

# A PLANNING VISION FOR BELMONT CENTER



***FINAL REPORT***

***THE BELMONT CENTER PLANNING GROUP***

February , 2008

**DRAFT**

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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, 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, Sara Oaklander Roy Papalia.

### **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 above mentioned 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 the foundation for our recommendations. A full report of the Charrette written by the consultant is provided in the Appendix 5.

The following additional outreach activities were undertaken:

- (a) Submitted articles to the Belmont Citizen Herald regarding the process, committee findings and upcoming activities of the committee; (See Appendix 4);
- (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 general public;
- (f) Coordinated with the 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 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 invitation to the Belmont Center Business Association was in January of 2008. In addition, he BCPG provided the members of Belmont Center Business Association with minutes of the Charrette and 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. See map at Appendix 6.

### **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 as articulated by this public planning process. The following illustrations 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 should 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 Selectmen, in the summer of 2007, appointed a committee, the

Capital Projects Oversight Committee (CPOC), to look at all the public buildings and properties in town to make recommendations. The BCPG defers to the recommendations in the Final Report of CPOC since the BCPG's findings are not inconsistent with theirs. The Historical Commission has recommended that the Belmont Police Station and the Electric Light Building get 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 due to the difficult configuration of the Electric Light Building and the Police Station.

## **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:

#### **(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 and efficient signage and traffic light placement; more frequent collection of trash 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 LBI area and a surrounding buffer including residential properties to ensure appropriate transitions from commercial to existing residential areas.

Allow 3 stories in height along Leonard Street, with a fourth story allowed stepped back from the street. In addition, allow 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.
- (vii) The Drive-thru bank and adjacent vacant lot.

**6.20 Preserve and enhance the Center's historic character and charm.**

- ~~(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 in the survey recommended above buildings over 50 years old that balances historic concerns and revitalization needs. 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 Ensure that the Town is well positioned to maximize the positive impact of future development opportunities as they arise.**

- (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 residential.
  - (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.

- (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 Implementaidevelopment of the Center.

**6.40 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.**

- (a) Enhance vitality on street:
  - (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) Licensing:
  - (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) Town - Business Liaison:
  - (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 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 passageways to 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

## **IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN**

## **7.00    APPENDICES**

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1.     Selectmens' Mandate to BCPG	
2.     BCPG 2005 Short-Term Recommendations to Selectmen	
3.     Summary of Recommendations from BCPG Outreach	
4.     Sample of Belmont Citizen Herald Articles	
5     The Belmont Center Planning Charrette Report by Daphne Politis of Community Circle	
6.     Map	
7.-     BCPG Report on the Electric Light Company Building	
<u>8.     Renderings of Recommendations (Illustrations)</u>	

### **Appendix 3**

#### **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)**

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- 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.

## Appendix 7

### **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.

~~A commercial use that the~~The BCPG recommends ~~was a~~ mixed use residential ~~or retail 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.

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.)

#### INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

**DRAFT**

- 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.***