

Berlin Master Plan

Visioning Exercise Conducted on 3/5/08

Part 1 - Summary of Key Findings

Question 1 – What do you hope the mill site looks like in twenty years?

As you think about the future of the 120 acre mill site, many people have different ideas. What do you hope the site looks like in twenty years?

The key findings from this question included:

- The site should provide access to the Androscoggin River, and this will include constructing a river walk.
- The site should include a mix of uses including job creating business or industrial activity, recreation areas, commercial uses, housing, and green space
- More green space should be created on the site around new developments, along the river, and in areas that deserve protection from development.
- The buildings should be constructed to compliment the downtown architecture and activity, and as a result must not block views of the mountains or other parts of Berlin.

Question 2 – Issues to keep in mind

When you think of the mill site in relationship to other parts of the community, what issues do you think should be kept in mind?

The key findings from this question included:

- The site should become part of the heritage corridor, and an effort should be made to be sure that buildings and streets blend with the rest of Downtown.
- Make sure that there are transportation connections within the site and to other portions of Berlin including multi-use paths and pedestrian connections.
- Allow a diversity of uses that do not pollute or detract from the City.
- Blend the site into the natural landscape as much as possible.

Question 3 – Concerns to address if the site remains industrial?

If the site remains industrial, are there specific concerns that you would hope to have addressed?

The key findings from this question included:

- Reduce the visual impacts of the site. This includes issues related to the height of structures, the color of and design of buildings, and the need for vegetation on the site.
- Eliminate noise and other forms of pollution from the site by carefully considering the operations the site may accommodate.
- Use any heat or energy, created by an industrial facility, on adjacent sites or elsewhere within the city as much as possible.
- Make sure the development contributes a good number of jobs and a livable wage, and provides opportunities for young people that wish to stay in Berlin or move to the area.

Question 4 – Activities you would like to see here instead or in combination with industry?

Are there activities or uses that you would like to see here instead of, or in combination with, industrial activities? What specific concerns would you hope to have addressed?

The key findings from this question included:

- A mix of uses should be accommodated on site with or without the industrial uses. These include offices, parks and recreation facilities, residential, and small businesses.
- Public access that contributes to the overall transportation system in Berlin.
- If energy generation takes place on site greenhouses and other businesses should also be located here to make use of the waste heat and other resources that may be available.
- Heat and renewable energy created on site should also be used within the Downtown for district heating to reduce utility bills and attract new residents and businesses.

Question 5 – Other thoughts?

Do you have any other thoughts about this site that you would like to share with us?

The key findings from this question included:

- Berlin needs proactive planning and zoning that will provide an opportunity to work with developers up front.
- The site needs to balance out the tax base while pleasing the public with a mix of uses.
- Make sure the development that does take place makes sense for Berlin and blends in with the rest of the Downtown buildings and streets.

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Part 2 - Summary of Responses by Group

Question 1 – What do you hope the mill site looks like in twenty years?

As you think about the future of the 120 acre mill site, many people have different ideas. What do you hope the site looks like in twenty years?

The key findings from this question included:

- The site should provide access to the Androscoggin River, and this will include constructing a river walk.
- The site should include a mix of uses including job creating business or industrial activity, recreation areas, commercial uses, housing, and green space
- More green space should be created on the site around new developments, along the river, and in areas that deserve protection from development.
- The buildings should be constructed to compliment the downtown architecture and activity, and as a result must not block views of the mountains or other parts of Berlin.

Group 1 Responses:

- Job opportunities for Teens
- Recreation and education opportunities that could include (2):
 - Conference Center
 - Resort or Vacation opportunities that include shops and recreation facilities
- Need taxes and jobs – create a mix of opportunities for small industries, offices, and recreation including river walks and bike paths
- Industry on the southern portion of the mill site
- Northern portion of the mill site for recreation, residential, and light commercial
- There are wetlands (20 – 40 acres possibly) on the northern side of the site to be aware of
- Beauty of the mountain views from the mill site (2)
- Tie the site into Main Street
- Provide for walking and biking around the perimeter of the site
- Southern portion of the site for mixed use including industrial and commercial uses, but energy self sufficient
- North side of the site for recreation only
- Provide for high density on the site that includes mixed uses, light industry on the southern end, easements for a river walk
- Planned community with restaurants, shops, and condominiums
- Productively occupied – not vacant
- Not an eyesore
- Greenery on the site – protect the natural beauty
- If Industrial activity is on the site it will be hard for recreation
- Civic Center for concerts, events, and jobs

- Recreation for the citizens more than as an income generator
- Create a recreation village at the northern end to operate as a hub of activity within the city and beyond
- In 20 years the site should be mixed use, well developed, and providing jobs and taxes
- Southern end should be for a biomass plant and the northern end should be for state offices and other office space, and small businesses should be located in the middle of the site between these two areas
- Secure the easements for the river walk (3)
- In 20 years the site should be an extension of Downtown with a mix of uses and no heavy industry. Light industries would be acceptable (2)
- Condominiums and a walkway along the river
- River walks
- Public access
- Mixed use including a municipal/government center
- There is a need for a site Master Plan
- The mixed use strategy should be adaptable

Group 2 Responses:

- Character of the site maintains the unique community character
- Site creates an image of a high quality of life
- Site is cleaned up to the highest standards
- Mix of uses that diversifies the economy
- Site is attractive with green buffers
- New buildings with environmentally friendly design and energy efficient
- Industry can be there, but it shouldn't look industrial
- More green space on the site
- Site is well landscaped
- Highlight the beauty of the area by not allowing new buildings to obstruct views of the mountains
- Trails for biking and walking
- Co-generation plant on the site that provides low cost heat and/or electricity to other buildings (such as offices, greenhouse) on the site
- Light industry that is clean and non-polluting
- Site should help create jobs
- Four year college (for profit) that deals with energy issues and produces technology and equipment
- Community center on site
- Community sports center for indoor and outdoor sports (including indoor pool)
- Community gathering places, such as ampitheater for concerts and events like the blessing of the snowmobiles
- Stock car racing in summer and ATV racing in winter
- Site incorporates access to and uses of the river
- White water park on the river
- Site use incorporates recreational components required in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing of hydroelectric projects on the river
- Visitor information center

- Conference center with a casino
- Not a mill site
- Shops
- A neighborhood community with a youthful profile
- Affordable housing
- Some commercial activity
- Restaurants
- New consolidated elementary school and playing fields

Group 3 Responses:

- Mixed-use redevelopment including a business park for commercial and light industrial uses that can help generate jobs, income, and tax base
- Open space areas should compliment commercial or light industrial uses
- Trees and landscaping for screening
- People-friendly uses that limit pollution and noise
- Riverwalk with links to multi-use trails on both east and west sides of river
- Indoor recreational uses such as hockey arena to attract regional tournaments
- Health and community recreation center
- Limited development on Chlor-Alkali site
- Hotel accommodations in the vicinity of the site and downtown
- Hotel and casino resort
- New buildings should compliment the facades of downtown Berlin
- Residential subdivision with north-south artery and cross streets named to reflect Berlin's northern forest heritage
- Amusement attractions, like a miniature "Six Flags"
- Site can be part of a heritage preservation effort
- A viewing tower to take advantage of the scenic views of the Androscoggin and the Presidentials
- Senior housing or a 55 + residential community
- Historic museum to preserve the Heritage of Brown and Company
- Eco-tourism village - recreational retail businesses for boat / canoe / bike rental, fishing equipment, backpacking and hiking supplies to support river-based recreation and use of a new multi-use trail system
- No heavy industry
- Small business incubator to support local entrepreneurship and to encourage the growth of new businesses
- Fine arts center
- Restaurants
- Northern UNH campus
- North country medical complex

Group 4 Responses:

- Combination of non-polluting industry and office space
- Attractive assets to draw people to river
- Paths and recreation bicycle path

- Condo (laws to protect views) along riverbank side
- Civic Center for public gathering and skate park (community center, community club, YMCA)
- 10 acre outdoor track, multi-model path, ATV, snowmobile, bikes
- Biomass plant
- Finish circle on map – South, North, East, West of River with housing for seniors
- Green space is necessary outdoor amphitheater for concerts
- Combine retail, technology, living wage jobs, on site
- Upper end housing
- Tourism combined with light industry and community space
- Make it attractive enough for people to return over and over again
- Scale to village feel
- Anything but heavy industry
- Must reflect the town
- Downtown and mill site is not the same
- Footbridge connecting community center
- Hotel with conference center
- Good paying jobs, skilled labor
- Wireless café, river walk
- Good tax base for city
- Hardwood tree stand with camping
- Mixed use, well blended industries, technology park and other development
- Multi-model trails along river
- Straighten the east side road Hutchins Street
- Continue the downtown, village with Downtown
- Gated community
- Supportive industry to what we have in Berlin already
- Green space
- Youth activities: social life. More for youth to attract them to stay in region
- Market will determine economic development
- Good jobs and more opportunity for young adults
- Vibrant market in existing downtown
- Diversified industry in downtown Berlin

Question 2 – Issues to keep in mind

When you think of the mill site in relationship to other parts of the community, what issues do you think should be kept in mind?

The key findings from this question included:

- The site should become part of the heritage corridor, and an effort should be made to be sure that buildings and streets blend with the rest of Downtown.
- Make sure that there are transportation connections within the site and to other portions of Berlin including multi-use paths and pedestrian connections.
- Allow a diversity of uses that do not pollute or detract from the City.

Group 1 Responses:

- Heritage and cultural aspects of Berlin – and activities to celebrate these
- Taxes, unemployment, culture, and promoting pride
- Light commercial fueled by renewable resources from the area
- Views of the mountains not obstructed
- Remember that we were a mill town, but have a new beginning
- Interpretive trail along the river
- The mill site should not be segregated from the community (2)
- There should be a public street or other access through the site (3)
- Adaptable buildings for future uses
- Enhance the area by becoming a center for innovation again
- Create a natural mix with trees around the buildings
- Architecture like Main Street – not just steel buildings
- Fix or replace the existing road around the site, and maybe move it
- Jobs
- Make use of the location between two existing parks and create a greenway that ties them together

Group 2 Responses:

- Need to address the issue of dilapidated properties near the mill site (especially on the east side and School Street areas)
- Keep the style of the city's development (grid block pattern of streets)
- Maintain the walkability of the area
- Connect the site to the downtown area and make it walkable to the downtown
- Development should compliment the downtown (several people commented on this)
- Site is the geographic and focal center of Berlin
- City needs to develop a variety of housing including condos, assisted living
- Services need to be maintained and new ones developed in the City since services is a factor why people live in a community
- Transportation networks to and from the site need to be planned so that traffic in the rest of Berlin is not disrupted by long delays and train crossings, truck traffic, etc.
- Stability of future businesses on the site is an issue so the community isn't faced with major change again
- New uses on the site shouldn't be noisy
- New uses on the site shouldn't be polluting or create particulates and dust
- Broadband and cable need to be available throughout Berlin
- Industry should be on the outskirts of town, not in the center

- There is industrial space elsewhere in Berlin that is not fully utilized so these sites need to be considered too
- There is industrial space elsewhere in Coos County that is not fully utilized so the region needs to be looked at as a whole
- There is existing commercial and housing space in downtown Berlin that also needs to be renovated and redeveloped
- Former mill buildings on the west side of the river (Administration, Woodlands and Research Buildings) also need to be redeveloped and connected to the site
- Berlin needs a hotel
- Site should generate revenue for the City of Berlin to help the City maintain services (such as library, Fire and Police Departments, roads)
- Site needs to provide diversity in businesses
- Site should have lots of small employers rather than one large business
- Residential uses around Napert Village could be developed and connected to East Side neighborhoods
- Residential condominiums on the river would add new type of housing to the community
- Diversity of uses should be encouraged
- Transportation and ease of access needs to be considered
- Morris Company site should be considered along with this property and they should compliment each other
- Historical aspects to preserve the heritage

Group 3 Responses:

- Site should be part of a cultural heritage corridor along the river that includes the Northern Forest Heritage Park, the former Brown Company research and administration buildings
- Existing trails on east side of river should connect to the west side of the river through the site and take advantage of the old railroad bridge
- Pedestrian trails and multi-use trails should be separated to ensure pedestrian safety
- Future uses at the site should compliment downtown and function as an extension of the downtown
- Future uses should also compliment residential areas next to the site as well as those that have views to the site
- The reuse of the site help guide the community away from reliance on industrial manufacturing and help regenerate Berlin
- New activities on the site should generate products or benefits for the rest of the community (energy, heat, steam, or other by-products)
- New development should blend into the natural landscape
- Access improvements to the site and throughout the community as a whole should accompany redevelopment of the site

Group 4 Responses:

- Please no white elephant
- Site should not negatively impact downtown future
- Downtown must be pleasant
- Match rest of downtown. Buildings and streets should blend with rest of town.

Question 3 – Concerns to address if the site remains industrial?

If the site remains industrial, are there specific concerns that you would hope to have addressed?

The key findings from this question included:

- Reduce the visual impacts of the site. This includes issues related to the height of structures, the color of and design of buildings, and the need for vegetation on the site.
- Eliminate noise and other forms of pollution from the site by carefully considering the operations the site may accommodate.
- Use any heat or energy, created by an industrial facility, on adjacent sites or elsewhere within the city as much as possible.
- Make sure the development contributes a good number of jobs and a livable wage, and provides opportunities for young people that wish to stay in Berlin or move to the area.

Group 1 Responses:

- Lower or eliminate the stack (4)
- Utilize the river in positive ways
- No heavy industry
- No pollution (air, water or noise) (2)
- River walk
- Maintain or enhance the snowmobile trail
- Control noise levels
- Dump the fence
- Create a building height requirement (four floors maybe) to maintain views
- Minimize disruption so the green space on the site will be useable
- Soften the edges of the site with trees and other greenery, and architecture like downtown
- Make the color of the structures have more variation like downtown (2)
- Remove piping from the exterior of the plant, and create a new façade if possible
- Move the boiler if possible
- Disguise the boiler – maybe with an apartment appearance
- Get the opinion of an outside engineering firm on the stack and structure and how to lower the profile of the facility
- Allow any energy projects on the site to “bleed off” power to adjacent sites
- Store wood chips inside a “fuel house”
- No industrial site in downtown!
- Mandate easements for access
- Create multi-modal trails

Group 2 Responses:

- The City needs to rebrand itself and market the new brand
- Visual aspects of the site is the primary concern
- Site needs to visually blend with the community
- Good landscaping is needed on the site
- If uses on the site involve large pipes and smokestacks then they should not be visible
- Noise from the site should be minimal

- Pollution from the site should be minimal
- Smell from the site should be minimal
- Site should create jobs
- Roads to the site need to be improved
- Access to the river is needed

Group 3 Responses:

- Industrial uses on the site should be designed to consider the site's visibility throughout the City
- Aesthetics and "curb appeal" should be kept in mind especially at the southern edge of the site where the property links to downtown
- The stack should be removed, or stack height should be limited based on visibility
- Screening could be made out of reflective material to create a mirror image of the Presidentials
- Clear delineation specific use areas should help to separate heavy industrial use areas from mixed-use or recreational areas
- If energy production occurs on the site, there should be away to keep electricity or other by-products of the generating process in the community. Heat or steam could potentially be used to support new light industrial uses on the site or existing downtown buildings.
- Noise, traffic and emissions should be carefully considered and regulated to the fullest extent possible
- Employment opportunities for young people
- Area along the river should be preserved for recreation and tourism activities, such as a multi-use trail
- The community should consider national industrial development trends and focus on clean and green – growing IT and telecom industries could help diversify
- A community education effort could help residents understand what can reasonably be done to limit the impacts of a biomass or industrial use on the site.

Group 4 Responses:

- Must improve property value of property surrounding the site
- We have to use the existing zoning laws
- Visual is important because of size
- Must blend
- Aesthetics are important – no rust ... trees ... clean, fresh paint
- Utilize/ think of rail site and other existing asset
- Economic base (not just 40 jobs)
- must diversify economy
- Must add living wage jobs
- If the biomass plant created co-location opportunities and reduce heat/electricity opportunities (benefits to town, greenhouse, cheap energy for adjacent businesses)
- Measure the impact of industrial pollution on the community (cancer and asthma)
- Not in favor of shortening smokestack because pollution needs to be put open air
- Shorten smokestack to improve aesthetics (most agreed)
- Keep long smoke stack to reduce impact of pollution (minority position)
- Trucking is also a problem

- Chipping operation would have to be off-site

Question 4 – Activities you would to see here instead or in combination with industry?

Are there activities or uses that you would like to see here instead of, or in combination with, industrial activities? What specific concerns would you hope to have addressed?

The key findings from this question included:

- A mix of uses should be accommodated on site with or without the industrial uses. These include offices, parks and recreation facilities, residential, and small businesses.
- Public access that contributes to the overall transportation system in Berlin.
- If energy generation takes place on site greenhouses and other businesses should also be located here to make use of the waste heat and other resources that may be available.
- Heat and renewable energy created on site should also be used within the Downtown for district heating to reduce utility bills and attract new residents and businesses.

Group 1 Responses:

- Office complex
- Build on existing attractions like the Northern Forest Heritage Park and River fire
- Create a link in the multi-modal recreational trail from Berlin to Gorham (follow railroad bed)
- Greenhouses fed by hot water from biomass facility
- Wood drying facility using waste heat
- Businesses that need space heating
- District heating for the Downtown area
- Small town park with heated outdoor pool and gathering area
- Indoor water park
- Public transportation

Group 2 Responses:

- Community cooperative farming
- Uses on the site should compliment each other, such as steam produced on the site could be used to supply heat and energy to a greenhouse operation
- Keep products produced on the site in the area rather than shipping out of town
- If energy is produced on site, then it should reduce the cost of energy for Berlin residents
- Conference center and hotel
- Access to the river
- Mixed uses (agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial)
- Security and openness

Group 3 Responses:

- Improved tax base
- Screening of heavy industry to allow for viable mixed-use nearby
- A community benefits agreement should be considered for other new uses at the site
- Keep energy generated in the community
- Green space and walkability should be maintained in surrounding areas
- Workforce housing to limit increased traffic
- Create an entrepreneurship center to attract young people and students and emphasize progressive changes in local economy
- Attract clean industries that can utilize by-products from energy production
- Chlor-Alkali site should be maintained as a tree farm yielded revenues for City from periodic harvests
- Lots of jobs created through several small companies to help diversify the economy
- Build on regional tourism market through initiatives like the Coos County branding. Berlin's heritage can become a diversion attraction for tourists that visit the White Mountains and the historic hotels.
- Consider how the economy will remain competitive with lower demand for industry

Group 4 Responses:

- Mixed-use
- Residential (including higher density condos, etc)
- Parks & recreational opportunities (pool, indoor recreation center, trails)
- Flex-office space

Question 5 – Other thoughts?

Do you have any other thoughts about this site that you would like to share with us?

The key findings from this question included:

- Berlin needs proactive planning and zoning that will provide an opportunity to work with developers up front.
- The site needs to balance out the tax base while pleasing the public with a mix of uses.
- Make sure the development that does take place makes sense for Berlin and blends in with the rest of the Downtown buildings and streets.

Group 1 Responses:

- No housing unless on the northern end of the site
- Some need for housing for older residents
- Timeliness – do it right and quick!
- Proactive planning and zoning
-Partner with the developers up front

Group 2 Responses:

- How the site looks should depend on the standards set by the community

- Site would be a good place for a combined new Police and Fire Station
- A college would keep youth here and also bring new people to Berlin
- Site could support a variety of recreational uses
- A Berlin History Museum would be a good use on the site
- A Boy Scout Camp could be developed on the site
- The site needs to balance out the tax base
- We may have to start small, but we can grow
- If you were to start anew, would you place an industrial site there? This is the first question to ask.
- It is a big piece of Berlin's available land
- There is no reason why we can't please everyone in this process
- Definition of uses of the site:
 - Heavy industry includes smoke stacks, large facility, noisy, large numbers of people coming and going from the site
 - Light industry includes high technology uses and would have office buildings and warehouses

Group 3 Responses:

- The community should take advantage of this opportunity to reinvent itself.
- Cleanup of Chlor-Alkali site should reach standards needed for a daycare center.
- Change the zoning designation on the site to limit heavy industry
- Create a better road alignment to improve existing traffic flow to and from site and surrounding area
- Any plan for the reuse of the site should consider long-term sustainability of the economy and reflect a proactive municipal government.

Group 4 Responses:

- The site has to make sense for Berlin and blend with the rest of downtown (streets and buildings)
- No big smoke stacks and giant buildings that are out of proportion with downtown.
- Some attractive feature that would emphasize the view of the mountains
- Terry Block presented a detailed drawing of a plan that includes lots of industrial-commercial flex space, higher density residential, park and recreation space. Others commented positively.