BELMONT CENTER ZONING BYLAW
Joint Meeting on Parking & Traffic

PUBLIC HEARING
OCTOBER 23, 2025

PARTICIPANTS

Belmont Select Board

Belmont Planning Board

Belmont Transportation Advisory Committee

BSC GROUP
BUILD | SUPPORT | CONNECT

SPALDING TOUGIAS ARCHITECTS, INC.

DESMAN

Special thanks to the Belmont Media Center (BMC) for all the great work they do for the boards and committees of the Town of Belmont.

belmont media center

Meeting Agenda

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Meetings Called to Order

a) Select Board
b) Planning Board
c) Transportation Advisory Committee

III. Public Hearing Continuation – Belmont Center Zoning By-Law

a) Traffic Study Findings and Discussion (30 min.)
1) Consultant Presentation (BSC Group)
2) Staff Analysis and Recommendations
3) Boards Discussion

b) Public Comment on Traffic (10 min.)

c) Parking Study Findings and Discussion (45-60 min.)
1) Consultant Presentation (DESMAN)
2) Staff Analysis and Recommendations
3) Boards Discussion

d) Public Comment on Parking (30 min.)

IV. Adjourn

Note for Clarity and Transparency

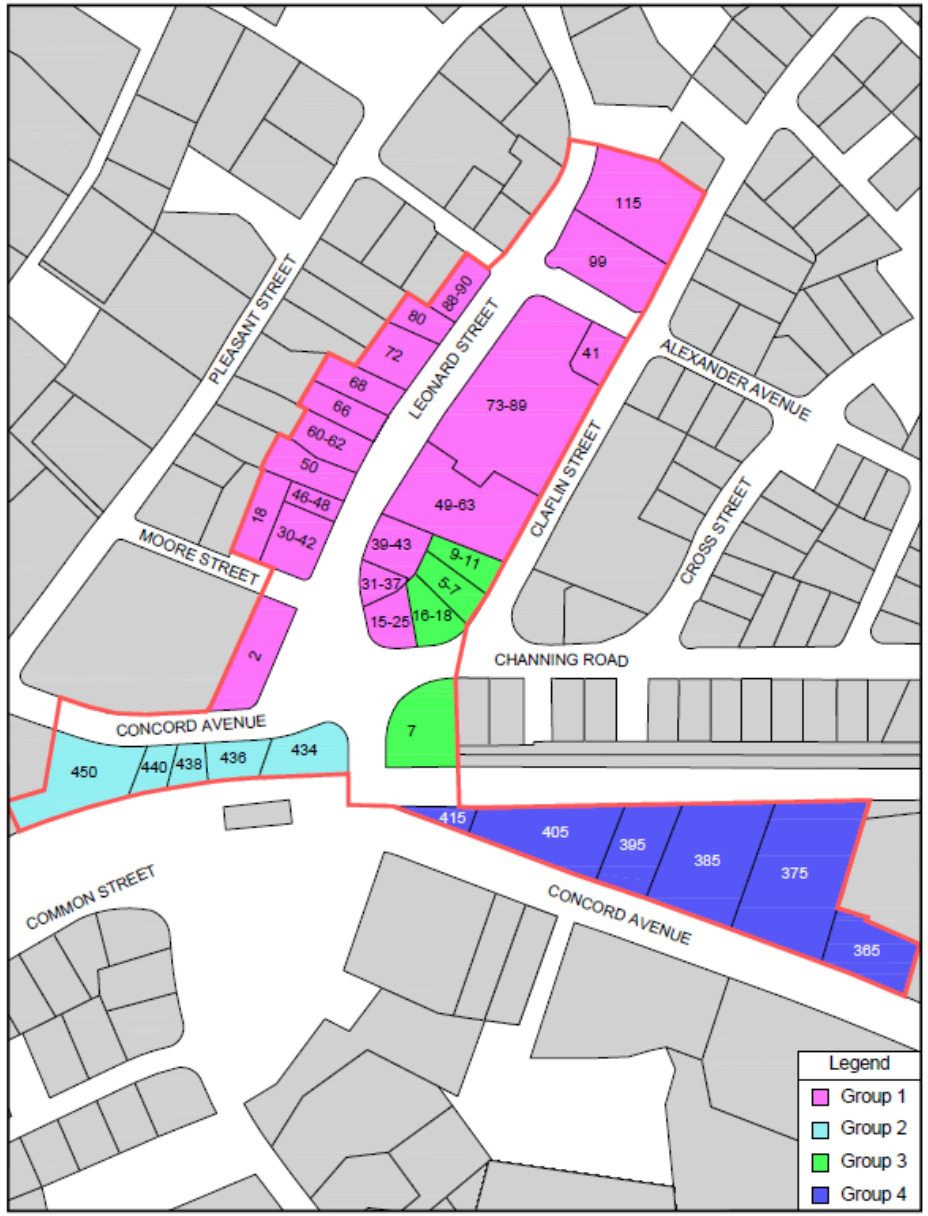
- Since these studies were commissioned, the zoning has evolved beyond some programmatic assumptions.
- Hotel rooms have been pared back so an adjustment needs to be made for that.
- However, it is not likely that it changes the fundamental analysis and recommendations by the consultants.

Traffic Study

The BSC Group

Traffic Methodology

- Traffic study was received in first draft form on Friday, October 10.
- Analysis considered existing conditions and a half-buildout scenario, with and without proposed traffic signalization.
- Half Buildout Scenario:
  - 258 residential units
  - 97,004 SF office
  - 141,438 SF retail/services
  - 179 hotel rooms
- Using ITE Trip Generation Manual (12th Edition) and adjusting for local conditions:
  - 15% mode-split reduction for office and residential uses (reflecting MBTA proximity and multimodal access).
  - 30% pass-by reduction for commercial trips.



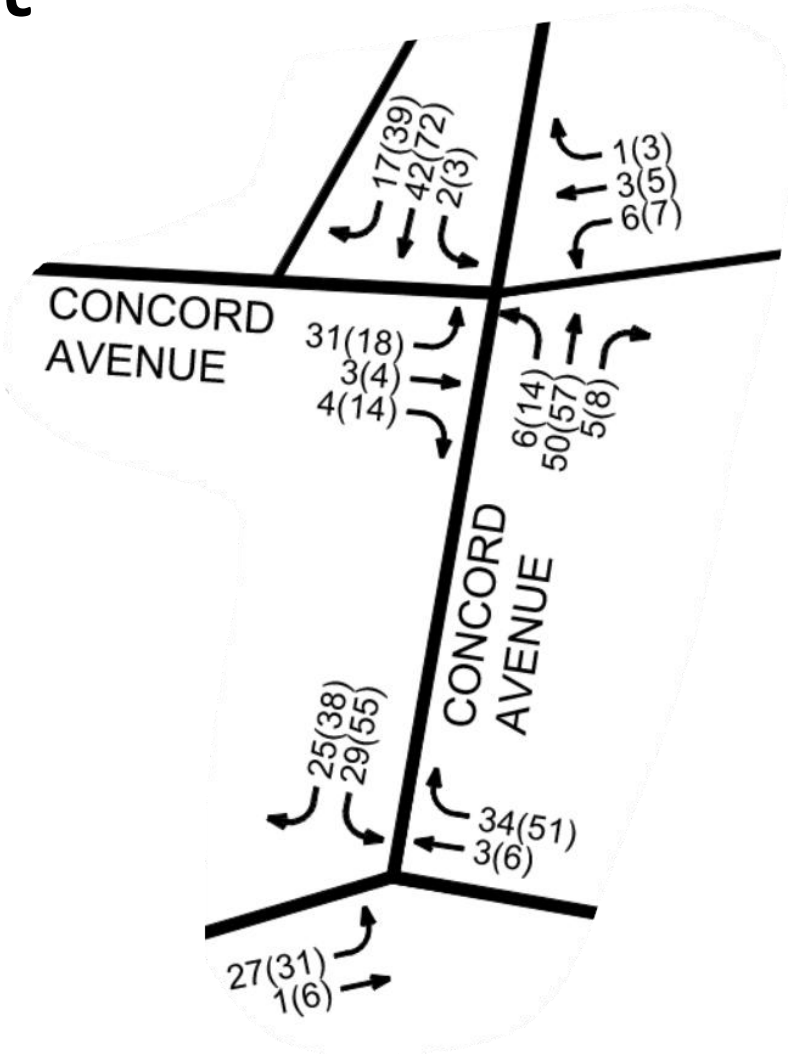
Proposed Zoning Change Limits
Belmont Center
Belmont, Massachusetts

Figure 1
Not to Scale

BSC GROUP
BUILD | SUPPORT | CONNECT

Trip Generation – Half Buildout

		AM Peak			PM Peak		
		Enter	Exit	Total	Enter	Exit	Total
Existing	**Commercial**	113	69	182	200	220	420
	Total	113	69	182	200	220	420
Proposed - Adjusted	**Residential**	23	67	90	71	44	115
	Commercial	95	59	154	227	235	462
	Office	97	14	111	18	92	110
	Hotel	32	29	61	43	41	84
	Total	247	169	416	359	412	771
Net New	**Residential**	23	67	90	71	44	115
	Commercial	-18	-10	-28	27	15	42
	Office	97	14	111	18	92	110
	Hotel	32	29	61	43	41	84
	Total	**134**	**100**	**234**	**159**	**192**	**351**



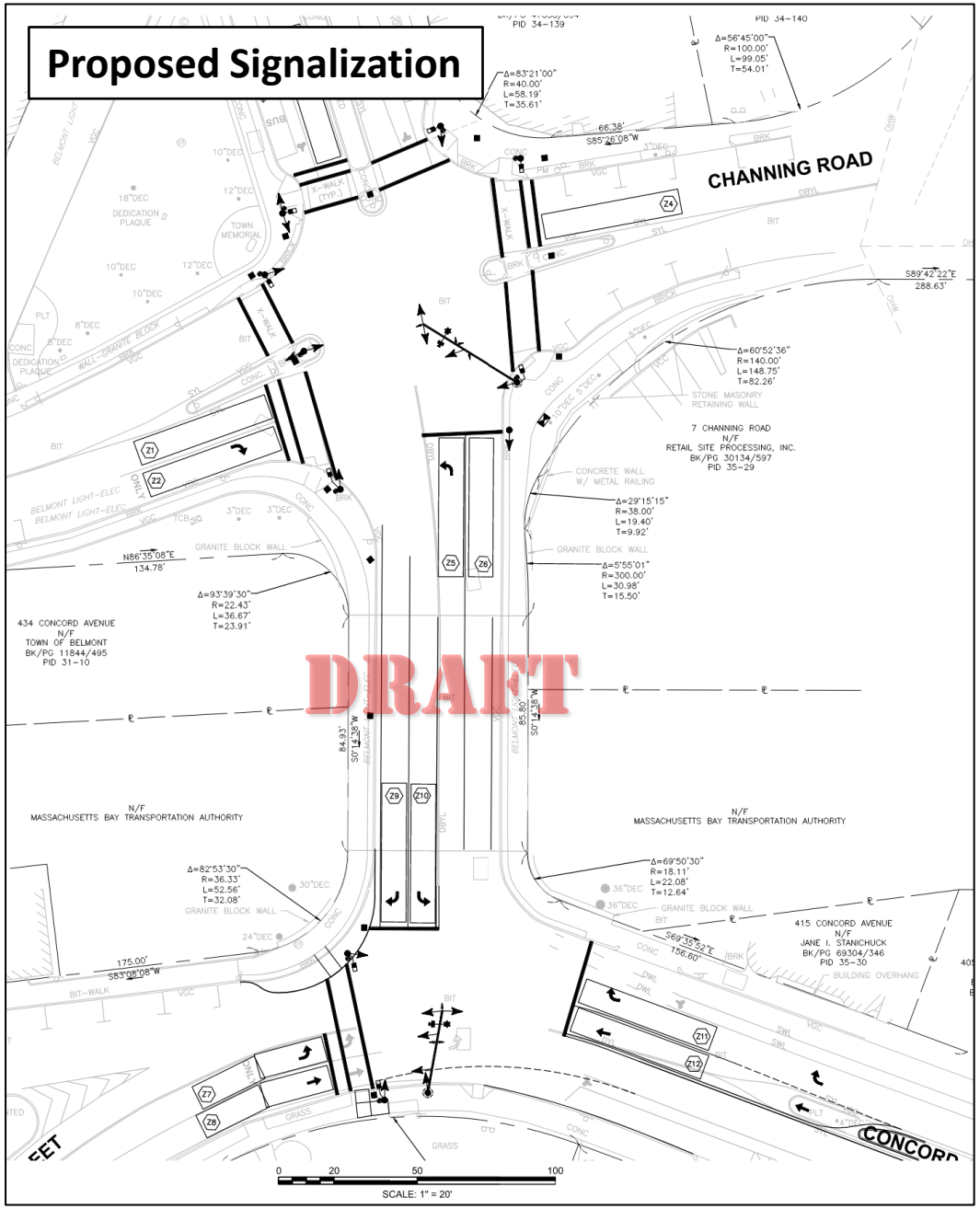
Total Half Buildout Net New Trips

Traffic Modeling Scenarios

- BSC evaluated four 2035 conditions:

  1. No-Build (no signals)
  2. Half Buildout (no signals)
  3. No-Build (with signals)
  4. Half Buildout (with signals)

- Signals at both key intersections are being designed through MassDOT's **Local Bottleneck Reduction Program**.



Key Findings of Traffic Analysis

- **Unsignalized Conditions:**
  - Both intersections already operate at LOS* F, and will remain so in 2035 — even without zoning changes.
- **Signalized Conditions:**
- **AM peak:** Both intersections improve to LOS D, with negligible difference between build and no-build conditions.
- **PM peak:**
  - At Concord Ave/Leonard–Channing, delays remain similar (LOS D).
  - At Common St/Concord Ave, delay increases by ~15 seconds due to added traffic, primarily westbound.
  - Overall LOS remains E or better — a manageable impact given the redevelopment scale

* LOS refers to Level of Service, which is a quantitative measure of traffic operational conditions.

Overall Conclusions of Traffic Analysis

- The half buildout would add modest new traffic — adding wait times of approximately 10–15 seconds in peak periods.
- The planned signal improvements will mitigate most impacts.
- With signals in place, no material degradation of overall intersection performance is expected.
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies will likely reduce traffic further.
- Existing congestion is primarily regional through traffic, not locally generated trips.

END

Staff Analysis and Recommendations

- BSC Group advises following through with TDM measures and employing the full signalization scenario. Staff would agree.

- No other zoning provisions are recommended related to traffic.

- Staff would recommend that the analyst review Town generated new draft with these provisions or provide specific examples of TDM measures in other local By-Laws that could be used in the Center By-Law.

Parking Study

Spalding Tougias Architects Inc. and DESMAN

Belmont Center Parking Study Outline

- **Deliverable:** Working Draft Report Conducted by DESMAN, Inc. for Spaulding Tougias Architects and the Town of Belmont (October 12, 2025)
- Summary and Initial Analysis Conducted by Christopher J. Ryan, AICP Director of Planning and Building, for the Town of Belmont, MA
- **Purpose:** Evaluation of parking adequacy in Belmont Center under existing conditions and the proposed Form-Based Code (FBC)
- Tests both "No Density Bonus" and "With Density Bonus" build-out scenarios
- **Objective:** Align future zoning with realistic parking needs

Belmont Center Parking Study Resources

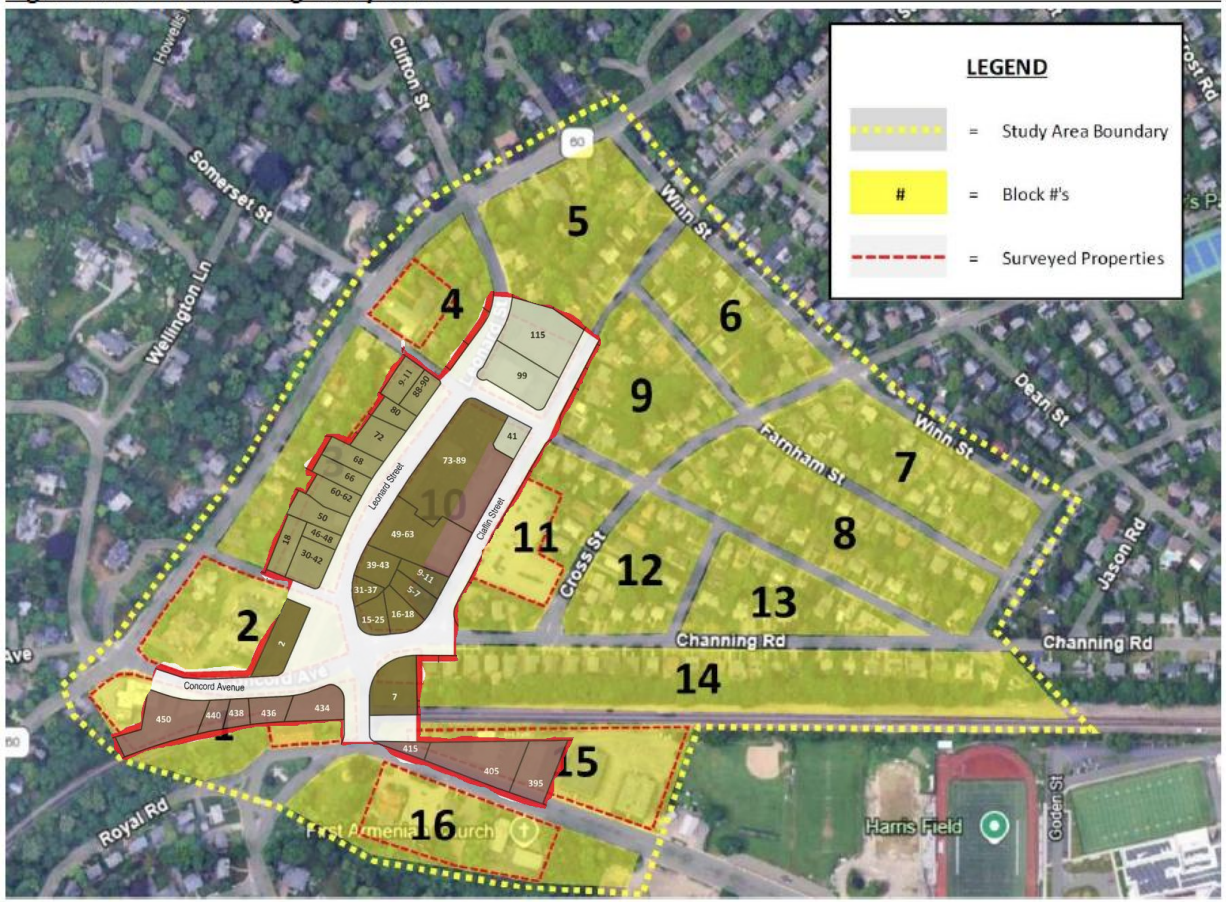
- *Proposed Belmont Center By-Laws*
- Town of Belmont General By-Laws, Chapter 60, Article 8, § 60-805 (Vehicles and parking)
- Belmont Center Zoning Project: Buildout Analysis (memo, 8/14/25) and *Center Overlay Buildout Model* (9/4/25)
- Belmont Center Parking Plan (March 2012)
- Town of Belmont Comprehensive Plan 2010-2020 (April 2010)
- A Planning Vision for Belmont Center (February 2008)

Parking

- Parking study was received in first draft form on Thursday, October 2. Town provided refining edits for consultant.
- Revised working draft version received on Monday, October 14 and findings and recommendations provided herein for initial consideration.
- Full report was provided to members in advance of the 10/23 joint meeting.
- Some additional tweaks may be made to working draft based on this.

Defined study area at right →

Figure 1: Defined Parking Study Area



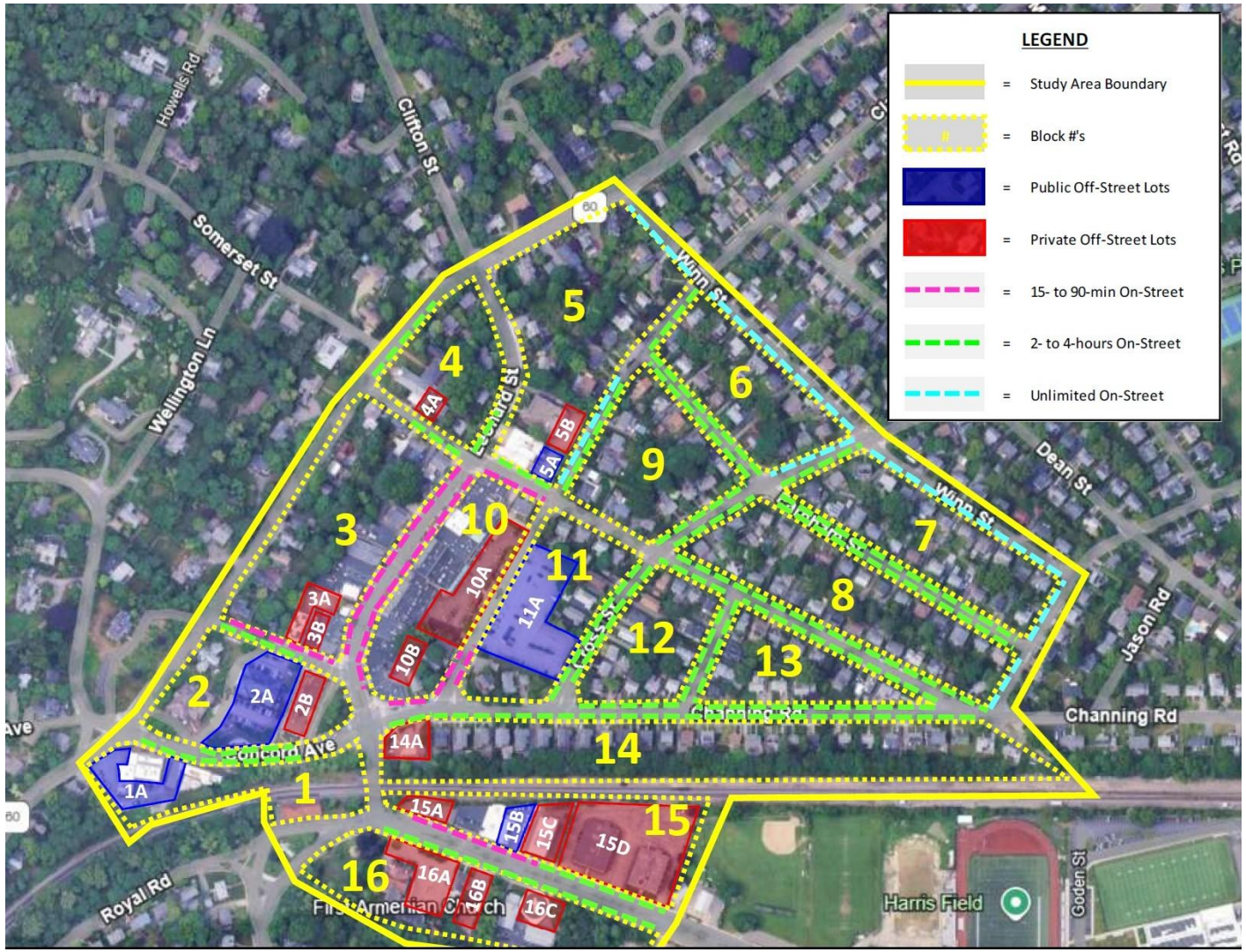
Note that the consultant emphasizes that this is still a working draft intended facilitate a review of observations, findings, and proposed action from the project team only.

Methodology

- **Study Area Inventory:** 1,158 total parking spaces w/ 724 public (63%) and 434 private (37%)
- **Field Counts Conducted:** September 10, 2025 (school year weekday)
- Peak Observed Utilization = 36%
- Developed shared parking model using ULI/ITE methodology
- Adjusted for local travel behavior, internal capture, and presence factors
- Excluded residential driveways and garages

Existing Conditions Findings

- **Total Supply:** 1,158 spaces
- **Peak Weekday Demand:** 502 spaces (36% utilization)
- **Peak Weekend Demand:** 337 spaces (29% utilization)
- **Surplus:** 656–781 spaces available
- **Highest Local Pressure:** Leonard Street (Blocks 3 & 10) Mitigated by Availability in Claflin Lot (Block 11) and Surrounding Streets
- Existing conditions show we have done a good job managing spill over beyond the immediate congested area.



Shared Parking Methodology

Parking Demand Ratios
- EMPRICIAL basis

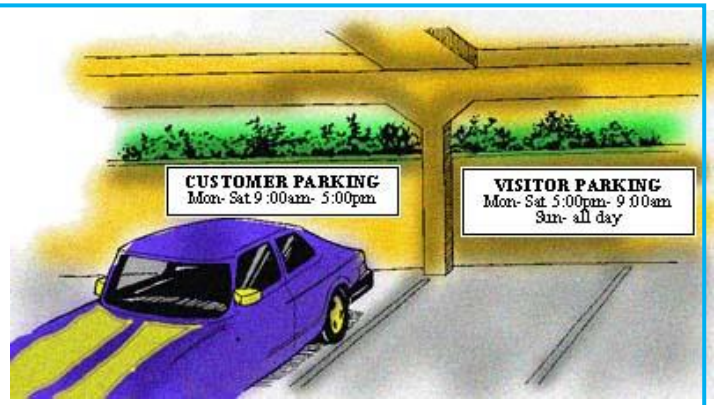
Local Adjustments
- MODE and CAPTURE

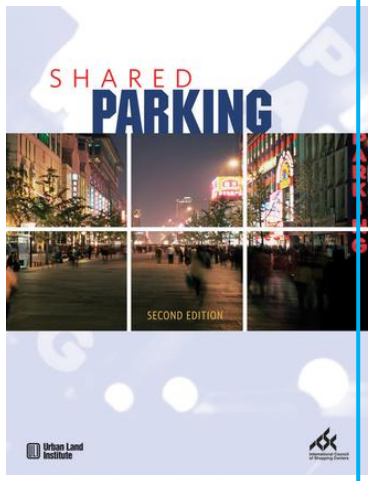
Presence Factors
- VARIATION by land use, hour, season

Calibration
- ALIGNMENT with actual conditions

Input/ Projections
- SUPPLY and DEMAND

This →

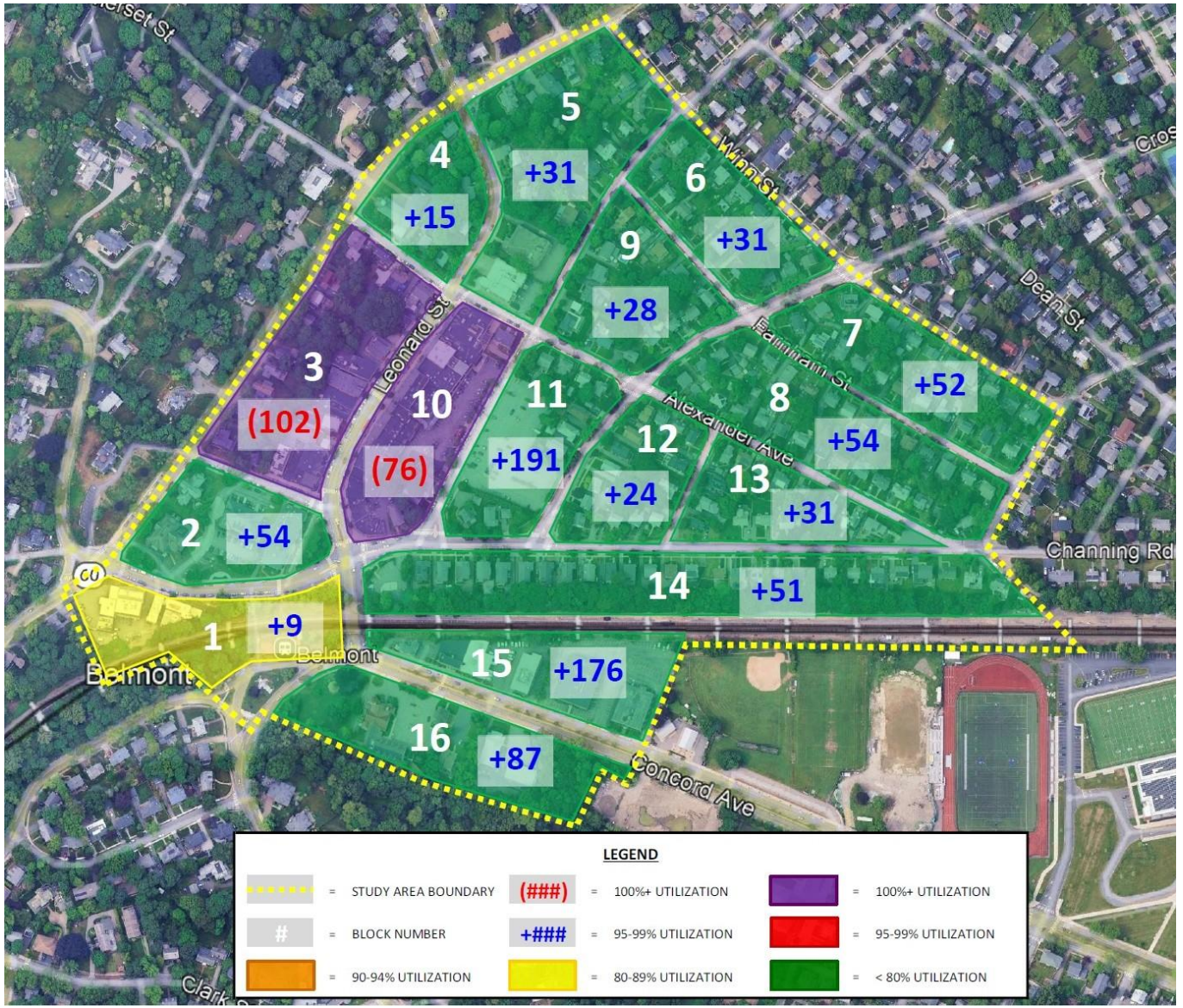




NOT this ↓

Existing Conditions

- ~ 395,000 square feet of occupied building area
  - ~ 87,500 sf in soft goods and services retail
  - ~ 30,500 sf in restaurants (~ 500 seats)
  - ~ 80,000 sf in standard and medical offices
  - ~ 28,000 sf in banks
- Peak Hour
  - 2 PM, December weekday
  - 502 vehicles, 656 open spaces



Future Scenario 1: Full Buildout / No Bonus*

- Full build-out assumes no density bonus applied
  - 476,885 SF commercial
  - 230,501 SF residential (307 units)
  - 176,000 SF hotel (286 rooms)
- Required by Zoning: ~940 spaces (per draft FBC ratios)
- Modeled Peak Demand: ~1,596 spaces (shared parking adjusted)
- Overall adequacy maintained with surplus capacity at district scale (231 space surplus)
- Localized constraints on Leonard Street corridor
- Shared use agreements may be utilized to address constraints

*** Note that this scenario is only for comparison purposes as the "No Bonus" option in the zoning has been removed from the draft under consideration by the Planning Board.**

Future Scenario 2: Full Buildout @ Higher Density

- Full build-out assumes higher baseline density formerly represented by the bonus case
  - 476,885 SF commercial
  - 402,627 SF residential (536 units)
  - 220,000 SF hotel (358 rooms)
- Model recalibrated to this higher-density condition as the new baseline
- Required by zoning: ~1,047 spaces (per draft FBC ratios)
- Modeled peak demand: ~1,664 spaces (shared parking adjusted)
- Overall adequacy maintained with surplus capacity at district scale (231 space surplus)
- Localized constraints remain on Leonard Street corridor

Assumptions

- Current modal and car ownership patterns remain stable
- Surplus parking will be available for use 24/7
- Limited competition for on-street parking in residential areas
- Baseline occupancy was representative of ‘typical’ conditions
- Proposed parking requirements focused on providing 100% needed supply

Summary of Analysis

- **Public Spaces:** The analysis assumes FULL AVAILABILITY of public parking spaces to absorb overflow from existing and new development. The overnight parking ban precludes this assumption.
- **Proposed Requirements:** If the Town's objective is to ensure that every new project include enough parking to support included land uses, some current ratios proposed are too low.
- **Specifically:** Ratios for restaurants, residential, and hotel fall below ITE recommended ranges for these uses and should be adjusted. Other recommendations relate to certain policies embedded in the By-Law.
- The area bounded by Alexander, Pleasant, Channing, and Cross is underparked.

Recommendations: Parking Ratios

- **Banks/Retail/Office/Institution:** Adequate as all fall within ITE ranges
- **Increase Ratios for 3 Specific Land Uses:**
  - **RESTAURANTS:** Increase from 1 space/5 seats to 1 space/3 seats
  - **HOTELS:** Increase from 0.5/room and 0.25/employee to a single 0.8 ratio.
  - **RESIDENTIAL:** Increase from 0.3/unit to 0.8/unit

Recommendations: Code Clarity and Process

- **Mixed-Use Calculation:** Current “Based on Each Use” phrasing is vague; add explicit mixed-use calculation language
- **In-Lieu Fee vs. Mitigation Tools:** Separate the in-lieu fee subsection from other relief tools (municipal parking, shared parking, mitigation). If the Town intends fees in addition, clarify that too.
- **Use of Municipal Parking:** Specify if on-street spaces count; and define conditions.
- **Encourage Joint-Use:** Provide a clear, simple calculation path the Board will accept to make shared-use attractive during design.
- **Shared Parking Agreements:** Offer model language and acceptable terms.
- **Broaden Relief Tools:** Review offered examples for TDM plans, care share incentives, and fixed reductions based on transit proximity.

Recommendations: Programmatic and Operational Measures

- **Overnight On-Street Parking Pilot (Leonard/Cross/Winn/MBTA area):** Create a permit program, adjust the 1:00–7:00 a.m. prohibition, and allow Claflin Lot use during snow emergencies.

- **Project Area Parking Structure Feasibility:** Study cost, timeline, capacity gain, steps to establish a garage if/when needed.

END

Staff Summary of Consultant Analysis

- **Limited Survey Basis** – Only one day of data was utilized but the analyst compensated by building a shared-parking model and layering adjustment factors.
- **Exclusion of Residential Use** – This was done because study area homes are almost entirely single-family residences with self-contained parking, private and separate from the shared or public parking supply the study was intended to evaluate.
- **Why?** Residential omitted based on assumption that this land use already maintains an internal balance allowing analysis to focus on mixed-use and commercial activity, where off-street and public parking management actually require policy decisions.

Staff Summary of Consultant Analysis

- **Capture Rates and Restaurant Assumptions** used peer data from similar towns because Belmont data was unavailable.
- **Absence of Cost, Turnover, and Enforcement Analysis** – Policy levers can impact supply adequacy but analyst notes that management issues like pricing or enforcement were outside project scope, suggesting these would be policy decisions for the Town to address later, not for modeling inputs.
- **Lack of Future Sensitivity Testing** – Varying mode share, TDM measures, redevelopment timing, etc. could produce different results related to both supply and demand. This omission was justified by scope and time constraints (the goal was to establish a defensible baseline rather than a probabilistic range) but it leaves future uncertainty unquantified.
- **Simplified Mode Share Assumptions** were necessary due to a lack of Belmont-specific trip mode data.
- **Calibration Factor** applied was intended to refine and “ground” future forecasts despite limited empirical data.

Staff Summary of Consultant Recommendations

- The recommendations seem generally to be practical, operations-first direction (i.e., shared parking, relief tools, agreements).
- Where consultant proposes raising minimum ratios (residential, restaurant), they feel more conservative than local evidence (36% weekday utilization, very large districtwide surplus) and local comparables. This could create a risk of overbuilding and undermining FBC goals. Note that:
  - **Cambridge** and **Somerville** have zero minimums municipality-wide and use TDM and shared parking mechanisms to compensate.
  - **Brookline** has a Transit Parking Overlay District which reduce minimums or only apply maximums. They have a Limited-Service Hotel use with 0.5 spaces/room.
  - **Watertown** has minimums similar to consultant recommendations.

Staff Recommendations: What to Adopt As-Is

- **Code Clarity and Relief Pathways:** Draft explicit mixed-use calculation steps, a clear shared-parking worksheet, and a template for off-site/reciprocal agreements that will reduce friction and make compliance predictable.
  - DESMAN recommends considering San Diego's shared parking provisions and template.
  - Staff has already drafted a version for Board review and consideration.

- **Hotel at 0.8/Room:** This is reasonable for a transit-served, mixed-use center; easy to administer; aligns with potential shared-use overnight patterns.

- **Permission Structure For Using Municipal Supply:** This should include distance, evidence, and monitoring conditions. This would direct demand to underused public lots and keep storefront curb space for customers.
  - Staff has already drafted a version of this for Board review and consideration.

- **Programmatic Pilots:** Consider overnight permit areas and a snow-emergency policy in Claflin. This is low-cost, reversible, and data-generating.

Staff Recommendations: Adopt w/ Tweaks

- **Shared-Parking Reductions:** Very desirable concept but pair with a standard method (ULI/ITE based) and require:

    1. A signed use-mix/operating hours table
    2. 2–3 comparable case studies or internal capture assumptions from model, and
    3. A post-occupancy check with corrective actions if the plan underperforms.

    Note that staff has drafted a version of this for Board review and consideration.

- **In-lieu Fees and Mitigation Tools:** Only keep them if…

    1. Ties the fee to a transparent cost basis (construction, operations, enforcement) and spend-down rules within the district.
    2. Clarify that fees stack (or don't) with other relief tools.
    3. Add a cap on relief from any single tool (e.g., max 40–50% of otherwise-required parking) unless Planning Board makes specific exceptional findings.

    Otherwise, eliminate them. I would lean this way to avoid complicated administrative work.

- **Parking Structure Feasibility:** Treat as a contingent option only after pricing/management/TDM are maximized and Belmont sees sustained, measured deficits. Include a "trigger metric" (e.g., 85%+ peak, 50+ hours/month over 80% in shoulder zones, 12–18 months running) that DESMAN might calibrate for us.

Staff Recommendations: Possibly Rethink

- **Raising restaurant to 1 per 3 seats and residential to 0.8/unit as blanket minimums:** Why?
  - The existing counts and modeled surplus suggest these could overshoot.
  - For restaurants, demand is highly time-peaked; shared-use could handle this better than high static ratios. Town also approved 1 per 4 seats for Food Service Establishments in 2024. Perhaps align with that but no more.
  - For residential, unbundling, on-street permit design, and proximity to transit/retail argue for 0.5–0.7/unit with adjustable reductions for TDM and unbundling. Consider range-based minimums keyed to sub-district, transit access, and unbundling, plus maximums to avoid land-consuming excess.

Staff Recommendations: TDM

- Both DESMAN and BSC recommend the use of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) tools to address both traffic and parking challenges.
- The Planning Board has developed a TDM program that is now proposed to be a new Section 5.5 in the Zoning By-Laws and targeted for ATM in 2026 (see p. 52 of proposed draft zoning v. 6.1 here).
- DESMAN recommends considering City of Portland, ME TDM program for ideas on how to strengthen Belmont's language and staff agrees.
- Portland's Land Use Code has TDM requirements in various sections and they also have a TDM Technical Manual here.
- Staff has already drafted a proposed program based on this comparable for Board review and consideration.

NEXT STEPS

1. Provide any feedback and edits of analysis to consultant.
2. Choose what recommendations to adopt and follow through with draft language.
3. Get consensus that these changes are the final ones before recommending approval by vote.
4. Vote to approve zoning draft to submit to Town Meeting.