A PLANNING VISION FOR BELMONT CENTER

FINAL REPORT

THE BELMONT CENTER PLANNING GROUP

March 17, 2008

Implementation Category	Action	Responsible Party	Priority	Schedule
Short Term Improvements	**Streetscape Guidelines:** Develop adequate detail for sidewalk extension and street furnishings to guide implementation. Grant funds sought.	CDD/BCPG	High	Winter/Spring 2008
	Negotiate partial widening with Burke development to be consistent with long term plan	CDD	High	Spring 2008
	Increased Trash Collection -- Follow-up with businesses regarding possible supplementary collection,	DPW	High	Winter 2008
Regulatory mechanisms	**Zoning Overlay District** Recommend consideration, review and public discussion	Planning Board	High	Spring - Fall 2008
	Demolition delay Recommendation: Review and public discussion.	CHC/ Planning Board	Med.	Fall 2008
Key Sites Studies to inform zoning overlay discussion	**Electric Light/ Police Dept. bldgs.** Consideration of development scenarios assuming possible move of Police station to Library bldg.	CPOC	Med.	
	Town Green: Review potential traffic and circulation impacts associated with range of Town Green options.	CDD/BCPG	Med.	
	Municipal lot Study long term development options for municipal lot	CDD/CPOC	Med.	

	Macy's building Work with Planning Board to identify possible zoning incentives to ensure active retail use IF Macy's were to leave in future for discussion	CDD/Planning Board	Med.	
	Bank Drive thru and adjacent lot Work with Planning Board to identify possible zoning incentives to ensure development to meet guidelines.	CDD Planning Board	Med.	

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1.00 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning Objectives

The Belmont Center Planning Group (BCPG) has worked since June 2005, in consultation with residents, Town officials, Town committees and property and business owners, to frame a strategy to improve Belmont Center. The committee has heard during a process of wide consultation that the Belmont community has a vision of a stronger, more vital version of the Center that we have today. The following broad statement reflects the views heard:

> ***Belmont Center should be an attractive and vital destination for people from Belmont and beyond for dining, shopping and socializing during both day and evening hours that maintains its 'small town' historic character and has a 'walkable' pedestrian scale while becoming a more vibrant and economically vital place to visit.***

Comments throughout the extensive public process reflected appreciation for the strong foundation of assets including the Center's charming character, family-friendly shops (book store, toy store, gift shops, etc), the walkable scale, the central location within town and good restaurants. However, the community also expressed a desire to address the Center's deficiencies by attracting a more diverse mix of businesses (citing too many banks and the need for a grocery store and/ or bakery), making circulation through the Center easier for pedestrians, stemming the hodgepodge mix of poor quality buildings, providing more parking and community gathering spaces, improving signage and wayfinding.

The BCPG proposes a set of broad objectives to guide future efforts to strengthen the character of Belmont Center. These objectives reflect the values and comments that the general public and Town committees communicated to the BCPG including acknowledging that Belmont Center is built up and that large scale redevelopment in a short time frame is not likely. These long term planning objectives [in no particular priority] are as follows:

(a) **Preserve and enhance the Center's historic character;**

(b) **Ensure that the Town is well-positioned to maximize the positive impact of future development opportunities as they arise;**

(c) **Encourage a complementary mix of business types and land uses to support both vibrant daytime and evening activity;**

(d) **Provide sufficient parking to support Center businesses and land uses;**

(e) **Preserve and enhance the Center's pedestrian scale by making it more pleasant and safer for pedestrians to walk to and through the Center;**

(f) **Promote civic engagement in the Center through activities, programs and uses that bring community members together.**

(g) **Preserve the residential neighborhoods abutting the Center to conform to the "small town" character of the Center and the concept of the Center as a place for mixed uses, including housing.**

In addition, all of these planning objectives are consistent with the Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Growth initiative and could provide a framework for future state and federal funding to support the town's effort to reinforce these Smart Growth qualities.

2.00 INTRODUCTION

2.10 Overview

The Belmont Center Planning Group ("BCPG") was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in June of 2005 with the goal of designing a transparent planning process with multiple opportunities for public participation for the purpose of developing recommendations to improve Belmont Center, which, where applicable, builds upon work that has been done by other Town Committees over the years. This document presents the BCPG's final recommendations for review and discussion by the Town.

The mandate of the Selectmen also included:

(a) addressing the potential re-use of the Belmont Center Fire station, the Electric Light Building and other under-used properties in the Center;
(b) recommending improvements to vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns and parking;
(c) recommending improvements to increase pedestrian traffic and enhance pedestrian amenities; and
(d) recommending methods to encourage an optimal mix of businesses in the Center. In addition, the Selectmen asked the BCPG to recommend projects that could be implemented in the short-term but would provide_immediate improvements to Belmont Center. The BCPG submitted these recommendations to the Selectmen in 2005. (See Appendix .)

The Belmont Planning Group consists of Belmont residents, Vickie Alani, Chair; Sami Baghdady (Planning Board liaison), Thayer Donham, Evelyn Haralampu, Roy Papalia, Mary Power and Allan Vanderley who together have professional backgrounds in the areas of architecture, planning, design, real estate development and law. Town Administrator, Thomas Younger is an ex officio member of the committee which is staffed by Jay Szklut, Planning and Economic Development Manager from the Office of Community Development. Over the course of this planning effort, the BCPG was also assisted by Deborah Emello, former Planning Board liaison: Jeffrey Wheeler of the Community Development Office as well as previous committee members Alison Palmer, and Sara Oaklander.

2.20 Public Outreach Process

The BCPG worked to involve a number of the stakeholder groups that have an interest in the Center, including, the Belmont Center Business Association, the Traffic Advisory Committee, the Disability Access Committee, the Historic District Commission, the Vision 21

Implementation Committee, the Library Trustees, the Garden Club, the Youth Commission, the Planning Board, the Bikeway Planning Committee, Parking Study Committee, the Town's Community Development Department, Electric Light, Fire and Police Departments and the Board of Health. The BCPG also sought the advice of a representative of the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development.

Early in the process the BCPG met with these Town committees, departments and associations to solicit their views about various issues. These stakeholder meetings focused around common topics such as transportation including transit, parking, traffic calming; urban design, including zoning, public property, utilities and historic preservation; business mix; and quality of life. In addition, BCPG members attended State sponsored workshops focused on walkable town centers, and business center planning.

The BCPG prepared a survey that was widely distributed to residents via Belmont Center businesses, the Library and Town Day activities, seeking the views of residents and visitors to the Center. Updated reports were provided to the Belmont Citizen Herald and documents were provided in a public file at the Belmont Library and on the Town's web site. A very significant element of the BCPG's outreach plan was the public planning "Charrette" held on April 1, 2006 which was attended by approximately 70 individuals. With the guidance of Daphne Politis, a professional facilitator, residents, young and old, offered their views about the future of Belmont Center and this Charrette provided a foundation for our recommendations. A full report of the Charrette written by the consultant is provided in the Appendix 5.

The BCPG undertook the following additional outreach activities:

(a) Submitted articles to the Belmont Citizen Herald regarding the process, committee findings and upcoming activities of the committee; (See Appendix);

(b) Made BCPG draft reports available in the Public Library, and on the Town web-site with opportunities for public comment;

(c) Provided BCPG draft recommendations, surveys and other material on the Town web site;

(d) Held a series of public meetings with stakeholder committees and local businesses regarding BCPG proposals;

(e) Held follow-up public meetings with Town committees, businesses, abutters and the general public;

(f) Coordinated with the Town's Planning Board and the Community Development Department to shape a process for defining the proposed regulatory changes;

(g) Provided an information table and a public feedback form at Belmont Center Town Day.

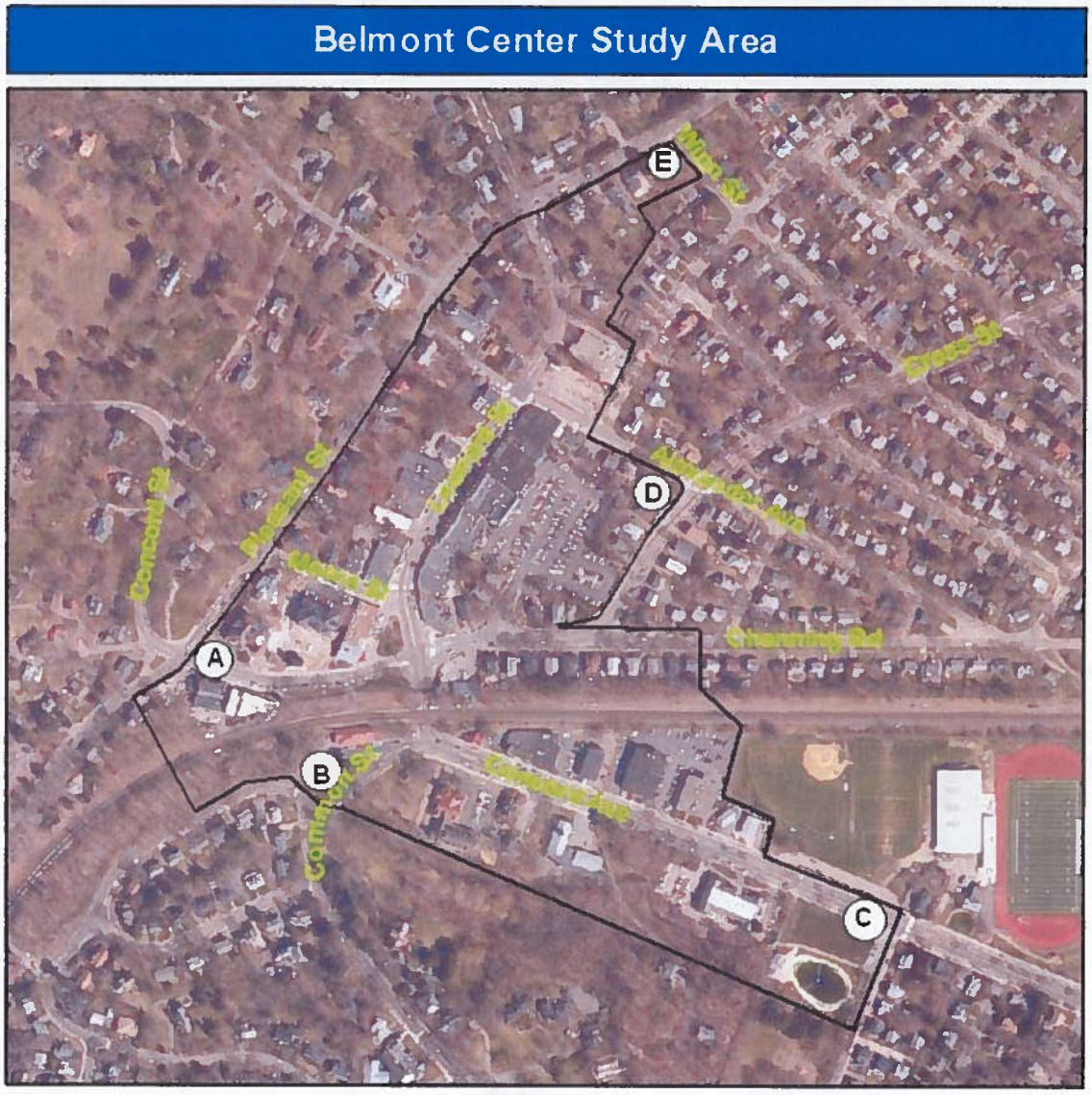
(h) Advised Planning and Zoning Boards on proposals presented by the Burke Land Company regarding the development of the Belmont Center fire station;

(i) Contacted the business community of Belmont Center on numerous occasions for personal interviews with BCPG members, meetings in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and the Charrette. BCPG's most recent meeting with the Belmont Center Business Association was in February of 2008 in which members of the Belmont Center Business Association (Belmont Toys, TCBY, and Calista's) expressed approval of the BCPG recommendations. In addition, the BCPG provided the members of Belmont Center Business Association with minutes of the Charrette and other meetings between the BCPG and the Association.

(j) Held open public posted meetings at Town Hall on most Friday mornings since June 2005.

3.00 MAP OF STUDY AREA

For the purposes of the study, the BCPG defined the Belmont Center study area primarily as the Leonard Street and Concord Avenue corridor from Pleasant Street down to the Underwood Pool. The zoning designation for most of Belmont Center is LB1, which is a smaller portion of this area.



4.00 RENDERING

In 2007-2008 the Town funded a design professional, Jason Spanier, to construct a computer-based model and images of a future Belmont Center. The illustrations at the end of the Appendices are computer graphics showing some of the recommendations for Belmont Center that are reflected in this report.

5.00 FIRE STATION

At the request of the Board of Selectmen, the BCPG helped draft the Request For Proposals for the sale and redevelopment of the original Belmont Center Fire Station. The BCPG held a public hearing to vet the developers' proposals, analyzed the proposals and reported findings in a report to the Selectmen, and recommended the selection of a potential developer.

Once the Board of Selectmen awarded the project to a developer, the BCPG has continued to review specific design proposals for the Fire Station and has reported the committee's comments at meetings of the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board. The plans for the redevelopment of the Fire Station feature a new 'destination' restaurant and other commercial uses which the committee expects will contribute to the vitality of the Center.

6.00 RE-USE OF THE ELECTRIC LIGHT BUILDING

The BCPG was asked to consider options for the re-use of the Electric Light Building. As part of its process, members of the BCPG inspected the Building, a report concerning which is attached in the Appendix. The Building currently houses Town offices, network switching gear under a contract with Comcast, a substation, transformers, the storage of Town files and a teen center. Drawbacks to the redevelopment of the Electric Light Building include the cost of removing the environmental hazards and relocating the transformer and other utilities. These costs would make it extremely unlikely that a sale of the Building alone would generate an offer anywhere near the Building's assessed value of $2,152,000 (as of December, 2007). Another major drawback of the development of the Electric Light Building site is the irregular shape of its lot. However, if the Electric Light Building property were combined with the Police Station property and adjoining lots the overall lot configuration would improve and the value of the assembled lot would increase.

The BCPG recommends a mixed use residential and commercial development with parking while recognizing that the proximity to the railroad tracks and the shape of the lot presents challenges. As it is adjacent to the railroad station and businesses, the Building could also lend itself to a two-level parking structure that could preserve the facades. Using the building for parking also enhances the pedestrian traffic on the CVS side of Leonard Street while adding public parking to the Center.

The Historical Commission has recommended that the Belmont Police Station and the Electric Light Building be folded into the Pleasant Street Historic District . This has not been approved by Town Meeting or prioritized by the Board of Selectmen over the years. The BCPG is not in agreement as to whether the historic value of these two properties outweighs the potential benefit of redeveloping the sites at a higher density.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

6.10 Overview of Proposed Implementation

The BCPG recommends that the Town consider implementing a series of short-term, mid-term and long-term actions to improve the Center utilizing three different approaches which are discussed more specifically below:

(a) Create a Physical Improvement Plan for Public Spaces

The BCPG recommends physical improvements such as more attractive street furnishings (benches, light standards, trash bins and newspaper boxes) that reinforce the Center's distinctive character; better pedestrian crossings; more attractive,efficient and less redundant signage and traffic light placement; more frequent trash collection from the businesses; provision of landscaping and planter boxes around the Center; wider sidewalks on both sides of Leonard Street (subject to a traffic study); more attractive gateways into the Center to draw attention to it; information kiosks highlighting parking locations, businesses, restaurants and events; and an upgrade of the pedestrian tunnel including better lighting. Other considerations for improving Belmont Center include: reinforcing the walkable scale of the Center by transitioning the scale of future development so that it is compatible with neighborhood edges; preserving the neighborhoods abutting the Center to conform to the "small town" design of the Center and the concept of the Center as a place for mixed uses, including housing. The BCPG supports cleaning the railroad bridge and providing improved lighting for pedestrians under that bridge.

(b) Adopt a zoning mechanism that provides incentives for high quality design in future development:

To ensure that future development supports the vision for a more active and thriving Center, the BCPG recommends establishing a zoning overlay district, consistent with the one recently created adopted for Cushing Square, or, alternatively, form-based zoning that provides guidelines to influence the design of any new development. The zoning tool is not as important as the BCPG's intent which is to provide incentives for property owners to provide attractive and more desired retail uses at the ground floor. The new zoning should encourage upper floor residential use in the commercial district which will also make the Center a more vital place by providing 24 hour occupancy. The district would include both the LB1 area and a surrounding buffer including residential properties to ensure appropriate transitions from commercial to existing residential areas.

Subject to Planning Board approval and design oversight that is sensitive to historic preservation, allow up to 5 stories in specific interior locations (i.e., the municipal parking lot and the sites on the north side of Concord Avenue).

(c) Identify Development Opportunities at Key Sites:

To ensure that the Town optimizes possible future development of key private and municipal properties in the Center, the BCPG recommends that the Town

undertake a series of studies and public dialogues to consider options for redevelopment of the following key sites:

(i) the Electric Light Department Building, the adjacent Police Department Building and the abutting public property along Concord Avenue (consideration of mixed use residential, retail, restaurant, and/or parking use);

(ii) the municipal lot (consideration of mixed use residential, retail, restaurant, and/or parking use)

(iii) Possibly re-siting the Belmont Library on Concord Avenue to a location that is closer to and more accessible from Leonard Street.

(iv) Make the Town green a more visually prominent and restful place that links the Town Hall campus to the commercial corridor and strengthens pedestrian connections throughout the Center. Transform the current Town Green, which is an isolated and under-used island in front of the bank, by expanding it to enhance the Center's overall character and promote civic engagement.

(v) Consider expanding war memorial green next to Royal Road.

(vi) The one story building at the corner of Alexander and Leonard within the Locatelli Trust property could possibly be redeveloped in the coming decade, subject to step down requirements to ensure a smooth transition to residential edges – (see §7.20(b)(v) below).

(vii) The Drive-thru bank and adjacent vacant lot.

6.20 <u>Preserve and enhance the Center's historic character and charm.</u>

(a) Survey and catalogue buildings 50 years old and older to identify buildings that contribute to the current character of the Center

(b) Consider implementing a six month "demolition delay" by-law for structures identified as significant to the town in the survey and catalogue effort recommended above. The demolition delay allows a process that balances concerns about preserving historic resources and the need to keep the center vibrant. BCPG recognizes that instituting a demolition delay by-law might conflict with the more streamlined permitting process that the BCPG also favors; however, the committee believes that, on balance, a demolition delay by-law would be useful to help the Town have leverage to ensure that the historic character of the Center is maintained. The BCPG notes that over 200 other communities in Massachusetts have adopted demolition delay by-laws as a tool to preserve the historic character of their community

(c) Initiate, through the Office of Community Development, a program that will provide businesses and landlords with information regarding financial assistance (such as federal grants) for preserving historic property.

(d) Establish through the Office of Community Development design guidelines for upgrading store fronts and signage.

6.30 <u>Ensure that the Town is well positioned to maximize the positive impact of future development opportunities as they arise.</u>

(a) As part of Planning Board's zoning analysis, assess key sites to determine if there are opportunities for the Town to create zoning incentives for desired uses.

(b) Recommend an Overlay District patterned after the Cushing Square District, a performance based or other zoning mechanism that links increased development potential to design incentives, preserves the Center's historic character and includes the following objectives:

(i) Streamline zoning approval process. Consider consolidating permitting with one review board rather than with two separate board reviews (currently, Zoning Board and Planning Board).

(ii) Allow more flexibility in parking options for new businesses and land uses, e.g., Cushing Square Overlay District For example, explore the use of church and bank parking lots for Town and Center employees.

(iii) Zoning should prohibit uses (such as funeral homes and drive-throughs) in Belmont Center that do not contribute to the pleasant, family-oriented ambiance of the Center.

(iv) Require future development to step down at residential edges to ensure a smooth transition from the Center to the current residential location

(v) Design guidelines should provide property owners and tenants with specific guidelines for more attractive signage, storefront appearance and architectural features, taking into consideration the detailed character of some of the buildings in the Center and the objective to preserve the "pedestrian scale" of the Center. Design guidelines would also preclude excessive and redundant Town signage and traffic signals.

(vi) Zoning changes should allow for increased height and density, subject to the approval of the Planning Board, for a potential building in the municipal parking lot and the North side of Concord Avenue. The BCPG recommends offering developers the possibility of added height, parking and density in these

locations in exchange for meeting design criteria to be set by the Town

(vii) Institute a non-binding, pre-application conference with the Office of Community Development before a developer can get a permit in order to help the Town communicate its overall goals for the design and development of the Center.

6.40 <u>Encourage a complementary mix of business types and land uses to support both vibrant daytime and evening activity through the use of special permitting, informal pre-application discussions with developers and zoning overlay requirements.</u>

(a) <u>Enhance vitality on street:</u>

(i) Create new staffing capacity within the Office of Community Development to work with landlords to anticipate store turnover and be proactive in pursuing a varied store mix.

(ii) Require ground floor windows and active uses to enhance transparency.

(iii) Encourage outdoor dining.

(iv) Increase retail mix with special permits for certain uses to encourage certain business activities and discourage others.

(v) Work with businesses to make Town Day and other town events in the Center more successful.

(b) <u>Licensing:</u>

(i) Reduce the 130-seat requirement for a liquor license in order to encourage smaller eating establishments in keeping with the size of the existing store fronts.

(ii) Increase number of liquor, beer and wine licenses, if necessary, to accommodate a greater number of smaller restaurants.

(c) <u>Town - Business Liaison:</u>

(i) Have Office of Community Development act as liaison between the Chamber of Commerce, the Belmont Center Business Owners and Landlords, and offer the Town Hall Complex as the site for regular meeting and workshops

designed to improve the overall commercial health of the Center.

(ii) Have the Office of Community Development sponsor meetings with businesses and landlords where they can learn about the various programs that are available to improve, finance and build their businesses similar to the Best Retail Practice Program that is hosted by the City of Cambridge.

6.50 Provide sufficient parking to support Center businesses and land uses

(a) In the short term, increase utilization of existing parking:

(i) As an alternative to building a garage, consider encouraging the community's use of private lots such as the Belmont Savings Bank garage and provide incentives to the bank for making it available.

(ii) Encourage businesses to create opportunities with other businesses to optimize use of parking during off hours.

(iii) Ensure heavier enforcement of parking violations in crosswalks and spaces reserved for the disabled.

(iv) The Town should evaluate the use of the Town Hall parking lot during off-peak times.

(b) In the long term, explore possibility of building new parking for business patrons as an integrated part of new development:

(i) Consider combining the Electric Light Dept. Building, the Police Station, the abutting Town-owned property and possibly the railroad owned land for redevelopment to include parking.

(ii) Consider redeveloping the Municipal lot into a mixed-use building including parking and retail uses.

6.60 Preserve and enhance the Center's pedestrian scale by making it easier, more pleasant and safer for pedestrians to walk to and through the Center.

(a) **Enhance streetscape amenities:**

(i) Improve the sidewalks by widening the sidewalks on both sides of Leonard Street and using high quality paving with a variety of texture and materials consistently throughout the Center. (See (b)(i) below.)

(ii) Engage an urban designer to develop a palette of recommended street furnishings including benches, bike racks, street lights, trash receptacles and recommended placement of the street furniture. (BCPG has applied for a grant to hire such a designer.)

(iii) Provide greater number of attractive public trash receptacles.

(b) **Make the Center more pedestrian-oriented and less car oriented:**

(i) Commission a traffic study to analyze the impacts of creating wider sidewalks, shorter and safer pedestrian crossings along Leonard and at Channing and Concord Avenue, traffic-calming measures, and expanding Town Green into the taxi stand and other paved areas.

(ii) Install signage leading to any new public parking areas.

(iii) Tighten the turning radii at Channing Road and Leonard Street to make it safer for pedestrians.

(iv) Mark car lanes and walkways to promote safer passage of traffic and pedestrians.

(v) Review car and pedestrian safety issues under the railroad bridge.

(vi) Encourage businesses to provide a pedestrian cut-through from municipal parking lot to Leonard Street.

(vii) Convert Leonard Street into a pedestrian mall for special events, like Town Day.

(viii) Consider reopening the Clark Street bridge to improve traffic flow throughout the Town.

(c) **Improve pedestrian connections:**

(i) Create an open space/green network connecting all green spaces visually for pedestrians including the Town green and land adjacent to the tracks all the way up to the pedestrian tunnel for benches, green space and big trees.

(ii) Improve lighting and aesthetics of pedestrian tunnel and the pedestrian walkways under the railroad bridge.

(d) **Improve Streetscape and Pedestrian Safety:**

(i) Implement more frequent trash collection for businesses and daily trash collection for all restaurants. For example, the Belmont Center businesses could get together and create a trash collection plan where they obtain a collective group contract to hire one provider for consistent and regular trash service. The Town could consider providing this service on a fee basis.

(ii) Provide better snow removal from sidewalks with sufficiently wide passageways at crosswalks on Leonard Street so that pedestrians and persons in wheelchairs can better navigate.

(iii) Ensure that all curb cuts comply with regulations for wheelchair accessibility.

(iv) Review necessity and placement of all traffic lights and signage in Belmont Center. Remove redundant signage and traffic lights to reduce unnecessary visual clutter.

6.70 Promote civic engagement in the Center through activities, programs and uses that bring community members together;

(a) Work with the Chamber, Belmont Center merchants and Town to identify and promote cultural activities, festivals, civic and social activities such as:

(i) Outdoor movie nights
(ii) Mini Concerts (madrigals, Jazz band, etc.)
(iii) Library book sale
(iv) Garden club plant sales
(v) Town Day
(vi) Belmont Farmer's Market

(b) Encourage Belmont Center businesses to participate in a local Business Association to promote their business

APPENDICES

1. Selectmens' Mandate to BCPG
2. BCPG 2005 Short-Term Recommendations to Selectmen
3. Summary of Recommendations from BCPG Outreach
4. The Belmont Center Planning Charrette Report by Daphne Politis of Community Circle
5. BCPG Report on the Electric Light Company Building
6. Map
7. Renderings of Recommendations

MANDATE for the BELMONT CENTER PLANNING GROUP
Approved by the Board of Selectmen,
May, 9, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Planning for Belmont's future has accelerated since the year 2000 with the appointment of a Vision 21 Committee and the subsequent unanimous acceptance of a Working Vision for Belmont's Future by the April, 2001 Annual Town Meeting; the work of several planning groups supervised by the Vision Implementation Committee; and the Belmont Economic Development Plan. While the plan reviewed and recommended improvements to all of the business districts within the town, it was commonly referred to as the "Corridor Study" as it focused on Trapelo Road and Belmont Street. It is now time to concentrate on Belmont Center in a comprehensive manner. This is becoming urgent because of the imminent emptying of two town-owned buildings, the fire station on Leonard St, and the old Municipal Light Building on Concord Avenue (all within the next two years).

There have been a number of studies including and/or involving Belmont Center emphasizing specific issues, e.g.: traffic flow, parking, business mix, streetscape design, etc, but there has been no comprehensive, integrated look at the downtown as a whole. There is even a question about what constitutes Belmont Center: does it "end" at the railroad bridge, or does it include the current business zoning onto Concord Avenue by the Post Office?

The following is a proposed planning process for Belmont Center.

The selectmen will appoint a BELMONT CENTER PLANNING GROUP with the following charge:

Composition: 5-7 members, with the following groups/constituencies represented to the extent possible:

- Community and/or urban planner
- Belmont Center business community
- Residents of the area
- Planning Board
- Vision Implementation Committee
- Citizens who are skilled at understanding and designing process
- Citizens who understand the need for and have experience with ways to promote public involvement
- Office of Community Development Staff Liaison
- The Town Administrator will be an ex officio member of the Planning Group

Mandate:

PHASE I: PROCESS DESIGN

The Group will design an inclusive and transparent planning process with much public participation. The process will be informed by the best interests of the immediate area and of the town as a whole. The goal is to develop a plan for the future of Belmont Center that will have broad public awareness and acceptance. To design this process, they will:

- Evaluate previous studies of various aspects of Belmont Center, as well as the planning processes and implementation plans created for downtown areas in other communities
- Evaluate other successful planning processes (e.g. Waverley Square Fire Station)
- Recommend, if necessary, appointment of additional Group members with specific skills and experience for Phase II.

Time line:
The Planning Group should be appointed by June 1, 2005, and should present to the Selectmen for their approval a planning process for Belmont Center by September 1, 2005. In addition, by September 1, 2005, the Planning Group will recommend actions that can be taken in the short term, and the necessary steps to achieve them.
A brief written report should be prepared outlining the process and the resources needed to accomplish it.

PHASE II: PLANNING PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Selectmen approve the process, the Committee shall begin work on developing a plan. The following are general parameters for the group's work which should be clearly described in a "Scope of Work" to guide the process:

The plan must support and be guided by the following statements from the town's Vision:

- "Thriving business centers contribute economic stability while offering places for residents to dine, shop and socialize."
- "We will preserve our small-town community atmosphere."

Where appropriate and applicable, the plan should integrate the results and/or the recommendations of previous studies.

Among the challenges and opportunities that the plan should encompass will be:

- Defining the geographic limits of Belmont Center, including a decision on whether areas beyond the railroad tracks (potentially including the war memorial and Wellington Station, the Post Office, and Concord Ave. businesses up to the Public Library) should be included
- Recommending the best use for the fire station, the former Electric Light Dept. building, and any other under-used properties in Belmont Center
- Recommending improvements in vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns and parking
- Recommending improvements/enhancements to pedestrian amenities to increase pedestrian traffic.
- Recommending the optimal mix of businesses in Belmont Center and methods to encourage that mix

This list will certainly be expanded as the process moves forward.

Timeline:

The Committee shall create a Scope of Work, which should include a Mission Statement and goals to guide the planning process, no later than November 1, 2005. The Scope should be as wide as possible, and narrowed only if the Planning Group concludes that a lesser scope is necessary for successful accomplishment of the task

The Planning Group will report to the Selectmen on a plan for Belmont Center by October 1, 2006. This will allow for preparation of Zoning articles by the Planning Board in time for the April 2007 Annual Town Meeting.

Proposed Short-Term Actions and Recommendations
Belmont Center Planning Group
December 1, 2005

1. NEWSPAPER BOXES

Description –

- The boxes are unattractive.
- The boxes create a curbside access problem
  - Difficult to access and egress parked cars.
  - Creates a wall between road and sidewalk causing difficulties for pedestrians.
- The Town cannot prohibit them outright

Proposed Actions –

1. Review Article 27 of the General By-Laws – this regulates newspaper boxes.
2. Look at best practices from other communities.
3. Talk with OCD about problems/issues with existing By-Law.
   a. What has experience shown us?
   b. What about enforcing regulations?
4. What further limitations can the Town place on newspaper boxes?
   a. Can the Town restrict their location?
   b. Can the Town require the boxes to be cleaned or replaced regularly?
   c. What can be done to make them more attractive?
5. Based on what we learn, recommend specific actions to address the problem.

Coordinator – Office of Community Development

2. SIDEWALK TRASH

a. Business Trash Collection
b. Public Trash Containers

Description –

a. Business Trash Collection

- Some businesses put trash out the evening before pick up resulting in unsightly trash sitting out all evening and overnight.
- There tends to be a lot of trash creating hazards for pedestrians and access problems for cars attempting to park along the curb.
- Trash is not adequately contained.

b. Public Trash Containers

- The trash cans are not always emptied on a timely basis, resulting in trash overflowing onto the sidewalk.

- The trash cans are reported used by residents to supplement their weekly residential trash collection.

Actions –

We recommend to the BOS that with respect to trash collection in Belmont Center these are the goals to be met:

- More frequent trash collection at the businesses or landlords' expense,
- Trash should be put in receptacles
- A clear path for pedestrians at least 3 feet wide should be maintained along the sidewalk
- Businesses should be strongly discouraged from using the public trash bins for their business trash.

Coordinator – Thayer Donham and Evelyn Haralampu

3. LANDSCAPING and OTHER USE OF PLANTS

Description –

- Two areas – Channing and Leonard, Leonard and Concord Avenue (ellow bollards were recently installed) – were specifically identified by the facilitators of the DHCD Downtown Workshops as offering opportunities for beautification of the Center.
- Other additional plant and flower location opportunities may exist throughout the Center.
- The open space between Bank of American and the Coldwell Banker Real Estate office is not currently well utilized to enhance the Center.
- Although longer-term changes in the Center may also involve this aspect of beautification, this is considered a relatively simple initiative that could have a significant near term impact on the look and feel of Belmont Center.
- Issues regarding the on-going maintenance of these areas need to be addressed before proceeding.

Actions –

1. Contact the Garden Club
   a. Find out what role the Garden Club currently plays in landscaping green spaces throughout Town
   b. Inquire about their willingness to participate in such a program
   c. Inquire about the costs associated with such a program
2. Contact the Lions and Rotary Clubs to ascertain their interest in participating
3. Determine who in Town is best positioned to provide oversight of this project, including development, implementation and ongoing management.
4. Begin to develop a program for flower boxes and other plantings throughout the Center

5. Begin to work with the property owners of the green space located between Bank of America and Coldwell Banker Real Estate offices to develop a plan to make this space more of an asset to the Center

Coordinator – Alison Palmer
Roy Papapia will contact the Lions and Rotary Clubs

4. BELMONT CENTER DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

- **To Belmont Center**
- **To Parking Lot**
- **From Parking Lot to Shopping Area**

Description –

- Drivers and passengers in cars traveling along Pleasant Street and Concord Ave/Common Street may not know where Belmont Center is located.
- Potential Belmont Center patrons may enter Leonard Street but be unable to find the parking lot as directional signs to the parking lot do not currently exist.
- There are no clearly demarcated paths to the Center from the parking lot.

Recommendation

1. Direct the Department of Public Works – or other appropriate Town department – to work in collaboration with the Belmont Center Planning Group to design and erect appropriate signage to Belmont Center and to the parking lot to address the challenges listed above.

Actions -

1. See attached spreadsheet for recommended locations for signage
2. Investigate and recommend design options for signs.
3. Work with the DPW to install signage.
4. Explore with Belmont Center business owners the advisability and desirability of promoting access to the shopping area by utilizing cut-throughs in existing stores.

Coordinator – Vicki Alani and Deborah Emello
Alison Palmer will draft a list of businesses with cut-throughs

Projected Timeframe – Install signs before the holiday season begins

5. MARKETING

Description –

- Some residents – and potential customers from other towns – are not aware of the range of businesses that exist in Belmont.

- With relatively little effort, we can encourage residents and others to consider shopping in Belmont.
- With relatively little effort, we can promote the existence of Belmont Center businesses to residents and others who come into the Center.
- Care needs to be taken to ensure that this initiative includes efforts to benefit businesses town wide as well as those in the Center.

Actions -

1. Create a simple "Buy Belmont" or "Shop Belmont First" bumper sticker (phrase to be determined) and distribute it throughout town.
2. Create a one page handout identifying and briefly describing businesses in Belmont Center
3. Provide handout to businesses to distribute to customers and make it available in other key locations in/near Belmont Center such as Town Hall and the library.
4. Create a website – long-term recommendation

Coordinator – Sara Oaklander, Alison Palmer and Mary Power

Projected Timeframe – Before the holiday season

6. UPGRADE THE PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL

Description –

- The pedestrian tunnel goes underneath the railroad tracks at the Belmont Center Train Station and is not well utilized -
  1. The pedestrian tunnel is difficult to find
  2. The tunnel is not very inviting

Actions -

1. Determine ownership and responsibilities
   a. Talk with Peter Castanino, Glenn Clancy
   b. Talk with Tom Younger
2. Renovations to Tunnel –
   a. Paint the tunnel
   b. Install better lighting
   c. Install better directional signage
   d. Repave the approach to the tunnel
   e. Close stairs
      i. Contact Peter about this

Coordinator – Deborah Emello

Belmont Center: Imagining the Future
Submitted by the Belmont Center Planning Group
3/5/06

All Belmont residents, merchants and commercial property owners are invited to imagine the future of Belmont Center at the Belmont Center Charrette on Saturday, April 1st from 2 to 5 p.m. in the Belmont High School cafeteria.

Unless you're an artist, architect, or town planner, you're probably not familiar with the word "charrette." A French word, "charrette" means "cart" and is often used to describe the final, intense work effort expended by art and architecture students to meet a project deadline. This use of the term is said to originate from the École des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart or "charrette" to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work.

In today's world of urban planning the term is used to describe an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. The Belmont Center Charrette will be an interactive community gathering that involves participants in crafting a vision for the future of Belmont Center. Participants will help identify Belmont Center's greatest strengths and challenges and develop ideas for how to enhance the Center so that we're all inclined to go there more often – to shop, eat, and spend time with our friends.

There are many questions to explore as we think about the future of Belmont Center. How can we make the Center more pedestrian friendly? Does the Center have the right mix of businesses? What would make the Center more attractive? Should Belmont Center include housing? Does the Center have enough parking? What are the best reuse ideas for the fire station and electric light building? What kinds of things would you like to be able to do in Belmont Center?

In addition to posing these questions, organizers of the Charrette are planning an array of displays and activities to inform and engage participants. Included will be current and historic photos of the Center, ideas from other cities and towns, small group discussions and design opportunities, visioning activities for children age five and older, refreshments, and more.

The Charrette is being organized by the Belmont Center Planning Group (BCPG), an ad hoc Town committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. In addition to planning the Charrette, the BCPG is developing opportunities for citizens and merchants to contribute their ideas if they will be unable to attend on April 1st. The BCPG is also working closely with staff of the Office of Community Development on a process for the redevelopment of the Belmont Center Fire Station. For more information about the Belmont Center planning process, contact Jeffrey Wheeler, Planning Coordinator, at 617-993-2666 or jwheeler@town.belmont.ma.us.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BCPG OUTREACH

1. BCPG Survey

- Centralize parking.
- Intersection at Leonard and Concord is problematic.
- Traffic control is an issue.
- Parking needed at either end of Center.
- Improve bicycle safety.

2. Report of Belmont Center Parking Study Committee

- Create 12 new parking spaces on east side of Electric Light Building concealed by landscaping.
- Limit all-day commuter parking to permit holders before 9:30 A.M.
- Maintain 1-hour parking on Leonard Street but add 4-6 new 15-minute spaces in front of high turnover businesses.
- Limit hours allowed for parking in Claflin lot between Thanksgiving and New Years to increase customer turnover.
- Allow all-day parking on Royal Road (both sides) and along north side of War Memorial triangle in front of Lions Club.
- Allow spaces for Town employees on Royal Road and Town Hall lot only.
- Encourage parking next to high school and north side of Concord Avenue (east of Cottage Street).

3. Vision 21 Report: Is Belmont Business-Friendly?

- Develop Town-wide, on-street parking regulations.
- Construct addition municipal parking.

4. BCPG Business Education Meeting (2/10/06)

- Encourage foot traffic on CVS-side of Belmont Center and near Town Green.
- Debate as to whether building a garage would be detrimental by bringing in more traffic to Center. Some would preserve the Center as it is.
- Need better signs to identify what some business owners deem ample parking.
- Increase parking for elderly close to bank on CVS side.
- Use parking spaces behind Electric Light Building.
- Parking for CVS-side of street needs improvement.

5. **Report of Belmont Police (BCPG Urban Design Education Meeting - 1/12/06)**

- Clarify right-of-way for traffic going under bridge.
- Slow down traffic on Clark and Cross Streets.
- Jaywalking is excessive.
- Parking in crosswalks and disabled parking – too many violations.

6. **Disability Commission Report (BCPG Urban Design Education Meeting – 1/12/06)**

- Not enough handicapped parking.
- Curb ramps are not up to code because they are too narrow and not cleared of snow in the winter.
- Curbs are too high for wheelchair access.

7. **BEDPG Report Recommendations**

- Have Town retain the services of a business development officer on a part-time contractual basis to act on behalf of the Town for the benefit of business development.
- Create a business development citizen committee to assist the business development officer.
- Amend zoning by-law and permitting process to create a more favorable climate for Town businesses.
- Offer incentives to encourage landlords to rent their properties to the kinds of businesses that are most likely to thrive in Belmont Center.
- Offer incentives to property owners to improve their properties.
- Create disincentives for owners who leave their properties vacant.

Belmont Center Charrette:
Imagining the Future of Belmont Center
SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT INPUT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Approximately thirty-five residents attended the community-wide charrette held on April 1st from 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon in the Belmont High School Cafeteria. The large majority of participants live within walking distance of the Center.[1]

Definition of Charrette: The French word "charrette" is used to describe an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. The term is said to originate from the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart or "charrette" to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work. Today the word "charrette" is used to describe an interactive community gathering that involves participants in crafting a vision for the future of a specific geographic area.

Purpose of Charrette: To invite the Belmont community to come together and generate ideas that will create a shared vision for Belmont Center's future. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.

Process: The three-hour charrette included both information sharing and brainstorming. Following a brief introduction and description of the purpose of the charrette, participants were presented with a slide show which included information on the history of the Center, the Center today and a brief presentation on good planning and design principles with some examples from other town centers used to exemplify these principles.

Next participants were given an opportunity to visit a series of information booths" set up in one section of the cafeteria. These "booths" included information, maps and photographs on:

- Parking and traffic
- Urban design and the reuse of municipal buildings
- Belmont Center today including zoning
- Belmont Center yesterday, including historic photos
- Previous studies
- Ideas from other towns including photographs

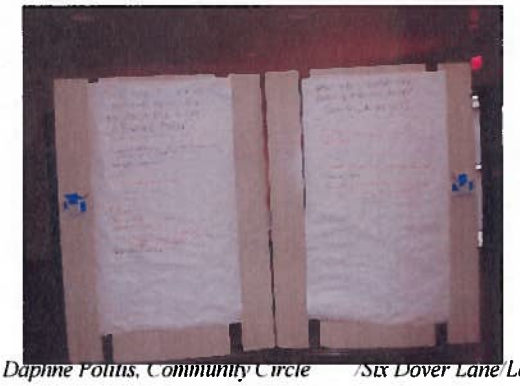
[1] Participants were asked on the sign-in sheet to indicate whether they lived within walking distance of the center.

Participants gathered around information booths.

Related to the information booths were a series of "issue pads" and "wall questions." These were a number of questions written on 8.5x11 pads and on large pieces of paper adhered to vertical surfaces to give an opportunity to participants to respond to specific questions. Response to these questions was voluntary. The questions were:

- *What makes Belmont Center unique?*
- *What have you seen in other town centers that you would like to see in Belmont Center?*
- *What would encourage you to come to Belmont Center more often?*
- *What is the number 1 reason you go elsewhere and where to you go?*
- *If you could do one thing to improve parking in Belmont Center what would it be?*
- *If a new business were to open in Belmont Center, what would you most like it to be?*
- *What are the kinds of businesses you would rather not see in Belmont Center?*
- *What could be done to improve the pedestrian experience in Belmont Center?*
- *Would you like to see more housing in Belmont Center?*
- *Height: 1-3 stories/ 4 stories/ 5 stories / taller*
- *Mixed Use: restaurant/ retail/ office/ residential*

A compilation of the responses to these questions is provided towards the back of this summary.



"wall questions"

Next the participants were assigned a small group where they were led through a number of questions and exercises designed to generate ideas regarding a vision for the future of Belmont Center. Each group was led by a pair of volunteer facilitators: one kept track of the discussion on a large pad; the other kept track of the group's ideas on a base map. All seven groups worked with the same eight questions; these were:

- *What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?*
- *What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?*
- *Define the primary purpose of what Belmont Center could be*
- *Share ideas from another town center – what did you especially like and think might work for Belmont Center?*
- *If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center, what would it be?*
- *What are the challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center?*
- *What are some ideas about how to get "there" (strategies)?*
- *Using the base map and having seen images in the slide show and booths, try defining some design changes/changes to the physical environment of the Center. Identify where they should be located on the map and try describing/drawing what they should look like.*

The charrette ended with a "report back" from each small group followed by a preliminary identification of common themes.

Small group discussion included coming up with urban design schemes for the Center

"Report back" included a proposal from the youth group regarding their ideas for a better Belmont Center

A summary of these discussions and ideas follows.

2.0 BROADER CONTEXT

Town-wide Working Vision for Belmont's Future

The following is a working vision for Belmont's future – as adopted by Town Meeting on April 23, 2001 – it is provided as context to the Town Center Vision.

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 of 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.

3.0 VISION STATEMENT FOR THE FUTURE OF BELMONT CENTER

Crafting a vision statement is a way of understanding and describing the desired future as envisioned by a group of people. The following vision statement represents a compilation of the elements suggested by the participants at the charrette who agreed these were desirable for the future of Belmont Center. "Imagine…" is a way of describing how the Center would be if the desired future is attained. An action plan will be developed based on this vision. The plan will outline steps necessary to reach the shared vision.

The following vision statement was developed based on input from the charrette participants.

Imagine a Belmont Center that is a welcoming place to shop. A place for one stop shopping and running errands such as going to the library, the bank, the town hall and the post office. Imagine a place where residents can comfortably walk with spaces for lingering and gathering and bumping into people. Imagine a town center where socializing is as much a part of the reason to go as is shopping and dining. Imagine a Belmont Center with wide sidewalks and attractive benches and street lights and trash barrels.

Imagine pedestrian connections to different parts of the Center including from the municipal parking lot to the retail destinations on Leonard Street. Imagine a Belmont Center that is not cut in two by the bridge, a Center whose two "halves" are well-connected by a pleasant and accessible walking path. Imagine a town center that is more supportive of bicyclists. Imagine an improved Town Green.

Imagine a Leonard Street with traffic calming and fewer cars. Imagine a Belmont Center that belongs more to pedestrians than it does to cars. Imagine a Belmont Center with fewer parking challenges.

Imagine a Belmont Center with an interesting and vibrant mix of uses including a grocery store, hardware store, variety of restaurants, a café with outdoor seating, and unique stores unlike those found at the mall. Imagine a Belmont Center with taller buildings with housing above the stores. Imagine a Belmont Center with a vibrant night life because the shops will have extended hours, the restaurants will be open late and people will be living in the Center.

Imagine a well-maintained Belmont Center with snow removed from the sidewalks in the winter in a timely fashion and enough attractive trash barrels placed in strategic locations and trash removed frequently.

Imagine a Belmont Center where changes are well -planned and decisions are deliberate and all stakeholders –including area residents and landlords -- are involved in a highly participatory process outlining the improvements to be made.

Imagine a Belmont Center that is welcoming, attractive, inviting and convenient with useful and enjoyable places to go and well connected spaces for walking in and around so that residents and visitors accomplish their errands, enjoy a meal and find reasons to linger and gather acting to connect the community and be a true social as well as commercial and municipal center for the town.

Key Elements of the Shared Vision

The following is a list of the key elements of the vision.

- Pedestrian environment
  - Pedestrian amenities including benches, street lighting, trash barrels
  - Widen sidewalks
  - More community gathering spaces including improving the Town Green
  - More landscaping
- Parking
  - Consensus only on the fact that more is needed, not on how to solve
- Business Mix, especially desired:
  - Grocery store
  - More diversity in restaurants
  - Hardware store, five and ten
- Mixed Use, including housing above retail
  - Evening use provided by extended hours for shops and housing above retail
- Improve pedestrian connections in and around the Center
  - Between parking and Leonard Street retail
  - Between the two "halves" of the Center
- Improve aesthetics
  - Architecture
  - Signage
  - Street furniture
- Change traffic pattern
  - Implement traffic calming measures, reduce congestion
  - Give over more space to the pedestrians
- Improve aesthetics
  - Architecture
  - Signage
  - landscaping
- Infill development, including taller buildings
- Improved maintenance including trash and snow removal

SUMMARY OF CHARRETTE RESPONSES

4.0 SUMMARY OF CHARRETTE RESPONSES

The following is a summary of the responses collected at the charrette. A more detailed listing may be found in the next section of this report.

What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?

The top favorite aspects of Belmont Center were:

- **The shops** –including the bookstore, toy store, gift shops, hairdresser and Filene's – because of what they offer in terms of goods and services, because they are family-friendly and because residents have developed relationships with the merchants. The shops were favorite aspect for six out of the seven groups.

- **Aesthetics** – including the scale, historic buildings, a "homeyness" and old "charming" look. This was a favorite feature for six out of the seven groups.

- **Walkable** – the fact that one can walk to "useful things," the walkable scale of the Center is appreciated by five out of the seven groups.

- **Within walking distance** - -Somewhat related to the fact that the Center is its attribute of being within walking distance from many parts of town, specifically from the homes of many of the charrette participants. This was appreciated in five out of the seven groups.

- **Restaurants.** four out of the seven groups consider the Center restaurants as one of their favorite features.

Other attributes appreciated but mentioned by fewer groups were the Town Green, the easy access to public transportation, the Town Hall complex, the old fire station and the fact that when people are walking around in the Center they bump into other people that they know.

What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

The top least favorite aspects of Belmont Center were:

- **Business Mix**- All seven groups cited not enough diversity in the types of businesses, including the fact that restaurants only appeal to specific groups and there is a lack of certain kinds of desired businesses such as a hardware store. The lack of a grocery store was called out as especially needed.

- **Poor pedestrian access/environment** – the pedestrian environment and access in and around the Center were cited in all seven groups as being problematic. This included issues such as narrow sidewalks, lack of connection between parking and retail, and a poor connection of the two "halves' of the Center under the bridge. These were least favorite for seven out of the seven groups.

- **Architecture** – the lack of consistent look, the "jumble and clutter," and the west side buildings were considered unattractive features for five out of the seven groups.

- **Lack of parking** – and the way this impacts residential neighborhoods (presumably because people park on residential streets) was considered one of the least favorite aspects of the experience of the Center for four out of the seven groups.

- **Lack of evening activities** – the fact that the stores close too early and that there are no other types of evening activities such as entertainment, was cited as least favorite for four out of the seven groups.

- **Lack of maintenance** – specifically the lack of trash removal and too few trash receptacles and the lack of snow removal in the winter were considered least favorite for four out of the seven groups.

Other attributes least liked by the groups included too much pavement, the poor signage for traffic, poor signage on shops, too many cars, no space for socializing, the bridge and traffic problems and the newspaper distribution boxes.

Define the primary purpose of what Belmont Center could be

All seven groups defined the primary purpose of the future Belmont Center to be a comfortable and convenient, inviting and **welcoming place to shop with walkable services** for the surrounding neighborhoods. A place for one stop shopping and running errands attracting people to shop locally. Related to this was the desire to have a good **mix of retail/food/services** – 5 out of the 7 groups felt that the Center needs to provide a good mix of services such as the post office, library and banks with restaurants and specialty shops.

- **A place to socialize** – six of the seven groups would like the Center to act as a community gathering place with activities other than shopping helping to promote increased connections between people. Related to this was the desire of three out of the seven groups to have **evening activities** in the Center including extended hours for shops, galleries and restaurants.

- **Pedestrian-oriented** – six out of the seven groups felt the Center should be less car-oriented and more people-oriented.

Additional thoughts regarding the purpose of Belmont Center in the future included being the "nerve center for the town," and a place for housing options for the elderly. Some added that it should be aesthetically pleasing with improved parking.

Share ideas from another town center – what did you especially like and think might work for Belmont Center?

The following represent ideas from other towns that participants felt were relevant to improving Belmont Center. One of the groups did not document their discussion regarding this question).

Pedestrian-friendly – six out of the six groups (one group did not document) felt that ideas from other towns regarding how to make the Center more pedestrian friendly were the most relevant. In fact, two of the six groups proposed converting Leonard Street into a car-free pedestrian mall for at least some hours of the day.

Coordinated street furniture – benches and attractive street lights were mentioned by five out of the six groups.

Better signage – pedestrian oriented signage and good directional signage were cited by four of the six groups.

Additional ideas from other towns included providing intra-town transportation, improving the pedestrian access into town, making the Center more aesthetically pleasing with flowers, landscaping and public art, providing outdoor seating and a performance space or art theater.

Some of the towns with desirable features mentioned include Lexington, Concord, Wellesley, Newburyport, Newport, Chatham and Rockport, MA.

If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center, what would it be?

The following ideas are listed in order of the number of votes they received in a prioritization exercise. One of the groups did not vote.

- **Mixed use.** This included a desire for **more diversity in shops** – especially grocery store and variety in restaurants and for **housing above retail**.

- **Change the traffic pattern** – various schemes were proposed to change the traffic pattern to calm the traffic and improve the pedestrian environment. These ranged from narrowing Leonard Street, to closing it to vehicular traffic altogether and if not always then at least in the evening. Another idea was to create a narrow landscaped island down the center for traffic calming purposes and to provide additional pedestrian space.

- **Increase pedestrian access & amenities** – very related to the reasoning for changing the traffic pattern above was the desire to improve the pedestrian experience by improving access and amenities. These included wider sidewalks, benches, attractive street lights, and trash barrels, improving connections within and around the Center and creating more gathering spaces and making them more inviting for lingering. **Improving the Town Green** was ranked high among such improvements. An additional idea regarding creating more gathering spaces is to acquire the open lot next to the bank and connect this to a system of landscaped open spaces throughout the town center.

- **Parking** – Parking ranked fourth in the list of improvements. There were several ideas with regard to how to improve the parking situation. These ranged from building underground parking to building a parking structure to asking the Belmont Savings Bank to share their lot with the town.

Additional improvements included providing "aesthetically harmonious signage and architecture," to create another retail anchor on the opposite end of the Center from Filene's and retain town ownership of the fire station in order to control its use.

What are the challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center?

The following were identified as challenges to attaining the desired future. One of the groups did not document their discussion.

- **Landlord agreement.** Working with the landlords and achieving consensus and support was identified by five of the six groups as being a challenge.

- **Money.** Money for making improvements was cited by four of the six groups.

Additional challenges identified by the groups included lack of central town planning, resistance to change, space limitations (both land and square footage), zoning restrictions and permitting processes, regional traffic issues, adjacent neighborhood concerns, parking, high rents, too restrictive liquor licenses, and the lack of connection to the train station.

What are some ideas about how to get "there" (strategies)?

The following are some ideas regarding strategies for improving the Center. The ideas are listed in order of the number of votes they received in a prioritization exercise. One of the groups did not document their discussion.

- **Educate & involve the public.** In addition to receiving the largest number of votes, six out of the six groups thought that involving the stakeholders early and creating a consensus for action was the most important strategy for moving forward.

- **Develop a Plan.** Four of the six groups thought that developing a vision and a plan was important before proceeding. Related to this was what four out of six groups saw as a need to **phase implementation;** that is, that the long term planning process should be broken down into smaller steps for implementation purposes.

- **Town be more proactive.** In addition to developing a plan, participants thought there were additional ways in which the town could be more proactive. Three of the six groups brought up ways in which the town could support the process by having a business development officer be proactive about attracting desirable businesses to town, fast tracking desirable businesses, **enacting zoning changes**, create incentives (such as naming rights) and acquiring additional town staff and using the town website.

- **Build relationship with property owners.** Just as the lack of landlord agreement was seen as an obstacle, the need to build relationships with property owners was seen as an essential strategy by five of the six groups.

- **Apply for available funding.** Many (four our of 6 groups) thought that the town should learn more about and seek available funding from relevant state and federal sources including TOD funds, Smart Growth funds, etc.

Additional strategies include buy in from abutters, pass the Community Preservation Act and creating a "Belmont Credit Card."

Urban Design Schemes

The following is a summary of the shared elements of the urban design schemes. They were all concerned with increasing pedestrian access in and around the Center, claiming additional space for pedestrians and making aesthetic improvements. Six of the seven groups explicitly called for an increase in building heights while five groups called for housing above retail. Six of the seven groups dealt with parking as an issue, although the proposed solutions varied. Five of the seven groups called for intensifying development in the center by increasing the density and in some cases adding additional commercial space in currently vacant lots and/or residential spaces. Four of the seven groups called for creating more pedestrian-friendly conditions on Leonard Street. In some cases they proposed to re-route all vehicular traffic away from Leonard Street; in other cases they proposed it be converted to a pedestrian mall only in the evenings.

Shared Elements (amongst small groups)

Proposal	***Comments***	***Number of Groups***
Increase pedestrian access throughout the Center	Provide amenities Increase gathering space	7
Improve aesthetics	Through architecture, landscaping, signage, etc.	7
Increase building height		6
Parking	Structure Underground Lease additional parking	(4) (1) 6 (1)
Housing above retail		5
Intensify development		5
Pedestrian Mall of Leonard St.	Some schemes propose that Leonard Street is closed to vehicular traffic at all times, others only during the evening	4
Traffic calming		2

The eighth group, that of the youth, proposed improving the pedestrian environment specifically by widening the sidewalk and providing more benches. They also suggested adding more variety in the types of places to go, public bathrooms, intra-town transportation, and aesthetic improvements such as arcades over the street with sunroofs, pretty signs and more trees. They also proposed converting the fire station into a teen center.

The comments made on the "issue pads" and "wall questions" were very consistent with the small group discussions and proposed urban design schemes. The following provides a summary of these.

The top three things that make Belmont unique were the **architecture**, **Filene's** and the **eclectic residents**. The top three things people saw in other town centers and would like to see in Belmont were **more green space (trees)**, **no cars** and **better trash removal**. The top two things that would encourage people to go to Belmont Center more were **an outdoor café** and **a grocery store**. The number one reason people go elsewhere is that they go to a **walkable center**. The majority of responses regarding what people would do if they could make one improvement to the Center are ideas regarding **parking**. The top responses (in terms of frequency) regarding what types of businesses people **would like to see** in the Center were:

- Small grocery
- Café
- Bakery
- Computer repair shop
- N.Y. style deli
- Stationery store
- Knitting store
- Video rental
- Small theater
- Tailor

Innovative Strategies/Ideas

The following is a list of innovative ideas which emerged at the charrette regarding making improvements to the Center. Some of these ideas are big and some are small; some are feasible, some may be not. All are creative and worthy of further thought and analysis.

Create open space/green network

- Acquire the open lot next to the bank and plant large evergreen trees. Connect all green spaces visually for pedestrians including Triangle in front of bank) and land adjacent to the tracks all the way up to the pedestrian tunnel, including the hill, for benches, green space and big trees
- Find a way to connect the town green across the tracks

Convert Leonard Street into a pedestrian mall

- Some thought 24-hour pedestrian mall, others thought only night time
- Reserve Leonard Street block for pedestrian traffic only. Route traffic in a series of one way streets around the Center.
- Create a narrow island down the center of Leonard St. with large trees (donated by families in town) to provide a median for pedestrians

Change traffic pattern

- Unify the two sides of the tracks
- Narrow Leonard St. to one traffic lane in each direction

- Reduce traffic flow through the Center
- Change traffic pattern only in the evening
- Traffic calming by narrowing the road

Improve pedestrian connections

- Build an arcade for walking between the parking lot and stores on Leonard Street
- Add another pedestrian tunnel running from Channing Road, under Concord Avenue, to opposite side of Concord Avenue, near the Old RR Station (yellow structure near UU Church)
- Add a pedestrian tunnel or overpass at the end of Channing where it intersects Alexander Avenue to connect the Center to the high school, pool and library on Concord Ave.
- Use the railroad bed to link the Center to Waverly Square
- Create a narrow landscaped island down the middle of Leonard Street for traffic calming and pedestrian space.
- Widen the sidewalks

Create mixed use development

- Add housing on the back portion of the back municipal parking lot fronting on Cross St.
- Add housing above shops

Parking

- Build Underground parking
- Create additional commercial space on existing parking lot and add a four level parking garage.
- Acquire lot next to the bank

Town Services

- Relocate library to town center
- Convert the fire station into a teen center

Market and brand the process of revitalization

- Build spirit to revitalize the Center in concert the 150th anniversary…. e.g., 150 reasons to improve the Center…"
- Create a "Belmont Credit Card"

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: COMPILATION OF COMMENTS & RESPONSES

5.0 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: COMPILATION OF COMMENTS & RESPONSES

The approximately thirty-five participants were divided into seven groups of approximately six people in each group. The groups worked on answering the following questions:

1. *What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?*

2. *What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?*

3. *Define the primary purpose of what Belmont Center could be*

4. *Share ideas from another town center – what did you especially like and think might work for Belmont Center?*

5. *If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center, what would it be?*

6. *What are the challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center?*

7. *What are some ideas about how to get "there" (strategies)?*

8. *Using the base map and having seen images in the slide show and booths, try defining some design changes/changes to the physical environment of the Center. Identify where they should be located on the map and try describing/drawing what they should look like.*

For numbers 5 and 7, each participant was given 5 dots with which to "vote" on what they felt was most important. They were instructed to use all of their dots and not to place any more than 3 dots/votes on any one item. Group #3 did not document their discussion on numbers 4, 6 and 7 and they did not vote on number 5 and therefore the compilation of responses does not include this group's discussion for those questions.

Responses are ranked by the number of groups in which the comment was made, with the most frequently cited responses listed first. For those responses for which priority "voting" was conducted, responses are listed by starting with the issue which received the largest number of votes regardless of the number of small groups which discussed it.

1. What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?

Response	Comments	# of Groups
Shops	▪ Gifts, especially for kids ▪ Family-friendly shops, display windows ▪ Bookstore, Belmont Toys, Filene's ▪ Frame Hut, Hairdresser's ▪ Being known & greeted by merchants	6
Aesthetics	▪ Old "charming" look ▪ Architecture ▪ Quaintness , homeyness ▪ Historic buildings ▪ Scale	6
Walkable	▪ Able to walk to useful things (except groceries ▪ Scale – contained but ample	5
Within walking distance from many parts of town	▪ Proximity to my home ▪ In my backyard	5
Restaurants	▪ The new ones ▪ Starbucks is relaxing	4
Town Green	▪ Including the pedestrian tunnel	3
Easy access to public transit	▪ Train station	3
Town Hall complex		3
Old Fire House		2
Know people	▪ Bump into folks ▪ See people I know	2
Bridge		1
Back parking lot	▪ It's attractive	1
Library, Post Office, Church		1
Lions Club		1

2. What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

Response	Comments	# of Groups
Not enough business mix	▪ Too many banks ▪ Restaurants appeal to specific groups ▪ Need hardware store	7
Poor pedestrian access / environment	▪ Walking into Center ▪ Lack of walk-thru from parking to Leonard ▪ Cars don't stop for pedestrians in crosswalks ▪ Narrow sidewalks ▪ Lack of awnings to stay dry ▪ Poor connection under bridge, Cross/Claflin ▪ Car portion of street too wide ▪ Especially Claflin side ▪ No people space	7
Hodgepodge of architecture	▪ Inconsistent feel of storefronts ▪ Huge building containing Frame Hut ▪ Jumble & clutter ▪ West side buildings unattractive	5
No food shopping	▪ Need bakery or other small eatery ▪ No grocery store	4
Lack of parking	▪ Impacts residential neighborhoods	4
Lack of evening activities	▪ Stores close too early, no places for entertainment, ▪ Everything closes down at 7 pm	4
Lack of maintenance	▪ Lack of snow removal ▪ Dirty, lack of trash receptacles	4
Lots of pavement	▪ Sitting on green feels like sitting on island in a parking lot ▪ Not enough landscaping	3
Poor signage for traffic	▪ For both traffic & businesses ▪ Too many municipal/parking signs	3
Poor signage on shops	▪ Hodgepodge, lack of uniform look	3
Too many cars	▪ Traffic, commuter route	2
No space for socializing	▪ Lack of places to congregate	2
Bridge and traffic problems	▪ Especially at intersection ▪ Intersection is way too wide	2
News distribution boxes	▪ "Some of them illegal?"	2
No outdoor places to sit		1
No places for youth	▪ Used to have Bailey's (, record store	1
Trash	▪ From businesses collected outside	1
Smokers	▪ On benches	1
Underutilization of train		1
Lack of seasonal care	▪ No flowers, planters, window boxes	1

3. Define the primary purpose of what Belmont Center could be

Response	Comments	# of Groups
Inviting, welcoming and attracting people to shop locally	▪ Keep Belmont shopping dollars in Belmont ▪ Inviting, Comfortable and convenient ▪ Walkable services for surrounding neighborhoods, connection to residential ▪ Place to do your business ▪ One stop shopping for errands ▪ Hardware store, bakery	7
Place to socialize	▪ For the people who live here ▪ Place to pass the time ▪ Vibrant in terms of promoting connections b/w people ▪ Community-gathering place ▪ Re-focus Center activities away from shopping	6
Pedestrian-oriented	▪ Car-less ▪ People-oriented ▪ Make reasons to walk	6
Mix of retail/food/services	▪ To attract people ▪ Unique retail, e.g. not the kind you find in mall ▪ Business center w/stores on ground & first floor levels ▪ All uses: retail, financial, restaurants, etc. ▪ Shopping, banking, mail letters, library ▪ Inviting to outsiders	5
Nerve center for town	▪ Economic, town/municipal services ▪ Community-driven/responsive	3
Evening activity	▪ People living in Center bring 24 hour vitality ▪ Have a variety of eating places open at night ▪ Provide a gathering place in the evening hrs. ▪ Extended hours: attractions shops& galleries	3
Aesthetically pleasing	▪ Be colorful, enticing town center	2
Place for housing options for aging	▪ Downsize housing options ▪ Walkable services	2
Parking improved	▪	2
Mix of shopping for all socio-economic strata	▪ Not just high end shops	1
A place to be proud of	▪ "A sense of pride and stewardship" ▪ welcomed by the police officers on the beat, "it's just about the tone"	1
Taller buildings	▪ Housing above shops	1
Connections to green space	▪ Especially important	1

4 Share ideas from another town center – what did you especially like and think might work for Belmont Center?

Response	Comments	# of Groups[2]
Pedestrian- friendly	▪ Wider sidewalks, brick - Lexington ▪ Create more promenade space, , more spacious ▪ Car-free pedestrian mall (Santa Monica) ▪ Design & pavement materials for connections	(6) 7 (2)
Coordinated street furniture	▪ Gas lamps, street lighting ▪ Benches, "buy a bench" program ▪ Fewer news box stands	5
Better signage		4
Intra-town transportation	▪ Provide more bike racks	2
Improve pedestrian access into town	▪ Create pedestrian tunnel to businesses by post office; Widen tunnel under tracks to make more pedestrian /bike friendly; Extend town green (by bank) out into intersection further to cut down on the amount of concrete by Store 24 & underpass; Use railroad bed to link to Waverly Square	2
Green space	▪ Landscaping ▪ Flowers	2
Aesthetically pleasing	▪ Scale ▪ Public art	2
Attractive & welcoming	▪ Businesses encourage pedestrian access	2
Mixed use; attractive	▪ Mass. Ave. North Cambridge, Chatham, MA	2
Café feel (outdoor dining)	▪ Fire station, patios	2
Performance space, art theater	▪ Cultural center	2
Structured parking		1
Housing above shops		1
Parking close to Center	▪ Lexington	1
Quaintness of buildings	▪ Small scale, hanging flowers ▪ Rockport, MA	1
Preservation of historic bldg		1
Underground utilities		1
Marketing of Center	▪ List of stores, map, etc.	1
Good restaurant selection	▪ In terms of type of food & prices ▪ Bakery	1

[2] Group #3 did not document their discussion of this question and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

Response	Comments	# of Groups[3]
Redefine boundaries of Belmont Center	▪ Redefine/expand to include Field House on Concord Ave. up to Pleasant St. along Pleasant St. to Alexander Ave., down to Cross St. & up Channing Rd. to Leonard Street	1
Library at heart of Center	▪ Not at the edge	1
Kids using the Center more		1
Community gathering	▪ "Chairs under the oak tree: in a small mid-western town provided sense of community"	1

Towns mentioned:

- Santa Monica
- Lexington
- Concord
- Wellesley
- Newburyport
- Newport
- Chatham
- Cushing Square, Belmont : stretch in front of Café d'Or
- Mass. Ave., North Cambridge
- Rockport, MA
- Davis Square
- Arlington Heights

[3] Group #3 did not document their discussion of this question and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

*5. If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center, what would it be?**

Response	Comments	# of Groups	Total # of Dots[4]
More Diversity in Shops	▪ Overall (including need for hardware, 5&10 store, entertainment, food, restaurants) ▪ Grocery store ▪ Restaurant variety (incl. Liquor)	4 4 3	8 (16) 38 (14)
Change traffic pattern	▪ Unify the two sides of the tracks ▪ Narrow Leonard St. to one traffic lane in each direction ▪ Reduce traffic flow thru Center ▪ At least change evening pattern ▪ Traffic calming by narrowing the road	4	28
Increase pedestrian access & amenities	▪ Wider sidewalks, benches, trash cans, attractive streetlights ▪ Community path to Alewife ▪ Improve pedestrian connections within Center ▪ Improve pedestrian access from surrounding neighborhoods ▪ Increase sidewalk width by 6 ft. ▪ Reconfigure sidewalks to improve flow & create gathering	6	27
Parking	▪ Structure with design guidelines ▪ Ask Belmont Savings Bank to share garage with public ▪ Connect parking behind Filenes' to Leonard St. ▪ More parking ▪ Underground Parking	1 1 1 1 1	(4) (1) 18 (3) (4) (6)
Convert Leonard Street into pedestrian mall	▪ With housing above shops ▪ Some thought 24-hour pedestrian mall; others thought only night time ▪ Create narrow island down the center of Leonard St. w/ large trees to provide a median for pedestrians	3	16
Housing above retail		3	13

* Each participant was given 5 dots with which to "vote" on what they felt was most important. They were instructed to use all of their dots and not to place any more than 3 dots/votes on any one item.

[4] Group #3 did not vote on their items and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

Response	Comments	# of Groups	Total # of Dots[5]
Improve Town Green	▪ Merge across the tracks, the open space by the church should be included ▪ Town Center Square (like European towns) ▪ Create more open space & landscaping	4	13
Aesthetically harmonious signage & architecture	▪ Better signage for stores & municipal buildings	2	11
Create open space/green network	▪ Acquire open lot next to the bank & connect all green spaces for pedestrians, include. hill, benches, green & big trees	1	10
Coordinate building design		1	7
Make Center more community-focused	▪ Make more inviting for lingering	3	7
Town should keep ownership of Fire station	▪ Control use	1	5
Another retail anchor	▪ At opposite end from Filene's	1	4
Maintenance	▪ Regularly remove trash	1	2
Relocate the library to Center		1	2
Reconvert Lion's Club back into real train station	▪ Let Lions use it	1	2
Raise building height restrictions		1	1
Fix Post Office		1	1
Relocate Police & Electric Depts. to elsewhere			1
Community pride		1	1
Raise taxes on businesses		1	
Improve connections	▪ Better connect parking back lot ▪ Connections for pedestrians of other side of tracks	2	

Issues brought up in three or more groups:

- Change traffic pattern
- More diversity in shops (esp. interested in grocery store & restaurants)
- Make Center more community-focused
- Improve Town Green
- Provide housing above retail
- Convert Leonard Street into a pedestrian mall (at least part of the day)
- Increase pedestrian access and amenities

[5] Group #3 did not vote on their items and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

- Parking

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6. What are the challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center?

Response	Comments	# of Groups[6]
Landlord agreement & support	▪ Garner landlord consensus & support ▪ Lack of diversity in real estate ownership	5
Money	▪ Should look for public sources	4
Lack of central town planning	▪ Lack of leadership in government, community and local businesses ▪ Reactive rather than proactive ▪ Need to set priorities for planning ▪ Find resources for outside expertise	3
Resistance to change	▪ Of any kind	3
Space limitations	▪ Lack of land, limited square footage	3
Zoning restrictions & permitting processes	▪ Some outdated by-laws	3
Regional traffic issues	▪ Rush hour through traffic ▪ Cut through traffic	3
Adjacent residential neighborhood concerns	▪ Neighbors' concerns – traffic, parking, loitering, evening activities, etc	3
Parking	▪ For employees ▪ For commuter rail	2
High rents		2
Too restrictive liquor license requirements	▪ Full license required ▪ Lack of liquor licenses	2
Lack of connection to train station	▪ Railroad tracks & narrowness of underpass	2
Increased traffic from changes		1
Traffic: Intersection of Channing & Leonard Streets	▪ Including the area in front of Belmont Savings Bank & train stop	1
Cross town public transportation		1
Lack of optimism	▪ We have to "think out of the box"	1
"car culture"		1
Road conditions		1
All town offices in one location		1
Explore aerial development over train tracks		1
Politics	▪ Zoning, Town Boards such as HDC, Board of Selectmen & Town Meeting Members	1
Narrowing Leonard St.	▪ Leads to difficulties with store deliveries	1

[6] Group #3 did not document their discussion of this question and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

Tax increases		1

*7. What are some ideas about how to get "there" (strategies)?**

Response	Comments	# of Groups [7]	Total # of Dots
Educate and involve the public	▪ Create consensus for action ▪ Convert ideas into pictures ▪ Construct models of proposals ▪ Citizen pressure & commitment ▪ Buy-in from residents ▪ Involve stakeholders early	6	50
Develop a Plan	▪ Develop a comprehensive plan & implement in increments ▪ Develop a vision	4	30
Town should take control	▪ Not leave it to real-estate based decisions; Have a business development contact to recommend desirable businesses ▪ Fast track permitting for desirable businesses; Tax vacant buildings to encourage occupancy; Need additional town staff; Use internet & town website	3	22
Build relationships with property owners	▪ Get businesses involved ▪ Buy-in from business community	5	17
Go after available funds	▪ What could Belmont Center do with TOD funds; Use state & federal funding ▪ Donations from local landscapers ▪ Hire a grant writer; Create a plan eligible for Smart Growth funds from State	4	12
Phase implementation	▪ Baby steps; Long term process broken down into smaller steps	4	12
Buy-in from abutters		2	10
Enact zoning changes	▪ Some need to "require" action ▪ Some need to "enable" action	2	9
Pass CPA (Community Preservation Act)	▪ Could use for historic preservation, affordable housing, Town Green & train station	1	8
Create incentives	▪ Raise money based on economic status, e.g., naming rights	3	6
Car-free pedestrian mall	▪ Santa Monica model	1	6
Mixed use development	▪ Offer opportunities	1	5
Create a "Belmont	▪ An affinity card	1	5

** Each participant was given 5 dots with which to "vote" on what they felt was most important. They were instructed to use all of their dots and not to place any more than 3 dots/votes on any one item.

[7] Group #3 did not document their discussion of this question and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

Credit Card"			
Response	**Comments**	**# of Groups**	**Total # of Dots[8]**
Leverage previous planning efforts	▪ E.g., planning that has already been done for the new library	1	3
Local tax	▪ Place local tax on luxury items	1	
Directory sign	▪ With space on it rented to businesses	1	1
Get approvals from appropriate town boards		1	1
Better connections	▪ Better relationship b/w residential & commercial spaces	1	1

Issues discussed in more than 3 groups:

- Educate and involve the public
- Develop a plan
- Town should take control
- Build relationship with property owners
- Go after available funds
- Phase implementation

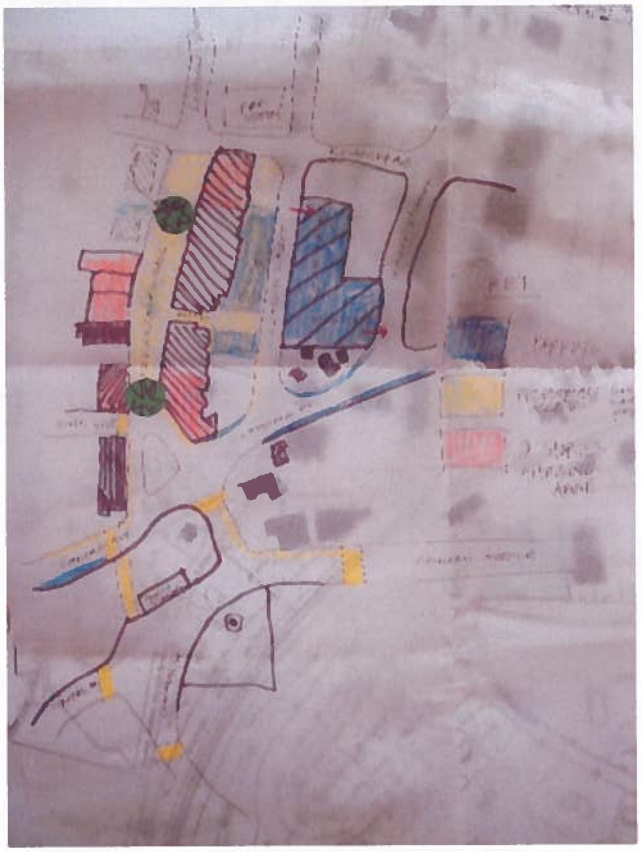
[8] Group #3 did not vote on their items and therefore they are not included in the compilation.

URBAN DESIGN SCHEMES

8. Using the base map and having seen images in the slide show and booths, try defining some design changes/changes to the physical environment of the Center. Identify where they should be located on the map and try describing/drawing what they should look like.

Group #1 [9]

Group One's scheme emphasizes pedestrian access and proposes converting Leonard Street into a pedestrian mall as well as improving pedestrian connections throughout the Center.



The main concept in this scheme is to create a pedestrian mall of Leonard Street with housing above shops located on either side of the street. There is a heavy emphasis on pedestrian access:

- *Add lots of crosswalks (make distinct by painting or different paving material)*
- *Lots of crosswalks needed near Store 24 in particular*

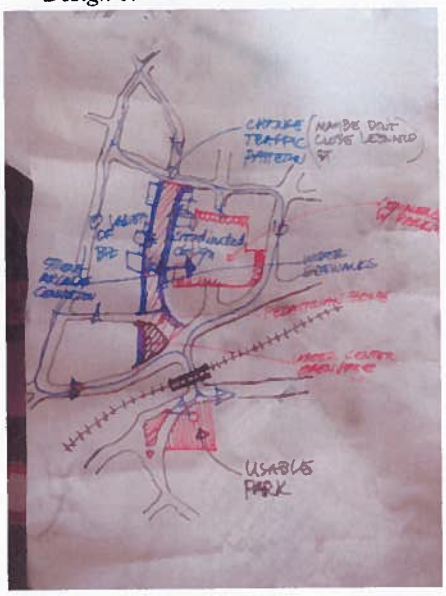
KEY:	***Color codes***
Yellow:	Pedestrian access
Blue:	Parking areas (including parking structure)
Orange:	Places to increase height for residential development

[9] "Red" Group , Facilitator: Roger Colton

Group #2[10]

Group Two proposed two slightly different schemes: "design 1" converts Leonard Street into a pedestrian mall, while "design 2" is less dramatic proposing to widen the sidewalks for pedestrians but does not propose changing the traffic pattern.

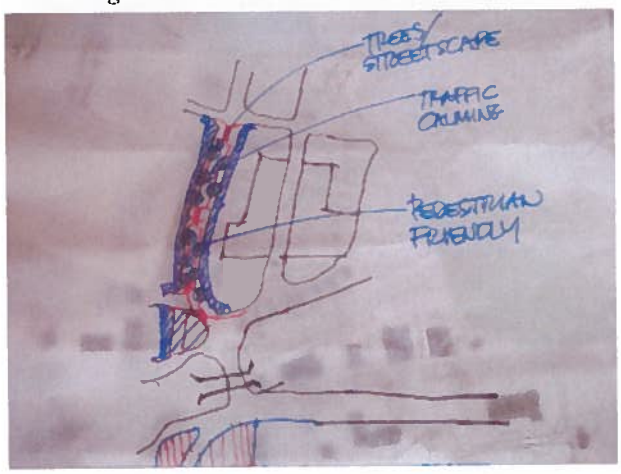
Design 1:



Some of the main features of this proposal include:

- *Reserve Leonard Street block for pedestrian traffic only. Route traffic in a series of one way streets around the Center.*
- *Widen sidewalks and install awnings for protection from the rain.*
- *Add landscaping*
- *Build an arcade for walking between the parking lot and stores on Leonard Street*
- *Create additional commercial space on existing parking lot and add a 4 level parking garage.*
- *Increase the size of the Town Green*
- *Create a usable park on the" other side" of the bridge*

Design 2:



The main features of this scheme include:

- *Widen sidewalks and improve pedestrian connections*
- *Introduce traffic calming measures*
- *do not change the traffic routing.*

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[10] Lime Group, Facilitator: Margaret O'Brien

Group #3[11]

Group Three's scheme focused on overcoming the barrier of the railroad tracks between the two "halves" of the Center. It showed both sides as part of the Center and suggested new crossings – behind the high school and/or somewhere near the Post Office. There was also some discussion of tunnels under the tracks.

They also proposed:

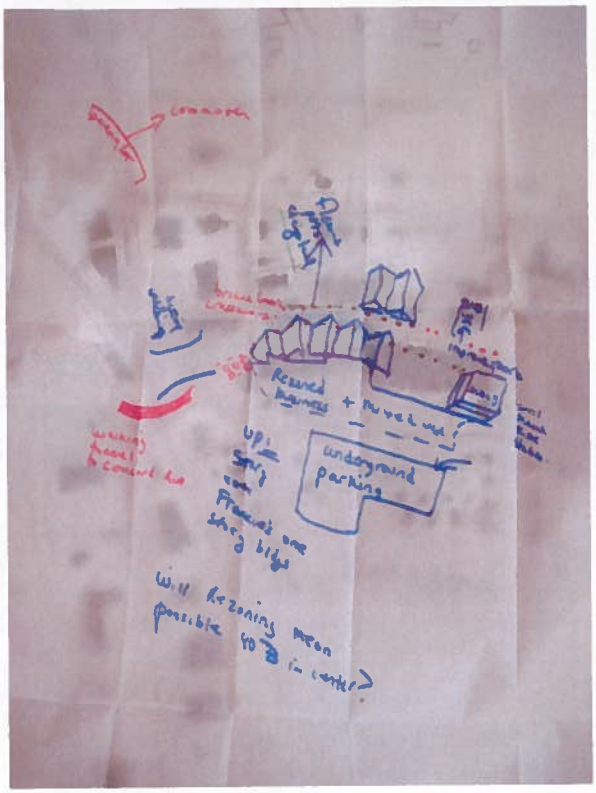
- a parking garage on the Claflin lot (covering the whole block including the houses)
- housing above retail on Leonard Street
- new retail along the west side of Claflin across from the garage

Unfortunately their base map is unavailable

[11] Yellow Group, Facilitator: Andy McClurg

Group #4[12]

Group Four's scheme proposes more mixed use with taller buildings with housing above retail and an underground parking facility in the existing municipal lot.



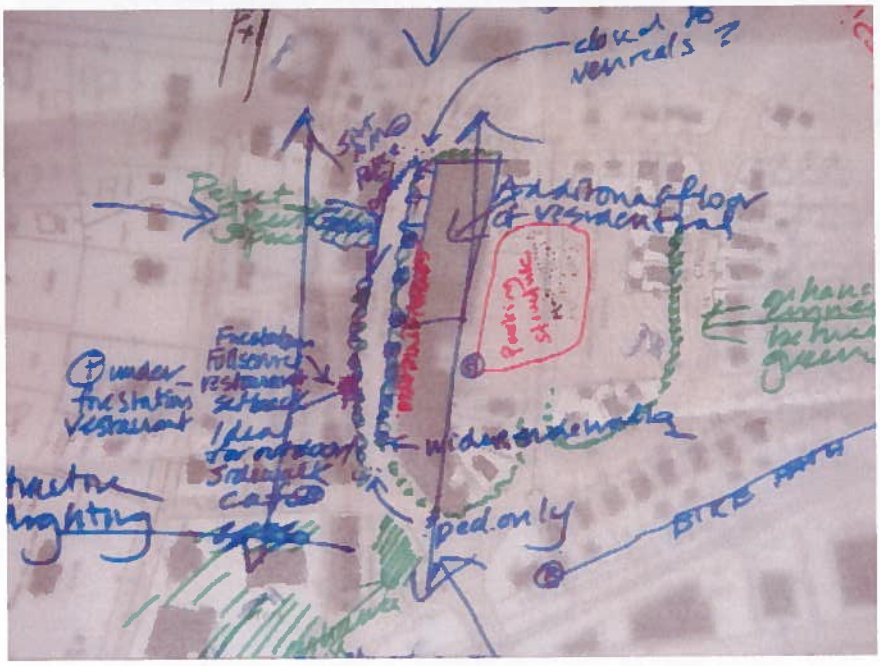
Some of the main features of this scheme include:

- *Situate underground parking garage under existing Claflin St. parking lot*
- *Rezone the 3 houses along Claflin and Channing (next to Nick's) to business ((This raised concern about combined lots' use for 40B development)*
- *Use parking area behind Champions and Filenes for expanded mixed use*
- *Go up one story above Frankie's building continuing second story to where that block has 2 stories already*
- *Go up one story on Filenes building – this will match in height and mass the new fire substation on Leonard*
- *Improve the play park between Coldwell Banker and Bank of America buildings*
- *Add a more attractive façade to CVS building, including a roofline similar to that of the second story across Leonard*
- *Enhance Center with hanging plants and by installing faux brickwork sidewalks*
- *Create a parking lot on Royal Road for Train commuters*
- *Expand width of road under railroad trestle, add better sidewalk, improve cross walk and lighting*
- *Add another pedestrian tunnel running from Channing Road, under Concord Avenue, to opposite side of Concord Ave. near Old RR Station (yellow structure near UU Church)*
- *Add a pedestrian tunnel or overpass at end of Channing where it intersects Alexander Ave. to connect Center to the high school, pool and library on Concord Ave.*

[12] Blue Group, Facilitator: Becky Vose

Group #5[13]

Group Five's scheme proposes to widen sidewalks, build a parking structure on the existing municipal lot, put housing on upper story above retail, and increase and improve pedestrian connections throughout the Center.



Some of the main features of this scheme include:

- Construct a parking structure on the site of the existing municipal lot
- A tunnel passage from the High School to Channing Street
- Bury utilities
- Increase pedestrian connections
- Convert fire station to a full service restaurant
- Air rights development over train tracks
- Widen sidewalks and provide outdoor seating
- Add an additional floor to the "Filene's" building and accommodate housing
- Enhance pedestrian connections, add landscaping
- Build spirit to revitalize the Center in concert the 150th anniversary…. e.g., 150 reasons to improve the Center…"

[13] "Red Group", Facilitator: Austin Bliss

Group #6

The main recommendations of from this group included:

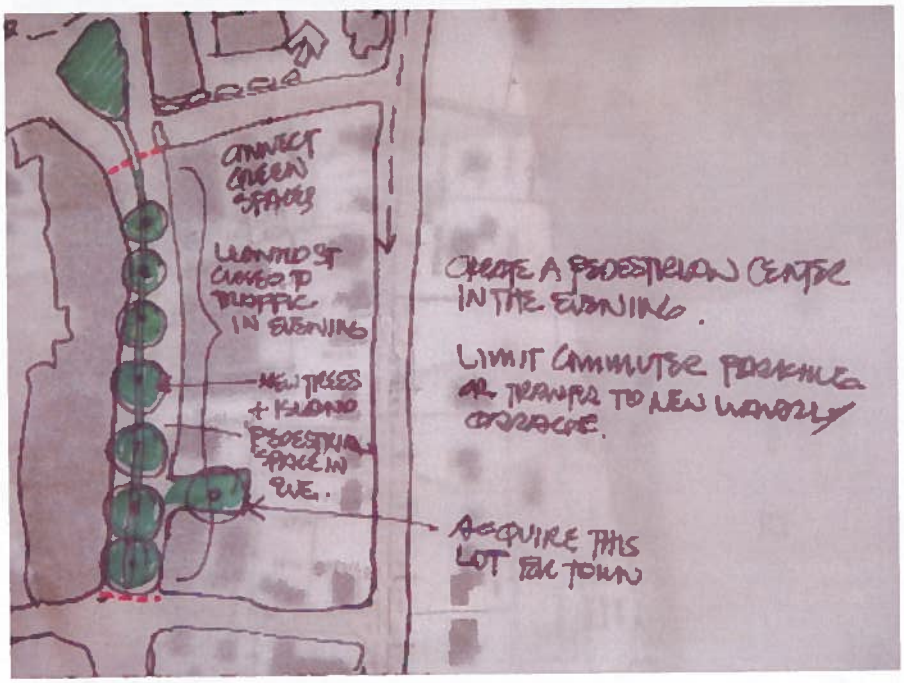
- More plantings at the Town Green, Alexander Ave. at Clafling St. and along the sidewalks of Leonard St., Channing Rd. and Concord Ave. between Leonard Street and Pleasant Street, including in front of the Homer building parking lot
- Expand the footprint of Belmont Center: Redefine and expand the boundaries of the Center to include Field House on Concord Ave. up to Pleasant St.along Pleasant St. to Alexander Ave., down to Cross St. & up Channing Rd. to Leonard Street
- More benches along Leonard St and at the Town Green
- Add more lighting with "character" along Leonard St, Channing Rd and Concord Ave from Leonard St to Pleasant St
- Increase the height of the buildings and add housing above retail/office on Leonard St
- Add housing on the back portion of the back municipal parking lot fronting on Cross St.
- Add an anchor store where Store 24 is
- Close Leonard St off to traffic

This scheme proposes to close Leonard Street to vehicular traffic and improve the pedestrian environment by adding benches, lighting and landscaping along both sides of the street. The group also recommended that housing be accommodated on second stories above retail.

Color Key
Red dots: lighting
Green: planting
Blue: benches
Yellow: housing

Group #7

Group's Seven's Scheme proposes to reroute evening traffic in order to create a pedestrian center in the evening. It also adds a traffic calming landscaped island down the middle of Leonard Street and relocates the library to the Center of town.



Some of the main features of this scheme include:

- *Connect green spaces (green on map)*
- *Create a landscaped island down the middle of Leonard St.*
- *Re-route evening traffic*
- *Leonard St. closed to traffic in evening*
- *Create pedestrian space/center in evening*
- *Limit commuter parking or transfer to new Waverley garage*
- *Leased commuter parking (other side of bridge/church lot)*
- *Acquire open lot (next to bank) for town*
- *Redevelop or sell present Library – don't demolish (new Library shown on Claflin St. lot)*

Group #8: Youth Group

The following is based on the written notes and presentation made by the youth group at the charrette. The group was led by four teenage girls who contributed their thoughts regarding the future of the Center while helping the younger children to articulate theirs.

The Youth Group presented written notes, performed a puppet show which included a song about Belmont Center, made a presentation to the adult participants and diagramed their thoughts regarding a Youth Center.

What would you like to see in Belmont Center?

Teen store
Cheaper hang spots
Variety of restaurants
Diesel Café
Burger place like Wild Willy's
CD store
Dated restaurants
Update green
Trapelo Rd. – crossways
Green
In-town shuttle
Repave pool and outside paint
Do something with outside green & rink
Create an indoor beach like a pool with fake trees and sand
More seating in the library area (inviting, hold events there)
More ice cream
Facing benches
Little benches
Larger buildings
Non-wheelchair accessibility
Snack bar
Arcade/video games
YMCA/Gym
Library in Center
Convert Firehouse building into Teen Center
Public bathrooms
Add something in front of Store 24
Cinema
Bike lane through bridge
Awkward entrance
Add arches at TCBY with a little roof
Repaint the bridge with a mural
Have events to bring people in
More spacious
Arches over street with sunroofs
Skate park near Store24
Pretty signs
More stores
A shoe store

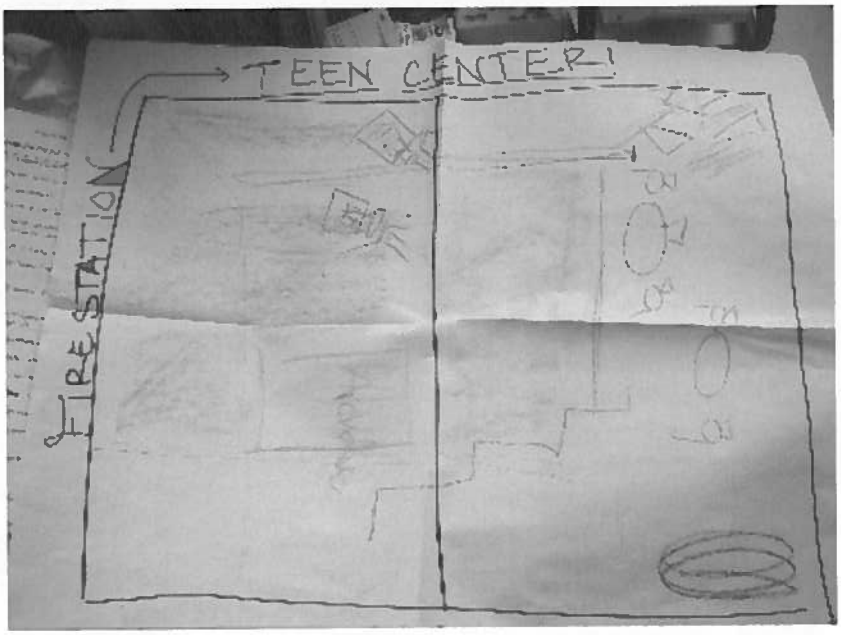
What are your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

- Bad sidewalks
- Bad benches
- Need more trees
- Building across from Filene's
- Extend sidewalk on Bruegger's
- No social
- Too many banks

Where is the parking money going?

If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center what would it be?

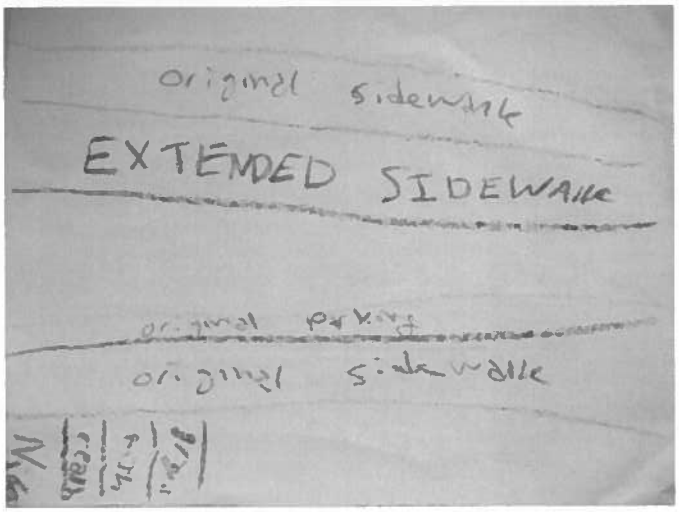
- Convert the Fire station into a Teen Center



Part of the proposed floor plan of the proposed conversion of the fire station into a teen center.

- Decorate: signs, murals, colors
- New Stores, including a cinema and a café and fewer banks
- Put Benches in Open Lot
- Fix Pool
- More pedestrian and disabled accessibility
- Provide in-town Transportation

- Build Out Sidewalk and add double benches, trees and plants



The Youth Group also submitted a plan for the Center with wider sidewalks.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF RESPONSES

6.0 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF RESPONSES

GROUP #1

Red group: eight people

Favorite things:

- People know--bump into folks.
- Able to walk to useful things (except groceries)
- Display windows
- Restaurants
- Can always find gifts (especially gifts for kids)
- Within walking distance *from* many parts of town.
- Aesthetics--old "charming" look (the Green, buildings, the slope by the trains, the curve to the road).

Bad things about Belmont Center:

- Too many banks.
- Poor pedestrian access walking *into* the Center.
- No food shopping.
- Lack of parking
- No entertainment.
- No outdoor place to sit
- Lots of pavement.
- *Sitting on the Green (in front of bank) feels like sitting on island in parking lot.*
- Too many cars
- Stores close too early
- Places for youth from when I was a kid gone (e.g., Brighams (Bailey's?), record store).
- No space for "constructive socializing."

Ideas from others:

- "Buy a bench"
- Coordinated street furniture
- Wider sidewalks
- Create more promenade space
- Intra-town transportation

- Have wi-fi Center-wide
- Car-free pedestrian mall (see, Santa Monica).
- Structured parking
- Housing above shops
- Better signing
- Pedestrian access from all neighborhoods (including bicycles access).
  Create pedestrian tunnel to businesses over by post office
  Widen tunnel under tracks to make more pedestrian/bike friendly.
  Extend Town Green (by bank) out into intersection further to cut down on the amount of concrete by Store 24 and underpass.

Belmont Center "purpose":

- Enough of a mix of retail/food to attract people.
- Attracts people to shop locally (keep Belmont shopping dollars in Belmont).
- People living to bring vitality (bring vitality 24 hours a day).
- Mix of shopping for all socio-economic strata (not just high end shops).
- Walkable services for surrounding neighborhoods
- Place for housing options and walkable services for aging who want to "downsize"
- Place for walkable services for those who cannot/do not want to drive.
- Nerve center for Town (e.g., economic, Town services--including government services).

One thing to do to Belmont Center:

- Parking structure with design guidelines
- Reconvert Lions' Club back into a real train station (let Lions use). (2 votes)
- Food shopping ('small grocery"). (5 votes)
- Town should keep ownership of Fire Station in order to control use (5 votes)
- Convert Leonard Street into a pedestrian mall and place housing above shops (8 votes).
- Some thought should be 24-hour pedestrian mall/others thought night-time mall).
- Increase pedestrian amenities (benches, lights, trash cans, etc.) (4 votes).
- Connect parking behind Filenes to Leonard Street (3 votes).
- Ask Belmont Savings Bank to share its garage parking with the public. (1 vote)
- Merge "Town Green" by the church with Belmont Center across the tracks (the open space by the church is "really" the Town Green; should be part of the Center) (2 votes)

- Put housing above retail (5 votes).

Challenges:

- Money
- Landlord agreement
- Resistance to any kind of change
- Space limitations
- Zoning restrictions
- Rush hour through traffic
- "Car culture"

Strategies:

- Educate the public (10 votes)
- Convert "ideas" into pictures.
- Construct models of proposals
- Town takes control--not leave it to real-estate-based decisions. (2 votes)
- Raise dollars based on economic status--create incentives for wealth to give (e.g., naming rights).
- Study Santa Monica model (6 votes)
- Get dollars in hand then decide what to do rather than deciding on what to do and then go looking for dollars (1 vote).
- Know what kind of money is available, and then seek to do first what fits that available money, rather than deciding on what to do and then seeking to find money that may or may not be available (e.g., what could Belmont Center do with transit-oriented development funds)
- Pass the Community Preservation Act (historic preservation, affordable housing, open space around Town Green and train station. (8 votes)
- Place local tax on luxury items
- Create a "Belmont Credit card" (an affinity card) (5 votes)
- Define a comprehensive plan and then implement it in increments (3 votes)
- Build relationships with property owners
- Enact zoning changes (6 votes)
    - Some need to "require" action
    - Some need to "enable" action

Annotations to map:

- Pedestrian access is heavy emphasis.
- Add lots of crosswalks (make distinct by painting or brick or some such thing). Lots of crosswalks needed down by Store 24 in particular.

Color codes:

Pedestrian access (yellow)
Parking areas (includes parking structure) (blue)
Places to increase height for residential development (orange)

GROUP #2

What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?

- Architecture mixed styles
- Town Green
- Proximity to my home
- The 3 new restaurants
- Family-friendly shops
- Starbucks - it's relaxing
- Scale - contained but ample
- Bookstore
- Bridge
- Train station
- Back parking lot is attractive

What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

- Not enough mix of businesses
- Too many banks
- Bridge and traffic problem at its intersection
- Restaurants appeal to specific groups
- Need bakery or other small eatery
- Lack of walk-through or arcade from parking to Leonard St.
- Doesn't meet daily needs of residents such as groceries, etc.
- Trash from businesses collected outside
- Cars don't stop for pedestrians in crosswalk
- Pedestrian unfriendly
- Narrow sidewalks
- "Give away" publication racks
- Smokers seated on benches
- Lack of awnings to stay dry
- Inconsistent feel of storefronts
- Lack of snow removal

Define the primary purpose of Belmont Center in terms of what it could be, for example: retail center, financial center (banking), service center, restaurant mecca, entertainment and recreation destination, other?

- Mixed use
- Inviting - comfortable and convenient
- Place to socialize - town for the people who live here

Share ideas from another town center - what did you especially like and think might work for Belmont?

- Towns mentioned: Lexington, Concord, Wellesley, Newburyport, Newport
- Welcoming
- Signage
- Flowers
- Scale aesthetically pleasing
- Pedestrian friendly and wide-open and visible
- Gas lamps
- Patios
- Wide, brick sidewalks
- Possibly no cars on Leonard St.

If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center, what would it be?
(ordered by number of sticker "votes")

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Stimulate variety of businesses	11
Change traffic pattern	8
Coordinated design of buildings	7
Wider sidewalks	7
Town-center square (like European towns)	5
Make Belmont Center more community-focused	2
Raise building height restrictions	1
Fix Post Office	1
Need for a grocery store	1
Move Police and Electric Depts. Elsewhere in town	0

What are the challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center?

- Garner landlord support of diversity of business
- High rents
- Lack of central planning in Belmont
- Lack of leadership, whether in Town government or in the community or the local businesses
- Need for funding (for landscaping, store front redesign, etc.)

- Reactive rather than proactive
- Need to set priorities for planning

What are some ideas about how get "there" (strategies)?
(ordered by number of sticker "votes")

Develop a vision for Belmont Center	5
Business development contact to recommend desirable businesses	5
Expedited/fast track permitting for desirable businesses	3
Incentivize businesses	4
Tax on vacant buildings to encourage occupancy	3
Get businesses involved	3
Citizen pressure and commitment	2

Using base map and having seen images in slide show and booths, try defining some design changes tot he physical environment of the Belmont Center (sic). Identify where they should be located on the map and try describing/drawing what they should look like.

Design 1

Reserve Leonard St. block for pedestrian traffic only. Route traffic in a series of one way streets around the Center. Widen sidewalks and install awnings for protection from rain. Add landscaping. Build an arcade for walking between the parking lot and stores on Leonard St.

Create a playground on Town Green.

Design 2

Widen sidewalks, etc. but do not change traffic routing.

GROUP #3

Facilitator notes from Yellow Table

Favorite things:

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- Scale – walkable – Leonard St. is a good size
- Nice mix of retail
- Belmont Toys
- Library, Post Office, Unitarian Church
- Town Hall complex
- Original town green

Least favorite:

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- Retail banks
- Poor pedestrian connections – under bridge, Cross/Claflin Streets
- Too much asphalt
- Not enough services/stores for local residents
- Underutilization of train

Purpose of Belmont Center – 2 different concepts:

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- Place to pass the time
- Place to do your business

Different opinions about what's more important

To improve Belmont Center:

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- More Residential
- Community path to Alewife
- Unifying the two sides of the tracks
- More Commercial Diversity:
  - hardware
  - food
  - cobbler
  - 5&10¢ store
  - entertainment
  - wine/liquor
  - restaurants

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- more parking
- improved pedestrian connections within the Center
- more open space
- improved pedestrian access from surrounding neighborhoods

Description of our Map (which may have been lost)

Our map focused on overcoming the barrier of the railroad tracks between the two 'halves' of the Center. It showed both sides as part of the Center and suggested new crossings – behind the high school and/or somewhere near the Post Office. We were thinking of tunnels under the tracks.

We also drew a parking garage on the Claflin lot (covering the whole block including the houses), housing above the retail on Leonard, and new retail along the west side of Claflin across from the garage.

GROUP #4

Responses of Blue group.
Reporter: Becky Vose

Favorite thing about Belmont Center:

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- Filenes
- Restaurants
- Bookstore
- Quaintness
- Frame Hut
- Hairdressers
- Town Green & Pedestrian Tunnel

Least favorite things:

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- Lack of diversity in stores
- Parking
- Lack of evening activity
- Too many banks
- Huge building containing Frame Hut
- Difficulty crossing street for pedestrians and drivers
- Poor signage for traffic and businesses

Primary purpose of Belmont Center:

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- Places to dine, shop and socialize
- Retail Center
- Unique Retail Center (not chains you find at the mall)
- Business Center but w/stores at both ground and 1st floor levels

- Be colorful, enticing center for town

Ideas from other town centers:

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- Any town center with better signage
- Chatham, MA – visually attractive and very welcoming
- Lexington, MA – wide sidewalks
- Cushing Square, Belmont – stretch in front of block with Café d'Or
- Mass Ave., No. Cambridge – mixed use; attractive design of exteriors
- Rockport, MA - Quaintness of buildings; small scale, hanging flowers and plants

One thing to improve Belmont Center, prioritized:

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- *1st place (8 stickers each):*
  - More diversity in shops
  - Architectural design standards
- *2nd place (6 stickers):*
  - Underground parking
- *3rd place (5 stickers each):*
  - Full-service continental restaurant w/ liquor license
  - Color, Landscaping
- *4th place (1 sticker):*
  Attractive Street lighting

Challenges to achieving what you'd like to see in Belmont Center:

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- Strong resistance to change
- Funding
- Increased traffic from changes
- Proximity to residences
- High rents
- Resistance from business owners
- Outdated zoning by-laws
- Outdated permitting processes
- Too restrictive licensing requirements for sale of liquor (full license for restaurants)
- Small footprint
- Railroad tracks & narrowness of underpass

- Intersection of Channing & Leonard Streets, including the area in front of the Belmont Savings Bank and train stop

Ideas about how to get there, prioritized:

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- *1st place (6 stickers):*
  - Buy-in from business community
- *2nd place (4 stickers each):*
  - State & Federal funding
  - Donations from local landscapers
- *3rd place (3 stickers each):*
  - Buy-in from abutters
  - Revise Zoning bylaws
  - Earmark town funds for improvements
  - Encourage public/private partnerships
- *4th place (2 stickers):*
  - Buy-in from residents
- *5th place (1 sticker):*
  Directory sign for Center with space on it rented to businesses

Using base map, define design & physical environment changes:

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- Situate underground parking garage under existing Claflin St. parking lot
- Rezone the 3 houses along Claflin and Channing (next to Nick's) to business
  - (This raised concern about combined lots' use for 40B development)
- Use parking area behind Champions and Filenes for expanded mixed use
- Go up one story above Frankie's building continuing second story to where that
  - block has 2 stories already
- Go up one story on Filenes building – this will match in height and mass the new
  - fire substation on Leonard
- Improve the play park between Coldwell Banker and Bank of America buildings
- Add a more attractive façade to CVS building, including a roofline similar to that
  - of the second story across Leonard
- Enhance Center with hanging plants and by installing faux brickwork sidewalks
- Create a parking lot on Royal Road for Train commuters
- Expand width of road under railroad trestle, add better sidewalk, improve cross

        - walk and lighting
    - Add another pedestrian tunnel running from Channing Road, under Concord
        - Avenue, to opposite side of Concord Ave. near Old RR Station (yellow
        - structure near UU Church)
- Add a pedestrian tunnel or overpass at end of Channing where it intersects
        - Alexander Ave. to connect Center to the high school, pool and library on
        - Concord Ave.

GROUP #5

Austin C. Bliss, facilitator
'red' group (there were two red groups)
7 people in group

Favorite Thing

- close to town business
- architecture of Georgian-type building block (building with dormers) [2 votes]
- can walk to it
- in my backyard
- town hall complex historic buildings

other things mentioned:

- architecture by commuter rail
- old firehouse
- historic buildings
- lions club

Least Favorite Thing

- hodgepodge of architecture
- not 'welcoming' to pedestrians
- hodgepodge of signage
- lack of mix of retail and business [mentioned twice]
- dirty
- lack of parking impacts residential neighborhoods

other things mentioned:

- everything closes down @ 7pm (wants something that has night use)

- lack of variety of stores (e.g. no hardware store)
- lack of seasonal care / snow removal
- piles of retail trash on the sidewalk
- police officer on Sat am by Bank of America

What it Could Be

- parking solved
- inviting and welcoming
- mixed use (retail & residential)
- aesthetically pleasing
- inviting to outsiders/welcoming
- vibrant (in terms of promoting connections between people)
- community driven/responsive
- car-less
- community gathering place
- a place to be proud of
- "a sense of pride and stewardship"
- all uses: retail, financial, restaurants, etc.
- built on a human scale, people oriented
- welcomed by the police officers on the beat "it's just about the tone"

Liked in other Towns:

- wider sidewalks
- parking close to ctr (Lexington)
- mix of uses [mentioned twice]
- greenspace [mentioned twice], trees in flowerboxes
- nicer lighting
- less xmas-y
- harmonious architecture & signage & trash receptacles
- preservation of historic buildings
- café-feel (outdoor dining) e.g. firestation
- benches
- less news-box stands
- bike racks
- public art
- performance space, art theater

- underground utilities
- marketing of Center (list of stores, map, etc.)
- bike path connection
- more like: Concord, Wellesley, Lexington, David Sq [mentioned twice], Arlington Heights.

What ONE thing could we do?

- improve mix of retail & residential [8 votes]
- regularly remove litter [2 votes]
- aesthetically harmonious signage & architecture [9 votes]
- appealing streetscape improvements [10 votes]
- more inviting for 'lingering' [1 vote]
- more parking [4 votes]
- community pride [1 vote]

also mentioned:

- raise taxes on businesses

Challenges?

- money
- consensus, consensus among businesses
- cross town public transportation
- lack of a plan, lack of vision
- lack of diversity in real estate ownership
- lack of optimism "we have to think out of the box"
- lack of liquor licenses
- parking for employees and for commuter rail
- connection to commuter rail
- traffic
- pass-through traffic
- road condition
- commuter parking
- all town offices in one location

also mentioned:

- we should explore aerial development over train tracks

Ideas to get there?

- Comprehensive plan & implementation strategy [13 votes]
- Public involvement [1 vote]
- 'baby-steps' to get there [2 votes]
- get businesses more involved in planning & financial involvement [1 vote]
- public grants [1 vote]
- hire a grant write [2 votes]
- getting public 'buy-in'/ awareness [3 votes]
- increased focus in economic development (time for town planner to pursue business) [3 votes]
- town staffing to address these needs [7 votes]
- incentives for retail development [2 votes]

GROUP #6:

What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?

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- see friendly faces/people I know
- see friendly faces
- the shopping
- the homeyness of the Center
- the accessibility of shopping and banking
- convenience of being able to walk to shop and eat
- Filene's\
- The location – it's convenient to my home
- Browsing in the bookstore and CVS
- Seeing my neighbors while I shop

What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

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- No good restaurant
- Lack of places to congregate
- Poor shoveling at some of the stores
- No grocery store
- Crossing Leonard St., especially near Moore St.
- Crossing anywhere – Concord Ave, Moore St., Leonard St., Alexander Ave., Claflin St., Channing Rd.
- Lack of beauty in the summer – no flowers, planters, window boxes
- No character – no uniformity in store signage or frontage
- Lack of trash receptacles
- Too many municipal signs/parking signs

Define the primary purpose of Belmont Center, in terms of what it could be.

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- Provide services – banking, shopping, mail letters, go to library

- Provide municipal services – fire, police, town offices, which increases the security of the Center
- Municipal service cluster
- Grocery store
- Place to congregate
- One stop shopping for errands, have a Five and Ten
- Provide a retail mix
- Have a variety of eating places open at night
- Provide a gathering place in the evening hours, perhaps til 9 pm
- Provide housing
- Be more livable – taller buildings, mixed use with housing
- Improved short-term parking and traffic circulation

Ideas from other town centers which might work for Belmont

- Outdoor seating, as in Lexington
- Wider sidewalks
- Brick sidewalks
- Better restaurant selection, in terms of types of food and prices
- Bakery
- Use railroad bed to link to Waverley Sq.
- Attractive street lighting
- Operable street lights
- Redefine/expand the footprint of Belmont Center – from Field House on Concord Ave up to Pleasant St, along Pleasant St to Alexander Ave, down to Cross St and up Channing Rd. to Leonard St.

One thing to improve Belmont Center

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# votes	idea
10	grocery store
9	restaurant with American style food
6	narrow Leonard St to one traffic lane in each direction v. current room for 2 lanes in each direction
4	have another retail anchor store at the opposite end from Filene's
4	reduce traffic flow through Belmont Center
2	better signage for stores and municipal buildings
2	close Leonard St. to cars
1	sidewalks at least 6 feet wider

Challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center

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- Lack of land
- Narrowing Leonard St. leads to difficulties with store deliveries
- Politics – zoning, Town boards such as Historic District Commission and Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting Members
- Resistance to change
- Working with the neighbors

Strategies

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# votes	strategy
9	find ways to attract businesses – use the internet and town website
9	community involvement and outreach
7	get approvals from appropriate town boards
5	clear communication that it is a long term process broken down into smaller steps
6	town wide citizen involvement with helping each other out, as it used to be
2	public education

Base Map

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More plantings at the Town Green, Alexander Ave at Claflin St. and along the sidewalks of Leonard St., Channing Rd. and Concord Ave between Leonard St and Pleasant St, including in front of the Homer building parking lot

Expand the footprint of Belmont Center, as described in Q. 4

More benches along Leonard St and at the Town Green

Add more lighting with "character" along Leonard St, Channing Rd and Concord Ave from Leonard St to Pleasant St

Increase the height of the buildings and add housing above retail/office on Leonard St

Add housing on the back portion of the back municipal parking lot fronting on Cross St.

Add an anchor store where Store 24 is

Close Leonard St off to traffic

GROUP #7

Purple Group
Jenny Fallon – Facilitator

6 people in the group (+ facilitator) – One person had to leave before Question 7

What is one of your favorite things about Belmont Center?

- Stores – family friendly
- Variety of restaurants
- 4 blocks from home
- Architecture of municipal buildings
- Architecture of east side (Filene's side) and old fire station
- Scale of buildings
- Having a bookstore
- Being known and greeted by merchants
- Open as late as 10 p.m.
- Easy access to public transit

What is one of your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

- Traffic
- It is a commuter route
- Intersections way too wide
- Limited parking
- Jumble and clutter among buildings
- Street crossing difficult
- Street too wide – car portion
- Loss of landscaping
- Not clean – too much trash
- News distribution boxes (Some not legal?)
- Claflin St. side not pedestrian friendly
- West side buildings unattractive
- Too many banks
- Not good mix of businesses
- Sidewalks too narrow – get blocked by a few people
- No people space

Define the primary purpose of Belmont Center in terms of what it could be.

- Center for community gathering place
- Re-focus away from shopping
- Businesses and restaurants as a reason to come – open late
- Reason to walk there
- Better business mix – used to be hardware store, bakery

- Connections to green space – especially important
- Pedestrian friendly welcoming Center
- Connection to the surrounding residential community
- Extended hours for attractions – shops, galleries
- Evening life

Share ideas from another town center – what did you especially like and think might work for Belmont?

- Library at the heart of Center – not at the edge
- Maximize space – other centers more spacious
- Businesses encourage pedestrian access – draw pedestrians in
- Architectural design and pavement materials to make connections
- Develop a cultural center in the town center
- Kids using Center more
- "Chairs under the oak tree" in a small mid-western town provided sense of community

If you could do one thing to improve Belmont Center what would it be?

- Open lot next to bank preserved and large evergreen planted (bought by town?). Triangle (in front of bank) and land adjacent to tracks all the way up to pedestrian tunnel, including hill, for benches, green space and big trees. Connect all green spaces visually for pedestrians. *(10 votes)*
- Change traffic pattern to lessen traffic on Leonard St. (e.g. one way streets) – evening traffic pattern different at least *(7 votes)*
- Narrow island down center of Leonard St – <u>large</u> trees planted (donated by families in town) providing a median for pedestrians and breaking up skyscape. *(6 votes)*
- Reconfigure sidewalks to improve flow and create optimal gathering spaces *(4 votes)*
- Narrow road – traffic calming *(3 votes)*
- Put library in Center (Claflin St. lot) *(2 votes)*
- More landscaping – green space *(1 vote)*
- Better connect parking, esp. "back lot" *(0 votes)*
- Connections for pedestrians to other side of tracks (from earlier sheet)

What are the challenges to achieving what you would like to see in the Center?

- Regional traffic issues – effects in other communities and increasing volume
- Neighbors' concern – traffic, parking, loitering, evening activity
- Money – Should not rely exclusively on merchants. State, other sources?
- Solutions to parking
- Planning capability – find resources for outside expertise

- Conflicting interests – lack of consensus
- Tax increases

What are some ideas about how to get there (strategies)?

- Create a plan and publicize it. Create consensus for action. Use visual images and models and circulate images widely. Create political will to make it happen – education and broad outreach. *(9 votes)*
- Involve all stakeholders early. *(7 votes)*
- Offering mixed use development opportunities *(5 votes)*
- Leverage all the planning that has already been done for the new library building *(3 votes)*
- Phases of implementation *(1 vote)*
- Better connections and attraction between residential and commercial spaces *(1 vote)*
- Smart growth $ from state – create a plan eligible for that *(0 votes)*

Using base map try defining some design changes/changes to the physical environment of the Center.

Comments written on map:

- Connect green spaces (green on map)
- New trees and island (along Leonard St.)
- Re-route evening traffic
- Leonard St. closed to traffic in evening
- Create pedestrian space/center in evening
- Limit commuter parking or transfer to new Waverley garage
- Leased commuter parking (other side of bridge/church lot)
- Acquire open lot (next to bank) for town
- Redevelop or sell present Library – don't demolish (new Library shown on Claflin St. lot)

ISSUE PADS AND WALL QUESTIONS
CHARRETTE – FEEDBACK

In addition to the small group discussions a number of specific questions were asked of participants. These questions were written on large pieces of paper adhered to vertical surfaces and "issue pads" located at the information booths. Response was voluntary. The following is a compilation of these responses.

Issue Pads

1. What makes Belmont Center unique?

- Filene's/Macy's (3)
- Architecture (5)
- Eclectic Residents (2)
- Unlimited potential for improvement. (1)
- Can walk to Belmont Center.
- Not too formal. (1)
- Easy access to stores. (1)
- Retains feeling of the past. (1)

2. What have you seen in other town centers that you would like to see in Belmont Center?

- Folk café (1)
- Better enforcement of right of way to pedestrians. (1)
- Better lighting and cross walks (1)
- Wi-Fi (1)
- Sit-down American or Italian restaurant (1)
- More green space, trees (4)
- Great variety of stores (1)
- No cars (4)
- Unique stores (1)
- Covered sidewalks (arcades) (1)
- Remove ice/snow in Winter, better drainage. (1)
- Better trash removal. (3)
- Remove parking meters; enforce 2-hour maximum parking. (1)

3. What would encourage you to come to Belmont Center more often?

- Bookstore open late. (1)
- Bakery, ice cream shop, computer café, dream machine (Watertown) (1)
- Parking structure (1)
- Boutique (1)

- Performance/exhibition space (1)
- Central meeting place (1)
- Outdoor café (especially in Electric Light Building) (3)
- Grocery store (e.g., Bildner's, Formaggio Kitchen) (3)
- Fresh fruit stands (1)
- Cheese/Wine Store (1)
- Wider sidewalks. (1)

4. What is the No. 1 reason you go elsewhere, and where do you go?

- Better mix of stores (1)
- Parking. (1)
- Walkable Center (Chatham) (3)
- Outdoor café, covered walkways (1)
- Grocery store (1)
- Sick of getting parking tickets (1)

5. If you could do one thing to improve parking in Belmont Center, what would it be?

- Encourage people to park and walk – not circle to find a space on Leonard Street.
- Build a one-story parking lot over existing lot behind Belmont Center *(Yes....too bad the new fire station space wasn't used for this.)*
- More handicap parking.
- Dig down two levels and one street-level parking.
- Reduce speed limit and utilize diagonal parking.
- Bring back parallel parking.
- Restrict parking at crosswalk to bus stop at Ritz Camera on rise and curve to only compact car at space before crosswalk. With trucks, SUV's, it is dangerous as you cannot see pedestrians crossing from coffee shops when there is heavy traffic between 7:30 – 9:30 a.m. A sign could be posted: **Compact Cars only 7:30 – 9:30 a.m.** (only one space before the crosswalk as this is the worst for safety restricting the view.
- Encourage walking and biking.
- If a nearby but "remote" parking area is created (with adequate capacity), you encourage some walking and the car circling and traffic down. Where? Don't know. If on Concord, the "ominous" walk under the bridge has to be made less ominous. How?

6. If a new business were to open in Belmont Center, what would you most like it to be?

- Café (like Starbucks, but more seating) (5)
- Bakery (4)
- Armenian grocery
- N.Y. – style deli (3)
- Newsstand selling magazines, comics, cigars
- video rental (2)
- Computer repair shop (4)
- Tailor (2)
- Grocery Store – Trader Joe's (or similar good food choice), Whole Foods, upscale shop of foods, small grocery (9)
- Specialty/Asian Grocery
- Pub
- Paper/stationery, pens, etc. (3)
- Knitting store (2)
- Nice dining
- Teen clothing store
- Hardware store
- Small theatre like Lexington Center (2)
- see Lexington Center for Variety for examples and range of offering
- Farmer's Market Weekly
- Mexican restaurant
- Shoe store
- Ethnic foods
- Filene's Basement
- Performance/Cultural Center
- Italian restaurant in the old fire house
- Gourmet wine and cheese shop
- Quality ice cream or Gelato shop
- Small grocery store (Bildner's)
- Dream Machine: What else for the kids?

7. What are the kinds of businesses you would rather <u>not</u> see open in Belmont Center?

Banks		(15)
Real Estate offices		(3)
Dunkin' Donuts		(4)
Eating places (except ice cream)		(1)
Nail/Hair salons		(11)
Coffee shops		(4)
Big box stores		(3)
Pizza		(2)
Chinese take-out		(1)
Macy's build-up 2 levels	**No**	(5)
	Yes	(1)

8. What could be done to improve the pedestrian experience in Belmont Center?

- More planters and sitting benches
- A reason to walk there – outdoor sitting, eating – instead of multiple banks
- Trees and wider sidewalks
- A place to walk to. A civic space to sit and chat. A community space that is so lacking. Begin with buying/taking the space between Bank of America and Coldwell Banker, Realtors. For me, as is, there is little reason to walk to town.
- Perhaps different stands: food samples or surveys. Just something to spruce up sidewalks for pedestrians. Maybe bands or live performances.
- Trash pickup more frequent; anti-litter campaign.
- Benches
- Better marked crosswalks.
- Definitely more planters, flower garden areas.
- More benches to coordinate with ornamental planters and lights.

9. Would you like to see more housing in Belmont Center?

Yes – 6: All but 2 qualified by need for parking.
No – 3: All citing parking as a problem

10. Zoning Booth Issues

	FOR	AGAINST
(A) Height 1-3 Stories		8
Stories:		
4	3	
5	3	
Taller	1 (only if it has books)	
(B) Mixed Uses		
Restaurant	3	1
Retail	3	1
Office	3	1
Residential	1	1

Belmont Center: Imagining the Future
Community-wide Charrette[14]

Saturday, April 1, 2006
Belmont High School
Cafeteria
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Agenda

Purpose of the Charrette:
To invite the Belmont community to come together and generate ideas that will create a shared vision for Belmont Center's future. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.

2:00 – 2:30	**Introduction and Overview**
2:30 – 3:00	**Visit Information Booths**
3:00 – 4:30	**Break Out into Small Discussion Groups**
4:30 –5:00	**Report Back and Wrap Up**

We would like to thank Starbucks of Belmont Center, Watertown Savings Bank, Cambridge Savings Bank, Bank of America, and Citizens Bank for their generous donations.

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[14] *The French word "charrette" is used to describe an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. The term is said to originate from the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart or "charrette" to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work. The Belmont Center Charrette will be an interactive community gathering that involves participants in crafting a vision for the future of Belmont Center.*

Key Elements to Consider for the future of Belmont Center:

- **Entrance to Belmont Center** *(including way-finding & orientation)*
- **Mix of uses** (*types of retail, housing, office space)*
- **Building height** *(how many stories?)*
- **Housing in the Center** *(where, what kind, for who?)*
- **Pedestrian experience** *(safety, accessibility, amenities, aesthetic appeal, sidewalks, paths & alleys, connections)*
- **Connections** *(between parking lot(s), adjacent & surrounding uses)*
- **Architecture** *(e.g. building details, height, massing, historic character)*
- **Parking** *(e.g. adequacy of available, desirability of parking garage, parking lot design)*
- **Signage** *(clear, attractive, directional, informational, location, orientation, scale, colors, materials)*
- **Building "accessories"** *(e.g. awnings, canopies, banners)*
- **Storefronts** (*design, transparency, welcoming, attractive)*
- **Street furniture** *(e.g. benches, street lighting, trash barrels, planters)*
- **Rear entrances/backs of buildings** (*accessible, attractive)*
- **Public spaces/gathering spots** *(accessible, attractive, comfortable)*
- **Landscaping** *(along sidewalks, in open spaces including parking lots)*
- **Visual interest** *(aesthetic appeal, variety, surprise)*

TERRACE CONDITION: Both the terrace and the front access stairs are in fair to poor condition. A portion of the basement may extend under the terrace. The cost to repair the terrace and steps would be substantial.

BUILDING USE: The first and second floors were used for offices. There is a small network switching gear room on the second floor. The IT Director, Lee McCann, must be contacted regarding the practicality and timetable of moving.
Comcast has switching gear in the basement under a contract with the Light Department. The relocation of this switching gear should be discussed with Tim Richardson of the Light Department.
The Recreation, School Departments, and Town Hall utilize the basement for storage. Jeff Conti should be contacted regarding finding alternate storage.
A small portion of the basement, adjacent to the Substation, houses transformers which will have to be moved.

SUBSTATION:
Two floors with 1,768 s.f. per floor. Cost and site for relocation is unknown and potentially problematic.

ASSESSMENT: (as of December, 2006)

LAND – 12,112 S.F.	=	$383,000
BUILDING:	=	$1,807,000
TOTAL	=	$2,190,000

SALE POTENTIAL:
Electric Company Building Visit (continued)

If the building and substation could be delivered free and clear of all tenancy and environmental
hazards, it is extremely unlikely that a sale would generate an offer anywhere near the building's present assessed value.

If this property were to be rezoned to permit the same maximum density as is allowed in Cushing Square, then the potential value of this property for residential development would be approximately $2,650,000. * (* Assumption: Land Area – 18,822 s.f. x 3 FAR = 56,466 s.f. x 75% living area = 42,349 s.f. / 1,200 s.f. average unit = 35 units at $75,000 land cost PDU - $2,625,000.)

The major drawback to the development of Electric Light Building site is the irregular shape of the lot. If the Electric Light Building property could be combined with the Police Station and adjoining lots (see plan), then the overall lot configuration would improve and the potential value of the assembled lot would increase.* (Assumption: * Land Area = 52, 172 s.f. x 3 FAR – 156,516 s.f. x 75% living area = 117,387 s.f./ 1,200 s.f. average unit = 98 units x $75,000 PDU = $7,350,000.)

BCPG Draft Report on Electric Company Building Visit

The purpose of this interim report is to provide the BOS with recommendations regarding the eventual disposition of the Electric Company Building. The Building currently houses Town offices, network switching gear under a contract with Comcast, a substation, transformers, the storage of Town files and a teen center. Drawbacks to the redevelopment of the Electric Light Building include the cost of removing the environmental hazards and relocating the transformer and other utilities. These costs would make it extremely unlikely that a sale of the Building alone would generate an offer anywhere near the Building's assessed value of $2,152,000 (as of December, 2007). Another major drawback of the development of the Electric Light Building site is the irregular shape of its lot. However, if the Electric Light Building property were combined with the Police Station property and adjoining lots the overall lot configuration would improve and the value of the assembled lot would increase.

One consideration is whether the Town should reuse, rent or sell the Electric Light Building (either separately or in conjunction with the Police Station property). The sale of the combined properties could fund other long-term development goals of the Town, however, costs attributable to that sale need to be evaluated carefully to determine whether sale is more advantageous to the Town than retained use.

Some of the possible alternative Town uses of the Electric Light Building that the BCPG considered were parking, a library or an expanded Police Station. As it is adjacent to the railroad station and businesses, the Building lends itself to a two-level parking structure that could preserve the facades. Using the building for parking also enhances the pedestrian traffic on the CVS side of Leonard Street while adding public parking to the Center.

The BCPG recommends-a mixed use residential and commercial development with parking while recognizing that the proximity to the railroad tracks and the shape of the lot presents challenges. THE PROPERTY:

- Land Area – 12,112 s.f. (An additional 6,710 s.f. lot runs behind both the Light Building and Police Station, and is used primarily for rear access and parking.)
- Building Area – * 8,766 s.f. GFA.
- Building Footprint - * 5,947 s.f.

* Based on Assessor's record cards. Does not include Substation.

THE BUILDING:

- First Floor approximately 2,200 s.f.
- Second Floor approximately 1,650 s.f.
- Basement approximately 4, 916 s.f.

BUILDING CONDITION: The building appears structurally sound but none of the floors meet current ADA requirements for access and bathroom facilities. A substantial investment will be required to bring the building up to code. The boiler room is antiquated.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) Contact all Town employees responsible for the various uses within the building and determine the practicality, cost and timetable for their vacating.

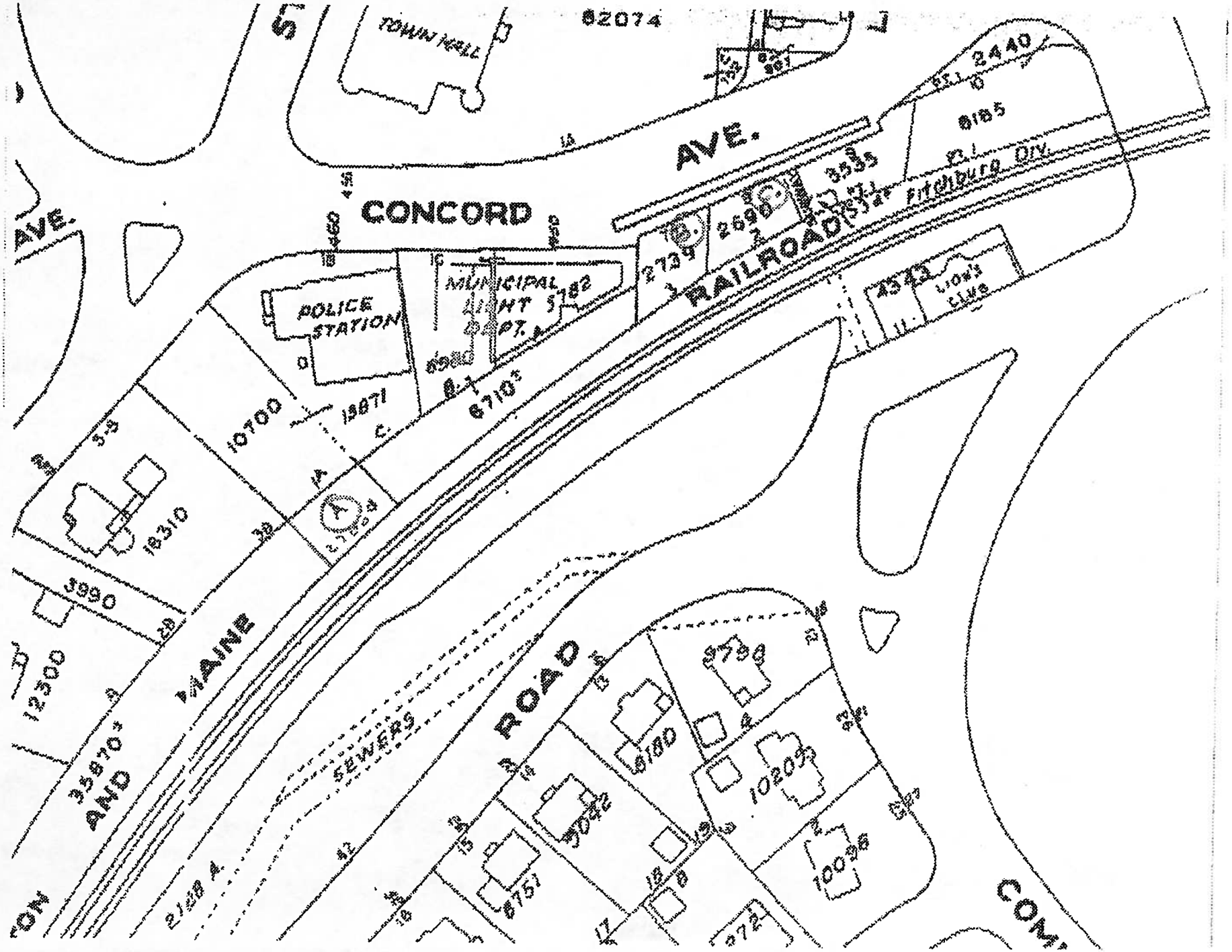
2) Get a realistic appraisal or estimate of value for both the Electric Company and Police Station buildings.

3) Initiate discussions with the railroad regarding purchasing the parcel behind the Police Station.

4) Determine if a new Police Station is part of the Town's short or long-term development goals and, if so, whether its construction could be funded by the sale of the Electric Light Building and the Police Station.

5) Determine the feasibility, cost and timetable of relocating the substation and, if applicable, the Police Station.

Note: Subsequent to this report the BOS appointed members to the Capital Projects Oversight Committee to review all town owned property and make recommendations as to future disposition strategies for the publicly owned properties and facilities.



TOWN HALL
82074
AVE.
CONCORD
AVE.
POLICE STATION
MUNICIPAL LIGHT DEPT.
RAILROAD
Fitchburg Div.
LION'S CLUB
MAINE
AND
ROAD
SEWERS
2440
8185
3535
2698
2739
5782
6980
6710
10700
18871
18310
3990
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