical separation between residential areas and uses that tend to produce excessive noise or odors, without sacrificing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Locate community facilities such as schools, churches, libraries, museums, parks and community centers in strategic locations that enhance and are safely accessible from the surrounding neighborhoods.
 - ii. **Site Design.** Direct traffic from higher volume uses to collector and arterial streets, away from neighborhood streets. Use screening (walls, landscaping, berms) to create separation when distance alone is not possible or sufficient. Design the site so that major activity areas such as building entrances, service and loading areas, parking lots and trash receptacle storage areas are oriented away from less intensive land uses to the greatest degree possible. Reduce the impact of parking areas with physical separation and visual barriers.
 - iii. **Building Design.** Encourage building and site design techniques to make larger buildings more compatible with smaller residential uses, such as increased setbacks, stepped-back upper stories, and architectural strategies to break up the apparent volume of the building. Require building design and materials standards for all multi-family uses and nonresidential uses in neighborhood settings. Encourage underground parking facilities when feasible.
 - iv. **Lighting Design.** Outdoor lighting of parking, storage and service areas shall be designed to minimize spillover of light onto adjacent properties and public rights-of-way.
7. Institutional land uses (schools, churches, community centers, etc.) should communicate with surrounding neighbors whenever they are considering long-term expansion plans. City staff should facilitate this process by creating (or requiring) detailed small area plans that include possible expansion.

- 8. Encourage large ownership parcels to be developed as planned developments, rather than subdivided into lots without a coordinated development plan.
- 9. Encourage building and neighborhood design to enable passive solar heating and photovoltaic power generation.
- 10. Enforce property maintenance codes to maintain neighborhood quality and prevent blight.
- 11. Encourage public dialogue and incorporate public input into decisions regarding planning. Use outreach and education techniques to keep residents informed of land use changes occurring in the city.

ACTIONS

- B. Review and update the City of Berlin's Zoning Ordinances (Section 13.1.30) as necessary to align with the land use goals as established in this Plan.
- C. Consider developing an interactive online zoning map for use by city staff and the general public.

GOAL 3

Placemaking that is vibrant, attractive and unique, especially within Downtown.

STRATEGIES

- 12. Encourage property owners to convert or rehabilitate vacant second-floor spaces into code-compliant residential units, supporting additional housing options and increasing downtown vitality.
- 13. Discourage the use of storefront-level

space for storage and encourage active commercial or community use through targeted engagement, updated regulations, and tenant recruitment support.

- 14. Foster the development of Downtown as a mixed-use district, encouraging development of shopping, employment, housing and community gathering opportunities.
- 15. Encourage infill development of vacant or underutilized lands or buildings. Work with property owners to bring forward projects consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and other relevant documents.
- 16. Continue to promote development incentives (e.g., waivers, flexibility, and/or TIF assistance) to encourage and support infill and redevelopment projects that substantially improve the downtown area and the City as a whole.
- 17. Encourage the preservation of architecturally, historically, and culturally significant sites, buildings, and structures in the city and its environs. Encourage continued use, maintenance and adaptive reuse of existing buildings with historic value.
- 18. Encourage more extensive floral, shrub, and tree planting in both public rights-of-way and on private property as allowed.

ACTIONS

- D. Develop and implement a plan to make the City's entry corridors attractive and inviting through landscaping, lighting, etc.
- E. Implement streetscaping improvements, wayfinding signage, placemaking, and connectivity strategies to make Downtown unique, memorable, and attractive.

LAND USE

EXISTING LAND USE COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Map 9.1 and Table 9.1 identify the types and locations of various land uses in Berlin. Map 9.2 illustrates land uses in the greater planning area, where rural lands (28%) and residential (22%) comprise the majority of land uses.

MAP 9.1 - EXISTING LAND USES, CITY LIMITS

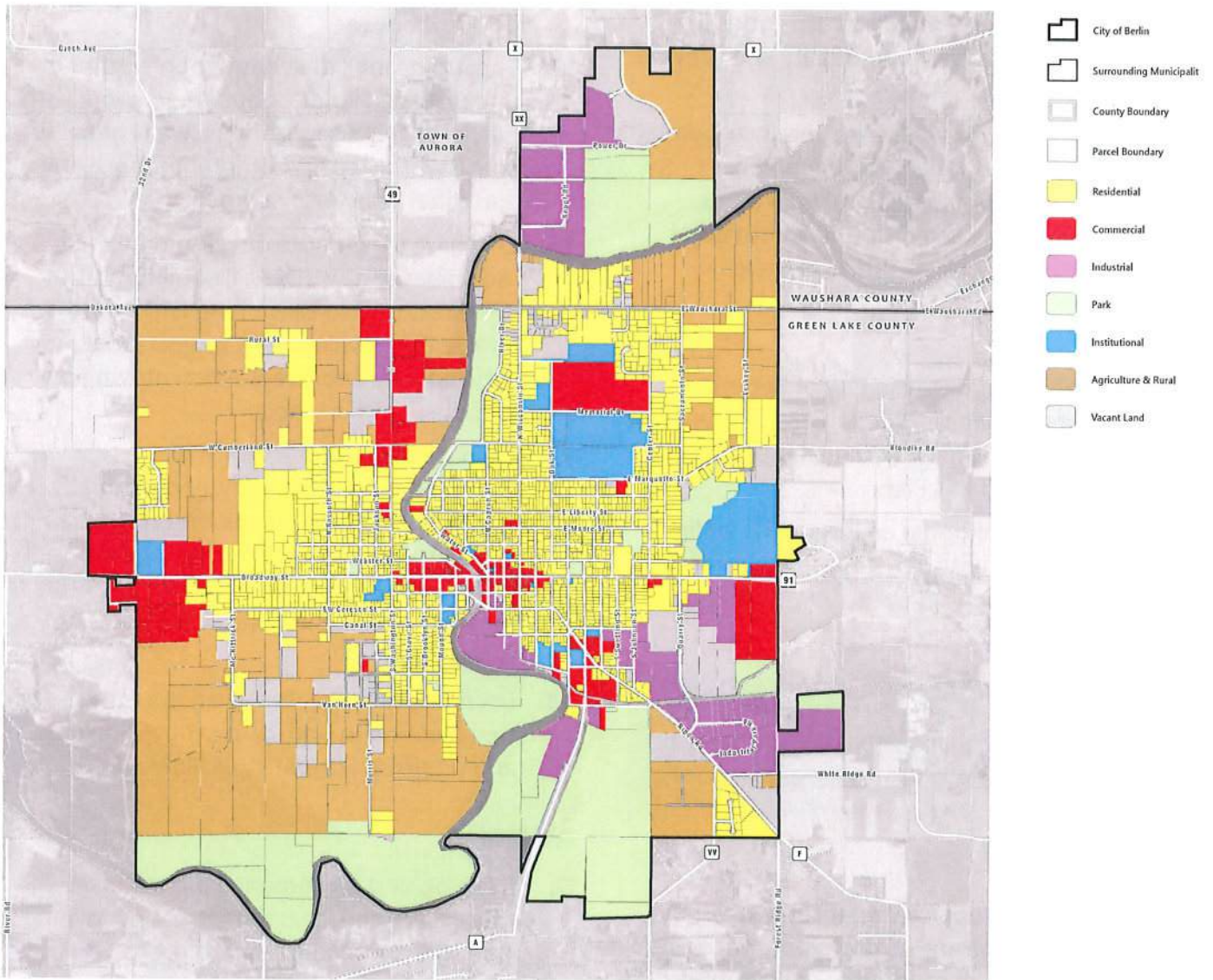
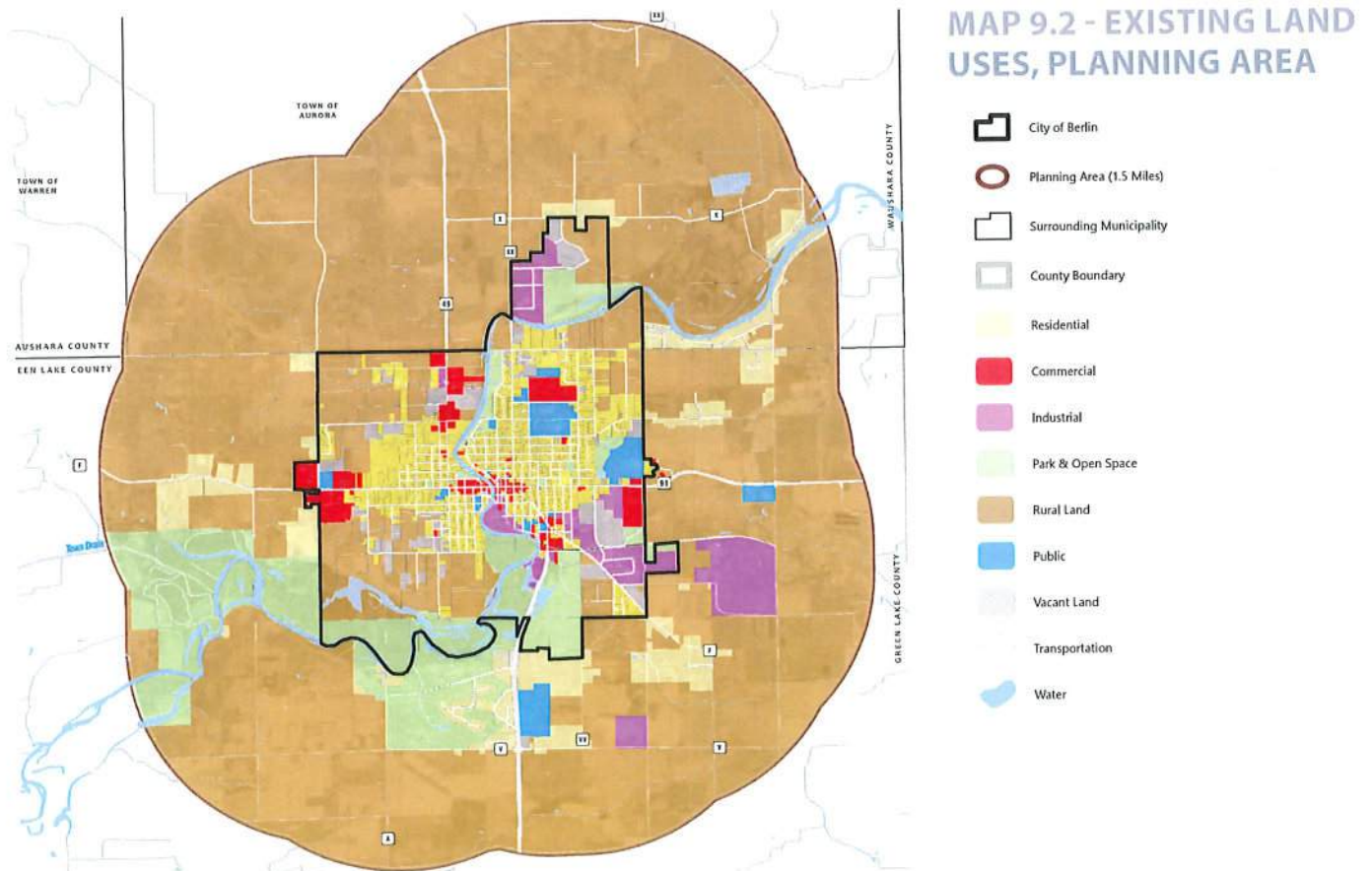


Table 9.1 - Existing Land Use, 2024
(GIS, MSA Professional Services)

LAND USE	COMMUNITY LIMITS	
	AREA (ACRES)	%
Residential	936	22%
Park	664	16%
Vacant	283	7%
Commercial	234	6%
Rural Land	1,192	28%
Transportation	378	9%
Industrial	259	6%
Institutional	147	3%
Water	113	3%
TOTALS	4,028	100%



LAND USE

PROJECTED LAND DEMAND

Table 9.2 projects the City's anticipated land use and space needs through 2050. These projections use current zoning minimum lot sizes, current land use percentages, and projected new housing demand to estimate land needed for other uses. The Plan's Future Land Use Map (*Maps 9.3 and 9.4*) was developed based on future land demand based on population projections, growth patterns, and input from City staff and the Plan Commission.

Key Findings

Based on projections of moderate growth in the population, the City will need to develop a minimum of 173 acres of land by 2050 to accommodate projected adjustments in residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Significant increases in the population beyond the current DOA projections should trigger an update to the land use plan and review of projected land demands.

Table 9.2 - Projected Land Use Demands
(GIS, MSA Professional Services, Municipal Zoning Ordinance, ACS 2023)

PROJECTED DEMANDS*	2020	2030	2040	2050	30 YR CHANGE
Population	5,571	5,333	5,068	5,811	+ 240
Avg. Household Size	2.38	2.25	2.06	1.89	- 0.49
Housing Units	2,689	2,723	2,826	3,532	+ 843
Residential Lands (acres)	936.27	940.84	954.80	1050.11	+ 113.84
Commercial Lands (acres)	234.2	235.4	238.9	262.7	+ 28.5
Industrial Lands (acres)	259.48	260.75	264.62	291.03	+ 31.55

Source: WI DOA Population Projections, GIS, MSA Professional Services, Municipal Zoning Ordinance, ACS, B25024 UNITS IN STRUCTURE

*These projections use current zoning minimum lot sizes, current land use percentages, and projected new housing demand to estimate land needed for other uses.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use (FLU) Map identifies the recommended future land uses within the City of Berlin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. This map and its associated policies form the basis for land development decisions; the FLU Map shall be consulted whenever development is proposed, especially when a zoning change or land division is requested.

USING THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Map contains different land use categories that together illustrate the City's land use vision. These categories, including explanation of the City's intent, zoning, design and development strategies for each, are described in this section. Zoning changes and development shall be consistent with the future land use category shown on the map and their corresponding Plan description.

Statement of Intent & Typical Use

The future land use categories identify areas by their primary intended uses, character and densities (herein described as "Statement of Intent & Typical Uses"). These classifications are not zoning districts; they do not establish binding performance criteria for land uses (i.e. setbacks, height restrictions, etc.), nor are they intended to list every possible use that may be permitted within the future land use classification. Parcels on the Future Land Use Map are identified by their primary intended uses; however, some of the parcels on the map have yet to be platted or subdivided. The City recognizes that detailed site planning to identify how larger unplatted parent parcels (herein referred to as "unplatted new development areas") may be subdivided, zoned, and developed is outside of the scope of this Plan.

The City may create neighborhood plans for these areas as part of future amendments to this Comprehensive Plan to further illustrate and guide development within these areas. The City may also require that developers create neighborhood plans and parks for these areas prior to submitting requests for rezonings or preliminary plats.

Potentially Acceptable Zoning Districts

The future land use classifications identify those existing City of Berlin Zoning Districts that are "consistent" within each future land use category (herein described as "Potentially Acceptable Zoning Districts"). The list of potentially acceptable zoning districts will be used by the City to confirm whether requests for rezoning of property are generally consistent with this plan.

Effect on Zoning

Land use and design policies in this plan should be considered during all development processes, especially in land division and rezoning or zoning ordinance amendment processes when consistency with the plan is a statutory requirement. Where development is proposed under existing zoning regulations, including any Planned Unit Development districts, the regulations of existing zoning supersede policies in this plan.

AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

It may, from time to time, be appropriate to consider amendments to the Future Land Use Map, usually in response to a type of development not originally envisioned for an area when this plan was adopted. *See Implementation Chapter for a description of the procedural steps for amending any aspect of this plan.*

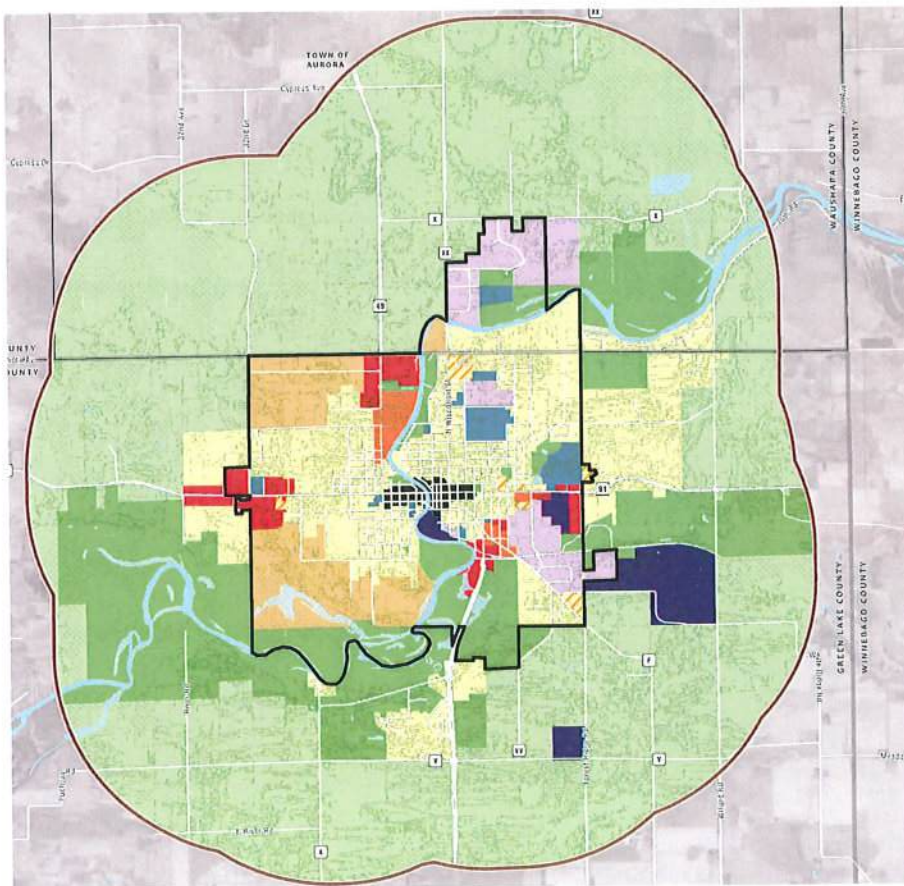
The following criteria should be considered before amending the map:

- **Compatibility:** The proposed amendment/development will not have a substantial adverse effect upon adjacent property or the character of the area, with a particular emphasis on existing residential neighborhoods.
- **Natural Resources:** The land does not include natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, scenic vistas or mature woodlands (1 or more acres, especially those consisting of heritage trees), which will be adversely affected by the proposed amendment/development. The proposed development will not result in undue water, air, light, noise pollution or soil erosion.
- **Transportation:** The proposed amendment/development will not create a significant detriment to the condition of adjacent transportation facilities or cause significant safety concerns for motorists, bicyclists, or pedestrians.
- **Ability to Provide Services:** The provision of public facilities and services will not place an unreasonable financial burden on the City.
- **Public Need:** There is a clear public need for the proposed change or unanticipated circumstances have resulted in a need for the change, and the proposed development is likely to have a positive social and fiscal impact on the City. The City may require that the property owner, or their agent, fund the preparation of a fiscal impact analysis by an independent professional.
- **Adherence to Other Portions of this Plan:** The proposed amendment/development is consistent with the general vision for the City, and the other goals, policies and actions of this plan.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

This section includes a description of each of the Future Land Use Plan categories. These categories include recommended land uses (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial), and land use densities (i.e. dwelling units per net acre). All zoning decisions, land divisions, utility extensions, capital improvement projects, and related land development activities and decisions should be consistent with the recommendations of the Future Land Use Plan.

- Neighborhood Residential
 - High-Intensity Residential Overlay
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Downtown Mixed Use
- Employment
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Public/Institutional
- Urban Reserve
- Rural Lands
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space (PRO)
- Natural Resource Protection (NRP) Overlay

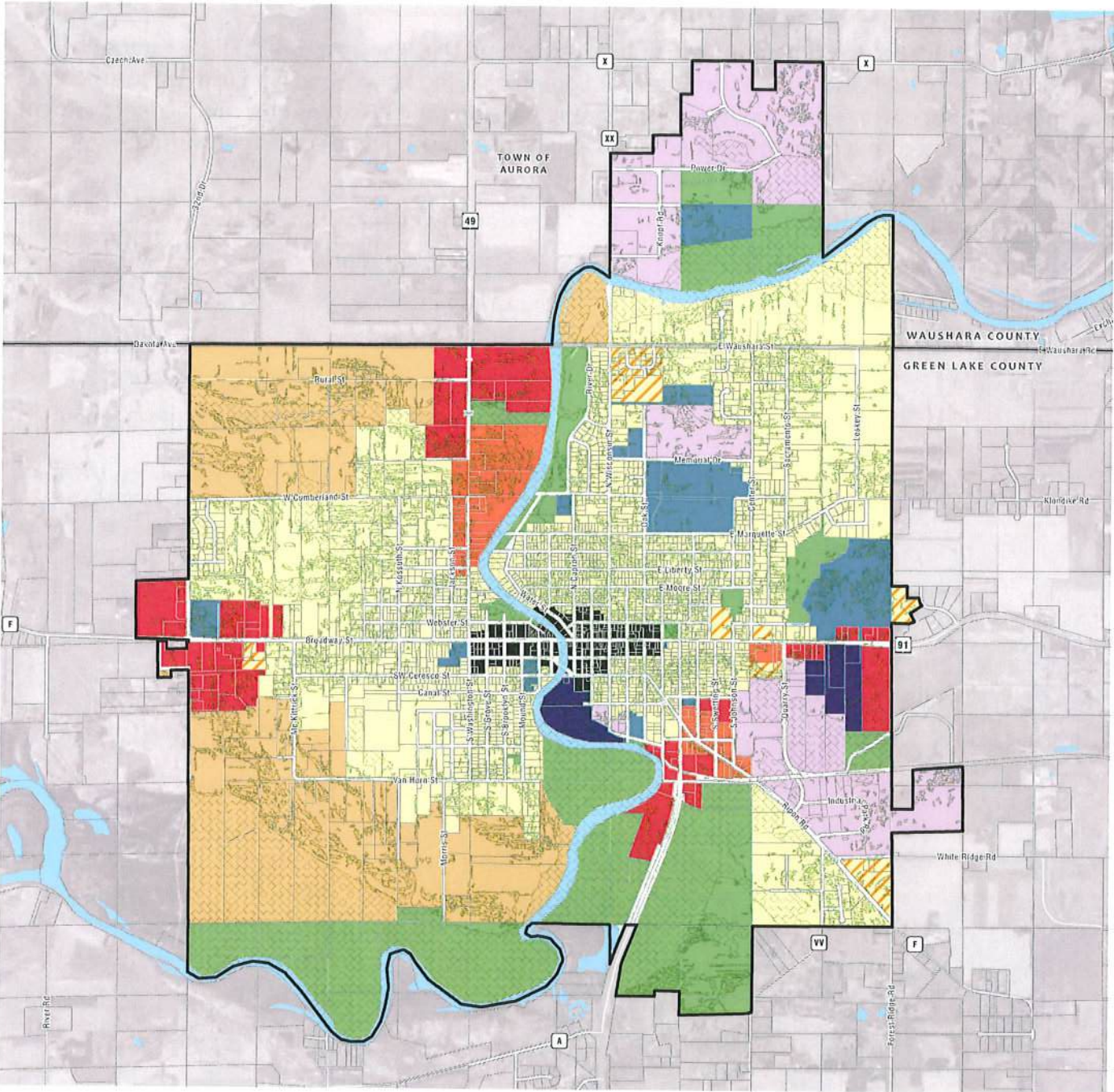


MAP 9.3 - FUTURE LAND USES, PLANNING AREA

- Planning Area (1.5 Miles)
- County Boundary
- Surrounding Municipality
- Future Land Use
 - Neighborhood Residential
 - High-Intensity Residential Overlay
 - Neighborhood Mixed Use
 - Downtown Mixed Use
 - Commercial
 - Employment
 - Industrial
 - Parks, Recreation & Open Space
 - Public/Institutional
 - Urban Reserve
 - Rural Lands
 - Transportation
 - Water
 - Natural Resource Overlay

LAND USE

MAP 9.4 - FUTURE LAND USES, CITY LIMITS



- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| City of Berlin | Future Land Use | Downtown Mixed Use | Parks, Recreation & Open Space | Transportation |
| Surrounding Municipality | Neighborhood Residential | Commercial | Public/Institutional | Water |
| County Boundary | High-Intensity Residential Overlay | Employment | Urban Reserve | Natural Resource Overlay |
| Parcel Boundary | Neighborhood Mixed Use | Industrial | Rural Lands | |

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL (NR)

NR areas provide a mix of housing types, civic uses (e.g., place of worship, social service clubs, etc.), existing neighborhood small-scale commercial, and daycare facilities. Most of the area designated as *NR* is or will be used for single family homes, but a variety of other housing types are appropriate within this designation, including duplex, town home, and multi-unit apartments/condos.

NR



POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential (R-1, R-2, R-3), Conservation District (C-1)

STRATEGIES

1. *NR* areas are expected to be 2-5 units per net acre (excluding streets, parks, outlots, etc.).
2. When integrating housing forms other than single-family detached, whether in new or existing neighborhoods, the following policies should inform neighborhood design and/or infill redevelopment design and approval. If more detailed neighborhood plans are prepared and adopted for specific neighborhoods (either new or existing), additional site-specific designations in those plans may supersede these policies.
 - i. Accessory dwelling units should be permitted in residential areas.
 - ii. Duplex units are appropriate for a neighborhood under the following conditions:
 - a. On any corner lot, if each unit faces and is addressed to a separate street and meets the standard setback requirements and pattern typical along the street.
 - b. As a transitional use when facing or next to a more intensive institutional, residential or commercial use. In this case there should be some general consistency of form and style with other homes in the neighborhood, but also more flexibility in design as compared to sites surrounded by single family homes.
 - iii. Townhomes or rowhouses with up to 4 contiguous units are appropriate in any neighborhood, as follows:
 - a. When facing or adjacent to commercial use, large institutional use, or residential use of equal or greater density.
 - b. When facing a public park or permanent green space.
 - iv. Small multi-unit buildings with up to 4 units per building or Cottage Cluster may be appropriate in any neighborhood, evaluated on a case-by-case basis, if ALL the following apply:
 - a. As a transitional use, if any of the facing or adjacent uses are commercial, large institutional, or residential of equal or greater density.
 - b. There must be off-street parking consistent with City ordinance and on-street parking adjacent to the lot to accommodate visitors.
 - c. If approved through the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process.

LAND USE

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL OVERLAY (HIR)

HIR overlay identifies areas that are suitable for greater density of residential development. The objective is to provide a mix of housing types to provide balanced neighborhoods, while mitigating negative impacts to existing or planned low-intensity residential areas. In general, higher-intensity residential development is identified close to major streets, mixed-use areas, or commercial/employment areas to provide convenient, walkable access to shopping, restaurants, and other amenities. **HIR** areas may also include civic uses (e.g., place of worship, social service clubs, etc.), existing neighborhood commercial, and daycare facilities.



POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential (R-3), Conservation District (C-1)

STRATEGIES

1. **HIR overlay** areas are expected to be more than 5 units per net acre (excluding streets, parks, outlots, etc.).
2. Intensive residential development greater in density than 8 units per net acre, or more than 12 units, require special attention to the design where the use adjoins less intense residential development per the recommended Residential Compatibility Standards outlined below, or as required in the City's zoning ordinance (should the ordinance be amended to include standards). Standards identified in the zoning ordinance shall supersede those outlined below.

i. Compatibility Standards:

- a. **Purpose.** These standards provide a proper transition and compatibility between low-density residential development and more intense multi-unit residential and mixed-use development. For purposes of this section, low-density residential development shall mean single-family, duplex, and townhome / small multi-unit buildings (4 or less units).
- b. **Applicability.** These residential compatibility standards shall apply to all new multi-unit residential and/or mixed-use development of three-stories or larger and/or any development requiring a Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning approval located on land abutting or across a street or alley from low-density residential. These standards do not apply to development governed by an existing General Development Plan (GDP), but they may be considered if a GDP is amended, especially as they pertain to aspects of the development that are proposed for revision in the amendment.
- c. **Compatibility Standards.** All development subject to this section shall comply with the following standards:

1. Use Density. In developments with multiple buildings/uses with varying densities, the development shall locate buildings/uses with the least dense character (e.g., lower heights, fewer units, parks) nearest to the abutting low-density residential development.
2. Building Height. The height of the proposed structure(s) shall not exceed thirty-five (35) feet in height adjacent to a low-density lot for a distance for up to Fifty (50) feet of the low-density lot.
3. Bulk and Mass. Primary facades abutting or across a street or alley from low-density residential development shall be in scale with that housing by employing the following strategies:
 - a. Varying the building plane setback, a minimum of two (2) feet at an interval equal or less than the average lot width of the applicable low-density residential uses. For example, if a block of single-family lots is across the street from the development with an average lot width of 50 feet, the applicable facade shall vary its building plane, at a minimum, every 50 feet.
 - b. Providing a gable, dormer, or other change in roof plane at an interval equal or less than the average lot width of the applicable low-density residential uses. For example, if a block of single-family lots is across the street from the development with an average lot width of 50 feet, the applicable roofline shall vary, at a minimum, every 50 feet (measured at the roof eave).
4. Parking. Parking areas that are visible from the street and located in the building front lot setback shall provide buffering at a minimum height of thirty-six (36) inches above the parking surface. Buffering can consist of landscaping, berms, fences/walls, or a combination of these.
5. Refuse Areas. Dumpsters shall be placed behind the building with opaque or semi-opaque screening (at a minimum, a chain link with fabric screening). If the refuse area cannot be placed behind the building, a wood fence or wall, at least six (6) feet in height, shall be required. Additional landscaping around trash enclosures is encouraged.

NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED USE

NMU category accommodates a wide variety of employment, service, retail, government, entertainment, and residential uses mostly in multi-story buildings. The general intent of the *NMU* area is to preserve and promote the architectural character of the main street, while providing higher density and density of uses befitting the central commercial district.

POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential District (R-2, R-3), Conservation District (C-1), Business District (B-1), Planned Unit Development (PUD)

STRATEGIES

1. Typically, residential densities in *NMU* areas will be about 5-8 units per net acre (excluding streets, parks, outlots, etc.), and building heights one to two stories tall.
2. As part of the zoning approval process, the appropriate mix of land uses, densities, and intensities will be determined with consideration of market conditions and compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods.
3. While both residential and non-residential uses are accommodated within this mixed-use district, not every building in a mixed-use district needs to include both residential and non-residential uses. Nonresidential development within these areas should be service and retail to support surrounding residential use.
4. Uses requiring heavy semi-truck deliveries or those that would generate significant traffic, odor, or noise nuisances for surrounding properties, particularly during early mornings, evenings or weekends, should be prohibited.
5. Buildings in these areas should be oriented towards streets with minimal setback from the public sidewalks.
6. Private off-street parking should be located primarily behind buildings or shielded from public streets by liner buildings or substantially landscaped.
7. Outdoor storage of raw materials should be prohibited, and outdoor display of retail merchandise should be minimized.
8. It is encouraged to preserve existing natural assets in these areas, as they will serve as natural buffers from surrounding uses, as well as generate a unique character for the neighborhood.

DOWNTOWN MIXED USE (DMU)

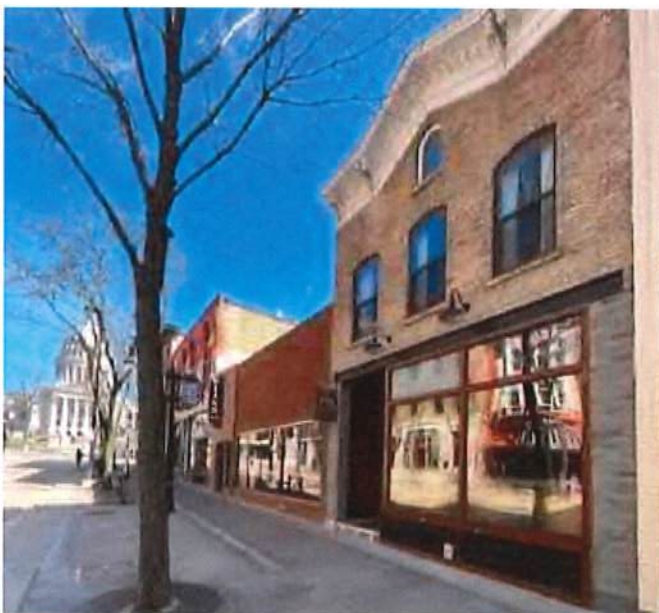
DMU category represents the entirety of Downtown Berlin, and accommodates a wide variety of employment, service, retail, government, entertainment, and residential uses mostly in multi-story buildings. The general intent of the *DMU* area is to preserve and promote the architectural character of the downtown area, while providing higher density and density of uses befitting the central commercial district. The core blocks fronting on main streets should continue to maintain buildings with their front facades built to the edge of the public sidewalk.

POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential Districts (R-2, R-3), Business District (B-1), Conservation District (C-1), Planned Unit Development (PUD)

STRATEGIES

1. As part of the zoning approval process, the appropriate mix of land uses, densities, and intensities will be determined with consideration of market conditions and compatibility with other relevant plans/documents.
2. Typically, residential densities in *DMU* areas will be more than 8 units per net acre (excluding streets, parks, outlots, etc.), and building heights ranging from two to four stories tall.
3. New drive-thru and gas station establishments may be allowed in such areas if designed to mitigate the typical auto-centric design, including placing the building close to the street with a public entrance from the public sidewalk and placing the majority of the parking and drive-thru lane facility along the back or side of the building. These uses should be discouraged East of the



LAND USE

Fox River in the historic section of Downtown as they are predominately concentrated west of the Fox River.

EMPLOYMENT (E)

E areas provide the City's population with a wide range of employment opportunities, including heavy commercial and light industrial uses. These can include corporate offices, business offices, research facilities, laboratories, medical clinics/hospitals, light manufacturing, wholesale, storage, distribution, transportation, and repair/maintenance uses. Though not considered detrimental to the surrounding area or to the community as a whole, they are high-traffic areas that are not always compatible with residential or small-scale commercial activities.



POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Business Districts (B-2), Light Manufacturing District (M-1, M-2).

STRATEGIES

1. Employment areas are not generally recommended for residential uses, though such uses may be considered as part of a conditional use under relevant zoning districts.
2. Employment areas can be high-traffic, including freight vehicles, but generally lack the nuisance odors, sounds, etc. that are typical of I land uses. As such, they can often be buffered from less-intense uses through large yards and landscaping. Entrance, parking, loading, and storage areas should be screened from public streets and directed away from residential and other less-intense land uses.
3. There is no limit on the size of establishments that may be constructed within an Employment area, but all uses should be compatible with the density and scale of the surrounding development.

COMMERCIAL (C)

C areas provide the City's population with a wide range of employment opportunities and retail goods and services, including professional offices and daycare facilities. Commercial areas include highway-oriented uses and "heavy" commercial uses with appearance or operational characteristics not generally compatible with residential or small-scale commercial activities. Other uses could be corporate offices, business offices, research facilities, laboratories, medical clinics/hospitals, light manufacturing, wholesale, storage, distribution, transportation, and repair/maintenance uses. The type and size of use will be determined by location and business characteristics (e.g. size, hours of operation, traffic impacts, etc.).

POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Business Districts (B-2), Manufacturing District (M-1, M-2)

STRATEGIES

1. Commercial areas are not generally recommended for residential uses, though such uses may be considered as part of a conditional use under relevant zoning districts.
2. Outdoor storage of raw materials is discouraged particularly if materials are not screened by a solid wall fence or landscaping.
3. There is no limit on the size of establishments that may be constructed within a Commercial area.
 - i. For example, areas along an arterial roadway or near a highway intersection are generally better suited for larger retail uses. Those areas located along local streets or adjacent to residential neighborhoods are better suited for smaller commercial uses that serve neighborhood needs. Such uses typically require smaller building footprints and parking lots and are less likely to have intensive truck and delivery needs.
4. Some commercial uses such as business parks are high traffic, including freight vehicles, but generally lack nuisance odors, sounds, etc. As such, they can often be buffered from less-intense uses through large yards and landscaping. Entrance, parking, loading, and storage areas should be screened from public streets and directed away from residential and other less-intense land uses.



LAND USE

INDUSTRIAL (I)

I areas accommodate manufacturing, wholesale, storage, distribution, transportation, and repair/maintenance uses. The designation may also be used for landfills and gravel or mineral extraction activities. Industrial areas can include “nuisance” uses that should not be located near residential, mixed-use, or some other types of non-residential uses due to noise, odor, appearance, traffic, or other impacts. The Industrial designation is not intended for retail or office uses not related to industrial use, except for limited retail goods and services provided primarily to employees and users of businesses within the area. Compared to the *C* designation, *I* areas generally have a relatively smaller workforce (for a given area), an emphasis on truck or rail traffic, and other characteristics such as outdoor work areas and outdoor equipment and materials storage.)

POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Manufacturing District (M-3)

STRATEGIES

1. “Nuisance” uses (noise, odor, appearance, traffic, or other impacts) should not be located in proximity to residential, mixed-use, or some other types of non-residential uses.
2. Architectural, site design, and landscaping features within *I* areas may be less extensive than in *C* areas, though properties should be well-buffered and screened from adjacent land uses that may not be compatible and parking/storage areas should be screened from public streets.

CIVIC / INSTITUTIONAL (CI)

CI areas include schools, community centers, cemeteries, government facilities, railroads, utilities, and other parcels that are owned by a public, quasi-public, utility, or religious entity. Park and recreational uses are sometimes a primary or secondary use on these sites.

POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential Districts (R-1, R-2, R-3), Business Districts (B-1), Conservation District (C-1).

STRATEGIES

1. Larger uses should be located on or near an arterial or collector street and be designed so that high volumes of traffic will not be drawn through local neighborhood streets.
2. Streets, walkways, and multi-use paths and trails should provide strong pedestrian and bicycle linkages adjacent to and within larger public & institutional areas.
3. If a parcel planned for Institutional use is vacated by that use and another use is proposed, the City may approve an alternative use without amending this plan if the proposed use is similar to and compatible with adjacent uses.

URBAN RESERVE (UR)

UR category are lands suitable for eventual urban development within the City of Berlin but are currently restricted due to a lack of utility infrastructure. Urban development in the UR areas should be restricted until infrastructure can effectively serve the area. Landowners requesting unsewered development approval from the City should meet compatibility requirements with surrounding land uses and shall be reviewed based on future considerations of eventual urban development.

Within the UR Area, new development should be limited in accordance with all policies applicable to the Agriculture designation, except through ONE of the following City processes:

1. Develop a conceptual neighborhood plan, prepared by a developer or the City, and adopt it as an appendix to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE (PRO)

PRO category includes public parks, conservation areas, recreation areas, private recreation uses (e.g., golf courses), greenways, major public trails, and other natural features and lands with a park-like character that are recommended for preservation.

POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Conservation Districts (C-1, C-2).

STRATEGIES

1. These uses are allowed in all other land use categories, regardless of whether the area is mapped as Open Space.
2. Greenways and stormwater conveyances provide opportunities to link otherwise separate open spaces with both habitat corridors and bicycle and pedestrian connections.
3. As the Future Land Use Map is general in nature, smaller parks may be shown as an adjoining land use.

What should be considered in a detailed neighborhood plan?

Such plans should specify land use mix, density, street layouts, open space and stormwater management, and adhere to the following design objectives:

- Create a distinct sense of place and human scale through provision of public plazas, greens and squares; creating visual interest; and designating prominent building sites.
- Integrate a mix of uses and densities within and surrounding the neighborhood.
- Connect the neighborhood internally and to adjacent areas through a network of paths, sidewalks, and streets. Discourage cul-de-sac and other dead-end street design, wherever possible.
- Preserve and focus attention on environmentally sensitive areas and unique natural features.
- Lay out streets, buildings, and public open spaces, which take advantage of long views created by local topography.

RURAL LANDS (RL)

RL areas likely will not develop in the present 20-year planning period. Typical uses in these areas include open space, farming, farmsteads, agricultural businesses, forestry, quarries, and existing small commercial establishments and rural residential on well and septic systems. Premature exurban development and premature utility extensions should not be promoted in these areas. Even if urban development eventually reaches these areas, some of the land in this designation may be appropriate for consideration as permanent agricultural-related uses.

STRATEGIES

1. When residential development is allowed in this category, it should be conditional, and it should comply with the design policies for R-1 (Residential). In the same context, development in this area should have the least amount of impact on the environment and limits fragmentation of productive agricultural land.
2. Farmers should adopt best practices to prevent any harm on environmentally sensitive areas, such as ground and surface water, wetlands, and floodplains.
3. When possible, it is important to include natural buffer areas between agricultural land and other uses to minimize any potential conflict.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION OVERLAY (NRP)

NRP overlay classification identifies sensitive lands that may be subject to development restrictions enforced by City, County, State, or Federal agencies. Mapped **NRP** areas include lands that meet one or more of the following conditions: water bodies and wetlands mapped as part of the WDNR Wetland Inventory, 100-Year Floodplains based on FEMA maps and areas with slopes averaging 20% or more based on USDA-NRCS Soils data.

Areas shown as **NRP** on the Future Land Use Map do not constitute the limits of all wetlands, floodplains, or steep slopes that may be present within the City's planning area. Mapped **NRP** areas are derived from third party sources and are generally considered accurate enough to identify the possible presence and approximate location of those features. They are not a substitute for field or site level delineations that may be required by local, county, state, or federal agencies prior to development approval. The **NRP** areas illustrated on the Future Land Use Map are not a substitute for official Shoreland-Wetland and Floodplain zoning maps.

The primary intent of these areas is to retain sensitive natural areas in either public or private ownership for the benefit of maintaining fish and wildlife habitat, preventing and controlling water pollution, preventing erosion and sedimentation, preventing property damage caused by flooding, preserving areas of natural beauty, and providing areas for outdoor recreation. A majority of the **NRP** represents areas that are vital to the region's ecosystem and are key ingredients of the character and image in Hillsboro. Thus, development in areas designated **NRP** shall be limited based on underlying local, county, state or federal environmental regulations.

1. This classification is intended to function as an overlay district, such that the underlying future land use classification (e.g., General Commercial) remains in place, but the overlay classification indicates the possibility of additional restrictions on development.
2. Landowners and developers are advised that land within **NRP** areas may be restricted from building development, site grading, or vegetation clearing under local, county, state, or federal regulations. Where building development is permissible additional building setbacks and buffer yards beyond the minimum requirements are encouraged.
3. Recreational uses, agricultural and silviculture operations may be permitted in accordance with local, county, state, and federal laws. Best Management Practices are highly encouraged in these areas.

10. IMPLEMENTATION

GUIDING DAILY DECISIONS

CITY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility for implementing this plan lies primarily with Common Council, several City boards and commissions, including the Plan Commission and City Staff.

COMMON COUNCIL

Common Council sets priorities, controls budgets and tax rates, and typically has the final say on key aspects of public and private development projects. Each council member should know where to find this plan and should be familiar with the major goals described herein. Common Council should expect and require that staff recommendations and actions both reference and remain consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Land use and development recommendations are a core component of this Plan, and the Plan Commission has a major role in guiding those decisions. Plan Commission members must each have access to this Plan and must be familiar with its content, especially the Land Use section. It is the responsibility of Plan Commission to determine whether proposed projects are consistent with this Plan and to make decisions and recommendations accordingly. In cases where actions that are inconsistent with the Plan are believed to be in the city's best interest, the Plan Commission should seek public feedback before recommending amendments to the Plan.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Some of the actions related to economic development and land use address redevelopment potentially require some sort of public funding. This Plan assumes that the Community Development Authority will have lead roles to implement blight removal and prevention programs.

OTHER COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

All committees, boards and commissions that serve as an extension of the City of Berlin should treat this Plan as relevant to their activities in service to the Community and should seek outcomes consistent with the goals and policies herein.

UTILIZING EXISTING TOOLS

Many of the strategies identified in the Plan presume the use of existing City ordinances and programs. Key tools which can be utilized by the City for Implementation include:

Operational Tools

- Annual Budget Process
- Capital Improvement Program

Regulatory Tools

- Zoning & Subdivision of Land Ordinances
- Site Plan Requirements
- Historic Preservation Ordinance
- Building and Housing Codes
- Official Map

Funding Tools

- Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Districts
- State and Federal grant programs

CITY STAFF

Key City staff have a significant influence on capital projects, operational initiatives, and regulatory decisions. It is imperative that individuals in key roles know about, support, and actively work to implement the various policies and actions in this Plan. Specifically, the following people should consult and reference the Comprehensive Plan for goal-setting and budgeting processes, planning for major public projects, and reviewing private development projects:

- Zoning Administrator
- City Administrator
- Department of Public Works – Street Superintendent

These key staff members should be familiar with and track the various goals, policies and actions laid out in this Plan and should reference the provided content in communications with residents and elected and appointed officials when appropriate. Other division heads should also be aware of the Plan and its connections to City projects. Thorough understanding of the Plan will strengthen staff recommendations and reinforce the Plan as a relevant tool integral to City functions.

The City Administrator is responsible for ensuring that other key staff members are actively working to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Implementation of this Plan also depends, to a great degree, on the actions and decisions of entities other than City government. The Action Plan indicates a few responsible parties that the City of Berlin does not control or direct. It is necessary to persuade these entities to be active partners in the implementation of the goals, strategies, and actions set forth in the Plan.

The following City activities can support this effort:

- Share this plan with each organization, including a memo highlighting sections of the Plan that anticipate collaboration between the City and the organization.
- Take the lead role in establishing collaboration with these organizations.
- Know and communicate the intent of relevant objectives and strategies - partner organizations need to understand and buy in to the rationale before they will act.

GUIDING ANNUAL DECISIONS

LINK TO ANNUAL BUDGET PROCESS

The most important opportunity for this Plan to influence City growth and improvement is through the annual budgeting and capital planning processes. These existing annual efforts determine what projects will and will not be pursued by the City, so it is very important to integrate this plan into those processes every year. The compiled Action Plan in the Appendix is a resource to support decisions about how and where to invest the City's limited resources. The Plan Commission should make formal recommendations for Council consideration, identifying those choices and commitments most likely to further the goals and objectives identified in this Plan.

AMENDING THE PLAN

Although this Plan is intended to guide decisions and actions by the City over the next 10 to 20 years, it is impossible to accurately predict future conditions in the City. Amendments may be appropriate from time to time, particularly if emerging issues or trends render aspects of the Plan irrelevant or inappropriate. The City may be faced with an opportunity, such as a development proposal, that does not fit the plan but is widely viewed as appropriate for the City. Should the City wish to approve such an opportunity, it must first amend the Plan so that the decision would be consistent with the Plan. Such amendments should be carefully considered and should not become the standard response to proposals that do not fit the Plan; frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals threaten the integrity of the Plan and the planning process.

Any changes to the Plan text or maps constitute amendments, which should follow a standard process (described below). Amendments may be proposed by either the Common Council or the Plan Commission, though a landowner or developer is also allowed to apply and initiate this process.

UPDATING THE PLAN

The 20-year horizon of this Plan defines the time period used to consider potential growth and change; however, market conditions and priorities change, community preferences shift, and technology evolves over time. The community's Comprehensive Plan needs to be amended and adjusted to keep pace with these changes to remain relevant.

AMENDMENT PROCESS

In years between major plan updates, it may be necessary or desirable to amend this Plan. A straightforward amendment, such as a strategy or future land use map revision for which there is broad support, can be completed through the following process:

Step One

Amendments can be initiated by referral by the Plan Commission or Common Council, or may be requested by application from a member of the public. For amendments affecting a large geographical area of the City or proposing major changes to Plan policies, a more involved public input process should be considered to ensure that proposed amendments are in the best interest of and are well supported by the community.

Step Two

The Plan Commission shall hold a public hearing on the proposed amendment, preceded by a 30-day public notice. Notice of the proposed amendment should also be transmitted as appropriate to other governmental entities that may be affected by or interested in the change, such as a neighboring jurisdiction. After holding the public hearing, Plan Commission can approve or deny a resolution to adopt the plan as amended, or recommend adjustments to the proposed amendment. The Commission may request more information before taking action on any proposed amendment.

Step Three

Common Council hears a report from Plan Commission on the amendment and considers adoption of the amended Plan, by ordinance. The Common Council may choose to revise the Plan after it has been recommended by Plan Commission on such changes prior to adoption, but, depending on the significance of the revision, such consultation may be advisable.

Step Four

Staff completes the amendment as approved, including an entry in an amendment log. A revised PDF copy of the plan is posted to the City website.

ACTION PLAN

Appendix B features a compilation of actions identified in Sections 3-9 to help the City achieve its various goals and objectives.

“TARGET COMPLETION” DEADLINES

The deadlines identified to achieve these actions are not firm - rather they are indications of when the City may choose to pursue an action based on its importance or difficulty. The general timelines identified are:

- Immediate (2025-2026)
- Short-Term (2026-2030)
- Long-Term (2030-2040)
- On-going (or repeating activity)

LEAD AGENCIES

Most of these actions require leadership and effort by multiple people and organizations. These tables indicate the lead agency (or agencies) necessary to initiate and sponsor the action. Other City departments, City officials, and (in some cases) external organizations/ agencies will likely be involved in implementing each action.

PLAN CONSISTENCY

Once formally adopted, the Plan becomes a tool for communicating the City's land use policy and for coordinating legislative decisions. Per the requirements of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, after January 1, 2010, if a local government unit enacts or amends any of the following ordinances, the ordinance must be consistent with that local governmental unit's Comprehensive Plan:

- Official maps
- Local subdivision regulations
- General zoning ordinances
- Shoreland/wetland zoning ordinances

An action will be deemed consistent if:

1. It furthers, or at least does not interfere with, the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan,
2. It is compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities/intensities contained in this Plan,
3. It carries out, as applicable, any specific proposals for community facilities, including transportation facilities, that are contained in the Plan.

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the implementation element describes how each of the nine elements will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the Plan. Prior to adoption of the Plan, the City reviewed, updated, and completed all elements of this Plan together, and no inconsistencies were found.

SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this Comprehensive Plan is found to be invalid or unconstitutional, or if the application of this Comprehensive Plan to any person or circumstances is found to be invalid or unconstitutional, such invalidity or unconstitutionality will not affect the other provisions or applications of this Comprehensive Plan, which can be given effect without the invalid or unconstitutional provision or application. If any requirement or limitation attached to an authorization given under this Comprehensive Plan is found invalid, it shall be presumed that the authorization would not have been granted without the requirement or limitation and, therefore, said authorization shall also be invalid.

BERLIN 2046 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PLAN APPENDIX

Visit the Plan Appendix for additional information:

APPENDIX A PLAN ADOPTION & AMENDMENTS

APPENDIX B ACTION PLAN

APPENDIX C COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

APPENDIX D MAPS