PROVIDENCE TOMORROW

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ELMHURST AND MT. PLEASANT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

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Introduction

On May 31, 2006, Mayor David N. Cicilline and the City Council announced the creation of Providence Tomorrow – an innovative planning process designed to provide a framework for the growth and preservation of Providence neighborhoods. Since then, the City Council has adopted a new Comprehensive Plan and the Department of Planning and Development has undertaken detailed planning studies for each of the city's neighborhoods. In February 2008, the fourth neighborhood "charrette," or detailed planning process, was held in the Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods. This report is a summary of the information that was collected from residents and business owners over the course of an intensive week of public meetings.

This plan summarizes neighborhood history and demographics, illustrates existing neighborhood character through building typologies, and identifies key issues and neighborhood priorities. The most important part of this report is the Action Plan, which identifies short-, mid- and long-term goals for the neighborhoods and the parties that will lead each effort. The Action Plan identifies not only City-led actions, but those projects that can be initiated by groups of residents working together. This report will be used to guide the review of development projects in the Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods by City boards and commissions, and will help prioritize funding for projects and infrastructure improvements, as well as provide a guide for redevelopment efforts.

Contents

Providence Tomorrow Neighborhood Charrettes

Providence has 25 distinct neighborhoods, each with unique character and identity. While neighborhoods share many features, each has its own set of planning issues and concerns. An important part of Providence Tomorrow are the in-depth, detailed planning studies that are conducted at the neighborhood level. The neighborhoods have been grouped together so that there will be ten neighborhood charrettes, or planning workshops, conducted from 2007 to 2009.

Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant Charrette

The Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant Charrette was held February 25-27, 2008 at Triggs Memorial Golf Course. Approximately seventy-five people participated in the charrette, voicing their opinions on improving connections through the neighborhoods, where they would like to see commercial growth in the future, the neighborhoods relationships with adjacent institutions, programming of park spaces, and how to protect the existing character of their neighborhood, among other issues. The planning team collected all of the information from the week and drafted a neighborhood plan that was presented to the neighborhoods at a follow-up meeting in October 2008.

What is a Charrette?

The term "charrette" originated at Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, the world's top architectural school in the nineteenth century, and is derived from a French word meaning "little cart." Carts were circulated to collect final plans. Students would jump on the cart, polishing their drawings up to the last minute.

Today the word "charrette" describes a process of dynamic, interactive community planning. Its goal is to bring all the stakeholders and all the issues into one room. This process can be applied to different projects, but always uses the same basic strategy. A team consisting of citizens, elected officials, planners, architects, developers, business owners, City officials, and other stake holders works to root out potential problems, identify and debate solutions, and create a plan within a set amount of time. Meeting day and night for several days, participants work together in both large and small groups through a series of brainstorming sessions, sketching workshops and other exercises.
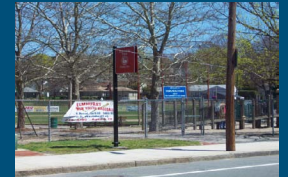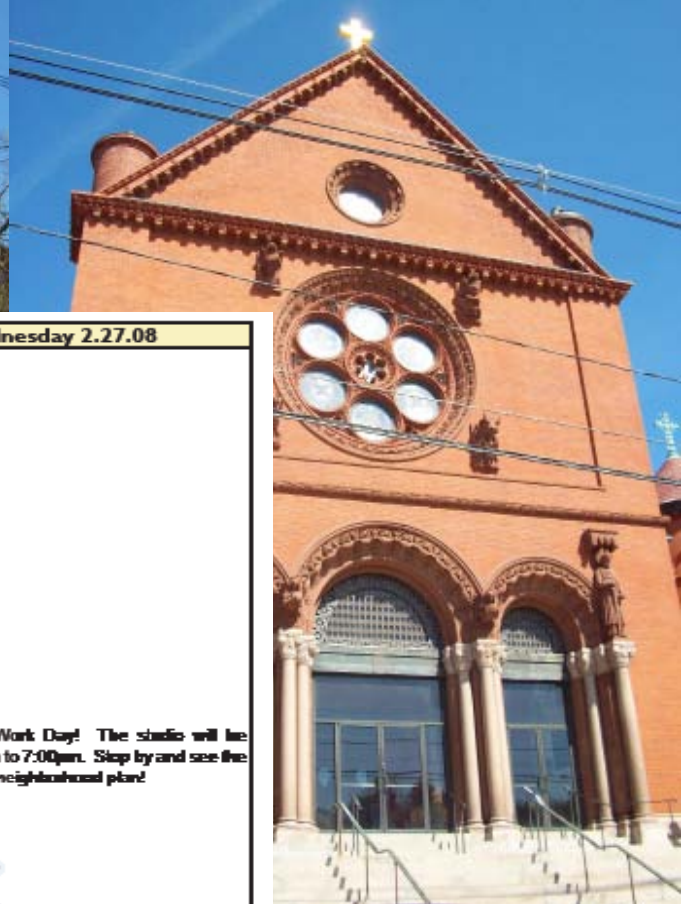
The Benefits of Charrettes in Planning

Charrettes provide a framework for creating a shared vision shaped by community involvement, directed by consultants representing key disciplines.

Charrettes provide an opportunity to improve and expand the relationships between residents and their government through meaningful public involvement and education.

Charrettes help a community to develop a shared vision of its future by allowing for increased opportunities for residents to make positive contributions to the planning process.

Charrettes help to create better plans by gaining more diverse input and involvement and help increase the likelihood that plans will be realized.

	Monday 2.25.08	Tuesday 2.26.08	Wednesday 2.27.08
Morning	**Neighborhood Character** 9:00am-11:00am What makes your neighborhood unique? Join us for a discussion on the important characteristics of your neighborhood (i.e. housing, business, streetscapes) that should be preserved and maintained. Share your ideas as to how we can realize a new vision for your neighborhoods while preserving and enhancing their current character.	**Parks/Recreation/Open Space** 9:00am-11:00am Open spaces, both publicly and privately owned, play important roles in every community. Come share your ideas on how to protect and use existing open space, as well as goals for the creation of new open space	
Midday	**Commercial Corridors** 11:30am-1:30pm Smith Street, Chalkstone Ave, and Academy Ave are a few of the commercial corridors that run through your neighborhoods and they are essential to the vitality of your neighborhoods. Join us for a discussion on how the commercial corridors can be improved for both residents and businesses.	**Community Safety** 11:30am-1:30pm Public safety is essential to a high quality of life. Join us for a discussion focusing on safety concerns in the neighborhoods and ways to improve perceived and actual public safety.	Charrette Team Work Day! The studio will be open from 9:00am to 7:00pm. Stop by and see the progress on your neighborhood plan!
Afternoon	**Infrastructure** 2:00pm-4:00pm Streets, Trees, Drainage, etc.: Join us for a discussion the essential infrastructure that supports your neighborhoods. Identify problem areas in the neighborhoods and goals for improvement.	**Connecting Neighborhoods** 2:00pm-4:00pm Walking, Biking, Transit, Cars, Parking: How do you get around your neighborhood? What is your preferred type of transportation? Let us know what works and what doesn't about getting around and through your neighborhoods.	
Evening	**Livable Neighborhoods** 6:00pm-9:00pm Join your elected officials in an interactive visioning session and discussion on how make your neighborhood a better place to live. Housing, jobs, safety, recreation opportunities, transportation-we want to hear from you about your neighborhoods.	**Neighborhood Visioning** 6:00pm-9:00pm Do you have a vision for what you want your neighborhood to be like in 20 years? What obstacles do you think exist to achieving that vision? Come share your thoughts and ideas with your friends and neighbors, and help to build on the vision of your neighborhoods started on Monday night.	**Open House** 5:00pm-7:00pm Come and see how this week's meetings have been translated into guiding principles and a plan for the future of your neighborhoods. This is your opportunity to help us set priorities and let us know if we missed anything.

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Neighborhood Overview

The History - Neighborhood Backgrounds

Elmhurst

Located in the northwest quadrant of Providence, Elmhurst is a residential community consisting of mostly twentieth century, medium-sized, single-family homes on tree-lined streets. Like its western neighboring community, Mount Pleasant, Elmhurst was one of the last parts of the city to be developed. Other neighborhoods that define the borders of Elmhurst are Wanskuck to the east and northeast, Smith Hill to the east, Valley to the south, and the town of North Providence to the north. In the eighteenth century, before Elmhurst was developed, the area served as common land, where large tracts of land were farmed. In order to supply the City of Providence with produce from the outlying farms, two roads were established. These roads followed the present-day Douglas Avenue, Eaton Street and Chalkstone Avenue. By the turn of the nineteenth century, transportation routes were developing dramatically. In 1815, a privately owned turnpike connected the neighborhood to outlying areas. By 1835, River, Douglas and Chalkstone avenues and Smith, Sharon and Admiral streets had been established as rural lanes to connect various farms.

Elmhurst's rural and picturesque qualities attracted wealthy Providence families who established country retreats in the area. In 1849 the area was named "Elmhurst" after William Grosvenor's Gothic Revival Villa, the first retreat to be constructed in the area. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century when public transportation improved that substantial residential development occurred. After WWII, small and mid-sized homes were constructed on the neighborhoods undeveloped land. In the early twentieth century, the Elmhurst area was predominantly middle and upper-middle class, which consisted mostly of second and third generation Irish-Americans escaping overcrowded Smith Hill and South Providence, followed by an influx of Italian-Americans towards the middle of the century.

During the early 20th century, with the industrial boom, hospitals, including Charles V. Chapin Hospital (1911), now part of Providence College, Providence Lying-In Hospital (1926), and the Homeopathic Hospital of Rhode Island (1926), now Roger Williams Hospital, were built. Providence College was founded by the Dominican Order in 1917, and LaSalle Academy, originally established downtown at LaSalle Square in 1871, moved in 1925 to its current location at the corner of Smith Street and Academy.

Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant History Timeline

1700s – The areas now known as Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant serve primarily as common land, used mainly for farming. The origins of present-day Douglas Avenue, Eaton Street and Chalkstone Avenue are established.

1815 – Powder Mill Turnpike is established from Smith and Eaton streets to Centerdale, Graniteville, Greenville, and Harmony.

1835 – River, Douglas and Chalkstone avenues and Smith, Sharon and Admiral streets are well-established as rural lanes connecting various farms.

1849 – Elmhurst is named after William Grosvenor's Gothic Revival villa, the first of several large rural retreats established in the area.

1870s – Plats for residential development are laid out, development of which is slowed by the economic panic of 1873.

1880s – Streetcar lines connect Chalkstone Avenue to Smith Street and North Providence.

Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant is a primarily middle-class residential neighborhood in the northwest quadrant of the city. The area is bounded by Manton to the west, Olneyville to the south, Valley to the east, Elmhurst to the east and northeast, and The Town of North Providence to the northwest. The major roads that define the area are Academy Avenue to the east, Smith Street to the northeast and Atwells Avenue to the south. Mount Pleasant was one of the last sections of the city to be developed (around the turn of the twentieth century), which accounts for the medium-sized homes on landscaped lots, bordered by tree-lined streets.

Mount Pleasant remained farmland through the eighteenth century, with almost no development occurring. Two roads had been established by 1730 that served to deliver produce from the outlying farms; today the northern branches of these roads are known as Douglas Avenue and Eaton Street, and the southern branch is Chalkstone Avenue. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that settlements became prevalent. During the 1870s, plats of house lots were laid out, but the national economic panic of 1873 dramatically slowed development plans. The majority of these lots were for moderately sized houses, though lots were laid out for larger houses south of Chalkstone Avenue and west of Academy Avenue. Though development occurred slowly up to 1880, it was not until afterwards that substantial residential development occurred when the economy was finally revitalized and transportation routes were improved. In 1882, streetcars traversed Chalkstone Avenue, extending out to Smith Street and North Providence. In the years following, a neighborhood commercial strip along Chalkstone Avenue, between River and Mount Pleasant avenues, was established, as was Triggs Memorial Golf Course; both remain significant destinations within the neighborhood and the city overall.

Mount Pleasant became home to members of the middle and upper-middle classes at the turn of the twentieth century. At this time the neighborhood experienced an influx of second and third generation Irish-Americans who moved into the area to escape the crowded neighborhoods of Smith Hill and South Providence. By the 1950s, second and third generation Italian-Americans began to move to Mount Pleasant from Federal Hill.

1880s –1900 – Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant develop as middle to upper-middle class residential neighborhoods for city residents seeking less crowded locations.

1909 – Pleasant Valley Parkway is constructed.

Early 1900s – Hospitals are constructed (the origins of present-day hospitals in the area).

1917 – Providence College is founded.

1925 – LaSalle Academy moves to its current location.

1950s – Second and third generation Irish and Italian-Americans establish themselves in Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant.

1958 - Rhode Island College moves from Downtown to Mount Pleasant campus.

1990s to present day – New immigrant groups, primarily of Hispanic origin, settle in Mount Pleasant.

The People - Neighborhood Demographics

Elmhurst

The population of Elmhurst in 2000 was 11,491, an increase of about three percent from the neighborhood's 1990 population. In Elmhurst, 18 percent of the population was nonwhite in 2000, a large increase from only 5.3 percent nonwhite in 1990. Hispanics accounted for 9 percent of the Elmhurst population, representing the largest segment of the neighborhood's minority population.

Just over three-quarters of all Elmhurst residents in 2000 age 25 or older were high school graduates. The unemployment rate of 11 percent was higher than the citywide rate of 9.3 percent.

The median family income in 1999 for Elmhurst was $51,503, which was 38 percent higher than the citywide median family income. Like Mount Pleasant, the incidence of poverty in Elmhurst increased over the past decade, although poverty rates were well below the citywide figures. In 2000, approximately 15 percent of Elmhurst residents were living in poverty, six percent of the families had an income below the poverty level, and 16 percent of children were poor, more than double from 1990.

Housing tenure in Elmhurst remained stable from 1990 to 2000, with a slight decline in home ownership. In 2000, more than half of all housing units in Elmhurst were single-family homes. Almost eighty percent of housing units were built prior to 1960. The median residential sales price in Elmhurst in 2004 was $235,500, about one percent higher than the citywide median. The median rent in Elmhurst was about 17 percent higher than the median rent for Providence. More than one-quarter of Elmhurst homeowners had lived in their present housing unit for more than 10 years, according to the 2000 census. Twenty percent of Elmhurst homeowners had been there for less than five years.

Mount Pleasant

The 2000 census reported 10,221 residents living in Mount Pleasant. The area was predominantly White (61%); Hispanics represented 24 percent of the population, Asians accounted for about 3 percent and African-Americans made up about 10 percent of the population. In 2000 two-thirds of Mount Pleasant residents age 25 or older were high school graduates and a quarter had a college degree or higher. The 10.4 percent unemployment rate for Mount Pleasant in 2000 was slightly higher than the citywide rate of 9.3 percent.

The median family income in Mount Pleasant in 2000 was $41,017, which was 22 percent higher than the citywide median. The incidence of poverty in Mount Pleasant increased significantly over the past decade, although poverty rates remained below the citywide figures. In 2000, 20 percent were poor, about 16 percent of families were living below poverty, 32 percent of children were poor, and about 12 percent of the elderly had incomes below the poverty level.

Housing tenure in Mount Pleasant remained fairly stable from 1990 to 2000. In 2000, more than forty percent of housing units in Mount Pleasant were single-family, detached units, and about two-thirds of all housing units were more than 40 years old. The median residential sales price in Mount Pleasant in 2004 was $213,000, slightly less than the citywide median of $220,000. The median rent in Mount Pleasant was eight percent higher than the citywide median rent.

Mount Pleasant is one of the city's most stable neighborhoods. According to the 2000 Census, less than half of all Mount Pleasant residents had moved into their present housing unit within the previous five years; a quarter of all residents had lived in their present unit for more than a decade, and almost one out of five had lived in his or her current home for more than 20 years.

Neighborhood Statistics

	Elmhurst	Mount Pleasant	Citywide
Size (Square Miles)	**1.01**	**1.21**	**18.2**
Population			
Households	3,889	3,596	62,389
Individuals	11,491	10,221	173,618
Percent Under 18	15.5%	24.8%	26.10%
Diversity			
Percent White	86.1%	69%	54.50%
Percent Black or African American	5.1%	10%	14.50%
Percent Non-Hispanic White	82.1%	60.5%	45.80%
Percent Hispanic	8.8%	24.1%	30.00%
Percent Asian or Pacific Islander	1.8%	2.7%	6.20%
Percent Native American	0.2%	0.9%	1.10%
Percent Other	4.3%	12.7%	17.60%
Percent Claimed 2 or more races	2.5%	4.7%	6.10%
Percent of Public school children primarily speak a Language Other than English	28%	45%	54%
Income			
Median Family Income	$51,503	$41,017	$32,058
Median Household Income	$38,253	$35,226	$26,867
Families Below Poverty	6.4%	16.2%	23.90%
Households on Public Assistance	2.2%	7.2%	10.20%
Housing			
Total number of housing units:	4,052	3,834	67,915
Percent Owner-occupied housing units	62%	56.1%	34.60%
Percent Single-family units	55%	47.2%	26.40%
Percent Duplex units	24%	30.1%	22.20%
Percent Multi-family units	20.2%	22.7%	50.10%
Percent of Housing built before 1960	77.4%	79.6%	70.10%
Percent Vacant units	4.6%	6.5%	8.10%
Percent Overcrowded housing units	3.1%	7.1%	8.40%
Median Sales Value and Number of Sales by Year			
for Single-family residence	$140,250	$125,250	$130,000
for 2 to 5-family residence	$170,000	$130,000	$129,000

Development Patterns

Neighborhood Typologies

The Planning Department is reviewing ways to preserve the existing character of the residential neighborhoods throughout the city, those areas that were identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Providence Tomorrow, as "Areas of Stability." The goal for these areas is to reinforce their stability, character and diversity by respecting valued development patterns and attributes. The strategies to achieve this goal include ensuring that new development maintains existing density levels and complements existing neighborhood scale, massing and design, and preserving the existing building stock in each of the city's neighborhoods.

One step toward that goal is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the existing development patterns in each neighborhood. The character of an area is defined by a number of elements that combine to create a cohesive identity. Building placement and form, lot coverage as well as lot size, shape, and orientation are some of these elements. As part of the neighborhood planning process, streets, blocks and structures were evaluated and grouped into areas that have common features. These areas are referred to as "typologies." By understanding the elements that combine to create the character of an area, it is possible to then identify those characteristics that current and future development may need to reflect or respect in order for this character to be maintained and preserved over time.

Key characteristics of the typologies identified for each neighborhood will be used to fine-tune zoning to make it a more effective tool to protect neighborhood character.

The neighborhoods of Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant have a fairly homogeneous range of housing styles and types, reflecting the middle class history of their development. Residential development patterns are generally marked by low to medium density, though scale varies according to housing type (single-family, 2-family), front and side yard setbacks, and regular distribution of street trees.

Elmhurst

The residential development patterns and housing types in Elmhurst can be broken down into five distinct areas:

A: The area bordered roughly by Academy Avenue, Chalkstone Avenue, Raymond Street, and Pleasant Valley Parkway.

B: The area bounded roughly by Smith Street, Admiral Street, River Avenue, and Sharon Street.

C: The area bordered by Oakland Avenue, Eaton Street, Convent Avenue, and Radcliff Avenue.

D: The area roughly bounded by Radcliff Avenue, Eaton Street, Huxley Avenue, Admiral Street, River Avenue, Academy Avenue, and Pleasant Valley Parkway.

E: The area between the city limits, Smith Street, Sharon Street and Admiral Street.

Elmhurst, like Mount Pleasant, was one of the last areas of the city to be developed. Most of the houses are medium-sized, single-family homes on landscaped lots and tree-lined streets. Most houses were built in the twentieth century, though there are some older structures, including a small number of significant historic houses that reflect the area's rural roots. In addition to more recent suburban tract houses, earlier periods of twentieth century architectural history are represented, including variations on the bungalow style. Though less commonplace, there are also pockets of triple-deckers and scattered examples of larger multi-family complexes throughout the neighborhood. In general there is ample tree canopy coverage and plentiful off-street parking, mostly in the form of driveways. Providence College occupies a significant portion of land in the neighborhood and has a defined campus with a distinct pattern of development. The influence of PC also extends to the neighborhoods through use and rental patterns, as well as the creation of surface parking lots, which are beginning to blur the boundaries of the campus in some areas.

Mount Pleasant

The Mount Pleasant neighborhood has five typological areas:

A: The area bounded by Atwells Avenue, Mount Pleasant Avenue, Chalkstone Avenue, Imperial Avenue, and Rushmore Avenue.

B: The area bounded by Rialto Street, Mount Pleasant Avenue and Chalkstone Avenue.

C: The area bounded by Atwells Avenue, Academy Avenue, Glover Street, and Mount Pleasant Avenue.

D: The area just north of C bounded by Mount Pleasant Avenue, Academy Avenue, and Mount Pleasant High School to the north.

E: The area bounded by the city limits, Smith Street, and Mount Pleasant High School to the south.

Housing in Mount Pleasant is, in part, similar to that of adjacent Elmhurst. This is particularly true in the area around Mount Pleasant High School where the two neighborhoods intersect and mid-twentieth century single-family housing predominates. The southern portion of the neighborhood has a higher percentage of older structures with three or more units and higher lot coverage. In this area, the housing stock is not as well maintained, tree canopy is less extensive and there are fewer driveways. Overall, Mount Pleasant has a wide range of housing types, most constructed in the twentieth century. Triggs Memorial Golf Course and Rhode Island College occupy a significant portion of Mount Pleasant's land area (over a third of the neighborhood) offering relief from the generally fairly dense development pattern while also effectively removing much of the land area from the neighborhood proper.

Sample Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Typologies

Elmhurst—Typology D

Neighborhood Map

Aerial Photograph

Rhythm of Solids and Voids

Single Family House

Single Family House

Typical Dwelling

Single Family House

Typical Dwelling

Typical Dwelling

Defining Characteristics

Streetscape		Lots		Buildings			
Pavement Width	50 ft	Lot Size	5000 sf	Type	Single-family	Roof Type/Pitch	Gable, hipped
On-Street Parking	Mixed	Lot Width	50 ft	Lot Coverage	50%	Materials	Wood, brick
Sidewalks	Continuous	Density	1 unit per lot	Height	2-3 stories	Garages	Side
Street Trees	Irregular	Side Yards	12 ft	Porch/Stoop	Porch, stoop	Outbuildings	No
Front Yard	20 ft	Rear Yard	35 ft	First Floor Elevation	0-2 ft		
Fences	Wood	Parking	Side	Street Facing Transparency	30%		

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Historic Districts

Providence derives much of its character from its large stock of historic buildings. The City has long recognized the value of preservation and has established eight Local Historic Districts and 40 National Register Districts that cover over 9,000 properties citywide. In addition, there are 150 individual properties listed on the National Register. National Register Districts identify an area or group of buildings that are significant on a local, state or national level; however, they do not provide regulatory protection through local zoning. Property owners in National Register Districts may be eligible for state and federal tax credits for maintenance and renovation. Properties listed in a Local Historic District (LHD) are in a zoning overlay which requires that building alterations be approved by the Providence Historic District Commission. This is to ensure that the historic attributes and qualities of the properties within the district are maintained and preserved over time. Property owners in LHDs are eligible for the same tax credits as the National Register Districts. The Industrial and Commercial Buildings District (ICBD) is one of the eight LHDs in the city. Many of the buildings that made up the industrial and manufacturing centers in Providence's history are included in this district. In Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant, there are five properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and three properties on the ICBD.

Neighborhood Issues

Amenities and Services
Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant have many recreational amenities including Davis Park, Fargnoli Park, Triggs Memorial Golf Course, and George West Park. At the charrette, neighborhood residents expressed very specific ideas as to how these amenities could be improved, including upgrading the clubhouse at Triggs Golf Course and opening it up for use by community organizations. Senior residents also expressed their desire to have the senior discount for golfing at Triggs reinstated. Residents also proposed creating trail connections between several neighborhood landmarks (Davis Park, Twitchell Park, LaSalle Academy, and Mt. Pleasant High School among them). Many residents spoke of the need to upgrade the fields at Mt. Pleasant High School and expressed a desire to be able to use the sports facilities during the summer when school is not in session. Since the charrette, improvements have been made to Davis Park that include new lighting and upgraded sports facilities.

Commercial and Retail Areas
While primarily residential, there is a significant amount of retail and service commercial use in Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant, as well as professional office use and larger-scale medical/professional uses. This activity is concentrated on main thoroughfares: Chalkstone Avenue and Smith Street and, to a much lesser extent, the segment of Atwells Avenue that straddles Mount Pleasant and Olneyville. The Chalkstone Avenue commercial district has the largest concentration of retail establishments in the area, but lacks a cohesive identity in terms of scale and massing, architectural consistency, street orientation, and even use patterns: while some businesses are relatively pedestrian-friendly, many are distinctly auto-oriented. The segment of Smith Street that is in Elmhurst has one primary retail node centered around Academy Avenue, though small offices and businesses are located at intervals along Smith in either direction. Most of these establishments are located in one-story commercial buildings with minimal setbacks and a have "neighborhood commercial" character. Atwells Avenue at the southern edge of Mount Pleasant is primarily residential but has several small scattered businesses, particularly at the intersections of Mount Pleasant and Academy avenues. At the charrette residents spoke of the need to encourage and strengthen these existing retail areas, and expressed the desire for more neighborhood-oriented businesses that provide goods and services. They encouraged coordinated efforts to improve facades, signage and streetscapes in the commercial areas and identified the need for commercial district identities (in part through the Neighborhood Markets program). Many attendees referred to the Castle Theater as a prominent neighborhood landmark that needs to be restored and reused. Other issues included getting businesses involved in the community, attracting more restaurants, particularly in the Chalkstone commercial area, and addressing parking issues so that there is a higher rate of turnover of spaces. Residents also advocated for more buffers between the commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Issues (Cont.)

Housing

The majority of the housing stock in Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant is over 50 years old. Elmhurst contains mostly single-family houses with some pockets of multi-family housing. Mount Pleasant also has large areas of single-family homes, but contains more of the traditional Providence multi-family triple-deckers. While many homes in both neighborhoods are well maintained and in good condition, some have been neglected for a variety of reasons. Residents expressed concern about these homes and their affect on the neighborhoods through declining property values and blight. Residents expressed their desire to have existing community development corporations work in the neighborhoods to improve substandard housing. Neighborhood residents want to learn more about the home improvement programs offered through the city and suggested targeting these programs to certain parts of the neighborhoods.

Safety

Neighborhoods residents generally feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods, but some identified the need for more lighting at night in commercial areas. Residents also requested more patrols of Davis Park in the evenings, as there has been an increase in crime recently. More police traffic patrols to catch speeders on Mount Pleasant Avenue, Chalkstone Avenue, River Avenue, and Smith Street were requested as well.

Circulation

Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant are densely developed with a grid-like street network. Residents identified traffic congestion on Chalkstone Avenue, Smith Street and River Avenue. They expressed the need to upgrade and repair sidewalk networks throughout the neighborhoods to improve walkability. Residents also identified the need for road maintenance such as paving and pothole repair throughout the neighborhoods, especially on Chalkstone Avenue. They also expressed concern about Pleasant Valley Parkway; many suggested that it become a one-way pair to stop speeding and driver confusion. Additionally, residents expressed the need for more transit service to Downtown and more frequent service on the Chalkstone Avenue line.
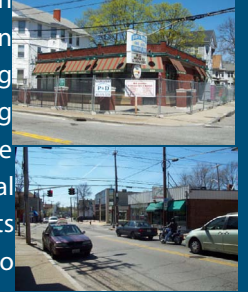
Infrastructure

In general, neighborhood residents were satisfied with the condition of their neighborhood infrastructure other than a few specific areas that require attention. One issue discussed was flooding at the southern edge of the Mount Pleasant High School athletic fields. Residents also said they would like the bridges over the creek in Pleasant Valley Parkway replaced, as they are in poor condition. Additionally, some residents wanted a process to be established for petitioning the City for on-street overnight parking.

Aesthetics and Character

Residents of Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant described their neighborhoods as generally stable and well maintained and expressed concern about preserving and maintaining the existing character. In particular, residents would like to maintain and grow the tree canopy in their neighborhood by adding street trees and protecting significant trees in the neighborhoods. Residential density was an issue residents raised; they would like to maintain the existing density by enforcing hardship requirements for variances granted by the Zoning Board of Review. Another proposal for maintaining existing neighborhood character was to implement design guidelines for infill development for building and site design, including requiring that new houses be built with an average front yard setback to help maintain the existing character.

Land Use Conflicts

Charrette participants identified areas where the current land use regulations are out of sync with existing or desired uses. After an extensive review of existing uses and current land use regulations, several areas were identified that may require zoning or comprehensive plan amendments to protect the character of the area, reflect the existing uses or, in some cases, encourage the desired uses to be developed in the future. A list of these specific areas is included in the action plan. The Planning Department will review these areas and forward recommendations for any amendments to the regulations to the City Plan Commission and City Council for their consideration.

Neighborhood Issues (Cont.)

Institutions

There are five major institutions in Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant: Roger Williams Hospital, Providence Veterans Medical Center, Providence College, Rhode Island College, and LaSalle Academy. These institutions and their properties have played prominent roles in shaping the development of their respective neighborhoods and will continue to have significant impacts on the area as a whole.

Roger Williams Hospital: Roger Williams Hospital was founded in 1878. The hospital's main entrance and emergency room are located on Chalkstone Avenue and associated facilities are located on Smith Street. The hospital has over 1100 employees and maintains 220 acute care beds. Neighborhood residents expressed concerns about landscaping, the amount of paved surface and other design considerations as they relate to property values and the primarily one- to three-unit residential character of the area. Additional concerns were raised about the rear of Roger Williams facing Pleasant Valley Parkway, and the need for improvement along this edge. Residents also expressed concern about the traffic generated by the hospital on Chalkstone Avenue.

Providence Veterans Administration Medical Center: The Providence Veterans Administration Medical Center is located across Chalkstone Avenue from Roger Williams Medical Center. It employs approximately 800 people and serves veterans from Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. In 2007, the Providence VMC served over 166,000 veterans. The main issues raised by residents were traffic generated by the medical center and the appearance of the street edge along Chalkstone Avenue. Participants suggested this could be improved by the hospital providing landscaping along the street.

Rhode Island College: Rhode Island College is located on a 180-acre campus on the western border of Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant. The college was founded in 1853 and moved to its current campus from downtown Providence in the 1950s. RIC is the oldest public institution of higher education in Rhode Island. It currently has 9,000 students and over 375 full-time faculty members. The main issues raised by residents were integrating the school into the neighborhoods, RIC allowing neighborhood residents to use their facilities and the behavior of students who live off campus in the neighborhoods.

Providence College: Providence College is located on a 105-acre campus in the Elmhurst neighborhood. The college was founded in 1917. It currently has an enrollment of 5,300 students. Residents expressed concern about the school expanding outside of the core campus into residential areas north of campus. Residents also expressed concern about the condition of many of the off-campus student apartments and the high proportion of absentee landlords. Neighborhood residents expressed concern about off-campus student housing and its impact on the neighborhood. Residents are also concerned about the college purchasing and demolishing properties along the northern edge of the campus for use as parking.

LaSalle Academy: LaSalle Academy is a private co-educational school located at the intersection of Academy Avenue and Smith Street run by the De LaSalle Christian Brothers. It has been at its current location since 1925. Residents were concerned with the traffic generated by school buses and by students jaywalking across Smith Street and Academy Avenue.

Neighborhood Action Plan

The key outcome of the Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant charrette was the development of a multi-phase action plan for the neighborhood and its associated map. The action plan below details the short-, mid- and long-term goals (spanning <5 years, 5–10 years and10+ years, respectively) of the neighborhoods and identifies specific actions needed to achieve the vision.

Key to Acronyms for City and State Departments and Agencies:

DPD- Department of Planning and Development (City of Providence)

DPW- Department of Public Works (City of Providence)

DIS- Department of Inspection and Standards (City of Providence)

ZBR- Zoning Board of Review (City of Providence)

TED- Traffic Engineering Division (City of Providence)

Parks- Department of Parks and Recreation (City of Providence)

PPD- Providence Police Department

PEDP- Providence Economic Development Partnership

HDC- Historic District Commission (City of Providence)

RIDOT- Rhode Island Department of Transportation

RIPTA- Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Schools- Providence Department of Public Schools

RIC- Rhode Island College

PC- Providence College

RWH-Roger Williams Hospital

VMC-Veteran's Medical Center

Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant Initiatives

Initiatives/Projects	Actions	Project Lead	Target Date
Actively involve the Elmhurst and Mt. Pleasant Neighborhoods in community decision-making.			
Promote collaboration between City government, neighborhood residents and businesses to achieve the vision for Elmhurst and Mt. Pleasant.	Identify strategies to broaden community participation in implementing the plan, such as creation of neighborhood and merchant associations, outreach plans, etc.	DPD, Community Groups	Ongoing
	Identify potential partners, such as businesses and non-profit organizations, that can assist in completing specific projects.	DPD, Community Groups	Ongoing
Ensure that all projects and initiatives contribute to achievement of the long-term vision.	Evaluate projects for consistency with the City's Comprehensive Plan and adopted neighborhood plan.	DPD	Ongoing
	Include neighborhood outreach and communication as part of the planning and development of significant public and private projects.	DPD	Ongoing
	Develop education and awareness programs to assist residents in understanding how different projects such as street tree plantings, recycling programs, etc. can improve their neighborhood.	DPD	Ongoing
Preserve and enhance Elmhurst and Mt. Pleasant as urban neighborhoods with a high quality of life.			
Maintain and improve the character of the neighborhoods, particularly the residential areas.	Create a brand for the neighborhoods e.g. "The Best of the Suburbs in the City."	DPD, Community Groups	Short-term
	Use the neighborhood typologies to develop zoning regulations that promote the best examples of existing neighborhood character.	DPD	Short-term
	Encourage the merging of undersized vacant lots with existing development to preserve open space.	DPD	Mid-term
	Strictly enforce hardship requirements for variances that may be detrimental to neighborhood character.	ZBR	Ongoing
	Increase enforcement of city ordinances such as paving limits, property maintenance and residential occupancy limits.	DIS	Ongoing
	Identify areas suitable for on-street overnight parking.	DPD, TED	Short-term
	Establish landscaping and lighting standards for residential neighborhoods and identify streets within the neighborhoods for improved landscaping and lighting.	DPW	Ongoing

Initiatives/Projects	Actions	Project Lead	Target Date
Preserve and enhance Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant as urban neighborhoods with a high quality of life. (Cont.)			
Increase opportunities for and access to safe and affordable housing.	Target properties with minimum housing code violations and complaints for enforcement.	DIS	Ongoing
	Publicize existing housing programs such as down payment assistance, emergency repairs and lead abatement, through distribution of brochures at neighborhood centers, meetings and events.	DPD	Ongoing
	Encourage CDCs working in adjacent neighborhoods to build housing in Elmhurst and Mt. Pleasant.	DPD	Ongoing
Preserve historic resources.	Consider adding regulatory protection to the following properties that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register, but are not currently protected by Historic District Zoning: • Elizabeth C. O'Connell House, Lying-in Hospital (now part of Roger Williams Hospital) • W.M Bailey House (now St. Domenic Hall, P.C.) • G.M. Bradley House (now St. Martin Hall, P.C.) • Winsor-Swan-Whitman Farm • Zachariah Allen House	DPD, HDC	Short-term
Improve neighborhood infrastructure.	Evaluate the drainage system along the southern end of Mt. Pleasant High School to determine the cause of the flooding problem, and identify solutions.	DPW	Mid-term
	Consider applying guidelines that would require "green" approaches to storm water management, reducing new storm water discharges.	DPW, DPD	Short-term
	Work with the City Forester to plant street trees in the neighborhoods and to promote Trees 2020 in these neighborhoods as well as publicizing the process for having street trees trimmed.	Community Groups	Ongoing
	Update the Atwells Ave/Manton Ave Intersection through the Manton Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project through reconfiguration of the intersection, installation of new sidewalks and pedestrian crossings and installation of a traffic signal.	DPD, DPW, RIDOT	Underway
	Work with the Department of Public Works to identify funding for a comprehensive inventory of sidewalks throughout the city, and develop clear maintenance and performance goals, eliminating the need for special requests to be made for routine maintenance and repairs.	DPD, DPW, Community Groups	Mid-term
Improve community safety.	Promote continued and improved interaction between the police and the community so that the police are better acquainted with community issues and community members.	Community Groups, PPD	Ongoing
	Establish neighborhood watch programs in addition to the Friends of Elmhurst program.	Community Groups, PPD	Ongoing
	Create a neighborhood police liaison program.	Community Groups, PPD	Short-term

Initiatives/Projects	Actions	Project Lead	Target Date
Preserve and enhance Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant as urban neighborhoods with a high quality of life. (Cont.)			
Improve connections within the neighborhoods and from the neighborhoods to the city for driver, bikers, walkers, and transit users.	Work with RIPTA to increase the frequency of service on Chalkstone Avenue, Admiral Street and Smith Street.	DPD, RIPTA	Short-term
	Work with RIPTA and other departments to develop distinct branding for transit maps, schedules and signs.	DPD, RIPTA	Mid-term
	Improve pedestrian connections across major corridors such as Chalkstone Avenue, River Avenue, Smith Street, Academy Avenue, and Admiral Street.	DPW, RIDOT	Mid to Long Term
	Evaluate ways to make Admiral Street more pedestrian-friendly.	DPW	Mid-term
	Evaluate ways to make Smith Street, Admiral Street, Chalkstone Avenue, Academy Avenue and River Avenue more bicycle friendly including bike lanes or sharrows (Share the Road markings).	DPW, DPD	Mid-term
	Restore Ravenswood Avenue to two-way travel.	DPW,TED	Mid-term
	Evaluate the Forbes/Ardmore intersection for circulation improvements.	DPW, TED	Mid-term
	Evaluate the Smith/Whitford/Wyndham intersection for improvements.	DPW, TED	Mid-term
	Work with the State to provide better pedestrian amenities for crossings at key intersections on Smith Street such as curb extensions, elevated crosswalks or push button lights as appropriate.	RIDOT	Mid-term
	Consider traffic calming on Sharon Street, Grosvenor Avenue and Pleasant Valley Parkway to deter speeding.	DPW, PPD	Mid-term
Upgrade and Restore Pleasant Valley Parkway.	Examine the current traffic configuration and consider making the road a one-way pair.	DPW, TED	Long-term
	Evaluate drainage system along Pleasant Valley to determine the cause of the existing flooding problems and identify possible solutions.	DPW	Mid to Long- Term
	Create a visual or physical connection from Pleasant Valley Parkway to Raymond Street.	Parks, DPD, DPW	Long-term
	Create a connection between Pleasant Valley Parkway and Davis Park.	Parks, DPD, DPW	Mid-term
	Consolidate or eliminate utility poles along Pleasant Valley Parkway.	DPW, National Grid	Long-term
	Create a walking trail through the neighborhood to create connections to the parkway.	Parks	Mid-term
	Repair or replace the bridges over the stream in the park.	Parks	Short to Mid Term

Initiatives/Projects	Actions	Project Lead	Target Date
Based on an extensive review of use patterns and current land use regulations, zoning amendments and comprehensive plan amendments should be considered for the following areas to reflect existing uses, encourage appropriate new uses and protect neighborhood character.			
Elmhurst	Parcels along Admiral Street between Sharon and Hillview from three-family residential to two-family residential.	DPD	Short-term
Mount Pleasant	Parcel at the intersection of Old Road and Gentian from limited commercial to residential.	DPD	Short-term
	The intersection of Atwells Avenue and Manton Avenue from general commercial to limited commercial.	DPD	Short-term
Increase opportunities for business and job growth.			
Create a vibrant retail district at Chalkstone and Academy.	Promote the Neighborhood Markets program to help with training, façade improvements, district identities and signage.	DPD, PEDP	Ongoing
	Encourage rehabilitation of commercial buildings.	DPD	Ongoing
	Promote the redevelopment or re-use of the Castle Theater.	DPD, Community Groups	Short-term
	Ensure buffers between commercial and residential uses.	DPD	Short-term
	Consider parking meters or signage to encourage turnover of on-street parking spaces for small business customers.	TED	Ongoing
	Work with the CPC to create a commercial node on Chalkstone Avenue between Rosebank and Academy avenues.	DPD	Short-term
Promote business growth in the neighborhood.	Publicize incentives available for job creation such as the revolving loan fund.	DPD, PEDP	Ongoing
	Promote business assistance programs such as technical assistance, storefront improvement grants and micro–loans.	DPD	Ongoing
	Promote merchant groups for Chalkstone Ave and Smith Street.	DPD, PEDP	Ongoing
	Meet with business owners to understand needs, concerns and issues.	DPD	Ongoing

Initiatives/Projects	Actions	Project Lead	Target Date
Establish Neighorhood Institutions as Anchors in the Neighborhoods.			
Create a campus environment around Roger Williams Hospital, Veteran's Medical Center, Davis Park and Nathanael Greene Middle School.	Work with the hospitals, parks department and school department to establish uniform standards for the public realm: fencing, lighting (street and pedestrian), landscaping, street trees, and banners.	DPD, Parks, Institutions	Short to Mid term
	Redesign southbound Oakland Avenue to include a drop off lane, right turn lane, left turn lane, and through travel lane.	DPW, Schools	Short-term
	Work with the hospitals to improve their neighborhood edges including landscaping, sidewalks, and lighting through the Institutional Master Plan process.	DPD, City Forester	Short-term
Work with institutions and schools to better integrate within the neighborhoods.	Encourage the Diocese of Providence and the De La Salle Christian Brothers to continue to restore the wetlands on their properties.	DPD	Short-term
	Work with the school department to allow neighborhood use of outdoor recreation fields and facilities when not in use by the schools, particularly the fields at Mt. Pleasant High School.	DPD, Schools	Short-term
	Work with RIC to create walking trails for campus and neighborhood use through their property.	Parks, RIC	Mid-term
	Improve the edge of Roger Williams Hospital facing Pleasant Valley Parkway through landscaping and lighting upgrades.	RWH, Community Groups	Mid-term
	Improve the edge of Veteran's Medical Center facing Chalkstone Avenue through landscaping and lighting upgrades.	VMC, Community Groups	Mid-term
	Work with RIC and PC to allow neighborhood residents to use campus facilities such as libraries and recreational facilities.	Community Groups, RIC, PC	Mid-term
	Increase the collaboration between PC, RIC and neighborhood residents through educational programs and services, mentoring neighborhood students and other learning opportunities.	Community Groups, RIC, PC	Mid-term
	Encourage PC to build a parking garage to address their parking requirements rather than expanding surface lots on the north edge of campus. Housing stock in the neighborhood should not be demolished to create additional surface parking.	DPD, PC	Mid-to Long-term
	Encourage PC to extend RIPTA U-Pass benefits to faculty and staff to decrease parking demand on campus and to increase bus ridership.	DPD, RIPTA, PC	Short-to Mid-term
	Improve Institutional Master Plan requirements to require more detailed information about institutions' plans for long-term growth, and require community input.	DPD	Completed

Initiatives/Projects	Actions	Project Lead	Target Date
Improve access to and increase opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of open space.			
Improve neighborhood maintenance, programming and access to existing parks spaces.	Evaluate the programming in Fargnoli Park to ensure it is meeting residents needs and upgrade lighting to improve safety and security.	Parks	Mid-term
	Update the playground at George West Park.	Parks	Mid-term
	Evaluate the utilization of Triggs Memorial Golf Course to determine if there is excess property that could be used for other recreational uses.	Parks	Short-term
	Work to permanently preserve the open space at Triggs Memorial Golf Course.	Parks	Long-term
	Examine the feasibility of renovating or constructing a new club house at the golf course.	Parks	Short-term
	Identify other opportunities for recreation on underutilized golf course lands.	Parks	Short-term
	Consider clearing overgrown acreage at Triggs to allow for sledding and other winter uses.	Parks	Short-term
	Upgrade the facilities at Davis Park, including lighting and fields.	Parks	Completed
	Continue the overall upkeep and maintenance in Fargnoli, Davis and West Parks.	Parks	Ongoing
	Work with the School Dept. to upgrade the athletic fields at Mount Pleasant High School and to open the fields to the public when school is not in session.	Parks, Schools	Short-to Mid-term
Create opportunities for new park and open spaces and community gardens.	Build a continuous trail through the neighborhoods to connect Davis Park, Twitchell Park, Greene School, Pleasant Valley Parkway, LaSalle Academy, Mt. Pleasant High School, Triggs Golf Course, and Pleasant Valley School.	Parks, Community groups	Mid to Long Term
	Identify and evaluate the best locations for community gardens and the level of sustained interest among residents in those areas to maintain and support community gardens.	Parks, Community groups	Short-term
	Work with local PTOs to consider establishing community gardens on school grounds, with an education component for students.	Parks, Schools	Short-term

Next Steps

This plan is not meant to sit on a shelf - it is a guide to neighborhood action. City departments, neighborhood leaders and residents should use this plan to guide decisions in the neighborhood, and to prioritize funding and neighborhood improvement projects. The action plan sets out short-, mid- and long-term goals so that we can periodically check in to see how we are doing. The plan is also not a static document – it can and will be changed over time. New concerns, issues or conditions in the neighborhood will be reflected in updates to the plan. Finally, the plan will set out the course for amending zoning regulations that have impacts in the neighborhood.

Thank you to the charrette team and to the residents of Elmhurst and Mount Pleasant for participating in this effort and to Triggs Memorial Golf Course for generously providing space for the charrette!

The Charrette Team

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Councilman Joseph DeLuca

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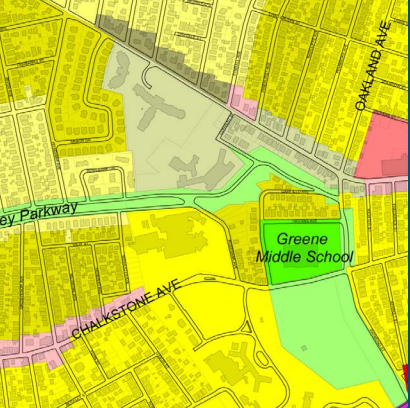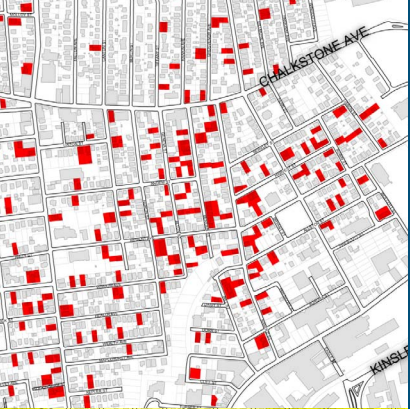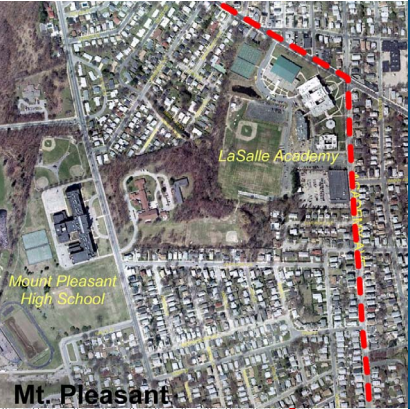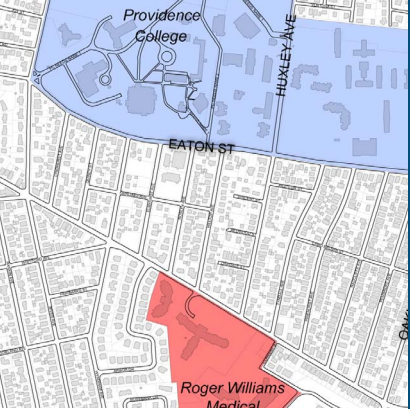
APPENDIX – NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

Neighborhood Boundaries

Legend

- - - - Neighborhood
        Boundary

0   0.125   0.25   0.5 Miles

N

Providence College

Elmhurst

Rhode Island College

LaSalle Academy

EATON ST

Mount Pleasant High School

Mt. Pleasant

Roger Williams Medical Center

Pleasant Valley Parkway

Greene Middle School

Triggs Memorial Golf Course

CHALKSTONE AVE

MOUNT PLEASANT AVE

MANTON AVE

KINSLEY AVE

ATWELLS AVE

US HWY 6

DOUGLAS AVE

SMITH ST

ACADEMY AVE
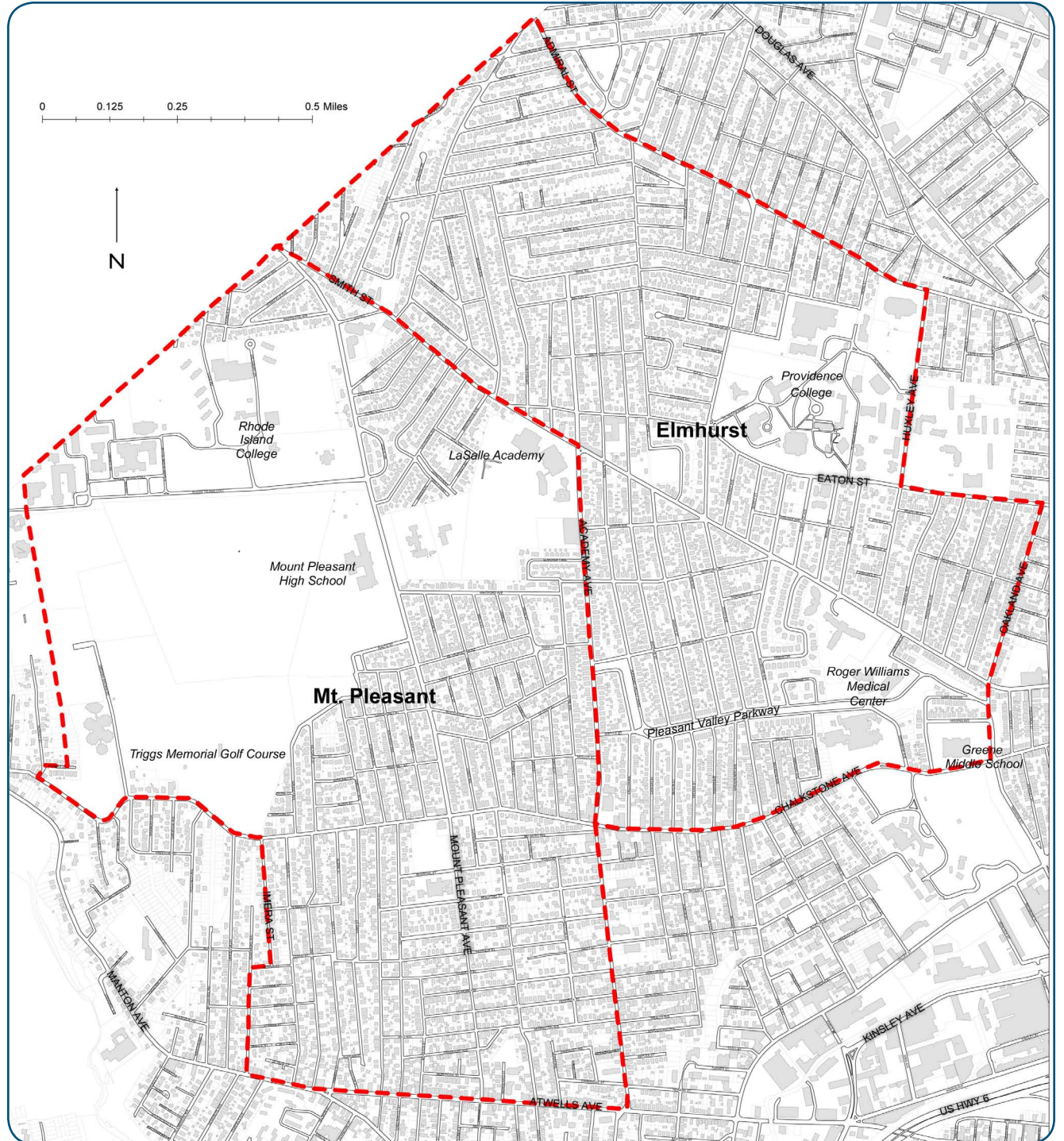
Aerial Photograph

2004

Current Zoning

Legend

R1	RG	C1	O.S.
R2	RM	C2	P.S.
R3	RP	C4	CD
D1-45	D1-150	D2	W1
D1-75	D1-200	M1	W2
D1-100	D1-300	M2	W3

N

June 2009

A-4

ADMIRAL ST
DOUGLAS AVE
SMITH ST
Providence College
HUXLEY AVE
EATON ST
Rhode Island College
LaSalle Academy
ACADEMY AVE
OAKLAND AVE
Mount Pleasant High School
Pleasant Valley Parkway
Greene Middle School
Triggs Memorial Golf Course
CHALKSTONE AVE
IMERA ST
MOUNT PLEASANT AVE
MANTON AVE
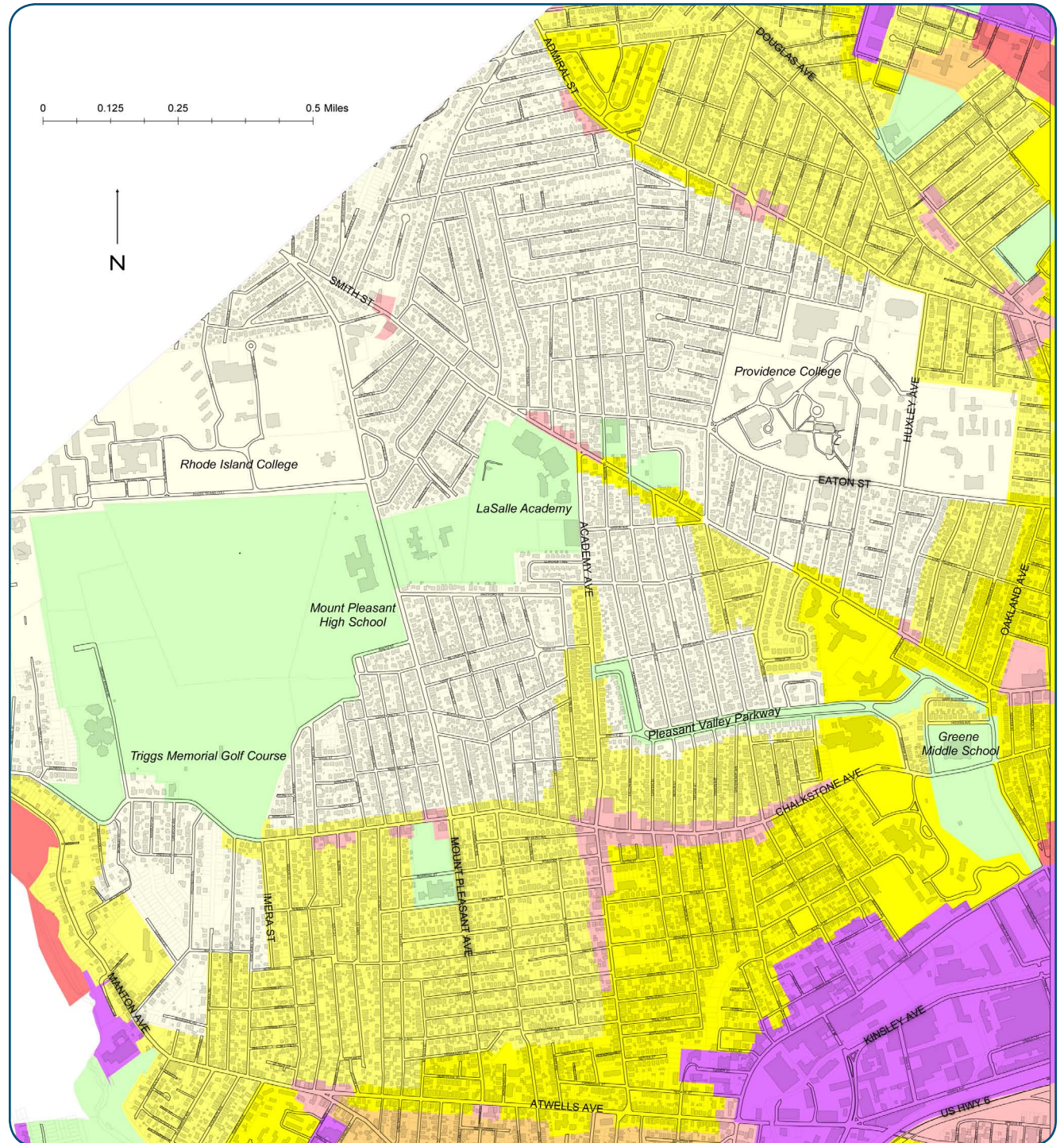KINSLEY AVE
ATWELLS AVE
US HWY 6
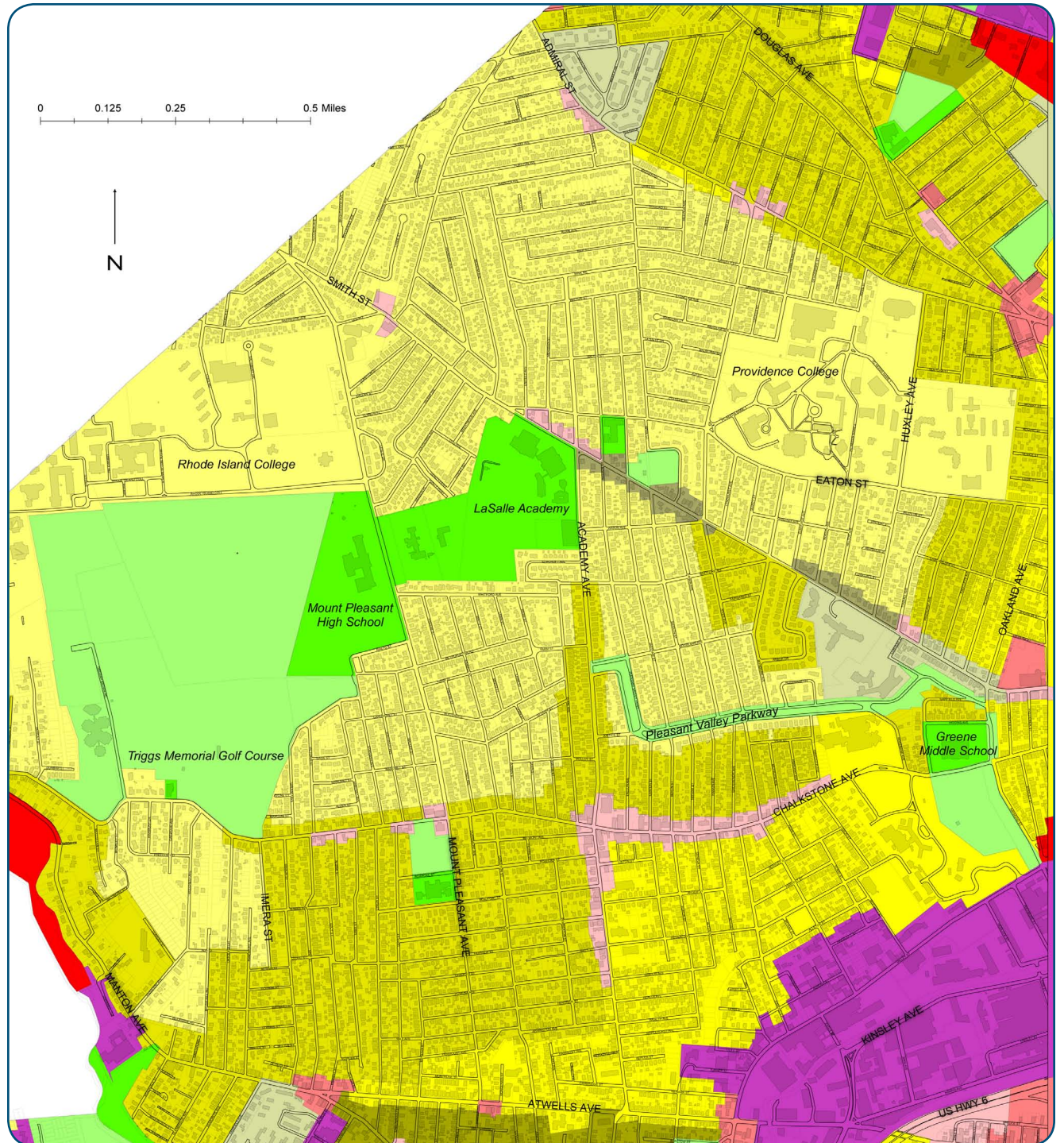
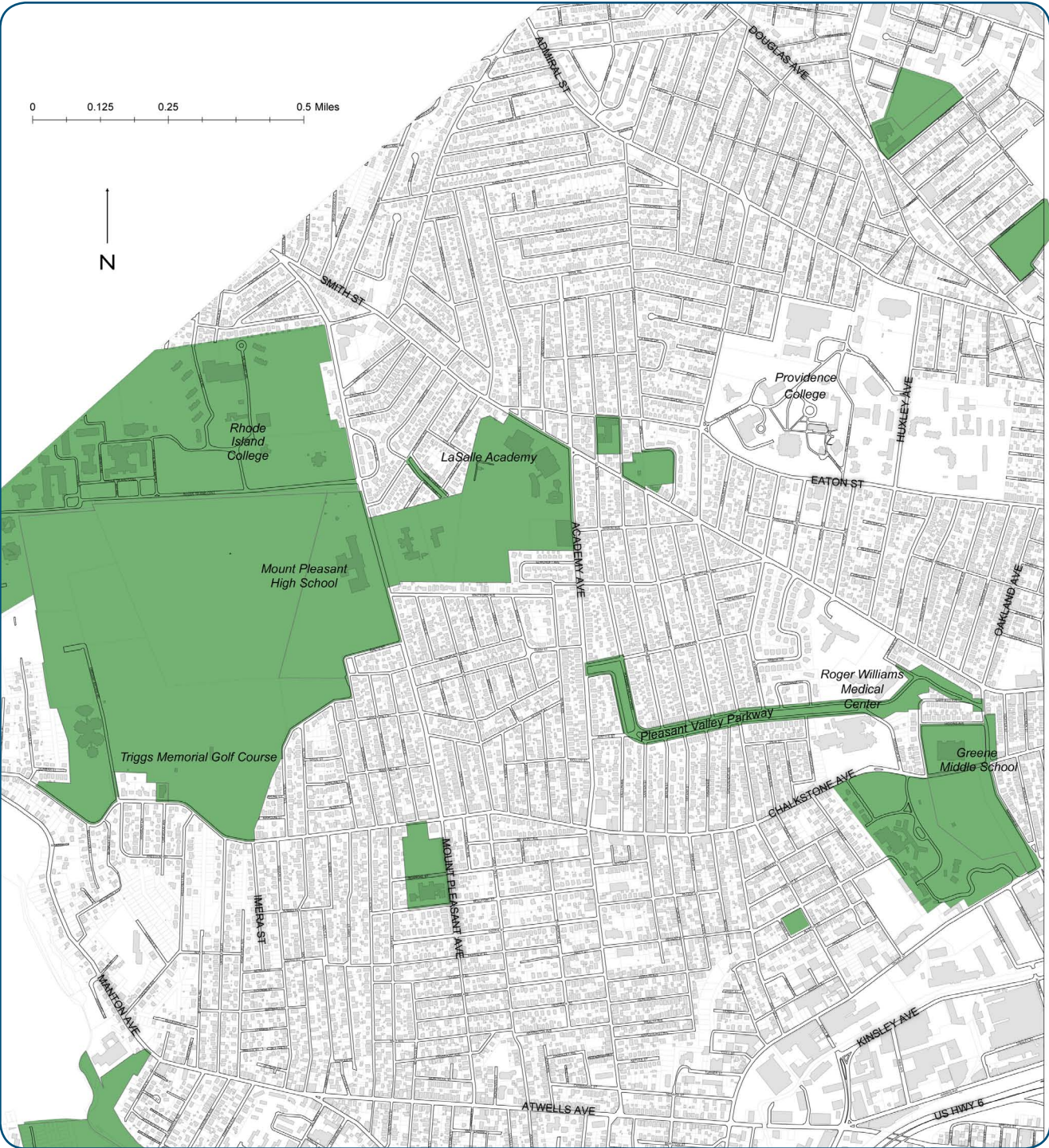# Current Land Use

Legend

- ▨ Institutional
- ▨ Jobs District
- ▨ Single Family Res.
- ▨ Low Density Res.
- ▨ Medium Density Res.
- ▨ High Density Res.
- ▨ Neigh. Comm./Mixed Use
- ▨ Gen. Comm./Mixed Use
- ▨ Downtown/Mixed-Use
- ▨ Business/Mixed Use Waterfront
- ▨ Mixed Use/Neigh.
- ▨ Waterfront Mixed Use/Gen.
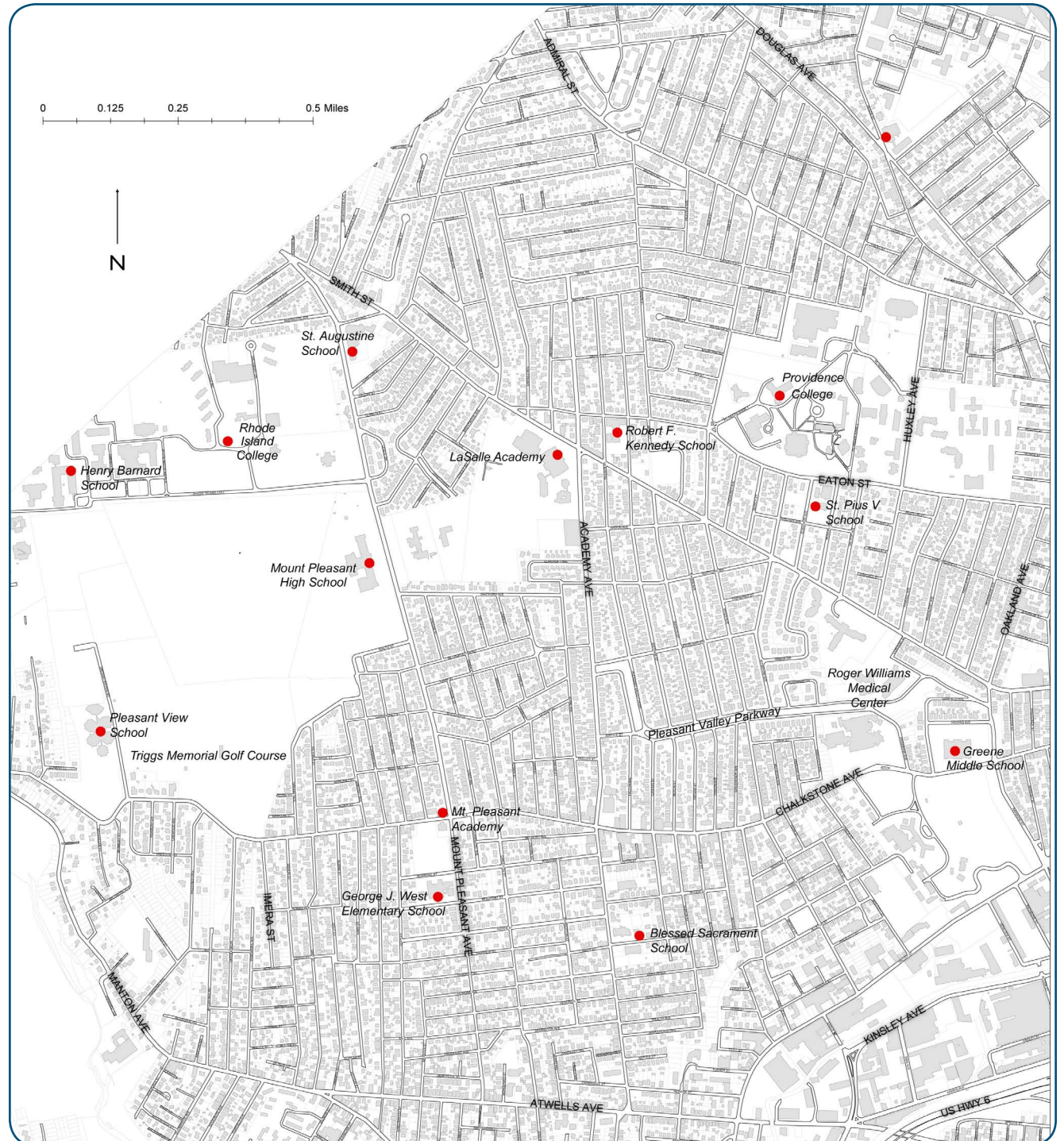- ▨ Waterfront/Port
- ▨ Public Space/Open Space
- ▨ Conservation

December 2007 (Comprehensive Plan)

0   0.125   0.25   0.5 Miles

N

Providence College

Rhode Island College

LaSalle Academy

Mount Pleasant
High School

Triggs Memorial Golf Course

Pleasant Valley Parkway

Greene
Middle School

SMITH ST

ADMIRAL ST

DOUGLAS AVE

HUXLEY AVE

EATON ST

ACADEMY AVE

OAKLAND AVE

CHALKSTONE AVE

MOUNT PLEASANT AVE

IMERA ST

MANTON AVE

KINSLEY AVE

ATWELLS AVE

US HWY 6

A-5

Parks and Open Space

0   0.125   0.25   0.5 Miles

N

Providence College

Rhode Island College

LaSalle Academy

EATON ST

Mount Pleasant High School

ACADEMY AVE

HUXLEY AVE

OAKLAND AVE

Roger Williams Medical Center

Pleasant Valley Parkway

Triggs Memorial Golf Course

Greene Middle School

CHALKSTONE AVE

IMERA ST

MOUNT PLEASANT AVE

MANTON AVE

ADMIRAL ST

DOUGLAS AVE

SMITH ST

KINSLEY AVE

ATWELLS AVE

US HWY 6

Schools
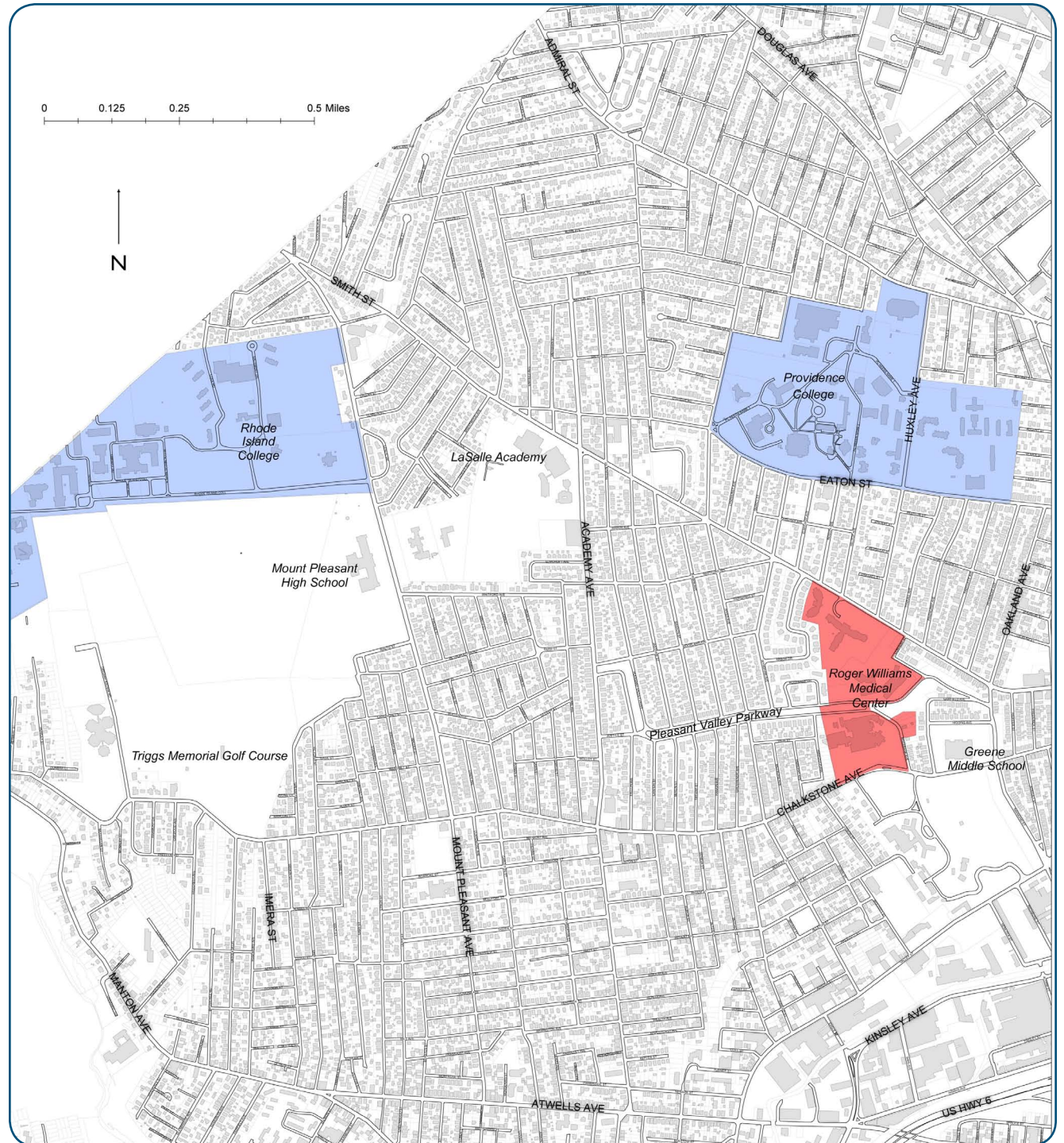
Historic Districts

Legend

- ▮ Local Historic District
- ▨ National Historic District
- ▮ ICBD
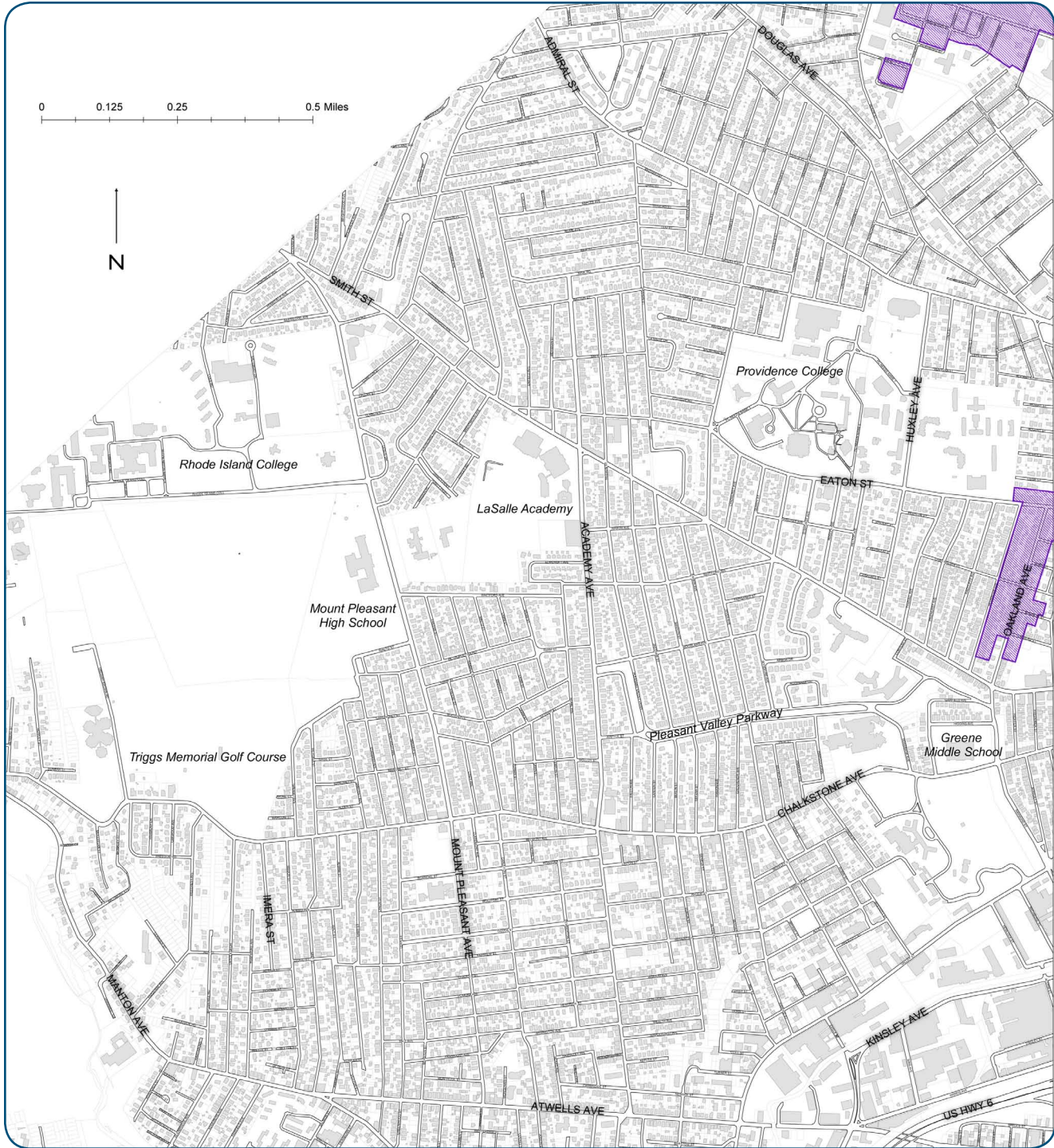
Institutional Zones

Legend

■ I-1 Health Care

■ I-2 Educational Zone
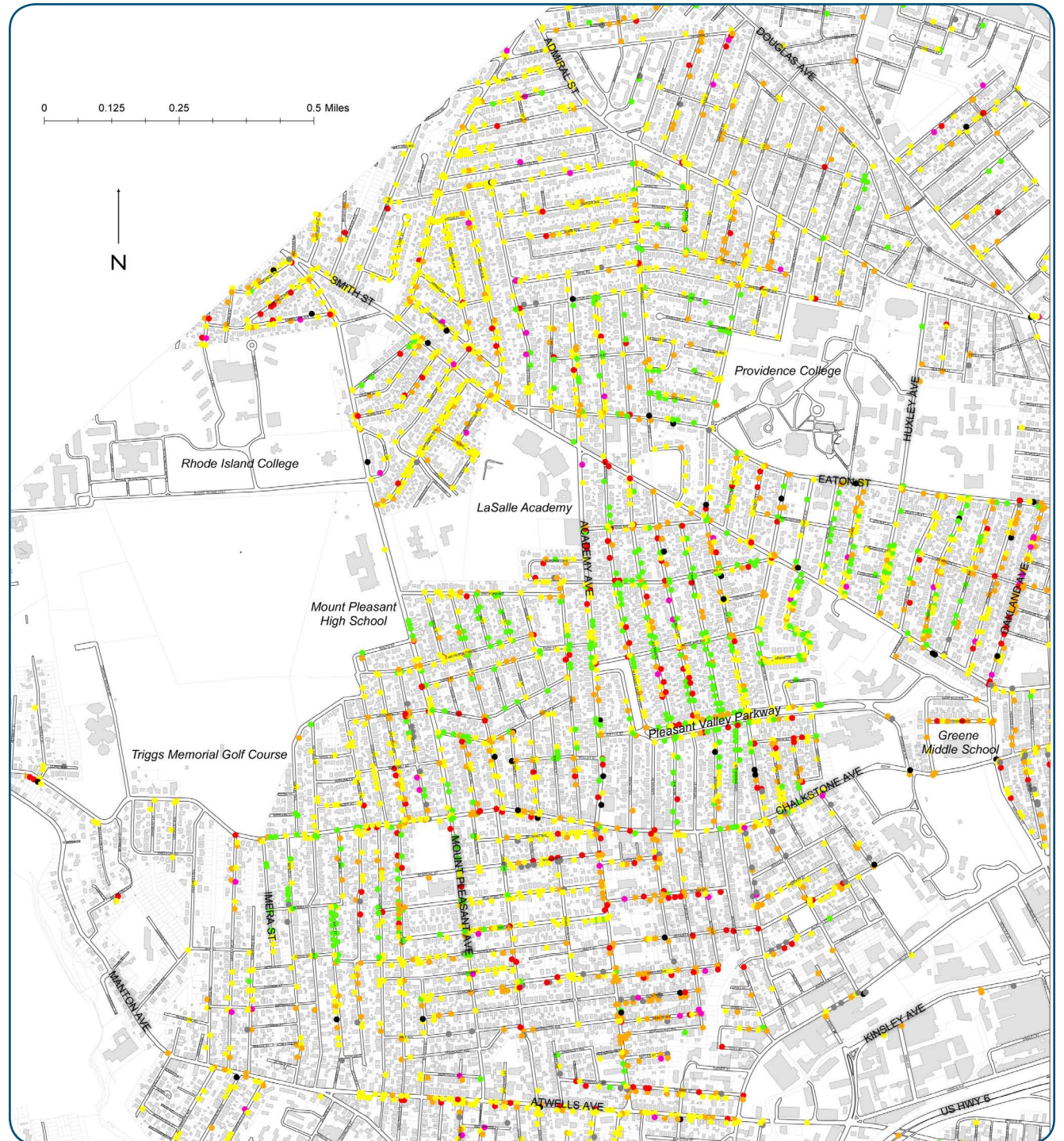
■ I-3 Educational Downtown Zone

0   0.125   0.25   0.5 Miles

N

SMITH ST

ADMIRAL ST

DOUGLAS AVE

Providence
College

HUXLEY AVE

EATON ST

Rhode
Island
College

LaSalle Academy

ACADEMY AVE

Mount Pleasant
High School

Roger Williams
Medical
Center

OAKLAND AVE

Pleasant Valley Parkway

Greene
Middle School

Triggs Memorial Golf Course

CHALKSTONE AVE

IMERA ST

MOUNT PLEASANT AVE

MANTON AVE

KINSLEY AVE

ATWELLS AVE

US HWY 6

June 2009

A-9

Street Tree Conditions

Legend

- 🟢 Excellent
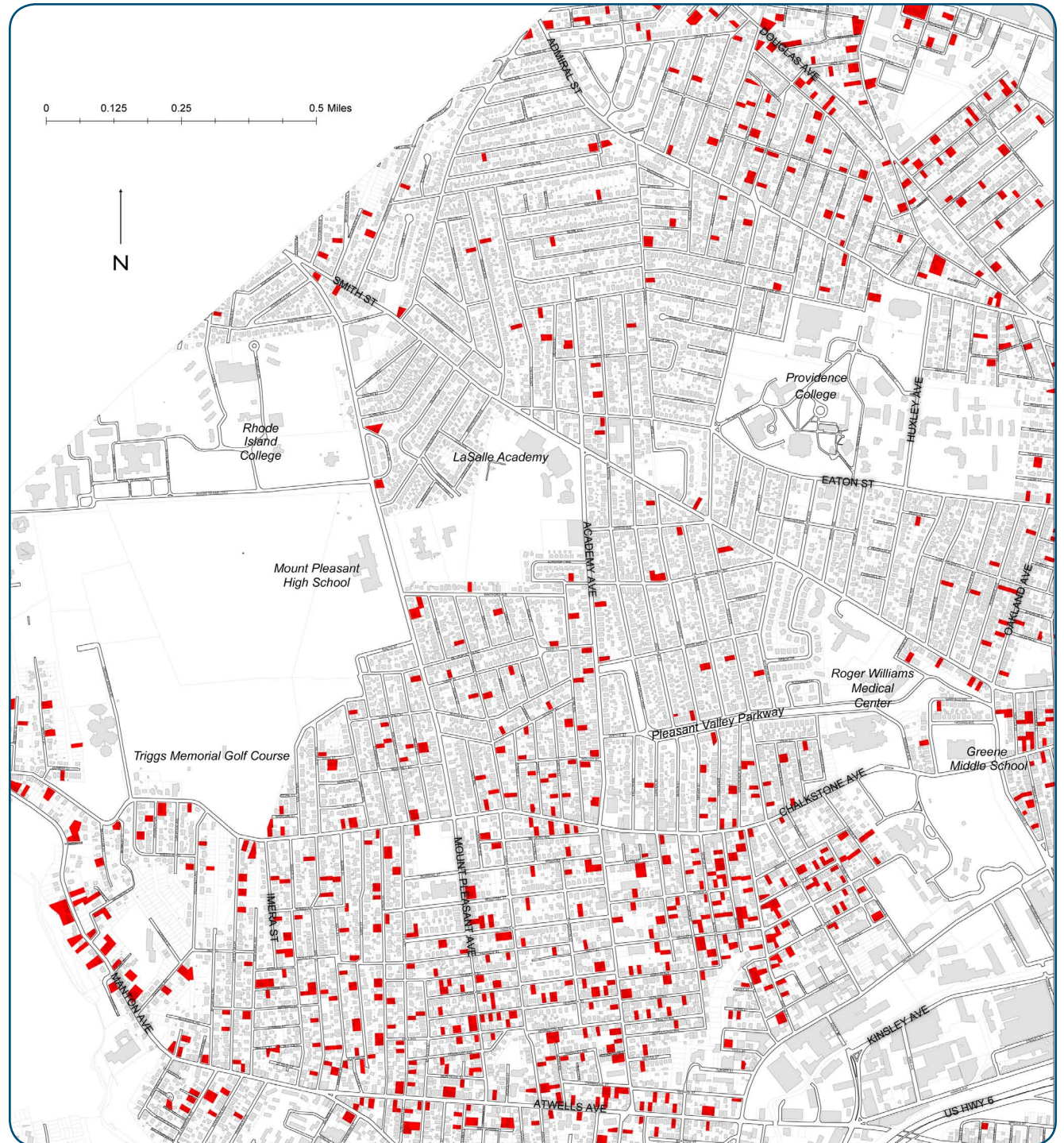- 🟡 Good
- ⚫ Dead
- 🟣 Stump
- 🟠 Fair
- 🔴 Poor
- ⚪ Empty Pit
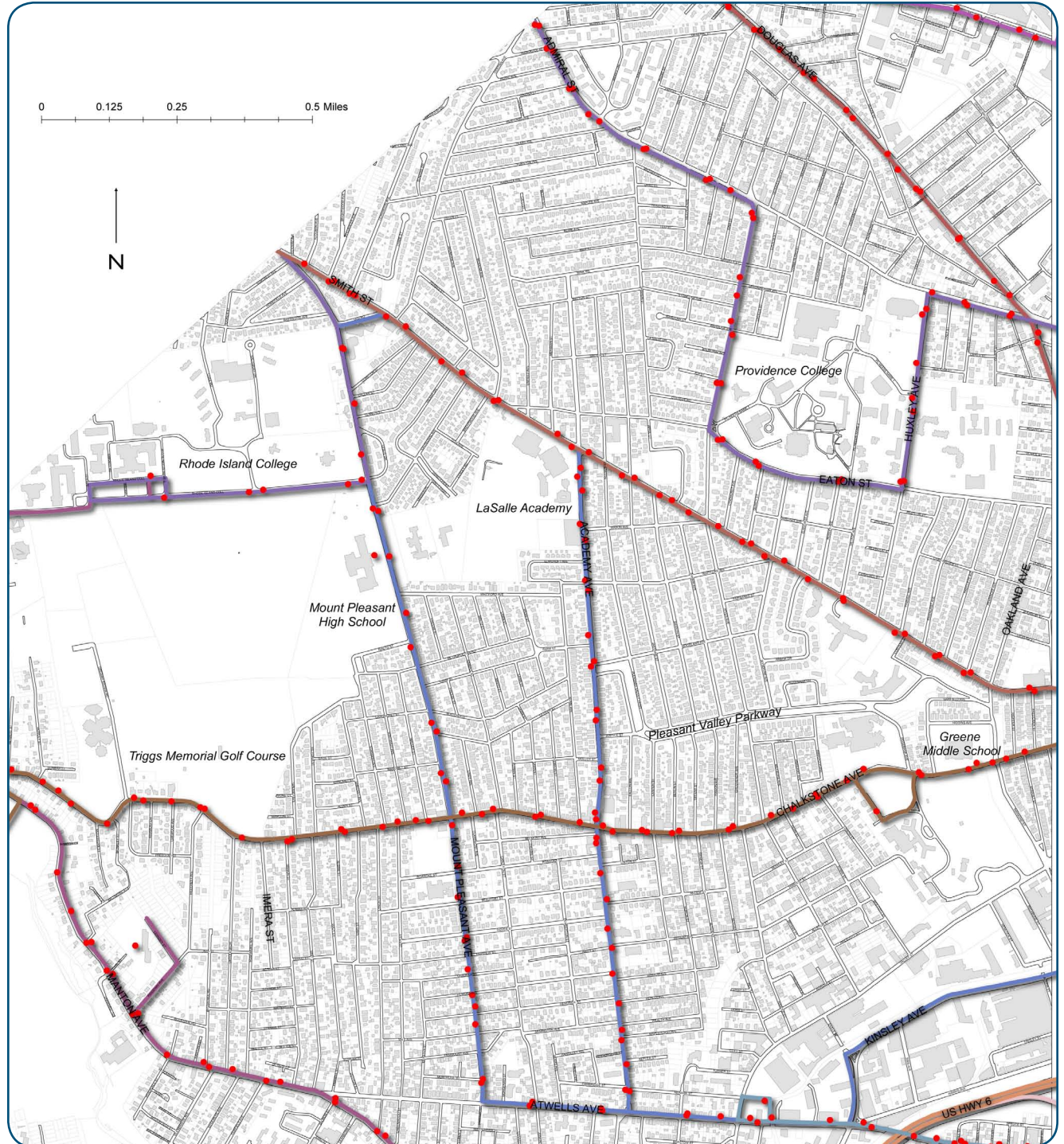
March 2007

Foreclosures
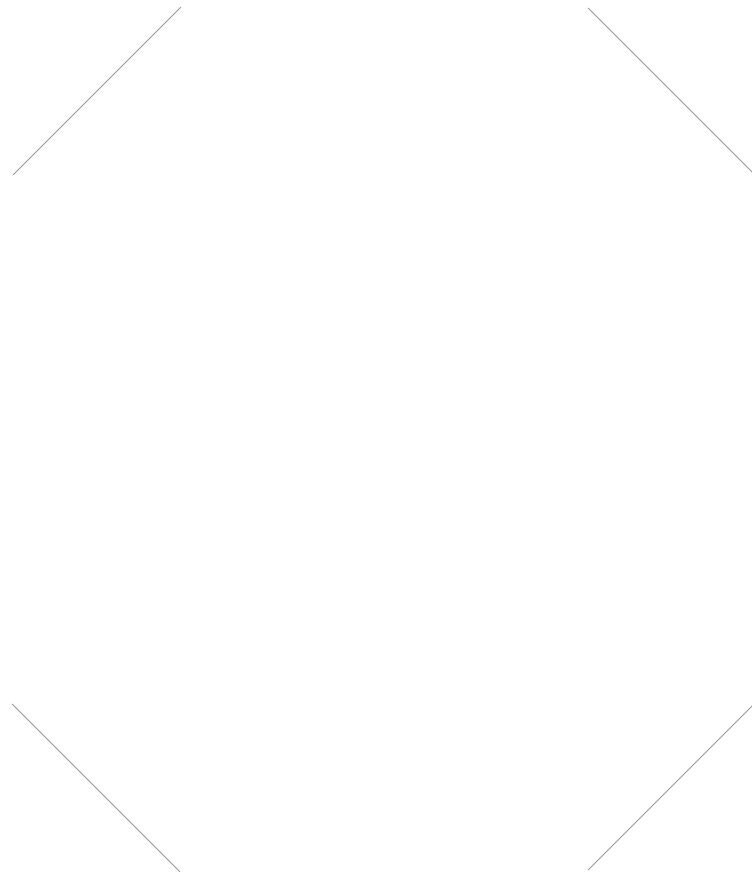
January 1, 2006 - May 31, 2009

RIPTA Routes

Legend

● RIPTA stop

━━ RIPTA route

APPENDIX – NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN MAP

PROVIDENCE TOMORROW

our city ■ our neighborhoods ■ our future

City of Providence, Department of Planning and Development
400 Westminster Street, Providence RI 02906

Tel:(401) 351-4300

www.providencetomorrow.org