



A Vision for Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future



Presented By

**BELMONT PLANNING BOARD
&
BELMONT OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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Prepared By

**LARRY KOFF & ASSOCIATES
BLUESTONE PLANNING GROUP
EATON PLANNING
GLC DEVELOPMENT, INC.
NELSON/NYGAARD CONSULTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
TODREAS HANLEY ASSOCIATES
ABRAMSON & ASSOCIATES, INC.
TETRA TECH RIZZO**



PREFACE

The Belmont Comprehensive Plan is a framework to guide future decisions and policies governing a wide range of land-use related issues in Belmont. The text, maps, illustrations, and nine recommendations contained within the Plan provide a basis for decision-making regarding the long term physical development of the Town.

The Comprehensive Plan, as presented here, does not require the Town to carry out any of the specific regulatory changes or public investments identified in the Plan. Rather specific zoning changes, commitment of public resources and other strategies will need to be considered through the required public process of the various boards and committees charged with these tasks during the Plan's implementation.

This Plan was developed to be consistent with Chapter 41: Section 81 D of the General Laws of Massachusetts which suggests that, under the direction of planning boards, cities and towns prepare plans which incorporate nine elements which are included in this plan: vision and goals, a land use plan, historic resources, commercial development, open space, transportation and energy, housing, public facilities and finance, and implementation recommendations.

Developed over a two year effort by the Planning Board, Comprehensive Planning Committee, residents, business owners, community leaders and a consultant team, the Plan presents a Land Use Vision for Belmont. It identifies issues, opportunities and goals, and sets forth a proposed Action Plan of strategies for working toward the Town's Vision.

In short, the Plan and its nine recommendations should serve as a roadmap for future actions by various Boards rather than as a blueprint of next steps that have to be taken.

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Board of Selectmen

Dan LeClerc
Angelo Firenze
Ralph Jones

Planning Board

Sami Baghdady
Jenny Fallon
Karl Haglund
Carla Moynihan
Andres Rojas

Comprehensive Plan Committee

Sami Baghdady
Sue Bass
Peter Boyajian
Roger Colton
Frank French
Art Kreiger
Dan LeClerc
Robert McLaughlin
Carla Moynihan
Jennifer Page
Mark Paolillo
Anne Paulsen
Mary Power
Paul Solomon

Technical Committee

Glenn Clancy
Jeff Conti
Jenny Fallon
Tim Richardson
Jay Szklut
Jeffrey Wheeler

Working Group Members

Tony Alcorn
Elizabeth Atkins
Sue Bass
Paul Bell
Elana Benoit
Peter Boyajian
Timothy Bowman
Pat Bruschi
Mark Clark
Martin Cohen
Roger Colton
Joe Cornish

Avery Dalton
Nancy Davis
Brett Dean
Gerry Dickout
John Dieckmann
Kit Drier
Bonnie Friedman
Barbara Gardner
Kevin Foley
Robert Forrester
Frank French
Kevin Heine
Sandy Kendall
Stephanie King
Jan Kruse
Charlie Laverty
Anne-Marie Lambert
Newt Levee
Bill Lovallo
Matt Lowry
Andrea Masciari
Robert McLaughlin
Christine McVay
Jeanne Mooney
Martha Moore
Linda Nickens
Lydia Ogilby
Sara Oaklander
Tommasina Olson
Jennifer Page
Anne Paulsen
Sue Pew
Lynn Polcari
Mary Power
Erik Rhodin
Nancy Richards
Stewart Richards
Ann Rittenberg
Paul Santos
Hal Shubin
Richard Simmons
Mike Smith
Paul Solomon
Heli Tomford
Allan Vanderley
David Webster
Miriam Weil
Roger Wrubel

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Consultant Team

Larry Koff & Associates

Larry Koff, AICP, Principal in Charge
Robertta Cameron, AICP Senior Planner
Adam Knoff, LEED AP, Planner

Bluestone Planning Group

Larry Bluestone, AIA, APA, Principal

Eaton Planning

Chris Kluchman, AICP Principal

GLC Development, Inc.

Robert Chihade

Nelson/Nygaard

Consulting Associates, Inc.

Jason Schrieber, AICP Principal

Phase I Report:

Abramson & Associates, Inc.

Barry M. Abramson, Principal

Tetra Tech Rizzo

Mitchell Fischman AICP
Director of Planning Services
Diane Gray, AICP

Todreas Hanley Associates, Inc

Carol Todreas, Principal

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Town of Belmont last adopted its Comprehensive Plan 47 years ago in 1963 and updated and re-codified its Zoning By-Laws in 1988. Since that time, significant changes have taken place in land use, finance, and demographics. Building on the work of various committees, Town Meeting voted to support the Planning Board in its efforts to retain consultants and prepare a new Comprehensive Plan. The Plan will provide a framework for making decisions and policies concerning key land use, quality of life, and zoning issues confronting the Town in the 21st century.

Public Process

Phase I of the planning process began in January 2009. A consultant team led by Larry Koff and Associates guided the Town through a process of identifying existing conditions, key concerns, and choices. The consultant team and Planning Board were assisted in this effort by the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), a group of citizens with a long history of public involvement in Town affairs, as well as by input from merchants and property owners concerned with the Town's commercial areas. Additional public input was obtained through a survey completed by 500 residents, two large public forums, and four smaller workshops where presentations of initial findings were offered.

Phase II began in September 2009 with the establishment of Working Committees that identified the issues, goals, and strategies for the 6 key topics that were identified in Phase I:

1. Commercial Development
2. Housing
3. Historic Preservation
4. Open Space and Greenbelt Connections
5. Transportation and Energy
6. Public Facilities and Finance

Residents, business owners and community leaders provided input and feedback identifying the issues and specific recommendations in each of these areas. A series of public workshops was organized to discuss the overlapping concerns and strategies, and to identify ways to bridge conflicting interests. A second survey of residents obtained public response to the more specific recommendations and priorities suggested by the draft plan.

Approach

This Comprehensive Plan brings into focus the intersection of goals and concerns from each of the six plan Elements. Policies and opportunities that simultaneously meet the needs of economic and fiscal vitality, environmental consciousness, and social equity, i.e., meeting the needs and preferences of people who live in Belmont and maintaining it as a welcoming community, will ensure the Town's long term sustainability.



This Executive Summary highlights the vision, priorities, and Plan recommendations. The summary is followed by five sections, which include background information, a presentation of the six plan elements, and specific implementation strategies. Three background sections presents two vision statements for Belmont and an overview of demographic information and land use and zoning issues. The six plan elements sections are drawn primarily from the Working Committee Reports including Historic Preservation, Commercial Development, Open Space & Recreation, Transportation & Energy, Housing, and Public Facilities & Finance. The Committee Reports are included as appendices. The Implementation section identifies more specific recommendations and lays out a prioritized action plan.

VISION IN BRIEF

Belmont is a well-established, predominantly residential community consisting of historic neighborhoods. Belmont's identity and vitality are also defined by its commercial village centers founded along transportation spines and around the Town's train stations. They, together with parks, playgrounds, open spaces, schools and public facilities are all interconnected through a network of roads, transit, bicycle, pedestrian paths and sidewalks. Three fundamental principles of this vision, as identified in 2001 by the Vision 21 Committee, were the goals of thriving business centers, support for retail needs and opportunities, and preservation of a small-town community atmosphere.

KEY ISSUES

From discussions during the Comprehensive Planning process, the following three over-riding concerns emerged:

- The vitality of the Town's commercial areas is at risk due to regional competition, zoning restrictions, disincentives to investment, and lack of consensus on a vision.
- The needs of 21st Century residents and businesses impose challenges on the character of Belmont's neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- Belmont's quality of life cannot be sustained without planning and investment of both public and private resources.

Recommendations

For achieving the vision and goals of the Plan, nine primary recommendations have been identified. These recommendations were considered by the community in a survey and in various public forums. The Implementation Section of the Comprehensive Plan discusses the concerns which led to these recommendations as well as specific strategies to achieve short, middle, and long-term goals. The nine recommendations, listed below in no particular order, are:

- Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Improve, support, and promote public transit.
- Expand housing choices for Belmont’s various and changing demographic groups.
- Reinforce Belmont’s neighborhoods and centers through historic and natural resource protection.
- Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process to supplement traditional zoning.
- Clarify the land use vision for each commercial area.
- Allow economically viable development which complements the Town’s existing character.
- Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements.
- Link public facilities and financial planning to land use priorities.

Key Action Plan Themes and Strategies

The following three themes were identified as priorities in both the workshops as well as the survey as overall guides to the short term direction that the Town should take in implementing the Plan. All specific activities and recommended assignments of responsibility are identified in the table of Action Plan Strategies found in the Implementation Section on page 68. The short term priorities noted in the survey responses and in the workshops are highlighted as the activities which the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen should immediately consider. This Plan seeks to involve all residents, entrepreneurs, and boards to join with the Planning Board in the work of implementing the recommendations presented here

1. Protection of the Town’s Character

Belmont’s “small-town feel” and historic character are strongly valued by many in the community. In order to build confidence in achieving the Plan’s vision, residents suggested taking some initial steps around the themes of protecting resources and building awareness and understanding of a plan for financial stability.

The Board of Selectmen will have the opportunity to work with the Planning Board and others to address some strategies which might be implemented relatively quickly without the need for additional funding. Preparing and considering a demolition delay by-law, a specimen tree by-law, streetscape guidelines, and policies regarding shade trees and plantings on Town property are some possible first steps. The Conservation Commission could also investigate and report on the costs and benefits of a wetlands by-law and could join with the Historic District Commission and others to reinvestigate the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Concurrently the Planning Board could initiate studies to address improvements to design and site plan criteria, modifying zoning to protect yards and small neighborhood open spaces, solicit the support of the Housing Trust in preparing zoning changes which could accommodate concentrated housing in key commercial locations, consider the adoption of energy efficiency building code standards and incentives, and work with the Capital Projects Overview Committee (CPOC) in undertaking planning for the next phase of public buildings projects. The Selectmen and Warrant Committee could take the lead in undertaking some of the recommended steps in financial management and public information. A possible good first step would be to communicate more clearly to the public what efforts have been made to reduce costs and increase revenues as well as to present a well documented Capital Asset and Financial Management Plan.

2. Enhancement of Commercial Centers

A “Key to Belmont’s Future” will lie in the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board working together to build public/private partnerships and support including that of commercial property owners and tenants for the visions, zoning changes, parking regulations, signage, and other related improvements to the commercial village centers. The Planning Board will need to prepare new zoning for key commercial centers, stronger design criteria, a more predictable approval process, and the inclusion of more technical and professional and community input into the design review process. The Office of Community Development (OCD) will need to concurrently undertake parking, transit, and infrastructure related studies all of which received broad support in the survey.



3. Improvements to Pedestrian Infrastructure, Connections, and Transit

This topic should become a higher priority for capital planning, reflecting the fact that being a walkable community is a highly valued community asset. Some of the early action activities are truly low budget and include adopting, with the support of the School Department, a “Safe Routes to Schools” program and having the Board of Selectmen advocate for improved bus connections to such locations as Alewife Station as well as improved signage, maintenance, and related pedestrian amenities at the train and bus stops. Concurrently, the OCD will need to be involved in a range of priority activities. The formation of a sidewalk management and construction program is recommended in order to plan, prioritize and fund a public private partnership of sidewalk and bicycle, and trail construction. A circulation/pedestrian connections study of the Leonard Street/Concord Avenue/Common Street intersection has also been recommended along with a parking study to support transit and commercial area enhancements.



VISIONS: A WORKING VISION & LAND USE VISION

The Town of Belmont's Vision 21 Committee developed the following vision for the Town which was adopted by Town Meeting in 2001. This vision has served to guide the work of various committees concerned with Belmont's future.

A WORKING VISION FOR BELMONT'S FUTURE

Adopted by Town Meeting, April 23, 2001



Belmont is a desirable and welcoming community that retains a small-town atmosphere within a larger metropolitan area. Our town provides excellent educational opportunities and high quality town services. We protect the beauty and character of our natural settings and historic buildings. Thriving business centers contribute economic stability while offering places for residents to dine, shop, and socialize. The town government responds to the concerns of the residents, practices sound fiscal management and plans for future generations. We make a commitment to preserving and enhancing our strengths as a community while respecting our differences as individuals.

Our Principles

To preserve and enhance the qualities that we value, we, the Belmont community, make a commitment to:

- Foster and maintain an open and inclusive decision-making process.
- Develop and use our human and financial resources wisely.
- Engage in comprehensive and integrated local and regional planning.

Our Common Goals

Quality of Life

- We will ensure an excellent school system as a cornerstone of our community, providing for the learning needs of all our children and all residents.
- We will manage traffic through and around town to ensure the tranquility of our neighborhoods and the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- We will be an environmentally responsible community and conserve our natural habitats.

Character of Our Town

- We will maintain our libraries, public buildings, infrastructure and recreational facilities as investments in our future and our historic buildings as witnesses to our past.
- We will work with neighborhoods and residents to identify and support retail needs and opportunities.
- We will value cultural enrichment and encourage local talent and creativity.

Sense of Community

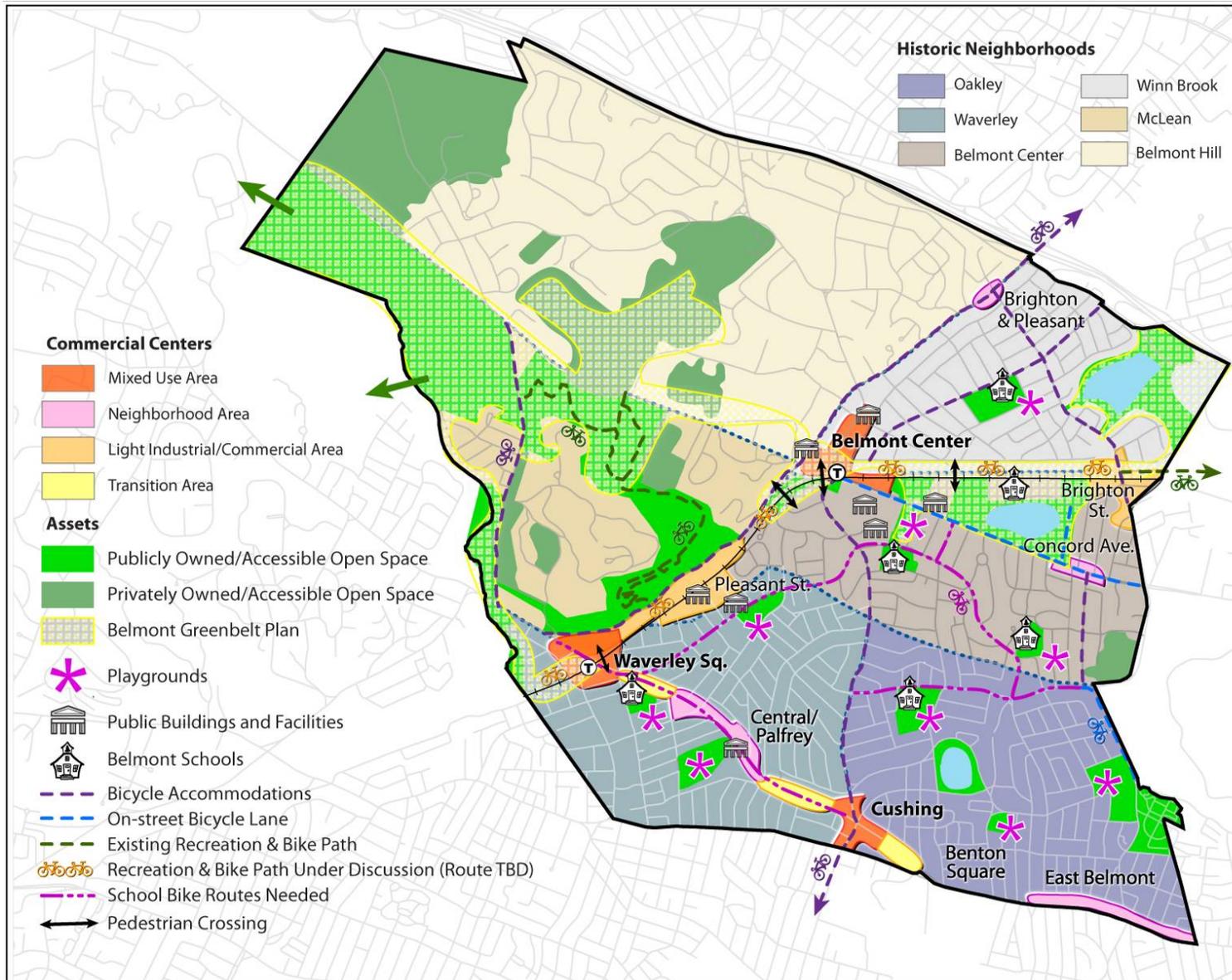
- We will welcome newcomers and value diversity, while caring for our neighbors and for the needs of children, youth and seniors.
- We will promote the involvement of all residents in the life of our community, support citizen involvement in our town affairs, and rely on an effective, representative local government.
- We will preserve our small-town community atmosphere.

LAND USE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A Vision for the future emerged from the comprehensive land use planning process begun in 2009 which builds on these broad goals and principles. This land use vision seeks to enhance the sustainability of Belmont's neighborhoods and community character. A more specific framework is identified to guide the elements of the Comprehensive Plan and the strategies which will be needed to realize this vision:

- Neighborhoods, village centers, parks and playgrounds are interconnected through a network of roads, public transit, sidewalks and open space pathways. Safe pedestrian and bicycle routes provide access to commercial centers, schools and other public amenities and regional transit, reducing reliance on the automobile.
- Open spaces and vistas provide connections to the beauty of the natural world and offer places for community gathering and interaction. Tree-lined streets, yards and small open spaces provide breathing room and beauty in neighborhoods.
- Commercial centers are revitalized through public improvements and redevelopment of underutilized properties. New developments support vibrant businesses and lively streetscapes, and also offer smaller housing options with easy walking access to goods, services and transit.
- Appropriate renovations and improvements increase property values, provide improved energy efficiency, and a broader range of housing to meet the needs of twenty-first century households.
- Historic properties and aspects of the Town are valued and are complemented by new buildings which sustain the unique character of each neighborhood, while serving the needs of new generations.

Land Use Vision for the Future



BACKGROUND: DEMOGRAPHICS & LOCATION



BELMONT'S POPULATION SNAPSHOT

Who We Are

Overview (2008 Statistics)

- Total Population: 24,194
- Total Households: 9,547
- Average Household Size: 2.5
- Median Age: 41.6
- Non-white Minorities: 11%

Education (2000)

- Completed a 4-year college: 47%
- Graduate level education: 26%

Households (2000)

- Family households: 69% (6,590)
 - With children under the age of 18: 35% (3,343)
 - Single parent households: 13% (1,280)
- With persons aged 65 and older: 26% (2,509)
- Individuals living alone: 26% (2,483)
 - Individuals living alone over age 65: 9% (860)

Income (2000)

- Median family income: \$102,964
- Median household income: \$85,981
- Households earning over \$150,000: 43% (4,107)
- Families below the poverty level: 1.7% (113)
- Individuals below the poverty level: 2% (550)

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Where We Are Going

Between 1990 and 2000 significant changes in Belmont's population occurred.

- Young adults (20-34) decreased by 35%
- Middle aged residents (35-54) increased by 21%
- Median Household Income increased 50%

Although Belmont's population is projected to remain stable through 2030, the internal demographics are expected to change significantly.

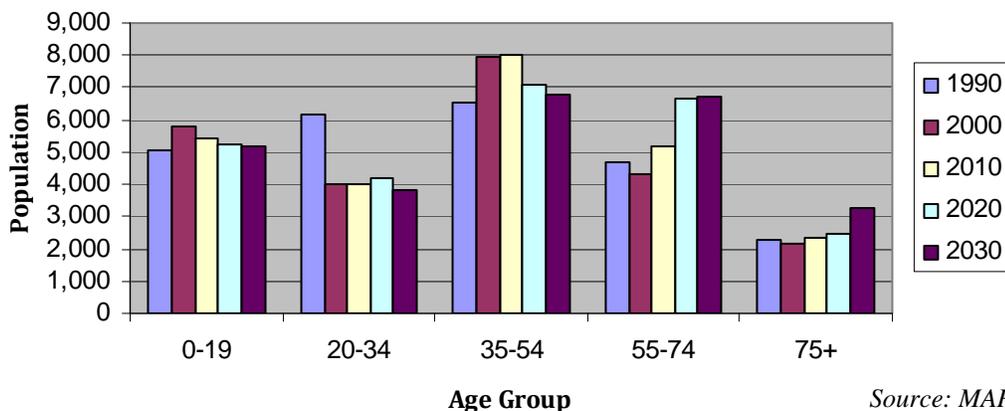
- **Belmont needs to adapt to its rapidly declining young adult population.**
 - 15% of Belmont's population will be between 20 and 34 in 2030 (compared to 25% in 1990)
- **Belmont's middle aged population (35-54) is declining**
 - Only 26% of Belmont's population will be between 35 and 54 in 2030 (compared to 33% in 2000)
- **Belmont needs to find ways to accommodate its older populations.**
 - Belmont's seniors (55-74) will account for 26% of the total population by 2030 compared to 18% in 2000, an increase of 57%
 - Belmont's elderly (75+) will comprise 14% of the total population by 2030 (an increase from 9% in 2000), an increase of 51%

Population Projections

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Population	24,720	24,194	24,946	25,607	25,752
Households	9,664	9,732	10,319	10,779	10,998
Household Size	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3

Source: MAPC

Source: MAPC



Source: MAPC

BELMONT'S REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Location

- 6 miles northwest of Boston
- Residents work and shop in Belmont, Cambridge, & Boston

Population

- Smaller population than neighboring communities
- Negative growth rate between 1990 and 2000. Only Cambridge and suburbs to the west gained population.
- Highest median household income next to Lexington.

Housing

- Highest median home price among neighboring towns.
- 40% renter occupied, low compared with neighboring towns (except Lexington)
- Nearly half of Belmont's homes are in 2-3 family structures or multifamily
- Smallest number of building permits from 2004-2008.

Economic Base

- Job-workforce ratio is second lowest compared with neighboring towns
- Commercial properties account for just over 5% of Belmont's tax base; lowest among neighboring towns.

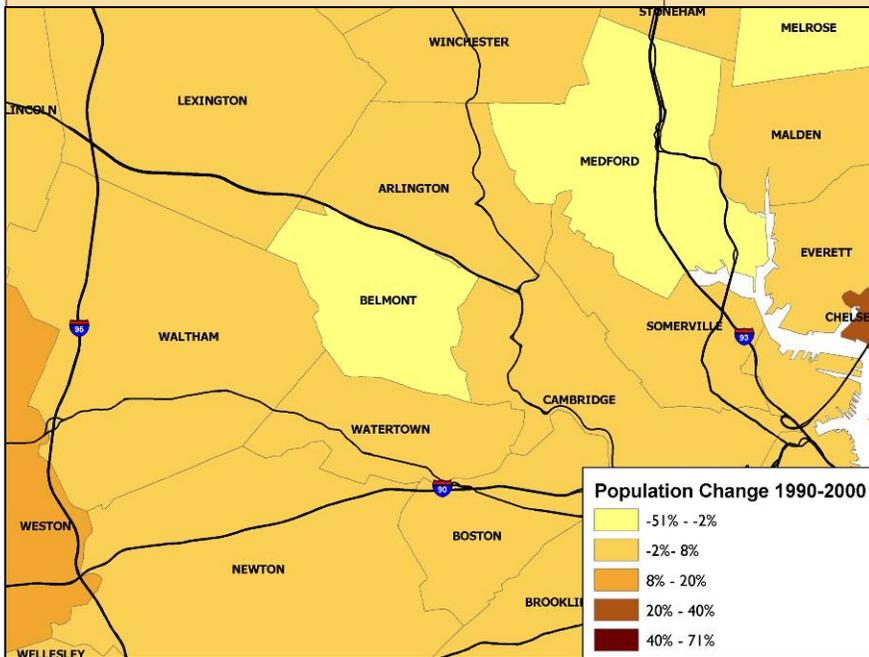
Source: U.S. Census

	Population	Pop. Growth 1990-2000	Median Household Income
Arlington	42,000	-5.0%	\$65,000
Belmont	24,194	-2.1%	\$80,000
Cambridge	102,000	5.8%	\$48,000
Lexington	31,000	4.8%	\$97,000
Waltham	60,000	2.3%	\$54,000
Watertown	32,000	-0.9%	\$60,000

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

	Owner-Occupied Housing Units	Single Family Units	Median Home Price	Building Permits 2004-2008
Arlington	59.9%	40%	\$425,000	308
Belmont	63.7%	56%	\$645,000	123
Cambridge	32.3%	9%	\$630,000	1778
Lexington	82.6%	80%	\$615,000	336
Waltham	46.0%	38%	\$366,000	886
Watertown	47.0%	22%	\$411,000	271

Sources: U.S. Census, The Warren Group, SOCDS Database



Source: MassGis

	Residential Tax Base	Jobs/Workforce Ratio
Arlington	94.0%	0.20
Belmont	94.2%	0.26
Cambridge	34.6%	1.05
Lexington	77.9%	0.70
Waltham	45.1%	1.06
Watertown	67.2%	0.60

Source: MA DET

Note: Job/Workforce Ratio is the comparison of the number of jobs in Town to the resident workforce

LAND USE & ZONING



BELMONT'S LAND USE SNAPSHOT

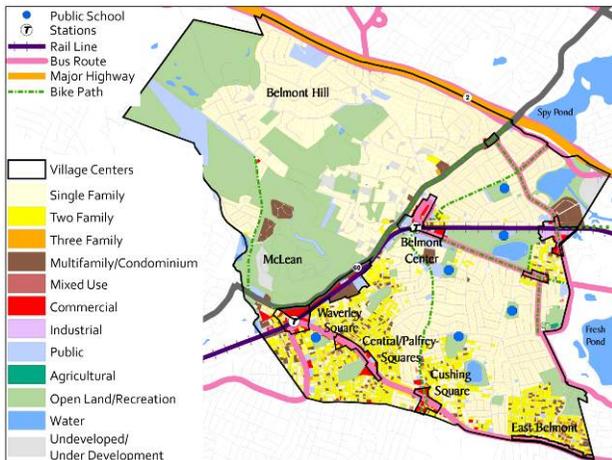
Land Use Facts

- Primarily built-out: 83% of land area is developed
- Of the remaining 17%, the majority (83%) is protected open space, both public and private
- The vast majority of open space is concentrated in the less densely settled western half of town
- Residential uses comprise nearly 80% of the developed area, the majority of which is medium to high density
- The higher density and low density residential areas are primarily divided by Pleasant St., which has served as an important transportation corridor throughout Belmont's history

Source: MassGIS from Aerial Photography

Current Land Use

The Eastern half of Belmont has higher density residential neighborhoods with many 2-3 family homes located within walking distance of commercial centers.



In contrast, Belmont Hill is more homogeneous with lower density single family homes, and regional open space resources.

Commercial areas are clustered around transit stations, former trolley stops, and along Trapelo Road, a regional transportation route. Current zoning would not allow these areas to be built as they developed historically.

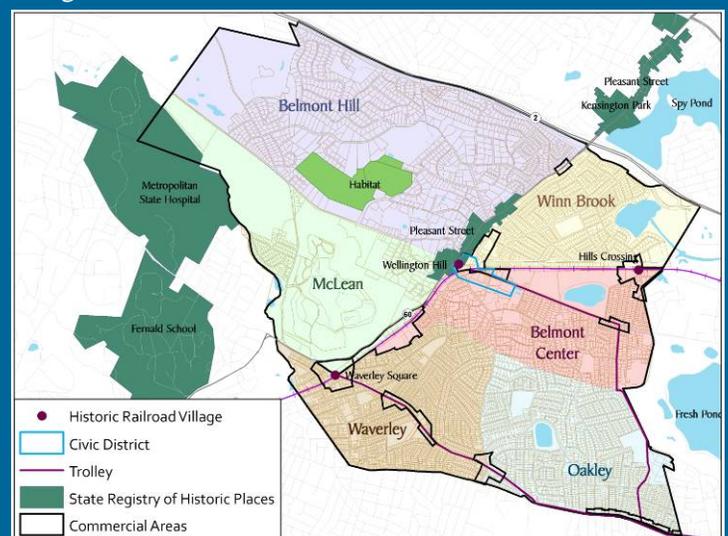
Existing Land Use

Land Use Category	Area (Acres)	% of Town Area	% of Dev. Area
Low Density Residential	386	12.7%	15.3%
Medium-High Density Residential	1,500	49.2%	59.4%
Multi-Family Residential	16	0.6%	0.7%
Commercial	90	3.0%	3.6%
Industrial	57	1.9%	2.3%
Recreation	220	7.2%	8.7%
Transportation	44	1.4%	1.7%
Transitional	212	7.0%	8.4%
Total Developed	2,525	82.8%	100.0%
Agriculture	60	2.0%	
Forest/Wetland	422	13.8%	
Vacant	11	0.5%	
Water	32	1.1%	
Total Undeveloped	524	17.2%	
Total Town Area	3,050	100.0%	

Source: MassGIS, from Aerial photography, 1999

Historical Land Use

- Neighborhoods and commercial centers developed along rail and trolley lines before the automobile
- Neighborhoods were created when farms and estates were subdivided, often incorporating historic homes into these neighborhoods



- These were high density neighborhoods within walking distance of commercial centers, public amenities, and transit.

BELMONT'S ZONING SNAPSHOT

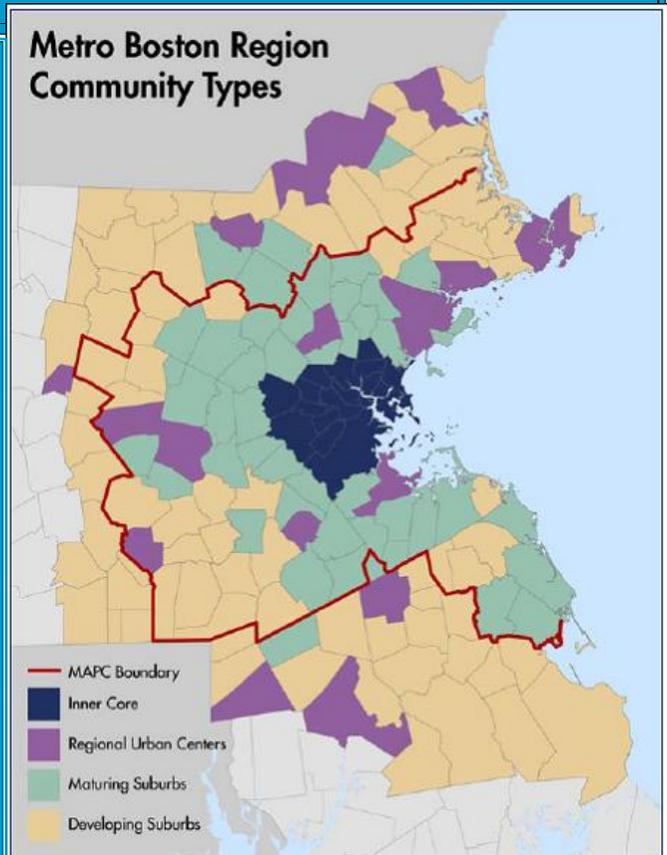
Belmont Zoning Districts—At a Glance

Residential		Description
Single Residence A	SR-A	Single family residences on 25,000 square foot lots. Height 36'
Single Residence B	SR-B	Single family residences on 12,000 square foot lots. Height 36'
Single Residence C	SR-C	Single family residences on 9,000 square foot lots. Height 36'
Single Residence D (Belmont Country Club)	SR-D	Single family residences on 25,000 square foot lots. Height 36'
General Residence	GR	Single and two family homes on 7,000 square foot lots. Height 33'
Apartment House	AH	Town homes and multifamily with up to 36 units per acre. Height 60'
Nonresidential		
Local Business I	LB I	Commercial uses. Height 28'
Local Business II	LB II	Commercial uses including motor vehicle sales/repair, residential by special permit. Height 28'
Local Business III	LB III	Commercial uses, residential by special permit. Height 28'
General Business	GB	Commercial uses. Manufacturing and warehousing by special permit. Height 36'
Overlay and Special Districts		
Cushing Square Overlay District		Mixed use with larger projects by Planning Board special permit and design review. Height 28', 36' or 48' by special permit
Oakley Neighborhood Smart Growth District (40R)		Multi-family redevelopment of former church property on Trapelo Road. Has its own design review process. Height 36'
McLean District		Special district created for residential and office redevelopment of parts of McLean Hospital property
Belmont Uplands (Currently approved for 40B)		Large office and research development. Height 98'; 36' for parking structures

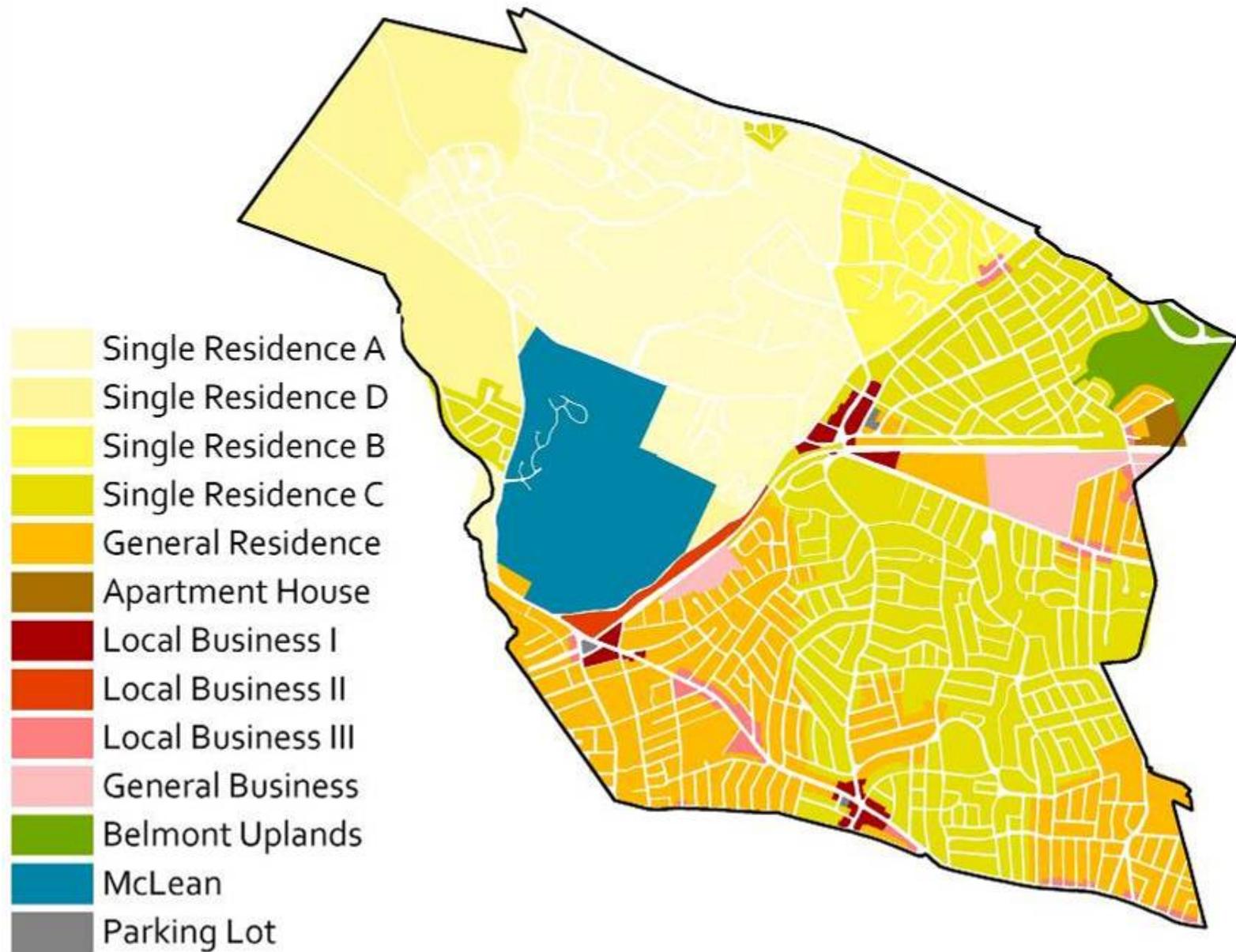
MetroFuture's Regional Plan

MetroFuture is the regional plan for Greater Boston which was prepared in 2008 by The Metropolitan Area Planning Commissions (MAPC), the regional planning agency with the support of 101 member municipalities and a broad based study committee of citizens and decision makers. This plan identified Belmont as one of 16 cities and towns including the “streetcar suburbs” inside Route 128 which comprise the Inner Core. Key elements of the plan include sustainable growth patterns, housing choices, and community vitality. The plan recommends many of the strategies recommended in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan including that suburban communities maximize the potential of their town centers and existing transit, promote mixed use growth, and foster improved bus connections, and bike and pedestrian paths.

Metro Boston Region Community Types



Belmont Zoning Map



INTRODUCTION

The land use and zoning section contains some of the overarching issues, opportunities, and strategies. Many of the strategies listed throughout the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan also include specific zoning recommendations. That is because zoning is one of the primary tools to implement the vision and goals of this Plan. One of the findings of the Comprehensive Plan process is that the current zoning by-law has many obstacles that prevent new development (or redevelopment) to create the type of desired future the Plan envisions.

Therefore, this section presents an overview of the zoning strategies—some of which will be repeated and refined in the other elements, which are based more on specific topics. The Appendix contains two resources related to zoning: First is a table: *Regulatory Strategies in the Belmont Comprehensive Plan*, which provides an “at a glance” view of all of the zoning strategies in one place. The second is an analysis of the current zoning by-law in light of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the “*Zoning Audit*” which contains detailed suggestions for possible improvements to the zoning by-law.

CURRENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Enhancing connections

- Creating incentives in zoning for new developments to provide pedestrian and non-auto connections can create a more walkable Belmont

Improving and promoting public transit

- Consider adopting zoning incentives for pedestrian/bicycle-friendly developments near public transit can help create a more walkable, sustainable Belmont

Expanding housing choice

- Allowing a greater range of housing options throughout Town will enable people of all ages and incomes to make a home in Belmont.

Reinforce neighborhoods through historic and natural resource protection

- Establishing neighborhood-specific design and site plan standards can reinforce historical character and development patterns

Design standards and review role in future development

- Establishing a stronger review process with more diverse input along with flexible development guidelines could help preserve historic resources and development patterns

Commercial area land use visions

- Replacing existing commercial area zoning with new, focused districts can better highlight each area’s character and role as well as bolster historical development patterns

Connecting historic character with economically viable development

- Revising the zoning by-law to conform with principles of design and development feasibility can allow new, economically beneficial development that complements and is sensitive to the Town’s historic character

Revitalizing commercial areas

- Introducing incentives and eliminating barriers to public and private improvements in commercial areas will help reinforce historical development patterns and maintain viable commercial centers

LAND USE AND ZONING STRATEGIES

Zoning Strategies

The Comprehensive Planning process identified three broad strategies to address the disconnect between the existing land use patterns and the current zoning by-law restrictions. First is the need to redefine the commercial districts so that they reflect the built form and broad commercial uses found in the commercial areas. Second, in a similar fashion, there is a need to redefine the residential districts so that the districts and dimensional standards more closely match existing development patterns. Third, modernize the current zoning by-law to improve the development review process so that it provides a stronger, more predictable review process with technical professional, as well as neighborhood, input. Finally, the Town should consider a tiered approach to project review based on expected project impacts. This would permit administrative site plan review for small projects and Planning Board design and site plan review and/or special permitting for larger projects. Very large projects with significant impacts could be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen, working with the Planning Board and other design and project review specialists. The four sub-strategies proposed in the table on page 18 may be combined or used separately.

1. Rezone the commercial areas to reflect a hierarchy of business districts

Belmont's commercial areas fall into one of four categories: Mixed-use areas, light industrial areas, neighborhood areas, and transition areas. These designations are not reflected in the current zoning districts and their associated use and dimensional standards. This mismatch inhibits an appropriate mix of uses and scaled new or infill development which can enhance the vitality of these districts. If the Town incorporates the concepts in the general land use patterns described below, it will allow new development to complement existing development patterns and allow the development to be economically feasible—such as the need to accommodate below grade parking and the high costs of well designed quality building practices to address these concerns.

Mixed Use: These are the Town's major commercial centers including Belmont Center, Waverley Square, and Cushing Square where the land uses include a mix of single and multi-story buildings with both residential and commercial uses. Architectural styles and mix of land uses and businesses vary among these three commercial centers. Currently these districts are zoned Local Business I, except Waverley Square, which has a mixture of LBI, II and III. Except by special permit, the current zoning does not permit mixed uses, the dimensional standards including setbacks and height impede viable new development, and the parking limitations inhibit shared parking and limit development possibilities. The Cushing Square Overlay District allows for mixed uses, and it has incentives for below grade parking. In considering reforms to the zoning by-law, overlay districts are one approach to designate specific criteria and standards for these districts. Other options to encourage development are discussed in detail in the Zoning Audit found in the Appendix.

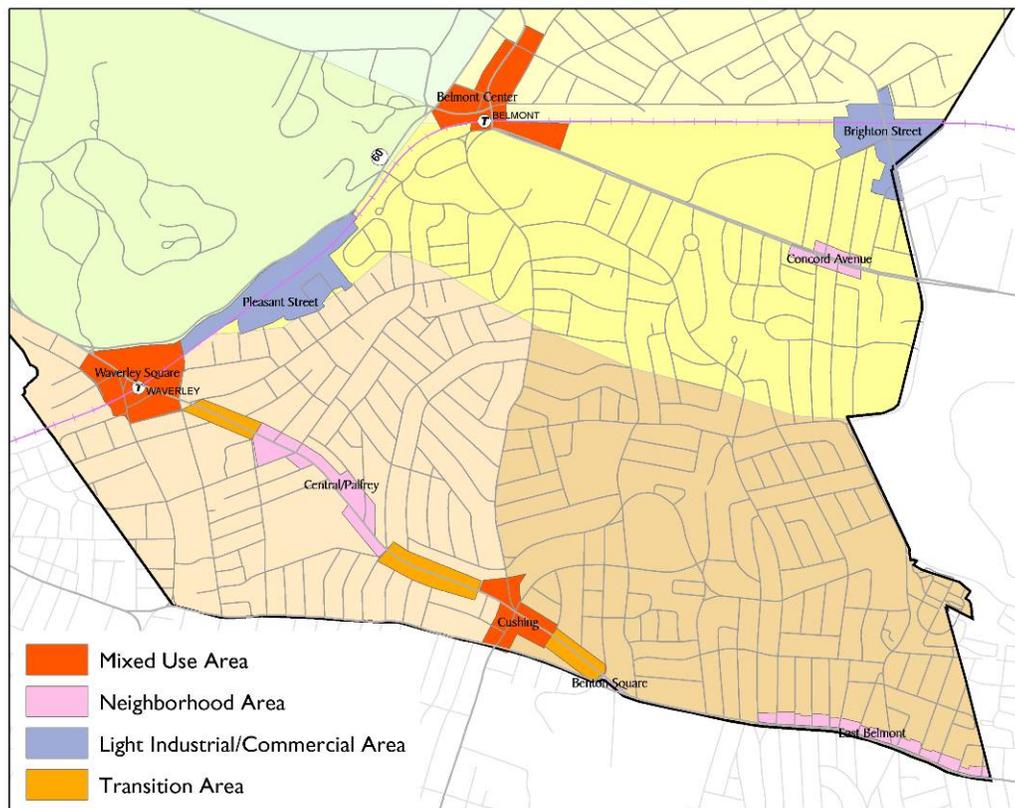
Neighborhood Areas: Located along Trapelo Road/Belmont Street and Concord Avenue are a number of smaller-scale, neighborhood-oriented commercial areas. An additional area at the corner of Pleasant and Brighton Streets, not depicted on the map on page 17, is more convenience oriented. The businesses in these locations tend to be smaller than in the mixed-use centers since they are catering to the surrounding residential neighborhoods, are primarily located in single story structures, and depend upon on-street parking. These districts are zoned Local Business III. This zoning limits a mix of uses, the height of

buildings, and requires a front yard set back and off-street parking for new businesses. These provisions restrain appropriately scaled in-fill development.

Transition Areas: Located along Trapelo Road are a number of residential areas which have homes partially or entirely converted into commercial service, medical, and office uses. These transition areas are mostly zoned General Residence, with some segments in the LBI or LBIII districts. As in the Neighborhood Areas, this zoning severely limits the uses that are allowed, and requires off-street parking standards, which restrain appropriately scaled in-fill development. It is interesting to note that the current zoning allows the heights of these buildings to be higher than the “by-right” height in all of the Local Business Districts. Issues of use and design will need to be clarified as part of a rezoning initiative for these areas, which are most suitable for both townhouses and mixed use housing, possibly including accessory units.

Light Industrial Districts: Pleasant and Brighton Streets are the two locations in Town with light industrial and auto-oriented businesses. The Pleasant Street area is zoned LBII, while the Brighton Street area is a mixture of General Business, and LB III, and Single Residence C. There is no “light industrial” district in the current zoning by-law. General Business does allow for manufacturing and warehouse uses by a special permit. Light industrial areas are an important part of the local economy; they generally allow a mix of uses (although limit hazardous and heavy industrial uses) and provide for “flex space” where small start up businesses can thrive. These existing areas need more study to clarify what mix of uses and development standards should apply.

Map of Proposed Business District Hierarchy



2. Rezone the residential areas to accommodate modest changes within the frame work of historic development patterns

The Town of Belmont is divided into five residential districts and one small apartment district. The boundaries of these districts do not in most cases reflect the historic development patterns. Thus the lot sizes which range, depending upon the district, from 7,000 to 25,000 sq ft. are often either larger or smaller than what is specified in the zoning dimensional standards. Likewise, the General Residential and Single Residence zoning that exists along portions of Trapelo Road and Belmont Street does not reflect current uses, or historic development patterns and dimensional standards. Re-zoning of these residential areas would both foster their protection and allow for modest changes in keeping with the character of these neighborhoods.

3. Establish a more predictable approval process that focuses on design standards and impact analysis

Emphasizing design standards can be more effective than use and dimensional regulations for ensuring compatibility with community character. As noted below, there are several ways to address this beginning with strengthening the existing design review process. A second strategy would identify overlay districts in some of the key commercial centers perhaps building on the format established for Cushing Square. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the Planning Board change the underlying zoning in the commercial districts modifying the height, setback, and use requirements and providing design standards appropriate to the vision of each commercial area. A fourth strategy would be to adopt a new code based upon the concept of Form Based Zoning.

The table below has a summary of four reforms to achieve this strategy. The Zoning Audit in the Appendix contains more detailed examples of what these reforms may look like. These reforms are not exclusive and the best approach may be a combination of these strategies such as changing regulations in the residential areas and considering a version of form-based zoning in some of the commercial districts. Decisions about specific changes will be part of the subsequent process of Plan implementation.

Zoning Reform	Advantage	Disadvantage
Strengthen existing design standards and consider a tiered review process	Requires zoning by-law revisions but can be separated from changes to districts and uses and therefore may be easier to adopt	Does not address the need for additional uses in commercial areas, nor the economic feasibility of zoning restrictions by itself
Create additional Overlay Districts for commercial areas	Provides development incentives through regulatory change tailored to a specific area without changing underlying district.	Applies zoning reform to a limited area. Can be phased over time. Not as comprehensive as new districts.
Create new Commercial Districts	Updates and improves definitions, uses, standards, and review process for each commercial area with different standards for each area.	Preparation and passage of large-scale zoning change will require time and broad support.
Town-wide or area-specific Form-Based Zoning	Applies built form-focused regulations throughout the town-wide, while allowing use and dimensional flexibility to meet housing and commercial needs.	Comprehensive and complicated zoning change will require extensive planning, education, and funding to prepare and obtain public support.

I. HISTORIC PRESERVATION



BELMONT'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION SNAPSHOT

Historical Associations

- Belmont Historic District Commission
 - Permanent commission appointed by Selectmen to review additions and/or modifications to properties within the historic district
 - Offers advice on alterations to historic properties and nominates properties to the National Register of Historic Places
- Belmont Historical Society
 - Nonprofit group whose mission is to preserve the history of Belmont and present it to its citizens

Pleasant Street Historic District

- Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979
- Encompasses the area adjacent to Belmont Center
- Contains 100 structures on 40 acres
- Includes important public buildings such as Belmont Town Hall



Belmont Town Hall



Waverley Square Fire Station



McLean Farm Barn



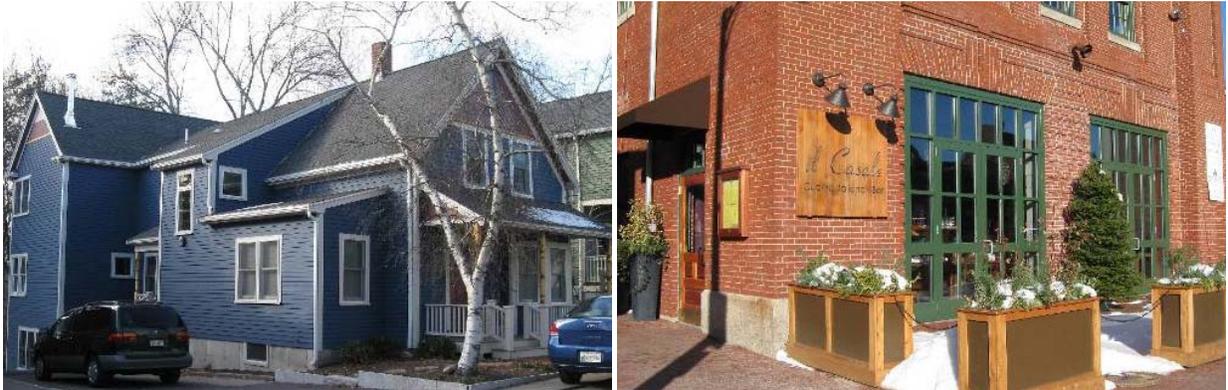
Josh Shattuck House

Examples of Historic Assets

Structure	Address
Belmont Town Hall	455 Concord Ave.
Lyman Underwood Estate	50 Common St.
Thomas Clark House	59 Common St.
Abraham Hill House	388 Pleasant St.
Josh Shattuck House	981 Concord Ave.
Captain Eaton House	154 Mill St.
Christopher Grant House	325 Common St.
Jonathan Stone House	150-152 Washington St.
Wellington Hill Station	1 Common St.
Belmont Center Fire Station	50 Leonard St.
Waverley Sq. Fire Station	455 Trapelo Road
John Chenery House	52 Washington St.
Cushing Farm House	23 Oak Ave.
William Flagg Homer House	661 Pleasant St.
Thaddeus Frost House	291 Brighton St.
Stephen Frost House	467 Pleasant St.
William Goodridge House	323 Waverley St.
McLean Farm Barn	Mill St.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Preserving small-town feel
- Providing input to the development review process
- Preservation of natural and man-made landmarks



HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS

- Educate the public on the benefits of “Historic Preservation” which reflect its role in:
 - Creating Economic Value
 - Neighborhood Revitalization
 - Commercial Revitalization
 - Community Planning
 - Sustainability
- Broaden preservation and protection of Belmont’s historic buildings, sites and neighborhoods.
- Preserve, rehabilitate and/or adaptively re-use Belmont’s historic public buildings and places.
- Encourage new development to be complementary to the historic small-town character of Belmont.
- Wherever feasible, prioritize renovation/reuse of existing worthy residential and commercial structures as alternatives to new construction.
- Strengthen physical definitions of neighborhoods.
- Encourage public road right-of-ways to be maintained through public/private partnerships.

CURRENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Preserving Small-Town Feel

“Belmont is a desirable and welcoming community that retains a small-town atmosphere within a larger metropolitan area.”¹ However, without thoughtful consideration this small-town community atmosphere can easily disappear. Belmont is a community made up of many residential neighborhoods, each with its own unique past and outward appearance. In addition to these neighborhoods, there are three distinct commercial centers - Belmont Center, Cushing Square and Waverley Square, and several neighborhood commercial and transitional zones that are comprised of varying mixes of residential and commercial uses. Preserving the physical settings and streetscapes of these areas must be a priority if the Town’s overall character is to be maintained.

Development Considerations

Although preservation of the Town’s history, character, and past is vital to its overall goals, this should not mean a lack of development or allowance for change that is complementary to that character. The commercial centers, along with the smaller commercial areas, will benefit from the thoughtful planning of future development that better defines the commercial and residential areas to meet 21st century needs and demographics while expanding the stores and services and housing options available to residents.

When change occurs, it should be harmonious with and complementary to its surroundings; built upon the aesthetic and historic values of the Town; and sustainable in that efforts are made to first encourage the reuse and improvement of existing buildings of historic or architectural value. However, it must also be remembered that one critical part of the definition of ‘sustainable’ is economic viability.

Preservation of Natural and Man-Made Landmarks

Careful attention must be paid to preserving scenic vistas and open spaces that highlight natural and man-made features unique to Belmont. Achieving this goal will also help the Town achieve its open space and recreation goals, while highlighting the important features that define Belmont’s historical past and unique character.

Benefits of Historic Preservation

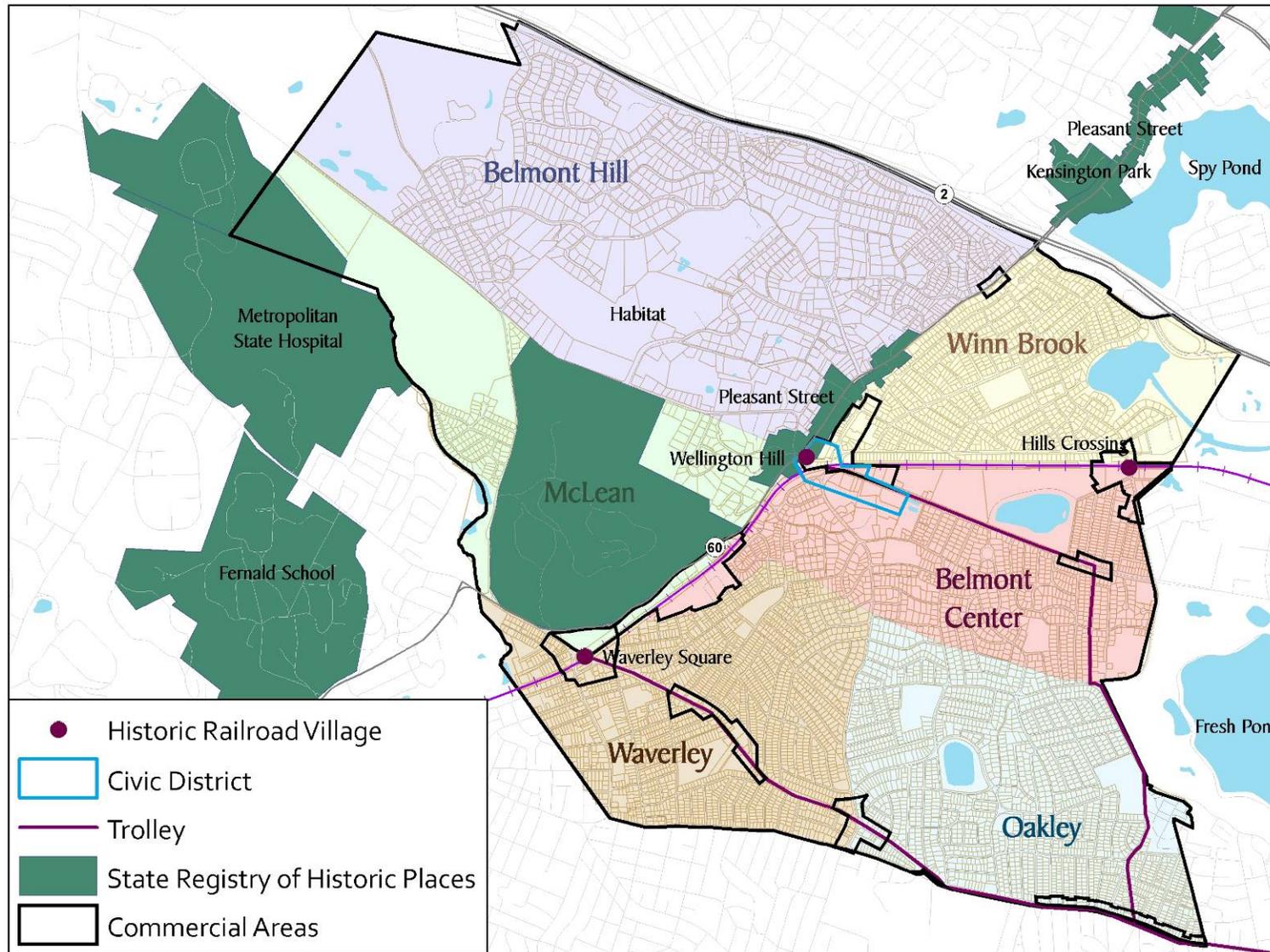
A number of studies have been undertaken to assess the economic impacts of undertaking preservation strategies such as district designation, organization of a public review process to monitor change, and the adoption of programs to encourage both public and private investment.

Studies have shown that areas with historic properties have 20% to 27% higher values and appreciate at an annual rate 50% higher than similar homes that are not in an area with preservation restrictions.

- Historic preservation leads to sustained property values, economic growth, and a higher quality of life
- Historic districts do not deny the right of a property owner to fully enjoy the appreciation of a property in the overall market conditions.
- Local historic districts do not discourage reinvestment in existing buildings.
- The stability of residential historic districts is paralleled by businesses downtown-historic downtowns provide the location of choice for businesses.
- Historic districts *do* allow for new construction.
- Many times, there are potential subsidies for preservation and renovations of historic properties.

¹ Working Vision for Belmont

Belmont's Historic Development Patterns



HISTORIC PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

Encourage the reuse and improvement of existing buildings

- Encourage adaptive reuse of Town-owned buildings
- Consider adoption of demolition delay by-law
- Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act
- Update National Register of Historic Places
- Enact density bonuses, flexible dimensional and parking standards to facilitate preservation

Encourage growth in existing commercial centers that complements Belmont's small-town character and encourages the reuse of existing buildings

Promote new development compatible with historic context

- Inventory historic patterns of housing and commercial development, and architectural styles throughout the Town.
- Strengthen neighborhood-specific design criteria
- Establish review process that includes historic and architectural expertise
- Publish guide listing required and suggested design alternatives (promote use of natural, traditional and sustainable building materials)

Facilitate communication among various committees, commissions, Town staff, and private groups regarding historic preservation objectives and policy

- Appoint member to the Planning Board with historic preservation and planning background
- Appoint a Sustainable Belmont member to the Historic District Commission
- Engage in more public outreach and education and listening
- Develop newspaper/on-line campaigns demonstrating techniques and benefits for historic preservation.

Identify vulnerable historic assets and measures to protect them

- Formulate criteria for selecting specific historic resources needing protection. (i.e., buildings that are at risk due to being on sites where zoning allows greater density or subdivision, being in a constant state of decline, having the historic characteristics obscured, where development plans do not include reuse)
- Inventory landmark buildings, open spaces, and update 1982 Inventory of Historic Properties
- Update Scenic Roads designations (Somerset Street is the only designated 'scenic road')
- Propose a new Historic Districts (a house can be a district)
- Consider adopting a Protection of Specimen Trees By-Law
- Create a historic plaque program

Protect neighborhoods

- Use traffic calming measures to slow down traffic within the neighborhoods
- Enhance buffers between commercial and residential areas through stronger regulation of site design to avoid parking lots, loading, dumpsters, lighting, etc. adjacent to residential neighborhood housing.
- Provide landscaping guide for homeowners and commercial owners/tenants.
- Develop guidelines for public/private maintenance of street trees and right-of-ways.
- Encourage underground placement of utilities.
- Modify zoning and parking regulations to prevent or minimize loss of yards and open spaces to accommodate parking needs or expansion of living space.

II. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT



BELMONT'S COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SNAPSHOT

Commercial Development Facts

Types of Businesses

- 147 establishments
- Average 9 employees per establishment

Labor Force

- The jobs to labor force ratio shows that there is one job for every four to five Belmont residents

Wages

- Belmont jobs provided a median annual wage of \$53,253 in 2008
- 5 primary industry sectors:
 1. Retail trade
 2. Information
 3. Real estate and rental leasing
 4. Arts, entertainment and recreation
 5. Accommodation and food services

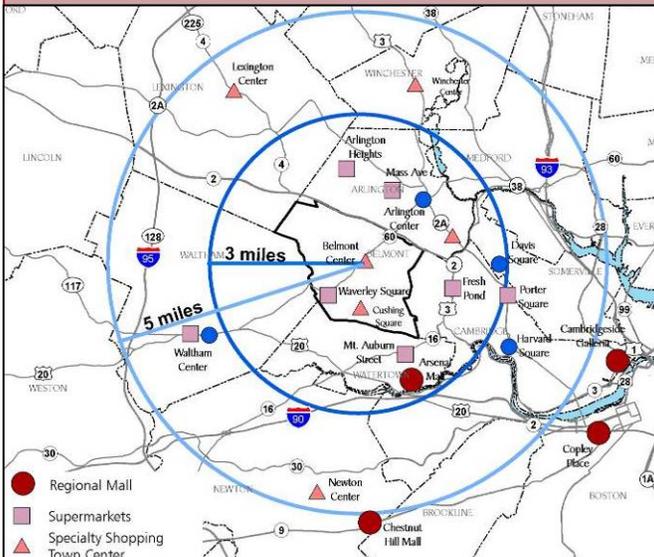
Town of Belmont Commercial Properties

Business Type	Number	%	SF
Retail	67	17%	142,669
Convenience	40	10%	110,119
Service	57	14%	127,811
Personal Care	51	13%	66,088
Office	89	23%	328,351
Entertainment/Hospitality	15	4%	33,979
Auto	29	7%	83,305
Public	24	6%	162,270
Manufacturing	2	1%	29,794
Warehouse	8	2%	65,551
Vacant	20	3%	89,029

Source: Belmont Assessor's Office and Larry Koff & Associates

Jobs to Labor Force Ratio, 2005

Belmont jobs	3,350
Belmont resident labor force	12,884
Jobs/Labor Force Ratio	0.26



	Retail Square Footage	Office Square Footage	Parking Spaces	Vacant Space (% Square Footage)	Zoning District(s)
Belmont Center	260,000	108,000	501	2%	LB I
Waverley Square	105,000	40,000	441	1%	LB I, II, III
Cushing Square	100,000	50,000	189	5%	LB I
Central and Palfrey Squares	137,000	Combined	--	8%	LB III
East Belmont	70,000	Combined	--	--	LB III
Concord Ave. and Bright Rd.	10,000	37,000	Limited	20%	LB III
Brighton Street	70,000	Combined	--	23%	LB III, GB
Pleasant Street	--	--	--	20%	LB II

Source: Belmont Assessor's Office and Larry Koff & Associates

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Proximity to strong commercial areas in greater Boston makes it difficult for Belmont's commercial centers to compete
- Resistance to new development in commercial areas hinders commercial economic growth
- Various regulatory constraints inhibit new commercial development which could enhance the Town centers and the commercial tax base



COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Support policies, programs and events that increase the competitiveness of local businesses.
 - Encourage the formation of local business organizations, public/private partnerships, and the accessibility and connectivity of the Town's commercial centers
- Encourage new and infill development, as well as reuse of existing buildings, which enhances the character and quality of the Town's commercial areas.
 - Review and amend zoning and other regulations to support development, redevelopment, and renovation which promotes appropriately scaled and located commercial uses, mixed uses, and housing
- Encourage increased use of public transit
 - Increase parking available to commuters and encourage higher density residential development in walking distance to commercial centers and transit
- Improve the physical appearance of commercial areas
 - Foster improvements through the public and private sectors to streetscapes, public open spaces, pedestrian and bicycle connections, as well as parking and traffic flow.

CURRENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

COMMERCIAL CENTER VISIONS

Belmont Center

- *Town Center commercial district featuring specialty shopping (as well as regional and anchor tenants), restaurants, office uses, municipal and post office uses, commuter rail station, and historic architecture.*

Waverley Square

- *Transit hub and center for convenience, shopping, restaurant, and office uses, with possible residential uses on upper floors.*

Central/Palfrey Squares (Trapelo Road Corridor)

- *Mixed use corridor with convenience retail, personal services, entertainment. Can accommodate higher density residential development in mixed use or stand-alone buildings*

Cushing Square

- *Mixed use center with shopping, dining, office, and multifamily residences.*

East Belmont

- *Small-scale neighborhood retail and services.*

Brighton Street (Hill's Crossing)

- *Existing mix of light industrial, office and retail uses could evolve through redevelopment or reuse to accommodate municipal, high density residential, and/or new commercial uses. Further analysis is needed to determine how design, density, parking, and municipal facility needs can redefine the character and role of this area.*

Concord-Bright

- *Small neighborhood retail/office district; Redevelopment could accommodate residential, retail, light industrial, or municipal uses; could benefit from streetscape and pedestrian improvements.*

South Pleasant Street

- *Commercial corridor with flexible uses i.e. office, retail, or light industrial uses based upon market conditions. New development at this location should enhance Waverley Square as a transit hub and commercial center and not undermine the viability of Belmont Center.*

Retail Market

Belmont's commercial areas suffer from strong regional competition and increasing vacancies that further deteriorate the competitiveness of the Town's commercial base. The retail market is in flux due to competition from internet and on-line shopping, the current recession, and the big-box phenomenon (Wal-Mart, Costco, BJ's, etc.) which creates increased competition for small retailers. Additionally, regional competition, small sites, and multiple owners limit market potential. Unless incentives are provided for site assembly and new development, the Town's retail market will continue to deteriorate.

To compound these issues, approximately 20 retail spaces are vacant in Town. If vacancies deteriorate into commercial blight, then neighboring residential values and tax revenues will be adversely affected. Further, the market (supply & demand), including current retail rents do not in many locations, support new development or renovation of existing buildings (including underground or off-street parking), which leads to added commercial area decline.

Neighborhood Development Resistance

Partly due to the Town's rich history, neighborhood opposition to commercial development has increased markedly in the recent years (i.e., to the density, height, parking, traffic, etc. associated with new development). Permitting under existing zoning, amending the Zoning By-laws at Town Meeting, and securing a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals or the Planning Board is extremely difficult and time consuming because of neighborhood opposition. Delays are costly and can result in blight due to prolonged vacancy and development period.

Considerable development opposition stems from a concern that allowing two-, three- and sometimes four-story buildings in commercial centers will detract from Belmont's small-town character, despite the fact that some of Belmont's commercial centers already have landmark 2.5-3 story historic buildings.

Physical & Regulatory Constraints

Current regulations (zoning, liquor license, and parking) and limited public improvements retard growth of niche markets and economically prevent major renovations or quality new construction. Compounding this regulatory constraint, Belmont's commercial squares are too small to provide their own private sector support for undertaking promotion, management and maintenance activities. Also, in some cases, the rents are not sufficient to support sign and façade improvements without support, for example, from local banks and the Town.

Communication

Because there is no consensus as to what commercial area changes are best for the Town, zoning and rezoning issues are dealt with on a case by case basis with the abutters having the greatest voice. This practice leads to costly delays, ad hoc development decisions, and lost opportunities for substantial, quality economic development. An additional issue is that there is no organizational mechanism to facilitate ongoing communication between the Town and local business areas regarding parking regulations, snow plowing, trash disposal, and marketing.



Fiscal Impacts

The findings of a fiscal impact analysis carried out in Phase I of the Comprehensive Plan indicated that while commercial development places smaller demands on municipal services, residential development typically generates significantly higher tax revenues, thus small apartments in multi-use structures and townhouse/condominiums can be fiscally positive.

Economic Feasibility

Development feasibility is typically viewed through the lens of project uses (project costs) and project sources (revenues). In those simple terms, sources and uses must be in balance for a project to be economically feasible. As leasable or sellable space is increased in a development, additional revenue is achieved. A project's size (in terms of square feet and/or units) is typically the balance of project costs and expected revenues.

The space, access, parking, design, open space, and other requirements and amenities for modern retail, office, and residential uses all have associated costs. In order for development to be successful, zoning must also allow for adequate square footage to be built that will cover the cost of these requirements and amenities. Considerations of economic feasibility must be taken into account as the Town creates policies to attract new development. Development envelopes (height, mass, FAR, parking) dictated by zoning regulations often result in creating an environment where development is simply not feasible; in effect creating a situation where zoning prevents development.

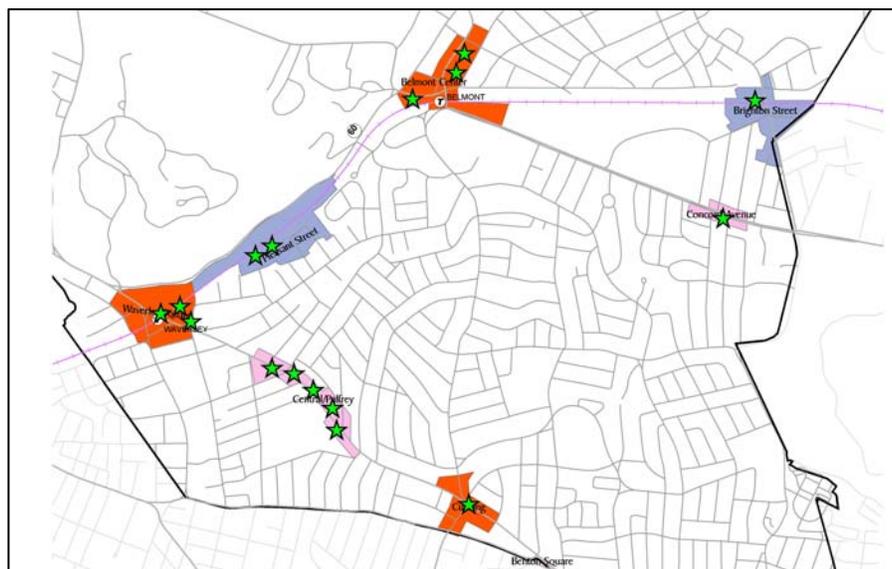
A simple example of the trade-offs that the Town must make is the connection between underground parking (which enhances the pedestrian-oriented environment and helps to ensure that commercial parking does not spill over into residential streets) and building height. The cost of underground parking is so high that adequate revenue cannot be achieved in the sellable space allowed under zoning that is limited to two stories. Additional building height allows for additional leasable or sellable square footage; the resultant revenue from which allows a development to cover the costs of underground parking.

Another example is the proposals for air rights developments over MBTA tracks – a costly construction proposal. A development over MBTA tracks, especially one requiring significant parking, will require significant leasable or sellable square footage in order to cover the high cost of development.

Development Sites

Sixteen development sites were initially studied to understand their reuse potential in the context of the Town’s overall goals to enhance the tax base and commercial area vitality. The findings of this analysis indicated that redevelopment of these and other possible sites for commercial and mixed use development would add 2-3% to the Town’s tax base. This is not sufficient to address the magnitude of the Town’s current revenue short-fall, however it would help.

AREA	SITES	ISSUES	POTENTIAL USE / OPPORTUNITY
Belmont Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic buildings Prime location in Center, adjacent to or near commuter rail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surplus municipal buildings require creative adaptation Insufficient space in current structures for mixed-use development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office, townhouse residential Quasi-public or non-profit/educational space
Pleasant Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car dealership Underutilized properties along Pleasant St. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictive zoning Lots for sale Neighboring industrial uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town-wide, greatest potential to absorb commercial growth
Waverley Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots adjacent to commuter rail (not including “triangle”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoning restrictions of use, height, parking, setbacks Public parking needed Land assembly may be required Limited value constrains air rights potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical offices Restaurant Retail Mixed use with upper floor residential
Central-Palfrey (Transitional Trapelo Road)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auto repair Other underutilized buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to define appropriate scale, design, uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Mixed-use Neighborhood retail/office
Brighton Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light industrial buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions about optimal land use, density, parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial use with renovations Municipal use Mixed-use residential
Concord-Bright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vacant gas station Vacant skate shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictive zoning How to create a “gateway”? Insufficient site area for mixed-use development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail and/or office in existing structures Townhouse residential units with rear surface parking



COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Review and amend zoning and other regulations to support development, redevelopment, and renovation of the Town's commercial areas

The Town's Zoning should be revised to reflect the vision for the character, uses and density of each commercial area.

- Propose modifications to dimensional regulations including height, setbacks, and floor area ratios to allow economically feasible development.
- Strengthen design guidelines for each area
- Propose modifications to major development regulations with stronger design criteria and review process in place of Town Meeting approval. Provide for graduated approval requirements commensurate with size/impact of development.
- Consider providing zoning incentives for development which provides public benefits such as historic preservation, open space and streetscape improvements, air rights development where appropriate, or underground/structured parking
- Review requirements for Liquor Licenses, reduce 130-seat requirement for all alcohol and 39 seat requirement for wine/beer, increase number of licenses

Parking regulations place the burden of parking on new development, constraining the potential for investment in the commercial centers.

- Reduce minimum parking requirements for private development uses
- Allow off-site parking to meet parking requirements
- Encourage shared parking
- For townhouse and possibly mixed-use developments, consider separating cost of parking from cost of housing in order to reduce cost of housing, rate of auto ownership and encourage shared parking.
- Propose elimination of parking requirement for outdoor dining

Improve the accessibility and physical appearance of commercial areas

Accessibility improvements can improve the safety and experience of visitors to the commercial centers, and make it easier for residents to patronize businesses and services.

- Improve traffic circulation (particularly in Belmont Center)
- Provide clear way-finding signage for pedestrians, commuters, and visitors seeking parking.
- Provide traffic calming in commercial areas as well as residential areas for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Enhance pedestrian connections within commercial centers, as well as to neighboring residential areas, public facilities and recreation assets.
- Investigate possibility of private shuttle service between commercial and residential areas and transit stations.

More attractive streetscapes and public plazas would enhance the vitality of the commercial centers.

- Widen sidewalks
- Enhance public spaces
- Develop a palette of recommended street furnishings for each district
- Establish uniform street lighting/traffic signals, signage for each district.
- Dedicate surplus parking revenue to physical improvements and maintenance
- Consider providing zoning incentives for development that provides physical improvements to commercial areas.

Public/private collaboration and investments are needed to promote improvement of signs and façades and commercial buildings.

- Refine signage guidelines, potentially as a component of design guidelines.
- Create a resource guide for existing businesses including desired suggestions and examples for new signage and façades.
- Explore possible incentives to encourage property owners to update their properties (low interest construction loan rates, real estate tax credits)
- Explore private funding through local financial institutions
- Explore public funding options
- Develop positive program and schedule meetings with landlords to discuss renovation needs

Develop a parking management plan for each commercial center.

A parking management program would focus on maximizing on-street parking capacity, prioritizing and encouraging more efficient use of public and private parking areas, while prioritizing parking for patrons.

- Consider adopting graduated pricing/time limit strategy
- Establish remote employee permit parking areas.
- Consider installing reverse angle parking where appropriate to increase curbside parking supply
- Limit loading zone hours

“Business friendly” parking policies would provide a more positive experience for shoppers.

- Provide clear signage indicating parking options.
- Increase time limits to avoid ticketing.
- Use enforcement personnel to “assist” consumers first and enforce regulations second.

The Town can capitalize on the economic value of parking within and near the commercial centers and transit stations to support businesses and enhance neighborhood transitions.

- Consider dedicating surplus parking revenues to local improvements as decided by local business community.
- Consider dedicating surplus revenues to residential neighborhoods that allow on street parking

Support policies, programs, and events that increase the competitiveness of local businesses

A more business friendly approach can help the Town to attract and retain businesses.

- Propose modifications to regulations and permitting processes to relieve barriers to commercial development or re-tenanting.
- Assist commercial areas in promoting their services and goods through community events
- Keep a single tax rate
- Investigate potential for tax credit for property improvements (create a TIF district)
- Address issues of town services (e.g. snow and trash removal) that affect commercial areas

The Town can partner with local businesses and developers to support economic development.

- Encourage formation of business organization(s)
- Delegate to a private/public organization authority to address issues that would improve appearance, conditions and experience of the district.
- Support common marketing promotions and events.
- Explore feasibility of creating a Business Improvement District

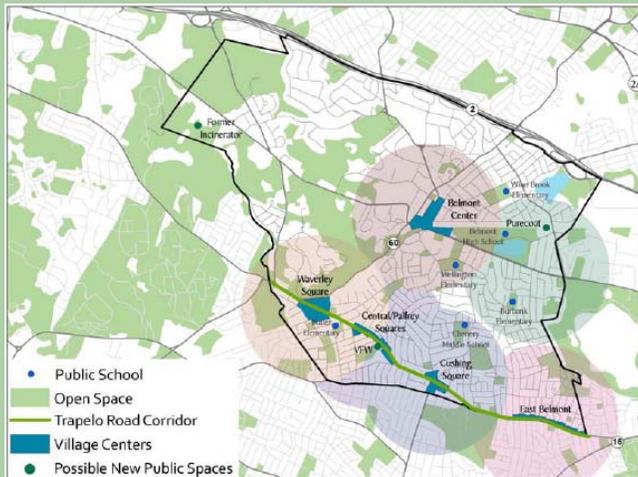
III. OPEN SPACE



BELMONT'S OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT

Open Space Summary

- Open space comprises approximately 20% of the Town's total area
- 2/3 of open space is publically-accessible
- The largest areas of open space are the 313 acre Beaver Brook Reservation (which continues into Waltham), the 140 acre Town Conservation land at McLean, the 88 acre Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, and the 70 acre Rock Meadow open space (Town-Owned)



Protected Open Space

- The Western Greenway, a series of protected passive recreation open spaces connects Western Belmont with Lexington and Waltham
- Town-owned active recreation areas connect Belmont to other urban open spaces in Greater Boston, such as Fresh Pond

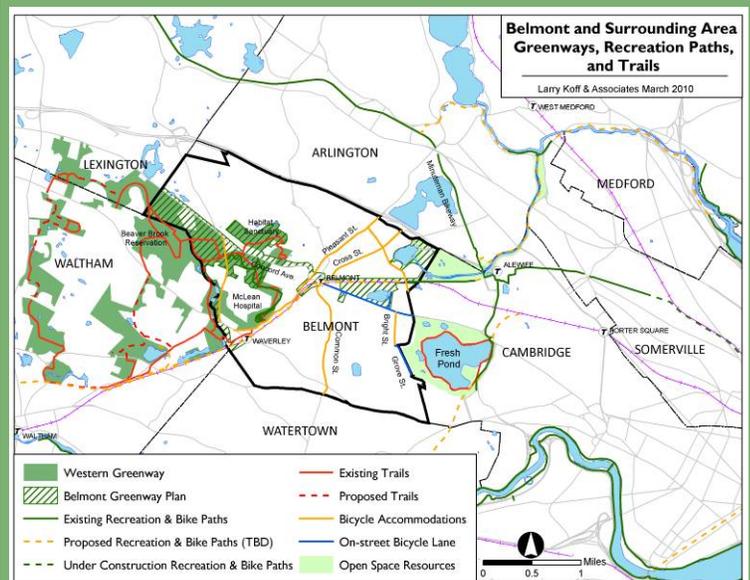
	Size	Access
Beaver Brook Reservation	313 acres	Public
Town Conservation Land at McLean	140 acres	Public
Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary	88 acres	Public
Rock Meadow (Town-Owned)	70 acres	Public

Bicycle Accommodations

- Currently, Concord Ave., from Belmont Center to Cambridge, Bright Rd. and part of Grove St. are the only streets with a designated bicycle lane
- Pleasant, Common, Bright, Cross, and Mill Streets all have bicycle accommodation, but no designated bicycle lanes
- Discussion has been occurring about a possible bicycle/recreation path that would connect the Cambridge Fresh Pond/Alewife Reservation and Waltham bicycle paths. A route is yet to be determined.

Proposed Greenways

- The proposed Belmont Greenbelt could be a method to link all of Belmont's open space resources with an urban pathway similar to Boston's Emerald Necklace
- This second proposed greenbelt overlaps with the existing Western Greenway



Major Recreation Facilities

- Town Field
- Pequossette Playground
- Grove Street Field
- Washington Street Playground
- Underwood Pool and Playground
- Belmont Elementary Schools
- Belmont High School multi-purpose field and athletic facilities
- Payson Park

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Recreation areas suffer from lack of maintenance, accessibility and connectivity
- Private residential vistas and amenities are not properly protected as open space
- Commercial center open spaces need better maintenance and definition
- Recreational trails are not clearly linked to other town trails and regional trail networks
- There is no significant system of commuter and community paths to public transit and schools



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Preserve and enhance existing active and passive recreation areas
 - Ensure adequate maintenance and develop more links between open spaces through Town
- Protect private neighborhood open spaces and vistas as visual amenities
- Seek to create more community public gathering places and beautify existing open spaces in village commercial squares to foster an even greater sense of community.
- Seek to expand off-street recreational trails that interconnect existing parks open spaces and conservation areas within Town and to inter-town trails both to the East and West
- Seek to encourage alternative modes of travel (e.g. bike and pedestrian) other than cars to travel to rail stations by designating more pathways and sidewalks from neighborhoods to commuter rail stations and Alewife
- Increase or designate more pathways from neighborhoods to commercial village centers and schools while increasing awareness of safety and neighborhood and community history along the paths

CURRENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Integral to Belmont's goal of creating a sustainable town is the need for more connectivity, and walkability between neighborhoods, natural resources, transit, and commercial areas. Additionally, Belmont needs activated, functioning public spaces to enhance this walkable community. The issues and opportunities can be classified into 5 general categories:

Recreation

- Both passive and active, public and private recreation areas need better maintenance, accessibility, and connectivity from other Town resources.

Neighborhood Vistas and Amenities

- There is currently limited recognition of private residential property as valuable and integral open space.
- Significant vistas and topographical landmarks are not often considered as vital to Belmont's overall goals.

Commercial Centers

- Open spaces and mini-plazas in commercial areas can give the Town's centers more vibrancy, provide gathering spaces, and create a greater sense of place
- The existing commercial center open spaces suffer from a lack of maintenance and clear definition

Recreational Trails

- The existing recreational trails are not clearly linked to neighboring regional trails
- A more defined intra-town recreational trail system would improve Belmont's connectivity

Commuter and Community Paths

- A more organized system of commuter and community paths is needed for Belmont residents to take advantage of transit opportunities and have easier, safer access to Town resources and schools.
- Sidewalks, street trees and pedestrian safety need adequate funding and policies that reflect their value as a community asset.

Statement of Values

Belmont Comprehensive Plan Open Space Committee

As stewards for future generations we support the following values which underlie our care for Belmont's open spaces, greenways, playfields, and pathways:

1. Connectedness – places for community gathering and interaction; centers for neighborhood identity; spaces preserving our connection to the natural world; connections to broader greenway corridors for both people and wildlife
2. Vistas – contributing to the natural beauty of the Town; enhancing enjoyment of the changing seasons; preserving a sense of space and light in the densely developed metropolitan area
3. Recreation – passive and active; youth and adult organized sports; open areas for informal play; spaces to enjoy exercise and relative solitude and closeness to the natural world
4. Conservation – Protecting green spaces important for air quality, water quality, wildlife habitats and natural beauty
5. Preservation of the historic elements of the Town – sense of Town's identity, pride of place; connection to the Town's agrarian past – an element of the Vision 21 Statement
6. Clean Water – Protecting contributing watersheds and maintaining natural filtering and buffers from pollution sources. Celebrating and protecting streams and ponds, and wetlands
7. Storm Water Management/Flood Control – Maintaining and protecting our "Green Infrastructure" to provide vegetated buffers (wetlands) and unobstructed waterways
8. Health - Providing opportunities for maintaining and improving good physical and mental health; helping children develop life-long sports and physical exercise habits
9. Small open spaces - Providing breathing room in densely developed neighborhoods
10. Equity - Aspiring to provide close proximity or at least convenient access to open spaces, playfields and public gathering spaces for *each* neighborhood in town, particularly taking into account residential densities.

OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

Passive Recreation, Natural Open Space, Parks and Greenway

- Support the continuing development of the Western Greenway in western part of the Town.
- Pursue creation of a Belmont Greenway in the eastern part of the Town as an urban trail.
- Link the two greenways as a continuous system.
- Consider adopting a Town policy for acquiring open space and for obtaining or approving conservation easements for the preservation of *private* open spaces.
- Encourage ‘daylighting’ existing underground streams to provide greater natural amenities, control floods and establish better drainage.

Active Recreation, Playfields and Courts

- Convene an inter-departmental working group, with the support of Friends groups, to identify additional recreational uses that could be established
- Identify the true costs of maintenance and current sources of funding – both public and private, and the percentage share contributed each by the Town and by private sources.
- Convene an inter-departmental working group, to identify opportunities for coordinating the maintenance of playfields, playgrounds and parks across departmental jurisdictions and private organizations for greater efficiencies and cost savings.

Private Neighborhood Open Spaces and Vistas as Visual Amenities

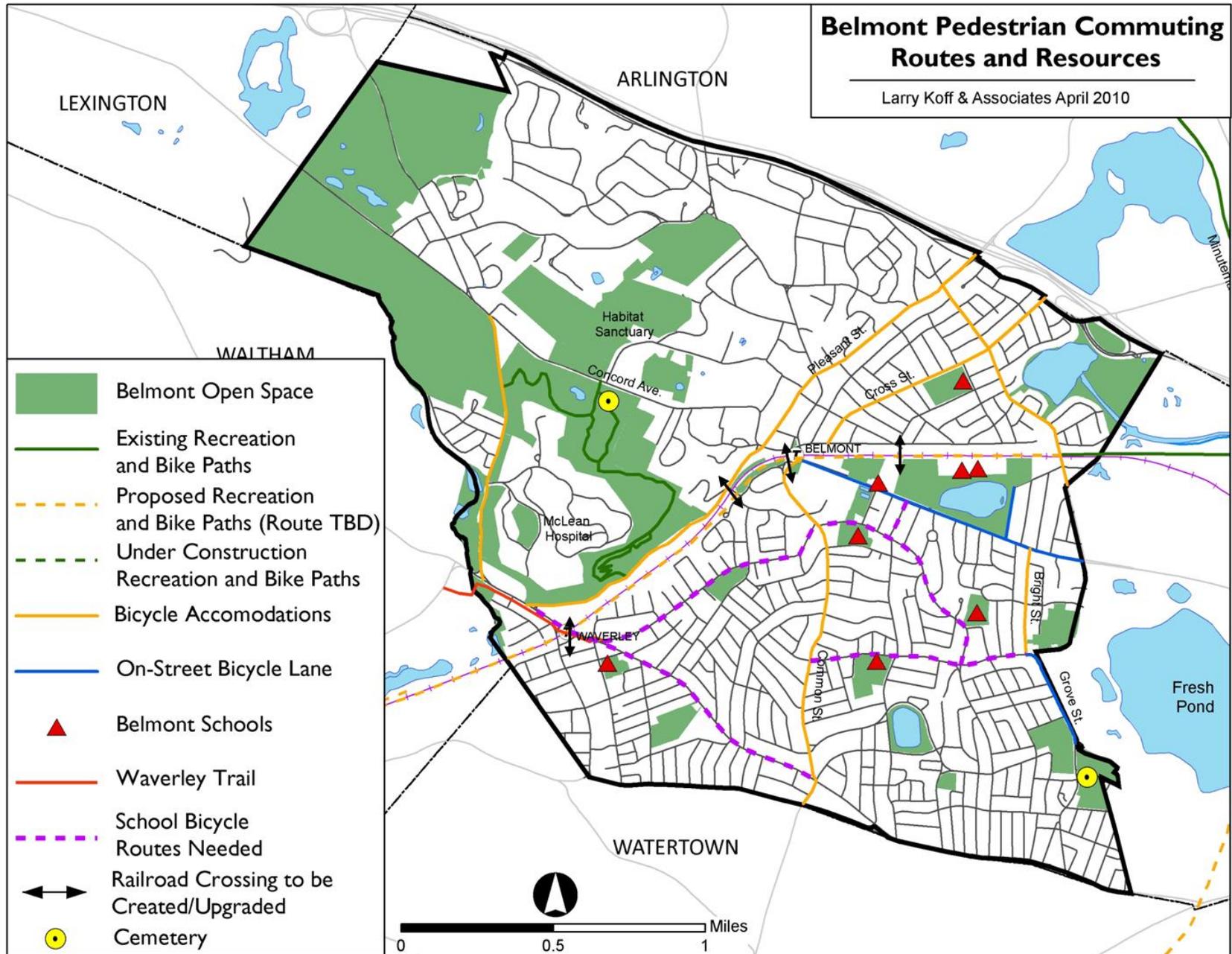
- Propose modifications to residential zoning by-laws, including site plan and dimensional standards to preserve neighborhood visual open space.
- Identify important vistas that should be maintained throughout Town.
- Utilize existing pavement more efficiently: consider on-street residential parking in selected higher density neighborhoods to prevent loss of yards to accommodate parking needs
- Prioritize preservation of trees and open spaces in site planning and design for both public facilities and private development projects.

Commercial Centers: Town Green & Community Meeting Spaces

- Build on existing amenities in the commercial squares to expand and enhance green spaces, mini-plazas or sidewalk areas.
- Prepare preliminary plans for improved streetscape, pedestrian connectivity, and public spaces in Belmont Center
- Develop strategies to better maintain open spaces and streetscapes in the commercial centers

Paths and Connections

- Determine a route and establish a trail through Belmont that will link with the Mass Central Rail Trail in Waltham to the west and the Alewife Reservation Trail in Cambridge to the east.
- Recognize that sidewalks need to be maintained as pedestrian pathways.
- Consider how to provide amenities at rail stations, such as secured bicycle lockers, to encourage cyclists to commute to train stations.
- Consider Belmont streets as multi-modal pathways that must be shared by autos, cyclists, parked cars, and pedestrians. Design and retrofit as many existing streets as possible to accommodate bicycle routes and safe pedestrian crossings, providing that safety issues can be addressed – such as sufficient street width to accommodate all modes.
- Consider providing signage along pedestrian pathways providing neighborhood history and community information.
- Identify opportunities to better cross rail ROWs for better interconnectedness throughout Town



IV. TRANSPORTATION & ENERGY



BELMONT'S TRANSPORTATION & ENERGY SNAPSHOT

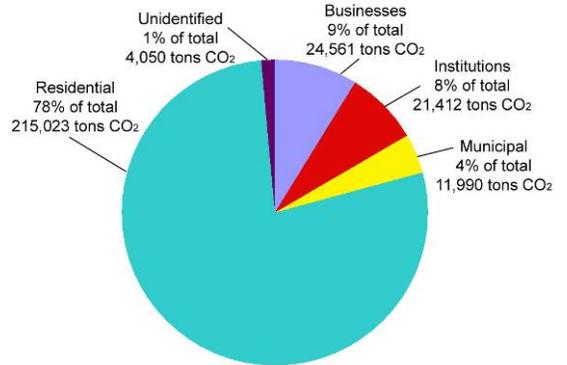
Means of Travel

Public Transportation

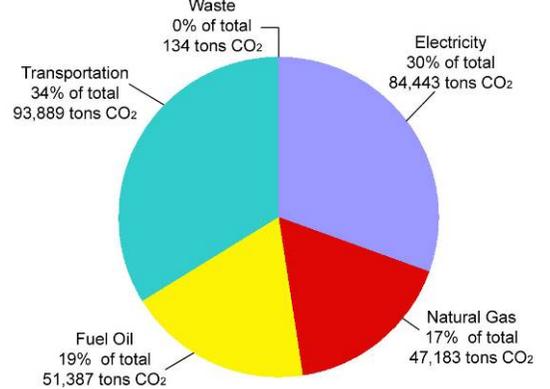
	Boardings	Ride Times
Waverley Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1,550 bus/day ▪ 125 Commuter Rail/day 	Downtown via bus: 55 minutes Harvard Square via bus: 15 minutes
Belmont Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 160 bus/day ▪ 140 Commuter Rail/day 	Via Rail Porter Square: 6 minutes North Station: 15 minutes Waltham: 8 minutes Brandeis: 12 minutes Via Bus Harvard Square: 18 minutes
Cushing Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 430 bus/day 	

Source: MBTA

Town of Belmont CO₂ Emissions by Sector, 2007

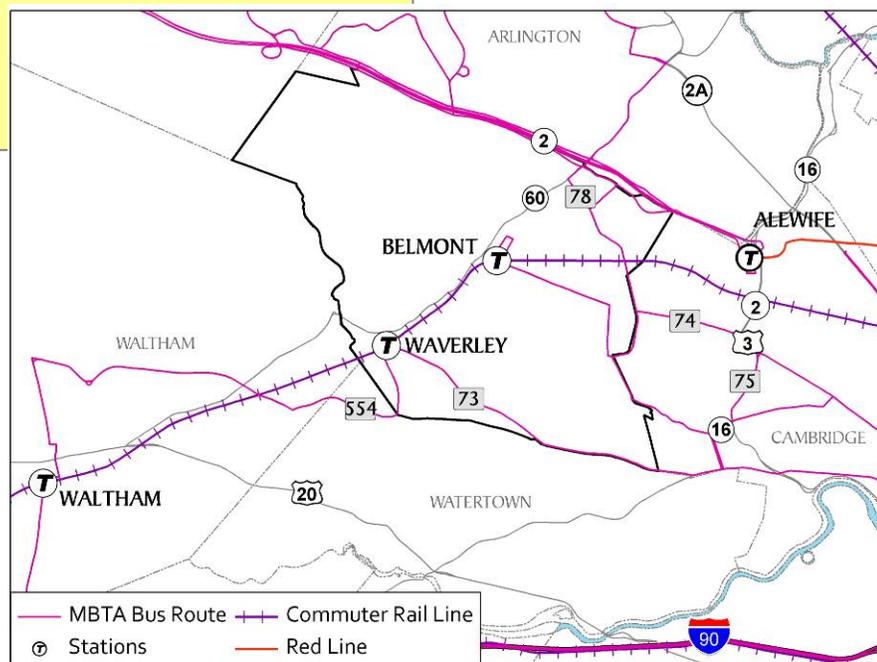
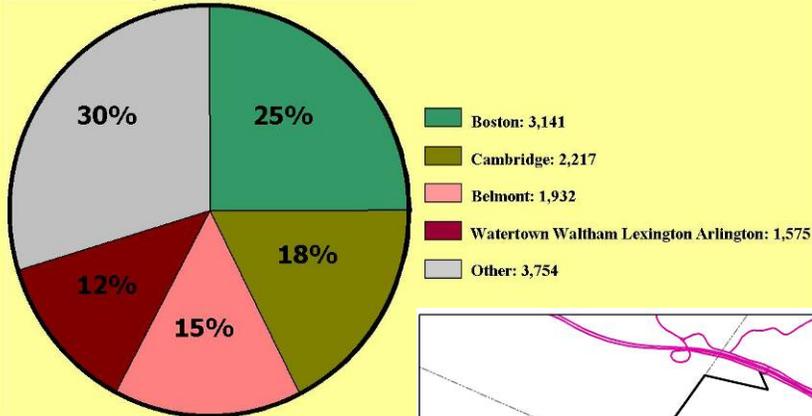


Town of Belmont CO₂ Emissions by Source, 2007



Based on data collected from 2005 to 2007. Percentage have been rounded. *Source: Sustainable Belmont.*

Commuting Patterns



ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Lack of Transportation Options

- 85% of Belmont's workforce commutes to a different city or town each day
- 50% commute to Boston or Cambridge
- The majority commute by car
- Very few can take advantage of the existing transit system

Parking Management

- Commercial development in Town centers is hindered by limited parking options for customers, employees, and commuters
- Difficult to balance parking while sustaining neighborhood character

Energy

- Difficult to reduce Town's energy consumption on a broad scale



TRANSPORTATION & ENERGY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Transportation

- Reduce emissions
- Ensure future livability
- Maintain "small-town community atmosphere"
- Reduce congestion at school and transit drop-off points in Town centers, and along key arterials
- Give people transportation choices
- Plan early for future trends/technologies in transportation

Parking

- Retain neighborhood character
- Sustain vibrant businesses
- Attract business customers from outside Belmont
- Promote the use of public transit

Energy

- Reduce the Town's energy budget
- Ensure future livability
- Ensure availability of sufficient, affordable, reliable energy

CURRENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Transportation

Despite its proximity to Boston and Cambridge and the region's public transit system, the majority of Belmont's workforce drive to and from work and school, causing road congestion and higher energy use and emissions. Additionally, the MBTA is considering eliminating one of Belmont's two commuter rail stations, due in part to lack of customers. There has also been consideration of service reductions on bus routes. Loss of transit options will only cause more people to resort to driving.



In line with its goal of being more sustainable, Belmont must reduce its emissions by utilizing alternative forms of transportation, such as rail, bus, and bicycle. Increased use of these forms of transportation, as well as increased dedication to the upkeep and maintenance of their surrounding infrastructure will help Belmont maintain its small-town character as well as achieve other goals.

Parking

Lack of parking and inefficient parking management has been harmful to all of Belmont's commercial centers—especially Belmont Center, Waverley Square, and Cushing Square—as well as to public transit use. In the town centers, “front-door” parking spaces are often not available for customers, as employees take advantage of the free, close parking these spots provide. Installing metering, as well as providing free parking in more remote spots would encourage employees to leave prime spots for customers, thereby helping local businesses.

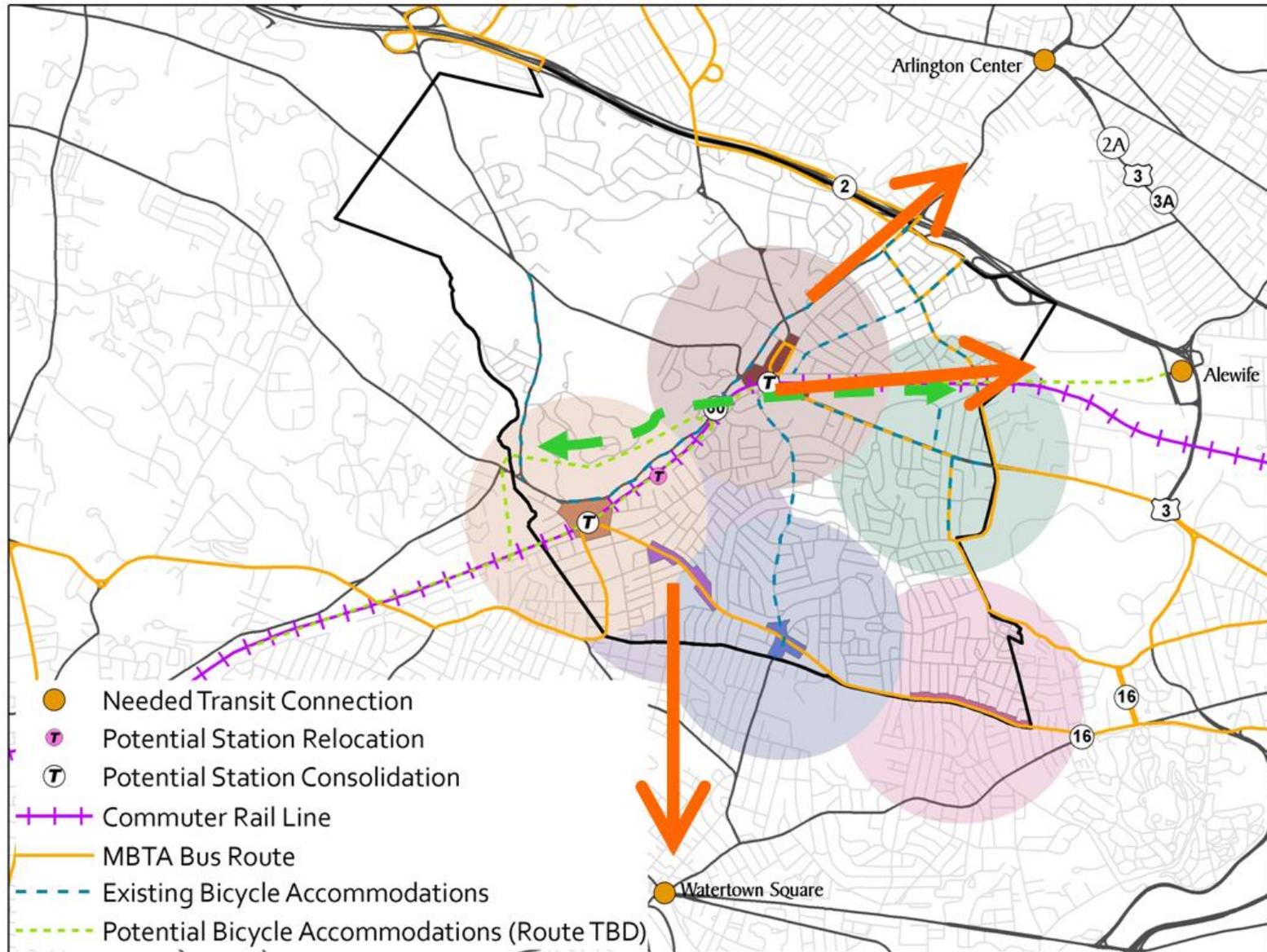


Likewise, there is a lack of all-day parking for potential commuters near the Town's two commuter rail stations. Despite the short ride to Boston, because of this lack of parking and the limited schedule of train arrivals on the commuter rail, many residents of Belmont and neighboring communities choose to drive to work, contributing to congestion on Belmont's roads.



Energy

Decreasing the Town's overall energy consumption will take significant investment and life style changes from both the public and private sectors. Pedestrian infrastructure and support for public transit will be important factors. Belmont's historic buildings and structures, while representing a significant “sunk investment” of resources and energy, unfortunately fall short of modern energy efficiency standards. Making the Town's public buildings as energy efficient as possible and adopting requirements and incentives for energy efficient construction, both for new development and for upgrades to current homes and commercial buildings, will be important. Reflecting “Smart Growth” principles in the Town's zoning by-law and establishing regulations inviting public and private alternative, local energy generation are both opportunities to make a difference.



TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY STRATEGIES

Keep Belmont a Walkable Community

Being a walkable community is a valued asset in Belmont. Reflecting this priority, the Town should dedicate resources to preserve and maintain a pleasant walking atmosphere with street trees and well lit sidewalks. The Town should investigate potential funding sources for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.

- Sidewalks should be included in road reconstruction policy, with an emphasis on funding the maintenance and reconstruction of sidewalks and pathways to schools, parks, public transit, and village centers. Sidewalks should be kept barrier-free.
- Consider how to establish a cross-town trail that will link with the Mass Central Rail Trail in Waltham to the west and the Alewife Reservation Trail in Cambridge to the east, considering safest routes, possible parcel acquisition and community input
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections across the rail right-of-way should be added or improved, including a tunnel under the tracks at the end of Alexander Avenue, a White Street pedestrian/bicycle bridge path to connect Waverley Square and Pleasant Street, improved lighting and visibility of the Belmont Center pedestrian tunnel, and improvement to the Clark Street bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Consider adopting “Safe Routes to School” policies and promote walking and biking to school
- Promote use of existing trails with clear signage (Habitat/McLean/Rock Meadow)
- Establish interesting walks/paths in each precinct/interpretive trail signage on local history
- Ensure plowing and shoveling of bicycle paths and sidewalks in both residential areas and commercial areas
- Encourage street closures for fairs and events.

Bikeways should be connected to schools, transit stations, villages and public amenities.

- Redesign streets to be shared as safely as possible by autos, cyclists, parked cars and pedestrians in order to abide by the multi-modal pathway state law
- Consider how to provide amenities at rail stations, village centers, recreational fields, parks, trailheads and selected bus stops, including secure, sheltered bicycle parking.
- Improve the number and legibility of on-street bicycle lanes and investigate the use of the bicycle “chevron” symbol to indicate bicycle accommodations where there are no bicycle lanes.
- Require new development to install and maintain non-auto infrastructure.



Promote Use of Public Transportation

Undertake study/public process to identify Belmont’s goals regarding continuation, consolidation/elimination of train stations. Implement local policies and investments in alignment with this preference, such as:

- Improving and maintaining pedestrian and bicycle access to train stations
- Providing commuter rail parking
- Providing safe, attractive, well-lit transit shelters for train stations and bus stops
- Providing clear signage to transit stations and visibly post schedule, “how to” information and real-time transit information at stations and on-line

- Seeking transit service to Alewife (consider diverting existing 128 shuttles to/from Waltham)
- Advocating for/Providing cross-town (inter-town/Arlington/Belmont/Watertown/etc) and intra-town service
- Advocating for more frequent and reliable transit service

Reduce Auto Dependency

Propose land use policies that encourage walking, biking, and working close to home.

- Promote higher density and greater mix of development near train stations.
- Encourage retail serving local neighborhoods, and business services to facilitate home-based working.

Promote Car-sharing and ridesharing programs.

- Seek Zip Car locations in Town
- Promote carpooling among municipal employees and residents through web-based ride-share programs

Parking

Create a Town-wide Parking Management Plan, studying parking utilization and the potential to optimize efficient use of existing pavement (roadway and off-street) to meet parking needs.

- Establish staff responsibility for coordinating and overseeing parking planning.

Patrons

Increase convenience for customers; maximize front door parking supply and promote shared parking by exploring public leasing and management of private spaces.

- Consider a strategy that modifies time limit parking to improve availability of prime spaces
- Establish access to Leonard Street for pedestrians coming from rear parking lots
- Improve parking signage
- Manage parking supply better through pay structure; treat customer parking as a business asset

Commuters

- Identify areas at the edges of village centers for permitted commuter parking; dedicate revenues to lease program or for streetscape and sidewalk improvements in residential neighborhoods that allow on-street commuter parking.
- Create safe, attractive walking connections from remote parking to stations.

Neighborhoods

- Consider allowing residential on-street parking in selected neighborhoods where space for off-street parking is limited in order to protect yards and open spaces.
- Consider adopting site plan regulations that require parking to be accommodated to the side and rear of buildings.

Energy

Reduce solid waste collection.

- Increase residential, commercial, and municipal recycling
- Promote composting and reuse

- Consider adopting a by-law requiring the salvage and recycling of building demolition debris

Reduce electricity use.

- Investigate pros and cons of becoming a “Green Community” with a goal to apply for the designation within one year if it is in the best interest of the Town.
- Consider adopting regulations to achieve energy efficiency in construction and renovation, including siting considerations, increased density to reduce average energy use, and the ability to take advantage of decentralized energy production.
- Consider implementing “time-of-use” metering and pricing.
- Promote BMLD’s energy audits and conservation incentive programs.

Encourage decentralized energy production.

- Propose zoning for by-right alternative energy equipment/installations.
- Explore providing incentives for local energy generation, both public and private.

Integrate energy conservation into public school curriculum.

- Identify conservation measures in the school buildings and use them as teaching tools.
- Organize environmental/energy fairs or other events with student participation.

Reduce energy use in municipal buildings and facilities.

- Establish administrative oversight and responsibility for energy use issues, including energy audits for all buildings, usage data gathering, reporting and continuing to keep current with developing energy conservation technologies.
- Establish energy conservation procedures for all staff and users of municipal buildings
- Install energy saving upgrades.
- Explore feasibility of new ESCO project and/or in-house energy audit and infrastructure upgrade program.

V. HOUSING



BELMONT'S HOUSING SNAPSHOT

Where We Live

Total Occupied Housing Units (2008): 9,547

Ownership (2008)

- 63.75% owner-occupied
- 36% renter-occupied

Condition & Age

- 92% of homes built before 1970
- 1% built between 1990 and 2000

Housing Type (2008)

- 56% Single Family
- 31% Two Family
- 13% Multifamily/Condominium

Housing Cost

- Between 1990 and 2000 the median selling price of a single family home increased by 110%
- Median home sale price: \$645,000
- Average rental for one bedroom apartment: \$1200/month
- Average rental for two bedroom apartment: \$1450/month
- Average 2 bedroom condo sales price: \$350,000

Chapter 40B (2009)

- Required subsidized housing units: 993 (10%)
- Current subsidized housing units: 328 (3.3%)
- Additional subsidized housing units needed: 665
- Subsidized housing units needed per year for certification: 50

Source: U.S. Census, MA DHCD, The Warren Group

Housing Needs

There is a need for a wider variety of housing types to serve young professionals and the elderly, especially near village centers.

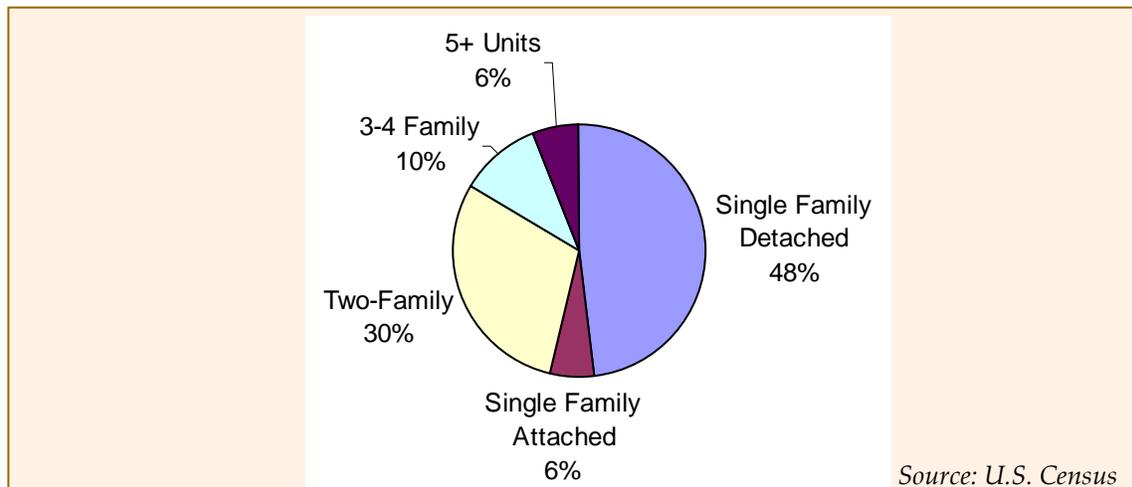
- Housing suitable for the needs and moderate incomes of young professionals and the elderly is insufficient, especially smaller rental units and townhouses.
- First time potential homebuyers earning the median income of \$80,000 annually can afford a \$300,000 home, which is less than half the median sale's price of more than \$600,000.

There is a need for housing that is accessible to a wider socio-economic range

- Lack of diverse housing options leads to homogenization of population and loss of residents who enrich the community.

There is a need to upgrade the existing housing stock

- Much of the older housing stock needs improvement to upgrade efficiency and meet 21st Century needs.
- Historic properties are important to maintaining Belmont's character.
- Renovation is costly to homeowners, yet



ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Limited opportunities for seniors to downsize and remain in Belmont.
- Limited opportunities for young adults and younger families to find homes in Belmont.
- Zoning limits opportunities for new construction or redevelopment of existing properties
- Lack of diversity leads to homogenization of population and intolerance
- Work force, both commercial and municipal, requires range of housing options at different prices
- Older housing stock has many homes which are inefficient and expensive to bring up to date
- Loss of historic homes, vistas, and other features impacts neighborhood character, value
- Existing zoning regulations do not allow for higher density housing that would support the commercial centers and transit infrastructure while addressing Town's housing needs.
- Homes are significant consumers of energy, increasing greenhouse gas emissions
- A number of public and private properties present opportunities for housing through redevelopment and/or adaptive reuse

HOUSING GOALS

- Provide organic life-cycle and affordable housing options for young families and the aging
- Promote socio-economic diversity
- Preserve and upgrade existing housing stock
- Promote a walkable/bike-able community of neighborhood villages and connecting corridors with a variety of housing options
- Reduce carbon footprint of new housing construction
- Supplement property tax base with renovations, improvements and new development

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Limited Housing Opportunities

Limited housing opportunities exist for seniors, young adults, and young families in Belmont. As seniors look to downsize, but remain in Belmont, there are few opportunities for them to do so on a modest, fixed budget. Also, young adults and young families looking to buy a first home, or to rent an affordable one do not have many options in Belmont.

Another group in need of housing in Belmont is the workforce. This cohort, both commercial and municipal, requires a range of housing that is not often or easily found in Belmont. Because the Town's housing market is inaccessible to so many groups, Belmont is experiencing a slow, but steady homogenization of the population. This lack of diversity will hurt Belmont in the long-run.

Zoning Constraints

Current zoning by-laws limit opportunities for new development and, in some places, redevelopment of existing properties. As an example, zoning regulations do not allow for higher-density housing that would support the commercial centers, as well as the diverse groups in need of housing throughout Belmont. Also, as it becomes necessary to retrofit or reuse older homes in many parts of Belmont, zoning makes this process cumbersome and time-consuming, which could potentially hurt Belmont's ability to attract new, continuously diverse residents.

Historic Homes

Belmont's numerous historic homes are an integral piece of the Town's character. As these homes age, they become increasing contributors to climate change due to the amount of energy they consume for heating and cooling. However, it is often expensive and burdensome to renovate these aging homes to make them more efficient. This can result in a loss through demolition of many of the Town's historic resources, which hurts the entire Town's character and small-town feel, and is not environmentally sound.

A number of public and private properties exist, however, that present opportunities for adaptive reuse or redevelopment. The Town needs to amend its zoning to allow for these projects that will ensure the future of these historic resources and Belmont's character, and provide a broader set of needed housing options.

HOUSING STRATEGIES

Promote a walkable/bike-able community of neighborhood villages and connecting corridors with a variety of housing options.

- Encourage mixed use, multifamily, and townhouse development in the village centers and corridors
- Consider providing density bonuses for housing development that provides benefits such as historic preservation, shared or underground parking, or air rights development where appropriate.
- Propose reductions to on-site parking requirements for housing in village centers that is accessible to public transportation

Supplement property tax base with renovation and redevelopment.

- Prioritize housing as reuse alternative for historic buildings located in walking distance to transit and commercial centers.
- Develop design guidelines to shape new development.
- Include representatives of historic preservation, architecture, development, and community-wide residents in a review of land use and building changes.
- Identify opportunities for higher density mixed use and multifamily housing as part of vision for commercial areas.
- Consider allowing flexible dimensional, site plan, and residential uses throughout town for properties that meet design criteria, in order to facilitate preservation of open space and historic features.

Amend zoning to allow/encourage creation of more smaller housing units, including rental housing.

- Consider allowing accessory/in-law apartments
- Consider allowing three-family structures in areas where they are historically located
- Consider allowing attached single family and townhouse development where appropriate
- Maintain meaningful and economically feasible inclusionary zoning by-law

Preserve and upgrade existing housing stock.

- Consider adopting a 90 day demolition delay by-law
- Consider encouraging building renovation by providing tax relief for improvements compatible with sustainability and historic preservation
- Consider allowing division of existing homes into multiple units, retaining single family appearance.
- Consider adopting design and dimensional standards that encourage historic preservation
- Propose design standards that require homes to be in scale with existing neighborhood.

Reduce carbon footprint of new housing construction.

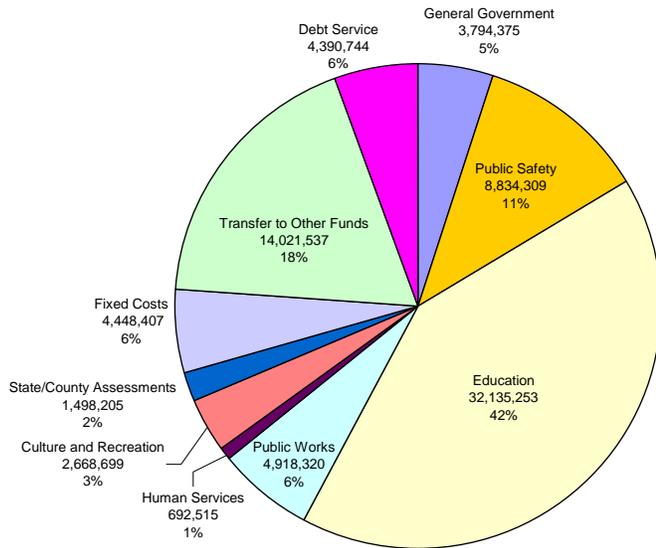
- Consider adopting energy efficiency building code standards and incentives
- Consider requiring LEED check list for all new development

VI. PUBLIC FACILITIES & FINANCE

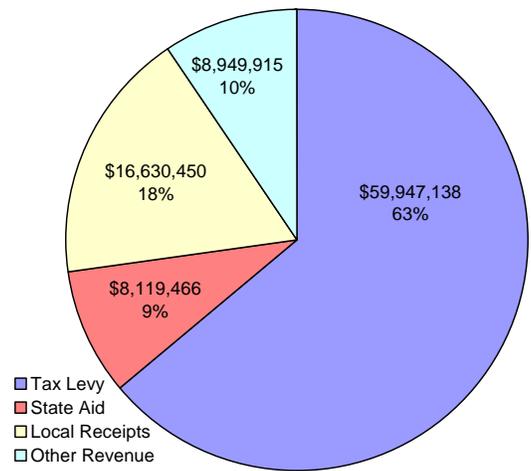


BELMONT'S PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE SNAPSHOT

Belmont Expenditure by Department FY2008



Belmont Revenue Sources FY2008



Town Facilities

Town Hall	455 Concord Ave.
Homer Municipal Building	19 Moore St.
Belmont Public Library	336 Concord Ave.
Benton Branch Library	75 Oakley Road
Fire Station Headquarters	299 Trapelo Road
Fire Station Sub-Station	99 Leonard St.
Police Station	455 Concord Ave.
Belmont Cemetery and Cemetery Building	121 Grove St.
Highland Meadow Cemetery	700 Concord Ave.
Underwood Pool	300 Concord Ave.
Higginbottom Pool, Belmont HS	293 Concord Ave.
Viglirolo Skating Rink	221 Concord Ave.
Town Yard (DPW)	37 C St.
Municipal Light Department	40 Prince St.
Former BMLD Building	455 Concord Ave.
Beech Street Senior Center	266 Beech St.
Belmont School Facilities	
Burbank Elementary	266 School St.
Butler Elementary	90 White St.
Belmont High School	221 Concord Ave.
Chenery Middle School	95 Washington St.
Wellington School	121 Orchard St.
Winn Brook Elementary	97 Waterhouse Rd.
School Administration Building	644 Pleasant St.
White Field House	291 Concord Ave.



Town Hall



Trapelo Road Fire Station



Belmont Memorial Library

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Pending capital improvements need to be incorporated into the broader goals of the Town
- The Town is facing a growing backlog of deferred maintenance on its facilities
- New cost savings strategies must be employed to help Belmont manage its growing capital needs
- Strategies for increasing local revenues should be implemented to help the Town accomplish its goals related to public facilities and finance



PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE GOALS

- Investment in regular asset management, infrastructure improvements, and public facilities should reflect the Town's Vision of a sustainable community.
- An organizational structure needs to ensure that a coordinated town-wide capital planning process complements the short term budgeting process, pulling together comprehensive town-wide goals.
- A capital budgeting process needs to build public support for funding and for financially sustainable policies.

CURRENT ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

A lack of comprehensive capital budget planning as well as sufficient revenue results in a gap in funding for investment in new public facilities, the management of existing Town assets and facilities, as well as the maintenance of Town services. Budget projections suggest the need for substantial overrides to cover operating expenses, yet carry forward a significant cut in funding for capital improvements that occurs in FY10, and maintain an already low contribution to Reserve Funds at a constant level. The funding choices are not sustainable. Strategies are needed to generate and allocate funding for facilities and services that reflect community priorities, as well as the need for financial sustainability.

Capital Improvements

While the Capital Projects Overview Committee (CPOC) report took a comprehensive view of the capital facilities needs facing the Town and prioritized capital projects currently in the planning stages, some unanswered questions remained about where further needed facilities should be located, depending on the sequence of construction and initial decisions which have yet to be made. Meanwhile, several private properties and public buildings are currently “in play”, which could be redeveloped for public or private use, and which could positively transform and define the character of the municipal campus and the surrounding neighborhoods as well as provide opportunities for tax base growth, economic development and/or housing.

Capital Budget and Asset Management

The definition of projects that qualify as Capital Budget items are “those public improvements and non-recurring major equipment needs which represent the most necessary enhancement projects or purchases to be undertaken by the Town during each year.” Increasingly, as department budgets are constrained, there is a push to shift maintenance and asset management costs which have traditionally been covered under department budgets onto the capital budget.

Given the constraints of the Capital Budget, many of these items go unfunded, and the Town faces a growing backlog of deferred maintenance on its facilities, which results in more costly repairs or replacement of assets whose use might have been prolonged with consistent maintenance. Meanwhile, implementing plans for major capital improvements such as replacement or reuse of public buildings is delayed, further impacting cost as well as opportunities to coordinate priorities and funding and take advantage of state funding.

Cost Saving Strategies

A few permanent cost saving strategies have been implemented to date. The Town has begun, and should continue to, explore various means to save costs. Broad categories that have been defined include: 1) Reducing services 2) Streamlining and combining government, 3) Regionalization, and 4) Shifting public employee health insurance costs.

Increasing Local Revenues

Property taxes are by far the largest source of municipal revenues, followed at some distance by state funding and other local revenues such as fees for services, licenses, permits, and fines. Although none stands out as easy, numerous opportunities exist to increase local revenues. These options include overrides,



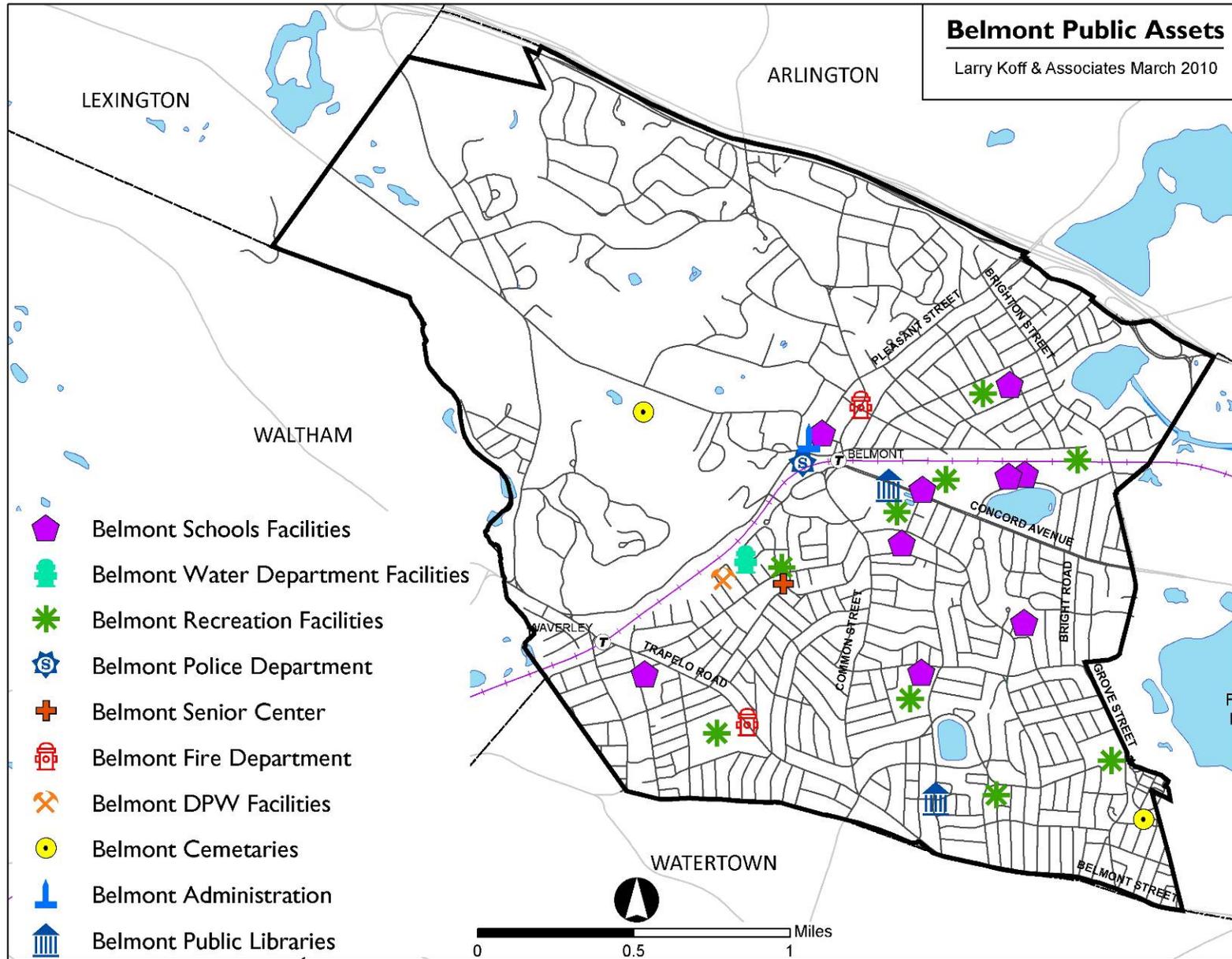
zoning changes to increase the tax base, securing additional State/Federal funding, utilizing the Community Preservation Act, increasing fees for services, partnering with the private sector, implementing tax increment financing (TIF) and/or district improvement financing (DIF), and leveraging public facility improvements to provide net revenue and tax benefits.

Belmont Public Assets*

BUILDING NAME	BUILDING VALUE	CONTENTS VALUE
Belmont High School	\$33,142,373	\$4,971,346
Chenery Middle School	\$22,932,000	\$3,439,800
Burbank School	\$14,890,905	\$2,233,636
Winn Brook School	\$12,280,029	\$1,962,747
Butler School	\$8,939,958	\$1,303,302
Town Hall Annex	\$7,504,000	\$1,425,760
Town Hall	\$7,317,980	\$1,390,416
Memorial Library	\$4,520,735	\$3,206,172
Belmont Senior Center	\$6,300,000	\$1,197,000
School Dept. Admin. Building	\$5,000,000	\$215,000
Fire Headquarters	\$3,687,300	\$660,000
Police Station	\$2,677,920	\$812,496
Temporary Classroom	\$1,500,000	\$1,699,315
Fire Sub-Station	\$2,712,600	\$250,000
Ice Skating Rink	\$2,574,269	\$166,617
DPW Building #1	\$2,364,093	\$318,738
Water Department	\$1,099,909	\$205,618
White Field House	\$1,003,601	\$55,589
Benton Branch Library	\$594,432	\$297,216
DPW Building #3	\$608,148	\$ 87,732
Bath House	\$336,225	\$22,114
Modular School Building	\$300,000	\$45,000
Temp. Fire Station Quarters	\$180,000	\$100,000
DPW Building #2	\$253,005	\$21,067
Cemetery Office #2	\$206,541	\$12,500
Cemetery Office #1	\$202,711	\$15,000
DPW Salt Shed	\$190,547	-
Stony Brook Pumping Station	\$154,500	-
Woodbine Rd. Pumping Station	\$154,500	-
Sub Totals	\$143,628,281	\$ 26,114,181
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 169,742,462	

Source: Town of Belmont

*The Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD) facilities, including the former office building on Concord Avenue, are not listed above since they are not owned by the Town of Belmont; BMLD is a separate entity.



PUBLIC FACILITIES & FINANCE STRATEGIES

Formulate Next Steps to carry out a Capital Improvement Plan

Before decisions are finalized about the light substation and library relocation, the Town should continue to build on the CPOC effort to identify next steps. A recharged planning process should consider how future projects are interrelated with land use and other objectives, identifying the types of uses, design and density that are most appropriate for the neighborhoods in which facilities might locate. At the same time, zoning changes should be considered that correspond with this capital facilities vision, including an exemption for municipal projects meeting defined criteria, and regulations for public buildings to be redeveloped.

Allocate Funding for Asset Management

Addressing the goals of capital planning and public facilities is closely tied to the issue of overall fiscal sustainability in the Town because the same shortage of funding affects all of the Town's departments and services. The following points echo the Capital Budget Committee recommendations.²

- In order for the Town to develop a fiscally sustainable strategy going forward, the Town needs to develop a Capital Asset Management Plan for catching up on deferred maintenance and capital projects.
- The Town also needs to consider how the budget can be shifted to allow for a gradual increase in the annual capital budget allocation to the level that is needed for sustainable asset management; the Capital Budget Committee recommends an annual rate of \$3M.
- Funds need to be set aside in the department operating budgets for maintenance and recurring capital expenses.
- A stabilization fund for pavement management is needed to ensure that regular funding is dedicated for this purpose and is available in coordination with the construction season.
- Capital improvements should be coordinated so that various projects such as pavement repair, water and sewer and streetscape improvements may be timed and/or combined for efficiency.
- Opportunities should be created to engage in public/private partnerships to fund the maintenance of assets.
- Establishing an estimated time frame for major capital projects well in advance (such as the library or pool) could help to facilitate fundraising efforts to defray their cost to the taxpayer.

Organizational Coordination around Capital Asset and Financial Planning

Building on the existing framework, organizational coordination should be enhanced or recharged so that an effective and sustainable Capital Asset and Financial Management Plan can be developed and implemented.

- More publicly accessible documentation (utilizing the Town's website) will clarify the issues, as well as historic and current efforts.
- Criteria and goals for asset management and funding should be identified.

² Capital Budget Committee Report, 2009

- A set of guiding principles, benchmarks, and strategies for capital facility investment, asset management, new growth and commercial tax base can help to ensure that financial sustainability is a shared objective across departments and committees, and connect specific actions (such as zoning or other regulatory changes) to financial goals.
- Operating budget funding of consultants is needed to continue developing zoning and other tools to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Building Support

The need to fund asset management, coordinate capital facilities planning, and to develop long-term budgeting solutions have long been explored by committees and Town staff, but have met resistance from voters and leadership.

Meanwhile, there is a real or perceived antipathy among voters and elected officials to pursue initiatives such as streamlining government, changes in zoning to facilitate growth in property assessments by allowing greater density, or funding maintenance of existing infrastructure, facilities or equipment.

To overcome this challenge, the town's financial leadership needs to engage the community in establishing and carrying out a plan for financial sustainability.

- Need to communicate more clearly, both to the public and internally, what efforts have been made to reduce costs, increase revenues, and shift budget allocations, providing a clear, well documented Capital Asset and Financial Management Plan.
- Goals of fiscal sustainability should be correlated with Town priorities regarding public investment in buildings and infrastructure, and other public improvements.
- Capital facility funding decisions should relate to the Comprehensive Plan, as well as changes in zoning, and other policy choices.
- Awareness and understanding of the Plan for Fiscal Sustainability should be fostered among residents and public officials in order to generate support for policy and funding decisions in accordance with the plan.

Graphic presentations should be used to raise and maintain awareness of the fiscal situation, linking property value, vitality and quality of life to the choices to be made regarding municipal services and revenues.

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The Recommendations introduced in the Executive Summary apply the Land Use Vision and strategies from each of the Comprehensive Plan Elements to nine broad issues confronting the town. The Recommendations, or Bridging Strategies, focus on the intersection of the goals and objectives of differing perspectives, so that consensus can be reached around sustainable land use choices. Following is an expansion of each of these recommendations, noting concerns and challenges to the community and outlining strategies to act on the recommendations.

As noted in the Executive Summary, these recommended strategies have also been considered in terms of a sequence of activities which should be carried out. An Action Plan Strategies table identifies a sequence of activities indicating the responsible party and sorted by time frame i.e. Short (one to two years), Medium, (three to five years) and Long Term (beyond five years).

While the following Recommendations draw on all of the 6 Elements, each Element includes further strategies to be considered which will contribute toward meeting objectives identified by the Working Groups, and implementing the Town's Land Use Vision. Many, but not all of these strategies are mentioned under the 9 Recommendations and the Action Plan Table. Nevertheless, they may be incorporated into Implementation efforts in the short, medium, or long term.

RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCERNS AND STRATEGIES

I. Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Concern: Being a “walkable” community is a valued asset in Belmont. Investment and maintenance of transportation infrastructure should reflect this priority, expanding accommodations for pedestrians and cyclists, and providing adequate funding for their maintenance.

Strategies:

- A. Continue discussions to identify routes and develop plans for off-street pedestrian connections through the Western Greenway and proposed in-town Greenbelt Corridor.
- B. Create additional pedestrian crossings and/or improvements to existing crossings over or under the railroad tracks at Alexander Ave, Belmont Center, White St. and/or Clark St.
- C. Provide bicycle parking/storage at transit stations, recreational fields and parks, trailheads, village centers, and other public destinations.
- D. Develop trail marker and park signage systems, providing both historical neighborhood information and directional information.
- E. Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle safety in roadway maintenance and improvement projects.
- F. Consider adopting “Safe Routes to School” policies and promote walking and biking to school.
- G. Fund the maintenance and reconstruction of sidewalks as part of pavement management program.
- H. Identify opportunities to partner with private sector developers and organizations to fund and/or construct pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

2. Improve, support, and promote public transit.

Concern: Belmont needs to demonstrate a commitment to supporting its transit infrastructure and encouraging use of transit if it wants to retain its two stations in its two primary commercial centers. There is not a specific target for ridership, but the Town can strengthen its position through consistency with State ‘Smart Growth’ objectives promoting the land use concept of greater density and mixed uses near train stations to reduce auto dependency.

Strategies:

- A. Amend zoning to allow/encourage concentrated housing in Waverley Square and Belmont Center and along the Trapelo Road Corridor.
- B. Consider adaptive reuse of public buildings that create housing opportunities within walking distance of Belmont Center
- C. Study alternatives for providing additional on- and off-street commuter parking.
- D. Advocate for bus connectivity to Alewife Station and between the Town’s commercial areas via MBTA or local or private shuttle service.
- E. Improve pedestrian connections and amenities at train stations and bus stops, including pathways, signage, shelters, furniture, and information.
- F. Consider providing incentives, such as dedicated parking revenues for streetscape improvement and maintenance, to residential areas that allow on-street commuter and employee parking.

3. Expand Housing Choices for Belmont’s Various and Changing Demographic Groups.

Concern: A shortage of housing options exists in Belmont, especially for seniors, empty-nesters, young adults, and households with modest income; key demographic groups that Belmont is losing in population, as many must look outside of the Town to find housing that meets their needs. The Town can accommodate additional housing to serve the needs of 21st Century households while protecting and enhancing the character of existing neighborhoods.

Strategies:

- A. Modify zoning to promote residential uses such as condominiums, townhouses, mixed-use structures with ground floor retail, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, especially in areas accessible to public transportation. Potential locations to consider include Trapelo Rd., Brighton St., Belmont Center vicinity, and Concord Ave./Bright Rd.
- B. Propose allowing accessory housing units in existing buildings to accommodate multigenerational households and families with multiple working adults.
- C. Refine dimensional regulations, design, and site plan criteria to provide flexibility to facilitate reasonable changes while protecting the character and vistas of historic neighborhoods.
 - Allow townhouses/attached single family homes
 - Allow/encourage modification of dimensional standards to protect scenic vistas, yards, open spaces, and historic character
- D. Consider adopting energy efficiency building code standards and incentives.

4. Reinforce Belmont’s neighborhoods and centers through natural and historic resource protection.

Concern: Historic buildings, neighborhoods, and open spaces are distinctive features that define Belmont’s small-town character and quality of life, but many of these are threatened by redevelopment and building expansions. Open space resources contribute to storm water management, habitat

protection, and public health. Yet many of these resources, some privately owned, are unprotected. Education, guidelines, and in some cases public investment is needed to ensure their continued public benefit. In addition to identifying protection strategies, further tools are needed for enhancing the historic and open space features of neighborhoods.

Strategies:

- A. Create action plans for feasible reuse of Police Station and Municipal Light Building, Rock Meadow Barn, and other Town-owned buildings and historic assets.
- B. Inventory historic and open space assets in order to target and prioritize historic preservation efforts.
- C. Consider adopting a Town policy/criteria for acquiring or having the right of first refusal to purchase open space and for obtaining or approving conservation easements for the preservation of *privately* open spaces.
- D. Develop criteria and support for adding properties to the historic register.
- E. Identify opportunities to provide storm water management and habitat protection through the Western Greenway and Greenbelt Corridor initiatives.
- F. Develop guidelines for streetscape improvements, street trees, and plantings on municipal-owned properties.
- G. Consider establishing a wetlands by-law.
- H. Consider a demolition delay by-law.
- I. Consider a by-law to protect specimen trees.
- J. Modify zoning to protect front, side, and rear yard lawns, wooded areas and native vegetation.
- K. Consider adoption of Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide funding for historic preservation and open space projects.

5. Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process to supplement traditional zoning.

Concern: The Town's current zoning regulations and approval process focus primarily on height, density, and use. These regulations do not ensure compatibility of new development with the historic character and development patterns in the commercial areas and neighborhoods. Design review processes need more significant input from design and development professionals.

Strategies:

- A. Establish design guidelines specific to each commercial area and residential neighborhood that reflect their unique character, current and desired, addressing features such as setbacks, massing, roofline, façade and entryway details, landscaping, building materials, and site organization.
- B. Establish stronger design review process under the leadership of the Planning Board, which balances input from historic preservation, transportation planning, architecture, and developer perspectives, along with neighborhood representatives.
- C. Allow flexibility regarding dimensions, use, and parking for development which meets design criteria in order to facilitate preservation of historic or open space features.
- D. Consider incentives (through density or approval requirements) for development which provides underground parking, streetscape, historic preservation, or other public improvements.

6. Clarify land use vision for each commercial district

Concern: Belmont’s commercial areas are incorporated into four zoning districts, Local Business I, II, III, and General Business, which do not reflect their current development patterns, function, and unique character. Redevelopment of a limited number of deteriorating properties could significantly enhance the character of the commercial centers.

Strategies:

- A. Clarify the vision for future land use, and design.
- B. Develop new commercial zoning districts that reflect the hierarchy of commercial areas, in terms of uses, scale and design.
- C. Define use, dimensional and parking regulations, and approval requirements that are sufficiently flexible to make new investment economical and appealing.
- D. Consider zoning incentives through density bonus or approval process to encourage historic preservation, streetscape and open space improvements, underground parking, and/or use of air rights, where appropriate.
- E. Identify design criteria to ensure that new development complements the Town’s historic character.

7. Allow economically viable development which complements the Town’s existing character.

Concern: Disinvestment in the Town’s commercial areas occurs where zoning inhibits economically feasible development and property improvement. The potential for new development or redevelopment is bound by restrictions on height, dimension and parking that make it unfeasible to improve or redevelop underutilized properties. Furthermore, the uncertainty and cost of navigating the approval process inhibit development or retenuing. Without allowing for higher value commercial development, the Town misses opportunities for improvements that could enhance and complement the historic character of the districts and the ability to attract businesses providing goods and services that Belmont residents want. The result is stalemate, stagnation, increased vacancies, and gradual decline.

Strategies:

- A. Modify underlying height and building dimension requirements in commercial areas to allow economically feasible development subject to a revised design review process that will enhance the character of the district.
- B. Substitute reliance on special permits or town meeting approval to control use and dimension by identifying a design review process which is based on specific area goals, and an approval process which is more comprehensive as well as predictable. The process should incorporate greater reliance on design criteria and comprehensive impact analysis to control development.
- C. Reduce on-site parking requirements, credit off-site and shared parking, and establish “in-lieu” fees to pay for future municipal supply.
- D. Consider incentives (through density or approval requirements) for development which provides underground parking, air rights development where appropriate, historic preservation, streetscape, open space, or other on or off site public improvements.

8. Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements

Concern: Belmont Center, Waverley and Cushing Squares, and other commercial areas are in need of better traffic flow, pedestrian and transit accessibility, and enhanced public spaces and sidewalks. Parking impacts the vitality of existing businesses, the feasibility of new development, accessibility to public transit, as well as the quality of life for residents. The Town does not wish to expand the area dedicated to surface parking, yet needs to resolve parking conflicts and shortages.

Strategies:

A. Physical Improvements

- *Belmont Center:* Undertake planning and design for physical improvements to roadway and sidewalks on Leonard St./Concord Ave./Royal Rd. Potential improvements include routing one-way traffic on Leonard St. and side streets, widening the sidewalks, creating reverse-angle parking, improving pedestrian access to the Claflin St. Lot and the train station, and enlarging and enhancing the “green” at Leonard St. and Concord Ave.
- *Trapelo Road Corridor:* Undertake study of open space, pedestrian and transit improvements to further enhance the commercial areas along Trapelo Rd. and Belmont St. and complement the design of the Trapelo Corridor reconstruction project.
- *Concord/Bright:* Plan streetscape and pedestrian improvements in the Concord Ave./Bright Rd. area enhancing its position as a “gateway” to the Town.

B. Public/Private Partnership

- Identify opportunities for partnership with private sector to accomplish physical improvements.
- Consider zoning incentives (density bonus, approval requirements) for development projects that provide public amenities, e.g. streetscape and open space improvements.
- Encourage establishment of a business association to undertake common marketing promotions and events.
- Organize private/public coordination to address issues that would improve appearance, conditions and experience of each district.
- Consider establishing funding sources such as creating a business improvement district, and/or dedicating surplus parking revenues to improvements and services in commercial areas.

C. Parking Management

- Prepare a parking management plan to free up “front door” curb-side spaces now often used by employees for patrons: install meters to discourage all-day curbside employee parking, increase time-limits to avoid ticketing, provide free parking in more remote spaces, and identify dedicated employee and commuter spaces.
- Investigate leasing private spaces from property owners (cost covered by parking revenues) to create new shared municipal parking.

9. Link public facilities and financial planning to land use priorities.

Concern: A number of public buildings are in need of replacement in the near to mid-term. The planning and timing of a sequence of public capital projects requires building consensus around overlapping issues of land use, finance, building preservation and reuse, and municipal services. Decisions about capital facilities should consider the vision for the impacted neighborhoods, including land use, design, economic development, housing, open space, historic resources, and transportation goals. Without addressing the funding needed to preserve the Town’s existing assets and services, it will be difficult to implement improvements in public facilities, infrastructure and services to support a land use plan.

Strategies:

- A. Following on the work of the CPOC, planning for the next phase of public building projects needs to be undertaken. Planning for capital projects should consider the land use context and vision for the neighborhoods in which opportunity parcels are located, financial/fiscal benefit to the Town, optimal reuse strategy for historic buildings in terms of land use goals and economic feasibility.
- B. Draft a financial management plan that will provide a sustainable level of funding for asset management and services.
- C. Establish priorities for funding of capital improvements, infrastructure and planning necessary to implement goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- D. Foster awareness and understanding of a plan for financial sustainability among residents and public officials in order to generate support for policy and funding decisions in accordance with the plan.

ACTION PLAN

Key Strategies, Responsibilities, and Prioritization

The following table lays out the recommendations and strategies, with assignment of responsibility for overseeing actions and establishment of short, middle, and long-term prioritization:

SCHEDULE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ACTIONS

Recommendation	Action Strategy	Responsible Board, Committee, Department	Time Frame Short 1-2 yrs
1. Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure			
	1.4 Consider adopting “Safe routes to School” policies	School Dept	Short
2. Improve, support, and promote public transit			
	2.1 Propose new zoning to encourage concentrated housing in Waverley Square, Trapelo Road Corridor and Belmont Center near train stations.	Planning Board	Short
	2.2 Consider adaptive reuse of public buildings to create housing opportunities within walking distance to Belmont Center.	Housing Trust, HDC	Short
	2.3 Undertake parking study to identify locations and funding strategies to support on and off-street parking for shoppers, employees and commuters at locations to be determined.	Office of Community Development	Short
	2.4 Initiate parking study to identify incentives, such as dedicated parking revenues for streetscape improvement and maintenance, to residential areas that provide on-street commuter parking.	OCD	Short
	2.5 Advocate for bus connections to Alewife Station and other destinations	BOS	Short
3. Reinforce Belmont's neighborhoods and centers through natural and historic resource protection.			
	3.1 Reinvestigate the costs and benefits of implementing a wetlands by-law, a demolition delay by-law (6 months-1 year) prior to demolishing historic structures and adoption of CPA to provide funding for historic preservation, affordable housing and open space projects.	BOS, request for HDC, ConCom, Housing Trust	Short

Note: Short= 1-2 years, Medium= 3-5, Long= 5+ years

Recommendation	Action Strategy	Responsible Board, Committee, Department	Time Frame Short
4. Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process to supplement traditional zoning.			
	4.1 Initiate re-zoning of priority commercial areas to reflect desired vision of uses and scale while permitting more flexibility in density through reform of design review and impact analysis	Planning Board	Short
5. Clarify the land use vision for each commercial area.			
6. Allow economically viable development which complements the Town's existing character.			
	6.4 Consider reducing on-site parking requirements for new development; (e.g. allow on-street parking areas and shared parking lots to count; establish fee in-lieu process to fund future municipal parking areas.).	OCD recommendations Planning Board implementation	Short
7. Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements.			
	7.1 Undertake circulation/pedestrian connections study of the Leonard Ave/Concord Street/Common Street intersection.	OCD	Short
	7.4 Organize/ support public/private business associations in the three key commercial centers to undertake common marketing promotions, maintain features such as trashcans and benches, and consider use of dedicated parking revenue to support business improvement efforts.	Private initiative supported by OCD	Short
	7.5 Consider formation of a Business Improvement District (BID) to improve services in commercial areas	OCD Business Owners Property Owners	Short to medium
	7.6 Where local support exists, plan and institute a Parking Management plan in commercial centers: (e.g. free up on street parking spaces for patrons, install meters to discourage all day parking, provide free employee parking in remote location, identify dedicated parking for employees and commuters.)	OCD/BOS	Short

8. Link public facilities and financial planning to land use priorities.				
	8.1	Undertake planning for the next phase of public building projects considering land use context and vision for the affected neighborhoods	CPOC with Planning Board	Short to long
	8.2	Create a financial management plan that provides a sustainable level of funding for maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure, and public services.	BOS/Warrant Committee	Short
	8.3	Establish priorities for funding capital improvements, infrastructure and planning to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Foster awareness and understanding of a plan for financial stability among residents and public officials	BOS	Short

Recommendation	Action Strategy	Responsible Board, Committee, Department	Time Frame Medium 3-5 yrs
1. Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure			
	1.1 Prepare sidewalk/bicycle/open space connections plan and public/private sector funding strategy	Planning Board	Medium
	1.2 Identify funding to improve/plan/construct railroad crossings at Alexander Ave, Belmont Ctr, White St and/or Clark St.	BOS	Medium to long
	1.3 Provide for bicycle storage at key destinations	Search grant opportunities	Medium
2. Improve, support, and promote public transit			
	2.6 Undertake study to improve pedestrian connections and amenities at train stations and bus stops, including pathways, signage, shelters, furniture and information.	BOS	Medium
3. Expand housing choices for Belmont's various and changing demographic groups			
	3.1 Propose new zoning which will promote residential uses such as condominiums, townhouses, mixed use buildings with ground floor retail, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, especially in areas near public transportation	Housing Trust, HDC, Planning Board	Medium
	3.2 Propose new zoning which will identify criteria for permitting accessory housing units (in-law apartments) in existing homes in designated locations.	Planning Board Housing Trust	Medium
	3.4 Propose new energy efficiency building code standards and incentives	Sustainable Belmont and OCD	Medium to Long

Recommendation	Action Strategy	Responsible Board, Committee, Department	Time Frame Medium 3-5 yrs
4. Reinforce Belmont's neighborhoods and centers through natural and historic resource protection.			
	4.1 Propose criteria for acquiring open land, conservation easements and restrictions for the preservation of privately held open spaces	Conservation Commission/Open Space Committee	Medium to Long
	4.2 Develop guidelines for neighborhood streetscape improvements, street trees, and plantings on town owned properties	Shade Tree Committee Planning Board	Medium
	4.3 Recommend zoning changes to dimensional standards in order to protect yards and small neighborhood open spaces	Shade Tree Committee Planning Board	Medium
5. Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process to supplement traditional zoning.			
	5.2 Initiate re-zoning of priority residential areas to allow more flexibility and greater density governed by design and impact analysis	Planning Board	Medium
	5.3 Consider changes in the site plan design review process so as to include more technical/professional and community input	OCD	Medium
6. Clarify the land use vision for each commercial area.			
	6.1 Undertake planning of the Brighton Street/Blanchard Road area to identify the desired mix of uses.	OCD and Planning Board	Short to Medium
	6.2 Undertake planning of the Pleasant Street corridor to identify the desired mix of uses	OCD and Planning Board	Short to Medium
	6.3 Define use, size, parking requirements and approval process that are sufficiently flexible to make new investments economical.	Consult with Business Association and Planning Board	Medium
7. Allow economically viable development which complements the Town's existing character.			
	7.1 Create a committee to develop a design review format/design review committee/ or design standards for carrying out re-zoning in the major commercial	BOS Planning Board OCD	Medium

	areas modifying height, parking, set requirements subject to a strengthened design review process.		
	7.2 Establish stronger design criteria for all development that is specific to each commercial area.	BOS Planning Board OCD	Medium
	7.3 Establish a more predictable approval process for commercial development that focuses on design criteria and impact analysis	BOS Planning Board OCD	Medium
8. Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements.			
	8.2 Identify public/private partnerships to plan and fund pedestrian improvements in commercial centers along Trapelo Road and Belmont Center to complement the design of the Trapelo Corridor reconstruction project	BOS initiates OCD staffs	Medium
	8.3 In conjunction with new development, design and carry out streetscape and pedestrian improvements to the Concord Avenue/Bright Road intersection.	OCD and Planning Board	Medium

Recommendation	Action Strategy	Responsible Board, Committee, Department	Time Frame Long Term 5 + yrs
1. Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure.			
	1.2 Identify funding to improve/plan/construct railroad crossings at Alexander Ave, Belmont ctr, White St and/or Clark St.	BOS	Medium to long
3. Expand housing choices for Belmont's various and changing demographic groups.			
	3.3 Propose residential area rezoning to define dimensional, design, and site plan criteria to facilitate renovations and improvements, while protecting the character of historic neighborhoods; including yards, vistas, and historic features.	Planning Board Historic Commission Open Space Committee	Long
	3.4 Propose new energy efficiency building code standards and incentives	Sustainable Belmont	Medium to long
4. Reinforce Belmont's neighborhoods and centers through natural and historic resource protection.			
	4.1 Adopt criteria for acquiring open land, conservation easements and restrictions for the preservation of privately held open spaces	Conservation Committee/Open Space Committee	Medium to Long
5. Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process to supplement traditional zoning.			
	5.4 Propose density incentives for developments that meet design criteria and build public improvements.	OCD	Long
8. Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements.			
	8.7 Propose a plan to create new shared municipal parking that is funded by parking fees.	BOS	Long