

# CITY OF ONALASKA MEETING NOTICE

**COMMITTEE/BOARD:** Community Development Authority (CDA)

**DATE OF MEETING:** March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (Wednesday)

**PLACE OF MEETING:** City Hall – 415 Main Street – **Rm 112**

**TIME OF MEETING:** 3:30 P.M.

## PURPOSE OF MEETING

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Approval of minutes from the previous meetings
3. Public Input (limited to 3 minutes/individual)

### **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

4. Review and Consideration of Onalaska Redevelopment Plans for the State Road 16 Corridor and Downtown Onalaska
5. Review and Consideration of Onalaska Redevelopment Planning Invoice #018-036-8 (HKgi)
6. Closed Session: To consider a motion to convene in closed session under Section 19.85(1)(e) for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session:
  - Discussion and Consideration of a Development Agreement with Marvin Wanders of Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions, LLC, PO Box 609, La Crosse, WI 54602 as associated with Tax Increment District (TID) #5

If any action is required in Open Session, as the result of the Closed Session, the Common Council will reconvene in Open Session to take the necessary action and/or continue on with the printed agenda.

### 7. Adjournment

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that members of the Common Council of the City of Onalaska or other City committees who do not serve on the CDA may attend this meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision making responsibility.

Therefore, further notice is hereby given that the above meeting may constitute a meeting of the Common Council and is hereby noticed as such, even though it is not contemplated that the Common Council will take any formal action at this meeting.

#### **NOTICES MAILED TO:**

Mayor Joe Chilsen

\*Ald. Jim Binash

\*Ald. Jim Olson

Ald. Jerry Every

Ald. Ron Gjertsen

Ald. Kim Smith

Ald. Diane Wulf

City Attorney City Administrator

Department Heads

La Crosse Tribune Coulee Courier

WKBT WXOW WKTY WLXR WLAX FOX

\*Committee Members

\*Mike Gargaro – Chair

\*Joe Bucheger – Vice Chair

\*Ron Johnson

\*Ann Brandau

\*John Lyche

Omni Center

Onalaska Public Library

Notices Posted and Mailed: 3/6/19

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the City of Onalaska will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability to ensure equal access to public meetings provided notification is given to the City Clerk within seventy-two (72) hours prior to the public meeting and that the requested accommodation does not create an undue hardship for the City.



# State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study 2019



## Acknowledgements

### **Community Development Authority**

- » Mike Gargaro, Chair
- » Joe Bucheger, Vice Chair
- » John Lyche
- » Ann Brandau
- » Ron Johnson
- » Jim Olson, Alderperson
- » Jim Binash, Alderperson

### **Common Council**

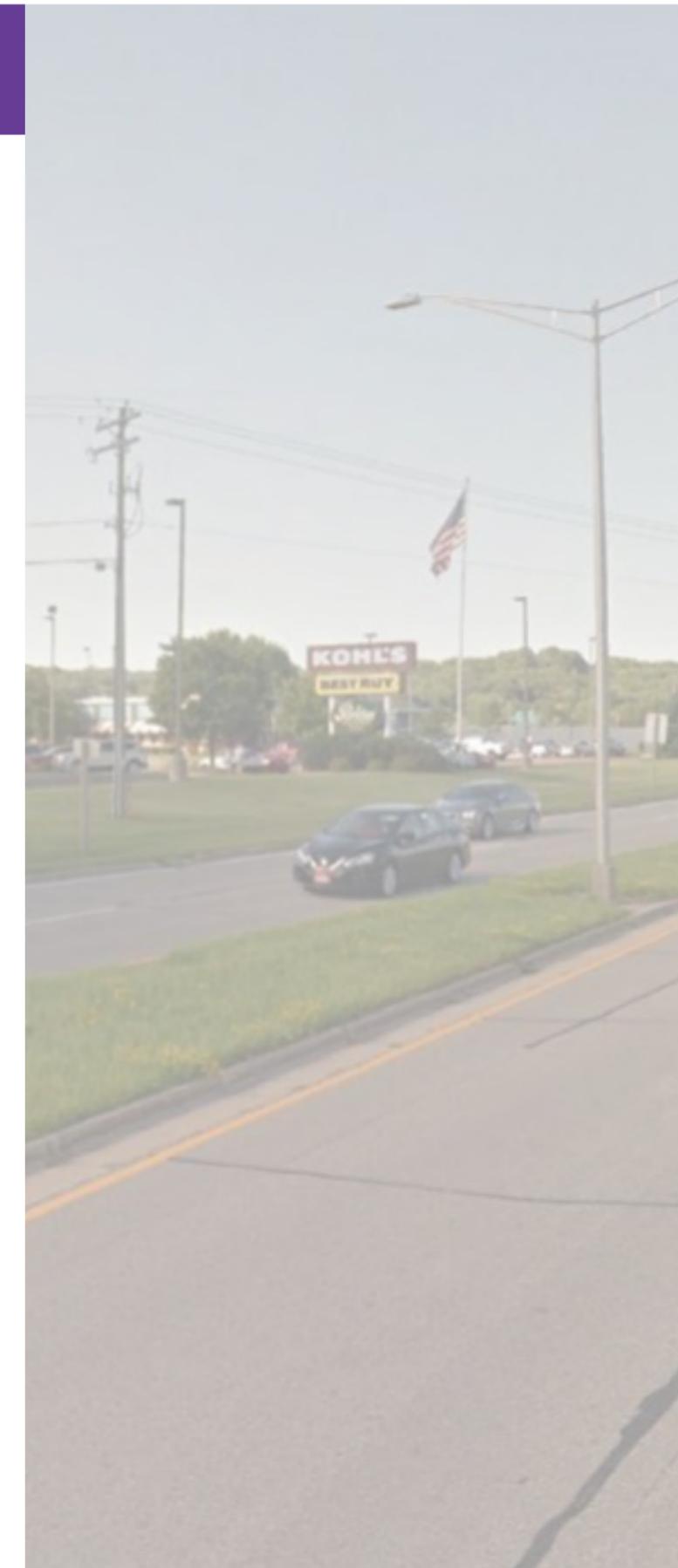
- » Joe Chilsen, Mayor
- » Jim Binash, First Aldermanic District, Common Council 2018-2019 Council President
- » Jim Olson, First Aldermanic District
- » Diane Wulf, Second Aldermanic District
- » Jerry Every, Second Aldermanic District
- » Kim Smith, Third Aldermanic District
- » Ron Gjertsen, Third Aldermanic District

### **City Staff**

- » Katie Aspenson, Planning Manager
- » Eric Rindfleisch, City Administrator
- » Jarrod Holter, City Engineer/Director of Public Works
- » Kevin Schubert, Assistant City Engineer

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# Project Background



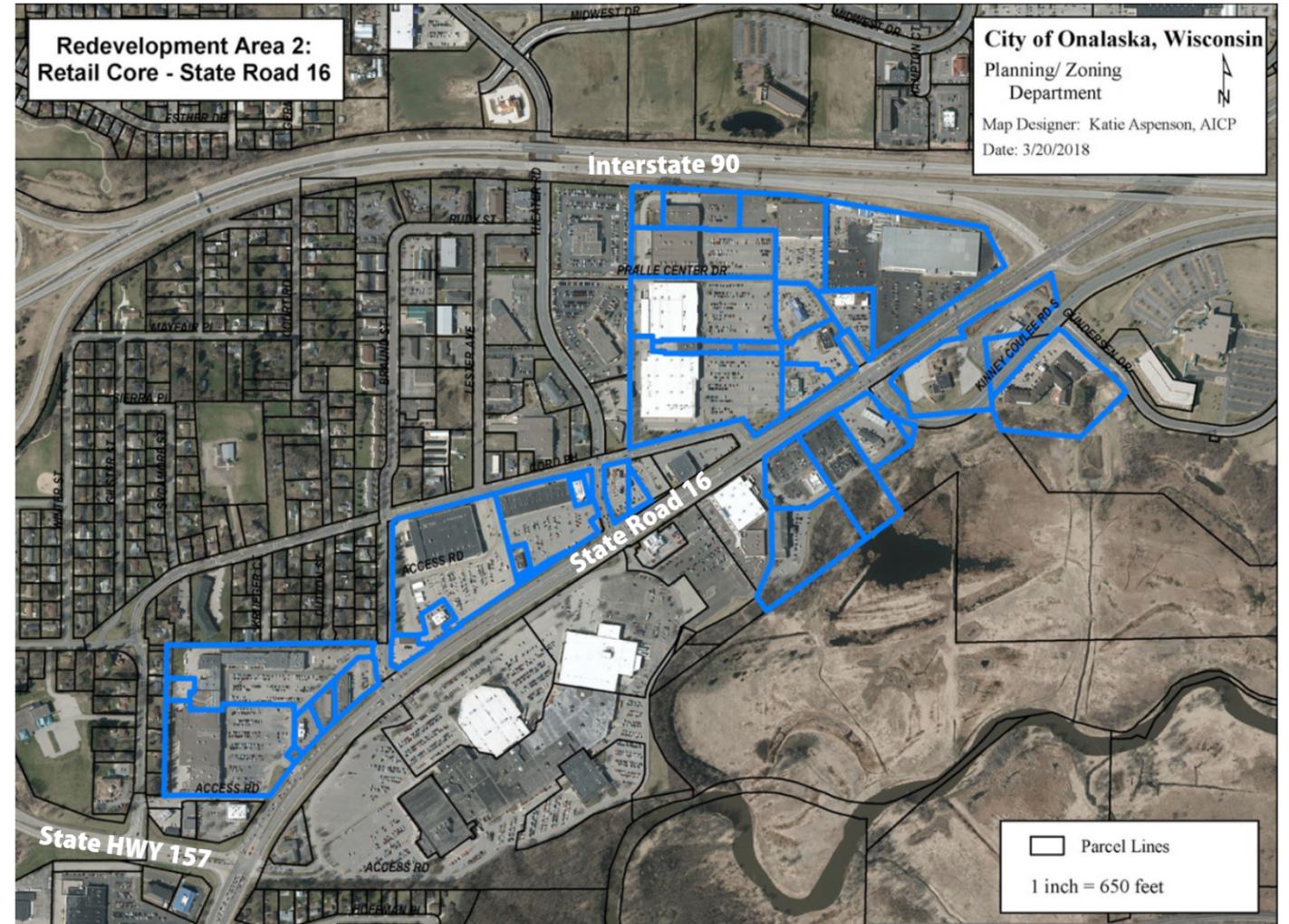
## Purpose

In 2018, the Onalaska Community Development Authority (CDA) initiated a planning process to guide potential future redevelopment in the State Road 16 Corridor. The study area is generally defined by Interstate 90 to the north, the La Crosse River Conservancy lands and the City of La Crosse to the east and south, and the existing residential and employment areas to the northwest of County Road PH and Theater Road. Core objectives of the planning study were to examine the future of retail in the district, to better understand its long-term viability in the area and to be proactive in anticipation of an ever-changing retail climate.

Key to this objective was also to understand, and better anticipate the transition of the Valley View Mall, located in the City of La Crosse. This planning process will help lay the groundwork for an on-going partnership with the City of La Crosse to understand common goals for the State Road 16 Corridor, a major economic generator for the region.

## Study Area

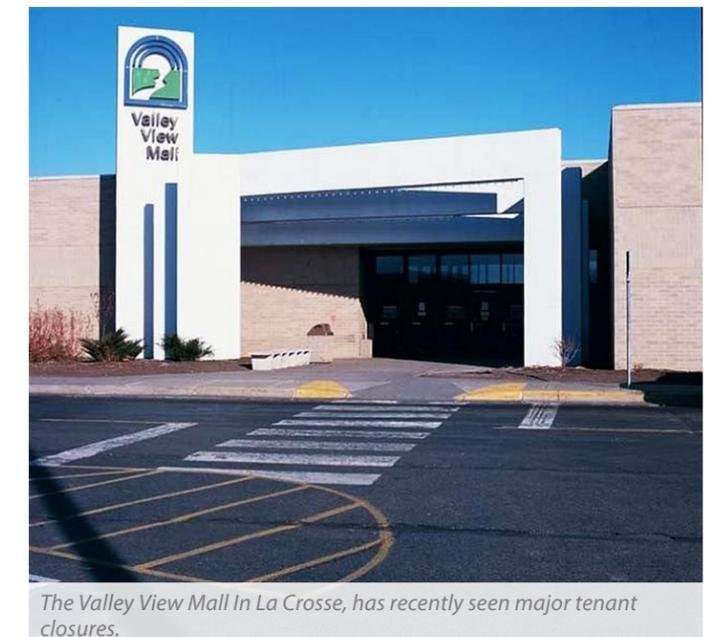
The study area includes a complex set of sites, each with their own individual characteristics and redevelopment potential. In order to understand and address the many moving parts of the corridor, the planning team worked to evaluate and understand current and future market conditions, existing and potential land uses, transportation enhancements (vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian) and identify necessary parks and open space features. The outcome of this planning effort is an integrated set of recommendations that work in concert with one another outlining a logical evolution to allow continued success for the corridor.



The parcels highlighted in blue reflect the study area.



La Crosse River Conservancy Area, east of the study area.



The Valley View Mall In La Crosse, has recently seen major tenant closures.



## Approach to the Planning Effort

The Onalaska CDA was involved throughout the planning process, including monthly meetings to review progress and guide the redevelopment planning. There were three primary tasks of the redevelopment planning effort:

### 1 Organize the Effort

This initial task involved assessing market conditions, existing physical conditions of the study area and conducting initial listening sessions with key stakeholders in the corridor.

### 2 Explore the Possibilities

This stage explored a range of concept alternatives for potential redevelopment, studied at precedent projects and included a second round of stakeholder listening sessions to gain feedback.

### 3 Develop a Preferred Plan and Seek Approvals

The final stage of the process brought the findings of the study together in a redevelopment study document, providing key recommendations, strategic implementation steps and discusses the funding tools to help support the desired redevelopment. A community meeting was also held for residents and business owners to provide comment on the recommendations. The conclusion of this task was the approval of the study by the CDA and City of Onalaska.

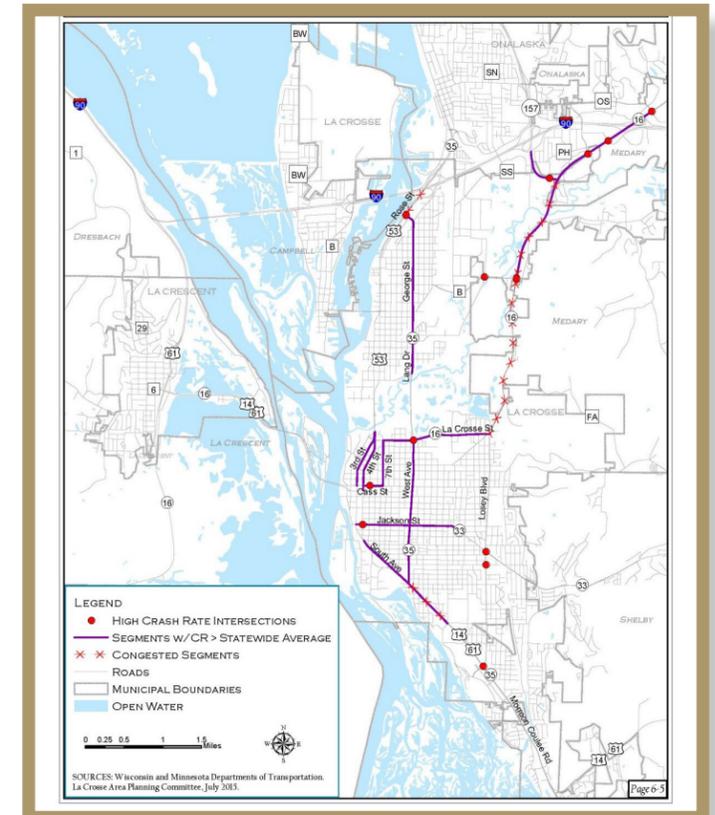


## Prior Planning in the State Road 16 Corridor

### Other Planning Efforts

Numerous other land use, transportation and pedestrian/ bicycle plans & studies have been completed in or around the project area. These documents have been reviewed to identify influencing factors in the State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study, they include:

- » Onalaska Comprehensive Plan (2016)
- » Onalaska Central Greenway Plan (1999)
- » Coulee Vision – A Long-term plan for Growth & Transportation in the La Crosse Region (2015)
- » Economic Impact of Bicycling in La Crosse (2015)
- » Grand River Transit Service Enhancement and Policy Plan (2015)
- » Transportation Improvement Program 2019-2022



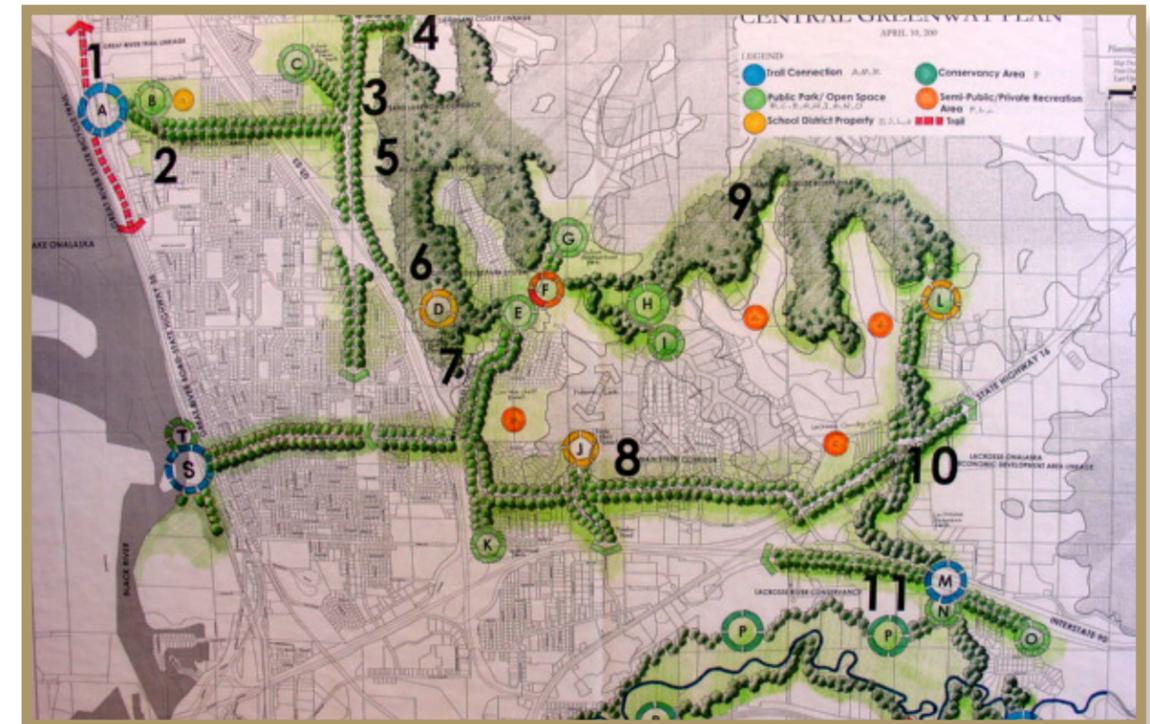
Transportation analysis from the Coulee Vision Plan shows crash rates above the statewide average.



## Key Questions for the Planning Process

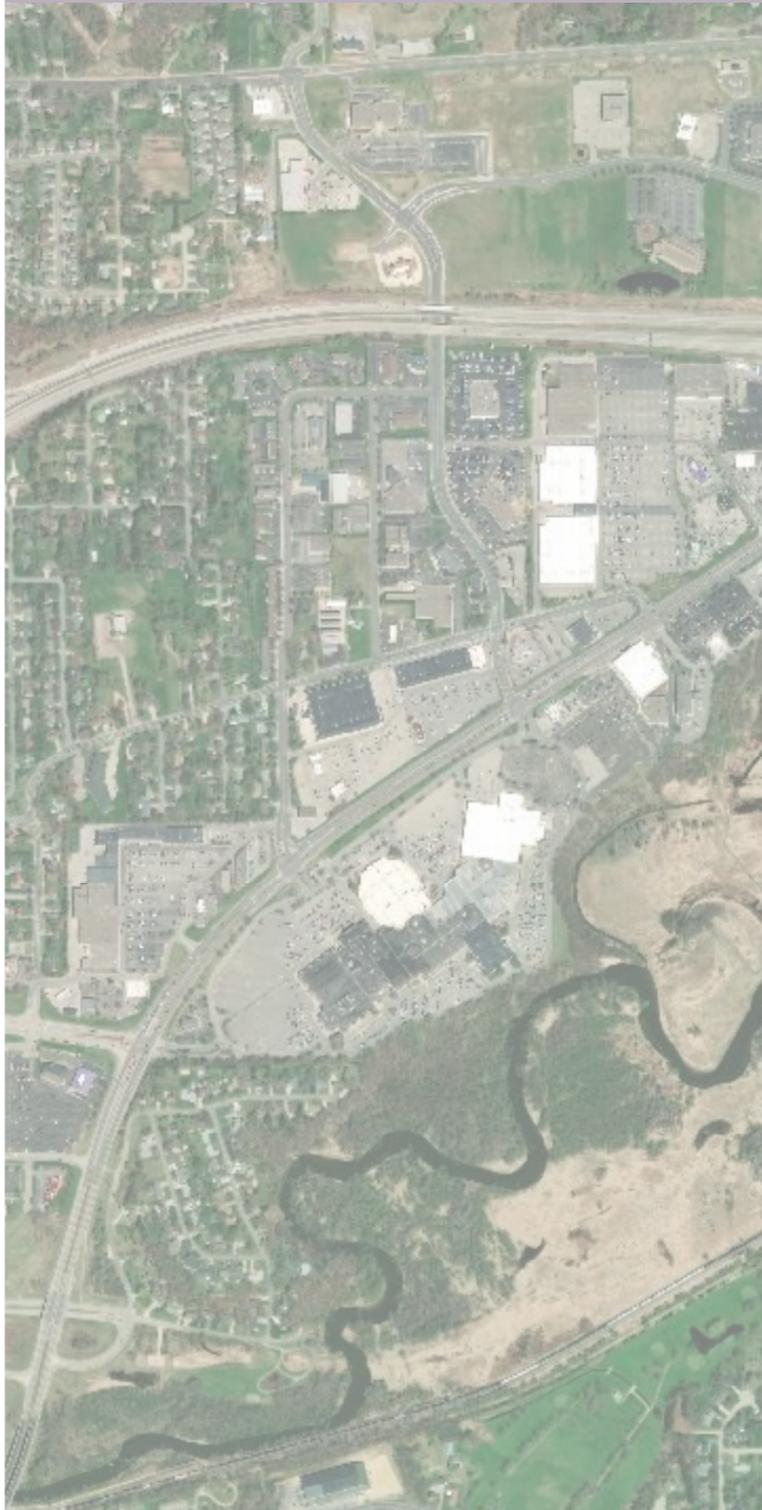
At the onset of the planning process, a number of key questions were asked and discussed with the CDA to help better understand the future vision of the State Road 16 Corridor. These questions included:

- » What is the future of the Valley View Mall? What role does the City of Onalaska play in guiding its future?
- » What should the appropriate future land uses in the corridor be? Should uses be diversified to include more residential or employment, or should this area remain a commercial corridor? What is the future of the traditional, bricks and mortar retail climate, in the face of a growing on-line retailing pressure?
- » What should the appropriate underlying zoning in the district be in the future? Currently this area is zoned Light Industrial (M-I) with a Planned Commercial Industrial District (PCID) overlay
- » What is the appropriate transition between uses?
- » What is the relationship to the uses north of Interstate 90? Do they complement or compete with this district?
- » How could access and circulation be better enhanced throughout the corridor?
  - Is there a plan for enhanced access management along State Road 16?
  - How could signalized intersections, and crossings of State Road 16 / I-90 be improved?
  - Can we better design internal site circulation?



Central Greenway Plan, City of Onalaska.

# Existing Conditions



## Land Use

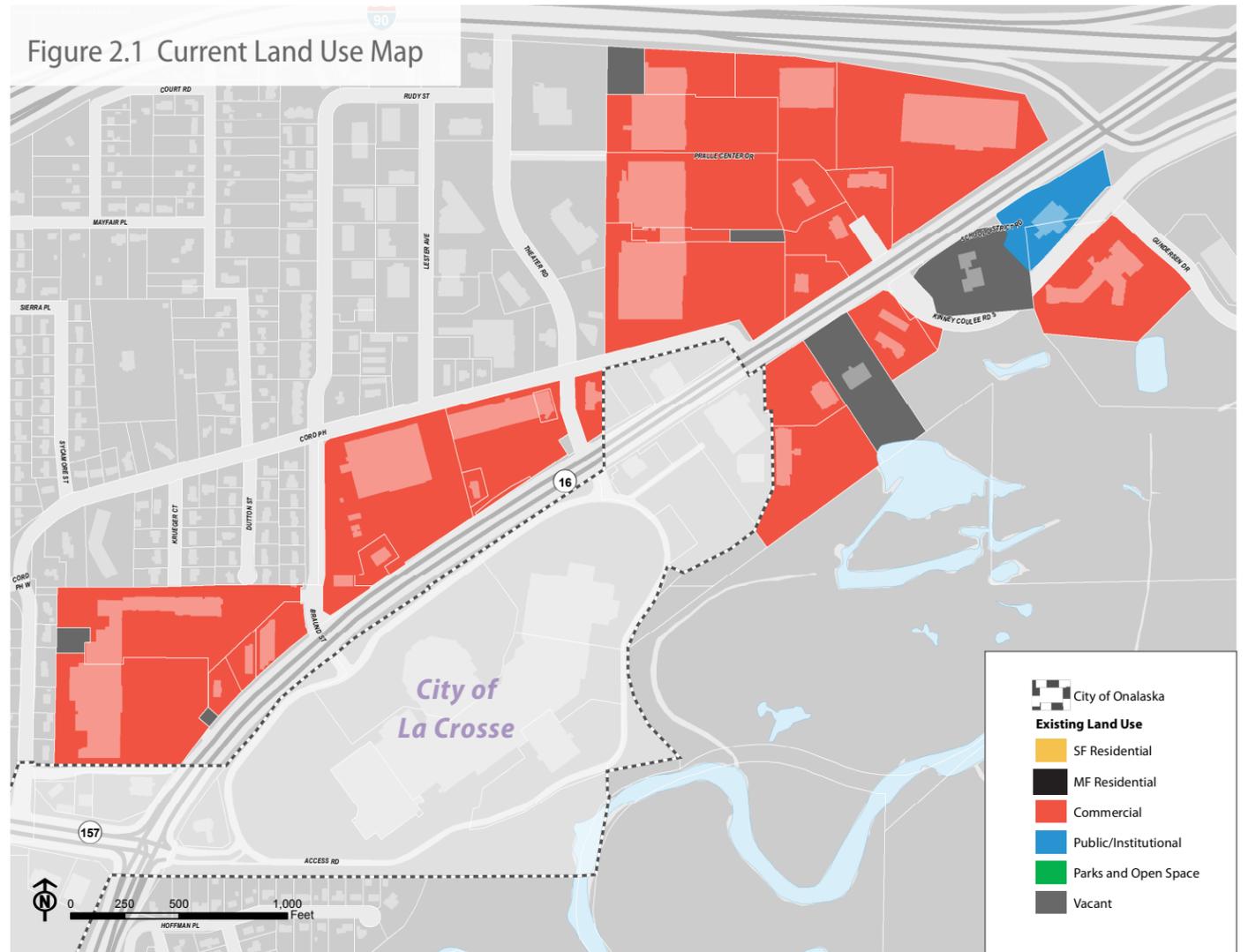
Figure 2.1 shows existing land uses in the study area.

### North of State Road 16

- » Entirely retail and restaurant uses, both freestanding buildings and multi-tenant strip commercial buildings, north of Hwy 16
- » Four small scattered vacant sites that could accommodate building expansions or infill development

### South of State Road 16

- » Retail, restaurant, and lodging uses
- » Medical use, renal dialysis center, adjacent to Gundersen Health's medical clinic
- » New vacant site owned by Gundersen Health, where Fauver Hill school building was demolished in 2018



Existing retail along State Road 16.



Existing retail along State Road 16.

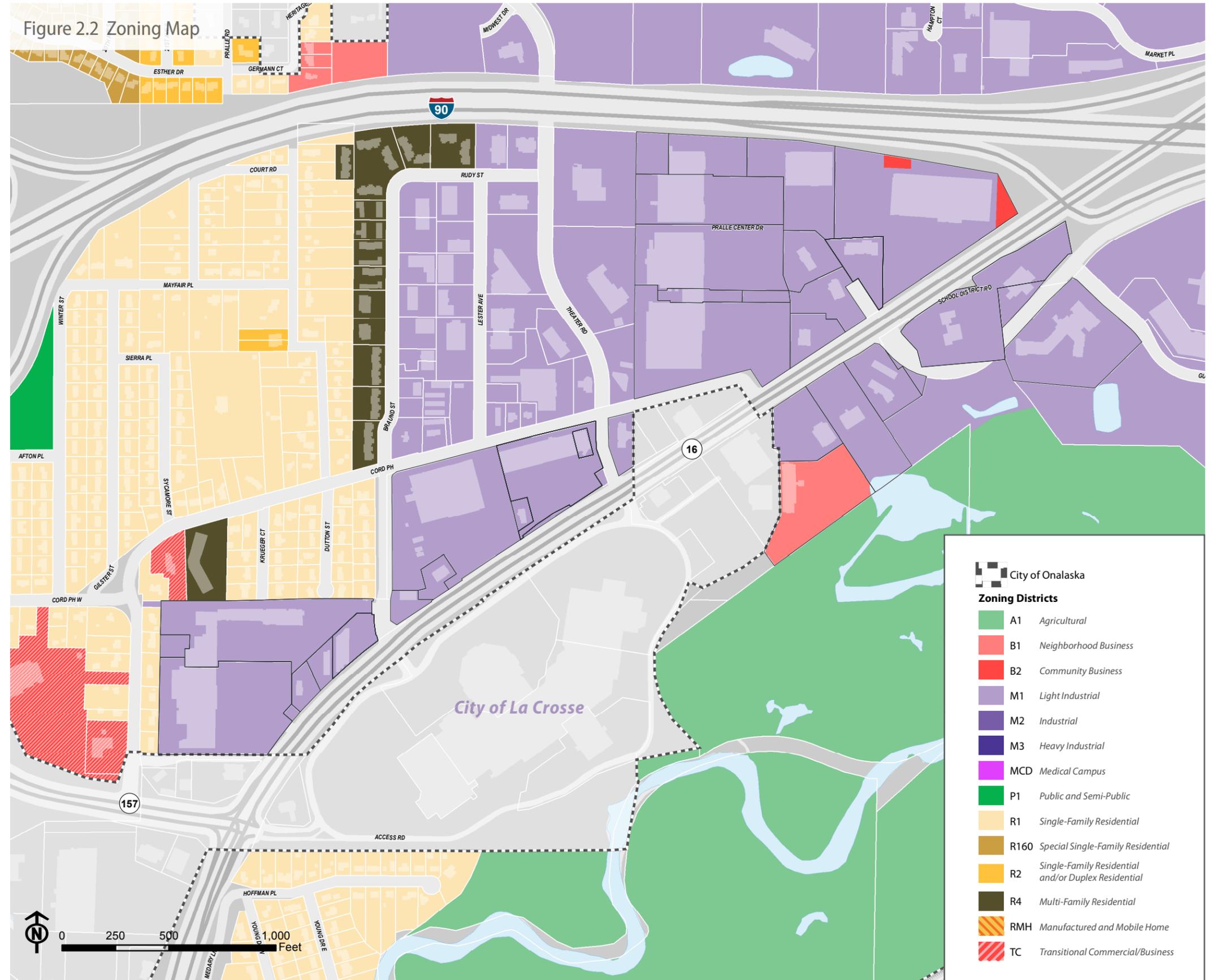
## Zoning

Figure 2.2 shows existing zoning in the study area.

- » Primarily Light Industrial (M1) with the exception of one hotel property that is zoned Community Business (B2)
- » All properties are also located within the Planned Commercial Industrial Development (PCID) overlay district.



Existing retail along State Road 16.





## Transportation

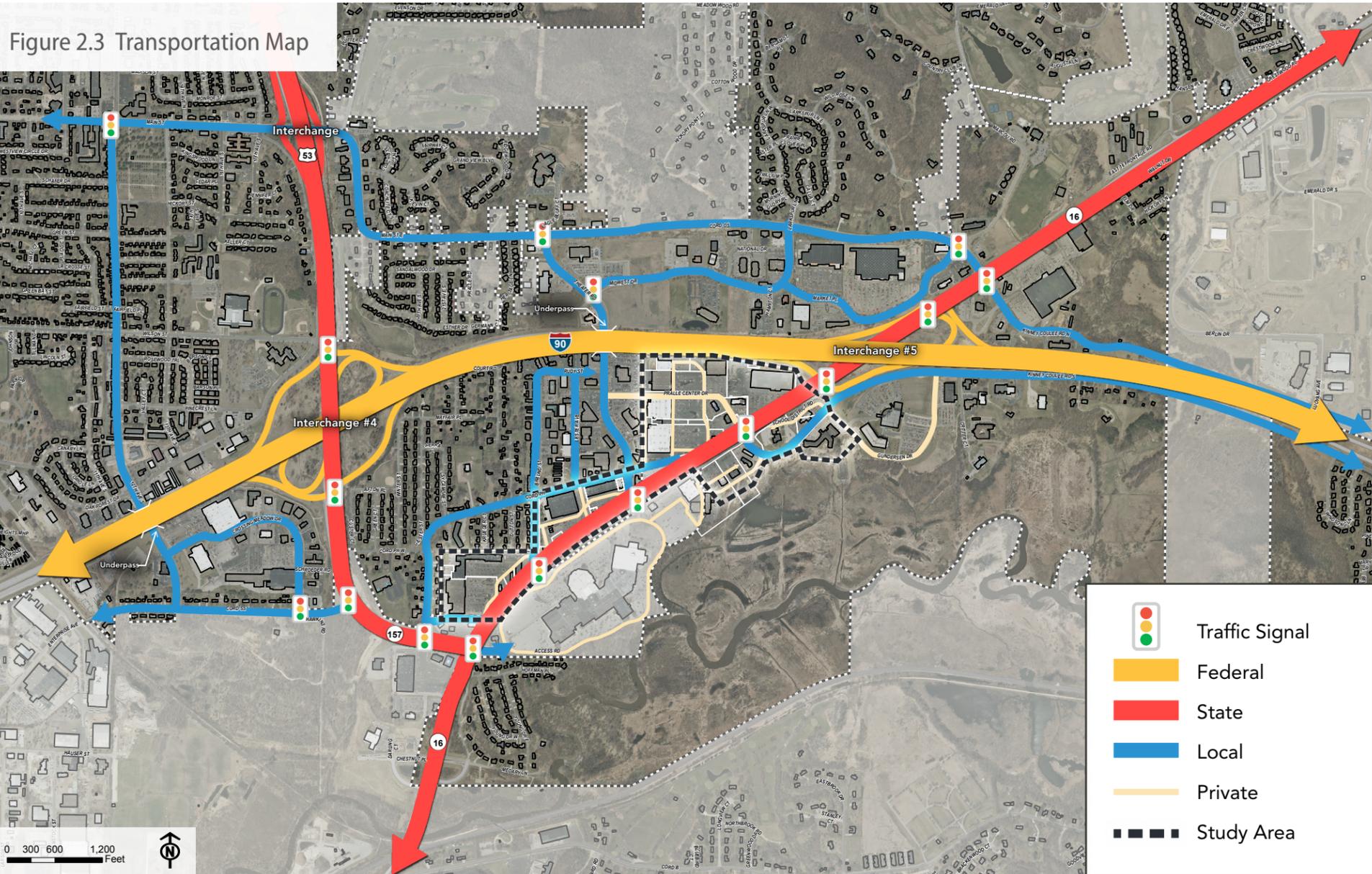
While this commercial corridor's location on a state roadway and interstate freeway grants it a high level of transportation access and traffic visibility, the corridor has a limited supporting transportation network. East-west roadway connections are limited to regional (state and federal) roadways – State Road 16 and I-90. North-south roadway connections are very limited due to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area to the south and the freeway corridor to the north; Theater Rd is essentially the only connection to the north passing under I-90 and State Road 16 is the only connection to the south (Figure 2.3). Roadway functional classifications are as follows:

- » Principal Arterials – Interstate 90, State Road 16, State Road 157
- » Minor Arterials – Theater Road
- » Collectors – County Road PH, Braund St., Kinney Coulee Road S
- » Local Streets – none
- » Private drives

The corridor's transportation circulation relies substantially on the private driveways linking commercial businesses to their parking lots and the limited public roadways.

Walking and biking facilities are limited as well. Sidewalks exist along both sides of the city's streets: Theater Road, County Road PH, and Braund Street with some gaps. Kinney Coulee Road S has a sidewalk along one side as well. On-street bike lanes exist on Theater Road, County Road PH, and Braund Street. An off-street bike/walk path exists along the south side of State Road 16 in La Crosse's portion of the corridor but not in the Onalaska portion. Walk/bike facilities are not provided along the private drives. Street crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists do not utilize high visibility techniques.

Transit is provided by the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU). Routes 5 and 9 provide connections between the State Road 16 Corridor, La Crosse, and Onalaska. Bus stops are oriented to major retail businesses, including Valley View Mall, Shopko, Target, and Gundersen Medical Center.





## Parks, Trails, and Open Space

While there are no parks or open spaces within the corridor, the area is located adjacent to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area. Two access points to the river valley's trails are located south of State Road 16 - Kinney Coulee Rd. S next to Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center and on the private drive behind the restaurants west of Kinney Coulee Rd. S (Figure 2.4).

### Connections Beyond the Study Area

#### Onalaska Central Greenway Plan

The Onalaska Central Greenway Plan identifies key opportunities for conservancy areas, particularly the steep terrain common to the bluffs and the La Crosse River valley floodplain areas. The Onalaska Comprehensive Plan also supports this plan by calling out specific locations for park and open space lands within rapidly growing areas of the City and identifies goals to provide, improve, and enhance public access, use and enjoyment of the community's natural and recreational resources, and to provide an efficient and well planned system of pathways that will encourage greater pedestrian and bicycle use for recreation and transportation purposes.

#### La Crosse River Conservancy Area

The La Crosse River Conservancy Area was conceived through a cooperative partnership between the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse and Gundersen Clinic. Key objectives of the plan included the phased acquisition of portions of the La Crosse River floodplain either through direct purchase or through the establishment of permanent conservation easements.

The La Crosse River Conservancy Area contains over 1000 acres of floodplain, wetland, wooded areas and the La Crosse River itself. The project proposes the future development of nature based recreation and education facilities through access by several local

public park sites including Robinson Park Valley View Park and Holiday Heights Park. Trails, bird watching platforms, river access points and interpretive areas are part of the master plan for the area. Plans for habitat restoration are also part of the plans for conservancy project. The conservancy area is largely inaccessible currently although spectacular views of the area can be found at several locations north and south of the floodplain.

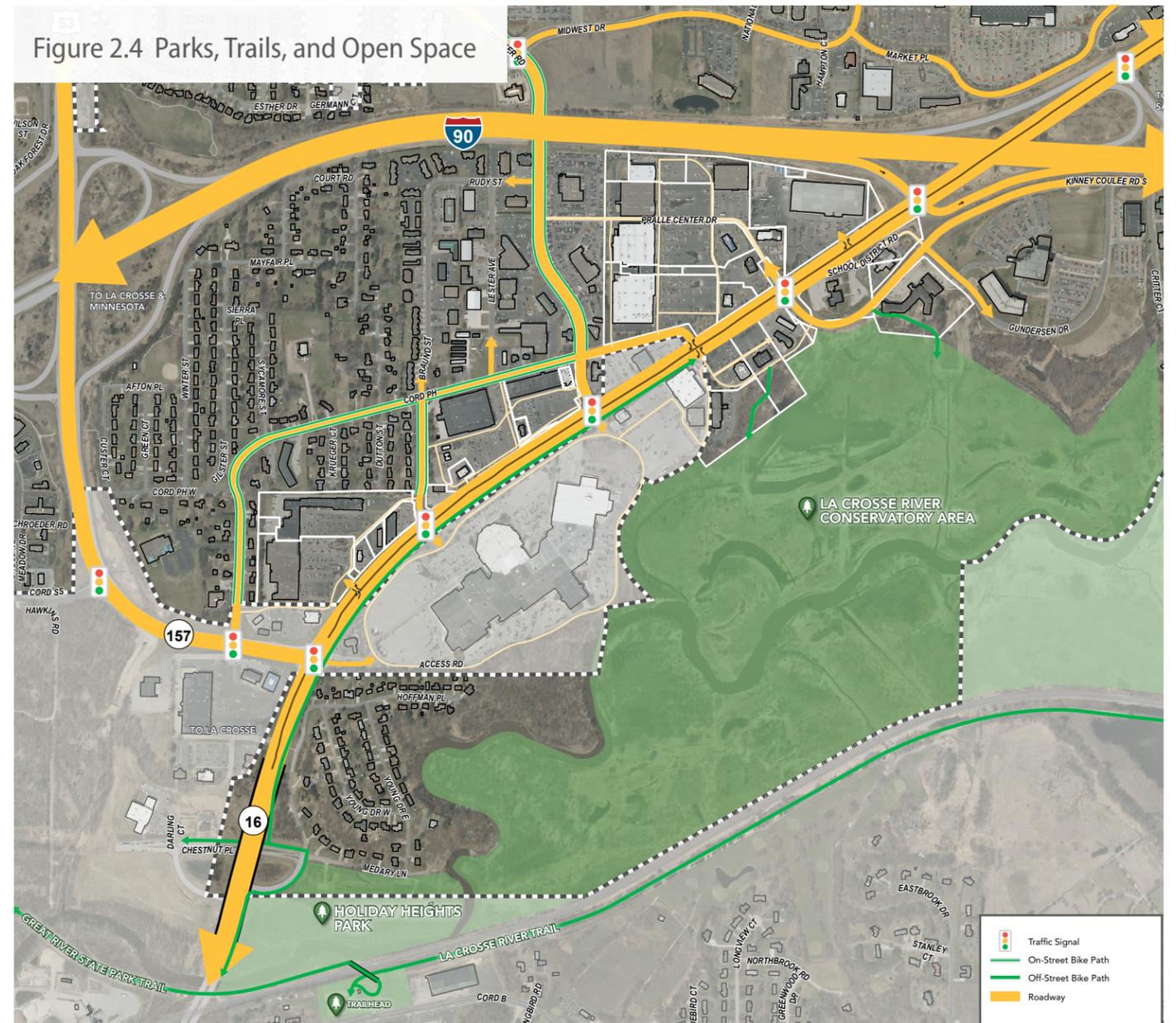
#### Holiday Heights Park

Holiday Heights Park is a 22 acre park located between the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse adjacent to the Holiday Heights subdivision. The park is primarily located in the La Crosse River floodplain, offering key wildlife viewing, fishing, and hiking opportunities. The park has a playground, nature trails along the river, an accessible fishing and canoe launch area, a shelter, and restroom facilities. The park also contains a potential linkage to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area to the east by way of a bridge over the La Crosse River. The park also lies across the river from the La Crosse River State Trail trailhead at County Road B in La Crosse, presenting another opportunity for a potential linkage to the State trail system. A trail connection to the La Crosse River State Trail would require a bridge over the La Crosse River from the north. Both the La Crosse River Conservancy Project and the Onalaska Central Greenway Plan note the possibility of this type of connection.

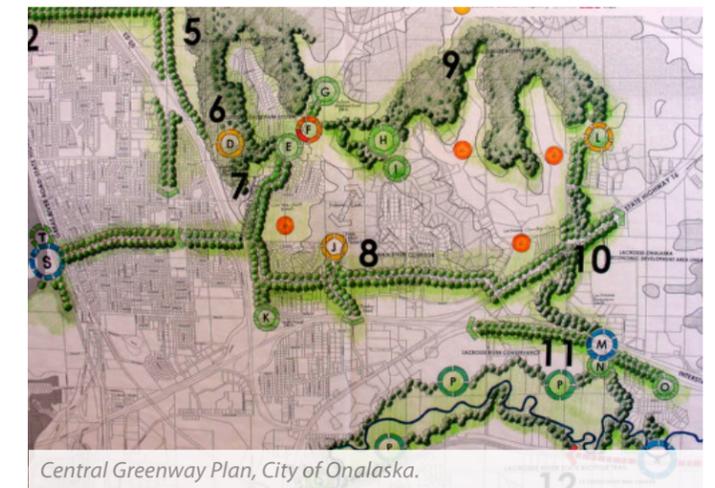
#### Crossing Interstate 90

The Central Greenway Plan also identifies a needed trail connection across Interstate 90. This would likely require an overpass or underpass depending on location. Initial identification places this connection near the drainage crossing indicating an underpass, however other location should be explored.

Figure 2.4 Parks, Trails, and Open Space



La Crosse River Conservancy Area.



Central Greenway Plan, City of Onalaska.



## Redevelopment Scoring

In addition to examining previous planning efforts, it was necessary to evaluate property within the corridor for redevelopment potential. By finding the “low hanging fruit” it was possible to identify locations that make sense as starting points for potential redevelopment.

Part of the process for identifying priority sites (Figure 2.9) was an attribute based evaluation of the properties within the study area. By assigning points based on characteristics of all of the parcels, the consultant team was able to get an initial view of where to focus redevelopment efforts. These characteristics included vacancy, age, land and building values, land use, size, ownership, location and visibility (Figures 2.5-2.8). This evaluation produced an initial framework to begin identifying redevelopment parcels.

Because the model could not take every variable into account, and because different redevelopment types have different needs, further analysis was conducted on a case-by-case basis, examining the physical characteristics, market realities, and other redevelopment demands of individual and combined sites.

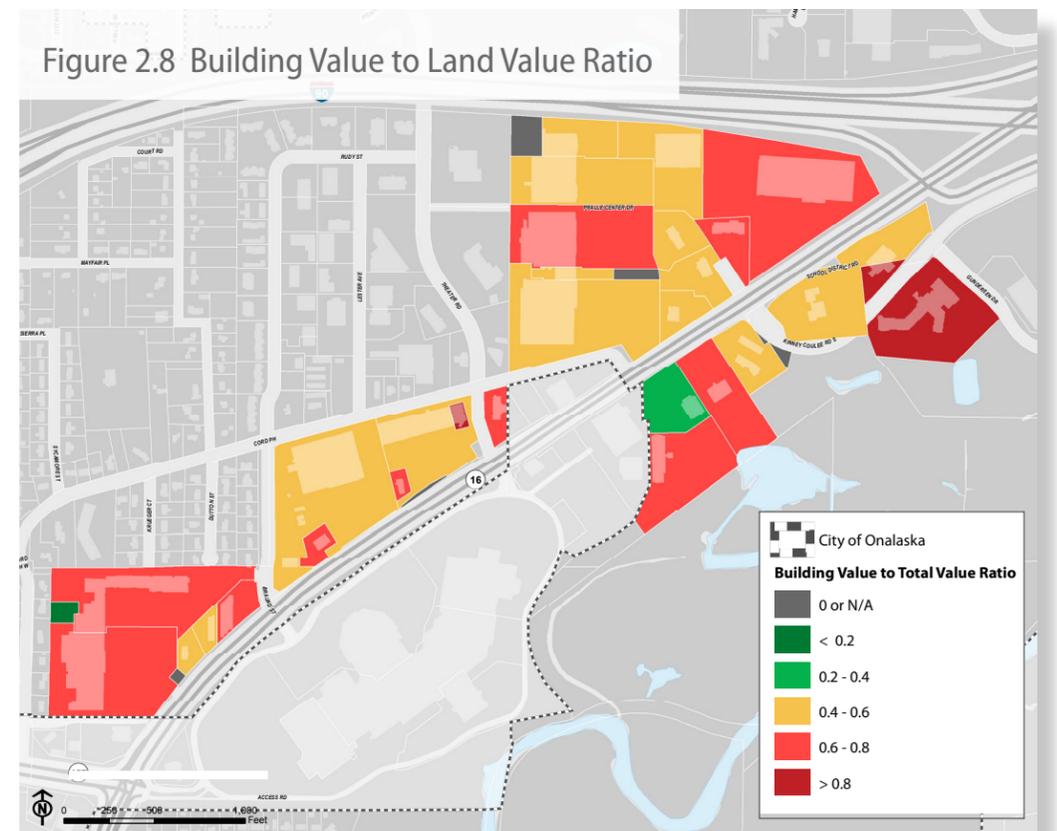
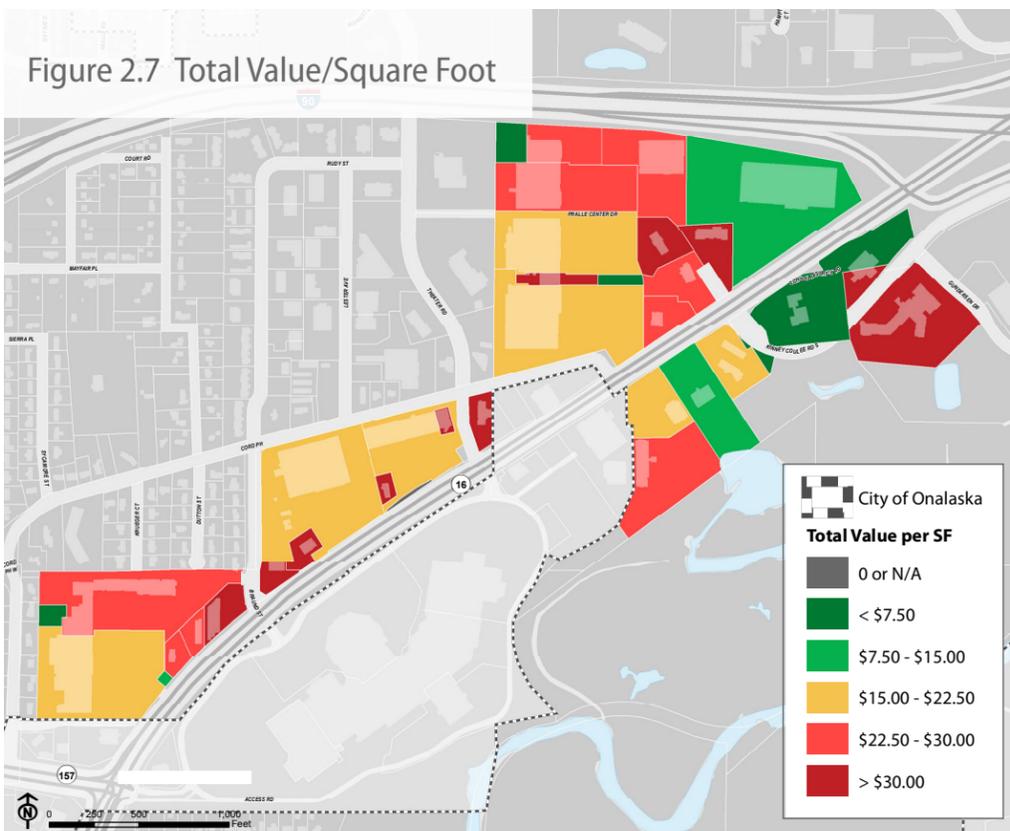
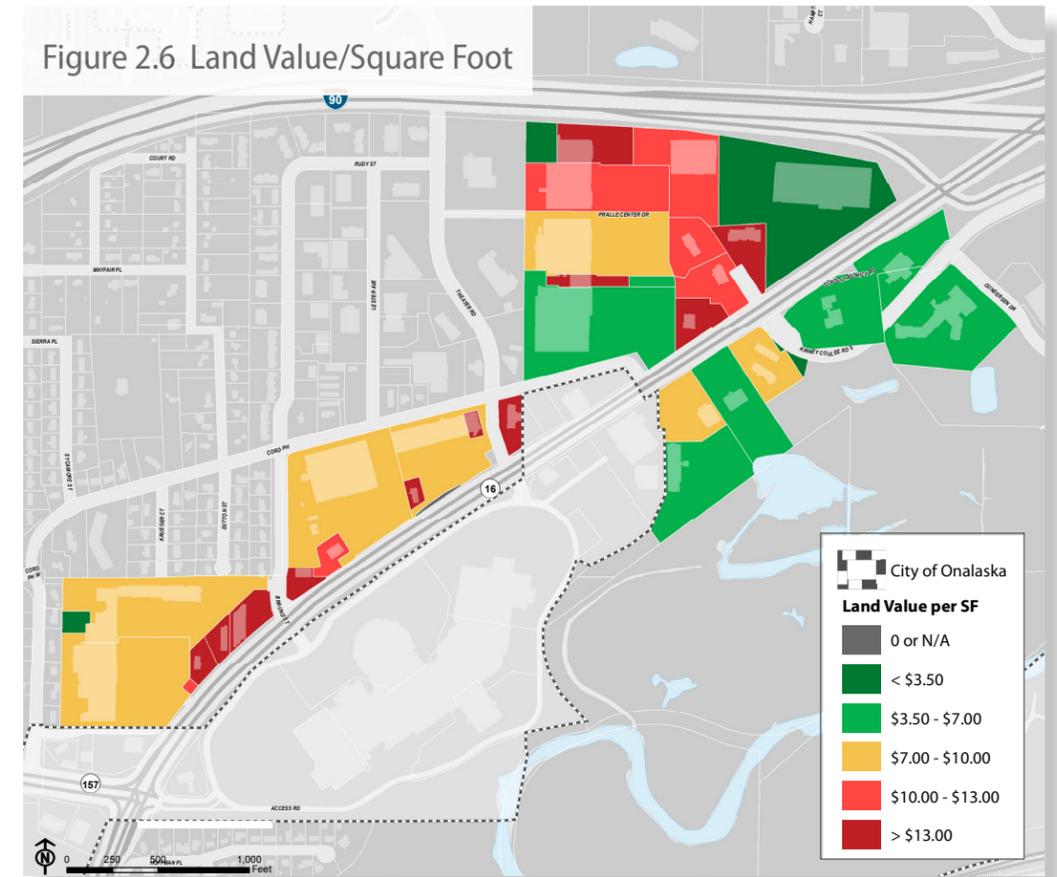
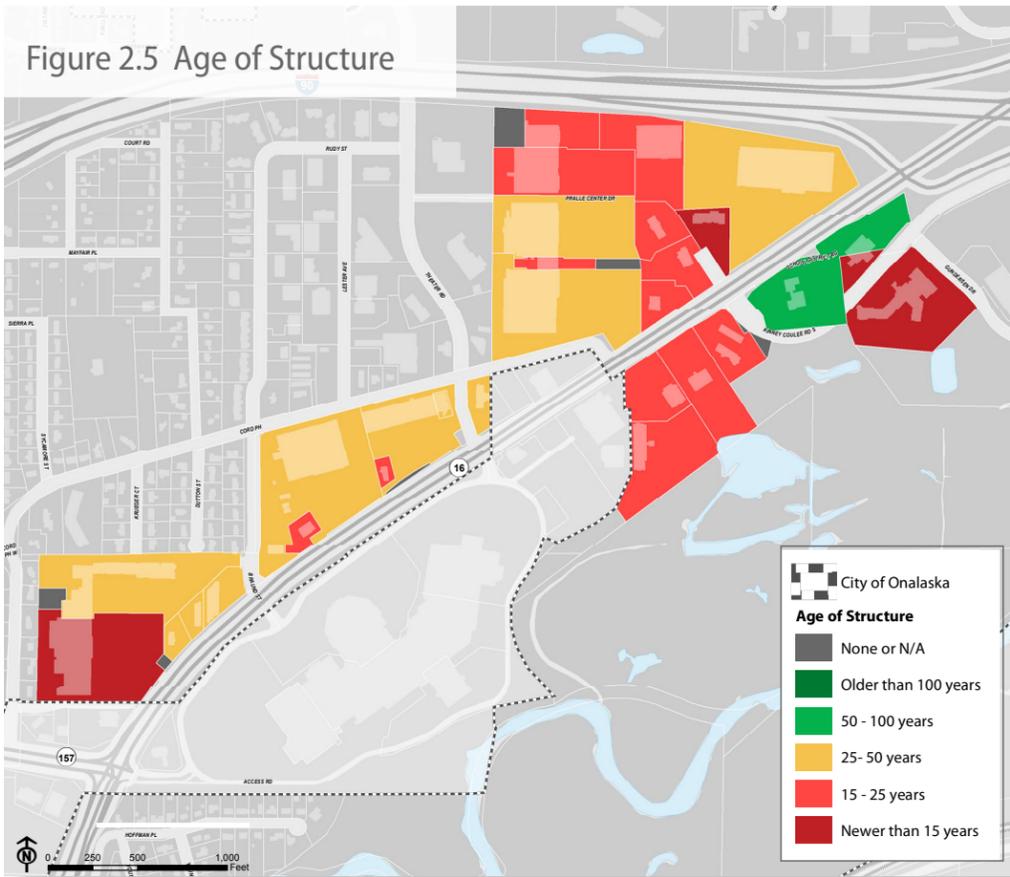
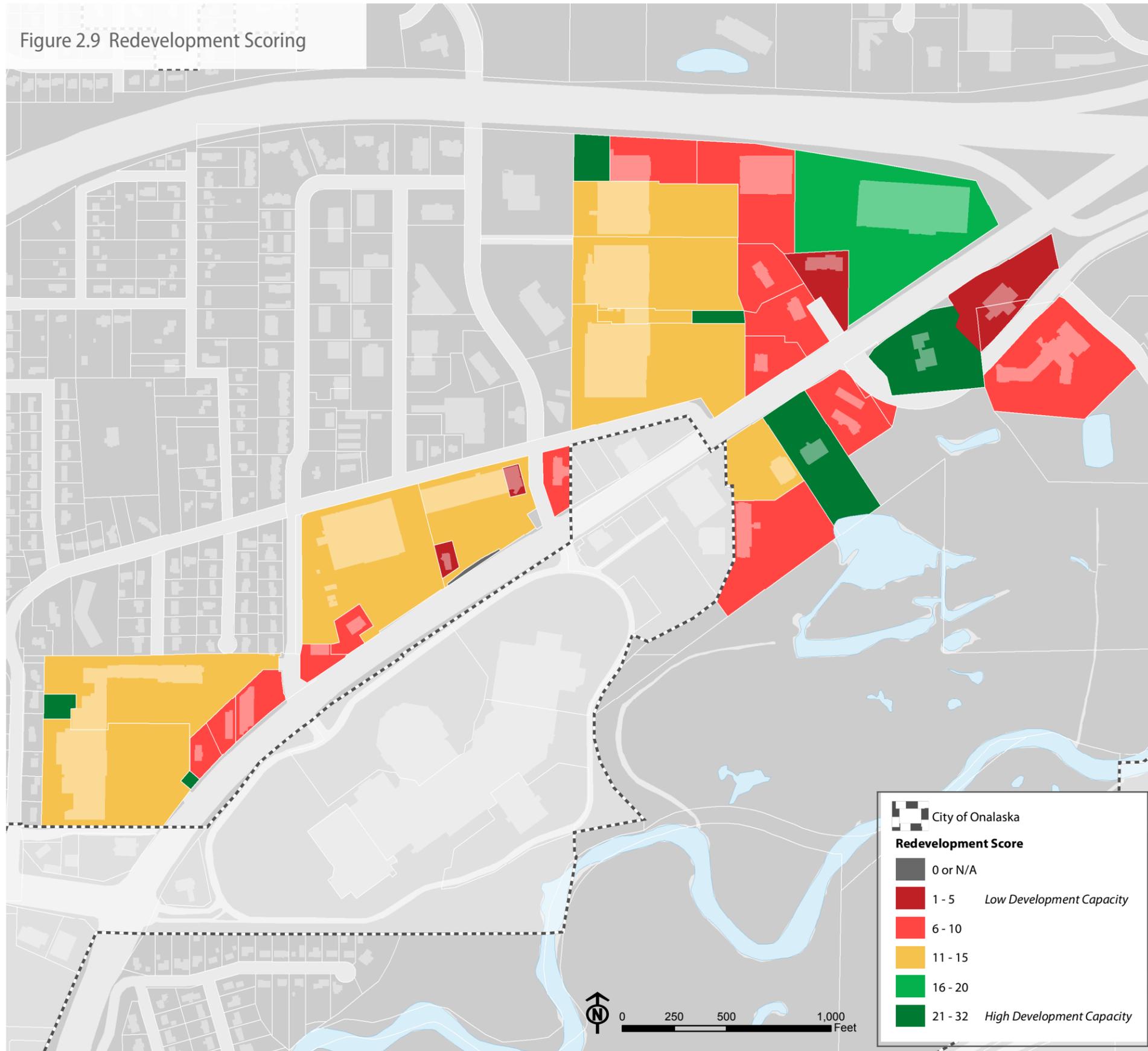


Figure 2.9 Redevelopment Scoring



## Redevelopment Scoring

This map shows the redevelopment potential as identified by scoring a number of variables for each parcel. This information should be considered as a baseline to start identifying potential redevelopment parcels, but should not be considered as definitive. The model cannot take everything into account and sites should be checked against ground conditions. (For example, some publicly owned parcels are missing information such as building improvement value.)

**Vacant:**

No.....	0
Yes .....	20

**Age:**

Over 100 yrs .....	1
50 - 100 yrs.....	5
25 - 50 yrs.....	3
15 - 25 yrs.....	1
Less than 15 yrs .....	0

**Land Value \$ / Square Foot:**

< 3.5 .....	4
3.5 - 7 .....	3
7 - 10 .....	2
10 - 13 .....	1
>13 .....	0

**Total Value \$ /Square Foot:**

< 7.5 .....	4
7.5 - 15 .....	3
15 - 22.5 .....	2
22.5 - 30 .....	1
> 30 .....	0

**Building Value to Land Value Ratio:**

< 1.0 .....	4
1.0 - 2.0 .....	3
2.0 - 3.0 .....	2
3.0 - 6.0 .....	1
> 6.0 .....	0

**Building Value to Total Value Ratio:**

< 0.2 .....	4
0.2 - 0.4 .....	3
0.4 - 0.6 .....	2
0.6 - 0.8 .....	1
> 0.8 .....	0

**Parking Oversupply:**

> 50 spaces .....	3
21 - 49 spaces .....	2
1 - 20 spaces .....	1
< 0 spaces .....	0

**Parcel Size:**

> 5 ac.....	4
2 - 5 ac.....	3
1 - 2 ac.....	1
< 1 ac.....	0

**City Ownership:**

Owned by Onalaska .....	5
Not owned by Onalaska .....	0





## Market Summary

The strength of the State Road 16 Corridor comes from being the premier retail location within the region, driven by its proximity to the access and traffic counts of Interstate 90. This has allowed the area to develop as a regional shopping destination. In turn, this growth strengthens the “cluster” destination mentality of retailers, further strengthening the corridor as a whole. This can also result in increase of local competition.

Challenges or potential vulnerabilities facing this area will be:

- » The continued growth of e-shopping;
- » What happens with the La Crosse side of the State Road 16 corridor (Valley View Mall);
- » Changing spending habits.

The city benefits from positive perceptions of the community as a desired place to live, strong schools, and a good location relative to the city of La Crosse.

## Market Area

The primary State Road 16 market can be defined by the 15, 30 and 45 minute drive time map shown in Figure 2.10.

The 45 minute drive time helps define the market area for larger purchases or shopping trips, consistent with the larger general merchandise retailers that are in the area. This market encompasses over a quarter of a million people and reaches to Tomah to the east, Winona to the northwest, and the Iowa border to the south.

Smaller retailers (typically convenience and fast food) benefit from the proximity and higher traffic counts that come with being proximate to regional shopping destinations, but may also draw customers on their own from shorter, more immediately local distances.

Figure 2.11 shows an equidistant line between the La Crosse/Onalaska area and other cities with populations over 35,000. These include Rochester,

Eau Claire, Wausau, Madison, Dubuque, IA, and Waterloo, IA.

Potential customers in this area will be deciding between these regional centers for larger goods and service shopping.

## Market for Retail Space

Based on location, traffic counts, and the strength of the retail cluster, the market is out performing La Crosse and Holmen by a significant margin. Vacancy rates in Onalaska and across the region are up slightly above the 5 year average, but remain remarkably low compared with the nation as a whole which sits around 10%.

## Rent Rates

Onalaska rents trail national asking rates (\$21/SF) slightly, but are over twice the asking rate for both La Crosse and Holmen, indicating a strong commercial/retail presence.

	Onalaska	La Crosse	Holmen
Retail Vacancy Rate	2.5%	3.4%	5.2%
5 Year Average	1.3%	2.6%	7.3%

	Onalaska	La Crosse	Holmen
NNN Rent \$/SF (asking)	\$18.60	\$9.09	\$7.59
5 Year Average	\$15.15	\$9.86	\$7.70

Figure 2.10 Drive Time Map

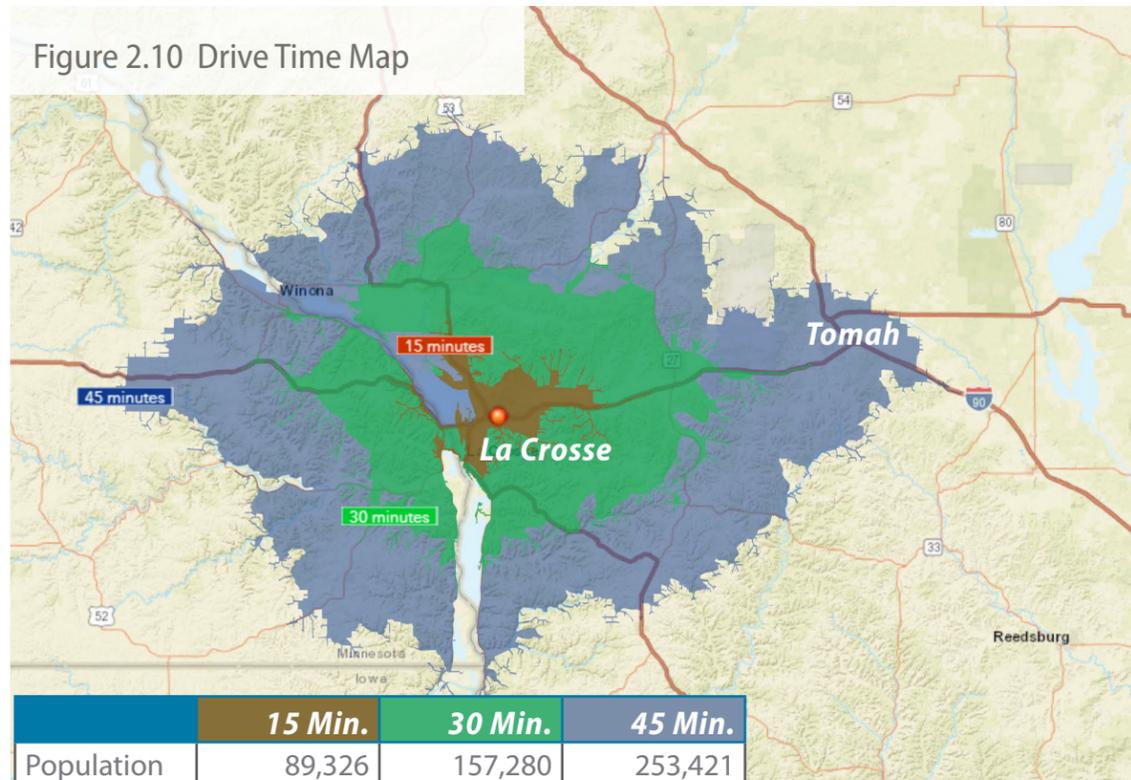


Figure 2.11 Regional Centers

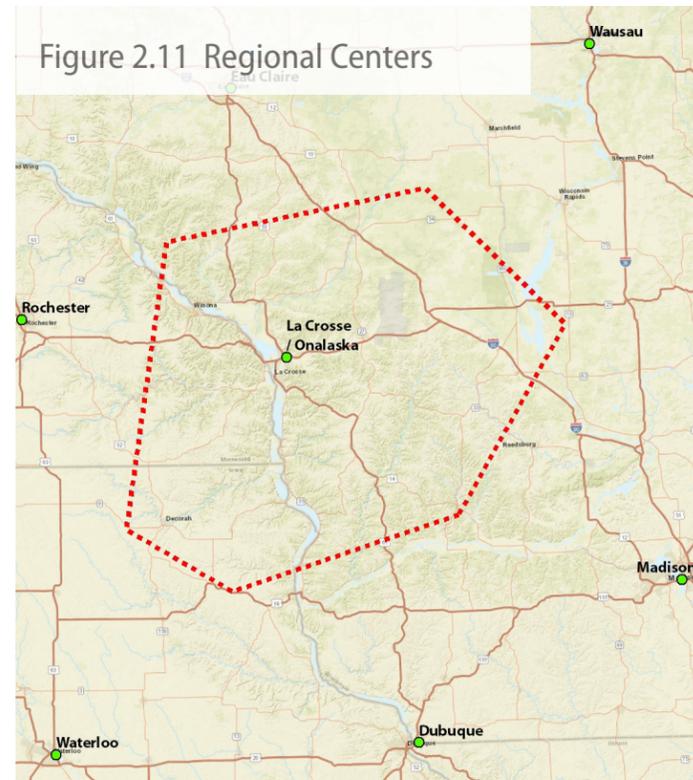
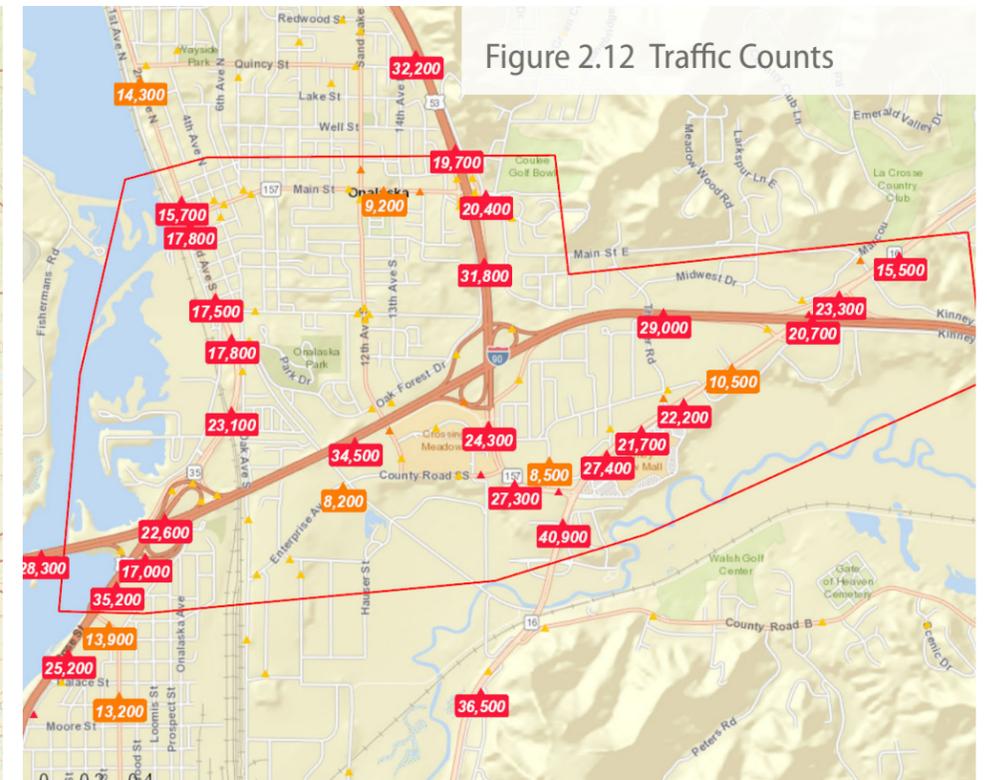


Figure 2.12 Traffic Counts



**Gap Analysis**

A gap analysis looks at the amount of spending that would be expected in an area based on population and population characteristics. It is then compared to the amount of spending that actually occurs in the same geographic area. If the gap is positive, it means spending is coming into the community. If it is negative, spending is leaving the community.

The gap analysis of Onalaska show an incredibly strong retail destination. In almost every retail category, the spending in the city outpaces what would be expected based solely on the population.

The implications of the leakage/surplus analysis suggest two things: retail is strong in Onalaska, but

there may not be much unmet demand in the city (opportunities for new retail). Based on sales data, new retailers will likely have to identify specific needs, carve out a niche market, or out-compete existing businesses.

With the exception of e-commerce and vending (which is centered nationally around a very few set of cities) the businesses categories that are not meeting local demand within the city are:

- » Motor vehicle sales & parts
- » Gasoline stations

Neither one is completely absent in the community and both have implications for the urban design and

appearance of a community with regards to open street frontages, intense lighting, traffic generation, and potential sources of contamination.

**Market Driven Design Requirements**

Businesses in the State Road 16 corridor rely on high visibility and convenient access. The district is auto-centric and draws from a large surrounding market area. Paying close attention to parking and automobile circulation is key to the success of a number of businesses in the corridor.

**Key Takeaways on the State Road 16 Market Conditions:**

- » Exceptionally strong retail capture rate for the surrounding region.
- » Draws net outside spending in nearly every retail category.
- » Best retail location in La Crosse Region from a highway/access perspective at intersection of I-90 and US-53.
- » Low vacancy rates and rising rents (over 2x the average asking rent for retail space in La Crosse or Holmen) point to the strength of this area.
- » Differences in visibility, circulation, and access make some parcels more attractive for retailing than others.
- » Regional retail “cluster” strengthens the total retail draw of the area, and makes the area more resilient, but can mean increased local competition.
- » This area will be impacted by changes at the Valley View Mall.
- » The study area may be vulnerable to changing spending habits and e-shopping, but this has more to do with retail in general than this area in particular.

	<b>Local</b>				<b>Market Capture Rate</b>		
	<b>Demand</b>	<b>Sales</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>15 Min.</b>	<b>30 Min.</b>	<b>45 Min.</b>
General Merchandise Stores (452)	\$45,776,857	\$111,264,074	\$65,487,217	243.10%	60.6%	32.8%	20.9%
Food Services & Drinking Places (722)	\$27,858,336	\$54,115,504	\$26,257,168	194.30%	48.5%	26.5%	17.2%
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores (444)	\$17,649,185	\$41,714,826	\$24,065,641	236.40%	59.3%	31.0%	19.0%
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores (448)	\$11,233,512	\$27,467,948	\$16,234,436	244.50%	60.5%	33.0%	21.0%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores (451)	\$6,672,829	\$21,932,701	\$15,259,872	328.70%	81.1%	43.8%	27.4%
Health & Personal Care Stores (446,4461)	\$16,317,667	\$30,134,365	\$13,816,698	184.70%	45.9%	24.3%	14.9%
Electronics & Appliance Stores (443)	\$8,555,885	\$20,167,473	\$11,611,588	235.70%	58.4%	31.7%	20.1%
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores (442)	\$8,437,406	\$13,847,768	\$5,410,362	164.10%	41.2%	22.4%	14.6%
Food & Beverage Stores (445)	\$40,047,124	\$43,817,994	\$3,770,870	109.40%	27.2%	14.6%	9.2%
Miscellaneous Store Retailers (453)	\$10,046,180	\$11,692,054	\$1,645,874	116.40%	29.0%	15.5%	9.6%
Nonstore Retailers (454) E-shopping, Vending	\$7,490,885	\$715,505	\$-6,775,380	9.60%	2.5%	1.3%	0.9%
Gasoline Stations (447,4471)	\$30,332,092	\$18,285,164	\$-12,046,928	60.30%	14.9%	8.0%	5.0%
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers (441)	\$55,176,616	\$32,962,142	\$-22,214,474	59.70%	14.9%	7.9%	4.9%
Expected rate based on population (any rate above the expected rate suggests net inflow of \$)					21.1%	12.0%	7.4%



## Corridor Challenges & Opportunities

Through conversations with the CDA and key stakeholders in the corridor a number of challenges and opportunities were discussed regarding redevelopment. The following provides a summary of the key challenges and opportunities discussed (Figure 2.13). Additional information can be found in the stakeholder input section as well.

### Corridor Challenges:

- » Development/ Redevelopment
  - *Triangular shape of parcels creates inefficiencies in development*
  - *Multiple property owners make assembly difficult*
  - *Cross access agreements can put limitation on redevelopment opportunities*
  - *Signage and visibility requirements in lease agreements can hinder redevelopment*
- » Transportation
  - *A number of intersections experience heavy congestion, even high crash rates*
  - *The area is served well by the State Highway, but has a limited supporting public roadway network and relies heavily on private drives for development*
- » Parks, Trails and Open Space
  - *Limited park and open space features exist in the corridor, essentially only views of the La Crosse River Conservancy*
  - *Trail connections are incomplete*

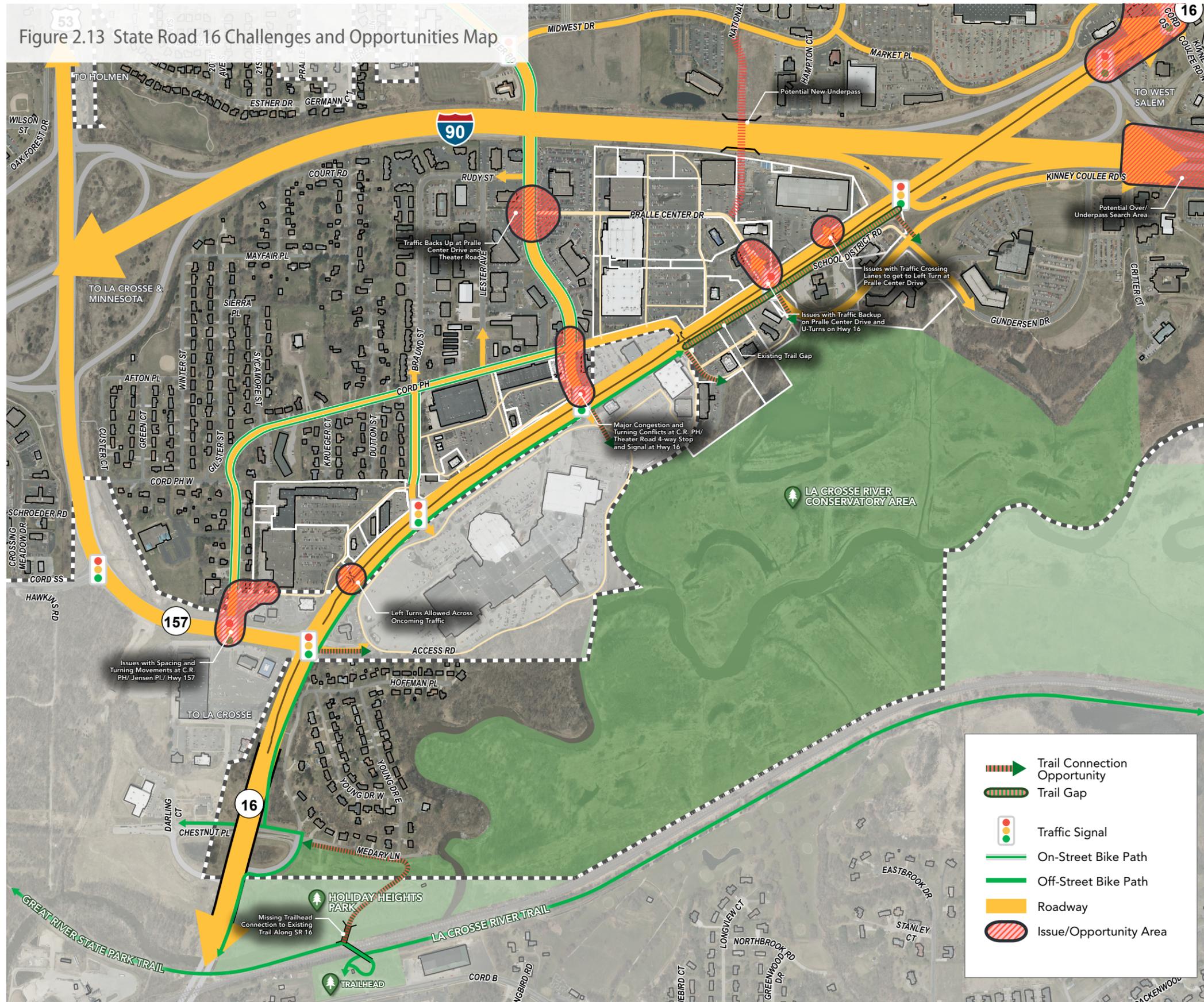
### Corridor Opportunities:

- » Development/ Redevelopment
  - *Over-parked surface parking lots provide an opportunity for infill development*
  - *Creation of unique shopping, dining and entertainment environments*
  - *Mixed use and high density housing*
- » Transportation
  - *Increase stacking distance to signalized intersections at State Road 16*
  - *Interconnect developments with public streets or enhanced private drives*
  - *Enhance streetscapes*
- » Parks, Trails and Open Space
  - *Complete a pedestrian and trail network to enhance connectivity*
  - *Additional connections across I-90*
  - *Create activated, programmed park spaces with redevelopment to provide an enhanced amenity*



Connections (visual and physical) to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area should be explored.

Figure 2.13 State Road 16 Challenges and Opportunities Map



# Stakeholder & Community Input



## Initial 2018 Stakeholder Input

As part of the planning process, the consultant team and city staff conducted two rounds of stakeholder interviews in 2018 with key property and business owners in the State Road 16 Corridor. Initial discussions centered on the issues these stakeholders see in the corridor today and what opportunities are possible in the future. The following summarizes these initial conversations in August 2018:

- » Most of the current property owners have had a long-term commitment to this retail corridor, remain confident in its future as a retail corridor, and expressed an openness to adjusting to retail's continuing evolution.
- » Retail tenants generally seem to be interested in downsizing their sq. footages, e.g. Best Buy, Shopko, Kohl's, smaller retailers. Impacts of this trend could be oversized buildings, single-tenant buildings becoming multi-tenant, and relocations.
- » The corridor is generally over-parked; a reduction to smaller buildings/spaces in the city's minimum parking quantity requirements (currently 6.7 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft.) could improve this situation and open up land for infill development opportunities.
- » Roadway circulation and access concerns. Potential improvements identified include redesign Theater Road/County Road PH intersection, add eastern connection to South Kinney Coulee Road, convert Pralle Road to a public street, State Road 16 reconstruction, roundabouts, and reduce cut-through traffic in parking areas.
- » Opportunities for the city to be more of a partner than a roadblock, e.g. reduce excessive parking requirements, improve roadway circulation/traffic issues, reduce requirements tied to property improvement projects (stormwater, landscaping).
- » The corridor's constrained size due to the bluffs and river valley limits the potential for retail expansion; some feel that the area does not have too much retail space and could attract additional retail businesses if there was expansion space.

- » Some infill/redevelopment opportunities include older oversized buildings, potential outlots along roadways, oversized parking lots.
- » Some infill/redevelopment challenges include cross access agreements, store sightline preservation requirements, lack of shared parking.
- » Interest in adding new development types to the corridor, e.g. co-working space, addition of retail store pick-up facilities, housing, entertainment, experience-based retail, personal service businesses that function more like retail (clinic, dentist, fitness).
- » Area is not pedestrian- and bike-friendly; limited pedestrian paths, trails, bike routes.
- » Major employment corridor, particularly with Gundersen Health campus, so corridor could cater more to employee-oriented businesses, amenities, and connectivity, e.g. convenient lunch restaurants.
- » Consider a TIF district as an incentive for reinvestment/redevelopment.
- » Potential for partnering with the City of La Crosse and the Valley View Mall on planning and redevelopment along both sides of State Road 16, creating a gateway for both cities and targeting mixed-use development.



Previous location of the Old Country Buffet building.



Existing retail along State Road 16.



While some traces exist, there is a lack of connected pedestrian and bike network facilities.





## Follow-up 2018 Stakeholder Input

A second round of listening sessions was conducted with the key stakeholders in the State Road 16 Corridor after redevelopment concept alternatives were created. The concepts explored new site redevelopment and roadway configurations. The following comments are from the second round of stakeholder meetings in November 2018:

### Existing Traffic Concerns

- » High cut-through traffic, high speed traffic and congestion in the corridor.
- » Traffic data needs including the specific data for traffic counts, congestion/length of backups, traffic signals at-capacity, fatalities, etc.
- » Vehicle circulation challenges in the State Road 16/Theater Road/I-90 triangle including:
  - *The Pralle Center Drive public road right-of-way only extends a short distance from the State Road 16 intersection*
  - *Access to Pralle Center businesses and Marsh View Center businesses but no public roadway connection between these two retail centers and Farm & Fleet.*
  - *Pralle Center Drive is being used by cut-through traffic avoiding congestion on Theater Road and State Road 16, such as Gundersen Health employees/patients. Pralle Center property owner has safety concerns about this private circulation drive being used as a public through street.*
  - *Blocking off of Pralle Center Drive by the property owner at times, which only worsens traffic on State Road 16 and Theater Road.*

### New Public Roadways

- » Interest in adding public roadway(s) but it would be important to identify what value and who values from any new public roadways, e.g. north-south underpass of I-90, conversion of private Pralle Center Drive to a public roadway.

### New East-West Backage Roadways

- » Some support for developing an east-west backage road on the north side of State Road 16 in conjunction with targeted redevelopment along State Road 16; skeptical that a backage road

on the south side of State Road 16 is feasible due to the adjacent river valley ridge.

### Excess Parking

- » Interest in reduction in the city's zoning code requirements for minimum number of parking spaces.

### Redevelopment Interest

- » Seems to be greater for sites closer to State Road 16 and smaller sites rather than the larger retail buildings further from State Road 16. For example, TGIF's lease is expiring in two years, infill of excessive surface parking lots, East Town Plaza impacts from Theater Road improvements, redevelopment tied to creating a new east-west backage road.

### Redevelopment Skepticism

- » Concern that market for mixed use or multi-family residential redevelopment may not be realistic in a smaller and lower density market like Onalaska; recommend looking for redevelopment precedents in comparable metro areas rather than large metro areas. Due to existing traffic issues, seems like it could be difficult to add development and go vertical with redevelopment.

### Desirable Area Amenities

- » Need to identify what amenities would be needed for attracting mixed use/multi-family redevelopment, e.g. walk/bike environment, tram/trolley/circulator, green space/park, connections to natural area such as La Crosse River Valley, etc.

### Valley View Mall's Store Closings

- » Would be beneficial to have a better understanding of Valley View Mall property owner's current thinking and potential future strategies. (City of La Crosse staff has not had much feedback from the owners.)
- » LADCO is interested in making financial and technical contributions to address issue of store closings.

### City of La Crosse Collaboration

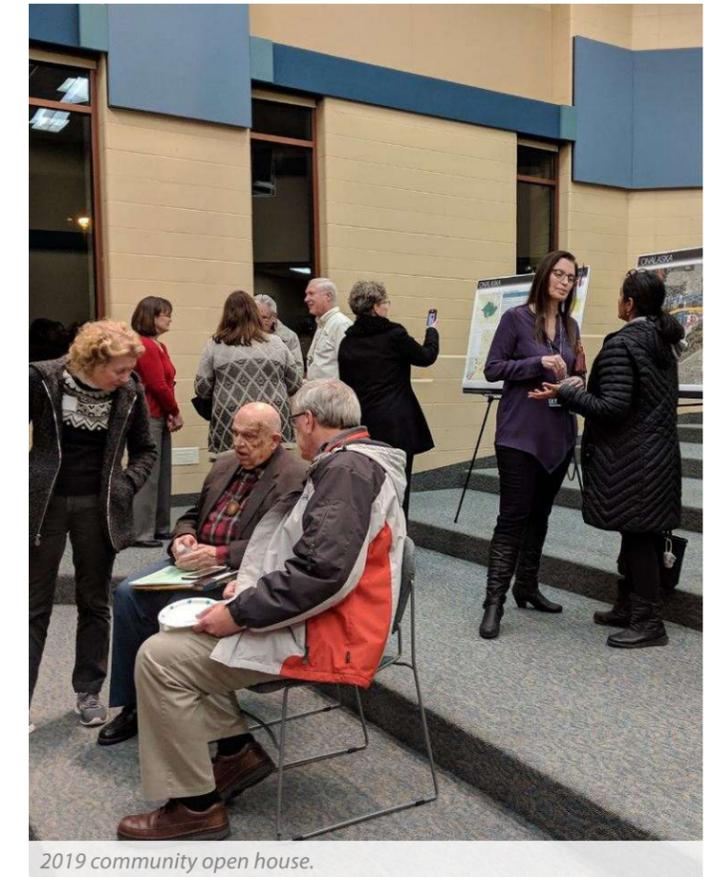
- » May have interest in partnering with Onalaska on area improvements or building upon them, e.g. adding pedestrian-friendly amenities, updating zoning regulations for mall site to increase development flexibility, particularly mixed use.



## 2019 Community Open House

A community open house was conducted in January 2019 to review the preliminary recommendations for the State Road 16 Corridor and the Downtown/ Highway 35 Corridor. The focus of the conversation was around transportation improvements (intersection safety, signal timings, etc.) and desired land uses (primarily retail & restaurants) in the corridor. Specific comments included:

- » Too many accidents at County Road HS and State Road 16
- » Consider no left turns and/or a round-a-bout at Theater Road and Prolle Center Drive
- » Farm and Fleet is impossible to access by foot or bike
- » Try to bring employers that bring in good wages to employees
- » Movie theater needed in the corridor, at the Valley View Mall?
- » Noodles and Company would be great!



2019 community open house.

## Summary of Public Meeting Notification for January 8, 2019 Open House

### Formal Meeting Announcements:

- » Common Council on December 11th, 2018
- » CDA on December 12th, 2018

### Social Media:

- » Event information promoted through Onalaska's Park & Recreation, Police Department, and Fire Department Facebook pages

### Press Release:

- » Sent on 12/31/18 to all news media (television, newspaper, and radio) promoting the event
- » Sent on 1/4/19 on Irving Pertzsch Elementary School Email Mailing List

### Individual invites to Onalaska Common Council, Committees, Boards, and Commissions:

- » Common Council, Long Range Planning Committee, Great River Landing Committee, Park & Recreation Board, Plan Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Community Development Authority

### Paper Flyers:

- » Installed at various department offices in City Hall

### Mailings:

- » Letter to over 500 residents/business owners in "Downtown Onalaska" area on 12/14/18. Postcard reminder to same list on 12/27/18



# Redevelopment Framework



## Approach to Redevelopment

The State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study outlines an approach for redevelopment in Onalaska's primary commercial district that responds to the realities of the marketplace as areas, stakeholder and community leader feedback. The redevelopment planning framework positions the Corridor as a vibrant commercial and evolving mixed use district over the long-term.

This chapter outlines the "Big Ideas" driving the transformation of the area over the next ten to twenty years. These "Big Ideas" are encapsulated in the Redevelopment District Diagram (Figure 4.1), the corresponding precedent examples, the Redevelopment Opportunities Diagram (Figure 4.2) and the subsequent redevelopment initiatives. The redevelopment initiatives are organized around three primary categories: redevelopment/ development; transportation; and parks, trails and open space.



*Mixed use redevelopment should be planned for portions of the Corridor.*

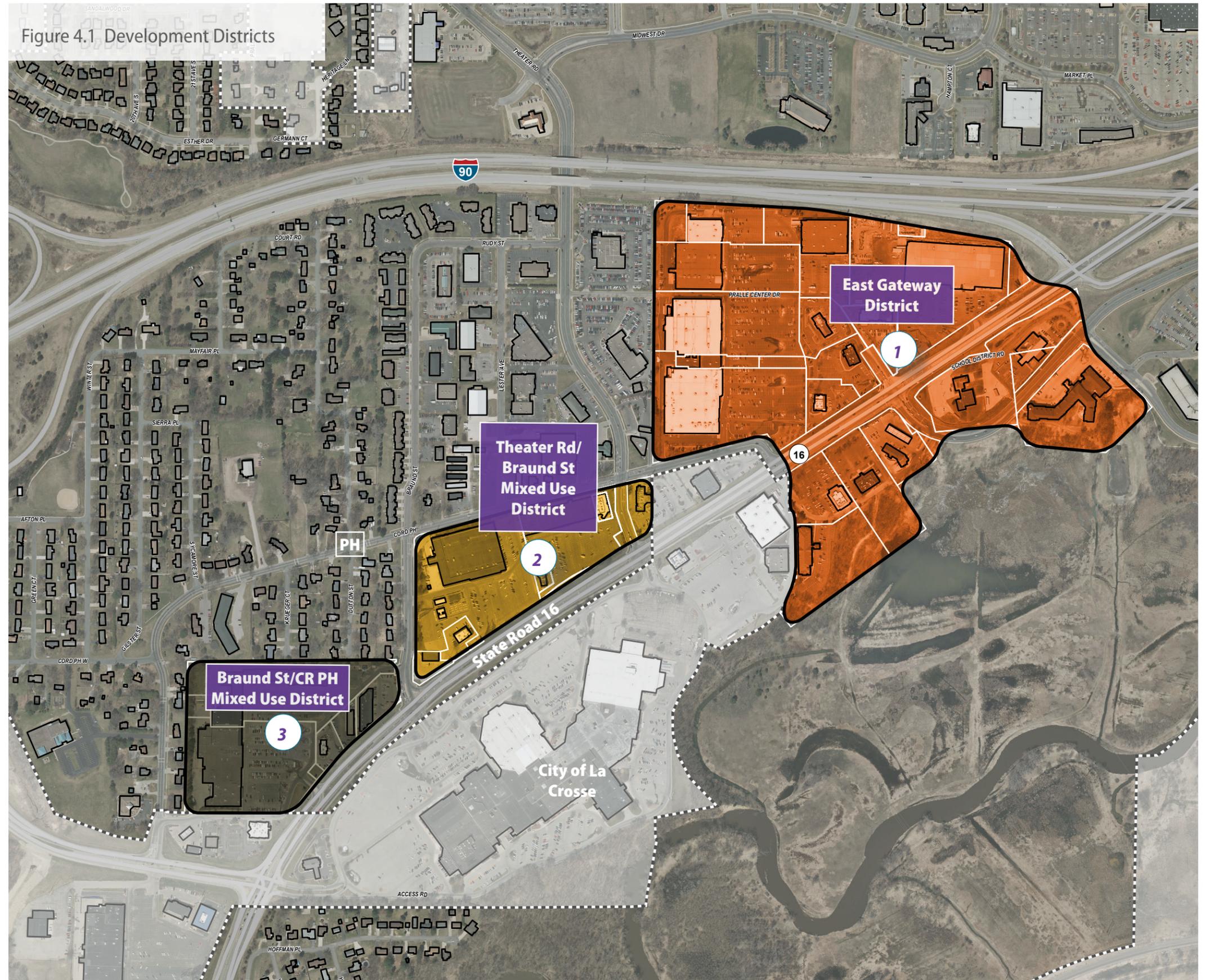


## A Collection of Districts

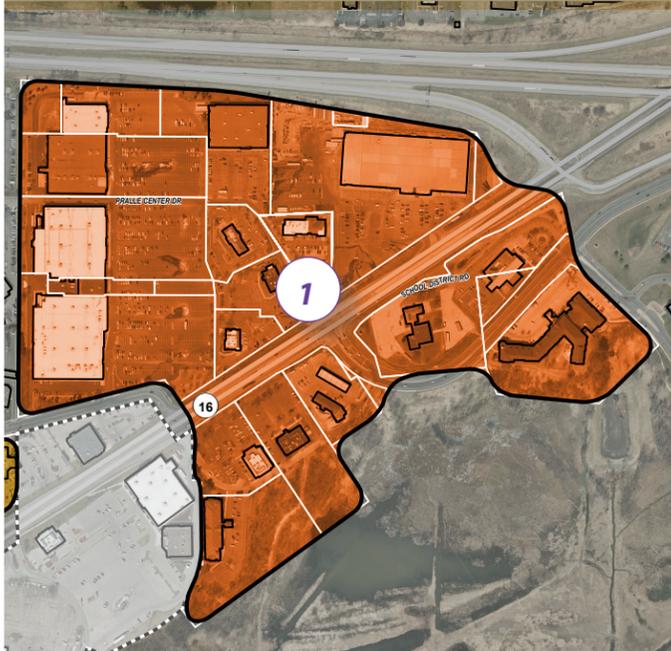
The redevelopment Master Plan organizes similar land uses and urban design relationships by a series of districts (Figure 4.1). These districts; The East Gateway District; Theater Road to Braund Street District; Braund Street to County Road PH District each have unique characteristics based on their existing uses, parcel shapes and sizes and relationship to their surrounding uses and the broader roadway network. The following is a summary of the unique characteristics each district exemplifies and a collection of aspirational precedent development projects that align with the desired characteristics of each district:

### Districts

- 1 East Gateway District
- 2 Theater Rd/Braund St Mixed Use District
- 3 Braund St/CR PH Mixed Use District



## East Gateway District



### 1 East Gateway District

The East Gateway District is the largest of the three identified districts in the corridor and comprises roughly 60 acres of land on both sides of State Road 16. Unlike the other districts, the City of Onalaska owns land on both sides of State Road 16, providing a strong gateway opportunity off of Interstate 90. Larger commercial uses exist on the west side of the road on approximately 44 acres, while on the east side of the road smaller, individual sites exist near the intersection of Kinney Coulee Road S.

Key recommendations for the East Gateway District include:

- » Maintain focus on commercial / retail redevelopment and reinvestment
  - This area will likely remain a regional retail destination due to its proximity to Interstate 90 and Interchange #5
- » Retain large format, destination retailers and supporting retail development
  - Traditional big-box retail formats
  - Infill with organized pad site and in-line retail development

- Allow for exploration of expanded commercial, retail, entertainment and hospitality uses
- » Recognize this district as a major gateway to Onalaska and the greater La Crosse Region
  - Develop increased community and district branding
  - Provide enhanced wayfinding and signage
- » Enhance interconnectivity throughout Pralle Center development
  - Utilize new public streets or a refined network of private drives to enhance vehicular and delivery circulation and reduce congestion on the regional roadway system
- » Enhance connections (private roadways, trails and sidewalks)

#### Project Precedent Types:

As part of the planning effort the consultant team studied two project precedent development types to replicate in this district, primarily on the western side of the district.

“Power Centers” are often anchored by larger format retail tenants with a combination of supporting inline retail and commercial pad development. Two specific projects highlighted were Central Park Commons in Eagan, MN, and the Fountains at Arbor Lakes – Maple Grove, MN, both of which have been redeveloped in the past three years. These recent developments provide an enhanced pedestrian realm with traditional, connected street design and pedestrian streetscape elements, yet still accommodate the parking demands for larger format general merchandise retailers.

“Lifestyle Centers” can often be characterized as higher-end shopping in a “Main Street”, or an inside-out mall configuration. These retail destinations often have a park once, shop twice model that includes a very pedestrian friendly walking environment with a number of ancillary amenities such as pocket parks, plazas and fountains to create

## Precedent - Power Center



Power centers are typically anchored by larger format retail, grocery, and/or entertainment.

spaces for community gathering. Two specific projects highlighted were the Shoppes at Arbor Lakes – Maple Grove, MN and Woodbury Lakes – Woodbury, MN.

## Precedent - Lifestyle Center



Lifestyle Centers provide a high quality pedestrian realm, walkable storefront shopping experience, with a dynamic mix of experience retail/restaurants and entertainment.

## CASE STUDY – Walmart Reimagined



Walmart, the country's largest general merchandise retailer, has embarked on a retrofit of portions of the land within and adjacent to existing stores to create elements of "town centers" to create additional development and enliven and activate underutilized portions of the property. As discussed with Stakeholders in the corridor, opportunities are present to add additional development in over-parked surface parking lots. Many of the key elements of the Walmart Reimagined story could fit well in the State Road 16 Corridor.

### Walmart Reimagined Key Elements:

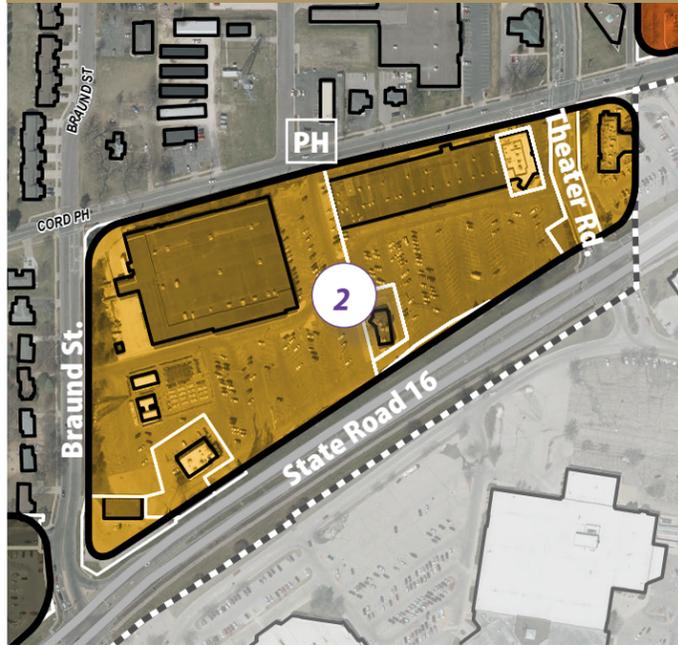
- » Community Connectivity – sites will feature paved pathways connecting to the community for consumers who prefer to walk or bike to destinations
- » Wellness – a mix of healthy destinations
- » Food & Beverage – diverse dining activities
- » Entertainment – carefully curate mix of entertainment featuring cinemas, bowling, golf, arcades and outdoor activities
- » Recreation – a mix of activated green spaces and family oriented experiences
- » Essential Services – a mix of essential services such as fuel, daycare and pet-care
- » Mobility Hub – sites will feature a Mobility Hub to connect the site with its community. Features will include 3<sup>rd</sup> party rideshare options, bike rentals and bus stops
- » Retail Tenants – carefully curated mix of local, regional and national tenants in an active setting, including inside the building

Critical elements to making these types of improvements in the recaptured parking lot areas of the larger format big-box users in the State Road 16 Corridor will require strong connections to surrounding areas and strategic placement of buildings. The redesign of drive isles to feel more like downtown scale streets and the use of sidewalks and trails will create a more desirable pedestrian realm, while the clustering of buildings will create a walkable destination and afford opportunities for outdoor dining and spaces for social interaction.

Copyright MMA & Walmart 2018  
 Images by Massa Multimedia Architecture (MMA)

<https://www.walmartreimagined.com/>

## Theater Rd/Braund St Mixed-Use District



### 2 Theater Road/ Braund Street District:

The Theater Road/ Braund Street District is approximately 15 acres of irregularly shaped land. Bound by State Road 16 to the south, County Road PH to the north, Theater Road to the east and Braund Street to the west this district provides a unique opportunity to explore mixed use development and the introduction of residential land uses into the corridor. Comprised of two larger land owners and three smaller pad sites there are opportunities for site assembly and redevelopment of all or portions of this district in the future. Access management and internal circulation are critical aspects to redevelopment in this location and will likely involve upgrades to the surrounding roadway network and changes in traffic patterns.

Key recommendations for the Theater Road/ Braund Street District include:

- » Creation of a more urban, or village like development pattern
- » Maintaining commercial vitality on the site
- » Introduction of vertical mixed use and/or high density residential
- » With increased development intensity and density, explore options for structured parking integrated with development
- » Enhanced connections (public/ private roadways, trails and sidewalks), particularly across State Road 16 to the Valley View Mall site and the La Crosse River Conservancy
- » Create a activated park space to frame development and provide an amenity for businesses and residents.
- » Enhanced wayfinding, signage and district/ development branding

### **Project Precedent Types:**

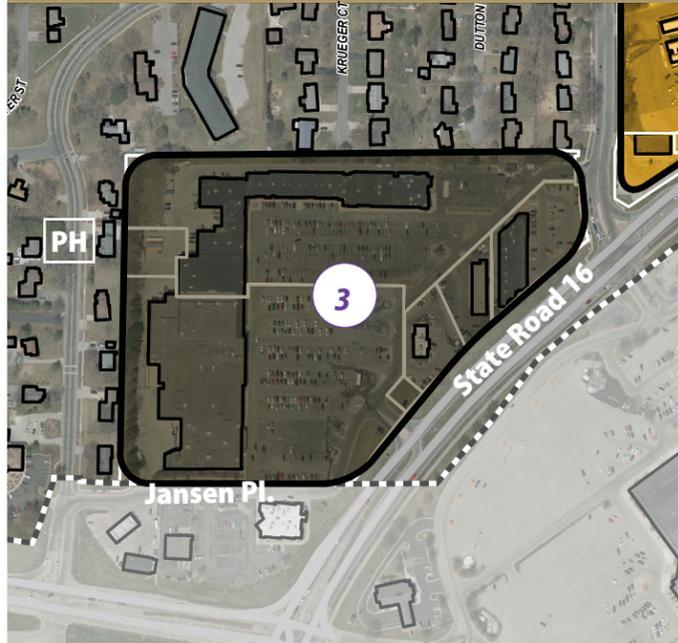
Precedents for this location could fall into the “New Town Village” category of development which essentially blends commercial, retail and residential into a more compact, pedestrian scaled development pattern. Typically these new developments are a mix of franchise and local tenants on the commercial/ retail end, with smaller professional office and service uses mixed in. Higher density housing such as apartments or condominiums can also be found surrounding the core development as stand-alone uses or vertically integrated above commercial uses. The Village at Mendota Heights in Mendota Heights was studied as a similar project precedent do to the overall development size, scale of development (2 story mixed use with surrounding 4 story residential).

## Precedent - New Town Village



New Town Villages are compact, urban developments with a quaint village character to buildings and the public realm.

## Braund St/CR PH Mixed Use District



### 3 Braund Street District / CR PH District:

Similar, but with more depth, and size (17 acres) and general shape, the Braund Street / CR PH District takes on similar characteristics to the Theater Road/ Braund Street District. This district however, is immediately adjacent to residential land uses to the west and north, creating more proximate land use adjacencies.

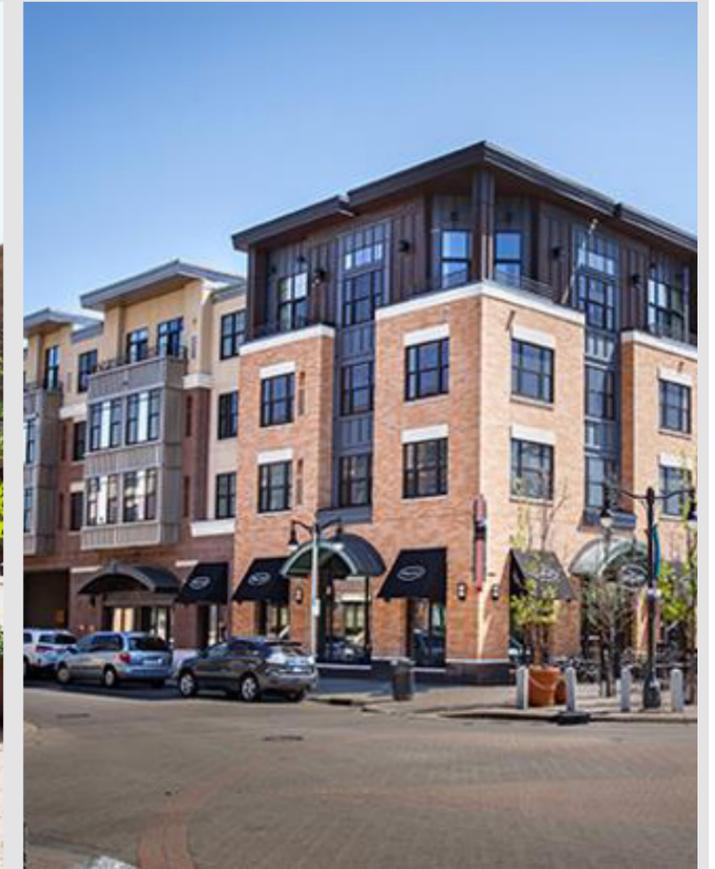
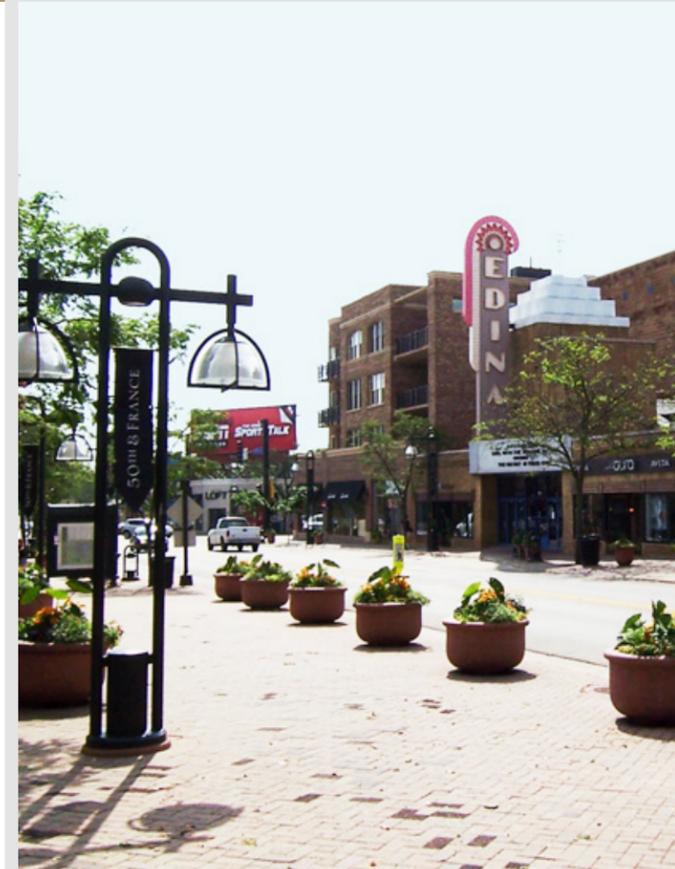
Key recommendations for the Braund Street / CR PH District include:

- » Creation of a more urban, or village like development pattern
- » Maintaining commercial vitality on the site
- » Introduction of vertical mixed use and/or high density residential with sensitivity to surrounding land uses
- » With increased development intensity and density, explore options for structured parking integrated with development
- » Enhanced connections (public/ private roadways, trails and sidewalks), particularly across State Road 16 to the Valley View Mall site and the La Crosse River Conservancy
- » Create a activated park space to frame development and provide an amenity for businesses and residents
- » Enhanced wayfinding, signage and district/ development branding
- » Coordinated efforts with the City of La Crosse on access improvements CR PH and State Road 157 and upgrades to Jansen Place
- » Respect adjacent land uses with appropriate screening or scale of development

#### ***Project Precedent Types:***

Again, The Village at Mendota Heights model was studied here, particularly how the commercial development is organized to maintain visibility toward the main highway and develop additional intensity (second story office and structured parking internal to the development). Organized retail pad development allows sightlines to uses away from the highway.

## Precedent - New Town Village



The following narrative represents the key initiatives for the State Road 16 Corridor organized by redevelopment, transportation, and parks, trails and open space initiatives and are graphically represented in Figure 4.2.



### Redevelopment Initiatives

- » Maintain progress on active redevelopment sites (Old Country Buffett Site, Fauver Hill School)
- » Infill remaining greenfield site at Gunderson Campus (Senior Housing)
- » Infill over-parked parking lots (Commercial/ Retail uses)
- » Intensify uses by repurposing over-sized buildings or subdividing
- » Integrate potential larger redevelopment sites with roadway improvements
- » Explore options for mixed use (housing, office, retail) with redevelopment
- » Continue on-going planning with the City of La Crosse in the State Road 16 Corridor (Valley View Mall Site)



### Transportation Initiatives

- » Explore options for new public roadways to enhance connectivity and reduce congestion at State Road 16 intersections, specific areas include:
  - Pralle Center Drive between Theater Road and State Road 16
  - Connection along the La Crosse River Conservancy Area
- » Explore options for overpass of I-90 east of Interchange #5 (State Road 16)
- » Explore the viability of a grade separated crossing of I-90 (roadway or trail) between Theater Road and State Road 16.
- » Creation of a "Parkway Road" along the ridgeline of the La Crosse River Conservancy Area (behind the Valley View Mall)
- » Creation of improved stacking distances for turning movements at key intersections
- » Integration of synced signal at County Road PH and Theater Road with signal at State Road 16 and Theater Road plus additional access management
- » Potential reconfiguration of County Road PH & Theater Road intersection with redevelopment and access management
- » Continue on-going planning with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation & City of La Crosse in the State Road 16 Corridor (access points, intersection controls, safety improvements)
- » Center turn lane improvements to improve safety and visibility (planned improvement project)



### Parks, Trails, and Open Space Initiatives

- » Enhance pedestrian and bike connectivity in the corridor
- » Create stronger pedestrian connections between businesses
- » Create safer crossings of State Road 16
- » Connect regional trail network through the State Road 16 Corridor and to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area
- » Consider the integration of plaza/park spaces with redevelopment to aid in place-making
- » Enhance wayfinding and signage to key park and trail destinations (La Crosse River Conservancy Area, Great River State Trail/ La Crosse River State Trail Trailhead on County Road B) as well as key bridges, underpasses and overpasses (Interstate 90) to strengthen connectivity in the district



Development character example image.

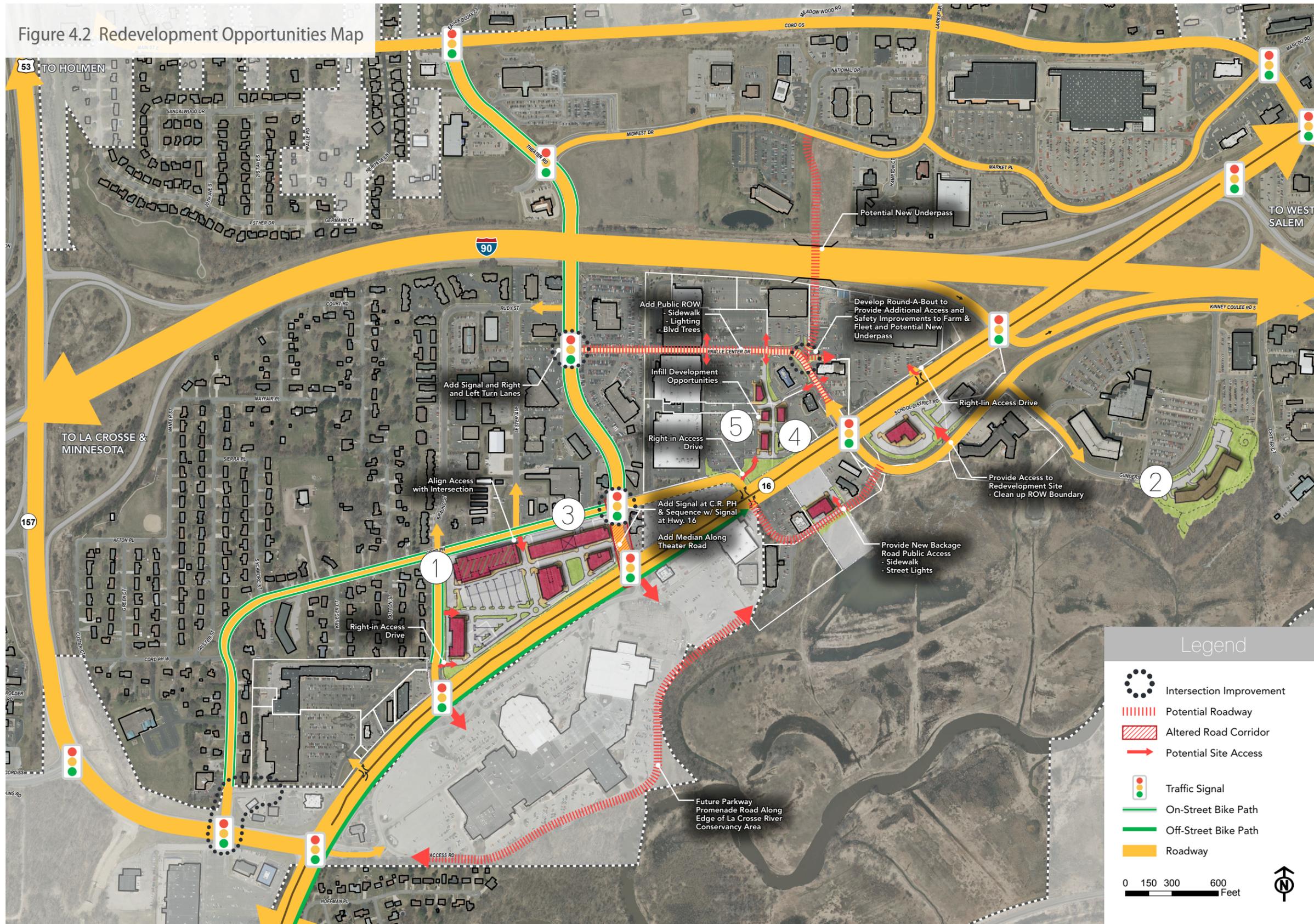


Development character example image.



Explore options for including community gathering with redevelopment.

Figure 4.2 Redevelopment Opportunities Map





# Implementation



## Keys to Implementation

Several factors will be crucial in successfully realizing the vision set forth by the City of Onalaska within this State Road 16 Redevelopment Study. These factors apply regardless of the actual form and timing of redevelopment:

### Patience

Transformation of the State Road 16 Corridor cannot be implemented overnight. The time frame for implementation reflects its evolutionary nature; it looks forward over a period of years. The desired change often requires the patience to wait for the right things to happen, rather than making changes simply to be seen as doing something.

### Commitment

Commitment to the State Road 16 Redevelopment Study and patience go hand-in-hand. This study does more than simply seek to attract new development to shovel-ready sites in Onalaska; it provides a road map to enhance the corridor over time. Commitment to the plan means the willingness to actively promote public and private investments that align with the objectives of the study. It also requires the willingness by decision makers to deter developments which do not meet the objectives of the plan. Not all of these decisions will be easy or will they occur exactly as analyzed in this study.

### Public & Private Partnerships

Removal of the physical and economic barriers to redevelopment in Onalaska will likely require some public financial assistance. The complexity of redevelopment envisioned for the area clearly demonstrates the need for public financial participation. Private investment will not be sufficient to pay for all costs associated with every redevelopment project. Strong public/private partnerships will make redevelopment projects more financially feasible, promote the desired types of development and build momentum in the area.

However, the needs established in this study do not make public financial assistance an entitlement. Ongoing planning will define the nature of assistance and amount available for each step throughout the implementation process. This approach ensures that public monies are used to achieve desired public outcomes and not simply make development more affordable (or profitable) for the developer.

### Financial Reality

Implementing the State Road 16 Redevelopment Study requires careful investment of public funds, but the private side of the financial equation must not be overlooked. New development and existing businesses will pay for their portion of the improvements called for in the study. Implementing the State Road 16 Redevelopment Study seeks to balance the investment in public initiatives with the creation of a financial environment that sustains successful businesses.

### Strategic Investments:

If financial support for the plan was unlimited, the need for strategic decisions would be less important. With limited funds, every expenditure is crucial. It is not possible to immediately undertake all of the initiatives described in this study. Needs and opportunities not contemplated in the study may arise in the future. Every investment must be evaluated for its impact on enhancing the State Road 16 Corridor.



## Roles & Responsibilities

There is a temptation to give sole responsibility for implementation of the State Road 16 Study to the City of Onalaska. Many of the powers and resources needed to undertake the actions described in this Study are held by the City. The success of the State Road 16 Corridor cannot be made the only by responsibility of City government. Achieving the vision for the corridor requires ongoing collaboration of both public and private

stakeholders. This section describes the roles and responsibilities of key parties.

### Business and Property Owners

While the City influences the physical setting, the State Road 16 Corridor remains a place of private activity. Individual businesses determine the type of goods and services available in the corridor. Individual businesses make decisions about how they operate. Property owners decide how to maintain and improve their buildings. Individual property access, cross access agreements and internal circulation drives are relied on heavily for circulation. Each of these factors plays a role in the long-term success of the corridor.



State Road 16 existing retail.

### City of Onalaska

The ultimate responsibility for implementing the recommendations of this redevelopment study rests with the City of Onalaska. The Common Council and CDA will provide direction on staff resources, review of proposed development projects and approve public investments. Responsibility for managing redevelopment in the State Road 16 Corridor will be a priority for the CDA and the Planning / Zoning and Engineering Departments of the City.

### **Planning / Zoning Department**

The Planning / Zoning Department will share a lead role in managing implementation for the City. The actions to be taken by the Planning / Zoning Department to implement the study include:

- » Application of land use controls and redevelopment guidelines to shepherd private development;
- » Review of development plans and proposals;
- » Coordination of planning for capital improvements needed to facilitate redevelopment; and
- » Creation of financial plans for public redevelopment investments and continued monitoring.

### **Engineering Department**

The Engineering Department also plays a major role through the design of public infrastructure (utility and roadway) improvements needed to support development and redevelopment in the State Road 16 Corridor. The Engineering Department is a key player in planning for future roadway and transportation improvements, including ongoing conversations with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WIDOT) on State Road 16 safety improvement projects and potential future intersection improvements along the corridor. The Onalaska Engineering Department will also work closely with WIDOT and City of La Crosse Engineering staff regarding transportation enhancements and access controls along State Road 16 at key intersections such as South Kinney Coulee Road, Theater Road, Braund Street and County Road PH.

### **Community Development Authority (CDA)**

The State Road 16 Corridor is an important location for economic development and job creation in the City of Onalaska. The CDA will maintain redevelopment momentum and monitor the Valley View Mall situation and potential impacts. The CDA will need to determine their specific roles for a coordinated effort with the Common Council. Several

potential CDA actions make them an important player in the successful implementation of the plan:

- » Provide a framework for coordinating efforts of the community. With limited resources, it is essential that the community work in unison to undertake redevelopment. The knowledge and experience gained from the planning process allows CDA members to efficiently and effectively take steps needed to implement core objectives of the study.
- » Work to ensure that economic development initiatives within Onalaska are a recognized priority for Common Council members.
- » Maintain an active role. Actively pursuing critical properties for redevelopment or educating business owners on improvement or reinvestment programs with low interest loans should be continued and expanded roles for the CDA.
- » Create an annual redevelopment “action plan” and report summary to help monitor progress toward implementation. This action plan would outline key steps to occur during the year, including descriptions of actions, responsible parties and funding resources. It forces the parties to not only consider what needs to be done in the coming year, but also why identified steps that were not taken in the prior year.
- » Work with business owners and landlords to promote and help finance the maintenance and revitalization of businesses (both buildings and site property) in the State Road 16 Corridor.
- » Host annual developer roundtables or site tours showcasing the potential of Onalaska sites to perspective developers.
- » Recognize the individual assets of the three primary locations (East Gateway, Theater Road/ Braund Street, and Braund Street/ County Road PH) for economic development and steer the appropriate uses to those areas.
- » Provide guidance to the City to ensure that proposed development projects and public improvements are consistent with the study.
- » Promote development projects with sustainable design practices.

- » Continue to find the appropriate funding options for various redevelopment projects.
- » Collaborate with private brokers marketing Onalaska sites and leveraging joint marketing efforts.

### **Plan Commission**

The Plan Commission has the lead responsibility for evaluating the application of land use controls needed to implement the Study. The Plan Commission advises the Common Council on issues involving the establishment of and compliance with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the zoning, subdivision, and sign ordinances. The Commission also reviews residential, commercial, and industrial development proposals and makes recommendations to the Common Council according to the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan and requirements of the zoning, subdivision, and sign ordinances. The Plan Commission plays a key role in integrating the State Road 16 Corridor Study with the update of the Comprehensive Plan and Unified Development Code.



Members of the community gathering at an open house in January 2019.

### **Common Council**

The Common Council sets the foundation for implementing this study consistent with the overall mission of the City. While other bodies (Plan Commission and CDA) play key roles in the implementation process, important redevelopment powers reside with the Common Council. Among the powers that may be needed to undertake public initiatives in the State Road 16 Corridor are:

- » Allocate money in the annual budget to capital improvements in State Road 16 Corridor.
- » Approve the establishment of tax increment financing (TIF) districts.
- » Levy of special assessments for public improvements.
- » Issuance of general obligation bonds to finance redevelopment and improvement projects.

### **Community-at-Large**

The community of Onalaska must stay involved as redevelopment continues over time. The community must work together with decision-makers and provide the necessary input for any new development, while respecting existing land owners' desires and meeting the vision for the State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study. Ultimately, the community must:

- » Provide a singular focus for the study. The knowledge gained from the planning process will allow members of the community to efficiently and effectively comment on redevelopment proposals.
- » Continue public involvement. Continue to attend public meetings, or provide comments and suggestions to proposals as they come forward.



## Land Use Controls

The initial focus of implementation will be on actions needed to establish this Study as the official guide for development and redevelopment for the State Road 16 Corridor in Onalaska. These procedural steps in implementation involve the adoption of key policy documents and updated development controls.

### Approve the State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study

The first implementation step is CDA and Common Council actions to approve this Study. These approvals set the stage for subsequent actions such as amending the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances, capital improvement programs and the allocation of financial resources.

### Amend Land Use Controls

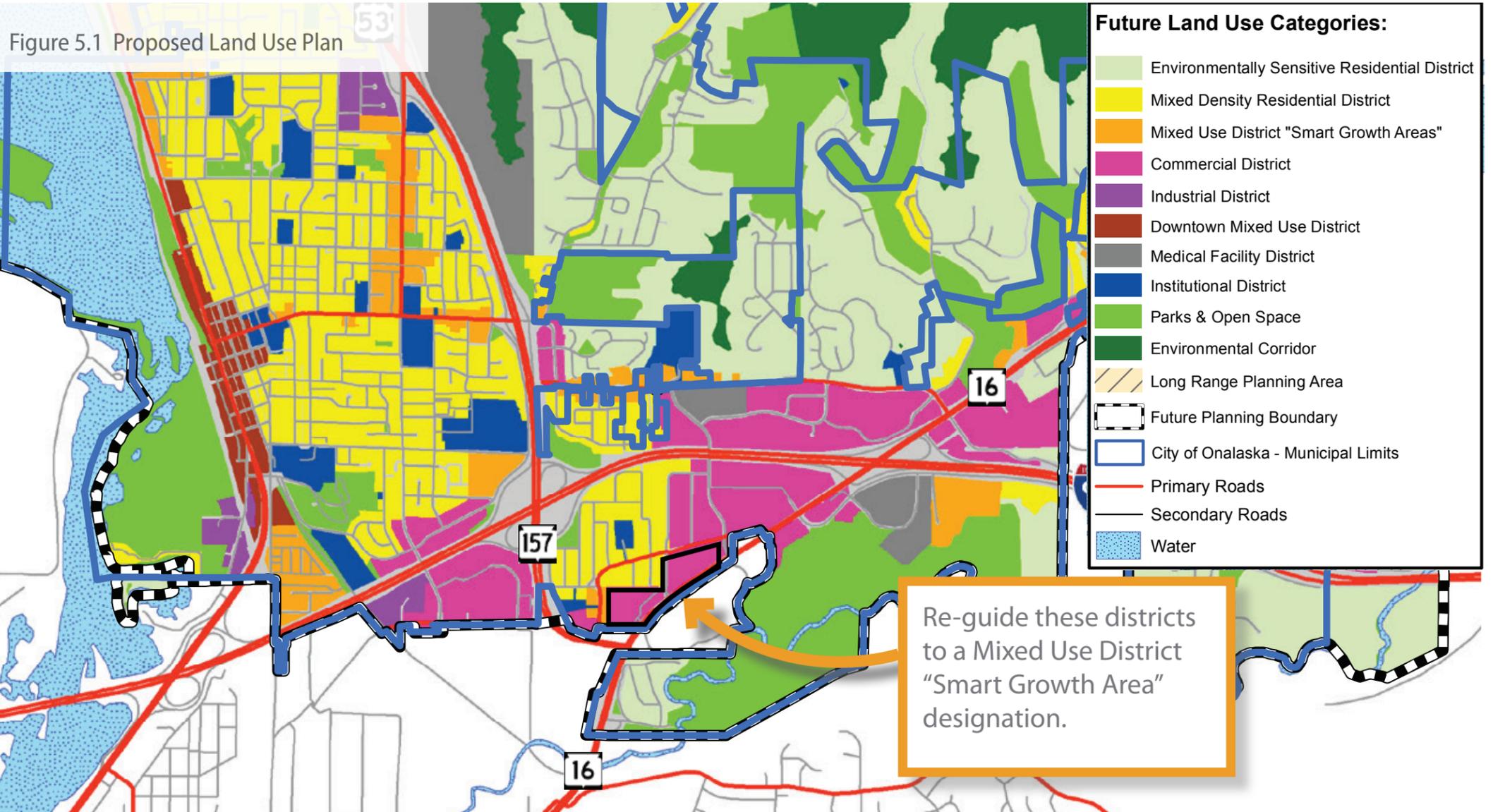
Study approval is the trigger for taking other actions needed to guide land use for the area in accordance with this document. Land use controls not only promote the desired development outcomes, they also prevent development that is not consistent with the study.

### Comprehensive Plan

The City will need to update the Comprehensive Plan with the new "State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study," including the recommended land use plan designations (Figure 5.1) and appropriate policies consistent with the vision of this Study. Amending the Comprehensive Plan creates the foundation for all other implementation actions. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan is a statutory requirement for zoning regulations, capital improvements and redevelopment projects.

### Zoning Regulations

More direct control of development comes from zoning regulations. The existing regulations



within the Light Industrial District (M-I) will require modification to conform to this plan. Part of the necessary modification is enabling the type and form of development proposed in this Study, for example, allowing vertical mixed use and residential use in portions of the corridor as well as refining the minimum parking space requirements.

The existing Light Industrial District (M-I) and Planned Commercial Industrial District (PCID) could be replaced with a new zoning district (B-3 District) consistent with the uses and design character identified in this Study. Key elements in this new district should recommend a reduced parking ratio

for commercial use and incentives for residential development. Zoning changes are likely needed in order to implement the State Road 16 Corridor Study. More detailed analysis and formal recommendation of any zoning changes will be handled by the City of Onalaska through the Unified Development Code update which is scheduled for completion at the end of 2019. Some of these updates could include a rezone of the Gundersen Campus to Medical Campus District (MCD) and the former Fauver School Site to a Business (B) District.



## Redevelopment Initiatives

Implementation of the State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study is not a single action, but a series of sequenced steps. These steps will be taken over time and across multiple phases. Initial focus should be on several implementation initiatives that lay the foundation for change. Active development projects on private property in the East Gateway District (the former Old Country Buffet site and Fauver Hill School site) and the potential infill and redevelopment in over-parked areas of Pralle Center will serve as models for future private development in corridor.

During the early years of redevelopment, there are several critical actions the City of Onalaska can take to reduce development constraints, allow for greater investment in public amenities and infrastructure and enhance the market viability of multiple locations. Suggested activities to enhance project success include:

### **Start small but with key catalytic projects:**

Strategically stage development so that it builds market momentum and so early projects act as positive demonstrations of great things to come in the corridor. Starting with small, achievable projects will demonstrate success. Additionally, finding a diversity of projects that are viable in the market place today will reduce competition within the

community. Allowing a strategic range of early projects should be guided carefully. Extensive examination as to which projects should or should not receive financial assistance should take place. Key steps to advance this initiative include:

- » Continuing the active redevelopment on the two active existing sites; the Old Country Buffet site and the former Fauver Hill School site owned by Gundersen Lutheran.
- » Identify additional redevelopment sites in underutilized surface parking lots through a parking study (in collaboration with existing property owners).
- » Link potential redevelopment sites with desired infrastructure improvements (see Figure 5.2) as redevelopment is proposed for larger sites, these are strategic opportunities to enhance redevelopment with improved access broader connectivity. These combined projects could include:
  - Farm & Fleet & Marshview Centre with the potential I-90 underpass, round-a-bout, and right-in only access configuration on State Road 16
  - Pralle Center with a new public east/west Road connection
  - Pathos Properties & Shopko sites with Theater Road

### **Build high-quality development:**

Directing and building high-quality commercial and residential development is critical to setting the table for future success. Early projects in the ground will provide the model for future development and establishing a high finish with proper selection of building materials will make great strides in elevating the image of Onalaska. Buildings should be respectful of adjacent properties and be designed with the appropriate scale. Both commercial and housing development should have a strong street presence and varied materials.

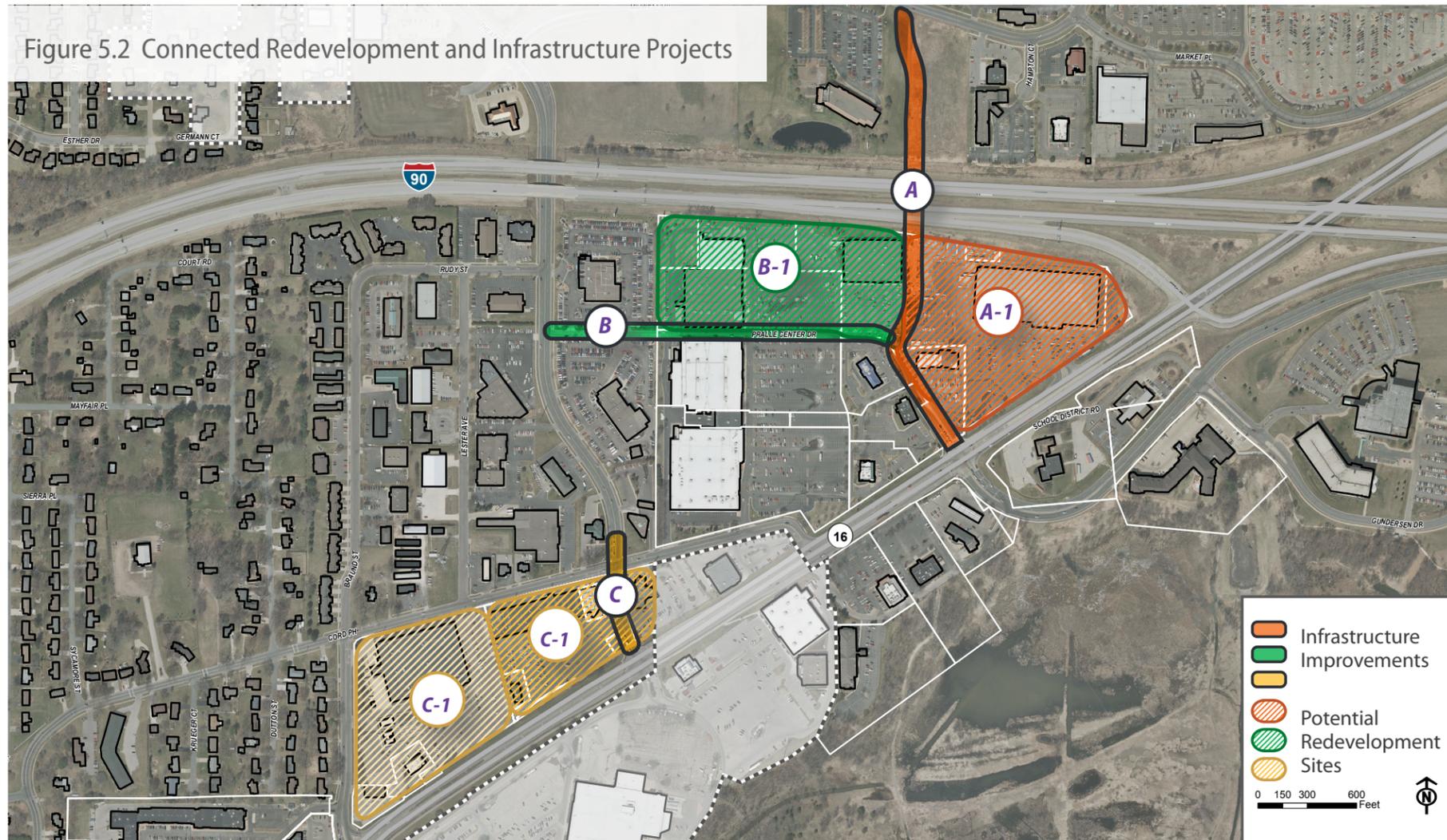
### **Build a high-quality public realm:**

Continued investment in the public realm, particularly along the main corridors of State Road 16, Theater Road, Braund Street, County Road PH, and South Kinney Coulee Road will provide an added boost to the creation of a unique destination, or district identity which will help to drive future market interest. The creation of new streets within the identified redevelopment districts and/ or the enhancement of existing private drives toward high quality streetscapes will aid in district identity and create a desirable experience. Additionally, stronger pedestrian links between existing neighborhoods and the La Crosse Area Conservancy and will also benefit the area as a whole over time with enhanced connectivity.

### **Enhance community identity and legibility:**

Expanding and enhancing district wayfinding and signage early in the redevelopment stages will create a unified and more legible / navigable environment for State Road 16 Corridor business patrons. Enhanced City of Onalaska entry monuments and streetscape along State Road 16, combined with development branding and monuments.

Figure 5.2 Connected Redevelopment and Infrastructure Projects



**Finalize update of the zoning code:**

Collaborate with property owners on appropriate parking requirements and the application of mixed use development in the corridor.

**Conduct additional transportation analysis:**

Leverage data from the WISDOT and/or conduct a detailed traffic study of the corridor prior to major redevelopment (this should occur for either the Onalaska or La Crosse side of State Road 16). The Theater Road, County Road PH and State Road 16 area should be a priority focus. Opportunities should be explored to increase the public roadway network or refine/ organize the private drive network to enhance district-wide circulation and create additional development sites.

**Continue integrated planning with City of La Crosse on the Valley View Mall:**

Beyond the integrated transportation planning in the corridor, the City of Onalaska should continue conversations with the City of La Crosse on its long-term redevelopment strategy for the Valley View Mall. Both communities benefit from a maintaining a vibrant and successful corridor.

**Connect to the La Crosse River:**

Visual connections to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area exist today along South Kinney Coulee Road. Strengthening physical connections to the La Crosse River Valley will require coordination with the City of La Crosse through potential redevelopment of the Valley View Mall Site. The "Parkway Promenade" road along the backside of the existing Mall could create a strong public amenity for the entire corridor and if paired with an additional pedestrian bridge crossing over the La Crosse River, create a strong connection to the Great River State Trail and the La Crosse River State Trail.

**Develop Architectural and Site Design Guidelines:**

Design guidelines serve as an important communication tool between the CDA, the City, property owners, business owners and developers. Aspects of the design guidelines are outlined as a part of Chapter 4 of this Study, and could potentially be incorporated into a new zoning district for portions of the State Road 16 Corridor (see previous section). Design guidelines could become a standard tool in evaluating proposed developments for the area. These guidelines should be rooted in the District Diagram (Figure 4.1) and Redevelopment Opportunities Diagram (Figure 4.2) and Redevelopment Initiatives. Application of desired (but not absolutely required) design guidelines could be connected to an incentive based approach whereby achieving certain design characteristics could lead to fast tracking entitlements or potential public financial assistance. Architectural guidelines, design of parking lots and private drives, as well as wayfinding and signage should be addressed through this approach.



**Tools for Public Investments**

The vision for the State Road 16 Corridor will continue to require investment by the City of Onalaska. As larger scale redevelopment opportunities present themselves in the corridor, the City may find public benefit with additional investments through the participation in private redevelopment projects. This section highlights the primary finance tools available to support public investments in the State Road 16 Corridor, both through public improvements and participation in private redevelopment projects. The primary finance tools available to cities are limited. This information is not intended to be an exhaustive guide, but rather a high level overview, a starting point, for further investigation. The use of these tools may be subject to requirements not discussed in this section. In addition, the statutes that govern these tools can be changed by the State Legislature.

***Tax Incremental Finance***

Tax incremental finance (TIF) is one of the primary development finance tools available to Wisconsin cities. TIF is simple in concept, but complex in its application. Through TIF, the property taxes created by new development (or redevelopment) are captured and used to finance activities needed to encourage the development. The city approved a TID for the Great River Residences Riverfront Redevelopment Project in February 2019.

TIF can be used to finance many actions needed to facilitate redevelopment, including land acquisition, site preparation, parking, and public improvements. In addition, TIF creates a means to borrow money needed to pay for redevelopment costs. The City can issue general obligation bonds to finance certain qualified expenses. These bonds may be supported with tax increments and other legally available revenues. The City has the authority to create a Tax Incremental District (TID) for a redevelopment site or area. The current value of all the taxable property within the defined TID boundaries is established prior to any redevelopment. New construction and

investment increases the property's value which results in increased/incremental tax value.

***Special Assessments***

Public improvements are often financed using the power to levy special assessments. The use of special assessments for the majority of public improvements is governed by state statutes. Essentially, special assessments are a means for benefiting properties to pay for all or part of the costs associated with improvements, and to spread the impact over a period of years. Special assessments can be used to finance public infrastructure improvements outlined in this study including streets, sidewalks and trails, streetscape, lighting and parking.

The method of spreading the assessments and the terms of the assessments are set by the City. Typically, the primary legal constraints on special assessments are:

- » The amount of the assessment cannot exceed the benefit the property receives from the improvement. The benefit is measured by the increase in property value.
- » The method assessment must be uniformly applied to the same type of property.

***General Property Taxes***

General property taxes can be used to finance many of the services, improvements, facilities and development activities needed to implement elements of the Study. Taxes may be levied through the General Fund, to pay debt service on bonds, and as a levy for the CDA. The ability to use property taxes provides another resource for the State Road 16 Corridor.

***Other City Funds***

While property taxes are the largest and most obvious source of City revenues, other funds may play a role in implementing the Study. The use of other City funds should be factored into capital

improvements planning and earmarked for State Road 16 Corridor. Some potential funding sources include:

- » Utility revenues. Monies from municipal utilities may be available to certain portions of the State Road 16 Corridor infrastructure improvement projects.
- » Park dedication fees. New development contributes money (or land) towards the creation of the local park system. Revenues from park dedication may be available to support park and trail improvements.
- » State aid for roads. The City receives money from the State for the construction and maintenance of roads. These roads must be part of the City's designated state aid street system.

### **Commercial Rehabilitation Loans and Grants**

Typically, through CDAs, cities have broad powers to facilitate the revitalization of existing buildings. State law also creates specific statutory authority for loans by cities. The City may establish a program to make loans to finance the rehabilitation of small and medium-sized commercial buildings. The program can be funded through the issuance of revenue bonds or obligations payable solely from all or a portion of the revenues derived from or other contributions to the program. Other revenues of the City (tax increment or tax abatement proceeds, for instance) could be used to assist the program.

### **Other Revenue Sources**

The City should continue to be informed and pay attention to other revenue sources that exist or may become available from La Crosse County or the State of Wisconsin or other sources. Redevelopment projects often rely on a myriad and ever-changing source of revenues and programs to achieve City objectives. The following are a list of Regional, State and Federal resources that provide grants and other revolving loan funds that efficiently link redevelopment, housing, jobs, services, and transit in an effort to create inspiring and lasting livable communities.

### **Regional Resources**

#### **Coulee Region Business Center**

The Coulee Region Business Center (CRBC) provides facilities, resources, mentoring and coaching to small businesses and entrepreneurs in the La Crosse area. The Center offers shared services and a network of professional assistance, giving entrepreneurs access to a wealth of business knowledge and support services. They can help you prepare your business plan, access funding, and market and grow your business.

#### **Dairyland Power Cooperative**

Look to Dairyland's Business Development Assistance and Economic Development Loan Programs. Site location assistance and an array of financing programs may be available for your new or expanding business.

#### **La Crosse Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau**

This non-profit organization represents the convention and tourism industries of the La Crosse/ Onalaska Area business community, actively marketing the area to tourists and meeting planners both nationally and internationally.

#### **La Crosse Area Development Corporation (LADCO)**

Founded in 1971, the La Crosse Area Development Corporation (LADCO) focuses on attracting businesses, retaining businesses, and they co-manage the Coulee Region Business Center. Services include: business attraction & retention assistance, site search/analysis, financial program coordination, assembly of private/public sector project teams, workforce development service, and regional transportation initiatives. LADCO also coordinates the Oktoberfest in the Capital event and the La Crosse Area Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club.

#### **La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)**

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization designated to perform transportation planning activities for the La Crosse and La Crescent Area. The main objectives of the LAPC are to develop and maintain a long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan and a short-range Transportation Improvement Program, and other regionally significant projects.

#### **La Crosse County Economic Development**

Find information on County industrial parks, available sites, economic profile, and their other business assistance programs, including their revolving loan fund program.

#### **Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC)**

Organized in 1964, MRRPC is a Commission of nine counties along the Mississippi River in western Wisconsin. The organization is charged with planning for the physical, social and economic development of the region. The Commission provides administrative and technical assistance to several community, county or multi-county revolving loan funds.

#### **7 Rivers Alliance**

The Alliance is a regional leadership group that boosts economic growth by fostering collaboration in western Wisconsin, southeast Minnesota, and northeast Iowa. The Alliance brings together public and private resources to forge entrepreneurial growth and serves as a clearinghouse of vital information to enhance quality of life in the region.

#### **UW-Extension La Crosse County**

The community and economic development agent can provide information and technical assistance on economic development in La Crosse County.

#### **Small Business Development Center**

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located at the University Wisconsin – La Crosse, is one of ten university-based SBDC's in Wisconsin. The SBDC mission is to provide learning opportunities and practical guidance to help individuals make informed business decisions. The La Crosse SBDC serves seven counties in our region and offers several types of services including seminars, customized in-house training, and individualized counseling.

#### **Xcel Energy**

Xcel offers a variety of programs and services for expanding companies or new industries wishing to relocate in their service area. They offer customized programs designed to help businesses and communities grow.



*Tax increment financing may be a tool for public financial assistance for redevelopment.*

## State Programs

### Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

WEDC is a public-private corporation that replaced the State Department of Commerce in 2011 and leads the state's economic development efforts. WEDC provides a number of programs and services focused on business and community development including:

- » Community Development Investment Grant – Funds may be used for building renovation, historic preservation, demolition, new construction, infrastructure investment, and project/site development planning. Grants are limited to 25% of eligible project costs, with a maximum of up to \$250,000, and grant recipients must provide a 3:1 match investment in project costs.
- » Brownfield Site Assessment Grant – Funds may be used to identify and quantify the degree and extent of soil, vapor and groundwater contamination.
- » Brownfields Grant - Funds may be used for brownfield redevelopment or associated environmental remediation activities such as environmental investigation, remediation or monitoring of the site; removal of hazardous waste containers; soil removal, capping, barrier installation and vapor intrusion systems; and demolition activities that will facilitate redevelopment in a brownfield project.
- » Downtown Development Programs
  - *Wisconsin Main Street Program – A free technical assistance program, rather than a direct funding program, provides training, façade renderings, small business consultations, and hiring of outside consultants to address topics such as business recruitment & retention, branding, historic preservation planning and event development.*
  - *Connecting Communities Program – Also a technical assistance program designed to provide training and networking for communities or organizations working on revitalization topics.*

### Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

WisDOT allocates federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds to transportation improvement projects that “expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment.” The categories of eligible TAP projects include: trail facilities for non-motorized transport; constructing safe routes for non-drivers; converting abandoned railroad corridors for non-motorized transportation; constructing turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas; community improvement activities; any environmental mitigation activity; the Recreational Trails Program; the Safe Routes to Schools program; and projects in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. All TAP projects are funded 80% federally, with a 20% local match. The minimum project cost is \$50,000 for non-infrastructure and \$300,000 for infrastructure projects.

### Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

WHEDA works with developers to finance affordable rental housing, and support economic development and agriculture through our small business guarantee programs. Look to them for New Market Tax Credits, Small Business Financial Products, and Multifamily Financing and Tax Credits.

(Source: City of La Crosse, 2018)

## Federal Programs

### Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

The low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program, created in 1986 and made permanent in 1993, is an indirect federal subsidy used to finance the construction and rehabilitation of low-income affordable rental housing. This program was created this as an incentive for private developers and investors to provide more low-income housing. Without the incentive, affordable rental housing projects do not generate sufficient profit to warrant the investment.

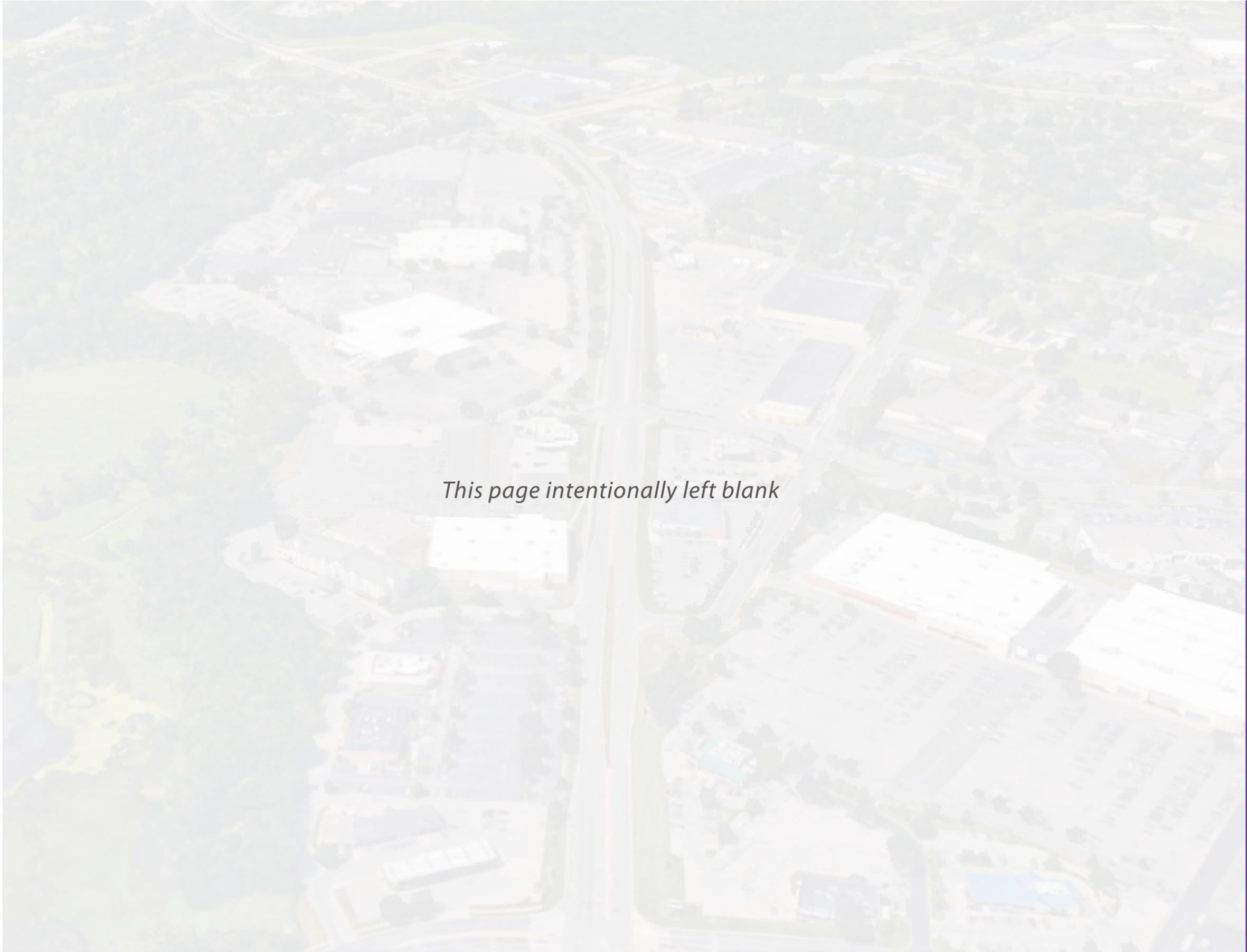
The LIHTC gives investors a dollar-for-dollar reduction in their federal tax liability in exchange for providing financing to develop affordable rental housing. Investors' equity contribution subsidizes low-income housing development, thus allowing some units to rent at below-market rates. In return, investors receive tax credits paid in annual allotments, generally over 10 years.

Financed projects must meet eligibility requirements for at least 30 years after project completion. In other words, owners must keep the units rent restricted and available to low-income tenants. At the end of the period, the properties remain under the control of the owner.

## Achieving the Vision

In summary, the State Road 16 Corridor Redevelopment Study outlines an approach for positive, incremental redevelopment, reinvestment and intensification throughout the area over time. The plan outlines a series of achievable goals over the next ten to twenty years with potential redevelopment projects have a reality in the marketplace today and provide a true foundation for transformation.

While the Study prescribes a detailed redevelopment approach for specific projects and likely steps, the plan is also flexible in its application to allow the City of Onalaska to adapt to an ever-changing marketplace. The Study should be utilized as a living document, continually referenced and checked against as development and redevelopment projects occur over time.



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# Downtown Redevelopment Study 2019



## Acknowledgements

### **Community Development Authority**

- » Mike Gargaro, Chair
- » Joe Bucheger, Vice Chair
- » John Lyche
- » Ann Brandau
- » Ron Johnson
- » Jim Olson, Alderperson
- » Jim Binash, Alderperson

### **Common Council**

- » Joe Chilsen, Mayor
- » Jim Binash, First Aldermanic District, Common Council 2018-2019 Council President
- » Jim Olson, First Aldermanic District
- » Diane Wulf, Second Aldermanic District
- » Jerry Every, Second Aldermanic District
- » Kim Smith, Third Aldermanic District
- » Ron Gjertsen, Third Aldermanic District

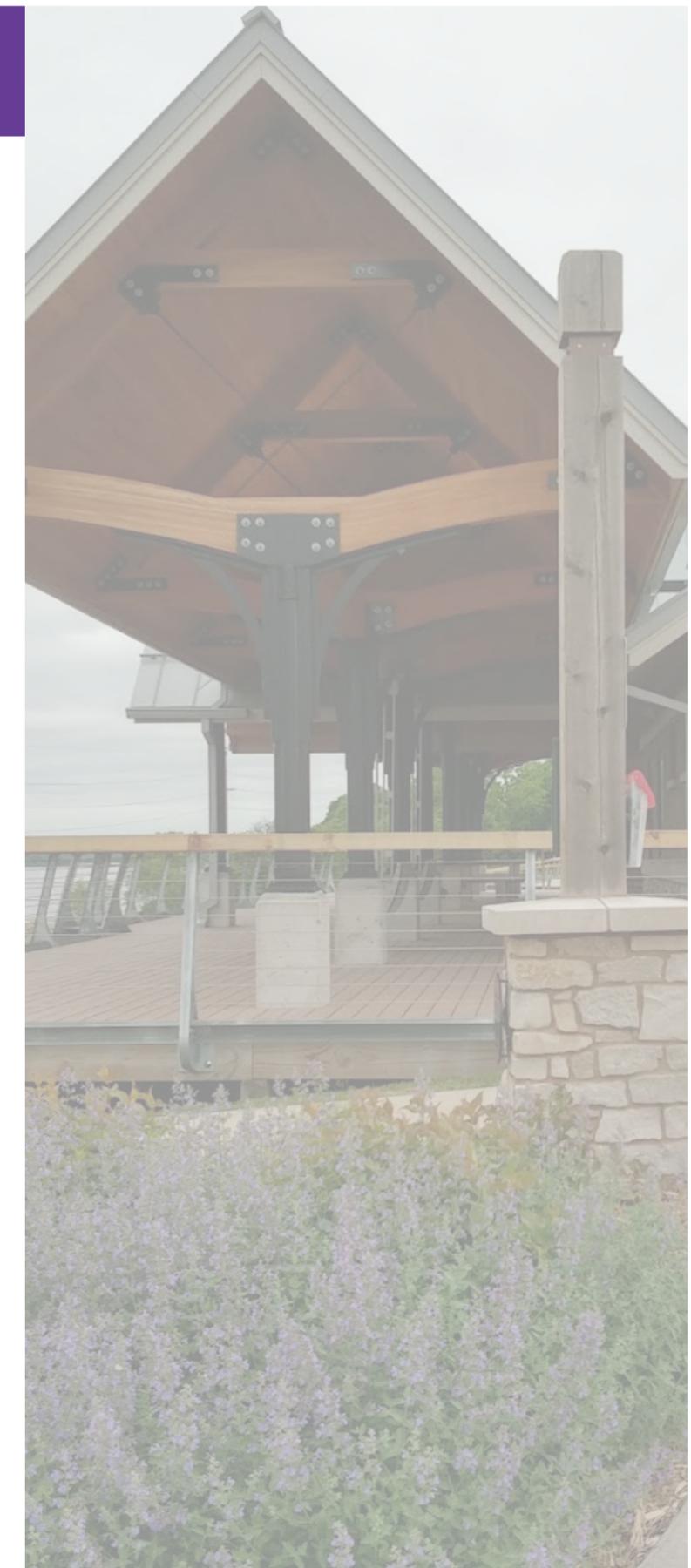
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# Project Background



## Purpose

Downtown Onalaska is continuing to become a desirable destination locally and regionally. A major transformation of the downtown core and its connection to the city's riverfront and the state trail is occurring through public and private initiatives. The purpose of this downtown redevelopment study by the Onalaska Community Development Authority (DCA) is to build upon downtown's revitalization momentum by establishing a framework for the next phase of downtown property redevelopment projects and public improvements.

Historically, while the city has experienced significant growth and prosperity, the downtown area lagged behind the rest of the city in terms of new investment and tax base increases. Similar to many cities, nearly all of the new retail development occurred at the city's edges, near the regional mall, and oriented to the major highways. While located adjacent to the riverfront, downtown is separated from the riverfront by the rail line and Hwy. 35 and its historic development turned its back toward the riverfront. In general, downtown lacked identity, connection to the river/open space, and was experiencing disinvestment. Onalaska functioned more as a pass-through area than a destination. In 2008, the river's natural landscape was not even visible from Main Street.

Downtown's environment has been improved dramatically in recent years with the reconstruction and widening of the Great River Road, development of the Great River Landing, Dash-Park, new commercial buildings and businesses, and revitalization of existing commercial buildings and businesses on Main Street. The Great River Landing's upland area encompasses major regional trail connections and trailhead facility, main street plaza, river overlook, and parking, as well as future plans for river's edge development and a pedestrian bridge providing a vertical connection between downtown and the river's edge. Downtown's mix of businesses now includes desirable restaurants, a wine bar, bike shop, specialty clothing & gift shop, and salon/spa/massage. As a result of these improvements, downtown now has an identifiable center and much stronger connection to the riverfront. Main Street now offers a wide and long vista of the beautiful river valley and its bluffs.

Beginning in 1994 with the adoption of the City of Onalaska Comprehensive Plan, the city has made a commitment to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of the downtown area and to take advantage of the aesthetic, recreational, and tourism opportunities afforded by the riverfront. Centering Onalaska was a major non-profit organization composed of businesses and citizens who further stimulated interest in downtown and riverfront revitalization.



Great River Landing trailhead.

The city's 1999 Downtown Onalaska Redevelopment Plan was the foundation for most of these improvements. With the current proposal by a developer for the redevelopment of the city garage site, the redevelopment sites identified in this plan will be completed. To keep downtown's revitalization moving, there is a need for the city to provide guidance for future redevelopment opportunities.

The vision for downtown is to continue its revitalization as a destination for Onalaska residents, La Crosse area residents, and regional visitors. At the same time, downtown has the opportunity to evolve into a unique neighborhood within the city that offers a greater variety of housing options with convenient access to commercial business, services, and recreation amenities. Downtown's center is where Main Street intersects with the linked open spaces of Dash-Park and Great River Landing. To enhance and leverage these downtown assets, the focus is to create a cluster of destinations surrounding this area through future redevelopment.



Rendering of Main Street to Great River Landing Trailhead

### 1999 Main Street Revitalization Illustration

- » Attract a greater variety of specialty retail, services, and tourist-oriented businesses
- » Storefront enhancements including signage, awnings, and large windows
- » Streetscape enhancements including streetlights, trees, planters, and sidewalk pavers



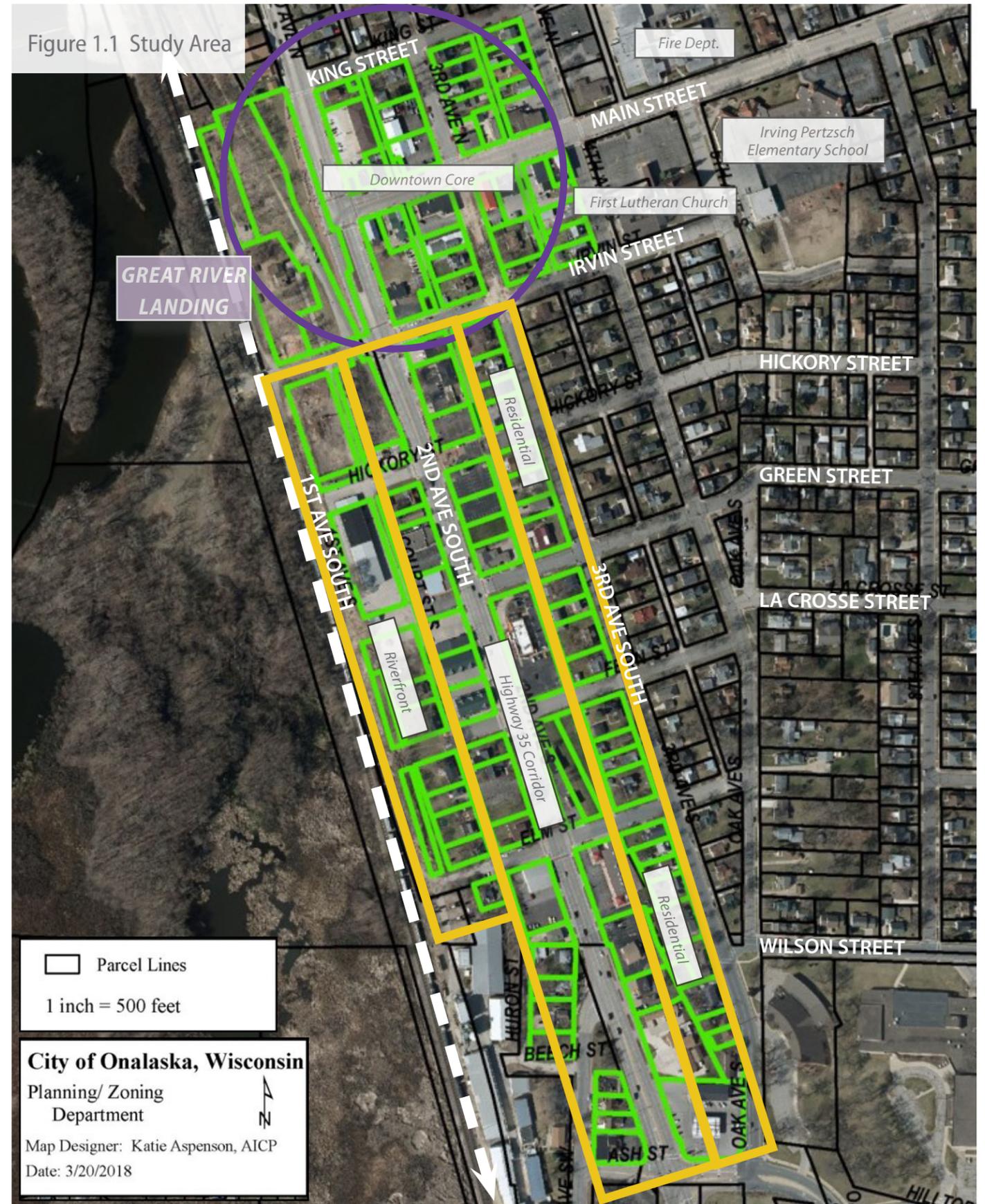
## Approach

The planning process consisted of three phases as follows (refer to figure 1.1):

- 1 **Phase 1 – Understand What Exists (July – September 2018)**
  - » Conduct Project Kickoff Meeting with CDA and City Staff
  - » Assemble Background Data
  - » Review Past, Relevant Studies
  - » Understand Future Market Potential
  - » Understand Current Issues and Opportunities
  - » Meet with CDA and City Staff (Background and Market Summary, Stakeholder Questions)
  - » Meet with Key Property Owners/ Stakeholders
  - » Meet with CDA and City Staff (Review Comments from Stakeholder Meetings)
- 2 **Phase 2 – Explore the Possibilities (September – November 2018)**
  - » Develop Redevelopment Concept Alternatives
  - » Conduct a Design Workshop/ Review Meeting with CDA and City Staff (Evaluate the Alternatives)
  - » Refine the Concepts and Prepare for Second Round of Stakeholder Engagement
  - » Meet with Key Stakeholders
  - » Meet with CDA and City Staff (Review Comments from Stakeholder Meetings)
  - » Conduct Developer Roundtable
  - » Meet with CDA and City Staff (Review Comments from Developer Roundtable & Provide Overview of Community Meeting Approach)
  - » Conduct Additional Developer Review
- 3 **Phase 3 – Refine to a Preferred Redevelopment Plan & Seek Approvals (December 2018 – March 2019)**
  - » Conduct Public Meeting (January 8, 2019 at Irving Pertzsch Elementary School)
  - » Meet with CDA and City Staff (Review Feedback from Public Meeting, Discuss Implementation Priorities, Review Outline of Draft Report)
  - » Prepare Draft Redevelopment Plan Report
  - » Meet with CDA and City Staff to Review Draft Report
  - » Refine Draft Document Based on CDA & Staff Feedback
  - » Final Redevelopment Plan to CDA for Approvals



Figure 1.1 Study Area





## Prior Planning

### 1999 Downtown Onalaska Redevelopment Plan

The City's current downtown plan was completed in 1999 by City Staff, the City's Long Range Planning Committee, and Centering Onalaska working collaboratively with a planning consultant. The plan has a larger downtown core study area, extending east to 8th Ave and Locust to Oak Forest, but its identified redevelopment sites were all focused near the intersection of Main St and 2nd Ave/Hwy 35. The key site redevelopment and public improvement projects recommended were:

- » Main Street Streetscape Improvements
- » Privately Owned Redevelopment Sites
  - Platz (Woolen Mill Site) and Skaff Properties west side of Hwy 35
  - Wiley and Wakeen/Harter Properties east side of Hwy 35 between Main St and Irvin St
- » Publicly Owned Redevelopment Sites
  - Police Department Site on Main St
  - City Garage and Shop Site on the riverfront (Court St)
- » Great River Trail Improvements and Routing
- » Sias Isles Marina Improvements
- » Wetland Conservancy Area Acquisition and Access Improvements

The implementation recommendations had a 5 to 10 year timeline, actual implementation has taken 20 years with the redevelopment of the last identified site (city garage site) anticipated to begin in 2019 or 2020.

### 2015 Great River Landing Plan

The Great River Landing Plan was completed in 2015. The project's goal was to develop a plan to revitalize the Onalaska waterfront by providing safe and accessible access to the waterfront with clear connectivity to the downtown and Main Street. The project involved the Mayor, Common Council, Community Development Authority, Great

River Landing Waterfront Committee, multiple City Departments, an urban design consultant, and numerous stakeholder groups.

The Great River Landing design concept envisions an extended Main Street to be directly connected to the waterfront. This connection will be achieved through a large pedestrian bridge and overlook that would span the railroad tracks to provide safe and accessible connection to the waterfront as a direct extension of Main Street. The uplands portion of the Great River Landing has been built, which includes a trailhead building with a visitor center, overlook, restroom facilities, parking (that could double as a farmers market), and Main Street Plaza for passive relaxation and enjoying views of the waterfront.

The planned lower waterfront portion of the project has been designed for both passive and active recreation. The proposed design concept includes a nature playground, picnic grove, log rolling boom, kayak launch along with other informal water's edge access, and a boardwalk system to connect the active area to the adjacent spillway.



1999 Riverfront Connection Concept Plan

- » Create vistas of the riverfront from downtown
- » Attractive and walkable connection between downtown and the riverfront
- » More trees and plantings along Irvin St



2015 Great River Landing Plan

- » Extended Main Street to be directly connected to the waterfront.
- » Connection will be achieved through a large pedestrian bridge and overlook spanning the railroad track

## 2016 Historical and Architectural Resources Survey

The purpose of this project was to provide a survey of the architectural and historical resources located within the City of Onalaska. This material may be useful in the development of a local preservation plan; to identify buildings, structures, sited and historic districts that meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; and to increase public and private sector awareness of the community's historical and architectural heritage. This 2016 survey resulted in identification of a total of fifty-five properties that meet current survey standards. No historic districts were identified. Of the total seven properties that were considered for National Register eligibility, six are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register. In the downtown study area, only two properties were identified to offer a sufficient degree of historical intrigue and/or architectural integrity to suggest potential for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The two properties are:

- » 201 Main St, Onalaska State Bank (1912)
- » 414 4th Ave S, Thomas & Mary Thompson House (ca. 1885)



### 2016 Historical and Architectural Resources Survey

- » Provided a survey of architectural and historical resources located in Onalaska
- » Onalaska State Bank (1912), 201 Main Street

The Onalaska State Bank building had previously been officially deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2011 and it is also listed as a City of Onalaska Historic Landmark.

Other downtown properties that are part of this survey are:

- » 205 Main Street, Luedtke Walgreen Agency, Inc. (1964)
- » 330 Main Street, Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge (1882)/Onalaska Lodge No. 214, F. & A.M.
- » 401 Main Street, Dickinson Funeral Home (1974)
- » 410 Main Street, First Lutheran Church (1954) and First Lutheran Church Education Center (1963)

## 2016 City Comprehensive Plan

The City's current Comprehensive Plan was completed and adopted in 2016. The City's Long Range Planning Committee served as the steering committee for updating the comprehensive plan with monthly meetings and coordinating feedback from the Plan Commission, city committees, City Staff, and the general public. The Comprehensive Plan includes the following chapters: Issues & Opportunities, Housing, Transportation, Utilities & Community Facilities, Agricultural/Natural/Cultural Resources, Economic Development, Land Use, Intergovernmental Cooperation, and Implementation.

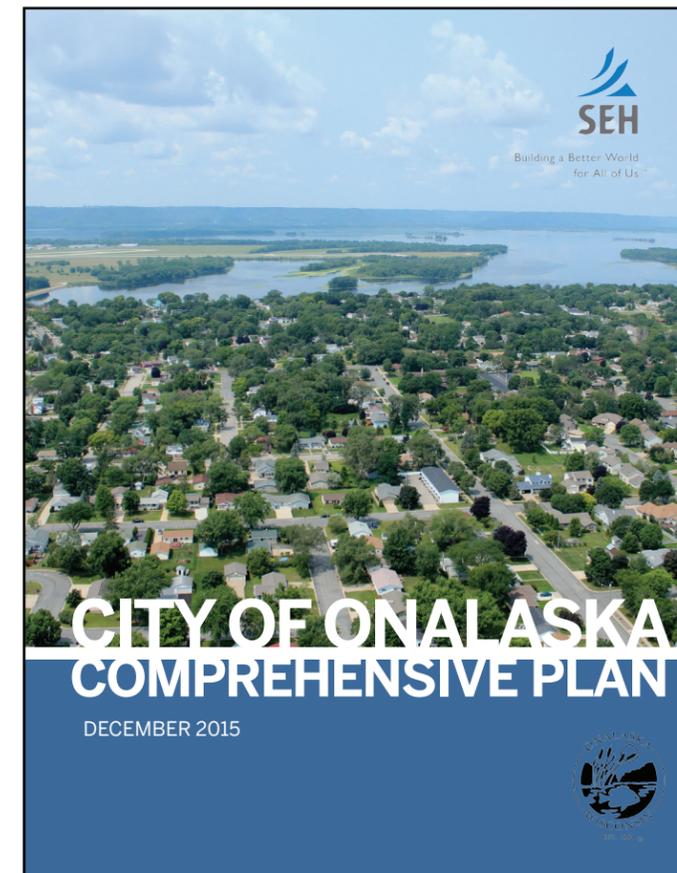
Key guidance for downtown from the 2016 City Comprehensive Plan includes the following:

- » The Future Land Use Map guides the entire downtown study area for the Downtown Mixed Use land use district.
- » One of the Land Use chapter's five goals is downtown-focused.
  - *Goal 2: Revitalize Downtown. Establish downtown Onalaska as a vibrant community and regional gathering place, destination, focal point, and source of city pride.*
  - *Objectives:*
    - *By identifying a core downtown area.*

- *By implementing the Great River Landing Plan.*
- *By promoting infill and redevelopment downtown.*
- *By ensuring the transportation system is adequately designed to serve the downtown.*
- *By ensuring that new development is well designed, high quality (materials), pedestrian/bicycle oriented, and environmentally friendly.*
- » The Economic Development chapter identifies the Hwy 35 corridor in downtown as an Economic Development Site.
- » The Implementation chapter identifies an implementation goal to update or create a new Downtown Redevelopment Plan.

## Railroad Quiet Zone Study

A Quiet Zone Study for the BNSF rail line that runs along the waterfront was completed in 2014. Due to some significant changes since 2014, including the large investment in the Great River Landing (which is immediately adjacent to the Irvin Street grade crossing) and the train/roadway traffic volumes, a Quiet Zone Field Diagnostic Meeting took place in 2018. The Irvin Street crossing is Quiet Zone eligible with the installation of some fencing. Future planning for Irvin Street and the lower portion of the Great River Landing project will need to be coordinated with Quiet Zone planning.





# Existing Conditions



## Zoning

A variety of zoning districts exist in the downtown (Figure 2.1). The following provides a summary of the existing zoning districts in the Downtown, organized by individual districts identified in the Redevelopment Planning Framework chapter.

### Downtown Core

- » Primarily Neighborhood Business (B1)
- » Three properties are zoned Community Business (B2)
- » Dash-Park and Great River Landing are zoned Public/Semi-Public (P1)
- » Entire district is also located within the Downtown-PUD overlay district

### Highway 35 Corridor

- » Primarily Neighborhood Business (B1)
- » Three properties are zoned Community Business (B2)
- » Entire district is also located within the Downtown-PUD overlay district

### Riverfront

- » Primarily Public/Semi-Public (P1)
- » Southernmost block is zoned Neighborhood Business (B1) with one property zoned Community Business (B2)
- » Entire district is also located within the Downtown-PUD overlay district

### Downtown Residential

- » Primarily zoned Single Family and Duplex Residential (R2)
- » One property zoned Multiple Family Residential (R4) at corner of Fern St
- » One property zoned Neighborhood Business (B1) at corner of King St/Hwy 35
- » Entire district is also located within the Downtown-Residential overlay district with exception of the one property at corner of King St/Hwy 35 that is within the Downtown-PUD overlay district

Figure 2.1 Zoning Map





## Land Use

Land uses in the downtown are generally a mix of commercial, residential and park uses (Figure 2.2). The following provides a summary of the existing land uses in the Downtown, organized by individual districts identified in the Redevelopment Planning Framework chapter.

### Downtown Core

- » Concentration of commercial businesses (retail, personal service, restaurant, auto repair/towing) along Main St. and 2nd Ave/Hwy 35
- » One small two-story multi-unit residential building on Main St
- » Two buildings have second floor residential apartments above commercial businesses
- » Single-family detached homes on 3rd and 4th Streets
- » Great River Landing recreational visitor/trailhead facility and parking lot
- » Dash-Park
- » Municipal parking lot
- » School District's administrative offices and parking lot
- » Electrical substation

### Great River Road Corridor

- » Wide variety of commercial businesses (retail, personal service, restaurant, professional office, lodging, funeral home, gas station) along 2nd Ave/Hwy 35
- » Small number of single-family homes at south end of corridor
- » Five vacant properties

### Riverfront

- » City-owned land, city public utilities building
- » Six single-family homes
- » One tri-plex

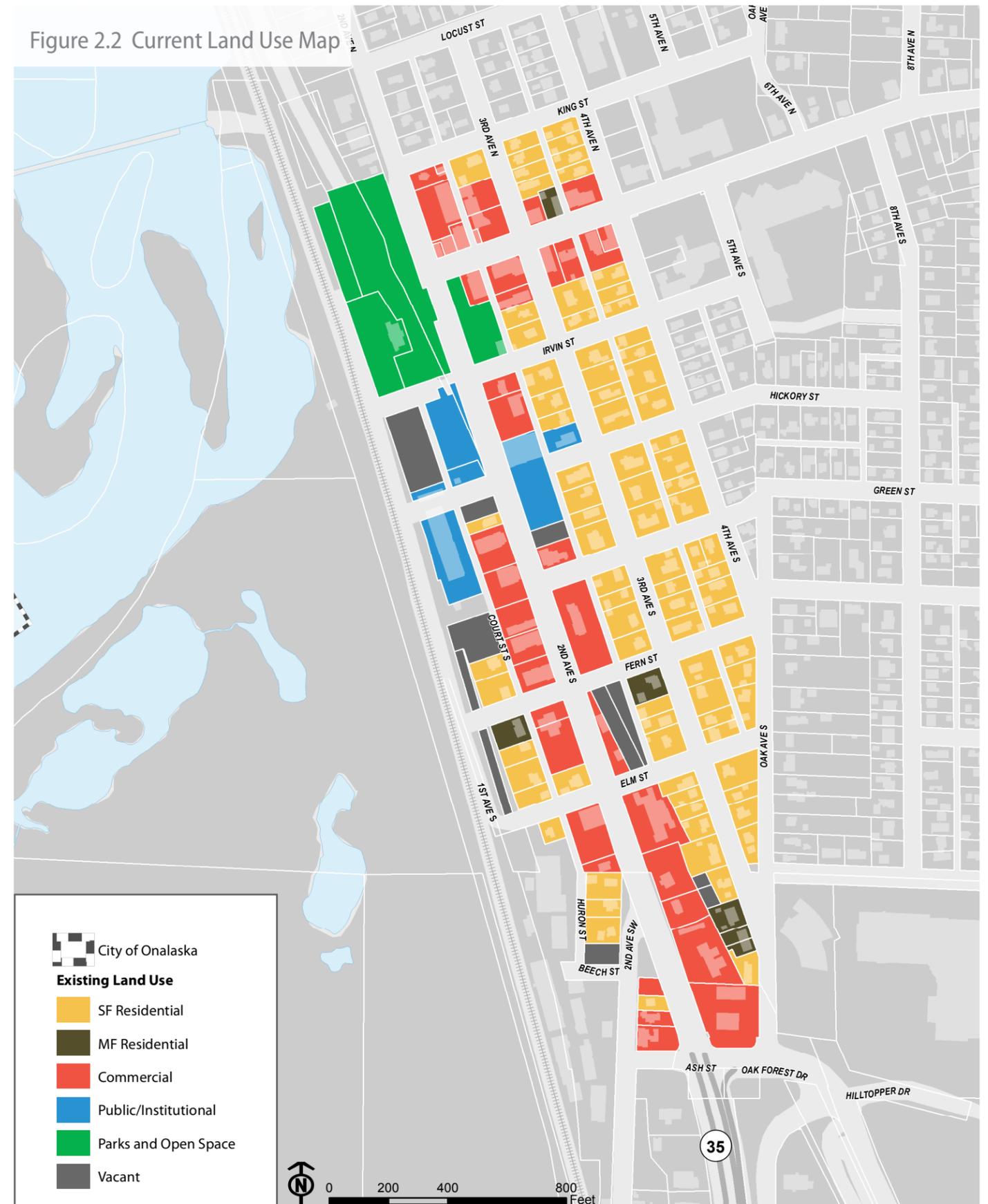
### 3rd Avenue and North of King St

- » Single-family homes along with two duplexes
- » Two small vacant lots on southernmost block but with no street or alley access



Downtown Core prior to recent public open space improvements.

Figure 2.2 Current Land Use Map



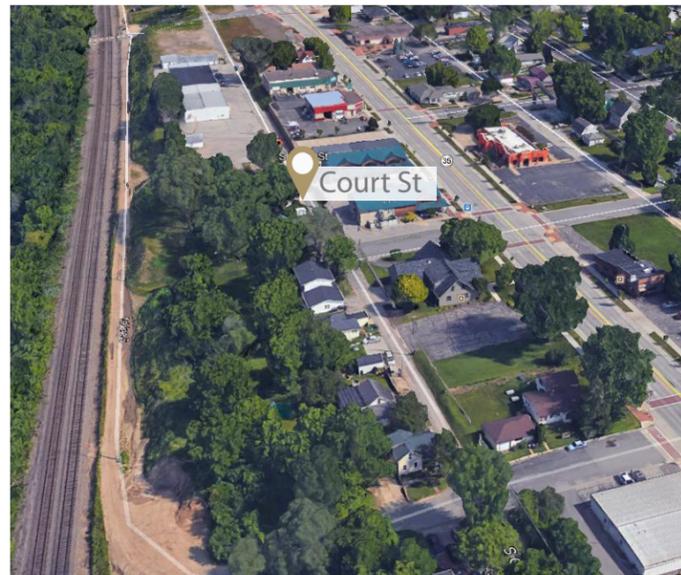


## Transportation

Downtown circulation benefits from its traditional street grid and access to major roadways (2nd Ave/Hwy 35 and Main St). Hwy 35 and Main St (Hwy 157) are both State roadways. Hwy 35/2nd Ave is designated as “The Great River Road”, which is Wisconsin’s only National Scenic Byway. This roadway was designated as a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration and extends from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. In Wisconsin, this route parallels the Mississippi River for 250 miles along the state’s western border. These roads are known for their scenic qualities and are promoted as driving vacation destinations. Roadway functional classifications are as follows:

- » Principal Arterials – Hwy 35 (south of Main St), Main St
- » Minor Arterials - Hwy 35 (north of Main St)
- » Collectors – 3rd Ave (south of Main St), 4th Ave (north of Main St)
- » Local Streets – all other streets

Almost all of the blocks east of Hwy 35 have an alley. In addition, Court St functions as an alley west of Hwy 35 (Figure 2.3).



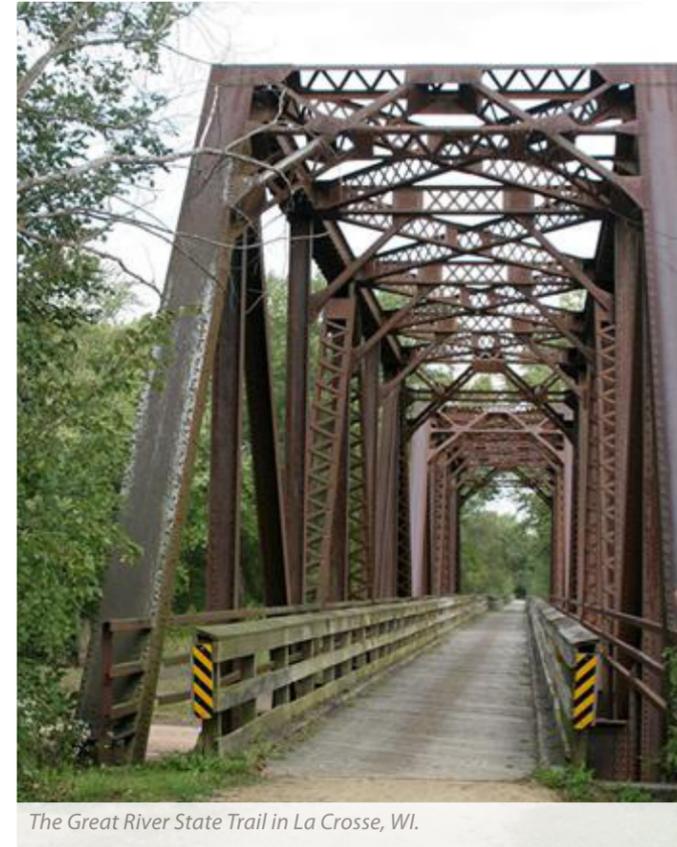
Court Street, west of Hwy 35, functions as an alley.

Downtown is well-served by sidewalks on many streets, including Main St, Hwy 35, 3rd Ave, and 4th Ave (see figure 2.3). Many gaps exist along the east-west streets, including Irvin, King, Hickory, Green, Fern, and Elm, as well as Oak Ave near the library and high school. Almost no sidewalks exist west of Hwy 35.



Existing sidewalks along Irvin Street.

The Great River State Trail travels through downtown with the Great River Landing serving as a major trailhead facility. The Great River State Trail is an approximately 24-mile rails-to-trails conversion that is a part of the Mississippi River Trail, which is a 3,000-mile designated bicycle route that travels from the headwaters of the Mississippi River in Itasca, MN all the way to the Delta of the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. In 2013, the WDNR estimated that 69,000 individuals utilized the Great River State Trail, with a high percentage utilizing the Onalaska portion of the trail. It was also estimated that the economic impact to the trail’s gateway communities - Trempealeau and Onalaska, was nearly \$1.8 million. On-street bike routes exist on Hwy 35, Main St, 3rd Ave (south of Main St), and 4th St (north of Main St).



The Great River State Trail in La Crosse, WI.

Pedestrian/bike crossings of Hwy 35 include two traffic signals - Main St and Ash St/Oak Forest. Additional street crossings are indicated with colored pavement markings at four intersections in between the two traffic signals. Striped pavement markings and pedestrian-friendly corner bump-outs exist at intersections along Main St.



Existing bike/ped crossing at Ash and Main Streets.

Transit is provided by La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU). Route 9 runs on Hwy 35 and Main St with bus stops at 5th Ave S/City Hall, Main St/3rd Ave, Hwy 35/Irvin St, Hwy 35/Fern St, and north of Hwy 35/Ash St.



Burlington Northern Railroad along the shore of Onalaska, WI.

The Burlington Northern Railroad runs north/south along the shore of Lake Onalaska on the west side of downtown. This track is heavily utilized for freight traffic travelling between Chicago and the Twin Cities. Passenger rail service via Amtrak is available in La Crosse. In 2014 it was estimated that 60 trains travel through Onalaska daily. There is no public street access across the rail corridor in the downtown area. The only vehicular crossing is the driveway at the end of Irvin St to the waterfront.



Figure 2.3 Transportation Map



Great River Landing.



Dash-Park.



Main Street.



Highway 35/Great River Road.



## Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Downtown is located along the riverfront and its open space, most notably the Great River State Trail and Great River Landing. Dash-Park, a new signature central downtown park, was completed in 2018. Downtown's access to active parks includes Rowe Park, a large community park at the southern edge of downtown, and the playground at the elementary school. Downtown lacks a neighborhood park. In addition to the Great River State Trail, bicycling facilities exist on Hwy 35, Main St, 3rd Ave (south of Main St), and 4th St (north of Main St) (Figure 2.4).

A state snowmobile trail runs along Oak Ave south of downtown then crosses Hwy 35 and heads north to connect with the Great River State Trail. In fact, Lake Onalaska is connected to Lake Superior through a series of snowmobile trails. The Great River State Trail also accommodates cross country skiing and snowshoeing.



Existing public space at Dash-Park.



The Great River State Trail in Onalaska, WI.



Entry sign at Rowe Park.



Great River Landing trailhead.



State snowmobile trail.



Figure 2.4 Parks, Trails, and Open Space



Figure 2.5 Great River Landing Concept





## Redevelopment Scoring

In addition to examining previous planning efforts, it was necessary to evaluate property within the downtown for redevelopment potential. By finding the “low hanging fruit” it was possible to identify locations that make sense as starting points.

Part of the process for identifying priority sites (Figure 2.10) was an attribute based evaluation of the properties within the study area. By assigning points based on characteristics of all of the parcels, the consultant team was able to get an initial view of where to focus redevelopment efforts. These characteristics included vacancy, age, land and building values, land use, size, ownership, location and visibility (Figures 2.6-2.9). This evaluation produced an initial framework to begin identifying redevelopment parcels.

Because the model could not take every variable into account, and because different redevelopment types have different needs, further analysis was conducted on a case-by-case basis, examining the physical characteristics, market realities, and other redevelopment demands of individual and combined sites.

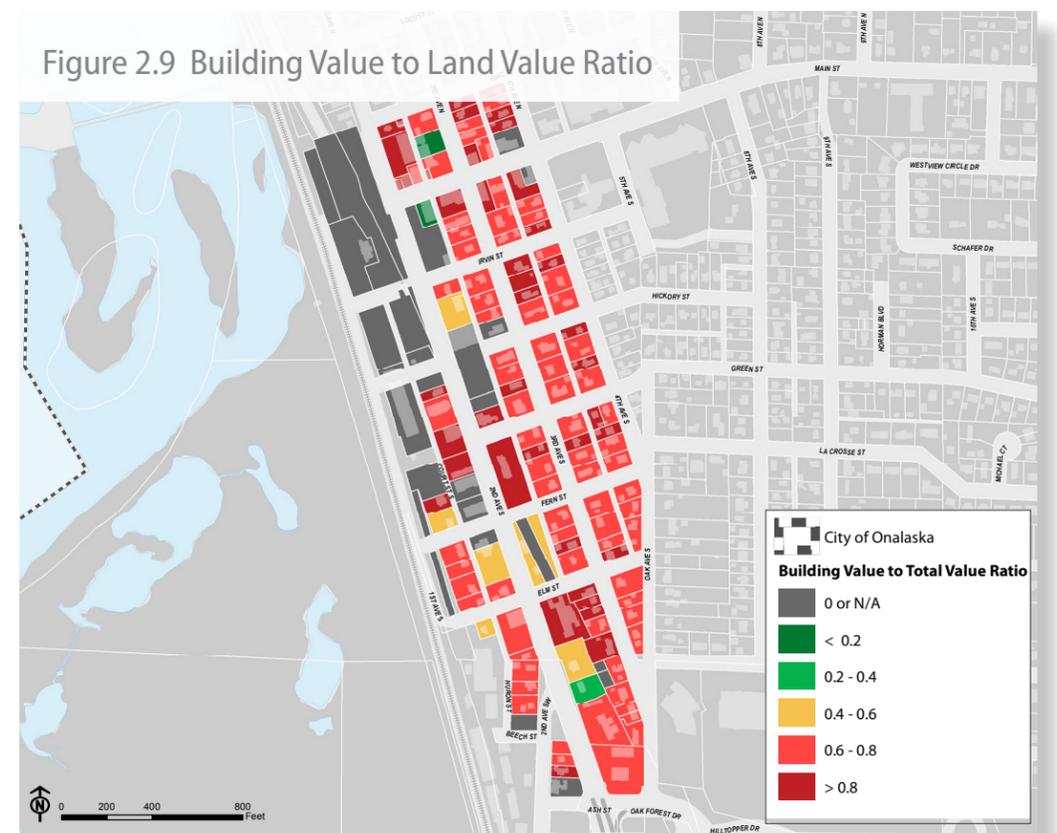
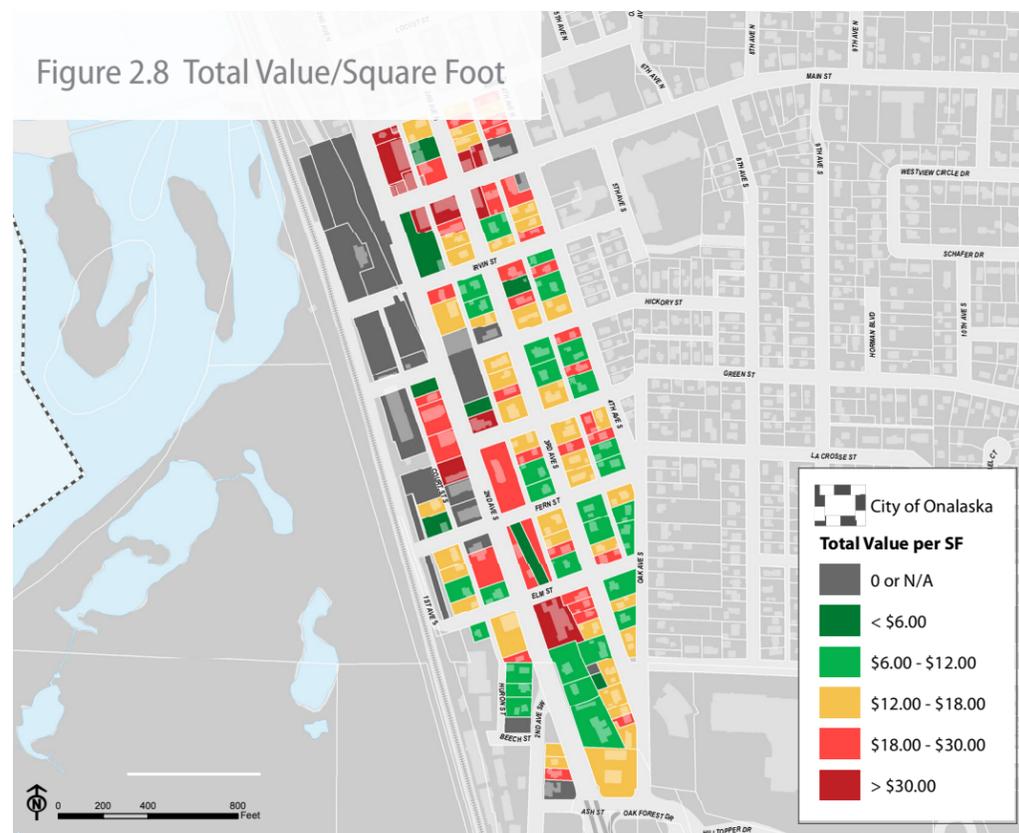
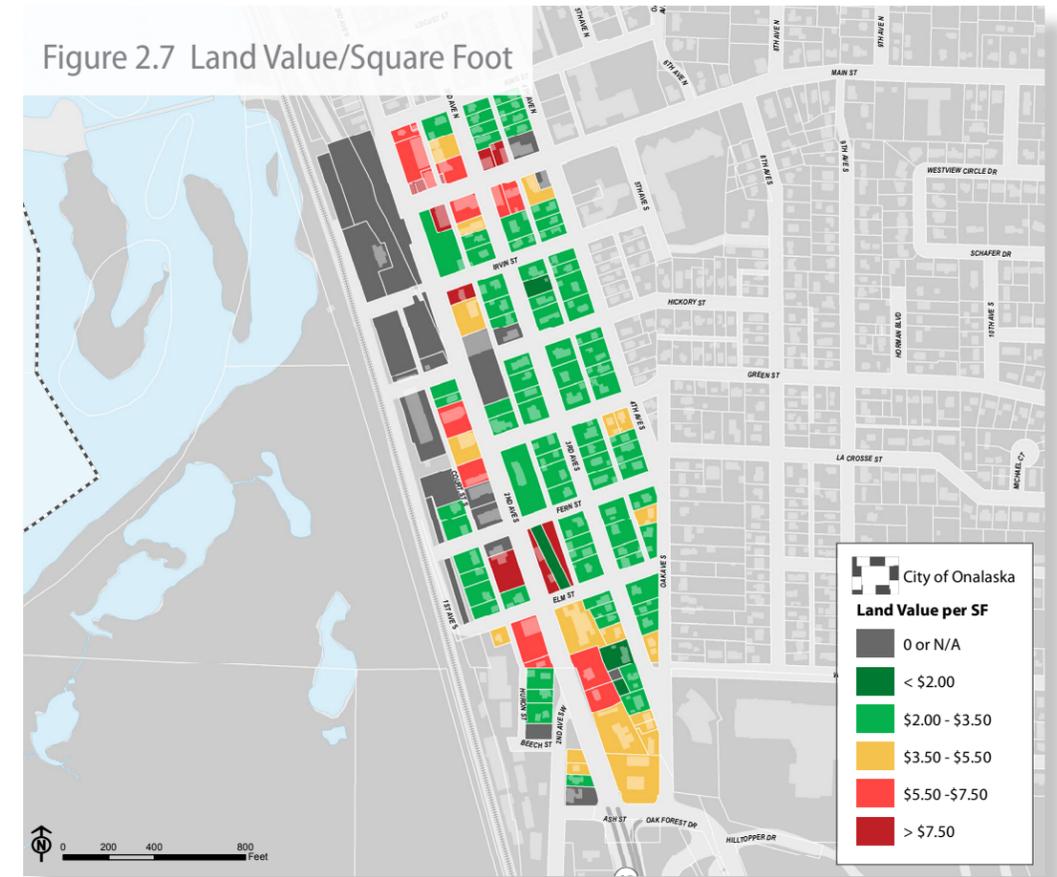
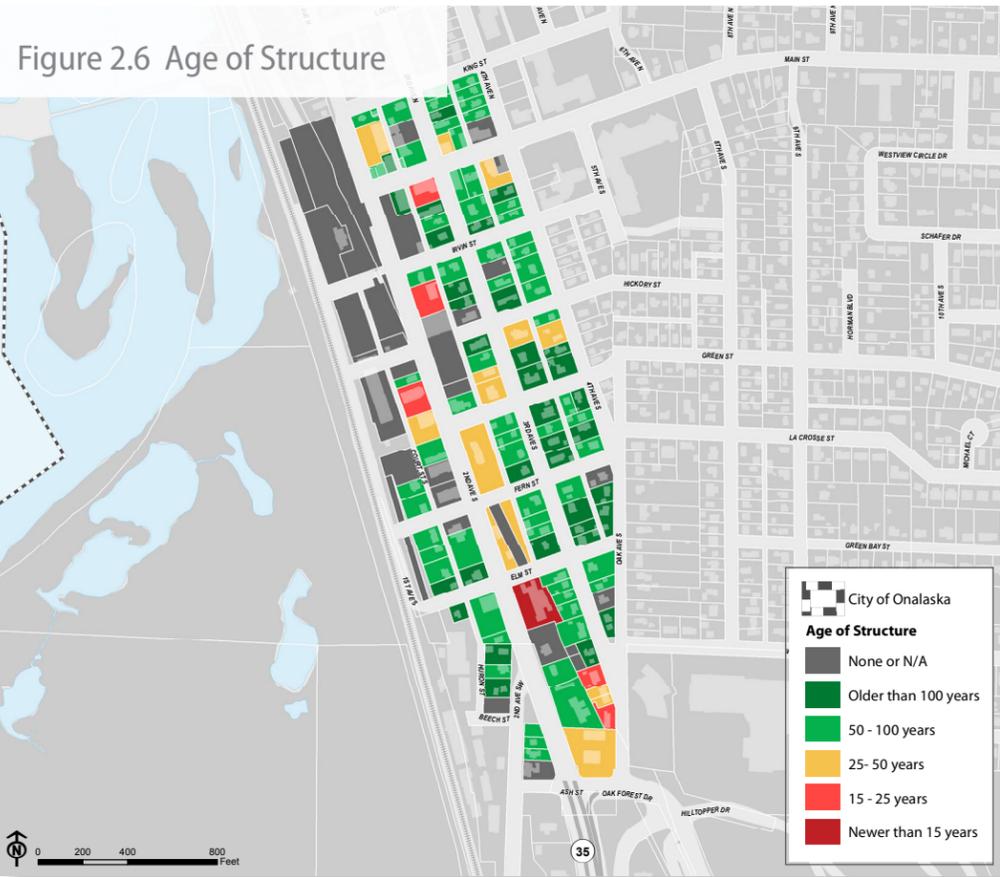
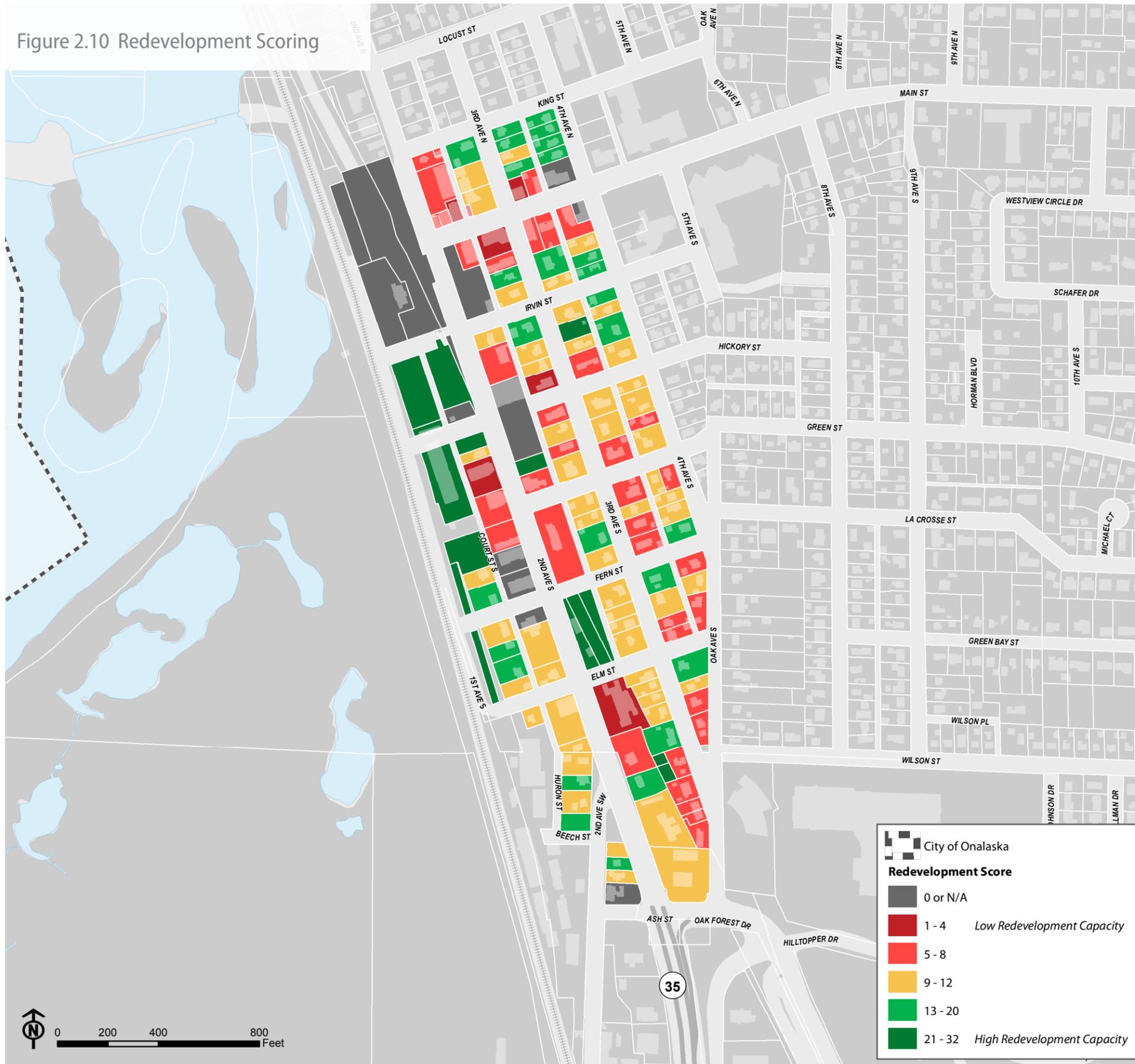


Figure 2.10 Redevelopment Scoring



## Redevelopment Scoring

This map shows the redevelopment potential as identified by scoring a number of variables for each parcel. This information should be considered as a baseline to start identifying potential redevelopment parcels, but should not be considered as definitive. The model cannot take everything into account and sites should be checked against ground conditions. (For example, some publicly owned parcels are missing information such as building improvement value.)

**Vacant:**

No.....	0
Yes .....	20

**Age:**

Over 100 yrs .....	1
50 - 100 yrs .....	5
25 - 50 yrs .....	3
15 - 25 yrs .....	1
Less than 15 yrs .....	0

**Land Value \$ / Square Foot:**

< 2 .....	4
2 - 3.5 .....	3
3.5 - 5.5 .....	2
5.5 - 7.5 .....	1
> 7.5 .....	0

**Total Value \$ /Square Foot:**

< 6 .....	4
6 - 12 .....	3
12 - 18 .....	2
18 - 30 .....	1
> 30 .....	0

**Building Value to Land Value Ratio:**

< 1.0 .....	4
1.0 - 2.0 .....	3
2.0 - 3.0 .....	2
3.0 - 6.0 .....	1
> 6.0 .....	0

**Building Value to Total Value Ratio:**

< 0.2 .....	4
0.2 - 0.4 .....	3
0.4 - 0.6 .....	2
0.6 - 0.8 .....	1
< 0.8 .....	0

**Non-conforming Use:**

Yes (SF or MF zoned commercial).....	3
No.....	0

**Parcel Size:**

> 5 ac.....	4
2 - 5 ac.....	3
1 - 2 ac.....	1
< 1 ac.....	0

**City Ownership:**

Owned by Onalaska .....	5
Not owned by Onalaska.....	0





## Market Summary

The strength of the downtown Onalaska market is derived from the city's social and economic demographics. The city benefits from positive perceptions of the community as a desired place to live, strong schools, and a good location relative to La Crosse.

Challenges facing the community will be the increase in older residents as a proportion of the overall population, the dwindling supply of developable land for subdivision, adaptability or right-sizing of the retail and commercial offerings along Hwy 35 to meet demand, and competition with surrounding communities.

As lifestyle and shopping preferences continue to change, downtown Onalaska should continue to position itself as a walkable, experience-driven destination with a desirable small town character. In this manner, the downtown can be important to the identity of the community and a marketable asset to new and existing residents.

Businesses along the Highway 35 corridor will maintain a focus on providing convenient, "on-the-way" retail and services that benefit from more traffic and can serve residents of Onalaska and Holmen that are commuting through the area.

Strong demand for housing remains, although supply is becoming constrained. There are fewer options within the city limits to create new neighborhoods, so it will be important to enable the development of new housing options in existing neighborhoods.

## Key Social and Economic Demographics

Within the La Crosse region, Onalaska has historically been a more affluent area than many other communities. Economic measures from household discretionary income to housing prices reflect this reality. It also means that the community has the means to support amenities such as restaurants and upscale retailers that may not work in other cities.

The community is also getting older. Based on population and housing age, many residents moved to Onalaska around the 1990s and early 2000s. Many of these residents are now in or entering the "empty nester" phase of their lives. They are reaching the highest earning potential of their careers as they near retirement and have more disposable income than ever before. In the next decade, many of these residents may be downsizing and looking for attractive, amenitized, but also lower maintenance housing options.

The aging/empty nester population also has impacts on the schools where the enrollment numbers are not growing as much as in the past.

Based on higher housing prices relative to other communities and the lower supply of housing, Onalaska can be a more difficult place for young families to move into. The ability of Onalaska to attract the next generations of residents will be key to the long term success of the community.

## Commercial/Retail

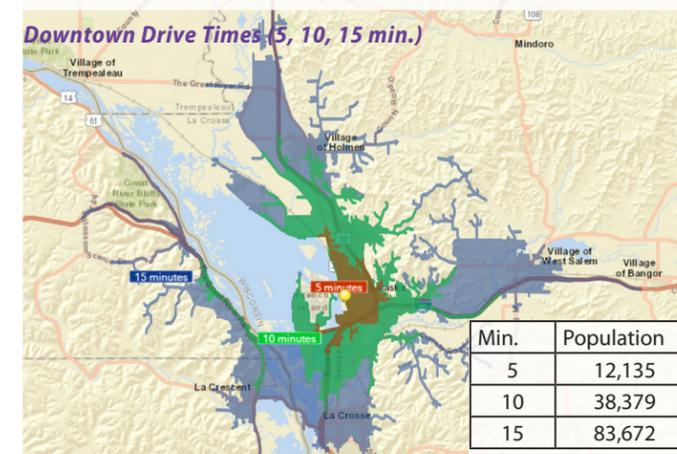
Households (Head of Household Age)	Onalaska	La Crosse	Holmen
Young Families (<45)	33.2%	49.0%	38.9%
Prime Earners (45-64)	37.7%	29.1%	42.2%
Retired (65+)	29.1%	21.1%	18.9%

From a retail and commercial perspective, the Hwy 35 corridor draws from other towns in the La Crosse region. However, in contrast to the State Road 16 Corridor, which is a larger regional draw, the smaller downtown commercial area is more likely to draw from a +/-15 minute drive (Figure 2.11). Downtown's power to draw customers also depends on its ability to offer something unique from surrounding communities. This includes Onalaska as well as Holmen, West Salem, Bangor, and La Crescent. It includes the north side of La Crosse, but there may be more competition from downtown La Crosse.

There are two distinct styles of retail within the Highway 35 study area. The first is the experience-driven retail and restaurants along Main Street and near Dash-Park. This downtown core area functions as a place where someone might spend a few hours eating/drinking, shopping, biking, walking, and relaxing/rejuvenating. Because of the "destination" nature of this area, people are more comfortable parking once and walking to their destination(s). Public and shared district parking facilities could work here. Downtown Onalaska is developing a strong brand based on creating a family friendly place that is focused on experiences more than stuff. Concerts, restaurants, biking and walking trails, spas, and access to the river are all examples of the experiences that people desire and can find in downtown Onalaska.

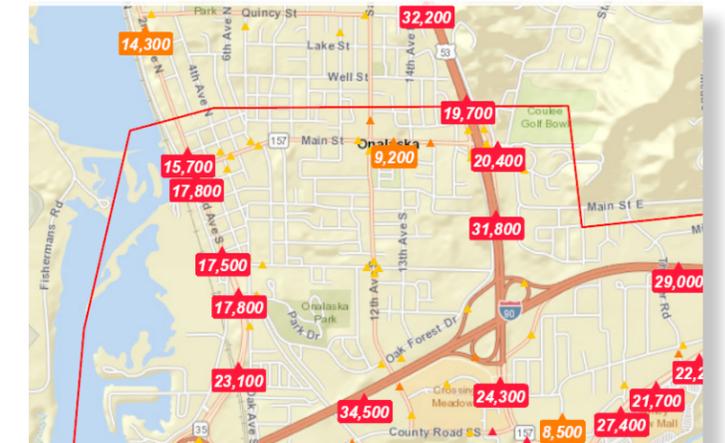
The second type is the convenience focused retail

Figure 2.11 Commercial/Retail Market



along Highway 35. This retail benefits from the higher traffic counts from residents of Onalaska and Holmen commuting back and forth to the I-90 / Highway 16 areas or La Crosse (Figure 2.12). 57 percent of the working residents of Holmen are employed in La Crosse or Onalaska, and many of these workers are traveling along Highway 35 to get to and from work.

Figure 2.12 Traffic Counts



Highway 35 corridor uses are more focused on providing goods and services to people who are traveling to work or home. These include retail/food uses such as gas stations and takeout food, as well as services such as tax preparation, insurance offices, and auto shops. Because customers are unlikely to linger and are in a hurry, convenient parking for each business is more important here than in the downtown core area.

## Employment

While many residents travel into La Crosse for work, Onalaska also has built and maintained a strong employment base. The city's jobs-to-population ratio is 0.64, which means there are more residents than jobs in the city. While the city has a strong employment base for a suburb, many residents are reliant on La Crosse as a job center.

When examining commuting patterns, there is a large shift between the permanent and daytime populations (Figure 2.13).

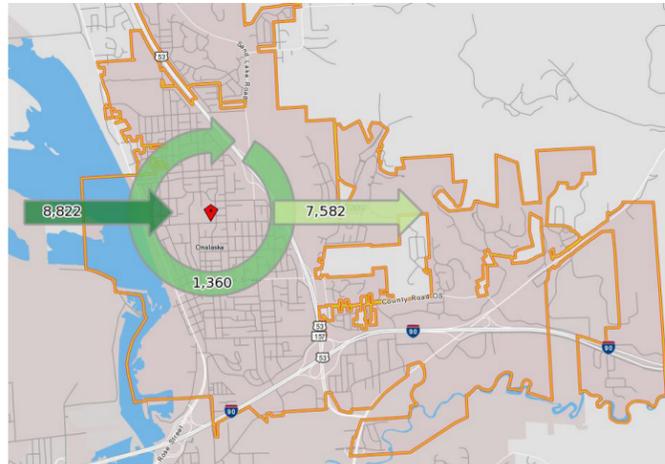
- » 10,224 people employed in Onalaska
- » 8,926 people come into Onalaska to work
- » 1,298 residents live and work in Onalaska
- » 7,350 people commute out of Onalaska to work

City	Jobs/Population Ratio
Onalaska	0.64
Holmen	0.31
La Crosse	0.93

Within the downtown study area (including the High School) there are approximately 1,300 jobs. Approximately 13% of these jobs are second jobs.

Among the primary jobs, 34% pay more than \$40,000/year. Employment is focused largely on education (16%), public administration (15%), business administration and support (15%), management (14%), and accommodation, food, and retail services (12%).

Figure 2.13 Employment Patterns



**Residential**

There are many draws that create demand for housing within the community. A positive perception of the City, combined with strong schools and great access to La Crosse and beyond have made Onalaska a desired place to live. The City has seen drastic growth from the 1970s through the early 2000s. This has slowed as the city is reaching a fully built out status. There are not many opportunities for new neighborhoods, although some un-built lots remain in some active subdivisions.

**Neighborhood Characteristics**

As a generalization, there are two main areas when it comes to housing in Onalaska. The downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods offer older, but also achievable entry level housing. These residents are largely new families and longtime residents.

The east side of the city has many more bluffs that offer views, but also restrict the ability to build affordable housing efficiently. Built more recently, these homes are more accessible to households with higher earnings, often further along in their careers.

**Single Family Housing**

The large scale development of single family housing will become increasingly difficult as the city runs out of undeveloped land. Opportunities to improve the single family housing stock will likely come in the form of infill lots and housing rehabilitation. As homes age, continued upkeep and rehabilitation will be important to keeping the housing stock competitive with other communities. The median year of a home built in Onalaska is 1983, compared with 1995 in Holmen.

Decade	Average Housing Units Per Year
1970s	~190 / year
1980s	~115 / year
1990s	~165 / year
2000s	~140 / year
2010-2016	~75 / year

**Multi-Family Housing**

As the ability to add population through single family housing is restricted, denser housing products such as apartments, condominiums, and townhomes will be the primary way for Onalaska to keep growing. Apartments appeal to many younger people as they begin careers and wait longer to start families. Similarly low maintenance housing appeals to many downsizing empty nesters. Most of the rental units that are in Onalaska are older stock and do not have the updated amenities that a more affluent clientele may expect.

The demographics of Onalaska suggest there could be untested demand for higher end for-sale and rental apartment products.

- » Median Household Income: \$61,299
- » Average Household Income: \$79,816
- » 4,693 (60%) of households make over \$50,000/year

Monthly Rent	Units	Affordable For Household Income of:
\$1-249	85	\$9,960
\$250-499	193	\$19,960
\$500-749	1,181	\$29,960
\$750-999	430	\$39,960
\$1000-1249	113	\$49,960
\$1250-1499	37	\$59,960
\$1500-1999	115	\$79,960
\$2000-2499	32	\$99,960
\$2500+	0	

**Senior Housing**

A large, affluent, aging population will continue to increase the demand for senior housing. Senior housing includes everything from active adult housing, through assisted living, memory care, and nursing homes.

The community has many of the amenities desired by seniors, including trails and activities such as the concerts at Dash-Park.

**Key Takeaways: Residential**

- » Economics and the School District help keep Onalaska as a premier, desired location.
- » The City is quickly approaching full build out and will not be able to develop new neighborhood subdivisions.
- » While demand remains high, supply is becoming increasingly constrained. This may hinder growth moving forward.
- » If there are not opportunities for new families to move into Onalaska, the City will continue to lose them to other communities such as Holmen.
- » The downtown neighborhoods are more accessible for starter homes.
- » New civic improvements and possibilities of expanding employment options continue to draw people to the community.
- » An aging population has, and will continue to drive growth in downsizing, active adult, and senior housing.

**Key Takeaways: Commercial**

- » Market area economics (incomes, spending, etc) are good.
- » Benefit from “experience” based retail as a draw.
- » Build on existing brands and promote area as family friendly, outdoors, and culturally focused.
- » Market will rely on Onalaska & Holmen residents, with opportunities to draw from West Salem, Bangor, French Island.
- » Continue to capture “on the way” retail and convenient service for Onalaska and Holmen residents.

# Stakeholder & Community Input



## 2014 Community Survey

The Downtown Redevelopment Study was informed by input from the community-at-large and key downtown stakeholders. A summary of this input is provided here:

### 2014 Community Survey

In 2014, the City of Onalaska conducted a community survey to gather residents' opinions and feedback regarding the quality of life in the city, types of future development, and their satisfaction with the performance of city government and service delivery. Out of the 9,296 surveys distributed within the 54650 Zip Code, 1,059 surveys were fully completed and returned to the city, which represents an overall return rate of 11.4% and a 12.8% return rate from Onalaska residents.

Particularly relevant to downtown, one of the survey's questions invited residents to share their opinions related to the question "If you could change one thing in the City of Onalaska, what would it be?" A total of 579 residents responded to this question. The top concerns identified were the following:

- » Traffic improvements
- » Downtown redevelopment including desired business types and redevelopment of underutilized buildings through renovation or demolition
- » Recreational improvements including more sidewalks (fill the gaps), more bike lanes and other bike accommodations, and more parks/open spaces for enjoying the community's natural features
- » Waterfront development to better utilize the waterfront along Lake Onalaska



## 2018 Downtown Stakeholder Meetings

Two rounds of stakeholder input meetings were conducted in August and November 2018. Stakeholder input focused on land use/redevelopment, circulation/access, parking, and parks/open spaces.

### Land Uses/Redevelopment

- » Continue to redevelop downtown and the highway corridor as a unique destination, such as food & drink places, artisan shops, brewery /distillery
- » Support the addition of local, small businesses downtown, including retail, restaurants, personal services, and offices
- » Promote the addition of housing in and surrounding downtown and along the waterfront including both condominiums/apartments (high density/mixed use) and townhomes/rowhouses (medium density)
- » Reinvestment in existing surrounding neighborhood homes
- » Some additional potential early phase redevelopment sites exist beyond current on-going projects
- » Promote assembly of undervalued properties to create larger and more viable redevelopment sites by both the city and interested developers

### Circulation/Access/Parking

- » Improve pedestrian and bicycling facilities throughout downtown, particularly along Hwy 35 and 3rd Avenue
- » Address perceived and actual parking issues today and for future redevelopment with effective parking solutions, including increased parking facilities and more effective parking management approaches

### Parks/Trails/Open Spaces

- » Leverage downtown's natural amenities, outdoor recreation opportunities, and existing park amenities, including outfitter / canoe-kayak / bike shop businesses, public and private programming
- » Consider upgrading existing crushed gravel trail to a paved bike trail to increase accessibility and usage





## 2019 Community Public Meeting

The community public meeting was held on January 8, 2019, at Irving Pertzsch Elementary School. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting.

### Land Uses/Redevelopment

- » Support for adding new housing options in downtown and along the riverfront
- » Additional food and drink businesses, including coffee shop, grocery store, etc.
- » Make the downtown core and riverfront area more walkable, including paths and routes from the surrounding neighborhoods
- » Preserve views to the riverfront
- » Support for some of the new downtown housing to be affordable, including senior housing, so that current downtown residents could afford to sell their houses and move into the new housing
- » Preserve a balance between low income and market rate housing in downtown

### Circulation/Access/Parking

- » Ensure good vehicle access to Hwy 35 from new residential developments
- » Additional parking in downtown, including shared parking opportunities
- » Need for crosswalks on Main St and other key streets
- » Add sidewalk on west side of 3rd Ave near high school
- » Improve public transportation options
- » New housing development should provide adequate on-site parking
- » Balance approach to future parking needs

### Parks/Trails/Open Spaces

- » Don't change the plans for completing the Great River Landing
- » Support for streetscape improvements to both Irvin Street and the alleys connecting to Main St
- » Community gateway/entry feature at south end of Hwy 35
- » Beautification that attracts visitors and businesses
- » Evaluate desire for paved vs. gravel trails



January 2019 community open house.



## Summary of Public Meeting Notification for January 8, 2019 Open House

### Formal Meeting Announcements:

- » Common Council on December 11th, 2018
- » CDA on December 12th, 2018

### Social Media:

- » Event information promoted through Onalaska's Park & Recreation, Police Department, and Fire Department Facebook pages

### Press Release:

- » Sent on 12/31/18 to all news media (television, newspaper, and radio) promoting the event
- » Sent on 1/4/19 on Irving Pertzsch Elementary School Email Mailing List

### Individual invites to Onalaska Common Council, Committees, Boards, and Commissions:

- » Common Council, Long Range Planning Committee, Great River Landing Committee, Park & Recreation Board, Plan Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Community Development Authority

### Paper Flyers:

- » Installed at various department offices in City Hall

### Mailings:

- » Letter to over 500 residents/business owners in "Downtown Onalaska" area on 12/14/18. Postcard reminder to same list on 12/27/18

# Redevelopment Framework



## Downtown Districts

In order to help describe the desired future character of downtown redevelopment, the recommendations in this redevelopment framework are organized into four unique downtown districts (Figure 4.1). The following highlights each of these district's land uses, parking, site access, and building design characteristics that are essential to creating an attractive downtown environment.

### Downtown Core Mixed Use

This district encompasses the core of downtown including the four blocks, both sides of Main St, between 2nd and 4th Aves, as well as the Great River Landing. Since the new Great River Landing and Dash-Park have now become the center of downtown, the blocks adjacent to these public open spaces are also included in the Downtown Core including the two blocks along the south side of Irvin St and the School District administrative property. A mix of uses is desired in this district, including commercial, residential, civic, and park/open space.

### Riverfront Residential

This district encompasses the riverfront land between the Great River Landing/Irvin St and Elm Street, which is located on a terrace between the riverfront and Court St. Residential uses are desired in this district in order to enable people to live on the riverfront, expand available housing types in downtown, bring more residents to downtown that will attract and support downtown businesses, and concentrate commercial businesses in the downtown core and along Hwy 35.

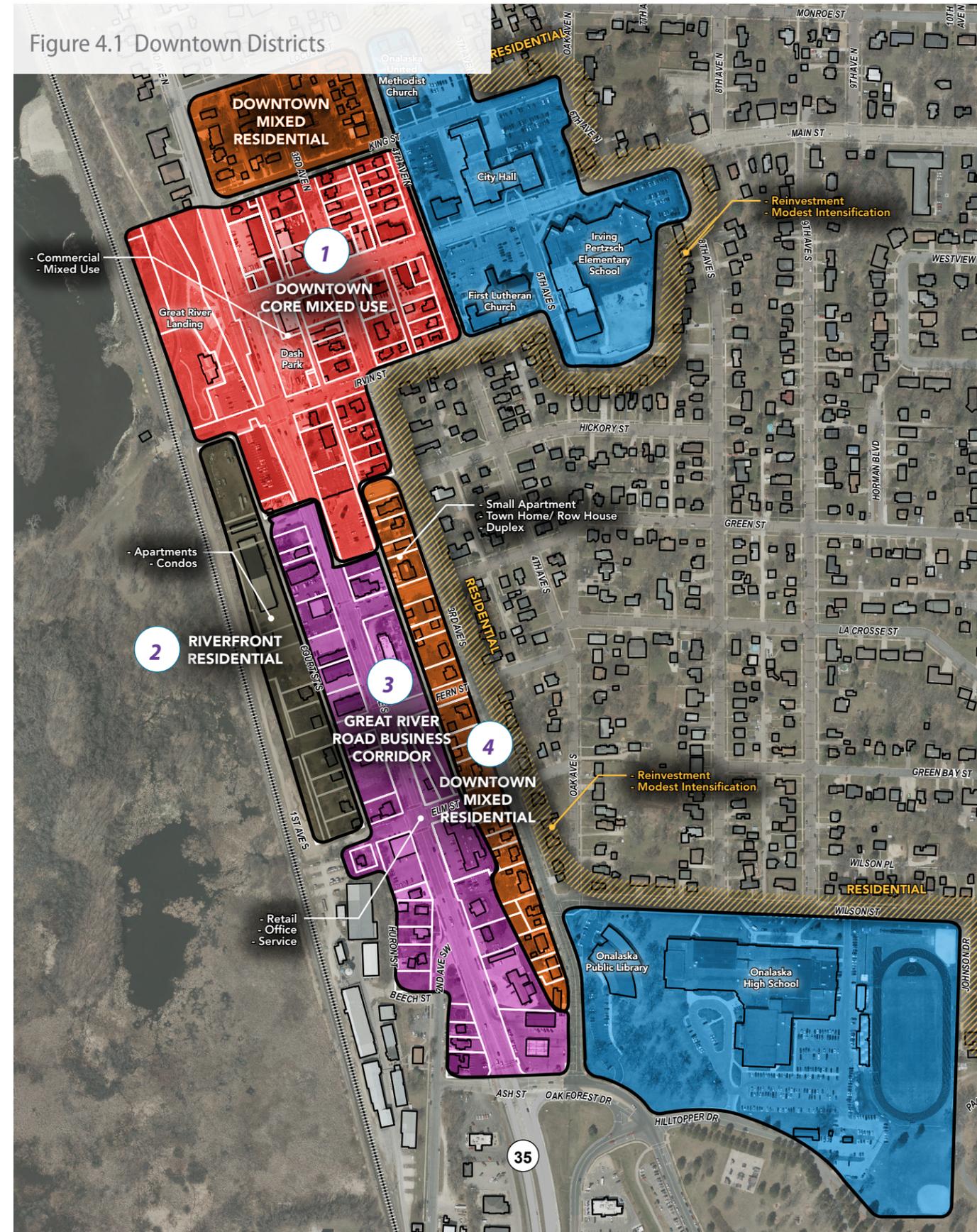
### Great River Road Business Corridor

This district includes the Hwy 35/Great River Road corridor south of the downtown core from Hickory St to Ash St. This district is envisioned to continue filling in and redeveloping with a wide variety of commercial business serving both local and regional customers.

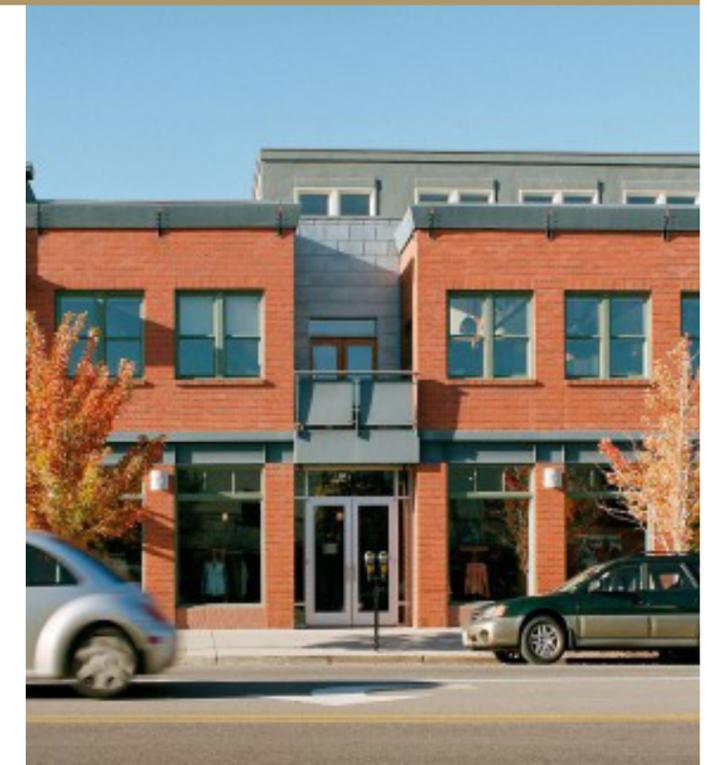
### Downtown Mixed Residential:

This district includes two residential areas immediately adjacent to the downtown core and/or the Hwy 35 corridor – the west side of 3rd Ave which shares the alley with Hwy 35 businesses and the two blocks north of King St which are located adjacent to the downtown core, Hwy 35, and the public/semi-public area to the east. A mix of residential types is desired in these two areas over time since they are conveniently located to commercial areas, could provide opportunities for expanding available housing types in downtown, and serve as transition areas between the commercial areas and smaller scale neighborhoods of detached houses.

Figure 4.1 Downtown Districts



**1 Downtown Core Mixed Use Design Guidelines**



**Land Uses**

- » Primarily retail, personal services and restaurants at street level facing Main St, Dash-Park and Hwy 35
- » Business services
- » Professional offices
- » Civic
- » Apartments/condos
- » Walk-up townhouses/rowhouses
- » Vertical mixed use buildings
- » Park/open space

**Parking**

- » On-street parking
- » Parking behind buildings
- » Parking under buildings using site grades
- » Municipal parking (surface or ramp)
- » Shared parking

**Site Access**

- » Alley as a shared vehicle access and pedestrian-friendly paseo
- » Eliminate driveways on Main St to maximize on-street parking
- » Limit driveways on 3rd Ave to maximize on-street parking

**Building Design**

- » Multi-story buildings desirable
- » Zero building setback from the sidewalk
- » Portion of building can be setback from sidewalk to provide usable open space, e.g. outdoor dining/gathering spaces
- » Primary building entry faces street
- » Street and alley facades are dominated by transparent windows
- » Buildings wider than a typical lot have articulated street/alley facades





Private amenities for residents.



Proposed Great River Residences Project.



Multi-story buildings.

**Land Uses**

- » Apartments/condos
- » Walk-up townhouses/rowhouses
- » Limited retail, personal services, and restaurants

**Parking**

- » Parking under buildings using site grades
- » Limited surface parking
- » Surface parking away from riverfront, accessed from Court St

**Site Access**

- » Use Court St as a shared vehicle access and pedestrian-friendly paseo
- » Publicly accessible path or parkway/street along terrace
- » Place driveways on east-west streets whenever possible

**Building Design**

- » Multi-story buildings (3 or 4 stories) desirable
- » Building fronts face the river
- » Usable open space and pedestrian access between building and riverfront
- » Buildings wider than a typical lot have an articulated street facade



Retail office and mixed use.

**Land Uses**

- » Retail, personal services and restaurants
- » Business services
- » Professional offices

**Site Access**

- » Parking behind and between buildings
- » Shared parking

**Driveways**

- » Use alley as a shared vehicle access and pedestrian-friendly paseo (east side of Highway 35)
- » Place driveways on east-west streets whenever possible
- » Share driveways on Hwy 35 whenever possible

**Building Design**

- » Buildings placed at block corners
- » Minimal setback from the sidewalk
- » Larger setbacks allowed to provide usable open space, e.g. outdoor dining/gathering spaces
- » Primary building entry faces Hwy 35
- » Street facades are dominated by transparent windows

4 Downtown Mixed Residential Design Guidelines



Artist lofts/housing



Commercial use with structured parking behind and above.



Pedestrian friendly paseo.



**Land Uses**

- » Apartments/condos
- » Walk-up townhouses/rowhouses
- » Artist housing

**Parking**

- » Parking under buildings using site grades
- » On-street parking
- » Limited surface parking

**Site Access**

- » Use alley as a shared vehicle access and pedestrian-friendly paseo
- » Place driveways on east-west streets whenever possible
- » Limit driveways on 3rd Ave to maximize on-street parking

**Building Design**

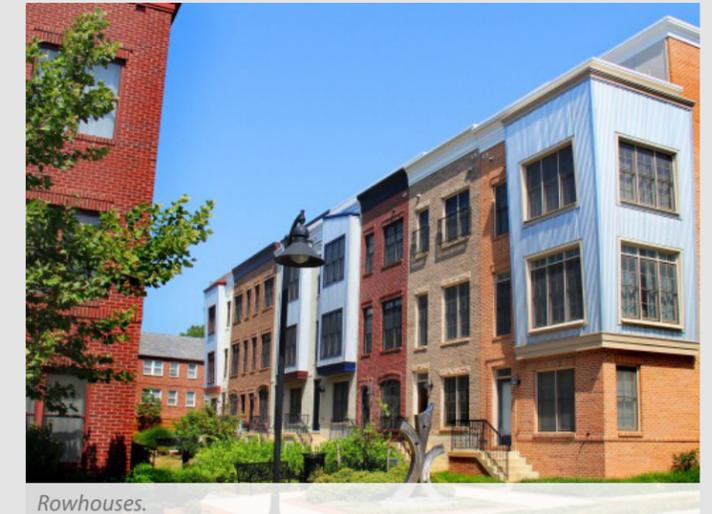
- » Multi-story buildings (3 or 4 stories) desirable
- » Small setbacks from sidewalk to provide transition/buffer between residential and public sidewalk
- » Primary building entries face street
- » Street and alley facades are dominated by transparent windows
- » Buildings wider than a typical lot have an articulated street facade



Townhomes.



Townhomes.



Rowhouses.

## Desired Redevelopment Concept

As part of the redevelopment planning process the consultant team explored redevelopment concepts for new commercial, residential and mixed use buildings in the downtown. These concepts also studied alternatives for parking to support the potential development including additional surface and/or structured parking integrated with the development. The following desired concepts are shown to illustrate potential size, scale and types of redevelopment for study purposes. Any future development will involve coordination between individual property owners, developers, reality of market conditions, and the City of Onalaska.



### Targeted Redevelopment Concept

In this concept, the focus for redevelopment occurs in the Downtown Core Mixed Use District and in the Riverfront Residential District primarily with some additional targeted redevelopment/ infill on underutilized sites along 3rd Avenue and Great River Road (Figures 4.2-4.3). The focus of redevelopment for the city should continue to center around and build upon the recent investments of the Great River Landing and Dash-Park.

- » Downtown Core Mixed Use focus for redevelopment/ reinvestment
- » Expand parking options (shared, surface, and integrated with development)
- » Riverfront housing
- » Infill redevelopment that requires limited site assembly

Figure 4.3 Section Drawing At Dash-Park



Figure 4.2 Targeted Redevelopment Concept



### Broader Redevelopment Concept

With the broader redevelopment concept, the focus for redevelopment still occurs in the Downtown Core Mixed Use District and Riverfront Residential District, but expands south along the Highway 35 and 3rd Avenue to explore options for commercial and residential redevelopment (Figures 4.4-4.5).

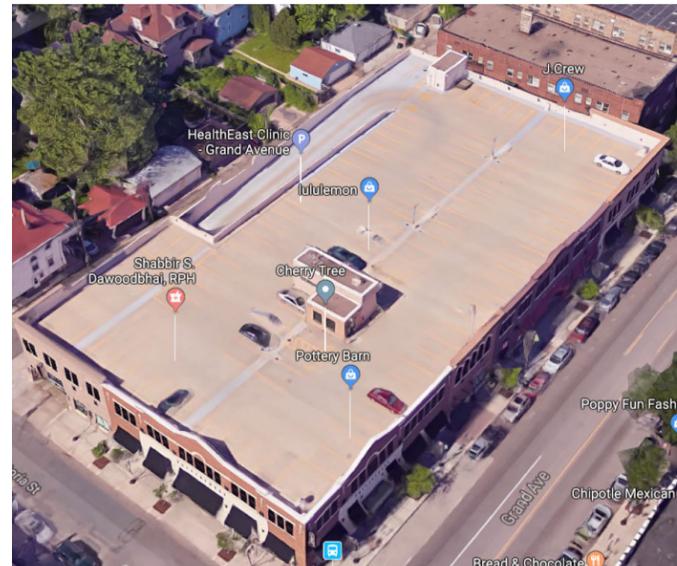
- » Continued Downtown Core Mixed use focus for redevelopment with mixed use and expanded ground-level commercial use along 3rd Ave.
- » Expand parking options (shared, surface, and structured)
- » Expanded riverfront housing south – adjust orientation, maintain grid.
- » Site assembly ( 1/4 block to 1/2 block sites) along the Great River Road Business Corridor and the Downtown Mixed Residential District



Downtown Mixed Residential example.



Public parking integrated with development (street view) example.



Public parking integrated with development (from above) example.

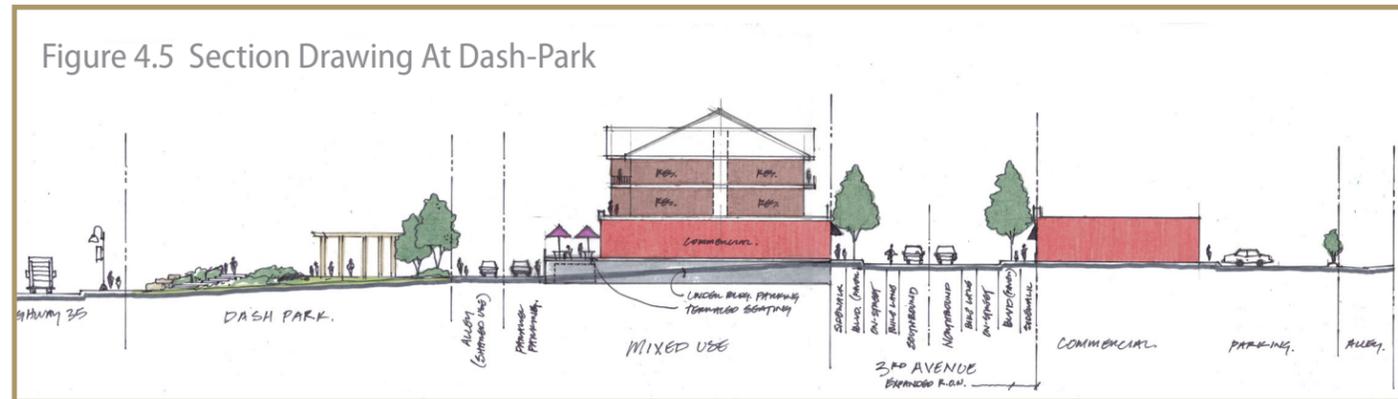
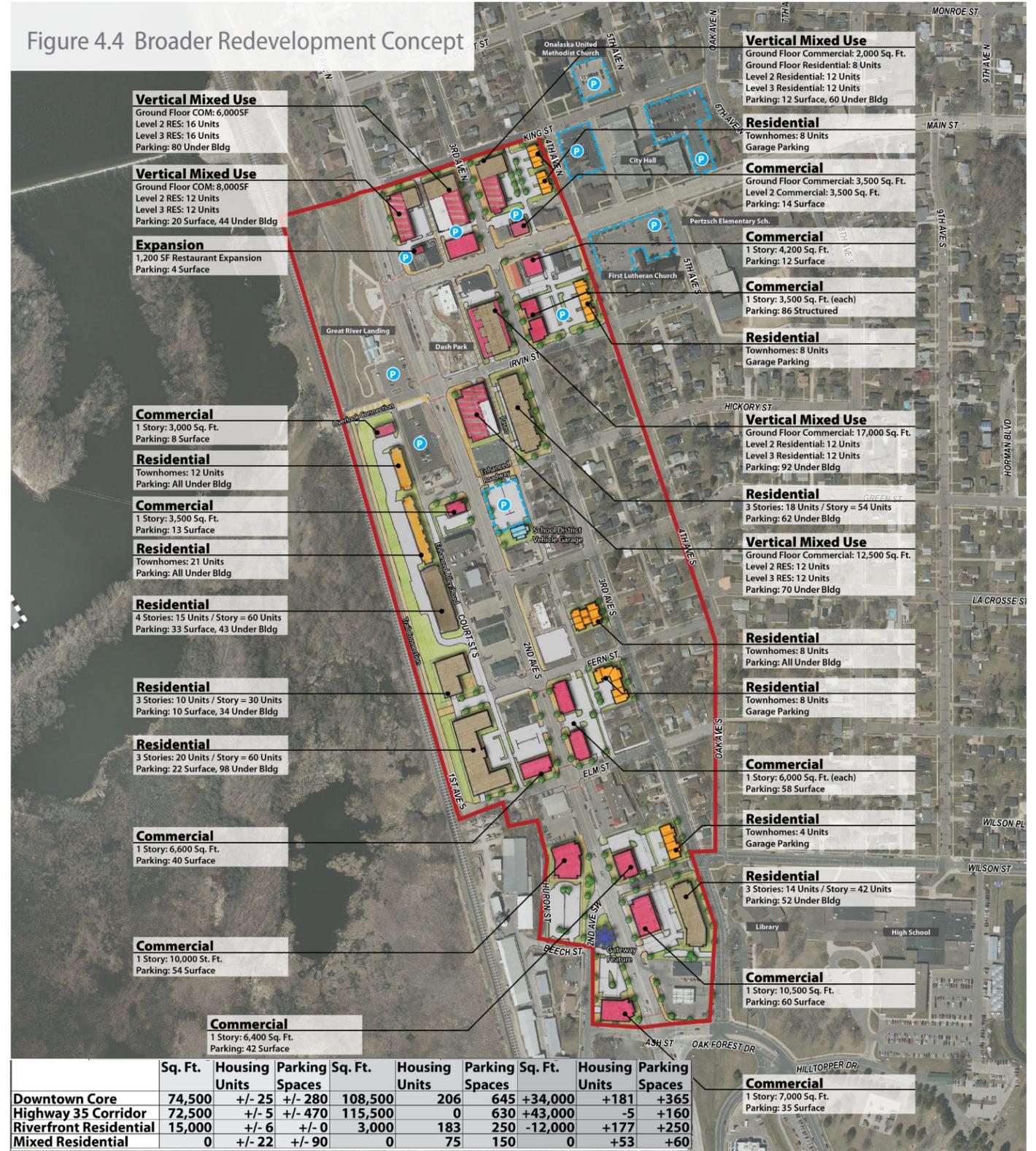


Figure 4.4 Broader Redevelopment Concept



Parking numbers do not reflect existing single family homes or self parked townhomes.

## Goals:

- » Improve downtown's walking environment with highly connected, convenient, and attractive streetscapes
- » Expand downtown's walking/biking environment to include Irvin St and Elm St as key connections to a riverfront trail in the 1st Ave right-of-way along the rail line
- » Enhance alleys (east side of Hwy 35) and Court St as pedestrian-oriented paseos
- » Improve walking/biking crossings of Hwy 35
- » Potential new street connections to complete the street grid
- » Consider opportunities for additional parking and shared parking facilities in conjunction with redevelopment



## Transportation Streets

As downtown continues to add desirable destinations, diversify its land uses, and intensify its development, downtown's transportation system also will evolve to balance the increase in volume and variety of users (Figure 4.7).

### Arterial & Collector Roadways

As designated arterial roadways under WisDOT jurisdiction, Hwy 35 and Main St (Hwy 157) should continue to be maintained and improved as multi-modal roadways throughout downtown. Both streets should continue to facilitate comfortable, safe and convenient movement for walking, biking, and driving, as well as bus riders. 3rd Ave is designated as a collector street under the City's jurisdiction. All three streets have sidewalks and dedicated on-street bike lanes. Recommended improvements for these arterial and collector streets include the following:

#### Main Street (Highway 157)

- » Improved and more visible pavement markings for pedestrian crosswalks at every intersection
- » Elimination of driveways to increase the quantity of on-street parking spaces
- » Wayfinding signage oriented to pedestrians in addition to existing signage oriented to vehicles

#### Hwy 35

- » Addition of a pedestrian refuge space in the median where there are crosswalks
- » Potential pedestrian/bike flashing beacon, e.g. Irvin St, Elm St
- » Wayfinding signage oriented to pedestrians in addition to existing signage oriented to vehicles
- » 3rd Ave should be a heading like Highway 35
- » Minimize number of driveways to increase the quantity of on-street parking spaces
- » Add street trees in boulevards

## Local Streets

Local streets in downtown are primarily the east-west streets between Hwy 35, 3rd Ave, and 4th Ave. Some of these streets extend west of Hwy 35, while others do not. Recommended improvements for local streets include the following:

#### Irvin Street (Figure 4.6)

- » Improved pedestrian streetscape features, e.g. sidewalk both sides, pedestrian scale lighting, trees
- » Additional on-street parking both sides
- » Wayfinding signage oriented to pedestrians

#### Other Local Streets

- » Fill in sidewalk gaps
- » Add street trees in boulevards
- » Consider connecting Wilson St between Hwy 35 and 3rd Ave in conjunction with any future redevelopment in that area

#### Alleys / Court Street (Figure 4.6)

- » Redesign as attractive shared access routes for pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles

#### Parking

- » Maximize on-street parking opportunities, e.g. minimize number of driveways, consider diagonal parking on east-west streets
- » Consider opportunities for additional on-street parking facilities in conjunction with redevelopment
- » Require new medium and high density residential developments to provide adequate on-site parking
- » Consider opportunities for shared parking facilities, including businesses, churches, school, city hall
- » Explore opportunity for a municipal parking lot or structure in the Downtown Core; not fronting on Main Street or Dash-Park but nearby

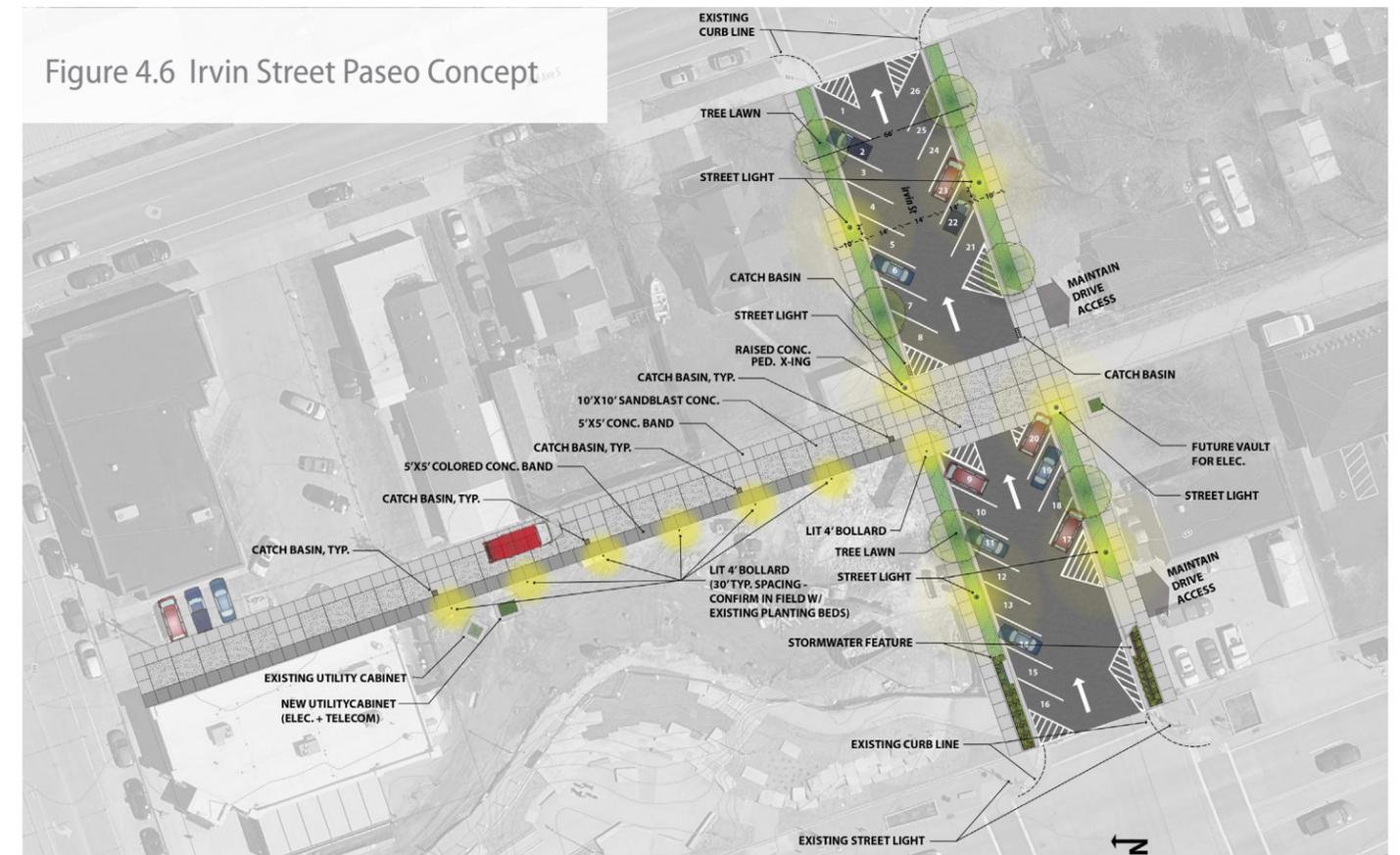
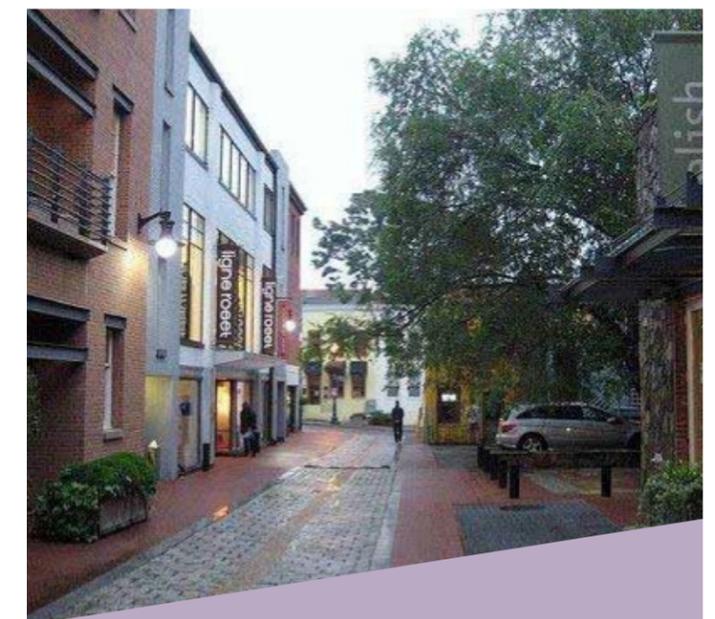
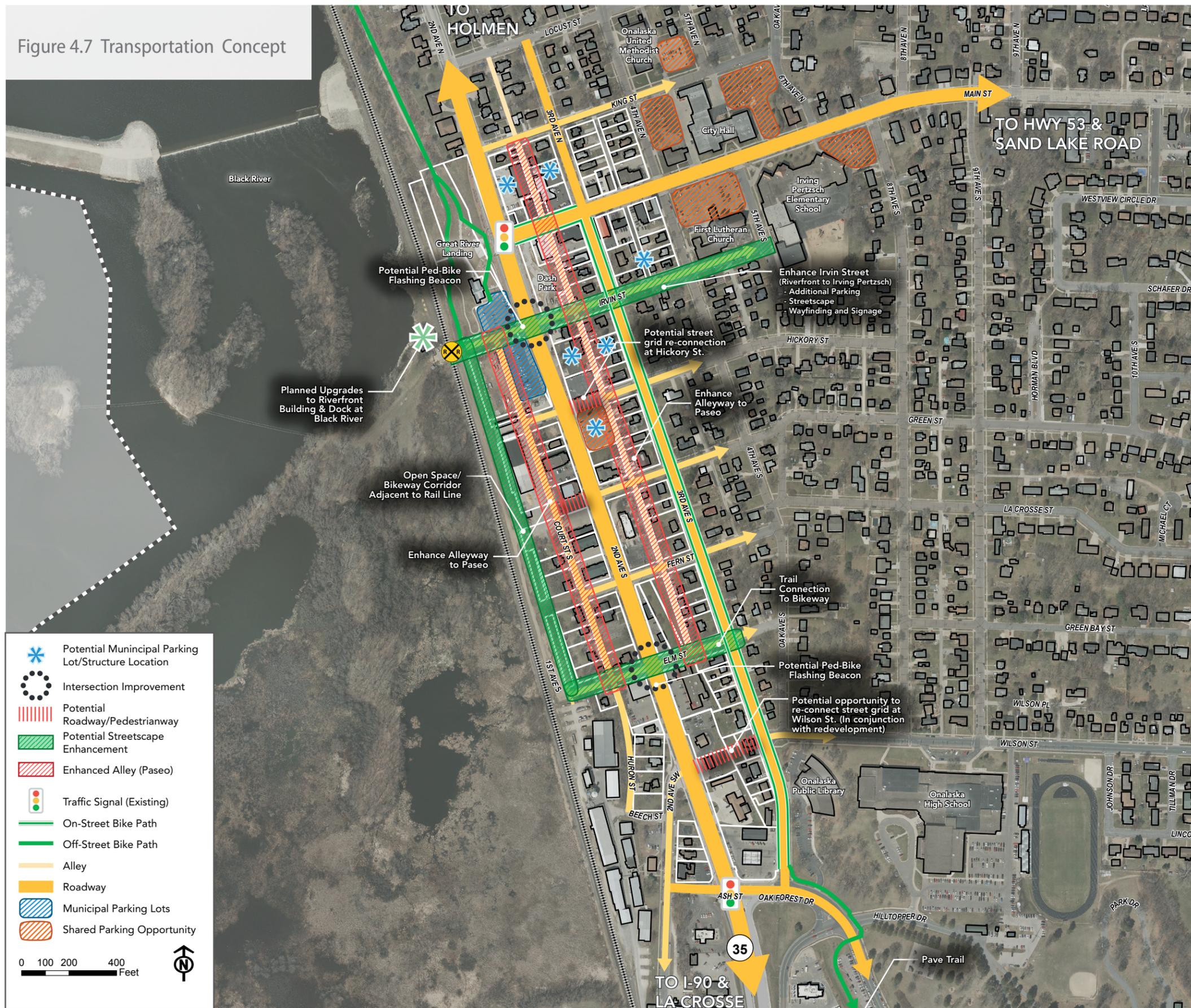


Figure 4.7 Transportation Concept



### Enhanced Alley "Paseo" Concept

- » A public path or place designed for leisurely walking or strolling
- » Provide alternative walking routes to streets for convenient connections to destinations and parking
- » Wide enough to comfortably accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles if needed
- » Special pavement materials and pedestrian scale lighting used to create desirable walking paths
- » Opportunity for public space features, including trash receptacles, seating, bicycle racks, planters
- » Preferable for buildings or open spaces to be located adjacent to paseos
- » Parking adjacent to paseos should have some type of buffer

## Goals:

- » Expand downtown's walking/biking environment to include Irvin St and Elm St as key connections to a riverfront trail in the 1st Ave right-of-way along the rail line
- » Enhance alleys (east side of Hwy 35) and Court St as pedestrian-oriented paseos
- » Improve walking/biking crossings of Hwy 35
- » Implement the water's edge portion of the Great River Landing concept with connections to downtown via Irvin St and a potential pedestrian bridge over the rail line
- » Continue to maintain and enhance the Great River State Trail as a high quality scenic and accessible trail for both regional and local users.
- » Continue to support the state snowmobile trail's route and access to downtown
- »



## Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Completion of the upland portion of the Great River Landing has transformed the character of downtown from a place that historically developed with its back toward the river to a place that now affords a grand view of the river valley. The Great River Landing was the introduction of parks and open spaces into downtown. While the Great River Landing is both a regional open space and a local park, in the form of the Main Street Plaza, the subsequent development of Dash-Park brings a park literally into the heart of the downtown core. Prior to these parks, downtown residents did not have convenient access to a neighborhood park.

The future development of the water's edge portion of the Great River Landing will be another great asset for downtown. Irvin St should be improved as a key trail connection between downtown and the waterfront (Figure 4.8).

## Trails

The current designated route of the Great River State Trail includes a segment of on-street bike lanes along Main St for a block and then south on 3rd Ave. It is recommended that this route is kept because it brings regional bicyclists into downtown. In the past, the designated route on Court St bypassed downtown. Future pavement of a portion of the trail north of the Great River Landing should be considered to make it accessible to more users. Downtown is also a destination on the state snowmobile trail that connects to the Great River Landing, which also provides snowmobile parking.

To enhance the trails in downtown for both regional recreational users and downtown residents, it is recommended that a trail loop be created in downtown. This loop would use Irvin St and Elm St to create a loop between downtown and the riverfront, including a trail down along the rail line.



This trail loop as well as the 3rd Ave on-street bike facility will also provide a trail connection between all of the parks and open spaces in downtown, including Great River Landing, Dash-Park, the playground at Irving Pertzsch Elementary School, the High School playfields, and Rowe Community Park.



## Great River Landing Concept

The future expansion of the Great River Landing design concept envisions an extended Main Street to be directly connected to the waterfront. This connection will be achieved through a large pedestrian bridge and overlook that would span the railroad tracks to provide safe and accessible connection to the waterfront as a direct extension of Main Street. A second connection to the heart of the planned lower waterfront activity area is Irvin St, which currently crosses the rail line. The planned lower waterfront portion of the project has been designed for both passive and active recreation. The proposed design concept includes a nature playground, picnic grove, log rolling boom, kayak launch along with other informal water's edge access, and a boardwalk system to connect the active area to the adjacent spillway.



Enhanced trail connection.

Figure 4.8 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Concept



Enhanced paddling connections along the Black River/Lake Onalaska.



Fishing the Black River/Lake Onalaska.



Enhanced bike trail connections.



# Implementation



## Keys to Implementation

Several factors will be crucial in successfully realizing the vision set forth by the City of Onalaska within the Downtown Redevelopment Study. These factors apply regardless of the actual form and timing of redevelopment:

### **Patience**

The vision for downtown cannot be implemented overnight. The time frame for implementation reflects its evolutionary nature; it looks forward over a period of years. The desired change often requires the patience to wait for the right things to happen, rather than making changes simply to be seen as doing something.

### **Commitment**

Commitment to the Downtown Redevelopment Study and patience go hand-in-hand. This study does more than simply seek to attract redevelopment in downtown; it provides a road map to move the area toward its vision. Commitment to the plan means the willingness to actively promote public and private investments that align with the objectives of the study. It also requires the willingness by decision makers to deter developments which do not meet the objectives of the plan. Not all of these decisions will be easy or will they occur exactly as analyzed in this study.

### **Public & Private Partnerships**

Removal of the physical and economic barriers to redevelopment in Onalaska will likely require some public financial assistance. The complexity of redevelopment envisioned for the area clearly demonstrates the need for public financial participation. Private investment will not be sufficient to pay for all costs associated with every redevelopment project. Strong public/private partnerships will make redevelopment projects more financially feasible, promote the desired types of development and build momentum in the area. The

needs established in this study do not make public financial assistance an entitlement however. On-going planning will define the nature of assistance and amount available for each step throughout the implementation process. This approach ensures that public monies are used to achieve desired public outcomes and not simply make development more affordable (or profitable) for the developer.

### **Financial Reality**

Implementing the Downtown Redevelopment Study requires careful investment of public funds, but the private side of the financial equation must not be overlooked. New development and existing businesses will pay for part of the improvements called for in the study. Implementing the Downtown Redevelopment Study seeks to balance the investment in public initiatives with the creation of a financial environment that sustains successful businesses.

### **Strategic Investments**

If financial support for the plan was unlimited, the need for strategic decisions would be less important. With limited funds, every expenditure is crucial. It is not possible to immediately undertake all of the initiatives described in this plan. Needs and opportunities not contemplated in the plan may arise in the future. Every investment must be evaluated for its impact on enhancing downtown.



Architect's Rendering of Proposed Great River Residences Project



## Roles & Responsibilities

There is a temptation to give sole responsibility for implementation of the Downtown Redevelopment Study to the City of Onalaska. While the City does possess many of the powers and resources needed to undertake the actions described in this redevelopment study, successful implementation will require actions by other stakeholders as well. Achieving the vision for downtown redevelopment and public improvements will require ongoing collaboration between public and private stakeholders. This section describes the roles and responsibilities of key parties.

### Business and Property Owners

While the City influences downtown's physical setting, downtown remains a place combining public and private activities. Individual businesses determine the types of goods and services available in downtown. Individual businesses make decisions about how they operate. Property owners decide how to maintain and improve their buildings. Individual property owners need to ensure that adequate convenient parking is provided for their customers and employees. Each of these factors plays a role in the long-term success of the corridor.

### City of Onalaska

The ultimate responsibility for implementing the recommendations of this redevelopment study rests with the City of Onalaska. The Common Council and Community Development Authority (CDA) will provide direction on staff resources, review of proposed development projects and approve public investments. Responsibility for managing redevelopment in downtown will be a priority for the Community Development Authority and the Planning / Zoning and Engineering Departments of the City.

### Planning / Zoning Department

The Planning / Zoning Department will share a lead role in managing implementation for the City.

The actions to be taken by the Planning / Zoning Department to implement the study include:

- » Application of land use controls and redevelopment guidelines to shepherd private development;
- » Review of development plans and proposals;
- » Coordination of planning for capital improvements needed to facilitate redevelopment; and
- » Creation of financial plans for public redevelopment investments and continued monitoring.

### Engineering Department

The Engineering Department also plays a major role in the design of public infrastructure improvements needed to support development and redevelopment in downtown, including utility and roadway improvements. The Engineering Department is also key player in planning for future roadway and transportation improvements, including ongoing conversations with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) on State Roads 35 and 157 (Main St) safety and potential future intersection improvements in downtown.

### Community Development Authority (CDA)

Downtown is an important location for economic development in the City of Onalaska. The CDA will promote and monitor downtown redevelopment momentum. The CDA will need to determine their specific roles for a coordinated effort with the Common Council. Several potential CDA actions make them an important player in the successful implementation of the plan:

- » Provide a framework for coordinating efforts of the community. With limited resources, it is essential that the community work in unison to undertake redevelopment. The knowledge and experience gained from the planning process allows CDA members to efficiently and effectively take steps needed to implement core objectives of the study.

- » Work to ensure that economic development initiatives within Onalaska are a recognized priority for Common Council members.
- » Maintain an active role. Actively pursuing critical properties for redevelopment or educating business owners on improvement or reinvestment programs with low interest loans should be continued and expanded roles for the CDA.
- » Create an annual redevelopment "action plan" and report summary to help monitor progress toward implementation. This action plan would outline key steps to occur during the year, including descriptions of actions, responsible parties and funding resources. It forces the parties to not only consider what needs to be done in the coming year, but also why identified steps were not taken in the prior year.
- » Work with business owners and landlords to promote and help finance the maintenance and revitalization of businesses (both buildings and properties) in downtown.
- » Host annual developer roundtables or site tours showcasing the potential of Onalaska sites to perspective developers.
- » Provide guidance to the City to ensure that proposed development projects and public improvements are consistent with the study.
- » Promote development projects with sustainable design practices.
- » Continue to find the appropriate funding options for various redevelopment projects.
- » Collaborate with private brokers marketing Onalaska sites and leverage marketing efforts.

### Plan Commission

The Plan Commission has the lead responsibility for evaluating the application of land use controls needed to implement the Study. The Plan Commission advises the Common Council on issues involving the establishment of and compliance with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the zoning, subdivision, and sign ordinances. The Commission also reviews residential, commercial, and industrial development proposals and makes

recommendations to the Common Council according to the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan and requirements of the zoning, subdivision, and sign ordinances. The Plan Commission plays a key role in integrating the Downtown Redevelopment Study with the update of the Comprehensive Plan and Unified Development Code.

### Common Council

The Common Council sets the foundation for implementing this study consistent with the overall mission of the City. While other bodies (Plan Commission and CDA) play key roles in the implementation process, important redevelopment powers reside with the City Council. Among the powers that may be needed to undertake public initiatives in downtown are:

- » Allocate money in the annual budget to capital improvements in downtown.
- » Approve the establishment of tax increment financing (TIF) districts.
- » Levy of special assessments for public improvements.
- » Issuance of general obligation bonds to finance redevelopment and improvement projects.

### Community-at-Large

The community of Onalaska must stay involved as redevelopment continues over time. The community must work together with decision-makers and provide the necessary input for any new development, respecting existing land owners' desires and meeting the vision for the Downtown Redevelopment Study. Ultimately, the community must:

- » Provide a singular focus for the plan. The knowledge gained from the planning process will allow members of the community to efficiently and effectively comment on redevelopment proposals.
- » Continue public involvement. Continue to attend public meetings, or provide comments and suggestions to proposals as they come forward.



## Downtown Development Guidance and Controls

The initial focus of implementation will be on actions needed to establish the Downtown Redevelopment Study as the official guide for development and redevelopment in downtown. These actions involve the adoption of key policy documents and updated development controls.

### Approve the Downtown Redevelopment Study

The first implementation step is for the CDA and Common Council to approve the Downtown Redevelopment Study. These approvals set the stage for subsequent actions such as amending the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances, and capital improvement program, as well as the identification of potential funding sources.

### Amend Comprehensive Plan

The City will need to amend the Comprehensive Plan (Figure 5.1) to incorporate the new Downtown Redevelopment Study's recommendations, primarily the Land Use chapter. Land use guidance not only promotes the desired development outcomes, it also prevents development that is not consistent with the redevelopment study. These amendments will include the Future Land Use Map designations, Downtown (Land Use Goal 2) Objectives, and appropriate Land Use Policies/Recommendations consistent with the redevelopment study's direction and recommendations. Amending the Comprehensive Plan creates the foundation for all other implementation actions. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan is a statutory requirement for zoning regulations, capital improvements and redevelopment projects.

It is recommended that the properties in the Riverfront Residential and Downtown Mixed Residential Districts be changed from the Downtown Mixed Use land use to the Mixed Density Residential land use on the Future Land Use Map.

### Amend Zoning Regulations

More direct control of future development and redevelopment comes from zoning regulations in the city's Unified Development Code (UDC). The existing zoning districts within the downtown study area will require modification to conform to the redevelopment study. Part of the necessary modification is enabling the type and form of development proposed in this study, for example, allowing vertical mixed use and residential use in downtown that currently zoned as commercial, as well as adjusting parking space requirements.

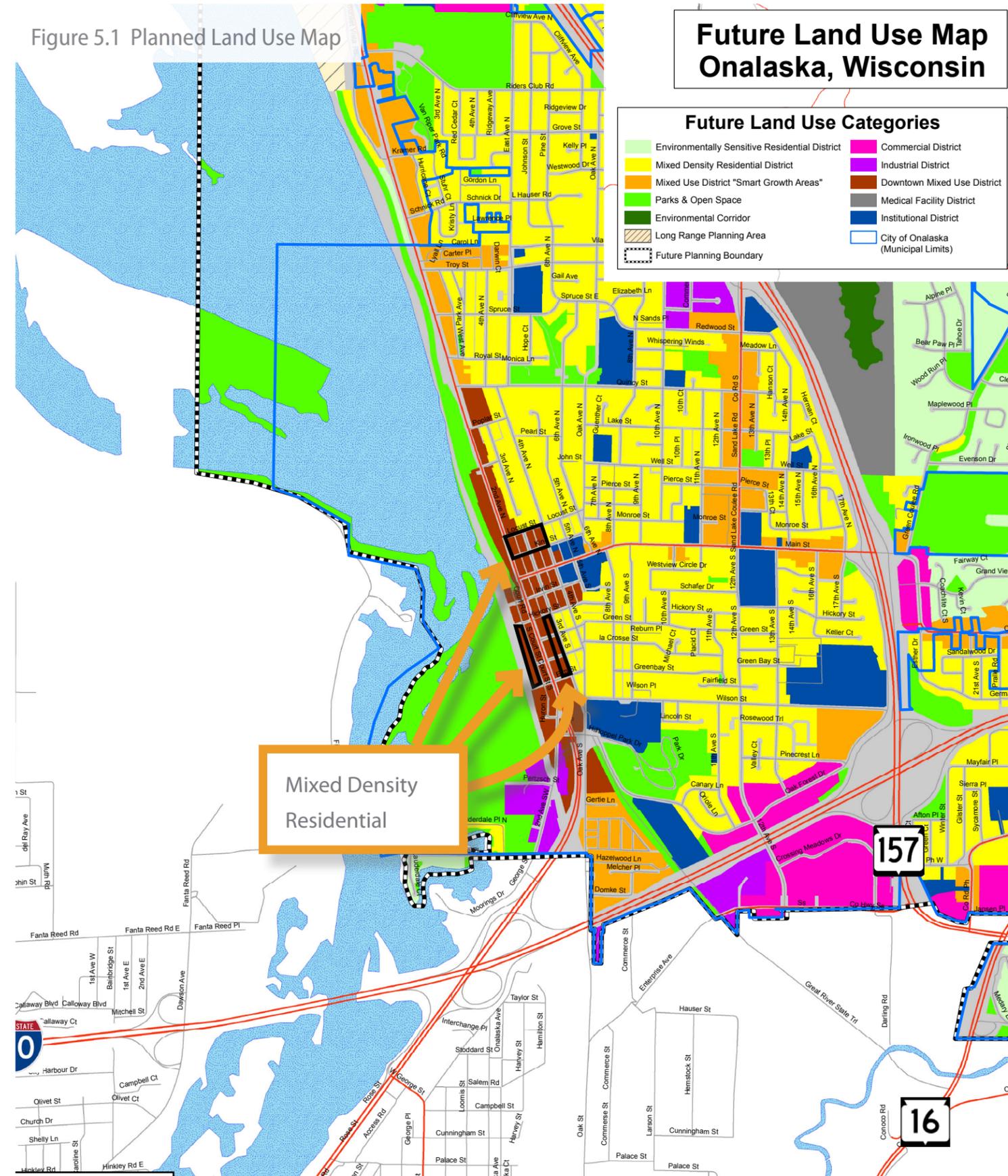
The following changes should be considered:

- » Rezone Riverfront Residential District properties from P1, B1 and B2 to R4
- » Rezone Downtown Mixed Residential District properties from R2 to R4
- » Consider rezoning entire Downtown Core District as B1 rather than its current mix of B1 and B2
- » Consider rezoning Great River Road Business Corridor District from B1 to B2

More detailed analysis and formal recommendation of any zoning changes will be handled by the City of Onalaska through the UDC Rewrite project which is scheduled for completion at the end of 2019.

The city's UDC also has two downtown design overlays districts in place: Downtown-PUD and Downtown-Residential. One option is to incorporate the Downtown Redevelopment Study's design guidelines into the overlay districts.

Figure 5.1 Planned Land Use Map





## Redevelopment Initiatives

Implementation of the Downtown Redevelopment Study is not a single action, but a series of sequenced steps. These steps will be taken over time and across multiple phases. Initial focus should be on several implementation initiatives that lay the foundation for change.

During the early years of redevelopment, there are several critical actions the City of Onalaska can take to reduce development constraints, allow for greater investment in public amenities and infrastructure and enhance the market viability of multiple locations. Suggested activities to enhance project success include:

### Focus on the momentum around downtown's new open space assets

Strategically target redevelopment sites and public improvements that will leverage downtown's desirable new open space assets. Focus on redevelopment that will continue to build market momentum and early projects act as positive demonstrations of great things to come in downtown. Start with achievable projects to build success and create a diversity of projects that are viable in the market place today so individual projects within the community don't directly compete with one another. Allowing this depth and range of early projects should be guided carefully with extensive examination as to which projects should or should not receive financial assistance. Key steps to advance this initiative include:

- » Explore opportunities to provide and manage parking conveniently and efficiently in downtown, including on-street, small lots behind buildings, public lot/ramp, shared parking lots.
- » Establish street design standards for downtown streets and enhanced alleys/paseos (Figure 5.2).
- » Reconstruct Irvin St (between 2nd and 3rd Aves) and the enhanced alley/paseo between Main St and Irvin St.
- » City partnership and support for the proposed

Great River Residences housing development (Figure 5.2).

- » Continued progress on completing the Great River Landing waterfront project.
- » Pursue public acquisition of key properties or public-private partnerships to assemble adequate redevelopment sites, particularly in the Downtown Core.

### Build high quality development

Directing and building high quality commercial and residential development is critical to setting the table for future success. Early projects in the ground will provide the model for future development and establishing a high finish with proper selection of building materials will make great strides in elevating the image of Onalaska. Buildings should be respectful of adjacent properties and be designed with the appropriate scale. Both commercial and housing development should have a strong street presence and varied materials.

### Build a high quality public realm

Continued investment in creating a high quality and memorable public realm that will attract local residents, regional visitors, new businesses, and developers. Key steps to advance this initiative include:

- » Completion of the Great River Landing.
- » Consider paving some portions of the Great River State Trail to make it accessible and attractive to a broader group of users.
- » Improvements to downtown core streets.
- » Extend enhanced alleys/paseos and Court St.
- » Work with WisDOT to improve walk/bike crossings of Hwy 35 and Main St (Hwy 157), particularly at Hwy 35/Irvin St.
- » Programming of public spaces, e.g. farmers market, art fairs in School District or Great River Landing parking lots.
- » Accommodate needs of snowmobiles to access downtown.

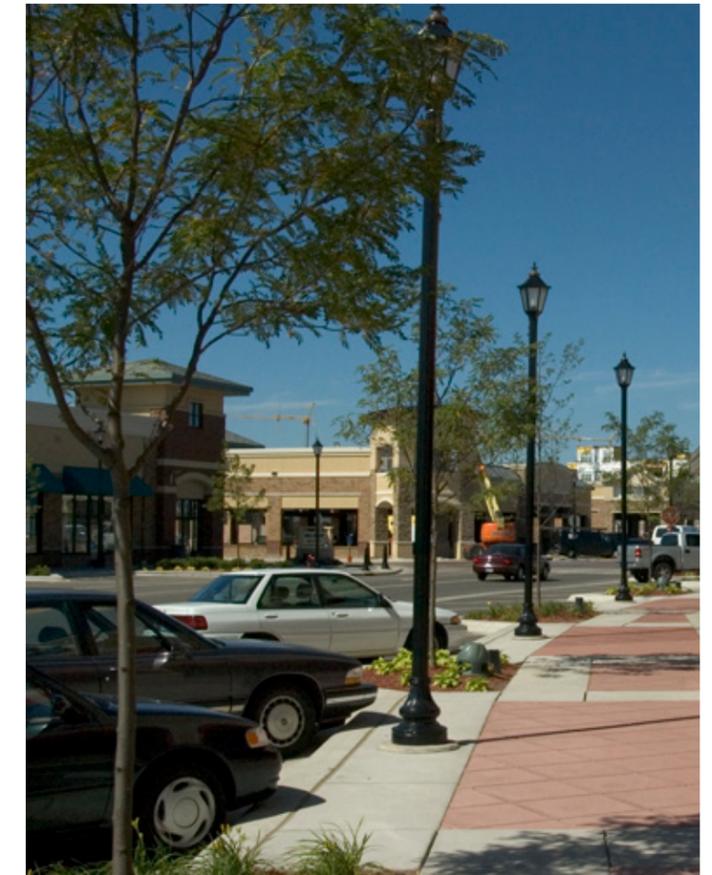
### Complete update of the zoning code

Collaborate with property and business owners on appropriate parking requirements and the desired application of mixed use development in downtown.

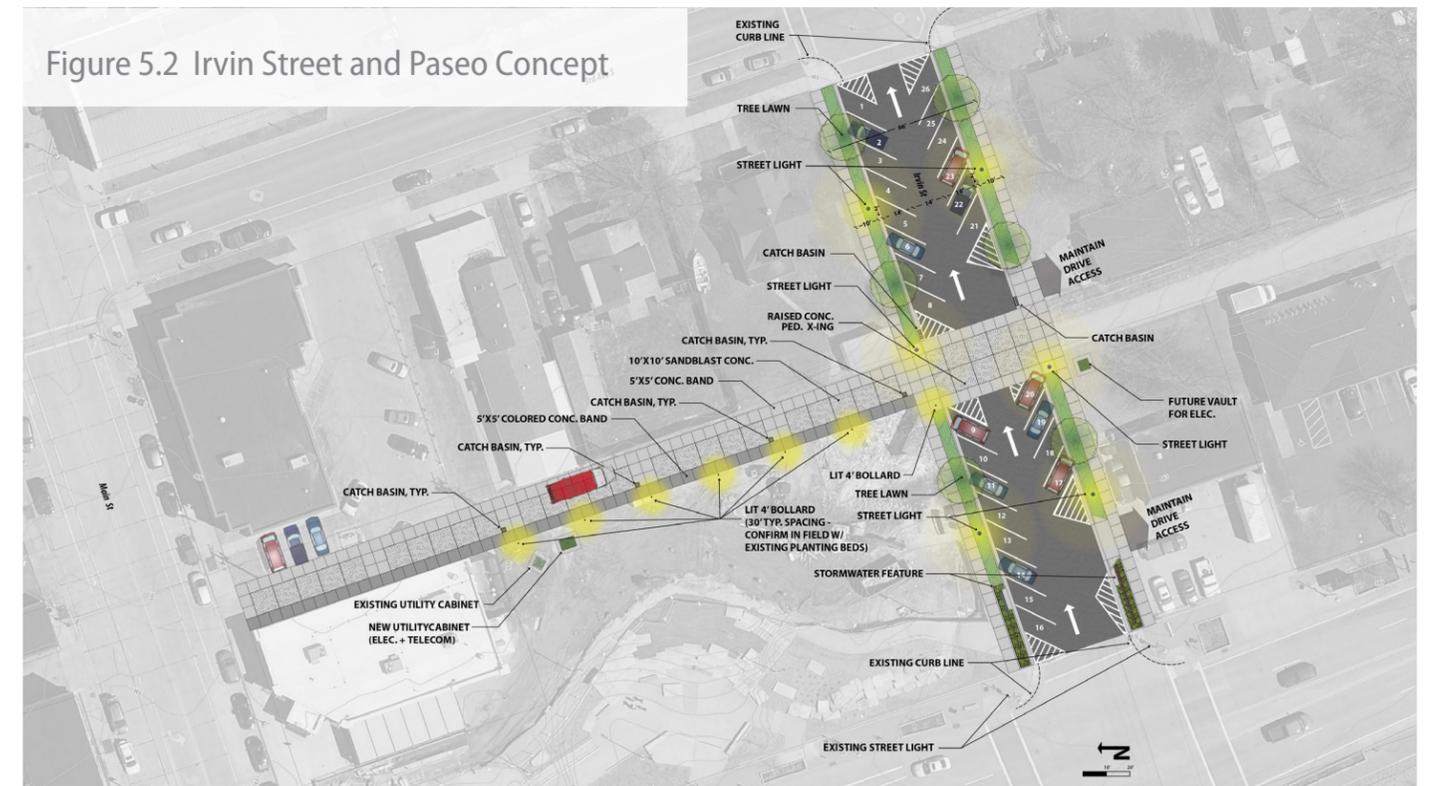
### Broader redevelopment opportunities

Keep an eye on opportunities for redevelopment beyond the downtown core. Key steps to advance this initiative include:

- » Work with utility company on future relocation of the electric substation.
- » Bury overhead power lines with infrastructure improvements and development projects.
- » Complete Quiet Zone improvements at Irvin St.
- » Work with property owners of potential housing redevelopment sites, particularly adjacent to new riverfront housing and along west side of 3rd Ave.
- » Create a general and flexible phasing strategy.



Improved downtown public parking example.



### Create a General and Flexible Phasing Strategy

Achieving the desired redevelopment goals of the Downtown study area will need to be approached in phases for a number of reasons including:

- » The large physical size of the study area
- » The large number of property owners
- » The need and complexity of assembling properties for redevelopment
- » The significant financial investments needed to facilitate redevelopment
- » Time needed for market absorption of new development

Figure 5.3 provides a general phasing strategy that starts with near term redevelopment in the Downtown Core, leveraging and complementing recent public and private investments including the Great River Landing, Dash-Park, and two new Main Street commercial buildings. Redevelopment of sites adjacent to these downtown amenities are identified as near term. In addition, near term redevelopment also includes the planned redevelopment of the City's public works site with the Great River Residences project and two vacant sites on the west side of Hwy 35. Medium term redevelopment areas include additional riverfront residential, relocation/expansion of the electric substation, and vacant/underutilized Hwy 35 properties. Long term redevelopment areas include the northeast and southwest corners of the study area.

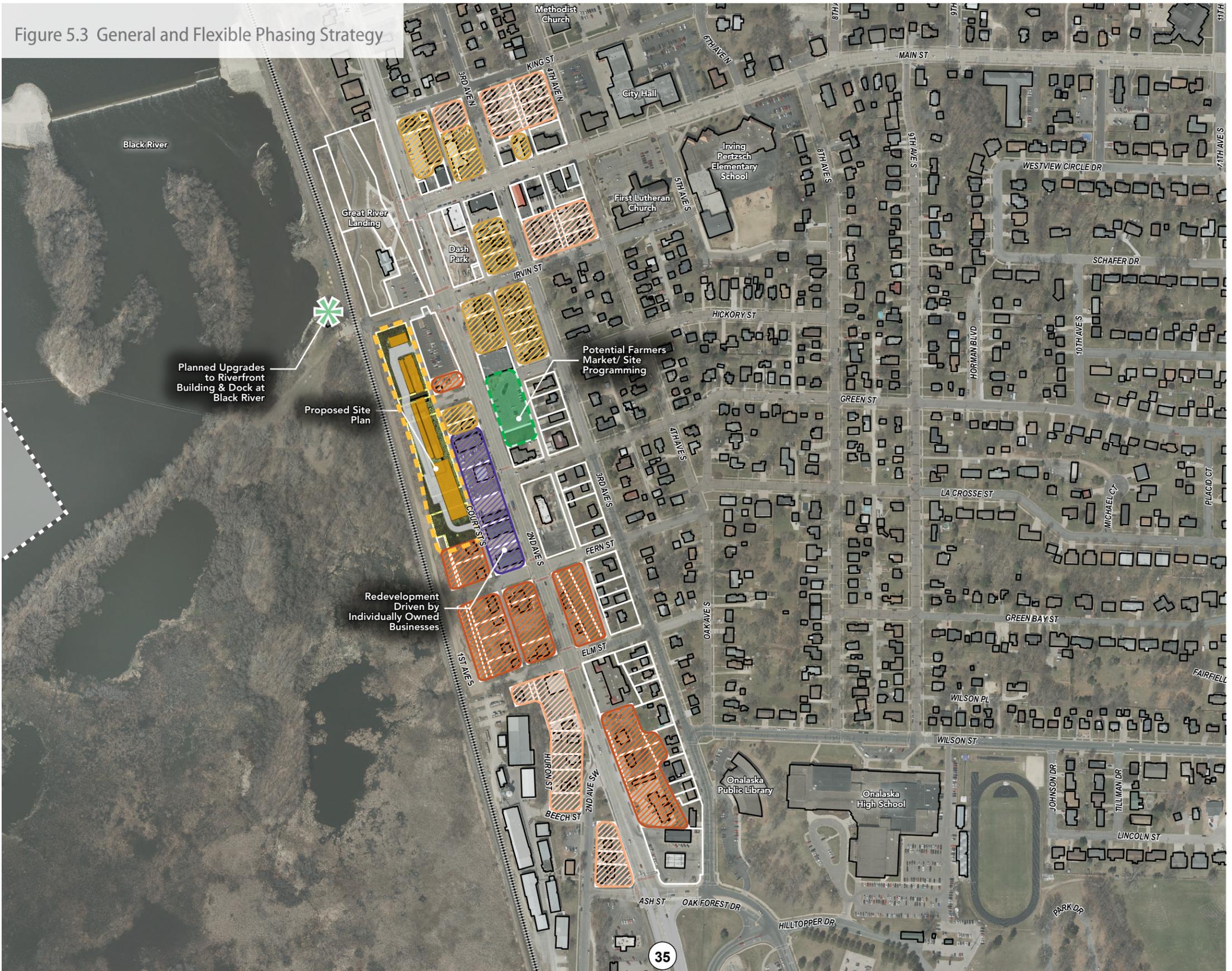


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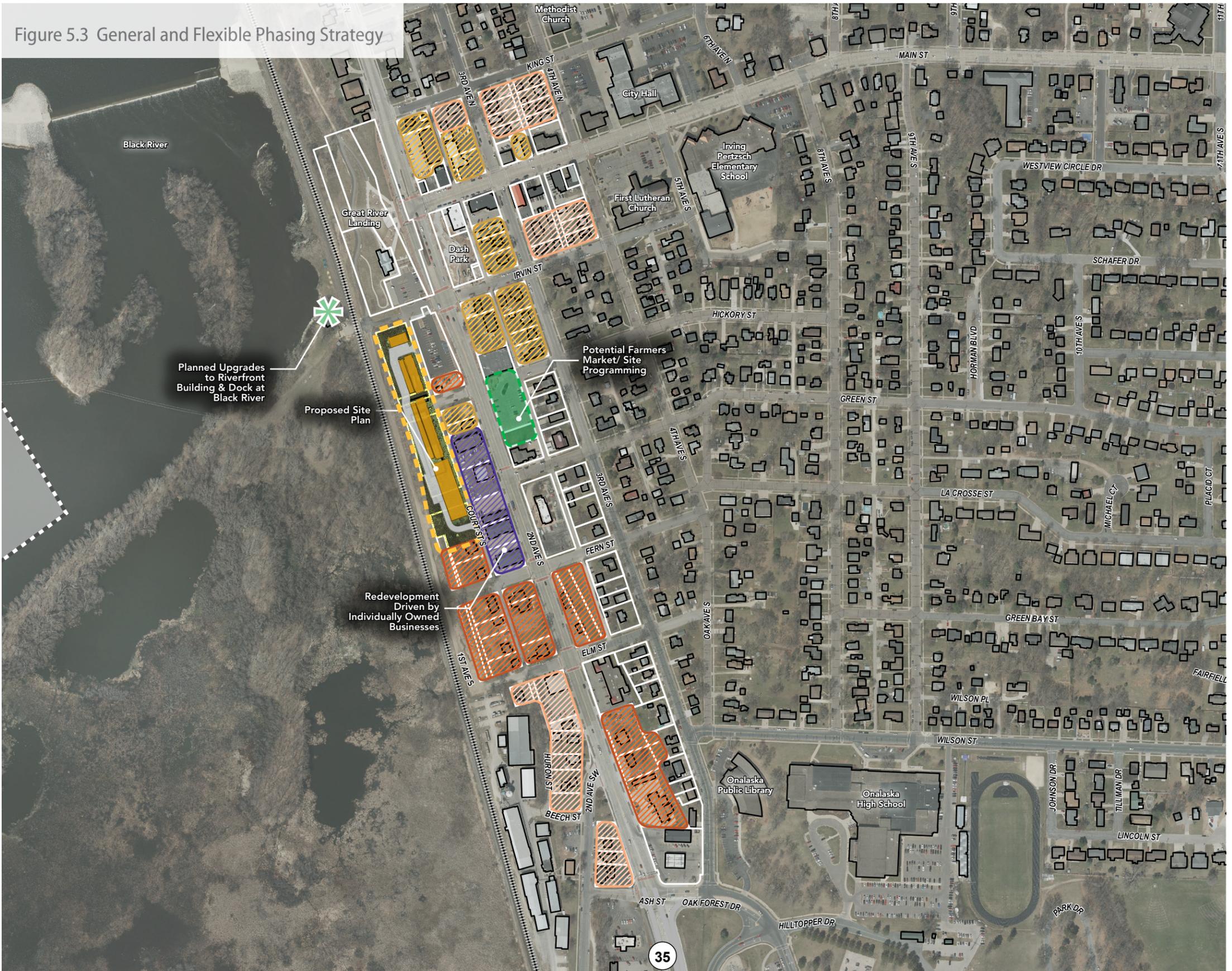


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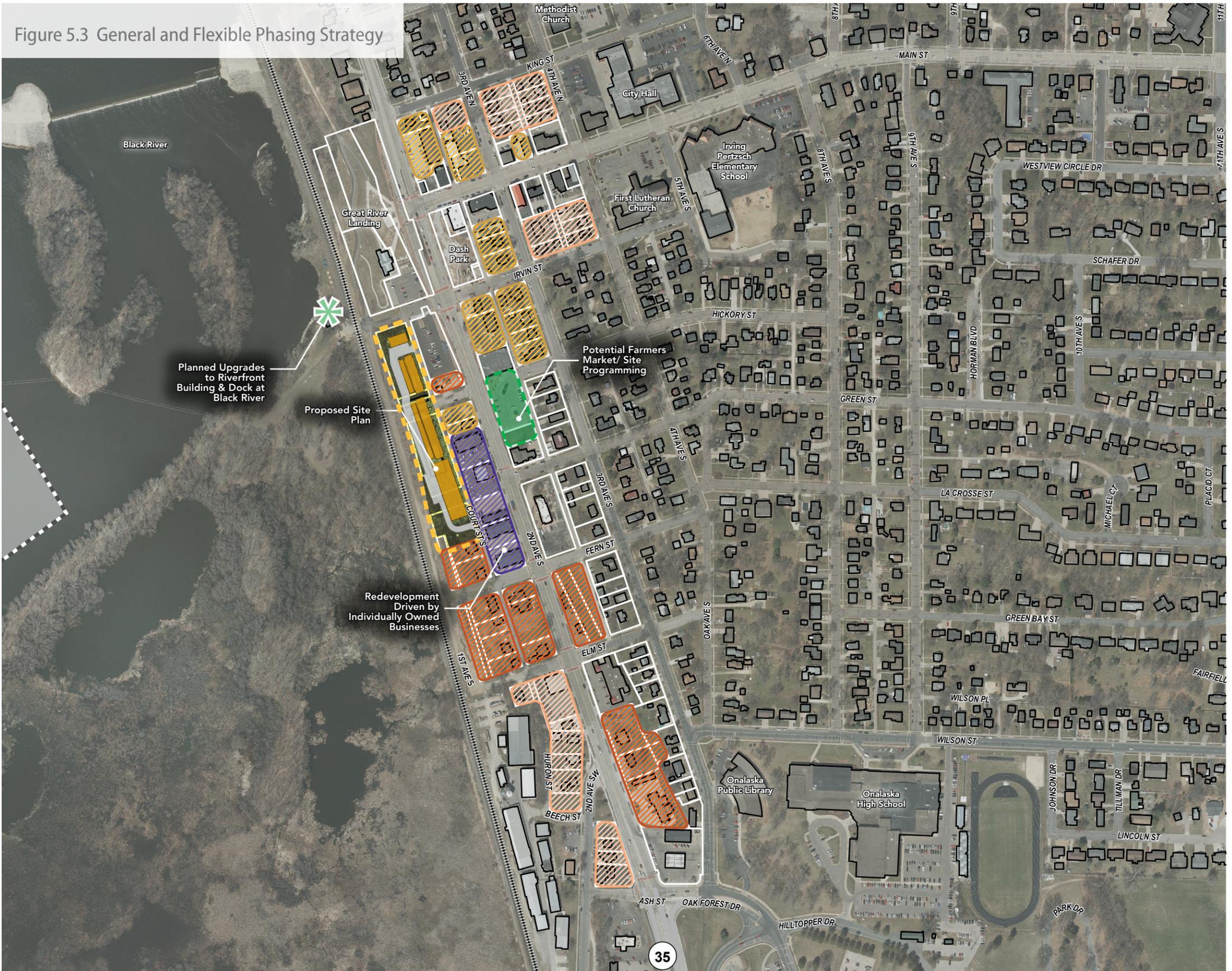


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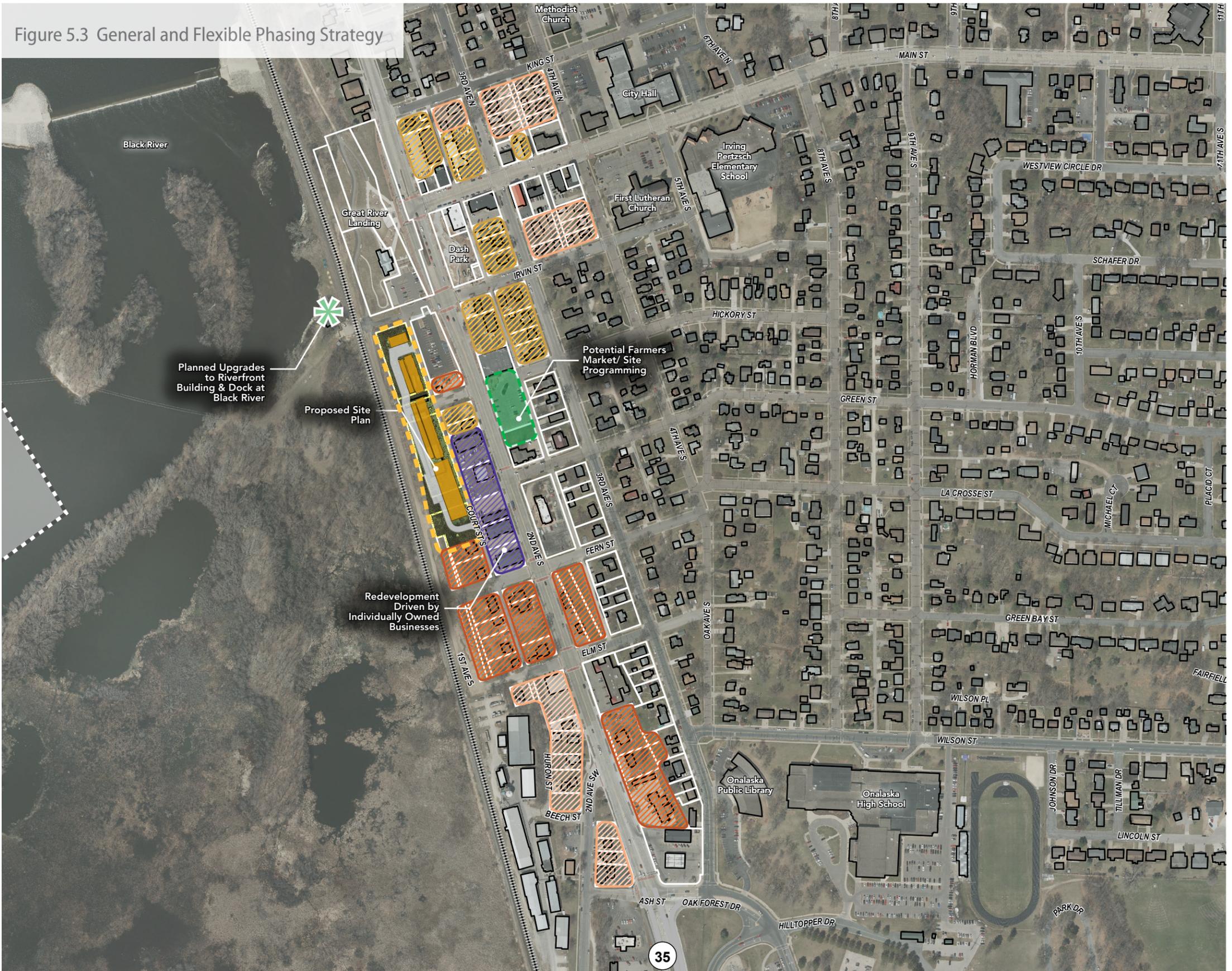


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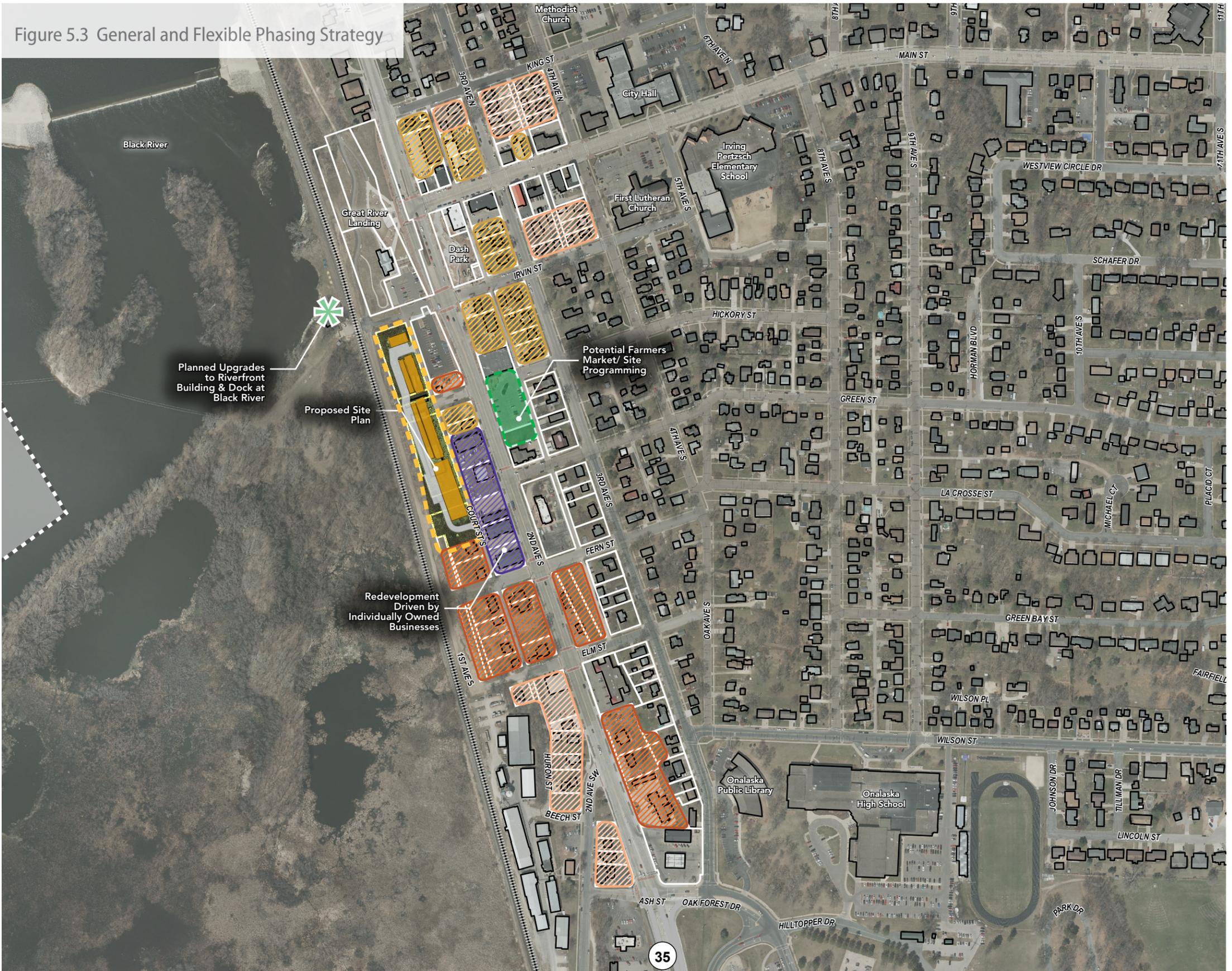


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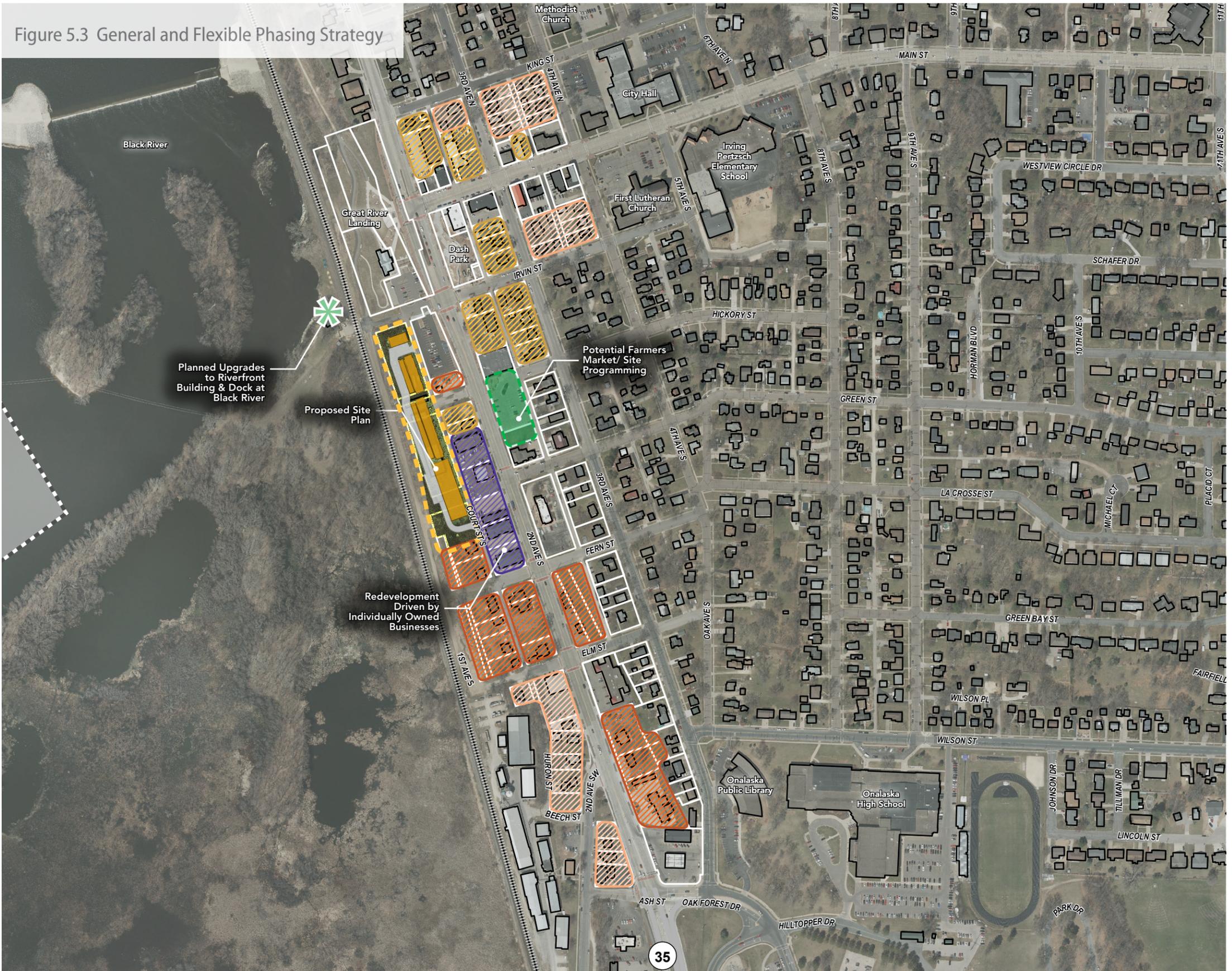


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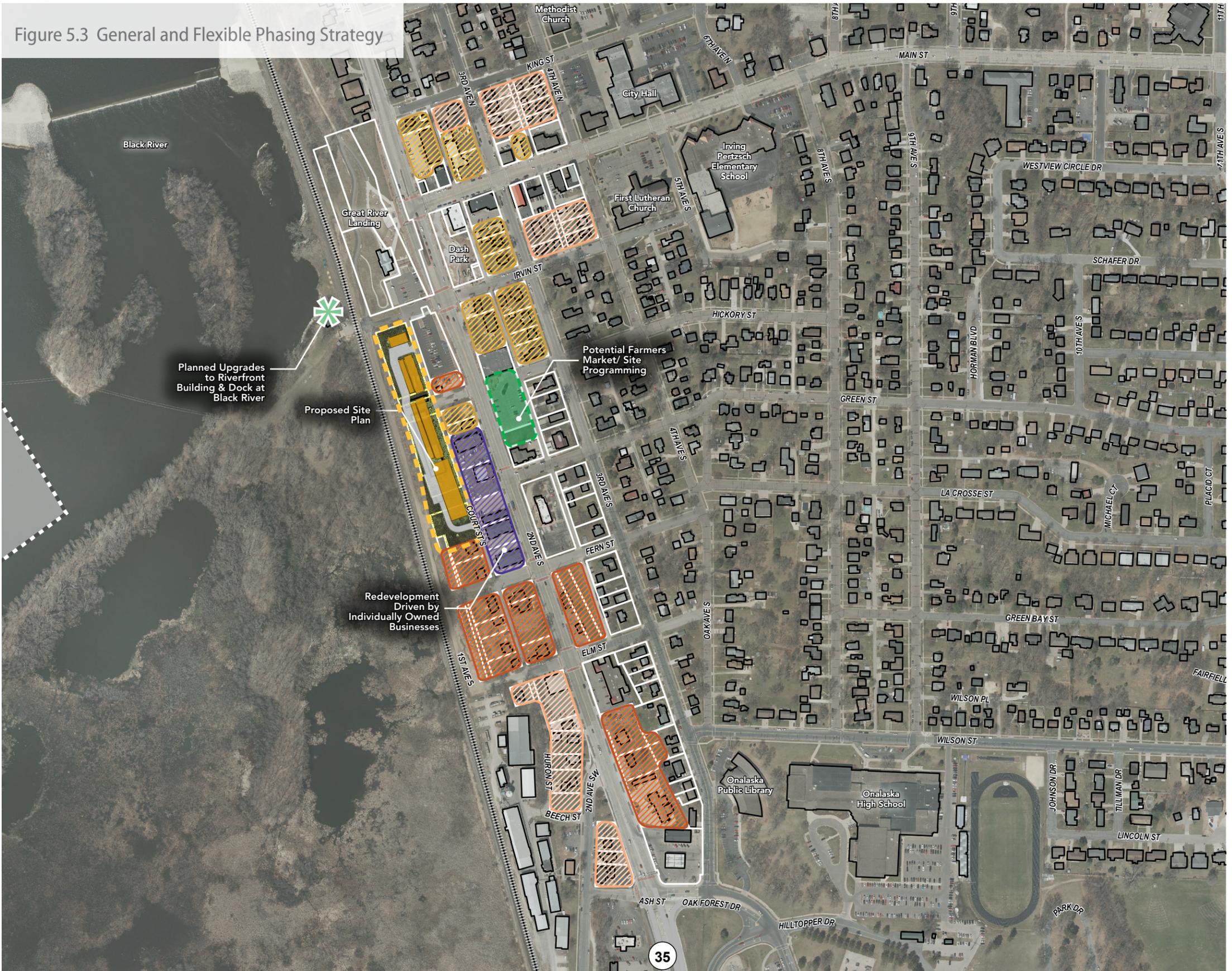


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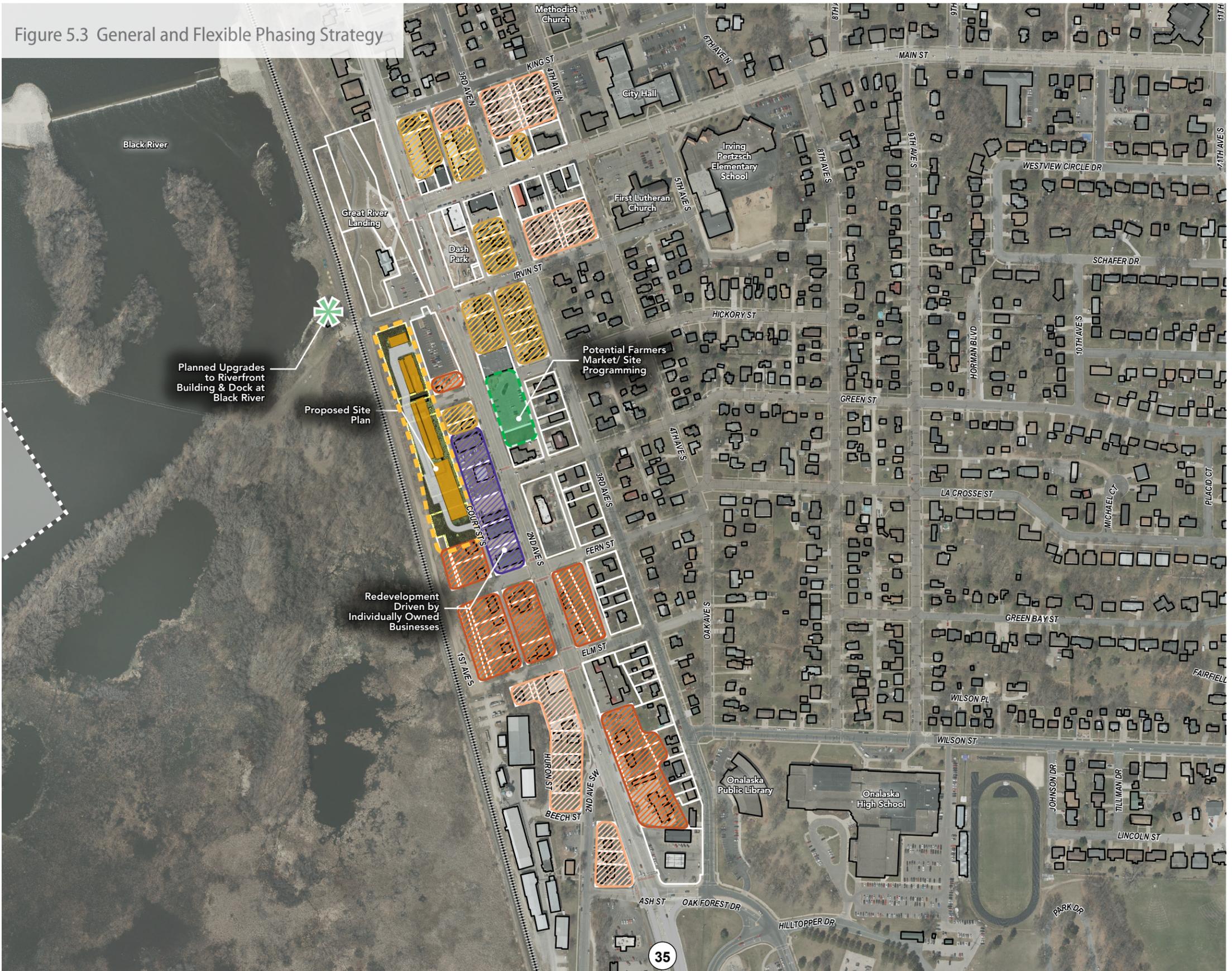


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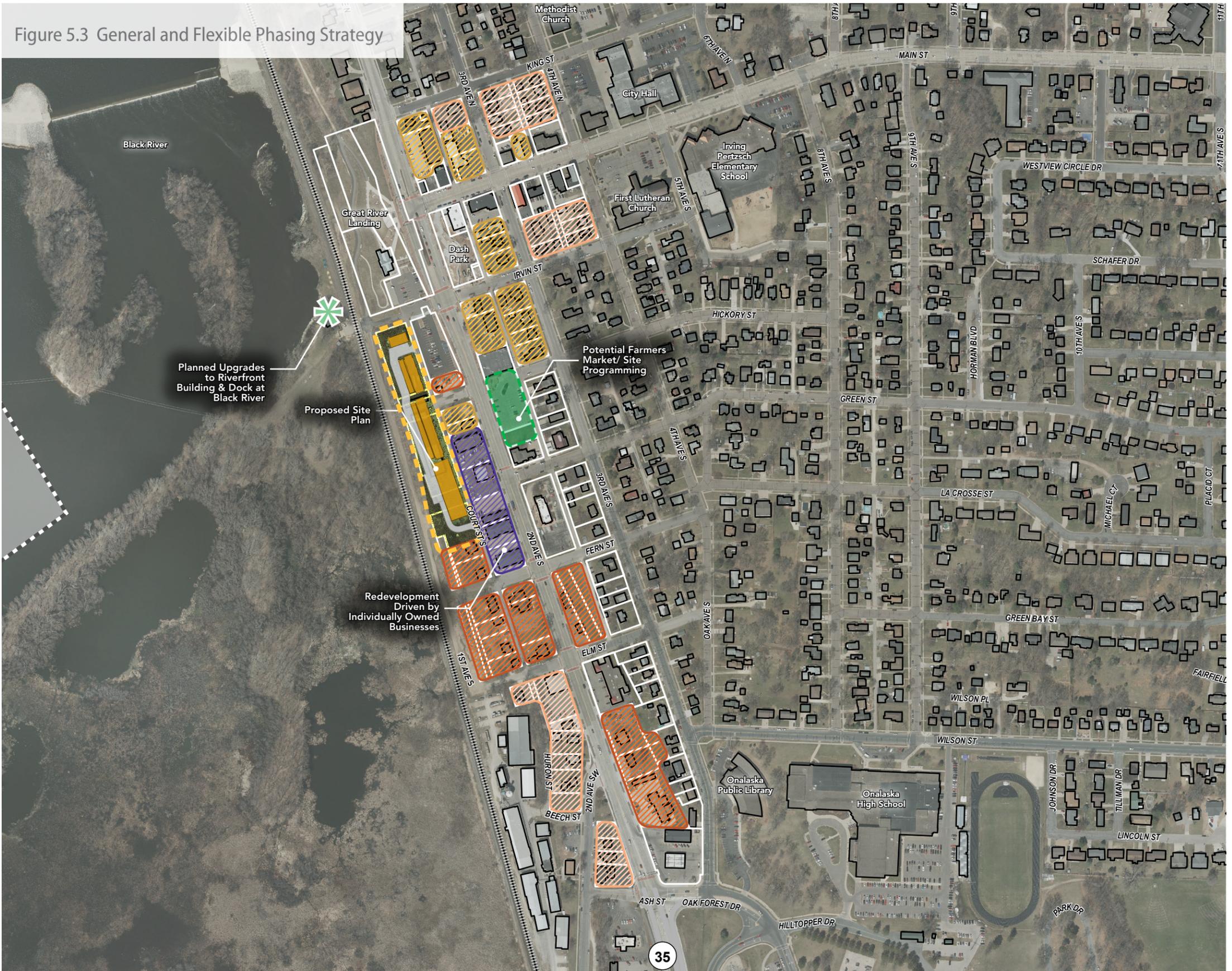


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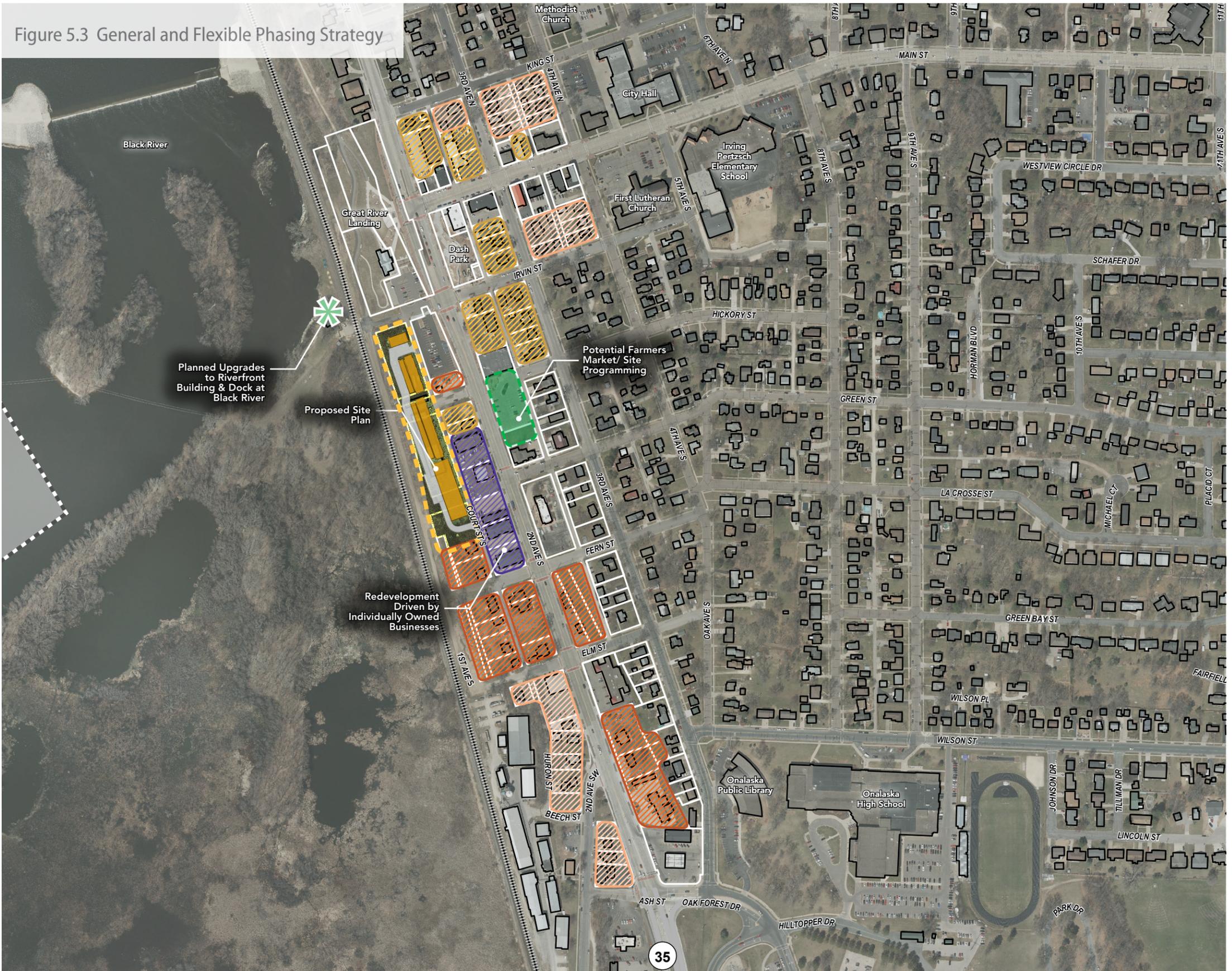


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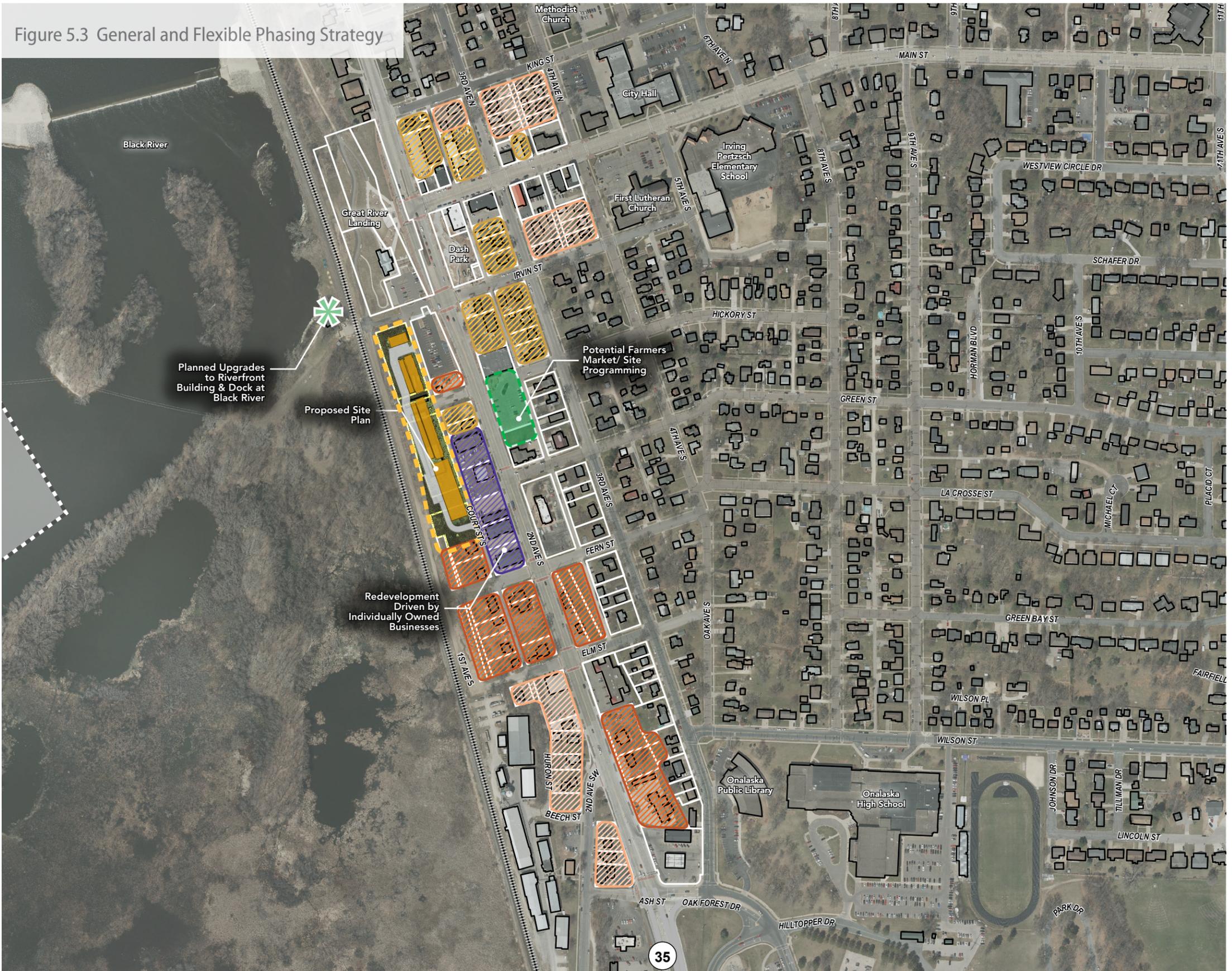


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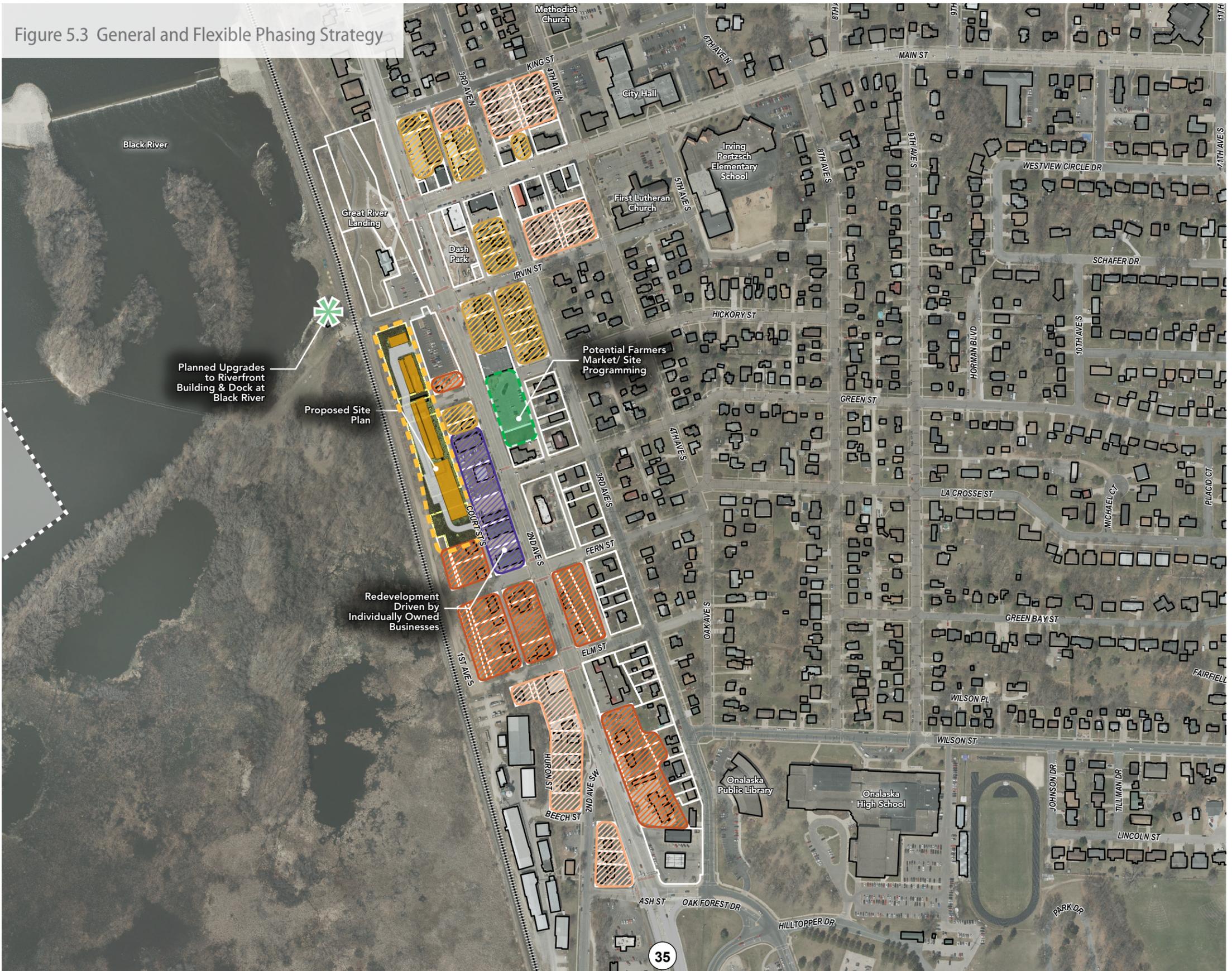


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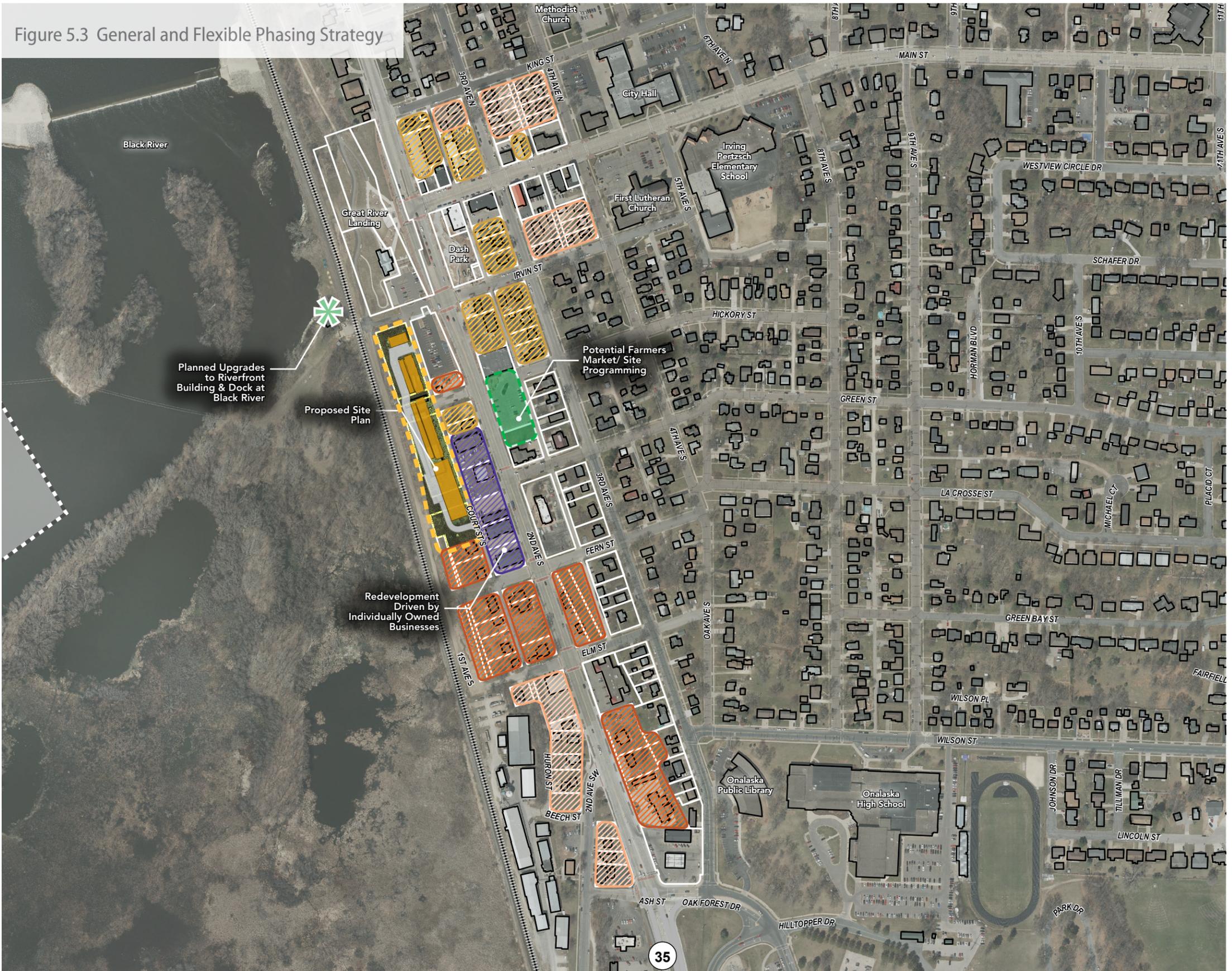


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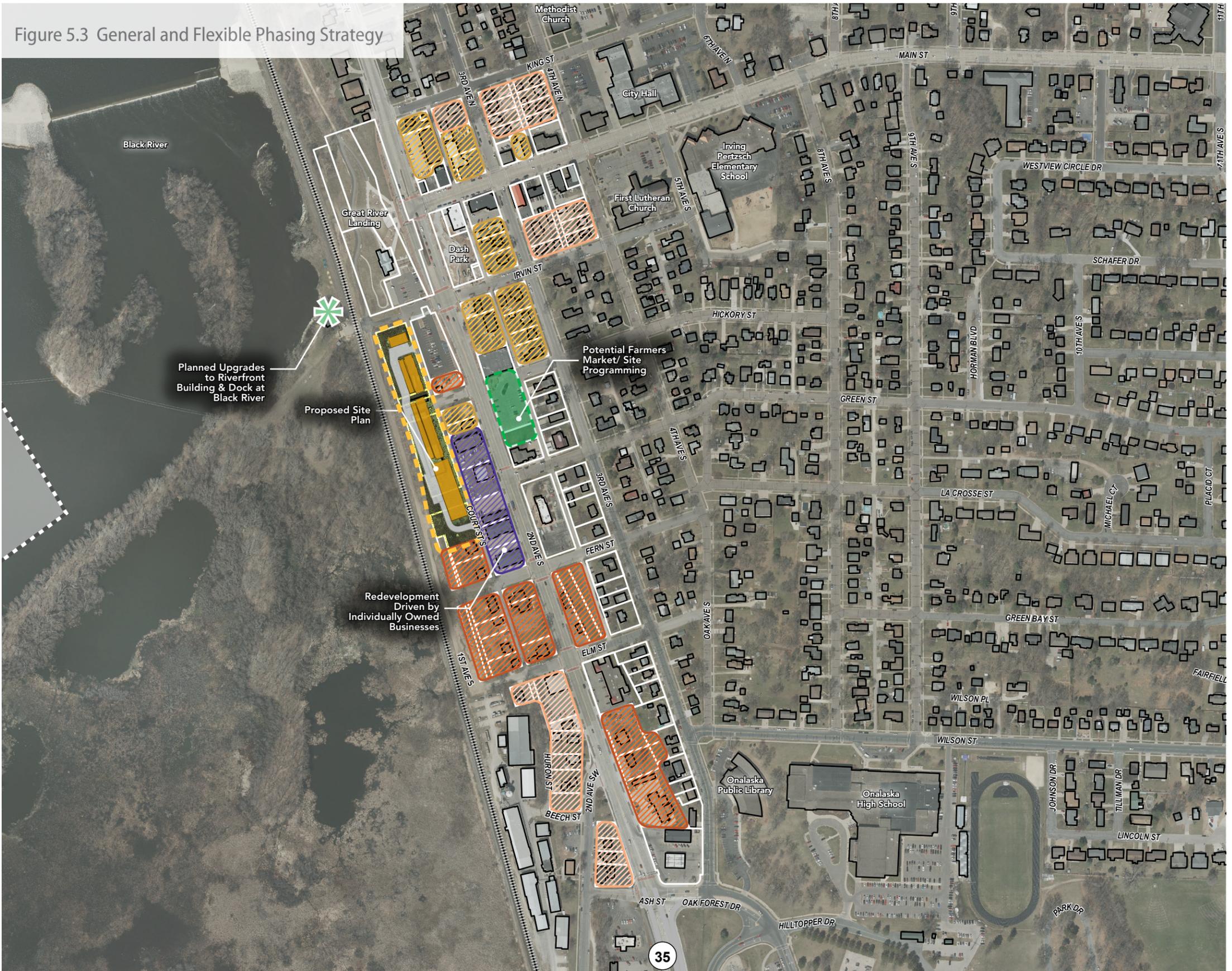


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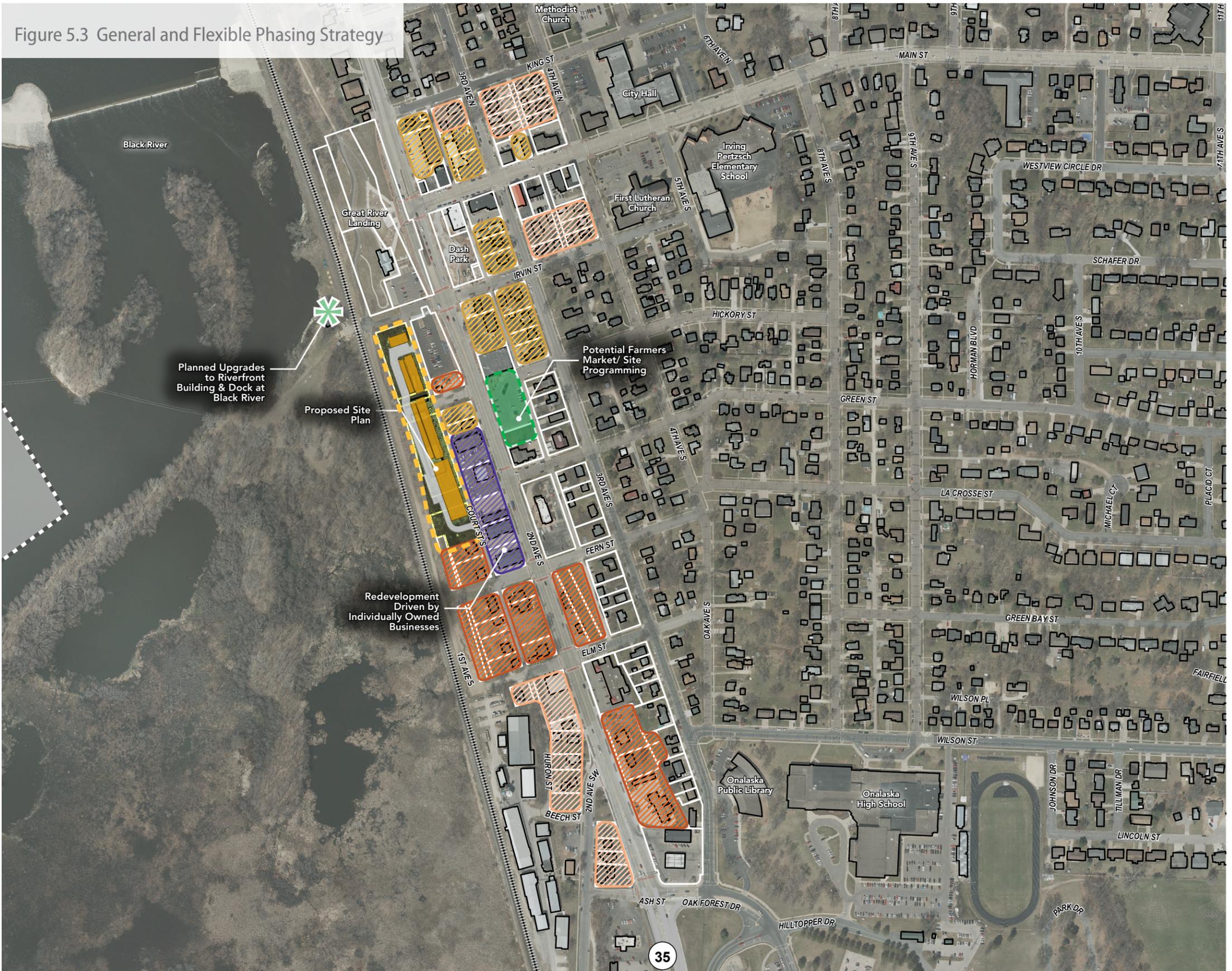


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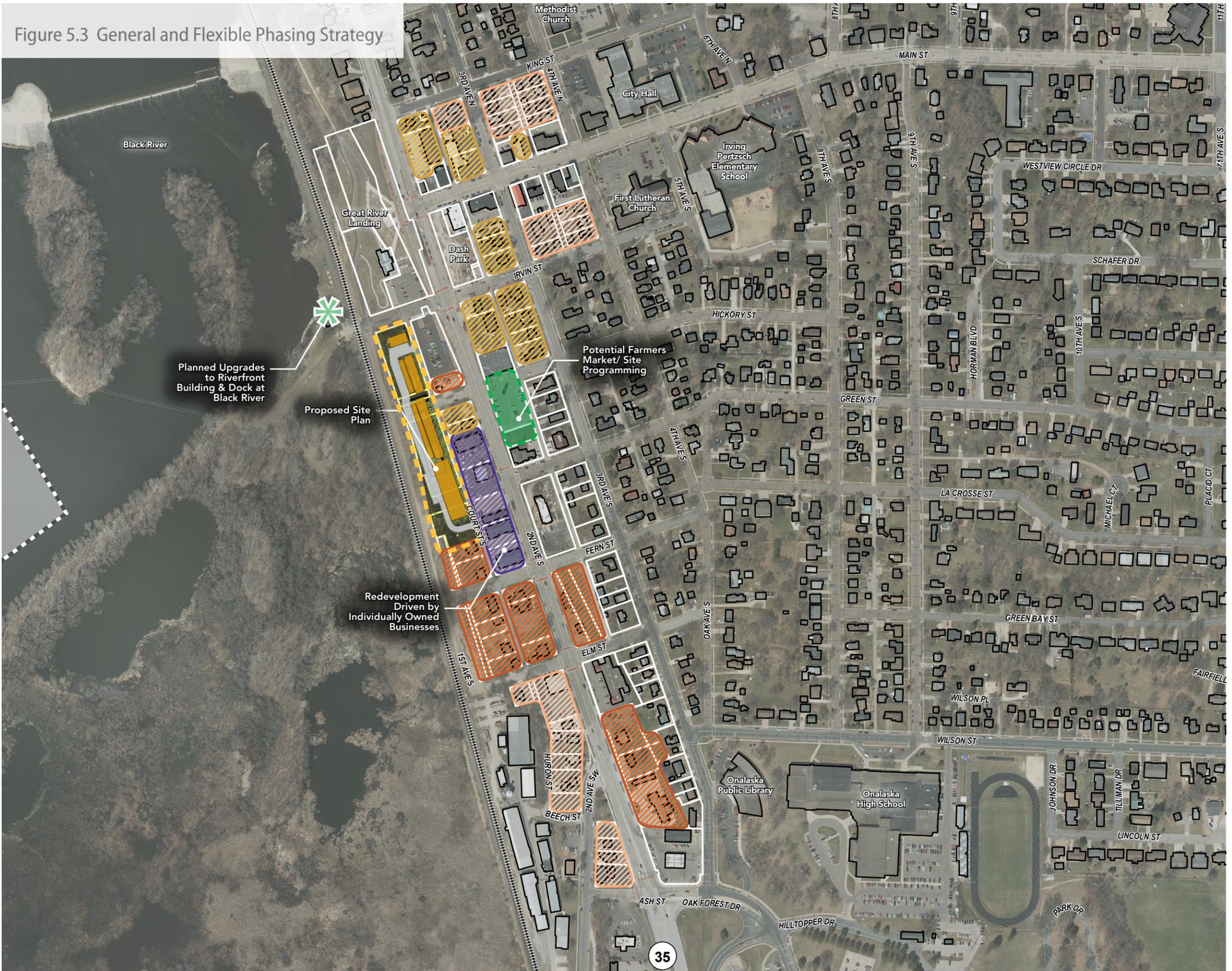


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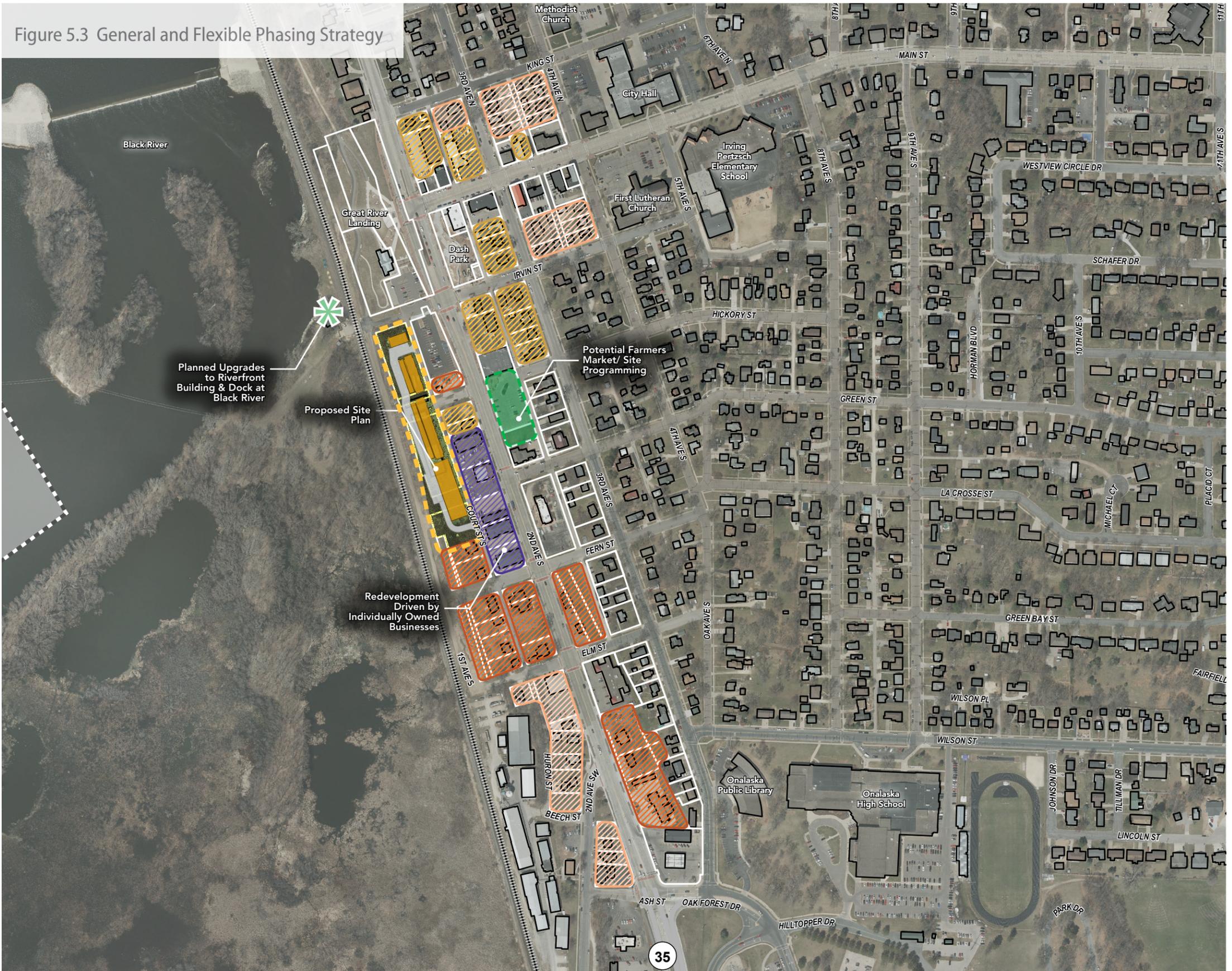


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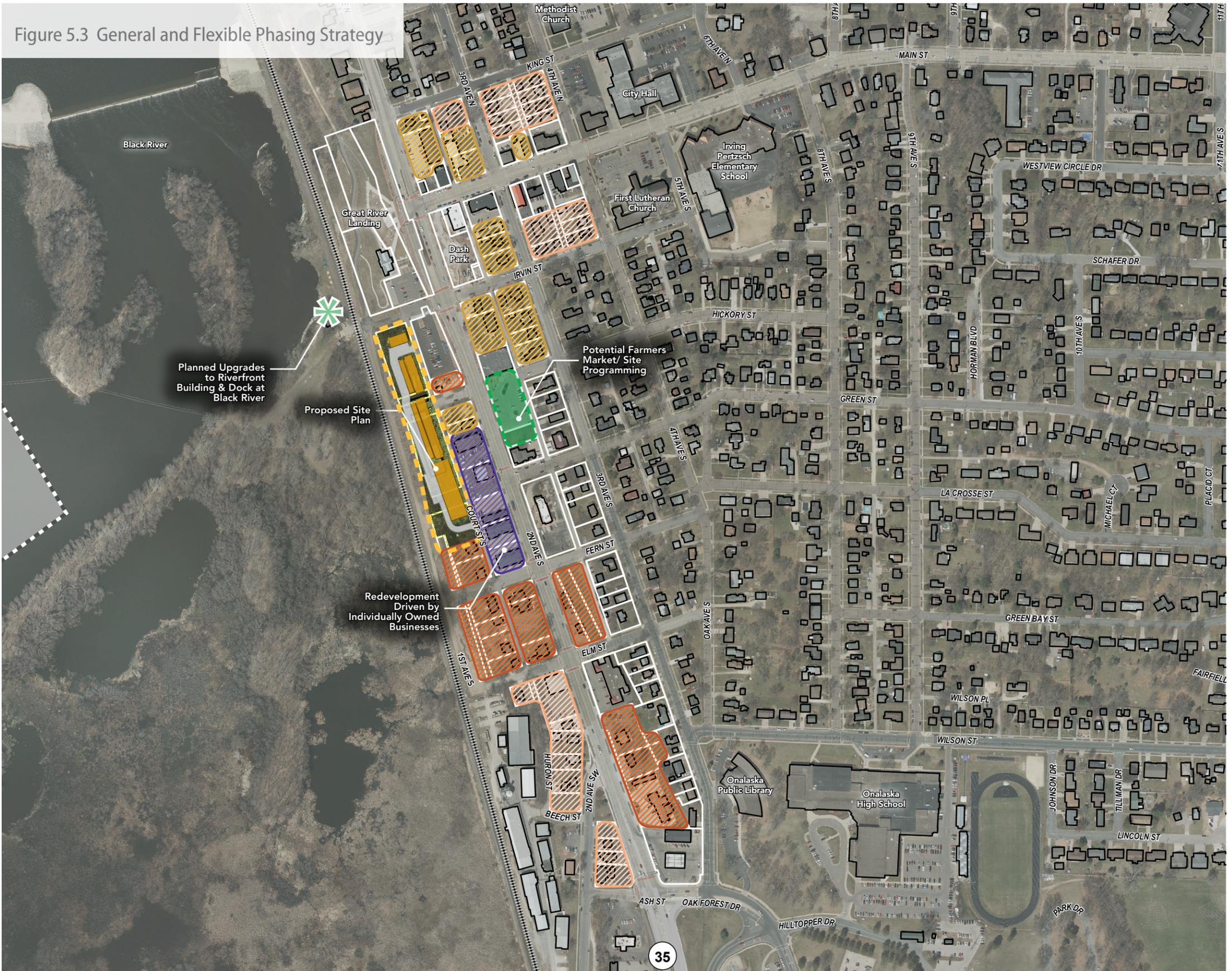


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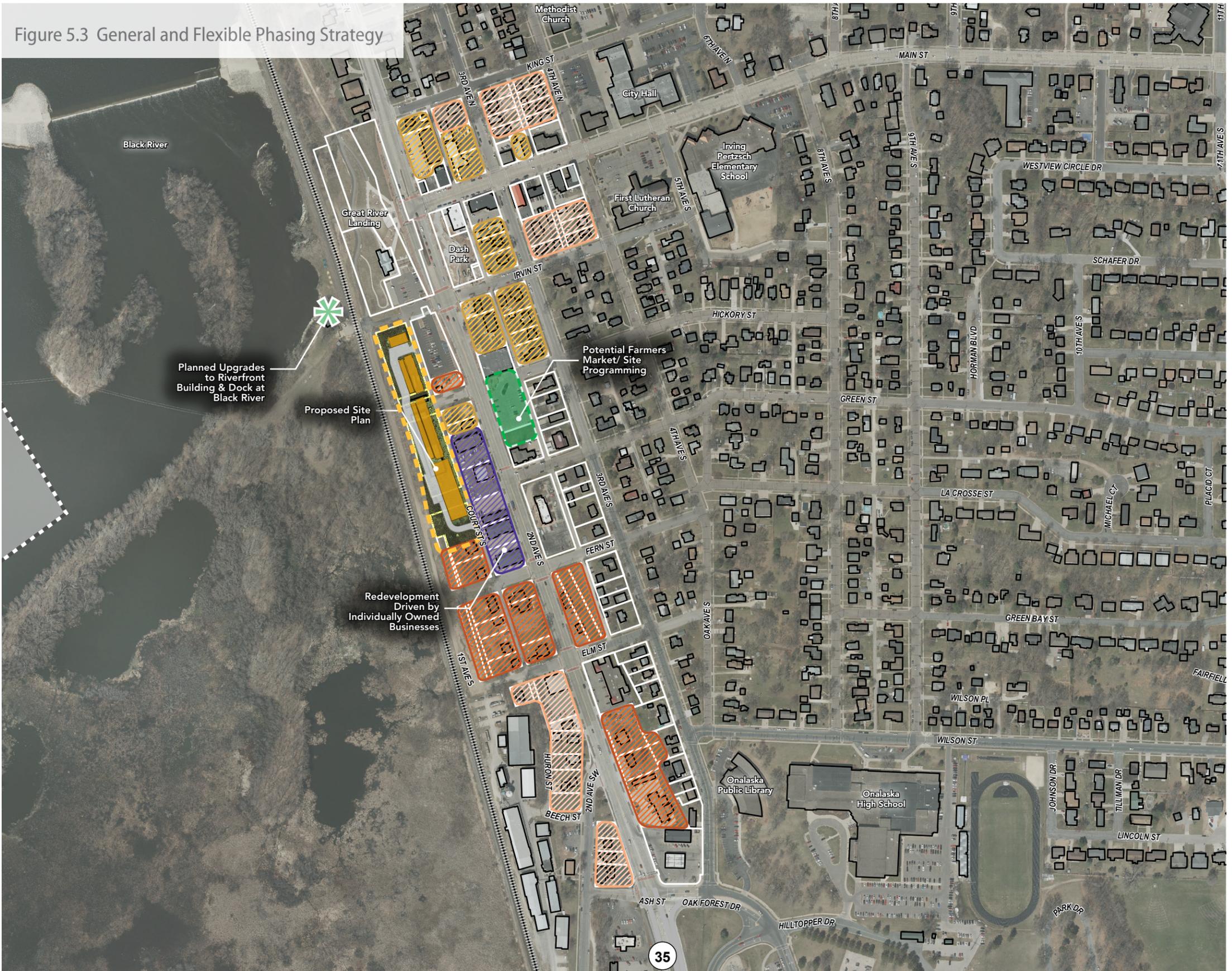


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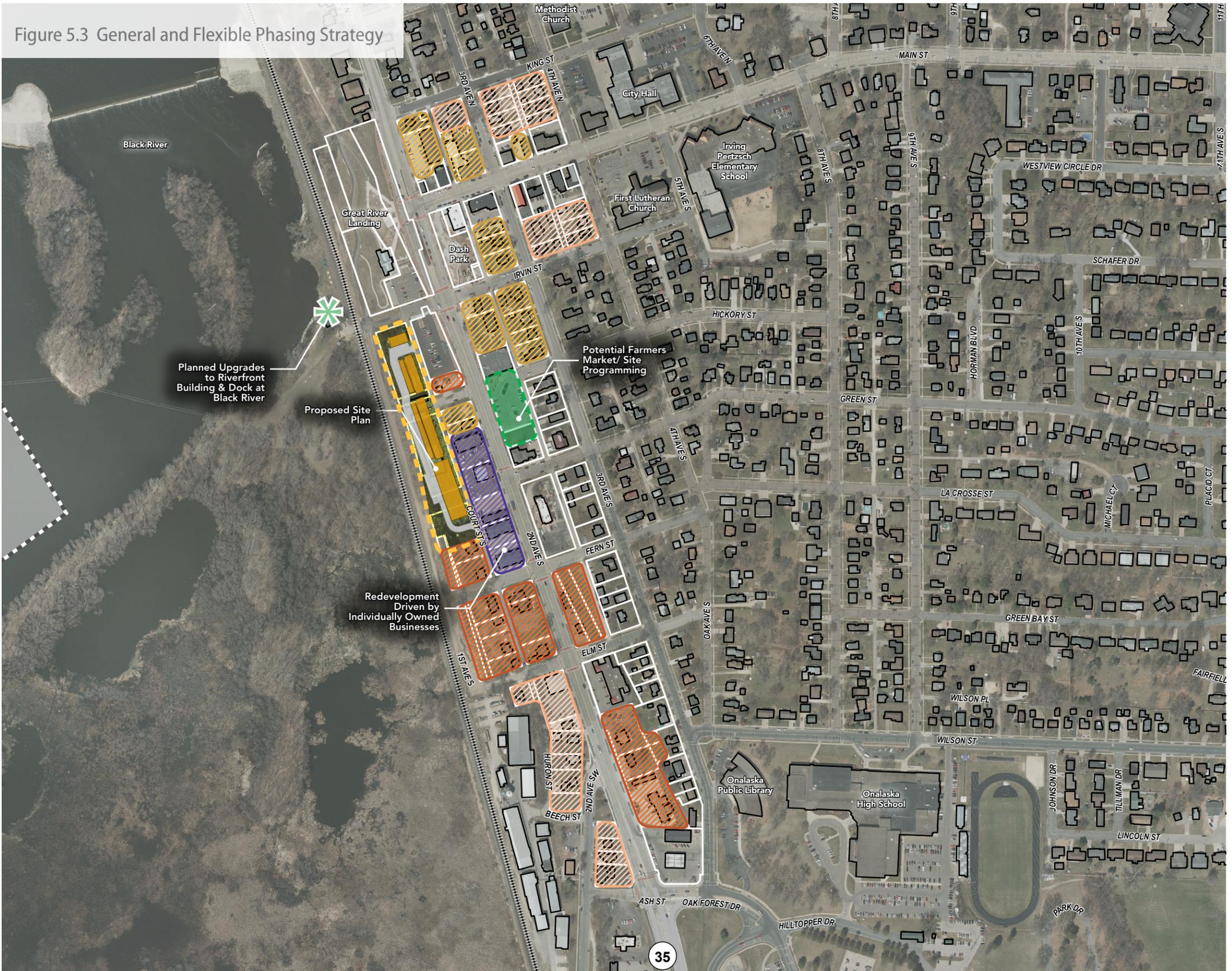


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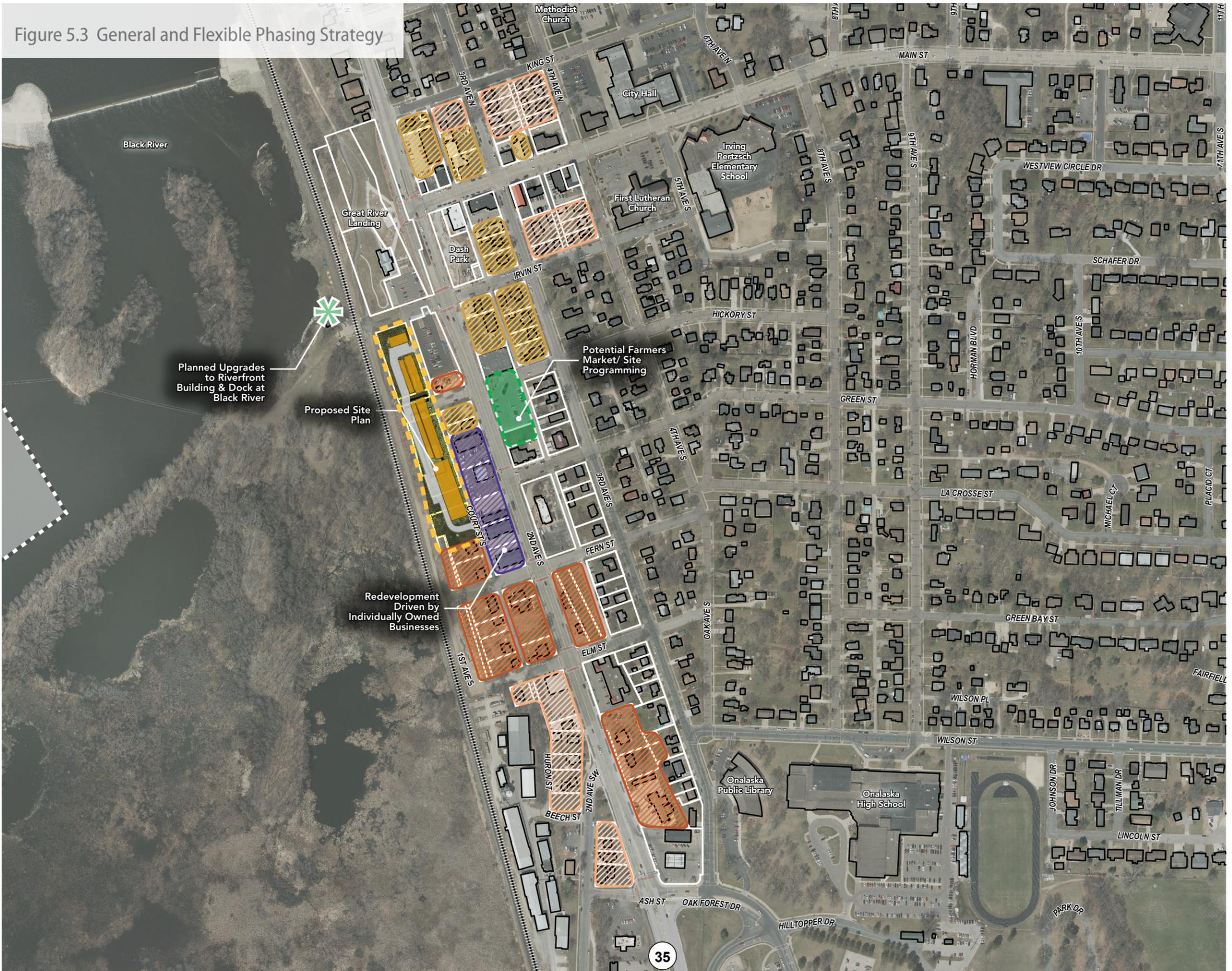


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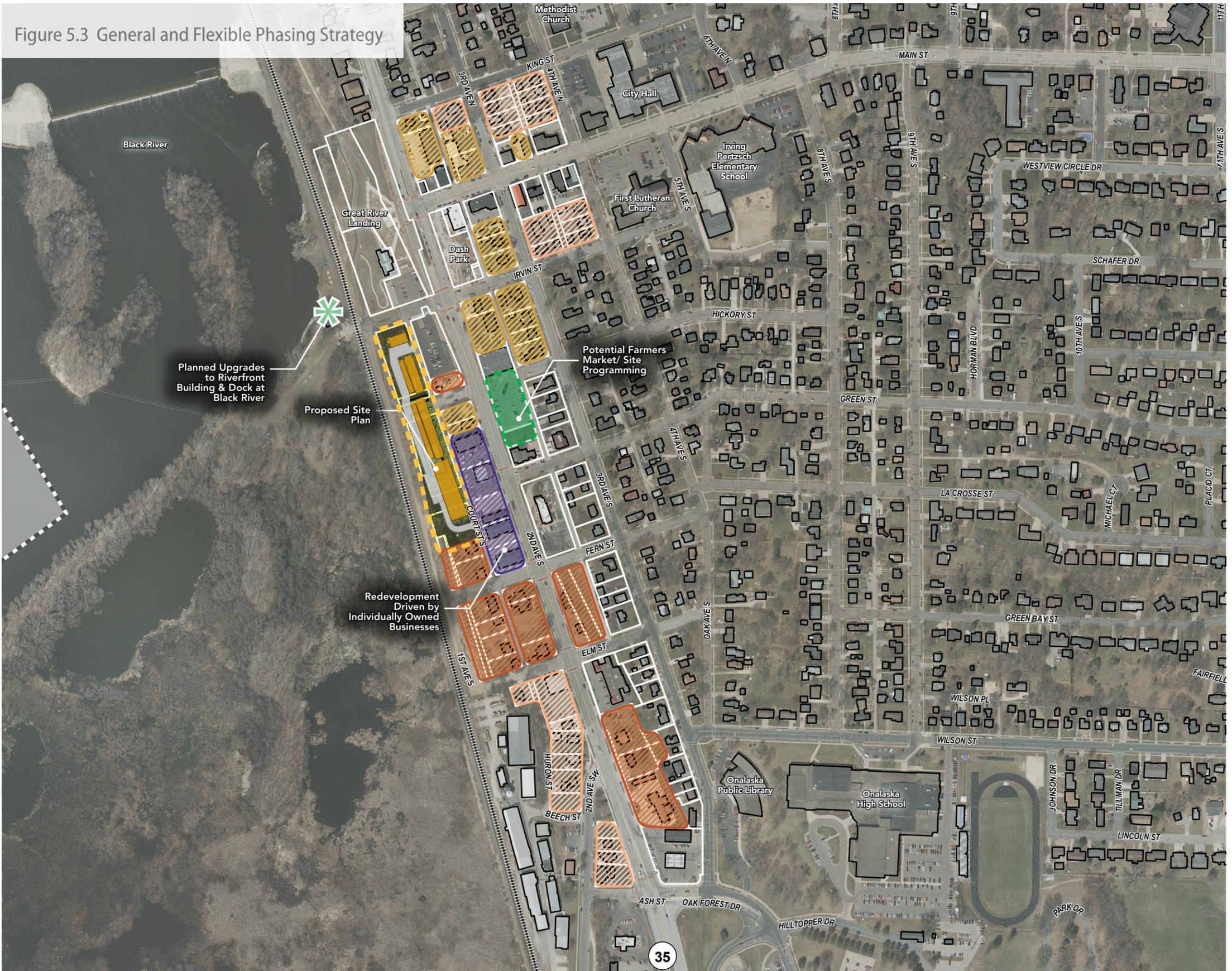


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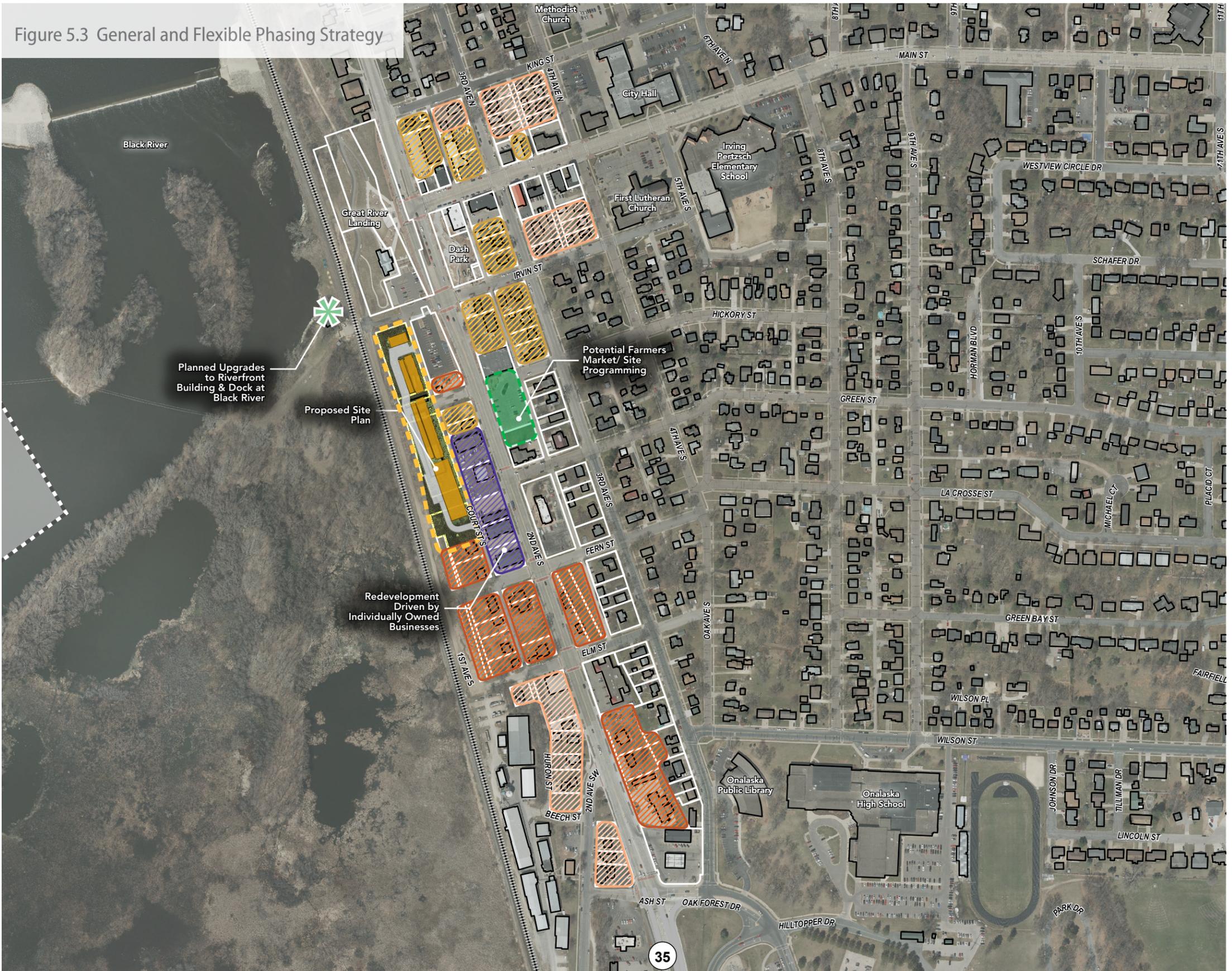


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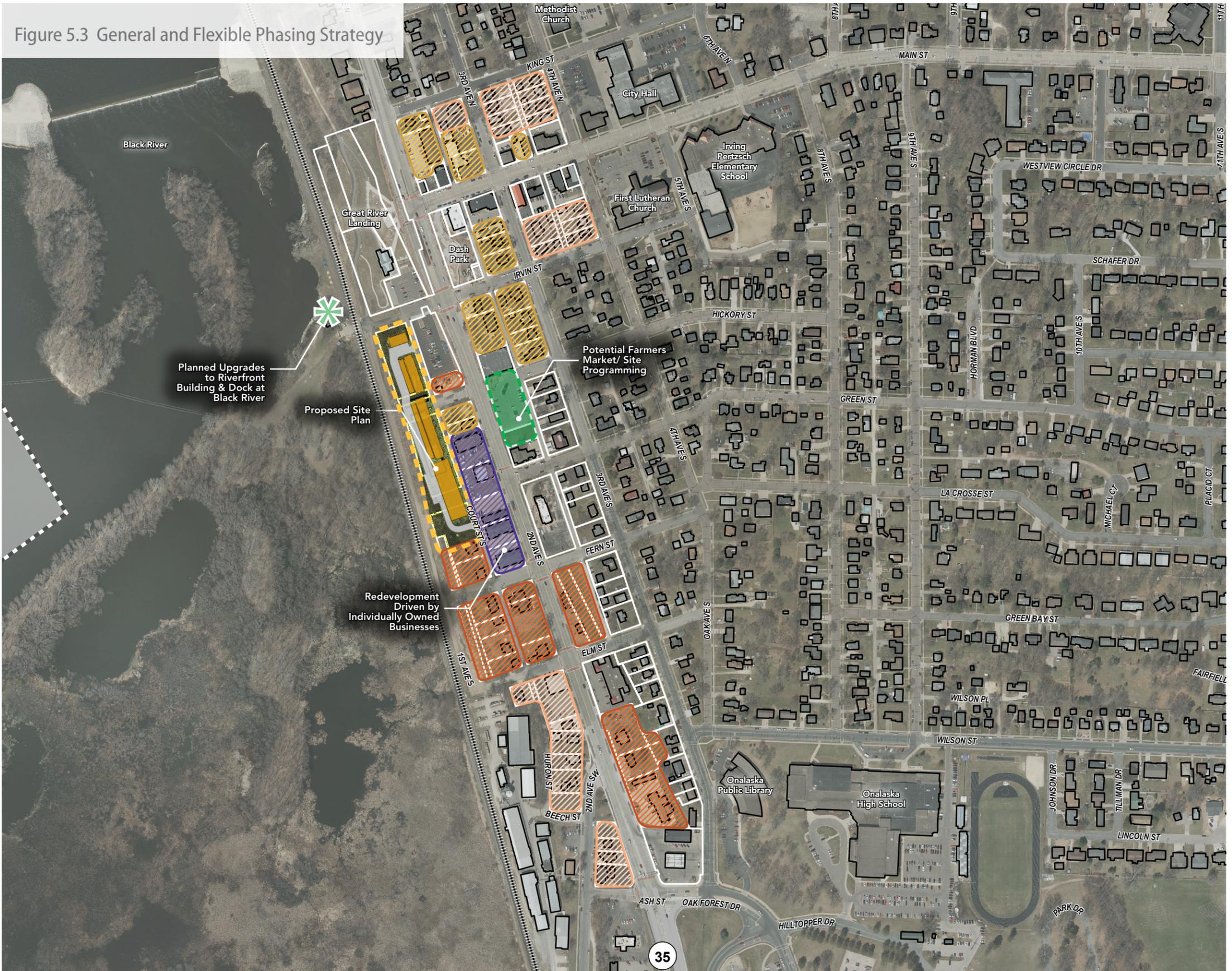


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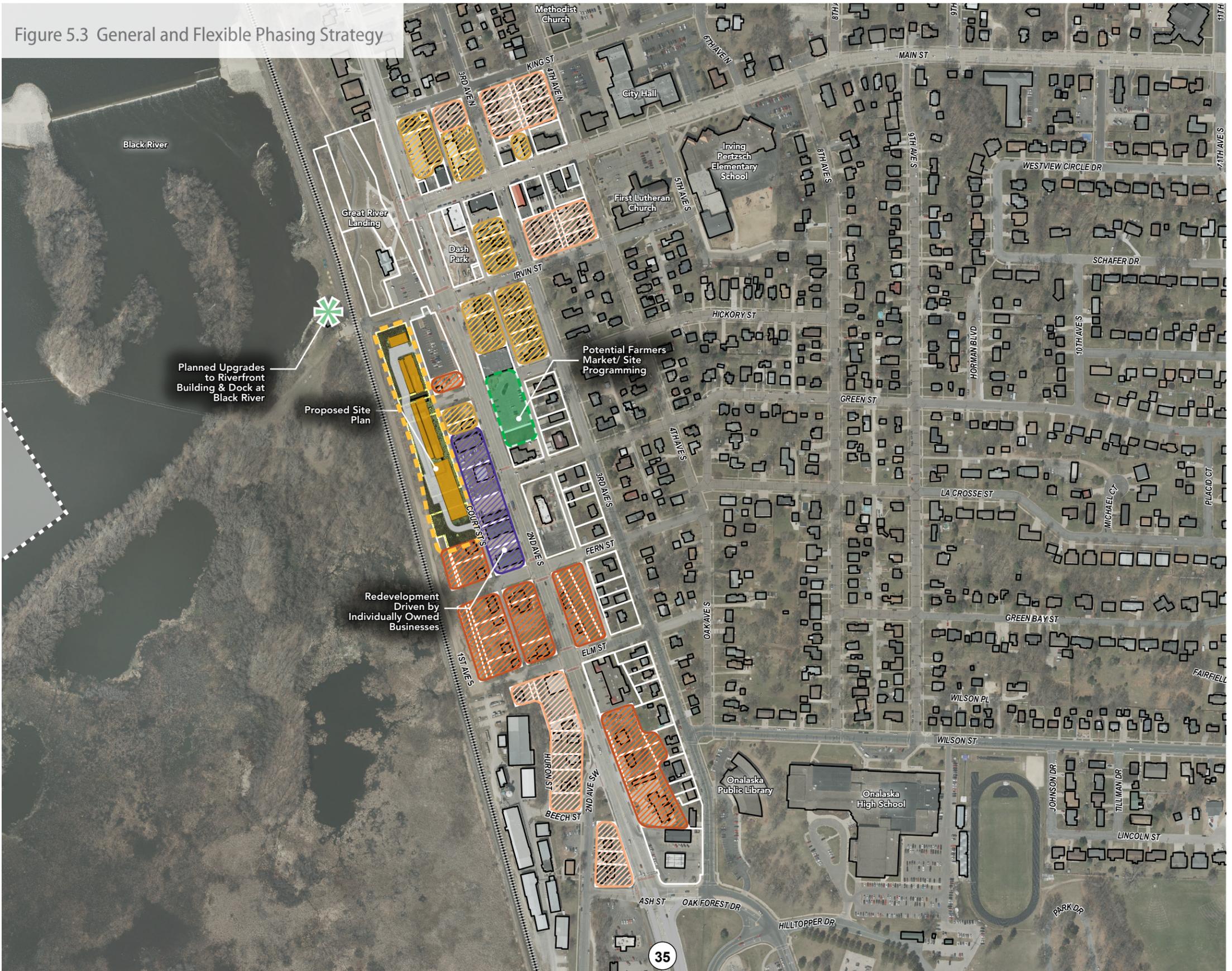


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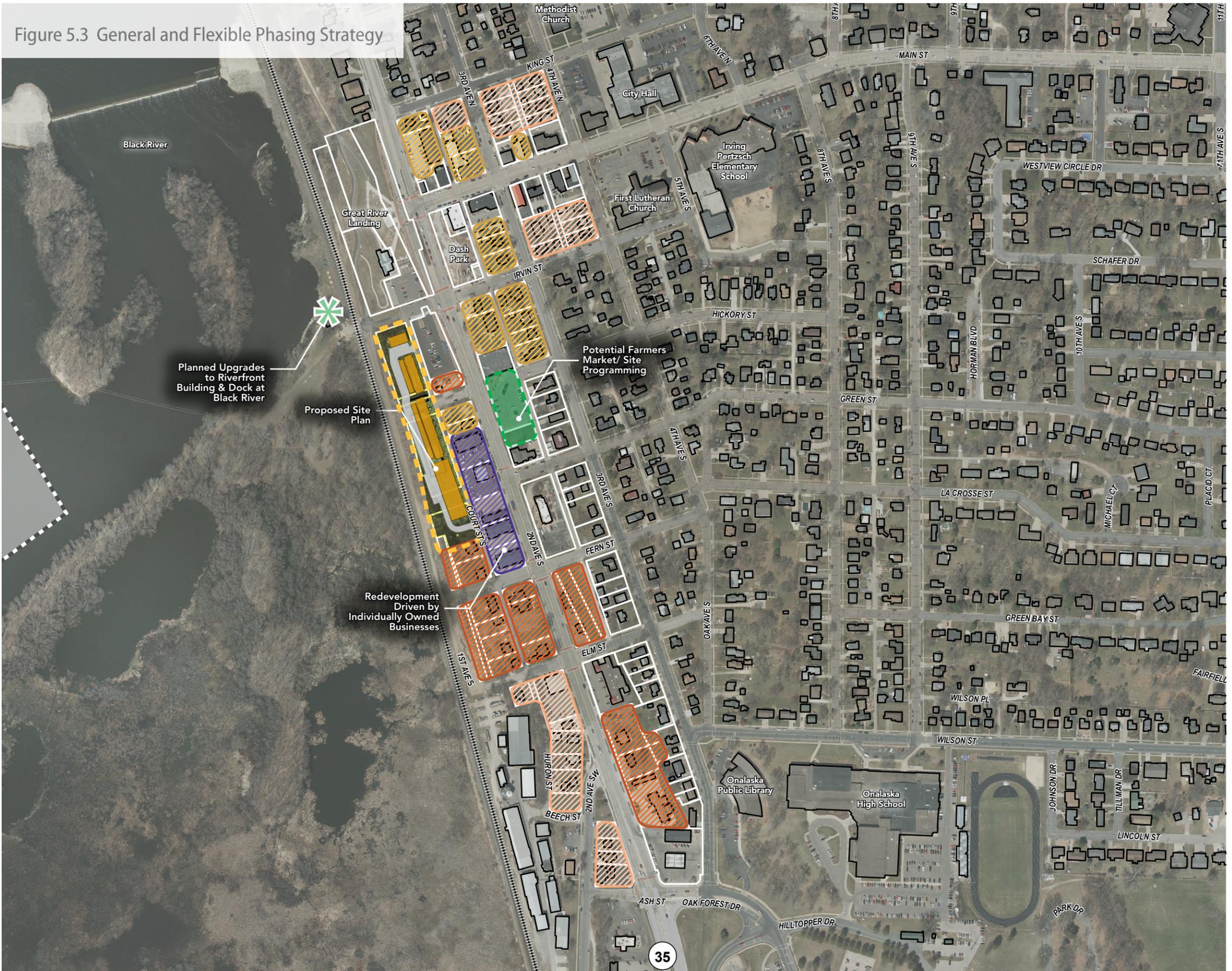


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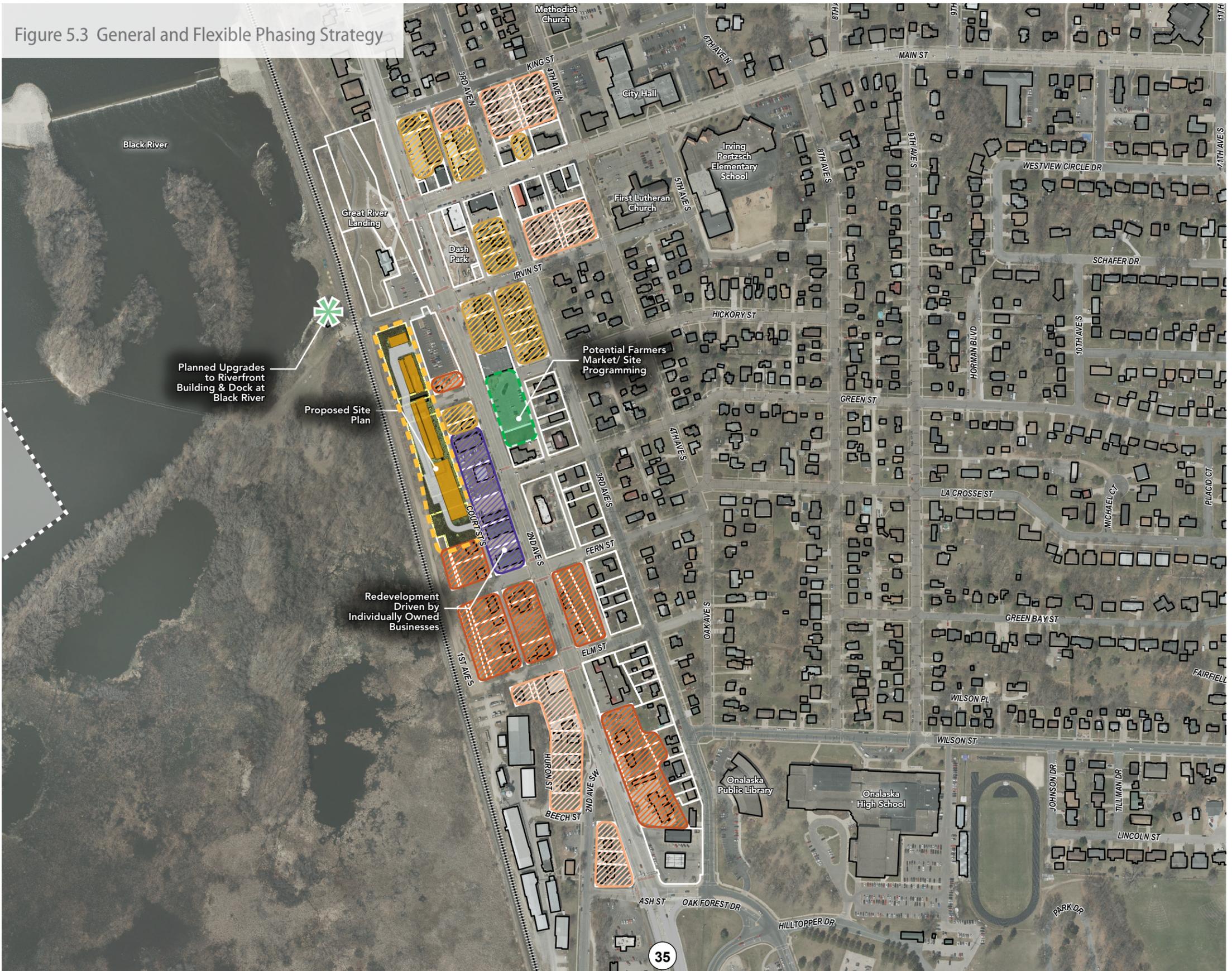


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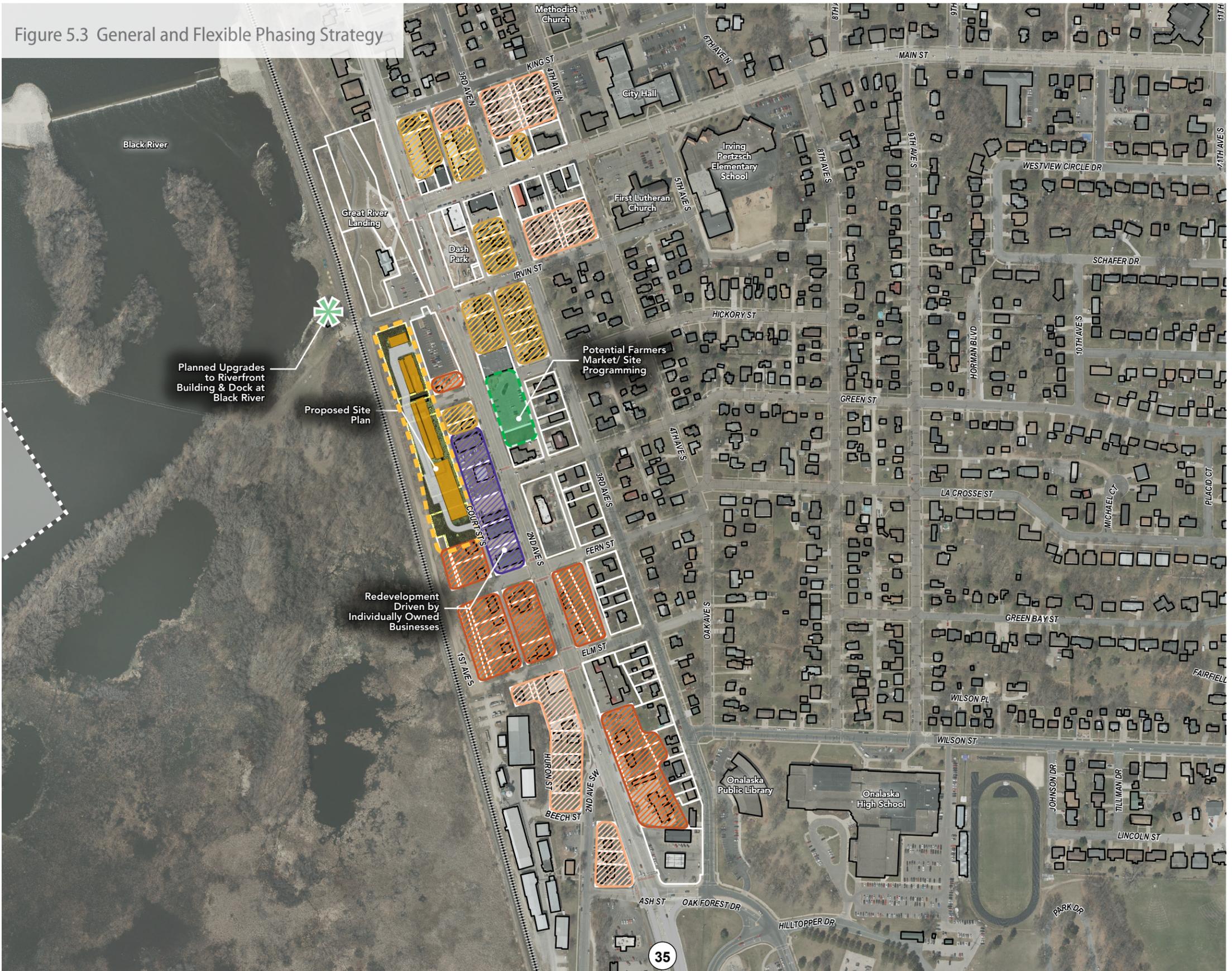


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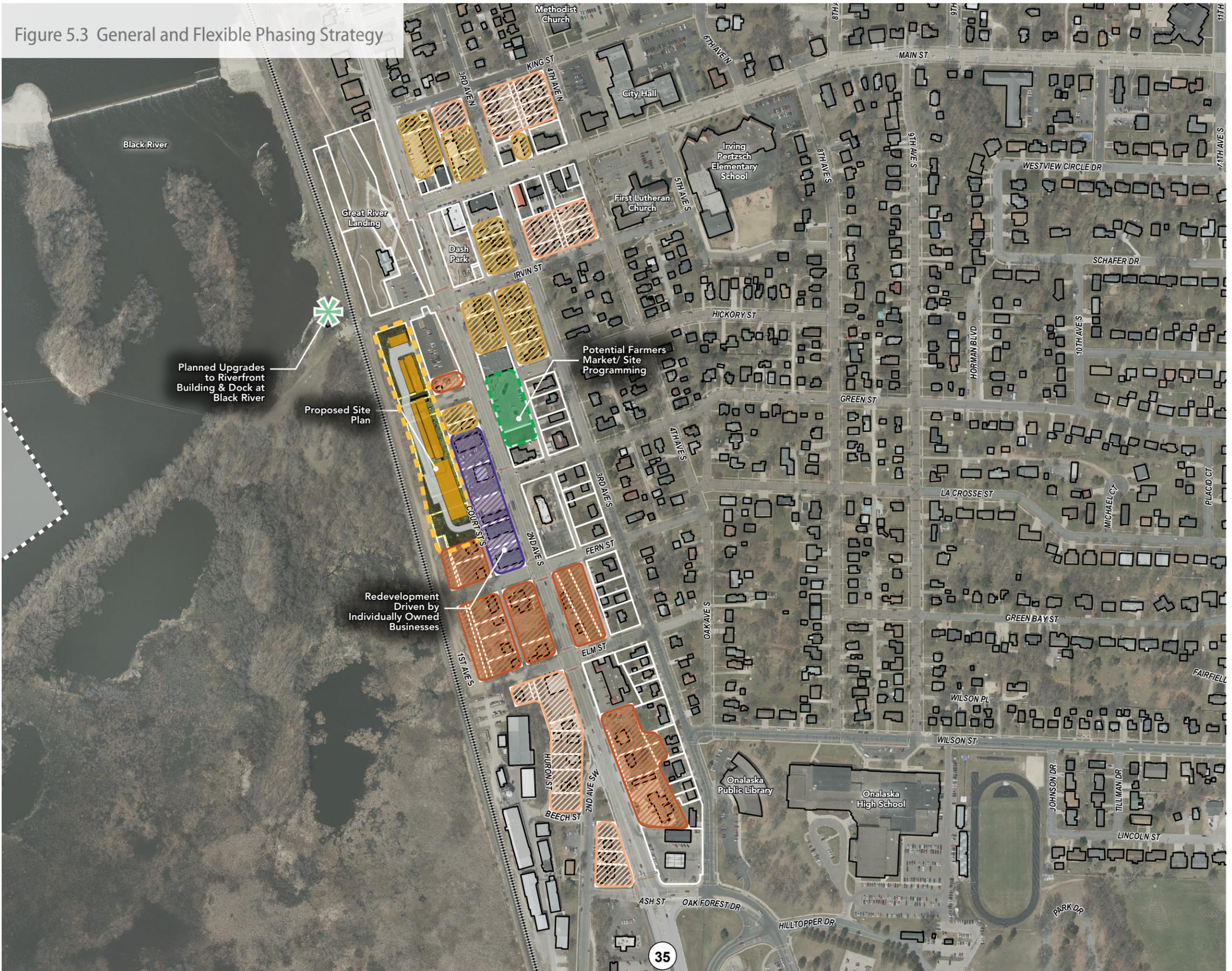


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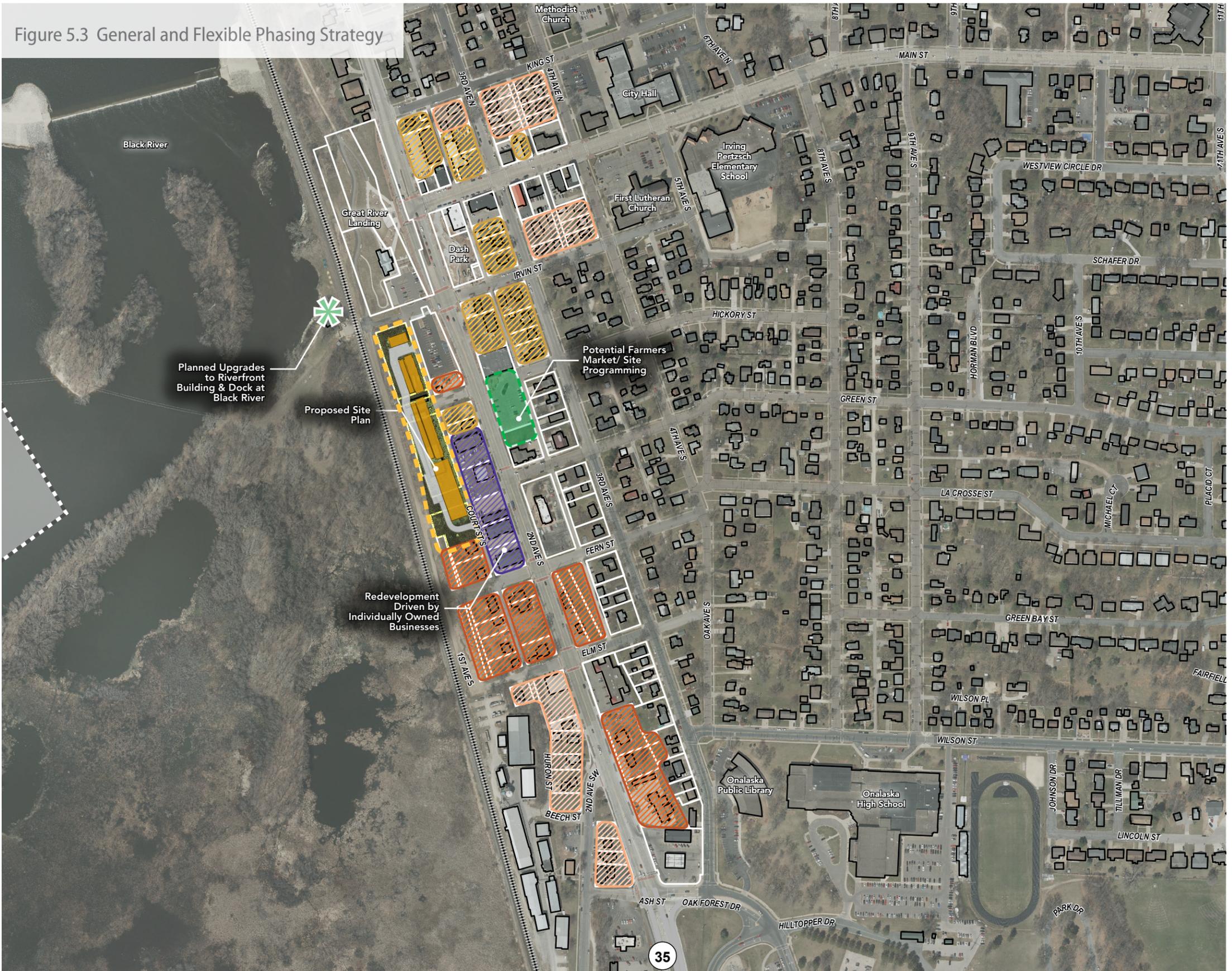


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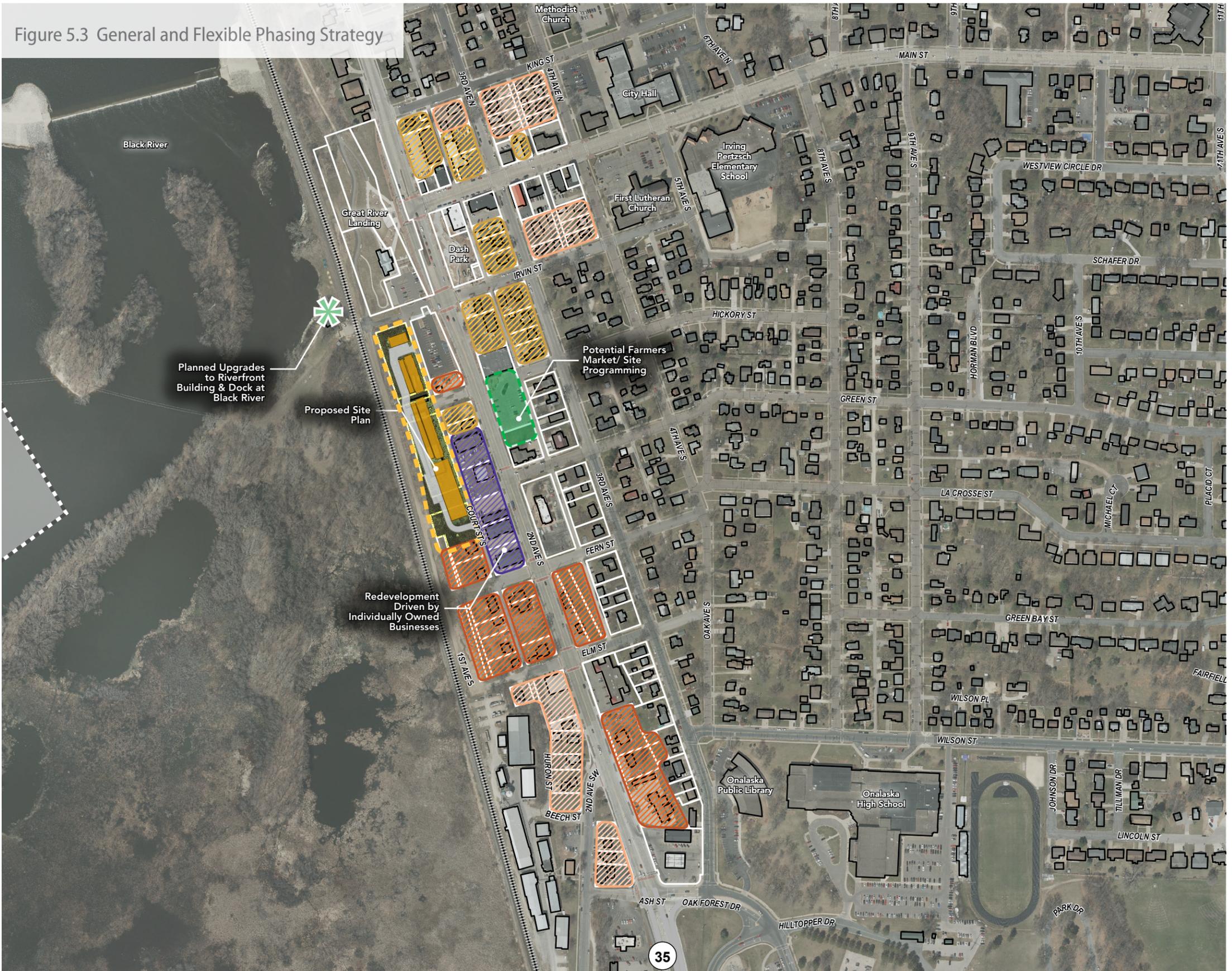


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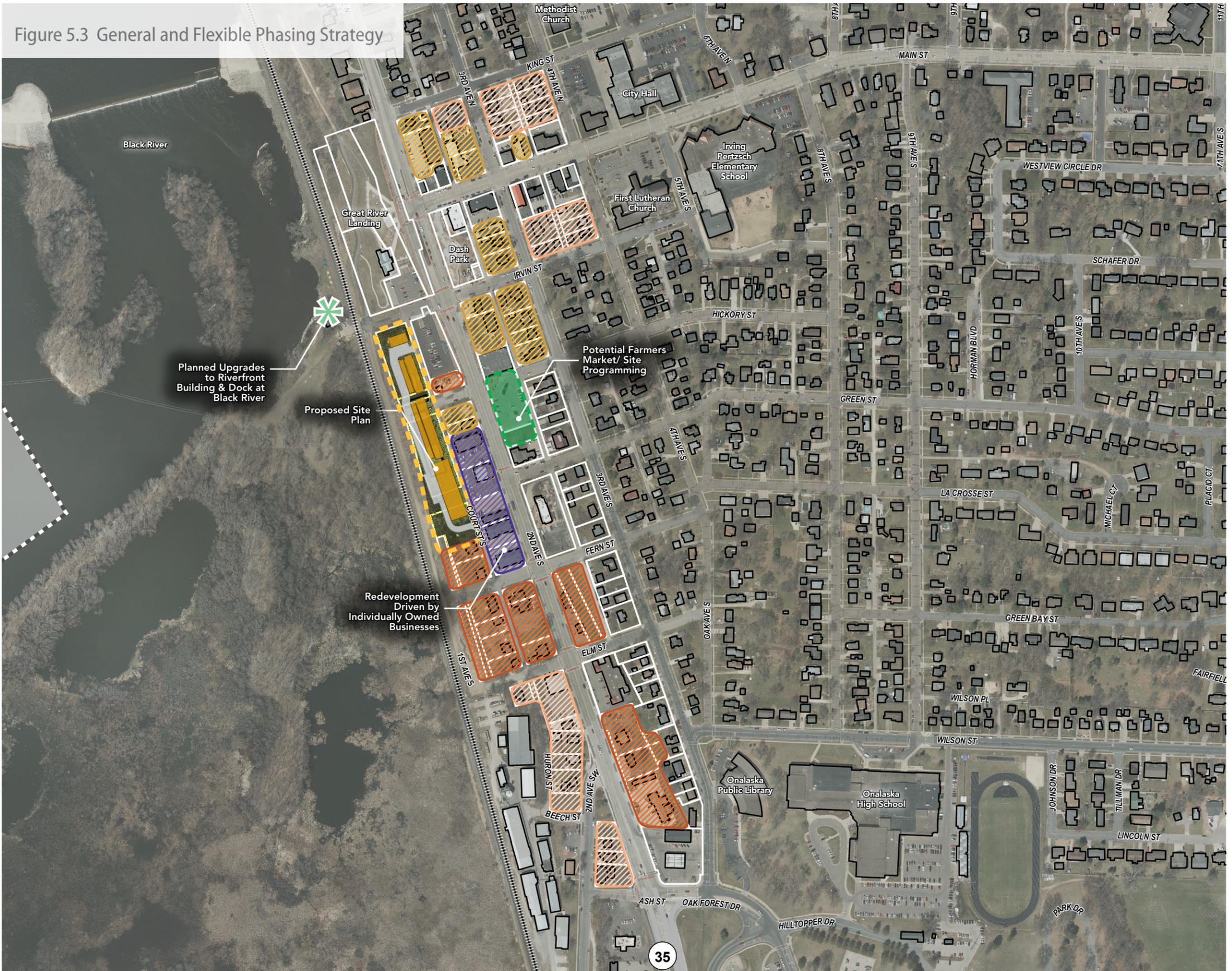


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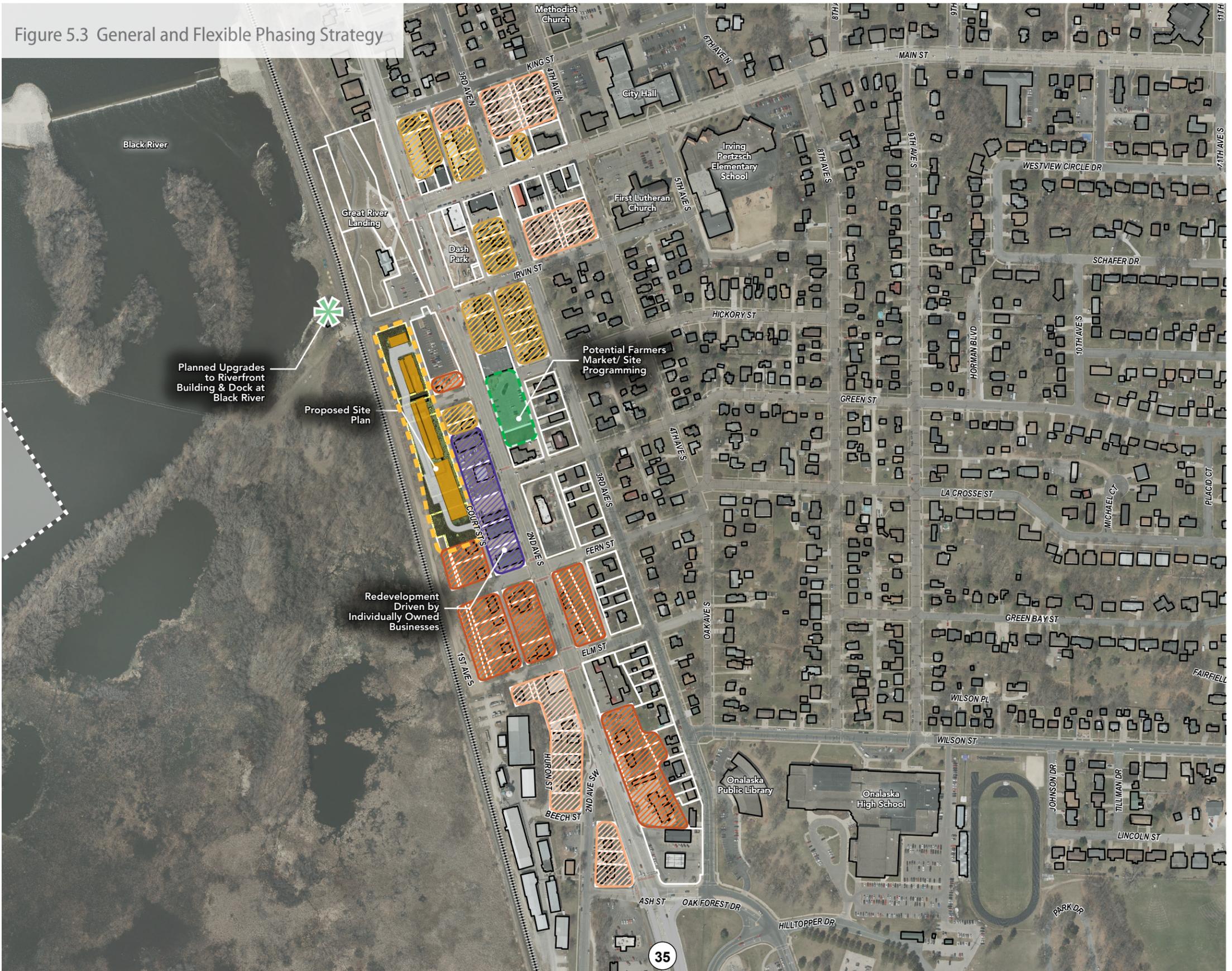


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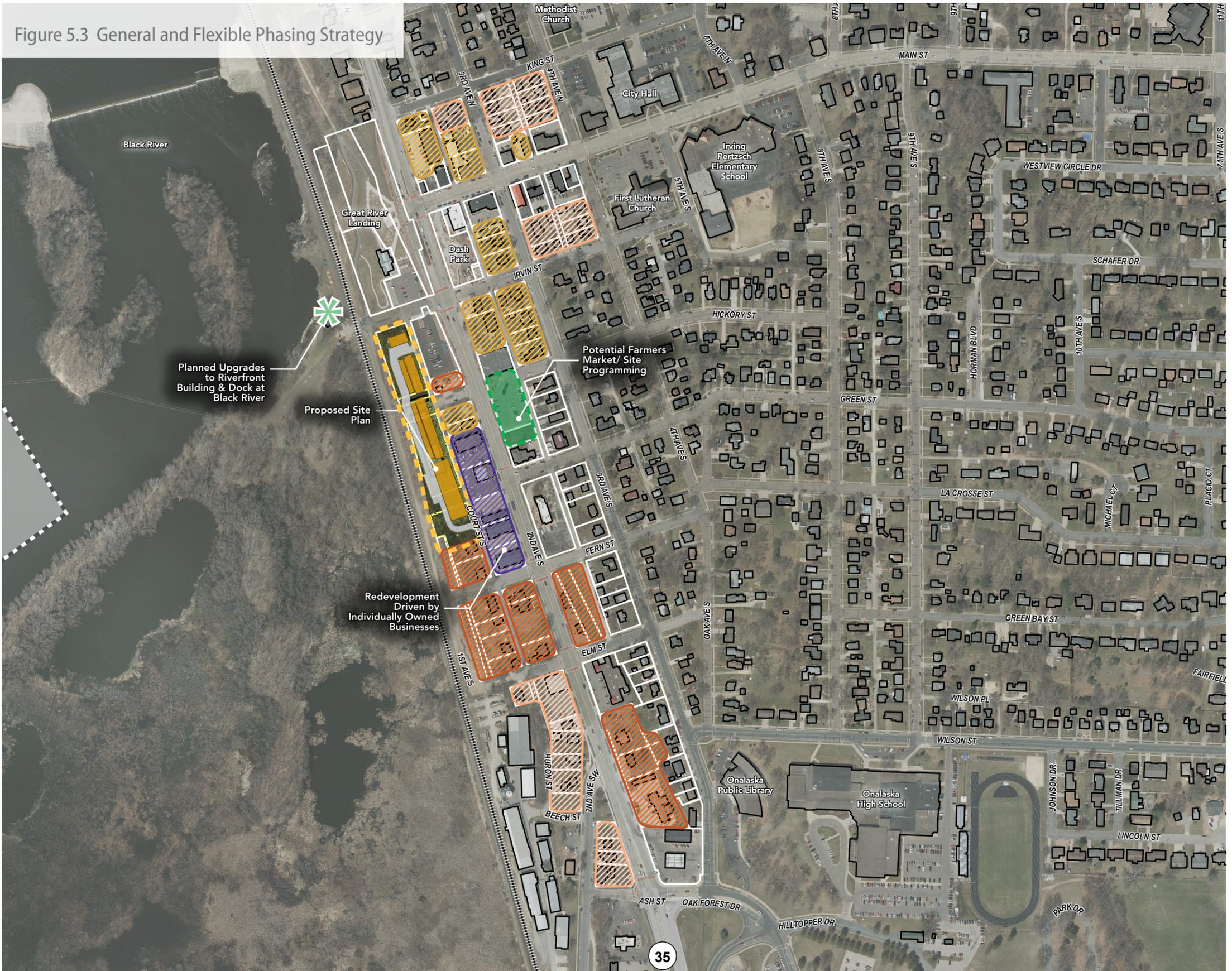


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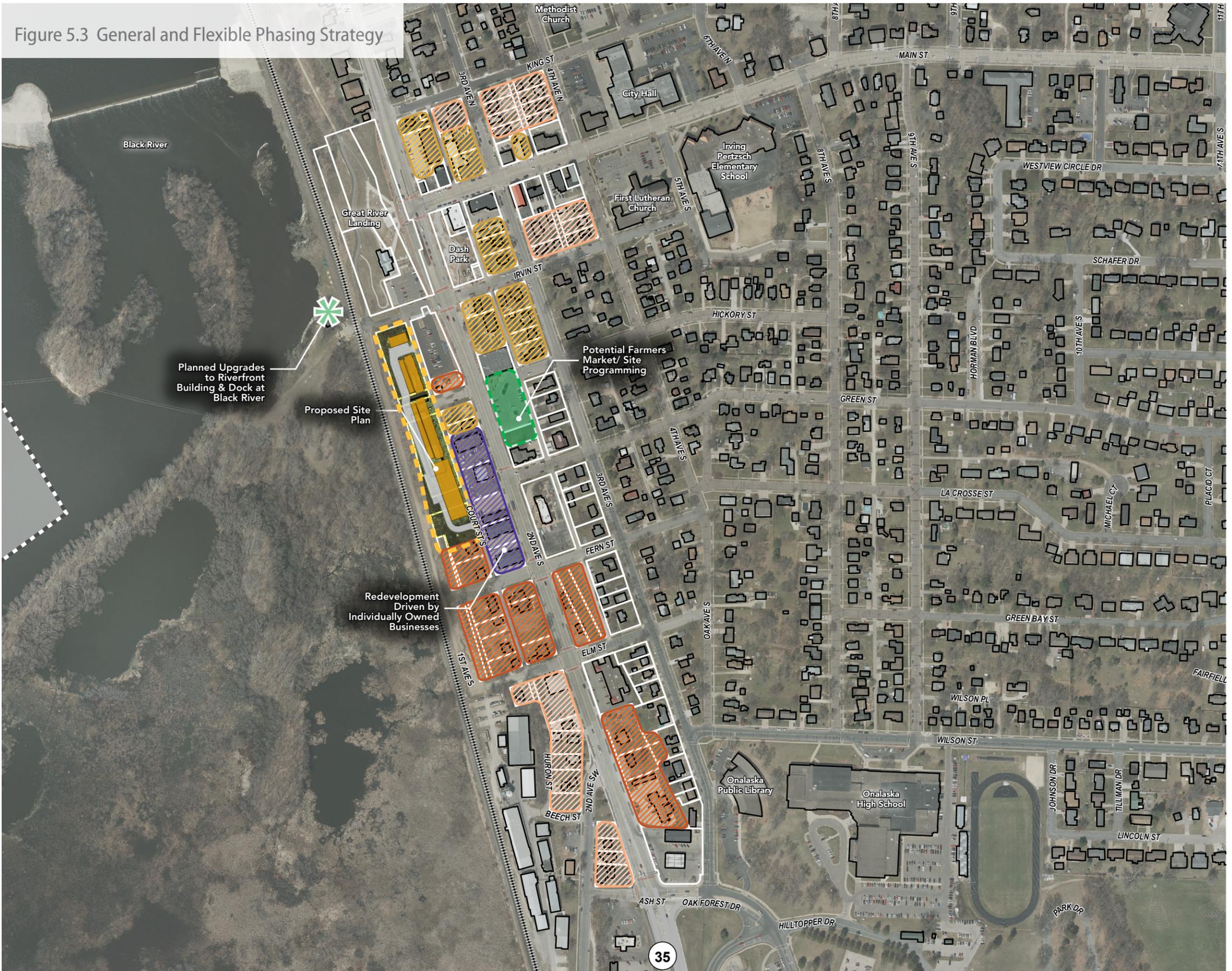


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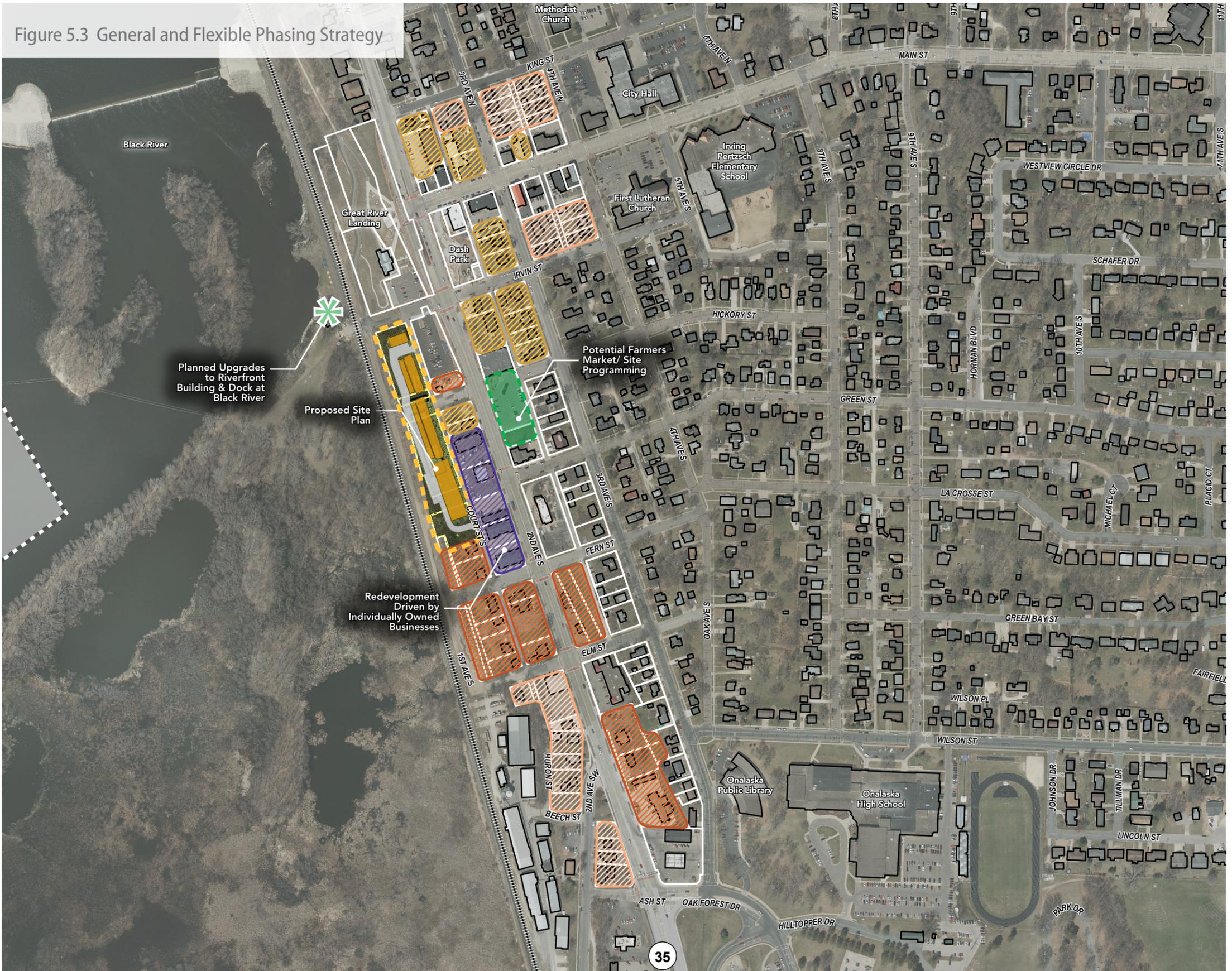


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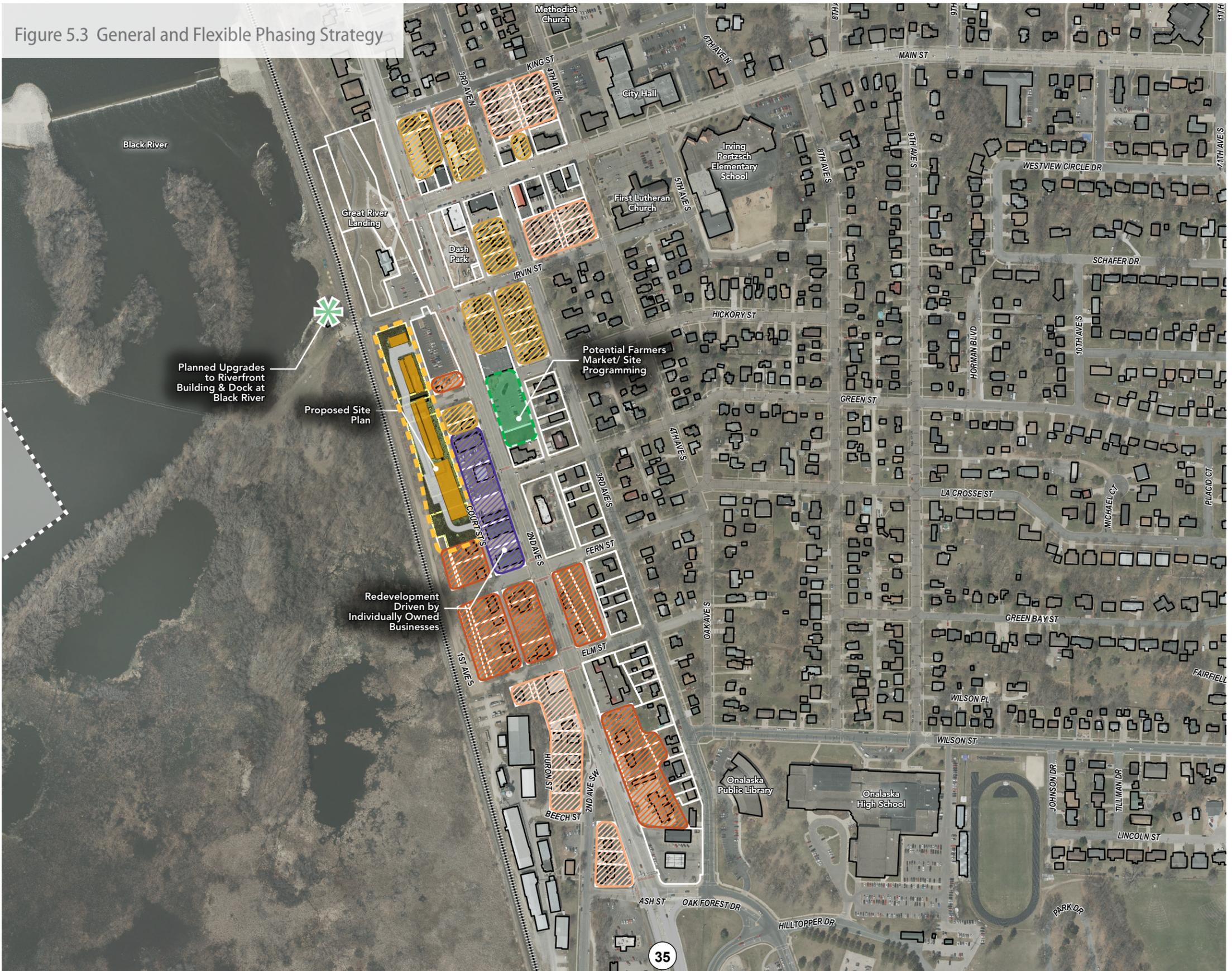


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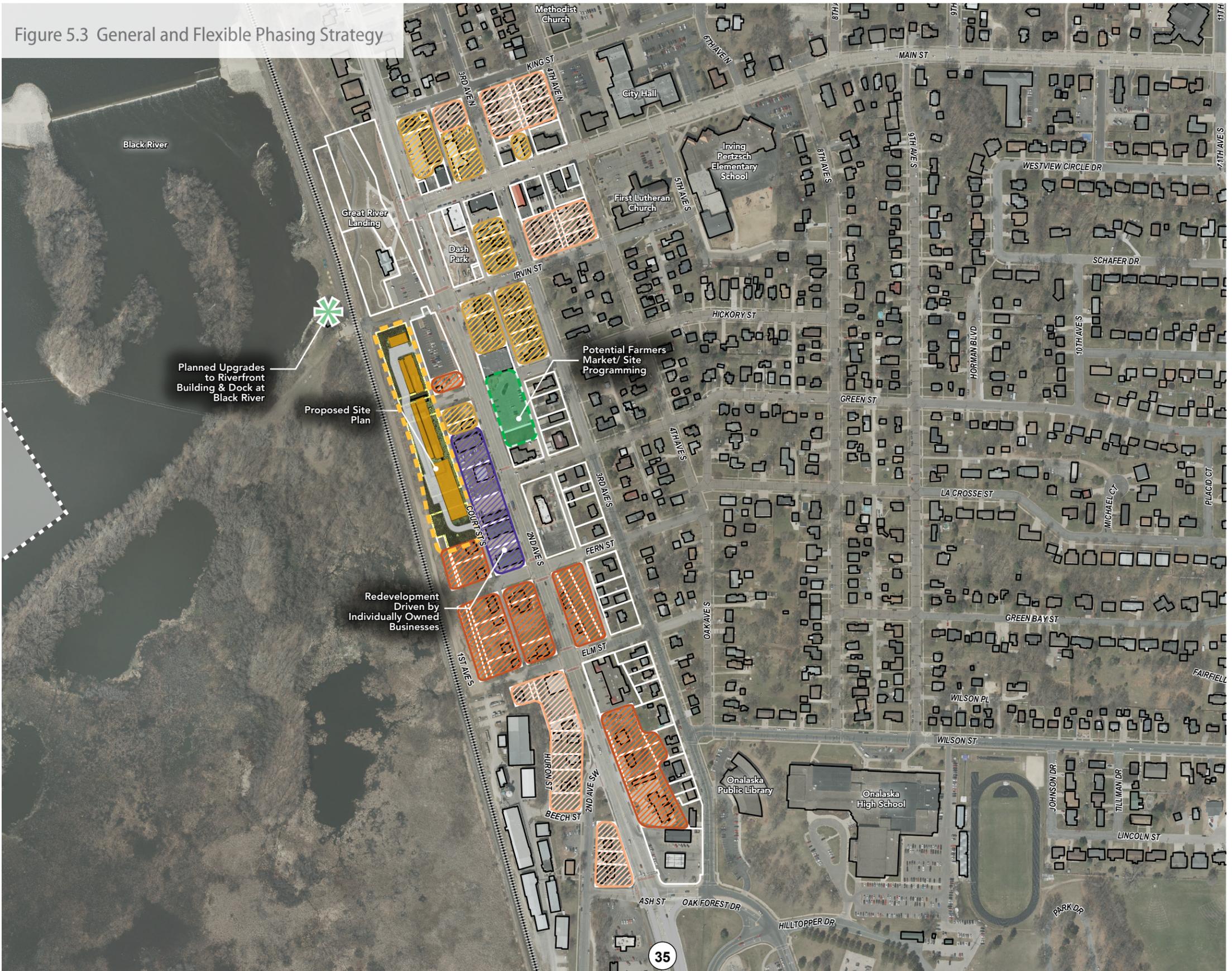


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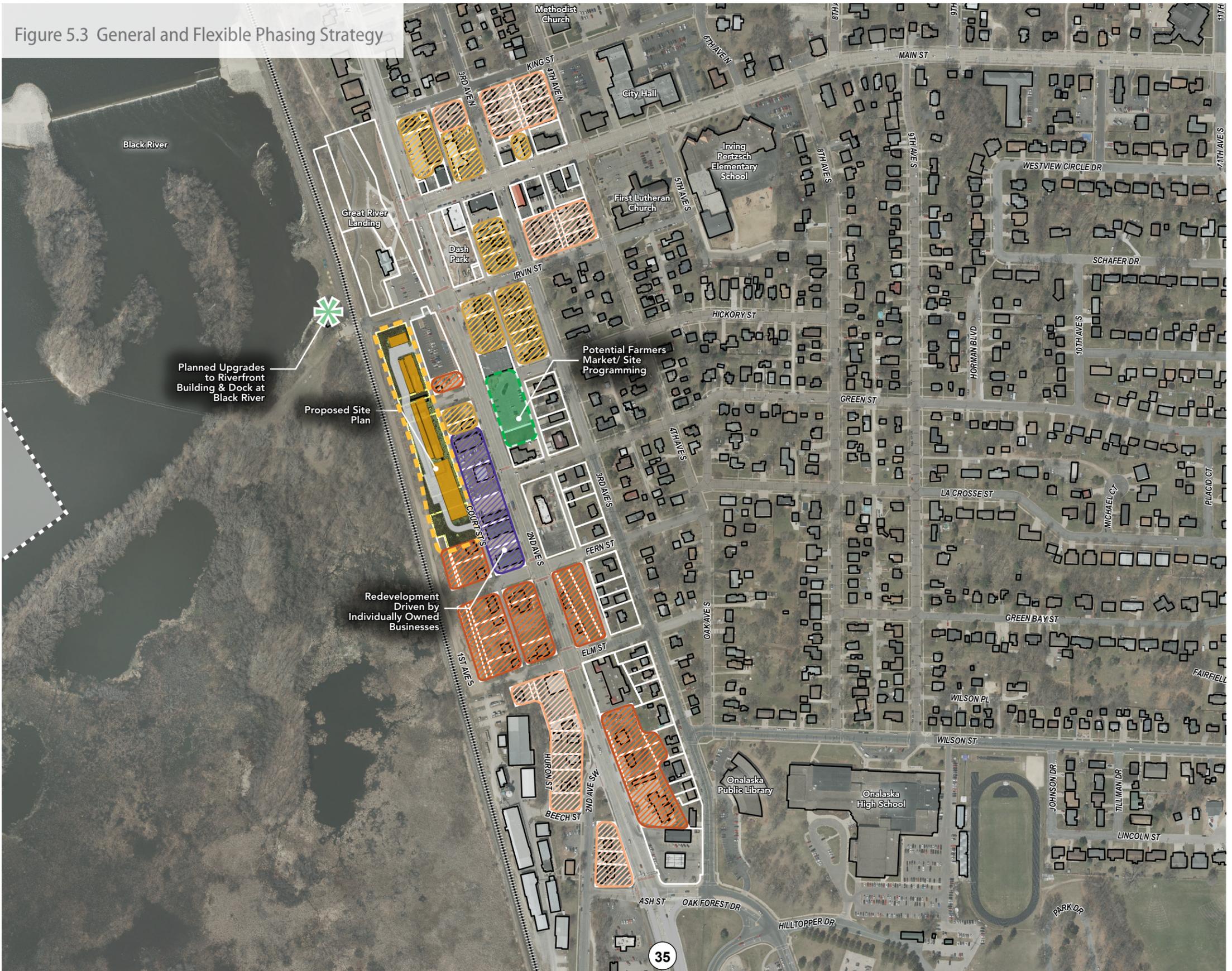


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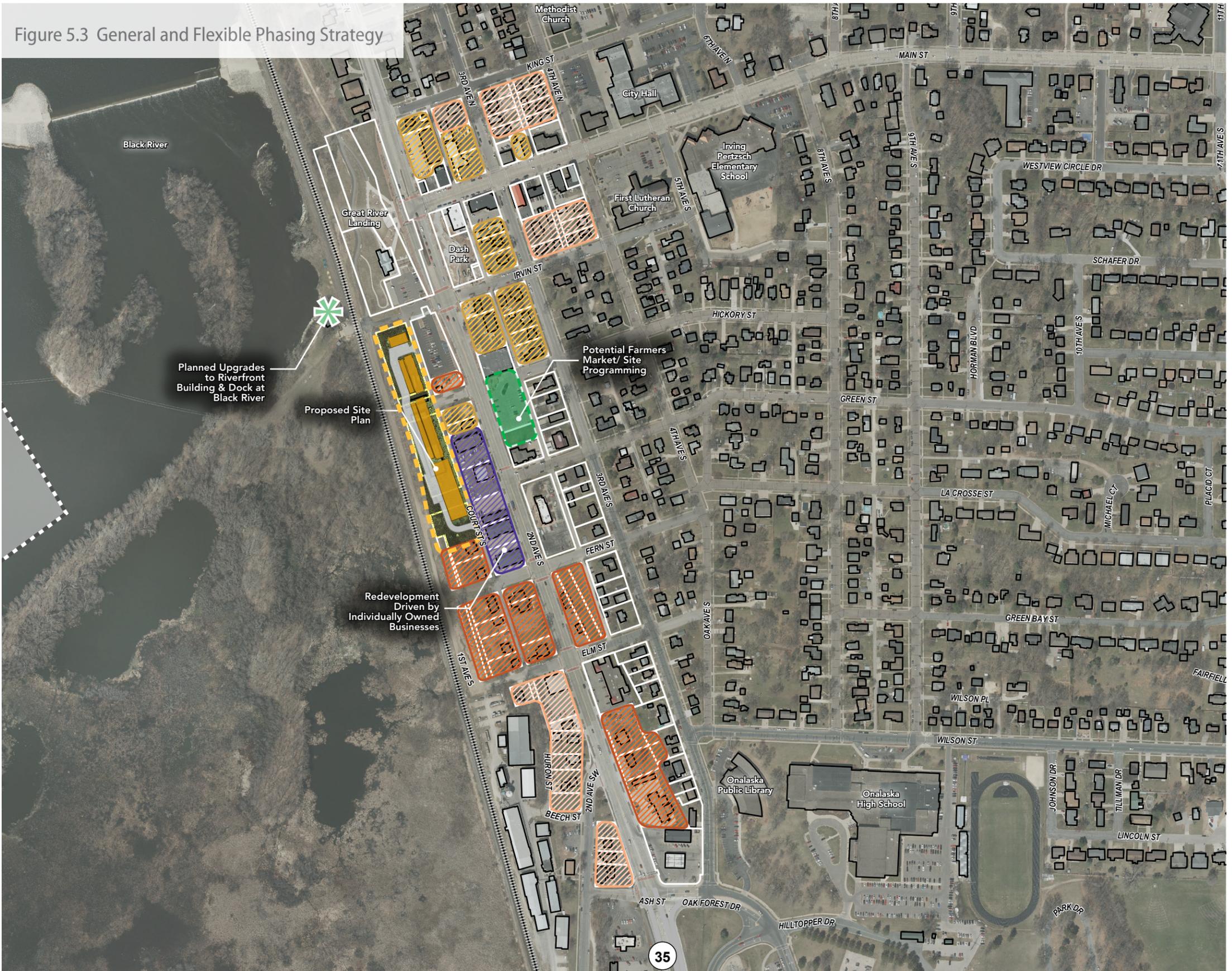


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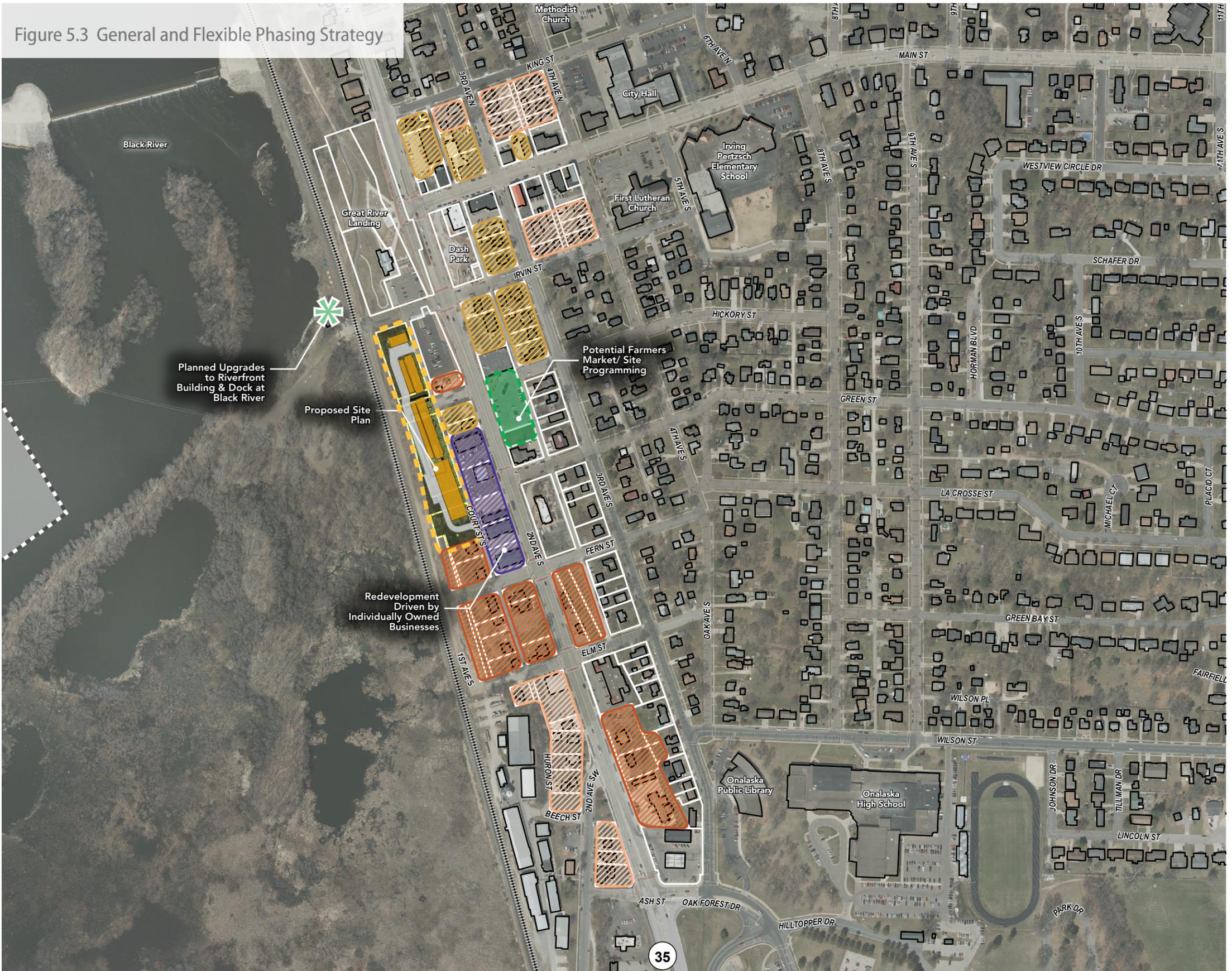


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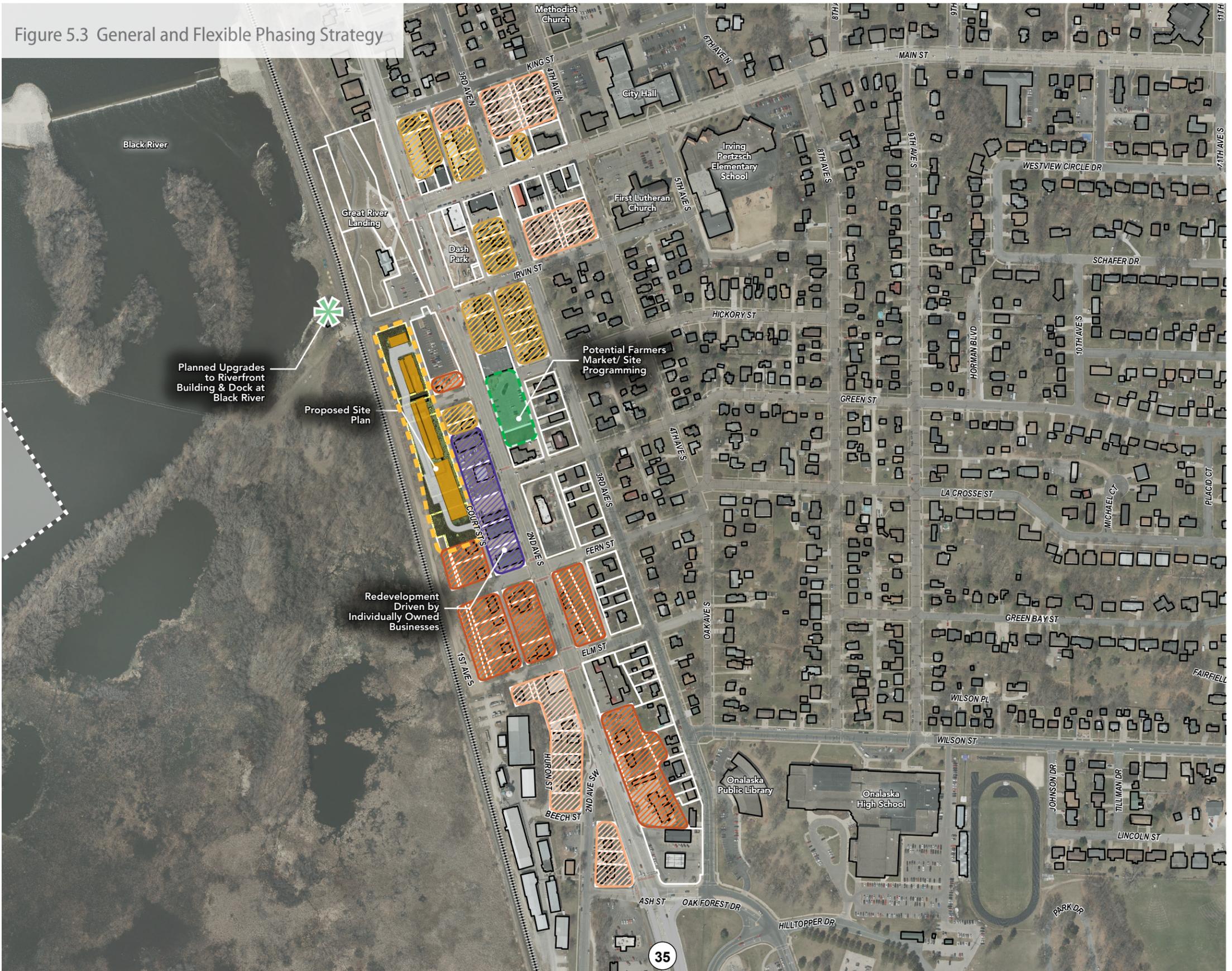


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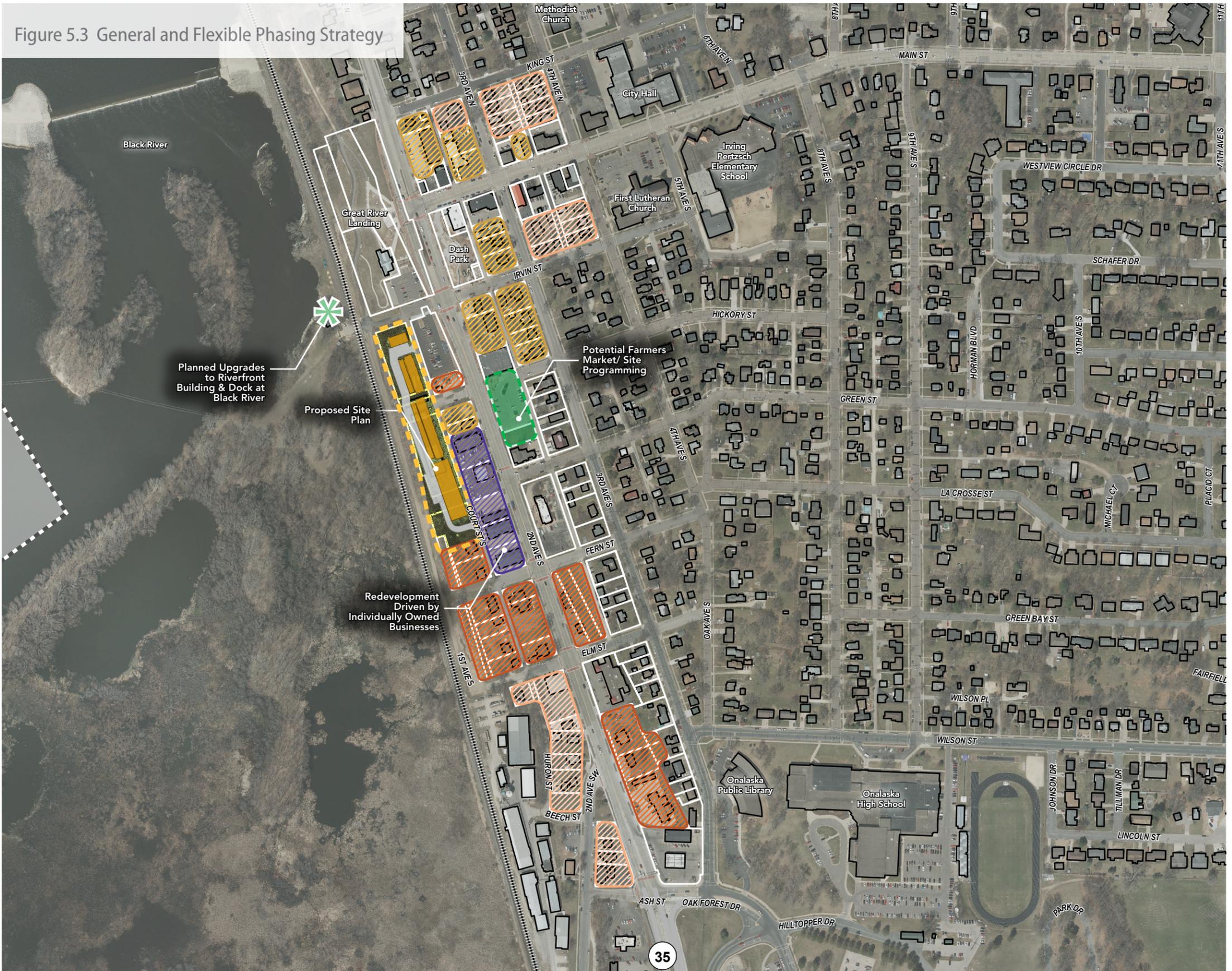


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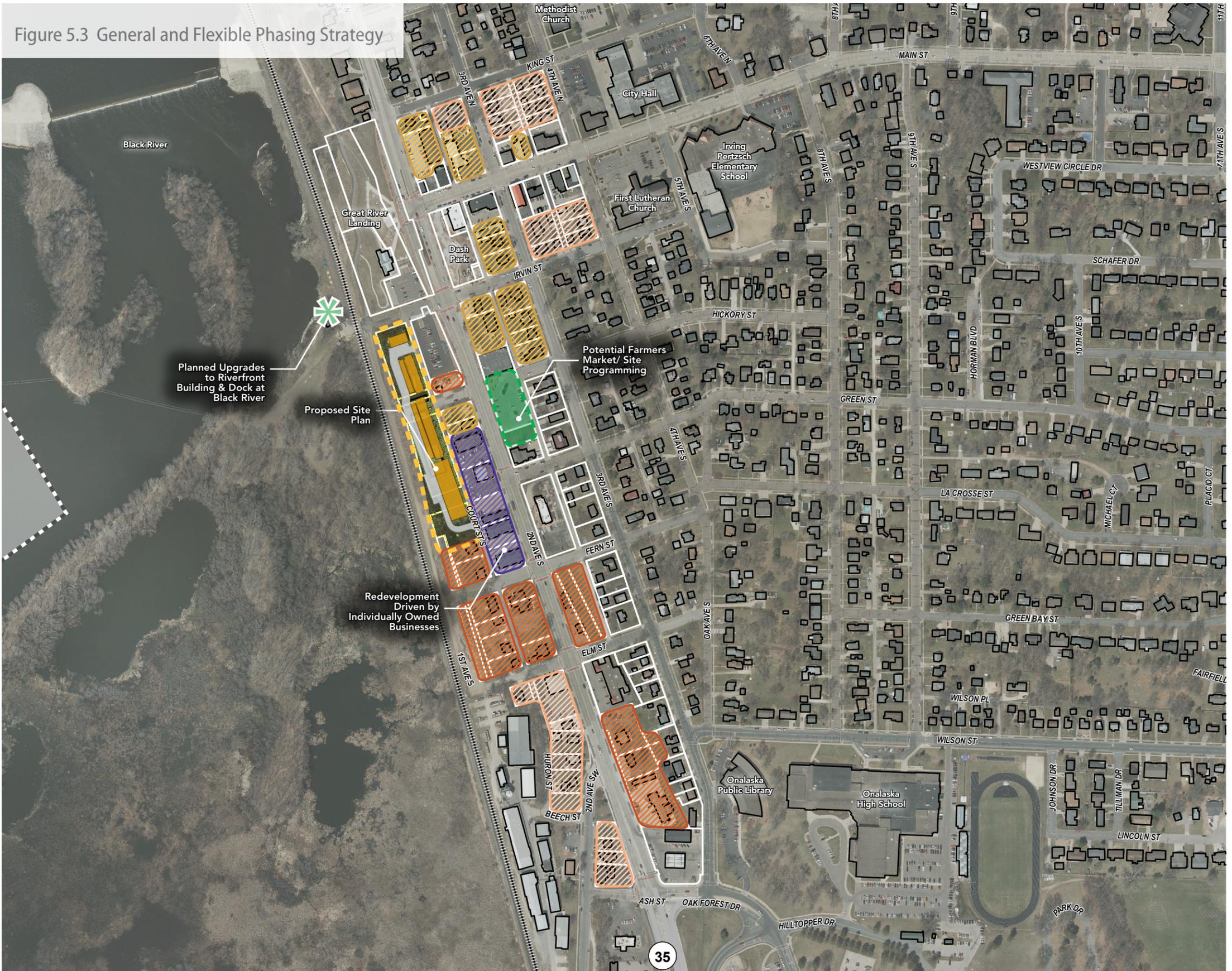


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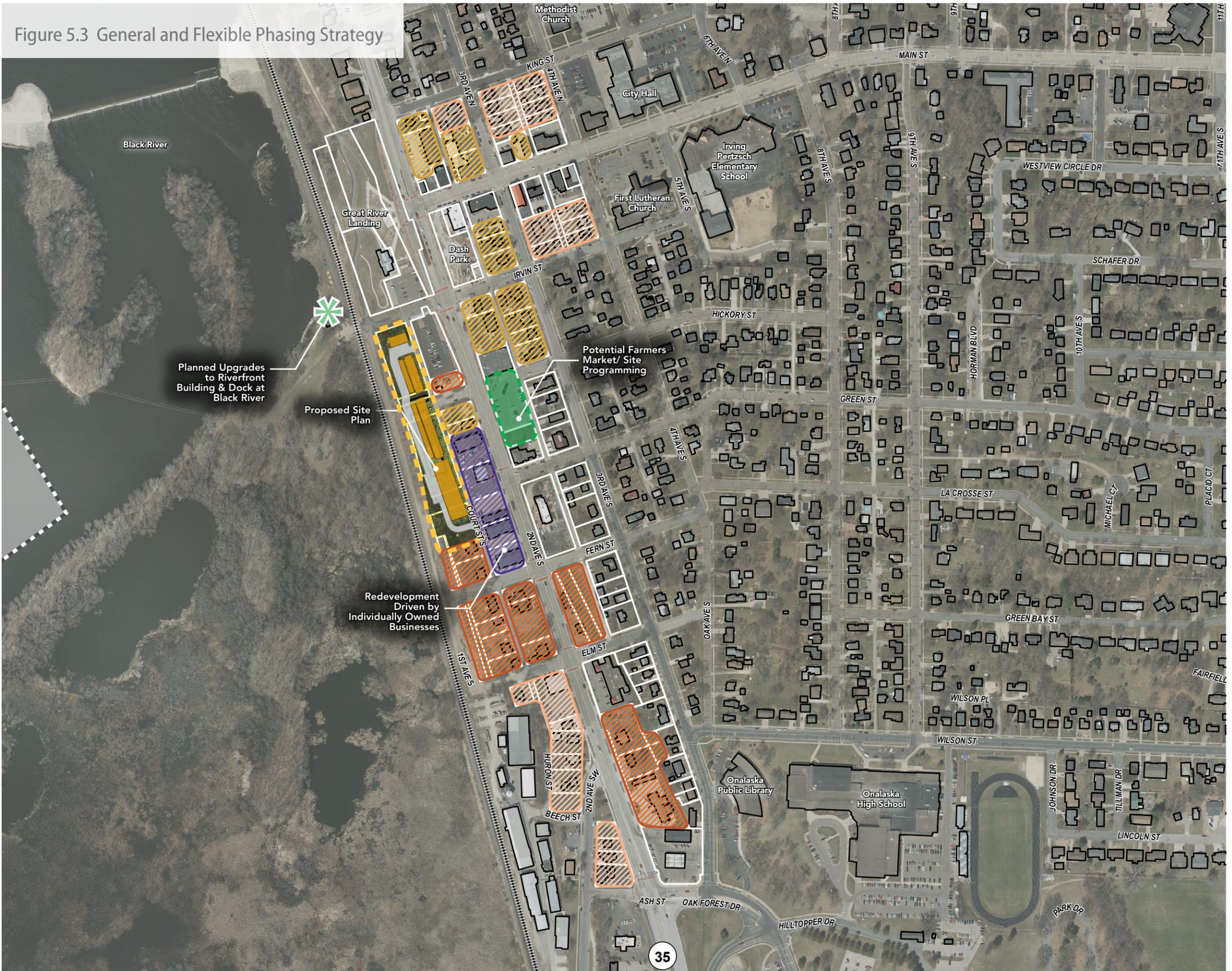


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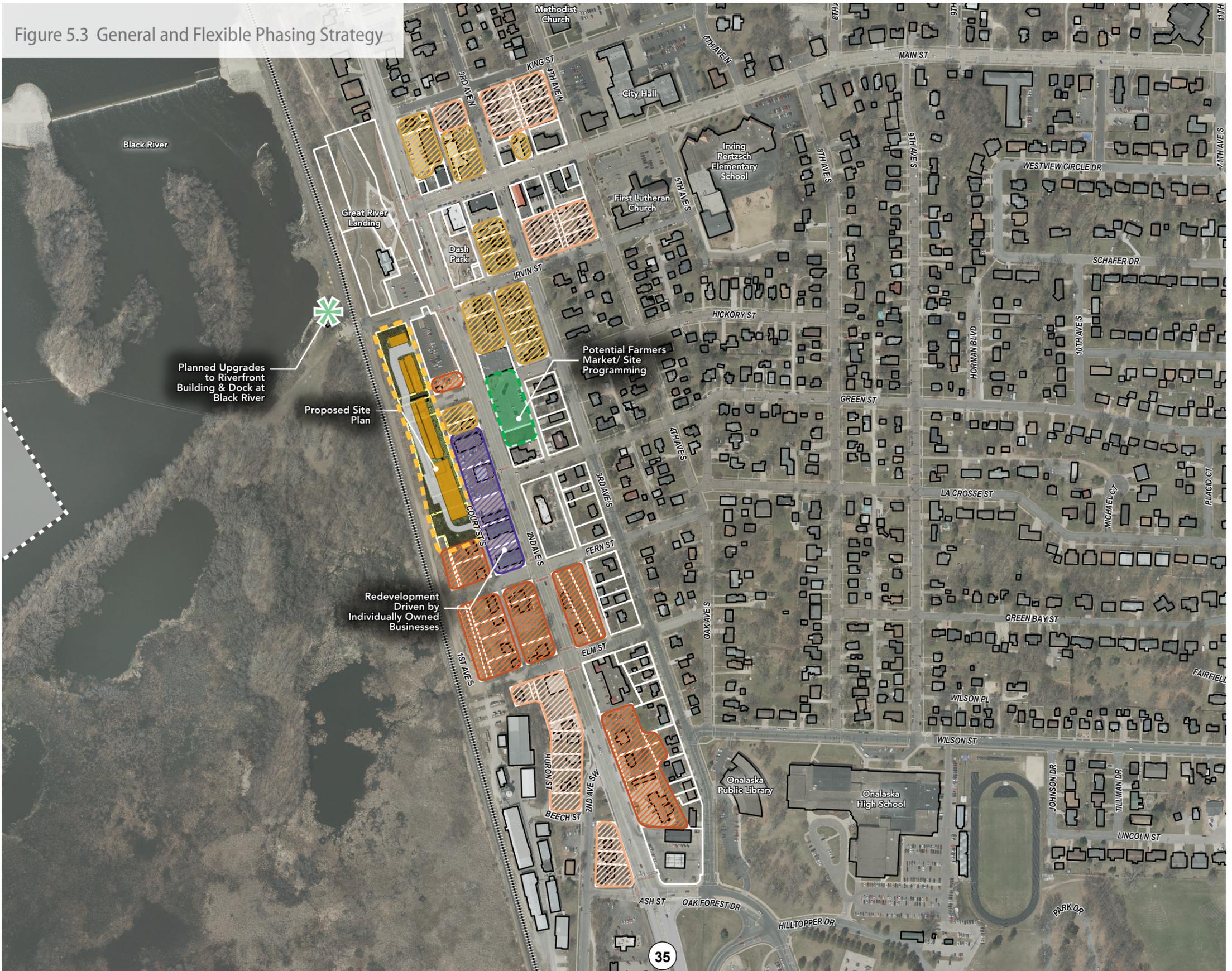


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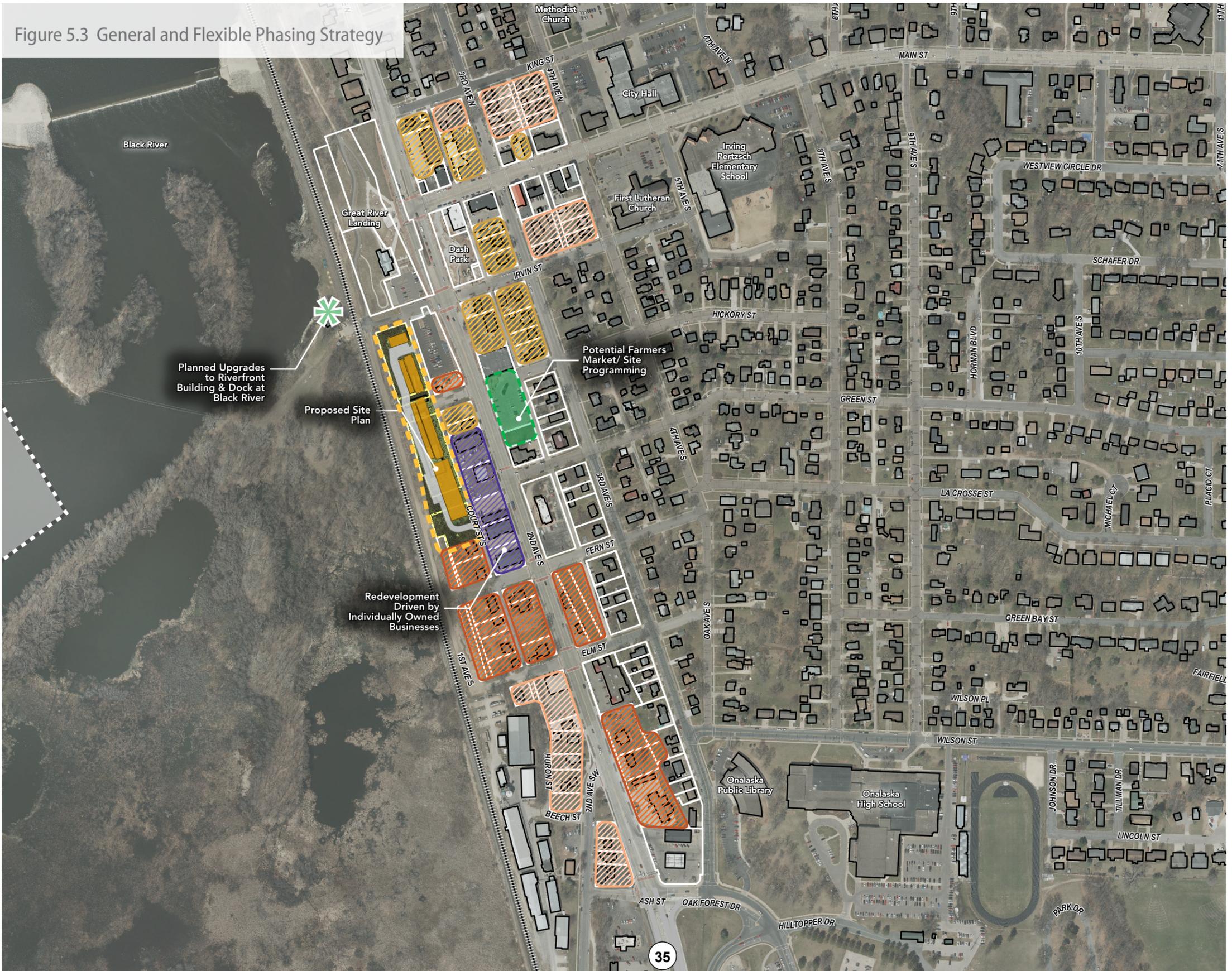


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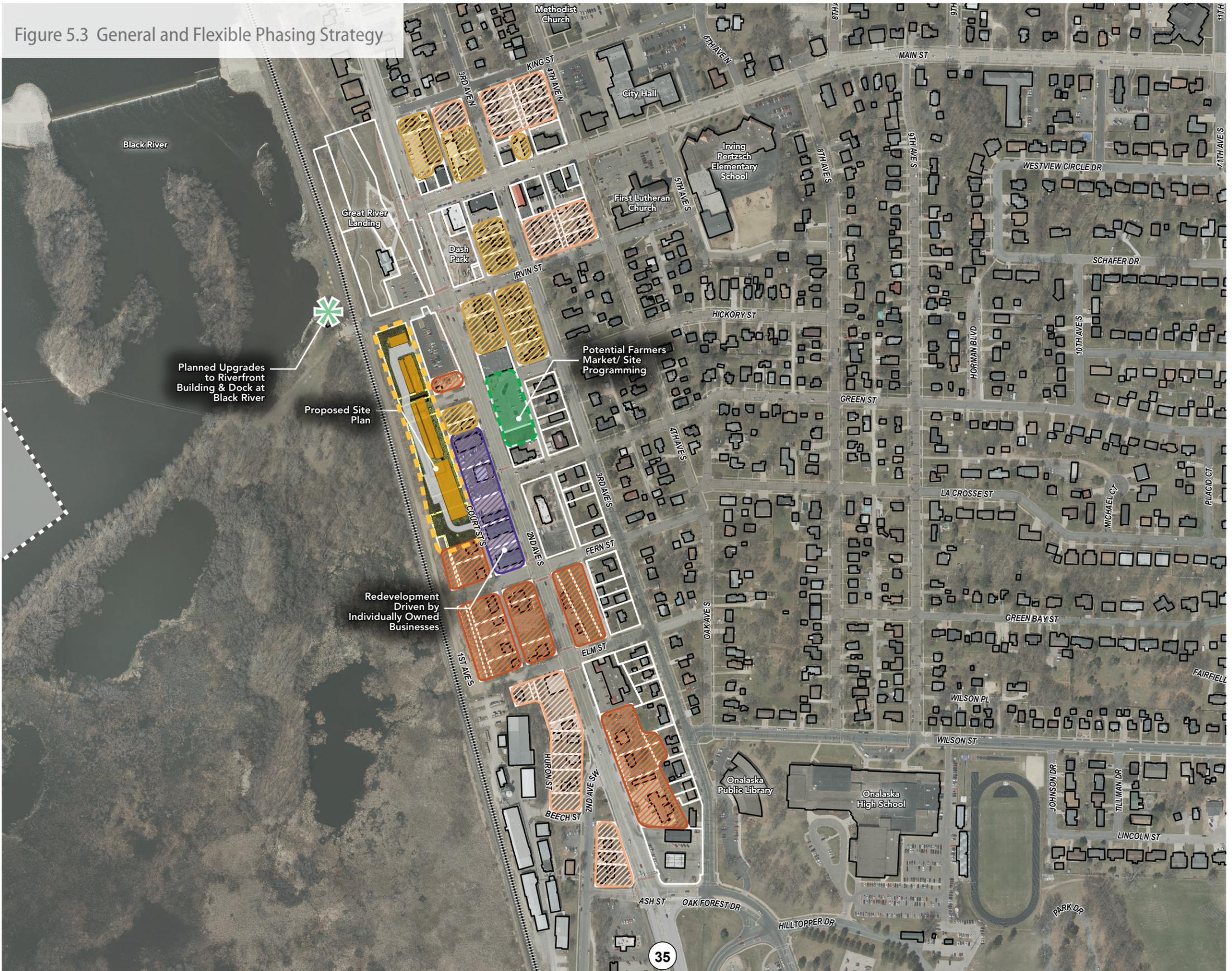


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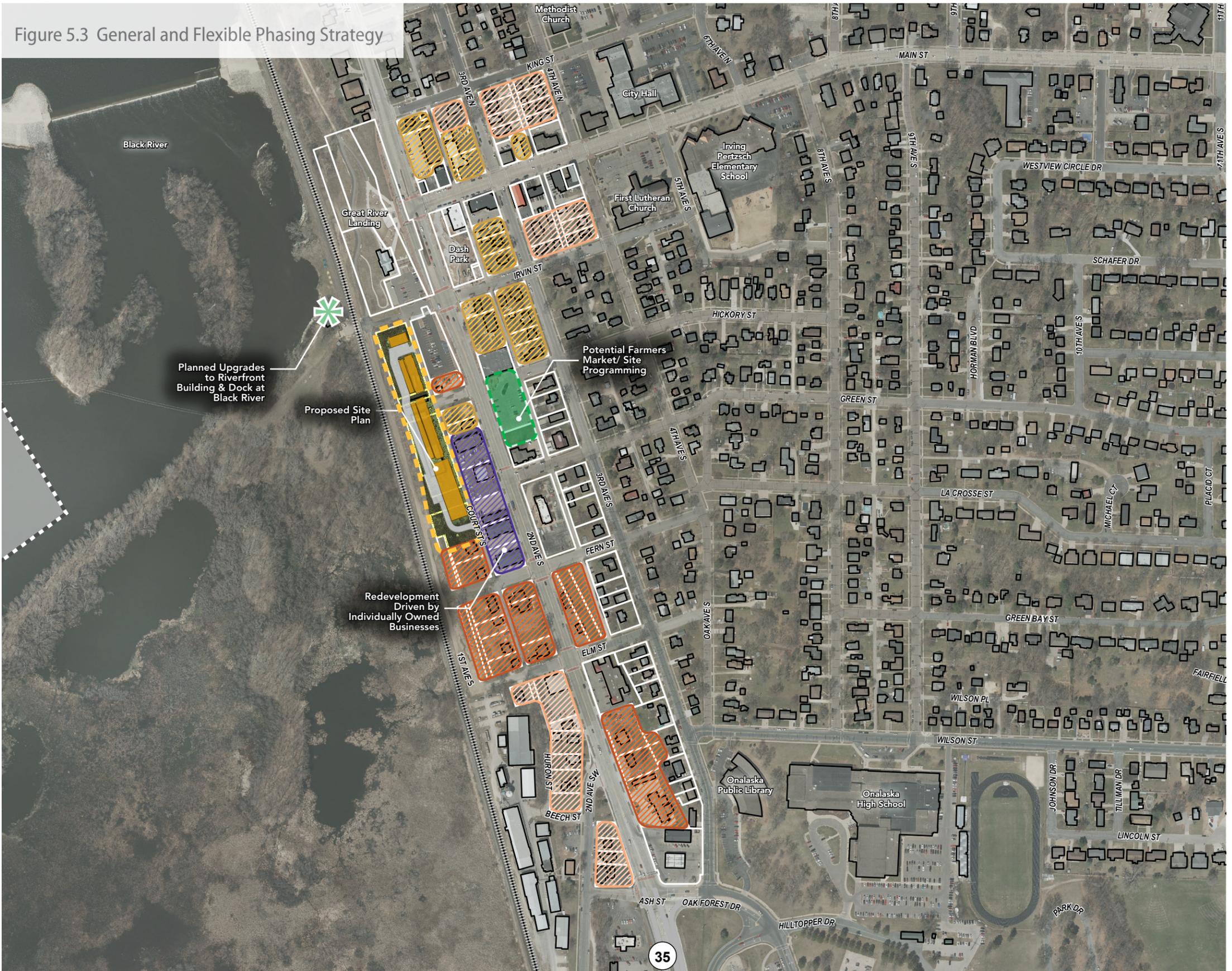


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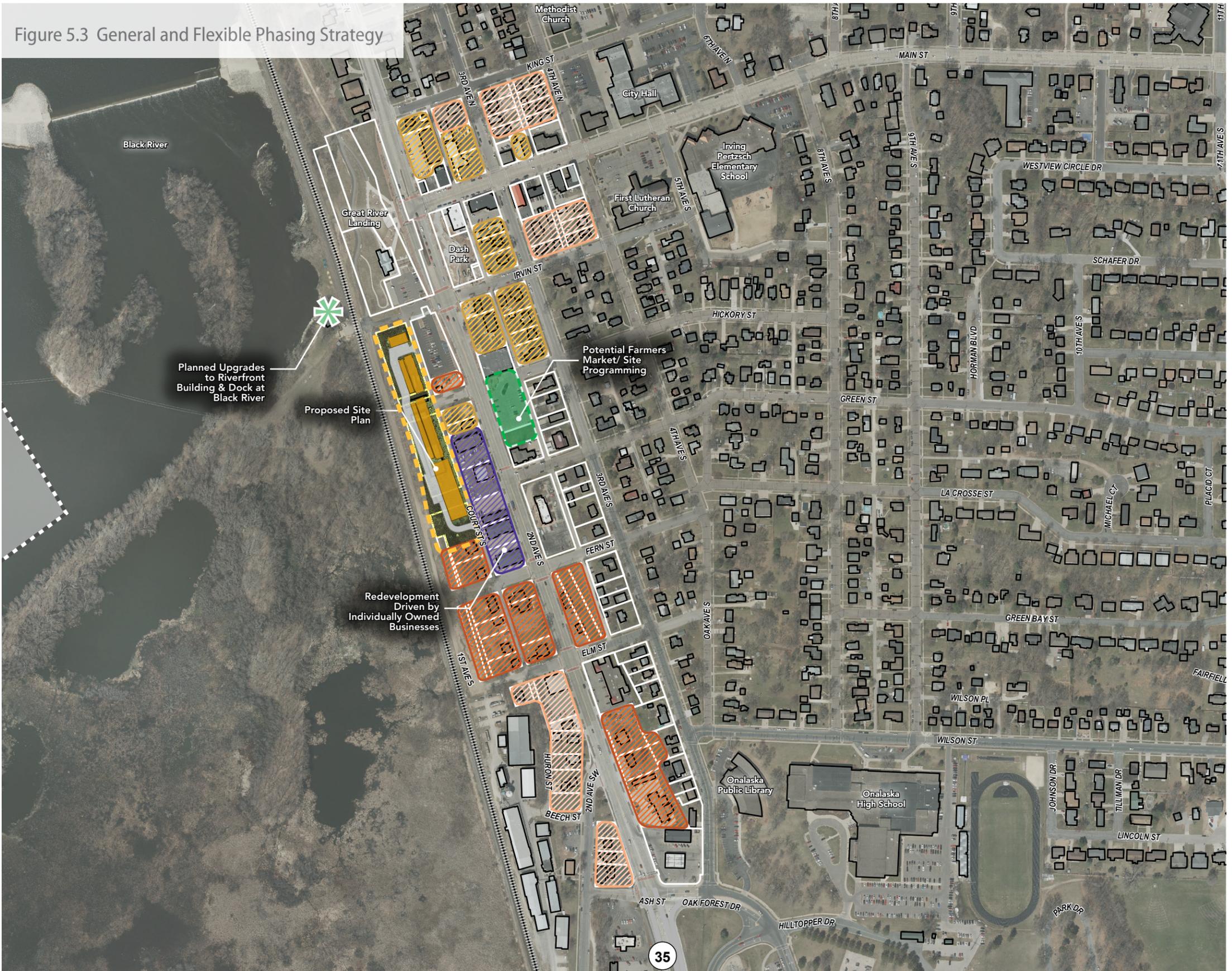


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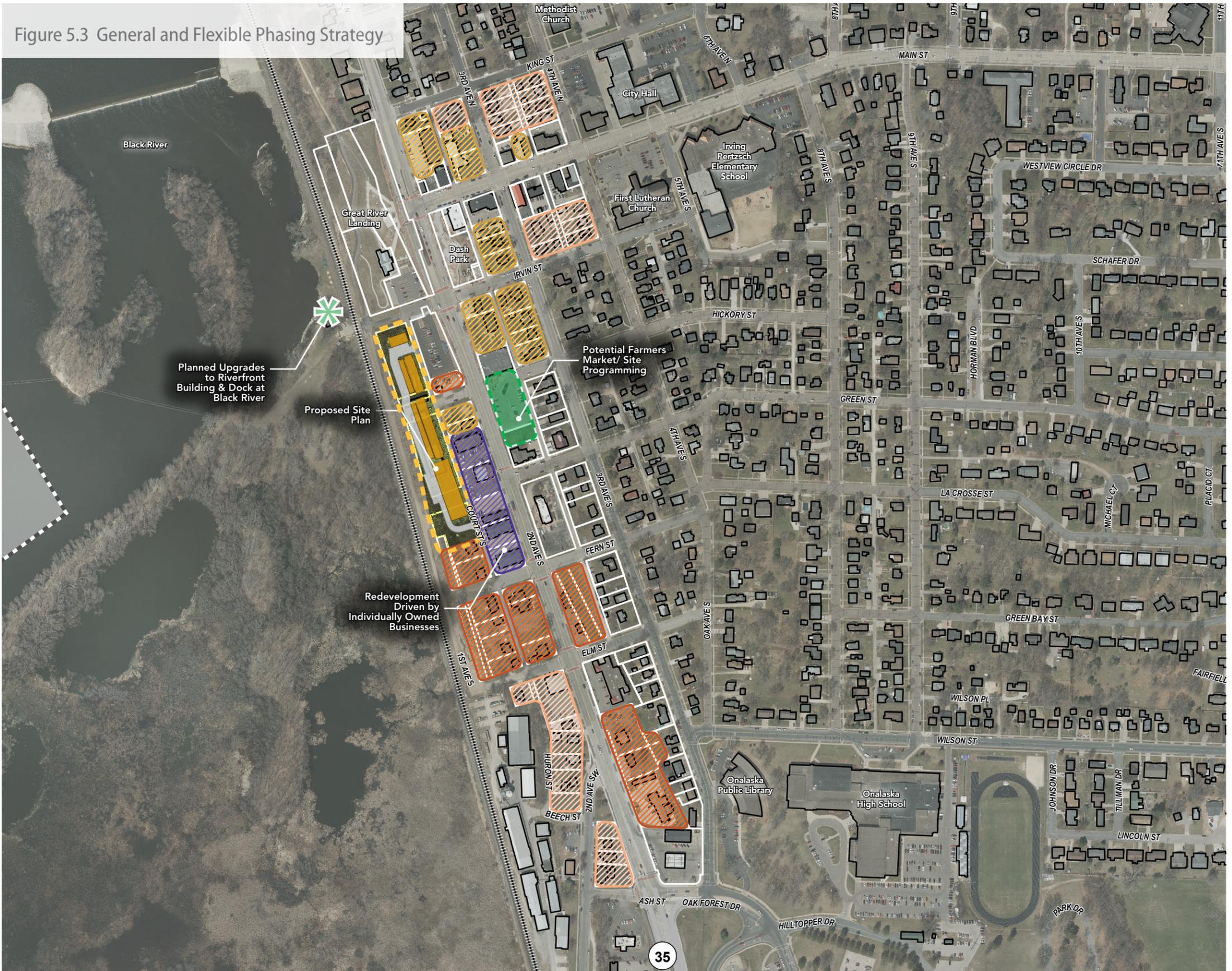


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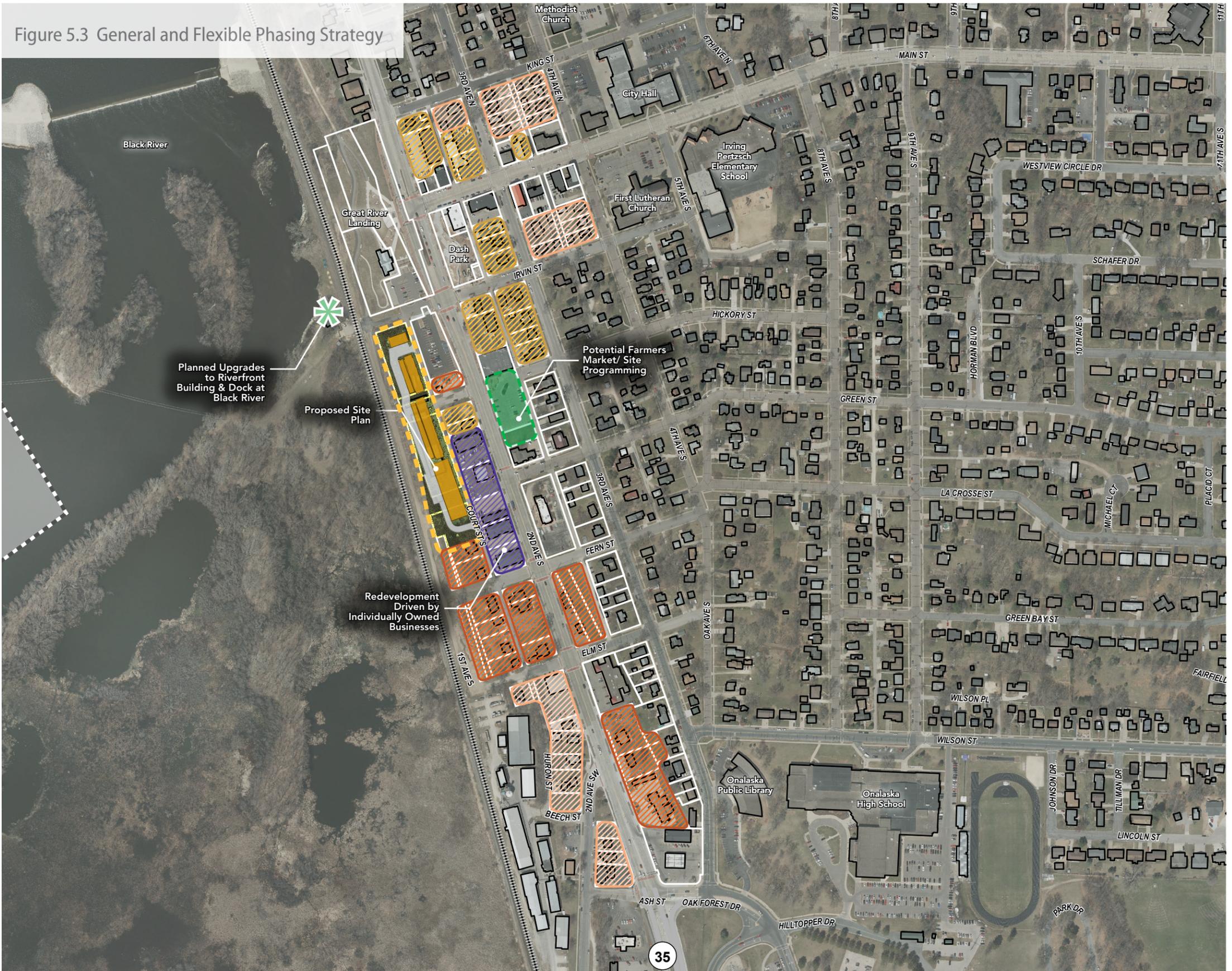


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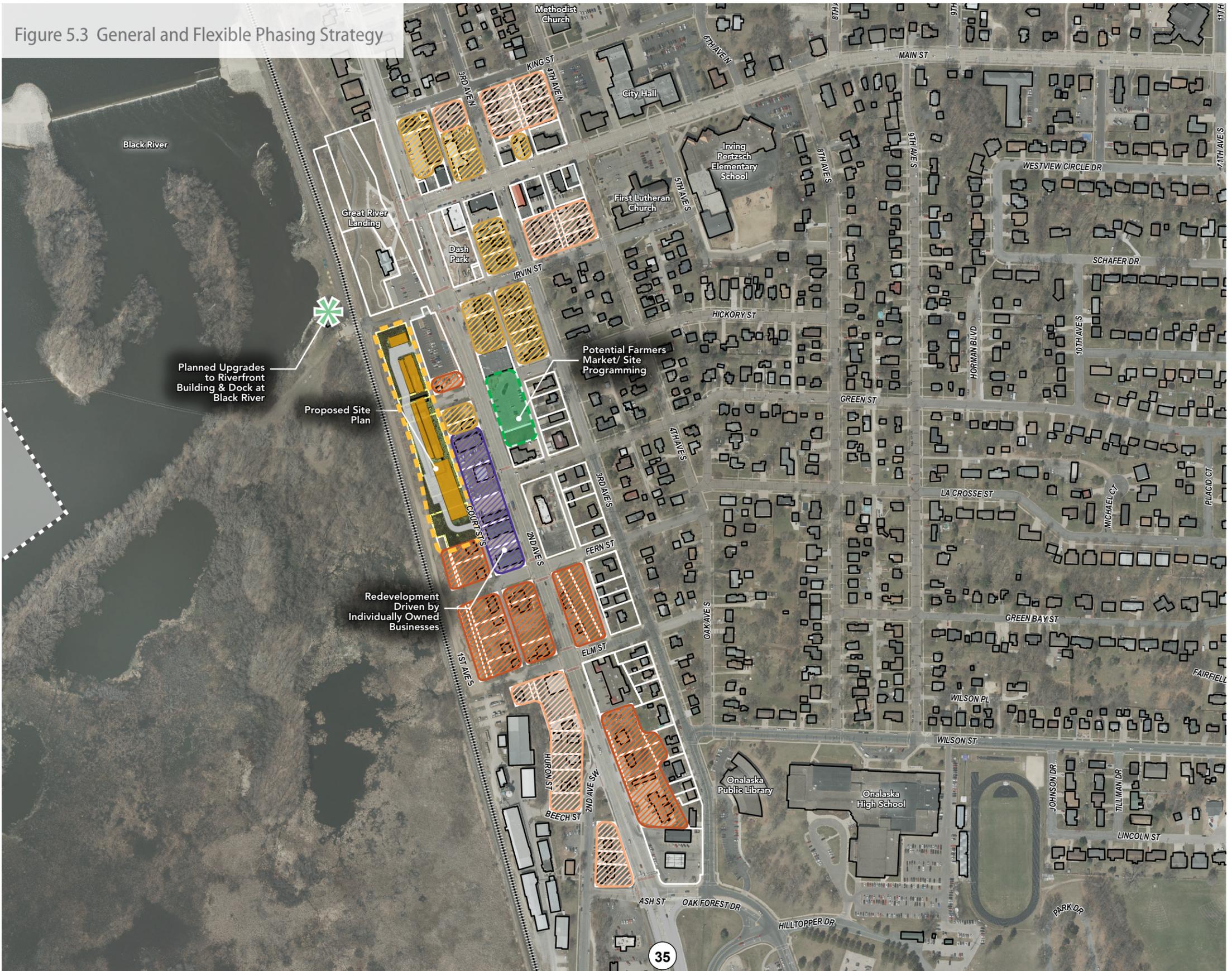


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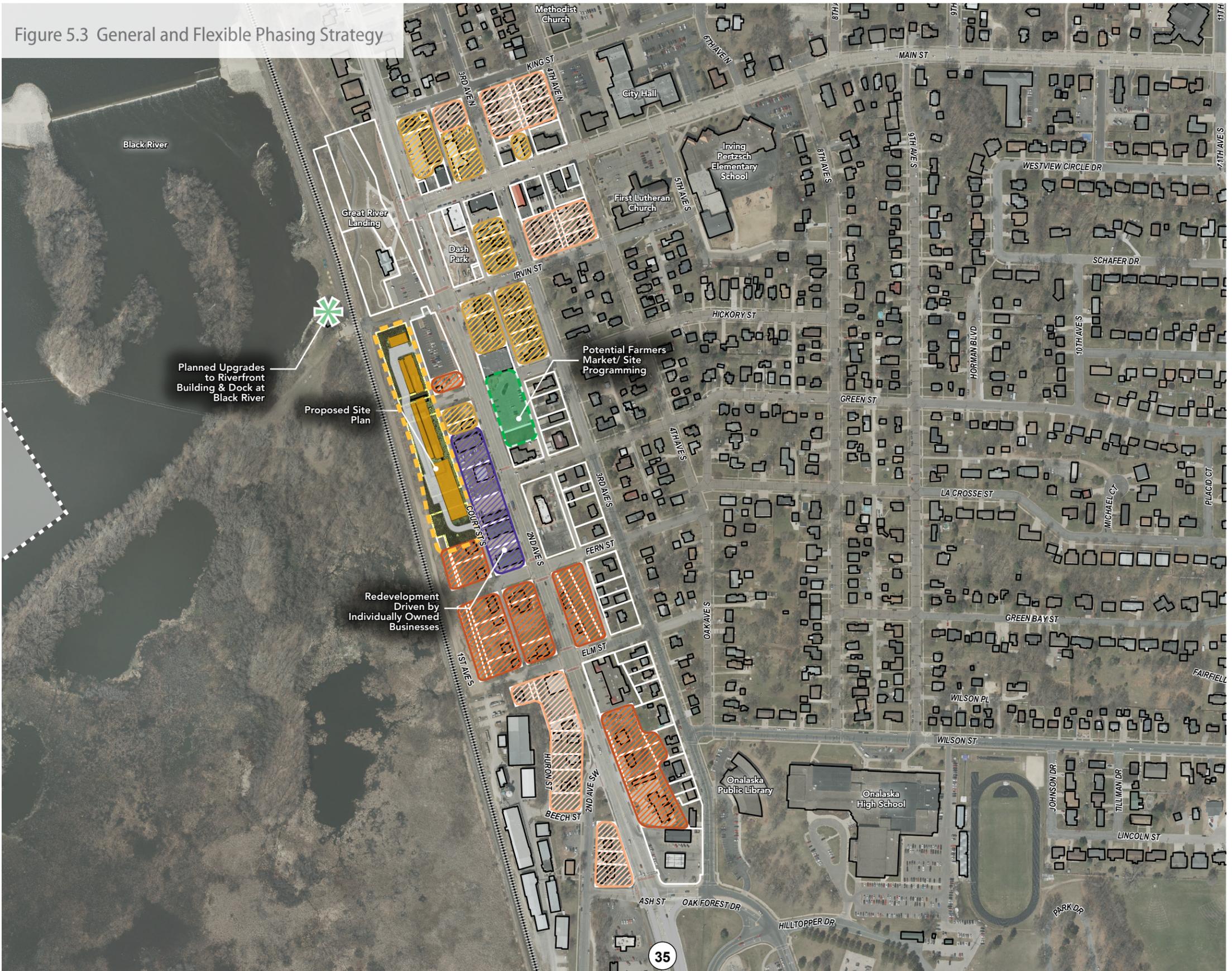


Figure 5.3 General and Flexible Phasing Strategy



## Tools for Public Investments

The vision for downtown will continue to require investment by the City of Onalaska. As larger scale redevelopment opportunities present themselves downtown, the City may also find public benefit through participation and investments in private redevelopment projects. This section highlights the primary finance tools available to support public investments in downtown, both through public improvements and participation in private redevelopment projects. The primary finance tools available to cities are limited. This information is not intended to be an exhaustive guide, but rather a high level overview, a starting point, for further investigation. The use of these tools may be subject to requirements not discussed in this section. In addition, the statutes that govern these tools can be changed by the State Legislature.

### Tax Incremental Finance

Tax incremental finance (TIF) is one of the primary development finance tool available to Wisconsin cities. TIF is simple in concept, but complex in its application. Through TIF, the property taxes created by new development (or redevelopment) are captured and used to finance activities needed to encourage the development. The city approved a TID for the Great River Residences Redevelopment Project in February 2019. TIF can be used to finance many actions needed to facilitate redevelopment, including land acquisition, site preparation, parking, and public improvements. In addition, TIF creates a means to borrow money needed to pay for redevelopment costs. The City can issue general obligation bonds to finance certain qualified expenses. These bonds may be supported with tax increments and other legally available revenues.

The City has the authority to create a Tax Incremental District (TID) for a redevelopment site or area. The current value of all the taxable property within the defined TID boundaries is established prior to any redevelopment. New construction and investment increases the property's value which results in increased/incremental tax value.

### Special Assessments

Public improvements are often financed using the power to levy special assessments. The use of special assessments for the majority of public improvements is governed by state statutes. Essentially, special assessments are a means for benefiting properties to pay for all or part of the costs associated with improvements, and to spread the impact over a period of years. Special assessments can be used to finance public infrastructure improvements outlined in this study including streets, sidewalks and trails, streetscape, lighting and parking.

The method of spreading the assessments and the terms of the assessments are set by the City. Typically, the primary legal constraints on special assessments are:

- » The amount of the assessment cannot exceed the benefit the property receives from the improvement. The benefit is measured by the increase in property value.
- » The method assessment must be uniformly applied to the same type of property.

### General Property Taxes

General property taxes can be used to finance many of the services, improvements, facilities and development activities needed to implement elements of the Study. Taxes may be levied through the General Fund, to pay debt service on bonds, and as a levy for the CDA. The ability to use property taxes provides another resource for downtown.

### Other City Funds

While property taxes are the largest and most obvious source of City revenues, other funds may play a role in implementing the Study. The use of other City funds should be factored into capital improvements planning and earmarked for both Downtown/Highway 35 Corridor and the State Road 16 Corridor. Some potential funding sources include:

- » Utility revenues. Monies from municipal utilities may be available to certain portions of Downtown

or State Road 16 Corridor infrastructure improvement projects.

- » Park dedication fees. New development contributes money (or land) towards the creation of the local park system. Revenues from park dedication may be available to support park and trail improvements.
- » State aid for roads. The City receives money from the State for the construction and maintenance of roads. These roads must be part of the City's designated state aid street system.

### Commercial Rehabilitation Loans and Grants

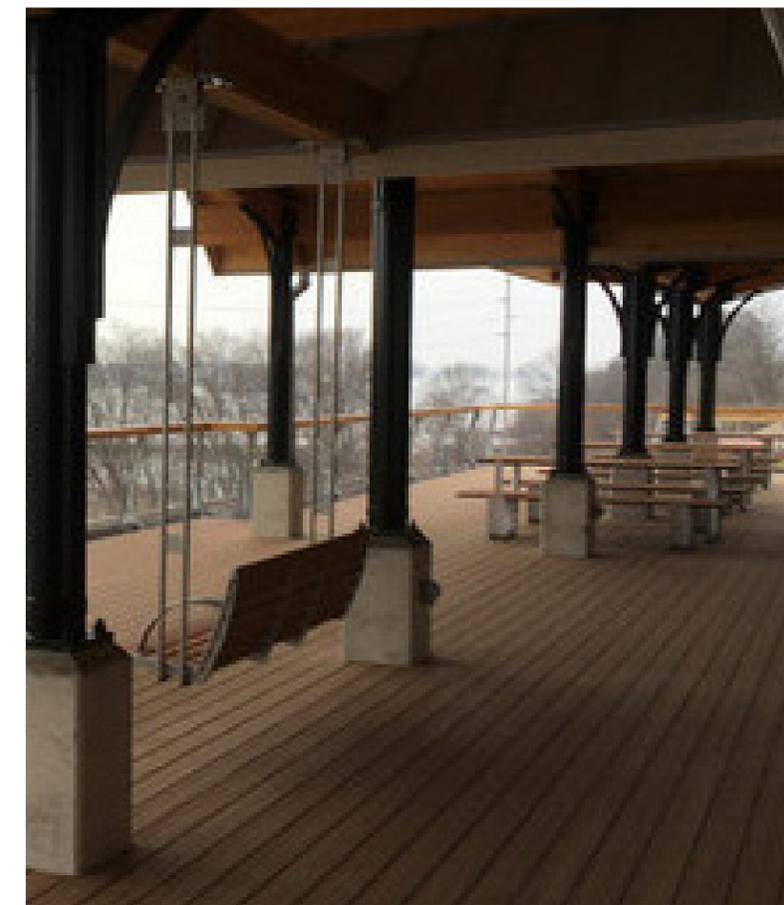
Typically, through HRAs and CDAs, cities have broad powers to facilitate the revitalization of existing buildings. State law also creates specific statutory authority for loans by cities. The City may establish a program to make loans to finance the rehabilitation of small and medium-sized commercial buildings. The program can be funded through the issuance of revenue bonds or obligations payable solely from all or a portion of the revenues derived from or other contributions to the program. Other revenues of the City (tax increment or tax abatement proceeds, for instance) could be used to assist the program.

### Other Revenue Sources

The City should continue to be informed and pay attention to other revenue sources that exist or may become available from La Crosse County or the State of Wisconsin or other sources. Redevelopment projects often rely on a myriad and ever-changing source of revenues and programs to achieve City objectives. The following are a list of Regional and State resources that provide grants and other revolving loan funds that efficiently link housing, jobs, services, and transit in an effort to create inspiring and lasting livable communities.



Farmers market example image.



Great River Landing's river overlook.



## Regional Resources

### **Coulee Region Business Center**

The Coulee Region Business Center (CRBC) provides facilities, resources, mentoring and coaching to small businesses and entrepreneurs in the La Crosse area. The Center offers shared services and a network of professional assistance, giving entrepreneurs access to a wealth of business knowledge and support services. They can help you prepare your business plan, access funding, and market and grow your business.

### **Dairyland Power Cooperative**

Look to Dairyland's Business Development Assistance and Economic Development Loan Programs. Site location assistance and an array of financing programs may be available for your new or expanding business.

### **La Crosse Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau**

This non-profit organization represents the convention and tourism industries of the La Crosse/ Onalaska Area business community, actively marketing the area to tourists and meeting planners both nationally and internationally.

### **La Crosse Area Development Corporation (LADCO)**

Founded in 1971, the La Crosse Area Development Corporation (LADCO) focuses on attracting businesses, retaining businesses, and they co-manage the Coulee Region Business Center. Services include: business attraction & retention assistance, site search/analysis, financial program coordination, assembly of private/public sector project teams, workforce development service, and regional transportation initiatives. LADCO also coordinates the Oktoberfest in the Capital event and the La Crosse Area Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club.

### **La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)**

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization designated to perform transportation planning activities for the La Crosse and La Crescent Area. The main objectives of the LAPC are to develop and maintain a long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan and a short-range Transportation Improvement Program, and other regionally significant projects.

### **La Crosse County Economic Development**

Find information on County industrial parks, available sites, economic profile, and their other business assistance programs, including their revolving loan fund program.

### **Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC)**

Organized in 1964, MRRPC is a Commission of nine counties along the Mississippi River in western Wisconsin. The organization is charged with planning for the physical, social and economic development of the region. The Commission provides administrative and technical assistance to several community, county or multi-county revolving loan funds.

### **7 Rivers Alliance**

The Alliance is a regional leadership group that boosts economic growth by fostering collaboration in western Wisconsin, southeast Minnesota, and northeast Iowa. The Alliance brings together public and private resources to forge entrepreneurial growth and serves as a clearinghouse of vital information to enhance quality of life in the region.

### **Small Business Development Center**

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located at the University Wisconsin – La Crosse, is one of ten university-based SBDC's in Wisconsin. The SBDC mission is to provide learning opportunities and practical guidance to help individuals make

informed business decisions. The La Crosse SBDC serves seven counties in our region and offers several types of services including seminars, customized in-house training, and individualized counseling.

### **UW-Extension La Crosse County**

The community and economic development agent can provide information and technical assistance on economic development in La Crosse County.

### **Xcel Energy**

Xcel offers a variety of programs and services for expanding companies or new industries wishing to relocate in their service area. They offer customized programs designed to help businesses and communities grow.



## State Programs

### **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)**

WEDC is a public-private corporation that replaced the State Department of Commerce in 2011 and leads the state's economic development efforts. WEDC provides a number of programs and services focused on business and community development including:

- » Community Development Investment Grant – Funds may be used for building renovation, historic preservation, demolition, new construction, infrastructure investment, and project/site development planning. Grants are limited to 25% of eligible project costs, with a maximum of up to \$250,000, and grant recipients must provide a 3:1 match investment in project costs.
- » Brownfield Site Assessment Grant – Funds may be used to identify and quantify the degree and extent of soil, vapor and groundwater contamination.
- » Brownfields Grant - Funds may be used for brownfield redevelopment or associated environmental remediation activities such as environmental investigation, remediation or monitoring of the site; removal of hazardous waste containers; soil removal, capping, barrier installation and vapor intrusion systems; and demolition activities that will facilitate redevelopment in a brownfield project.
- » Downtown Development Programs
  - *Wisconsin Main Street Program* – A free technical assistance program, rather than a direct funding program, provides training, façade renderings, small business consultations, and hiring of outside consultants to address topics such as business recruitment & retention, branding, historic preservation planning and event development.
  - *Connecting Communities Program* – Also a technical assistance program designed to provide training and networking for communities or organizations working on revitalization topics.

### **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)**

WHEDA works with developers to finance affordable rental housing, and support economic development and agriculture through our small business guarantee programs. Look to them for New Market Tax Credits, Small Business Financial Products, and Multifamily Financing and Tax Credits.

### **Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)**

WisDOT allocates federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds to transportation improvement projects that “expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment.” The categories of eligible TAP projects include: trail facilities for non-motorized transport; constructing safe routes for non-drivers; converting abandoned railroad corridors for non-motorized transportation; constructing turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas; community improvement activities; any environmental mitigation activity; the Recreational Trails Program; the Safe Routes to Schools program; and projects in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. All TAP projects are funded 80% federally, with a 20% local match. The minimum project cost is \$50,000 for non-infrastructure and \$300,000 for infrastructure projects.



### **Federal Programs**

#### **Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)**

The low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program, created in 1986 and made permanent in 1993, is an indirect federal subsidy used to finance the construction and rehabilitation of low-income affordable rental housing. This program was created this as an incentive for private developers and investors to provide more low-income housing. Without the incentive, affordable rental housing projects do not generate sufficient profit to warrant the investment.

The LIHTC gives investors a dollar-for-dollar reduction in their federal tax liability in exchange for providing financing to develop affordable rental housing. Investors’ equity contribution subsidizes low-income housing development, thus allowing some units to rent at below-market rates. In return, investors receive tax credits paid in annual allotments, generally over 10 years.

Financed projects must meet eligibility requirements for at least 30 years after project completion. In other words, owners must keep the units rent restricted and available to low-income tenants. At the end of the period, the properties remain under the control of the owner.

<https://www.novoco.com/resource-centers/affordable-housing-tax-credits/lihtc-basics/about-lihtc>

(Source: City of La Crosse, 2018)

### **Achieving the Vision**

In summary, the Downtown Redevelopment Study outlines an approach for positive, incremental redevelopment, reinvestment and intensification throughout the area. The plan outlines a series of achievable goals over the next ten years with potential redevelopment projects that have a reality in the marketplace today and provide a true foundation for transformation.

While the Redevelopment Study prescribes a detailed redevelopment approach for specific projects and likely steps, the plan is also flexible in its application to allow the City of Onalaska to adapt to an ever-changing marketplace. The Redevelopment Study should be utilized as a living document, continually referenced and checked against as development and redevelopment projects occur over time.





Katie Aspenson  
 City of Onalaska  
 415 Main Street  
 Onalaska, WI 54650

March 6, 2019  
 Invoice No: 018-036 - 8

Project 018-036 Onalaska - Redevelopment Planning  
**Professional Services from February 1, 2019 to February 28, 2019**

Task 03 Refine to Preferred Plan & Seek Approval

- Internal team collaboration
- Preparation of draft report
- Preparation of final report
- Project coordination
- Onalaska CDA Meeting on 2/13
- Preparation and attendance at CDA Meeting
- Preparation and attendance at Plan Commission Meeting

**Professional Personnel**

	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Amount</b>	
Principal				
Harjes, Bryan	21.50	185.00	3,977.50	
Associate				
Miller, Jeffrey	24.50	130.00	3,185.00	
Professional II				
Clarke, Kevin	9.25	90.00	832.50	
Thorsen, Jesse	21.75	85.00	1,848.75	
Professional I				
Hackett, Aimee	28.50	60.00	1,710.00	
Totals	105.50		11,553.75	
<b>Total Labor</b>				<b>11,553.75</b>
				<b>Total this Task</b>
				<b>\$11,553.75</b>

Task 99 Project Expenses

**Reimbursable Expenses**

Mileage and Travel Expense				
2/13/2019	Miller, Jeffrey	Mileage	185.60	
2/13/2019	Harjes, Bryan	Mileage	162.40	
Meals				
2/13/2019	Harjes, Bryan	Dinner	12.53	
2/13/2019	Harjes, Bryan	Lunch	13.24	
<b>Total Reimbursables</b>			<b>373.77</b>	<b>373.77</b>

**Total this Task** **\$373.77**

**Billing Limits**

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Prior</b>	<b>To-Date</b>
Total Billings	11,927.52	86,851.08	98,778.60
Limit			101,125.00
Remaining			2,346.40

**Total this Invoice** **\$11,927.52**

**Outstanding Invoices**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Balance</b>
7	2/6/2019	15,522.91
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,522.91</b>

**Total Now Due** **\$27,450.43**