

TOWN OF UNIONDALE COMMUNITY REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uniondale's role as a smaller, primarily residential community was reinforced by county comparison data and a public meeting that stressed reversing population decline, upgrading infrastructure, and attracting basic amenities like grocery options. Survey participants noted the need for stable or increased job availability, particularly given Uniondale's geographic location and relatively affordable housing stock. Accordingly, Uniondale's Vision Principles include sustainable growth through owner-occupied housing, industrial site identification to create new jobs, and improved infrastructure (especially sewer and stormwater systems) to support development. These principles lead to action items such as infill construction incentives on vacant town-owned lots, industrial zoning updates on the town's fringes, and stronger intergovernmental cooperation for upgraded roads and drainage.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Uniondale is a small but vital community within Wells County, with strong ties to agriculture and regional connectivity. Understanding Uniondale's land use characteristics and infrastructure needs is essential for guiding sustainable development and investment.

Uniondale's land use patterns are predominantly agricultural, with small residential and commercial clusters along its main corridors. Maintaining a balance between farmland preservation and controlled development is a key priority for future planning.

Infrastructure investments, particularly in stormwater management and road improvements, will be crucial for ensuring long-term resilience and connectivity. As Uniondale looks to the future, enhanced drainage solutions and infrastructure upgrades will play a critical role in maintaining service reliability and flood mitigation.

By evaluating these existing conditions, this section provides a comprehensive overview of Uniondale's development landscape, ensuring that strategic investments align with community needs.

The Town of Uniondale is a small but important community in Wells County, providing a mix of residential neighborhoods, agricultural land, and commercial corridors along State Road 224. As one of the county's smaller incorporated areas, Uniondale plays a role in supporting rural development while maintaining strong connections to regional transportation networks. This section examines the town's natural features, zoning, land use patterns, and infrastructure, providing insight into how Uniondale can guide future growth while preserving its character.

Uniondale's natural landscape is shaped by nearby streams, wetlands, and agricultural fields, which contribute to the town's rural identity. Flood hazard areas, including 100-year and 500-year flood zones, are present along waterways, emphasizing the need for thoughtful land use planning in these areas. Tree coverage and wetlands further define the environmental conditions, providing natural buffers and conservation opportunities.

- Flood-prone areas along streams and low-lying sections of town require careful planning for stormwater management and infrastructure improvements.

- Parks, open spaces, and tree-covered areas offer environmental and recreational benefits, supporting the well-being of residents.
- Wetlands and conservation areas contribute to Uniondale’s environmental sustainability, ensuring natural resource protection while accommodating development.

As Uniondale plans for the future, maintaining a balance between development and environmental stewardship will be essential in sustaining the town’s rural character.

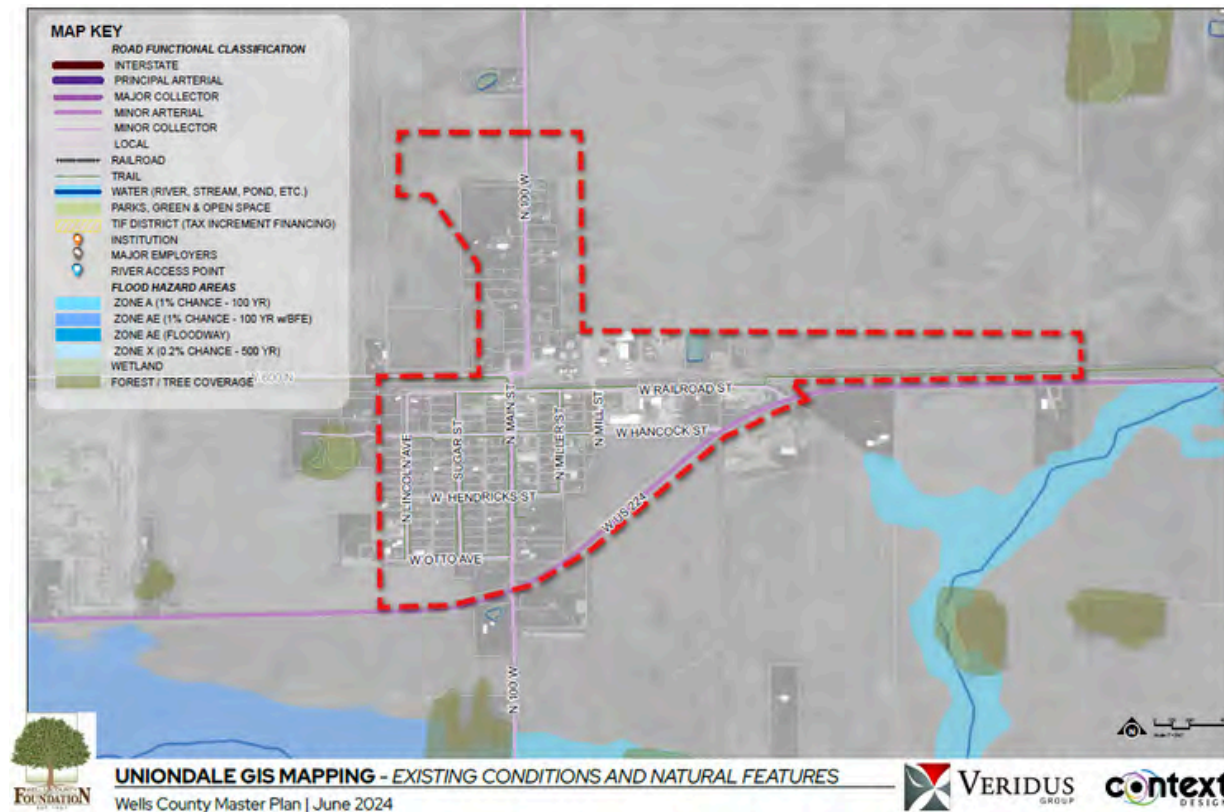


Figure 48:
Uniondale
Existing
Conditions
Map;
Source:
Context
Design

Uniondale’s transportation network is a key factor in its growth, with State Road 224 providing direct connections to larger economic centers within Wells County and beyond. The town’s local roads and collector routes support residential and commercial mobility while maintaining a small-town atmosphere.

- State Road 224 serves as the town’s primary transportation corridor, facilitating movement and economic activity.
- TIF districts (Tax Increment Financing) help encourage redevelopment and investment in key areas.
- Major employers and institutions contribute to the town’s economy, ensuring access to jobs and services.

As Uniondale continues to evolve, investments in transportation infrastructure and public utilities will be essential for supporting sustainable growth while maintaining the town’s rural charm.

Uniondale's zoning structure is designed to preserve agricultural land while supporting residential and commercial growth in designated areas. The town's compact nature allows for a clear separation between urban development and surrounding farmland.

- Agricultural zoning (A-1, A-R) remains dominant in the surrounding areas, ensuring the preservation of farmland and supporting rural land uses.
- Residential zoning (R-1, R-2, R-3, suburban residential) is concentrated within the town's core, providing housing options for residents.
- Commercial zoning (B-1, B-2, Central Business District) is primarily located along State Road 224, accommodating local businesses and services.
- Industrial zoning (I-1, I-2) is present near the town's eastern and southern edges, offering space for potential business expansion.

The below land use plan identifies additional areas for undeveloped land, flood-prone areas, and conservation, ensuring that future development aligns with both community needs and environmental constraints.

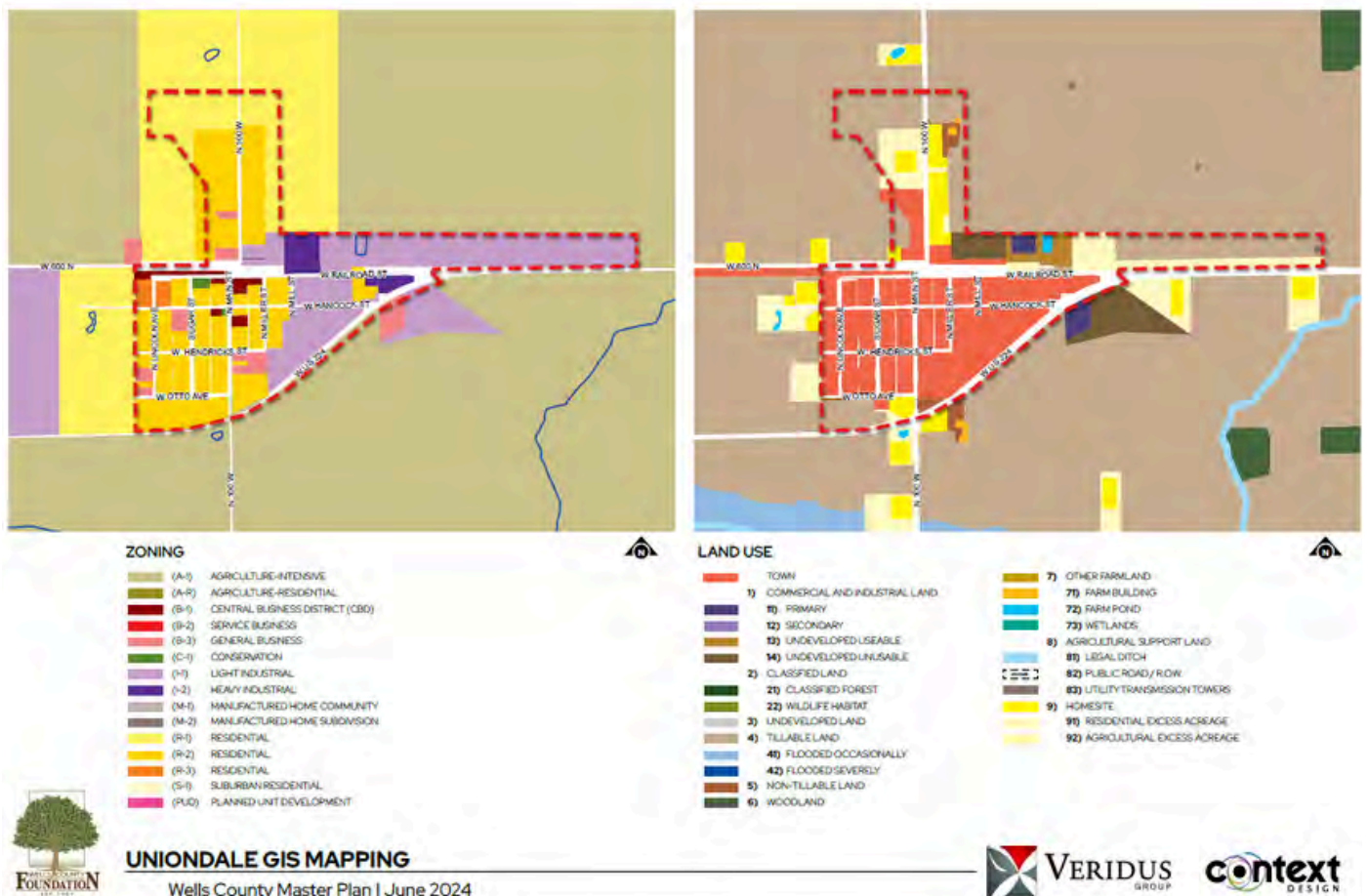


Figure 50: Uniondale Zoning and Land Use Map; Source: Context Design

Uniondale’s existing conditions, land use patterns, and infrastructure assets provide a strong foundation for future planning efforts. By carefully managing residential growth, commercial development, and environmental preservation, the town can continue to serve as a small but vital part of Wells County. Ensuring that land use policies, infrastructure improvements, and economic strategies align with long-term goals will help Uniondale remain a resilient and thriving community.

ANALYSIS OF VACANT PARCELS IN UNIONDALE

The map shows the distribution of vacant parcels in Uniondale, marked in orange, with most concentrated in the central and southern portions of town. These parcels are primarily located within the existing street grid, indicating infill potential.

A few vacant parcels are positioned within the higher residential area, with future land use for all of the parcels designated as residential in the Vision 2035 Plan. The town’s boundaries extend eastward along a transportation corridor, where additional undeveloped land is present. The pattern of vacant parcels reflects a compact community with limited but strategically located areas designated for residential development.

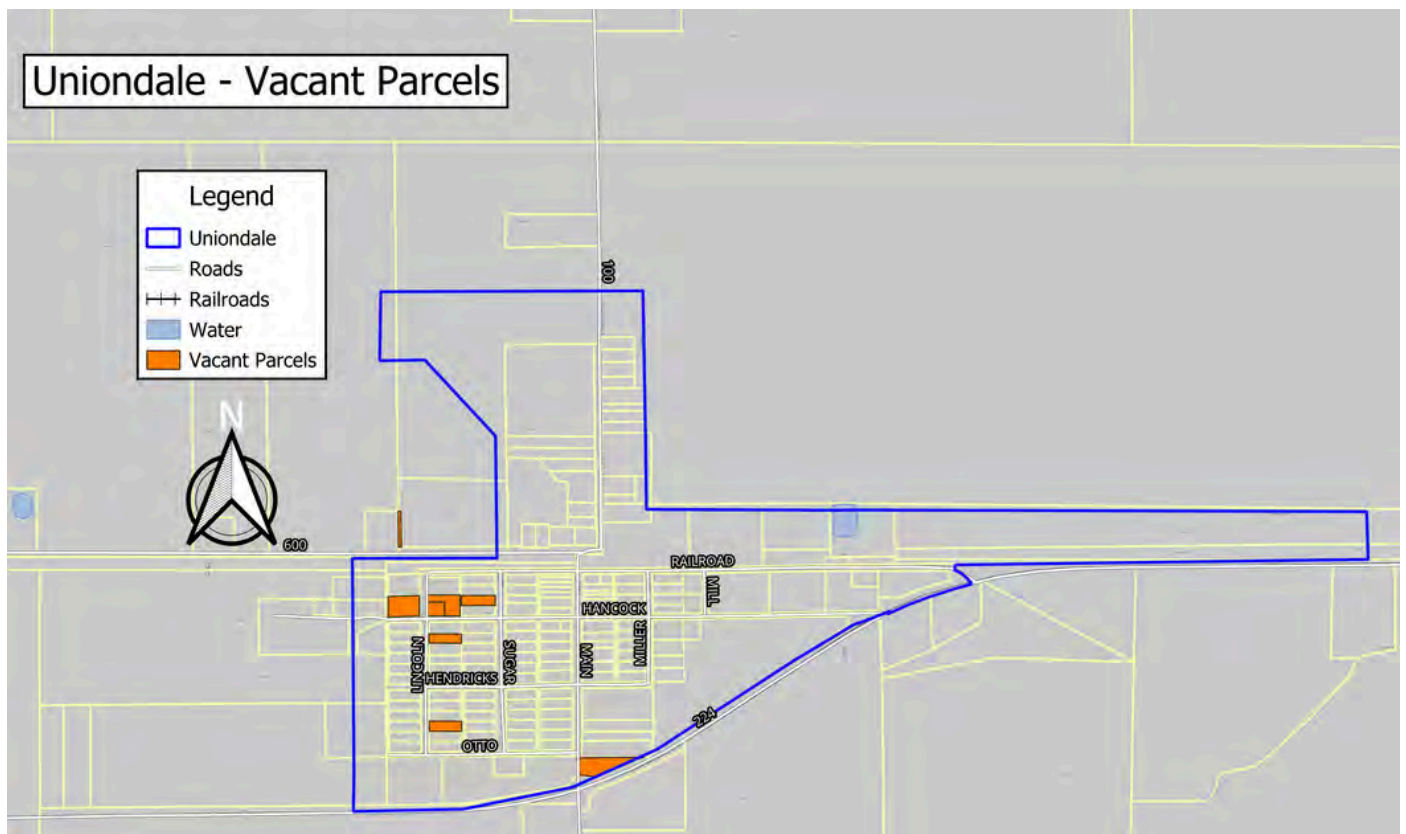


Figure 49: Uniondale Vacant Parcels Map; Source: Wells County GIS

COMMUNITY MEETING

In a recent community meeting, Uniondale residents shared candid reflections on the town's current conditions and future prospects. While participants expressed concern about the town's long-term viability, describing it as "a dying community," there was also a strong sense of possibility, particularly if quality jobs could be brought within the town limits. Much of the discussion centered around the need for infrastructure improvements, expanded housing opportunities, and renewed civic leadership.

Residents voiced frustration with the burden placed on a few individuals to keep the town running, and shared a desire for professional management and stronger collaboration with the county. They also identified areas of strength, including the ballpark, close social ties, and Uniondale's geographic location, which could support incremental growth. The conversation made clear that while the town faces real challenges, many of them are solvable with strategic investments and more coordinated leadership.

STRENGTHS

- Strong community bonds; residents know and support one another.
- Affordable housing and the lowest sewer rates in the county.
- Regional draw: the town's ballpark regularly brings in thousands.
- Geographic proximity to key highways and job centers.
- Two small businesses and two historic churches create a village-like character.

WEAKNESSES

- Over-reliance on elected officials for maintenance and operations.
- No professional town manager; limited administrative capacity.
- Aging housing stock and absentee property owners.
- Infrastructure issues, especially with drainage and sewer.
- Limited ability to pursue grants or development opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Vacant and underused lots along 224 could support new housing.
- Space available for light industrial development and jobs.
- Desire to bring back community staples (grocery, gas station).
- Potential for incremental growth with county partnerships and improved management.

THREATS

- Infrastructure deterioration outpacing the town's capacity to respond.
- Perception of decline discouraging investment.
- Lack of EMS responsiveness; fire services are now based in Markle.
- Small town board stretched thin; risk of burnout without support.

FUTURE VISION

Uniondale's vision for the future is shaped by community engagement and local priorities, ensuring that growth and development align with the town's unique character. Through public input and stakeholder discussions, a set of vision principles has been developed to guide Uniondale's long-term strategy in alignment with Vision 2035.

This section outlines Uniondale's vision principles, focusing on agricultural preservation, residential development, infrastructure improvements, and small-business growth. The town aims to maintain its rural charm while investing in essential infrastructure and stormwater management solutions to support future growth.

As Uniondale moves forward, these principles will inform future policies in areas such as land use planning, public infrastructure, and community investment. The implementation section will further refine these goals into actionable strategies, ensuring that Uniondale's vision becomes reality while maintaining its strong sense of community and rural identity.

VISION PRINCIPLES: TOWN OF UNIONDALE

Uniondale will embrace sustainable growth that strengthens its economy, enhances infrastructure, and preserves its small-town character. By supporting housing development, improving community amenities, and fostering a strong sense of place, the town will create new opportunities while maintaining its close-knit identity. These vision principles will guide Uniondale's future, ensuring thoughtful development that benefits both current and future residents.

1

Sustainable growth through housing and economic development.

2

Enhance infrastructure and community amenities.

3

Preserve character while building community.



FOCUS AREAS

Uniondale's Focus Areas reflect the town's commitment to preserving its small-town character while pursuing targeted development. This section translates Uniondale's vision principles into actionable priorities, ensuring well-managed growth and infrastructure investment.

Key growth priorities for Uniondale include:

- Preserving agricultural land while allowing for controlled residential expansion.
- Encouraging small business development to support the local economy.
- Investing in infrastructure improvements, including road maintenance and stormwater management.
- Enhancing public spaces and community amenities for residents.
- Addressing long-term water and sewer system needs to support sustainable growth.

To ensure cohesive planning, the below map highlights designated growth areas and infrastructure projects, helping stakeholders make informed land use decisions. These Focus Areas will guide Uniondale's future, ensuring that growth aligns with community priorities while maintaining the town's rural character.

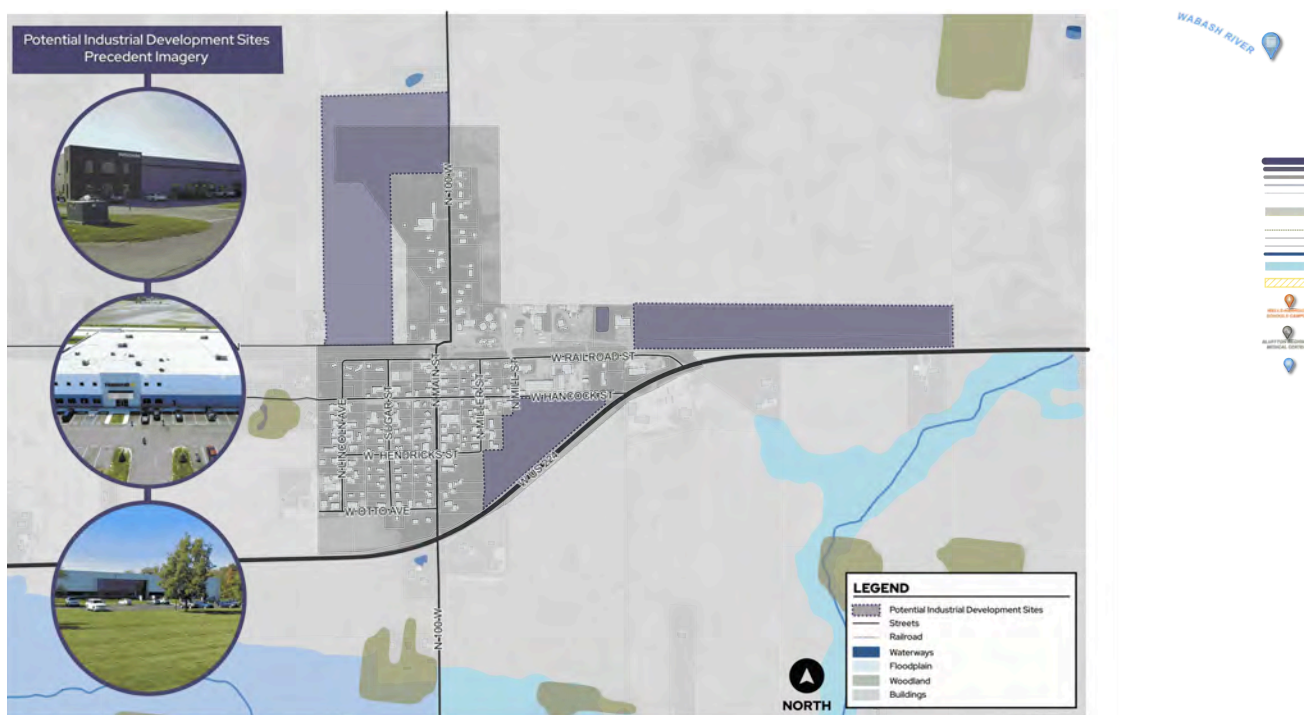


Figure 51: Uniondale Future Vision; Source: Context Design

Building on these priorities, Uniondale's approach to growth balances economic expansion with the preservation of its small-town and rural character. The map focuses on potential industrial development sites, identifying strategic areas where new businesses and job opportunities can be introduced while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding community.

The highlighted industrial development areas support Uniondale’s goal of encouraging small business growth and economic diversification. These sites, strategically located near existing infrastructure and transportation corridors, provide opportunities for light industrial and commercial operations that can strengthen the local economy without compromising the town’s character.

While the map primarily emphasizes industrial development, Uniondale remains committed to infrastructure investments that support sustainable growth, including road maintenance, stormwater management, and long-term water and sewer system upgrades. These improvements will ensure that Uniondale’s development is well-managed and aligned with community needs.

Additionally, the town continues to prioritize preserving agricultural land and fostering controlled residential expansion that respects its rural roots. By guiding growth in a thoughtful and strategic manner, Uniondale ensures that its future remains sustainable, community-focused, and true to its small-town identity.

IMPLEMENTATION

Uniondale’s implementation framework offers a structured approach to advancing the town’s long-term growth strategy. Through two action-oriented matrices, this plan ensures that key priorities are addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

The first matrix establishes each priority and goal, detailing:

- Responsible Parties: Town officials, regional agencies, and local stakeholders.
- Potential Funding Sources: Public grants, infrastructure funds, and private partnerships.
- Cost: The estimated total cost for each strategy on a scale of \$ - \$\$\$\$.
- Priority Level: A classification of initiatives to guide project sequencing.
- Timeline: Estimated timeframes for goal completion.

The second matrix breaks down each goal into actionable steps, ensuring clear direction for implementation. These matrices will serve as practical tools for Uniondale’s leadership, providing a roadmap for strategic investment, infrastructure improvements, and long-term planning.

TOWN OF UNIONDALE VISION 1

Sustainable growth through housing and economic development.

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Reverse population decline and attract new residents by promoting owner-occupied housing development, including infill projects on town-owned lots.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Council • Redevelopment Commission • Builders • Habitat for Humanity • Financial Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDIT • Grants • Low Interest Loans 	\$\$	High	12 - 36 Months
2	Identify areas for industrial development on the town's fringes to attract quality employers, aiming to create at least 150 jobs in the next decade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Council • Utility Board • Wells County Economic Development • Redevelopment Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Fund • Utility Funds • TIF 	\$\$	High	12 - 36 Months, Ongoing

Vision 1, Strategy 1: Reverse population decline and attract new residents by promoting owner-occupied housing development, including infill projects on town-owned lots.

Objectives	Tactics
Promote Owner-Occupied Housing Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with developers to build new single-family homes that appeal to first-time buyers and growing families. • Offer financial incentives, such as reduced permit fees or property tax abatements, for owner-occupied housing projects. • Create a homebuyer assistance program to help residents with down payments and financing options.
Encourage Infill Development on Town-Owned Lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and inventory vacant or underutilized town-owned properties suitable for residential development. • Develop a streamlined process for selling or leasing town-owned lots to builders committed to owner-occupied housing. • Implement design guidelines to ensure infill housing complements the existing character of Uniondale’s neighborhoods.
Market Uniondale as a Desirable Place to Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a promotional campaign showcasing the town’s affordability, quality of life, and small-town charm. • Highlight Uniondale’s proximity to regional employment centers and recreational amenities to attract new residents. • Partner with real estate professionals to actively market available homes and new housing opportunities.

Vision 1, Strategy 2: Identify areas for industrial development on the town’s fringes to attract quality employers, aiming to create at least 150 jobs in the next decade.

Objectives	Tactics
Designate Industrial Development Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rezone targeted areas and ensure necessary infrastructure, such as roads, water, and sewer, is in place to support industrial growth. • Develop an incentive package, including tax abatements and expedited permitting, to attract manufacturers and logistics companies.
Proactively Recruit Quality Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with regional economic development organizations to market Uniondale as a business-friendly location. • Target industries that align with the local workforce and provide stable, well-paying jobs. • Attend industry trade shows and networking events to connect with potential investors and business leaders.
Invest in Workforce Development to Support Industrial Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local schools and training programs to ensure residents have the skills needed for industrial and manufacturing jobs. • Establish partnerships with prospective employers to create apprenticeship and job training opportunities. • Promote workforce relocation incentives to attract skilled workers to the area.

TOWN OF UNIONDALE VISION 2

Enhance infrastructure and community amenities.

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Invest in critical infrastructure improvements, particularly the sewer system, to support residential and industrial growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council Utility Boards Redevelopment Commission Wells County Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund EDIT TIF Utility Funds 	\$\$\$\$	High	12 - 36 Months
2	Build on Uniondale's existing strengths, by expanding recreational opportunities and fostering events that benefit residents and draw visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council Park Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund Grants Donations 	\$\$	Medium	2 - 5 Years
3	Explore hiring maintenance staff to ensure ongoing care for public spaces and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund Utility Fund 	\$\$	Low	2 - 5 Years

Vision 2, Strategy 1: Invest in critical infrastructure improvements, particularly the sewer system, to support residential and industrial growth.

Objectives	Tactics
Upgrade and Expand the Sewer System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing sewer infrastructure to identify capacity limitations and necessary upgrades. • Secure state and federal funding to finance sewer system expansions that accommodate future residential and industrial development. • Implement phased improvements to ensure sewer capacity aligns with long-term growth projections.
Ensure Infrastructure Readiness for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend sewer lines to designated residential and industrial growth areas to attract development. • Upgrade treatment facilities to handle increased demand while meeting environmental standards. • Improve stormwater management systems to prevent overflows and protect water quality.
Coordinate Infrastructure Planning with Economic and Housing Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align infrastructure investments with Uniondale’s land use plan to ensure efficient growth. • Work with developers to coordinate sewer upgrades with new housing and business developments. • Establish long-term maintenance and funding plans to sustain infrastructure reliability and functionality.

Vision 2, Strategy 2: Build on Uniondale’s existing strengths, by expanding recreational opportunities and fostering events that benefit residents and draw visitors.

Objectives	Tactics
Expand Recreational Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and develop new park spaces, playgrounds, or greenways to enhance outdoor recreation for residents. • Improve existing recreational facilities with upgraded equipment, walking trails, and picnic areas. • Partner with regional organizations to establish nature-based activities such as fishing areas, biking trails, and community gardens.
Host Community Events to Engage Residents and Attract Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize seasonal festivals, farmers’ markets, and holiday celebrations that highlight Uniondale’s small-town charm. • Develop event partnerships with local businesses and organizations to increase participation and sponsorship opportunities. • Establish an annual signature event that becomes a regional attraction and economic driver for the town.
Promote Tourism and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create marketing materials that showcase Uniondale’s parks, events, and local attractions to draw visitors. • Encourage the development of small businesses, such as cafés, craft shops, and outfitters, that complement recreational tourism. • Improve signage and wayfinding to connect visitors to key points of interest throughout the town.

Vision 2, Strategy 3: Explore hiring a Town Manager or maintenance staff to ensure ongoing care for public spaces and services.

Objectives	Tactics
Expand Maintenance Staff for Public Spaces and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess current maintenance needs and determine the required staffing levels for parks, streets, and public facilities.• Develop a funding strategy to support new hires, including potential cost-sharing with county or regional agencies.• Create a routine maintenance plan to ensure parks, sidewalks, and town-owned properties are well-kept year-round.
Improve Efficiency in Public Service Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement a work-order system to track maintenance requests and prioritize repairs.• Provide training and resources for maintenance staff to ensure high-quality service.• Explore partnerships with neighboring towns or the county for shared staffing or equipment to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

TOWN OF UNIONDALE VISION 3

Preserving Character While Building Community

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Maintain Uniondale's small-town charm and sense of community through thoughtful planning and collaboration with county government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Wells County Areas Planning 	General Fund	\$	Medium	3 - 5 Years
2	Pursue incremental growth that aligns with the town's values, strengthens partnerships with neighboring municipalities, and ensures a cohesive vision for the future.	Elected Officials	General Fund	\$	Medium	3 - 5 Years
3	Promote initiatives that bring back essential services, such as grocery stores and gas stations, to enhance residents' quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council Wells County Economic Develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund EDIT TIF 	\$\$	Medium	3 - 5 Years

Vision 3, Strategy 1: Maintain Uniondale’s small-town charm and sense of community through thoughtful planning and collaboration with county government.

Objectives	Tactics
Ensure Thoughtful Planning that Preserves Uniondale’s Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop design guidelines that maintain the town’s small-town aesthetic while allowing for necessary growth and modernization. • Encourage infill development and adaptive reuse projects that complement existing structures and historic features. • Establish a public input process to ensure residents have a voice in planning decisions that impact the town’s character.
Strengthen Collaboration with County Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with county officials to align zoning and infrastructure planning with Uniondale’s growth objectives. • Advocate for county investment in key projects, such as road improvements, public utilities, and recreational amenities. • Develop joint initiatives with the county to support economic development, housing, and community services.
Foster Community Engagement and Pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize town meetings and workshops to keep residents informed and involved in community planning efforts. • Support volunteer-led beautification projects, such as landscaping, mural installations, and public space improvements. • Celebrate Uniondale’s history and traditions through events, historical markers, and community storytelling initiatives.

Vision 3, Strategy 2: Pursue incremental growth that aligns with the town’s values, strengthens partnerships with neighboring municipalities, and ensures a cohesive vision for the future.

Objectives	Tactics
Encourage Growth that Aligns with Uniondale’s Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a growth strategy that prioritizes small-scale, well-planned development that maintains the town’s close-knit feel. • Support residential and commercial projects that enhance the community’s identity and quality of life. • Require new developments to incorporate green space, pedestrian connectivity, and architectural styles that reflect Uniondale’s character.
Strengthen Partnerships with Neighboring Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish regular meetings with nearby towns to coordinate infrastructure improvements, economic development, and regional planning efforts. • Explore shared service agreements for utilities, public safety, and maintenance to improve efficiency and reduce costs. • Work with regional organizations to advocate for funding and support for projects that benefit multiple communities.
Ensure a Cohesive Vision for the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a long-term town development plan that balances growth with historic preservation and community values. • Implement zoning and land use policies that guide development in a way that complements Uniondale’s existing neighborhoods. • Engage residents and stakeholders in the planning process to ensure decisions reflect the town’s collective vision.

Vision 3, Strategy 3: Promote initiatives that bring back essential services, such as grocery stores and gas stations, to enhance residents’ quality of life.

Objectives	Tactics
Attract Essential Retail and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a market analysis to identify gaps in essential services, such as grocery stores, gas stations, and pharmacies. • Develop incentive programs, including tax abatements or reduced permitting fees, to attract businesses that provide daily necessities. • Work with commercial developers and local entrepreneurs to encourage investment in small-scale retail and service businesses.
Support Local Business Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a business recruitment campaign targeting companies that align with the town’s needs and growth potential. • Partner with small business support organizations to provide funding, mentorship, and resources for residents interested in opening essential service businesses. • Explore cooperative business models, such as a community-owned grocery store, to provide needed services while keeping profits local.
Improve Infrastructure to Support New Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that commercial development areas have the necessary infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and broadband, to attract and sustain businesses. • Streamline zoning and permitting processes for essential service businesses to encourage quicker establishment. • Work with county and state economic development agencies to secure grants and funding for commercial revitalization projects.