

Forward to 2045: A Bold Vision for Black River Falls

City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 to 2045



Prepared by the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission
Under the Direction of the Black River Falls City Council
and Plan Commission





City of Black River Falls
Comprehensive Plan 2025 - 2045

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

Joel Busse – Ward 4 Alderperson

City of Black River Falls Plan Commission

Jay Eddy – Mayor

Michael Rave – Alderperson

Marc McDowel – Member

Randy Eddy – Member

Jared Smith – Member

Anneliese Eddy – Member

Dennis Guenther – Member

Mississippi River

Regional Planning Commission

Jon Bingol – Executive Director

Ken Harwood – Planner

Sarah Ofte – Senior Office Manager

Jack Zabrowski – Senior Planner

Forward to 2045: A Bold Vision for Black River Falls City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025-2045

Forward 2045 provides a strategic vision for guiding the city’s growth and development over the next two decades. Aligned with Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning Law (Sections 66.1001(1) and 66.1001(2)), this plan establishes a clear roadmap for building a resilient, thriving, and sustainable community.

Grounded in an analysis of current conditions—such as demographics, land use, transportation, and economic trends, — this plan defines actionable goals and objectives. These goals address critical areas including land use, housing, transportation, economic development, utilities, natural and cultural resources, and community services. The plan also reflects the values and aspirations of residents, ensuring that development aligns with the community’s long-term vision.

This plan will guide decision-makers and city leaders in creating a vibrant economy, protecting natural and cultural assets, and enhancing the quality of life for all residents. With ongoing assessment and updates, the City of Black River Falls is committed to fostering growth and preserving its unique character for the future.

Contents

- Introduction.....1**
- Why Plan? 1
- Setting 2
- Black River Falls Planning Goals3**
- Introduction 3
- Housing Goal 3
- Transportation Goal 3
- Utilities and Community Facilities Goal 3
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Goal..... 4
- Economic Development Goal..... 4
- Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal 4
- Land Use Goal 4
- Black River Falls Objectives.....5**
- Short Term Objectives 5
- Medium Term Objectives 6
- Long Term Objectives 7
- Implementation8**
- History of Black River Falls.....9**
- Map of Town of River Falls and Surrounding Communities 10
- Issues and Opportunities.....11**
- Issues..... 11
- Opportunities 12
- Housing Element.....13**
- Goal: 13
- Affordable Housing Development..... 13
- Housing Issues..... 13
- Establish a Housing Revitalization Program 13
- Refine and Update City Zoning Codes..... 13
- Housing Data 14
- Housing Units by Type and Year Built..... 14
- Table Housing Units..... 15

Table Housing Structures by Type	15
Table Housing Structures by Year Built	16
Median Housing Value	16
Table Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units	17
Occupancy Characteristics	18
Table Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units	18
Table 1.12 Housing Unit Occupancy Rates	18
Table Housing Unit Vacancy Rates	19
Affordability of Housing	19
Table Percent of Household Income Spent on Owner-Occupied Units	20
Table Percent of Household Income Spent on Renter-Occupied Units	21
Housing Tenure	21
Table Year Householder Moved In (Owner Occupied Units)	21
Transportation Element	22
Goal	22
Improving Community Infrastructure	22
Public Road Inventory	22
Non-Driving Population	23
Public Transit	23
Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation	23
Railroad	23
Airports	23
Freight	24
Existing Transportation Plans	24
Map Town of River Falls Roads	24
Utilities and Community Facilities Element	25
Goal	25
Enhance Water System Capacity	25
Improving Community Infrastructure	25
Public Infrastructure and Community Engagement	25
Wastewater Treatment	25
Water Supply	26
Electricity and Natural Gas Transmission	26

Alternative Energy Sources	26
Local Park and Recreation Facilities	27
Cemeteries	27
Health Care Facilities.....	28
Map Health Care Facilities	28
Childcare Facilities.....	29
Libraries.....	29
Senior Services	29
Map Community Facilities.....	29
School Districts.....	30
City Facilities and Equipment	30
Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling	30
Police Protection	30
Fire Protection.....	30
EMS/Rescue Services	30
Communication Facilities	31
Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element.....	32
Goal	32
Natural Resources	32
Geology and Topography	33
Streams and Watershed Drainage Areas.....	33
Wetlands, Floodplains, and Bluffs	34
Woodlands	34
Wildlife Habitat	35
Threatened and Endangered Species.....	35
Exotic and Invasive Species	35
Metallic and Non-Metallic Mining Resources	35
Air Quality	36
Soils	36
Map Floodplain and Wetlands	37
Map Watersheds	37
Cultural and Historic Resources	38
Cultural Resources	38

Historic Resources	38
Black River Falls Commercial Historic District Map.....	39
Certified Local Government Program	40
Economic Development Element	41
Industry Projections	41
Industrial Park	41
Aerial View of Black River Falls Industrial Park	42
Table Employment by Industry in the City of Black River Falls.....	43
Income and Poverty	43
Table Percentage of Population Below Poverty Level	44
Table Percentage of Households within Income Categories	44
Commuting to Work.....	44
Table Means of Commuting to Work in the City of Black River Falls	44
Table Industry Projections for Western Workforce Development Area.....	45
Intergovernmental Cooperation Element	46
Ho-Chunk Nation.....	46
Neighboring Towns and Communities	47
Black River Falls School District	48
Jackson County.....	48
Regional Planning Commission	49
Federal and State Agencies	50
Infrastructure to Support City Success.....	50
Land Use Element	51
Goal	51
Land Use Inventory	51
Zoning and Land Use Regulations	51
Map Zoning	52
Figure Proportion of Land in the City of Black River Falls per Zoning District.....	53
Map Slope and Topography	54
Existing Land Use.....	55
Table Land Use	55
Land Use Trends	56
Figure 1.3 Land Use in the City of Black River Falls in 2023	56

Land Unsuitable for Development with map	57
Other Demographics and Data.....	58
Population Trends and Projections	58
City Black River Falls Wards.....	58
Table Population.....	59
Population Characteristics.....	59
Table Race	60
Table Race by Ward in the City of Black River Falls.....	60
Figure Age by Five Year Cohort	61
Table Age.....	61
Educational Attainment.....	62
Table Educational Attainment of Population Over 25	62
Appendices.....	63
Appendix A:.....	63
Appendix B: Survey Report	64
Appendix C: Public Participation Plan	73
Appendix D: Sign In Sheet From Stakeholder Meeting	75
Appendix E: Class 1 Notice of Public Hearing	76
Appendix F: Plan Commission Adoption Resolution.....	77
Appendix G: Common Council Ordinance to Adopt the Plan	78



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Introduction

The City of Black River Falls developed its Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning law (Section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes). This law, enacted in 1999, required that local zoning, subdivision regulations, and official mapping align with a comprehensive plan. The final plan included two key components: an Existing Conditions Report and a section on Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Recommendations.

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC), one of nine voluntary regional planning commissions in Wisconsin, facilitated the planning process. While MRRPC provided assistance with drafting and coordinating public engagement, the plan itself was directed and overseen by the City Plan Commission.

The first phase involved the creation of the Existing Conditions Report, which analyzed data from 2020 to 2023 on population, housing, and the economy and much more. This report formed the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan. After reviewing the report, the Plan Commission collaborated with MRRPC to design a public survey, incorporating local insights. The survey was made available in August and September 2024. A stakeholder meeting was held on September 9, 2024, allowing local leaders and residents to discuss the city’s issues and opportunities directly.

The Comprehensive Plan culminated in a set of goals and objectives designed to guide the future development of the City of Black River Falls. The goals provide a broad vision, while objectives are specific, measurable actions—each with a defined timeline. These will guide the city’s development and decision-making in the years ahead. This plan looks 20 years into the future: to 2045. These goals and objectives are listed first in this plan, prior to the Existing Conditions Report.

Why Plan?

Planning enables the City of Black River Falls to anticipate and address emerging challenges, helping the community stay ahead of potential risks such as population growth, infrastructure needs, and economic shifts. By analyzing current conditions and future trends, the City can proactively adapt to changing circumstances.

Planning also fosters a shared vision by involving residents, businesses, and stakeholders in the process. This collaborative approach reflects the community’s values and aspirations, strengthening bonds and promoting a sense of ownership.

Long-term planning supports sustainable growth and quality of life by balancing land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and resource preservation. It aims to create a resilient community where residents and businesses can thrive, while preserving the City’s unique character and resources for future generations.

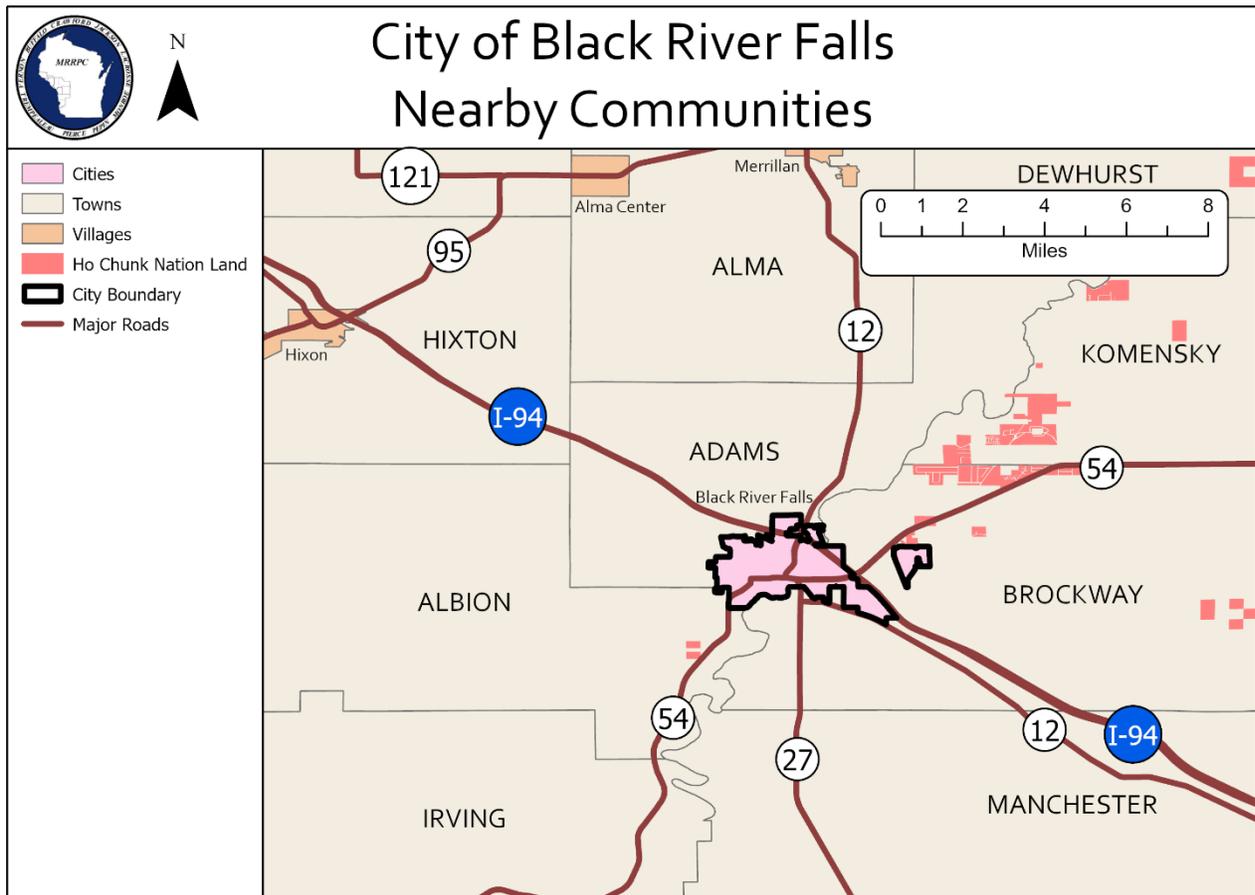


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Setting

The City of Black River Falls is located in central Jackson County, with the Black River running through its center. The City is divided into four wards and borders the Towns of Adams, Brockway, and Albion. Nearby villages include Hixton, Alma Center, and Merrillan, with Sparta, Tomah, La Crosse, and Eau Claire being the closest cities. Fort McCoy is 12 miles southeast.

The County's landscape is mainly agricultural and forested, with the Black River serving as the primary drainage. The City's transportation network includes Interstates, US Highways, State Highways, County Highways, and City Roads. Interstate 94 runs east-west, connecting Black River Falls to Milwaukee and the Twin Cities. USH 12/STH 27 runs north-south, linking the City to Eau Claire, Hayward, and Tomah. STH 54 crosses the City east-west, providing access to USH 53 and STH 80. County Highway A is the only county road within the City.





Black River Falls Planning Goals

Introduction

This section of the report outlines the goals and objectives for the City of Black River Falls. These goals reflect the community's long-term vision, with each goal addressing one of the core elements of the Comprehensive Plan, including land use, housing, transportation, economic development, utilities and community facilities, intergovernmental cooperation, and agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. The objectives provide clear, actionable steps to achieve this vision. While each goal aligns with a specific element, the objectives are not tied to any one element, recognizing the interconnected nature of these areas. Each objective is designed to be specific, measurable, and time-bound to ensure progress can be tracked and evaluated. This section also contains the implementation section, which states how the city plans to go about achieving these objectives and how they will be monitored and reported.

Housing Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will provide diverse, high-quality housing options that are affordable, accessible, and sustainable, meeting the needs of residents across all income levels and life stages. We will prioritize the development and preservation of safe, energy-efficient housing that enhances neighborhood stability, supports long-term growth, and ensures that all residents have access to safe and affordable housing that meets their needs now and into the future.

Transportation Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will develop a safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation network that accommodates all modes of transportation, including vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit. We will integrate transportation planning with land use and economic development, ensuring that our infrastructure supports the mobility needs of residents, businesses, and visitors while enhancing access to regional markets and promoting sustainable practices.

Utilities and Community Facilities Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will ensure the provision of high-quality, reliable utilities and community facilities that meet the needs of a growing population while protecting the environment. We will invest in infrastructure improvements, including water, sewer, stormwater management, and energy systems, that support sustainable growth and foster resilience against future challenges. Our public facilities, including parks, libraries, and emergency services, will be accessible, well-maintained, and responsive to the community's evolving needs.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will preserve and protect its rich agricultural heritage, natural landscapes, and cultural resources, recognizing their critical role in maintaining the City’s character and environmental health. We will promote sustainable practices in agriculture, forestry, and resource management, ensuring the conservation of sensitive ecosystems, wildlife habitats, and water resources. At the same time, we will celebrate and protect the City’s cultural and historic assets, promoting them as key drivers of tourism and community identity.

Economic Development Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will foster a vibrant, resilient economy by attracting and retaining businesses that diversify the local economy, create high-quality jobs, and expand the tax base. We will leverage our strategic location, natural resources, and cultural assets to promote tourism, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic growth while enhancing the quality of life for residents and positioning the City as a regional hub for commerce and innovation.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will actively engage in collaborative partnerships with neighboring municipalities, Jackson County, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and state and federal agencies to pursue mutually beneficial initiatives. We will seek opportunities to share resources, align development efforts, and address regional challenges in a cooperative and transparent manner. Our goal is to ensure that the City remains a key stakeholder in shaping the future of the region through strong intergovernmental relationships.

Land Use Goal

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to land use, prioritizing the preservation of natural resources, promoting smart growth principles, and fostering a diverse mix of residential, commercial, and industrial developments that reinforce the community's unique character and sense of place. We will promote innovative zoning and land management policies that protect open spaces, encourage infill development, and create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods that enhance the quality of life for all residents.



Black River Falls Objectives

The following objectives for the City of Black River Falls are organized into three timeframes: short-term (within the next 5 years), medium-term (within the next 10 years), and long-term (within the next 20 years). While the City is committed to pursuing these objectives to enhance the quality of life for residents and support sustainable growth, it is important to note that this plan represents a guiding framework and not a legally binding obligation. The City's ability to achieve these objectives will depend on available resources, funding, and changing circumstances over time.

Short Term Objectives

- 1. Establish a City Identity and Community Events**
Form a committee that includes City Council members, Chamber of Commerce representatives, and interested community organizations to develop a unique identity for the city and plan associated festivals/events.
- 2. Enhance Water System Capacity**
Expand the city's water system by constructing an additional water tower or well to support future growth, as the current system is nearing its capacity limits.
- 3. Evaluate Wastewater Solutions**
Explore options for expanding wastewater facilities or collaborating with neighboring entities, such as the Ho-Chunk Nation, to enhance wastewater capacity and ensure sustainable growth.
- 4. Upgrade 3rd Street Culverts**
Make necessary improvements to the culverts on 3rd Street to enhance safety and infrastructure resilience.
- 5. Modernize Waste Disposal Facilities**
Develop a combined waste disposal and recycling facility adjacent to the city to improve waste management efficiency.
- 6. Establish a Centralized Public Safety Building**
Construct a new facility to centralize police, fire, and EMS services, freeing up space in the City Hall for other functions.
- 7. Lay the Groundwork for a Municipal Court System**
Utilize the space created in City Hall to explore and plan for a municipal court system, which could streamline services for residents and generate additional city revenue.
- 8. Develop a City Bike Trail Network**
Design and implement a bike trail that connects with the Wauzee Trail and state systems, promoting outdoor recreation and tourism.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

9. **Improve Road Infrastructure**

Collaborate with WisDOT on major road projects within their jurisdiction and directly address safety concerns in city-managed areas. Focus on improvements like County Road A between Hwy 12/27 and the McNulty Rd intersection. Enhance communication with residents about the city's existing five-year street improvement plan.

10. **Explore Childcare Development Opportunities**

Develop a conceptual plan for expanding childcare services, identifying funding opportunities to make childcare more accessible and affordable.

11. **Investigate Public Transit Alternatives**

Assess the feasibility of alternative public transit options to enhance mobility for all city residents.

12. **Foster Business Expansion and Diversity**

Explore opportunities to expand and diversify the city's business environment, supporting new and existing enterprises.

13. **Plan for an Aging-in-Place Elder Care Facility**

Develop a strategy to establish an elder care facility that supports aging in place, catering to the needs of the city's older residents.

14. **Create a Comprehensive Community Welcome Guide**

Produce a digital and physical "Welcome Guide" detailing local facilities, organizations, and services. This guide would be updated annually and linked on the city's website, as well as distributed to new residents.

Medium Term Objectives

1. **Develop Land Adjacent to the Black River**

Utilize vacant land near the river and, if feasible, repurpose areas like the fire station site for mixed-use development, including commercial and residential spaces.

2. **Attract Major Employers to the Industrial Park**

Aim to fill the industrial park to capacity by attracting significant employers, supporting economic growth and job creation.

3. **Refine and Update City Zoning Codes**

Review and modernize city zoning codes to support affordable and diverse housing options, ensuring the codes reflect current community needs and development standards.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

4. **Pursue Strategic Boundary Adjustments**

Explore development of new or amended boundary agreements with neighboring townships to optimize services, reduce costs, and improve community integration.

5. **Expand Electrical Capacity**

Increase the city's electrical capacity to support EV infrastructure and accommodate business growth, ensuring the city is prepared for sustainable expansion.

Long Term Objectives

1. **Expand Airport Infrastructure**

Plan for the addition of a second runway at the airport to accommodate increased air traffic and support economic development.

2. **Establish a Housing Revitalization Program**

Create a comprehensive program to provide financial assistance and resources for improving the safety, livability, and efficiency of older homes within the city.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Implementation

Plan Administration

To ensure the effective achievement of the goals and objectives outlined in this plan, the City of Black River Falls will implement a structured reporting and monitoring process. City resources will be used strategically to support this process, ensuring transparency and accountability at each step. The reporting framework will focus on tracking progress, evaluating outcomes, and adjusting plans as necessary to meet changing circumstances or unforeseen challenges.

At one Common Council meeting each year, a report will be presented by the Plan Commission outlining the city's progress on the Comprehensive Plan's objectives. Relevant departments and staff will assist in compiling and presenting this information. Every five years, a more in-depth review will assess whether the city is on track to meet its goals. The plan will be updated every ten years, with the next update scheduled **for 2035**.

Plan Amendments

This Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time by the Board following the procedures set forth in Wisconsin Statutes § 66.0295(4). Amendments are generally defined as minor changes to the plan maps or text. Amendments may be needed for a variety of reasons including:

- Changes in goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations
- Changes in borders through annexation
- Unique opportunities presented by private development proposals
- Changes in programs and services
- Changes in state or federal laws

Any proposed amendments should be submitted to the Plan Committee for their review and recommendations prior to being considered by the Town Board for final action.

Plan Update

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law requires that the comprehensive plan be updated at least once every 10 years. An update is different than an amendment because the update is often a substantial rewrite of the plan document and maps. In addition, on January 1, 2010, "any program or action that affects land use" must be consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans, including zoning and land division ordinances. The Town should continue to monitor any changes to the language or interpretations of the State Law over the next several years.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

History of Black River Falls

White pine trees were growing here when Columbus made his voyage to America. In 1819 the first attempts to saw lumber were unsuccessful, but in 1839 Jacob Spaulding founded Black River Falls by erecting the first permanent sawmill and settlement on the Black River. Lumber attracted the settlers who set up sawmills powered by the Black River.

This valley contained the largest pine trees, some of them up to six feet across at ground level, and the most pine trees per township in the state. Before logging ended in 1905, more than fifty sawmills had been in operation in Jackson County. Accurate records kept over a period for forty years reveal that enough lumber was sawed to have built a plank road nine feet wide and four inches thick around the world.

Iron ore was smelted at Black River Falls in 1856 and again in 1886, but the old process proved too expensive and was abandoned. The Jackson County Iron Company, a subsidiary of Inland Steel, built a modern processing plant in 1969 that ships 2800 tons of taconite pellets every day of the year to its blast furnaces in Indiana. The mine buildings and open pit mine are visible from the overlook on top of this scenic Bell Mound.

Mormons came to the town in 1842 but left after the death of Joseph Smith. The town's first church opened in 1847, and the first school in 1848. The town was destroyed by fire in 1860 but was rebuilt in 1861. A damaging flood in 1911 also caused serious damage to the city.

See Also:

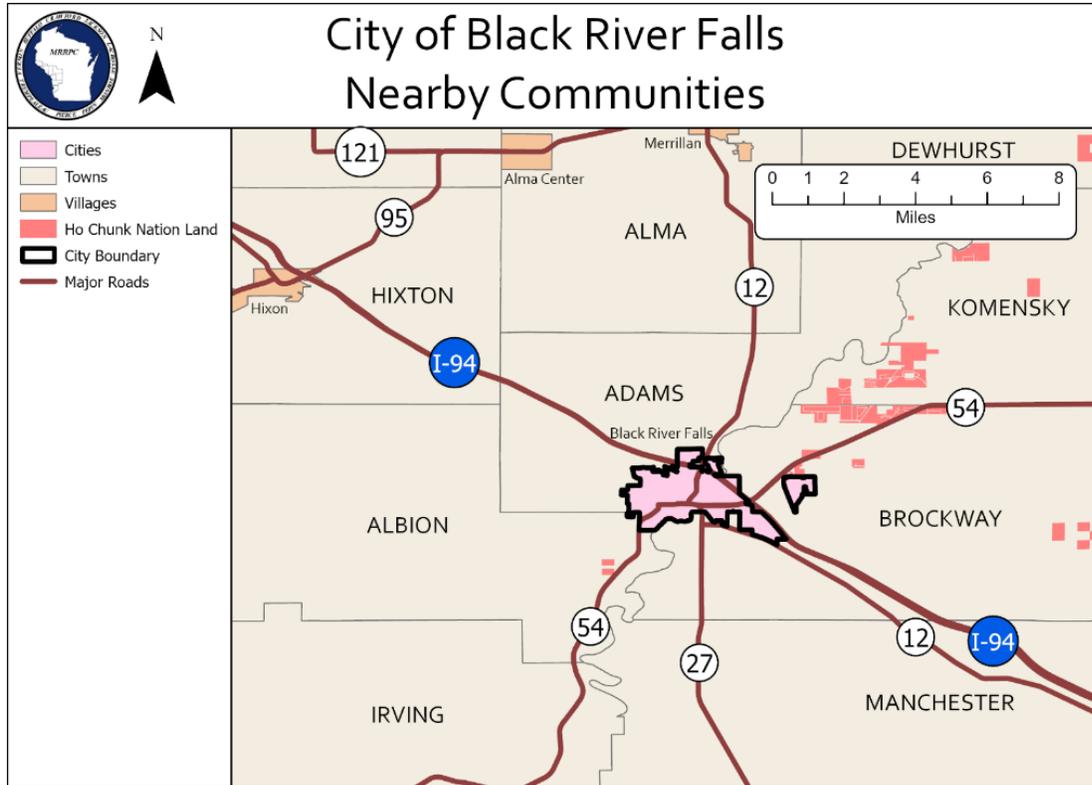
<https://recollectionwisconsin.org/travel-back-in-time/black-river-falls>

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS5503>



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Map of Town of River Falls and Surrounding Communities





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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.

Issues

Based on both the stakeholder meeting summary and the survey report, the top issues facing the City of Black River Falls can be summarized as follows:

1. **Low Median Income and Lack of Good Jobs:** This was highlighted in both the stakeholder meeting and the survey, where job opportunities were ranked as a key priority.
2. **Housing Issues:** The city faces challenges with housing supply, quality, and affordability. The stakeholder meeting noted a lack of housing stock and affordability issues, while the survey identified affordable housing as one of the top concerns.
3. **Stagnant or Declining Population Growth:** The aging population and related strains on resources were key issues raised in the stakeholder meeting. This demographic shift also drives concerns about healthcare and support services for the elderly, which were prioritized in the survey.
4. **Childcare Affordability and Availability:** The affordability and availability of childcare was flagged in the stakeholder meeting as a barrier to attracting families and workers to the city. The survey also ranked childcare as important.
5. **Public Infrastructure and Community Engagement:** Both the stakeholder meeting and survey noted issues related to public infrastructure (like roads, parks, and utilities), as well as the need for better communication and access to community resources. Respondents highlighted improvements in local streets and community services like parks.
6. **Health Care Services:** As the city faces an aging population, the need for improved healthcare services was a strong concern in both the survey and stakeholder feedback.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Opportunities

Based on the stakeholder meeting summary and the survey results, the top opportunities for the City of Black River Falls are:

1. **Expanding Job Opportunities and Economic Development:** The city has an opportunity to attract higher-paying jobs and expand its industrial base. The Industrial Park offers significant potential for growth, and stakeholders emphasized the need to take action on expanding it. By focusing on industries like healthcare, education, technology, and tourism, the city can create a more robust economy. Supporting job training and business development will also play a crucial role in this economic expansion.
2. **Affordable Housing Development:** With housing affordability being a pressing issue, there is a clear opportunity to increase the supply of affordable homes. Stakeholders expressed interest in setting specific, measurable targets for housing development, such as aiming for the construction of 100 new housing units by 2040. This would help alleviate pressure on the current housing market and make living in Black River Falls more accessible for a broader range of residents.
3. **Healthcare Expansion and Services for an Aging Population:** As the population ages, there is an opportunity to expand healthcare services, particularly those aimed at elderly care. The local hospital has already begun exploring new initiatives like renewable energy projects and alternative aging options. Supporting and expanding these healthcare services could make the city more attractive to older residents, as well as alleviate pressure on local resources.
4. **Tourism and Recreation Development:** Black River Falls can capitalize on its natural beauty and recreational opportunities by further developing tourism. Survey respondents highlighted the importance of promoting the city's parks, trails, and natural resources. Expanding access to these areas, along with enhancing recreational facilities and events, could boost tourism, improve quality of life for residents, and strengthen the local economy.
5. **Improving Community Infrastructure:** Investing in infrastructure is a major opportunity for the city. Improvements to roads, bridges, and utilities were identified as critical needs. Additionally, there is potential for expanding multi-use trails, enhancing sidewalks, and increasing the availability of public transportation options. These investments would improve the overall functionality of the city and support its long-term growth.
6. **Enhanced Community Engagement and Information Sharing:** Stakeholders identified the need for better communication and access to community resources. Creating a centralized hub or website to provide information on available services, parks, and amenities would significantly enhance residents' awareness and engagement. This resource could also help attract new residents by showcasing the city's offerings more effectively.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Housing Element

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will provide diverse, high-quality housing options that are affordable, accessible, and sustainable, meeting the needs of residents across all income levels and life stages. We will prioritize the development and preservation of safe, energy-efficient housing that enhances neighborhood stability, supports long-term growth, and ensures that all residents have access to safe and affordable housing that meets their needs now and into the future.

Affordable Housing Development

With housing affordability being a pressing issue, there is a clear opportunity to increase the supply of affordable homes. Stakeholders expressed interest in setting specific, measurable targets for housing development, such as aiming for the construction of 100 new housing units by 2040. This would help alleviate pressure on the current housing market and make living in Black River Falls more accessible for a broader range of residents.

Housing Issues

The city faces challenges with housing supply, quality, and affordability. The stakeholder meeting noted a lack of housing stock and affordability issues, while the survey identified affordable housing as one of the top concerns.

Establish a Housing Revitalization Program

Create a comprehensive program to provide financial assistance and resources for improving the safety, livability, and efficiency of older homes within the city.

Refine and Update City Zoning Codes

Review and modernize city zoning codes to support affordable and diverse housing options, ensuring the codes reflect current community needs and development standards.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Housing Data

Housing Units by Type and Year Built

In 2017, the Windward Group completed a housing study for the City of Black River Falls. The findings and statistics from this study are frequently mentioned in the housing section of this plan, as although the data is a few years out of date at this point, it is of higher quality and more accurate and precise than the more recent data produced by the American Community Survey. American Community Survey data is also used, both for context and for when data is not available from the housing study. Preference is given to data from the housing study, however.

Housing structures in the City of Black River Falls are mostly (63%) single-family detached homes. 6% of housing structures are 2 units, and 6% of housing structures have 3 or 4 units. The next most frequent category is 20 or more units, with 11% of housing structures being of this type. This reflects the City's older and denser pattern of development than seen in Jackson County and much of Wisconsin – 79% of housing units in the County are single-family detached homes, and 66% in Wisconsin.

According to the American Community Survey, from 2010 to 2022, the reported number of housing units in the City decreased by 161, representing a change of -8%. Before further discussing any housing data from the American Community Survey, a caveat must be made, due to the rather unexpected results from the data. American Community Survey data can have large margins of error, especially for smaller communities. Random chance and the margin of error producing a high number in 2010 and a small number in 2022 could be a plausible explanation. From 2010 to 2022, Jackson County saw an increase of 1%, while Wisconsin saw an increase of 5%. From 2010 to 2016, the number of housing units dropped by 240, but increased by 84 in the following 3 years.

There has been less housing development in Black River Falls in more recent times. This was an issue highlighted in the 2017 housing study as well – most homes in the City were built before 1969, significantly older than most homes in Jackson County and Wisconsin. According to the American Community Survey, 11% of homes in the City were built in 2000 or later, compared to 26% in Jackson County and 18% in Wisconsin. The American Community Survey claims that no housing units in the City were built after 2020. However, actual home construction data from the City's building inspector does not support the findings of the American Community Survey. Since 2020, they report that 13 single family homes and 6 multi-family homes (total of 96 units) have been built in the City, for a total of 109 units.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table Housing Units

Year	City of Black River Falls	Jackson County	Wisconsin
2010	1,911* 1,665	9,521	2,593,073
2016	1,671	9,772	2,649,597
2022	1,755 1,588	9,646*	2,734,511
% Change 2010 to 2022	-8%	1%	5%

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

*These numbers and others may not match the actual tax roles for the years they represent. A 2017 housing study used different data (in Red) but showed a decline in household units in 2022 (also an estimate). That study is here:

<https://blackriverfallswi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/BRF-Housing-Needs-Assessment-2017.pdf>

“ACS data can be considered “incorrect” to a certain degree because it relies on a sample of the population, which means there’s always a margin of error due to potential issues like respondent error (misreporting information), non-response bias (people not completing the survey), coverage error (missing certain populations), and data processing errors, all of which can lead to inaccuracies in the final estimates; additionally, the accuracy can vary depending on the geographic area being studied, with smaller areas having larger potential for error due to smaller sample sizes.”

Census.Gov...

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sahie/technical-documentation/source-and-accuracy.html>

Table Housing Structures by Type

Housing Structure Type	City of Black River Falls		Jackson County	Wisconsin
	#	%		
1-unit, detached	1,108	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	1,755	100%	100%	100%

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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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%
Built 1950 to 1959	292	17%	8%	11%
Built 1940 to 1949	89	5%	4%	5%
Built 1939 or earlier	380	22%	21%	19%
Total	1,755	100%	9,646	2,734,511

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

Median Housing Value

The 2017 housing study also discussed home prices. While this data is higher quality than that provided by the American Community Survey, it is seven years out of date – before the rise in housing prices following the pandemic. Therefore, considering both this study and the American Community Survey data is prudent.

In 2017, the housing study found that the median home value in the City was \$125,619, with 69.7% of all homes valued at under \$150,000. In Jackson County, the median home value is slightly higher at \$130,233, with 60.2% of all homes carrying a value under \$150,000.

According to the American Community Survey, 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.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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 had 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 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
% Change (2010 to 2022)	3%	40%	37%

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

Zillow provides the Zillow Home Value Index (available at <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>) which reflects the typical value for homes in the 35th to 65th percentile range. This index increased from about \$120,000 in 2009 to about \$215,000 in 2024. The index steadily rose following 2009, although the rate of increase rapidly increased in 2020 and has only recently slowed. This estimate is much higher for the median housing value given by the American Community Survey, and is likely more accurate than that value – it is certainly a more current estimate.

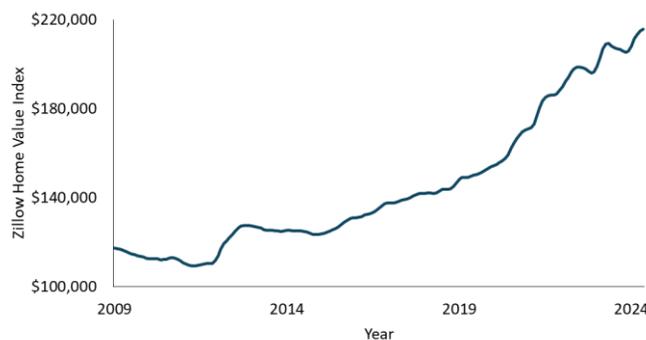


Figure 1.5 Zillow Home Value Index over Time in the City of Black River Falls



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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. 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.

The 2017 housing study found that the rental vacancy rate was 1.8% and recommended building up to 82 new units to accommodate the demand. During this study, of properties the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority financed, a vacancy rate of 0.0% was found. According to the American Community Survey, in 2022 0% of homes were available to purchase or to rent.

Table Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units

Occupancy Status	City of Black River Falls		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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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

Housing affordability is a significant issue today, often measured by whether households spend more than 30% of their income on housing. In the City of Black River Falls, 36% of homeowners with a mortgage spend over this threshold, compared to 32% in Jackson County and 22% in Wisconsin. For homeowners without a mortgage, 17% exceed this threshold, higher than the 15% in Jackson County and 12% in Wisconsin. This issue is likely tied to the City’s lower median household income, as the median home value is lower than in the County and State, meaning households must allocate a larger share of their income to housing.

For renters, 44% of the City’s 777 rental households spend 30% or more of their income on housing, similar to Jackson County (42%) and Wisconsin (43%). This may be due to a higher concentration of low-income individuals in urban areas and the City’s lower median income.

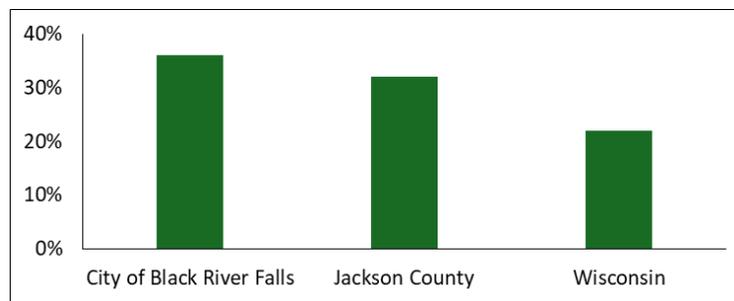


Figure 1.6 Proportion of Households with Mortgages Spending more than 30% of Household Income on Housing



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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 the length of time residents have lived at their current residence, is important for community planning. Comparing housing tenures between different communities may not be useful due to the varying characteristics of each community. For example, a college town may have low housing tenure due to the transient nature of student populations. Therefore, it's more meaningful to compare the same community over time.

Between 2010 and 2022, there were several changes in housing tenure patterns in the City. In 2022, a smaller proportion of residents had moved in within the last decade compared to 2010 and 2016. The proportion of residents who moved 1 to 2 decades ago was slightly lower than in 2016, but higher than in 2010. Significantly more residents had moved in 2 to 3 decades or 3 decades or more ago in 2022 than in 2016 or 2010. This suggests that more home purchases occurred before 2010 compared to the period leading up to 2022, with fewer people buying homes more recently. However, those who have purchased homes are staying longer now than they did a decade ago.

Table 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 Element

The transportation element provides a baseline for transportation facilities and capabilities in the City of Black River Falls. 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.

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will develop a safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation network that accommodates all modes of transportation, including vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit. We will integrate transportation planning with land use and economic development, ensuring that our infrastructure supports the mobility needs of residents, businesses, and visitors while enhancing access to regional markets and promoting sustainable practices.

Improving Community Infrastructure

Investing in infrastructure is a major opportunity for the city. Improvements to roads, bridges, and utilities were identified as critical needs. Additionally, there is potential for expanding multi-use trails, enhancing sidewalks, and increasing the availability of public transportation options. These investments would improve the overall functionality of the city and support its long-term growth.

Public Road Inventory

The main transportation route serving Black River Falls is Interstate 94, which runs along the city's eastern border. Additionally, US Highway 12, Wisconsin Highway 27, and Wisconsin Highway 54 provide further connectivity through the area.

The City of Black River Falls participates in the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) program. The WISLR program maintains a complete listing of public roads in the Town by jurisdiction, classification, and number of miles.

Public roads are classified as arterial, collector and local based on functionality. Arterials provide intra-community links and interconnect urban arterial systems and connections to rural collectors. Collector roads provide traffic circulation in residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas. Collectors also focus traffic from local roads onto the arterial system. Local roads provide the lowest level of mobility and provide direct access to collectors and arterials.

- **Minor Arterials:** Those streets and highways that are used primarily for fast and heavy traffic
- **Major Collectors:** Those roadways which carry traffic from minor streets to the system of major streets and highways, including the principal entrance streets of a residential development and streets for circulation within such a development
- **Minor Collectors:** Those streets which are used primarily for access to abutting properties
- **Local Streets:** Minor streets which are parallel or adjacent to major streets and highways and which provide access to abutting properties and protection from through traffic. All other public roads in the Town that are not classified by the DOT are local roads.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Non-Driving Population

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation defines the non-driving population as “can include aging adults, students, low-income individuals, those with physical, mental or intellectual/developmental disabilities, those who cannot drive, those with no access to a vehicle, or those who prefer not to drive.” The non-driving population in the City of Black River Falls is estimated to be between 0 to 10% of the total population.

Public Transit

The City of Black River Falls currently operates a Shared Ride Taxi Service provided by Abby Vans. This on-demand service runs daily from 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM, using two city-owned vehicles. It serves the city and a surrounding area within five miles, offering affordable fares for adults, students, seniors, and disabled riders. In 2023, the service provided around 13,000 rides, but ridership has recently declined, partly due to fare increases. The city is exploring ways to maintain or improve transit options while managing costs, considering partnerships with other local service providers.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Walkers and bikers in the City primarily use existing roads and sidewalks, though some areas lack sidewalks. On quiet country roads, including town and county highways, minimal improvements are needed to create great biking routes. Low-traffic rural roads (with AADT below 700) generally don't require paved shoulders, as motorists can easily pass without facing oncoming traffic. However, busier state and county highways, especially those with more truck traffic, may benefit from paved shoulders. In areas where suburban development is increasing along low-traffic town roads, adding paved shoulders should be considered.

Railroad

The City of Black River Falls does not have direct passenger rail service, but it is located near freight rail lines that serve the broader Jackson County region. These freight lines are primarily used for transporting goods and materials, supporting local industries. While the city itself does not have a major rail hub, nearby cities and counties rely on these lines for industrial and commercial shipments.

For passenger rail service, residents of Black River Falls can access Amtrak services from stations located in nearby cities. The closest Amtrak stations are in Tomah and La Crosse, Wisconsin. These stations are part of Amtrak's Empire Builder and Borealis routes, which runs between Chicago and the Pacific Northwest, with stops in several Wisconsin cities. This route provides a valuable connection for residents to major urban centers, including Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago, offering long-distance and regional travel options.

Airports

The Black River Falls Airport is a public-use facility that serves the City of Black River Falls and surrounding areas. It has a single asphalt runway measuring 4,600 feet in length and is capable of accommodating small to mid-sized aircraft. The airport primarily supports general aviation, including private and business flights. It offers basic services such as fuel and tie-downs, and its operations are managed by the city. The airport plays a key role in providing air access to the region for both local residents and visitors.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Freight

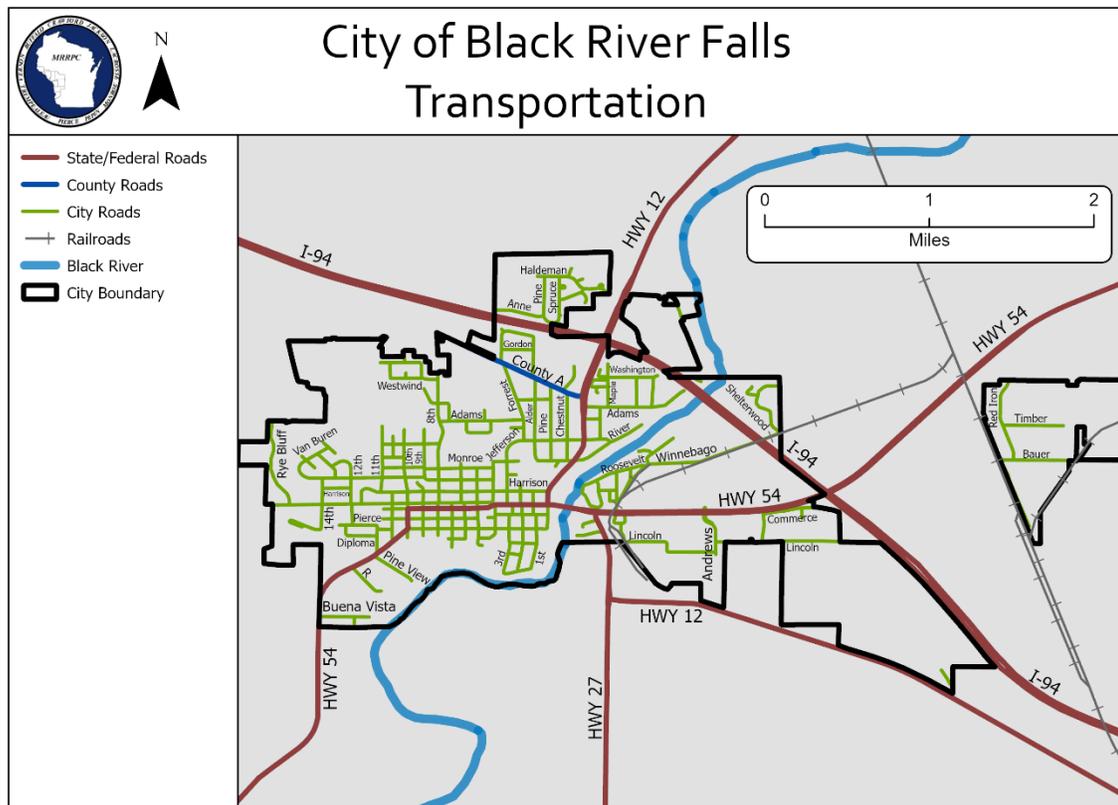
Due to its proximity to I-94, Black River Falls sees moderate truck traffic. Freight is primarily transported through the city via I-94, providing a key route for goods movement. While Black River Falls lacks direct water transportation access, it is less than 60 miles from the Mississippi River in La Crosse. Additional port facilities are available farther south in Prairie du Chien.

Existing Transportation Plans

The following transportation plans were reviewed as part of the Town of River Falls planning process. The plans were reviewed to ensure consistency with other governing jurisdictions regarding future transportation improvements.

- Active Transportation Plan 2050
- Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030
- Wisconsin State Freight Plan
- Connect 2050
- Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050
- MRRPC Regional Freight Study
- Local Plans (i.e. Rec, Old Comp, Other)

Map Town of River Falls Roads





Utilities and Community Facilities Element

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

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will ensure the provision of high-quality, reliable utilities and community facilities that meet the needs of a growing population while protecting the environment. We will invest in infrastructure improvements, including water, sewer, stormwater management, and energy systems, that support sustainable growth and foster resilience against future challenges. Our public facilities, including parks, libraries, and emergency services, will be accessible, well-maintained, and responsive to the community's evolving needs.

Enhance Water System Capacity

Expand the city's water system by constructing an additional water tower or well to support future growth, as the current system is nearing its capacity limits.

Improving Community Infrastructure

Investing in infrastructure is a major opportunity for the city. Improvements to roads, bridges, and utilities were identified as critical needs. Additionally, there is potential for expanding multi-use trails, enhancing sidewalks, and increasing the availability of public transportation options. These investments would improve the overall functionality of the city and support its long-term growth.

Public Infrastructure and Community Engagement

Both the stakeholder meeting and survey noted issues related to public infrastructure (like roads, parks, and utilities), as well as the need for better communication and access to community resources. Respondents highlighted improvements in local streets and community services like parks.

Wastewater Treatment

The wastewater treatment services for the City of Black River Falls are managed by the Black River Falls Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), located on Disposal Drive. The plant has a design capacity to handle an annual average flow of 0.860 million gallons per day (MGD) and a peak daily flow of 1.36 MGD. The facility is in above-average condition and serves not only the City but also the neighboring Brockway Sanitary District, processing daily flows from Brockway ranging between 50,000 to 100,000 gallons.

The plant's infrastructure includes three lift stations: the River Street Lift Station, which serves approximately 10-12 residential customers; the Lallapaloosa Lift Station, which was constructed in 2006 and currently serves 2-5 customers; and the Swiderski Lift Station, built in 2023, which supports 90-100 residential units with additional capacity for future expansion. The WWTP also manages the City's sanitary collection system, which is maintained and operated by the City.

In 2023, the WWTP processed a total of 181 million gallons of wastewater, with an average daily flow of 0.496 MGD. The plant is well-positioned to accommodate additional residential loading; however, its capacity for higher-use commercial additions is limited. The current location of the WWTP may restrict future expansion efforts. The facility faces challenges in meeting increasingly stringent phosphorus effluent



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

standards, which could require significant capital investments to ensure continued compliance with environmental regulations.

Water Supply

The City of Black River Falls' water supply is provided by the Black River Falls Water Department, which serves all homes and businesses within the City. The water supply system relies on four deep wells, each reaching over 160 feet into the aquifer. These wells collectively provide over 145 million gallons of water annually. Once the water is drawn from the wells, it is treated and tested to ensure it meets all safety and quality standards before being distributed to residents and businesses.

The City's water infrastructure is well-maintained, and the Water Department has the capacity to meet current demands. Provisions are in place for potential expansions to water storage and treatment facilities, ensuring that the system can accommodate future growth in the City. The existing service territory of the Water Department aligns closely with that of the sanitary sewer system, ensuring comprehensive utility coverage across the City.

Electricity and Natural Gas Transmission

Electricity for the City of Black River Falls is primarily provided by the Black River Falls Municipal Utilities, with the exception of the industrial park, which is serviced by Jackson Electric Cooperative. The electric utility infrastructure includes a network of substations, transformers, and distribution lines that ensure reliable power delivery throughout the City.

The hydroelectric dam on the Black River contributes a significant portion of the City's energy needs, generating between 7-12% of the City's electricity, depending on river levels. The dam, reconstructed between 2010-2012, features a 190-foot long spillway and three hydroelectric generators with capacities of 614 kW, 373 kW, and 380 kW, respectively. This local generation capability reduces the City's reliance on purchased power from external providers.

Plans are in place to upgrade and replace aged transformers and enhance the distribution grid to ensure it meets the increasing demand and continues to support the City's growth. The hydroelectric dam's operation is regulated by a license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which includes measures to minimize environmental impacts, particularly on aquatic life.

Natural gas in the City is provided by WE Energies.

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.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Local Park and Recreation Facilities

There are currently 15 parks in the City of Black River Falls. These parks include:

- Lunda Community Park
- Hoffman Aquatic Center
- Foundation Trailhead
- Field of Honor Park (Deer Park and Chamber Park)
- Rock Springs Park
- Sig Peterson Park (Scout Park)
- Park at 3rd and Johnson (Cheyney Park)
- Al Young Park
- Mills Park (Hippo Park)
- Skyline Golf Course & Skyline Park
- Pet Park
- Marks Field
- Jackson County Fair Grounds/Park
- Milt Lunda Memorial Ice Arena (MLMA)
- Soccer Park

The City recently adopted an Outdoor Recreation plan. That plan contains a detailed inventory of the existing facilities and programs at these parks, as well as those outside the City but nearby and utilized by City residents.

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. There are many cemeteries within the townships surrounding the City.

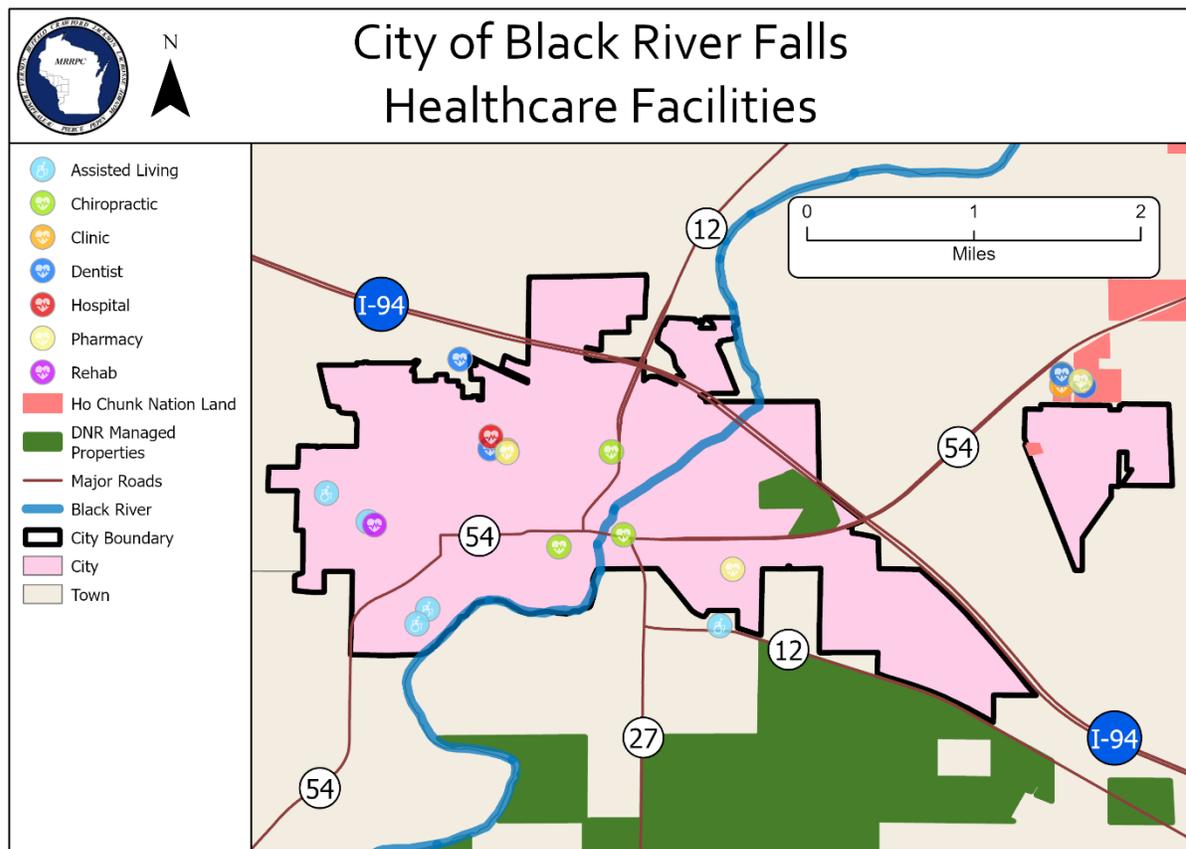


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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 (rehab and assisted living) (1311 Tyler St.), Pine View Terrace (404 County Rd. R), Country Terrace Assisted Living (525 E 2nd St), Spaulding Place Assisted Living (1374 Van Buren St), Marshfield Clinic (N6571 Lumberjack Guy Rd), Ho Chunk Clinic (N6520 Lumberjack Guy Rd), Black River Chiropractic (126 S 2nd St), Advanced Chiropractic (3 E Main St), Jessen Family Chiropractic (438 N Water St #4), Kristo Orthodontics (716 W Adams St), Black River Family Dentist, Dr. Feras Alkhader Dentist, Tarek Kaakani Dentist, Beaver Douglas pharmacy (N6520 Lumberjack Guy Rd), Walmart pharmacy (611 WI-54), and Health Mart pharmacy (610 W Adams St) are all facilities that provide care to residents in the City and County.

Map Health Care Facilities





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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. There are many other childcare facilities in the county, which can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ccdir/lic/pdf/ccdir-lic-27.%20JACKSON.pdf>.

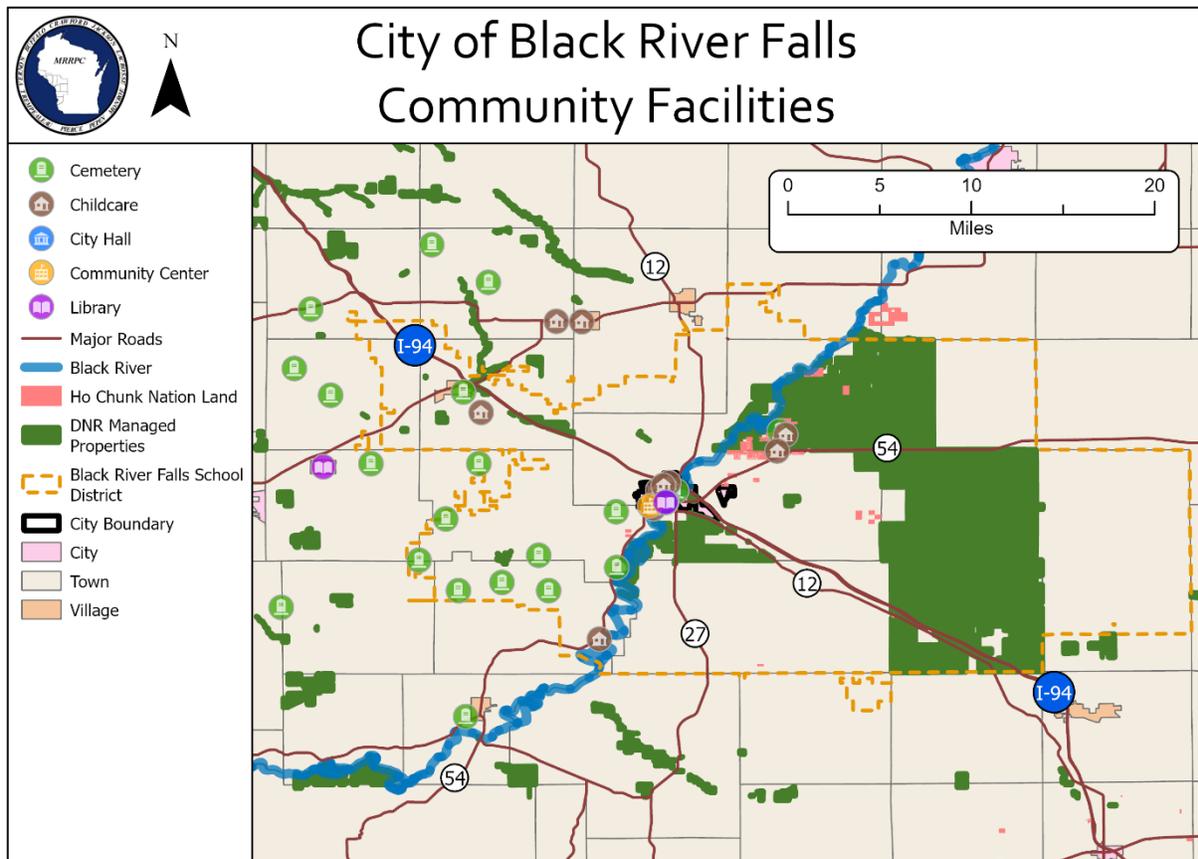
Libraries

The Black River Falls Public Library is located within the City at 222 Fillmore St. The library provides many programs for adults and children. Another nearby library is the Taylor Library, located at 420 2nd St, Taylor, WI.

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.

Map Community Facilities



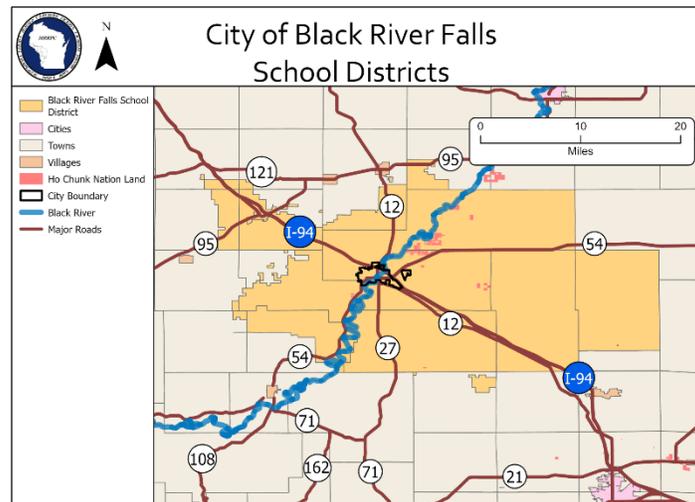


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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.

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. Modern Disposal Systems, located at 200 Hemstock Dr, Sparta, WI 54656, will dispose of large items like couches, chairs, mattresses, and demolition material for a fee.

Police Protection

Police protection in the City of Black River Falls is provided by the Black River Falls Police 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

The Black River Falls Fire Department provides EMS and Rescue Services to the City.

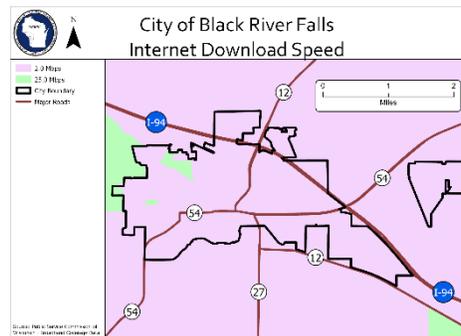
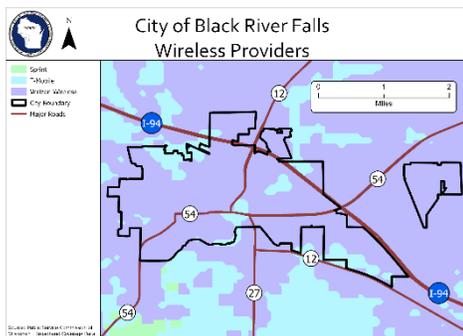


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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 are multiple towers in the area, including Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T, and US Cellular.
- Internet: Brightspeed, Spectrum, and a variety of other satellite services provide internet access to the City.
- Newspapers: The Banner Journal is the main newspaper that provides news to the City of Black River Falls.
- Television and Radio: Spectrum provides television for the City. WWIS has a radio station that is based out of the City.
- Postal Service: Residents receive mail from the post office located at 108 Fillmore St., Black River Falls.





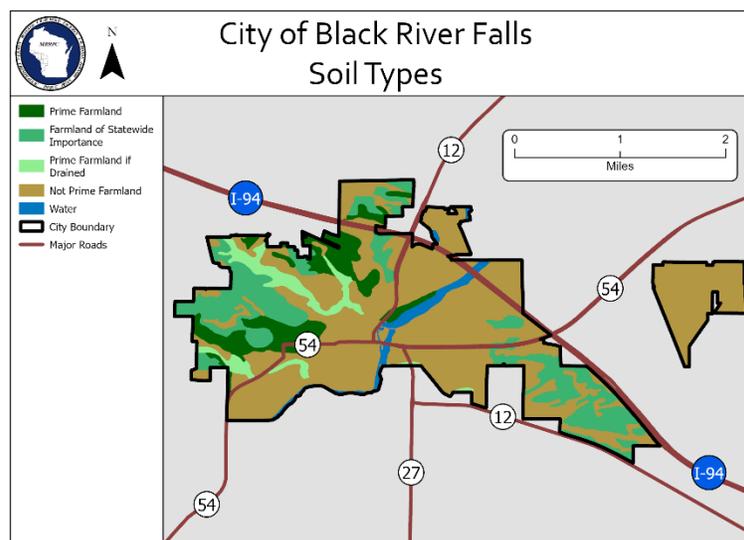
Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element

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.

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will preserve and protect its rich agricultural heritage, natural landscapes, and cultural resources, recognizing their critical role in maintaining the City's character and environmental health. We will promote sustainable practices in agriculture, forestry, and resource management, ensuring the conservation of sensitive ecosystems, wildlife habitats, and water resources. At the same time, we will celebrate and protect the City's cultural and historic assets, promoting them as key drivers of tourism and community identity.

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.





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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.

Past agricultural practices have caused damage to streams, 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 changes 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 techniques 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.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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 the City of 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 the City of Black River Falls.

Development is also regulated within shoreland areas, which in the City of Black River Falls 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.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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.

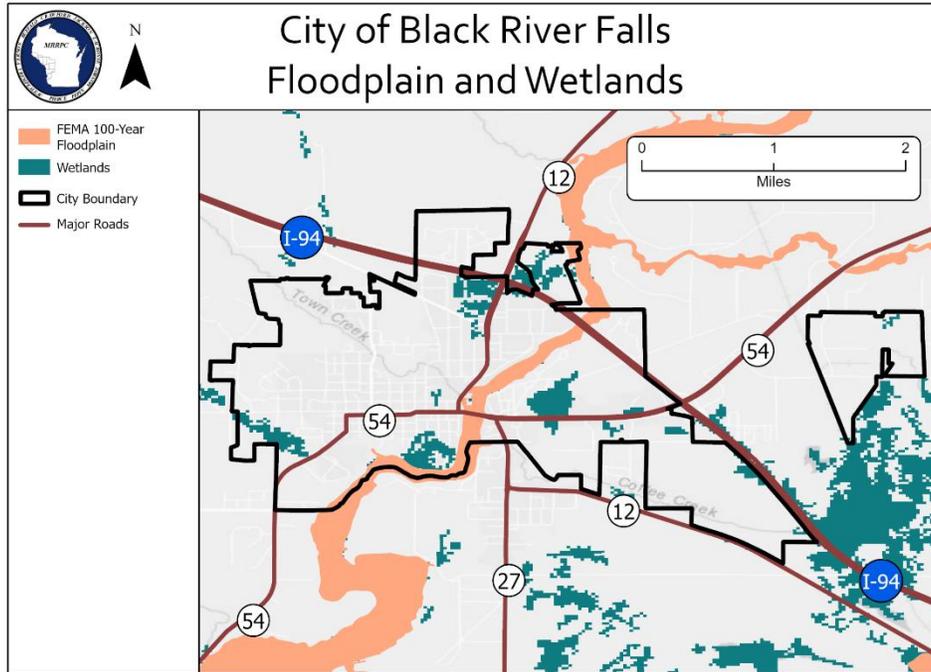
The predominant soil type in the City of Black River Falls is the Clayburn series. This series typically varies in slope from 2% to 65% in Black River Falls, as do many of the remaining minor soil series in the City. Clay content is 18% to 35% and the soils are well-drained.

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.

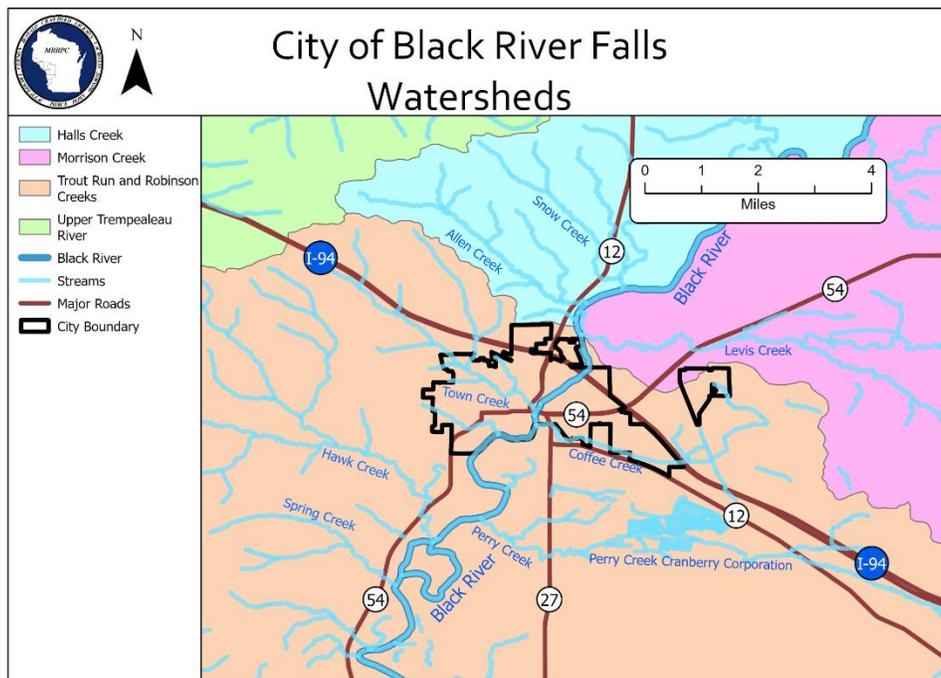


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Map Floodplain and Wetlands



Map Watersheds





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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.

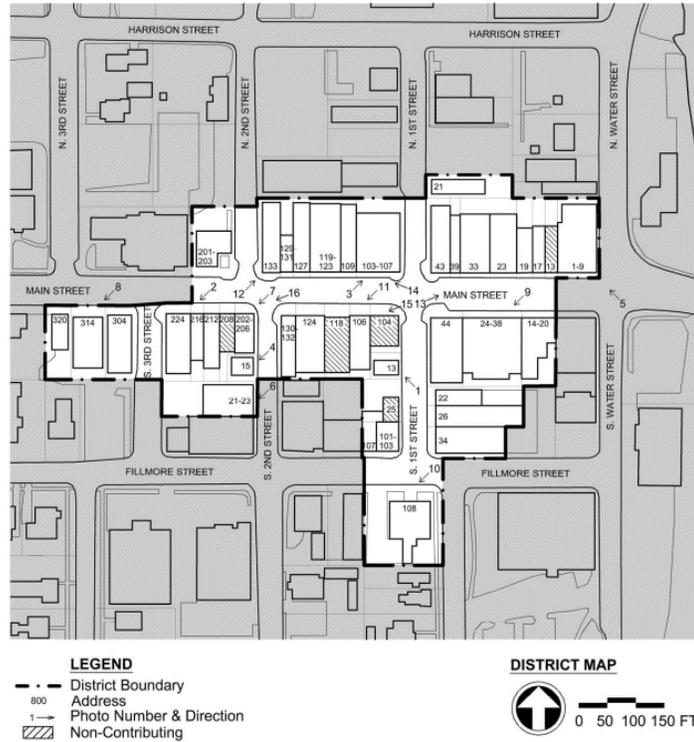
Historic Resources

The Wisconsin Historical Society placed the Black River Falls Commercial Historic District on the State Register of Historic Places in February of 2021. The Black River Falls Commercial Historic District developed primarily between 1911 and the 1960s, after a 1911 flood destroyed much of the city's original commercial area. Rebuilt along Main Street, the district showcases a dense streetscape with buildings in styles like Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Art Deco, and more. These historic structures housed diverse businesses such as dry goods stores, pharmacies, groceries, and financial institutions, with additional meeting halls, apartments, and offices on upper floors. The district remains the commercial heart of the community, continuing its legacy since the 1860s. There are 45 properties listed on the Downtown Historic District Properties list.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Black River Falls Commercial Historic District Map



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.

There are several historic properties in the City outside the Historic District. These include the Black River Falls Public Library, which was Wisconsin's first free public library in 1872. It is also Wisconsin's oldest Carnegie Library. There are also two homes in the City registered by the historic society.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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. The City of Black River Falls has a Historic Preservation Commission.

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



Economic Development Element

The City of Black River Falls has 1,431 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%).

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will foster a vibrant, resilient economy by attracting and retaining businesses that diversify the local economy, create high-quality jobs, and expand the tax base. We will leverage our strategic location, natural resources, and cultural assets to promote tourism, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic growth while enhancing the quality of life for residents and positioning the City as a regional hub for commerce and innovation.

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.

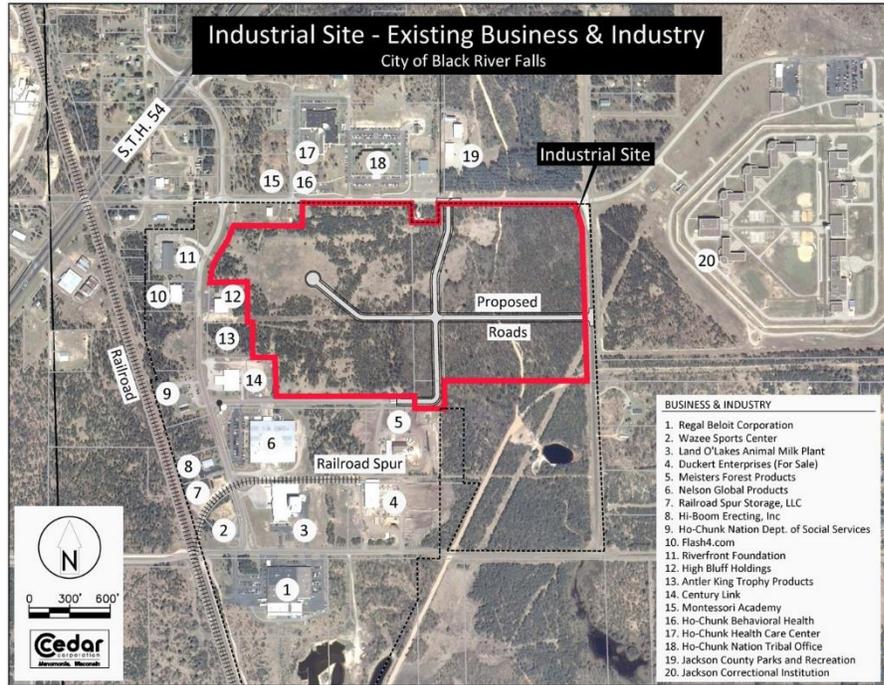
Industrial Park

The City of Black River Falls is home to the Black River Falls Industrial Park. The Black River Falls Industrial Park is a Certified Industrial Park. It contains a Wisconsin Certified Site, offering 75.89 acres of contiguous buildable land. This site is well-suited for industrial development, with no significant topographical, environmental, or archaeological impediments. It is zoned for light industrial use, allowing for a range of manufacturing and assembly operations. The park is strategically located near major transportation routes, including Interstate 94, with dual access points and potential rail service. Essential utilities like electricity, natural gas, water, and wastewater are readily available, with infrastructure in place to support industrial activities. The site is owned by the City of Black River Falls, which offers it at a competitive price and may provide incentives for significant job-creating projects.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Aerial View of Black River Falls Industrial Park





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table Employment by Industry in the City of Black River Falls

Industry	Workers	
	#	%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	143	100
	1	%
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%).



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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 (2012 to 2022)	-21%	-24%	-15%

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

Table 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 Means of Commuting to Work in the City of Black River Falls

Means	Workers	
	#	%
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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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



Intergovernmental Cooperation Element

Intergovernmental cooperation is a cornerstone of the City of Black River Falls’ approach to planning. This collaboration involves engaging with neighboring communities, Jackson County, and State agencies to ensure that the City’s future planning aligns with broader regional goals. While the sharing of plans forms the foundation of these relationships, the City views this as merely the starting point for joint decision-making, conflict resolution, and the development of strategies to promote coordination.

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will actively engage in collaborative partnerships with neighboring municipalities, Jackson County, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and state and federal agencies to pursue mutually beneficial initiatives. We will seek opportunities to share resources, align development efforts, and address regional challenges in a cooperative and transparent manner. Our goal is to ensure that the City remains a key stakeholder in shaping the future of the region through strong intergovernmental relationships.

As part of its comprehensive planning process, the City Plan Commission convened a meeting with representatives from Jackson County, the neighboring towns of Adams, Brockway, and Albion, the Black River Falls School District, and the Ho-Chunk Nation. This meeting evaluated the current state of intergovernmental relationships, identified shared opportunities and challenges, and explored avenues for strengthening partnerships. The discussions highlighted the City’s deep-rooted connections with its neighbors, built on a shared history, a culture of collaboration, and mutual respect.

The City of Black River Falls’ intergovernmental relationships are shaped by a culture of collaboration and a shared history. During the intergovernmental cooperation meeting, Michael Rave, a member of the Plan Commission and the Common Council President, highlighted the importance of personal relationships in fostering effective partnerships. “A lot of the success in these partnerships comes down to history—knowing each other, working together over the years, and keeping things personal,” he stated. This perspective reflects the City’s commitment to maintaining its small-town ethos while addressing challenges through collective effort.

As the City plans for the future, this tradition of relationship-driven cooperation will remain integral to achieving regional goals and addressing new challenges.

Ho-Chunk Nation

The Ho-Chunk Nation plays an integral role in the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the Black River Falls region. As a sovereign entity, the Nation has a unique relationship with the City of Black River Falls, rooted in history and shared goals for regional well-being. The Nation’s administrative center is located nearby, and many Ho-Chunk Nation members live within or near the City.

The relationship between the City and the Ho-Chunk Nation has potential for growth and mutual benefit. Areas for future collaboration may include land use planning, economic development, cultural preservation, and community services. The Nation’s unique perspective as a sovereign government adds a valuable dimension to planning discussions, particularly on issues such as housing, environmental stewardship, and economic resilience.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Neighboring Towns and Communities

The City's relationships with neighboring towns are characterized by mutual respect and cooperation, built on shared social, historical, and cultural connections. While boundary disputes can occasionally arise, particularly concerning annexation, limited development pressure and modest population growth projections over the next 20 years reduce the likelihood of significant annexation actions. Nonetheless, when growth occurs, the City is committed to ensuring well-planned, quality development that benefits both its boundaries and the surrounding towns.

Town of Adams

The City and the Town of Adams enjoy a cooperative relationship, particularly in the areas of road maintenance and emergency services. Shared responsibilities include the upkeep of Logan Road, 8th Avenue, and Riverview Drive, as well as collaborative EMS services. The Town has identified road maintenance and EMS as its top priorities, dedicating nearly all of its resources to these areas. Opportunities for resource sharing have been explored, such as utilizing the City's new road grader to assist with the Town's gravel road maintenance, replacing the Town's aging equipment. Although annexation of certain areas has been discussed as a potential solution to service challenges, past grant funding attempts for such efforts were unsuccessful. Despite these challenges, the strong working relationship between the City and the Town of Adams offers a solid foundation for future collaboration.

Town of Albion

The City's relationship with the Town of Albion is relatively limited compared to other neighboring jurisdictions. The primary area of collaboration is shared EMS services, as there are no shared roads or significant joint initiatives. While the Town has expressed concerns about annexation, it generally describes its relationship with the City as positive. These foundations of mutual respect could be leveraged to explore new opportunities for collaboration in the future.

Town of Brockway

The Town of Brockway and the City of Black River Falls share multiple points of collaboration, including utilities and emergency services. The Town is part of the City's utility commission, and mutual emergency water connections ensure support during critical situations. The two entities have discussed streamlining fire services by consolidating the Black River Falls Fire Department and the Black River Falls Rural Department, a proposal that stakeholders have praised as cost-effective and efficient. Implementing such measures could align with the City's plans to construct a new fire station.

The boundary agreement between the City and the Town, signed in 2014 and effective through 2034, has significantly reduced annexation conflicts. However, opportunities exist to revise certain aspects of this agreement, such as separating room tax provisions to allow greater flexibility. Currently, the room tax rate remains below the legal maximum, presenting an opportunity to generate additional revenue for tourism and community initiatives.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Water quality is a critical issue for the Town, as two of its wells have been contaminated with PFAS chemicals. While the City provides emergency water hookups, further collaboration may be necessary to develop long-term solutions. Another point of shared interest is the jointly owned School Forest, managed by four governmental entities. While this resource remains valuable for the region, its administrative structure presents ongoing challenges.

The Town of Brockway provides water and sewer through Sanitary District #1. Through an agreement with the Town, the Sanitary District provides water and sewer to the City in the industrial park.

Villages of Hixton, Alma Center, and Merrilan

While the City does not share borders with the Villages of Hixton, Alma Center, and Merrilan, these nearby communities offer opportunities for collaboration. By sharing equipment, resources, and supplies, the City and these Villages can reduce expenses and enhance service delivery, fostering regional efficiency and stronger partnerships.

Black River Falls School District

The Black River Falls School District is a key partner in the City's intergovernmental efforts. The District benefits from municipal services such as the library and EMS but has expressed a desire for a dedicated School Resource Officer from the City's police department. Currently, the District shares a County deputy with multiple districts, which has proven insufficient.

High absenteeism rates among students are a significant issue for the district. Due to this, the district expressed support for the City's idea of creating a municipal court, which could address truancy cases locally, reducing the reliance and strain on County court resources. The District also values the City's use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, which have yielded largely positive results. However, the jointly owned School Forest presents ongoing administrative challenges that require resolution to ensure its continued value as an educational and recreational resource.

Jackson County

Jackson County plays a vital role in supporting the City of Black River Falls and its residents through a variety of programs, services, and facilities. These contributions significantly influence the quality of life in the City and the surrounding region. Key areas where the County directly impacts Black River Falls include highway maintenance and improvement programs, funding support for the library to offset costs associated with County residents using City resources, social services, and land use planning and mapping assistance. The County consistently consults with the City before making decisions in these areas to ensure alignment with the City's needs and priorities.

The County's partnership with the City is productive and collaborative, characterized by open communication and shared goals. The County Highway Department exemplifies this relationship, with frequent informal communication ensuring efficient coordination of services such as signage, equipment sharing, and road maintenance. One significant project under consideration is the relocation of the County's highway facility from Harrison Street, located in the core of the City, to Highway 54. This transition presents a major opportunity for redevelopment of the vacated site, including potential housing development, which



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

environmental studies have confirmed as suitable for reuse. Such a redevelopment effort could bring long-term benefits to the City’s economy and land use planning.

Beyond infrastructure, Jackson County is actively reviewing its economic development strategy, including the potential creation of a full-time economic development coordinator position. The City strongly supports this initiative, recognizing the value of a dedicated professional to address regional economic challenges and opportunities.

Housing, a pressing issue for both the City and County, is a shared focus. Ongoing discussions center on strategies to address housing shortages, including the attraction of developers to build multi-family units and other affordable housing options. These efforts align closely with the City’s broader goals for sustainable growth and expanded housing availability.

In addition to these collaborative efforts, Jackson County provides essential social services that benefit City residents, particularly in areas such as senior housing, transportation, and healthcare services. The aging population presents unique challenges, and the City and County are committed to working together to develop programs and infrastructure to meet these needs. Coordination on land use planning tools, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, further strengthens this partnership and ensures a unified approach to regional development.

Looking to the future, Jackson County and the City recognize the necessity of a coordinated, multi-jurisdictional response to broader socio-economic and environmental issues. Key topics for collaboration include:

- Adapting land use planning and zoning to address emerging challenges.
- Expanding transportation options and senior services to meet the needs of a growing elderly population.
- Addressing housing shortages for year-round residents and seasonal workers.
- Tackling socio-economic and environmental impacts related to climate change, including resilience planning and mitigation efforts.

The longstanding partnership between Jackson County and the City of Black River Falls is a cornerstone of regional planning and governance. By continuing to collaborate on infrastructure, social services, economic development, and environmental challenges, the County and City are well-positioned to address current and future needs effectively.

Regional Planning Commission

The City of Black River Falls is within the service region of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC), which represents nine counties in western Wisconsin: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Monroe, La Crosse, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Vernon. The MRRPC plays a pivotal role in maintaining the region’s eligibility as an Economic Development District, making it eligible for Economic Development Administration funding.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Federal and State Agencies

The City of Black River Falls collaborates with several state agencies to achieve its planning objectives and address community needs. Key agencies include:

- **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR):** The WDNR plays a leading role in wildlife protection, sustainable management of woodlands, stormwater regulation, wetlands conservation, and the oversight of State parks and wildlife habitat areas. Given the importance that City residents place on preserving natural resources, the WDNR is a vital partner in planning efforts that prioritize environmental stewardship.
- **Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT):** WisDOT is a crucial partner in the planning and development of transportation infrastructure, including highways, pedestrian pathways, and cycling facilities. The City has a strong working relationship with WisDOT, particularly regarding projects in the STH 12, 24, and 27 corridors. Ongoing communication with WisDOT ensures that local land use and transportation decisions align with regional and state objectives.
- **Wisconsin State Historical Society:** This agency plays a vital role in preserving the City's historical and cultural heritage. Collaboration with the Historical Society ensures that planning and development initiatives respect and incorporate the City's historic resources.

Additionally, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) oversees Interstate 94, which runs east-west through the northern part of the City. The interstate is a critical economic asset, facilitating travel and commerce between Black River Falls and other regional cities.

Infrastructure to Support City Success

The success of Black River Falls is supported by a robust network of infrastructure and dedicated government departments that coordinate to maintain and improve public services and community development. The City's government includes departments responsible for the Airport, Fire, Police, Library, Parks and Recreation, and Street Maintenance. Together, these departments ensure the effective management of infrastructure and public services, working collaboratively to meet the community's evolving needs.

The City contracts with private providers for building inspection services. Additionally, Black River Falls Municipal Utilities operates as a city-owned entity governed by a separate Utilities Commission, ensuring reliable and high-quality utility services for residents and businesses.

Moving forward, the City will continue to rely on the cooperation of its departments, contractors, and utility providers to maintain the quality of its infrastructure and public services. By fostering collaboration at every level, the City of Black River Falls is well-positioned to support its residents and sustain its growth and development into the future.



Land Use Element

Goal: The City of Black River Falls will ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to land use, prioritizing the preservation of natural resources, promoting smart growth principles, and fostering a diverse mix of residential, commercial, and industrial developments that reinforce the community's unique character and sense of place. We will promote innovative zoning and land management policies that protect open spaces, encourage infill development, and create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods that enhance the quality of life for all residents.

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 has several residential zoning districts, each tailored for specific types of housing. The R-1 Single-Family Residential District is for single-family homes, while the R-2 Single-Family Residential District allows similar uses with slightly different lot and building requirements. The R-Duplex Two-Family Residential District accommodates both single-family and two-family homes, and the R-Zero Lot Line Residential District allows for higher-density single-family homes with shared walls. The R-3 Multi-Family Residential District permits multi-family dwellings up to four units, and the R-4 Mobile Home Park District is designated for mobile home parks. The RD Rural Development District supports rural and low-density residential development, and the R-PUD Residential Planned Unit Development District provides flexibility for mixed housing types and densities.

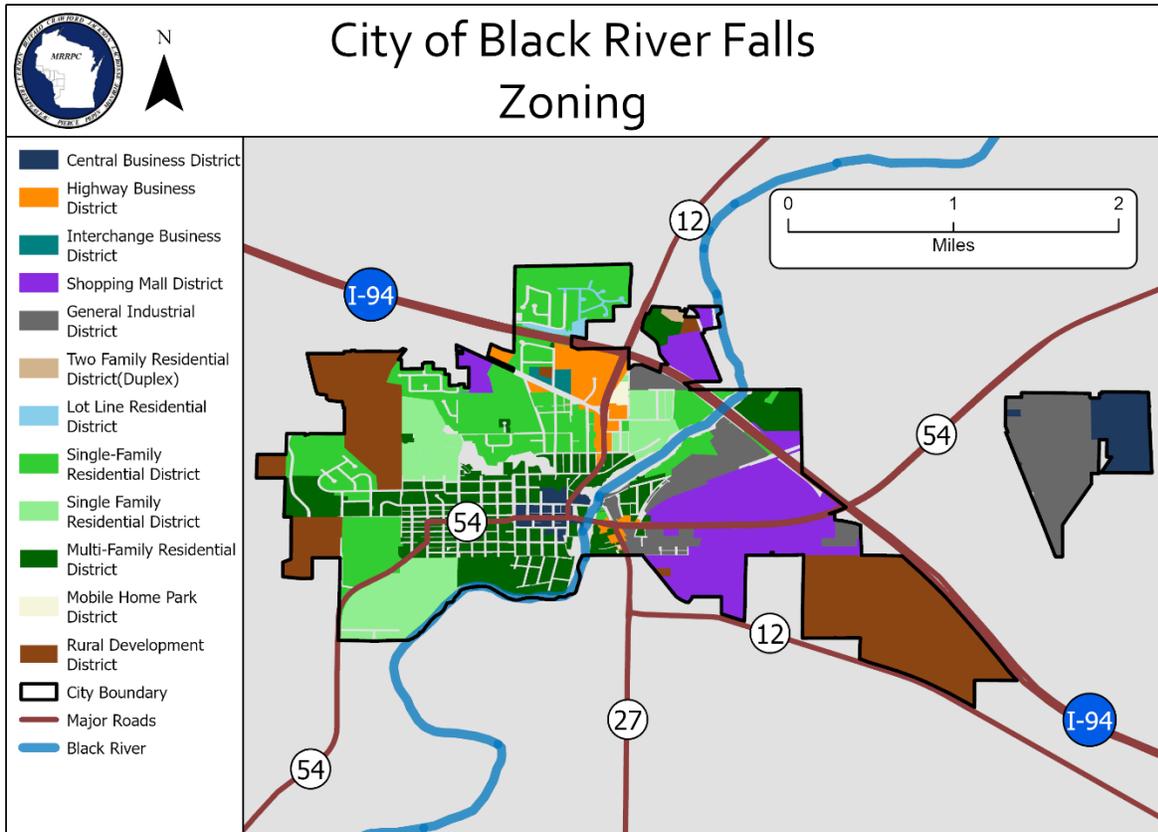
The business zoning districts are designed to support various commercial activities. The B-1 Central Business District focuses on commercial and governmental uses in the city center, while the B-2 Convenience Business District permits similar uses with additional options like gas stations. The B-3 Highway Business District is intended for low-traffic retail and service establishments along highways, and the B-4 Interchange Business District supports large-scale commercial developments near highway interchanges. The B-5 Shopping Mall District is for large, multi-tenant retail and service complexes.

The industrial zoning districts and special-purpose areas address specific needs within the city. The I-1 General Industrial District is designated for general manufacturing and processing activities. The Conservancy District protects natural areas from development, while the Historic Preservation District safeguards the city's historical and architectural heritage. The Well-Head Protection Area Overlay District is focused on protecting the city's drinking water sources, and the Shoreland-Wetland and Floodplain Districts regulate land use in environmentally sensitive and flood-prone areas.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Map Zoning





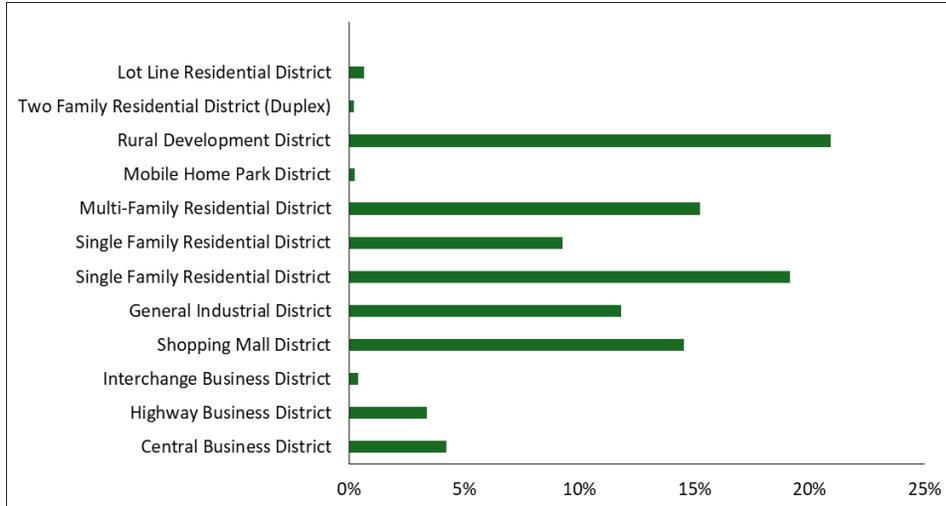
Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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

Zoning Type	Acres	% of Land
Central Business District	100	4%
Highway Business District	80	3%
Interchange Business District	9	0%
Shopping Mall District	345	15%
General Industrial District	280	12%
Single Family Residential District	454	19%
Single Family Residential District	220	9%
Multi-Family Residential District	361	15%
Mobile Home Park District	6	0%
Rural Development District	496	21%
Two Family Residential District (Duplex)	5	0%
Lot Line Residential District	15	1%
Total	2,371	100%

Source: Personal Communication with City of Black River Falls Staff

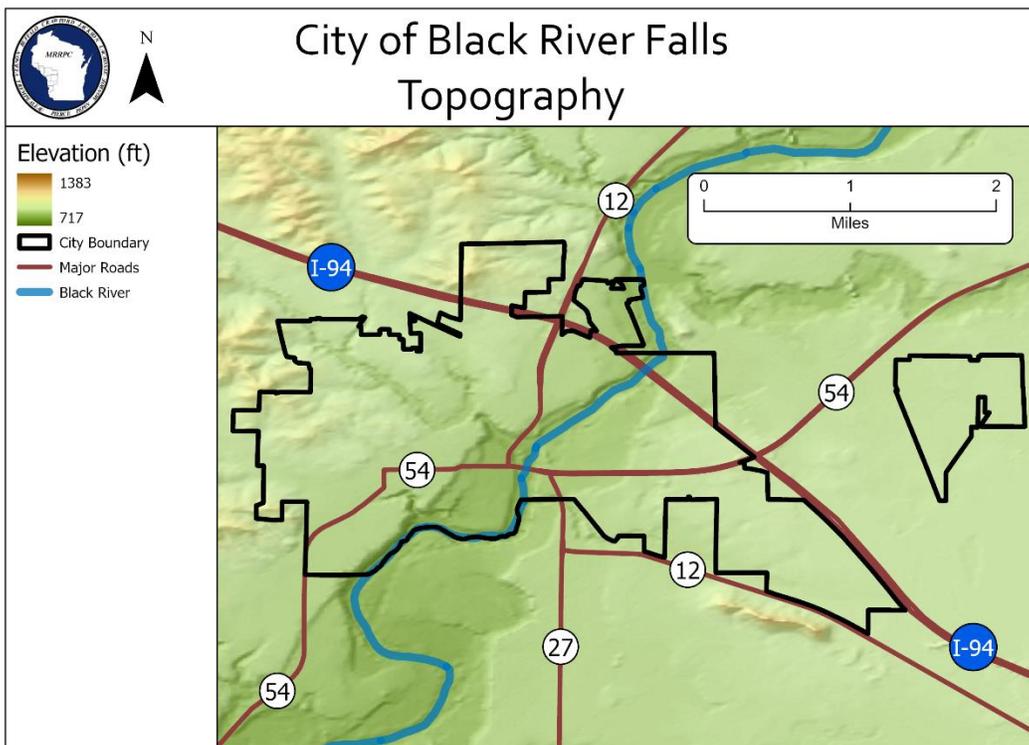
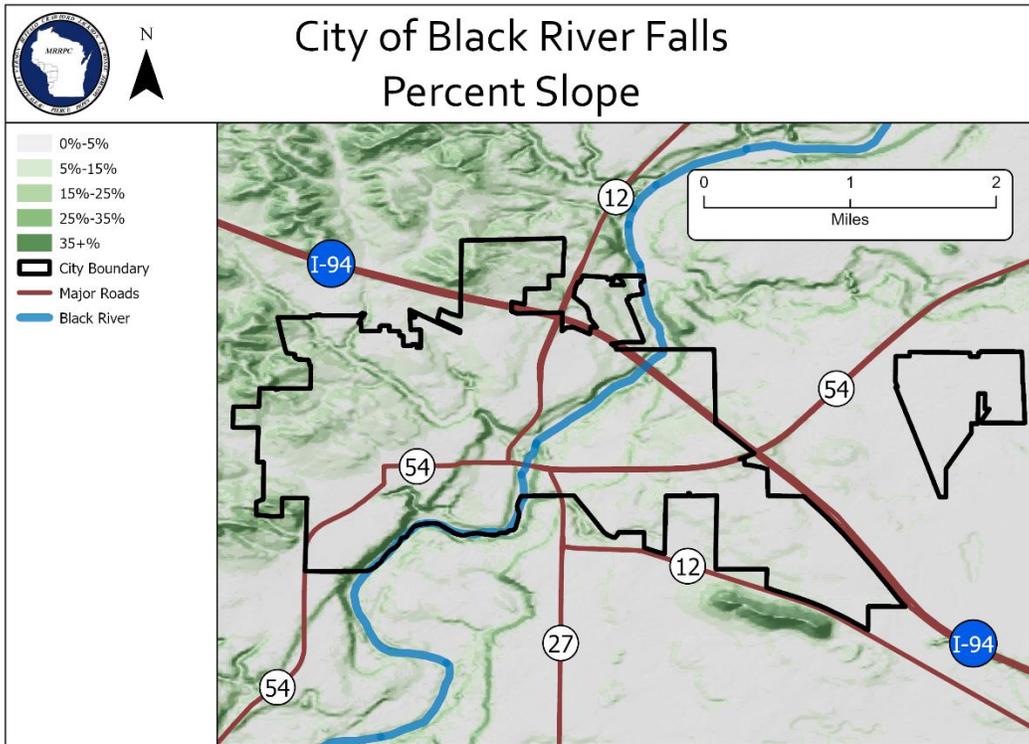
Figure Proportion of Land in the City of Black River Falls per Zoning District





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Map Slope and Topography





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Existing Land Use

Data from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue regarding land use classifications has been used for comparisons over time. 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. Additionally, WISCLAND land use land cover data from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has been used. This data only exists at one point in one time (2017) but shows what is really there, unlike the zoning map which shows what should be there.

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 Land Use

Land Use	Acres		% of Land		Change from 2015 to 2023	
	2015	2023	2015	2023	Acres	%
Residential	176	201	21%	23%	25	14%
Commercial	278	330	34%	38%	52	19%
Manufacturing	116	104	14%	12%	-12	-10%
Agricultural	15	26	2%	3%	11	73%
Undeveloped	60	27	7%	3%	-33	-55%
Agricultural Forest	0	0	0%	0%	0	0%
Forest Lands	176	173	21%	20%	-3	-2%
Other	0	0	0%	0%	0	0%
Total	821	861	100%	100%	40	5%

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

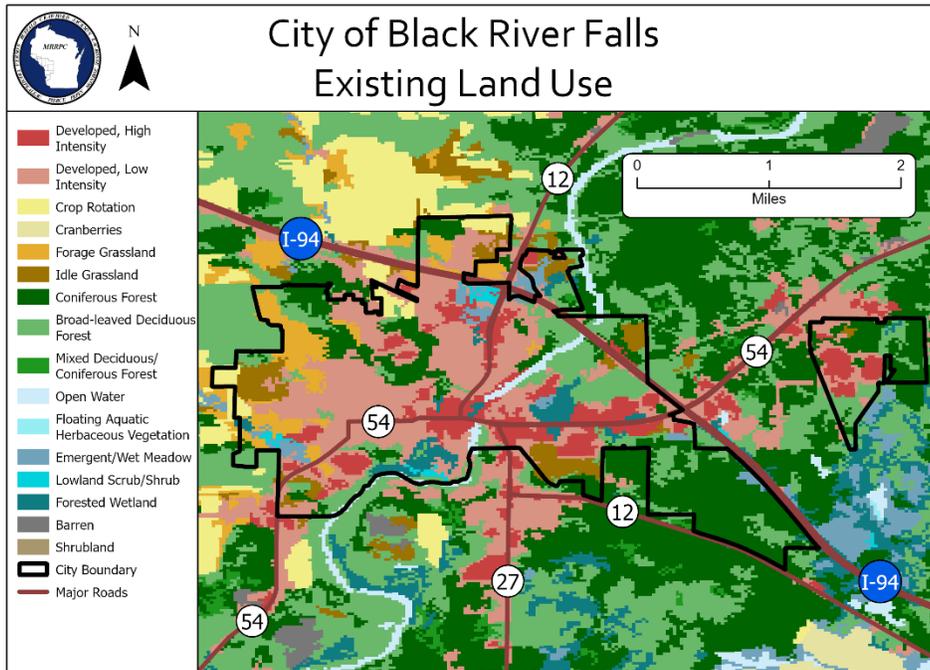
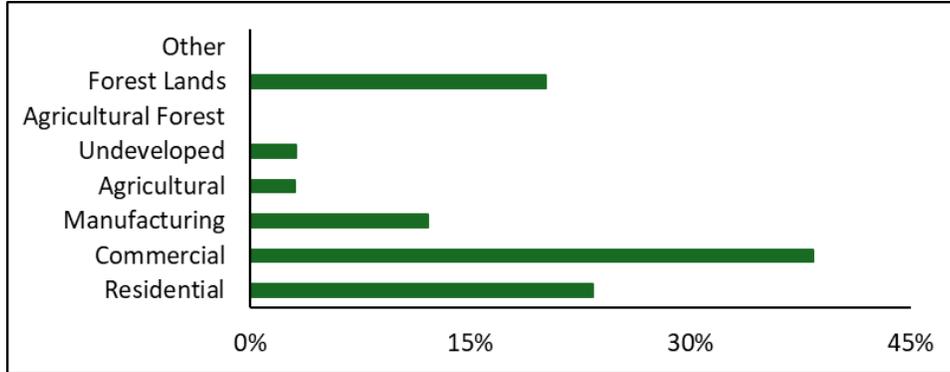


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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%).

Figure 1.3 Land Use in the City of Black River Falls in 2023

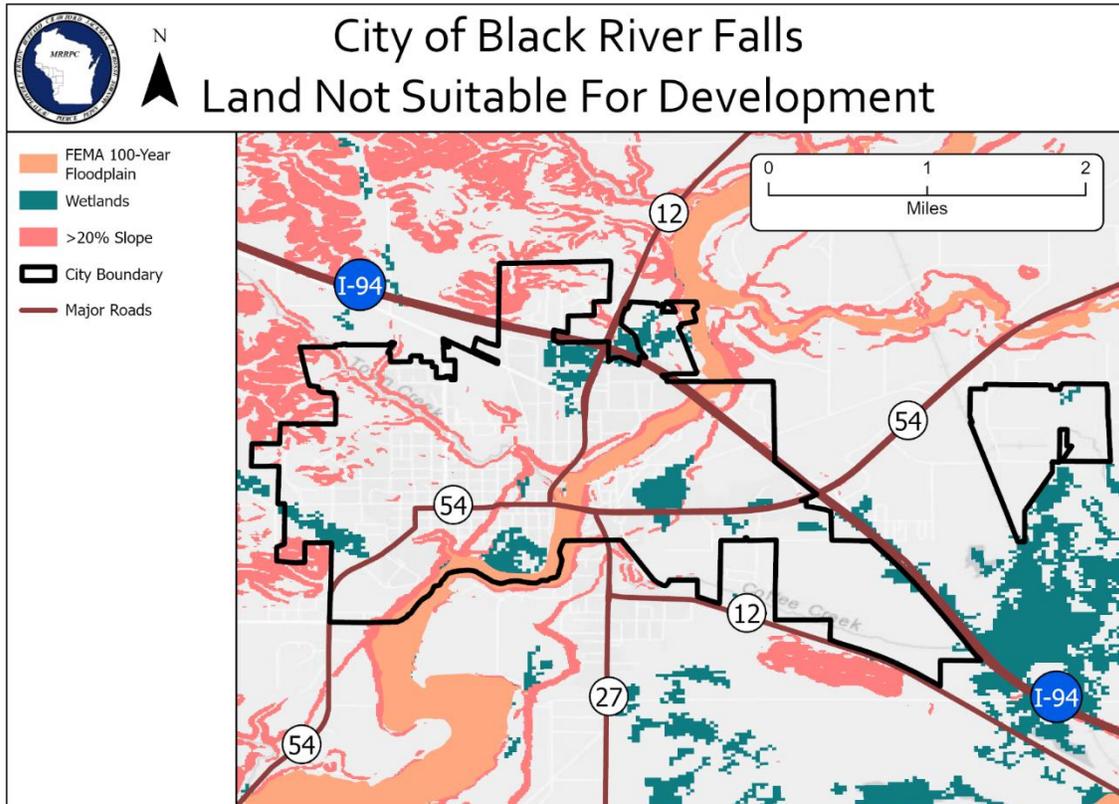




Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Land Unsuitable for Development with map

Some land is unsuitable for development – including being in a floodplain, being a wetland, or having too steep of a slope. The following map shows these areas in the City of Black River Falls.





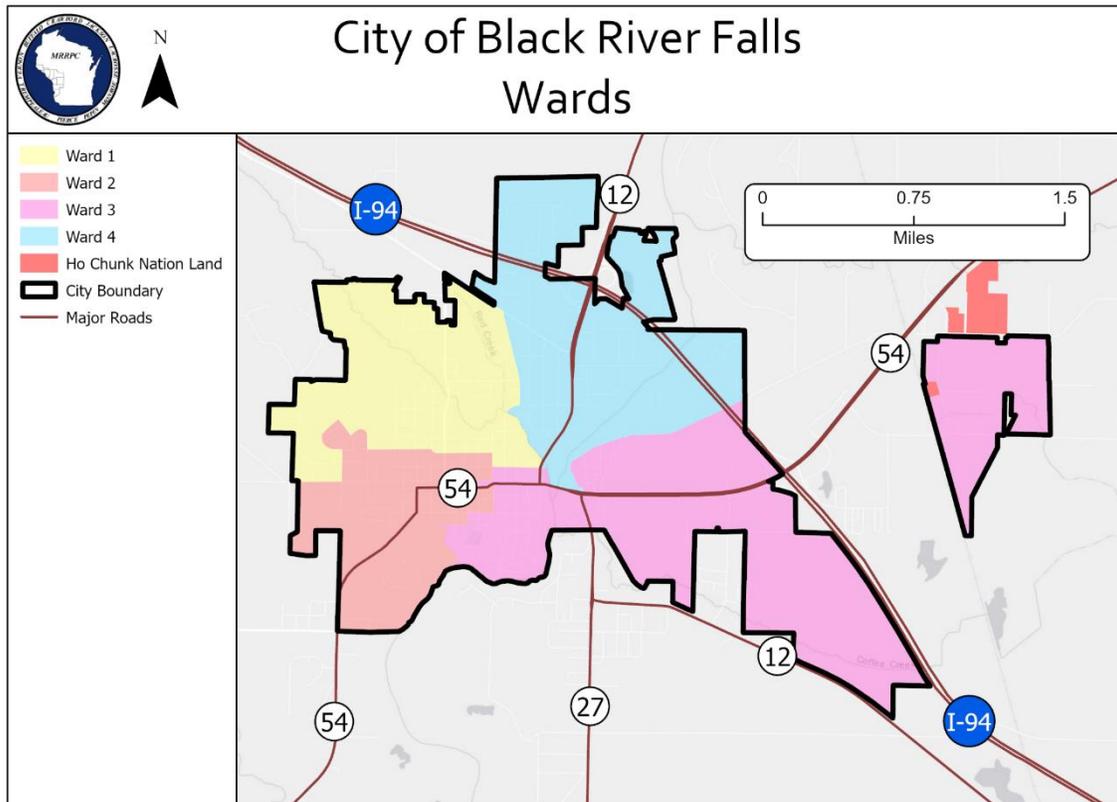
Other Demographics and Data

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%.

In 2023, the Wisconsin Department of Administration estimated that the City's population was 3,612, which was 89 more people than the US Census estimated the City's population was in 2020, representing a 3% increase in population.

City Black River Falls Wards





Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table 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%).

Throughout each Ward, people of each race are evenly distributed, with the exception of their being a bit higher proportion (10%) of Native American people in Ward 4 than the City itself and the other Wards, which are between 6% and 7%. Ward 4 is the Ward closest to the Ho-Chunk administrative center and nearby Ho-Chunk communities.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Table Race

Race	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 Race by Ward in the City of Black River Falls

Race	Ward 1		Ward 2		Ward 3		Ward 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	861	86%	871	87%	537	85%	750	84%
Black or African American	16	2%	9	1%	4	1%	5	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	60	6%	55	6%	47	7%	90	10%
Asian	7	1%	4	0%	2	0%	3	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	10	1%	9	1%	4	1%	8	1%
Some Other Race	46	5%	52	5%	36	6%	39	4%
Two or More Races	1000	100%	1000	100%	630	100%	895	100%

Source: US Census 2020 – Table P2 Race (ESRI Statistics)



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Figure Age by Five Year Cohort

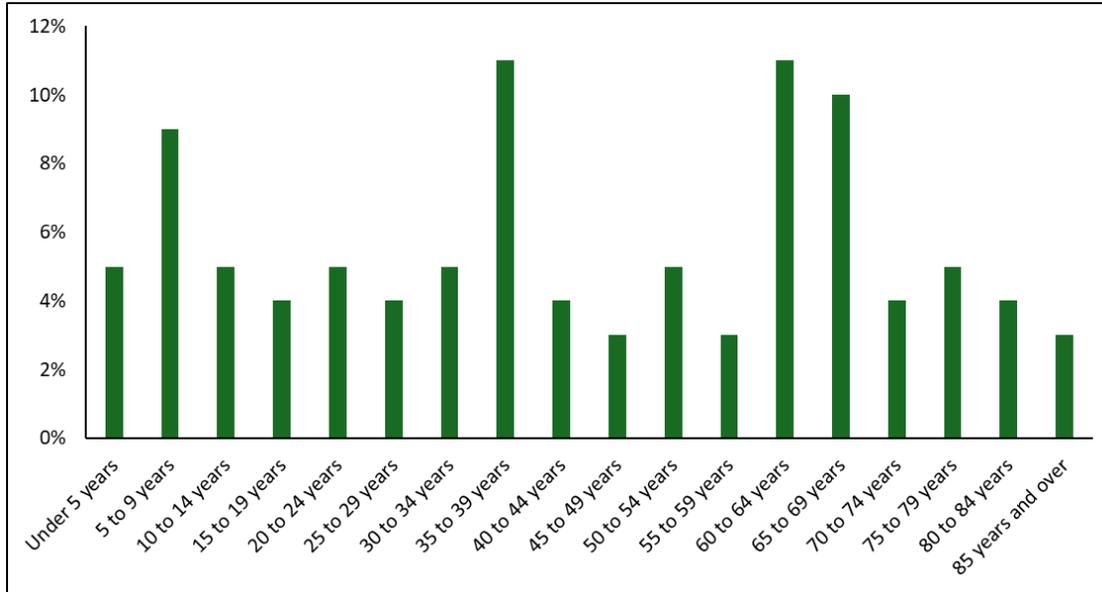


Table Age

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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

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 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 Educational Attainment of Population Over 25

Educational Attainment	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



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendices

Appendix A:



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendix B: Survey Report

Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan Survey

The City of Black River Falls conducted a survey in August and September 2024 to gather community input in support of the city's Comprehensive Plan. The survey was designed to identify community priorities and satisfaction levels with existing services, providing valuable insights to guide future planning efforts.

The survey was promoted through the City's website, social media, word of mouth, and other local channels to encourage broad participation. A full list of the survey questions can be found in the appendix of the Comprehensive Plan, and detailed survey results are available for download in .csv format via a link in the plan.

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate various issues on a scale ranging from "Extremely important" to "Not at all important." The rating scale was as follows:

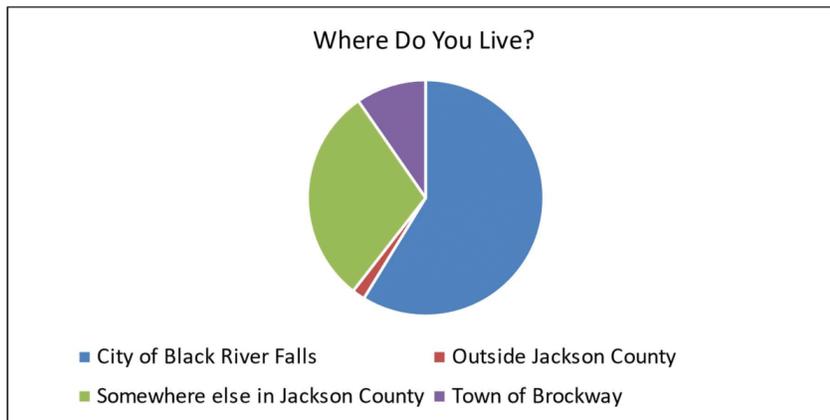
- 5 = Extremely important
- 4 = Very important
- 3 = Moderately important
- 2 = Slightly important
- 1 = Not at all important

These ratings were then converted into numerical values, with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. The averages (means) of these ratings were calculated to report results in tables and to summarize the key findings of the survey.

In addition, respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with existing services using the same scale and methodology. This is noted in the relevant sections where satisfaction is evaluated.

Demographic Overview:

A total of 114 people participated in the City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan Survey. Of these, 59% (67 respondents) reside within the city limits, 10% live in the Town of Brockway, and 30% live elsewhere in Jackson County. Among city residents, Ward 3 was notably underrepresented, with only 9% of respondents from that ward, while other wards accounted for at least 26% each.

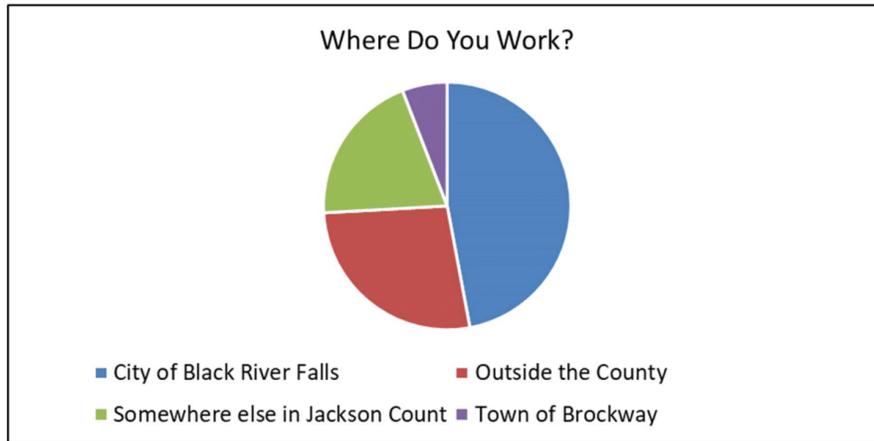


Employment:

Most respondents (70%) work full-time, with retirees making up 18% and part-time workers 7%. Unemployment and student representation were minimal. Work locations varied significantly: 48% of respondents work in Black River Falls, 27% outside Jackson County, 20% elsewhere in Jackson County, and 6% in the Town of Brockway. Even among city residents, only 51% work in the city, with 30% working outside the county and 17% within Jackson County.

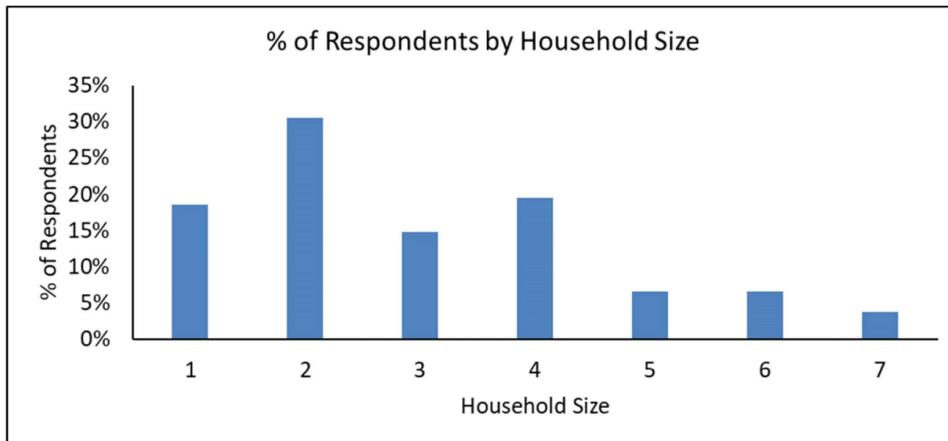


Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045



Housing:

Homeownership is prevalent, with 80% of respondents owning their homes, 17% renting, and 4% staying with friends or family. On average, respondents live with 2.96 people, with homeowners averaging slightly more (3.00) than renters (2.63). Those staying with friends or family reported an average household size of 4.00. Household sizes also varied by location, with 2.75 people per household in the City of Black River Falls, 4.00 outside the county, 3.36 elsewhere in Jackson County, and 2.9 in the Town of Brockway. Within the city, Ward 2 had the largest households (3.18), while Ward 4 had the smallest (2.43).

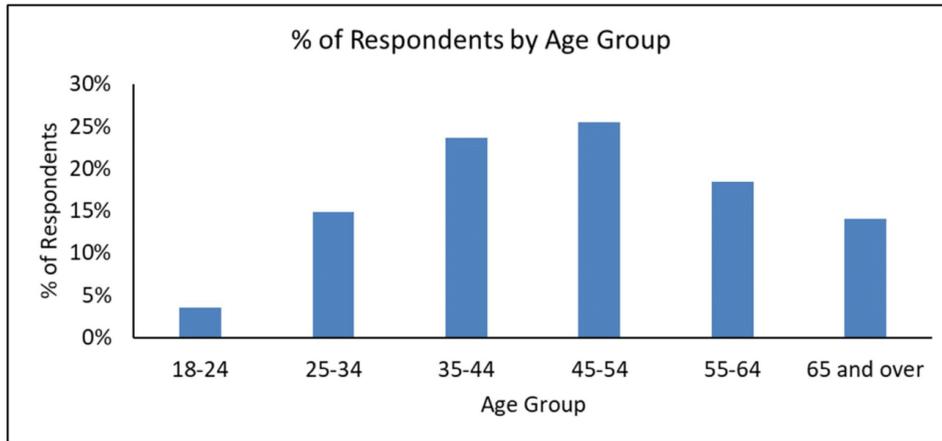


Age Distribution:

The age distribution was fairly representative across all age groups. The only underrepresented group was those aged 18–24, comprising 4% of respondents. Every other age group had at least 14% representation, with the largest group being 45–54 years old (25%).



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045



Additional Property and Business Ownership:

About 26% of respondents own additional property, primarily recreational land (64%) or income property (14%). Additionally, 15% of respondents are business owners.

Community Observations and Recommendations:

Survey respondents were asked which attributes the City of Black River Falls should prioritize. There was broad consensus that nearly all areas are important to support. Even the lowest-ranked issue, volunteerism, was still considered very important.

The top five priorities, with the highest average scores, were:

1. Education
2. Quality of life
3. Health care
4. Job opportunities
5. Affordable housing

These priorities remained consistent across various demographics, including whether respondents lived in the city or their specific ward. However, there were some predictable variations by age group. For respondents aged 35-44 and 45-54, education ranked as the top concern, while for those aged 55-64 and 65+, health care emerged as the most important issue.

Overall, respondents indicated that nearly all community attributes need attention, but these five areas clearly stood out as the most pressing concerns.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Community Observations	Average Importance Rating
Education	4.6
Quality of Life	4.6
Health Care	4.5
Available Job Opportunities	4.5
Affordable Housing	4.4
Housing	4.3
Business Support	4.3
Child Care	4.2
Natural Resources	4.2
Economic Opportunities	4.2
Property Taxes	4.2
Community Engagement	4.1
Recreational Opportunities	4.0
Volunteerism	3.8

Housing Issues and Recommendations:

Respondents were asked which housing issues the City of Black River Falls should prioritize. While there was less consensus compared to other community priorities, the lowest-scoring issue, mobile homes, still received a 2.4 out of 5. The top five areas of focus were:

1. Affordable housing
2. Public sewer and water
3. Parks and public lands
4. Development near existing services
5. Apartments and multi-family housing

Responses varied more by demographic than geography, with the largest differences between renters and homeowners. Renters generally favored stronger support for all housing issues, particularly affordable housing and apartments, while homeowners expressed lower levels of support across most areas. Homeowners, in particular, showed less support for mobile and manufactured homes compared to the overall response.

Interestingly, geographic location had less impact on responses than whether respondents rented or owned their homes.

Housing Issues	Average Importance Rating
Affordable Housing	4.3
Public Sewer and Water	4.1
Parks and Public Lands	3.8
Encouraging Development in Proximity To Existing Services	3.5
Apartments/Multi-Family	3.5
Proximity To School, Services, and Retail	3.3
Zoning and Land Use	3.3
Housing Density	3.2
Manufactured Home	2.9
Accessory Dwelling Units (Second Housing Unit on Existing Property)	2.8
Tiny Homes	2.5
Mobile Homes	2.4



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Business and Economic Development:

When asked about priorities for business development in the City of Black River Falls, respondents identified the following top five areas:

1. Healthcare
2. Education and job training
3. Technology
4. Tourism and recreation
5. Retail and service industries

There was broad agreement on these priorities, with minimal variation across different demographics or geographic areas. One notable area with a low level of support was for mining, which received a score of just 2.3, indicating limited community interest in encouraging mining activities.

Business Sectors	Average Importance Rating
Healthcare	4.4
Education/Job Training	4.1
Technology	4.0
Tourism and Recreation	3.9
Retail and Service	3.9
Light Industrial	3.7
Professional Services	3.6
Renewable Energy	3.6
Shipping and Distribution	3.5
Heavy Industrial	3.3
Industrial Parks	3.2
Tenured Employment at Mid-Range Businesses	3.0
Mining	2.3

Public Transportation Priorities:

Respondents were asked to identify which public transportation issues the region should focus on. The top five priorities were:

1. Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) services
2. Senior, veterans, and medical transit services
3. SMRT Regional Bus Transit System
4. Bike and pedestrian trails
5. Bike and pedestrian routes

There was very little variation in responses across both geography and demographics, with these issues consistently ranked as top priorities by respondents from all wards and both within and outside the city.

Transit Priorities	Average Importance Rating
ADRC (For Seniors and People With Disabilities)	4.2
Transportation Services (Senior, Veterans, Medical Transit, etc.)	4.1
S.M.R.T Bus Regional Transit System	3.5
Bike/Pedestrian Trails	3.3
Bike/Pedestrian Routes	3.3
Ride Hailing Services (Uber, Lyft, Taxis)	3.2
Bus (Regional/National)	3.1
Ride Sharing	2.9
Rail Transit	2.6



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Street and Transportation Priorities:

Respondents were asked to identify which street and transportation areas the City of Black River Falls should prioritize.

The top five issues were:

1. Seasonal maintenance (snow, erosion, potholes)
2. Local/city streets
3. Infrastructure (bridges, culverts, etc.)
4. Sidewalks and trails
5. Traffic controls and safety

Multi-use trails for ATVs received notably low support, with an average score of 2.6. There was very little variation in responses across both geography and demographics, with these issues consistently ranked as top priorities by respondents from all wards and both within and outside the city.

Transportation Priorities	Average Importance Rating
Seasonal Maintenance (Snow, Erosion, Potholes)	4.4
Local/City Streets	4.3
Infrastructure (Bridges, Culverts, etc.)	4.2
Sidewalks and Trails	3.9
Traffic Controls and Safety	3.9
State and Federal Highways	3.6
Parking	3.5
New Street Construction	3.0
Multi-Use (ATVs)	2.6

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Priorities:

Respondents were asked to identify which agricultural, natural, and cultural issues the City of Black River Falls should prioritize. The top five issues were:

1. Lakes, rivers, and waterways
2. County or community parks
3. Land conservation (erosion, flood, storms)
4. Wildlife and game
5. Forests

While there was strong support for most areas, recreational ATV trails received notably lower support. There was very little variation in responses across both geography and demographics, with these issues consistently ranked as top priorities by respondents from all wards and both within and outside the city.

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Priorities	Average Importance Rating
Lakes, Rivers, and Waterways	4.2
County Or Community Parks	3.9
Land Conservation (Erosion, Flood, Storms)	3.9
Wildlife and Game	3.8
Forests	3.8
Farmland Preservation	3.8
Cultural and Historic Landmarks	3.7
Wetlands	3.6
Land Conservancies	3.6
Bike and Pedestrian Trails	3.5
State Parks	3.5
Recreational ATV Trails	2.9



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Utilities and Community Facilities Quality:

Respondents were asked to rate the current quality of utilities and community facilities in the City of Black River Falls. The top-rated services were:

1. Natural gas
2. Trash collection
3. Electricity

Areas noted for improvement included TV service, landline phone, and internet. However, these services were still rated as "Average," indicating they are not viewed as poor. There was broad agreement on these ratings among both city residents and those living outside the city, with no significant variation across wards within the city.

Utilities and Community Facilities	Average Service Rating
Natural Gas	3.9
Trash Collection	3.8
Electricity	3.8
Recycling	3.5
Cellular Reception	3.3
Solid Waste/Landfill	3.2
TV Service	3.2
Landline Phone	3.1
Internet	3.1

Renewable Energy and Environmental Priorities

Respondents were asked to identify which renewable energy and environmental issues the City of Black River Falls should prioritize. The top three priorities were:

1. Drinking water
2. Solar projects
3. Agricultural pollution prevention

There was little variation in responses based on demographics or whether respondents lived inside or outside the city. However, within the city, Ward 3 residents placed a significantly higher priority on these issues, with a median score of 4.2 across all categories, compared to 3.6 for respondents overall. Ward 3 also showed more emphasis on the hydroelectric system and less on solar projects.

Mining received very low support across the board, with a score of 2.2, reflecting a consistent lack of interest in mining throughout the survey.

Renewable Energy and Environmental Priorities	Average Importance Rating
Drinking Water	4.6
Solar Projects	3.6
Agriculture Pollution Prevention	3.6
Hydroelectric Systems	3.6
Distribution (Power Lines)	3.6
Carbon Emissions	3.1
Wind Projects	3.0
Mining	2.2



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Support for City Environmental Initiatives

The survey asked respondents how they felt about the City supporting various initiatives. The top five initiatives with the most support were:

1. Water conservation and treatment
2. Recycling
3. Pollution reduction
4. Renewable energy
5. Encouraging development near existing infrastructure

Initiatives with notably lower support included electric vehicle usage and charging options, as well as residential requirements for EV charging, both of which scored below 3.

Support for environmental initiatives varied slightly by geography. City residents expressed more support for these issues compared to those living outside the city. Within the city, Wards 3 and 4 showed stronger support than Wards 1 and 2.

Environmental Initiatives	Average Importance Rating
Water Conservation and Treatment	4.0
Recycling	3.9
Pollution Reduction	3.7
Renewable Energy	3.7
Encouraging Development to Existing Development	3.6
Runoff Reduction	3.6
Sustainable Building Design	3.6
Solar Power	3.5
Commercial Building Codes Requires Energy Efficiency	3.5
Reduce Carbon Emissions	3.3
Residential Building Codes Require Energy Efficiency	3.2
Electric Vehicle Usage and Charging Options	2.6
Residential Requirement for EV Charging	2.2

Key Issues for Future Development

Respondents were also asked to identify the issues they believe will have the most positive impact on development in the City of Black River Falls over the next 10 years, with the option to select up to four. The five most commonly selected issues were:

1. Cost of living
2. Education
3. Employment and jobs
4. Child care
5. Housing development

There was minimal variation in responses across different demographics or geographic areas, indicating broad agreement on these priorities for the city's future growth.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Issues	# of Responses	% of Responses
Cost Of Living	55	46%
Education	54	45%
Employment/Jobs	47	39%
Child Care	45	38%
Housing Development	44	37%
Health Care	34	28%
Business Development	28	23%
Recreation/Tourism	28	23%
Infrastructure	21	18%
Finding Qualified Employees	20	17%
Internet Access	18	15%
Community Engagement	17	14%
Streets	16	13%

Community Feedback: "Big Idea" for Black River Falls

Residents of Black River Falls were asked to share their "Big Idea" for the city. The responses highlighted a wide range of perspectives, with a focus on several key areas for improvement:

1. **Infrastructure:** Many respondents emphasized the need for upgrades to roads, bridges, and public facilities. Suggestions included enhancing street maintenance, improving walkability, and expanding bike trails.
2. **Business Development:** Residents called for more diverse business opportunities, including new retail stores, restaurants, and local job creation. There was also strong interest in supporting small businesses and attracting new industries to boost the local economy.
3. **Community Safety:** Enhancing public safety was a common theme, with suggestions for increased police presence, better traffic control, and improved lighting in public areas to make the city safer for all residents.
4. **Quality of Life Improvements:** Respondents expressed a desire for more recreational facilities, parks, and community events. Ideas included adding more family-friendly amenities, improving access to green spaces, and creating more opportunities for community engagement.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendix C: Public Participation Plan

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

for the Update of the City of Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2023-2024

1. Introduction

Section 66.1001(4)(a) of Wisconsin Statutes requires the governing body of the local government unit to adopt written procedures designed to foster public participation, including open discussions, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice is provided, in every stage in the preparation of the updated comprehensive plan. These written procedures contained within this Public Participation Plan have been developed to meet this requirement. This Plan will guide public participation throughout the City's Comprehensive Planning Update Process.

This Public Participation Program offers all citizens, businesses, other units of government, and other parties a range of opportunities to participate through the planning process in a meaningful way to shape the future of the City. Effective public input is critical for the success of this planning process because it is the citizens, businesses, and other organizations that will experience the results of the objectives, policies, goals and programs of the Comprehensive Plan in the future.

The participation program is designed to be inclusive. It encourages people to participate in the process and to maximize the effectiveness of their contributions. The opportunities are open to everyone.

Our public participation process will:

- Ensure all planning decisions are open to public comment;
- Produce better planning decisions;
- Support and add credibility to all City decision-making processes
- Provide opportunities to disseminate information about the Plan and process to all segments of the City;
- Strengthen the relationship between our decision makers, residents, and stakeholders.

2. Public Participation Methods and Opportunities

Black River Falls has established the following list of public participation methods and opportunities.

a. Open Plan Commission Meetings

Plan Commission meetings scheduled during the Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan update process will have an agenda item providing the opportunity for any public comment on or regarding the City's Comprehensive Plan.

b. Review and Distribution of the Planning Documents

During the Comprehensive Plan update process the public may review and obtain copies of proposed, alternative, or amended elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan from the City upon request. This information may also be distributed through the City's website.

c. Website

The City will post on its website information related to the City's Comprehensive Plan update planning process. This information may include agendas, minutes, draft plan elements, amendments, reports, maps, and photographs.



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

d. Written Comments

The City will always welcome and consider written comments and will respond either in writing or by public comment during public meetings and/or through the media.

e. Meeting Notices

The City will post meeting notices for each meeting and event in a timely manner at accessible locations, and the notices will meet the requirements for proper notification regarding purpose of meeting, date, time and location.

f. Public Hearing

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires local units of government to hold at least one (1) formal public hearing with a Class 2 public notice prior to adoption of a revised Comprehensive Plan resolution or ordinance. Prior to adoption of the revised Comprehensive Plan, the City will conduct this required public hearing.

g. Plan Recommendation Resolution

The Plan Commission or other body of the City that is authorized to amend the City's Comprehensive Plan may recommend the adoption or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan only by adopting a resolution by a majority vote of the entire commission or other body. The vote shall be recorded in the official minutes of the committee or other body. The resolution shall refer to maps and other descriptive material that relate to one or more elements of a comprehensive plan. Upon adoption of the plan amendment, the Plan and its resolution shall be distributed by the City to recipients listed in Section 66.1001(4)(b) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

h. Plan Adoption by Ordinance

No comprehensive plan that is recommended for adoption or amendment may take effect until the City Board enacts an ordinance that adopts the comprehensive plan or amendment. Upon adoption of this ordinance it shall be filed with all of the entities specified in Section 66.1001(4)(b) of the Statutes.

i. Other

Planning is a continuous process that does not end with the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan. Since new issues and unforeseen circumstances will always arise the City may amend its Comprehensive Plan with proper public input and in accordance with City policies and State Statutes at any time.

3. Adoption

Black River Falls adopted this Public Participation Plan on this 6th day of June, 2023.



Mayor – City of Black River Falls



Administrator – City of Black River Falls



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendix D: Sign In Sheet From Stakeholder Meeting

Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder Meeting

~~Common Council Meeting~~

Date: September 9, 2024

PRINT NAME	PHYSICAL ADDRESS
Erio Chrisinger	2326 Egeoberger Rd BRF
Carol Blaken	Jacksonville CO-OP Niobe Ct. BRF
Bob Becker	Black River County Bank 221 Main St Black River Falls, WI
Shelly Severson	11199 Hagen Lane BRF, WI
Jay Borek	Jackson City Hwy.
Casay Engebretson	BRF Municipal Utilities
Amanda Gunn	Black River Area Chamber
Jarod Meyer	BRF Parks and Rec
Anneliese Eddy	Planning Commission
Randy Eddy	Planning Commission



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendix E: Class 1 Notice of Public Hearing



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendix F: Plan Commission Adoption Resolution



Black River Falls Comprehensive Plan 2025 – 2045

Appendix G: Common Council Ordinance to Adopt the Plan