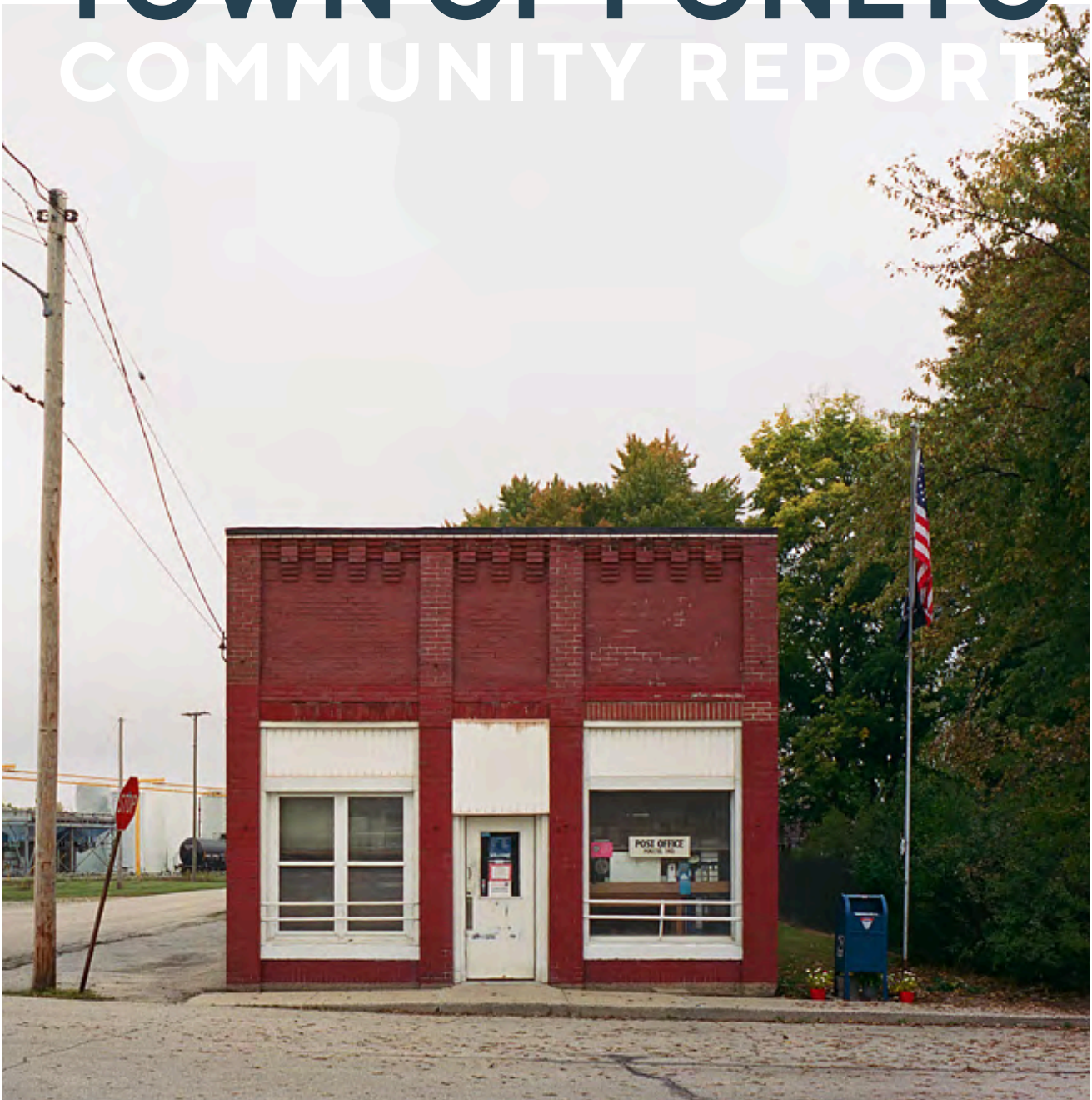


# TOWN OF PONETO COMMUNITY REPORT



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Poneto section of the plan is guided by data that suggests relatively stable demographics but also a need to revitalize older housing and enhance local infrastructure. Survey results and public meeting discussions echoed residents' desire for modest residential expansion coupled with adequate water, sewer, and transportation services. Poneto's Vision Principles thus focus on preserving the rural heritage while exploring small-scale development that can expand the tax base and introduce new business opportunities. Action items include encouraging infill or renovation of existing homes, coordinating with county agencies for targeted infrastructure improvements, and promoting a mix of local entrepreneurial activities that suit Poneto's agricultural backdrop, smaller population, and the Vision 2035 Plan.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

The Town of Poneto is a rural community with a strong agricultural base, positioned along State Road 218. Understanding its land use patterns, infrastructure needs, and environmental assets is essential for guiding sustainable growth and economic development.

Poneto's land use is primarily agricultural, with residential and commercial areas concentrated in the town center. Maintaining this balance between farmland preservation and controlled development will be key to ensuring sustainable growth that aligns with Vision 2035.

The town recognizes the importance of infrastructure investments, particularly in stormwater management, road improvements, and utility upgrades. As Poneto looks to the future, continued investment in essential infrastructure will ensure long-term viability and resilience.

By examining these existing conditions, this section provides a comprehensive overview of Poneto's development landscape, ensuring that growth is managed strategically while maintaining the town's rural identity.

### TOWN OF PONETO

The Town of Poneto, located in southern Wells County, is a small but historically significant community with strong ties to agriculture, transportation, and rural development. While Poneto maintains a predominantly residential and agricultural character, its strategic location along State Road 218 provides opportunities for economic growth and infrastructure improvements. This section examines the town's natural features, zoning, land use patterns, and infrastructure, offering insight into how future development can be guided to support long-term sustainability.

Poneto's natural landscape is defined by its proximity to Rock Creek and Elk Creek, which run near the town and provide both environmental benefits and development challenges. Flood hazard areas, including 100-year and 500-year flood zones, are present along these waterways, requiring consideration for stormwater management and development restrictions. Wetlands and tree-covered areas further contribute to the town's ecological balance, supporting biodiversity, recreation, and conservation efforts.

- Flood-prone areas along Rock Creek and Elk Creek require careful planning for infrastructure and future growth.
- Wetlands and tree coverage provide environmental protection, reducing flood risks and improving water quality.
- Parks and green spaces offer recreational opportunities, enhancing quality of life for Poneto’s residents.

As Poneto continues to grow, maintaining a balance between development and environmental protection will be essential to ensuring sustainable land use and infrastructure resiliency.

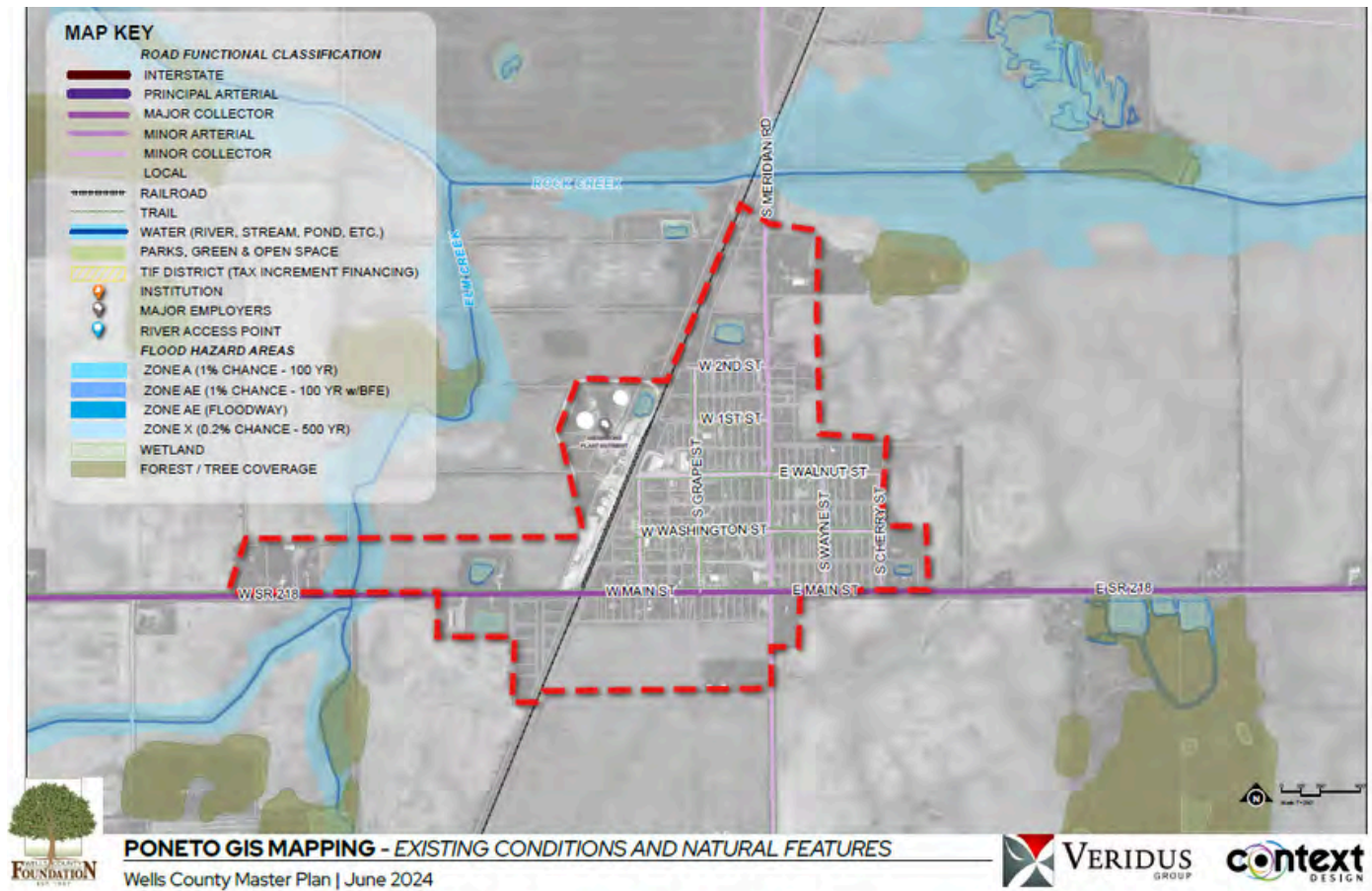


Figure 56: Poneto Existing Conditions Map; Source: Context Design

As Poneto continues to grow, maintaining a balance between development and environmental protection will be essential to ensuring sustainable land use and infrastructure resiliency.

Poneto’s transportation and infrastructure network plays a key role in supporting its economic viability and quality of life. The town is connected to the broader region via State Road 218, which serves as the primary transportation corridor. While Poneto does not have major highways or interstates, its local road system and proximity to rail infrastructure provide key connectivity opportunities for residents and businesses.

- State Road 218 facilitates access to neighboring communities and regional markets.



- TIF districts (Tax Increment Financing) support redevelopment and infrastructure investment in strategic locations.
- Major employers and institutions contribute to the town’s local economy, providing jobs and essential services.
- Public utilities and infrastructure investments will be crucial for maintaining service levels and supporting sustainable growth.

As Poneto looks to the future, ensuring that infrastructure investments, transportation improvements, and land use planning strategies align with community priorities and economic opportunities will be critical for its long-term success.

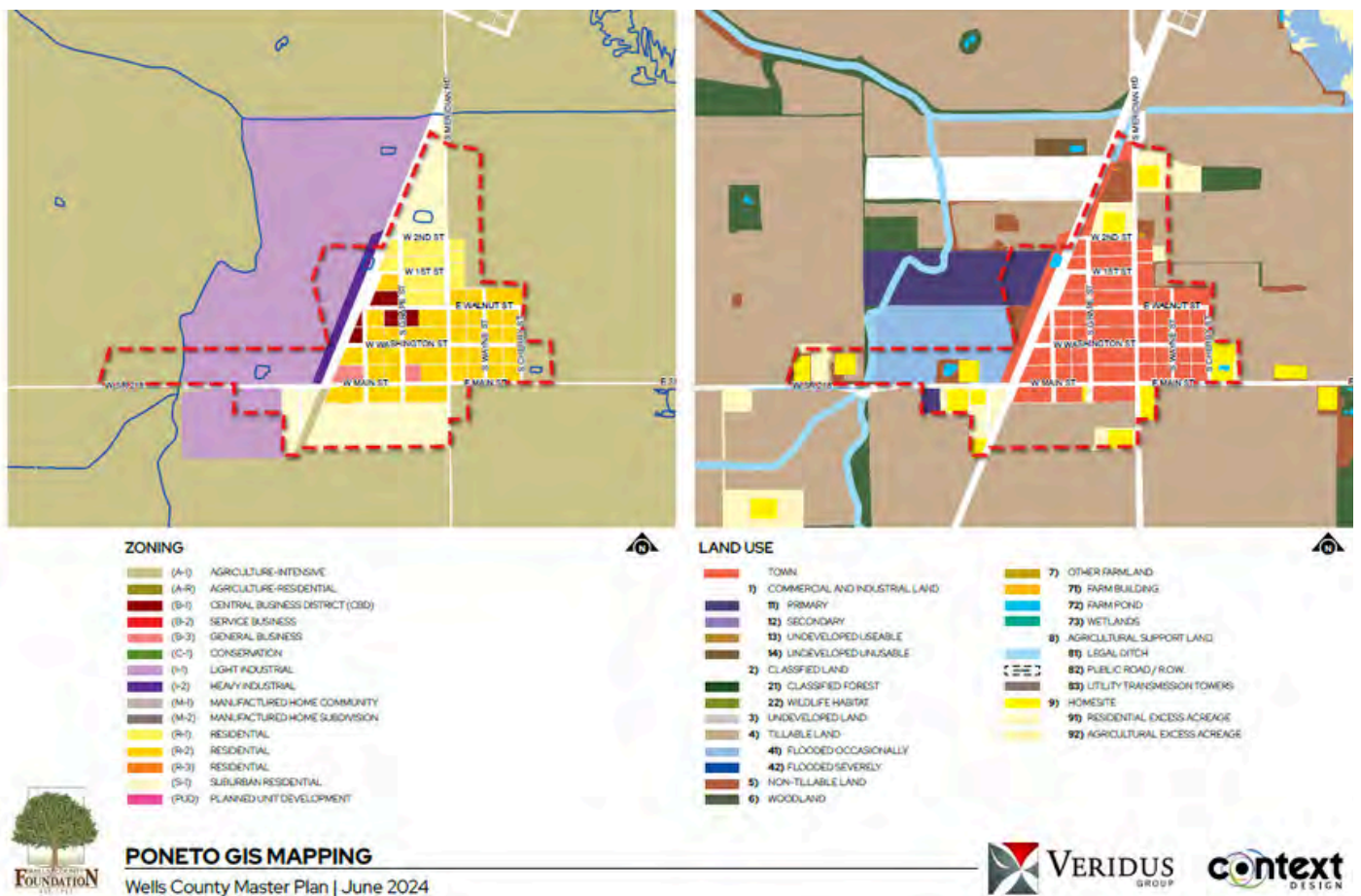


Figure 58: Poneto Zoning and Land Use Map; Source: Context Design

Poneto’s zoning and land use patterns reflect its rural character, with agriculture and residential development forming the core of the community. The town’s zoning framework ensures that agricultural preservation remains a priority, while also allowing for residential expansion and commercial activity along key corridors.

- Agricultural zoning (A-1, A-R) dominates the surrounding areas, reinforcing the town’s rural setting while enabling limited development.

- Residential zoning (R-1, R-2, R-3, suburban residential) is concentrated in the town center, providing a mix of housing types.
- Commercial zoning (B-1, B-2, Central Business District) is focused along State Road 218, supporting small businesses and local services.
- Industrial zoning (I-1, I-2) is present near the northwestern portion of town, offering opportunities for future employment growth.

The land use plan highlights additional areas for undeveloped land, conservation zones, and flood-prone areas, ensuring that growth remains aligned with environmental considerations.

Poneto’s existing conditions, land use framework, and infrastructure assets provide a solid foundation for future planning efforts. By balancing agricultural preservation, residential expansion, and commercial development, the town can sustainably grow while maintaining its small-town identity. Strategic infrastructure improvements and land use policies will help Poneto remain a resilient and connected community within Wells County for generations to come.

## ANALYSIS OF VACANT PARCELS IN PONETO

The map shows vacant parcels in orange, distributed throughout Poneto with a notable concentration in the southern and central sections of the town. Many vacant lots are located within the established street grid, suggesting infill potential, while larger parcels are positioned along the railroad corridor to the northeast and southwest, indicating industrial or commercial possibilities.

Clusters of vacant land along Main Street, Washington Street, and Cherry Street highlight areas with multiple undeveloped properties. The presence of several parcels near water bodies and transportation routes may influence future land use considerations. It will be important to align future development opportunities with the Vision 2035 Land Use Plan, as the vacant parcels fall within areas designated for various future land uses.

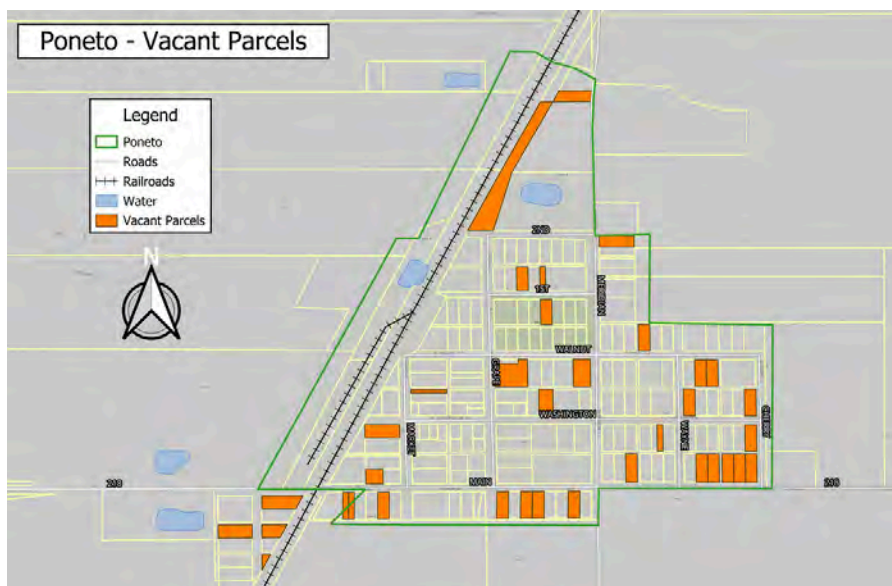


Figure 57: Poneto Vacant Parcels Map;  
Source: Wells County GIS

# COMMUNITY MEETING

At the Poneto community meeting, residents gathered to share what they value about their town and to identify key areas for improvement. The meeting was open and candid, revealing both a deep appreciation for the town's strong sense of community and a recognition of the infrastructure and engagement challenges that need to be addressed moving forward.

Many participants expressed pride in the town's close-knit atmosphere, active churches, responsive leadership, and the quality of local schools. Others highlighted concerns about the long-term sustainability of infrastructure, particularly the sewer system, public safety issues, and a general lack of coordinated planning or communication tools. The dialogue also reflected a desire to revitalize community life, support new development, and build stronger connections among residents of all ages.

The insights below reflect the collective voice of the community and help inform future priorities for the town.

## STRENGTHS

- Strong relationships: Residents know and support one another.
- Responsive leadership and well-maintained public services.
- Churches and schools are active and central to community life.
- Affordable housing and town-wide fiber access.
- Volunteer spirit.

## WEAKNESSES

- No clear long-term plan/development vision.
- Aging sewer infrastructure and expensive to maintain.
- The town park is non-compliant and underutilized.
- Safety concerns at key intersections and limited police presence.
- Lack of effective communication tools (e.g., no Facebook page).

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Vacant lots and highway access offer space for housing or retail (e.g., Dollar General).
- Community events and traditions could be revived.
- Potential to increase civic engagement through better outreach.
- Partnering with churches and nonprofits to extend local services.

## THREATS

- Infrastructure failure, especially with the sewer system, would be costly.
- Perceptions of crime and lack of enforcement undermine safety.
- Disengagement and mistrust of local government processes.
- Vacant or neglected properties may discourage future investment.

# FUTURE VISION

Poneto’s future vision is informed by community input and regional priorities, ensuring that growth aligns with the town’s agricultural roots and small-town character. Through stakeholder engagement and public meetings, residents have expressed their goals for land use planning, infrastructure improvements, and economic development.

This section introduces Poneto’s vision principles, which focus on maintaining agricultural integrity, enhancing residential opportunities, and improving essential infrastructure. Investments in stormwater management, road maintenance, and small business development will ensure that the town remains sustainable and resilient in the years ahead.

These principles will guide future policy development, ensuring that land use decisions, infrastructure projects, and community investments align with Poneto’s long-term vision. The implementation section will refine these priorities into actionable steps, providing a clear path forward for sustainable and balanced growth.

## VISION PRINCIPLES: TOWN OF PONETO

Poneto will continue to be a safe, connected, and welcoming community that prioritizes quality living and responsible growth. Through strong local leadership, infrastructure improvements, and a commitment to community engagement, the town will enhance its small-town charm while preparing for the future. These vision principles will guide Poneto’s development, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable community for generations to come.



**1**

Safe, Connected, and Attractive Community

**2**

Engaged and Collaborative Governance

**3**

Quality Living and Growth for the Future



# FOCUS AREAS

Poneto’s Focus Areas focus on agricultural preservation, residential development, and infrastructure upgrades to support the town’s future growth and quality of life. By translating its vision principles into a structured plan, this section ensures that land use decisions align with long-term goals.

Key growth priorities for Poneto include:

- Preserving agricultural land while allowing for measured residential growth.
- Investing in roadway and utility infrastructure improvements.
- Encouraging small business development to support the local economy.
- Enhancing stormwater management systems to improve resiliency.
- Maintaining the town’s small-town character while supporting future growth.

The below map illustrates designated growth areas and planned infrastructure investments, ensuring Poneto’s development aligns with community values and sustainability. These Focus Areas provide a clear guide for decision-makers, ensuring that Poneto remains a strong and well-planned community.

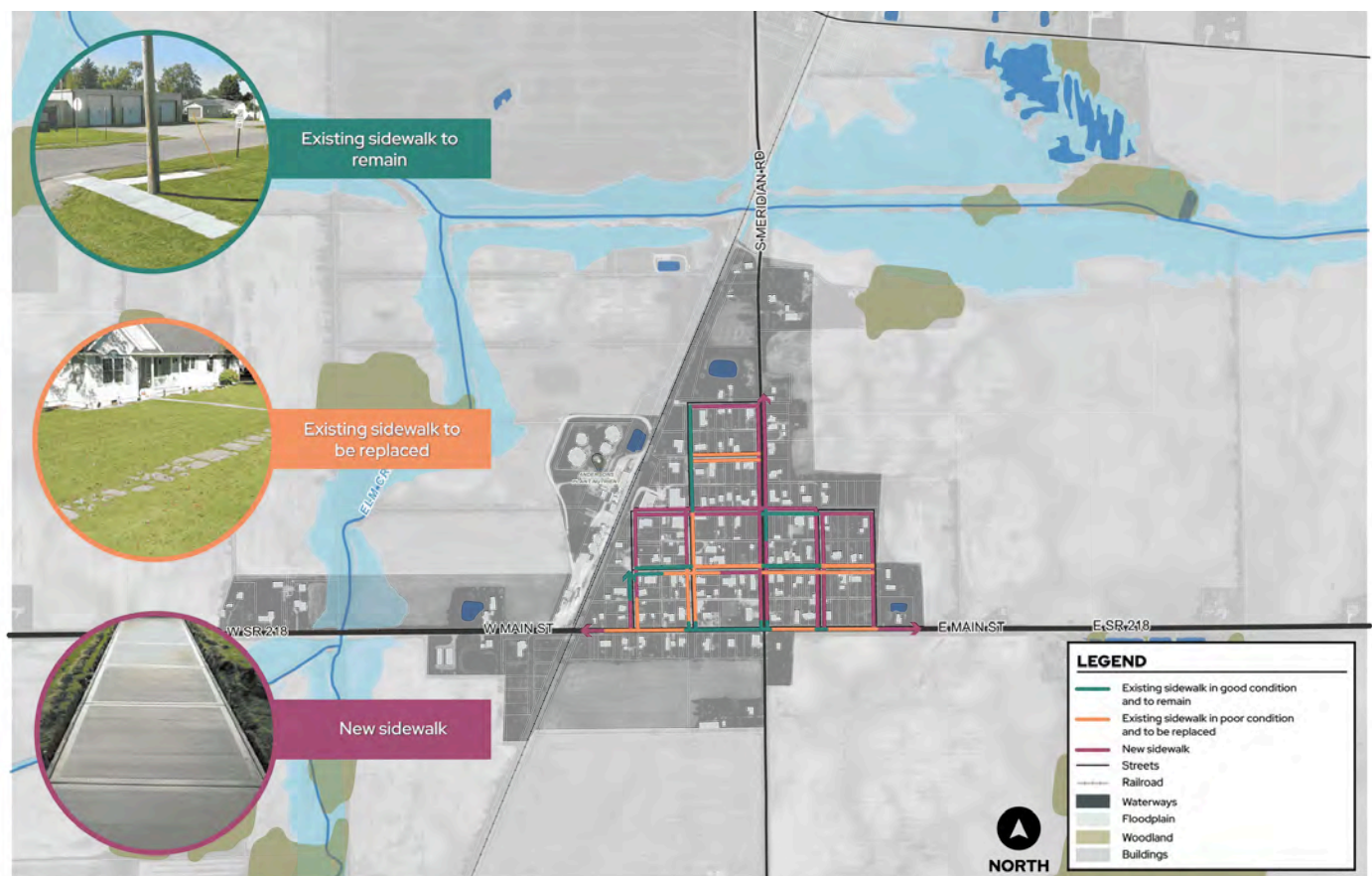


Figure 59: Poneto Future Vision; Source: Context Design



Building on these priorities, Poneto’s growth strategy emphasizes infrastructure upgrades that enhance walkability and connectivity while maintaining its small-town character. The map focuses on sidewalk improvements, ensuring that the town’s pedestrian infrastructure supports both existing and future development.

The map highlights existing sidewalks that are in good condition and will remain, areas where aging sidewalks will be replaced, and locations for new sidewalks to expand connectivity. These improvements will enhance safety, accessibility, and walkability throughout the town, reinforcing Poneto’s commitment to a high quality of life for residents.

While sidewalk infrastructure is the primary focus of the map, Poneto’s broader development strategy includes roadway and utility upgrades, stormwater management enhancements, and measured residential growth. These initiatives support the town’s vision of preserving agricultural land while allowing for strategic expansion, encouraging small business development, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

By investing in infrastructure improvements that align with community needs, Poneto is ensuring that future growth is balanced, well-planned, and supportive of its rural character. These Focus Areas will guide decision-makers in maintaining Poneto’s charm while fostering a resilient and connected future.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Poneto’s implementation framework provides a structured plan for managing growth, infrastructure improvements, and economic development. Through two comprehensive matrices, this section establishes a clear pathway for achieving the town’s long-term goals.

The first matrix details each goal and priority, including:

- Responsible Parties: Town officials, infrastructure partners, and funding agencies.
- Potential Funding Sources: Grants, transportation funds, and economic development programs.
- Cost: The estimated total cost for each strategy on a scale of \$ - \$\$\$\$.
- Priority Level: A classification system for effective project sequencing.
- Timeline: Projected timeframes to maintain progress and accountability.

The second matrix identifies the specific action steps required to ensure that each goal is met, providing a step-by-step approach to implementation. These matrices will serve as a guide for Poneto’s leadership, ensuring that growth is well-managed and infrastructure investments align with community needs.

# TOWN OF PONETO VISION 1

*Safe, Connected, and Attractive Community*

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Enhance public safety and the perception of safety through improved town services, enforcement of ordinances, and the maintenance of clean, well-kept properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Officials</li> <li>Wells County Sherriff's Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Fund</li> <li>Sherriff's Funding</li> </ul>	\$\$\$	High	18 - 24 Months
2	Invest in strong infrastructure, including sidewalks, water, sewer, and broadband, to ensure connectivity and a foundation for future growth while improving the appearance and livability of the town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Officials</li> <li>Utility Providers</li> <li>Wells County Economic Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Fund</li> <li>Utility Fund</li> <li>TIF</li> <li>EDIT</li> </ul>	\$\$\$	High	18 - 24 Months, Ongoing

**Vision 1, Strategy 1: Enhance public safety and the perception of safety through improved town services, enforcement of ordinances, and the maintenance of clean, well-kept properties.**

Objectives	Tactics
<p>Improve Town Services to Support Public Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand regular maintenance schedules for streets, sidewalks, and public spaces to ensure safe and functional infrastructure.</li> <li>• Assess the feasibility of increasing law enforcement presence or establishing a neighborhood watch program.</li> <li>• Improve emergency response capabilities by working with county agencies to enhance fire, EMS, and law enforcement coordination.</li> </ul>
<p>Enforce Ordinances to Maintain a Clean and Orderly Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen enforcement of property maintenance codes to address abandoned vehicles, overgrown lots, and neglected structures.</li> <li>• Implement a proactive approach to code enforcement by conducting regular property inspections and offering compliance assistance programs.</li> <li>• Provide resources or incentives for property owners to repair or improve the appearance of their homes and businesses.</li> </ul>
<p>Enhance Community Appearance and Public Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize town-wide cleanup events to encourage residents to take pride in their community.</li> <li>• Install additional street lighting, benches, and landscaping to improve aesthetics and visibility in key areas.</li> <li>• Encourage property owners to participate in beautification efforts through a façade improvement program or volunteer initiatives.</li> </ul>

**Vision 1, Strategy 2: Invest in strong infrastructure, including sidewalks, water, sewer, and broadband, to ensure connectivity and a foundation for future growth while improving the appearance and livability of the town.**

Objectives	Tactics
Expand and Improve Sidewalk Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify gaps in the sidewalk network and prioritize repairs or extensions to improve walkability and safety.</li> <li>• Ensure sidewalks are ADA-compliant, adding curb ramps and tactile paving where needed.</li> <li>• Incorporate landscaping and street lighting along sidewalks to enhance aesthetics and pedestrian comfort.</li> </ul>
Upgrade Water and Sewer Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the current water and sewer infrastructure to identify aging systems in need of replacement or expansion.</li> <li>• Secure funding through state and federal grants to support water and sewer upgrades that accommodate future growth.</li> <li>• Implement a maintenance program to ensure long-term system reliability and reduce service disruptions.</li> </ul>
Improve Broadband Access for Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with internet service providers to expand high-speed broadband access throughout Poneto.</li> <li>• Identify funding opportunities to support broadband infrastructure investments, particularly in underserved areas.</li> <li>• Promote digital connectivity initiatives to support remote work, education, and local businesses.</li> </ul>



## TOWN OF PONETO VISION 2

*Engaged and Collaborative Governance*

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Build stronger relationships between the community, elected officials, and county government by promoting open communication, transparency, and collaboration.	Elected Officials	General Fund, really aren't need	\$	High	18 - 24 Months
2	Foster community engagement through town hall meetings, social media, and events that bring residents together to strengthen trust and shared purpose.	Elected Officials	General Fund	\$	High	18 - 24 Months
3	Focus on initiatives that promote community togetherness through events experiences that celebrate Poneto's identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Officials</li> <li>Park Board</li> </ul>	General Fund	\$	Medium	2 - 5 Years

**Vision 2, Strategy 1: Build stronger relationships between the community, elected officials, and county government by promoting open communication, transparency, and collaboration.**

Objectives	Tactics
<p>Promote Open Communication Between Residents and Local Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a town website or social media page to share updates, meeting agendas, and community announcements.</li> <li>• Implement a quarterly town hall meeting where residents can engage directly with elected officials and provide feedback.</li> <li>• Create a resident newsletter (print or digital) summarizing key decisions, upcoming projects, and town initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p>Enhance Transparency in Local Decision-Making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish meeting minutes, budgets, and policy decisions online to ensure public access to government actions.</li> <li>• Develop an easy-to-use public feedback system for residents to submit concerns, questions, or ideas to town leadership.</li> <li>• Provide an annual “State of the Town” report outlining progress on infrastructure, safety, and community initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthen Collaboration with County Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold regular meetings with county officials to align on infrastructure, public safety, and economic development priorities.</li> <li>• Advocate for county resources and funding opportunities that support Poneto’s growth and quality of life.</li> <li>• Partner with regional organizations to coordinate planning efforts and improve services for residents.</li> </ul>

**Vision 2, Strategy 2: Foster community engagement through town hall meetings, social media, and events that bring residents together to strengthen trust and shared purpose.**

Objectives	Tactics
<p>Host Regular Town Hall Meetings to Encourage Resident Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule quarterly town hall meetings to discuss upcoming projects, gather community input, and address resident concerns.</li> <li>• Rotate meeting locations or offer virtual attendance options to ensure accessibility for all residents.</li> <li>• Use interactive formats, such as Q&amp;A sessions and small group discussions, to foster meaningful dialogue.</li> </ul>
<p>Utilize Social Media and Digital Platforms for Community Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and maintain an official town social media page to share important updates, meeting notices, and community events.</li> <li>• Develop an online suggestion box or feedback form where residents can submit ideas and concerns.</li> <li>• Post regular "Meet Your Officials" spotlights to introduce residents to town leaders and encourage direct engagement.</li> </ul>
<p>Organize Community Events to Strengthen Trust and Connection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan annual town gatherings, such as picnics, festivals, or holiday celebrations, to bring residents together in a relaxed setting.</li> <li>• Partner with local businesses and organizations to sponsor or co-host events that encourage civic pride.</li> <li>• Establish volunteer opportunities that allow residents to actively contribute to town improvements and initiatives.</li> </ul>

**Vision 2, Strategy 3: Focus on initiatives that promote community togetherness through events and experiences that celebrate Poneto’s identity.**

Objectives	Tactics
<p>Establish Signature Community Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize an annual town festival featuring local food, music, and activities that celebrate Poneto’s small-town charm.</li> <li>• Host seasonal events, such as a summer picnic, fall harvest festival, or holiday tree lighting, to bring residents together.</li> <li>• Develop a community awards program to recognize outstanding residents, businesses, and volunteers.</li> </ul>
<p>Encourage Public Art and Cultural Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install murals, historical markers, or public art projects that reflect Poneto’s heritage and community spirit.</li> <li>• Partner with local artists and schools to create rotating art exhibits in public spaces.</li> <li>• Support storytelling initiatives, such as oral history projects or a community scrapbook, to preserve Poneto’s past and celebrate its future.</li> </ul>
<p>Foster Neighborhood and Civic Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize neighborhood meet-and-greet events to strengthen connections between residents.</li> <li>• Develop a community service day where volunteers can participate in beautification projects, park cleanups, or local improvement efforts.</li> <li>• Encourage local businesses and organizations to sponsor or participate in town events, reinforcing a sense of shared purpose and pride.</li> </ul>



# TOWN OF PONETO VISION 3

*Quality Living and Growth for the Future*

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Define a clear vision for Poneto’s future by addressing housing needs through infill development on vacant properties and supporting appropriate new home construction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Officials</li> <li>Wells County Economic Development</li> <li>Wells County Area Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Fund</li> <li>TIF</li> </ul>	\$\$	Medium	2 - 5 Years
2	Attract small-scale commercial development, such as a convenience store or gas station, to serve residents while improving the town park and public spaces to enhance the overall quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Officials</li> <li>Wells County Economic Development</li> <li>Wells County Area Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Fund</li> <li>TIF</li> <li>EDIT</li> </ul>	\$\$\$	Low	6 - 10 Years

**Vision 3, Strategy 1: Define a clear vision for Poneto’s future by addressing housing needs through infill development on vacant properties and supporting appropriate new home construction.**

Objectives	Tactics
<p>Encourage Infill Development on Vacant Properties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and catalog vacant lots suitable for residential development and promote them to builders and prospective homeowners.</li> <li>• Offer incentives, such as reduced permit fees or tax abatements, for new housing construction on underutilized properties.</li> <li>• Establish design guidelines to ensure infill housing blends with the character of existing neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<p>Support New Home Construction That Aligns with Community Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with developers to build a mix of housing options that appeal to young families, retirees, and professionals.</li> <li>• Ensure zoning and land use regulations allow for moderate residential expansion while maintaining Poneto’s small-town charm.</li> <li>• Invest in infrastructure improvements, such as water, sewer, and roads, to support future residential growth.</li> </ul>
<p>Promote Homeownership and Housing Affordability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop partnerships with financial institutions to offer first-time homebuyer assistance programs.</li> <li>• Encourage the rehabilitation of older homes through grants or low-interest loan programs for repairs and improvements.</li> <li>• Host housing forums or workshops to connect residents with resources for purchasing, renovating, or building homes in Poneto.</li> </ul>

**Vision 3, Strategy 2: Attract small-scale commercial development, such as a convenience store or gas station, to serve residents while improving the town park and public spaces to enhance the overall quality of life.**

Objectives	Tactics
Attract Small-Scale Commercial Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and market key locations for a convenience store, gas station, or other essential services that meet residents' daily needs.</li> <li>• Offer tax incentives or reduced permitting costs to encourage small business investment in Poneto.</li> <li>• Work with regional economic development organizations to recruit businesses that align with the town's size and character.</li> </ul>
Enhance the Town Park as a Community Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade park amenities, such as playground equipment, picnic shelters, and walking trails, to encourage greater use.</li> <li>• Add landscaping, benches, and lighting to improve aesthetics and safety.</li> <li>• Develop programming, such as community movie nights, fitness classes, or seasonal events, to activate the park year-round.</li> </ul>
Improve Public Spaces for a More Livable Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in streetscape enhancements, such as decorative lighting, planters, and signage, to make public areas more inviting.</li> <li>• Establish a beautification initiative to encourage property owners to improve storefronts and residential landscaping.</li> <li>• Create pedestrian-friendly pathways connecting key areas, such as the park, downtown, and future commercial development sites.</li> </ul>