



Village of Biron
2026 Comprehensive Plan



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1. Issues and Opportunities

Location & Geography

The Village of Biron is located in the southeast quadrant of Wood County in central Wisconsin on the banks of the Wisconsin River. The Village is bordered on the north and west by the Wisconsin River, on the east by Portage County's Town of Grant and Town of Plover, and to the south by the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Town of Grand Rapids. Map 1 shows the location of Biron in relation to its surroundings. The soils in Biron include a mix of sand to loamy sand to muck. Most areas where development has occurred have sandy soils. Other areas have wetter soils with shallow groundwater depths. Much of the Village has groundwater depths of less than five feet, with levels of three feet or less common. Although most of the Village is served by a sanitary sewer system, a few homes and businesses are still located on private septic systems; see Chapter 4 for more information. Map 2: Natural Resources depicts the extensive floodplains and wetlands that limit development in the Village and Map 4: Utilities and Community Facilities provides an overview of infrastructure that serves development.

Data Sources The U.S. Census Bureau has two data sources that are widely used in this plan, which are described below:

U.S. Census	American Community Survey (ACS)
- Counts population, households, etc. - Based on former Census "short form" - Mailed to every household in the U.S. - Mailed every decade (2010, 2020, etc.) - Self-reported data that is published - Typically more accurate than ACS - No data for non-Census years	- Counts U.S. Census info plus additional topics - Based on former Census "long form" - Mailed to a limited number of households - Mailed every year (2024, 2025, etc.) - Self-reported data used to produce estimates - Typically less accurate than Census - Provides data for non-Census years

The ACS evolved from the "long form" that some households used to receive with the Census. In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau began releasing ACS data for all populations on a yearly basis. The availability of these surveys means that communities do not need to wait ten years for the census to assess current trends, but they are only estimates based on a limited sample size. Trends are generally analyzed for the thirteen-year time frame from 2010 to 2024 in this report since 2024 data was released in early 2026. Despite the limitations listed above for each data source (self-reporting, etc.), there are few substitutes, if any, for most of the demographic data provided by these sources. In general, they are the most widely used and exhaustive data sets used in plans, grants, decision-making tools, and other programs. Other data sources are used for topics not covered by Census are cited accordingly, such as population projections and estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration's (DOA).

History

In 1837, the first sawmill was constructed by Harrison Kellogg Fay and Joshua Draper. This mill soon shipped the first fleet of dressed lumber down the Wisconsin River. Francis Xavier Biron, for whom the Village was eventually named, bought the sawmill in 1846. Biron rebuilt the mill in 1853, then built and equipped a new

and larger sawmill and improved the dam in 1873. Francis Biron died in 1877, leaving the mill to his son, who sold to the Grand Rapids Pulp and Paper Company in 1894. The paper company built the first paper mill the following year, 1895. Consolidated Papers, Inc. purchased the paper mill in 1911 and raised the head on the dam, necessitating diking along the river several miles back from the dam to prevent flooding.

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

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

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

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

Village Government

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

Population Change and Distribution

Table 1 contains population totals for the Village, its neighboring municipalities, the County, and the State. Note that the Village's population jump in 2000 was a result of an annexation of a large area on the Village's south side near 32nd Street and Highway 54. In summary, most municipalities in the area have a flat or decreasing population, with the Town of Seneca having the largest decrease (21.3 percent) between 2010 and 2024, for a loss of 239 people. The County and many of its municipalities grew modestly between 1990 and 2010 but have decreased between 2010 and 2024. Only the Village of Rudolph saw a considerable population

gain between 2010 and 2024 of 6.2 percent or 27 residents, with the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Village of Port Edwards, and Town of Sigel seeing more modest gains. By contrast, the state of Wisconsin grew by 4 percent.

Table 1: Population

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

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

Households

The household characteristics in Biron have changed as the age and make-up of the population has changed. Overall, the total population and number of households have fallen in recent years. See Table 2. Housing and job development, discussed in this plan's future chapters, can reverse these trends while expanding the Village's tax base. Recent examples include the Biron Business Park and the Bridgewater housing development. The trend in the number of people per household decreased from 1990 to 2010, followed by a slight increase. See Table 3. Wood County's change in the number of households since 2010 (2.1 percent) has been much slower than the state of Wisconsin's change in number of households (8.8 percent). Due to the recent development of nearly 20 housing units in the Bridgewater subdivision, Biron's household growth is likely higher than what is reported in the ACS.

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

type of housing needs are changing with the aging population and, as one looks around the greater community, one can see new housing that is designed to meet many of these needs.

Table 2: Total Households

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

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

Table 3: Average Household Size

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

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

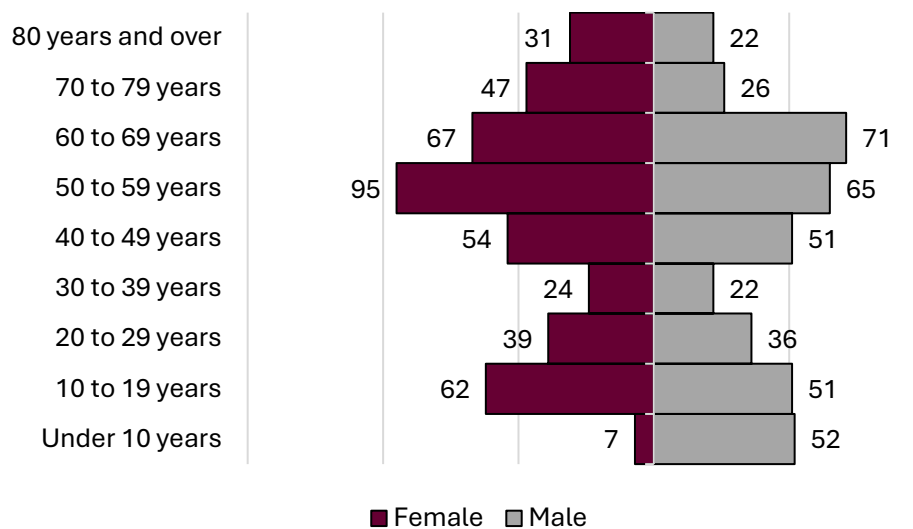
Median Age and Age Distribution

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

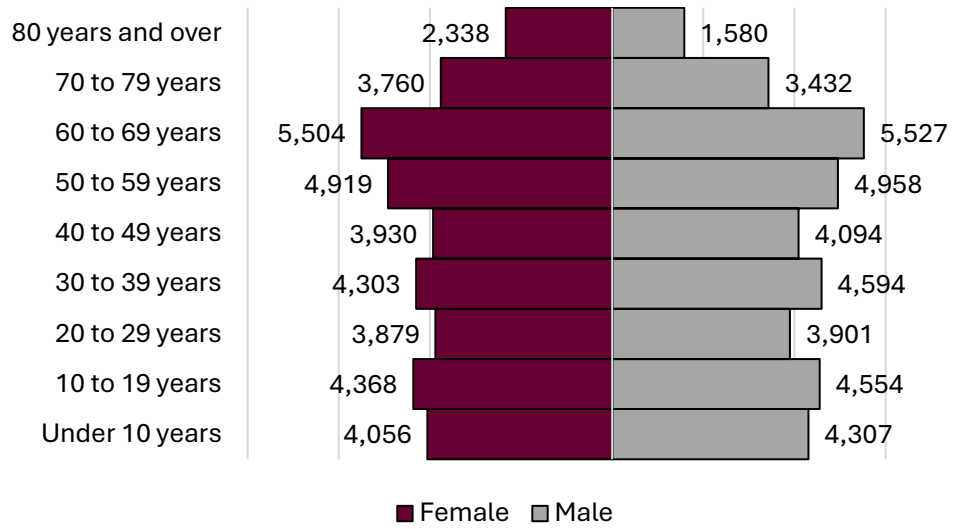
As people age, they tend to want to live closer to shopping, churches and community activities. Condominiums and senior housing developments are popular choices for the aging who no longer want to care for lawns and homes, or who can't perform home maintenance functions. Those types of housing are almost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

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

Figure 1: Village of Biron Age Distribution



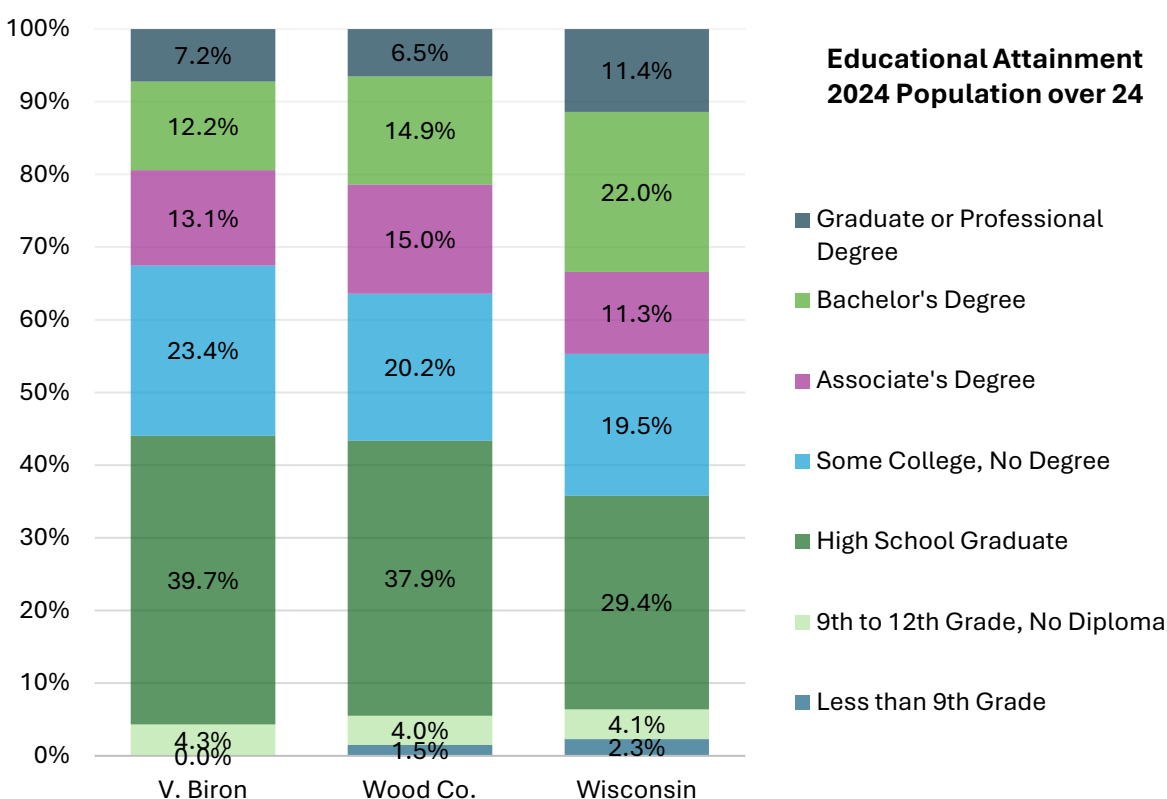
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Figure 2: Wood County Age Distribution

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Education

The level of education of Biron residents, age 25 and older, has increased since 1980. This is the result of more emphasis placed on education that is needed to live in a society that has much more technology and more specialties than in the past. Many of the Village's most elderly residents ended their educational training with high school graduation or less. Some cut their education short because of World War II and high school education was all that was required for most manufacturing jobs in the area. During the 1970s and 1980s, local industries often provided their own training. During that same time and beyond, more partnerships were developed with Mid-State Technical College to develop and provide custom training programs for local industries. Figure 3 shows the change in educational levels for Biron, Wood County, and Wisconsin. The proportion of Biron residents who completed high school was higher than both the county and the state. The proportion of Biron residents who have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher is slightly lower than the proportion in Wood County and is considerably lower than the Statewide proportion.

Figure 3: Educational Attainment

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

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

Income and Poverty

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

Since then, Biron's median household income has fallen below countywide and statewide figures, but the median family income and per capita income are more than the countywide incomes. This could be partially explained by the growing retired population earning less on fixed income but having fewer people in each household. It could also reflect changes in the local economic base, such as the mill in Wisconsin Rapids closing. Income growth was higher than the countywide income growth for median family income and per capita income, but slower for median household income. Statewide incomes in all three categories were

higher and grew faster than Village and county incomes. But the Village's lower cost of living helps to offset its lower wages when attracting new residents and workers.

Table 4: Income Characteristics

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

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

Employment Characteristics

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

Table 5: Labor Force Characteristics 2024

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

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates 2024

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

Table 6: Resident Occupations 2024

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Growth Projections

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

Table 7: Population Projections

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

Source: WDOA

Household Projections

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

Table 8: Household Projections

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

Source: NCWRPC

Summary & Conclusions

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

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

L. Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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

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

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.
- Interest in further developing outdoor recreation to enhance the Village's quality of life.
- Managing costs and resources associated with providing outdoor recreation facilities.
- Concerns over groundwater contamination and the Village's two wells being located on the same site. There is interest in identifying a future well site in another location in case this site is someday contaminated.
- 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 Village. 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.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are of growing concern in Wisconsin, particularly in areas of heavy industry. Recent well testing confirmed that PFAS are not currently a concern in the Village of Biron.

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.



Bridgewater Development and the Wisconsin River

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 WDNR. 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 levies. Most developed areas of the Village are all outside the mapped floodplain, except the north central portion of the Village. Some areas have experienced flooding during what has been considered 100-year flood levels in 2010 and 2011. Following these floods, the Consolidated Water Power Company (CWPCO) Emergency Action Plan for the Biron Hydroelectric Project was completed in 2012 to identify areas that would be inundated in the event of a dam failure and the emergency procedures in case of such event. 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 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 metallic deposits in the Village, but there is a gravel pit in the Bridgewater development that has been mined for aggregate, and a pit in the Business Park that has been excavated for sand fill.

Parks, Open Spaces, and Recreational Resources

According to the Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, the Village has four 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, and playground 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.



Wisconsin River

Future Opportunities

In the past, an informal trail known locally as the “Forest Walk” was open to the public on the Nine Dragons property. In recent years, it has been closed to the public due to liability concerns, but the Village could investigate the feasibility of reopening this trail to the public. This could involve a change in ownership, easements, and/or environmental cleanup to achieve. Additionally, a 40-acre parcel of land west of Forest Lane and north of STH 54 was recently willed to the Village for conservation purpose, providing additional passive recreation opportunities in a wooded area. Should the areas around this site develop, especially for residential use, the site should be protected and surrounding sites be designed with public access in mind.

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 percent of the soils are classified as "prime" in the Village and 8 percent are classified as "prime if drained." The other 82.6 percent 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. There are 12 property records on the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) Architecture and History Inventory (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.
13. Work with existing landowners who are interested in preserving natural areas on their property and/or dedicating land for the Village's parks and recreational offerings.
14. Investigate conservation and passive outdoor recreation opportunities, including the future conservancy site west of Forest Lane and the "Forest Walk" that was formerly open to the public on the Nine Dragons property.

3. Housing

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

Previous Plans and Studies

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

NCWRPC Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

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

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

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

Wisconsin Realtors Association's (WRA) Workforce Housing Report

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

Wisconsin State Consolidated Housing Plan 2025-2029

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

Wood County Rural Economic Development Plan (REDI)

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

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

Wood County Housing Report 2025

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

Inventory and Trends

Total Housing Units and Occupancy Characteristics

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

Table 9: Housing Unit by Occupancy Status

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Note that the total estimate in 2024 was 338 housing units, a decline from 380 in the previous comprehensive plan based on 2010 estimates. This is due to the American Community Survey’s accuracy issues with smaller communities, since they tend to project a decrease in housing automatically if there is a decrease in population. Given the lack of demolitions that have occurred, along with over 20 units being built in the Bridgwater area in recent years, it is likely that housing stock is increasing. According to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, 34 building residential building permits were issued between January 2010 and April 2026. The number of new construction since 2010 could be even higher, as only one permit is issued for buildings that may have multiple units.

Vacancy rates are important because they show the demand for and availability of housing. A vacancy rate of 2 percent or 3 percent of owner-occupied housing units generally indicates a tight market and unmet

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

Type of Housing Structures

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

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

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

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

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Age of and Value Housing Stock

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

Note that ACS data uses limited data sets to provide estimates between Census years. The most recent ACS data set is from 2024, and the most recent Census was in 2020. This can result in some data accuracy issues,

as evidenced by the lack of housing units built after 2020 in Table 12 despite new homes being built in the Bridgewater area. It is likely that more homes have been built in recent years than Table 12 estimates.

Table 12: Year Structure Built 2024

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Home values reflect housing affordability and households' ability to build wealth. Table 13 shows that the Village has a much smaller share of homes valued under \$50,000 than the County and the State do, but it has a much higher share of homes between \$50,000 and \$150,000 than the County and State do, meaning there could be an opportunity to attract young families with starter homes that are affordable to them. There is a smaller share of housing valued above \$200,000 compared to countywide and statewide figures, indicating that there is an opportunity to build housing in these price ranges that provides an option for residents to upgrade into a newer home, freeing up more affordable starter homes for others. The Village's median value of \$154,400 is considerably lower than Wood County's (\$175,600) and Wisconsin's (\$266,500) values which is due to a variety of factors. Note that these are self-reported home values for those who participate in the ACS, so they may be lower than what the homes would sell for on the market.

Older housing on smaller lots generally has lower values, and the presence of floodplains may reduce the appeal of purchasing a house in certain areas of Biron. Newer housing development like the Bridgewater area reflects an opportunity to increase housing options and quality in the Village. Since the first homes were constructed around 2019, there are an estimated 20 constructed or planned housing units in this subdivision, indicating that the number of housing units in Biron is likely higher than what ACS data estimates.

Table 13: Owner Occupied Housing Values

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Housing Affordability

By federal law, all communities are required to enable affordable housing to be built. Affordable housing is defined as housing for which a household pays no more than 30 percent of their annual income, including the cost of a mortgage or rent and homeowner's or renter's insurance. Table 14 summarizes the median monthly housing costs and percentage of residents spending more than 30 percent of income on housing, which is known as cost burden. In summary, renters in Biron are more likely than not to be cost burdened, with over 66 percent of renter households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Over 23 percent of homeowners with a mortgage are cost burdened, but less than 10 percent of homeowners without a mortgage are cost burdened.

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

Table 14: Median Monthly Housing Costs

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Tenure

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

Housing Accessibility

The number of households with at least one disabled resident increases as the population ages. People generally have the desire to age in their own home and live there comfortably. Few single-family detached

homes, like those in Biron, are accessible to those with mobility limitations. Key features for accessibility are a zero-step entrance, a bathroom or half bath on the entry level and interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance. Other features may include lever-style door handles, electrical controls that are in reach from a wheelchair, and other features. Such features make a home accessible for both the resident who has physical limitations and for visitors with physical disabilities.

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

Housing Programs

Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)

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

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

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

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.

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

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

Other Programs

- The Federal Housing Supply Action Plan.
- Emerging CDBG, LIHTC, HOME, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and other Department of Transportation (DOT) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) programs.
- Emerging WEDC and WHEDA housing programs.
- Focus on Energy (rebates on energy efficient upgrades)
- Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). In 2026, Wisconsin created a new type of TIF district that supports developing workforce housing. See Chapter 6: Economic Development.

Housing Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal:

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

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

Goal:

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

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

Goal:

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

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

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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, and most residential and commercial structures in the Village are connected to the system. There are a few houses on 80th street that still rely on private wells and septic systems. 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 Biron 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. Two sewer projects are planned. The first involves removing the existing gravity mains from the alleys and relocating them beneath Center and Williams Streets as part of Phase 2 of the CTH U project. The second project will create a “loop” by installing a new force main to connect Bridgewater with the Business Park. Details and maps are discussed below under the Water Supply and Water Distribution section. Finally, the 2031 South Biron Drive reconstruction project will involve new sanitary mains. There is also a planned replacement of the force main between the Bauer Lift Station and the 32nd Street Lift Station

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 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. Stormwater facilities are part of the new business park, and more will be part of the South Biron Drive reconstruction in 2031.

Water Supply and 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ 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. The Village may also consider a new well site in the Bridgewater area as another option.

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 this area of the Village is now served by the 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 that will be located under Williams and Center Streets between Fox and Badger Streets as part of Phase 2 of the CTH U reconstruction project. They will run parallel to the existing water mains located in alleys half a block to the northwest of these two streets which will be abandoned once the new mains are installed. An additional project will extend water mains from their existing endpoint at Anchor Landing Drive south along 80th Street and west toward 72nd Street within the Biron Business Park to create a complete loop. See Figure 4. Another project is the reconstruction of South Biron Drive estimated for 2031, which includes replacement of water distribution mains.

Figure 4: Planned New Water Mains



Source: Village of Biron Public Works

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Village ordinance, garbage and refuse collection services are provided to single- and two-family residences. The service is provided by a contracted collector, as determined by the Village Board, with Waste Management being the current provider. Waste Management collects garbage at the curb every week and recyclables every other week and transports them to the Waste Management landfill and recycling facility 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. 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.

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. There is always a need for additional volunteer fire fighters and first responders, and currently the Fire Department needs additional space.

Ambulance

Ambulance service is provided to the Village of Biron under an annual contract with United Emergency Medical Response based in Wisconsin Rapids. 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, playground equipment, and drinking fountain. 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. There is also an opportunity to expand bicycle and pedestrian trails to better connect the Village of Biron with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and other neighboring municipalities.

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. There are also 97 boat slips in warmer months, and the Village owns 4 docks and the Bridgewater development owns 3. The Village and CWPCO have an agreement that outlines each party's responsibilities regarding the Village's desire to enhance public recreational access to the Biron Reservoir while meeting Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requirements that CWPCO is subject to.

Biron's boat landings, docks, and slips frequently experience congestion and parking issues during warmer months, leading to a need to investigate adding more boat landings, docks, and slips, as well as parking areas, which would be subject to working with FERC for approval.

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 are two wireless towers, one at 111 Eagle Road and the other on 32nd Street N just south of the Village hall. 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 two 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 (CWPCO) has five hydroelectric plants along the Wisconsin River, one of which is in Biron. CWPCO owns the dam and a powerhouse near the paper mill in Biron. The 80 – 100 residential and small commercial customers purchase electricity from CWPCO 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.

Utility-scale solar is expanding throughout Wood and Portage Counties. Though Biron might not have the site characteristics needed for this type of facility, there may be interest in lowering the cost of solar, especially for small-scale installations. There also may be an economic development opportunity to attract solar-related businesses to the Biron Business Park. Solar is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 along with programs that can reduce its costs for installers and energy consumers.

Natural Gas

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

Community Facilities

Village Operations

The Biron Village Hall, built in 1996, is located at 451 Kahoun Road, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494. Governing bodies include the Village Board that is comprised of a President and six Trustees. The former treasurer position was combined with the Village Clerk position and is therefore no longer an elected position. The Village also has a Plan Commission and eight additional committees, with a staff of six 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, and backhoe.

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. In 2026, Marshfield Clinic opened a new hospital next to the Wisconsin Rapids Clinic. 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 is 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 Child Care Resource 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.



Head Start Childcare Center

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. This includes investigating new boat launches, docks, slips, and parking areas as well as bicycle and pedestrian trail connections to neighboring municipalities, especially the City of Wisconsin Rapids.
6. Ensure public safety is fully staffed and accommodated by working with area organizations to recruit and train workers while investigating expanded space for the Fire Department.

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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 15, below, summarizes the Village's road network mileage by functional and jurisdictional classification.

Table 15: Biron Road Network Mileage by Functional and Jurisdictional Classification

Jurisdiction	Functional Classification			Total	Percent
	Arterial	Collector	Local		
County	3.51	0.49	0.00	4.00	24.46%
Local	2.09	1.26	9.00	12.35	75.54%
Total	5.60	1.75	9.00	16.35	100.00%
Percent	34.25%	10.70%	55.05%	100.00%	

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 of 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 Drive, Eagle Road, and 80th Street N) and S Biron Drive 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 Road 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 5 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 15, the Village has a much higher share of arterials (34.25 percent) and a lower share of local roads (55.05 percent). This reflects Biron's position at the crossroads of many major highways that give it the ability to support 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 as 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 (75.54 percent) and county roads (24.46 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 16 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 16: Road Network AADT

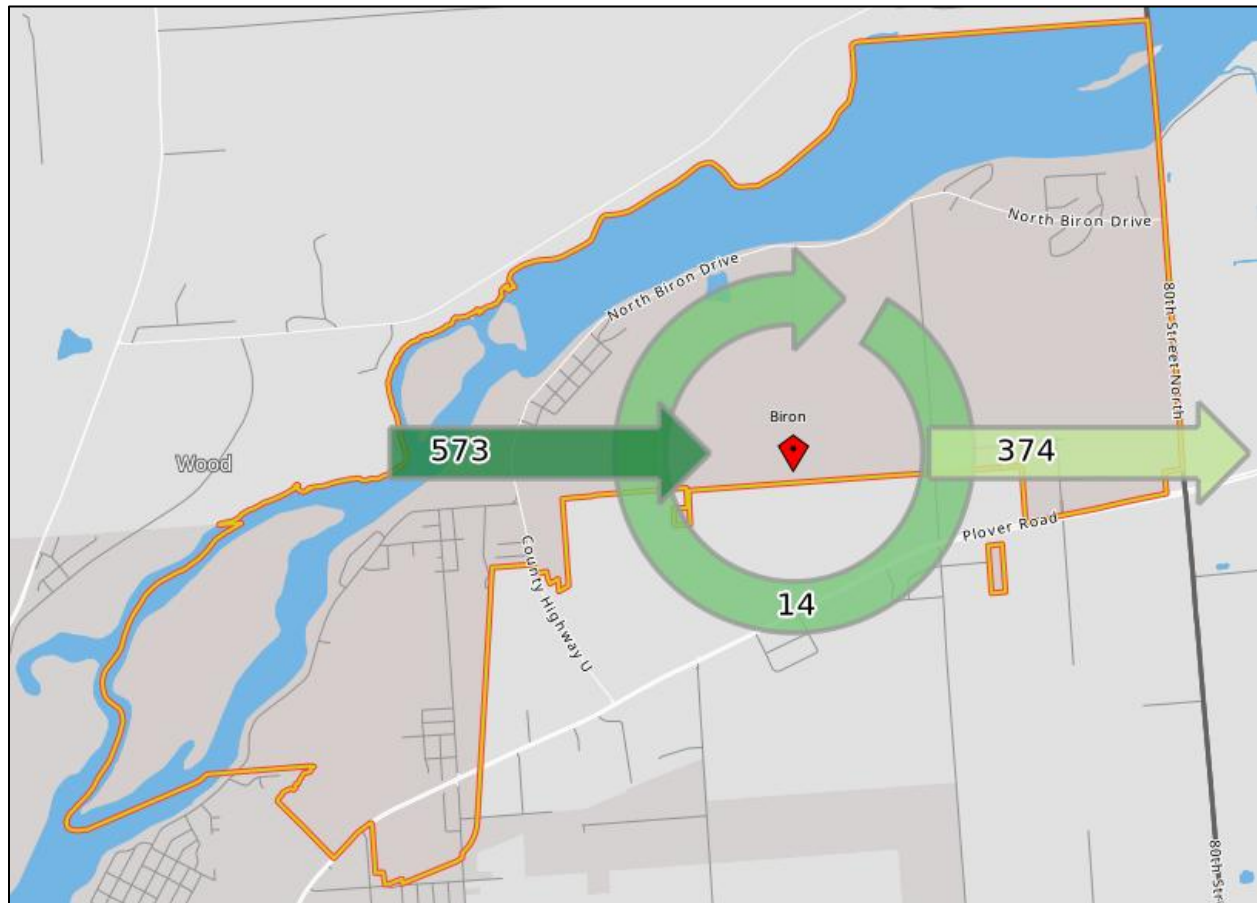
Location	2011	2021	2011-2021 % Change
STH 54 East of Spring St	11,500	11,400	-0.9%
Kahoun Drive North of STH 54	1,300	470	-63.8%
S Biron Drive between Kahoun and CTH U	1,200	430*	-64.2%
S Biron Drive S of Johnson Pkwy	1,100	640	-41.8%
N Biron Dr/CTH U Between Marsh & Huffman Roads	1,600	1,100	-31.3%
CTH U Between N Biron Road 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 5 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 5: 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 percent are less than 15 minutes, and more than 61.9 percent 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 17 shows a summary of Village 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 17: Pavement Condition and Surface Type

Condition	Miles	Percent
Very Poor	0.00	0.00%
Poor	0.26	2.11%
Fair	3.99	32.31%
Good	4.54	36.76%
Very Good	1.83	14.82%
Excellent	1.73	14.01%
Total	12.35	100.00%
Surface Type	Miles	Percent
Gravel	1.07	8.66%
Asphalt	11.28	91.34%
Total	12.35	100.00%

Source: WisDOT

65.6 percent of roads in Biron are rated “good” or better. Though only 2.1 percent are rated “poor” or “very poor”, another 32.3 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 (91.3 percent) are paved with asphalt.



North Biron Drive

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 Street 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 Street and Huffman Road 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 as well as Mariana Packing Company in Wisconsin Rapids. There is the potential to add another spur to the south of the Biron Business Park south of STH 54 to open more additional land up for industrial development, which would require the annexation of a portion of the Town of Grand Rapids. See the Future Land Use map (Map 7) for the location of this future expansion area.

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 Road, CTH U/Eagle Road south of S Biron Dr, and S Biron Road between Chapman Drive and Wellington Place. There are also off-road paved trails on S Biron Road south of Wellington Place and along CTH U/N Biron Drive and Sunset Pl Drive along the Wisconsin River east of Huffman Road. There is also a trail that connects S Biron Drive and Kahoun Road near Village Hall. The 2025 Wood County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposes bike lanes on CTH U/N Biron Drive in the areas that currently lack bicycle infrastructure (north of S Biron Drive to Fox Street and east of Sunset Pl). It also proposes off-road paved paths between Fox Street and Huffman Road as well as south of Village Hall to extend the

existing east-west trail all the way to CTH U/Eagle Road. Paved shoulders were added to Huffman Road in 2025.

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 7) 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. The Village has a heavy truck routes ordinance that designates the following routes:

- All County trunk highways
- The first 1/4 mile section of South Biron Drive, from its intersection with C.T.H. U
- 32nd Street North from State Highway 54 to railroad tracks
- 72nd Street North from State Highway to Business Park Drive
- Integrity Way from its intersection with 72nd Street North

Any heavy truck that is not equipped with pneumatic tires or has a combined vehicle or load weight exceeding 12,000 pounds (10 tons) on any single axle or 34,000 pounds (17 tons) on any tandem axle are not allowed on any other roads. Non heavy truck routes have additional posted weight restrictions that vary and must be followed as well. There are additional provisions for exceptions, construction equipment, and seasonal weight limits in this ordinance as well.

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. In 2026, Lamers added a new route between Green Bay and La Crosse that connects to Wisconsin Rapids.

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 all streets except 80th street.

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 Drive 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 Nine Dragons 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:

1. 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.
5. Support the addition of a rail spur south of STH 54 to connect to a planned expansion of the Biron Business Park to the south.

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6. Economic Development

Introduction

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

Previous Plans and Studies

North Central Wisconsin Regional Entrepreneurship Assessment & Strategy, 2023

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

North Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2026

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

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

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

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

North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

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

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

Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2009

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

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

Inventory and Trends

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

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

Park and the East Side Commerce Center of Wisconsin Rapids, and the Village of Biron opened the Biron Business Park in 2014. In 2021, Wood County developed the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Plan to expand access to housing, childcare, broadband, and entrepreneurship to attract and develop a workforce while enhancing the economy and quality of life.

Employment Trends

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

Occupation

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

Table 18: Resident Occupations 2024

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Industry

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

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

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

Table 19: Industries that Employ Village Residents

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

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

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

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

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

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

Economic Base

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

Location Quotient and Employment Projections

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

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

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

Table 20: Occupation and Location Quotient 2024

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Wages

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

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

Table 21: Wages by Industry

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

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

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

Worker Age Structure

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

Commuting Patterns

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

Area Business & Industrial Parks

The Village of Biron recently developed a privately owned business and industrial park on the Village's far southeast corner. There are three other such parks in the area. One is the West Side Industrial Park on the west side of Wisconsin Rapids north of Highway 73. That industrial park is nearly full. Another business park, The Woodlands, is southwest of the Biron business park and is located near Midstate Technical College. The third park is called the Wisconsin Rapids Commerce Center and targets manufacturing operations more than office type businesses. It is only a couple of miles from the Biron business park, south of Highway 54 on 48th Street. The Commerce Center has been developed with municipal sewer and water and has rail access. This park offers the most competition for the Biron business park, but it can also serve to complement Biron's facility. Figure 6 shows a map of the park, with Phase 1, which is already constructed, outlined in red.

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



Source: Village of Biron

This business park is located in a Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) district, which is discussed below. Additional land may be acquired in the future on either side of State Highway 54. There is also potential to someday expand the park across State Highway 54 where a rail spur connecting to the Canadian National line south of the highway would be feasible. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation recently improved State Highway 54 intersections at 72nd and 80th street. Working together to create jobs in the area, Wisconsin Rapids and Biron can offer a full range of facilities and services, all very close to each other. Past surveys and the Village's former comprehensive plan supported the desire for more job opportunities in the Village, leading to the creation of the Biron Business Park, and the identification of the State Highway 54 corridor for retail and restaurants on the Future Land Use Map (Map 7). These recommendations have been carried forward into this plan, see Chapter 7: Land Use for more information.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

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

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

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

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

Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment oversees the investigation and cleanup of contaminated soil or groundwater in Wisconsin and tracks these sites on what is

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

Solar and Economic Development

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

Solar Development Benefits

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

Solar Development Potential Drawbacks

Although solar power has proven to be economically and environmentally beneficial, it also has its limitations. The initial construction cost of solar projects is expensive, and solar arrays often take several years before they generate a profit, according to the University of Minnesota. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), the supply chain and trade instability has increased solar costs in the 2020s, reducing projected installations from 30 gigawatts to 15 gigawatts in 2022 over a year-and-a-half period nationwide. Utility-scale solar prices were also 12.7 percent higher in 2022 compared to 2021.

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

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

Solar Jobs and the Supply Chain

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

Solar Summary

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

Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses

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

The second key action needed is business innovation. The strategy is to attract and grow new industries by developing economic incentives to draw industries capable of competing on a global, versus regional or

national, scale. In addition, the strategy would include developing a support network to retain and expand local businesses.

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

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

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

Strengths

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

Weaknesses:

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

Opportunities

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

Threats:

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

Economic Development Organizational Framework

Local

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regional

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

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

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

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

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

Portage County Business Council (PCBC) is neighboring Portage County's official Chamber of Commerce, of which Biron is a member. The organization is dedicated to the development of the business community by

offering information on local business and industry as well as providing a variety of programs designed to assist business development.

State

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Encourage increased collaboration between Wisconsin businesses and workforce training partners.
- Fill current and ongoing skill requirements of Wisconsin employers.

- Place workers in long-term positions with opportunities for professional growth and economic advancement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Federal

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

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

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

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

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

Economic Development Goals & Objectives

Goal:

Create a business-friendly persona for the Village of Biron

Objectives:

1. Retain existing businesses and support their continued growth.
2. Attract new business and industry.
3. Work towards WEDC's shovel-ready certification for Biron Business Park sites.

Policies:

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

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

7. Land Use

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

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

Historical Land Use Pattern

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

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



Cranberry Bogs in the Village of Biron

Current Land Use & Future Expectations

The inventory used for this analysis was developed using aerial photography, local zoning maps, and field surveys. Based on that information, estimates were made of the amount of land in the Village that is used for various purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, agricultural, etc. Map 6 shows the existing land use on each parcel in the Village of Biron. It should be noted that a parcel of, say, five acres in size that is shown as residential may, in fact only have one or two acres that is actually used for the residential purpose. The estimated acres in that activity, however, include the entire parcel. A description of each observable activity follows.

Residential

Residential activities are found throughout the Village, with a few others scattered in the eastern portions, mainly fronting the Wisconsin River near Huffman Road. According to recent land use inventory, there are about 250 acres of residential land, which is about 6.2 percent of the total land in the Village. Residential development in Biron consists mostly of traditional single-family detached structures (93.7 percent), with a scattering of duplexes, multi-family structures and mobile homes. About 87.9 percent of homes were built before 1980, and only 12.1 percent have been built between 1980 and 2020. In general, little housing development has occurred in recent years, but the Bridgewater development has started to reverse this trend, with nearly 20 units constructed or planned to be constructed since 2019.

Commercial

About 52 acres are classified under the Commercial category (shopping, business or trade on Map 6). Most commercial uses are located along Highway 54, although a few are scattered throughout the Village. Portions of the Biron Business Park remain undeveloped at this time and thus are not classified as commercial. As it develops, however, some of the acreage will become commercial and some will become industrial. Many respondents to the community planning survey administered during the Village's previous comprehensive plan recommended that new retail stores, restaurants and convenience stores be attracted to the Village.

Industrial

Industrial, manufacturing and waste-related activities utilize over 152 acres in Biron. The industrial area shown on Map 6 is land owned by Nine Dragons and includes the paper mill, outside log storage area and related activities. Village officials worked with private developer to create a new business park in the far southeast part of the Village that opened in 2014, fronting on Highway 54, west of County Road U (80th Street). Village officials have also installed access to the business park at 72nd Street/Integrity Way and WisDOT upgraded the intersection of Highway 54 and 80th Street.

Governmental and Utilities

This land use category includes, among other things, schools and libraries, public safety related activities, activities associated with utilities and health care or medical facilities. The Village of Biron has over 40.8 acres coded in this category. Those uses include a cellular tower, the Village municipal building on Kahoun Road, the water tower on Eagle Road, and other similar facilities.

Transportation/Railroad

This category includes all transportation systems, whether for pedestrians, vehicles (including parking), railroads, aircraft and more. The existing land use inventory in Biron has almost 126 acres classified as travel or movement activities. Most of those acres are road or railroad rights-of-way or the railyard at Nine Dragons.

Outdoor Recreation

About 68.6 acres is classified in the leisure activities land use category, many of which were added when the Bridgewater development occurred. The business park may also have areas for leisure activities, i.e., for employees who are on break or mealtimes. Those may include green areas with benches, walking paths, etc. If they are in the business park, however, the area will likely continue to be classified as industrial or commercial.

Agricultural, Cranberry Bog, Open Lands, and Woodlands

When combined, these classifications have more land than any other. It includes not only active agricultural lands but also forests and undeveloped parcels. The existing land use inventory in Biron shows 56 percent of all land in the Village to be in this category for a total of around 2,249 acres. Included are islands in the Wisconsin River, cranberry marshes, wetlands and forest lands.

Below is a summary of existing land use categories:

Table 22: Existing Land Use 2025

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	19.9	0.5%
Commercial	51.7	1.3%
Cranberry Bog	661.6	16.5%
Governmental / Institutional	32.8	0.8%
Industrial	152.2	3.8%
Open Lands	131.7	3.3%
Outdoor Recreation	68.6	1.7%
Railroad	16.4	0.4%
Residential	250.1	6.2%
Transportation	109.2	2.7%
Utility	8.0	0.2%
Water	1,075.3	26.8%
Woodlands	1,436.0	35.8%
Total Acres	4,013.5	100.0%

Source: NCWRPC

Land Supply and Demand

Table 23 uses the current acreage per capita for residential, commercial, and industrial land uses and projects future demand based on population projections in Chapter 1. With only 6 new residents projected between 2020 and 2040, only 3.2 acres are projected to be developed by 2030 and another 0.5 acres between 2030 and 2040 total. Due to the extensive land in Biron that is currently undeveloped, it is likely that land supply will meet demand in the coming decades, even when considering the extensive building limitations. Should population trends or job growth change from its current trajectory, the Village may need to plan for higher demand in the future.

Table 23: Projected Land Demand in Acres 2020-2050

Land Use Category	2025-2030	2030-2035	2035-2040	2040-2045	2045-2050
Projected Additional Residents	6	1		-8	
Residential (0.30 acres/person)	1.8	0.3	0.0	-1.2	-1.2
Commercial (0.06 acres/person)	0.4	0.1	0.0	-0.2	-0.2
Industrial (0.18 acres/person)	1.0	0.2	0.0	-0.7	-0.7
Total	3.2	0.5	0.0	-2.2	-2.2

Source: NCWRPC & Wisconsin DOA

Note that 2025 Wisconsin Act 173 requires residential land demand to be projected in five-year increments, despite DOA population projections being in ten-year increments. Therefore, the population increase of 1 between 2030-2040 is placed in the 2030-2035 category since it is impossible to have half a resident per 5-year increment.

Land Values

Table 24 displays the assessed land values in the Village of Biron. It is important to note that lands that are tax exempt, such as the Biron Municipal Center, would not have a taxable value to report. Overall, land value per acre for non-tax-exempt land in the Village is valued at about \$82,831 per acre based on assessed land values from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue's annual Statement of Assessment (SOA). Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by commercial properties.

Table 24: Village of Biron Land Values 2025

Land Use	2025 Value of Land and Improvements	Total Acres	Average Value per Acre
Residential	\$85,220,000	192	\$443,854
Commercial	\$45,163,500	165	\$273,718
Manufacturing	\$32,247,700	108	\$298,590
Agricultural	\$84,900	484	\$175
Undeveloped	\$384,400	343	\$1,121
Ag Forest	\$59,500	28	\$2,125
Forest	\$2,019,800	474.	\$4,261
Other	\$2,802,300	234	\$11,976
Total	\$167,982,100	2,028	\$82,831

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR)

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

Potential Conflicts

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

Population Loss

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

Competition for Business & Industrial Development

Each of the incorporated communities in the area (Biron, Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa) has vacant land and/or buildings that are available for industrial development, and each is in the process of marketing those facilities. The Village of Plover and City of Wisconsin Rapids each have an industrial park

along the State Highway 54 corridor, complete with streets, sewer and water infrastructure. The Village of Port Edwards has a large, vacant industrial and office building complex that the Village is marketing. Nekoosa also has a newly developed business/industrial park that is being marketed but has limited development so far.

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

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

Annexation

Annexation from towns to Villages and cities is often a cause of conflict between communities. To accommodate the business/industrial park in Biron, land had to be annexed from the Town of Grand Rapids. Likewise, Wisconsin Rapids annexed land from Grand Rapids to develop their East Side Commerce Park. Although villages and cities cannot annex land without a petition from the landowners (as a general rule), it is the villages and cities that have the ability to provide the infrastructure needed for development or expansion of those businesses that create or retain jobs. Biron has worked closely with Wisconsin Rapids and Grand Rapids regarding annexation. The three, along with other neighboring communities, worked closely in 2012 to develop a 20-year sanitary sewer extension plan. Although there are no boundary agreements between these three, that is a tool that can be used in the future.

Cost of Providing Services

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

Land Use Tools

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

Future Land Use Plan

The previous portions of this chapter have presented a discussion on historical trends, existing land use patterns and goals that have been established, based on environmental information, Village growth expectations and the desires of Village residents as voiced in the community planning survey that preceded the development of the comprehensive plan. The Future Land Use Plan map (Map 7) takes into consideration all of these factors and illustrates graphically how the Village of Biron is planned to grow for the next 20 years. It is important to note that the future land use plan map is not a zoning map, rather it is a depiction of the desired growth patterns for several years into the future. The Village zoning ordinance and zoning map are the actual documents that set standards for each of the land uses, including setbacks, height limitations, minimum lot sizes, etc. It is also important to note that the future land use plan is dynamic and can be amended as market trends or the local economy change. The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, Ch. 66.1001, requires that the comprehensive plan be updated no less than once every ten years, and the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The future land use plan map often shows some areas to be used for purposes other than what the current use may be. That map is a blueprint for development and can be changed. It is dynamic. The following paragraphs, along with information presented throughout this plan, help explain the reasoning behind the future land use plan categories.

Agricultural

Although Biron is not what one would consider an agricultural community, it does have a significant amount of land that is in cranberry production; these areas are covered by the “Cranberry Beds” future land use category. Grazing of cattle is not a large component of the Village’s land use base but is one that is compatible with the areas where potential development of other uses is marginal, and there are also other farming operations in the Village. Finally, some emerging uses complement agriculture, such as Rooted in Red, which is considered “agritourism.” Agricultural lands with a single-family home have a maximum density of 3.63 dwelling units per acre.

Commercial and Manufacturing

While the Nine Dragons paper mill provides the Village with its industrial heritage, the Village’s employers have diversified in more recent decades with the addition of commercial and manufacturing areas. With the annexation of properties in the Highway 54 area, the Village acquired several commercial establishments. There isn’t an identifiable “downtown” in Biron and little room existed for new commercial (and manufacturing) development until the Biron Business Park was created. The business park provides adequate space for new commercial and manufacturing operations into and beyond the planning period.

Cranberry Beds

This category identifies areas that, due to their high groundwater and current use, are most suitable for growing cranberries. It is important that the cranberry marshes be protected from encroachment from incompatible uses. The soils condition around the marshes is not conducive to other types of land uses, so this should not present a problem. There is limited room for expansion as this use has consumed most of the land that is conducive to the production of cranberries.

Industrial

The Nine Dragons paper mill has been the main industry in Biron for many decades. Nine Dragons owns over 150 acres in the direct vicinity of the paper mill. Additional industrial land is mapped in the Biron Business Park so that there is flexibility for the Village to attract industrial uses in addition to the commercial and manufacturing uses described above.

Natural Resource Related

The Village of Biron has some natural resources that create difficulties for some types of development. Some of those natural resources are conducive to and have been used for specialized agriculture, specifically cranberry production. Other areas may have wetlands that serve an important ecological function and should not be converted to other uses. The natural resources were discussed in earlier sections of this plan. The future land use plan map shows the floodplains and the identified wetlands. Areas that present difficulties for dwellings with basements were also presented earlier in the plan, but this is not to say these areas cannot be developed with some modifications or engineering of structures. Developing some areas may require compliance with certain federal, state, county, or local restrictions. In general, this category covers areas with considerable development limitations that are also not currently used for agriculture, cranberries, parks, or other minimally developed uses.

Park and Open Space

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

Public & Quasi-Public

This category covers uses like the Municipal Center, Water Utility building, Cellular Towers, and other similar facilities. It is not anticipated that the Village will need additional expansion of the Municipal Center during the planning period. Should new development drive demand for more public safety equipment or staffing, expansion room is available on the site of the municipal building.

Residential

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

2025 Wisconsin Act 173 requires residential densities to be mapped; See Map 7: Future Land Use. Residential land use categories and densities found on this map are as follows:

Suburban Single Family Residential

This future land use category has a maximum density of 3.63 dwelling units per acre. It is suitable for single family detached housing permitted under the R-1 Zoning District.

Neighborhood Single Family Residential

This future land use category has a maximum density of 5.35 dwelling units per acre. It is suitable for single family detached housing permitted under the R-2 Zoning District in older areas of the Village where existing lot sizes are smaller.

Two Family Residential

This future land use category has a maximum density of 6.05 dwelling units per acre. It is suitable for two-family dwellings, such as duplexes, condominiums, flats or apartment conversions in large, older, single-family housing permitted under the R-3 Zoning District.

Multiple Family Residential

This future land use category has a maximum density of 25.24 dwelling units per acre. It is suitable for multiple-family apartments, including family or garden types, elevator and walk-up types, efficiency or studio types and apartment conversions in existing single-family dwellings, condominiums and mobile home parks permitted under the R-4 Zoning District.

Mobile Home Park

This future land use category has a 10-acre minimum lot size with maximum density specified in the Village's R-MP Zoning District.

Future Business Park Expansion

This area identifies where the Biron Business Park may expand in the future to contain a mix of residential, commercial, manufacturing, and industrial uses.

Future Development Lots

These property lines depict future lots that are part of the Bridgewater Subdivision which have not been subdivided and recorded yet.

Note that, per State Statute, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, and lands owned by local, state, or federal government that are not intended for development do not count towards net density for any residential areas mapped in the Future Land Use Map.

Land Use Goals & Objectives

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

Goal:

Attract new residential growth to help support essential municipal services.

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

Goal:

Attract new industrial and commercial development.

Objectives:

1. Create new jobs for Village residents.
2. Ensure success of the Village's TIF Districts.

Policies:

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

Goal:

Preserve the Village's current small-town character.

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

Goal:

Work with adjacent towns regarding boundary issues and cooperative growth management.

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

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8. Intergovernmental Cooperation

Purpose

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

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

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

Existing Shared Services and Cooperative Efforts

Law Enforcement

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

E-911 Dispatch Services

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

Fire Services

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

Wisconsin Rapids Area Sanitary Sewer

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

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Forest Fire Protection)

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

Wood County Planning & Zoning Support

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

League of Wisconsin Municipalities

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

Wisconsin Rapids Public School District

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

Mid-State Technical College (MSTC)

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

Neighboring Municipalities

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

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

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

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

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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

State and Federal Agencies

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

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

Existing Intergovernmental Regulations and Tools

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

Intergovernmental Cooperation (Wisconsin Statute 66.0301)

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

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

Municipal Revenue Sharing (Wisconsin Statute 66.0305)

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

Wisconsin Commercial Building Code

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

Wisconsin Electrical Code and National Electric Code

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

Wisconsin Plumbing Code

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

Floodplain & Shoreland Zoning

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

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

Village of Biron Comprehensive Plan

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

Village of Biron Zoning Ordinance

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

Wisconsin Rapids Area Sewer Service Area Plan

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

Annexation

Wisconsin law generally places annexation power in the hands of individual property owners, making it difficult for local municipalities to control where or when annexation will occur. A landowner may petition a city or village to annex a parcel of land. Cities and villages may only react to annexation petitions, they cannot initiate them (except in the case where the territory petitioned for annexation is owned by the city or village). Chapter 66.0217 through 66.0223 of the Wisconsin Statutes outlines the procedures for petitioning for annexation. Biron has not annexed much territory until recent years. The Village annexed an area near the intersection of 32nd Street and Highway 54 that included several residential dwellings. Annexation of several acres of undeveloped land may need to occur should the Biron Business Park expand across State Highway 54. At this time, no further annexations are anticipated beyond that. Continued meetings with Grand Rapids officials can provide an opportunity to plan for future growth of the Village or to protect development plans along Highway 54 in the Town of Grand Rapids.

Detachment

Detachment is a process where territory is detached from one municipality and transferred to another. Detachment can be between cities and villages, and between cities/villages and towns. Detachment between

a city/village and a town is like the opposite of annexation and, most often, tends to involve land that is rural in nature and more appropriate for town-level government, although they have been used to resolve boundary disputes. Detachments are rare; there have been only about 40 in the State since 2002, but it is a tool that is available for certain circumstances.

Existing and Potential Conflicts

Boundary Development and Land Uses

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

Extraterritorial Plat Review

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

Coordination of Services

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

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals & Objectives

Goal:

Continue cooperative participation for emergency services.

Objectives:

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

Goal:

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

Objectives:

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

Goal:

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

Objectives:

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

9. Implementation

Introduction

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

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

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

Implementation Tools

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

Zoning Ordinance and Map

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subdivision Ordinance

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

Capital Improvement Program

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

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

Annual Operating Budget

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

Official Map

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

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

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

Building Code

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



Diking along the Wisconsin River at North Biron Drive

Shoreland and Shoreland-Wetland Zoning

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

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

Other Ordinances

In addition to those listed above, which deal with land use-type issues, the Village of Biron has other ordinances that focus on public health, nuisances, public safety, orderly conduct within the Village, and more. The only ordinances that need to be consistent with the comprehensive planning law are their local zoning ordinance and the shoreland, wetland, and floodplain protection code as it relates to shoreland and floodplain zoning. If the Village eventually enacts a land subdivision ordinance or official map, as discussed above, those ordinances would also need to meet the consistency requirement of §66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Although the other ordinances are not required to be consistent with the comprehensive plan, consistency between some of those ordinances (junk vehicles, protecting the water supply, noise regulations, speed limits, public health, etc.) and the comprehensive plan may prove to be advantageous to the Village in the implementation of the comprehensive plan.

Brownfield Redevelopment

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

Consistency Among Plan Chapters

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

goals, objectives, and policies have been repeated under all applicable chapters to reinforce their importance.

Plan Adoption, Amendments, Updates, and Monitoring

Plan Adoption

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

Plan Amendments

The plan amendment process can be as important as the initial development and adoption of the plan. Monitoring those changes is also important. Monitoring changes can assist the plan commission and Village board to assure consistency in the application of standards and in proposing changes to either the text or the future land use map. The following process is used in Biron for amending the plan and monitoring changes.

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

- The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Village of Biron Comprehensive Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development shall be consistent with the physical character of its surrounding environment or would upgrade and improve its viability.

- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment that cannot be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- There is a change in Village actions or community characteristics that would justify a change.
- There is a community or regional need identified in the comprehensive plan for the proposed land use or service.
- The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.
- The change does not adversely affect water quality and the overall health of residents.

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

The amendment process is rather straightforward. The first step can be either a petition to the Plan Commission from a Village resident or property owner or a proposal by the Plan Commission or Village Board. The petition can be for either a change in the plan's text, such as a change in goals or objectives, or a change to the future land use map. The zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance and official street map must be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

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

Monitoring

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

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

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

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

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

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

Plan Updates

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

Village of Biron Planning Administration

Plan Commission

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

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

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

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

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

Plan Commission Powers and Duties

The powers and the duties of the plan commission are spelled out in state statutes and applicable Village ordinances. A chief task of the commission is to develop the Village's comprehensive plan, pursuant to the specifications of Chapter 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. That statute requires the plan commission to solicit citizen participation and intergovernmental communication and coordination in developing the community's

plan. The plan commission oversees coordination and development of the comprehensive plan and, once completed, forwards the plan to the Village board by formal resolution.

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

Recommendations:

1. The Village Board should use the Plan as a guide when making decisions, especially those that relate to growth and development. The Planning Commission and any other official committee of the Village should also use the Plan in their efforts as well.

2. The Village should encourage citizen awareness of the Comprehensive Plan by making copies available, making reference to it at public meetings and Village newsletters, and displaying a copy of the future land use plan map in the Village Hall. Neighboring local units of government and others will receive copies of the Plan.

3. The Village has a zoning ordinance to supplement the shoreland areas covered under county zoning. Beyond that, there are some additional tools and approaches that can be utilized by the Village to achieve the goals of the Plan. These include but are not limited to the following: land division, official mapping, fee simple land acquisition, easements, deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as building permits, erosion control, or septic pumping, etc. The Village should consider these tools as needed.

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

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

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

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

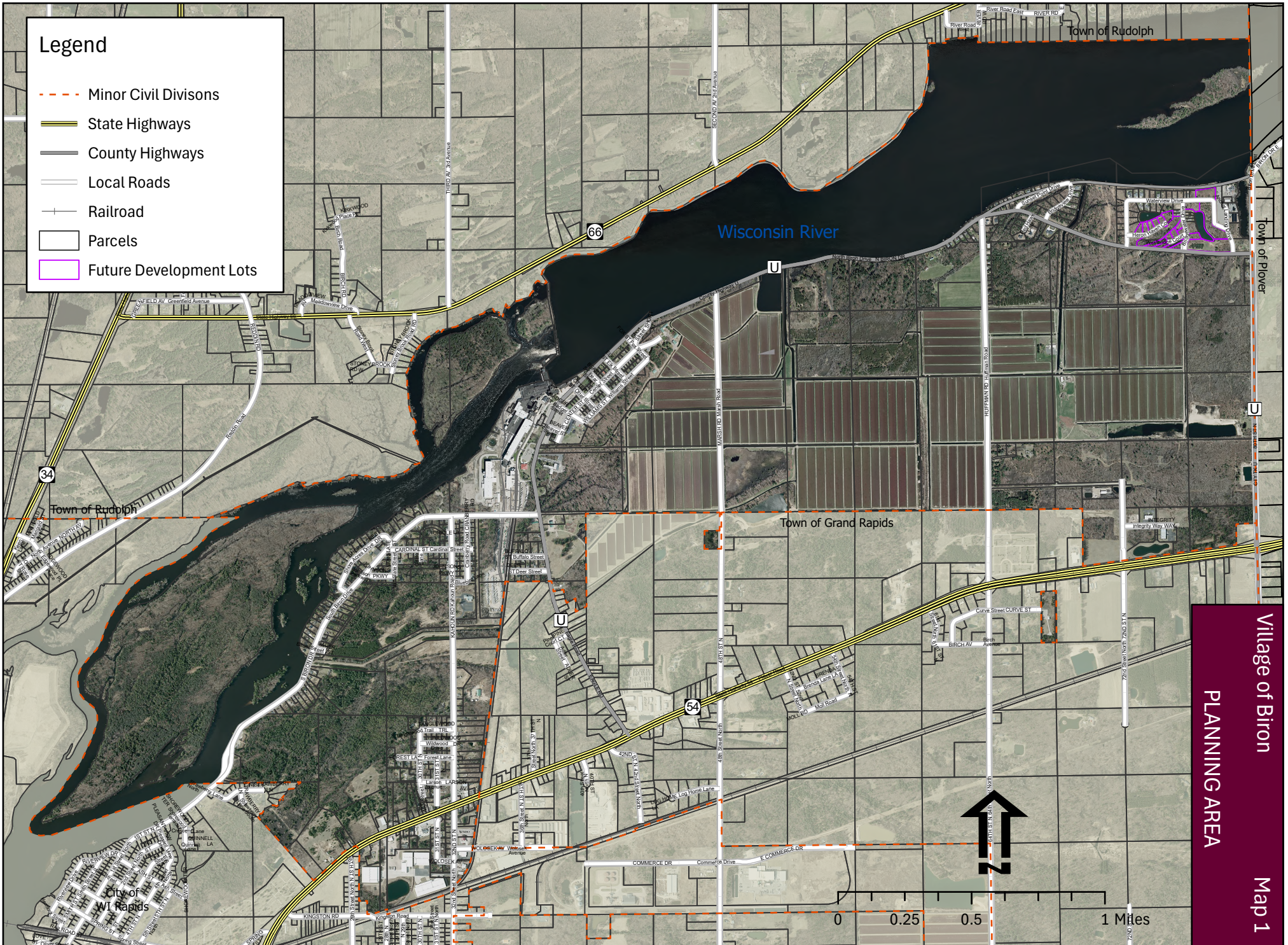
- Revision should be made to bring decision-making back in line with the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies.
- The goals, objectives, and policies should be reviewed to ensure they are still relevant and worthwhile in the Village.
- New implementation tools should be considered to gain more control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

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

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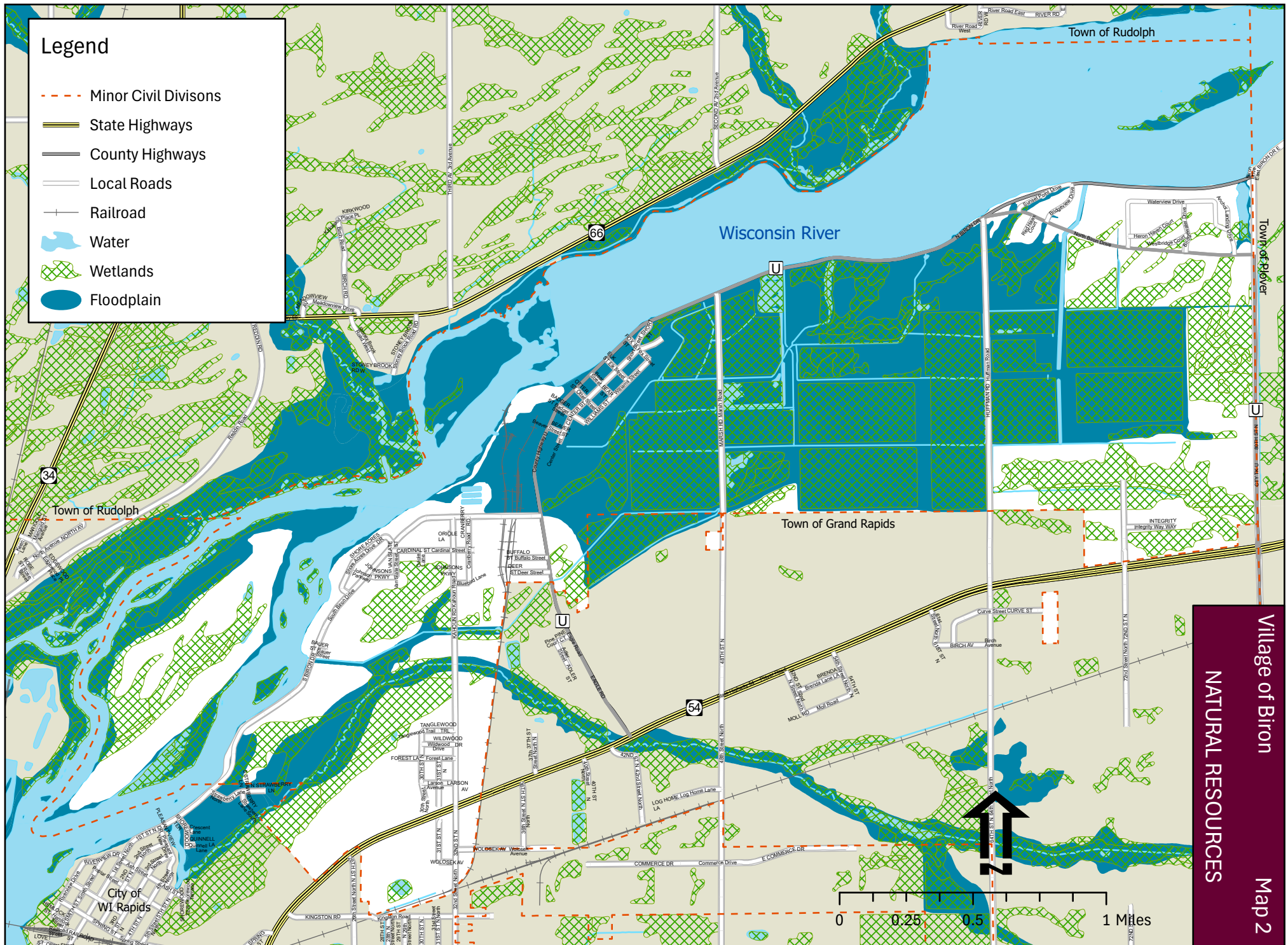
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- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Parcels
- Future Development Lots



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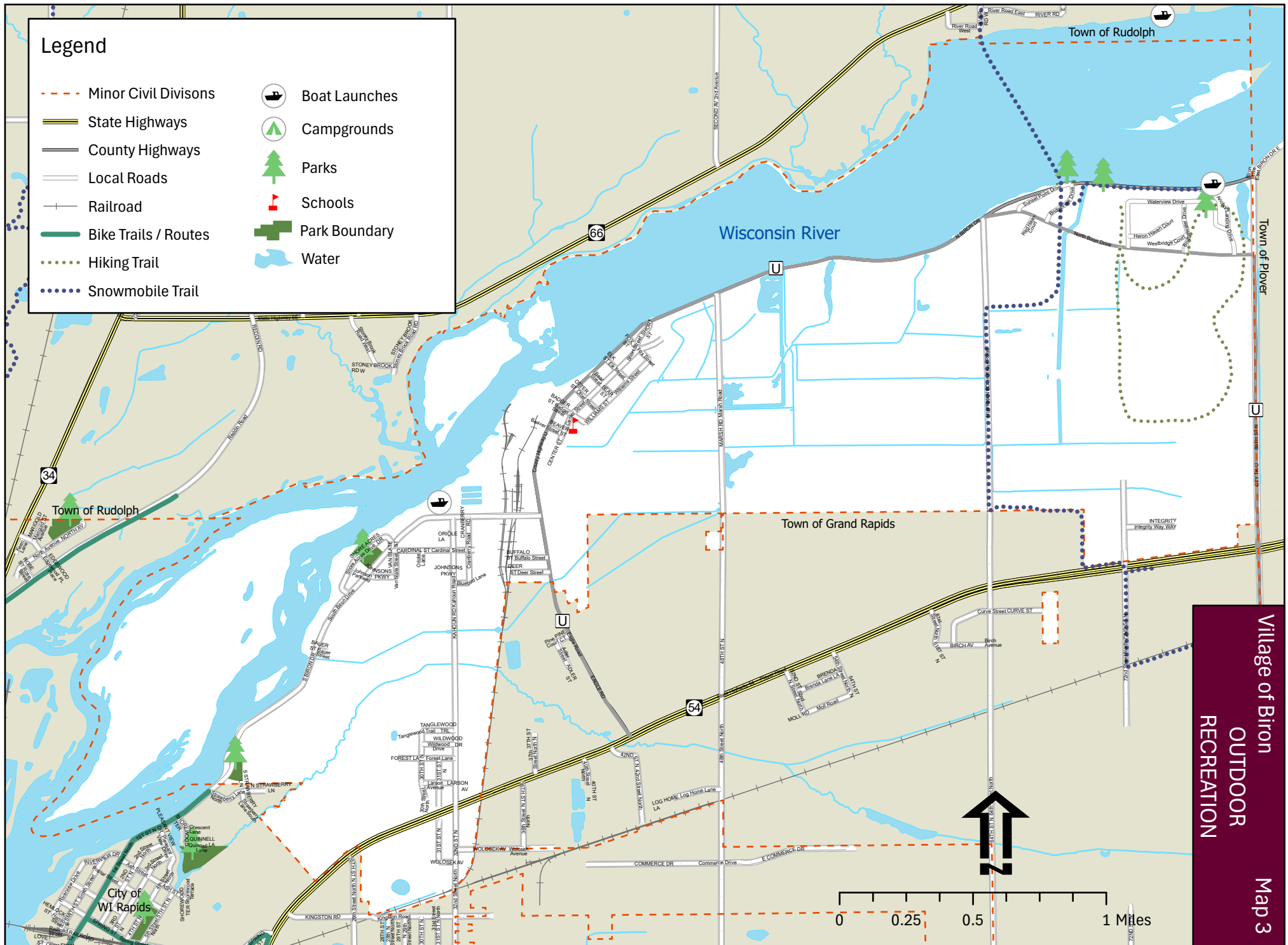
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- == State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Water
- Wetlands
- Floodplain



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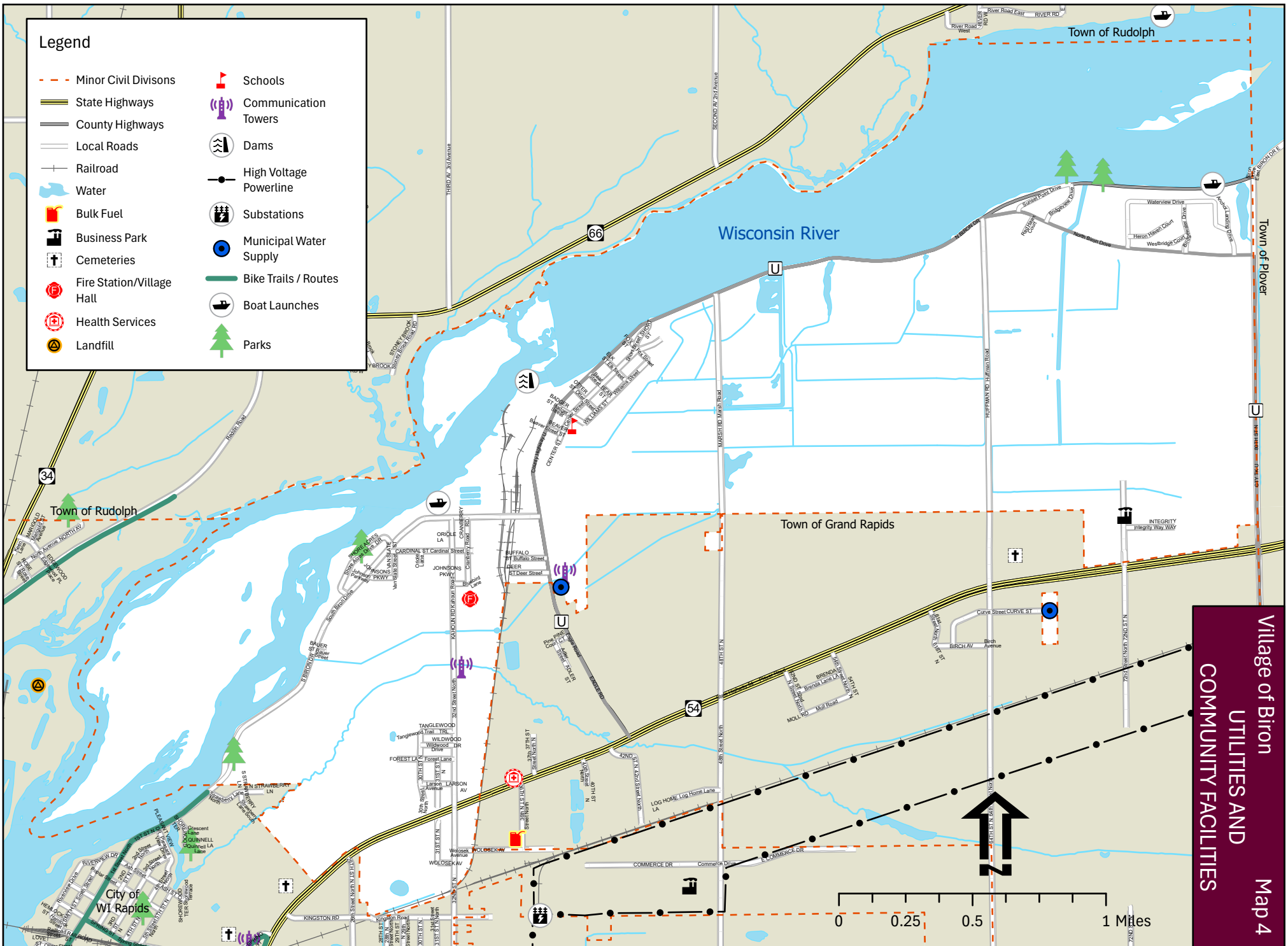
- Minor Civil Divisions
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Bike Trails / Routes
- Hiking Trail
- Snowmobile Trail
- Boat Launches
- Campgrounds
- Parks
- Schools
- Park Boundary
- Water



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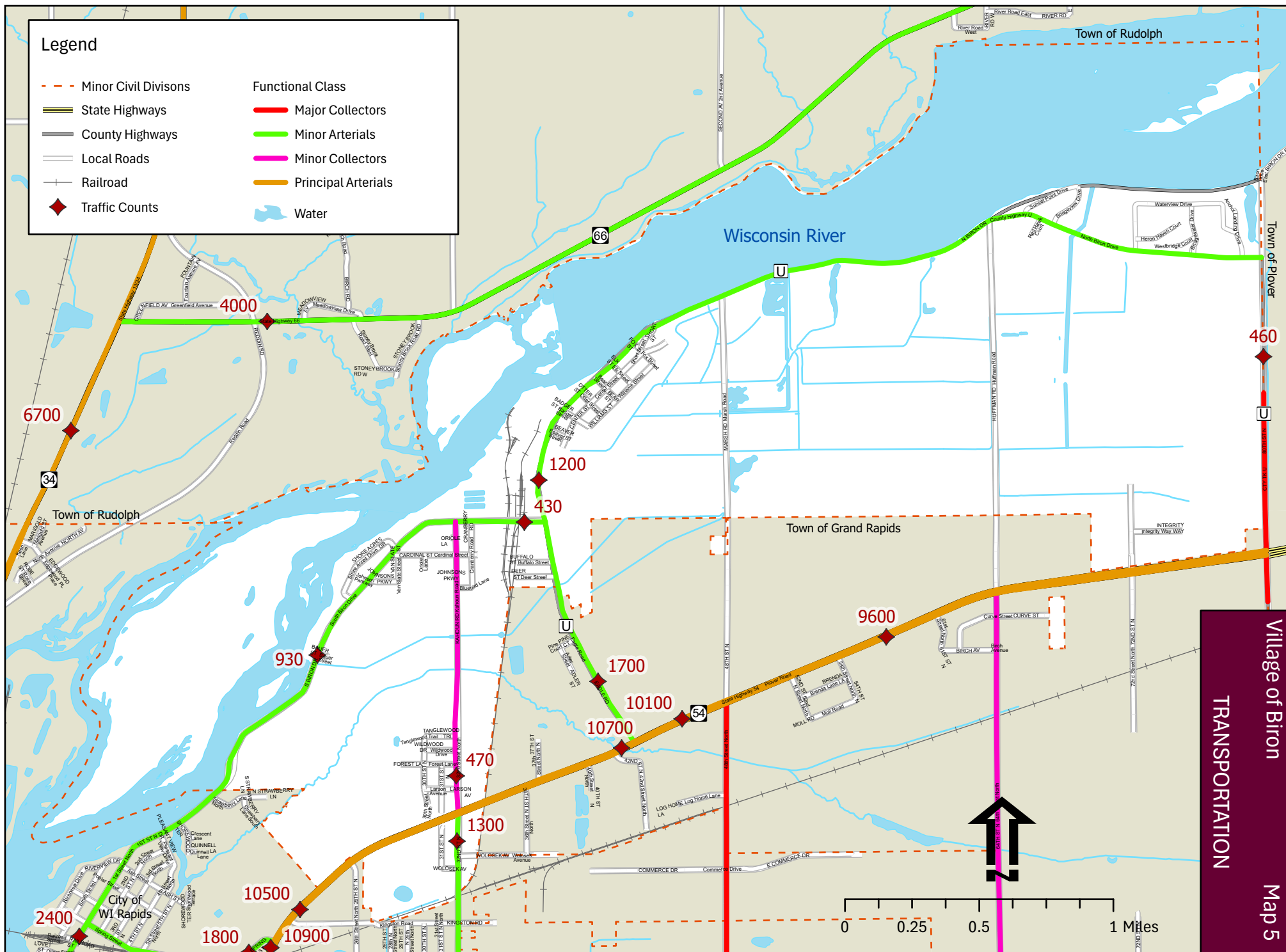
- Minor Civil Divisions
- == State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- + Railroad
- Water
- Bulk Fuel
- Business Park
- † Cemeteries
- ⚡ Fire Station/Village Hall
- ⚕ Health Services
- ⚡ Landfill
- 🚓 Schools
- 📶 Communication Towers
- 🌊 Dams
- ⚡ High Voltage Powerline
- ⚡ Substations
- ⦿ Municipal Water Supply
- ⚓ Boat Launches
- 🌲 Parks



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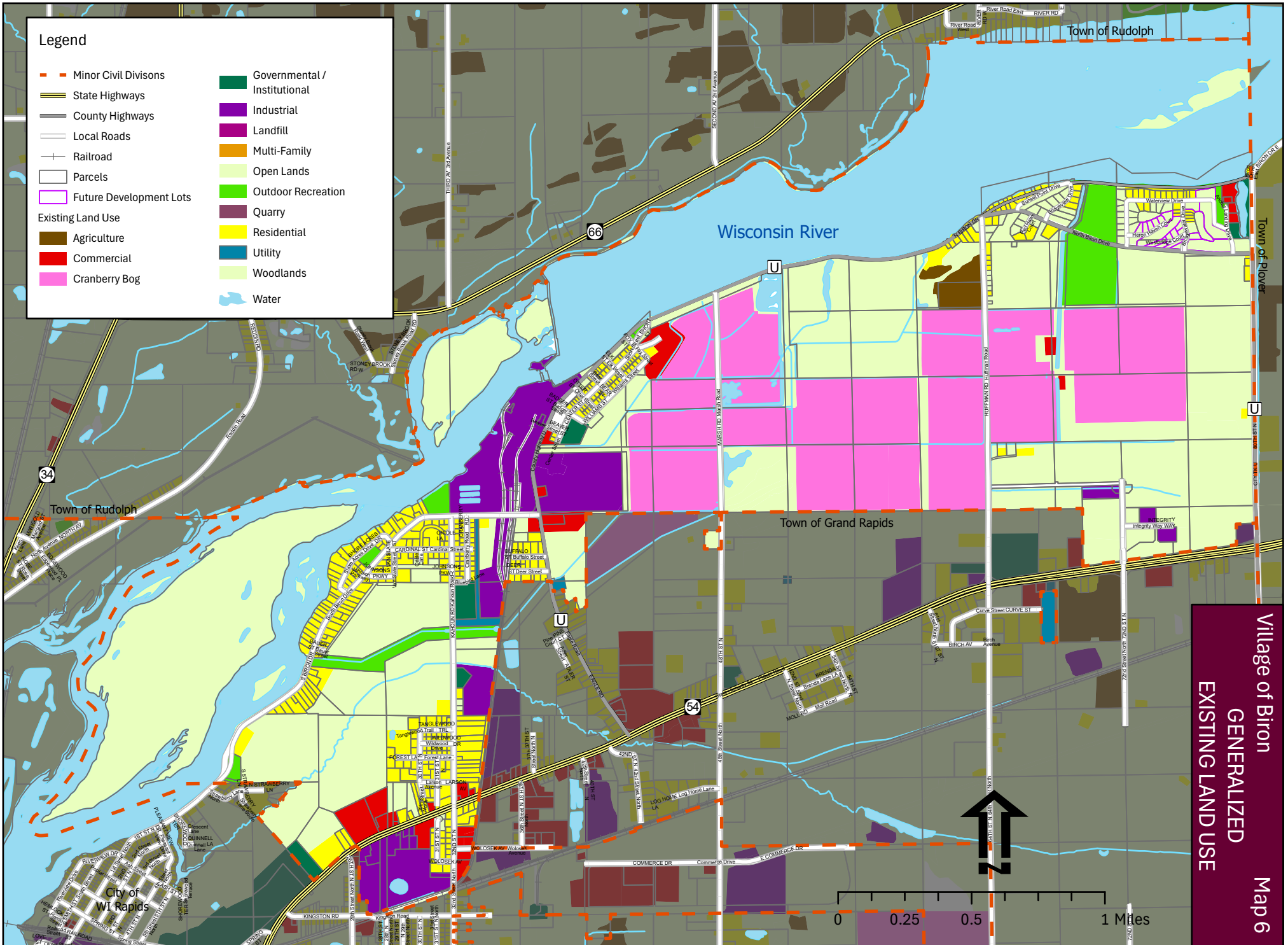
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| - - - Minor Civil Divisions | Functional Class |
| == State Highways | Major Collectors |
| — County Highways | Minor Arterials |
| — Local Roads | Minor Collectors |
| — Railroad | Principal Arterials |
| ◆ Traffic Counts | Water |



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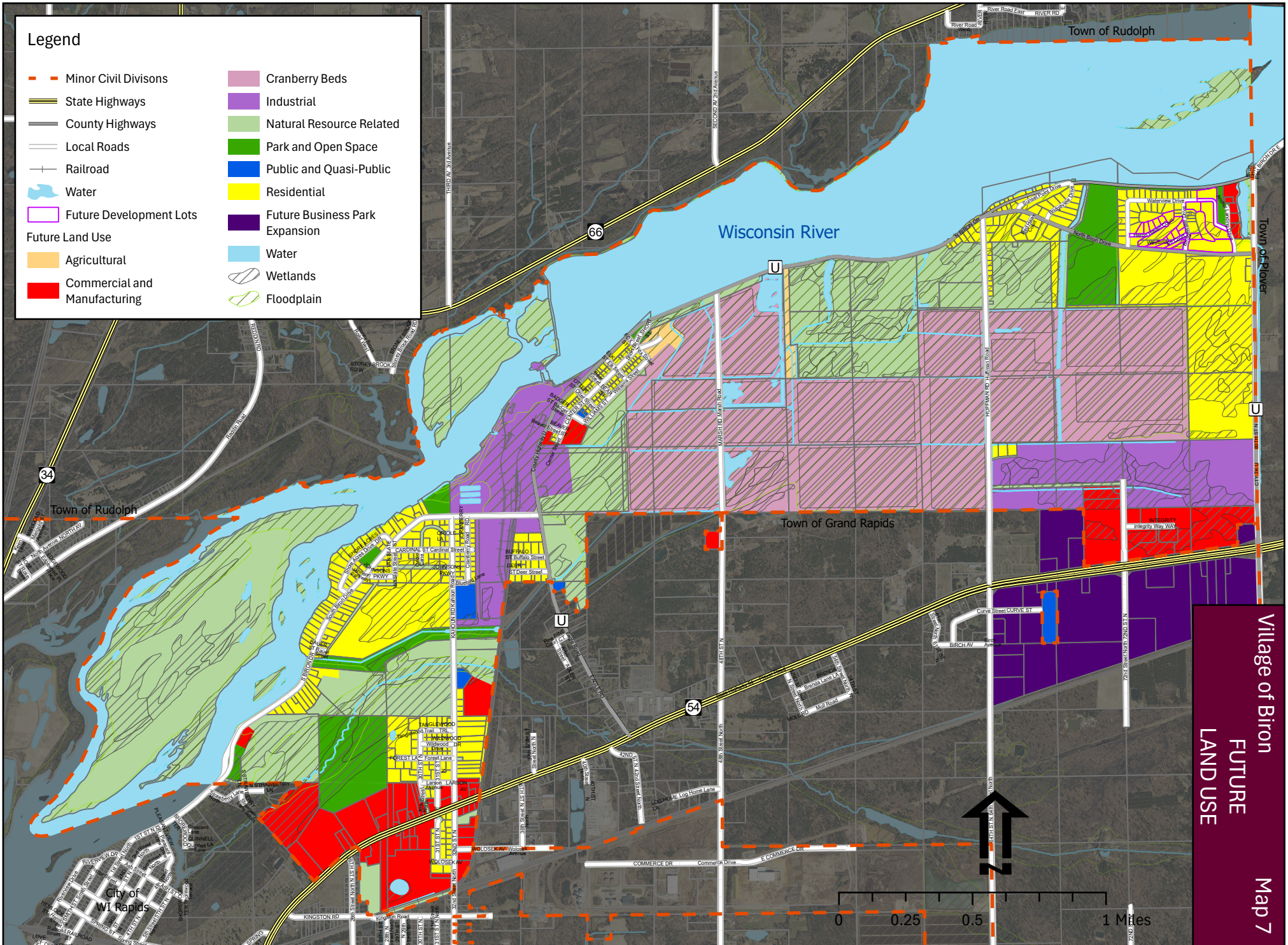
- Minor Civil Divisions
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Parcels
- Future Development Lots
- Existing Land Use
 - Agriculture
 - Commercial
 - Cranberry Bog
- Governmental / Institutional
- Industrial
- Landfill
- Multi-Family
- Open Lands
- Outdoor Recreation
- Quarry
- Residential
- Utility
- Woodlands
- Water



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Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Water
- Future Development Lots
- Future Land Use
 - Agricultural
 - Commercial and Manufacturing
- Cranberry Beds
- Industrial
- Natural Resource Related
- Park and Open Space
- Public and Quasi-Public
- Residential
- Future Business Park Expansion
- Water
- Wetlands
- Floodplain



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