



2025

## POCAHONTAS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Developed by the Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan Committee

*Planning Assistance Provided by  
MIDAS Council of Governments*



**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-02-#12**

**A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE  
2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
FOR POCAHONTAS COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors and Planning & Zoning Commission recognized the need for a new comprehensive plan for the County; and

**WHEREAS**, MIDAS was hired to aid in the completion of the comprehensive plan including the solicitation of public input for the plan, and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors has held a public hearing to provide the public a final chance to provide input into the comprehensive plan update.

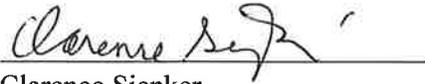
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Board of Supervisors for Pocahontas County, that the 2025 Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan be accepted and approved.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 3rd day of February, 2026.

Pocahontas County Board of Supervisors



Louis Stauter, Chairman



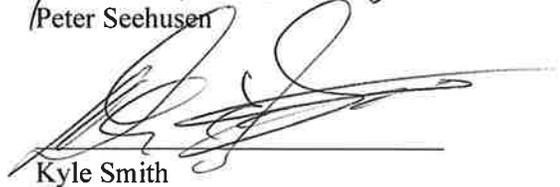
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## Executive Summary

Comprehensive plans are an essential long-term planning tool that informs current and future land use development in a city or county. These plans take a step back from the present and analyze it with the evolving nature of many factors, including a community’s demographics, housing stock, economic conditions, infrastructure, public services, and land use patterns. Through a committee of stakeholders and public input, various goals & objectives are set to help guide growth and development based on its past and present conditions along with its longer-term vision for the future set in the comprehensive plans. As zoning codes, subdivisions, proposed developments, and other matters are proposed and revised, the comprehensive plan sets the framework to review the changes against to ensure it fits with the long-term plan.

The Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan outlines existing conditions; establishes future goals, objectives, and implementation strategies; and identifies existing and desired land uses within the unincorporated area of the county. The plan was developed using existing data, as well as community input through various committee meetings, county department meetings, and a public survey in which all residents and businesses of the unincorporated area were encouraged to complete. The initial chapters of the plan present an overview of existing conditions within the county. The latter chapters propose goals & objectives, set an action plan for implementation, and sets the future land use map.

All comprehensive plans in Iowa are required to incorporate guidance from the Smart Planning Legislation (SF 2389). This guidance includes ten *smart planning principles* and thirteen *planning elements*. These principles and elements provide a framework for ensuring that a comprehensive plan is truly comprehensive in its review and consideration of a community’s growth & development. Not all of the principles and elements are implementable in each community; rather, these tools help ensure that sound, long-term decisions are made in the comprehensive planning process. The underlined text below reflects these smart planning principles and planning elements and their inclusion in the Pocahontas County plan.

Public Participation was used throughout the planning process. Residents, business owners, appointed and elected officials, and other stakeholders were actively involved at multiple stages, ensuring that the plan reflects diverse perspectives and shared values that constitute the county’s *Community Character*. The public participation process consists of *Collaboration* and *Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency* principles by encouraging inclusive, fair, and open participation.

The public was encouraged to provide feedback on a public input survey that discussed each element of the plan, as well as a business survey that discussed elements of the plan as it

relates to business. Surveys were dispersed to residents and businesses located in the unincorporated area of the county by the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Survey results can be found in Appendix C. The public also received further opportunities to provide comments and input upon approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission and adoption by the Board of Supervisors.

Issues and Opportunities were discussed during the County Department Workshop. Each planning element was considered, and attendees were asked to identify the County’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The Committee then performed their own SWOT analysis and noted the most important items from the Workshop and their committee meeting. This analysis supports *Collaboration* between the Committee and other stakeholders and is consistent with *Community Character* by valuing and attributing local strengths and opportunities. For the results of the SWOT Analysis, see Appendix D.

Community Character is reflected on throughout the plan, especially in Chapter 5, where the central planning elements are discussed.

The following elements and strategies are reflected in Chapters 5 and 6:

1. Economic Development (Chapter 5) details the existing employment trends, employment sectors and diversity, and commuting patterns. The planning strategies emphasize the importance of preserving the county’s *Occupational Diversity* of the county to foster a resilient and dynamic economy.
2. Agricultural and Natural Resources Element (Chapter 5) is split into two sections: Agriculture, along with Recreation and Conservation. The strategies in both sections reflect the priority of preservation and *Protection*, addressing the competing and overlapping goals of land preservation for agriculture and conservation.
3. Housing (Chapter 5) exhibits the age, condition, type, and occupancy of current and past housing within the county. The strategies express that it is paramount that *Housing Diversity* remains a priority to attract and retain residents by offering affordable and suitable living options.
4. Transportation (Chapter 5) highlights the multitude of transportation options within the region. The strategies call for continued regional *Collaboration* and support for *Transportation Diversity* through multi-modal opportunities, while promoting the safe and *Efficient* movement of people and goods.
5. Public Infrastructure and Utilities (Chapter 5) addresses current access to infrastructure, utilities, and community facilities across the county. The strategies focus on meeting present and future needs, particularly through the integration of *Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy* solutions that align with local land use.

Economic Development, Agricultural and Natural Resources, Housing, Transportation, Public Infrastructure and Utilities, Community Facilities, Land Use and Implementation are all

elements of the plan and *Smart Planning Principles* that are patently displayed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Intergovernmental Collaboration was practiced throughout the land use portion of the plan. Each City within the County was sent a survey regarding their land use practices. Each were then invited to attend a Planning Committee meeting to review the Future Land Use Map of the County and recommend any suggestions they might have in relation to their Cities' land use practices.

Hazards were considered through a County-wide hazard mitigation plan, which received FEMA approval in September 2015.

Upon consideration of the above-listed elements, the County followed a planning process that encouraged public participation, identified existing conditions, and established and evaluated future goals and objectives. Implementation of this plan will assist the county government in making informed decisions on future land use proposals.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Planning Process

A comprehensive plan is a living document developed by a group of community or county stakeholders, which presents a vision for the future of its indicated area. Also known as a master plan or land use plan, the comprehensive plan includes long-range goals and objectives for all activities that impact growth and development in a community or county; especially those activities relating to land use.

It is necessary for a county to have a comprehensive plan to assist public officials and county boards in their decision-making process. The plan provides justification for decisions relating to public and private land development proposals; expenditure of funds for infrastructure and public facilities; and it presents methods to address issues of pressing concern (Iowa State University - University Extension, 2018).

The Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan outlines existing conditions, establishes future goals, objectives, and implementation strategies, and identifies existing and desired land uses within the County. The plan was developed using existing data, as well as local input through various committee meetings, and public input and business surveys, which all residents and businesses were encouraged to complete. The Comprehensive Plan Committee established for this plan was involved in the entire planning process. This committee included county supervisors and the Zoning Coordinator. The planning process includes the subsequent itinerary:

1. Discussed and considered Smart Planning Principles
2. Discussed ideas for data collection
3. Obtained plans already established
4. Discussed and determined planning elements
5. Developed and dispersed separate surveys to residents and businesses of the unincorporated area of the County and to cities located within the County
6. Reviewed survey results with the Comprehensive Plan Committee
7. Held public input and focus group meetings on housing, transportation, public services and infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, and conservation
8. Discussed existing conditions
9. Discussed and developed goals and objectives
10. Developed implementation strategies
11. Developed existing and future land use maps
12. Met with cities to discuss proposed future land use maps
13. Provided public opportunity to review the proposed future land use map
14. Comprehensive Plan Committee reviewed draft.
15. Planning & Zoning Commission was sent the draft to review.

16. Allowed the public 30 days to comment on the plan and its future land use map
17. Held Public Hearing on proposed plan for public review
18. The Planning and Zoning Commission gave recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for adoption of the Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan
19. The Pocahontas County Board of Supervisors approved and adopted the Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan

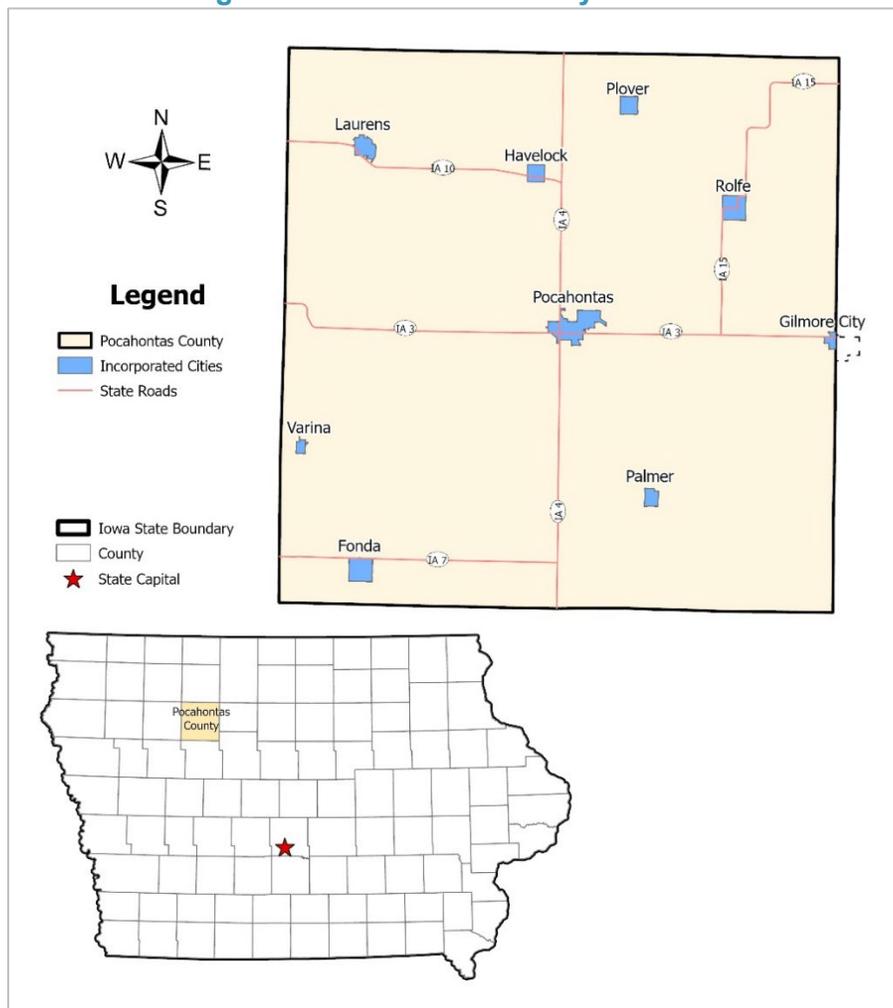
The Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan consists of the compilation of objectives and goals that address the following elements: **agriculture, economic development, housing, public services and infrastructure, recreation and conservation, transportation, and land use.** As the county changes from year-to-year, so will its residents' and businesses' needs; therefore, this plan may be amended, changed, or revised as needed.

## Chapter 2: History of Pocahontas County

Pocahontas County is named after Pocahontas, a Powhatan Native American woman from Virginia, known for saving the life of Captain John Smith and marrying John Rolfe, both of whom were early American settlers. The location of Pocahontas County is shown in Figure 1 below.

When Pocahontas County was formally organized in March of 1859, a group of commissioners was appointed to select the location for the county seat. They selected 200 acres of land near the West Fork of the Des Moines River. The county seat was initially named Highland, or Highland City, but it went through several name changes over time, including Milton, (old) Rolfe, and finally Parvin. A two-story, 36-foot by 50-foot Classical Revival courthouse was constructed in the county seat, funded through swampland funds. The second story of the courthouse served as a school (History of County Governments in Iowa, 1992).

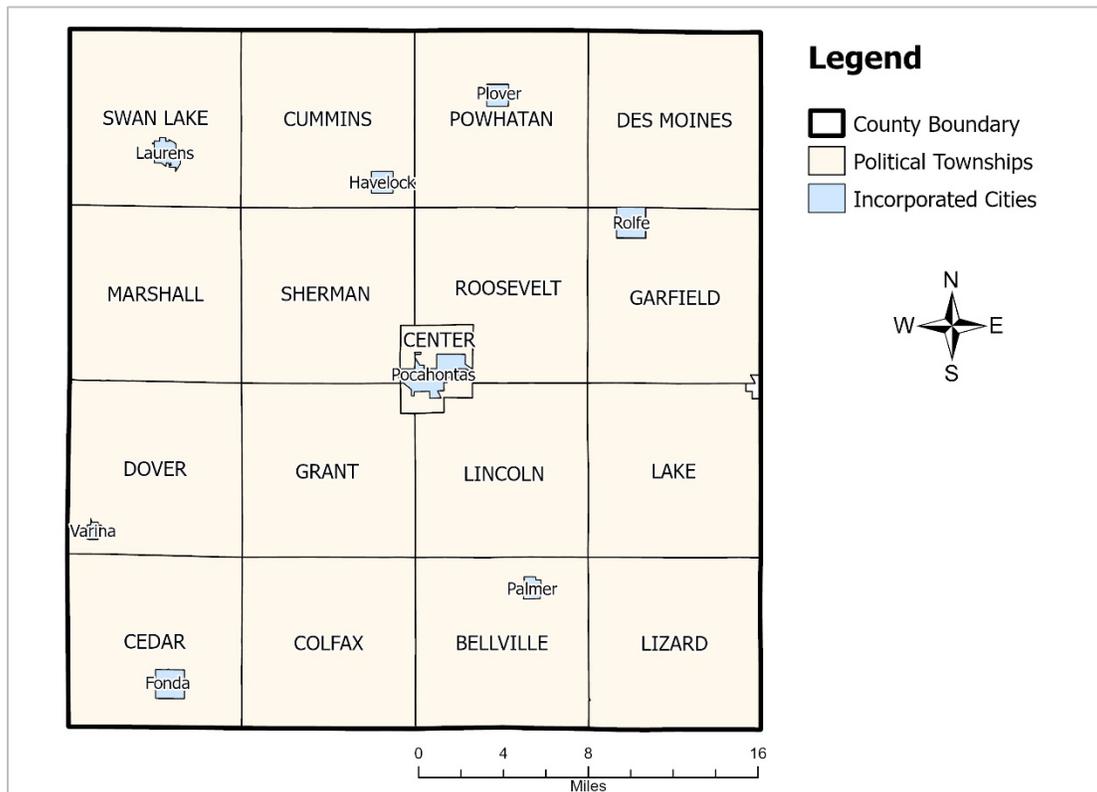
**Figure 1: Pocahontas County Location**



The original county seat remained the county seat for 16 years before being moved in 1875 to a more central location within the county, where a newly-platted city called Pocahontas Center was established. A new courthouse was constructed in 1875 for \$2,600 in the new county seat (Iowa Judicial Branch, 2024). In 1892, the “Center” was dropped from the name, and the city became known as Pocahontas (City of Pocahontas, 2024).

The first railroad to locate in Pocahontas County was an extension of the Iowa Falls & Sioux Railroad, which reached the southwest corner of the county in 1870. In 1882, grading for the Toledo & Northwestern Railroad reached what is now known as the City of Rolfe (History of County Governments in Iowa, 1992). By 1883, Pocahontas County had sixteen townships and six flourishing railroad towns, with four railroads crossing the county’s southern, northern, and eastern borders. Present-day Pocahontas County consists of sixteen survey townships and seventeen political townships, the latter having the addition of Center Township. Each of the sixteen survey townships is subdivided into 36 sections.

**Figure 2: Pocahontas County Political Townships**



In 1899, two additional railroads were constructed, and the towns of Varina and Hanson were founded along these lines. Hanson later became the town of Palmer (The Pioneer History of Pocahontas County, 1905). Railroads helped drive further development in Pocahontas County,

as the population jumped from 3,713 people in 1880 to 15,339 people in 1900 (State Data Center of Iowa).

On April 6, 1920, an election was held that authorized the construction of a new courthouse in the City of Pocahontas. A contract was awarded that autumn to architects Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson, and to the contractor A.H. Neumann and Co. The building was officially dedicated on September 3, 1923, which was Labor Day of that year. The neo-classical, stone courthouse measured 121 feet by 86 feet and cost \$421,062 to build (History of County Governments in Iowa, 1992).

## Places of Historical Significance in Pocahontas County

### National Historic Register of Historic Places

According to the National Register of Historic Places, there are three (3) historical sites currently designated as significant within the County. The properties listed in the Register include those sites that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and/or culture. These sites are being preserved to ensure that the County's historic past can be reflected upon and remembered during the entire time of the County's formation. Below is a listing of each of the historical sites currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and a brief background of each site (National Register of Historic Places, 2022).

**Pocahontas County Courthouse:** The Pocahontas County Courthouse, built in 1923, is a neatly constructed building of classical Greco-Roman design. The interior is particularly noteworthy for its variety of materials and extensive and well preserved, decorative detail. The courthouse represents a significant public investment in a structure built not simply for utilitarian purposes, but also as a monument associated with the historical importance of county organization and development.



<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75337222>

**Laurens Carnegie Free Public Library:** Designed in the “mission style” according to its planners, the library was established on October 13, 1910. At the time, Laurens was reported to be the smallest community in the nation to have a Carnegie Library. During the early years of the library, it proved to be a main source of entertainment and pride for the town.



<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75339722>

**Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church:** Located a short distance west of downtown Pocahontas, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church showcases a blend of stylistic influences. The Italianate influence can be seen in the round-arched windows and the paired brackets on the belfry, while Greek Revival influence is evident in the elliptical fanlight with tracery above the entrance. The church was originally constructed in 1883.



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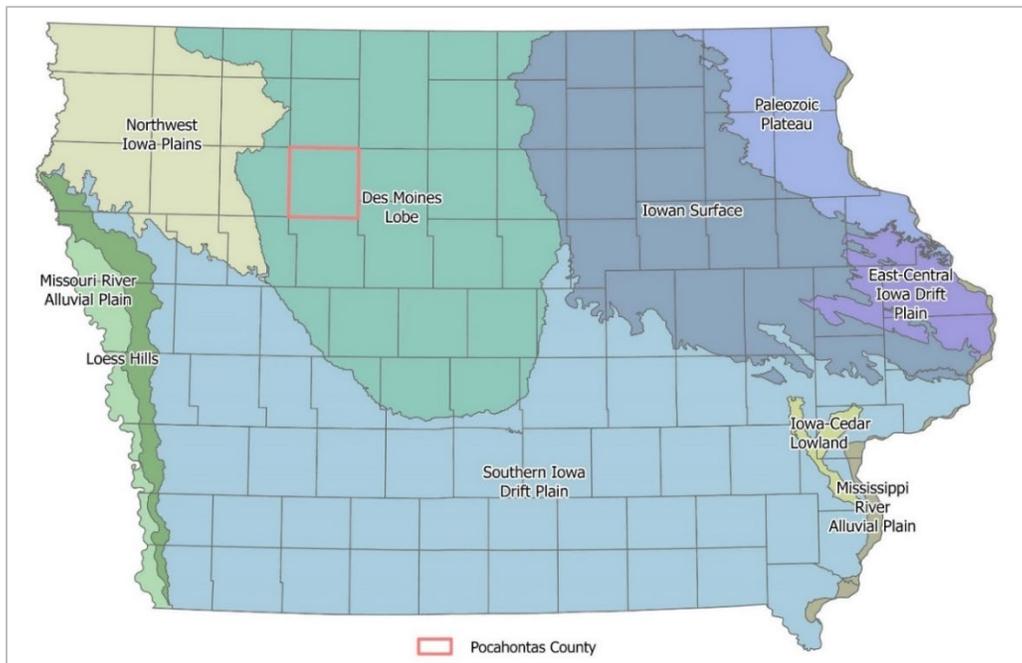
## Chapter 3: Physical Description

Physical features of Pocahontas County are important in Land Use development to ensure that proper land uses are enforced in environmentally sensitive areas. This section gives a background on the physical features that are present throughout the county including topography, water features, drainage, watersheds, and soils.

### Topography and Landforms

Pocahontas County is located in north-central Iowa and is surrounded by Buena Vista County to the west, Calhoun County to the south, Humboldt County to the east and Palo Alto County to the north. The County consists of 577.2 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) and is located in the landform known as Des Moines Lobe, which is often referred to as the Prairie Pothole Region. Nearly all of Iowa’s natural lakes are found in this region, shaped by historic glacial activity. Many of these lakes have since been tiled for agricultural purposes. Along with ponds and marshes, these lakes form prairie potholes that are vital habitats for wildlife. The region supports 50% of America’s waterfowl, which rely on the potholes for feeding and mating (Iowa Geological Survey).

Figure 3: Iowa Landforms

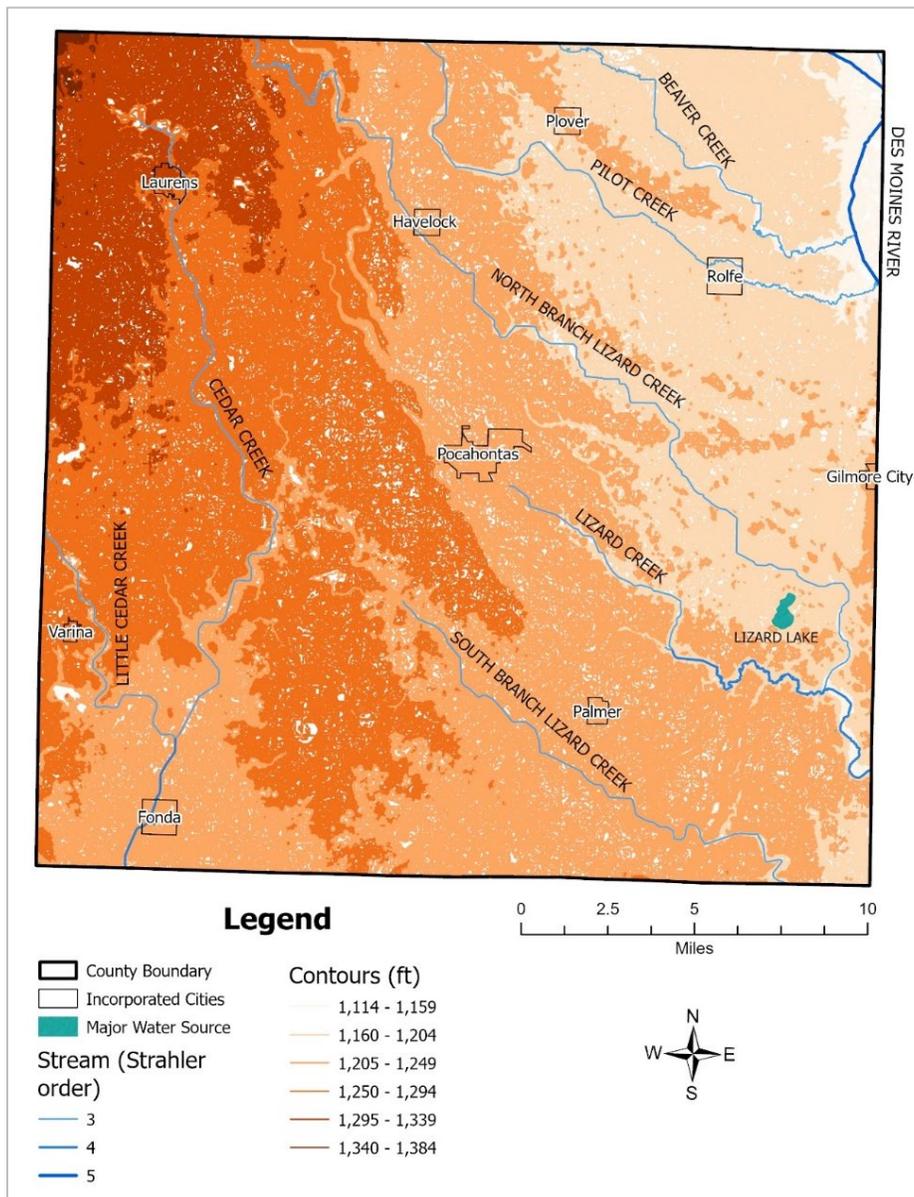


Iowa’s landscape was profoundly shaped by glaciers. The Des Moines Lobe experienced the last glacier to impact Iowa, approximately 12,000 to 14,000 years ago. The Wisconsin glacier moved southward through North and South Dakota, Minnesota and into north-central Iowa,

stopping at present day Des Moines. Where glacial movement was rapid, a flat to gently rolling landscape formed.

The terrain of Pocahontas County consists of mostly flat lands with hilly areas around Lizard Creek, Lizard Lake, and the Havelock Wildlife Area. The highest elevation in Pocahontas County can be found in the northwestern portion of the county. Here the elevation can reach 1,380 feet above sea level. The lowest elevations (1,114 feet) are found along creek beds and the Des Moines River, which runs through the northeast corner of the county. The following map displays the elevation distribution in Pocahontas County (IDNR).

**Figure 4: Pocahontas County Contours**

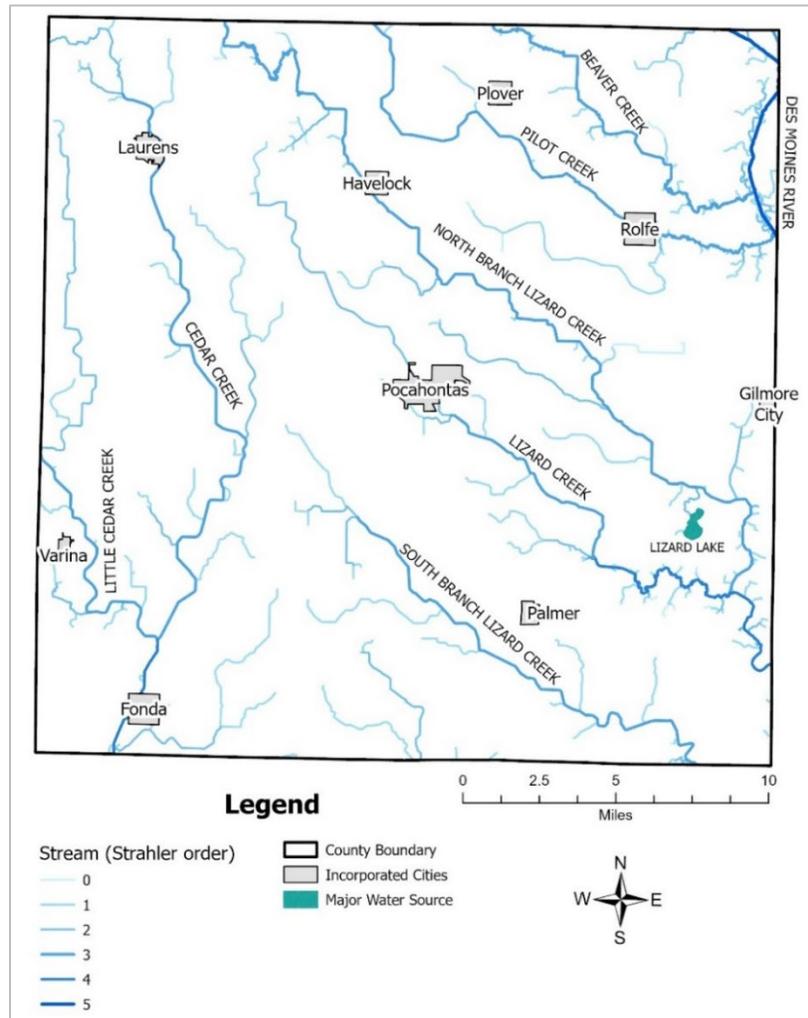


## Water Features

Figure 5 shows the rivers and streams in Pocahontas County, shaded according to the Strahler stream order. This classification system describes the branching structure of stream networks by assigning a numeric order to stream tributaries. The lighter the stream branch is on the map, the higher the number in the Strahler order, and the further away that branch is from the main river. The map includes Lizard Lake, which is a significant lake in the county.

The West Fork of the Des Moines River flows through a small portion of northeast Pocahontas County. Creeks of Pocahontas County include Beaver Creek, Pilot Creek, Crooked Creek, Lizard Creek, Cedar Creek, Little Cedar Creek, and South Lizard Creek. Pocahontas County crosses three different watersheds: the Middle Des Moines Watershed, the Des Moines Upper Watershed, and the North Raccoon Watershed (IDNR).

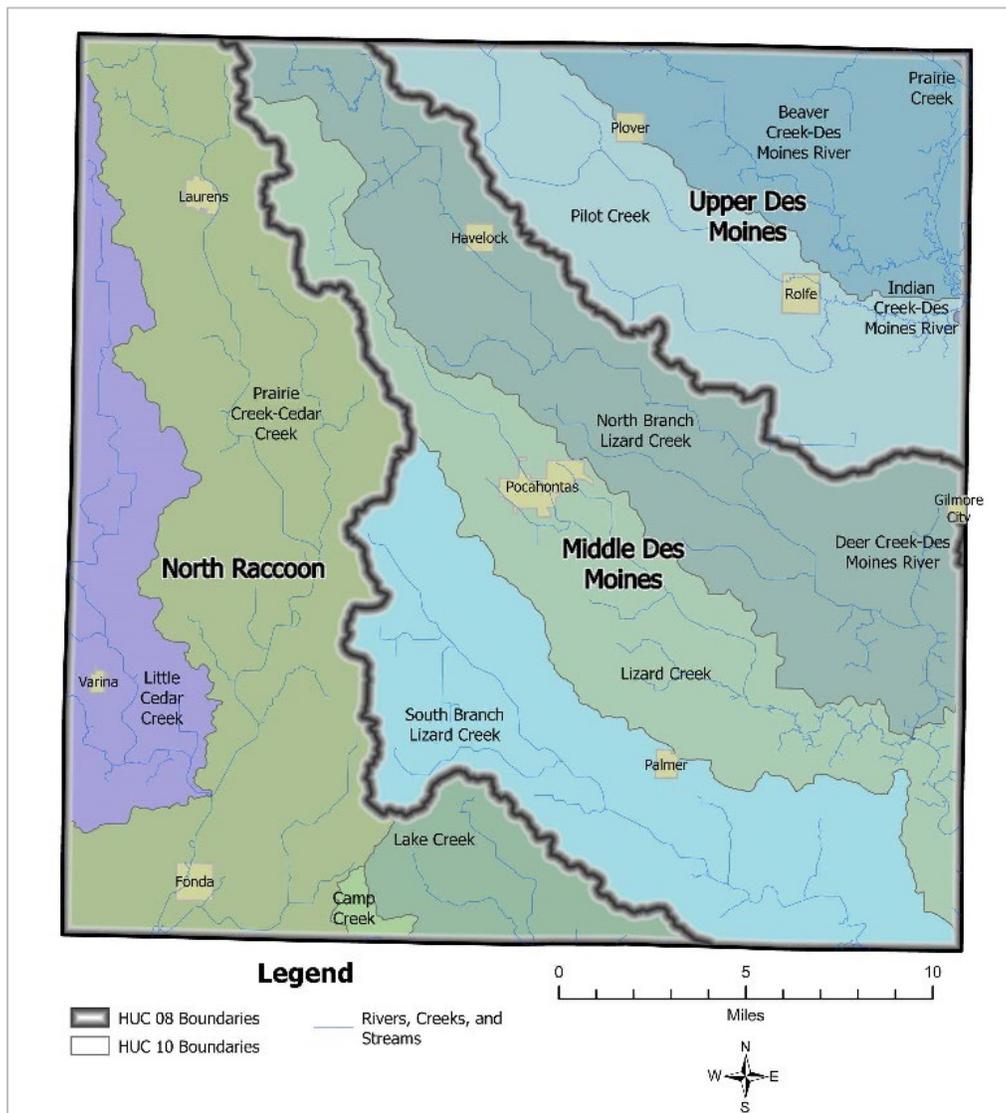
**Figure 5: Pocahontas County Rivers & Creeks**



## Watersheds

Pocahontas County is divided into three distinct watersheds. The Des Moines River, the county's most prominent waterway, flows through the northeastern corner. Beaver and Pilot Creek branch off from the Des Moines, along with their tributaries, forming the Upper Des Moines watershed. In the central part of the county lies the Middle Des Moines watershed, where the South Branch Lizard Creek, Lizard Creek, and North Branch Lizard Creek converge. To the west, the North Raccoon watershed is fed by Cedar Creek and Little Cedar Creek. Figure 6 shows the boundaries of these watersheds in Pocahontas County.

**Figure 6: Pocahontas County Waterways & Watersheds**



“A watershed is the area of land that drains into a lake, stream or river. Water traveling over the surface or through groundwater may pick up contaminants like sediment, chemicals and

waste and deposit them in a body of water” (IDNR Watershed Basics). Watersheds can vary in size. Some are as small as a farm field while others can be as large as entire states or regions.

*Upper Des Moines Watershed*

The Upper Des Moines Watershed covers an area of 633,598 acres and is located in two counties in Minnesota and seven counties in Iowa, with Pocahontas County containing nearly 9% of the watershed (USGS).

*Middle Des Moines Watershed*

The Middle Des Moines Watershed covers portions of eleven counties within Iowa and contains 1,104,288 total acres (USGS). 15% of this watershed is located in Pocahontas County. 76% of this watershed is used for row crop purposes (ACWA).

*North Raccoon Watershed*

The North Raccoon Watershed covers an area of 1,579,994 acres and is located in portions of Clay, Palo Alto, Buena Vista, Pocahontas, Sac, Calhoun, Webster, Carroll, Greene, Boone, Guthrie, Dallas, Polk, Madison, and Warren Counties in central and northwest Iowa. About 77% of the North Raccoon Watershed is used for row crop production (North Raccoon River Watershed, 2019).

**Soils**

Pocahontas County has four soil associations: Clarion-Webster-Canisteo, Webster-Canisteo-Nicollet, Havelock-Coland-Estherville, and Garmore-Faxon. Associations are “broad areas that have a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainage” (Soil Survey of Pocahontas County Iowa; 1985). Each association consists of one or more major soils and some minor soils.

Table 1 shows Pocahontas county’s four soil associations and their composition.

**Table 1: Pocahontas County Soil Associations**

Soil Association	% of County	Composition
Clarion-Webster-Canisteo	75%	Clarion soils – 23% Webster soils – 20% Canisteo soils – 19% Soils of minor extent – 38%
Webster-Canisteo-Nicollet	23%	Webster soils – 35% Canisteo soils – 23% Nicollet soils – 17% Soils of minor extent – 25%

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Havelock-Coland-Estherville	<2%	Havelock soils – 24% Coland soils – 15% Estherville soils – 14% Soils of minor extent – 47%
Garmore-Faxon	<1% (1,560 acres)	Garmore soils – 47% Faxon soils – 11% Soils of minor extent – 42%

Table 2 shows the different soils that are found in Pocahontas County and the soil description. The Webster Clay Loam soil is the most common in the county, accounting for nearly 25.6% of the total soil. This soil is typically cultivated for corn and soybeans, and otherwise supports growth of native vegetation, primarily wet-site tall prairie species (National Cooperative Soil Survey).

**Table 2: Pocahontas County Soils**

Soil	% of County	Description
Webster Clay Loam	25.6%	Nearly level to low sloping, poorly drained, loamy wet prairies
Canisteo Clay Loam	21.9%	Nearly level to low sloping, poorly drained, loamy wet prairies
Clarion Loam	15.2%	Low to moderate sloping, moderately well drained, loamy upland prairies
Nicollet Clay Loam	14.2%	Nearly level to low sloping, somewhat poorly drained, loamy upland prairies
Okoboji Silty Clay Loam	4.7%	Nearly level to low sloping, very poorly drained, depressional marsh
Clarion Eroded Loam	2.5%	Moderate sloping, well drained, loamy upland prairies
Harps Clay Loam	2.2%	Nearly level to low sloping, poorly drained, calcareous rim prairies
Coland Clay Loam	1.7%	Nearly level to low sloping, poorly drained, wet floodplains
Talcot Clay Loam	1.1%	Nearly level to low sloping, poorly drained, sandy wet prairies, stream terraces
Okoboji Mucky Silty Clay Loam	1.0%	Nearly level to low sloping, very poorly drained, depressional marsh

<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

Soil is a very important feature of the unincorporated area of the county, as farming is the most significant economic driver for the area. According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, there were 802 farms totaling 316,323 acres of farmland in Pocahontas County (United States Department of Agriculture, 2022).

The soil classification/association, slope, and erosion class are each used to determine the Corn Suitability Rating 2 (CSR2), which is an index of productivity for row-crop production. Land Use patterns are often shaped around CSR2, especially in unincorporated areas of Iowa where agriculture is a common use. See the “Agriculture” section in Chapter 5 of this plan for more information on the CSR2 and how it is used in land use planning in Pocahontas County.

## Hazards

A hazard is any source of danger that threatens humans, property, and the environment (FEMA 385-2/August 2001, Page iii). Pocahontas County adopted its most recent Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2015. Since this Comprehensive Plan was completed ahead of the next update to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, all hazard-related information in this section is based on the 2015 version of that plan.

A Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies, prepares for, and minimizes the impact of potential hazards that may affect jurisdictions based on the risk each potential hazard poses to the jurisdiction. The Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies hazards, profiles hazard events, inventories assets, assesses vulnerability, and then identifies goals and strategies for each participating incorporated city and the unincorporated county.

In the context of hazard mitigation planning, there are two classifications of hazards. The first is natural hazards, which are caused by a meteorological, environmental, or geological phenomena (Iowa 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan). The second category includes biological and human-caused hazards, which originate from human activity or biological threats. Table 3 lists both categories of hazards as identified in the 2010 Iowa Hazard Mitigation Plan.

In developing the 2015 plan, the committee analyzed potential hazards in Pocahontas County using data from the 2010 Iowa Hazard Mitigation Plan, historical events, disaster declarations, the National Centers for Environmental Information, Pocahontas County Emergency Management, and local knowledge.

Some hazards were evaluated at the county level due to their broad and consistent impact across jurisdictions within Pocahontas County. To reflect this, an asterisk (\*) is used in Table 3 to indicate hazards that were assessed countywide rather than on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis. Addressing these shared risks at a larger scale helps reduce redundancy in the planning process. Hazards determined by the Hazard Mitigation Committee to have no significant impact on the county are shaded in gray in Table 3 and were removed from the plan.

**Table 3: Pocahontas County Hazard Mitigation – Hazards**

Natural Hazards	Human-Caused/Biological Hazards
Dam Failure	Animal/Plant/Crop Disease*
Drought*	Hazardous Materials Incident
Earthquake	Infrastructure Failure
Expansive Soils	Human Disease*
Extreme Heat*	Radiological Incident
Flooding (Flash and Riverine)	Terrorism
Grass or Wildland Fire	Transportation Incident
Hailstorm*	
Landslides	
Levee Failure	
Severe Winter Storm*	
Sinkholes	
Thunderstorm & Lightning*	
Tornado*	
Windstorm*	

\*Hazard considered as a *countywide* hazard.

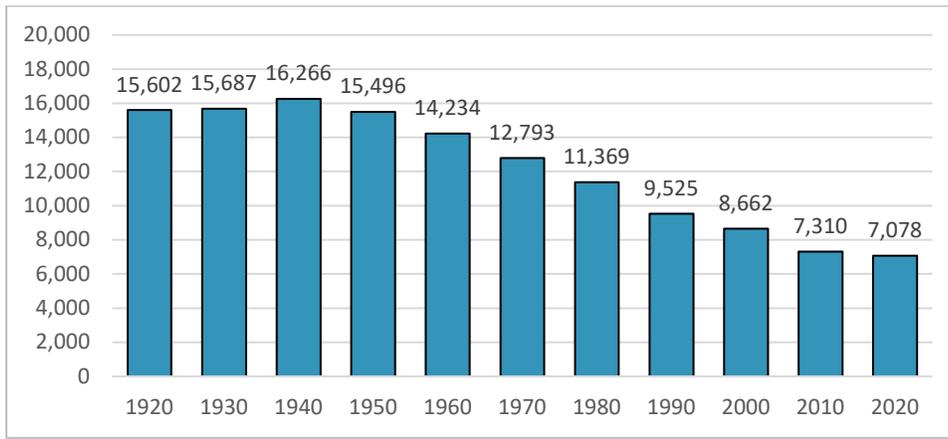
The Hazard Mitigation Committee evaluated the threat of each hazard using a risk assessment based on historical occurrence, probability, vulnerability/magnitude, severity, and speed of onset. This assessment identified that the two hazards that pose the highest risk to the county are Tornadoes and Hailstorms.

For more detailed information about hazards and mitigation strategies, please refer to the Pocahontas County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2015.

## Chapter 4: Demographics

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the population of Pocahontas County is currently 7,078 people, which is a 3.2% decrease in population from 2010. Pocahontas County has had a declining population since 1940, with the most significant decrease occurring from 1980 to 1990. The Farm Crisis of the 1980s negatively impacted Iowa’s population, especially the rural areas. Figure 7 shows the percent change of Pocahontas County’s population for each decade between 1920 and 2020.

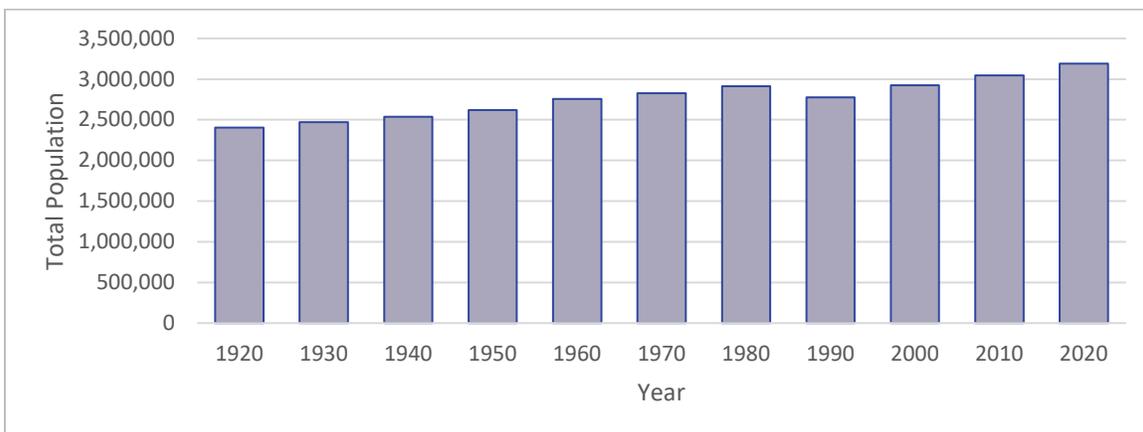
**Figure 7: Population of Pocahontas County 1920-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020)

As displayed in Figure 8, the State of Iowa’s population change is quite different from Pocahontas County, as the State reached its peak population in 2020. The State of Iowa has only lost population once since 1930, during the 1980s farm crisis. The population decrease in Pocahontas County is a common trend occurring throughout many rural areas in Iowa. Younger populations are migrating towards larger, metropolitan areas such as Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, and their surrounding suburban neighborhoods.

**Figure 8: Population of Iowa 1920-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020)

Future population trends are projected to keep heading in the same direction. Table 4 shows the State of Iowa continuing to increase in population, while Pocahontas County continues to decrease in population. It is important to note that these projections are based on past trends. The projected population numbers are assuming economic and demographic factors will remain constant. If there’s a large enough shift in economic and/or demographic factors, the projections may change significantly.

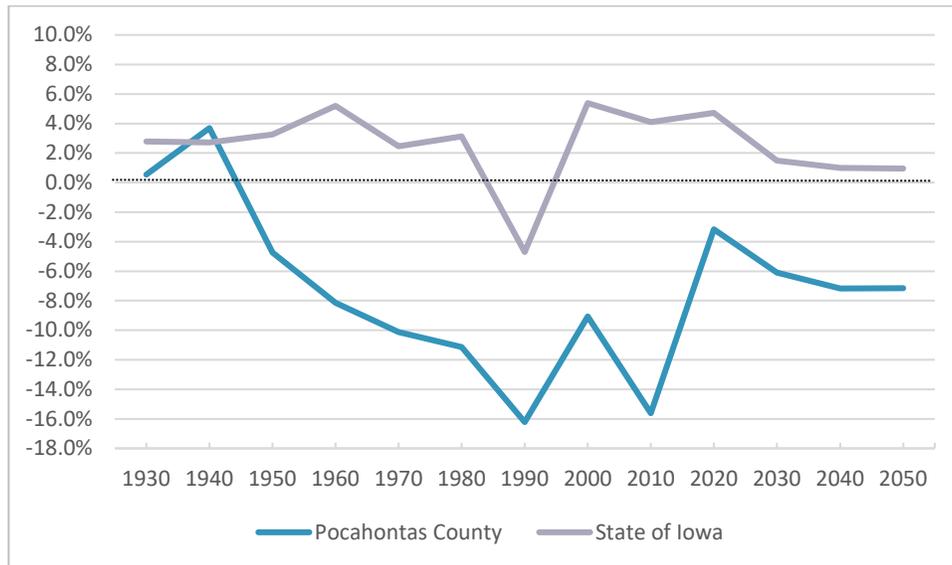
**Table 4: Projected Population**

	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
<b>State of Iowa</b>	3,283,817	3,325,020	3,357,879	3,387,257	3,419,169
<b>Pocahontas County</b>	6,646	6,404	6,170	5,945	5,729

Source: Woods & Poole (2023)

Since 1940, Wright County has experienced an average population decline of 3.8% per decade. Between 1960 and 1970, the county had an 11.1% drop in population, with a substantial 12.6% decrease during the farm crisis.

**Figure 9: Population Change by Decade**

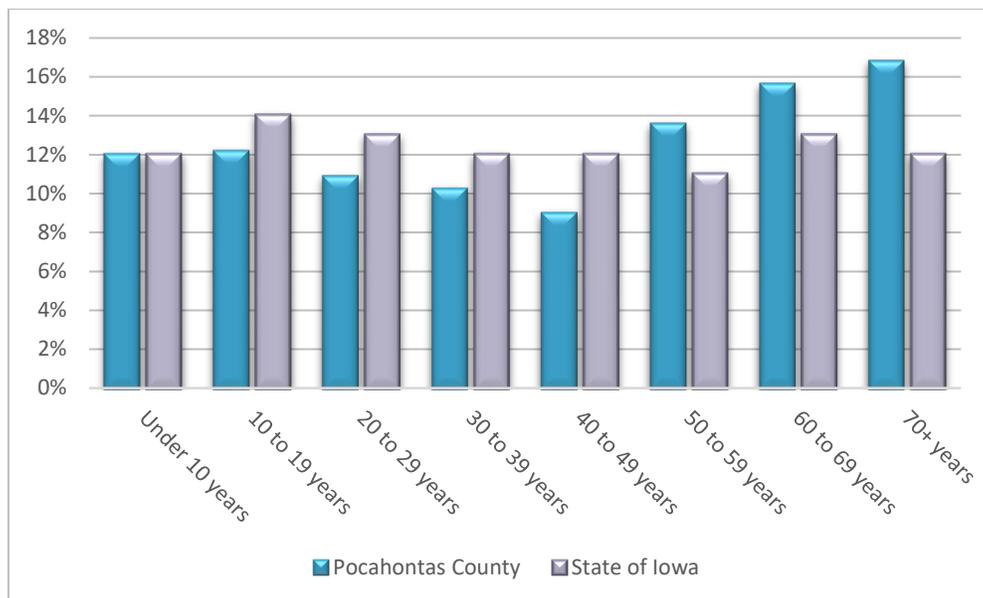


Source: Woods & Poole (2023)

Like many counties in Iowa that are primarily rural, Pocahontas County’s population distribution does not resemble the ideal population percentage regarding age groups. The largest age cohort in Pocahontas County is the 60- to 69-year-old group with 15.6% of the population, followed closely by the 50- to 59-year-old cohort with 13.5% of the population. Additionally, the 10- to 19-year-old age cohort has a notable percentage of the population with 12.1%.

Many rural counties, including Pocahontas County, face challenges in retaining their young adult population (ages 20-29) when compared to the rest of the population. Pocahontas County’s age distribution differs from the State of Iowa by nearly 2% across most age groups. Specifically, Pocahontas County has a lower proportion of residents aged 0 to 49 years, with the most significant gap occurring in the 40-49 age group, which is 3% lower than the state average. Conversely, the county has a higher proportion of residents in the older age groups. Pocahontas has a 2% greater population in both the 50-59 and 60-69 cohorts, with a substantial deviation in the 70+ age group, which is 4.7% higher in the county than in the state. With a significantly older population compared to the state average, Pocahontas County will need to plan for the needs of its aging community. Providing the right senior care services will be key to supporting residents and helping them maintain a good quality of life.

**Figure 10: Percentage of Population by Age Range**



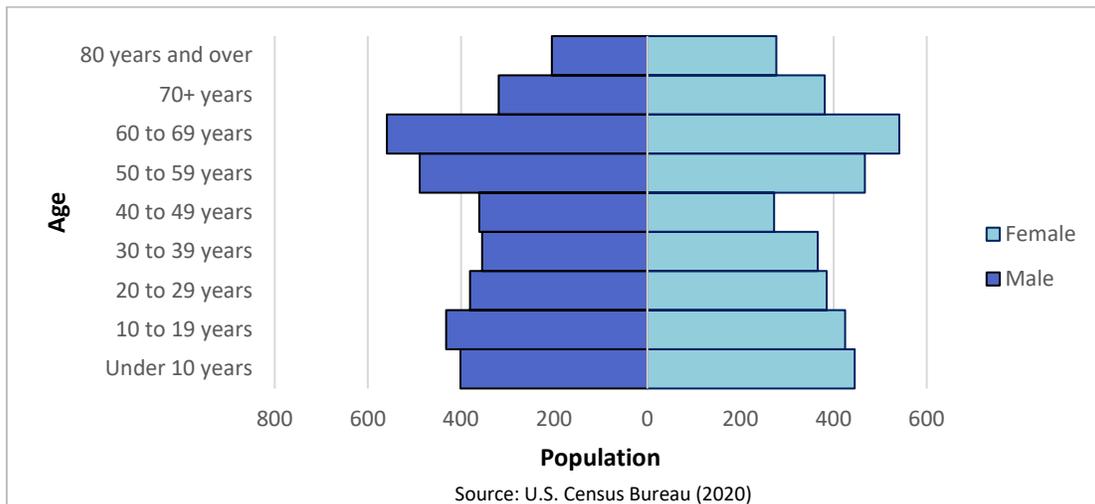
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020)

The dependency ratio is another tool to use when describing the population makeup of an area. The dependency ratio describes the ratio of the dependent-age population (under 18 or over 65) to the working-age population (18-64). The higher the ratio, the more burden there will be on the working population to support the dependent population. Pocahontas County’s dependency ratio increased from 79.5 in 2010 to 80.3 in 2020. Iowa’s ratio increased from 63 in 2010 to 70 in 2020 while the United States increased from 59 to 64 within the same decade.

Figure 11 on the following page shows the distribution of age by sex in Pocahontas County as of 2020. The male-to-female ratio of the county is relatively equal with about 49.6% or 3,502 males and 50.4% or 3,559 females.

The 60- to 69-year-old male age group is the largest group at 16% of the male population followed closely by the 50- to 59-year-old age group at 14% of the male population in the county. The largest female population of the county is 60- to 69-year-olds, at 15%. There are two age groups that make up approximately 13% of the female population in Pocahontas County each: 50- to 59-year-olds, and under 10 years old. These age groups are followed closely by the 10- to 19-year-olds at 12% of the female population. Finding a way to motivate the younger population to stay in Pocahontas County will be key to its long-term success and sustainability.

**Figure 11: Pocahontas County Age Cohorts by Sex**



Pocahontas County is also seeing a trend of younger residents moving away, which is reflected in the median age of its population. The median age of residents in Pocahontas County is 45.3, which is higher than both the State of Iowa (38.3) and the national average (37.2) according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020). To prevent the age distribution from becoming even more skewed, it will be crucial for the county to offer the lifestyle options that younger generations seek.

**Table 5: Median Age by Sex**

Sex	2010			2020		
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
United States	37.2	35.8	38.5	38.8	37.5	39.9
Iowa	38.1	36.6	39.5	38.6	37.6	39.8
Pocahontas Co	47.6	46.5	48.6	45.3	44.3	47.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020)

As displayed in Table 6, approximately 91.3% of Pocahontas County’s population is white alone. The County also has a number of African Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians

and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders. Of the total population, 214 persons are 2+ races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Over the past 20 years, Iowa and Pocahontas County have become more diverse. In 2000, only 6.1% of the population in Iowa and 2% of the population in Pocahontas County identified themselves as a race other than White alone. By 2020, these percentages increased to 15.5% and 8.7%, respectively.

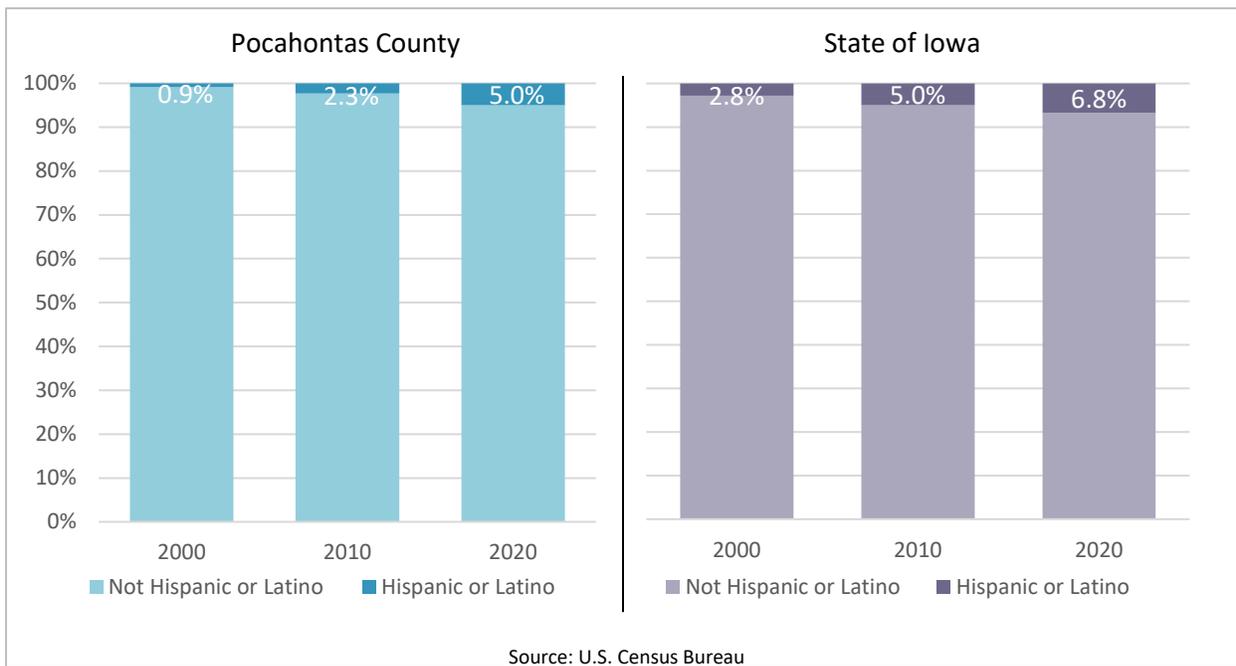
**Table 6: Race, 2020**

Population Makeup by Race	Pocahontas Co	Iowa
Population of 1 Race	95.8%	94.4%
White	91.3%	84.5%
Black or African American Alone	0.9%	4.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	0.5%
Asian	0.4%	2.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.2%
Some Other Race	2.6%	2.8%
Population of 2(+) Races	4.2%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020)

The percentage of the population identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino is also increasing. In 2000, only 2.8% of Iowan residents identified as Hispanic or Latino, increasing to 6.8% by 2020. Pocahontas County has seen a significant growth in its Hispanic or Latino population, with an increase from 0.9% in 2000 to 5% in 2020.

**Figure 12: Hispanic or Latino Population**



## Chapter 5: Planning Elements

The subsequent portion of the plan focuses on existing conditions, goals, objectives, and implementation strategies of the following elements: **economic development, agriculture, housing, transportation, public services and infrastructure, recreation and conservation and land use.**

The existing conditions provide a basis for future expectations of the County with regards to growth, housing needs, employment, land use needs and other important components of the comprehensive plan.

The goals and objectives target the County’s desired physical, social, and economic environment. The goals set the tone for the development decisions in terms of the citizens’ desired quality of life, while the objectives are the stepping-stones to achieving each goal.

### Agriculture

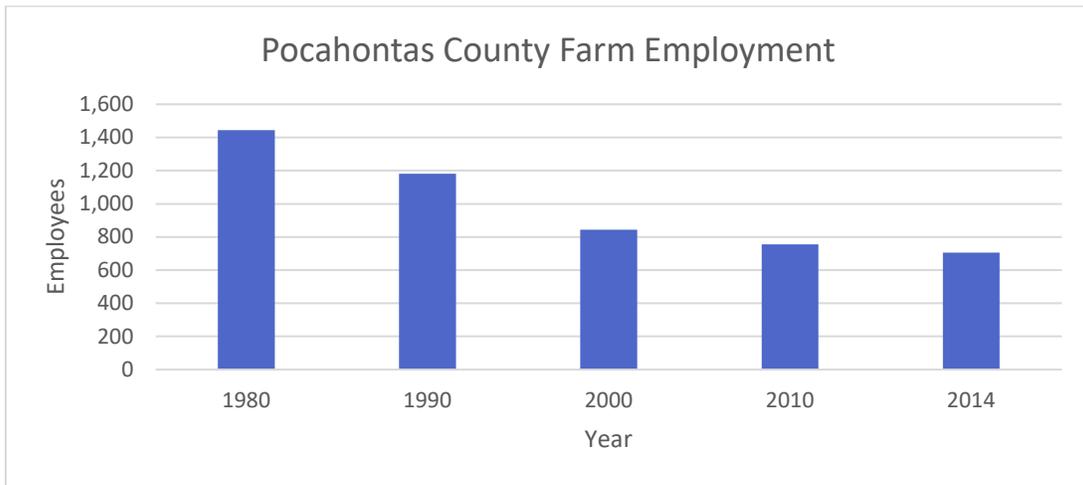
#### *Existing Conditions*

##### **Agricultural Economy**

Agriculture plays a vital role in the economy of Pocahontas County, contributing jobs, income, and a source of locally produced goods. Figure 13 presents annual farm employment data for both full-time and part-time workers in the county. 28% of farms in the county hire labor, indicating that more than one in four operations depend on employment outside of the immediate farm family. Since the Farm Crisis of the 1980s, farm employment in the county has continued to decrease. Between 2010 and 2014 alone, the county saw a net loss of 51 farm jobs (Iowa State University, 2014), which results in a 6.75% employment reduction.

The farm employment decline within the county follows national trends. Farm employment has fallen due to a myriad of reasons, including mechanization, increased regulation, rising supply costs, and demographic changes as people continue to migrate from rural areas to urban centers. Younger generations are increasingly pursuing careers outside of agriculture, contributing to an aging farm workforce population nationwide (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2025). Only 10.3% of Pocahontas County’s farmers are 35 years of age or younger, according to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture. As the share of farmers over the age of 65 grows, the generational imbalance continues to raise concerns regarding farm succession and the future viability of local, smaller family-owned agricultural operations.

**Figure 13: Pocahontas County Farm Employment – 1980-2014**



Source: Iowa State University (2014)

Pocahontas County’s agricultural economy is primarily driven by two sectors: cropland and livestock production. According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, crop sales account for 54% of the county’s total farm sales, while livestock, poultry, and other animal products make up the remaining 46%. Corn for grain and soybeans dominate crop production, together representing 99.1% of the total crop acreage in the county (USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022). The strong emphasis on row crop production reflects the county’s suitability of large-scale farming due to its favorable topography and highly productive soils.

In 2022, nearly all crop sales in Pocahontas County, approximately 99.9%, came from the “Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas” crop category; out of 2,917 counties in the United States producing this category of crop, Pocahontas County ranks number 102. Within the livestock sector, hogs and pigs generated the largest share of sales within the county, accounting for 69% of the total, while poultry and eggs made up 11.6% of livestock sales. In terms of numerical inventory, hogs and pigs represented 56.8% of the county’s total livestock inventory (United States Department of Agriculture, 2022).

Pocahontas County closely resembles the state of Iowa’s patterns in farm size distribution. Pocahontas County has a similar percentage of farms that are less than 49 acres (25%) compared to the state average (29.8%) and a comparable percentage of farms that are 1,000 acres or more (11%) to the state average (8.5%).

**Table 7: Agriculture Data 1987 to 2022 – Pocahontas County**

	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
<b>Number of Farms</b>	987	919	810	730	806	742	730	802
<b>Total Farmland (acres)</b>	349,376	359,442	370,293	354,398	362,404	332,065	329,401	316,323
<b>Average Size of Farm (acres)</b>	354	391	457	485	450	448	451	394

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture (1987 to 2022)

As shown in Table 7, the average farm size in Pocahontas County increased from 1987 to 2002, driven by a significant decrease in the number of farms during a period of consolidation. This trend reversed between 2002 and 2017, when the number of farms rose and the average farm size declined by 28 acres, followed by a further 13% reduction in average acreage between 2017 and 2022. By 2022, average farm size had returned to levels similar to those in 1992. Despite these fluctuations in acreage, agriculture in the county remains predominantly local and family-based, with 93% of farms classified as family farms in 2022.

**Agricultural Land Values**

Land use decisions are heavily based on protecting prime farmland, which is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as having an adequate supply of moisture, favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable levels of acidity, few or no rocks, permeability to water and air, is not excessively erodible or saturated with water, is not frequently flooded and has a slope that ranges between 0 to 6 percent (Dideriksen, 1992).

Table 8 shows the value of Farmland in Pocahontas County in 2023 to be \$14,181 per acre, which is an increase of \$5,332 from 2020.

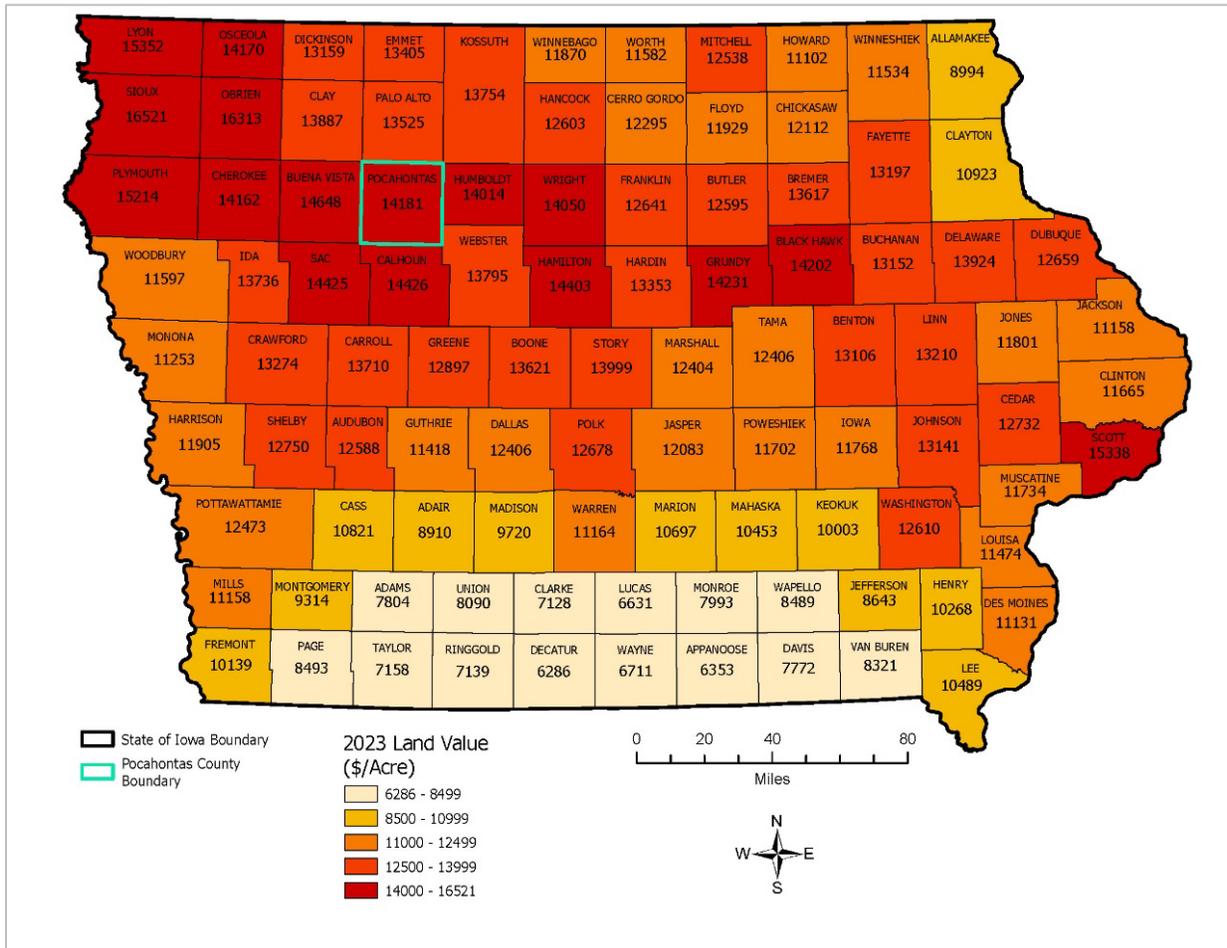
**Table 8: Pocahontas County Average Farmland Value – 1980-2024**

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Land Value</b>	\$2,891	\$1,644	\$2,329	\$6,345	\$8,849	\$11,686	\$13,961	\$14,181	\$13,367

Source: Iowa State University (2024)

The map displayed in Figure 14 depicts average land values across the State of Iowa as of November 2023. That year, Pocahontas County ranked 12th in the state for nominal land value, demonstrating its amongst some of the richest, prime agricultural soils across the nation. North-central to northwest Iowa, on average, offers the highest land values found across the state.

Figure 14: Average Farmland Value (\$/Acre) – 2023



Source: Iowa State University (2023)

### Corn Suitability Rating

The Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) is an index used to assess various soil types based on their potential for row-crop productivity. It considers factors such as soil profile characteristics, slope, and weather conditions. A higher CSR indicates greater potential for crop production.

In 2013, Iowa State University introduced an updated system known as CSR2 (Corn Suitability Rating 2). This revised method offers a more uniform and transparent approach to evaluating soil productivity. Unlike the original CSR, CSR2 does not factor in weather conditions, which has led to higher ratings in some Iowa counties, particularly in north-central and western Iowa. For example, Pocahontas County’s CSR2 weighted mean is 81.2, a notable increase from its original CSR score of 74. CSR2 weighted mean values across the state are illustrated in Figure 15.

Figure 15: State of Iowa CSR2 Weighted Means by County

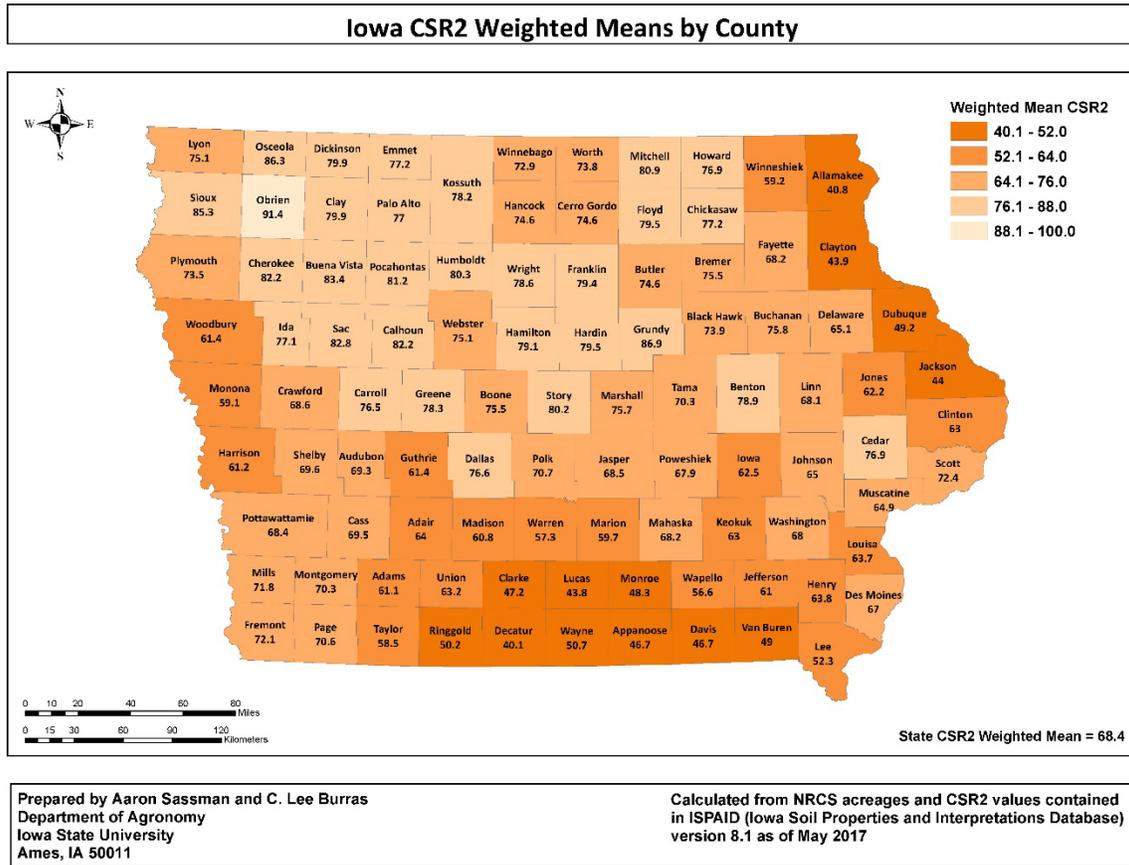
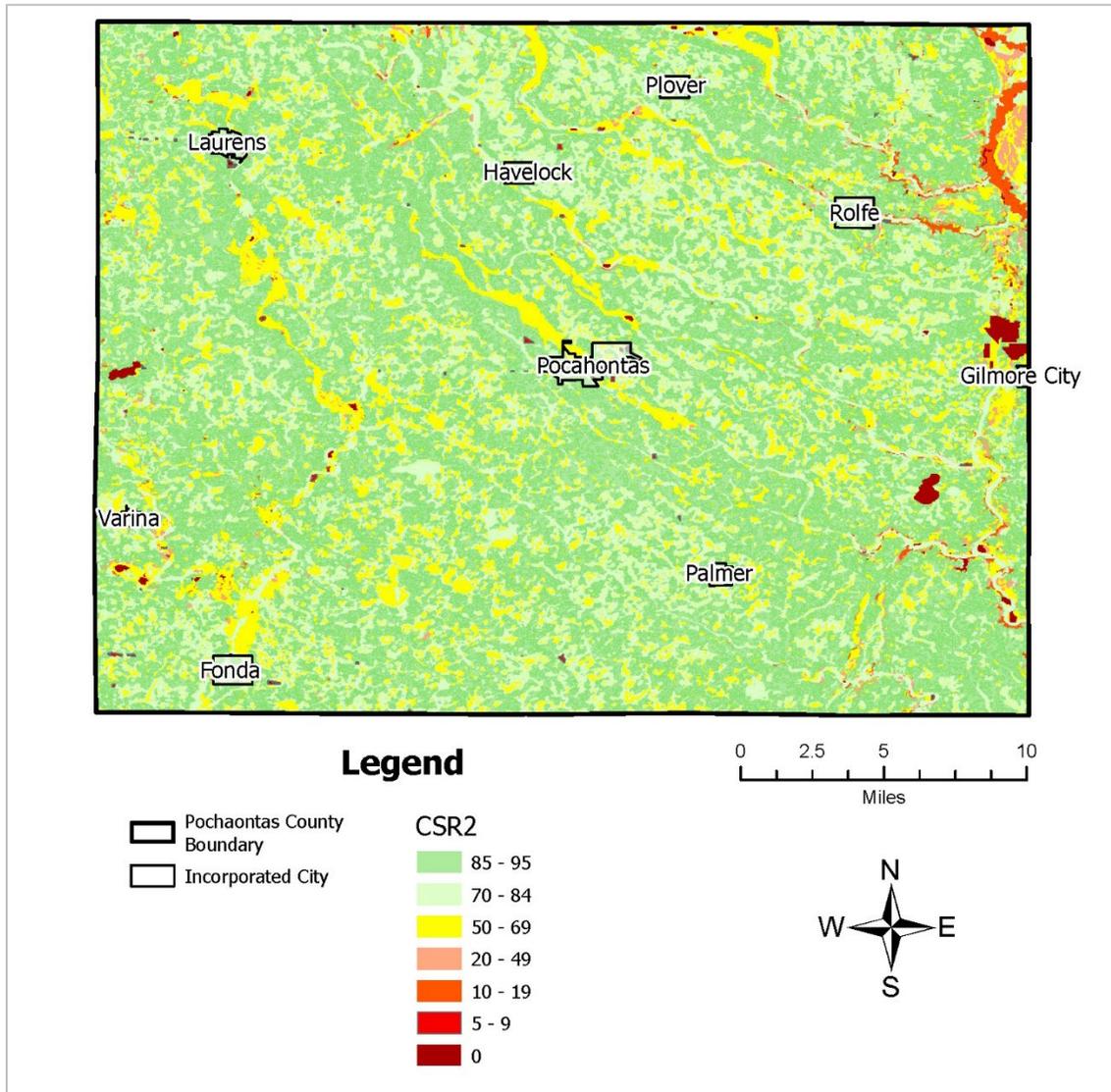


Figure 16 shows localized patterns in CSR2 values within Pocahontas County. Productivity is generally highest in the central and upland areas, where well-drained soils, moderate slopes, and stable moisture conditions create ideal conditions for row-crop farming. Conversely, CSR2 values drop noticeably along natural drainageways and flood-prone areas. These lower ratings are typically associated with factors such as poor drainage, elevated water tables, or frequent soil saturation, all of which limit row-crop viability by negatively impacting the planting process, crop yields, and limiting the types of crops that can be grown. The variation in CSR2 values within Pocahontas County exhibits how, even within a county known for its strong agricultural base, land use potential can shift significantly over short distances due to underlying soil and landscape characteristics.

Figure 16: Pocahontas County CSR2 Rating



Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey

## Goals and Implementation Actions (Agriculture)

### Goal 1: Preserve and protect agricultural land with emphasis on prime agricultural areas.

**Objective A.1.1 Discourage conversion of designated prime agricultural land and soils to non-agricultural uses by targeting less productive agricultural soils (crops) for urban or non-farm uses.**

#### Implementation Strategies

- A.1.1.1 Discourage fragmentation of prime agricultural land to protect the continuity of prime farmland areas for future use.
- A.1.1.2 Support efforts to diversify agricultural markets.
- A.1.1.3 Adopt and enforce regulations for residential and commercial properties that may impact agricultural and conservation land.

### Economic Development

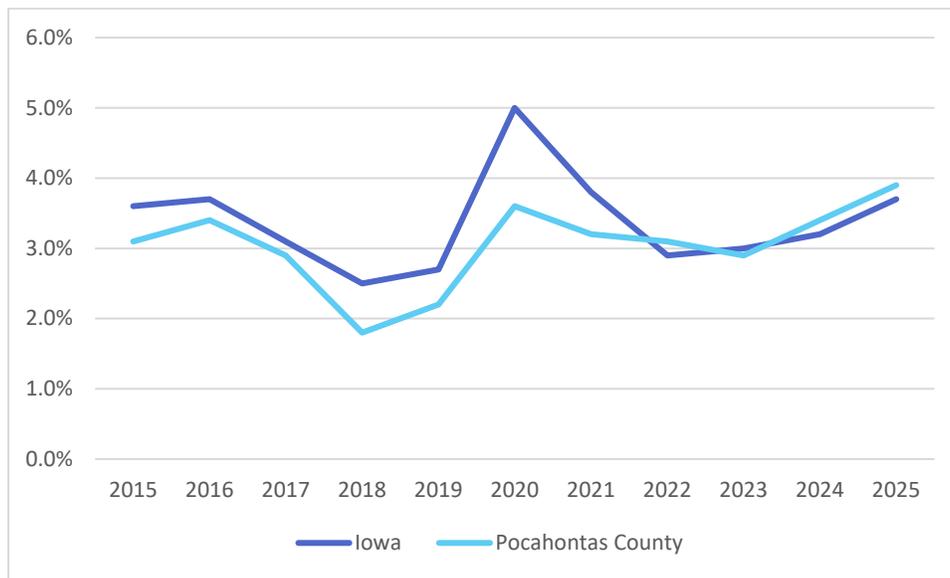
Economic development is a long-term planning element aimed at sustaining or growing the population and ensuring a good quality of life through employment, industry, and local goods and services. Many rural areas in Iowa have faced significant challenges to their local economies caused by changes in mobility, retail development patterns, and other shifts in commerce. Now more than ever, rural communities need to leverage their distinctive assets to build a strong foundation for economic development.

#### Existing Conditions

#### Employment Trends

The unemployment rate is often used as an indicator of the health of the local economy. As shown in Figure 17, there has been a slow decrease in unemployment within Pocahontas County since 2012, with an exception in 2020, in which the unemployment rate skyrocketed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The unemployment rate has remained at 2.6% from 2022-2023, suggesting that the economy has reached or surpassed full employment.

**Figure 17: Unemployment Rates for Pocahontas County and Iowa, 2015-2025**



Source: Iowa Workforce Development (2025)

**Table 9: Pocahontas County & State of Iowa Unemployment Rate by Year**

Unemployment Rates (%)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State of Iowa	3.6%	3.7%	3.1%	2.5%	2.7%	5.0%	3.8%	2.9%	3.0%	3.2%	3.7%
Pocahontas County	3.1%	3.4%	2.9%	1.8%	2.2%	3.6%	3.2%	3.1%	2.9%	3.4%	3.9%

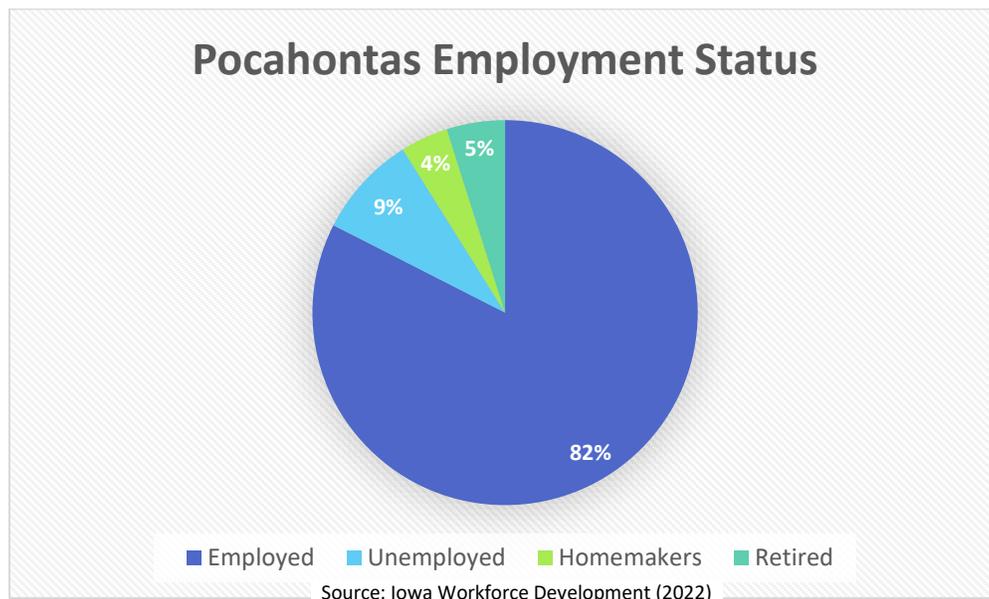
Source: Iowa Workforce Development (2025)

The county’s current unemployment rate of 2.3% is lower than both the state average of 3.0% and the national rate of 3.4%, indicating a strong local job market and solid economic standing.

### Employment Sectors

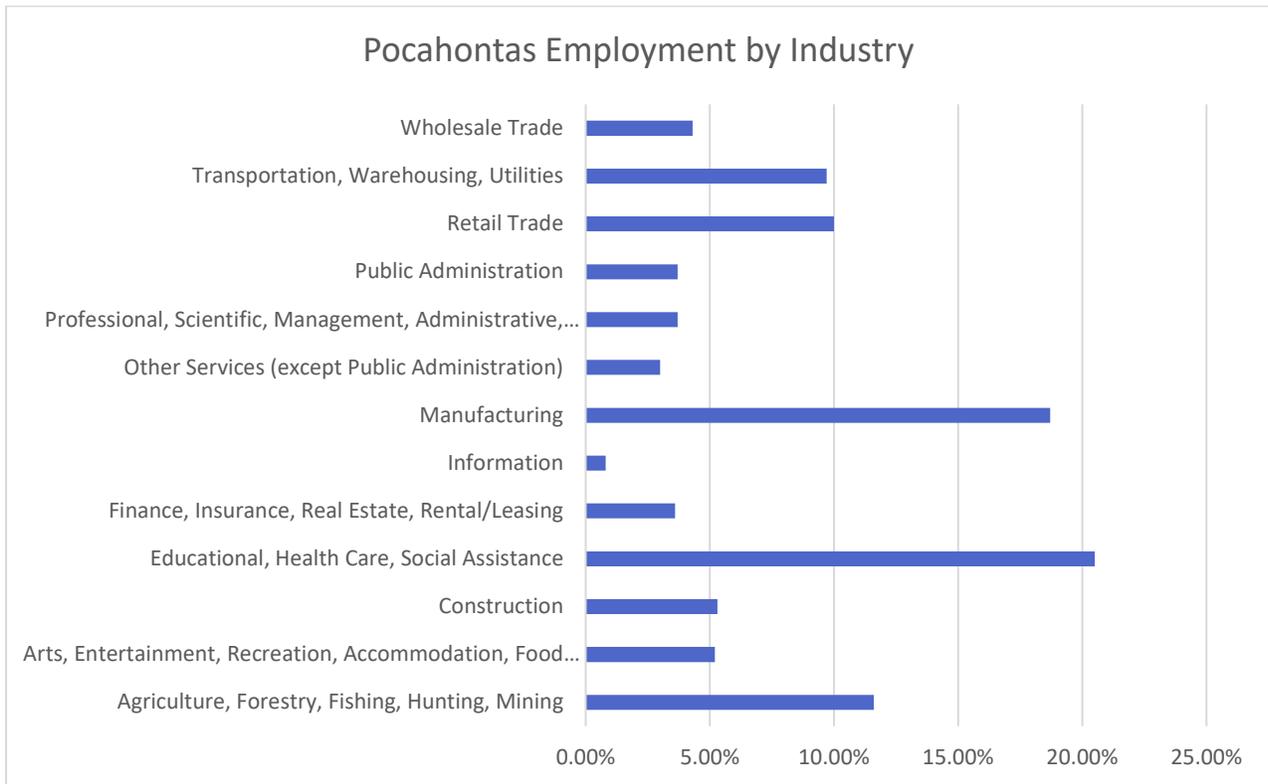
According to the 2022 Pocahontas Laborshed Analysis, approximately 82.5% of respondents were employed and participating in Pocahontas’s civilian labor force. Figure 18 displays the Employment Status of those persons who responded to the Iowa Workforce Development Laborshed survey.

**Figure 18: Employment Status – Pocahontas – 2022**



The majority of respondents worked in manufacturing, agriculture, and health care, which are all locally established employers. The employment by industry within the county is shown in Figure 19. According to Pocahontas County Economic Development Commission, some of Pocahontas County’s largest employers include Pro Cooperative, Brand FX, Jack Links, Fisher Hydraulics, Wells Ag Supply, Bobalee, Positech, and Dutchland Dairy.

**Figure 19: Employment by Industry – Pocahontas County – 2022**



Source: ACS 5-year estimates survey DP03 (2022)

Table 10 presents Census data comparing employment changes in Pocahontas County between 2010 and 2020. The most significant change occurred in the Agriculture sector, which lost 194 employees, a 33.62% decline. Agriculture has historically been a cornerstone of Pocahontas County’s economy. A reduction of one-third of farm-related employment would not only affect farm operations, but also the economy and social fabric of local communities. The Information sector also experienced a notable decline, decreasing 54.39% from 2010 with a loss of 31 employees. This may be due to the shift from traditional media and publishing industries in rural areas.

Conversely, the “Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities” industry saw the largest growth, adding 44 new jobs. The addition of transportation jobs provides new employment opportunities and may strengthen local economies by improving local supply chains and market access. Despite this gain, total employment in the county decreased by 484 jobs, or 12.74%, from 2010 to 2020. If these employment trends continue, the county could face reduced consumer spending, out-migration, and increased strain on public services and resources.

**Table 10: Employment Trends by Industry – Pocahontas County – 2010-2020**

Industry	2010	2020	%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	577	383	-33.62%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Service	146	172	17.81%
Construction	165	177	7.27%
Educational, Health Care, Social Assistance	833	679	-18.49%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental/Leasing	107	118	10.28%
Information	57	26	-54.39%
Manufacturing	671	621	-7.45%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	154	100	-35.06%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	118	123	4.24%
Public Administration	146	124	-15.07%
Retail Trade	370	330	-10.81%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	277	321	15.88%
Wholesale Trade	179	142	-20.67%
<b>Total Civilian Employed Population (16 years and older)</b>	<b>3,800</b>	<b>3,316</b>	<b>-12.74%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010 and 2020)

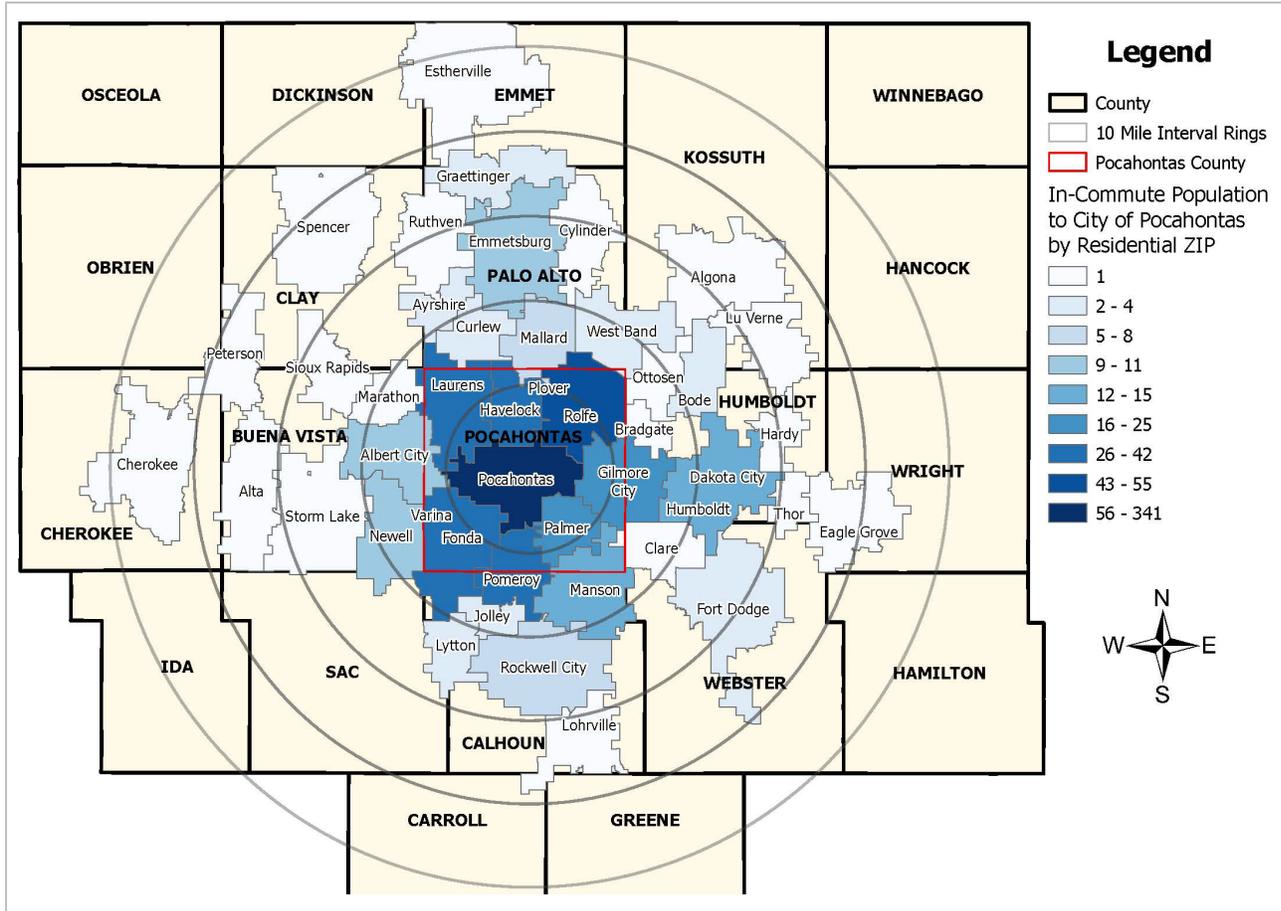
These trends indicate that there has been a decrease in the number of employment opportunities in Pocahontas County and that additional tools may need to be implemented to stimulate growth within specific industries.

### Commuting Patterns

According to the 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates of those commuting to work, approximately 79.6% drove alone, 10.3% carpooled, 0.1% used public transportation, 2.3% walked, 0.6% used other means and 7.1% worked from home. The average travel time to work was 17.8 minutes.

Figure 20 displays commuting patterns within Pocahontas County. The map represents commuting patterns into the City of Pocahontas by concentration of commuters per zip code. A majority of people who commute into Pocahontas reside in the Pocahontas, Rolfe, Pomeroy, Fonda, Varina, Laurens, and Havelock areas. A smaller number of commuters come from other places within the surrounding counties of Clay, Palo Alto, Kossuth, Humboldt, Webster, Calhoun, and Buena Vista.

Figure 20: Commuter Patterns for the City of Pocahontas



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Commuter Concentration Map (2022)

According to Iowa Workforce Development, employed individuals in the Pocahontas Laborshed area who are “likely to change jobs” are currently traveling an average of 15 miles one way but are willing to commute up to 29 miles for new employment opportunities (Iowa Workforce Development, 2022).

The out-commute of a community represents the percentage of residents living within the node community (in this case, the City of Pocahontas ZIP) but work for employers located in other communities. The out-commute for Pocahontas is estimated at 35.5%, meaning approximately 888 Pocahontas residents travel to other communities for employment. Most residents who out-commute work in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

**Pocahontas County Economic Development Commission**

The goal of Pocahontas County Economic Development Commission (PCEDC) is to “increase economic opportunity through business formation, job creation and appropriate business and community development strategies for the citizens of Pocahontas County.” PCEDC is a resource for existing businesses, aims to attract new businesses, assists with commercial and value-added agriculture projects, and is proactive in community growth and sustainability. Funding for PCEDC comes from the

private and public sectors. It is governed by a Board of Directors composed of two representatives from the Board of Supervisors, individuals from various towns, and two members from the private sector.

## Goals and Implementation Actions (Economic Development)

### Goal 1: Promote small business and locally-owned business to include ag-related business

**Objective E.1.1 Retain existing businesses and attract new businesses by utilizing financial incentives and development resources.**

#### Implementation Strategies

E.1.1.1 Use resources such as TIF, Tax Abatement, low interest revolving loan funds, state/federal funds, new market tax credits, and others to encourage commercial/industrial development.

**Objective E1.2 Encourage and promote the development of home-based businesses and telecommuting based upon a commitment to providing a high level of technology and communication infrastructure.**

#### Implementation Strategies

E.1.2.1 Support broadband/satellite development throughout the County.

E.1.2.2 Encourage business diversity and entrepreneurship to attract a creative workforce and enhance unconventional economic development.

### Goal 2: Provide adequate public services and facilities to existing businesses

**Objective E2.1 Coordinate with area communities to implement a joint economic development strategy that supports existing businesses, promotes new businesses in coming to the area, and develops new attractions and amenities for the public at a local and regional level.**

#### Implementation Strategies

E.2.1.1 Participate in planning efforts of local communities to help coordinate economic development opportunities to help attract a strong workforce.

E.2.1.2 Promote economic development efforts online and seek input from local communities to open opportunities for partnerships.

E.2.1.3 Implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to provide the County with a locally-based planning process focused on economic growth.

## Housing

The housing element of the plan supports quality of life in Pocahontas County by addressing the availability, condition, and affordability of places to live. Housing plays a central role in how communities grow, adapt, and meet the needs of current and future residents. People often choose where to live based not only on employment or family ties, but also on the type and quality of housing available. This section examines existing housing diversity and conditions, identifies trends and

challenges, and outlines opportunities to strengthen housing options across the County. Where possible, comparisons between the 2010 and 2020 Census are used to show changes over time.

According to survey responses (Appendix C), most residents are satisfied with their current housing and do not plan to move within the next two years. Many respondents would choose to live in the unincorporated area of the County for the perceived higher quality of life and the privacy of not having nearby neighbors. It is important for the County to maintain available, affordable housing in the unincorporated area to draw people who prefer rural living.

**Existing Conditions**

**Total and Vacant Housing Units**

Table 11 displays the number of occupied and vacant housing units in Pocahontas County and the State of Iowa, based on the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of housing units in Pocahontas County decreased by 3.4% while the state experienced an increase of 5.7%. This could indicate that the county is removing older, dilapidated housing stock, combined with limited new construction.

The number of vacant units increased in both the County and the State from 2010 to 2020. In the incorporated areas of the county, the vacancy rate rose from 15.3% to 16.3%; in unincorporated areas, it increased from 13.7% to 14.5%. Statewide, the vacancy rate increased by a smaller margin, from 8.6% to 8.8%. These trends may be linked to the broader population shifts, including continued migration from rural areas to metropolitan centers. As a result, rural housing demand has declined, contributing to higher vacancy rates and reduced development activity in rural counties like Pocahontas.

**Table 11: Occupancy Status**

OCCUPANCY STATUS	2010			2020		
	Pocahontas County	Unincorporated Area of Pocahontas County	Iowa	Pocahontas County	Unincorporated Area of Pocahontas County	Iowa
Total housing units	2,532 (100.0%)	1,262 (100.0%)	1,336,417 (100.0%)	2,486 (100.0%)	1,180 (100.0%)	1,412,789 (100.0%)
Occupied housing units	2,144 (84.7%)	1,089 (86.3%)	1,221,576 (91.4%)	2,081 (83.7%)	1,009 (85.5%)	1,288,560 (91.2%)
Vacant housing units	388 (15.3%)	173 (13.7%)	114,841 (8.6%)	405 (16.3%)	171 (14.5%)	124,229 (8.8%)

Source: U.S. Census (2010 & 2020)

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of renter-occupied housing units increased by 3.3% in the incorporated area and decreased by 1.4% in the unincorporated area. Owner-occupied units continue to make up the majority of housing, accounting for 75.3% of occupied units in incorporated areas and 84.5% in unincorporated areas. Higher owner-occupancy in rural areas is typical, as housing in unincorporated parts of the county often consists of single-family homes on larger lots, which are less likely to be used as rental properties.

**Table 12: Tenure**

TENURE	2010			2020		
	Pocahontas County	Unincorporated Area of Pocahontas County	Iowa	Pocahontas County	Unincorporated Area of Pocahontas County	Iowa
Occupied housing units	2,144 (100.0%)	1,089 (100.0%)	1,221,576 (100.0%)	2,081 (100.0%)	1,009 (100.0%)	1,288,560 (100.0%)
Owner-occupied housing units	1,685 (78.6%)	905 (83.1%)	880,635 (72.1%)	1,568 (75.3%)	853 (84.5%)	906,797 (70.4%)
Renter-occupied housing units	459 (21.4%)	184 (16.9%)	340,941 (27.9%)	513 (24.7%)	156 (15.5%)	381,763 (29.6%)

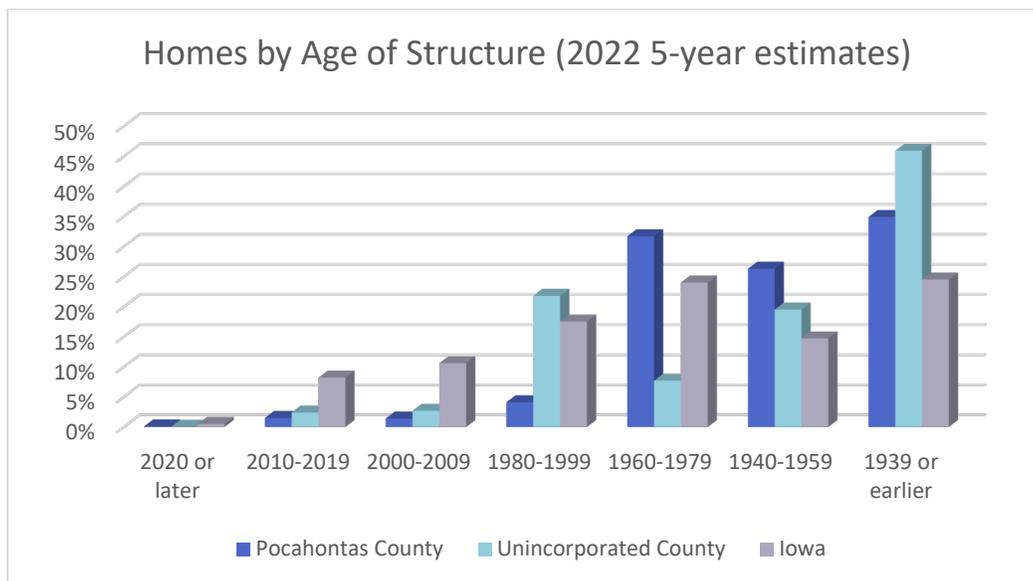
Source: U.S. Census (2010 & 2020)

### Age of Housing Structures

Figure 21 compares the age of housing units in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Pocahontas County and the State of Iowa based on 2022 ACS 5-year estimates. 45.9% of housing units in the unincorporated area were built before 1939, indicating an older housing stock. The high share of older housing indicates a need for ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation to retain the stock that exists.

Between 2010 and 2019, an estimated 32 housing units were built in the unincorporated area (2.4% of the unincorporated housing stock), and 34 units (1.5%) in the incorporated area. This is far below the recent development throughout the State of Iowa, which added around 116,529 units (8.2%) during the same period. Housing development in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of Pocahontas County has declined since 1980, imitating the county’s slow population decline following the Farm Crisis.

**Figure 21: Age of Structures – Unincorporated and Incorporated Area of Pocahontas County**



Source: U.S. Census (2022 ACS)

## Home Values

Table 13 shows that the median value of owner-occupied housing units in every incorporated city within Pocahontas County, as well as the county overall, is lower than the median for the State of Iowa. In fact, Pocahontas County’s median housing value is significantly below the state average. About 69% of housing units in the County are valued under \$100,000, compared to nearly 54% of Iowa’s housing units that fall between \$100,000 and \$299,000. Although housing values are generally lower within the county, affordability varies based on local economic factors.

**Table 13: Housing Value**

Median Housing Value – 2022	
Fonda	\$58,300
Havelock	\$22,800
Laurens	\$73,100
Palmer	\$31,100
Plover	\$41,400
Pocahontas	\$94,800
Rolfe	\$51,300
Varina	\$43,300
Pocahontas County	\$90,400
Iowa	\$181,600

Source: ACS 5 Year Estimates (2022)

Pocahontas County’s housing trends reflect those seen in many rural Iowa communities, with a notable supply of vacant housing that remains relatively affordable within the broader market. However, new housing development is limited, resulting in a stable but slow-changing market.

## Goals and Implementation Actions (Housing)

### Goal 1: Encourage new and maintain existing housing in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County

**Objective H.1.1 Plan for a range of housing that meets the needs of residents of various income levels, age groups, abilities, and health conditions.**

#### Implementation Strategies

H.1.1.1 Promote housing needs assessment and housing implementation plans in the county to support the development of new housing opportunities.

H.1.1.2 Explore federal and state grant opportunities to diversify housing options.

**Objective H.1.2 Support programs that maintain or rehabilitate the local housing stock.**

#### Implementation Strategies

H.1.2.1 Identify opportunities for partnerships with local and regional rehabilitation programs to improve the quality of existing housing options

H.1.2.2 Use resources such as TIF, Tax Abatement, and programs like Homes for Iowa to encourage residential development.

## Public Services and Infrastructure

Good public services and infrastructure promote quality conditions relating to the governmental and social well-being of the residents of Pocahontas County. The focus of this section is on the services present within the County as well as physical infrastructure services that are provided to residents by the County.

### ***Existing Services***

Pocahontas County strives to provide all those services necessary to maintain the day-to-day activities of its residents and businesses, services range anywhere from County Engineering to Assessors Services, to Community Services and Public Health. Below is a list of the prominent services provided by the County. While other services are available, a majority of such fall within the following divisions:

Government Structure: The County's government takes structure through the Board of Supervisors (B.O.S.), which is the county body formed to discuss and determine decisions relating to County funds, proposed ordinances, proposed projects, and other initiatives that may require an approved agreement with the County. The B.O.S. consists of five members, each serving a term of four years. These members are elected from the five Supervisor Districts, which are redrawn following each decennial Census to reflect the County's population proportionately. The B.O.S. holds their regular weekly meetings every Tuesday.

The county government comprises several individual positions, departments, and organizations. These include both elected and appointed positions: 911 Communications Center, Assessor, Auditor, Board of Supervisors, Community Services, Conservation Board, Emergency Management, Engineer, Recorder, Sanitarian, Sheriff, Treasurer, Veterans Affairs, and Zoning. These departments consist of elected and appointed positions.

Fire Protection Services: Pocahontas County is served by several municipal fire departments. Unincorporated Pocahontas County is serviced by the nearest municipal fire department. The fire departments that serve the county include Fonda (Volunteer), Laurens (Volunteer), Pocahontas, and Plover (Volunteer) Fire Departments.

Health Care Service: The Pocahontas County Public Health Services offers several services that include the following: skilled nursing, home health aides, homemaker services, family foundations, immunizations and flu clinics, maternal/child health, communicable disease follow-up and prevention, tuberculosis monitoring & follow-up, DME loan closet, lifeline medical alert system, WIC clinics and dental screenings, emergency preparedness, health promotion, child safety seat checks, DNA testing, and environmental health services.

The Pocahontas Community Hospital is located at 606 NW 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Pocahontas. The hospital provides several services that include the following: Ambulance, cardiac rehabilitation, community

education including CPR training, Lunch and Learn, Heart Smart Program, Dietary Services, Emergency Room with Physician available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, health education, Hospice, industrial spirometry screenings and fit testing, lab testing, mental health evaluations & counseling, skilled and in-patient nursing, outreach services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, plastic surgery, pulmonary rehabilitation, radiology, respiratory service, sleep services, smoking cessation, inpatient and same day surgery, vein surgery, and wound clinic.

Law Enforcement: The Pocahontas County Sheriff and Sheriff's Deputies are the police force for residents of the unincorporated areas of the county. The Sheriff's Office handles all routine and emergency calls for these areas and regularly patrols all areas of the County. Located at 99 Court Square Pocahontas, the Sheriff's Office is shared as a joint facility with the rest of the Pocahontas County Courthouse.

Emergency Management Services: The Pocahontas County Emergency Management Agency plans for disasters, responds to disasters, organizes the recovery from disasters and mitigates situations that could cause harm during a disaster. The Emergency Management Department works with fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, hospitals, public health, public works, utilities, and many other local agencies. The Department also works with State and Federal agencies including Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (IHSEM), Federal Emergency Agency (FEMA), and the Department of Homeland Security.

### ***Existing Infrastructure***

Electricity & Natural Gas: Pocahontas County receives its electric and gas utilities from Alliant Energy, Black Hills Energy, and MidAmerican Energy.

Communication (Phone/Internet): Telecommunications and internet providers in Pocahontas County include Windstream, MediaCom, CenturyLink, and NW Communications. Mobile internet providers include AT&T Mobility, LLC ; U.S. Cellular and Verizon Wireless.

Water/Wastewater Utility: While some municipal water/wastewater utilities extend their water services outside of their city limits, it is common for the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County to use their own personal wells for water. Wells are most suitable for this area because houses are scattered throughout the rural landscape; connecting water systems throughout the County would be costly. The Cities of Fonda, Havelock, Laurens, Palmer, Pocahontas, Rolfe, and Varina all have their own water utilities.

Storm Sewer System: A storm sewer utility is not a common utility in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County, except for those areas where city storm sewer systems may have been extended outside of their incorporated limits. Most of the drainage is provided by agriculture tiling that is maintained by each appropriate Drainage District. Much of the tiling infrastructure is aging and needs to be repaired or replaced.

## Goals and Implementation Actions (Public Services & Infrastructure)

### Goal 1: Provide safe and reliable infrastructure and services throughout Pocahontas County

#### Objective P.1.1 Ensure developments contribute to the improvement of public facilities and services.

##### Implementation Strategies

P.1.1.1 Encourage development to bury electrical lines.

#### Objective P.1.2 Expand broadband in rural areas.

##### Implementation Strategies

P.1.2.1 Improve access to internet connectivity by promoting broadband infrastructure and satellite expansion.

#### Objective P.1.3 Regulate renewable energy.

##### Implementation Strategies

P.1.3.1 Update policies that regulate renewable energy infrastructure to ensure that it does not present safety hazards and to minimize disruptions to surrounding land uses.

## Recreation & Conservation

The recreation & conservation element of the plan provides the opportunity to improve the quality of life for residents of Pocahontas County through health, leisure, and entertainment along with the developing the wellbeing of the environment surrounding the residents. People value amenities available to them and often make the decision to locate somewhere based on the recreational resources available. This section of the plan will look at the existing recreational and conservation assets in the County and establish additional opportunities that are of interest to the public.

Most of the recreation and conservation areas in the County are operated and maintained by the Pocahontas County Conservation Board, established in 1959. The Board has approximately 195 acres across three major parks that provide public access for camping, fishing, hiking, and general outdoor recreation. About 276 acres of public land are managed as wildlife habitat and are open for hunting, bird watching, and nature photography. A 38-acre area acquired in 2007 is regularly used by both fishermen and hunters. The Board also manages roughly 33 miles of trails that extend across the County, with several attached spur trails (Pocahontas County Conservation, 2025).

### ***Existing Conditions***

The following displays the available recreational opportunities within the County that the Conservation Board provides along with other recreational opportunities within the County. These parks and wildlife areas are used by many of the residents in the county throughout the changing seasons. Many of the residents include hunters, fishers, photographers, walkers, bikers, paddlers, and other outdoor adventurers.

## Recreation and Conservation Responsibilities

Pocahontas County has the responsibility of maintaining and developing new opportunities for outdoor entertainment, recreation, and conservation throughout the area. The task of maintenance often comes to the minds of many of the residents when surveyed about the condition of the area. Below is a listing of the importance of services and/or facilities to residents of the County based on the surveys that were disbursed and collected in the unincorporated area of the County. For the full survey results, see Appendix C.

### RECREATION SERVICES:

- **Less Important** – Equestrian Trails, Water Trails, Motor Boating, Non-Motor Boating
- **Neutral** – Off-Road/ATV Areas, Lake/River Access, Tent Camping Areas
- **More Important** – RV (full hookup) Areas, Park Amenities, Hiking/Walking Trails, Bike Trails

### CONSERVATION SERVICES:

- **Less Important** – Wildlife Sanctuaries (non-hunting areas)
- **Neutral** – Trapshooting Range/Archery Range
- **More Important** – Fishing Areas, Hunting Areas

When asked which services they would like to see Pocahontas County spend more/less/the same amount of money on in the next 5-10 years, Emergency Services and Roads and Transportation scored the most important out of 9 items. Hard Surface Trails ranked fourth, Recreation/Parks scored fifth, and Environment/Conservation scored the lowest.

## Goals and Implementation Actions (Recreation and Conservation)

### Goal 1: Maintain and improve recreation opportunities in the county.

#### Objective R.1.1 Preserve, enhance, expand, and create new recreational opportunities.

##### Implementation Strategies

- R.1.1.1 Increase knowledge and use of cultural and historical features
- R.1.1.2 Ensure ADA compliance standards for recreational facilities to enable persons with limited mobility to access recreational and natural resource amenities
- R.1.1.3 Work with interested cities within the County and regional partners to develop and expand recreation trails and corridors that one day connect communities within and surrounding the county
- R.1.1.4 Improve amenities in parks and conservation areas

## Transportation

Transportation has a major influence on land use. The transportation element of the plan evaluates and expands upon transportation options within the County.

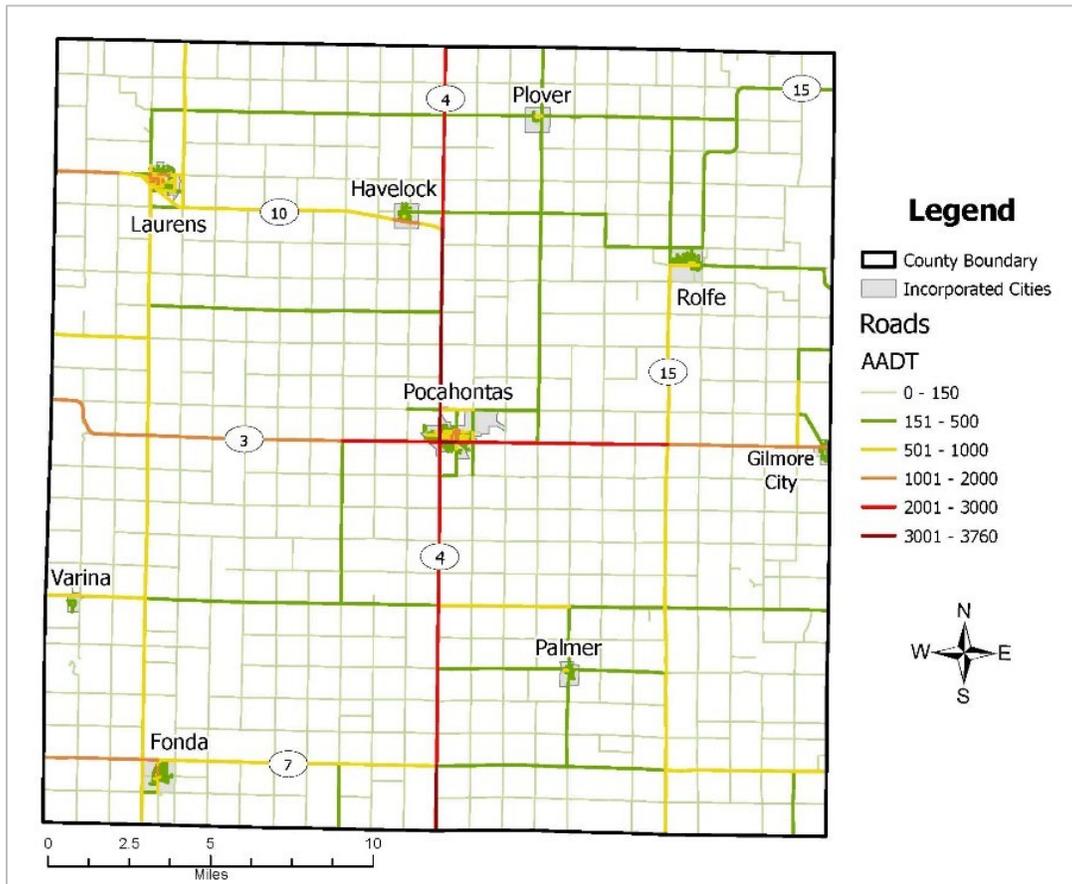
### ***Existing Conditions***

Transportation options in Pocahontas County include air, personal vehicle, public transit, walking, biking, and train. The most common mode of transportation used by the County is the motor vehicle. The

County’s State and County Roads are presented through an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) map in Figure 22. AADT is a metric used to indicate vehicle traffic load on a particular road segment.

Pocahontas County has access to Iowa Highway 4, which runs North to South through the center of the County. Iowa Highway 3 traverses the county from East to West, while Iowa 10 and 15 pass through portions of the County.

**Figure 22: Pocahontas County Transportation**



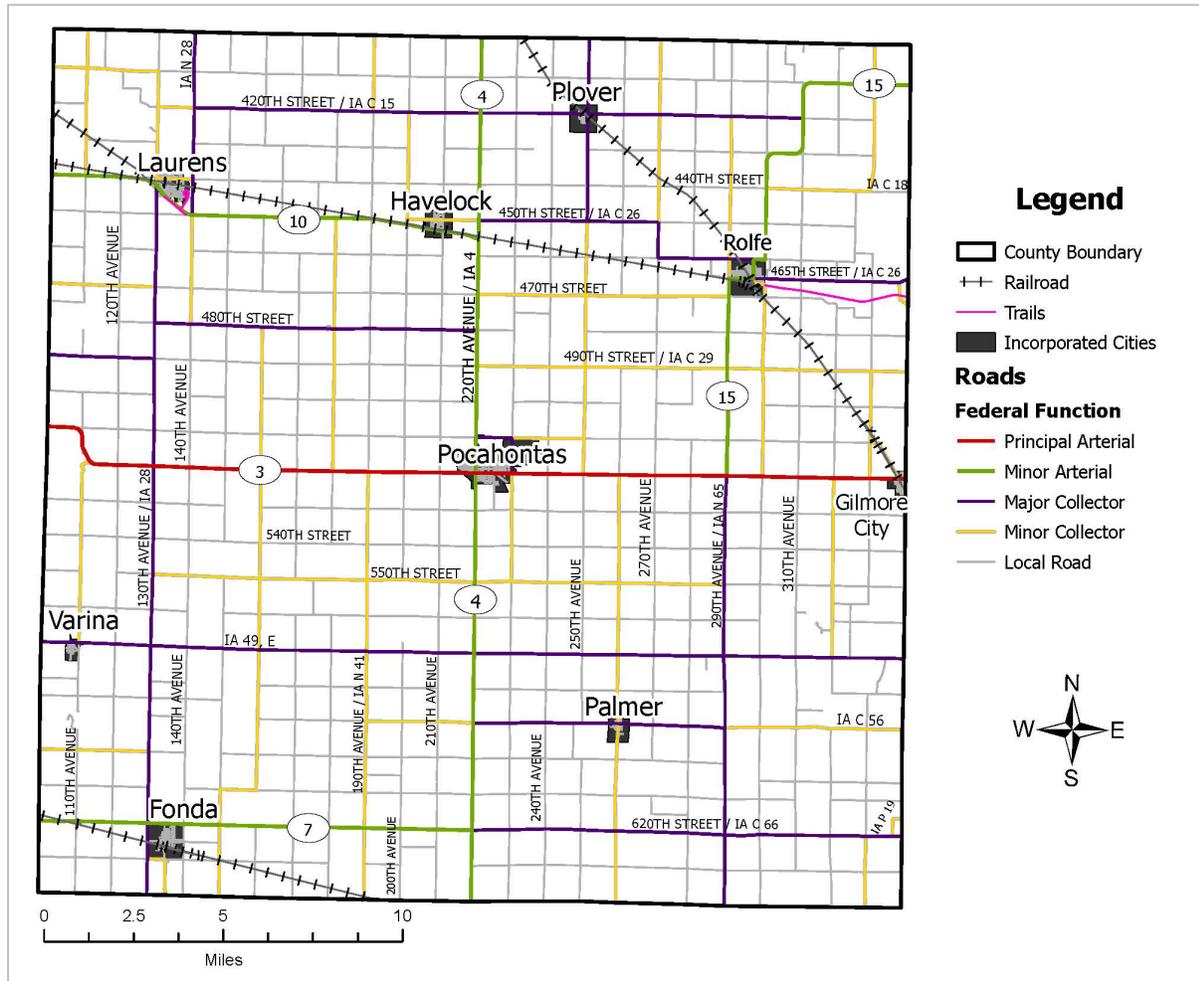
Source: IDOT AADT (2023)

Limited air service is available through the Pocahontas Municipal Airport, which is classified as a basic service airport. The nearest commercial service airport is the Fort Dodge Regional Airport located in neighboring Webster County, approximately 23 nautical miles southeast of the Pocahontas Municipal Airport.

Public transit for Pocahontas County is provided by MIDAS Council of Governments through the MIDAS Regional Transit Authority 5 (RTA 5). Service is open to the public and serves primarily as a demand-response service. Riders are encouraged to schedule a ride at least one day in advance to ensure availability. All vehicles are ADA accessible. RTA 5 operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

While residents can use their personal vehicles for local travel, walking and biking are common modes of transportation during the spring and summer months. Figure 23 details the existing railroads, roadways, and trails in the county.

**Figure 23: Pocahontas County Roads and Trails**



There are two rail lines in the county. The Canadian National Railway runs through the City of Fonda to the south, transporting chemicals, forest products, coal, agricultural goods, and petroleum products.

The Union Pacific Railroad crosses through five cities to the north (Gilmore City, Rolfe, Plover, Havelock, and Laurens), carrying Iowa’s corn, oats, and soybean crops. Union Pacific is one of the largest intermodal shippers in the country, carrying commodities such as coal, forest products, and fertilizer/chemicals (Union Pacific, 2023).

### Goals and Implementation Actions (Transportation)

**Goal 1: Develop a transportation plan that will promote the safe, efficient, and economic movement of people and goods**

Improvements to the County’s transportation infrastructure systems are one of the primary vital components to developing a sound economic base. To ensure the best use of County funds and proper movement, all roads should be regularly maintained, and future development should be located where suitable road access is available.

**Objective T.1.1 Develop and maintain the County’s transportation network at a level of service that accommodates emergency vehicles.**

Implementation Strategies

T.1.1.1 Coordinate rural addressing, road naming, and driveway siting to ensure safe and adequate emergency response services.

**Objective T.1.2 Coordinate transportation projects within the County’s municipalities, adjacent counties, MIDAS, and the Iowa Department of Transportation.**

Implementation Strategies

T.1.2.1 Support intergovernmental and land development agreements that define the responsibilities of the developers and municipalities regarding any required improvements and ongoing maintenance of roadways and funding of such improvements.

**Goal 2: Maintain and improve existing transportation infrastructure.**

Maintaining the County’s transportation system is critical to safety, reliability, and long-term cost savings. Regular repairs and strategic upgrades to roads and bridges will support efficient travel, accommodate growth, and strengthen the local economy.

**Objective T.2.1 Improve the safety and capacity of the county’s bridge infrastructure.**

Implementation Strategies

T.2.1.1 Strive for the elimination of all load rated bridges in the county.

**Objective T.2.2 Enhance multi-modal opportunities for regional travel for County residents and visitors.**

Implementation Strategies

T.2.2.1 Support alternative transportation modes for County residents, with particular emphasis on catering to the needs of individuals with limited mobility, including persons with disabilities and the aging population.

## Land Use

Zoning policy and land use strategies are important tools that the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors use to make informed decisions on proposed re-zonings, variances, and other land use requests. The evaluation of existing and future land uses is a process that requires public input and participation. The following portion of the plan includes a discussion of Pocahontas County’s current

zoning ordinance, existing land uses, and proposed future land uses, all of which were developed through comprehensive plan committee meetings.

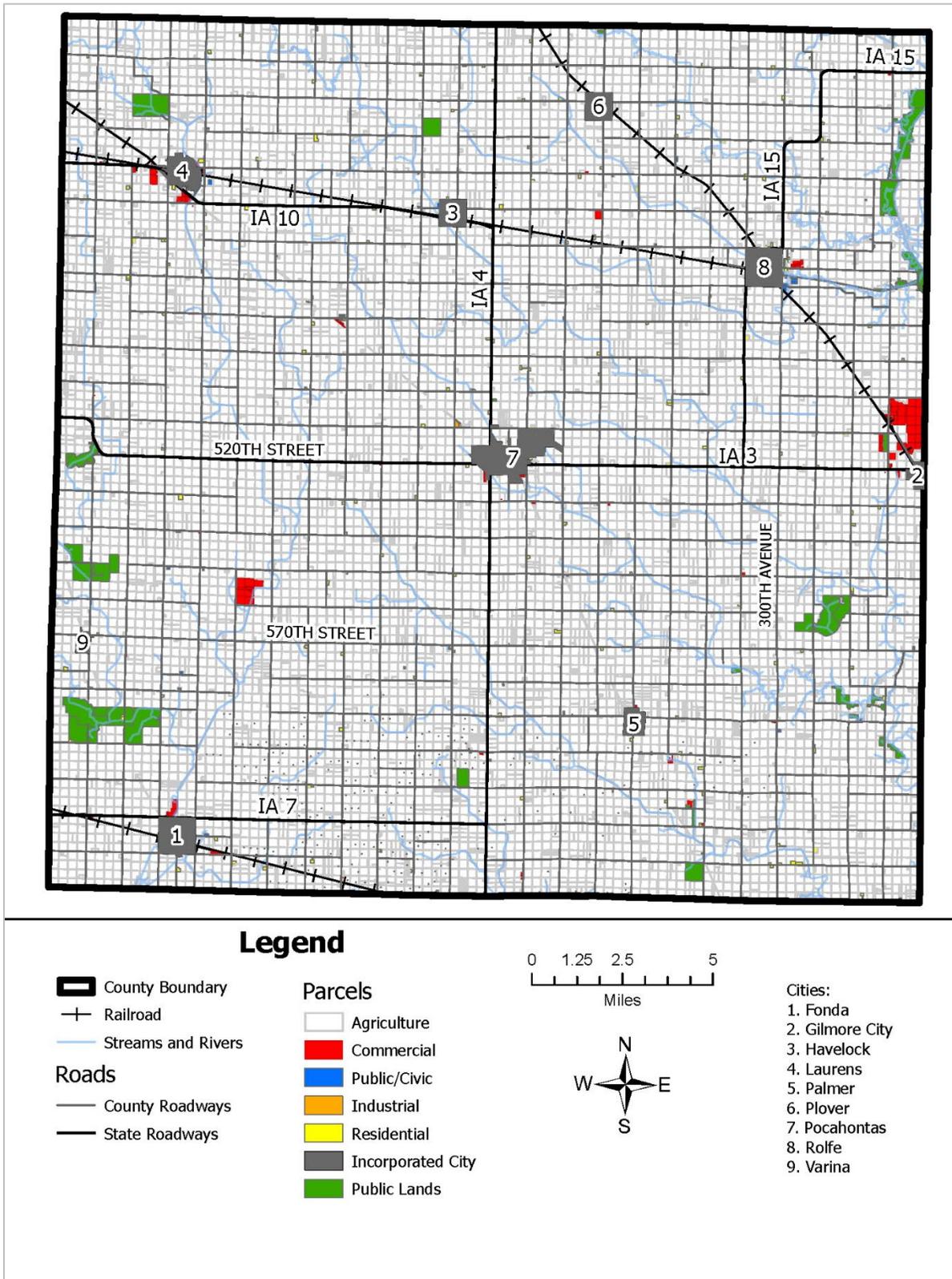
### ***Existing Conditions***

#### **Existing Land Use**

To understand the nature of the county’s physical land use patterns, an existing land use map was developed using an aerial view of the county and multiple land use discussions with the Comprehensive Plan Committee. The Existing Land Use Map is illustrated on page 45. This map does not fully reflect the existing zoning map or ordinance, but instead identifies the specific land uses that each area is currently being used as. For example, a lot that, based on the aerial view and committee input, is being used for crop production would be considered agricultural use. An overview of each individual existing land use classification is discussed below.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b><u>Agriculture</u></b>  | Any use where the primary purpose is some form of agriculture, including but not limited to farming, dairying, pasturage, agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, viticulture, and the care and feeding of livestock.  |
| <b><u>Commercial</u></b>   | Any use where the primary purpose is the sale, rental, service, trade, commerce, and distribution of goods or services such as retail, entertainment, food, and other related businesses, excluding wholesale and manufacturing. Also included are uses located at major highway intersections that cater to passing traffic. |
| <b><u>Industrial</u></b>   | Any use where the primary purpose is the manufacturing, packaging, warehousing, or distribution of natural or man-made products, and on-site extraction of natural resources.   |
| <b><u>Public/Civic</u></b> | Any use where the primary purpose is public service such as educational, cultural, medical, childcare, cemeteries, social clubs, and government offices and functions, such as lagoons and county sheds.  |
| <b><u>Residential</u></b>  | Any use where the primary purpose is providing dwelling quarters for individuals, households, and families.   |
| <b><u>Recreation</u></b>   | Any use where the primary purpose is active or passive recreation activities for use by the public. This includes city, county and state parks, golf courses, and similar uses.   |

Figure 24: Pocahontas County Existing Land Use



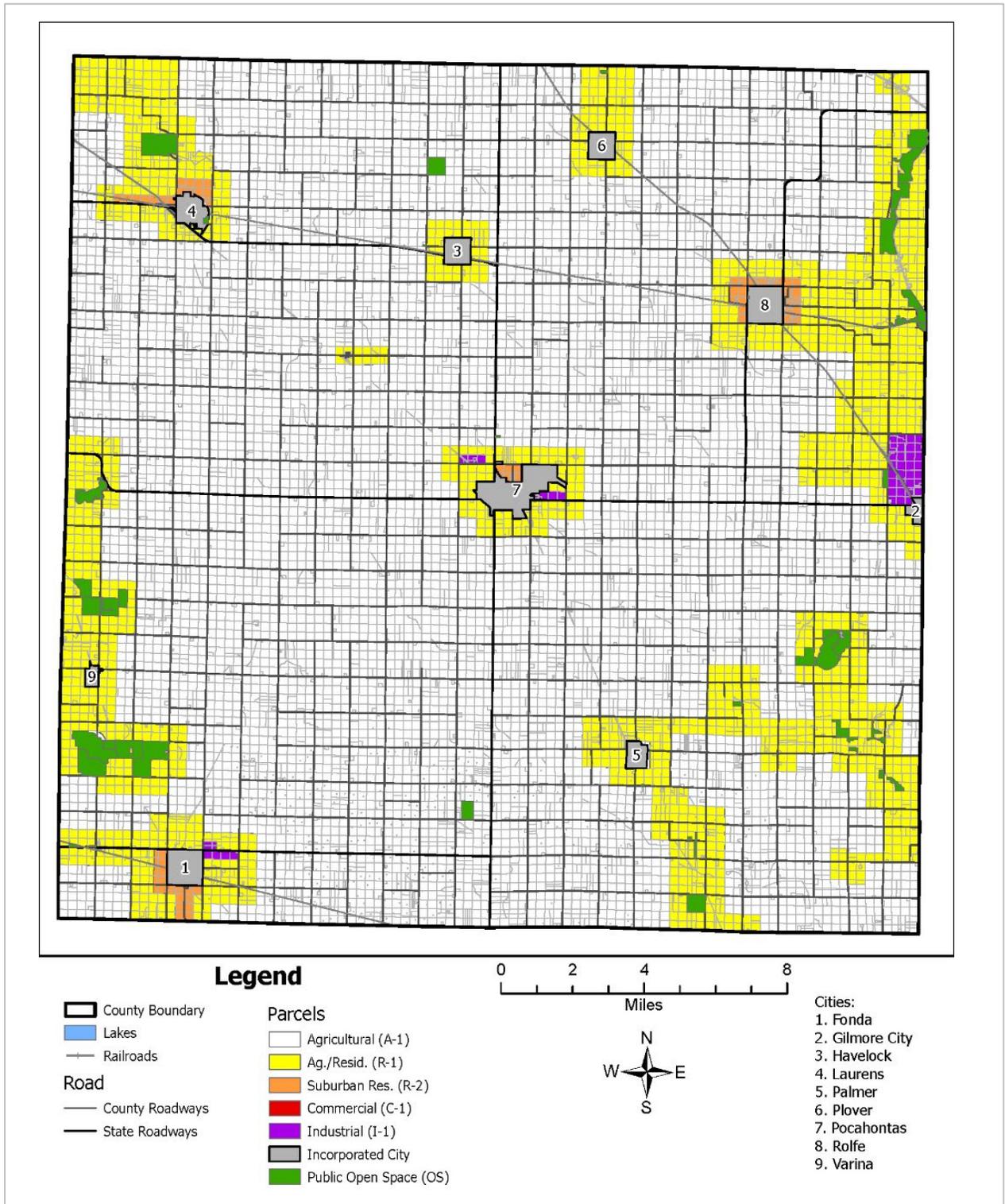
## **Zoning**

The County's current zoning ordinance includes six (6) zoning districts: Agricultural District (A-1), Agricultural Residential District (R-1), Residential District (R-2), Planned Unit Development District (R-3), Commercial District (C-1), and Industrial District (I-1). As portrayed in the Zoning Map on page 47, most of the county has been zoned for agriculture, with some ag./residential (R-1) corridors and areas of industrial (I-1) and suburban residential (R-2) primarily abutting city limits.

Zoning divides the county into districts and establishes regulations governing the use, placement, spacing, and size of land and buildings. The Zoning Administrator is responsible for administering the zoning ordinance and is usually the first point of contact for residents needing a permit. The Planning and Zoning Commission studies issues, oversees the preparation of plans and ordinances, and reviews and advises on development proposals. Iowa Code lists two specific responsibilities for the Planning and Zoning Commission 1) prepare the zoning ordinance and 2) review and recommend zoning amendments and updates.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment governs interpretation and implementation of the zoning code. They hear appeals, grant or deny special exceptions, and grant or deny variances.

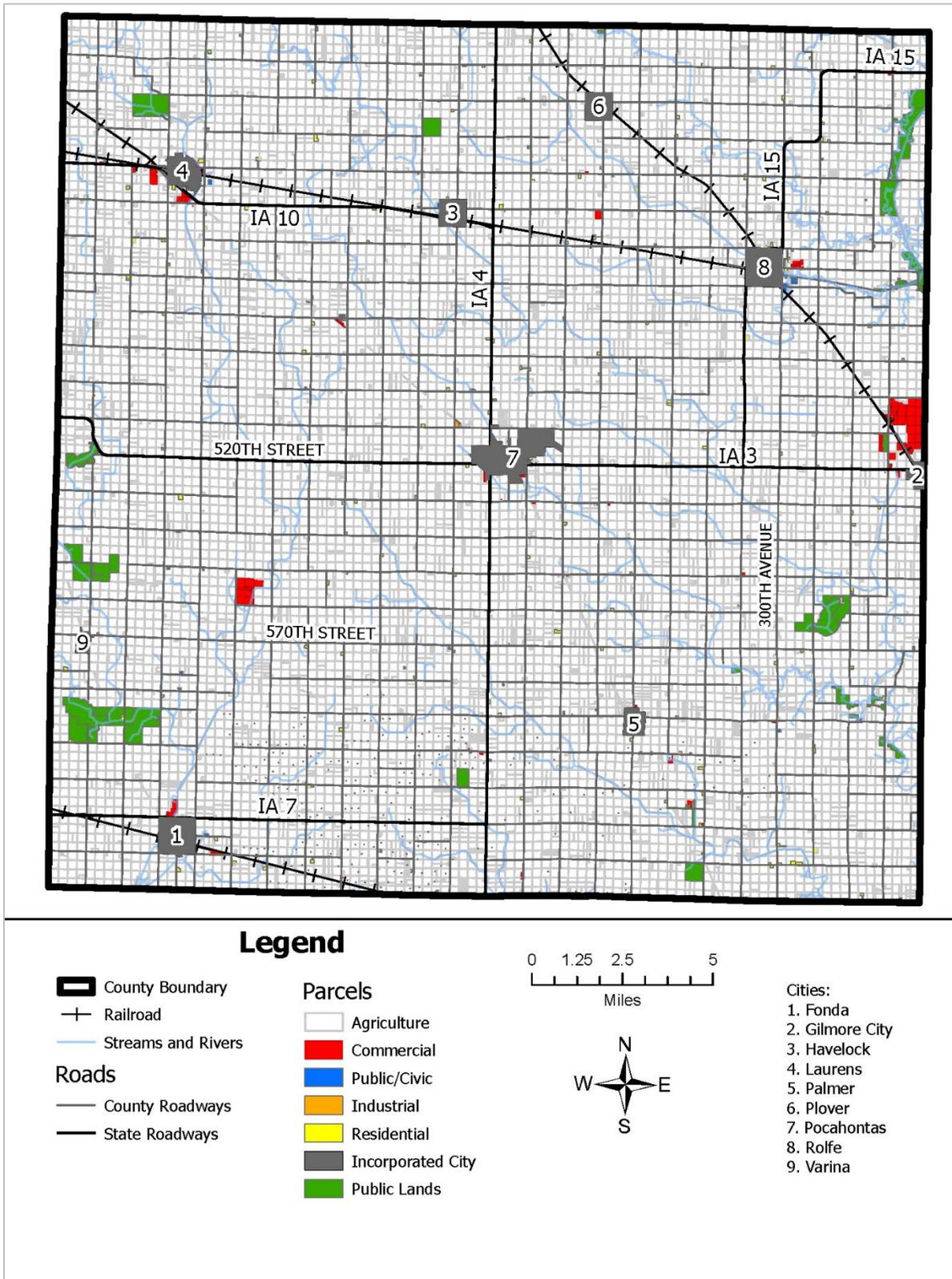
Figure 25: Pocahontas County Current Zoning



**Future Land Use**

The future land use map provides a guide for the county to follow when approached with future zoning questions or changes. All future land use suggestions were taken into consideration before Board of Supervisors Approval. The Future Land Use map is presented by individual survey township in Appendix A.

Figure 26: Pocahontas County Future Land Use



## Chapter 6: Implementation

### Goal: Implement the County’s comprehensive plan.

The Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan has been prepared as a representation of the interests of all County residents within the unincorporated area and should be referred to when considering future land use proposals and when executing the County’s long-term goals and objectives. The plan provides a framework for achieving desired tasks relating to agriculture, economic development, housing, transportation, public facilities, recreation, and conservation. Both the public and private sectors can use this plan to make informed decisions on ordinance development, rezonings, variances and other land use projects or proposals.

*Objective 7.1 Adopt/amend county comprehensive plan when appropriate.*

#### Implementation Strategies

##### **7.1.1 Review comprehensive plan annually**

Along with implementing the Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission should evaluate the Plan on an annual basis to account for development changes that may occur in any given year. Reviewing the plan ensures that planning goals, objectives and implementation strategies are updated. The implementation strategies may be benchmarked or “checked off” as each strategy is completed. The Zoning Coordinator should lead the review process.

The local and surrounding governments shall use the plan as a guide in making land use decisions. The plan has been prepared as a representation of the interest of all county residents. Any activities that impact land uses within the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County should follow the comprehensive plan.

The private sector, including developers and landowners, will use this document to educate themselves on the official positions of the County regarding land use and policy issues. The plan will act as an outline for land investments, purchases, or development decisions. With such knowledge, the public and governing bodies will be able to make informed decisions, complimentary to the comprehensive plan, on rezonings, variances, ordinance development, and other land use projects or proposals.

### **Collaboration**

For successful comprehensive plan implementation, cities, counties, and other agencies/ organizations need to work together to achieve the plan’s vision and goals. Formal municipal agreements are generally referred to as 28E agreements and they are permitted under Iowa Code Chapter 28E: Joint Exercise of Governmental Powers. Iowa Code states the purpose of 28E agreements “is to permit state and local governments in Iowa to make efficient use of their powers by enabling them to provide joint services and facilities with other agencies and to

cooperate in other ways of mutual advantage.” Each 28E agreement will set forth the purpose, powers, rights, objectives, and responsibilities of the contracting parties.

Many Pocahontas County departments use 28E agreements. The Pocahontas County Sheriff's Office has 28E agreements with many of the communities in Pocahontas to provide law enforcement and emergency services. The Iowa Secretary of State maintains an online database of 28E agreements at: <https://sos.iowa.gov/search/28ESearch.html>.

Pocahontas County and its cities also collaborate with a variety of nonprofit organizations, community organizations, and private organizations. They belong to economic development/chambers of commerce groups, regional planning and transportation agencies, and other organizations.

## Plan Updates

The plan should be used and reviewed on a regular basis. As the county changes from year to year, so will its needs; therefore, this plan may be amended, changed, or revised as necessary. It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission review the plan on an annual basis and propose any necessary actions or amendments to the Board of Supervisors in a legal and orderly process. The Planning and Zoning Commission shall pay special attention to the planning goals, objectives, and implementation strategies within each planning element. The implementation strategies may be benchmarked or marked as complete as progress is made.

## Implementation Tool

The Implementation Tool serves as a tracking resource for the County to benchmark and “check off” plan goals. This table should be reviewed and updated regularly. These goals and actions strategies should stay in accordance with the Future Land Use Map, or vice versa.

The Committee utilized this tool for the same goals, objectives, and action strategies that were presented in Chapter 5, assigning each strategy the following components:

- Priority: Categorized as low, medium, or high, based on overall importance, urgency, and resource availability
- Responsible Party: The agency or organization expected to lead implementation
- Partners: Additional entities that may support or collaborate on implementation
- Timeframe: The estimated duration needed to administer or complete each action.

Timeframes reflect the anticipated window for strategy implementation based on staff capacity, available or projected funding, and the technical complexity of each strategy. While these estimates provide planning guidance, the actual timeframe may vary for any one strategy. The Committee determined the four timeframes to be defined as:

- Short-term: 1-5 years
- Middle: 6-10 years

Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan – 2025

- Long-term: 11+ years
- Ongoing: Strategies that are expected to continue indefinitely or on a recurring basis

Comprehensive Action Plan Overview				
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>				
<b>Goal: Preserve and protect Agricultural land with emphasis on prime agricultural areas</b>				
<b>Objective A.1 Discourage conversion of designated prime agricultural land and soils to non-agricultural uses by targeting less productive agricultural soils (crops) for urban or non-farm uses.</b>				
A.1.1 Discourage fragmentation of prime agricultural land to protect the continuity of prime farmland areas for future use	Med	Planning and Zoning (P+Z)	Farmers/landowners, IDNR, Pocahontas County Economic Development Commission (PCEDC)	Middle
A.1.2 Support efforts to diversify agricultural markets	Med	PCEDC	Farmers/landowners	Long
A.1.3 Adopt and enforce regulations for residential and commercial properties that may impact agricultural and conservation land	High	P+Z, Board of Supervisors (BOS)	Board of Adjustments (BOA), PCEDC	Long
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>				
<b>Goal: Promote small business and locally-owned business to include ag-related businesses</b>				
<b>Objective E.1 Retain existing businesses and attract new ones by utilizing financial incentives and development resources.</b>				
E.1.1 Use resources such as TIF, Tax Abatement, low interest revolving loan funds, state/federal funds, new market tax credits, and others to encourage commercial/industrial development	High	BOS, Treasurer, Auditor’s Office	Assessor’s Office, MIDAS Council of Governments	Long
<b>Objective E.2 Encourage and promote the development of home-based businesses and telecommuting based upon a commitment to providing a high level of technology and communication infrastructure.</b>				
E.2.1 Support broadband/satellite development throughout the County	High	PCEDC	Service Providers	Long
E.2.2 Encourage business diversity and entrepreneurship to attract a creative workforce and enhance unconventional economic development	High	PCEDC	Service Providers	Long
<b>Goal: Provide adequate public services and facilities for existing businesses</b>				
<b>Objective E.3 Coordinate with area communities to implement a joint economic development strategy that supports existing businesses, promotes new businesses in coming to the area, and develops new attractions and amenities for the public at a local and regional level.</b>				

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E.3.1 Participate in planning efforts of local communities to help coordinate economic development opportunities to help attract a strong workforce	High	BOS, City Councils	PCEDC	Long
E.3.2 Promote economic development efforts online and seek input from local communities to open opportunities for partnerships	High	PCEDC	MIDAS	Long
E.3.3 Implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to provide the County with a locally-based planning process focused on economic growth	High	BOS	MIDAS	Short

HOUSING				
<b>Goal: Encourage new and maintain existing housing in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County</b>				
<b>Objective H.1 Plan for a range of housing that meets the needs of residents of various income levels, age groups, abilities, and health conditions.</b>				
H.1.1 Promote housing needs assessment and housing implementation plans in the county to support the development of new housing opportunities	Med	Planning and Zoning	MIDAS	Middle
H.1.2 Explore federal and state grant opportunities to diversify housing options	High	PCEDC	MIDAS	Long/Ongoing
<b>Objective H.2 Support programs that maintain or rehabilitate the local housing stock.</b>				
H.2.1 Identify opportunities for partnerships with local and regional rehabilitation programs to improve the quality of existing housing options	Low	Planning and Zoning	MIDAS	Long
H.2.2 Use resources such as TIF, Tax Abatement, and programs like Homes for Iowa to encourage residential development	Med	BOS, Treasurer/Auditor	MIDAS	Long

PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE				
<b>Goal: Provide safe and reliable infrastructure and services throughout Pocahontas County</b>				
<b>Objective P.1 Ensure developments contribute to the improvement of public facilities and services</b>				
P.1.1 Encourage development to bury electrical lines	High	Service Providers	-	Long
<b>Objective P.2 Expand broadband in rural areas.</b>				
P.2.1 Improve access to internet connectivity by promoting	High	PCEDC	Service Providers	Long

Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan – 2025

broadband infrastructure and satellite expansion				
<b>Objective P.3 Regulate renewable energy.</b>				
P.3.1 Update policies that regulate renewable energy infrastructure to ensure that it does not present safety hazards and to minimize disruptions to surrounding land uses	High	BOS, City Councils	PCEDC	Long

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION				
<b>Goal: Maintain and improve recreation opportunities in the county</b>				
<b>Objective R.1 Preserve, enhance, expand, and create new recreational opportunities.</b>				
R.1.1 Increase knowledge and use of cultural and historical features	Med	County Conservation, State Conservation	School System	Long
R.1.2 Ensure ADA compliance standards for recreational facilities to enable persons with limited mobility to access recreational and natural resource amenities	High	County Conservation, State Conservation	DOJ	Long
R.1.3 Work with interested cities within the County and regional partners to develop and expand recreation trails and corridors that one day connect communities within and surrounding the county	Low	County Conservation	Surrounding Communities (Cities, Counties), MIDAS	Long
R.1.4 Improve amenities in parks and conservation areas	Med	County Conservation, State Conservation	IDNR	Long

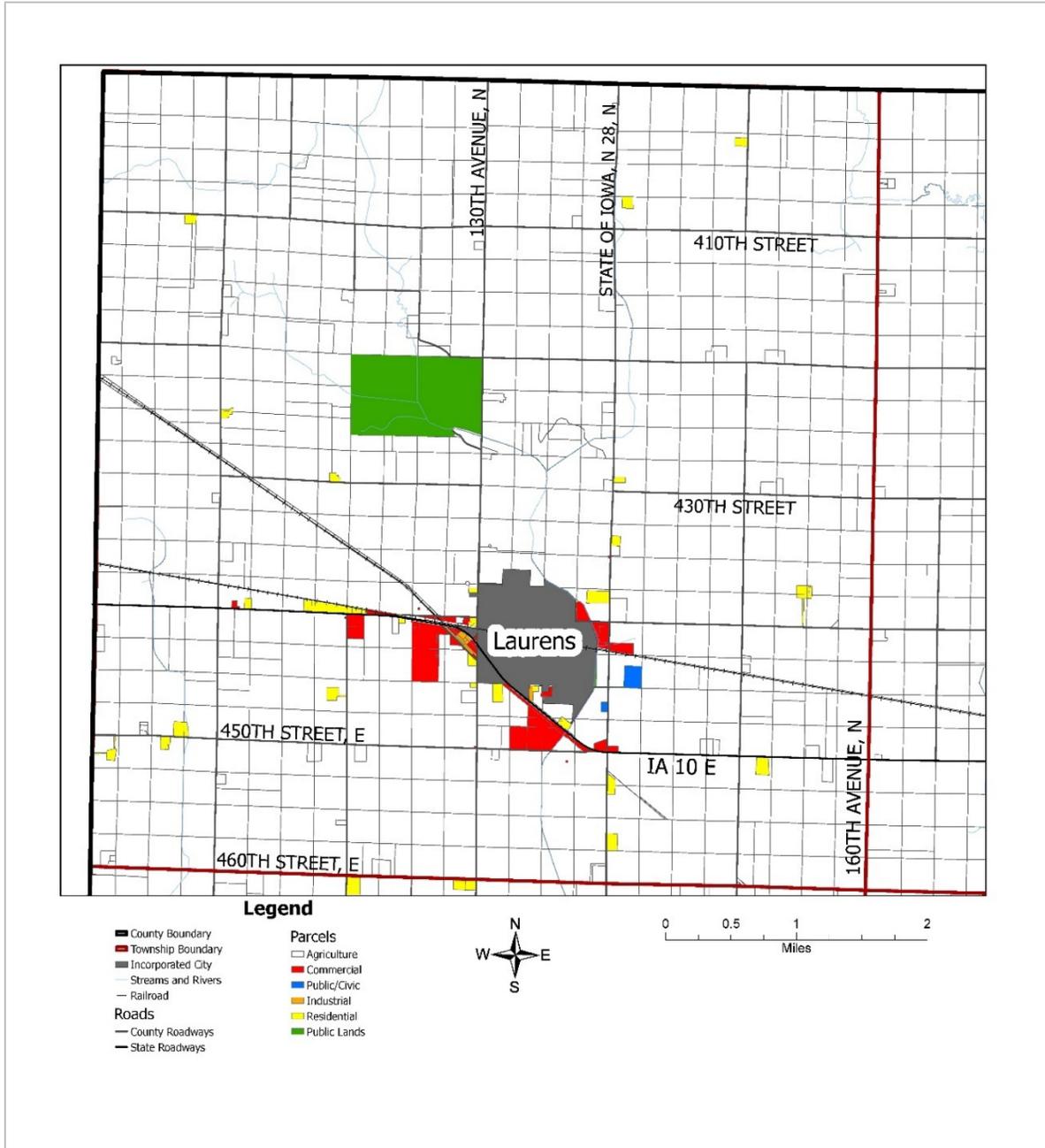
TRANSPORTATION				
<b>Goal: Develop a transportation plan that will promote the safe, efficient, and economic movement of people and goods</b>				
<b>Objective T.1 Develop and maintain the County’s transportation network at a level of service that accommodates emergency vehicles.</b>				
T.1.1 Coordinate rural addressing, road naming, and driveway siting to ensure safe and adequate emergency response services	Med	County 911	Secondary Roads	Long
<b>Objective T.2 Coordinate transportation projects within the County’s municipalities, adjacent counties, MIDAS, and the Iowa Department of Transportation</b>				
T.2.1 Support inter- governmental and land development agreements that define the responsibilities of the developers and municipalities regarding any required improvements and ongoing maintenance of roadways and funding of such improvements	High	BOS, Secondary Roads	MIDAS, IDOT	Long
<b>Goal: Maintain and improve existing transportation infrastructure</b>				

Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan – 2025

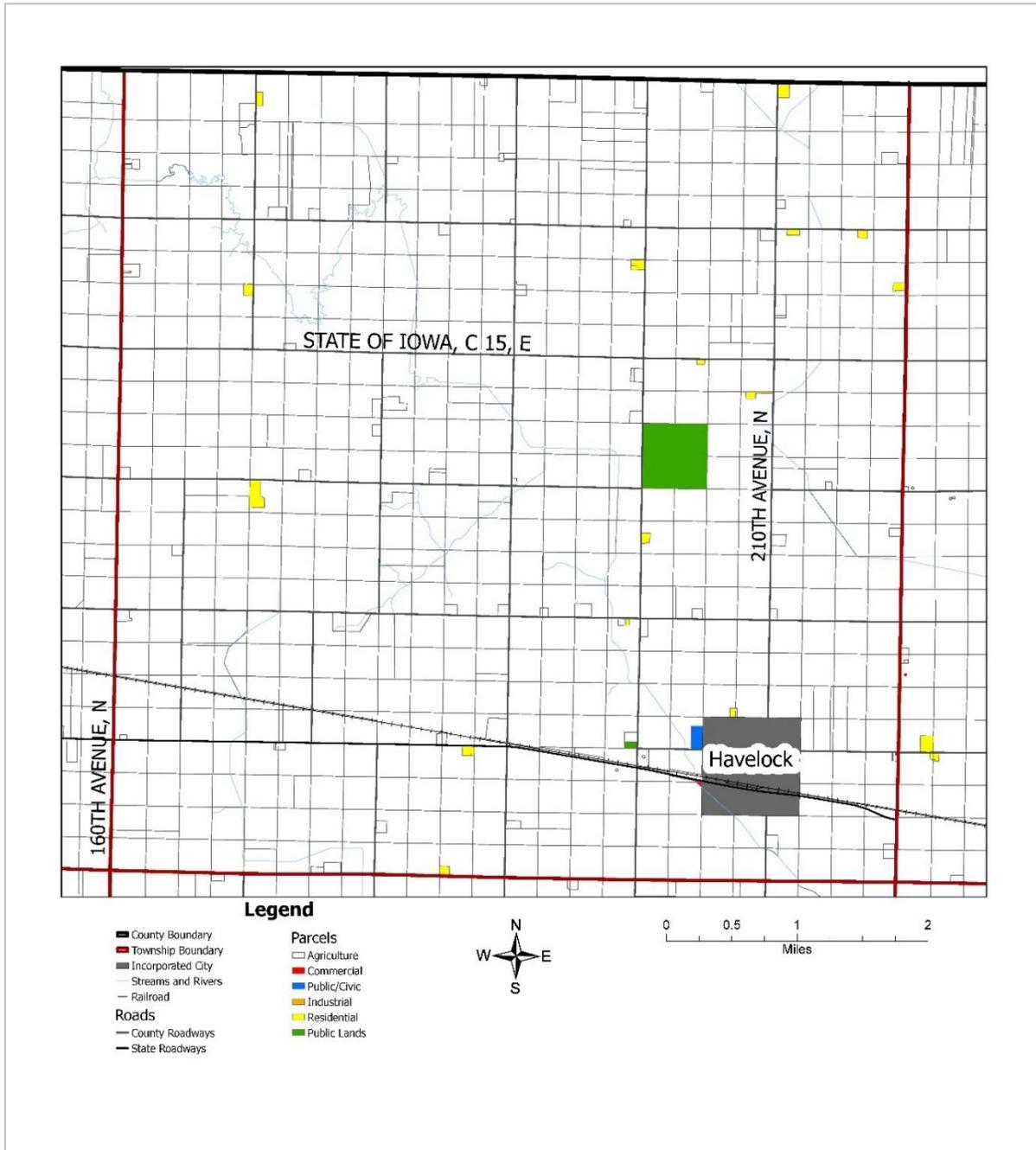
<b>Objective T.3 Improve the safety and capacity of the county's bridge infrastructure</b>				
T.3.1 Strive for the elimination of all load rated bridges in the county	High	BOS, Secondary Roads	DOT	Long
<b>Objective T.4 Enhance multi-modal opportunities for regional travel for County residents and visitors</b>				
T.4.1 Support alternative transportation modes for County residents, with particular emphasis on catering to the needs of individuals with limited mobility, including persons with disabilities and the aging population	High	PCEDC, Cities	MIDAS RTA	Long

# Appendix A: Future Land Use by Township

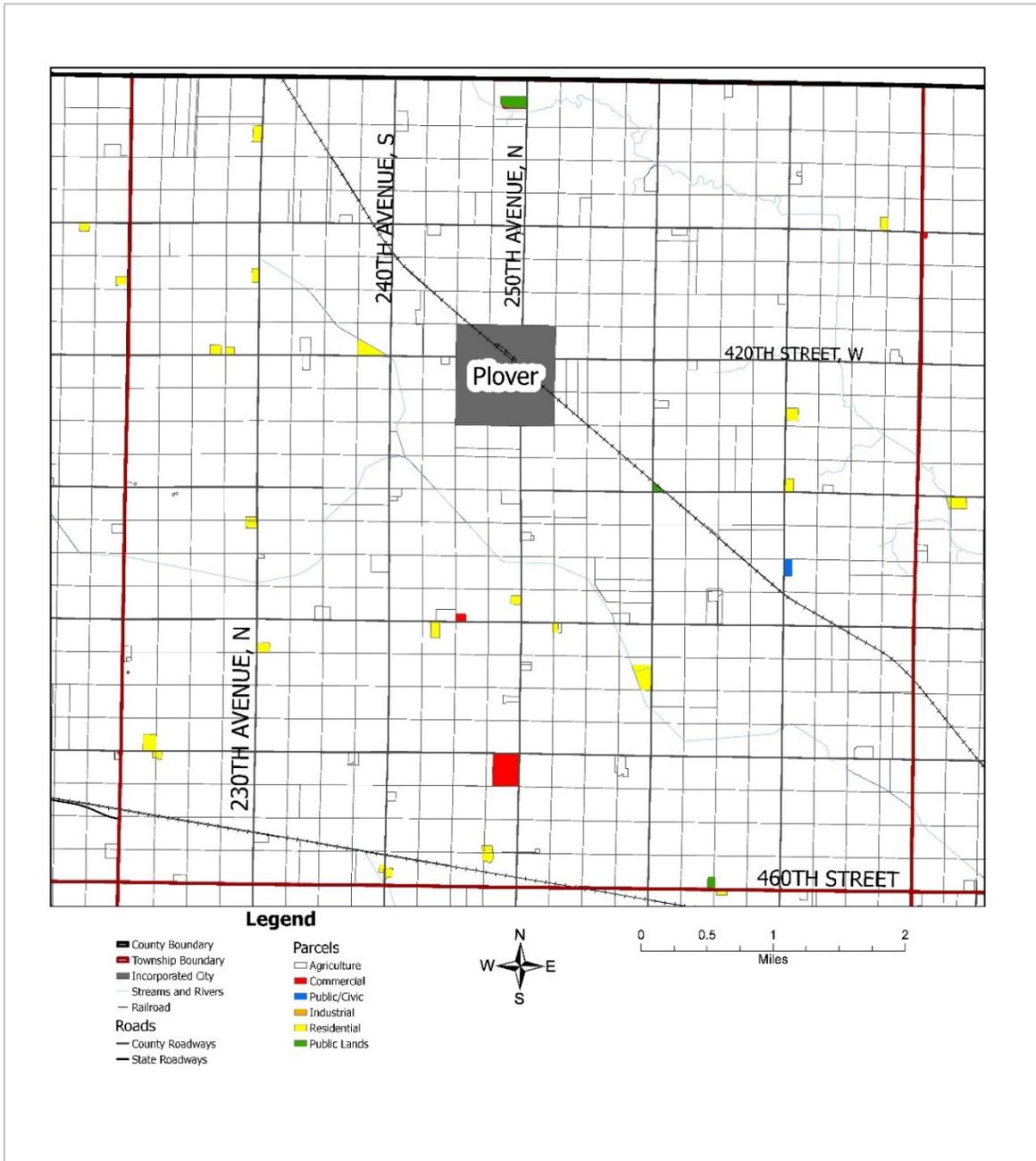
## Swan Lake Township Map



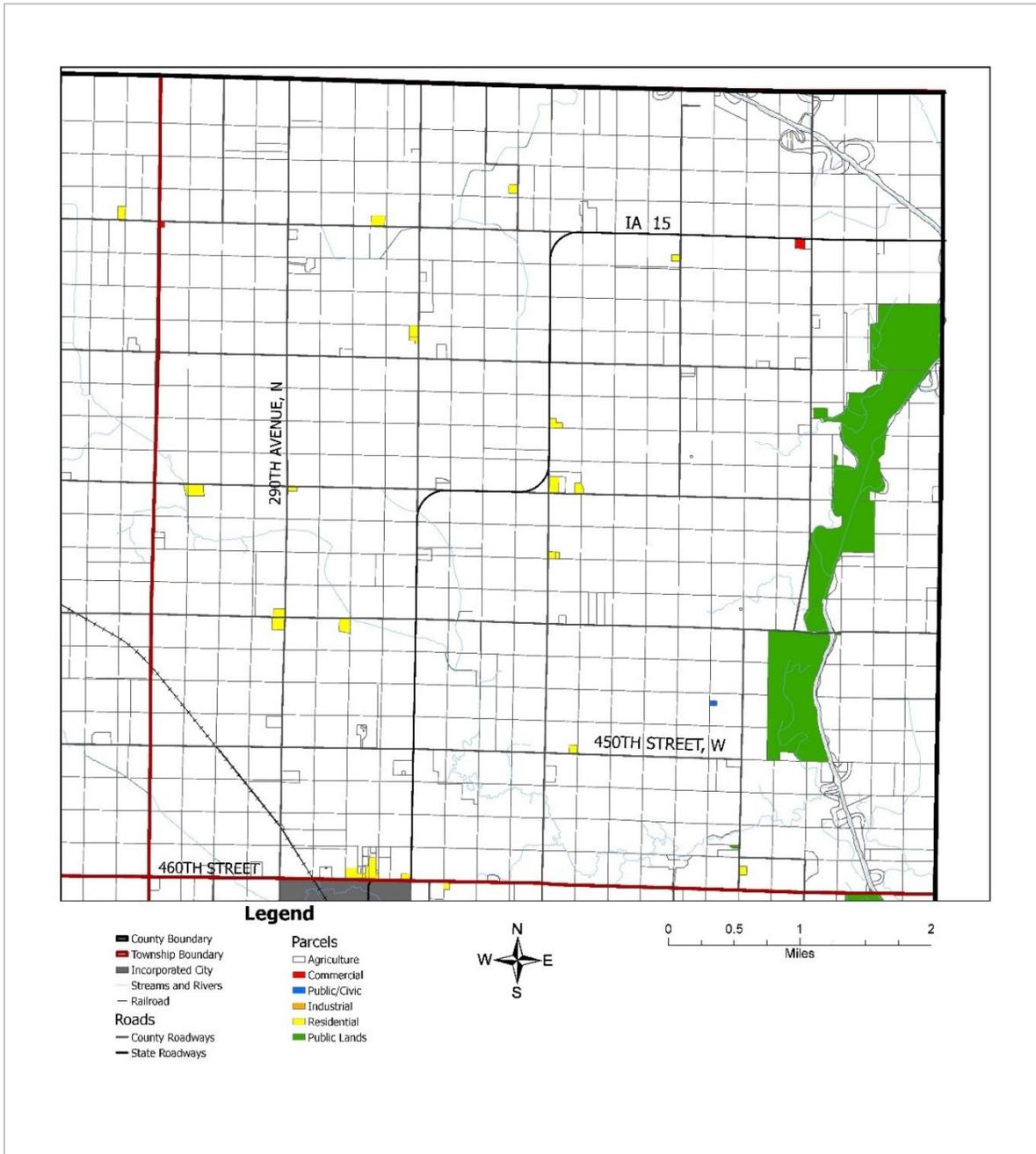
## Cummins Township Map



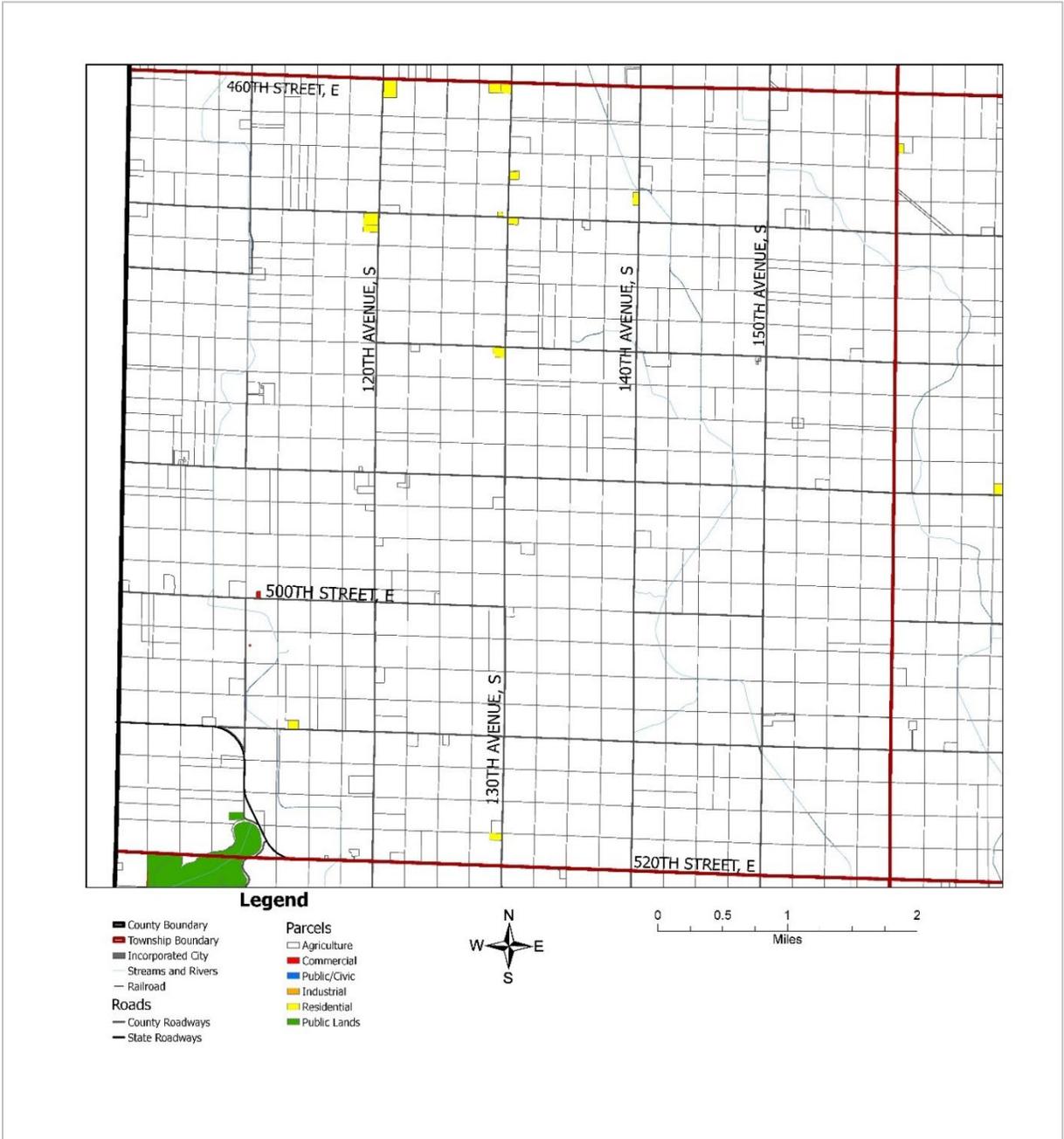
### Powhatan Township Map



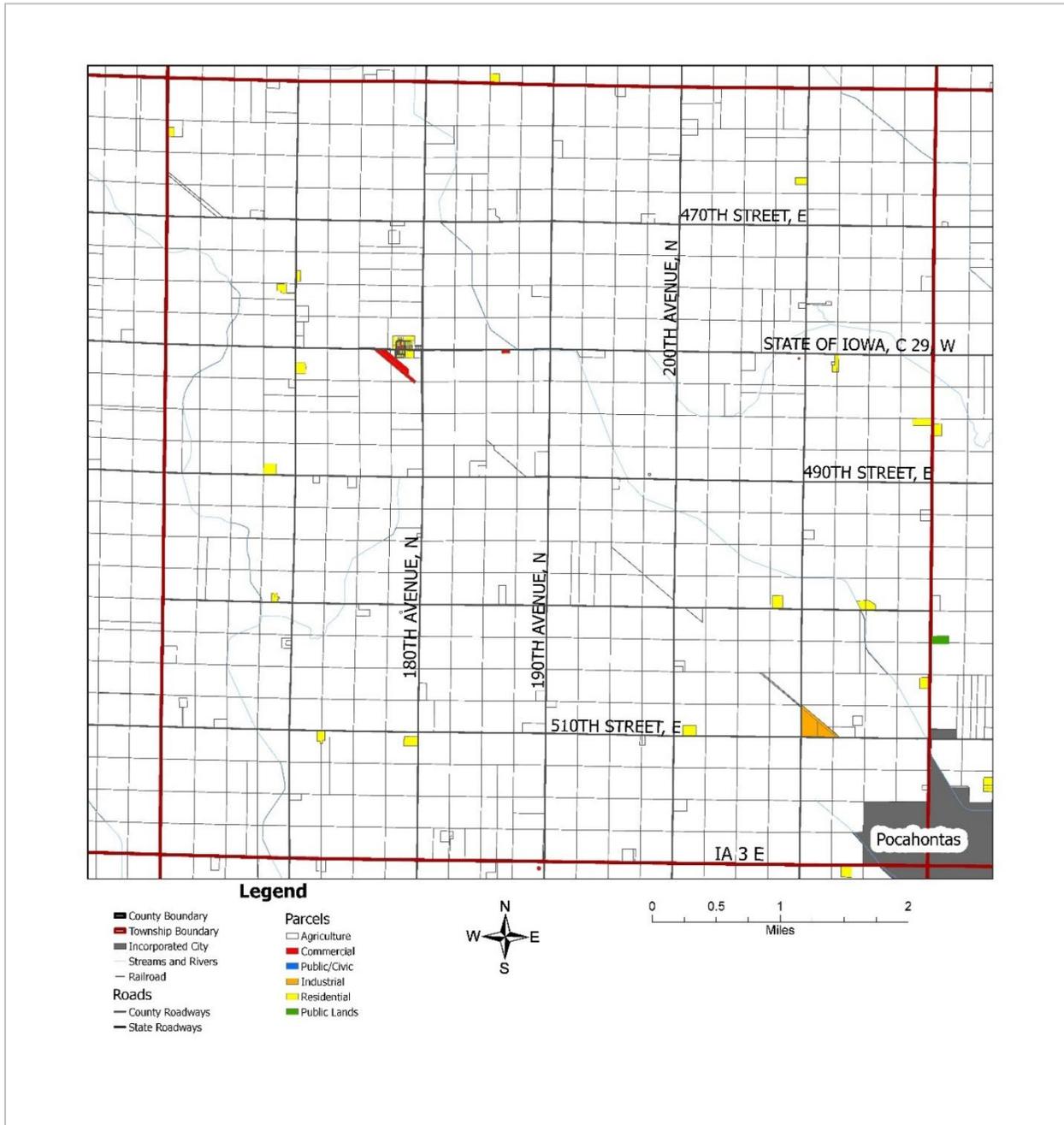
## Des Moines Township Map



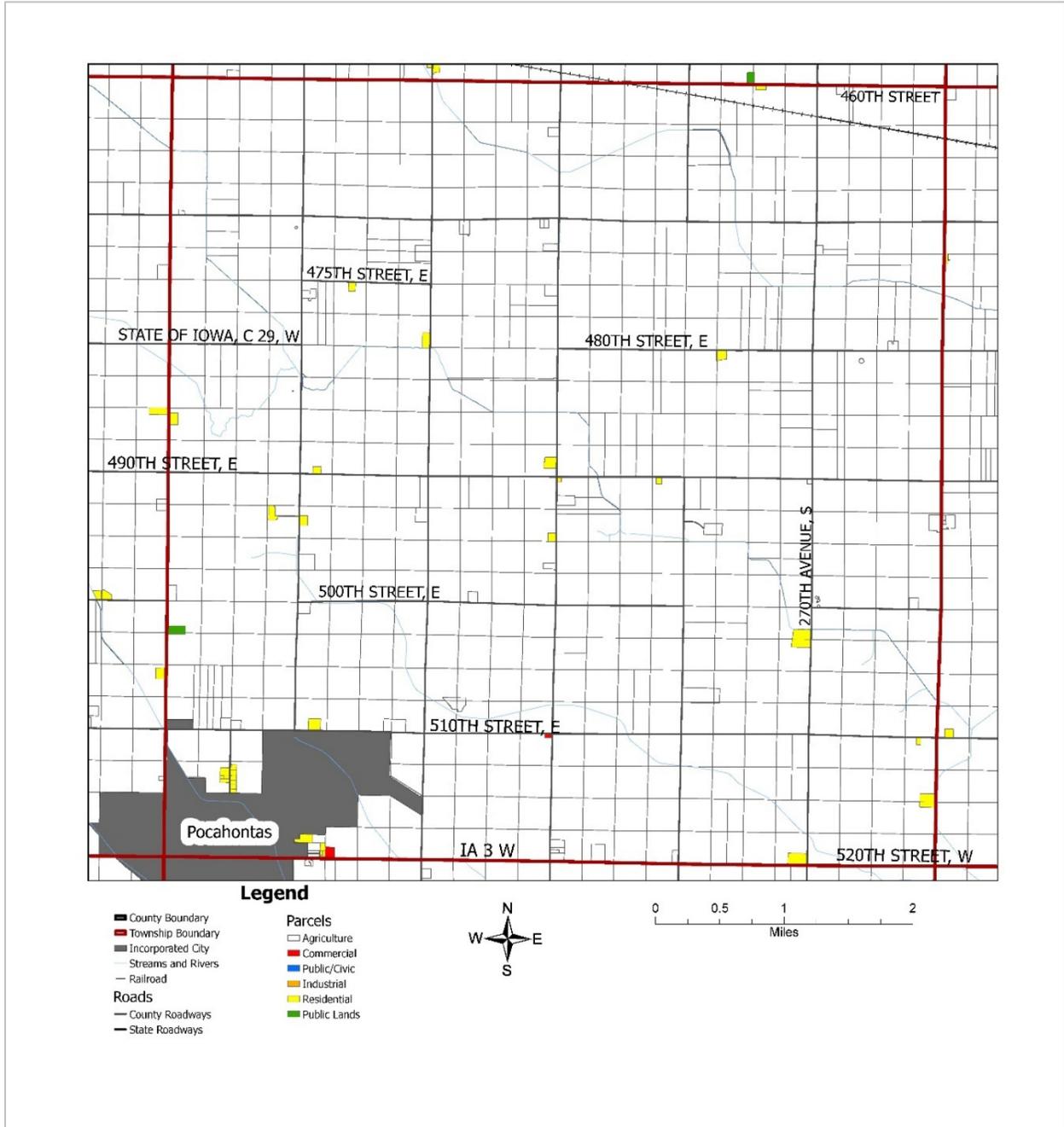
## Marshall Township Map



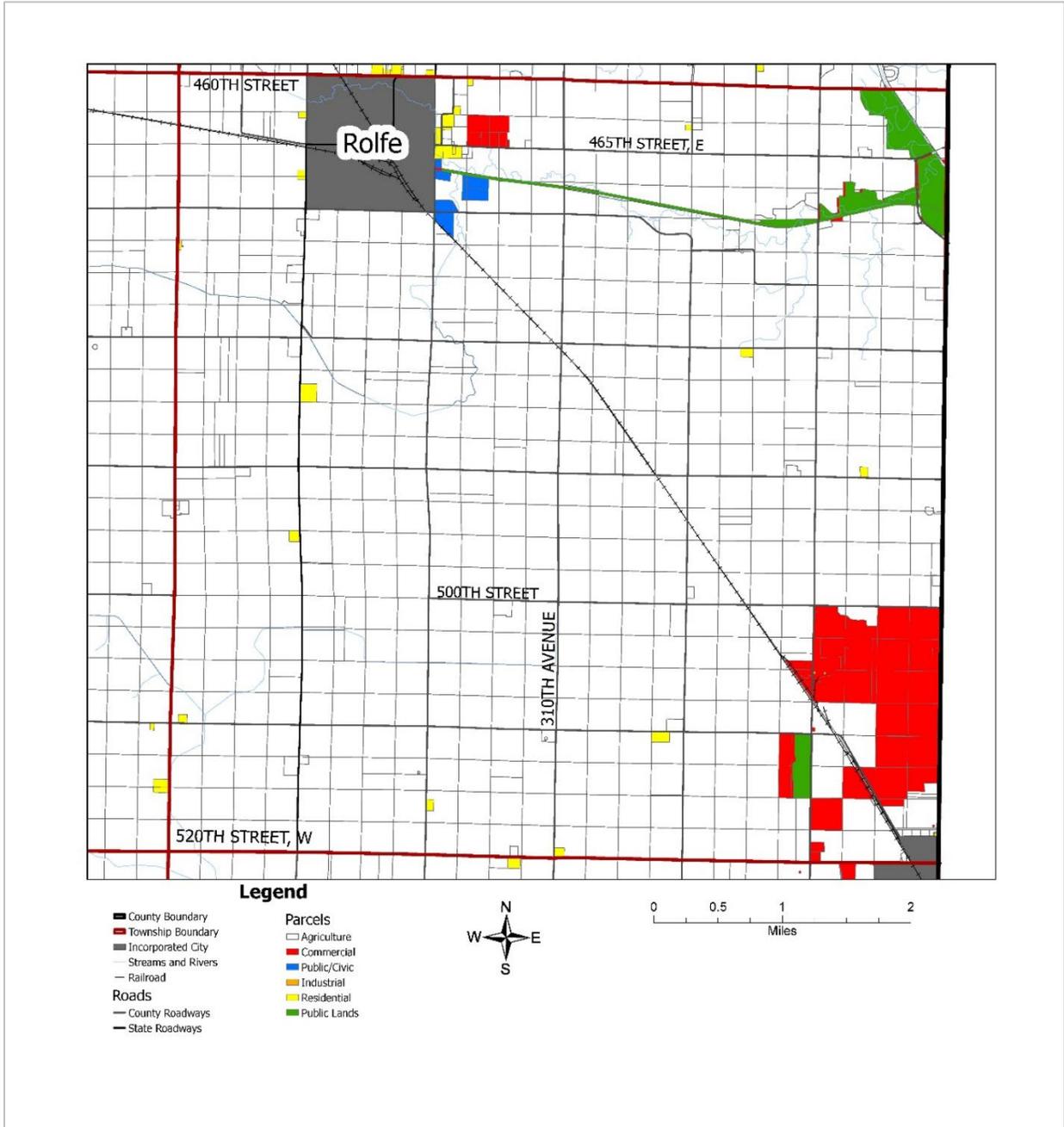
## Sherman Township Map



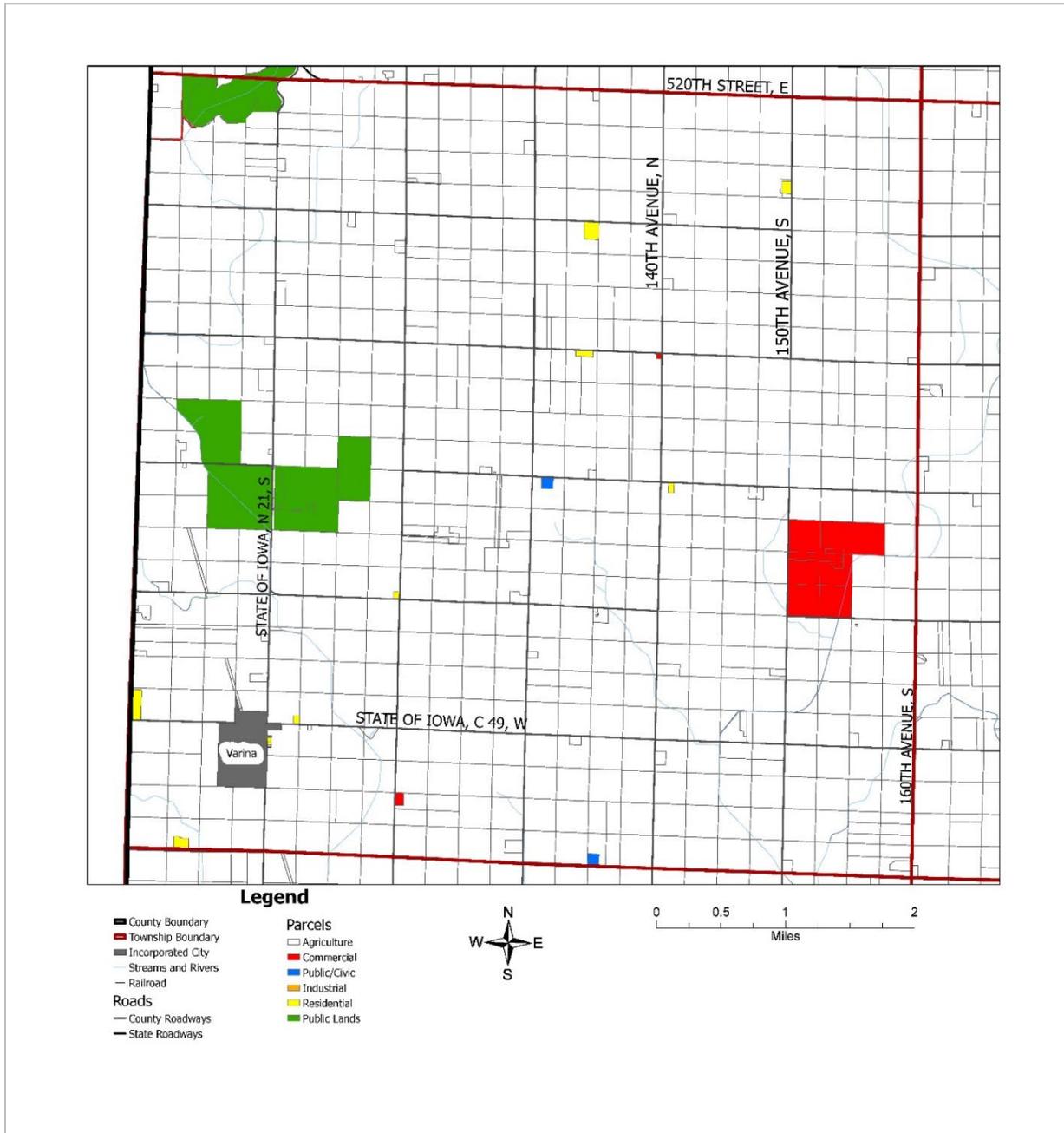
## Roosevelt Township Map



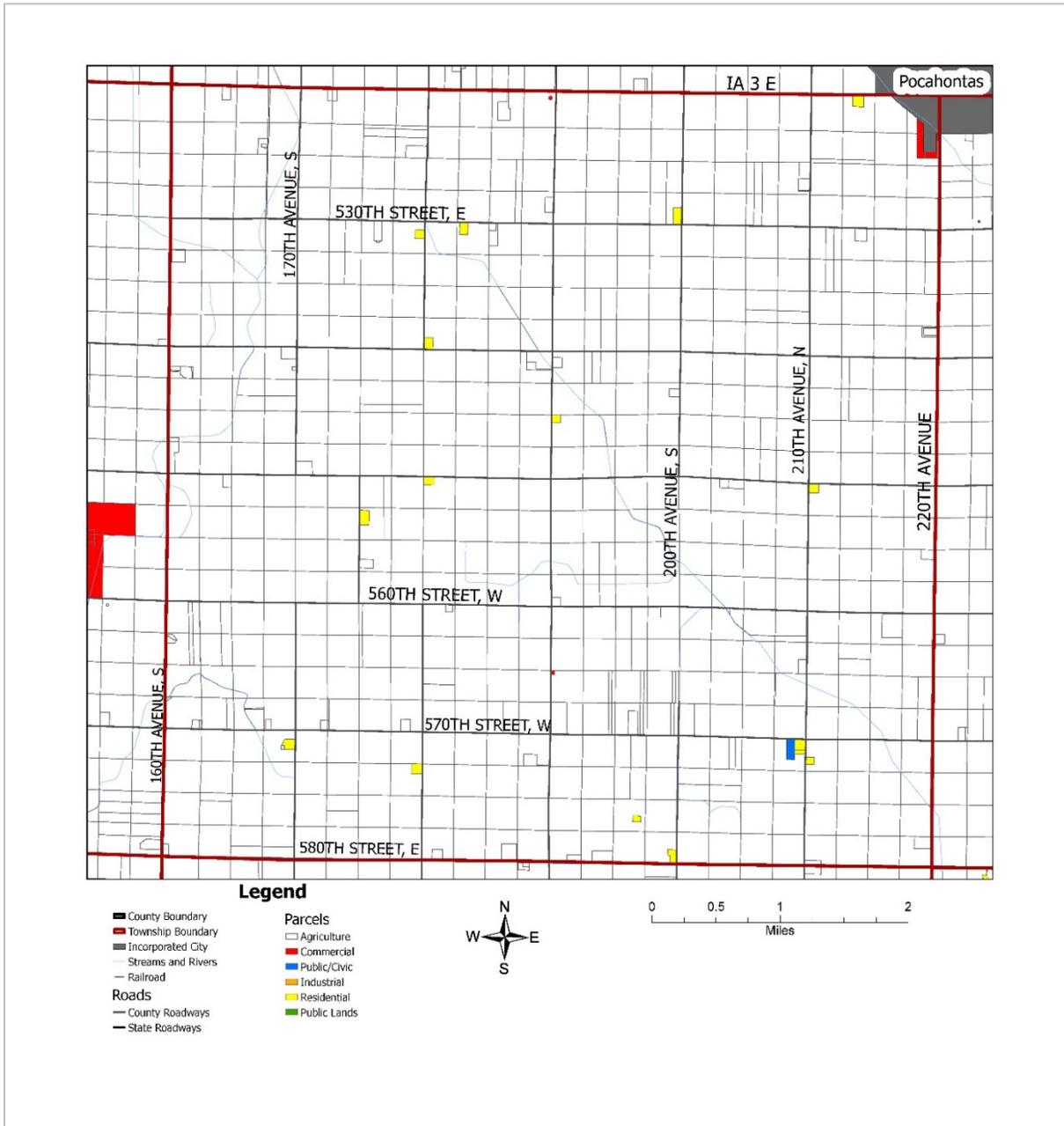
## Garfield Township Map



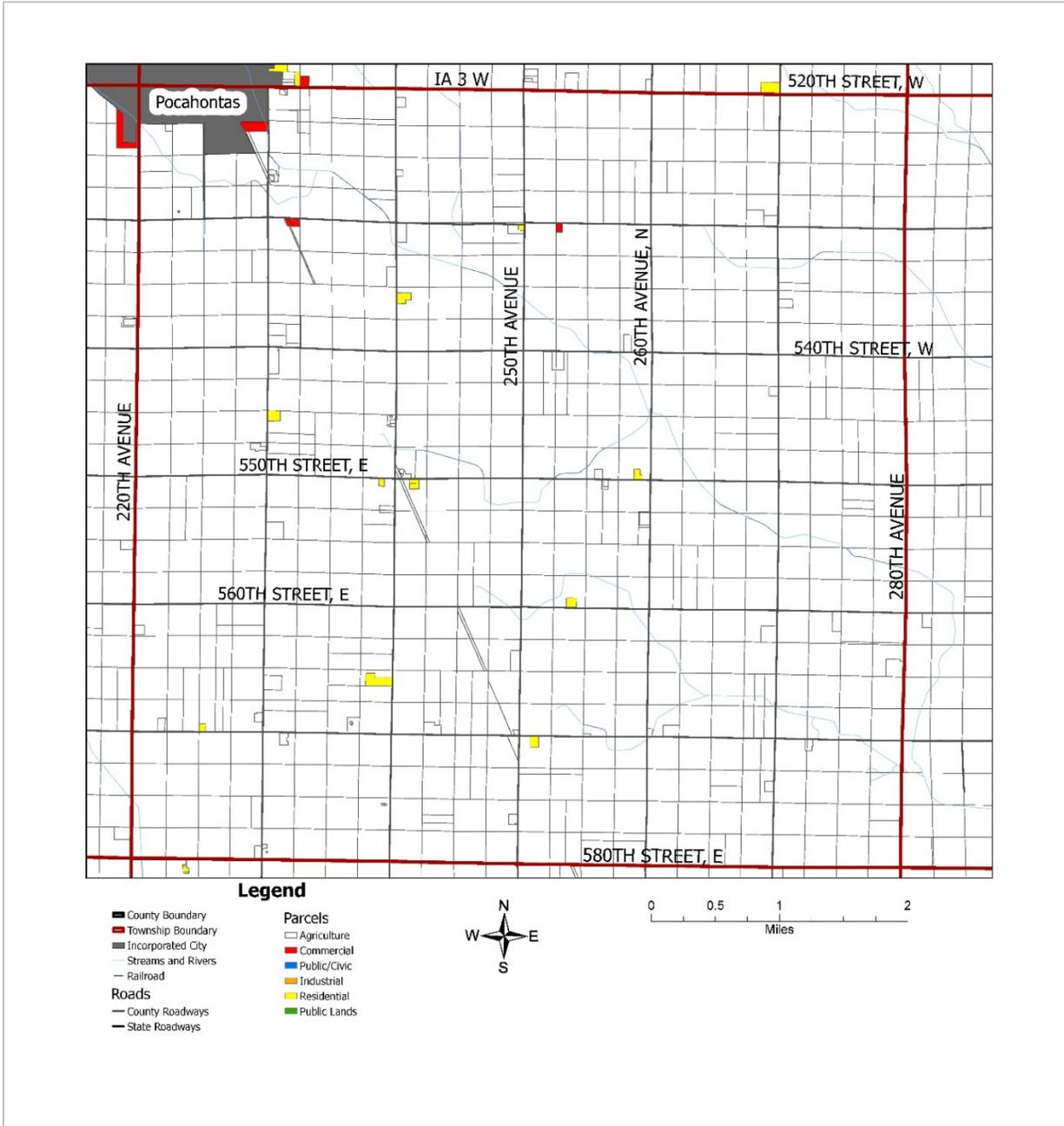
## Dover Township Map



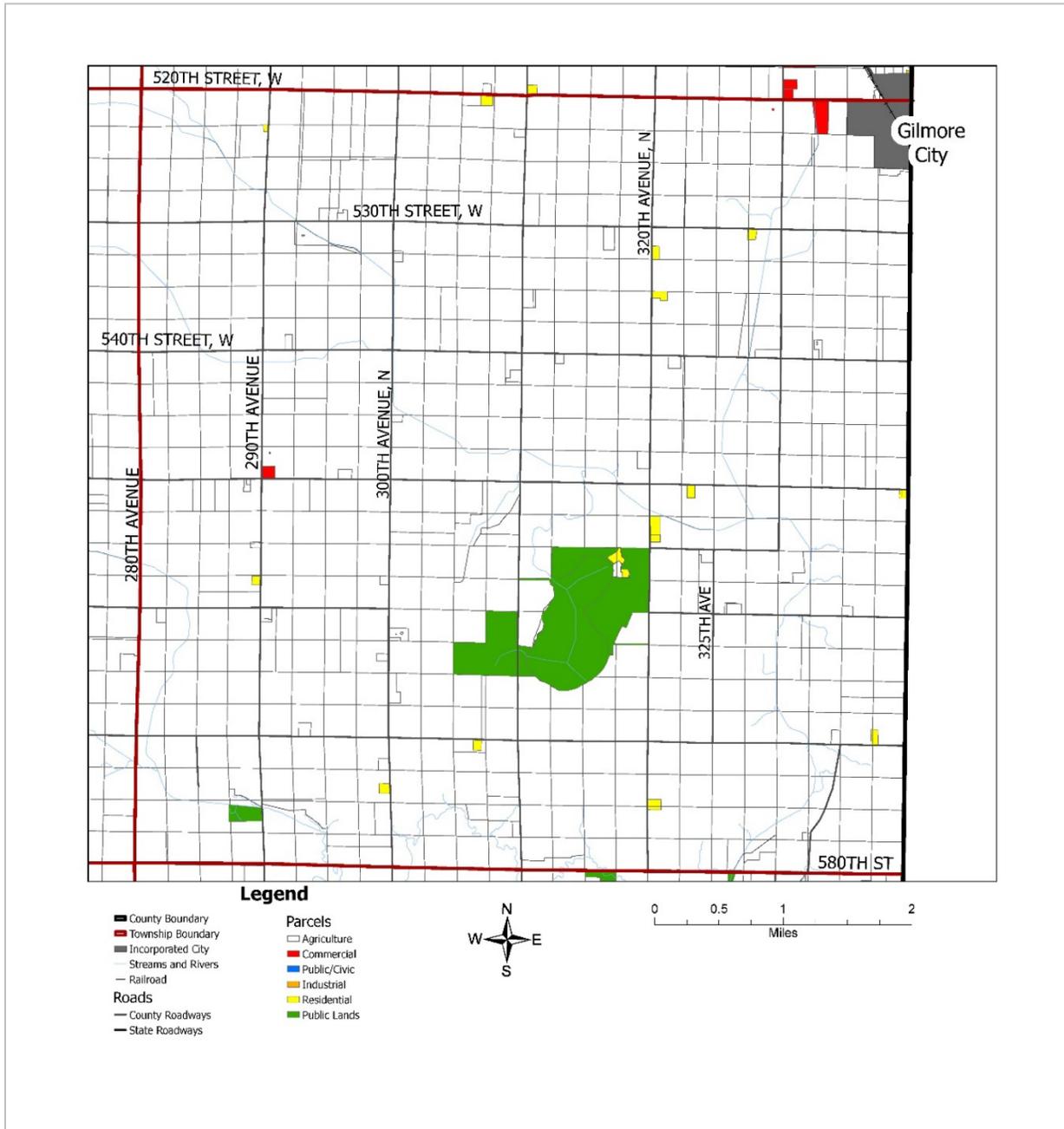
## Grant Township Map



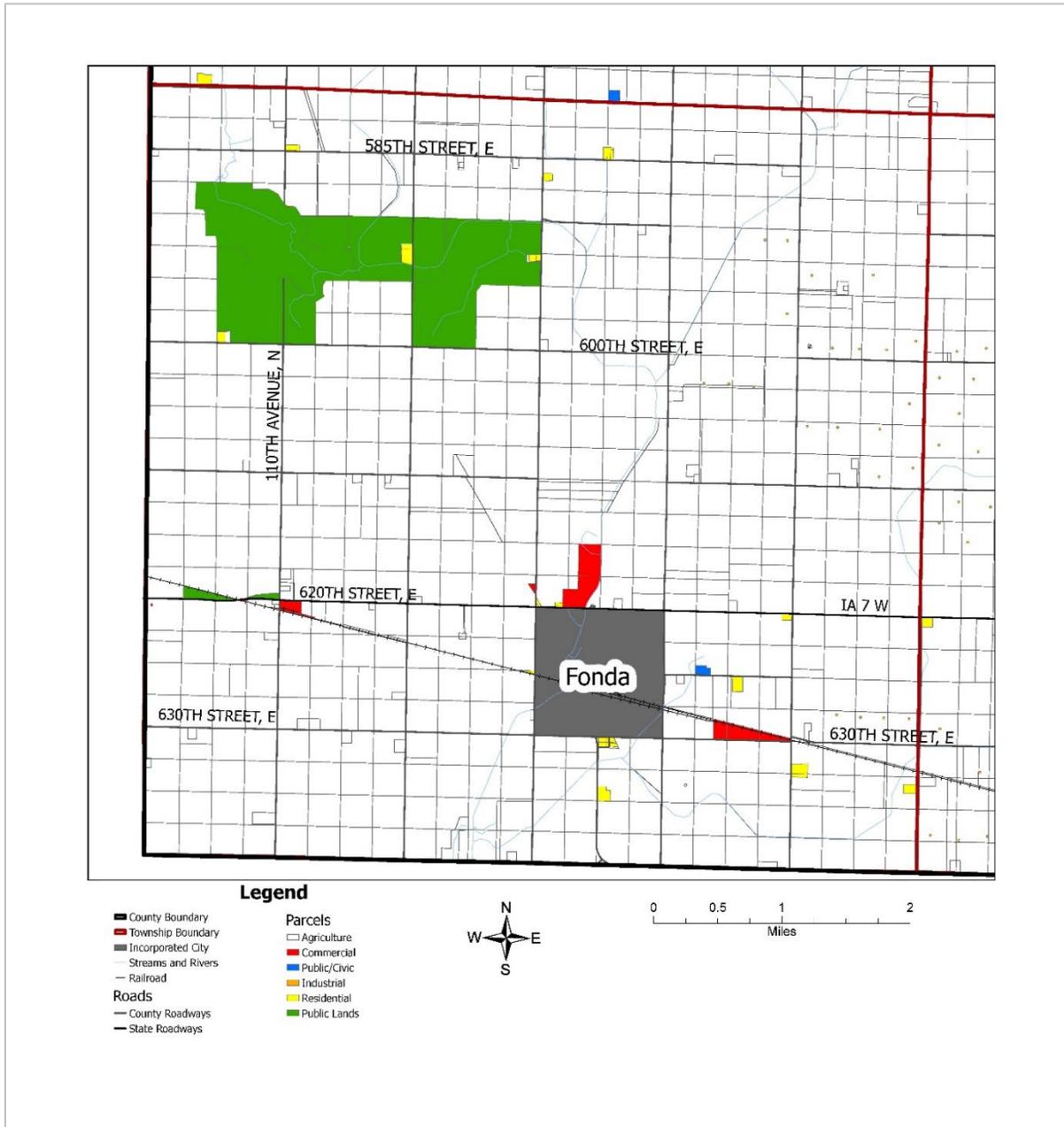
## Lincoln Township Map



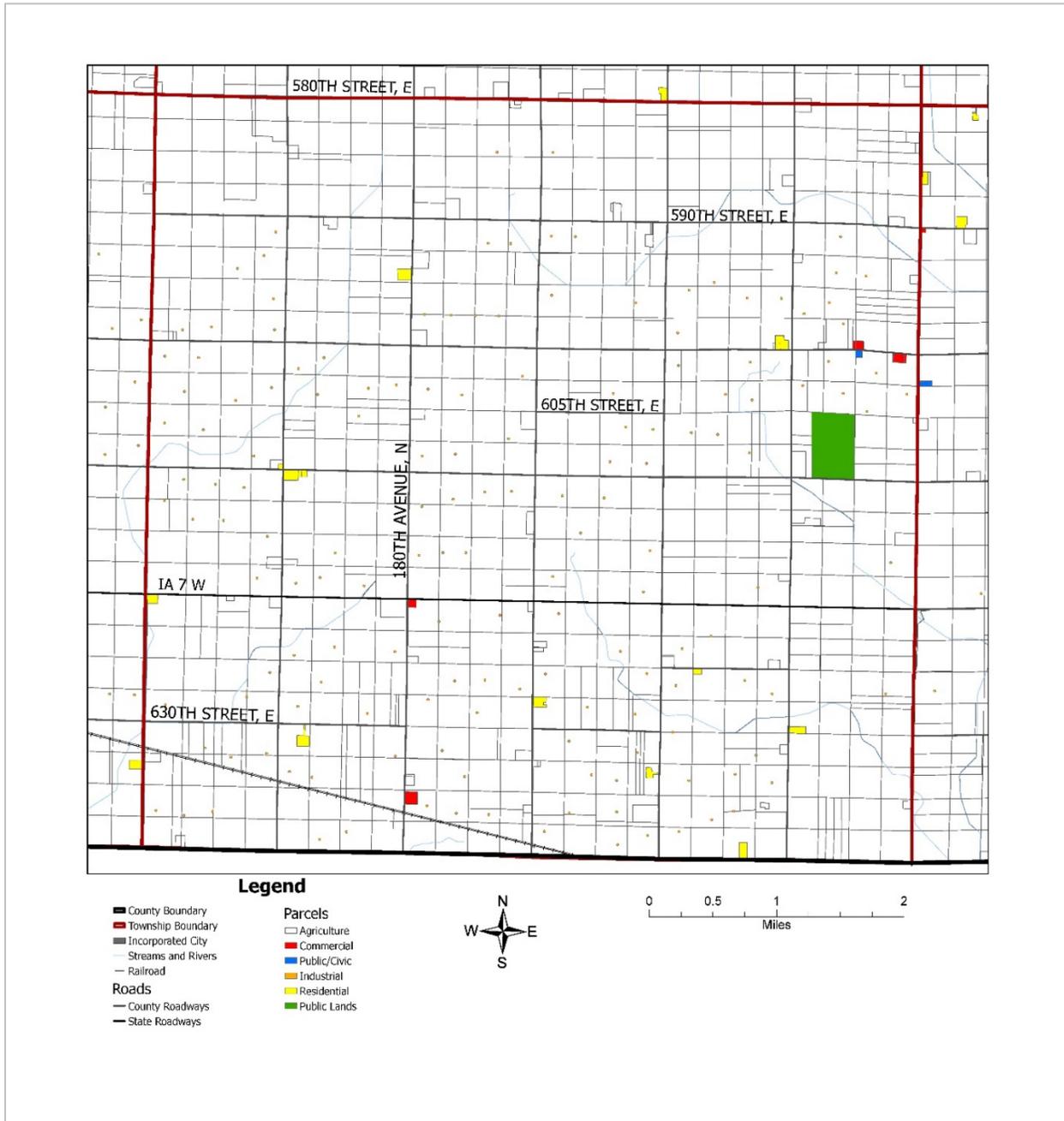
## Lake Township Map



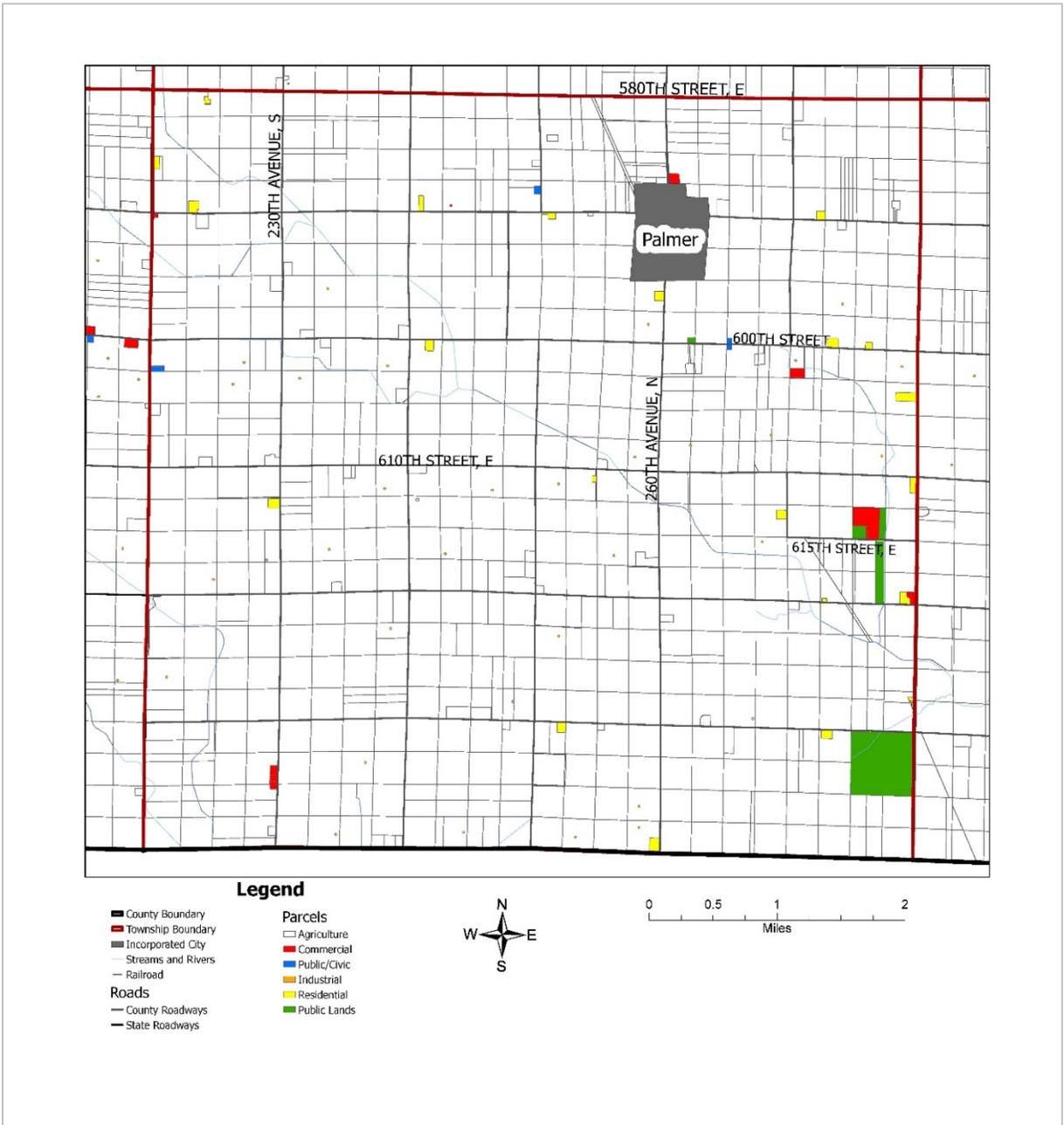
### Cedar Township Map



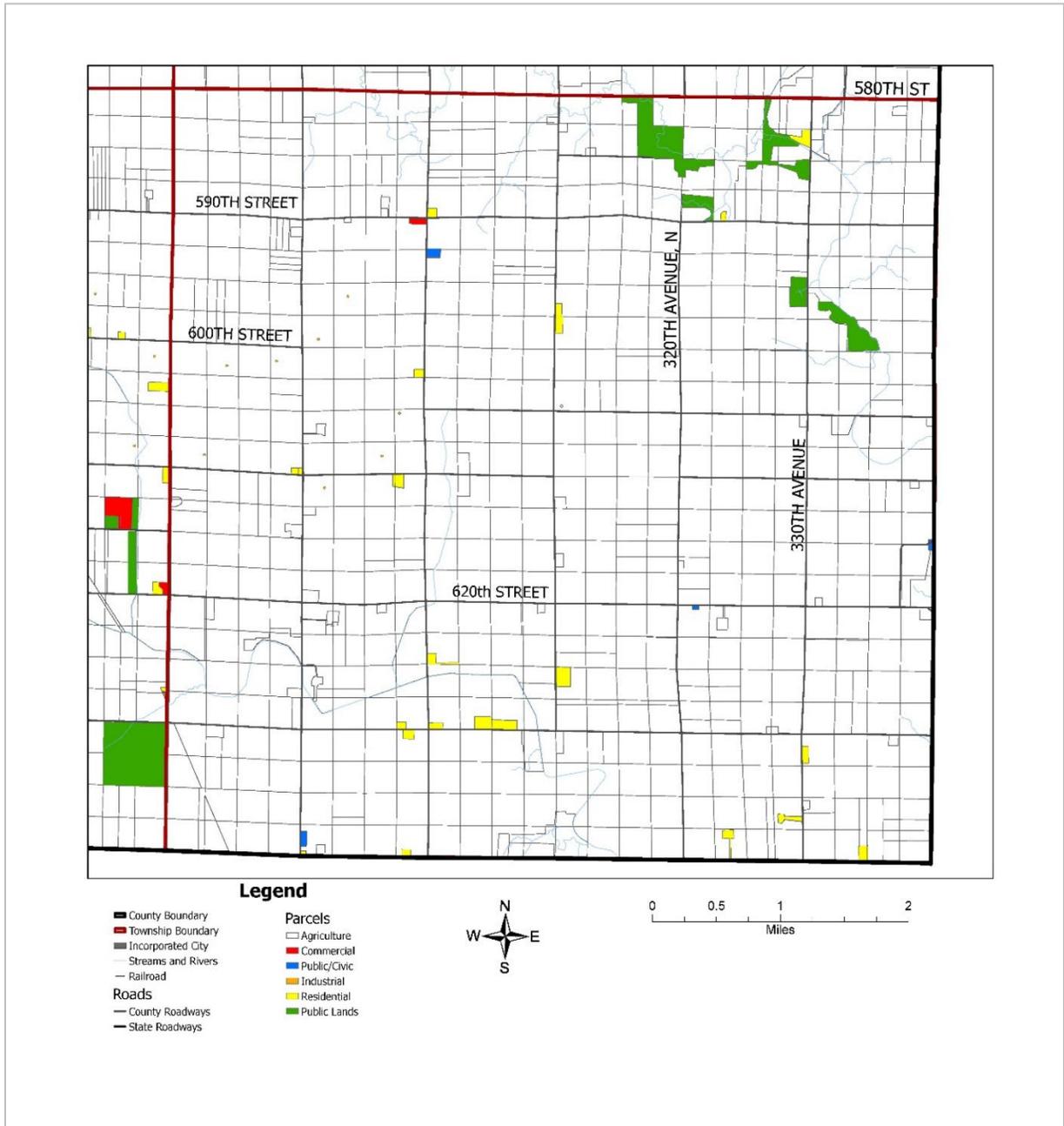
## Colfax Township Map



## Bellville Township Map



## Lizard Township Map



## Appendix B: Meeting Summaries

### **Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting #1**

Emergency Management's (EMA) Office  
Pocahontas County Courthouse, Suite 3  
99 Court Square, Pocahontas, IA  
Tuesday, May 28, 2024  
12:00 PM

- Meeting began at 12:00 p.m. with 6 people in attendance.
- Introductions of MIDAS and those in attendance.
- MIDAS explained details of a comprehensive plan, the planning process, and the responsibility and role of the committee.
- MIDAS presented general data/trends for population, agriculture, economic development, housing, public services and infrastructure, recreation and conservation, and transportation.
- Committee discussed whether or not to do surveys and focus group meeting(s) and logistics of doing them. Committee decided the #1 choice was to have public input meetings. The back-up option would be to do 2 surveys (1 for residents and 1 for businesses). Surveys would be done through Survey Monkey and paper handouts.
- MIDAS presented the "SWOT" Analysis and facilitated the first stage. The Committee brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each of the 6 plan topics.
- MIDAS presented proposed (tentative) timeline for plan.
- Committee discussed general goals that they'd like to see within the plan.
- Committee decided to set up a county department workshop for 2:30 PM on June 25, 2024, at the Pocahontas County Courthouse Assembly Room. This workshop would give different departments within the County a platform to identify SWOTs via their expertise.
- Meeting ended at 1:30 p.m.

Appendix B: Meeting Summaries

**Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan County Department Workshop**

Pocahontas County Courthouse, Assembly Room

99 Court Square, Pocahontas, IA

June 25, 2024

2:30 PM

- Meeting began at 2:30 p.m. with 7 people in attendance: members represented Pocahontas County's Economic Development, County BOS, Auditor's Office, Assessor's Office, and Conservation. Two members of MIDAS attended.
- Introductions of MIDAS and those in attendance.
- MIDAS explained the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan.
- MIDAS facilitated the second stage of SWOT Analysis.
  - o Attendees brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each of the 6 plan topics, utilizing their expertise to provide valuable information that the Committee would review during the next meeting.
- Next Committee meeting set for July 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM.
- Meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

**Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting #2**

Emergency Management's (EMA) Office

Pocahontas County Courthouse, Suite 3

99 Court Square, Pocahontas, IA

July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

12:00 PM

- Meeting began at 12:00 p.m. with 6 people in attendance.
- MIDAS facilitated the final stage of the Committee SWOT Analysis.
  - o The Committee reviewed the SWOT Analysis results from the department meeting, and compared these results with the Committee's results from May 28.
  - o The Committee determined which SWOT results were the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and/or threats.
- The Committee reviewed plan Goals.
- Developed existing land use map.
- Due to time constraints, decided to revisit Objectives and Strategies at the next meeting.
- Committee and MIDAS determined the next meeting time/date would be set via E-mail communication in the coming months as the plan was developed further.
- Meeting ended at 1:30 p.m.

**Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting #3**

Emergency Management's (EMA) Office

Pocahontas County Courthouse, Suite 3

99 Court Square, Pocahontas, IA

November 12, 2024

10:00 AM

- Meeting began at 10:00 a.m. with 6 people in attendance.
- Reviewed existing land use map.
- Identified Objectives and Strategies.
- Due to time constraints, decided to leave the Future Land Use map with the committee to fill out and send back to MIDAS.
- Committee and MIDAS determined the next meeting time/date would be set via E-mail communication in the coming months as the plan was developed further.
- Meeting ended at 11:30 a.m.

**Pocahontas County Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting #4**

Emergency Management's (EMA) Office

Pocahontas County Courthouse, Suite 3

99 Court Square, Pocahontas, IA

April 8, 2025

1:30 PM

- Meeting began at 1:30 PM with 4 people in attendance.
- Reviewed Goals, Objectives, and Strategies, while also completing the Implementation Tool that outlines priority level, responsible party, assisting party/partner, and expected timeframe for each Strategy.
- Discussed existing and future land use map location in plan. Determined existing land use map would be located within the main body of the plan. Future land use map is to be visualized in the Appendices by township.
- Discussed the need for a "Hazards" section in the plan and determined it would be a section within Chapter 3 instead of its own chapter, as it heavily references the Hazard Mitigation Plan that has more in-depth information.
- Discussed Public Input. Decided to move forward with the Community Survey. Determined there would be two surveys, one for the general public and one geared towards businesses. Would publicize through flyers and be available as paper copies and through Survey Monkey.
- Meeting ended at 2:30 p.m.

## Appendix C: Community Survey Results (5/25, 8/25)

Two surveys were created to gather input for the plan. All residents and businesses of the unincorporated area were encouraged to complete the surveys. The business survey was distributed from May-June 2025, and the resident survey was distributed from Aug-Sept 2025. The public input survey addressed 5 areas of focus for the plan (Agriculture, Economic Development, Housing, Recreation and Conservation, and Transportation) as well as funding. The business survey focused on Agriculture, Economic Development, Land Use, and Transportation.

A summary of the survey results can be found below. After the summary, each question from the business survey and public input survey has been broken down into charts and graphs. ]

### **Agriculture**

#### Business Survey

- Majority of respondents are not an agricultural business; those that are, consist of crop farming, ag education, and drainage.
- All agricultural respondents said County should look into programs to preserve agricultural land.
- All ag-business respondents said there were no drainage issues on their farmland.

#### Public Input Survey

- Majority of respondents participated in crop farming.
- Majority of respondents that owned their farm indicated that the farm has been in their family for 30-49 years.
- Majority of respondents said there are drainage issues on their farmland.
- Majority of respondents said the County should focus their funding on Emergency Services, followed by a tie of the following: Economic Development (bring in new business/industry), Maintain existing roads/bridges, and Maintain existing park system.

### **Economic Development**

#### Business Survey

- Majority of respondents owned/managed businesses in Services, "Other" (includes education, construction, etc.), and Medical.
- The majority of respondents said the County should work to establish more non-agriculture businesses/industries in the unincorporated area of the County.
- Half of respondents said the County should focus on attracting the Commercial industry to the unincorporated area of the County, as opposed to Manufacturing, Industrial, or Tourism.

#### Public Input Survey

## Appendix C: Community Survey Results

- Majority of respondents saw Commercial/industrial development most likely occurring within City boundaries.
- Majority of respondents said the county should focus on attracting Manufacturing industry.
- Majority of respondents said no development should be discouraged by the County on agricultural land. The two industries that were most discouraged by respondents, however, were Industrial and Tourism.
- Majority of respondents said the County should work to establish more non-agriculture businesses or industries.

### **Land Use**

#### Business Survey

- Majority of respondents said future development in Pocahontas County should be evenly spread across urban and rural areas of the county.
- The majority of respondents said no types of development should be discouraged by the County on agricultural land.
- Half of respondents said wind power generators should *not* be allowed to locate in the unincorporated area of the County, while half of respondents said wind power generators *should* be allowed to located in the unincorporated area.

#### Public Input Survey

- No questions pertaining to land use were asked on the public input survey.

### **Recreation/Conservation**

#### Business Survey

- No questions pertaining to recreation/conservation were asked on the business survey.

#### Public Input Survey

- Majority of respondents said their household visits parks and public use areas in the unincorporated area of the County a few times per year.
- The majority of respondents rated the parks and public use areas in the unincorporated area of the County as Good.
- Respondents ranked Park Amenities (e.g. shelters, playgrounds) and Hiking/Walking Trails as the most important recreational activity in the unincorporated county. Equestrian Trails ranked as the least important recreational activity.

### **Housing**

#### Business Survey

- Majority of respondents said their business's employees live in an incorporated City within Pocahontas County

#### Public Input Survey

- Majority of respondents indicated that they own their residence.

## Appendix C: Community Survey Results

- Majority of respondents said they are satisfied with their current housing.
- Majority of respondents have lived at their current address for more than 5 years.
- 48.5% of respondents have no mortgage/house payment
- Majority of respondents said they will not be looking for different housing within the next two years.
- Majority of respondents said that they would choose to live in the unincorporated area of the county instead of within an incorporated city because the quality of life is better, and neighbors are not close.
- Majority of respondents said the County should not be allowed to regulate residential agricultural property.

### **Transportation**

#### Business Survey

- Nearly half of respondents said the type/condition of roads was important but not the most significant factor when selecting where to locate their business.
- The majority of respondents said maintenance of highways/roads is the most important issue for their business, as opposed to Bridge Maintenance, Speed Limits, or Other.
- Half of respondents said that they think road improvements should be paid for through a gas tax.
- The majority of respondents said the postal service/UPS/FedEx and Large Semi-Trucks are important freight options for their business.

#### Public Input Survey

- Majority of respondents said better maintenance of highways/roads is an improvement the County should consider for the unincorporated area of the County

## Business Survey

Open from 5/20/25 until 6/6/25.

Total Surveys Returned: 20

### Economic Development

1. Is your business located within the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County?  
(20 responses)

	Percent	Number
Yes	65%	13
No	35%	7

2. What is your zip code?  
(20 responses)

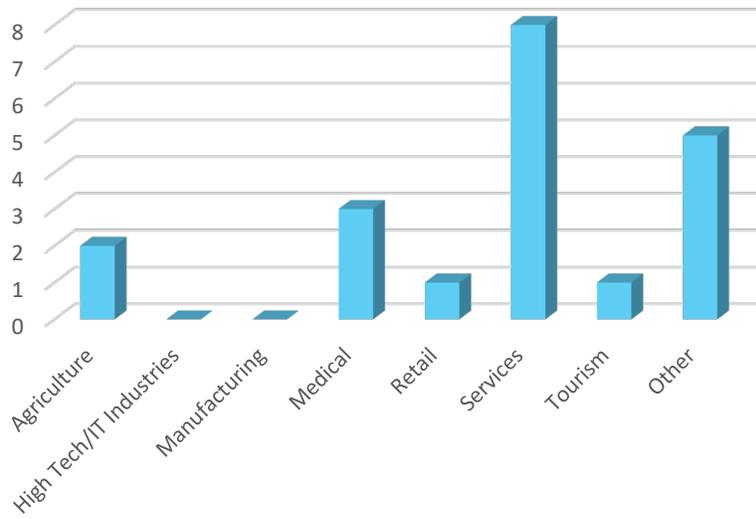
	50574	50554	50575
Number	11	8	1
Percentage	55%	40%	5%

3. What type of business do you have?  
(20 responses)

	Number	Percentage
<b>Agriculture</b> (crop or livestock farming, cooperatives, ethanol, biodiesel, or poultry factories, etc.)	2	10%
<b>High Tech/IT Industries</b> (technical equipment production, medical production, pharmaceuticals, etc.)	0	0%
<b>Manufacturing</b> (product assembly, product disassembly, production, etc.)	0	0%
<b>Medical</b> (hospital, assisted living, rehabilitation, clinics, etc.)	3	15%
<b>Retail</b> (Convenience stores/gas stations, grocery stores, niche shops, etc.)	1	5%
<b>Services</b> (salons, law offices, insurance agencies, etc.)	8	40%
<b>Tourism</b> (museums, historical attractions, etc.)	1	5%
<b>Other</b> (please specify)	5	25%

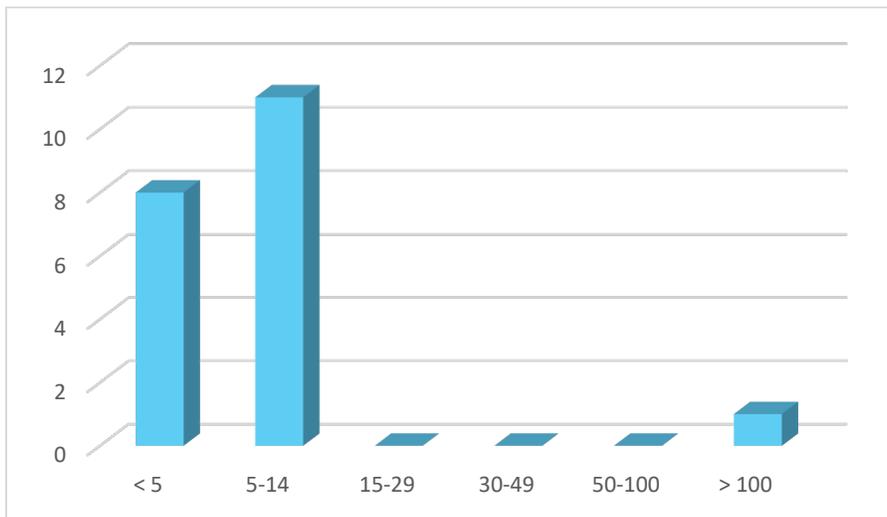
\*"Other" responses: Education, Construction, Municipal Utility, Food & Beverage, Manufacturing and E-Commerce.

Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Business Survey



4. How many employees does your business have?  
(20 responses)

	< 5	5-14	15-29	30-49	50-100	> 100
<b>Number</b>	8	11	0	0	0	1
<b>Percentage</b>	40%	55%	0%	0%	0%	5%



**5. Should the County work to establish more non-agriculture businesses/industries in the unincorporated area of the County?**

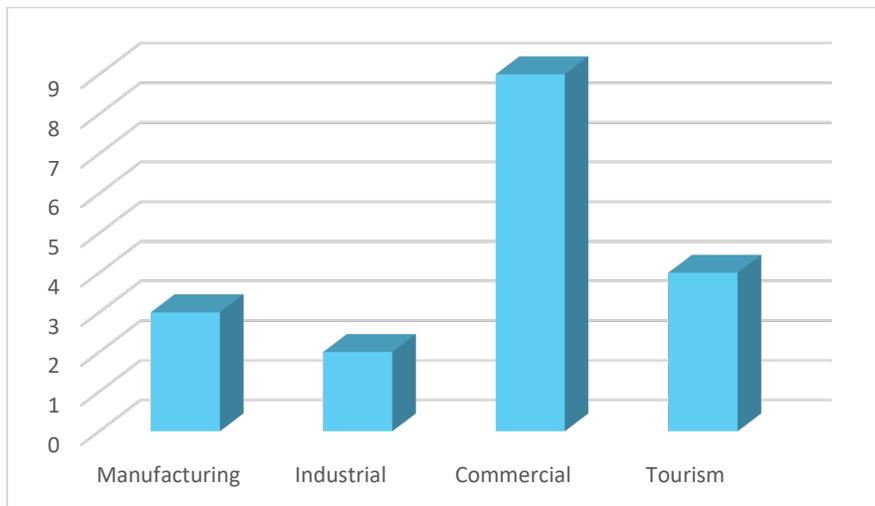
(19 responses)

	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	18	1
<b>Percentage</b>	94.74%	5.26%

**6. What type of industry should the County focus on attracting in the unincorporated area? (Choose one)**

(18 responses)

	Manufacturing	Industrial	Commercial	Tourism
<b>Number</b>	3	2	9	4
<b>Percentage</b>	16.7%	11.1%	50.0%	22.2%

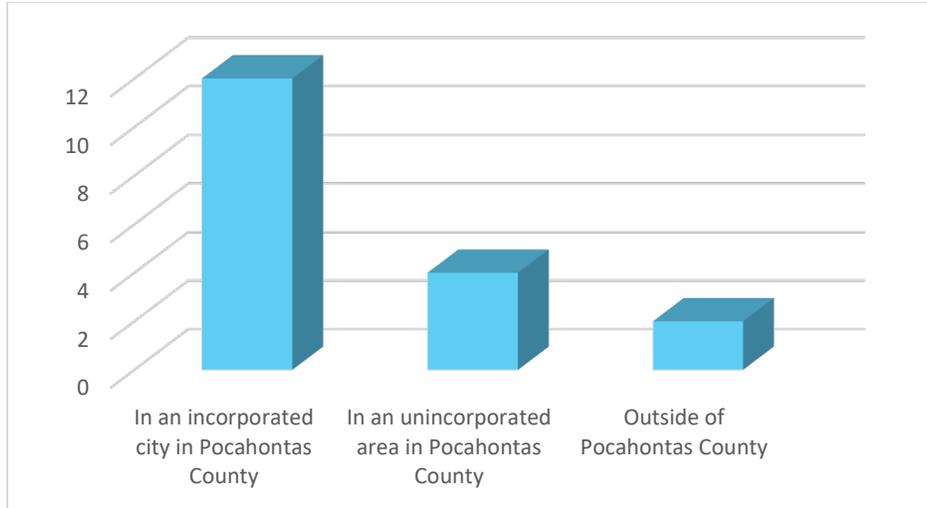


**7. Where do most of your business's employees live? (Choose one)**

(18 responses)

	In an incorporated city in Pocahontas County	In an unincorporated area in Pocahontas County	Outside of Pocahontas County
<b>Number</b>	12	4	2
<b>Percentage</b>	63.2%	21.1%	15.7%

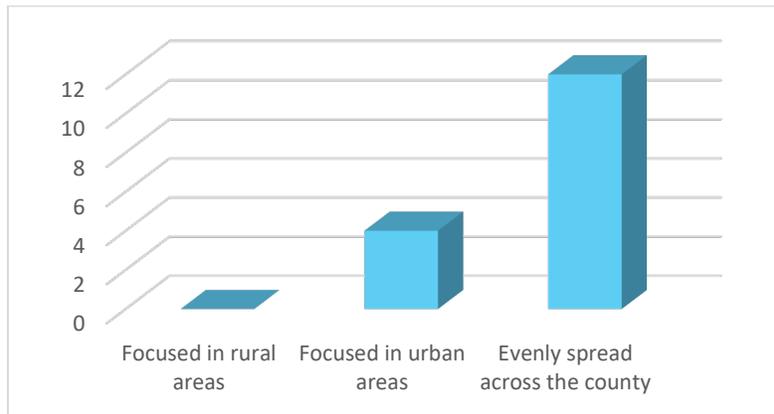
### Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Business Survey



### Land Use

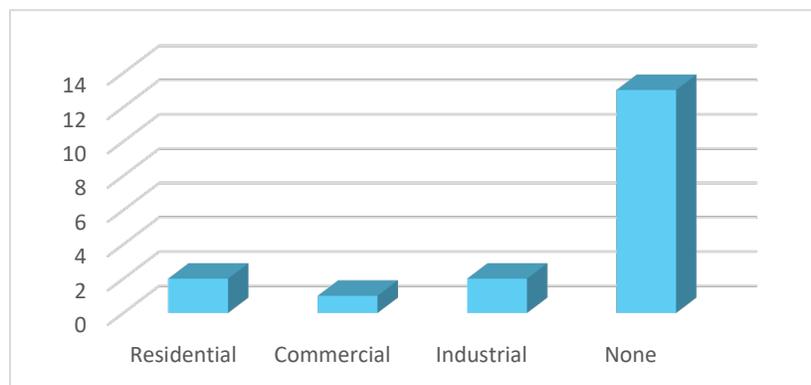
8. Where should future development be focused in Pocahontas County (this includes residential, commercial, and industrial development)? (Choose one)  
(16 responses)

	Focused in rural areas	Focused in urban areas	Evenly spread across the county
<b>Number</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>75%</b>



9. Which type of development should be discouraged by the County on agricultural land? (Select all that apply)  
(18 responses)

	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	None
<b>Number</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>6.25%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>81.25%</b>



10. Should wind power generators be allowed to locate in the unincorporated county?

Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Business Survey

(16 responses)

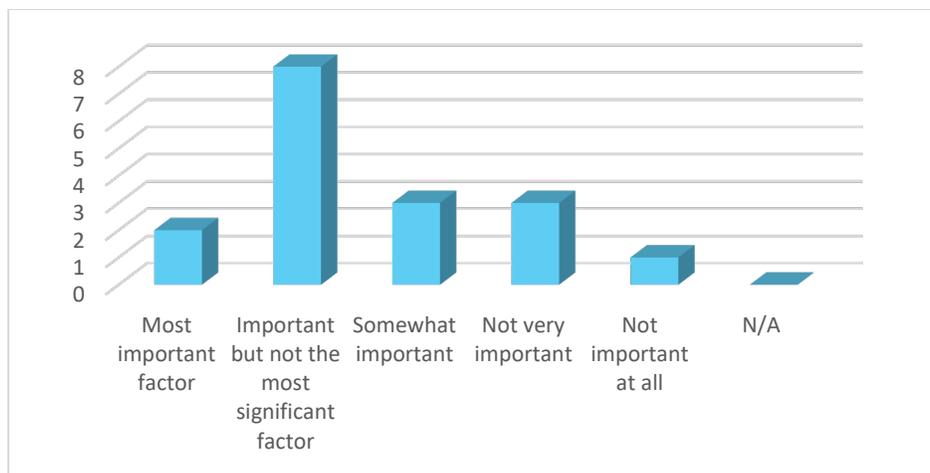
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Number</b>	8	8
<b>Percentage</b>	50%	50%

## Transportation

### 11. How important were the type/condition of roads when selecting where to locate your business?

(17 responses)

	Most important factor	Important but not the most significant factor	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important at all	N/A
<b>Number</b>	2	8	3	3	1	0
<b>Percentage</b>	11.7%	47.1%	17.7%	17.7%	5.8%	0%

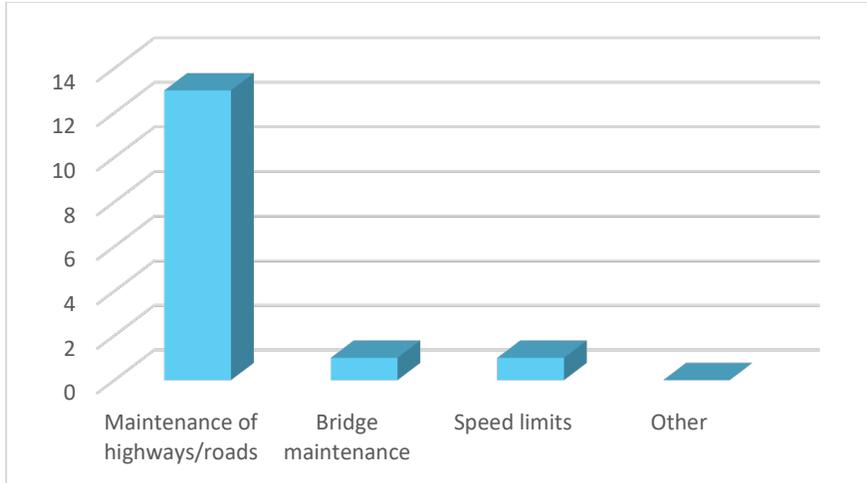


### 12. What is the most important issue for your business when it comes to roads in Pocahontas County?

(15 responses)

	Maintenance of highways/roads	Bridge maintenance	Speed limits	Other
<b>Number</b>	13	1	1	0
<b>Percentage</b>	86.6%	6.7%	6.7%	0%

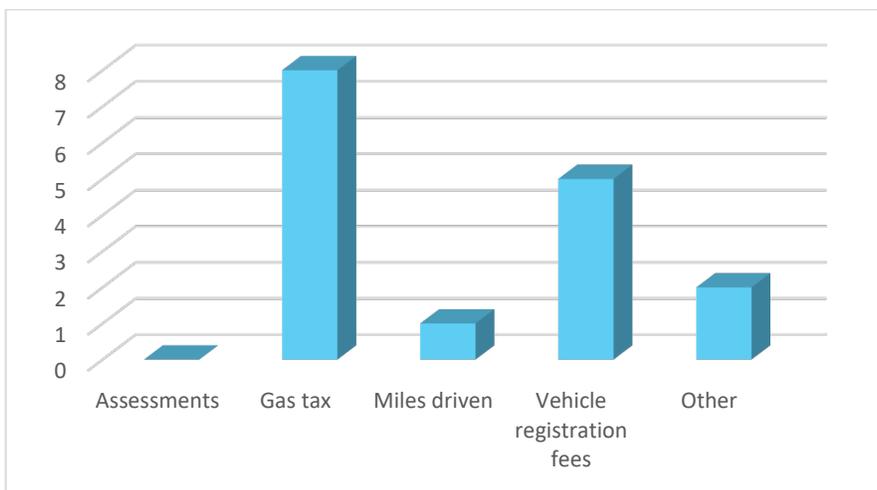
Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Business Survey



**13. How do you think road maintenance/improvements should be paid for?**  
(16 responses)

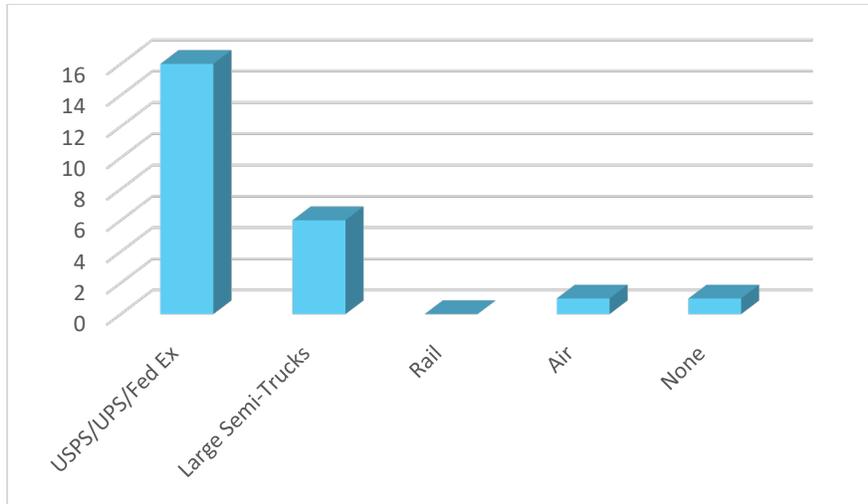
	Assessments	Gas Tax	Miles driven	Vehicle registration fees	Other
<b>Number</b>	0	8	1	5	2
<b>Percentage</b>	0%	50%	6.25%	31.25%	12.5%

\*"Other" responses: Portion of gas tax and vehicle registration fee, from the taxes we are already paying



**14. Which freight options are important to your business? (Select all that apply)**  
(17 responses)

	USPS/UPS/Fed Ex	Large Semi-Trucks	Rail	Air	None
<b>Number</b>	16	6	0	1	1
<b>Percentage</b>	94.1%	35.3%	0%	5.9%	5.9%



**Agriculture**

**15. Are you an agricultural business (farm establishment, seed sales, equipment, cooperative, etc.)?**  
(17 responses)

	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	3	14
<b>Percentage</b>	17.7%	82.3%

**16. What type of agriculture business are you? (Select all that apply)**  
(3 responses)

	Number	Percentage
Livestock farm (cattle, hogs, sheep, etc.)	0	0%
Crop farm (corn, soybeans, wheat, etc.)	1	33.3%
Cooperative	0	0%
Seed Sales	0	0%
Hay Farm	0	0%
Poultry livestock farm (chickens, turkeys, eggs, etc.)	0	0%
Dairy Farm	0	0%
Ethanol/Biodiesel	0	0%
Other	2	66.7%

\*“Other” responses: Ag Education, Drainage

**17. Should the County look into programs to preserve agricultural lands?**  
(2 responses)

	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	2	0
<b>Percentage</b>	100%	0%

**a) If yes, which programs to preserve agricultural lands would you suggest?**  
(1 responses)

	Number	Percentage
Farmland Development Rights Agreements	1	100%
Easements (Conservation, Open Space, etc.)	1	100%
Purchase of Development Rights	1	100%
Transfer of Development Rights	1	100%
I don't know	0	0%
Other (Please specify)	0	0%

**18. Do you supply your products to any of the following events or resources in Pocahontas County?**

(2 responses)

	Number	Percentage
Fairs/Farm Festivals	0	0%
Farmers Market	0	0%
Specialty Farms (corn mazes, orchard, wineries, organic farms, etc.)	0	0%
N/A – Do not supply	1	50%
Other (Please specify)	1	50%

\*“Other” responses: Community Garden – produce to those in need

**19. Is your business a family-owned farm?**

(3 responses)

	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	1	2
<b>Percentage</b>	33.3%	66.7%

**a) If yes, how long has it been in your family?**

(1 responses)

	Number	Percentage
Less than 2 years	0	0%
2-9 years	0	0%
10-19 years	0	0%
20-29 years	0	0%
30-49 years	0	0%
50-99 years	1	100%
100 years or more	0	0%

**20. If your business consists of crop farming, are there drainage issues on the land you farm?**

(2 responses)

	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	0	2
<b>Percentage</b>	0%	100%

**21. Please provide any additional comments you may have on these topics within Pocahontas County, or on anything you believe should be considered when developing a comprehensive plan for the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County:**

(3 responses)

- Working with large electric companies, such as solar and windmill, do great for helping our taxbases. They should be welcomed to the county upon consent of the landowner they wish to work with.
- We need to find and work on ways of keeping what we have and looking for other small wins. We also need to be sure that people running county sponsored committees understand what we need for the future of our county to survive. I think we are struggling at that right now.
- Pocahontas county and its towns should focus on helping and improving the businesses that are already up and running. They should encourage and support ALL businesses, not just new or selective ones. Towns should focus on regulating their business districts - not allowing people to have potential storefronts sit full of junk, making the town look trashy and like it's dying.

## Public Input Survey

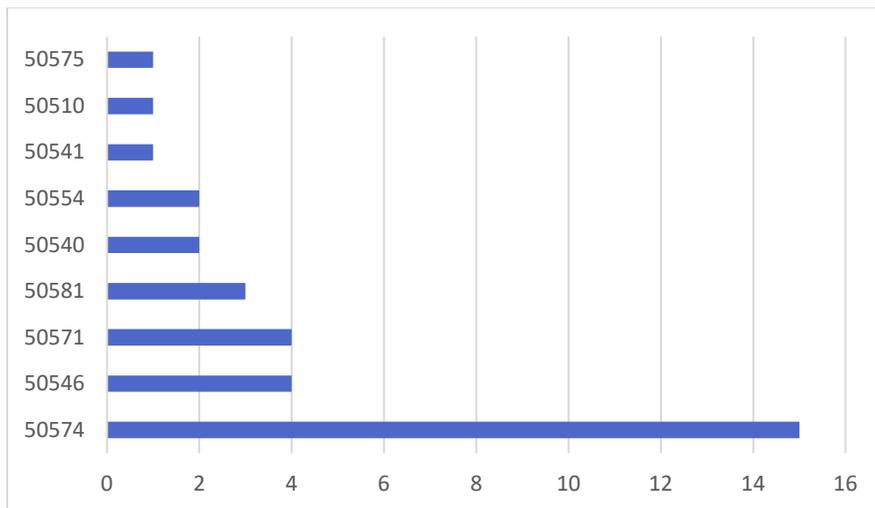
Open from 7/28/25 until 8/11/25.

Total surveys returned: 33

### General Questions

2. What is your zip code?  
(33 responses)

	Number	Percentage
<b>50574</b>	15	45.5%
<b>50546</b>	4	12.1%
<b>50571</b>	4	12.1%
<b>50581</b>	3	9.1%
<b>50540</b>	2	6.1%
<b>50554</b>	2	6.1%
<b>50541</b>	1	3%
<b>50510</b>	1	3%
<b>50575</b>	1	3%



2. Do you live in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County (outside incorporated city limits)?  
(33 responses)

Yes	No
-----	----

<b>Number</b>	12	21
<b>Percentage</b>	36.4%	63.6%

## Housing

### 3. What type of housing do you live in?

(33 responses)

	Rent	Own
<b>Number</b>	2	31
<b>Percentage</b>	6.1%	93.9%

### 4. Are you satisfied with your current housing?

(33 responses)

	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	30	3
<b>Percentage</b>	90.9%	9.1%

### 5. How long have you lived at your current address?

(33 responses)

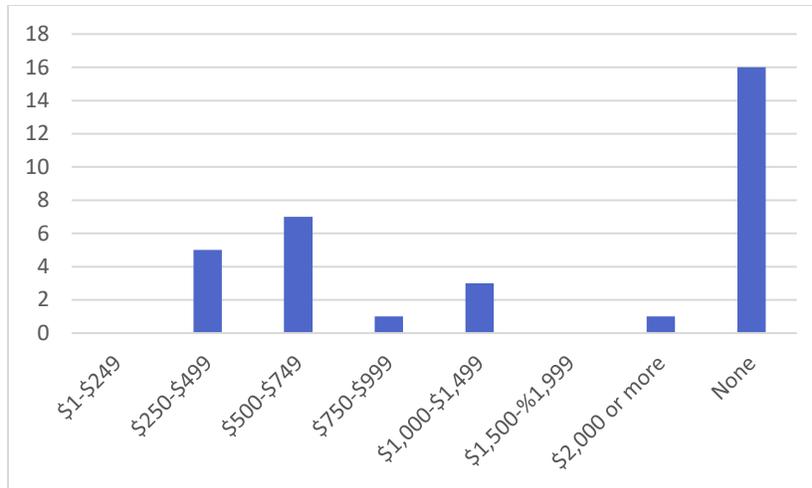
	Less than 6 months	6 months-less than 1 year	1-5 years	More than 5 years
<b>Number</b>	1	0	6	26
<b>Percentage</b>	3%	0%	18.2%	78.8%

### 6. What is your current monthly rent or house payment?

(33 responses)

	Number	Percentage
\$1-\$249	0	0%
\$250-\$499	5	15.2%
\$500-\$749	7	21.2%
\$750-\$999	1	3%
\$1,000-\$1,499	3	9.1%
\$1,500-\$1,999	0	0%
\$2,000 or more	1	3%
None	16	48.5%

Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Public Input Survey



**7. Will you be looking for different housing within the next two years?**  
(33 responses)

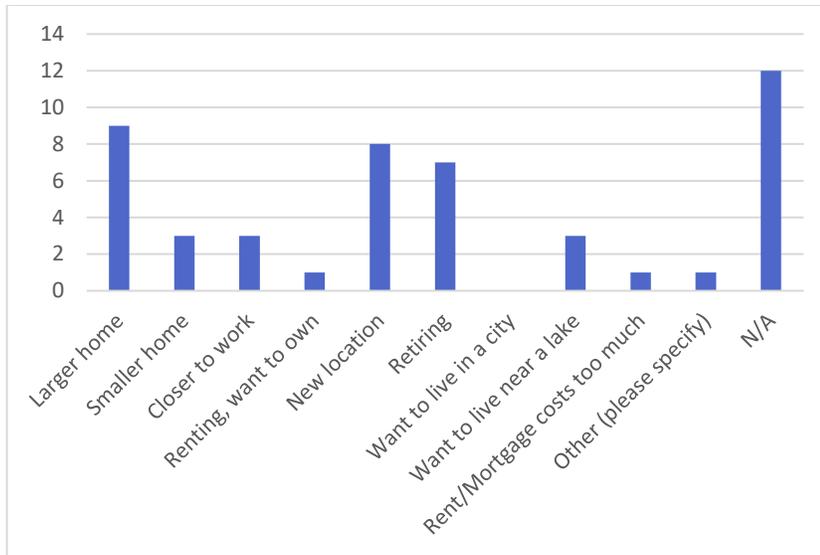
	Yes	No	Possibly
<b>Number</b>	1	22	10
<b>Percentage</b>	3%	66.7%	30.3%

**8. What would make you consider different housing? (Select all that apply)**  
(31 responses)

	Number
Larger home	9
Smaller home	3
Closer to work	3
Renting, want to own	1
New location	8
Retiring	7
Want to live in a city	0
Want to live near a lake	3
Rent/Mortgage costs too much	1
Other (please specify)	1
N/A	12

\*"Other" responses: Closer to family

Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Public Input Survey



**9. Why would you choose to live in the unincorporated area of the county instead of within an incorporated city? (Select all that apply)**  
(32 responses)

	Number
Farm the land	8
Fewer regulations	7
Housing is more affordable	5
Neighbors are not close	16
Optimum location for work	1
Quality of life is better	11
More recreational activities available	4
Taxes are less	5
N/A, I want to live in an incorporated city	11
Other (please specify):	1

\*“Other” responses: we enjoy our garden, pastures, tress, and privacy

**10. Do you feel the County should be allowed to regulate residential agricultural property?**  
(32 responses)

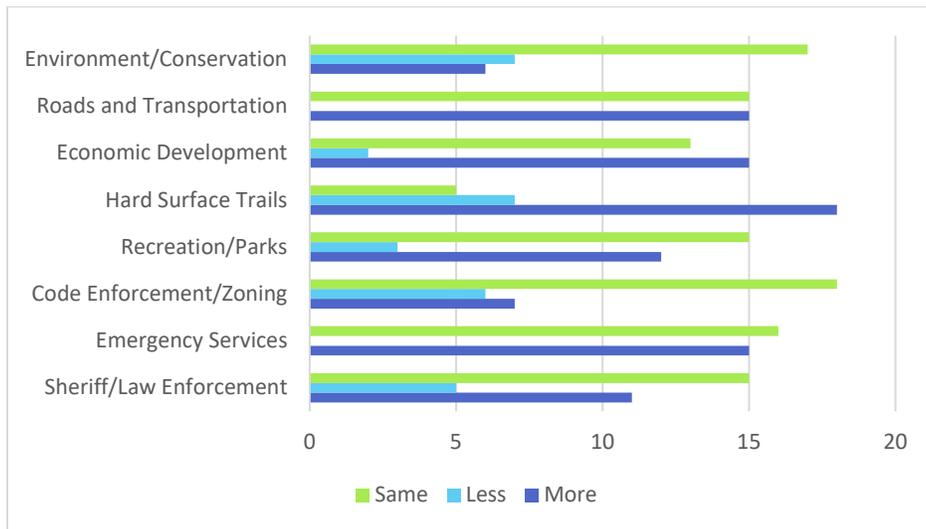
	Yes	No
Number	11	21
Percentage	34.4%	65.6%

## Recreation and Conservation

**11. Of the following services, where would you like to see Pocahontas County spend MORE, LESS, or the SAME amount of money in the next 5 to 10 years?**

(31 responses)

	More	Less	Same
<b>Sheriff/Law Enforcement</b>	11	5	15
<b>Emergency Services</b>	15	0	16
<b>Code Enforcement/Zoning</b>	7	6	18
<b>Recreation/Parks</b>	12	3	15
<b>Hard Surface Trails</b>	18	7	5
<b>Economic Development</b>	15	2	13
<b>Roads and Transportation</b>	15	0	15
<b>Environment/Conservation</b>	6	7	17
<b>Rural Drainage</b>	4	3	23

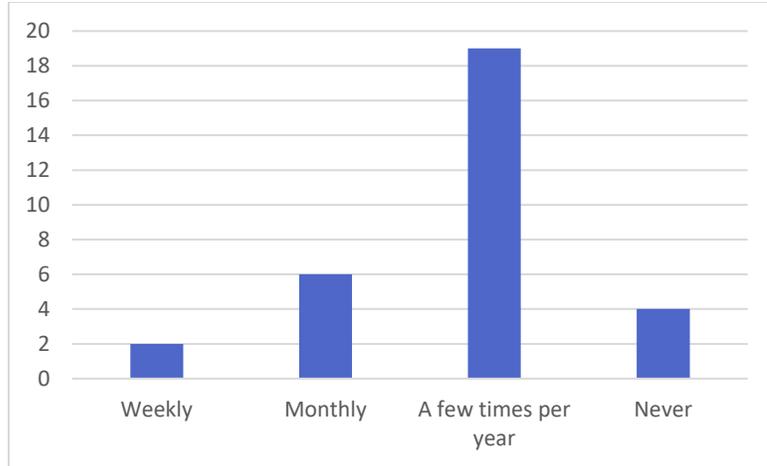


**12. How often does your household visit parks and public use areas in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County?**

(31 responses)

	Weekly	Monthly	A few times per year	Never
<b>Number</b>	2	6	19	4
<b>Percentage</b>	6.5%	19.3%	61.3%	12.9%

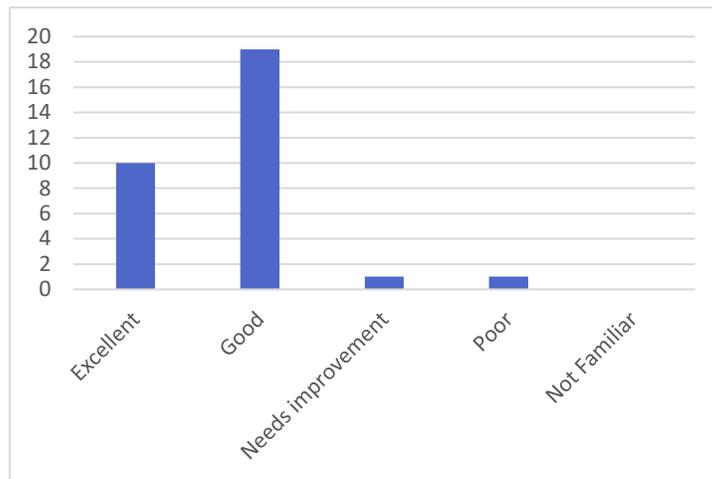
Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Public Input Survey



**13. How would you rate the parks and public use areas in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County?**

(31 responses)

	Number	Percentage
Excellent	10	32.3%
Good	19	61.3%
Needs improvement	1	3.2%
Poor	1	3.2%
Not Familiar	0	0%



**14. How would you rate the parks and public use areas in the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County?**

(31 responses)

	Least Important (1)	2	3	4	Most Important (5)
Bike Trails	8	1	4	7	10
Hiking/Walking Trails	4	4	3	6	12
Equestrian Trails	14	6	7	2	1
Water Trails	10	7	11	1	2
Park Amenities (e.g. shelters, playgrounds)	1	4	6	9	10
Lake/River Access	6	5	7	10	2
Motor Boating	9	5	13	1	2
Non-Motor Boating	6	10	11	1	2
Off-Road Vehicle/ATV Areas	6	6	10	3	5
Tent Camping Areas	7	4	8	4	6
RV (full hookup) Areas	1	2	10	6	11
Fishing Areas	2	0	11	8	9
Hunting Areas	3	1	12	6	8
Trapshooting Range/Archery Range	5	2	13	3	7
Wildlife Sanctuaries (non-hunting areas)	7	6	11	4	3

**Transportation**

**15. What transportation improvements should the County consider for the unincorporated area? (Select all that apply)**

(31 responses)

	Number
Better maintenance of highways/roads	22
Increased bridge maintenance	13
Changing speed limits	9
Wider/Paved shoulders on highways	15
Closing of low usage roads	3
Other (please specify):	3

\*“Other” responses: There is by far too much speeding on Highway 4 between Pocahontas and Havelock it’s become dangerous, Doing a better job on the gravel roads in some areas, Better weed and tree control in ditches and more wildflowers etc.

## Economic Development

**16. Where do you see commercial/industrial development most likely occurring in the county?**

(31 responses)

	Outside boundaries/limits of incorporated cities	Within incorporated cities' boundaries/limits
<b>Number</b>	9	22
<b>Percentage</b>	29%	71%

**17. What type of industry should the County be attracting within the unincorporated area? (Choose one)**

(29 responses)

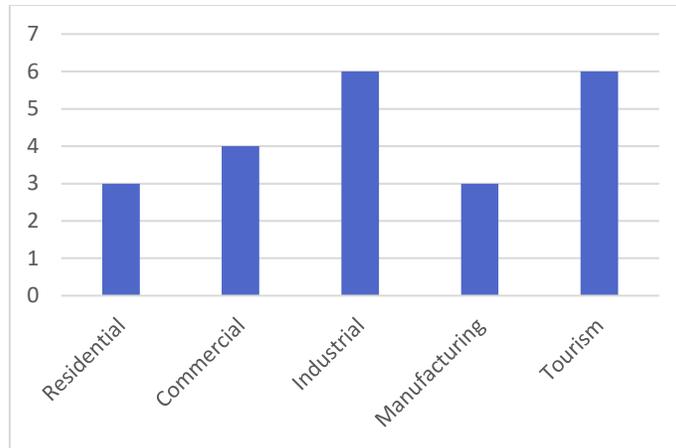
	Number	Percentage
Manufacturing	16	55.2%
Industrial Agriculture	9	31%
Agrotourism	0	0%
Commercial	2	6.9%
Medical	0	0%
Tourism	2	6.9%
Other (please specify):	0	0%

**18. Which types of development should the County discourage on agricultural land? (Select all that apply)**

(31 responses)

	Number
Residential	3
Commercial	4
Industrial	6
Manufacturing	3
Tourism	6
None	19

Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Public Input Survey



**19. Should Pocahontas County work to establish more non-agriculture businesses or industries?**

(31 responses)

	Yes	No
Number	25	6
Percentage	80.6%	19.4%

**Agriculture**

**20. Are you an agricultural business (farm establishment, seed sales, equipment, cooperative, etc.)?**

(26 responses)

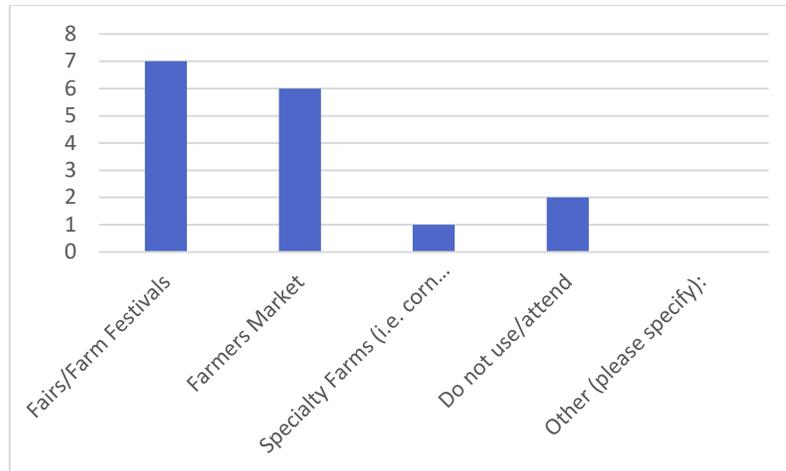
	Yes	No
Number	6	20
Percentage	23.1%	76.9%

**21. What agricultural events do you regularly attend within Pocahontas County? (Select all that apply)**

(10 responses)

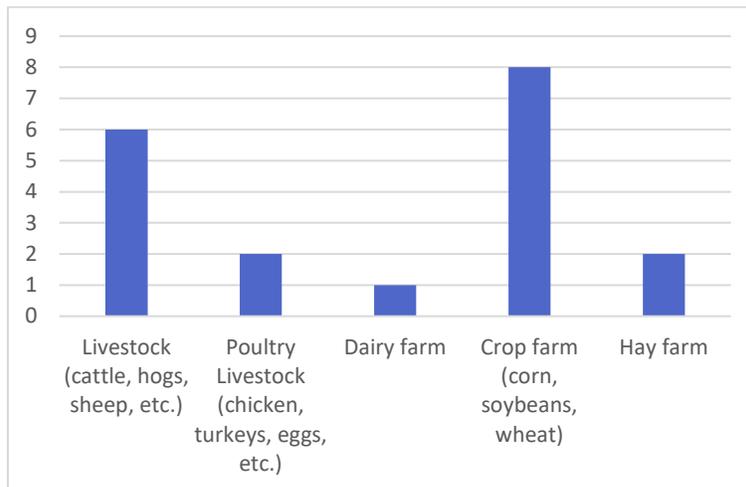
	Number
Fairs/Farm Festivals	7
Farmers Market	6
Specialty Farms (i.e. corn mazes, orchards, wineries/vineyards, organic farms, etc.)	1
Do not use/attend	2
Other (please specify):	0

Appendix C: Community Survey Results, Public Input Survey



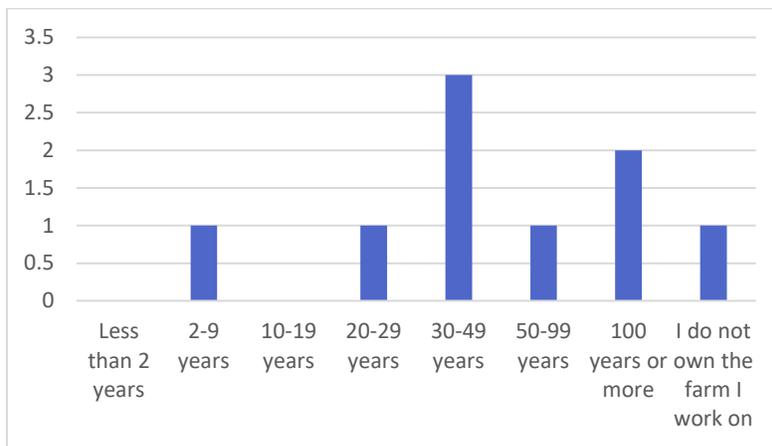
22. What type of agricultural business do you participate in? (Select all that apply)  
(9 responses)

	Number
Livestock (cattle, hogs, sheep, etc.)	6
Poultry Livestock (chicken, turkeys, eggs, etc.)	2
Dairy farm	1
Crop farm (corn, soybeans, wheat)	8
Hay farm	2
Other (please specify):	0



**23. If you own the farm on which you work, how long has it been in your family?**  
(9 responses)

	Number
Less than 2 years	0
2-9 years	1
10-19 years	0
20-29 years	1
30-49 years	3
50-99 years	1
100 years or more	2
I do not own the farm I work on	1



**24. Are there drainage issues on the land you farm?**  
(9 responses)

	Yes	No
Number	5	4
Percentage	55.6%	44.4%

**25. Rate which areas the county should focus their funding on.**

(30 responses)

	Least Important (1)	2	3	4	Most Important (5)
Economic Development (bring in new business/industry)	0	1	11	10	8
Maintain existing roads/bridges	1	2	10	5	12
Add new roads/Pave existing roads	5	7	11	2	5
Tourism	3	8	13	3	3
Preservation of agricultural land	0	2	10	8	9
Housing	1	1	7	11	9
Maintain existing park system	1	3	6	10	10
Expand park system	5	6	8	2	9
Maintain existing trail network	3	3	7	10	7
Expand trail network	7	2	6	5	10
Drainage system	0	4	14	4	6
Law enforcement	0	6	9	6	9
Emergency response	0	0	9	8	12
Bring rural water to the County	8	7	10	4	1

**Demographics**

**26. What is your age?**

(30 responses)

	Number	Percentage
Under 18	0	0%
18-34	2	6.7%
35-54	12	40%
55-74	16	53.3%
75 or Older	0	0%

27. Please indicate the number of persons in your household, including yourself, by age (e.g. 2 31-64, 1 6-12 years).  
(30 responses)

	Under 5 years	6-12 years	13-18 years	19-30 years	31-64 years	65 and over
<b>Number</b>	4	8	6	16	37	12

Please provide any additional comments you may have on these topics within Pocahontas County, or on anything you believe should be considered when developing a comprehensive plan for the unincorporated area of Pocahontas County:

- I'm VERY concerned about the solar farms that are in the works to be built in this county. I feel that the use of prime farmland is only beneficial to a select few. I feel that the budget for Law Enforcement has been more than adequate, and I am praying that the funds spent on the new jail and Sheriff's Department will be the asset that we were told it will be.
- Like a ymca or something for families or teens to do. Need more things to do. More activities. Something for everyone young and old. To stay fit get out house all year round.
- I believe the solid waste system needs to be taken over as a county department, provide services for small towns and develop itself into a self-sustaining entity.

## Appendix D: SWOT Results (6/25/24, 7/9/24)

### County Department Workshop and SWOT Results

SWOT input was provided from two meetings: the County Department workshop on 6/25/24, and the Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting on 7/9/24. Items in **bold** were determined by the Committee as most important.

#### Agriculture

##### Strengths:

- **Grain production**
- **Animal production**
- **Organic farming influx (exporting products)**
- Higher agriculture values due to higher CSR2 values
- Little river flooding
- New family farm businesses

##### Weaknesses:

- **Workforce**
- Housing for workers
- Cleanup for old sites (i.e. hog confinements, windmills)
- Cost of cleanup/removal
- Windmills and solar power take away from farmland

##### Opportunities:

- **Progressive agriculture state always looking to improve and make things better**
- The Pro Co-Op new train loading facility in Havelock

##### Threats:

- **Absentee landowners**
- Avian bird flu
- Animal disease (particularly a threat to hog confinements)

## Economic Development

### Strengths:

- **Growing Fiber Network**
- **Quality of life**
- **Centrally located in relation to other larger towns (i.e. Spencer, Fort Dodge, Storm Lake, etc.)**
  - Lower cost of living than larger towns
- Active group
- Hospital brings patients to town
- Make My Move members
  - Move to the area for a job with their spouses
- Low crime
- Timely access to medical care, including quick appointments with doctors and short ER wait time
- Variety of businesses

### Weaknesses:

- **Only one grocery store in county**
- Local stores closing
- Limited entry-level housing
- Aging nursing home facilities
- Lack of hotels
- Workforce – quantity and quality

### Opportunities:

- Fiber network
- Governor's broadband initiative
- Telework/remote work

### Threats:

- State commission determined there were too many beds in nursing homes
- Workforce for nursing homes
- Cost of transportation to commute (i.e. maintenance, etc.)

## Housing

### Strengths:

- **Housing Trust Fund for home repairs**
- **Low property taxes**
- Working with nuisance inspector
- Increase in building permits for acreages

### Weaknesses:

- **Lack of affordable housing**
- **Lack of quality rental housing in the rural area**
- Nowhere for higher income residents to rent
- Only acreages available to buy
- Lots not available to build on due to corporations buying them out
- Lack of entry-level housing

### Opportunities:

- Incentives for contractors
- Homes for Iowa

### Threats:

- **Landowners that don't live on said land**
  - **Particularly investment farmland owners**
- Weather destroys businesses
- Weather/flooding scares off contractors
- Retiring/aging contractors

## Public Services and Infrastructure

### Strengths:

- **Windmill farms (tax base)**
- **County sheds in most communities (not just one central location)**
- **Good rural roads**
- Volunteer fire departments
- Levy funding
- New jail reduces liability
- Hospital pays for transit rides for patients
- Full-time paramedics on staff
- Keep secondary road equipment updated
- NW Career Academy in Laurens
- Utilities – NW Communication, Laurens Municipal, Rolfe Municipal Water
- Good daycares

### Weaknesses:

- **Natural gas capacity is limited**
- **Volunteerism throughout the county is in decline**
- Volunteers getting older
- Lack of grant writers
- Limited on what can be offered as school amenities
- Some restricted bridges and roads
- Not many roads that qualify for FM funds or STBG roads
- High turnover in staff and students
- Daycare staff is hard to come by
- Lack of a large event center
- Ambulance and first responder volunteers are low

### Opportunities:

- Grant funding (including federal Grant opportunities/CDBG, USDA, etc.)
- 3-year preschool

### Threats:

- **Mandated trainings for EMS and all first responders**
- **Cost of equipment/repairs**
- **Workforce for daycare and preschool**
- Grant funding
- Lower funding from AEA and Upper Des Moines

## Recreation and Conservation

### Strengths:

- **Variety of options**
- West branch of Des Moines River
- Park amenities
- 5-man crew
- Canoeing
- EDC funds for trails
- Gym in the church outside of Palmer that can be used in emergency (showers, bathroom, food)
- Trap shooting in Palmer revitalized
- 4 golf courses
- Bike trails
- Grants
- Campgrounds

### Weaknesses:

- **Lack of indoor recreation**
- Limited on the number of trails

### Opportunities:

- **Grant funding**
- Additional bike trails
- New Laurens pool that will host competitions
- Partnering with the DOT

### Threats:

- Weather that is capable of ruining facilities
- Argumentative – farming vs. preservation
- Argumentative – legislation limiting land for trails

## Transportation

### Strengths:

- **MIDAS/RTA Transit**
- **Hospital contracted services for clients**
- **Railroad**

### Weaknesses:

- **No Uber/Lyft**
- Electrical grid
  - Only 3 charging plug-ins at dealership
- Peak electric usage
- No micro transit/after-hours transit
- Church transportation is lacking
- Population utilizing public transit

### Opportunities:

- Direct arterials to larger cities (i.e. Emmetsburg, Humboldt, Fort Dodge, Spencer, etc.)
- Highways 15, 4, 3 (28 was just reworked)

### Threats:

- **Poor state roads**
- RTA drivers
- Mandated electrical vehicle regulation

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