

City of Black River Falls
PLAN COMMISSION – AGENDA

Wednesday – July 24, 2024 – 5:30 PM
City Hall – 101 S. Second Street, Black River Falls, WI

To participate remotely, join Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89449973487?pwd=xaezXC3P7b2omENUM5NCRfxpEEOZUC.1>

Or Dial: 1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 894 4997 3487 Passcode: cityhall

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Consider Certified Survey Map (CSM) submitted by Ethan Remus on behalf of Kaylan Rich for land on Alder Street – Action
4. Consider Certified Survey Map (CSM) submitted by Ethan Remus on behalf of Al Lahmayer for land on Van Buren Street & Rye Bluff Road – Action
5. Comprehensive Plan – existing conditions report
6. Comprehensive Plan – survey questions
7. Comprehensive Plan – scheduling
8. Adjourn

Posted: July 9, 2024

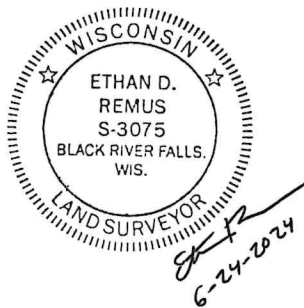
Comments

A- After testing this stake against others within the Block, I have accepted its E-W position as correct, but am not yet convinced in its N-S location, as it seems too far south. This could very well be where it was originally placed, but I would prefer to spend more time examining this before accepting it as a lot corner. Considerable time was spent searching for other stakes along this line. A chainlink fence along the east side of Lots 1 & 2 makes searching a challenge. An old stone and mortar wall along the east side of Lot 5 also made for a challenge. The stone wall was built around the SE Cor of Lot 5; the stones had to be removed to access the stake. I believe the NE Cor of Lot 5 was removed when this wall was built.

B- The Rebar referred to in CSM's 987 and 3950 is bent NW, just off the north edge of a concrete driveway. I computed a location for this corner based on data from CSM 987. The stake at the SE Cor of Lot 6 is perfectly on-line between this point and the stake at the NW Cor of OL 2.

C- The 1" pipe at the SE Cor of Lot 6 is down 9" below ground on an E-W chainlink fence, about 7.8' E of the fence corner. There is a 2" pinched Pipe, presumably set in CSR 779 to mark the NE Cor of Outlot 2, exactly 5.00' west of the 1" pipe, but about a tenth of a foot south of this line. This pipe is down 11" below ground and is 5" south of the fenceline and about 2.8' E of the fence corner.

The length of the E-W lines on the east half of Block 1 are all short. There is a substantial change in elevation between the west and east halves of the block north of lots 6 & 7. This measurement error is consistent with what I would expect from chaining on a steep hill.



JACKSON COUNTY CERTIFIED SURVEY MAP NO. _____

Lot 8 of CSM 1499 and Lot 64 of Rye Bluff Addition, lying in the NW1/4-SE1/4 Sec. 16, T21N, R4W, City of Black River Falls, Jackson County, Wisconsin, for Al Lahmayer

BEARINGS in this survey are based on WicCRS, Jackson County Zone [NAD83(91)], in which the north line of Lot 7 of CSM 1499 bears N82°51'22"W.

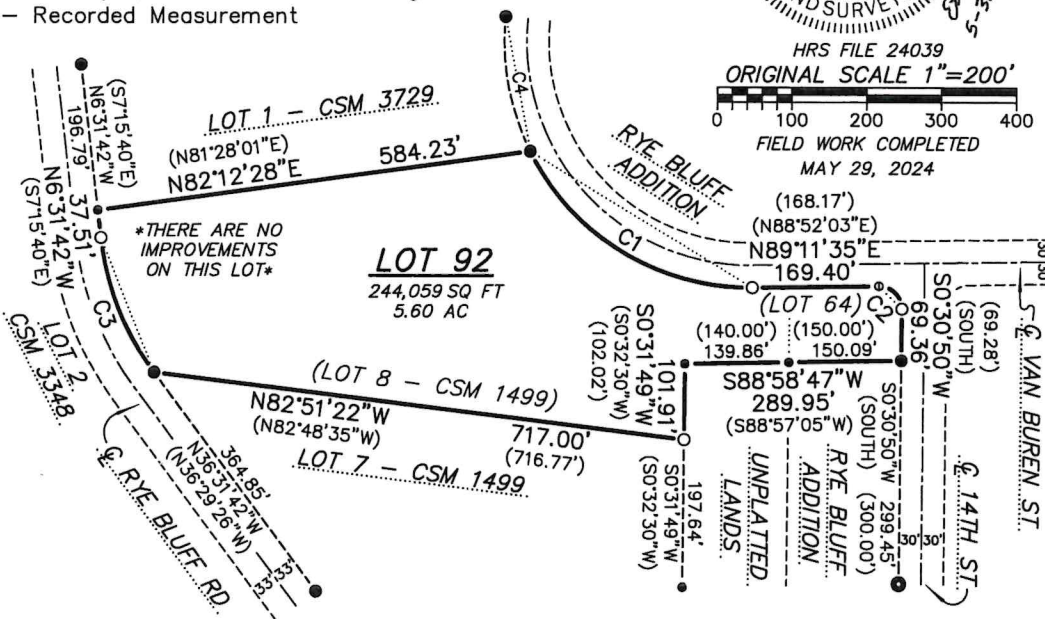
LEGEND

- - Existing 1-1/4" OD Iron Pipe
- - Existing 1" OD Iron Pipe
- - Existing 3/4" Iron Bar
- - Existing 3/4" Rebar
- - Set 1-1/4" OD x 24" Iron Pipe, 1.68 lb/ft, with identification Plug
- () - Recorded Measurement

OWNER:
Lahmayer Trust
Al Lahmayer, Trustee
PO Box 249
Black River Falls, WI



HRS FILE 24039
ORIGINAL SCALE 1"=200'
FIELD WORK COMPLETED
MAY 29, 2024



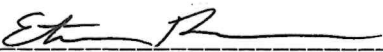
CURVE	RADIUS	CENTRAL ANGLE	CHORD BEARING	CHORD LENGTH	ARC LENGTH	TANGENT BEARING	TANGENT BEARING
C1	330.00'	64°12'52"	S58°41'59"E	350.79'	369.85'	S26°35'33"E	N89°11'35"E
C2	30.26'	91°19'15"	S45°08'47.5"E	43.29'	48.23'	N89°11'35"E	S0°30'50"W
C3	376.26'	30°00'00"	N21°31'42"W	194.77'	197.01'	N36°31'42"W	N6°31'42"W
C4	330.00'	32°20'46"	S10°25'10"E	183.84'	186.30'	S5°45'13"W	S26°35'33"E

SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATE

I, Ethan D. Remus, Professional Land Surveyor, hereby certify that, by the order and under the direction of Al Lahmayer, I have surveyed and mapped Lot 8 of Certified Survey Map (CSM) No. 1499, recorded in Volume 6 of CSM's on Page 284 as Document No. 277077, and Lot 64 of Rye Bluff Addition to the City of Black River Falls, recorded in Plat Cabinet A on Page 123 as Document No. 191791, lying in the Northwest quarter of the Southeast quarter of Section 16 in Township 21 North of Range 4 West, City of Black River Falls, Jackson County, Wisconsin, and that this CSM is a true and correct representation of the exterior boundaries of the land surveyed and that I have fully complied with the provisions of Section 236.34 of the Wisconsin Statutes and Chapter 19, City of Black River Falls Subdivision and Platting Ordinance, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated this 31st day of May, 2024

Approved by the Black River Falls City Council


Ethan D. Remus S-3075
Hurlburt & Remus Surveying, Inc.
W15324 Ellingson Road
Hixton, Wisconsin 54635

Jay Eddy, Mayor

Date

City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan

Existing Conditions Report



Prepared by the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

Under the Direction of the Common Council and Plan Commission

City of Black River Falls Common Council

Jay Eddy – Mayor

Erin Rave – Ward 1 Alderperson

Michael Rave – Ward 1 Alderperson, Council President

Jacob Peloquin – Ward 2 Alderperson

Gary Ammann – Ward 2 Alderperson

Kylee Wussow – Ward 3 Alderperson

Desiree Gearing-Lancaster – Ward 3 Alderperson

Justin Dougherty – Ward 4 Alderperson

Pete Olson – Ward 4 Alderperson

City of Black River Falls Plan Commission

Jay Eddy – Mayor

Michael Rave – Alderperson

Steve Aldach – Member

Randy Eddy – Member

Jared Smith – Member

Anneliese Eddy – Member

Dennis Guenther – Member

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

Jon Bingol – Executive Director

Simon Fichter – Planner

Ken Harwood – Planner

Sarah Ofte – Senior Office Manager

Jack Zabrowski – Senior Planner

Chase Jones – Intern

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Why Plan.....	1
Setting	1
Section I – Existing Conditions.....	3
Issues and Opportunities.....	3
Population Trends and Projections.....	3
Population Characteristics.....	3
Educational Attainment.....	5
Land Use Inventory.....	6
Zoning and Land Use Regulations.....	6
Existing Land Use.....	9
Land Use Trends	9
Housing.....	11
Housing Units by Type and Year Built.....	11
Median Housing Value.....	12
Occupancy Characteristics.....	12
Affordability of Housing.....	13
Housing Tenure	14
Transportation	16
Economic Development	17
Income and Poverty.....	17
Commuting to Work	18
Industry Projections	18
Utilities and Community Facilities.....	20
Utilities Inventory	20
City Facilities and Equipment	21
Intergovernmental Relationships and Coordination	24
Adjacent Governmental Units	24
State Agencies	25
Existing Plans	25
Infrastructure to Support City Success.....	25
Relationship to Other Comprehensive Plan Chapters	26
Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources	27
Agriculture	27
Natural Resources.....	28
Cultural and Historic Resources.....	32

Introduction

The City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan is being prepared under the State of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law contained in Section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. The law was adopted in 1999 and requires that zoning, subdivision regulations, and official mapping within the City must be consistent with a comprehensive plan. To meet the requirements of the planning law a comprehensive plan is being prepared that will consist of two sections: first, an Existing Conditions Report, and second a Goals, Objectives, Policies and Recommendations section.

In developing the City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan, the first step taken was the preparation of an Existing Conditions Report. The report has been compiled to provide detailed background information on the City of Black River Falls, which will be utilized in the planning process. The Existing Conditions Report provides a comprehensive snapshot of the City of Black River Falls in 2020-2023 and provides some insight into the City's future with population, housing, and economic projections. This report will serve as the statistical/data foundation for the City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan.

Why Plan

Planning allows the City of Black River Falls to anticipate and address emerging challenges effectively. Communities are constantly evolving, and planning enables the town to stay ahead of any potential risks or conflicts. By conducting an analysis of current conditions, future trends, and potential risks, the City of Black River Falls can proactively identify and mitigate issues such as population growth, infrastructure needs, environmental impacts, and economic shifts. With a well-crafted plan in place, the City can adapt to changing circumstances with agility and purpose.

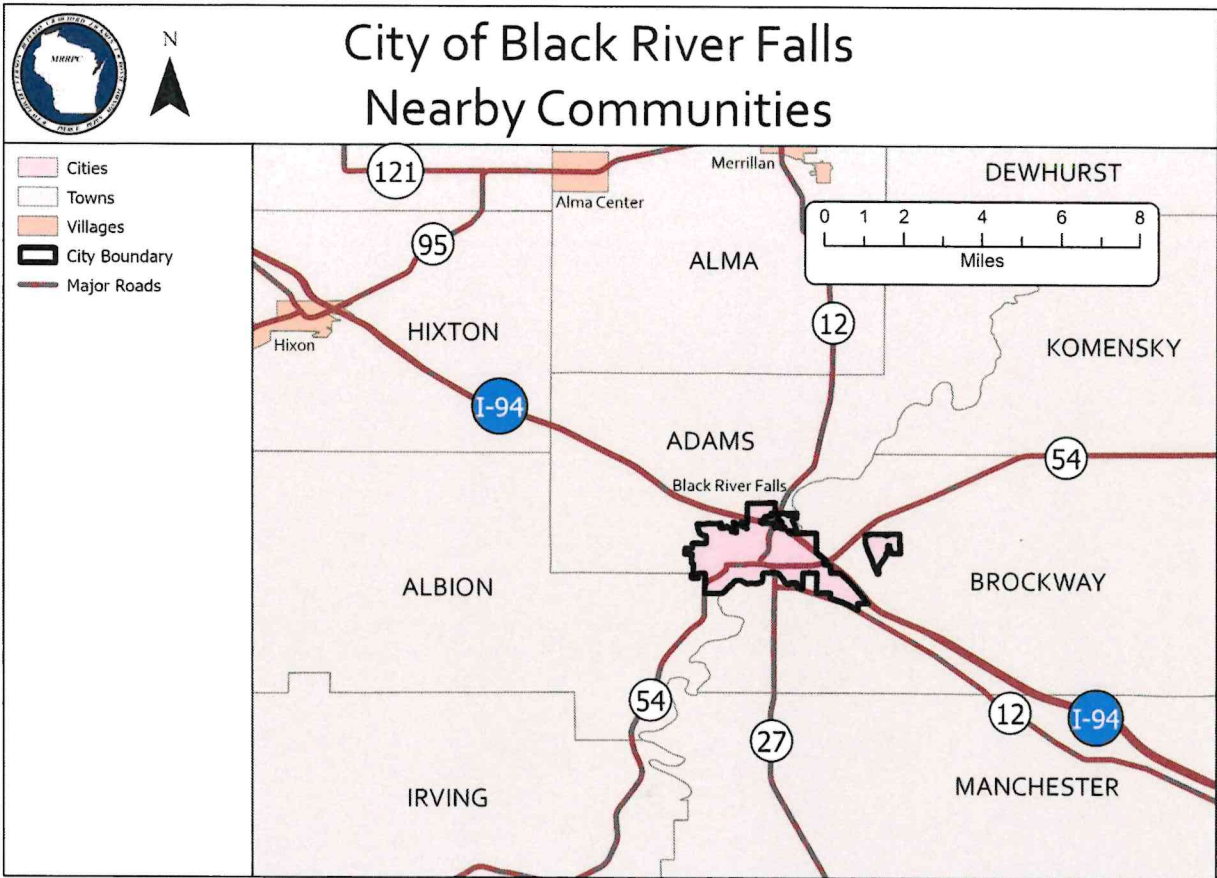
Planning also fosters the creation of a shared vision for the City of Black River Falls. Engaging residents, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholders in the planning process allows for meaningful participation and collaboration. By discussing the perspectives of all of those who become involved, the plan can reflect the aspirations, values, and visions of the entire community. This inclusive approach not only strengthens community bonds but also cultivates a sense of ownership and pride among residents, who can actively contribute to shaping the future of their home.

Long-term planning plays a vital role in achieving sustainable growth and enhancing quality of life in the City of Black River Falls. By considering the relationships between land use, housing, transportation, economic development, utilities and community facilities, intergovernmental relationships, and agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, the plan promotes a comprehensive approach to development. It strives to strike a balance between preserving the City's unique character, protecting its most important resources, and fostering economic vitality. Through carefully crafted policies and strategies, the plan aims to create a harmonious and resilient community where residents can thrive, businesses can succeed, and future generations can enjoy a high quality of life.

Setting

The City of Black River Falls is in central Jackson County, with the Black River going through the City's center. Black River Falls borders the Towns of Adams to the north and west, Brockway to the east, and Albion to the southwest. The Villages of Hixon, Alma Center, and Merrillan are located in the near area to the north and west. The nearest cities to Black River Falls are the City of Sparta, the City of Tomah, the City of La Crosse and the City of Eau Claire. Fort McCoy is 12 miles southeast of Black River Falls.

The County's landscape is dominated by agricultural lands and forested areas. The Black River is the primary natural drainage in the community. The transportation network in the City of Black River Falls includes Interstates, US Highways (USH), State Highways (STH), County Highways (CTH) and City Roads. Interstate 94 runs east and west connecting the City to Milwaukee to the east and the Twin Cities to the west. USH 12/STH 27 runs north-south through the central portion of the community connecting Black River Falls with Eau Claire and Hayward to the north and Tomah to the south. STH 54 running east and west in the central part of the City provides access from USH 53 to STH 80. County highway A is the only county highway in the City.



Section I – Existing Conditions

Issues and Opportunities

This section of the report will provide information on the demographic trends and projections that are taking place in the City of Black River Falls. The information has been gathered from various sources, and when possible, City level data was utilized.

Population Trends and Projections

In 2020, the City had a population of 3,523, which was 95 fewer people than it had in 2000, representing a decrease in population of 3%. During the same time, Jackson County increased in population by 11% and Wisconsin increased in population by 10%. From 2020 to 2040, the City is projected to increase in population by 1% - from 3,523 people to 3,565. Jackson County is projected to increase in population by 10% over the same period, while Wisconsin is projected to increase in population by 10%.

Table 1.1 Population

Year	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
2000	3,618	19,100	5,363,675
2010	3,622	20,449	5,686,986
2020	3,523	21,145	5,893,718
2030	3,725	23,200	6,375,910
2040	3,565	23,290	6,491,635
Percent Change 2000-2020	-3%	11%	10%
Percent Change 2020-2040	1%	10%	10%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Population Projections, US Census 2000 – Table DP1, US Census 2010 and 2020 – Table P1

Population Characteristics

The City of Black River Falls is predominantly White – 86% of residents – which is less than Jackson County (89%) but more than Wisconsin (80%). The largest minority group in the City are American Indians and Alaska Natives, who are 6% of the population, comparable to Jackson County (7%) but much more than Wisconsin (1%). The City is home to the administrative center of the Ho-Chunk Nation, and many Ho-Chunk people live in and near the City, and throughout Jackson County and the wider region. Individuals of two or more races are the next most sizeable group – 5% of the City, which is comparable to Jackson County (4%) and Wisconsin (6%). No other group makes up more than 1% of the City.

The median age of the City is 43 – which is comparable to Jackson County (42) and a bit older than Wisconsin (40). Correspondingly, the proportion of the population over 65 in the City – 26% -- is higher than Jackson County (19%) and Wisconsin (18%). The City also has a smaller proportion of the population under 18 - 20% - compared to Jackson County and Wisconsin (both at 22%). The largest five-year cohorts in the Town are those 60 to 64 (11%), 35 to 39 (11%), and 65 to 69 (10%).

Table 1.2 Race

Race	City of Black River Falls (#)	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
White	3,039	86%	85%	79%
Black or African American	37	2%	2%	6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	213	6%	6%	1%
Asian	12	0%	1%	3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0%	1%	0%
Some Other Race	33	1%	1%	3%
Two or More Races	189	5%	4%	8%
Total	3,523	100%	100%	100%

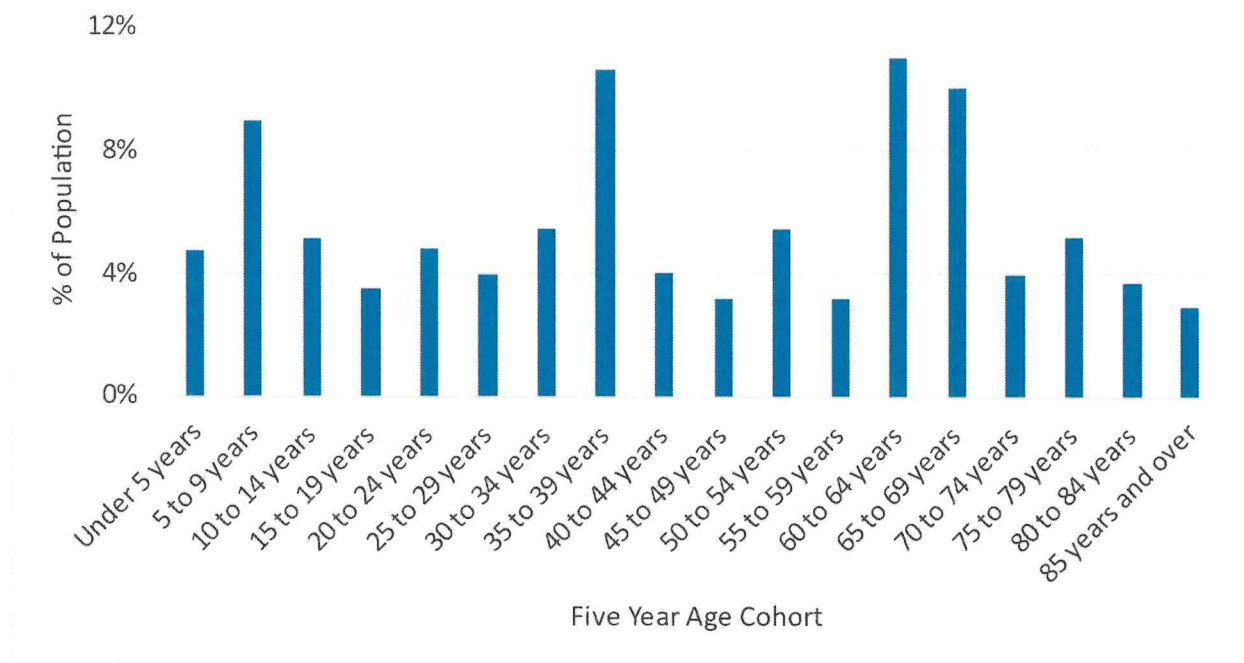
Source: US Census 2020 – Table P2 Race

Table 1.3 Age

Age	City of Black River Falls (#)	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Under 5 years	165	5%	6%	5%
5 to 9 years	313	9%	6%	6%
10 to 14 years	179	5%	6%	7%
15 to 19 years	123	4%	6%	7%
20 to 24 years	167	5%	5%	7%
25 to 29 years	138	4%	6%	6%
30 to 34 years	191	5%	6%	6%
35 to 39 years	372	11%	7%	7%
40 to 44 years	140	4%	5%	6%
45 to 49 years	112	3%	6%	6%
50 to 54 years	190	5%	6%	6%
55 to 59 years	112	3%	7%	7%
60 to 64 years	384	11%	8%	7%
65 to 69 years	351	10%	7%	6%
70 to 74 years	138	4%	5%	5%
75 to 79 years	181	5%	4%	3%
80 to 84 years	129	4%	2%	2%
85 years and over	103	3%	2%	2%
Total population	3,488	100%	100%	100%
Median Age	(X)	43	42	40

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates – S0101 Age and Sex

Chart 1.1 Age by Five Year Cohort



Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates – S0101 Age and Sex

Educational Attainment

Almost all residents of the City of Black River Falls have at least a high school diploma – 97% – which is higher than in Jackson County (92%) and Wisconsin (93%). On the other hand, a fairly small proportion of City residents have at least a bachelor's degree – 19%, comparable to Jackson County (16%) but almost half the proportion of Wisconsin (32%). A notable number of residents have graduate or professional degrees (7%), more than Jackson County (5%) but less than Wisconsin (11%).

Table 1.4 Educational Attainment of Population Over 25

Educational Attainment	City of Black River Falls (#)	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Less than 9th grade	15	1%	2%	2%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	74	3%	6%	5%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1345	53%	44%	30%
Some college, no degree	478	19%	21%	20%
Associate's degree	147	6%	11%	11%
Bachelor's degree	300	12%	11%	21%
Graduate or professional degree	182	7%	5%	11%
High school graduate or higher	2452	97%	92%	93%
Bachelor's degree or higher	482	19%	16%	32%

Source: ACS 2022 – Table S1501 Educational Attainment

Land Use Inventory

To plan future land use for the City of Black River Falls, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the existing land uses in the City. Existing land uses, residential densities, and the supply and demand for land are discussed below.

Zoning and Land Use Regulations

The City of Black River Falls is a zoned City. Jackson County is not comprehensively zoned but does have Floodplain and Shoreland-Wetland Zoning Ordinances. City ordinance divides the City into twelve districts: Central Business District, Highway Business District, Interchange Business District, Shopping Mall District, General Industrial District, Two Family Residential District, Lot Line Residential District, Single Family Residential District, Multi-Family Residential Districts, Mobile Home Park District, and Rural Development District.

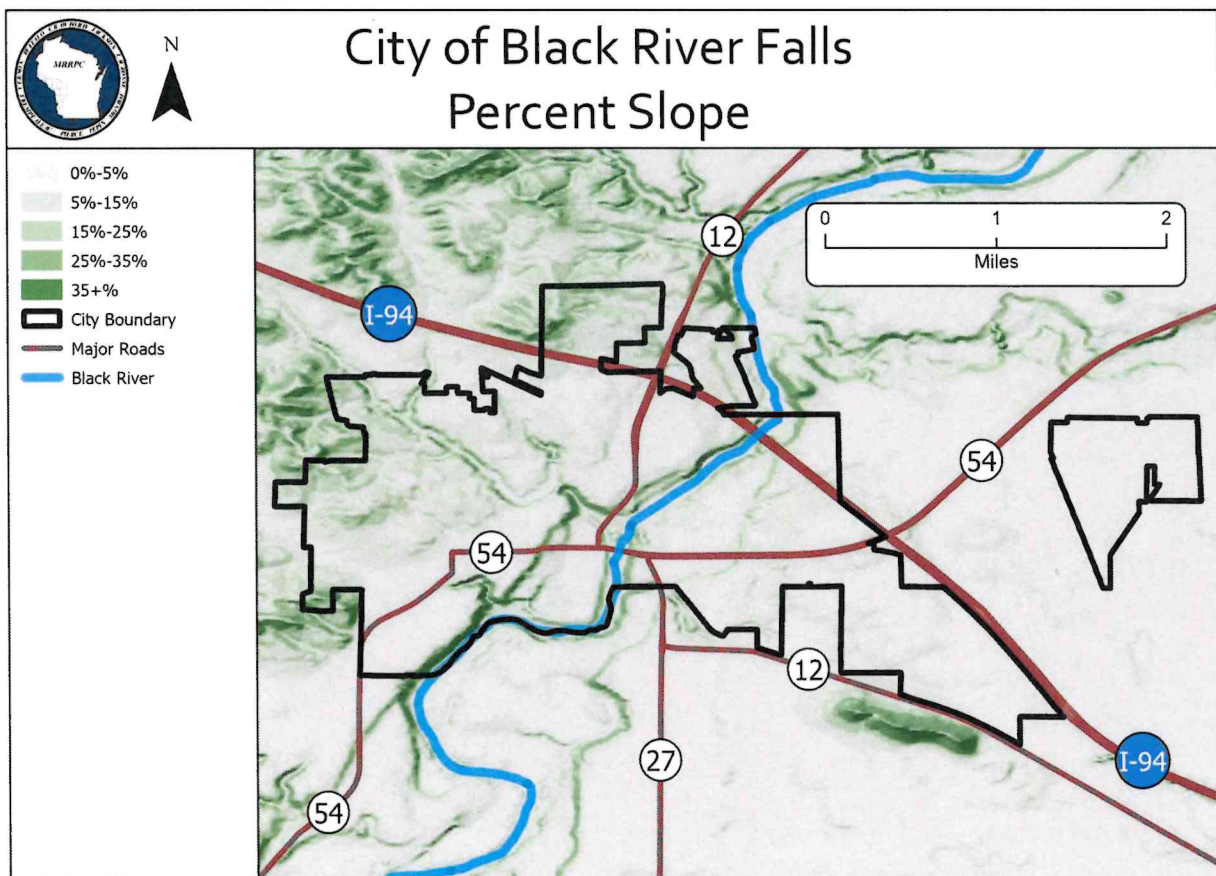
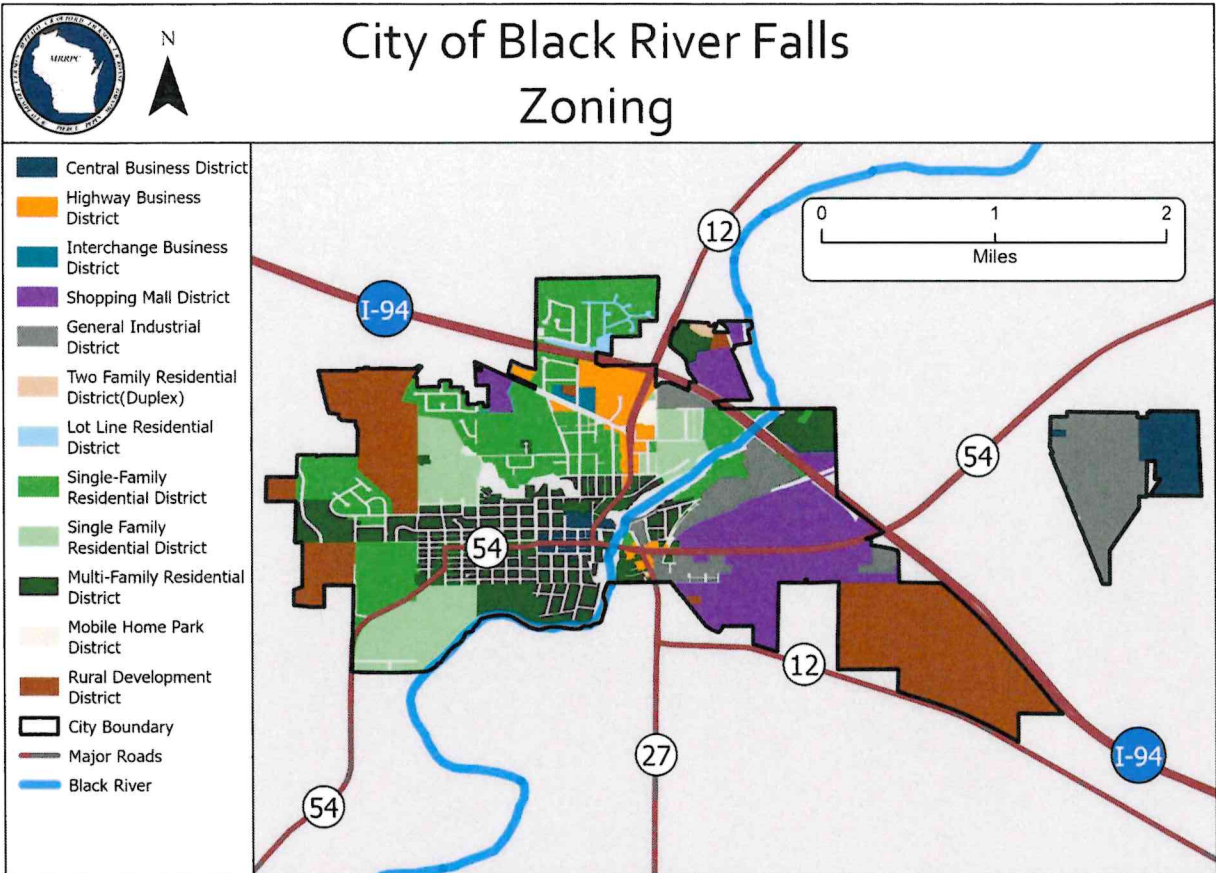
The Commercial Districts contain things such as shops, hospitality services, and financial services. These districts are meant to promote and preserve the economic development and availability of the City.

The Residential Districts are designed to protect residential areas and include provisions for community and recreational services. It sets out permitted and conditional uses for residential properties, including provisions for home occupations, accessory buildings, and various residential facilities. The Commercial District aims to establish locations for a variety of compatible commercial uses, excluding heavy manufacturing and residential development to protect commercial viability and prevent incompatibility issues. It lists permissible commercial activities and conditional uses requiring board approval. The Industrial Districts are specifically designed for industrial use only. This includes manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and other industrial activities. The purpose of these districts are to separate industry from residential areas to minimize conflicts and ensure efficient use of the land.

For almost all situations in all districts, the minimum lot size is 1 acre, with one exception. The minimum lot size for residential construction is 12,750 square ft (0.29 acres) for publicly sewered lots.

Table 1.5 Number of Acres in Each City of Black River Falls District

Zoning Type	Acres
Central Business District	194
Highway Business District	157
Interchange Business District	18
Shopping Mall District	673
General Industrial District	547
Single Family Residential District	887
Single Family Residential District	429
Multi Family Residential District	706
Mobile Home Park District	11
Rural Development District	968
Two Family Residential District (Duplex)	9
Lot Line Residential District	30

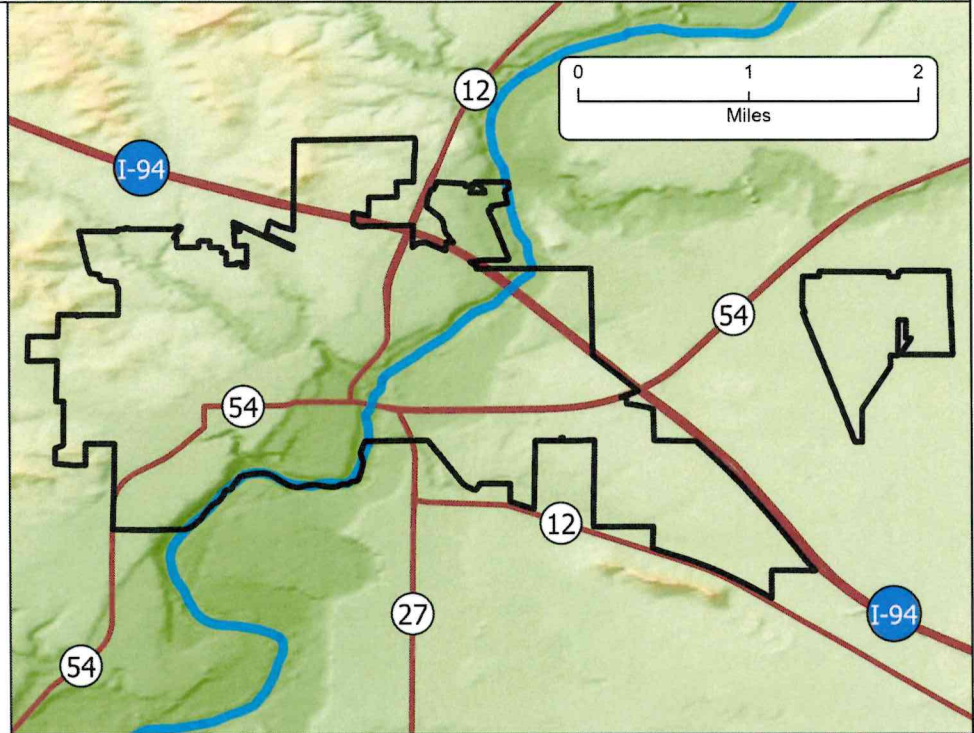




City of Black River Falls Topography

Elevation (ft)

- 1383
- 717
- City Boundary
- Major Roads
- Black River



Existing Land Use

Data from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue regarding land use classifications has been used. It should be noted that the definition and classification of land for these categories can be misleading – for example, many rural residential parcels would be classified as “other”. Nonetheless, imperfect data is better than no data. This data is also useful as it is reported annually, and data from as far back as 2015 is available for comparison, to evaluate trends and changes in land use.

Most land in the City is commercial at 38%, although there are also substantial amounts of residential (23%), forest lands (20%), and manufacturing (12%) uses. Small amounts of agricultural (3%) and undeveloped land (3%) are also in the City, although there is no agricultural forest or other land.

Table 1.6 Land Use

Land Use	Acres 2015	Acres 2023	Percent of Land Use 2023	Change in Acres 2015- 2023	Percent Change 2015- 2023
Residential	176	201	23%	25	14%
Commercial	278	330	38%	52	19%
Manufacturing	116	104	12%	-12	-10%
Agricultural	15	26	3%	11	73%
Undeveloped	60	27	3%	-33	-55%
Agricultural Forest	0	0	0%	0	0%
Forest Lands	176	173	20%	-3	-2%
Other	0	0	0%	0	0%
Total	821	861	100%	40	5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue 2015 and 2023 Statement of Assessment for Jackson County

Land Use Trends

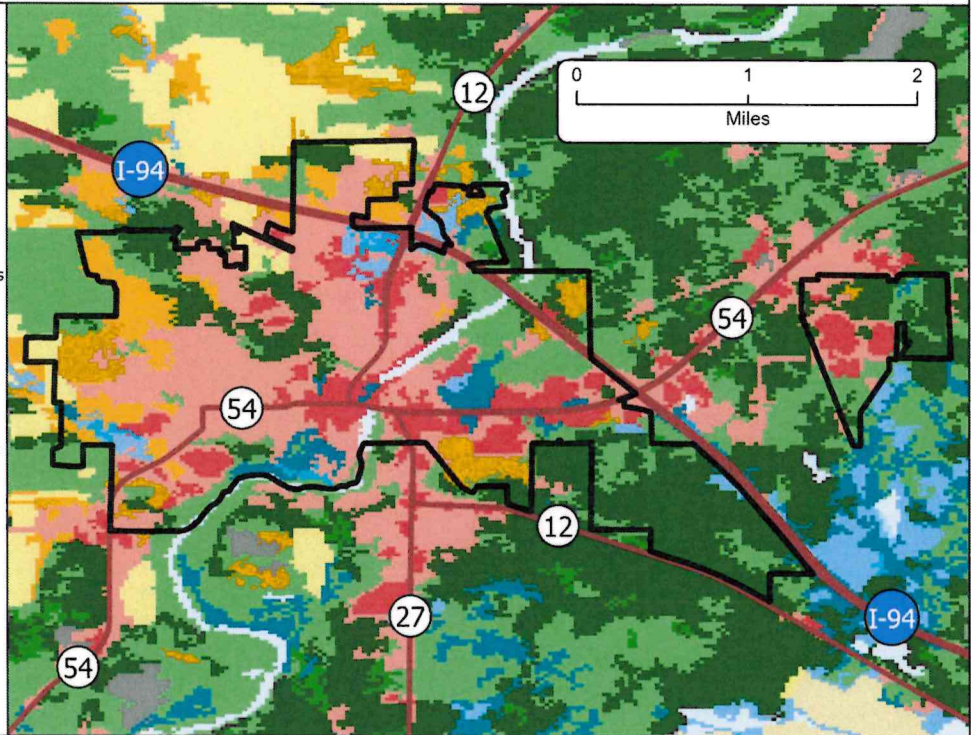
From 2015, the largest percent changes in land use by acres were commercial, which increased by 52 acres, and undeveloped, which decreased by 33 acres. When looking at the percent change, the largest changes were agricultural (73% increase) and undeveloped (55%) decrease. There were also substantial increases in commercial (52 acres, 19% increase) and residential (25 acres, 14%).

Comprehensive plans require a projection of the future needs for residential land. However, it is currently unwise to make such a prediction for the City. This comes back to the issue with the population projections - as notwithstanding changes in average household size and average lot size, future need for residential land use is tied to future population growth. As the future level of population growth is quite unknown at the moment, it is best practice to first come to a consensus and discuss it with the City before making such predictions.



City of Black River Falls Existing Land Use

- Developed, High Intensity
- Developed, Low Intensity
- Crop Rotation
- Cranberries
- Forage Grassland
- Idle Grassland
- Coniferous Forest
- Broad-leaved Deciduous Forest
- Mixed Deciduous/Coniferous Forest
- Open Water
- Floating Aquatic Herbaceous Vegetation
- Emergent/Wet Meadow
- Lowland Scrub/Shrub
- Forested Wetland
- Barren
- Shrubland
- City Boundary
- Major Roads



Housing

Housing Units by Type and Year Built

Homes in the City of Black River Falls are mostly (63%) single-family detached homes. 6% of homes are 2 units, as well as 3 or 4 units. The second biggest category is 20 or more units at 11%. There are fewer single-family detached homes and more 20 or more-unit housing units than in Jackson County (79%, 2%), however all numbers are very similar to Wisconsin's statistics.

From 2010 to 2022, the reported number of housing units in the City decreased by 161, representing a change of -8%. Jackson County saw an increase of 1%, while Wisconsin saw an increase of 5%. There are several possible explanations. One is the margin of error of the data; ACS data can have large margins of error, especially for smaller counts. Random chance and the margin of error producing a high number in 2010 and a small number in 2022 could be a plausible explanation. Another explanation is that more homes or apartment buildings have been torn down in the City than have been built. This is not necessarily a bad thing. 22% of the City's homes were built in 1939 or earlier, however that is roughly the same amount as Jackson County and Wisconsin. Homes have a lifespan, and it is likely the bulk of the City's housing stock is aging to the point where serious repairs are needed. Another interesting statistic is that only 27 homes have been built in the City since 2010, none of those being after 2019. This could partially be attributed to the pandemic, although some houses should have still been built. From 2010 to 2016, the number of houses dropped by 240, but increased by 84 in the following 3 years.

However, it does not seem like much new housing is being built in its place. Only 11% of homes in the City were built in 2000 or later, compared to 26% in Jackson County and 18% in Wisconsin. Depending on how much population growth the City sees, housing and its availability might become a larger issue in the future.

Table 1.7 Housing Units

Year	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
2010	1,911	9,521	2,593,073
2016	1,671	9,772	2,649,597
2022	1,755	9,646	2,734,511
% Change 2010 to 2022	-8%	1%	5%

Source: ACS 2022, 2016 and 2010 5-Year Estimates, B25001 Housing Units

Table 1.8 Housing Structures by Type

Housing Structure Type	City of Black River Falls	%	Jackson County %	Wisconsin %
1-unit, detached	1108	63%	79%	66%
1-unit, attached	56	3%	1%	4%
2 units	98	5%	2%	6%
3 or 4 units	105	6%	2%	4%
5 to 9 units	86	5%	2%	5%
10 to 19 units	62	4%	1%	4%
20 or more units	191	11%	2%	8%
Mobile Home	49	3%	11%	3%
Total	1755	100%	100%	100%

Source: ACS 2022 5- Year Estimates, S2504 Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units

Table 1.9 Housing Structures by Year Built

Year Built	City of Black River Falls	%	Jackson County %	Wisconsin %
Built 2020 or later	0	0%	0%	0%
Built 2010 to 2019	27	2%	7%	6%
Built 2000 to 2009	156	9%	19%	12%
Built 1990 to 1999	133	8%	13%	13%
Built 1980 to 1989	164	9%	9%	10%
Built 1970 to 1979	235	13%	12%	14%
Built 1960 to 1969	279	16%	8%	10%

Source: ACS 2022 5- Year Estimates, S2504 Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units

Median Housing Value

The median value of a home in the City of Black River Falls was \$124,700 in 2022, which is only \$3,500 more than it was in 2010, representing an increase of 3%. Between 2010 and 2016, the median value of a home in the City went down by over \$6,000. In 2010, the City had median home values almost the same as Jackson County, and \$47,800 less than Wisconsin. In 2022 the City way lower median home values than both. The incredibly low increase in median home value the City saw over the decade is out of the ordinary. The City saw an increase of just 3%, while Jackson County and Wisconsin saw a massive increase of 40% and 37% each.

The reason for the magnitude of the gap is unknown, but several factors are likely. A common reason that housing values would stay stagnant in an area is due to slower economic growth in the region. Business closures or fewer job opportunities could result in depreciated home values. This would make sense during the pandemic if the City has fewer essential jobs than the county and Wisconsin, however the decrease between 2010 and 2016 would not make sense. Another reason could be industry decline. If the region relies heavily on a certain industry that left, the housing values would go down. Another common reason is a lack of infrastructure in the area, such as damaged roads or not having enough services to meet the City's needs.

Regardless of the causes for the increase in median home value, the effects are the same and not entirely positive. While it is beneficial for those who are looking to purchase their home now, it may present issues for those who own their home as the value is not going up. Nevertheless, the opportunity for growth in the City remains high.

Table 1.10 Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

Year	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
2010	121,200	121,400	169,000
2016	115,100	129,100	167,000
2022	124,700	170,000	231,400

Source: ACS 2022, 2016 and 2010 5-Year Estimates, B25077 Median Value (Dollars)

Occupancy Characteristics

The number of owners and renters are almost even in the City of black River falls, with 54% of homes being owner occupied and 44% being renter occupied. This is not surprising, as City areas tend to have an even distribution between owning than renting. In Jackson County and Wisconsin, about a quarter of homes are renter-occupied (24% and 32% respectively).

The City has no housing vacancies, for either owned or rented homes. 0% of homes are available to purchase or to rent. A vacancy rate of about 5% is healthy for all parties involved, and once values get below about 2 or 3%, a housing shortage is likely. The current housing shortage is a widespread problem, and City areas tend to be hit hard, due to high population growth. There is an extreme housing shortage in the City – far more people want to live in the City than can

do so now, due to the supply of housing. While the housing shortage is a problem across the country, it is affecting the City unusually hard. While not as extreme as in the City, there still is a shortage of homes to purchase in Jackson County and Wisconsin, but an adequate supply of homes to rent in those locations.

Table 1.11 Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units

Occupancy Status	City of Black River Falls	Percent	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Owner Occupied	978	56%	76%	68%
Renter Occupied	777	44%	24%	32%
Total	1,755	100%	100%	100%

Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates - Table DP04 Selected Housing Characteristics

Table 1.12 Housing Unit Occupancy Rates

Occupancy Rate	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Homeowner Occupancy Rate 2010	96%	87%	88%
Homeowner Occupancy Rate 2016	93%	83%	87%
Homeowner Occupancy Rate 2022	100%	83%	89%
Rental Occupancy Rate 2010	98%	96%	94%
Rental Occupancy Rate 2016	91%	96%	95%
Rental Occupancy Rate 2022	100%	96%	95%

Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates - Table DP04 Selected Housing Characteristics

Table 1.13 Housing Unit Vacancy Rates

Vacancy Rate	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Homeowner Vacancy Rate 2010	0%	2%	2%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate 2016	3%	2%	2%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate 2022	0%	1%	1%
Rental Vacancy Rate 2010	2%	4%	6%
Rental Vacancy Rate 2016	9%	4%	5%
Rental Vacancy Rate 2022	0%	4%	5%

Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates - Table DP04 Selected Housing Characteristics

Affordability of Housing

Affordability of housing is a major issue today. A cutoff of 30% of household income being spent on housing is a commonly given figure for what constitutes housing unaffordability. By this metric, 36% of households that own their home in the City of Black River Falls with a mortgage are under financial strain. This is a higher figure than Jackson County (32%) and Wisconsin (22%). For households that own their home without a mortgage, the story is different, but still higher – 17% of such households in the City pay more than 30% of their household income on housing, compared to 15% in Jackson County and 12% in Wisconsin. There is no single reason for this issue of housing affordability in the City. It is a common issue throughout much of the country today. The most crucial factor here is likely the median household income, which is lower than the County and the State. More information on household income is in the Economic Development Element. The reason this is likely the main contributor is because the median value of a house in the City is much less than Jackson County and Wisconsin, therefore the income is the issue. Since their income is lower, they must spend a disproportionately higher amount of their income on their house.

When it comes to rental affordability, the situation in the City is remarkably like the county and state. Of the 777 households renting their home, 342 (44%) spent 30 percent or more of their income on housing. This is compared with 42% in Jackson County and 43% in Wisconsin. This is likely due to several reasons. For one, in urban areas there is a

greater concentration of very low-income individuals, for whom housing is an undue financial strain. Another probable reason could be the low median income of the City.

Table 1.14 Percent of Household Income Spent on Owner-Occupied Units

Occupation Status	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Housing units with a mortgage	590	3,495	1,017,354
Less than 20.0 percent	47%	46%	52%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	10%	13%	16%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	7%	10%	10%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	0%	8%	6%
35.0 percent or more	36%	24%	16%
Housing unit without a mortgage	369	2,505	614,099
Less than 10.0 percent	41%	37%	43%
10.0 to 14.9 percent	30%	27%	22%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	4%	9%	12%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	8%	9%	7%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	0%	3%	4%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	0%	3%	3%
35.0 percent or more	17%	12%	9%

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP04 Selected Housing Characteristics

Table 1.15 Percent of Household Income Spent on Renter-Occupied Units

Income Spent	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Occupied units paying rent	669	1,636	737,678
Less than 15.0 percent	16%	20%	17%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	17%	16%	15%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	8%	12%	13%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	16%	11%	11%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	0%	3%	8%
35.0 percent or more	44%	39%	35%

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP04 Selected Housing Characteristics

Housing Tenure

Housing tenure, or how long residents have lived at their current residence, is a key factor for community planning. Higher housing tenure is associated with higher community cohesion, which in part encourages residents to stay. Comparing housing tenures between communities is of little use, due to how variable the character of a community may be. A college town with high community cohesion may have exceptionally low housing tenure due to college students occupying a substantial proportion of housing in the town and moving every few years. Therefore, comparing the same community over time makes more sense.

From 2010 to 2022, there were a few noticeable changes in the pattern of housing tenure. In 2022, a substantially smaller proportion of City residents had moved in within the last decade than had in 2010 and 2016. A slightly smaller proportion moved 1 or 2 decades ago than had in 2016, but a higher amount than 2010. Significantly more had moved in 2 to 3 decades or 3 decades or more ago in 2022 in 2016 and 2010. What does this tell us? That more home purchasing occurred in the period before 2010, than did in the period before 2022. In other words, fewer people are buying homes in the City today than a decade ago. But among people who have bought homes in the City, they are staying longer today

than they did a decade ago. This shows that the community has a high amount of social cohesion, which is a strength. It does indicate that the City has work to do to encourage more new prospective homeowners to choose to live in the City.

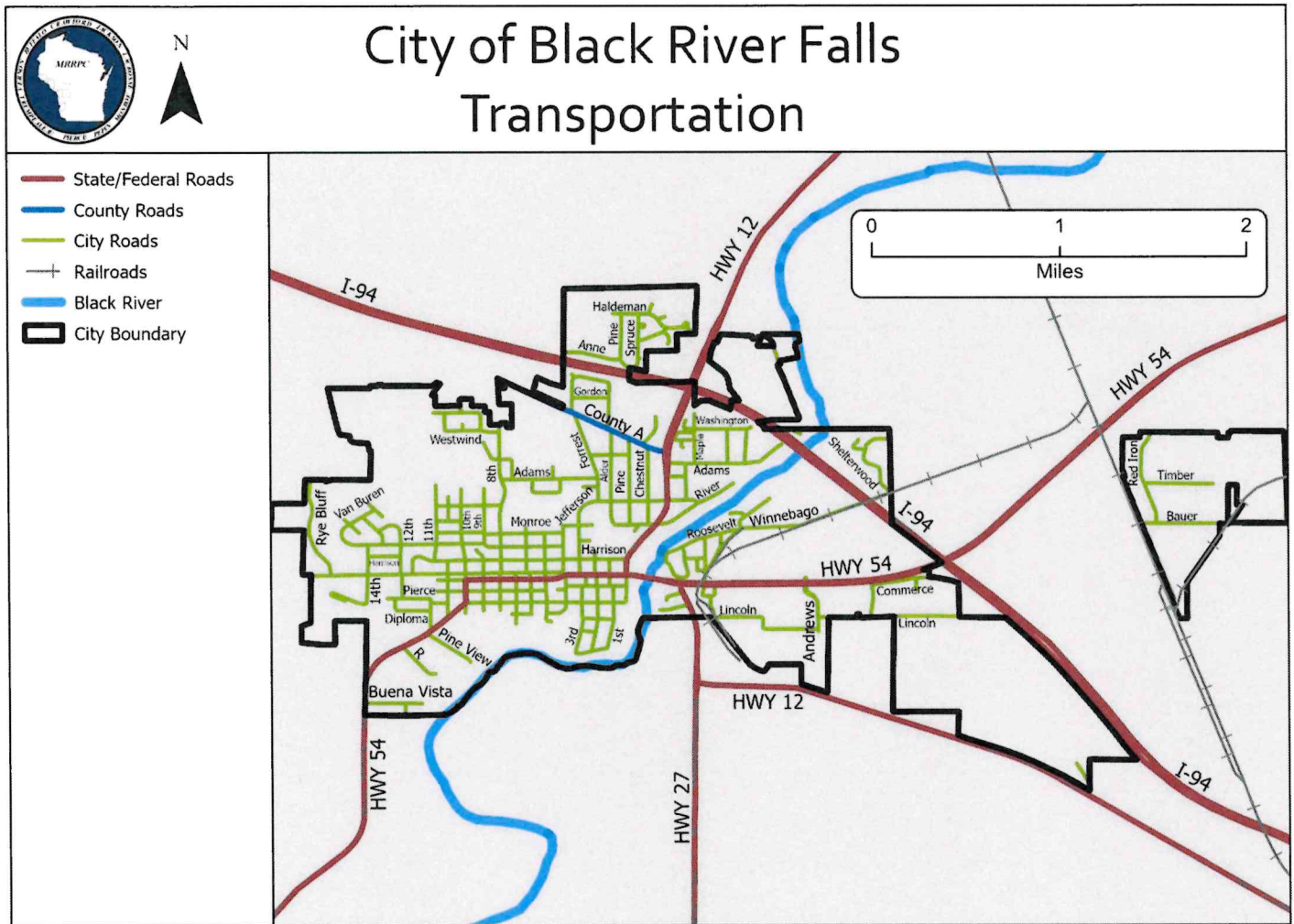
Table 1.16 Year Householder Moved In (Owner Occupied Units)

Housing Tenure	2010	2016	2022
Moved Within Last Decade	62%	40%	24%
Moved 1 to 2 Decades ago	20%	32%	28%
Moved 3 or more decades ago	18%	28%	48%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: American Community Survey 2022, 2016 and 2020 5-Year Estimates, B25026 Total Population in Occupied Housing Units by Tenure by Year Householder Moved Into Unit

Transportation

The transportation element provides a baseline for the Town of Utica's transportation facilities and capabilities. This section outlines information on specific topics required under Wisconsin SS66.1001, such as highways, transit, transportation systems for persons with disabilities, bicycles, electric scooters, electric personal assistive mobility devices, walking, railroads, air transportation, trucking, and water transportation. MRRPC is currently working on a transportation plan for the City of Black River Falls, therefore this section of the report will be based on that plan, which will be completed soon.



Economic Development

The City of Black River Falls has 1431 residents in the civilian labor force. Major industries in the City include manufacturing (16% of workers), retail trade (14% of workers), educational services, health care and social assistance (12% of workers), and public administration (11%).

Table 1.17 Employment by Industry

Industry	Number of Workers	% of Workforce
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1431	100%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	75	5%
Construction	68	5%
Manufacturing	228	16%
Wholesale trade	0	0%
Retail trade	206	14%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	58	4%
Information	60	4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	39	3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	126	9%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	177	12%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	127	9%
Other services, except public administration	108	8%
Public administration	159	11%

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates, S2407 Industry by Class of Worker for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over

Income and Poverty

In 2022, the City had a higher poverty rate than Jackson County and Wisconsin, which was also the case in 2012 and 2017. However, the poverty rate in the City has been declining, from 19% in 2012 to 15% in 2022, representing a decrease of 21%. This a greater decrease in poverty rates than seen in Wisconsin, which only decreased by 15%, but less than Jackson County which decreased its poverty rate by 24%.

The median household income of the City (\$42,798) is more than \$20,000 less than that of Jackson County, and about \$30,000 less than that of Wisconsin. This is due to a very high proportion of very low-income households in the City, who make less than \$25,000 (38%). This is a much higher proportion than in Jackson County (20%) and Wisconsin (14%). There are also proportionally fewer households that make over \$50,000 in the City (55%), compared to Jackson County (61%) and Wisconsin (66%).

Table 1.18 Percentage of Population Below Poverty Level

Year	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Poverty Rate 2012	19%	17%	13%
Poverty Rate 2017	14%	13%	12%
Poverty Rate 2022	15%	13%	11%
% Change	-21%	-24%	-15%

Source: ACS 2022, 2017 and 2012 5-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 months

Table 1.19 Percentage of Households within Income Categories

Income Categories	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Less than \$10,000	9%	5%	4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	13%	6%	3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	16%	9%	7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	9%	9%	8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	8%	11%	11%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12%	20%	18%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12%	14%	14%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10%	16%	18%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6%	6%	8%
\$200,000 or more	5%	5%	8%
Median income (dollars)	\$42,798	\$64,630	\$72,458

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates, S1901 Income in the Past 12 months (in 2021 in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)

Commuting to Work

Most workers drove alone at 80%, while 10% carpooled, and 4% walked. Most of the City's workforce commutes to nearby commercial or industrial areas within the City.

Table 1.20 Means of Commuting to Work

Means	Number	Percent
Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	1,140	80%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	141	10%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab):	0	0%
Walked:	57	4%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means:	46	3%
Worked from home	33	2%
Total:	1,417	100%

Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates, B08101 Means of Transportation to Work by Age

Industry Projections

Industry projections are available for the Western Workforce Development Area, which includes Jackson County from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. Table 1.21 indicates that over the next several years the largest projected employment increases will take place in professional and business services and financial activities industries.

Table 1.21 Industry Projections for Western Workforce Development Area

Industry	Projected Change from 2016 to 2026
Goods Producing	2.7%
Natural Resources and Mining	7.9%
Construction	10.3%
Manufacturing	-0.1%
Services Providing	8.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	9.2%
Information	-11.7%
Financial Activities	12.8%
Professional and Business Services	13.1%
Education and Health Services	8.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	9.8%
Other Services (except Government)	6.1%
Government	2.5%
Self-Employed	8.9%

Source: Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, WIOA Local Plan 2020-2023, Table 1

Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities Inventory

This section documents those utilities provided by the City, Jackson County, neighboring communities, and private providers.

Wastewater Treatment

All development in the City of Black River Falls is accommodated with the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). This facility ensures that all wastewater is treated properly to protect groundwater and surface water to maintain environmental standards. The City's treatment plant processes waste from residential, commercial, and industrial sources to meet their needs. The City also services sewage lines to the Town of Brockway. The plant was at 70% capacity in 2017.

Water Supply

All homes and businesses in the City of Black River Falls are served by the Black River Falls Water Department. This includes four separate wells, reaching depths over 160 feet deep into the aquifer. After the water reaches the surface, it is treated and tested to make sure it is safe to drink. Residents and visitors use over 145 million gallons of water every year.

Electricity and Natural Gas Transmission

Electricity and natural gas in the City of Black River Falls are provided by WPPI Energy. They are an energy company based out of Sun Prairie Wisconsin and serve 51 communities. WE Energies provides natural gas to the City.

Alternative Energy Sources

Currently there is one alternative energy source in the City, the Black River Falls Municipal Hydroelectric Dam. The dam is 843 feet long and has a maximum storage capacity of 6,270-acre feet.

Local Park and Recreation Facilities

There are currently 10 parks in the City of Black River Falls. These parks include:

- Lunda Community Park
- Field of Honor Memorial Park
- Mills Hill Park
- Skyline Park
- AL Young Park
- Rock Springs Park
- Fairgrounds Park
- Cheyney Park
- Marks Fields
- Armory Fields

Communication Facilities

Access to communication facilities is important in the modern economy. Several communication companies provide services to Black River Falls. The quality of communication services depends on the capacity of the network (wires, fiber optics, towers, etc.) serving the City.

- Local and Long-Distance Telephone Service-CenturyTel provides landline service for the City. For wireless calls, there is a US Cellular tower in the area.
- Internet-Brightspeed, Spectrum, and a variety of other satellite services provide internet to the City.
- Newspapers-The Banner Journal and The Shopper are the main newspapers that provide news to the City of Black River Falls.

- Television and Radio-Charter provides television for the City. WWIS has a radio station that is based out of the City.
- Postal Service-Residents receive mail from post the post office located at 108 Fillmore St., Black River Falls.

Cemeteries

The Riverside Cemetery is a public cemetery in the City of Black River Falls. There are currently no plans to build another cemetery. Cemeteries are regulated through zoning by the City.

Health Care Facilities

The Black River Falls Memorial Hospital is located within the City at 711 W Adams St. The hospital is a primary health facility. Krohn Clinic is located within the City 610 W Adams St. As for assisted living, Atrium Senior Living (109 N 14th St.), Pineview Care Center (400 County Rd. R), Meadowbrook at Black River Falls (1311 Tyler St.), Spaulding Place Cooperative (1374 Van Buren St.), and Pine View Terrace (404 County Rd. R) are all facilities that provide care to residents in the City and County.

Childcare Facilities

There are multiple childcare facilities in the City of Black River Falls. Black River Child Care Center (725 N 8th St.), Black River Early Learning Center (905 Alder St.), and the Children's Learning Village Montessori Academy (N6431 Lumberjack Guy Rd.) are all facilities that provide childcare in the City.

Libraries

The Black River Falls Public Library is located within the City at 222 Fillmore St. The library provides many programs for adults and children.

Senior Services

The Lunda Community Center provides a wide range of programs and memberships for senior activities. They have a pool, workout/exercise equipment, and open rooms to house other activities.

School Districts

The City of Black River Falls is served by the Black River Falls School District. The school district covers the entire City and multiple townships outside of the City.

The Black River Falls School District provides a 4K through 12th grade education to students at its Elementary Schools, Middle School, and High School. District offices are located at 301 North 4th St. in Black River Falls.

City Facilities and Equipment

The Black River Falls City Hall is located at 101 S 2nd St. The Street Department is located at 401 Pine View Rd. The Zoning Building for the City is located at 307 Main St.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Jackson County has a recycling center located at 115 Harrison St. in Black River Falls. The facility sponsors multiple special roundups each year for specialty items. There is a fee, but they will take your specialty item for you.

Police Protection

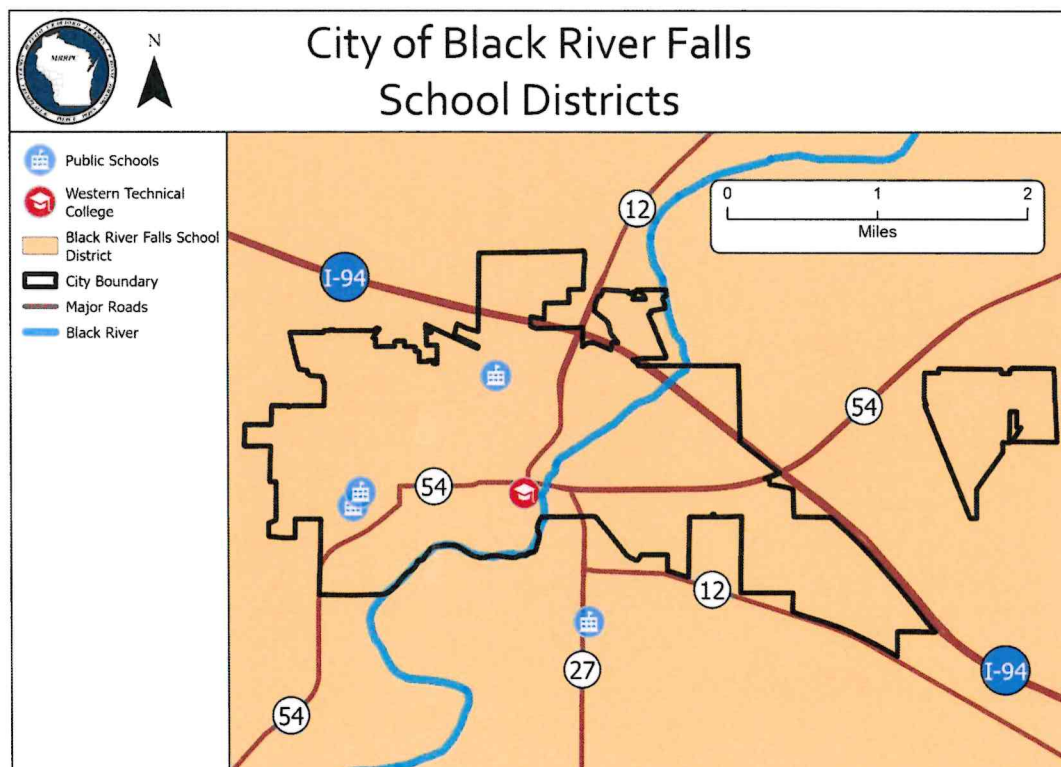
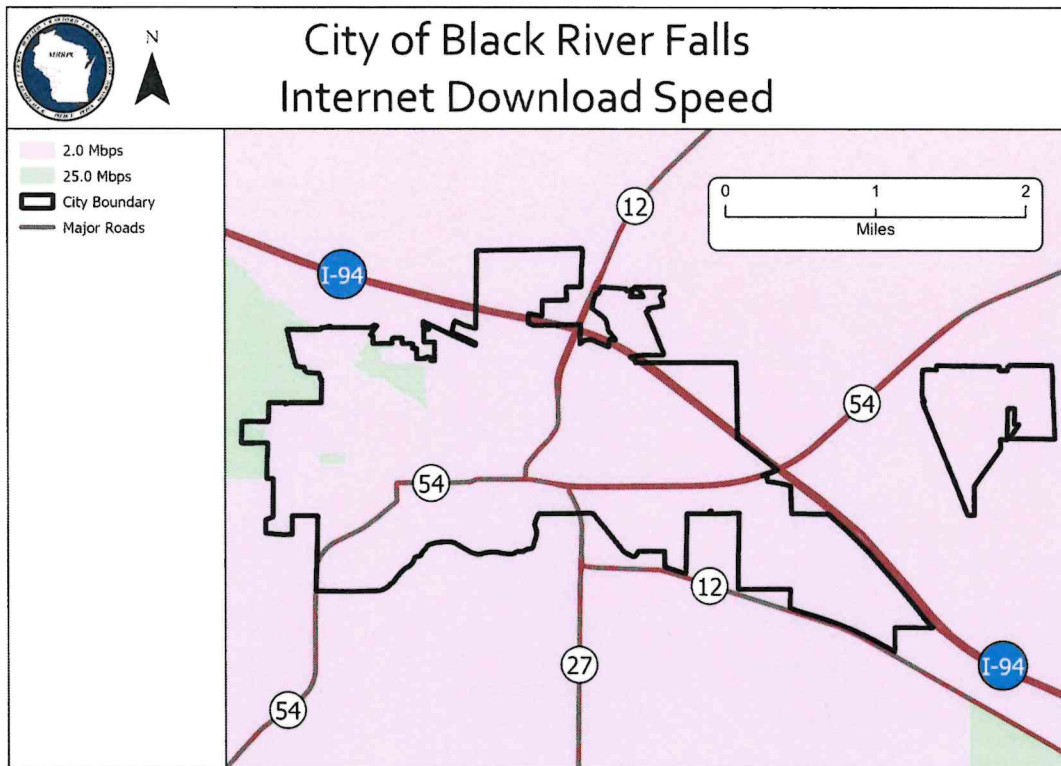
Police protection in the City of Black River Falls is provided by the Black River Falls Department. The BRFPD is located at 101 S 2nd St. In addition, the Jackson County Sheriff's Department (30 N 3rd St.) also provides backup and assistance to the Black River Falls Police Department.

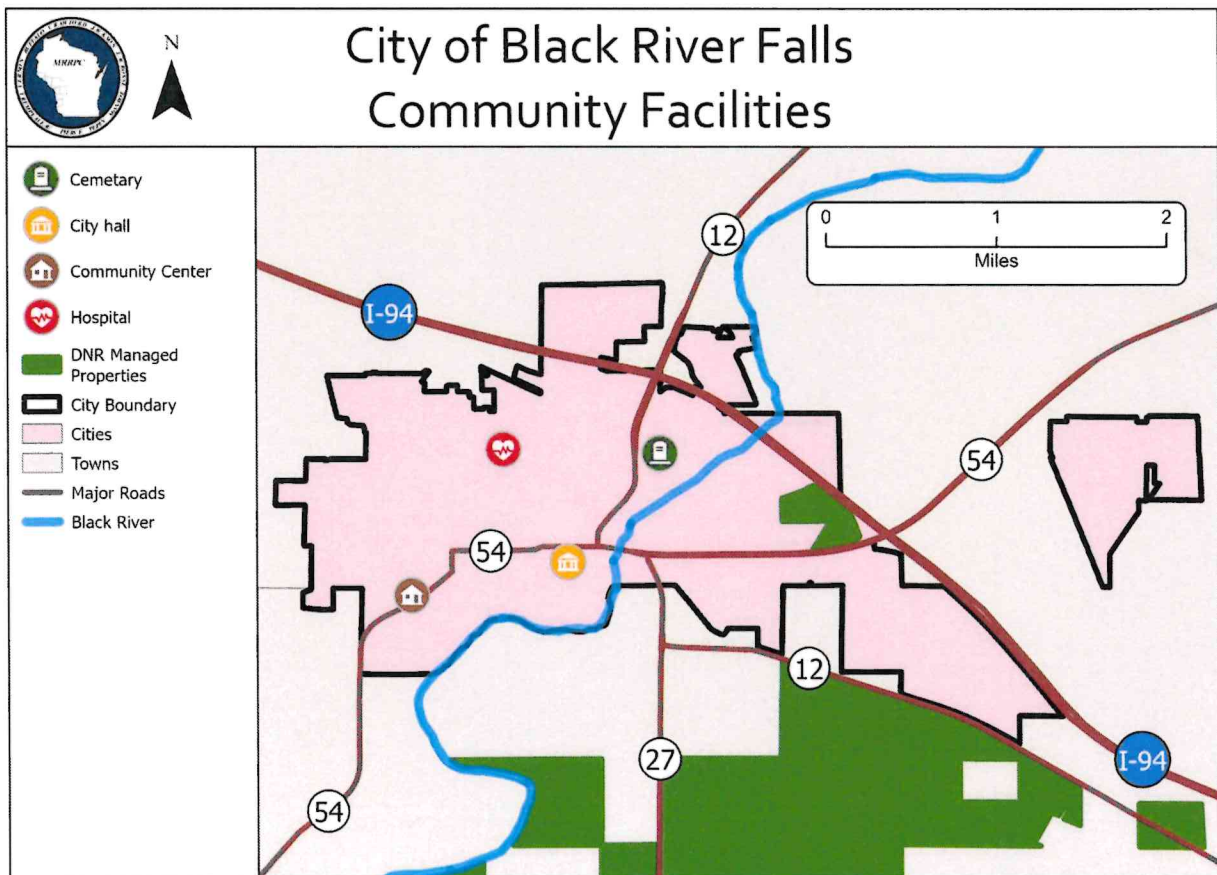
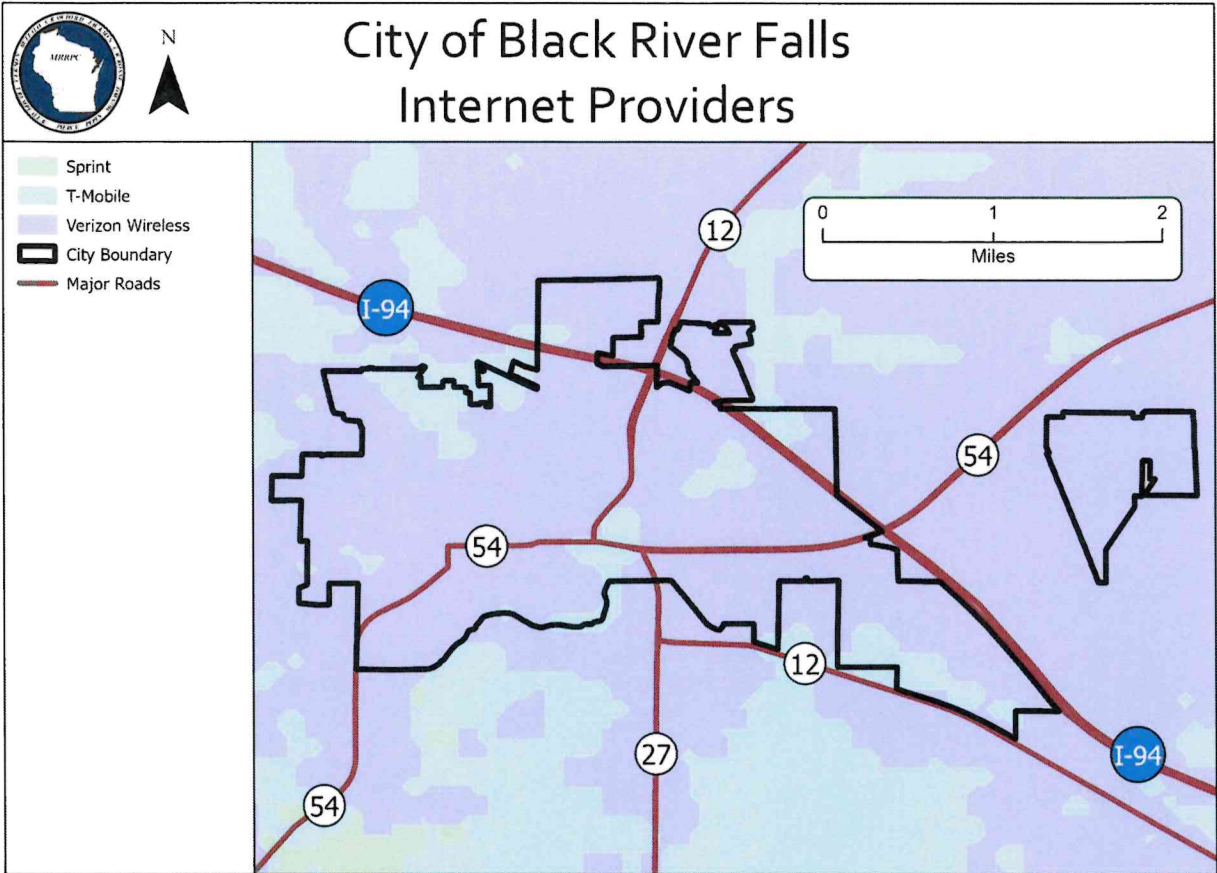
Fire Protection

Fire protection in the City of Black River Falls is provided by the Black River Falls Fire Department located at 30 S Water St.

EMS/Rescue Services

Black River Memorial Hospital and the Black River Falls Fire Department provide EMS and Rescue Services to the City.





Intergovernmental Relationships and Coordination

Intergovernmental cooperation involves collaborating with neighboring communities, County government, and State agencies to understand how their future planning activities will impact the City of Black River Falls. At a minimum, this involves sharing information about Black River Falls' Plan with neighboring communities and agencies and vice versa. Black River Falls believes intergovernmental cooperation should not end with the sharing of Plans. Instead, this process should be the beginning for joint planning and decision-making, conflict resolution, and other strategies to promote regional coordination.

Adjacent Governmental Units

Towns of Adams, Brockway, and Albion

The City's relationship with neighboring towns can be characterized as one of mutual respect. These communities share a common history, social culture, and rural character with Black River Falls. Since cities can annex land from a town, boundary disputes may exist. Potential conflicts may arise in the future, particularly in respect to annexation.

Annexations often occur because of a desire for municipal sewer and water services. However, limited development pressure and projected population growth in the City during the next twenty years minimizes the likelihood of significant annexation action. When growth occurs in the future, the City of Black River Falls is committed to providing quality development choices within its boundaries and believes that, with proper planning; it will accommodate and make the right decisions for growing communities around the City's limits. The City is currently developing into the Town of Brockway, and annexation is something to be considered.

Villages of Hixton, Alma Center, and Merrillan

The City of Black River Falls does not share borders with any villages or cities. The Villages of Hixton, Alma Center, and Merrillan are all nearby Villages to the City. Black River Falls can work with these villages through intergovernmental cooperation to share equipment and supplies and lower expenses.

School Districts

The City of Black River Falls and the Black River Falls School District recognizes the significant role each plays in the other's future. Each is dependent upon the other, to varying degrees, to ensure a healthy long-term future. The school districts were discussed in detail in the Existing Utilities and Community Facilities section. With respect to intergovernmental cooperation, opportunities were identified during the planning effort to strengthen relations between the City of Black River Falls and the School District.

Jackson County

Jackson County provides many programs, services, and facilities to Black River Falls and its residents. Those that most directly affect Black River Falls include:

- County highway maintenance and improvement programs
- Library funding support (to help cover the costs of County residents who use the library)
- Social services
- Land use planning and mapping assistance

In those areas where Jackson County has jurisdiction (i.e., shoreland zoning), the County consults the City before making decisions affecting Black River Falls.

There are several issues that will challenge the City of Black River Falls and its neighbors during the coming decades, many of which require or benefit from a coordinated multi-jurisdictional response. The City will cooperate with the County and other local communities to discuss and address matters related to:

- Subdivision, zoning, and other local land use tools
- Housing, transportation, and services for seniors
- Affordable housing for year-round residents and seasonal workers

- Socio-economic and environmental issues related to global climate change

Regional Planning Commission

The City of Black River Falls and Jackson County are in the service region of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC). The MRRPC represents nine counties in western Wisconsin: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Monroe, La Crosse, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Vernon. The MRRPC maintains the region's eligibility as an Economic Development District and eligible for Economic Development Administration funding. They also provide planning and development assistance to local governments including comprehensive planning and zoning assistance, economic development assistance, geographic information system mapping, and grant writing.

State Agencies

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)
- Wisconsin State Historical Society

WDNR and WisDOT are the primary State agencies with whom Black River Falls must coordinate to achieve the goals and objectives of this Plan.

WDNR takes a lead role in wildlife protection and the sustainable management of woodlands, stormwater regulations, wetlands, State parks, and other natural wildlife habitat areas. Given the priority City residents give to natural resource protection, the WDNR is an important partner with the City of Black River Falls in planning for the future.

WisDOT is a key player in the planning and development of highways and pedestrian/cycling facilities in the City and region. Black River Falls has a good relationship with WisDOT and will continue to collaborate with them, particularly with respect to ongoing and future work within the STH 12, 24, and 27 corridors. The City will continue to communicate with WisDOT about land use and transportation decisions made locally. The FHWA maintains Interstate 94 that travels east-west through the northern part of the City. The interstate boosts the local economy and provides a way to travel to other nearby cities.

Existing Plans

Black River Falls School District

Currently, the school district has no plans to construct new facilities within the City of Black River Falls. To facilitate future school district planning efforts, this Plan recommends that the City continue to work with the districts on studies related to future enrollment and facility needs. The district's current facilities can accommodate additional students. To further facilitate school district planning, this Plan has been made available to those districts as a tool to predict future school enrollments from the City of Black River Falls.

State Agencies

WDNR takes a lead role in wildlife protection and the protection and sustained management of woodlands, wetlands and other natural wildlife habitat areas. These priorities are reflected in Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources.

WisDOT has completed a series of statewide planning documents for use in the development of local Comprehensive Plans. These documents include plans for the State highway corridors, bicycle corridors, rail corridors, and air transportation. The plans were used as a starting point when preparing the Transportation section of this plan.

Infrastructure to Support City Success

The City of Black River Falls has government employees that coordinate to ensure the City's infrastructure, public services, and community development are effectively managed and maintained. The departments that reside within the

City's government include Airport, Fire, Municipal Utilities, Police, Building Inspector, Library, Parks and Recreation, and Street. These departments work together to improve and maintain the City and will continue to do so in the future.

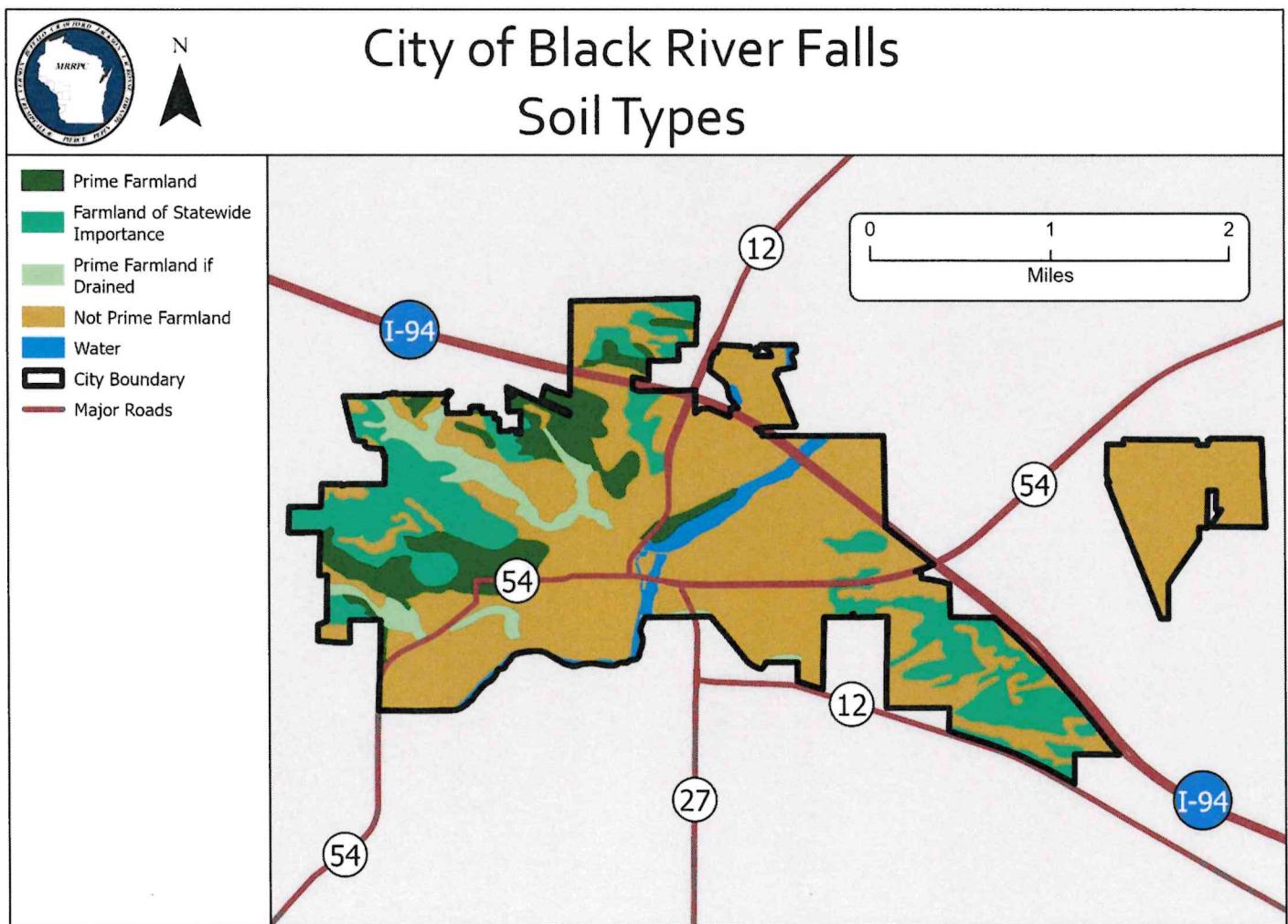
Relationship to Other Comprehensive Plan Chapters

Intergovernmental Cooperation weaves its ways into every chapter of this Plan. Regional housing demand and supplies determine the market for housing in the City of Black River Falls. Transportation improvements made to County, State, and Federal highways have the potential to affect land use and development patterns in the City. Likewise, the City's ability to expand economically depends on quality services being provided, not only by the City, but also its intergovernmental partners (i.e., schools, police, fire, etc.). Moreover, the City's ability to support development opportunities at its perimeter must be coordinated with neighboring communities to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses.

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

Agriculture

The City of Black River Falls does not have agriculture as a significant component of its landscape. However, residential and commercial growth in urban communities typically occurs through "green field" development, which takes place on land not previously developed. Green fields include woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, and fallow areas. Many wooded areas in the City are classified as forested or grassland. Therefore, any future development may result in a significant decrease in these natural landscapes unless steps are taken to preserve them. The City must balance growth with environmental conservation to maintain its natural beauty and ecological health. Numerous factors, including urban expansion and environmental regulations, influence the long-term viability of these green spaces in the City of Black River Falls. Productive farm soils are located throughout the City, particularly on its western and eastern boundaries. There is a golf course on the west side of the City where most of the agricultural soil resides.



Natural Resources

The condition of the natural environment is a key ingredient in Black River Falls' "quality of life" and the sense of resident community pride. A correlation exists between the presence and prevalence of open space and the positive feelings people have about their community. Woodlands, grasslands, streams, wetlands, and diverse topography provide important wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for residents. They improve the visual appeal of the City, provide tourist income from fishing activities, and function as development buffers. The Black River that runs right through the City and determines where development can occur.

Geology and Topography

The City of Black River Falls is in the "Driftless Area" of southwestern Wisconsin, an area unique in North America. The upper Midwest has undergone multiple periods of glaciation. Thick continental ice sheets have moved from Canada southward in various lobes at various times, leveling high areas of the landscape. The Driftless Area survived these glacial episodes, even though areas surrounding it for hundreds of miles were at one time covered with glaciers.

As a result, the area preserves the landscape of what the rest of Wisconsin, as well as northern and eastern United States, would have looked like before the glacial period. Without glacial drift covering the surface, topographic relief is dramatic. Bedrock, consisting primarily of limestone and sandstone, is oftentimes close to or exposed at the surface. The thin layers of topsoil in the upper areas of the landscape consist primarily of loess, which is wind-blown material. The land is deeply cut by streams into a maze of narrow, twisting ridges and valleys. The topography stands in stark contrast to surrounding land from glaciated areas, which shows a gently rolling topography.

Streams and Watershed Drainage Areas

Surface water resources are extremely valuable assets to a community because of their potential environmental and economic benefits. Water-based recreational activities and appropriately designed residential development that capitalizes on surface water amenities can have lasting impact on the local economy. Appropriate location and management of residential uses near surface water features is extremely important because of potential threats to water quality. Residential development's threats to surface water resources include lawn-applied chemicals, petroleum-based substances and salts from local road runoff.

The entire City is in the Trout Run and Robinson Creek watershed, excluding the northwestern park of the industrial park (Morrison Creek watershed). All of the City drains into the Black River, which is also in both watersheds.

Efforts are being made to reverse damage to streams caused by past agricultural practices, primarily siltation due to runoff caused by logging and cropping. During the latter half of the 1800's until the 1930's, there were no soil conservation practices used in the Driftless Area. The ridges were logged, plowed, and planted. Rain ran down the steep slopes instead of infiltrating into the ground, creating gullies, and carrying enormous amounts of silt into the creeks. Cattle were pastured in the stream bottoms, compacting the soils and exacerbating erosion problems.

Soil conservation practices were begun in the Driftless Area in the mid-1930's, championed by Aldo Leopold. Farmers were taught to terrace land, to practice contour planting of alternating corn and hay crops, and to vegetate areas along waterways. These efforts have increased rainfall infiltration to groundwater, which in turn recharges area streams with colder water. Silt is prevented from reaching the streams, which maintains the graveled streambeds favored by trout.

Modern stream restoration efforts include the removal of silt from streambeds and valley floors; the creation of gentle, sloping banks; the installation of riprap, weirs, and other structures in streams to reconstruct natural habitat, and the planting of buffer zones alongside stream banks.

Wetlands, Floodplains, and Bluffs

Wetlands act as a natural filtering system for sediment and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrates. They also serve as a natural buffer, protecting shorelines and stream banks from erosion. Wetlands are essential in providing wildlife habitat, flood control, and groundwater recharge.

Floodplains serve many crucial functions related to flood and erosion control, water quality, groundwater recharge and fish and wildlife habitats. Floodplains provide an area for streams and rivers to swell into during high rainfall and snowmelt events. These areas are unsuitable for development because of risks to lives and property. The primary floodplain areas within the City of Black River Falls are associated with the Black River in the central portion of the community. Minor floodplain areas can also be found in the west and east portions of the City that are associated with Town Creek and Coffee Creek.

Recent developments have left the future of wetland and floodplain restrictions more unclear than they have been in decades. The Supreme Court's 2023 decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* led to redefining what exactly constitutes a wetland, essentially stripping away federal protections from large swaths of land that were previously identified as wetlands. Wisconsin's requirements however are more stringent, so the applicability of this decision to Black River Falls is currently moot. However, there is a distinct possibility, if not certainty, of there being some challenge to Wisconsin's wetland regulations over the following years. If such a challenge occurred, it is likely it would lead to more land being made available for development in Black River Falls.

Wisconsin counties also regulate development activities within shoreland areas, which in Jackson County are defined to be within 300 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable rivers or streams or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater. Shorelines are often thought of as a boundary between the land and water, but shorelines are also a transition area within which the health of land and water ecosystems can be positively or negatively affected. Shoreland vegetation traps and filters sediment and debris from rainfall and snow melt, buffering surface waters.

Shoreland zoning regulations are designed for efficient use, conservation, development, and protection of water resources. They are intended to:

- Prevent and control water pollution
- Protect spawning ground for fish and aquatic life
- Control building sites, placement of structures, and land use
- Preserve shore cover and natural beauty

Woodlands

The first record of vegetation in the City of Black River Falls occurred in the 1840's, when the U.S. General Land Office performed a land survey of Jackson County. In the City of Black River Falls, the native vegetation was composed primarily of prairie grasses and sparse oak forest. During the last half of the nineteenth century much pre-settlement forestland was cut and cleared for agriculture and forested for logging.

The Bordner Survey was a vegetative assessment of the entire State of Wisconsin, conducted by the University of Wisconsin between 1933 and 1945. That survey found that most prairies within the county were cropped. Forests were also a huge part of the existing land at the time.

Presently, much of the area cropped during the earlier part of the 1900's is now woodland. To protect woodlands, the WDNR Managed Forest Program is available to landowners who own more than 10 acres of contiguous forestland. Through the program, landowners agree to manage their forestland for hunting, fishing, wildlife, and recreation purposes and not permit development in exchange for tax credits. Additional information about this program is available on the Internet at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry.

Wildlife Habitat

The majority of Jackson County provides ideal habitat for deer and turkey. The combination of farmland and woodlands offers year-round food sources and cover for these species. The difficult terrain provides additional protection for these hunted animals. 25 Elk were introduced to the county in 1995, and a second reintroduction in 2015 brought the herd to

400 animals. These Elk are monitored and something to be aware of in the area. Aquatic habitats in the City of Black River Falls include the Black River, Town Creek, and Coffee Creek. The quality of these water resources as aquatic habitats was discussed in earlier sections of this chapter.

Threatened and Endangered Species

There are several threatened and endangered plant and animal species in Jackson County. As mentioned above, the Elk population has been a priority of the DNR in the past 30 years. Unfortunately, there is not a list or map available specific to the Black River Falls area. The WDNR has county-level maps of threatened and endangered species. These maps do not precisely identify habitat areas within each county. The WDNR does not want people to visit or otherwise intrude on the habitats of endangered and threatened species. The WDNR is attempting to identify and catalog endangered plant and animal species across the state. For a complete, up-to-date list, refer to: www.dnr.state.wi.us. The state and federal government have programs and laws in effect to protect threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the City of Black River Falls and beyond.

Exotic and Invasive Species

Non-native invasive plant and animal species have been recognized in recent years as a major threat to the integrity of native habitats and species, as well as a potential economic threat (damage to crops, tourist economy, etc.). The WDNR requires that any person seeking to bring a non-native fish or wild animal for introduction in Wisconsin obtain a permit. The City of Black River Falls can help combat invasive species by educating residents about non-native species (using the Internet or a City newsletter as primary tools in this effort) and by encouraging residents to use native plants in landscaping. For a complete listing of invasive plants and animals, visit: www.dnr.state.wi.us/invasives/.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mining Resources

The process of siting a mine continues to be a local matter governed under existing zoning procedures by local authorities. The reclamation requirements through NR 135 add to the status quo, but do not replace or remove any other means of regulation. The requirements neither regulate active mining processes nor have any effect upon local zoning decisions, like those related to the approval of new mine sites.

As part of NR 135, Wisconsin Administrative Code, adopted in December 2000, any community in Wisconsin may adopt an ordinance to establish requirements for reclamation of non-metallic mines, such as gravel pits and rock quarries. If a community decides not to develop its own ordinance, a county may develop an ordinance for the area instead. Likewise, a regional planning agency may develop ordinances for the counties within its region. The ordinance must establish reclamation requirements to prevent owners and operators of quarries and gravel pits from abandoning their operations without proper reclamation of the mine or quarry.

Under NR135, any landowner of a demonstrated “marketable non-metallic deposit” may register the site for mining. The local zoning authority may object to the application if the zone does not permit non-metallic mining as a use. Registration expires after a 10-year period and may be extended for a single 10-year period if it is demonstrated that commercially feasible quantities continue to exist on the property. Cities rezoning property in a manner consistent with their Comprehensive Plan are not required to permit non-metallic mining operations that are inconsistent with their adopted plan. The City may want to consider establishing requirements for quarrying including a mandatory operation plan.

Air Quality

Air pollutants can impair human health, harm the environment and cause property damage. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) evaluates air quality using health-based criteria (science-based guidelines) as the basis for setting permissible air quality levels. One set of limits (primary standard) protects health; another set of limits (secondary standard) is intended to prevent environmental and property damage. A geographic area that meets or exceeds the primary standard is called an attainment area; areas that do not meet the primary standard are called non-attainment areas.

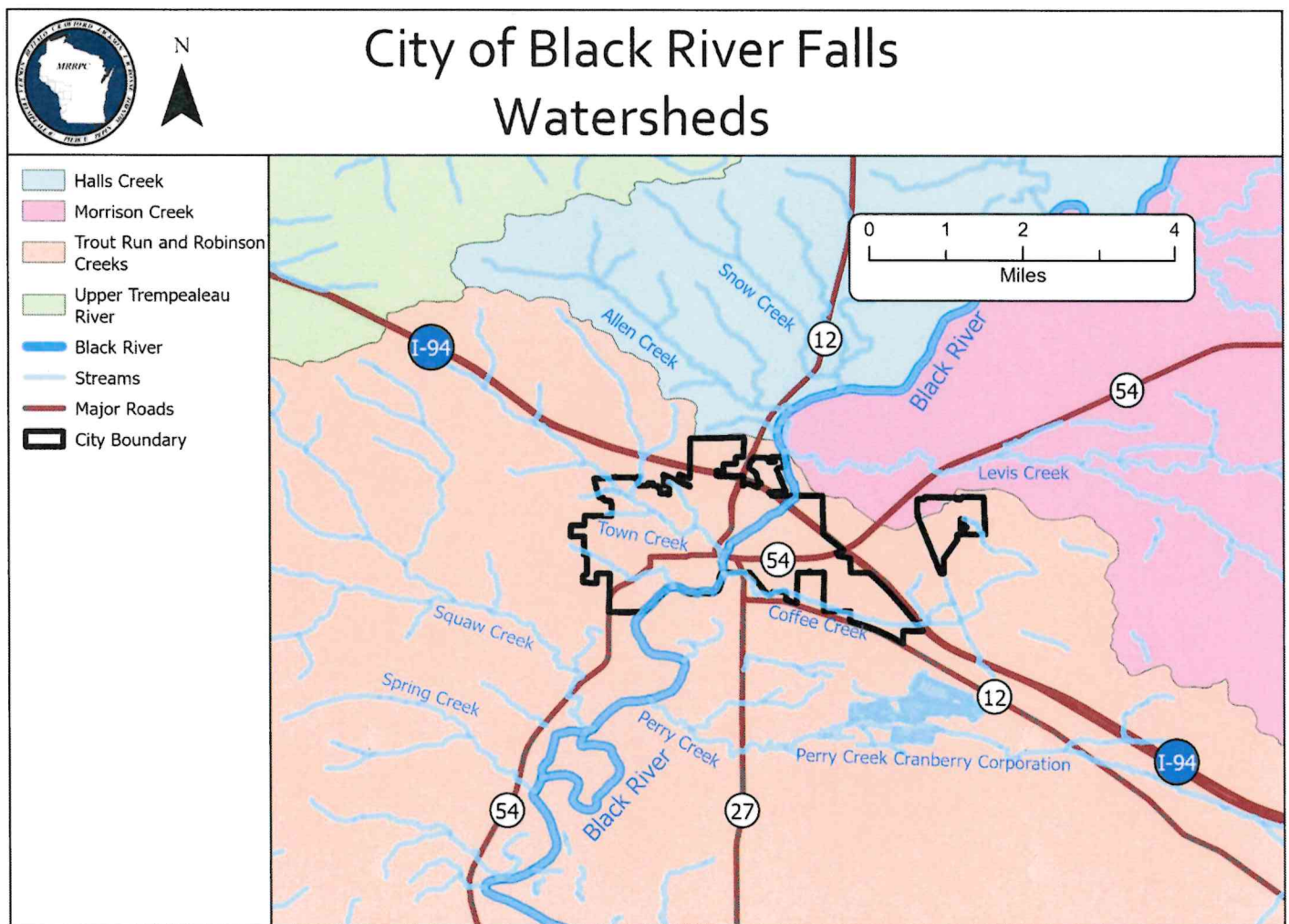
Jackson County is an attainment area. Residents feel that this is an asset of our City's character and would encourage the City to look at available means of maintaining current conditions through zoning or considering impacts of future development.

Soils

Soil is the physical base for development and agriculture. Knowledge of their limitations and potential difficulties is important in evaluating crop production capabilities and other land use alternatives, such as residential development.

The predominant soil type in the City of Black River Falls is the Clayburn series. This series typically varies in slope from 2% to 65% in Black River Falls, as do many of the remaining minor soil series in the City. Clay content is 18% to 35% and the soils are well-drained.

Severe soil limitations do not always mean a site cannot be developed, but rather more extensive construction measures may have to be taken to prevent damage to the land or structures. Any specific use of a parcel will require preliminary onsite investigation.



Cultural and Historic Resources

Cultural and historical resources, like natural resources, are valuable community assets warranting preservation.

Cultural Resources

Indigenous cultural resources can be found today in the arrowheads, spear points, and campsites that are seen on occasion throughout Black River Falls. European-American cultural assets in the City include historic church and school sites, 19th and early 20th century structures, and farmsteads scattered throughout the community. These facilities offer spiritual enrichment, education, and gathering spaces that contribute to the local culture.

Historic Resources

City governments, like other governments in Wisconsin, have the authority to preserve their historical heritage (Wisconsin Statutes §60.64). One of the most effective ways to do so is through a local historic preservation ordinance. The historic preservation ordinance can establish procedures to designate historically and culturally sensitive properties and places and to review projects that have the potential to negatively affect these important places.

The Wisconsin Historical Society has created the Architecture and History Inventory (AHI), an internet-based search engine that provides architectural and historical information on approximately 120,000 properties in Wisconsin. The AHI contains information on buildings, structures, and objects that illustrate Wisconsin's unique history such as round barns, log houses, cast iron bridges, small town commercial buildings, and Queen Anne houses, among others.

Certified Local Government Program

Local units of government that have enacted historic preservation ordinances may consider being certified to participate in the state and federal Certified Local Government (CLG) program. The CLG program provides special grants to fund planning and educational activities. The Division of Historic Preservation at the Wisconsin Historical Society administers the CLG program. Wisconsin has 77 Certified Local Governments, including The City of Black River Falls.

Local governments strengthen their local historic preservation efforts by achieving Certified Local Government (CLG) status from the National Park Service (NPS). NPS and State governments, through their State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), provide valuable technical assistance and small matching grants to hundreds of diverse communities whose local governments are striving to keep for future generations what is significant from their community's past. In turn, NPS and States gain the benefit of local government partnership in the national historic preservation program.

Another incentive for participating in the CLG program is the pool of matching grant funds SHPOs set aside to fund CLG historic preservation subgrant projects—at least 10% of the State's annual Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant allocation. Grant funds are distributed through the HPF grant program, administered by NPS and SHPOs.

Jointly administered by NPS in partnership with SHPOs, the CLG Program is a cost-effective local, State, and federal partnership that promotes historic preservation at the grassroots level across the nation. Working closely with such national organizations as the National Association of Preservation Commissions, the CLG program seeks:

- To develop and maintain local historic preservation programs that will influence the zoning and permitting decisions critical to preserving historic properties
- To ensure the broadest possible participation of local governments in the national historic preservation program while maintaining preservation standards established by the Secretary of the Interior

City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan Survey

City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan Survey

This survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete

This survey serves to support the development of the City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan. A Comprehensive Plan is a guide to the physical, social, and economic development of a County, City, Village, Town, or Region.

This plan serves as a roadmap for decision making and provides a framework for the management of growth, resources, and services.

We appreciate your participation in this questionnaire for the development of a Comprehensive Plan for The City of Black River Falls.

Your input is critical in shaping the future of our community and to ensure that individual wants and needs are reflected in the decisions made on topics such as Housing, Transportation, Utilities and Community Facilities, Agricultural / Natural and Cultural Resources, Economic Development, Intergovernmental Cooperation, and Land Use.

Your opinion and ideas can make a difference.

Let's Get Started!

Demographics

Indicate Where You Live.

- ☐ City of Black River Falls
- ☐ Outside the City (in the school district)
- ☐ Jackson County
- ☐ Outside the Area

Indicate Where You Work.

- ☐ City of Black River Falls
- ☐ Outside the City (in the school district)
- ☐ Jackson County
- ☐ Outside the Area

Age Group?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-45
- ☐ 46-65
- ☐ 66+

Are you a Property Owner? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Yes I Own A Home
- ☐ Yes I Own Income Property
- ☐ Yes I Own Farm Land
- ☐ Yes I own Recreational Land
- ☐ Yes I own Commercial Property
- ☐ I Rent My Home
- ☐ Does Not Apply

Are you a Business Owner?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

In the future, do you plan to... (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Build a Home
- ☐ Buy a Home
- ☐ Start A Business
- ☐ Expand A Business
- ☐ Acquire Land in The City of Black River Falls
- ☐ Move Away from The City of Black River Falls (We Really Don't Want you to Go!)

Community Observations and Recommendations

Please share your thoughts on what attributes in The City of Black River Falls are important for the community to support.

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Business Support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Natural Resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Volunteerism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Available Job Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreational Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of Life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Housing General	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Affordable Housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child Care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Property Taxes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health Care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What Issues Will Positively Impact The City of Black River Falls Development in the Next 10 Years?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Zoning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Housing Development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Infrastructure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cost of Living	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health Care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet Access	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment / Jobs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Finding Qualified Employees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child Care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Business Development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreation / Tourism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Housing and Residential Development / Zoning, Planning, and Public Infrastructure

What Housing issues should The City of Black River Falls Support and Encourage?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Housing Density	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cluster Development (A grouping of residential properties ...)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Affordable Housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family-Friendly Zoning Districts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conservation Zone Housing (The primary purpose of a conservation subdivision is to ...)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Proximity to School, Services and Retail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rural Housing / Larger Private Lots	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Apartments / Multi Family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parks and Public Lands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public Sewer and Water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Zoning and Land Use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourage development in proximity to existing services (sewer ,water, roads, electricity)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Farmland Preservation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accessory Dwelling Units (Second Housing Unit on Existing Property)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Business / Economic Development

What Business Development areas should the City Focus on Supporting?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Retail and Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organic Farming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small Farms (Family Owned)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Large Farms (Over 1,000 head)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Light Industrial	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Heavy Industrial	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Shipping and Distribution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Healthcare	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Industrial Parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tourism and Recreation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Professional Services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Renewable Energy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Education / Job Training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mining	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Roads and Transportation

What Road and Transportation issues should The City of Black River Falls Seek to Improve?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Local / City Roads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
State and Federal Highways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traffic Controls and Safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sidewalks and Trails (Ped Bike Issues)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New Road Construction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multi Use (ATV's)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seasonal Maintenance (Snow, Erosion, and Potholes.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Infrastructure (bridges, culverts, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What Public Transportation issues should the Region Focus on?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Bike / Pedestrian Routes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bike / Pedestrian Trails	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ADRC (Senior and Disability)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
S.M.R.T. Bus Regional Transit System	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bus (regional / national)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ride Sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transportation Services (Senior, Veterans, Medical Transit, other)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ride Hailing Services (Uber, Lyft, Taxis)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

What Natural Resource issues should the Region Focus on?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
County or Community Parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bike and Pedestrian Trails	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
State Parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Farmland Preservation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Land Conservancy's	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreational ATV Trails	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lakes, Rivers, and Waterways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wildlife and Game	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wetlands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Forests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cultural and Historic Landmarks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Land Conservation (erosion, flood, storms)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Utilities and Community Facilities / Renewable Energy and Environmental Issues

How would you rate the current services / Utilities in The City of Black River Falls?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Terrible
Gas and Electric	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Water and Sewer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
TV Services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Landline Phone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cellular Services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trash Collection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recycling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Solid Waste / Landfill	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What Renewable Energy and Environmental Issues Should the Region Focus on?

	Extremely important	Very important	Slightly important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Solar Projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wind Projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Renewable Projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Distribution (Power Lines)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hydro Electric Systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carbon Emissions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking Water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mining	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture Pollution Prevention	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Recently there has been an increased focus on sustainability and renewable options. Please let us know how you feel about the City supporting the following issues.

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Renewable Energy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sustainable Building Design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduce Carbon Emissions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electric Vehicle Usage and Charging Options	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Residential requirement for EV charging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Water Conservation and Treatment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pollution Reduction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recycling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Runoff reduction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Solar power	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Farmland Preservation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encouraging development adjacent to existing development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Commercial building codes requiring energy efficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Residential building codes requiring energy efficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

One More Thing...

What else would you like to share with us, what is your "Big Idea" for The City of Black River Falls?

THANK YOU!

Proposed Schedule/Logistics

- Survey – open from ASAP after July 24th meeting until end of August
- Stakeholder Meeting (Public)
 - Wednesday, September 4th, 2:00 PM or 6:00 PM
 - What facility could we use for this?
- Draft Goals and Objectives Meeting (Committee)
 - Wednesday, September 11th
- Final Goals and Objectives Meeting (Committee)
 - Wednesday, September 25th
- Public Hearing (Public)
 - Wednesday, October 30th