

# TOWN OF BERLIN (Revised 3.8.15) 2016 - 2018 Strategic Plan

## *Preface*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I ---*

*I took the one less traveled by,*

*And that has made all the difference.*

**Robert Frost**  
1874-1963

## **By Mayor Gee Williams**

First, on behalf of myself, the entire Town Council, all Town employees, and the many citizens who unselfishly serve on our municipal boards, commissions and our inspiring volunteers, thank you for the outstanding participation we experienced in the Town of Berlin's first Strategic Planning Sessions.

The purpose of the sessions was three fold. First, to provide the Mayor and Council with an overview of Berlin's collective community values, hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future. Second, to identify both immediate goals (2016-2018), plus future longer-term goals for our community. And the third benefit was to identify a detailed work plan for achieving our Town's immediate goals over the next three years.

The strategic planning sessions were not only well-attended, but also positive and energetic. From a personal perspective, I think the most encouraging part of the entire process was the fact that, in general terms, the direction and values we believed the community to have, were confirmed. It was especially helpful to listen and learn what you believe gives Berlin its special sense of place and purpose.

This is an exciting time for our community. We have multiple, but not necessarily mutually exclusive challenges, that will enable us to continue to make Berlin economically vibrant, environmentally responsible, and artistically alive while using our collective common sense to preserve our most precious asset...our quality of life.

While many challenges were identified during the process, I encourage you to think of our community's challenges as opportunities in disguise. Berlin, like most "living communities" of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, is experiencing unprecedented change in all manner of things. Some of the most noticeable changes are related to population growth among both residents and guests, plus rising expectations about the quality and quantity of existing and new public services provided by the Town. As your elected public servants for the Town of Berlin, it is our

responsibility to do our best to balance so many well-thought hopes and dreams with the finite human and financial resources that are at our disposal at any time.

I am confident that by continuing to follow the proven path of working together with a shared commitment to reach our goals, that over time, every challenge can be overcome and every opportunity achieved.

One final thought that is obvious from my perspective as your mayor. We are benefiting today from the foresight, courage and investments that have been made in recent decades in our community from every sector, be it government, private business, education, non-profits or faith-based groups. The decisions that have begun with our first community-wide strategic planning process give us an unprecedented opportunity to rise from a “good to great” community for all of our citizens.

Let us reaffirm our belief in each other, in the benefits of balancing determination with thoughtful compromise and a relentless pursuit of never-ending, constant improvement in all aspects of our shared community life. To paraphrase the words of the great American poet Robert Frost, if we continue to follow the road that is less traveled by, it will make all the difference. So let us confidently step forward together knowing that for the Town of Berlin, the best is yet to come!

### ***Community Values***

The Town of Berlin is a safe, welcoming, innovative, can-do model small Town that values its history, traditions and diversity. We embrace tolerance and inclusiveness. We are:

- Committed to working together to define and shape our future
- Economically sustainable and environmentally progressive
- Artistically alive and eternally young
- A people friendly community and a place to live in for a lifetime

### ***Three-Year Goals***

1. Increase parks and recreation facilities
2. Preserve Berlin's traditions, quality of life, and "wow" factor while prospering and changing
3. Enhance and maintain public safety services
4. Invest in public buildings, roads, sidewalks, and water and sewer pipes to ensure that they function well and meet state and federal regulations
5. Promote economic development and increase employment opportunities

### ***2016 Work Plan***

#### **Goal #1: Increase parks and recreation facilities**

##### **Outcomes**

- Final decision on acquisition of the former Tyson property

- Two new recreation events

#### **Actions**

- 1a. Complete appraisal, environmental assessment, feasibility analysis, and funding plan to enable the Council to make a decision regarding acquisition of the Tyson property by September 30, 2015.
- 1b. Work with the Parks and Recreation Commission in developing recreation program plans
- 1c. Work with the county to expand the “Just Walk” program
- 1d. Create regularly scheduled fitness programs in Stephen Decatur Park
- 1e. Establish a regular walk around the Town with elected officials and the Town Administrator
- 1f. Provide regular information updates to the community about progress on this goal

### **Goal #2: Preserve Berlin's traditions, quality of life, and "wow" factor while prospering and changing**

#### **Outcomes**

- A preliminary plan for Town growth and development including parking capacity and alternative transportation options
- Better communication of the schedule of special Town events

#### **Actions**

- 2a. Partner with other transportation providers to meet senior mobility needs in the Town
- 2b. Establish written agreements with schools and churches for temporary use of on-site parking during Town events
- 2c. Work with the County Library Board to use the lot behind the new library for public parking
- 2d. Adopt architectural standards and revise building codes as needed to begin planning for better access and mobility using all types of local transportation as the Town grows
- 2e. Initiate specific growth planning and access management for Berlin's three primary transportation corridors (MD 346, MD 113, and US 50)
- 2f. Provide more information to residents and visitors about all Berlin events, particularly newer or lesser known events, using a variety of media and including both photographs and event descriptions

### **Goal #3: Enhance and maintain public safety services**

#### **Outcome**

Stable public safety staffing, structure, and equipment

#### **Actions**

- 3a. Establish a funding formula for EMS services
- 3b. Use the five-year capital plan and processes for public safety capital improvement
- 3c. Complete engineering and site work for the new police station
- 3d. Use annexation and planning processes to anticipate Town growth and plan for public safety needs

## **Goal #4: Invest in the Town’s infrastructure including public buildings, roads, sidewalks, water and sewer pipes, and the electric utility to ensure that they function well and meet state and federal regulations**

### **Outcome**

Increased awareness of all infrastructure programs and services including roads, sidewalks, sewer and water pipes, stormwater management, electric utility, public buildings

### **Actions**

- 4a. Reduce flooding
- 4b. Continue ongoing infrastructure improvements and maintenance
- 4c. Work with the state Department of Transportation to deal with flooding problems on state roads in Berlin
- 4d. Implement the AMI smart metering system for water and electric services including obtaining a grant to support the water component of the metering system
- 4e. Complete the engineering plan to upgrade the electric substation and work on funding for the project
- 4f. Provide regular communication to residents about ongoing infrastructure programs and services and about progress on this goal

## **Goal # 5: Promote economic development and increase employment opportunities**

### **Outcomes**

- Available space/properties filled with new businesses
- Electronic forms available on the Town website for new businesses

### **2015 Activities**

- 5a. Research what incentives are available from the Town and county to attract new businesses
- 5b. Create and widely distribute a one sheet/business briefer for potential new businesses
- 5c. List all available properties for new businesses
- 5d. Design/make available electronic forms for opening new businesses

### ***Future Goals***

Five additional goals were recommended during the community input process. They will become a second tier of priorities as the Mayor and Town Council remain alert to opportunities to make progress on these future goals while remaining vigilant on achieving Berlin’s five primary goals over the next three years. Some components of these goals relating to the electric utility and transportation options have been incorporated into the three-year goals. These additional goals will be considered regularly by the Mayor and Town Council in annual reviews of progress on the strategic plan.

The five future goals are:

- ✓ Maintain an environmentally proactive community
- ✓ Broaden transportation options to improve mobility

- ✓ Increase the variety of housing to meet the needs of our population over time
- ✓ Invest in the Town's electric utility to meet environmental regulations and improve service
- ✓ Expand the Town's revenue base to meet needs, expectations, and requirements