

# OPINION: It's time to bring rent control to New Bedford

Is it time to bring rent control back to New Bedford? A member of the **New Bedford Facebook group** thinks so:

"I think it's time rent control makes a comeback. The house my sister lives in was just sold. The new landlord wants to go up \$140 a month on her rent. She only gets social security. Even someone who works isn't going to get a \$140 a month raise to pay that kind of an increase." -Pauline St.Don

Contribute to the discussion **here**.

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# OPINION: New Bedford resident warns of pushy energy people

A concerned New Bedford resident wants to warn others about aggressive energy people aggressively knocking on doors in the city today.

"There are some guys knocking on doors on Independent Street in New Bedford claiming to be city workers. They are asking for electrical bills. Spread awareness! They ask for electrical bills to update something on their system, If you refuse, they tell you that your electrical bill will go up." – Carlos Lazcano

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# OPINION: The medical system is failing those of us who need it most

"I have been a community worker for over 14 years, worked at the YWCA as a Volunteer for over 15 year and worked as a minister since 2010. I have a 22-year-old disabled son who is certified legally blind, and has Global Developmental Delay – he's non-verbal.

This winter, he went into respiratory distress and I took him to Saint Annes Hospital in Fall River. After being there for 2 days his lungs collapsed and in a week and a half and he had gone through 5-6 medical procedures. He was hospitalized for over a month and a half. He was in the ICU for a few long weeks.

I live in a rented home but I need to live on the ground floor for him. I applied for assistance in July but was told that being disabled or blind was not a priority. Aren't these places for people with low income, disabled, veterans, and those struggling financially?

As a single mom, I am paying more than what I receive. I had to quit my job as an activity Director at New Bedford Gardens Care And Rehab. due to the family emergency. There are other families like me that think that the system is failing those who **truly** need housing assistance.

A lot of people believe that everyone in housing is uneducated or just want to live off of the system, but a lot of us have situations that pull us back."

Sincerely,  
Jenny

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# **OPINION: New Bedford Public Schools must not be extorted**

State Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley has rolled a proverbial Trojan horse into New Bedford with his plan to allow expansion of the Alma del Mar charter school. This scheme hands over public assets at no charge to a private company and carves out a neighborhood district that will automatically feed students into the charter school.

Mr. Riley's deal is not only bad for New Bedford, but it is also bad for public schools across the state. They will become the targets of this new approach to aid and abet the growth of charter schools, even though voters overwhelmingly defeated a 2016 ballot question that sought a massive charter school expansion in Massachusetts.

The arguments and issues raised in 2016 have not changed. Charter schools are private businesses with no oversight by democratically elected officials – even though they take away public funds from the public schools that educate all children. Proponents of the Alma del Mar plan are calling it a compromise. In reality, it is extortion.

Alma del Mar wanted to expand by 1,188 seats. Swift and loud community outcry followed. From parents to elected leaders, the community's message was clear: Such an expansion would drain \$15 million annually from the New Bedford Public Schools, causing catastrophic harm to the city.

Mr. Riley and Alma del Mar CEO Will Gardner concocted a plan that, if implemented, would allow the charter school to expand by 450 seats. The city must hand over the closed Kempton school building plus the land adjacent to it and create a

“neighborhood zone” from which students are automatically enrolled in the school, thus doing away with the citywide admissions lottery.

At the Jan. 22 meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mr. Riley set a 45-day timeline for ironing out the details of this plan. If this fails, he will take it off the table and grant Alma del Mar an additional 594 seats.

So is this about providing educational opportunities for the children of New Bedford or threatening a community into bending to the will of the charter school industry, which has the robust support of the administration of Governor Charlie Baker.

Mr. Gardner, who has always based his desire to expand his business empire on the claim that he has a long waiting list of applicants, seems quite willing to ignore those families if given the proper economic enticements of a free building and a guaranteed pool of students.

And what does New Bedford gain from this deal? Nothing, unless you consider losing less money than originally feared a victory. And we should not.

Here are some facts:

- Roughly one-third of the teachers currently at Alma del Mar are not licensed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Alma del Mar has a very high suspension rate. Many of its students, primarily those with a high level of needs, are sent back to the New Bedford Public Schools.
- There is no transparency about what is happening in the school, even though it takes public funds for its operation.

This plan still needs the approval of state legislators and local officials. The New Bedford Educators Association urges our locally elected leaders to reject any charter school

expansion and encourages them to speak out against any form of extortion from the DESE.

As Massachusetts embarks on its first serious effort in more than 25 years to improve funding for public education, let's honor the will of the voters and put an end to the practice of propping up the charter school model. Let's instead focus on creating public schools across the state that meet the needs of every student and family.

– Lou St. John, New Bedford Educators Association President

*Have an opinion on this topic? A different topic? e-mail your essay to [mike@newbedofrdguide.com](mailto:mike@newbedofrdguide.com).*

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**OPINION: “Let’s place a tribute on the hurricane dike to represent human souls lost at sea.”**

“To Whom it may Concern: I am writing to you concerning the New Bedford Hurricane Dike.

I had a vision this morning of cement statues, standing at attention, facing the ocean front. Each one represents a human soul who was lost at sea thru the years, be it whaling, or fishing. At the base of each one was there Name and Date, I can picture it majestically honoring every single man who never came home.

Like my friend Andrew Nolan Parisi who went down with the F/V Aristocrat 9/18/90. There is no grave to visit, and these men

have paid the ultimate sacrifice to the city of New Bedford. Wouldn't it be a great tribute to their lives? Standing guard to protect New Bedford along the dike – cement figures, with enough detail to carry the image home that this was a soul, who did what few want to do, and lost their lives in the process.

Is it conceivable to manage such a feat? Can it be applied to the dike?

Any ideas or help would be appreciated. Please let me know." – Timothy J Gifford

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## **New Bedford should change its name from 'Whaling City' to 'No Bail City'**

New Bedford judges have been on a "no bail" roll in the past week.

On Friday, Jan. 4, 37-year-old Elizabeth Pina was arrested for seven outstanding warrants. Clearly, she is someone who doesn't care much about authority or court decisions. She was released by the judge anyway. A few days later, on Jan 8, she was arrested for shoplifting, allegedly stealing \$125 worth of items from Rite-Aid Pharmacy on 824 Purchase St. Yet again, she was released by the judge without bail despite a request by the assistant district attorney that she be held on the three open charges. Here's someone with a long history of failing to show for court, with 18 defaults on her record, released by the judge.

23-year old Adrian Lablue, a homeless man, **allegedly broke into four businesses between Dec. 18 and Jan. 5**, but was released by the judge. Within hours of being released without bail by Judge Edward Sharkansky, New Bedford police report that the suspect broke into yet another business on Jan. 7.

But wait, it gets better.

On Jan. 2, New Bedford District Court Judge James McGovern **found 26-year old Catherine Murphy to be a danger to public safety after her involvement in a violent kidnapping** but released her anyway with an ankle bracelet and some conditions (don't go to Wareham and avoid the victim). She is accused of helping to kidnap, beat and tie up someone for a \$180 drug debt in New Bedford. The judge found her to be dangerous and knowing her partner in crime was still at large, released her with an ankle bracelet.

This is just a sample of the ridiculous no bail cases in 2019. New Bedford should change its name from 'The Whaling City' to 'The No Bail City' – we don't hunt whales anymore, but we sure do allow criminals to walk free to victimize society over and over.

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## **OPINION: Stop Cumberland Farms from building on busy part of Acushnet Ave**

The following was submitted to New Bedford Guide by a concerned resident:

"North [End] Residents, Business Owners and Employees in Far

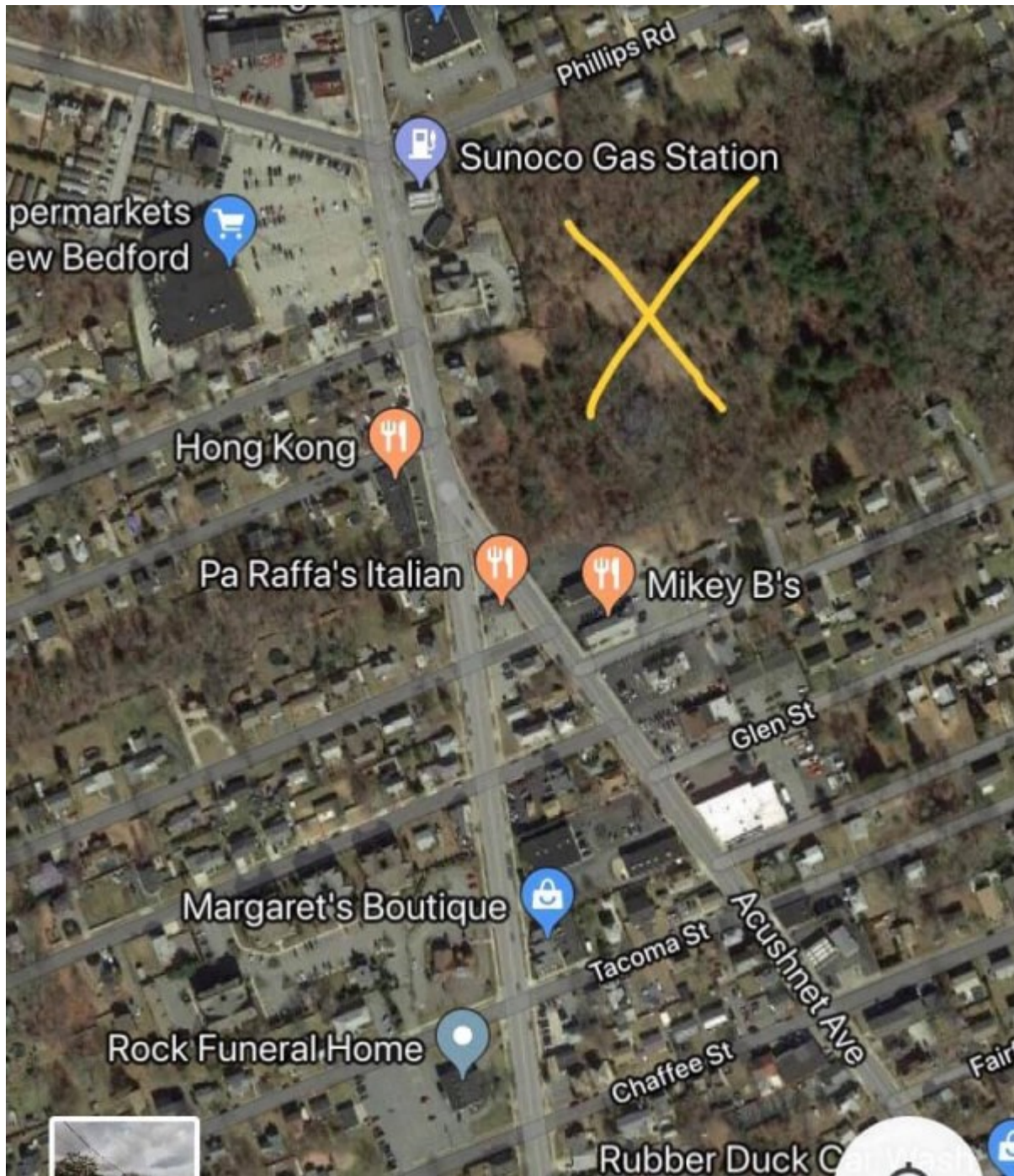
North End, Voc Tech Faculty, Staff, Travelers, & Any Concerned Citizens:

Your Presence and Support is Needed Wed. night, Jan. 9th at 6 PM, Downtown Library, 3rd Floor

The New Bedford Planning Board will decide to approve or disapprove a new LARGE Cumberland Farms, to include a gas station AND a car wash. The proposed location is directly at the Acushnet Ave curve lights (adjacent to Orthodontics and across from Pa Raffa's – and close to the Rte. 140 gateway into the north end).

This meeting is a continuation from a December meeting where the developers shared their plan. Cumberland Farms hired a traffic review, who did a traffic safety analysis for ONE day, on a Tuesday, to determine if it would be safe to add a Cumby's in that location. ONE DAY, plus, they only used Mass DOT accident info to tell the Planning Board "only 15 accidents at that location in x number of years. Councilor LINDA Morad then spoke sharing New Bedford Police accident data indicating over 100 accidents PLUS a FATALITY.

PLEASE ATTEND on Wed., Jan. 9th at 6 PM to show your OPPOSITION to having a large Cumberland Farms with gas station and car wash at a dangerous traffic location (plus, there are currently 4 gas stations near there, a car wash a few blocks away and a grocery store. Is Cumby's needed there? NO!)." – Jacqueline Coucci



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**OPINION: “Concerned Citizens:  
help stop Cumberland Farms**

# from building a gas station with car wash!"

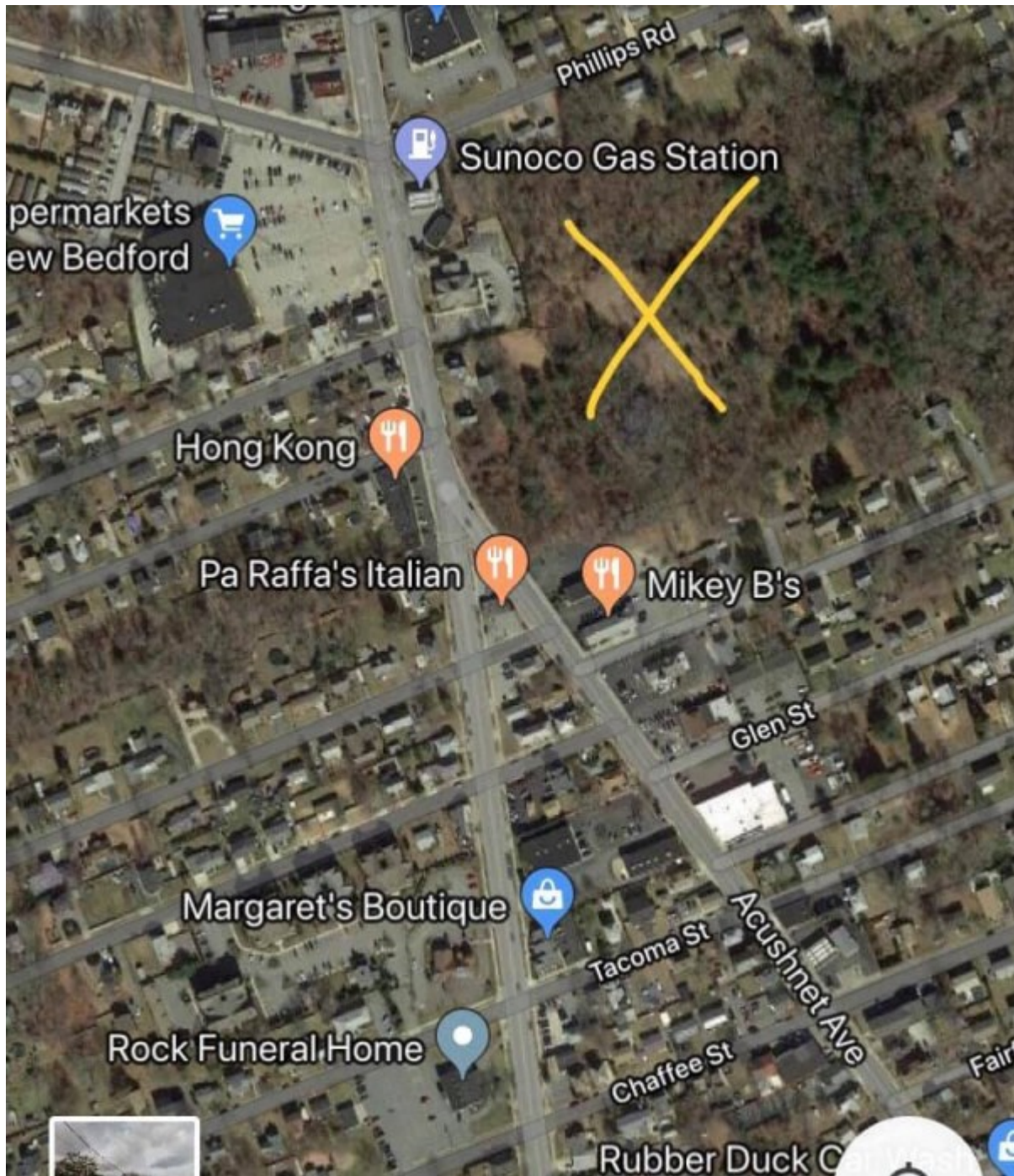
"North [End] Residents, Business Owners and Employees in Far North End, Voc Tech Faculty, Staff, Travelers, & Any Concerned Citizens:

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**Pope's Island – good enough  
for a strip club, but not**

# retail marijuana sales?

Whisk & JANE LLC is one of at least three businesses that have started the process of opening a recreational marijuana facility in New Bedford. They are hoping to open their business at the former Temptations strip club at 161 Popes Island in New Bedford, but have hit some significant roadblocks put up by the City of New Bedford.



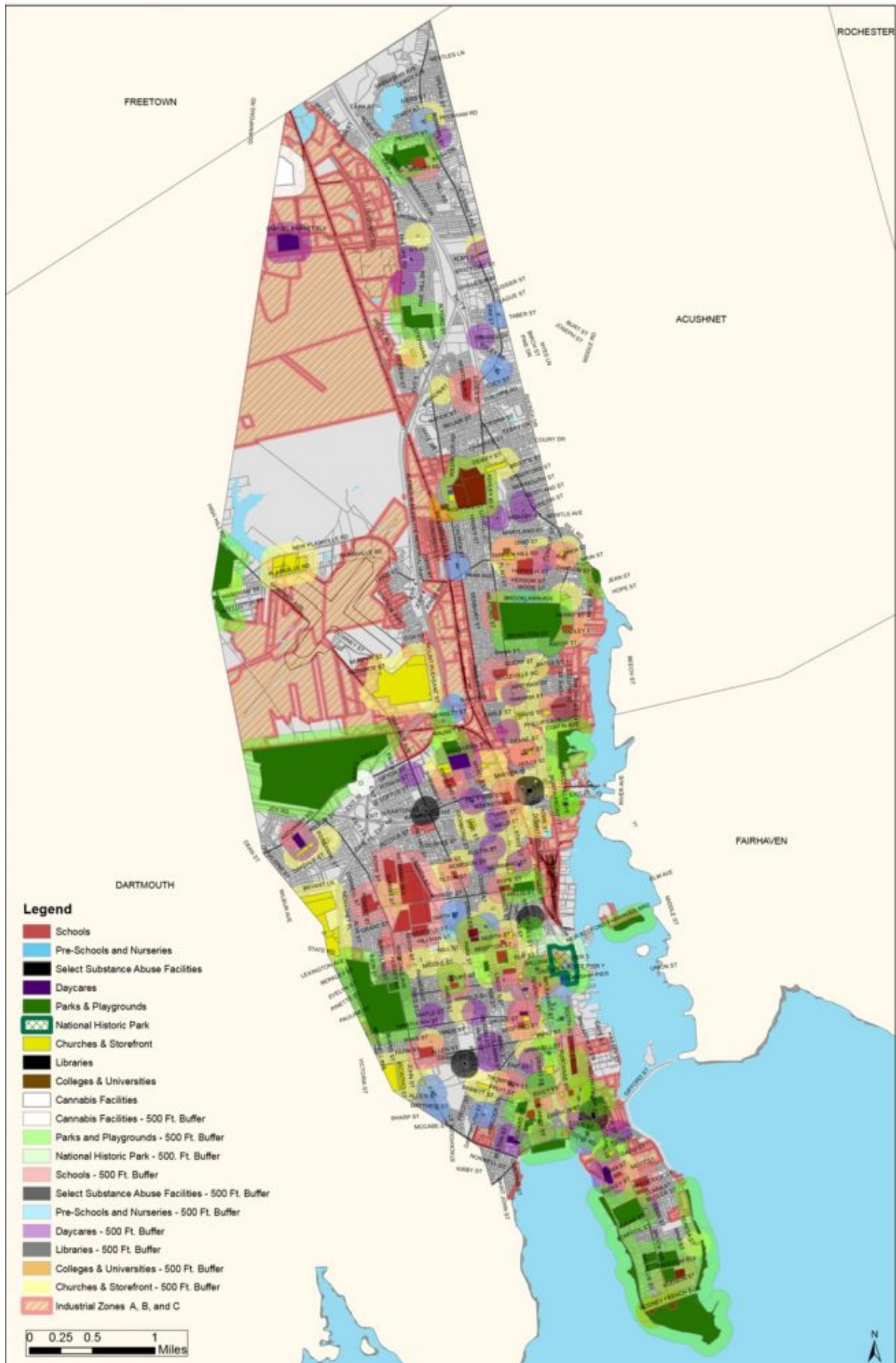
The main barrier? The **City of New Bedford's zoning ordinance** that significantly limits where marijuana facilities can be opened. In the case of Whisk & JANE, 161 Popes Island is too close to the Prince Henry the Navigator Monument and the park that surrounds it.



Here's Ericca Kennedy of Whisk & JANE LLC detailing her frustration in front of the New Bedford Cannabis Committee last month. You can read her letters to the City Council and Mayor [here](#).

Recently, **three businesses are applying to open a recreational marijuana business in New Bedford** and all three have mentioned that the City of New Bedford has “blacked out” New Bedford to recreational marijuana. If you look at the zoning map, they have a point – the white area is where marijuana facilities may apply to open (based on the map legend).

Map 5: Proposed 500 Ft. Buffers and Industrial Zones A, B, and C



The obvious question is, if the building at 161 Popes Island is good enough for a strip club, why isn't it good enough for a recreational marijuana business? Another obvious question is, why are elected officials in New Bedford so determined to keep recreational marijuana out of the city? Four recreational marijuana shops have already opened in Massachusetts, one not too far in Wareham:

Fall River will be opening a recreational marijuana store any day now yet New Bedford seems at least months away. New Bedford elected officials seem to be taking a cautious approach due to the fact that marijuana sales are still banned at the federal level, but clearly other cities and towns have figured out how to get recreational marijuana sales started. With 2019 being an election year, I'm sure they'll figure it out before October when the primary season begins.

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## **New Bedford has talent: “3 God” Poem by Kalie Brum**

Taking some time to sit and reflect on myself  
For me when it comes to my healing I have to pull every  
problem off the shelves  
Then I'm faced with many problems from not only from this  
lifetime but many other lifetimes  
And for myself, the first step is facing it, acknowledging it  
happened, learning from it, then breaking it down in a rhyme  
  
But then learning it let go  
Because if I don't in the future there will be no room for me  
to grow  
I have to much love to give

And all this time I've been running from the one I truly love  
We both deserve in peace to live

We have so much to offer and teach from our pain we found in  
love and the love we found in pain

She taught me to see the true beauty in life even when I was  
blind and couldn't see the beauty for what it was she stood  
there

Even when I couldn't hear the loving, caring, calling whispers  
of the world and the universe she helped me to hear

She is my Goddess I am her God and now I'm here

I will stand tall by her side

There's no more room left in this universe for her or me to  
hide

We're here to make a change for the better of all

This time we as one will not collapse or fall

Because we are united through mind body and soul

We are complete we are whole

-3 God- Kalie Brum