



# **BAY MILLS INDIAN COMMUNITY**

## **Planning Department Annual Report**

*Covering activity from 01/01/2025-12/31/2025*

Prepared by Brianna Gunka, Planning Manager



## Introduction

The Planning Department is responsible for:

- Developing the community's comprehensive plan and capital improvements plan which provide a framework for orderly growth and redevelopment.
- Overseeing all planning efforts, including feasibility studies.
- Overseeing development projects, including roads, parks and recreation, community facilities, housing and utility infrastructure.
- Identifying, procuring, and managing grant funding.
- Acquiring and managing landholdings, including taking land into Trust.
- Promoting Destination Bay Mills, hosting the annual Whitefish Festival, and leading parks, recreation, and tourism initiatives.
- Overseeing the development of BMIC's 11MW solar farm.
- Studying special topics or conducting other special projects as requested by the Executive Council

This report contains a record of the Planning Department's activity over the past year. Highlights include:



### Plans

The Planning Department completed 12 plans and studies.



### Grants

The Grants Department applied for 23 grants. 9 grants were secured, totaling \$1,708,436.



### Property Acquisition

BMIC purchased 6 new properties in Brimley. 11 properties were taken into Trust.



### Housing

11 housing units were completed this year. 15 units are currently under development.

## Comprehensive Plan Status

The Planning Department is responsible for regularly reviewing and updating the comprehensive plan to ensure it continues to be relevant to the community's needs. The community's current comprehensive plan is currently still in process. Additional information can be found on the baymills.org website using the following link:

<https://www.baymills.org/comprehensiveplan>

A comprehensive plan is a long-range roadmap that guides future development consistent with the community's mission, vision, values, and goals. Comprehensive plans usually cover a 20-30-year period, and require updates every 5 years. It is a tool that allows communities to be proactive in co-creating a shared future, instead of reactive to emergent issues and trends. For a comprehensive plan to be successful, there must be community buy-in. Plans should be "comprehensive in scope, general in nature, and long-range in perspective". A well-crafted comprehensive plan is used to guide short-term and long-term decision-making, develop policies that promote orderly growth and development, balance competing interests and demands, and achieve broad goals.

Once in place, the Planning Department will undertake a formal review (and update or reaffirmation) at least every five years. The first round of reviews are scheduled to take place in 2030. The Capital Improvements Plan will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure new facilities and community infrastructure are accounted for.

## Plans and Feasibility Studies

The Planning Department has coordinated a variety of planning documents and feasibility studies this year. Planning documents create a shared vision and action plan for a variety of efforts, including capital improvements, community signage, and comprehensive community action. Feasibility studies provide critical data

| Plan/Study                            | Summary  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>COMPLETE</b>                       |  |
| Tourism Diversification Study         | Capacity Consulting completed a regional market analysis, and provided recommendations for tourism diversification, including adventure tours, seasonal events, and infrastructure development. This study will guide the Recreation and Tourism Department and the Destination Bay Mills efforts.   |
| Solar Feasibility                     | BMIC secured an Energy & Mineral Development Program grant to hire a consulting firm to conduct a solar feasibility study. Baker Tilly assisted in identifying a site suitable for an 11MW array with 5 MW of battery backup. With the assistance of 5 Lakes, BMIC secured a CPRG grant for the deployment of the solar farm.  |
| Wind Feasibility                      | BMIC secured an Energy & Mineral Development Program grant to hire a consulting firm to conduct a wind feasibility study Baker Tilly performed a wind-resource assessment based on 180 days of data collected from an anemometer deployed on the Plantation Hill water tower, and Amazon Web Services (AWS) data from the Sault Ste Marie Airport. Based on the wind speed estimate, a single 1.5 megawatts (MW) turbine on an 85 m tower is estimated to produce 3,450,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of net energy per year. |
| Signage Plan                          | BMIC Planning Department developed a Signage Plan that catalogues existing signage, and schedules the replacement of all community signage. This is an ongoing effort that will take several more years to complete.   |
| Plantation Hill Archeological Phase 2 | BMIC received a MSHDA TNHDAP grant to hire a firm to conduct a Phase 2 Archeological Survey of the Plantation Hill area. ResCom completed the survey and found no significant cultural resources that would prevent future housing development.  |
| Priority Climate Action Plan          | The Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (ITCMI) received funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to produce a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program, for Bay Mills Indian Community. The PCAP includes a generalized Green House Gas (GHG) inventory using existing national and state data, a benefit analysis showing the benefits of GHG reduction measures, and a list of potential projects that BMIC can adapt to reduce GHG emissions.    |
| Condition Assessment                  | BMIC worked with Fishbeck and Superior Township to complete a condition assessment for the Superior Township Wastewater Collection and Treatment system. The results of this condition assessment will guide future repairs and upgrades to ensure the Farms continues to have access to reliable wastewater collection and treatment services. This document will also serve as the basis for an updated BMIC-Superior Township wastewater master agreement.  |

| <b>ONGOING</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| Plantation Hill Phase 2 Feasibility and Concept Design | BMIC received a MSDHA TNHDAP grant to hire a firm to conduct a feasibility study north of the existing Plantation Hill development to determine if the area is suitable for housing. TriMedia completed the feasibility analysis, determined the area was suitable for development, and proceeded with a concept design for the Phase 2 development. This will include 73 lots, a Sugar Bush Preserve, and a large park. TriMedia will survey the lots and roads in Spring, 2026.  |
| Comprehensive Plan                                     | BMIC received a Michigan Economic Development Corporation grant to hire a consulting firm to assist with the development of a community Comprehensive Plan – a long range planning document to guide development. Raven’s Fork Consulting is continuing to assist with this effort. While December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2025 was the initial deadline for the plan, I do not anticipate it will be complete until March, 2026.   |
| Capital Improvements Plan                              | BMIC received a Michigan Economic Development Corporation grant to hire a consulting firm to assist with the development of a Capital Improvements Plan Raven’s Fork Consulting. Capital Improvements Plans are used to schedule, prioritize, and fund major infrastructure projects and equipment purchases. While December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2025 was the initial deadline for the plan, I do not anticipate it will be complete until March, 2026.   |
| Strategic Energy Plan                                  | BMIC is partnering with MTERA/NREL to develop a Strategic Energy Plan for BMIC, a document that serves as a roadmap to achieve community energy goals. Our Strategic Energy Plan will outline goals and implementation plans that will improve energy efficiency of BMIC facilities and expand renewable deployment.   |
| Comprehensive Climate Action Plan                      | BMIC is partnering with ITC on the development of a CCAP. The CCAP will consist of developing a comprehensive GHG inventory for BMIC, determining GHG emissions for the transportation sector, electricity power sector, the industrial sector, commercial and residential sector, land use and forestry sector, waste and materials management sector and agriculture sector. The CCAP will build on the PCAP by developing additional and long-term GHG reduction measures. GHG reduction measures will address the main GHG emission sectors. After completion of GHG reduction measures for the CCAP, a complete benefit analysis will be conducted on each measure. This benefit analysis will look at benefits and drawbacks for each GHG reduction measure. At the end of the CCAP development, BMIC will have a comprehensive climate action plan that will help the Tribe combat climate change and meet the Tribes climate change goals. |
| <b>FUTURE OUTLOOK</b>                                  |  |
| Source Water Protection Plan                           | ITC will assist BMIC with a Source Water Protection Plan update in 2026. Our current plan was created by ITC in 2009 and subsequently updated in 2012.   |
| Water/Wastewater Asset Management Plan                 | ITC will assist BMIC with a Water/Wastewater Asset Management Plan update in 2026. Our current Water/Wastewater Asset Management Plan was created by the Bay Mills Utility Authority in 2006, in cooperation with the EPA and IHS.   |

## Grants Secured

Grants Team: Christian Perron, Eva Stapleton, Tara Parrish, Cheryl Bernier

A total of 23 grants were submitted this year, of which 9 were funded, 6 were denied, and 9 are still pending.

| Grant  | Summary  |
|--|--|
| EGLE   | BMIC Marina Project- Final Engineering   |
| BIA  | Tribal High Priority Projects- Wadjiwong Oden Road Paving  |
| USDA-RBDG RDBCP  | Zhiitaatoodan Wiiyaasan "Preparing Meats" – preliminary engineering for a meat processing plan. This funding was not accepted due to limited funding that required an additional cash match. |
| USDA Housing Preservation Grant  | BMIC Rural Housing Program to support home upgrades  |
| FTA FTA-25-007-TPM-BUS   | Bus Facility 2025 – Bus Facility for BM Transit  |
| FTA Operating Assistance and 5311 Competitive Program Funding                        | Public Transportation on Indian Reservations- general operating funds for the BM Transit program   |
| BIA Tribal Justice Support Program   | Tribal Court Operations  |
| MSHDA/Bank of Indianapolis Tribal Nations Housing Development- GAP Financing Program | Wadjiwong 6 homes- Gap funding for the 6 homes constructed in the Wadjiwong Oden Development   |
| Midwest Arts Midwest GIG - Wellness  | Regalia Making   |

## Pending Grants

| Grant                           | Summary   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| DOT/FHWA 2026TTPSF              | Engineering and Design Plans for Residential Facilities                       |
| HUD ICDBG 25                    | Childcare Facility Expansion  |
| DOT-FHWA2025 TTPSF              | BMIC Safe Route to Schools Project- Construction of Pedestrian/Bicycle Trail  |
| NEA2025NEA01GAP2                | BMIC Grants for Arts Project- Sound Equipment for Community Gathering Grounds |
| DOT-OST DOT-OST-2025-103        | Waishkey River Bridge Upgrades  |
| MDHHS PRVNT-2026                | Prevent Elder Neglect Forensic Accounting                                     |
| DOJ CTAS                        | Conservation Facility Expansion/ Expanded Tribal Court Authority              |
| MSHDA Employer Assisted Housing | Low Income Homes  |

## Transportation

Transportation Planner: Justin C. Carrick

Bus Drivers: Lori Teeple, Bruce Burdick, and Lucy Carrick. Terry Moran served as an On-Call Bus Driver for a portion of the year.

Below is a summary of FY 2025 Transportation projects. Aside from regular road maintenance activities, the Transportation Department has engaged in several ongoing road construction projects, trail maintenance projects, and planning activities this year. The Transportation Department also completed a light audit, and worked with Cloverland to replace all non-operational street lights, and is in the process of replacing all outdated mercury light bulbs with energy-efficient LEDs. Light poles were also installed in the Planation Hill Housing Development this year. The Transportation Department replaced all BIA road stop signs with dual-language stop signs, as well as replaced all road signs to be consistent across the community.

The Transportation Department coordinated with the Chippewa County Road Commission on several projects this year, including the creation of a school zone for Ojibwe Charter School. Language has been developed and is now codified in Tribal Law establishing the school zone speed limits and times. CCRC is also coordinating a Michigan State Police speed study for Tower Road and Spectacle Lake Road to determine if the speed limit should be reduced from 35 mph to 25 mph. We expect to have the results of the study in 2026. We are also cooperating on a Safe Routes to School project (a summary of this project is provided in the table below).

| Road Projects                           | Summary   |
|---|---|
| Tower Road Realignment                  | Project bid complete. Construction will commence Spring, 2026. This project will involve removing the y-intersection, realigning the Tower Road/Lakeshore Drive intersection to a 90 degree T-intersection, and expanding the shoulders to 5' on both sides for pedestrians/bicyclists.   |
| Mission Hill Overlay                    | Project bid complete. Construction will commence Spring, 2026. This project will pave an overlay on Tower Road starting at the base of Mission Hill, extending to the parking lot on top of the Hill. This will include curbing and rip rap for stormwater runoff to address erosion issues.  |
| Spirit Stone Trail Crack Seal           | The stand-alone section of Spirit Stone Trail along the 55 Stretch was crack sealed and seal coated.  |
| Memorial Park Walking Path Crack Seal   | The Memorial Parking walking path was crack sealed and seal coated, in addition to installing a new culvert and replacing a small section of pavement.  |
| Pedestrian Facilities Road Safety Audit | Fishbeck completed a road safety audit for all BMIC housing areas to identify pedestrian/bicycle safety concerns, provide recommendations on how to address those concerns, and develop a cost/benefit analysis that can be used to secure grant funding.   |
| Safe Routes to School                   | The Chippewa County Road Commission applied for a Safe Routes to School grant to install a new 10' walking/biking path along Lakeshore Drive, extending from Bay Mills Point Road to W. Spectacle Lake Road, as well as a new 10' walking/biking path along W. Spectacle Lake Road, and installation of cross walks at key locations. This funding has been secured. The BMIC Grants Department applied for Tribal Transportation Safety Fund Program funds to support the rest of the project cost. We are awaiting an award notice on this funding. |

## Land Office

Land Office Coordinator: Jeffrey Graham

With the HEARTH Ordinance approved by GTC, the Land Office is now issuing HEARTH leases.

Below is a summary of property-related activities conducted by the Land Office this year. BMIC purchased 30.8 acres of land in the Brimley area, focusing efforts on the main commercial corridors along M-221 and 6 Mile Road. Approximately 215 acres of land was taken into Trust in 2025.

| Properties into Trust             | Summary   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Hayfields                         | 195 acres on M-221  |
| Laundry                           | 4 parcels consisting of 1.3 acres on M-221 in Brimley     |
| Whitehouse                        | 0.23 acres on M-221 in Brimley                            |
| Four Seasons                      | 19.06 acres on 6 Mile in Brimley                          |
| Pending Fee-to-Trust Acquisitions | Summary   |
| Passmores                         | 0.74 acres on M-221 in Brimley                            |
| Deland St.                        | 0.95 acres on Deland St in Brimley                        |
| River Property                    | 2.5 acres with 500' river frontage on River Rd in Brimley |
| 6 Mile Properties                 | 5.5 acres on 6 Mile Rd in Brimley                         |
| Jamros Property                   | 0.33 acres on Scribner St in Brimley                      |
| Anderson Property                 | 1.52 acres on 6 Mile Rd in Brimley                        |
| Varacalli Property                | 20 acres on M-221   |

## Recreation and Tourism

Recreation and Tourism Development Specialist: Kai Gerster

In 2025, the Planning Department hired a Recreation and Tourism Development Specialist to oversee our parks and recreation areas and expansion of the Destination Bay Mills brand. Over the course of the last year, major highlights include:

- Instituting a Destination Bay Mills tax on hotel rentals at BMRC. Revenue derived from this tax will be utilized for parks and rec improvements, hosting the annual Whitefish Festival, developing tourism opportunities, and much more.
- Created the Destination Bay Mills website, and building on existing social media accounts to expand the Destination Bay Mills brand.
- Instituted Roverpass, and online platform, for Riverview campsite booking.
- Improvements at Riverview Park and Playground, including signage, benches, erosion control via beach grass planting, and much more.
- Secured approval on the BMIC 5-year Recreation Plan, opening the door for Michigan Department of Natural Resources grant opportunities.
- Trail improvements, including routine brushing and tread work, installation of benches, and installation of interpretive signage and carsonite posts along the Spirit Stone Trail.
- Reviving the Whitefish Festival, and hallmark community event celebrating our Treaty Fishers.

## Energy Facilities

Energy Facilities Manager: Jim Wilson

The Planning Department welcomed Jim Wilson to the team this year as our Energy Facilities Manager. Jim is responsible for overseeing the construction of the new solar farm on M-221, including coordinating interconnection with Cloverland Electric, and ensuring BMIC has a favorable Power Purchase Agreement and can procure Investment Tax Credits for the project. Thus far, the Energy Facilities Department has onboarded a turn-key solar contractor, Harvest Solar, for the project and is actively managing construction at the M-221 site. A draft Power Purchase Agreement is in review, and interconnection studies with Cloverland Electric and American Transmission are underway.

## Programs

The Planning Department coordinated several community programs in 2025. See below for a summary of the ITC Residential Weatherization Program, Abandoned Vehicle Program, and Building Futures Homeownership Program.

| Program                                | Summary  |
|--|--|
| ITC Residential Weatherization Program | Heat pumps and upgraded HVAC installed in 12 homes, with 3 pending. These homes are also receiving weatherization upgrades, as needed.   |
| Abandoned Vehicle Program              | A total of 91 abandoned vehicles were collected in 2025. This program will continue to run in 2026, with the addition of abandoned boats and campers.  |
| Building Futures Homeownership Program | The Planning Department, in partnership with the Bay Mills Housing Authority, rolled out a new Executive Program dedicating \$1million in revolving funding for the construction of Tribal citizen homes on the Reservation. The program opened to applicants in November, 2025, and received 12 applications. The Housing Authority is currently working with applicants on getting pre-approved for a mortgage, prior to selecting program applicants. |

## Public Engagement Summary

Public engagement is crucial to developing community goals and priorities. Your feedback informs initiatives undertaken by the Planning Department, including prioritization of projects, grants pursued, and programs created.

Highlights from the past year include:

- Bay Mills Indian Community- Community Childcare Needs Survey
- Comprehensive Plan Survey for Young Adults Ages 18-25
- Blight and Abandoned Lots Survey
- Renewable Energy Community Survey



## Project Management

Below is a summary of major projects undertaken by the Planning Department this year:

| Project                            | Status Summary   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Demolition of Kings Club/Old Admin | Complete   |
| Elder Housing Phase 2              | Two homes are complete and six will be completed this winter. The project is slated to wrap up in Spring, 2026.  |
| 6 New Wadjiwong Oden Homes         | Complete   |
| 3 Townhouses for Professionals     | Complete   |
| Riverview Park and Campground      | Complete   |
| Old EMS Barn Renovation            | Complete   |
| Materials Management Facility      | Engineering Pending, construction slated for 2026  |
| Firekeepers Lodge                  | Engineering Complete   |
| Silver Dome Demo                   | Complete   |
| Chippewa Landing Demo              | Complete   |
| Community Signage                  | 2025 Signage Implementation Schedule - Complete  |
| Wastewater System Infrastructure   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wadjiwong Oden Wastewater Treatment Expansion Preliminary Engineering Report- Complete</li> <li>Superior Township Wastewater Condition Assessment (including the Farms)- Complete</li> <li>Lakeshore Drive Lift Station servicing BMRC- substantial completion expected in January</li> <li>Lift Stations 5 and 6- engineering complete, will be put out to bid in January, construction to be completed in 2026</li> </ul> |
| River Property Demo                | Complete   |
| Community Signage                  | Installed 25 community signs and 11 wayfinding signs   |
| Long Term Care Facility            | USDA financing pre-application submitted   |
| Kings Club Redevelopment           | Engineering plans finalized. Project to be re-bid January, 2026  |
| Access Road Boat Launch            | EGLE permit application submitted  |
| EV Chargers                        | Installed a level 2 EV charger at the Ogimaag Gamig Governmental Center. EV Chargers at BMRC were replaced.  |
| Chester's Chicken                  | Chester's Chicken launched at Four Seasons Market and Deli as a business expansion and diversification effort.   |
| Wadjiwong Oden Phase 2             | Completed an archeological study and feasibility study for future expansion of the Wadjiwong Oden development  |

## In Closing & Looking Forward

The Planning Department had a busy year. Looking forward to 2026, we aim to accomplish the following:

- Wadjiwong Oden “Hill Top Village” Road Paving
- Construction of the Community Gathering Grounds
- Begin Construction of the King’s Mixed Use Facility
- Community Signage- 2026 implementation
- Install Access Road Boat Launch at Bay Mills Township Access Road
- Complete Engineering for Safe Routes to School Walking/Biking Path
- Finalize Construction of the M-221 Solar Farm
- Construct 6 Professional Townhomes (Two Triplexes)
- Complete Engineering for a Bus Facility to House Bay Mills Transit
- Complete Engineering for an Expanded Marina Facility
- Construction of the Materials Management Facility
- Construction of the Firekeepers Lodge
- Engineering for the Long Term Care Facility
- Renovation of Lift Stations 5 and 6
- Complete Tower Road Realignment and Mission Hill Overlay Projects
- Fiber Deployment in the Wadjiwong Oden “Hill Top Village” Development
- Community Signage- approximately 20 more signs to be installed

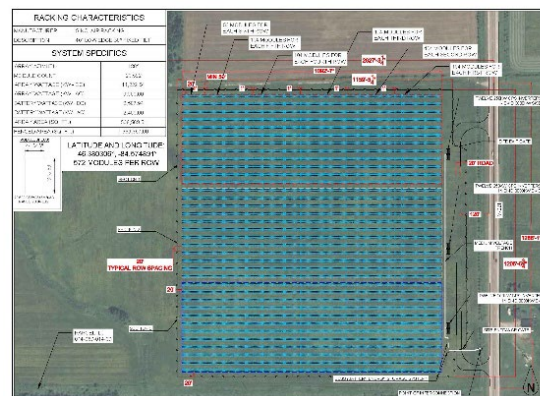


## King's Club Mixed Use Building

BMIC received a \$2 million ICDBG grant to construct a new mixed use facility at the site of the old Administration and King's Club facilities. Engineering is complete, and the project will be re-bid in January, 2026. The building will feature 9 one and two-bedroom apartment units and 4 retail spaces, one of which will be home to Ziibi Mart. Construction will most likely be complete in 2027.

## M-221 Solar Farm

BMIC received a \$17.5 million CPRG grant to construct a 11MW solar farm with 5 MW of battery energy storage. Fencing is installed, and posts for the solar racking are in the process of being driven. Construction is slated to conclude in Summer, 2026, and the system is expected to come online at the end of 2026. This commercial-scale solar farm will generate additional revenues for BMIC.



## 2025 Highlights



### 8 Elder Houses- Ongoing

BMIC received nearly \$3,000,000 from HUD through their Indian Housing Block Grant program for the construction of 8 additional Elder Homes. The first of these new homes was made available in December, 2025. Whiskey River will continue to turn over units to the Housing Authority throughout the winter to make available for tenants. We anticipate this project to wrap up in Spring, 2026.

### 6 Plantation Hill Homes- Complete

Executive Council obligated General Fund dollars for the construction of six 2-bedroom houses on Plantation Hill. MSHDA contributed funding to this project through their GAP Financing program. These Fair Market homes became available in December, 2025.



### Bay Mart Renovation- Complete

Bay Mart closed for 12 weeks this summer to remove and replace the old tanks, excavate contaminated soil, expand the awning, and reconfigure the entryways and parking.



### **Riverview Park - Complete**

Riverview Park and Campground re-opened this summer. The upgraded park includes 16 campsites, 2 of which are ADA accessible, dump station, pavilion, concession stand, bathhouse, boardwalk, and expanded parking.



### **Silver Dome Demolition- Ongoing**

The Silver Dome and old Public Works building were demolished utilizing EPA Brownfield Clean up funding. Contamination on the site was excavated. Some additional clean up activities are expected to continue into 2026.

Thank you to Jen Satchell for her hardwork and dedication to this effort!

### **Materials Management Facility- Ongoing**

The new Materials Management Facility project kicked off in 2025, a project made possible through the EPA's Solid Waste Infrastructure Grant program. The site was cleared and culverts/driveways installed. A pre-fabricated steel structure was ordered and delivered to the site. The building will be constructed in 2026, and will feature a drive-through trash and recycling drop-off.

