



June 7, 2019 MVAC SR-2019-24

Jeremy Tomesh, PE
SEH
329 Jay Street
Suite 301
La Crosse, WI 54601

Re: Archaeological literature review for the Riverside North Development, La Crosse, Wisconsin.
Section 31 T16N, R07W

Dear Mr. Tomesh,

A comprehensive site search was conducted using the Wisconsin Sites Inventory (ASI) and the Architectural History Inventory (AHI) database as maintained by the State Historical Society (WisAHRD) for the proposed Riverside North development just north of the La Crosse River in the City of La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin (Figures 1 and 2).

There are no previously reported archaeological sites within the boundary of the Northside development location. There are eight previously reported archaeological sites within one-half mile from project area (Table 1, see figures 1 and 2). 47LC63/BLC-0124, the War Eagle ship wreck, is located adjacent to the western project boundary. The War Eagle was a sidewheel packet built during the winter of 1853-54 in Fulton, Ohio. She was 225 feet long, was rated for 296 tons, and had a capacity in excess of 300 people. In 1870 the War Eagle was transporting barrels of petroleum and was docked on the Black River in La Crosse. An accident with a lantern started a fire that caused the boat to sink where it was moored. There are varying accounts on how many people died during the accident. Most accounts say five were known to have died (Evening Democrat 1870). However, the passenger logs for the War Eagle were lost in the fire so it is unknown how many passengers were on the ship and if they were all accounted for. The ship was also carrying mail from points up river, all of which was lost in the fire (Evening Democrat). Also lost in the fire were a railroad depot and restaurant, three warehouses, and all but three cars of a passenger train. A local diver recovered many items from the wreck in the late 1900s, many of these artifacts are now on display by the La Crosse Historical Society. A human skull was also found and was reburied in place. The site is a catalogued burial site and was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Total avoidance of this location is recommended. Any work within the site boundaries would require permission from the Wisconsin Historical Society to disturb a catalogued burial site and there would likely also be requirements associated with the NRHP eligibility.

47LC395, the Peavy site, is located just south of the project area. The site is listed as an historic concentration of materials and unknown prehistoric campsite/village. MVAC has a peavy, a tool used to manipulate logs, found at the site and a few other large metal pieces. The site record also says that lithic debitage was found at the site but that is not in MVAC's collections.

The remainder of the previously reported sites are located either on the other side of the La Crosse River or almost a half mile away. Most of the other sites are located on landforms that are more likely to contain archaeological resources. The early maps and bird's eye view of the city show the project area as undeveloped and in most cases low, wet, and marshy (Figure 3-5). This would not have been a good location for prehistoric or historic settlements. The 1914 Soil Survey of La Crosse County (Whitson et al. 1914: soils map and 56-57) shows the project area as meadow. Meadow was used as a broad category used to describe the floodplains of the Mississippi, La Crosse, and Black Rivers. It indicates that soils within the floodplain vary but in this part of La Crosse are typically level except for the low ridges of sand and old channels which have been cut through the floodplains. These areas are at least intermittently flooded throughout the year. As can be seen from the information on the War Eagle above, there was development along the western edge of the project area, namely

warehouses, elevators, and railroad related structures. The 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show two elevators and a freight warehouse on the west side of multiple railroad tracks (Figure 6).

Table 1: Previously reported sites located within one-half mile of the project areas.			
Site No./Name	Site Type	Affiliation	Comments
47LC13/BLC-0068/La Crosse Cemetery	Campsite/village/Cemetery/burial	Historic Indian, Oneota, Middle Woodland, Middle Archaic	Site is reported as a pre-contact and historic cemetery located in downtown La Crosse. Members of the Myrick family, first La Crosse settlers, are reported to have been buried in the cemetery. Some of the remains were said to have been exhumed and placed in Oak Grove Cemetery. Recent monitoring of construction in this area has failed to find any remains and all soil has been previously disturbed.
47LC63/BLC-0124/War Eagle	Shipwreck	Historic Euro-American	War Eagle was a side-wheeler and steam packet that burned and sank in 1870. Parts of the wreckage were salvaged shortly after it sank. Some bodies were pulled from the water after the boat sank but the number of dead is unknown the records were destroyed during the fire. A skull was found by a looter in the 1980s and was reburied in place.
47LC270-0088/Jewell Boys Cemetery	Cemetery/burial	Historic Euro-American	The site consists of two graves marked with a tombstone engraved with "Jewell" and dated to 1859-1860. The plot was unearthed in 1936 in the railroad ROW by a crew excavating a city sewer line. The bones were left in place and were reburied.
47LC271/BLC-0089/Spence Park Cemetery	Cemetery/burial Trading/fur post	Historic Indian, Historic Euro-American	Cemetery area that may be associated with the cabin of Nathan Myrick 1841 trading post/store. Both Native American and Euro-American burials were reported to be located here. Two graves marked with wooden crosses as late as the 1920s.
47LC295/BLC-0112/Street Railway Cemetery	Cemetery/burial	Historic Indian	Site is reported as a cemetery discovered during construction of stable in 1879. Nicolet's map of La Crosse (1839) shows Ho-Chunk graves in the vicinity.
47LC395/Peavy	Campsite/village/HCM concentration	Unknown Prehistoric, Historic Euro-American	Thin lithic scatter and historic pike found eroding from bank at highest point of shoreline. In 2004 additional debitage and historic items observed eroding from sandy beach into the water.
47LC636/Honey Eye	Shipwreck	Historic Euro-American	Wooden hull sternwheel river ferryboat. On March 56, 1857, boat was crushed by ice and sank at the foot of State St in La Crosse. The site may now be under modern fill within Riverside Park. Condition has never been confirmed.
47LC754/Second Parking	HCM concentration	Historic Euro-American	Historic refuse pits found during construction of a parking garage.

The AHI database was also checked for historic properties near the project area. There are numerous properties on the AHI south of the project area in downtown La Crosse. There is one property adjacent to the project area that is evaluated as potentially eligible for the NRHP. The Standard Oil Co. building, or as it is known now, the Causeway Plaza North Building, is located on the east side of Copeland Avenue. The building was constructed in 1915 and is a Neoclassical brick structure. The building was surveyed in 1996 and again in 2016 and is considered to a fine example of Italian Renaissance style and remains substantially intact.

There have been two archaeological investigations within or adjacent to the project area. In 1978 the Center for Research Archaeology, now MVAC, conducted a survey for a bypass railroad track route that follows along a portion of the southern boundary of the current project area. The route was found to be either under water or disturbed and no further archaeological investigations were recommended. In 2000 Strata Morph monitored the removal of the Mobil Oil Dock and associated piling clusters on the Black River adjacent to the project area. The pilings and dock were determined to be in contact with the War Eagle. An underwater archaeologist completed a preliminary map of the wreck, photographed some artifacts, and supervised the removal of the Mobil Oil facilities.

There are no reported archaeological sites or historic properties located within the project area. There are a few located adjacent to the project area. Based on early maps and other historic accounts of the area around the project area, the location has always been low, wet, and marshy. It is unlikely that intact prehistoric archaeological remains would be present within the project area. There is a possibility that intact historic resources could be found within the project area. Based on the historic records this would be most likely along the riverfront which saw development in the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Based on the 2.0 overall masterplan (Figure 7) provided by SEH it appears that there could be potential conflicts with the location of the War Eagle wreck, 47LC63. Total avoidance of this area would be recommended, however as the site is now mapped it is likely larger than the actual wreckage and a more detailed mapping of the wreck itself could help to reduce the site footprint. Please let me know if you have any questions or need clarification on this report.

Sincerely,

Wendy K. Holtz-Leith

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References Cited

Evening Democrat

1870 Destructive Fire in La Crosse, Steamer War Eagle Burned. Several Lives Lost! *Evening Democrat*, May 16, 1870. (Article about the fire and sinking of War Eagle in La Crosse, Wisconsin.)

Whitson, A.R., W.J. Geib, T.J. Dunnewald, and C. Lounsbury

1914 *Soil Survey of La Crosse County*. State of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

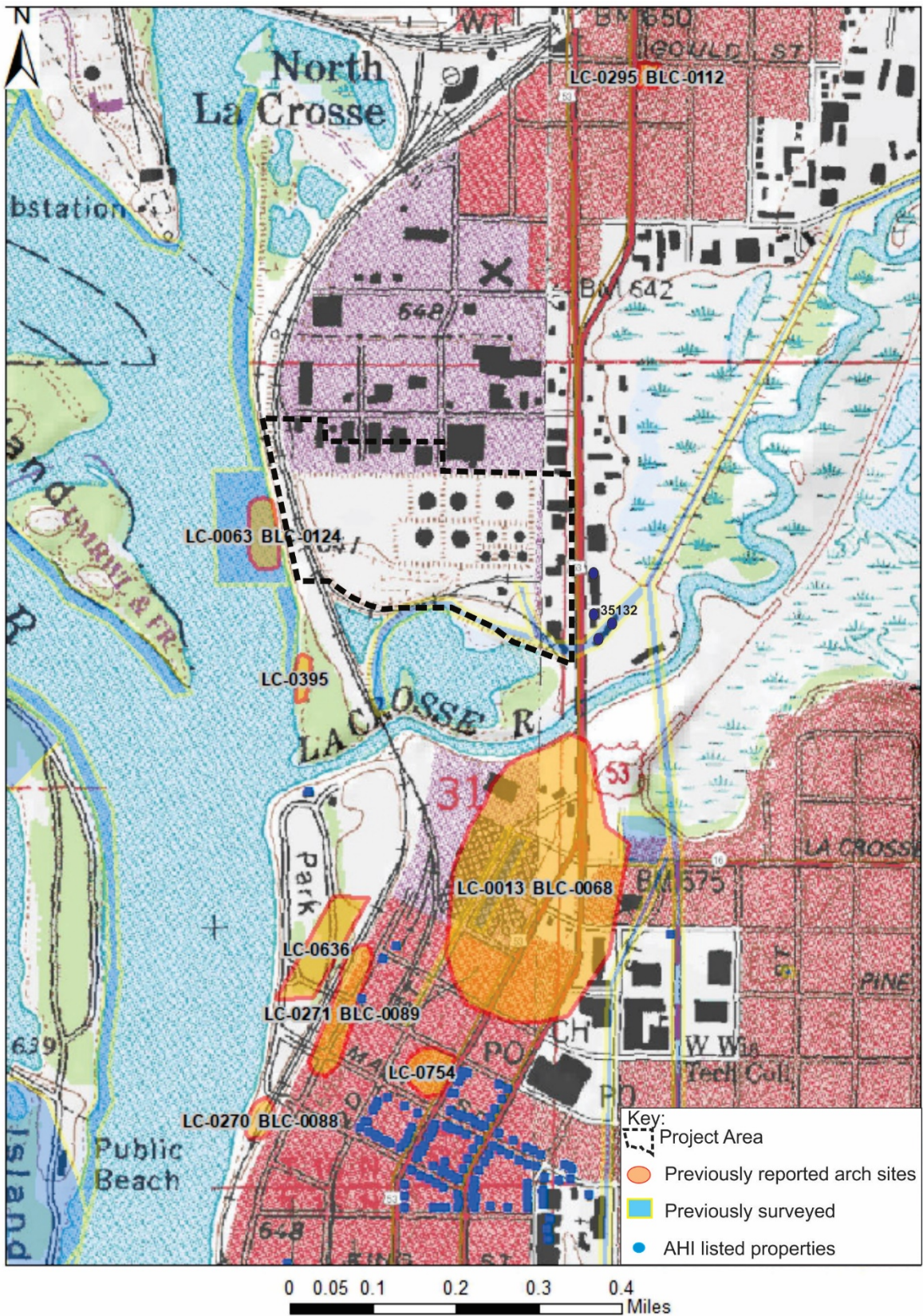


Figure 1: Topographic map showing location of Riverside North Development and previously reported archaeological sites, archaeological investigations, and AHI properties as of May 2019.



Figure 2: Aerial map showing location of Riverside North Development and previously reported archaeological sites, archaeological investigations, and AHI properties as of May 2019.

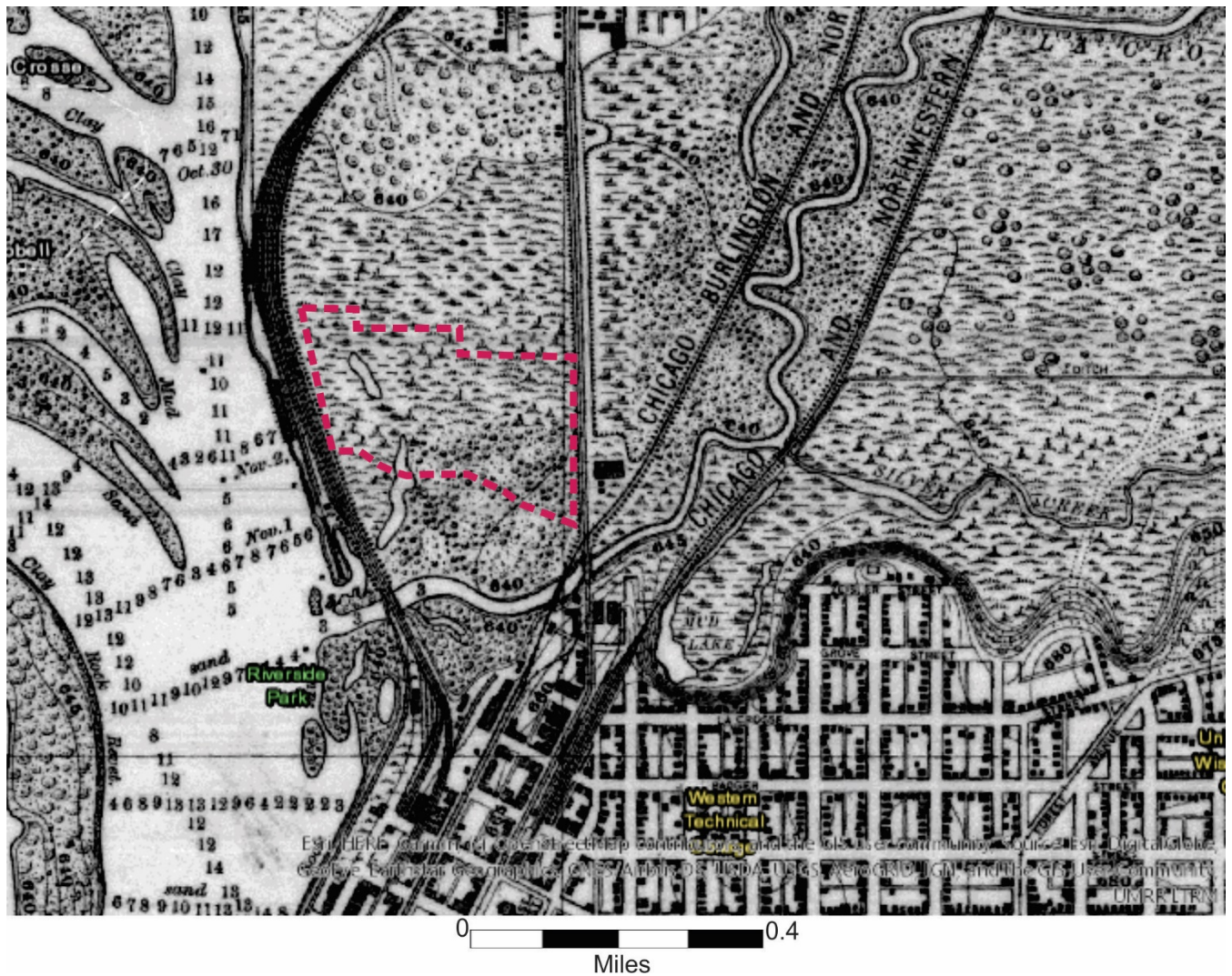


Figure 3: 1890 Mississippi River Commission survey map showing the project area prior to the lock and dam installation in the 1930s (https://www.umesc.usgs.gov/management/dss/historic_map_viewer.html), with project area superimposed.

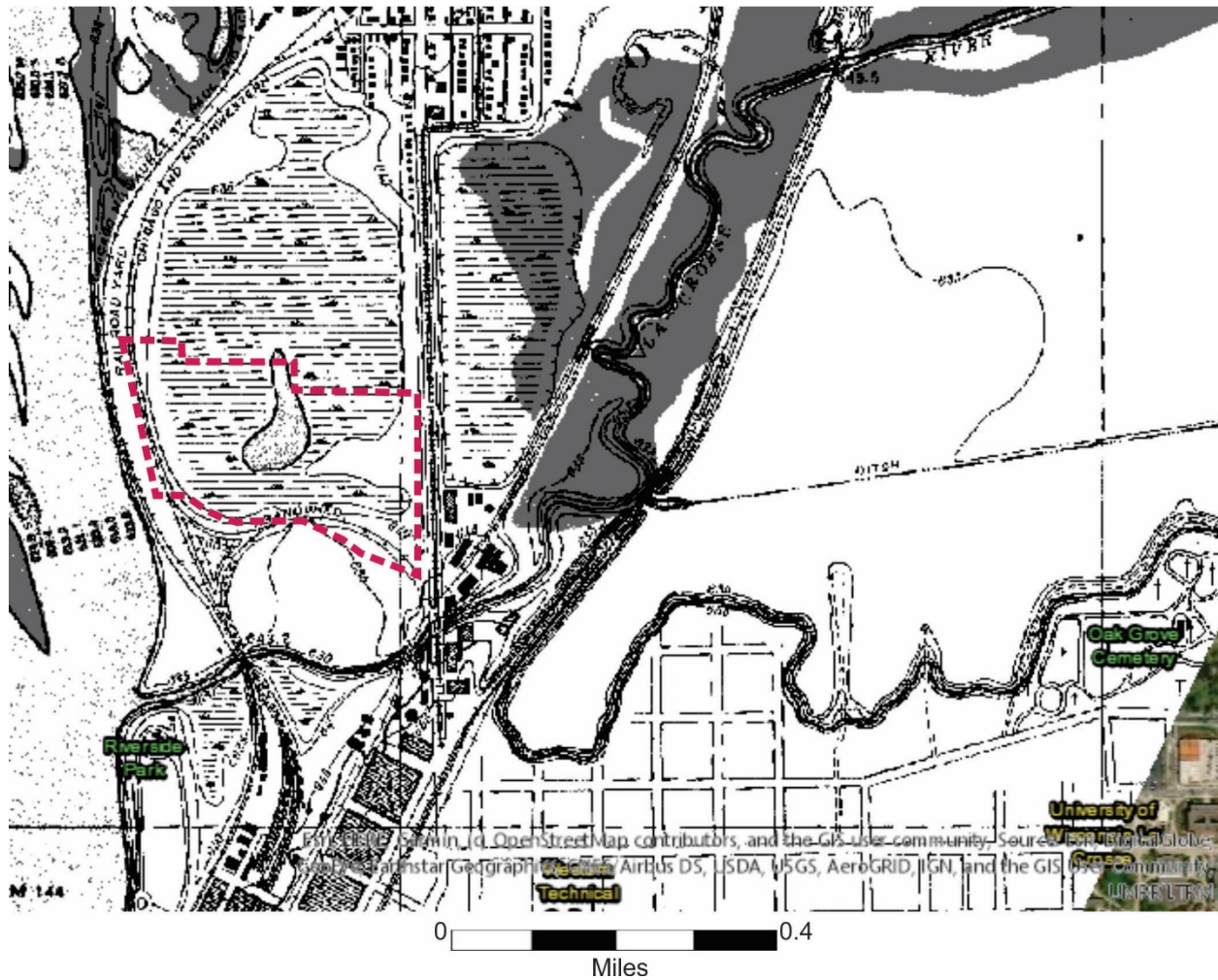


Figure 4: U.S. Army's Engineers Office survey of the Upper Mississippi River, data collected between 1929 and 1930 (https://www.umesc.usgs.gov/management/dss/historic_map_viewer.html), with project area superimposed.

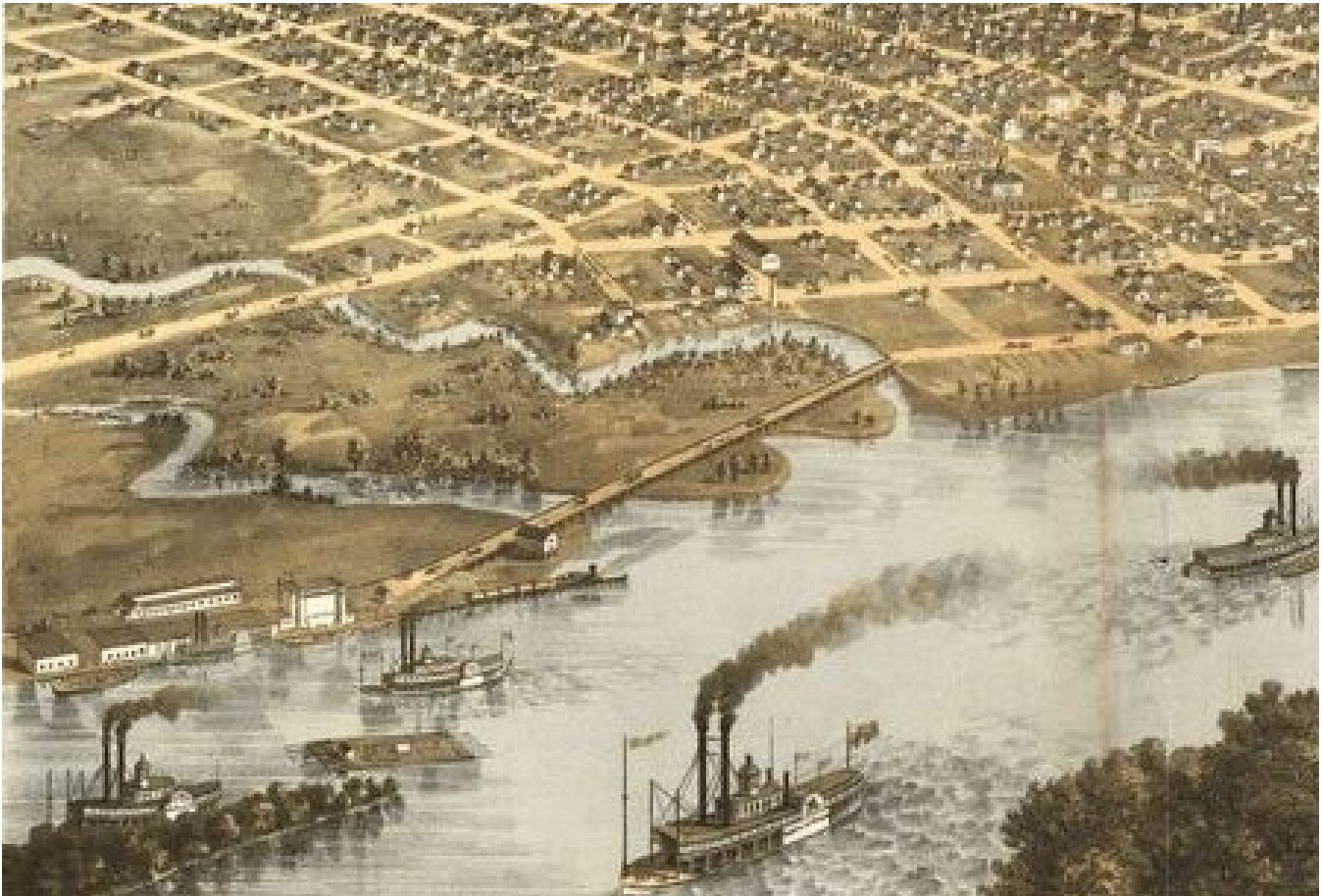


Figure 5: 1867 Bird's Eye view of the city of La Crosse (<https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=la+crosse&new=true&st=>). The project area is likely located in the bottom left hand side of the figure, where the warehouses and docks are located.

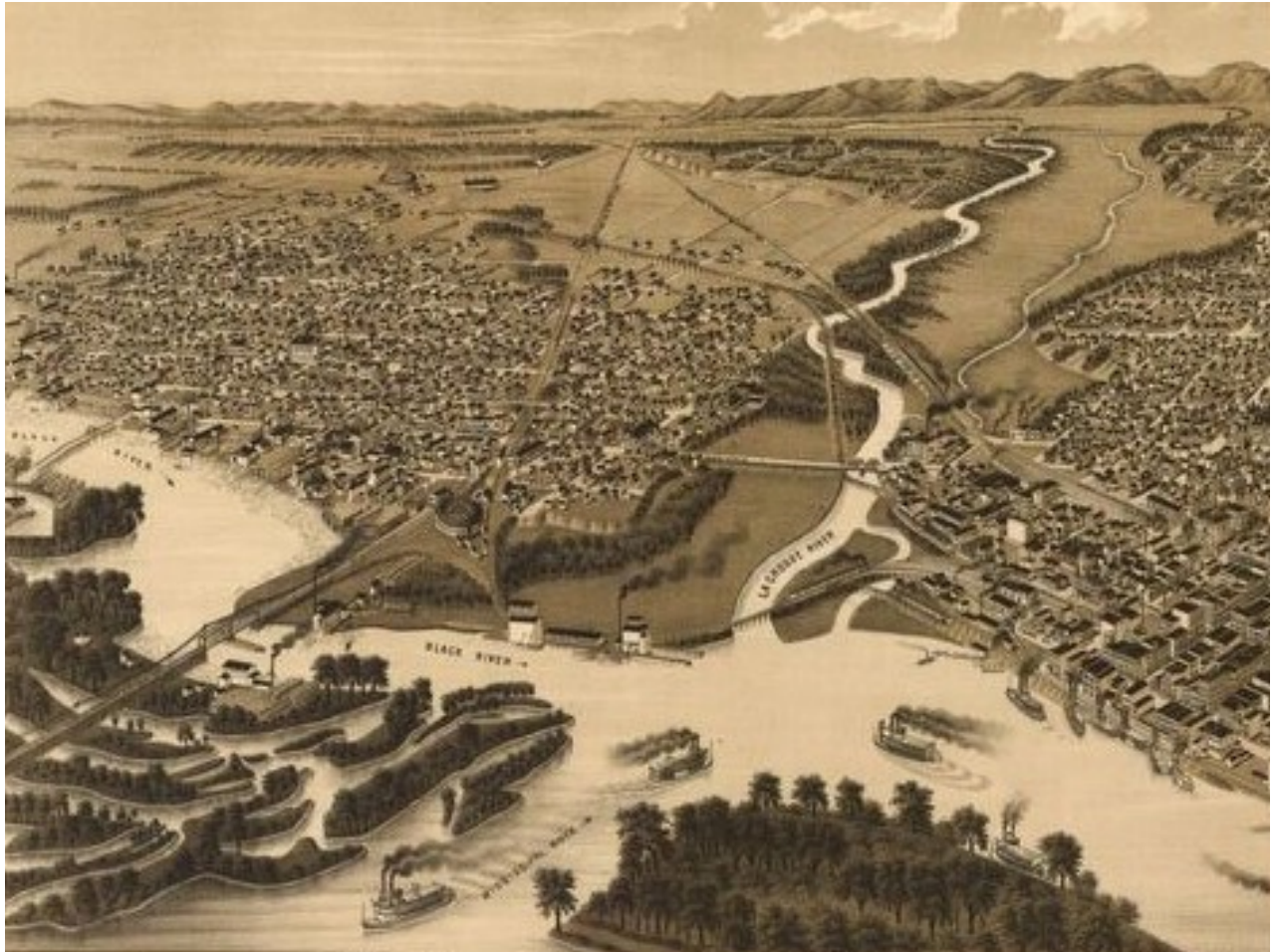


Figure 5: 1887 Bird's Eye view of the City of La Crosse (<https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=la+crosse&new=true&st=>). The project area is located to the left of where the La Crosse River is labeled, between the river and the base of the terrace.

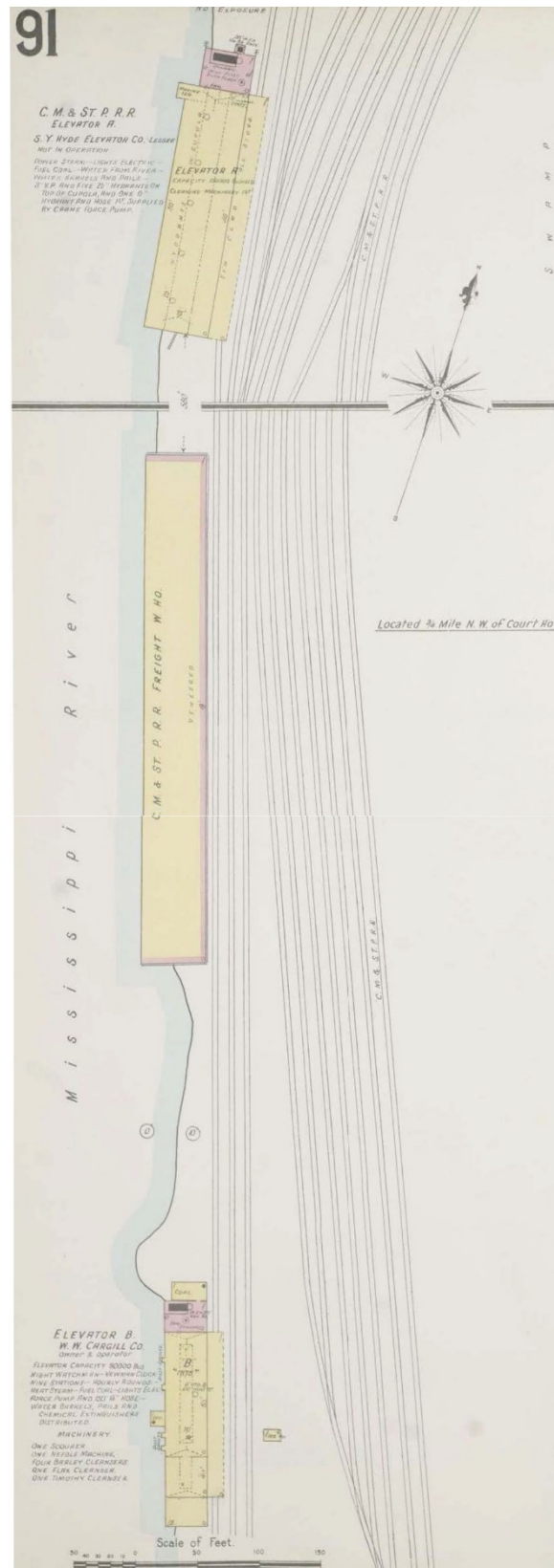


Figure 6: 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance map showing the western edge of the project area where warehouse and elevators associated with the railroad were located (see Figure 5 for general location).

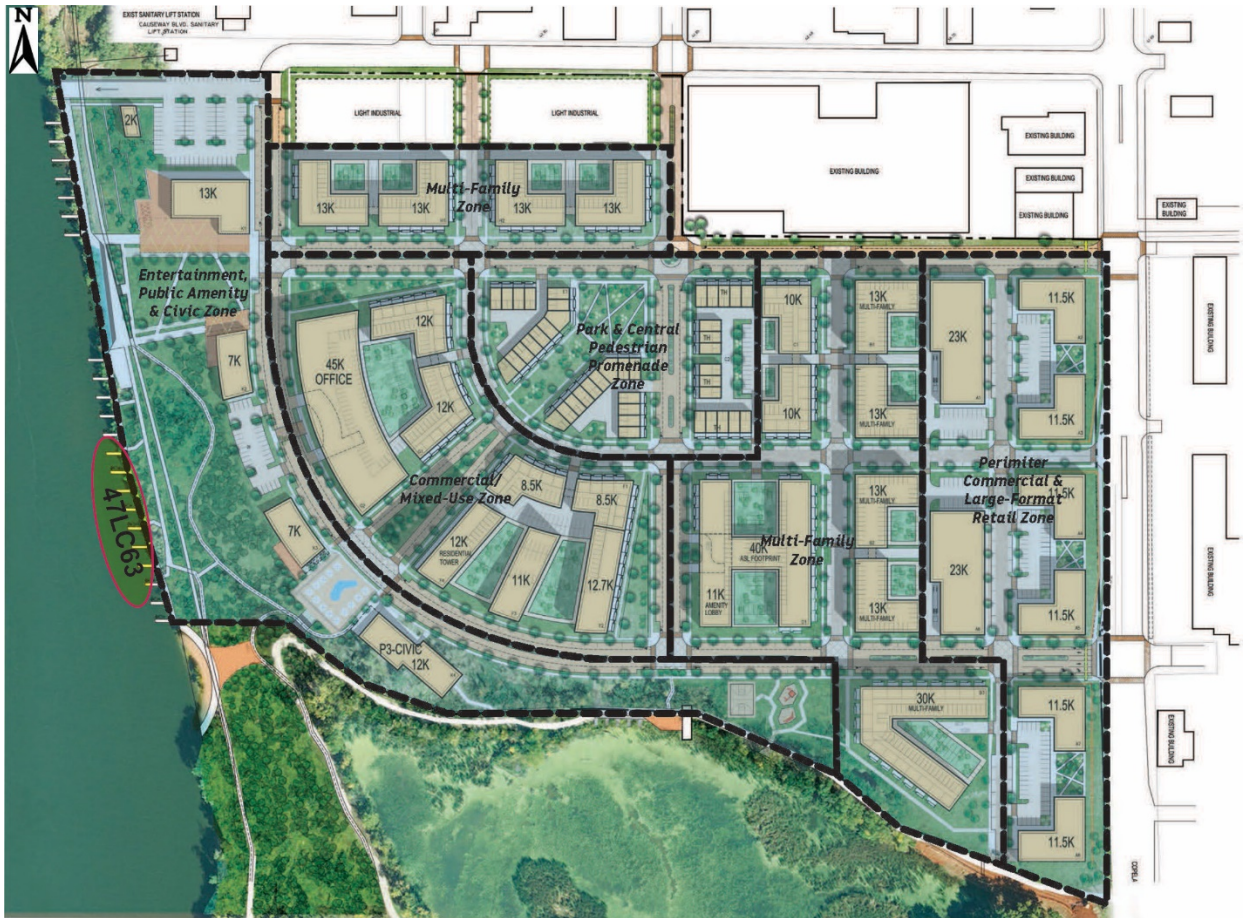


Figure 7: 2.0 Overall masterplan for the Riverside North development with approximate location of 47LC63, the War Eagle wreck.