

Butler County, Iowa

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update
2025



RESOLUTION NUMBER #32-2025

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 2025

WHEREAS, said plan is authorized under Chapter 335 and 368 of the Iowa Code, as amended, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held by the Butler County Board of Supervisors on June 17th, 2025, at 9:00 AM in the Butler County Courthouse Basement EOC on the proposed adoption of the Butler County Comprehensive Plan Update, and

WHEREAS, said plan was developed with consideration of the smart planning principles under section 18B.1 of the Iowa Code and includes information specified in section 18b.2, subsection 2 of the Iowa Code,

WHEREAS, said plan is a policy document that considers the community's demographics, public facilities, land use, transportation, housing and implementation procedures, and

WHEREAS, said plan looks at community development by outlining a land use plan and is the basis for Butler County's zoning, subdivision, annexation, and urban renewal tools and regulations, and

WHEREAS, an integral part of the plan is providing opportunities for public input in the Comprehensive Plan Update 2025 process, including the use of Task Force meetings, community survey, community open house, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Board of Supervisors' hearings and meetings, and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission has subsequent to its formal public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan Update 2025 recommended it be approved, and

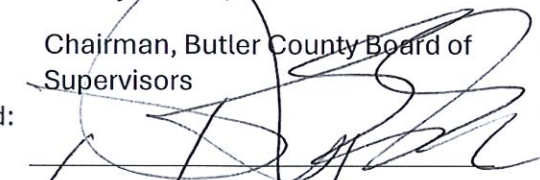
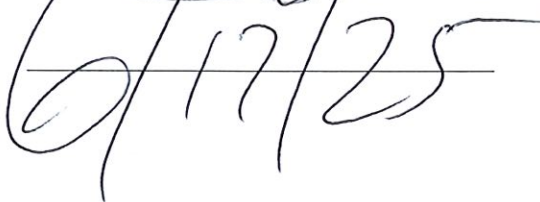
WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update 2025 has been the subject of, or a discussion item on the agenda of, numerous task force meetings, public meetings, Planning and Zoning Commission work-sessions, and presentations, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan is a primary land use tool of the Board of Supervisors, Planning and Zoning Commission; Board of Adjustment; and Butler County staff, and

WHEREAS, said plan is in the best interests of the city of Butler County, now therefore BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors hereby approve and adopt the Butler County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2025 as a replacement in its entirety to the existing Comprehensive Plan this 17th day of June, 2025.

Signed: _____
Chairman, Butler County Board of Supervisors



Date: _____

ATTEST: Leslie Groen, County Auditor

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

The County would like to thank the following entities, bodies, staff, and volunteers who provided input, time, and resources into the development of this plan. Special thanks to Butler County who provided their time and effort to make this an effective document.

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Goals and Objectives

COMMUNITY CHARACTER Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Ensure the preservation and conservation of land and other natural, human, and economic resources in Butler County that are the basis of the rural community, economy, and lifestyle and ensure its residents can maintain a strong quality of life. Quality of life shall include the following objectives:

- Objective A: Education. The county will work to ensure all residents have access to quality education.
- Objective B: Parks and Recreation. The Butler County Conservation Board will continue to work to ensure the county has a strong access to recreational opportunities and preserves valuable land for environmental preservation and recreation opportunities.
- Objective C: Health. The county will work to ensure all residents have adequate access to quality healthcare.
- Objective D: Attraction. The county will continue to work to ensure current and future residents want to live, work, and stay within the county.
- Objective E: Arts, Culture, and Historical Preservation. The county will work with appropriate organizations to offer cultural opportunities to its residents and preserve historical landmarks.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Preserve agricultural land, ensuring that areas that are considered “prime” agricultural areas are preserved to the greatest extent possible.

- Objective A. In making land use decisions, the county shall consider the compatibility of existing surrounding land uses and the proposed use.
- Objective B. The county shall consider the availability of services needed for land use change requests.
- Objective C. The county shall require applicants to provide information regarding the services required for development at the time of the development request.
- Objective D. The county will prioritize the preservation of “prime” agricultural soils by considering land characteristics such as Corn Suitability Rating (CSR), soil type, and crop history.
- Objective E. The county will encourage the development of agricultural areas to be compact and efficient as well as similar developments.
- Objective F. Research and consider adopting Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) scoring system when considering land use compatibility for development.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES Goals and Objectives

Goal #2 Balance existing farmland on productive soils with community development needs by rezoning agricultural to residential to alleviate the demand for housing.

- Objective A. Consider the feasibility of establishing agricultural buffers between developed areas and farmland to protect against encroachment.
- Objective B. Require use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the installation of erosion control measures such as silt fences, sediment basins, and erosion control blankets to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation during construction activities.
- Objective C. Encourage agricultural stakeholders to adopt practices that enhance soil health and productivity.
- Objective D. Support land restoration initiatives that can help preserve agricultural lands while enhancing ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.
- Objective E. The county will work to develop specific residential overlays that will focus on residential development with already established infrastructure that can be developed in higher Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) areas.

Goal #3 Achieve a balance between residential, commercial, and industrial development, conservation efforts, and preservation of agricultural lands.

- Objective A. Collaborate with County Conservation, land trust, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources to acquire and preserve crucial lands for biodiversity conservation, recreation, and public enjoyment.

Goal #4 Preserve, promote, and maintain a greenbelt system along all river and drainage systems in Butler County as an aid to prevent soil erosion, promote passive recreation, preserve habitat, and limit development on active floodplains especially along the Shell Rock River, West Fork Cedar, and Beaver Creek areas.

Goal #5 Ensure the maintenance and improvement of the environmental quality of the soil, air, water, and land for all residents, present and future, living in the county.

Goal #6 Conserve and protect remaining wetland areas and promote wetland area growth in areas in which development is not feasible or beneficial.

Goal #7 Promote environmental education, habitat management and development, and leadership programs at the local level that engage agricultural producers, conservationists, and the public to ensure the protection and conservation of Butler County's current natural resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Maintain and enhance economic development opportunities throughout the county.

- Objective A. Continue to foster strong relationships with local groups including Butler-Grundy Economic Alliance and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach to leverage collective strengths, resources, and expertise to drive sustainable economic growth, enhance regional competitiveness, and improve quality of life for residents.
- Objective B. Support Butler-Grundy Development Alliance in the development and negotiation of potential business incentive packages that benefit the county.
- Objective C. Increase and enhance the marketing of Butler County to those outside of the county to attract residents and visitors alike.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Goals and Objectives

Goal #2 Promote job training programs that benefit Butler County's workforce and employers.

- Objective A. Support local training and education for workforce to secure job placements within the county.
- Objective B. Partner with local employers and higher education institutions to improve interest and skill development for local jobs.
- Objective C. Educate youth on the local job opportunities available including developing job shadowing opportunities.

Goal #3 Maintain existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district management practices through regular reporting to Iowa Department of Management and encourage regional cooperation of jurisdictions to foster successful outcome of TIF district growth within the county.

- Objective A. Partner to provide training and educational opportunities for local government officials to learn about TIF funding, urban revitalization, municipal funding mechanism, and economic development.

Goal #4 Support the growth of quality-of-life amenities, especially those at the heart of Butler County, including the support of restoration, preservation, and conservation by Butler County's Conservation Board, which manage attractive and orderly campgrounds, public hunting areas, prairies, preserves, and bike trails.

Goal #5 Retain existing industries and businesses.

- Objective A. Collaborate with industry leaders and Butler-Grundy Development Alliance to identify opportunities for business retention and expansion.

Goal #6 Enhance and improve entrepreneurship opportunities with the county and local small business growth.

HOUSING Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Foster quality and affordable housing options for both current and prospective residents.

- Objective A. The county will work to develop specific residential overlays that will focus on residential development with already established infrastructure that can be developed in higher Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) areas.
- Objective B. Promote infill development of all available lots that strengthen and improve neighborhood character.
- Objective C. Encourage the development of housing on existing acreage sites.
- Objective D. Improve quality of the housing stock using recommendations from the current Butler County Housing Needs Assessment.
- Objective E. Consider compact and efficient housing development patterns.
- Objective F. Utilize housing affordability data and market data to track the success of implementation efforts.
- Objective G. Promote funding opportunities for housing rehabilitation to qualified applicants.
- Objective H. Adopt a timely and updated housing needs assessment.

HOUSING Goals and Objectives

Goal #2 Adopt ordinances that are up-to-date, comprehensive, and enforceable.

- Objective A. Consider the State Building Code of Iowa – 2015 International Building Code (IBC) to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of occupants of new and existing buildings and structures.
- Objective B. Provide the necessary training of county staff to permit, approve, and regulate construction practices based on adopted building codes.
- Objective C. Adopt ordinances to address nuisance properties if and when the county can meet enforcement capacity.
- Objective D. Promote radon testing and mitigation in existing homes and encourage radon resistant features in new construction.
- Objective E. Take legal action against property owners who fail to address code violations or nuisance conditions as necessary.
- Objective F. Update the fee schedules to align with county services and inspections demands.

Goal #3 Increase homebuying opportunities at all income levels.

- Objective A. Identify viable parcels of land suitable for residential development and update the future land use map as necessary with feedback from public and housing developers on possible future development.
- Objective B. Develop partnerships with lenders to improve availability of funding for development.
- Objective C. Support partnerships between public agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector to foster innovation, collaboration, and stimulate the growth of home construction and rehabilitation.
- Objective D. Promote federal and state tax credits and other development incentives to housing developers seeking to build in rural communities.

Goal #4 Provide for the development of safe and affordable rental units.

- Objective A. Seek to provide safe and habitable rental housing through enforceable zoning regulations and policies.
- Objective B. Seek collaboration with major employers and lending institutions to invest in quality and affordable workforce housing development.

TRANSPORTATION Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Maintain services for the public and private sectors including addressing necessary improvements to all transportation modes that adequately and efficiently provide safe travel across Butler County for automobile, agriculture, trucks, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

- Objective A. Adopt and coordinate roadway projects in Butler County's Secondary Roads 5-Year Plan with the RTA's Project Schedule FY2021-2024 in the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan to inform and guide land use decisions.
- Objective B. Complete the Rolling Prairie Trail from Bristow to the western boundary line of Butler County.
- Objective C. Collaborate with Bremer County to construct a secondary route for the Rolling Prairie Trail from Shell Rock to Waverly along 240th Street/Grove Road.

Goal #2 Provide an efficient traffic system for orderly development of the county, while maintaining safety and economy of scale including preventing unexpected improvement projects that occur due to inefficient development projects on non-paved roads located away from existing utilities.

- Objective A. Require all new developments to conform to the existing road system or show that the changes will be an improvement for travel in the county.
- Objective B. Investigate future locations of roads to ensure an orderly growth, which is consistent with the values and objectives of the county.
- Objective C. Explore options to reduce the maintenance and operations of roads that are no longer of value in the county.
- Objective D. Evaluate weight limits on roads and bridges to accommodate heavier truck traffic.
- Objective E. Enhance transportation network efficiency by encouraging developers to construct their projects along paved roadways.
- Objective F. Explore ordinances and systems to ensure safety around railroads including rail elimination and noise limits.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Continue delivering robust public services to local municipalities and the public as needed.

- Objective A. Maintain the Butler County Regional Collection Center and Swap Shop facility and its operations to ensure the proper disposal of waste.
- Objective B. Encourage and expand the recycling, reuse, and reduction of waste within the county.
- Objective C. Educate residents about proper recycling and waste disposal services.

Goal #2 Foster and bolster the resiliency and independence of the county's energy sector.

- Objective A. Promote increasing energy efficiency efforts in individual homes, businesses, and government buildings.
- Objective B. Increase access to clean, renewable energy.
- Objective C. Encourage sustainable building practices.
- Objective D. Remain informed on emerging transportation industry trends such as electric vehicle transportation technologies.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES Goals and Objectives

Goal #3 Support the improvement of access to essential community development infrastructure with a particular focus on enhancing water and sewer systems.

- Objective A. Promote federal and state efforts among agricultural stakeholders to contribute to the watershed management efforts to reduce nutrients into waterways.
- Objective B. Encourage use of best management practices for stormwater management.
- Objective C. Continue to educate the public on well systems and water quality.
- Objective D. Encourage well owners to test wells annually and plug abandoned wells utilizing the Private Well Grant.
- Objective E. Explore emerging onsite wastewater treatment system technologies.
- Objective F. Educate homeowners on proper maintenance of septic systems and address illegal discharges of inadequate wastewater treatment systems.

Goal #4 Continue to enhance and upgrade public infrastructure and utilities as needed.

- Objective A. Improve cellular systems for greater coverage across the county.
- Objective B. Continue partnering with local utilities to increase access to fiber internet.
- Objective C. Enhance and update electrical grid systems across the county to meet changing demands while enhancing its resiliency to disruptions.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Strengthen emergency response infrastructure and its support systems.

- Objective A. Continue to support fire, police, and EMT services throughout the county.
- Objective B. Identify potential ways to ensure ambulance service is available in the county.
- Objective C. Provide law enforcement services to surrounding communities and the rural areas.

Goal #2 Create and maintain vibrant public spaces.

- Objective A. Promote public amenities such as swimming pools, parks, and recreation facilities throughout the county.
- Objective B. Encourage and support the construction of multi-use public facilities (i.e. libraries, community centers, museums, etc.) which enhance efficiency in construction costs, facility operations, and maintenance.

Goal #3 Promote and maintain quality health for Butler County residents.

- Objective A. Ensure childcare facilities remain vibrant and available.
- Objective B. Support home visit healthcare professionals and utilization of telemedicine programs to increase access to healthcare facilities.
- Objective C. Ensure healthcare clinics and services are available throughout the county.
- Objective D. Collaborate with Butler-Grundy Development Alliance to develop attraction and retention strategies geared toward home-based healthcare workers to ensure healthcare remains viable and available within the county.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES Goals and Objectives

Goal #4 Foster sustainable land use practices and conservation efforts.

- Objective A. Continue the maintenance and modernization of existing recreational and conservation facilities.
- Objective B. Expand public relations programs to increase awareness and understanding of Conservation Board issues, goals, and objectives among county residents.
- Objective C. Continue the planning, construction, and improvement to the Rolling Prairie Bike Trail.
- Objective D. Advocate for the preservation and enhancement of healthy rivers, recognizing their importance as critical natural resources for wildlife, fish, flood control, wetlands, and conservation, while also balancing recreational use when appropriate.
- Objective E. Improve river accessibility by establishing designated public access points for boats, kayaks, and canoes, promoting responsible recreation activities.
- Objective F. Ensure the sustainable upkeep and modernization of current recreational and conservation amenities to maintain their functionality and appeal to residents and visitors alike.
- Objective G. Partner with County Conservation to construct a new headquarters and shop located out of the floodplain.

HAZARDS Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Butler County will implement, update, and maintain the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan including the following objectives from the 2025 Butler County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- Objective A. Minimize to the greatest extent possible the number of injuries and/or loss of life associated with all identified hazards.
- Objective B. Reduce or eliminate property damage due to the occurrence of disasters.
- Objective C. Improve response operations in the event of a disaster.
- Objective D. Return the community to either a pre-disaster or improved condition in a timely manner in the wake of a disaster.
- Objective E. Develop strategies that can be used to reduce the community's overall risk to the negative effects of natural, technological, and man-made disasters.
- Objective F. Reconvene the planning committee annually to review the plan document, check for compliance with the plan goals, and track progress in achieving the mitigation strategies.
- Objective G. Maintain the Countywide Multi-Jurisdictional format for future updates.

LAND USE Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Allow for the appropriate amount of land designated for residential use to accommodate growth and meet housing needs of the county.

- Objective A. Consider crop yield history or lower the parcel area percentage with CSR of 70 or greater from 50% to 25% as alternatives to lessen land use on agricultural lands.
- Objective B. Encourage residential development within incorporated areas utilizing municipal utilities. Development in the unincorporated areas of the county shall be directed toward existing areas which have been rezoned for residential use but are vacant, or toward overlay districts which have been found suitable for development and have existing infrastructure including existing acreage sites.
- Objective C. Ensure designated zoning ordinances are flexible enough to accommodate diverse housing types and densities to meet varying needs and preferences.
- Objective D. Designate residential land use areas near employment center and/or transportation corridors.
- Objective E. When possible, incorporate affordable housing provisions and incentives to encourage the development of affordable housing options.
- Objective F. Consider findings and recommendations from the most current Butler County Housing Needs Assessment to inform future land use designation for residential.

Goal #2 Focus on updating ordinances to create more efficient and effective land use.

- Objective A. Update subdivisions ordinances to match the residential needs of the county with land preservation.
- Objective B. Develop zoning and nuisance codes that ensure land is used appropriately and property is maintained.

Goal #3 Create a vibrant economic sector that fosters sustainable growth within the county's commercial and industrial hubs.

- Objective A. Attract commercial and industrial tenants to fill available lots.
- Objective B. Encourage commercial and industrial development to occur in incorporated communities that have water and sewer capacities to adequately service the proposed sites.
- Objective C. Direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Objective D. Consider adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associate conflicts or concerns.

LAND USE Goals and Objectives

Goal #4 Adopt and amend, when appropriate, a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The purpose for the Plan is the following:

- (a) The Plan will serve as a guide and statement of policies for the county.
- (b) The Plan will seek to promote orderly growth. More specifically, the Plan will attempt to:
 - Prevent leapfrog development.
 - Promote the county and cities working together when annexation is proposed to plan for growth and service provisions in the proposed areas.
 - Include a severance policy that requires land that is severed from a city to be reverted to agriculture use and corresponding zoning.
 - Provide guidance to the various county commissions, boards, and authorities (P&Z, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health) that may be involved in county land use management.
 - Guide county staff as development is reviewed and considered.
- (c) The Plan is intended to be the planning and legal foundation for:
 - The County Zoning Ordinance
 - The County Subdivision Ordinance
 - Future County Building Code
 - Any future County Urban Renewal Plans or Ordinances
 - Any future annexations consistent with comprehensive plans
- (d) The Plan, and its implementation tools listed above, is designed to encourage citizen or community input through defined and statutory development, amendment, and implementation processes.
- (e) The county will require or measure the following checklist of issues prior to development approval.
 - Consistency with the Plan, including the Future Land Use Map.
 - Compatibility with existing surrounding land use(s).
 - Minimal impact on adjacent property.
 - Appropriate density of proposed use and its surroundings.
 - Minimal impact on traffic generation and flow.
 - The ability of the proposal to obtain or access adequate services.
 - Minimal environmental impact (i.e. floodplain, wetlands, and woodlands).
 - Other factors affecting general intent and purpose of Plan.
- (f) The Plan, which is intended to be broad and general, will serve as an umbrella for other county plans such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Housing Needs Assessment.

LAND USE Goals and Objectives

Goal #5 It is the goal of Butler County, and its residents, to recognize that land use planning is a continuous process.

- (a) The County will review this Plan as the need arises.
- (b) The Plan will be implemented through various departments, policies, and ordinances including, but not limited to, the following:
 - County staff
 - County ordinances
 - County plans
 - County budget
 - Outside agencies and municipalities
- (c) Public input on the planning decisions and considerations will be sought out early in the process and in various formats, which may include providing public notices in or on:
 - Newspapers
 - County Websites
 - Public Areas

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 It is the goal of Butler County to collaborate with other levels of government with regard to future land use and development. Specifically, the County shall collaborate with the Federal, State, City, and School Districts as appropriate and/or possible. The County may also work collaboratively with other counties when it is beneficial.

Goal #2 Support and promote discussions amongst County municipalities to generate collaborative agreements for shared-cost/shared-buying opportunities that benefit each city to the greatest extent possible.

- Objective A. Maintain mutual aid efforts with emergency response service partners.
- Objective B. Continue support for Butler-Grundy Development Alliance.
- Objective C. Continue contractual obligations between the Sheriff's Office and local communities.
- Objective D. Continue 28E agreements on growth and development including discussions on annexation and service provisions.

Goal #3 Foster active public engagement in the formulation of long-term plans aimed at informing the decision-making process.

- Objective A. Develop effective outreach strategies that solicit input and feedback from the public.
- Objective B. Enhance public awareness through outreach methods with various partners.

Chapter 1: Smart Planning Principles and Plan Development Process



Purpose & Scope of the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan (referred also as *master plan* or *general plan*) is a document developed to guide future decision making of land use within Butler County, Iowa. The 2024 Butler County Comprehensive Land Use Plan (or Plan) presents a collective vision by stakeholders about the direction of future development, including goals, objectives, and opportunities.

Long-range visioning is a broad-based approach focused on how development should occur across the county. This Plan is developed to be a broad-based set of recommendations that support decision makers, community leaders, organizations, developers, and residents of Butler County as they begin to shape the next 10-15 years of development for the county.

The future portrait of the county requires that the Comprehensive Plan Update incorporates the vital input of three major civic forces:



This plan includes the current conditions of Butler County, a key overview and summary of smart planning components for the county including goals and objectives, as well as information on how to implement and maintain the plan throughout its life. People, constraints, barriers, and goals may change over time. This updated comprehensive plan reports on the relevancy of current, future, and previous conditions. The Butler County Comprehensive Plan Update 2025 (or “Plan 2025 Update” or “Plan”) should reinform and invigorate the long-term planning goals based in the previous comprehensive plan update adopted in 2012.

The county is defined as the entity and organization that administers the Butler County offices, notwithstanding the various departments, staff, committees, subcommittees, and administrators within Butler County. The objective of this comprehensive planning effort shall ensure the plan can be a useful tool to develop, adopt, and implement land use regulations including the community’s zoning ordinance (Code Chapter 335), land subdivision ordinance (Code Chapter 354), and urban renewal program (Code Chapter 403).

The Comprehensive Plan Update seeks to incorporate the best vision and ideals of the citizens along with realistic needs and aspirations of private development to capitalize upon the county’s ongoing productivity and potential.

Legal Basis of a Comprehensive Plan

Local governments of cities and counties (also called municipalities) are entities created by the state constitution and state legislature. State law provides the legal authority for local planning and land use regulations. Counties are authorized to adopt plans through Chapter 335 of the Iowa State Code. Subject to powers in Chapter 335, the county board of supervisors may by ordinance regulate and restrict building characteristics and lot density for land within the county of outlying the corporate limits of a city. Regulations shall be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan and designed to preserve the availability of agricultural land.

Exemptions to Iowa State Code Chapter 335 extends to farmland, barns, farmhouses, or property within farms. However, if a structure or obstruction within an agricultural property is in a floodplain, ordinances may take effect on the structures or obstructions.

Chapter 461A of the Code of Iowa gives counties in Iowa the power to decide on the land use for public lands. Chapter 461B gives the power of condemnation and eminent domain law to counties in accordance with regulations, requirements, and rights pertaining to these land use powers. The comprehensive plan was developed in conformance with Chapter 18B of the Code of Iowa. Chapter 18B.1 defines 10 Iowa Smart Planning Principles for municipalities to consider that would assist in the decision making by stakeholders regarding land use and development.

Existing Plans and Documents Related to Butler County

- 2012 Butler County, Iowa Comprehensive Plan Update 2012
- 1994 Butler County Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- 2019 Butler County, Iowa Housing Needs Assessment
- 2020 Butler County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the Iowa Northland Regional Economic Development Commission (INREDC)
- 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan by Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority

Smart Planning in Butler County, Iowa

Principles in Smart Planning in Iowa are defined in Chapter 18B.1 of the Iowa State Code. These principals are listed for municipalities to consider in the development of their comprehensive plan.

This plan update is a continuation of the original 1994 comprehensive plan for Butler County. The 2024 Plan Update follows a practice in regional and urban planning to ensure a long-term master plan is updated every 10-15 years to reflect current and effective means of guiding the future growth and development of the county.

This update was undertaken with the direction of the Butler County Planning Department, Butler County Planning & Zoning Commission, County Board of Supervisors, and Task Force comprised of citizens and stakeholders.

Iowa's Smart Planning Guiding Principles

The plan is guided by Iowa's Smart Growth and Sustainable Principles (Iowa Code 18B.1 and 18B.2). As Iowa Code 18B.1 states "...local governments, ...shall consider and may apply the following principles during deliberation of all appropriate planning, zoning, development and resource management decisions." These principles include:

✓ Collaboration

Governmental, community, and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction of the entity, are encouraged to be involved and provide comment during deliberation of planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions and during implementation of such decisions. The state agency, local government, or other public entity is encouraged to develop and implement a strategy to facilitate such participation.

✓ Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should be undertaken to provide efficient, transparent, and consistent outcomes. Individuals, communities, regions, and government entities should share in the responsibility to promote the equitable distribution of development benefits and costs.

✓ Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should be undertaken to promote clean and renewable energy use and increased energy efficiency.

✓ Occupational Diversity

Planning, zoning, development, and resources management should promote increased diversity of employment and businesses opportunities, promote access to education and training, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and promote the establishment of businesses in locations near existing housing, infrastructure, and transportation.

✓ Revitalization

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should facilitate the revitalization of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility, and integrates different uses of property. Remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in underdeveloped areas.

✓ Housing Diversity

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers.

✓ Community Character

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community.

✓ Natural Resources and Agriculture Protection

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should emphasize protection, preservation, and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, and cultural and historic landscapes, and should increase the availability of open spaces and recreation facilities.

✓ Sustainable Design

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that utilize sustainable design and construction standards and conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, air, and materials.

✓ Transportation Diversity

Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel, and improve air quality.

Iowa's Smart Planning Elements

(Iowa State Code 18B)



Planning Elements

Under subsection 2 of the Iowa Code (18B.2), it states a county “shall consider the smart planning principles” and “may include” the elements listed below, if applicable, when developing or amending a comprehensive plan. The 13 elements include:

1. Public Participation
2. Issues and Opportunities
3. Land Use
4. Housing
5. Public Infrastructure & Utilities
6. Transportation
7. Economic Development
8. Agricultural and Natural Resources
9. Community Facilities
10. Community Character
11. Hazards
12. Intergovernmental Collaboration
13. Implementation

Plan Organization

This plan is divided into four chapters for the ease of citizens, development interests, local and regional agencies, and decision-makers who will be its primary users. These chapters include Smart Planning Principles and Plan Development Process, Community Profile, Smart Planning Components – Issues, Opportunities, & Goals, and Plan Implementation and Maintenance.

Chapter 1: Smart Planning Principles and Plan Development Process

The first chapter discusses what a comprehensive plan is, the legality of the plan, the components of a plan, and the plan development process.

Chapter 2: Community Profile

The second chapter of the plan provides a brief overview and profile of the community using the latest available quantitative data available to describe the community in its current state.

Chapter 3: Smart Planning Components – Issues, Opportunities, & Goals

The heart of the plan is found in this chapter. The chapter discusses in detail the main components to a comprehensive plan, built off the Smart Planning Guiding Principles and Elements. Each component contains the goals, objectives, and action strategies developed by citizens, task force members, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors. Each group of goals, objectives, and action strategies is preceded by a summary of existing conditions, issues, and opportunities.

The ten components of this chapter include:

- Component 1: Community Character
- Component 2: Agricultural & Natural Resources
- Component 3: Hazards
- Component 4: Community Facilities
- Component 5: Public Infrastructure & Utilities
- Component 6: Housing
- Component 7: Economic Development
- Component 8: Transportation
- Component 9: Land Use
- Component 10: Intergovernmental Collaboration

Each component provides the information needed to understand how the plan is intended to guide growth and development in Butler County. However, each component is interconnected and works in conjunction with the entirety of the Plan. For instance, to understand the local economy, it is important to know about the community's history and population trends, income levels, community characteristics, land use, and housing. Each goal, objective, and action strategy consider the ten Iowa Smart Planning Principles of the Iowa Code and the Butler County's overall vision of the future. The components of goal setting are as follows:

- 1 Principle Statement** describes the current condition or consideration that makes the goal(s) and its associated objectives and action strategies necessary and explains how they address the problem or condition.
- 2 Goals** are broad statements of the community's desires. Goals tell us where we want to go. The language of each goal statement includes directives such as "ensure", "provide", and "retain". "Ensure" in this plan means the county will do whatever they can within their physical, legal, and financial means.
- 3 Objectives** are more specific and measurable activities. They serve as a benchmark to be reached in pursuit of the goal.
- 4 Action Strategies** express a commitment to a course of action in one of three ways:
 - The action strategies themselves, as they appear in an adopted comprehensive plan provide clear guidance for decision-making when a situation arises;
 - They form a basis for revised development regulations (i.e. zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, building codes, etc.); and
 - They provide the overall direction for implementation of a strategy or course of action.

Chapter 4: Plan Implementation and Maintenance

This chapter serves as a user's manual for implementing the identified goals, objectives, and action strategies located in Chapter 3. This chapter also covers the adoption and amendment process, how to evaluate and effectively participate in continued collaboration with local, county, and regional agencies and organizations.

The implementation sets an agenda for the future work of the plan. As many of the discussions have shown during the planning process, the community is looking toward building for the future and work remains to

be done over time by citizens, county officials, county staff, county commissions, and community organizations.

Public Participation and Planning Process

This section summarizes the numerous phases and tasks completed to develop the plan, including defining the roles and responsibilities of citizens, stakeholders, and groups involved in the planning process. It also summarizes the public involvement opportunities used to gather public input.

The planning process used to update the Butler County's Comprehensive Plan engaged a diverse group of community stakeholders, concerned citizens, elected and appointed officials, county staff, and county representatives. The process allowed numerous opportunities for participation and involvement throughout the project. The process balanced preserving and improving upon the county's existing strengths, enhancing economic opportunities, preserving community character and quality of life, identifying means for redevelopment and infill, and creating a community that is livable and attractive.

The Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) worked closely with Butler County throughout the course of the project to ensure the fullest participation possible. To educate the public and add additional feedback throughout the planning process and adhere to Iowa's Smart Planning Principles of Collaboration, Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency, the county engaged in a variety of meetings. The county also worked to engage the community through a variety of mediums including public notices and public engagement opportunities. Below are the details of the roles, responsibilities, and outcomes.

Task Force Meetings

Three structured and facilitated Task Force meetings were held between September 2023 and November 2023. These meetings provided discussion of existing conditions, objectives, and draft recommendations for each of the components. Each meeting ran approximately one and a half hours from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM. Members of the Task Force consisted of a board of supervisor member, county auditor, county department heads, school members, local economic development agencies, public works, zoning department, Board of Adjustment members, and Planning and Zoning Commission members.

Task Force Meetings		
Meeting Dates	Location	Discussion Topics
September 19, 2023	Butler County Courthouse	Benefits of a Comprehensive Plan, legal requirements, components of Plan, project schedule, and the role of the Task Force and public in the planning process. Identifying and discussing the conditions and importance of agriculture and natural resources, community character conditions, perceived hazards, key issues, opportunities, and potential goals.
October 17, 2023	Butler County Courthouse	Identifying and discussing existing conditions, key issues, opportunities, and potential goals for intergovernmental collaboration, infrastructure, and community facilities and services.
November 14, 2023	Butler County Courthouse	Identifying and discussing existing conditions, key issues, opportunities, and potential goals for economic development, housing, land use, and transportation.

Planning & Zoning Commission Meetings

Four work sessions were held with the Planning & Zoning Commission between February 2024 and July 2024 to develop goals and objectives for the Plan along with recommendations for the Future Land Use Map. Each meeting ran approximately one and a half hours from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM.

Planning & Zoning Commission Meetings		
Meeting Dates	Location	Discussion Topics
February 8, 2024	Butler County Courthouse	Comprehensive Plan overview, role of Commission and public in the planning process. Review of Task Force meetings and discussion of existing conditions, key issues, opportunities, and potential goals.
February 29, 2024	Butler County Courthouse	Continued discussion of proposed goals and objectives for the Plan.
March 28, 2024	Butler County Courthouse	Continued discussion of proposed goals and objectives for the Plan.
August 15, 2024	Butler County Courthouse	Discussion of proposed goals and objectives. Review of current land use map. Reviewed Draft Comprehensive Plan and set date for public hearing.
May 6, 2025	Butler County Courthouse	Joint task force meeting to discuss the plan.

May 29, 2025	Butler County Courthouse	Comprehensive Plan public hearing.
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Public Hearings

The Planning & Zoning Commission held a public hearing on May 29, 2025. Following discussion, the commission recommended the adoption of the draft plan to the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on {Insert Date}, after which the Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan by resolution.

Chapter 2: County Profile

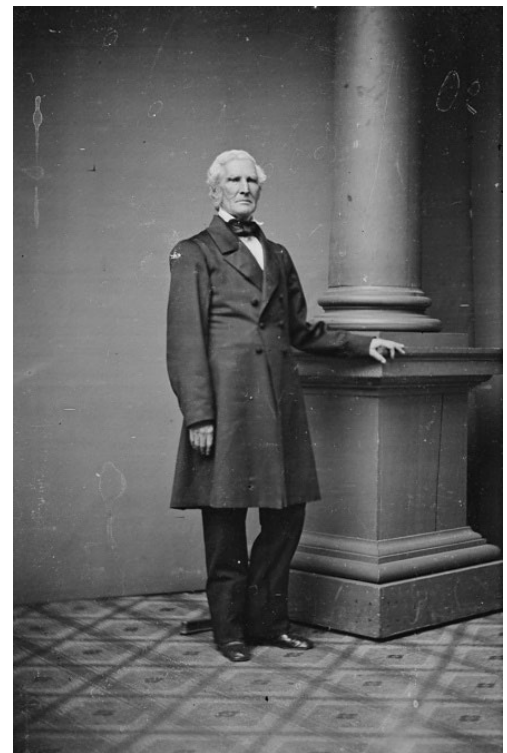


County Overview

Multi-generational planning approaches encourage community development engagement of all age groups throughout all stages of planning. This method enables the development of plans, programs, policies, places, partnerships, processes, and values that promote interaction to the mutual benefit of all groups and the community. The information generated from this section will be valuable to accomplish multi-generational planning for years to come and understand Butler County as it is today.

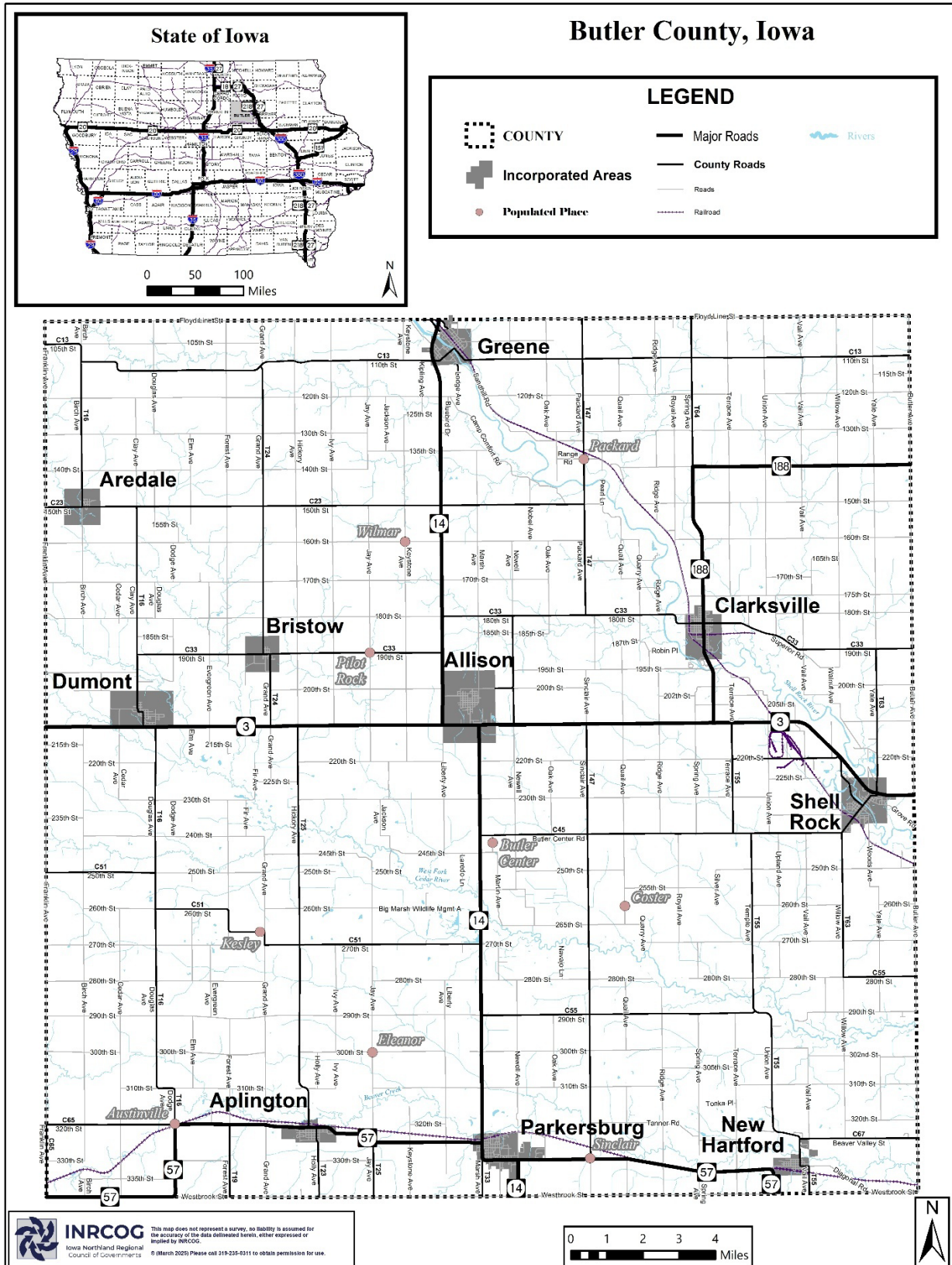
Location

Butler County is located in the northeastern quadrant of the State of Iowa. With a land mass of 582 square miles, the county is comprised of long sloping terrain, several state and county parks, wetlands, vast stretches of prime agricultural landscapes that stretch into the distance, and flourishing forested landscapes. The county is bisected to the north-south by its main body of water, the Shell Rock River. Most drivers will access Butler County from U.S. Highway 218 at Exit 203 onto State Highway 3 West leading to the City of Shell Rock. The city is approximately 6.5 miles north of the U.S. Highway 20 corridor and 1 mile west of U.S. Highway 218. State highways 3 & 57 traverse Butler County to the east-west. State Highway 14 traverses north-south through Butler County. The county is home to 14,334 residents. The county seat is Allison, Iowa. The county includes 10 incorporated cities including, in alphabetical order, Allison, Aplington, Aredale, Bristow, Clarksville, Dumont, Greene, New Hartford, Parkersburg, and Shell Rock. There are two unincorporated areas, Kesley and Austinville. The county is divided into sixteen townships including, in alphabetical order, Albion, Beaver, Bennezette, Butler, Coldwater, Dayton, Fremont, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Pittsford, Ripley, Shell Rock, Washington, and West Point. See Figure 1 for the location of Butler County.



General William Orlando Butler (1791-1880), a Kentucky statesman, officer in the Mexican War, and unsuccessful Democratic candidate for Vice President for whom Butler County was named in honor of.

Figure 1: Location of Butler County



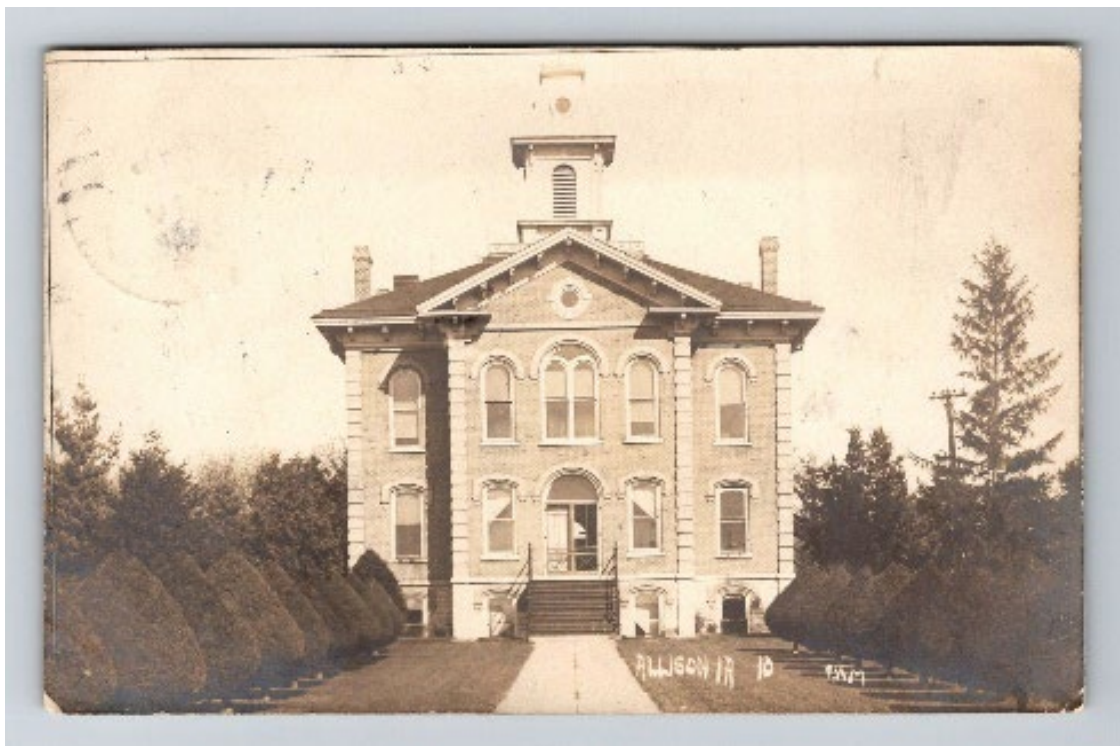
History

Butler County is in lands that were once occupied by the Sauk and Meskwaki (Sac and Fox) tribes, the Ioway tribes, and Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe (a Dakota Sioux band) (Library of Congress). In the late 1700s/1800s, early French settlers had established sparse hunting settlements in the region for fur trappings. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase preemptively started westward expansion. In 1825, the Treaty of Prairie Du Chien acquired much land from the Sauk and Meskwaki (Sac and Fox tribes), Ioway, and bands of the Dakota Sioux.

Following the Black Hawk War of 1832, the U.S. relocated all tribes from the state region with the signing of several treaties including land document *Cessions #152* which covered most of Butler County.



Looking north on Main Street in Allison, IA in 2023 and 1907



Railroads began crossing the continent and brought in settlers who established Butler County in 1851. It was named in honor of General William Orlando Butler (1791-1880), a Kentucky statesman and officer in the Mexican War, and unsuccessful Democratic candidate for Vice President in 1848. In 1860, the population in Butler County was 3,724.

The county seat of Butler County has switched between multiple towns in its history. From 1854 to 1860, Butler County's seat was in Clarksville. Beginning in 1860 to 1880, the now-nonexistent village of Butler Center was the county seat until residents found it too difficult to access the town simply because it was in the more rural parts of Butler County without any commercial businesses. The power struggle among Butler's towns to become the next county seat was settled by a new development sweeping across the country. In 1879, the Dubuque and Dakota Railroad Company built their railroad through Butler County and placed a station in the town of Allison, named for United States Senator William B. Allison (1829-1908). This settled the question of where Butler County's seat was to be located.



Butler County Hall of Fame Building (old courthouse cupola)

The people of Butler County decided to move the county seat to Allison in 1881 with the county records being moved to Allison on January 10, 1881. Allison grew due to its location being centrally located within the county and located along the newly established rail line. From 1880 to 1900, the population of Butler County grew from 14,293 to 17,955 people.



Butler County Courthouse today

This population growth matched the peak and eventual decline of railway travel in Iowa. Between 1911 to 1917, the railroad industry reached its peak in Iowa, where it is estimated that approximately 10,500 miles of railroad track had been laid throughout the state. During the rest of the 20th century, railroad operators lost their advantage in mass transportation as the rise of automobiles started to shape the United States. Iowa's rail system experienced change and restructuring as many railroad companies went through buyouts, acquisitions,

bankruptcy, and liquidation. The population in Butler County remained steadily above 17,500 people until 1970 when the population of Butler County dropped to 16,953.

In 1975, Butler County bid farewell to a symbol of their ‘pioneer days’ and moved into a new courthouse building. This new courthouse was built in the mid-century modern architectural style differing from the previous court house’s Italian ornate architecture popular for public and government buildings during the 19th century. The older, then-derelict 94-year-old Butler County Courthouse was demolished the following year in 1976. The cupola, a round window structure topping the building, was salvaged from the old courthouse and remains on the courthouse grounds as a nod to its storied history. The cupola sits above the Hall of Fame building celebrating notable people of Butler County.

Government Structure and Districts

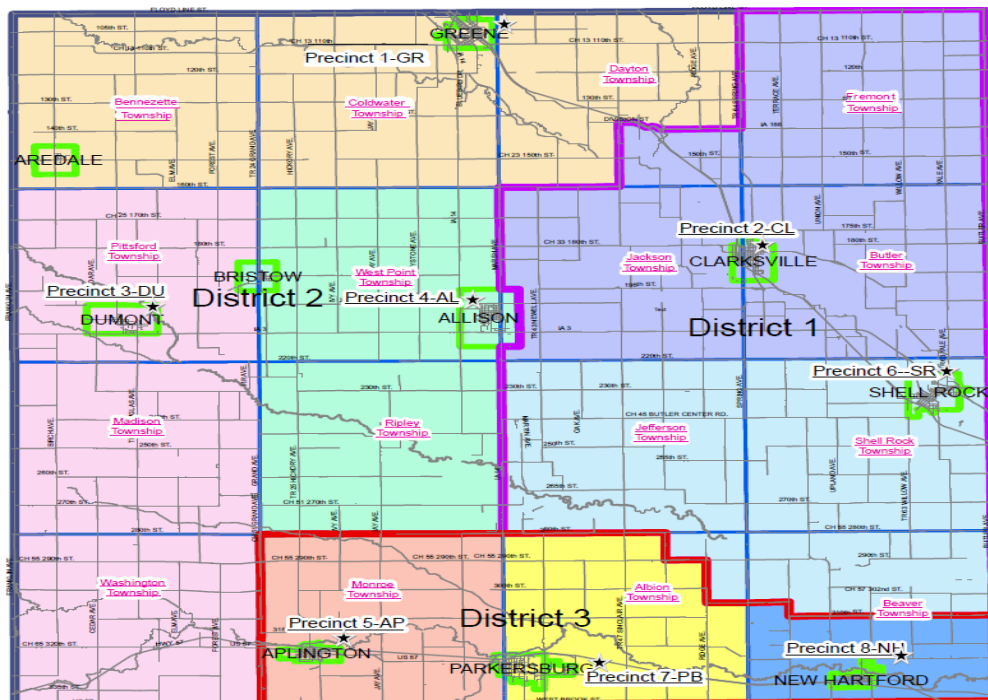
Local government and land use is established in Butler County for both incorporated municipalities and those who live in unincorporated Butler County. Incorporated municipalities have typical city government structures: mayor, city council, and city clerk, which may decide their future land use plans and zoning ordinances. For the unincorporated areas of Butler County, land use is designated into seven (7) classes of districts known as:

- "A-1" Agricultural District
- "A-2" Limited Agricultural District
- "R-1" Low Density Residential District
- "R-2" Suburban Residence District
- "C" Commercial District
- "C-M" Commercial-Manufacturing District
- "M" Manufacturing District

These zoning classifications are defined and administered in accordance with the Butler County Zoning Ordinance developed in 2022.

Butler County's executive branch of government is comprised of three (3) elected members of the county board of supervisors. Each member represents one of three districts in the county. In Figure 2, the district boundaries are shown. The county supervisors appoint the zoning administrator with powers and duties to carry out the zoning ordinance for the unincorporated parts.

Figure 2: County District Map



Demographic and Socioeconomic Background

Population

The study of population within a Comprehensive Plan provides a statistical and historical profile of the community. Population demographics can be used to make projections about the future of the community. This section will provide a variety of information that describes the demographic trends and projections for Butler County.

Figure 3 illustrates, by decade, a historical trend of the population for Butler County and the surrounding counties. As the figure shows, Butler County has seen a steady decline in population growth over the past decades. Between 1900 and 1980, the population stayed at a relatively stable stage. The 1980’s brought the economic downturn that led to a sharp decline in rural communities known as the Farm Debt Crisis. Midwest communities largely saw the sharpest decline in this period. For Butler, the shrinking population hit the lowest point in 2020 with a population total of 14,334.

Figure 3: Historical Trends in Butler County Population

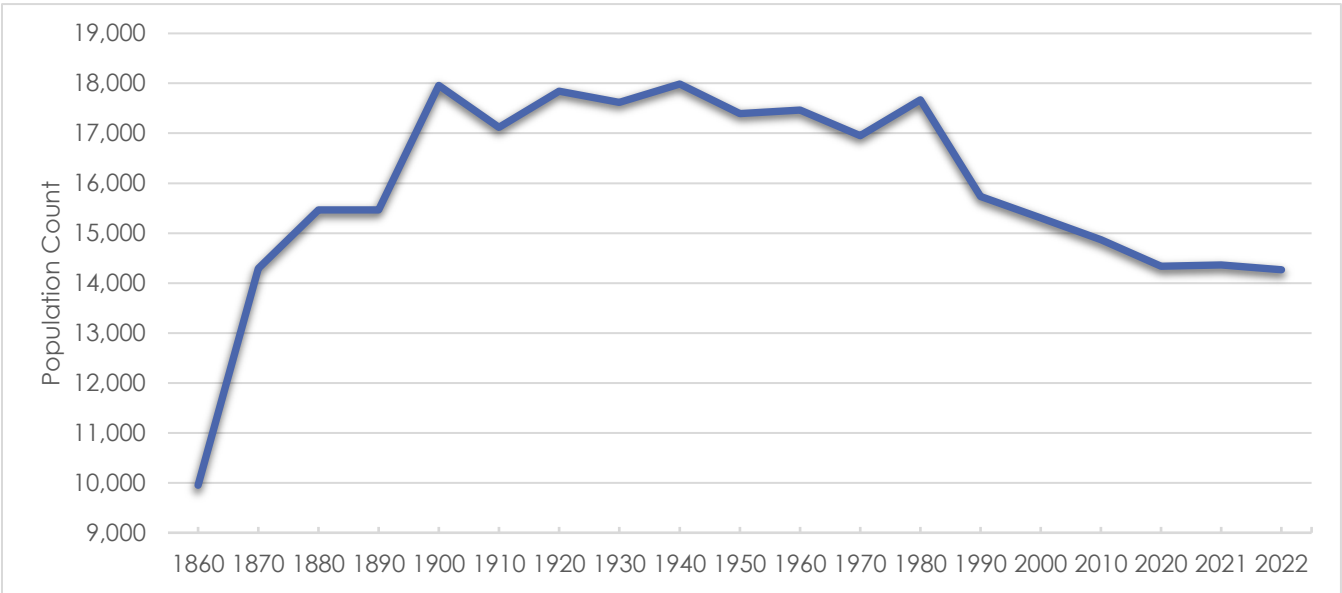


Table 1 on the following page shows the population change between 1980 and 2020 for Butler County in incorporated communities as well as the total unincorporated area. From 2010 to 2020, only New Hartford (+56) and Parkersburg (+145) saw increases in their population size. The rest of the incorporated communities saw slightly declining populations. The unincorporated areas also saw a slight increase in population size during that period (+314). In total, the county saw their population decline by 534 individuals from 2010 to 2020.

Table 1: Historic Population Size by Incorporated Communities, 1980-2020

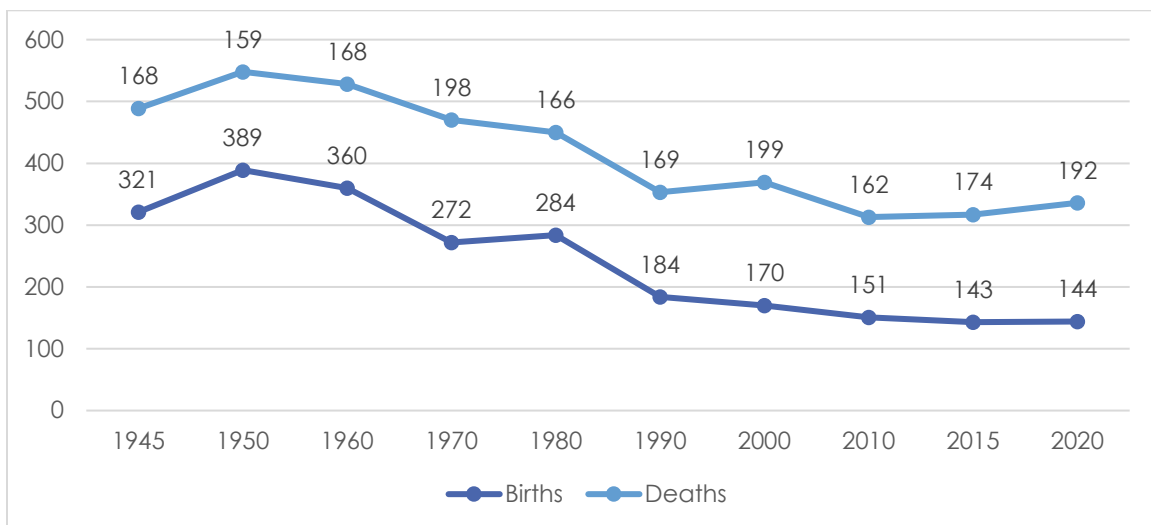
Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Allison	1,132	1,000	1006	1029	961
Aplington	1,027	1,034	1,054	1,128	1,105
Aredale	88	88	89	74	62
Bristow	252	197	202	160	144
Clarksville	1,424	1,382	1,441	1,439	1,264
Dumont	815	705	676	637	632
Greene	1,332	1,142	1,099	1,130	990
New Hartford	764	683	659	516	572
Parkersburg	1,968	1,804	1,889	1,870	2,015
Shell Rock	1,478	1,385	1,298	1,296	1,258
Total Incorporated Area	10,280	9,420	9,413	9,279	8,431
Total Unincorporated Area	7,388	6,311	5,892	5,588	5,902
Total County Population	17,668	15,731	15,305	14,867	14,333

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Iowa Data Center

Natural Change

Using available data from the Iowa Department of Public Health, Figure 4 illustrates Butler County's natural change over the years. Natural change is the indication of population change caused by the natural events of birth and death. Thus, the natural change is the number of deaths subtracted by the number of births. As the graph illustrates, Butler County's gap between births and deaths has been increasing.

Figure 4: Butler County's Natural Change of Births and Deaths



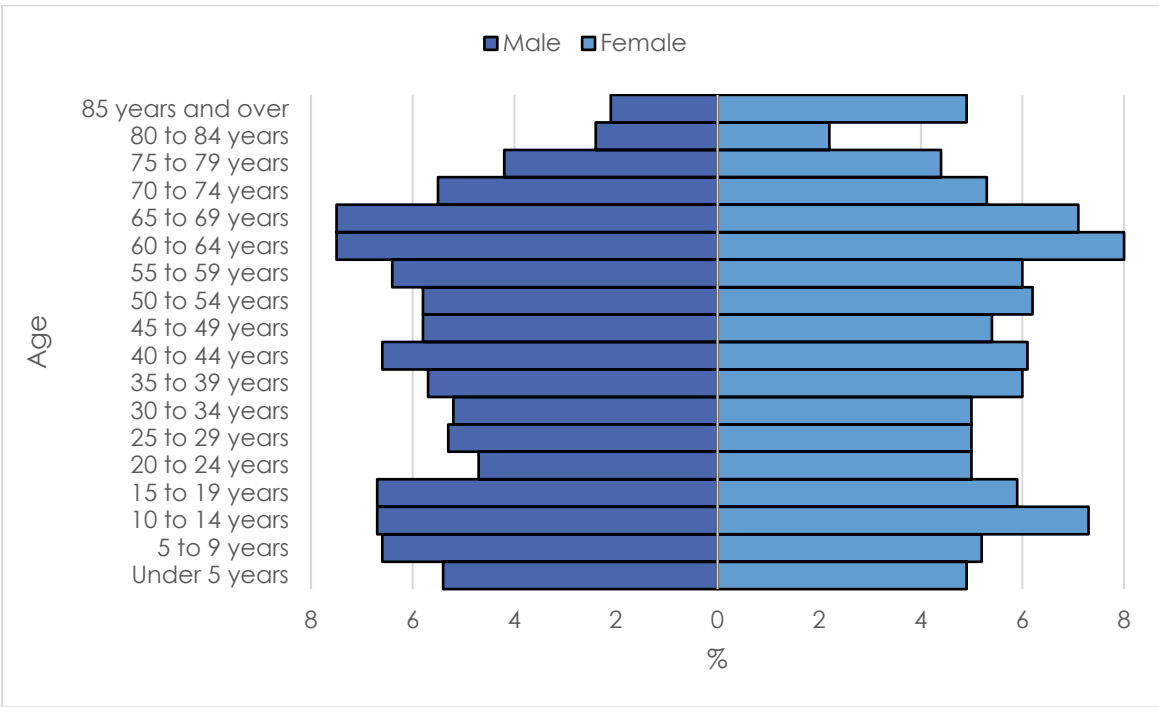
Net Migration

The net migration is the difference in the number of people that have moved out of the county compared to in. Since the 1980s, Butler County has had a negative net migration with the largest migration taking place in the 1980s. Since then, net migration has remained relatively low with it being -2.6 in 1990, 0.00 in 2000, and -0.43 in 2010.

Age, Sex, and Race

Butler County’s population is almost equally split between males and females. According to the 2023 American Community Survey, there are still a higher number of females (50.4%) in the county than males (49.6%). An overwhelming percentage of Butler County’s population is white (95.3%). The figure below provides a population pyramid for Butler County.

Figure 5: Population Pyramid for Butler County



Source: 2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate

One way of expressing the general age composition of the local population is using a ‘dependency ratio.’ A high dependency ratio for a community results in significant planning directed to address the dependents’ needs. Butler County’s dependency ratio per 2020 Census data is 70%, compared to the State of Iowa’s ratio of 65.8%. This indicates Butler has more people under the age of 18 and over the age of 64 than average in Iowa. Finally, the median age in 2020 for Butler County was 43.5 years.

Population Estimates & Projections

Population projections are only estimates of future population, and many factors influence the future population, such as employment, housing, and educational opportunities. While some projections use some of this data to estimate future population, they cannot plan for unknown events, such as drastic changes in employment opportunities, natural disasters, or other major events.

The projections are based on linear and geometric methods, which assume that future population will continue to change based on past trends. The linear method adds or subtracts from the population the average number from each ten-year period since 1950, while the geometric method uses an average growth or decline rate.

Using the numbers from Table 2, population projects can be estimated using the two methods (Linear and Geometric). These projects are listed in Table 3. It is important to note that these projections are estimates based on past trends. Many variables can affect a county’s growth and/or decline in population. Nevertheless, projecting population can give some idea as to how to plan for the future.

Table 2: Historic Population Changes for Butler County

Year	Population	Number Change (Linear Method)	Growth/Decline Rate (Geometric Rate)
1950	17,394	-	0.0
1960	17,467	73	0.4
1970	16,953	-513	-3
1980	17,668	715	4
1990	15,731	-1,937	-12.3
2000	15,305	-426	-2.7
2010	14,867	-438	-2.8
2020	14,333	-534	-3.6
Average (1950-2020)		-3,060 / 7.0 = -437.14	-2.85 / 7.0 = -0.407%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Iowa Data Center			

Table 3: Future Population Projections for Butler County

Year	Butler County
2030	13,896
2040	13,459
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Iowa Data Center	

Income and Poverty

The per capita and median household income for the county and its communities are listed in Table 4. The county has a per capita income of \$38,917. The median household income for the entire county is \$54,822. The City of Dumont has the smallest per capita income while the City of Allison has the largest per capita income.

Table 4: Per Capita & Median Household Income

Community	Per Capita Income		Median Household Income	
	2010	2020	2010	2020
City of Allison	\$23,153	\$50,562	\$34,338	\$61,458
City of Aplington	\$17,527	\$34,394	\$32,440	\$66,625
City of Aredale	\$15,579	\$29,081	\$32,500	\$28,750
City of Bristow	\$11,305	\$32,063	\$30,625	-
City of Clarksville	\$14,811	\$28,629	\$32,857	\$58,523
City of Dumont	\$15,260	\$23,304	\$27,708	\$49,625
City of Greene	\$17,891	\$31,770	\$34,063	\$51,756
City of New Hartford	\$16,771	\$22,936	\$40,082	\$64,583
City of Parkersburg	\$16,978	\$38,059	\$32,083	\$69,038
City of Shell Rock	\$17,064	\$35,079	\$36,823	\$68,125
Butler County (Total)	\$17,036	\$33,943	\$35,883	\$54,822
State of Iowa	\$25,335	\$38,917	\$39,469	\$69,588
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Iowa Data Center				

Butler County's median household income rose steadily between 2010 and 2020 to \$54,822, slightly below the State of Iowa's median household income.

Based on 2020 Census data, Butler County has an estimated 1,696 people living in poverty, or 11.8% of the total population. Of these people, 16% are under 18 years old. Similarly, 7% of those individuals are 65 and over.

Educational Attainment

In Butler County, educational attainment levels reveal that 93.6% of residents age 25 and older have at least a high school diploma, which is slightly above the state rate of 93% and higher than the national rate of 89.1%. However, only 20.4% of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher, which is below the state rate of 30.3% and the national rate of 34.3%. These figures in Table 6 highlight a strong foundation in basic education but indicate a lower level of higher education attainment compared to broader benchmarks.

Table 5: Educational Attainment for Persons 25 Years of Age and Older

Category	Butler County	
	#	%
Less than 9 th Grade	191	1.9%
9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma	460	4.5%
High School Graduate, includes GED	3738	36.9%
Some College, No Degree	2109	20.8%
Associate's Degree	1555	15.4%
Bachelor's Degree	1580	15.6%
Graduate or Professional Degree	489	4.8%
Total	10,122	
Source: 2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate		

Cost of Living

The cost of living in Butler County is generally affordable, particularly in terms of housing. The median value of owner-occupied homes is \$146,300, significantly lower than both the state median of \$181,600 and the national median of \$281,900. This lower housing cost contributes to a more manageable cost of living for residents. Additionally, other living expenses such as groceries, healthcare, and transportation are also more affordable compared to national averages, making Butler County an economically attractive place to live.

Chapter 3: Smart Planning Components – Issues, Opportunities, & Goals



Community Character

An attractive, well-designed county will entice quality development, instill civic pride, improve the visual character of the community, and create a strong, positive image for Butler County. The community character element contains the goals and action strategies that encourage and preserve Butler County's character.

The community character element should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the characteristics of the community that make it unique and are important to the municipality's heritage and quality of life.

Existing Conditions

The county epitomizes the charm and warmth of rural America. The rural communities of Butler County enjoy a close-knit, community-oriented lifestyle. Its small towns and farming communities reflect a strong sense of tradition and resilience. It is a place where traditions are cherished and residents work together to maintain a high quality of life, making it a welcoming and nurturing environment for all.

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county.

- It boasts some of the strongest outdoor recreation opportunities in the state, but it has yet to complete the paving of the bike trails.
- It continues to remain resilient, especially regarding its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the reasons has been its forward thinking and the development of a fiber optic network.
- Strong local utility providers in the communities.
- Affordable communities to live and work.
- Population decline continues to be a concern locally including the lack of qualified and dependable workforce.
- There is a need to continue preserving the unique qualities of Butler County while also remaining open to new growth opportunities. It is essential for ensuring the county's future prosperity and stability.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Ensure the preservation and conservation of land and other natural, human, and economic resources in Butler County that are the basis of the rural community, economy, and lifestyle and ensure its residents can maintain a strong quality of life. Quality of life shall include the following objectives:

- Objective A: Education. The county will work to ensure all residents have access to quality education.
- Objective B: Parks and Recreation. The Butler County Conservation Board will continue to work to ensure the county has a strong access to recreational opportunities and preserves valuable land for environmental preservation and recreation opportunities.
- Objective C: Health. The county will work to ensure all residents have adequate access to quality healthcare.
- Objective D: Attraction. The county will continue to work to ensure current and future residents want to live, work, and stay within the county.
- Objective E: Arts, Culture, and Historical Preservation. The county will work with appropriate organizations to offer cultural opportunities to its residents and preserve historical landmarks.

Agricultural & Natural Resources

The Agricultural and Natural Resources element has two primary goals. First, it aims to clarify the relationship between the natural environment and its surroundings. Second, it seeks to ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to future development. To complete these goals, the following guiding principles and assumptions were used along with the Smart Planning Principles:

- The cultural landscape where we work, live, and play is shaped by the natural surroundings.
- The economic base of agriculture products is dependent on the county's natural setting and its resources.
- To protect the long-term capacity of the environment to support growth, the community needs to understand the limits of natural systems.
- Responsible growth requires the county to work with and within their natural setting. We must work with nature rather than against it.
- Butler County must recognize its limits. The problems facing humanity, especially those related to the natural environment, cannot always be resolved through advanced science or technological solutions.

The natural environment of Butler County is comprised of multiple factors that combine to form the environmental setting. The importance and status of the man-made elements such as the roads, water infrastructure, sewer, businesses, and residential areas are commonly viewed and mistaken as being independent of the natural environment. Such misconceptions have led to the residential and commercial development of flood plains and prime agricultural land, leading to the loss of irreplaceable natural element such as native prairies, forests, prominent vistas, and other scenic resources.

The following section will identify the physical elements that make up the environmental setting of Butler County. From the identification and analysis of the individual elements, areas can be identified as sensitive or in need of protection. Butler County, like all government bodies, must learn from past mistakes and implement simple rules and regulations to ensure the protection of its natural systems.

The health and stability of Butler County and the natural and man-made environments can be measured by the diversity within the system and the ability of the county to develop responsibly with the natural system, which shapes its ultimate path.

Existing Conditions

Agriculture

According to data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the number of farms in Butler County is 1,063, down from 1,074 in 2017 and 1,214 in 2007. There are 327,856 acres of farmland, which was a 9% decrease since 2017. The Average size of farms in acres was 308, which was also a decrease of 8% since 2017. Finally, the market value of products sold in 2022 was \$469,943,000.

Most farmland is rolling and well suited for corn, soybean, small grains, and forages productions. Farms also raise hogs, beef cattle, and dairy. Due to the rural agricultural setting of Butler County, there are

numerous agricultural supply services including veterinarians, local grains and feed suppliers, agriculture chemical companies, agricultural lenders, and farm implement dealers. Agriculture is economically important to the county and region and provides over 20% of the total employment earnings in the county.

Topography

Butler's terrain is generally a flat to rolling slope topography that characterizes the agricultural areas of northeast Iowa. There are several areas of steeper than normal slope dispersed throughout the county adjacent to watercourses. The highest elevation in the county, exceeding 1,054 feet above mean sea level, is near the county seat of Allison, and the lowest elevation, approximately 899 feet above mean sea level, is found in the southwestern corner of the county. The low elevation areas are subject to high water tables, have alluvial (water carried) soils, and experience frequent flooding.

The most visible geographic features within the county are the Shell Rock River, West Fork of the Cedar River, and Beaver Creek. The Shell Rock River flows through Greene, Clarksville, and Shell Rock. The West Fork of the Cedar River travels through Dumont to the north of New Hartford. Beaver Creek flows from Aplington to New Hartford. Figure 6 is a topographic map of the county.

Soils

The list below provides a brief, general, description of each soil classification in the county. For more detailed information, please refer to the most recent Butler County Soil Survey.

According to available information, seventy-five (75) percent of the county has soil with slopes of 5 percent or less. Also, as a rural, largely agricultural county, Butler County has a large amount of prime agricultural soil. *Figure 7: Butler County Corn Suitability Rating* illustrates the county's prime agricultural soils.

There are seven soil classifications for the county¹:

1. *Marshan-Coland-Flagler*: Nearly level to moderately sloping, poorly drained and somewhat excessively drained soils that formed in loamy sediment underlain by loamy, sandy, or gravelly alluvial sediment; on stream benches and bottom lands.
2. *Cresco-Kenyon-Clyde*: Nearly level to strongly sloping, moderately well drained and poorly drained soils that formed in loamy sediment and the underlying glacial till; on uplands.
3. *Dickinson-Sparta*: Nearly level to strongly sloping, well drained to excessively drained soils that formed in loamy and sandy material; on uplands.
4. *Dinsdale-Klinger-Maxfield*: Nearly level to moderately sloping, well drained, somewhat poorly drained, and poorly drained soils that formed in loess and the underlying glacial till; on uplands.
5. *Mt. Carroll-Downs-Garwin*: Nearly level to steep, well drained and poorly drained soils that formed in loess; on uplands.
6. *Kenyon-Clyde-Floyd*: Nearly level to stronger sloping, moderately well drained to poorly drained soils that formed in loamy sediment and the underlying glacial till; on uplands.
7. *Rockton-Ostrander*: Nearly level to moderately sloping, well drained soils that formed in loamy

¹ United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service; [Soil Survey of Butler County Iowa](#)

sediment and the underlying glacial till and limestone residuum; on uplands.

Major Rivers and Surface Water Systems

There are three watersheds within the county. These watersheds, as defined by the United States Geological Survey, and are illustrated on Figure 8. They include the following:

- Shell Rock River – The Shell Rock watershed is present in the north and eastern quadrant of Butler County. The watershed is approximately 102 miles long and encompasses two states, Iowa and Minnesota. The Shell Rock River eventually flows into the Cedar River. The Shell Rock River and its tributaries drain approximately 31 percent of the county.
- West Fork Cedar - The West Fork Cedar watershed flows from west to east through Butler County. The West Fork Cedar flows into the Cedar River, which eventually flows into the Mississippi River. The West Fork of the Cedar River and its tributaries drain approximately 47 percent.
- Beaver Creek – Beaver Creek and its tributaries drain the remaining 22 percent from the county.

Vegetation

The vast majority of rural Butler County is planted or sowed for corn and soybeans. Grass and brush are present in uncultivated and underdeveloped areas of the county. Trees and grasses are often incorporated with otherwise urbanized areas in the county for aesthetics, shade, and/or erosion control.

There are problems associated with cultivation methods used in the rural areas of the county. The high percentage of cultivated land and the relatively low percentage of conservation methods used in farming cause excessive runoff to occur to rain events. This can lead to problems that are discussed later in the plan, specifically erosion and silting in and around bridges and drainage ditches.

Figure 6: Topographic Map of Butler County

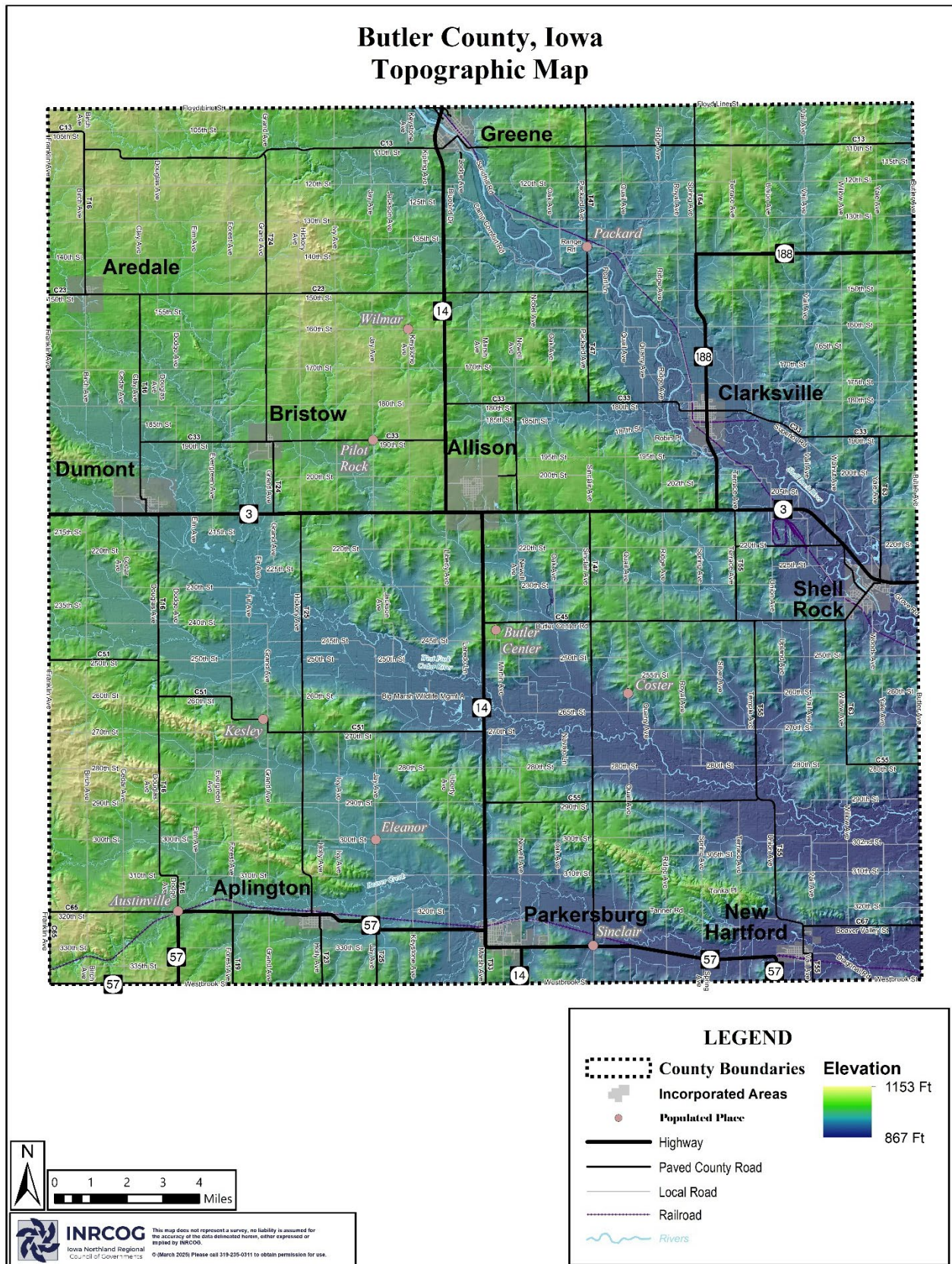


Figure 7: Butler County Corn Suitability Map

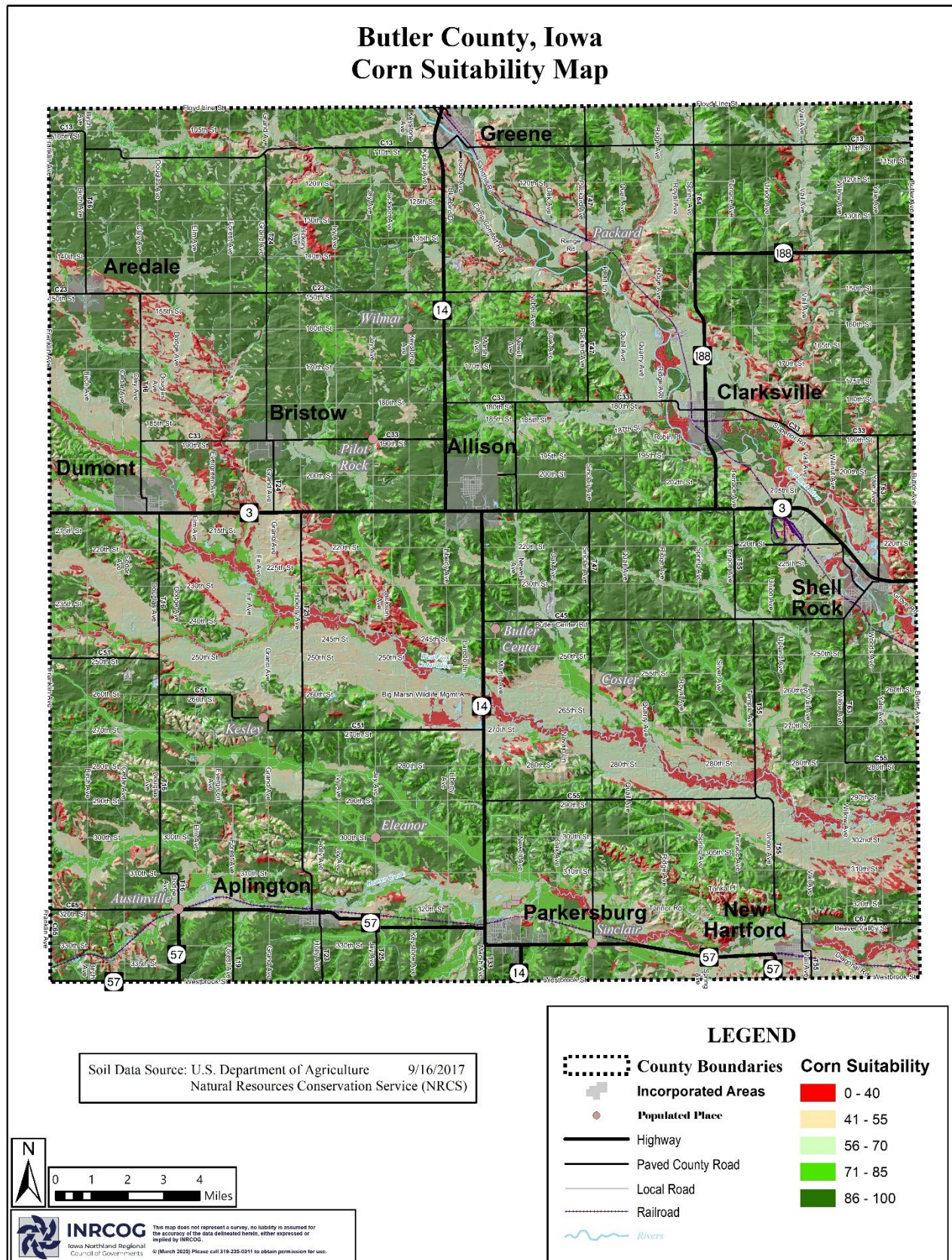
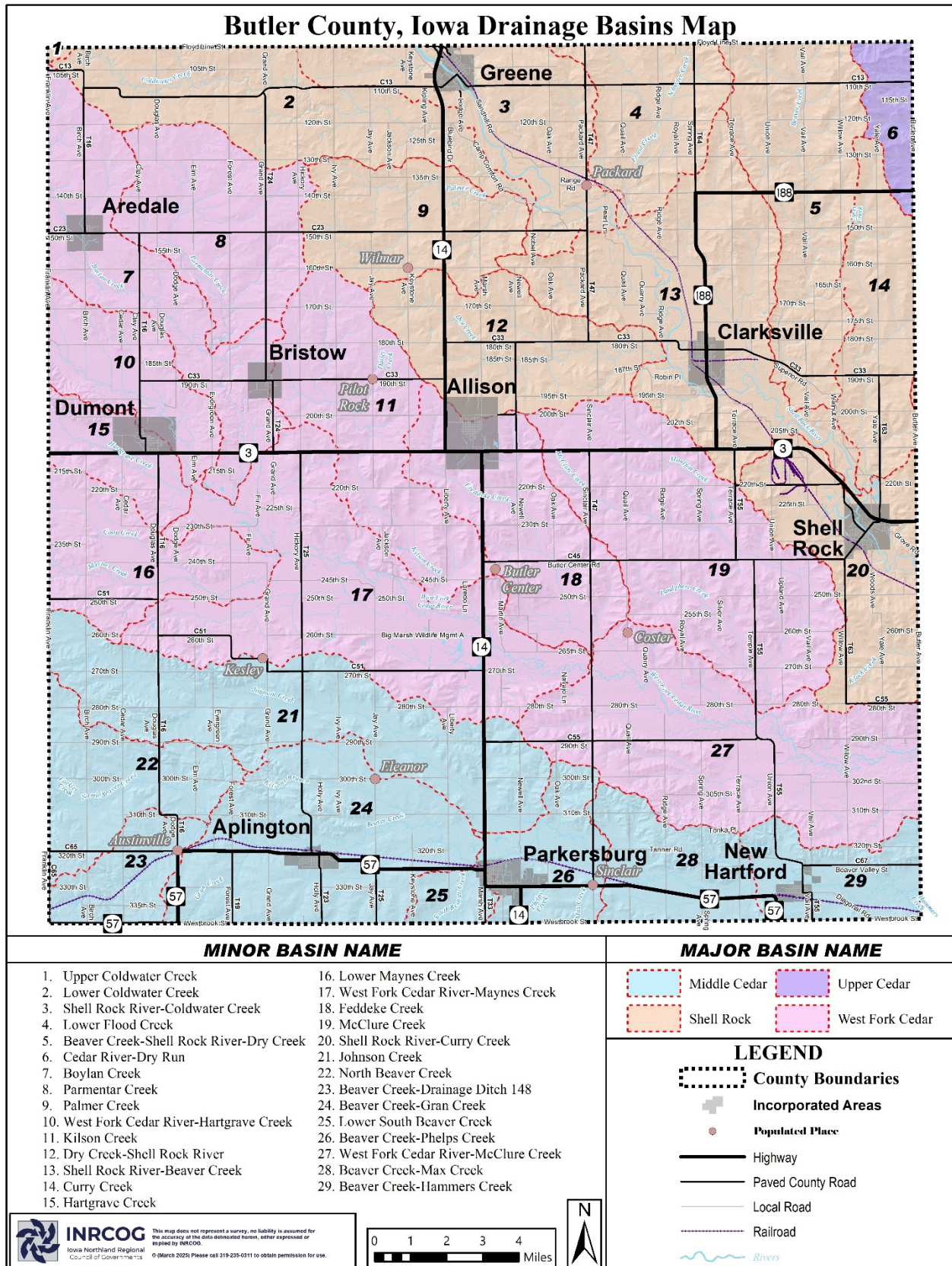


Figure 8: Butler County's Minor and Major Drainage Basins



Environmentally Sensitive Lands

The Big Marsh State Wildlife Management Area is naturally located in the south-central part of Butler County. This area includes 3,049 acres of public hunting grounds and 1,050 acres of water area. The Big Marsh Area is located five miles south of Allison.

Environmentally sensitive areas have a low suitability for development due to natural constraints. These areas are composed of surface waters, flood plains, soil classifications unsuitable for development, and areas with unique natural landscapes. Many of the environmentally sensitive areas within Butler County have been incorporated into planned and reserved growth areas such as parks and open spaces. Because these areas are largely in the flood plain or have soils with limitations, development that is more intense should be discouraged by the county.

Climate

The climate is identified as having cold and snowy winters with humid and hot summers. The climate is in the polar front zone, the battleground of polar and tropical air masses. Being far removed from moderating influences of a large body of water, seasonal contrasts are quite distinctive and weather highly variable. Ample precipitation throughout the year is increased in the summer by invading maritime tropical air masses from the Gulf of Mexico. Cold winters are dominated by continental polar masses from the arctic regions.

The annual precipitation ranges from about 31.5 inches to 32.5 inches. Approximately 71 percent of a year's precipitation falls during the months of April to September. Precipitation can be expected to exceed one-half inch or more 20 days per year, or one-tenth inch or more 56 days a year. Precipitation can occur in multiple inches within one hour or less during intense rainstorms. There are storms, usually associated with extreme humidity, that can cause extensive damage to infrastructure. Any extremely intense rainfall can render detention basins and small streams useless due to the extreme speed and onset of surface flow.

The annual temperature range is large, typical of a continental climate with January being the coldest month (18.6 degrees Fahrenheit average) and July being the warmest month (74.3 degrees Fahrenheit average).

Key Issues & Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- County Conservation and DNR have established a strong partnership preserving the natural resources and land of the county.
- Private citizens are contributing to the success of protecting and preserving natural resources and need to continue to be engaged in the efforts.
- Citizens value the protection of natural resources, especially for the use of environmental recreation activities.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Preserve agricultural land, ensuring that areas that are considered “prime” agricultural areas are preserved to the greatest extent possible.

- Objective A. In making land use decisions, the county shall consider the compatibility of existing surrounding land uses and the proposed use.
- Objective B. The county shall consider the availability of services needed for land use change requests.
- Objective C. The county shall require applicants to provide information regarding the services required for development at the time of the development request.
- Objective D. The county will prioritize the preservation of “prime” agricultural soils by considering land characteristics such as Corn Suitability Rating (CSR), soil type, and crop history.
- Objective E. The county will encourage the development of agricultural areas to be compact and efficient as well as similar developments.
- Objective F. Research and consider adopting Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) scoring system when considering land use compatibility for development.

Goal #2 Balance existing farmland on productive soils with community development needs by rezoning agricultural to residential to alleviate the demand for housing.

- Objective A. Consider the feasibility of establishing agricultural buffers between developed areas and farmland to protect against encroachment.
- Objective B. Require use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the installation of erosion control measures such as silt fences, sediment basins, and erosion control blankets to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation during construction activities.
- Objective C. Encourage agricultural stakeholders to adopt practices that enhance soil health and productivity.
- Objective D. Support land restoration initiatives that can help preserve agricultural lands while enhancing ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.
- Objective E. The county will work to develop specific residential overlays that will focus on residential development with already established infrastructure that can be developed in higher Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) areas.

Goal #3 Achieve a balance between residential, commercial, and industrial development, conservation efforts, and preservation of agricultural lands.

- Objective A. Collaborate with County Conservation, land trust, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources to acquire and preserve crucial lands for biodiversity conservation, recreation, and public enjoyment.

Goal #4 Preserve, promote, and maintain a greenbelt system along all river and drainage systems in Butler County as an aid to prevent soil erosion, promote passive recreation, preserve habitat, and limit development on active floodplains especially along the Shell Rock River, West Fork Cedar, and Beaver Creek areas.

Goal #5 Ensure the maintenance and improvement of the environmental quality of the soil, air, water, and land for all residents, present and future, living in the county.

Goal #6 Conserve and protect remaining wetland areas and promote wetland area growth in areas in which development is not feasible or beneficial.

Goal #7 Promote environmental education, habitat management and development, and leadership programs

Economic Development

An important indicator of a county’s vitality is its economic profile. This section will detail the workings of Butler County’s economy. The information provides guidance on the types of economic development the County should foster through the next 10-20 years, as well as actions the County can take, in partnership with local and regional economic development organizations, to encourage these efforts.

Existing Conditions

Employment & Unemployment

According to the most complete Census data (2020), Butler County had 6,831 persons (or 59.7% of the total population aged 16 years and older – 11,440) in the labor force. The majority of these employed persons were females, 58.9%. Parents in a family accounted for 71.2% of the employed labor force. 4,269 individuals were not in the labor force.

Table 6: Occupations in Butler County

Occupations	Number	%
Management, Professional, and related Occupations	2,219	32.5%
Service Occupations	954	14.0%
Sales and Office Occupations	1,346	19.7%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance Occupations	910	13.3%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	1,402	20.5%
Employed Civilian Population 16 yrs and over	6,831	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020		

As typical of rural counties, 83.1% of workers age 16 and older traveled to work alone in an automobile. The number of workers who either carpooled (529) or worked from home (410) were similar. The mean travel time for workers was twenty-three minutes.

As Table 6 shows, 32.5% of the Butler County’s workers work in Management, Professional, and related occupations, followed by 20.5% in Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations.

As for the class of workers in the county, 77.7% are private wage and salary workers, while 11.2% are government workers, and 10.6% are self-employed workers in their own not incorporated business.

The average unemployment rate was 3.0%. Iowa Workforce Development does not report individual statistics for Butler County; however, it is important to note that Butler County has consistently reported lower unemployment rates than the State.

Economy Base

As Table 7 indicates, Butler County has a large percentage of its residents employed in the education, health and social services, similar to the State. Manufacturing is the second highest industry, employing 15.9% of the county. The table also shows the rural environment of the county with 7.0% employment in the agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industry. These figures reflect Butler County’s major employers which include:

- Unverferth Manufacturing
- POET (Ethanol Plant)
- Sinclair Elevator

- Packard Elevator
- FC Cooperative
- Menards DC
- VT Industries
- Trinity Rail
- Shell Rock Soy Processing
- Zinpro
- Heartland Windows
- Feldmeier
- Allan Industries
- Cole Excavating
- Schroeder Concrete

There are four industrial parks located in Butler County.

- Allison Industrial Park: Located in Allison along Iowa Highway 3 and only 12 miles east of Highway 218, this 21-acre site is zoned heavy industrial.
- Greene Westside Industrial Park: Located along Highway 14 on the west side of Greene, this industrial park has 16 acres for heavy industrial.
- Butler Logistics Park
- Parkersburg Business Park: Located along Highway 14 and 57 in Parkersburg, this business park has 2 acres in phase one and approximately 60 acres in phase two.

Table 7 : Employment Sectors/Industries for Butler County In 2020

Industry	Butler County	
	#	%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining	478	7.0%
Construction	542	7.9%
Manufacturing	1,089	15.9%
Wholesale Trade	242	3.5%
Retail Trade	743	10.9%
Transportation & Warehousing, and Utilities	360	5.3%
Information	79	1.2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental & Leasing	306	4.5%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	338	4.9%
Education, Health and Social Services	1,769	25.9%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodations and Food Services	348	5.1%
Other Services (except public administration)	358	5.2%
Public Administration	179	2.6%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020</i>		

Agriculture Economy

Much of the rural, unincorporated areas of the county are used for agricultural purposes. Based on data from the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, there were 1,063 farms in the county, a 1% decrease from 2017. This accounted for 327,856 acres within the county, a decrease of 9% since 2017. The average size of a farm was 308 acres.

The market value of agricultural products sold in 2017 was \$496,943,000, which ranked 37th in the State. The majority (62%) of this value is in crop sales, \$290,218; while the remaining sales were in livestock, \$179,725. Government assistance received by farmers increased 11% since 2017, totaling \$15,225,000 in 2022. This equates to an average of \$14,323 per farm.

Butler County's top commodity group in 2022 was grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas, totaling \$289,044, with hogs and pigs coming in second at \$148,463. Corn was the top grain at 160,681 acres. Soybeans for beans consumed 98,242 acres.

An overwhelming number of principal farm operators were male (1,240) compared to females (587) in 2022. 185 famers were under 35 years old while 882 were between 25 and 64 and 760 were 65 years and older.

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- Continue to have strong county support for economic development.
- Promote amenities that improve attractiveness of the county.
- Support Main Street economic development and investment within communities.
- Enhance training and development of entrepreneurs, especially younger individuals.
- Be proactive with partnerships at the local level.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Maintain and enhance economic development opportunities throughout the county.

- Objective A. Continue to foster strong relationships with local groups including Butler-Grundy Development Alliance and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach to leverage collective strengths, resources, and expertise to drive sustainable economic growth, enhance regional competitiveness, and improve quality of life for residents.
- Objective B. Support Butler-Grundy Development Alliance in the development and negotiation of potential business incentive packages that benefit the county.
- Objective C. Increase and enhance the marketing of Butler County to those outside of the county to attract residents and visitors alike.

Goal #2 Promote job training programs that benefit Butler County's workforce and employers.

- Objective A. Support local training and education for workforce to secure job placements within the county.
- Objective B. Partner with local employers and higher education institutions to improve interest and skill development for local jobs.
- Objective C. Educate youth on the local job opportunities available including developing job shadowing opportunities.

Goal #3 Maintain existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district management practices through regular reporting to Iowa Department of Management and encourage regional cooperation of jurisdictions to foster successful outcome of TIF district growth within the county.

- Objective A. Partner to provide training and educational opportunities for local government officials to learn about TIF funding, urban revitalization, municipal funding mechanism, and economic development.

Goal #4 Support the growth of quality-of-life amenities, especially those at the heart of Butler County, including the support of restoration, preservation, and conservation by Butler County's Conservation Board, which manage attractive and orderly campgrounds, public hunting areas, prairies, preserves, and bike trails.

Goal #5 Retain existing industries and businesses.

- Objective A. Collaborate with industry leaders and Butler-Grundy Development Alliance to identify opportunities for business retention and expansion.

Goal #6 Enhance and improve entrepreneurship opportunities with the county and local small business growth.

Housing

This section addresses the goals, policies, and actions needed to promote housing diversity and opportunities in strategic direction in Butler County. Provided is a general overview of the current existing conditions within the county. For a greater detailed understanding of housing, please reference the latest housing needs assessment completed for Butler County.

Existing Conditions

According to 2023 American Community Survey estimates, there are 6,569 total housing units in the county, 5,887 are occupied and 682 are vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 80% (4,710) are owner-occupied and 20% (1,177) are renter-occupied. The homeowner vacancy rate is 0.9% and the rental vacancy rate is 10.5%.

Mobile homes make up 1.3% of the county’s housing units. This is slightly less than the State’s average. Figure 10 shows the communities of Parkersburg, Clarksville, Shell Rock, and Greene have the majority of the housing units. The average household size of owner-occupied units is 2.46 persons. The rental-occupied average household size is 2.28 persons.

Table 8 : Housing Units in Butler County

	2000	2010	2023
Occupied Units	6,175	6,120	5,887
Owner Occupied	4,964	4,994	4,710
Renter Occupied	1,211	1,126	1,177
Vacant Units	403	562	682
Total Units	6,578	6,682	6,569
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey			

Table 9: Total Housing Units in Selected Butler Communities

Community	2010	2015	2023
City of Allison	470	508	519
City of Aplington	505	501	444
City of Aredale	40	40	35
City of Bristow	84	85	99
City of Clarksville	619	567	605
City of Dumont	312	324	325
City of Greene	575	592	665
City of New Hartford	234	281	292
City of Parkersburg	870	898	886
City of Shell Rock	588	567	666
Butler County (unincorporated areas)	2,385	2,338	2,033
Butler County (Total)	6,682	6,707	6,569
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey			

Age of Housing

Approximately 44 percent of the housing units in Butler County were built in 1949 or earlier. In the decades following 1950, the largest numbers of housing units were built in the 1970s. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a dramatic decline in the number of houses being built. Table 10 shows the number of structures built in each decade since 1939 and the number built before that time. The numbers represented in the table encompass all houses within the county, including incorporated areas.

Table 10: Age of Housing Units in Butler County

Year Built	Butler County 2022		Iowa 2022 %
	Number	Percent (%)	
2020 or later	32	0.5%	1.0%
2010-2019	317	4.8%	8.8%
2000-2009	580	8.8%	10.7%
1990-1999	427	6.5%	10.0%
1980-1989	315	4.8%	7.1%
1970-1979	819	12.5%	14.1%
1960-1969	531	8.1%	9.7%
1950-1959	661	10.1%	9.9%
1940-1949	432	6.6%	4.7%
1939 or earlier	2455	37.4%	24.1%
Total	6,569	100%	100%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2023			

Value of Housing

Table 11: Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units

Community	2000	2010	2023
City of Allison	\$53,900	\$86,800	\$104,600
City of Aplington	\$65,200	\$97,400	\$131,800
City of Aredale	\$13,800	\$22,500	\$58,300
City of Bristow	\$27,300	\$36,500	\$54,400
City of Clarksville	\$52,200	\$91,300	\$114,200
City of Dumont	\$33,300	\$59,500	\$72,700
City of Greene	\$52,800	\$76,700	\$125,200
City of New Hartford	\$50,000	\$82,900	\$112,100
City of Parkersburg	\$71,500	\$126,000	\$200,000
City of Shell Rock	\$73,300	\$112,100	\$159,100
Butler County	\$62,200	\$107,400	\$156,500
State of Iowa	\$82,500	\$129,200	\$195,900
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2023			

Housing value within Butler County has increased steadily since 2000. According to 2023 Census U.S. Census American Community Survey, the median value household for an owner-occupied unit in the county was \$156,500. While gaining ground since the previous census, the planning area remains relatively low compared to State averages for owner occupied housing units of \$195,900. Butler County's median gross rent is \$169 (\$780) less than the State's (\$949).

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- Increasing housing availability is critical.
- There is a lack of aging in place housing available.
- More cooperation is needed with developers.
- Smaller communities are struggling with increasing their housing stock.
- There are issues with building quality in the unincorporated areas of Butler County.
- Much of the housing stock is starting to become aged.
- Additional housing will be greatly needed moving forward for the county's future.

HOUSING Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Foster quality and affordable housing options for both current and prospective residents.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Objective A. | The county will work to develop specific residential overlays that will focus on residential development with already established infrastructure that can be developed in higher Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) areas. |
| Objective B. | Promote infill development of all available lots that strengthen and improve neighborhood character. |
| Objective C. | Encourage the development of housing on existing acreage sites. |
| Objective D. | Improve quality of the housing stock using recommendations from the current Butler County Housing Needs Assessment. |
| Objective E. | Consider compact and efficient housing development patterns. |
| Objective F. | Utilize housing affordability data and market data to track the success of implementation efforts. |
| Objective G. | Promote funding opportunities for housing rehabilitation to qualified applicants. |
| Objective H. | Adopt a timely and updated housing needs assessment. |

Goal #2 Adopt ordinances that are up-to-date, comprehensive, and enforceable.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Objective A. | Consider the State Building Code of Iowa – 2015 International Building Code (IBC) to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of occupants of new and existing buildings and structures. |
| Objective B. | Provide the necessary training of county staff to permit, approve, and regulate construction practices based on adopted building codes. |
| Objective C. | Adopt ordinances to address nuisance properties if and when the county can meet enforcement capacity. |
| Objective D. | Promote radon testing and mitigation in existing homes and encourage radon resistant features in new construction. |
| Objective E. | Take legal action against property owners who fail to address code violations or nuisance conditions as necessary. |
| Objective F. | Update the fee schedules to align with county services and inspections demands. |

HOUSING Goals and Objectives

Goal #3 Increase homebuying opportunities at all income levels.

- Objective A. Identify viable parcels of land suitable for residential development and update the future land use map as necessary with feedback from public and housing developers on possible future development.
- Objective B. Develop partnerships with lenders to improve availability of funding for development.
- Objective C. Support partnerships between public agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector to foster innovation, collaboration, and stimulate the growth of home construction and rehabilitation.
- Objective D. Promote federal and state tax credits and other development incentives to housing developers seeking to build in rural communities.

Goal #4 Provide for the development of safe and affordable rental units.

- Objective A. Seek to provide safe and habitable rental housing through enforceable zoning regulations and policies.
- Objective B. Seek collaboration with major employers and lending institutions to invest in quality and affordable workforce housing development.

Transportation

Transportation facilities are a part of the infrastructure needed to support and maintain the existing economic development efforts including the importing and exporting of goods, commuter traffic, and recreation. To accurately plan for future transportation needs within Butler County, an inventory of existing facilities has been prepared and analyzed.

Transportation facilities connecting the residents of Butler County are very important, but just as these areas are important to the residents of Butler County, the connection of Butler County to other regional service centers is important to business and industry. For this reason, the transportation inventories will examine the transportation facilities for vehicular, freight, air, rail, public, and recreation.

In developing this section, it was necessary to study the relationship between service centers and their users. The following is a brief discussion of specific elements, users, and value to the transportation system currently.

Existing Conditions

Butler County has a variety of existing systems that contribute to its transportation network. These systems include highways, gravel roads, blacktop roads, rail, and transit. Access to bike and pedestrian trails for transportation and recreation is becoming more prevalent in the area as well with additional efforts being made to extend recreation trails.

Roads

Butler County is served by Iowa Highway 3, which runs east-west through the middle of the county. It links the county with U.S. Highway 218 approximately three miles east of the county line. On the west side of the county, Iowa Highway 3 intersects U.S. Highway 65 eight miles past the county line. In addition, Iowa Highway 14 runs through the county in a north-south direction, joining U.S. Highway 20 approximately 6.5 miles south of the county line.

State Highways present in Butler County include Iowa Highway 3, 14, 57, and 346. In addition to the State Highway systems, the County maintains a total of 204 miles of paved roads, 735 miles of granular surfaced roads, 16 miles of unpaved roads, and 245 bridges greater than 20 feet long. Figure 9 shows the transportation infrastructure in Butler County.

Due to the county's large road system, the current maintenance work plan consists of asphalt resurfacing 8-10 miles, rock surfacing on 350-400 miles of roads, and replacement of several culverts annually.

Bridges

There are numerous bridges in the county; with approximately 15% of them having weight restrictions. Approximately 30-40% of the county bridges are either functionally obsolete or structurally deficient. This does not mean they are unsafe. It means they were not designed to meet today's traffic needs. The County's work plan currently tries to maintain what they have by repairing or replacing one major bridge and four or five minor bridges each year.

Air

Air travel is an important form of transportation. The county has one airport, which is the Allison Municipal Airport. The airport provides service to private aircraft only. There are several airports of different service levels within one hour outside the county. These regional airports include:

- Mason City Municipal Airport, Commercial Service (Great Lakes Airlines)
- Waterloo Municipal Airport, Commercial Service (American Eagle Airlines)
- Charles City Municipal Airport, General Service
- Hampton Municipal Airport, General Service
- Iowa Falls Municipal Airport, General Service
- Waverly Municipal Airport, Local Service

Rail

Rail throughout the county includes routes owned by the Canadian National Railroad. One route runs east and west through Aplington and New Hartford while the other route runs north to south through Clarksville and Shell Rock. In 2025, Canadian National Railroad took over operating control of Iowa Northern Railroad and became a wholly owned, class 3 subsidiary.

Transit

OnBoard Public Transit, a service of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission, offers limited transit service to residents of Butler County. Currently, demand response service, which requires 24-hour notice, is offered in Waverly. The remainder of the county is served by OnBoard Public Transit on a case-by-case basis depending on space and service timing considerations.

Trail System

In addition to the above-mentioned facilities, the county has one main trail system: Rolling Prairie Trail System. When complete, the corridor will include nine communities, three counties (Bremer, Butler, and Franklin) and two state parks. Trailheads are located in Waverly, Denver, Shell Rock, Clarksville, and Allison. Completed trail segments total 26.5 miles. See the recreation trail map in Figure 10 for the location of trails in Butler County.

- Allison to Clarksville (Rolling Prairie Trail) is twelve miles of asphalt surface into Heery Woods State Park and connects Allison, Clarksville, and Shell Rock
- Clarksville to Shell Rock (Butler County Nature Trail) is five and half miles of asphalt surface that ends a mile east of Clarksville (riders use a bike lane along County Road C33)
- Waverly to Denver (Waverly Rail Trail and Denver Jefferson Trail) is asphalt surface that starts along the Waverly Rail Trail and proceeds southeast out of Waverly for approximately seven miles to Highway 63 then continues as the Denver-Jefferson Trail another two miles from Highway 63 to Denver.

Figure 9: Transportation Infrastructure of Butler County

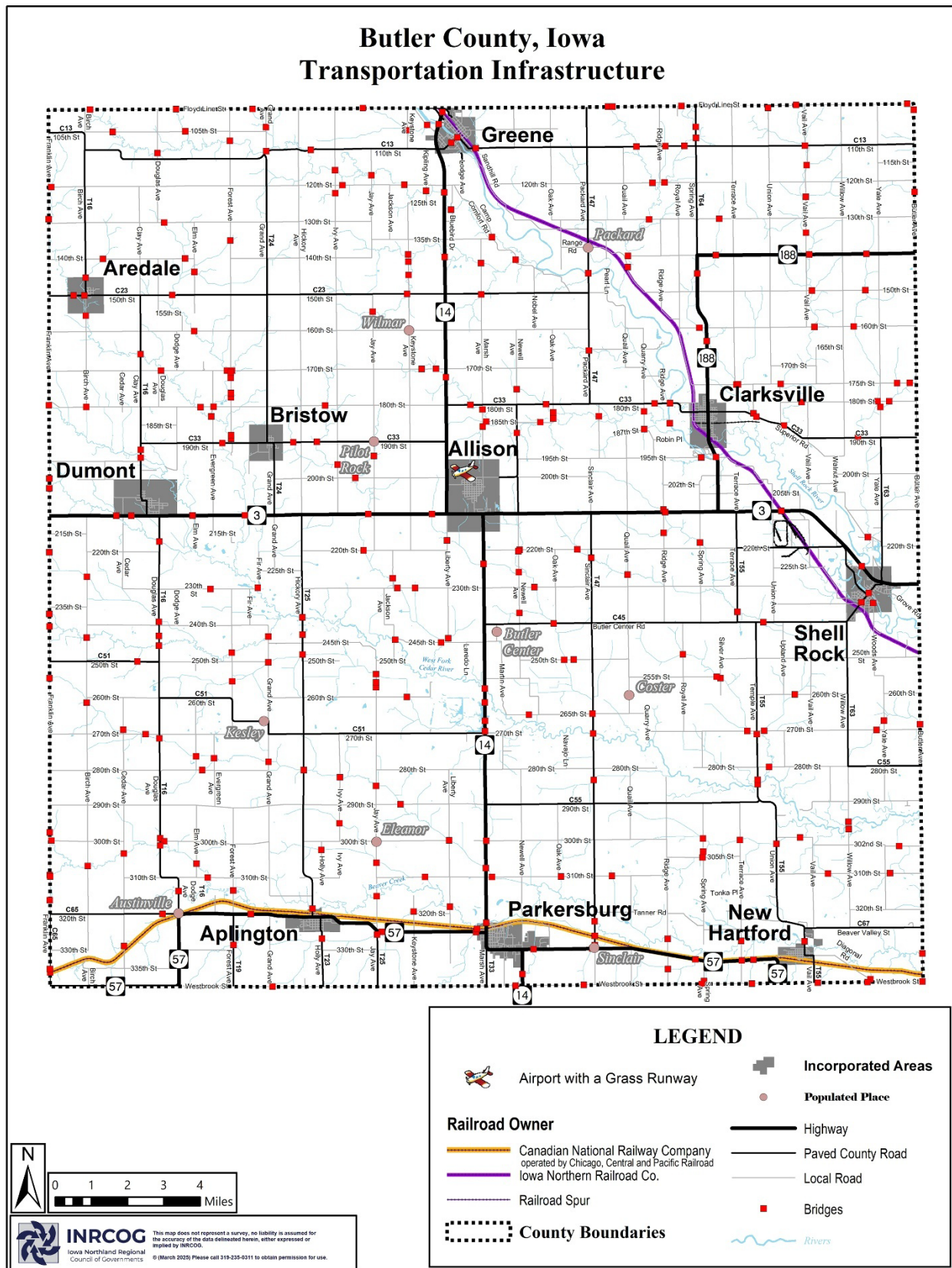
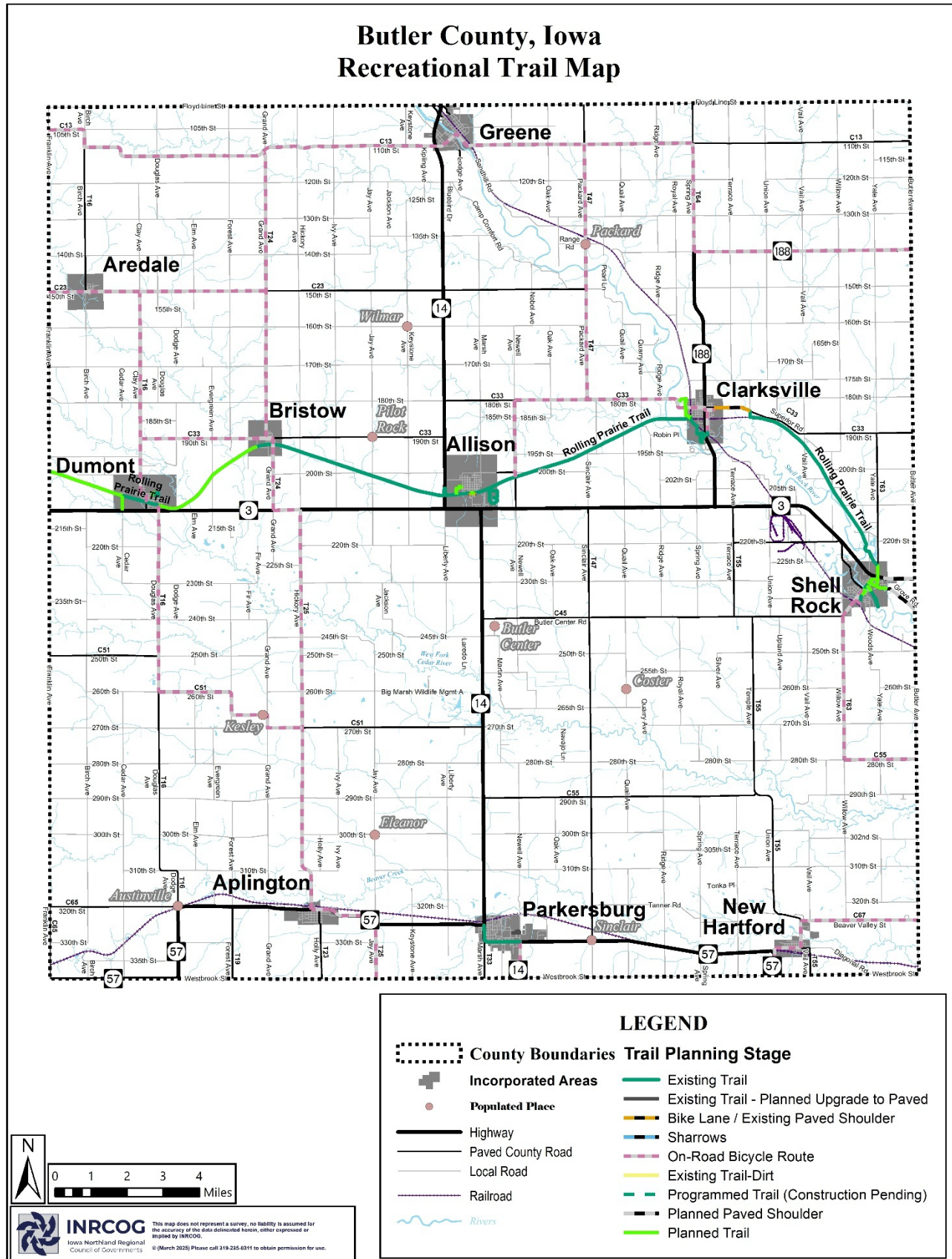


Figure 10: Map of Butler County Trail System



Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- The recreation trail has been a great force within the county, and there is a strong desire to finish paving the trail.
- Rail safety around crossing infrastructure is a challenge, especially for relocating any assets.
- There is a lack of transit networks within the county.
- Agricultural vehicle and shipping trucks are hard on the rural roads.
- The county has aging bridges that are taking on increased traffic with larger loads.
- The secondary road department is in the process of developing a safety plan.
- Industry growth is faster than the county can keep up with.
- Overall, the county needs to increase transportation budgets, reduce the level of service, reduce the size of the system, or a combination of all these to ensure current conditions.

TRANSPORTATION Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Maintain services for the public and private sectors including addressing necessary improvements to all transportation modes that adequately and efficiently provide safe travel across Butler County for automobile, agriculture, trucks, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Objective A. Adopt and coordinate roadway projects in Butler County's Secondary Roads 5-Year Plan with the RTA's Project Schedule FY2021-2024 in the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan to inform and guide land use decisions.

Objective B. Complete the Rolling Prairie Trail from Bristow to the western boundary line of Butler County.

Objective C. Collaborate with Bremer County to construct a secondary route for the Rolling Prairie Trail from Shell Rock to Waverly along 240th Street/Grove Road.

Goal #2 Provide an efficient traffic system for orderly development of the county, while maintaining safety and economy of scale including preventing unexpected improvement projects that occur due to inefficient development projects on non-paved roads located away from existing utilities.

Objective A. Require all new developments to conform to the existing road system or show that the changes will be an improvement for travel in the county.

Objective B. Investigate future locations of roads to ensure an orderly growth, which is consistent with the values and objectives of the county.

Objective C. Explore options to reduce the maintenance and operations of roads that are no longer of value in the county.

Objective D. Evaluate weight limits on roads and bridges to accommodate heavier truck traffic.

Objective E. Enhance transportation network efficiency by encouraging developers to construct their projects along paved roadways.

Objective F. Explore ordinances and systems to ensure safety around railroads including rail elimination and noise limits.

Public Infrastructure and Utilities

The infrastructure and utilities of the community are the backbone of the community's operation. Without up-to-date infrastructure, the quality of life in the county is reduced. To reduce the out-migration to more urban areas, Butler County needs to determine the quality of the services, facilities, and systems needed throughout the county to meet its current and future needs.

Existing Conditions

Water

Water services in the unincorporated area are typically provided by private, individual, or common wells. The wells tap rechargeable groundwater aquifers for water. In terms of need, the county does not foresee the need for a common or public water system. However, the county does want to protect the groundwater from depletion or contamination to maintain its supply of potable water. In addition to these wells, rural water, in combination with wells, serves a significant portion of the southern half of the County.

Although not thoroughly developed, large rural water mains and storage facilities have the potential to supply water for purposes of firefighting. It is estimated that the water line would need to be at least six inches in order to supply effective pressure for actual firefighting. Smaller lines could serve as potential fill locations for tanker trucks.

Sanitary Sewer

The primary means of disposing of sewage in the county is by individual, on-site septic systems. These on-site systems include tanks and septic fields for disposal of household sewage. As with water service, the county does not envision the need for a common public sewage system. The county, however, does regulate on-site systems through ordinances, inspections, and its Board of Health.

Storm Sewer / Storm Water

There are no storm sewer or storm water systems in the unincorporated area of the county. The rural unincorporated area relies on open ditches to collect and displace storm water.

Electricity, Natural Gas, and Telephone

The county is served by numerous utility providers. A list of the primary providers of all community utilities in the county is shown on Table 12, including the incorporated communities. Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the electric providers and telephone service providers in the county.

Figure 11: Electric Services Providers

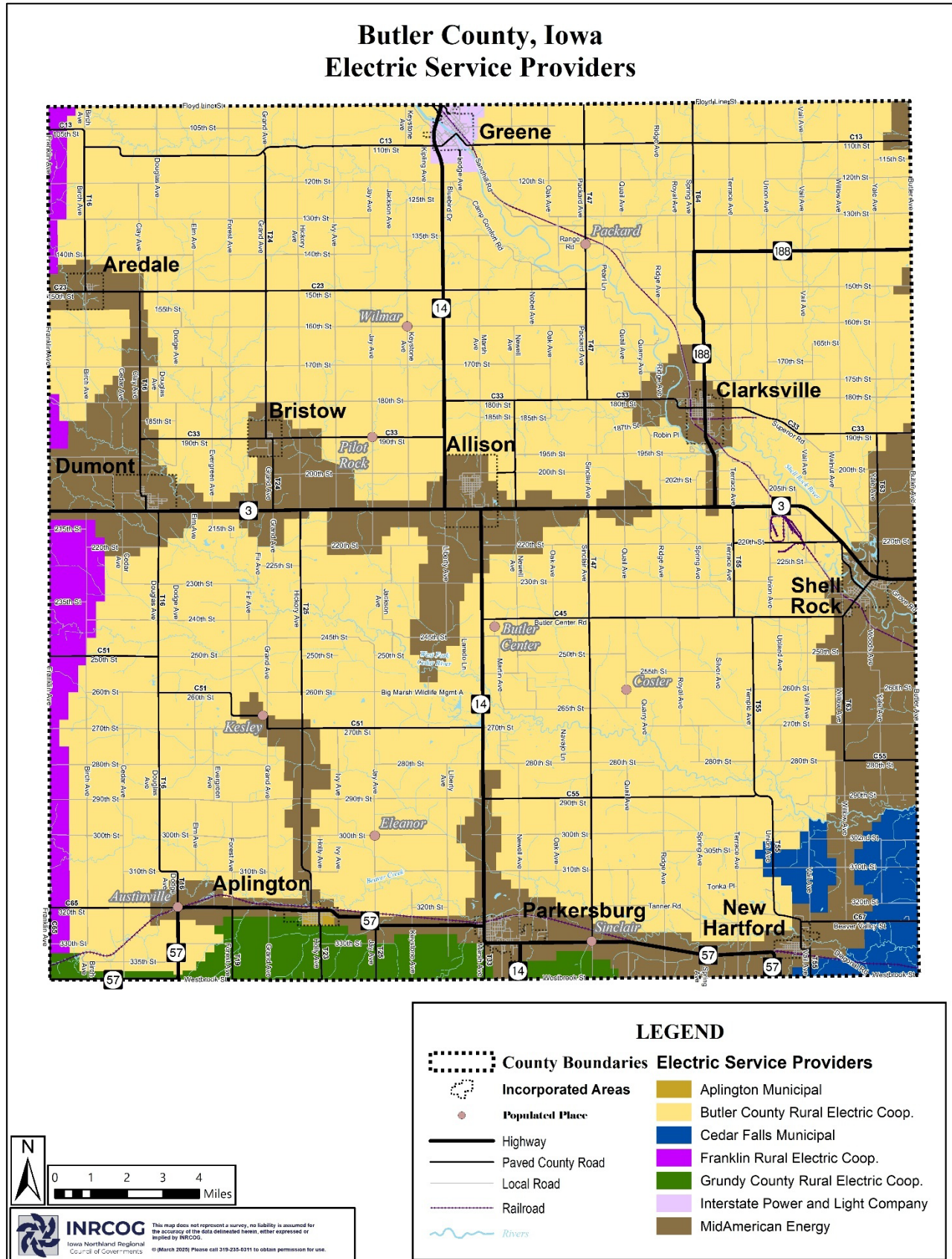


Figure 12: Telephone Service Providers

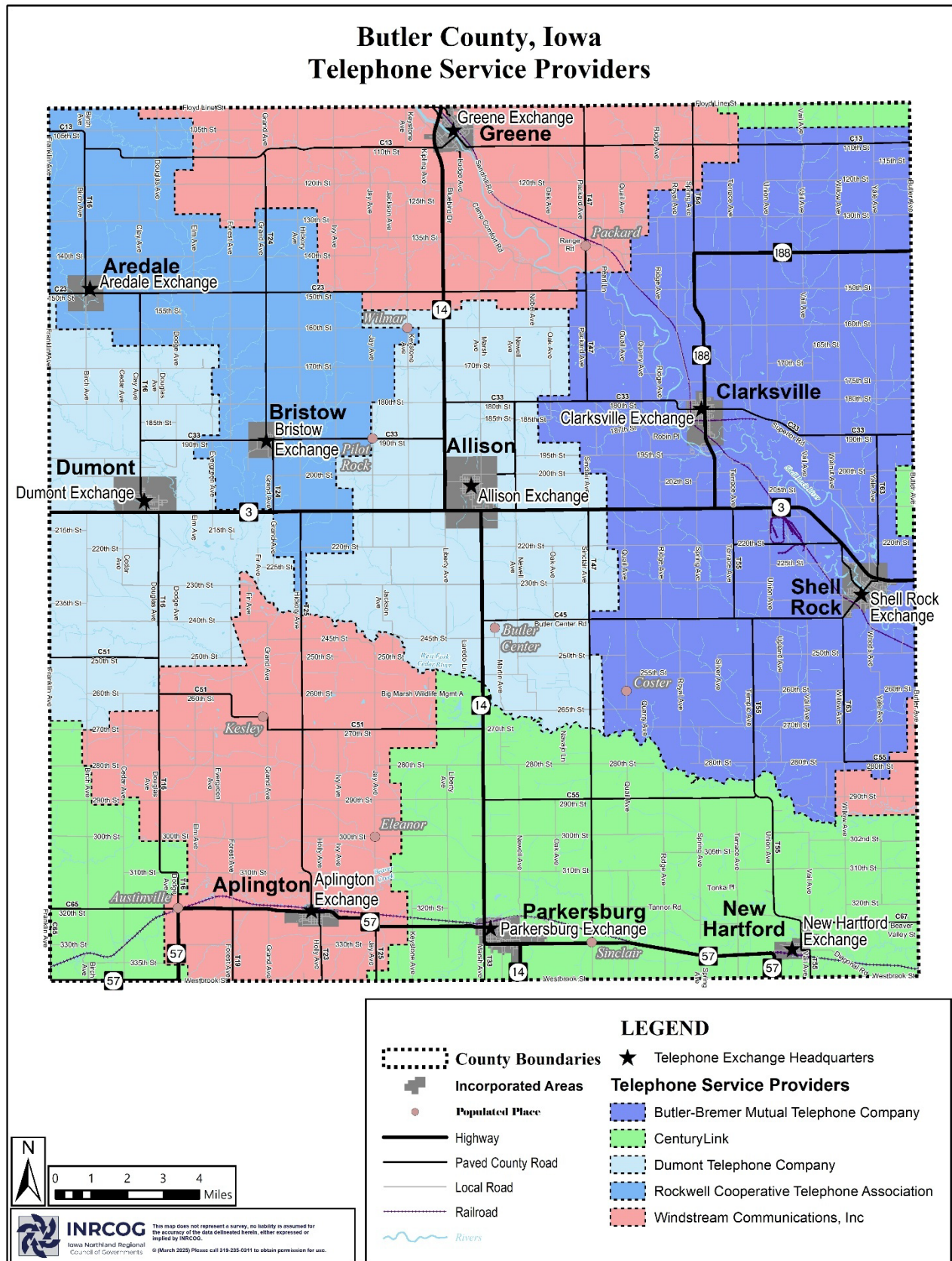


Table 12: Primary Providers for Community Utilities within Butler County

Community	Electric	Natural Gas	Telephone/ Internet	Cable TV	Water	Sewer	Sanitation
City of Allison	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy	Dumont Telephone	Dumont Telephone	City Wells	City-Lagoon	Private Contractor
City of Aplington	City	Mid-American Energy	Iowa Telecom or Mediacom	Mediacom	City	City	Private Contractor
City of Aredale	Mid-American Energy	Individual Choice	Rockwell Coop Telephone Assn.	DirectTV, Dish Network, Rockwell Coop Telephone	Individual wells	Individual Septic	Private Contractor
City of Bristow	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy	Rockwell Co-Op Telephone, Dumont Telephone	Dumont Telephone	City-Wells	Individual Septic	Private
City of Clarksville	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy	Butler-Bremer Communications	N/A	City-Wells	City-Lagoon	N/A
City of Dumont	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy	Dumont Telephone Co.	Dumont Telephone/Cablevision	City-Wells	City-Tertiary	City
City of Greene	Alliant Energy, Butler County REC	Black Hills Energy	Omnitel, Iowa Telecom	Omnitel	City	City	City
City of New Hartford	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy	Qwest	Mediacom	City	City	City
City of Parkersburg	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy	Qwest, City	Mediacom	City	City	Private Contractor
City of Shell Rock	Mid-American Energy	Mid-American Energy, ENROC	Shell Rock Telephone Company, AT&T, MCI, U.S. Sprint, Teleconnect, Iowa Network Services	AT&T	City & Individual Wells	City & Individual Septic	Private Contractor
Unincorporated Area	Mid-American Energy, Alliant Energy, Butler County REC	Mid-American Energy, Aquila	All services listed above	All services listed above	Individual Wells	Individual Septic	Private, Individual

Source: Communities

Solid Waste & Recycling

Butler County Solid Waste Commission oversees reducing, reusing, recycling, and renewing in the unincorporated and incorporated areas of Butler County. The Butler County Transfer Station accepts certain items free of charge and minimal charges for other items. Solid waste is hauled out of county to a landfill.

The Commission also has recycling containers throughout the county for disposal of recyclable materials.

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- The storm drain system could use more tiling to address stormwater flow.
- There are no active drainage districts to address stormwater.
- The county landfill provides quality service and remains in compliance.
- Large private well systems are shallow and prone to contamination.
- There remains a lack of water quality education amongst the public.
- Many of the telecommunication systems are provided by local authorities that have significantly invested in their systems, including fiber optic.
- There is a lack of cellular communication provider cooperation, leading to numerous single towers throughout the county.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Continue delivering robust public services to local municipalities and the public as needed.

- Objective A. Maintain the Butler County Regional Collection Center and Swap Shop facility and its operations to ensure the proper disposal of waste.
- Objective B. Encourage and expand the recycling, reuse, and reduction of waste within the county.
- Objective C. Educate residents about proper recycling and waste disposal services.

Goal #2 Foster and bolster the resiliency and independence of the county's energy sector.

- Objective A. Promote increasing energy efficiency efforts in individual homes, businesses, and government buildings.
- Objective B. Increase access to clean, renewable energy.
- Objective C. Encourage sustainable building practices.
- Objective D. Remain informed on emerging transportation industry trends such as electric vehicle transportation technologies.

Goal #3 Support the improvement of access to essential community development infrastructure with a particular focus on enhancing water and sewer systems.

- Objective A. Promote federal and state efforts among agricultural stakeholders to contribute to the watershed management efforts to reduce nutrients into waterways.
- Objective B. Encourage use of best management practices for stormwater management.
- Objective C. Continue to educate the public on well systems and water quality.
- Objective D. Encourage well owners to test wells annually and plug abandoned wells utilizing the Private Well Grant.
- Objective E. Explore emerging onsite wastewater treatment system technologies.
- Objective F. Educate homeowners on proper maintenance of septic systems and address illegal discharges of inadequate wastewater treatment systems.

Goal #4 Continue to enhance and upgrade public infrastructure and utilities as needed.

- Objective A. Improve cellular systems for greater coverage across the county.
- Objective B. Continue partnering with local utilities to increase access to fiber internet.
- Objective C. Enhance and update electrical grid systems across the county to meet changing demands while enhancing its resiliency to disruptions.

Community Facilities

Community facilities and services are commonly used to measure the quality of life in a community. These facilities and services are often what potential citizens and businesses consider when determining if they should relocate to a community – in addition to a well-connected and diverse transportation network, economic diversity, and so forth. In regard to community facilities and services, potential citizens and businesses look for a community that provides a responsive and competent public safety system, a variety of parks and recreational opportunities, an exceptional and supported school system, and cultural events and opportunities. Existing citizens and businesses also consider these features when deciding whether to remain in the community or move elsewhere. To some degree, community facilities can be used to enhance a community's quality of life and can be used to help guide the rate of growth.

Existing Conditions

County Courthouse

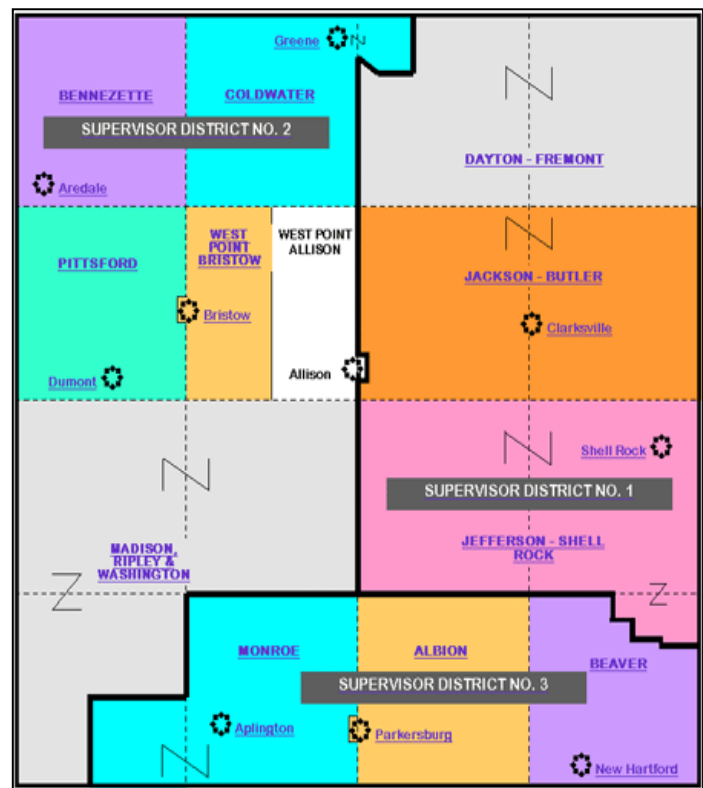
Government Structure

Butler County is governed by a 3-member Board of Supervisors. Each member represents a district:

- District 1 includes Dayton-Fremont, Jackson-Butler, and Jefferson-Shell Rock, and Beaver;
- District 2 includes Bennezette, Coldwater, Pittsford, West Point-Bristow, West Point-Allison, Madison, Ripley, and Washington;
- District 3 includes Monroe, Albion, and Beaver, and Washington.

Figure 13 illustrates these district boundaries and the location of the county seat and the individual city halls in the county.

Figure 13: Butler County Board of Supervisors

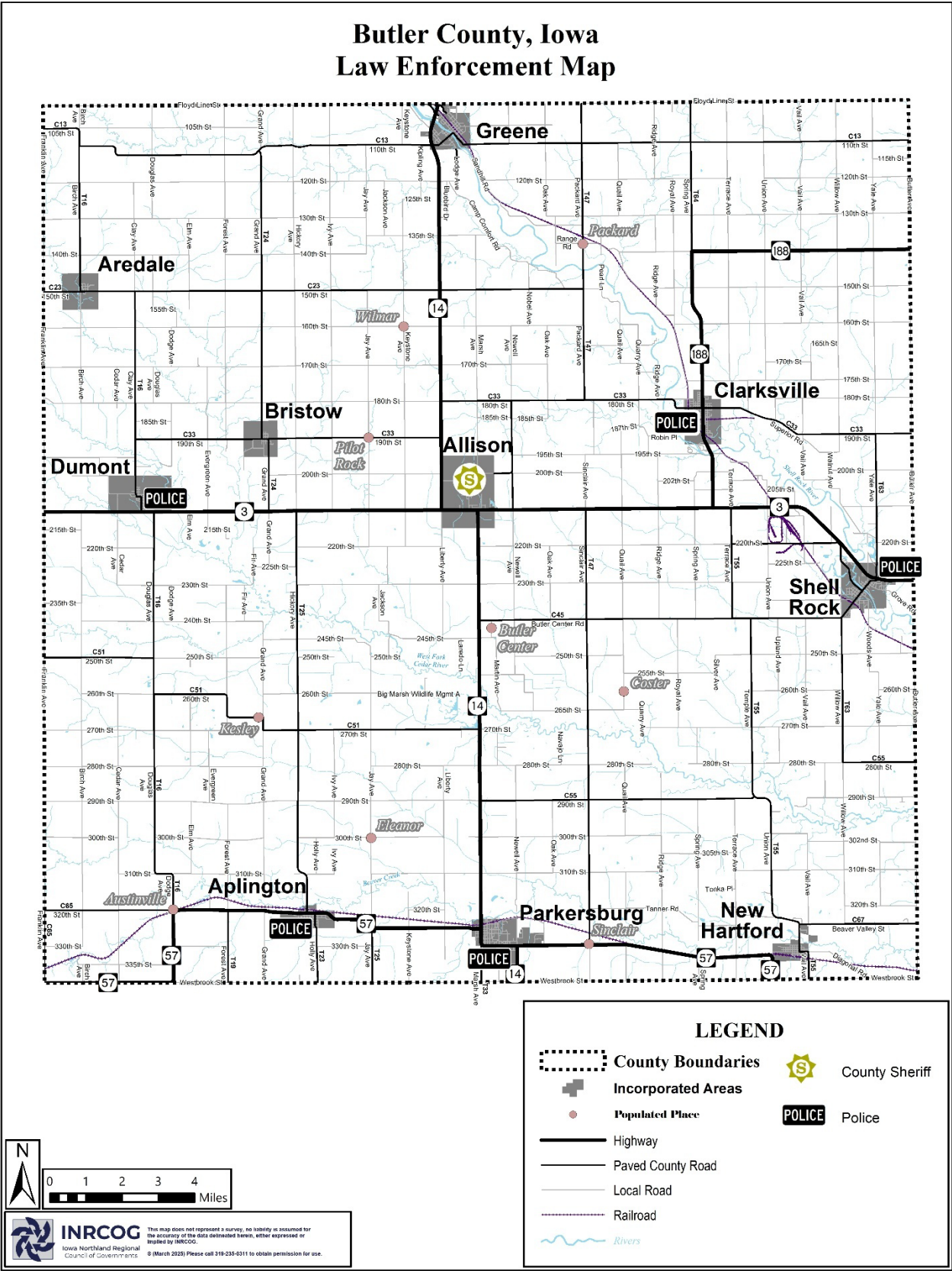


Law Enforcement

The Butler County Sheriff's Office employs one sheriff, six deputies, and one civil deputy for the county, as well as one full-time jailer and three dispatchers (cross trained as jailers).

The Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement for all the unincorporated areas of the county along with assisting the cities that have their own police force. In addition, they have service contracts to provide law enforcement patrols with the communities of Allison, Aredale, Bristow, Dumont, Greene, New Hartford, and Shell Rock.

Figure 14: Law Enforcement Locations



County Jail

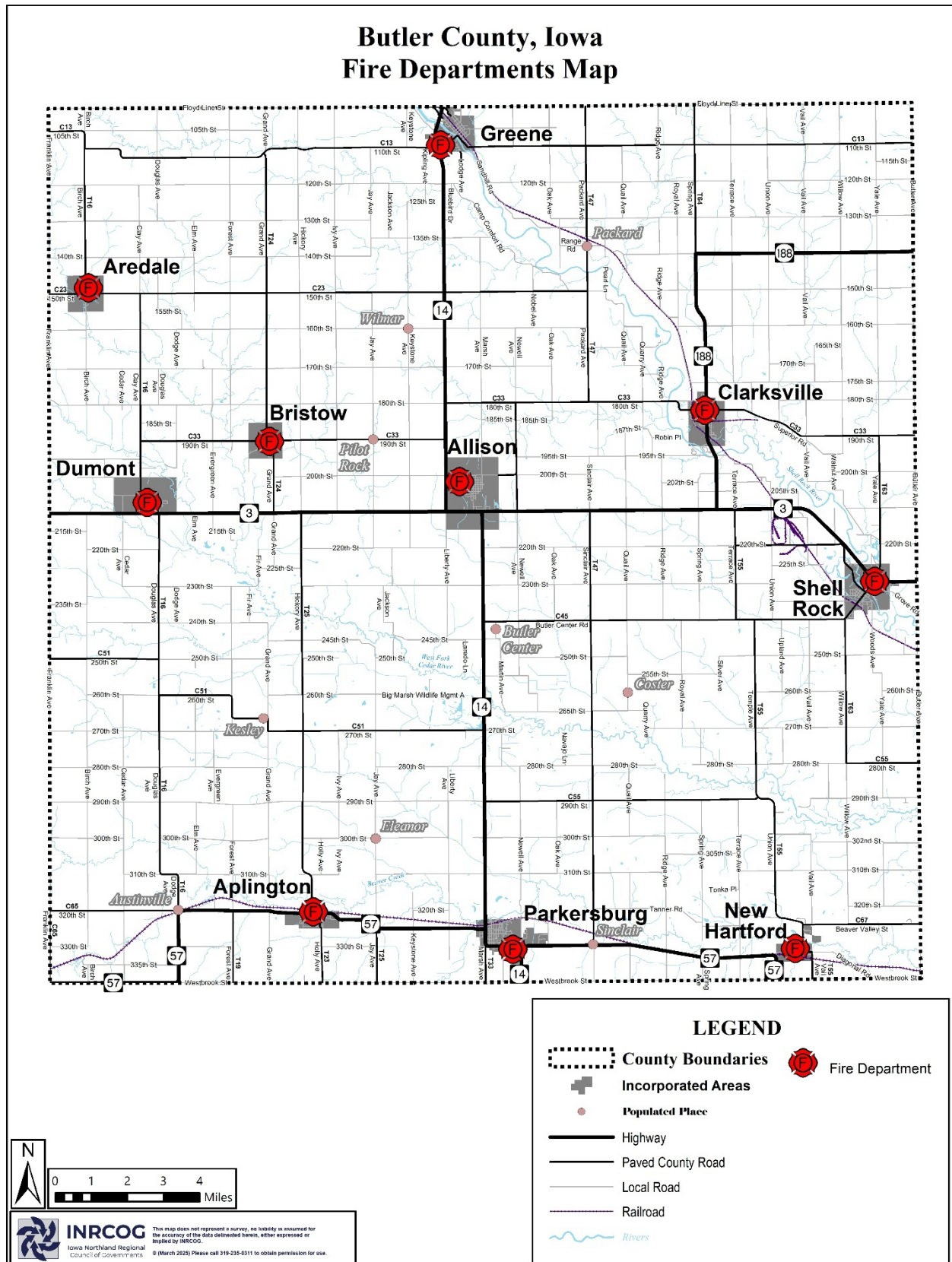
The Butler County Jail was built in 1928 and has since been remodeled in 1983 and again in 1992. The current capacity of the jail is 12 inmates.

The main purpose of the Butler County Jail is to hold persons arrested for crimes committed in Butler County. The jail is to protect the public and make sure the person arrested is available for subsequent court appearances. The secondary purpose of the jail is for punishment of those persons convicted of misdemeanor crimes. Those persons can be sentenced to the Butler County Jail for up to one year. The jail has five cells consisting of three single cells, one three-person cell, and one six person cell. The jail can hold males, females, and juveniles waved into adult court.

Fire Department

Butler County is divided into Fire Districts with fourteen fire departments having coverage for every square mile of the county. Fire Departments serving Butler County are Ackley, Allison, Aplington, Aredale, Bristow, Clarksville, Dougherty, Dumont, Greene, Nashua, New Hartford, Parkersburg, Plainfield, and Shell Rock. Figure 15 shows the locations for the fire departments within the county.

Figure 15: Fire Departments within Butler County



Healthcare/Medical Services

Much like the fire departments, the entire county is divided into ambulance districts. Ambulance providers for Butler County are:

- Allison Ambulance
- Aplington Ambulance
- Clarksville Ambulance
- Dumont Ambulance
- Greene Ambulance
- New Hartford Ambulance
- Parkersburg Ambulance
- Shell Rock First Responders

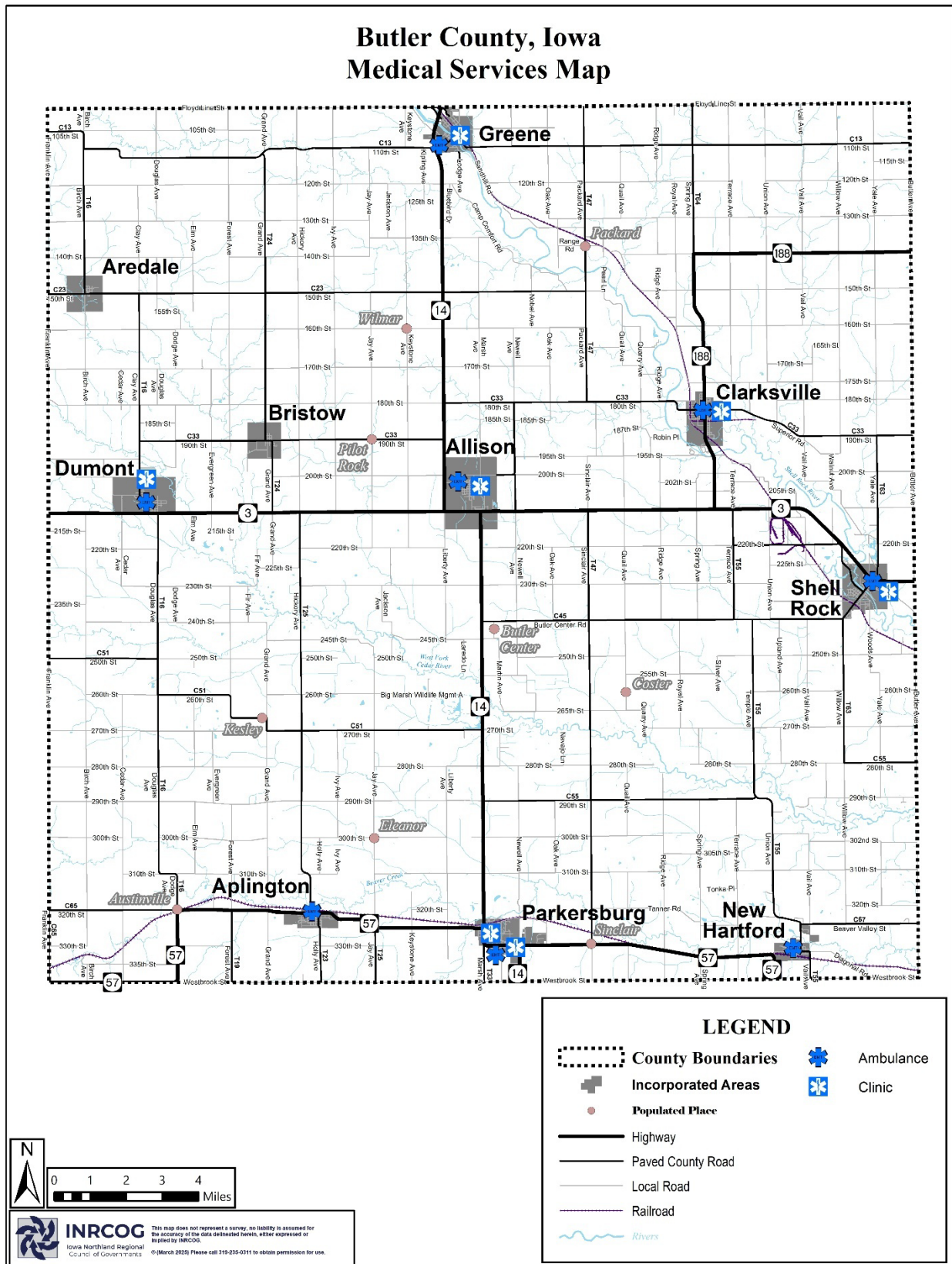
The Butler County Board of Supervisors recently deemed EMS an essential service for the County according to Iowa Code Chapter 422D and recently hired an EMS Coordinator to provide coverage and support for EMS services within the county. Butler County EMS represents all 8 of the EMS services within the county.

The county also receives mutual aid from paramedic/ambulance services from:

- Franklin General Hospital Ambulance Service
- Covenant Medical Center Ambulance Service
- Sartori Ambulance Service
- Waverly Hospital Ambulance Service
- AMR Ambulance Service in Charles City
- Mason City Fire Department

Butler County has no hospital within its boundaries; therefore, residents go to neighboring counties for medical attention. Figure 16 shows the location of medical services within the county.

Figure 16: Medical Services within Butler County



Parks and Recreation

The current recreation facilities provided in Butler County are shown in Table 13 and Figure 17. Currently, a total of 4,515 acres is reserved for park and recreational purposes. Additional information about each of these facilities is provided.

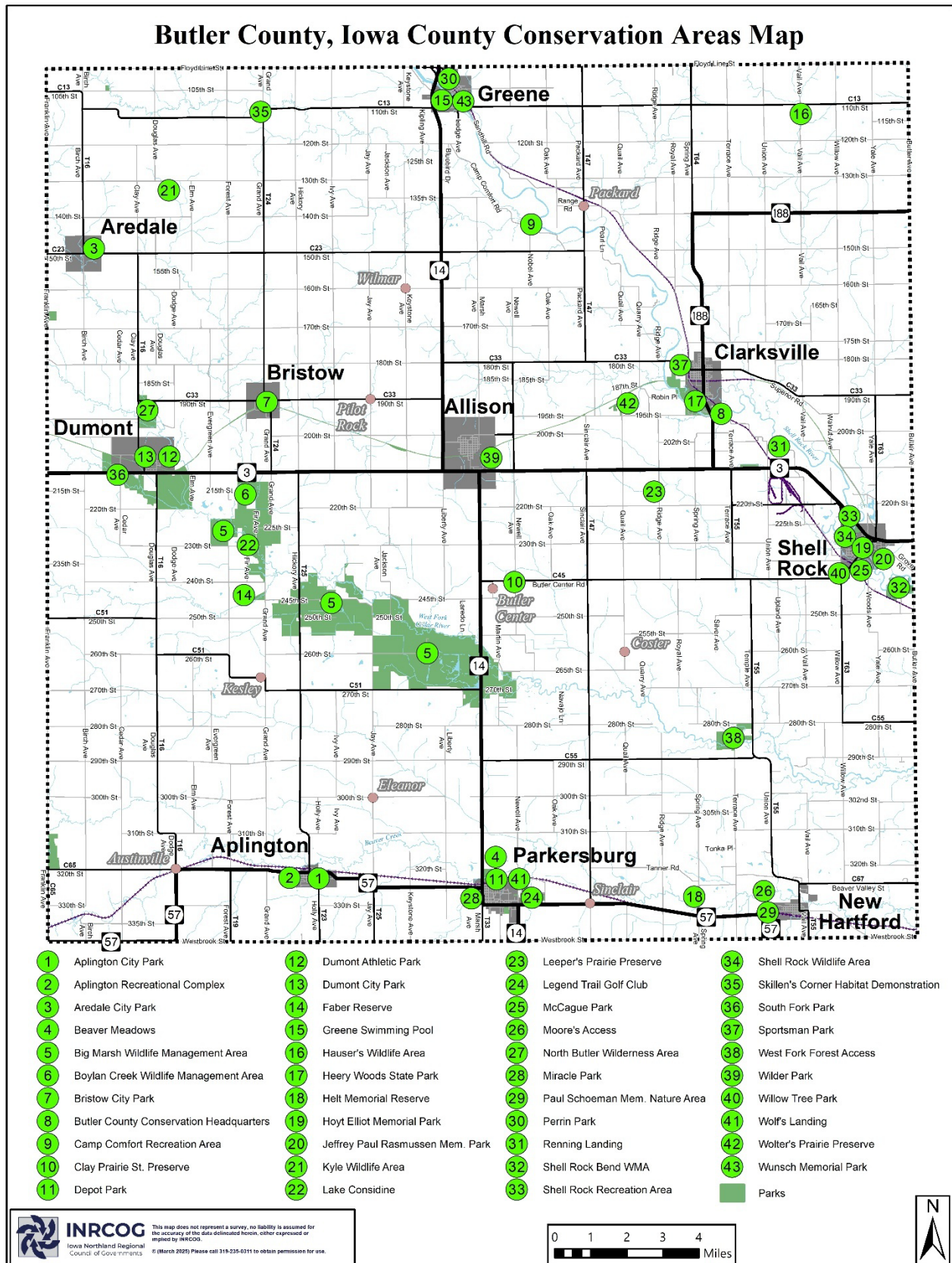
Table 13: Recreational Facilities within Butler County

Facility / Park	Acres	Camping	Electric	Water	Dump Station	Toilets	Showers	Hiking	Biking	Fishing	Hunting	Boat Access	Canoe Access	Wildlife Refuge
Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area	3,100									X			X	X
Heery Woods State Park	340	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Conservation Headquarters	14	X								X	X	X	X	
Camp Comfort Recreation Area	27	X	X	X		X				X		X	X	X
Wunsch Memorial Park	1.2	X	X	X	X	X				X		X	X	X
Shell Rock Recreational Area	40	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Beaver Meadows Park	32	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	X
Sportsmen Park	26.5	X			X	X		X		X				X
Boylan Creek WMA	334							X**	X**		X			
Dumont Park-South Fork Access	20	X*								X	X			
Lake Consodine	90	X*						X		X	X	X	X	
Helt Memorial Preserve	25									X	X			
Moore's Access	35	X*						X		X	X			
West Fork Forest Access	108	X*						X			X			
Hauser's Wildlife Area	25													X
Skillen's Corner	16													X
Kyle Wildlife Area	19													X
Wolter's Prairie Preserve	40													X
Leeper's Prairie Preserve	41													X
Faber Reserve	27.5													X
Shell Rock Wildlife Area	49													X
Wilder Park	78	X	X		X	X	X		X	X				
Paul Shoeman Nature Area	26.5							X						X
North Butler Wilderness Area	150										X			

Source: www.butlercountyiowa.com

Notes: *Camping in these areas is limited to primitive camping only. **Hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding area allowed in this area during non-hunting seasons.

Figure 17: County Conservation Areas within Butler County



Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area

Located five miles south of Allison along West Fork of the Cedar River, Big Marsh Wildlife Management Area provides 3,100 acres of diversity for wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. Habitat types include riparian timber, a river corridor, upland areas and a large man-made wetland. Approximately 200 species of birds have been observed in the area since it was acquired in 1952 through 1954. The area provides excellent opportunities for bird watchers, hunters, and other broad recreational interests.

Heery Woods State Park

Heery Woods State Park, which consists of 394 acres, is part of the original tract of land belonging to the first land owner in the county. After becoming a state park in 1932, workers of the WPA were used to develop the park. A dam, a shelter house and lodge were built. The park is now home to excellent fishing, boating, biking, and hiking opportunities. There are also camp sites available to accommodate 20 trailers and has modern toilets. In 2005 the park was improved with a new shower house and a paved bike trail that leads to the Rolling Prairie Trail. The park is under the management of the Butler County Conservation Board.

The Allan and Fayette Meyer Nature Center is an environmental learning center located on the bluffs of the Shell Rock River. The Heritage of Iowa is taught through interactive displays about trees, prairies and animals. In 2021, the natural center was expanded with significant improvements made. It includes various live animals and other interactive exhibits.

Conservation Headquarters

Butler County Conservation Board Offices is located on 14-acres one mile south of Clarksville on Timber Road. This area has access to the Shell Rock River via a boat ramp and picnic areas for public use.

Beaver Meadows Park

Located behind Beaver Meadows Golf Course, this 32-acre park was once a state park. It is now owned and managed by the Butler County Conservation Board and offers a wide variety of recreational activities. Fishermen can find Smallmouth Bass, Catfish and Northern Pike in Beaver Creek. There are 20 electric hook-ups for campers, flushable toilets and showers, and a shelter house.

Camp Comfort Recreation Area

This 27-acre area is one of the most important areas operated by the Conservation Board. Located south of Greene and east of Highway 14 along the Shell Rock River, this park offers excellent recreational opportunities. Walleye and Smallmouth Bass can be found below the dam and Catfish above it. There are boat ramps and canoe access both above and below the dam, a large shelter, and 30 camping sites with electric connections and an area for tents as well as a shower house.

Dumont Park – South Fork Access

Consisting of only 20-acres, Dumont Park offers access to the South Fork of the West Fork River and a 3-acre lake stocked with bass, Bluegill and Yellow Perch. In addition to its fishing opportunities, the park provides a small variety of upland and forest type resources for hunting and primitive camping (no water or toilet facilities are available).

Sportsman Park

Located on the western edge of Clarksville, this 26.5-acre park is the site of the first settlers' cabin. The park provides excellent opportunities for family enjoyment. The 6-acre lake, picnic shelter, and playground offer something for all ages.

Wunsch Memorial Park

Located just below the Greene Dam along the Shell Rock River, this 2-acre park is a popular area. It offers electricity, running water, river access, and a boat ramp and shelter house.

Wilder Park

Wilder Park encompasses 78-acres. It has 48 camping sites with 50-amp electricity. There are two ponds, a shelter house, playground, restrooms, shower facilities, and wireless internet available. Bicyclists have direct access to the Rolling Prairie Trail on the north end of the park.

Shell Rock Recreation Area

This 40-acre area located on the western edge of Shell Rock was one of the first areas purchased by the Conservation Board. Hiking trails, a playground, and a shelter house are just a few of this park's features. There are 20 electric hook-ups, flush toilets, and showers. The Shell Rock River offers fishing, canoe access and a boat ramp. The oxbow lake on the west side of the park is currently being dredged and will offer increased fishing opportunities.

Boylan Creek Wildlife Management Area

Purchased using Habitat Stamp Money and with assistance from local Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited Chapters, this 334-acre area is located just south of Bristow on Highway 3. This area features hunting of upland game birds, wild turkey and white-tail deer. There are also opportunities for trapping along the creek, timber edges and fence lines.

Lake Considine

Formerly a popular camping area, vandalism forced the removal of modern facilities in the late 1980's. Currently, the major use of this area is fishing and hunting.

Helt Memorial Reserve

This 25-acre area was donated to the Conservation Board by the estate of the late Donald Helt. Placed in the CRP program in the 1980's, the area was primarily brome and timothy with a few cedar trees planted along one area. It has been enhanced with prairie grass, a food plot, and tree plantings since its acquisition.

Moore's Access

This 35-acre area of bottomland timber is located just north of New Hartford off County Road T-55. Designated in 1997, this is a walking area with access to Beaver Creek.

West Fork Forest Access

Located along County Road T-55, this 108-acre area of bottomland timber provides excellent habitat for many species of wildlife. Waterfowl hunting is also available throughout the area's many potholes. A small boat ramp is available to launch either small boats or canoes but canoeing the West Fork may be difficult due to large numbers of trees in the water. Primitive camping is allowed with no water or restroom facilities available.

South Fork Park

Located outside of Dumont off Highway 3, this 10-acre area is small but provides diverse offerings. A 4-acre pond and access to the West Fork River provides fishing opportunities. Primitive camping is allowed, but no restrooms or other facilities are available.

North Butler Wilderness Area

Butler County's newest public hunting area is located north of Dumont off County Road T-66 and C-66. This 150-acre area was purchased by local Pheasants Forever Chapters with a grant from the Iowa Habitat Stamp program. The area is enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program and is mostly grassland with a small amount of timber. The West Fork River runs through the southwest side of the property.

Wolter's Prairie Preserve

In 1984, the Butler County Conservation Board purchased the first half of this 40-acre native prairie area from John Wolter. In 1990 the local chapter of Pheasants Forever purchased the remaining 20 acres on behalf of the Conservation Board. As a result, an area of native grasses and forbs that represent Iowa's past was preserved. Today the area is used to teach the natural and cultural history of Iowa.

Leeper's Prairie Preserve

Donated to the county by Doris Leeper in memory of her late husband, this 41-acre prairie area is a remnant of what once covered most of Iowa. Management of this area is limited to tree removal and periodic spring burning.

Kyle Wildlife Area

Donated by Joseph Kyle as a wildlife refuge, this 19-acre area provides excellent winter habitat for a wide array of wildlife including pheasants, deer, and songbirds. In 1999 work was done on the waterway passing through the site to provide better drainage for surrounding farms. The redevelopment of this waterway should also promote a greater abundance of aquatic oriented furbearers in the area.

Hauser's Wildlife Area

This 25-acre refuge provides diversity. Located along a small tributary of the Shell Rock River, called Beaver Creek, this refuge provides a combination of aquatic, forest, and upland habitats that support a wide variety of species.

Faber Reserve

Former Conservation Board member, Herman Faber, donated this 27.5-acre wildlife refuge to the Conservation Board in 1997. The main use of the area is a wildlife refuge. Tree plantings, a food plot and a wetland developed in 2003 have helped make this area a wildlife haven.

Shell Rock Wildlife Area

The Shell Rock Wildlife Area is adjacent to the Shell Rock Recreation Area. This 49-acre area of floodplain forest is home to waterfowl, beaver, deer, and a variety of non-game wildlife.

Skillen's Corner Habitat Demonstration Area

Located at the intersection of County Road C-13 and T-24, this area is designed as a teaching area. The Conservation Board has planted trees, shrubs, and prairie grasses to demonstrate how good planning and proper maintenance can help enhance wildlife habitat.

Paul Shoeman Nature Area

The newest preserve area, the Paul Shoeman Nature Area is located west of New Hartford on Highway 57. A re-established prairie, wetland, and tree planting make this 28.5-acre area an excellent place to see a variety of wildlife. Mowed hiking trails are offered through the area.

Education and Libraries

Schools

There are six school districts in Butler County providing K-12 education for the county. All these schools offer a low student/teacher ratio, a wide range of curriculum, and extracurricular activities. The figure to the right lists the school districts and enrollment with a map of their school district boundaries below.

Table 14: Enrollment by School District

School District	2023-24 Enrollment
North Butler	515
Aplington-Parkersburg	794
Clarksville	281
Hampton-Dumont	1,091
Dike-New Hartford	873
Waverly-Shell Rock	2,184
Source: Iowa Department of Education	

Post high school education is available to residents of the county through various institutions. Several school districts, within the county, host various adult education courses. In addition, all the following public and private education facilities are located within two hours of Butler County and provide online courses. These facilities include:

- University of Northern Iowa (UNI) in Cedar Falls
- Upper Iowa University in Fayette and satellite classrooms in Waterloo
- Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo with satellite centers in Cedar Falls and Waverly
- North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City with satellite centers in Charles City, Hampton, Garner, Lake Mills, and Osage
- Northeast Iowa Technical Institute in Calmar
- American Institute of Commerce
- Wartburg College in Waverly
- Luther College in Decorah
- Allen Hospital in Waterloo
- Butler County Public Health Department

Public Libraries

Each of the incorporated communities, except for Aredale and Bristow, has a public library. These libraries are:

- Dumont Community Library
- Greene Public Library
- Allison Public Library
- Clarksville Public Library
- Benny Gambaiani Public Library
- New Hartford City Library
- Kothe Memorial Library
- Aplington Legion Memorial Library

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- The public parks system and recreational opportunities are a strength of the county.
- The school system within Butler County is well respected.
- The county lacks childcare facilities as well as healthcare clinics.
- Volunteer services such as local fire are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 Strengthen emergency response infrastructure and its support systems.

- Objective A. Continue to support fire, police, and EMT services throughout the county.
- Objective B. Identify potential ways to ensure ambulance service is available in the county.
- Objective C. Provide law enforcement services to surrounding communities and the rural areas.

Goal #2 Create and maintain vibrant public spaces.

- Objective A. Promote public amenities such as swimming pools, parks, and recreation facilities throughout the county.
- Objective B. Encourage and support the construction of multi-use public facilities (i.e. libraries, community centers, museums, etc.) which enhance efficiency in construction costs, facility operations, and maintenance.

Goal #3 Promote and maintain quality health for Butler County residents.

- Objective A. Ensure childcare facilities remain vibrant and available.
- Objective B. Support home visit healthcare professionals and utilization of telemedicine programs to increase access to healthcare facilities.
- Objective C. Ensure healthcare clinics and services are available throughout the county.
- Objective D. Collaborate with Butler-Grundy Development Alliance to develop attraction and retention strategies geared toward home-based healthcare workers to ensure healthcare remains viable and available within the county.

Goal #4 Foster sustainable land use practices and conservation efforts.

- Objective A. Continue the maintenance and modernization of existing recreational and conservation facilities.
- Objective B. Expand public relations programs to increase awareness and understanding of Conservation Board issues, goals, and objectives among county residents.
- Objective C. Continue the planning, construction, and improvement to the Rolling Prairie Bike Trail.
- Objective D. Advocate for the preservation and enhancement of healthy rivers, recognizing their importance as critical natural resources for wildlife, fish, flood control, wetlands, and conservation, while also balancing recreational use when appropriate.
- Objective E. Improve river accessibility by establishing designated public access points for boats, kayaks, and canoes, promoting responsible recreation activities.
- Objective F. Ensure the sustainable upkeep and modernization of current recreational and conservation amenities to maintain their functionality and appeal to residents and visitors alike.
- Objective G. Partner with County Conservation to construct a new headquarters and shop located out of the floodplain.

Hazards

This section addresses the goals, policies, and actions to mitigate the risk of future hazards (natural or man-made) on Butler County. For a deeper analysis into the hazards of Butler County, refer to the latest adopted Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Butler County.

Existing Conditions

Flood Conditions

There have been various degrees of flooding within the county throughout its history. According to Bulter County’s Hazard Analysis, flash flooding and river flooding are two of the greatest hazards in the county. From 1950 to 2018, there have been 25 flash floods in Butler County which has caused an estimated \$3.5 million in property damage and \$1.3 million in crop damage. During the same period, there were 76 various recorded flood events in Butler County. Since 1999, floods have caused nearly \$32.8 million in property and crop damage. Major floods occurred recently in 1999, 2008, and 2018. Approximately 46.5% of the unincorporated area of Butler County is within a 100-year or 500-year floodplain.

Structures within Hazardous Areas

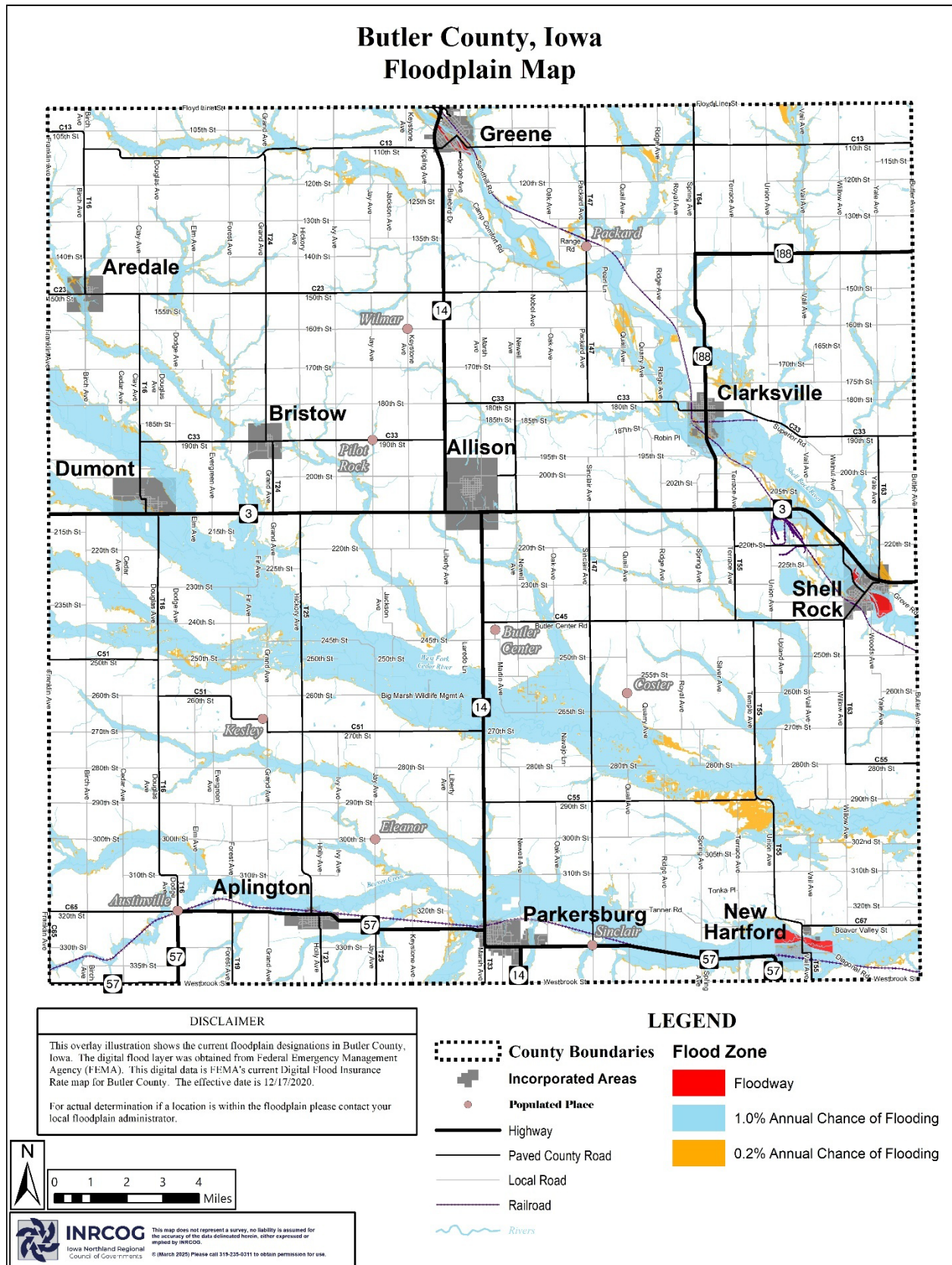
A facilities vulnerability to flooding is normally low, since these structures are not often constructed within the 100-year floodplain. However, bridges and roadways would be impacted by flooding. This disruption in the transportation infrastructure would result in more time to receive and provide services and supplies to an area if a bridge was washed away or damaged due to flooding.

The table below lists the number properties in the entire planning area that are located within the 100-year floodplain along with the land, building, dwelling values. According to the data provided by INRCOG and Butler County, there are 4,663 parcels of land with a total value of \$292,919,260 located within the 100-year floodplain. Finally, a map of Butler County’s floodplain is included in this section.

Table 15: Floodplain Values of Butler County

	Number of Parcels	Land Value	Building Value	Dwelling Value	Total Value
Incorporated 1.0% Annual Chance Floodplain	908	\$9,432,540	\$14,164,517	\$35,332,733	\$58,929,790
Unincorporated 1.0% Annual Chance Floodplain	3,165	\$267,678,680	\$125,492,770	\$115,291,780	\$508,463,230
Total Floodplain Value	4,663	\$292,919,260	\$148,067,957	\$178,429,883	\$619,417,100
Figures calculated using data from Butler County GIS Department & INRCOG; Parcel data current as of 2024					

Figure 18: Floodplain Map of Butler County



Additional Hazards

Please refer to the latest *Butler County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan* for detailed information on Butler County’s hazards.

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force determined that the county should remain focused on the protection of the health, safety, and economic security of residents, workers, visitors, and property owners by mitigating the impacts of natural and manmade hazards. The focus of the county should be maintaining the implementing the recommendations from the latest Butler County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

HAZARDS Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 **Butler County will implement, update, and maintain the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan including the following objectives from the 2025 Butler County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.**

- Objective A. Minimize to the greatest extent possible the number of injuries and/or loss of life associated with all identified hazards.
- Objective B. Reduce or eliminate property damage due to the occurrence of disasters.
- Objective C. Improve response operations in the event of a disaster.
- Objective D. Return the community to either a pre-disaster or improved condition in a timely manner in the wake of a disaster.
- Objective E. Develop strategies that can be used to reduce the community’s overall risk to the negative effects of natural, technological, and man-made disasters.
- Objective F. Reconvene the planning committee annually to review the plan document, check for compliance with the plan goals, and track progress in achieving the mitigation strategies.
- Objective G. Maintain the Countywide Multi-Jurisdictional format for future updates.

Land Use

Land and land use drive all aspects of a community. We grow food on the land and build our homes on it. Some lands need to remain open for natural, aesthetic, and recreational use. Conversely, some open lands need to be in-filled and used productively for other uses.

How land is used is a chief ingredient of a community's character. What goes largely unnoticed is that growth and land development carry with them some significant costs. These costs are not only felt by a developer or builder, but by surrounding land users and the broader community. What is often forgotten is that once land is developed there is an on-going financial responsibility for the entire tax system. Roads, water, and sewer operations, police and fire protection, and other services all have costs which must be considered when designating land for development.

Since fiscal resources, both public and private, are limited, it only makes sense to think carefully about the long-term impacts of our land use. Careful planning better secures and protects the substantial investment needed to develop or conserve land.

By defining the extent to which our various lands can and should be used, we provide more predictability for individuals and businesses making long-term decisions. More importantly, the public costs associated with serving these lands can be minimized and the qualities that make many of them unique are preserved.

Just as land use drives our economy, the Land Use element can be described as the driver of the comprehensive plan. The goals and policies of this section are intended to weigh the adverse environmental impacts of growth against the benefits of growth.

This section describes the existing conditions regarding land and its use in Butler County by cataloging the activities currently taking place on land under county jurisdiction. It then relates the existing use and character of these lands to the possible major land use categories identified by the county.

Existing Conditions

Butler County highest land use is agriculture, 282,345 acres or 77.7% of the unincorporated area. The next largest land use category is open, floodplain, recreation at 77,394 acres or 21.3%. The existing land use is illustrated on the map and table below.

Table 16: Existing Land Use Summary Information for Butler County (Unincorporated Area Only)

Land Use Classification or Category	Acres	Square Meters	Percent
Agriculture	282,345	1,142,610,835	75.89%
Residential	383	1,549,916	0.10%
Residential (Floodplain)	84	341,824	0.02%
Institutional	256	1,036,936	0.07%
Institutional (Floodplain)	198	802,162	0.05%
Commercial/Industrial	1,647	6,666,117	0.44%
Commercial/Industrial (Floodplain)	1,014	4,102,675	0.27%
Open/Floodplain/Recreation	77,394	313,204,158	20.80%
Incorporated	6,421	25,984,475	1.73%
Incorporated (Floodplain)	2,313	9,361,143	0.62%
Total	372,057	1,505,660,242	100%
<i>Sources: INRCOG & Butler County</i>			

Key Issues and Opportunities

Growth Management

To reflect the visions, goals, and action strategies outlined in this Plan, the Task Force members agree the best land use strategy was directed growth.

This strategy reflects past and current development policies of Butler county. The critical points of directed growth include:

- Preservation of prime agricultural soils (CSR of 70 and above);
- Protection of environmentally sensitive areas;
- Directed ‘urbanized’ growth to those soils most capable of supporting it where public utilities and services are present; and
- Directing growth to those areas where the proposed use would be compatible with existing land use.

Thus, most residential growth would be directed toward existing platted subdivisions, where adequate public utilities and service can be provided and are within municipalities.

One underlying assumption of this strategy is that soils are a valuable asset to Butler County. If accepted, this assumption would require that protecting soils is a high priority, and will remain a valuable asset for the county.

A second assumption of this strategy relates to non-agricultural rural land. Development in the county would not depend solely upon whether or not the land is considered prime. Rather, productivity would be one contributing factor to the decision about development of a piece of land. Land with low productivity is not automatically suitable for development, nor is land that is not being cropped. Many other factors should come into play as outlined in the goals and objectives.

Finally, this strategy would be the direction for growth to those areas capable of supporting it, and those areas where growth would be compatible with existing uses. For example, areas where soils or other physical constraints that may not support construction or whose characteristics would present possible hazards should not be developed. Areas where existing uses would preclude compatible residential development (a large feedlot, for instance) would not be considered as suitable development sites.

The benefit of this strategy would be to allow the natural systems to function in the intended manner. Consideration of soil potentials, floodplain functions, slope, aspect, water quality and quantity, subsurface characteristics, and vegetation all will benefit the county environmentally, economically, socially, and aesthetically. There would be less unnecessary infrastructure built and the need for maintenance would be minimized based on where demand for services is needed.

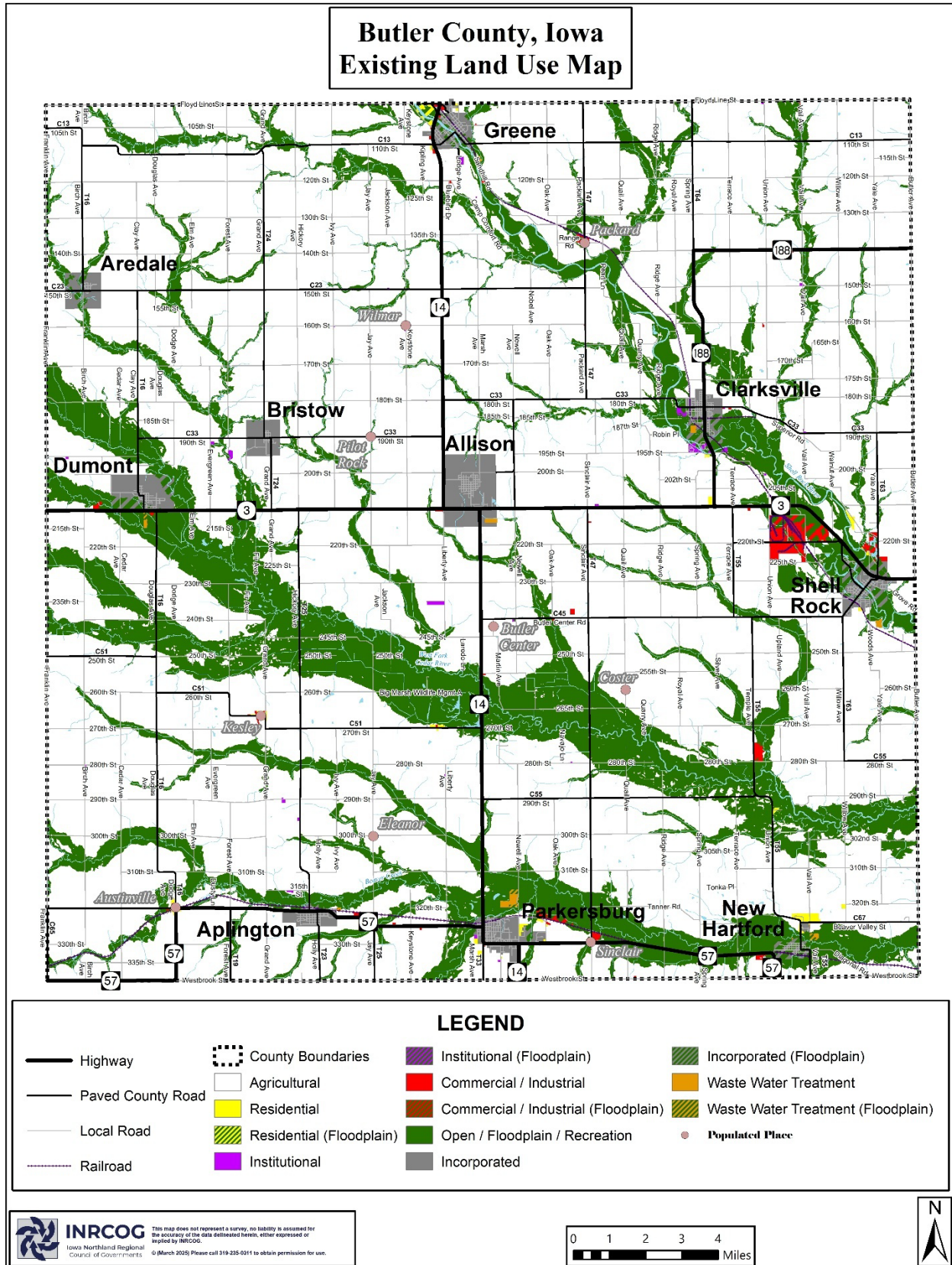
On the other hand, such a strategy could, through restriction of possible building sites, restrict the amount of developable land available and drive up land and improvement costs. The county’s tax base will stay at approximately the same level, while the cost of providing services would increase.

The future land use map and summary information for Butler County is below. As the map shows, future development is focused on the existing cities and along major transportation intersections. However, there are future opportunities to create additional residential areas using overlay districts to help balance the two conflicting needs of the county. The difference between the existing and future land uses is acreage in residential increased significantly while commercial and industrial also increased slightly.

Table 17: Future Land Use Summary Information for Butler County (Unincorporated Area Only)

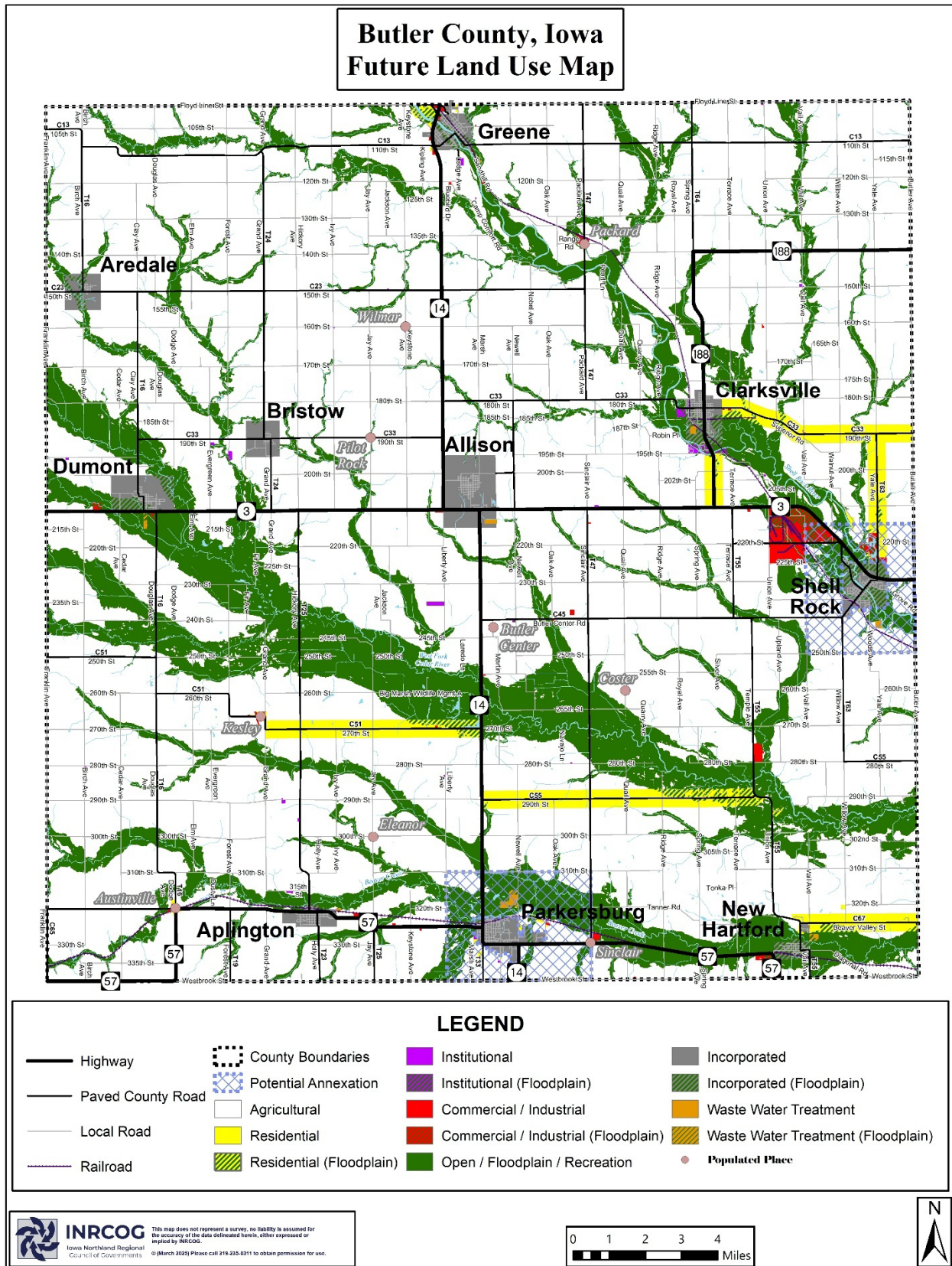
Land Use Classification or Category	Acres	Square Meters	Percent
Agriculture	275,676	1,115,622,073	74.10%
Residential	7,049	28,528,030	1.89%
Residential (Floodplain)	1,282	5,190,009	0.34%
Institutional	256	1,036,936	0.07%
Institutional (Floodplain)	198	802,162	0.05%
Commercial/Industrial	1,648	6,671,238	0.44%
Commercial/Industrial (Floodplain)	1,021	4,131,930	0.27%
Open/Floodplain/Recreation	76,191	308,332,247	20.48%
Incorporated	6,421	25,984,475	1.73%
Incorporated (Floodplain)	2,313	9,361,143	0.62%
Total	372,057	1,505,660,242	100.00%
<i>Sources: INRCOG & Butler County</i>			

Figure 19: Existing Land Use Map of Butler County*



*For Specific Townships Existing Land Use Maps, See Appendix 1

Figure 20: Future Land Use Map of Butler County*



*For Specific Townships Future Land Use Maps, See Appendix 1

LAND USE Goals and Objectives

Goal #4 Allow for the appropriate amount of land designated for residential use to accommodate growth and meet housing needs of the county.

- Objective A. Consider crop yield history or lower the parcel area percentage with CSR of 70 or greater from 50% to 25% as alternatives to lessen land use on agricultural lands.
- Objective B. Encourage residential development within incorporated areas utilizing municipal utilities. Development in the unincorporated areas of the county shall be directed toward existing areas which have been rezoned for residential use but are vacant, or toward overlay districts which have been found suitable for development and have existing infrastructure including existing acreage sites.
- Objective C. Ensure designated zoning ordinances are flexible enough to accommodate diverse housing types and densities to meet varying needs and preferences.
- Objective D. Designate residential land use areas near employment center and/or transportation corridors.
- Objective E. When possible, incorporate affordable housing provisions and incentives to encourage the development of affordable housing options.
- Objective F. Consider findings and recommendations from the most current Butler County Housing Needs Assessment to inform future land use designation for residential.

Goal #5 Focus on updating ordinances to create more efficient and effective land use.

- Objective A. Update subdivisions ordinances to match the residential needs of the county with land preservation.
- Objective B. Develop zoning and nuisance codes that ensure land is used appropriately and property is maintained.

Goal #6 Create a vibrant economic sector that fosters sustainable growth within the county's commercial and industrial hubs.

- Objective A. Attract commercial and industrial tenants to fill available lots.
- Objective B. Encourage commercial and industrial development to occur in incorporated communities that have water and sewer capacities to adequately service the proposed sites.
- Objective C. Direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Objective D. Consider adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associate conflicts or concerns.

LAND USE Goals and Objectives

Goal #4 It is the goal of Butler County to adopt and amend, when appropriate, a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The purpose for the Plan is the following:

- (a) The Plan will serve as a guide and statement of policies for the county.
- (b) The Plan will seek to promote orderly growth. More specifically, the Plan will attempt to:
 - Prevent leapfrog development.
 - Promote the county and cities working together when annexation is proposed to plan for growth and service provisions in the proposed areas.
 - Include a severance policy that requires land that is severed from a city to be reverted to agriculture use and corresponding zoning.
 - Provide guidance to the various county commissions, boards, and authorities (P&Z, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health) that may be involved in county land use management.
 - Guide county staff as development is reviewed and considered.
- (c) The Plan is intended to be the planning and legal foundation for:
 - The County Zoning Ordinance
 - The County Subdivision Ordinance
 - Future Building Code
 - Any future County Urban Renewal Plans or Ordinances
 - Any future annexations consistent with comprehensive plans
- (d) The Plan, and its implementation tools listed above, is designed to encourage citizen or community input through defined and statutory development, amendment, and implementation processes.
- (e) The county will require or measure the following checklist of issues prior to development approval.
 - Consistency with the Plan, including the Future Land Use Map.
 - Compatibility with existing surrounding land use(s).
 - Minimal impact on adjacent property.
 - Appropriate density of proposed use and its surroundings.
 - Minimal impact on traffic generation and flow.
 - The ability of the proposal to obtain or access adequate services.
 - Minimal environmental impact (i.e. floodplain, wetlands, and woodlands).
 - Other factors affecting general intent and purpose of Plan.
- (f) The Plan, which is intended to be broad and general, will serve as an umbrella for other county plans such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Housing Needs Assessment.

LAND USE Goals and Objectives

Goal #5 It is the goal of Butler County, and its residents, to recognize that land use planning is a continuous process.

- (a) The county will review this Plan as the need arises.
- (b) The Plan will be implemented through various departments, policies, and ordinances including, but not limited to, the following:
 - County staff
 - County ordinances
 - County plans
 - County budget
 - Outside agencies and municipalities
- (c) Public input on the planning decisions and considerations will be sought out early in the process and in various formats, which may include providing public notices in or on:
 - Newspapers
 - County Websites
 - Public Areas

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Butler County has a strong history of working with numerous entities – public and private – to accomplish their goals and objectives. This section will briefly discuss those efforts and how to improve upon them.

Existing Conditions

The County currently has a recently updated website. The County also has 28E agreements with the cities of Parkersburg and Shell Rock for land use decisions.

In addition, in 2025 Butler County and all the incorporated cities developed and adopted a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan. And several of the smaller cities utilize the Sheriff's office for law enforcement.

Key Issues and Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following key issues and opportunities within the county:

- Has positive 28E agreements with cities for land use, EMS, and law enforcement services.
- Cities and towns work together for greater efficiency, including school districts.
- Butler-Grundy Development Alliance operates with great efficiency and covers two counties.
- Butler has strong working relationships with many entities including INRCOG, DNR, local municipalities, etc.
- There is a greater need to continue looking at joint collaboration with communities and other agencies to reduce costs.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION Goals and Objectives

- Goal #1 Collaborate with other levels of government with regard to future land use and development. Specifically, the County shall collaborate with the Federal, State, City, and School Districts as appropriate and/or possible. The County may also work collaboratively with other counties when it is beneficial.**
- Goal #2 Support and promote discussions amongst County municipalities to generate collaborative agreements for shared-cost/shared-buying opportunities that benefit each city to the greatest extent possible.**
- Objective A. Maintain mutual aid efforts with emergency response service partners.
 - Objective B. Continue support for Butler-Grundy Development Alliance.
 - Objective C. Continue contractual obligations between the Sheriff's Office and local communities.
 - Objective D. Continue 28E agreements on growth and development including discussions on annexation and service provisions.
- Goal #3 Foster active public engagement in the formulation of long-term plans aimed at informing the decision-making process.**
- Objective A. Develop effective outreach strategies that solicit input and feedback from the public.
 - Objective B. Enhance public awareness through outreach methods with various partners.

Chapter 4: Implementation & Maintenance of Plan's Goals and Objectives



Action Plan

This comprehensive plan includes goals and objectives for Butler County to become the community it envisions for itself.

While each goal and objective are important to achieve the county's vision, it is critical to set priorities for the strategies laid out. These priorities will lay the foundation for the development of future capital improvement plans and annual departmental work plans for the county. Furthermore, they will help with organizing and prioritizing future implementation efforts. The action plan provides a means for working through a variety of immediate, short, and long-range issues with other agencies, jurisdictions, and stakeholders by articulating a concept, premise, or position to start constructive discussion and completion.

Implementation Priorities

Throughout the course of developing the Comprehensive Plan, community input focused on creating a more sustainable community that manages growth, enhances residential development, improves community facilities, diversifies and expands economic development, embraces its natural resources, and maintains and enhances the ideals of Butler County. The goals and objectives listed in this plan will serve as guideposts for implementing the vision of the county moving forward.

Implementation Strategies

Many of the identified goals and objectives will only be met through the expenditure of public funds. Achieving the components of the Plan should lead to more efficient use of both public and private resources. Each project should be viewed with the full range of funding alternatives and technical assistance available to it before action is taken. These sources must not only provide sufficient funds to accomplish the goals and action strategies intended, but they should also be tapped in ways that are as equitable as possible in balancing costs against benefits received.

Another method for implementing the elements of the Comprehensive Plan could be developed through a system of incentives and compensation. The benefits and costs involved in the achievement of public objectives should be considered, which are equitable to the individual and to the general public. Specific steps should be taken to enable progress to be made in each area of the plan.

Implementation Committee

The Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee should serve as a diverse group of stakeholders that are tasked with overseeing the execution of the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in this plan. The committee plays a vital role in ensuring that the plan's vision is realized, and progress is made towards sustainable development, economic growth, and enhanced quality of life for Butler County. The committee's role will ensure the Board of Supervisors remains informed while monitoring and evaluating the plan in its entirety. The committee shall meet on an annual basis to discuss and update the plan as needed.

Smart Planning Principles:

All 10 principles apply – Collaboration; Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency; Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy; Occupational Diversity; Revitalization; Housing Diversity; Housing Diversity; Community Character; Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection; Sustainable Design; and Transportation Diversity.

Smart Planning Element M

***Implementation:** A compilation of programs and specific actions necessary to implement any provision of the comprehensive plan, including changes to any applicable land development regulations, official maps or subdivision ordinances.*

Zoning Ordinance

Zoning as an instrument of plan implementation is basic to any effective and sincere planning program. Zoning may be defined as a “police power” that divides a county into districts with regulations within those districts concerning the height, bulk, area, use of building, use of land, and population density. This legal device provides a means of control over private property for the purpose of maintaining the health, safety, and the general welfare of the entire community. This objective is accomplished by the division of the community into zones or districts in accord with present or planned land use so the development and use of all land conforms to community plans.

Each type of zone has "uniform" regulations concerning (1) the use of land and building, (2) the height and bulk of building, (3) the lot area which a building may cover, and (4) the population density of a given area. Zoning is not usually concerned with land ownership, architectural design, or building materials. As a tool of plan implementation, zoning deals principally with the use and development of privately owned land and buildings rather than with public land, buildings, and facilities.

The division of the county into zones is necessary to provide special regulations for different sections of the county in accordance with the planned development of each section. In this respect, zoning regulations differ from building codes, plumbing codes, and other codes, which have uniform application throughout the community. Although zoning regulations vary according to the uses established for each type of zone, regulations within a given zone or the same kind of zones must be uniform. Thus, zoning contemplates different regulations to effectuate different land uses in different zones but seeks to avoid discrimination in the application of those regulations to the use of property similarly situated within a given zone or in the same type of zone.

Zoning is the primary legal tool available for implementing the county's land use plan. However, it is not synonymous with the land use plan. The land use plan serves as a guide for community development for a 10 to 15-year planning period and even beyond. The zoning ordinance functions as an immediate device in controlling and directing the day-to-day decisions in conformance with the land use plan. To do this, the zoning districts should be laid out as much as possible to conform to the land use plan. However, certain non-conforming areas and uses will be allowed to continue into the immediate future with the intention that such areas will eventually conform to the long-range land use plan. Furthermore, the amount of land zoned for each type of land use is just enough to satisfy the current demands for each use. As the demand for a particular use increases, then additional land may be zoned for that use in conformance to the land use plan or policies.

Butler County originally adopted zoning in 1978, and it recently updated its ordinance in 2022. It appears to be able to adequately handle the needs of the county. Although it should not have to be said, the ordinance should be reviewed periodically, and amended as necessary, to maintain its effectiveness in the future.

Subdivision Ordinance

A subdivision ordinance is another legal tool and “police power” that the county may use to carry out its objectives. Subdivision regulations establish what “development standards” for new subdivisions are basically. A good ordinance will ensure adequate lot areas, proper utility connections, and the proper street configuration. In short, it will help promote orderly growth, maintain property values and aesthetics, and provide guidelines for developers.

The process of planning new streets, blocks, and lots establishes a pattern on the land which is permanent, and therefore is difficult, if not impossible, to change. Therefore, it is essential that the process of subdividing land be subject to public control and in conformance with the goals and policies of the community. Ultimately, the beneficiaries of an enforced subdivision ordinance will be the residents of a community.

The present Butler County Subdivision Ordinance was updated in 2004. It has been reviewed and appears to be able to adequately handle the needs of the community. Like the Zoning Ordinance, it should be reviewed periodically, and amended as necessary, to maintain its effectiveness in the future.

Building Code

Utilization of a building code can further a community's efforts to protect its public health, welfare, and safety. A building code establishes construction standards for structures within the community. At present, Butler County continues to discuss the need for adopting a Uniform Building Code and the greater need for enhancement and enforcement of the building code.

28E Agreements

Butler has two 28E agreements with the cities of Parkersburg and Shell Rock. Those agreements are for land use development within a 2-mile radius of each community.

Financing

Many of the identified goals, objectives, and action strategies will only be met through the expenditure of public funds. Achieving the components of this plan should lead to more efficient use of both public and private resources. Each project should be viewed with the full range of funding alternatives and technical assistance available to it before action is taken. These sources must not only provide sufficient funds to accomplish the goals and action strategies intended, but they should be tapped in ways that are as equitable as possible in balancing costs against benefits received.

Another method for implementing the elements of the Plan could be developed through a system of incentives and compensation. The benefits and costs involved in the achievement of public objectives should be considered, which are equitable to the individual and to the general public. Specific steps should be taken to enable progress to be made in each area of the plan.

Plan Maintenance

The Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a working document. Its adoption by the Board of Supervisors is not the end of the community's long-range planning efforts, but rather the means by which the county will see growth continue to occur. County staff, citizens, and the private sector will use the plan as a dynamic tool to manage growth over the next ten to fifteen years to protect the high quality of life and foster a healthy economy.

A relevant, up-to-date plan is a critical element to ongoing planning success. To maintain public and private sector confidence, evaluation and modifications based on sound judgements should be made to the planning document as necessary. The plan must remain current and utilized. Therefore, the Board of

Supervisors may, from time-to-time, want to consider amendments or updates to this plan, including any and/or all of the maps, tables, and/or illustrations.

Continued Participation and Leadership

Broad public support and involvement are required as a prerequisite to the development and use of virtually any implementation policy or program. If adequate support is to be developed, a vigorous and continuing program of discussion, education, and participation must be carried out. Moreover, people who are in a position to understand the needs of the county and ways of meeting those must take the initiative to stimulate the interest and the understanding that must be involved to assure that support and action is developed.

To produce the levels of consensus required, vigorous and continuing public involvement will be required in such area as:

- Detailing of plans and proposals to clarify their impact on specific areas, groups, and individuals;
- Developing of specified implementation activities and organization arrangements; and
- Continue the monitoring and interpretation of the plan.

Amendment Process

In order to consider an amendment or update to this plan, first the Planning and Zoning Commission shall consider the proposed amendment and conduct a properly noticed hearing, notice of which shall be published once, not less than seven (7) nor more than twenty (20) days before the date of the hearing, in a newspaper with local circulation. The Commission shall make a recommendation on the proposed amendment or update, after the public hearing. Said recommendations of the Commission shall be carried by an affirmative vote of a simple majority of its members. The Commission shall send its recommendation, either for approval or denial of the proposed amendment or update, to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

After receiving the recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Supervisors shall also hold a properly noticed hearing on the proposed amendment. The notice shall follow the same publication guidelines as those prescribed for the Commission above. The Board of Supervisors is authorized to make the final decision, including alterations to the amendment or update prior to adoption. Adoption shall require a vote of a simple majority of the membership of the Board.

Appendix 1: Future and Existing Land Use Maps for Townships

Figure 21: Albion Township Existing Land Use Map

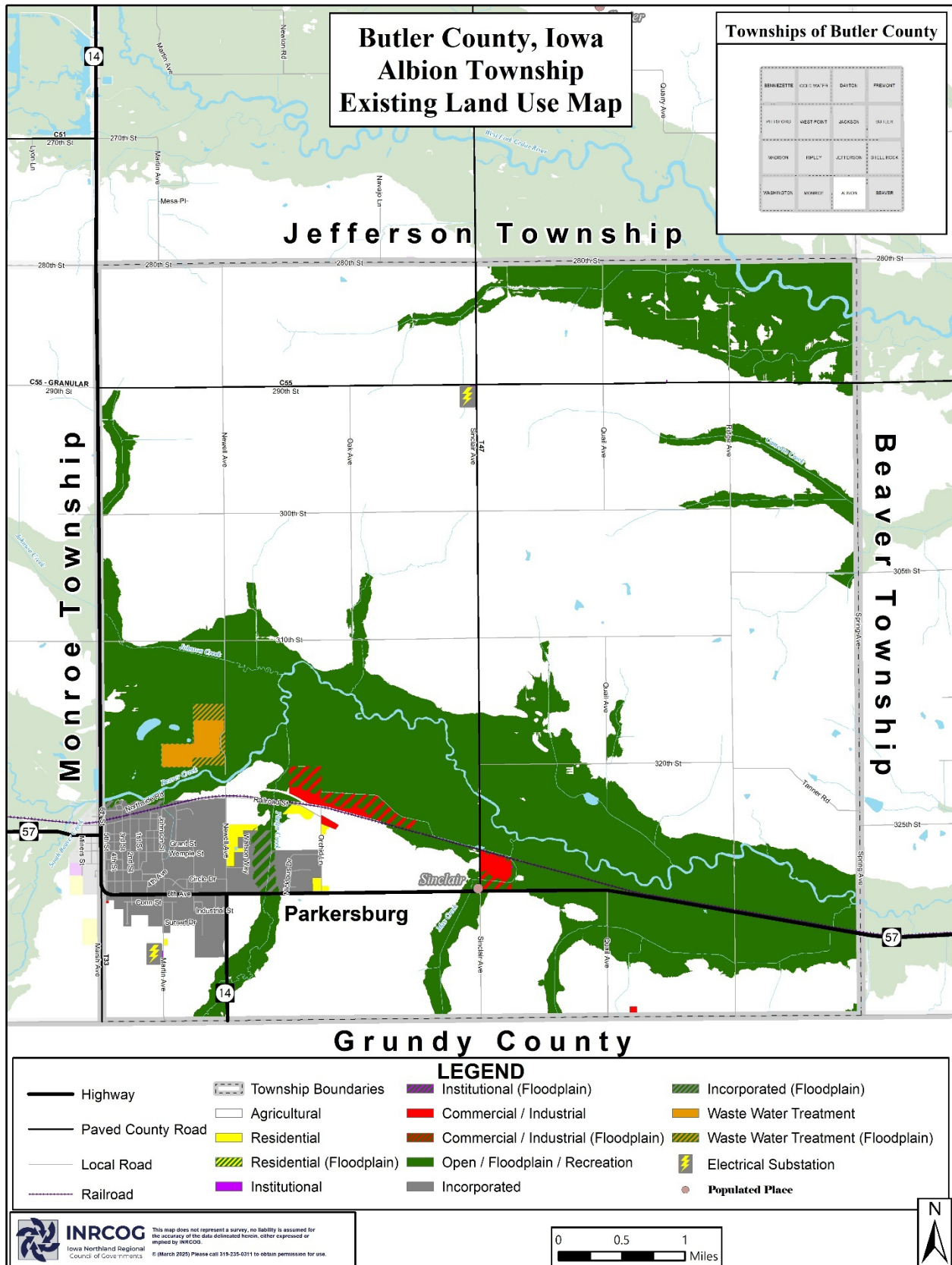


Figure 22: Albion Township Future Land Use Map

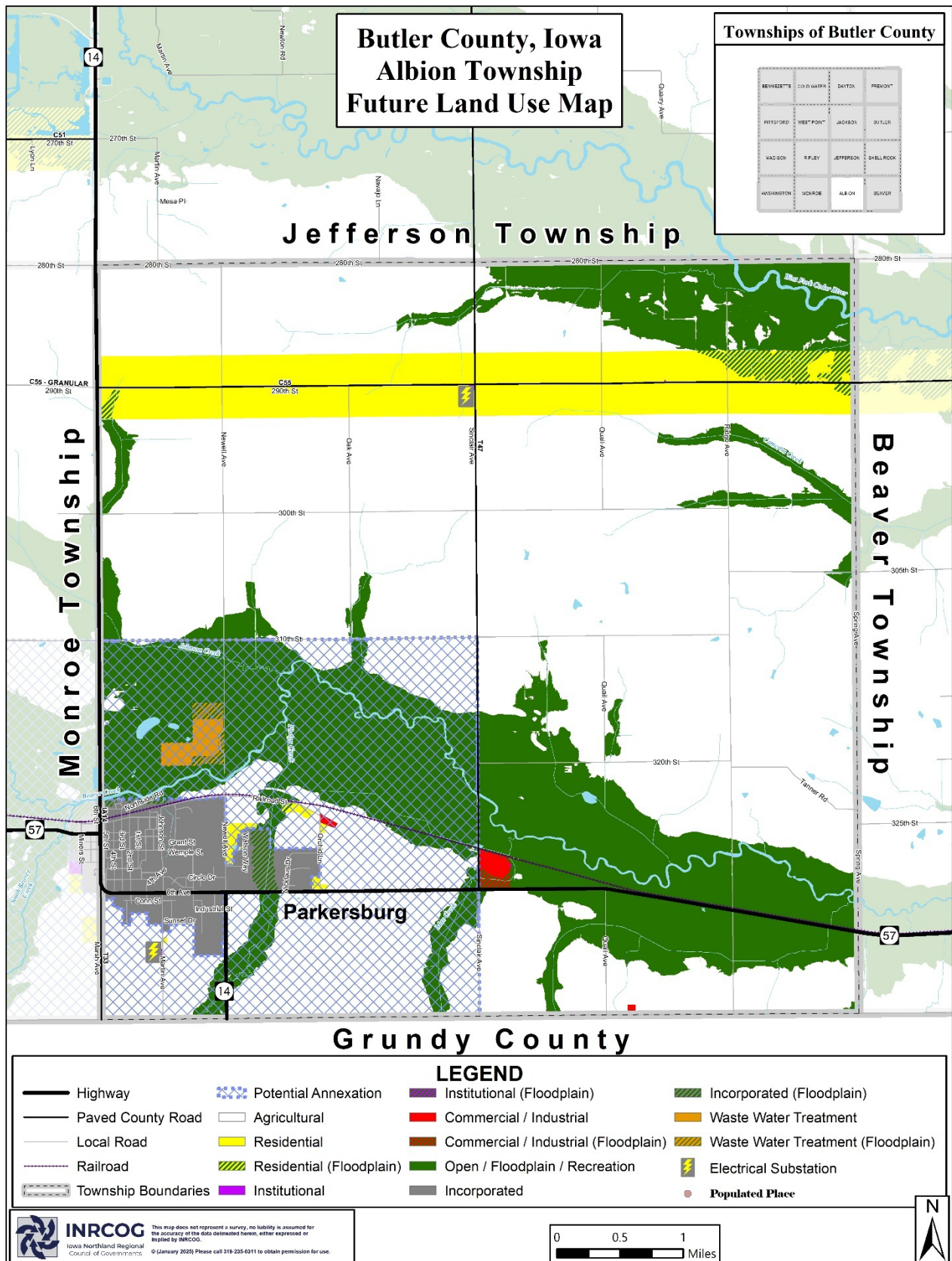


Figure 23: Beaver Township Existing Land Use Map

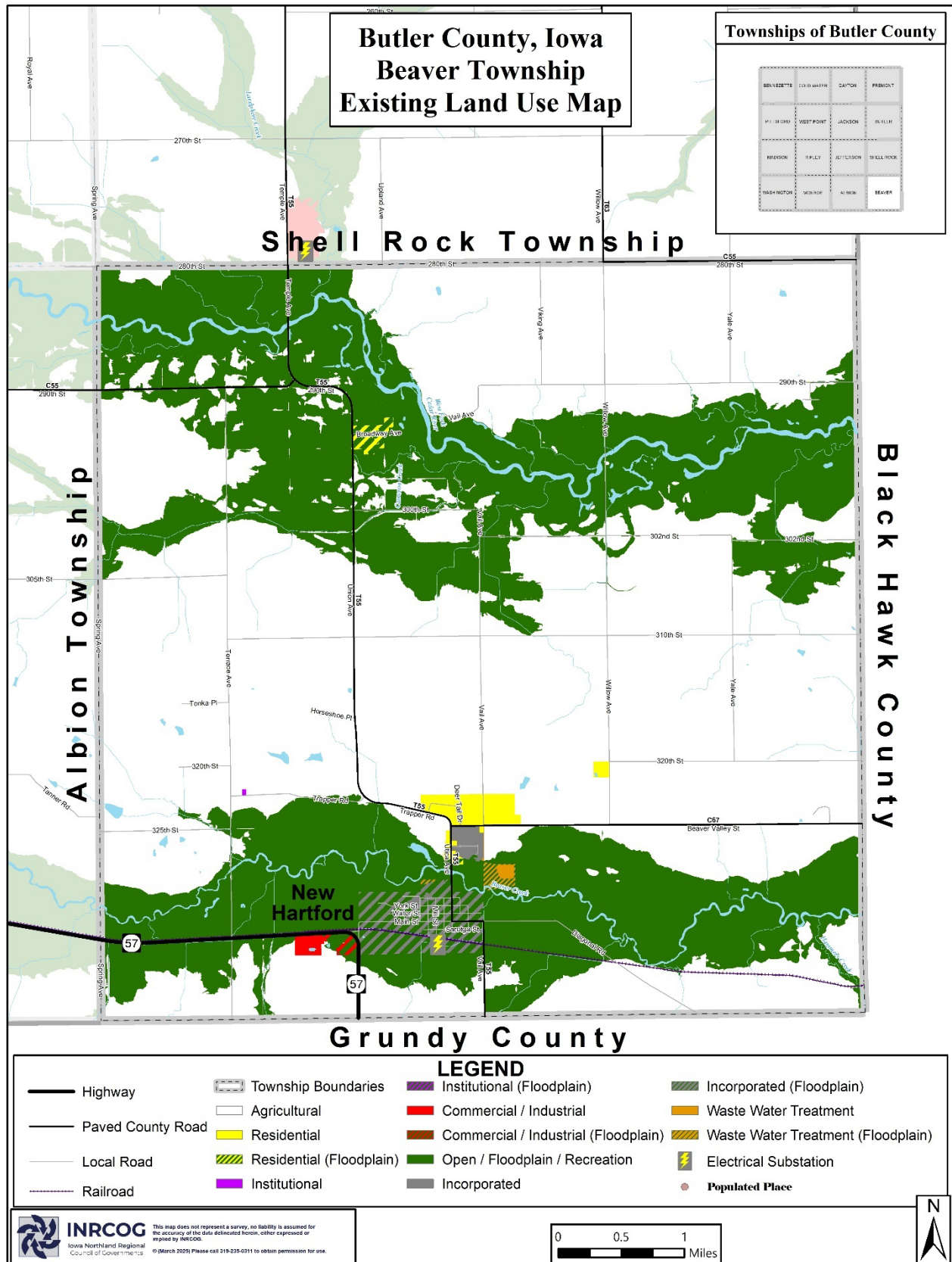


Figure 24: Beaver Township Future Land Use Map

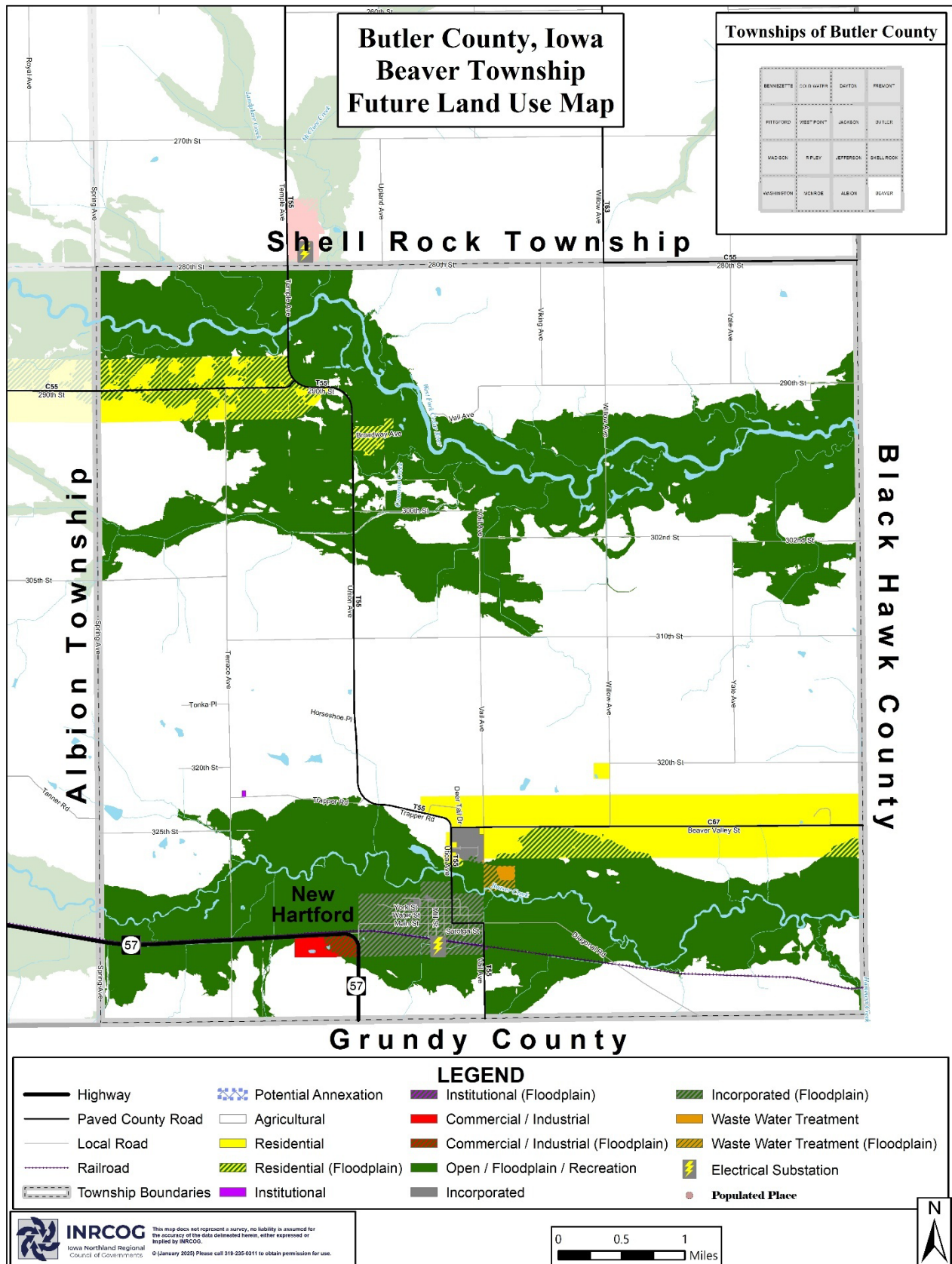


Figure 25: Bennezzette Township Existing Land Use Map

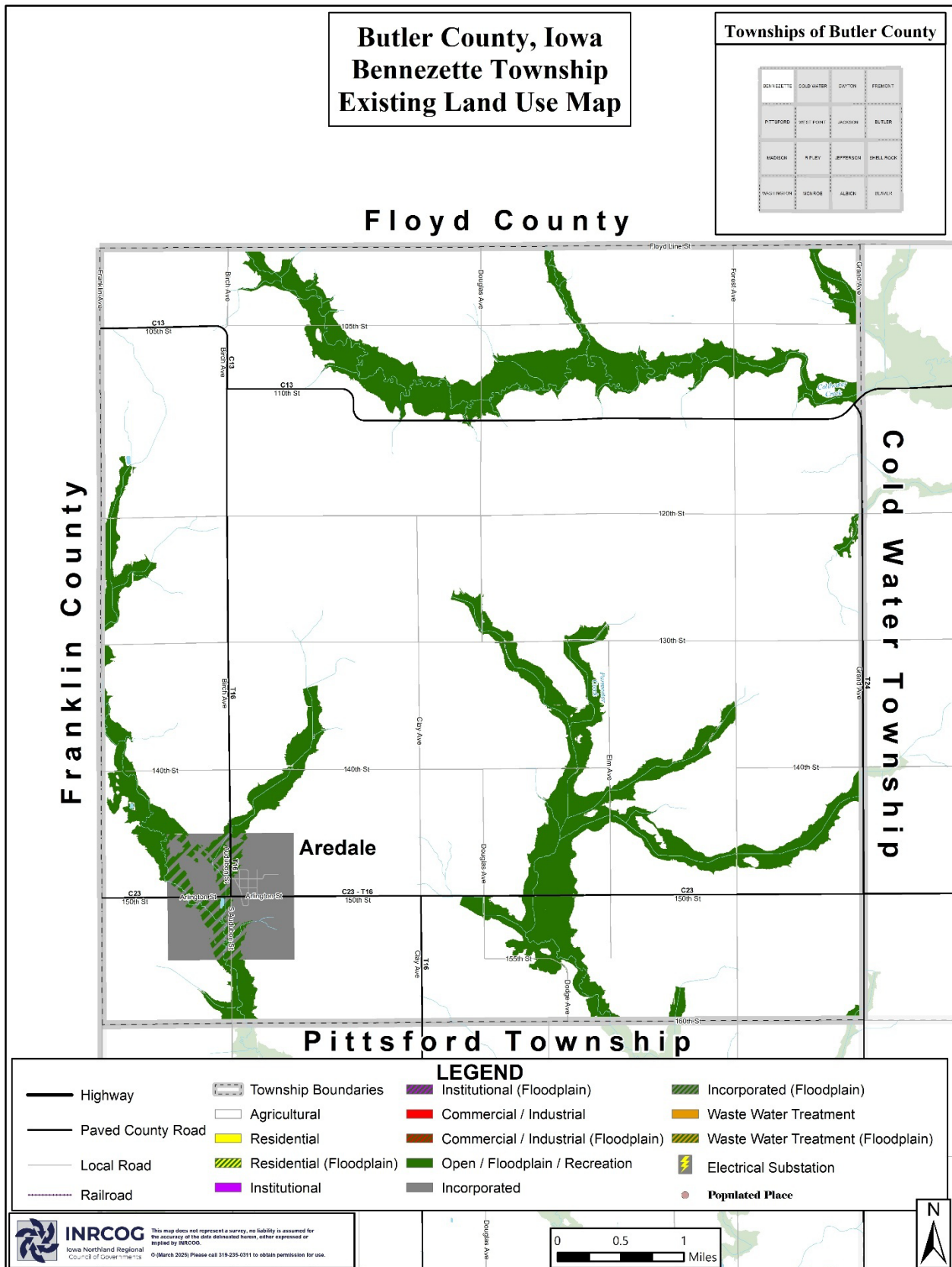


Figure 26: Bennezzette Township Future Land Use Map

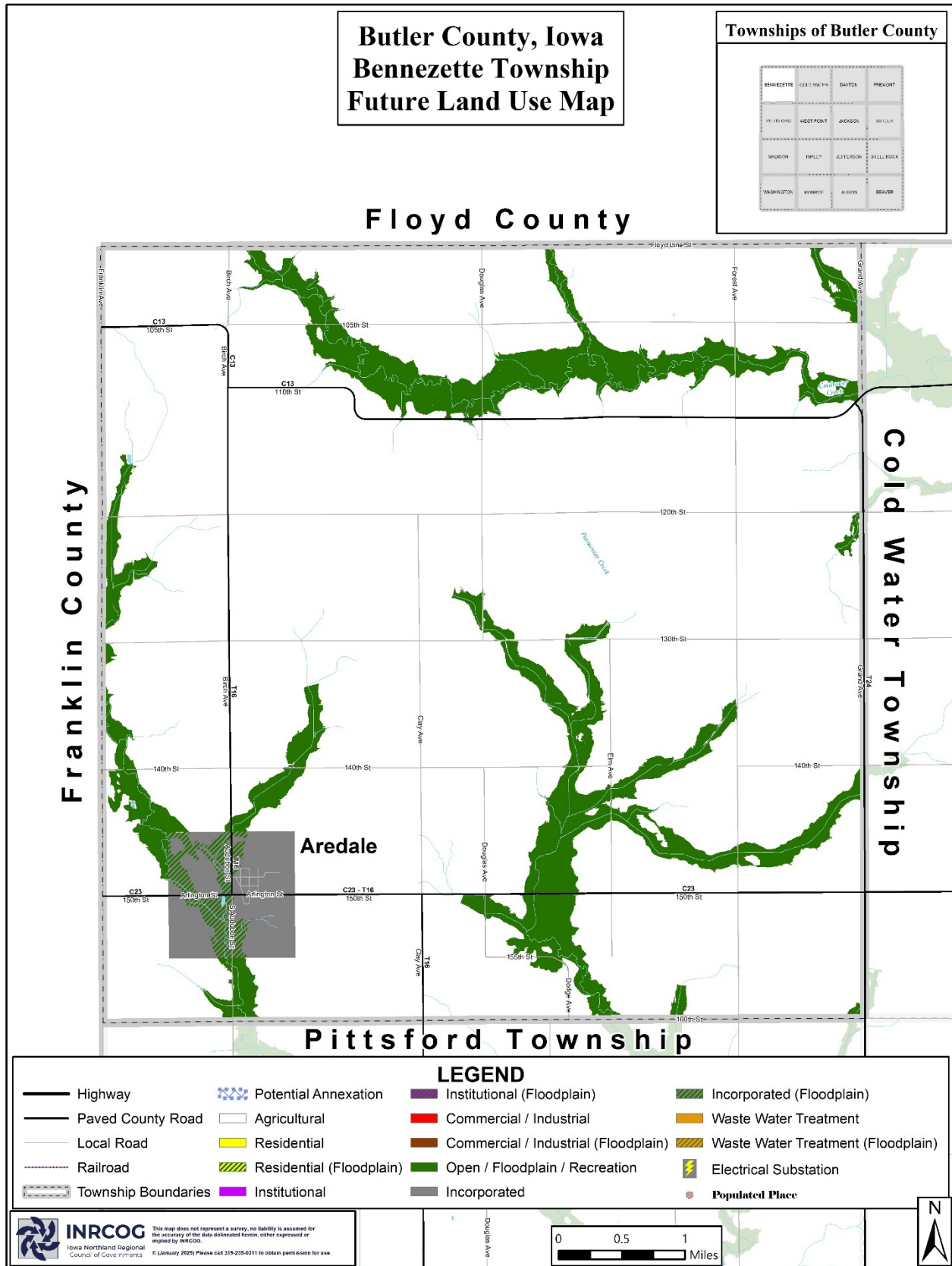


Figure 27: Butler Township Existing Land Use Map

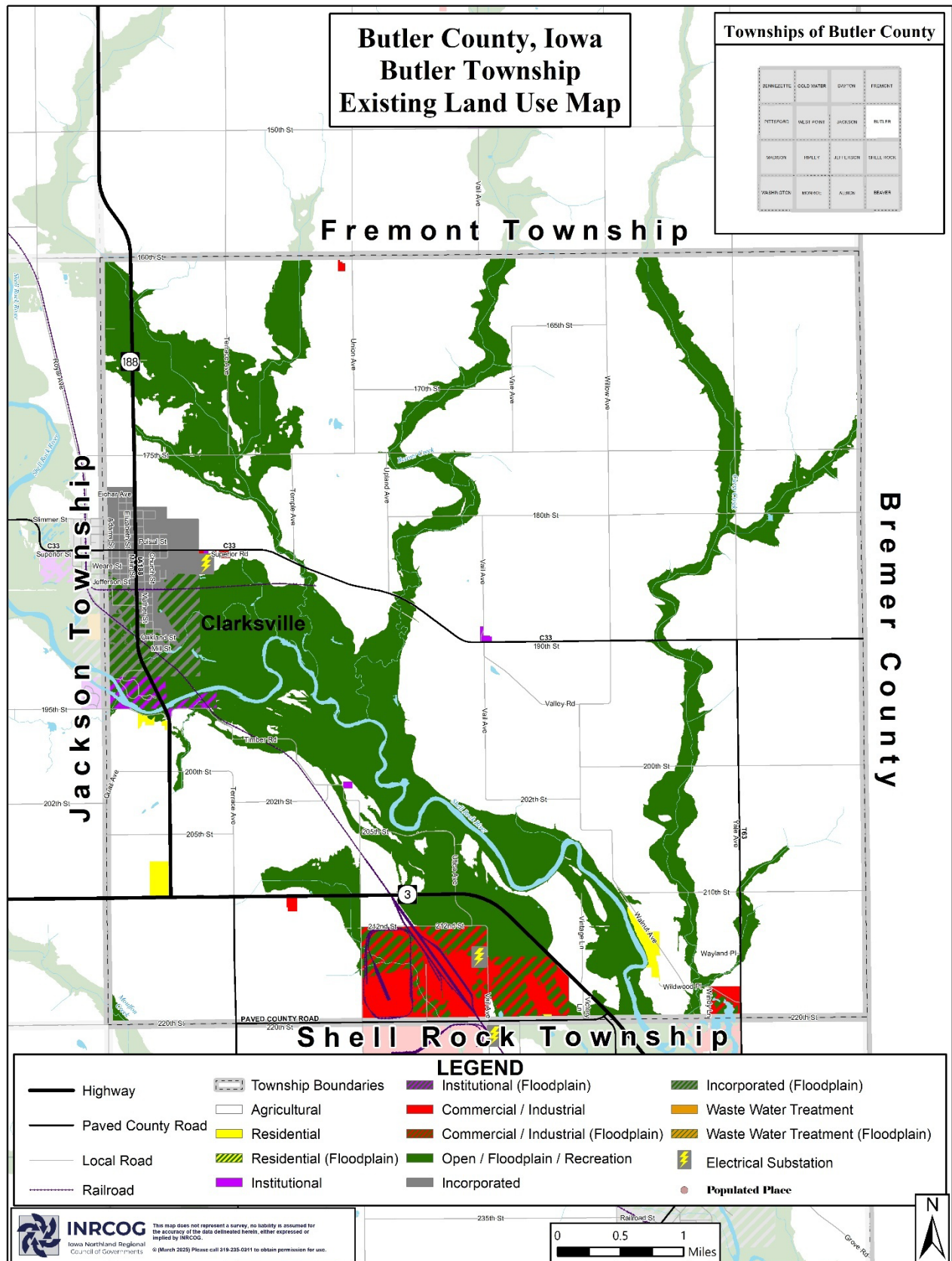


Figure 28: Butler Township Future Land Use Map

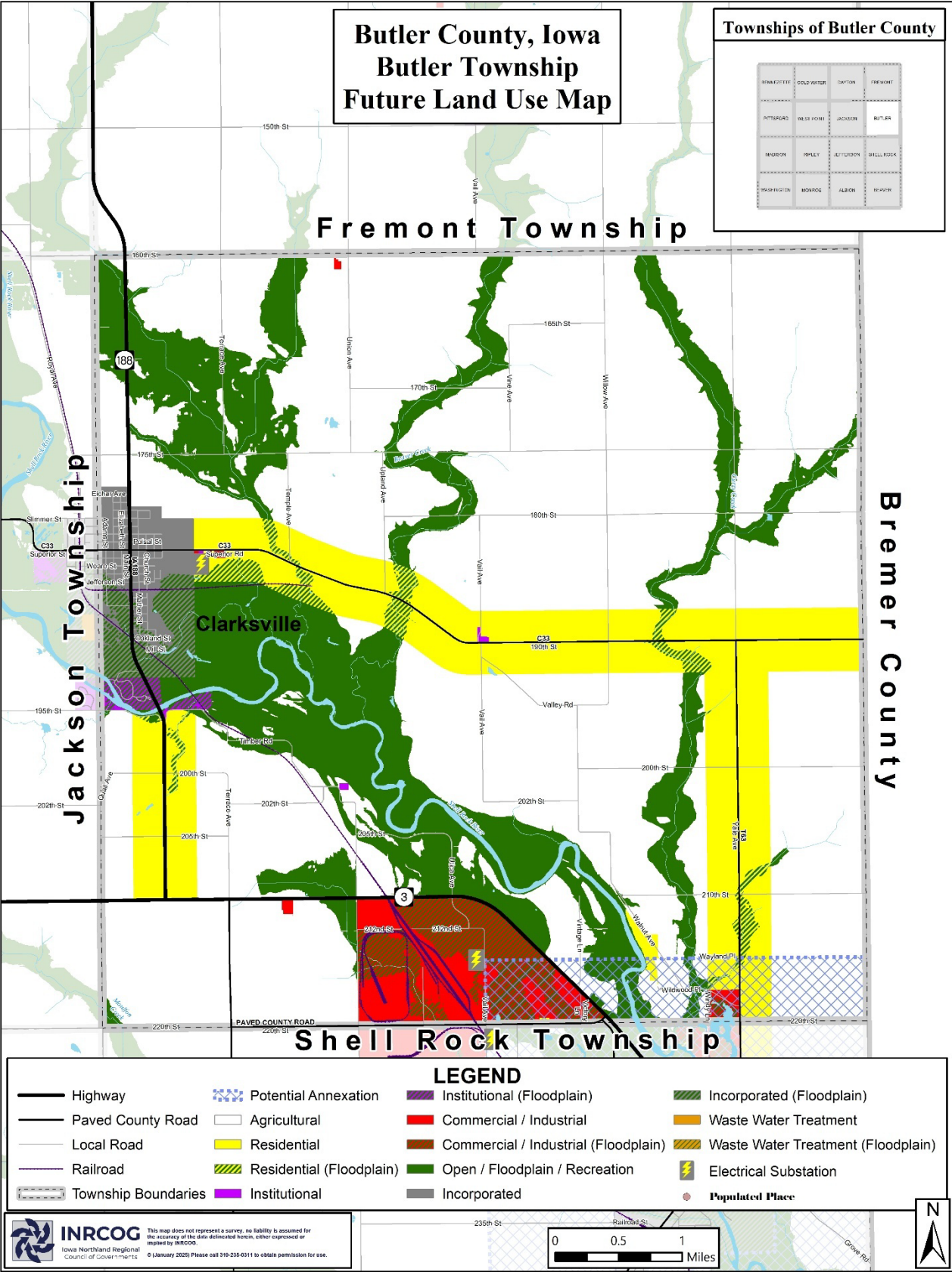


Figure 29: Cold Water Township Existing Land Use Map

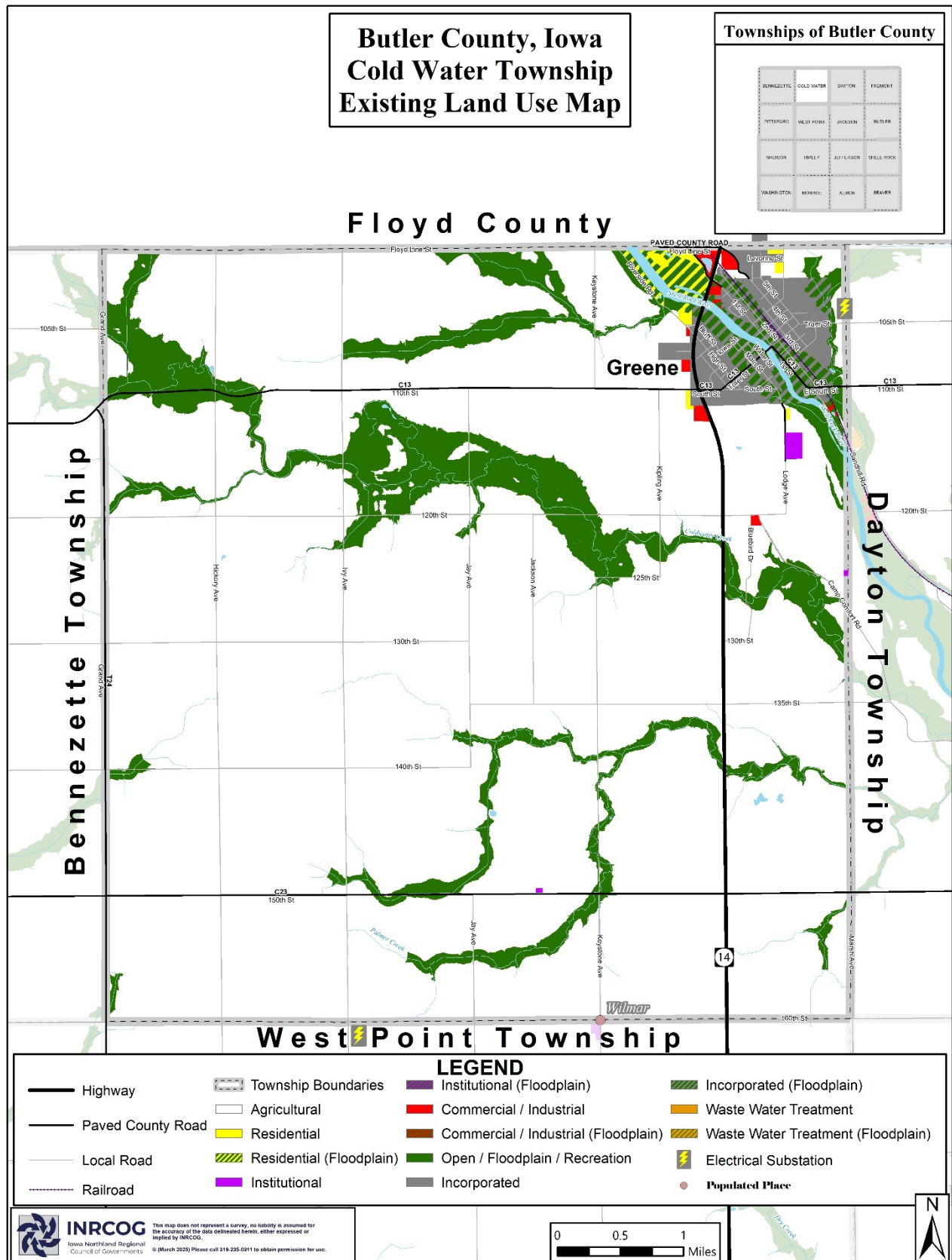


Figure 30: Cold Water Township Future Land Use Map

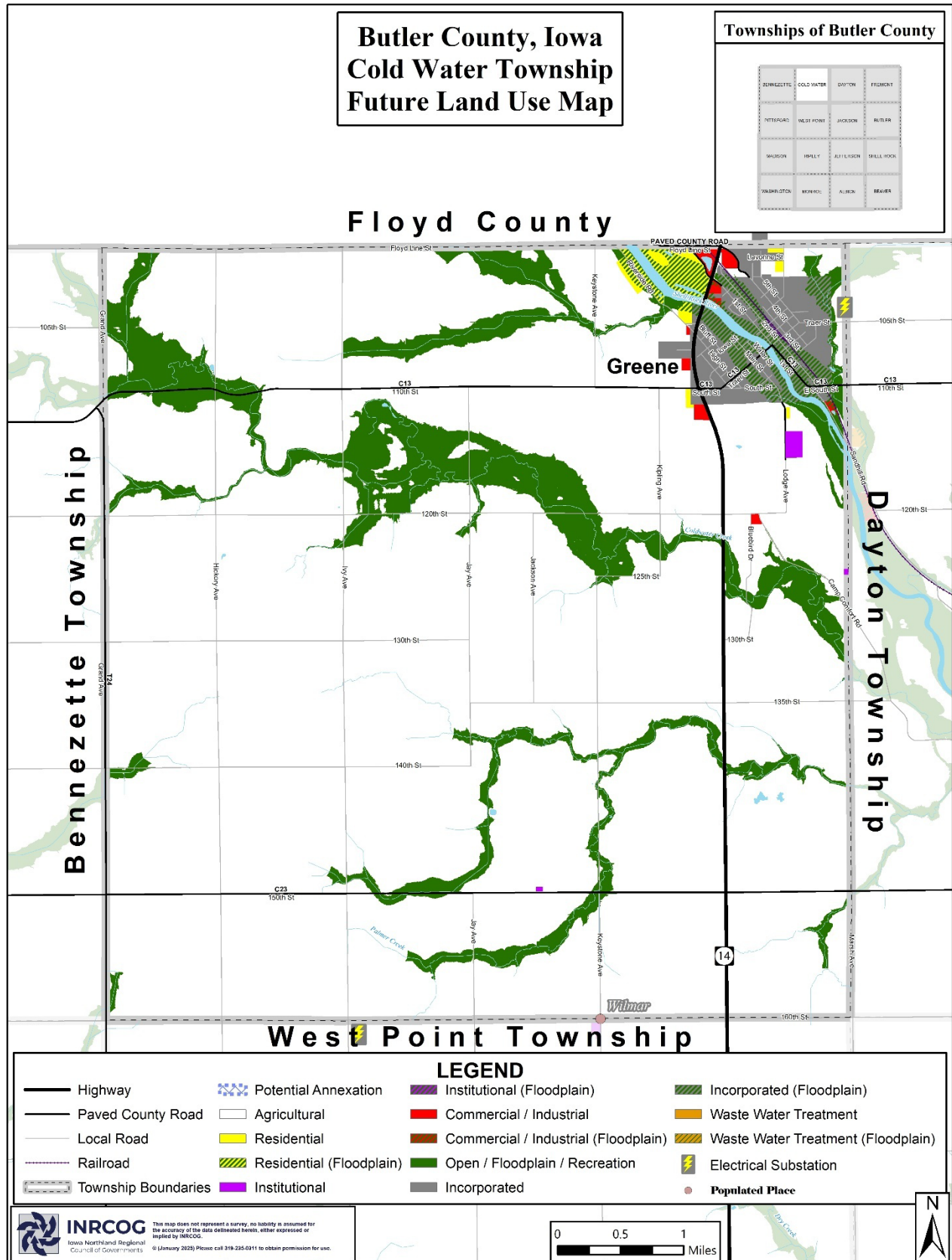


Figure 31: Dayton Township Existing Land Use Map

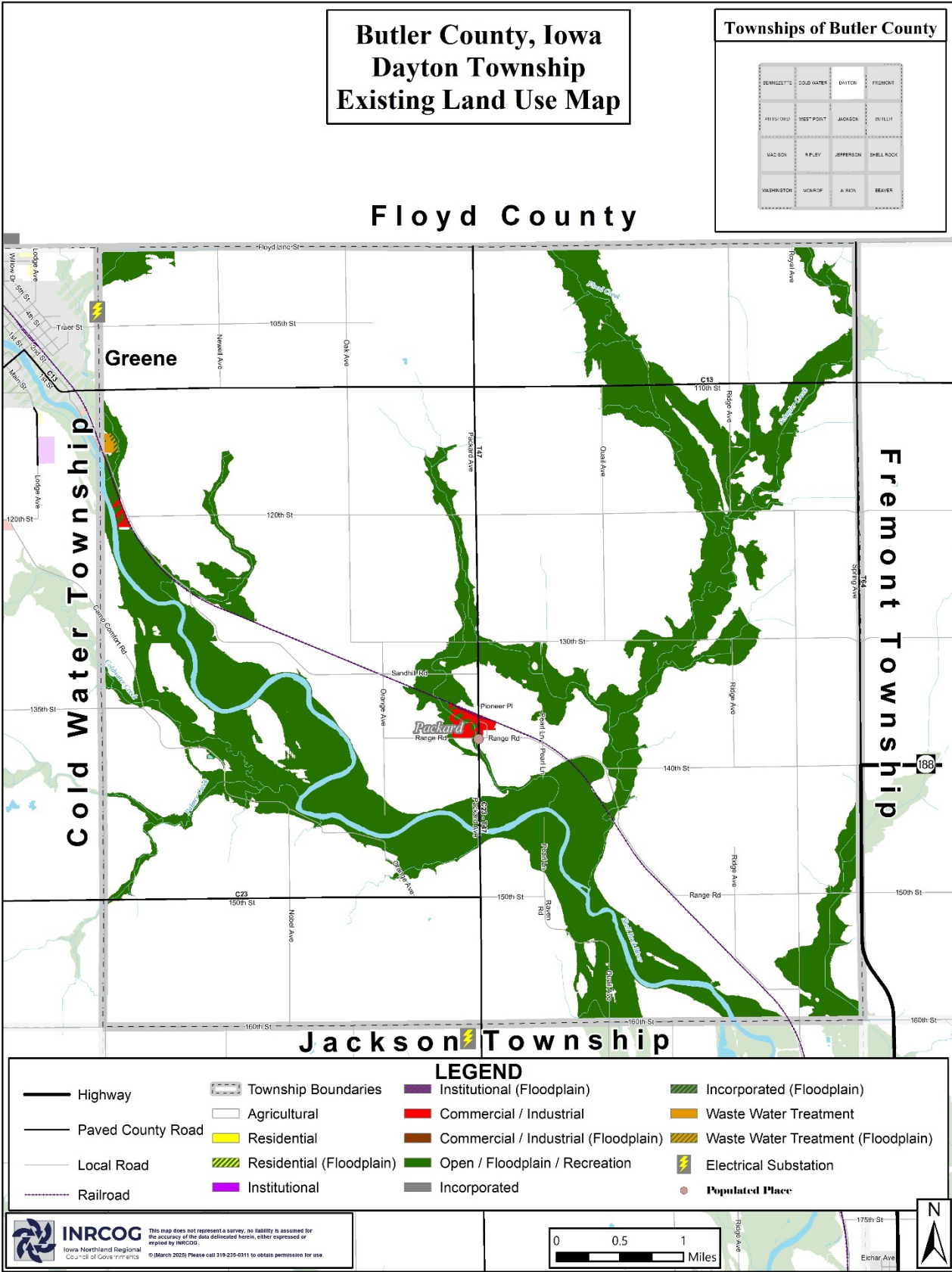


Figure 32: Dayton Township Future Land Use Map

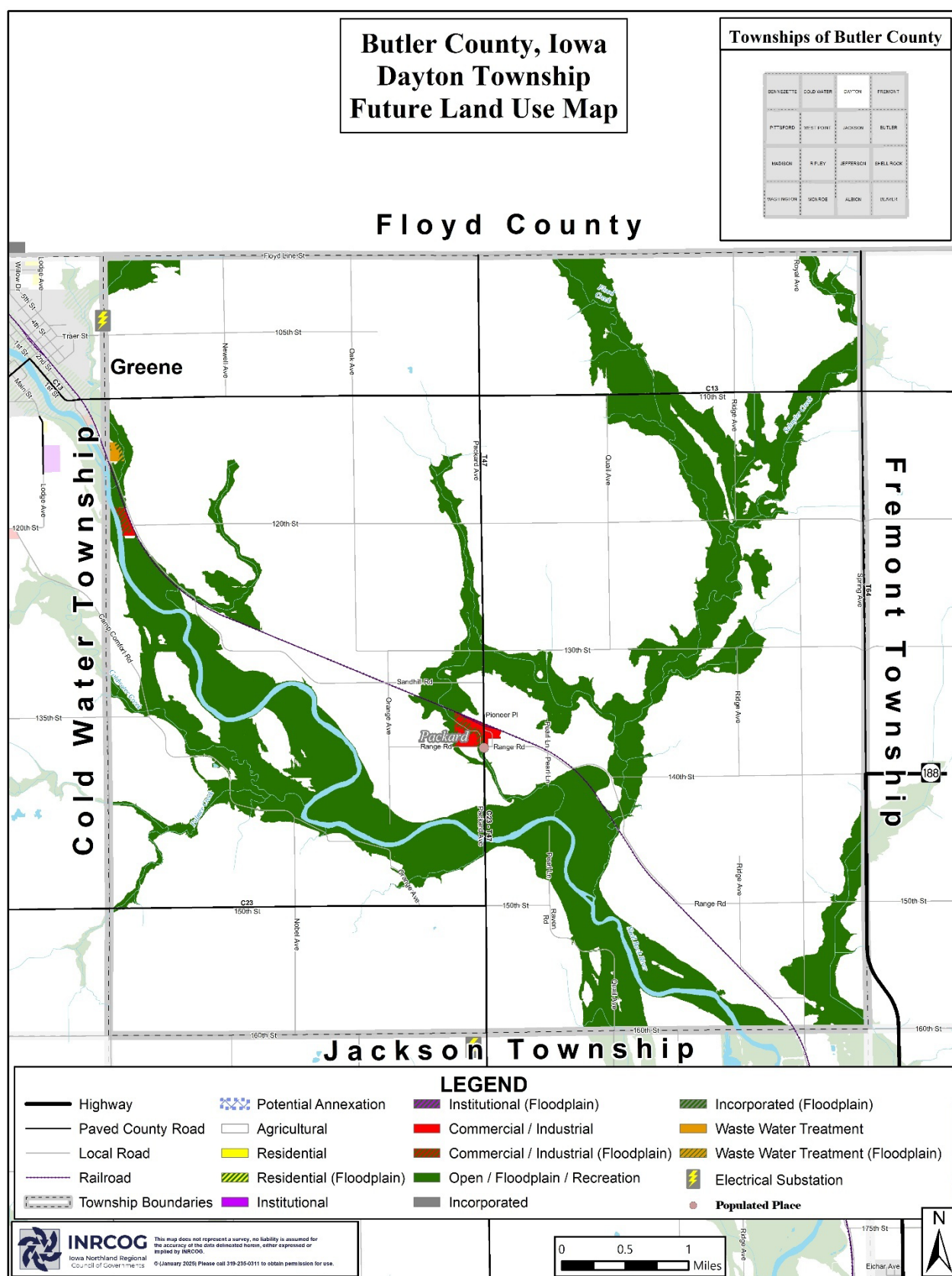


Figure 33: Fremont Township Existing Land Use Map

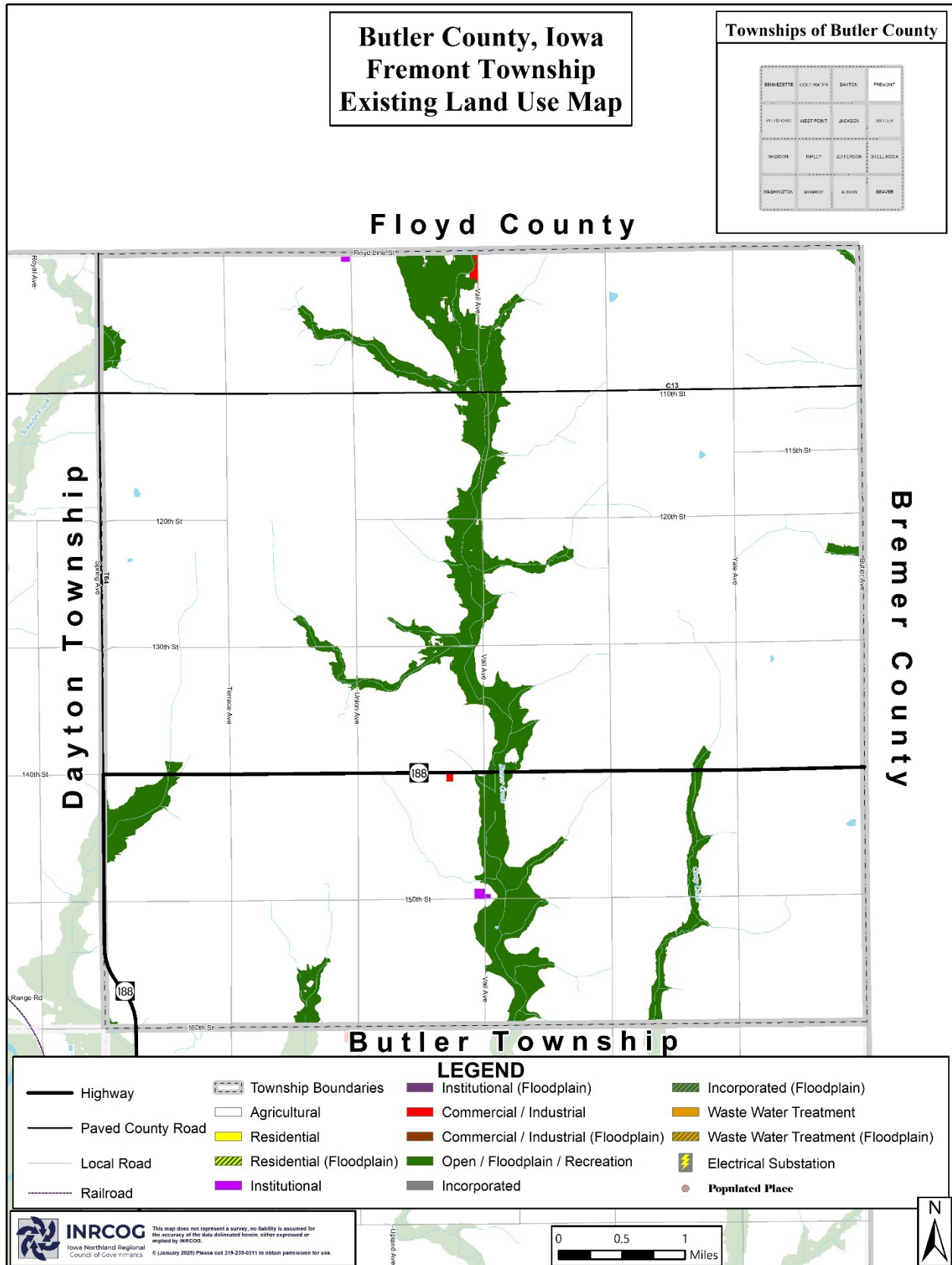


Figure 34: Fremont Township Future Land Use Map

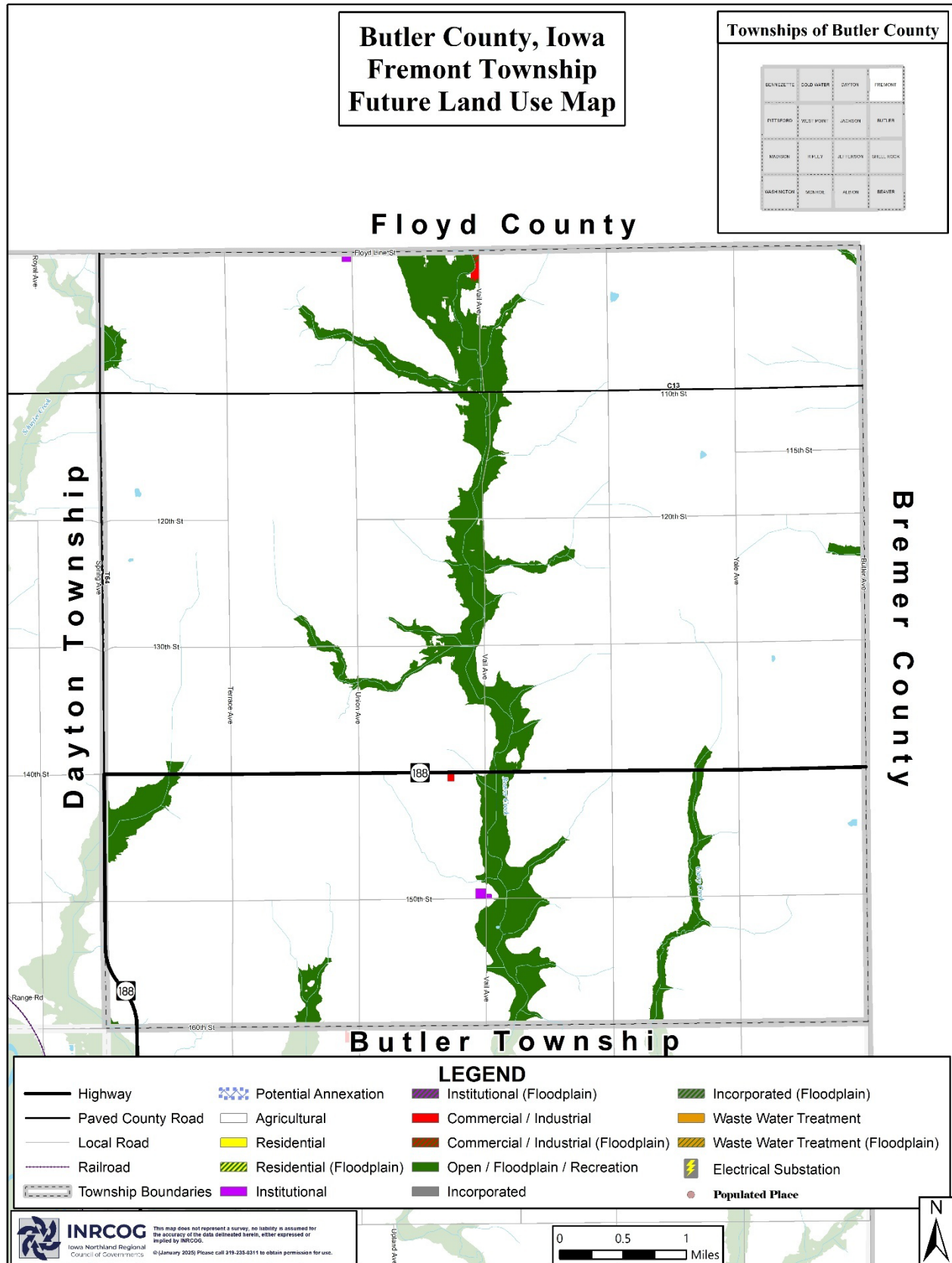


Figure 35: Jackson Township Existing Land Use Map

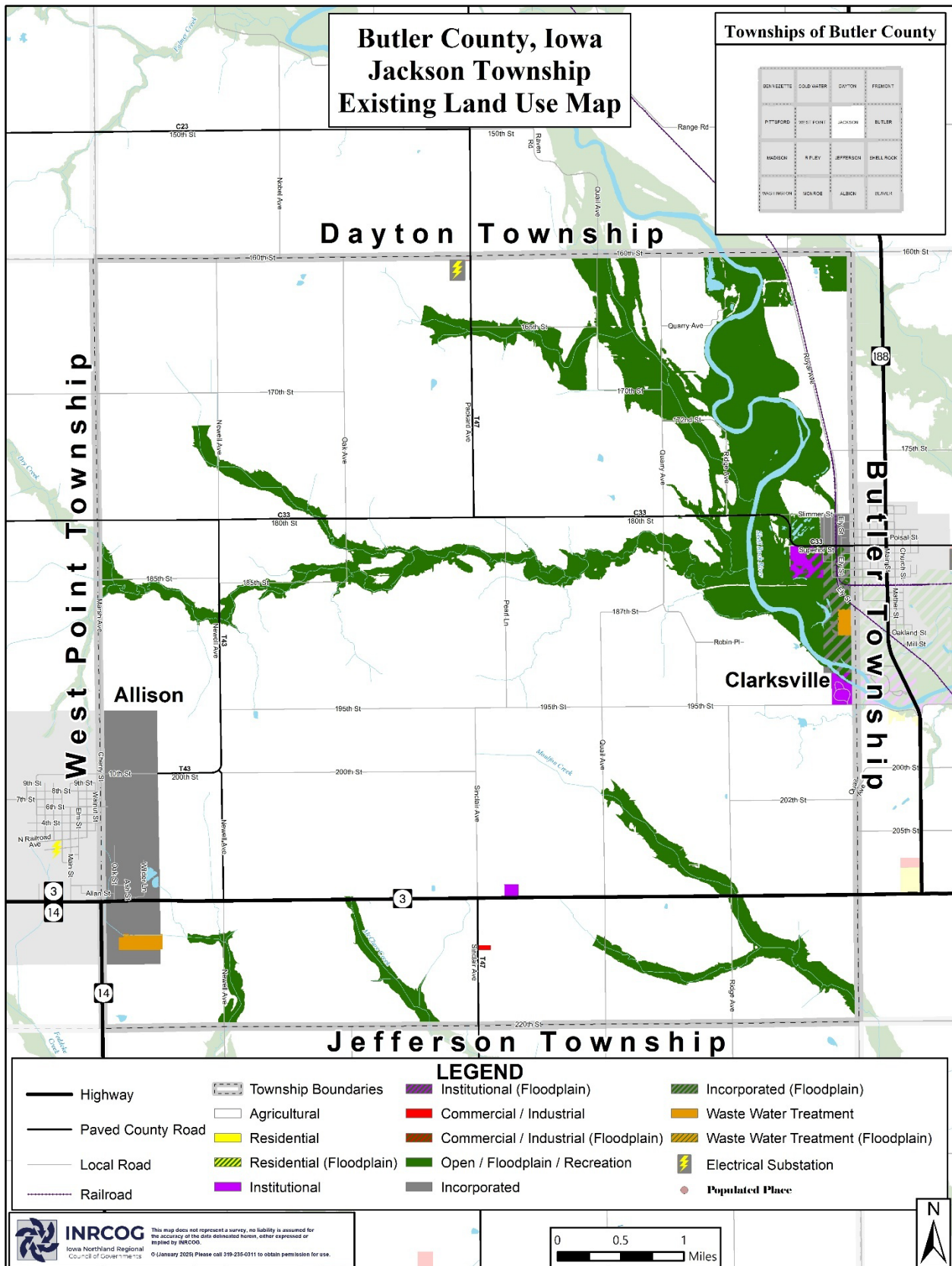


Figure 36: Jackson Township Future Land Use Map

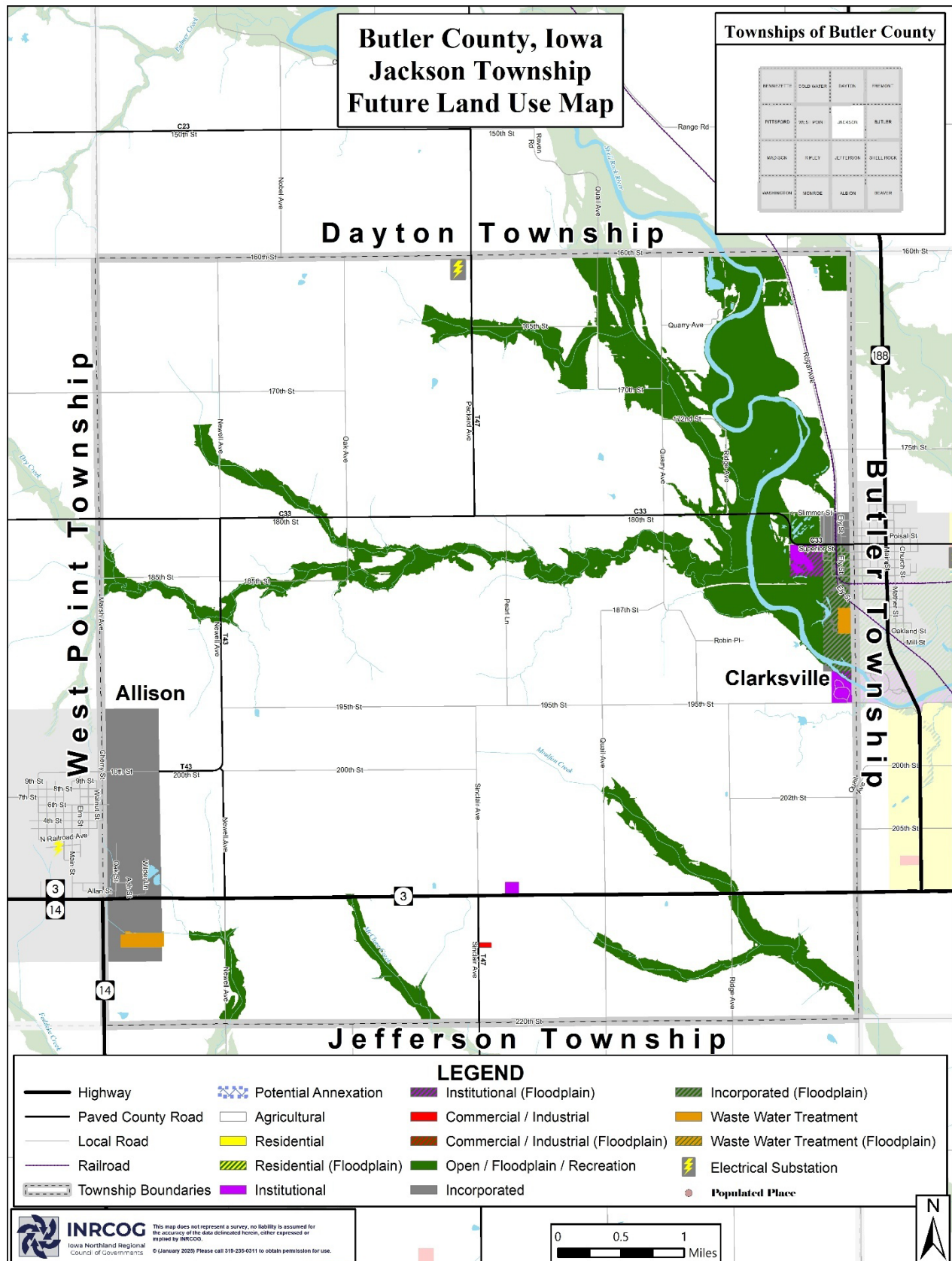


Figure 37: Jefferson Township Existing Land Use Map

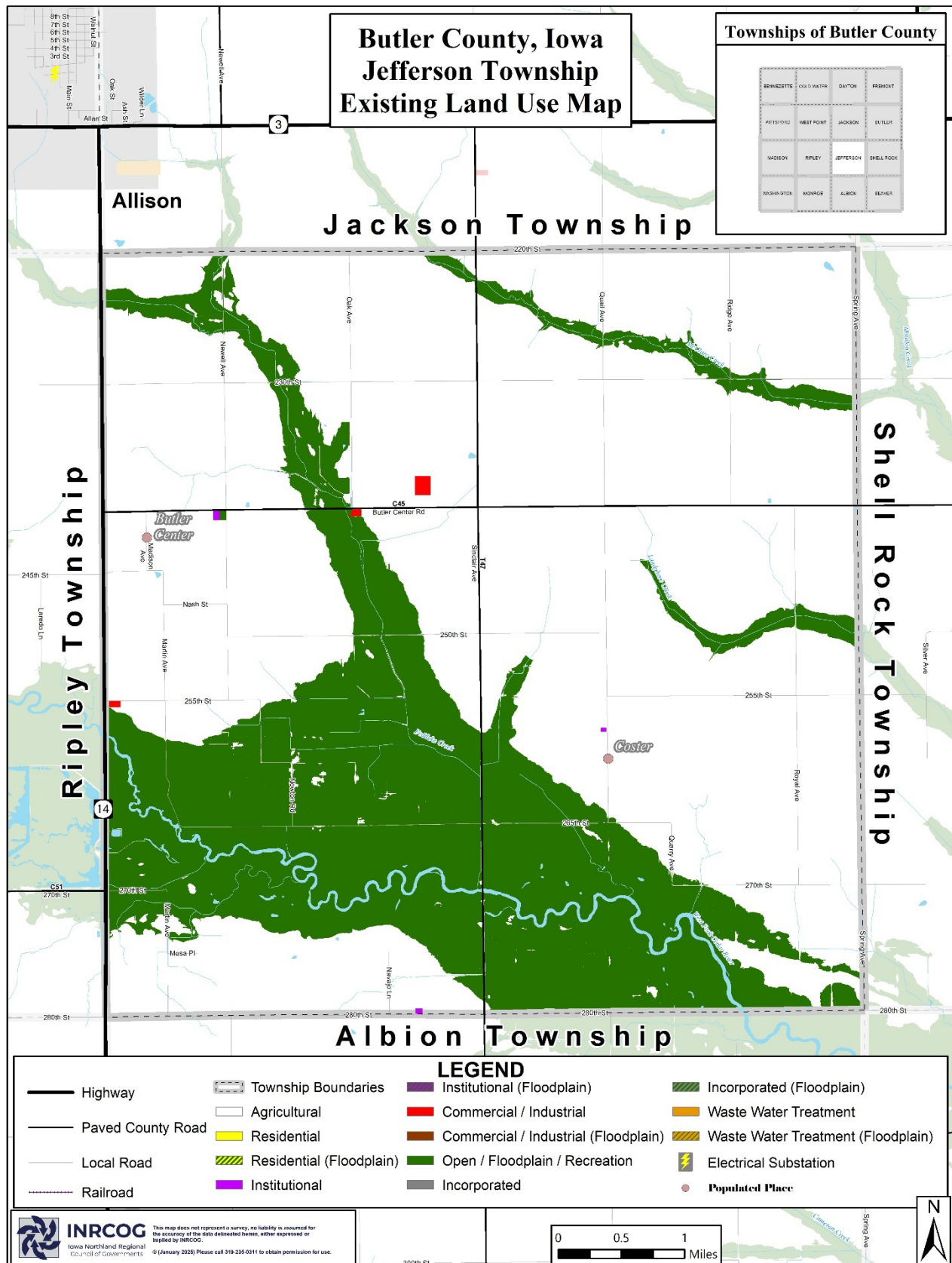


Figure 38: Jefferson Township Future Land Use Map

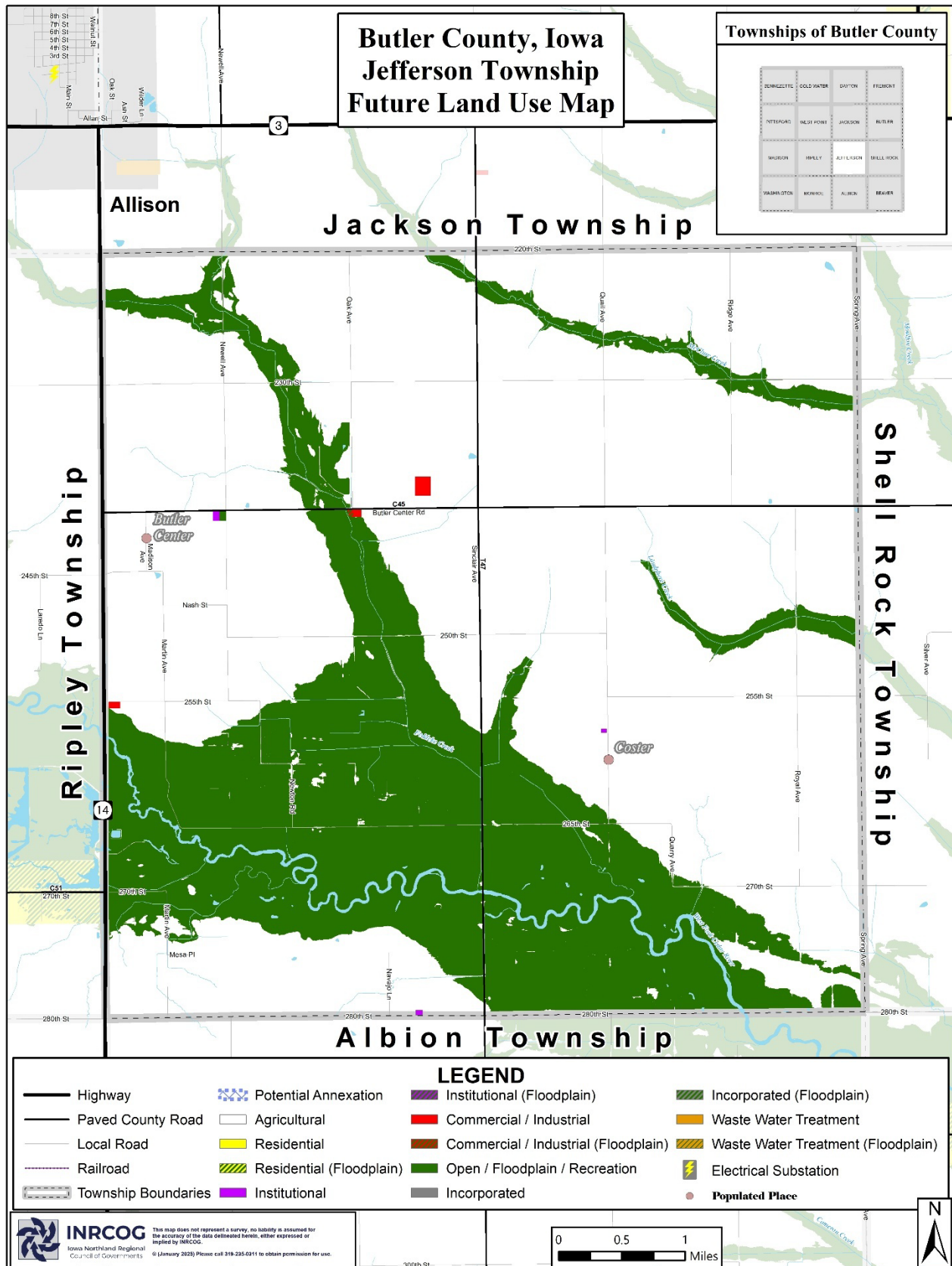


Figure 39: Madison Township Existing Land Use Map

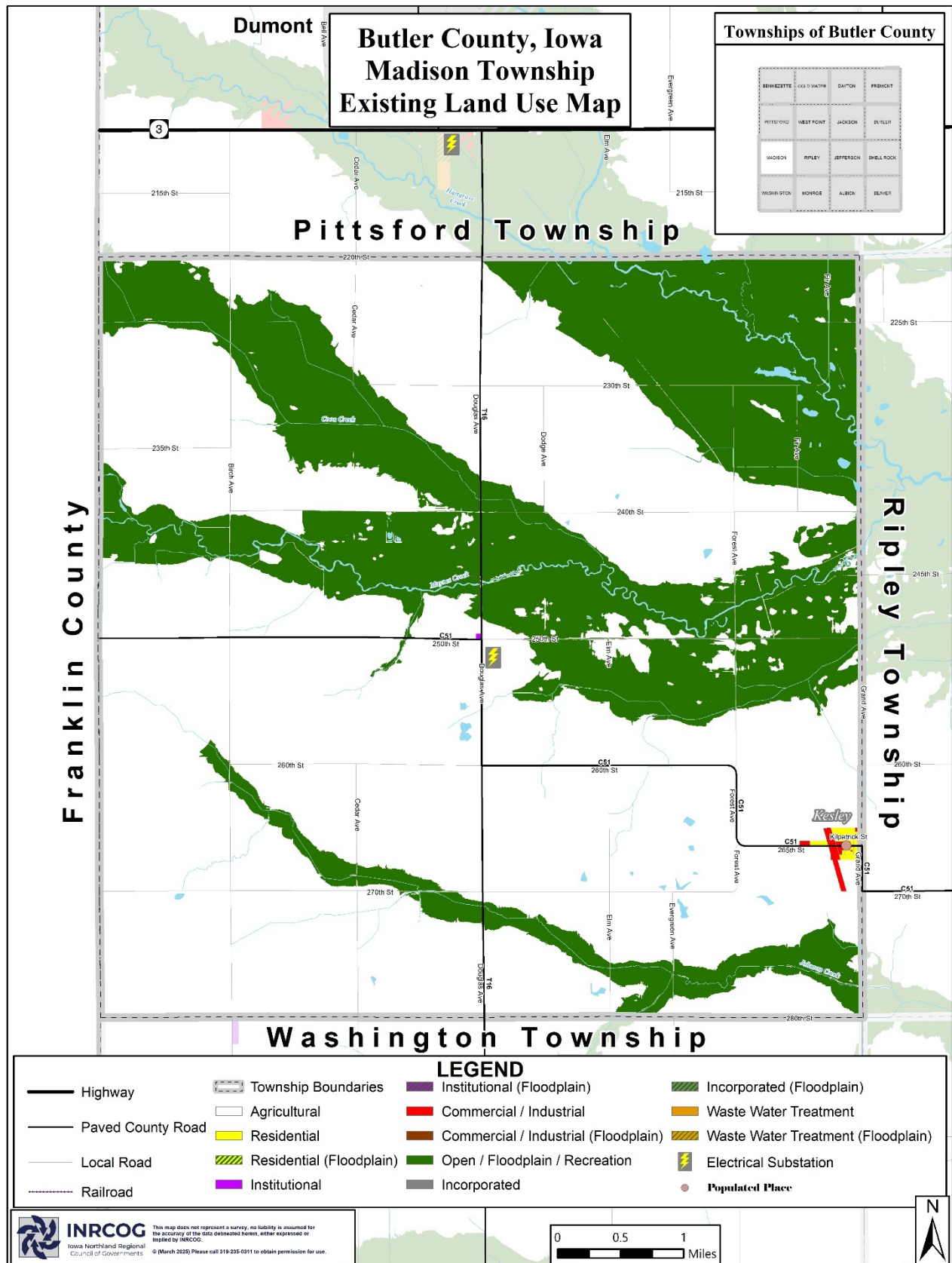


Figure 40: Madison Township Future Land Use Map

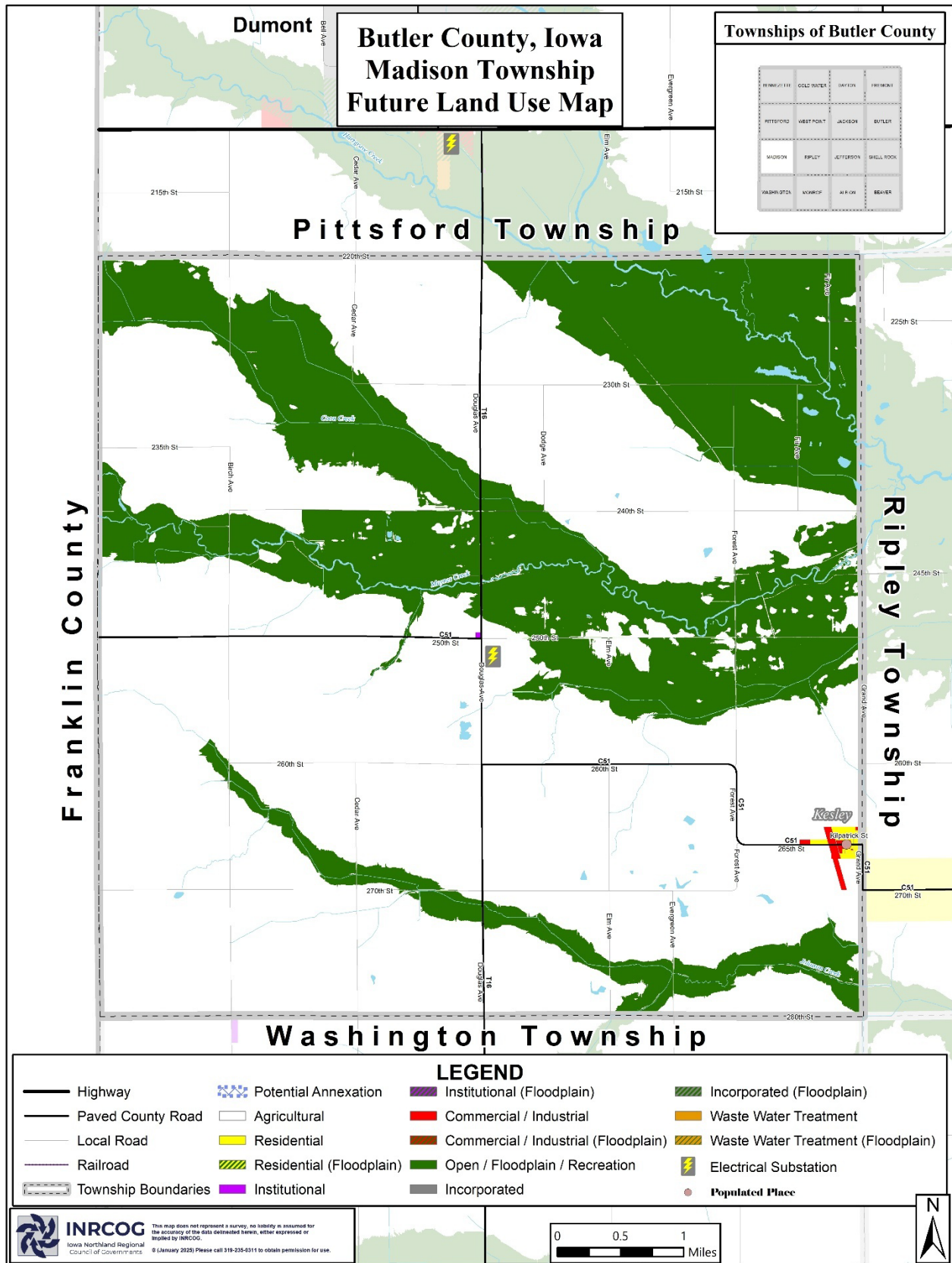


Figure 41: Monroe Township Existing Land Use Map

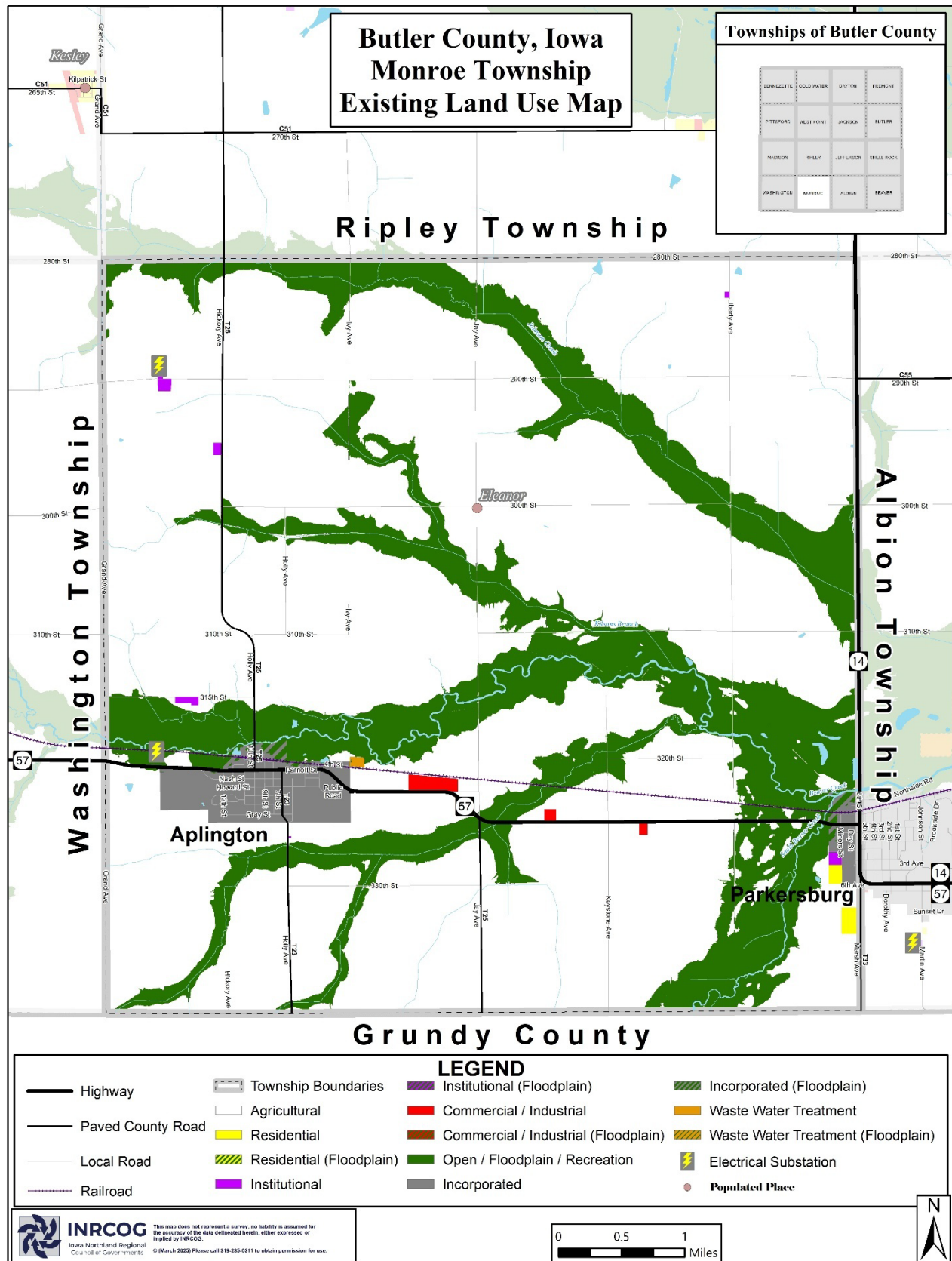


Figure 42: Monroe Township Future Land Use Map

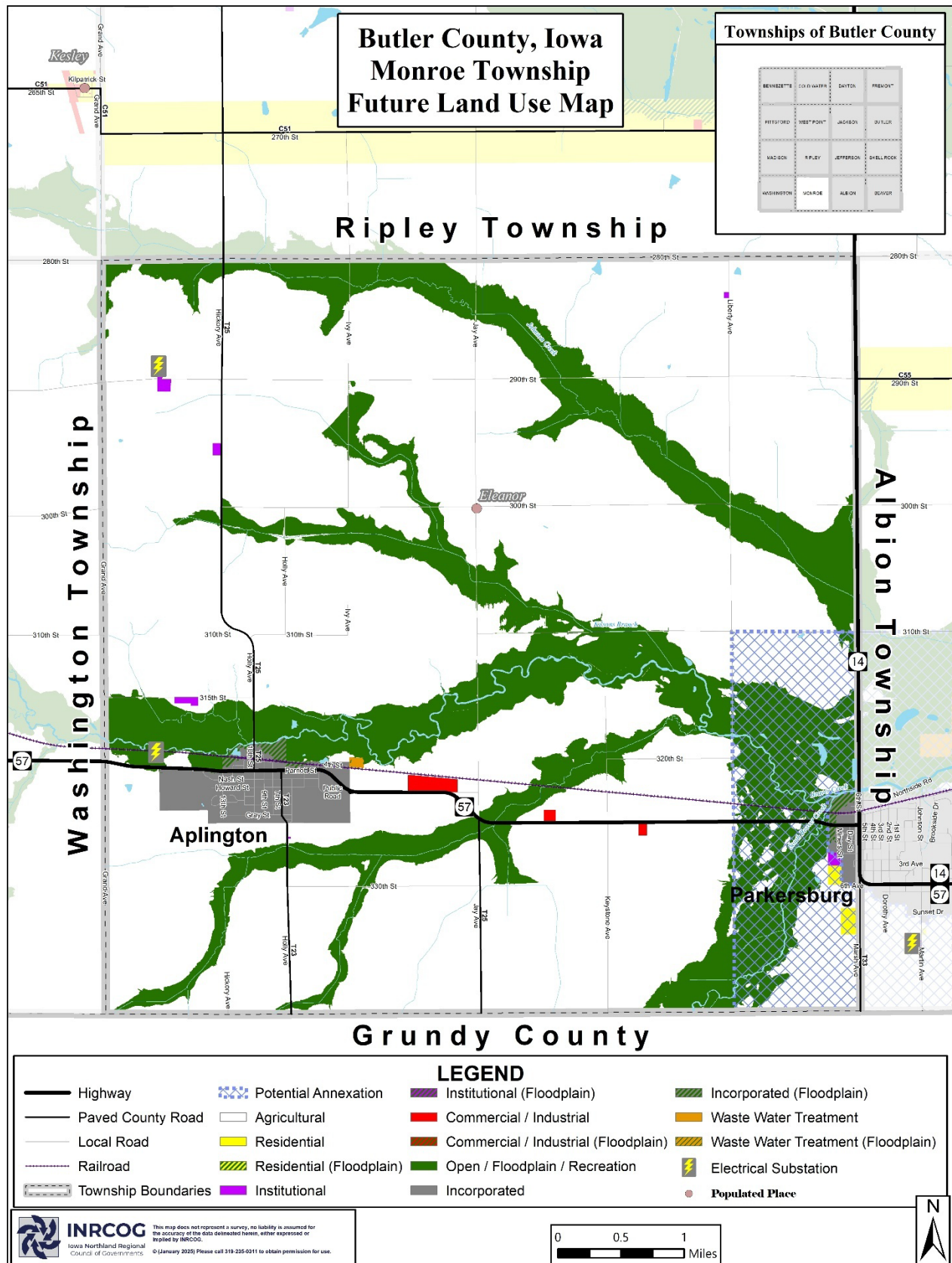


Figure 43: Pittsford Township Existing Land Use Map

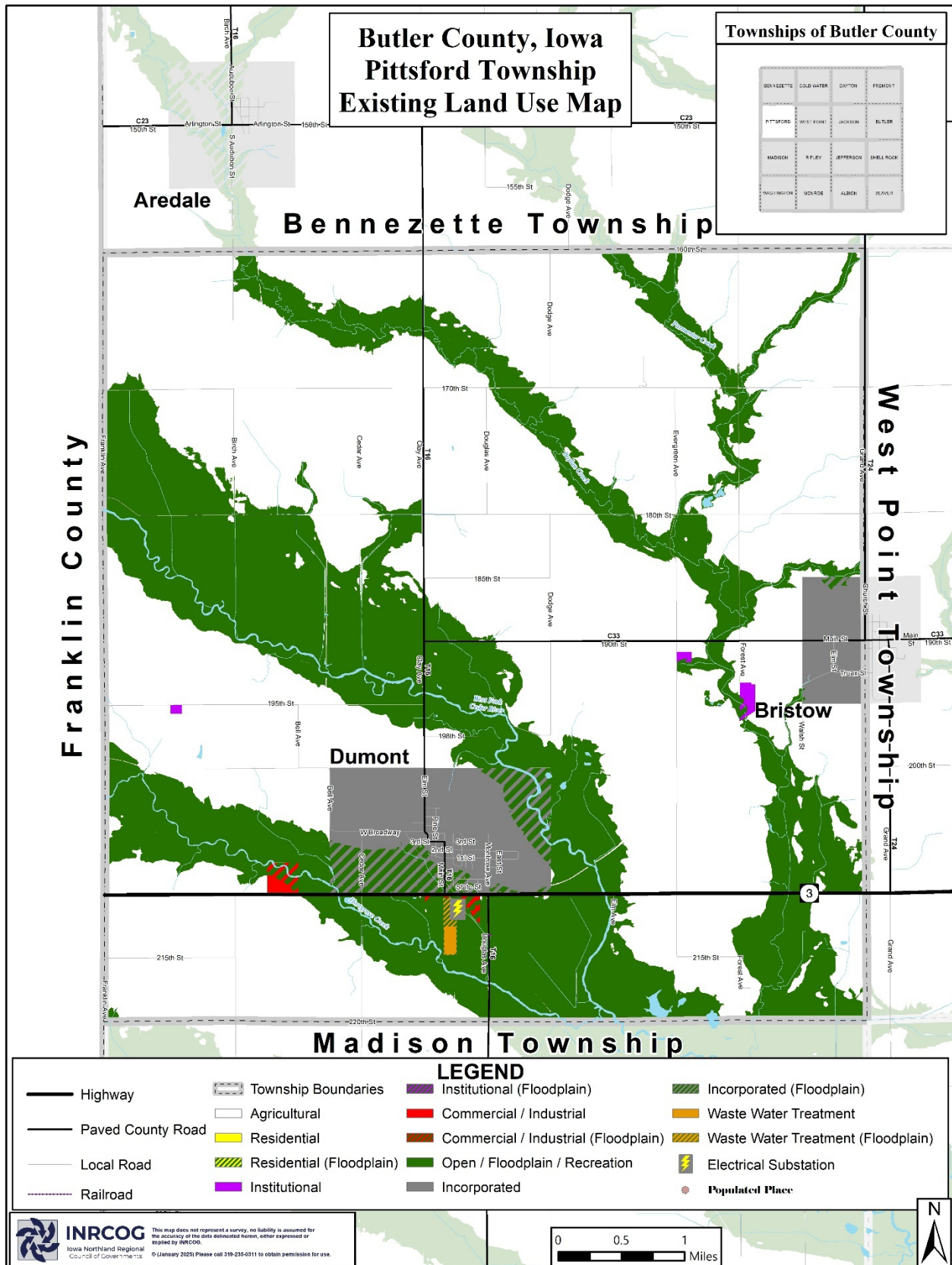


Figure 44: Pittsford Township Future Land Use Map

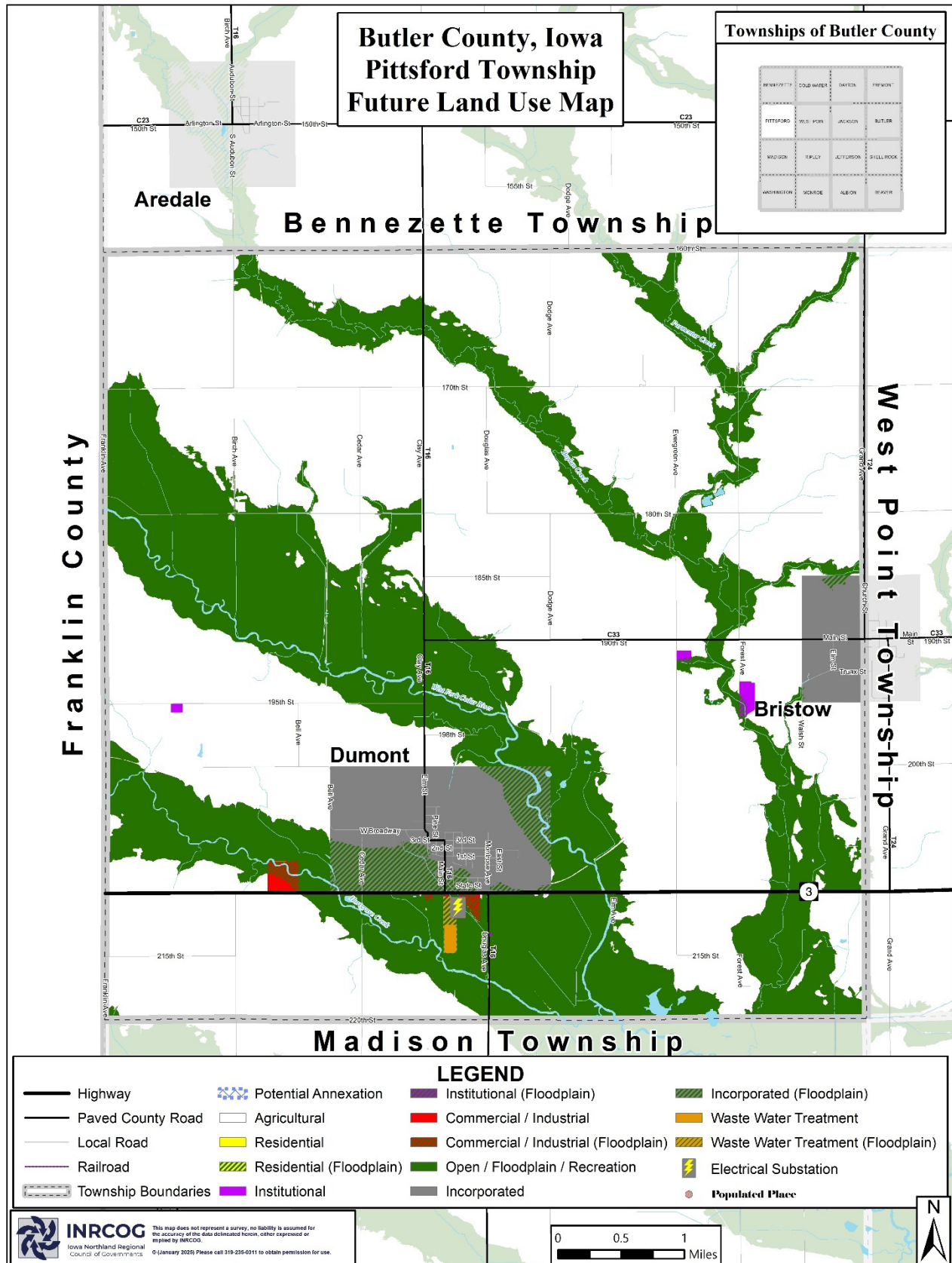


Figure 45: Ripley Township Existing Land Use Map

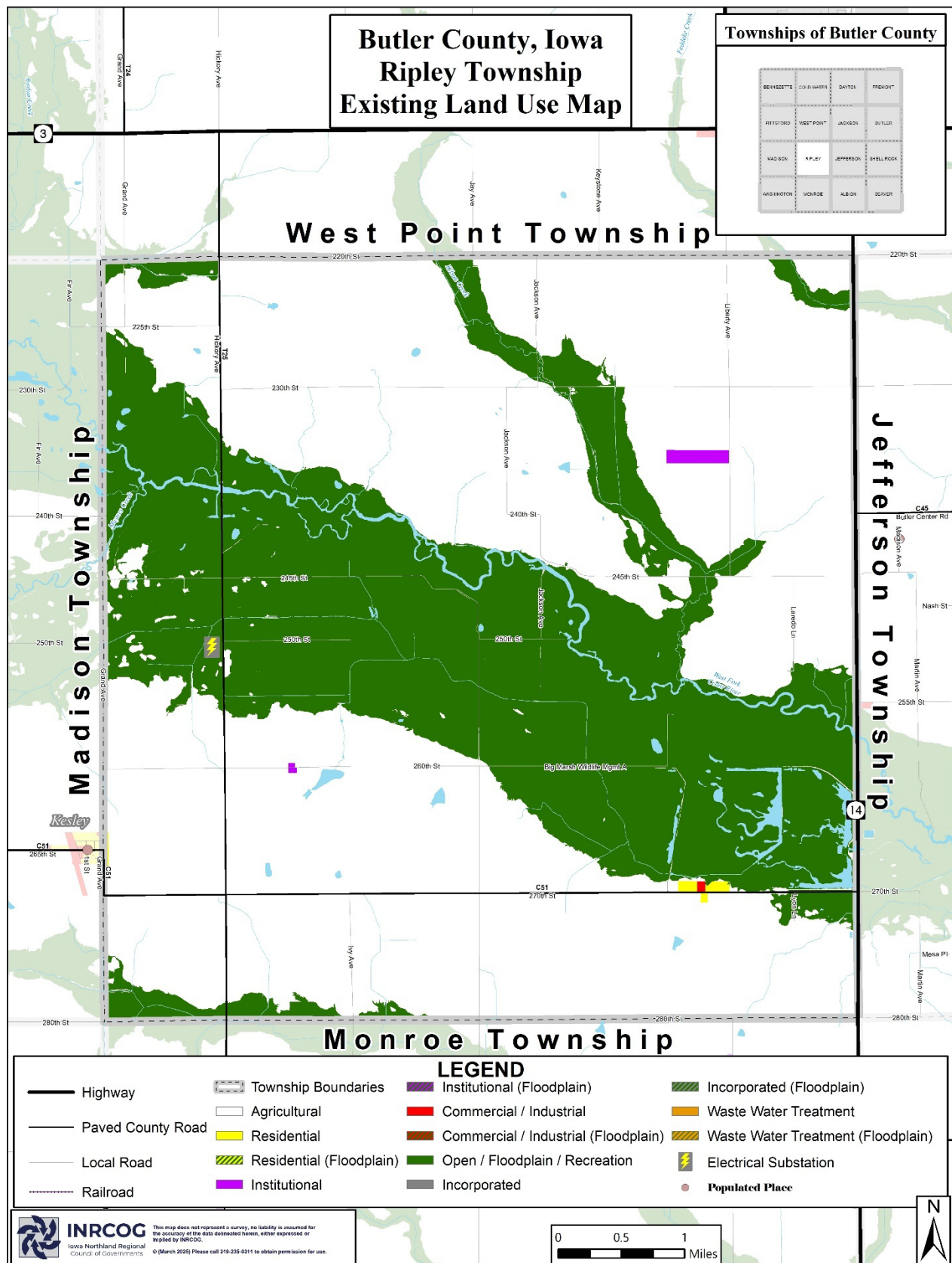


Figure 46: Ripley Township Future Land Use Map

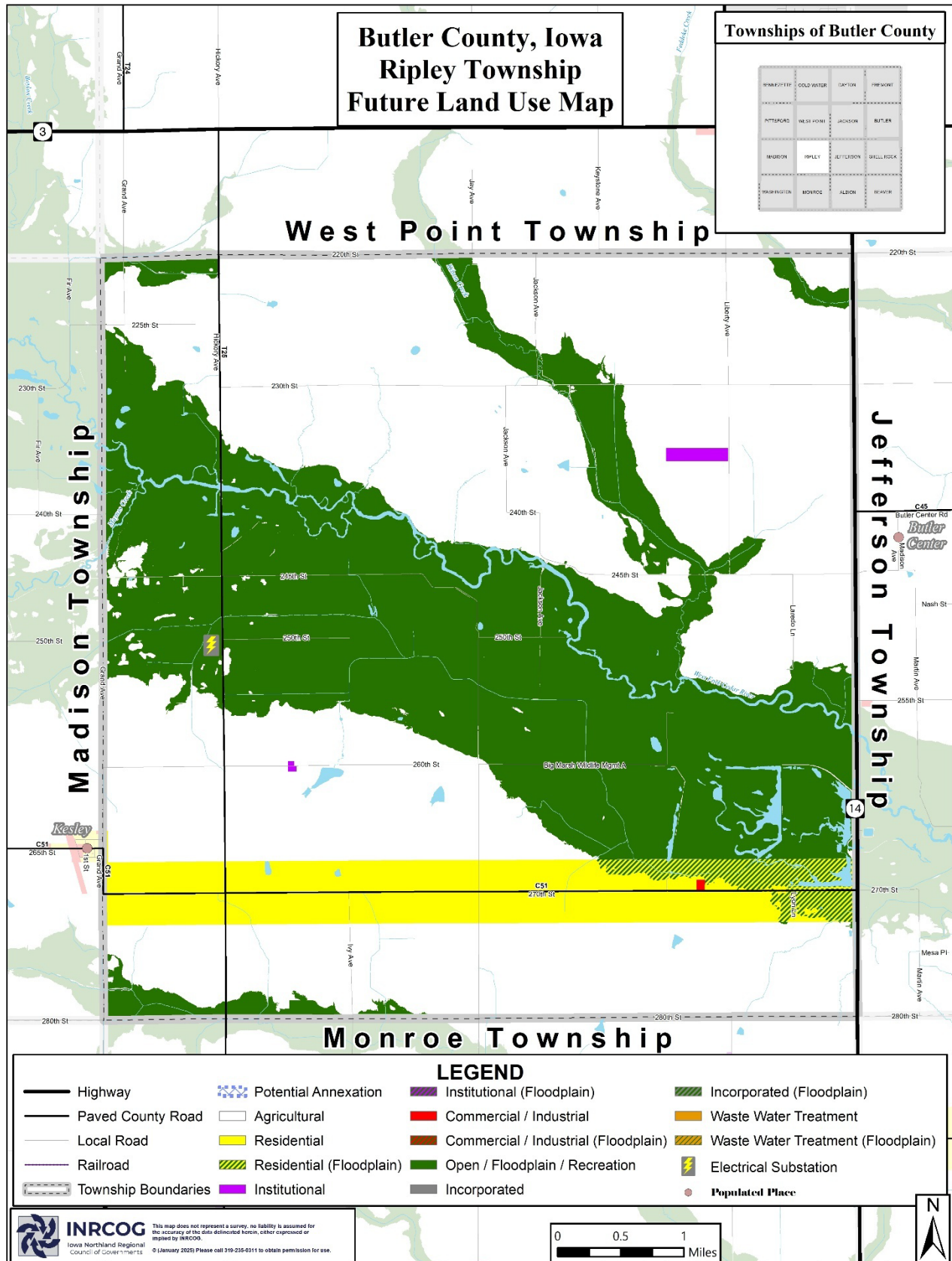


Figure 47: Shell Rock Township Existing Land Use Map

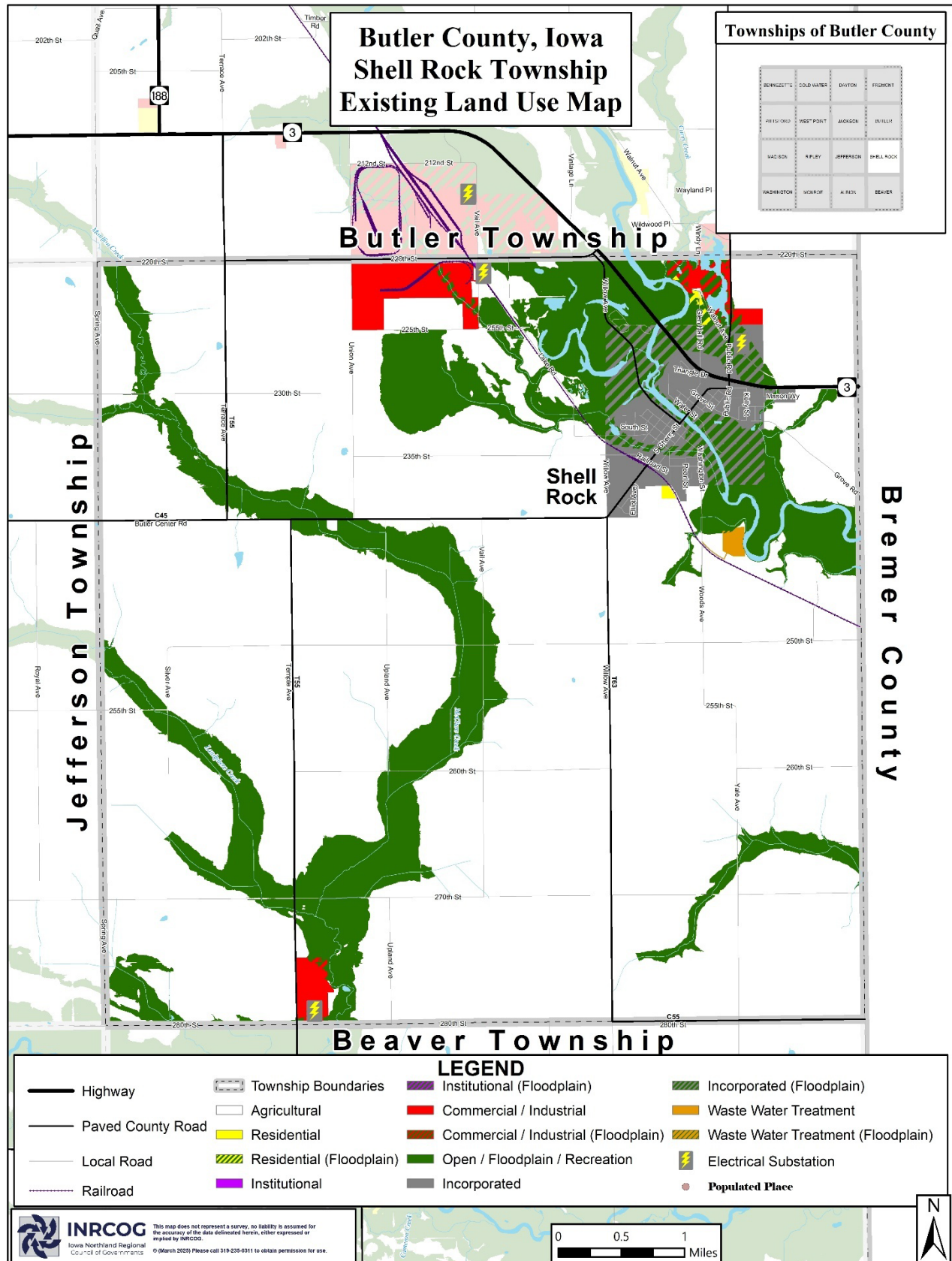


Figure 48: Shell Rock Township Future Land Use Map

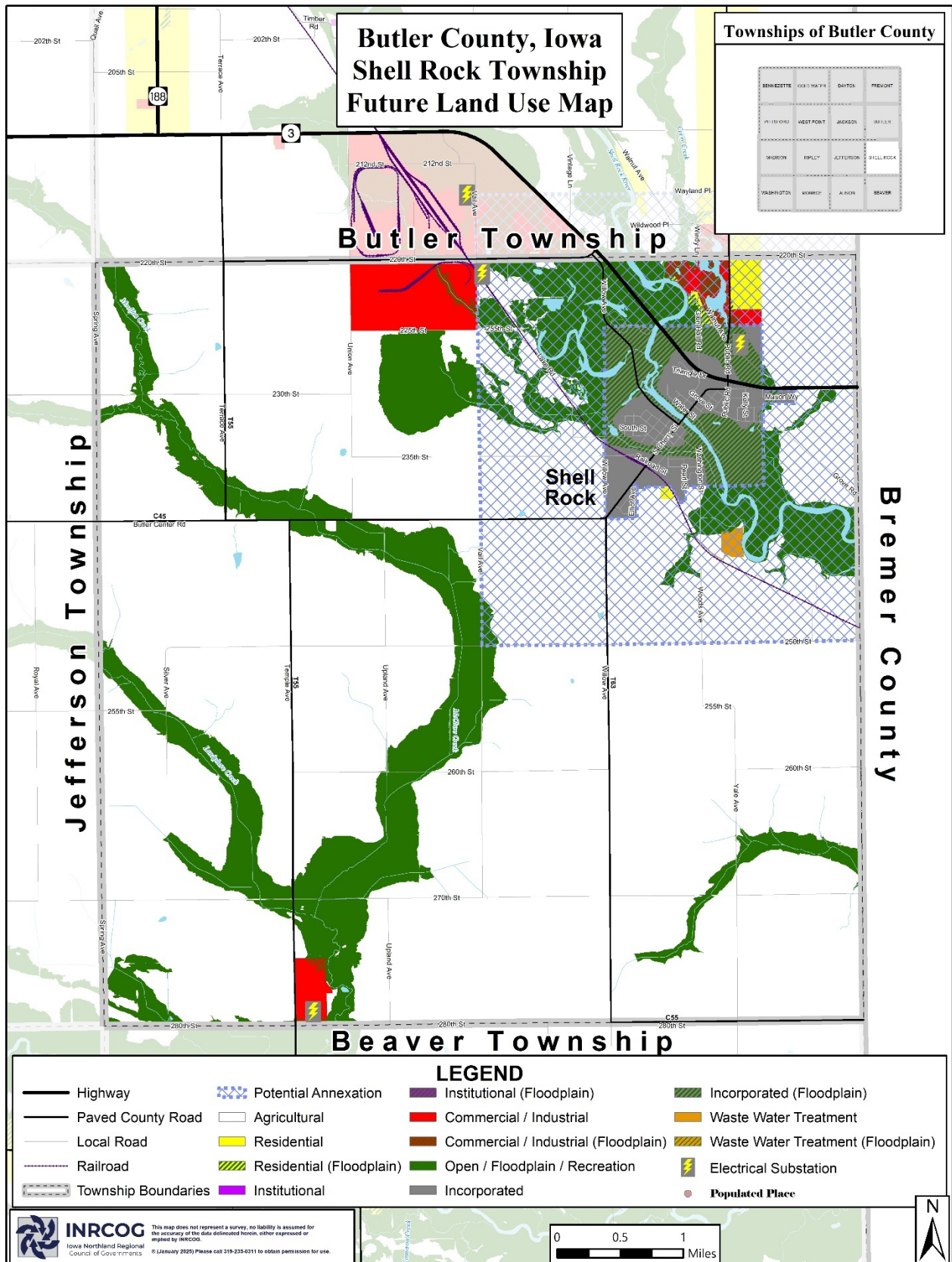


Figure 49: Washington Township Existing Land Use Map

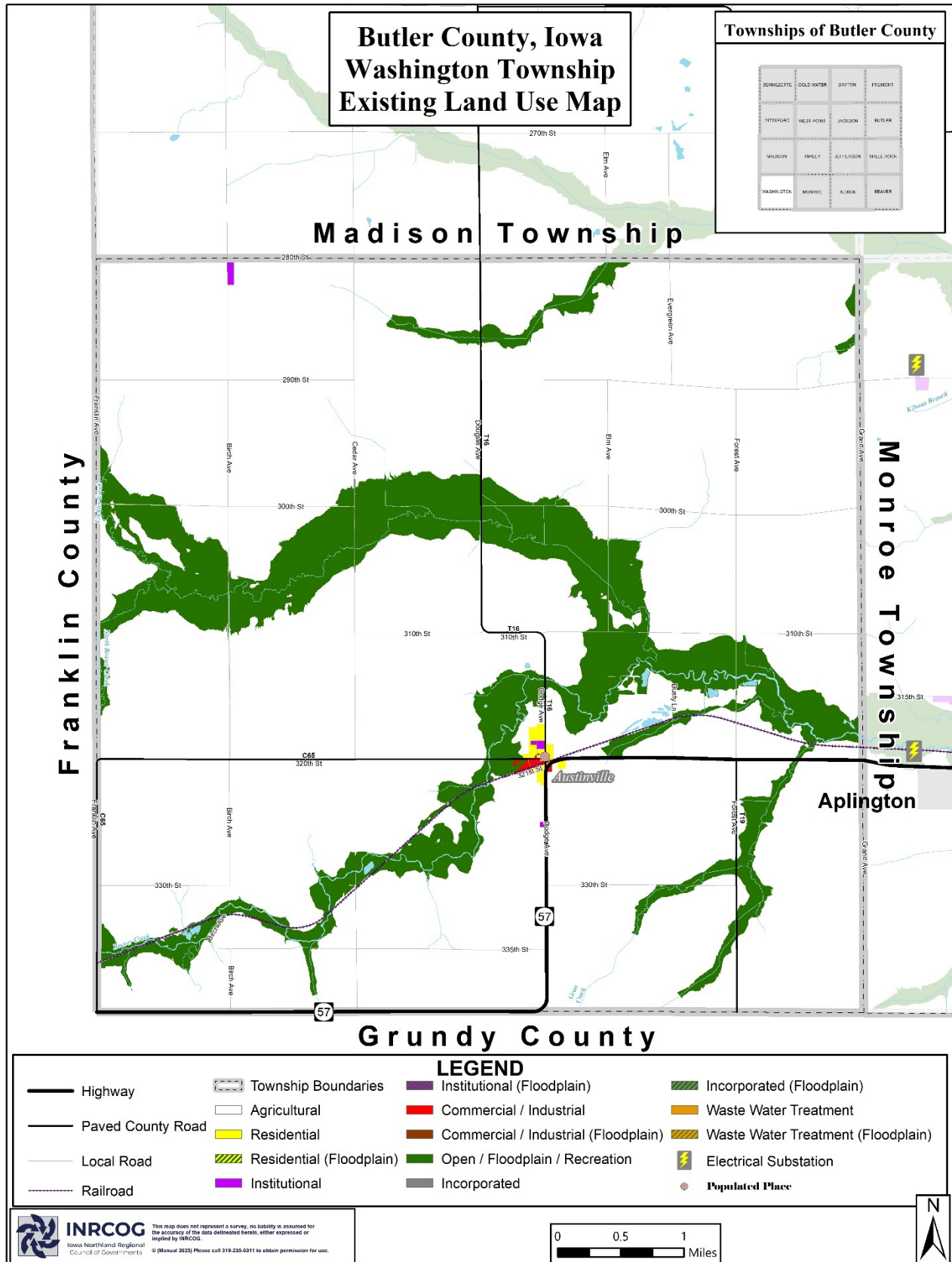


Figure 50: Washington Township Future Land Use Map

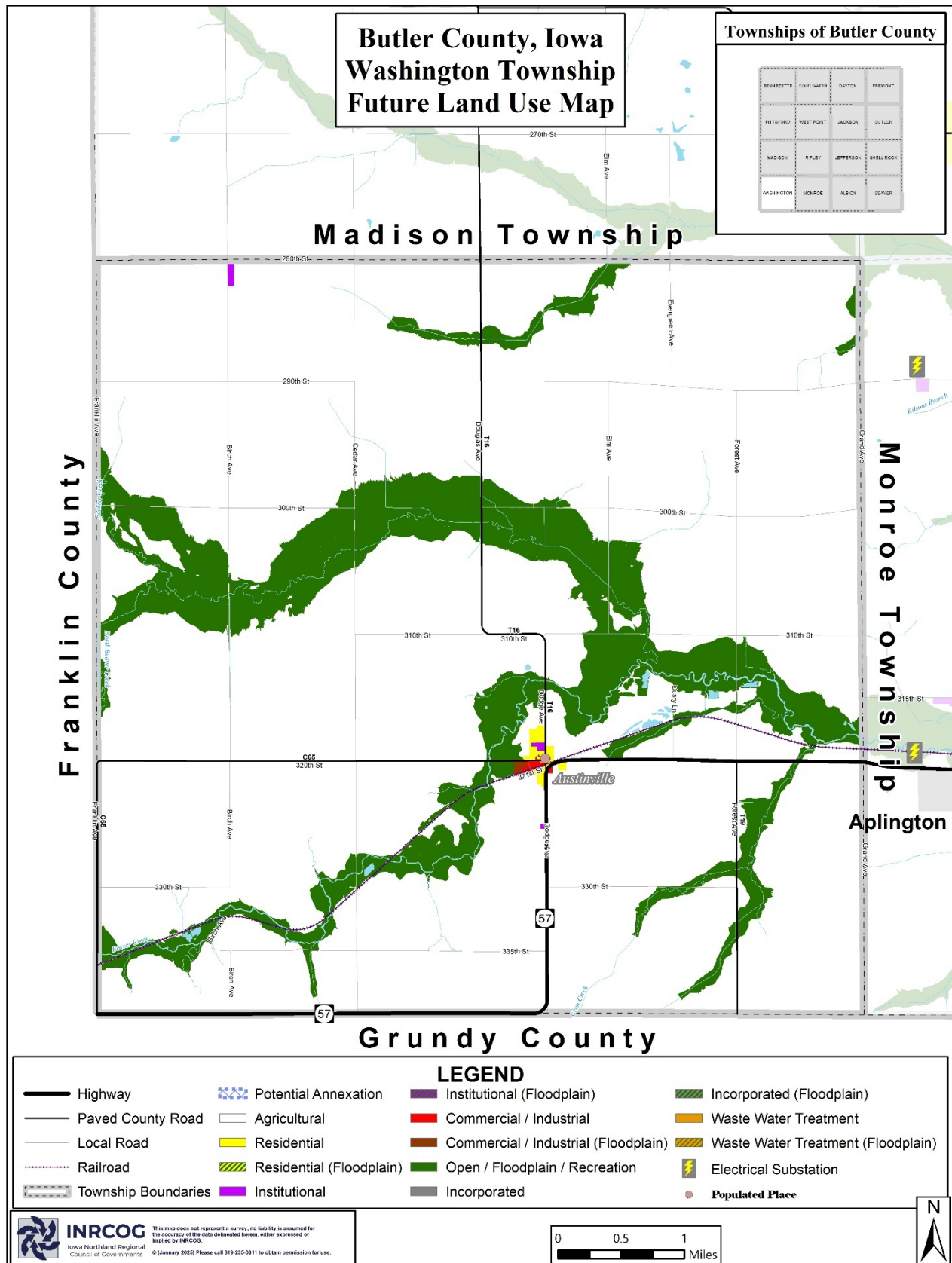


Figure 51: West Point Township Existing Land Use Map

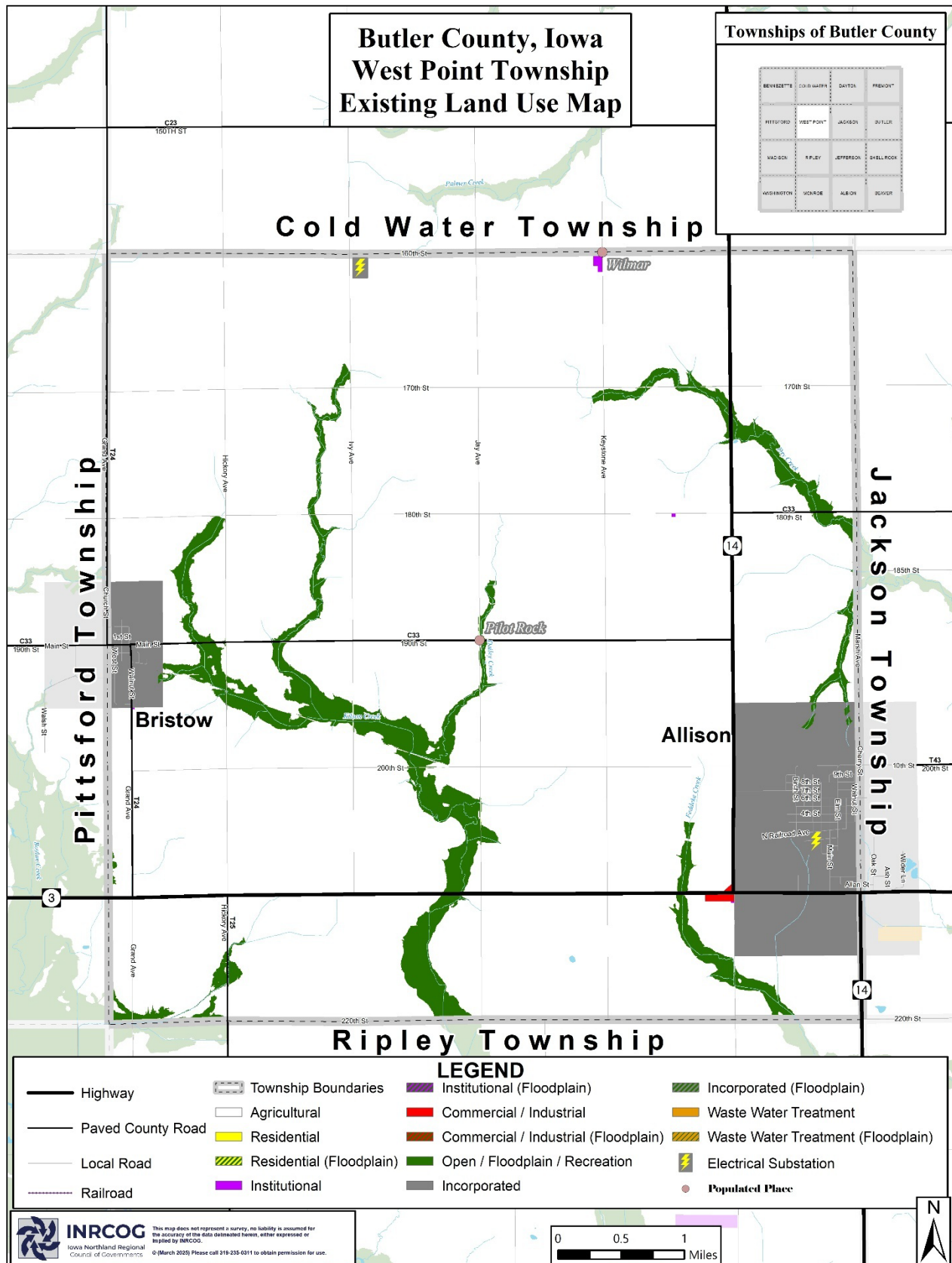


Figure 52: West Point Township Future Land Use Map

