



# Reflections on Urban Growth, Farmland Loss, & Land/Water Stewardship

YAHARA PRIDE FARMS  
WATERSHED-WIDE CONFERENCE

February 25, 2026

Jason Valerius

# What CARPC Does

## WATER QUALITY & CLIMATE RESILIENCE



## LAND USE



## COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE



# | My House



| 1937



Einstein Bros. Bagels



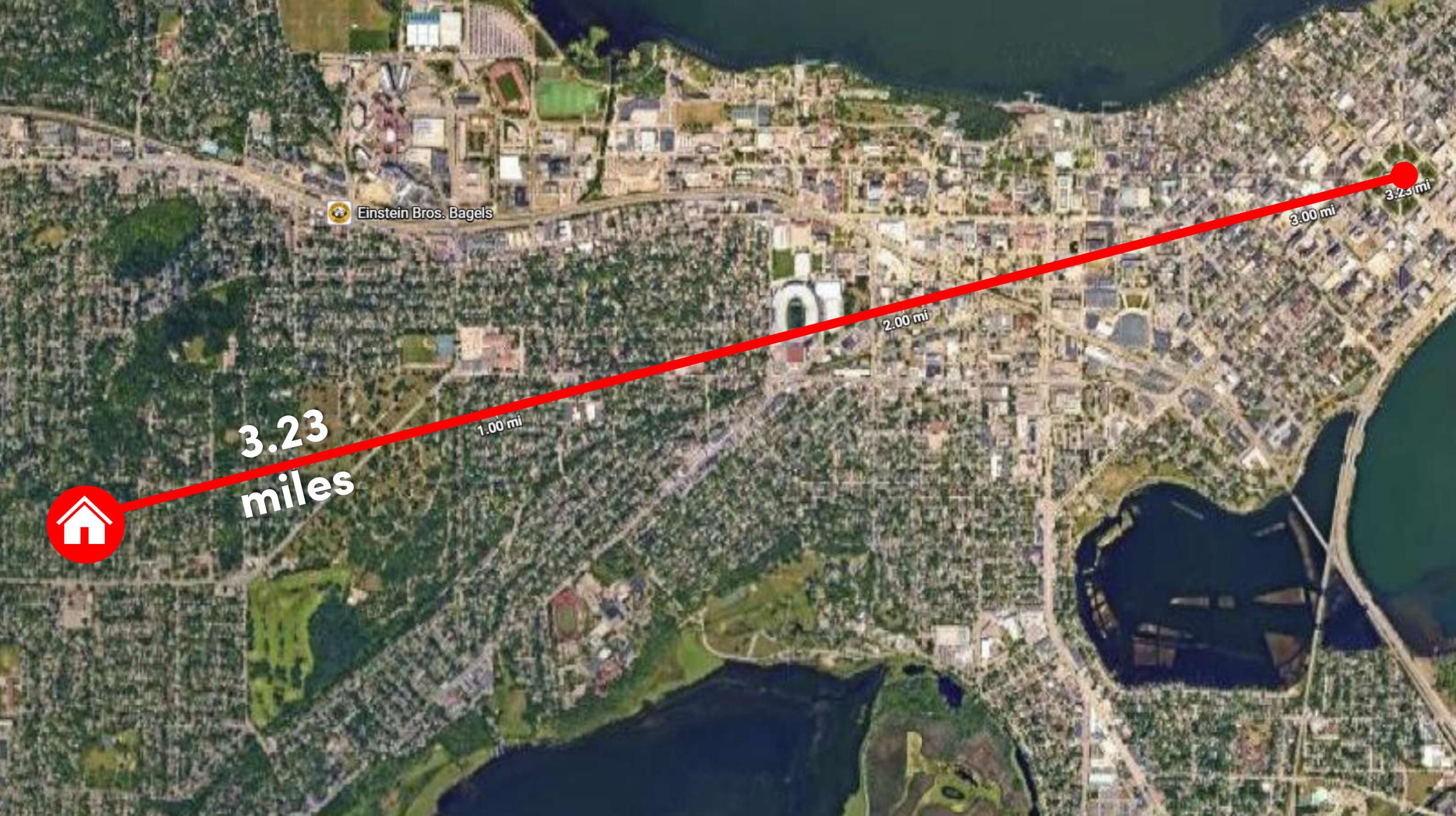
3.23  
miles

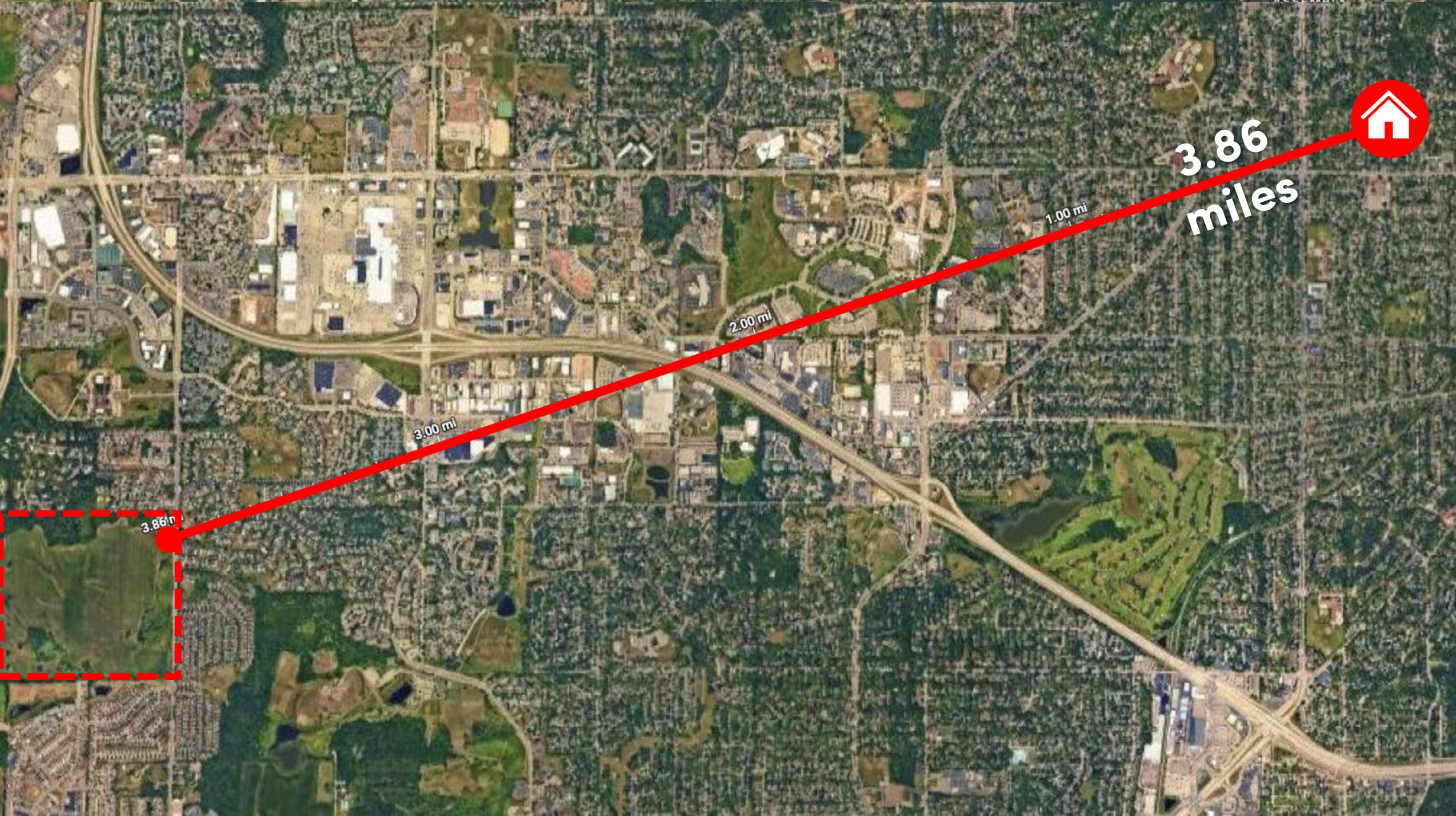
1.00 mi

2.00 mi

3.00 mi

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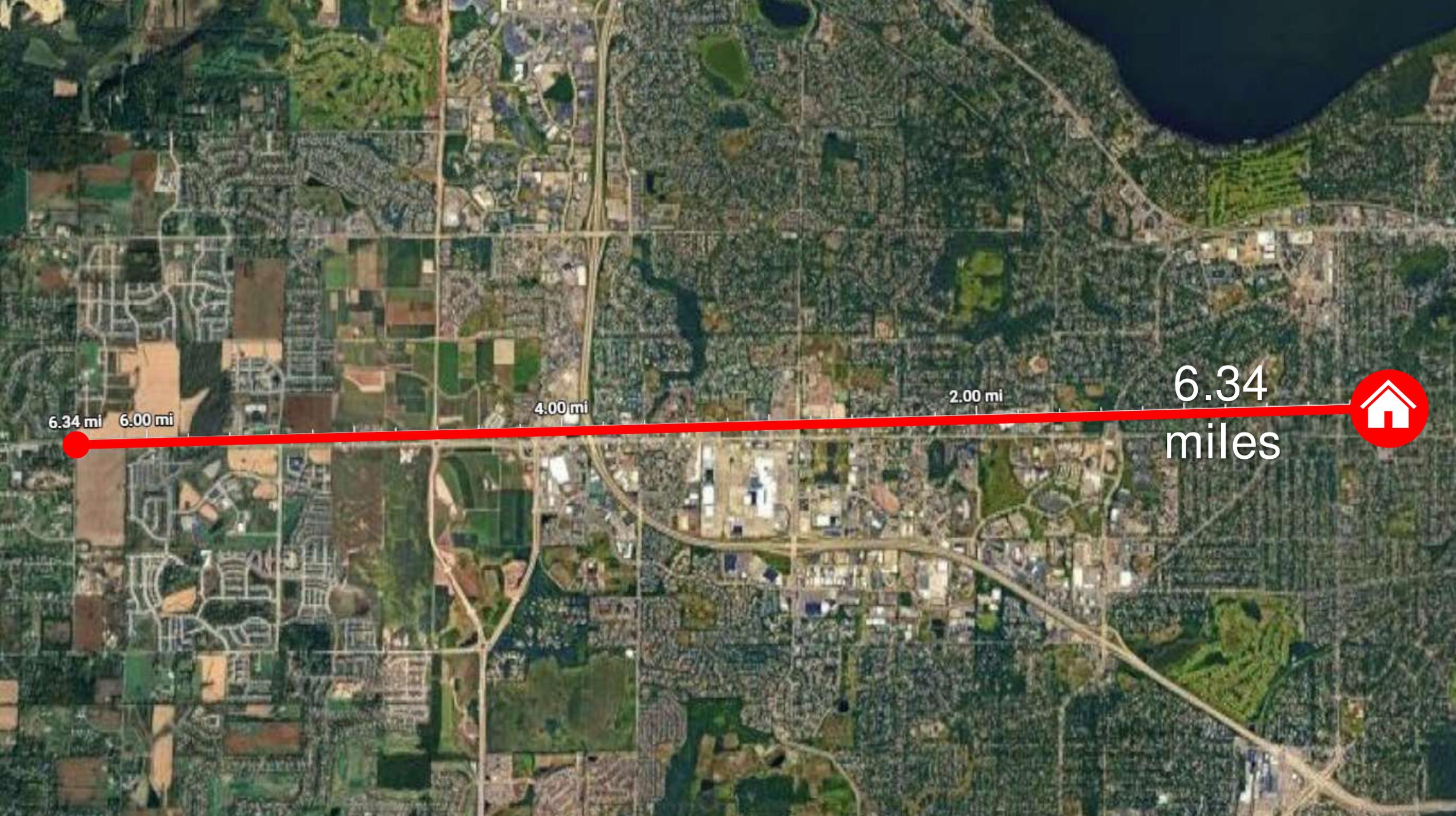
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miles

1.00 mi

2.00 mi

3.00 mi

3.86 mi



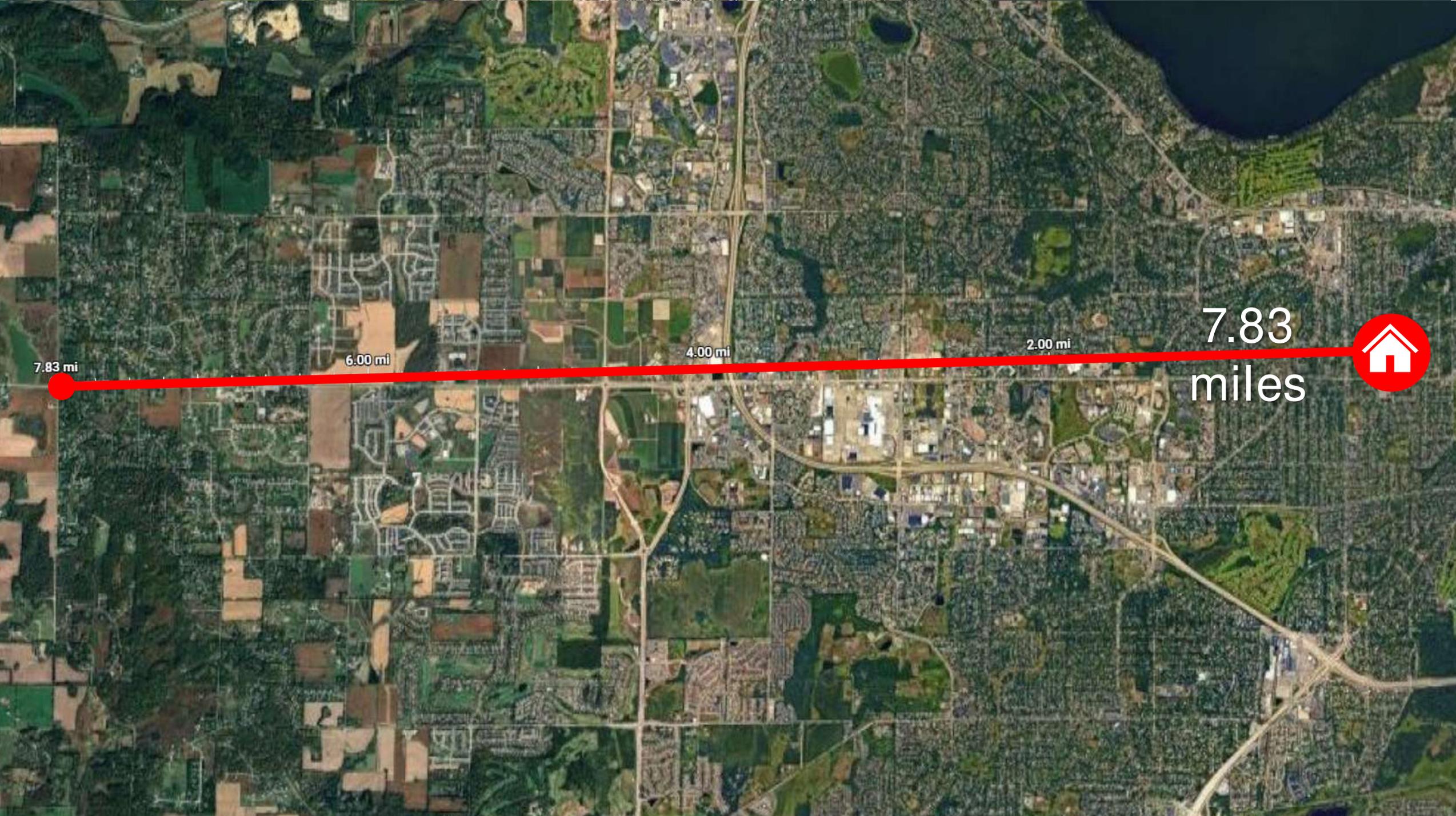
6.34 mi 6.00 mi

4.00 mi

2.00 mi

6.34  
miles





7.83 mi

6.00 mi

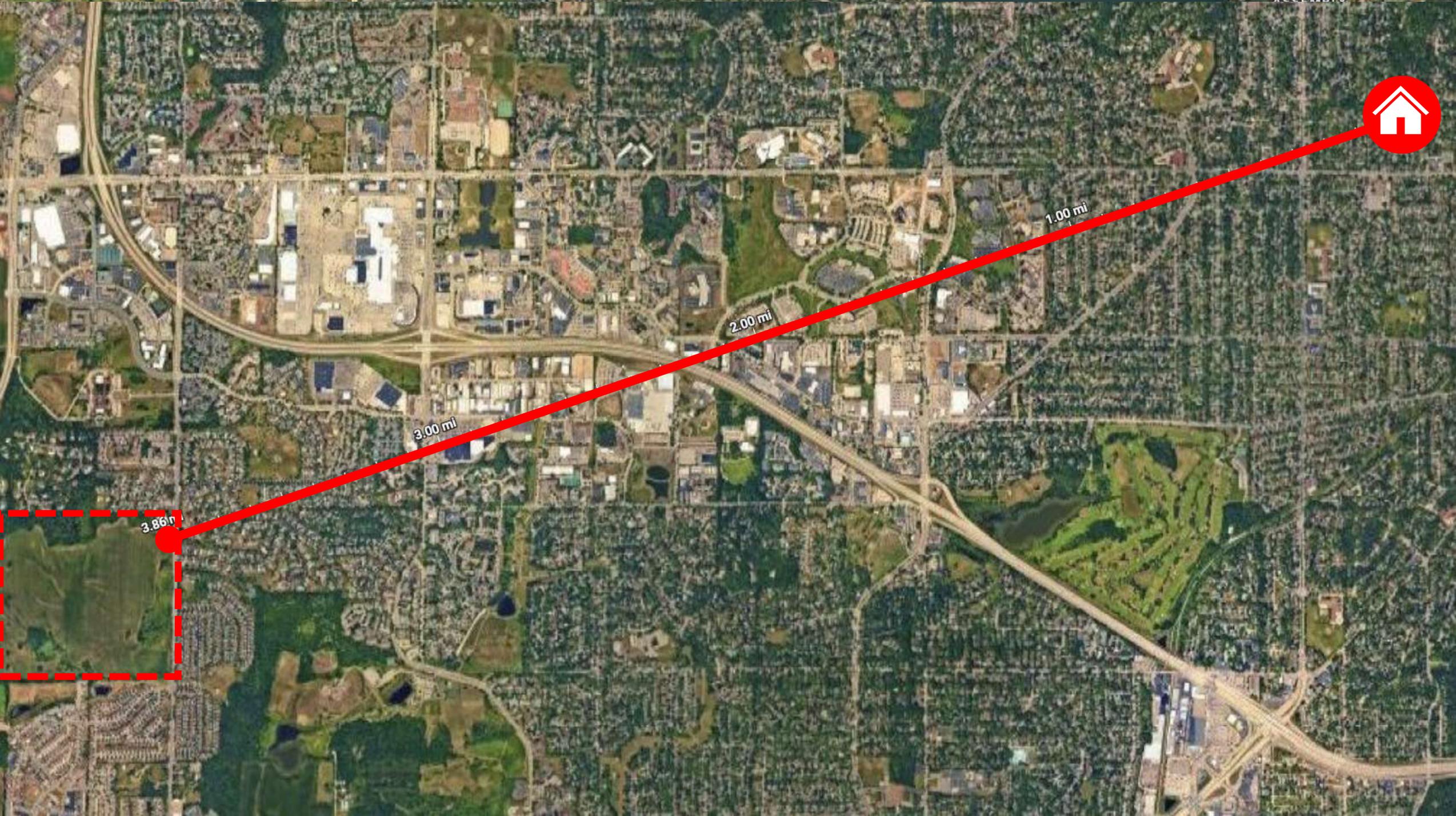
4.00 mi

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1.00 mi

2.00 mi

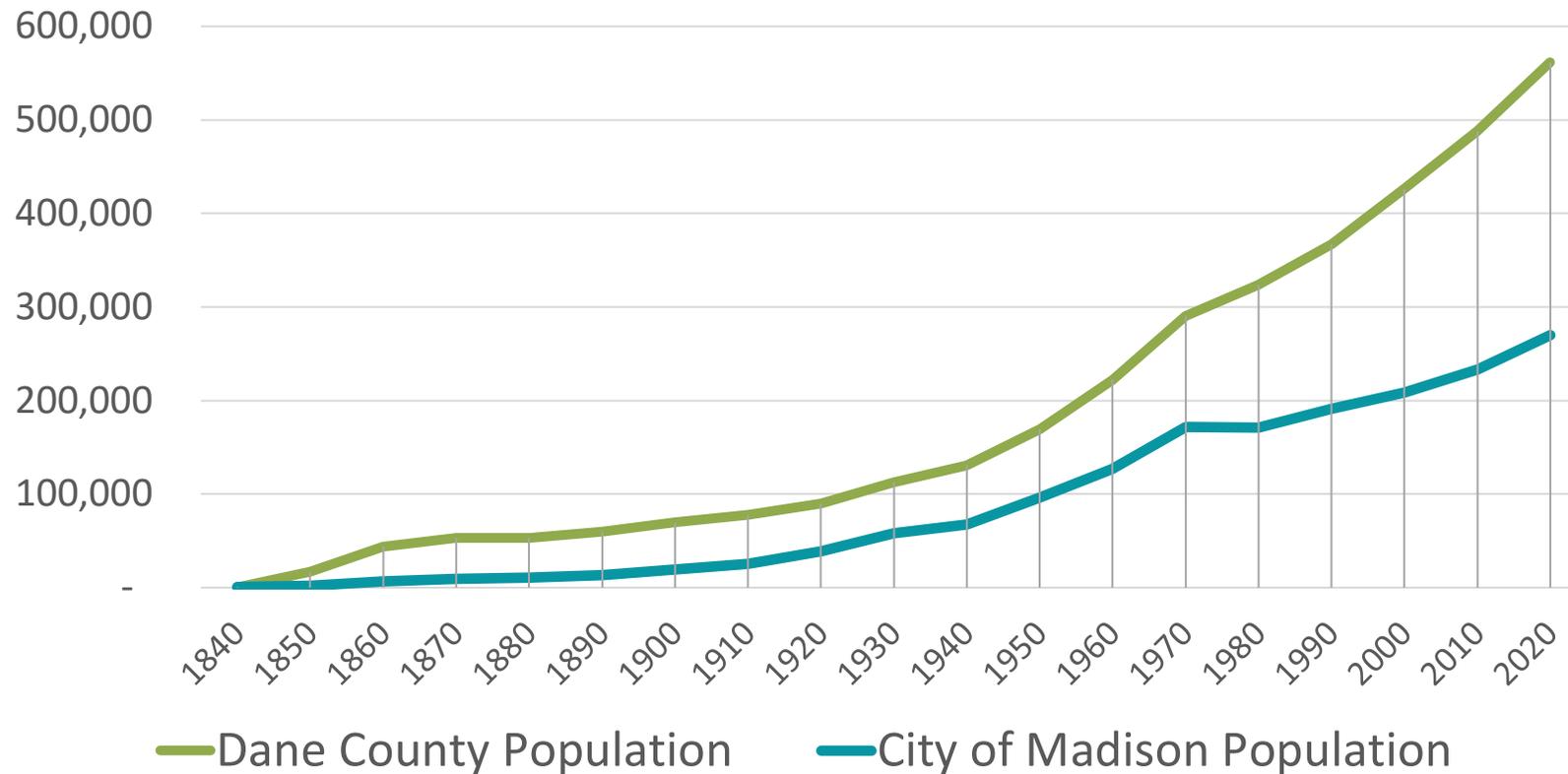
3.00 mi

3.86 mi



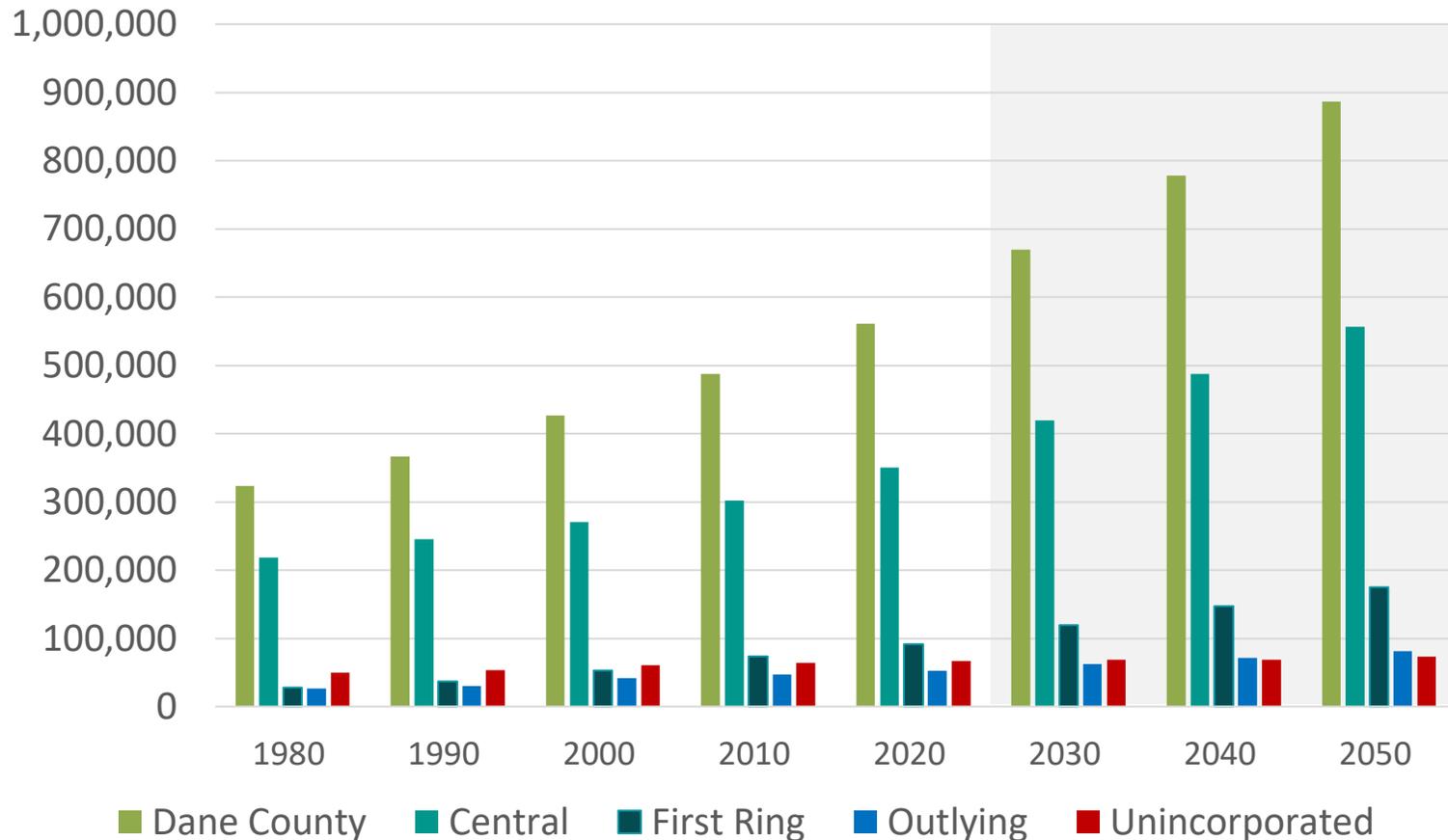
# 180 Years of Population Growth

Dane County vs City of Madison Population,  
1840-2020



# The Next 25 Years of Population Growth

## Dane County Population, 1980-2050



### CENTRAL

Madison, Middleton, Fitchburg,  
Maple Bluff, McFarland, Monona,  
Shorewood Hills

### FIRST RING

Cottage Grove, DeForest, Sun  
Prairie, Verona, Waunakee  
Windsor

### OUTLYING

All other Cities and Villages

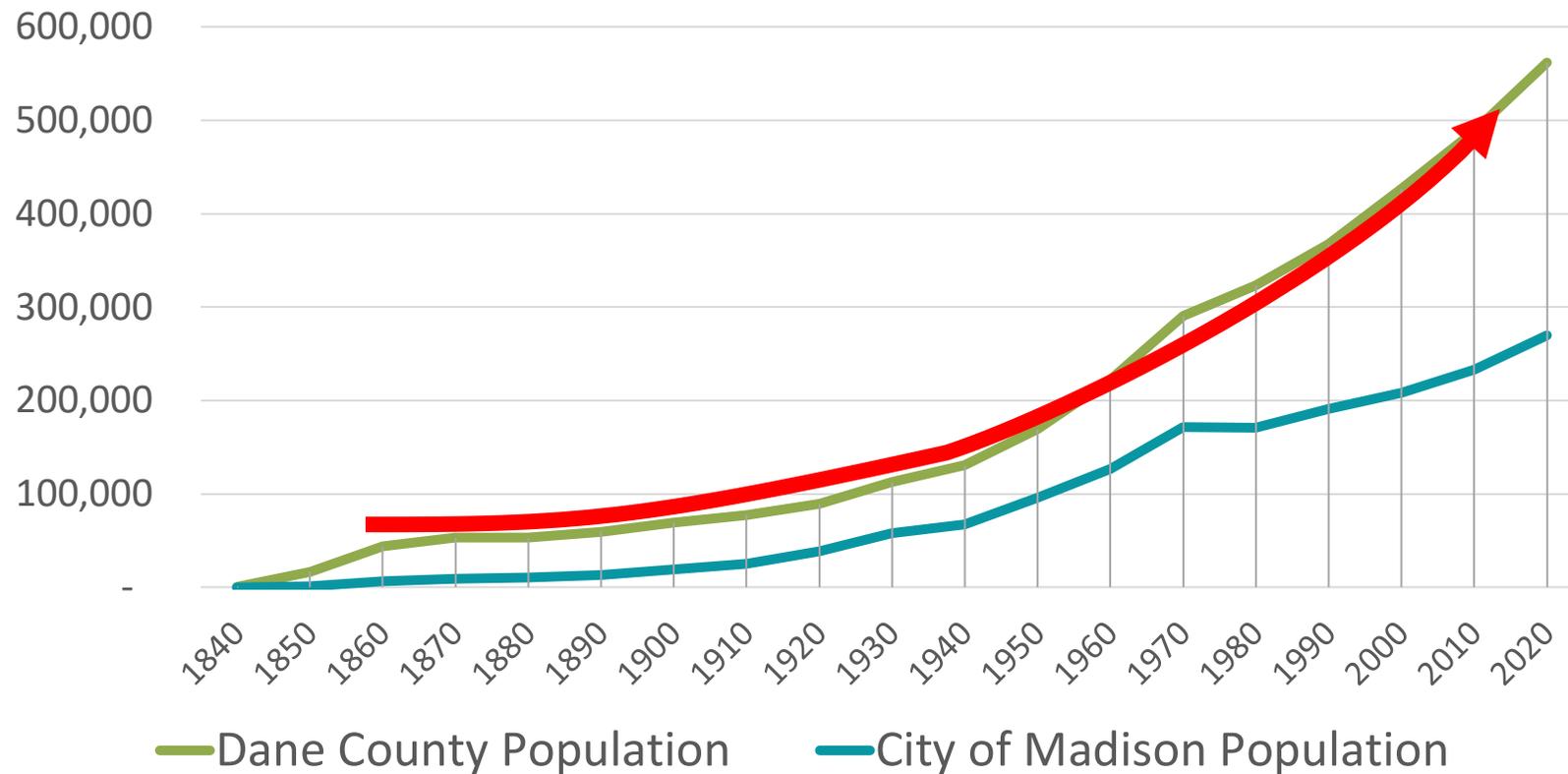
### UNINCORPORATED

All Towns



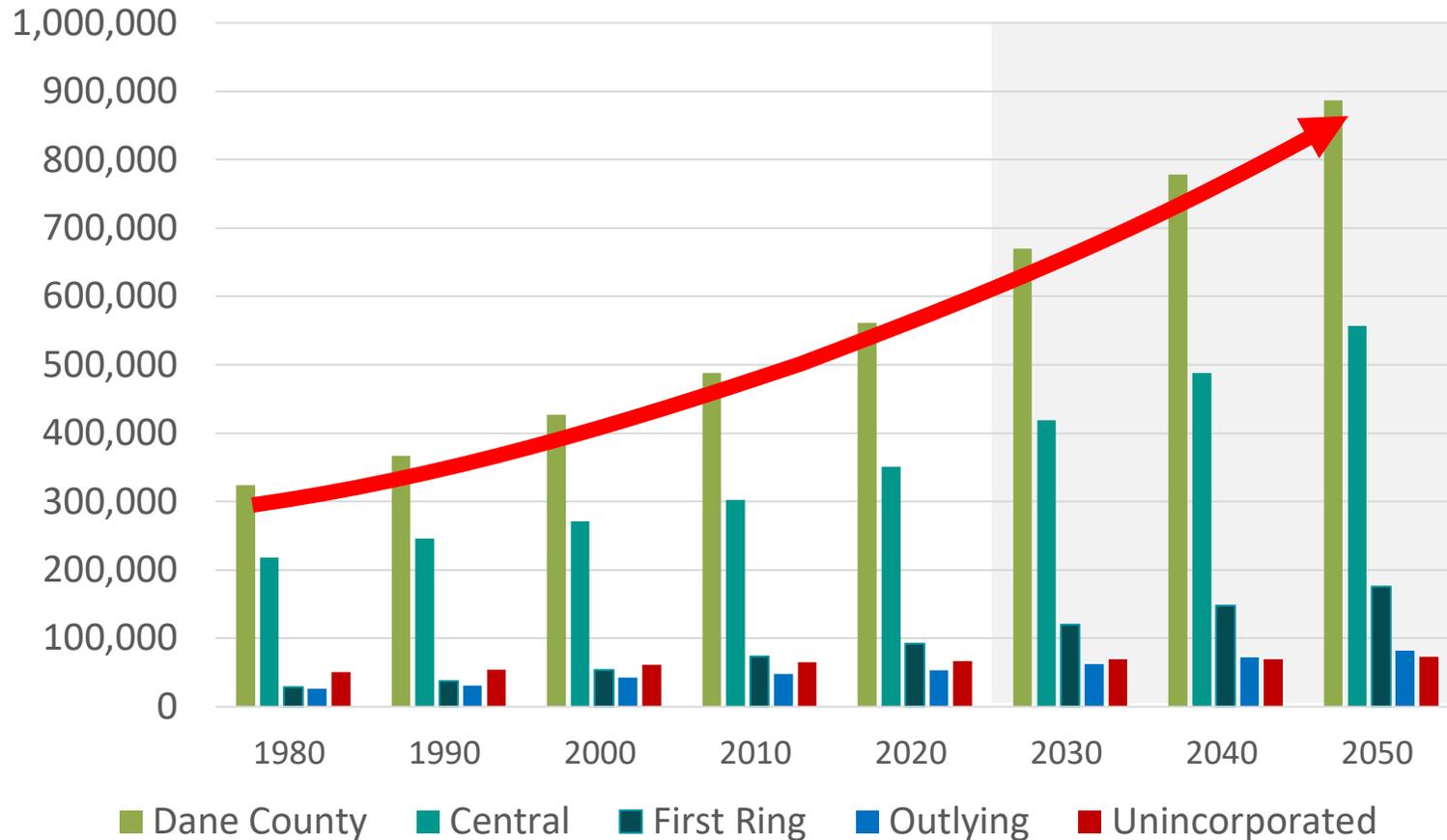
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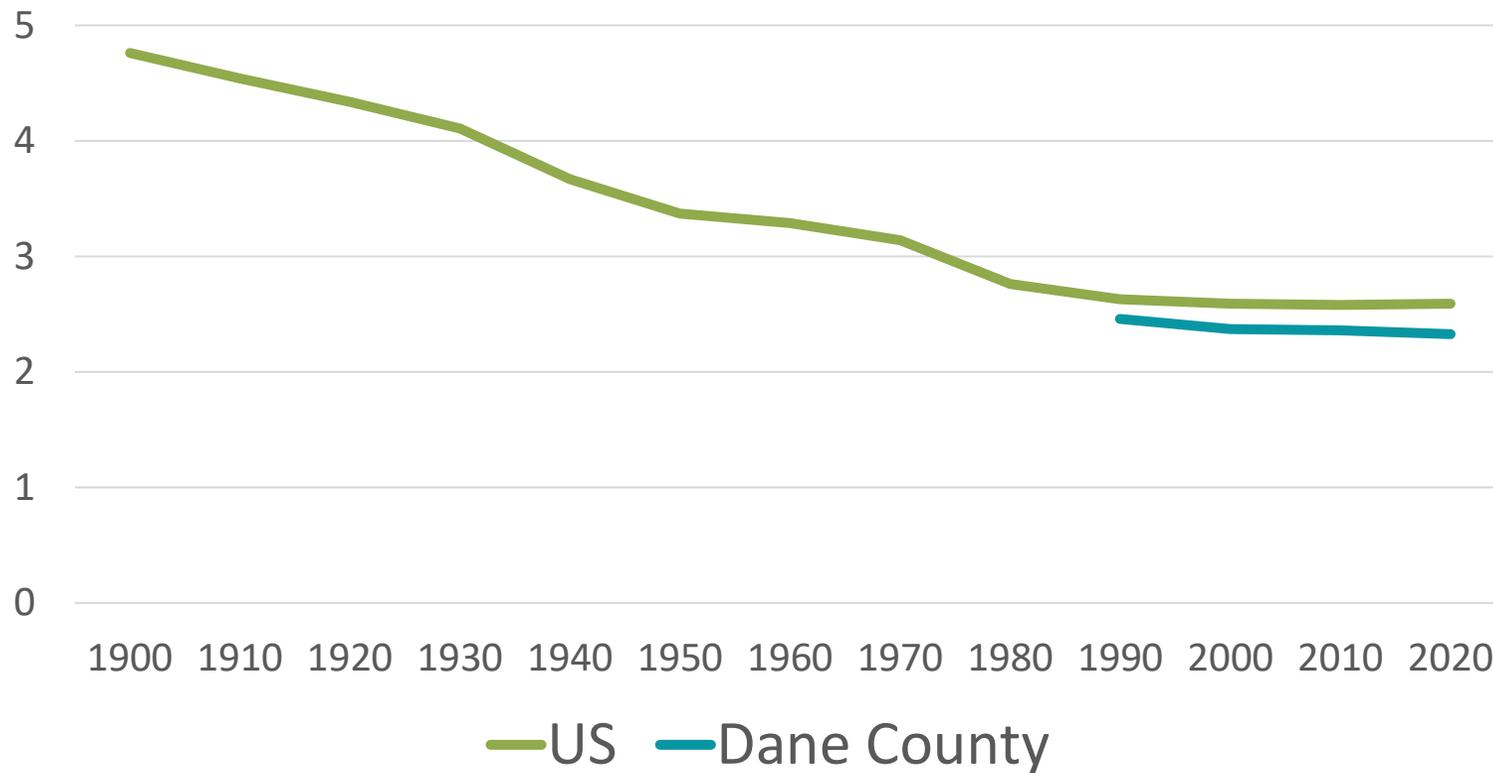
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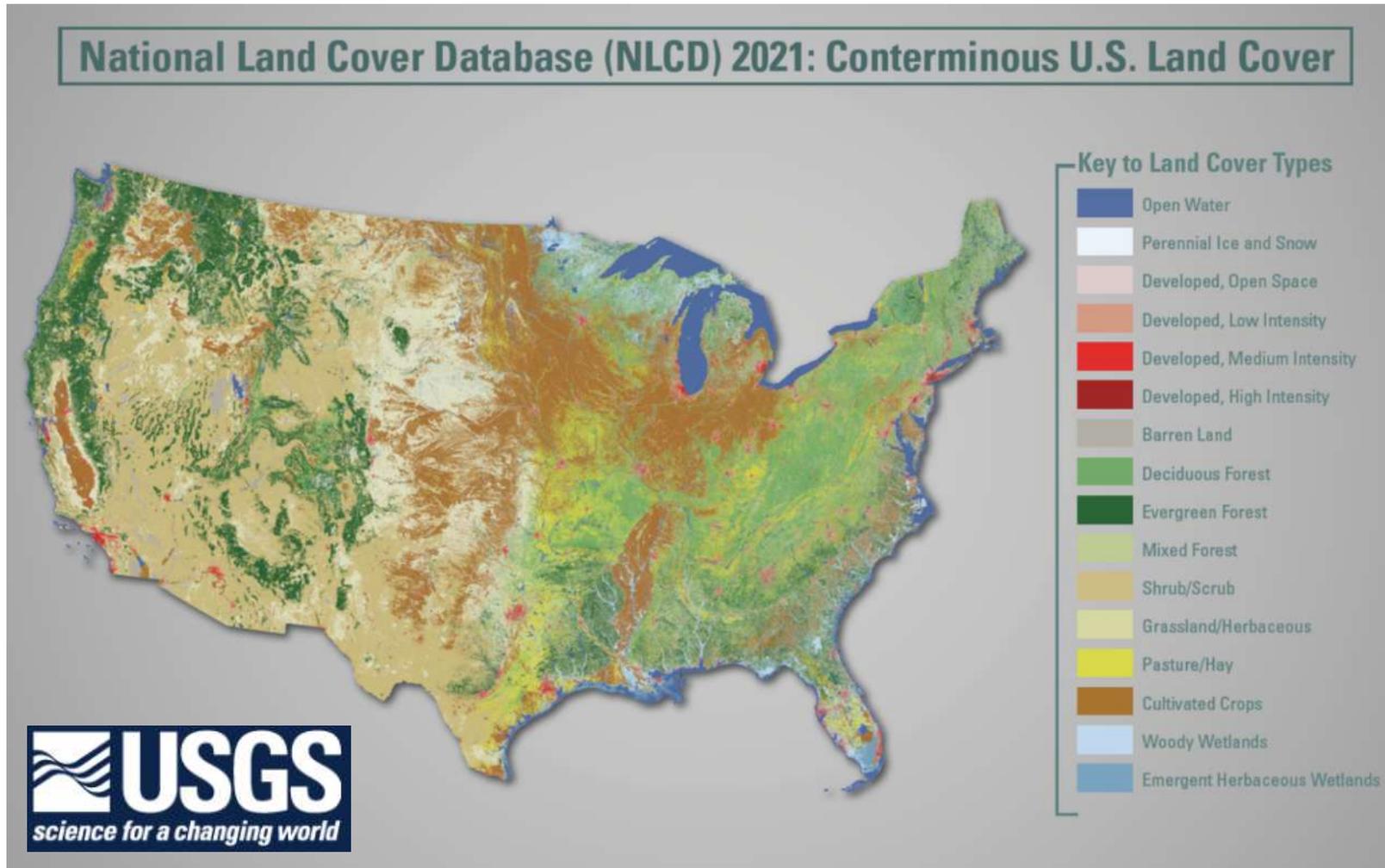


# Shrinking Households

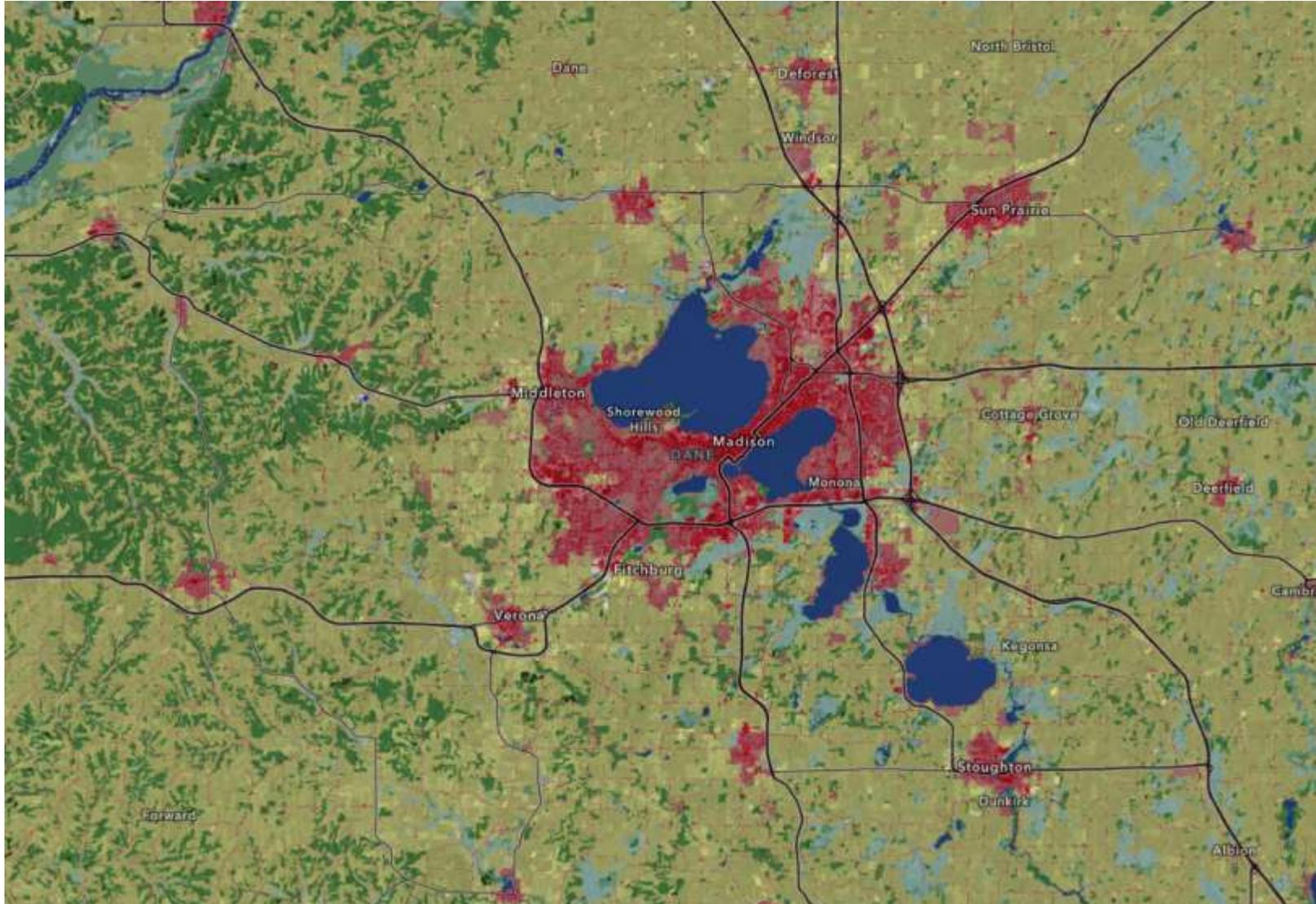
Average Household Size, 1900-2020



# National Land Cover Database



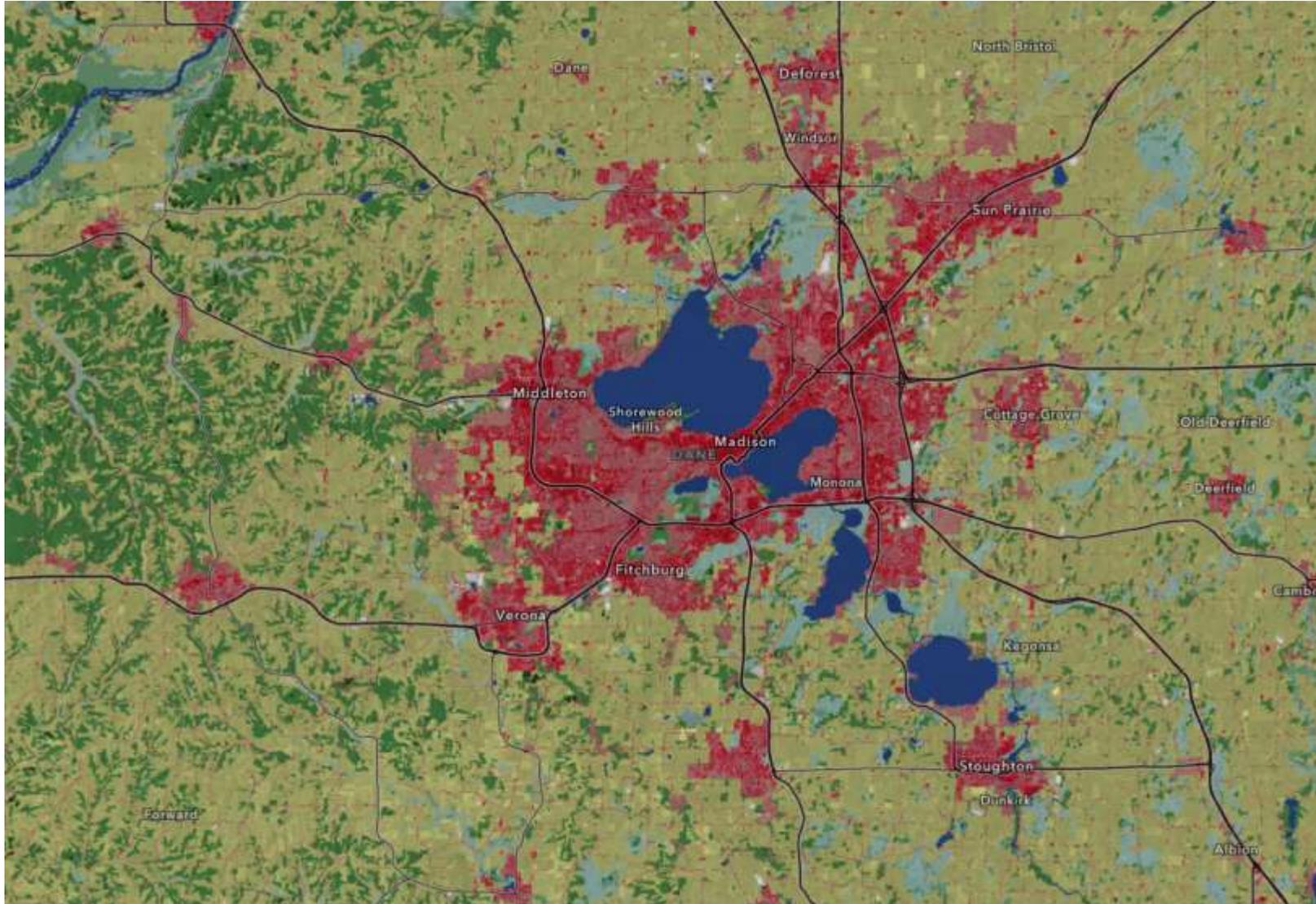
# National Land Cover Database



1985



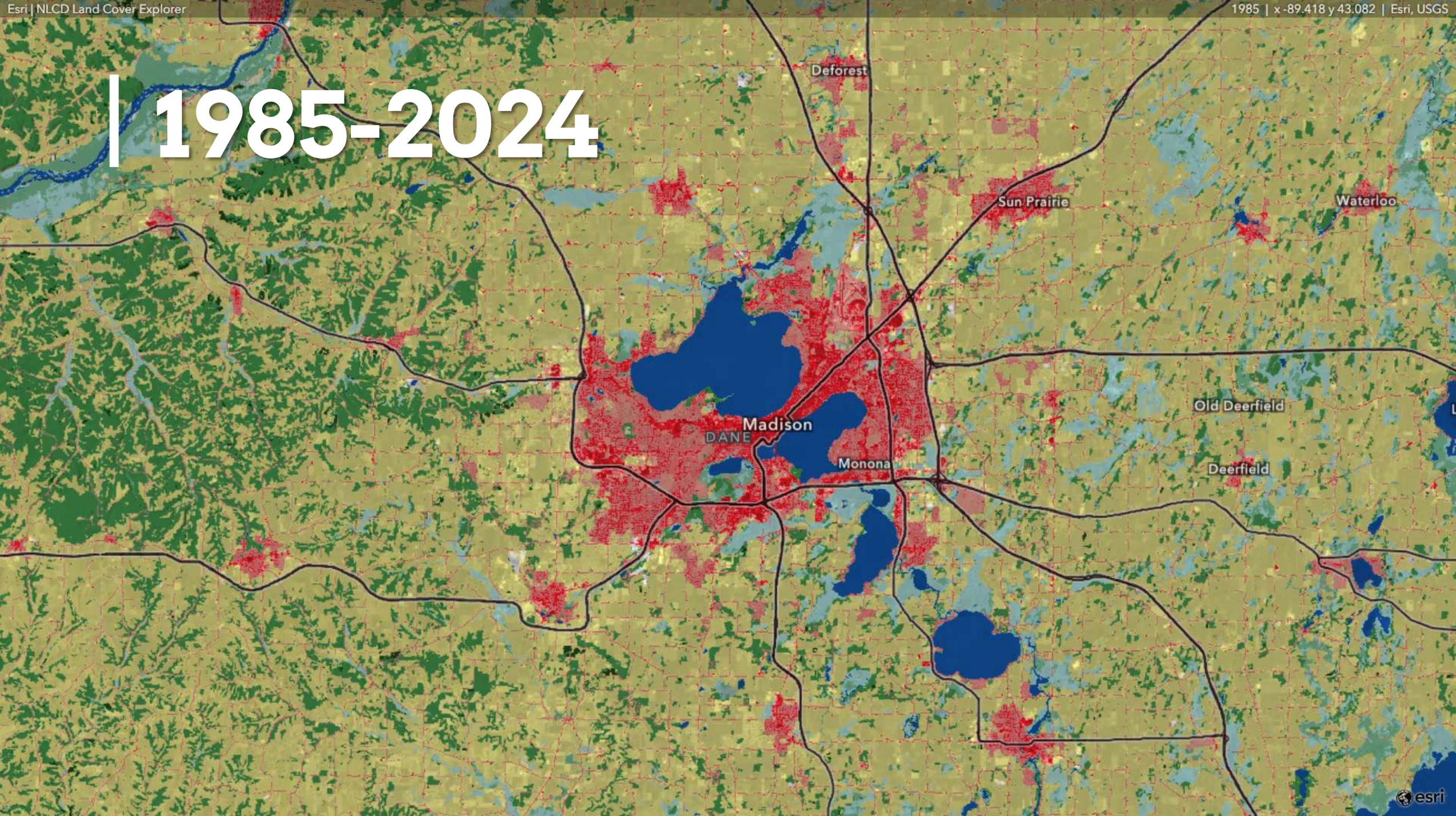
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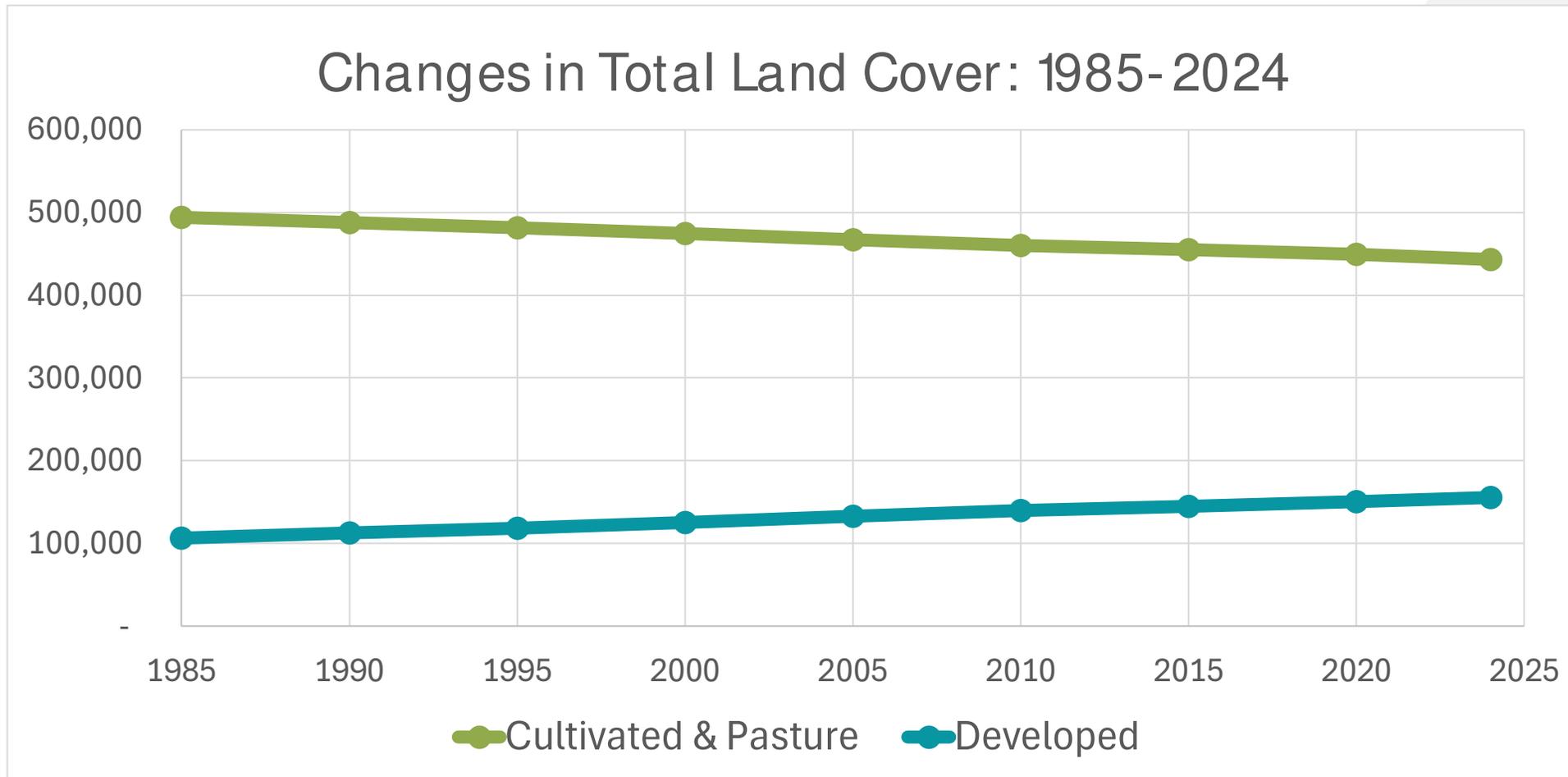
2024



# | 1985-2024

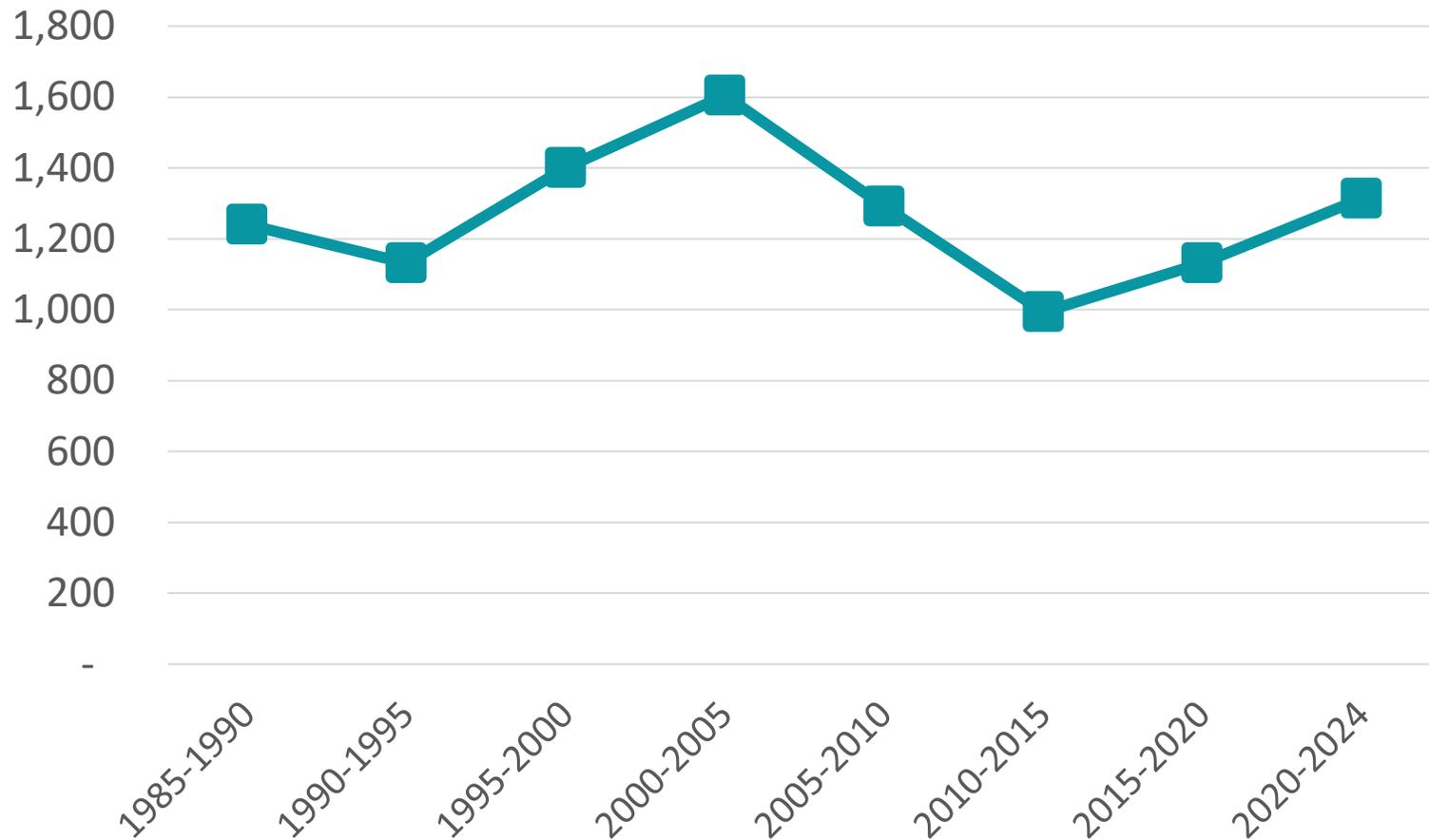


# Dane County Acreage Changes (NLCD Data)



# Land Use Efficiency

Acres Developed Per Year: 1985-2024

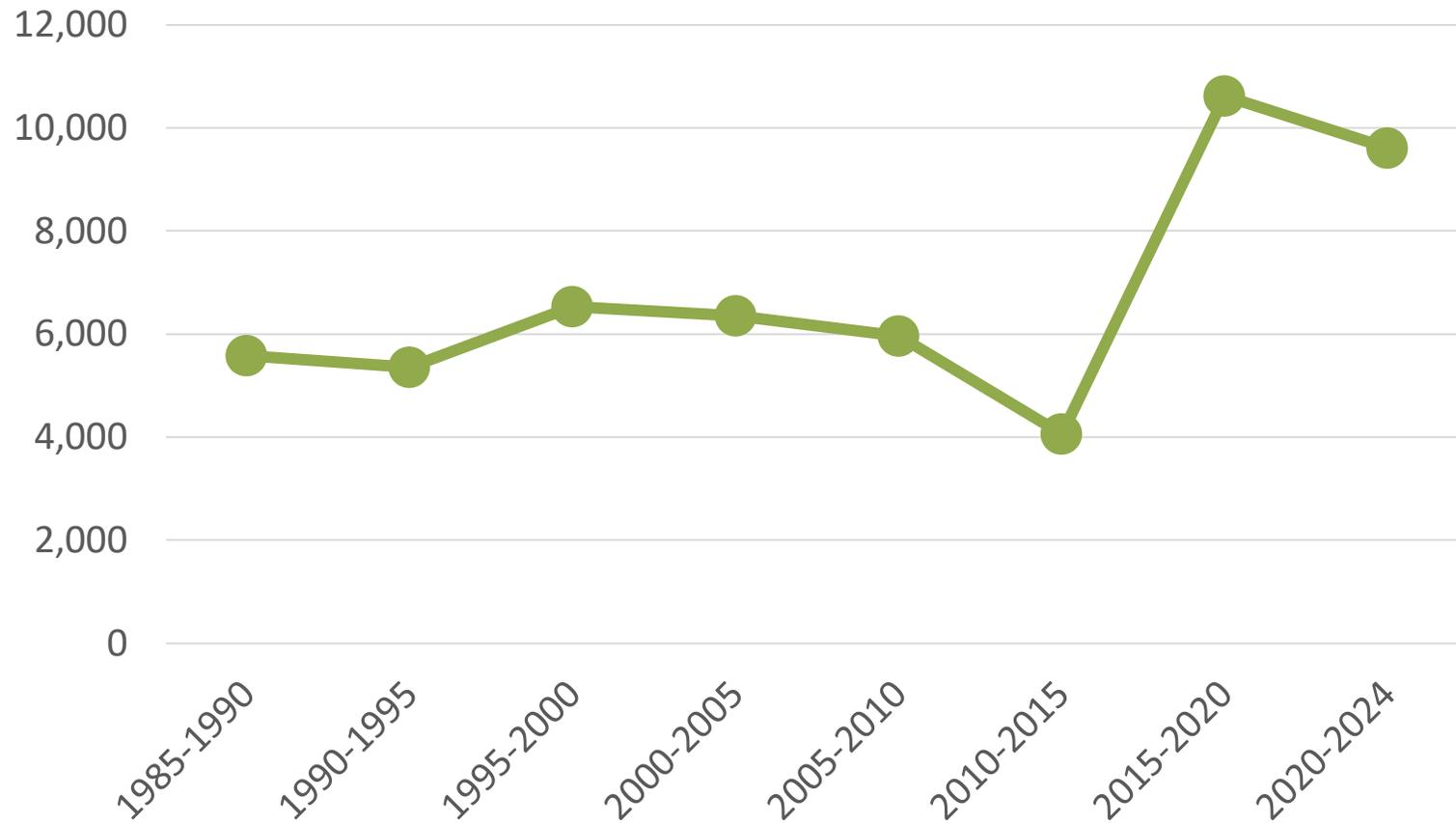


**1,262 acres/year**



# Land Use Efficiency

Population Increase Per Year: 1985-2024

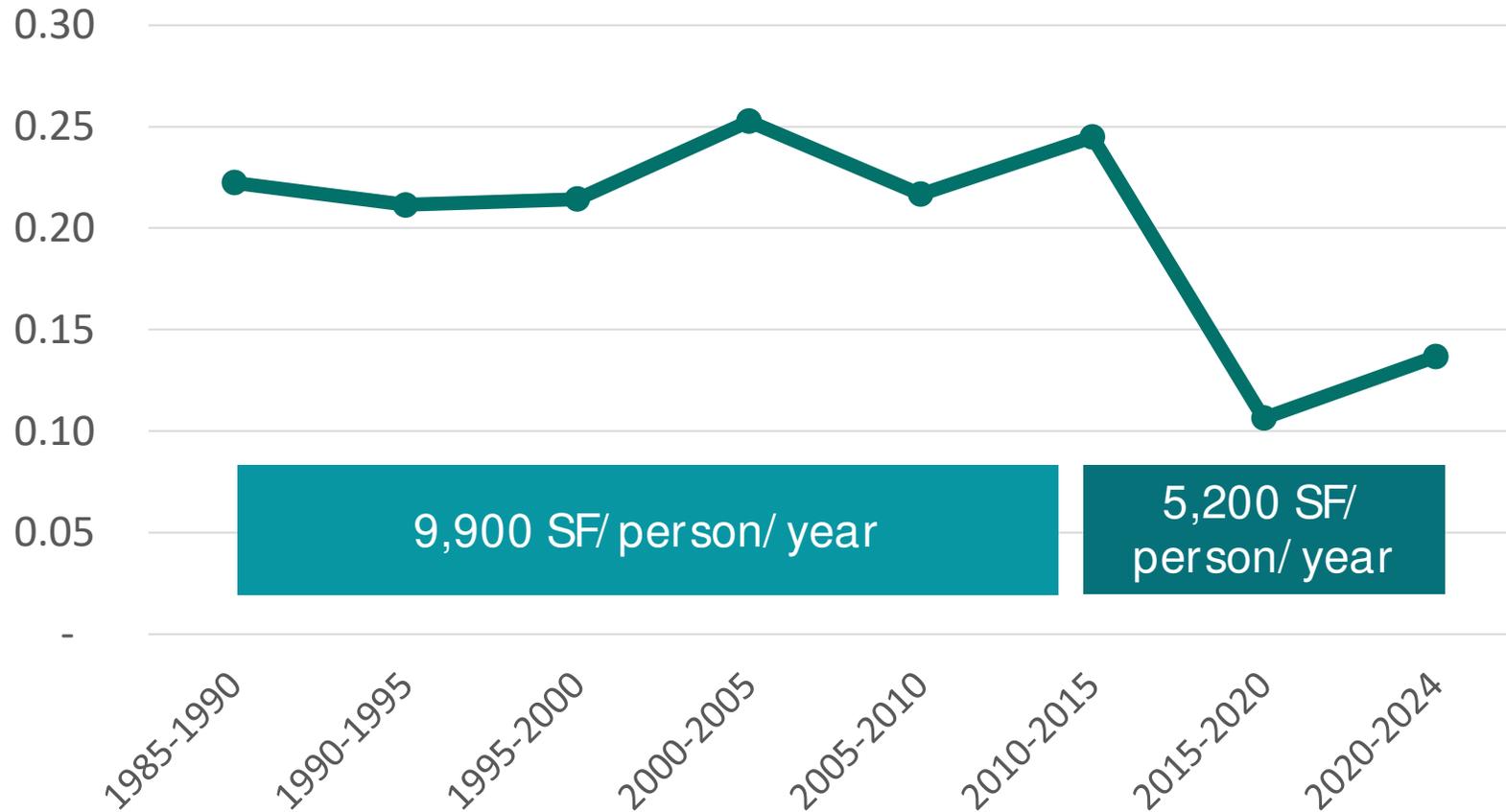


**6,686 people/year**



# Land Use Efficiency

Acres Developed Per Person Per Year,  
1985-2024



9,900 SF/ person/ year

5,200 SF/ person/ year

**8,200 SF/  
person/year**



# What's Happening?

- Is it Use-Value Assessment finally working?



# What's Happening?

- Is it Use-Value Assessment finally working?
  - Passed in 1995,  
fully implemented in 2000



# What's Happening?

- Is it Farmland Preservation Tax Credits finally working?

Gov ▾



State of Wisconsin

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Online Services ▾ Licenses/Permits ▾ Publications ▾ Programs ▾

## Farmland Preservation Tax Credits

Eligible landowners may claim farmland preservation tax credits. The amount of the credit depends on the number of acres that the landowner participates in the program.

Landowners who are new to the program or need to obtain a copy of the program rules should contact the County Conservation Department in the County their farmland is located.

## NEW! Farmland Preservation Program Legislative Updates

On December 6, 2023, Governor Evers signed Assembly Bill 133, now known as the Farmland Preservation Program Act, which changes farmland preservation agreements minimum term lengths and increasing farmland preservation tax credits. The changes go into effect starting on December 8, 2023 and will affect tax credits for farmland preservation agreements entered into on or after that date.

Check out the [Legislative Updates to the Farmland Preservation Program](#).

### What are the eligibility requirements for claiming farmland preservation tax credits?

The following requirements must be met to claim the farmland preservation tax credit:

The landowner must have been the owner of the farmland for the year

# What's Happening?

- Is it Farmland Preservation Tax Credits finally working?
  - 2023: 700 claims, \$1.3M on 133,000 acres (about \$10/ acre)

Gov ▾



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# What's Happening?

- Is it Farmland Preservation Tax Credits finally working?
  - 2023: 700 claims, \$1.3M on 133,000 acres (about \$10/acre)
  - 2023 Dane County ag land average sale price: \$7,400/acre (with rumors of offers for \$20K/acre and up)

Gov ▾



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# What's Happening?

**It's housing development trends!**

- More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing



# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Because CARPC adopted a plan encouraging this?



## Greater Madison grows together

2050 REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
FRAMEWORK



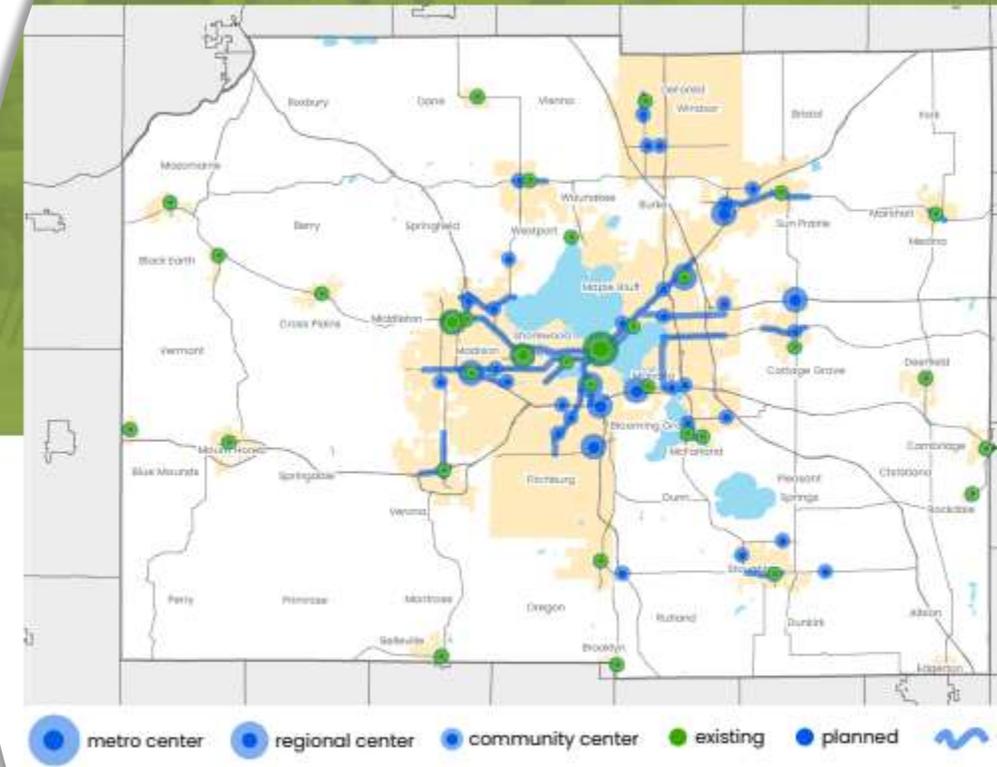
# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Because CARPC said this should happen in a planning document
- We DID say this should happen!

## DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Focus growth in centers and corridors



The Framework recommends locating at least 40% of all future growth within centers and corridors. **Centers** are vibrant places where people can live, work, shop, be entertained, and meet and connect with others. **Corridors** are linear centers. They provide a variety of ways to travel, including walking, biking, and, where possible, transit. Along many stretches, they also offer similar combinations of activities found in centers.

# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
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- Because CARPC said this should happen in a planning document
- We DID say this should happen
- **But we're just reflecting public opinion about what should happen**

## Planning Process

### A Framework shaped by you

The work to prepare this Framework started in 2018 with the [A Greater Madison Vision](#) (AGMV) initiative. This initiative, guided by leaders from business, government, and community organizations, engaged people across the region to share their priorities for possible futures.

A Greater Madison Vision culminated in a public survey that sought input on growth scenarios and asked participants their priorities for future growth. More than 9,000 people completed the survey.

The top priorities identified in the survey were:

- Reducing and becoming resilient to climate change
- Increasing access to opportunity for all people
- Expanding housing and transportation choices

Read more about AGMV survey results in [Appendix A](#).

CARPC's Regional Development Framework carries forward the AGMV message that "how we grow matters" and presents a vision for regional growth.

### Defining a vision for the future

Building on the public priorities identified during the AGMV process, CARPC established draft goals and objectives for regional development. These goals and objectives were refined based

on alignment with CARPC's mission and feedback from local government.

### Identifying strategies

After establishing goals and objectives, CARPC captured the priorities of Madison region stakeholders, CARPC identified growth strategies that can best achieve them.

This step involved researching the approaches used in Dane County communities and other regions to achieve similar goals and objectives. CARPC examined and identified common themes from the regional plans of more than a dozen regions across the U.S. CARPC also reviewed comprehensive plans from regional communities in the greater Madison region and consulted with 16 local community officials.

  
**9,186**  
PARTICIPANTS

**2,500**  
COMMUNITIES



# What's Happening?

## More Attached- Unit Housing, Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Because CARPC said this should happen in a planning document?
- We DID say this should happen.
- Actually, we're just reflecting public opinion about what should happen
- And we collected those opinions as it was already happening (2018-2019)

## Planning Process

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**9,186**  
PARTICIPANTS

  
**2,100**  
COMMENTS



# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Preferences



# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Preferences
- SF Valuations/ Construction Costs



# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Preferences
- SF Valuations/ Construction Costs
- Persistent low rental vacancy



# What's Happening?

More Attached- Unit Housing,  
Less Single- Family Detached Housing

- Preferences
- SF Valuations/ Construction Costs
- Persistent low rental vacancy
- Local Policy

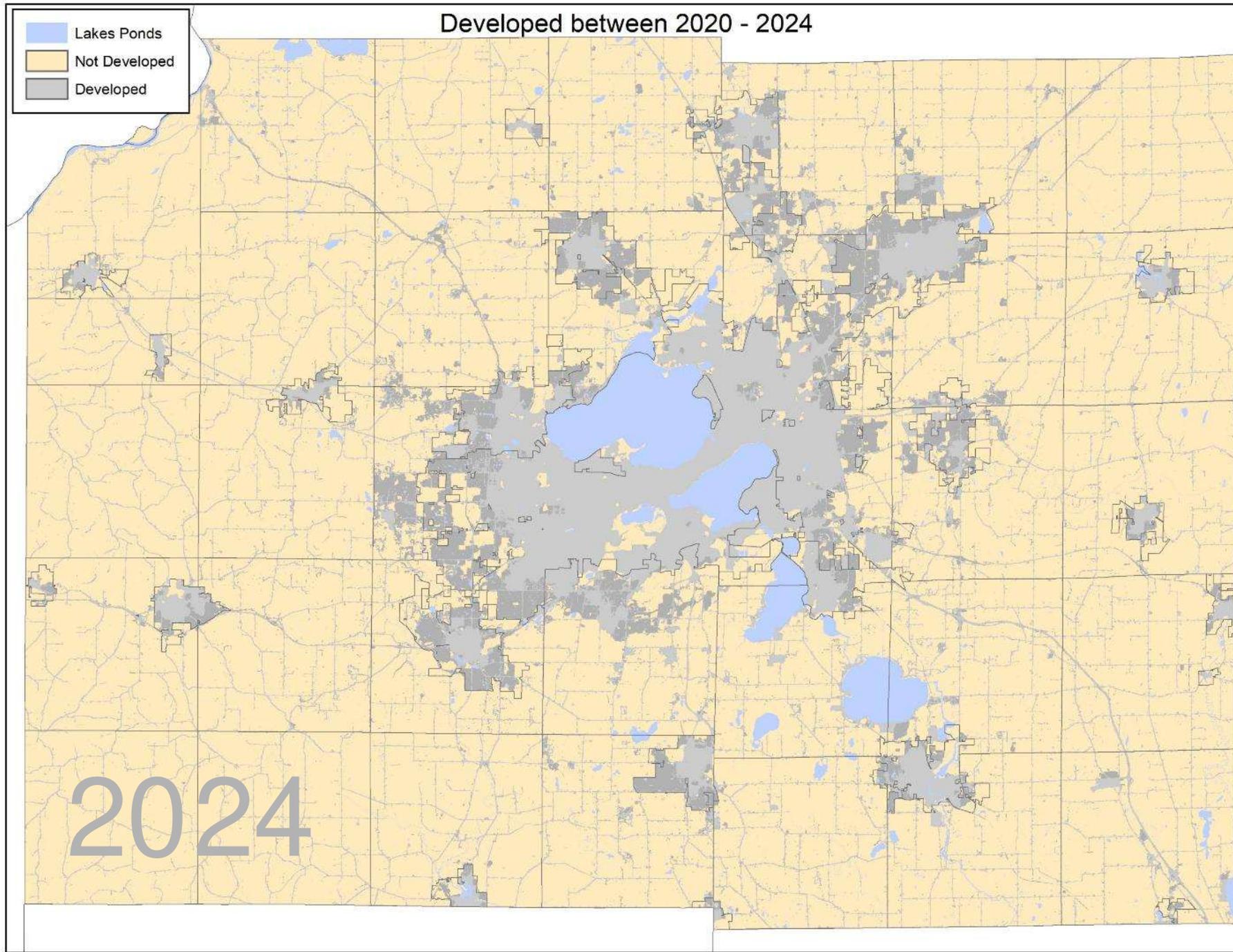


# What's Happening?

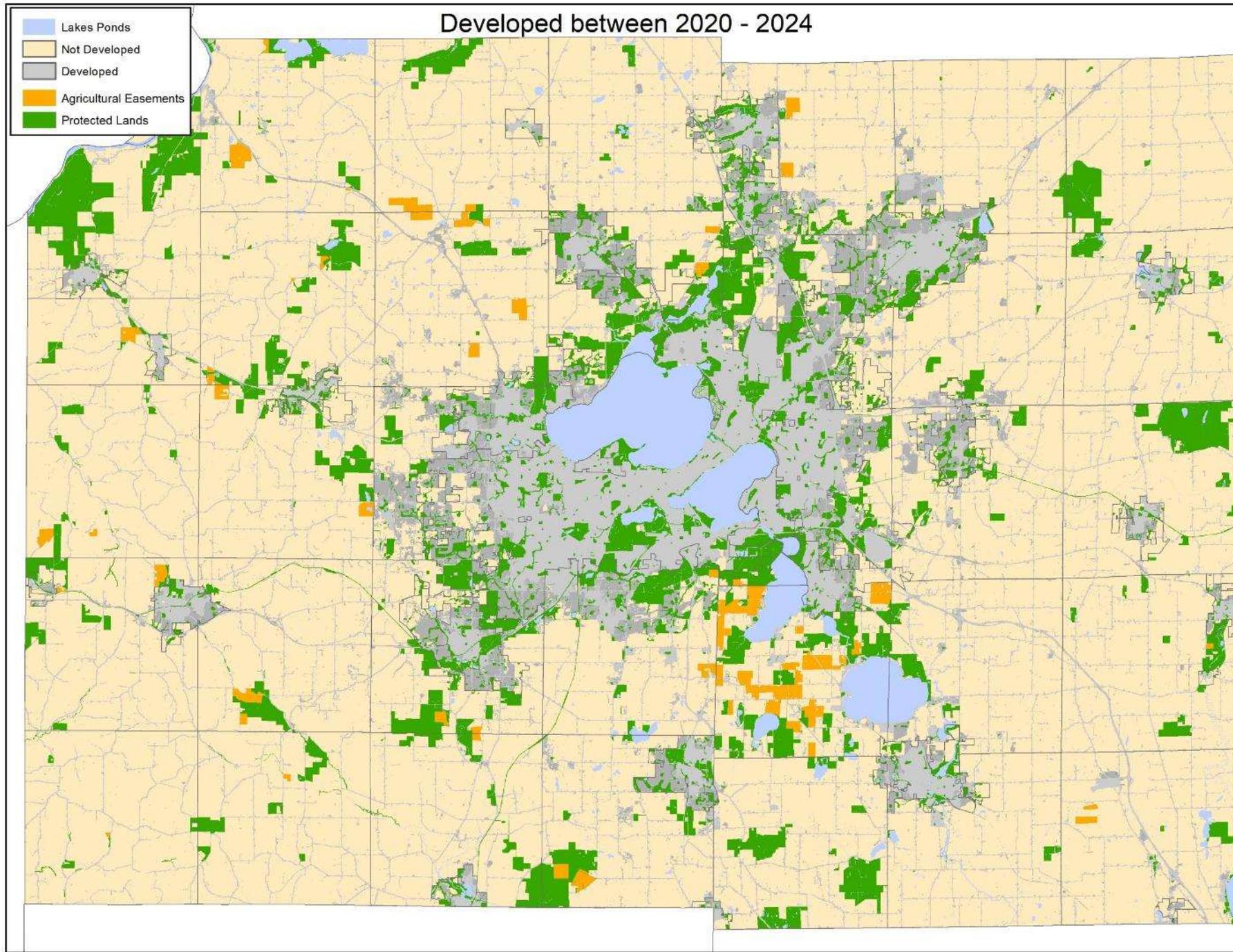
What about the role of preservation purchases and easements?



# How Much Land Is Currently Protected from Development?

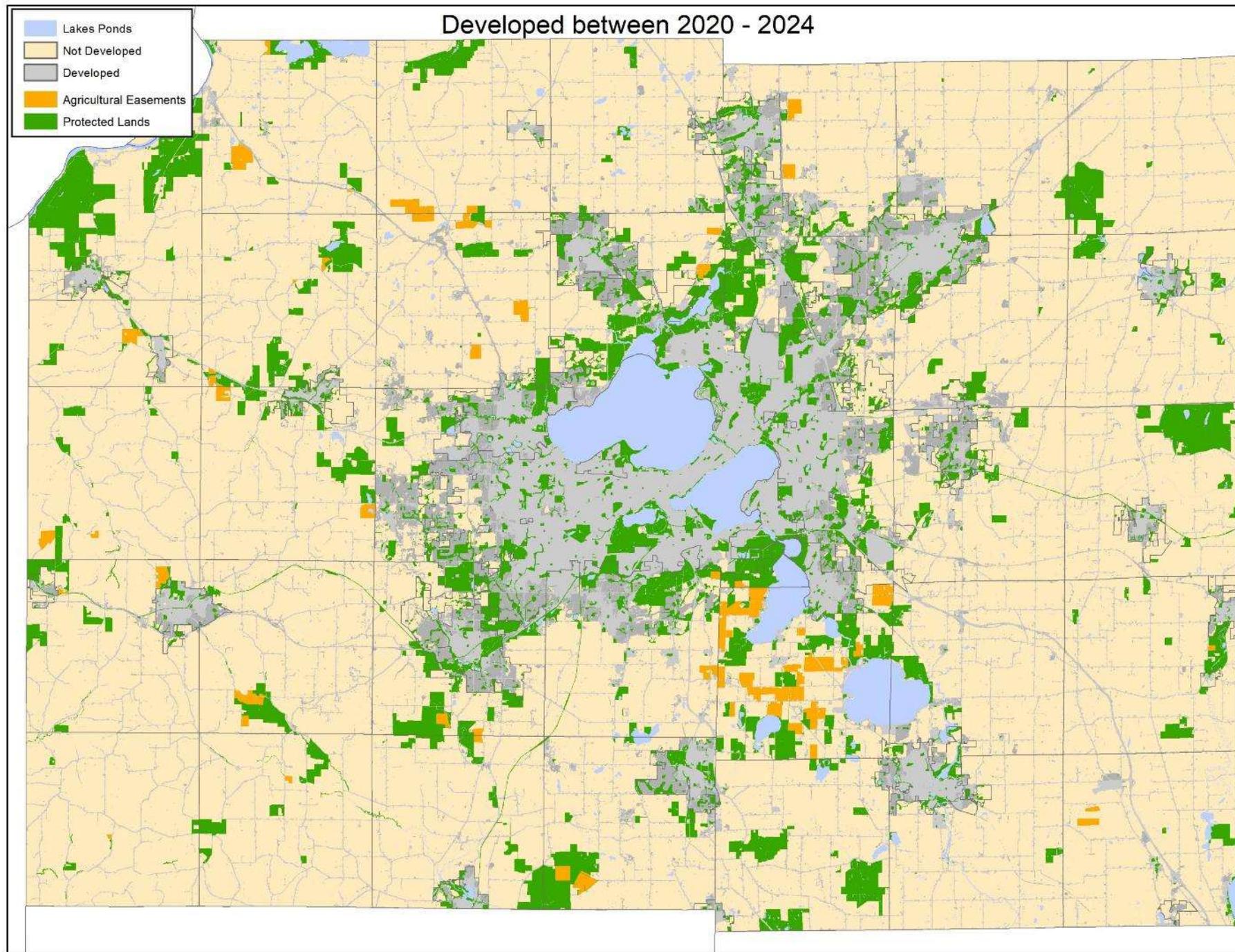


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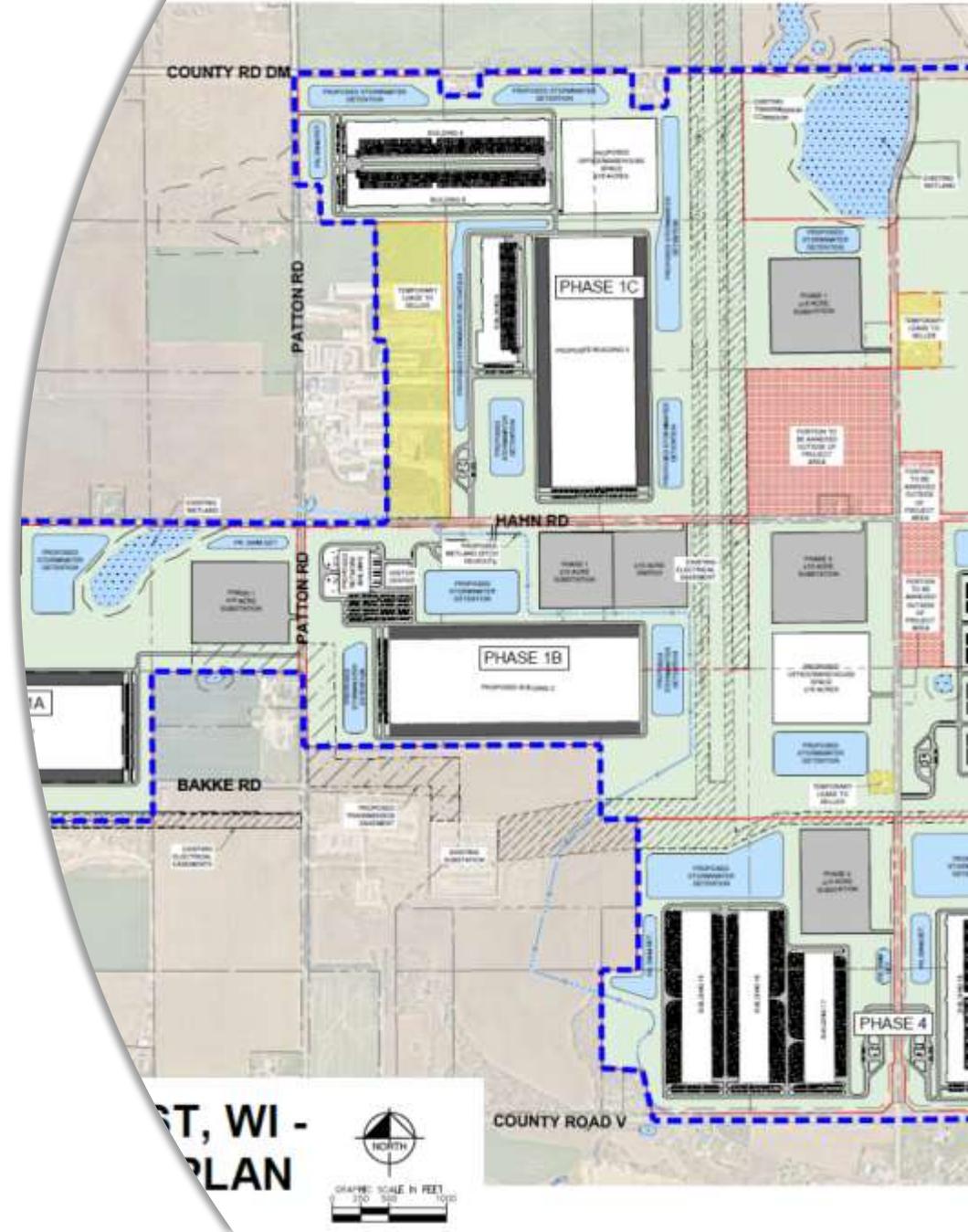
# How Much (Farm) Land Is Currently Protected from Development?

CURRENT ESTIMATE:  
7,400 ACRES  
PROTECTED  
FARMLAND



# Challenges

- Data Centers



# Challenges

- Data Centers
- Solar Farms



# Challenges

- Data Centers
- Solar Farms
- Succession Planning



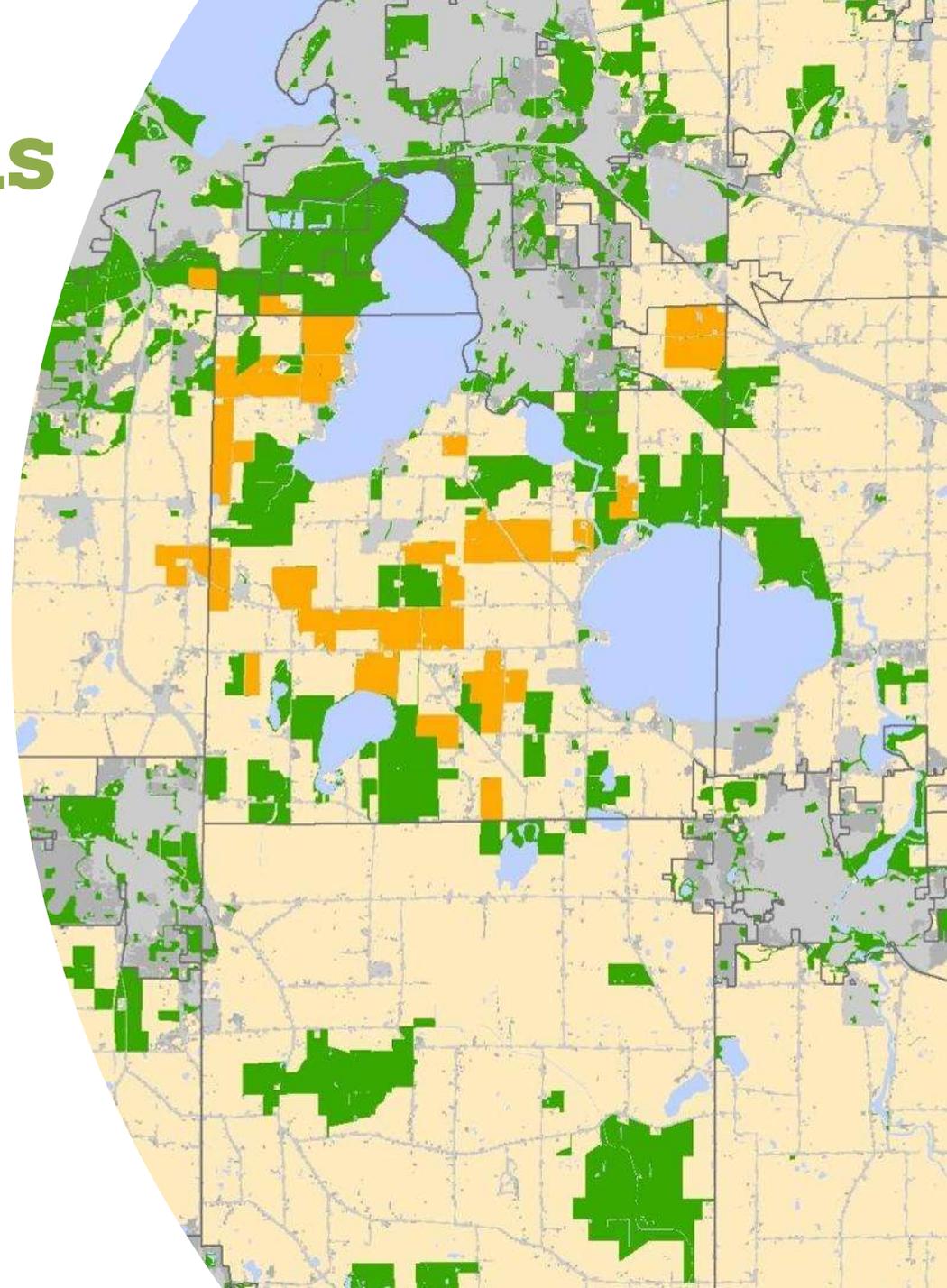
# Opportunities and Actions

- Conservation Easements



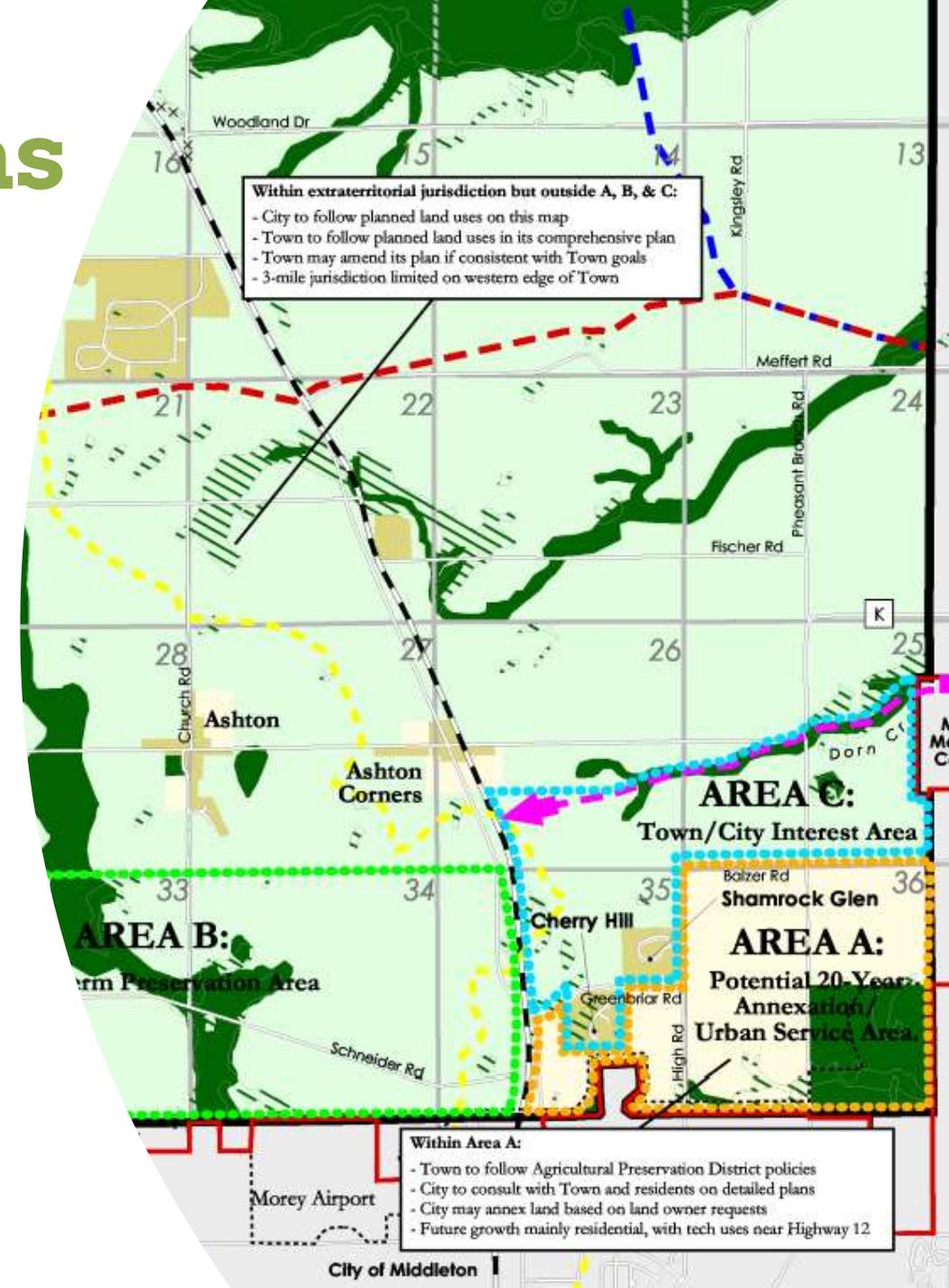
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- Conservation Easements
- Local Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights Programs (PDR/ TDR)



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- Municipal Boundary Agreements



# Opportunities and Actions

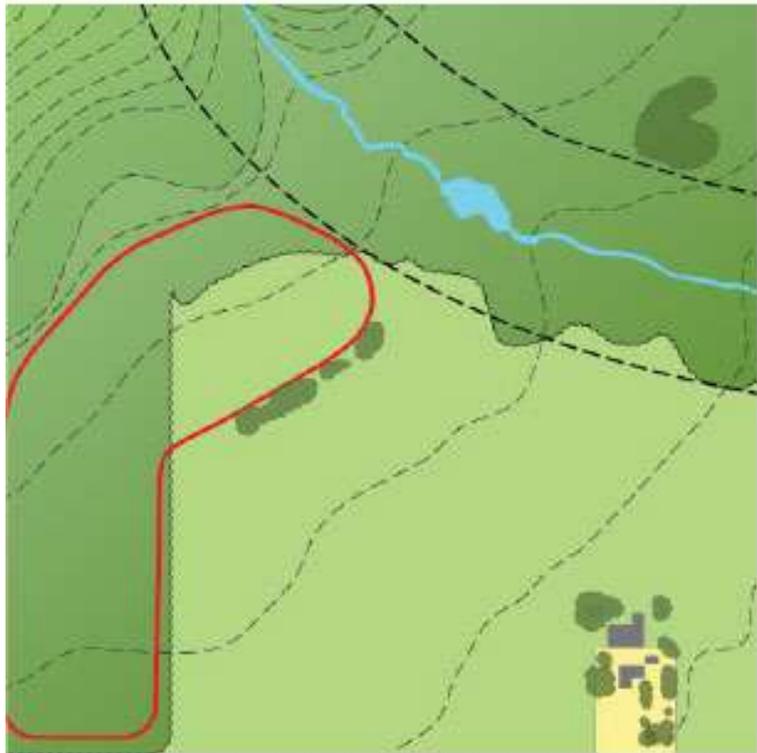
- Conservation Easements
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- Municipal Boundary Agreements
- Strategic Edge Development



# Opportunities and Actions

- Conservation Easements
- Local Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights Programs (PDR/ TDR)
- Municipal Boundary Agreements
- Strategic Edge Development
  - NOT a Conservation Neighborhood





**Existing Landscape**

**Subdivision Sprawl**

**Conservation Neighborhood**

# Opportunities and Actions

- Conservation Easements
- Local Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights Programs (PDR/ TDR)
- Municipal Boundary Agreements
- Strategic Edge Development
  - NOT a Conservation Neighborhood
  - NOT necessarily an Agrihood



# Opportunities and Actions

- Conservation Easements
- Local Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights Programs (PDR/ TDR)
- Municipal Boundary Agreements
- Strategic Edge Development
  - NOT a Conservation Neighborhood
  - NOT necessarily an Agrihood
  - A designed urban/ ag edge within a property



# Opportunities and Actions

- Conservation Easements
- Local Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights Programs (PDR/ TDR)
- Municipal Boundary Agreements
- Strategic Edge Development
- In ALL of the above:  
Emphasize Nutrient Retention and  
Water Quality protections



# | Discussion



# What's CARPC's Role?

## STILL FINDING OUR VOICE...

- Continue to encourage infill development, centers and corridors



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- Continue to encourage infill development, centers and corridors
- Support boundary agreements and PDR/ TDR programs



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- Continue to encourage infill development, centers and corridors
- Support boundary agreements and PDR/ TDR programs
- Help figure out a response to data centers



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## STILL FINDING OUR VOICE...

- Continue to encourage infill development, centers and corridors
- Support boundary agreements and PDR/ TDR programs
- Help figure out a response to data centers
- Support water quality protection practices on ag lands (especially when protecting it from development)



