

**SECTION II**  
**INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

**A. REGIONAL SETTING AND COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS**

The City of Amsterdam is located along the Mohawk River within eastern Montgomery County, and is approximately 30 miles northwest of Albany and 60 miles east of Utica. It is the largest city within the mid-Mohawk Valley, and the River is a dominant local feature. See Map 2 which displays Amsterdam's regional setting.

The beginnings of Amsterdam date back to the Revolutionary War era when settlers began to locate along the Mohawk River at the mouth of the North Chuctanunda Creek in 1783. Originally known as Veddersburg, this hamlet was re-named Amsterdam in 1804 in recognition of its many Dutch settlers. The Port Jackson neighborhood, within the City's South Side, was originally developed during the 1820's upon completion of the Erie Canal. It was later incorporated as a village and eventually annexed to the City of Amsterdam in 1888.

Besides its role as a commercial center closely tied to the Erie Canal, Amsterdam soon developed as a major manufacturing center, known especially for its extensive carpet production industry. In 1840 William K. Greene established a small carpet mill in nearby Hagaman and a few years later began expanding his business in Amsterdam. Throughout the rest of the 19th century and the early 20th century the carpet industry grew dramatically and the City became known as the "Carpet Capital of the World". The period from 1850 to 1920 was also one of industrial diversification, with knitting and other textile products being manufactured, as well as brooms, linseed oil, and paper products.

As was the case throughout much of the Northeast, however, Amsterdam's manufacturing economy began a steady decline from 1940. The aging production facilities and frequent labor unrest contributed to the exodus of textile and other industries to the South and foreign locations. As industrial employment declined, so did the City's population. From a peak population of 34,817 in 1930, the City population has declined steadily to a 1990 level of 20,714. Although the manufacturing sector is still an important employer, a relatively large number of residents commute to Albany for work.

In addition to having its past closely associated with the Mohawk River and Erie Canal, the future revitalization of the City is also linked in large part to the Canal, as a recreational and tourism resource.

**B. MOHAWK RIVER/ERIE CANAL**

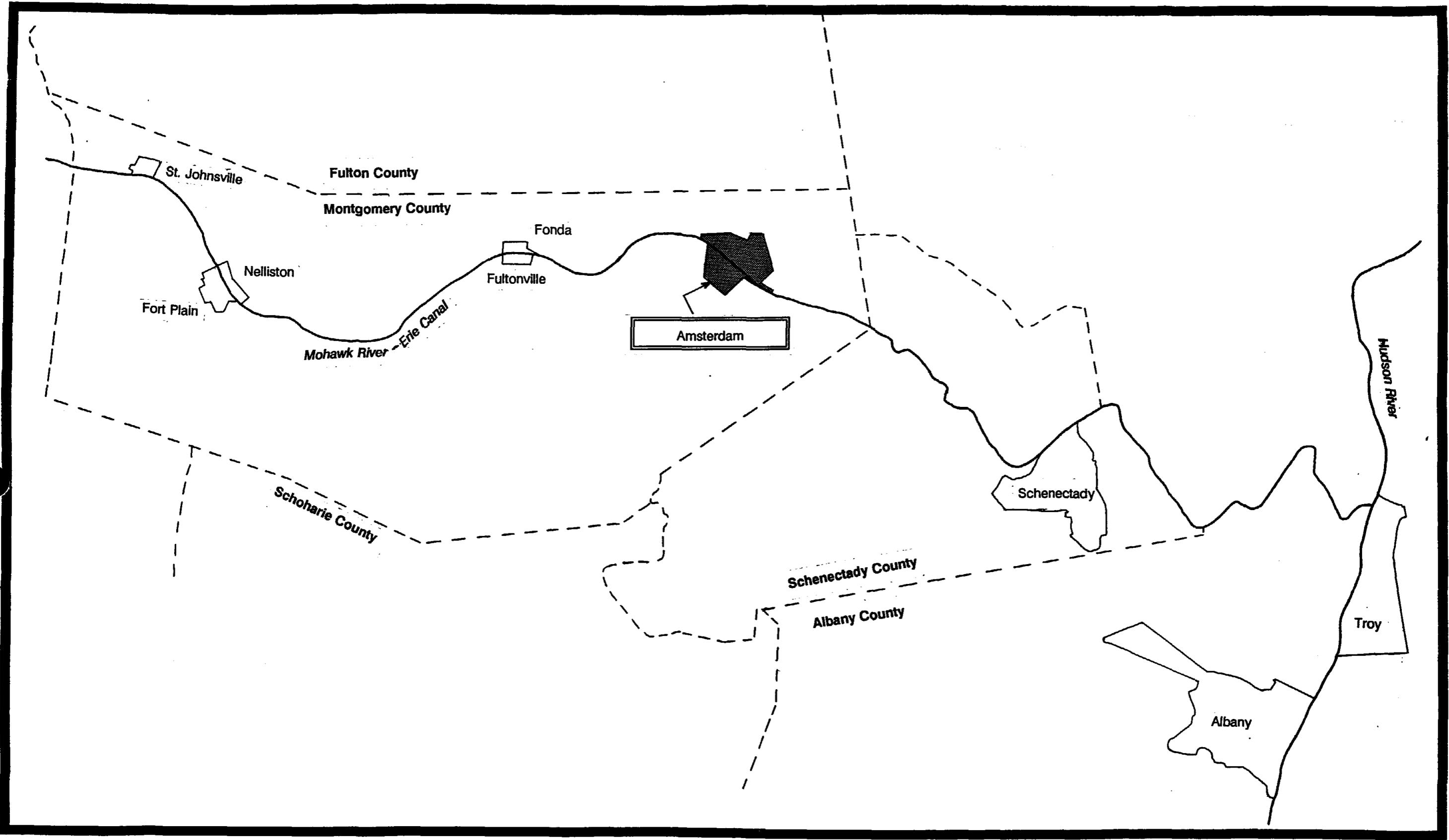
The Mohawk River, coterminous with the Erie Canal within this region of the State, flows in an easterly direction through the City. The Mohawk is the largest tributary of the Hudson River and drains an area of 3,400 square miles. With its headwaters near Delta Reservoir in northern Oneida County, the Mohawk flows 148 miles to its

confluence with the Hudson at Cohoes. Due to the presence of numerous rapids and other features, the Mohawk was not navigable in certain stretches for boat traffic. It was not until construction of the Erie Canal during the early 19th century that the Mohawk Valley's importance as a major transportation artery was fully realized. The Erie Canal was originally completed in 1825 and spanned the State from Cohoes to the Niagara River. Initially, the entire Canal was land-cut and was four feet deep, 40 feet wide, and capable of accommodating boats carrying 30 tons of freight. Completion of the Canal represented one of the greatest engineering achievements of the time and subsequently resulted in a veritable frenzy of canal-building throughout the country. The dominant role which the Canal played in the settlement and growth of the State and the country is well documented in countless history books.

From 1834 to 1862 the Erie Canal underwent an enlargement, whereby its depth was increased to seven feet, allowing it to handle boats carrying 240 tons of cargo. It was the major reconstruction of 1903-1918, however, which created the New York State Barge Canal System as it largely exists today. During that period, the Canal was dramatically expanded by abandoning numerous land-cut sections in favor of canalized natural waterways, such as the Mohawk River, Oneida Lake, Oneida River, and Tonawanda Creek. In addition, this expansion saw the reconstruction of 57 electrically - operated locks and the construction of approximately 2,000 support structures, including lift bridges, movable dams, high dams, and guard gates (emergency dams). During the 1920's the expansion of the Barge Canal System continued with the construction of numerous terminal facilities for commercial freight.

The Barge Canal System, which is now maintained and operated by the NYS Thruway Authority, includes not only the Erie Canal, but numerous branch canals, including the Champlain Canal, Oswego Canal, and Cayuga-Seneca Canal. The total length of the system is 524 miles, with the Erie Canal being 340 miles in length. From its tide-water level at Troy, the Erie Canal rises through a series of locks to an elevation of 565 feet above sea level at the Niagara River.

Although the Barge Canal System was constructed largely for commercial boating, primarily cargo barges, recreational boaters are now by far the dominant users. Since the middle of this century, commercial tonnage has declined substantially. Within the Erie Canal, commercial traffic accounted for only 72,282 tons in 1988 and 5,000 tons in 1990. Commercial traffic passing through the Mohawk Valley consists, for the most part, of machinery and miscellaneous cargo. Conversely, as commercial traffic has decreased to minimal levels, recreational boat traffic has increased dramatically. Although accurate data on the number of pleasure boats using the Canal System has been somewhat lacking, the New York State Department of Transportation estimated that from 1980 to 1990, the number of pleasure boats using the system has doubled. Within Amsterdam, the Department of Transportation estimated that 2,500 pleasure boats passed through Lock No. 11 during 1990.



**CITY OF AMSTERDAM**

**Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**

**MAP 2 - Regional Setting**

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization

August 1991



Scale: 1" = 4 Miles

Within Amsterdam, the most notable canal feature is Lock No. 11, located adjacent to the Guy Park State Historic Site in the western portion of the City. Lock No. 11 is a 12 foot lift lock with a movable dam, typical of locks within the Mohawk Valley. The movable dam, which spans the Mohawk, is used to maintain a navigation pool of upstream water. Its gates can be closed to increase the upstream pool during low-water periods, or opened to regulate water levels during the winter season or during periods of flooding. Although operating dates vary slightly, the Canal is usually opened around May 1 and closed around December 1 for the winter months.

In recognition of the Canal System as an underutilized resource that holds considerable potential for increased tourism and recreational opportunities, the State Legislature established the Barge Canal Planning and Development Board during 1986. The Board acted as a focal point for the coordinated promotion, planning and development of the State Canal System for tourism purposes. The initial findings of the Canal Board were documented in their 1989 report, entitled "Development of Tourism and Economic Potential on New York's Canals". Among the specific findings made by the Canal Board were that the pleasure boating industry is the key to the future of the Canal System and that promotion of tourism for the System can be greatly improved.

A key milestone for the Canal System occurred during 1991, when voters approved an amendment to the State Constitution which repealed the ban on tolls for canal users. It is anticipated that the user tolls will finance capital improvements for the system's aging infrastructure. The Constitutional amendment also now allows the State to lease surplus canal right-of-way lands, which should stimulate the provision of private-sector services for boaters.

The amendment was followed in July 1992 by legislation which transferred jurisdiction of the Canal System from the Department of Transportation to the Thruway Authority, which can issue bonds to finance improvements and stimulate economic development activities. In addition, the Barge Canal Planning and Development Board was replaced by an expanded Canal Recreationway Commission, which is charged with overseeing completion of a master plan for the Canal corridor.

It is thus clear that the use and enhancement of the Barge Canal as a recreational facility is key to its future viability. It is likewise clear that the revitalization of Amsterdam's waterfront, and indeed the entire City, revolves around its ability to capitalize on the recreational boating and tourism opportunities offered by the Canal. Amsterdam has several assets which, fortunately, can enhance the development of water-related recreational facilities. The undeveloped and essentially open space character of lands adjacent to the Canal could easily accommodate marina, docking, and related support activities, such as boat repair, fuel, general supplies, and perhaps lodging. Also, in conjunction with the selected renovation of historically significant waterfront industrial structures and existing historic resources, such as the Guy Park State Historic Site, the City's attraction to boaters as a tourism center would be enhanced.

## **C. EXISTING LAND USE**

The existing land use of the waterfront area is presented for four (4) distinct sub-areas, including the West End, Downtown, East End, and South Side. Each of these sub-areas exhibit unique land use patterns. Reference should be made to Map 3 for a graphic display of land use.

### **1. West End**

The West End sub-area includes that portion of the waterfront area extending along Guy Park Avenue from the City's western boundary to Clinton Street, and south to the Mohawk River shoreline.

Although residential development predominates, other uses are located within this sub-area. Single and two-family wood frame homes characterize much of Guy Park Avenue, Division Street, and the numerous cross-streets, with some retail commercial and office uses also present. West Main Street is occupied by commercial and industrial uses, for the most part, although some residential uses are also present.

With respect to building conditions, although some structures exhibit signs of deterioration in the eastern portion of the sub-area, residential conditions are generally good. In addition, some older industrial structures along West Main Street, some of which are only partially occupied by commercial uses, likewise exhibit signs of deterioration.

The area between West Main Street and the Mohawk River shoreline is occupied by the Conrail railroad line and open space canal right-of-way lands. These uses extend throughout the northern shoreline area of the City, as well as much of the Mohawk Valley. Also located within this portion of the sub-area are two key waterfront features: the Guy Park State Historic Site; and Lock #11 of the Erie Canal. Guy Park is a historic structure constructed in the late 18th century and is surrounded by landscaped grounds. Lock #11, the scenic grounds of the Manor, and the well kept maintenance and engineering buildings associated with the lock all act to attract considerable public use during the summer.

### **2. Downtown**

The Downtown sub-area includes the City's central business district and surrounding blocks, and extends from Clinton Street in the west to Schuyler Street in the east, and Guy Park Avenue and the East-West Arterial in the north to the Mohawk River shoreline in the south. The central business district is

generally bounded by Washington and Liberty Streets on the east and Mohawk Place and Wall Street to the west. Land uses are typical of a business district, with retail commercial, professional offices, and public buildings predominating. To the west of Church Street is the older portion of the business district, with buildings generally in good condition and little, if any, deterioration evident. Due in large part to a facade restoration and public improvements program undertaken during the late 1970's, the appearance of this portion of the business district is quite appealing and represents a positive asset. In contrast to this older portion of the business district is Amsterdam Mall, located to the immediate east of Church Street. Constructed during the early 1970's, Amsterdam Mall contains approximately 275,000 sq. ft. of floor space accommodating both retail and office uses, as well as an attached parking garage. To the east and west of the central business district is a zone of transition characterized by a variety of uses, including commercial, residential, and industrial activities.

### **3. East End**

The East End sub-area extends to the east of Schuyler Street, from Main Street to the Mohawk River.

The neighborhood is characterized by strip commercial development along Main Street (NY Route 5), and a mix of blue-collar single and two-family homes, as well as industrial structures on the numerous side streets between Main Street and the railroad lines. The East End is one of the older sections of the City, with low and moderate income households predominating. In addition, the housing stock exhibits varying degrees of structural deterioration. It should be noted, however, that a number of publicly-assisted housing units were recently constructed on vacant lots within this area, and targeted to lower income households.

The East End is also characterized by a concentration of older industrial buildings in close proximity to residential uses. The industrial buildings are located, for the most part, immediately north of the Conrail railroad line. Most of these structures were utilized for carpet production in the past and some have been converted to other industrial uses. The bulk of these structures are only partially occupied and exhibit structural deterioration, with some being totally vacant. The re-use, renovation, and selected demolition of these structures is a central issue to confront in this sub-area.

In addition, the City recently annexed a finger-like extension to the east along the waterfront. Uses occupying the land include the City's sewage treatment plant and a small boat launch ramp operated by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

#### **4. South Side**

The South Side sub-area includes that portion of the City to the south of the Mohawk River bounded by Cleveland Avenue, NY Route 30, and NY Route 5S. It comprises the historic Port Jackson neighborhood, the adjacent floodplain to the east and west, as well as the nearby upland area.

The Port Jackson neighborhood comprises the core of the South Side and represents an area of considerable local historic significance. Originally a separate village, Port Jackson is a compact neighborhood comprised, for the most part, of single and two-family homes, as well as commercial and industrial uses. Residential uses are generally wood-frame, detached structures on small lots. Overall housing conditions are good, with no significant levels of structural deterioration present. Neighborhood-level commercial uses are found throughout the area, especially along Bridge Street. Industrial uses occupy much of the neighborhood along the Mohawk River, consisting largely of warehouse and outdoor storage activities. Of particular note is the Chalmers Mill, a vacant former knitting facility, comprised of four separate structures totalling 260,000 sq. ft. of floor area located at Bridge Street and Gilliland Avenue and having direct frontage on the Mohawk. Its renovation and re-use represent a key component in the revitalization of the City's waterfront.

To the east and west of Port Jackson are low-lying lands adjacent to the Mohawk River. Although a small number of structures are located within this area, the bulk of the land is open space. Of particular note are two junk yards located east of Port Jackson and north of Cleveland Avenue with direct frontage on the Mohawk. Perhaps the most noteworthy use in the area, however, is the Mohawk Trailway, which extends in an east-west direction just inland of the shoreline along the abandoned Conrail railroad bed. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is presently converting this, and other public rights-of-way which parallel the Erie Canal, into a bicycle and hiking trail which will extend throughout the Mohawk Valley and eventually form a canal trail spanning the entire length of the State. The Schenectady to Fort Hunter segment was completed in 1992 and that portion of the trail within Montgomery County will be maintained by the County. The upland portion of the South Side overlooks the Mohawk Valley and is characterized by low density development. Single-family residences predominate in this area and contrast with the older historic character of Port Jackson. Other land uses of note within the upland area are the Montgomery County Infirmary, located off of Broadway and Queen Anne Street; the Barkley Elementary School off of Destefano Avenue; and the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation operational facility located off Route 5S.



**D. LAND OWNERSHIP**

A large amount of the City's waterfront area is publicly-owned, including virtually all of the immediate shoreline. (See Map 4 which displays the ownership patterns of waterfront lands.) New York State owns over 300 acres, or 28.5% of the waterfront, comprised of right-of-way lands adjacent to the Erie Canal, as well as the Canal itself. With the exception of the Lock No. 11 facility, the right-of-way lands along the northern shoreline are largely unimproved. The State-owned lands along the southern shoreline area are utilized, for the most part, for the Mohawk Trailway, which is further described in the Public Access and Recreation chapter.

Montgomery County and the City of Amsterdam also own land within the waterfront area. The County owns approximately 43 acres, comprised entirely of the Montgomery County Infirmary, located within the South Side and inland of the shoreline. The City also owns about 43 acres, consisting of parcels scattered throughout the waterfront area. The majority of these lands are vacant parcels owned by the City's Industrial Development Agency and Urban Renewal Agency, and located inland within the Downtown and East End neighborhood.

Conrail is also a major land owner within the waterfront area, with holdings of approximately 68 acres. Conrail lands are comprised of a continuous tract along the northern shoreline area and actively used as a railway. Excluding Conrail, privately-owned land comprises nearly 58% of the waterfront area. As shown on Map 4, however, only a small portion of the actual shoreline area is in private ownership.

The presence of extensive, largely open space publicly-owned lands represents a considerable asset and opportunity to the City in accommodating future water-related development. The use of of the State-owned Canal right-of-way lands through long-term lease arrangements with the City or the private sector is a key element in facilitating the revitalization of the waterfront. The Conrail lands, however, represent a possible constraint to future development along the northern shoreline. As previously discussed in this section, the railroad represents a barrier to shoreline access which must be overcome.

The following table summarizes the approximate acreage of public and private land ownership within the City's waterfront area.

**Table 1**

<b>WATERFRONT LAND OWNERSHIP</b>		
<b>Type of Ownership</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total Area</b>
Montgomery County	43	3.9
City	43	3.9
New York State	314	28.5
--Land	(144)	(13.1)
--Erie Canal	(170)	(15.4)
<b>Subtotal - Publicly Owned *</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>36.3</b>
Conrail	68	6.2
<b>Other Privately Owned</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>57.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,102</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* This figure does not include local highway and street right-of-ways.

**E. PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION**

Although virtually all of the City's immediate shoreline lands are in public ownership, waterfront access and recreational opportunities are somewhat limited. As previously mentioned, both the East-West Arterial and the Conrail railroad lines represent significant barriers to shoreline access. Overcoming these obstacles is key for any effort aimed at increasing waterfront access along the City's northern Mohawk River shoreline.

Presently, public access is concentrated at three locations: the State-owned boat launch ramp, located adjacent to the City's sewage treatment plant in the East End; the open space waterfront land below the Route 30 bridge in the Downtown; and the Barge Canal Lock No. 11/Guy Park area. The State boat launch is utilized by small boats trailored by car, primarily for pleasure boating and recreational fishing. The facility does exhibit some deterioration and is not heavily used. The open space waterfront area below Route 30 in the Downtown is unimproved, but widely used for recreational fishing. Due to the

width of this shoreline tract and its central location, its future development as a waterfront park will be pursued. A significant barrier to developing this area, however, is poor roadway access to it, as well as the presence of the Conrail rail lines. Access is gained to it by a circuitous road with an uncontrolled crossing over the Conrail lines. The Lock 11/Guy Park area, located in the West End, is heavily used for both recreational fishing and other passive uses. The well maintained grounds of these facilities represent a significant recreational asset to the City. The development of a public boat launch at this location is being actively pursued by the City.

Within the Port Jackson neighborhood, public access is somewhat limited by development which abuts the shoreline, such as the Chalmers Mill and other industrial uses. Opportunities nonetheless exist for the siting of water-dependent recreational facilities, especially a marina, within the South Side to the east or west of Port Jackson. As previously discussed in the "Mohawk River/Barge Canal" chapter, a key aspect in the revitalization of the City will be capitalizing on the recreational boating opportunities offered by the Canal. The development of docks, marinas, and associated services such as boat repair and supply businesses are important components in this regard.

Also of great importance as a recreational resource is the Mohawk Trailway, presently (1992) completed from Schenectady to Fort Hunter and located along the abandoned Conrail railroad bed just inland from the City's south shoreline. When completed, this hiking and bicycle trail will extend throughout the Mohawk Valley and eventually span the entire State.

See Map 5 which displays the location of these public access sites.

## **F. INFRASTRUCTURE**

The City of Amsterdam is serviced by a full range of utilities and support systems typical of an urbanized area. The following describes various key components, including the water supply, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal, and transportation systems.

### **1. Water Supply**

The City is serviced by a public water supply system. The raw water sources are the Ireland Vly and Steele Reservoir, surface reservoirs located north of the City and east of the Great Sacandaga Lake in the Town of Providence, Saratoga County. From these reservoirs, raw water is transmitted to the City's filtration plant, located in the northern portion of the City off Brookside Avenue. Treated water is then transmitted to the adjacent Brookside Reservoir and subsequently distributed throughout the City.

The overall system is in good condition and should be able to accommodate the proposed uses and level of waterfront development discussed in Section IV. The filtration plant, for example, has a design capacity of 10 million gallons per day (MGD) and is currently operating at an average flow of 4.5 MGD.

2. **Sewage Disposal System**

The City is serviced by a public sewage disposal system. The system is separated into sanitary and storm-water collection components, for the most part, although a small section of the City is still served by combined sewers. Sewage is collected and pumped to the treatment plant, located along the northern shoreline of the Mohawk in the extreme eastern portion of the City along a narrow strip of waterfront land recently annexed by the City.

Overall, the system is in good condition and should be able to adequately accommodate the proposed waterfront development described in Section IV. The treatment plant, for example, has a design capacity of 10 MGD and is currently operating at an average flow of 5 MGD. Also, an evaluation conducted in the early 1980's found that combined sewer overflows had minimal impacts on Mohawk River water quality. Problems have occurred, however, at the treatment plant where sludge has been discharged into the Mohawk River. The City is addressing this problem through various improvements to the plant and is considering sludge composting as a possible long term solution.

3. **Solid Waste Disposal**

Solid waste is collected by the City and disposed of by the Montgomery-Otsego-Schoharie Authority (MOSA). Waste is transported from the City to the MOSA landfill, located to the west of the City near the Montgomery County hamlet of Randall. Currently, adequate capacity exists to accommodate the proposed level of development discussed in Section IV of this document.








Additionally, MOSA has constructed a solid waste transfer station off of Route 5S in the southern upland portion of the City. The facility serves as a central location to transport waste collected by the City and adjacent municipalities to the MOSA landfill.

4. **Transportation Systems**

An extremely diverse transportation network characterizes Amsterdam, especially the waterfront area. The Erie Canal, coterminous with the Mohawk River, dominates the waterfront. As described in more detail in a previous chapter, the




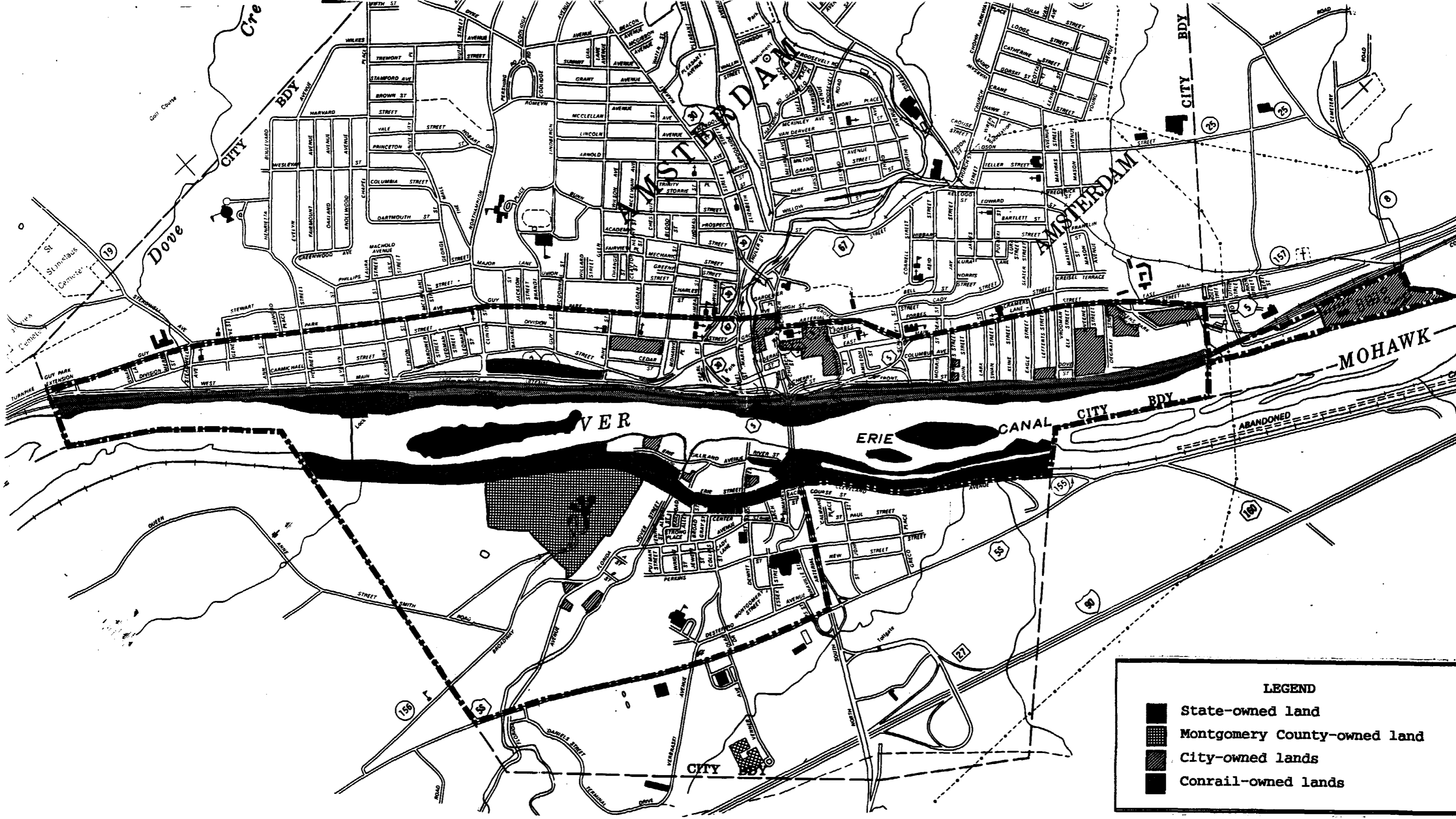
**LEGEND**

 Open Space	 Commercial/Office
 Recreational	 Industrial
 Residential	 Utilities
 Institutional	

**CITY OF AMSTERDAM**  
**Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**  
**MAP 3 - Existing Land Use**

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization

N  
  
 May 1991 Scale: 1" = 1200'



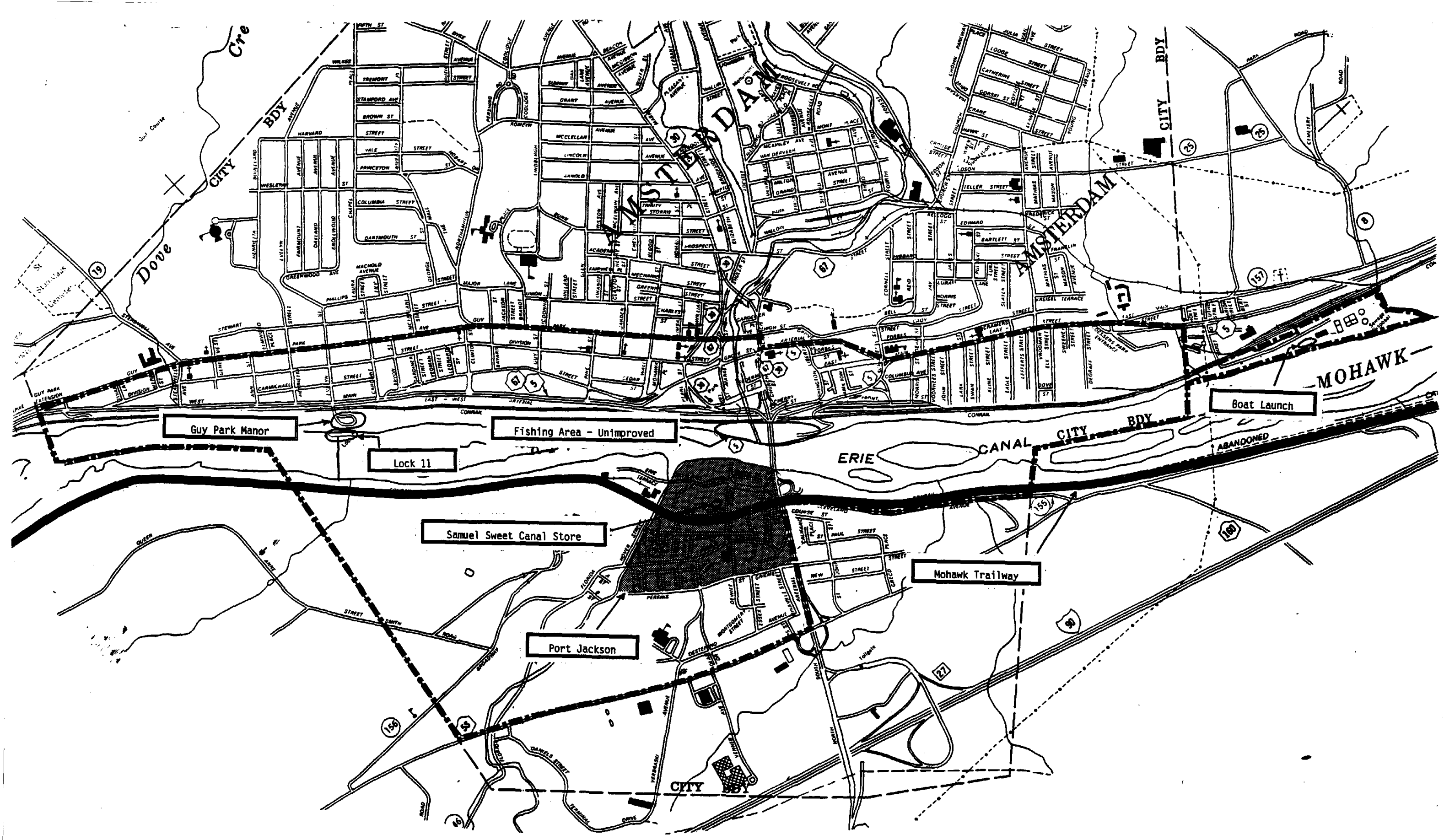
**LEGEND**

- State-owned land
- Montgomery County-owned land
- City-owned lands
- Conrail-owned lands

**CITY OF AMSTERDAM**  
 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program  
**MAP 4 - Ownership of Waterfront Lands**

N

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization August 1991 Scale: 1" = 1200'



**CITY OF AMSTERDAM**  
**Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**  
**MAP 5 - Historic Resources and Public Access Sites**

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization

August 1991

Scale: 1" = 1200'



Erie Canal is a major component of the New York State Barge Canal System, which totals 524 miles of waterways, comprised of artificial, land-cut sections and canalized rivers and lakes. The Canal System provides boat access to the Atlantic Ocean, the Great Lakes, and the St. Lawrence Seaway. It represents a substantial asset to the City for future recreational opportunities.

With respect to roadways, the New York State Thruway (Interstate 90) passes through the southern portion of the City, with Interchange #27 located immediately south of NYS Route 5S. The Thruway provides the City with rapid vehicular access to Albany, Utica and points east and west.

Local roadways are also a dominant feature of the waterfront area, providing both opportunities and constraints to future waterfront development. NYS Route 30 is the primary north-south roadway and spans the Mohawk River between the South Side and Downtown. NYS Routes 5 and 67 are the primary east-west roadways within the City. Route 5 is located immediately to the north of the Conrail railroad line in the West End, Downtown, and East End sections of the City and follows Main Street, for the most part. Within the Downtown, a section of Route 5 comprises the East-West Arterial, an elevated limited-access highway which serves to bypass portions of Downtown, as well as providing direct access to Route 30 and subsequently to the Thruway. Although the East-West Arterial and the connecting ramps to the Route 30 bridge are important local roadways, their elevated configuration acts as a barrier to waterfront access within the Downtown. Overcoming these barriers is key to virtually any future waterfront development along the northern shoreline within the City.

Public mass transit is provided to local residents by the City of Amsterdam Bus Transportation Department. Bus service is provided on a regular basis throughout the waterfront area.

Another key feature of the waterfront is the rail line located just inland along the City's northern Mohawk shoreline. Owned by Conrail and utilized by both Conrail and Amtrak, this railroad line hugs the river throughout the Mohawk Valley. Although it serves as an important artery for the transportation of freight and passengers, like the highway system, it also represents a significant barrier to public access to the City's waterfront.

## **G. HISTORIC RESOURCES**

The City of Amsterdam, particularly its waterfront area, is rich in historic significance dating back to the Revolutionary War era. Located within the waterfront area are historic structures of national and local significance, as well as archaeological resources.



The Guy Park State Historic Site and the Samuel Sweet Canal Store are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Guy Park is a State-owned historic site located adjacent to Erie Canal Lock No. 11 in the western portion of the City, which is operated by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. This late Georgian stone house was constructed by Guy Johnson in 1773 and its history is reflective of several important issues within the Mohawk Valley, including Indian affairs and the construction of the railroad and Erie Canal. As Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the northern colonies of British America, for example, Johnson conducted numerous Indian meetings at Guy Park. Together with Lock No. 11, Guy Park serves as a major public access and waterfront resource for the City.

The Samuel Sweet Canal Store, constructed in 1847 as a storage facility for goods transported along the Erie Canal, is located near the intersection of Bridge and Erie Streets within the Port Jackson neighborhood. The old land-cut Erie Canal, abandoned in favor of the canalized Mohawk River, previously existed to the immediate north of this structure. The store is constructed of rough-cut limestone and reflects a simple utilitarian appearance. It is architecturally significant as an example of the distinctive canal store structure and is a rare, surviving example of the era when the Erie Canal was the nation's foremost link to the western frontier. The structure is presently in private ownership and used as a storehouse.

The Port Jackson neighborhood represents a locally-significant historic district whose growth was closely tied to construction of the Erie Canal. It is typical of the numerous villages which sprang up along the Canal and developed as commercial and industrial centers. Port Jackson developed into an active community in 1825 upon completion of the original Erie Canal, was incorporated as a village in 1852, and was annexed to the City of Amsterdam in 1888. While only a few buildings exist from the early 19th century canal era, Port Jackson is still comprised, nonetheless, of a building stock which displays substantial local historic significance.

The waterfront area is also characterized by numerous archaeological resources. In this regard, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation has identified the entire waterfront area as a zone of archaeological sensitivity.

See Map 5 for the location of historic resources within the waterfront area.

## **H. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

Amsterdam is located within the Mohawk Valley subdivision of the Hudson-Mohawk Lowland physiographic region and lies between the Adirondack Mountains to the north and the Appalachian Upland to the south. Soils within the waterfront consist largely of alluvium, or river-deposited sediments, as well as considerable amounts of fill. Sub-surface geology is comprised of glacial deposits overlying a shale bedrock. The

overall topography of the waterfront and adjacent area is typical of a river valley, with a narrow flat floodplain surrounding the Mohawk River sloping to a rolling upland area. In addition, the North and South Chuctanunda Creeks cut steep-sloped valleys through the City. The base elevation at the shoreline of the Mohawk is approximately 260 feet above sea level, sloping to an upland elevation of about 700 feet above sea level in the northern outskirts of the City and 450 feet above sea level in the City's southern extreme. The steep slopes rising from the base of the floodplain and along the creek banks range from 25% to 45% grades. Although these steep slopes obviously represent a developmental constraint, views of the lower portion of the City and the Mohawk are excellent from the upland area.

## **I. WATER QUALITY**

The water quality of the Mohawk River has improved significantly in recent years. That portion of the Mohawk flowing through Amsterdam is rated "C" by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, being suitable for fishing and fish propagation. Water quality ratings of "C" have also been established for the North and South Chuctanunda Creeks.

Water quality ratings of "C" have likewise been established for the following small streams which pass through the waterfront area and empty into the Mohawk River: Dove Creek, which flows through the West End into the Mohawk to the west of Lock No. 11; Degraff Creek, which forms a portion of the City's eastern municipal boundary and flows into the Mohawk adjacent to the City's sewage treatment plant; an un-named stream identified as Mohawk Tributary 66, which enters the Mohawk about 3,500 ft. west of Degraff Creek; an un-named stream identified as Mohawk Tributary 72 which originates in a wetland to the south of Queen Ann Street and enters the Mohawk just opposite Lock 11 on the South Side; and two un-named streams identified as Mohawk Tributaries 68 and 67 which merge and enter the Mohawk to the west of the eastern South Side municipal boundary.

Apart from the City's sewage treatment plant and ten (10) storm water outfalls, no industrial point-source discharges into the Mohawk have been identified. As previously discussed in the "Infrastructure" chapter, since virtually all of the City's sewage collection system is separated, combined sewer overflows do not represent a significant water quality problem. It can be assumed that the primary impacts on water quality result from non-point source urban runoff and upstream rural runoff. Overall, water quality within the Mohawk and its tributaries within the City is fairly good and should not pose constraints on future waterfront development.

## **J. ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE FEATURES**

This chapter describes land and water resources within the waterfront area which either represent a hazard to future development or are sensitive to developmental activities. These features include steep slopes, wetlands, and flood prone areas and are displayed on Map 6.

Steep slopes exist along the Mohawk River bluffs and the South Chuctanunda valley within the South Side. From the low-lying floodplain adjacent to the River, slopes with grades of approximately 50% rise almost 150 ft. to the upland area. Such slopes represent an obvious constraint to development, and disturbance of these slopes should be minimized or avoided altogether. With respect to wetlands, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) identifies and regulates wetlands which are over 12.4 acres in size or which display unique characteristics, pursuant to the State's Freshwater Wetlands Act. Such wetlands are then rated by DEC into four classifications, with Class I representing the most valuable. A total of four such wetlands have been identified by DEC which are located either entirely or partially within Amsterdam's waterfront area, and are designated by the identification codes TH-14, A-30, A-11, and A-12.

Wetland TH-14 is located in the extreme western portion of the City and extends into the Village of Fort Johnson. This Class I wetland is situated within the Mohawk River and the immediate shoreline area, is 165 acres in size, and consists of mudflat and emergent vegetation. Wetland A-30 is a 23 acre Class II wetland located to the immediate east of TH-14 within the Mohawk River and adjacent shoreline. Only a small portion of this wetland is actually within the City, with the bulk of it being in the Town of Florida. Wetland A-11 is a 96 acre Class II wetland comprised of open water, shrub, and emergent vegetation. This wetland includes several small islands within the Mohawk and extends into the Town of Florida. Wetland A-12 is a 28 acre Class II wetland located along the East End shoreline adjacent to the City's sewage treatment plant. This wetland consists of meadow vegetation and shrubs.

Flood-prone lands also exist within the City's waterfront area. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has designated both flood hazard areas and floodways along the Mohawk River and the North and South Chuctanunda Creeks. These flood-prone areas exist along the immediate shorelines and do not extend inland more than 400 ft. A flood hazard area has a 1% chance of being inundated by flood waters each year, or once every 100 years.

## **K. FISH RESOURCES**

The lower Mohawk River, from Five Mile Dam west of St. Johnsville to its confluence with the Hudson River, supports abundant and diverse warmwater fish populations. A

fisheries survey conducted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation during the mid-1980's identified fifty-six (56) fish species within this portion of the Mohawk. The survey showed that the lower Mohawk River contains a very large population of smallmouth bass, maybe one of the best fisheries within the State for that species. In addition to smallmouth bass, other abundant or common fish found in the Amsterdam vicinity include: walleye; bullheads; rock bass; yellow perch; blueback herring; carp; and suckers.

As mentioned in the "Public Access and Recreation" chapter, recreational fishing within the Mohawk is popular. The State-owned boat launch adjacent to the City's sewage treatment plant is the primary means of access for boat fishing. Shoreline fishing is popular, particularly at Lock No. 11 and also along the open space shoreline adjacent to the downtown.

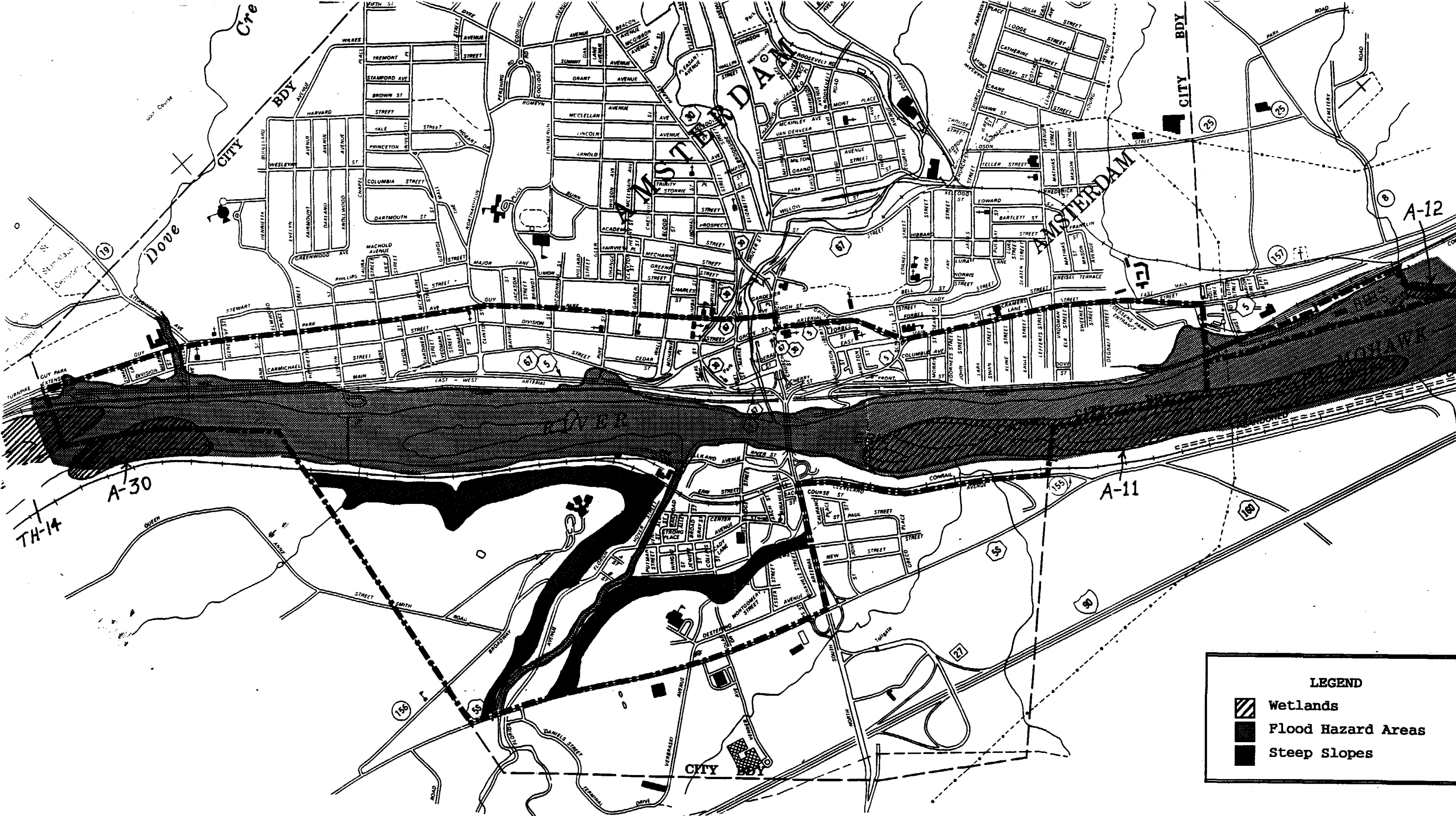
## L. ZONING

The City's Zoning Law recently underwent a comprehensive revision. The current zoning establishes districts which support stable existing uses, while also accommodating planned future waterfront development. The zoning districts to the north of the East-West Arterial and Conrail railroad, as well as within the Port Jackson neighborhood, are largely reflective of existing land uses. In this regard, single and two-family residential, light industrial, and commercial districts characterize these portions of the waterfront area. Along much of the immediate Mohawk River shoreline, however, a special waterfront district was established which has parks and boating facilities as the principal permitted uses. (See Map 7 which displays the zoning districts within the waterfront area.)

In addition, special historic preservation and flood protection zoning districts were also established. The Historic Resources Overlay District seeks to preserve the historic character of the Port Jackson neighborhood, as well as portions of the Downtown and along the Guy Park Avenue corridor. The Floodway Zone and Floodway Fringe Overlay Districts, coterminous with the flood hazard areas delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, seek to protect property and the natural flood protection values of floodways by discouraging all but open space uses in a floodway and by setting forth flood proofing construction criteria for development to be located within floodway fringe areas.

**M. SUMMARY OF KEY WATERFRONT ISSUES**

- Provide for the re-use and redevelopment of vacant and under-utilized industrial structures which are found throughout the waterfront area, particularly within the East End and South Side neighborhoods.
- Capitalize on the recreational boating opportunities offered by the Erie Canal/Mohawk River. The development of docks and associated services, such as boat repair and supply facilities, are key components in this regard.
- Develop improved public access and recreational opportunities along the State-owned Erie Canal right-of-way lands. Such lands are ideal for use as waterfront parks or recreational boating facilities.
- Overcome the East-West Arterial and Conrail railroad as barriers to shoreline public access. Improving connections between the downtown and waterfront is a key element for the City to address if it is to capitalize on the Mohawk as a recreational and economic resource.



**LEGEND**

- Wetlands
- Flood Hazard Areas
- Steep Slopes

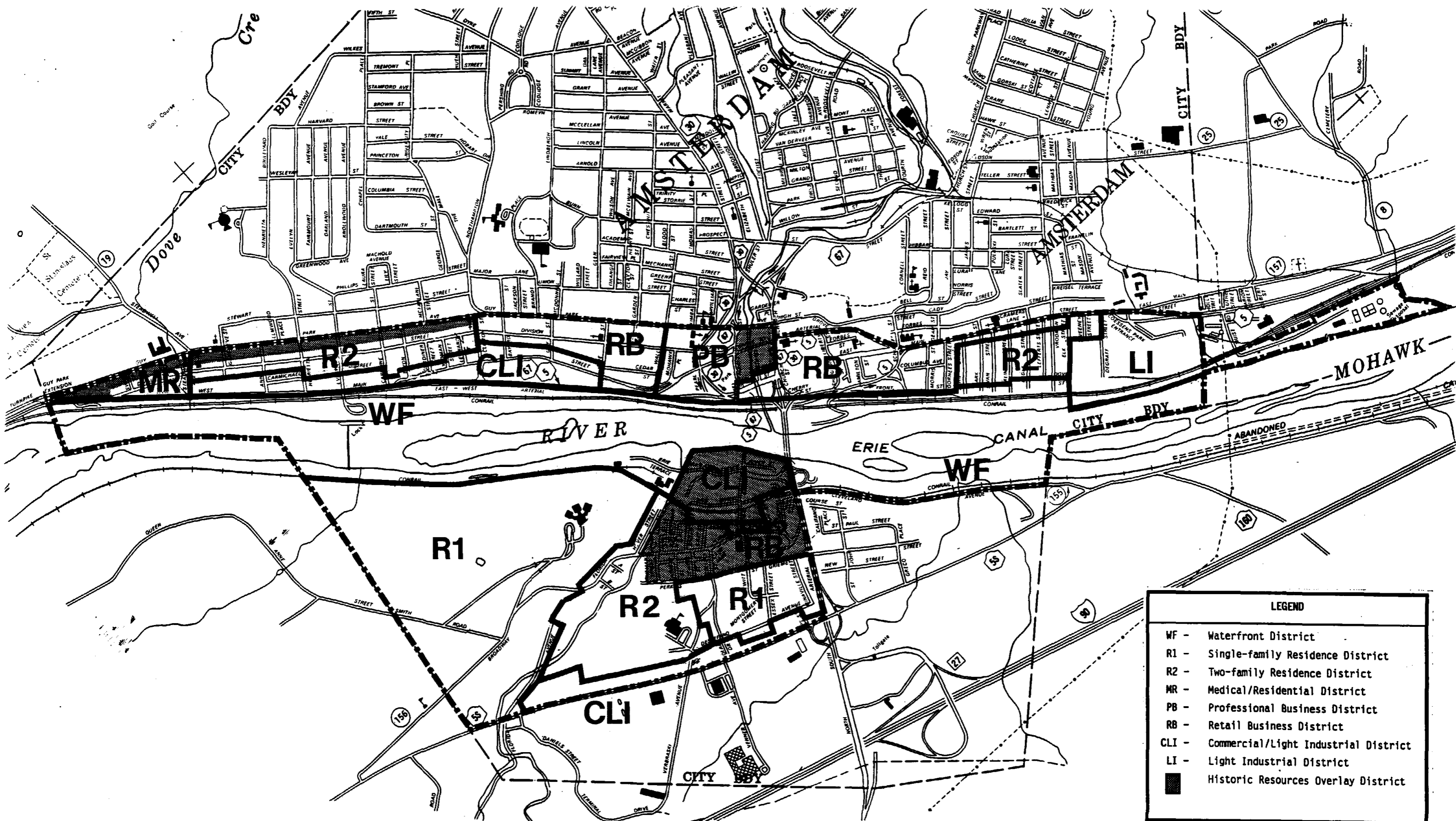
**CITY OF AMSTERDAM**  
**Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**  
**MAP 6 - Environmentally Sensitive Features**

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization

August 1991

Scale: 1" = 1200'

N




LEGEND	
WF	Waterfront District
R1	Single-family Residence District
R2	Two-family Residence District
MR	Medical/Residential District
PB	Professional Business District
RB	Retail Business District
CLI	Commercial/Light Industrial District
LI	Light Industrial District
■	Historic Resources Overlay District

**CITY OF AMSTERDAM**  
**Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**  
**MAP 7 - Zoning**

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization

N



Scale: 1" = 1200'

August 1991