

Mapping Belmont's Future



Phase I Report Available

The results of the first phase of planning are available on the Town's website at the Office of Community Development web page which can be found off the Town's home page:

<http://www.belmont-ma.gov>

What is the Belmont Comprehensive Plan and why is it important to me?

The Plan is a coordinated vision based on community consensus with policies to guide private investment, public facilities, infrastructure, land use, and zoning .

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Comprehensive Plan Survey — What did we hear from you?

This past Spring over 500 community members participated in web based survey as part of the initial outreach for the Comprehensive Plan. What did we hear?

Commercial Vitality

Respondents felt that the commercial areas are NOT stable and that the Town should make changes to help these areas thrive. Commercial areas used by respondents most frequently were: Belmont Center, Waverly Square and Cushing Square.

Sixty-five percent (65%) said they visit Belmont Center on a weekly basis. On the other hand, 60% and 42% visit East Belmont and Central/Palfrey Squares respectively a few times a year or never.

Access to Commercial Areas and Transportation

Improved **bus connections** between Alewife, Arlington Center, and Watertown square were supported/strongly supported by 78%. **Shuttle service** was supported by 45%. Improved **sidewalks and on-road bicycle** connections had the highest amount of "strong support" with 40%, and a total of 77% support & strongly support.

The Comprehensive Plan puts part of the Town's Vision into action.

"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."*

(Source: A Working Vision for Belmont's Future, 2001)

Myths vs. Reality

When asked for an open ended response about the Town's most important assets, the most frequently cited were:

- Good school system,
- Good Location (Proximity to Boston and Cambridge), and
- Small town feel



Belmont's school system is one of the communities strongest assets.

During the course of outreach to Belmont citizens, property and business owners, the project team uncovered some common opinions that are not borne out by our analysis.

Myth: Belmont's commercial areas are not viable.

Belmont's commercial areas face stiff economic challenges similar to towns throughout the region. Low foot traffic, parking and space limitations, and streetscapes in need of improvement all present significant hurdles to commercial success. Nevertheless, Belmont continues to be a popular place to live because of the quality of life and that small town character to which the village development pattern contributes.

The commercial areas in Belmont have the potential to thrive.

Myth: Belmont is fully built-out and will not change.

The consultant team identified with the support of the planning staff 16 development sites within the 6 village centers or subareas demonstrating that there are some short-term opportunities for redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels throughout Belmont, even under existing zoning.

Myth: Increasing density means more cars, school children, and lower tax revenue.

Increased density, if done in the context of the scale and character of Belmont's historic development patterns, will result in net benefits.

A Town of Neighborhoods

Belmont's six interconnected, walkable neighborhoods provide a structure of local commercial centers that residents cherish as one of the town's defining features. The survey identified the convenience of the walkable neighborhoods with shopping, services, facilities, and transit as one of Belmont's core strengths. A "town of neighborhoods" has been identified as a possible framework for managing growth in the Comprehensive Plan. In addition to fiscal stability and schools, **thriving commercial areas was listed as one of the top 3 priorities** identified by respondents in the Comprehensive Plan Survey.



Single family housing in Belmont

Most common reasons for going to Belmont's commercial centers	
Convenient to my home/work	79%
Able to walk to many different services and shops	77%
Want to purchase items locally	71%

What happens next?



Fall 2009

Kickoff Summit Meeting
September 10th—Belmont
High School Cafeteria
7:00 p.m.

5 Working Meetings
(dates to be determined)

1. Historic Preservation
2. Public Facilities/finance
3. Open Space
4. Housing
5. Energy Reduction & Transportation



The renovation of an old fire station on Trapelo Road into condominiums is an example of “adaptive reuse” of an historically significant building.

Winter 2009

3 Public Workshops
(dates to be determined)

1. Belmont Center, Brighton Street, Concord Avenue Business Districts
2. Trapelo Corridor Villages and south Pleasant Street
3. Greenbelt Corridors, Concord Avenue Neighborhood connections, and Historic Preservation

Spring 2010

Plan Approval

(dates to be determined)

The Planning Board with the Board of Selectmen will hold a joint public meeting to approve the Plan. Town Meeting will receive a report on the Comprehensive Plan in April 2010.

Did you know? The acorn and oak leaf reflects Belmont's historic and natural character.

In an open ended response for the most important challenges, these were cited most frequently:

- Fiscal stability and budget
- Road and sidewalk repair;
- Maintaining the Town's infrastructure (roads, buildings, water/sewer) and
- Enhancing business climate



A building of this scale could not be built under current zoning rules.

Survey Results (continued from page 1)



Belmont's weekly farmers market builds community

Residential Development

Mixed use building (first floor retail with residential apartments above) got support, with 56% saying "Yes" to more of that development type. At the same time, 52% said "no" to apartments indicating a need for clarification about these building forms. Responses to the questions about adding more single family (detached) houses and townhouses were inconclusive.

Public Spaces

Seventy-eight percent (78%) supported improving non-vehicular travel by pedestrian and bicycle connections; while 75% supported enhanced public spaces in commercial areas (such as adding benches, tables, other amenities). Enhancing school facilities and municipal facilities got slightly lower support with 68% and 64% respectfully.



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Follow the project on the Web

<http://www.belmont-ma.gov>

(go to Office of Community
Development Page)

Come to the Comprehensive Plan
Phase II Kickoff meeting

on

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Belmont High School Cafeteria

7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Questions or comments?

Contact: Jay Szklut, Town of Belmont Planning and Economic Development Manager,