

Housing Work Group
Town of Belmont Comprehensive Plan
Housing Committee

Goals:

1. Provide organic life-cycle housing options for young families and the aging
2. Promote Socio-economic diversity
3. Preserve and upgrade existing housing stock
4. Promote a walkable/bike-able community of neighborhood villages and connecting corridors with a variety of housing options
5. Reduce carbon footprint of new housing construction
6. Supplement property tax base with new development of empty properties

Provide organic life-cycle housing options for young families and the aging:

Issues:

1. Limited opportunities for seniors to downsize and remain in Belmont in smaller, owner or renter units affordable for a range of incomes.
2. Limited opportunities for young families at a range of incomes to move into Belmont
3. Zoning limits opportunities for new construction or redevelopment of existing properties

Strategies:

1. Allow co-housing on large lots
2. Allow accessory apartments based upon lot size (Newton model—subject to size restriction of accessory apartment)
3. Allow three story buildings with third floor, one bedroom units along “Corridors” except Pleasant Street
4. Allow mixed-use development along Trapelo Road
5. Allow 1-family attached housing on smaller lots throughout Town
6. Allow cluster zoning on smaller lots town-wide constrained by green space and design standards
7. Allow townhouse development on large lots town-wide.
8. Rollback residential zoning to former lot size with “McMansion” constraint

Promote socio-economic diversity

Issues:

1. Lack of Diversity leads to homogenization of population and intolerance of others’ differences
2. Work force, both commercial and municipal, requires range of housing options at different prices

Strategies:

1. Maintain meaningful inclusionary zoning by-law
2. Allow accessory apartments

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Preserve and upgrade existing housing stock so that it is sustainable

Issues:

1. No tax relief for building renovation
2. No restrictions on building demolition
3. No incentives for adopting energy efficiency improvements
4. No historic neighborhood preservation guidelines

Strategies:

1. Adopt 90 day demolition delay bylaw
2. Adopt energy efficiency building code standards and incentives
3. Provide tax relief for “New Growth” by encouraging building renovation
4. Permit cluster development on large lots in residential districts
5. Promote neighborhood preservation

Promote a walkable/bike-able community

Issues:

1. Existing zoning regulations prohibit mixed use and multifamily housing in the commercial centers and along the Trapelo Road and Concord Road corridors
2. No incentives in zoning bylaw for mixed use, multifamily housing, and shared parking

Strategies:

1. Allow increased housing density within walking distance of commercial centers and “corridors” (i.e. the village centers)
2. Within the village centers permit smaller lot size/du., cluster zoning, density bonuses.
3. Allow by-right development

Reduce carbon footprint of new housing construction

Issues:

1. Existing housing is energy inefficient and increases greenhouse gas emissions
2. Over-reliance on cars leads to energy inefficiency and greenhouse gases

Strategies:

1. Adopt energy efficient building code
2. Require LEED check list for all new development

Supplement property tax base with new development of empty properties

Issues:

1. A number of public and private properties have vacant, underutilized buildings. There is no consensus about reuse (i.e housing, commercial, mixed use as well as preservation or redevelopment).
2. There is no database inventory of underutilized property nor is there a process to develop consensus amongst the various boards and interest groups to facilitate change.

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Strategies:

1. Consensus around the three elements included in Sustainability (i.e. Enhancing the town's tax base, the environment and design/historic preservation/social) need to be taken into account when considering changes in land use and buildings.
2. Develop design guidelines to shape new development.
3. Include representatives of the Historic Preservation community in a review of land use and building changes.
4. Identify opportunities for mixed use, multi-family housing and co- housing.
5. Promote zoning changes which will enable the development of housing to address priority needs.