

# 1. Issues and Opportunities

## Location & Geography

The Village of Biron is located in the southeast quadrant of Wood County in central Wisconsin on the banks of the Wisconsin River. The Village is bordered on the north and west by the Wisconsin River, on the east by Portage County's Town of Grant and Town of Plover, and to the south by the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Town of Grand Rapids. Map 1 shows the location of Biron in relation to its surroundings. The soils in Biron include a mix of sand to loamy sand to muck. Most areas where development has occurred have sandy soils. Other areas have wetter soils with shallow groundwater depths. Much of the Village has groundwater depths of less than five feet, with levels of three feet or less common. Although most of the Village is served by a sanitary sewer system, many cottages and small homes between County Road U and the Wisconsin River have some type of private onsite waste treatment system (septic system) or holding tanks. Map 2: Natural Resources depicts the extensive floodplains and wetlands that limit development in the Village and Map 3: Utilities and Community Facilities provides an overview of infrastructure that serves development.

## History

In 1837, the first sawmill was constructed by Harrison Kellogg Fay and Joshua Draper. This mill soon shipped the first fleet of dressed lumber down the Wisconsin River. Francis Xavier Biron, for whom the Village was eventually named, bought the sawmill in 1846. Biron rebuilt the mill in 1853, then built and equipped a new and larger sawmill and improved the dam in 1873. Francis Biron died in 1877, leaving the mill to his son, who sold to the Grand Rapids Pulp and Paper Company in 1894. The paper company built the first paper mill the following year, 1895. Consolidated Papers, Inc. purchased the paper mill in 1911 and raised the head on the dam, necessitating diking along the river several miles back from the dam to prevent flooding.

The Biron Village site was first surveyed in 1895 by the direction of the Grand Rapids Pulp and Paper Company. The Village was incorporated in 1910. Francis Biron's home, known as the Biron "White House," was built in 1865 but it has since been razed. It was used briefly as a school after 1911, as a recreation center, and served as headquarters for Consolidated Papers. The present Village Municipal Building was built on Kahoun Road in 1996. A board that is comprised of the Village President and six Village Trustees governs the Village.

Historically, there has been little commercial development in Biron. Many years ago, there used to be a small grocery store, gas station, and hotel. Most retail is currently located in nearby Wisconsin Rapids. Recently, the Village annexed land along State Highway 54 that included residential and commercial uses. The Village also created a business park in 2014 that is accessed by State Highway 54.

The only industrial development in the Village for many years was the paper mill. That mill, formerly Consolidated Papers, Inc. was sold to Stora Enso North America, then later was sold to NewPage Corporation, and is currently owned by Nine Dragons Paper. New industrial development has begun to locate in Biron. A large industrial freezer facility (Midwest Cold Storage & Logistics, LLC) was built in 2009 in Biron's annexed territory south of Highway 54. That facility was built to serve the area's large cranberry industry. The freezer is also available to other food producers throughout the Midwest.

Development of a new industrial/business park has occurred since the previous comprehensive plan was written in 2010. The 230-acre Biron Business Park is located in the southeast corner of the Village, north of Highway 54 and west of 80th Street (County Road U). As of 2026, Phase 1 streets and four businesses have been constructed. See Chapter 6: Economic Development for more information.

### Village Government

Biron is an incorporated Village and, as such, receives many of its powers and responsibilities under Chapter 61 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Elected officials include the Village President, Treasurer and six Trustees. Each of these elected officials serves a two-year term. Biron also has six full-time employees and nine committees with both Village Trustees and Village residents who are appointed to assist with many of the Village functions. The present Village Municipal Building was built on Kahoun Road in 1996.

### Population Change and Distribution

Table 1 contains population totals for the Village, its neighboring municipalities, the County, and the State. Note that the Village's population jump in 2000 was a result of an annexation of a large area on the Village's south side near 32nd Street and Highway 54. In summary, most municipalities in the area have a flat or decreasing population, with the Town of Seneca having the largest decrease (21.3 percent) between 2010 and 2024, for a loss of 158 people. The County and many of its municipalities grew modestly between 1990 and 2010 but have generally decreased since 2010. Only the Village of Rudolph saw a considerable population gain since 2010 of 6.2 percent or 27 residents, with the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Village of Port Edwards, and Town of Sigel seeing more modest gains. By contrast, the state of Wisconsin grew by 4 percent since 2010.

**Table 1: Population**

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2024	1990-2010 % Change	2010-2024 % Change
T. Grand Rapids	7,071	7,801	7,646	7,576	7,598	8.1%	-0.6%
T. Port Edwards	1,351	1,446	1,427	1,356	1,331	5.6%	-6.7%
T. Rudolph	1,180	1,161	1,028	1,027	974	-12.9%	-5.3%
T. Saratoga	4,775	5,383	5,142	5,060	5,071	7.7%	-1.4%
T. Seneca	1,133	1,202	1,120	1,039	881	-1.1%	-21.3%
T. Sigel	1,192	1,130	1,051	1,017	1,059	-11.8%	0.8%
<b>V. Biron</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>-2.0%</b>
V. Port Edwards	1,848	1,944	1,818	1,762	1,881	-1.6%	3.5%
V. Rudolph	451	423	439	433	466	-2.7%	6.2%
C. Nekoosa	2,557	2,590	2,580	2,449	2,420	0.9%	-6.2%
C. Wisc. Rapids	18,245	18,435	18,367	18,877	18,722	0.7%	1.9%
Area Total	40,597	42,430	41,475	41,435	41,225	2.2%	-0.6%
Wood Co.	73,605	75,555	74,749	74,207	74,004	1.6%	-1.0%
Wisconsin	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,914,872	16.3%	4.0%

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

## Households

The household characteristics in Biron have changed as the age and make-up of the population has changed. Overall, the total population and number of households have fallen in recent years. See Table 2. Housing and job development, discussed in this plan's future chapters, can reverse these trends while expanding the Village's tax base. Recent examples include the Biron Business Park and the Bridgewater housing development. The trend in the number of people per household decreased from 1990 to 2010, followed by a slight increase. See Table 3. Wood County's change in households since 2010 has been much slower than the state of Wisconsin's change in number of households.

With an aging population, it is expected that the type of housing that residents prefer or need will change somewhat. They may prefer smaller homes or condominium living to get away from outdoor maintenance chores that get more difficult with age and disabilities. Perhaps they will need a home that can accommodate people with mobility impairments who need features like zero-step entrances and wide interior doorways in order to live safely and comfortably in their homes. In 2024, 111 (13.5 percent) of Biron residents had physical disabilities and 33 (4 percent) had self-care disabilities that could contribute to difficulty getting around in their homes or using facilities within their homes. Another 51 residents (6.2 percent) have an independent living difficulty, which could drive demand for certain housing arrangements. It's easy to understand how the type of housing needs are changing with the aging population and, as one looks around the greater community, one can see new housing that is designed to meet many of these needs.

**Table 2: Total Households**

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2024	1990-2010 % Change	2010-2024 % Change
T. Grand Rapids	2,348	2,788	2,978	3,081	3,153	26.8%	5.9%
T. Port Edwards	460	526	564	565	461	22.6%	-18.3%
T. Rudolph	381	423	418	419	445	9.7%	6.5%
T. Saratoga	1,613	2,011	2,085	2,148	2,229	29.3%	6.9%
T. Seneca	369	408	411	410	361	11.4%	-12.2%
T. Sigel	376	410	423	400	418	12.5%	-1.2%
<b>V. Biron</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>-10.9%</b>
V. Port Edwards	660	706	711	723	771	7.7%	8.4%
V. Rudolph	165	170	179	197	208	8.5%	16.2%
C. Nekoosa	970	987	1,065	1,065	1,058	9.8%	-0.7%
C. Wisc. Rapids	7,549	7,970	8,296	8,655	8,392	9.9%	1.2%
Area Total	15,224	16,783	17,496	18,025	17,822	14.9%	1.9%
Wood Co.	27,473	30,135	31,598	32,238	32,253	15.0%	2.1%
Wisconsin	1,983,460	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,428,361	2,479,480	14.9%	8.8%

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Table 3: Average Household Size**

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2024	1990-2010 Change	2010-2024 Change
V. Biron	2.38	2.28	2.24	2.48	2.39	-0.14	0.15
Wood Co.	2.65	2.47	2.34	2.20	2.26	-0.31	-0.08
Wisconsin	2.61	2.50	2.43	2.36	2.33	-0.18	-0.10

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

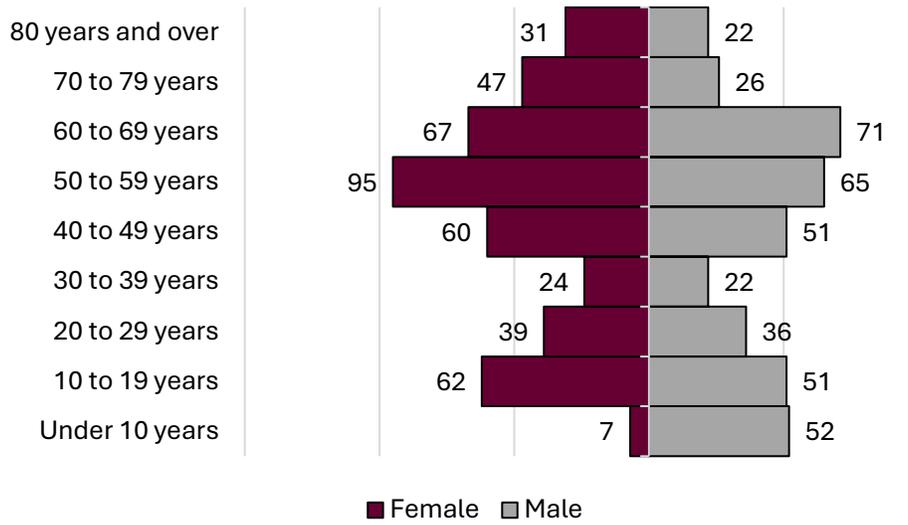
### Median Age and Age Distribution

The median age of Biron’s population is 51.1 years old, which is considerably higher than that of Wood County (43.8) and Wisconsin (40.2). This is up from 47.0 in the Village in 2010. According to the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year estimates, 21.2 percent of the Village’s population was age 65 and over compared to 21.8 percent of Wood County. Only 19 percent of the Village was under age 18, compared to 21.3 percent for the County. The rate of those under age 18 is down from 21 percent for the Village and 23.1 percent for the County in 2010, which affects school enrollments and the future workforce.

As people age, they tend to want to live closer to shopping, churches and community activities. Condominiums and senior housing developments are popular choices for the aging who no longer want to care for lawns and homes, or who can’t perform home maintenance functions. Those types of housing are almost always located in cities and villages that can provide water pressure needed to meet fire codes and sanitary sewer systems to provide for waste disposal. Second, many of the elderly need assistance or round-the-clock medical care. Assisted living centers and nursing homes are located in incorporated communities for the same reasons, necessitating relocation from towns for those who require such services. If new housing is not provided to attract more residents and, if the community does not attempt to attract younger residents, the median age of the population will continue to increase.

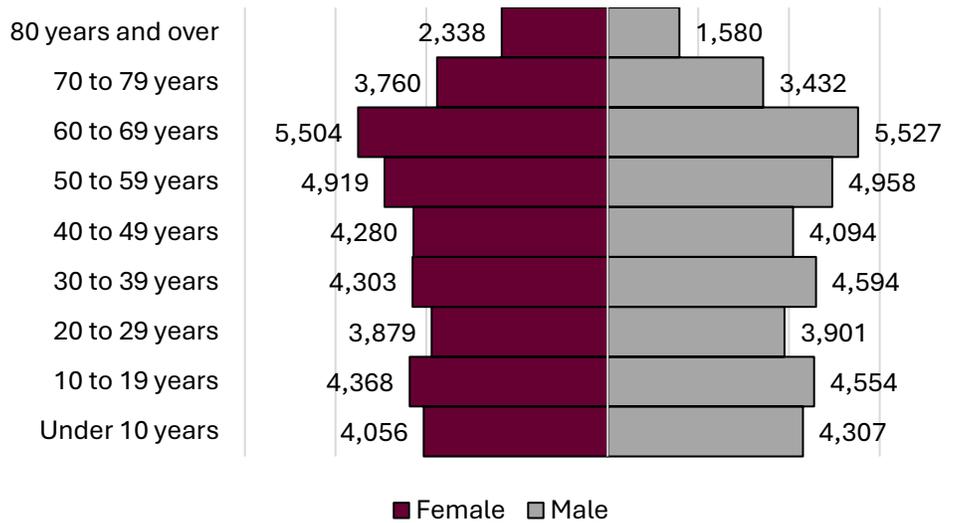
An analysis of the Village’s population cohorts, or age groups, is shown in Figures 1 and 2. These Figures were historically known as population pyramids because the base (younger ages) was considerably wider than the top (older ages). But as the large baby boomer cohort enters the higher age ranges and lives longer than previous generations, population pyramids have shifted to more box-like form since people are having fewer children or having no children at all. This impacts how the economy and workforce will support a growing retired population with fewer working aged adults relative to the size of the retired population.

**Figure 1: Age Distribution**



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Figure 2: Age Distribution 2**



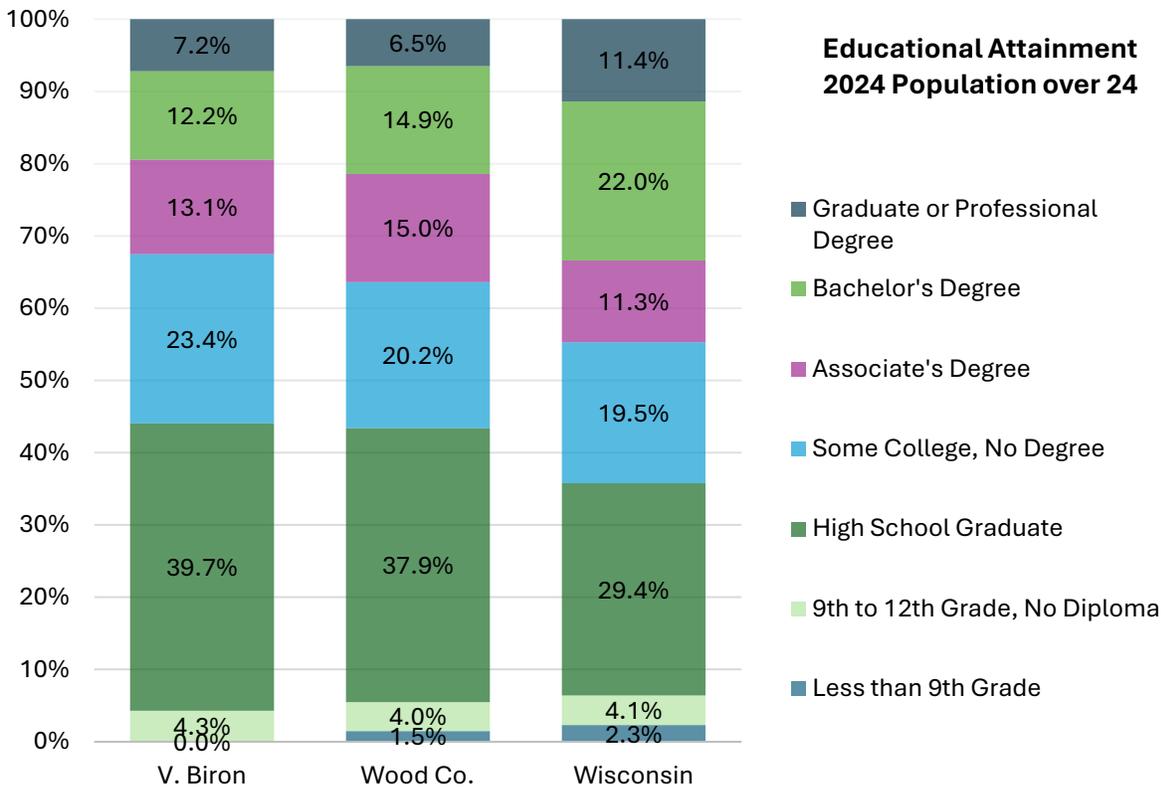
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Education**

The level of education of Biron residents, age 25 and older, has increased since 1980. This is the result of more emphasis placed on education that is needed to live in a society that has much more technology and more specialties than in the past. Many of the Village’s most elderly residents ended their educational training with high school graduation or less. Some cut their education short because of World War II and high school education was all that was required for most manufacturing jobs in our area. During the 1970s and 1980s,

local industries often provided their own training. During that same time and beyond, more partnerships were developed with Mid-State Technical College to develop and provide custom training programs for local industries. Figure 3 shows the change in educational levels for Biron, Wood County, and Wisconsin. The proportion of Biron residents who completed high school was higher than both the county and the state. The proportion of Biron residents who have earned a Bachelor’s degree or higher is slightly lower than the proportion in Wood County and is considerably lower than the Statewide proportion.

**Figure 3: Educational Attainment**



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Today, many area businesses and industries require specialized training and a two-year associate’s degree. Mid-State Technical College works closely with area businesses to provide customized training programs to meet changing needs. In 2010, 7.5 percent of Biron residents, age 25 and older had an associate’s degree, which increased to 13.1 percent in 2024. Biron has a lower proportion of residents with associate’s degrees than Wood County as a whole, but a higher proportion than the statewide figure. A growing number of jobs require a minimum of a bachelor’s degree and more require a master’s degree. The nearby University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and other U. W. campuses help train people who work in and around the Biron area.

**Income and Poverty**

Table 4 provides income information for Biron for 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2024. In 2000, median household income and median family income were higher than the county as a whole, but slightly lower than statewide incomes. At that time, per capita income was lower than both countywide and statewide incomes.

Since then, Biron’s median household income has fallen below countywide and statewide figures, but the median family income and per capita income are more than the countywide incomes. This could be partially explained by the growing retired population earning less on fixed income but having fewer people in each household. It could also reflect changes in the local economic base, such as the mill in Wisconsin Rapids closing. Income growth was higher than the countywide income growth for median family income and per capita income, but slower for median household income. Statewide incomes in all three categories were higher and grew faster than Village and county incomes. But the Village’s lower cost of living helps to offset its lower wages when attracting new residents and workers.

**Table 4: Income Characteristics**

	V. Biron	Wood Co.	Wisconsin
<b>Median Household Income</b>			
2000	\$42,557	\$41,595	\$43,791
2010	\$54,271	\$47,204	\$51,598
2020	\$53,833	\$55,684	\$63,293
2024	\$66,250	\$67,989	\$77,485
% Change 2000-2024	55.7%	63.5%	76.9%
<b>Median Family Income</b>			
2000	\$51,719	\$50,798	\$52,911
2010	\$59,375	\$58,294	\$64,869
2020	\$63,333	\$69,866	\$80,844
2024	\$92,500	\$84,896	\$100,141
% Change 2000-2024	78.9%	67.1%	89.3%
<b>Per Capita Income</b>			
2000	\$19,293	\$20,203	\$21,271
2010	\$27,424	\$24,893	\$26,264
2020	\$25,365	\$32,037	\$34,450
2024	\$39,076	\$37,943	\$43,373
% Change 2000-2024	102.5%	87.8%	103.9%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

According to United Way, 10 percent of Wood County households live in poverty, which is slightly lower than 11 percent of households statewide living in poverty. But 25 percent of Wood County households are considered to be “ALICE” households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) which means they are working and earn more than the poverty rate, but not enough to afford the basic cost of living, which is slightly higher than 24 percent of statewide households being considered ALICE. Combined, this means that Wood County and the State of Wisconsin both have 35 percent of its residents who struggle to meet the basic cost of living. The Village of Biron’s combined poverty and ALICE household rate is 39 percent of all households, indicating a slightly higher rate of households who are struggling to afford the basics.

### Employment Characteristics

Table 5 depicts labor force characteristics for all Biron residents age 16 and older. Those who are in the labor force are working or looking for work, and it doesn't count those who are in school, retired, or staying home with children that are choosing not to work, for example. Despite a slight increase in the 16 and over population, the labor force has decreased by over 18 percent since 2010, which is partially explained by the increase in retirements. The decrease was less pronounced for Wood County (5.8 percent) and the size of the labor force increased statewide (3.7 percent). The labor force participation rate, which is the percent of residents over 16 who are in the labor force, decreased by 13.5 percent in the Village compared to a 4.6 percent decrease countywide and 3.6 percent decrease statewide. Unemployment rates have fallen for the Village, County, and State since 2010 due to economic recovery from the late 2000s financial crisis but mill operations in Biron and Wisconsin Rapids only employ a fraction of what they did several decades ago. This could indicate a need to grow local jobs that support a living wage.

**Table 5: Labor Force Characteristics 2024**

Category	V. Biron			Wood County			Wisconsin		
	2010	2024	% Change	2010	2024	% Change	2010	2024	% Change
Population aged 16+	682	694	1.8%	59,438	60,132	1.2%	4,458,387	4,882,973	9.5%
Labor Force	464	378	-18.5%	39,534	37,230	-5.8%	3,078,465	3,191,606	3.7%
Employed	444	365	-17.8%	36,924	35,725	-3.2%	2,869,310	3,090,398	7.7%
Unemployed	20	13	-35.0%	2,537	1,490	-41.3%	204,600	97,244	-52.5%
Unemployment Rate	4.3%	3.4%	-0.9%	6.4%	4.0%	-2.4%	6.7%	3.1%	-3.6%
Participation Rate	68.0%	54.5%	-13.5%	66.5%	61.9%	-4.6%	69.0%	65.4%	-3.6%

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates 2024

The number of Biron residents who are employed in different industries and their occupations are listed in Table 6. Over a quarter of Biron residents (26.8 percent) are employed in management, business, science, and arts occupations, and nearly another quarter (23.3 percent) are employed in sales and office occupations. Additionally, about one-fifth (20.8 percent) are employed in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. These occupations reflect where Biron residents work, regardless of if the job is located within the Village or in another municipality. Chapter 6: Economic Development provides a more detailed overview of the local economy, jobs, and more.

**Table 6: Resident Occupations 2024**

Occupation	V. Biron		Wood County		Wisconsin	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	98	26.8%	11,924	33.4%	1,281,096	41.5%
Service occupations	62	17.0%	6,264	17.5%	475,030	15.4%
Sales and office occupations	85	23.3%	6,447	18.0%	573,114	18.5%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	44	12.1%	4,024	11.3%	255,987	8.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	76	20.8%	7,066	19.8%	505,171	16.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>35,725</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,090,398</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Growth Projections**

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) produces population projections for every municipality and county in Wisconsin every decade based on the most recent Census. The latest projects were released in 2024 and are based on the 2020 Census. It factors existing demographic patterns but does not account for shifts in migration patterns, for example, a hypothetical sudden economic boom in Wisconsin that attracts a large number of inbound moves or a natural hazard such as a major hurricane or wildfire that would result in more people moving to less hazard-prone states like Wisconsin. In general, WDOA projects a decline of over 200,000 people between 2020 and 2050 statewide. Table 7 summarizes the Village, County, and Statewide projections, which show the Village’s population peaking in 2040, the County population peaking in 2020, and the statewide population also peaking in 2020.

**Table 7: Population Projections**

	2020	2030	2040	2050
V. Biron	839	845	846	838
Wood Co.	74,207	71,310	68,185	64,580
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120

Source: WDOA

**Household Projections**

In the past, WDOA also produced household projections, but none have been released since 2013. Table 8 takes the population projections in Table 7 and divides it by the average household size in 2020 in Table 2020 to estimate projected households between 2020 and 2050. While this isn’t as accurate as the methodologies used in the past by WDOA, it indicates that, if current trends continue, Biron can expect housing demand through at least 2040.

**Table 8: Household Projections**

	2020	2030	2040	2050
V. Biron	347	349	350	346
Wood Co.	32,405	31,140	29,775	28,201
Wisconsin	2,507,965	2,506,772	2,485,796	2,429,838

Source: NCWRPC

## Summary & Conclusions

Based on the factual data and projections presented throughout this section, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Changing demographics mean the Village's population is aging, retiring, and living in smaller household sizes compared to past decades. Additionally, Wood County and the Wisconsin Rapids area as a whole are decreasing in population.
2. While 2024 estimates show a slight decrease in the Village's population since 2020, projections show a slight increase through 2040.
3. Recent projects like the Bridgewater development and Biron Business Park have the potential to attract new jobs and residents, reversing some of these trends. This is important to attract younger individuals and families to fill jobs and support the local economy given the growing retired population.
4. The increasing median age results in a change in demand for types of municipal services, housing types, need for schools and more. The proposal for a variety of housing styles will help to accommodate aging households' changing needs and abilities (i.e., single family detached, duplexes, and condominiums).
5. Biron residents are more likely to have an associate's degree than the average Wisconsin resident, but are less likely to have a bachelor's degree. Partnerships with Mid State Technical College (MSTC) and University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) will ensure Village residents are qualified for jobs that are in demand.
6. Shrinking household sizes means that housing demand can persist even if the population decreases. New developments like the Bridgewater area may also be attractive for those building a second home due to Biron's proximity to waterfront views and outdoor recreation (Wisconsin River, Sand Valley, etc.).
7. Income levels have not kept up with statewide trends, which is partially due to the increasing retired population that is past its peak earning years. But it could indicate that more households are able to afford the basic cost of living compared to the past as the country has experienced considerable inflation in recent years.

## L. Goals & Objectives

Each chapter of the comprehensive plan contains goals, objectives, and policies that are set by the Plan Commission during the planning process, based on information gathered for that chapter and used to guide future actions of the Village over the planning period or until changed via an amendment to this plan. The following definitions are used for goals, objectives and policies:

- 1. Goal:** A broadly written, general statement describing what should happen to change an existing condition in the Village.
- 2. Objective:** A statement that identifies a course of action to achieve a goal. It states what should be done to address an issue.
- 3. Policy:** A rule or course of action used, or followed, to achieve the goals and objectives. It can be mandatory (“shall,” “will”) or advisory/recommended (“may,” “are encouraged”).

## 3. Housing

This Chapter analyses trends and characteristics of the Village’s housing stock and the current housing market. Housing affects how public facilities, services, and transportation infrastructure should be managed. Understanding the factors affecting people’s ability to meet their own housing needs provides a basis for reinforcing community ties, fostering economic development, and improving the quality of life.

### Previous Plans and Studies

**Centergy Region Housing Study 2025.** This project highlights the need for new housing units throughout the Centergy Region (Adams, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, and Wood Counties) to help employers attract and retain workers long-term. It specifies that units renting between \$900 and \$1,499 per month or priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000 are in the highest demand and benefit the greatest number of households, along with exploring a Regional Housing Fund that would use a low-cost revolving loan fund to reduce construction costs to meet demand.

### NCWRPC Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

The North Central Region’s Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2025, looks at housing in all ten NCWRPC counties, including Wood County. It identifies housing as an essential component of the Region’s quality-of-life and prosperity. It supports expanding the housing supply with a variety of new housing styles and prices, along with rehabilitating existing housing with energy efficiency and aging-in-place upgrades.

### Welcoming Wisconsin Home: A Statewide Action Plan for Homelessness 2021-2023

This plan notes a severe statewide shortage of very low-income housing units in rural, urban, and suburban areas alike.

### Wisconsin Realtors Association’s (WRA) Workforce Housing Report

The association released a study in 2019 finding a lack of workforce housing throughout the State of Wisconsin. The claim is backed by the falling number of building permits being issued for new home construction, the rising cost of new home construction, a decline in home ownership and a continued decline in overall affordability. The report can be found on WRA’s website.

### Wisconsin State Consolidated Housing Plan 2025-2029

This 5-year plan guides how funding from Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG), Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), and Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is distributed. It is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### Wood County Rural Economic Development Plan (REDI)

In 2021, Wood County completed this plan to respond to unique challenges like a stagnating population, workforce shortage, and challenges as its population ages. Recommendations include building technology infrastructure, creating a housing plan, branding, and marketing, promoting cultural amenities, improving

tourism access to natural features, establishing an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and collaborating on economic development.

**Wood County Housing Report 2025**

This report identifies gaps in Wood County’s housing market along with a robust series of goals, strategies, and programs designed to increase the supply of housing countywide. It projected a need for 376 housing units countywide by 2025, 179 units between 2025 and 2030, and 130 units between 2030 and 2035 to meet demand.

**Inventory and Trends**

**Total Housing Units and Occupancy Characteristics**

Table 9, below, summarizes the overall characteristics of housing units in the Village. Over four-fifths of the housing units are owner occupied, and nearly one-third of households consist of an individual living alone. Nearly 30 percent of households have family members aged 65 or over, and only five units are used as seasonal or recreational housing units (second homes).

**Table 9: Housing Unit by Occupancy Status**

	V. Biron	Wood County	Wisconsin
Total Housing Units	338	34,755	2,778,572
Total occupied housing units	326	32,253	2,479,480
Vacant Housing Units	12	2,502	299,092
Seasonal Housing Units	5	547	172,842
Owner occupied housing units	262	23,408	1,682,214
Renter occupied housing units	64	8,845	797,266
Average household size	2.39	2.26	2.33
% owner occupied	80.4%	72.6%	67.8%
% householder living alone	32.8%	31.6%	31.8%
% with individuals 65 or over	29.4%	35.7%	32.5%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Vacancy rates are important because they show the demand for and availability of housing. A vacancy rate of 2% or 3% of owner-occupied housing units generally indicates a tight market and unmet demands for new housing. Renter-occupied housing vacancy rates below 5% indicate a need for more rental units. Currently, vacancy rates for both renter- and owner-occupied homes are 0.0 percent, according to the 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates for the Village of Biron. Even though 12 units are listed as vacant, 5 of them are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, and 7 of them are considered “other” vacant homes by the ACS. This means that, of those 12 units, none of them are currently for rent or for sale, making the vacancy rate 0. There is an opportunity to expand housing supply to improve availability and affordability in places like Biron that currently have limited choices.

**Type of Housing Structures**

Tables 10 and 11 summarize the style of housing found in Biron. Most housing units are single-family detached homes (93.8 percent) with the remaining housing units being dispersed among several other types of housing. While high rates of single-family, owner-occupied homes contribute to community stability and long-term wealth building, they limit choices for young adults starting careers or for older adults looking to downsize into something more manageable.

**Table 10: Housing Units by Structural Type 2024 (Total)**

	1- Detached	1- Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Other	Total
V. Biron	317	4	6	0	9	2	0	338
Wood Co.	25,450	1,191	1,686	569	4,281	1,575	3	34,755
Wisconsin	1,839,569	120,679	162,913	97,215	472,263	84,807	1,126	2,778,572

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Table 11: Housing Units by Structural Type 2024 (Percent)**

Community	1- Detached	1- Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Other	Total Occupied
V. Biron	93.8%	1.2%	1.8%	0.0%	2.7%	0.6%	0%	100%
Wood Co.	73.2%	3.4%	4.9%	1.6%	12.4%	4.5%	0%	100%
Wisconsin	66.2%	4.3%	5.9%	3.5%	17.0%	0.031	0%	100%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Age of and Value Housing Stock**

Age of housing is often correlated with its condition. While some older homes might be built with sturdier materials than new construction, roofing, HVAC, plumbing, windows, electrical, and other components often wear with age and are not up to code. Most of Biron’s housing was built in the 1970s (30.5 percent), and only 18.6 percent of the Village’s housing has been built since then. This could indicate that a large portion of the Village’s housing could be overdue for expensive repairs.

Note that ACS data uses limited data sets to provide estimates between Census years. The most recent ACS data set is from 2024, and the most recent Census was in 2020. This can result in some data accuracy issues, as evidenced by the lack of housing units built after 2020 in Table 12 despite new homes being built in the Bridgewater area. It is likely that more homes have been built in recent years than what Table 12 estimates.

**Table 12: Year Structure Built 2024**

Community	V. Biron		Wood Co.		Wisconsin	
2020 or later	0	0.0%	413	1.2%	38,983	1.4%
2010 to 2019	4	1.2%	1,917	5.5%	197,957	7.1%
2000 to 2009	14	4.1%	3,143	9.0%	347,953	12.5%
1990 to 1999	23	6.8%	3,576	10.3%	347,567	12.5%
1980 to 1989	22	6.5%	3,395	9.8%	262,669	9.5%
1970 to 1979	103	30.5%	6,379	18.4%	394,494	14.2%
1960 to 1969	57	16.9%	3,915	11.3%	262,558	9.4%
1950 to 1959	58	17.2%	3,875	11.1%	285,081	10.3%
1940 to 1949	24	7.1%	2,075	6.0%	146,155	5.3%
1939 or earlier	33	9.8%	6,067	17.5%	495,155	17.8%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Home values reflect housing affordability and households’ ability to build wealth. Table 13 shows that the Village has a much smaller share homes valued under \$50,000 than the County and the State do, but it has a much higher share of homes between \$50,000 and \$150,000 than the County and State do, meaning there could be an opportunity to attract young families with starter homes that are affordable to them. There is a smaller share of housing valued above \$200,000 compared to countywide and statewide figures, indicating that there is an opportunity to build housing in these price ranges that provides an option for residents to upgrade into a newer home, freeing up more affordable starter homes for others. The Village’s median value of \$154,400 is considerably lower than Wood County’s (\$175,600) and Wisconsin’s (\$266,500) values which is due to a variety of factors. Older housing on smaller lots generally has lower values, and the presence of floodplains may reduce the appeal of purchasing a house in certain areas of Biron. Newer housing development like the Bridgewater area reflect an opportunity to increase housing options and quality in the Village.

**Table 13: Owner Occupied Housing Values**

Community	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 to \$299,999	\$300,000 to \$499,999	\$500,000 or more	Median Value
V. Biron	1.5%	13.4%	32.8%	17.6%	20.2%	11.8%	2.7%	\$154,400
Wood County	6.4%	12.7%	19.0%	18.5%	24.9%	15.6%	2.9%	\$175,600
Wisconsin	4.0%	5.1%	8.9%	14.1%	25.5%	29.4%	13.1%	\$266,500

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Housing Affordability**

By federal law, all communities are required to enable affordable housing to be built. Affordable housing is defined as housing for which a household pays no more than 30% of their annual income, including the cost of a mortgage or rent and homeowner’s or renter’s insurance. Table 14 summarizes the median monthly housing costs and percentage of residents spending more than 30 percent of income on housing, which is known as cost burdened. In summary, renters in Biron are more likely than not to be cost burdened, with over 66

percent of renter households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Over 23 percent of homeowners with a mortgage are cost burdened, but less than 10 percent of homeowners without a mortgage are cost burdened.

In general, housing in Wood County is considerably more affordable than the statewide median. Housing costs for homeowners are even lower in the Village of Biron compared to Wood County as a whole, but rent is considerably higher, being even higher than the statewide median rent. The proportion of renters that are not in “affordable” housing has risen from 31% in 2000, more than doubling to nearly 68% in 2010, falling slightly to 66.7 percent in 2024. According to the U.S. Census bureau, the median rent in Biron has risen from \$773 in 2000 to \$1,161 in 2024. High rents limit the ability of a household to save for an eventual house where there is an opportunity to build equity. Expanding the supply of housing units provides more options, addressing low vacancy rates and improving affordability.

**Table 14: Median Monthly Housing Costs**

Community	With mortgage	% Cost burdened	No mortgage	% Cost burdened	Median Rent	% Cost Burdened
V. Biron	\$1,277	23.7%	\$511	9.7%	\$1,161	66.7%
Wood County	\$1,331	20.9%	\$522	10.1%	\$856	38.0%
Wisconsin	\$1,689	22.5%	\$659	12.6%	\$1,087	43.7%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Tenure**

Tenure is a measurement of how long people have lived in their present home. According to estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, 50.6% of all householders in the Village moved to their current residence after 2010. This is similar to the figures for Wood County, where 55.4 percent moved after 2010. The Village and County have similar proportions of people moving to their current residents in the 1990s, 2000s, and all decades prior to 1990. By contrast, 65.4 percent of Wisconsinites moved to their current residence after 2010, meaning that Village residents are more likely to have lived in their residence slightly longer than the average Wood County resident and considerably longer than the average Wisconsin resident. County and statewide numbers, however, reflect a larger number of rental units, group homes, nursing homes, etc. Those type housing units, which Biron does not have a lot of, experience more turnover than single family housing, which makes up the biggest majority of Biron homes.

**Housing Accessibility**

The number of households with at least one disabled resident increases as the population ages. People generally have the desire to age in their own home and live there comfortably. Few single-family detached homes, like those in Biron, are accessible to those with mobility limitations. Key features for accessibility are a zero-step entrance, a bathroom or half bath on the entry level and interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance. Other features may include lever-style door handles, electrical controls that are in reach from a wheelchair, and other features. Such features make a home accessible for both the resident who has physical limitations and for visitors with physical disabilities.

Neither the State of Wisconsin nor the Village of Biron has mandatory accessibility building standards for single-family homes at this time. Given today's high construction costs, an aging population that will live longer than previous generations, and residents who prefer to age-in-place, it is often more beneficial to retrofit and maintain existing housing stock for older adults to continue living in than it is to build new construction. But given low vacancy rates and high-cost burden for renters, there is also an opportunity to expand multifamily options for those who want a lower-maintenance residence as they age. Encouraging basic features described above would be worthwhile and may attract new residents to Biron.

## Housing Programs

### Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)

- Community Development Block Grant
- Housing Revolving Loan Fund Program
- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
- Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP)
- Housing Assistance Program (HAP)
- HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program

### Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

- Housing Tax Credit (HTC, formerly LIHTC)
- Home Improvement Advantage Loan
- Home Rehab and Repair Loan
- Vacancy-to-Vitality Loan
- Restore Main Street Loan
- Infrastructure Access Loan

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

### U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD)

- Section 502 Homeownership Direct Loan
- Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loan
- Section 504 Very-Low-Income Housing Repair Program
- Section 515 Multi-Family Housing Loan Program
- Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance
- Section 523 Rural Housing Site Loans
- Section 533 Rural Housing Preservation Grants
- Single-family Home Loan Guarantees

### Other Programs

- The Federal Housing Supply Action Plan.
- Emerging CDBG, LIHTC, HOME, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and other Department of Transportation (DOT) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) programs.
- Emerging WEDC and WHEDA housing programs.
- Focus on Energy (rebates on energy efficient upgrades)

## Housing Goals, Objectives & Policies

### Goal:

Promote development of housing types and densities to provide quality housing for persons of all economic means in a manner to protect the environment and preserve the natural resources of the Village.

### Objectives:

1. Promote infill development where feasible to accommodate the use of and cost-effective use of the existing sanitary sewer and public water distribution infrastructure.
2. Promote development of affordable housing to continue attracting working-age population with families and to make our community affordable to those who are leaving the work force.

### Policies:

1. Identify areas within the community where infill is an option for residential development close to existing municipal services.
2. Encourage landlords and developers to set rent levels and purchase prices at levels that are attainable by those just entering the housing market or whose incomes are being reduced as they leave the work force.
3. Coordinate new residential development with the availability of municipal services, including sanitary and storm sewer, water supply, fire protection, street maintenance (i.e., repair, snow plowing, etc.).
4. Maintain the policy of a maximum of 20 mobile homes in the mobile home park for health, safety, and aesthetic purposes.
5. Allow various lot sizes that are conducive to different housing types.

### Goal:

Create and enhance the curb appeal of the Village to attract new residents and residential development.

### Objectives:

1. Improve and maintain Biron's "first impression" for visitors and prospective residents.
2. Adopt housing development policies and regulations that promote a variety of housing types and cost ranges to promote housing choices.
3. Promote new housing developments that use the Village's natural resources as an attraction.

### Policies:

1. Review the Village zoning ordinance and housing ordinance on a regular basis to ensure that standards meet the needs of changing economic conditions, housing types, and resident needs.

2. Encourage home improvements will enhance the overall appearance of housing structures in the Village.
3. Encourage volunteers or civic organizations to help those who are physically unable to maintain their property.
4. Offer guidance to low- and moderate-income individuals and households to seek housing rehabilitation loans from Wood County up ensure that they have a safe home and one that enhances its neighborhood.
5. Consider mixed residential use developments on a case-by-case basis for walkability and creation of natural resource view sheds.
6. Enforce the Village's minimum housing standards to keep housing from deteriorating and dilapidating.

**Goal:**

Make Biron a livable community by offering housing styles to accommodate the needs of an aging population.

**Objectives:**

1. Add new and rehabilitated housing to the housing inventory that meets the objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Policies:**

1. Encourage housing designers and contractors to incorporate accessibility features, such as zero-step entries, a bathroom or half bath on the entry level, main floor laundry, interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance, and lever-style door handles.

## 6. Economic Development

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter of the comprehensive plan is to provide an analysis of the current labor force and economic base of the Village and, from that analysis, develop objectives, policies, goals and programs “to promote the stabilization, retention or expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities in the [Village].” To achieve that purpose, this element will assess the types of businesses and industries that are desired in Biron, perceived strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries to our area, discuss sites for desired business development, evaluate the status of contaminated sites, and identify county, regional and state economic development programs that apply to the Village. Some employment characteristics were presented in Chapter 1 of this plan and will be expanded upon here. Some of the data in this chapter is only available at the County level, but it is used to inform decision making for the Village, which is part of the greater Wood County economy.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Entrepreneurship Assessment & Strategy, 2023**

In 2023, NCWRPC surveyed businesses across its ten-county region to assess how business-friendly the region is for entrepreneurs. Included in this report are survey findings, recommendations, and an inventory of all programs and facilities that support entrepreneurship. An Entrepreneurship Portal containing these resources is found on NCWRPC’s website.

#### **North Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2026**

Wood County’s membership with NCWRPC allows it to be part of a 10-county economic development district as defined by the Economic Development Administration. NCWRPC recently adopted this regional economic development strategy with the following goals:

1. Promote and increase communication between regional and county economic development, workforce development and other organizations.
2. Encourage business retention and expansion to maintain and increase employment opportunities in the Region.
3. Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.
4. Promote and attract new business to the Region.
5. Encourage the reuse of existing commercial and industrial sites for more sustainable economic development.
6. Meet the full range of private sector infrastructure needs with emphasis on transportation, utilities, and communications.
7. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.

### **North Central Region Industrial Park Inventory, Absorption, and Needs Study 2022**

NCWRPC conducted a 10-county study of available industrial park acreage, the rate at which it is being developed, and how much acreage is needed in the future. Using absorption rates from 2000 to 2020, it estimates that Wood County has an estimated 15- to 23-year supply of available industrial park acreage.

### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025**

NCWRPC's regional comprehensive plan has an economic development chapter with the following goals:

1. Support infrastructure needed for economic development.
2. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce.
3. Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency.
4. Develop tourism and the knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors.
5. Support economic development that ensures a living wage for the Region's residents.

### **Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2009**

The Wood County Comprehensive Plan analyzes labor patterns, the economic base, employment projections, and existing facilities. It is being updated in 2024. The 2009 plan outlines the following goals:

- Continue to maintain a strong presence in area economic development organizations.
- Retain local businesses and jobs and help them expand.
- Attract new business to Wood County.
- Continue to improve logistics in Wood County.
- Provide a quality of life that is attractive to young company executives.

### **Inventory and Trends**

The Wisconsin Rapids area, including Biron, has been hard hit with industrial plant downsizings and closings in recent decades. As a major paper manufacturing area, the community has seen the sale of a once strong Consolidated Papers, Inc. first to Stora Enso and, a few years later, to NewPage Corporation, and finally, Nine Dragons, the current owner of the Biron mill. The sales resulted in hundreds of job losses. The former Great Northern Nekoosa Corporation has also been sold twice in recent years. The first sale was to Georgia-Pacific Corporation. That sale resulted in several lost jobs in our area as some office jobs were moved out of state. The second sale was to Domtar Corporation, a Canadian company. In 2008, Domtar made the decision to close their Port Edwards plant, resulting in the loss of over 500 local jobs. Yet another transition was the sale of American-held Vulcan Chemicals in Port Edwards to Canadian-held Erco Worldwide. Additionally, the nearby Verso Mill in Wisconsin Rapids, closed in 2020 after 116 years of operation, dramatically impacting the area's economy. Many Biron residents were employed by these companies and were displaced with the restructuring and closing.

On the positive side of the local economy, the area has seen expansion in the medical services sector with the expansion of Riverview Hospital, and the addition of several medical and dental clinics in and near the Woodlands Business Park. In 2026, the new Marshfield Medical Center opened. Specialized agriculture has also grown, especially the production and processing of cranberries. Other growth in the Woodlands Business

Park and the East Side Commerce Center of Wisconsin Rapids, along with movement to create a new business/industrial park in Biron and a technology center near Mid-State Technical College show the community’s optimism that there will be new business attracted to or started from within the community. In 2021, Wood County developed the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Plan to expand access to housing, childcare, broadband, and entrepreneurship to attract and develop a workforce while enhancing the economy and quality of life.

**Employment Trends**

In Chapter 1, it was noted that the employed labor force in Biron decreased by 17.8 percent between 2010 and 2024, a decrease of 79 employed workers. The accuracy of these numbers is subject to question, however, because the most recent figures are based on the American Community Survey 5-year estimate, not actual count like the decennial Census. The employed labor force in Wood County was down 3.2% for the same period, according to estimates. Unemployment rates were 3.4 percent and 4.0 percent for the Village and County, respectively in 2024. This is a decrease from 2010 but slightly higher than the statewide unemployment rate of 3.1 percent.

**Occupation**

Table 18 below is a copy of Table 6 in Chapter 1 for reference to show which occupations Village of Biron residents have, regardless of whether the job is located in the Village or not. Figure 4 in Chapter 5 indicates that very few (14) Village residents also work within the Village, with most of them (374) leaving the Village for work each day, and another 573 workers from other communities entering the Village each day. This makes it important to analyze not only the jobs that Village residents have, but also which jobs are located within the Village, as there is little overlap between inbound and outbound commuters.

**Table 18: Resident Occupations 2024**

Occupation	V. Biron		Wood County		Wisconsin	
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	98	26.8%	11,924	33.4%	1,281,096	41.5%
Service occupations	62	17.0%	6,264	17.5%	475,030	15.4%
Sales and office occupations	85	23.3%	6,447	18.0%	573,114	18.5%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	44	12.1%	4,024	11.3%	255,987	8.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	76	20.8%	7,066	19.8%	505,171	16.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>35,725</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,090,398</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Industry**

Table 19 lists each industry that Village residents work in to show a more detailed overview of what types of jobs are in the local economy. It also shows the change in employment by industry between 2010 and 2024. Four industries increased in employment:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining (5 jobs, 45.5 percent increase)
- Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (19 jobs, 70.4 percent increase)
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services (4 jobs, 23.5 percent increase)
- Public Administration (21 jobs, 350 percent increase)

Since these are jobs that Village residents have, rather than the types of jobs located in the Village, these changes don't necessarily reflect the exact change in jobs available to Biron residents, but rather, it reflects the change in jobs that Biron residents are working in. All other industries saw a decrease in the number of Biron residents who work those jobs, except for information, which saw no change.

**Table 19: Industries that Employ Village Residents**

Sector	V. Biron			Wood County		
	2010	2024	% Change	2010	2024	% Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	11	16	45.5%	1,411	1,078	-23.6%
Construction	28	21	-25.0%	2,229	2,360	5.9%
Manufacturing	112	83	-25.9%	7,530	5,957	-20.9%
Wholesale trade	2	1	-50.0%	795	766	-3.6%
Retail trade	53	41	-22.6%	4,246	3,945	-7.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	37	9	-75.7%	1,983	2,212	11.5%
Information	0	0	0.0%	827	458	-44.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	29	16	-44.8%	1,564	1,794	14.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	27	46	70.4%	1,713	2,560	49.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	82	75	-8.5%	9,695	9,458	-2.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	17	21	23.5%	2,375	2,374	0.0%
Other Services, except Public Administration	40	9	-77.5%	1,732	1,674	-3.3%
Public Administration	6	27	350.0%	824	1,089	32.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>-17.8%</b>	<b>36,924</b>	<b>35,725</b>	<b>-3.2%</b>

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

The only industries that grew for both the Village and Wood County as a whole were:

- Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services
- Public administration

Countywide, the following industries grew that didn't grow for Village residents:

- Construction
- Transportation and warehousing, and utilities
- Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing

All other industries either decreased or showed no change countywide. Continuing to monitor changes in local industries and job offerings helps the Village attract and retain suitable businesses that complement existing ones or fill gaps where a particular good or service doesn't exist locally. This can expand the economic base and encourage more workers to relocate to the area.

### **Economic Base**

The Village of Biron is dependent on the general economy of the urban area, county and region. There are several businesses, a major manufacturing plant, several home occupations located in the Village. They range in size from one employee up to over 50 employees. The largest of these is the Nine Dragons paper mill. These businesses and others of similar size are very important to the area's economy. Some of the businesses in Biron are located along or adjacent to Highway 54, a corridor that has historically been zoned for commercial uses and has potential for future growth. A new business park provides opportunities for new industrial, commercial or office facilities in a prime location along the State Highway 54 corridor. It has the potential to be expanded across State Highway 54 with potential rail spur access to the Canadian National line that runs parallel to the highway. The area's largest employers are located and will continue to locate where municipal services can be provided, namely sanitary sewer and water. The business park will be able to accommodate those needs as well as access to the Interstate highway system via the four lane, high speed Highway 54.

### **Location Quotient and Employment Projections**

This section of the chapter analyzes the kinds of jobs located within the Village, rather than which jobs Village residents have. Table 20 lists each industry's total number of jobs in 2026 countywide, Location Quotient in 2026, and projected job growth by 2036. Location Quotient (LQ) measures each industry's concentration. Industries with an LQ higher than one have a higher concentration in the Village than nationwide and industries with an LQ have less of a presence than they do nationwide. This also reflects which industries are "exporting" and which are "importing" industries. Those with an LQ greater than 1 are exporting sectors which bring revenue into the Village, and those with an LQ less than 1 indicate industries that the Village is dependent on importing from other communities.

Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting industries have the highest LQ in Wood County, meaning there are a higher concentration of these jobs locally compared to the nationwide average, and these jobs export products that bring revenue into the community. By contrast, management of companies and enterprises has the lowest LQ, meaning there are relatively few industries in this category in the County. This seems to

contradict the high share of Village residents who work in management, business, science, and arts occupations as shown in Table 18, but that is because the Lightcast data used to create Table 20 measures the jobs that are within the County's limits, and the ACS data used for Tables 18 and 19 measure the occupations that Village of Biron residents have, most of whom work outside of the Village's limits. By examining the LQ of existing industries, the Village can not only work to attract new businesses that work well with existing industries, but it can also attract new industries to diversify its economy.

**Table 20: Occupation and Location Quotient 2024**

Industry	2026 LQ	2026 Jobs	2036 Jobs	Change 2026-2036	% Change 2026-2036
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2.48	1,119	1,059	-60	-5.4%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.15	20	33	13	65.0%
Utilities	0.65	91	98	7	7.7%
Construction	0.92	2,143	2,185	42	2.0%
Manufacturing	1.53	4,521	4,442	-79	-1.7%
Wholesale Trade	0.96	1,360	1,523	163	12.0%
Retail Trade	1.05	3,821	3,550	-271	-7.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	2.18	3,831	3,809	-22	-0.6%
Information	1.5	1,053	932	-121	-11.5%
Finance and Insurance	1.08	1,717	2,008	291	16.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.32	222	230	8	3.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.33	930	1,094	164	17.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.12	73	19	-54	-74.0%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.46	1,060	959	-101	-9.5%
Educational Services	0.24	247	233	-14	-5.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.46	7,978	7,175	-803	-10.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.4	296	275	-21	-7.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	0.84	2,784	2,989	205	7.4%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	0.95	1,883	1,936	53	2.8%
Government	0.82	4,698	4,638	-60	-1.3%
Unclassified Industry	0	0	0	0	0.0%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

## Wages

Supporting jobs that pay a living wage ensures a high quality of life and the ability to attract and retain a skilled, educated workforce. Table 21 summarizes the annual wages for each industry and their growth from 2010 to 2024. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$1 in 2010 was worth \$1.46 in 2024, meaning that wages in Table 21 need to have grown 46 percent to have exceeded inflation during that time. Most industries exceeded this growth rate except for manufacturing, transportation/warehousing/utilities, and

education/healthcare/social assistance. Other services (except public administration), construction, and natural resource-related industries saw the greatest wage growth as a percent since 2010. Overall, wages increased by 82.2 percent since 2010; however, due to the late 2000s recession, wages may have been especially low at that time.

**Table 21: Wages by Industry**

Industry	2010 Annual Wages	2024 Annual Wages	% Change 2010-2024
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	\$27,083	\$73,000	169.5%
Construction	\$18,500	\$60,938	229.4%
Manufacturing	\$39,500	\$52,202	32.2%
Wholesale trade	N/A	N/A	N/A
Retail trade	\$21,477	\$45,313	111.0%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	\$33,750	\$36,250	7.4%
Information	N/A	N/A	N/A
Finance and insurance, and real estate, and rental and leasing	\$24,408	\$48,750	99.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative, and waste management services	\$43,250	\$65,000	50.3%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	\$33,750	\$41,442	22.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	N/A	\$15,313	N/A
Other services, except public administration	\$11,875	\$61,875	421.1%
Public administration	\$27,500	\$41,705	51.7%
Total	\$26,667	\$48,583	82.2%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Despite the gains in wage growth, inflation and affordability continue to be a growing concern, reinforcing the need to attract jobs with wages that are in line with the local cost of living. According to the 2025 United Way ALICE report for Wood County, a household with two adults and two children needs to earn \$78,936 annually to afford basic household expenses and taxes, and a single adult needs to earn \$27,144 annually.

### Worker Age Structure

As described in Chapter 1, the Village's median age is rising and is well above countywide and statewide medians. The share of residents over 65 is increasing, while the share of residents under 18 is decreasing. This impacts school enrollment and future workforce availability as there are relatively fewer working age adults to support a growing retired population. Focusing on economic development and quality-of-life improvements in the Village helps attract and retain a workforce, and promoting the area's relatively low cost of living can encourage more families to relocate or grow in the Village.

### Commuting Patterns

Commute patterns into, within, and out of the Village of Biron are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Being part of the Wisconsin Rapids area, Biron is part of an urban area that draws workers from surrounding rural areas and neighboring counties. According to the U.S. Census-on-the-Map, an estimated 19,782 commuters traveled into Wood County every day in 2023, and 18,577 workers left Wood County every day. Another 18,155 workers both lived and worked in Wood County. Since Biron is the first incorporated municipality on STH 54 when driving from the east, it has the potential to attract workers from the Stevens Point and Plover areas as well due to the easy commute. In summary, Biron’s location on a major state highway with quick access to the Wisconsin Rapids and Stevens Point areas allows Village residents convenient access to area employers and amenities while supporting economic development that area residents can easily access.

### Area Business & Industrial Parks

The Village of Biron recently developed a combination business and industrial park on the Village’s far southeast corner. There are three other such parks in the area. One is the West Side Industrial Park on the west side of Wisconsin Rapids north of Highway 73. That industrial park is nearly full. Another business park, The Woodlands, is southwest of the Biron business park and is located near Midstate Technical College. The third park is called the Wisconsin Rapids Commerce Center and targets manufacturing operations more than office type businesses. It is only a couple of miles from the Biron business park, south of Highway 54 on 48th Street. The Commerce Center has been developed with municipal sewer and water and has rail access. This park offers the most competition for the Biron business park, but it can also serve to complement Biron’s facility. Figure 5 shows a map of the park, with Phase 1, which is already constructed, outlined in red.

**Figure 6: Biron Business Park (Phase 1 Outlined in Red)**



Source: Village of Biron

Wood County has collaborated with and supported Biron's efforts to develop this business park in a tax increment finance district. Eventually, additional land will be acquired to fill in the white area on the map, north of Highway 54 and east of 64th Street. There is also potential to someday expand the park across State Highway 54 where a rail spur connecting to the Canadian National line south of the highway would be feasible. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation recently improved State Highway 54 intersections at 72<sup>nd</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> street. Working together to create jobs in the area, Wisconsin Rapids and Biron can offer a full range of facilities and services, all very close to each other. Past surveys and the Village's former comprehensive plan supported the desire for more job opportunities in the Village, leading to the creation of the Biron Business Park, and the identification of the State Highway 54 corridor for retail and restaurants on the Future Land Use Map. These recommendations have been carried forward into this plan, see Chapter 7: Land Use for more information.

### **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) involves creating a Tax Increment District (TID), where a property's baseline taxes continue to fund all taxing jurisdictions. As improvements are made and the property's taxable value increases, the increment, or additional property tax revenue generated, goes directly towards projects within the TID. This can be used to finance infrastructure serving the site, environmental cleanup, and/or other projects needed to make a project happen. When TID-related costs are paid by the increment, the TID closes and the TID's entire property taxes go towards all taxing jurisdictions, adding to the tax base. A proposed project using TIF must pass the "but-for" test, meaning that the applicant must demonstrate that the project is not feasible without the use of TIF. The value of all properties in TID districts in any given municipality is limited by state law to a percentage of the municipality's total equalized value.

The Village of Biron has three TIDs, all of which are approaching their closure date in the next few years. The Village will have to decide whether to close the TIDs or extend them for the following reasons that the State allows:

- Standard – allows an extension (three or four years from the TID's maximum life, depending on TID type) if existing tax increments will not pay project costs within the TID maximum life.
- Technical College – allows a three-year extension to the TID's maximum life if tax increments were negatively impacted by 2013 Act 145. The Act increased state aid to technical colleges and may have caused a decrease in tax increment revenue for some TIDs.
- Affordable Housing – allows an extension, up to one year from the resolution date, if the municipality uses the final year's increment to benefit affordable housing.

The advantage of closing a TID means that properties in the former TID would then pay into the levy instead of remaining in the TID, potentially lowering tax burden on the remainder of the Village. The advantage of keeping a TID open would be to help pay off the TID if project costs have not been reimbursed over its life, or to support the addition of affordable housing that would expand the future tax base.

## **Environmentally Contaminated Sites**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment oversees the investigation and cleanup of contaminated soil or groundwater in Wisconsin and tracks these sites on what is called the Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System, or BRRTS. There are six Biron sites listed in the BRRTS database. One is a leaking underground storage tank (LUST) and five are spills. A spill is defined as "a discharge of a hazardous substance that may adversely impact, or threaten to impact public health, welfare or the environment." The status of all but one of these sites is "closed." The one that is not closed is classified as "historic," which is a spill where cleanup may have been completed prior to 1996 and no end date is shown in DNR records. See DNR's BRRTS database for the most current information on these sites.

## **Solar and Economic Development**

Utility-scale solar has rapidly increased its presence in Wood County with the addition of two projects in the Town of Saratoga in recent years, each generating 150 megawatts of electricity. The projects utilize land that has high solar potential and low environmental impact, with an estimated revenue of \$42 million over 35 years for the Town and County combined. Due to the magnitude of this project and increasing demand for solar energy in the United States, it is important to evaluate the economic development and land use implications of these solar projects. This section will focus on economic development specific to photovoltaic systems, known as solar panels.

### Solar Development Benefits

According to Town of Saratoga's Comprehensive Plan, declining costs, increased demand, and tax credit availability have dramatically increased solar power generation over the past decade. One large solar farm in Freeborn County, Minnesota was analyzed for its economic impact. The project involved a \$128.8 million investment, which is estimated to increase direct spending in Freeborn County by \$15.6 million. The project expects 204 on-site employees and a total of \$7.9 million in wages, generating an estimated \$30.9 million in economic activity during construction and will support an estimated 115 jobs in the area, such as real estate agents, clinics, hospitals, and professional services. The construction period of the project will also generate an estimated \$461,870 in state and local taxes. While in operation, an expected \$2.2 million will be spent on operations, maintenance, land leases, and wages. An overall increase of \$3.3 million is expected in the county every year, adding \$99,040 in annual taxes, and supporting 14 jobs (4 on-site and 10 in other area industries). This case study demonstrates that solar projects impact the local economy both during construction and operation. In addition to Economic Benefits, solar power also has environmental benefits, such as reduced air pollution, reduced carbon emissions, and reduced water use compared to other forms of energy generation, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

### Solar Development Potential Drawbacks

Although solar power has proven to be economically and environmentally beneficial, it also has its limitations. The initial construction cost of solar projects is expensive, and solar arrays often take several years before they generate a profit, according to the University of Minnesota. According to SEIA, the supply chain and trade instability has increased solar costs in the 2020s, reducing projected installations from 30 gigawatts to 15

gigawatts in 2022 over a year-and-a-half period nationwide. Utility-scale solar prices were also 12.7 higher in 2022 compared to 2021.

Solar generation is also weather-dependent, requiring batteries to store energy when generation is low. As of 2020, solar power often generates an average of 15 percent of its capacity, compared to an average of 80 percent for coal power plants, according to the University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment. But declining costs for panels and batteries are reducing the main barriers to widespread solar installations, and long-term maintenance costs are low compared to other forms of energy generation.

There are several environmental concerns regarding solar energy. Solar arrays must be sited to minimize damage to wildlife, ecosystems, soil, and water, since they often require extensive open land. Many people who support solar energy oppose utility-scale projects because they require large amounts of land and alter the character of rural areas, but some may be designed as agriculture-friendly, allowing crops and animals to thrive underneath them. There is also more research needed on recycling the glass, aluminum, silicon, and other materials in trace amounts (tin, lead, copper, and silver) in solar panels at the end of their useful life. While this raises environmental concerns, there could also be an opportunity for new jobs for highly specialized repair and/or recycling of solar panels.

#### Solar Jobs and the Supply Chain

According to the Town of Saratoga's comprehensive plan, solar power can attract high-earning jobs ranging from \$60,460 for an engineering technician to over six figures for software developers and engineers. There is also existing capacity in the United States' supply chain to manufacture polysilicon, ingots, wafers, cells, modules, mounting systems, and inverters needed to create solar panels.

#### Solar Summary

Utility-scale solar has its benefits and drawbacks as summarized in this chapter of the comprehensive plan. Though Biron has large tracts of undeveloped land, high water tables and soil suitability may limit this type of installation. But there is a chance that the increase in utility scale solar projects in the area may provide an opportunity to expand solar-related industries in the Village. Additionally, the Village may investigate opportunities for small-scale solar that is scattered on various sites throughout the Village rather than on sprawling tracts of land. Renew Wisconsin, SolarShare Wisconsin, and Focus on Energy all assist landowners with navigating the various incentives, procedures, and regulations for installing small-scale solar arrays. Finally, the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) offers solar installation advice as well as information about licensing and permit requirements.

### **Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses**

A community's approach to economic development is based on its competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The Village's previous comprehensive plan identified four key actions that are needed for our area to move aggressively forward in economic development. The first is regional collaboration; the development of a shared vision and common economic development goals by all regional leaders and more cooperation between municipalities to create and support a strong economic base.

The second key action needed is business innovation. The strategy is to attract and grow new industries by developing economic incentives to draw industries capable of competing on a global, versus regional or national, scale. In addition, the strategy would include developing a support network to retain and expand local businesses.

The third action is to develop strong and inclusive local leadership with broad-based community participation and engagement. This action includes programs to encourage more people to become involved with local programs and government through leadership training, entrepreneurial training, etc.

The fourth action is the creation of a new model for education. Workshop participants identified a need to reshape the education system in the region to include entrepreneurial training beginning in the elementary school levels, long range planning to include Charter schools, and creating a workforce collaborative to re-skill and retain our workforce. There is now a Charter school in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School system.

Below is the SWOT analysis based on comments made during the development of the Village's 2013 Comprehensive Plan. It has been updated with additional comments to reflect changes that have occurred since then.

### **Strengths**

- Proximity to Wisconsin Rapids business and industrial parks.
- Access to four-lane state highway.
- Lower property taxes than nearby communities.
- Abundant labor force.
- Well-educated workforce.
- Access to customized training at local technical college.
- Cooperative, supportive, proactive Village government.
- High quality of life – abundant recreation opportunities (indoor and outdoor), safe, friendly, excellent schools, etc.
- Community support of locally owned businesses.
- Economic development incentives – Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund, Wisconsin income tax credit program for high technology businesses, State training grants, etc.
- High quality municipal services.
- Abundant water supply for agricultural and industrial uses.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Business climate – plant downsizings, plant closings, sale of major industries.
- Proximity to Wisconsin Rapids business and industrial parks.
- Intergovernmental cooperation – lack of consideration for sharing services, cooperating with joint business and industrial parks.
- Location – Fifteen miles from nearest Interstate highway.
- Lack of risk capital.
- Lack of citizen participation at the local level.

- Lack of neighborhood schools.

### **Opportunities**

- Health care (clinic spin-offs – research, angel investing).
- Growth of small/medium size businesses.
- New business start-ups.
- Development/expansion of the arts and cultural programs and activities.
- Expansion of tourism and utilization of area park facilities.
- Aging population (expanded market opportunities, services).
- Green community movement.
- Growth of cranberry production and processing industry.

### **Threats:**

- Workforce – aging workers, worker shortage.
- Brain drain – many students leave area for college education and there aren't jobs for them to return to.
- Lack of direct Interstate highway access.
- Global industrialization and commerce.
- Decline of the paper industry.
- State tax burden on new businesses.
- Upper Midwest climate.

## **Economic Development Organizational Framework**

### **Local**

Central Wisconsin SCORE consists of experienced entrepreneurs who volunteer their knowledge to help small business professionals start, develop, and grow businesses. SCORE offers free advice, training, and numerous templates and tools. SCORE also offers the opportunity to connect with mentors and provides business education tools such as events, online courses, recorded webinars, and a startup roadmap.

Central Wisconsin Tourism Association is made up of several entities: Visit Marshfield, Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. The organization promotes tourism in Wood and Portage Counties and has staff to assist those wanting to plan a visit to the area. The Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau specifically focuses on promoting the Wisconsin Rapids area.

CREATE Portage County is headquartered in Stevens Point, but it has a collaborative hub in the McMillan Library in Wisconsin Rapids. Its mission is to “accelerate creativity, connection, and collaboration to advance vibrant and welcoming communities.” This nonprofit organization operates co-working spaces with conference rooms, studios, 3-D printers, and other rentable equipment and spaces that support the creative economy.

Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce receives financial support from annual membership dues, local government funding, public and private grants, sponsorships, program revenues and more. The Chamber serves as a first contact for business resource assistance, provides entrepreneurial training and either sponsors or participates in several economic development workshops each year. The Village of Biron is a member of the Chamber.

Impact Seven Business Lending Loans provide flexible, affordable loans for a variety of business types, specializing in commercial and mixed-use real estate and affordable housing. From large catalytic development projects to Main Street businesses, Impact Seven invests in community-building.

Wood County, under the oversight of the Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee, participates in several economic development activities and is represented on various Boards of Directors of area economic development organizations. Wood County is a partner with Adams, Portage, Marathon, and Lincoln counties in a revolving loan fund program. The Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) fund has been used successfully with area businesses, including a food freezer facility in the Village.

## **Regional**

Advance Wisconsin Employment, Formerly known as the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, this entity was created by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), this entity customizes workforce development programs and initiatives. It is based at 2801 Hoover Road in Stevens Point and serves all of Wood County.

Centergy, Inc. is a non-profit organization whose mission is to assist area counties and communities in their efforts to recruit and retain businesses, stimulate new job creation, and to foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurial growth. It was created to foster cooperation among economic development partners and foster economic growth efforts in Adams, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, and Wood Counties.

Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund administers revolving loan funds for entrepreneurs and their lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area. Programs are designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down payment, low-interest financing.

Childcaring, Inc. is Wood County's local Child Care Resources and Referral Agency (CCRR). This organization works with business owners and those looking to open a childcare location by sharing opportunities and resources regarding how to create and operate a childcare program. They also share funding opportunities as they arise and work with existing childcare programs to enhance their services.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) functions as an Economic Development District, which gives Biron eligibility for a variety of grants administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. The organization also provides technical assistance and compiles economic development data for its members as well as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs, and grant writing services.

## State

Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce (HWCC) HWCC has a new Forgivable Loan Program designed for new and existing HWCC clients. This program offers loan forgiveness of up to 25% of the approved loan for new clients, and up to 25% of the original loan amount with a maximum of \$10,000 for existing clients (not to exceed \$10,000).

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) TEA is a program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, provides immediate assistance and funding for the cost of transportation improvements necessary for major economic development projects.

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) DCF has partnered with the nonprofit First Children's Finance to finance small business loans to childcare entrepreneurs. They work with other lenders, community partners, economic developers, and directly with childcare businesses to provide financing.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) WEDC is the state's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their purpose is to 1) foster retention of and creation of new jobs and investment opportunities in Wisconsin; 2) foster and promote economic business, export, and community development; and 3) promote public health, safety, and welfare through effective and efficient regulations, education, and enforcement. WEDC manages programs that assist businesses and communities, including:

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)
- Certified Sites
- Enterprise Zone Tax Credit
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Industrial Sites Redevelopment Program
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program (see below)
- Wisconsin Investment Fund
- Talent Recruitment Grant (TRG)
- Technology Development Loan Program

Additionally, WEDC supported the development of the Business-Child Care Partnership Tool Kit that helps childcare providers partner with communities and businesses to build capacity. This Tool Kit is located on the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) website.

Wisconsin Fast Forward is a program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. It is a nationally recognized, innovative talent development solution driven by Wisconsin businesses to train and retain highly skilled workers. Grant funds support employer-led worker projects that:

- Encourage increased collaboration between Wisconsin businesses and workforce training partners.
- Fill current and ongoing skill requirements of Wisconsin employers.
- Place workers in long-term positions with opportunities for professional growth and economic advancement.

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) administers a variety of programs to support small businesses, with several programs designed specifically for agribusiness.

The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC) is a non-profit organization located at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater which specializes in new product and invention assessments and market expansion opportunities for innovative manufacturers, technology businesses, and independent inventors.

Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP) functions as a consultant that assists midsize manufacturers with growing and operating their businesses effectively.

Wisconsin Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP) seeks to foster vibrant, prosperous, and resilient rural communities across Wisconsin. ORP is housed within WEDC, and it functions as a one-stop shop to help rural stakeholders navigate programs and resources serving rural communities and businesses. ORP's website contains a list of available grant programs, grant writing consultants, and grant writing training opportunities.

The Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UWSP is partially funded by the Small Business Administration and provides a variety of programs and training seminars to assist in the creation of small business in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Small Cities Program The Wisconsin Department of Administration provides federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds under this program to eligible municipalities for approved housing and/or public facility improvements and for economic development projects. Economic Development grants provide loans to businesses for such things as the acquisition of real estate, buildings, or equipment; construction, expansion, or remodeling; and working capital for inventory and direct labor.

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC) makes loans to small and micro businesses up to \$350,000. They work with both women and men in analyzing their business' financial needs and guiding them through the loan process.

## **Federal**

America's Seed Fund (SBIR and STTR) Through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, America's Seed Fund provides technology-focused entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses with funding to develop their ideas and a pathway to commercialization. Powered by a network of federal agencies, entrepreneur support organizations, and the Small Business Administration, America's Seed Fund advances federal missions and fosters a culture of innovation in the United States

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) This Planning Grant from the Federal Communications Commission, administered by Wisconsin Public Service, enables eligible entities to opt-in to receive formula funding to participate in broadband planning activities that will inform the state Five-Year Action Plan which will guide broadband deployment and implementation of the BEAD program.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) offers a guaranteed loan program as well as public works grant program. These are administered through local units of government for the benefit of the local economy and, indirectly, private enterprise.

Small Business Administration (SBA) provides business and industrial loan programs that will make or guarantee up to 90% of the principal and interest on loans to companies, individuals, or government entities for financing in rural areas. Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation acts as an agent for the U.S. SBA programs that provide financing for fixed asset loans and for working capital.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD) is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. Financial programs include support for such essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone service. USDA-RD promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools. The program also offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

## **Economic Development Goals & Objectives**

### **Goal:**

Create a business-friendly persona for the Village of Biron

### **Objectives:**

1. Retain existing businesses and support their continued growth.
2. Attract new business and industry.
3. Provide a business park that is ready for tenants.

### **Policies:**

1. Encourage development of new small businesses in the business park.
2. Focus attention on the businesses on Highway 54 via mention in news articles, a Village newsletter or tax bill inserts.
3. Encourage new businesses to locate on Highway 54 by maintaining commercial zoning that is business friendly.
4. Publicize the business park and its prime location on the Internet, touting the area's strengths and opportunities, skilled labor force, high quality of life, good schools, and low cost of housing and cost of living.
5. Develop business retention program to visit local businesses to discuss needs with which the Village may be able to assist.
6. Work with business executives to assist with expansion of their businesses in our area, helping with state financial programs that may be available, comprehensive plan and zoning reviews, or other assistance that the Village is in the position of providing.
7. Encourage reuse of residential structures for home-based occupations, office space or small retail businesses as those structures are sold if they are compatible with the neighborhood where they are located.

8. Maintain the Village website with information on available buildings and sites, and possible uses or conversion opportunities.
9. Urge WisDOT to complete their studies on traffic flow and circulation on Highway 54 near the business park so the new traffic pattern designs can be constructed and infrastructure can be placed in the business park.
10. Promote natural resources-based economic development, such as outdoor recreation and agritourism.
11. Prepare for the closure of the Village's TIDs and investigate whether any should have an extension to repay project costs or support the development of affordable housing.
12. Collaborate with regional and state organizations such as NCWRPC, WEDC, and Centergy, Inc. to market the Village's development sites to attract both residential and business development.
13. Create a marketing plan that highlights the Village's quality-of-life and business development potential.
14. Explore the use of new TIDs to install or upgrade economic development infrastructure such as utilities, streets, rail spurs, etc.
15. Collaborate with property owners interested in selling land for development and actively maintain an inventory of development-friendly sites for residential and business development.
16. Work with WEDC to obtain shovel-ready status for Biron Business Park sites under the Certified Sites program.

## 7. Land Use

A study of past and current land use patterns is a good way to understand why a community looks like it does and reveals growth areas, or those areas that have not grown at all. Land use changes can be driven by socio-economic conditions, political decisions, and natural resource conditions. Changes can be effectively guided by political decisions that reflect the desires of community residents. Regardless of why land uses changed the way they have in past years, reflecting on historic land use changes will assist the community in determining how they want their area to develop in the future.

Physical land use in the Village of Biron has been inventoried from time-to-time for various projects. Inventories can be used to aid in land use analysis and planning for such things as community development projects (i.e. sanitary sewer, municipal water lines) and natural resource protection efforts. The land use inventory is important for good community management and should be updated regularly to remain current. The land use inventory is not a plan in and of itself; it is part of the vital data from which plans are made.

### Historical Land Use Pattern

The Village of Biron developed, first, around the sawmill and, later, around the paper mill. The large industrial complex of the mill has been the center of Biron's existence. Most of the residential development in the Village is in the same area of the mill, although some is between the mill and Wisconsin Rapids along the Wisconsin River. Several cottages and homes were built on land owned by Wisconsin River Power Company on North Biron Drive along the river as well. Although the structures were privately owned, the land on which they were placed was leased with the understanding that the power company could order removal of the structures with a 30-day notice. Eventually, an agreement resulted in a land exchange, giving owners of the structures ownership of the land too.

Land east of Williams Street is mostly undeveloped or developed as cranberry marshes. The exception is the commercial and residential development along and near Highway 54 and Kahoun Road.

### Current Land Use & Future Expectations

The inventory used for this analysis was developed using aerial photography, local zoning maps, and field surveys. Based on that information, estimates were made of the amount of land in the Village that is used for various purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, agricultural, etc. Map 5 shows the land use on each parcel in the Village of Biron. It should be noted that a parcel of, say, five acres in size that is shown as residential may, in fact only have one or two acres that is actually used for the residential purpose. The estimated acres in that activity, however, include the entire parcel. A description of each observable activity follows.

#### Residential

Residential activities are concentrated in the western half of the Village, with a few others scattered in the eastern portions, mainly fronting the Wisconsin River near Huffman Road. According to recent land use inventory, there are about 250 acres of residential land, which is about 6.2% of the total land in the Village. Residential development in Biron consists mostly of traditional single-family detached structures (80.4

percent), with a scattering of duplexes, multi-family structures and mobile homes. About 81.5 percent of homes were built before 1980, and only 5.3 percent have been built since 2000. In general, little housing development has occurred in recent years, but the Bridgewater development has started to reverse this trend.

### **Commercial**

About 52 acres are classified under the Commercial category (shopping, business or trade on Map 5). Most commercial uses are located along Highway 54, although a few are scattered throughout the Village. Portions of the Biron Business Park remain undeveloped at this time and thus is not classified as commercial. As it develops, however, some of the acreage will become commercial and some will become industrial. Many respondents to the community planning survey recommended that new retail stores, restaurants and convenience stores be attracted to the Village.

### **Industrial**

Industrial, manufacturing and waste-related activities utilize over 152 acres in Biron. The industrial area shown on Map 5 is land owned by Nine Dragons and includes the paper mill, outside log storage area and related activities. Wood County has worked with Village officials and a private developer to create a new business park in the far southeast part of the Village, fronting on Highway 54, west of County Road U (80th Street). Village officials have also installed access to the business park at 72nd Street and upgraded the intersection of Highway 54 and 80th Street.

### **Governmental and Utilities**

This land use category includes, among other things, schools and libraries, public safety related activities, activities associated with utilities and health care or medical facilities. The Village of Biron has over 36 acres coded in this category. Those uses include the Village park between South Biron Drive and Shore Acres Drive, the Village municipal building on Kahoun Road, and the water tower on Eagle Road.

### **Transportation/Railroad**

The travel or movement activities includes all types of transportation systems, whether for pedestrians, vehicles (including parking), railroads, aircraft and more. The existing land use inventory in Biron has about 109 acres classified as travel or movement activities. Most of those acres are road or railroad rights-of-way or the railyard at Nine Dragons.

### **Outdoor Recreation**

About 12.7 acres is classified in the leisure activities land use category, many of which were added when the Bridgewater development occurred. The business park may also have areas for leisure activities, i.e., for employees who are on break or mealtimes. Those may include green areas with benches, walking paths, etc. If they are in the business park, however, the area will likely continue to be classified as industrial or commercial.

### Agricultural, Cranberry Bog, Open Lands, and Woodlands

When combined, these classifications have more land than any other. It includes not only active agricultural lands but also forests and undeveloped parcels. The existing land use inventory in Biron shows 57.4% of all land in the Village to be in this category for a total of around 2,301 acres. Included are islands in the Wisconsin River, cranberry marshes, wetlands and forest lands.

Below is a summary of existing land use categories:

**Table 22: Existing Land Use 2025**

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	19.9	0.5%
Commercial	51.8	1.3%
Cranberry Bog	661.6	16.5%
Governmental / Institutional	36.4	0.9%
Industrial	152.2	3.8%
Open Lands	133.5	3.3%
Outdoor Recreation	12.7	0.3%
Railroad	16.4	0.4%
Residential	250.4	6.2%
Transportation	109.2	2.7%
Utility	8.0	0.2%
Water	1,073.5	26.8%
Woodlands	1,486.1	37.0%
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>4,011.7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: NCWRPC

### Land Supply and Demand

Table 23 uses the current acreage per capita for residential, commercial, and industrial land uses and projects future demand based on population projections in Chapter 1. With only 7 new residents projected between 2020 and 2040, only 3.24 acres are projected to be developed by 2030 and another 0.54 acres between 2030 and 2040. Due to the extensive land in Biron that is currently undeveloped, it is likely that land supply will meet demand in the coming decades, even when considering the extensive building limitations. Should population trends or job growth change from its current trajectory, the Village may need to plan for higher demand in the future.

**Table 23: Projected Land Demand in Acres 2020-2050**

	2020-2030	2030-2040	2040-2050
Projected Additional Residents	6	1	-8
Residential (0.30 acres/person)	1.80	0.30	-2.40
Commercial (0.06 acres/person)	0.36	0.06	-0.48
Industrial (0.18 acres/person)	1.08	0.18	-1.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>-4.32</b>

Source: NCWRPC &amp; Wisconsin DOA

## Land Values

Table 24 displays the assessed land values in the Village of Biron. It is important to note that lands that are tax exempt, such as the Biron Municipal Center, would not have a taxable value to report. Overall, land value per acre for non-tax-exempt land in the Town is valued at about \$69,640 per acre based on assessed land values from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue's annual Statement of Assessment (SOA). Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by commercial properties.

**Table 24: Village of Biron Land Values 2025**

Land Use	2025 Value of Land and Improvements	Total Acres	Average Value per Acre
Residential	\$64,661,400	192.0	\$336,778
Commercial	\$45,138,000	165.0	\$273,564
Manufacturing	\$27,111,900	108.0	\$251,036
Agricultural	\$73,900	484.0	\$153
Undeveloped	\$193,500	343.0	\$564
Ag Forest	\$37,800	28.0	\$1,350
Forest	\$1,384,500	474.0	\$2,921
Other	\$2,628,200	234.0	\$11,232
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$141,229,200</b>	<b>2028.0</b>	<b>\$69,640</b>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR)

Note that total acreage in Table 24 is calculated much differently by using parcel boundaries, rather than by air photos as in Table 22. Uses like water, public right-of-way for highways, or tax-exempt lands are not reported in Table 24 like they are in Table 22. Therefore, acreage totals vary greatly between the two methods of calculation used for Tables 22 and 24.

## Potential Conflicts

Smaller communities that are located within a larger urbanized area sometimes have difficulties competing for economic development, residential growth, or providing some essential services in a cost-effective manner. This is especially true during a recession or sluggish economy. The competition between communities creates several potential or real conflicts. Many conflicts can be resolved fairly easily if the communities sit down and plan their growth or arrange to provide community services cooperatively. Some

of the potential conflicts in the Village of Biron are presented below, along with a discussion of each and ideas as to how they might be addressed.

### **Population Loss**

The Wisconsin Rapids area and its neighboring municipalities have experienced a combined population loss since 2000. Marketing communities to attract new growth of any kind is difficult and has been made more difficult with the downturn in the local economy. There have been many changes at the Nine Dragons Paper Mill in Biron in recent decades. That and the elimination of jobs in other mills and industries has contributed to the loss of population in Biron. Every other community in the immediate area has also lost population and all are trying to attract new residents to fill vacant homes and boost the area's economy. So, while the communities work together to attract jobs for the area's macro-economy, they are competing to attract those jobs and residents to their communities.

### **Competition for Business & Industrial Development**

Each of the incorporated communities in the area (Biron, Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa) has vacant land and/or buildings that are available for industrial development, and each is in the process of marketing those facilities. The Village of Plover and City of Wisconsin Rapids each have an industrial park along the State Highway 54 corridor, complete with streets, sewer and water infrastructure. The Village of Port Edwards has a large, vacant industrial and office building complex that the Village is marketing. Nekoosa also has a newly developed business/industrial park that is being marketed but has limited development so far.

While the area has several options for new business and industrial development in competition with each other, the communities are working as a group to link those facilities via a new extension of Highway 54 that would cross the Wisconsin River into Port Edwards. The new highway, discussed in the Transportation chapter, would provide easy access from one business/industrial park to the others and to Interstate 39 to the east.

There are a variety of ways the Village can make itself stand out as business-friendly and attractive as a place to live. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's (WEDC) Certified Sites Program can be used to designate certain business park lots 20 acres or larger as shovel-ready, making them more appealing for development. Working with WEDC and Centergy, Inc. through the state's request for information (RFI) process also matches sites with developers interested in locating or expanding in Wisconsin. Additionally, a marketing plan that highlights these assets along with the quality of life improvements, such as recent subdivisions and new recreation amenities, can draw more interest in not only business development, but also new residential development, which improves the tax base and the Village's ability to attract and retain residents and workers.

### **Annexation**

Annexation from towns to Villages and cities is often a cause of conflict between communities. To accommodate the business/industrial park in Biron, land had to be annexed from the Town of Grand Rapids. Likewise, Wisconsin Rapids annexed land from Grand Rapids to develop their East Side Commerce Park. Although villages and cities cannot annex land without a petition from the landowners (as a general rule), it is the villages and cities that have the ability to provide the infrastructure needed for development or expansion of those businesses that create or retain jobs. Biron has worked closely with Wisconsin Rapids and Grand

Rapids regarding annexation. The three, along with other neighboring communities, worked closely in 2012 to develop a 20-year sanitary sewer extension plan. Although there are no boundary agreements between these three, that is a tool that can be used in the future.

### **Cost of Providing Services**

General revenue sharing has been the topic of discussions and proposals at the state level for several years. At the Village level, services that have felt the impact of inflation include fire protection, ambulance service, road maintenance, snow plowing, garbage collection and more. Many communities have entered into agreements or are contemplating agreements with their neighbors to provide or share certain services to help with the financial situation and to continue to provide essential services. Under current fiscal policies, Biron needs to continue to be innovative in this regard. Matching sources of funds to the demand for uses of funds is difficult for smaller communities like Biron.

### **Land Use Tools**

Land use tools such as zoning and subdivision ordinances are described in detail in Chapters 8 (Intergovernmental Cooperation) and 9 (Implementation) of this Plan.

### **Future Land Use Plan**

The previous portions of this chapter have presented a discussion on historical trends, existing land use patterns and goals that have been established, based on environmental information, Village growth expectations and the desires of Village residents as voiced in the community planning survey that preceded the development of the comprehensive plan. The Future Land Use Plan map (Map 6) takes into consideration all of these factors and illustrates graphically how the Village of Biron is planned to grow for the next 20 years. It is important to note that the future land use plan map is not a zoning map, rather it is a depiction of the desired growth patterns for several years into the future. The Village zoning ordinance and zoning map are the actual documents that set standards for each of the land uses, including setbacks, height limitations, minimum lot sizes, etc. It is also important to note that the future land use plan is dynamic and can be amended as market trends or the local economy change. The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, Ch. 66.1001, requires that the comprehensive plan be updated no less than once every ten years, and the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The future land use plan map often shows some areas to be used for purposes other than what the current use may be. That map is a blueprint for development and can be changed. It is dynamic. The following paragraphs, along with information presented throughout this plan, help explain the reasoning behind the future land use plan categories.

### **Environmental Corridors**

The Village of Biron has some natural resources that create difficulties for some types of development. Some of those natural resources are conducive to and have been used for specialized agriculture, specifically cranberry production. Other areas may have wetlands that serve an important ecological function and should not be converted to other uses. The natural resources were discussed in earlier sections of this plan. The future land use plan map shows the floodplains and the identified wetlands. Areas that present difficulties for dwellings with basements were also presented earlier in the plan, but this is not to say these areas cannot be

developed with some modifications or engineering of structures. Developing some areas may require compliance with certain federal, state, county, or local restrictions.

### **Residential**

Homes in Biron have been built in areas away from wetlands and floodplains for the most part. Earlier sections of this plan described that the population of Biron is expected to decline after 2040. Village officials are aware of the need to attract new residents and new housing to the Village to be able to maintain municipal services. This has led to recent development like the Bridgewater subdivision and the Biron Business Park.

### **Commercial and Manufacturing**

The Nine Dragons paper mill has been the main industry in Biron for many decades. Nine Dragons owns over 150 acres in the direct vicinity of the paper mill. Only in recent years has the Village had much in the way of commercial uses. With the annexation of properties in the Highway 54 area, the Village acquired several commercial establishments. There isn't an identifiable "downtown" in Biron and little room existed for new commercial (and manufacturing) development until the Biron Business Park was created. The business park provides adequate space for new commercial and manufacturing operations into and beyond the planning period.

### **Transportation**

The realignment of County Highway U along with the installation of new streets in the Biron Business Park and Bridgewater development have increased the amount of land dedicated to transportation. Future roads are generally installed by a developer and dedicated to the Village as public streets as development occurs.

### **Recreation & Open Spaces**

Chapters 2 and 4 of this plan provide a detailed description of the Village's natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities. With the realignment of County Highway U and creation of the Bridgewater development, recreational offerings that take advantage of the Wisconsin River have been expanded in recent years. Future recreation needs should continue to be assessed both within the Village and as the Wisconsin Rapids Area further enhances outdoor recreation that serves all the area's municipalities.

### **Public & Quasi-Public**

It is not anticipated that the Village will need additional expansion of the municipal building during the planning period. Should new development drive demand for more public safety equipment or staffing, expansion room is available on the site of the municipal building.

### **Agricultural**

Although Biron is not what one would consider an agricultural community, it does have a significant amount of land that is in cranberry production. It is important that the cranberry marshes be protected from encroachment from incompatible uses. The soils condition around the marshes is not conducive to other types of land uses, so this should not present a problem. There is limited room for expansion as this use has consumed most of the land that is conducive to the production of cranberries. Some emerging uses

complement agriculture, such as Rooted in Red, which is considered “agritourism.” There are also other farming operations in the Village. Grazing of cattle is not a large component of the Village’s land use base but is one that is compatible with the areas where potential development of other uses is marginal.

### **Land Use Goals & Objectives**

It is the desire of Biron residents to retain the small-town character of the Village, while, at the same time, creating new jobs and attracting some new residential growth. To that end, the following goals, objectives and policies have been developed for Biron.

#### **Goal:**

Attract new residential growth to help support essential municipal services.

#### **Objectives:**

- Attract construction of new housing, including single-family detached, duplexes and multi-family units, through review and amendment, if necessary, of the Village zoning ordinance.
- Attract support commercial businesses to locate in Village locations that are convenient to residential developments.

#### **Policies:**

- Provide commercial or mixed-use zoning in areas where support businesses are compatible with residential housing.
- Consider commercial development proposals on a case-by-case basis rather than with one-size-fits-all zoning.

#### **Goal:**

Attract new industrial and commercial development.

#### **Objectives:**

- Create new jobs for Village residents.
- Ensure success of TIF District #2.

#### **Policies:**

- Collaborate with developers to create aesthetically pleasing settings in which to build or expand their businesses.
- Work to assure that commercial and industrial developments have safe, convenient access for shipping, for workers, and for the general public.
- Work together with adjoining municipalities to attract new business and industry to the area with the thought that, if the Village does not get the main business, smaller related businesses may choose Biron for their location.

**Goal:**

Preserve the Village's current small-town character.

**Objectives:**

- Avoid becoming over-developed, especially along the Wisconsin River.
- Preserve the Village's environmental resources.
- Protect existing land uses from unnecessary encroachment of new uses that may be a detriment or devalue existing land uses.

**Policies:**

- The Village will manage new residential, commercial and industrial development through its future land use plan and zoning ordinance to preserve the Village's small-town character.
- Consider adding zones of different development densities to protect the area's resources while encouraging housing types for different economic levels. Goal: Work with adjacent towns regarding boundary issues and cooperative growth management.

**Objectives:**

- Maintain good working relationships with neighboring municipalities.
- Plan for sound growth within the Village.
- Provide cost-effective services to Village residents.

**Policies:**

- Participate in joint planning meetings and provide input to make sound planning decisions that will accommodate needs of Village residents and those across Village borders while keeping urban sprawl tendencies in check.
- Participate in planning the area's sewer service boundaries and provide input when boundary changes are proposed in the sewer service area.
- Encourage open dialogue with adjacent towns to discuss common issues and to develop a working relationship to address areas where cooperation and collaboration will result in cost savings to Village and neighboring municipality residents.
- Support coordinated planned growth in boundary areas, while protecting the Village's land area, tax base and property rights.
- Participate in area meetings that focus on economic development or where planning decisions are made that may impact the Village or its residents.

Page intentionally left blank

## 8. Intergovernmental Cooperation

### Purpose

In the past couple decades, government at all levels has struggled to continue to provide expected levels of services. There are a variety of factors that have contributed to this including rising costs of labor and materials, consensus against new taxes, and increased responsibilities. As local government searches for ways to continue to provide quality services with limited resources, they are reviewing the efficiency of their service delivery, setting priorities of services, and determining which services can be provided through alternative arrangements. One alternative arrangement that government has gravitated towards is working with neighboring municipalities to provide essential services. This intergovernmental cooperation arrangement can be defined as two or more government agencies working together to provide services, reach common goals, or solve mutual problems.

In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation among communities can lead toward relationships that prosper based on common goals and interests, while putting aside political and boundary differences. By establishing a rapport with adjacent communities, improved communication can lead to a better working relationship that can benefit all the communities involved. By working together, not only will they have the potential of providing services at the lowest cost, and most efficient manner, they will be better positioned to address issues of mutual interest.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning law requires each comprehensive plan to include an analysis of the relationship of the local governmental unit to school districts and adjacent local governmental units and to the region, the state and other governmental units and to identify potential conflicts between the local governmental unit and other governmental units. One purpose of this chapter, then, is to inventory existing activities in which Biron currently participates with other local units of government, the Wisconsin Rapids Public School district, Wood County, and State and Federal governments. The inventory will identify important existing cooperative activities and summarize major challenges and issues that have been identified regarding intergovernmental cooperation, including opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services; incompatible goals, policies and development; mechanisms for conflict resolution; and opportunities for joint planning and decision making. This chapter will also describe major area planning issues that will or could impact Biron residents, as well as residents of neighboring communities.

### Existing Shared Services and Cooperative Efforts

#### Law Enforcement

Biron does not have a municipal police department. Instead, the Wood County Sheriff's Department provides routine patrols through the Village.

#### E-911 Dispatch Services

The Wood County Communications Department receives emergency calls for Biron and dispatches the Wood County Sheriff's Department for response. Calls for the Humane Officer are dispatched through the 911 system only, not by the Village's staff.

## **Fire Services**

The Biron Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD) has mutual aid agreements with each of the surrounding municipalities that have fire departments. The Village fire department has contracts to provide fire services to all or portions of the towns of Grand Rapids and Grant. The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) is the mutual aid system where the BVFD, if in need of additional help, can contact another fire department that will provide up to 20% of their resources to the fire department in need. This new system guarantees that the loaning fire department's community has 80% of their resources at home in case they have a fire.

## **Wisconsin Rapids Area Sanitary Sewer**

The Wisconsin Rapids Area Sewer Service Area Plan is a cooperative effort to plan for expansion of the Wisconsin Rapids sanitary sewer collection system and treatment plant. Biron and nine other area municipalities participated jointly to establish policies and develop implementation strategies for the extension of sanitary sewers in a planned, cost-effective manner for the Wisconsin Rapids system. The plan was prepared as mandated by the Clean Water Act. The Policy Committee bylaws call for biannual meetings, or special meetings as called by the Chair. The purpose of the twice-yearly meetings is for staff members to brief the Committee about activity since their last meeting, known proposals for the upcoming period, and any issues or problems that may need committee attention.

## **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Forest Fire Protection)**

A portion of Biron is located in a DNR fire protection district. If the Biron Volunteer Fire Department responds to a forest or grass fire outside that area, the DNR is available to assist them through a mutual aid agreement. Conversely, if the DNR responds to a forest fire in the fire protection district, they can call the BVFD for assistance. In other words, the entire Village is covered for forest fire protection.

## **Wood County Planning & Zoning Support**

Biron has been an active participant in local planning and zoning since the 1960's when the South Wood County comprehensive plan was developed. Although this is only the second comprehensive plan for the Village that has been prepared since that time, the Village board has actively maintained their zoning ordinance and conducted extensive reviews of development proposals, debating the advantages and disadvantages to the community prior to granting approvals. A plan commission was appointed in 2001 to review planning and zoning issues and, more specifically, to develop a comprehensive plan. The Wood County Planning & Zoning staff assisted with that process leading up to and including the creation of the Village's former comprehensive plan.

## **League of Wisconsin Municipalities**

Biron is a member of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM). LWM provides a myriad of services to cities and villages. Services include lobbying for or against legislative proposals that will impact incorporated municipalities, legal opinions and reviews, publications designed to assist cities and Villages in their operations, and conferences to further the education of municipal officials and provide them an opportunity to network with their peers.

### **Wisconsin Rapids Public School District**

The Village of Biron is located in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District (WRPS). A former WRPS elementary school is located in Biron, but was closed several years ago. Students from Biron are bussed to schools in Wisconsin Rapids. Communications between the Village and the school district are important, especially regarding transportation routes into and through the Village. The Bridgewater residential development proposal, for example, required new streets. The school district should be brought into discussions regarding street layouts to ensure cost-effective and safe school bus routes. Cul-de-sac streets can result in difficult bussing of students, can cause traffic conflicts on through streets and can be dangerous for both the student and motorists.

### **Mid-State Technical College (MSTC)**

There is a long history of customized training that has been developed by MSTC to train displaced workers or to train workers for new technologies that have been brought into the local manufacturing arena. As new industries locate in the Biron business park, opportunities will arise for customized training programs. Although training agreements will be between the businesses and MSTC, Village officials can act as a liaison between the two to help assure that training is provided to area residents who will work in the new businesses.

### **Neighboring Municipalities**

Biron officials have actively participated in area-wide programs and projects that affect Village residents and businesses. The relocation and proposed extension of State Highway 54 is one example. Highway 54 travels through a small part of Biron and is an integral component of the proposed business park in Biron. A feasibility study was completed in 2009 for an extension of that road south to County Road Z, then west to and across the Wisconsin River to the Village of Port Edwards. If completed, Highway 54 would connect important business parks and industrial developments along the Wisconsin River corridor. It should be a good benefit to the Biron business park. The Village has been represented at several area meetings and participated in the costs for applying for a federal grant to fund the highway extension, but the project is currently paused.

Another example is the series of meetings that have been held between Grand Rapids and Biron officials to discuss cooperation and collaboration of services. Both know the difficulty of providing and expanding expensive municipal services and know the value of working together to give their residents cost effective government.

It is very important that Biron and its neighbors coordinate their planning efforts. Wisconsin Rapids, Grand Rapids and Grant all have adopted comprehensive plans. Each of these plans impacts the others, especially with border issues. Coordination of and communication between the plan commissions of Biron and its neighbors is important to each in that it can eliminate redundancies in services, result in cooperative expenditures or equipment usage, etc. With past land use planning issues, inconsistent planning along boundaries has caused frustration when the two communities projected the same parcels to become different future uses. Boundaries may be the most challenging of all intergovernmental issues and resolving any conflicts with boundaries can have dramatic improvements for the community.

Biron cooperates with neighboring municipalities by sharing public works equipment and assisting on public works projects where it is feasible and appropriate for the Village to do so. Sharing of equipment between municipalities helps provide cost effective and efficient services to the taxpayers of participating communities.

### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was formed under §60.0309 Wis. Stats. as a voluntary association of governments within a ten-county area. Wood County is a member of the NCWRPC, which qualifies the Town of Port Edwards for low-cost local planning assistance. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include (but are not limited to) land use, transportation, economic development, intergovernmental, and geographic information systems (GIS) planning and services.

### **State and Federal Agencies**

The Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources and Transportation are the primary agencies the Town might deal with regarding development activities. Many of the goals and objectives of this plan will require continued cooperation and coordination with these agencies.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetland, lakes, and other wildlife habitat areas, while Wisconsin Department of Transportation is responsible for the planning and development of state highways, railways, airports, and other transportation systems. State agencies make several grant and aid programs available to local units of government like the Town of Port Edwards. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Plan (LRIP) and the Priority Watershed Program. There are also several mandates passed down from the state that the Town must comply with, such as the biannual pavement rating submission for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). Most federal programs are administered by the states, so the Town should work with the responsible state agency regarding federal programs and regulations.

### **Existing Intergovernmental Regulations and Tools**

Wisconsin State Statutes provide a variety of options for local government to work with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions to achieve various planning goals. These programs help overcome intergovernmental barriers and challenges communities have when addressing land use issues or providing adequate public services.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation (Wisconsin Statute 66.0301)**

Wisconsin Statute 66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others. Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with §66.0301, formerly §66.30, are the most common forms of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as law enforcement, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide

for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes must be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

### **Municipal Revenue Sharing (Wisconsin Statute 66.0305)**

Wisconsin Statute 66.0305 gives authority to cities, villages, and towns to enter into agreements to share revenue from taxes and special charges with each other. The agreements may also address other matters, including agreements regarding services to be provided or the location of municipal boundaries. Boundaries of the shared revenue area must be specified in the agreement and the term of the agreement must be for at least ten years. The agreement must specify the formula or other means for sharing revenue, the date of payment of revenues, and how the agreement may be invalidated after the minimum ten-year period.

### **Wisconsin Commercial Building Code**

Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code Chapters SPS 320 to 325 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code establish statewide construction standards and inspection procedures for one- and two-family dwellings and manufactured dwellings in Wisconsin. Uniform standards for design, installation, maintenance and inspection of commercial buildings and structures are contained in SPS 361 – 366 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. This code addresses erosion control during construction; energy conservation; heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC); and fuel gas appliances as well as administration and enforcement of the code.

### **Wisconsin Electrical Code and National Electric Code**

Chapter SPS 316 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code provides a “practical safeguard” of persons and property throughout the state from hazards arising from the installation and use of electricity. Among other things, SPS 316 covers installation of electric and communication conductors and equipment in places of employment, within or on public and private buildings or other structures, including mobile homes and certain other structures and premises. The National Electric Code, NEC-2005, is incorporated into SPS 316 by reference and, thus, is required to be followed for electrical installations.

### **Wisconsin Plumbing Code**

Wisconsin Statutes and the companion Administrative Code regulate the method of installation and maintenance of private septic systems. The Code is implemented through the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office. That office works with homeowners, plumbers and system pumpers on the design, installation and maintenance of septic systems. While most of Biron is served by a public sanitary sewer system, there are still several dwellings and some commercial establishments that rely on private septic systems or holding tanks.

### **Floodplain & Shoreland Zoning**

Much of Biron is located in the 100-year floodplain. Development in those areas is regulated by the Biron Shoreland, Wetland and Floodplain Zoning Code. That code is written to comply with federal standards, developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and channeled to the State and down to

the County and Village. Biron participates in the flood insurance program, which allows property owners the opportunity to purchase the specialized insurance that is needed in these areas.

### **Village of Biron Comprehensive Plan**

In the late 1960s, a comprehensive plan was commissioned by several of the South Wood County communities. Although Biron did not formally participate in the “South Wood County Comprehensive Plan,” or “701 Plan,” the demographics were considered for the area plan. The 2012 comprehensive plan is the first plan for the Village, with this plan being the first substantial revision. The plan commission will continue to use the plan to provide consistency with the zoning ordinance and the shoreland, wetland and floodplain zoning code.

### **Village of Biron Zoning Ordinance**

Biron first adopted a zoning ordinance in the mid-1960s, a document that has undergone a comprehensive revision and has been amended many times to accommodate the changing dynamics of the Village. The Biron plan commission is very active, meeting monthly or more, depending on what projects are on the table. In the years leading up to the creation of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, the commission has dealt with a comprehensive revision of their ordinance, TIF district planning, planning for a large residential development, working with property owners and Stora Enso (NewPage) Paper company on a land transfer, and working with a private developer and Wood County on a business park proposal.

### **Wisconsin Rapids Area Sewer Service Area Plan**

Biron is an active participant in the Wisconsin Rapids Sewer Service Area Plan, a document that establishes future service areas for the regional sanitary sewer system. Such plans are required for cities with a population of 10,000 or more under the Federal Federal Clean Water Act. The current 20-year plan was written in 2012.

### **Annexation**

Wisconsin law generally places annexation power in the hands of individual property owners, making it difficult for local municipalities to control where or when annexation will occur. A landowner may petition a city or village to annex a parcel of land. Cities and villages may only react to annexation petitions, they cannot initiate them (except in the case where the territory petitioned for annexation is owned by the city or village). Chapter 66.0217 0223 of the Wisconsin Statutes outlines the procedures for petitioning for annexation. Biron has not annexed much territory until recent years. The Village annexed an area near the intersection of 32nd Street and Highway 54 that included several residential dwellings. Annexation of several acres of undeveloped land will take place to accommodate the business park proposal. At this time, no further annexations are anticipated beyond that. Continued meetings with Grand Rapids officials can provide an opportunity to plan for future growth of the Village or to protect development plans along Highway 54 in the Town of Grand Rapids.

### **Detachment**

Detachment is a process where territory is detached from one municipality and transferred to another. Detachment can be between cities and villages, and between cities/villages and towns. Detachment between a city/village and a town is like the opposite of annexation and, most often, tends to involve land that is rural

in nature and more appropriate for town-level government, although they have been used to resolve boundary disputes. Detachments are rare; there have been only about 40 in the State since 2002, but it is a tool that is available for certain circumstances.

## **Existing and Potential Conflicts**

### **Boundary Development and Land Uses**

The development on the south boundary of Biron can be a source of conflict between Biron and Grand Rapids if not approached in an open manner. Opinions about future land use often differ between Village officials and Town officials, the latter who sometimes view annexations of their territories as an incorporated community's way of encroaching on an established tax base. Boundary agreements are often used to resolve some of these issues. To date, however, Biron has not developed any agreements, nor have they felt a pressing need to create boundary agreements.

### **Extraterritorial Plat Review**

Wisconsin Rapids exercises extraterritorial plat review of new land divisions in the Town of Grand Rapids that fall under the requirements of the Wood County Land Subdivision Ordinance (currently 10 acres or less). The city can review land splits up to three miles from its borders. The Village of Biron could also exercise extraterritorial plat review if it chooses. Their review would typically be used to ensure street alignments or utility easements for future expansions of the Village. Statutes allow the Village to review land divisions within a mile and a half of the Village boundaries. Where the two extraterritorial review jurisdictions overlap, the difference is split between the two.

### **Coordination of Services**

There are several miles of boundary streets between Biron and its neighboring municipalities. More coordination of municipal services could probably save the municipalities money, and a lack of coordination is both an existing and a potential conflict.

## Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals & Objectives

### Goal:

Continue cooperative participation for emergency services.

### Objectives:

- Have police and fire personnel attend joint training so they can coordinate efforts in emergency situations.
- Use the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) to assist neighboring communities while maintaining protection within the Village.
- Cooperate with the E-911 dispatch center to assure rapid response to emergencies.

### Goal:

Continue collaborations and partnerships with neighboring communities and the State to provide cost-effective services.

### Objectives:

- Maximize effectiveness by encouraging Village staff to work together with county and state staff for the conduct of inspections, reductions of health and safety violations, and monitoring new developments in the many different areas where staff can effectively work together.
- Remain active in the urban group, the sewer service area planning group and with neighboring municipalities to gain new knowledge and ideas of how to provide services in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.
- Provide leadership in coordinating agreements between Wood and Portage Counties, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and neighboring towns to assure that the functionality and safety of State Highway 54 is protected as the Wood County Business Park in Biron is constructed and developed.

### Goal:

Become an effective voice for State initiatives that can affect the Village operations or residents.

### Objectives:

- Consider participating in Central Wisconsin Days in Madison. This Centergy-sponsored event is aimed at educating and reminding State legislators about central Wisconsin and our needs. The annual two-day event brings a program of four or five issues to Madison, where participants meet with the Governor, his cabinet, and state senators and assemblymen.
- Through municipal associations, be proactive in proposing or supporting changes in state statutes or codes that will have a positive impact on Biron.

## 9. Implementation

### Introduction

A primary reason for a community to prepare a comprehensive plan is to establish a framework for the future, especially as it relates to decisions regarding growth and regulation of development to protect and maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the community. A plan also helps to set priorities for public expenditures. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

- The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances based on the goals and objectives identified in this plan.
- The development of programs and support systems that further the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.
- The location of specific land uses as identified in the comprehensive plan and based on goals and objectives.
- The establishment and support of a continued planning process providing for periodic review and updates to this plan and other land use control measures.

Wisconsin planning law describes the implementation element as a compilation of programs and specific action to be completed in a stated sequence, including proposed changes to any applicable zoning ordinances, official maps, or subdivision ordinances, to implement the objectives, policies, plans and programs in the other elements. The task of this element is to describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements and includes a mechanism to measure progress toward achieving all aspects of this comprehensive plan. A process for updating the comprehensive plan is also included as part of this element.

### Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. Zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations are used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development as identified in this comprehensive plan. There are also non-regulatory approaches to implementing the comprehensive plan. These generally involve decisions about how the community will spend its limited funding resources on capital improvements, staffing and maintenance. These decisions will affect the development demand and the location of development in the Village. State planning law requires certain programs and/or actions that affect land use must be consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan. Following the adoption of this comprehensive plan update, the Village of Biron should evaluate and update, as necessary, its related ordinances to ensure meeting this requirement.

## Zoning Ordinance and Map

The zoning ordinance is the most common land use regulatory tool that is used in Wisconsin communities. Zoning allows municipalities to determine how different areas of their community will be used (eg. residential, commercial, open space, etc.) and authorizes municipalities to regulate the design and placement of structures within various zoning districts. The Village of Biron first adopted a zoning ordinance in 1960s and, through the Village's Plan Commission, has amended the ordinance as needed to reflect changes in development patterns and structures. The commission and Village Board have actively enforced the ordinance since its enactment.

The relationship between this plan and the zoning ordinance is easy to understand once one understands the role of each document. The comprehensive plan is "a guide to the physical, social, and economic development of a local governmental unit..." The comprehensive plan contains nine elements, or chapters that address a variety of development and social aspects of the community, one of which is future land use patterns that are expected as a matter of economic or demographic conditions, or desired to make the community a better place to live. The zoning ordinance sets the standards by which specific parcels can be developed, including such things as the type of use on the parcel, parcel size, open space requirements, access requirements and other provisions specific to the use and location of the parcel. In this relationship, the zoning ordinance is clearly a tool to implement the land use recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

The establishment of zoning districts and the zoning map indicates where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will serve as a guide when proposed zoning changes are reviewed. Therefore, indiscriminate zoning changes may result in weakening of the comprehensive plan.

An effective and manageable planning tool, zoning offers many possibilities for confronting the issues presented in this comprehensive plan. Natural conditions such as geology or geography are very difficult, if not impossible, to alter. Zoning is an acceptable solution because of the characteristics of the land. Fitting compatible uses with suitable natural conditions saves expense for the landowner or homeowner while protecting natural conditions.

Zoning traditionally creates different zones (physical areas or districts) for various uses of the land. Each zoning district has some clearly permitted uses and other uses requiring approval of the Plan Commission and Village Board for specific site proposals (i.e., conditional uses or special exceptions). Some uses are prohibited. Flexibility can be built into the zoning ordinance to allow for some variance in land use rules. This is important because the unique characteristics of some lands preclude them from being categorized to be used the same as other lands in a specific zoning district. For example, odd-shaped lots may preclude a parcel from meeting lot line setbacks, while the lot may, in fact, contain adequate area for development. In some cases, mixing of uses may be appropriate where the uses are compatible with one another and with neighboring properties and where neither use creates a nuisance, health hazard, safety hazard or other conflict with other nearby uses.

Biron will continue to monitor and enforce the zoning ordinance and map and make any changes the Village deems necessary to assure consistency with the other elements of the comprehensive plan.

### **Subdivision Ordinance**

As a comprehensive plan implementation tool, subdivision regulations attempt to minimize the creation of lots that fail to satisfy zoning or sanitary ordinances. The control of land divisions promotes the dedication and reservation of land for roadways and drainage ways. In addition, landowners benefit from an effective subdivision code by assuring that properties don't overlap when new parcels are created by metes and bounds land descriptions. Most incorporated municipalities have adopted rules relating to creation of new lots so that municipal services, particularly underground infrastructure and roads, can be well planned and provided in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Although Biron does not have a subdivision ordinance, many provisions that are common to subdivision ordinances are included in the Village's zoning ordinance.

### **Capital Improvement Program**

A capital improvement program (CIP) is a plan for the capital expenditures of the Village over a period of years, usually five years. The CIP addresses the Village's capital needs that require attention during the period and helps establish priorities and financing for those needs. A capital budget is a concurrent document that outlines the plans for the expenditure of funds for capital projects. A tax impact analysis, or development impact analysis, is sometimes used to develop the CIP and helps Village officials determine both the advantages and disadvantages of various projects or developments. Capital improvement programs are very useful, especially when the supply of money is short and the demand for services or improvements is high.

The Village of Biron may want to consider developing a five-year capital improvement plan for road improvements, large equipment procurement, large improvements to municipal buildings and for other large capital outlays. Each year the CIP should be reviewed and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This keeps the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet the community's changing needs. The preparation of a CIP is normally a joint responsibility between the Village Board, Plan Commission, staff, and other committees. The proposed capital improvement plan should be reviewed considering the priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan.

### **Annual Operating Budget**

The Village prepares a budget each year and it is one of the most important policy documents prepared. It is a statement that prioritizes and allocates financial resources to achieve certain objectives over a specific time. The budget is based on the needs of Village residents and priorities set by the Village Board. The budget and the services provided by that budget are instrumental in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan.

### **Official Map**

Wisconsin Statutes allow municipalities to adopt an official map, showing the streets, highways, historic districts, parkways, parks and playgrounds laid out, adopted and established by law. The map may also include railroad rights-of-way, waterways and public transit facilities. As a supporting document to a land use

plan and map, the Official Map is a valuable tool because it is conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets. The official map is declared to be established to conserve and promote public health, safety, convenience or general welfare.

State law also allows the official street map to be used as a planning document. Although Biron has not enacted an official map, their two adjacent neighbors (Grand Rapids and Wisconsin Rapids) have. With plans for residential, commercial and industrial development in the Village of Biron, it may benefit the Village to discuss the advantages of creating an official map to preserve planned future road rights-of-way at a minimum. Discussion with both neighboring municipalities would be necessary to assure coordination of the planned road network. One example of the use of official maps is to preserve the ability to create a through-street system for efficient movement of traffic through the Village and for efficient movement of school buses and emergency services equipment.

### **Building Code**

The State of Wisconsin adopted a Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) for one- and two-family dwellings in 1980. Biron's building code adopts the state code by reference. The Village contracts with a private, licensed individual for building inspection services. Questions regarding site design are often referred to the plan commission for further review and action.

### **Shoreland and Shoreland-Wetland Zoning**

Biron has and will continue to apply the regulations of the zoning ordinance and UDC so they remain consistent with the comprehensive plan. H. Shoreland, Wetland and Floodplain Zoning Code We learned, in Chapter 1, that Consolidated Papers, Inc. raised the head on the Biron dam in the early 1900s, necessitating diking along the Wisconsin River and can see that diking in Figure 1-3. Much of the Village of Biron is located within the 100-year floodplain as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is only protected by the strength of that dike. Because of the presence of extensive 100-year floodplain, the Village was required to adopt an ordinance to protect the floodplain and regulate development of properties within the floodplain district. Without such an ordinance, improper development can be put into jeopardy and property owners would not be eligible to purchase floodplain insurance.

The shoreland-wetland district includes all wetlands in the Village that are within 1,000 feet of a river, pond or flowage, or within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark or navigable rivers or streams, are five acres or larger in size, and that are shown on the final wetland inventory map that was created by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and adopted by the Village Board. Those areas are shown on a map in Chapter 8, Land Use. The Plan Commission will review zoning standards to assure that the requirements of FEMA and of Chapter NR 115, Wisconsin Statutes, dealing with shoreland protection, are met.

### **Other Ordinances**

In addition to those listed above, which deal with land use-type issues, the Village of Biron has other ordinances that focus on public health, nuisances, public safety, orderly conduct within the Village, and more. The only ordinances that need to be consistent with the comprehensive planning law are their local zoning ordinance and the shoreland, wetland, and floodplain protection code as it relates to shoreland and

floodplain zoning. If the Village eventually enacts a land subdivision ordinance or official map, as discussed above, those ordinances would also need to meet the consistency requirement of §66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Although the other ordinances are not required to be consistent with the comprehensive plan, consistency between some of those ordinances (junk vehicles, protecting the water supply, noise regulations, speed limits, public health, etc.) and the comprehensive plan may prove to be advantageous to the Village in the implementation of the comprehensive plan.

### **Brownfield Redevelopment**

Pursuing funding from state agencies for redevelopment of contaminated sites can reduce the uncertainty that otherwise prevents contaminated properties from being redeveloped. Action by the Village to evaluate contaminants or begin remediating the property is often necessary before the private sector is willing to invest in redevelopment. This may require some upfront investment from the community. However, as sites are improved and reused, they generate tax revenue.

### **Consistency Among Plan Chapters**

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Chapter describes how each of the required elements (chapters) will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since the Village of Biron completed all planning chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the nine plan chapters. Where deemed appropriate, goals, objectives, and policies have been repeated under all applicable chapters to reinforce their importance.

### **Plan Adoption, Amendments, Updates, and Monitoring**

#### **Plan Adoption**

The first step toward implementation of the comprehensive plan is adoption of the plan by the Village Board. Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 provides specific procedures that are necessary to adopt the plan. As allowed by statute, the Biron Village Board has delegated the responsibility of preparing and maintaining the comprehensive plan to the Plan Commission. Upon completion of the plan, the Plan Commission will adopt a resolution by a majority vote of the entire commission before sending the plan to the Village Board for adoption. The comprehensive plan does not take effect until the Village Board enacts an ordinance that adopts the plan and that ordinance cannot be adopted unless the plan contains all the elements specified by the comprehensive planning statute. At a minimum, a Class 1 public notice is required to be published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. Once adopted, any program or action of the Village Board or its authorized commission, that affects land use shall be consistent with the comprehensive plan. This statutory requirement will primarily impact the Village's zoning ordinance or any other land use related ordinance or program that the Village may adopt.

#### **Plan Amendments**

The plan amendment process can be as important as the initial development and adoption of the plan. Monitoring those changes is also important. Monitoring changes can assist the plan commission and Village

board to assure consistency in the application of standards and in proposing changes to either the text or the future land use map. The following process is used in Biron for amending the plan and monitoring changes.

The comprehensive plan is a dynamic document; as conditions change in Biron, the plan will change. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity. In addition, the Wisconsin planning law requires that comprehensive plans that are created under the statute be updated no less than once every 10 years. The following criteria should be considered when reviewing plan amendments:

- The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Village of Biron Comprehensive Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development shall be consistent with the physical character of its surrounding environment or would upgrade and improve its viability.
- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment that cannot be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- There is a change in Village actions or community characteristics that would justify a change.
- There is a community or regional need identified in the comprehensive plan for the proposed land use or service.
- The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.
- The change does not adversely affect water quality and the overall health of residents.

Village officials must be ready to react to changing conditions in the community by amending the plan to reflect changes. Care must be taken, however, not to amend the plan as a routine or the process may lose its importance in the community development process. It is important to establish local planning goals, review those goals on a regular basis and develop objectives that will help the decision makers achieve community planning goals.

The amendment process is rather straightforward. The first step can be either a petition to the Plan Commission from a Village resident or property owner or a proposal by the Plan Commission or Village Board. The petition can be for either a change in the plan's text, such as a change in goals or objectives, or a change

to the future land use map. The zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance and official street map must be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The second step is to review the petition or proposal by the Plan Commission. Their review can include visiting the site, meeting with the petitioner to discuss the reason for the request, obtaining professional planning assistance or a legal opinion, or meeting as a commission to discuss the merits of the proposal. Third, the Plan Commission will make a recommendation, in writing, to the Village Board. The Board will then publish a notice for a public hearing and hold a hearing on the proposal to get input from any interested people. They should keep a written transcript or, at the very least, detailed minutes of the testimony. Following the hearing, the Village Board will decide in the form of a motion to amend the comprehensive plan. The Board can decide immediately following the public hearing or they can set a time to meet later to make the decision, allowing additional time to receive written testimony about the proposal. The Board's options are to accept the recommendation, modify it, deny it, or send it back to the Plan Commission for further study. They should provide the petitioner with a copy of the decision in writing. If the petitioner is not satisfied with the decision, he can submit an entirely new petition, submit a petition with revisions to the original proposal, appeal the decision to the Circuit Court, or do nothing. Of course, the petitioner also has the option of withdrawing the petition at any time during the process.

### **Monitoring**

The adopted plan should be used as a tool by Village when making land use and development decisions. Decisions concerning private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions should be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations outlined in this plan.

Although this plan describes policies and actions for future implementation, it is impossible to predict the exact future condition. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions in this plan should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions and respond to unanticipated events.

This plan should be evaluated at least every five years and updated at least every ten years. Members of the Village Board, Plan Commission, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the strategies and actions should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate.

Monitoring changes over time is also relatively easy and important. Changes can be documented simply by maintaining a file of each change, including copies of the following:

- Petition for amendment or minutes of the Plan Commission meeting where an amendment was initiated.
- Minutes of all Plan Commission meetings where the proposal was discussed.
- Plan Commission's written recommendation to the Village Board.
- Notice of public hearing.
- Public hearing transcript or detailed minutes of the hearing.

- Decision of the Village Board, including their rationale or justification for their decision.
- Notice to petitioner of Village Board decision.

In the past, these files were maintained in a safe place in case the decision is challenged by either the petitioner, in the case of a denial, or by someone who opposed the amendment proposal. They will continue to be carefully maintained by Village staff in the future. Included in the individual files are reasons for the Plan Commission's and Board's decisions regarding specific cases. These files will prove useful when a comprehensive review of the plan is done in ten years (or sooner) from adoption.

### **Plan Updates**

Comprehensive planning law requires that the plan be updated at least once every ten years. Because the Biron comprehensive plan is being written after the 2020 census was taken, but it is closer to the 2030 census, it would behoove the Village to undertake a comprehensive review and revision in several years after adoption to consider data from the 2030 Census, especially regarding the actual number of residents, housing counts, and information specifically related to the local economy. Much of this data is available at the county level, but little can be found for local municipalities.

## **Village of Biron Planning Administration**

### **Plan Commission**

Plan Commissions in Wisconsin are created by municipal ordinance under s. 62.23, Wisconsin Statutes. The ordinance may create a 7-member commission, or, if the town is under 2,500 population, a 5-member commission. The Village President appoints the members and chooses the Plan Commission chair. Elected and appointed Village officials may be appointed to the commission. There must, however, be at least three citizen members who are not Village officials on the 7-member commission and one citizen member who is not a Village official on the 5-member commission.

The Biron Plan Commission meets monthly to consider rezoning requests, conditional uses, ordinance violations, text and map amendments, land divisions, development proposals, consistency between the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance, and various other planning-, zoning- and building code-related issues.

The relationship of the Plan Commission and the Village Board is important. The Village board is a seven-member, elected body that is primarily a policy-making body charged with conducting the Village's affairs. The plan commission, on the other hand, is an appointed body, whose responsibilities include reviewing and making recommendations to the board regarding development proposals, developing a community development plan (comprehensive plan) and recommending measures to implement that plan. Many of the plan commission's recommendations are forwarded to the Village board for approval or adoption. A plan commission, therefore, functions in a more objective (versus political) manner than the Village board, but must realize that, in developing plans and ordinances, it operates within a political system where the Village board makes the final decision. Put another way, the appointed plan commission, in theory, removes politics from the planning and zoning process.

The plan commission is of great assistance to the Village board by involving citizens and developing expertise in planning, which can be a time-consuming and controversial undertaking, thereby freeing the Village board to carry out its other functions. The plan commission is an appointed body whose policy-making function is advisory-only to the Village board. If the Village board chooses to delegate additional powers to the plan commission, beyond advisory powers, it may do so. For example, the Village board may allow the plan commission to issue conditional use permits under Village zoning and allow it to approve subdivision plats.

The Biron Plan Commission has a good working relationship with the Village Board, which is essential for implementing land uses that are in the public interest. The existence of an adopted comprehensive plan and implementation measures depends upon both bodies – the plan commission to develop the proposals with public support and the Village board to support the effort and ultimately adopt the legislation and implementation programs.

### **Plan Commission Powers and Duties**

The powers and the duties of the plan commission are spelled out in state statutes and applicable Village ordinances. A chief task of the commission is to develop the Village’s comprehensive plan, pursuant to the specifications of Chapter 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. That statute requires the plan commission (“or other body of a local governmental unit that is authorized to prepare or amend a comprehensive plan”<sup>19</sup>) to solicit citizen participation and intergovernmental communication and coordination in developing the community’s plan. The plan commission oversees coordination and development of the comprehensive plan and, once completed, forwards the plan to the Village board by formal resolution.

After the Biron comprehensive plan is adopted, the zoning ordinance and shoreland, wetland and floodplain zoning code are to be reviewed and amended to reflect the goals, objectives, policies and programs of the plan (to provide consistency between the plan and the land use regulations). In Biron, updating and maintaining these ordinances is another function that has been delegated to the Plan Commission, with final enactment powers remaining with the Village Board.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The Village Board should use the Plan as a guide when making decisions**, especially those that relate to growth and development. The Planning Commission and any other official committee of the Village should also use the Plan in their efforts as well.
- 2. The Village should encourage citizen awareness of the Comprehensive Plan** by making copies available, making reference to it at public meetings and Village newsletters, and displaying a copy of the future and use plan map in the Village Hall. Neighboring local units of government and others will receive copies of the Plan.
- 3. The Village has a zoning ordinance** to supplement the shoreland areas covered under county zoning. Beyond that, there are some additional tools and approaches that can be utilized by the Village to achieve the goals of the Plan. These include but are not limited to the following: land division, official mapping, fee simple land acquisition, easements, deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as building permits, erosion control, or septic pumping, etc. The Village should consider these tools as needed.

**4. Amendments to this Plan** may include minor changes to the plan text or maps, and/or major changes resulting from periodic review. Wisconsin Law requires that the same process used to adopt the Plan to be used to make any amendments. The steps are outlined below:

- An amendment or change may be initiated by either the Town Board or Plan Commission, a request from a resident, or may result from a regular review of the Plan.
- The Plan Commission prepares the specific text or map amendment being considered, holds a public meeting and votes to recommend approval or disapproval of the proposed amendment, by resolution to the Town Board.
- A copy of the proposed Plan amendment is sent to all affected government units, including Wood County.
- Village Clerk publishes a 30-day Class 1 notice announcing a Village Board public hearing on the proposed changes.
- The Village Board conducts the public hearing and votes to either approve, disapprove, or approve with changes.

Any approved changes are sent to affected government units, including Wood County. Frequent minor changes to accommodate specific development proposals should be avoided.

**5. Periodic updating of the Plan** is necessary to ensure that it reflects the desires of the Village's residents. The Plan Commission should review the Plan on an annual basis and conduct an in-depth review of the plan every five years. At a minimum the Plan must be updated every ten years. The annual review should compare how decisions made during the year, especially land use decisions, are related to the goals, objectives, and policies of the plan. If decisions are inconsistent with the Plan, changes need to be made. The update should consider the following to maintain consistency in the land development process:

- Revision should be made to bring decision-making back in line with the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies.
- The goals, objectives, and policies should be reviewed to ensure they are still relevant and worthwhile in the Village.
- New implementation tools should be considered to gain more control over decisions.

The above recommendations provide a general process for the Village to best implement the findings of the Plan. The process to develop the Plan consisted of many hours of work by elected, non-elected staff and the public; however, the ability to implement the Plan lies with the Village Board. In the end, it is the Village Board's responsibility to uphold and promote the Plan.