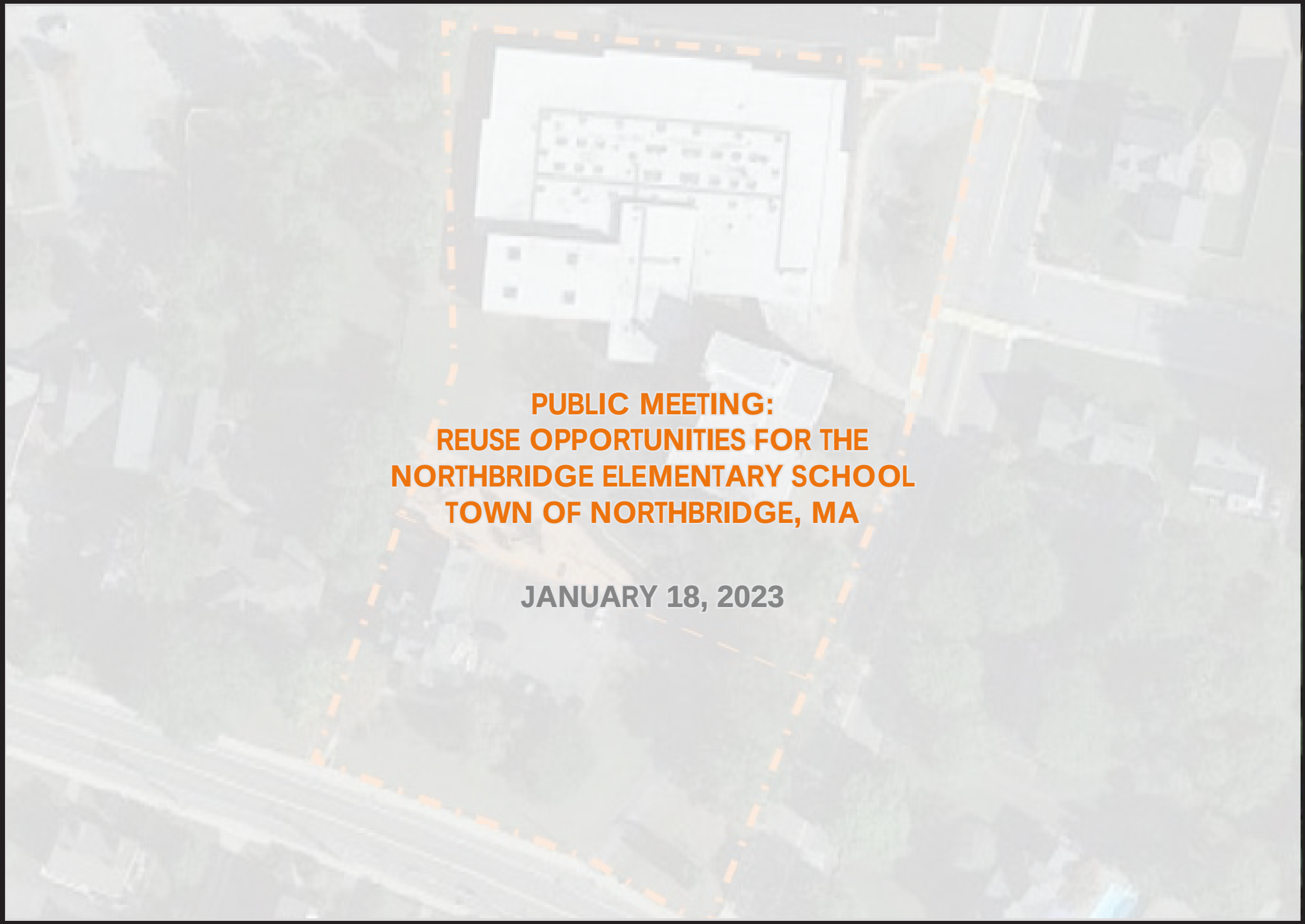
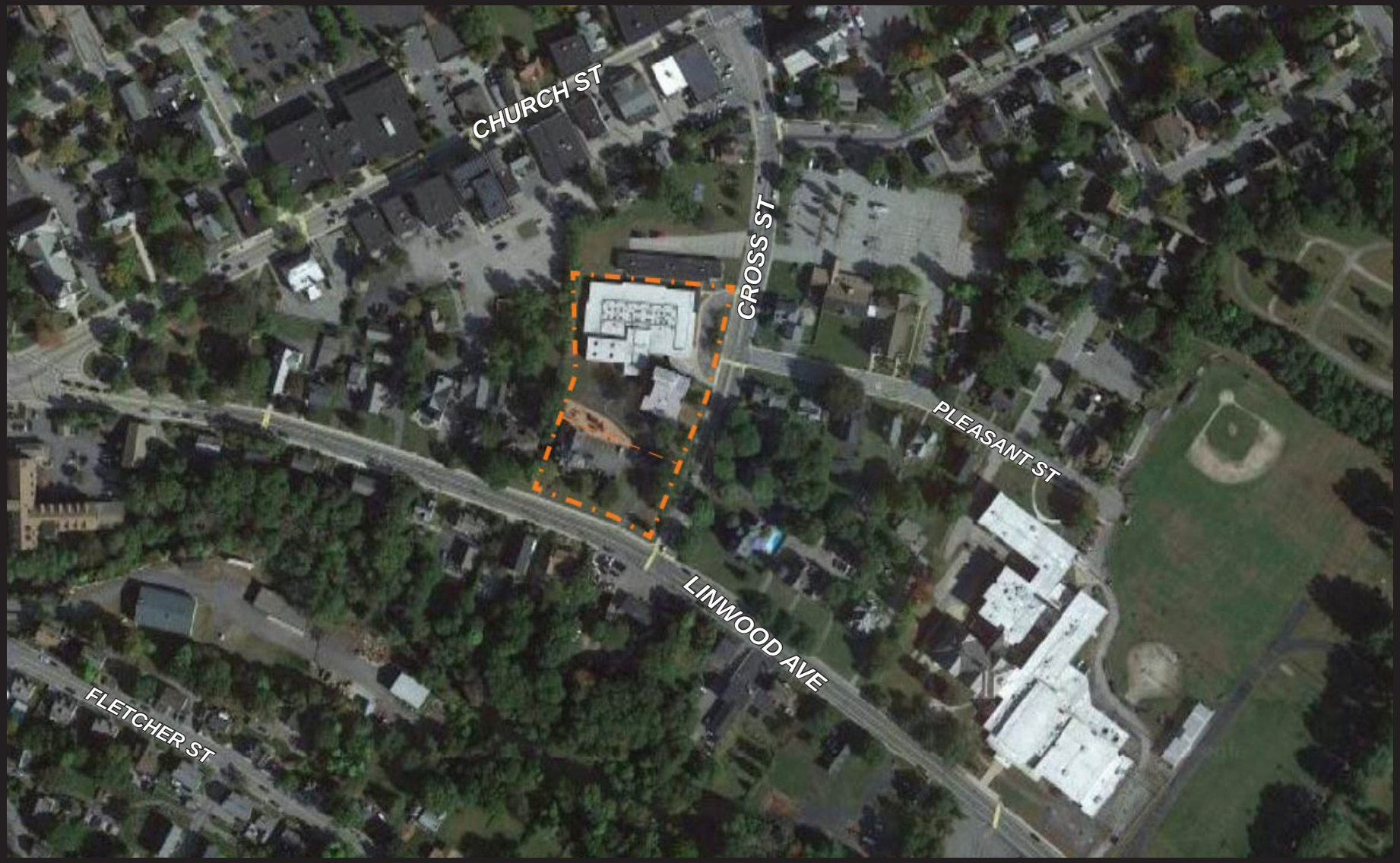


PUBLIC MEETING:
REUSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTHBRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE, MA

JANUARY 18, 2023

STUDY AREA: AERIAL IN CONTEXT

The site is behind Church St. retail, the municipal parking lot, and near the middle school, mill building redevelopment, Town Hall, Common and primarily single family residential.



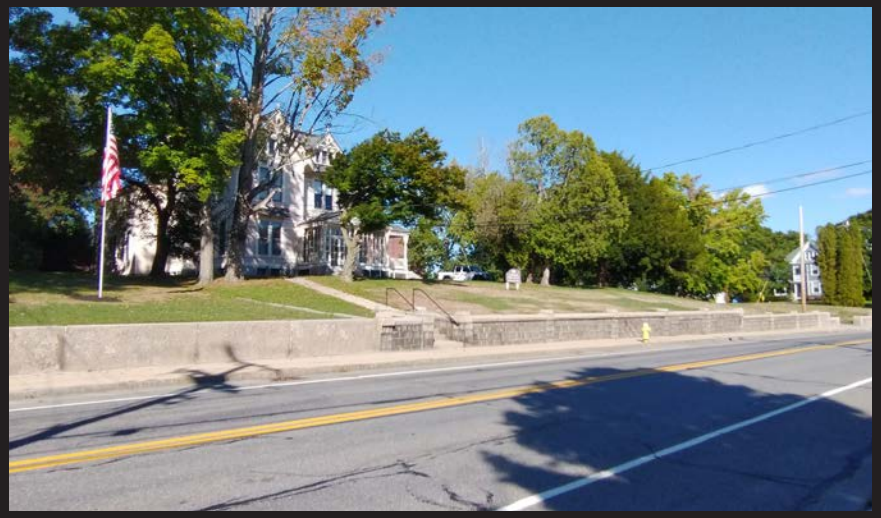
STUDY AREA: CONTEXT AND BUILDING PHOTOGRAPHS

Church St. and the houses along Linwood provide an attractive downtown context for the school - and anything else that might happen on the site.

The Northbridge School itself, inside and outside, is lacking in the charm that characterizes the area and is awkwardly located on the site.

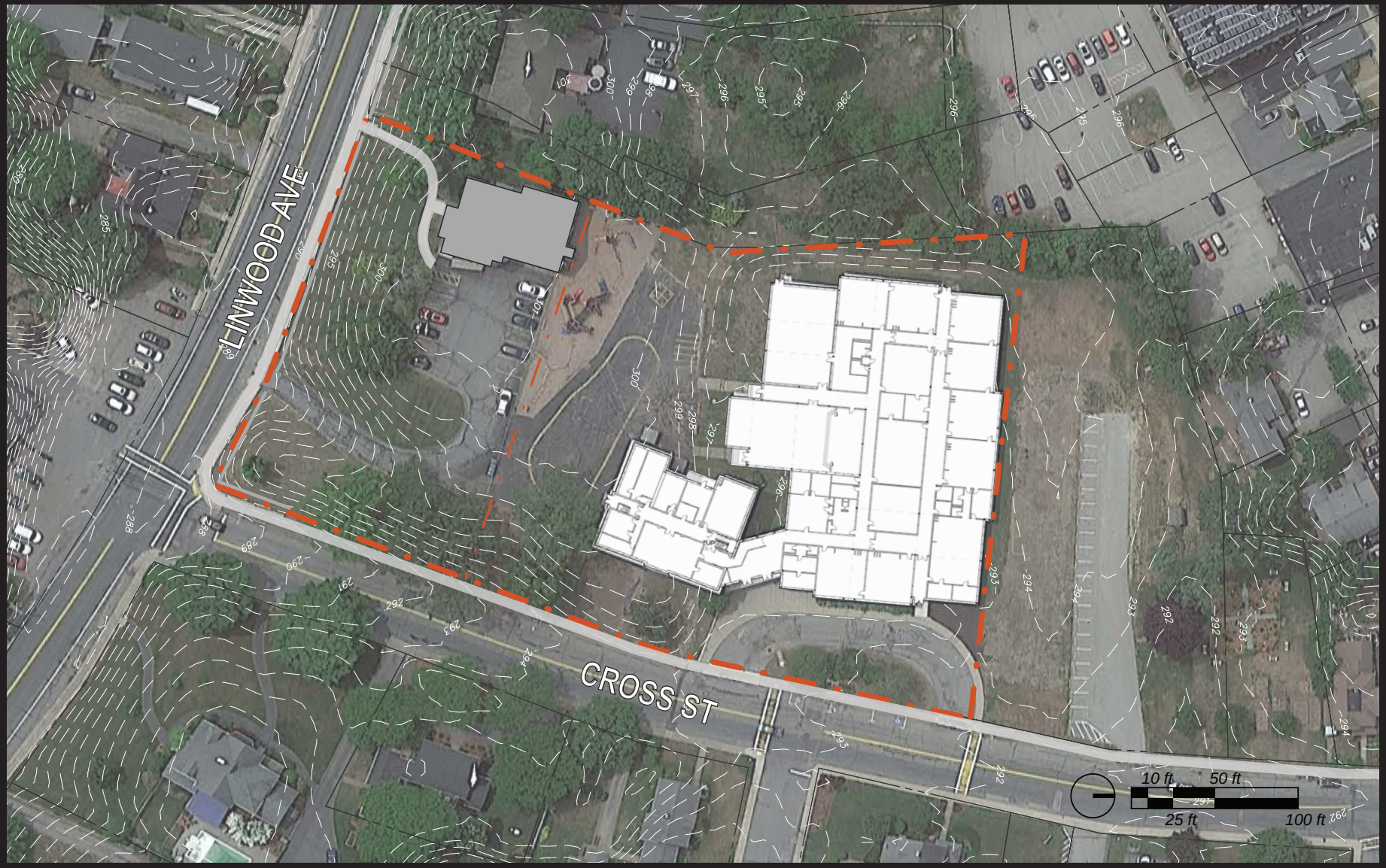
STUDY AREA: SITE CONTEXT PHOTOS

Parking is critical to making downtown viable for civic, religious, commercial or residential use, but how it is located and designed should be carefully considered.



STUDY AREA: FIRST FLOOR PLAN

The initial study area doesn't extend out to Linwood, and includes only the school and the land immediately around it.



STUDY AREA: SECOND FLOOR PLAN

The small school building from 1954 in the lower left is three floors, one partially below grade. The addition is large and low and is one story with two taller spaces.

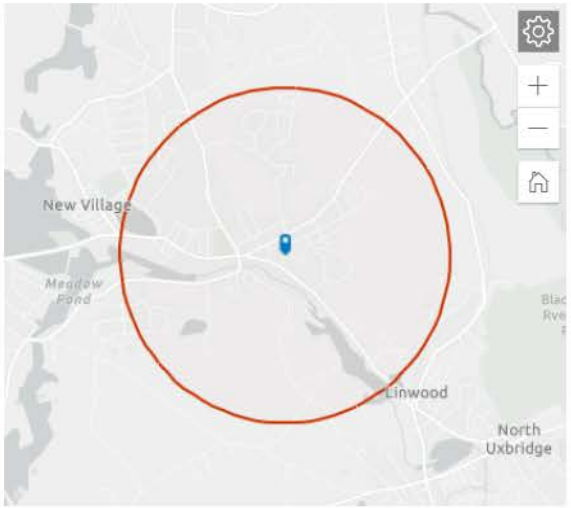
MARKET STUDY: PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS

Drew Leff, development consultant, reviewed the context in which redevelopment of the Northbridge School would take place

- Reviewed regional and local demographics
- Reviewing regional and local real estate market data
- Toured the site, immediate context & nearby development
- Discussed market potential and local expertise with:
  - Jeannie Hebert, Pres/CEO, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Comm.
  - Marty Green, local broker, former Selectman, form head BVC of C
  - Kevin Kouras, former State Rep; Mass Off. of Bus. Dev. regional rep
- Still contacting other brokers, property managers.
- Consider focus group with local real estate & business professionals

MARKET STUDY: DEMOGRAPHICS

Information below for a 1-mile radius from the site helps to provide an understanding of the demographics of the surrounding area



POPULATION TRENDS AND KEY INDICATORS

Project Site

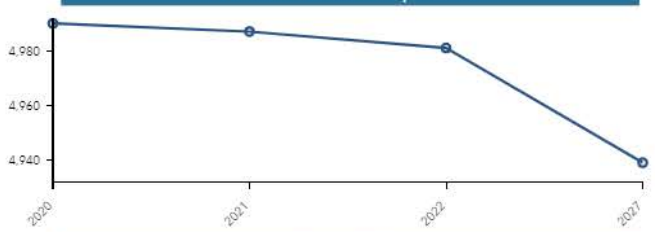
4,981	2,157	2.28	39.8	$88,343	$418,954	121	93	31
Population	Households	Avg Size Household	Median Age	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Wealth Index	Housing Affordability	Diversity Index

MORTGAGE INDICATORS

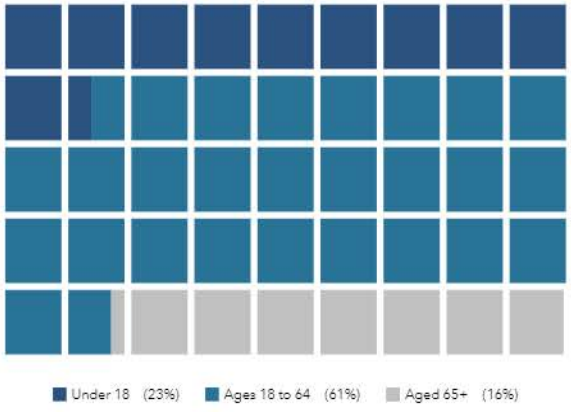
$15,829
Avg Spent on Mortgage & Basics

25.0%
Percent of Income for Mortgage

Historical Trends: Population



POPULATION BY AGE



POPULATION BY GENERATION

5.4%
Greatest Gen: Born 1945/Earlier

19.9%
Baby Boomer: Born 1946 to 1964

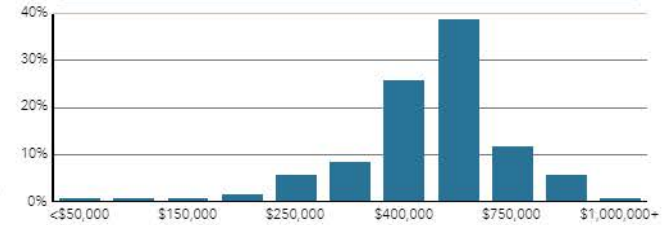
22.4%
Generation X: Born 1965 to 1980

22.1%
Millennial: Born 1981 to 1998

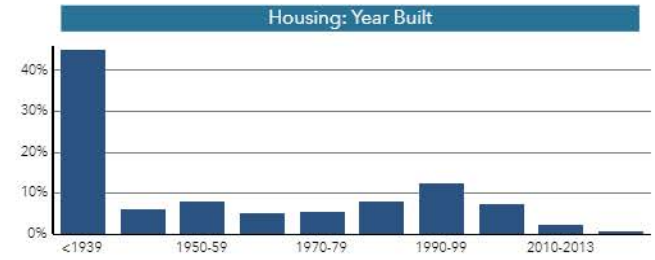
22.9%
Generation Z: Born 1999 to 2016

7.3%
Alpha: Born 2017 to Present

Home Value



Housing: Year Built

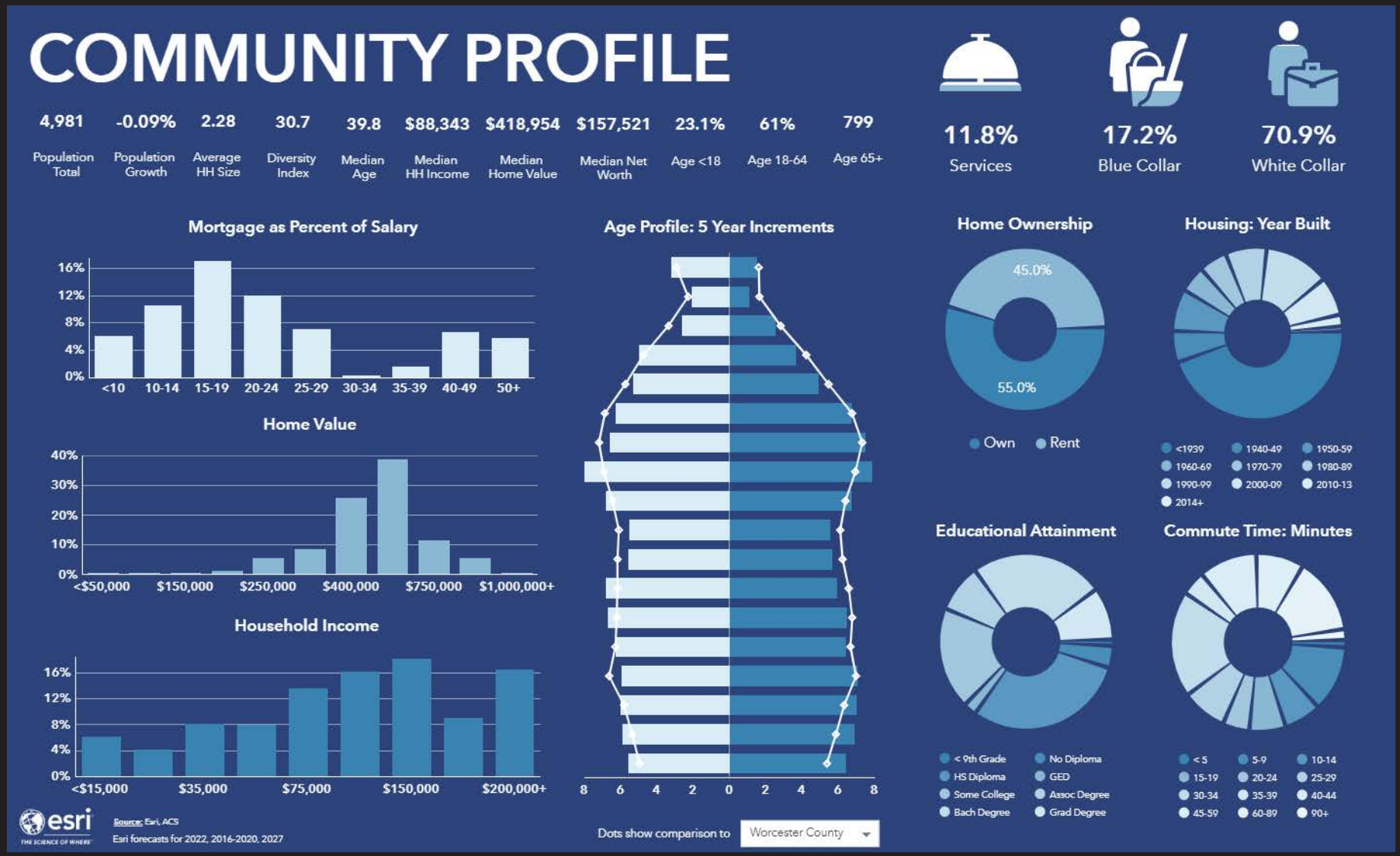


esri THE SCIENCE OF WHERE

This infographic contains data provided by Esri, Esri-U.S. BLS, ACS
The vintage of the data is 2022, 2027, 2016-2020 © 2022 Esri

MARKET STUDY: DEMOGRAPHICS

Additional demographic detail on occupation, educational attainment, commute, income and homeownership, and relative age profile to Worcester County



1-mile radius from 44 Church Street

MARKET STUDY: RESIDENTIAL

The most likely use for the property is residential (multi-family, townhouses, cluster or semi-attached housing). The data and analysis below is primarily for rental and condominium housing. There are very low vacancies and strong growth in rents

Southeast Worcester County Multi-Family

12 Mo. Delivered Units	12 Mo. Absorption Units	Vacancy Rate	12 Mo. Asking Rent Growth
0	41	3.4%	8.3%

The vacancy rate in the Southeast Worcester County Submarket has dropped over the past four quarters, and at 3.4%, is slightly below the long-term average.

While developers have been active in recent years, nothing has delivered over the past 12 months. But construction has started back up, and about 540 units are underway, which will substantially expand the existing inventory. Rents have increased by an impressive 8.3% over the past year, which significantly exceeds the average annual growth of 3.7% over the past decade.

Southeast Worcester County is a liquid submarket, with about 33 trades over the past three years. The market price, which is an estimated price of all properties in the submarket, has risen dramatically over that time period and now stands at about $280,000/unit.

KEY INDICATORS

Current Quarter	Units	Vacancy Rate	Asking Rent	Effective Rent	Absorption Units	Delivered Units	Under Constr Units
4 & 5 Star	438	9.8%	$2,470	$2,462	6	0	250
3 Star	622	2.3%	$1,870	$1,863	1	0	290
1 & 2 Star	1,785	2.3%	$1,719	$1,716	9	0	0
Submarket	**2,845**	**3.4%**	**$1,949**	**$1,944**	**16**	**0**	**540**

Annual Trends	12 Month	Historical Average	Forecast Average	Peak	When	Trough	When
Vacancy Change (YOY)	-1.4%	5.3%	6.5%	7.2%	2003 Q2	3.1%	2020 Q4
Absorption Units	41	25	172	237	2021 Q3	(55)	2018 Q1
Delivered Units	0	22	201	284	2021 Q1	0	2022 Q1
Demolished Units	0	0	1	6	2016 Q4	0	2022 Q1
Asking Rent Growth (YOY)	8.3%	2.4%	3.5%	10.8%	2021 Q3	-2.9%	2009 Q4
Effective Rent Growth (YOY)	8.2%	2.5%	3.5%	11.2%	2021 Q3	-3.2%	2009 Q4
Sales Volume	$104M	$11.3M	N/A	$108.8M	2022 Q1	$0	2008 Q2

MARKET STUDY: MULTI- FAMILY RENTAL

5-mile radius

5 mile radius only

Search Analytics

INVENTORY UNITS	UNDER CONSTRUCTION UNITS	12 MO ABSORPTION UNITS	VACANCY RATE	MARKET RENT/UNIT	MARKET SALE PRICE/UNIT	MARKET CAP RATE
1,280 +0%	0 -	(15) -158.1%	2.6% +1.1%	$1,361 +4.7%	$165K +11.2%	5.8% -0.1%
Prior Period 1,280	Prior Period 0	Prior Period 26	Prior Period 1.5%	Prior Period $1,299	Prior Period $149K	Prior Period 5.9%

Key Metrics

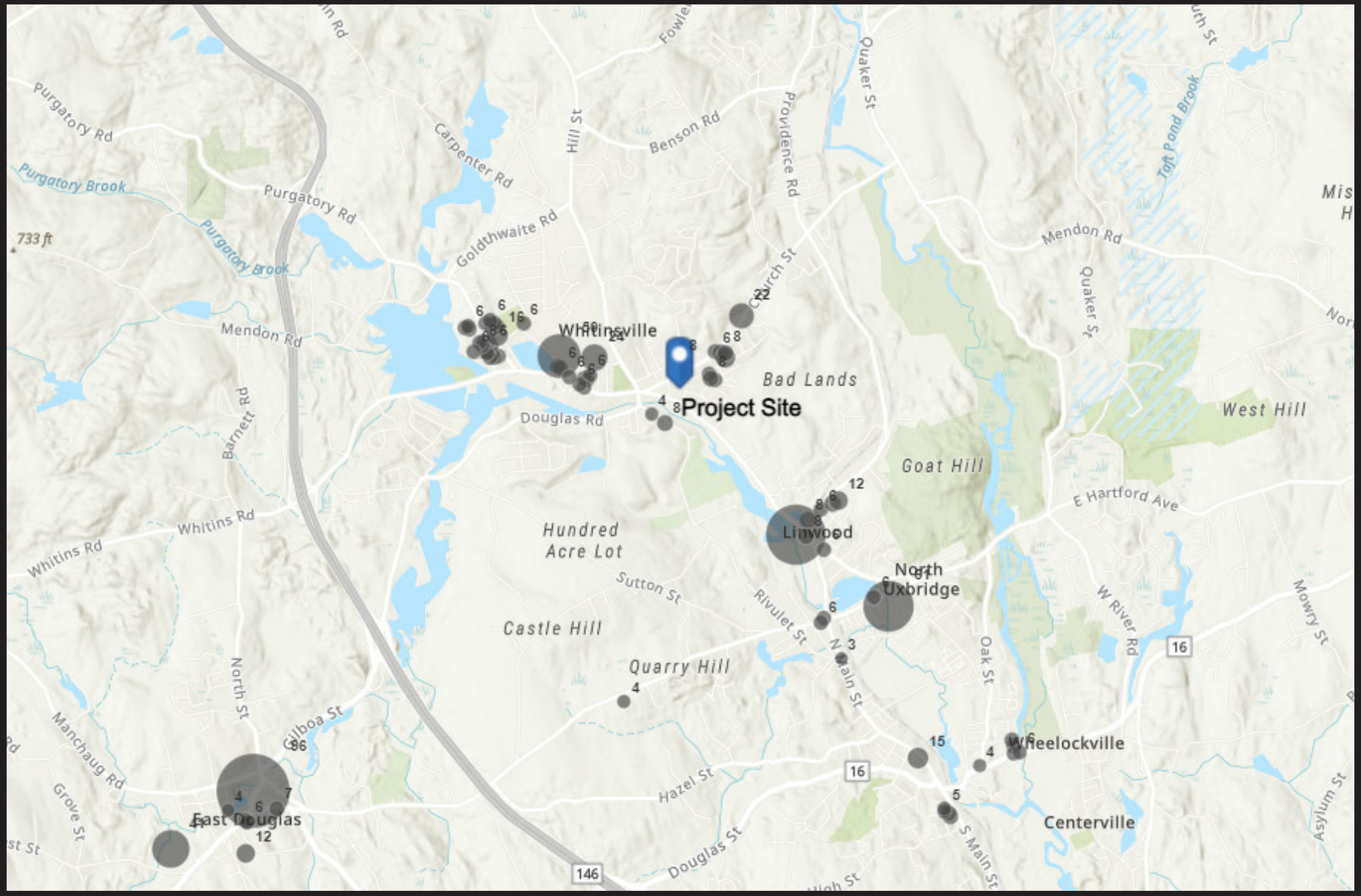
Availability	
Vacant Units	33
Asking Rent/SF	$1.86
Concession Rate	0.4%
Studio Asking Rent	$1,082
1 Bedroom Asking Rent/Unit	$1,295
2 Bedroom Asking Rent/Unit	$1,525
3 Bedroom Asking Rent/Unit	$1,756

Inventory	
Existing Buildings	105
Average Units Per Bldg	12
12 Mo Demolished Units	0
12 Mo Occupancy % at Delivery	-
12 Mo Construction Starts Units	0
12 Mo Delivered Units	0
12 Mo Avg Delivered Units	-

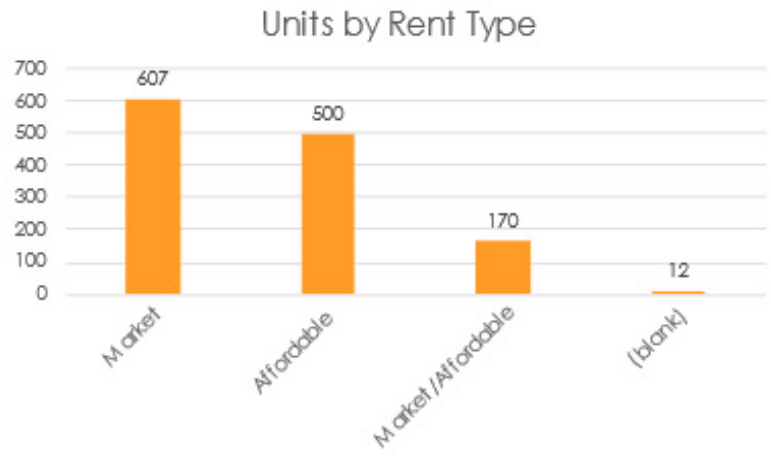
Sales Past Year	
Asking Price Per Unit	$132,475
Sale to Asking Price Differential	-11.3%
Sales Volume	$7.2M
Properties Sold	8
Months to Sale	2.6
For Sale Listings	-
Total For Sale Units	-

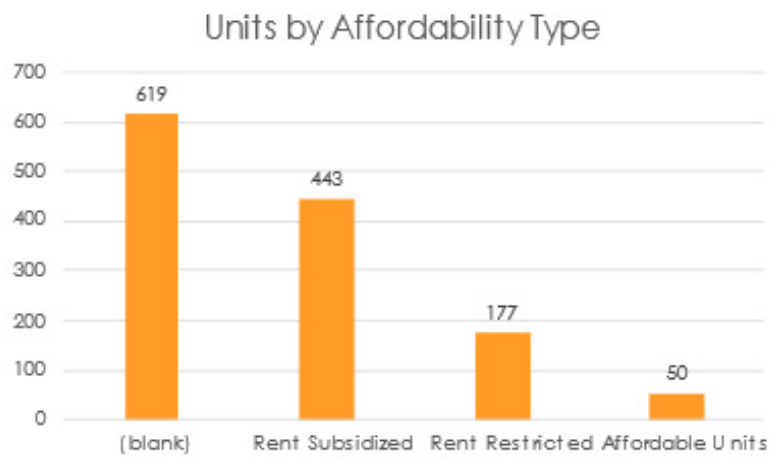
Demand	
12 Mo Absorp % of Inventory	-1.2%
Median Household Income	-
Population Growth 5 Yrs | 20-29	-
Population Growth 5 Yrs | 30-39	-
Population Growth 5 Yrs | 40-54	-
Population Growth 5 Yrs | 55+	-
Population Growth 5 Yrs	-

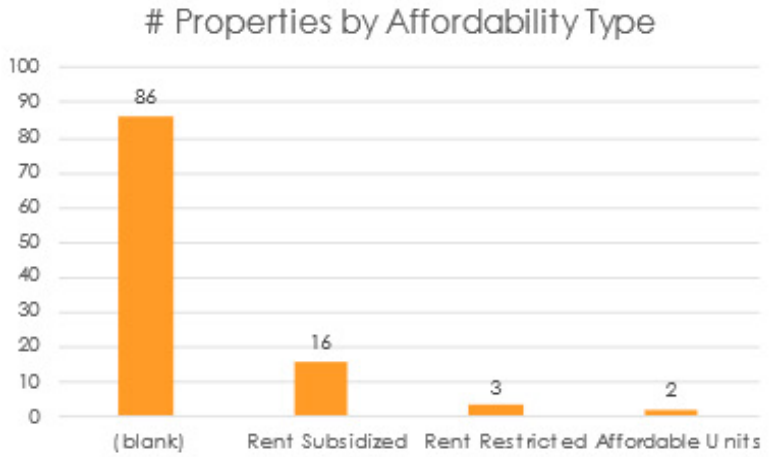
MARKET STUDY: MULTI-FAMILY LOCATIONS



MARKET STUDY: MARKET RATE AND AFFORDABLE

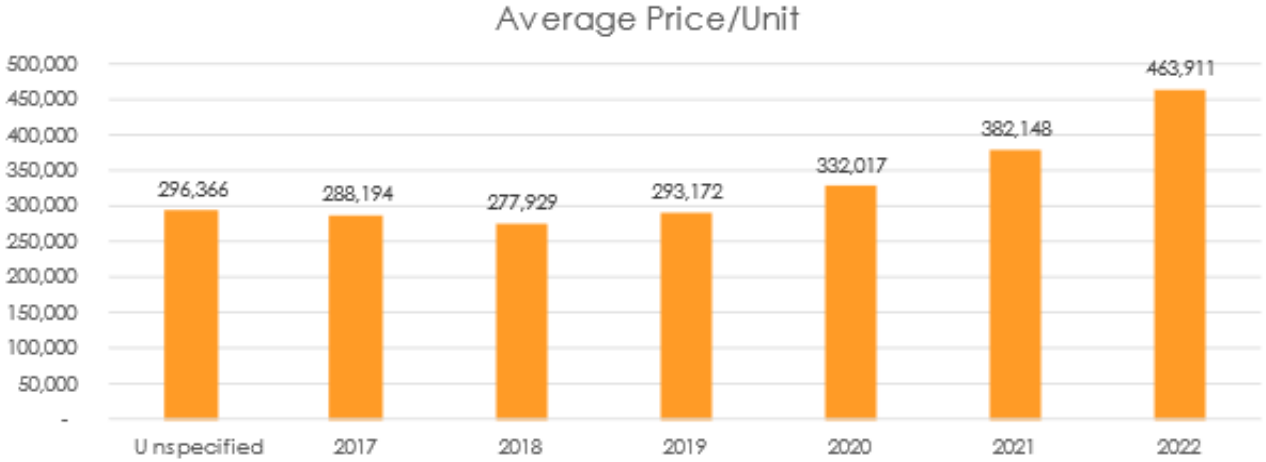






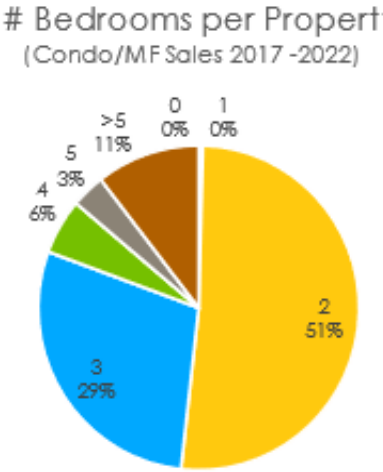
MARKET STUDY: SIZES AND PRICES

Condo/Multifamily sales price and unit size



Avg price per unit currently around $465K (and has been increasing)

5 yearavg overall: $318K



Majority of properties are 2-3 bedrooms

MARKET STUDY: LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

We had conversations with four very knowledgeable professionals regarding the Northbridge real estate market and the site potential:

1. Jeannie Hebert, President & CEO, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
2. Kevin Kuros, Regional Director, Mass Office of Business Development
3. Marty Green, Broker. Marty Green Properties LLC
4. Sue VanderZicht, Broker, VanderZicht Real Estate

Notes from calls:

- Northbridge has been very successful in filling its large stock of historic mill buildings with primarily industrial uses, particularly in Whitinsville. There has been significant industrial development in larger-scale new construction.

- Unlikely that scale of the site is suitable for industrial, but don't rule out industrial for which mill building won't work—uses that need their own facility with special loading access. This would be build-to-suit for a specific tenant. Difficult to count on this kind of user.

- Discussed potential for maker space. Already in Linwood Mill. Didn't think they needed more.

MARKET STUDY: LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

(notes from calls continued)

- Significant state programs for commercial/industrial uses.

- No market for office space, like finding a needle in a haystack.

- There is a need for more multi-family housing, particularly multi-family at a more affordable price point.

- There is a need/market for more senior and 55+ housing that might particularly like location near Church Street.
- Blanchard School in Uxbridge is a great example of a determined group finding programs and funding sources to make a mixed-income development work. Example of the Affordable housing, mixed income or 55+

- Would love to have some retail on ground floor, if possible. Town needs another higher-quality restaurant. Mixed use with residential and some retail like a better-quality restaurant or pub would be desirable.

- A stand-alone property for entrepreneurs like a brewery/distillery. Might work. It's about the right size and may be a sufficient draw that not being on major street is a detriment.

MARKET STUDY - POTENTIAL USES

a. **Residential**

- Town Houses or Semi-attached homes may provide appropriate density for this location & buyers may see this setting as attractive.
- Attached 55+: A more urban /village version of Stone Hill Condominiums might be attractive.
- Multi-family.

b. **Mixed-use.** highly unlikely as there is not enough vehicular or foot traffic passing by to support non-destination ground floor retail

c. **Destination Retail/Restaurant**. A brew pub or similar stand-alone restaurant or unique retailer that has sufficient scale and/or unique interest might benefit by nearby activity but not need the visibility that a small retailer requires.

d. **Light Industrial**. While hard to compete with larger-scale mill buildings & new larger-scale high bay industrial buildings, there may be potential for a single build-to-suit user. But, nearby churches and residences may see this use as something that will increase traffic and noise in the area.

MARKET STUDY - POTENTIAL USES

Discussions to date suggest the following possibilities for Northbridge School redevelopment - primarily new construction but could utilize parts of the existing construction buildings

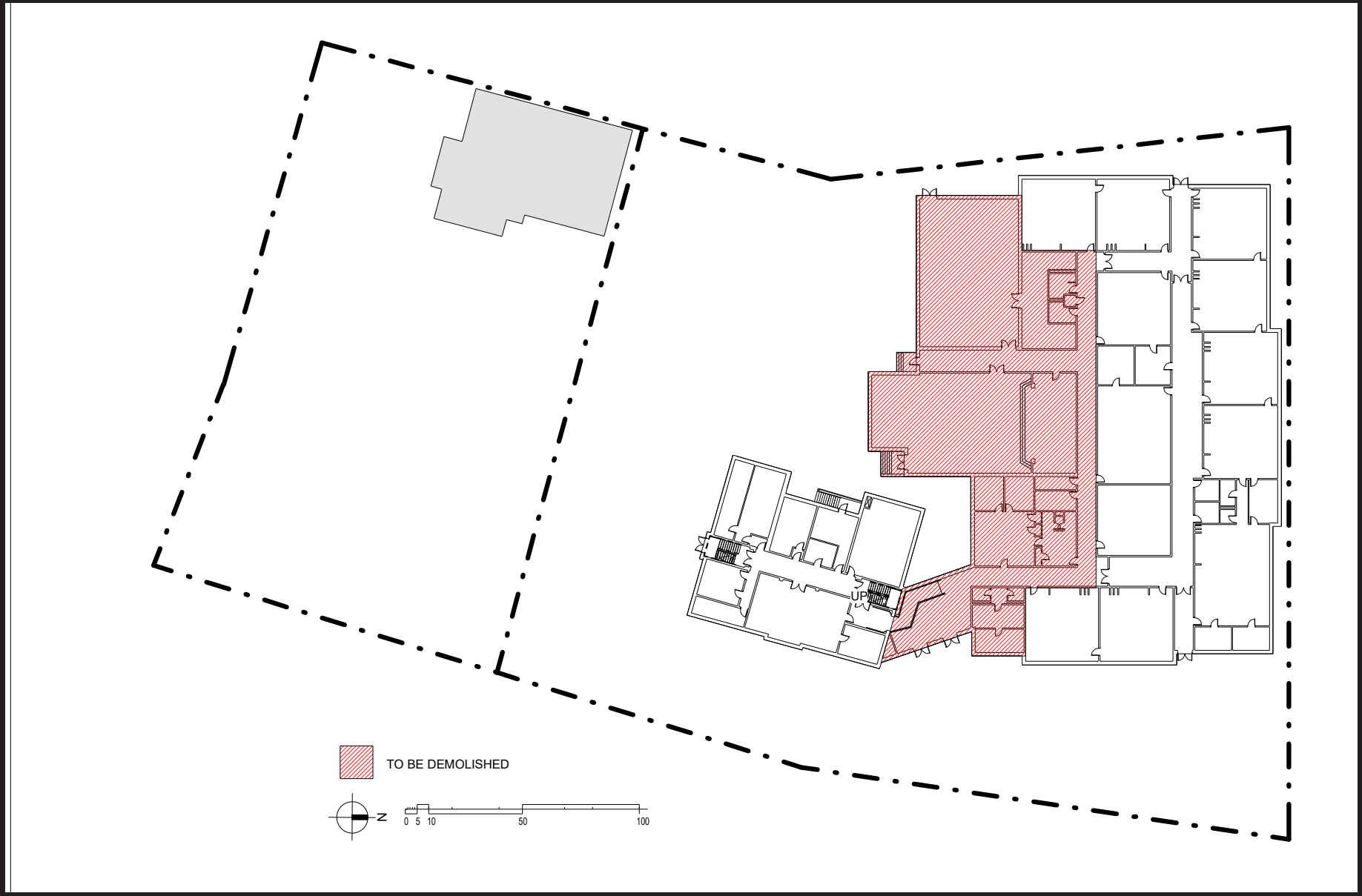
- Residential - appears to be the most likely option
  - Market Rate, Affordable, Mixed Income, 55+
  - Townhouses, Duplexes, Multi-family Apartments
  - Single Family subdivision - better sites in less dense areas
- Non Residential - that doesn't need vehicle. & pedestrian visibility
  - Destination restaurant, brewery with pub
  - Community kitchen with dining area
  - Co-working incubator
  - Lab space / small scale manufacturing that requires own site
  - Institutional user - difficult to determine but could emerge
  - No demand for office
  - Community or educational uses - to be determined

EXISTING BUILDING AND SITE

The site has a large impermeable area and the building is close to the property lines which is out of character with the neighborhood.

RESIDENTIAL ADAPTIVE REUSE: DEMOLITION & NEW CONSTRUCTION

One option is to demolish parts of the building not well suited for residential, and use portions of the building whose rooms sizes and access to light are appropriate.



RESIDENTIAL ADAPTIVE REUSE: DEMOLITION, & NEW CONSTRUCTION

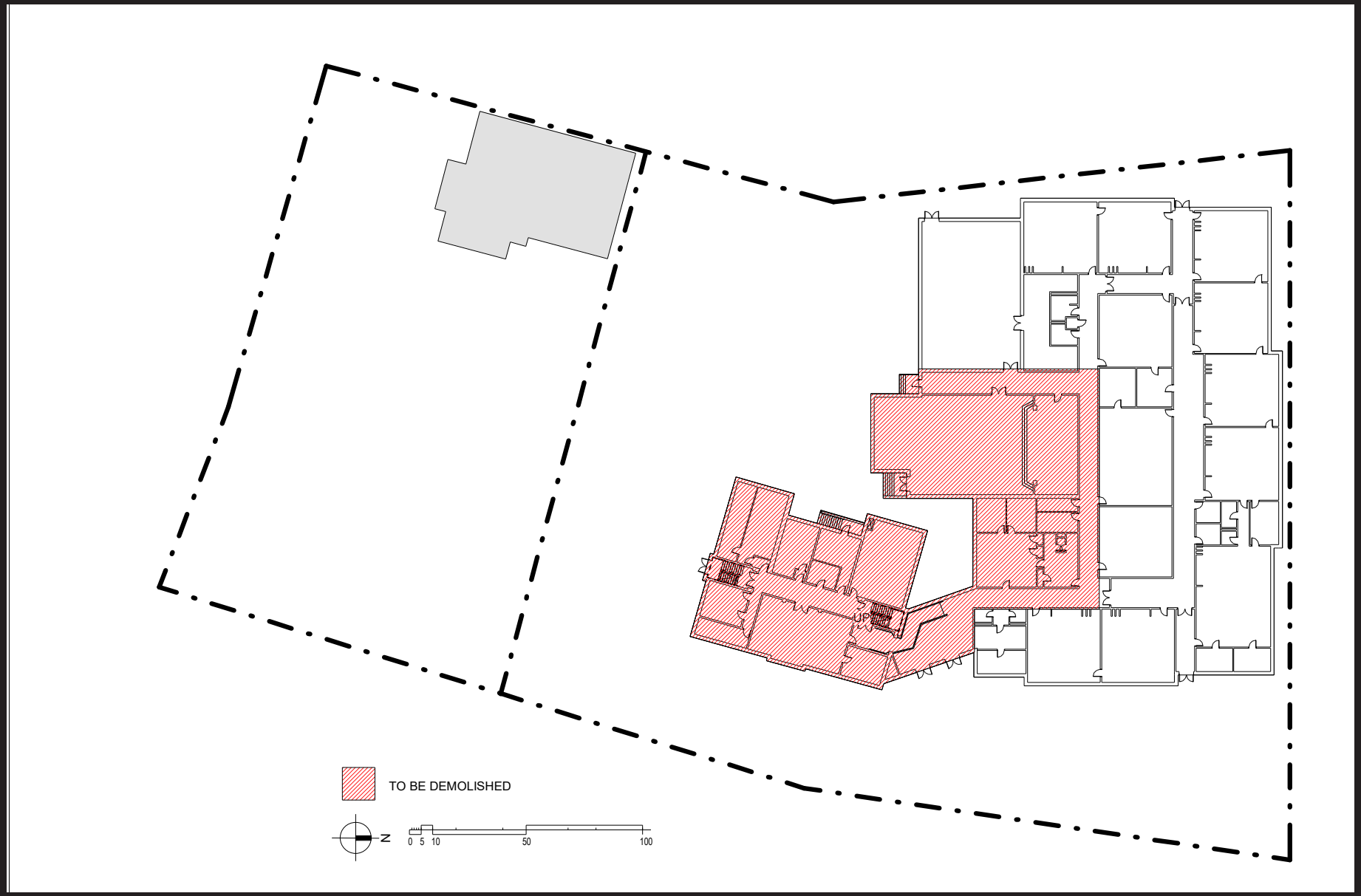
A combination of partial demolition and new construction could be appropriate for housing, although retaining the existing building may have very little value.

RESIDENTIAL ADAPTIVE REUSE: DEMOLITION, & NEW CONSTRUCTION

Demolishing many or most of the existing interior walls would allow reconstruction with wall types and locations more suitable for apartments and condominiums.

NON-RESIDENTIAL ADAPTIVE REUSE: DEMOLITION, & NEW CONSTRUCTION

Another option is to demolish building areas not suited for non-residential uses and retain those that might be able to be opened up.

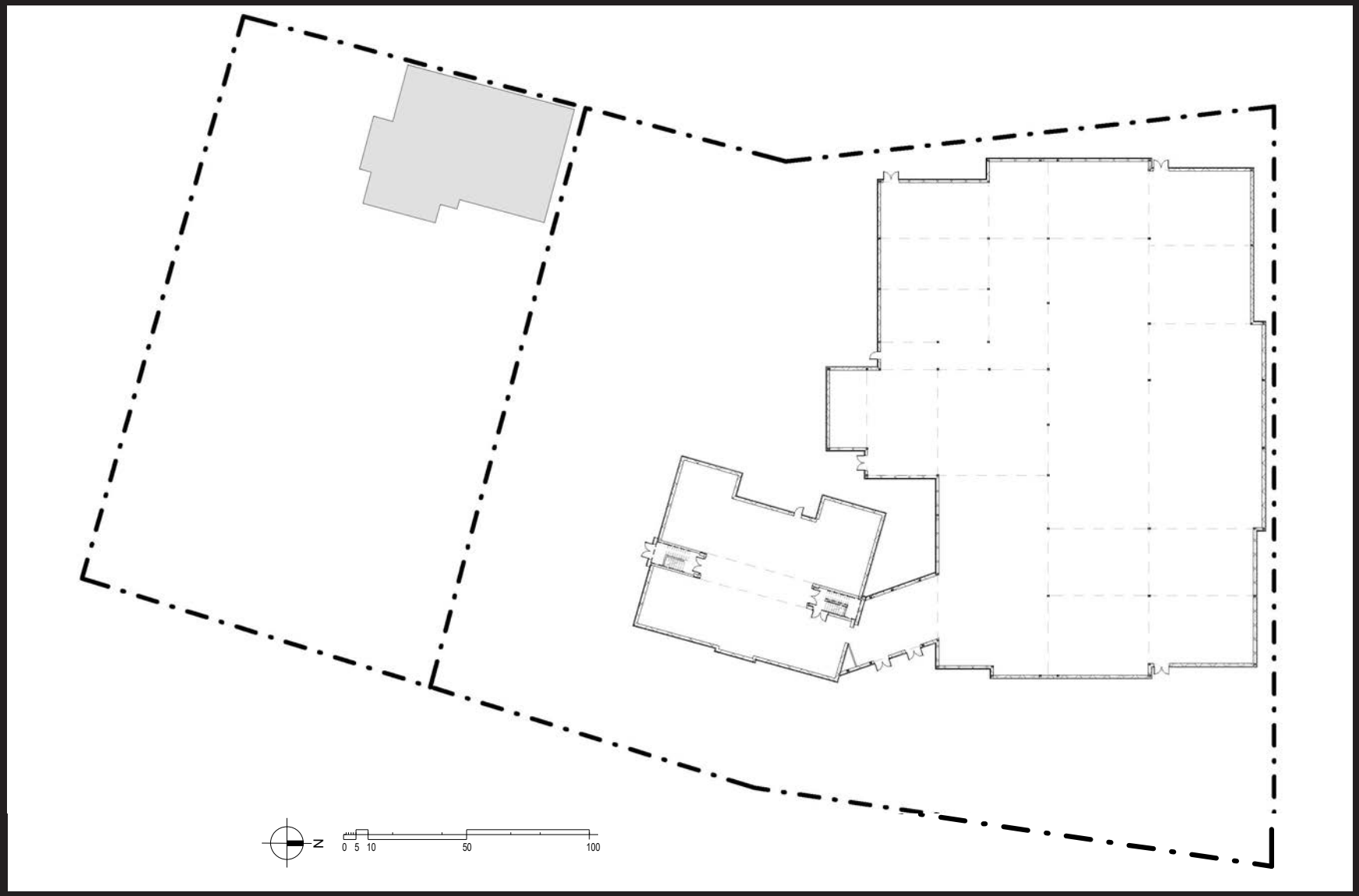


NON-RESIDENTIAL ADAPTIVE REUSE: DEMOLITION, & NEW CONSTRUCTION

A brew pub, destination dining/food center or boutique manufacturing could occupy the retained part of the existing building with a new front face.

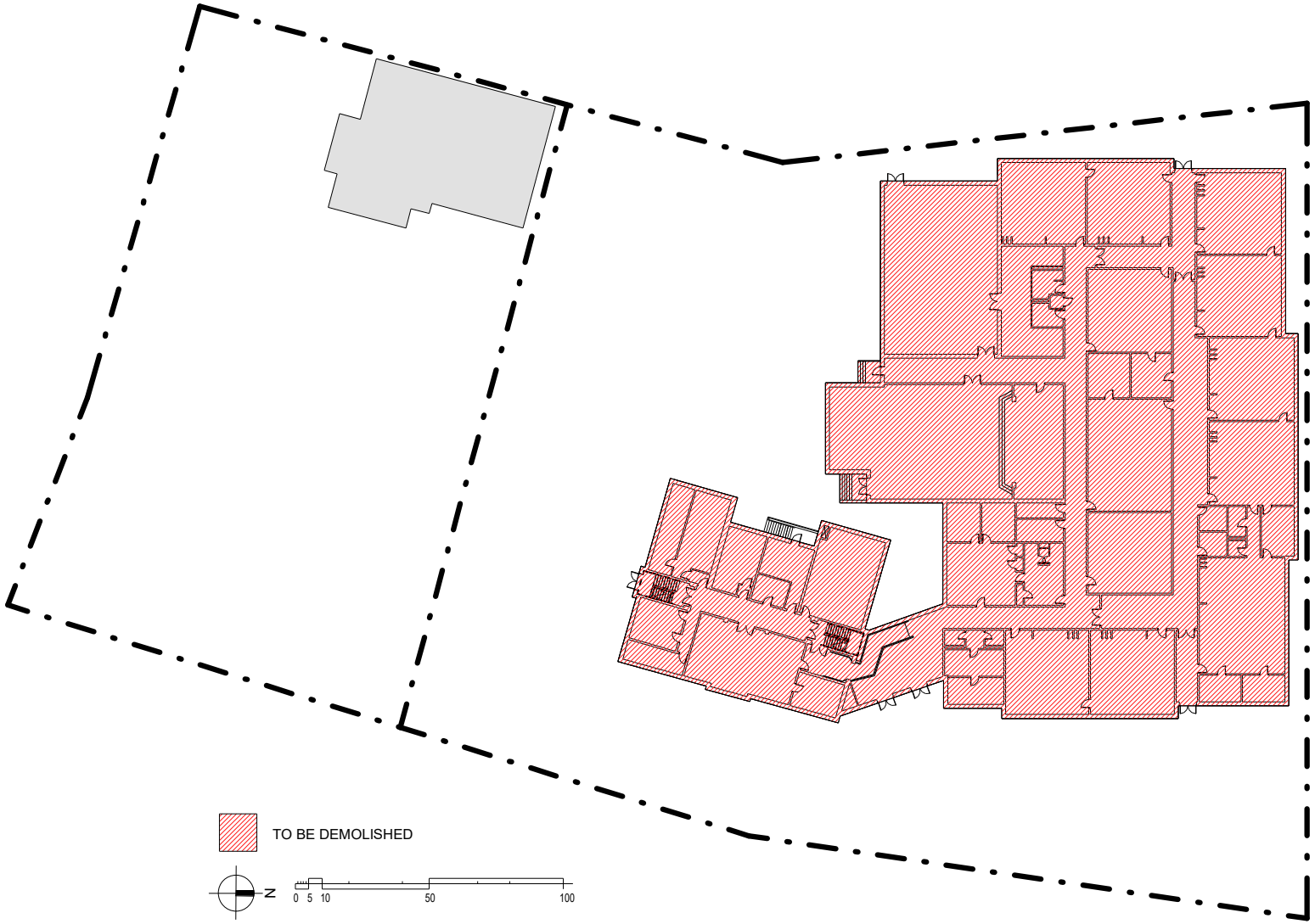
NON-RESIDENTIAL ADAPTIVE REUSE: DEMOLITION, & NEW CONSTRUCTION

The roof is supported by a steel structure and all other walls are non-bearing concrete block. Non-bearing walls could be removed to provide space for commercial use.



DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Demolition the entire building opens up the most possibilities for reuse of the site – if the existing structure provides little value and adds significant cost.



DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION: 55+ DUPLEXES

14 homes provide garages, primarily first floor living with partial second floors, and are aimed at the 55+ “empty nester” market.

DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION: TOWNHOUSES

29 townhouses have garages and 2 or 3 bedrooms suitable for families, young adults or empty nesters.

DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION: APARTMENT BUILDINGS

Apartment building provide 24 units per floor. Whether they are two floors/48 apartments or three floor/72 apartments may be determined by parking needs

DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION: NON-RESIDENTIAL

New non-residential could include destination dining, with institutional or residential above. The connection to Town parking for Church St might support these uses.

DEMOLITION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION: SENIOR CENTER

Kelly Bol (Senior Center director) suggested this site for a 15,000 SF COA. PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care) may be a private sector alternative.

EXPANDED SITE: SENIOR CENTER & SENIOR HOUSING

If the site were expanded out to Linwood Ave. then there would be space for senior housing in addition to a senior center (15,000 SF COA)

ORIGINAL STUDY AREA

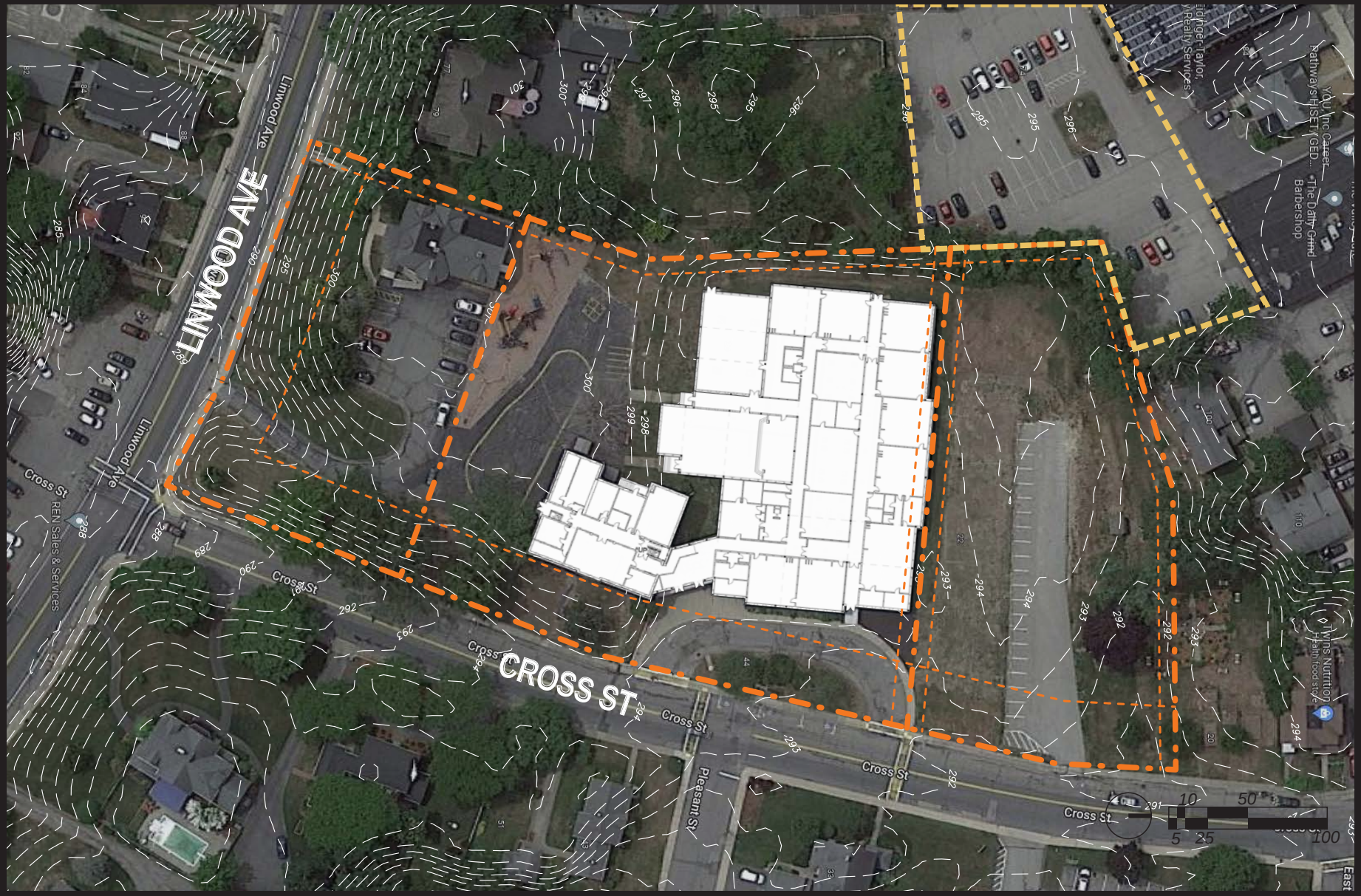
The study area per the RFQ included the area immediately around the school but did not include the Town owned land used by the School Committee.

EXPANDED STUDY AREA

Expanding the site to Linwood Ave. while retaining the existing house could reinforce the character of the Cross St. & Linwood Ave. corner and add value for the Town.

FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE STUDY AREA

Expanding the site further onto the privately owned church parking lot site would reinforce the kind of town fabric that gives Whitinsville its identity.



EXPANDED STUDY AREA IN CONTEXT

Given the proximity of Church St. retail and the Town Center, development on an expanded property might be advantageous from an economic and social perspective.

EXPANDED STUDY AREA AERIAL IN CONTEXT

The town-owned parking lot behind Church St. businesses is an important asset but hard to access. An additional drive connecting to Cross St. could support local retail.

EXAMPLES OF HOUSING TYPES

(1) Townhouses

(2) Apartment Buildings

(1) Duplexes

(2) Large Houses with Multiple Apts

EXPANDED SITE: TOWNHOUSES AND BELOW GRADE PARKING

Apartment buildings near the corner of Linwood and Cross could pick up the scale of the old houses with parking located below. Otherwise there are townhouses.

EXPANDED SITE: TOWNHOUSES AND APARTMENT BUILDINGS

Apartment buildings could b 2, 3, or 4 stories depending on how much parking is needed.

EXPANDED SITE: APARTMENTS AND FIRST FLOOR COMMERCIAL

The first floor of multistory buildings could be a commercial use - restaurant, brew pub, art gallery, or other small shops.

FURTHER EXPANSION WITH MIXED HOUSING TYPES

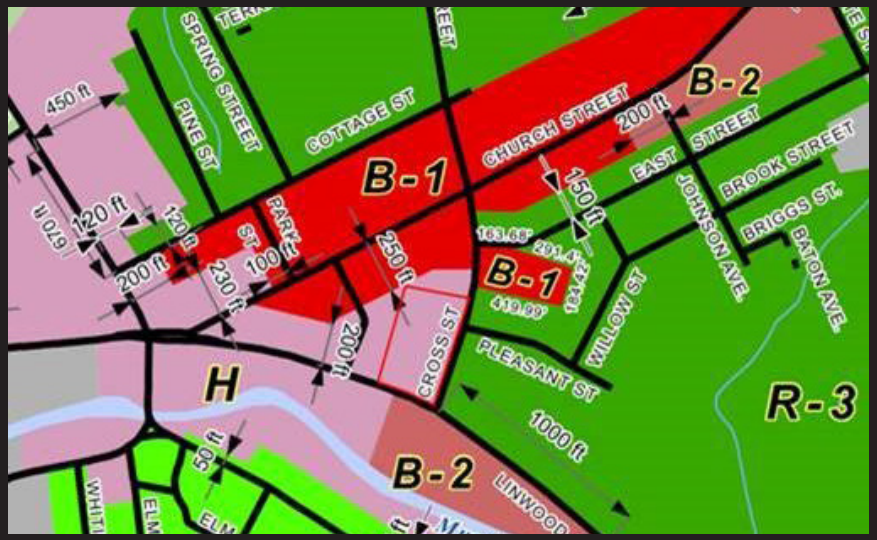
New development along Linwood. could pick up the scale of the historic houses & along Cross St. denser development can provide more housing near the retail.

FURTHER EXPANSION WITH MIXED HOUSING TYPES

New development along Linwood. could pick up the scale of the historic houses & along Cross St. denser development can provide more housing near the retail.

SITE FEASIBILITY SUMMARY

44 Cross Street, located at the corner of Cross Street and Linwood Ave, falls within ***District H - The Heritage District***. Multi-family housing, planned townhouses, and senior living dwellings are not currently permitted uses within this district. A variance or zoning change would be required for multifamily housing.



Parking spaces shall be 9x18 feet with a minimum drive aisle of 24 feet. 2 spaces per dwelling are required for any single, double, or multi-family housing. For professional/general commercial use, 1 space is required per every 250 feet of net floor space (nfs).

The parcel does not fall into the Open Space overlay district. There do not appear to be any specific open space requirements for District H or for any residential districts zoned for multi-family use or planned townhouse developments. Senior dwelling use has an open space requirement that calls for 30% of the parcel to be contiguous open space excluding the setback areas per the senior living bylaw.

All redevelopment projects that disturb more than 5,000 SF or 25% of a property, or do not reduce impervious area by 40% will be subject to a storm-water management permit. Due the proposed reduction of impervious area for all concepts, recommended storm-water management would include water quality treatment and groundwater recharge. It is not anticipated that additional detention would be required.

SITE FEASIBILITY SUMMARY

The total existing impervious surface is ~60,000 SF
Concept 1 ~39,125 SF --> Reduced by 35%. Permit required.
Concept 2 ~31,850 SF --> Reduced by 47% No permit required.
Concept 3 ~35,000 SF --> Reduced by 42% No permit required.
Concept 4 ~45,000 SF --> Reduced by 25%. Permit required.
Concept 5 ~49,250 SF --> Reduced by 18%. Permit required.
Concept 6 ~39,275 SF --> Reduced by 34%. Permit required.
Concept 7 ~46,360 SF --> Reduced by 22%. Permit required.

The NRCS soil type for the entire site is 245B: Hinckley Loamy Sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes. It is part of hydrologic soil group A. The runoff class is very low and the drainage class is excessively drained. The depth to the water table is more than 80 inches. Based on this information we don't anticipate issues with subsurface stormwater management features, but investigations are required to confirm soil conditions for design purposes.

The total grade change from the south to north side of the site is approximately 7-8 feet, resulting in a 1-2% grade. It appears that all buildings could be constructed and site grading accomplished to meet existing grade within property lines
without the use of retaining walls.

Per the DPW, the existing sanitary sewer connection ties directly into Cross Street (they believe it's a 8" line). & the town is looking into records on existing storm drainage in Cross Street.

Electric: National Grid
Gas: Eversource
Telecom: Verizon
Water: Whitinsville Water Co.
Sewer: Northbridge Sewer Department