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In association with:



Will Friedman

Rock Island Port District

Master Plan & Implementation Strategy

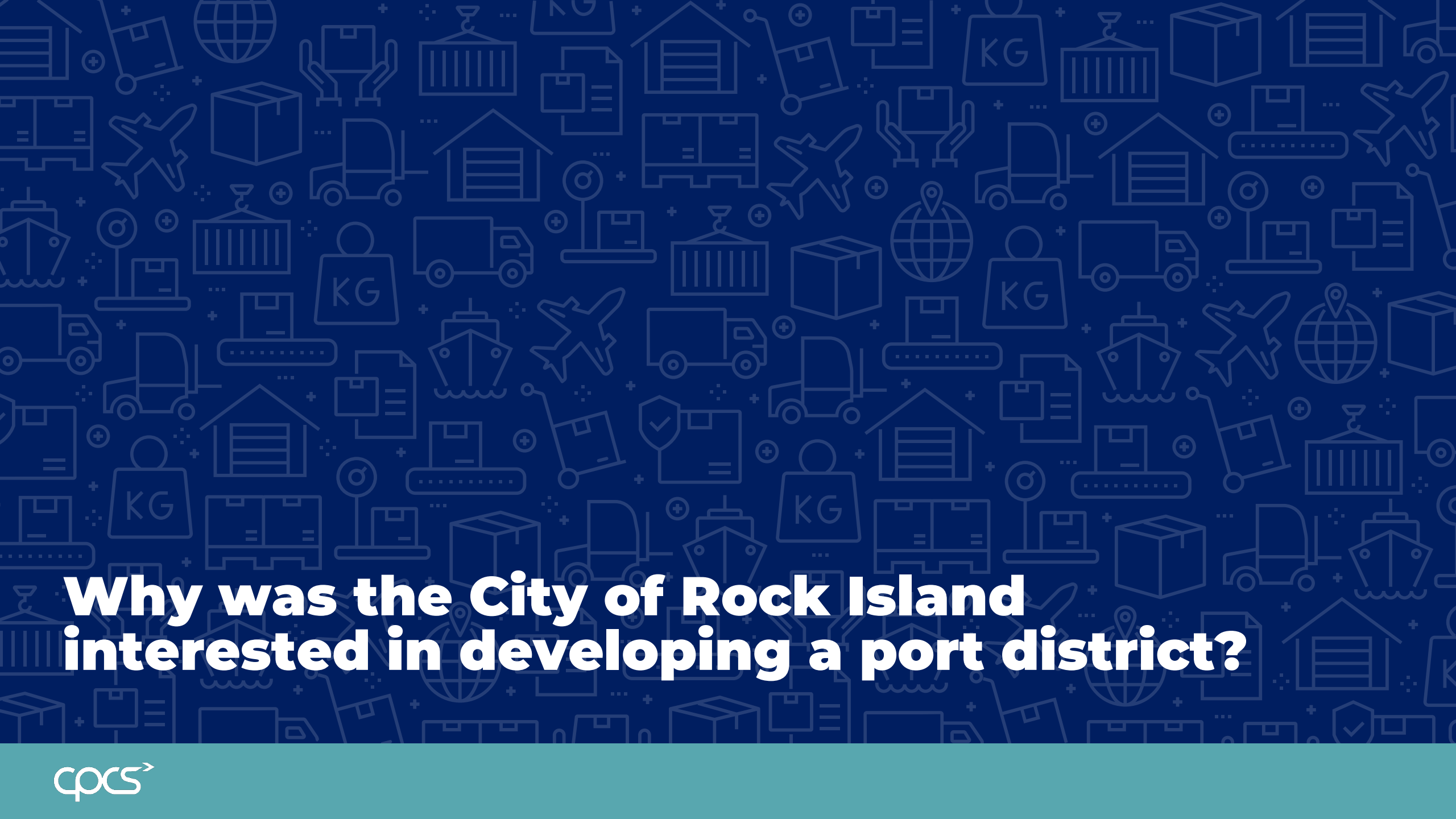
2026 IDOT Fall
Planning Conference

September 2026



Key Questions

- Why was Rock Island interested in creating a port district?
- What did the port district want from a master plan/ implementation strategy?
- What does the local freight system look like?
- How does the master plan/implementation strategy help deliver RIPD's strategic value?
- What progress has RIPD made?

The background is a dark blue field filled with a repeating pattern of white line-art icons. These icons represent various aspects of logistics and supply chain management, including cargo ships, cargo planes, cargo trucks, warehouse buildings, forklifts, shipping containers, and boxes. Some icons also feature the letters 'KG' (kilograms) and a location pin symbol. The icons are scattered across the entire background, creating a dense, thematic texture.

**Why was the City of Rock Island
interested in developing a port district?**

City Faces a Number of Challenges



Population loss

- From 51,000 in 1960s to ~37,000 today
- Lost 4% of population since 2019
- More than 30% of residents are over 60



Job loss

Unemployment rates remain above neighboring communities.



No net gain in housing units

Housing growth remains flat while the existing housing stock continues to age.



Lagging the other Quad Cities in economic opportunity

Per capita income trails behind the regional average.



Need to catalyze industrial development and redevelopment within the city

Many well-located industrial sites remain underutilized or are not development-ready.

Port District offers Ec. Development Tool



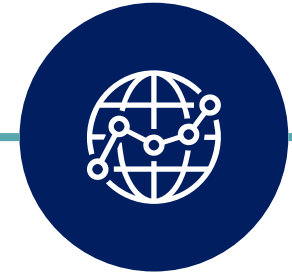
**Access to grant/loan
programs available only to
port authorities/districts**



**Ability to combine
port district with
other tools**



**Authority to buy/sell
property/facilities**



**New lens for
viewing the city's
economy**

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What did the port district want from a master plan/implementation strategy?

Planning Process Focuses Thinking

Engagement with key stakeholders

- State/local agencies
- Cargo facility operators
- Truck and rail operators
- Manufacturers, shippers



Strategic direction and role

- Mission/vision
- Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threat assessment



Baseline freight transportation system analysis

- Commodities, modes, volumes
- System performance
- Land use assessment

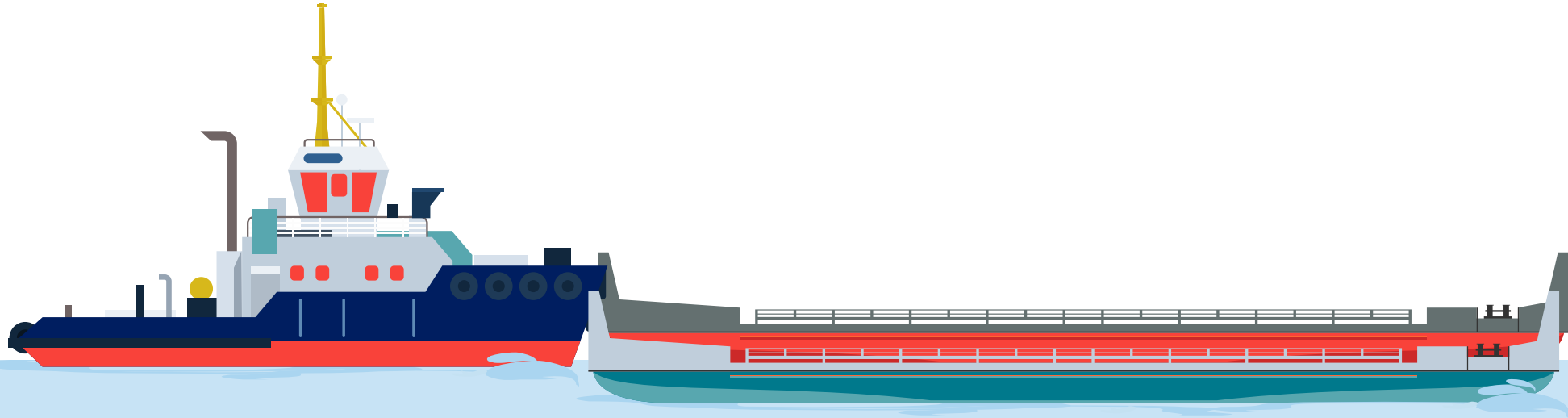


Guidance for optimizing strategic role and value

- Internal organizational framework
- Site concept layouts
- Strategy roadmap



Parameters Guide Plan Development



City and Port District boundaries remain identical for the time being; City Council continues serving as the Port District board.



City and Port District have little capacity, if any, to add new staff without ongoing funding sources.



The City/Port District will focus on economic development through the port movement lens.



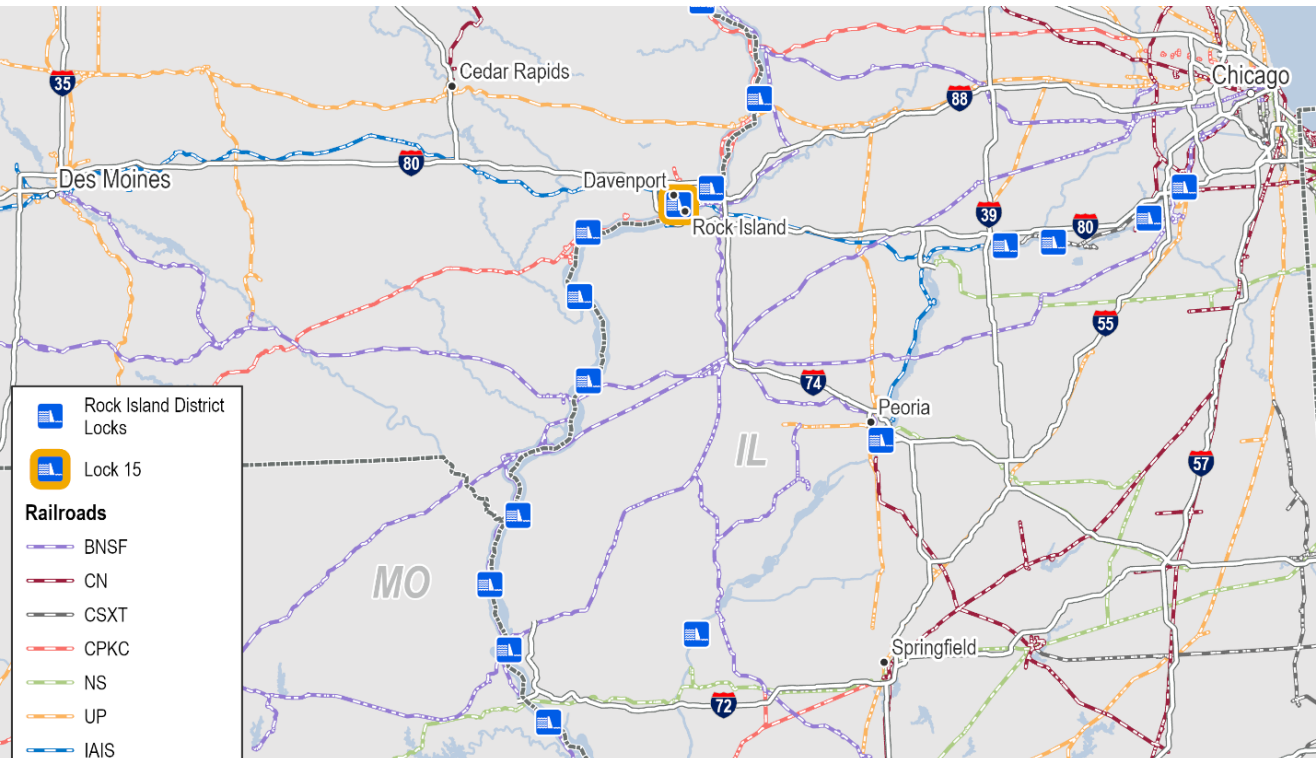
Develop the Port District pragmatically and incrementally over the long term; do not want to grow too fast.

The background of the slide is a dark blue field filled with a repeating pattern of white line-art icons. These icons represent various elements of the freight and logistics industry, including cargo ships, cargo planes, cargo trucks, warehouse buildings, forklifts, shipping containers, and boxes. Some icons also feature a 'KG' symbol, representing weight. The icons are scattered across the entire background, creating a dense, thematic pattern.

**What does the local freight
system look like?**

Rock Island – A Port Since the Beginning

Rock Island's Port District designation validates years of the city's role in regional freight movement, its strong industrial base, and vast multimodal transportation network.



7%
Transportation
and warehousing

3%
Wholesale
trade

5%
Construction

58%
Non-freight
dependent
industries

1%
Utilities

12%
Retail trade

14%
Manufacturing

0%
Agriculture

Freight-Reliant Industries 42%

Rock Island – A Port Since the Beginning

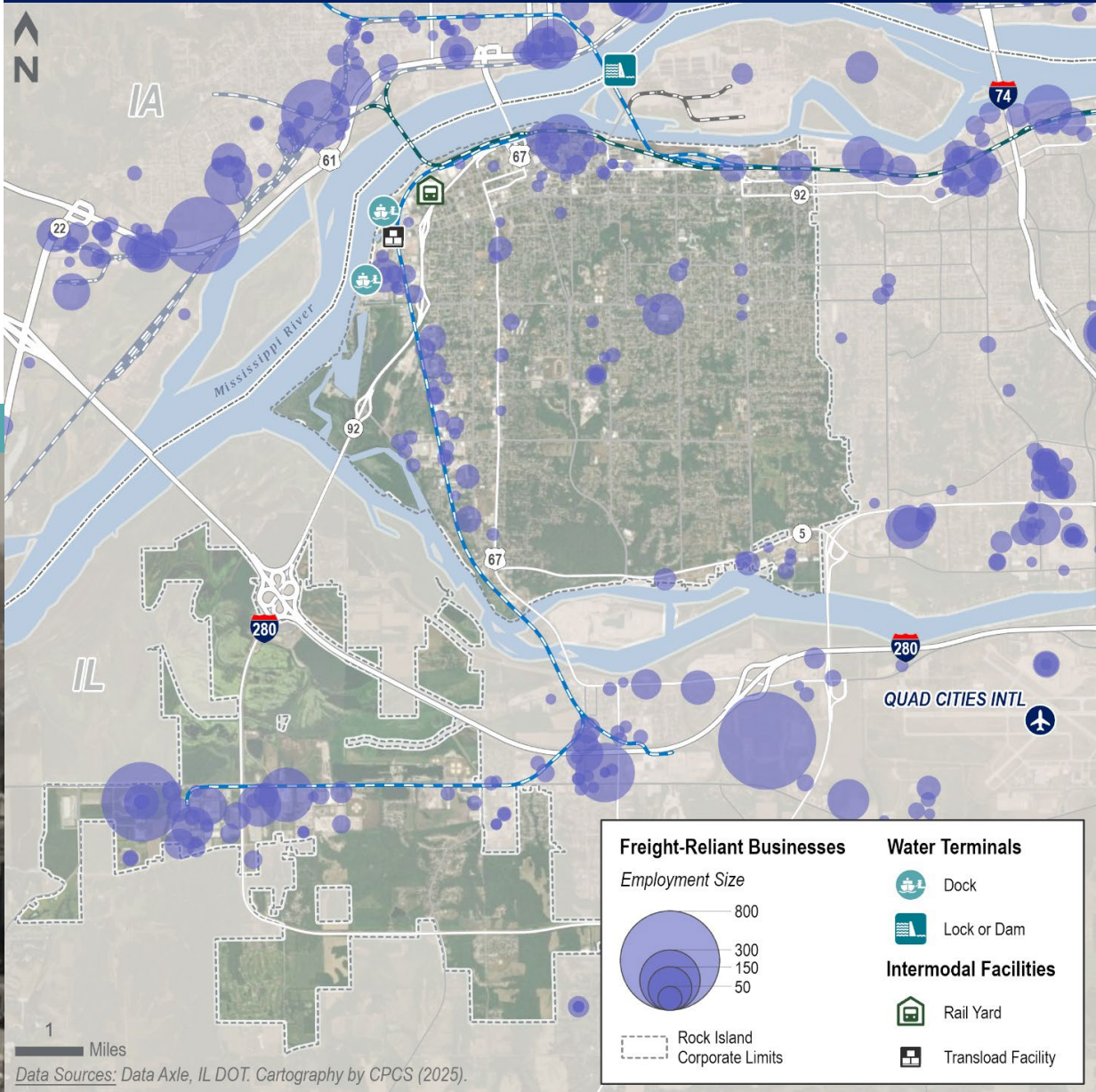
Not only has Rock Island long been a port, clusters of freight-dependent businesses have developed along its key barge, train, and truck transportation corridors.

Rock Island Mississippi Riverfront, 1937



Source: City of Rock Island

Freight-Reliant Industry Clusters, 2024



Key Facilities/Infrastructure



2 barge terminals

- Rock Island River Terminal
 - Owned by City of Rock Island
 - Long term lease to Alter Logistics
- RiverStone Group (privately held)



Rail network

- Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS) operates within Rock Island
- IAIS owns most trackage; City owns about one mile



Truck freight network

- Dohrn Transportation terminal in Rock Island, near the river terminals
- Easy access to state highways and interstate freeways

Data-driven Developable Land Analysis

A transparent, parcel-level screening that turned local knowledge into a defensible development pipeline



Screen

Quantitative metrics

- Parcel-level dataset built from County Assessor and zoning data
- Underutilization flagged via FAR, improvement share, land-to-building value ratio, and vacancy indicators



Validate

Ground-truthing

- Aerial imagery review and field reconnaissance excluded active, utility, and undersized sites
- Cross-checked against wetland and flood constraints

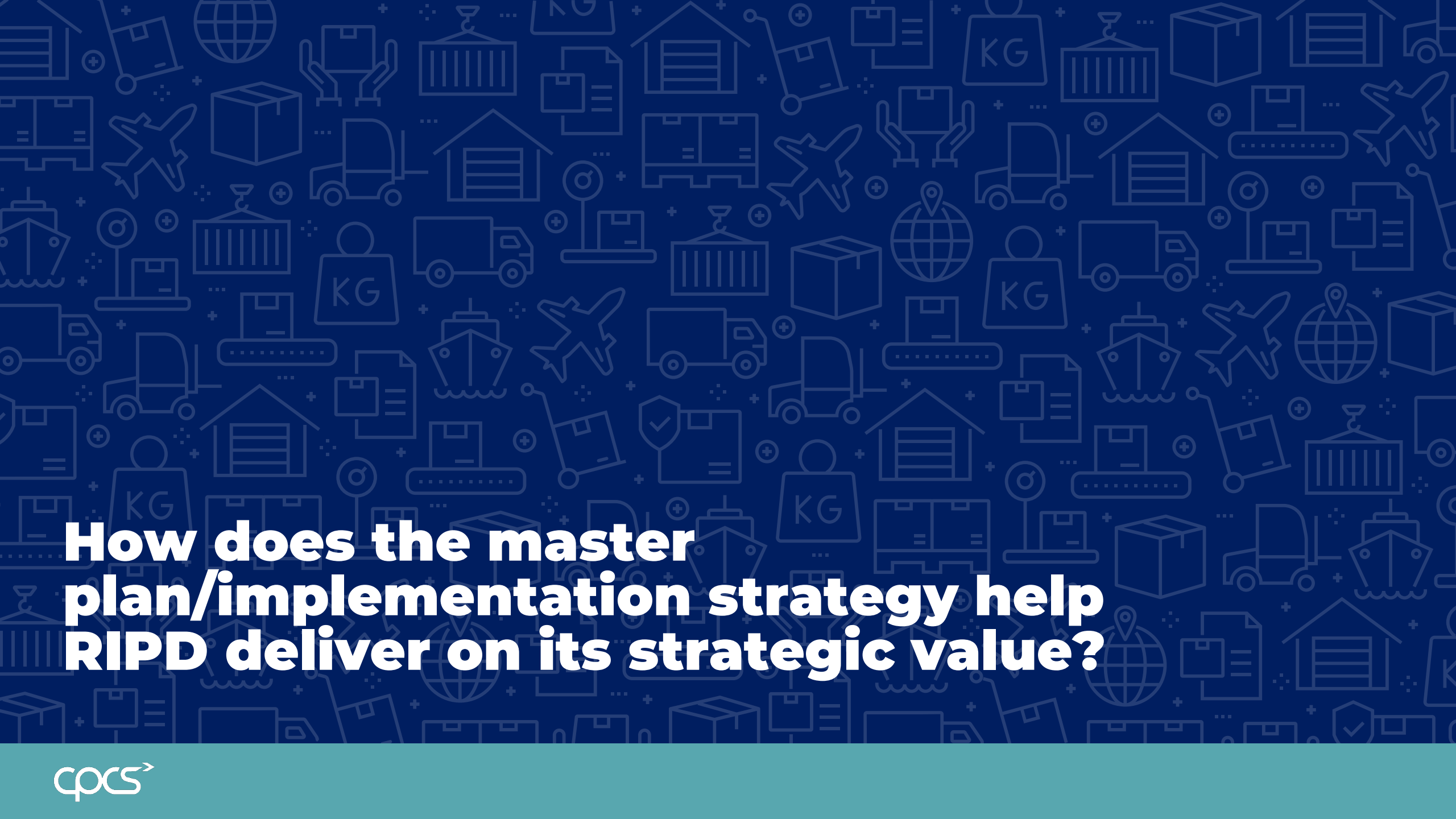


Prioritize

Clusters → conceptual designs

- Validated parcel clusters became the basis for six conceptual freight development areas
- Confirmed sites the City knew were suitable and elevated their priority with defensible evidence

Objective screening + local validation gave the City a data-backed, prioritized inventory of redevelopment-ready industrial land.

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**How does the master
plan/implementation strategy help
RIPD deliver on its strategic value?**

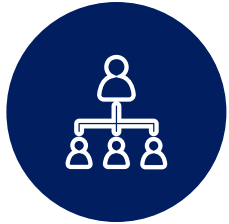
Master Plan/Implementation Strategy Elements



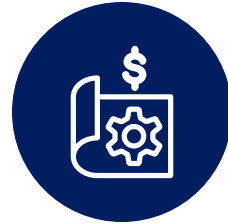
Port's Strategic Role



Implementation Strategies



**Administrative/Organizational
Structure Recommendations**



**Site Concepts and Capital
Improvement Plan**

Plan intent:

- Provide guidance and decision-making support for the City/Port District
- Create a menu of options for the City/Port District to implement RIPD as an economic development tool

Defining Port Capabilities – The 4 “R”s



River

- Direct access to the Mississippi River
- Enables barge transport of bulk commodities



Road

- Excellent connectivity via I-280, IL 92, and US 67
- Strong access to I-74 and I-80 corridors



Rail

- Connectivity with river barging locally
- IAIS connections with all Class I's



Real Estate

- Well-located vacant and re-developable land
- Existing rail trackage serves or passes by key industrial corridors
- Need for site readiness work on some parcels



Port's Strategic Role



RIPD's role is not to compete with or take over operational responsibility from private operators, nor is it to duplicate broader business attraction work of other organizations.



Its role is to make freight-oriented industrial development more feasible, more coordinated, and more fundable.

Catalyst. Convener. Coordinator.

Governance Recommendation Examples

Keep City/Port District Existing Structure

- Continue existing structures until there is an overriding need to separate
- The Rock Island City Council continues as the board for the Port District
- Continue current accounting practices
- Establish a Port District Advisory Committee
- Use a Shared-Services model for staffing

Play Various and Intentional Roles in Bringing Industrial Sites to Market

- **Landlord:** city-owned waterfront parcels
- **Seller:** non-waterfront parcels
- **Land aggregator/preparer:** strategic parcels and immediate value capture
- **Convener:** Bring parties to the table to scope development needs and funding sources for any of these land types.

Implementation Strategy Examples

Administration/Governance



Port revenue allocation and reinvestment policy

- Create a policy to establish funds, provide administrative guidance
- Offer flexibility to adapt

Commercial Development



Site readiness revolving fund and Strategic Reserve Fund

- Site Readiness Revolving Fund – value capture and seed money for next project
- Strategic Reserve Fund - generational projects

Community Development



Community economic development support

- Limited project funding
- Local/small business participation in port projects

RIPD Development and Investment Opportunities

Project team identified three Development Districts for examination:

- **Rock Island Waterfront** (Alter, Riverstone, and near-dock subareas)
- **Sunset South** (north and south subareas)
- **Campbell Sports Complex / Andalusia Road** (CSC and West subareas)

For each Development Districts, developed:

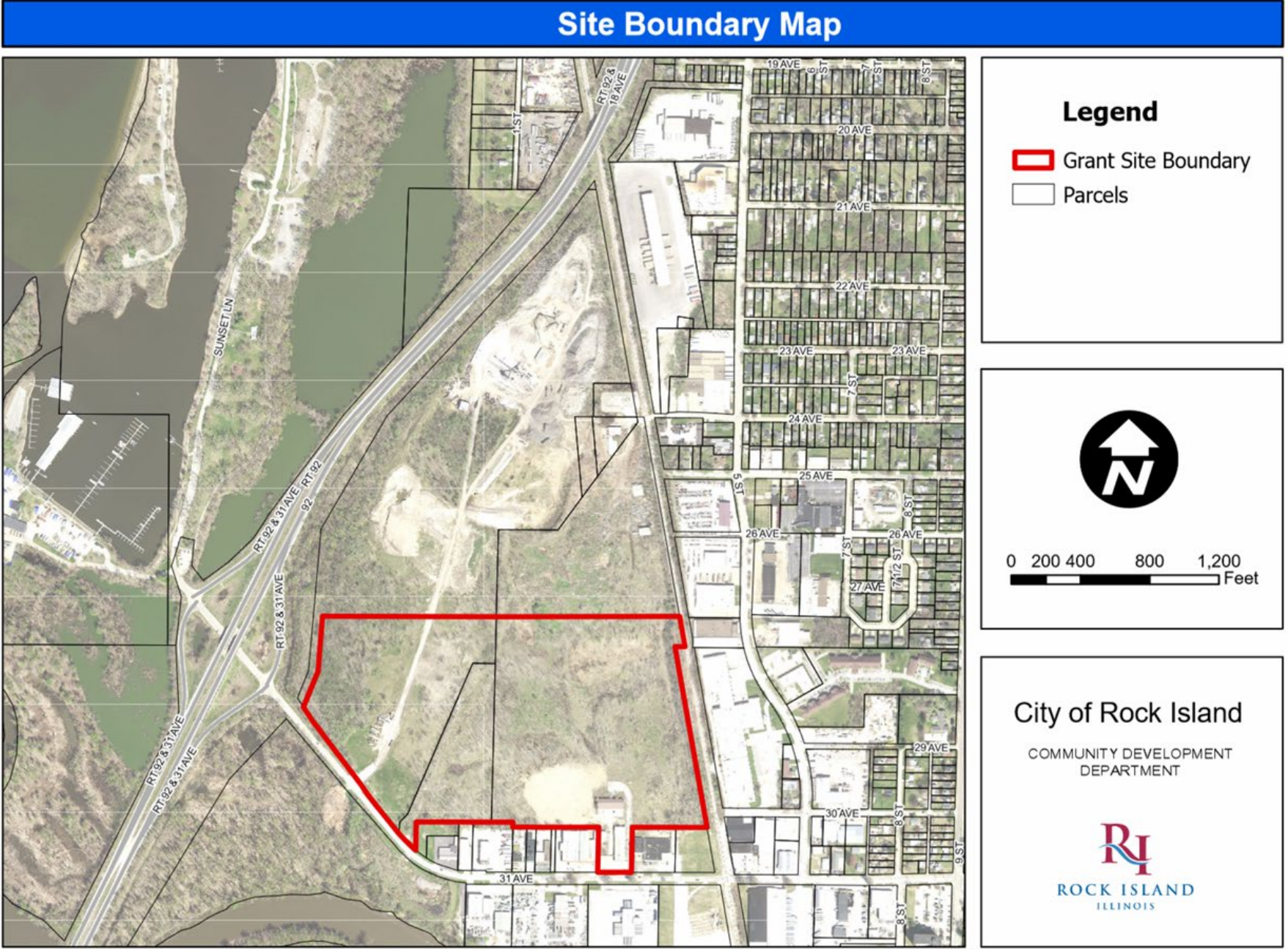
- Capital plan and cost estimates
- Potential funding sources and near-term actions
- Implementation pathways



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What progress had RIPD made?

Progress- to-date





Any questions or additional comments?



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Thank you!