



Mapping a Sustainable Belmont

On-line Survey March 2010

Summary Report

April 8, 2010

Prepared by: Chris Kluchman

Eaton Planning



Introduction

Mapping a Sustainable Belmont was a web-based and print survey that was part of the public outreach associated with the Belmont Comprehensive Plan project. This survey was available from March 8 to March 31st 2010 and was the second on-line survey during the Comprehensive Plan process. The first survey was taken by over 500 people in April 2009.

Purpose

In conjunction with other outreach efforts, the second survey informed people about the Comprehensive Plan and sought feedback on specific recommendations and strategies being proposed as part of the draft plan. Other public participation methods used in the second part of the project included:

- Kickoff meeting in September 2009;
- Six working committees that met several times each to analyze specific topic areas and make recommendations;
- Three workshops during December 2009 and January 2010 to review the intersection of the working group suggestions;
- Executive Summary presentation at a joint Planning Board/Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting in February 2010;
- Public Forum held on March 23, 2010, at the Beech Street Center including presentation and discussion of recommendations; and
- Project website with updates and project materials and reports.

Survey Distribution

The survey was available from March 8, 2010 through March 31, 2010. In addition to being available via a link on the Town's web page, an email notice with a direct link to the survey was sent to email lists of Town Meeting members, and other public email lists. Paper copies of the survey were available at the Office of Community Development and at the Town Library. There was a press release and subsequent notice in the Belmont Citizen-Herald.

Number of responses

There were a total of 308 responses to the survey. 304 were completed on-line, and 4 were submitted as "paper copies".

Survey Qualification

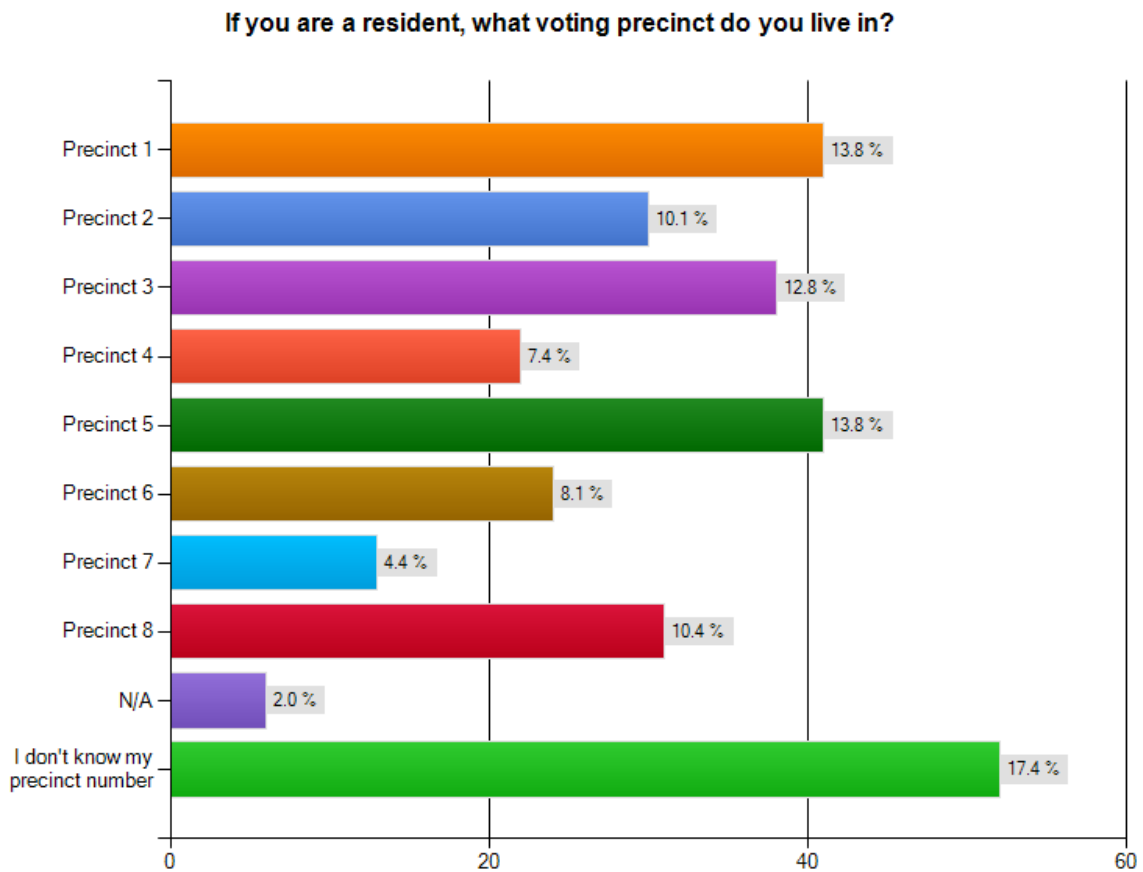
The survey is not a scientific survey with a random selection of respondents. It represents a self selected group that chose to take the survey. Therefore, the results should not be extended to



represent the views of the community of Belmont as a whole, rather as the opinions of people who took the time to answer the questions.

Demographics of respondents

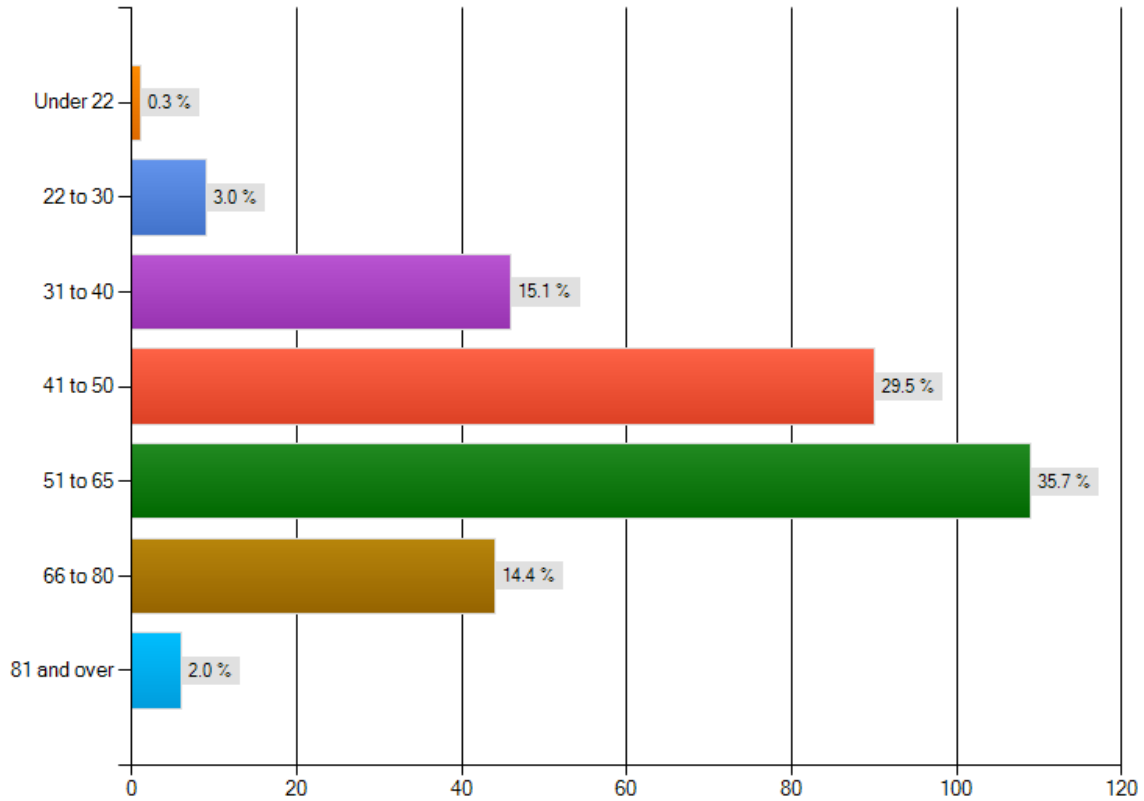
Respondents represented all of the precincts in the Town; Precincts 5 and 1 each made up over 13% of respondents, while Precinct 7 had the lowest distribution with 4%. Over 17% did not know which precinct they lived in.



Participants were most likely to be between 51 and 65 years old.



What is your age?



Response to Vision Statement and Map

Many people had comments about the Vision Statement and the Map. Generally, the comments break down into 5 groups:

	Support Vision	Don't Support Vision	Suggestions for additions to Vision	Don't Understand vision and/or map	Feel strongly about one issue (positive or negative)
Number	78	14	29	7	45
Percent	45%	8%	17%	4%	26%



Prioritization of Nine Recommendations

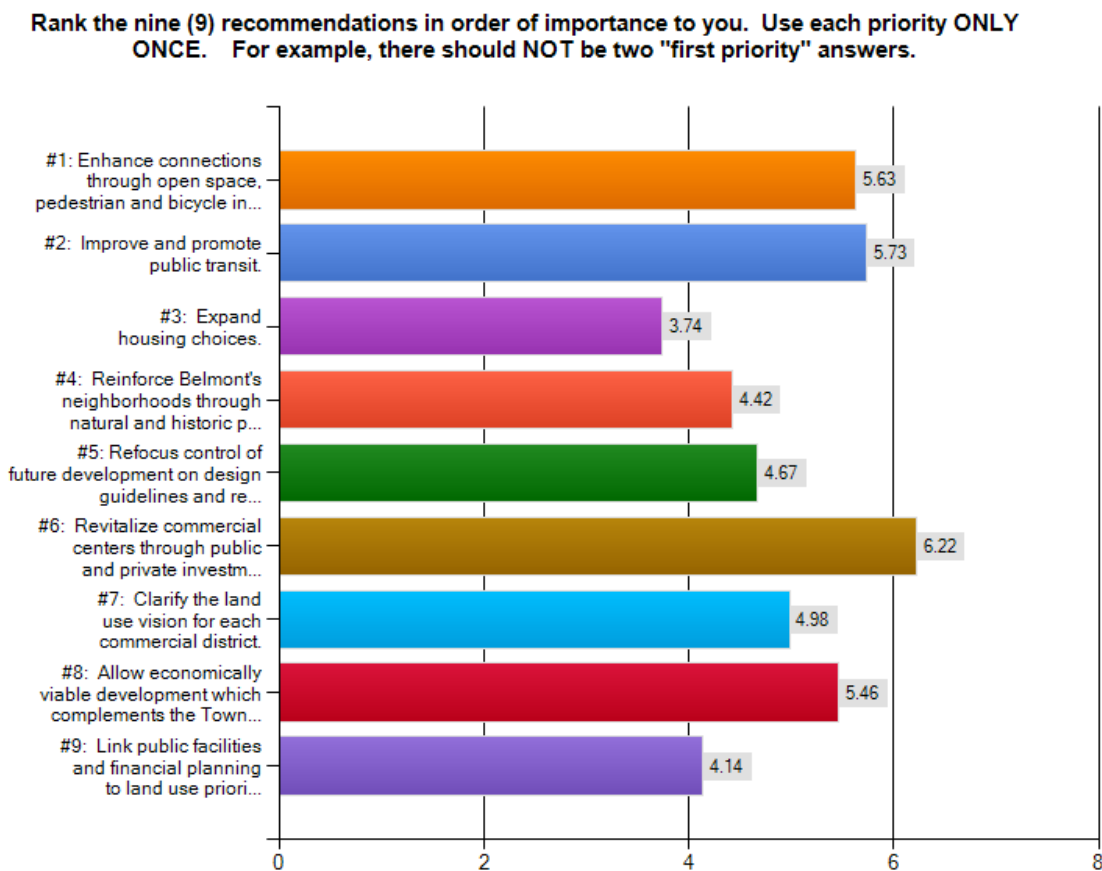
The survey had two different ways for people to show their priorities among the nine recommendations. One was to rank each from first to ninth priority. In this exercise, the top three priorities were:

First Priority Revitalize Commercial Centers through public and private investment

Second Priority Improve and promote public transit

Third Priority Enhance connections

The following chart shows the average ranking for the nine recommendations.





The second prioritization asked people to rank recommendations by designating dollar values to the nine recommendations. The same top three priorities come forward from this exercise as the above, although the second and third priorities are switched. This indicates that respondents think it is slightly more important for the town to spend more money building connections such as bike paths than it is to spend money to support transit.

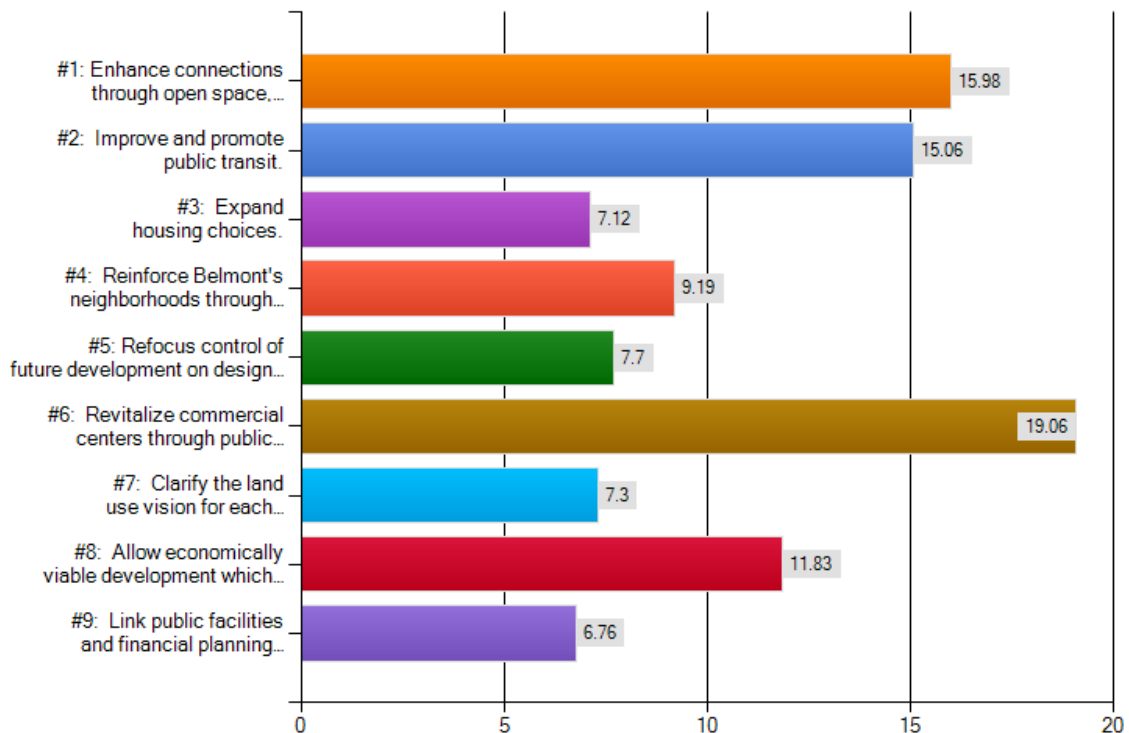
First Priority Revitalize Commercial Centers through public and private investment

Second Priority Enhance connections

Third Priority Improve and promote public transit

The following chart shows the average dollars assigned to each of the nine recommendations.

Rank the nine (9) recommendations in terms of how funding should be allocated. You have \$100 to allocate to the set of recommendations. Fill in the amount you would spend on each. Use 0 for none. Your answer must add up to 100 (don't use \$ sign). For example you might allocate 40 to #1, 40 to #7, and 20 to #9, and 0 to the remaining recommendations.





Each of the priority exercises had the same **fourth priority** – Allow economically viable development which complements the Town’s historic character.

Most and Least supported Strategies for each of the nine Recommendations

1. Enhance Connections

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Adopt “Safe Routes to School”	55.4% (124)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Improve or create Railroad Crossings	13.8% (31)

2. Improve and Promote Public Transit

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Advocate for bus connections to Alewife Station and between town’s commercial centers via MBTA or local/private shuttle`	47.1% (105)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Encourage concentrated housing in Waverley Square, Trapelo Road Corridor and Belmont Center near train stations	31.3% (70)

3. Expand Housing Choices

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	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	40.2% (90)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Allow accessory housing units (in-law apartments) in existing homes	14.8% (33)

Note: The four strategies for this recommendation had very close results. See detailed results below.



4. Reinforce Belmont’s neighborhoods

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Develop guidelines for neighborhood streetscape improvements, street trees, and plantings on town owned properties	42.0% (95)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Pass a demolition delay by-law to require a time delay (perhaps 6 months or a year) prior to demolishing historic properties	23.0% (52)

5. Refocus control of future development on design guidelines

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Include technical/professional and community input in design review process	36.9% (82)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Allow more flexibility and greater density governed by design and impact analysis	20.7% (46)

Note: Two of the four strategies in this recommendation had high number of responses that indicated “Need more info”; including 29.8% (65) for the strategy “Allow more flexibility and greater density governed by design and impact analysis.” See detailed results below.

6. Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Public/Private Partnerships: Business association(s) to undertake common marketing promotions and maintain features such as trashcans and benches in commercial areas.	53.1% (119)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Lease parking spaces from property owners to create new shared municipal parking that is funded by parking fees.	13.0% (29)

Note: The strategy “Lease parking spaces from property owners to create new shared municipal parking that is funded by parking fees” had high number of responses that indicated “Need more info” 30.1% (66). See detailed results below.



7. Clarify the land use vision for each commercial district.

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Define use, size, parking requirements and approval process that are sufficiently flexible to make new investments economical	43.0% (95)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Undertake further planning to determine the vision for future land use and design for each commercial area.	6.8% (15)

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

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Establish a more predictable approval process for commercial development that focuses on design criteria and impact analysis	53.9% (118)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Reduce 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).	16.6% (37)

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

Most/Least Support	Strategy	Percentage (#)
Highest Percentage Support Short Term Action	Create a financial management plan that provides a sustainable level of funding for maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure and public services.	51.6% (113)
Highest Percentage Do not support	Undertake planning for the next phase of public building projects considering land use context and vision for the affected neighborhood.	4.6% (10)

Note: The four strategies for this recommendation had very close results. See detailed results below.



Question 1

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

Which of the following apply to you? (check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Belmont Resident	94.1%	286
Belmont Resident - Business Owner	3.9%	12
Non-resident - Business Owner	1.3%	4
Non-resident - Property Owner	1.3%	4
Other	2.0%	6
<i>answered question</i>		304
<i>skipped question</i>		4

Question 2

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

What is your age?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 22	0.3%	1
22 to 30	3.0%	9
31 to 40	15.1%	46
41 to 50	29.5%	90
51 to 65	35.7%	109
66 to 80	14.4%	44
81 and over	2.0%	6
<i>answered question</i>		305
<i>skipped question</i>		3



Question 3

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

If you are a resident, what voting precinct do you live in?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Precinct 1	13.8%	41
Precinct 2	10.1%	30
Precinct 3	12.8%	38
Precinct 4	7.4%	22
Precinct 5	13.8%	41
Precinct 6	8.1%	24
Precinct 7	4.4%	13
Precinct 8	10.4%	31
N/A	2.0%	6
I don't know my precinct number	17.4%	52
<i>answered question</i>		298
<i>skipped question</i>		10

Question 4

Open response question – summarized above.



Question 5

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #1: Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure Concern: Investment and maintenance of transportation infrastructure does not reflect the Town's priority of being a "walkable" community.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Establish a program for regularly funding maintenance and reconstruction of sidewalks.	55	61	75	9	22	4	226
Improve pedestrian connections among open spaces, neighborhoods, and commercial centers.	61	45	65	16	27	9	223
Improve or create railroad crossings, e.g. at Alexander Ave., Belmont Center, White St. and/or Clark. St.	43	46	55	31	40	10	225
Provide bicycle parking and storage at transit stations, recreational fields, trail heads, village centers and other destinations.	82	45	47	19	16	10	219
Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle safety in roadway projects.	99	39	49	14	22	2	225
Adopt "Safe Routes to School" policies and promote walking and biking to school.	124	25	41	14	16	4	224
Identify opportunities to partner with the private sector to fund bike and pedestrian projects.	96	30	48	23	28	2	227
<i>answered question</i>							229
<i>skipped question</i>							79



Question 6

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #2: Improve and promote public transit. Concern: Low ridership at commuter rail stations is partly why the MBTA may eliminate one of the two train stops in Belmont. Bus routes may be reduced as well. The Town needs to demonstrate support for transit infrastructure to maintain this service.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Encourage concentrated housing in Waverley Square, Trapelo Road Corridor and Belmont Center near train stations.	48	33	29	70	38	4	222
Consider adaptive reuse of public buildings to create housing opportunities within walking distance to Belmont Center.	60	48	37	34	42	3	224
Provide additional on and off-street commuter parking at locations to be determined.	61	39	39	37	42	4	222
Advocate for bus connections to Alewife Station and between the town's commercial areas via MBTA or local/private shuttle service.	105	36	44	18	19	1	223
Improve pedestrian connections and amenities at train stations and bus stops, including pathways, signage, shelters, furniture and information.	89	45	37	23	21	4	219
Provide incentives, such as dedicated parking revenues for streetscape improvement and maintenance, to residential areas that provide on-street commuter parking.	65	36	29	42	43	9	224
answered question							226
skipped question							82



Question 7

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #3: Expand housing choices. Concern: There is a shortage of housing options in Belmont for seniors, empty nesters, adults without children, young adults and households with average or lower incomes.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
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.	90	31	36	32	30	5	224
Allow accessory housing units (in-law apartments) in existing homes.	88	28	33	33	31	10	223
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.	64	40	39	20	51	10	224
Adopt energy efficiency building code standards and incentives for improving housing stock.	88	30	44	20	39	4	225
answered question							226
skipped question							82



Question 8

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #4: Reinforce Belmont's neighborhoods through natural and historic resource protection. **Concern:** Historic buildings and open spaces are distinctive features that define Belmont's small town character and quality of life, but many of these are threatened by changes.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Adopt criteria for acquiring open land, conservation easements and restrictions for the preservation of privately held open spaces.	78	32	44	29	35	9	227
Develop guidelines for neighborhood streetscape improvements, street trees, and plantings on town owned properties.	95	45	40	14	26	6	226
Pass a wetlands bylaw that would increase natural resource protection.	86	26	39	32	36	6	225
Pass a demolition delay bylaw to require a time delay (perhaps 6 months or a year) prior to demolishing historic structures.	81	15	27	52	41	10	226
Modify zoning to protect yards and small neighborhood open spaces.	90	19	31	29	48	6	223
Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide funding for historic preservation, affordable housing and open space projects.	79	21	24	42	50	11	227
<i>answered question</i>							229
<i>skipped question</i>							79



Question 9

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #5: Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process. Concern: Current zoning regulations do not ensure compatibility of new development with the historic character and development patterns in the commercial areas and neighborhoods.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Adopt stronger design criteria specific to each residential and commercial neighborhood.	68	33	23	43	49	7	223
Allow more flexibility and greater density governed by design and impact analysis.	62	26	19	46	65	4	222
Include technical/professional and community input in design review process.	82	36	34	17	42	11	222
Provide density incentives for developments that meet design criteria and build public improvements.	64	28	22	40	62	6	222
<i>answered question</i>							225
<i>skipped question</i>							83



Question 10

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #6: Revitalize commercial centers through public and private improvements. Concern: Commercial areas are in need of better traffic flow and enhanced public spaces and sidewalks.

Concern: Commercial areas are in

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Physical Improvements: Leonard Ave/Concord Street/Common Street intersection.	84	40	44	22	33	1	224
Physical Improvements in commercial centers along Trapelo Road and Belmont Street to complement the design of the Trapelo Corridor reconstruction project	77	55	50	14	27	0	223
Streetscape and pedestrian improvements to the Concord Avenue/Bright Road intersection.	56	50	57	28	27	6	224
Public/Private Partnerships: Business association(s) to undertake common marketing promotions and maintain features such as trashcans and benches in commercial areas.	119	28	40	8	22	7	224
Public/Private Partnerships: A Business Improvement District and/or dedicated surplus parking revenues to improve services in commercial areas.	80	35	34	15	53	5	222
Parking Management plan: (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.)	91	33	28	26	39	6	223
Lease parking spaces from property owners to create new shared municipal parking that is funded by parking fees.	57	37	27	29	67	6	223
answered question							225
skipped question							83



Question 11

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #7: Clarify the land use vision for each commercial district. Concern: Belmont's commercial zoning districts do not reflect the current development patterns, functions and unique character.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Undertake further planning to determine the vision for future land use and design for each commercial area.	89	42	30	15	35	9	220
Develop new commercial zoning districts that reflect the desired vision for each commercial area, including a range of uses and distinctive design.	72	45	30	12	55	6	220
Define use, size, parking requirements and approval process that are sufficiently flexible to make new investments economical.	95	43	24	9	43	7	221
<i>answered question</i>							223
<i>skipped question</i>							85



Question 12

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #8: Allow economically viable development which complements the Town's historic character. Concern: The Town is missing opportunities for higher value commercial development because of limits in the zoning regulations in commercial districts. These limits are an obstacle to attracting businesses to provide the goods and services that Belmont residents want.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Modify height and building size requirements in commercial areas subject to a strengthened design review process.	96	25	26	35	39	1	222
Establish a more predictable approval process for commercial development that focuses on design criteria and impact analysis	118	27	34	9	30	1	219
Establish stronger design criteria for all development that is specific to each commercial area.	103	28	32	12	45	1	221
Reduce 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.)	85	23	24	37	48	6	223
answered question							223
skipped question							85



Question 13

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

RECOMMENDATION #9: Link public facilities and financial planning to land use priorities. Concern: Decisions about capital facilities and budgeting need to consider comprehensive land use vision and goals for economic development, housing, open space, historic resources and transportation.

Answer Options	Support Short Term (1-2 years)	Support Medium Term (3-5 years)	Support Long Term (5-10 years)	Do not support	Need more info	No opinion	Response Count
Undertake planning for the next phase of public building projects considering land use context and vision for the affected neighborhoods.	67	52	37	10	45	7	218
Create a financial management plan that provides a sustainable level of funding for maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure, and public services.	113	31	41	5	25	4	219
Establish priorities for funding capital improvements, infrastructure and planning to implement the Comprehensive Plan.	108	35	41	5	23	7	219
Foster awareness and understanding of a plan for financial stability among residents and public officials	105	37	38	5	26	7	218
answered question							222
skipped question							86



Question 14

Rank the nine (9) recommendations in order of importance to you. Use each priority ONLY ONCE. For example, there should NOT be two "first priority" answers.

Answer Options	First priority	Second priority	Third priority	Fourth priority	Fifth priority	Sixth priority	Seventh priority	Eighth priority	Ninth priority	Rating Average	Response Count
#1: Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure	54	34	20	18	11	16	16	20	32	5.63	221
#2: Improve and promote public transit.	28	43	27	24	30	16	27	16	10	5.73	221
#3: Expand housing choices.	13	9	23	16	21	18	25	33	63	3.74	221
#4: Reinforce Belmont's neighborhoods through natural and historic protection.	19	17	21	25	20	22	24	40	33	4.42	221
#5: Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process.	7	19	26	22	39	33	40	22	13	4.67	221
#6: Revitalize commercial centers through public and private investments.	58	24	34	27	20	20	14	14	10	6.22	221
#7: Clarify the land use vision for each commercial district.	10	25	26	36	27	34	26	26	11	4.98	221
#8: Allow economically viable development which complements the Town's historic character.	20	41	27	30	23	25	20	20	15	5.46	221
#9: Link public facilities and financial planning to land use priorities.	12	9	17	23	30	37	29	30	34	4.14	221
answered question											221
skipped question											87



Question 15

Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future, March 2010

Rank the nine (9) recommendations in terms of how funding should be allocated. You have \$100 to allocate to the set of recommendations. Fill in the amount you would spend on each. Use 0 for none. Your answer must add up to 100 (don't use \$ sign). For example you might allocate 40 to #1, 40 to #7, and 20 to #9, and 0 to the remaining recommendations.

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
#1: Enhance connections through open space, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure	15.98	3,532	221
#2: Improve and promote public transit.	15.06	3,328	221
#3: Expand housing choices.	7.12	1,573	221
#4: Reinforce Belmont's neighborhoods through natural and historic protection.	9.19	2,032	221
#5: Refocus control of future development on design guidelines and review process.	7.70	1,701	221
#6: Revitalize commercial centers through public and private investments.	19.06	4,212	221
#7: Clarify the land use vision for each commercial district.	7.30	1,614	221
#8: Allow economically viable development which complements the Town's historic character.	11.83	2,615	221
#9: Link public facilities and financial planning to land use priorities.	6.76	1,493	221
		<i>answered question</i>	221
		<i>skipped question</i>	87