

2. Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources

Introduction

Natural resources and cultural resources are elements that are present to some degree in most communities. Agricultural resources, on the other hand, usually do not have a major presence in many cities and villages. Cities and villages are normally associated with higher density development, municipal sewer and water services, high traffic volumes, business and industry, shopping, and similar “city” activities. The Village of Biron is one of those communities that has those “city” activities, but also has substantial areas of specialized agriculture, namely cranberries. The purpose of this chapter is to inventory Biron’s agricultural resources, the natural resources of the community and cultural resources that are located in the Village.

Previous Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Plans and Studies

NCWRPC Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

This regional plan for the 10-county North Central Wisconsin region identifies natural resources as both enhancing the local quality of life but also as an economic development tool as outdoor recreation attracts workers and visitors to the region.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan 2009

The County’s comprehensive plan addressed several issues: invasive species, loss of farmland, crop damage from wildlife, protection of natural resources and habitat, protection of groundwater, preservation of historic structures, and support for outdoor recreation and cultural amenities that benefit County residents.

Wood County Soil Survey

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that produces the Wood County, Wisconsin Soil Survey. The survey contains predictions of soil characteristics for selected land uses and highlights the limitations and hazards inherent in the County’s soils. A series of detailed maps identifying the location of soil types in Wood County accompanies the survey.

State of the Central Wisconsin River Basin, 2002

This Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) report provides a snapshot of ecological conditions and prioritized management needs for the Wisconsin River, along with work planning, budget decisions, and management recommendations.

Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan 2025

This plan provides a framework for local/state/federal conservation program implementation efforts. This plan aims to protect valuable water and soil resources within Wood County. The plan identifies four goals: 1. Land resources are improved and protected county-wide, 2. Surface water quality is improved and protected, 3. Groundwater quality and quantity is improved and protected, and 4. Actively educate and engage all community stakeholders to develop an understanding of land, surface water, and groundwater quality concerns.

Wood County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2026-2030

This plan identifies outdoor recreation opportunities in Wood County and qualifies the County to receive funding for parks and outdoor recreation facilities. The County does not currently own or operate any parks in the Village, but it contains a list of proposed improvements for each municipality.

Wisconsin Historic Preservation Plan 2016-2025

This plan, created by the Wisconsin Historical Society, has five goals to advance historic preservation in Wisconsin: develop educational opportunities, increase awareness and support of historic preservation, increase funding sources, cultivate partnerships, and expand digital data and access.

Issues

The Village's previous comprehensive plan identifies the following issues:

- High groundwater, floodplains, and soil limitations that restrict the amount of developable land.
- High costs associated with providing outdoor recreation facilities.
- Concerns over groundwater contamination.
- Limited information regarding potential historic sites in the Village.

Existing Conditions

Climate

The climate in Wood County is continental, characterized by large seasonal and daily ranges in temperature. Winters are usually cold and snowy, and summers are generally warm with periods that are hot and humid. Precipitation on average is adequate for agricultural purposes, although soil moisture varies based on the water table and time of year. Prevailing winds are generally from the west and northwest in winter, and from the south in summer.

According to the Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, an average of nine days a year have temperatures of 90° F or higher, and an average of 32 days a year have temperatures of 0° F or lower. Total annual precipitation is about 31 inches, with an annual snowfall average of 50 inches. The sun shines an average of 60 percent of the time possible in summer and winter. The average date of the last 32° freeze in spring is May 17, and of the first in fall, September 27.

Geography, Topography, and Soils

Wood County contains Precambrian igneous metamorphic rock, Cambrian sandstone, and a variety of Pleistocene material. The landforms of Wood County are primarily a result of glacial activity. The southern and east central portion of the county, while not covered by ice during the glacial period, consists of well sorted deposits of clays, silts, and sands left by glacial outwash and lake deposits, including the area where the Village of Biron is located. The remainder of the county consists of ground moraine deposits of clay, silt, gravel, and boulders.

The surface elevation in the Village ranges from about 1,020 feet to 1,045 above sea level. The highest elevation is in the far southeast corner of the Village, and the low points tend to be near Quinnell Creek, west of Kahoun Road. Drainage is generally northeast to southwest, entirely draining to the Wisconsin River. The cranberry marshes use water from the Wisconsin River for flooding to protect against frost and for harvesting purposes. River water is taken in from the Biron Flowage via a network of ditches in the northeast part of the Village (Section 35), then flows to the cranberry marshes and is discharged to the river in the southern part of the Village, south of the Shore Acres subdivision (Section 4). Much of the Village lies in the floodplain; see Map 2.

Soils

Most of the Village is defined by areas that are very limited for development with basements. Most of the development that has occurred is in soils that are defined as “somewhat limited” or “not limited.” The suitability for dwelling rating is only a general guideline and there are other factors that impact the suitability of land for dwellings and development. Most soils that are unsuitable for development are deep, somewhat-to very-poorly drained organic residue over sand. The residue is typically decomposed sedges, grasses and reeds. Some of the soils are loamy sand over sand. The soils where development has occurred are deep, moderately well drained, nearly level sandy soils with bedrock being greater than six feet deep and groundwater ranging from three to five feet or more beneath the surface. Many of these soils are suitable for growing cranberries.

Forests

Woodlands cover about 1,486 acres, or approximately 37 percent of the Town. Forests play a key role in the protection of environmentally sensitive areas like steep slopes, shorelands, wetlands, and flood plains. Expansive forests provide recreational opportunities, aesthetic benefits, and economic development. All forests are dynamic, always changing from one stage to another, influenced by natural forces and human behavior. Changes can be subtle and occur over long periods or can happen in short spans of time from activities such as timber harvest, a windstorm, or a fire. Common tree species include pine, oak, and aspen. Tamarack and Black Spruce are also found in wetland areas.

There are approximately 22 acres of privately-owned forest in the state’s Managed Forest Law program. This program has been established to preserve and protect woodlands through practicing proper management techniques in exchange for a reduction in property taxes. Within the MFL program, some, but not all lands are open for public use. An updated map of open lands and access points is found on the Wisconsin DNR’s website. Additional woodland that is not in the MFL program (and therefore not open to the public) also exists on private land.

Water Resources

The State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has significant responsibilities for protecting water resources under what is known as the Public Trust Doctrine, meaning the waters in Wisconsin are held in trust by the state for the benefit of all. There can be no private interest in waterways that adversely affect this public interest. This local comprehensive plan must, at a minimum, be consistent with the state laws. This section of the comprehensive plan provides an inventory of water resources in the Village and establishes local policies and programs to preserve those resources.

Aquifers

Wood County's groundwater originates in two aquifers: the sand and gravel aquifer, and the crystalline bedrock aquifer. The sand and gravel aquifer is a result of glacial deposits, and it is the closest to the surface. Most wells use this aquifer as it is easier to drill into and produces faster flow rates compared to the crystalline bedrock aquifer, which is deeper. Because the gravel-sand aquifer is closer to the surface, it is more vulnerable to contamination.

Groundwater

Drinking water and agriculture rely on groundwater in the Village of Biron. Groundwater is water that occupies void spaces between soil particles or cracks in the rock below the land surface. It originates as precipitation that infiltrated the ground. The type of soil and bedrock that a well is drilled into often determines the pH, saturation index, and the amount of hardness or alkalinity in water. The type of soil and bedrock in a region also determines how quickly contaminants can reach groundwater. Groundwater can also be vulnerable to poor management, drought, or other factors.

According to the Village's previous comprehensive plan, 15 to 30 percent of the precipitation in Wisconsin each year seeps into the ground and recharges aquifers. The Village of Biron is in a geographical area where soils are characterized by shallow groundwater conditions. Groundwater is closest to the surface adjacent to streams and in drainage swales where the groundwater is in some cases one foot or closer to the ground's surface. Depth to groundwater is difficult to map in detail because of seasonal fluctuations, fluctuations due to extended periods of precipitation or drought, surface drainage, and construction of impermeable surfaces. Storm sewers also impact the amount of fluctuation experienced in structures.

Land uses can impact groundwater quality, particularly when groundwater is near the surface. There are growing concerns statewide about both the quantity and quality of groundwater. For example, groundwater quality may be impacted by a variety of activities, including leaking underground storage tanks, old dumps, septic systems, land spreading of septage and over-application of fertilizers and pesticides. The most common contaminants found in Wisconsin groundwater are nitrate-nitrogen, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as gasoline, paints and thinners and drain cleaners, and pesticides. Nitrate comes from several sources, including nitrogen-based fertilizers, septic systems, animal waste storage, feedlots, municipal and industrial wastewater discharges and sludge disposal. Phosphorus is another mineral that can be a potential problem because, while phosphorus levels in soil are high, the types of crops needed to reduce those levels are not being planted as often as in the past and the soils do not break phosphorous down.

Groundwater contaminants can affect the health of humans, livestock, and wildlife. Because groundwater seeps more slowly than surface runoff, pollution that occurs today may not become evident for several years. Once polluted, the groundwater is very difficult to purify and may take many years to clean itself by the dilution process. The DNR has developed a groundwater contamination susceptibility model. This model identifies groundwater contamination susceptibility by measuring the ease with which water (and any contaminant carried in the water) travels from the land surface to the top of the groundwater layer. Five characteristics are used to obtain the composite measurement: bedrock depth, bedrock type, soil characteristics, surficial deposits, water table depth, and contaminated source waters.

Various laws recognize the need to protect groundwater resources at the local level. Private well supplies, agricultural uses, recreational use of surface waters, etc. depend on a clean water supply. In 1974, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned existing law and created the current law, which is the doctrine of reasonable use. A property owner's use of groundwater is not absolute, but must be reasonable, considering impacts on the water table and other uses. Groundwater is also protected as waters of the state. Additionally, the Village's Municipal Well (MW) Recharge Overlay District prohibits certain land uses within a certain radius of municipal wells to prevent contamination from chemicals, nutrients, and other threats.

High-Capacity Wells

Numerous high-capacity wells are located throughout Central Wisconsin. According to the DNR there are 3 active high-capacity wells located in the Village, two of which are its municipal wells and one used by Nine Dragons Paper. A high capacity well is a well that has the capacity to withdraw more than 100,000 gallons per day, or a well that, together with all other wells on the same property, has a capacity of more than 100,000 gallons per day. Residential wells and fire protection wells are excluded from the definition of a high capacity well, and their pumping capacities are not included in the calculation of a property's well capacity.

Surface Water

The Village of Biron was founded because of its location on the Wisconsin River, and it is bounded along its entire northern limit by the river. There are also named and unnamed man-made tributaries to the river. Quinnell Creek is the most notable natural stream, which enters the Village just west of the intersection of Eagle Road and Highway 54. It then meanders to the northwest, crossing Kahoun Road, then dives to the southwest, exiting the Village near Strawberry Lane. The creek empties into the Wisconsin River a short distance later near Pleasant View Drive in Wisconsin Rapids.

The other surface water is related to the cranberry growing in the center parts of the Village. There are eight known locations where surface water withdrawals occur according to WDNR. Five locations on the Wisconsin River are operated by Nine Dragons Paper, and the remaining three are used for cranberry bogs. An elaborate system of man-made ditches diverts water from the Wisconsin River near the northeast corner of the Village, then channels it to the cranberry marshes, then back to the Wisconsin River where it exits south of Shore Acres subdivision. Several reservoirs act as ponds to store water needed in the cranberry operations. Those are scattered throughout the cranberry marsh area.

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land in which water drains to a common point. In Wisconsin, watersheds vary in scale from major river systems to small creek drainage areas and typically range in size from 100 to 300 square miles. River basins encompass several watersheds. There are 24 river basins in Wisconsin, which range in size from 500 to over 5,000 square miles. The Village is entirely within the Fourmile and Fivemile Creek watershed, which is part of the Central Wisconsin River Basin.

Wetlands

Wetlands play an important role since they serve as a filter system of pollutants, and are invaluable in controlling flood waters, recharging groundwater, and retaining water during drought. They may also provide valuable habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife, excellent cover and migration corridors for wildlife, and may support spawning and nursery habitat for fish and sanctuaries for rare and endangered species. Wetlands also offer education, recreational, and aesthetic benefits and opportunities.

Wisconsin Administrative Codes NR 115 and NR 117 mandate that wetlands be protected in both the rural and urban areas of the state. In the unincorporated areas, NR 115 protects wetlands or portions of wetlands within the shoreland zone that are designated on Wisconsin Wetland Inventory maps prepared by WNDR. To protect wetlands in incorporated areas, NR 117 was enacted in 1983 and requires that all wetlands and portions of 5 acres or more in size located in the shoreland zone be protected, and it outlines minimum shoreland zoning standards for Wisconsin cities and Villages. In addition to NR 115 and 117, NR 103 outlines water quality standards for wetlands and requires that all practicable alternatives be considered to avoid and minimize wetland disturbance and to ensure preservation, protection, restoration, and management of wetlands. Any alterations that are to be made to any wetland, regardless of size, need to be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the WDNR before any action can be taken.

The Village of Biron has approximately 1,322 acres of wetland defined by the WDNR and depicted in Map 2. There is a correlation between wetlands, seasonal high groundwater areas, and areas that are very limited for dwelling units. This map also helps to explain why the extensive cranberry marshes have developed in the Village. These areas are not suitable for development and are therefore protected and are noted on the future land use plan map later in this plan.

Floodplains

Much of Biron (1,276 acres) lies in the floodplain of the Wisconsin River, according Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood insurance rate maps. The Village is protected by concrete and earthen levees. The developed areas of the Village are all outside the mapped floodplain, although some have experienced flooding during what has been considered 100-year flood levels in 2010 and 2011. Floodplain areas have been and will continue to be protected through the Village's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Floodplains are mapped in Map 2.

Shorelands

Shorelands are sensitive areas near surface water bodies, and disturbing them causes erosion, runoff, and other issues that affect water quality and aesthetics. The Wood County Planning and Zoning Department administers Shoreland Zoning for lands 300 feet from a river or stream and 1,000 feet from a lake.

Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Wood County are threatened by the introduction of invasive aquatic species. Invasive species can alter the natural ecological relationships among native species and affect ecosystem function, economic value of ecosystems, and human health. Eurasian Water Milfoil, Reed Canary Grass, and Yellow Iris are listed by WDNR as invasive aquatic species that are present in the Village.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The Wisconsin DNR classifies major surface water resources. These classifications allow water bodies of particular importance to be identified because of their unique resource values and water quality. The DNR has two categories including Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) which have the highest quality water and fisheries in the state deserving of special protection, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) which have excellent water quality and valued fisheries. Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs) share many of the same environmental and ecological characteristics. The primary difference between the two is that ORWs typically do not have any direct point sources discharging pollutants directly to the water. In addition, any pollutant load discharged to an ORW must meet background water quality at all times. Exceptions are made for certain types of discharge situations to ERWs to allow pollutant loads that are greater than background water quality when human health would otherwise be compromised. There are currently no ERWs or ORWs in the Village.

Impaired Waters

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop a list of impaired waters, commonly referred to as the “303(d) list.” A water body is considered impaired if a) the current water quality does not meet the numeric or narrative criteria in a water quality standard or b) the designated use that is described in Wisconsin Administrative Code is not being achieved. A documented methodology is used to articulate the approach used to list waters in Wisconsin. Every two years, states are required to submit a list of impaired waters to EPA for approval. The Wisconsin River at Biron is listed as impaired due to Mercury, PCBs, and PFOS (Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid) contamination according to WDNR. PFOS is one type of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which have become a growing concern throughout the state. Policies and practices continue to emerge regarding PFAS, and the Village may monitor information about this topic as it is released.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are often unsuitable for development since they are constantly in a state of erosion due to wind and rain. Development on these surfaces would be subject to unstable foundations and exacerbate the erosion process. Steep slopes are nearly nonexistent in the Village of Biron.

Wildlife Habitat

The Village of Biron has a presence of wildlife, including deer, rabbits, ducks, geese, turkey, a large variety of birds, and more. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, there have been both aquatic and terrestrial occurrences of rare, endangered or protected plant and animal species in the Village. Bald eagles, for example, are common along the Wisconsin River and can be seen soaring overhead year around. Sightings of Red Shouldered Hawks have also been recorded on islands in the Wisconsin River. Karner Blue butterflies have been sighted in the area as well, although there are no recorded sightings specifically within the Village.

WDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) lists endangered and threatened species by location; however, data is only available at the County level to protect certain species. For Wood County, endangered species include Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Karner Blue Butterfly, Little Goblin Moonwort, Red-necked Grebe, Eastern Massasauga, Black Tern, Incurvate Emerald, Slender Glass Lizard, Kirtland's Warbler, and Peregrine Falcon. Threatened species include Wood Turtle, Redfin Shiner, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Red-shouldered Hawk, Frosted Elfin, Dwarf Milkweed, Pale Green Orchid, Henslow's Sparrow, Northern Long-eared Bat, Little Brown Bat, Big Brown Bat, and Upland Sandpiper.

Environmentally Remediated Areas

Brownfields are commercial or industrial properties that contain or may contain hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of these properties can be especially difficult. The Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) is an online database that provides information about contaminated properties and other activities related to the investigation and clean-up of properties with contaminated soil and/or groundwater. Contaminated sites are common as all communities with commercial and industrial development have the potential for air emissions, groundwater contamination, soil spills, and surface water contamination. Contaminated sites originate when a property is used for such activities as a gas station, industrial processing facility, a landfill, or a laundromat. As of 2025, there are ten closed sites and two open sites in the Village of Biron on the BRRTS map.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mining

Nonmetallic mining has a presence throughout Wood County, which involve "sites" or "quarries" where rock, sand, and other aggregates are extracted. There are no known nonmetallic mines or metallic deposits in the Village.

Parks, Open Spaces, and Recreational Resources

According to the Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, the Village has five parks: Biron Park, Gateway Park, Bridgewater Park, and Sunset Point Park. There are also two boat landings that are privately operated: one at the end of Anchor Landing Drive, and another on South Biron Drive near Kahoun Road. Recently, the Village constructed the Bridgewater Trail along North Biron Drive in the northeast part of the Village along the Wisconsin River. Biron Park is the oldest and most developed park since it includes active facilities like a ball field, tennis court, volleyball court, basketball courts, playground, and ice rink as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this plan. The other three parks are relatively new and provide recreation options for paddlers, fishers, wildlife viewers, and more. There are also multiuse trails and paved shoulders for bicycles and pedestrians as mapped in the Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan and Wood County Bicycle Pedestrian Plan, both adopted in 2025. Overall, the Village's proximity to the Wisconsin River and large tracts of undeveloped land provide open space, scenic value, and recreational opportunities.

Productive Agricultural Areas

The U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) interprets Biron's soils for agricultural uses. Nearly 800 acres in the Village are dedicated to the production of cranberries. Most of the cranberry marshes are located east of Marsh Road, although more than 150 acres of marshes are west of that road. Most of the cranberry marsh land is classified as "not prime farmland," although a bit is rated as "prime if drained." Cranberry production is the only agricultural practice of any significance in the Village, although there is some managed forestry and a few small hobby farms.

Only about 9.4% of the soils are classified as "prime" in the Village and 8% are classified as "prime if drained." The other 82.6% are considered "not prime." A very small 13-acre pocket of soil is classified as farmland of statewide significance, but that area is not farmed.

Historical and Cultural Resources

There are no buildings or sites in Biron that are listed on the Wisconsin or National Register of Historic Places. The Francis X. Biron home, known as the "White House" is historically significant and worthy of preservation. It has been in the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) since 1978. The "White House" was built in about 1865 as Mr. Biron's residence and boarding house for his workers. It was also used briefly as a school, a recreation center and headquarters for Consolidated Papers, Inc. This structure could be nominated for both the Wisconsin and the National Register of Historic Places. There are an additional 12 property records on the WHS AHI in the Village that could also be evaluated for historic nomination. One of these records is for the Biron Community Hall, now demolished, that contained Village offices, a gymnasium, bowling alley and more. It, along with the adjacent municipal swimming pool, were razed due to their deteriorating condition.

Biron residents should identify the potential structures and archeology sites and work with the Wisconsin Historical Society to determine their historical and cultural significance. This may be a project that can be undertaken by a community group or individual who is interested in the Village's history.

Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Programs

Local Programs include the Center for Watershed Science and Education (CWSE), Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc., and North Central Conservancy Trust.

Extension – University of Wisconsin – Madison: Discovery Farms Program, Nutrient Reduction Programs

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) / National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)
- Water Bank and Watershed Programs
- Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention
- Operations (WFPO) Program
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB)
- Wetland Mitigation Banking Program (WMBP)
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
- Working Lands for Wildlife

USDA Farm Service Agency: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

- Aquatic Habitat Protection Program
- Drinking Water and Groundwater Program
- Endangered Resources Program
- Fisheries Management Program
- Managed Forest Law
- Natural Heritage Conservation
- Nonpoint Source Program
- Parks and Recreation Management Program
- Private Forestry
- Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations
- Wildlife Management Program

Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS): State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

1. Commercial Nitrogen Optimization
2. Farmland Preservation Program
3. Nutrient Management Farmer Education
4. Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants
5. Soil and Water Resource Management

Natural, Agricultural, & Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal:

1. To preserve and enhance the Village's unique cultural, historical and natural resources.

Objectives:

1. Support park and recreation facilities and activities/programs.
2. Promote pride and community uniqueness by highlighting history and culture of the Village.
3. Encourage preservation of natural resources, including groundwater, surface water, drainage swales and wetlands.
4. Continue to be supportive of cranberry production in the Village and the role that it plays in the local economy and rural character.

Policies:

1. Continue to maintain the facilities at the Village park.
2. Remain responsive to changing recreation trends and interests.
3. Through fund-raising and volunteer help, continue to improve park and trail facilities.
4. Assess properties for possible architectural and historical significance and share information with the State Historical Society.
5. Identify ways to document Village history, share it with residents and visitors, and develop a method to record significant events for future reference.
6. Make efforts to document historical accounts from long-time Village residents.
7. Review the impacts of new development on natural resources in the Village.
8. Encourage development to take place in areas where natural resources will be minimally impacted.
9. Preserve access and scenic vistas of the Wisconsin River through close review of development proposals that may diminish that resource.
10. Encourage the peaceful coexistence of the cranberry growing areas and other land uses in the Village, recognizing the need for both to continue to grow.
11. Consider the impact of new development or land use changes on the established cranberry marshes and protect those marshes from encroachment of incompatible uses.
12. Encourage cranberry growers to utilize practices that minimize conflicts with adjacent land uses.

4. Utilities and Community Facilities

The Village of Biron has the typical utilities and community facilities that are common in small cities and Villages. Because of its small population size, Biron lost its post office several years ago and, in the 1980s was forced to abandon their municipal wastewater treatment plant and connect to the Wisconsin Rapids sanitary sewer system. The Village does not have its own police department but has a well staffed and equipped fire department. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Village's utilities and facilities.

Previous Plans and Studies

American Transmission Company: 10 Year Transmission System Assessment 2025

The American Transmission Company manages transmission infrastructure in the state. See ATC's website for a detailed list of projects that are planned to improve flexibility, reliability, economic factors, connectivity, and performance.

Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management Plan 2012

This sewer service area plan contains a detailed history of the Village's wastewater infrastructure and a description of how the regional wastewater system will meet demand in the future.

Wood County Broadband Plan 2024

This assessment involved a survey of Wood County residents and their attitudes towards broadband expansion in the County. Generally, there was strong support to expand broadband throughout the County and use it as an economic development tool. This Plan helps Wood County utilize Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding to expand its infrastructure.

Wood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan 2020

This document allows local governments to be eligible for certain disaster mitigation programs. An inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services form the background for understanding how the County should respond to a disaster. Examples of hazards include floods, tornadoes, winter storms, drought, fire, and hazardous materials accidents.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan 2009

The existing Wood County plan was adopted in 2009. The plan highlighted issues related to protecting groundwater supply and quality, promoting redevelopment and infill to maximize existing infrastructure, maintaining education and health in the County, and providing adequate infrastructure while protecting private property values. As of 2026, this plan is being updated.

Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Plan 2026-2030

This plan, adopted in late 2025, identifies priority projects for park, recreation, and open space throughout Wood County. Improvements include potential cross country ski trails, hiking, and biking trails to Bridgewater Park, and upgraded landscaping and a second kayak launch at sunset point park. Proposed bicycle and

pedestrian facilities include an off-road path along STH 54 and a connection from the existing east end of the off-street path that runs between South Biron Drive and 32nd Street/Kahoun Road south of Village Hall to Eagle Road/CTH U near Deer Street. Another proposed shared road runs along 32nd Street/Kahoun Road starting at STH 54 and running south into the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Finally, a corridor that alternates between bicycle lanes and an off-road path is proposed on CTH U/North Biron Drive for the entire length of roadway north of the South Biron Drive intersection to North 80th Street.

Wisconsin State Trails Network Plan 2001

This plan identifies STH 54 through the Village of Biron as Segment 4, which connects Green Bay to the Mississippi River. Segment 18 could also use this corridor to connect Tomahawk to the Wisconsin Dells, though that route could also use STH 66 across the Wisconsin River.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

To help with planning for outdoor recreation, the WDNR updates the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years. The purpose of the SCORP is to offer a sourcebook and overall guide for providers of recreational activities/facilities. The SCORP identifies issues such as changing demands on recreational resources, how new recreational activities compete for the same limited recreation resources as the traditional ones, and the effect of surrounding land uses on recreational areas. In general, outdoor recreation participation has dramatically increased in Wisconsin over the past 5 years, and participants are most frequently interested in habitat restoration and trail creation for running, walking, and hiking.

Wood County REDI Plan, 2021

The Wood County Rural Economic Development (REDI) Plan identifies a need for broadband and cellular service expansion as well as upgraded childcare infrastructure to remain economically competitive. There are currently implementation teams addressing both topics.

Utilities

Sanitary Sewer Service

The Village of Biron has a municipal sewer system for the disposal of waste, but not all residential and commercial structures in the Village are connected to the system. At this time, those structures east of 48th Street/Marsh Road rely on private onsite waste treatment systems (POWTS) and private wells. Sanitary sewers have been extended along the current North Biron Drive corridor to serve the Bridgewater mixed use development and along the Highway 54 corridor to serve the proposed business park. Other existing developed parcels in those corridors will have the sanitary sewer service available to them as part of these projects.

The sanitary sewer system in Biron is part of the Wisconsin Rapids system, the treatment plant being located in the City. The Village has been part of the regional system since the mid-1980s. Prior to that, Biron had its own treatment plant. When the Village proposed to add secondary treatment, the Department of Natural Resources required a study to analyze the cost effectiveness of adding secondary treatment versus joining a regional system. The result was a detailed study titled, Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management

Plan in 1972. That plan designated a 10- and 20-year service area to be served by the Wisconsin Rapids treatment plant. It also determined that the cost-effective option for Biron was to join the regional system. The Village pays an annual fee to Wisconsin Rapids. In 2009, the fee was \$137,000 for the 71,000 gallons per day of sewage generated in Biron. While this system has been working for the Village, it is difficult to budget when the flow cost is variable and not known.

Storm Water Management

Three and a half miles of storm sewer provides much of the Village with drainage of runoff from rain and snow melt. The water is channeled to the Wisconsin River. There are three outlets to the river. The Village spends about \$16,000 on an annual basis to rebuild manholes and catch basins. The manholes and catch basins are cleaned every two years to assure a good working condition. The entire storm water drainage system is in fair to good condition. Village officials constantly monitor the components of the storm water sewer system for needed repairs and replacement. A recent reconstruction of a portion of South Biron Drive includes a storm water component along with sanitary sewer and water distribution. A storm water component was also part of the new business park and for the Bridgewater residential development.

Water Supply & Distribution System

Biron's municipal water system includes one water tower that serves most of the Village. Two wells are located south of Highway 54 in a small island of Village that is surrounded by the Town of Grand Rapids. Each of the wells has a capacity of about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 million gallons per day (gpd). At this time, approximately 125,000 gallons of water are pumped each day. The Village has plenty of capacity for today's needs but has and will continue to investigate new sites for future wells. It is likely that future wells will also be located in what is now Grand Rapids. Because both wells are on the same well field property, it is possible that both could be contaminated by a single source simultaneously. In the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and to protect both water quantity and water quality for both private wells and future municipal wells, Biron should take a proactive position in reviewing potential well sites with Grand Rapids officials invited to reviews and discussions.

Like the sanitary sewer system, that portion of the Village east of 48th Street/Marsh Road historically did not have access to the water system. But the system expanded when the Bridgewater development in the northeast part of the Village was created, as well as the new business park in the southeast part of the Village. There are other issues with the existing water distribution system that are being addressed by the Village Board. When the previous Comprehensive Plan was written, Biron had many mains that were installed too shallow, are made of asbestos cement-type piping, and are undersized. They are prone to freezing and water main breaks. Another issue with the existing system is that there were two dead ends, meaning the mains had to be flushed every year at a costly loss of water. In 2015, a new water main loop was installed in the southwest portion of the Village. In 2026, there are plans to reconstruct Phase 1 of CTH U, including another new water main loop to the older part of the Village and the replacement of aging pipes in two sections. Shallow pipes are planned to be addressed with new water mains under Phase 2 of CTH U's reconstruction in the future.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Biron has its own garbage collection equipment. By Village ordinance, the Village provides garbage and refuse collection services to single- and two-family residences. The service can be provided by either Village crews

or by a contracted collector, as determined by the Village Board. Currently, Village crews pick up garbage and refuse at the curb and transport it to the Waste Management landfill in Wisconsin Rapids. The cost of the service is charged back to the property owners on their annual property tax bill. Commercial and industrial establishments arrange their own collection service. Recycling is also provided to residential structures, but not to commercial or industrial establishments. The Village provides recycling pickup on a bi-weekly schedule. Currently, Waste Management picks up the recyclables and hauls them to their facility in Wisconsin Rapids. The current 5-year contract with Waste Management runs through the end of 2027 and it renews on a one-year basis unless both the Village and Waste Management terminate the contract.

Biron residents also have a need to dispose of grass clippings, leaves and brush. Two locations provide this service; Ideal Recycling and Wolosek Landscaping, both conveniently located on Highway 54. Residents pay for this service with their property taxes.

Emergency Services

The policy of the Village Board regarding protective services is to provide the most efficient police, fire and ambulance services available to Village residents and the most cost-effective rates.

Law Enforcement

Police protection is provided to Biron by the Wood County Sheriff's Department. Biron does not employ a Village police officer or constable. The Wisconsin State Patrol also has presence in the community with Highway 54 traveling through the extreme southern part of the Village. There are no plans to hire a local law enforcement officer at this time.

Fire

Biron's fire protection is provided by a volunteer fire department. The department is equipped with two pumpers; one a 1,250 gpm rig and the other having a capacity of 1,000 gpm. The department also has a brush rig that carries 300 gallons, a UTV that is equipped to carry a water supply, a 14-foot Jon boat, and various small pieces of equipment.

Biron's fire department responds to an average of 15-20 fire calls each year. Fourteen of the 19 members are also first responders. About 35-40 ambulance calls are answered each year. Although they haven't had to respond for water rescues on the Wisconsin River, the department has responded to the river area to treat injuries.

Biron has mutual aid agreements with all area Wood County municipalities and the Town of Plover just to the east in Portage County. Presently, the equipment and man-power levels are adequate. The proposed Bridgewater residential development and the new business park will create a need for an additional truck. There is always a need for additional volunteer fire fighters and first responders.

Ambulance

Ambulance service is provided to the Village of Biron under contract with the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Wisconsin Rapids has their own ambulance vehicles that operate out of each of the two fire stations. The

Village Board monitors comments about this service and will continue to provide the best service available for emergencies.

Parks & Trails

Public open space lands are important determinants of the quality of life within a community. The Village has one community park, located on South Biron Drive. The 2.5-acre park has a baseball field, basketball hoops, volleyball court, picnic tables with grills, playground equipment, and drinking fountain. An ice-skating pond is also provided in the winter, and a new open shelter was added in 2012. The shelter has picnic tables, including two handicap accessible tables. It also has counter space for electric cookers. The park is well maintained, although past community surveys indicated that they would like to see upgraded play equipment and additional recreation facilities, some of which could be part of a regional effort.

Newer facilities include Gateway Park, Bridgewater Park, Sunset Point Park, and the Bridgewater Trail, which form a corridor of public access along the Wisconsin River on the Village's north side. Gateway Park includes a parking lot, picnic table, viewing deck, kayak launch, and fishing pier. Bridgewater Park features a wooded area with parking, an open pavilion, four picnic tables, power outlets, restrooms, and running water. Sunset Point park has 400 feet of shoreline and an ADA-accessible fishing pier as well as parking. Two boat landings along the river also have public access.

Many rural communities rely on nearby larger cities to provide recreational resources that smaller communities are unable to develop and maintain. In the past, many communities in the Wisconsin Rapids area, including Biron, operated a municipal swimming pool, but most have closed over time. Since 2020, the Wisconsin Rapids Aquatic Center has filled this role for surrounding communities that used to have their own pools.

The South Wood County Park is just a short drive from Biron and offers amenities beyond what a Village park can offer. Activities such as camping, beaches and extensive walking trails are available at the county park. Individual recreation and fitness opportunities are available throughout the area. Organized sports leagues are available in several facilities in neighboring Wisconsin Rapids, including fitness centers, the South Wood County YMCA, youth and adult organized sports, extensive bicycle trails, the Wisconsin Rapids Municipal Zoo, and indoor activities using school facilities.

Energy and Telecommunications

Telecommunications Facilities

Wireless communications have grown at a rapid pace in the past couple of decades. There is currently only one wireless tower in Biron at 111 Eagle Road. Cellular service in the Village is provided by AT&T Mobility, Cellcom, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, and Verizon. Internet service providers that operate in the Village of Biron include AT&T, Bug Tussel Wireless, HughesNet, Solarus, Spectrum, Starlink, U.S. Cellular, and Viasat, Inc. To provide for expansion of wireless technology while protecting the aesthetics and property values in the Village, it would be worthwhile to establish guidelines for location of these towers and to work with wireless communications providers to continue to co-locate their equipment whenever possible.

Power-Generating Plants and Transmission

No municipal power generating plants or transmission lines are located in Biron. The Village does have emergency generators located at the water tower and well house in case of power failure. Electricity is provided by three providers to residential and commercial customers. Most of the Village is served by Wisconsin Rapids Water & Light Commission. This utility does not, however, have a power generating facility in the Village. Consolidated Water Power Company (CWPC) has five hydroelectric plants along the Wisconsin River, one of which is in Biron. CWPC owns the dam and a powerhouse near the paper mill in Biron. The 80 – 100 residential and small commercial customers purchase electricity from CWPC at rates that are set by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, which is the same as with other utilities. Finally, the Wisconsin Power & Light Company covers the northeast corner of the Village north of North Biron Drive.

Nine Dragons Paper also has a power generating facility to produce electricity that is used in the paper mill for the production of paper. Power from the steam turbine generators is for internal use only, with no power being distributed to other users.

Natural Gas

The Village is currently served by Wisconsin Gas. There are no major gas or petroleum pipelines or terminals in the Village of Biron.

Community Facilities

Town Operations

The Biron Village Hall, built in 1996, is located at 451 Kahoun Rd, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494. Governing bodies include the Village Board that is comprised of a President, Treasurer and six Trustees. The Village also has a Plan Commission and eight additional committees, with a staff of seven full-time employees. The Village also has a municipal garage located at the intersection of Badger and Center Streets. This location houses most of the heavier equipment, including an end loader, air compressor, gas water pumps, pickup trucks, dump trucks, compactors, backhoe, and garbage truck.

Post Office

The nearest Post Office is located at 320 E Grand Ave, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries are difficult to create in the Village due to high water tables. There are no known cemeteries in the Village, but Restlawn Memorial Park is located between the Village's southern boundary and STH 54, and Calvary Cemetery borders the Village's western boundary near STH 54.

Health Care Facilities

A not-for-profit community-based residential facility, Wellington Place, is located on South Biron Drive across from the Wisconsin River, giving residents, employees and visitors a magnificent view. This community-based

residential facility (CBRF) has the capacity to house 30 residents. Twenty-four-hour assisted care is available to residents that may require some assistance. Located on 51.5 acres, there is room for potential expansion.

Though there are no facilities in Biron, the Village is served by both the Marshfield Clinic Wisconsin Rapids Center at 220 24th Street and Aspirus Wisconsin Rapids Hospital at 410 Dewey Street, both in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Various dental clinics, medical clinics, rehabilitation centers, and specialized medicine centers are located throughout the area. Aspirus is based in the City of Wausau and Marshfield Clinic is based in the City of Marshfield, with both health systems having a presence in many communities throughout Central Wisconsin.

Childcare Facilities

According to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), there are 14 licensed childcare facilities within 5 miles of the Village of Biron, one of which was within the Village, known as Head Start. The Wood County Head Start program has multiple centers, including one in Biron at what was formerly an elementary school in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School district. Head Start is a child development program that serves economically disadvantaged children ages three to five years old. The overall goal of Head Start is to develop social competence by using center-based programs. Services are also available to families who have a child with a disability. The Head Start program offers transportation to sites and provides meals to participants.

Childcaring is Central Wisconsin's Care and Referral (CCR&R) Network that assists parents in selecting quality childcare, helps increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offers information and technical support to potential child care providers, and gives technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs. The agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages.

Libraries

Public library service is provided to Biron residents at the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids. This service is made available, in part, through financing to the library from Wood County. It is part of the South Central Library System which includes Adams, Columbia, Dane, Green, Portage, Sauk, and Wood Counties.

Schools

Biron is in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School (WRPS) District. The district has a reported enrollment of 4,431 students for the 2025-26 school year, which is a decrease of nearly 1,000 students since the Village's previous comprehensive plan was written. There are six elementary schools in the district (Grant, Grove, Howe, Mead, Washington, and Woodside) along with a middle school, and two high schools (Lincoln and River Cities, as well as the THINK academy, Pitsch Early Learning Center, and Central Oaks Academy. Biron Elementary used to operate in what is now the Head Start Biron Center, but the district has since consolidated buildings in response to declining enrollment. This is due to a combination of population stagnation and families having fewer children or no children at all compared to the past. Several parochial schools are also available to Biron

residents. Most of those are located in Wisconsin Rapids, including Catholic elementary, middle and high schools, and Lutheran grade schools.

Post high school education is also available in the area. The two-year Midstate Technical College Campus is about one mile south of Biron on 32nd Street. The technical college, which also has three other campuses, offers degree and diploma programs, certificates, and business training for agribusiness, business, health, service, technical, and industrial careers. MSTC has worked with many area businesses and industries on custom and specialized training and has developed retraining programs for workers who have been displaced when businesses downsize, relocate or close.

The University of Wisconsin has a two-year campus in Marshfield and a four-year campus in nearby Stevens Point. The 4-year campus includes colleges of Fine Arts and Communication; Letters and Science; Natural Resources; and Professional Studies, with more than 125 majors and minors to choose from. Marshfield's two-year campus offers an Associate's Degree program to provide the liberal arts foundation required for over 200 University of Wisconsin majors and for acquiring a bachelor's degree. They also have a bachelor's degree partnership with other UW campuses. College and University opportunities are also available in Wausau, about an hour drive to the north, with Northcentral Technical College and UWSP at Wausau. Lakeland University based in Plymouth, Wisconsin also has classes in MSTC's Wisconsin Rapids campus.

Utilities & Community Facilities Goals & Objectives

Goal:

Promote a cost-effective, efficient supply of utilities, facilities and services that meets the needs and expectations of residents, that will encourage the expansion of existing businesses, that will encourage the attraction of new businesses, and that will contribute to the sustainability of the Village.

Objectives:

1. Provide all public services in a cost-effective and energy efficient manner.
2. Provide a safe, potable water supply, adequate sanitary sewers and adequate storm sewers to protect properties and the health and safety of Village residents and businesses.
3. Provide for expansion of the Village while protecting the abundant wetlands and other natural resources in the community.
4. Protect the lives, property and rights of Biron residents and businesses through law enforcement, fire and emergency services.
5. Improve the quality of life as a means to attract and retain residents and businesses.
6. Support high quality education through the Wisconsin Rapids public and parochial school system, Midstate Technical College, and the area University of Wisconsin campuses.

Policies:

1. Improve the water distribution system by providing looping and a redundant supply of water from the City of Wisconsin Rapids in case of emergency.
2. Utilize the advantages of tax increment districts and other financing programs to develop and expand Biron's water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer infrastructure.
3. Be a proactive member of the areawide sewer service area plan policy and technical advisory committees.
4. Work with the state, county and surrounding municipalities to create and maintain agreements to share or partner with one another to provide emergency and protective services.
5. Expand and enhance parks and trails within the Village and work to connect Biron with other trail networks in neighboring communities to create a community that reaches beyond Biron's corporate limits. Specific additions will include a new park at the south end of South Biron Drive, new boat launch sites as part of the County Road U relocation, a new County park as part of the Bridgewater development and green spaces in the new business park. Trails are identified on the future land use plan map, except trails that are to be included in the Bridgewater development and business park.

5. Transportation

A community's transportation system consists of a variety of roads; some are owned and maintained by local officials, others are part of the county or state road systems. In addition to roads, the transportation system includes separate facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, railroads, airports, and public transit. This chapter describes the transportation system in the Village of Biron and related improvements or issues affecting the system.

As part of the larger urbanized area, Biron coordinates with their partners on regional transportation planning and expenditures. The purpose of this section is to describe the Village's transportation system components, discuss current and future changes and additions to that system, describe how the transportation system relates to other segments of the comprehensive plan, describe how Biron's transportation system relates to that of the urbanized area and state and regional systems, develop goals and objectives for the transportation system and establish local programs that will seek to achieve those goals and objectives.

Previous Plans and Studies

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

This current federal transportation program authorizes up to \$108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including \$91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026 and provides advance appropriations for certain programs. Major goals include improving safety, modernizing aging transit infrastructure and fleets, investing in cleaner transportation, and improving equity in communities with limited transportation access. Other federal legislation that frames transportation planning includes the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA); the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and the Clean Air Act.

Connect 2050: Let's Connect Wisconsin 2022

Connect 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted in 2022, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. It states that other existing state-level plans created prior to Connect 2025 remain in effect until another plan supersedes them. These plans include:

- Bicycle Transportation plan 2020. This plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors like old rail lines is an important strategy to make these connections.
- Corridors 2030. Recommendations for State Highways 13, 54, and 66 near Biron are discussed, with STH 54 being considered a 2030 Connector Route with a potential bypass around the City of Wisconsin Rapids identified in a 2007 study.

- Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020. This plan supports WisDOT's role in implementing pedestrian infrastructure along state trunk highways (STHs).
- Rail Plan 2050. Objectives in this plan include enhancing rail safety and security, supporting freight rail, ensuring the long-term viability of rail corridors, ensuring the long-term viability of branch and short line networks, encouraging intercity passenger rail network investment, supporting commuter rail, and planning for intercity passenger rail and commuter rail.
- State Airport System Plan 2030. This plan is described later in this chapter regarding details about the nearby Alexander Field South Wood County Airport.
- State Freight Plan. Statewide goals for this plan include pursuing long-term funding, focusing on partnerships, pursuing continuous improvement, expanding data-driven decision-making processes, increasing options, connections, and mobility for people and goods, maximizing technology benefits, maximizing transportation safety, maximizing transportation system reliability and reliability, and balancing transportation needs with those of the natural environment, socioeconomic, historic, and cultural resources.
- Transportation Asset Management Plan 2023-2032. This plan's goal is to keep Wisconsin's portion of the National Highway System safe, efficient, resilient, and in a state of good repair at minimal cost.

Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Service Transportation Plan 2024- 2028

Wood County developed this five-year plan that was facilitated by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The plan analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation and proposes strategies to address the gaps and needs.

Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

Transportation is one of ten elements included in NCWRPC's Regional Comprehensive Plan. This plan identifies the following issues: A need for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, dispersed population in rural areas, weight limits on roads, rail and roadway conflicts, funding transportation maintenance and improvements, an aging population's ability to continue depending on driving, and transporting students as school enrollment declines and school facilities consolidate. Goals include providing and improving transportation access to people of all ages and abilities, funding transportation maintenance and expansion, and enhancing the regional economy by supporting airports, freight rail, and intermodal freight opportunities.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2018

This plan is a region-wide effort to improve bicycling and walking across communities within North Central Wisconsin. The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifies other potential trail and route user groups, identifies routes, and describes policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking to promote connectivity between communities and destinations throughout North Central Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Trails Network Plan 2003

This Plan identifies corridors for statewide bicycle and pedestrian trails. Proposed segments 4 (Green Bay to the Mississippi River) and 18 (Tomahawk to Wisconsin Dells) would utilize frontage along the Wisconsin River and/or STH 54 to connect the Cities of Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids as part of these segments.

Wood County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2025

As discussed in previous chapters, this Plan maps the existing and future paved shoulders, bicycle lanes, and off-road paths.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan

Goals of this plan include A. Support a transportation system which, through its location, capacity, and design will effectively serve the existing land use development pattern and meet anticipated transportation demand generated by existing and planned land use, B. Continue to provide transportation alternatives to residents that include vehicular travel, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and air and rail facilities, and C. Encourage a transportation system that supports economic development of the County.

Road Network

Roads and highways all fall into two classification systems: functional and jurisdictional. Functional classification describes its physical characteristics, and jurisdictional classification describes which entity manages the road. According to the Village's previous comprehensive plan, Biron was partially under urban classifications and partially under rural classifications at the time; it now entirely falls under urban classifications. Table 13, below, summarizes the Village's road network mileage by functional and jurisdictional classification.

Table 13: Biron Road Network Mileage by Functional and Jurisdictional Classification

| Jurisdiction | Functional Classification | | | Total | Percent |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----------|-------|--------|---------|
| | Arterial | Collector | Local | | |
| State | 0.50 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 3.0% |
| County | 3.51 | 0.49 | 0.00 | 4.00 | 24.5% |
| Local | 2.09 | 1.26 | 8.45 | 11.80 | 72.4% |
| Total | 6.10 | 1.75 | 8.45 | 16.30 | 100.0% |
| Percent | 37.4% | 10.7% | 51.8% | 100.0% | |

Source: WisDOT, NCWRPC

Functional Classifications

A functional classification system groups streets and highways into classes according to the character of service they provide. The current functional classification system used in Wisconsin consists of five classifications that are divided into urban and rural categories. Wisconsin Rapids, Biron, Port Edwards

(Village) and Nekoosa are considered part of an urban area for having a combined population greater than 5,000 people. Descriptions of each functional class are as follows:

- Principal Arterials serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas greater than 5,000 population or connect major centers of activity and the highest traffic volumes and the longest trip desires. STH 54 is a Principal Arterial.
- Minor Arterials, in conjunction with principal arterials, serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intracommunity continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials. CTH U (N Biron Dr, Eagle Rd, and 80th St N) and S Biron Dr are minor arterials.
- Collectors provide service to moderate-sized communities and other inter-area traffic generators and link those generators to nearby larger population centers or higher function routes. There are no collectors in Biron.
- Minor Collectors collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, important traffic generators, and higher function roads. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of a collector road. Kahoun Rd is a minor collector.
- Local Roads comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to higher road classifications. Local streets offer the highest level of access, but the lowest level of mobility for automobiles because of their slow speeds and complexity. All remaining roads not listed in the other classifications are local roads.

Map 4 identifies Biron's road network based on Functional Classification. Sixteen urban areas in Wisconsin, including the Wisconsin Rapids urban area, of which Biron is a part, receive annual allocations based on their population. The communities in the urban area meet annually to determine which projects should be submitted for funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP) – Urban funding. More information is available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation North Central Regional Office in Wisconsin Rapids.

Current state guidelines suggest that principal arterials should be between 2 and 4 percent of the total road network, minor arterials 4 to 8 percent, major collectors 5 to 18 percent, minor collectors 5 to 10 percent and local roads 65 to 75 percent of the total system. When combined, guidelines promote that all arterials are between 6 and 12 percent, and all collectors are between 10 and 28 percent. According to Table 13, the Village has a much higher share of arterials (37.4 percent) and a lower share of local roads (51.8 percent). This reflects Biron's position at the crossroads of many state and county highways that give it the ability to manufacturing, agriculture, and other industries that require a robust road network. It also means that a large share of the Village's roads do not need to be maintained by the Village.

Jurisdictional Classification

Within a jurisdictional framework, roads fall into four major classifications: federal (U.S. Highways abbreviated as USH and Interstate Highways abbreviated ISH), state (state trunk highways, abbreviated as "STH"), county (county trunk highways, abbreviated as "CTH") and City roads, which are called local roads. The Village's local roads form the largest share of the road network (72.4 percent), followed by county roads (24.5 percent), and state roads (3.0 percent). There are currently no federal highways in Biron.

Average Daily Traffic

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation counts traffic and calculates average daily traffic every few years. Though multiple years of data are available, 2011 and 2021 counts were conducted for most sites in the Village; they are displayed in Table 14 below. Between 2011 and 2021, traffic counts fell across the Village except for County Highway U (80th St) between North Biron Road and State Highway 54. This could be due to the newer Bridgewater Development adding homes and upgraded outdoor recreation facilities that generate traffic in that area as well as commuters utilizing the highway to commute between Portage and Wood Counties. The decrease in other locations could be a result of more retirees and fewer children being driven to school compared to past decades.

Traffic counts are important to local officials for future planning for access, for maintenance purposes and to analyze the need and timing for new local streets or county and state highways. Sometimes, it is beneficial for local municipal units to take counts of traffic on certain local streets prior to making improvements to determine if any type of upgrade is needed.

Table 14: Road Network AADT

| Location | 2011 | 2021 | 2011-2021 % Change |
|--|--------|--------|--------------------|
| STH 54 East of Spring St | 11,500 | 11,400 | -0.9% |
| Kahoun Dr North of STH 54 | 1,300 | 470 | -63.8% |
| S Biron Dr between Kahoun and CTH U* | 1,200 | 430 | -64.2% |
| S Biron Dr S of Johnson Pkwy | 1,100 | 640 | -41.8% |
| N Biron Dr/CTH U Between Marsh & Huffman Rds | 1,600 | 1,100 | -31.3% |
| CTH U Between N Biron Rd and STH 54 | 370 | 460 | 24.3% |

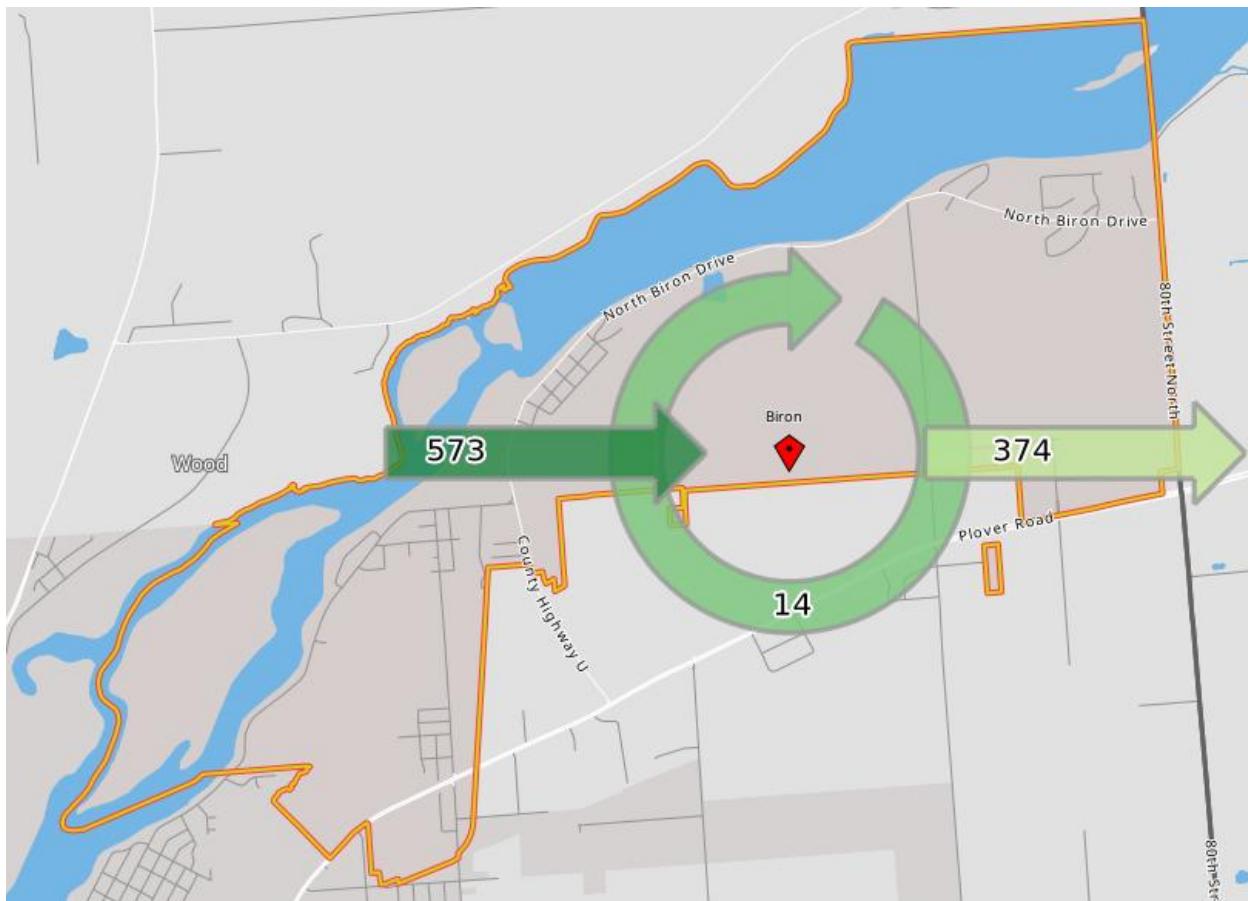
Source: WisDOT. *2021 AADT not available at this site; 2017 data was used instead.

In general, traffic generated and attracted by any new land use can increase congestion on the roadway system. Even without creating new access points, changes in land use can alter the capacity of the roadway. Uncontrolled division of land tends to affect highways by increasing the amount of traffic turning into and out from intersecting driveways, therefore impairing safety, and impeding traffic movements. Future development should consider impacts on traffic patterns.

Commuting Patterns

Figure 4 describes the commuting patterns of Biron resident workers who are 16 years old and older in 2022. At that time, 573 workers commuted into the Village every day, 374 workers left the Village every day, and 14 workers lived and worked in the Village. This indicates that there could be demand for housing if workers would like to move closer to their employer, but it also indicates that few residents are working within the Village, supporting an opportunity to create more jobs.

Figure 4: Village of Biron Commuter Flow



Source: U.S. Census-on-the-Map 2022

In 2022, most Biron workers (95.3 percent) used automobiles (or trucks or vans) to commute to their workplace and most of them drive alone. None reported using public transportation providers, which consists of taxi service only. A few commute by walking (1.1 percent), only 3.6 percent work at home, and none reported traveling by other means, which includes bicycles. Approximately 17.4 percent all Biron residents have less than 10 minutes travel time to work, about 41.9% are less than 15 minutes, and more than 61.9% travel for less than 20-minutes to their workplace. At the State level, 51.1 percent of workers travel less than 20-minutes to work. The short travel time for Biron is primarily because of little traffic congestion and the fact that many of the Village's residents work in Wood County. With over half of Biron's workers being less than 20 minutes to work, there is an opportunity to promote healthier means of transportation, such as bicycles or walking.

Road Maintenance

The Village of Biron uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The PASER system is the rating system used by most Wisconsin communities. The PASER system rates road surfaces of a scale of 1 to 10:

- “1” and “2” = very poor condition
- “3” = poor condition
- “4” and “5” = fair condition
- “6” and “7” = good condition
- “8” = very good condition
- “9” and “10” = excellent condition

Table 15 shows a summary of Town road pavement conditions in the Village of Biron. Note that these totals only include local roads, so County and State Highways are excluded. Village roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below “fair” must be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary. The roads that display a surface rating of “good” or better will only require minimal preventative maintenance to promote safe travel conditions.

Table 15: Pavement Condition and Surface Type

| Condition | Miles | Percent |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Very Poor | 1.09 | 9.2% |
| Poor | 0.00 | 0.0% |
| Fair | 6.68 | 56.6% |
| Good | 1.86 | 15.7% |
| Very Good | 0.96 | 8.1% |
| Excellent | 1.21 | 10.3% |
| Total | 11.80 | 100.0% |
| Surface Type | Miles | Percent |
| Gravel | 0.81 | 6.9% |
| Asphalt | 10.99 | 93.1% |
| Total | 11.80 | 100.0% |

Source: WisDOT

Only 34.1 percent of roads in Biron are rated “good” or better. Though only 9.2 percent are rated “poor” or “very poor”, another 56.6 percent of roads in the “fair” category. This means there will likely need to be several significant road projects in the coming years. Overall, most roads (93.1 percent) are paved with asphalt.

Road Design Standards

Roads should be designed for the function they serve. Lightly traveled rural roads may remain graveled to reduce speed levels and maintain a rural character. Where higher traffic volumes are expected, roads should

be paved. Communities should consider the current and potential future usage of a road to determine if minimum design standards will be adequate or if higher standards are needed.

WisDOT has multiple resources and guidelines for facility design. Construction of new or complete reconstruction of existing roads often must meet a higher level of design standards than basic resurfacing or reconditioning improvements. Examples of resurfacing and reconditioning improvements include pavement rehabilitation, lanes and/or shoulder widening, replacing bridge elements, bridge deck overlays, bridge and culvert replacement, and other improvements such as minor grading, sub-grade work, and correction of drainage problems.

Proposed Highway Improvements

WisDOT prepares a six-year improvement program that identifies improvement projects for state trunk highways. STH 54 east of 26th St is planned to be improved with concrete pavement joint repair, shoulder, turn lane, and median resurfacing, concrete curb ramps replacement, as-needed curb and gutter replacement, and storm sewer inlet repair by 2030. At-grade railroad crossing upgrades kicked off this project in 2025. The County Highway Department prepares its own roadway management plan identifying needed improvements on county highways, with a planned reconstruction of CTH U between Fox St and Huffman Rd following the replacement of two culverts in 2025. Continually changing needs, funding availability, and political climate affect the implementation of these improvement plans each year.

Official Mapping

State Statutes permit municipalities to adopt an Official Map under Section 62.23(6). This map is used when reviewing land division and subdivision requests to ensure that adequate right-of-way is dedicated for future road expansions, reducing future land acquisition expenses. For example, a property that borders a County Highway may be required to dedicate additional frontage if said highway is planned to have a wider future right-of-way to gain subdivision approval. Currently, Biron does not have an Official Map.

Network Users

Airports

Biron is served by two airports; Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport (ISW) and the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee. CWA provides commercial airline service to the area. Delta, United, and American Airlines provide daily departures to Minneapolis/St. Paul and Chicago O'Hare. There are also daily air freight and express flights.

Central Wisconsin Airport is classified by WisDOT as a non-hub primary airport. CWA is owned by Marathon and Portage Counties and is governed by the Central Wisconsin Joint Airport Board. The airport first opened in 1969 to provide a regional facility to ensure continued quality air service for North Central Wisconsin. The terminal was modernized in 2011 and the highway access has been improved to make access to the airport more convenient. Parking facilities were also upgraded in 2012.

CWA has two grooved concrete runways, precision instrument landing procedures to both runways for all weather operations, an air traffic control tower and all the other amenities of a modern airport. With recent

renovations and planned improvements, more than \$65,000,000 will have been spent since 1982 to keep the airport ready to serve the business and pleasure needs of the region.

Alexander Field is a medium general aviation airport that has two paved runways, including a 5,500-foot concrete runway that will accommodate business jets and other private aircraft. The cross runway is 3,640 feet in length. They also offer aircraft maintenance, aircraft and jet fuel, an S.D.F. landing system, flying lessons, and charter service. The airport is located on the southeast side of Wisconsin Rapids and is situated on land that is in Wisconsin Rapids, Grand Rapids and the Village of Port Edwards. Each of these three communities, the City of Nekoosa and Wood County contribute to the costs of operating and maintaining the airport.

Like most airports, Alexander Field has both direct and indirect impacts on the area's quality of life and economy. Convenient access to air transportation allows businesses to quickly move key personnel from one site to another, saving valuable time and increasing their productivity. The airport also provides facilities for emergency medical flights, law enforcement, agricultural spraying, pilot training, recreational flying and hosts annual breakfast fly-ins, all adding to the economy and quality of life of our area. Finally, the airport's popularity has increased following the rapid development of the Town of Rome (Adams County) and its multiple luxury golf resorts.

Since 2017, over \$10 million has been invested in a multi-phase series of airport upgrades. Phase 1 involved a partial taxiway and runway reconstruction to improve safety and maneuverability for the secondary runway (12/20). Phase 2 resulted in an expanded apron and airplane parking areas, and Phase 3 added a full taxiway parallel to the primary runway (2/20). These upgrades have allowed the airport to safely handle the 600 percent increase in jet traffic, and terminal upgrades are underway to enhance visitor experience.

Direct economic impacts include jobs at the airport and sales of airport products and services. Indirect impacts include spending by visitors who arrive in the Wisconsin Rapids area via the airport. That spending includes such things as lodging, meals, recreation, ground transportation and retail purchases while here. In addition, there are induced economic impacts which include the activities of suppliers to the businesses at the airport, for example electricity, office supplies, aircraft parts, and fuel for resale; and suppliers to the businesses that serve visitors, such as bedding, towels, and wholesale food suppliers. It also includes activity generated by the airport workers re-spending their income on clothing, housing, groceries, entertainment, etc.

Airports, by their very nature, create planning issues and opportunities for communities. Uses near airports will differ depending on the size and function of the airport. Noise is a factor to consider, along with safety issues related to low-flying aircraft, including clear zones at the end of runway approaches and height restrictions. The Federal Aviation Administration regulates heights of structures. Biron is far enough away from the airport that property in the Village is not affected by the building height restriction. Special attention should be given, however, to proposals for communications towers and similar structures in the future.

Railroad Service

The Canadian National Railroad has service to industries throughout the Wisconsin Rapids urban area with a main line that lies south of and roughly parallels State Highway 54. Canadian National, headquartered in

Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is the largest railway in Canada and is currently Canada's only transcontinental railroad. CN also has extensive trackage in the central portion of the United States, from northern Minnesota, through Wisconsin to Chicago, Memphis, and New Orleans and has spurs into the paper mill in Biron.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Bicycle/pedestrian paths and trails (multi use trails) provide both an alternate means of travel and a quality-of-life opportunity that is important to people of all ages. There are some opportunities for trail use in Biron. Currently, wide paved shoulders exist on Kahoun Rd, CTH U/Eagle Rd south of S Biron Dr, and S Biron Rd between Chapman Dr and Wellington Place. There are also off-road paved trails on S Biron Rd south of Wellington Place and along CTH U/N Biron Dr and Sunset Pl Drive along the Wisconsin River east of Huffman Rd. There is also a trail that connects S Biron Dr and Kahoun Rd near Village Hall. The 2025 Wood County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposes bike lanes on CTH U/N Biron Dr in the areas that currently lack bicycle infrastructure (north of S Biron Dr to Fox St and east of Sunset Pl). It also proposes off-road paved paths between Fox St and Huffman Dr as well as south of Village Hall to extend the existing east-west trail all the way to CTH U/Eagle Rd.

State Highway 54 also has a paved path that parallels that road from its intersection with County Road W, north to Wisconsin Rapids, beyond to and through Biron to 48th Street. While most of this path is in Wisconsin Rapids, part of it is in the Village and lends to the quality of the trail network that serves residents of Biron. All of the trails and routes in Biron can be tied into the network of trails in Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa. Planned and potential multiuse facilities in Biron are shown on the Future Land Use Plan map (Map 6) and described in Chapter 7.

Public Transportation

There is no mass public transit service for the general public in Biron. The Wood County Elderly and Disabled Transportation program provides rides to persons over the age of 55, and people who have a disability that prevents them from driving. Rides are provided for shopping, to and from medical appointments, or to other locations as needed.

The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin provides bus service for seniors and persons with disabilities. Priorities include medical appointments/treatment, nutrition, shopping and social events. Because of recent increased ridership, the ADRC has established a schedule for each of the Wisconsin Rapids area communities. A fee is charged per one-way trip, but some area retailers will pay the rider fee for people who patronize their establishments.

The ADRC's Volunteer Driver program provides certified drivers to transport Wood County residents who are 60 years or older and prioritizes based on medical and nutritional purposes. This is a non-emergency service covering the entire State of Wisconsin for medical appointments. Riders must be ambulatory or accompanied and are billed a percentage of the cost of the trip.

There are also privately operated transportation options. Running, Inc. is a shared taxi company that offers transportation to the public for a fee. Additionally, Reliaride Transport Services, LLC is a non-emergency

medical transport provider based out of Wisconsin Rapids that serves several Central Wisconsin communities.

Trucking

Trucking traffic in Biron consists of both through-traffic and traffic generated by local manufacturers, distribution centers, and services which include rental, sales, service, transport and transportation brokers. Issues related to increased stress on physical infrastructure, noise, and pedestrian safety concerns should be considered along corridors of heavy truck traffic. According to WisDOT, STH 54 is the only designated long truck route in Biron. Additional roads branch out from STH to link local industry with the main truck routes as well as for the distribution of commodities within the local area. Issues such as safety, weight restriction and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

Long Distance Intercity Bus Service

Lamers Bus Lines currently connects Wisconsin Rapids to the Wausau, Fox Cities, and Milwaukee areas. WisDOT supports another route connecting the nearby City of Stevens Point to the Cities of Portage and Madison, operated by Coach USA Van Galder.

Water Transportation

The Wisconsin River contains several dams and hydroelectric facilities along its length, but there are no locks for commercial transportation for passengers or freight. The River and its tributaries provide recreational uses, such as swimming, tubing, paddling, boating, and sailing.

Other Modes of Travel

There are a variety of other miscellaneous modes within and around the Village including snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), horses, cross-country skis, and others. For the most part, however, these forms of travel are not recognized as modes of transportation, but rather as forms of recreation. As such, these alternative forms of travel will not be addressed extensively in the transportation chapter. However, it is important to be aware of interactions between recreational forms of travel and more traditional transportation systems. For example, snowmobiles have an extensive network of their own trail routes that are often parallel to or cross public highways. Snowmobiles and ATVs trails may compete against a bike trail for the same right-of-way, and ATVs are sometimes permitted to travel on roads. Each municipality has its own ordinances and locations where these modes of travel are permitted. In Biron, ATVs are allowed on CTH U (Eagle Rd, N Biron Dr, and 80th St) only.

Relationship of Transportation System to Other Comprehensive Plan Elements

Since the previous comprehensive plan was written, several road projects have occurred. These include creating the Biron Business Park and opening access to 72nd street and STH 54 as well as the Bridgewater Development, which realigned CTH U. Several bicycle-pedestrian projects also occurred during this time, including one along S Biron Dr that also upgraded municipal water system improvements. These and future projects impact existing traffic patterns over time.

Future development may result in road network and land use changes to accommodate school busses or transportation for the elderly. Speed limits could potentially be affected as well. Street maintenance, snow plowing and garbage pickup will certainly be affected as more mileage is added and as more business and residential development occurs.

Street improvements will continue to be coordinated between neighboring communities, the county and the state. Biron's changes may require coordination with the Town of Plover and Portage County. The Village and its neighboring communities should benefit from cost-effective provision of future transportation facilities that can be achieved through open discussions and collaboration.

Transportation Goals & Objectives

Goal:

Provide a safe, efficient, cost-effective transportation system, including streets and highways, bike and pedestrian facilities, air and rail facilities, and facilities for transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

Objectives:

1. Provide a choice of transportation options for Village residents.

Policies:

1. Create multiuse system of trails and routes throughout the Village and coordinate that system with trails in neighboring communities.
2. Continue to encourage providers of transportation for the public and those who choose not or cannot drive to provide transportation alternatives to Biron neighborhoods. This includes taxi service, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) bus and driver services, and others.
3. Maintain contact with external transportation service providers to ensure that Biron is receiving the services at fair rates and at times that are convenient for Biron residents.
4. Communicate on a regular basis with NewPage Corporation and their rail providers to prevent South Biron Drive from being blocked for extended periods while moving rail cars into or out of the mill.

Goal:

Provide interconnection of transportation systems between municipalities.

Objectives:

1. Create a seamless flow from Biron into neighboring communities' street patterns and assure that their new streets coordinate with those in Biron.

Policies:

1. Work with neighboring communities to coordinate a street and highway system that creates a smooth flow between communities and the major traffic generators in them. New opportunities may occur with the development of the business park streets and the relocation of County Highway U.

Goal:

Provide safe transportation throughout the Village.

Objectives:

6. Provide an internal street system that will ensure a safe, smooth flow of motorized and non-motorized traffic and will enable Village emergency vehicles and service vehicles and school busses to access local neighborhoods in the most expeditious manner.

Policies:

1. Coordinate local street improvements with work on county and state highways.
2. Schedule work on local streets in such a way as to minimize impact on school bus services and the needs of local residents, businesses and the paper mill.
3. Encourage pedestrian-friendly design of new residential or commercial developments to provide for alternative modes of transportation to and from area employers, recreation areas and schools.
4. Protect the function of various streets and highways and minimize conflicts between local land uses by monitoring the number of access points from subdivisions and higher density residential areas to higher function county and state highways.
5. Through implementation of the local plan and zoning ordinance, monitor the location of access points to assure clear visibility for motorists and bicyclists and to allow sufficient maneuvering space for speed changes and turning.
6. On a regular basis, the appropriate committees and Village Board will discuss maintenance of existing roads, need for new roads, and issues regarding access at points of high volume traffic to work towards alleviating congestion and reducing accidents at those points.

Goal:

Provide adequate local and regional air and rail freight and transportation options.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that options are available for businesses to ship and receive goods and for residents and businesses to travel to preferred destinations.

Policies:

1. Consider participating on the Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport Commission to maintain the existing facility and expand the airport to offer better service to airport users, especially businesses and industries that are, or will be, located in the community.
2. Promote Alexander Field as a local airport to prospective businesses that may be looking to locate in Biron.
3. Support movement of freight into and out of the community via rail as an option to trucking. Encourage railroad owners to maintain and improve the area railroads as needed to accomplish this goal.
4. Encourage the railroad owners to consider the addition of a second, parallel rail line as an inducement to businesses to locate in the Biron, Grand Rapids and Wisconsin Rapids area.