

CHAPTER 5:

Land Use



3. Land Use

Land Use Overview

Chapter Purpose

The Land Use Chapter is designed to provide a guide to the growth and development of land uses within unincorporated Polk County through the year 2050 and beyond. The main feature of this chapter is the creation of a Future Land Use Plan. Goals and strategies related to land use and growth management have been outlined at the end of the chapter.

Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan lays out the preferred land use composition and distribution throughout the unincorporated areas of Polk County. Land uses have been proposed for more area than is likely needed to create numerous options and provide flexibility for development. As a county plan, a special emphasis has been placed on conservation. Land uses have been laid out to avoid conflict and promote a harmonious layout in the county.

There are many factors that impact the Future Land Use Plan of an area including the existing land use pattern, the location of existing and proposed major roadways, the presence of natural features, the ability to provide necessary infrastructure for development, as well as the desires of the residents.

For a county, the growth and development plans of incorporates cities also plays a huge role, especially in the fringe areas between more urban and rural areas.

Basis for Zoning

A key purpose of the Future Land Use Plan is to serve as the basis for determining the appropriate zoning for property in the unincorporated parts of the County. Chapter 414 of the Code of Iowa, which grants cities the authority to enact city zoning regulations, requires that said zoning regulations, "...be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan."

The Comprehensive Plan should be consulted whenever the County is amending a zoning code regulation and every time a property is rezoned. This is to ensure the change is consistent with both the goals and policy recommendations of this plan and with the land use designations as proposed by the Future Land Use Plan.

Included within the Land Use Chapter is a Zoning Compatibility Matrix. This matrix provides the County assistance and guidance on zoning districts that are compatible or partially compatible with each of the future land use classifications.

When to Update

The Future Land Use Plan represents Polk County's preferred future land use layout. However, the Future Land Use plan does not need to remain stagnant or unchanging. If situations or the environment changes significantly, the Future Land Use Plan should be amended appropriately to reflect the updated conditions of the community.

If the County determines it is appropriate to rezone a property in a way inconsistent with the comprehensive plan or the Future Land Use Plan, the plan (and any impacted policies) should be amended as a part of the rezoning action the ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Care should be taken to carefully document the justifications for an amendment to this plan and findings adopted as part of the official record.

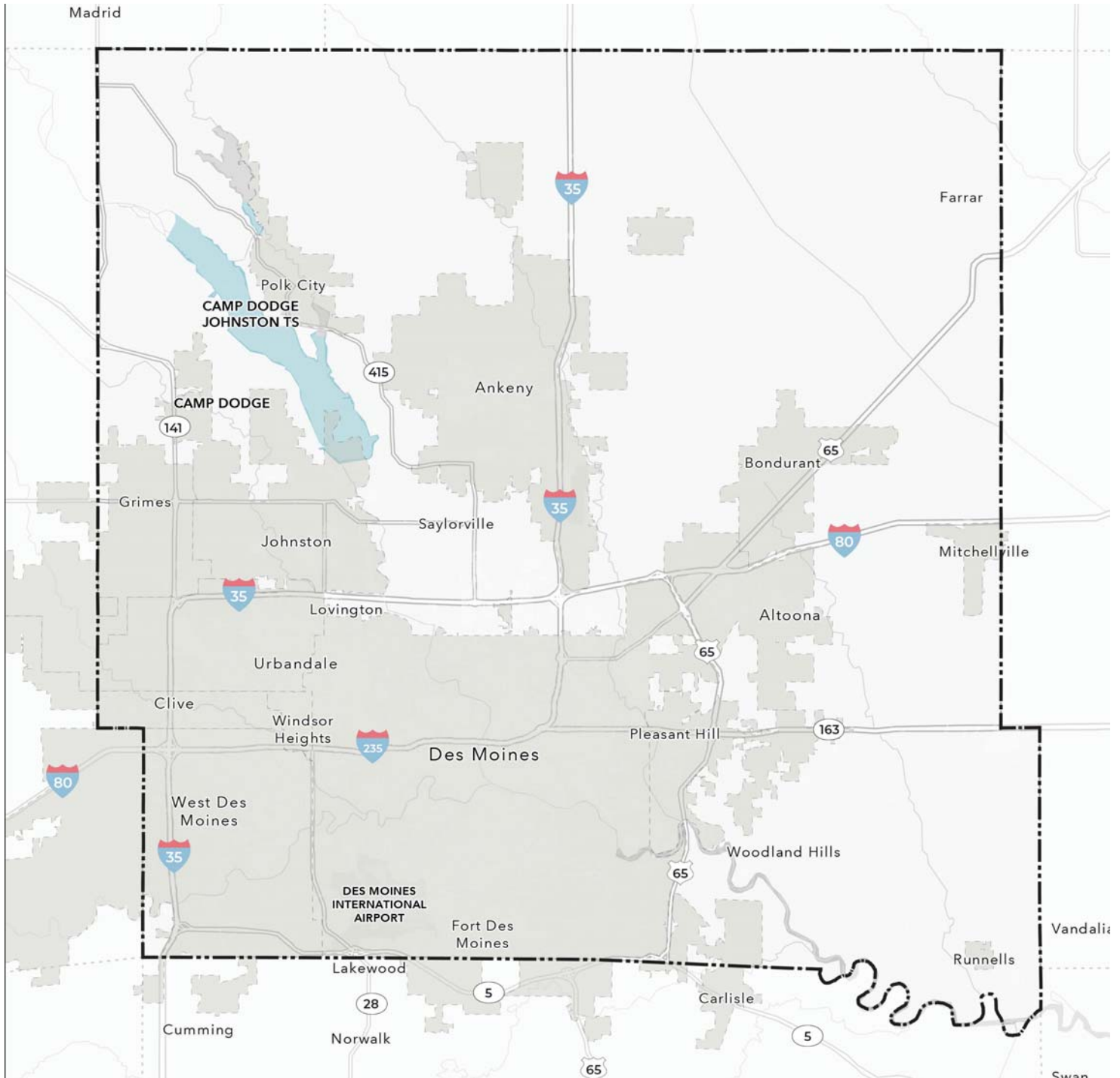
Planning Boundary

Figure X.X shows the planning boundary for the Polk 2050 Comprehensive Plan. Polk County is responsible for the unincorporated areas of the county. Incorporated areas are shown in gray in the figure below. Every year, more of Polk County is annexed by cities. While this growth has traditionally stayed south and west, there is a growing

trend of north and eastward heading growth. This chapter will plan for all of the unincorporated areas as of the time of this plan. However, it recognizes certain areas that will likely fall under city control within the horizon year of the plan.



Figure X.X - Polk County Planning Boundary



3. Land Use

Existing Land Use

The existing land use in the unincorporated areas of Polk County is shown in Figure X.X. Each land use category is described below.

Open Space

Open space is land that is undeveloped but also not used for agriculture or recreational purposes.

Agriculture

Agriculture is for active agriculture such as row crops or livestock. This is the most dominant land use in unincorporated Polk County with over 157,000 acres. However, the total acres of agriculture land continues to decrease across Polk County as urban development expands.

Parks & Recreation

This land use includes all county and state parks and recreational land or conservation areas. It also includes public and private golf courses. There are just over 15,000 acres of parks & recreation land in unincorporated Polk County.

Residential

This land use category includes all residential land in Polk County. This can include ag dwellings, rural residential estates, single-family detached homes or the limited amount of higher-density residential such as mobile homes, townhomes, duplexes or apartments, though this represents very little of unincorporated Polk County's land use. Collectively, residential land accounts for 9.0% of total land use.

Public / Semi-Public

This land use category is set aside for any county, state, or federally owned land within the unincorporated areas. Just under 2% of land use in the unincorporated area is public / semi-public.

Light Industrial / Warehouse

The light industrial / warehouse is for lower-intensity industrial users such as distribution centers, light manufacturing, or warehousing. There are around 2,000 acres of this land use in unincorporated Polk County.

Utilities

This land use category is for let owned and operated for utility companies in Polk County.

Commercial

This land use is for any commercial, retail, or service activities occurring with unincorporated Polk County. The majority of this land is in the unincorporated areas north of Interstate 80 between Des Moines, Ankeny, and Johnston.

Industrial

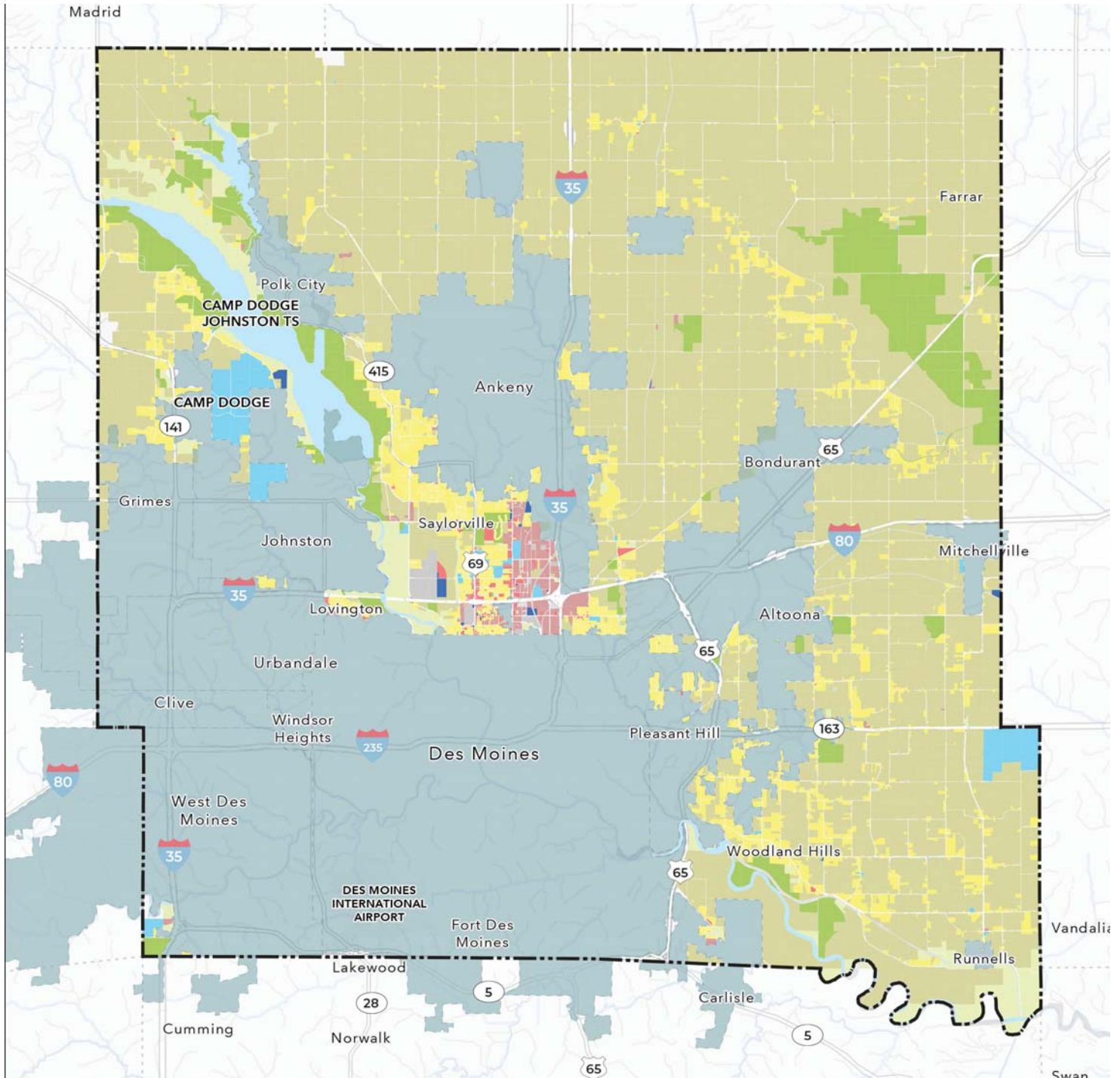
This land use category is for more heavy industrial users such as heavy manufacturing and industry. There are around 741 acres of industrial land in the unincorporated parts of Polk County.

Office

This land use category is for office space and represents a small percentage of total land uses.

Existing Land Use	Acres	Share (%)
Agriculture	157,734.5	73.5%
Residential	19,246.7	9.0%
Parks & Recreation	15,038.7	7.0%
Open Space	7,528.4	3.5%
Water	6,881.1	3.2%
Public / Semi-Public	3,663.1	1.7%
Light Industrial / Warehouse	2,050.4	1.0%
Utilities	801.8	0.4%
Industrial	741.8	0.3%
Commercial	551.3	0.3%
Office	289.4	0.1%
Total Acres	214,565.5	100%

Figure X.X - Existing Land Use Map, Unincorporated Polk County



3. Land Use

Future Land Uses

To create the Future Land Use Plan, several future land use definitions were created.

Urban Fringe

Includes land within a portion of a city's identified growth area with a realistic opportunity of being annexed and converted to urbanized development within this Plan's time frame. Existing land use and zoning within this category consists primarily of agricultural or rural/estate residential. These areas shall remain in their current use with no further development of division until annexed and served by municipal utilities/services. Splits or divisions of agricultural land to separate an existing residence or provide limited parcels/lots for new residences under the agricultural density and open space requirements may be appropriate, but will require approval of adjoining jurisdiction(s) under their 2-mile review authority for platting.



Floodplain Overlay

Land that is within a designated flood plain, including both the 100-year and 500-year zones. These areas should not be developed but can include agricultural, aggregate mining, parks and other uses minimally impacted by flooding.



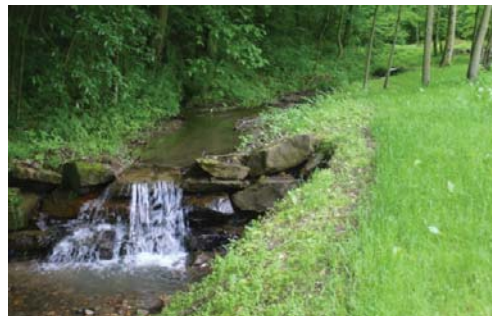
Agricultural

Active farmland that includes agricultural and rural activities, farmsteads, home occupations, scattered ag-related facilities or businesses. No more than 1 dwelling unit per 35 acres.



Conservation

Land that is has been set-aside from agricultural use or development and may include land owned by Polk County Conservation or otherwise covered by a conservation easement or agreement.



Future Land Uses

Institutional

Public or privately owned land used for schools, camps, cemeteries, religious institutions, and governmental facilities.



Parks & Open Space

Public or privately owned land used or set aside for recreational uses such as parks, trails, golf courses, greenways, and recreational fields.



Estate Residential

Land for single-family residential development with very large lots or cluster developments with minimum of 3 acres per residential lot.



Rural Residential

Land for single-family residential development with minimum 1-acre lots. This land use category can include cluster subdivisions as well for larger-scale developments.



3. Land Use

Future Land Uses

Low-Density Residential

Land for traditional single-family residential subdivisions with 1 to 5 units per acre. Densities from 3 to 5 units per acre require sanitary sewer and clustering at highest densities.



Medium-Density Residential

Land for townhomes, rowhouses, and cottage home developments. May include single-family homes and single-family homes. Includes densities from 6 to 10 dwelling units per acre. Development within this category may also include religious, educational, institutional uses, child daycare centers, and public and private recreational areas. Medium-Density Residential can serve as a transitional land use between single-family and higher density residential and/or commercial development.



High-Density Residential

Land for apartment developments with densities between 10 to 18 dwelling units per acre as well as Medium Density Residential uses.



Residential-Business Flex

Land that includes a variety of existing residential, business park, and industrial uses that overtime should transition to only include commercial and business park uses. To limit the impact of this land use transition, existing residential properties may be considered a permitted use versus non-conforming, allowing for their continued maintenance, renovation, and replacement.



Future Land Uses

Neighborhood Commercial

Land for small retail and office spaces located at major nodes for readily accessible services to residents and the traveling public. Typical land uses include daycares, assisted living facilities, small office, convenience stores and other neighborhood-serving uses. Building Design Standards should be included to ensure this type of development does not interfere with the adjacent neighborhood, is built at a suitable scale, and does not unnecessarily increase noise, light, or vehicular pollution. Sites are generally 1 to 10 acres and should accommodate pedestrian and bicycle circulation.



Highway Commercial

This land use category is designed for larger-scale retail, entertainment, and office uses typically located along high traffic corridors. These retail and entertainment uses are intended to serve larger area with a typical service area of up to 5 miles or more. The locations should be along minor/major arterial streets or major collectors with multiple access points. These retail areas typically consist of large box stores and multi-tenant shopping centers. Sites are generally greater than 20 acres.



Business Park (BP)

Areas for office and research facilities, light manufacturing and assembly, shipping and distribution, wholesale, and limited commercial uses with all activities occurring within an enclosed building and with very limited outdoor storage and display.



Industrial

Land devoted to large-scale assembly of goods and material processing, heavier manufacturing and assembly, shipping and distribution, wholesale trade uses and mineral extraction. Activities may occur outdoors and along with outdoor storage of materials and goods. This area may also include Business Park uses. Industrial uses should not be located near any residential or other sensitive uses.


















3. Land Use

Zoning Compatibility Matrix

The zoning compatibility matrix shows the relationship between the future land use categories and Polk County's existing zoning districts. Zoning districts have been listed as either compatible ("C") or partially compatible ("PC") within each of the

corresponding land use categories. This matrix should be used as the basis for determining the appropriate zoning district(s) for land as a property rezoning is being considered. If the zoning desired for a given property is incompatible with its future land use designation, the parcels future land use should be first be amended.

Land Use Categories		Zoning Districts													
		Agricultural District - AG	Agricultural Transition District - AT	Estate Residential District - ER	Rural Residential District - RR	Low Density Residential District - LDR	Medium Density Residential - MDR	High Density Residential - HDR	Mixed Use District - MU	Neighborhood Business District - NB	General Commercial District- GC	Light Industrial District - LI	Heavy Industrial District - HI	Mobile Home Park District - MH	Open Space District - OS
	Agricultural	C	C												C
	Conservation		PC												C
	Parks and Open Space		PC												C
	Urban Fringe		C												C
	Institutional	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
	Estate Residential	C	C	C											C
	Rural Residential	C	C	C	C										C
	Low Density Residential	PC	C	C	C	C									C
	Medium Density Residential		C	C	C	C	C								C
	High Density Residential			PC	PC	PC	C	C						PC	C
	Neighborhood Commercial									C	PC				C
	Highway Commercial									C	C				C
	Residential-Business Flex					PC	PC	PC	C	PC	PC	PC			C
	Business Park									PC	PC	C			C
	Industrial	C	C									C	C		C

Compatible : C
Partially Compatible : PC

Key Land Use Factors

Several factors contribute to the existing and proposed future land uses for Polk County.



City Growth + Annexation

Many cities in Polk County have been growing at high levels, which reduces the overall area under the land use control of the county. Likely city growth areas were identified as part of the land use planning.



Infill Opportunities

Special attention was given to areas where infill development could take place. This predominantly includes the unincorporated areas along I-80 north of Des Moines and south of Ankeny.



Agriculture Preservation

Polk County is home to very productive and fertile agricultural land. The preservation of this important resource helped drive future land use decisions.



Village Plans

Polk County contains several villages, with varying degrees of development. Several key village areas have been given special area plans that have been built into the land use plan.



Natural Resource Conservation

In addition to agriculture, Polk County is home to a wide variety of natural resource and conservation areas. Areas with sensitive environmental features such as floodplain drove land use planning.



Infrastructure Development

The ability to serve future development was also considered in the Future Land Use Plan. Certain areas have limited or would be prohibitively expensive to service. Growth areas were steered toward readily infrastructure available areas.



Rise in Rural Subdivisions

Unincorporated Polk County has seen a steep rise in rural subdivision, single-family growth in recent decades. Key areas for continued growth have been strategically identified within the Future Land Use Plan.



Market Analysis

The results of the market analysis will be used to help guide the creation of the Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Plan should provide enough variety of different land uses to provide flexibility in the actual development of unincorporated Polk County.

3. Land Use

City Growth Areas

Figure X.X shows the approximate planning boundaries and likely growth areas for incorporated cities in Polk County. A significant portion of the County falls within these areas. While not all of the land within each city's planning boundary will be annexed, the likely growth areas represent likely growth areas within the planning

horizon year. For this reason, the County should require proposed growth in these likely growth areas to be developed under the jurisdiction and services of the nearby city to ensure it is consistent with each community's long-term vision for their growth areas. This will hopefully curb urban sprawl and promote a coordinated regional growth strategy.





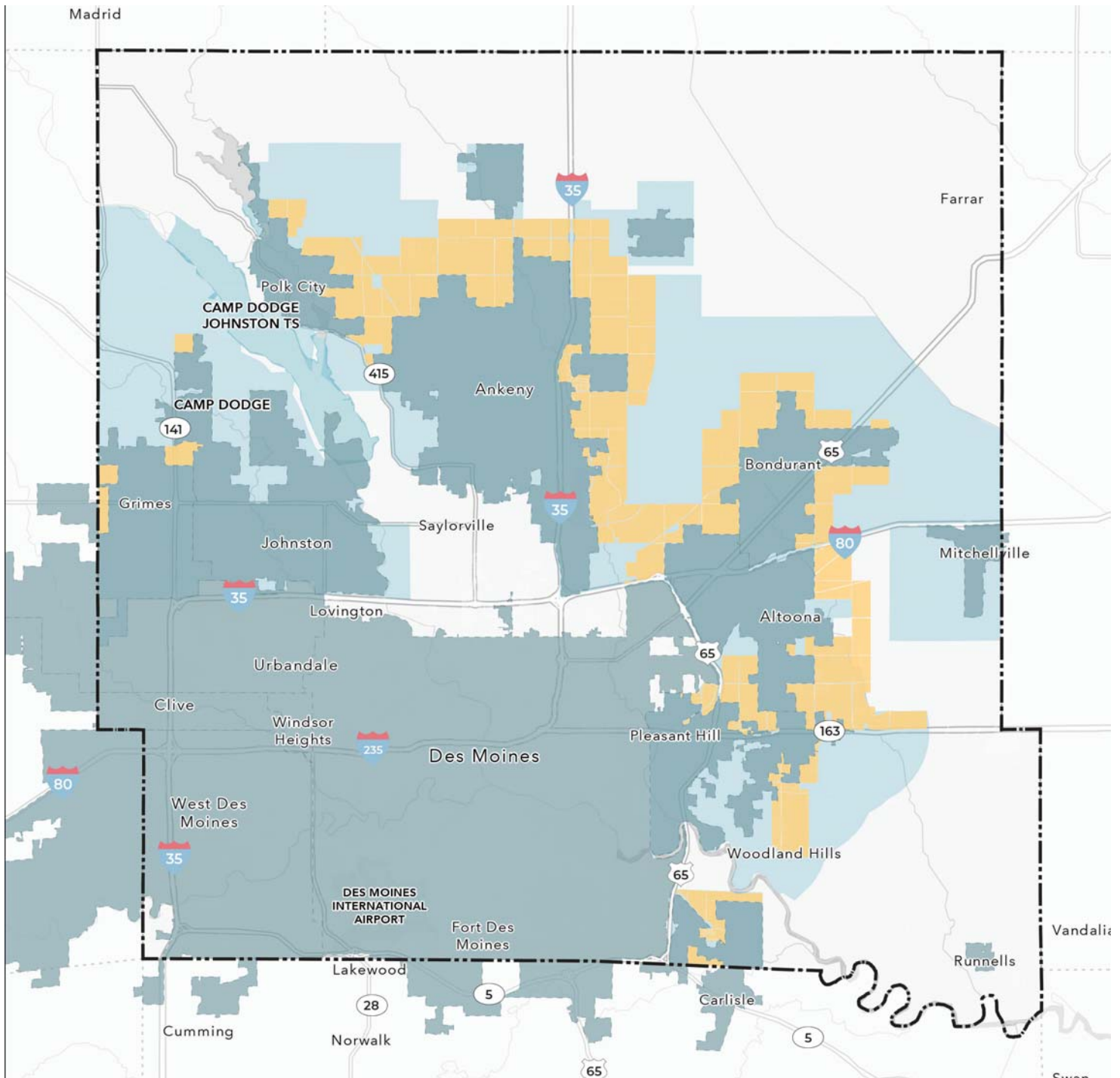
-  Polk County
-  Incorporated City
-  Planning Boundaries
-  Likely Growth Areas

Figure X.X - Polk County Plan Boundaries + Likely Growth Areas



Villages + Corridors

Polk County Villages

Within unincorporated Polk County are several villages. The villages vary in how developed they are, and each has unique character and features. Several villages have received special area plans, which will be explored in further detail in Chapter X - Village + Corridor Plans. The villages with plans are shown in blue.

Corridors

Three special area corridors were given special attention during the planning process, which will also be further discussed in Chapter X. These three corridors represent important infill opportunity sites where a more intense and varied mix of land uses would be appropriate.





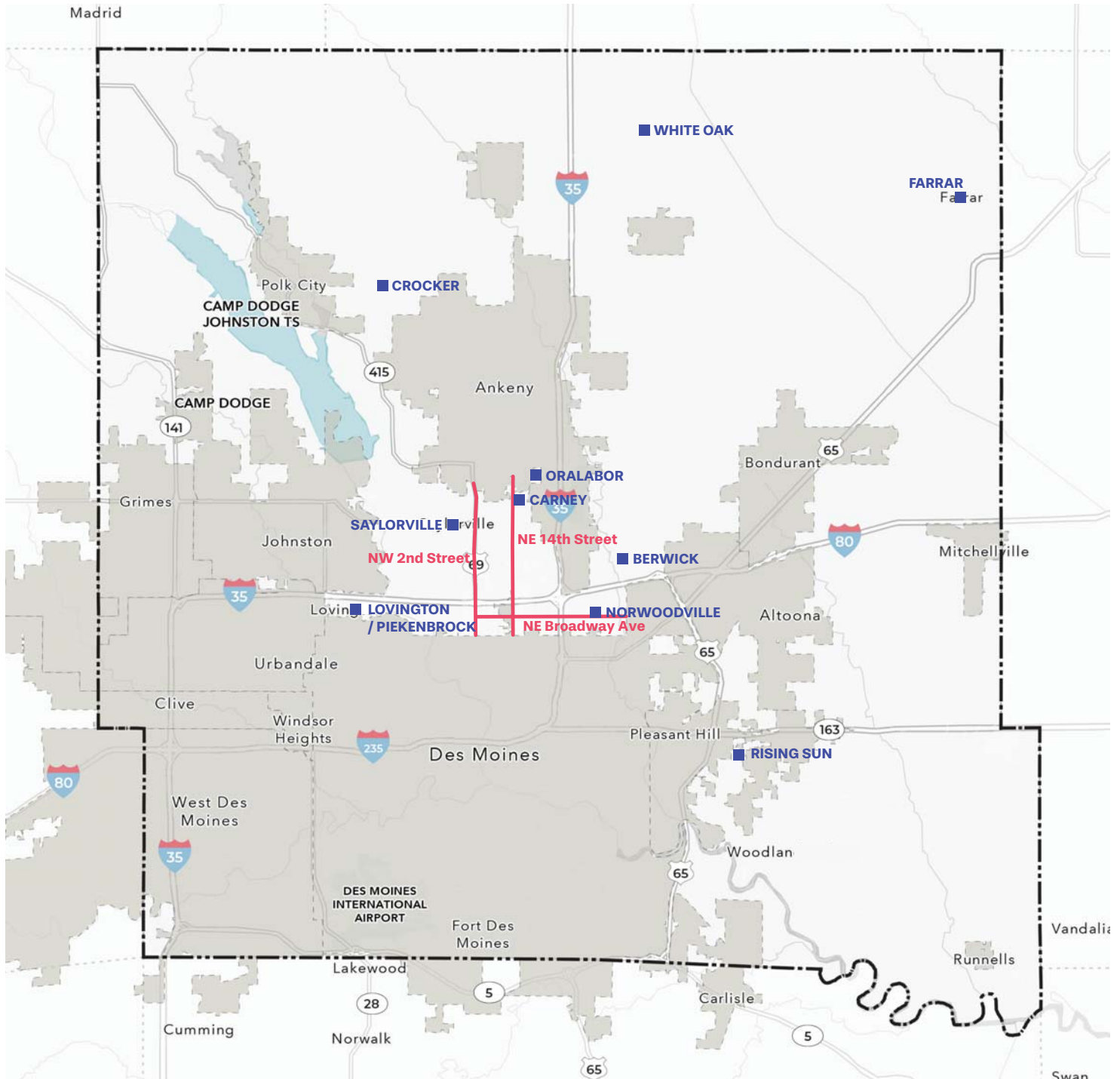
-  Polk County
-  Incorporated City
-  Village with Special Area Plan
-  Corridor Special Areas

Figure X.X - Polk County Villages + Corridors



3. Land Use

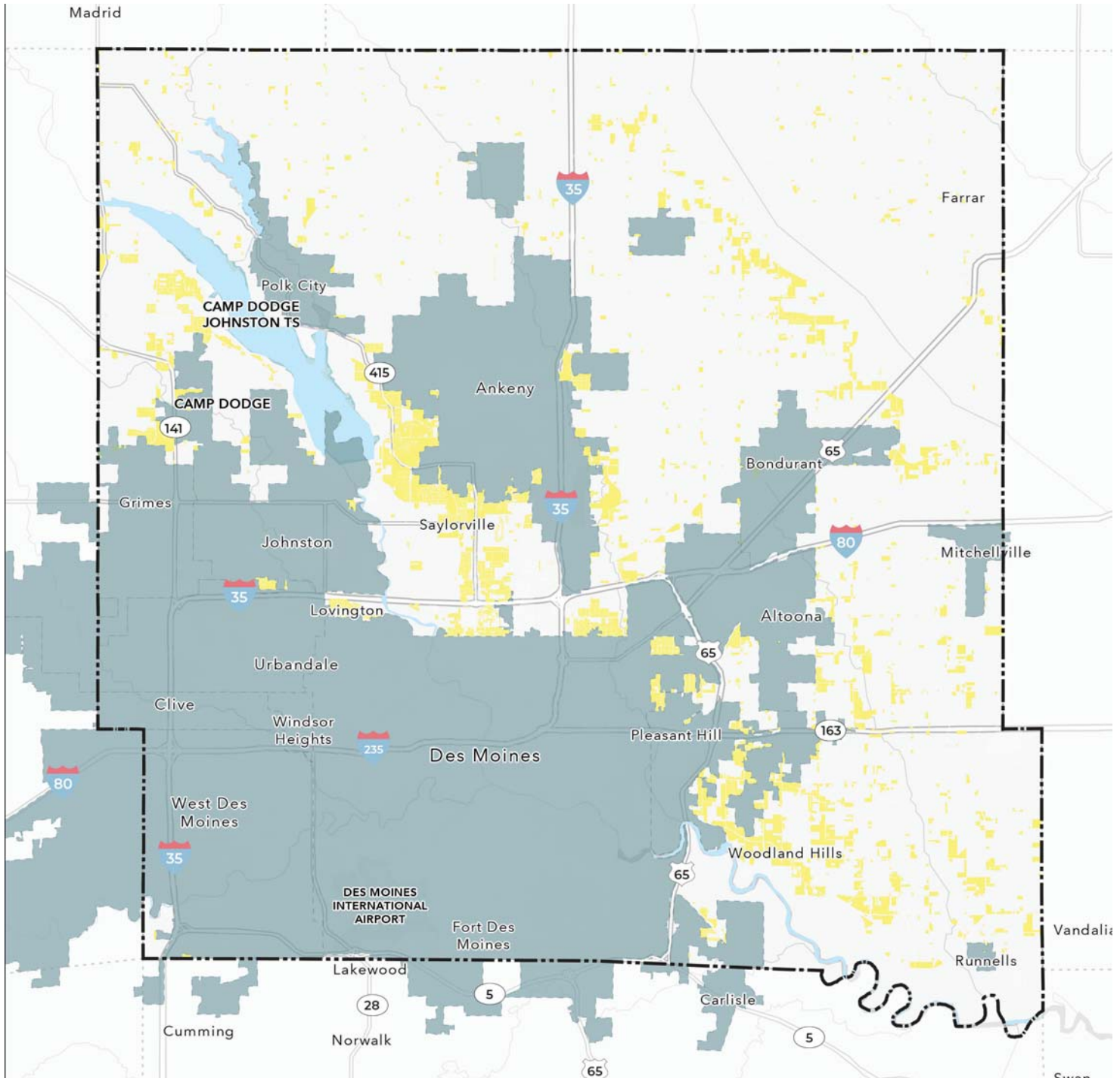
Residential Areas

Figure X.X shows the existing residential areas within unincorporated Polk County. This includes all ag dwellings, single-family homes, mobile home parks, and any multi-family residential uses. There has been a steep rise in the number of rural subdivisions within the County. While some residential growth is

to be expected, in many instances, this type of development pattern is better suited for urban areas to help preserve agriculture and open space in the unincorporated areas. Key locations for expanded residential growth have been identified throughout the planning boundary.



Figure X.X - Unincorporated Polk County Residential Land Uses



Residential Growth

Table X.X below shows the housing demand estimates for unincorporated Polk County through 2050. These demand estimates include both owner and renter-occupied units. The average number of new households needed per year are expected to gradually increase to up to an average of 360 per year by 2046-2050. This is further divided into owner, renter,

and vacant units.

Figure X.X shows the cumulative housing unit needs between 2021-2050. By 2050, unincorporated Polk County will need to have added approximately 7,300 owner-occupied housing units and 1,400 renter-occupied units.

growth, while also targeting specific areas for the growth to occur to reduce sprawl and preserve agricultural land uses.

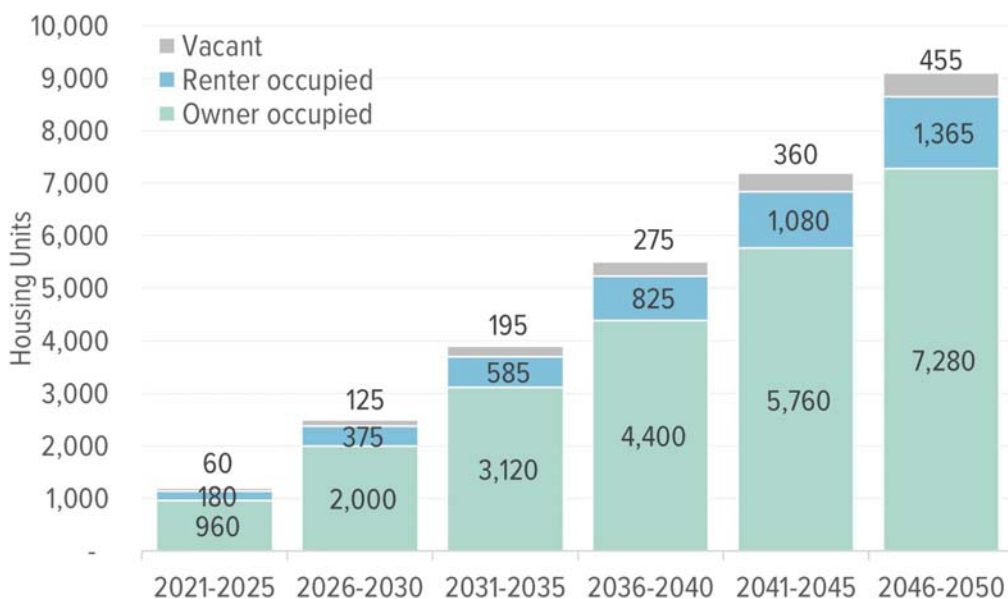
The Future Land Use Plan should provide adequate areas of land use to accommodate the expected

Figure X.X - Required New Housing Units per Year to Meet Demand (2020)

Time Period	Households	Housing Units			
	Average New Households Per Year*	Required New Housing Units Per Year*	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Vacant/Available
2021 - 2025	220	240	192	36	12
2026 - 2030	240	260	208	39	13
2031 - 2035	260	280	224	42	14
2036 - 2040	300	320	256	48	16
2041 - 2045	320	340	272	51	17
2046 - 2050	360	380	304	57	19

*Estimates have been rounded

Figure X.X - Cumulative Housing Unit Need 2021-2050 (2020)



3. Land Use

Commercial, Office, + Industrial Areas

Figure X.X shows the existing commercial, office, light industrial, and industrial land uses within unincorporated Polk County. Most of these land uses are clustered in the unincorporated areas north of Des Moines, south of Ankeny, and east of Johnston near Interstate 80. Much of the land is within the three

corridor areas and part of several village special area plans. Most of the more intense land uses as well as infill development will be focused on these already developed areas.

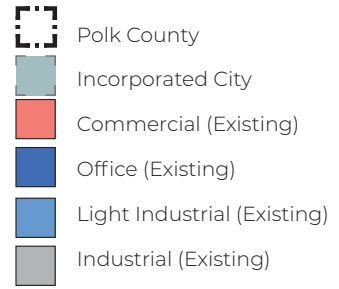
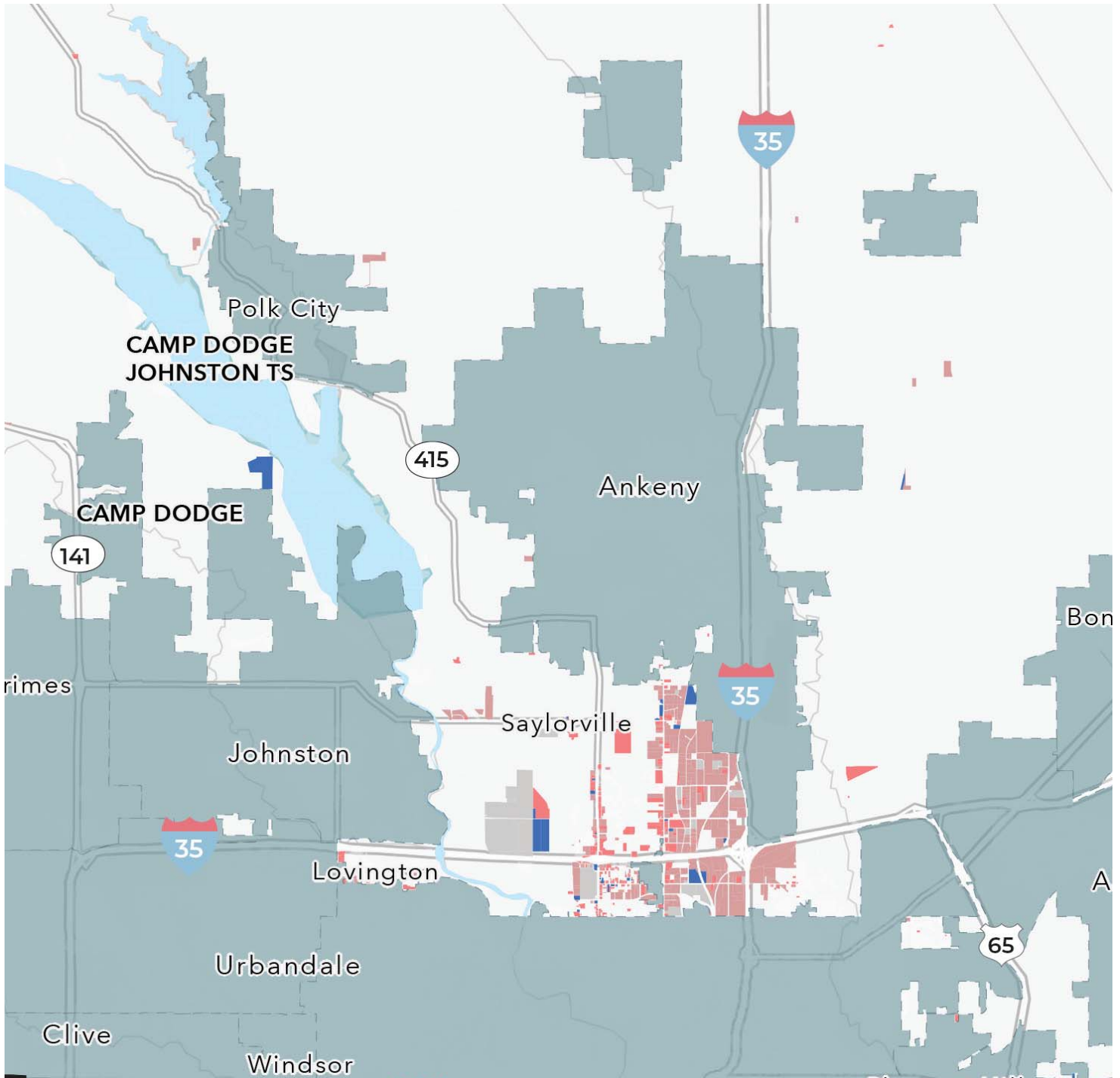


Figure X.X - Unincorporated Polk County Commercial, Industrial, & Office Uses



Commercial, Office, + Industrial Growth

Figures X.X-X.X show the projected retail space demand estimate, office space need estimates, and industrial space demand estimates through 2050.

Retail Demand Estimates

Despite the changing nature of retail, growth pressures facing Polk County suggest a gradual increase in demand for retail square footage between 2021-2050. Between 2046-2050, an additional 10,400 SF of retail space could be demanded.

Office Demand Estimates

Figure X.X shows the office space demand estimates for total square feet (millions) and the trend for SF per person between 2025-2050. While the overall demand for SF is expected to gradually increase in Polk County, the SF per person will decline. By 2050, Polk County could see demand for around 250 million SF of office space throughout the county.

The majority of the region's demand for new office space will be absorbed within Incorporated Polk County locations. Therefore, office demand is not anticipated to be a significant driver of growth in unincorporated Polk County.

Industrial Demand Estimates

Figure X.X shows the total square feet (millions) for industrial space and the trend for industrial SF per employee. Unlike office, both of these numbers are expected to increase between 2025 and 2050 in Polk County.

Currently, unincorporated Polk County contains 17% of Polk County's industrial space. The exact percentage of this industrial demand that will land in unincorporated areas will depend on various factors, most importantly the availability of suitable sites, adequate utility infrastructure, and community willingness to add additional industrial development. The Future Land Use Plan should identify suitable locations for such development.

Figure X.X -Unincorporated Polk County Retail Space Estimate (2020)

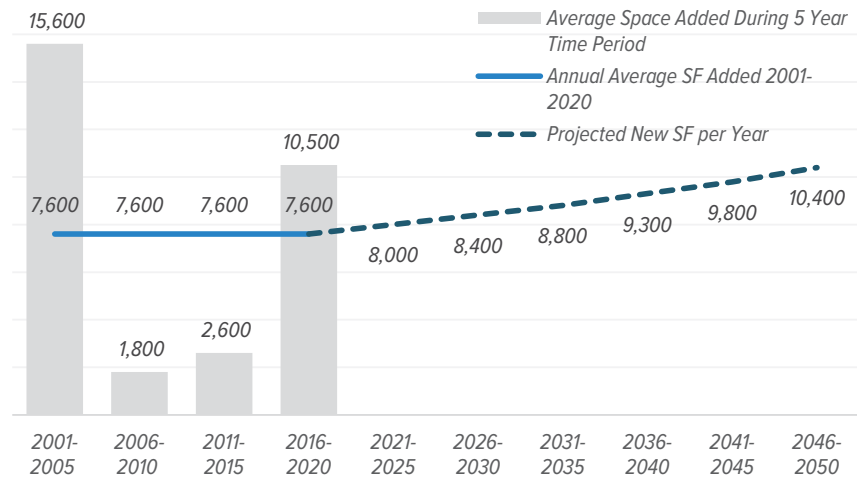


Figure X.X -Polk County Office Space Needs (2020)

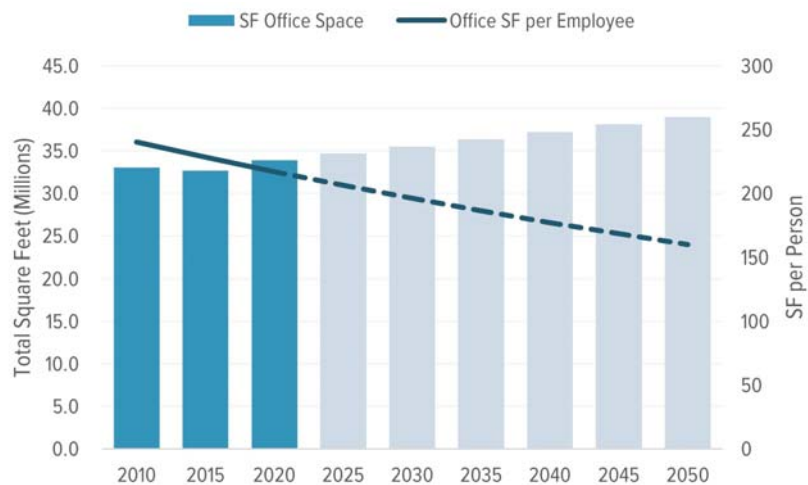
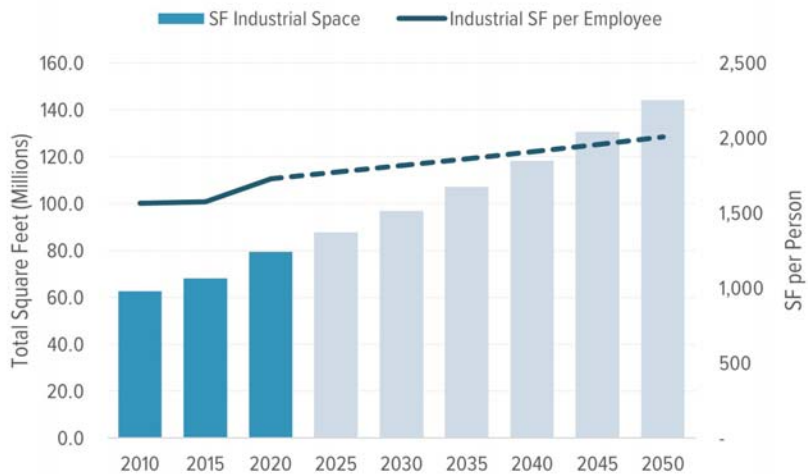


Figure X.X -Polk County Industrial Space Needs (2020)



3. Land Use

Environmental Areas

The location of conservation land and other areas with sensitive environmental features impacted the future land use plan. In addition to identifying the existing parks, recreation, and conservation land on the Future Land Use Plan, a floodplain overlay was added on top of the map to show the widespread areas impacted by the floodplain

around the county as a way to avoid negative environmental impacts and land use conflicts.







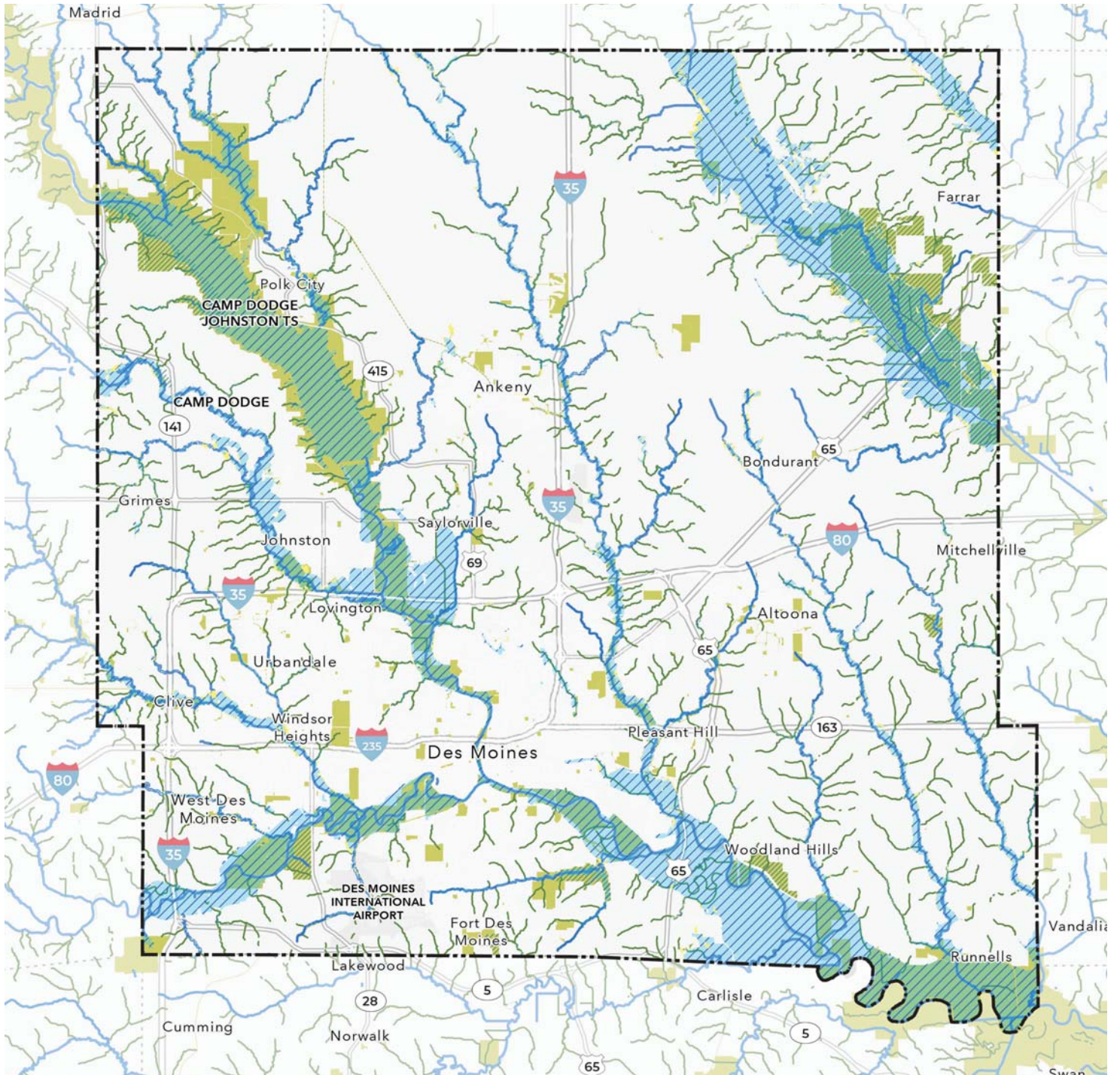
-  Polk County
-  Incorporated City
-  Floodplain
-  Type 1 Stream
-  Type 2 Stream
-  Parks & Recreation Land

Figure X.X - Unincorporated Polk County Environmentally Sensitive Areas



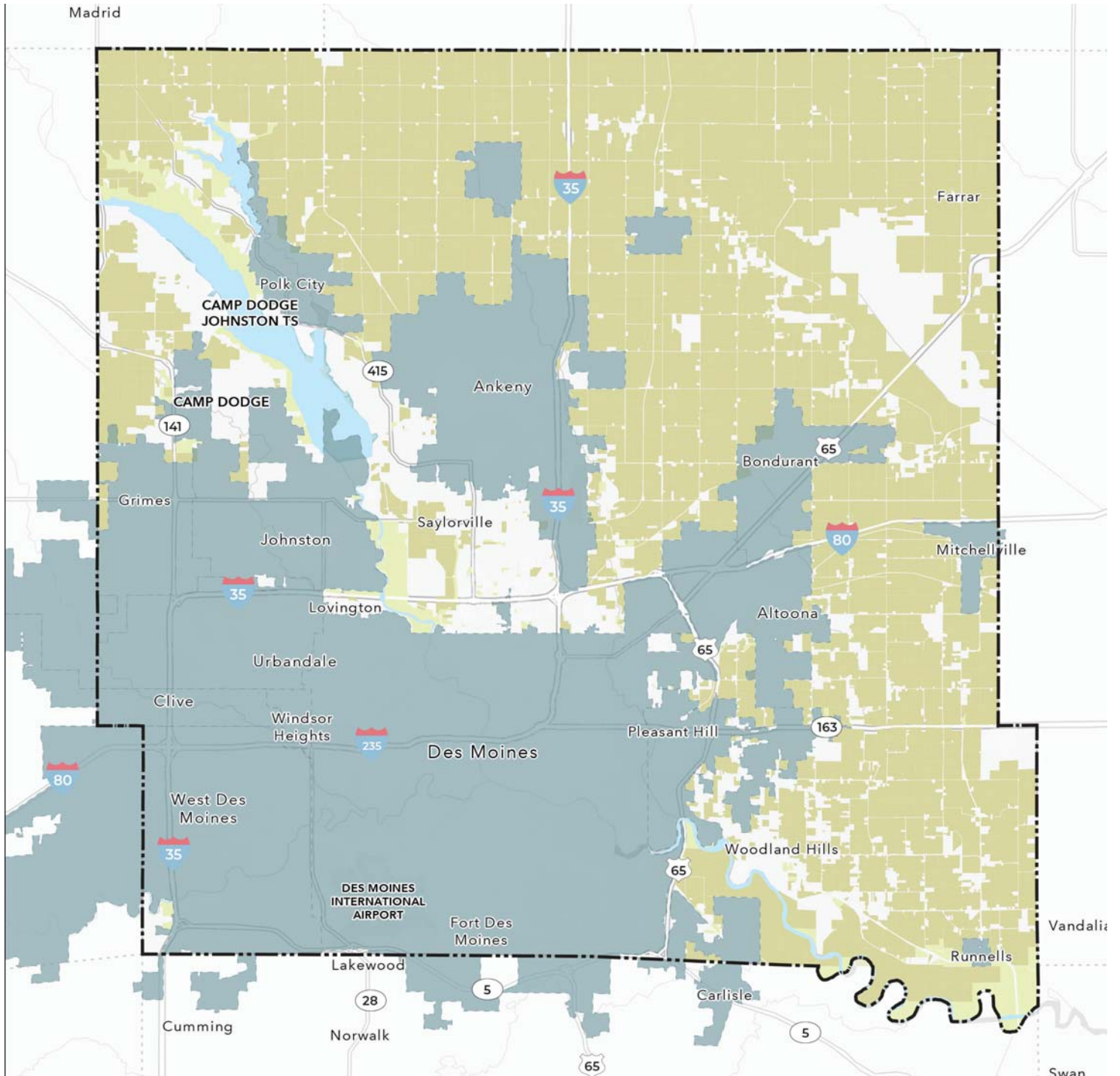
Existing Agriculture Land

Agricultural preservation is a key goal of the Polk 2050 Comprehensive Plan. While Polk County will continue to feel growth pressures, preservation of this important and historic land use should remain a priority. Preferably, large contiguous areas of agricultural land will remain in the county, especially in the northern most sections of the county.

Figure X.X shows the estimated existing agricultural, park, and open space in unincorporated Polk County. While not all of this land will remain agricultural, urban growth should be steered towards municipalities and conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural users should be avoided be limiting urban sprawl in the county.

-  Polk County
-  Incorporated City
-  Existing Agricultural Land
-  Existing Open Space
-  Water

Figure X.X - Unincorporated Polk County Agriculture, Park & Open Space



3. Land Use

Future Land Use Plan

Figure X.X shows the Future Land Use Plan for Polk County. All of the incorporated areas have been excluded from the plan. The dominant land use in the plan remains Agriculture with approximately half of the planning boundary. The second most dominant land use category is the Urban Fringe Land Use, this represents land that should remain as-is until annexed by the nearby municipality where it should be then developed in accordance with their future land use plan. Conservation and Parks and Open Space represents approximately 14% of the Future Land Uses.

Rural residential, estate residential, and low-density residential

accounts for a combined 17.0%. Higher-density residential, including medium and high density, account for less than 1% of the plan.

Residential-Business Flex, representing less than 1% of land use, includes those residential, business park, and industrial uses that have intermingled as development occurred but should be allowed to remain and be improved as needed.

Employment land, which is industrial, business park, and all of the commercial uses make up 1.4% of the land use makeup.

Institutional land, including public or privately held land such as schools, cemeteries, or governmental facilities, comprises 3% of all land uses.
















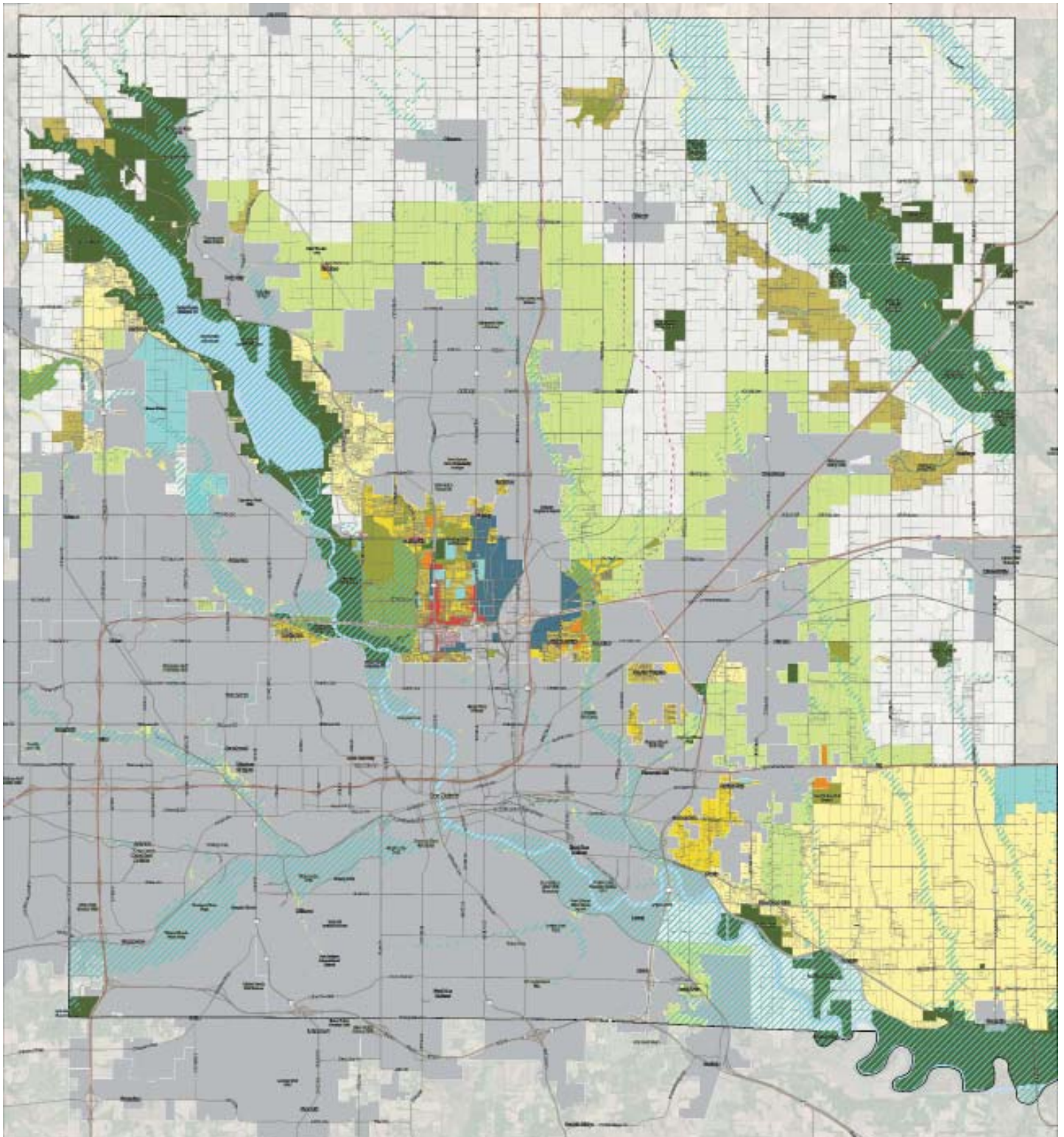
	Future Land Use	Acres	Share (%)
	Agriculture	104,840.7	49.8%
	Urban Fringe	30,793.4	14.6%
	Rural Residential	25,389.2	12.1%
	Conservation	24,676.2	11.7%
	Institutional	6,303.8	3.0%
	Estate Residential	5,466.5	2.6%
	Low-Density Residential	4,605.0	2.2%
	Parks and Open Space	4,702.8	2.2%
	Business Park	1,704.2	0.8%
	Industrial	989.1	0.5%
	Medium-Density Residential	468.0	0.2%
	Highway Commercial	231.6	0.1%
	Residential-Business Flex	129.9	0.1%
	Neighborhood Commercial	92.7	0.0%
	High-Density Residential	61.4	0.0%
	Total Acres	210,454.6	100%

Figure X.X - Future Land Use Map, Unincorporated Polk County



- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Polk County | Proposed Roads & NE Beltway | Estate Residential | Institutional |
| Incorporated City | Agriculture | Rural Residential | Neighborhood Commercial |
| Water | Conservation | Low-Density Residential | Highway Commercial |
| 100-Year Floodplain | Parks and Open Space | Medium-Density Residential | Residential-Business Flex |
| 500-Year Floodplain | Urban Fringe Overlay | High-Density Residential | Business Park |
| | | | Industrial |

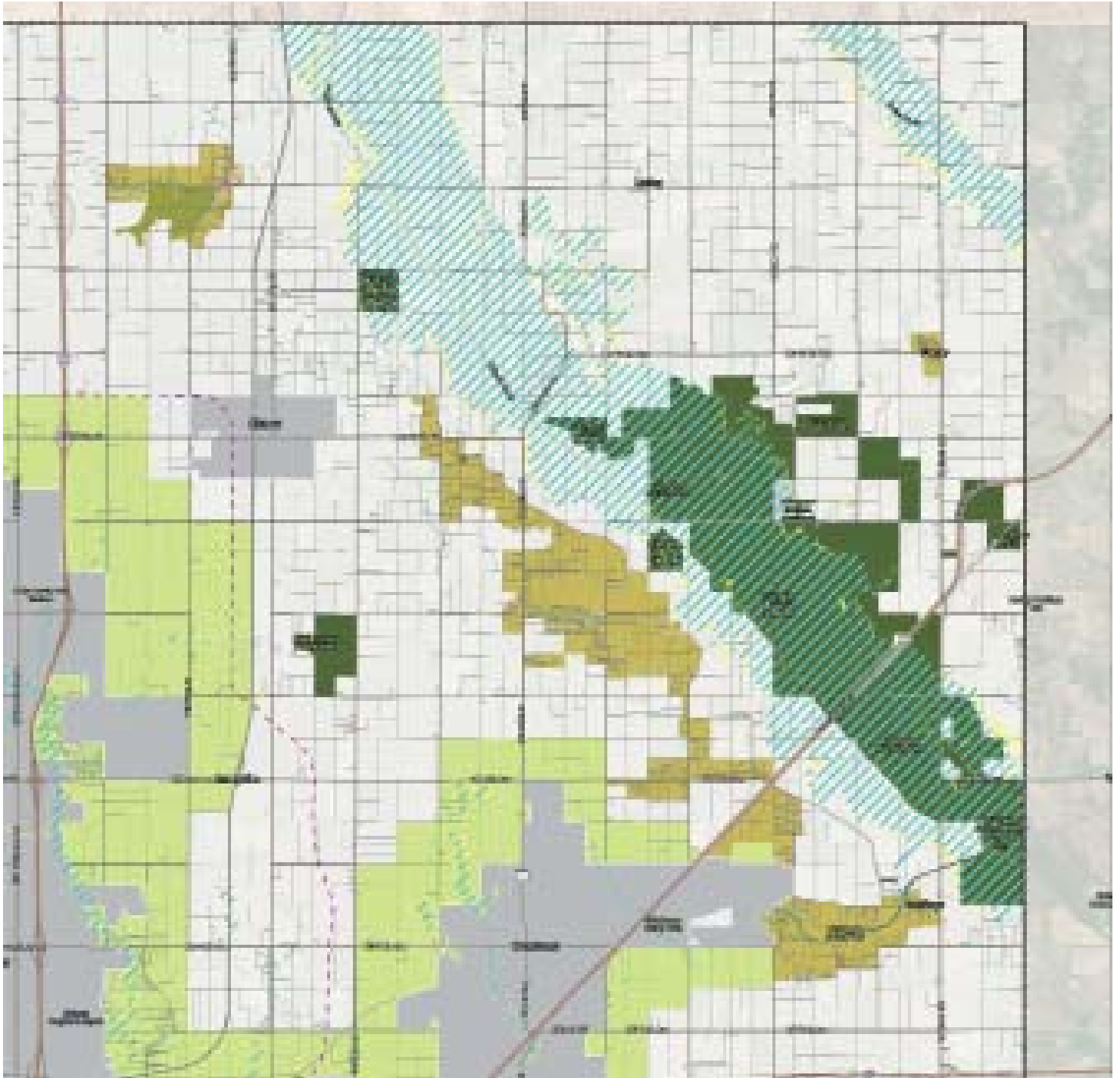
3. Land Use

Northeast Quadrant

The Northeast Quadrant of the Future Land Use Plan features expanses of agriculture land, estate residential, and conservation of the Chichaqua Bottoms. There is a high presence of floodplain that runs through a majority of the ag land and Chichaqua Bottoms. Villages, White Oak and Farrar, are located within this area with a great focus

on expanding estate residential and open space. The Urban Fringe Overlay land use provides a healthy buffer between the villages or ag land and the incorporated cities of Polk County. Also featured in this map is the proposed Northeast Beltway that would provide an additional connection running north-south throughout the metro.

Figure X.X - Future Land Use Map, Northeast Quadrant



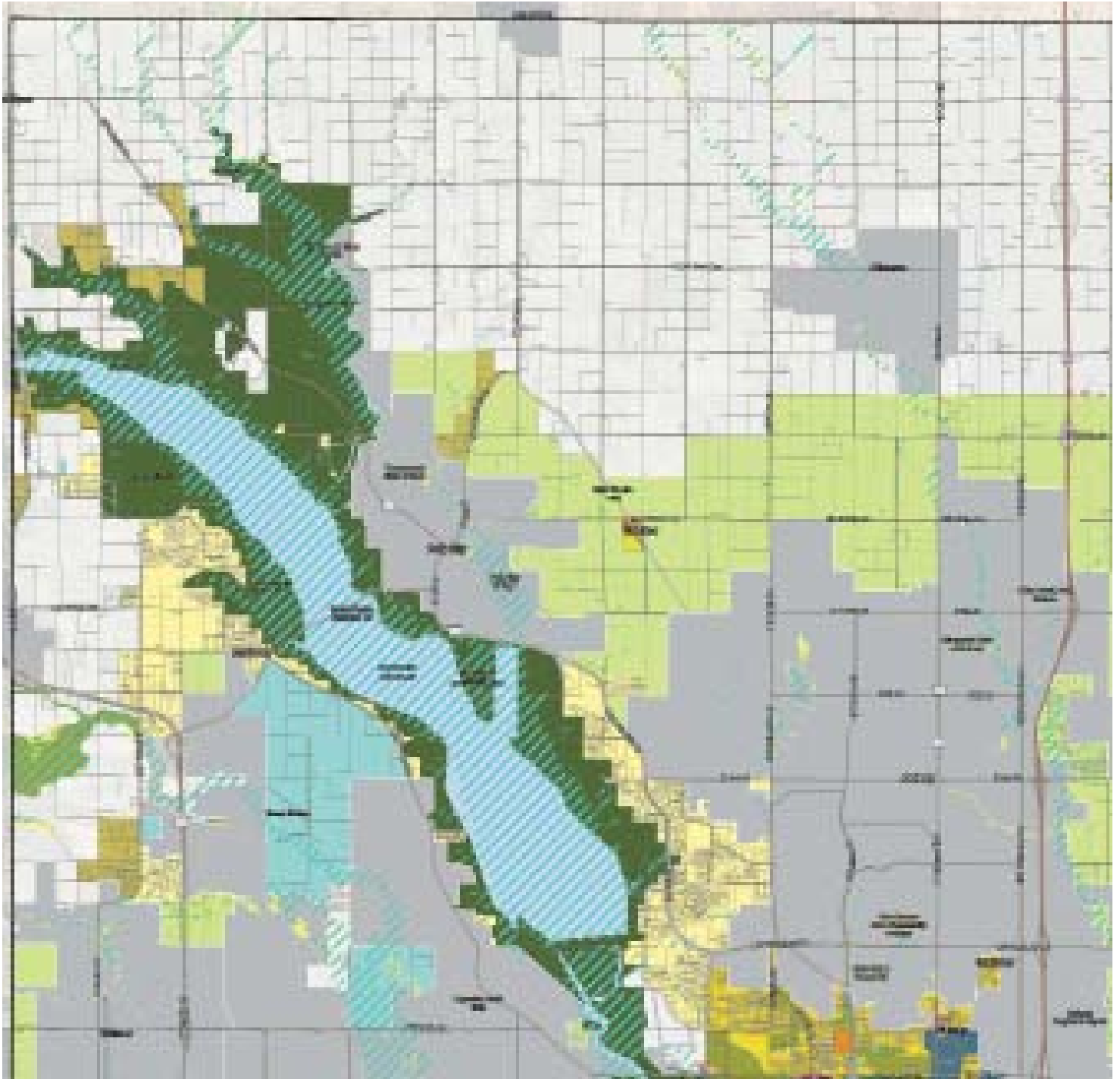
Northwest Quadrant

In the Northwest Quadrant, Saylorville Lake contributes a large portion of the land uses. Other significant features include Camp Dodge

many incorporated municipalities. Predominate land uses include agriculture, estate residential, conservation, public, and the urban fringe overlay.

The Northwest Quadrant includes many significant features, such as Saylorville Lake, Camp Dodge, and

Figure X.X - Future Land Use Map, Northwest Quadrant



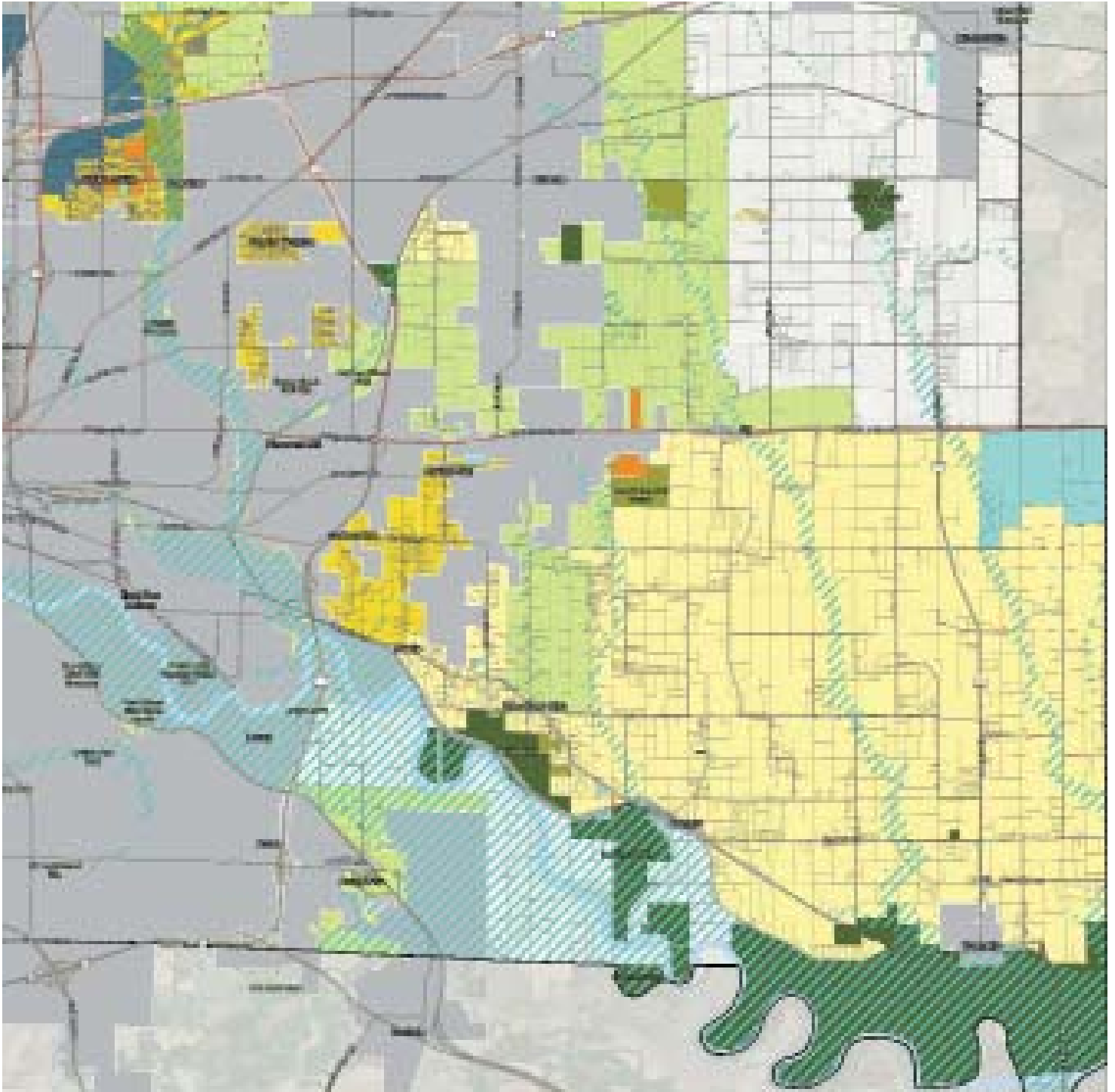
3. Land Use

Southeast Quadrant

The Southeast Quadrant has a high presence of developed land, rural residential, and villages. In the Runnells area, focus was placed here to preserve and maintain the rural residences that exist their today. The villages in this quadrant are intermingled with

the incorporated municipalities shown in grey. The Urban Fringe Overlay is actively serving as a buffer in this area to preserve and protect conservation, ag, and rural residential land.

Figure X.X - Future Land Use Map, Southeast Quadrant



Southwest Quadrant

The Southwest Quadrant is predominately developed and incorporated. Areas that are not incorporated include villages, such as Saylorville, Carney, and parts of Norwoodville. These villages are featured in greater detail in their corridor-specific sections.

Figure X.X - Future Land Use Map, Southwest Quadrant



3. Land Use

Recommendations

Natural resource and conservation management in Polk County can boil down to four basic goals.

1. Protect Polk County watersheds
2. Preserve environmentally sensitive landforms
3. Prioritize system-level natural resource solutions
4. Be a regional leader in natural resources and conservation

These separate but interrelated goals incorporate the multifaceted strategies the county must employ to properly conserve, protect and preserve its abundant natural resources.

Each goal will be supported by a series of strategies. Each strategy will make general and specific recommendations for the county to use as policy or achieve as an action item.

GOALS

G1



Plan for new growth in strategic areas of Polk County

G2



Ensure preservation and conservation of environmental and historic land uses in Polk County

G3



Be a regional leader in sustainable land use management

Goal 1:
Plan for new growth
in strategic areas of
Polk County

INTENT

Polk County is facing significant growth pressures. While much of this growth will be targeted towards municipalities, there will inevitably be growth within the unincorporated areas well. This growth should occur strategically and thoughtfully with an eye towards infrastructure readiness, infill development, and transitional land uses.

GOAL 1 STRATEGIES



Allow for a mix of new land use types in strategic locations



Consider the availability and capacity of local services and infrastructure when approving development applications



Promote infill development in underutilized, previously developed areas of Polk County



Ensure gradual land use transitions or designed buffers to reduce potential incompatibilities among land uses

3. Land Use

S1



STRATEGY 1

Allow for a mix of new land use types in strategic locations

While an overarching goal of the Polk 2050 Plan is to conserve agricultural land, strategic growth areas have been identified for a variety of land use types. Much of this growth has been targeted to village areas or land that has been previously developed but is not likely to be annexed by any Polk County municipality. The Future Land Use Plan should be the guide the County uses when making decisions about re-zonings or proposed new development, especially when it is developing on existing agricultural land.

Policies and Action Items

1. Consult the Comprehensive Plan when reviewing rezoning requests and development proposals to determine if they are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Plan and related goals and strategies.
2. Update the zoning and subdivision regulations to support the Future Land Use Plan and any goals, policies or action items included in the plan
3. Limit and focus rural housing growth to only the areas identified on the Future Land Use Plan
4. Allow medium and high-density residential development in key areas throughout the county as identified on the Future Land Use Plan
5. Locate new commercial and industrial uses in urban areas except where uses have specific requirements which justify a potential location in rural areas.

goal

STRATEGIC GROWTH AREAS

S2



STRATEGY 2

Consider the availability and capacity of local services and infrastructure when approving development applications

In general, urban growth should be steered towards incorporated areas to help preserve natural and agricultural land uses. Proposed growth within existing city growth areas should annex and connect to city infrastructure services. Where this is not possible or likely, available capacity to provide services should be considered when reviewing and/or approving development applications or re-zonings. If service cannot yet be provided by the County, dry sewer mains, easements, plans and agreements to connect in the future should be established to approve development.

Policies and Action Items

1. Encourage rural development proposed within an incorporated city's growth area to annex into the city and connect to city water and sanitary sewer service
2. Ensure new development in the county is served by adequate public infrastructure and does not exceed the capacity of existing infrastructure
3. Require any proposed development connect to available sanitary sewer service or provide dry sewer mains, easements, plans, and agreements to connect when available at some point in the future if within areas anticipated to be serviced by sewer
4. Encourage future land uses that efficiently match the capacity of the existing transportation system

goal

STRATEGIC GROWTH AREAS

3. Land Use

S3



STRATEGY 3

Promote infill development in underutilized, previously developed areas of Polk County

Development and redevelopment should be prioritized and promoted in areas that have been previously developed or already served by infrastructure services, otherwise known as infill sites. Most of Polk County's infill sites are within identified villages or corridors, most of which are unlikely to face annexation by a city in the future. Review zoning code that may be discouraging infill redevelopment and adopt design standards for multi-family, commercial, and industrial users to ensure new development promotes an increased quality of life for nearby users.

Policies and Action Items

1. Promote infill, housing rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of existing properties and vacant lots of record in key corridors and villages in Polk County
2. Review zoning code that may be discouraging redevelopment of infill parcels
3. Adopt enhanced design standards for multi-family, commercial, and industrial development in high visibility areas
4. Promote commercial redevelopment and expansion along key corridors and intersections

goal

STRATEGIC GROWTH AREAS



S4

STRATEGY 4

Ensure gradual land use transitions or designed buffers to reduce potential incompatibilities among land uses

Proper buffers or transitions between incompatible land uses can reduce conflict and increase the quality of life for all user types. Residential land typically enjoys being minimally disturbed by loud or heavy traffic users such as industrial or commercial. Commercial and industrial users equally prefer being away from users that may complain about their everyday activities. There should also be buffer between active agricultural users and residential development due to dust, noise, odor, etc. Requiring physical or landscaped buffers can reduce conflicts. Setbacks between drainageways, storm sewers, utility poles and pipelines can also prevent future conflicts.

Policies and Action Items

1. Require buffers between incompatible land uses such as industrial and residential
2. Encourage new residential development to maintain the rural character and protect sensitive environmental features and agricultural uses
3. Require new development is setback an adequate distance from existing and proposed drainageways, storm sewers, major utility transmission lines, and pipelines

goal

STRATEGIC GROWTH AREAS

3. Land Use

Goal 2:

Ensure preservation and conservation of environmental and historic land uses in Polk County

INTENT

Polk County contains a wide variety of natural resources and historic land uses. Preservation of this land amidst development pressure will help to ensure Polk County is environmentally healthy and consciousness. This can be done through inventorying, preserving and buffering.

GOAL 2 STRATEGIES



Preserve rural character of Polk County



Protect and buffer high-quality natural resources and conservation land



Preserve the historic and culturally significant land in Polk County



STRATEGY 1

Preserve rural character of Polk County

Unincorporated Polk County has always largely been defined by its rural and agricultural character. The County should continue to prioritize preservation of this important environmental, economic, and cultural resource through intentional land use management practices and voluntary participation in incentive-based programs designed to help landowners protect their agricultural status. Large, contiguous areas of farmland will best protect the practice, which has been facing increasing growth pressures in certain parts of the county. Continuing to follow strategies and regulations to protect farmland along with reducing conflicts between development and ongoing agriculture users should be followed.

Policies and Action Items

1. Protect large contiguous areas of prime farmland with a focus on northwest and northeast Polk County
2. Maintain rural character of non-urbanized northwest and southeast Polk County
3. Preserve agriculture through voluntary, incentive-based programs and strategies by continuing to work with partners to promote and provide access to said programs
4. Continue to foster land strategies and regulations that conserve the productivity and availability of high value agricultural land
5. Seek to reduce conflicts that may arise between development and agricultural practices

goal

PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION

3. Land Use

S2



STRATEGY 2

Protect and buffer high-quality natural resources and conservation land

Polk County has many partners to work with in the mission to preserve the county's wide array of natural resources. Through continued and active participation in regional conservation efforts, Polk County can help to protect sensitive land areas. In particular, supporting Polk County Conservation in their efforts will be key. The County should continue to discourage development near these sensitive areas such as streams or floodplains and should ensure proper transitional or buffering between agriculture and environmental uses.

Policies and Action Items

1. Work closely with Polk County Conservation and other partners to protect and conserve sensitive environmental land
2. Discourage development near sensitive environmental areas such as streams or floodplains
3. When adjacent to agricultural areas or natural resources, minimize development impacts through transitional uses, edge treatments, and other appropriate measures

goal

PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION



STRATEGY 3

Preserve the historic and culturally significant land in Polk County

Preserving the historic and culturally significant land in Polk County should continue to be a mission for the county. Identification of said areas is key along with identifying strategies to preserve and manage these areas. Existing structures, neighborhoods, or districts should be priority.

Policies and Action Items

1. Preserve culturally or historically significant properties and establish strategies for their use and preservation.
2. Encourage the preservation and renovation of existing structures, neighborhoods, or districts that may qualify as designated historic landmarks.

goal

PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION

3. Land Use

Goal 3:

Be a regional leader in sustainable land use management

INTENT

Polk County can be a regional leader in sustainable land use management through discouraging urban sprawl even as the county faces growth pressures. This can be accomplished by discouraging leapfrog development and encouraging cities to grow in an orderly and condensed manner. Preventing unnecessary conversion of natural land to the built environment should paramount.

GOAL 3 STRATEGIES



Promote coordinated growth patterns in Polk County to discourage urban sprawl



STRATEGY 1

Promote coordinated growth patterns in Polk County to discourage urban sprawl

While the region will continue to grow, the prevention of unnecessary urban sprawl is in the interest of the county and all of its municipalities. Sprawl is an inefficient development pattern that can over burden infrastructure systems, harm the tax base, cause negative impacts on natural resources, and increase growth pressures on important agricultural land. Polk County should be a regional leader in discouraging leapfrog development within unincorporated areas and promote orderly and controlled growth patterns region wide. Practices such as conservation subdivisions should be encouraged to prevent additional conversion of natural land to the built environment.

Policies and Action Items

1. Discourage leapfrog across Polk County to keep growth connected and centralized
2. Promote controlled, orderly growth by Polk County municipalities to reduce sprawl and unnecessary conversion of agricultural land to the built environment
3. Discourage unincorporated development within urban fringe areas, which includes areas near municipalities growth boundaries
4. Promote conservation subdivisions as an alternative to typical rural subdivision development
5. Allow for growth only where utilities and infrastructure can be financially supported and provided

goal

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE