

Future Land Use



Introduction

A Future Land Use Plan is a roadmap for how to guide land use changes in Berlin over time. It establishes land use policy, and can then be implemented by both regulatory and non-regulatory means. The pattern of existing development, the location of infrastructure and services, the framework of open space, the natural constraints (soils, wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes), and the amount and type of growth anticipated or desired suggest the basic options open to the community. Within these opportunities and limitations, alternative patterns and policies for future growth are considered. The Future Land Use Plan consists of two major components – the future land use map and the future land use policies.

Land use policies should be based on the conditions identified during the development of the master plan, and on the community vision. These policies should encourage development in areas that can accommodate it, and have been designated for preferred growth. The ability of future development to protect and enhance Berlin's community character is an issue of both location and design.

Future Land Use – Key Themes and Opportunities

Berlin's desired future land use pattern reflects the vision statement, which speaks of:

- **A mixed-use environment** - which supports its businesses, arts, entertainment, education, leisure, parks and ease of living for residents of all ages. This includes new homes being built within the city limits, allowing the City to more fully utilize the infrastructure that was developed previously for a more populous community.
- **Restoring Downtown structures or constructing new buildings that fit with the old** - People like the scale and architectural details of Main Street, and there is a desire for a new specialty retail economy here. These new stores, and offices and residential units on the upper stories, will re-introduce a vitality to Main Street.

- **Improvement in the City's housing stock** - There is an appreciation of the efforts by the City and related agencies to remove surplus units and to enforce modern building and life safety codes on all properties. There is a hope that supply and demand will be back in balance, and that Berlin will be a city of well kept, well maintained neighborhoods.
- **Nodes of new development** – for the second home market and for manufacturing and light industrial activity that may not be compatible with the other uses in the Downtown.
- **More natural resource-based recreation** – composed of a system of multi-use, multi-seasonal trails ringing the City, and large blocks of unfragmented land adjacent to the Downtown.
- **A walkable community** - both in terms of its size and its pedestrian safety. Preserve the walkability of the City and even improve it with additional walking paths and other trails.
- **Easy access to the renewable energy of the northern forests** – this resource will become a way to make the city's remoteness from major population centers an asset once again. This could include the creation of electricity from biomass, and the use of the waste heat within the Downtown area for space heating.
- **Redevelopment of the Pulp Mill Site** - This area is envisioned as a multiple use area with a much greener landscape than it had during its previous use as a log yard and pulp mill. There should be multiple uses here, perhaps including light manufacturing, offices, some commercial (to complement the Downtown, not compete with it), and maybe even some housing. There should be access to the Androscoggin River here via walking paths. Any remaining historic buildings should be restored as interpretive sites.

The future land use pattern should be driven by the content of this Master Plan, and by the need to reflect the likely development activity that Berlin and the market can realistically encourage. The nature of this growth and development, and its placement on the landscape, will be driven by market forces, by individual landowner's preferences, and by Berlin's land use policies and ordinances: its zoning ordinance, its site plan and subdivision regulations, its capital improvement plan, and others. Two Future Land Use maps follow to illustrate how the City would like to see all of these forces brought together. Making this future land use plan a reality, however, will require changes to the City's land use policies and ordinances.

Specifically, on the map of the whole City, there are identified

Areas for new manufacturing and light industrial activity on the former pulp mill site, in the Dummer Yard east of Hutchins Street and into Success, south of the waste water treatment plant, and north of Horne Brook;

Areas for new recreational and seasonal activity around the entrance to to Jericho Lake and on the south side of Mount Forist;

A multi-use trail system connecting all parts of the community;

New residential development north of Cates Hill Road;

Areas for protection and preservation that include the Views from Cates Hill, and areas around Mount Jasper, Mount Forist, Cascade Falls, and along the Dead and Androscogging Rivers; and

The final completion of the Route 110 improvements.

On the Downtown Map, specific recommendations include:

Continued efforts to improve housing and the neighborhoods in general in the Lower East Side and in the Narrows around the former Notre Dame High School; working to reduce density by joining adjacent non-conforming lots so as to make them more conforming, where practical;

Strengthen the Downtown area as a mixed use district, with retail and commercial activity on the lower levels with residential activity above;

Redevelopment of the former pulp mill site as an area of manufacturing and light industry;

Designing a new link of the East Side Arterial between Napert Village and Bridge Street;

Developing internal circulation connecting Hutchins Street in the vicinity of the former Boston and Maine railroad station with the new Arterial noted above.

Providing pedestrian amenities, including a new bridge to the former International Paper Company site on the islands below Mason Street and a new pedestrian riverwalk linking Mason Street to Twelfth Street;

Developing a part of the former mill site as an interpretive center in coordination with a new information center at the Northern Forest Heritage Park;

Considering the above area for some housing as a mixed use development; and

Developing a multi-use trail through the mill site, linking other trail systems to the west and east.