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1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan is intended to assist local officials and residents in decision-making that reflects the future vision of the community. The plan will also assist in development and management issues by addressing short-range and long-range concerns regarding growth, development, and preservation of the community. There are numerous reasons for developing a comprehensive plan, including to:

- Identify areas appropriate for development and preservation over the next 20 years.
- Recommend types of land use for specific areas of the village.
- Identify needed transportation and community facilities to serve existing and future residents.
- Direct housing and other investments throughout the community.
- Provide detailed objectives and actions to implement the overall plan goals.

This Comprehensive Plan has been prepared under the Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning legislation contained in Wisconsin Statute 66.1001. The plan is organized into nine chapters or elements (issues and opportunities; housing; transportation; utilities and community facilities; natural, agricultural, and cultural resources; economic development; intergovernmental cooperation; land use, and implementation) each addressing one element specified under the law.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

To guide the planning process, the Village of Birchwood Plan Commission directed a number of efforts to ensure that this comprehensive plan is based on a vision shared by Birchwood residents. The results are summarized below.

Public Participation Plan

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, Chapter 66.1001 requires municipalities to adopt written procedures that are designed to foster a wide range of public participation throughout the planning process. The main goals of this plan are to make all citizens of Birchwood aware of the comprehensive planning process and to offer the public opportunities to make suggestions or comments during the process.

In adhering to this requirement, the village adopted a public participation plan on January 10, 2023. The adopted Public Participation Plan is included in Appendix A.

Public Hearing

A public hearing on the comprehensive plan and ordinance was held on **Month Day**, 2023 at **TIME**. In advance of the public hearing, the village provided copies of the draft plan to surrounding governments and other parties as required by Chapter 66.1001.

GENERAL REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Village of Birchwood, located in southeastern Washburn County, is one of only four incorporated communities in the county. Surrounded by the Town of Birchwood to the north, west, and south, and the Town of Edgewater to the east, the village helps support the primary employment and shopping base for the southern portion of Washburn County. During the 20-year period covering 2000 to 2020, the village lost 116 people, for a 2020 population count of 402.

Map 1-1 shows the relationship of the Village of Birchwood to neighboring jurisdictions in Washburn and Sawyer Counties. As mentioned earlier, both the Town of Birchwood and the Town of Edgewater share borders with the village.

POPULATION

Population is an important contributing factor to the pattern of settlement and development of a municipal unit. Significant increases or decreases in the number of inhabitants along with the characteristics of income, education, and age all impact economic development, land use, transportation, and the use of public and private services. Examining past changes and the present conditions of the population enhances the ability to prepare for the future needs of a community.

Historical Population

As Table 1-1 reveals, the Village of Birchwood has experienced population fluctuations since 1950. From 1950 to 1970, the village sustained a 21.5% population decline, losing 108 residents. From 1970 to 2000, the village’s population rose nearly 31.5% . Since 2000, the village’s population has again sustained a decline, losing 116 residents, with a 2020 population count of 402.

Table 1-1: Historical Population 1950-2020

Year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Population	502	433	394	437	449	518	442	402

Source: US Census Bureau

Population Projections

In Table 1-2, population projections for the Village of Birchwood are displayed using three different projection methods through 2040. The projections generated by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) were developed based on the 2010 census count. These are the most current official population projections for the State of Wisconsin. The projections generated by Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) were developed using a historical average method as well as a linear regression method. For clarification on how these projections were generated see footnote.¹ Figure 1-1 charts the historical population count from 1950 to 2020 and the projected population counts through 2040.

¹ Wisconsin Department of Administration Projections:

Official State of Wisconsin population projections produced by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. These projections were produced in 2013 and are based on the 2010 census count.

Historical Average:

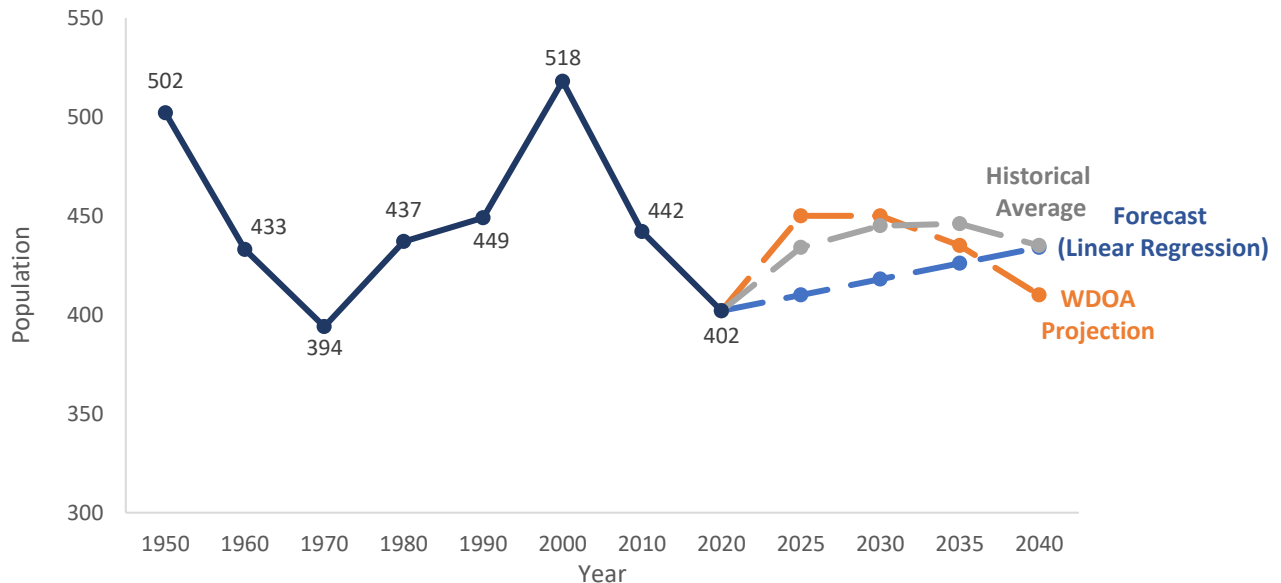
Model based on the historical average 10-year growth rate for the period 1950-2020.

Table 1-2: Population Projections 2010-2040

Year	2010	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
WDOA	442	440	450	450	435	410
Historical Average	442	402	410	418	426	434
Forecast (Linear Regression)	442	402	434	445	446	435

Source: US Census Bureau, Wisconsin Department of Administration, & Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Figure 1-1: Historic and Projected Population



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Population projections represent estimates of future population change based on historical information. Actual future population growth will be based on many social and economic factors, and unforeseen events may cause dramatic deviations from the projected future values. Three methods were used to depict different mathematical models, each of which are represented in Figure 1-1. The methods used include:

- WDOA Official Population Projections
- Historical Average
- Forecast (Linear Regression)

Regression projections tend to be the most conservative estimates due to the negative population spike occurring between 1950 and 1960. The historical growth rate is typically a mid-range estimate based on the average growth rate from 1950 through 2020. Barring unforeseen changes, it is expected that net in-migration will continue to drive population growth as more retirees relocate to places within the county, especially the lake areas.

Linear Regression Model:

Prediction of future population based on historic values. Regression fits a line through a set of observations using the "least squares" method.

Factors Affecting Population Change

Factors for the overall increase in population in the Village of Birchwood may include the conversion of seasonal residences into permanent residences, attractiveness of the area’s natural resources, affluent people choosing to buy homes and retire in the area, and the overall ability of the region to provide a quality of life that’s comfortable with access to goods, services, and economic activities to satisfy its current population and attract new people.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Summary of Age Distribution

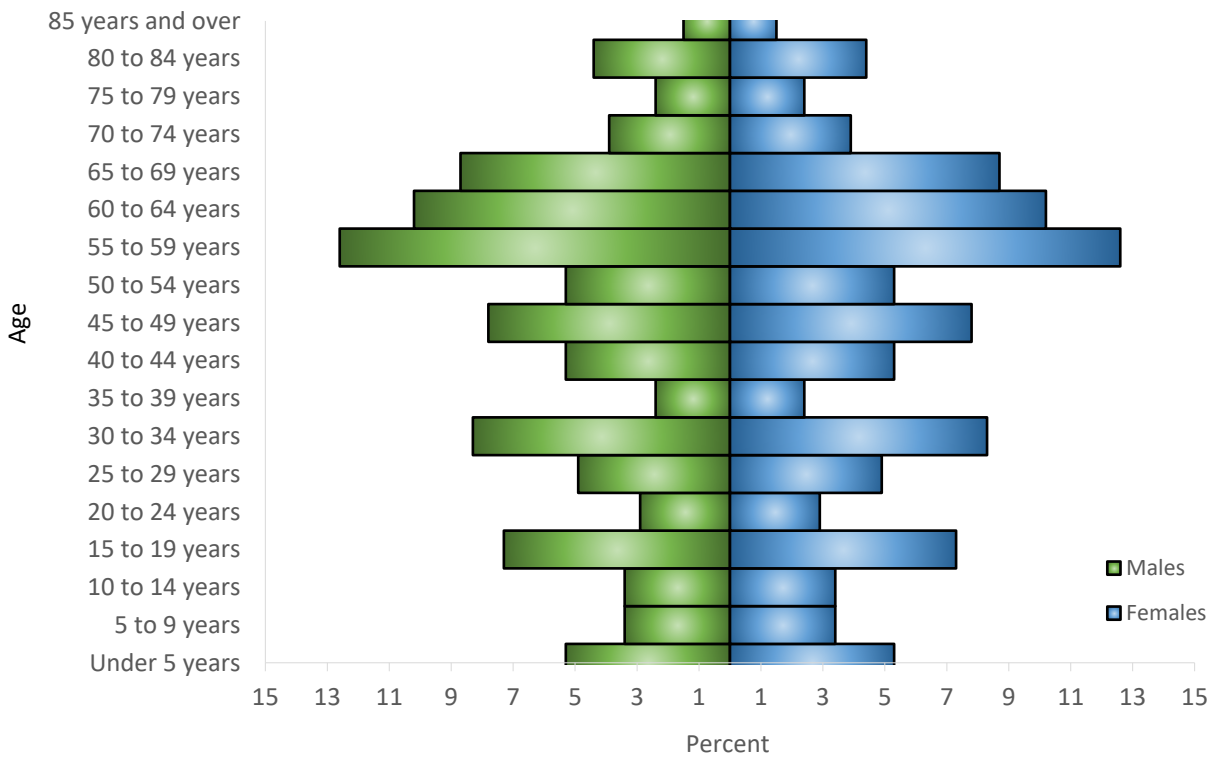
According to the 2020 census, the median age of the population of the Village of Birchwood was 47.9 years old. About 65.3% of the population was between the ages of 15 and 64 years, which is the typical working age population. In comparison, 21.4% of the population was age 65 or over, and an estimated 13.4% of the population was age 14 years and under. Table 1-3 displays the age distribution of the village, while the population pyramid in Figure 1-2 represents a visual depiction of male and female age distribution in the Village of Birchwood.

Table 1-3: Age Distribution

Age	#	%
Under 5 years	23	5.7%
5 to 9 years	15	3.7%
10 to 14 years	16	4.0%
15 to 19 years	29	7.2%
20 to 24 years	16	4.0%
25 to 29 years	20	5.0%
30 to 34 years	30	7.5%
35 to 39 years	14	3.5%
40 to 44 years	21	5.2%
45 to 49 years	30	7.5%
50 to 54 years	20	5.0%
55 to 59 years	46	11.4%
60 to 64 years	36	9.0%
65 to 69 years	29	7.2%
75 to 79 years	16	4.0%
80 to 84 years	16	4.0%
85 years and over	15	3.7%
Total	402	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1-2: Male & Female Age Distribution



Source: US Census Bureau

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Households

The 2020 census identified 203 households in the Village of Birchwood. Of these, 52.2% were family households and 47.8% were nonfamily households.

Household Trends and Projections

Table 1-4 reveals the composition and characteristics of households in the Village of Birchwood. Definitions for household characteristics are provided on page 1-11. Table 1-5 displays Village of Birchwood household projections through the year 2040. These projections were developed by the Wisconsin Department of Administration in 2013 and utilize the 2010 census count.

Table 1-4: Household Characteristics

Household Characteristics	Total	% of All Households
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	203	100.0%
Married-Couple Household	73	36.0%
With Children of the Householder Under 18 Years	20	9.9%
Cohabiting Couple Households	16	7.9%
With Children of the Householder Under 18 Years	5	2.5%
Male Householder, No Spouse/Partner Present	59	29.1%
With Children of the Householder Under 18 Years	1	0.5%
Female Householder, No Spouse/Partner Present	55	27.1%
With Children of the Householder Under 18 Years	9	4.4%
Households with One or More People under 18 Years	49	24.1%
Household with One or More People 65 Years and Over	74	36.5%
1-Person Household	81	39.9%
2-Person Household	63	31.0%
3-Person Household	19	9.4%
4-Or-More-Person Household	40	19.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

Table 1-5: Historic and Projected Households

Year	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Proj.	2025 Proj.	2030 Proj.	2035 Proj.	2040 Proj.
WDOA	227	200	207	214	216	212	202

Source: US Census Bureau & Wisconsin Department of Administration Projections

EMPLOYMENT, INCOME, AND POVERTY STATISTICS

Employment Characteristics

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021, 34.5% of the village’s civilian labor population 16 years and over was employed in the retail trade industry. Second is the manufacturing industry, which employed an estimated 29.1%. Figure 1-3 illustrates in more detail the composition of the village’s workforce.

Figure 1-3: Employment by Industry

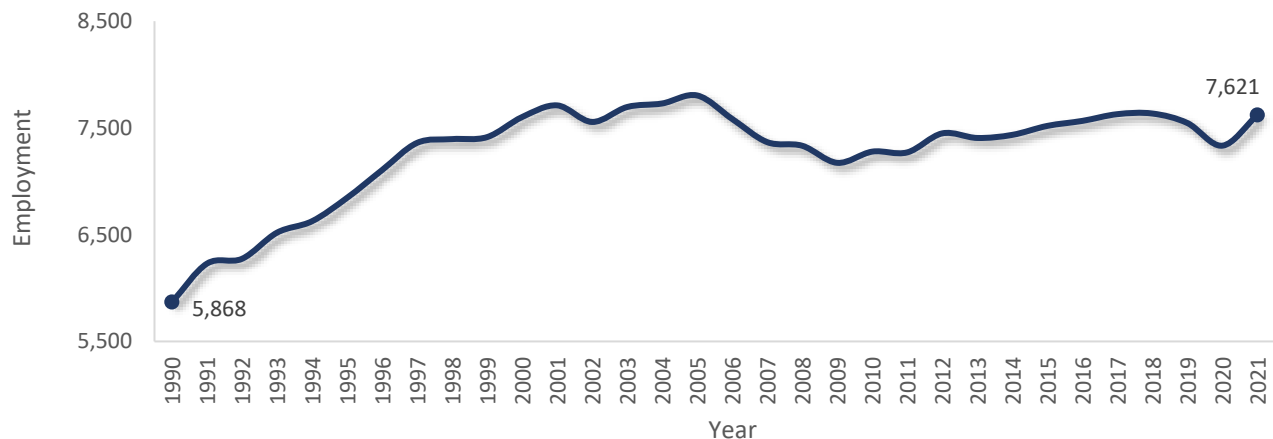


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Washburn County Employment Forecasts

Figure 1-4 illustrates the number of employed persons in Washburn County from 1990 to 2021. Figure 1-5 shows not only the past employment data but also the employment projections for future years to 2040.

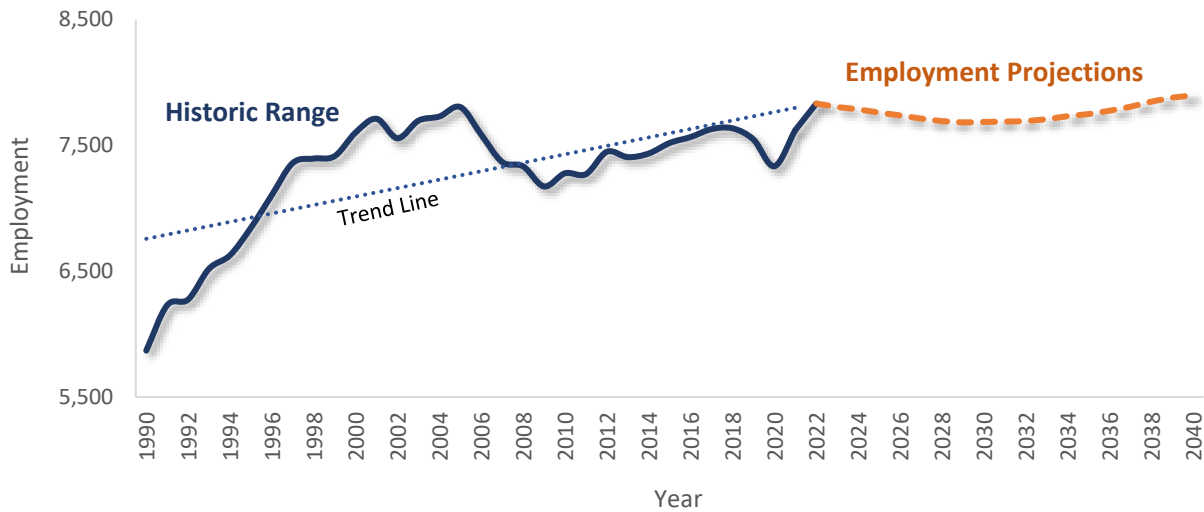
Figure 1-4: Washburn County Employment



Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Analyzing the local employment data from 1990-2021 derived employment projections for Washburn County. The “trend line” in Figure 1-5 depicts a “best fit” of the known data values and a projection of the future data values. This is a very simplistic model to be used for general planning purposes.

Figure 1-5: Washburn County Projected Employment



Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Occupational Categories

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021 indicated that the majority of Village of Birchwood residents (41.7%) work in sales and office occupations. Table 1-6 illustrates the occupational status of village residents age 16 years and over.

Table 1-6: Occupations

Occupation – Civilian Employed Population Age 16 Years and Over	%
Sales & Office	41.7%
Production, Transportation, & Material Moving	26.9%
Management, Business, Science, & Arts	12.1%
Natural resources, Construction, and Maintenance	10.8%
Service	8.5%
Total	100%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Household Income

In the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021, the Village of Birchwood reported the eighth lowest median household income of all municipalities in Washburn County. The lowest reported median household income was \$27,303 in the Village of Minong. Within the village, nearly 58% of households reported incomes of \$50,000 or more. Approximately 27% of village households earned \$25,000 per year or less (Table 1-7).

Table 1-7: Household Income

Household Income	%
Less than \$10,000	0.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	11.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	8.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	27.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5.4%
\$200,000 or more	0.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2016-2021

Median Income, Per Capita, and Poverty Level

In the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021, the median household income was estimated to be \$54,063. This figure is slightly below the median household income for both Washburn County and significantly lower than the median household income as indicated in Table 1-8. Per capita income for the village is lower than that of the county and the state, while the poverty level is slightly higher.

Table 1-8: Income Comparison

Characteristic	Village of Birchwood	Washburn County	State of Wisconsin
Median Household Income	\$54,063	\$54,550	\$67,080
Per Capita Income	\$25,321	\$32,188	\$36,754
% Below Poverty Level	13.8%	13.3%	11.9%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Washburn County Labor Force

A community’s labor force is that portion of the population that is employed or available for work. The labor force includes people who are in the armed forces, employed, unemployed, or actively seeking employment.

According to Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development data, 7,621 residents of Washburn County were employed in 2021. The lowest annual unemployment rate attained in the past 10 years was 3.9% (2017-2019). In 2021, the annual unemployment rate in Washburn County was 4.5%. Table 1-9 depicts Washburn County labor force statistics between 2012 and 2021.

Table 1-9: Washburn County Labor Force

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Labor Force	8,077	7,995	7,921	7,935	7,952	7,938	7,941	7,850	7,878	7,983
Employed	7,449	7,406	7,435	7,519	7,566	7,629	7,635	7,546	7,334	7,621
Unemployed	628	589	486	416	386	309	306	304	544	362
Unemp. Rate	7.8%	7.4%	6.1%	5.2%	4.9%	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%	6.9%	4.5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021 identified 258 village residents aged 25 and over, of this age group, 89.1% have attained a high school education or higher. Table 1-10 below details educational attainment of Village of Birchwood residents.

Table 1-10: Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	#	%
Less than 9th grade	3	1.2%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	25	9.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	118	45.7%
Some college, no degree	55	21.3%
Associate's degree	31	12.0%
Bachelor's degree	15	5.8%
Graduate or professional degree	11	4.3%
High school graduate or higher	230	89.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	26	10.1%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

DEFINITIONS

Housing Unit - A house, apartment, mobile home, group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building, and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall.

Household - All the people who occupy a housing unit.

Householder - This is the person or one of the people in whose name the house is owned, being bought, or rented. Two types of householders are distinguished: a family householder and a nonfamily householder.

Family Household (families) - A household maintained by a householder who is in a family (two or more people residing together, and related by birth, marriage, or adoption), and includes any unrelated people (unrelated subfamily members and/or secondary individuals) who may be residing there. The number of family households is equal to the number of families.

Nonfamily Household - A householder living alone or with non-relatives only.

Married-Couple Household - A family in which the householder and his or her spouse are enumerated as members of the same household. The married couple may or may not have children living with them.

Per Capita Income - Calculated as the personal income of the residents of an area divided by the population of that area.

Median Household Income - The average income received in the previous calendar year by all household members 15 years old and over, including household members not related to the householder, people living alone, and others in non-family households.

RESULTS OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFICATION

VILLAGE OF BIRCHWOOD

April 6, 2023

Housing

- 1) Affordable housing
- 2) Spot zoning
- 3) Define zoning districts
- 4) More rental housing
- 5) Assisted living
- 6) Tax disparity on residential property
- 7) Shoreland zoning
- 8) Housing rehabilitation
- 9) Minimum house size

Transportation

- 1) Senior transportation
- 2) Sidewalks
- 3) Speeding (enforcement)

Utilities & Community Facilities

- 1) Sewer and water extensions
- 2) Need for a community center
- 3) Clinic
- 4) Boat landing repair
- 5) Information signage
- 6) Second village well

Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources

- 1) Lake quality
- 2) Air quality
- 3) Fishing contests
- 4) Location of factory farms
- 5) Preservation of historic buildings
- 6) Preservation of wetlands
- 7) Habitat protection
- 8) Nuisance geese

Economic Development

- 1) Development of industrial park
- 2) Main Street revitalization
- 3) Business encouragement
- 4) Advertising – billboards
- 5) Strip malls +/-
- 6) Job opportunities
- 7) Encouragement of tourism and other types of recreation
- 8) Abandoned commercial land/contaminated land
- 9) Fast food businesses

Intergovernmental Cooperation

- 1) Cooperate with adjoining jurisdictions on lake use restrictions
- 2) Cooperation with towns, county, state
- 3) Zoning regulations on bodies of water
- 4) Uniform zoning across municipalities
- 5) Sharing of facilities and equipment

Land Use

- 1) Extra-territorial zoning/STH 48
- 2) Regulation of nonmetallic mines
- 3) No junkyards
- 4) Lack of enforcement of zoning codes and ordinances
- 5) Review of current zoning
- 6) Lake multi-use
- 7) Inability to enforce ordinances
- 8) TIFF districts

OVERALL GOAL STATEMENT

The Village of Birchwood has prepared a number of goals and objectives that include actions and policies to address land use activities of the village. The goals and objectives are intended to assist the Village Board and local property owners in implementing actions deemed important and in the interest of the community. Optimally, the set of goals, objectives, and actions described in this plan are to be implemented to fully achieve the desired outcome. A full set of the goals, objectives, and actions are included in the implementation element of this plan.

The overall goal is to maintain the quality of life in the Village of Birchwood and to continue to work towards making it a better place to live, work, and play. To do this the overall objective of the Village of Birchwood is to guide future development and redevelopment of the community in a manner consistent with the goals, objectives, actions, and identified programs contained in this document. The overall policy is to adopt and implement the comprehensive plan and continue to work with the adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions. The overall policies and programs outlined throughout the action plans represent the methods to achieve the overall plan goal.

Map 1-1: Location

2: HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Usually, most rural villages contain a high percentage of single-family homes, often with few other housing types available. As new people move in and the population ages, other types of housing will have to be given some thought in order to provide the variety needed to meet the needs of residents. This comprehensive plan reviews the existing housing stock and provides recommendations to meet future housing needs.

HOUSING STOCK CHARACTERISTICS

Table 2-1 displays historic housing stock data from 1980 to 2020. In 2020, the total number of housing units in the Village of Birchwood was 263 and the average household size was 1.98.

Table 2-1: Housing Stock 1980-2020

Year	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Total Housing Units	256	252	269	290	263
Occupied Housing Units (Households)	185	196	227	200	203
Owner-Occupied Units	126	134	165	133	115
Renter-Occupied Units	59	62	62	67	88
Vacant Housing Units	71	56	42	90	60
Seasonal Units	-	46	36	67	50
Average Household Size	2.36	2.26	2.28	2.21	1.98

Source: US Census Bureau

Owner-Occupied Housing Units

The majority of occupied housing units in the Village of Birchwood are owner-occupied. According to the 2020 census count, 56.7% of all occupied housing units were identified as owner-occupied. Projections indicate that owner-occupied units will continue to comprise the majority of all occupied units through 2040.

Renter-Occupied Housing Units

Renter-occupied units comprised only 43.3% of all occupied housing units in the Village of Birchwood according to the 2020 census count.

Seasonal Homes

Because the Birchwood area has traditionally been a tourism and recreation destination, the village maintains a number of homes identified as seasonal or for recreational use. This category includes all types of recreational uses, including summer homes.

Trends that have been identified as taking place throughout northern Wisconsin in the past 10 to 15 years also may impact the Village of Birchwood. One is the conversion of seasonal homes into permanent residences, especially by individuals at retirement age. Two, is the conversion of permanent homes into seasonal homes as area residents retire and spend winters in a more

temperate climate. As no specific data exists on these trends for the Village of Birchwood, it is difficult to definitively describe where and at what rate these conversions are taking place.

Average Household Size

A trend common to many northern Wisconsin municipalities and rural areas in general is the gradual decline of average household size. Table 2-1 indicates that in 2020 the Village of Birchwood had an average of 1.98 persons per household, representing a decline from the 1980 level of 2.36.

Projected Housing Needs

Table 2-2 displays housing unit projections through 2040. According to the Census Bureau, the Village of Birchwood has experienced a small decrease in total housing units since 2010. During the 20-year period from 2010 to 2020, there were 27 fewer housing units. Based upon past trends, total housing units in Birchwood will have continued fluctuations through the year 2040. In 2020, the Village of Birchwood had 263 units, with projections indicating that by 2030, the village will have 282 units, and 275 units by 2040. The projected growth indicates an average of two new housing units per year through 2040.

Table 2-2: Historic & Projected Housing Stock

Year	1980*	1990*	2000*	2010*	2020*	2025	2030	2035	2040
Total Housing Units	256	252	269	290	263	279	282	279	275

Source: US Census Bureau

Future growth or decline in housing units can impact local units of government significantly. Each housing unit requires public services from fire protection to assigning addresses and tax assessments. Projecting future housing units in the Village of Birchwood will assist the local government in planning for future growth.

Structural Characteristics

Table 2-3 compares housing characteristics for the Village of Birchwood, Town of Birchwood, Village of Haugen, Village of Minong, Town of Edgewater in Sawyer County, and in Washburn County. According to American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021, the village had a vacancy rate of 31.3%, but seasonal, recreational, or occasional use accounted for 24.7% of that vacancy, leaving a “true” vacancy of 6.4%. These seasonal, recreational, or occasional uses are likely around Birch Lake. The village’s median housing value (\$109,600) was lower than all surrounding towns and the county but higher than the Village of Minong and the Village of Haugen.

Table 2-3: Comparison of Housing Characteristics

	Village of Birchwood	Town of Birchwood	Village of Haugen	Village of Minong	Town of Edgewater	Washburn County
Housing Units	214	726	150	353	832	12,760
% Vacant	31.3%	65.2%	11.3%	14.4%%	72.1%	44.5%
Median Housing Value	\$109,600	\$256,000	\$104,200	\$76,100	\$211,400	\$170,600

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Housing Stock

Understanding the relative age of the housing stock is a good indicator of the quality and condition of the available housing stock. Table 2-4 details the village's total housing stock by year built.

Table 2-4: Age of Housing Stock

Year Structure Built	% of Housing Stock
Built 2020 or later	0.0%
Built 2010 to 2019	6.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	2.3%
Built 1990 to 1999	7.9%
Built 1980 to 1989	7.0%
Built 1970 to 1979	20.1%
Built 1960 to 1969	15.4%
Built 1950 to 1959	10.8%
Built 1940 to 1949	7.5%
Built 1939 or earlier	22.9%
Total	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Units in Structure

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021 reports that of the estimated 214 total housing units, 82.2% were 1-unit detached, 2.3% were 1-unit attached, and 2.8% were mobile homes.

Heating Fuel

Of the estimated 147 occupied housing units, 79.6% are identified as using bottled, tank, or LP gas as their primary source of heat. Table 2-5 illustrates other means of heating fuel that are used in the Village of Birchwood.

Table 2-5: Home Heating Fuel

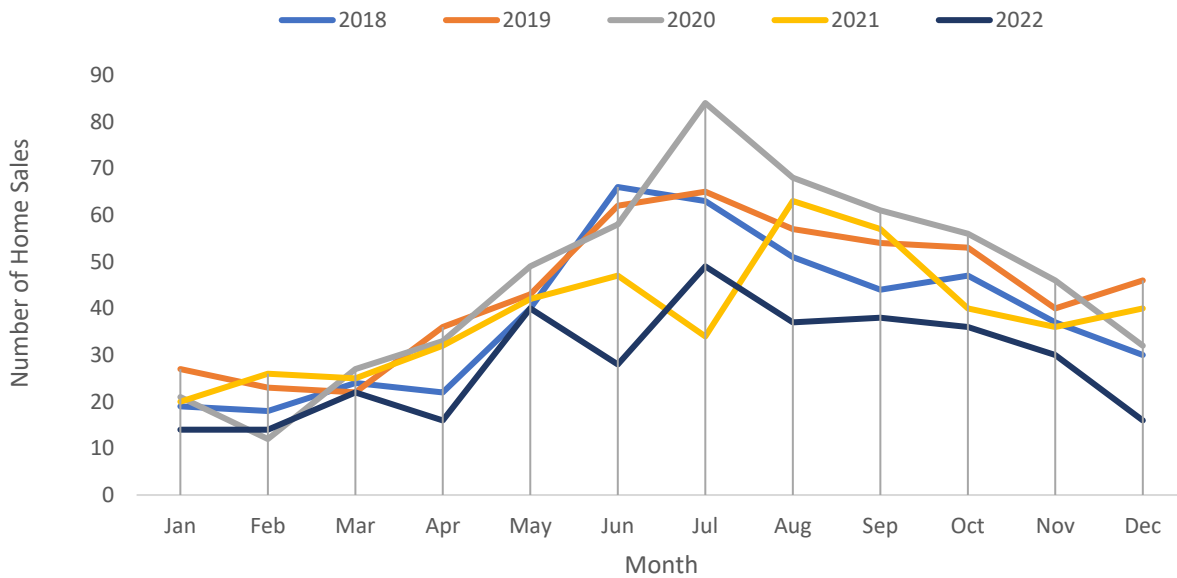
Home Heating Fuel	% of Occupied Housing Units
Bottled, Tank, or LP Gas	79.6%
Wood	7.5%
Electricity	6.1%
Fuel Oil, Kerosene, etc.	4.1%
Utility Gas	2.7%
Total	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Housing Market

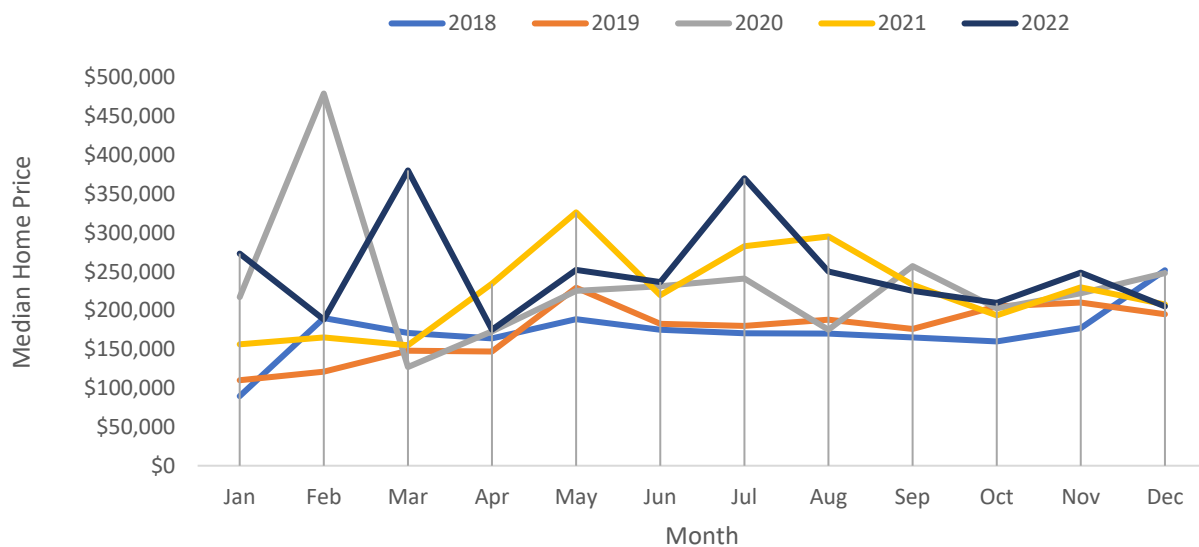
The Wisconsin Realtors Association Housing Statistics database was used to determine the number of home sales and prices within Washburn County from 2018 to 2022. This database does not include residential properties for sale through private individuals. Within Washburn County, there were 340 home sales in the year 2022, ranging in price from \$175,000 to \$380,000. The median sale price of residential listings was \$241,000. Figure 2-1 compares the number of housing sales by month for the years 2018-2022. Figure 2-2 compares the median home prices by month for the years 2018 to 2022.

Figure 2-1: Washburn County Number of Home Sales



Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

Figure 2-2: Washburn County Median Home Price

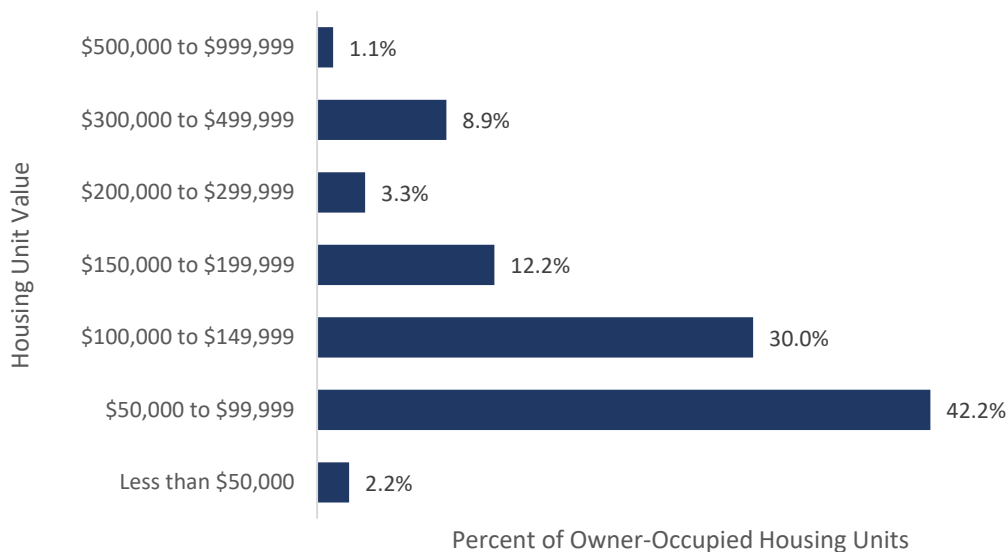


Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

Value of Existing Housing Stock

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021 estimated the median value of an owner-occupied housing unit in the Village of Birchwood to be \$109,600. Of the estimated 90 total owner-occupied housing units, 74.4% were valued less than \$150,000, while 25.6% were valued at \$150,000 or more. Figure 2-3 gives a detailed breakdown of existing housing values in the Village of Birchwood.

Figure 2-3: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Affordability Analysis

Affordability of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units is critical to sustaining population and employment levels for local businesses. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), affordable housing costs including utilities, taxes, mortgage, or rent payments, and insurance, should not be greater than 30% of the total household income. If the housing costs are greater than 30%, households may have difficulty making ends meet. Table 2-6 indicates the monthly owner costs as a percent of household income, as reported by the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021. In the Village of Birchwood, 25.5% of housing units with a mortgage cost 30% or more of the monthly household income.

Table 2-6: Monthly Owner Costs as a Percent of Household Income

Percent of Household Income	Units	% of Units
Less than 20%	38	42.2%
20.0 to 24.9%	29	32.2%
25.0 to 29.9%	-	-
30.0 to 34.9%	2	2.2%
35.0% or More	21	23.3%
Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units	90	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Rental costs vary based on many factors, including the quality of housing, number of bedrooms, and overall size of the housing unit. Table 2-7 gives the number of renter-occupied units by gross rent according to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021. During that timeframe, the median gross rent was estimated at \$349.

Table 2-7: Renter-Occupied Housing Units by Gross Rent

Gross Rent	Units	% of Units
Less than 15.0%	25	45.5%
15.0% to 19.9%	2	3.6%
20.0 to 24.9%	20	36.4%
25.0 to 29.9%	5	9.1%
30.0 to 34.9%	-	-
35.0% or More	3	5.4%
Total Occupied Units Paying Rent	55	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Property Taxes

Property taxes can have a significant impact on housing affordability. Homeownership can be out of reach for low-income families who otherwise may be able to afford a \$400 per month mortgage payment but cannot afford the additional \$100 per month in property taxes. Property taxation is directly correlated with assessed valuation of land and property. Demand for rural land and waterfront property in Washburn County has caused substantial increases in land value. The increased land valuation coupled with rising government and school costs has caused significant increases in taxes assessed to Washburn County property owners.

HOUSING PROGRAMS

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning legislation requires that the Village of Birchwood compile a list of programs to provide an adequate housing supply that meets existing and forecasted housing demand.

Washburn County Housing Authority - The Washburn County Housing Authority has various sites throughout Washburn County with affordable housing for elderly and disabled individuals. Properties are located in Birchwood, Shell Lake, and Spooner. The Housing Authority also manages Multi-family Section 8 housing in Minong and affordable HOME Program units in Birchwood, Minong, and Spooner.

Northwest Regional Housing Program - The Northwest Regional Housing Program, administered by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, provides financial assistance to qualifying applicants for down payment assistance, home repairs, and rental unit repairs. Qualifying rehabilitation projects include roofing, siding, heating, electrical, insulation, foundation, windows, doors, sewer and water laterals, handicapped accessibility, and well and septic.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) - The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority serves Wisconsin residents and communities by working with others to provide creative financing resources and information to stimulate and preserve affordable housing, small business, and agribusiness.

USDA-Rural Development - Rural Development administers federal funds to help secure loan options to assist low-moderate income families with home purchase and rehabilitation. Rural Development generally funds individuals who cannot obtain conventional financing.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation - CDBG funds are available through HUD (Housing and Urban Development). These funds are available to public or private entities to help offset rehabilitation costs to homeowners, renters, and landlords. These funds are in the form of percent interest/deferred payment loans.

Housing Cost Reconstruction Initiative (HCRI) - The Housing Cost Reconstruction Initiative provides federal funds for housing down payment and closing costs to low-moderate income families. HOME funds are available for the rehabilitation of these homes after the purchase. HOME is the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. HOME funds are awarded annually as formula grants to participating jurisdictions.

Indianhead Community Action Agency - Indianhead Community Action Agency provides weatherization (insulation, doors, energy efficient furnaces, etc.) assistance and home rehabilitation repair.

HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist in the overall housing development efforts of the village.

Goal: Adequate range of housing opportunities to meet the varied needs of existing and future residents.

Objective 1: Encourage maintenance of existing housing.

Utilize the existing community development block grant and apply to the state for more funds as needed.

Provide community outreach on available affordable housing down payment and home repair assistance programs.

Aggressively enforce housing ordinances and codes to encourage property owners to upgrade and maintain property.

Enforce public safety and welfare ordinances.

Address ordinances regarding junk cars, debris, mowing, etc., to ensure compliance.

Work with Washburn Co. to cooperate with building inspections/inspectors.

Objective 2: Support the development of equitable and attainable housing opportunities.

Encourage “in-fill” building on existing vacant lots in the village.

Work to obtain infrastructure grants and loans to encourage development.

Encourage conversion of agricultural land in the village to residential development.

Expand infrastructure to developable areas of the village to encourage new housing.

Develop incentives for the building of homes on lands in the village.

Review housing ordinances to identify provisions that constrain housing or unnecessarily increase the cost of building.

Support federal, state, and local funding opportunities to develop low-income and senior housing in the village.

Work with developers to create affordable housing and senior living opportunities in the village.

3: TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

Vehicular transportation is the predominant mode of transportation for individual use in the Village of Birchwood due to the limited forms of transportation available. Recreational transportation also plays an important role as part of the overall system. Recreational transportation is further described in the Utilities and Community Facilities element. The following element describes the existing conditions of transportation facilities in the Village of Birchwood.

TRANSPORTATION VISION & VALUES

The Village of Birchwood envisions managing demand for local transit, while providing an appropriate level of service to sustain community businesses. This can be achieved by providing for efficient and effective delivery of commercial, public, and emergency services and through encouraging the use of multi-modal means of transportation. The Village of Birchwood also values a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation network that is planned, well-maintained, and which meets the current and future needs of residents, visitors, and community businesses.

FACILITIES INVENTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Road Network

The Village of Birchwood's roadway network is comprised of 10.93 miles of highways and village streets. Streets within the village are classified by their functional use and by the amount of traffic they sustain. Table 3-1 indicates the functional use of Birchwood's roadway network, while Map 3-1 visually depicts the functional classification in the Village of Birchwood.

Functional road classifications for rural areas include principal arterials, minor arterials, major collectors, minor collectors, and local roads.

Principal arterials - Serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics indicative of substantial statewide or interstate travel.

Minor arterials - Serve corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by collectors and local roads. Link cities and larger towns (and other major destinations such as resorts capable of attracting travel over long distances).

Major collectors - Serve small-to-moderate sized communities and other intra-area traffic generators and link those generators to nearby larger population centers (cities, villages, and towns) or Arterials. Many rural major collectors are also county highways.

Minor collectors - Serve smaller population clusters not already served by a collector or arterial, link the locally important traffic generators, and are spaced to collect traffic from local roads and bring developed areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road.

Local roads - Provide access to homes and businesses. They have low speed limits and offer limited mobility for through traffic. At the bottom of the functional classification hierarchy, even though they comprise the largest percentage of all roadways in the state.

In the Village of Birchwood, State Trunk Highway (STH) 48 is classified as a minor arterial highway on a statewide level. This highway serves as the central road corridor providing residents and visitors access to the community, while County Trunk Highway (CTH) D and other local roads provide routes to homes and recreational destinations both within and beyond the village.

Table 3-1: Functional Classification of Roadways

Classification	Miles of Roadway
Principal Arterials	0.0
Minor Arterials	1.09
Major Collectors	1.02
Minor Collectors	0.27
Local Roads	8.55
Total	10.93

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Traffic Volume

Table 3-2 depicts changes in traffic volume at recording sites on roads passing through the Village of Birchwood.

Table 3-2: Average Annual Daily Traffic

Location	2010	2011	2016	2017	2019
STH 48 SW of V. Birchwood	2,500	-	2,600	-	-
STH 48 W of CTH F N at Washburn County Line	-	1,900	-	1,800	-
CTH D W of Edenharter Rd	820	-	-	-	-
Main between Park Ave & Birch Ave	900	-	-	-	650
Cedar St between Fuller & Main	290	-	-	-	240

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

PASER Roadway Evaluation

The Village of Birchwood is required to complete a Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) for all village roads every odd-numbered year. The PASER is intended to assist the village in planning for roadway improvements and to better allocate financial resources for these improvements. These ratings are entered into the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), which is an internet accessible system that helps the village and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation manage local road data.

During the inventory, roadways in the village are evaluated and rated in terms of surface condition, drainage, and road crown. Paved roads are rated from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), and gravel roads rated from 1 to 5 (5 being the best). Based upon 2021 road evaluation results, the villages’ streets are in good condition, receiving an average of 7 rating for paved roads.

Sidewalk Network

Accessibility to sidewalks for pedestrian travel is available in the Village of Birchwood along both sides of North and South Main Street, and on limited sections of other village side streets.

ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements to local roads are critical for maintaining an adequate and safe roadway system. Future road improvements are generally based on current road conditions, with the intent to keep all roadways intact and usable on a daily basis. Future roadway improvements need to be flexible because of the possibility of unforeseen emergencies or disasters that may arise from year-to-year or even day-to-day. The Village of Birchwood has developed a schedule of road improvements. The 5-year plan for road improvements is listed below.

2024-2025 STP-Rural

Cedar Ave (White St to Wilson St) – Rated 4, 370 feet

Cedar Ave (Wilson St Fuller St) – Rate 4, 370 feet

Cedar Ave (Fuller St to Main St) – Rate 4, 370 feet

Cedar Ave (White St to Bradley Scott’s PID 65-106-2-37-10-36-1 02-000-001000) – Rated 5, 1,500 feet

2024-2025 LRIP/TID 1

Main St (Cedar Ave to Balsam Ave) – Rated 6, 422 feet

2025-2026 STP-Local

Main St (Cedar Ave to Village Limit towards Sucker Creek Rd) – Rated 6, 1426 feet

2027-2028

Elm Ave (Loomis St to Termini) – Rated 5, 422 feet

Birch Ave (Slocum St to Bracklin St) – Rated 4, 317 feet

Bracklin St (Birch Ave to Park Ave) – Rated 5, 369 feet

2029-2030

White St (Cedar Ave to Balsam Ave) – Rated 5, 475 feet

White St (Balsam Ave to Park Ave) – Rated 5, 350 feet

White St (Park Ave to Birch Ave) – Rated 5, 370 feet

White St (Birch Ave to Chetac Ave) – Rated 5, 370 feet

AIRPORTS & AVIATION

No scheduled passenger flights are available in the Village of Birchwood. The nearest airports providing regular scheduled passenger flights to domestic and international destinations are located in Eau Claire, WI, Duluth, MN, or Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN. Charter air service is also available at the Rice Lake Air Center-Regional Airport. At present, there are two public and nine private airport/airfields within Washburn County. Their location and status are outlined in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3: Washburn County Airports/Airfields

Airport/Airfield	Location	Owner/Operator	Status
Shell Lake Municipal Airport	Shell Lake	City of Shell Lake	Public
Nest of Eagles Airport	Spoooner	Alf Johnson	Public
Will-Be-Gone Airport	Birchwood	William Cyr	Private
Ben Sutherland Airport	Minong	Byron Bright	Private
Indianhead Medical Center Heliport	Shell Lake	Paul Naglosky	Private
Spoooner Hospital Heliport	Spoooner	Spoooner Hospital	Private
Birchwood Airport	Springbrook	Clifford Ingbreton	Private
Willie's Airport	Springbrook	Willie Kauffman	Private
Lakewood Lodge Airport	Stone Lake	Robert Gillette	Private

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

MULTI-USE TRAILS

Throughout Washburn County, there are several hundred miles of multi-use trails. This network is used most intensely during the winter months for snowmobiling and in the summer months for ATV use, which in addition to its recreational use provides an alternate means of commuting for some Washburn County residents. The Tuscobia Trail is the only designated trail that goes through the village, and it is open to both snowmobiles and ATVs.

ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSPORTATION

The Section 5310 Program, Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, provides grant funding for capital and operating expenses to improve mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities. At present, there are no designated pick-up or drop-off sites located in the Village of Birchwood relating to this program.

Nonemergency medical transportation is available through private providers outside of Washburn County and by local providers including Caring Medical, Indianhead Medical Center, Spooner Health Systems, Washburn County Veterans, and Washburn County Unit on Aging.

Ventures Unlimited provides specialized transportation service to its clients, with limited seating available to the public. Ventures Unlimited operates throughout Washburn County four days a week.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Namekagon Transit located in Hayward provides public transportation service in Washburn County, with weekly door stop service. Namekagon Transit also services Sawyer County, Bayfield County, and Barron County.

Greyhound Bus Lines located in Eau Claire also provide commercial bus transportation.

NWT Express Shuttle provides charter or group ground transportation between prearranged locations in Northwest Wisconsin and the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

TRUCKING AND WATER TRANSPORTATION

Trucking through the village is accommodated through the local street network, while water transportation is primarily utilized for recreational purposes. The closest port available for the delivery or shipment of waterborne commerce is approximately two hours north of the village. Domestic and international shipping is handled out of the Duluth/Superior Port.

RAIL SYSTEM

There are currently no railways in the Village of Birchwood and there are no plans for future expansion of railways into the village.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND PROGRAMS

State, regional, and county agencies have developed guidance and improvement schedules for roadways or infrastructure under their responsibility. It is important the Village of Birchwood and these agencies communicate on proposed implementation schedules and coordinate local and regional activities. State, regional, and county plans applicable to this element have been reviewed.

Washburn County Road Improvement Plan

The Washburn County Highway Department has a road construction schedule in place for scheduled county road improvements for the next seven years. There are no planned county improvements slated for the Village of Birchwood in the next six years. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

Connect 2050

Connect 2050 is a multimodal long-range plan which facilitates decision-making for improvements to and investments in all modes and means of transportation in Wisconsin, including cars, roads, transit, biking, walking, rail, aviation, and water transport.

Wisconsin Active Transportation Plan 2050

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation updated the Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan and the Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan, which were adopted in 1998 and 2002, and combined them into the Wisconsin Active Transportation Plan 2050. The Active Transportation Plan is a statewide long-range plan focused on human-powered modes of transportation, such as bicycling and walking.

Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030

The Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030 and its accompanying Environmental Evaluation (SEE) are the statewide long-range airport transportation plans. The identification of potential projects in the plan is not a commitment for federal or state project funding, nor does it provide project justification.

Wisconsin State Freight Plan

The State Freight Plan is a long-range multimodal plan that addresses the state's freight transportation needs and provides a vision for WisDOT's freight program for the next eight years. The State's Freight Plan is updated every four years so that it accurately reflects, considers, and addresses current and future freight needs.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides an analysis of local conditions; identifies problems, needs, and opportunities of the ten-county region; and defines the vision, goals, and objectives of the region. Within the document, specific transportation objectives and activities have been identified on a regional basis. Based on a review of the CEDS and that of the transportation goals and objectives of the village, the transportation goals and objectives are complementary, and no conflicts exist.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist in the overall transportation efforts of the village.

Goal: Safe and efficient transportation systems, which accommodate the movement of people and goods.

- Objective 1: Work to provide transportation means for the village elderly for medical/dental appointments and shopping.
Contact nearby municipalities and/or medical facilities for shuttle bus-sharing opportunities.
- Objective 2: Support enhancement and maintenance of Tuscobia and Ice Age Trails.
Work with local snowmobile/ATV/biking clubs to improve, maintain, and advertise trails.
Identify (via signage) and expand existing bicycle, walking, and jogging trails.
- Objective 3: Continue to maintain high quality of local roads.
Follow village's five-year road improvement plan.
- Objective 4: Encourage building of additional local roads and/or sidewalks as needed to meet future housing needs of the village.
Add sidewalks on residential streets as needed. (Example: sidewalks that carry school traffic.)
Designate funds for future road planning and construction.
Establish TIF (or similar) funding for infrastructure improvements.
- Objective 5: Reduce parking congestion on Main Street.
Create parking spaces on side streets abutting Main St. and additional areas off Main St. behind businesses.

Map 3-1: Functional Classification

4: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

A sound and well-maintained infrastructure is crucial for the health and safety of its inhabitants and forms the basis for its economic prosperity. Similarly, the services, institutions, and recreational amenities extend beyond their individual functions by enriching community life, civic pride, and community identity. Maintaining the quality of community facilities and infrastructure is key to serving residents and attracting new residents and businesses. This portion of the plan serves as an inventory of existing facilities in the Village of Birchwood and reviews their capacity to accommodate Birchwood's projected growth for the coming 20-year period.

EXISTING UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Water Supply

The Village of Birchwood has had a public water system in place since 1974 when the pump, water tower, and water lines were installed. The system extends through nearly all of the inhabited portions of the incorporated area. The remaining residences make use of drilled or dug wells for their water. The village maintains one well to supply the system with a storage capacity of 60,000 gallons per day and a distribution system of both six- and eight-inch mains. The Village of Birchwood water system is shown in Map 4-1.

Over the 20-year planning horizon, the village will continue to upgrade the existing system due to maintenance and future needs resulting from development.

Wastewater Disposal

Birchwood's public sewer system was put in place in 1964. Similar to the municipal water system, the sewer system reaches most inhabited areas within the municipal limits. Residences not presently being served with village sewer have private septic systems. Capacity of the system is approximately 80,000 gallons of sewage per day. Birchwood's sewage treatment facility is comprised of a pipe network, four lift stations, and three sewage ponds. The lagoon system is located at 412 Edenharter Road. The Village of Birchwood sewer system is shown in Map 4-1.

Over the 20-year planning period, the village will continue to upgrade the existing system due to maintenance and future needs resulting from development. The village will also continue to evaluate the cost-benefit of providing service to existing areas of the village without municipal sewer service.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Prior to 1969, solid waste management in Washburn County consisted primarily of individuals hauling to unsupervised open municipal dumps. Since that time, state and federal codes have become more restrictive and nonhazardous household waste is landfilled only in licensed facilities. These solid waste disposal sites or landfills are important potential sources of groundwater pollution. It was not until approximately 1984 when the costs to comply with state codes ultimately forced towns to close dumpsites that could not be upgraded. The municipal dump in the Town of Birchwood, which Village of Birchwood residents patronized for their

garbage disposal, closed at that time. Table 4-1 shows information regarding the old dump in the Town of Birchwood.

Table 4-1: Solid Waste Disposal Sites

Facility Name	Legal Description	Status
Birchwood Town Dump	SE SE S02 37N 10W	Inactive

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Waste removal within the Village of Birchwood is contracted with Republic Services, which provides both garbage and recycling pickup services and runs the only private sanitary landfill in Washburn County, which is located on CTH D in the Town of Sarona.

The recycling program in Washburn County is a two-tier program that includes curbside collection and drop-off recycling centers. Under the current Washburn County Solid Waste Ordinance, waste haulers that provide curbside collection of garbage must also provide curbside collection of certain recyclables. Curbside collection in rural areas involves storage of recyclables in separate compartments of Republic Services trucks. Dropoff sites are aimed at persons that do not have curbside garbage collection.

There are five drop-off recycling centers in Washburn County, two of which take expanded recyclables and one that is a transfer station. These facilities are located in the communities of Spooner, Minong, Springbrook, Stone Lake, and Long Lake. The Spooner and Minong facilities are the expanded recycling centers, with the Minong facility being the only present transfer station in the county. The transfer station in Minong serves both the Town and Village of Minong and the Town of Frog Creek. Waste that is brought to the station is compacted, loaded into trailers, and taken to the landfill in Sarona for final disposal. Recyclables on the other hand are collected and maintained separate from other solid waste materials.

Stormwater Management

Much of the inhabited portions of the village have a storm drain system currently in place.

Over the next 20 years, the village will continue to monitor stormwater runoff. Additional storm sewers may be developed in addition to the development of detention ponds by either the village or private developers. The development of a stormwater ordinance may be considered in the future, based on development factors and effects of stormwater damage.

Emergency Management

The village board and plan commission share the responsibility of integrating all activities necessary to prepare for, respond to, recover from, or mitigate against threatened or actual natural, technological, and human-caused emergencies and disasters. The framework of emergency management is built around a four-phase cycle:

1. **Preparedness** is when activities, programs, and systems are developed or updated before an event happens. These activities are often tested (or exercised) in non-emergency situations to test their effectiveness. Potential risks, hazards, and vulnerabilities are also assessed in this phase.
2. **Response** focuses on the immediate and short-term effects of a disaster. It is usually focused on life safety and preventing damage.

3. **Recovery** is a long-term phase that looks to return a community to normal, or to a more resilient state, after a disaster.
4. **Mitigation** focuses on building (or rebuilding) in ways that reduce hazard risk more permanently. It is an activity that can occur at any point in the emergency management cycle. For example, a community can undertake mitigation actions before a disaster (preparedness phase) or while rebuilding after a disaster (recovery phase).

The village has developed and maintains an Emergency Operations Plan. The purpose of the plan is to describe how the village will respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters.

The village is also a participating jurisdiction in the Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan. The purpose of this plan is to identify long-term strategies to reduce or eliminate the risk to human life and property from identified hazards of concern.

Law Enforcement

The Village of Birchwood Police Department has one full-time police chief who is stationed at the village hall. The police chief has no set hours, and the department has one vehicle for patrol duties. The police department covers approximately a 200-square mile area and includes the Village of Birchwood, Town of Birchwood (mostly the southern one-half), Town of Wilson in Rusk County, Town of Cedar Lake in Barron County, and the Towns of Edgewater and Meteor in Sawyer County. Enforcement services are contracted with the Village of Birchwood. Costs for these services depend on the size of the municipality, population, and number of calls received.

The Washburn County Sheriff's Department, headquartered at the Washburn County Courthouse, also has jurisdiction in the village, as does the state patrol with its regional headquarters in Spooner. Federal marshals, headquartered in Madison, also have jurisdiction to assist in law enforcement in the Village of Birchwood.

All emergency calls should use 911, which is staffed 24 hours by the Washburn County Sheriff's Department.

Fire and Rescue

The Birchwood Four Corners Emergency Services District (BFCESD) was incorporated in 2008 to provide emergency services to its members which include the Village of Birchwood and the Towns of Birchwood, Wilson, Edgewater, Long Lake, and Doyle. The BFCESD provides fire protection for all of the member municipalities and ambulance service for all but Doyle and one half of both Long Lake and Cedar Lake.

The Birchwood Volunteer Fire Department and Birchwood Ambulance Service both report to the District. The village and each town have a commissioner, and the seven commissioners from the Board for the District. The BFCESD Emergency Services building is located in the village at 280 Edenharter Road.

Village Hall/Garage

The village hall is located at 101 N. Main Street and the village garage is located at 412 Edenharter Road in the Village of Birchwood. In addition to hosting Village of Birchwood functions, the village hall also serves as a community center where local organizations and clubs can use the large meeting room. The location of the Village Hall and Garage are shown on Map 4-2.

Libraries

Residents of the Village of Birchwood can utilize the library in the Birchwood High School, which is open to the public. Residents can also utilize the City of Shell Lake Public Library at 501 1st Street and the City of Spooner Public Library at 421 High Street, the Rice Lake Public Library located at 2 E. Marshall Street, or the Hayward Carnegie Library located at 10538 Main Street.

Cemeteries

Although there is not a cemetery within the village limits, citizens of the village consider the cemetery in the Town of Birchwood (Birchwood/Woodlawn Cemetery, located directly south of the village) as their main cemetery. The village contributes yearly to help with the cost of operations.

Communication Facilities

Mosaic Technologies and S&K TB Systems provide telecommunications services in the village.

Power Plants, Substations, and Transmission Lines

There are no power plants (hydro, coal, or nuclear) or substations located in the Village of Birchwood, and there are no plans to locate any in the future.

Electric and Gas Utilities

Xcel Energy is the primary provider of electric services to the Village of Birchwood.

Currently, natural gas is not offered in the Village of Birchwood. The closest natural gas lines are located in the Village of Haugen in Barron County. Any future extension of this main line to the Village of Birchwood would depend on year-round home heating customers who would be willing to pay for the extension.

MEDICAL/HEALTH CARE AND OTHER FACILITIES

Located within the village limits are Birchwood Family Medicine and NorthLakes Community Clinic. Birchwood Family Medicine is located at 101 West Loomis Street Suite A. It provides primary medical care on a membership basis, but single visit care pricing and services are also available. NorthLakes Community Clinic is located at 108 S Main Street, Birchwood and offers behavioral health and dental services.

Residents can also receive full medical services in Rice Lake or Spooner. Both locations operate facilities that are staffed 24 hours a day to respond to medical emergencies in Barron, Rusk, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties.

Senior Care

Birch Haven Manor is available to elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Other senior care facilities can be found in the cities of Hayward, Rice Lake, Shell Lake, or Spooner.

Childcare Facilities

Licensed and certified childcare facilities in the Village of Birchwood include:

Crystal's Daycare, 202 Chetec Avenue
Grey Mansion Day Care, 110 E. Cedar Avenue
Lots-of-Hugs Child Care, 212 E. Birch Avenue

Additional childcare facilities may be available in adjoining towns or other local units of government.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Most school age children in the Village of Birchwood attend public school in the Birchwood School District. Birchwood School, located at 300 S. Wilson Street is a Pre-K-12 school, which had an enrollment of approximately 267 students in the 2022-2023 school year, with just fewer than 40 employees. Students can choose from a traditional classroom setting in Birchwood Elementary (PK-5), Middle (6-8) or High School (9-12); a Montessori setting at Birchwood Public Montessori (PK-6); a project-based learning setting at the Birchwood Blue Hills Charter School (7-12), or in a virtual setting at the Bobcat Virtual Academy (PK-12). Based on the population projections in Table 1-2 of the Issues and Opportunities element, the total population is predicted to rise through the year 2040, some of which will be school age children.

No other educational facilities are available in the village. However, Northwoods Technical College has campuses in Ashland, Rice Lake, New Richmond, and Superior, outreach centers in Hayward, Ladysmith, and Balsam Lake, and a health education center in Shell Lake. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire-Barron County campus is located in Rice Lake.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Parks and Recreation

Below is an inventory of park and recreational facilities and services available in the village as of November 2023.

- **Rest Park.** Located next to the village hall. Has a shelter with benches, a drinking fountain, and a logging museum open on a seasonal basis.
- **Lake Avenue Park.** Facilities include a fishing pier on Birch Lake.
- **Playground/Tennis/Pickleball Courts/Skate Park.** Located between East Birch Avenue and East Park Avenue, the village shares the facilities with the Birchwood School. The area is fenced-in and currently includes tennis/pickleball courts, basketball courts, and a skateboard park.
- **Baseball field.** Located on W. Park Avenue. Has a fenced-in baseball field with bleachers and concession stand and restroom facilities.
- **Bluegill Village Park.** Picnic area located just off of STH 48.

- **Doolittle Park and Campground.** Located on Birch Lake. Amenities include a 40-site campground with public restrooms and sewer dump location, a sandy swimming beach, small playground, half court basketball, picnic area, pavilion with electricity, and a boat launch with a dock. There are plans to install a second dock.
- **Birch Lake Ice Skating Rink.** Located on Birch Lake. Open to the public, weather dependent.

Trails

The Tuscobia Trail enters the Village of Birchwood in the southwest corner of the village limits and parallels Hwy 48 into Sawyer County. In Washburn and Sawyer Counties, the Tuscobia Trail is open for both snowmobiles and ATVs, while in Barron County it is maintained for snowmobiles and other non-motorized recreational uses.

Public Access Points

Public access points are points of entry for the public to make use of public lakes, forests, and parks. Public access points would include boat landings, carry-in sites, waysides, or road crossings. In the Village of Birchwood, there are two public access points, both of which are located on Birch Lake. See Table 4-2 and Map 4-2 for more details.

Table 4-2: Improved Boat Landings

Waterbody	Section No.	Future Improvements	Timeframe
Birch Lake (Big)	T.37N – R.10W Section 25	As needed	N/A
Little Birch Lake	T.37N – R10W Section 25	As needed	N/A

Source: Village of Birchwood

Table 4-3: Utility and Community Facilities Timetable

Village Utilities & Community Facilities	Timeframe	Identified Needs	Notes/Comments
Water Supply	2023-2027	Second well	Most residents are supplied by village public water system
Onsite Wastewater Disposal Facilities	-	None	Most residents are supplied by the village sewer system
Solid Waste Disposal & Recycling	-	None	Village has residential garbage pickup
Stormwater Management	-	None	No current needs. Continue to maintain and update as needed
Law Enforcement	-	None	
Fire & Rescue	-	None	Village is served by the Birchwood Four Corners Emergency Services District
Library	-	None	Village is served by school library
Village Hall/ Garage	-	None	
Communication Facilities	-	None	Village is served by Mosaic and S&K TV Systems
Power Plants & Transmission Lines	-	None	Village is served by Xcel Energy
Medical & Health Care Facilities	-	None	
Educational Facilities	-	None	Birchwood School District
Senior Care Facilities	2023-2033	Need assisted living program or nursing home	

Source: Village of Birchwood

Residential, commercial, and manufacturing development is anticipated to continue over the 20-year planning horizon. As this development occurs, it is important that the overall utility and community facilities be developed and enhanced to provide the most feasible and economically responsible operation to the village and its residents.

Redevelopment and infill of vacant lots is encouraged throughout the community. However, much of the commercial and manufacturing development will likely occur on already vacant undeveloped land due to the presence of STH 48.

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist the village in addressing utility and community facilities.

Goal: Maintain and enhance facilities and services, which contribute to the overall well-being of the village.

Objective 1: Maintain enhance and/or expand existing public facilities within or shared by the village.

Enhance and/or develop recreational trails and/or trail accesses for public use.

Establish assisted living facility and/or nursing home to serve the village and surrounding area.

Maintain village parks and provide additional parks as population expands.

Renovate or replace the Village Hall.

Objective 2: Protect the health, safety, and public welfare of the village.

Participate in the 5-year update of the Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan.

Maintain the Village of Birchwood Emergency Operations Plan.

Objective 3: Enhance and expand protection and safety services, as the population requires.

Maintain open communication with county and state law enforcement agencies to promote cooperation and provide complete coverage of area.

Provide necessary facilities and funds for ambulance and fire department to meet the needs of the growing population.

Objective 4: Coordinate building and sharing of community facilities with adjoining jurisdictions whenever possible.

Support and encourage a health care facility in the Birchwood area by providing economic and/or land use incentives.

Look into funding opportunities with adjoining towns for a Birchwood Area Community Center.

Contact adjoining towns and inventory their community facilities for future sharing possibilities.

Objective 5: Maintain and expand public facilities as necessary to provide maximum benefit to the village.

Expand the water supply and sewerage plant to accommodate growth.

Enlarge the storm drainage system to incorporate areas in the village not currently served.

Drill additional well(s) as needed.

Reconstruct the tennis court to be handicap accessible.

Objective 6: Establish and maintain high quality parks, open space, and recreational services.

Develop a local outdoor recreation plan.

Incorporate the adopted Village of Birchwood Outdoor Recreation Plan as an attachment into the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan.

Review and update the Village of Birchwood Outdoor Recreation Plan every 5 years.

Map 4-1: Community Facilities and Utilities

Map 4-2: Community Facilities

5: NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This element explores the various natural, agricultural, and cultural resources in the village including topography, soils, land cover, agricultural areas, water resources, wetlands, floodplains, agricultural characteristics, and cultural and historic resources. It is important to acknowledge these resources to make intelligent land use decisions, as they are directly related.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Background

The Village of Birchwood encompasses approximately 832 acres and is located in the far southeastern corner of Washburn County.

Topography

The Village of Birchwood lies in an area of gently rolling terrain, with slopes generally ranging from 0% to 5%. The highest elevation in the village is approximately 1,314 feet, northwest of Doolittle Park. The steepest slopes within the village are found adjacent to the highest point of elevation and at various places along the lakeshore and Birch Creek. Most of the steeper sloping lands in the village range between 15% and 25%.

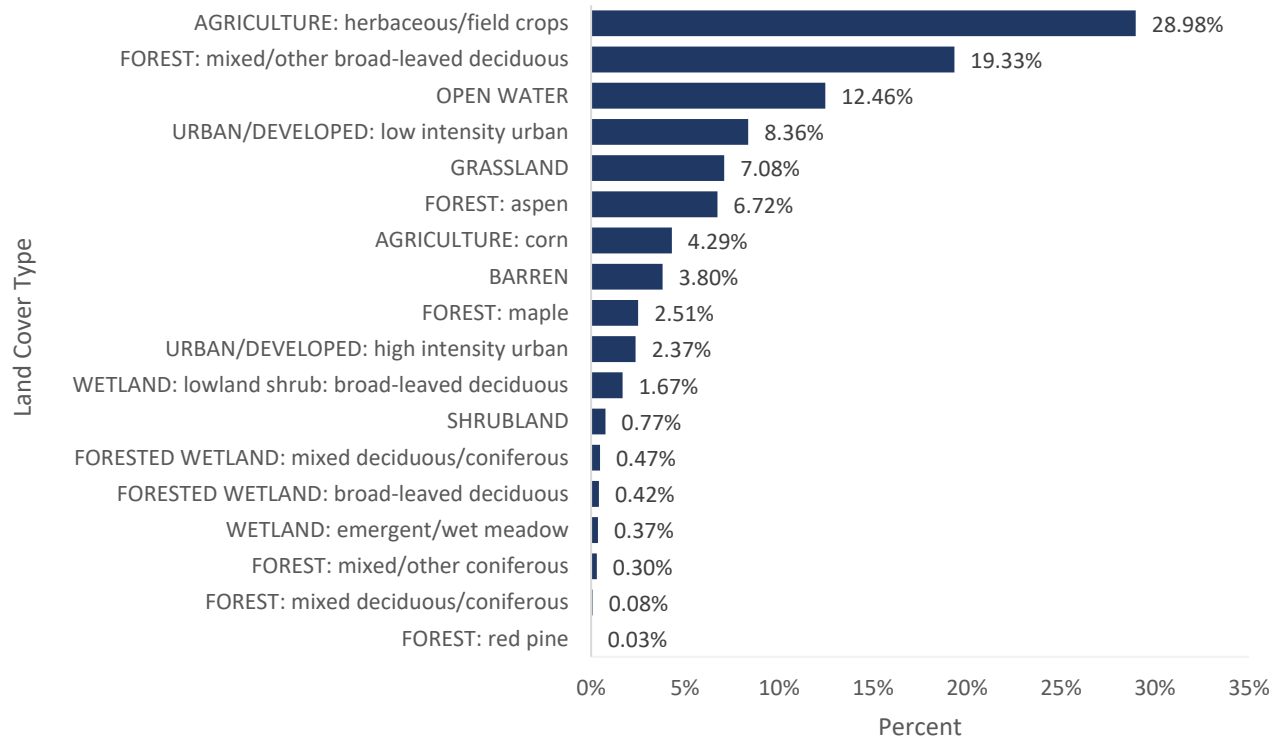
Soils

An understanding of local soil types is a critical component of land use planning. Soil conditions influence productivity of agricultural lands and forests and may pose obstacles to land and infrastructure development. Soil factors such as wetness, drainage capacity, strength, and depth to bedrock all influence soil suitability for land uses. In order to evaluate soil suitability for land uses, soil criteria for each use must be well defined and the suited soil regions must be identified. Soil types located in the Village of Birchwood are shown in Map 5-1.

Land Cover

Land cover information for the Village of Birchwood was obtained from Wisland 2.0 (Wisconsin Initiative for Statewide Cooperation on Land Cover Analysis and Data) and is shown in Figure 5-1. This data represents surface vegetation, open water, and urban area delineation based on interpretation of dual year satellite imagery. The data presents a generalized view of community land cover and should not replace individual site examination. The land cover information reflects only areas within the village limits.

Figure 5-1: Land Cover



Source: Wiscland 2.0

Surface Water Resources

Water resources in the Village of Birchwood are environmentally, socially, and economically significant. These resources represent unique and complex environments supporting a wide range of biological diversity. The aquatic influence extends beyond the confines of the lake or stream and impacts the diversity of surrounding terrestrial communities.

Water resources represent one of the most significant factors in defining the “northwoods” character of northern Wisconsin. Surface waters in the Village of Birchwood are shown on Map 5-2.

Every two years, Sections 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires Wisconsin to publish a list of all waters not meeting water quality standards. In the Village of Birchwood, the 2022 Impaired Waters List includes Birch Lake due to total phosphorus and excess algal growth (Map 5-2).

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a waterway that flows to a lake, reservoir, or river. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has transitioned its resource management approach to utilize watershed boundaries rather than political or social boundaries.

The Village of Birchwood is located entirely within the Red Cedar Lake watershed. Village runoff entering surface waters or transported through subsurface hydrologic flow eventually finds its way to the Red Cedar River, which is part of the Lower Chippewa River Basin.

Lake Characteristics

Within the Village of Birchwood is Birch Lake, a moderately deep hardwater drainage lake. The lake’s outlet is at Birch Creek, where a 19-foot headwater control structure regulates streamflow into Balsam Lake. This chain of lakes marks the headwaters of the Red Cedar River. The portion of the lake within corporate limits of the Village of Birchwood extends north of County Highway 48 to approximately one-half mile north of Doolittle Park. The lake is noted for exceptional fishing opportunities, with panfish/bluegills being abundant. The lake also sustains a quality population of bluegill, walleye, northern pike, and largemouth bass.

Table 5-1: Named Lakes

Name	Location Sec. T-N R-W	Surface Acres	Maximum Depth	Miles of Shoreline**	Miles of Public Shorelin*	Percent of Private Shoreline
Birch Lake	24-37-10	368.0	73.0	8.4	2.1	88.0%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
 **2.6 miles of shoreline are within the village limits

Birch Lake has a relatively high development density, with approximately 115 structures located along the lake’s perimeter. Several structures are found along the shoreline within the village limits, particularly south of Doolittle Park.

The Village of Birchwood Shoreland Zoning Ordinance regulates development on all lots which abut navigable waters in the Village of Birchwood.

Perennial and Intermittent Rivers, Creeks, and Streams

Riparian surface features such as rivers, creeks, and streams represent unique and diverse natural systems. The quality and quantity of these resources is intimately linked to land use and human activities.

There are two kinds of streams, perennial and intermittent. Perennial streams flow throughout most (> 50%) of the year. Intermittent streams usually flow only after rainstorms or snowmelt and, therefore, are dry most of the year. Intermittent streams must be protected because they channel runoff into perennial streams and lakes and may become part of the aquatic ecosystem when water flows in them.

The only stream within the corporate limits of the village is Birch Creek, a rapid flowing, clear warm water drainage stream which forms the main headwaters tributary to the Red Cedar River. Birch Creek flows from the dam at Birch Lake, northwesterly 0.9 miles into Balsam Lake. The creek sustains both a warm and coldwater fishery with smallmouth bass, minnows, and brook trout present.

Floodplains

Floodplains are lands adjacent to rivers or streams, which are subject to periodic, recurring inundation by water. Development and other land use activities within this zone are strongly discouraged. Appropriate land uses for these areas would consist of resource protection and wildlife habitat uses.

Flood Hazard Assessment

The Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) has defined areas of flood susceptibility in the Village of Birchwood.

Environmental Corridors

Environmental Corridors are defined by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as:

“Linear areas of natural resources that are critical to maintaining water quality and quantity and to providing habitat linkages that ensure biological diversity. Environmental corridors are often associated with rivers and streams.”

Natural benefits provided by environmental corridors include air filtration, erosion control, and improved water quality. In addition, these natural features benefit the overall quality of life in the area and reduce the need for more expensive manmade solutions to water quality issues.

Many areas within these corridors provide important habitats for land and aquatic plants and animals. Connected habitats are superior to disjointed habitats and larger habitats are better for ensuring the survival of a species than smaller areas. Ensuring these corridors can continue to work as a system and the relationships between plants, insects, animals, land, and water continue to function properly are critical to environmental health and continued biological diversity.

The impacts and benefits of these corridors are not limited to one community or the responsibility of one jurisdiction. These areas follow natural boundaries and do not stop at political boundaries. Coordination among communities/jurisdictions is necessary in order to achieve the environmental, economic, cultural, community building, and health benefits, which can be attributed to these natural features.

Wetlands

Wetlands represent one of the most unique and diverse elements of the natural community. Defined by the presence of water and water-loving vegetation, these communities support a range of plants and animals adapted to survive and thrive in this wet environment, including many threatened and endangered species.

These environments provide additional benefits through the services they provide. Examples of these services include:

- Wetlands act as natural filters removing nutrients and chemicals from the water and are often constructed as bioengineered water filtration devices used to treat and cleanse municipal wastewater or urban runoff.
- Wetlands serve as natural flood control devices by intercepting and holding water, a service that reduces flood risk to local communities.
- Wetlands also serve as groundwater recharge supplies for Washburn County communities.
- Wetland vegetation serves to stabilize streambanks and watercourses. This action reduces overall soil erosion and protects water quality by reducing siltation and sediment loads.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and local zoning codes regulate wetlands. Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act establishes a program to regulate the discharge of dredged and fill material into waters of the state including wetlands and is the primary federal regulatory program for wetlands. Wetland boundaries have been delineated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Wisconsin Wetland Inventory displays all wetland areas within the state which are less than five acres in size. According to the inventory, the Village of Birchwood has approximately 24 acres of wetlands (five acres and larger). Wetlands within the Village of Birchwood are located in close proximity to surface waters, namely Birch Creek and the small, unnamed ponds south of STH 48. Wetlands adjacent to and the northeast of Birch Creek are classified as forested wetlands. These communities are forested floodplain complexes characterized by large, mature trees such as tamarack, white cedar, black spruce, elm, black ash, green ash, and silver maple. Surrounding the small ponds are scrub/shrub wetland types, which are characterized by woody shrubs and small trees such as tag alder, bog birch, willow, and dogwood. A small area of emergent/wet meadow wetlands (< 0.5 acres) has also been identified in the Village of Birchwood by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Table 5-2: Wetland Types

Name	# of Acres	% of Acres
Forested	14.3	58.6%
Scrub/Shrub	9.7	39.8%
Emergent/Wet Meadow	0.4	1.6%
Total	24.4	100.0%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Resources of Concern

The Village of Birchwood provides habitat for many species of wildlife, including rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants and animals. These critical resources have been documented by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as part of the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (NHI).

Plants and animals threatened with extinction are protected under federal and state endangered species legislation. Protection is not limited to only the individual species, but includes protection of habitat critical to the species’ survival.

The NHI has not identified any rare or endangered resources within the Village of Birchwood, although several occurrences have been identified in lands adjacent to the village, in the Town of Birchwood.

Note: Absence on the NHI listing does not imply that rare, threatened, or endangered species are not present, only that species have not been identified at the location in the past. A complete and thorough investigation would be required to determine if species are present.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

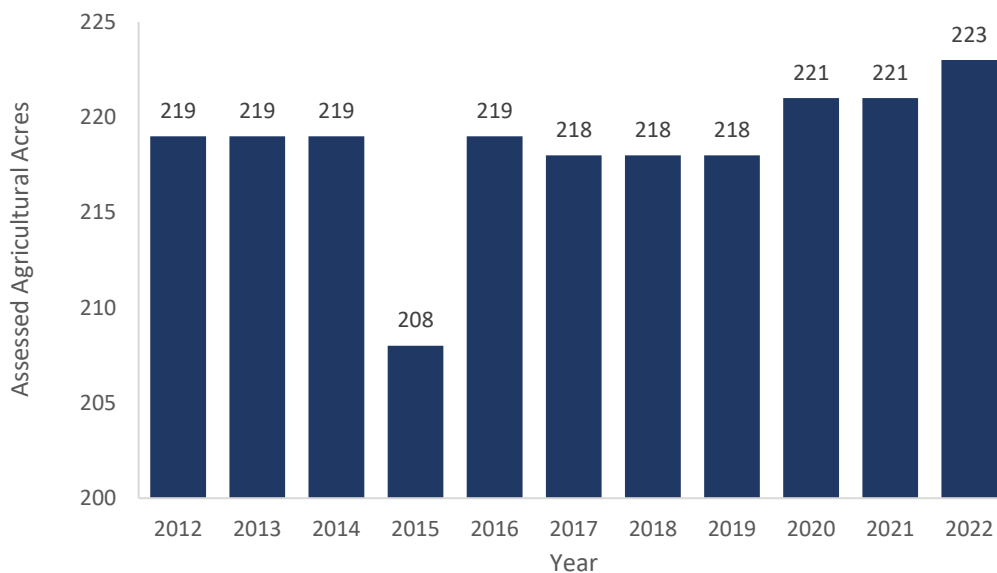
Productive Agricultural Lands

Agricultural lands play an important role in defining the character of many Wisconsin communities. While not a considerable land use, agriculture is an economically and culturally significant activity in some portions of Washburn County. Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning legislation requires communities to review and analyze their agricultural land base and to formulate goals, objectives, and policies for preserving prime agricultural lands. Prime farmland soils are shown in Map 5-3.

Agricultural Trends

In 2022, assessed agricultural lands in the village included 20 land parcels made up of 223 acres of land. In comparison, 2012 assessed agricultural lands in the village included 15 parcels made up of 219 acres of land (Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2: Agricultural Assessment



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources are a significant element in defining local character. The cultural heritage of the community may consist of many things such as historic buildings, festivals, cultural groups, entertainment, and viewsheds. This element proposes to identify a number of cultural attributes in the Village of Birchwood and propose meaningful objectives to the enhancement and protection of village cultural resources.

Based on the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, a number of sites in the village have been identified as having a culturally significant background (Table 5-3). Some sites, through further investigation, may qualify for designation under the historically designated building site.

Table 5-3: Historic Sites Inventory

Common Name	Historic Name	Year Built
Don’s Outlet	Loomis Store	1902
Blue Gill Lounge	Hud’s Bar (1940 CA)	1903
Birchwood Hardware		1904
Morey House	Gus Freitag House	1904
Trinity Lutheran Church	Slovak Zion Lutheran Church	1904
Methodist Church	-	1905
Reynold’s Rib House	Birch Lake Inn	1906
Birch Lake Dam	-	1911
Cobblestone Bed and Breakfast	Anthony Wiess Sr. House	1912
Dairy State Bank	Citizens State Bank	1918
-	W.W. Vincent House	1928
Birchwood Post Office	Birchwood Post Office	1960

Source: Wisconsin Historical Society

NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist the village in addressing natural, agricultural, and cultural resources.

Goal: Protect, conserve, and maintain a high level of environmental quality throughout the Village of Birchwood.

Objective 1: Protect and monitor the water supply.

Gather existing information on groundwater resources to plan for a safe water supply.

Inventory and map potential contaminant sources within the recharge area of the village wells.

Recommend the village enforces the wellhead protection ordinance.

Objective 2: Limit effect of practices that have a detrimental impact on water and air resources.

Identify the location and impact of large factory farms on the village.

Work with adjoining towns to guide placement of factory farms.

Objective 3: Maintain and enhance the quality of lake/river environments.

Work with FEMA to accurately identify floodplain around Big and Little Birch Lakes.

Monitor and control weed problems on Birch Lake.

Update shoreland zoning ordinances.

Explore ways to prevent the introduction of invasive species in area lakes.

Continue to have a relationship with the lake association.

Consider adoption of a slow-no wake zone ordinance on Little Birch Lake.

Objective 4: Encourage healthful living conditions within the village.

Contain noise pollution in village through ordinance enforcement.

Regulate burning within the village limits.

Objective 5: Support efforts for community beautification and preservation.

Preserve historic buildings in the village.

Support beautification efforts of Hwy. 48 and Main St. through plantings, maintenance, and upkeep.

Map 5-1: Soil Types

Map 5-2: Surface Water

Map 5-3: Watersheds

6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Economic Development element is an opportunity for the Village of Birchwood and the local business community to clarify the categories or types of new businesses and industries that would be favorable to Birchwood’s business climate, evaluate the village’s strengths and weaknesses for attracting and retaining business and industry, and determine if there are an adequate number of sites for such businesses and industries. Numerous factors contribute to the economic development of a community, many of which extend far beyond the community’s boundaries. Therefore, in addition to the specific data on the Village of Birchwood, this element also includes information on Washburn County, the State of Wisconsin, and the Northwest Wisconsin Region.

This element of the comprehensive plan contains a compilation of background information, goals, objectives, and programs to promote the retention and stabilization of the economic base in the Village of Birchwood. As required by §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes, this element includes an assessment of new businesses and industries that are desired in the village; an assessment of the village’s strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries; and an inventory of environmentally contaminated sites. It also identifies applicable county, state, and regional economic development programs that apply to the Village of Birchwood.

LABOR FORCE ANALYSIS

Table 6-1 shows that an estimated 67.2% of village residents 16 years of age and above were in the labor force and that 32.8% were not in the labor force.

Table 6-1: Employment Status

	Village of Birchwood	Washburn County	Wisconsin
In Labor Force	67.2%	54.4%	66.1%
Civilian Labor Force	67.2%	54.4%	66.0%
Employed	67.2%	52.2%	63.7%
Unemployed	0.0%	2.2%	2.3%
Armed Forces	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Not in Labor Force	32.8%	45.6%	33.9%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

Table 6-2 compares the percentage of persons employed by occupation and industry in the Village of Birchwood, Washburn County, and the States of Wisconsin. The table shows that Birchwood had the highest percentage of persons employed in sales and office occupations and the manufacturing industry. These numbers reflect the presence of major employers in the village.

Table 6-2: Employed Civilian Population

	Village of Birchwood	Washburn County	Wisconsin
OCCUPATION			
Sales & Office	41.7%	20.0%	19.8%
Production, Transportation, & Material Moving	26.9%	17.9%	17.7%
Management, Business, Science, & Arts	12.1%	30.5%	38.0%
Natural Resources, Construction, & Maintenance	10.8%	13.2%	8.6%
Service	8.5%	18.4%	15.9%
INDUSTRY			
Manufacturing	40.4%	22.1%	22.2%
Retail Trade	15.4%	11.4%	9.1%
Construction	13.2%	8.2%	6.5%
Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance	13.2%	22.4%	21.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting, & Mining	4.4%	3.6%	2.3%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, & Waste Management Services	3.7%	5.3%	9.1%
Transportation & Warehousing, & Utilities	2.9%	6.0%	5.3%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	2.9%	3.4%	3.5%
Public Administration	2.2%	6.0%	4.2%
Wholesale Trade	1.5%	2.1%	3.2%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation & Food Services	0.0%	4.0%	4.7%
Information	0.0%	1.0%	1.6%
Finance & Insurance, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	0.0%	4.4%	7.3%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

EXISTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The most important economic activity that Birchwood can pursue is the creation of an environment that encourages entrepreneurs to engage in business activities. Encouraging entrepreneurs involves attracting new businesses and assisting existing businesses. The three types of programs most relevant to the village are business attraction, business retention, and commercial/industrial development.

Attracting and Retaining Business and Industry

Business attraction involves letting businesses know what a community has to offer. For example, some of the activities that are involved in a business attraction program include:

- Providing information on available sites
- Identifying labor and community characteristics
- Marketing sites to industries that would be complimentary to existing industries or would provide diversity to the local economy
- Offering low-cost land, state, or federal grants, or other incentives to encourage industry to locate in the community

Since a good portion of the economic growth that occurs from businesses is already in a community, business retention is essential. Activities associated with business retention include:

- Helping businesses learn about potential sites for expansion, offering low-cost loans and identifying state and federal grant funds to finance business expansions
- Providing business areas with efficient, reliable public services, such as snow removal, road repair, and sewer/water utilities
- Providing a contact person to answer business questions and solicit information from business leaders regarding local development problems

The attraction of business and industry is an important goal for the village. The Village of Birchwood has several attributes and strengths that would make it an excellent place to locate a potential business. Specifically, the village has:

- Strong population growth
- Strong labor pool
- No competition in above areas (or minimal) for new business/industry
- Business growth occurring and new businesses coming in
- Natural beauty of the area
- Excellent school district
- Conscientious workforce

While the village enjoys its share of advantages, there are several disadvantages or weaknesses that they must address when seeking to attract new business and industry. In particular:

- Distance from major highway/railroad spur
- Industrial park located off Hwy 48 on village road
- Lack of incentives offered by village (grants, TIF, etc.)
- Limited workforce

- Limited space for development on Main Street
- Limited capacity of the village well
- Lack of industrial technology training
- Aging population
- Limited rental housing

Commercial/Industrial Development

Commercial and industrial development activities allow communities to identify market needs and seek prospective businesses to fill the needs. In the future, the Village of Birchwood may be able to assist in this process by creating or modifying Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts to encourage development by offering publicly owned and improved land for sale to commercial developers. The village can also encourage the redevelopment of existing structures and the development of new structures and can ensure that the designs meet the standards established for the community. In addition, economic development incentive revolving loan fund programs can be established to assist in financing commercial projects that meet the goals of the village.

The Village of Birchwood is well positioned to compete with communities its size in the area in attracting business and industries. It is important that the village wisely uses any resources available to attract new businesses and industries.

Commercial Business Areas

Commercial areas within the Village of Birchwood can be characterized as either highway commercial or downtown commercial. The highway commercial area currently exists along STH 48 from South Main Street east to La Pointe Drive. It is anticipated that additional commercial and industrial development along STH 48 will continue through the 20-year planning horizon. The downtown commercial area in the village extends from STH 48, south on Main Street to E Cedar Avenue. For the purposes of this plan, both the highway and downtown commercial areas will be referred to as the Central Business District (CBD) in the Village of Birchwood. The CBD represents a core group of retail, service, and industrial oriented businesses. The CBD is the primary location for shopping and eating establishments within the village. Although other businesses may be scattered throughout the village, the highway commercial area and the downtown commercial area represent the core commercial areas.

Expansion of retail and service businesses within the CBD is possible as vacant lots could be developed, or existing residential dwellings could be renovated or demolished to make way for new retail or service enterprises. Many local businesses in the CBD have either renovated or expanded their business over the past several years.

Throughout the entire village, the equalized value of commercial real estate (land and improvements) has increased from \$6,461,600 in 2017 to \$7,774,700 in 2022. The majority of this increased equalized value is thought to be within the CBD.

The tourism sector is important to the Village of Birchwood and the CBD. According to the State Department of Tourism, the total economic impact of visitors in Washburn County was \$53.0 million in 2022. Direct visitor spending in Washburn County in 2022 was estimated at \$34.7 million.

The Village of Birchwood's geographic location contributes to the success of the CBD and local and visitor spending in the community. The Birchwood Chamber of Commerce is also a result of the continued strengthening of local business through promoting the area as a year-round destination for businesses. To maintain and enhance the CBD, the Village of Birchwood could participate in the Wisconsin Main Street Program, the Connect Communities Program, or explore the creation of a Business Improvement District.

Participants in both the Wisconsin Main Street Program and the Connect Communities Program receive operational assistance including access to educational workshops, webinars, conferences, networking opportunities, and an online resource guide and discussion group to facilitate revitalization of downtowns and urban commercial districts. These programs benefit a diverse array of communities by size and geography, supporting the efforts of both emerging and established revitalization programs.

A Business Improvement District (BID) allows communities to create a district(s) and develop an assessment methodology for businesses to contribute to programs aimed at promotion, management, maintenance, and development of the district. BIDs are restricted to commercial and industrial properties that are subject to real estate tax.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Future commercial and industrial development in the Village of Birchwood is most likely to occur along or adjacent to the STH 48 corridor running through the center of the village. The development of this comprehensive plan is seen as an important step to plan for and accommodate growth and development along the highway corridor. The community would like to see a compatible mix of land uses along this corridor in the future. The village would also support limited residential development in the area.

While the village would like to welcome additional business development to support the local tax base, it is important that any new development exists in harmony with the local environment. Therefore, new business and industry developments should be "clean" and not produce waste, which would be a hazard to the natural resources of the Village of Birchwood (i.e., Birch Lake and surrounding wetlands, forests, and agricultural lands). Likewise, new development should blend into the landscape and not represent a nuisance to other businesses and residents.

BIRCHWOOD'S TARGETED BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

The Village of Birchwood is well situated not only as a tourist destination but also in relationship to regional metropolitan areas. As discussed earlier in the plan, the village is located on STH 48, which connects with USH 53 (southwest-14 miles). The Village of Birchwood lies almost directly in the center of a triangle formed by three of the region's most populous centers: Minneapolis-St. Paul to the southwest, Eau Claire to the south, and Duluth-Superior to the north.

ENVIRONMENTALLY CONTAMINATED SITES

Many urban or rural areas have former industrial or commercial sites where contamination is present or perceived to be present. These “brownfield” sites are often abandoned or underutilized sites that could be redeveloped to accommodate growth. The Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System on the Web (BOTW) is a searchable database maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) that includes information on the investigation and cleanup of environmental contamination in Wisconsin. Table 6-3 lists contaminated properties and other cleanup and redevelopment activities in the Village of Birchwood.

The BOTW contains both open and closed site listings. Sites with an open status are in need of cleanup or where cleanup is still underway. Sites with a closed status are where investigation and cleanup of the contamination has been completed and the WDNR has approved all cleanup actions. Activity type divides the data into separate groups of activities, including:

A leaking underground storage tank (LUST) site has contaminated soil and/or groundwater with petroleum, which includes toxic and potentially cancer-causing substances. However, given time, petroleum contamination naturally breaks down in the environment. Some LUST sites may produce potentially explosive vapors.

An environmental repair program (ERP) site is a site other than a LUST that has contaminated soil and/or groundwater. Examples include industrial spills or releases that require long-term investigation, buried containers of hazardous substances or closed landfills that have caused contamination.

A spill is a discharge of a hazardous substance that may adversely impact, or threaten to impact public health, welfare, or the environment. Spills are usually cleaned up quickly.

The BOTW also contains sites with a status of no action required by RR Program (NAR) or General Property Information (GP). At NAR sites, there was, or may have been, a discharge to the environment, and based on the known information, the WDNR has determined that the responsible party does not need to undertake an investigation or cleanup in response to that discharge. At GP sites, activity type consists of records of various milestones related to liability exemptions, liability clarifications, and cleanup agreements that have been approved by the WDNR to clarify the legal status of the property.

Several federal and state programs exist to fund or assist in funding the redevelopment of these sites. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has Brownfield assessment, revolving loan fund, and cleanup grants. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation has a Brownfield Program, which includes the Brownfields Site Assessment Program grant funds to assist local governments with conducting initial environmental assessment and demolition activities on eligible abandoned, idle, or underutilized industrial or commercial sites.

Table 6-3: Environmentally Contaminated Sites

Activity Name	Address	Status	Activity Type
Ed's Pit Stop	701 E STH 48	OPEN	LUST
Skar Oil Co & Abandoned Rail Line	311 N Main St	CLOSED	ERP
Birchwood Vil Waterworks	403 Cedar Ave W	CLOSED	ERP
Birchwood Barrels LF	STH 48	CLOSED	ERP
Skar Oil Co	311 N Main St	CLOSED	ERP
Birchwood Lumber & Veneer Co	600 E STH 48	CLOSED	ERP
Skar Oil Co & Abandoned Rail Line	311 N Main St	CLOSED	LUST
Birchwood Lumber Co/Site 1	600 E STH 48	CLOSED	LUST
Birchwood Lumber Co/Site 2	600 E STH 48	CLOSED	LUST
Davis Chris Property	224 S Main St	CLOSED	LUST
Ed's Pit Stop	701 E STH 48	CLOSED	LUST
Bich Haven Manor	305 W Elm St	CLOSED	LUST
Birchwood Best	600 E STH 48	CLOSED	LUST
Birch Haven Manor	305 W Elm St	CLOSED	SPILL
Xcel Energy Spill	Near W131 CTH DD	CLOSED	SPILL
Xcel Energy Spill	410 Park Ave	CLOSED	SPILL
Davis Chris Property	224 S Main St	GP	GP
Birchwood Public Schools	300 S Wilson St	NAR	NAR
Birchwood Schools	300 S Wilson St	NAR	NAR
Birchwood Standard	311 N Main St	NAR	NAR

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

INVENTORY OF EXISTING BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Included as part of the Economic Development element, members of the plan commission were asked to inventory the current businesses/industries in the village. The following is a list of current (as of June 2023) businesses and industries that make up the core of the Village of Birchwood’s economic development.

- 1. Air-Tec
- 2. Bakery Coffee House LLC
- 3. Beartracks
- 4. Birch Creek RV Park
- 5. Birchwood Cafe
- 6. Birchwood Comfort Systems
- 7. Birchwood Family Medicine
- 8. Birchwood Food Pantry
- 9. Birchwood Laundromat
- 10. Birchwood Motel
- 11. Birchwood RV Park
- 12. BP Station
- 13. Century 21 Real Estate Service
- 14. Cobblestone Bed and Breakfast
- 15. Crystal’s Daycare
- 16. Dairy State Bank
- 17. Dollar General
- 18. Doolittle Park and Campground
- 19. Ed’s Coffee House
- 20. Gargulak Tree Farm
- 21. Gary’s Grocery
- 22. Grey Mansion Day Care
- 23. Greeners
- 24. Happy Campers Repair
- 25. Horton’s Hardware
- 26. Junction 48, LLC
- 27. Lily Beez’ Flower Farm
- 28. Lion’s Club
- 29. Lots-of-Hugs Child Care
- 30. Maple Terrace Resort
- 31. Mary’s Bluegill Bar
- 32. Masonite
- 33. Neighbor to Neighbor
- 34. North Country Insurance
- 35. NorthLakes Community Clinic
- 36. Pizza Den
- 37. Post Office
- 38. Birch Creek RV Park
- 39. Rurup Metal Fab
- 40. Synergy
- 41. Timber Bay
- 42. Two Sisters
- 43. Unique Design Salon and Spa

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

There are many programs at the federal, state, county, and regional levels that can help the Village of Birchwood in the support of economic development efforts. In addition, there are programs available for individual businesses to assist in start-up and expansion. This section contains a list of the major agencies and programs that are most likely to be used by the village in its economic development efforts. In addition, there are regional and local economic development organizations that are available to provide assistance. These are also listed in this section.

FEDERAL

Economic Development Administration

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration offers programs for assistance with economic development that apply to the Village of Birchwood. One is the Public Works Program, which helps distressed communities revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure. This program enables communities to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, generate local investment, and create or retain long-term jobs through land acquisition, development, and infrastructure improvement projects that establish or expand industrial or commercial enterprises. Secondly, the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program provides a wide range of technical, planning, and public works and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time. These adverse economic impacts may result from a steep decline in manufacturing employment following a plant closure, changing trade patterns, catastrophic natural disaster, a military base closure, or environmental changes and regulations.

USDA Rural Development

Several loan and grant programs of benefit to the county and local business development are available from the USDA Rural Development. One of those programs is the Community Facility Guaranteed Loans Program, guarantees loans from eligible private lenders to help build essential community facilities in rural areas. Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and/or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment, and pay related project expenses.

The Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program provides funding for rural projects through local utility organizations. The USDA provides zero-interest loans to local utilities which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses (ultimate recipients) for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the lending utility directly. The utility is responsible for repayment to the USDA.

The Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program is a loan guarantee program designed to assist credit-worthy rural businesses obtain needed credit for most any legal business purpose.

The Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program provides direct loans and/or grants for essential community facilities in rural areas. Priority is given to healthcare, education, and public safety projects. Funds may be used to purchase, construct, enlarge, or improve facilities.

STATE

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) is a public-private agency in the State of Wisconsin designed to assist business development and innovation through loans, grants, tax credits, and technical assistance programs.

The Business Development Loan Program supports the retention and expansion of businesses operating in Wisconsin.

The Business Development Tax Credits Program supports job creation, capital investment, training, and the location or retention of corporate headquarters.

The Connect Communities Program supports any organization or government entity interested in pursuing revitalization activities at the local level.

The Diverse Business Development Program supports minority business development through business creation, expansion, and attraction.

The Enterprise Zone Tax Credit Program incents the expansion of existing Wisconsin businesses or relocation of major business operations from other states to Wisconsin.

The Entrepreneurial Microloan Grant Program provides early-stage technology-based companies with services to support their efforts in obtaining federal grant funding.

The Entrepreneurial Training Program provides expert guidance on business plan development to Wisconsin entrepreneurs and small businesses.

The Technology Development Loan Program provides direct financial assistance to startup and emerging growth companies in Wisconsin that are developing and commercializing innovative products and services.

The Wisconsin Main Street Program provides technical support and training for organizations dedicated to downtown or commercial corridor revitalization activities.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) was created to meet an increasing need for affordable housing financing throughout Wisconsin. It offers a number of programs and services in support of business development within the State of Wisconsin.

The Participation Lending Program pairs WHEDA with community lenders, banks, credit unions, community development institutions and other entities that provide commercial loans to Wisconsin businesses.

The Small Business Guarantee Program provides assistance in the expansion or acquisition of an existing small business, assistance in the start-up of a day care business, and assistance in the start-up of a small business in a vacant storefront in the downtown area of a community.

The Agribusiness Guarantee Program assists in the start-up, acquisition, and expansion of a business that develops products using Wisconsin's raw agricultural commodities.

The New Market Tax Credit Program serves as a resource to help fuel job creation and economic development efforts by promoting equity investment in low-income urban and rural communities. Projects must be located in highly distressed census tracts, which are determined by factors such as poverty rates and percentage of median family income.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is a governmental agency of Wisconsin responsible for planning, building, and maintaining the state's highways.

The Transportation Economic Assistance Program provides matching state grants to governing bodies for road, rail, harbor, and airport projects that help attract employers to Wisconsin, or encourage business and industry to remain and expand in the state.

Wisconsin Department of Tourism

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism is a governmental agency of Wisconsin responsible for marketing and promoting the state as a travel destination.

The Joint Effort Marketing Grant Program offers funding to make a promotion or event come to fruition. The grant reimburses Wisconsin non-profit organizations for qualified promotional costs.

The Tourist Information Center Grant Program is open to nonprofit tourism organizations, municipalities or Native American tribes who operate a regional tourist information center.

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is a governmental agency of Wisconsin responsible for regulating agriculture, trade, and commercial activity in the state.

The Wisconsin Foods Program is an economic development program designed to promote local and regional sales of Wisconsin products, keeping food dollars in the state. Program components range from providing resources and technical assistance for producers to providing grant funds for industry innovation.

The Dairy Processor Grant Program provides assistance to dairy farmers, without regard to size or type, focusing on creating long-term, sustainable operations.

The Export Expansion Grant Program aims to accelerate the growth of Wisconsin dairy, meat, and crop product exports. Applicants must be a not-for-profit organization, located in Wisconsin, and currently serving or have the ability to serve Wisconsin agribusinesses. Wisconsin agribusiness associations, technical colleges, universities, and economic development organizations are encouraged to apply.

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program helps organic farmers and processors pay for organic certification.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission is a cooperative venture of the local units of governments in the ten counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn and the five tribal nations of Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff, St. Croix, and Lac du Flambeau in the region. The purpose of NWRPC is to assist the communities of the membership to promote sustainable economic development, develop public facilities, provide planning and technical services, efficiently manage, and conserve natural resources, and protect the environment. Every five years, NWRPC, with the cooperation of the local units of government in its region, prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the entire Northwest Region.

In an effort to build a focused development strategy for the Northwest Region, NWRPC developed three non-profit development corporations, each focusing on a specific area need and opportunity including financing for business startups and expansions (Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation), technology-based business development (Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation), and affordable housing (Northwest Affordable Housing, Inc.).

Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation

A strategic partner of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, the Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation, has available revolving loan funds to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down-payment, and low interest financing to assist businesses in job creation/retention and growth.

Washburn County Economic Development Corporation

Washburn County Economic Development Corporation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that was established in 2002 in a response to having a center to serve existing county businesses, promote the development of new business start-ups, and to help businesses relocate to Washburn County. Its mission is "To Expand the Tax Base, Create New Jobs and Retain Existing Businesses in Washburn County." Funding comes from membership contributions and businesses and organizations that are located in or service Washburn County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist the village in addressing economic development.

Goal: Promote economic development that provides for a healthy, diversified, and growing economy.

Objective 1: Attract new business ventures and industry to the village.

Enhance Hwy. 48 and Main Street through the Street Beautification Program.

Provide incentives through grants or loans to assist business in relocation, expansion and/or construction.

Anticipate need for industrial park and acquire land.

- Objective 2: Work to retain existing business and industry and encourage expansion.
*Promote opportunities to capitalize on recreational activity and tourism.
Promote signage and/or advertising at area campgrounds, resorts, trails,
and boat landings.
Provide for economic growth by enhancing skills of the labor force and
encouraging relocation into the area.*
- Objective 3: Support area associations, organizations, and businesses in their efforts to
promote tourism and economic development.
*Provide space and facilities for local activities as appropriate.
Participate in community beautification efforts through maintenance of
green space and funding of projects as appropriate.*

7: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

INTRODUCTION

In order to ensure continuity and prevent potentially conflicting development patterns, community planning must incorporate a thorough inventory and analysis of the plans of adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions.

Throughout the planning process, maps, goals, objectives, and plan recommendations were developed in a coordinated effort with adjoining jurisdictions. Birchwood's comprehensive plan components were developed through joint planning, in order to achieve a logical and consistent framework among adjoining local units of government.

Inventory and examination of existing jurisdictional relationships within the county provides the cornerstone for intergovernmental cooperation and coordination. Presently, many jurisdictions within the county have informal agreements with other units of government. It will be the aim of the intergovernmental element to achieve a superior level of multi-jurisdictional cooperation through formalization of relationships, opening the lines of communication between jurisdictions, and promotion of intergovernmental agreements.

GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND RELATIONSHIPS TO THE VILLAGE

The Village of Birchwood is located within Washburn County and the Birchwood School District. The village shares a border with the Town of Edgewater in Sawyer County and the Town of Birchwood in Washburn County. An assessment of the village's intergovernmental relationships with surrounding towns, counties, the school district, and other jurisdictions follows.

Town of Birchwood

The village's relationship with the Town of Birchwood can be characterized as one of mutual respect and cooperation. The village and town have had a long-standing relationship in which the units of government meet periodically throughout the year to discuss local and state issues. In reviewing the comprehensive plans, it has been determined the plans for the Town of Birchwood and the Village of Birchwood are consistent with one another.

Town of Edgewater

The village's relationship with the Town of Edgewater can be characterized as one of mutual respect and cooperation. In reviewing the comprehensive plans, it has been determined the plans for the Town of Edgewater and the Village of Birchwood are consistent with one another.

Birchwood School District

The village is within the Birchwood School District. The Birchwood K-12 school buildings are located within the village limits. The village and school do not have conflicting issues. The village shares a playground with the school and the school uses the village's baseball field, while the village uses the school's public library. See Appendix C for the playground shared use agreement between the Village of Birchwood and the Birchwood School District.

Washburn County

In general, the relationship between the village and Washburn County can be characterized as cooperative. In reviewing the comprehensive plans, it has been determined the plans for Washburn County and the Village of Birchwood are consistent with one another.

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The village is within the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) area, which includes Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, and Taylor Counties. In reviewing the comprehensive plans, it has been determined the plans for the Northwest Region and the Village of Birchwood are consistent with one another.

State Agencies

The village and state agencies communicate and cooperate on projects of joint interest. Cooperating state agencies include but are not limited to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

The WDNR is responsible for management of natural resources and wildlife throughout the state. The village and private developers will continue to coordinate and cooperate with the WDNR on land use activities that may infringe on resources managed by the department.

The village and WisDOT coordinate and communicate on projects related to STH 48 and the intersection of STH 48 and CTH D/Main Street. The only identified relationship the village has with the WisDOT is the relationship for receiving General Transportation Aids.

Federal Agencies

No federal agencies have jurisdiction within the Village of Birchwood. However, several federal agencies have technical assistance and funding opportunities which the village can utilize.

Conflict Resolution Process

Potential conflicts related to land use decision-making have been greatly diminished due to the concerted development of local jurisdictional plans through the planning process. Although it is important to recognize that unplanned future variables may result in conflict, planning for potential future conflict between jurisdictions requires a process to resolve such disputes. The conflict resolution process developed for Washburn County outlines the appropriate steps to be taken by the local governing body to resolve these disputes in a logical, systematic, and equitable manner. See Appendix B for a detailed description of the conflict resolution process.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION EFFORTS

Pre-Existing Local Plans

The Village of Birchwood produced a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan in 1974.

The Village of Birchwood adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 2004, and updated its latest Comprehensive Plan in December 2023.

The Village of Birchwood adopted its latest Emergency Operations Plan in June 2022.

Some village resources are also included under the umbrella of various county, state, and federal plans:

The Village of Birchwood is a participant in the Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan. The village last adopted the plan in May 2020.

Plans of Overlapping Jurisdictions

Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan

The Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan forms the foundation for the county's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses. The plan is maintained by the Washburn County Emergency Management Department, and the Village of Birchwood is one of the participating jurisdictions in the plan. As a participating jurisdiction, the village must participate in the county's 5-year review and update of the plan as well as meet all plan update requirements as a condition of being eligible to receive certain kinds of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) non-emergency disaster assistance funding. The most recent Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan can be found on the Washburn County Government website under Emergency Management.

Washburn County Farmland Preservation Plan

The Washburn County Farmland Preservation Plan establishes trends and resources related to agriculture, documents policies and goals related to farmland protection and identifies lands that will remain in agricultural use for the foreseeable future. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

Washburn County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The Washburn County Forest is operated under the direction of the 15-year County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The plan sets policy on all actions conducted in the County Forest. Included in the plan is the Road and Access Plan which regulates motorized access in the County Forest. Currently there is no county-owned land within the Village of Birchwood. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

Washburn County Land and Water Resource Management Plan

The Washburn County Land and Water Resource Management Plan assists the Land and Water Conservation Department in its efforts to protect and improve land and water resources in Washburn County. No recommendations specific to the Village of Birchwood have been identified, although general guidelines apply to all of Washburn County. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan

The Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan includes a list of general recommendations that apply to all Washburn County communities. Specific recommendations included in the plan are made for recreational facilities in the village. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

Washburn County Roadway Improvement Plan

County roadway improvements within the Village of Birchwood are identified in the Transportation element. Roadways under Washburn County jurisdiction within Birchwood include CTH D. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

Wisconsin State Highway Improvement Plan

State roadway improvements within the Village of Birchwood are identified in the Transportation element. Roadways under state jurisdiction within Birchwood include STH 48. No conflicts with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan have been identified.

EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS, SHARED SERVICES, AND AGREEMENTS**Protective Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance)**

The Police Department assists Washburn County Police, State Troopers, State Court System personnel, the District Attorney, and other attorneys with administrative, secretarial, and clerical responsibilities.

Fire and EMS services are provided to the Village of Birchwood by the Birchwood Four Corners Emergency Services District. The Fire Department services the Village of Birchwood and the Towns of Birchwood, Cedar Lake, Doyle, Edgewater, Long Lake, and Wilson. The Ambulance Department serves the Village of Birchwood and the Towns of Birchwood-South, Cedar Lake-Northwest side and East side, Edgewater, and Wilson.

Transportation Services (Road Maintenance, Plowing, etc.)

The Towns of Birchwood and Edgewater share maintenance and plowing on boundary roads.

Washburn County

The Washburn County Highway Department for the maintenance of CTH D through the village.

State Agencies

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation maintains STH 48 through the village.

Federal Agencies

No current relationships exist with any federal agencies.

School Districts

The village shares a playground with the school and the school uses the village's baseball field, while the village uses the school's public library.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist the village in addressing intergovernmental cooperation.

Goal: Promote cooperative relationships with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions.

Objective 1: Maintain fair, equitable and stable funding of shared services (ambulance, fire, & police) with neighboring jurisdictions.

Support the Birchwood Four Corners Emergency Services District.

Objective 2: Cooperate with adjoining jurisdictions to better manage lake issues.

Invite other municipalities and associations to explain their enforcement methods to the village and adjoining jurisdictions.

Develop ordinances to coordinate with adjoining jurisdictions.

Objective 3: Identify potential conflicts between the village and other governmental units and attempt to resolve them.

Review adjoining and overlapping comprehensive plans for conflicts.

Provide a protocol for means of communication between the village and other governmental units.

Provide a protocol for a conflict resolution process.

Objective 4: Work with adjoining municipalities to ensure cooperation with regard to possible expansion (annexation) of the village.

Create a task force or meet jointly with established committees.

Establish complimentary zoning and land use for land that crosses jurisdictional boundaries.

Objective 5: Cooperate with the State of Wisconsin to assure safety at the intersection of State Highway 48 and County Highway D.

Maintain proper signage identifying busy intersections in the village.

8: LAND USE

The Land Use element is intended to provide important background data, analyze trends, and define future needs related to community land use. This information will serve as the foundation for the development of goals, objectives, policies, programs, and actions. This planning element must be utilized in conjunction with the other eight elements and will serve as a guide to future growth and development within the community. Tools to implement the community actions taken related to land use are defined and described under the Implementation element.

Defining appropriate land use is about more than making ecologically and economically intelligent choices. It is also about retaining values, lifestyles, cultural assets, and community character. The planning of future land uses is sometimes perceived as an intrusion on the rights of private property owners. The actual purpose of this activity is to protect the rights of the individual and to give landowners, citizens, and local communities the opportunity to define their own destiny.

Many northern Wisconsin communities are facing the same problems now engulfing the southern parts of the state including pollution, a loss of community character, traffic problems, and rising costs to individuals and governments. Taxes have reached all-time highs, and infrastructure and maintenance costs continue to encumber local units of government. These issues are being further exacerbated by the trends of unplanned, haphazard growth and development. By giving communities the opportunity to define the way they wish to grow and developing a “road map” to reach that destination, the magnitude of these problems can be reduced.

EXISTING LAND USE

An inventory of existing land uses was compiled through analysis of 2023 aerial imagery and Washburn County Tax Parcel GIS data. The inventory was verified by the plan commission in June 2023 (Table 8-1 and Map 8-1). The determined land use boundaries are approximations based on photo-identifiable changes in land use and are not based on parcel classifications used for assessment and zoning purposes.

The existing land use classification system is as follows:

- **Residential** - Lands with structures designed for human habitation including permanent, seasonal, and mobile housing units (not in a designated mobile home park) and recreational cabins and cottages.
- **Commercial** - Retail sales establishments, restaurants, hotels/motels, and service stations.
- **Government/Institutional** - These lands include government-owned administration buildings and offices fire stations, public hospitals, and health care facilities; day care centers; public schools, colleges, and educational research lands; and lands of fraternal organizations (BSA, VFW, etc.). Cemeteries, churches, and other religious facilities are included in this land use category.

- **Park/Recreation** - Recreation lands under public or private ownership. Publicly owned recreational lands may include parks, nature preserves, athletic fields, boat landings, campgrounds, etc. Examples of privately owned lands may include golf courses, campgrounds, marinas, shooting range, etc.
- **Agriculture** - The predominate existing land use is agriculture. Agricultural areas include croplands, livestock grazing, and dairy farming.
- **Industrial** - Manufacturing and processing, wholesaling, warehousing and distribution, and similar activities.
- **Utility** - Lands used for generating and/or processing electronic, communication, or water, electricity, petroleum, or other transmittable products and for the disposal, waste processing, and/or recycling of by-products.
- **Open Space/Unimproved/Forested** - Privately owned non-wooded undeveloped lands, fallow fields.
- **ROW** - The right of way (ROW) is the area needed for traffic lanes, shoulders, ditches, etc.

EXISTING LAND USE PATTERN

Residential

Residential land use accounts for about 226 total acres within the village limits. Development density is much higher than the surrounding rural areas, as the village is incorporated with urban services available.

Commercial

The village has roughly 34 acres of land used for commercial purposes. Most commercial land use is found along Main Street in the “downtown” business district of the village and along the STH 48 corridor that bisects the village. Commercial businesses within the village consist of restaurants, taverns, retail, gas stations, along with other sales and service businesses. A current business inventory list can be found in the Utilities and Community Facilities element.

Government/Institutional

The village has approximately 29 acres used for government/institutional uses. Government/institutional land use consists of public and municipal buildings, including the village hall, school, and fire department.

Park/Recreation

The village has roughly 15 acres of parks and recreation land. The park and recreation lands include school and village parks scattered throughout the village, including Doolittle Park located off Hinman Drive on Birch Lake.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the second most dominant land use in the Village of Birchwood (approximately 291 acres). Agricultural lands are especially prevalent in the flat, productive soils found in the southern one-half of the village.

Industrial

Industrial lands in the village encompass approximately 15 acres.

Utility

Utility lands in the village encompass approximately 9 acres.

Open Space/Unimproved/Forested

The village has approximately 320 acres of undeveloped open space, unimproved, and forest lands. Undeveloped, open space lands not used for agriculture or other purposes. The dominant land use within the Village of Birchwood is forested lands, which account for approximately 300 acres. The vast majority of forested lands are under private ownership. Most private forested lands in the village are used as residential or recreational parcels.

ROW

Village ROW acreage is approximately 26 acres. The ROW is the area needed for traffic lanes, shoulders, ditches, etc.

Table 8-1: Existing Land Use

Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Residential	225.91	23.41%
Commercial	33.53	3.48%
Government/Institutional	29.17	3.02%
Park/Recreation	14.49	1.50%
Agriculture	291.18	30.18%
Industrial	14.54	1.51%
Utility	9.38	0.97%
Open Space/Unimproved/Forested	320.34	33.20%
ROW	26.31	2.73%
Total	964.85	100.00%

Source: Northwest Regional Planning Commission

PRIMARY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Provision of Services

The Village of Birchwood provides several municipal services to residents. These services include wastewater collection and treatment, municipal water, police, fire, and emergency services. Other services available in the community include a senior center, chiropractor, dentist, and three churches. Birchwood School, located on Wilson Street, provides K-12 education. In addition to these services, the incorporated community has several retail shops and businesses, which attract local as well as tourist patrons.

Employment Opportunities

The Village of Birchwood is the smallest incorporated community in Washburn County with 402 residents in 2020. Community businesses and industries provide jobs for local residents.

Transportation Corridors

The Village of Birchwood is located along State Highway 48. This highway provides transportation routes for goods, services, and people to and from the Village of Birchwood. This route also connects the village with outlying communities and larger population centers, such as Rice Lake. This transportation corridor has obviously impacted commercial development, evident by the number of commercial businesses located along this route. Commercial business development is generally found on major transportation corridors due to the larger traffic volumes.

Natural Environment

The Village of Birchwood is located in the southeast corner of Washburn County on the east county line. The northeast corner of the village is separated by Birch Lake, a flowage formed by a dam located near the west village limits. Agriculture lands are located mostly in the south and southeastern portions of the village. Forested lands and water make up the remaining bulk of the village's natural environment.

Land Trends

Throughout the Village of Birchwood, the value of and price paid for land and improved buildings has seen a steady increase. This increase is not expected to slow as the village and surrounding areas continue to see development pressures and demand for area land. The supply of vacant and improved properties has kept pace with local demand.

Equalized values for the village have steadily increased over the past several years. The increase in equalized value is the result of new construction and an increase in property and building values. In 2018, the village's equalized value stood at \$32,120,500 and in 2022 stood at \$40,716,300. A significant change in equalized value occurred in the residential sector between 2018 and 2022. In 2018, the equalized value of residential property was \$23,166,500 and in 2022 was \$29,859,300.

Existing/Potential Land Use Conflicts

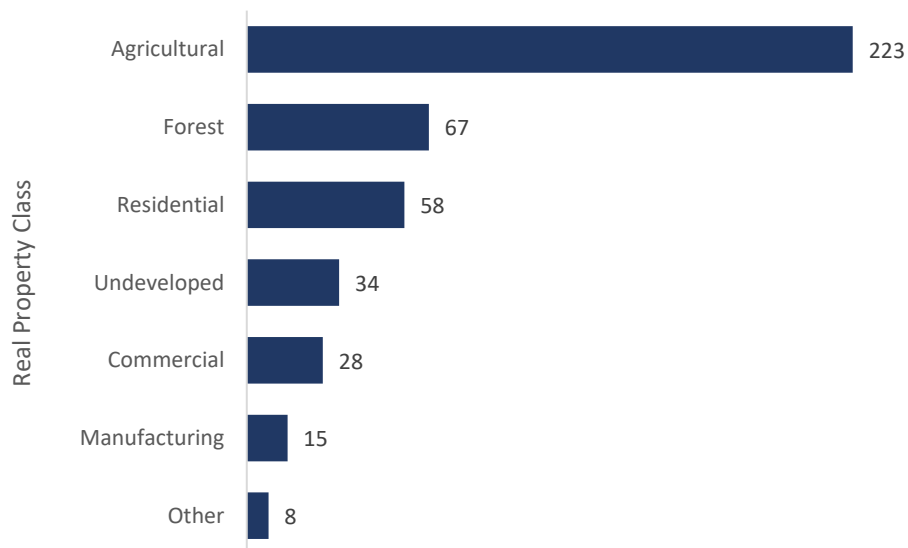
Existing land use conflict in the village is minimal, as past land use activities have been well guided to similar use areas. State Highway 48 has begun transition to a mixed commercial/residential area. It is anticipated this area will convert to all commercial and is depicted as such on the future land use map (Map 8-2).

Over the 20-year planning horizon, future land use conflicts may result as land use patterns transition from use to use based on the future land use map. The village will utilize existing and future ordinances as a means of minimizing conflicts where inappropriate land use activities may arise. In areas bordering the village and town, some sections of land use differ in terms of type. However, these designations appear compatible as related to predicted future use.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE ASSESSMENT STATISTICS

Wisconsin Department of Revenue real estate classes are used to determine land assessments and valuations. Because these data cover extensive time periods, they can be useful in conducting a simplified land use analysis and for examining trends, which are determined by the conversion from one type of assessment class to another over a period of time. Village of Birchwood 2022 tax assessment acres are illustrated in Figure 8-1.

Figure 8-1: Tax Assessment Acres 2022



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Wisconsin Real Estate Classifications

Agricultural includes land, exclusive of building and improvements, which is devoted primarily to agricultural use.

Forest includes land that is producing or is capable of producing commercial forest products. Forest lands cannot include buildings and improvements.

Residential includes any parcel or part of a parcel of untilled land that is not suitable for the production of crops, on which a dwelling or other form of human abode is located.

Undeveloped includes marshes, swamps, thickets, bogs, wet meadows, fallow tillable land, road right-of-way, ponds, and deplete gravel pits, and other nonproductive lands.

Commercial includes lands and improvements primarily devoted to buying and reselling goods.

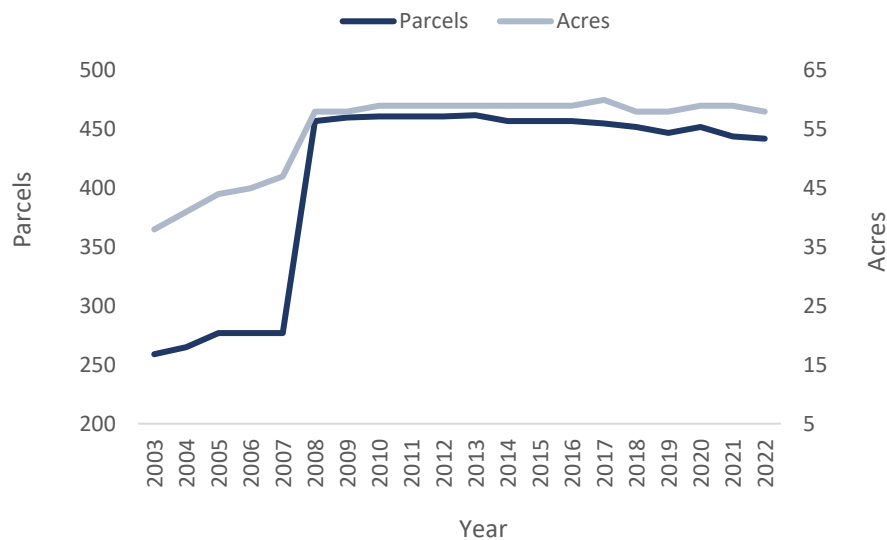
Manufacturing includes land and buildings used in manufacturing, assembling, processing, fabricating, making, or milling tangible personal property for profit.

Other includes buildings and improvements on a farm (ex: houses, barns, and silos, along with the land necessary for their location and convenience).

HISTORIC TRENDS

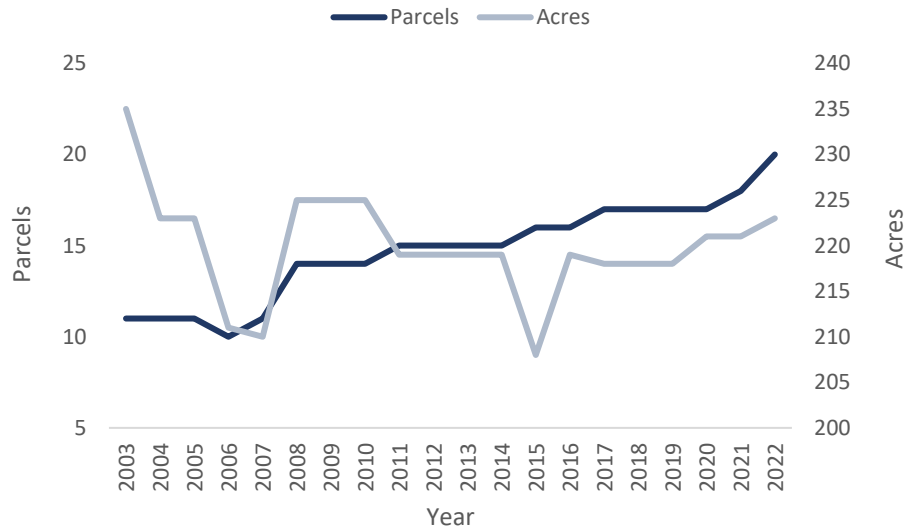
Figures 8-2 through Figure 8-4 illustrate the change in parcels and acres for residential, agricultural, and forest lands from 2003 through 2022 in the Village of Birchwood.

Figure 8-2: Residential Assessment 2003-2022



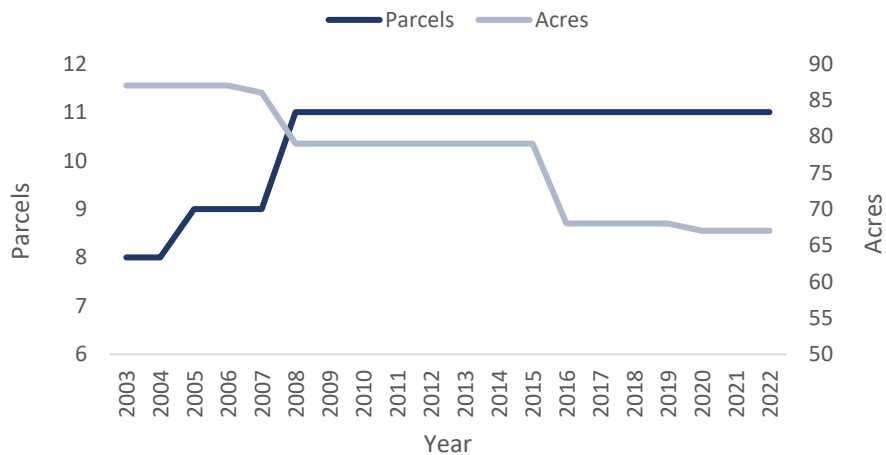
Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 8-3: Agricultural Assessment 2003-2022



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 8-4: Forest Assessment 2003-2022



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

ZONING

Zoning is a tool used by the Village of Birchwood to regulate how land may be used and developed within the community. Zoning divides a community into specific zoning districts and regulates uses, density, and dimensions of development allowed in each area. Districts are designed to separate incompatible uses and promote a mix of compatible uses.

The Village of Birchwood has its own zoning ordinance which includes two legally adopted parts: the zoning map and text.

The text of the zoning ordinance describes uses that are allowed in each district, dimensional standards (such as lot size, setbacks, building height) and other development standards (such as parking, signage, landscaping, and stormwater management). The authority, process, and standards for granting different types of zoning approval are described in the ordinance.

The current village zoning districts are listed below and shown on Map 8-3.

- **R-1 Single Family Residential District** - Intended to provide a quiet, pleasant, and relatively low density living area protected from excessive traffic and nuisances, such as noise, odors, vibration and uses.
- **R-2 Multiple Family Residence District** - Intended to provide a living environment similar in all respects to the R-1 district, although with a higher population density and greater diversity of housing types.
- **RD Rural Development District**
- **PUD Planned Unit Development District** - Intended to permit developments that will over a period of time be enhanced by coordinated area site planning, diversified location of structures and/or mixing of compatible uses.
- **CBD Central Business District** - Intended to provide for the orderly and appropriate regulations to ensure compatibility of the diverse uses typical of the "downtown" area without inhibiting the potential for maximum development of commercial, cultural, entertainment and other urban activities which contribute to its role as the "center" of the village.
- **C-1 Community Business District** - Intended to provide for individual or small groups of retail and customer service establishments. Generally located away from the traditional Central Business District and provides such amenities as increased open space and off-street parking and loading facilities, making such retail centers more compatible with the character of adjacent residential districts.
- **I-S Specialized Industrial District** - Intended to provide an aesthetically attractive working environment exclusively for and conducive to the development and protection of offices, research and development institutions, and certain specialized manufacturing establishments, all of a non-nuisance type.
- **I-1 General Industrial District** - Intended to provide a place for all industrial activities, as well as wholesale and research establishments, where interference between industrial activities on the one hand and commercial and residential activities on the other is minimized.
- **C-S Conservancy District** - Intended to preserve and perpetuate in an open state certain areas, such as, but not limited to, lakes and waterways, wetlands and marshes, floodplains and streambeds, woodlands and other areas of aesthetic value which, because of their unique physical features, are deemed desirable and functional as natural drainageways and water retention areas, natural habitat for plant and animal life, green belts and other multiple purpose uses beneficial to the community.

REDEVELOPMENT AND SMART GROWTH AREAS

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law requires local communities to explore and plan for redevelopment options such as infill housing, brownfield sites, and obsolete buildings. Local communities are also responsible for identifying potential “smart growth areas” or areas with existing infrastructure and services in place, where development and redevelopment can be directed. These areas may also include developing land contiguous to existing development that will be developed at densities that will have relatively low public service costs.

The plan specifically identifies areas in the Village of Birchwood in need of redevelopment.

FUTURE LAND USE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The future land use development strategy for the Village of Birchwood is based on several components. Early in the planning process, surveys were distributed to all landowners in the village; the results of these surveys assisted the village planning committee in defining community issues and opportunities. A series of goals and objectives were developed which provided the direction for development of a preferred future land use scenario. These tools were utilized in conjunction with GIS analysis of existing environmental, infrastructure, and transportation conditions to determine the most appropriate locations for future growth and development. Finally, growth forecasts based on the projections found in the Issues and Opportunities and Housing elements provided the means to assess future needs related to land use. The combination of public involvement, assessment of conditions, and expected future needs led to the development of a future land use map, recommendations, policies, programs, and actions.

EXPECTED FUTURE TRENDS IN THE VILLAGE OF BIRCHWOOD

- A. The year-round population of the Village of Birchwood will continue to rise.
- B. The number of seasonal residents and tourists is expected to increase.
- C. Future industrial development may be accommodated by the creation of an industrial park.
- D. Commercial growth will continue at the current rate. New commercial development will likely be in or in close proximity to the Village of Birchwood.
- E. Increased traffic on village streets and county and state highways to accommodate more residents and visitors.
- F. More lake users resulting in a more intensive recreational use of Birch Lake.
- G. Land prices and taxes will continue to rise.
- H. Seasonal housing units will continue to be converted to year-round permanent residences.

- I. Home-based business and telecommuting will become more prevalent allowing more people the flexibility to live in rural areas such as the Village of Birchwood.
- J. There will be no significant expansion of infrastructure into the Village of Birchwood within the next 20 years.
- K. Water quality concerns will increase due to increased development.
- L. The village will implement a TIFF District throughout the village affording accommodation of new residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

GROWTH FORECASTS

Future land use activities and their resulting change to the landscape over the next 20-year period are difficult to predict. Changes in the economy, natural disasters, and the overall change in year-round residents are some of the factors that will influence how land use activities may change in the future. Projected future land use change for the period of 2022 to 2042 has been developed to assist in predicting future development activities relating to residential, commercial, manufacturing, and agricultural land use (Table 8-2). These future land use demand estimates are largely dependent on current trends and project and should only be utilized for planning purposes in combination with other indicators of land use demand.

Table 8-2: Projected Land Use Demand 2022-2042

Land Use	2022	2027	2032	2037	2042
Residential	58.0	58.1	57.6	57.2	56.7
Commercial	28.0	30.2	34.1	37.4	41.5
Manufacturing	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0
Agricultural	223.0	223.3	227.0	231.0	235.3

Source: Northwest Regional Planning Commission

FUTURE LAND USE

As part of the overall comprehensive planning process, the identification of issues, opportunities, and desires of citizens and property owners of the village assisted in developing a future land use scenario covering a 20-year planning horizon. The future land use map found in the comprehensive plan shows broad land use categories and highlights areas of growth and change. It is intended to assist the village in directing land use activity to areas best suited for development and is based on background data, future projections, local issues and opportunities, natural resource constraints, and public input.

The goals, objectives, and actions of the comprehensive plan include specific statements or references to promoting future land use categories, the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services, and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures. In implementing the comprehensive plan, redevelopment of land versus new development of greenfields is encouraged, where applicable.

The future land use map depicts areas for future development. Over the planning period, it is possible that with time and trends, future proposed developments may create shifts in the future land use map. As a result of these potential changes, this comprehensive plan may be amended to reflect those changes. Amendments to the plan to allow for changes due to trends and proposed developments should follow the recommended amendment process established within this plan.

The future land use classification system is as follows:

Residential

Residential uses may include single-family and multi-family dwellings.

Single-Family Residential: Single-family residential dwellings on standard village lots.

Multi-Family Residential: Multi-family and multi-story units, including town houses, apartments, and duplexes.

Commercial

Commercial uses may include retail sales establishments, restaurants, hotels/motels, and service stations, or other future commercial uses.

Government/Institutional

Government/Institutional uses may include government-owned buildings and offices, wells and lift stations, fire stations, public hospitals and health care facilities, day care centers, public schools, colleges and educational research lands, lands of fraternal organizations (BSA, VFW, etc.), cemeteries, churches, and other religious facilities.

Park/Recreation

Current and future park and recreational lands, including golf courses, boat launches, tennis courts, and campgrounds.

Agriculture

Suitable lands allocated for future agricultural uses, including active and idle crop and pasture lands and residences associated with agricultural uses.

Industrial

Industrial uses may include manufacturing and processing, wholesaling, warehousing and distribution, and similar activities.

Utility

Utility uses such as gas, electric, and other related uses.

Rural Development

Suitable lands for residences on large-lot agricultural, open lands, or forestry parcels.

LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives and action steps has been developed to assist the village with existing and future land use activities.

Goal: Implement a coordinated land use plan for the village.

Objective 1: Guide land use recognizing available resources and village goals and objectives.

Periodically review ordinances to promote highest and best use of land in the village.

Provide and enforce standards for housing rehabilitation.

Review shoreland zoning ordinances for minimum building standards.

Zone development areas for compatibility with existing adjacent uses.

Work to change and/or eliminate spot zoning.

Objective 2: Encourage responsible development of undeveloped/underdeveloped lands and/or vacant lots within the village.

Encourage rezoning to allow in-fill development on existing vacant lots.

Review current ordinances to change dimensional requirements of lots in an effort to potentially combine lots and make them more buildable.

Inventory existing and potential, park and recreational resources and analyze for projected needs of the village.

Map and protect drainage corridors in the village to aid in management of stormwater runoff.

Develop agricultural and erosion control programs that are targeted to assist private landowners.

Map 8-1: Existing Land Use

Map 8-2: Future Land Use

Map 8-3: Zoning

9: IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The overall success of a comprehensive plan and its initiatives is in the plan's implementation. The comprehensive plan outlines the village's growth and development philosophy and provides a strategy for attaining the desired future conditions. This element of the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan outlines the sequence of activities or actions required in order to fulfill the village's goals and objectives.

CONSISTENCY AND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law (66.1001 Wisconsin Statutes) identifies a series of actions and procedures that must be consistent with the governmental unit's comprehensive plan.

Within this Implementation element, it is required to "describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the comprehensive plan." As a result of the comprehensive plan being developed in a coordinated and simultaneous effort, the planning process ensured that the development and review of each element is consistent with the others; and based on that analysis, there are no known inconsistencies between the planning elements. In the future, as plan amendments occur, it is important that the plan commission and village board both conduct consistency reviews to ensure the document continues to represent an integrated approach to planning.

Beginning on January 1, 2010, implementation of zoning, subdivision regulation, and official map ordinances must be consistent with the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan. "Consistent with" means furthers or does not contradict the goals, objectives, and policies contained in the comprehensive plan.

PLAN ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT REQUIREMENTS

Chapter 66.1001(4) of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law establishes the procedures for adoption or amendment of the comprehensive plan. The village must comply with the following five steps before its comprehensive plan becomes effective.

Public Participation Plan (66.1003)(4)(a)

The adoption of a written public participation plan designed to foster public participation in the development or amendment of a comprehensive plan.

Resolution Recommending Adoption (66.1003)(4)(b)

The village plan commission may recommend the adoption or amendment of a comprehensive plan only by adopting a resolution by a majority vote of the entire commission.

Public Hearing (66.1003)(4)(d)

Before an ordinance can be enacted adopting the comprehensive plan, the village must hold at least one public hearing at which the proposed ordinance is discussed. A Class 1 notice of the hearing must be published at least 30 days prior to the hearing. Written notice must also be provided to:

1. An operator who has obtained, or applied for a nonmetallic mining permit under 295.12(3)(d), Wisconsin Statutes.
2. A person who has registered a marketable nonmetallic mineral deposit under s. 295.20, Wisconsin Statutes.
3. Any other property owner or leaseholder who has an interest in property pursuant to which the person may extract nonmetallic mineral resources, if the property owner or leaseholder requests in writing that the local governmental unit provide the property owner or leaseholder notice of the hearing.
4. Property owners that have filed a request for written notice under Section 66.1001(6), Wisconsin Statutes.

Adoption of the Plan by Ordinance (66.1003)(4)(c)

In order for the comprehensive plan to take effect, the village must enact an ordinance that adopts or amends the plan. The ordinance must be passed by a majority vote of the village board.

Comprehensive Plan Distribution (66.1003)(4)(b)

One copy of an adopted comprehensive plan, or of an amendment to such a plan, shall be sent to all of the following:

1. Every governmental body that is located in whole or in part within the boundaries of the local governmental unit.
2. The clerk of every local governmental unit that is adjacent to the local governmental unit that is the subject of the plan that is adopted or amended.
3. The regional planning commission in which the local governmental unit is located.
4. The public library that serves the area in which the local governmental unit is located.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration no longer archiving copies of local comprehensive plans. However, it does still maintain a record of adoption dates for communities that have adopted/amended/updated plans.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan is intended to help guide growth and development decisions. The plan is not an inflexible or static set of rules. Rather, it is fluid, dynamic, and responsive to the changing needs of the community. The plan is not an attempt to predict the future, rather it is an attempt to record the fundamental community values and philosophies that citizens of the Village of Birchwood share and to use them as benchmarks in future decisions concerning growth and development throughout the village.

The plan is intended to be used by the village plan commission, village board, and citizens in reviewing all future land use and development proposals. In the examination of future planning-related issues, careful consideration should be taken to ensure that the proposed activity is consistent with the vision and desires expressed in the plan. The plan's goals, objectives, and actions are intended to provide a general framework and direction in making land use, and other planning-related decisions. Where the impact of a proposed development is minimal, the evaluation may simply be a determination of whether or not the plan provides relevant direction and whether the requested action is in conformance with the plan. Development proposals with significant potential impacts will require a more detailed analysis to determine consistency.

FUTURE AMENDMENTS OR PLAN UPDATES

The Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan was designed with a twenty-year vision (2023-2043). However, this comprehensive plan should be considered a “living document,” responsive to changing conditions and opportunities and challenges. Updates to a long-range plan such as this one is inevitable as changes in development patterns, economic conditions, social values, or other factors may require that the plan be revised in order to remain consistent with the current situation. The plan also contains background narrative and statistical data which needs to be periodically revised to remain current. The plan’s projections may also need to be revised in response to changing demographics, social values, or economic variables.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law requires that the plan be reviewed and updated at least once every ten years. However, it is recommended that the plan be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure accuracy and relevance and to evaluate progress toward attainment of plan goals and objectives. A more formal plan update is recommended at least once every 10 years to examine and adjust statistical data, projections, plan narrative, goals, objectives, mapping, actions, and implementation mechanisms. The update of statistical data should coincide with the release of US Decennial Census information.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

As part of the comprehensive planning process, a number of goals, objectives, and actions were developed that provide a general framework for attaining the village’s long-range vision. These statements established the benchmarks on which the plan was created and provide a means of assessing and evaluating plan progress in the future. Many of the objectives and actions can be accomplished in the short term, while some will take longer to accomplish.

It is required to include a mechanism to measure the village’s progress toward achieving all aspects of the comprehensive plan. The task of developing a measurement tool to gauge the outcome of plan objectives and actions was accomplished by the development of an implementation timeframe for the identified actions. These timeframes will provide guidance to the plan commission and village board on when specific actions were to have been initiated. Based on the timeframes, the plan commission can then measure the progress of achieving implementation of the comprehensive plan. The following tables, organized by plan element, provide a detailed work plan and timeline for the Village of Birchwood to complete as part of overall plan implementation. Headings used in the tables are defined as follows:

Goal: A broad statement of a desired end state toward which objectives are directed.

Objectives: Provide the measurable and attainable end towards which specific actions are directed.

Actions: Specific tasks or projects that must be completed in order to achieve the plan’s goals and objectives.

Key Group for Implementation: The group responsible for taking the lead on the specified action.

Timeframe: Identifies the order, or sequence of the action. Many actions identified in the tables are continuous or ongoing tasks that do not have an implementation target date.

Housing

GOAL: ADEQUATE RANGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE VARIED NEEDS OF EXISTING AND FUTURE RESIDENTS.			
Objectives	Actions	Key Groups for Implementation	Timeframe
1. Encourage maintenance of existing housing.	<i>Utilize the existing community development block grant funds and apply to the state for more funds as needed.</i>	Village Board/ NWRPC	Ongoing
	<i>Provide community outreach on available affordable housing down payment and home repair assistance programs.</i>	Village Board/ NWRPC	Ongoing
	<i>Aggressively enforce housing ordinances and codes to encourage property owners to upgrade and maintain property.</i>	Village Board	Immediate
	<i>Enforce public safety and welfare ordinances.</i>	Fire and Police Departments	Immediate
	<i>Address ordinances regarding junk cars, debris, mowing, etc., to ensure compliance.</i>	Police Department/ Village Board	Immediate
	<i>Work with Washburn Co. to cooperate with building inspections/inspectors.</i>	Village Building Inspector/ State Commercial Building Inspector/ Plan Commission	Ongoing
2. Support the development of equitable and attainable housing opportunities.	<i>Encourage “in-fill” building on existing vacant lots in the village.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Work to obtain infrastructure grants and loans to encourage development.</i>	Village Board/ Washburn County/	Ongoing
	<i>Encourage conversion of agricultural land in the village to residential development.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Expand infrastructure to developable areas of the village to encourage new housing.</i>	Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Review housing ordinances to identify provisions that constrain housing or unnecessarily increase the cost of building.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	As needed
	<i>Support federal, state, and local funding opportunities to develop low-income and senior housing in the village.</i>	Village Board/ NWRPC	Ongoing

	<i>Work with developers to create affordable housing and senior living opportunities in the village.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	Ongoing
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NWRPC = Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Transportation

GOAL: SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS, WHICH ACCOMMODATE THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS.			
Objectives	Actions	Key Groups for Implementation	Timeframe
1. Work to provide transportation means for the village elderly for medical/dental appointments and shopping.	<i>Contact nearby municipalities and/or medical facilities for shuttle bus-sharing opportunities.</i>	Chamber of Commerce/ Business Organizations/ Washburn Co. ARDC	Ongoing
2. Support enhancement and maintenance of Tuscobia and Ice Age Trails.	<i>Work with local snowmobile/ATV/biking clubs to improve, maintain, and advertise trails.</i>	Chamber of Commerce/ Business Organizations	Ongoing
	<i>Identify (via signage) and expand existing bicycle, walking, and jogging trails.</i>	Public Works/ Washburn County and/or Federal Agencies	2023-2030
3. Continue to maintain high quality of local roads.	<i>Follow village’s five-year road improvement plan.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	Ongoing
4. Encourage building of additional local roads and/or sidewalks as needed to meet future housing needs of the village.	<i>Add sidewalks on residential streets as needed. (Example: sidewalks that carry school traffic.)</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	As needed
	<i>Designate funds for future road planning and construction.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	2023-2030
	<i>Establish TIF (or similar) funding for infrastructure improvements.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2023-2043
5. Reduce parking congestion on Main Street.	<i>Create parking spaces on side streets abutting Main St. and additional areas off Main St. behind businesses.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	2030

ADRC = Aging and Disability Resource Center

Utilities and Community Facilities

GOAL: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE FACILITIES AND SERVICES, WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERALL WELL-BEING OF THE VILLAGE.			
Objectives	Actions	Key Groups for Implementation	Timeframe
1. Maintain enhance and/or expand existing public facilities within or shared by the village.	<i>Enhance and/or develop recreational trails and/or trail accesses for public use.</i>	Local Clubs/ Private Landowners/ Gov't. Agencies	Ongoing
	<i>Establish assisted living facility and/or nursing home to serve the village and surrounding area.</i>	Developers/ Village Board	2023-2043
	<i>Maintain village parks and provide additional parks as population expands.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Renovate or replace the Village Hall.</i>	Village Board	2023-2043
2. Protect the health, safety, and public welfare of the village.	<i>Participate in the 5-year update of the Washburn County All Hazards Mitigation Plan.</i>	Village President/ Village Board	Every 5 Years
	<i>Maintain the Village of Birchwood Emergency Operations Plan.</i>	Plan Commission	Review Annually
3. Enhance and expand protection and safety services, as the population requires.	<i>Maintain open communication with county and state law enforcement agencies to promote cooperation and provide complete coverage of area.</i>	Police Department/ Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Provide necessary facilities and funds for ambulance and fire department to meet the needs of the growing population.</i>	BFCESD/ Police Committee/ Village Board	Ongoing
4. Coordinate building and sharing of community facilities with adjoining jurisdictions whenever possible.	<i>Support and encourage a health care facility in the Birchwood area by providing economic and/or land use incentives.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2023-2043
	<i>Look into funding opportunities with adjoining towns for a Birchwood Area Community Center.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2023-2043
	<i>Contact adjoining towns and inventory their community facilities for future sharing possibilities.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2023-2043

5. Maintain and expand public facilities as necessary to provide maximum benefit to the village.	<i>Expand the water supply and sewerage plant to accommodate growth.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	As Needed
	<i>Enlarge the storm drainage system to incorporate areas in the village not currently served.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	2023-2043
	<i>Drill additional well(s) as needed.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	As Needed
	<i>Reconstruct the tennis/pickleball court to be handicap accessible.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2024
6. Establish and maintain high quality parks, open space, and recreational services.	<i>Develop a local outdoor recreation plan.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2024
	<i>Incorporate the adopted Village of Birchwood Outdoor Recreation Plan as an attachment into the Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2024 and Ongoing
	<i>Review and update the Village of Birchwood Outdoor Recreation Plan every 5 years.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	Ongoing

BFCESD = Birchwood Four Corners Emergency Services District

Natural, Agricultural, & Cultural Resources

GOAL: PROTECT, CONSERVE, AND MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY THROUGHOUT THE VILLAGE.			
Objectives	Actions	Key Groups for Implementation	Timeframe
1. Protect and monitor the water supply.	<i>Gather existing information on groundwater resources to plan for safe water supply.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Inventory and map potential contaminant sources within the recharge area of the village wells.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Recommend the village enforces the wellhead protection ordinance.</i>	Village Board	Ongoing
2. Limit effect of practices that have a detrimental impact on water and air resources.	<i>Identify the location and impact of large factory farms on the village.</i>	DNR/Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Work with adjoining towns to guide placement of factory farms.</i>	Adjoining Towns/ Plan Commission/ Village Board	Ongoing
3. Maintain and enhance the quality of lake/river environments.	<i>Work with FEMA to accurately identify floodplain around Little and Big Birch Lakes.</i>	Village Board/ FEMA	Ongoing
	<i>Monitor and control weed problems on Birch Lake.</i>	Village Board/ Lake Association	Annually

	<i>Update shoreland zoning ordinances.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board	2023-2025
	<i>Explore ways to prevent the introduction of invasive species in area lakes.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board/DNR Washburn County	Ongoing
	<i>Continue to have a relationship with the lake association.</i>	Village Board	Ongoing
	<i>Consider adoption of a slow-no wake zone ordinance on Little Birch Lake.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board/DNR	2023-2025
4. Encourage healthful living conditions within the village.	<i>Contain noise pollution in village through ordinance enforcement.</i>	Police Department	Ongoing
	<i>Regulate burning within the village limits.</i>	Village Board	As Needed
5. Support efforts for community beautification and preservation.	<i>Preserve historic buildings in the village.</i>	Village Board/ Historical Society	As Needed
	<i>Support beautification efforts of Hwy. 48 and Main St. through plantings, maintenance, and upkeep.</i>	Public Works/ Chamber of Commerce	As Needed

FEMA = Federal Emergency Management Agency
 DNR = Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Economic Development

GOAL: PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT PROVIDES FOR A HEALTHY, DIVERSIFIED, AND GROWING ECONOMY.			
Objectives	Actions	Key Groups for Implementation	Timeframe
1. Attract new business ventures and industry to the village.	<i>Enhance Hwy. 48 and Main St. through the Street Beautification Program.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board/ Chamber of Commerce	2023-2043
	<i>Provide incentives through grants or loans to assist business in relocation, expansion and/or construction.</i>	Village Board/ Private Funding Entities	Ongoing
	<i>Anticipate need for industrial park and acquire land.</i>	Village Board/ WCEDC	2023-2043
2. Work to retain existing business and industry and encourage expansion.	<i>Promote opportunities to capitalize on recreational activity and tourism.</i>	Chamber of Commerce/ Clubs/ Businesses/ WCTA	Ongoing
	<i>Promote signage and/or advertising at area campgrounds, resorts, trails, and boat landings.</i>	Area Clubs/ Federal, State, and Local Units of Government	Ongoing
	<i>Provide for economic growth by enhancing skills of labor force and encouraging relocation into area.</i>	Plan Commission/ Village Board/Chamber/ UW Extension/NTC	Ongoing

3. Support area associations, organizations, and businesses in their efforts to promote tourism and economic development.	<i>Provide space and facilities for local activities as appropriate.</i>	Village Board	As needed
	<i>Participate in community beautification efforts through maintenance of green space and funding of projects as appropriate.</i>	Public Works/ Village Board	As needed

WCEDC = Washburn County Economic Development Corporation

WCTA = Washburn County Tourism Association

NTC = Northwoods Technical College

Intergovernmental Cooperation

GOAL: PROMOTE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADJACENT AND OVERLAPPING JURISDICTIONS.			
Objectives	Actions	Key Groups for Implementation	Timeframe
1. Maintain fair, equitable and stable funding of shared services (ambulance, fire, & police) with neighboring jurisdictions.	<i>Support the Birchwood Four Corners Emergency Services District.</i>	Village Board	Ongoing
2. Cooperate with adjoining jurisdictions to better manage lake issues.	<i>Invite other municipalities and associations to explain their enforcement methods to the village and adjoining jurisdictions.</i>	Plan Commission	2023-2025
	<i>Develop ordinances to coordinate with adjoining jurisdictions.</i>	Village Board	2023-2025
3. Identify potential conflicts between the village and other governmental units and attempt to resolve them.	<i>Review adjoining and overlapping comprehensive plans for conflicts.</i>	Plan Commission	2023-2025
	<i>Provide protocol for means of communication between the village and other governmental units.</i>	Plan Commission	2023-2025
	<i>Provide a protocol for a conflict resolution process.</i>	Plan Commission	2023-2025
4. Work with adjoining municipalities to ensure cooperation with regard to possible expansion (annexation) of the village.	<i>Create a task force or meet jointly with established committees.</i>	Plan Commission	Ongoing
	<i>Establish complimentary zoning and land use for land that crosses jurisdictional boundaries.</i>	Plan Commission	As needed

<p>5. Cooperate with the State of Wisconsin to assure safety at the intersection of State Highway 48 and County Highway D.</p>	<p><i>Maintain proper signage identifying busy intersections in the village.</i></p>	<p>Public Works/ Village Board</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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Land Use

<p>GOAL: IMPLEMENT A COORDINATED LAND USE PLAN FOR THE VILLAGE.</p>			
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Actions</p>	<p>Key Groups for Implementation</p>	<p>Timeframe</p>
<p>1. Guide land use recognizing available resources and village goals and objectives.</p>	<p><i>Periodically review ordinances to promote highest and best use of land in the village.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Village Board</p>	<p>As needed</p>
	<p><i>Provide and enforce standards for housing rehabilitation.</i></p>	<p>Village Board/ NWRPC</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p><i>Review shoreland zoning ordinances for minimum building standards.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Village Board</p>	<p>2023-2025</p>
	<p><i>Zone development areas for compatibility with existing adjacent uses.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Village Board</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p><i>Work to change and/or eliminate spot zoning.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Village Board</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2. Encourage responsible development of undeveloped/underdeveloped lands and/or vacant lots within the village.</p>	<p><i>Encourage rezoning to allow in-fill development on existing vacant lots.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Village Board</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p><i>Review current ordinances to change dimensional requirements of lots in an effort to potentially combine lots and make them more buildable.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Village Board</p>	<p>2023-2025</p>
	<p><i>Inventory existing and potential park and recreational resources and analyze for projected needs of the village.</i></p>	<p>Public Works/ Village Board</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p><i>Map and protect drainage corridors in the village to aid in management of stormwater runoff.</i></p>	<p>Public Works/ Village Board/ Plan Commission</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p><i>Develop agricultural and erosion control programs that are targeted to assist private landowners.</i></p>	<p>Plan Commission/ Washburn County</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

NWRPC = Northwest Regional Planning Commission

OTHER IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

Extraterritorial Plat Review and Zoning

According to Wisconsin State Statutes, the Village of Birchwood has the ability to institute a process of reviewing and approving extraterritorial plats following Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 236 and implementing extraterritorial zoning following Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 62. These processes would be limited to an area within 1 1/2 miles of the Village of Birchwood's municipal boundary. Over the 20-year planning horizon, the Village of Birchwood may choose to examine and implement one or both of these processes.

Extraterritorial plat review and approval can help a village influence the development patterns of areas outside the municipal boundary that will likely be annexed by the community. In addition, plat review and approval can protect a village's land use near the municipal boundary from conflicting uses that may be developed in the town.

Extraterritorial zoning allows municipalities to adopt a zoning ordinance for an area within 1 1/2 miles of the municipal boundary. Unlike the extraterritorial plat review and approval process, extraterritorial zoning requires the town to approve the municipality's zoning ordinance for that area.

Village of Birchwood Zoning Ordinance

The Village of Birchwood is organized into zoning districts as described in more detail in the land use element. The Village of Birchwood zoning districts are shown on Map 8-3.

Purchase of Development Rights Program

An incentive based, voluntary program with the intent of permanently protecting productive, sensitive, or aesthetic landscapes, yet retaining private ownership and management. A landowner sells the development rights of a parcel of land to a public agency, land trust or unit of government. A conservation easement is recorded on the title of the property that limits development permanently. While the right to develop or subdivide that land is permanently restricted, the landowner retains all other rights and responsibilities associated with that land and can use or sell it for purposes allowed in the easement.

Transfer of Development Rights Program

An incentive based, voluntary program that allows landowners to sell development rights from their land to a developer or other interested party who then can use these rights to increase the density of development at another designated location.

Land Acquisition

A land preservation tool involving the direct purchase of land for the purposes of preservation and protection. This tool should be used in cases where other protective mechanisms fail to meet objectives and/or in cases of high-priority acquisition lands.

Conservation Easement

A legal agreement in which a landowner conveys some of the rights associated with ownership of his/her property to an easement holder. The easement holder may be a governmental unit or a qualified nonprofit organization.

Conservation Subdivision

A site-planning approach that clusters residences in smaller lots to reserve a significant portion of a subdivision for common open space.

Best Management Practices

Best management practices, or BMPs, are practices that are capable of protecting the environment while considering economic factors, availability, technical feasibility, ability to implement, and effectiveness.

Other Adjoining and Overlapping Jurisdictions

The Village of Birchwood encourages early dialog between all adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions as they develop or amend their comprehensive plan. This dialog will ensure that local input and consistency between comprehensive plans is reached. Where inconsistencies are identified and a resolution cannot be reached, future actions can be developed to bring the parties together to address their concerns.

CONCLUSION

The Village of Birchwood Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic and evolving document. Periodic revisions and update of the plan will ensure that it is accurate and consistent with the wishes and desires of the community. Plan recommendations in this document provide the basis for evaluation of development proposals and give the community a means for achieving their vision. The specific action statements are meant to serve as the mechanisms for achieving the goals and objectives, which were defined throughout the planning process. Ultimately the success of the planning process will be measured by the future quality of life experienced by residents and visitors. Overall, the comprehensive plan provides a guide and policy framework for development of the Village of Birchwood that reflects the vision of a desirable community.

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

APPENDIX B: CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

APPENDIX C: PLAYGROUND SHARED USE AGREEMENT