

## **Answer Man: Knocking things down to build it up in Onalaska**

**Dear Answer Man, this may be out of your territory, but what's going on in Onalaska, Wis., just north of I-90 and La Crosse, where a bunch of buildings are about to get knocked down? — Road Warrior**

No question is outside my territory. My interests are very catholic.

The demolition in Onalaska, on Wisconsin Highway 35 just north of La Crosse, will make room for a new tourism center at what's called Great River Landing. The project involves knocking down the former Western Spinning Mills building, Peter Pan Cleaners and other buildings to open up the riverfront and improve downtown while realigning the highway.

The demolition was to begin last week but now appears likely to start today.

Construction of the new tourism center will begin next summer. That facility also will house a Center for the Cultural and Natural History of the Upper Mississippi. Take a look at the master plan for what Onalaska, population 18,000, hopes to do along the riverfront and if they pull it off, it'll be a national model for how a small city with a great location can reinvent itself.

FYI, the city's name sounds like a Dakota word, but it's from a poem called "The Pleasures of Hope" by Scottish poet Thomas Campbell. It was "Oonalaska" in the poem, which has nothing to do with the Badger State:

*Now far he sweeps, where scarce a summer smiles,  
On Behring's rocks, or Greenland's naked isles:  
Cold on his midnight watch the breezes blow,  
From wastes that slumber in eternal snow;  
And waft, across the waves' tumultuous roar,  
The wolf's long howl from Oonalaska's shore.*

**You can't do better than the Answer Man. Send questions to P.O. Box 6118, Rochester, MN 55903 or [answerman@postbulletin.com](mailto:answerman@postbulletin.com).**