



Berwyn Strong



A Coalition of Proven Leaders and Bold New Innovators

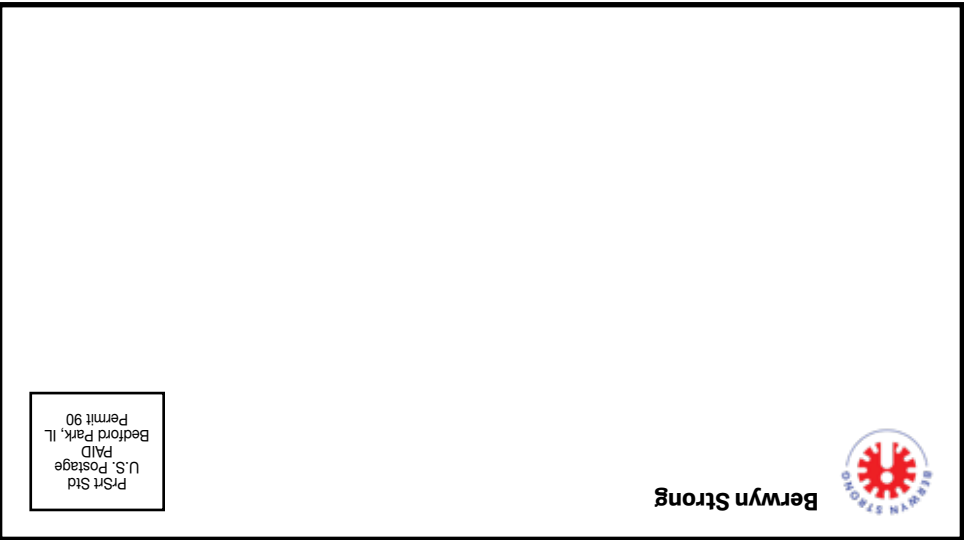
2025 Recap Edition

FROM INAUGURATION TO IMPACT: BERWYN STRONG AT WORK

Following a lively election cycle, twelve Berwyn Strong officials were sworn into city and township positions earlier this year, pledging to serve the community with distinction. This team blends experienced leaders with fresh voices, forming a collaborative force grounded in cooperative leadership and a shared vision for progress that benefits everyone. Many members have long histories of volunteering, serving on local boards, and running small businesses that strengthen our neighborhoods. They have listened to residents across the city, ensuring

their decisions reflect the needs of all, not just the loudest voices.

Congratulations to Mayor Robert J. Lovero, Treasurer Lizbeth “Libby” Linares-Herrera, Alderman Richard Leja, Alderman Robert “Bob” Fejt, Alderman Theodore “Teddy” Polashek, Alderperson Sara Barnett Bruckmann, Township Supervisor David Avila, Township Assessor Jaqueline Pereda, Township Trustee Jesse Miranda, Township Trustee Edward “Eddie” Espinosa, Township Trustee Nicholas Margarites, and Township Trustee Zulema Ortiz.



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Berwyn Strong: Leadership Rooted in Cooperation, Community, and Continuity

Berwyn is a uniquely diverse city—economically, culturally, and politically. Our residents come from every walk of life, each bringing their own hopes and concerns. In a community as dynamic as ours, it's clear that no single solution fits every family or every neighborhood. That is why the neighbors who make up Berwyn Strong believe deeply in one idea: progress happens when we lead together, not against one another.

Local politics is not a zero-sum game. When we treat those with different ideas as adversaries, everyone loses. Collaboration should be the expectation, not the exception. We are all neighbors working toward the same simple goals—safety, stability, and a stronger Berwyn for every resident.

Berwyn Strong is guided by three essential pillars: Cooperative Leadership, Community Development, and Continuity with Progress. These principles set us apart and anchor every decision we make.

1. Cooperative Leadership

Strong leadership starts with respect. It means listening before acting, inviting stakeholders into the conversation, and recognizing that the best solutions rarely come from one person alone. In Berwyn Strong, shared decision-making and open communication are the foundation of effective governance.

Innovative leaders welcome feedback, even when it challenges their perspective. When addressing city issues—whether fiscal planning, community services, or neighborhood concerns—we focus on practical solutions, not political emotion. Responsible leadership means weighing the benefits already in place, avoiding knee-jerk reactions, and working toward outcomes that serve the greater good. Compromise is not weakness; it is the path to resilience and equity.

2. Community Development

A thriving community invests in people of every age and background.

Berwyn Strong's approach to development emphasizes accessibility, inclusivity, and long-term value for all families.

The newly opened Senior Services Center exemplifies this commitment. So does the upcoming mixed-use soccer field, which will give Berwyn's young people and families a safe recreational space while strengthening community pride. Not every project directly serves every resident, but each improves our overall quality of life and reinforces our identity as a multi-generational, community-driven city.

Real progress requires setting aside personal agendas to support services that lift up all families—because strong families are the core of a strong Berwyn.

3. Continuity and Progress

Berwyn's next generation of leaders is stepping forward with energy and new ideas—but they do so on the foundation laid by dedicated public servants who have guided our city for decades. Berwyn Strong believes that the most successful communities blend

experience with fresh innovation.

This is the essence of transitional leadership: ensuring that what has worked well continues, while thoughtfully evolving to meet tomorrow's challenges. With proven leaders working alongside emerging professionals, Berwyn is positioned for a seamless transition that honors our past and embraces our future.

A Strong Berwyn Is Built Together

The strength of our city is not measured by political victories, but by how well we serve our residents. When leaders collaborate, when communities are developed with intention, and when progress builds on a stable foundation, Berwyn moves forward with confidence.

Berwyn Strong stands committed to this vision—one rooted in cooperation, community, and continuity. A stronger future for Berwyn is one we create collectively, by working together with purpose and respect.

Alderman Teddy Polashek: A Legacy of Service

Few people embody community spirit quite like Alderman Teddy Polashek. A lifelong resident of Berwyn, Teddy is a proud graduate of local schools and a first-generation son of immigrants. Teddy's entire career is based in public service, volunteerism, and leadership. His passion for helping others is evident in every corner of the city.

As a former two-term alderman, past mayoral contender, and founder of the Berwyn United Party, Teddy has long been a familiar face in the community. One of his most beloved initiatives began as a humble act of kindness—a self-formed volunteer "Snow



Teddy Polashek

Patrol." What started as an effort to assist elderly and mobility-challenged neighbors with shoveling, grew into a team that cleared sidewalks across the entire ward after every snowfall. Teddy has also personally funded and led a corner beautification program, transforming neglected plots of land into landscaped spaces

that brighten Berwyn's blocks.

Outside of his role as alderman, Teddy's professional background as a firefighter and lieutenant shaped his dedication to public safety. His firsthand experience gives him a unique understanding of the importance of strong emergency response systems and the need to prioritize resources for first responders.

In his eight years of public service, Teddy has championed community beautification and accessibility. He has personally walked every block of his ward, talking with residents, evaluating infrastructure, and ensuring that trees, planters,

and sidewalks were well maintained. "I pride myself on meeting people and having discussions," Teddy shared. "Sometimes the most important part of leadership is just showing up."

Teddy's heart for service extends far beyond official duties. Many of his proudest moments come from helping residents with small, everyday tasks—fixing something around the house or checking in on seniors who need a hand. "Helping people is what I enjoy most," he said. "It's not always about politics; sometimes it's about being there when someone calls."

Looking ahead, Teddy's priorities remain

focused on public safety, development, and community engagement. He continues to advocate for proper funding and support for Berwyn's first responders and plans to bring more walkable development to the city's neighborhoods. Among his current projects are new landscaping efforts, plans for pocket parks in the 6th Ward, and the creation of a community space where he hopes to eventually teach cooking classes.

Balancing civic duty with personal life comes naturally to Teddy. "Helping people is part of who I am," he said. "It's how I was raised." Whether he's volunteering, coaching, cooking,

or supporting local businesses like La Parra, La Michoacana, or Violet's Flowers, he approaches each day with the same commitment to his Berwyn neighbors.

When asked what being Berwyn Strong means to him, Teddy didn't hesitate.

"Berwyn is a unique, diverse, and strong community. Being Berwyn Strong means saying hello to your neighbors, lending a helping hand, and sometimes knowing what people need before they even ask."

For Alderman Polashek, that philosophy isn't just a slogan—it's a way of life.

Neighbor Spotlight: Deb Mirabelli's Dedication to Berwyn

Some neighbors make a difference just by being themselves. For Deb Mirabelli, Berwyn has always been more than a place to live; it's been a place to grow, give back, and build connections that feel like family.

Deb and her husband Joe moved to Berwyn in 2001 after meeting in the late '90s and spending a few years in Lisle. Her husband grew up here, and when they returned, they were immediately drawn to Berwyn's unique spirit. "There's something about Berwyn that's very special," Deb said. "It's like a big family reunion all the time."



Deb Mirabelli

Family is at the heart of everything Deb does. She and her husband raised three children here—Joey (25), an air traffic controller; Keri (22), a social work student; and Sami (19), who works at Wrigley Field as a guest ambassador and is a student in the Morton West

Transition Program.

Deb, who has a teaching degree and experience as an au pair, found her purpose through a mix of motherhood and advocacy. When Sami, who has Down syndrome, expressed a desire to play sports and win a trophy, Deb realized that local options for children with special needs were limited... so she created her own.

That idea became the Buddy League, a no-commitment basketball and baseball program designed to be inclusive, welcoming, and fun for children of all abilities. "I

was just a mom with an idea whose daughter wanted a trophy," Deb said. What started small quickly grew into a community effort: shirts were donated by Mayor Robert Lovero, trophies by Tony Martinucci, and fields and courts by the Berwyn Park District, Berwyn Recreation Department, and Heritage Middle School.

The Buddy League has since changed lives. Deb recalls one child who initially wouldn't even step foot in the gym but now thrives on the court. "The world comes together better when children with special needs are in-

cluded," she said.

Deb's leadership didn't stop there. Alongside fellow Berwyn resident Karin Nangreave, she also helped launch the 30 Minute Challenge, an open-invitation community cleanup that encourages neighbors to devote just half an hour to caring for shared spaces. So far, volunteers have cleaned six high-traffic areas across Berwyn, with about 20 people joining.

Deb's philosophy on community perfectly aligns with the spirit of Berwyn Strong. "It takes all of us to be a community," she said. "We have such a diverse

community, and Berwyn Strong is finding all those pieces within your surroundings to make a better Berwyn."

When she's not organizing cleanups or running the Buddy League, Deb enjoys the simple joys of local life doing things such as dining at Lalos, Lavergne's Tavern, Paisans, or Michael Anthony's, and spending time with family and friends.

Through her compassion, action, and dedication, Deb Mirabelli reminds us that community isn't something we simply live in; it's something we build together.



Project Homegrown: Small Businesses, Big Impact

In the heart of Berwyn, Project Homegrown is planting the seeds for small business success. Born out of a desire to bridge the gap for minority entrepreneurs, the initiative gives emerging business owners a place to grow, connect, and thrive right here in the community.

Recognizing the lack of accessible space for small business owners, Project Homegrown set out to create opportunities where ideas could take root. From this, the Berwyn Shops and Berwyn Sprout were born. Each year, local entrepreneurs pitch their business concepts, receive valuable feedback, and ultimately compete for a spot within the Berwyn Shops. The Berwyn Sprout location offers three-month vendor slots for small businesses to showcase their products and services in a collaborative retail space where many have often seen long-term success.

Several vendors have transitioned from pop-



up participants to permanent storefront owners, including Date Night Beauty and Los Amigos Books. The visibility and support gained through Project Homegrown have also opened national opportunities. Scalp and Skin, one of the former vendors, was even invited by Meta to Washington

D.C. to discuss small business advocacy.

Project Homegrown emphasizes experience-based retail. Rather than traditional shopping, vendors often create immersive offerings and personalized experiences that meet any guests needs.

From gift-wrapping stations to community-hosted events, Project Homegrown encourages residents to fully immerse themselves in the shopping experience. Events and upcoming opportunities can always be found on the Berwyn Development Corporation (BDC) website, ensuring that both residents and entrepreneurs stay connected and engaged.

We strongly encourage residents to visit the Berwyn Shops and Berwyn Sprout. Supporting your neighbors not only ensures that Berwyn's small businesses have a place to sell, but a place to shine.



Small Business Highlight: Brooklyn's Berwyn Subs Joins the Neighborhood

There's a new sub shop in town! For owner Renaldo Barbini, entrepreneurship has always been about family and community. His latest venture, Brooklyn's Berwyn Subs, brings both together. Named after his bonus daughter, Brooklyn, the restaurant is a heartfelt continuation of Renaldo's passion for small business and local connection.

Already the owner of another small business on the same block, Renaldo saw an opportunity to expand his vision. Though he hadn't worked in the food industry for some time, he believed in the concept behind Brooklyn's. The restaurant officially opened its doors on May 14th, 2025, quickly becoming a favorite among locals looking for fresh, high-quality meals made close to home.

Brooklyn's sets itself apart with a simple philosophy: serve great food, made fresh, for people who love to eat local. "For a quick, simple meal, we're offering something you've never seen," Renaldo said. From fresh, locally sourced ingredients to authentic Italian flavors, every menu item tells its own story.

Customer favorites include the Italian sub,



paninis, the "Brooklyn's Special" Italian Beef, as well as homemade meatballs, focaccia sandwiches, and refreshing Italian ice. Brooklyn's also offers daily specials and catering services, making it a go-to spot for both casual lunches and community gatherings.

Like many small businesses, Brooklyn's has faced its challenges. Rising food costs and the difficulty of standing out on a busy street near a chain restaurant have tested the team's creativity and perseverance. Yet, in just five months, they've adapted - updating the menu, fine-tuning recipes, and continuously improving the customer experience.

Community support has been a driving force behind Brooklyn's success. "Small businesses are everything to me in Berwyn," Renaldo shared. "With no small businesses, there is no sense of community."

For him, the most rewarding part of entrepreneurship isn't just seeing the restaurant grow — it's helping others grow with him. Many of his employees have been with him across ventures, and he takes pride in providing opportunities that make a difference in their lives.

As Brooklyn's continues to serve the community, Renaldo remains focused on one goal: always finding ways to make the business — and Berwyn — a little better each day



Berwyn Strong Team Supports Local Causes and Organizations

On September 11, 2025, Mayor Lovero and the Berwyn Strong team held a golf outing at White Pines Golf Club in Bensenville. Proceeds from the annual event are used to support a variety of community-based programs such as youth sports teams, local school events, domestic violence initiatives, Berwyn Pav Y.M.C.A., youth civic engagement, and many other organizations that make Berwyn Stronger. Through our 50/50 split-the-pot raffle, we were honored to present the Commodore Barry American Legion Post #256 with a check for \$3,120. Berwyn Strong thanks everyone who contributed to such an amazing day!



Berwyn Strong: 2025 in Review

NOVEMBER

Nov. 12-Dec 12	Letters to Santa	Mailboxes are located throughout South Berwyn
Nov. 15	10:00am-7:00pm Berwyn Shops Holiday Kickoff	Gift shopping, visit from Mr. and Mrs. Claus, light ceremony, choir, free popcorn and hot cocoa
Nov. 27	9:00am-10:00am Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway	Volunteers must please be at the Liberty Center at 9:00am

DECEMBER

Dec. 1-Dec. 13	North Berwyn Letters to Santa	Mailbox located at the North Berwyn Community Center (1619 Wesley Ave.)
Dec. 3	8:30am-1:00pm Senior Holiday Breakfast	Located at the Berwyn Senior Center (3320 S. Grove Ave.) Doors open at 8:30am. Must purchase tickets and RSVP to guarantee entry
Dec. 5	1:30pm Senior Movie Day	55+ event, movie begins at 1:30pm
Dec. 13	12:00pm-2:00pm Santa's Workshop	Located at the Joseph C. Vallez Activity Center (1529 Harlem Ave.) - Gift stations, crafts, photo ops, and pet photo ops
Dec. 18	2:30pm-4:30pm Silver Bells Holiday Craft Workshop	Located at the Berwyn Senior Center (3320 S. Grove Ave.)
Dec. 18	7:00pm North Berwyn Christmas House Decorating Contest	NORTH BERWYN RESIDENT ELIGIBLE ONLY. Call 708-749-4900 or visit 1619 Wesley Ave. to register by 12/11
Dec. 19	6:00pm-8:00pm Phone Calls from Santa	Santa will be calling residents between 6pm-8pm. Must call (708)749-4900 or visit 1619 Wesley Ave. by 12/12 to register
Dec. 20	8:00am Christmas Meal Giveaway	Volunteers must please be at the Libert Center at 8:00am