

**MEMORANDUM
MIDDLETOWN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

To : Mayor Sebastian Giuliano,
Members of the Common Council

From : Quentin Phipps, Chairman,
Planning and Zoning Commission

Date : June 22nd, 2011

Re : Riverfront Technical Memorandum #1

Congratulations on the city's recent progress regarding the Mattabasset sewer regionalization project. It is yours and the Councils commitment that will bring this long awaited waterfront project to fruition.

In December of 2010 the Mayor asked the Planning and Zoning Commission to begin a planning process for the "new waterfront", basically the underutilized area to the southeast of the existing Harbor Park. The Mayor asked that we formulate new zoning regulations for the area which will allow for the highest and best use of this precious and emerging asset.

The purpose of this technical memorandum is to update the Mayor and the Common Council on our progress.

The Commission began by reviewing previous planning efforts for the waterfront. The Commission paid specific attention to the results of a charette conducted at Long Hill Estate in May of 2000. The charette attracted over one hundred (100) members of the public on a beautiful Saturday morning.

Because progress has been delayed by seemingly endless negotiations with the Mattabasset Sewer District and a stalled State Department of Transportation project to create a diamond interchange in the area, little has changed in the area since the charette.

The findings of the charette are still very pertinent and even more importantly they represent the opinion of the citizenry. The commission intends to adhere closely to these findings.

The underlying principals which grew out of the public process are as follows:

- ***Keep development at an appropriate scale – complement the adjacent neighborhoods.***
- ***Use circulation patterns, land development, and design elements to strengthen the downtown and the riverfront area.***
- ***Always focus on the River. Assess development proposals on the basis of their impact upon the river and the riverfront area.***
- ***Incorporate pedestrian orientation into street, sidewalk and building design.***
- ***Provide multiple points of access – pedestrian, vehicular and visual – to the River.***
- ***Protect and enhance views of the river – work with Portland to provide mutual scenic protections for the riverfront areas.***
- ***Concentrate open space and active recreational uses along the riverfront.***
- ***Establish a significant water-related use such as small marina or a series of docks in the riverfront area.***
- ***Use railroad as an asset – establish a tourist attraction around it.***
- ***Remove sewage treatment plant from area.***
- ***Establish commercial uses that will complement, not take away from, downtown retail.***

The Process to Date

The Commission began by receiving an update on the Mattabasset Regionalization project from the Director of Water and Sewer. The Commission also received and reviewed previous plans and studies, received and reviewed detailed maps and aerial photographs. The maps highlighted the areas which held development potential and those areas which face significant development constraints due to inland wetlands, 100 year flood plain and steep slopes.

The Planning Department also explained the areas of suspected environmental contamination which were identified during the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) brownfield assessment pilot project in 2000. The existence of brownfields in the area will pose additional constraints to re-development but they also open up significant opportunities for state and federal funding and partnerships.

The zoning for the area was then reviewed and it can best be described as a hodgepodge of five (5) zoning districts and an aquifer protection overlay zone. The aquifer protection overlay zone is designed to protect the city's drinking water supply which is drawn from the aquifer below the Connecticut River.

Finally the Commission reviewed waterfront zoning regulations from Bridgeport, CT, Stratford, CT, Groton/Stonington, CT and Portsmouth NH. The purpose of this review was to better understand how other communities treat their waterfronts from a zoning perspective.

Based on the Commissions' work to date the Commission choose to expand the study area used in 2000 to the undeveloped land owned by the State of Connecticut around Merritt Hall and the former Long River Village housing project property. While these properties lack direct water frontage they possess significant development potential, including magnificent river views, and are worthy of inclusion.

Figure 1 displays the Planning and Zoning Commissions study area.

After reviewing the study area and its existing characteristics the Commission identified five development districts within the study area. These districts, as displayed on Figure 2, are as follows:

1. City Riverfront;
2. Former OMO Manufacturing Superfund site;
3. Residential area, Walnut and OMO Streets;
4. Jackson Corrugated;
5. State of Connecticut Hillside / Long River Village properties.

Open spaces and natural systems are also a critical component to a successful waterfront. With regard to the study area there is a large wetland/floodplain area which will be preserved and enhanced, including an interpretive/walking/jogging trail along the edge to allow access and to foster an appreciation of the tidal river ecosystem. Also many of the steep sloping areas facing the waterfront on the State of Connecticut Hillside / Long River Village properties will be preserved as wildlife corridors.

The Riverfront Zone

Below are our preliminary thoughts on the new Riverfront Zone for the study area. The new zone will incorporate the underlying principals which grew out of the May 2000 charette.

At this point in the process, the Commission envisions more of a form based overlay regulation which overlays the existing zoning and recognizes the unique characteristics of each of the 5 development areas. In this way the commission is not taking away anyone's existing property rights they are granting them additional development opportunities.

Because the city currently owns the vast majority of the river frontage the Commission plans to display the actual river frontage as a public park in the form of an expanded Harbor Park. New zoning will be designed to mandate complete public accessibility and will be crafted in a way to leverage private dollars from new development in other areas to enhance the public realm.

Other critical considerations which will be incorporated into the new zoning will be :

Mixed use – its well recognized that single use Euclidean zoning is not sustainable and therefore the new Riverfront Zone will encourage/require mixed use zoning to create places where people can live, work, shop and play and not be dependent on the automobile.

Protection of View corridors – the way to preserve and enhance property values and create a successful living environment is to maintain and create as many views of the river as possible.

Natural systems – as discussed zoning will seek to preserve unique undeveloped natural systems.

Encourage/require Water dependent uses – so as to avoid competition with other commercial areas zoning will establish water dependent / water related uses. For instance a burger shop might not be allowed while a clam or shad shack would be allowed or a canoe / kayak shop would be allowed before a bike shop.

Environmentally Sustainable – in the year 2000 little was discussed about creating sustainable development. Now it is the norm. The zone will talk about reduce, reuse, recycle, LEED and LEED ND certification, green buildings, green roofs, solar panels, geothermal heating, energy efficiency, water conservation and the overall carbon footprint.

Permeable – considering its proximity to the Connecticut River, this consideration is of utmost importance. New development will need to display permeability in its design of required hardscapes and low impact design which promotes water quality. There will be no room for excessive pavement.

Dynamic, creative and financially sustainable – coming out of the current economic downturn developers and investors will be very selective about where they invest. Middletown will have to create a dynamic and creative investment opportunity that provides a sufficient return on investment in order to attract those dollars.

Riverfront Planning - Study Area

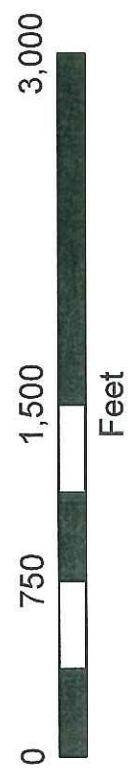
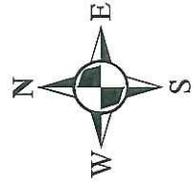
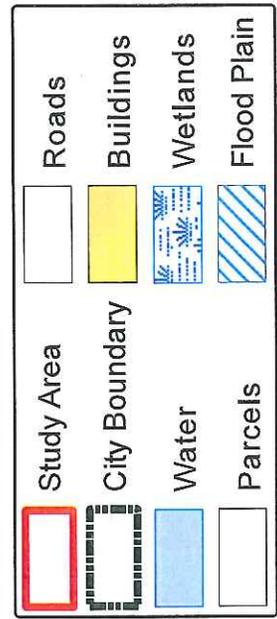
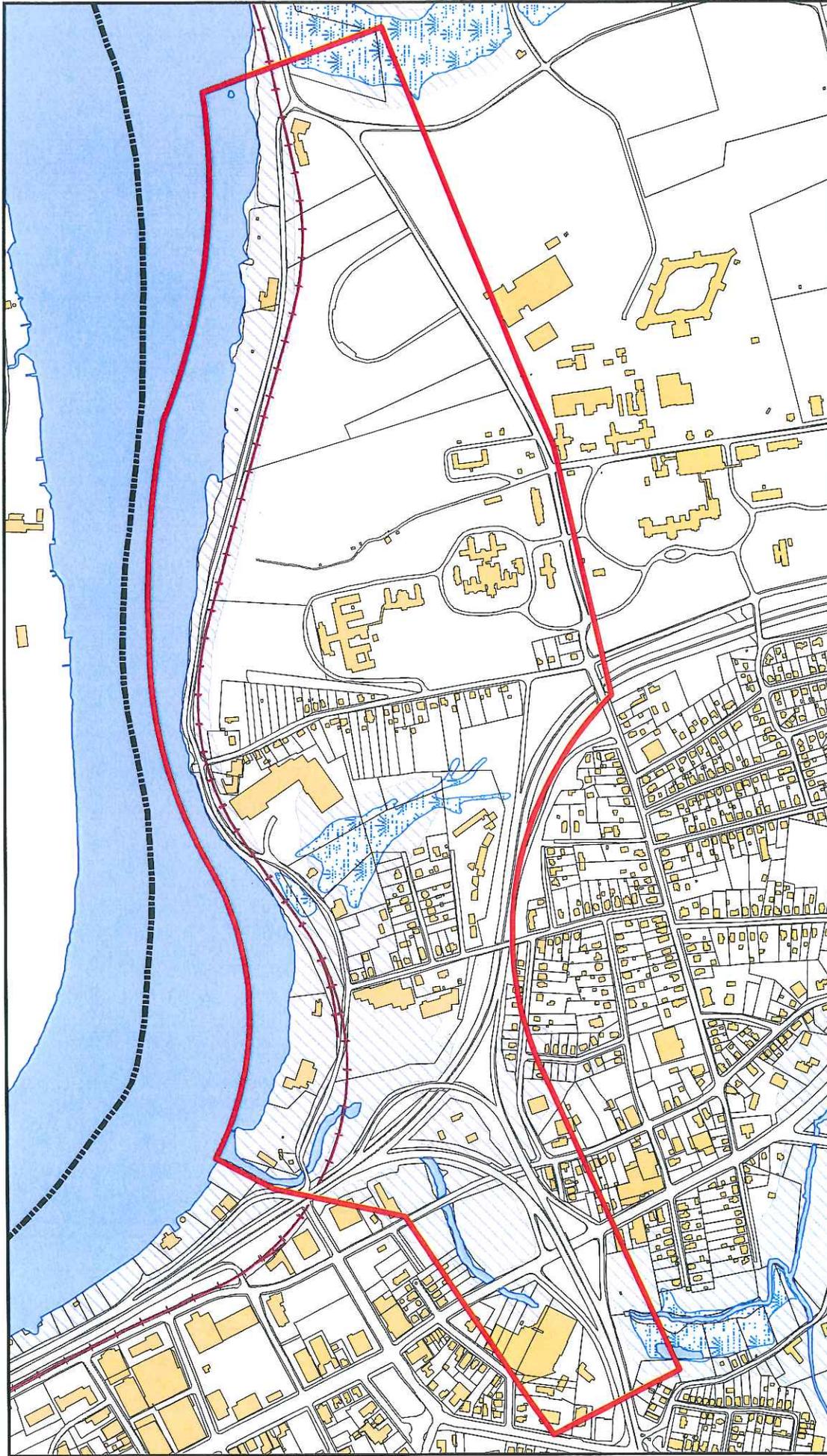
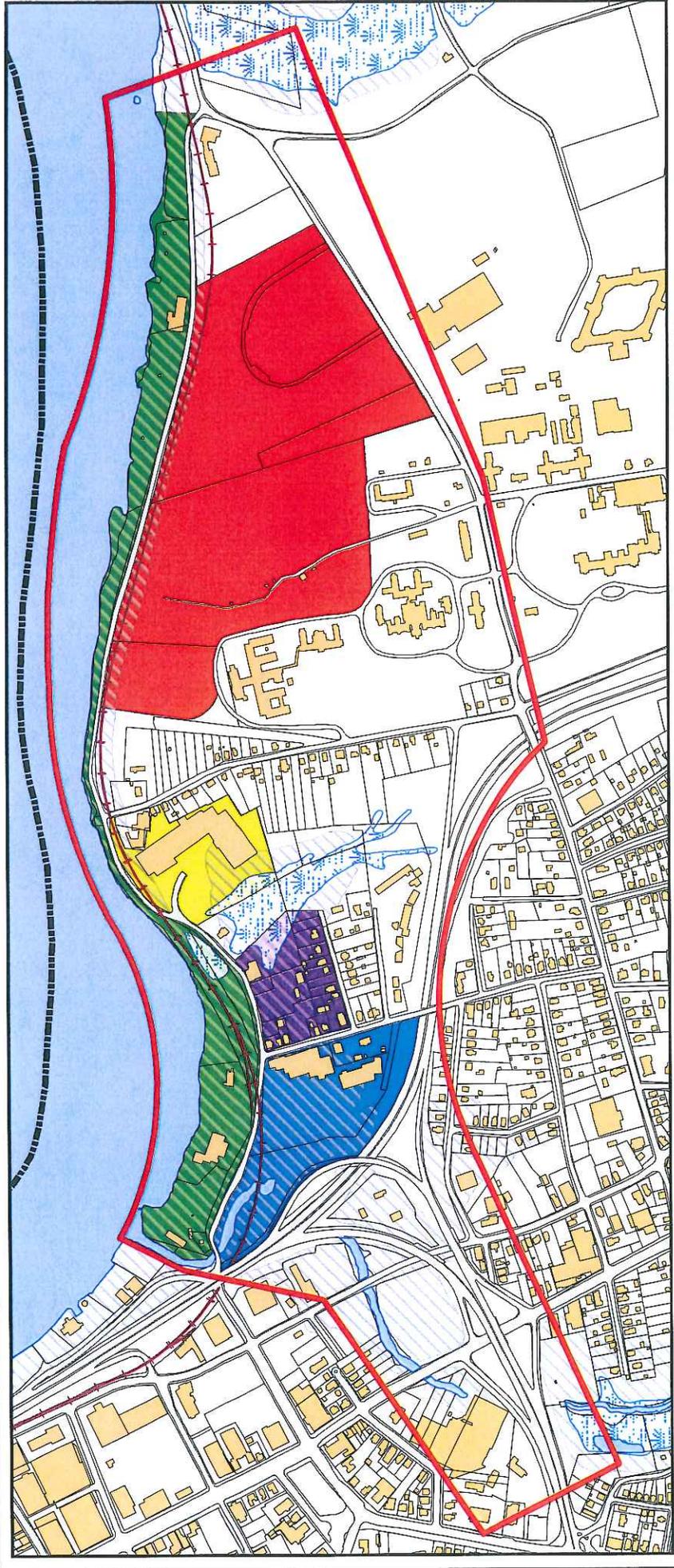


Figure 1



Riverfront Planning

Area	Acres	Description
	23.61	City Riverfront
	12.5	Former Omo Manufacturing Superfund Site
	6.7	Residential Area, Walnut & OMO Street
	9.3	Jackson Corrugated
	26.52	State Hillside/Former Longriver Village Property

	Riverfront Area
	Water
	Parcels
	Roads
	Buildings
	Wetlands
	Floodplain

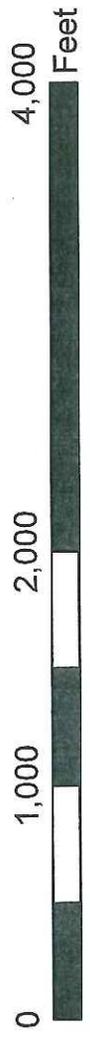
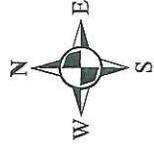


Figure 2



Area 1

Ownership: Public

Average: 23.61

Zone: RF - Riverfront Recreation

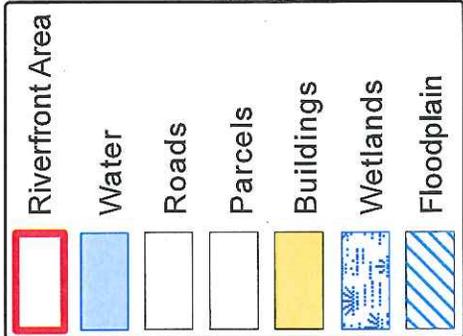
Wetlands: Yes

Flood Plain: Yes, entire area

Other Development Constraints: Sewage plant, well fields, rail line

Future Recommended Use: Passive recreation with walking/biking trail,

Public park



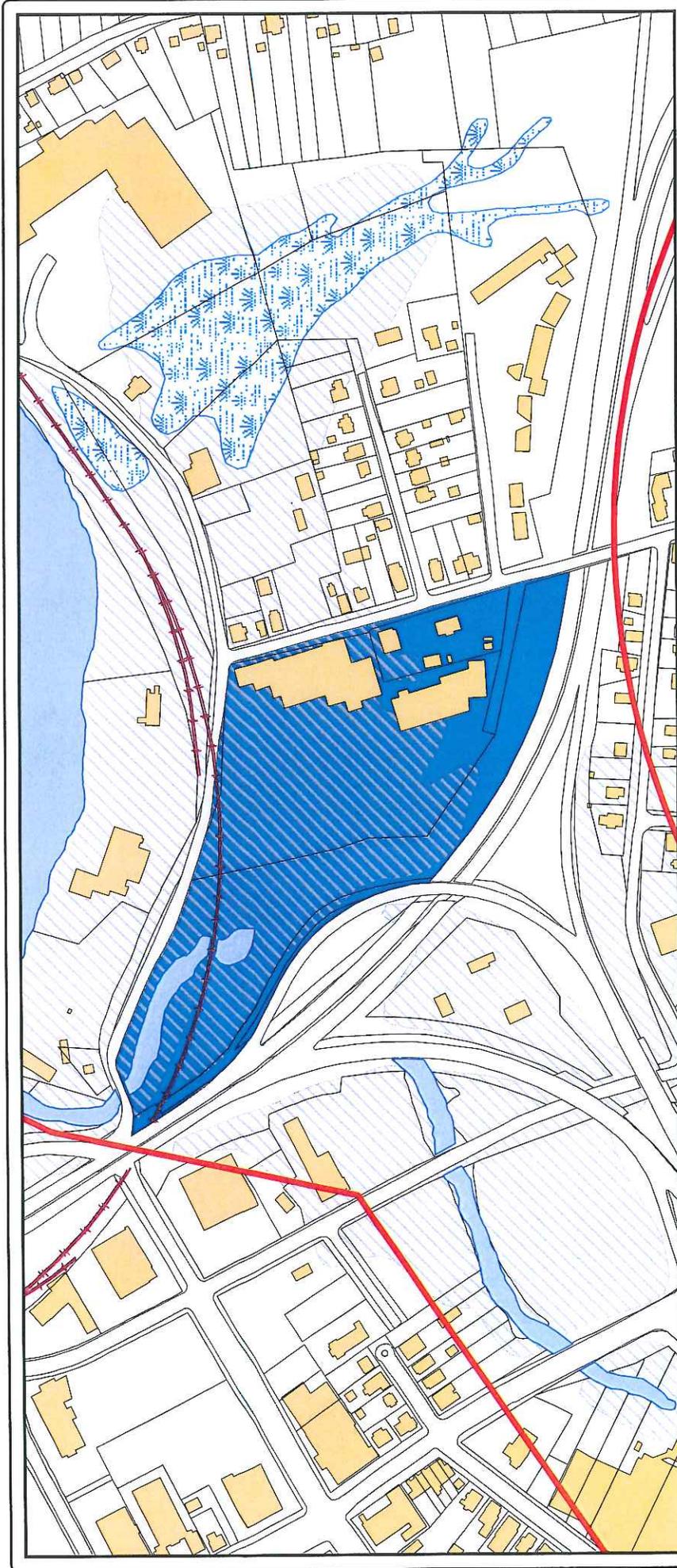
2,000 Feet

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500

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Figure 3



Area 2

Ownership: Private

Aceage: 12.5

Zone: TD - Transitional Development

Wetlands: No

Flood Plain: Yes

Other Development Constraints: Contamination, flood plain, rail line
Future Recommended Use: Parking area, adaptive historic reuse of building, office, hotel, water dependant retail

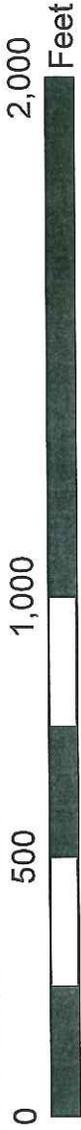
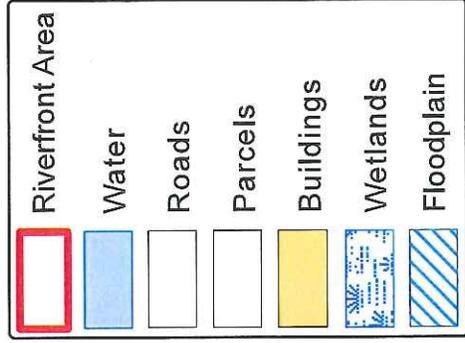
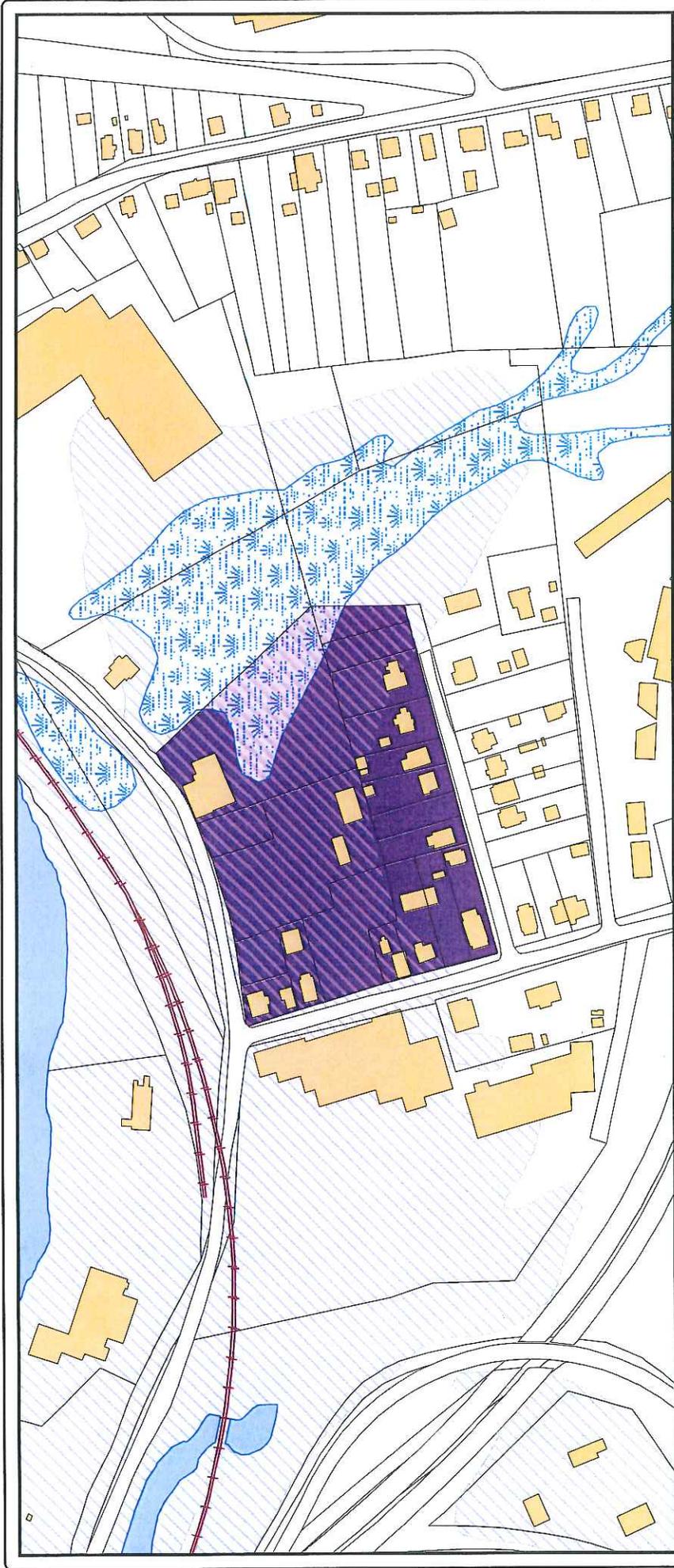


Figure 4



Area 3

Ownership: Private

Average: 6.7

Zone: MX - Mixed Use

Wetlands: Yes

Flood Plain: Yes

Other Development Constraints: Current development, multiple ownership, possible contamination

Future Recommended Use: Mixed use, residential

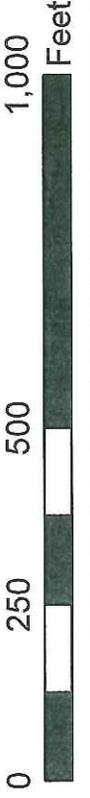
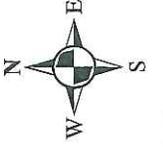
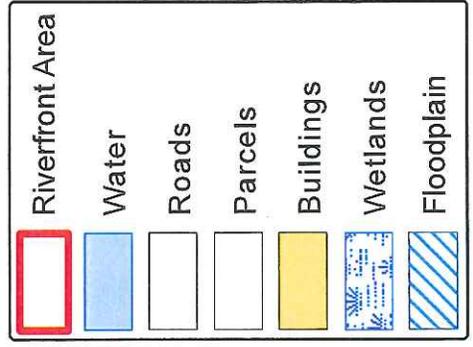
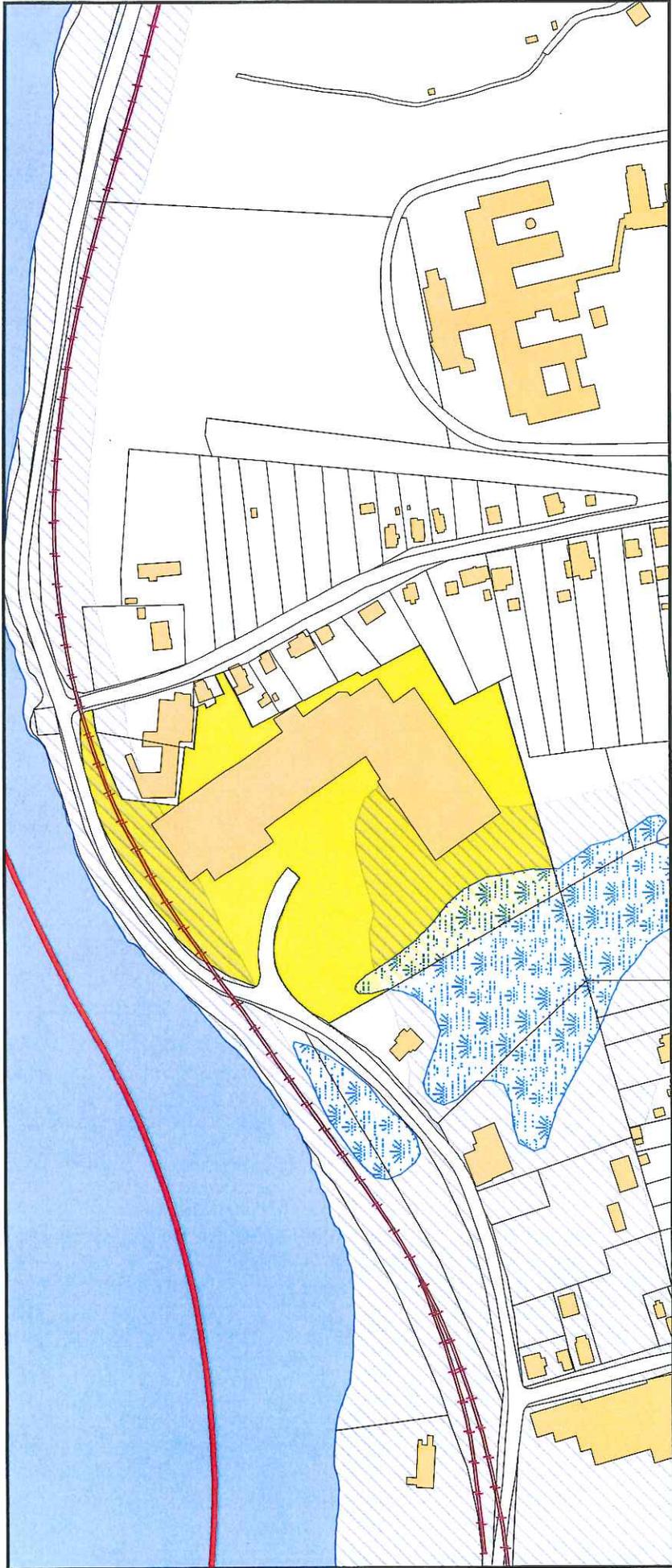
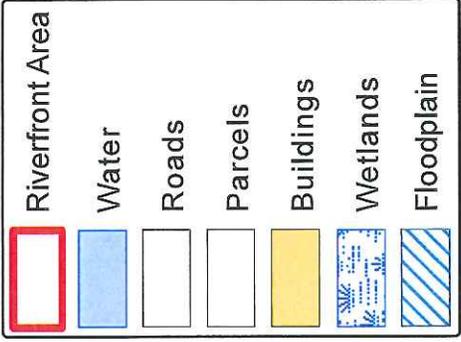


Figure 5



Area 4



Ownership: Private
Average: 9.3
Zone: MX - Mixed Use
Wetlands: Yes
Flood Plain: Yes
Other Development Constraints: Current development, ownership
Future Recommended Use: Mixed use, commercial, water oriented, high density residential

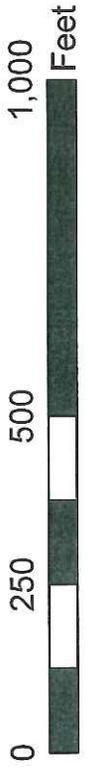
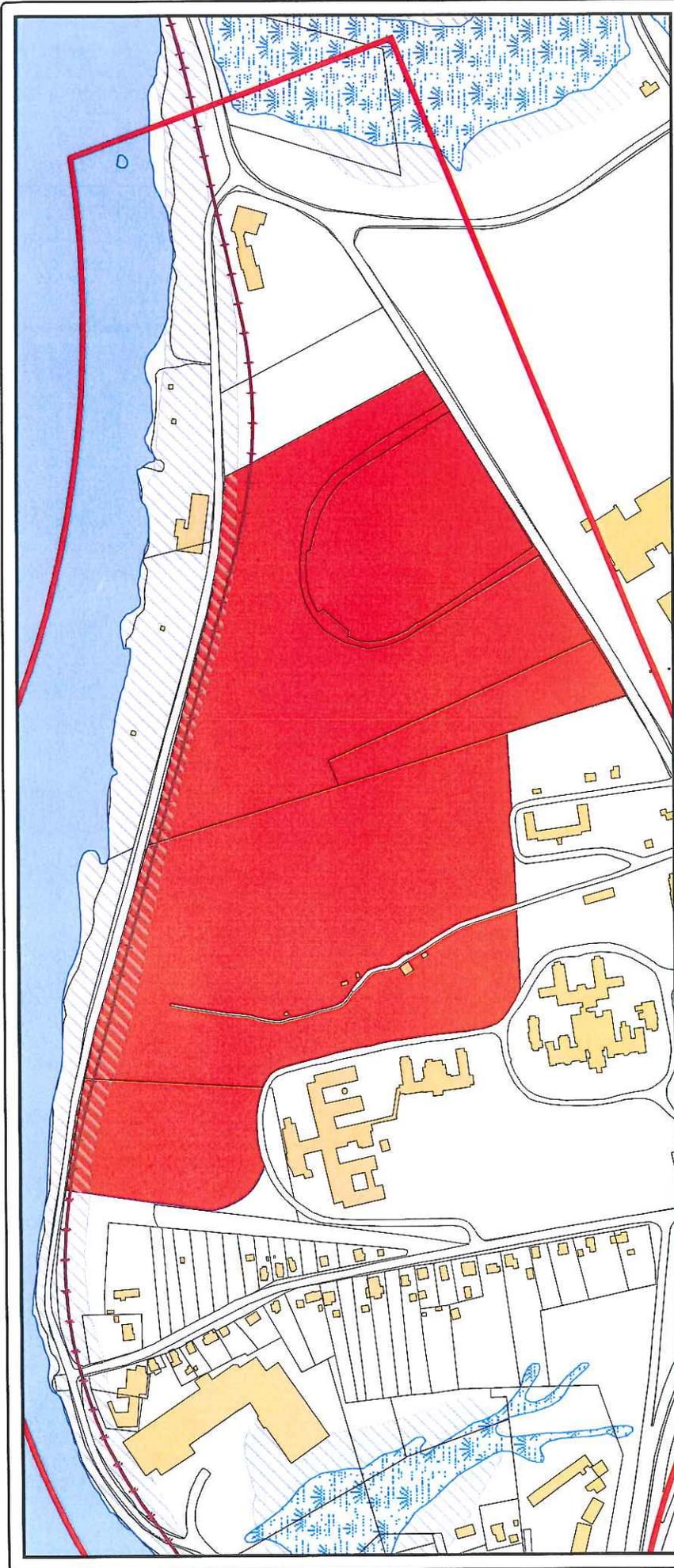
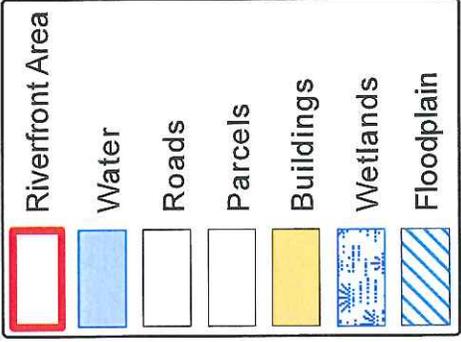


Figure 6



Area 5



Ownership: Private
Average: 50.92
Zone: R-45 - Residential & M - Multi-family
Wetlands: No
Flood Plain: Yes
Other Development Constraints: Topo, ownership, infrastructure, adjacent to CVH and CJTS
Future Recommended Use: Mixed use, commercial, residential



Figure 7