

# NORTH HEIGHTS ADDITION TO AMARILLO

NORTH WEST 100 ACRES, SECTION 168, BLOCK 2, A.B.&M.  
POTTER COUNTY TEXAS.

# 168

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p. 18



## North Heights Rezoning Initiative Committee Summary and Recommendations

Community Outreach Draft  
October 2, 2020



John R. Rennie, Surveyor,  
that the above is a true and correct plat  
as surveyed by me on the ground  
18th Sept 1926

John R. Rennie  
Surveyor

# North Heights Rezoning Initiative

## Committee Summary and Recommendations

### Introduction

One of the primary strategic actions recommended by the 2016 *North Heights Neighborhood Plan* was a comprehensive land use assessment to amend incompatible uses and encourage zoning patterns that will protect the historic character of the North Heights neighborhood while also diversifying and maximizing the opportunities for residential and commercial development.

The North Heights neighborhood is at risk for development activity that is inconsistent with the community's vision for its future. Industrial and commercial zoning districts could allow for intensive uses such as manufacturing, storage, and warehousing near existing residences. Large amounts of multi-family zoning could result in higher density apartments, reducing the chances for construction of stabilizing single-family homes and the preservation of existing buildings. One of Amarillo's oldest neighborhoods, it is historically significant for its founding by African American leader Bones Hooks and its concentration of around 150 thriving black-owned businesses at its peak in the 1940s.

The current zoning pattern is also inconsistent with the Neighborhood Unit concept in Amarillo's *Comprehensive Plan*, which encourages more intensive commercial uses on the edges and protection of single-family neighborhoods at the center.

The community's vision as documented in the *North Heights Neighborhood Plan* is that of a strong, vibrant neighborhood comprised of single-family homeowners as well as other types of lower density mixed-income housing in proximity to jobs and services.

The Rezoning Initiative was identified in late 2019 as one of the plan's transformative projects by the North Heights Advisory Association Board. A committee was then organized with the assistance of Texas Housers in May 2020 to facilitate the process which includes three steps:

1. Analysis and committee recommendations (June – July)
2. Community outreach and education (August – October)
3. Formal city application and approval process (Winter 2020/2021)

This report articulates the guiding principles expressed by the committee during their working sessions, which were all completed virtually, and then summarizes the committee's recommendations for land use changes by quadrants. It should be used for NHAA's outreach to the broader community

including property owners and residents potentially impacted by the changes. The goal of the outreach efforts is to "empower residents, empower development and empower change." The committee will work to help residents and property owners understand the expected outcomes from the zoning changes from a "neighbor to neighbor" perspective, simplifying what can become a very technical and complex process.

Staff will continue to refine the recommendations based on public input. The City-initiated application process will begin once NHAA believes it has reached community consensus on the proposed zoning changes, and the expected outcomes from those changes.



### Committee Members

Alan Abraham	Mary London
Mildred Darton	Nicole Luper
Tierra Evans	Wanda Nelson
Shirley Ford	Jay Parker
Jerri Glover	Julian Reese
Melodie Graves	Reverend Joseph Young

### Texas Housers

Caleb Roberts, *Northwest Texas Director*

### City of Amarillo Planning & Development Services

Emily Koller, AICP, *Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Manager*  
Torie BenShushan, *Neighborhood Planner 1*

## North Heights Neighborhood Development Timeline

This is intended to provide historical context for the land use and development patterns that have shaped the present condition of North Heights. It is not intended to be a complete historical record of all people and institutions.

**1887** - Town of Amarillo begins with the building of Fort Worth & Denver City (FW&DC) Railway.

**1889** - Town of Amarillo incorporated with an approximate population of 480.

**1900** - Bones Hooks arrives in Amarillo.

**1900-1930** - African Americans primarily reside in a four-square block area immediately west of downtown along SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave., called The Flats.

**1901** - St. Anthony's Hospital is constructed at 710 N Polk St., the first Catholic hospital in the Panhandle. It would not equally serve African American patients until the 1950s.

**1907** - Miller Heights platted.

**1910** - Census notes population of 9,957, 149 "negroes."

**1916** - Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church is completed at 118 S Van Buren St., the first African American church organized and constructed in Amarillo. This building exists in its original location today.

**1926** - Bones Hooks secures 100 acres of land north of the Flats with Mayor Lee Bivins financing the property. His intent is create a new neighborhood for Amarillo's African American residents, on high ground, where they would be able to purchase homes, not rent, and build their own community. This area was between present day NW 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. and NW 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. between Ong and Jefferson.

North Heights is platted and an opening day sale is held for the lots on September 26, 1926. It appears it was annexed into the City at the time of platting, but that roads and utilities were constructed after lots were sold. The neighborhood was described in early newspaper accounts in the following way, "North Heights is the realization of a life-long dream of Matthew Bones Hooks whose parents were slaves. The idea of founding an exclusively Negro community grew to dominate his thoughts. It would be a town for those Negroes bound by the economic shackles of the cotton industry—a town not of renters, but of homeowners, each person holding an abstract." - May 14, 1947, "Bones Hooks and his Modern Pioneers," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*

**1928** - Patten High School is built at 18<sup>th</sup> and N Hughes St. It operated from 1928 to 1948.

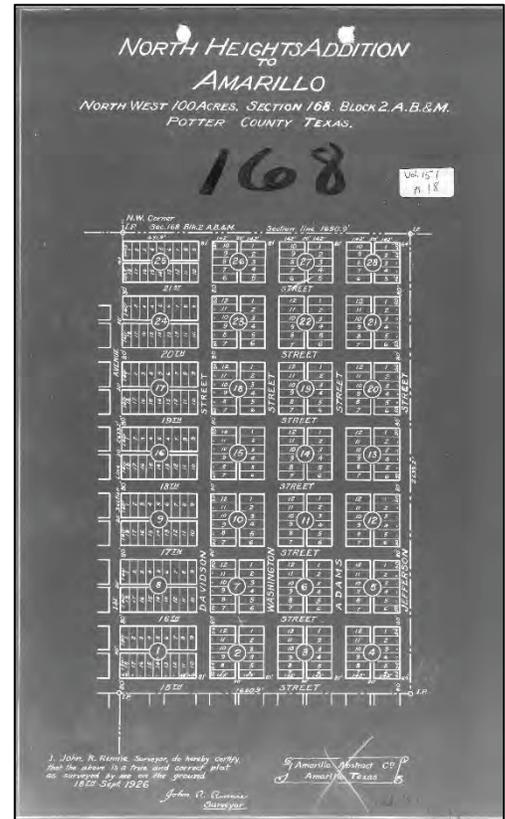
**1930** - City of Amarillo's first comprehensive plan and zoning code is completed by E.A. Woods of Dallas. Census notes population of 43,132. No land use policies specific to race are noted.

**1934** - Miller Heights is platted.

**c. Late 1930s** - Dr. James Odis Wyatt opened a clinic at 901 N. Hayden to serve the African American community as a primary care physician. This location is now the Amarillo United Citizens Forum and Historical Black Cultural Center, whose building replaced the original clinic building in 1982.

**1940** - Census notes total population of 51,686 with 5.3% African American.

**1940** - Homeowners' Loan Corporation, a federal government agency, issued maps for lenders illustrating North Heights, Miller Heights and University Heights subdivisions as "hazardous." for home loans. Period newspaper accounts note that many homes were financed by African Americans including S.C. Patten, school superintendent, who built 16 homes in North Heights.



**1943** – GT Davis subdivision platted.

**c. 1945** – The Historic *Negro Motorist Green Book*, published between 1936 and 1964, identified 13 businesses that were safe for the traveling African American. Of these, all but 12 were in The Flats. The only one in the new North Heights subdivision was the Watley House at 1205 N Hughes St. Only two of the 13 structures remain standing today – Tom’s Place at 322 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave and the Harlem Grill at 114 S Harrison St. The date range for Amarillo properties was 1940-63.

**1948** – George Washington Carver School constructed at “707” N. Hughes St with grades 2-6 in an elementary wing and grades 7-12 in a high school wing. It operated from 1948 to 1959.

**c. Late 1940s** – Around 150 African American-owned businesses serve the North Heights neighborhood. Newspaper articles described around 500 houses in the neighborhood, 70% owner-occupied, and six churches.

**1950** – Park Hills platted.

**1953** – N. Eighth St. reconstructed as new four lane thoroughfare and renamed Amarillo Boulevard. US Route 66 is rerouted in an effort to construct new highway facilities in the postwar era.

**1959** – The new Carver High School opens at 1905 NW 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. with the first class of 1959-1960 graduating (30 students). Only grades 7-12 were taught in the new school. Carver was formally closed in 1967 and converted to a junior high school and the students attending Carver were integrated into the other white schools around Amarillo (Golden Spread Informer, May 31, 1976).

**1961** – Whittington addition platted.

**1968** – The 1968 Comprehensive Plan introduces the Neighborhood Unit concept and provides in-depth analysis of each unit. The North Heights neighborhood includes units #37, #38 and #40. They are all described as a “primary rehabilitation area” with many structures in need of both major and minor repair and some structures are dilapidated and should be removed.” The plan notes that scattered throughout the area, there are structures that are well-maintained; however, “the homeowners’ or occupants’ efforts to create a good neighborhood are impaired by the preponderance of declining structures and poorly maintained yard areas.” It concludes that with some effort, “this neighborhood unit can be upgraded to an acceptable neighborhood.”

**1968** – Zoning code adopted, replaces the original 1930s code.

**1976** – The 1976 Comprehensive Plan describes housing in the North Heights neighborhood as overall substandard. Extensive deterioration in the neighborhood is attributed to a high percentage of renter-occupied (32%) and vacant (24%) homes. The plan noted a population decline between 1960-1970 and stated, “unless there are substantial incentives and opportunities for improvement, continued decline can be expected.”

**1989** – The 1983 *Comprehensive Plan* prioritizes the need for neighborhood revitalization and establishes a goal that “older, developed areas be maintained as sound contributing neighborhoods.”

**1996** – High Plains Baptist Hospital and St. Anthony’s Hospital merge into Baptist St. Anthony’s Health System. Operations slowly move from St. Anthony’s Polk Street campus to the Baptist campus on Wallace Boulevard. The last employees leave the campus in 2004.

**2010** – The 2010 *Comprehensive Plan* re-emphasizes the issues from the previous plan, including the “ongoing vacancy, blight, and redevelopment needs, particularly in sections of north and east Amarillo.” It states that the ongoing need for neighborhood revitalization and neighborhood reinvestment has not been met and calls out the condition of deteriorating housing stock in older neighborhoods with a low-income population without the means to reinvest. “The continuing challenge for Amarillo is to enhance neighborhood quality and sustainability in its lowest- income areas. On the north and east sides, this is made even more complicated by the absence of the Neighborhood Unit Concept in some areas as implemented so well elsewhere in the City.” Special Area Plans (neighborhood plans) are recommended as a high priority action item. The Census population at the time of this plan was 190,695, 6.62% African American.

**2017** – The *North Heights Neighborhood Plan* is adopted as an official policy guide for the revitalization of North Heights. Eight independent action items in the plan address zoning strategies. The population of the neighborhood at the time was 4,654 and 64% African American.

## **Land Use Guiding Principles**

A number of guiding principles were established in the *North Heights Neighborhood Plan* and those have been utilized for guidance during this process including the following:

- Plan for an adequate and diverse supply of housing for all income levels.
- Minimize negative effects between incompatible land uses and ensure adequate transitions.
- Discourage intense uses within or adjacent to residential areas.
- Diversify the types of commercial activity.
- Protect and promote areas of historical and cultural significance.

Throughout the committee discussions, the following principles were also expressed to guide their decision-making:

1. Eliminate industrial zoning on undeveloped land as much as possible.
2. Downzone industrial zoning where possible on developed land.
3. Increase the amount of single-family zoning and reduce the amount of multi-family zoning.
4. Provide appropriate commercial areas within proximity to residences for access to jobs and services.
5. Consider amenities such as parks and trails as part of future development patterns.
6. All land use decisions should be done to encourage the preservation of the existing culture and character of North Heights.
7. No decisions should increase the chances of gentrification.
8. The results of this effort should make it easier for people who want to be invested in North Heights purchase homes and become part of a movement to rebuild the neighborhood.
9. This project should help bring North Heights back to the neighborhood people remember – a self-sustaining community full of residents who took pride in their homes and their places of worship; full of locally owned businesses that served their friends and neighbors.

## **Relationship to the City of Amarillo’s Zoning Code Revision Process**

- This will be the first neighborhood-wide rezoning accomplished in Amarillo.
- The zoning code was adopted in 1968 and has been minimally updated over the years. A complete revision process kicked-off in 2019 in which the district uses and requirements are being updated and rewritten.
- Proposed code changes through the revision project to the existing districts in North Heights will encourage infill redevelopment and revitalization. Examples of some of these changes include the addition of a wider range of housing types typically referred to as “missing middle” housing, incentives for parking reductions for infill lots, and zoning districts that allow for a mix of compatible commercial and residential uses.
- However, proposed changes through the revision project should be thought of as enhancements to the existing districts. Should the enhancements not be adopted, the committee’s work will not be affected.

# Recommendations

There are four quadrants in the North Heights plan area. These were identified during the 2016 planning process as smaller subsections primarily for the purpose of analyzing zoning and land use in manageable ways (see map on the following page). The committee studied the existing character, current zoning, and future land use designations in each quadrant. There are a total of 11 recommendations that focus on neighborhood character and the desired development patterns. More technical details are provided later in the analysis of each quadrant.

## Summary of Recommendations

### Quadrant 1

**Recommendation 1:** The area around the historic St. Anthony's hospital, planned as a mixed-use redevelopment site, should be an urban neighborhood concept where residents can live in a variety of housing – such as lower density apartments, condos, and “missing middle” types such as duplexes and townhomes – within proximity to jobs and services.

**Recommendation 2:** Reduce the amount of industrial zoning south of NW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. and east of N Jackson St.

**Recommendation 3:** The area between N Adams St., N Jackson St., NW 1st Ave. and NW 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. should transition to a more diverse residential area.

**Recommendation 4.** The Hughes St. corridor south of Amarillo Blvd. should be a retail corridor with businesses that can provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences.

### Quadrant 2

**Recommendation 5:** The large area of industrially zoned land on the west end (undeveloped because of lack of infrastructure) should be rezoned to encourage future single-family home development.

**Recommendation 6:** All areas that are internal to the neighborhood in this quadrant should be rezoned to encourage single family development. Some multi-family zoning should remain as a buffer between the commercial uses along Amarillo Blvd. and the single family residential zones.

**Recommendation 7:** The Hughes St. corridor north of Amarillo Blvd. should be zoned to encourage its status as an important neighborhood commercial corridor that will offer services, shopping, and social activities for neighborhood residents. A buffer of moderate density residential should separate it from the single-family neighborhoods.

**Recommendation 8:** The NW 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. corridor should also serve as a mixed-use corridor with neighborhood amenities.

### Quadrant 3

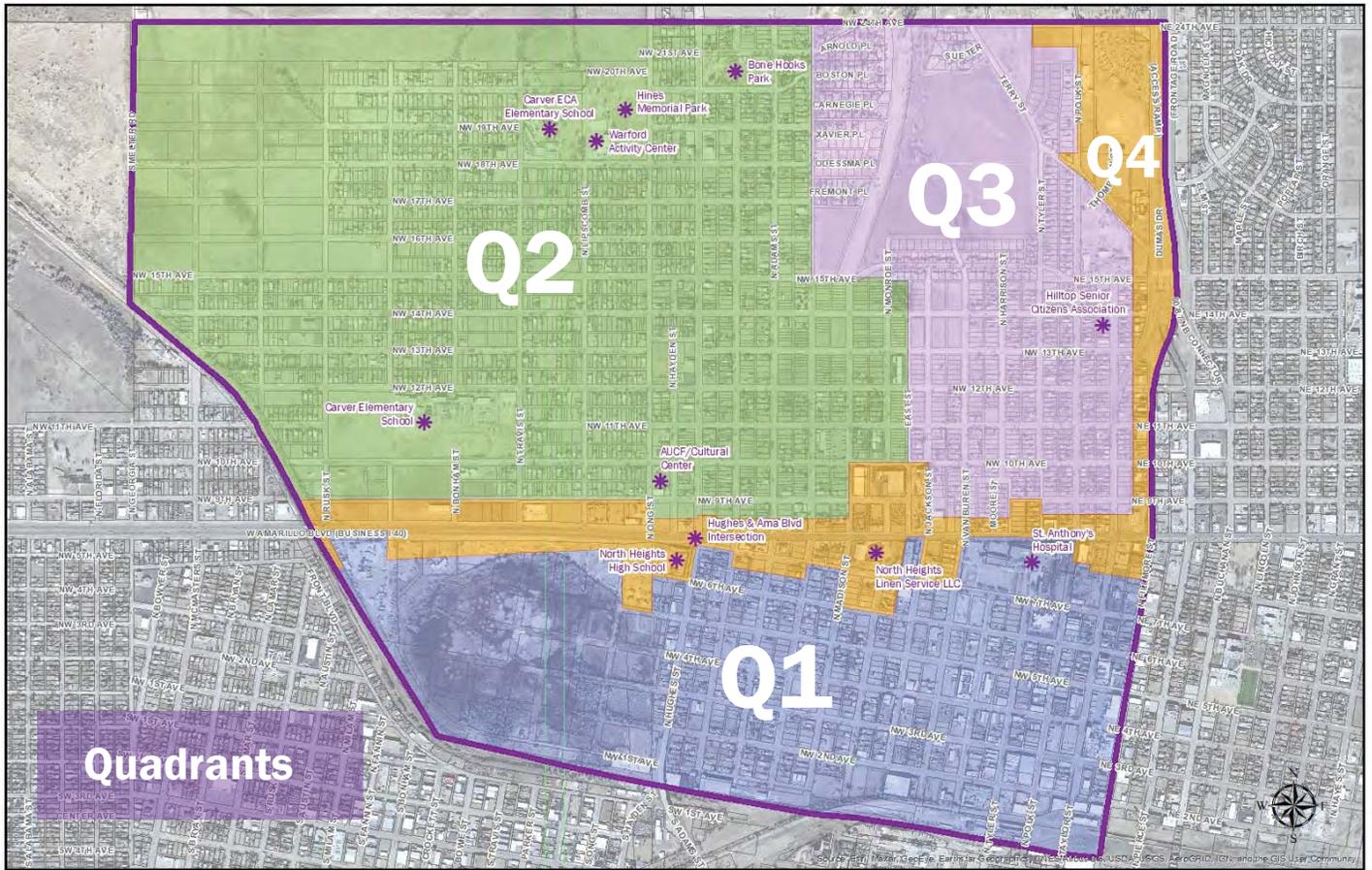
**Recommendation 9:** Reduce the amount of manufactured home zoning.

**Recommendation 10:** Utilize the natural topography and constraints from public utility easements to develop open space and trail amenities in this area as an incentive for single family home development.

### Quadrant 4

**Recommendation 11:** The largely undeveloped area along Amarillo Blvd. between N Hughes St. and the plan boundary to the west should be less intensive retail zoning to enable development suitable for serving nearby residents.

# Quadrant Map



## Master Legend

This legend is used universally throughout the report for the map analysis.

### Existing Zoning Districts

- A Agricultural
- GR General Retail
- HC Heavy Commercial
- I-1 Light Industrial
- LC Light Commercial
- MD Moderate Density
- MF-1 Multiple Family 1
- MH Manufactured Home
- NS Neighborhood Services
- O-2 Office District 2
- R-1 Residential District 1
- R-2 Residential District 2
- R-3 Residential District 3

### Future Land Use Designations

- General Commercial
- General Residential
- Industrial Zoning
- Rural
- Parks - Recreation

Proposed Areas of Change

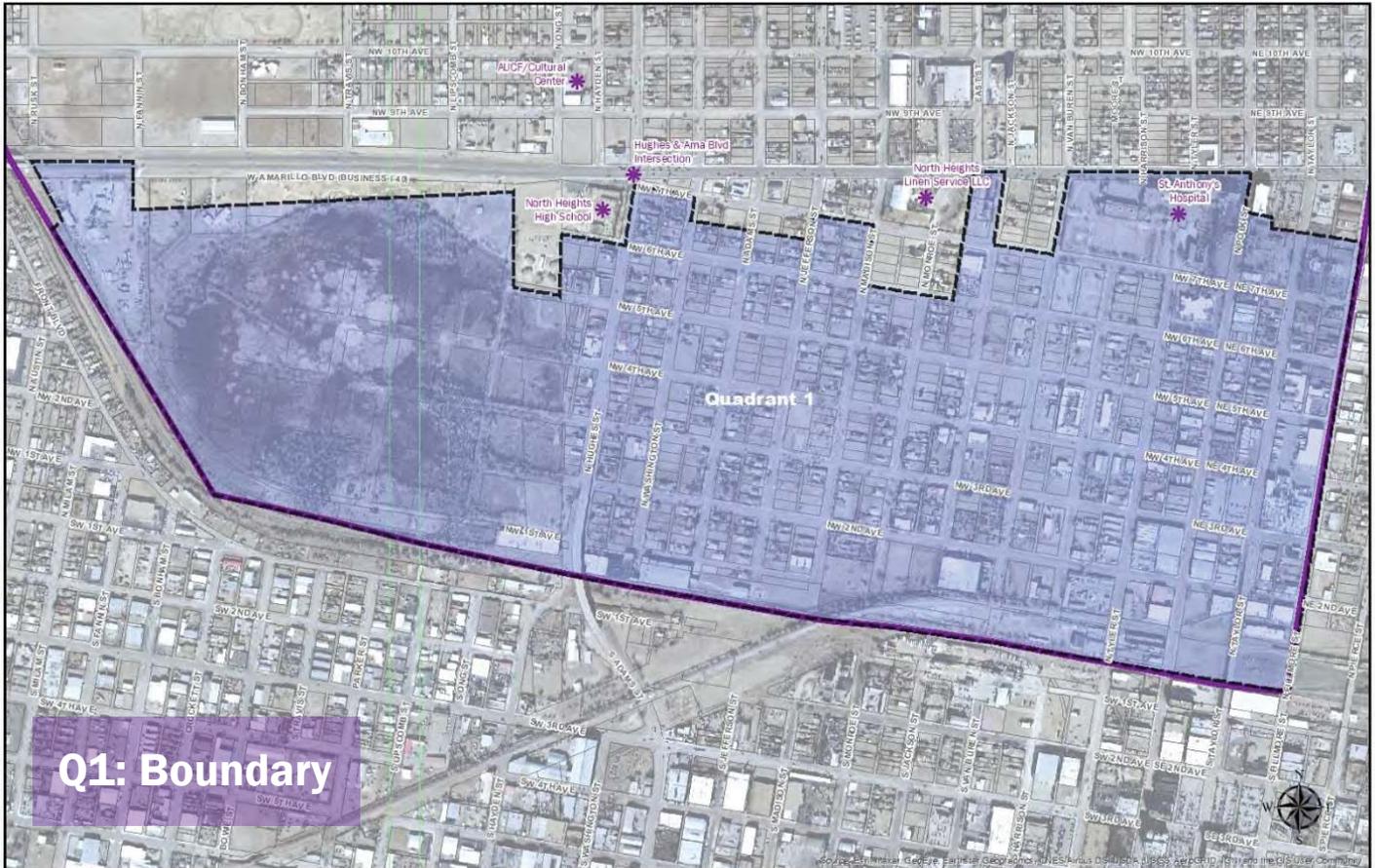
Points of Interest

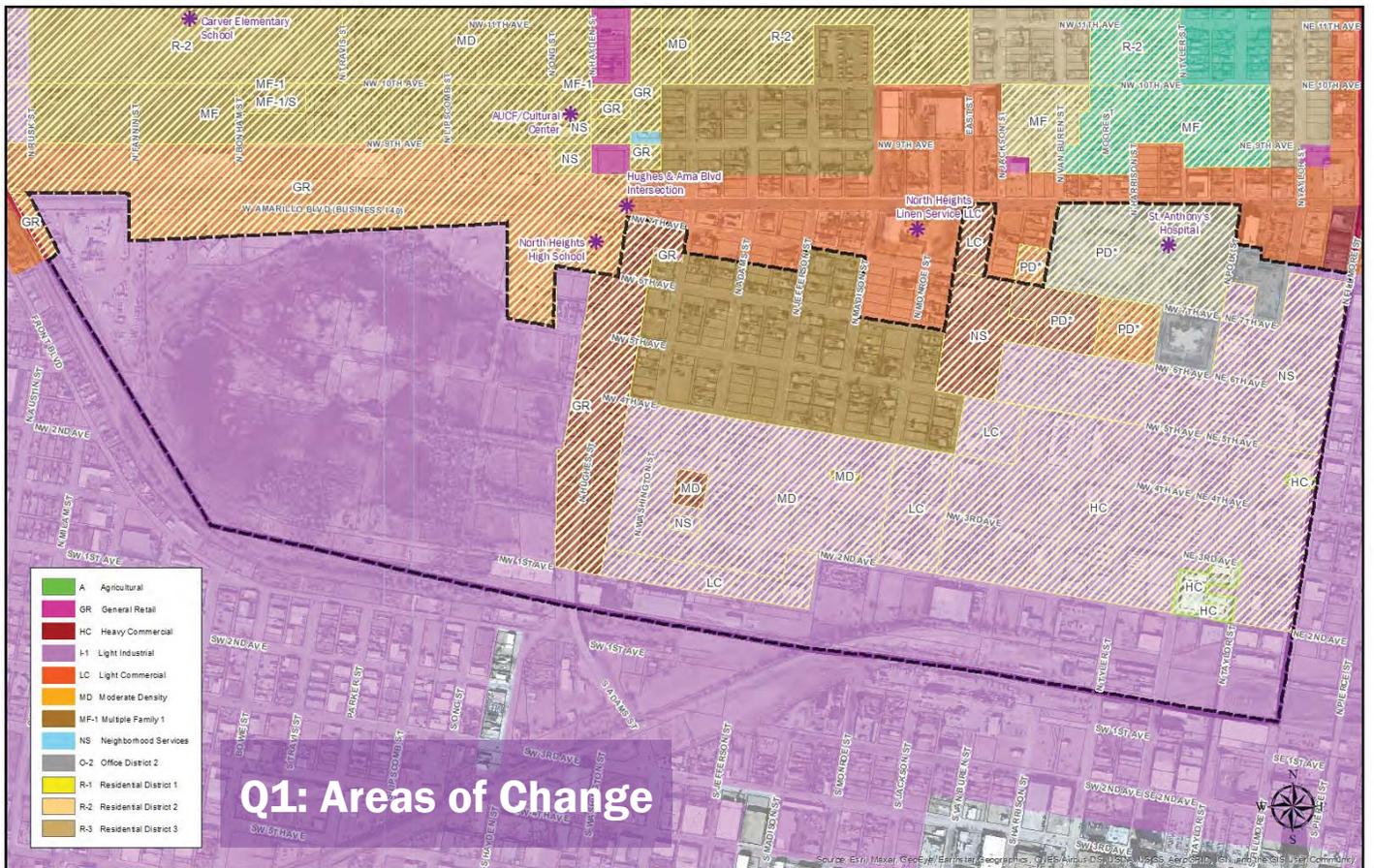
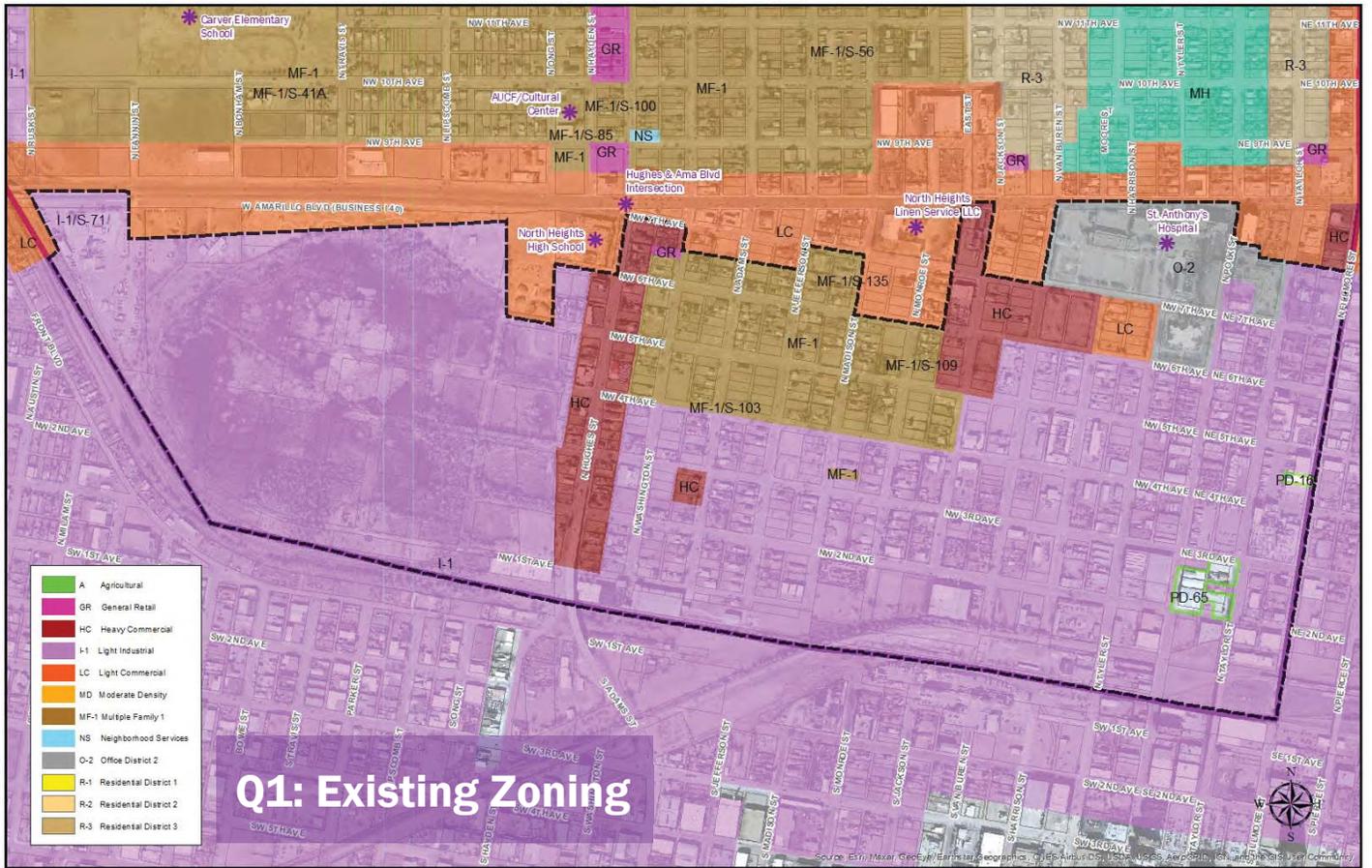
Neighborhood Plan Area

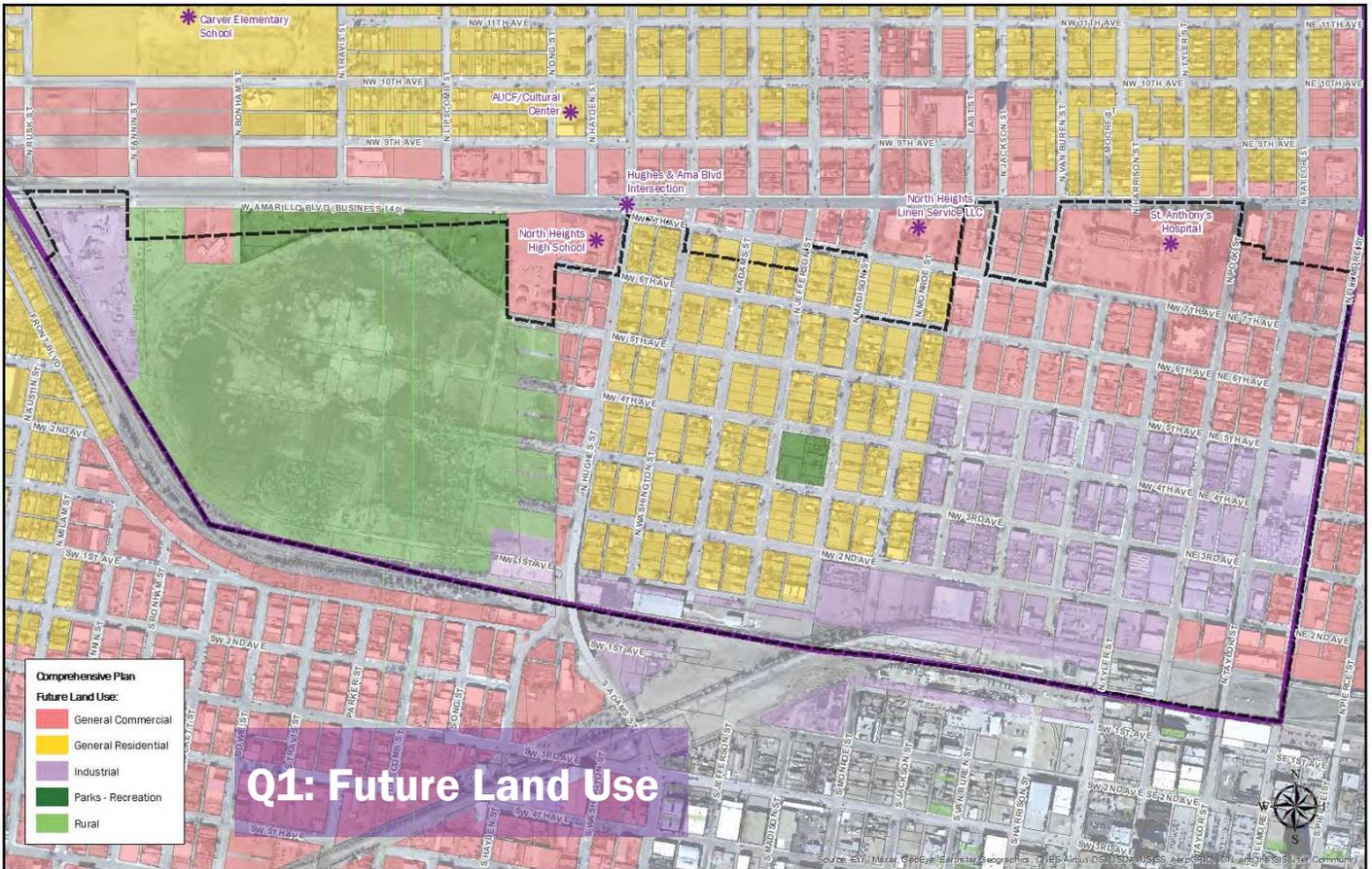
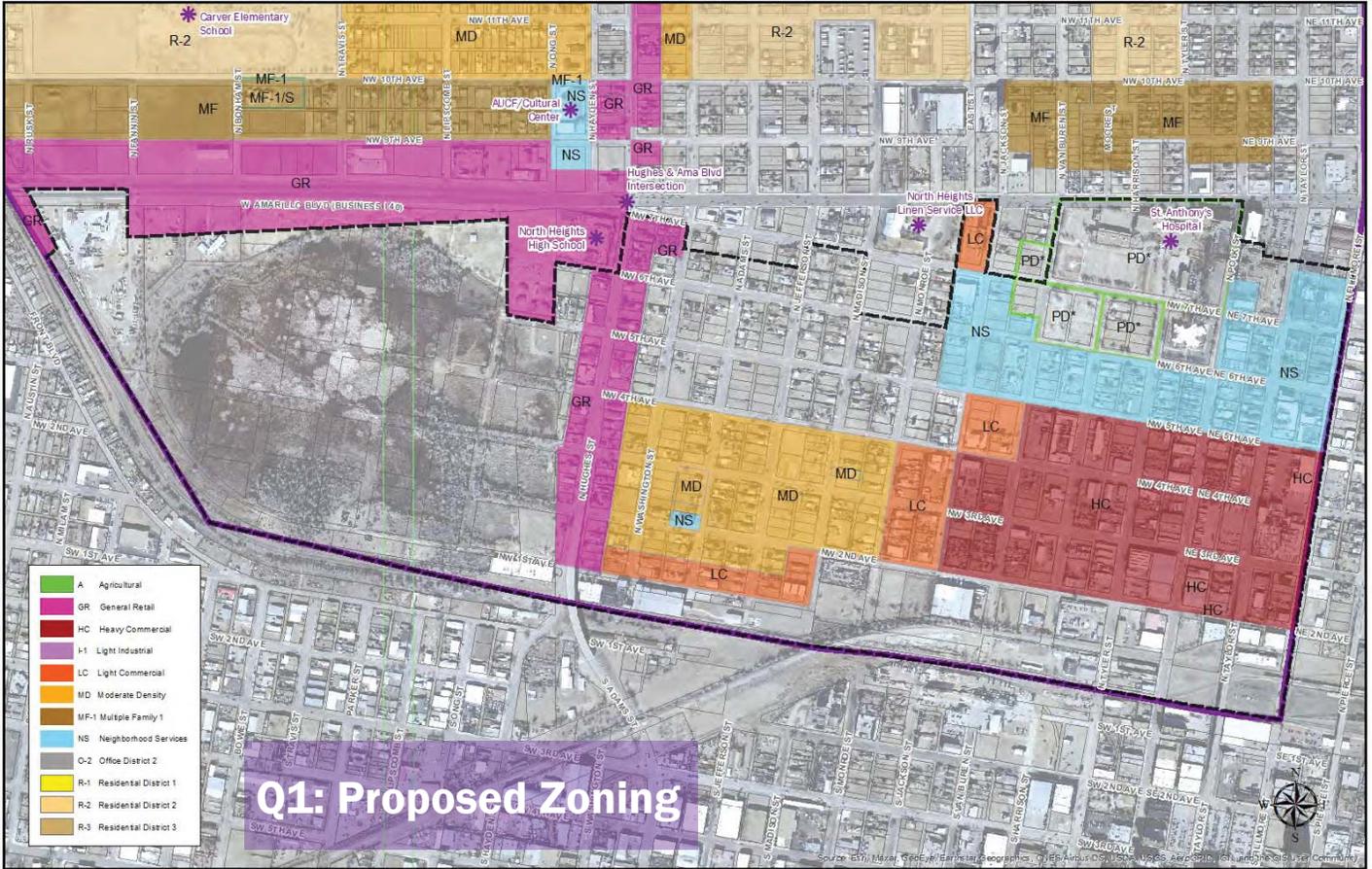
Quadrant Boundary

# Quadrant 1

This is the southern-most portion of the plan boundary and it is comprised of land south of Amarillo Blvd. between Fillmore St. on the east and the railroad tracks on the west. It is largely zoned industrial and multi-family and contains a current mix of land uses ranging from residential to industrial. St. Anthony's hospital lies within this quadrant.







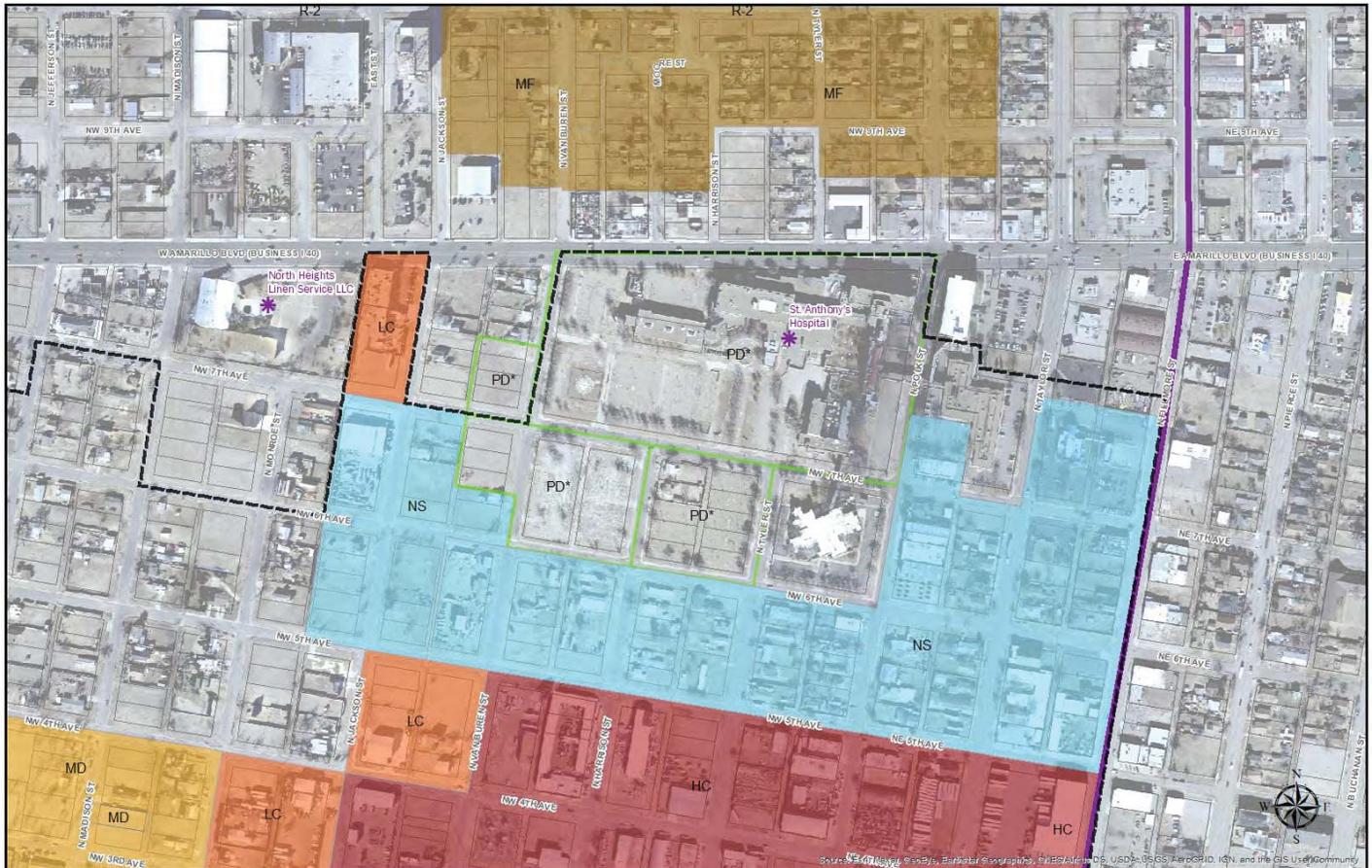
## Recommendation 1:

The area around the historic St. Anthony's hospital, planned as a mixed-use redevelopment site, should be an urban neighborhood concept where residents can live in a variety of housing – such as lower density apartments, condos, and “missing middle” types such as duplexes and townhomes – within proximity to jobs and services.

Zoning change needed:

Light Commercial (LC) and Heavy Commercial (HC) to Neighborhood Services (NS). Adjacent Office (O) will remain. Note that the actual St. Anthony's property (outlined in green below) is shown as Planned Development (PD), but it will NOT be rezoned as part of this project. It will be rezoned by the property owner and developer when the redevelopment plan is finalized.

The Future Land Use map illustrates this as General Commercial.



- A Agricultural
- GR General Retail
- HC Heavy Commercial
- I-1 Light Industrial
- LC Light Commercial
- MD Moderate Density
- MF-1 Multiple Family 1
- MH Manufactured Home
- NS Neighborhood Services
- O-2 Office District 2
- R-1 Residential District 1
- R-2 Residential District 2
- R-3 Residential District 3





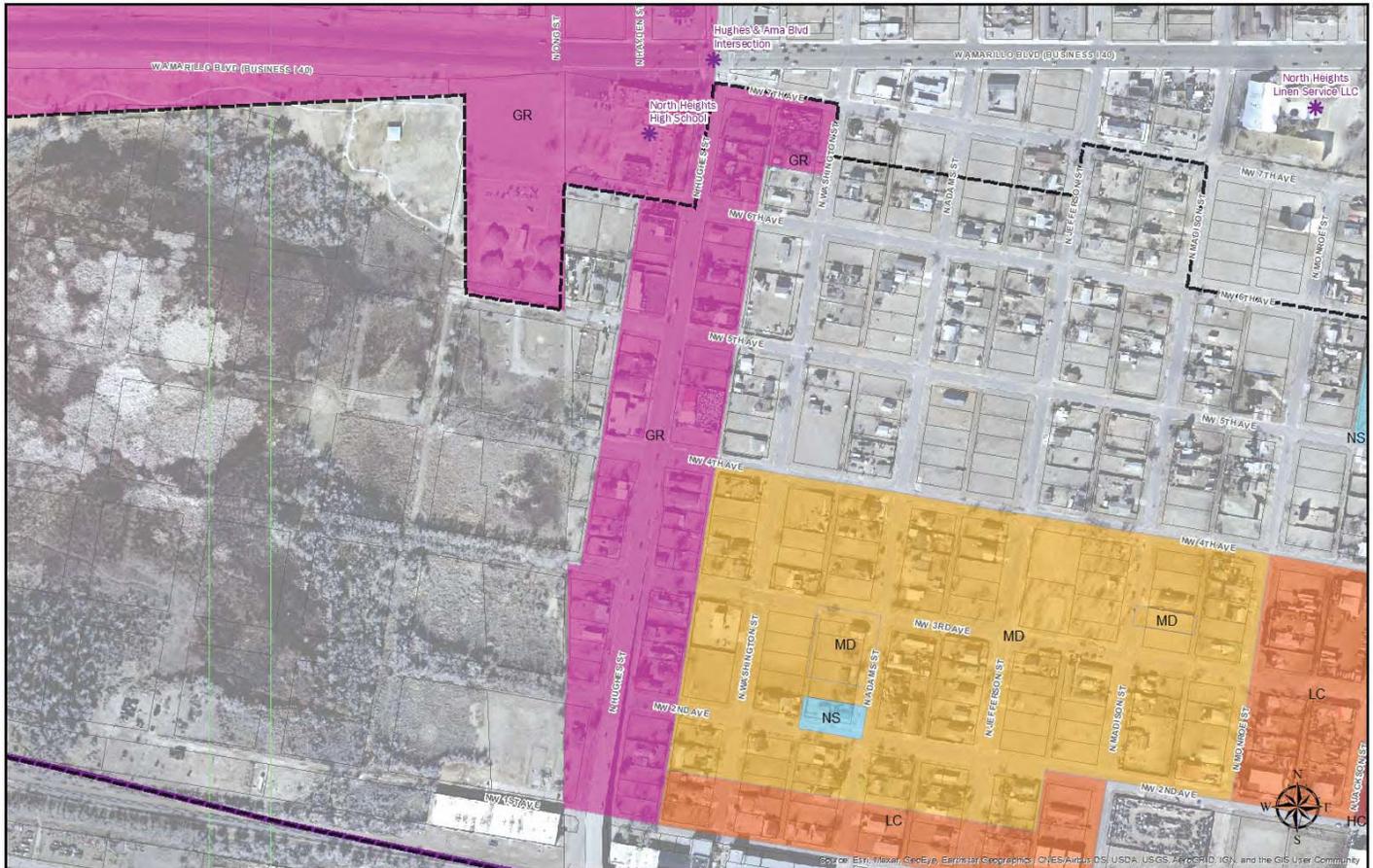
## Recommendation 4. Neighborhood Business Corridor

The Hughes St. corridor south of Amarillo Blvd. should be a retail corridor with businesses that can provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences.

Zoning change needed:

This corridor is currently Heavy Commercial (HC) and is recommended to be rezoned to General Retail (GR).

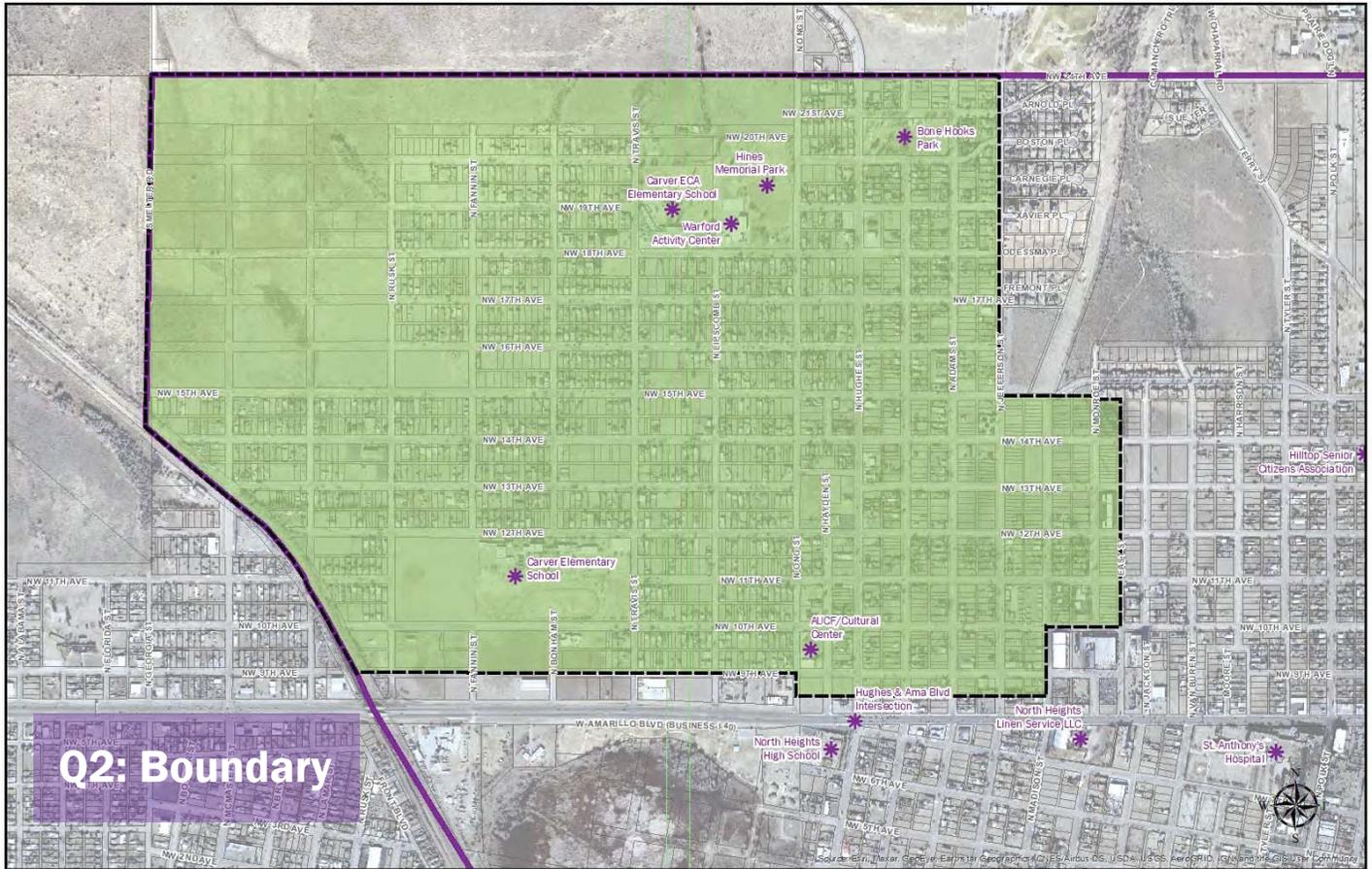
Future Land Use Map illustrates this area as General Commercial and General Residential.



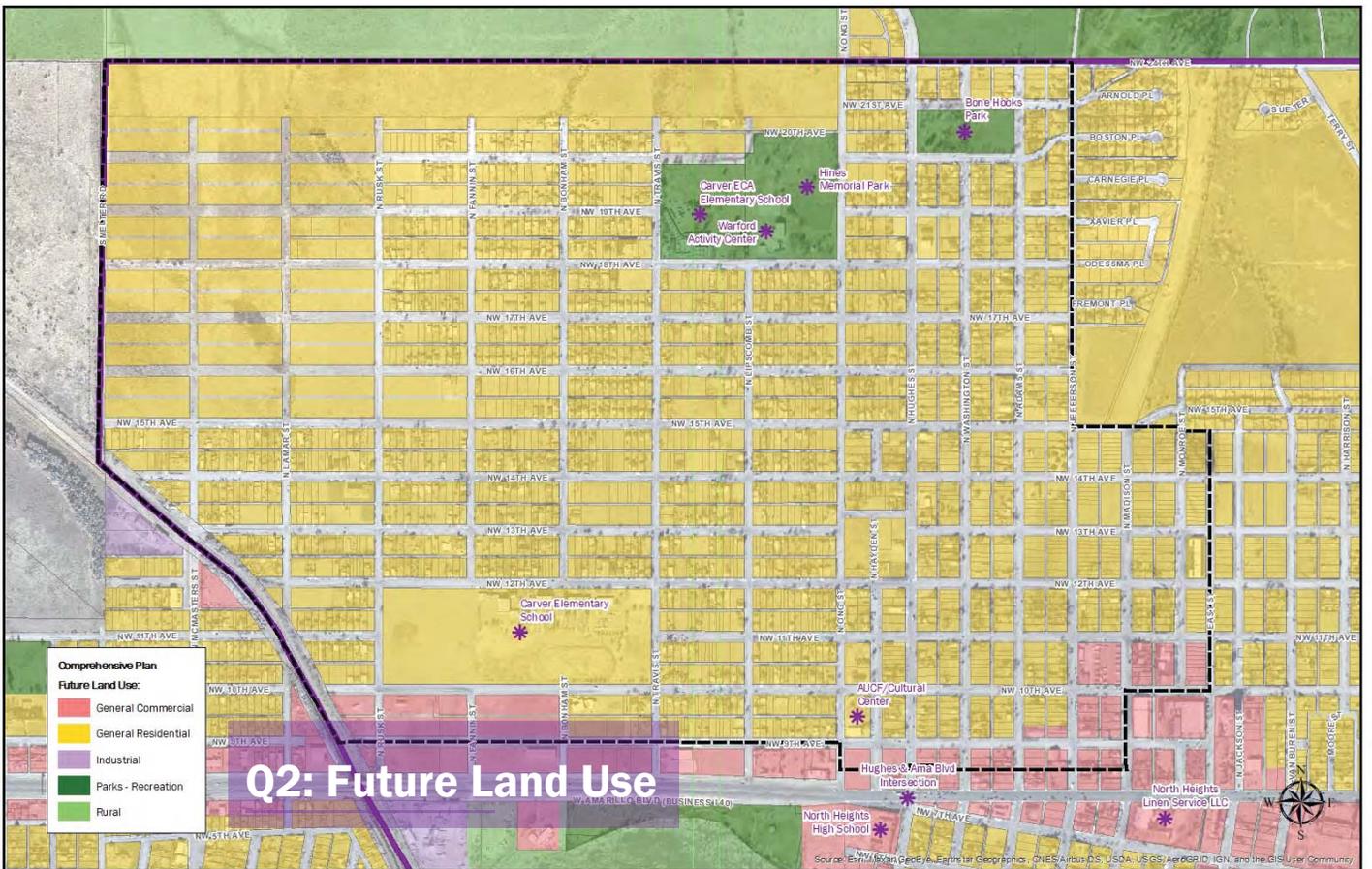
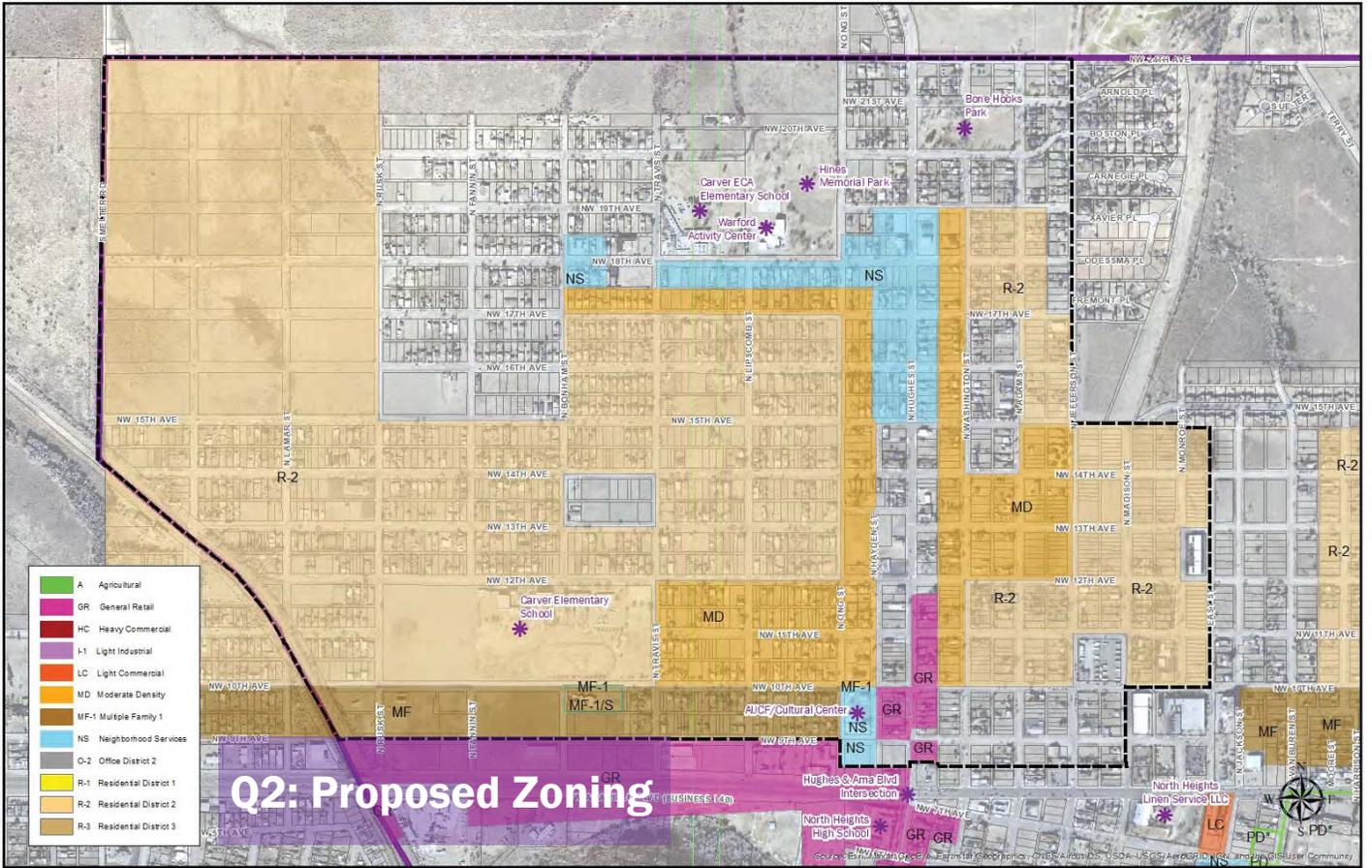
- A Agricultural
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- MH Manufactured Home
- NS Neighborhood Services
- O-2 Office District 2
- R-1 Residential District 1
- R-2 Residential District 2
- R-3 Residential District 3

## Quadrant 2

This quadrant is in the northwest portion of the plan boundary between Amarillo Blvd. and NW 24th Ave, (north and south) and between N Georgia St. and N Jefferson St. (east and west). Its current use is primarily residential. There is a large vacant area without existing infrastructure. This quadrant also includes the N Hughes St. business corridor.







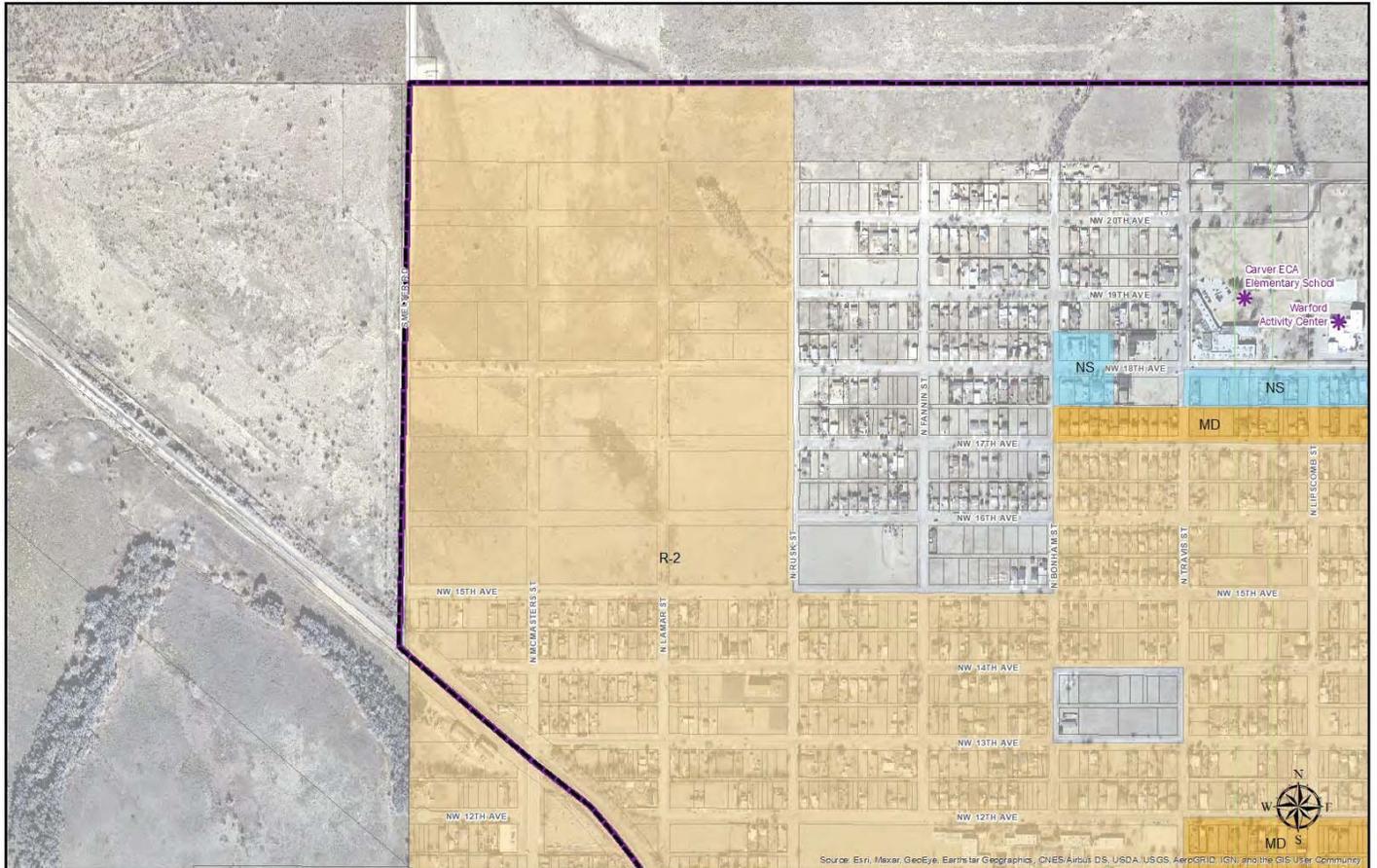
**Recommendation 5:**

The large area of industrially zoned land on the west end (undeveloped because of lack of infrastructure) should be rezoned to encourage future single-family home development.

*Zoning change needed:*

*Industrial (I-1) to Residential-2 (R-2).*

*The Future Land Use Map illustrates this as General Residential.*



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- NS Neighborhood Services
- O-2 Office District 2
- R-1 Residential District 1
- R-2 Residential District 2
- R-3 Residential District 3

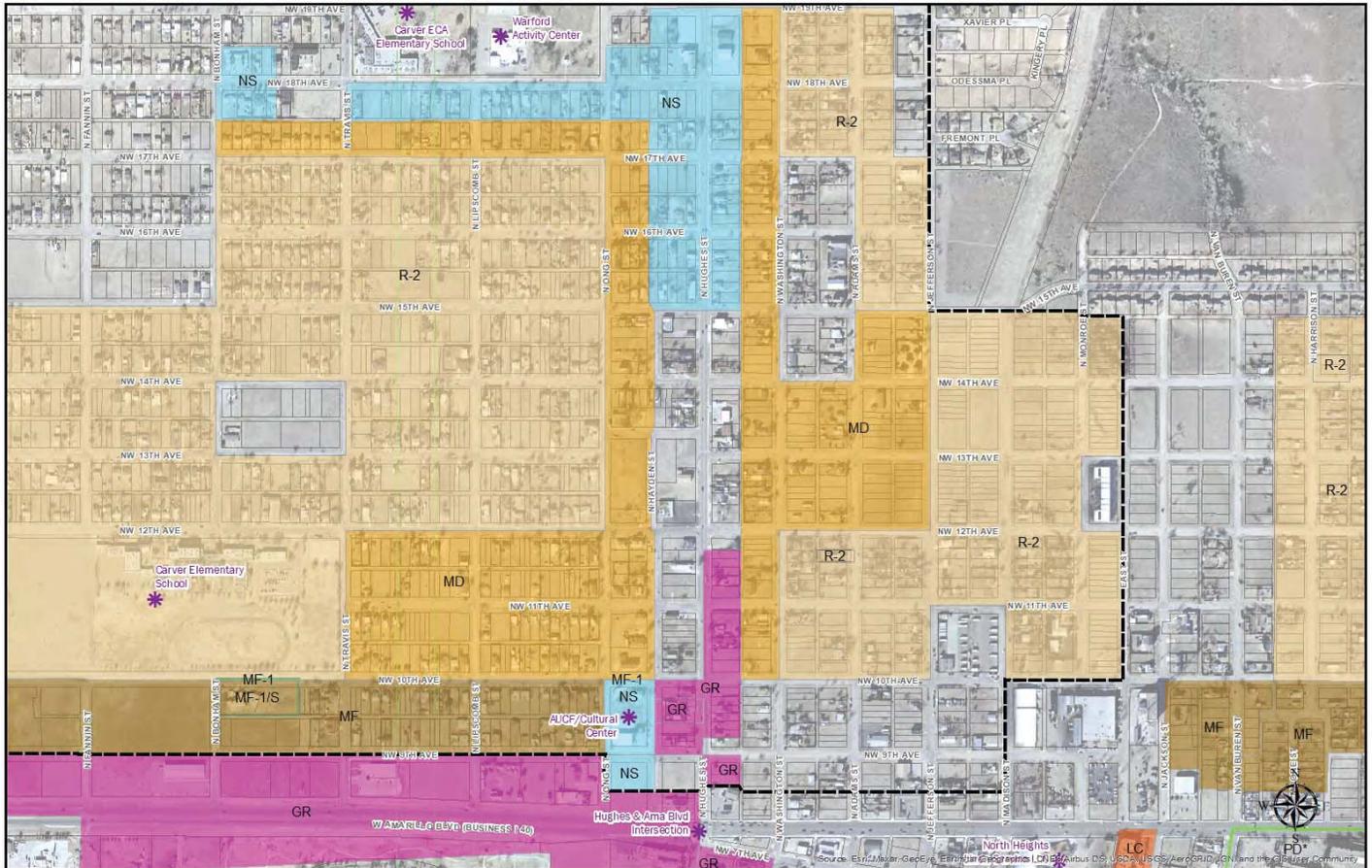


**Recommendation 7:**

The Hughes St. corridor north of Amarillo Blvd. should be zoned to encourage its status as an important neighborhood commercial corridor that will offer services, shopping, and social activities for neighborhood residents. A buffer of moderate density residential should separate it from the single-family neighborhoods.

*Zoning change needed: Parts of the corridor south of NW 15th Ave. will transition from Multi-Family-1 (MF-1) to General Retail (GR). North of NW 15th Ave., the corridor will transition from Multi-Family 1 (MF-1) to Neighborhood Services (NS). One block on either side of the corridor will go from Multi-Family-1 (MF-1) to Moderate Density (MD).*

*Future Land Map illustrates this area as General Residential.*



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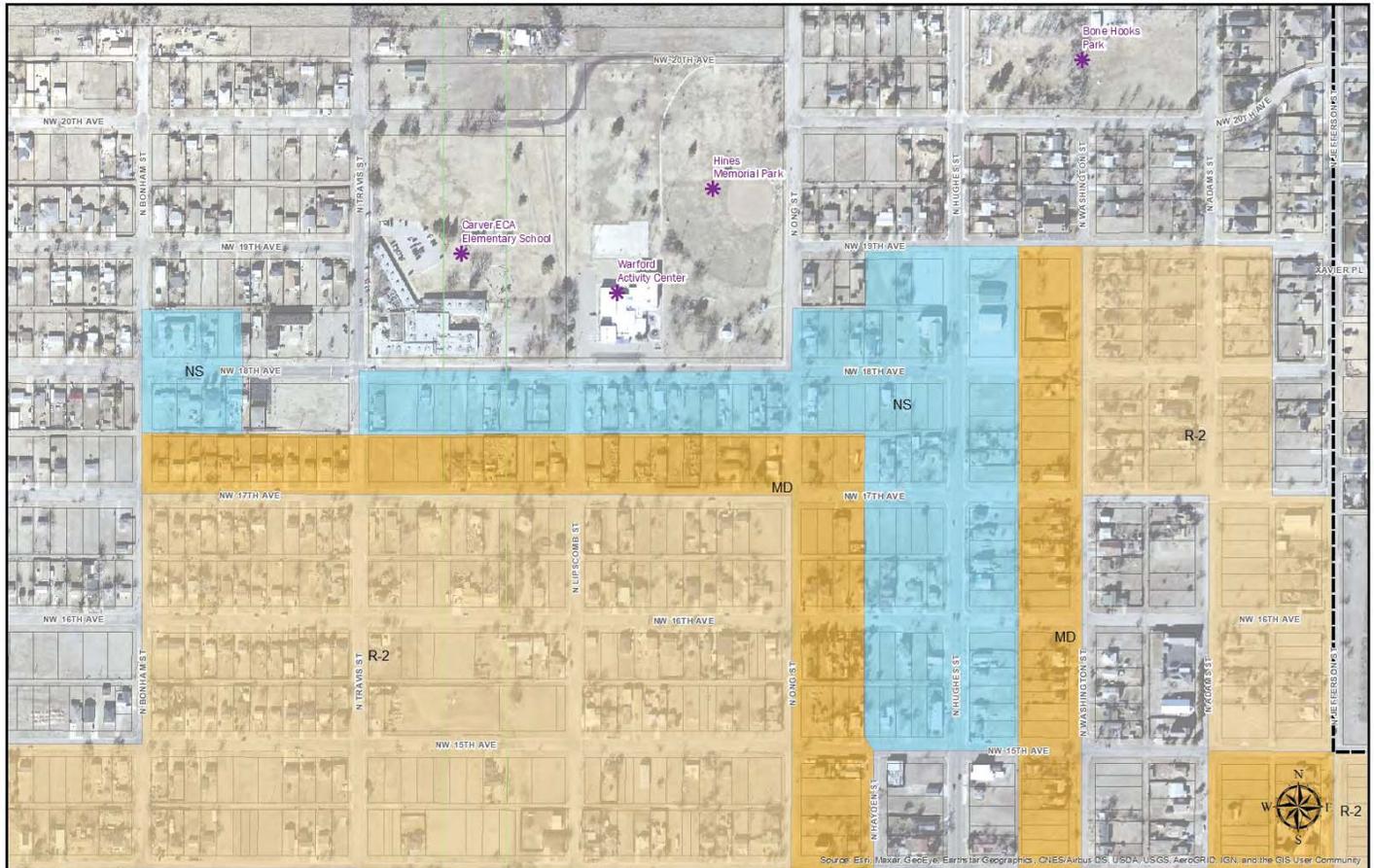
**Recommendation 8:**

The NW 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. corridor should also serve as a mixed-use corridor with neighborhood amenities.

*Zoning change needed:*

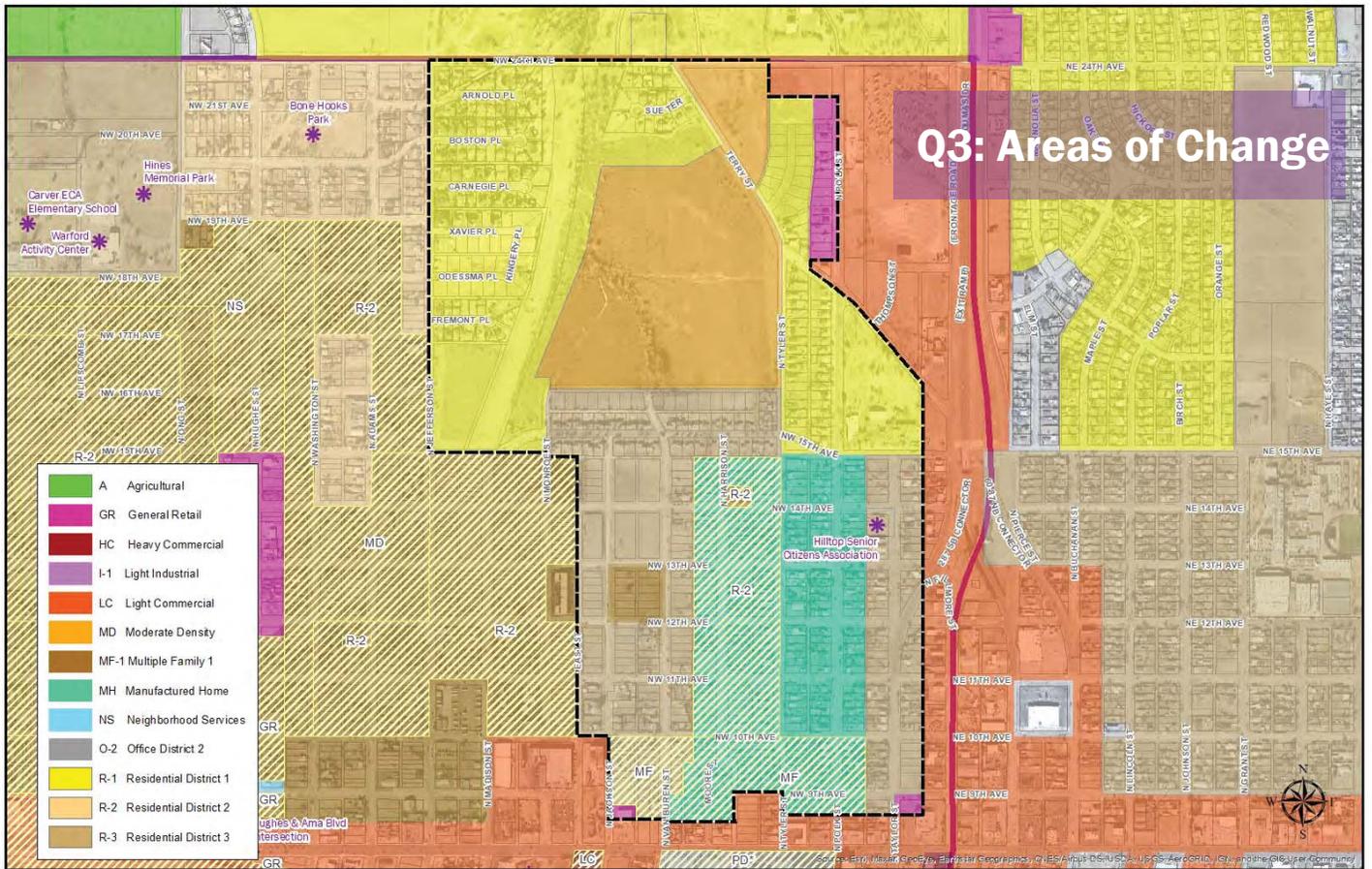
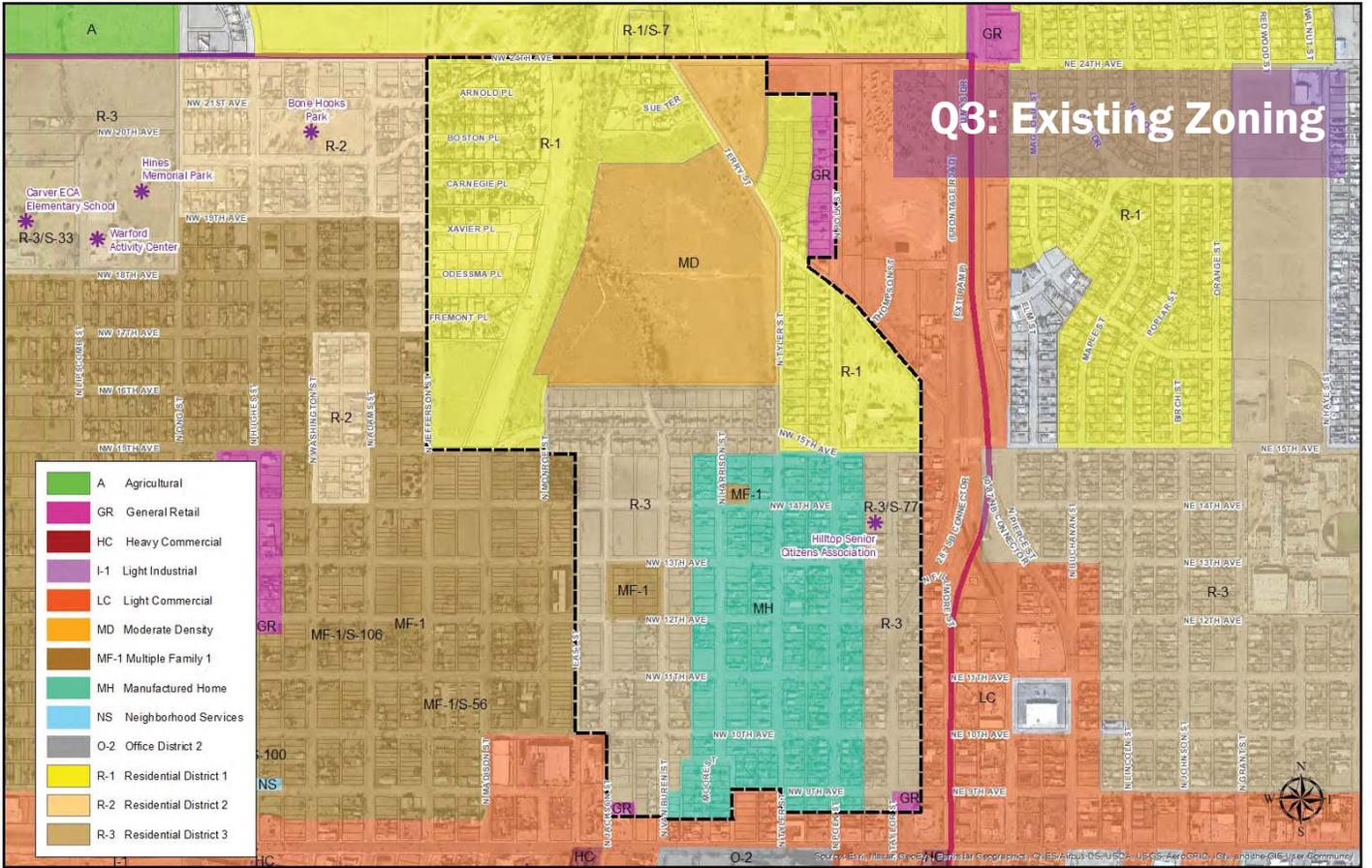
The corridor will transition from Multi-Family-1 (MF-1) to Neighborhood Services (NS) with a buffer of Moderate Density (MD).

Future Land Map illustrates this area as General Residential.



- A Agricultural
- GR General Retail
- HC Heavy Commercial
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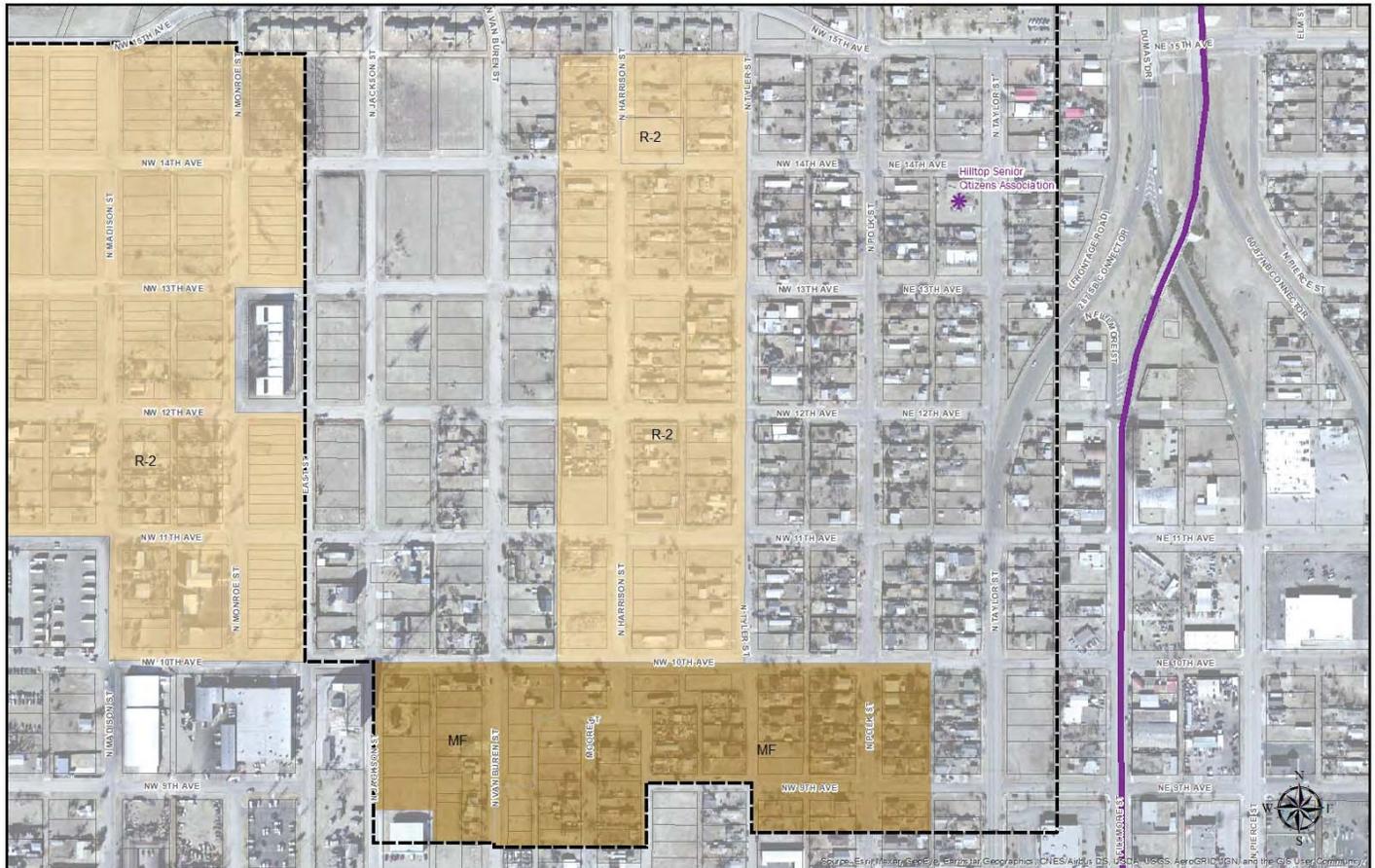


**Recommendation 9:**

Reduce the amount of Manufactured Home zoning.

Zoning change needed: Manufactured Home (MH) to Multi-Family-1 (MF-1) across the southern portion (up to NW 10th Avenue) and Manufactured Home (MH) to Residential-2 (R-2) is recommended between N Van Buren St. and N Tyler St.

The Future Land Map illustrates this area as General Residential.

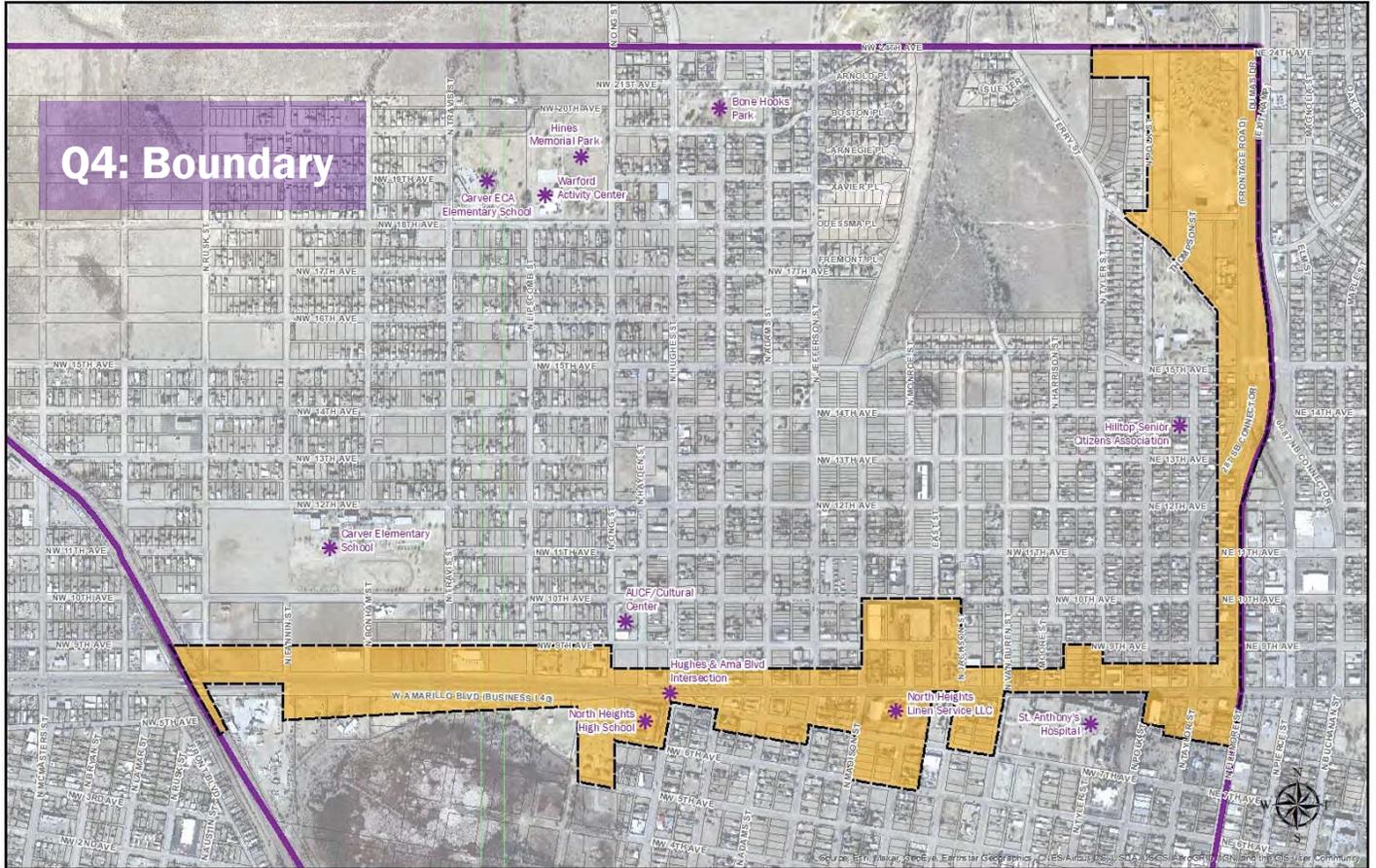


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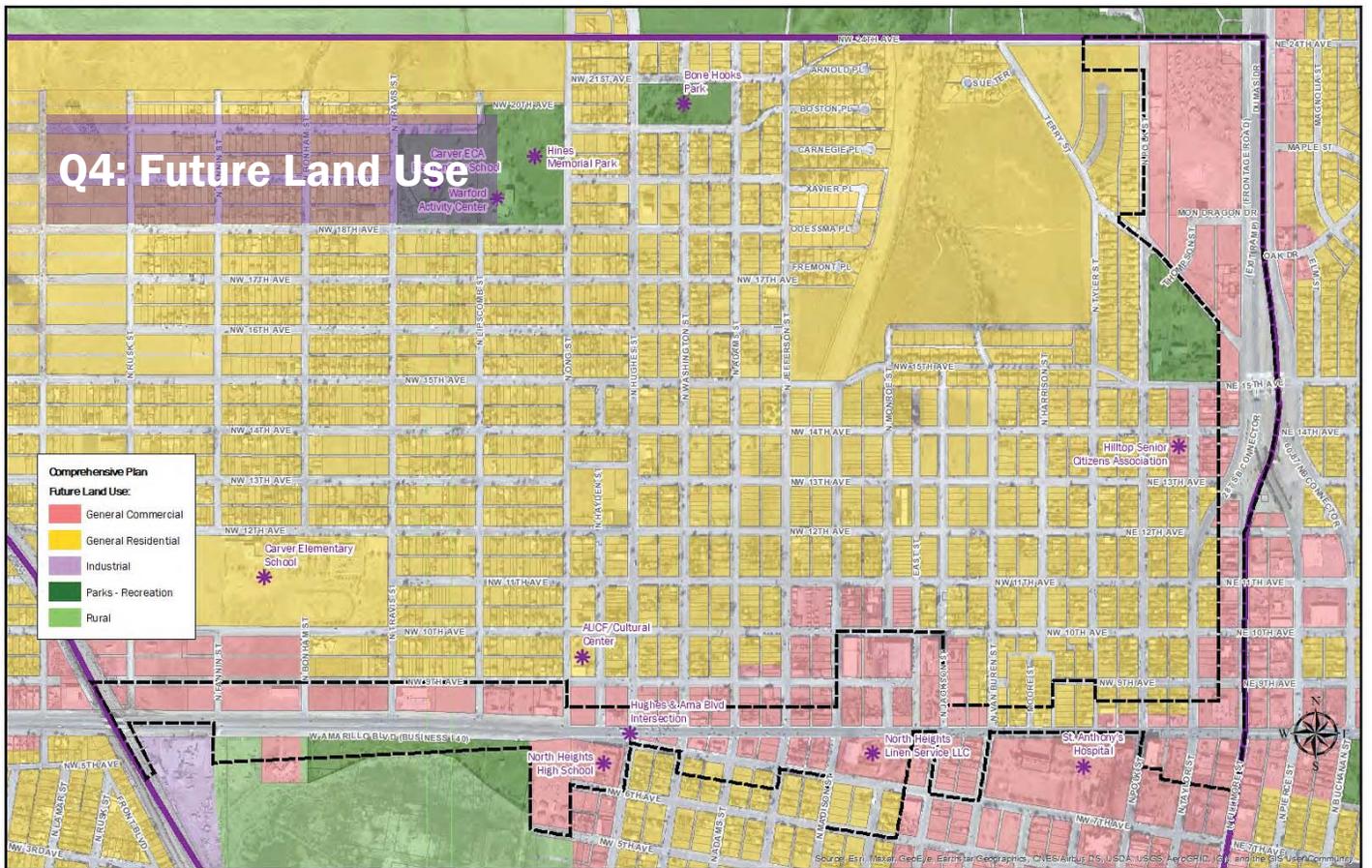
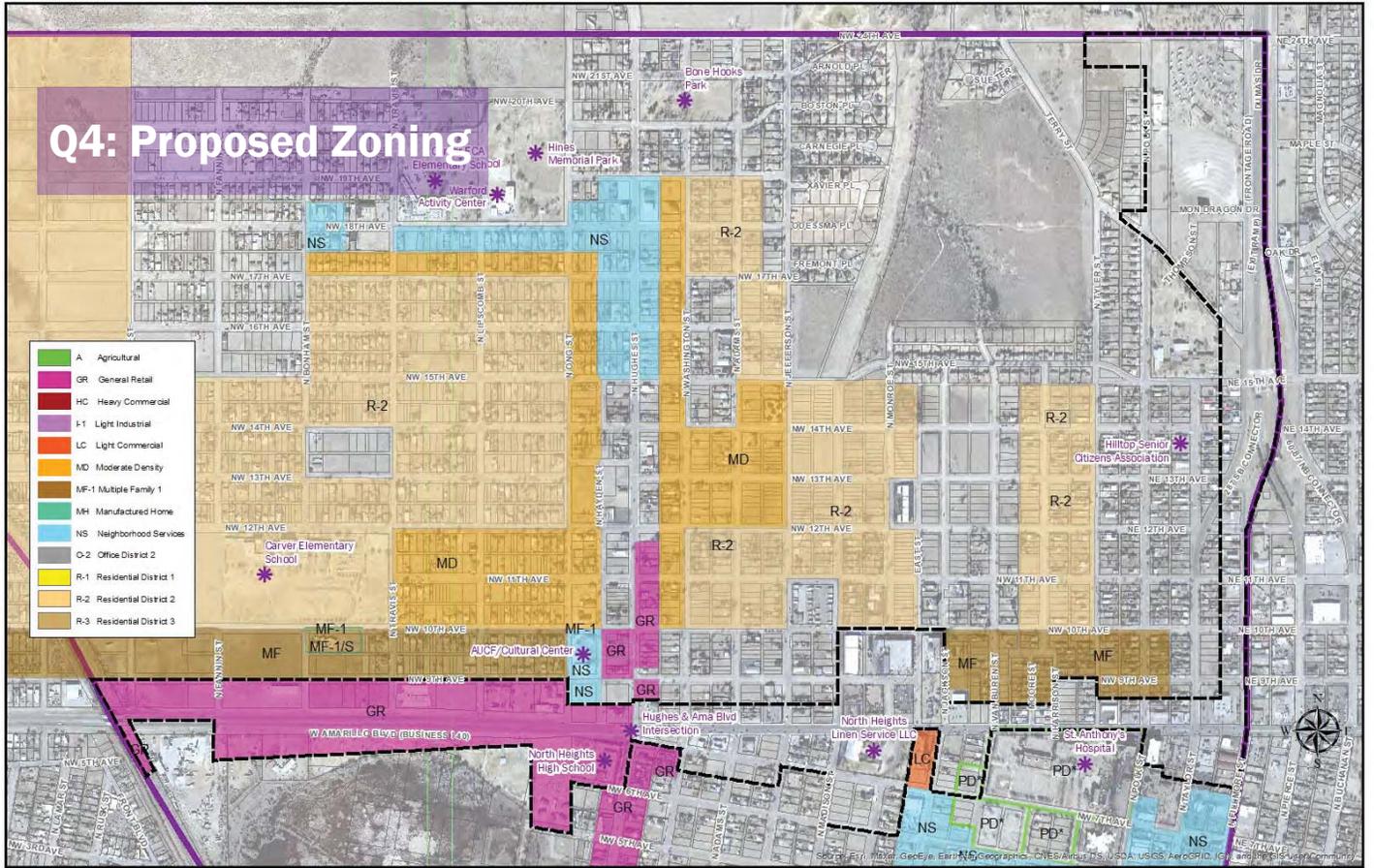


# Quadrant 4

Quadrant 4 encompasses all of the Light Commercial (LC) zoning along Amarillo Blvd. and the Dumas Highway/ 87





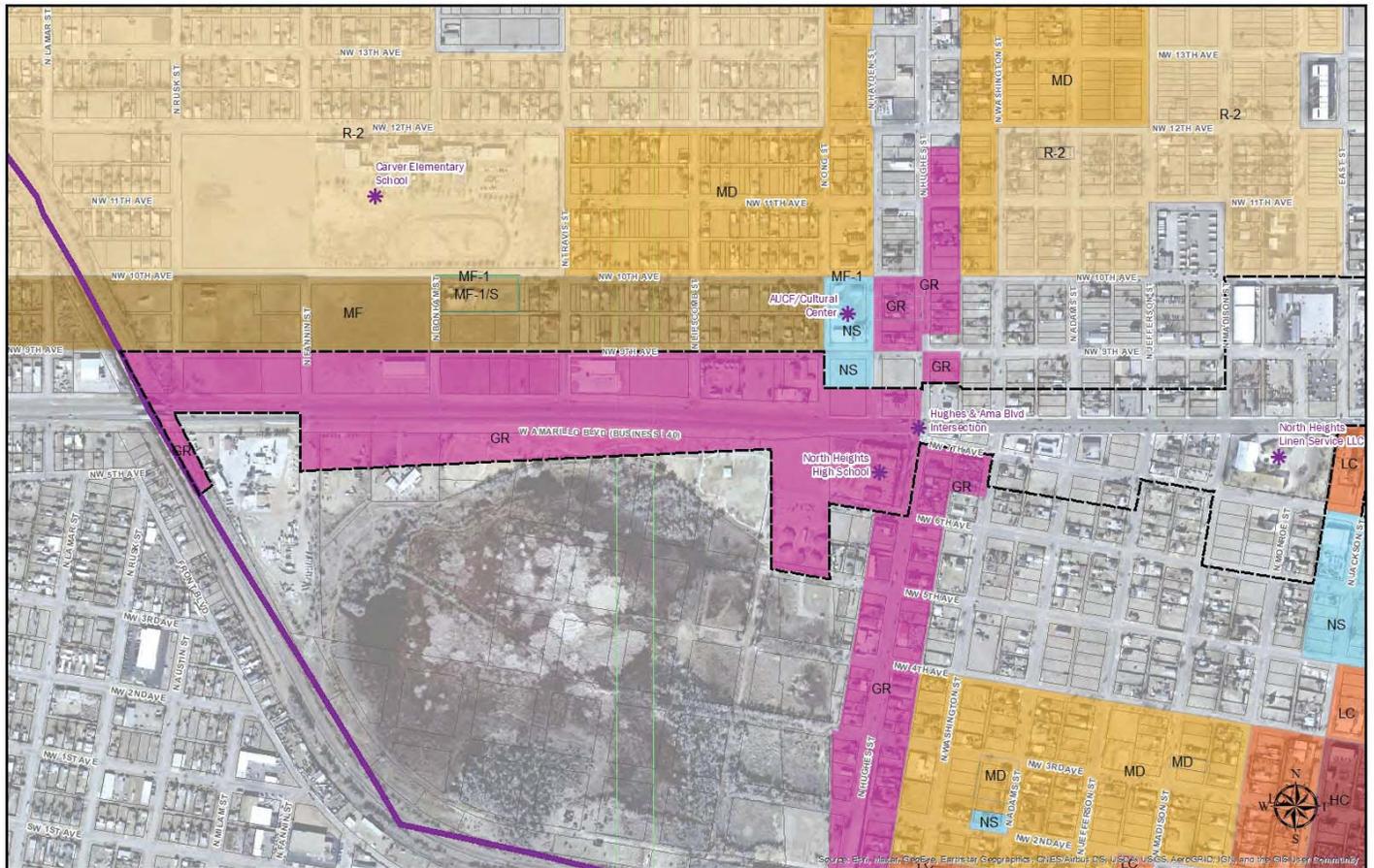


**Recommendation 11:**

The largely undeveloped area along Amarillo Blvd. between N Hughes St. and the plan boundary to the west should be less intensive retail zoning to enable development suitable for serving nearby residents.

Zoning change needed: Light Commercial (LC) to General Retail (GR).

The Future Land Use Map illustrates this area as General Commercial.



- A Agricultural
- GR General Retail
- HC Heavy Commercial
- I-1 Light Industrial
- LC Light Commercial
- MD Moderate Density
- MF-1 Multiple Family 1
- MH Manufactured Home
- NS Neighborhood Services
- O-2 Office District 2
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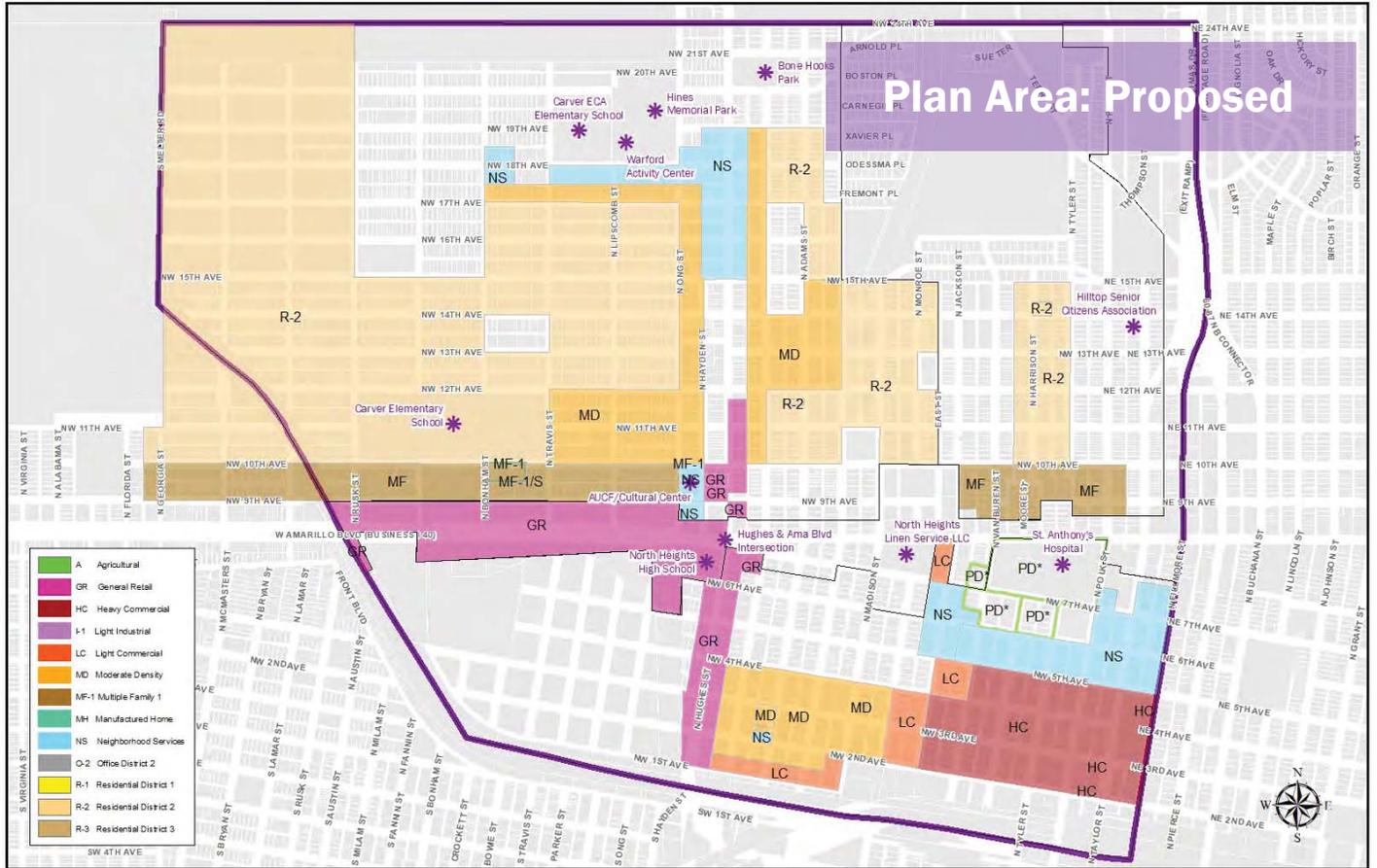
# Conclusion

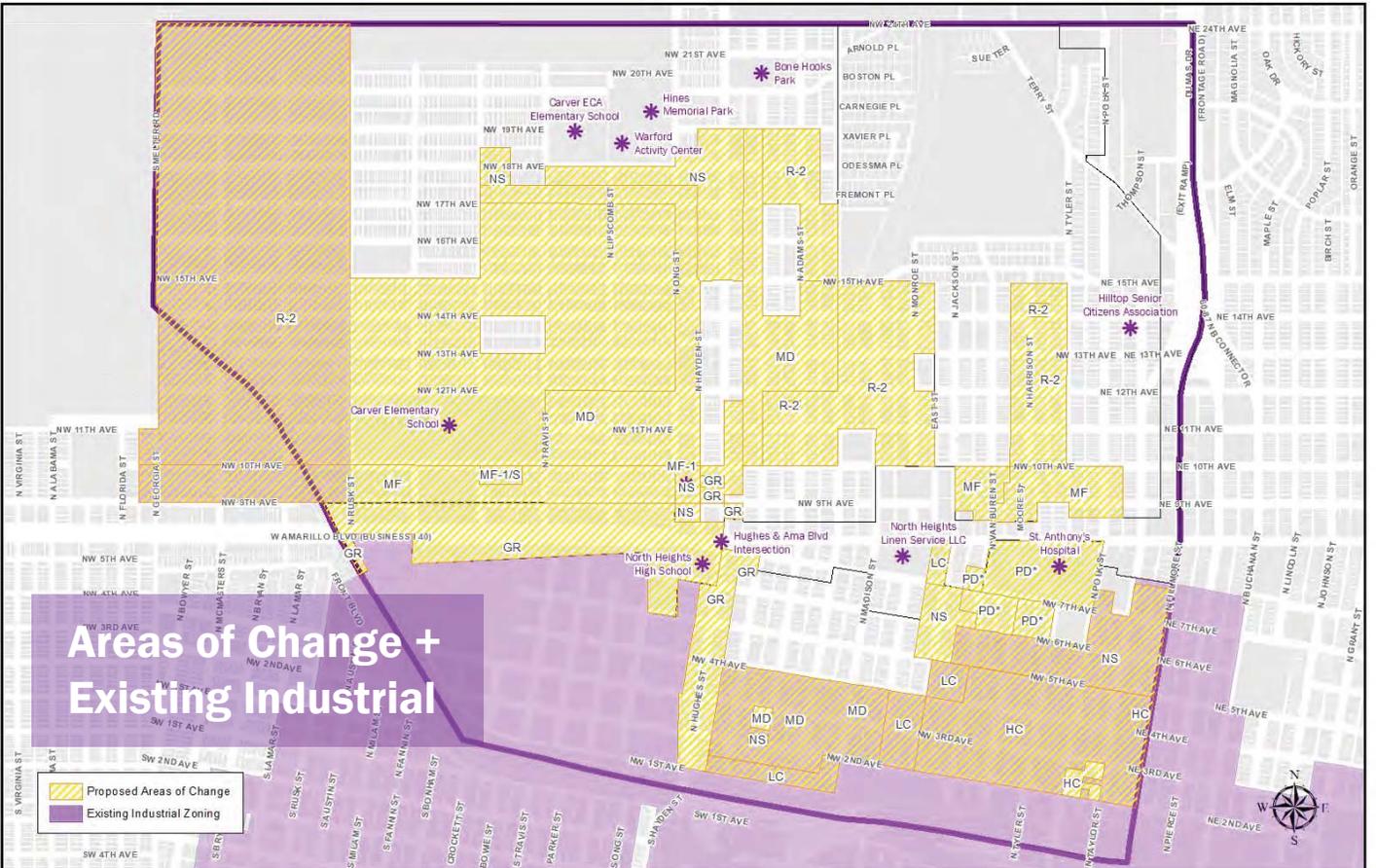
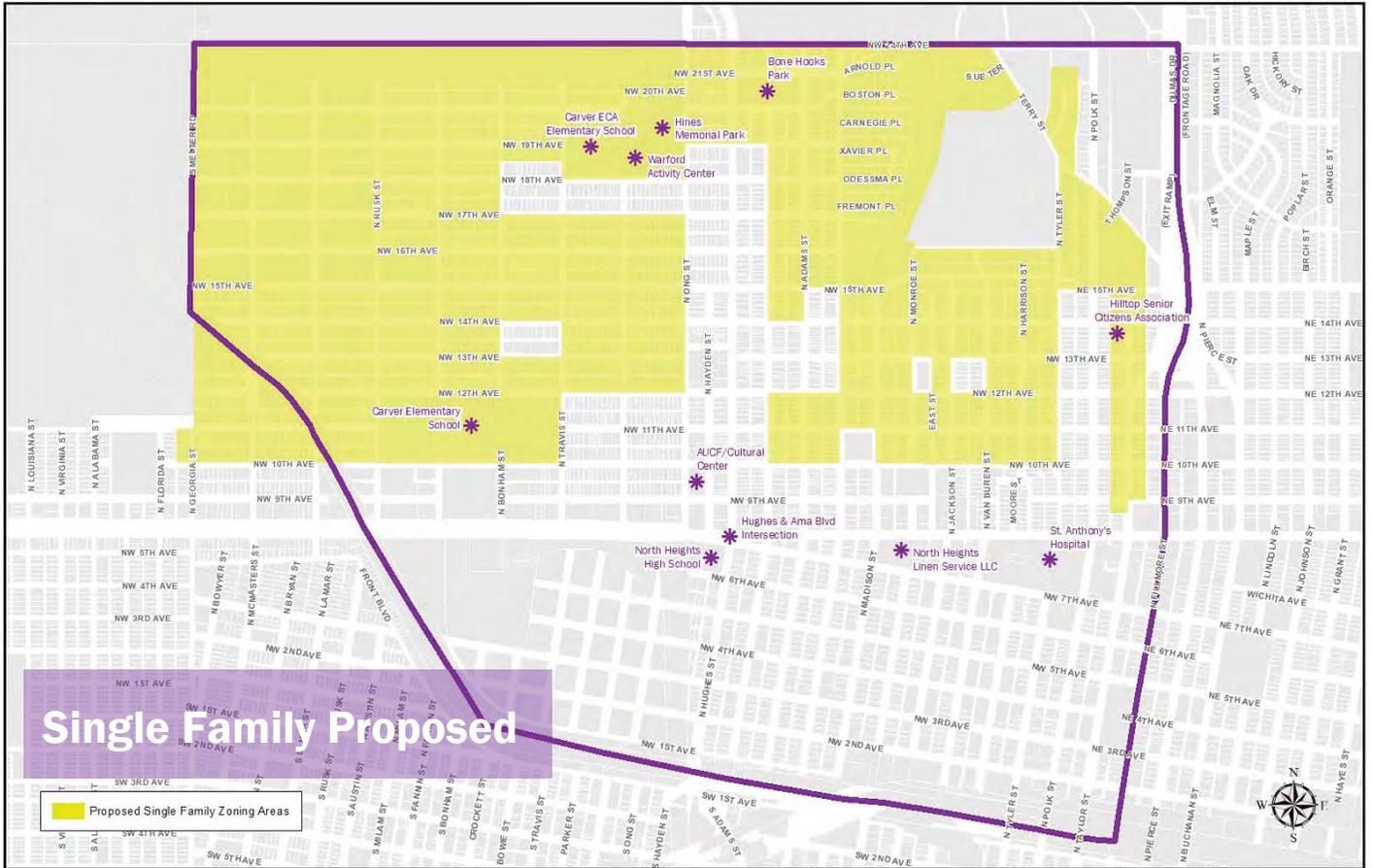
The eleven recommendations meet the principles expressed by the committee:

1. Eliminate industrial zoning on undeveloped land as much as possible.
2. Downzone industrial zoning where possible on developed land.
3. Increase the amount of single-family zoning and reduce the amount of multi-family zoning.
4. Provide appropriate commercial areas within proximity to residences for access to jobs and services.
5. Consider amenities such as parks and trails as part of future development patterns.
6. All land use decisions should be done to encourage the preservation of the existing culture and character of North Heights.
7. No decisions should increase the chances of gentrification.
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9. This project should help bring North Heights back to the neighborhood people remember – a self-sustaining community full of residents who took pride in their homes and their places of worship; full of locally owned businesses that served their friends and neighbors.

**The land use analysis demonstrates that industrial zoning has decreased by 307 acres to 10% of the plan area and single-family zoning has increased by 407 acres to 46% of the plan area in the proposed zoning pattern.**

<b>Land Use Comparison</b>	<b>Proposed</b>		<b>Existing</b>		<b>Change in Acres</b>
	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Agricultural	1	0.04	1	0.04	0
General Retail	99	5.94	23	1.36	+77
Heavy Commercial	58	3.46	34	2.03	+24
Light Industrial	182	10.87	488	29.19	-307
Light Commercial	142	8.49	180	10.77	-38
Moderate Density	167	9.95	53	3.18	+113
Multiple Family	122	7.26	433	25.88	-311
Manufactured Home	24	1.46	62	3.7	-38
Neighborhood Services	76	4.56	9	0.55	+67
Office District	6	0.36	22	1.34	-16
Planned Development*	25	1.49	3	0.17	+22
Single Family (R-1, R-2, R-3)	772	46.11	365	21.79	+407
	1673	100	1673	100	





# Resources

The committee and staff utilized a variety of resources throughout this project, which are all available to the public for viewing online at [amarillo.gov/NHRezoning](http://amarillo.gov/NHRezoning)

## General Zoning Tools

Quick Reference Guide – Zoning 101

Quick Reference Guide – Zoning District Definitions

## Plans and Ordinances

*North Heights Neighborhood Plan, 2016*

Zoning and Land Use Strategies pages 30-35

*Amarillo Comprehensive Plan, 2010*

City of Amarillo current Zoning Ordinance

City of Amarillo Zoning Ordinance Revision Project

## Maps

Interactive Project Map

City of Amarillo Online GIS Map

North Heights Analysis by Quadrant – Existing, Areas of Change, Proposed and Future Land Use