

# FRANKLIN AVENUE:



## A DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR ONE OF HARTFORD'S MOST VIBRANT CORRIDORS



City of Hartford  
**Eddie A. Perez, Mayor**

Department of Development Services  
Planning Division

3-24-2008 DRAFT



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Franklin Avenue is one of the most important commercial thoroughfares in the City of Hartford, extending a distance of 1.75 miles from Maple Avenue to the Wethersfield Town Line. An unusually wide street, it has a right-of-way of 100 feet in width that, combined with generous setbacks of twenty feet or more, gives it the appearance of a grand boulevard.

Franklin Avenue has long been known for its numerous restaurants, and while long-established eateries such as Mazzicato and Carbone's confirm that it is still the heart of Hartford's Little Italy, the variety of establishments on the Avenue has diversified in recent years to solidify its prominence as a vast multi-ethnic and international district.



Primarily residential at its northern and southern ends, Franklin Avenue derives its unique flavor from the mixture of residences and businesses that are located along the mile long stretch between Bond and Chester/Eaton Streets. Buildings are mostly two and three stories in height and many of them have restaurants and retail businesses on the ground floor and dwellings on the upper floors.

Contrary to the oft-told tale of the decline of city neighborhoods in Hartford and other cities, Franklin Avenue has retained its viability through the years. There are very few vacant structures and vacant lots are nearly non-existent. Most buildings are well-maintained and the sidewalks are vibrant with pedestrian life.



Franklin Avenue can be divided roughly into three segments, separated by Bond Street and South Street. The area north of Bond Street (Area I), particularly the blocks closest to Maple Avenue, are primarily residential and characterized by two and three family houses with an occasional business interspersed within. Although there has been much residential rehabilitation in the last ten years, there are a few vacant structures in the area. Near the intersections of Benton and Warner Streets are several automotive uses, including auto repair, sales, and a gas station. The concentration of these businesses and their poor site management, with cars in various states of repair, give this section of the Avenue a blighted appearance.

The second segment of the Avenue (Area II) between Bond and South Streets is the stretch that gives Franklin Avenue its identity. This is where the famed “restaurant row” is located, as well as other businesses that support the area’s diverse population. These businesses are vital to the diverse population that lives on and immediately around the Avenue, but they also attract customers from all over the city and region. The properties are very well-cared for and vacancies are rare.

The third segment of Franklin Avenue (Area III), extends from South Street to the Wethersfield Town Line. While there are still numerous businesses in this stretch, as one travels south the avenue becomes increasingly residential. Vacancies are concentrated in the two blocks between Plymouth and Chester Streets and are especially prevalent in the Johnson Controls complex south of Hanmer Street. Several auto-oriented businesses are also located in this area. While not as blighted as those north of Bond Street, they are also afflicted by poor site management that detracts from the appearance of the Avenue.







The zoning on Franklin Avenue largely reflects the current uses that exist on the Avenue. With the exception of a few residentially- zoned lots, the west side of Franklin Avenue is zoned for B-3 and B-4 business uses between Pawtucket and Chester Streets, a total of sixteen blocks. These zoning designations allow a broad range of retail business uses, as well as



multi-family residential uses such as those that are typically found in urban neighborhood business districts. The B-3 zone is distinguished from the B-4 zone in that it permits a variety of auto-oriented businesses, such as car sales, limited repair and drive-through restaurants. The east side of the street is similarly zoned between Shultas Place and Bolton Street, a total of twenty blocks. This reflects almost exactly the recommendation of the 1996 Plan of Development.

Several zoning amendments are being proposed (see maps and table that follow) that would protect the Avenue's pedestrian ambiance by changing the zoning classification of several blocks from the B-3 to B-4 district. Such changes, which are similar to changes made along Park Street, Maple, Farmington, and Albany Avenues in the last twenty years would prohibit the establishment of new auto-oriented establishments in those areas.





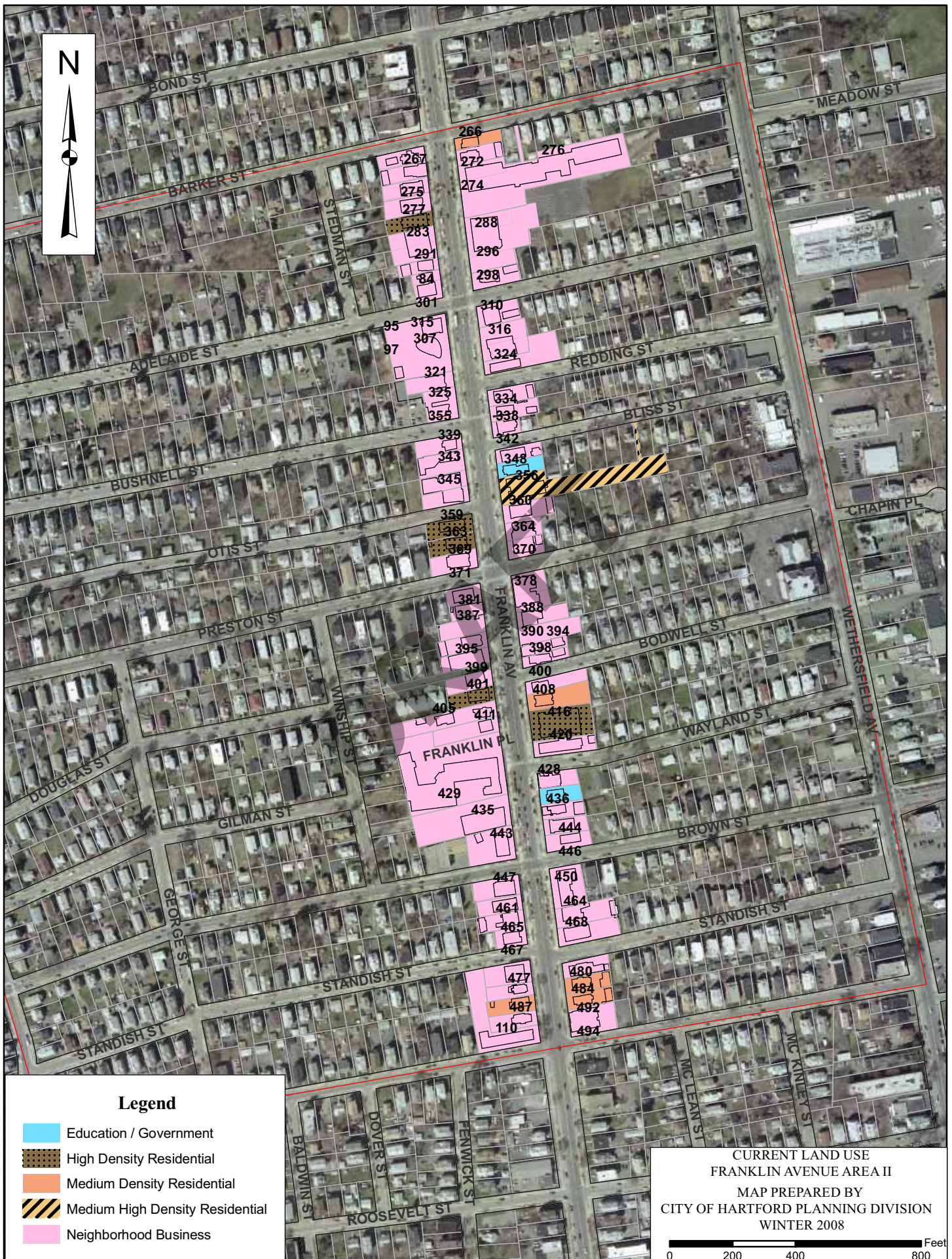
### Legend

- Education / Government
- High Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Medium High Density Residential
- Neighborhood Business

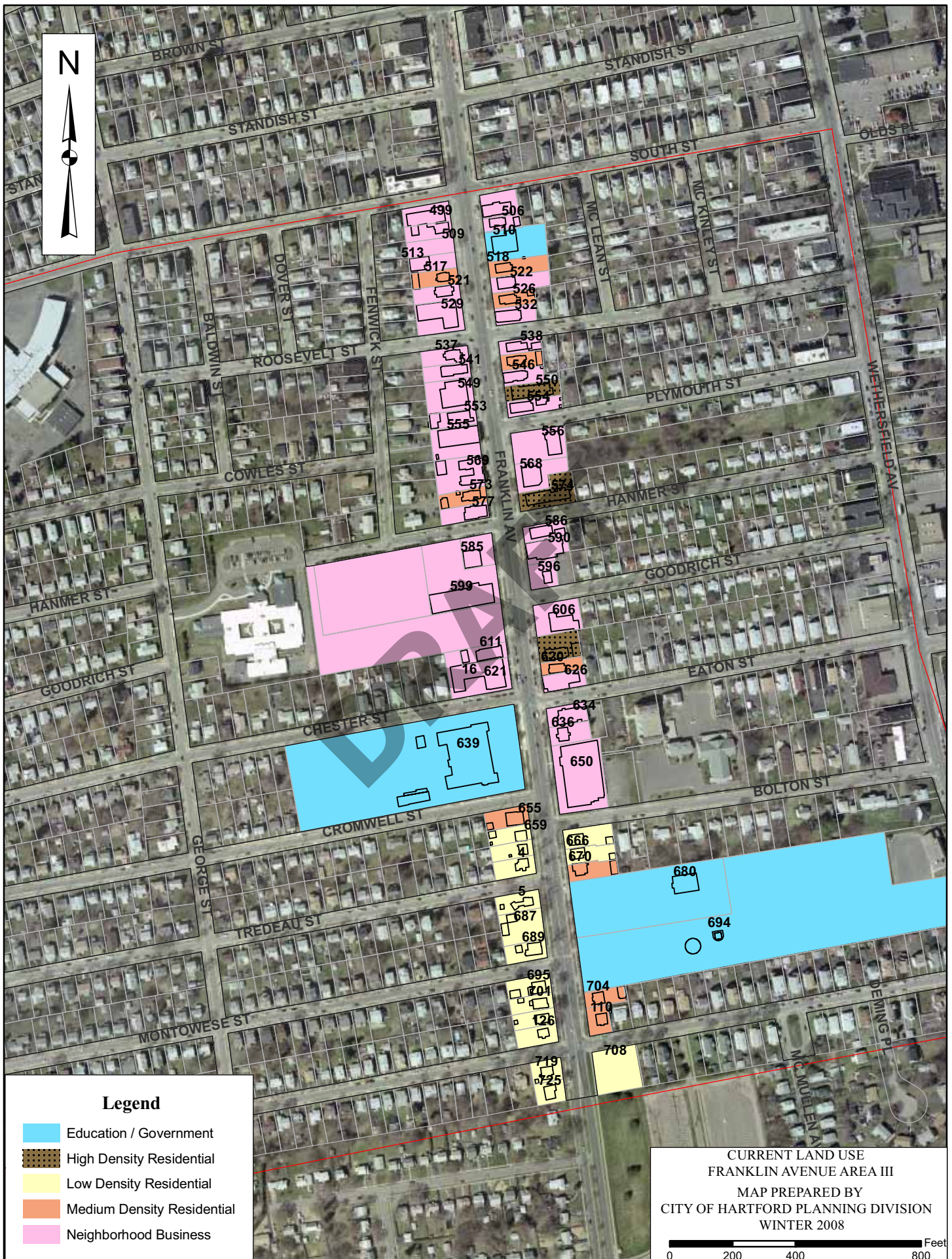
CURRENT LAND USE  
FRANKLIN AVENUE AREA I  
MAP PREPARED BY  
CITY OF HARTFORD PLANNING DIVISION  
WINTER 2008

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

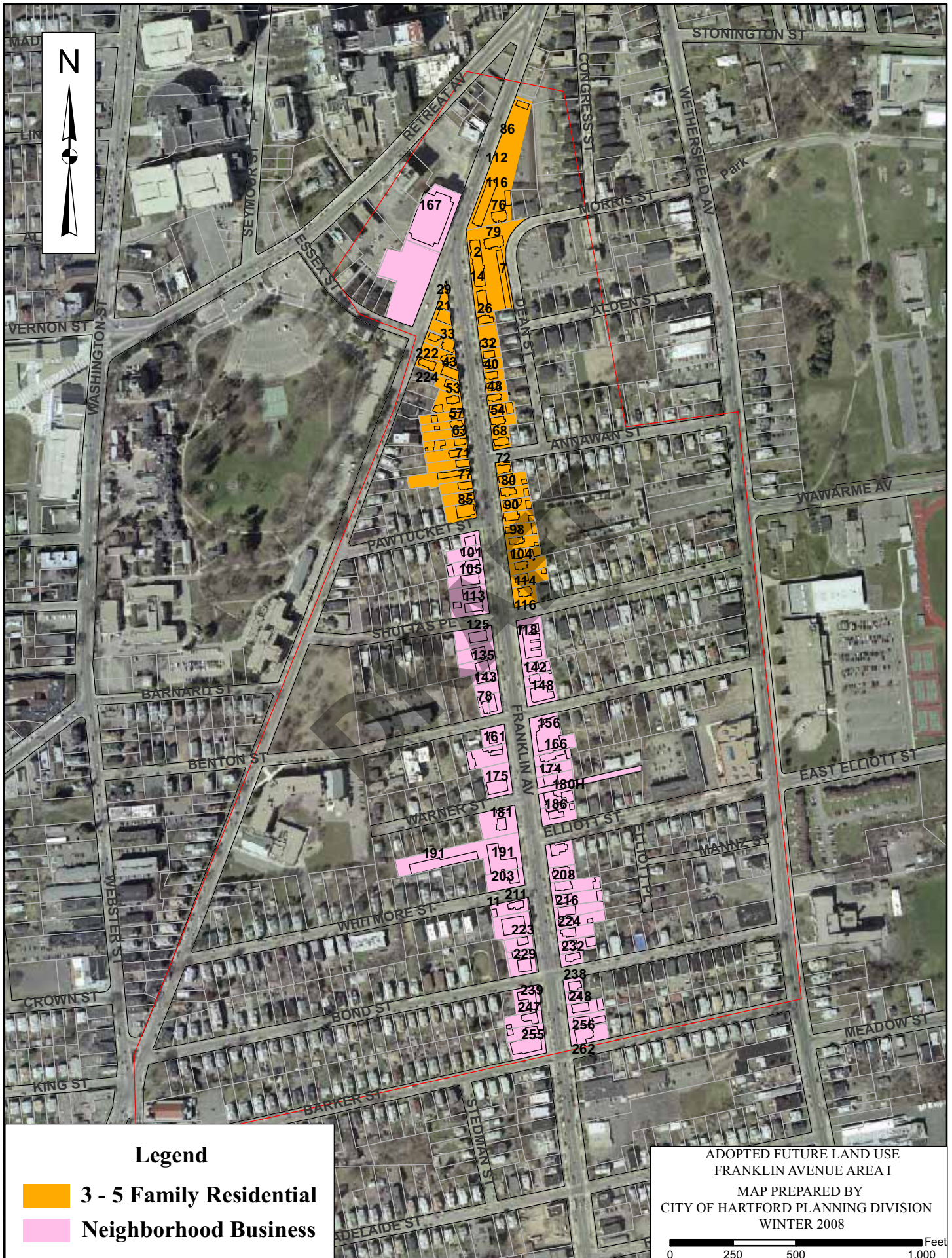




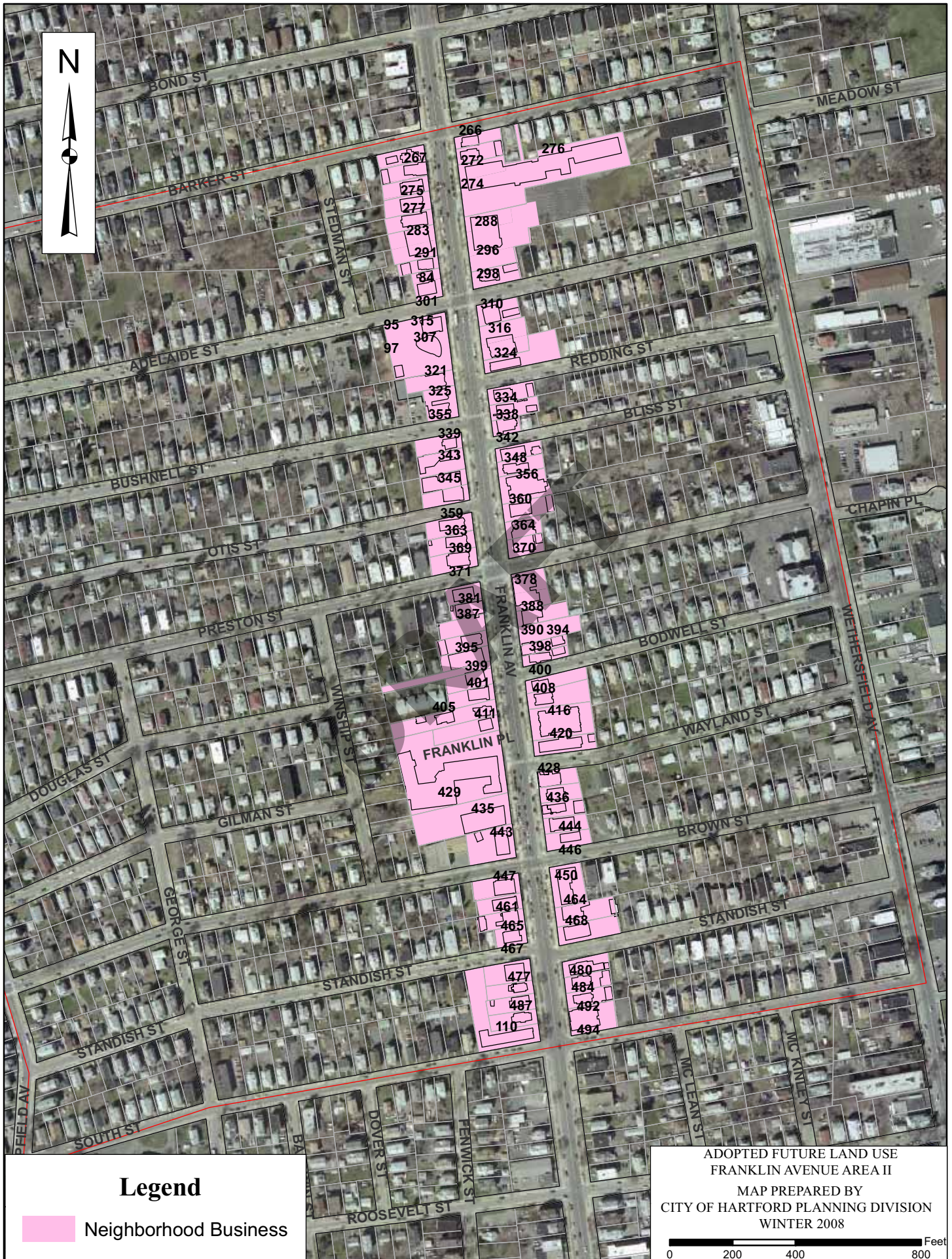








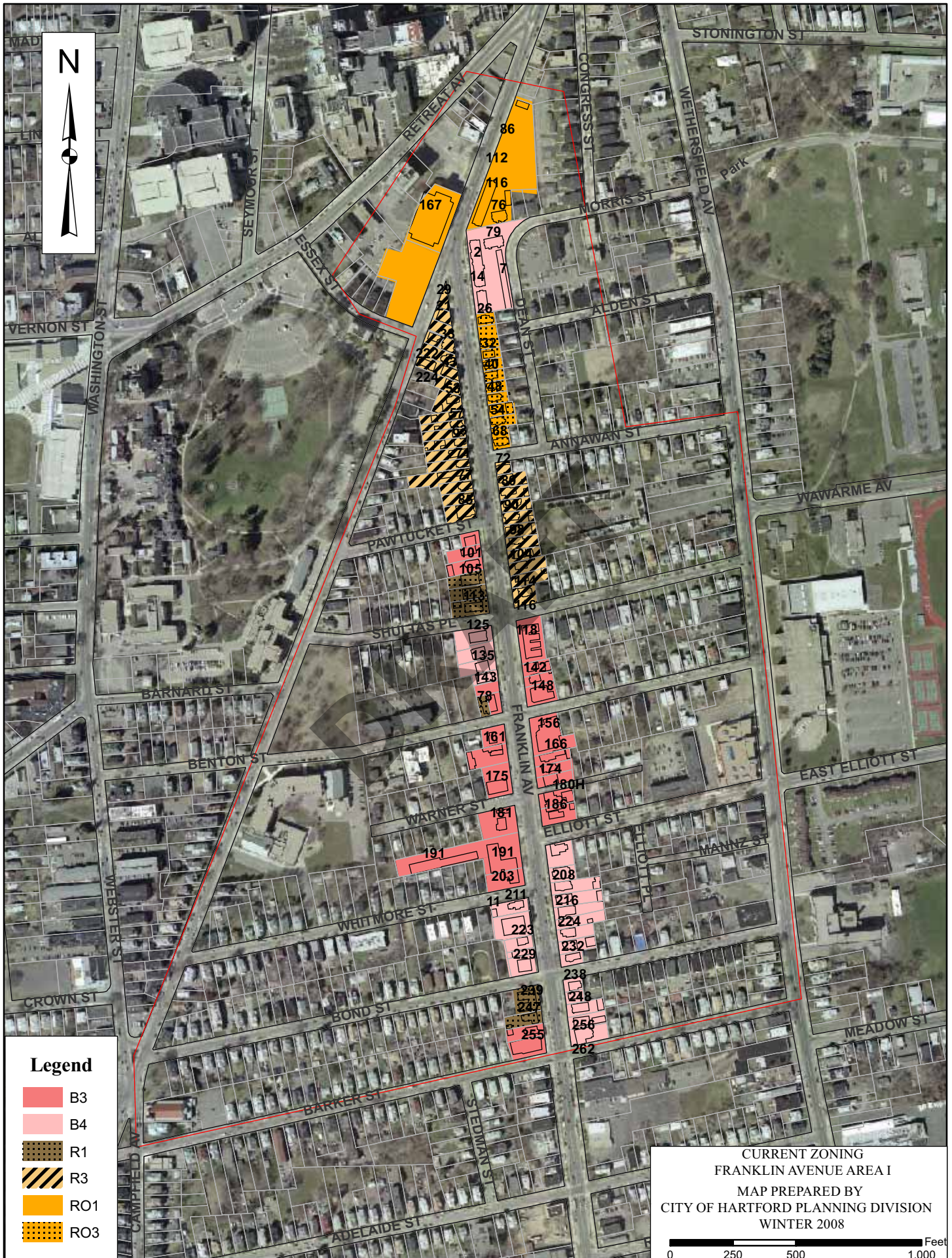








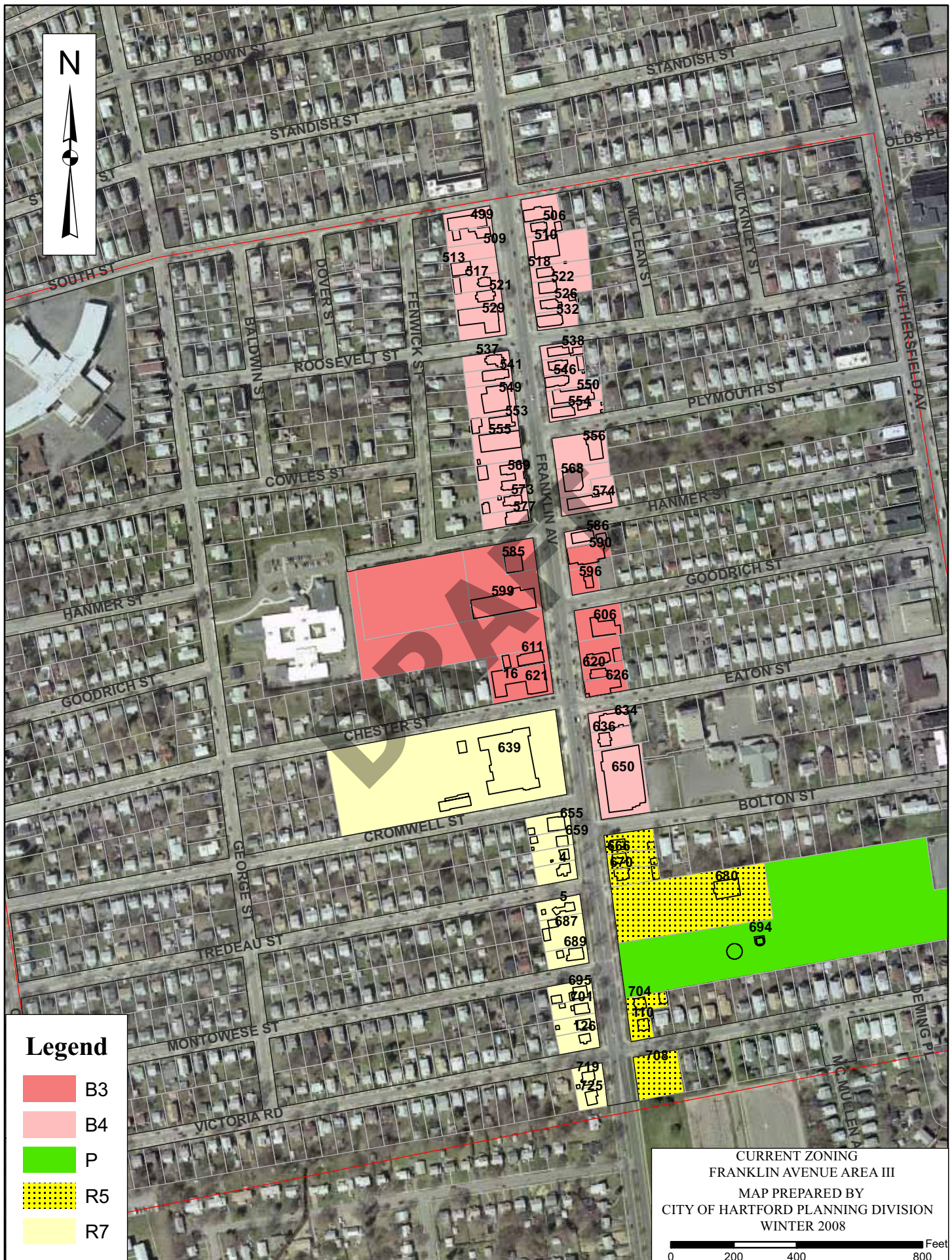












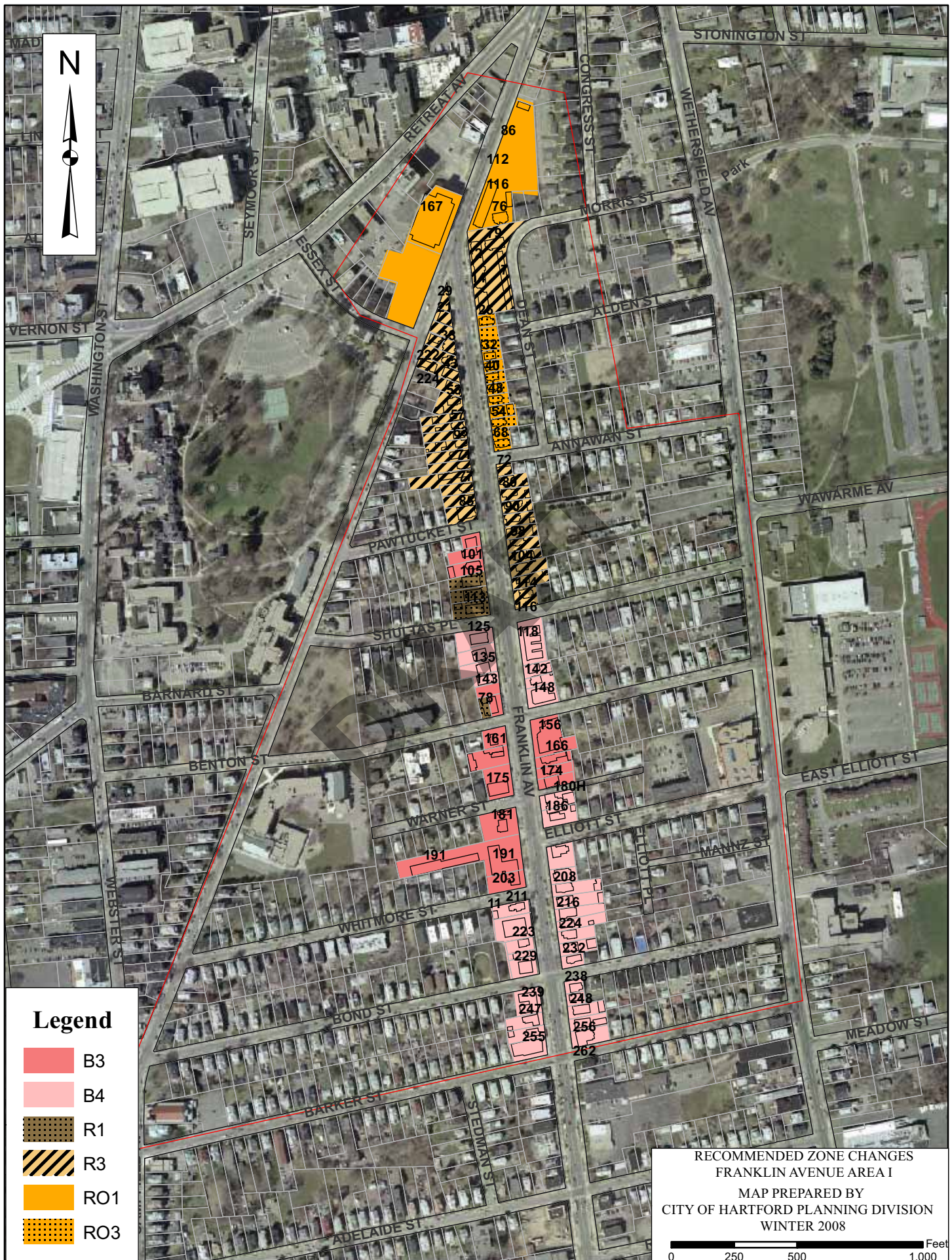




**TABLE OF RECOMMENDED  
ZONE CHANGES**

	LOCATION	CURRENT ZONE	PROPOSED ZONE	COMMENTS
<b><u>AREA I</u></b>	MORRIS TO ALDEN (EAST SIDE)	B-4	R-3	- CONSISTANT BLOCKFACE
	SHULTAS TO BENTON (EAST SIDE)	B-3	B-4	- MIXED-USE BUILDINGS - REMOVE AUTO USE / DRIVETHROUGH
	WARNER TO ELLIOT (EAST SIDE)	B-3	B-4	- MIXED-USE BUILDINGS - REMOVE AUTO USE / DRIVETHROUGH
	BOND TO BARKER (WEST SIDE)	R-1 & B-3	B-4	- MIXED-USE BUILDINGS - REMOVE AUTO USE / DRIVETHROUGH
<b><u>AREA II</u></b>	BODWELL TO WAYLAND EAST SIDE	R-1	B-4	- ALL MIXED-USE BUILDINGS - REMOVE AUTO USE / DRIVETHROUGH
	443 FRANKLIN	B-3	B-4	- BANK - REMOVE SPLIT ZONING
	444-446 FRANKLIN	B-3	B-4	- REMOVE SPLIT ZONING - EXISTING USED AUTO DEALERSHIP TO BE MADE NON- CONFORMING
<b><u>AREA III</u></b>	HANMER TO GOODRICH	B-3	B-4	- MIXED-USE BUILDINGS - REMOVE AUTO USE / DRIVETHROUGH

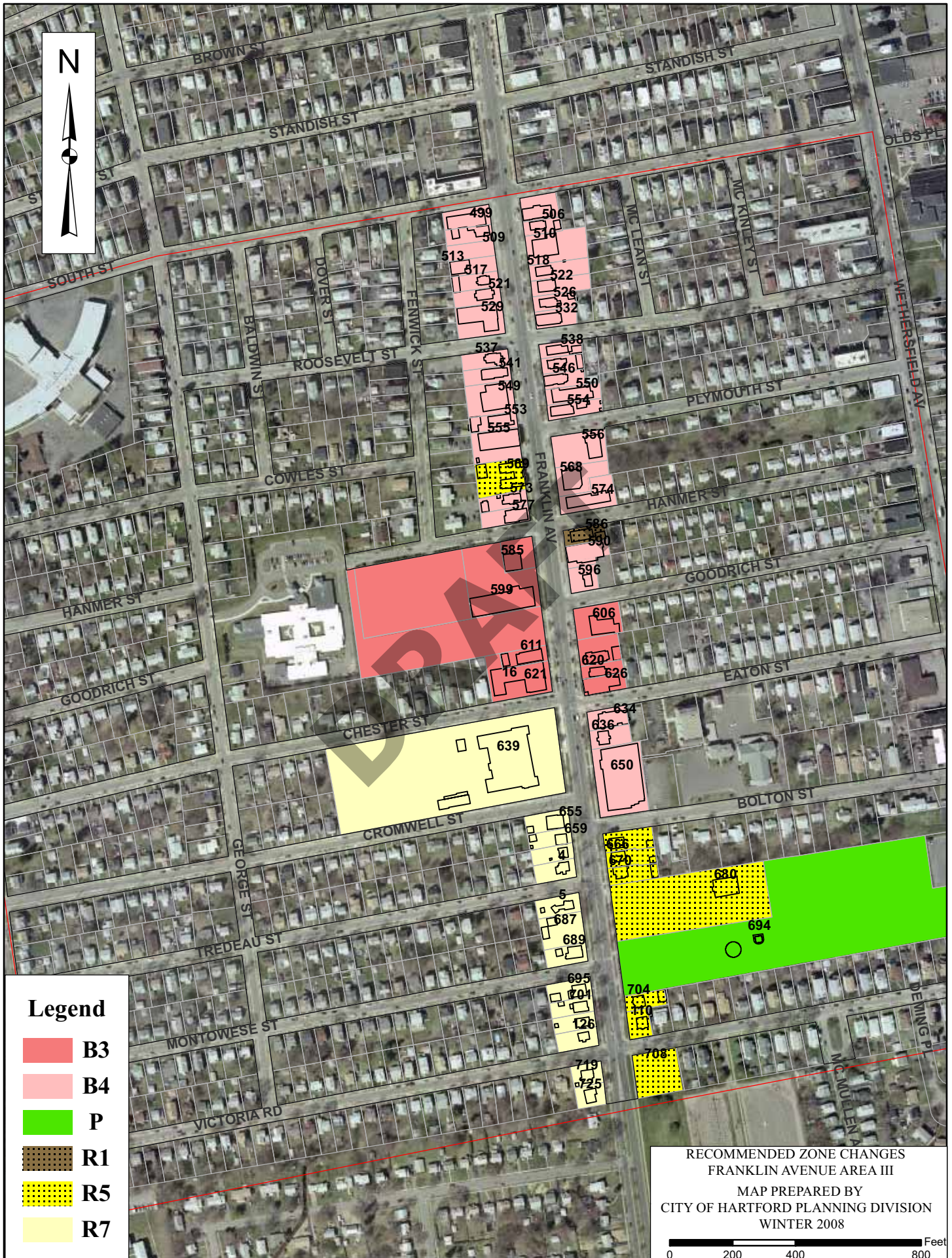
















## PARKING FORWARD OF THE BUILDING LINE

Throughout the length of the business-zoned portion of Franklin Avenue, cars are frequently parked in front of the building, often in front of the building line, a violation of the City's zoning code. For most properties, this situation has not arisen from a lack of legal parking options. At any given time, there are typically on-street parking spaces available at most establishments, yet customers frequently choose to park in front of the building, where the front yards are paved. Many businesses also provide customer parking in side or rear parking lots around their buildings.



These parking patterns detract from the appearance of the business district and exacerbate conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. In some instances, these conflicts can become unsafe for pedestrians. While surveying Franklin Avenue on foot, Planning staff witnessed and photographed a vehicle drive up a corner wheelchair-accessible curbcut, and along the sidewalk in front of several businesses, before parking in front of a shop.

Of the 46 blockfaces along the length of Franklin Avenue, most have building lines of at least 20 feet. Almost all the structures along the Avenue are built to the building line. The building lines along nine of the blockfaces are coincident with the street line, most as a result of ordinances passed by the Court of Common Council in the 1980s. The Zoning Board of Appeals has granted only two variances in the last 70 years permitting parking forward of any building line along Franklin Avenue.





## **AUTO SALES AND REPAIR BUSINESSES**

There are several auto sales and repair businesses situated near gateways to the Franklin Avenue Business District. These businesses are located near the Benton and Warner Street intersections in the north, the Goodrich and Hanmer Street intersections in the south, and at the Brown Street intersection in the heart of the district.

While these businesses are permitted in their current locations, they have persistent site management problems that detract from the appearance of their particular properties, the surrounding properties, and the image of the Avenue as a whole. The most visible aspect of these businesses is the storage of vehicles, many of which are in disrepair, located forward of the building line, and arranged haphazardly on the lot.



A concentrated effort of zoning enforcement is necessary in order to bring these properties into compliance with the Zoning Regulations. In addition, because all automobile sale and repair businesses operate under permits from the State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) according to site plans that are on file with that agency, the DMV can assist with the enforcement of their approved site layouts.





## IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

### VACANT STRUCTURES

The study identified several vacant structures on both Franklin Avenue and some of its side streets (see attached). While most of these buildings are in some disrepair, it is believed that, with few exceptions, most could be rehabilitated. A few of the properties that have fire or other damage should be demolished. The preferred option for the rest of the Avenue is rehabilitation, which would maintain the largely intact streetscape of two-and three family houses and similarly-scaled businesses, and retain the late nineteenth early twentieth century character of the Avenue and its side streets.





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## IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

**TABLE OF PROPERTY  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

ADDRESS	UNITS	USE/STYLE	CONDITION	IMPROVEMENT NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
52 FRANKLIN	2	MIXED USE	FAIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BOARDED</li> <li>- IN GOOD CONDITION</li> <li>- INADEQUATE PARKING</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REHAB. BLDG</li> <li>- OBTAIN VARIANCE TO ALLOW PARKING FOR TWO CARS ON LEFT SIDE OF LOT</li> </ul>
68-70 FRANKLIN	3	RESIDENTIAL	GOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FIRE DAMAGE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CONTINUE ONGOING REHABILITATION</li> </ul>
101-103 FRANKLIN	3	RESIDENTIAL	POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NOT BOARDED, OPEN TO ELEMENTS</li> <li>- EXTENSIVE FIRE DAMAGE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OWNER HAS INITIATED REHABILITATION</li> </ul>
118 FRANKLIN	MULTI-FAMILY	MIXED-USE	POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BOARDED</li> <li>- VACANT</li> <li>- HISTORIC</li> <li>- LACK OF PARKING</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REHABILITATE BUILDING</li> <li>- CURB EXTENSION FOR THE BLOCK</li> <li>- CREATE ANGLED PARKING</li> </ul>
161-163 FRANKLIN	4	MIXED-USE	POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BOARDED</li> <li>- IN POOR CONDITION</li> <li>- STYLE NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE AREA</li> <li>- MAJOR EXTERIOR PROBLEM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REHABILITATE BUILDING</li> <li>- DEMOLISH 3-BAY GARAGE AT THE REAR</li> <li>- REMOVE UNSECURED CHAIN LINK TEMPORARY FENCING</li> </ul>
184 FRANKLIN	2	RESIDENTIAL /OFFICE VICTORIAN	FAIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BOARDED</li> <li>- MISSING/BROKEN WNDOWS</li> <li>- MISSING BRICKS</li> <li>- ROTTEN PORCHES</li> <li>- FAIR CONDITION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REHABILITATE</li> </ul>





**TABLE OF PROPERTY  
RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)**

ADDRESS	UNITS	USE/STYLE	CONDITION	IMPROVEMENT NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
484 FRANKLIN	3	RESIDENTIAL	FAIR	- BOARDED - MISSING WINDOWS & DOORS - ROTTEN PORCHES - FAIR CONDITION	- REHABILITATE
563 FRANKLIN	5	MIXED USE	FAIR	- VACANT - NOT BOARDED	- WORK WITH OWNER TO LINE UP VIABLE USE
111 & 115 WHITMORE STREET		AUTO	POOR	- NONCONFORMING	- RESTORE RESIDENTIAL USE
12-14 WARNER STREET		RESIDENTIAL	FAIR	- BOARDED	- REHABILITATION
109-111 WHITMORE STREET		RESIDENTIAL	FAIR	- BOARDED	- REHABILITATION
56 WHITMORE STREET		VACANT LOT	N/A	- UNDER-UTILIZATION	- WORK WITH OWNER TO LINE UP VIABLE USE
194 BOND STREET		MIXED-USE	FAIR	- BOARDED	- REHABILITATION





## CONCLUSIONS



Franklin Avenue benefits from a lively mix of residential and business uses. This report recommends a few key initiatives to remedy emerging blight and address overall site management.

The Planning Division looks forward to working with Mayor Perez and the area stakeholders to refine these initiatives and move forward.

DRAFT