

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.

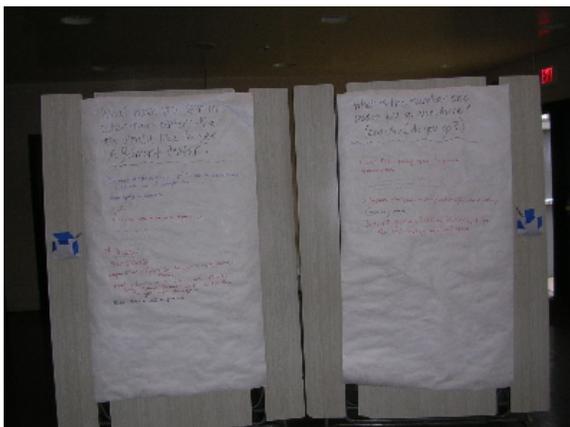


Participants gathered around information booths.

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 do 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”

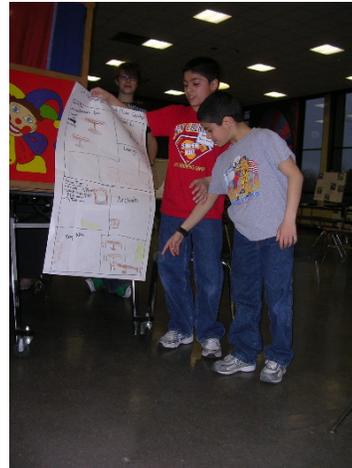
Next the participants were assigned a small group where they were led through a number of questions and exercises designed to generate ideas regarding a vision for the future of Belmont Center. Each group was led by a pair of volunteer facilitators: one kept track of the discussion on a large pad; the 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 out 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)

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Number of Groups</i>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Old "charming" look ▪ Architecture ▪ Quaintness , homeyness ▪ Historic buildings ▪ Scale 	6
Walkable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to walk to useful things (except groceries) ▪ Scale – contained but ample 	5
Within walking distance from many parts of town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proximity to my home ▪ In my backyard 	5
Restaurants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new ones ▪ Starbucks is relaxing 	4
Town Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Including the pedestrian tunnel 	3
Easy access to public transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train station 	3
Town Hall complex		3
Old Fire House		2
Know people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bump into folks ▪ See people I know 	2
Bridge		1
Back parking lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Too many banks ▪ Restaurants appeal to specific groups ▪ Need hardware store 	7
Poor pedestrian access / environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inconsistent feel of storefronts ▪ Huge building containing Frame Hut ▪ Jumble & clutter ▪ West side buildings unattractive 	5
No food shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need bakery or other small eatery ▪ No grocery store 	4
Lack of parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impacts residential neighborhoods 	4
Lack of evening activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stores close too early, no places for entertainment, ▪ Everything closes down at 7 pm 	4
Lack of maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of snow removal ▪ Dirty, lack of trash receptacles 	4
Lots of pavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sitting on green feels like sitting on island in a parking lot ▪ Not enough landscaping 	3
Poor signage for traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For both traffic & businesses ▪ Too many municipal/parking signs 	3
Poor signage on shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hodgepodge, lack of uniform look 	3
Too many cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic, commuter route 	2
No space for socializing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of places to congregate 	2
Bridge and traffic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Especially at intersection ▪ Intersection is way too wide 	2
News distribution boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Some of them illegal?" 	2
No outdoor places to sit		1
No places for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Used to have Bailey's (, record store 	1
Trash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From businesses collected outside 	1
Smokers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On benches 	1
Underutilization of train		1
Lack of seasonal care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Car-less ▪ People-oriented ▪ Make reasons to walk 	6
Mix of retail/food/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic, town/municipal services ▪ Community-driven/responsive 	3
Evening activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be colorful, enticing town center 	2
Place for housing options for aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Downsize housing options ▪ Walkable services 	2
Parking improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	2
Mix of shopping for all socio-economic strata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not just high end shops 	1
A place to be proud of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “A sense of pride and stewardship” ▪ welcomed by the police officers on the beat, “it’s just about the tone” 	1
Taller buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing above shops 	1
Connections to green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 Groups²
Pedestrian- friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gas lamps, street lighting ▪ Benches, “buy a bench” program ▪ Fewer news box stands 	5
Better signage		4
Intra-town transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide more bike racks 	2
Improve pedestrian access into town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Landscaping ▪ Flowers 	2
Aesthetically pleasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scale ▪ Public art 	2
Attractive & welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Businesses encourage pedestrian access 	2
Mixed use; attractive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mass. Ave. North Cambridge, Chatham, MA 	2
Café feel (outdoor dining)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fire station, patios 	2
Performance space, art theater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural center 	2
Structured parking		1
Housing above shops		1
Parking close to Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lexington 	1
Quaintness of buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small scale, hanging flowers ▪ Rockport, MA 	1
Preservation of historic bldg		1
Underground utilities		1
Marketing of Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ List of stores, map, etc. 	1
Good restaurant selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 Groups³
Redefine boundaries of Belmont Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not at the edge 	1
Kids using the Center more		1
Community gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "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 Dots⁴
More Diversity in Shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall (including need for hardware, 5&10 store, entertainment, food, restaurants) 	4	8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grocery store 	4	(16)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restaurant variety (incl. Liquor) 	3	(14)
Change traffic pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structure with design guidelines 	1	(4)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask Belmont Savings Bank to share garage with public 	1	(1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connect parking behind Filenes' to Leonard St. 	1	(3)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More parking 	1	(4)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Underground Parking 	1	(6)
Convert Leonard Street into pedestrian mall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 Dots⁵
Improve Town Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better signage for stores & municipal buildings 	2	11
Create open space/green network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make more inviting for lingering 	3	7
Town should keep ownership of Fire station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Control use 	1	5
Another retail anchor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At opposite end from Filene's 	1	4
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regularly remove trash 	1	2
Relocate the library to Center		1	2
Reconvert Lion's Club back into real train station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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)

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

- Increase pedestrian access and amenities
- Parking

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

Response	Comments	# of Groups⁶
Landlord agreement & support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Garner landlord consensus & support ▪ Lack of diversity in real estate ownership 	5
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should look for public sources 	4
Lack of central town planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Of any kind 	3
Space limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of land, limited square footage 	3
Zoning restrictions & permitting processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some outdated by-laws 	3
Regional traffic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rush hour through traffic ▪ Cut through traffic 	3
Adjacent residential neighborhood concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neighbors' concerns – traffic, parking, loitering, evening activities, etc 	3
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For employees ▪ For commuter rail 	2
High rents		2
Too restrictive liquor license requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full license required ▪ Lack of liquor licenses 	2
Lack of connection to train station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Railroad tracks & narrowness of underpass 	2
Increased traffic from changes		1
Traffic: Intersection of Channing & Leonard Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Including the area in front of Belmont Savings Bank & train stop 	1
Cross town public transportation		1
Lack of optimism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoning, Town Boards such as HDC, Board of Selectmen & Town Meeting Members 	1

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

Narrowing Leonard St.	▪ Leads to difficulties with store deliveries	1
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a comprehensive plan & implement in increments ▪ Develop a vision 	4	30
Town should take control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get businesses involved ▪ Buy-in from business community 	5	17
Go after available funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baby steps; Long term process broken down into smaller steps 	4	12
Buy-in from abutters		2	10
Enact zoning changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some need to “require” action ▪ Some need to “enable” action 	2	9
Pass CPA (Community Preservation Act)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could use for historic preservation, affordable housing, Town Green & train station 	1	8
Create incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise money based on economic status, e.g., naming rights 	3	6
Car-free pedestrian mall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Santa Monica model 	1	6
Mixed use development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer opportunities 	1	5
Create a “Belmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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.

Response	Comments	# of Groups	Total # of Dots⁸
Leverage previous planning efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g., planning that has already been done for the new library 	1	3
Local tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Place local tax on luxury items 	1	
Directory sign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With space on it rented to businesses 	1	1
Get approvals from appropriate town boards		1	1
Better connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 #1⁹

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*

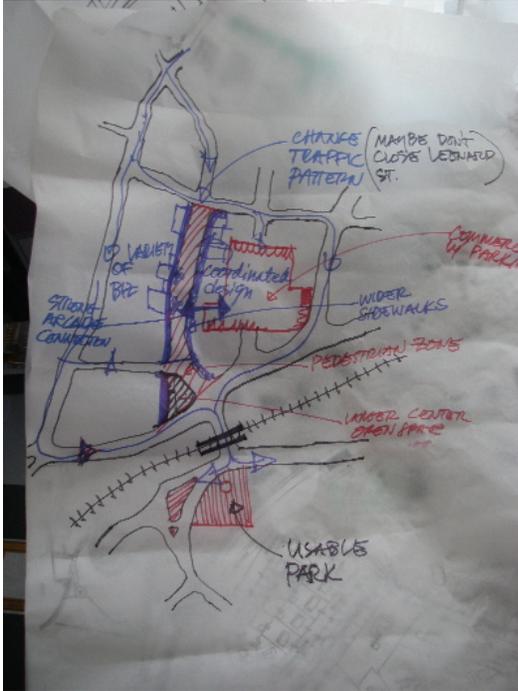
KEY:	Color codes
Yellow:	Pedestrian access
Blue:	Parking areas (including parking structure)
Orange:	Places to increase height for residential development

⁹ "Red" Group, Facilitator: Roger Colton

Group #2¹⁰

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.

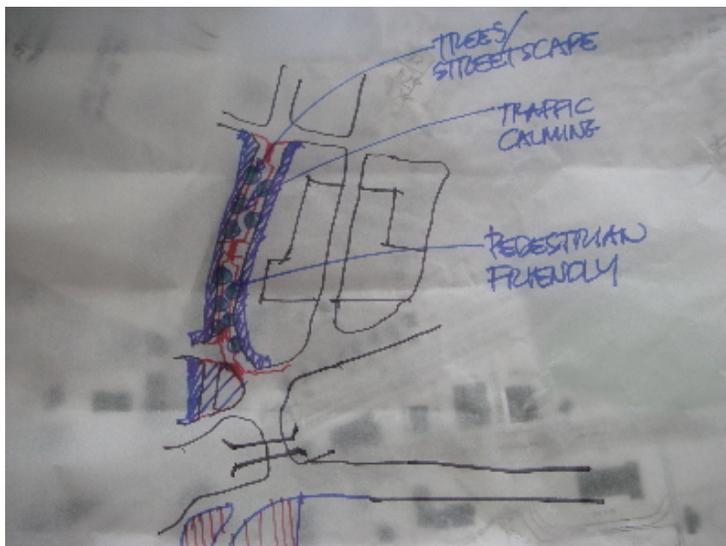
Design 1:



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.

¹⁰ Lime Group, Facilitator: Margaret O'Brien

Group #3¹¹

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 #5¹³

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



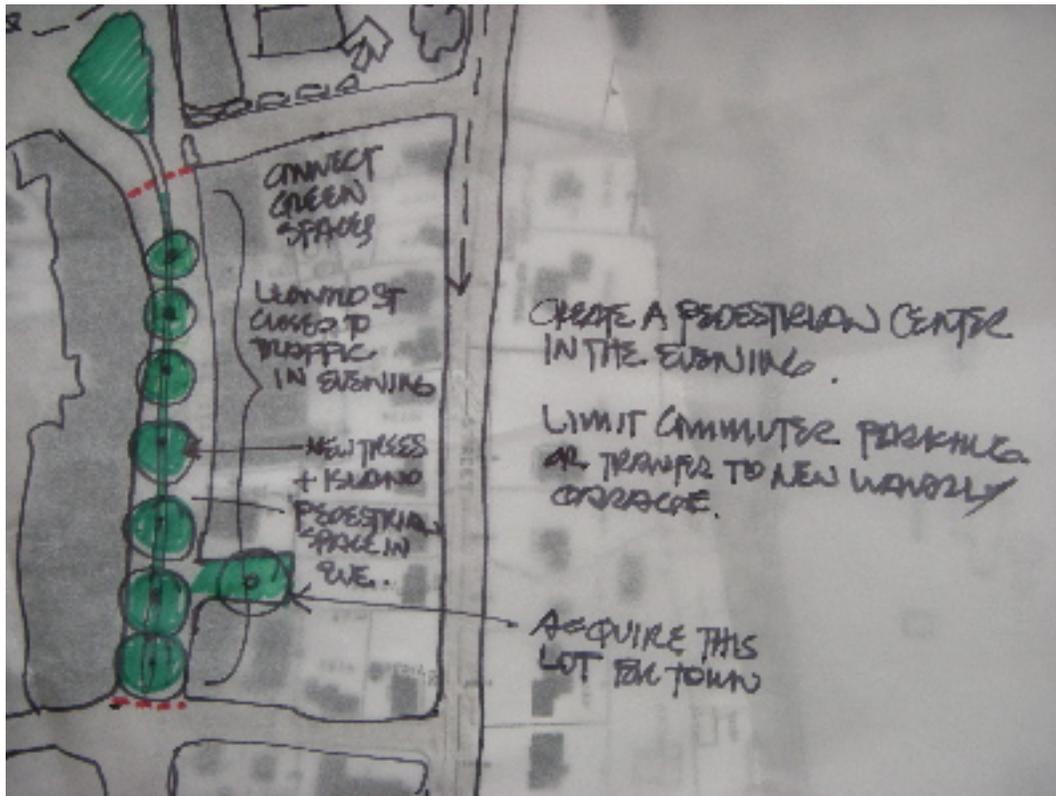
This scheme proposes to close Leonard Street to vehicular traffic and improve the pedestrian environment by adding benches, lighting and landscaping along both sides of the street. The group also recommended that housing be accommodated on second stories above retail.

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 Clafin 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 diagrammed their thoughts regarding a Youth Center.

What would you like to see in Belmont Center?

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

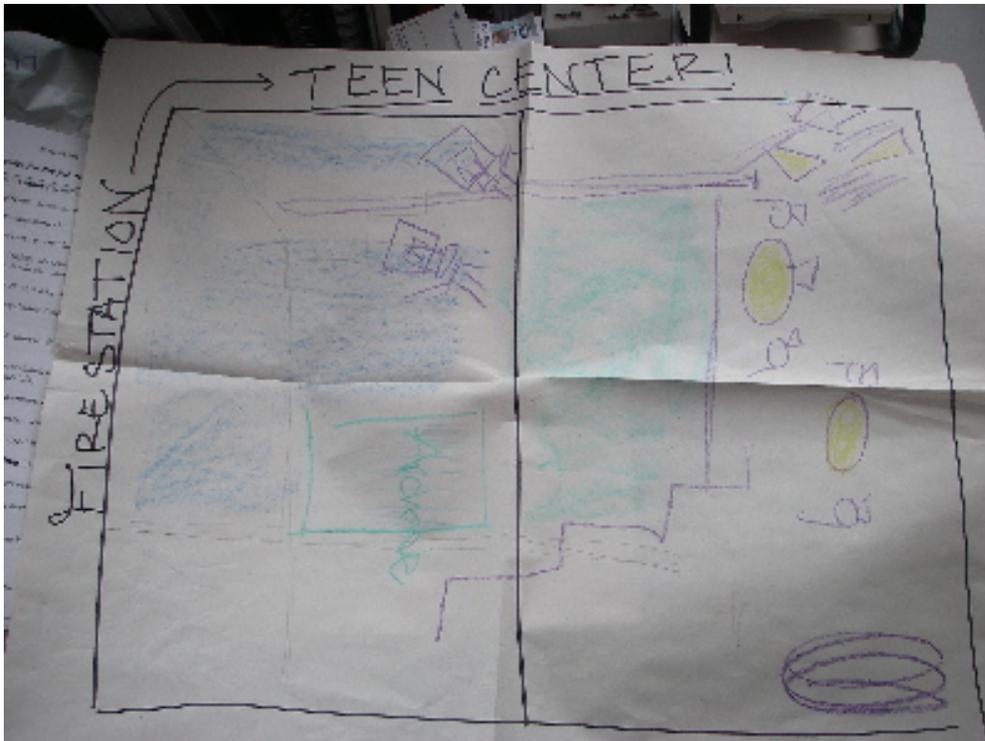
What are your least favorite things about Belmont Center?

- 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?

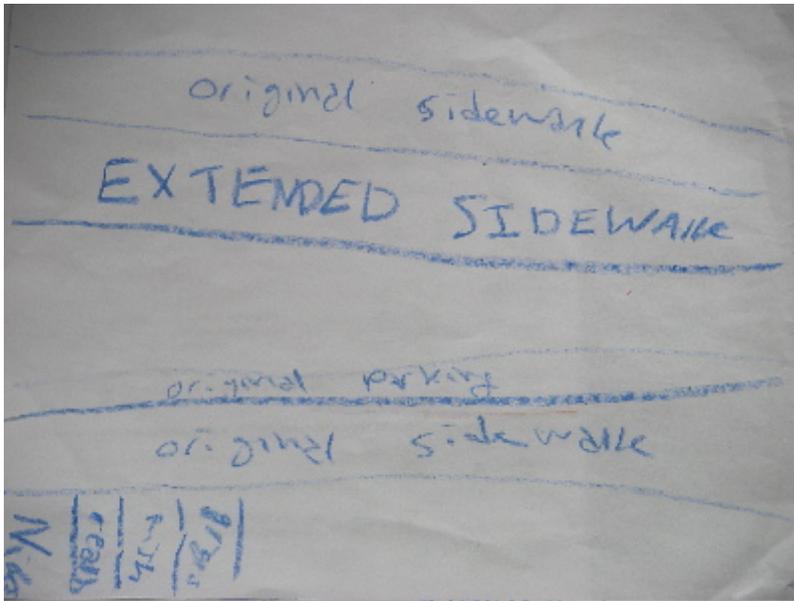
- Convert the Fire station into a Teen Center



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")

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 to the 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:

- 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:

- 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:

- Place to pass the time
 - Place to do your business
- Different opinions about what's more important

To improve Belmont Center:

- 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
- 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:

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

Least favorite things:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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:

- *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:

- 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:

- *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:

- 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?

- 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?

- 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.

- 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

<u># votes</u>	<u>idea</u>
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

- 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

<u># votes</u>	<u>strategy</u>
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

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 – large trees planted (donated by families in town) providing a median for pedestrians and breaking up skyline. (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 not 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**

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

***Belmont Center: Imagining the Future
Community-wide Charrette¹⁴***

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.

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/back 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*)