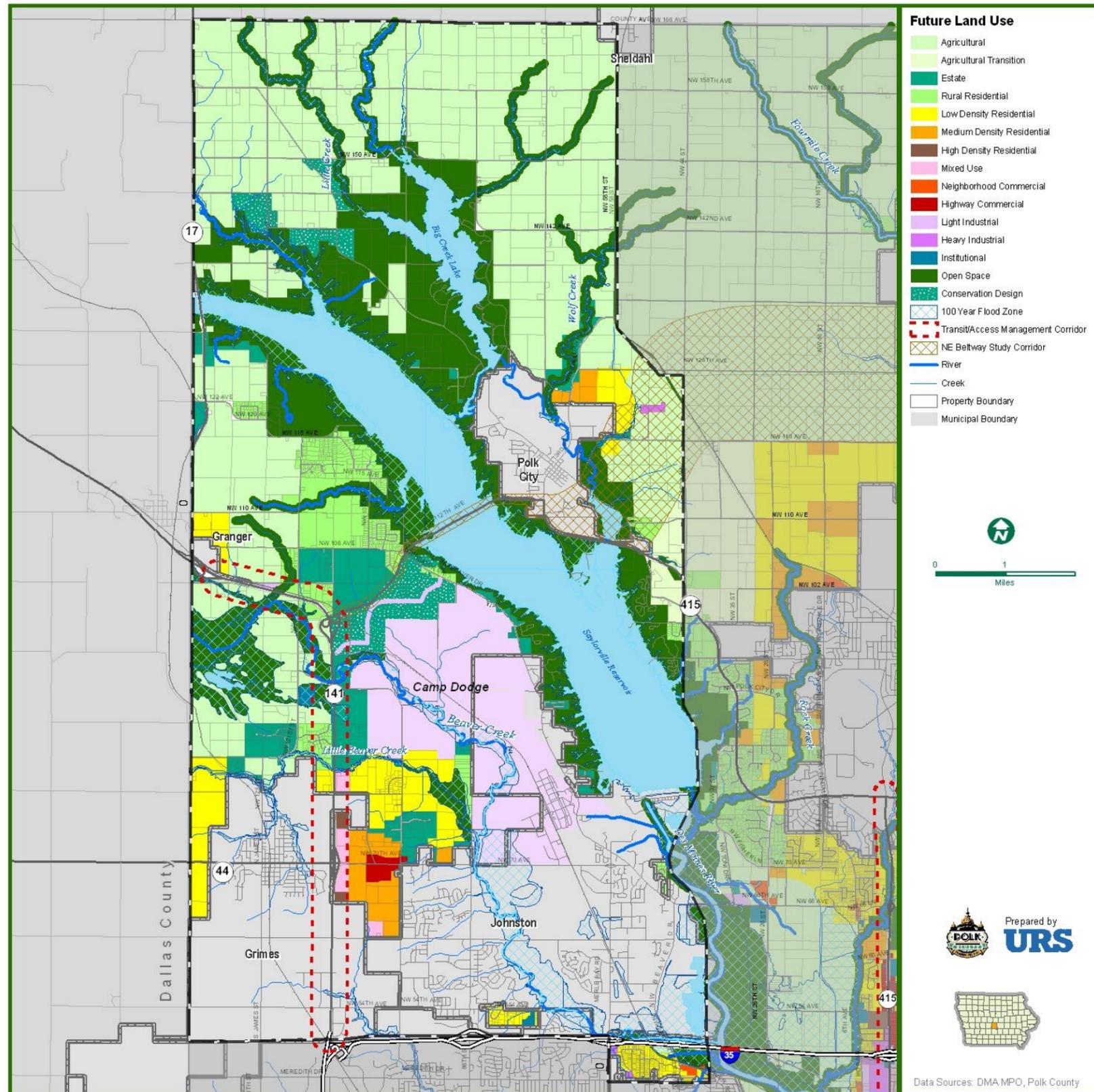


# Northwest Area Plan



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## Planning Context

The Northwest Planning Area is characterized by an abundance of water-oriented recreational and natural areas, including Jester Park, Big Creek Lake State Park, Saylorville Lake recreational areas, and related wildlife areas. Natural areas include Brenton Slough, a large wetland area north of Grimes. Camp Dodge, the large Army and National Guard training facility, occupies a central location within the Northwest area.

The cities of Johnston and Grimes are experiencing rapid growth and considering options for future expansion. Polk City, somewhat less accessible to regional highways, is also experiencing extensive new residential development.

Johnston's comprehensive plan concentrates most medium- to high-density residential, commercial and industrial uses south of Camp Dodge (NW 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue). The city's proposed expansion area extends to the (proposed) boundary of Grimes and Highway 141 on the west and to NW 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the north.

The Grimes comprehensive plan, updated in 2002, designates large areas south of the existing city for business and industrial development. Most of the city's expansion area is to the west into Dallas County, with some expansion of the city's boundaries to the east, encompassing both sides of the Highway 141 corridor at Highway 44.

While its location away from major highways has limited commercial development, Polk City has seen extensive new residential development that takes advantage of its natural and recreational amenities, including the large Tournament Club golf course.

Polk City's 2002 comprehensive plan keeps most new development within existing city boundaries, focusing residential development on a new civic parkway, Parker Boulevard, on the city's west side. A new neigh-

borhood with a mixed-use center is proposed north of the city's boundary at Sheldahl Drive and NW 126<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Most of Granger's developed area lies west of Highway 17 in Dallas County. The city's comprehensive plan shows a large expansion area within Polk County, extending to NW 128<sup>th</sup> Street and NW 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue, designated for low-density residential development.

## Issues

Among the primary issues of concern to the Northwest Area Committee were:

- Questions of traffic and access management along IA 141 – a lack of signaled access points causes problems for commuters attempting to access the highway southbound in the a.m. peak hour, yet adding more signaled intersections is likely to increase traffic delays.
- Issues regarding the proposed Northeast Beltway, including the corridor alignment through Polk City, the potential need to expand the Mile-Long Bridge, and the connection to IA 141.
- The desire to protect prime farmland, recreational and natural areas.
- Recognition of cities' expansion plans, versus the desire of many residents for large estate-type residential lots.

## Vision Statement

*Because of successful, joint planning between cities and county, the Northwest quadrant smoothly transitions from residential/small commercial in the south to parks and recreational areas, and to farmland going north. The Northwest quadrant is a primary recreational area for the entire county. The three cities have a "joint" planning process, so that the edges of Johnston, Grimes and Polk City blend with compatible housing*

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*densities and styles. County and city boundaries are invisible from the air, because land uses are consistent and compatible.*

*Roads designed as parkways provide additional access to the northern section of the County; with development clustered in designated areas, and ample green space. Careful access management has maintained adequate traffic flow along Highway 141.*

*Commercial development is limited and carefully designed so that rural views are preserved. New light industrial development has occurred within the existing cities. There are no large industrial operations or "big box" structures past the city limits. Infrastructure has been extended in an economically efficient manner to the developing areas.*

*Much of the newer residential development is in the form of clusters, with protected green space and amenities such as trails and entry features. Larger lot development is located in areas where communities have determined that urban services will not be extended, and serves as a transition to viable operating agricultural areas. There is a variety of housing types, including affordable entry-level housing such as townhouses and cottages, primarily within the cities.*

*Greenbelts and greenways allow stormwater to recharge groundwater and reduce polluted runoff into the healthy waterways and lakes. The greenbelts are wide enough to provide wildlife habitat and preserve ecological functions, as well as a regional network of bike trails, many of which lead to Big Creek and Saylorville Lake. The water quality of these lakes has improved over the previous decades, as better stormwater and wastewater management techniques have been put in place.*

### Northwest Area Goals

**Planning and Zoning Goal** – Polk County will implement its long term planning goals through zoning standards that direct commercial, industrial and residential development to allow for appropriate land uses and minimize leap-frog development.

**Recreation and Natural Areas Goal** – Polk County will protect its green infrastructure in the Northwest area, promote recreational assets, and ensure that future development enhances rather than threatens riparian corridors, green space, natural areas, air quality, parks, and trails.

**Transportation Access Goal** – Polk County will enhance and manage transportation infrastructure in the Northwest area to improve access to regional highways for residents and businesses.

**Transportation Impacts Goal** – Polk County will consider the land use impacts of transportation investment and multi-modal alternatives to road expansion or improvements.

**Environmental Goal** – Polk County will protect surface and groundwater quality through protection of watersheds and management of stormwater and wastewater.

**Preserving Rural Character Goal** – Polk County will protect prime farmland and maintain the rural character of non-urbanized areas.

**Infrastructure and Utilities Goal** – Polk County will stage infrastructure expansion to guide future development and keep infrastructure affordable.

**Social Infrastructure Goal** – Polk County will promote development patterns and investment that fosters educational and economic opportunities for current and future residents.

**Collaborative Planning** – Polk County will work with Northwest area

communities and adjoining counties to create an open, public, collaborative planning effort that meets the region's goals.

### Future Land Use Plan

The future land use plan maintains the distinction between urbanizing and rural areas by focusing most new development around the cities in areas that can effectively be served by public utilities. These include the areas between Grimes and Johnston, south of Camp Dodge, close to the County boundary adjacent to Grimes and Granger, and north and east of Polk City.

#### Land Use Categories

The Northwest Area plan includes some, but not all, of the land use categories in the countywide land use plan. The categories found in the Northwest, and their locations, are:

**Agriculture:** This is the most dominant land use category, including most rural land north and west of Saylorville and Big Creek lakes and west of Camp Dodge.

**Estate Residential:** This very low-density category is located primarily in areas already partially developed with large residential lots or cluster development at equivalent densities. Conservation design (clustering) is specifically identified in the areas adjacent to Camp Dodge and Big Creek Lake State Park. The intent is to locate new housing at a distance from these boundaries in order to create protective buffers around these facilities.

**Rural Residential:** This one-acre lot category is located primarily in areas already developed or developing at this density. These areas are adjacent to Jester Park, Saylorville Lake, and just west of IA 141.

**Low Density Residential:** This district, designed to accommodate urban-density housing that will be served by public utilities, comprises most of the expansion areas around the cities of Grimes, Johnston,

Granger and Polk City. The area between Johnston and Camp Dodge is already partially developed at a rural or estate residential density. However, availability of central sewers makes this a logical designation for the remainder of the area.

**Medium Density Residential:** This category is applied to match the designations in Johnston's and Polk City's plans and, in the latter case, to reflect the proximity of the IA 141 and IA 44 interchange as a center of activity.

**High Density Residential:** This category is located in a small area north and south of the IA 141/44 interchange, adjacent to mixed-use and commercial areas.

**Mixed Use:** This category is located at several locations along IA 141, NW 62<sup>nd</sup> Ave. and the IA 141/44 interchange, indicating that a variety of high-density or high-intensity land uses would be appropriate at these locations.

**Commercial:** A small commercial node is shown along NW 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue, reflecting Johnston's land use plan.

**Open Space:** In addition to the protected County and State parkland and federal recreation areas, the Brenton Slough wetland complex is designated as protected open space. Stream buffers are shown along most tributary streams feeding the lakes and Beaver Creek.

#### Related Transportation and Infrastructure Policies and Projects

- IA 141 is designated as a transit/access management corridor. Access management policies along state highways are controlled by the Iowa Department of Transportation, but land use policies should encourage centralizing of access points, creating pedestrian connections between land uses, and providing enhanced transit service where appropriate (see discussion in Chapter 4,

Infrastructure, of potential transit corridors).

- The proposed Northeast Beltway is shown as a study corridor, with as yet no relationship to adjacent land uses. The County will undertake a more detailed planning study of the corridor as plans for the roadway are refined and intersection or interchange locations are determined. In this area, the corridor has been revised to indicate that the preferred alignment may be located southeast of Polk City's downtown.

Other transportation and infrastructure improvement projects currently planned include:

- The Trestle-to-Trestle Trail, paralleling the west bank of the Des Moines River from Johnston to Des Moines.
- Improvements to the Neal Smith Trail in the Polk City area.
- Widening of IA 141 from 4 lanes to 6 lanes between I-35/80 and IA 44, scheduled for the 2010-2020 period.
- I-80/I-35 Interchange improvements – a new interchange at NW 100<sup>th</sup> Street and interchange improvements at Meredith Drive.