

2010 - 2030

# Village of Biron Comprehensive Plan



Francis Xavier Biron  
1815-1877

Prepared under the provisions of  
Wisconsin Statute, Chapter 66.1001  
Comprehensive Planning

# **VILLAGE OF BIRON, WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO 2030**

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Chapter 66.1001 Comprehensive Planning

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VILLAGE OF BIRON, WISCONSIN  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
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## 1. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### A. 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 to the south by the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Town of Grand Rapids. Figure 1 shows the location of Biron in relation to the State of Wisconsin and Wood County.

The soils in Biron include a mix of sand to loamy sand to muck. Most areas where development has occurred have sandy soils. Other areas have wetter soils with shallow groundwater depths. Much of the village has groundwater depths of less than five feet, with levels of three feet or less common. Although most of the village is served by a sanitary sewer system, many cottages and small homes between County Road U and the Wisconsin River have some type of private onsite waste treatment system (septic system) or holding tanks. Soils maps, presented in Chapter 5 to help explain development patterns in Biron and more is said in Chapter 4 about the existing and proposed utilities in the village.

### B. History

Biron's beginning was in about 1837 when the first saw mill was constructed by Harrison Kellogg Fay and Joshua Draper. The saw mill was sold after Fay's death in 1840. Later that year, this mill shipped the first fleet of dressed lumber down the Wisconsin River. Francis Xavier Biron (Figure 2), for whom the village was eventually named, bought the saw mill in 1846. Biron rebuilt the mill in 1853, then built and equipped a new and larger sawmill and improved the dam in 1873.

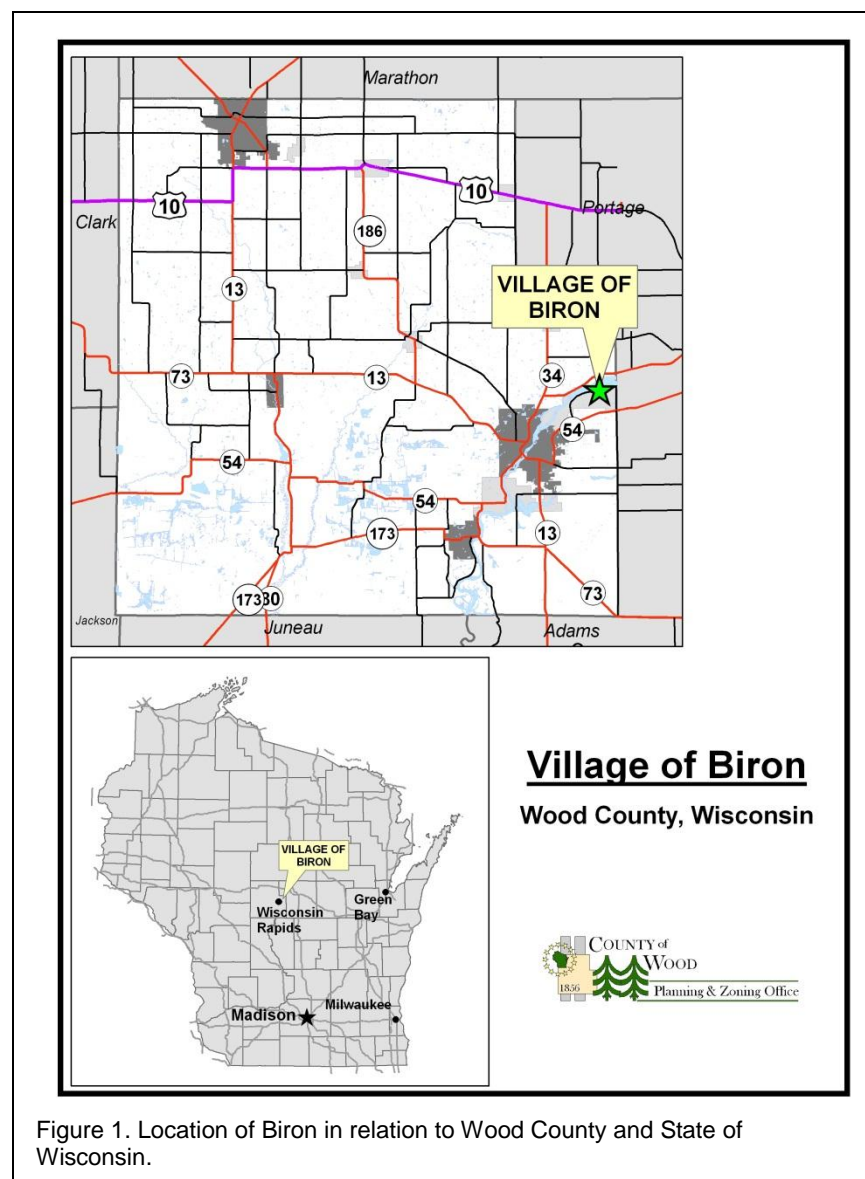


Figure 1. Location of Biron in relation to Wood County and State of Wisconsin.



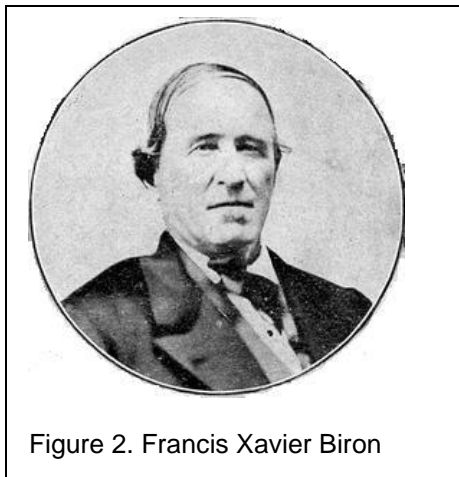


Figure 2. Francis Xavier Biron

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 (Figure 3) 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 (Figure 4), known as the Biron "White House," was built in 1865 as Biron's residence and boarding house for his workers. The house 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. Biron has seven full-time employees.



Figure 3. Dike along North Biron Drive



Figure 4. "The White House" Francis Biron's home (c. 1865)

Historically, there has been little commercial development in Biron. Many years ago, there was a small grocery store, a gas station and hotel, but those original businesses are gone. Most retail needs continue to be provided to Biron residents by retailers in nearby Wisconsin Rapids. More recently, the village annexed territory along State Highway 54 which included residential and commercial uses. The commercial uses included a convenience store, car dealership, automotive repair shop, small restaurant, and print shop. The car dealership and small restaurant have since closed and remain closed as of this writing. A newer restaurant/bar (Anchor Bay) is located at the northeast corner of Biron along the Wisconsin River.

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 was sold to NewPage



Corporation, the company that continues to own and operate it today. New industrial development has begun to locate in Biron. A large industrial freezer facility (Midwest Cold Storage & Logistics, LLC) was built in 2009 in Biron's annexed territory south of Highway 54 on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. 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 will begin as this comprehensive planning process is underway. That 220-acre park is located in the southeast corner of the village, north of Highway 54 and west of 80<sup>th</sup> Street (County Road U). More will be said about the village's industrial base and other changing land uses in later chapters of this plan.

### C. Village Government

Biron is an incorporated village and, as such, receives many of its powers and responsibilities under Chapter 61 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Elected officials include the village president, treasurer and six trustees. Each of these elected officials serves a two-year term. Biron also has seven 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 (cover photo) was built on Kahoun Road in 1996. Before this facility, government offices were located in the old community center, a structure that was constructed in 1924. The home of Francis Biron was also used as the community center and village government building for a time.

### D. Population Change and Distribution

Because it was incorporated after the 1910 census count, the first official census of Biron occurred in 1920. The village had 286 residents that year. Official census counts for the Village of Biron, from 1920 to 2010, are listed in Table 1 and illustrated graphically in Figure 5. The Village experienced steady, somewhat rapid growth from the time it incorporated until 1970. Between 1970 and 1980, Biron lost nearly 10% of its population. Between 1980 and 1990, the village regained the earlier loss and more (13.8%). The 2000 census of the village was 915, an increase of 15.3% from the previous census. That change was due not to natural increase, but to annexation of a large area on the village's south side near 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and Highway 54. By 2010, the population in Biron declined by 76 people to a population of 839.

According to the information in Table 2, all area communities lost population between 2000 and 2010, except the Town of Rudolph. Biron had the second greatest decrease, percentage wise, although six of the ten other communities

Table 1 . Biron Census Counts 1910 - 2010

YEAR	POPULATION	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
1920	286	N.A.	N.A.
1930	380	94	32.9
1940	475	95	25.0
1950	528	53	11.2
1960	726	198	37.5
1970	771	45	6.2
1980	698	-73	-9.5
1990	794	96	13.8
2000	915	121	15.3
2010	839	-76	-8.3

Source: U.S. Census of Population.

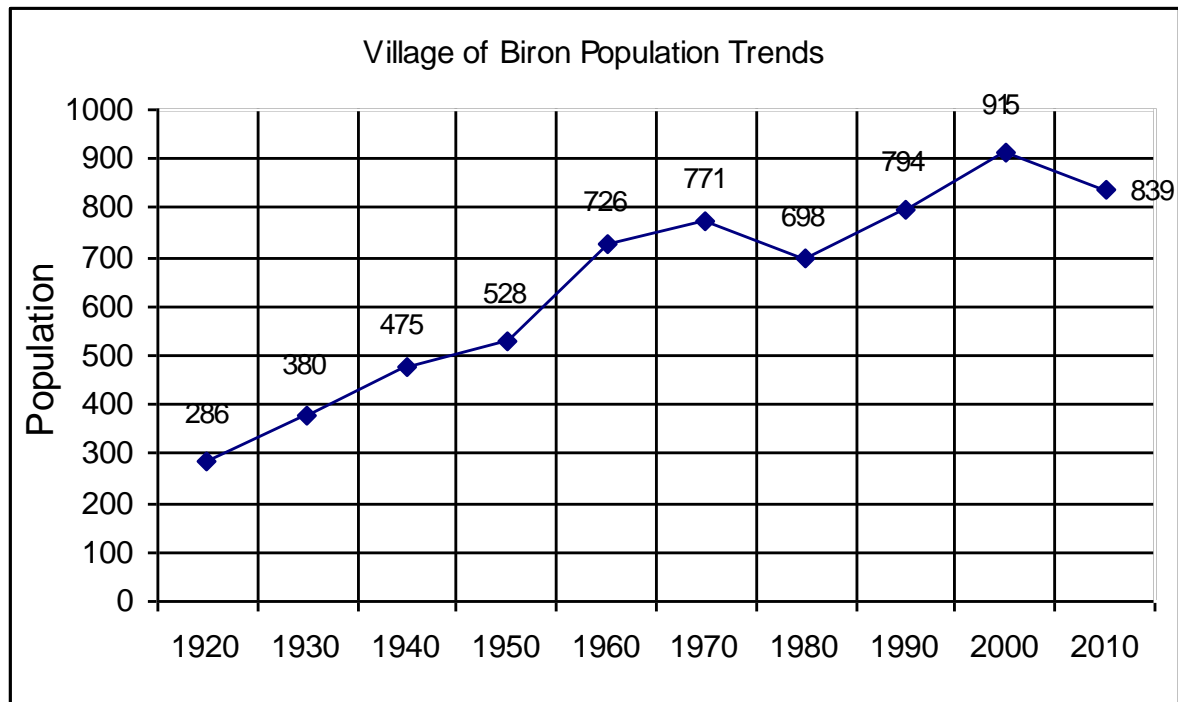


Figure 5. Biron Population Trends

Table 2 . Wisconsin Rapids Urban Area Growth Trends 1990-2010

COMMUNITY	1990 POPULATION	2000 POPULATION	2010 POPULATION	PERCENT CHANGE 2000 - 2010	MEDIAN AGE YEAR 2010
Grand Rapids	7,071	7,801	7,646	-1.9	44.8
Port Edwards (town)	1,351	1,446	1,427	-1.3	44.1
Rudolph (town)	1,180	1,161	1,028	-11.5	45.9
Saratoga	4,775	5,383	5,142	-4.5	46.6
Seneca	1,133	1,202	1,120	-6.8	43.2
Sigel	1,192	1,130	1,051	-7.0	46.8
<b>Biron (village)</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>-8.3</b>	<b>47.0</b>
Port Edwards (village)	1,848	1,944	1,818	-6.5	43.5
Rudolph (village)	451	423	439	3.8	40.9
Nekoosa (city)	2,557	2,590	2,580	-0.4	39.4
Wisconsin Rapids (city)	18,245	18,435	18,367	-0.4	41.1
AREA TOTAL	40,601	42,430	41,457	-2.3	43.9

Source: U. S. Census - 2010, Table DP-1.

lost greater actual numbers of residents. As a group, the area lost 888 residents; Biron lost 76 – 8.6% of the previous village population and 8.6% of the area's total. The Economic Development chapter helps provide an explanation for the loss in population for this area.

### E. Cultural Change

Biron has experienced some mixing of cultures in recent decades with respect to the number of minorities that live in the village. The vast majority of the village's population continues to be comprised of persons of the Caucasian race, but the number of persons of a minority race has increased, although it has fluctuated a bit. In 1990, the village had eight persons of a minority race as residents. The number of minorities increased to 44 in 2000, which was still a small proportion of the village's population. In 2010, the number of minorities living in the village was 18. The changes shown in Figure 6 could be partially the result of a change in how race was reported in the three census years.

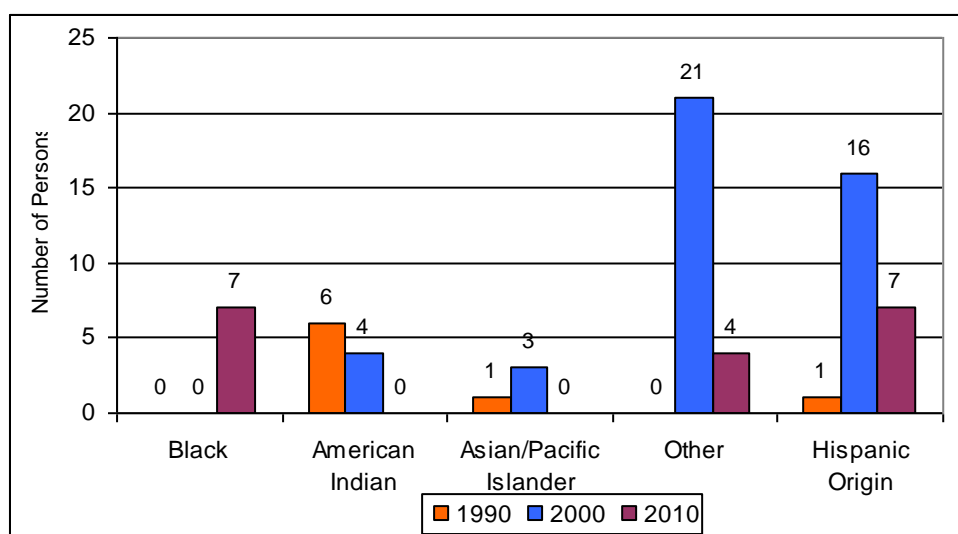


Figure 6. Minority Populations Living in Biron

### F. Median Age and Age Distribution

The median age of Biron's population from 1990 to 2010 is illustrated in Table 3, together with a comparison to Wood County and Wisconsin. The median age in the village rose from 38.8 in 1990 to 47.0 in 2010, an increase of 8.2 years over the 20-year period. According to the 2010 census, over 25% of the village's population was age 65 and over and nearly 30% was age 62 and older.

The state and county's population has also been aging. In Wood County, the median age went up 9.3 years from 1990 to 2010 and the median age for Wisconsin went up by 5.6 years. Causes of the older population include, first, the fact that the baby-boomers are now from 50-years old and into their mid-60s, and birth rates have been down since the birth of the baby boomers.

The median age for the Wisconsin Rapids area communities (Table 2) is 43.9 years. Villages and cities typically have "older" populations than unincorporated towns for a number of reasons. First, 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

Table 3. Median Age			
	1990	2000	2010
Biron	38.8 +3.4	43.3 4.5	47.0 3.7
Wood County	33.3 +4.4	38.0 +4.7	42.6 +4.6
Wisconsin	32.9 +3.9	36.0 +3.1	38.5 +2.5
Source: U. S. Census.			

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. Note that Biron has the oldest median age of all area municipalities. Biron also has the smallest population. It also has a low turnover of residents. According to the community planning survey, 67.5% of the respondents have lived in the village for more than 10-years and nearly half, 48.4% have lived in Biron for more than 20-years. 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 obviously continue to increase. An analysis of the village's population cohorts, or age groups, will help explain.

Figure 7 provides graphic details about the village's population age groups for 1990, 2000 and 2010. Interestingly, only three age cohorts increased in numbers; the age groups 45-54, 65-74, and 85 and over. This is interesting because most other Wood County communities have had a decreasing population in the younger groups, i.e. Under 5 through 35-44, as did Biron, but have had an increase in the older age groups. Biron actually had a decline in the 55-64 and 75-84 age cohorts, which is an anomaly, locally. There was a spike in the 45-54 age group that mirrors the spike in the 35-44 age group 10-years earlier. The other interesting point shown in the chart what appears to be a reversal of a growth trend in the three youngest age groups. Whereas between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase in the number of young people in the village, between 2000 and 2010, all three of those cohorts lost population. Part of



Figure 7. Population by Age Group

that is due to the declining number of 25 to 34 year olds, those most likely to have the youngest children. Many of those people may have left the village partly as the result of the downsizing of the local paper mill. The same holds true for the loss of 35 to 44 year olds.

## G. Education

The level of education of Biron residents, age 25 and older, has continued to increase 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 a high school education was all that was required for most manufacturing jobs in our area. During the 1970s and 1980s, local industries often provided their own training. During that same time and beyond, more partnerships were developed with Mid-State Technical College to develop and provide custom training programs for local industries. Table 4 shows the change in educational levels for Biron, Wood County and Wisconsin. Except for the 2000 census, the proportion of Biron residents who completed high school was consistently higher than both the county and the state. There wasn't much change between 1990 and 2000, but that can probably be explained by the annexation of an area that included many children who were still in school.

The proportion of Biron residents who have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher has been increasing and now exceeds the figures for Wood County and is approaching the state average.

Today, many area businesses and industries require specialized training and a two-year Associate degree. Mid-State Technical College works closely with area businesses to provide customized training programs to meet changing needs. In 2010, 7.5% of Biron residents, age 25 and older had an Associate degree. This figure is down from 10.0% in 2000, perhaps due in part to the downsizing of the paper mill. The proportion of county and state residents with Associate Degrees increased from 2000 to 2010.

A growing number of jobs require a minimum of a Bachelor's degree. More are requiring 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.

Table 4 . Educational Attainment (Percent Age 25 and Older)			
Year and Educational Level	Biron	Wood County	Wisconsin
1990			
High School	82.8	78.3	78.6
Associate Degree	6.7	8.2	7.1
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	11.5	13.5	17.7
2000			
High School	82.7	84.8	85.1
Associate Degree	10.0	8.1	7.5
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	12.9	16.9	22.4
2010			
High School	93.9	89.2	89.4
Associate Degree	7.5	10.9	9.0
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	23.8	19.2	25.8
Source: U. S. Census – 2010, Table DP-02			

## H. Households

The household characteristics in Biron have changed as the age and make-up of the population has changed. The trend in the number of persons per household has been downward since 1980, slowing somewhat between 1990 and 2000 and leveling off in 2010. Although the trend is for fewer people to live in each household, the actual number of persons living in Biron was on an upward trend until the slight downturn in 2010. That small blip in population aside, the overall result is a need for more housing in the Village.

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 persons with mobility impairments who need features like zero-step entrances and wide interior doorways in order to live safely and comfortably in their homes. A survey of Americans aged 45 and older found that nearly one-fourth of the respondents thought it likely that they or someone in their household would have difficulty getting around in their homes within the next five-years.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, 164 (17.9%) of Biron residents, age 65 and over, had physical disabilities and as many as 40 (3%) had self-care disabilities that could contribute to difficulty getting around in their homes or using facilities within their homes. Another 65 residents, ages 16 to 64, reported having physical, self-care or go-outside-home disabilities. 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.

A planned housing project along the Wisconsin River on Biron's northeast side will provide a variety of housing types that will satisfy some of the local needs, not only in Biron, but throughout the greater Wisconsin Rapids area. The Bridgewater development will include a mix of over 150 housing, including traditional single-family homes, duplexes and townhouse condominium units.

In 1980, there were 246 households<sup>2</sup> in Biron (population 698). That number increased to 333 (population 794) in 1990 and to 384 in the year 2000 (population 915). In 2010, the number dropped to 366 as the village's population declined to 839. This slight reversal in population and households was primarily the result of the recent economic recession and loss of jobs in the area. Although the population trend and the trend in the number of households are upward, the trend in the number of persons residing in each household has been downward. In 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 the average number of persons per household has gone from 2.84 to 2.38 to 2.28, leveling off at 2.29, respectively. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the growth in households along with the decline in persons per household. Notice the opposite slopes of the trend lines. Then, Table 5 shows how Biron compares to Wood County for both.

## I. Income and Poverty

Table 6 provides income information for Biron for 1990, 2000 and 2010 and that information is represented graphically in Figure 10. In 2010, median household income, median

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<sup>1</sup> Bayer, A.-H., & Harper, L. (2000). *Fixing to stay: A national survey of housing and home modification issues*. Washington D.C.; AARP Knowledge Management.

<sup>2</sup> A "housing unit" is the physical structure. It can contain one "household," as with a single-family home, or more than one "household" as with a duplex, four-plex or other multiple-family "housing unit." There is more discussion about housing units in the housing element.

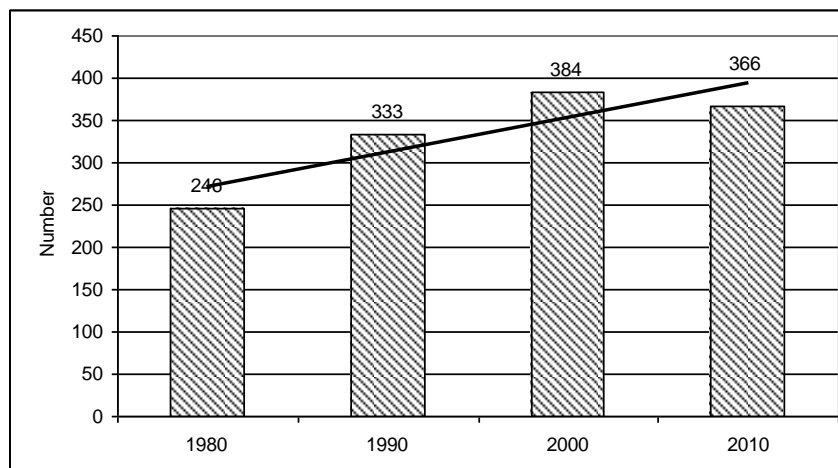


Figure 8 . Number of Households

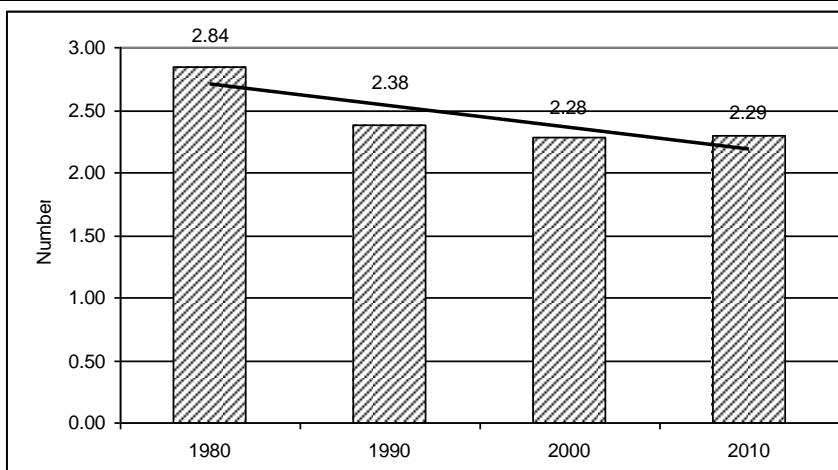


Figure 9. Persons Per Household

Table 5. Households and Population Per Occupied Household

Year	Biron		Wood County	
	# of HH	Pop./HH	# of HH	Pop./HH
1980	246	2.84	25,067	2.87
1990	333	2.38	27,473	2.65
2000	384	2.28	30,135	2.47
2010	366	2.29	31,071	2.41

Source: U. S. Census

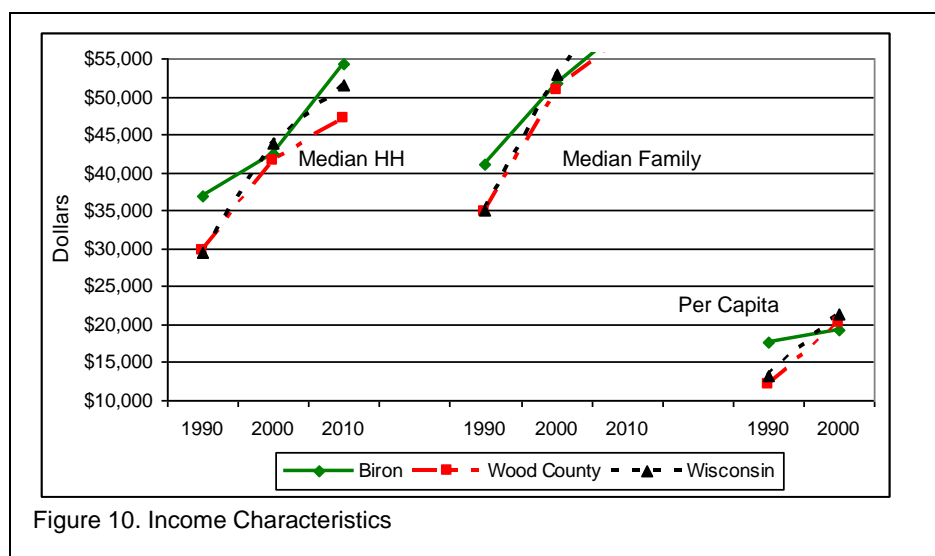


family income and per capita income were all higher than the county as a whole. Biron's median family income was somewhat lower than that of the state. Although income levels in Biron residents have risen more slowly than the county or state over the 20-year period from 1990 to 2010, village incomes have exceeded those of both other levels since 2000. Between 2000 and 2010, median household incomes rose by 28% in Biron compared to 13% and 18% for Wood County and Wisconsin, respectively. Median family incomes in the village and county increased by 15%, compared to the state's 23% and per capita income in Biron increased by 42%, compared to 23% for both other governmental levels.

The information presented in Figure 10 and Table 6 shows how Biron compares to the rest of Wood County or Wisconsin, in general. How is the income distributed among Biron families though? We saw, in Table 6, that the median family income in the year 2010 was \$59,375. Table 7 lists the income ranges for Biron households. The \$50,000 to \$74,999 range seems to be the peak of the income hill, so to speak, with 23.3% of the village's households falling in that range. This is comparable to the 25.8% and 23.0% proportions in Wood County and Wisconsin, respectively. A slightly lower income range - \$35,000 to \$49,999 - included 18.7% of Biron's households, again similar to Wood County's 17.6% and a bit more than Wisconsin's 14.0%. Fifteen percent of Biron's households made between \$75,000 and \$99,999, similar to, although slightly less than, the figures for the county and state. Both the village and the county fell behind in the most upper income ranges, which is understandable

Table 6. Income			
Income Type	Biron	Wood County	Wisconsin
Median HH			
1990	\$36,923	\$29,735	\$29,442
2000	\$42,557	\$41,595	\$43,791
2010	\$54,271	\$47,204	\$51,598
Median Family			
1990	\$41,094	\$34,933	\$35,082
2000	\$51,719	\$50,798	\$52,911
2010	\$59,375	\$58,294	\$64,869
Per Capita			
1990	\$17,629	\$12,130	\$13,276
2000	\$19,293	\$20,203	\$21,271
2010	\$27,424	\$24,893	\$26,264

Source: U. S. Census. Data for 2010 is from Table DP-03, generated from the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



considering the employment limitations in this area versus what is available elsewhere in larger Wisconsin cities.

Table 7. Income Distribution by Households - 2010			
Income Level	Biron	Wood County	Wisconsin
< \$10,000	8.9%	2.2%	3.5%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	0.0%	2.6%	2.6%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	7.2%	7.9%	7.2%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	9.8%	10.4%	8.8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	18.7%	17.6%	14.0%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	23.3%	25.8%	23.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	15.0%	16.4%	17.6%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	12.7%	12.4%	15.7%
\$150,000 – \$199,999	2.6%	2.2%	4.2%
\$200,000 or more	1.7%	2.5%	3.6%
Median household inc.	\$54,271	\$47,204	\$51,598
Source: U. S. Census			

The percent of persons and families at or below the poverty level in 1999 and 2009 is shown in Table 8. In 1999, the percent of families and individuals in Biron that were at or below the poverty level was considerably lower than the percent for Wood County. In 2009, the percent of families at or below poverty in Biron rose by more than two percent compared to slightly less than a percent and a half for Wood County. The percent of individuals who were at or below the poverty level in 2009 actually decreased in Biron, while there was an increase at the county and state levels.

Table 8 . Percent in Poverty				
	Pct. Families		Pct. Individuals	
	1999	2009	1999	2009
Biron	3.1	5.3	7.2	6.3
Wood County	4.4	5.8	6.5	8.4
Wisconsin	5.6	7.7	8.7	11.6
Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-03, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.				

## Employment Characteristics

The employed labor force is defined as people living in the village who are 16 years and older and had a job at the time the census was taken. Table 9 provides a comparison of Biron's employed labor force for 2000 and 2010, comparing village data to that of the county and state. This data shows a 21.3% increase in Biron's employed labor force since 2000. The unemployment rate for the Biron labor force was 2.6% in 2000 (3.4% for Wood County), which is considered "full-employment," but was probably in the range of 8.0% or more in 2010. **Although the table shows that more people are employed in Biron, caution must be used when using that data because it is based on an estimate in the U.S. Census American Community Survey's 5-year program.** Biron's unemployment rate is probably at or above Wood County's current rate. Wood County's unemployment rate rose from 3.8% in 2000 to 5.7% in 2002. It stabilized between 5% and 6%, then rose to a high of 8.7% in 2009, declining slightly to 7.7% for 2011. Although unemployment data is not available for Biron, that community has also suffered with high unemployment as area paper mills have downsized operations.

Table 9. Employed Labor Force			
Jurisdiction	Employed		Percent Change
	2000	2010	2000-2010
Biron	366	444	+21.3%
Wood County	37,345	36,924	-1.1%
Wisconsin	2,734,925	2,869,310	+4.9%
Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development and U. S. Census Table DP-03, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.			

The number of Biron residents who are employed in different industries and their occupations are listed in Table 10 for 2000 and 2010. **The 2010 figures are from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates and are provided for comparison purposes only.** Because they are based on estimates, there are large margins of error in some of the estimates. Nevertheless, the estimates provide an idea of where the jobs are and what level Biron residents hold in those occupations. The 2010 figures in Table 10 indicate that the number of Biron residents who are employed has increased from 366 to 444, a good sign for the community. A high percentage of them are in sales and office positions, many are managers and equally as many are in production, transportation and material moving. These three areas account for 85% of Biron's workers. The occupations described would suggest the paper industry jobs that are in Biron and neighboring communities.

## J. Growth Projections: Population and Housing

### (1) Population Projections

Wisconsin law requires the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) to make annual population estimates for each municipality and county and to periodically make projections of the anticipated future population of the state, counties and municipalities. Those projections are deemed to be the "official population projections" for the State. The 2010 population was 839 for the village. Prior to the census, the WDOA projected the 2010 population to be 932, 11% higher than the actual census count. Because the WDOA projections were off by that large of margin, population projections for this plan have been adjusted by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office. The official WDOA projections from

Table 10. Employment by Industry & Occupation - Biron				
INDUSTRY	2000		2010	
	Number Employed	Percent of Total	Number Employed	Percent of Total
	366	100.0%	444	100.0%
<b>Employed persons 16 years and over</b>				
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	26	7.1%	11	2.5%
Construction	7	1.9%	28	6.3%
Manufacturing	118	32.2%	112	25.2%
Transportation warehousing & utilities	26	7.1%	37	8.3%
Wholesale trade	10	2.7%	2	0.5%
Retail trade	53	14.5%	53	11.9%
Finance, insurance & real estate	13	3.6%	29	6.5%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	N/A	N/A	27	6.1%
Personal services	21	5.7%	N/A	N/A
Entertainment & recreation services	29	7.9%	17	3.8%
Education, health & social services	37	10.1%	82	18.5%
Other professional & related services	16	4.4%	40	9.0%
Public administration	10	2.7%	6	1.4%
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Management, professional & related	87	23.8%	114	25.7%
Sales & office	67	18.3%	155	34.9%
Service, except protective and household	64	17.5%	38	8.6%
Farming, forestry & fishing	14	3.8%	N/A	N/A
Natural Resources, construction, extraction & maintenance	43	11.7%	29	6.5%
Production, transportation & material moving	91	24.9%	108	24.3%
NOTE: Because classifications change slightly from one census reporting period to the next, caution is advised when comparing or citing these figures. This table includes sample data. It is known, locally, that some of the figures shown here are not accurate.				
Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-03, "Selected Economic Characteristics, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates."				

their 2008 release are listed along with projections as modified by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office for this plan.

A linear regression method of projection was used to modify population projections of the area. Simple regression uses known data (population for 1990, 2000 and 2010) to determine a trend line which can then be used to forecast future data points (population levels). Although this projection method does not account for births, deaths and net migration like more sophisticated methods, the results are adequate for the purposes of this plan. As shown in Table 11, the difference between the WDOA's projections for 2030 and those

calculated by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office using simple linear regression is 167 people. This is a reasonable adjustment considering the fact that the WDOA projections for 2010 were significantly higher than actual census figures. The chart in Figure 11 shows that the growth will be steady, although not rapid. When the WDOA updates the official projections for the state, those will be the figures used for future planning and infrastructure development.

Table 11. Population Projections 2010 - 2030									
Village of Biron	2010 Census	2015		2020		2025		2030	
		WDOA	WCPZ	WDOA	WCPZ	WDOA	WCPZ	WDOA	WCPZ
	<b>839</b>	975	<b>867</b>	1,017	<b>894</b>	1,054	<b>906</b>	1,084	<b>917</b>
WDOA = Wisconsin Department of Administration									
WCPZ = Wood County Planning & Zoning Office									
Source: U. S. Census of Population, Wisconsin Department of Administration, and Wood County Planning and Zoning Office.									

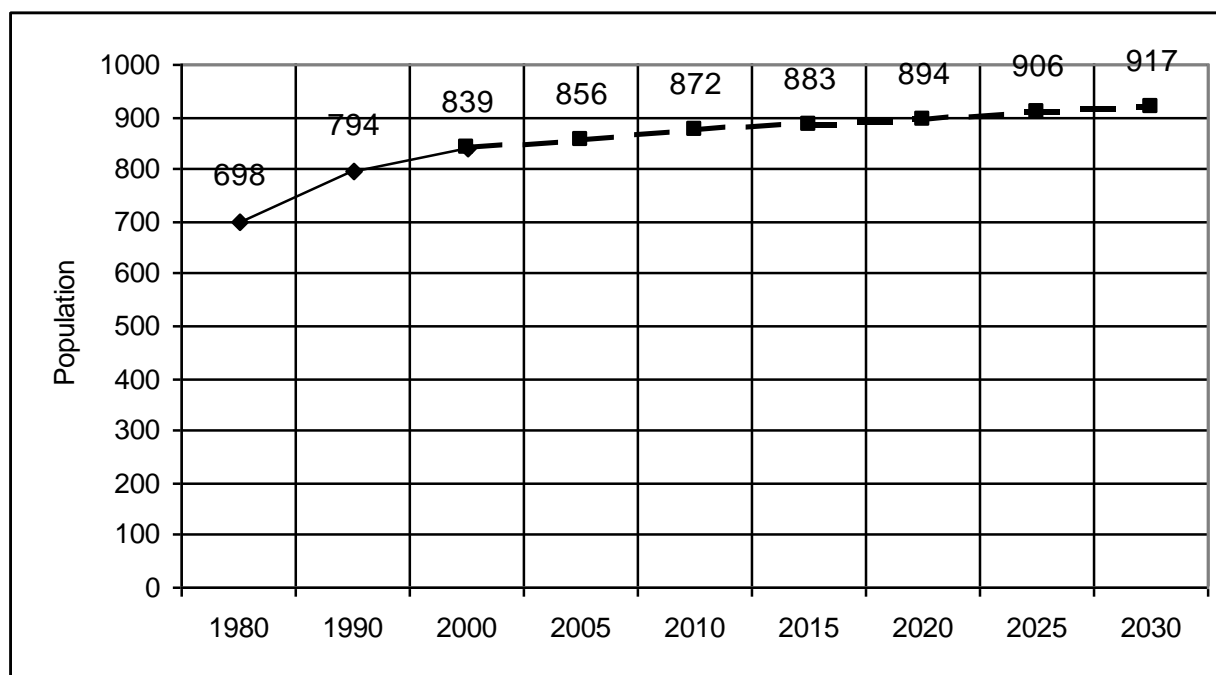


Figure 11. Population Projections, 2010 - 2030

## (2) Household Projections

The number of households that will be needed over the planning period is driven by the projected population and the population per household. Replacement housing units will also be needed as some are destroyed by fire, wind or other means or as they become worn and dilapidated. As housing structures are added to accommodate the needs of future households, some undeveloped land will have to be converted.

Like with the population projections, the Wisconsin Department of Administration projects the number of future households for municipalities. Their projections are used for various state and federal grant and loan programs. Earlier, we saw how the number of households has continued to increase and the number of persons per household has continued to decline. Those trends are expected to continue. According to WDOA projections, the number of persons per household (PPH) in Biron will decline over the planning period from the 2000 figure of 2.38. WDOA projected the 2010 PPH to be 2.25. Census figures show that it was actually 2.29, just slightly higher than the projection. For purposes of this plan, the WDOA projections for number of households in 2020 and 2030 were adjusted by the differential between the 2010 projections and actual figure. The adjusted population per household figures are listed in Table 12 with population and household projections. With the expected increase in population and the expected decline in the number of persons per household, Biron can expect a fairly substantial demand for more housing units. Projections generated by the WDOA as adjusted by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office indicate that Biron can expect to have to provide an additional 59 households by the year 2030.

Table 12. Projections of Population, Households & Population Per Household			
Year	Population	Households	Pop./HH
2010	839	366	2.29
2015	856	384	2.23
2020	894	406	2.20
2025	906	416	2.18
2030	917	425	2.16
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration and Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.			

## K. Summary & Conclusions

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

1. The demographic characteristics of the area, including Biron, are changing. Biron and neighboring communities lost a portion of their population base between 2000 and 2010, partly due to the loss of jobs in the paper industry. The population is expected to recover at a slow, steady pace, with Biron adding another 78 people for a 2030 population of 917. This may be a conservative projection, depending on the success of the Bridgewater development, a planned mixed-use residential development on the village's northeast side along the Wisconsin River. The success of the proposed new business/industrial park northwest of the intersection of Highway 54 and 80<sup>th</sup> may also influence residential growth in the village. As those developments begin, village officials need to reanalyze growth projections and update any information that may influence capital projects in the village.

2. Although the population is expected to grow, the proportion of younger persons, age 35 and younger, will begin to decline as the number of those of child-bearing age declines.

3. Biron's population base will become more diverse as those of varying ethnicities continue to move into, and become a part of, the community.

4. Between 1990 and 2010, the median age has increased by 8.2 years from 38.8 to 47.0. The median age will continue going up, causing a change in demand for types of municipal services, housing types, need for schools and more. The proposal for a mixed used residential area in the village will help to accommodate the need for various types of housing (i.e., single-family detached, duplexes, and condominiums).

5. A greater proportion of Biron residents, age 25 and older, have a high school level education than the county as a whole and than the state average. There are also more with a Bachelor's Degree or higher than at the county level. It appears that the proportion of village residents who have earned an Associate Degree has declined since 2000 and is now lower than the county and state. Studies have shown that higher levels of education result in higher incomes over a person's lifetime. It is likely that the proportion of the village's population that will earn a four-year degree or higher will continue to increase.

6. Household sizes are becoming smaller with about 2.29 persons per household in 2010 and an expected 2.16 persons per household in 2030. As household sizes continue to get smaller and the population continues to grow, the demand for more housing units will require planning for roads and other municipal facilities and services. Another 59 units are projected to be needed by 2030. A planned mixed residential development will provide for about 177 new dwelling units, including single-family, duplexes and townhouse condominiums. Planned development of a new business park in Biron may create demands for additional housing units. The location of the planned 177-unit Bridgewater development along the Wisconsin River may also result in the development of some second homes for persons who live in other areas of Wisconsin or northern Illinois.

7. Income levels of Biron residents are higher than the average income in Wood County and Wisconsin. The proportion of individuals and families whose income is at or below poverty level remains lower than the state and county average.

## **L. Goals & Objectives**

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

The following definitions are used for goals, objectives and policies:

1. Goal: A broadly written, general statement describing what should happen to change an existing condition in the village.

2. Objective: A statement that identifies a course of action to achieve a goal. It states what should be done to address an issue.

3. Policy: A rule or course of action used, or followed, to achieve the goals and objectives. It can be mandatory ("shall," "will") or advisory/recommended ("may," "are encouraged").



## 2. HOUSING

This chapter attempts to compare data regarding housing structures, households, ownership, value and more from the most recent two census years – 2000 and 2010. The type and extent of information gathered in the 2010 census was drastically reduced from earlier census years, making accurate comparisons difficult or impossible. More current data from the U.S. Census, American FactFinder, American Community Survey, and State agency sources is used where available. Data from these other sources, however, is based on samples and may have a large margin of error. Caution is advised when citing this data. It is presented for general planning purposes only to attempt to analyze trends and plan for change.

### A. Housing Assessment

#### (1) Type of Housing Structures

The vast majority of dwelling units in Biron are single-family homes (Table 13). The proportion of single-family dwellings increased since 2000 and now makes up 92.1% of all housing units. Slightly more than five percent are in multi-family structures. There are 10 mobile homes, all in the mobile home park at the intersection of Highway 54 and Kahoun Road.

A plan has been approved for a new housing development on Biron's northeast side, along the Wisconsin River. The Bridgewater development is a mixed-residential development that is proposed to include 177 traditional single-family homes, 22 duplexes and 58 townhouse condominium units. The various types of housing proposed in this development will serve several housing needs and desires. Providing both rental and ownership options for residents in a tranquil river setting should attract new residents to Biron.

#### (2) Age and Structural Value of Housing Stock

In 2010, there was an estimated 380 total housing units in Biron. About 40% were built prior to 1960, while only six percent are newer than 1990 (Table 14). The value of the homes is somewhat lower than the average value of homes throughout Wood County (Table 15). Homes in Biron and Wood County have a significantly lower value than the average state wide. Nearly 40% of Biron's homes were valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999 in 2010. Another 40% are valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999.

The housing values listed in Table 15 are based on estimates. Recent sales data can provide a means to gauge current values. In 2011, five properties in Biron were listed by Realtors (data for houses sold by owner is not readily available). Table 16 shows that the highest sold

Table 13 . Dwelling Types - 2010 vs. 2000

Type	2000		2010	
	Number of Dwelling Units	Percent of Total Units	Number of Dwelling Units	Percent of Total Units
Single Family	342	85.9	350	92.1%
Duplex	2	0.5	0	0.0%
Multi-Family	34	8.6	20	5.2%
Mobile Home	20	5.0	10	2.6%
TOTAL	398	100.0	380	100.0
Source: U.S. Census, Summary File 3F – Sample Data (2000) and U.S. Census American Community Survey 2006-2010 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04).				

Table 14. Age of Housing Structures

YEAR BUILT	HOUSING UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
2000 or newer	20	5.2%
1990 – 1999	3	0.8%
1980 – 1989	41	10.8%
1970 – 1979	67	17.6%
1960 – 1969	97	25.5%
1940 – 1959	106	27.9%
1939 or earlier	46	12.1%
<b>TOTAL HOUSING UNITS</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: U.S Census American Community Survey “Selected Housing Characteristics 2006-2010 5-Year Estimates,” Table DP04.		

price was \$210,000, with an average sold price being \$80,100 and the median being \$53,000. On average, Biron homes are on the market for 225 days.

The value of housing units is a factor of the unit's age, location, condition and the local economy. The median value of housing in Biron is \$4,600 lower than the average in Wood County. Both the village and the county have lower median housing values than the state, which is reflective of the overall lower cost of living outside the large metropolitan areas of Wisconsin. Values of owner-occupied housing in Biron are considered to be “affordable,” providing good selection of owner-occupied housing for persons of all income levels to live in the village, but most of the village's renter-occupied housing is not “affordable” by federal definition (see Housing Affordability below).

#### **(4) Occupancy Characteristics**

The occupancy status of housing units in the Village of Biron has become more owner- and less renter-occupied during the past 20-years (Table 17). In 1990, 273 of the 353 housing units, or 77%, were owner-occupied. In 2000, 74% were owner-occupied and, in 2010, over 94% were owner-occupied.

Vacancy rates are important because they show the demand for and availability of housing. A vacancy rate of 2% or 3% of owner-occupied housing units generally indicates a tight market and unmet demands for new housing. In Biron, the vacancy rate was 8.7% in 2010. Renter-occupied housing vacancy rates below 5% indicate a need for more rental units. In Biron, the vacancy rate was 25.0% in 2010. This is up from only 6.3% in 2000. The increase may be associated with the downturn in the economy. The fact that the latest vacancy rate was derived from the 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates may also be a factor in the high current number. Having rental units available helps to attract new residents to a community. New families will often rent a housing unit until they learn the community and find the

Table 15. Value of Owner Occupied Housing Units

VALUE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Less than \$50,000 -	14	4.4%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	126	39.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	79	24.9%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	48	15.1%
\$200,000 – \$299,999	44	13.9%
\$300,000 – \$499,999	0	0.0%
\$500,000 - \$999,999	6	1.9%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%
Median – Biron	\$111,900	-
Median – Wood Co.	\$116,500	-
Median-Wisconsin	\$169,000	-
Source: U.S Census American Community Survey “Selected Housing Characteristics 2006-2010 5-Year Estimates,” Table DP04.		

Table 16. Housing Sales Data - 2011

	List Price	Sold Price	DOM
High	\$255,000	\$210,000	472
Low	\$42,000	\$35,000	40
Average	\$93,140	\$80,100	225
Median	\$59,900	\$53,000	274
Total Price	\$465,700	\$400,500	
Listing Count	5		

Source: First Weber Group, Wisconsin Rapids, July, 2012.

neighborhood where they want to live. The greater urban area currently has an ample selection of both homeowner units and rental units in various price ranges.

The actual number of owner-occupied housing units continually increased during the 20-year period from 1990 to 2010. The number of owner-occupied housing units increased by 22 between 1990 and 2000, with another 22 units added from 2000 to 2010. The number of renter-occupied housing units appears to have decreased. In 1990, it was reported that there were 60 rental units, increasing to 89 in 2000. The 2010 census reports that the number of rental units dropped to 30. Caution should be used when using the latest figures because they are based on a 5-year estimate in the Census' American Community Survey for 2006-2010.

### **(5) Housing Affordability**

By federal law, all communities are required to provide for affordable housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing for which a household pays no more than 30% of their annual income, including the cost of a mortgage or

Table 17. Occupancy Characteristics of Biron Housing Units

Year	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Total Housing Units
2010	317; 91.4%	30; 8.6%	33; 8.7 %	380
2000	295; 74.1%	89; 22.3%	14; 3.5%	398
1990	273; 77.3%	60; 17.0%	20; 5.7%	353

Source: U.S. Census of Population, Table DP-1.

rent and homeowner's or renter's insurance. Table 18 provides a look at housing affordability in Biron. The table is broken down into three categories: housing costs as a percent of household income when there is a mortgage, housing costs as a percent of household income when there is no mortgage, and housing costs as a percent of household income for renters. Of those homeowners who have a mortgage on their home, nearly one-third (32.8%) are spending more than 30% of their household income to pay for their housing (living in housing that does not meet the definition of "affordable"). In those households where there is no mortgage, the proportion of that are paying 30% or more of their household income on housing costs drops to 24.8%. In 2000, although not broken out for those with and without mortgages, there were about eight percent of the households spending 30% or more of their household income for housing.<sup>3</sup>

The proportion of renters that are not in "affordable" housing has risen from 31% in 2000, more than doubling to nearly 68% in 2010.<sup>4</sup> According to U.S. Census figures for 2010, the median rent in Biron has risen from \$773 in 2000 to \$1,031 in 2010.

<sup>3</sup> 2010 data is based on an estimate in the American Community Survey 2006-2010 5-Year Estimates and should be used with caution.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Table 18. Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income - 2010						
Percent Household Income for Housing	Homeowners				Renters	
	With Mortgage		Without Mortgage			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 20%	86	44.8	92	73.6	7	25.9
20% to 24.9%	26	13.5	2	1.6	0	0.0
25% to 29.9%	17	8.9	0	0.0	2	7.4
30% to 34.99%	39	20.3	9	7.2	0	0.0
35% or more	24	12.5	22	17.6	18	66.7
Not Computed	0	(X)	0	(X)	3	(X)
TOTAL	192	100.0	125	100.0	30	100.0
Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-4, "Selected Housing Characteristics," 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.						

These figures compare to Wisconsin Rapids' affordable housing figures where slightly more than 31.3% of homeowners who have a mortgage are not in "affordable" housing. In Biron, the proportion of those households where there is not mortgage is double the Wisconsin Rapids figure of 12.0%, and considerably higher than the 52.1% of renters in Wisconsin Rapids who are in housing that is not "affordable." The rapid increase in the cost of housing and utilities in recent years coupled with the slower rise in household incomes, loss of jobs in our area, and a recessionary economy all contribute to residents having to pay a higher proportion of their household income for housing.

## (6) Tenure

Tenure is a measurement of how long persons have lived in their present home. Table 19 shows tenure data for Biron. According to estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, 45.5% of all householders in the village moved in since 2000. This is similar to the figures for Wood County. Twice as many Biron residents have been in their homes earlier than 1970 than at the county level. County numbers, however, reflect a large 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.

Table 19. Tenure by Year Householder Moved Into Unit		
YEARS	PERCENT OF TOTAL	
	VILLAGE OF BIRON	WOOD COUNTY
2000 - 2010	45.5	48.8
1990 – 1999	19.3	21.7
1980 – 1989	8.9	10.8
1970 – 1979	8.1	9.6
1969 or earlier	18.2	9.2
Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-4, "Selected Housing Characteristics," 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.		

## **(7) 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 wheel chair, and other features. Such features make a home accessible for both the resident who has physical limitations and for visitors with physical disabilities. A recent study concluded that a typical single-family detached home has a lifespan of 75-100 years and will have an average of four households living there during its life. That study estimated that there is a 60% probability that a single-family house built in 2000 will house at least one disabled resident during its expected lifetime and a 91% chance of having a disabled visitor.<sup>5</sup> It is suggested that constructing accessible homes, under either a mandatory ordinance or voluntary program, costs less than retrofitting existing homes. It is further suggested that there are economic benefits to society in general if the aging population can remain in their homes longer before moving into an institutionalized setting, many of which are financed by public programs like Medicaid (\$54 billion in 2005) and Medicare (\$20 billion in 2005).

Neither the State of Wisconsin nor the Village of Biron has mandatory accessibility building standards for single-family homes at this time. Encouraging even the basic features described above would be worthwhile and may attract new residents to Biron.

## **B. 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 so as 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 (see subpara. 3).
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.

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<sup>5</sup> Smith, S. K., Rayer, S. and Smith, E. A. (Summer 2008). *Aging and Disability, Implications for the Housing Industry and Housing Policy in the United States*. Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 74, No. 3.

**Goal: Create and enhance the curb appeal of the village to attract new residents and residential development.**

**Objectives:**

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

**Policies:**

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

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

**Objectives:**

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

**Policies:**

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

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### **3. TRANSPORTATION**

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Many of us take our transportation system for granted and, often, are not even aware of the components of the transportation system we use everyday. Biron is situated in an area where the cluster of communities works together to provide various modes of travel and transport, including roads, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and air and rail transportation. The transportation system in the village proper includes local streets, a county highway, a four-lane state highway, and bicycle facilities. 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.

#### **A. Road Network**

The most obvious and most used component of the village's transportation system is the network of streets and highways that serve the community. Different roads are designed to serve different functions and, with good planning, those functions can be carried out and protected.

##### **(1) Functional Classifications**

It is important to understand the function of different categories of streets and highways so you can plan your street system to be efficient and to protect that efficiency by protecting the function of the road network. Streets and highways are grouped into different classes according to the type of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility, which is moving vehicles across a community, region or country, to a low level of mobility of providing access to land or individual lots. The functional classifications are also categorized, in the case of Biron, as "urban" or "rural." Presently, that part of Biron that lies west of Marsh Road (48<sup>th</sup> Street) is classified as urban and the balance is rural. In many cases, the same street will have both "urban" and the "rural" segments. North Biron Drive is an example. Also, as in the case of North Biron Drive, a street may transition from one level of classification to another level (i.e., collector, arterial), depending on the amount of traffic it serves or whether it is categorized as urban or rural. The functional classifications, from the lowest function to the highest, are generally as defined in the following paragraphs.

##### ***Local Streets***

The primary function of local streets is to provide access to individual parcels of land. They typically offer the lowest level of mobility of all the functionally-classified streets. Typical residential streets, like Center Street, Buffalo Street or Shore Acres, are examples of a "local street." These streets are designed to serve residential lots, typically have a 25 mph or lower speed limit, may have a curvilinear design to "calm" traffic or may be a cul de sac to prevent through traffic. Once you leave these streets, you may turn onto a collector street.



### ***Collector Streets***

The function of collector streets is to carry a higher volume of traffic than local streets, provide through traffic in residential, commercial and industrial neighborhoods, and distribute traffic to even higher function highways. Collector streets may be of a straighter design, often have wider pavement widths with fewer access points (driveways) and may have higher speed limits (i.e. 35 to 45 mph). A part of Biron is in what is called the “urban functional classification system” and part is in the “rural functional classification system.” In the rural areas, collectors are classified as “minor” collectors or “principal” collectors, depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Examples of collector streets in Biron are Kahoun Road and 80<sup>th</sup> Street (County Road U).

### ***Arterials***

Traffic from collector streets may move onto even higher volume roads called “arterials.” Arterials have faster speed limits and often have more lanes for travel. Like collector streets, arterials are classified as either “minor arterials” or “principal arterials,” depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Minor arterials may have speeds up to 55 mph and principal arterials, like some state highways and interstate highways, will have speeds up to 65 mph. Minor arterials are designed to take the higher volumes of traffic from the collector streets and move that traffic to and from major traffic generators, such as business districts, employment centers and places of large public gatherings, like university campuses, stadiums, or something of that magnitude. They also provide a connection between communities. Principal arterials serve urban areas with a population of greater than 5,000, usually have multiple lanes, typically carry very high traffic volumes and move traffic on longer trips. Minor arterials should have even fewer access points than collectors, but still provide land access. Principal arterials often have limited or controlled access, such as State Highway 54. There are no minor arterials in Biron. State Highway 54 is the Village’s only principal arterial.

### ***Biron Street Classifications and Urban Area***

Figure 12 is a map showing the classifications for Biron streets and the urban area boundaries which include portions of Biron. Table 20 lists streets in Biron that are classified either in the urban area or in the rural area. Functionally classified streets in the urban area are eligible for different federal funding than the rural area classified streets. 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. Similarly, Biron’s classified roads that are outside the urban area are eligible for funding under the STP-Rural program. More information is available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation North Central Regional Office in Wisconsin Rapids.

### **(2) Average Daily Traffic**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation counts traffic and calculates average daily traffic every few years. The most recent area traffic counts were conducted in 2005 and, before that, in 2002. Only one count is available for the interior of the Village. The average daily traffic on South Biron Drive just west of Eagle Road was 1,600 cars, up from 1,300 in 2002. Other traffic counts were taken on Highway 54, east of Eagle Road. There were 11,500 vehicles at that location in 2005, dropping to 10,400 east of 48<sup>th</sup> Street. The traffic increased to 11,400 just east of 80<sup>th</sup> Street. This indicates that 80<sup>th</sup> Street is used as a traffic carrier to those who are

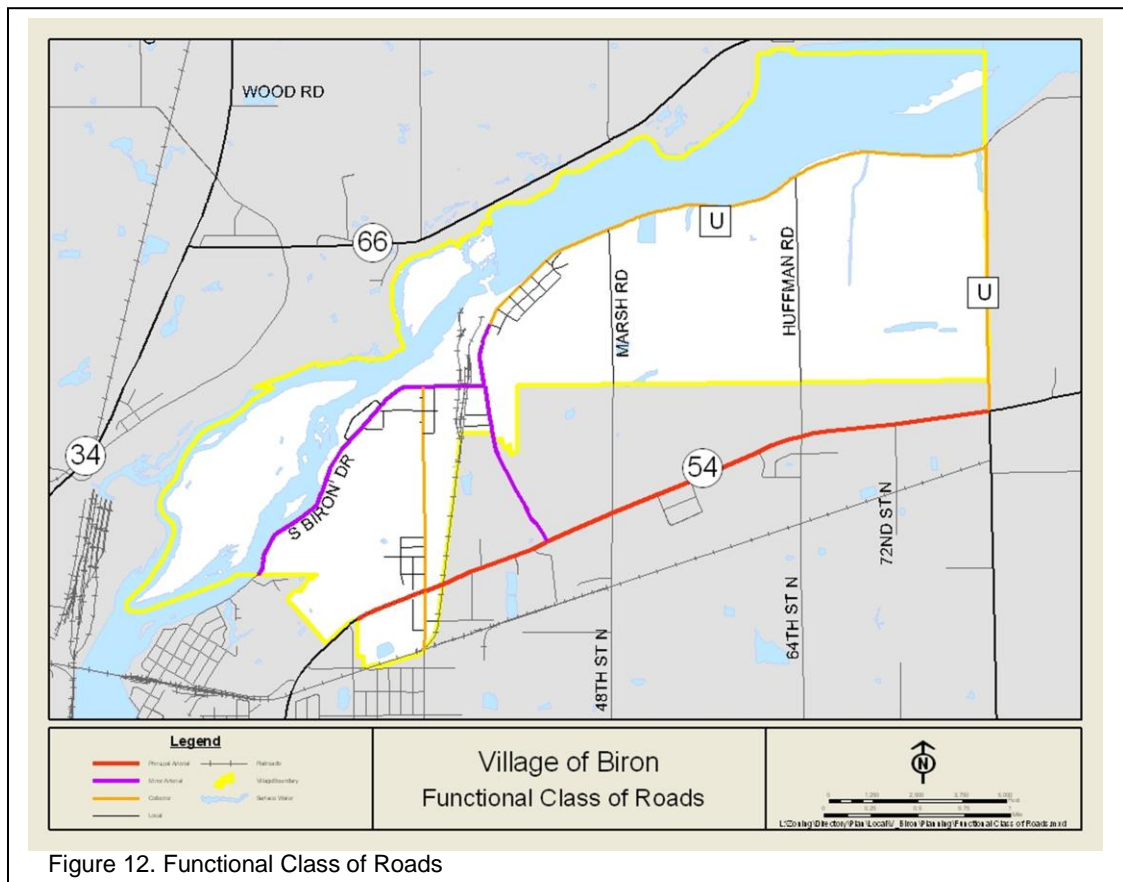


Figure 12. Functional Class of Roads

Table 20 . Biron Functional Classification of Roads			
	Street	From-To	Approx. Mileage
<b>Urban</b>			
Collector:	Kahoun Road	32 <sup>nd</sup> St. RR Tracks – S. Biron Drive	1.3
Principal Arterial:	Hwy 54	26 <sup>th</sup> St. – Hwy 54 RR Tracks	0.5
Minor Arterial:	Eagle Road	Deer St. – Beaver St.	0.5
<b>Rural</b>			
Collector:	N. Biron Drive (Co. Rd. U)	Beaver St. – Hwy 54	4.2
Principal Arterial	Hwy 54	Co. Rd. U – 64 <sup>th</sup> St.	1.0
		Total	7.5
Source: WisDOT Bureau of Planning & Economic Development Map, Oct. 19, 2005.			

Table 21. Commuting to Work

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Car, Truck, Van (drove alone)	366	84.1%
Car, Truck, Van (carpooled)	37	8.5%
Public Transportation (including taxi)	0	0.0%
Walked	9	2.1%
Other Means	14	3.2%
Worked at Home	9	2.1%
Total	435	100.0%
Source: U. S. Census, American FactFinder, 2010, Table DP-03, "Selected Economic Characteristics, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates."		

Table 22. Travel Time to Work

Travel Time to Work	Biron		Wisc. Pct.
	Estimate	Pct.	
Less than 5 minutes	16	3.76%	5.05%
5 to 9 minutes	87	20.42%	14.30%
10 to 14 minutes	98	23.00%	17.42%
15 to 19 minutes	62	14.55%	16.48%
20 to 24 minutes	30	7.04%	14.72%
25 to 29 minutes	17	3.99%	6.44%
30 to 34 minutes	38	8.92%	10.45%
35 to 39 minutes	3	0.70%	2.60%
40 to 44 minutes	12	2.82%	2.82%
45 to 59 minutes	42	9.86%	5.26%
60 to 89 minutes	15	3.52%	2.85%
90 or more minutes	6	1.41%	1.61%
Source: U. S. Census, American FactFinder, 2010, Table DP-03, "Selected Economic Characteristics, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates."			

commuting from Wood County to Portage County. 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.

### **(3) Commuting Patterns**

Table 21 describes the commuting patterns of Biron resident workers who are 16 years old and older. Most Biron workers – 92.6% - use automobiles (or trucks or vans) to commute to their workplace and most of them drive alone. None reported using public transportation providers, which consist of taxi service only. A few commute by walking, only about two percent work at home, and just over three percent travel by other means, which includes bicycles.

Approximately 24% all Biron workers have less than 10 minutes travel time to work, about 47% are less than 15 minutes, and more than 61% travel for less than 20-minutes to their workplace. Table 22 shows that, at the State level, 53% 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 most of the Village's workers work in Wood County. With nearly half of Biron's workers being less than 15 minutes to work, there is an opportunity to promote healthier means of transportation, such as bicycles or walking.

#### **(4) STP Urban & Rural Systems Planning**

Biron has not participated with neighboring communities in the area's urban group<sup>6</sup> for several years. That group considers projects to be funded with federal Surface Transportation Projects (STP) Urban Program dollars that are channeled to local governments through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The urban group consolidates the funding and uses it for agreed upon urban area projects. Funding is available in two-year cycles, the current cycle being the 2012 – 2013 fiscal years. Current projects include one in the Village of Port Edwards, one in Wisconsin Rapids and another in Grand Rapids. Village officials should consider what benefits it might receive from rejoining the urban area group to see if those benefits outweigh the costs to the Village.

#### **B. 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 14 daily departures to Minneapolis/St. Paul, Detroit and Chicago O'Hare. There are also daily air freight and express flights.

Central Wisconsin Airport is a regional non-hub 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.

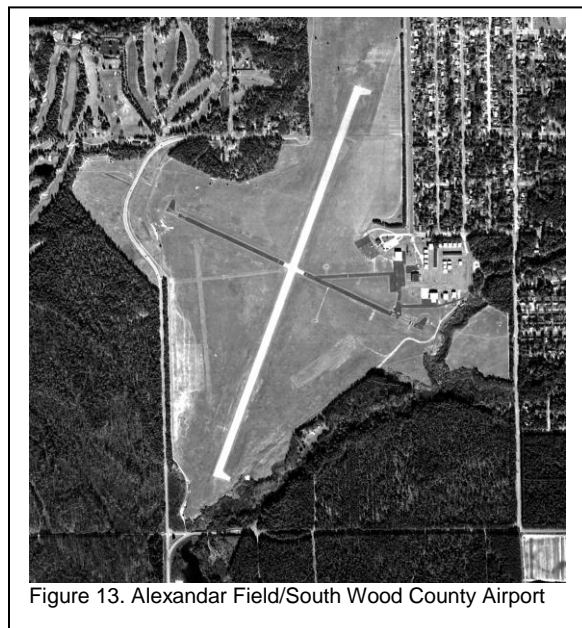


Figure 13. Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport

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 (Figure 13) is a local 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, a 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

<sup>6</sup> Includes the Towns of Grand Rapids, Seneca and Port Edwards, the Village of Port Edwards, the cities of Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids, plus the Wood County Highway Department. This group is eligible for funding for municipalities with a population of 20,000 to 50,000.

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.

The Airport Commission has identified the need for a 500 foot extension of Runway 2002 and the Village of Port Edwards has indicated a desire to expand Runway 2911 as well. The airport is hemmed in at its current location with residential neighborhoods to the east, the Wisconsin Rapids sewage treatment plant to the north, Nepco Lake to the south and private lands to the west. To accommodate the runway expansions, the main runway would have to be turned slightly, a major expenditure.

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.

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. The total economic impact of Alexander Field on the area was estimated to be over \$3 million dollars per year, including 53 local jobs with annual wages of nearly \$1 million and another 11 jobs statewide pushing the wages to over \$1.3 million (2000 dollars).<sup>7</sup>

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.

### C. 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



Figure 14. Canadian National Railroad

<sup>7</sup> Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics, "The Economic Significance of Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport to the Local Economy – Draft," October 2001.

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 (Figure 14) and has spurs into the paper mill in Biron.

#### D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails

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. The rise in gasoline prices and the “green” movement have provided incentives to develop and use multi-use trails and routes even more for transportation purposes. There are some opportunities for trail use in Biron. A paved, wide shoulder on Kahoun Road (Figure 15) provides ample room for bicyclists between Highway 54 and North Biron Drive.



Figure 15. Kahoun Road looking south at wide lanes to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.

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 48<sup>th</sup> Street. While most of this path is in Wisconsin Rapids, part of it is in the village and certainly lends to the quality of the trail network that serves residents of Biron. Paved shoulders along South Biron Drive, beginning at Strawberry Lane, can also be used by bicyclists and pedestrians. That route crosses several railroad tracks near Eagle Road so users have to use caution for their own safety. There is a short segment of off-road trail where South Biron Drive transitions into North Biron Drive. Bicycle routes are then designated along village streets and eventually connect to the Kahoun Road facility pictured above.

A new multiuse path will be developed in the present location of County Road U from Hoffman Road to 80<sup>th</sup> Street. That path will provide users with easy access and visibility of the Wisconsin River as it travels through the proposed Bridgewater residential development.

Another new off-road, multiuse trail is planned for South Biron Drive, beginning at the Biron-Wisconsin Rapids corporate limits. This path will start as a separated multiuse path and be positioned along the river side of the South Biron Drive until it reaches the first residence on the east side of the road past the Wellington Place assisted living facility. The multiuse path will then cross South Biron Drive and be integrated into an 8-foot wide paved shoulder on the east side of the road to Bauer Street. Prior to reaching Bauer Street and Cranberry Creek from the south the trail will have a spur extension that will extend between South Biron Drive and Kahoun. At this trail's intersection with Cranberry Creek, the trail will then parallel Cranberry Creek, on the creek's south side, finally connecting with the 8-foot lane on Kahoun Road (shown above).

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 in Chapter 8.

## **E. Public Transportation**

There is no mass public transit service for the general public in Biron. River City Cab, a shared ride taxi company, offers transportation to the public for a fee.

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 of \$1.00 is charged per one-way trip, but some area retailers will pay the rider fee for persons 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.

## **F. Relationship of Transportation System to Other Comprehensive Plan Elements**

Several changes in Biron's transportation system are planned for the near future. The changes are the result of the planned business park in the southeast part of the village, the planned residential development in the northeast part of the village, and changes associated with trail development on South Biron Drive north of Strawberry Lane. Changes have had to be coordinated with, and will be completed with, cooperation between the village, the county and the state DOT.

One change that will be occurring in the early years of the planning period is in the business park. The land use element discusses the addition of over 200 acres of office and industrial land in the village. Local streets will be developed within the development. To accommodate the new streets, the village had to secure approval from the Wisconsin DOT for access on 72<sup>nd</sup> Street. Before that approval could be provided, the DOT had to undergo a traffic impact analysis to determine the impact on Highway 54, a four-lane, high-speed facility. Changes will be made to that road and to the intersection at 80<sup>th</sup> Street. Approvals were pending at the time this plan was drafted.

Another change will occur with the relocation of County Road U. Highway U now parallels the Wisconsin River from 80<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, into the populated portion of the village. Highway U will be relocated from about Huffman Road to 80<sup>th</sup> Street. The road will be moved to the south, making way for a multi-use trail in the highway's current location. This change is discussed in the land use element and community facilities element because it is changing the use of land along the river and to the south, and because it is adding a new community facility in the way of a recreational trail and open space.

A new residential development (Bridgewater) is also planned. Bridgewater, as mentioned in the housing element and land use element, will provide single-family and multi-family housing opportunities between the relocated County Highway U and the Wisconsin River. New local streets are included in the development plans.

These projects will result in more traffic in the village, different traffic make-up than exists now, and opportunities for new modes of transportation in the village (i.e. bicycles). The village



is currently working to implement one of those opportunities. South Biron Drive will be moved at the south village limits along the Wisconsin River to incorporate a multi-use trail and improvements to the municipal water system. Coordination with Wisconsin Rapids will result in a trail that connects the two communities and beyond. Wisconsin Rapids has improvements planned for 1<sup>st</sup> Street (South Biron Drive) that include bicycle facilities.

Other changes may be necessary to accommodate school busses or transportation for the elderly. Speed limits could potentially be affected. 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.

## **G. Transportation Goals & Objectives**

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

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

**Goal: Provide interconnection of transportation systems between municipalities.**

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

**Goal: Provide safe transportation throughout the village.**

## Objectives:

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.

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## **4. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

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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 abandoned 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 manned and equipped fire department. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the village's utilities and facilities.

### **A. Sanitary Sewer Service**

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

The sanitary sewer system in Biron is part of the Wisconsin Rapids system, the treatment plant being located in the city. The village has been part of the regional system since the mid-1980s. Prior to that, Biron had their own treatment plant. When they 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." 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.

### **B. Storm Water Management**

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

### **C. Water Supply & Distribution System**

Biron's municipal water system includes one water tower that serves most of the village. Two wells are located south of Highway 54 in a small island of village that is surrounded by the Town of Grand Rapids. Each of the wells has a capacity of about  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 million gallons per day (gpd). At this time, approximately 125,000 gallons of water is pumped each day. The village

has plenty of capacity for today's needs, but has and will continue to investigate new sites for future wells. It is likely that future wells will also be located in what is now Grand Rapids. Because both wells are on the same well field property, it is possible that both could be contaminated by a single source simultaneously. In the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and to protect both water quantity and water quality for both private wells and future municipal wells, Biron should take a proactive position in reviewing potential well sites with Grand Rapids officials invited to reviews and discussions.

Like the sanitary sewer system, that portion of the village east of 48<sup>th</sup> Street does not have access to the water system at this time. That will change in the future, however, as the planned Bridgewater development in the northeast part of the village, and the new business park in the southeast part of the village begin to take shape. There are other issues with the existing water distribution system that are being addressed by the Village Board. Biron has many mains that are installed too shallow, are made of asbestos cement-type piping, and are undersized. They are prone to freezing and, in the past few years, there have been four water main breaks. Another issue with the existing system is that there are two dead ends. To maintain a safe water supply, the mains have to be flushed every year at a costly loss of water. Village officials are working to correct the deficiencies and, in addition to eliminating the dead ends by looping the water system, Biron is going to connect to the Wisconsin Rapids water main system to guarantee an emergency water supply.

#### **D. Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling**

Biron has its own garbage collection equipment. By village ordinance, the village provides garbage and refuse collection services to single- and two-family residences. The service can be provided by either village crews or by a contracted collector, as determined by the Village Board. Currently, village crews pick up garbage and refuse at the curb and transport it to the Viola landfill in Wisconsin Rapids. The cost of the service, approximately \$29,000 per year, is charged back to the property owners on their annual property tax bill. Commercial and industrial establishments arrange for their own collection service.

Recycling is also provided to residential structures, but not to commercial or industrial establishments. The Village provides recycling pickup on a bi-weekly schedule. At this time Viola picks up the recyclables and haul them to their facility in Wisconsin Rapids.

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

#### **E. Emergency Services**

**1) Police.** 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.



Figure 16. Biron Fire Department

**(2) Fire.** Biron's fire protection is provided by a 19-member volunteer fire department. The department is equipped with two pumpers; one a 1,250 gpm rig and the other having a capacity of 1,000 gpm. The department also has a brush rig that carries 300 gallons, a UTV that is equipped to carry a water supply, a 14-foot Jon boat, and various small pieces of equipment.

Biron's fire department responds to an average of 15-20 fire calls each year. Fourteen of the 19 members are also first responders. About 35-40 ambulance calls

are answered each year. Although they haven't had to respond for water rescues on the Wisconsin River, the department has responded to the river area to treat injuries.

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

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

While 86% of community planning survey respondents rate ambulance service as "good," some who have used that service said there is a need for faster response times. Since the survey was completed, the village has added first responders to the fire department. The Village Board monitors comments about this service and will continue to provide the best service available for emergencies.

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.

## F. Parks & Trails

Biron's only municipal park (Figure 17) is nestled between South Biron Drive and Shore Acres Drive. The 2.71-acre site has a fenced perimeter for safety and security purposes. The park has a playground with swings and climbing equipment, basketball, tennis court, baseball field, volleyball court, and ice skating pond in the winter. 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 village will have a new, small park in the near future. This facility is associated with reconstruction and infrastructure work along South Biron Drive, beginning at the Biron-Wisconsin Rapids corporate limits. About 1.4-acres in size, the new park will provide parking and picnicking facilities and possibly fishing opportunities at the multiuse trail trailhead near Strawberry Lane. The size of the new park can be increased if the village elects to enhance the



Figure 17. The Biron municipal park is nestled between Shore Acres Drive and South Biron Drive in a residential neighborhood.

banks of the Wisconsin River as far as the first private parcel along the river on South Biron Drive. The park's size could be increased to nearly 2.5-acres, providing additional fishing opportunities.

Biron will have more park land as the Bridgewater project is developed along the shore of the Wisconsin River in the northeast part of the village. Plans call for a new county park and village park that will include passive recreation activities such as picnicking and fishing, with a handicap accessible fishing pier. Public boat launching facilities are also part of that project.

There are two existing public boat landings in Biron. One is located on Biron's far north east side not far west of County Road U. The other is below the NewPage dam. The one on County Road U has caused safety concerns. Users can not launch their boats without remaining at least partially on the County highway while lining up their trailers to back down the launch ramp. This causes safety risks for both the boat launch users and the highway traffic. This issue will be resolved when County Road U is relocated as part of the Bridgewater project.

There are a number of multi-use trails in and around the village for bicyclists and pedestrians. More information about those is presented in the transportation chapter.

## **G. Telecommunications Facilities**

Wireless communications continues to grow at a rapid pace. There is currently only one wireless tower in Biron. That tower is used by four providers. It is located at 111 Eagle Road. 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.

Charter Communications and Solarus provide television, internet and telephone services throughout the village.

## **H. 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 actually 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 (CWPC), which is a wholly owned subsidiary of NewPage Corporation, has five hydroelectric plants along the Wisconsin River, one of which is located in Biron. CWPC owns the dam and a powerhouse near the paper mill in Biron. The 80 – 100 residential and small commercial customers purchase electricity from CWPC at rates that are set by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission the same as with other utilities.

NewPage Corporation 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.

## **I. Health Care Facilities**

A not-for-profit community-based residential facility – Wellington Place – is located on South Biron Drive just as you enter the village. Wellington Place is located immediately across South Biron Drive from the Wisconsin River, giving residents, employees and visitors a magnificent view of the river. This Class C CNA independent retirement living facility has the capacity to house 28 residents; they have an average of 22 residents. There are 24 suites with four of the suites sized for double occupancy. Twenty-four hour assisted care is available to residents that may require some assistance. Located on 51.5 acres, there is plenty of room for future expansion, if the need arises.

Biron is in the Riverview Hospital service area. That facility, together with the associated clinics that are housed in the same building and around the Wisconsin Rapids area, provides full medical services to area residents. Licensed for 99 beds, the hospital currently has approximately 72 beds for inpatient care and provides a wide range of outpatient services, including the four clinics that occupy space in the hospital. In late 2009, the hospital recently opened a new 117,000 square foot, two-story addition that includes 57 private inpatient rooms on the second floor and room for future expansion on the third floor. Previous inpatient areas have been remodeled for other uses, including office space, meeting rooms, etc.

There are several medical and dental clinics in the area too. The Aspirus Doctors Clinic, a Marshfield Clinic outreach clinic, Wisconsin River Orthopaedics, Riverview Family Clinic and various rehabilitation and specialized medicine centers are located throughout the area.

The main Marshfield Clinic and Saint Joseph's Hospital are located about an hour away from Biron in Marshfield. The Marshfield Clinic has nearly 40 specialty areas and 83 sub-specialties. More than 700 doctors are employed by the Marshfield Clinic. The clinic is the largest private group medical practice in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the U. S.

## **J. Child Care Facilities**

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.

The Wisconsin Child Care and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of 17-community based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin. CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential child care providers and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs. Each 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. The community-based CCR&R agency that provides services to Wood County residents is the Child Care Resources & Referral of Central Wisconsin.<sup>8</sup>

## K. 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.

## L. Schools

Biron is in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School (WRPS) District. The district has a reported enrollment of 5,366 students for the 2011-12 school year. There are eight elementary schools in the district. There is also a middle school for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, a junior high school for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders, a senior high school and a Charter School for At-Risk students (grades 9-12). The Charter School is located in what had been Children's Choice Elementary School, a facility that was closed several years ago. In the 2011-12 school year, 215 students are enrolled in 4-year-old kindergarten and pre-k.

The number of students enrolled in the WRPS district for the most recent five school years is listed in Table 23. According to these figures, enrollment has been declining steadily. Children's Choice Elementary School was closed after the 2005-06 school year and Pitsch Elementary was closed following the 2009-10 school year. Biron also had an elementary school at one time, but that building was closed several years ago. Reuse of the Biron elementary school included the Wisconsin Rapids Christian Academy, a private parochial school and a Head Start center.

Several parochial schools are also available to Biron residents. Most of those are

Table 23. Public School Enrollment Wisconsin Rapids Public School District 2011-2012 and Previous Years	
School Year	Enrollment (Pre K-12)
2007-08	5,711
2008-09	5,654
2009-10	5,582
2010-11	5,533
2011-12	5,366
Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website ( <a href="http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp">http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp</a> ).	

<sup>8</sup> Child Care Resources & Referral of Central Wisconsin, 210 East Jackson Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI serves Wood, Clark and Adams counties. Contact information, in addition to the address listed here is: Phone 1-800-628-8534; email - [ccrcw@tznet.com](mailto:ccrcw@tznet.com); website - [www.ccrcw.org](http://www.ccrcw.org).



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 32<sup>nd</sup> 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 to the north. That city has a technical college, two-year UW campus, Lakeland College, a new medical college, and more.

## **M. Other Governmental Facilities and Equipment**

The village also has a municipal garage located at the intersection of Badger and Center Streets. It's at this location that the village houses most of their heavier equipment, including an end loader, air compressor, gas water pumps, pickup trucks, dump trucks, compactors, backhoe, and garbage truck.

## **N. Utilities & Community Facilities Goals & Objectives**

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

Objectives:

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

**Policies:**

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

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## **5. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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### **A. 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. We begin with the lay of the land.

### **B. Topography**

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 very generally northeast to southwest. All drainage is 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.

### **C. Productive Agricultural Areas**

Figure 18 shows the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) interpretation of Biron’s soils for agricultural uses. Nearly 800 acres in the village is dedicated to the production of cranberries. Most of the cranberry marshes are located east of Marsh Road, although more than 150 acres of marshes are west of that road. Most of the cranberry marsh land is classified as “not prime farmland,” although a bit is rated as “prime if drained.” Cranberry production is the only agricultural practice of any significance in the village, although there is some managed forestry and a few small hobby farms.

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

### **D. Soil: Limitations for Dwellings**

Soil limitations for dwellings with and without basements are shown in Figure 19. Most of the village is defined by areas that are “very limited” for this type development. Most of the development that has occurred is in soils that are defined as “somewhat limited” or “not limited.”

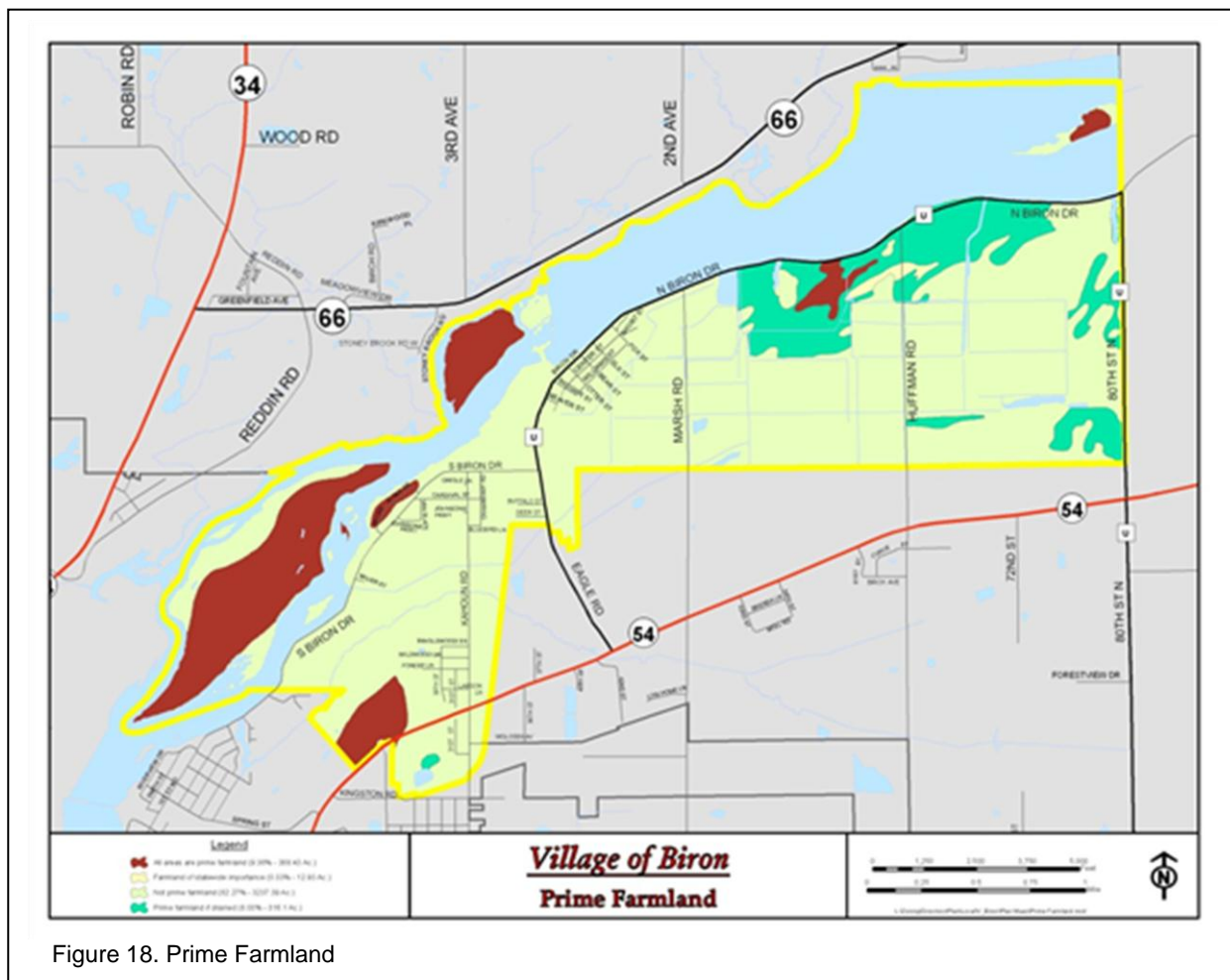


Figure 18. Prime Farmland

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.

The areas shown in red on the map have soils that are, for the most part, 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 better soils – those 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.

## E. Water Resources

The State of Wisconsin has significant responsibilities for protecting water resources under what is known as the “Public Trust Doctrine.” The Public Trust Doctrine embodies the notion that the waters in Wisconsin are held in trust by the state for the benefit of all. There can be no private interests in waterways that adversely affect this public interest. In fulfilling its responsibilities under the Public Trust Doctrine, the Wisconsin Legislature has enacted laws and charged the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to protect water resources. This local comprehensive plan must, at a minimum, be consistent with the state laws. This section of the

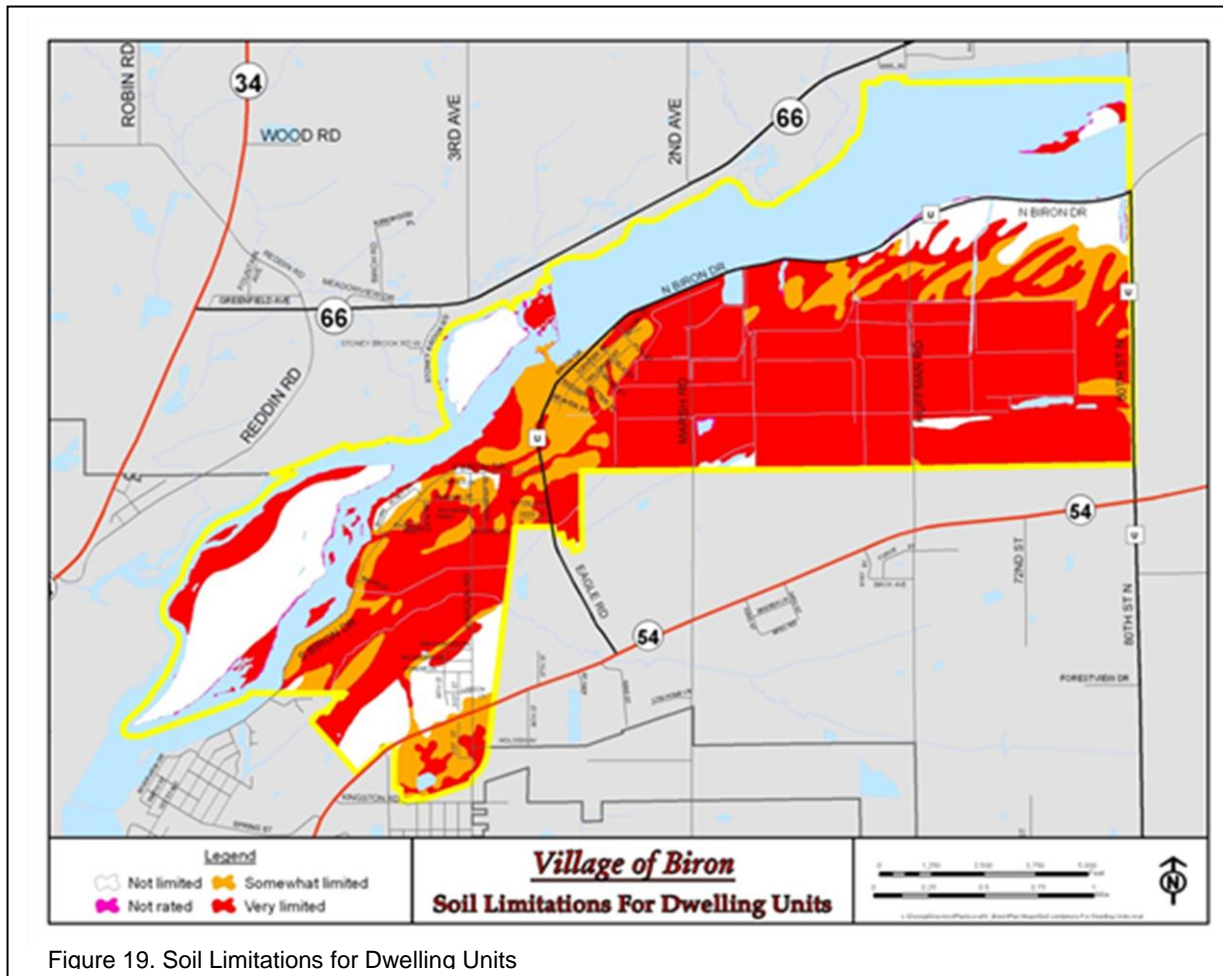


Figure 19. Soil Limitations for Dwelling Units

comprehensive plan provides an inventory of water resources in the village and establishes local policies and programs to preserve those resources.

### Groundwater

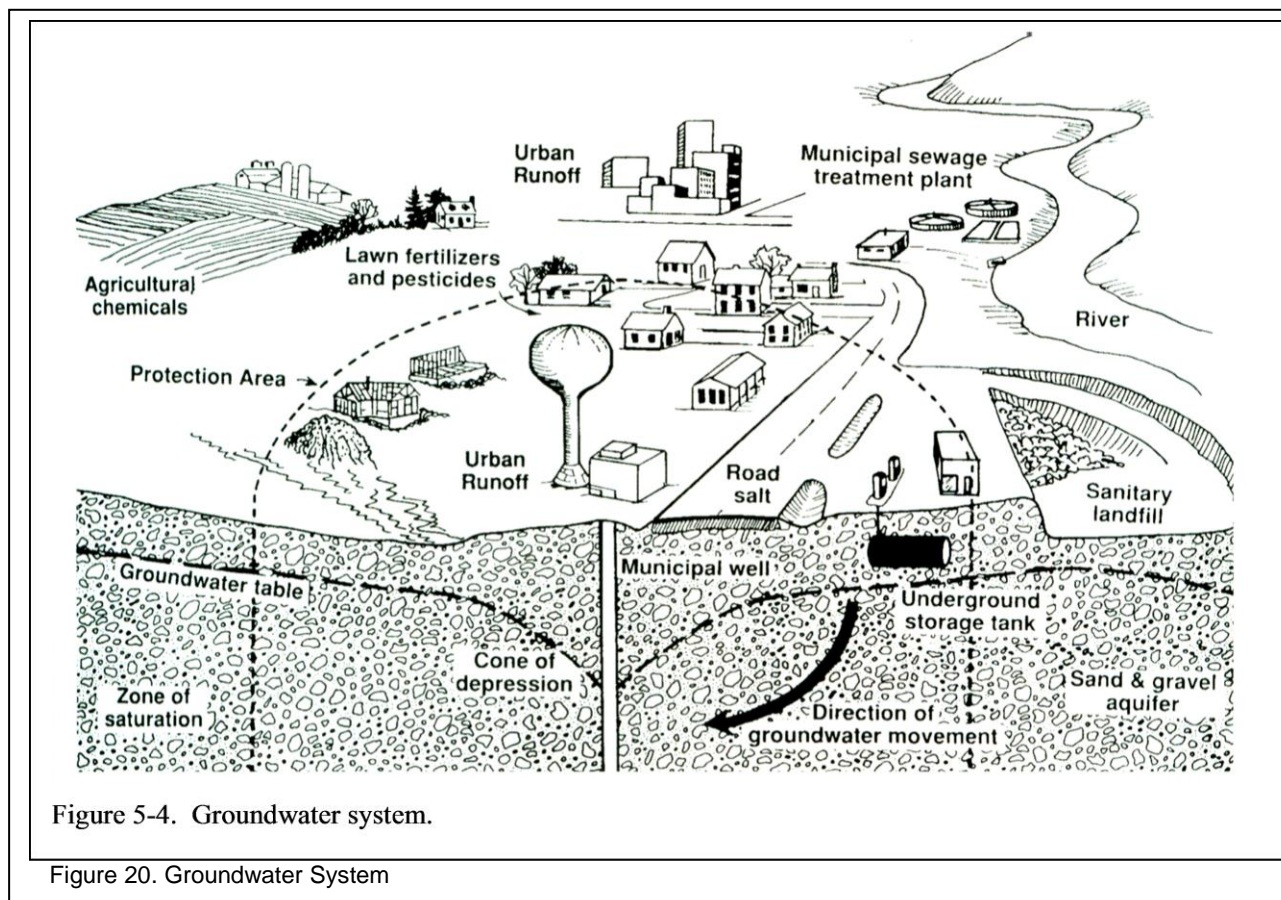
Fifteen to 30% of the precipitation we get in Wisconsin each year seeps into the ground and recharges our aquifers.<sup>9</sup> It is estimated that there is enough groundwater underground to cover Wisconsin to a depth of 30 feet.<sup>10</sup> The Village of Biron is in a geographical area where soils 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.

Figure 20 illustrates how nature's water system works and how land uses can impact groundwater quality. There are growing concerns statewide about both the quantity and quality

<sup>9</sup> "Planning for Natural Resources", Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, January, 2002, pg. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.





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.<sup>11</sup> Nitrate comes from a number of 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 the soils 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 this mineral down.

It is not only important to protect groundwater resources at the local level, it is the law. 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 – the doctrine of reasonable use. A property owner's use of groundwater is not absolute, but has to be reasonable, considering impacts on the water table and other uses. Groundwater is also protected as waters of the state.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## **Surface Water**

The Village of Biron was founded because of its location on the Wisconsin River. The village 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. Quinnell Creek 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. 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.

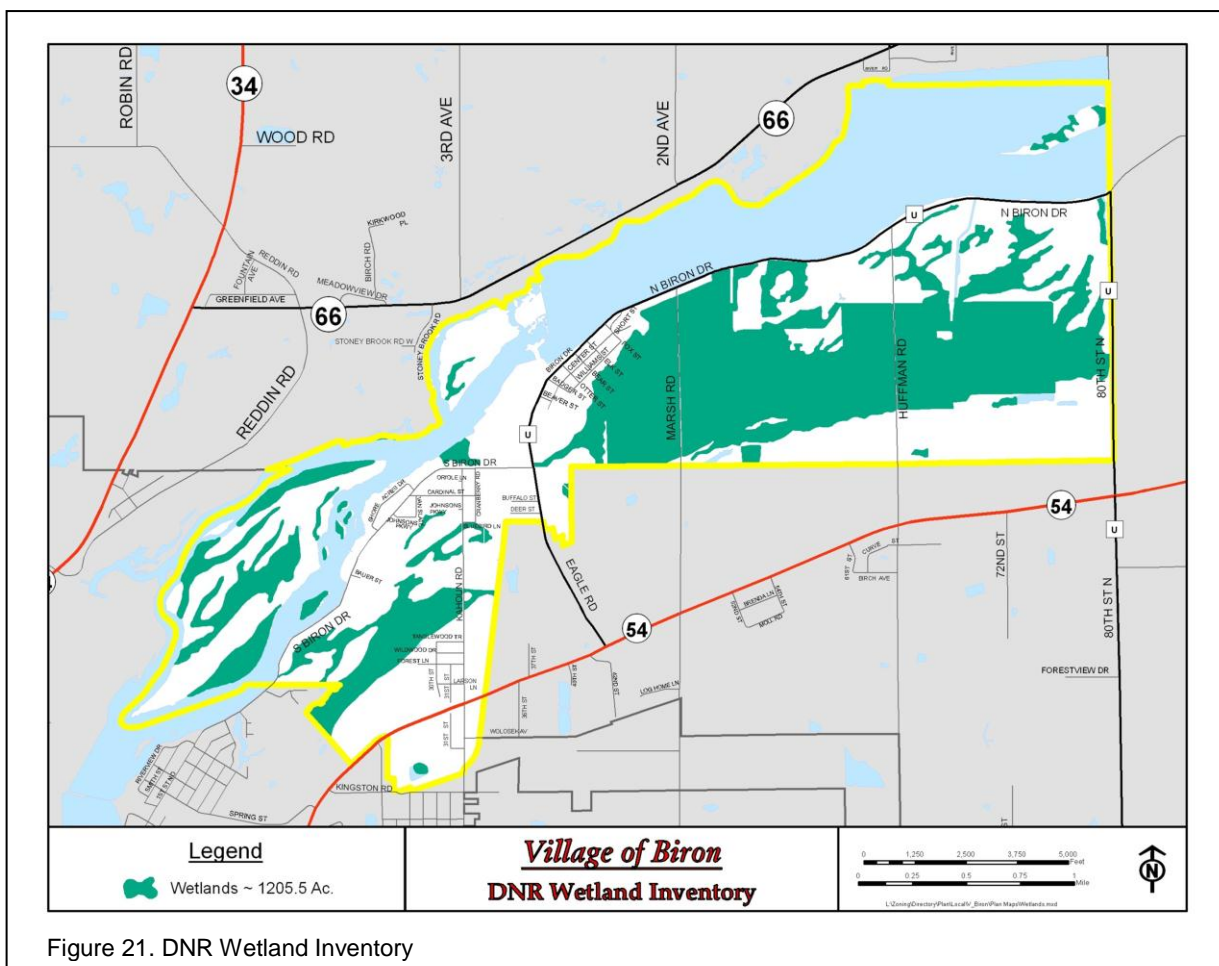
## **F. Wetlands**

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 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 over 1,200 acres of wetland defined by the WDNR. Comparing the shaded areas in Figure 21, it is easy to see the 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 of any type structures, especially habitable structures. These areas are protected and are noted on the future land use plan map later in this plan.



## G. Floodplains

Much of Biron – 1,357 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. The developed areas of the village are all outside the mapped floodplain, although some have experienced flooding during what has been considered 100-year flood levels in 2010 and 2011. Floodplain areas have been and will continue to be protected through the village's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance. The floodplain map appears as Figure 22.

## H. 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 (Figure 23) 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.



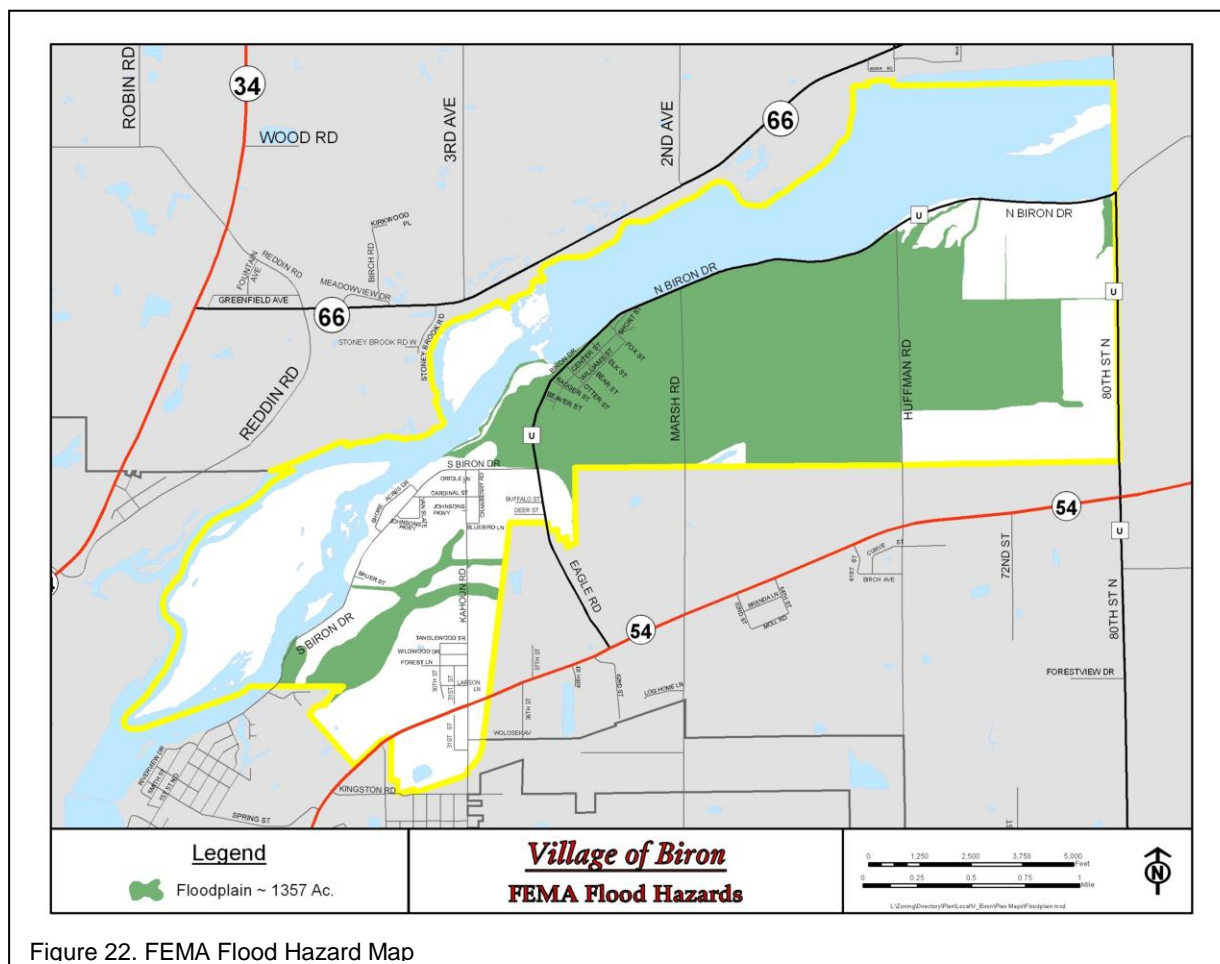


Figure 22. FEMA Flood Hazard Map

## I. Parks, Open Spaces and Recreational Resources

Public open space lands are important determinants of the quality of life within a community. Many times rural communities rely on larger cities to provide recreational resources that smaller communities are unable to develop and maintain. The Village of Biron had a municipal swimming pool for many years, but, like many area municipalities, was unable to continue providing a facility that was deteriorating and where use was dropping. Consequently, the Biron pool was removed. Several other area communities have swimming pools that are falling into disrepair, are expensive to repair or rebuild, and have a limited life left. Wisconsin Rapids has already eliminated one of their swimming pools and the other is falling into disrepair. The City of Nekoosa finally removed their swimming pool after it was beyond repair. The Port Edwards pool is nearing the end of its useable life. All of the area communities, including Biron, have discussed the concept of a central regional swimming pool, or water park, jointly owned and maintained. Investigation into such a facility continues although priority for a water park may be lower than other community needs, such as maintenance of infrastructure and other community facilities.



Figure 23. Red Shouldered Hawk  
Source widimedia.org

The village has one community park, located on South Biron Drive. The 2.5-acre park has a baseball field, basketball hoops, volleyball court, picnic tables with grills, playground equipment, and drinking fountain. An ice skating pond is also provided in the winter. 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 and residents seem satisfied with that facility, although many community survey respondents indicated that they would like to see upgraded play equipment. Some would also like to see additional recreation facilities, some of which could be part of a regional effort. Already mentioned was a swimming pool or aquatic center. Others suggested a dog park, hockey rink, parkland along the river to use that natural resource, and a zoo. Some of these ideas are obviously out of the financial reach of a small community, while others are certainly worthy of further consideration. Another park is proposed along the Wisconsin River as part of the Bridgewater mixed-residential development proposal. That proposal is discussed in the housing chapter of this plan. The Wisconsin DNR has funding through their Stewardship Program for some recreation opportunities.

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, a “Y”, youth and adult organized sports, extensive bicycle trails, and indoor activities through the use of school facilities.

## **J. Historical and Cultural Resources**

There are no buildings or sites in Biron that are listed on the Wisconsin or National Register of Historic Places. The Francis X. Biron home, known as the “White House” (pg. 2, Figure 4) is historically significant and worthy of preservation. It has been in the Wisconsin Historical Society inventory since 1978. The “White House” was built in about 1865 as Mr. Biron’s residence and boarding house for his workers. It was also used briefly as a school, a recreation center and headquarters for Consolidated Papers, Inc. Today, the “White House” houses offices for NewPage Corporation. This structure could be nominated for both the Wisconsin and the National Register of Historic Places.

The only other record in the State Historical Society’s inventory is for the old community center that contained the village offices, a gymnasium, bowling alley and other amenities. The swimming pool was next to the community center. The community center and swimming pool were both razed because of deteriorating conditions.

There are probably other structures that are of historical or cultural significance in the village, but they have not been formally identified. The old elementary school that now houses the Head Start Program might be one such structure. For these structures to be recognized, 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 might be a project that can be undertaken by a community group or individual who is interested in the village’s history.

## **K. Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Goals & Objectives**

**Goal: 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.



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## 6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### A. Recent Economic Change & Purpose

The Wisconsin Rapids area, including Biron, has been hard hit with industrial plant downsizings and closings in recent years. As a major paper manufacturing area, the community has seen the sale of a once strong Consolidated Papers, Inc. first to a Finnish company (Stora Enso) and, a few years later, to NewPage Corporation which is based in Miamisburg, Ohio. The sales resulted in hundreds of layoffs. 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. Many Biron residents were employed by these companies and were displaced with the restructuring and closing. One of the NewPage plants is located in Biron.

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. Specialized agriculture has also grown, especially the production and processing of cranberries. Other growth in the Woodlands Business Park and the East Side Commerce Center of Wisconsin Rapids, along with movement to create a new business/industrial park in Biron and a technology center near Mid-State Technical College show the community's optimism that there will be new business attracted to or started from within the community.

The changing economy of the area has left the community with certain competitive strengths and weaknesses that will be discussed later in this chapter. First, the status of the local economy will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

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]."<sup>12</sup> 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. Much of the economy-related information is available only on a county wide basis and much of that only from the census in 2000 and not again in 2010. Consequently, that data will be presented where village level data is not available, with comments and assumptions for the village drawn from county level data.

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<sup>12</sup> Chapter 66.1001 (2) (f), Wisconsin Statutes.

## B. Employment Trends

In Chapter 1, it was noted that the employed labor force in Biron increased between 2000 and 2010. In 2000, the labor force was 366 people. In 2010, it was 444, an increase of over 21%. The accuracy of these numbers is subject to question, however, because the most recent figures are based on a 5-year *estimate*, not actual count. The employed labor force in Wood County was down 3.6% for the same period, according to estimates. The unemployment rate for the Biron labor force was only 2.6% in 2000 (3.4% for Wood County), which is considered “full-employment.” Unemployment rate figures for municipalities have not been available since 2000, but the unemployment rate for Wood County in 2011 was 7.7% and 7.5%

Table 24. Employment by Industry & Occupation - Village of Biron				
	2000		2010	
	Number Employed	Percent of Total	Number Employed	Percent of Total
<b>INDUSTRY</b>				
<b>Employed persons 16 years and over</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	26	7.1%	11	2.5%
Construction	7	1.9%	28	6.3%
Manufacturing	118	32.2%	112	25.2%
Transportation, warehousing & utilities	26	4.1%	37	8.3%
Wholesale trade	10	2.7%	2	0.5%
Retail trade	53	14.5%	53	11.9%
Finance, insurance & real estate	13	3.6%	29	6.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services	N/A	N/A	27	6.1%
Personal services	21	5.7%	N/A	N/A
Entertainment & recreation services	29	7.9%	17	3.8%
Education, health & social services	37	10.1%	82	18.5%
Other professional & related services	16	4.4%	40	9.0%
Public administration	10	2.7%	6	1.4%
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Management, business, science & arts	87	23.8%	114	25.7%
Sales & office	67	18.3%	155	34.9%
Service occupations	64	17.5%	38	8.6%
Farming, forestry & fishing	14	3.8%		
Natural Resources, construction, and maintenance	43	11.7%	29	6.5%
Production, transportation & material moving	91	24.9%	108	24.3%
<p>NOTE: Because classifications change slightly from one census reporting period to the next, caution is advised when comparing or citing these figures. This table includes sample data. It is known, locally, that some of the figures shown here are not accurate.</p> <p>Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-03, “Selected Economic Characteristics, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.”</p>				

through the first three quarters of 2012. The State had a similar trend, falling from 8.5% in 2000 to 7.2% through August, 2010.

The industries that employ Biron residents and the type of jobs are listed in Table 24. The manufacturing sector remains the strongest industry for area employment for Biron workers, accounting for over 25% of the employed work force. Employment in the fields of education, health and social services ranks second with 18.5% of Biron's employed work force, up from just over 10% in 2000. Retail trade is third with 11.9% in 2010, down a bit from 10-years earlier.

The types of occupations held by Biron residents in 2010 indicate that more than a third of the employed labor force is in sales and office jobs. That is nearly double the percentage in 2000. Those whose occupations include management, business, science and arts, and production, transportation and material moving each have about a quarter of the employed work force with 25.7% and 24.3%, respectively.

### **C. Worker Age Structure**

In Biron, there are 489 people from the ages of 16 through 64, which is generally considered the working age group. Nearly 85% percent of those are between the ages of 25 and 64, a range that the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) considers to be the "prime working age" population. This is slightly higher than the proportions for Wood County (83%) and Wisconsin (80%). On the national level, the growth of the civilian labor force is expected to slow down, while the older labor force is expected to grow five times faster than the overall labor force. The age 55 and older portion of the labor force is expected to grow by 46.7% between 2006 and 2016, according to the BLS. Similar conclusions have been projected for Wisconsin and it is not unreasonable to expect Biron to be any different given the information that was presented in Chapter 1 regarding the local aging population. The two principal reasons for the change are: the baby-boom generation is aging and retiring, and the labor force participation rate of women appears to have peaked.

### **D. Labor Force Participation**

The previous section focused on the working age population. Even though a person may be in that age group, he or she may or may not actually be in the labor force. If a person who is 16 years old or older is not looking for a job, that person is not part of the labor force. Most of those who fit into this category are students, retirees and others who choose not to work. If a person who is 16 years old or older is employed or is unemployed but looking for a job, that person is participating in the labor force. In 2010, Biron's labor force consisted of 464 persons, a 68.0% labor force participation rate. In comparison, the participation rate for Wood County in 2010 was 64.9% and for Wisconsin was 68.4%.

The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percent of the labor force. Unemployment rates are reported on Wisconsin's WorkNet web site for the U.S., states, counties select cities, metropolitan areas, etc. Unemployment rates for small cities and villages have not been available since 2000. At the time the 2010 census was taken, the unemployment rate for Wood County was 8.9%. Through the first three quarters of 2012, the unemployment rate had dropped to 7.5% for the county. It is likely that the unemployment rate for Biron has paralleled that of Wood County during the sale and downsizing of area paper mills.

## E. Commuting Patterns

More people commute into Wood County from neighboring counties than those who travel to other counties to work (Table 25). Wood County has a net gain of over 5,000 commuters on a daily basis. The greatest number of commuters comes from Portage County and it is likely that most of these commuters work in the Wisconsin Rapids urban area, including the NewPage mill in Biron. Earlier reports indicated that only a small percentage of Biron workers commute to other counties. Several community planning survey respondents indicated that they work in the Stevens Point area, some in Marshfield and a number in other communities.

## F. Economic Base

The Village of Biron is dependent on the general economy of the urban area, county and region. There are several businesses, a major manufacturing plant, several home occupations located in the village. They range in size from one employee up to over 50 employees. The largest of these is the NewPage paper mill. These businesses and others of similar size are very important to the area's economy. Some of the businesses in Biron are located along or adjacent to Highway 54, a corridor that has historically been zoned for commercial uses and has potential for future growth. A planned business park will provide opportunities for new industrial, commercial or office facilities in a prime location along the Highway 54 corridor. 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.

Wage information on the various industry types in Wood County is listed in Table 26 for the years 2000 and 2010 (this information is not available for municipalities). Those who work in the Education and Health

Table 25 . County-to-County Commuting

County	Commute		Net Commute
	Into Wood County	From Wood County	
Portage	2,639	2,572	67
Marathon	3,944	1,449	2,495
Clark	1,956	272	1,684
Adams	899	178	721
Juneau	186	83	103
Jackson	70	52	18
TOTAL	9,694	4,606	5,088

Source: Wisconsin WorkNet web site, November 2012; <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/worknet/default.aspx>.

Table 26 . Average Wages by Industry - Wood County

Industry	2000	2010	Average Annual Increase
Education & Health Services	\$38,974	\$55,073	4.1%
Manufacturing	\$41,704	\$52,575	2.6%
Professional & Business Services	\$41,179	\$37,412	-0.9%
Construction	\$36,781	\$46,155	2.5%
Information	Suppressed	Suppressed	N/A
Natural Resources & Mining	\$29,963	\$37,281	2.4%
Public Administration	\$27,812	\$33,379	2.0%
Financial Activities	\$24,237	\$32,981	3.6%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$24,038	\$28,469	1.8%
Other Services ( inc. repair & maintenance, personal & laundry, membership organizations, and private households)	14,310	\$20,680	4.5%
Leisure & Hospitality	\$8,717	\$10,925	2.5%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development.



Services industry earn the most on average and those who work in the Leisure and Hospitality industry are the lowest paid (many Leisure & Hospitality jobs are part-time or seasonal). Similar average annual wage increases are evident in many of the industries with the largest increases in the Other Services, Financial Activities, and Education and Health Services sectors. Very little gain was made in the Professional and Business services which includes professional and technical services, management of companies, and administrative and support services.

## G. Employment Projections

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development makes 10-year projections of the fastest growing occupations in Wisconsin. Recognizing that these are statewide projections, it is worthwhile to consider their impact in central Wisconsin. Table 27 identifies the occupations

Table 27. Fastest Growing Occupations in Wisconsin, 2008 – 2018 (listed by percent change)				
Occupational Title	Estimated Employment			
	2008	2018	New Jobs	Pct. Chg.
Home health aides	20,730	28,670	7,940	38.3%
Network systems and data communications analysts	7,860	10,760	2,900	36.9%
Personal and home care aides	21,720	29,100	7,380	34.0%
Financial Examiners	440	580	140	31.8%
Ambulance Drivers, Attendants, Exc. Emergency Medical Tech.	530	700	170	32.1%
Physician Assistants	1,670	2,120	450	29.9%
Athletic Trainers	440	560	120	27.3%
Surgical Technologists	2,660	3,330	670	25.2%
Physical Therapist Aides	1,080	1,350	270	25.0%
Medical Equipment Repairers	1,220	1,520	300	24.6%
Mental Health Counselors	1,880	2,330	450	23.9%
Gaming Dealers	920	1,140	220	23.9%
Animal Trainers	590	730	140	23.7%
Cardiovascular Technologists & Technicians	960	1,180	220	22.9%
Medical Scientist, except Epidemiologists	2,890	3,540	650	22.5%
Compliance Officers, except Ag/Construction/Health/Safety/Transportation	3,780	4,630	850	22.5%
Medical assistants	9,860	11,960	2,100	21.3%
Funeral Directors	800	970	170	21.3%
Dental assistants	6,060	7,340	1,280	21.1%
Dental Hygienists	4,920	5,960	1,040	21.1%
Respiratory Therapists	2,240	2,710	470	21.0%
Personal Financial Advisors	4,290	5,130	840	19.6%
Registered nurses	54,420	64,990	10,570	19.4%
Employment, Recruitment & Placement Specialists	5,450	6,490	1,040	19.1%
Skin Care Specialists	550	650	100	18.2%
Fitness trainers and aerobics instructors	7,100	8,160	1,070	15.0%
Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.				

that are expected to grow the fastest between 2008 and 2018. It should come as no surprise that, given the aging population, many of those occupations are medical and health related. Also, computer and data communications jobs are expected to continue to remain strong during this period.

A follow-up table, (Table 28) lists those industries that the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development foresees as the fastest growing between 2008 and 2018. This table, sorted by number of new jobs expected, again shows the strong presence of the medical

Table 28. Industries with the Most New Jobs in Wisconsin, 2008 - 2018				
Industry Title	Estimated Employment			
	2008	2018	Change	Pct. Chg.
Ambulatory health care services	105,930	128,600	22,670	21.4%
Hospitals, including state and local government(2)	119,350	134,430	15,080	12.6%
Social assistance	69,500	84,100	14,600	21.0%
Administrative and support services	129,980	143,600	13,630	10.5%
Food services and drinking places	191,410	203,830	12,420	6.5%
Nursing and residential care facilities	72,470	84,730	12,260	16.9%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	100,180	108,750	8,570	8.6%
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	90,300	96,370	6,070	6.7%
Local, excluding education and hospitals(2)	130,860	135,310	4,450	3.4%
Management of companies and enterprises	44,460	48,800	4,340	9.8%
Educational services, including state and local government(2)	264,580	268,110	3,530	1.3%
Specialty trade contractors	74,490	77,570	3,080	4.1%
General merchandise stores	63,620	66,440	2,820	4.4%
Truck transportation	46,210	48,830	2,610	5.7%
Personal and laundry services	27,160	29,720	2,570	9.4%
Wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers	7,990	10,170	2,190	27.4%
Heavy and civil engineering construction	15,340	17,170	1,830	11.9%
Insurance carriers and related activities	69,600	71,400	1,800	2.6%
Warehousing and storage	13,880	15,390	1,510	10.9%
Construction of buildings	28,160	29,660	1,500	5.3%
Accommodation	31,560	33,040	1,480	4.7%
Private households	7,830	9,190	1,360	17.3%
Amusement, gambling, and recreation industries	26,350	27,550	1,200	4.6%
Merchant wholesalers, nondurable goods	46,480	47,540	1,070	2.3%
Credit intermediation and related activities	54,140	55,050	910	1.7%
Internet service providers, web search portals, and data processing services	7,510	8,370	860	11.4%
Support activities for transportation	5,310	6,160	850	16.0%
Total federal government employment	15,500	16,000	500	3.2%
Real estate	18,540	19,030	490	2.7%
Food and beverage stores	56,510	56,960	450	0.8%
Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.				

industry. The jobs listed in the table will provide an opportunity to attract new development to our area. The presence of the strong medical sector in our area is an example that can be used to market our area for medical industry expansion. The area industrial and business parks' location in relation to the Interstate 39 are ideal for attracting some of these type businesses and industries.

## H. Area Business & Industrial Parks

The Village of Biron is in the process of developing a combination business and industrial park on the village's far southeast corner. There are three other such parks in the area. One is the West Side Industrial Park on the west side of Wisconsin Rapids north of Highway 73. That industrial park is nearly full. Another business park, The Woodlands, is southwest of the Biron business park and is located near Midstate Technical College. The third park is called the Wisconsin Rapids Commerce Center and targets manufacturing operations more than office-type businesses. It is only a couple of miles from the Biron business park, south of Highway 54 on 48<sup>th</sup> 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.

The configuration of the "Wood County Business Park in Biron" (a/k/a Biron business park) is shown in Figure 24. Wood County has collaborated with and supported Biron's efforts to develop this business park in a tax increment finance district. Eventually, additional land will be acquired to fill in the white area on the map, north of Highway 54 and east of 64<sup>th</sup> Street. The Biron business park has direct access to a four lane highway, but no rail sidings. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is working on design options for a 72<sup>nd</sup> Street access



Figure 24. Wood County Business Park in Biron

and a future redesign of the intersection of Highway 54 and 80<sup>th</sup> Street. Working together to create jobs in our area, Wisconsin Rapids and Biron can offer a full range of facilities and services, all very close to each other.

## I. 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 three Biron sites listed in the BRRTS database (Table 29). One is a leaking underground storage tank (LUST) and two 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.

Table 29. BRRTS* Sites in Biron		
Site Name & Address	Activity Type	Status
Biron Municipal Building 630 Center Street	LUST	Closed
NewPage Corporate Spill 621 N. Biron Drive	Spill	Closed
1511 S. Biron Drive	Spill	Historic
<p>* Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System.</p> <p>LUST – Leaking Underground Storage Tank Spill - a discharge of a hazardous substance that may adversely impact, or threaten to impact public health, welfare or the environment.</p> <p>Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.</p>		

## J. Desired Businesses

In the community planning survey that was provided to all property owners in the Village of Biron, 86% of the respondents said they want to see more job opportunities in the village. Light industrial jobs were the most desired, followed by retail, then restaurants, then general industry.

The light industrial and general industry jobs would fit well in the new business park. Twenty-nine percent said they wanted to see an industrial park developed in the village and 40% said they'd like to see a business park. Thirty-one percent wanted neither.

Retail and restaurants may be better situated along the Highway 54 corridor. Some survey respondents favored collaborating with Grand Rapids or Wisconsin Rapids to develop more of a regional industrial or business park. In the end, Biron officials collaborated with Wood County and a private developer on the business park.

## **K. Economic Development Organizational Framework**

There are several economic development organizations and efforts in the area. Some of the primary organizations include:

Chamber of Commerce – The 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.

Wood County – Under the oversight of the Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee, Wood County 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.

NCWRPC – The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, located in Wausau, provides technical assistance and compiles economic development data for its members. It also administers a regional revolving loan fund on behalf of the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation. The ten counties the NCWRPC serves have also been formally designated as an Economic Development District by the State of Wisconsin and by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. Under this designation, the NCWRPC maintains a continuous process of planning assistance that supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs and income. The NCWRPC provides services such as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs that support private economic development activity, and works with local units of government to maintain eligibility for certain grants.

Centergy – The Centergy Central Wisconsin Alliance for Economic Development was initially created in 1988 and has evolved into the strong economic development proponent it is today. This non-profit organization is led by an executive director who has the responsibility of conducting economic development activities and looking after economic development interests in Wood, Portage and Marathon counties. The County of Wood is represented on the Board of Directors by Chamber of Commerce staff from Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield, and private business owners from the county. Centergy has conducted economic opportunity forums and studies for central Wisconsin, which have resulted in cooperative efforts in our region. Each spring, Centergy coordinates Central Wisconsin Days in Madison. This two-day event features one-on-one meetings with the Governor, Wisconsin legislators and state-level staff members to educate them on the opportunities and needs throughout central Wisconsin. Centergy Board members, private business representatives and local elected officials travel to Madison to represent our area.

## **L. Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses**

A community's approach to economic development is based on its competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Strategic planning workshops have

been held for our area in recent years. Participants 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. In 2008, the area created and promoted the “Buy Local” campaign to keep sales and jobs in our community. This program continues to be promoted today.

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.

Comments from the Village of Biron Community Planning Survey suggest several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our area. Some of the SWOT items that can be identified in that survey and other community workshops are:

#### 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 town 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

### **M. Economic Development Goals & Objectives**

#### **Goal: Create a business friendly persona for the Village of Biron**

##### **Objectives:**

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

##### **Policies:**

1. Encourage development of new small businesses in the business park.
2. Focus attention on the businesses on Highway 54 via mention in news articles, a village newsletter or tax bill inserts.
3. Encourage new businesses to locate on Highway 54 by maintaining commercial zoning that is business friendly.
4. Publicize the business park and it's 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 the 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.



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## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

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### A. Purpose

During the downturned economy, 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 of 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.

### B. Existing Shared Services and Cooperative Efforts

Law Enforcement. Biron does not have a municipal police department. Instead, the Wood County Sheriff’s Department provides routine patrols through the village.

E-911 Dispatch Services. The Wood County Communications Department receives emergency calls for Biron and dispatches the Wood County Sheriff’s Department for response. Calls for the Humane Officer are dispatched through the 911 system only, not by the village’s staff.

Fire Services. The Biron Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD) has mutual aid agreements with each of the surrounding municipalities that have fire departments. The village fire department has contracts to provide fire services to all or portions of the towns of Grand Rapids and Grant. The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) is the mutual aid system where the BVFD, if in

need of additional help, can contact another fire department that will provide up to 20% of their resources to the fire department in need. This new system guarantees that the loaning fire department's community has 80% of their resources at home in case they have a fire.

Wisconsin Rapids Area Sanitary Sewer. The Wisconsin Rapids Area Sewer Service Area Plan is a cooperative effort to plan for expansion of the Wisconsin Rapids sanitary sewer collection system and treatment plant. Biron and nine other area municipalities<sup>13</sup> 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 a comprehensive plan for the village has not 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 has been assisting with the process.

League of Wisconsin Municipalities. Biron is a member of "the League." The League of Wisconsin Municipalities 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, will require new streets. The school district should be brought into discussions regarding street layouts to assure 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.

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<sup>13</sup> The chief elected officials or their designee of the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Village of Biron, Village of Rudolph, and the Towns of Grand Rapids, Grant, Plover, Rudolph, Saratoga, Seneca, Sigel make up Policy Committee of the "Wisconsin Rapids Area Sewer Service Area Plan – 2030" that was adopted in March, 2012.

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 our manufacturing arena. As new industries locate in the Biron business park, opportunities will arise for customized training programs. Although training agreements will be between the businesses and MSTC, Village officials can act as a liaison between the two to help assure that training is provided to area residents who will work in the new businesses.

Neighboring Municipalities. Biron officials have actively participated in area-wide programs and projects that affect village residents and businesses. The relocation and proposed extension of State Highway 54 is one example. Highway 54 travels through a small part of Biron and is an integral component of the proposed business park in Biron. A feasibility study has been completed 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. Once completed, Highway 54 will 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.

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

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

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

State and Federal Agencies. There are, of course, many programs that are mandated by various State and Federal agencies. The village cooperates by submitting the appropriate records and reports as prescribed by the specific programs and laws.

### **C. Existing Intergovernmental Regulations and Tools**

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.

Wisconsin Commercial Building Code. 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 plan is really the first comprehensive plan for the village. 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 recent years, the commission has dealt with a comprehensive revision of their ordinance, TIF district planning, planning for a large residential development, working with property owners and Stora Enso (NewPage) Paper company on a land transfer, and working with a private developer and Wood County on a business park proposal.

Wisconsin Rapids Area Sewer Service Area Plan. Biron is an active participant in the “Wisconsin Rapids Sewer Service Area Plan,” a document that establishes future service areas for the regional sanitary sewer system. Such plans are required for cities with a population of

10,000 or more under the Federal Clean Water Act. The current 20-year plan was written in 2012.

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

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

#### **D. Existing and Potential Conflicts**

Boundary Development/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 or raiding 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 they so choose. Their review would typically be used to assure 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.

## **E. Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals & Objectives**

### **Goal: Continue cooperative participation for emergency services.**

#### Objectives:

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

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

#### Objectives:

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

### **Goal: Become an effective voice for State initiatives that can affect the village operations or residents.**

#### Objectives:

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

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## 8. LAND USE

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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.

### A. Trends in Supply & Demand

#### 1. Historical Land Use Pattern

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

#### 2. 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.

The map and table in Figure 25 shows the land use on each parcel in the Village of Biron. **It should be noted that a parcel of, say, five acres in size that is shown as residential may, in fact only have one or two acres that is actually "used" for the residential purpose. The estimated acres in that activity, however, include the entire parcel.** A description of each observable activity follows.

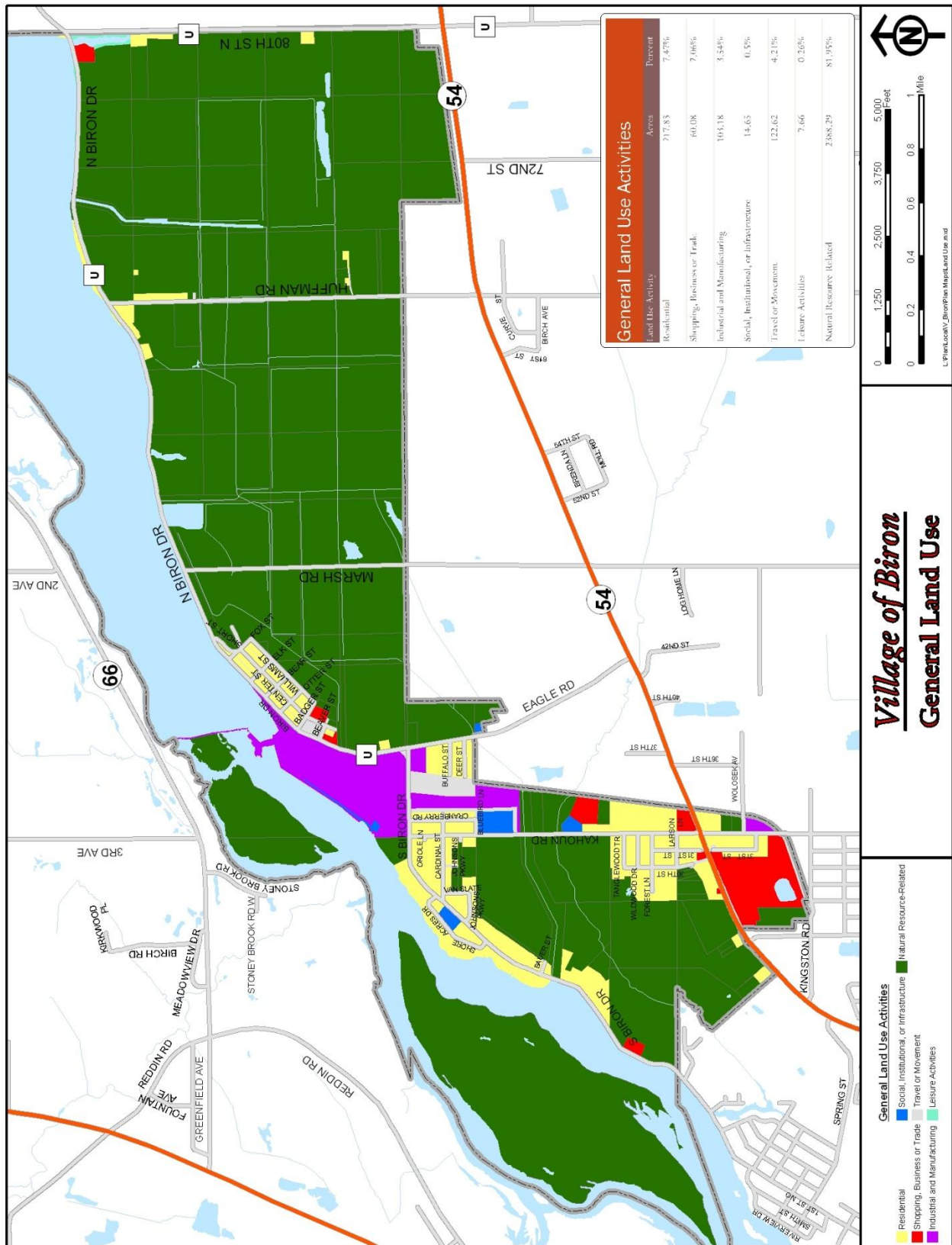


Figure 25 . Existing Land Use 2005



### *Residential*

Residential activities are concentrated in the west half of the village, with a few others scattered in the eastern portions, mainly fronting on the Wisconsin River near Huffman Road. According to recent land use surveys, there are about 218 acres of residential land, which is about 7.5% of the total land in the Village. Residential development in Biron consists mostly of traditional single-family detached structures (85.9%), with a scattering of duplexes, multi-family structures and mobile homes. Nearly half (46.7%) of these homes were built prior to 1960, while less than 10% are newer than 1990.

According to census figures, in 1990, there were 368 housing units in Biron. In 2000, there were 398, a difference that is due, in part, to the annexation of the mobile home park and a few single-family homes near the intersection of Highway 54 and Kahoun Road. The 2010 census reports that there are 402 housing units. The stagnation can be attributed mostly to a sagging local economy; manufacturing layoffs, fluctuating interest rates, and uncertainties about the future of jobs in the area.

### *Commercial*

About 60 acres are classified under the Commercial category (shopping, business or trade on Figure 25). Most commercial uses are located along Highway 54, although a few are scattered throughout the Village. The new Wood County Business Park in Biron remains undeveloped at this time thus is not classified as commercial. As it develops, however, some of the acreage will become commercial and some will become industrial. Many respondents to the community planning survey recommended that new retail stores, restaurants and convenience stores be attracted to the Village.

### *Industrial*

Industrial, manufacturing and waste-related activities utilize over 100 acres in Biron. The industrial area shown on Figure 25 is land owned by NewPage Corporation and includes the paper mill, outside log storage area and related activities.

Eighty-six percent of community planning survey respondents want to see new jobs developed in the village. Nearly 60% of those respondents expressed a desire to see an industrial park or business park developed in Biron in collaboration with adjacent communities. Wood County has worked with village officials and a private developer to plan a new business park in the far southeast part of the village, fronting on Highway 54, west of County Road U (80<sup>th</sup> Street). Village officials have also met with and are working toward an agreement that will provide funding to install access to the business park at 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and to upgrade the intersection of Highway 54 and 80<sup>th</sup> Street when the level of service warrants.

### *Social, institutional or infrastructure-related*

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 nearly 15 acres coded in this category. Those uses include the village park between South Biron Drive and Shore Acres Drive, the village municipal building on Kahoun Road, and the water tower on Eagle Road. .

*Transportation or movement-related*

The travel or movement activities includes all types of transportation systems, whether for pedestrians, vehicles (including parking), railroads, aircraft and more. The existing land use inventory in Biron has about 122 acres classified as travel or movement activities. Most of those acres are road rights-of-way. Additional acreage will be added as the business park develops and when County Road U, along the Wisconsin River, is relocated. That relocation is part of the planned residential development (Bridgewater), which will also include additional streets and multi-use paths. NewPage Corporation's rail yard is also included in this category.

*Mass assembly of people*

No land in Biron is categorized as being used for a mass assembly of people.

*Leisure activities*

A little more than 7.5 acres is classified in the leisure activities land use category. Additional areas for leisure activities will be added as the Bridgewater development unfolds. That development will include walking paths, boating facilities and open spaces. The business park may also have areas for leisure activities, i.e., for employees who are on break or meal times. 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 and natural resources-related*

This classification code has 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 82% of all land in the village to be in this category. Included are islands in the Wisconsin River, cranberry marshes, wetlands and forest lands.

**B. 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.

**(1) Population Loss**

Every community in the Wisconsin Rapids area had a loss of population between 2000 and 2010. 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 layoffs at the NewPage paper mill in Biron in recent years. 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.

## **(2) Competition for Business & Industrial Development**



Figure 26. Wood County Business Park - Biron

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. Classic Development Corp. of Plover is in the process of getting the necessary WDOT agreements for access in place and plans to begin construction of Phase I of the business park. Wisconsin Rapids has a business/industrial park about a mile to the east, complete

with streets, sewer and water infrastructure. The Village of Port Edwards has a large, vacant industrial and office building complex that is owned by Domtar Corporation that the village is marketing. Nekoosa also has a newly developed business/industrial park that is being marketed, but has no tenants as of this writing.

While the area has several options for new business and industrial development that is 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.

## **(3) 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.

## **(4) Cost of Providing Services**

General revenue sharing has been the topic of discussions and proposals at the state level for several years. Cuts in revenue sharing in recent years, coupled with tax freezes, have had a drastic affect on every level of government in Wisconsin. At the village level, services that have felt the impact 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.

### **C. 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.

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#### **Goal: Attract new residential growth to help support essential municipal services.**

##### **Objectives:**

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

##### **Policies:**

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

#### **Goal: Attract new industrial and commercial development.**

##### **Objectives:**

- Create new jobs for village residents.
- Assure success of TIF District #2.

##### **Policies:**

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

#### **Goal: Preserve the Village's current small town character.**

##### **Objectives:**

- Avoid becoming over-developed, especially along the Wisconsin River.
- Preserve the village's environmental resources.

- Protect existing land uses from unnecessary encroachment of new uses that may be a detriment or devalue existing land uses.

Policies:

- The village will manage new residential, commercial and industrial development through its future land use plan and zoning ordinance to preserve the village's small town character.
  - Consider adding zones of different development densities to protect the area's resources while encouraging housing types for different economic levels.
- 

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

Objectives:

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

Policies:

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

#### **D. 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 (Figure 27) takes into consideration all of these factors and illustrates graphically how the Village of Biron is planned to grow for the next 20-years. It is important to note that the future land use plan map is not a zoning map, rather it is a depiction of the desired growth patterns for several years into the future. The village zoning ordinance and zoning map are the actual documents that set standards for each of the land uses, including setbacks, height limitations, minimum lot sizes, etc. It is also important to note that the future land use plan is dynamic and can be amended as market trends or the local economy change. The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, Ch. 66.1001, requires that the comprehensive plan be updated no less than once every ten years, and the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The future land use plan map often shows some areas to be used for purposes other than what the current use may be. That map is a blueprint for development and

can be changed. It is dynamic. The following paragraphs, along with information presented throughout this plan, help explain the reasoning behind the future land use plan categories.

### **Environmental Corridors**

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

### **Residential**

Homes in Biron have been built in areas away from wetlands and floodplains for the most part. We learned in earlier sections of this plan that the population of Biron is expected to decline over the planning period. Village officials are aware of the need to attract new residents and new housing to the village in order to be able to maintain municipal services. That awareness has led to their working closely with a private developer to create plans for a mixed residential development in the northeast part of the village along the Wisconsin River. Known as the Bridgewater development, new single-family, condominium and duplex housing will become a reality during the planning period. That development, along with some replacement housing throughout the existing residential areas, will provide sufficient space for new housing into the future.

### **Commercial and Manufacturing**

The NewPage paper mill has been the main industry in Biron for many decades. NewPage owns about 145 acres in the direct vicinity of the paper mill.

Only in recent years has the village had much in the way of commercial uses. With the annexation of properties in the Highway 54 area, the village acquired a number of commercial establishments. These include a convenience store, print shop car dealership, automotive repair business and more. Midwest Cold Storage & Logistics is a new freezer facility for food products and is located on about 23 acres on the far south side of Biron on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. That company is currently undergoing an expansion and has room on site to grow even further.

There isn't an identifiable "downtown" in Biron and little room existed for new commercial (and manufacturing) development until the Wood County Business Park in Biron was proposed. The business park will provide adequate space for new commercial and manufacturing operations into and beyond the planning period.

### **Transportation**

New streets will be needed for the planned development of the Bridgewater residential area and the Wood County Business Park in Biron. The streets will be built by the developer as part of those projects. Once built to village standards, the streets will become village streets.

County Road U is being relocated away from the Wisconsin River, south of its current location, to make way for parts of the Bridgewater residential project. The new location will provide a safer roadway for motorists, will reduce the amount of road pollution (petroleum residues, salt, etc.) that enters the river, and will also make maintenance (repair and plowing, for example) easier and potentially less costly.

Traffic from the new business park will have an impact on Highway 54 and its intersection with County Road U. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Biron officials, the developer of the business park, Wood County representatives and the adjacent towns of Plover, Grant and Grand Rapids are working together to configure a new roadway design in the area to provide safe ingress-egress to the business park and create an intersection that provides safe, convenient access to or crossing Highway 54.

### **Recreation & Open Spaces**

It was pointed out in the Community Facilities chapter that the village has a community park with baseball, basketball, tennis, picnicking and playground facilities. They also have two boat landings that provide access to many users of the Wisconsin River. The Aqua Skiers of Wisconsin Rapids also have a practice area along the Biron shore. Future recreation needs will be adequately met with the addition of a new park and multi-use trails that are components of the proposed Bridgewater project.

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

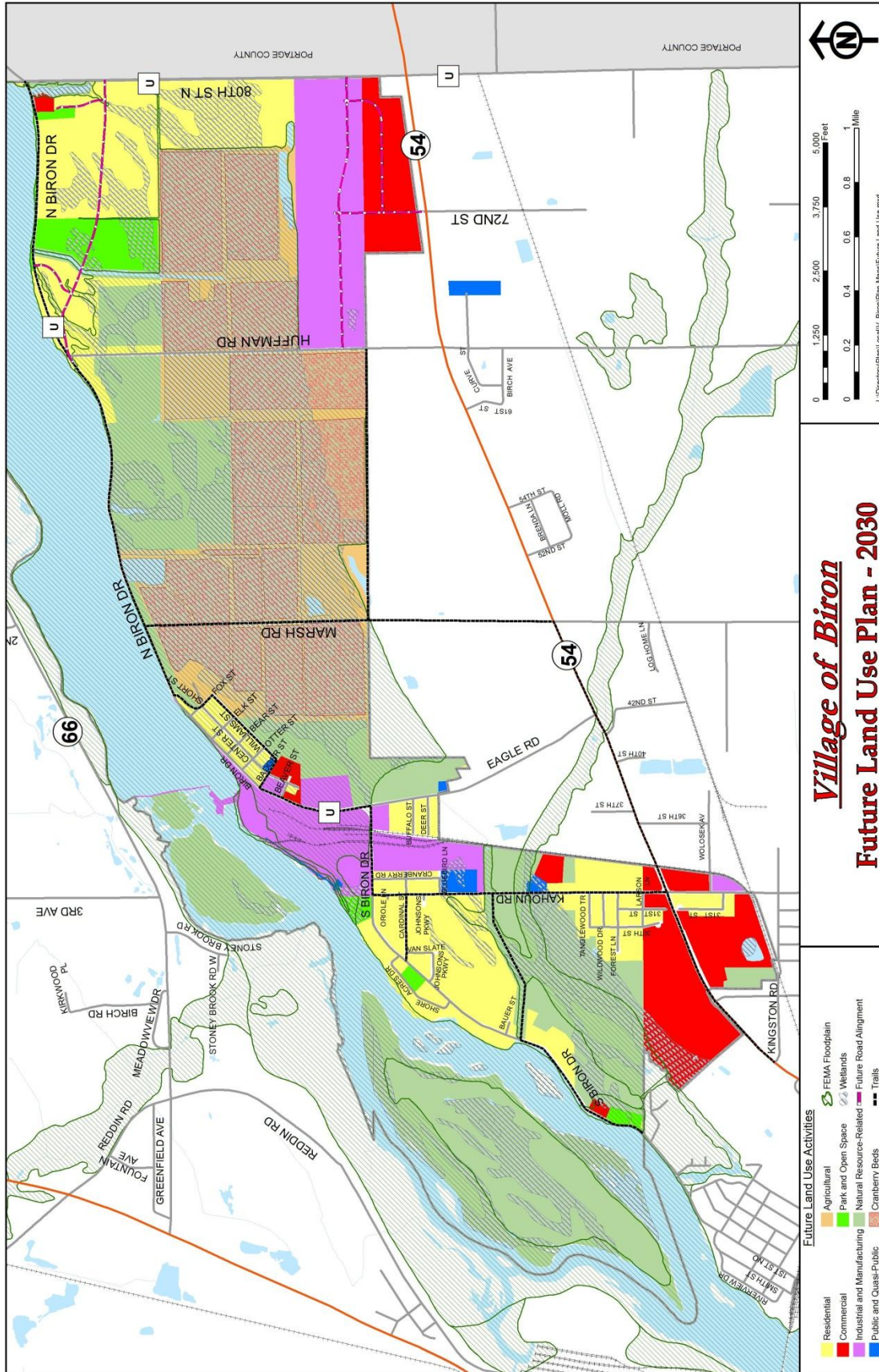
It is not anticipated that the village will need additional expansion of the municipal building during the planning period. The proposed new developments of Bridgewater and the business park may result in the need for an additional fire truck. Those developments may also create the need for police facilities/equipment. If that is the case, expansion room is available on the site of the municipal building.

### **Agricultural**

Although Biron is not what one would consider an agricultural community, it does have a significant amount of land that is in cranberry production. It is important that the cranberry marshes be protected from encroachment from incompatible uses. The soils condition around the marshes is not conducive to other type 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.

There are also other farming operations in the village. Grazing of cattle is not a large component of the village's land use base, but is one that is compatible with the areas where potential development of other uses is marginal.







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## 9. IMPLEMENTATION

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### A. Introduction

The 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.

### B. 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.<sup>14</sup> 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 of the elements specified by the comprehensive planning statute.<sup>15</sup> At a minimum, a class 1 public notice is required to be published **at least 30 days** before the hearing is held.<sup>16</sup> Once adopted and no later than January 1, 2010, any program or action of the Village Board or its authorized commission, that affects land use shall be “consistent with” the comprehensive plan.<sup>17</sup> 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.

### C. Zoning Ordinance

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 the 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

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<sup>14</sup> Chapter 66.1001 (4) (b), Wisconsin Statutes, 2003-2004.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “Consistent with” means furthers or does not contradict the objectives, goals, and policies contained in the comprehensive plan, §66.1001(1)(am), Wis. Stats.

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.

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 as well as protects 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 make any changes the Village deems necessary to assure consistency with the other elements of the comprehensive plan.

#### **D. 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.

#### **E. Capital Improvement Program**

A capital improvement program (CIP) is a plan for the capital expenditures of the Village over a period of years, usually five years. The CIP addresses the Village's capital needs that require attention during the period and helps establish priorities and financing for those needs. A capital budget is a concurrent document that outlines the plans for the expenditure of funds

for capital projects. A tax impact analysis, or development impact analysis, is sometimes used to develop the CIP and helps Village officials determine both the advantages and disadvantages of various projects or developments. Capital improvement programs are very useful, especially when the supply of money is short and the demand for services or improvements is high. The Village of Biron may want to consider developing a five-year capital improvement plan for road improvements, large equipment procurement, large improvements to municipal buildings and for other large capital outlays.

## **F. 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 the public health, safety, convenience or general welfare."<sup>18</sup>

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.

## **G. 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. Biron has and will continue to apply the regulations of the zoning ordinance and UDC so they remain consistent with the comprehensive plan.

## **H. Shoreland, Wetland and Floodplain Zoning Code**

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

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<sup>18</sup> Chapter 62.23 (6) (b), Wisconsin Statute, 2003-2004.

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.

## **I. 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.

## **J. Village of Biron Planning Administration**

### **Plan Commission**

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

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

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

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

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

#### Plan Commission Powers and Duties

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

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

#### **K. Plan Amendments, Monitoring & Update**

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.

#### Plan Amendments

The comprehensive plan is a dynamic document; as conditions change in Biron, the plan will change. 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."<sup>20</sup> An example of why a comprehensive plan would need to be amended, or updated, might include changing economic conditions in the area – if a new manufacturer chooses to locate in the village or nearby urban area, there may be demands for new roads or highway access and new housing.

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<sup>19</sup> Chapter 66.1001 (4) (a), Wisconsin Statutes, 2005-2006, page 535.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter 66.1001 (2) (i), Wisconsin Statutes, 2005-2006, page 535.

An aging population demanding different types of housing or a change in the types of municipal services is another example. A major change to the local transportation system is yet another example of when the plan may need to be updated. Biron officials, along with representatives from surrounding communities, Wood County and the local office of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, are investigating the possible extension of State Highway 54 from its current intersection with County Road W, south to Griffith Avenue (County Road Z), then west, crossing the Wisconsin River to the Village of Port Edwards. To implement this proposal will impact existing residential and commercial developments, may impact municipal well fields, and could have an impact on the South Wood County Airport (Alexander Field). Yet another example are the proposals for a residential development (Bridgewater) along the Wisconsin River, including a major relocation of County Road U, and the 220 acre business park north of Highway 54 in the Village's southeast corner.

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 straight forward (the flow chart on the last page shows the process for amendments). 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. Remember, the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance and official street map must be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The second step is review of 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 persons. They should keep a written transcript or, at the very least, detailed minutes of the testimony. Following the hearing, the Village Board will make a decision in the form of a motion to amend the comprehensive plan. The Board can make a decision 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 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

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:

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<sup>21</sup> All meetings of plan commissioners must comply with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law.

- 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 rational or justification for their decision,
- notice to petitioner of Village Board decision.

In the past, these files have been 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 Update

The 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 2010 census was taken, but before detailed census information is available, it would behoove the village to undertake a comprehensive review and revision in 3- to 5-years after adoption to provide more accurate data, 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.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS**