An aerial photograph of a city street scene. The street is lined with multi-story brick buildings and parking lots filled with cars. The scene is captured from a high angle, showing the layout of the buildings and the flow of traffic. A large blue rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text.

Belmont Center Zoning Project

Update on Design and Other Criteria

March 26, 2025

Table of Contents for Meeting

- **Welcome & Introductions (5 Min)**
- **Background, Goals, & Objectives (10 Min)**
- **Design Framework (25 Min)**
 - Workshop Activities and Findings
 - Height Analysis
 - Revised Height Analysis
- **Other Issues (15 Min)**
 - Generally
 - Uses
 - Fiscal
- **Draft Code**
- **Next Steps (5 Min)**
- **Public Comment (60 Min)**
- **Adjourn**

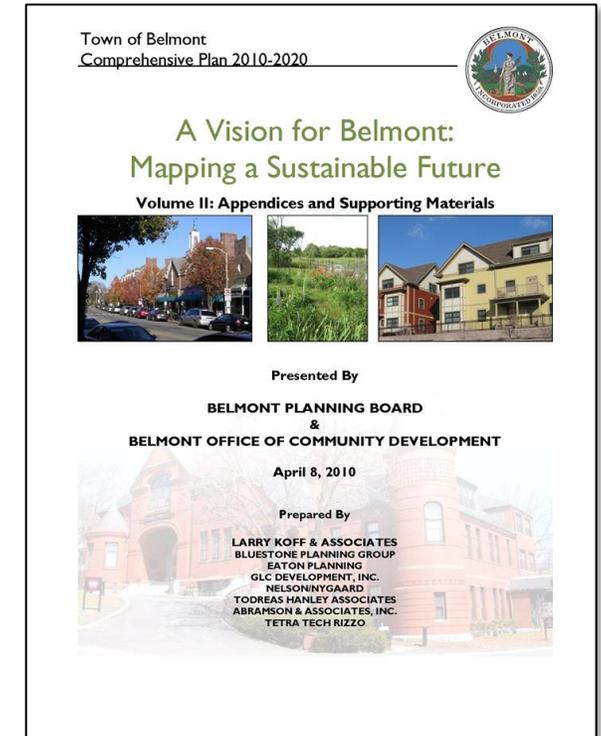
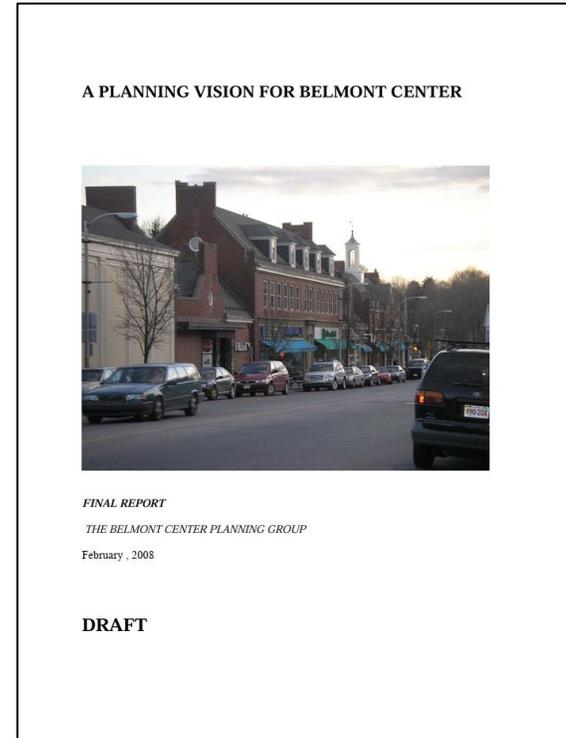
Background

- **REPORT: A Planning Vision for Belmont Center (2008)**

- Seven (7) Primary Recommendations
- Three (3) Specific Actions/Approaches
- Collaborated with over 16 committees and departments
- Robust outreach process
- Specifically calls for a Center zoning solution

- **PLAN: Draft Belmont Comprehensive Plan (2010)**

- 14 Member Committee
- 60 Member Working Group
- 500 Survey Responses
- Two Public Forums
- Over 50 recommendations RE: The Center



Project Goals and Objectives (Primary)

1. Provide opportunity for additional commercial development in Center including ground and 2nd stories
2. Provide opportunity for additional complementary residential development
3. Maximize tax receipts for municipal revenue
4. Work with Engineering on Traffic Solutions
5. Consider a parking master plan for the center; no net loss
6. Consider key municipal sites for development opportunities
7. Create a regional destination to bring dollars in from surrounding areas



Project Goals and Objectives (Specific)

1. Provide opportunity for thoughtful development of the Claflin Lot and Leonard Street Backlands
2. Find a solution for establishing a Paseo or Arcade cut-through from Leonard Street to the Claflin Lot
3. Use placemaking to create a vibrant Belmont Center district to serve residents and draw visitors



January 22 Workshop

- **Visual Preference Survey**
- **Table Exercises**
 - Mapping
 - Five (5) Big Ideas
 - Reporting
- **Focus Groups**
 - Gathered additional information from four topic-specific focus groups



Workshop: Visual Preference Survey

E. Pedestrian Environment

D. Architectural Character

C. Streets and Streetscapes

B. Site Layout

A. Density and Scale

Please rate each image according to their appropriateness to your downtown. Make sure to review the list of considerations (right) before beginning and rate the overall image and ignore minor details.

Things to Consider

- Height of the Buildings
- Attached or Detached
- Varying Heights of the Buildings



ROUTE 8 AND WATERBURY BRANCH LINE CORRIDOR TOD

AECOM

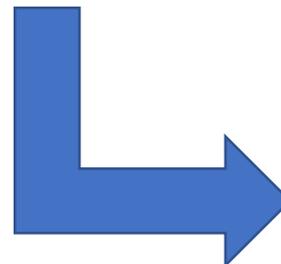


AECOM

AECOM

AECOM

AECOM



COMMERCIAL ADDRESSES WHAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE LEONARD STREET AREA?

- Place GREEN dots below the images you believe are appropriate for this part of the City.
- Place RED dots below the image that is most inappropriate for this part of the City.
- Add a post-it with comments if you like.

- More of this
- Not so much



Red: 1
Green: 22



Red: 9
Green: 18



Red: 6
Green: 17



Red: 1
Green: 23



Red: 3
Green: 12



Red: 9
Green: 16



Red: 5
Green: 13



Red: 13
Green: 9



Red: 1
Green: 23

Workshop: Mapping Exercise



1



2



5



8



7



13



3



4



6



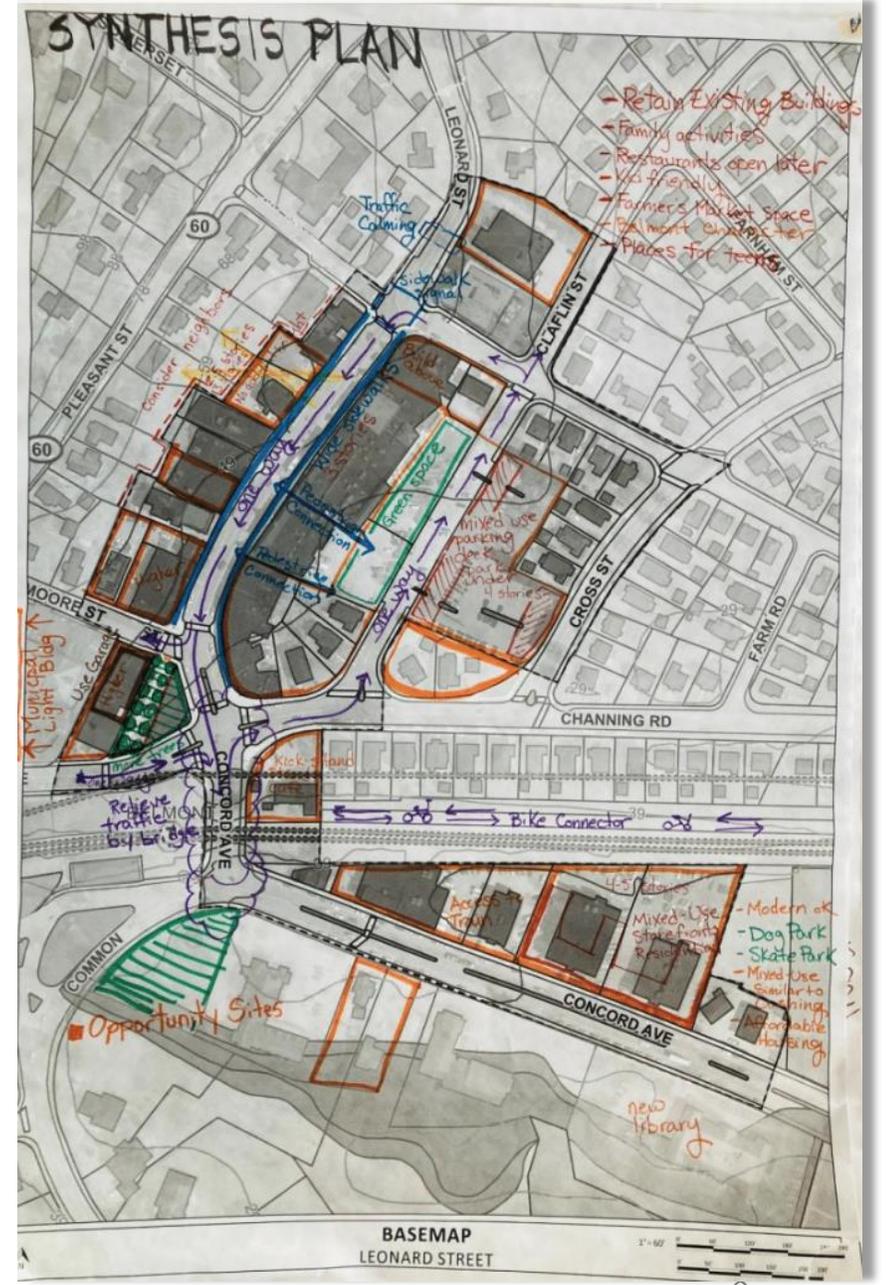
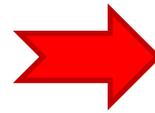
11



12



14



Five Big Ideas

- The “**Five Big Ideas**” sheets were collected from each table after the hands-on presentation from each group. Each set of ideas was presented and synthesized by consultant.

BIG 5 IDEAS

DRAFT

- **Make the Leonard Street Area a vibrant multi-generational place**

Leonard Street is surprisingly quiet after 5PM. More fine dining restaurants, coffee shops, art galleries, music venues, maker spaces, and a parking structure. More art. Add more affordable living and rentable building spaces. More concerts and programming on plazas. Look at the character of Winchester, MA and Newburyport, MA. Turn Claflin into a Main Street. Add more residential in order to add more customers within walking distance. Provide places for young adults and teens besides the CVS.

- **Safe, comfortable, and interesting streets for walking and biking**

Create path/arcade/paseo from Claflin Street lot to Leonard Street. Enable pedestrians and cyclists. Add shopfronts and awnings. Consider making Leonard Street a one-way pair in order to widen sidewalks. Make temporary parking space dining permanent. More bike stations & shared bikes. ADA accessibility. Add pocket parks and street trees. Traffic congestion is terrible; do not worsen. Add privately-operated jitneys. Add planting boxes and banner signs to light poles. Expand green in front of bank. Make cut-through traffic more difficult.

- **Increase the town’s tax base with more commercial destinations**

Town is struggling fiscally due to a small tax base. Too few places to open a new business. “Upzone” and add height and to make room for new businesses. Develop underutilized spaces. Too many storefronts are currently empty and more square footage may not be the only solution. Spur business attraction, retention, expansion, and entrepreneurship. Turn Claflin into a Main Street. Need less banks and more local-serving businesses like a grocery store or bakery. Add boutique hotel. Mixed-use above the CVS. Add family entertainment, food hall, and brewery. Rooftop dining with view of city skyline. Add tech stores, Trader Joe’s, and an Anne Taylor. Increase the value of the land in order to increase the property tax generation.

- **Protect and restore historic structures and places**

Protect historic structures that aren’t within local historic districts. Protect the fire station. Do not tear-down historic structures to build surface parking. Fix and repurpose existing buildings. If redeveloping Claflin, can the farmer’s market be moved? Daily maintenance of the Belmont Center includes regular weeding, adding trash bins, and better signage. Make re-use of historic buildings easier. Preserve but improve the municipal light building.

- **New development should be compatible and respectful of context**

Height must transition to neighborhoods. Protect the views from owners on Pleasant Street. Different maximum heights for different areas. Is underground parking possible instead of a garage? Take input from abutters but do not allow them to veto investment. Concord Street could host the highest heights. New development should be designed with a sensitivity to cultural and historical significance of existing structures. New buildings should complement, rather than overwhelm, existing structures.

BIG IDEA 1: MAKE THE CENTER A VIBRANT MULTI- GENERATIONAL PLACE

- Leonard Street can become a lively, multi-generational destination with more dining, art, and cultural spaces.
- Looking at the similar character of Winchester and Newburyport, adding residential units will bring more customers within walking distance.
- Enhanced public spaces will create a more engaging and inclusive environment for all.





Initial Height Analysis

Initial Height Analysis

- **Review Current Allowed Heights as a Benchmark**
- **Consider Use of Building Height as an Economic Force Multiplier** (incl. building costs, financial feasibility thresholds, and tax revenue generators)
- **Consider retaining charm and protecting abutters as modifiers.** How to define “reasonable impacts” will be important.
- **Consultant Proposed Two (2) Scenarios for Revised Heights:**
 - **SCENARIO 1:** Adds between 45% and 65% more leasable/taxable commercial space to the project area
 - **SCENARIO 2:** Adds between 35% and 50% more leasable/taxable commercial space to the project area

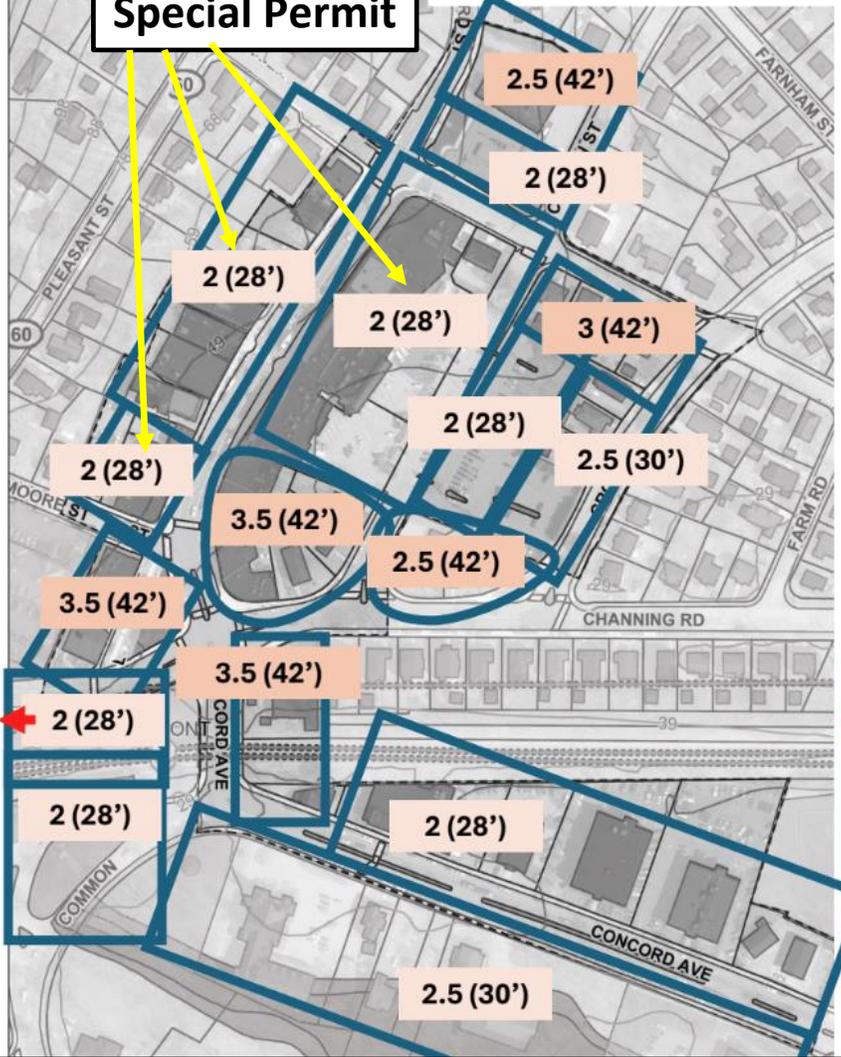
MAXIMUM HEIGHTS
STORIES & FEET

- 30' MAX
- 43' MAX
- 54' MAX
- 65' MAX
- 76' MAX

4/5 (65')
PUBLIC BENEFIT PROVIDED
"AS OF RIGHT" HEIGHT

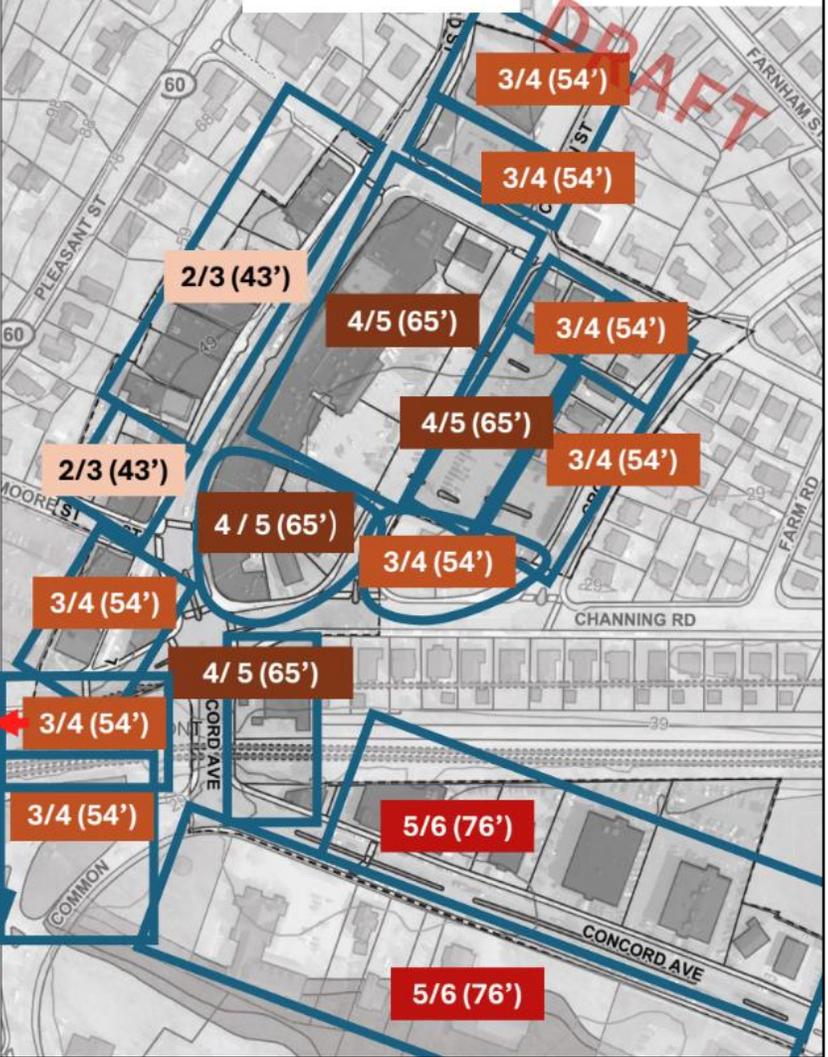
32' By Special Permit

EXISTING ZONING



OPTION 1

PROPOSED



The initial height options that Able.City proposed after the Workshop are exemplified here.

They are contrasted by the existing heights allowed by current zoning.

After a review, staff asked Able.City revised these heights lower in some areas that resulted in their first proposed zoning plan.

Zoning Framework

Form-Based Code Zoning

- All first floors must have storefronts
- 5% - 10% Open Space Required
- Minimum Floor Heights
- Extra Story Allowed for Public Benefit
 - Two Floors of Commercial
 - Local Business Focused (Formula Bus. Restrictions?)
 - Pedestrian Corridor/Arcade to Claflin
 - Provision of Public Open Space
 - LEED Platinum Certification
 - Others?
- Design Requirements (plus separate Guidelines)
- Specific Use Table for Floor Uses
- By-Right Development

MBTA 3A Zoning

- Some first floors must have storefronts
- 30% Open Space Required
- Minimum Floor Heights

Town of Belmont Zoning By-Laws
As amended through 11/19/2024
Approved 9/26/2024

Section 9 Multifamily Housing Overlay District ("MOZ")

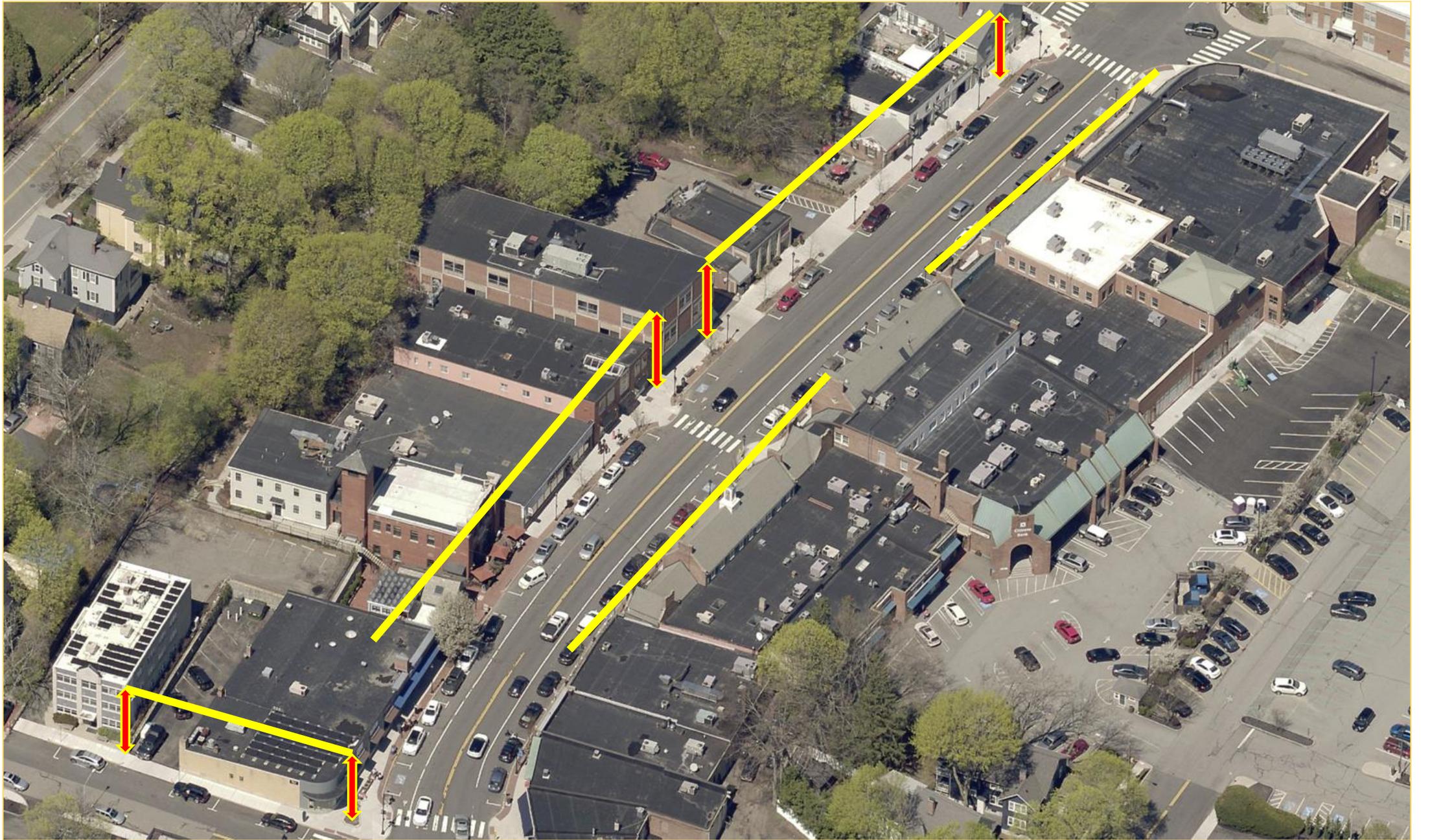
Note: §9 was adopted under Article 2 at the 2024 Special Town Meeting.

- §9.1 District Purpose and Intent
- §9.2 District Establishment
- §9.3 Applicability
- §9.4 Definitions
- §9.5 Dimensional Standards
- §9.6 Development and Design Standards
- §9.7 Design Guidelines
- §9.8 Affordable Housing Provisions
- §9.9 Density Bonus.
- §9.10 Allowed Uses
- §9.11 Administration

A True Copy, Attest
Eileen O'Brien Ashman
Town Clerk of Belmont, MA

Revised Height Analysis

- Initial Height Analysis evaluated by staff
- Specific Comments Included:
 - Establish lower heights in some edge areas
 - Maintain a consistent and reduced height along W. Leonard Street comparable to 68 Leonard Street and 18 Moore Street.
 - Maintain a consistent height along E. Leonard Street comparable to 67 Leonard Street but consider flexibility for Clafin Lot area behind the facades of the Center.
 - Provide for greatest heights along Concord Avenue.
 - Provide step backs along residential edges.
 - Provide substantial buffers and screening with natural vegetation.
 - Ensure compatibility with and preservation of historic buildings
- Review with Planning Board on 2/25/2025



REGULATING PLAN

- Consultant team devised a first draft FBC **Regulating Plan** based on Town input.
- First draft FBC received last week of February 2025.
- Planning Board will evaluate FBC in March 2025

- MBTA 3A Zoning Overlay
- FB1: Edge 1 (2 stories – 28')
- FB2: Edge 2 (2.5 stories – 37')
- FB3: General (2.5-3.5 stories – 48')
- FB4: Center (3-4 stories – 48')
- FB5: Core 1 (4-5 stories – 65')
- FB6: Core 2 (5-6 stories – 76')
- Form-Based Overlay Boundary



SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS PLAN

- Required Shopfront
- Arcade Connection
- Rear Accommodations
- FB1: Edge 1 (2 stories – 28')
- FB2: Edge 2 (2.5 stories – 37')
- FB3: General (2.5-3.5 stories – 48')
- FB4: Center (3-4 stories – 48')
- FB5: Core 1 (4-5 stories – 65')
- FB6: Core 2 (5-6 stories – 76')
- Form-Based Overlay Boundary



A special requirements plan shows particular elements that are emphasized to be accomplished by the zoning.

Other Key Issues

- **Traffic**

- Consider Strategic Signalization
- Consider Range of Other Traffic Calming Measures

- **Parking**

- Ensure sufficient parking for all current and future center uses.

- **Clafin Lot**

- Currently Not Under Consideration
- Requires Parking Study

- **Fiscal Impact**

- How much space proposed in Plan?
- Apply FIA model to the buildout.

- **Uses***

- Commercial – Exclusive on ground story, 2nd story and some subdistricts, incentivized elsewhere
- Hotel – Allowed use
- Residential – Allowed in some 3rd or higher stories

- **Building Height**

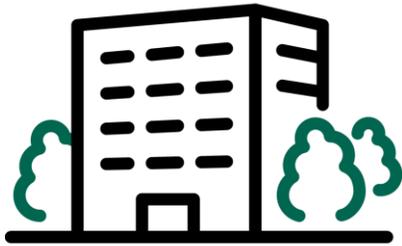
- Reasonable for Feasibility and Revenue Generation
- Limit for Meeting but not Exceeding “Reasonable Impacts”

* See Slide 20

Uses – How to Maximize Commercial

- **Commercial Uses**
 - Required commercial uses on 1st and 2nd stories
 - Minimum % of commercial uses for each subdistrict (or parcel)
 - Flex space on upper floors with commercial incentives
- **Residential Uses**
 - Special Permit and Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) required for other mix
 - Some Live/Work space Uses
- **Hotel**
 - Possible Zone 6 for Hospitality
- **Challenges**
 - Ensure defensibility under MGL
 - Ensure development feasibility

Fiscal Impact



- Property Tax
- Meals Tax



- Property Tax
- 40 R Payments



- State Excise Tax
- Local Option Excise Tax
- Property Tax

REVENUES – EXPENDITURES =

- Public Safety
- Schools
- Public Works
- Other

**Net
+/-
Fiscal Impact**

Draft By-Law



BELMONT, MA
FORM-BASED OVERLAY DISTRICTS

DRAFT FEBRUARY 2025

Draft By-Law

- **Objective is to develop a Form-Based Code according to best practices established by the [Form-Based Codes Institute](#), the [Congress for New Urbanism](#), and [Smart Growth America](#).**
- **Seeking to reach standards of models like Cincinnati, Brookline, Somerville and others.**
 1. The first draft of the overlay district By-Law was received on **February 25, 2025**.
 2. Distributed to the Planning Board after an initial staff review for appropriateness.
 3. First public vetting at the Planning Board (**March 11, 2025**)
 4. Comments Due to Consultant on **March 10th**
 5. On **March 12th**, staff provided comments to consultant
 6. On **March 20th**, Planning Board comments provided to consultant
 7. Second draft of By-Law will be provided **3/31** w/ responses to staff comments
 8. Third draft of By-Law will be provided **4/15** w/ responses to Board comments

2 FORM-BASED OVERLAY DISTRICTS

A. ESTABLISHMENT OF OVERLAY DISTRICTS

The Form-Based Overlay hereby establishes the following Form-Based Districts, as shown on the Regulating Plan herein. Each area is defined by particular characteristics that correspond with building placement, building form, building height, and frontage standards, all of which influence the level of walkability and vibrancy in a particular place. The Form-Based Overlay Districts for Belmont include:

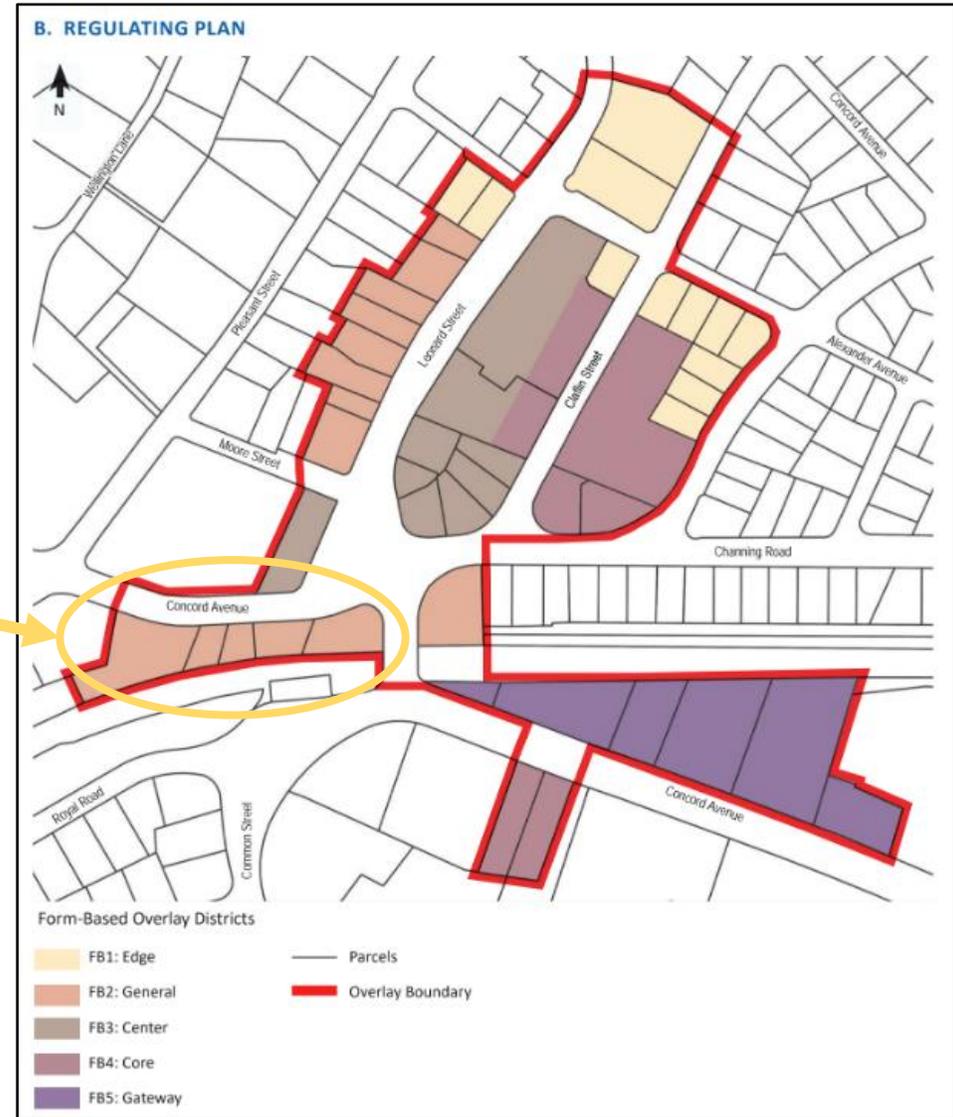
FB1 EDGE: This district includes residential sized buildings on the edge of the commercial area and encourages the additional of more commercial or office uses. It allows 2.5 stories and 37 feet of height, a similar as adjacent residential buildings.

FB2 GENERAL: This district provides a transition from the main commercial areas to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Buildings may be 2.5 to 3.5 stories and up to 48 feet in height.

FB3 CENTER: This district focuses on Leonard Street. It allows 3 to 4 stories and up to 48 feet in height. It encourages additional floors to have commercial space.

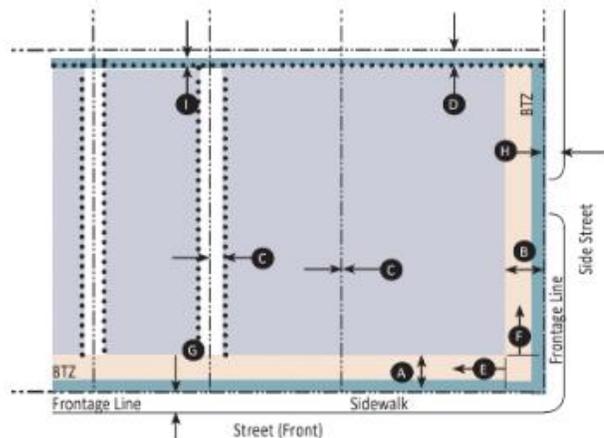
FB4 CORE: This district forms the core of the Leonard Street area. It is concentrated along Claflin Street and allows 4 to 5 stories and up to 65 feet of height. To maximize vibrancy and walkability, this district adds an additional street for commercial addresses to the area.

FB5 GATEWAY: This district allows building with heights of 5 to 6 stories and up to 76 feet in height. The first floor is required to be commercial space with upper floors able to be office or residential. The height in this district is compatible with its lower neighbors because it is separated by wide roads, public uses and the rail line.



Subdistricts are established with a description and are depicted on a Regulating Plan map.

2. BUILDING FORM



a. Building Placement

Setbacks

Front Build-to-Zone	0' min to 10' max	A
Side Street Setback	5'	B
Interior Side Property Line Setback	0' min (attached) 7.5' min (detached)	C
Rear Setback	10' min.	D
Rear Setback abutting R District	20' min	E

Frontage Buildout

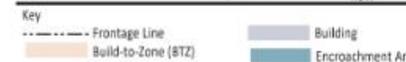
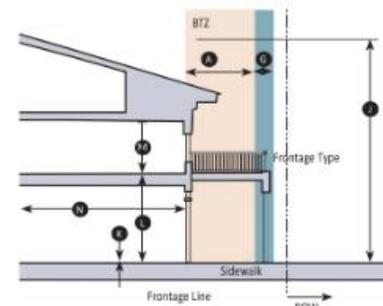
Building Façade within Build-to-Zone		
Front Street Frontage	40% min	F
Side Street Frontage	N/A	F
Lot Coverage (% maximum)	70% max	

Permitted Encroachments

Balconies, Bay Windows, Awnings, Stoops, and Other Frontage Elements		
Front	8' max.	G
Side Street	7.5' max.	H
Rear	3' max.	I

Building form is dictated by a prescriptive set of dimensional and siting requirements with detailed diagrams.

3. PARKING



b. Building Form

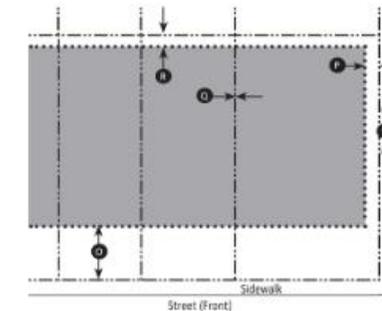
Height		
Main Building	2.5 stories	J
	48' max	K
Maximum Building Height with Public Benefit Incentive	3.5 stories	
Rear Accommodation Building Height within 50' of Lot Line Abutting R District	pitched roof preferred 2.5 stories / 41' max	
Ground Floor Elev. Above Sidewalk	6" max (commercial)	L
Ground Story Height	11' min.	M
Upper Floor(s) Story Height	8' min. clear	N
Half Story Height	18' max pitched roof 12' max flat roof	

c. Frontage Type

Depth, Ground Floor Active Use	15' min.	O
Ground Floor Fenestration	60% min	
Allowed Frontage Types	Shopfront, Gallery, Forecourt, Stoop	

d. Miscellaneous

All buildings must have a Principal Entrance along the Front Façade.
 See Lot & Building Standards for more information

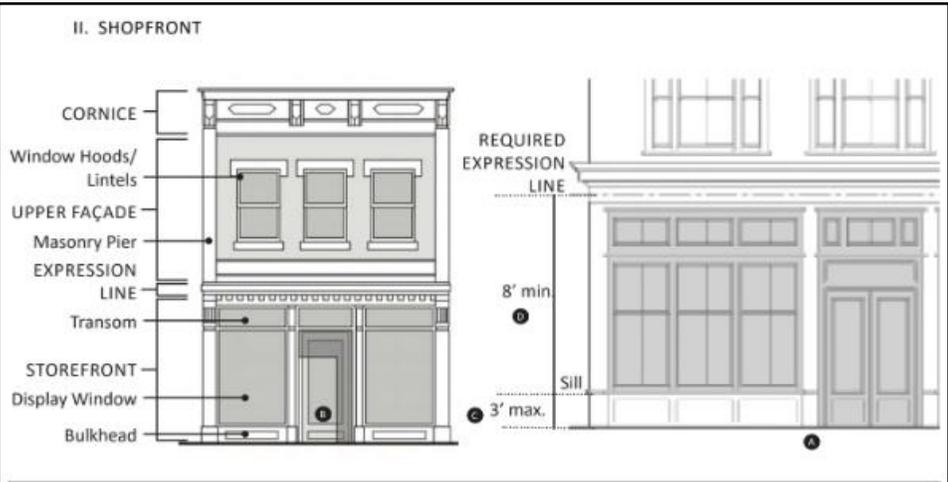


a. Parking Location (Distance from Property Line)

Front Setback	20' min	P
Side Street Setback	3' min	Q
Side Setback	0' min	R
Rear Setback	5' min	S
Parking Curb Cut Width	15' max.	T

b. Parking District Requirements

Parking shall be provided as established in the Parking Section.
 Parking shall be located behind the Front Façade of buildings and accessed from Rear Alleys or Side Streets whenever possible.
 Streetscreens, Garden Walls, fences, or hedges are required along all un-built Street Right-of-Ways adjacent to parking.
 Shared driveways between adjacent lots is encouraged to reduce curb cuts.



A. DESCRIPTION

A frontage wherein the facade is aligned close to the frontage line with the building entrance at sidewalk grade. This type is conventional for retail use. It has a substantial glazing on the sidewalk level and an awning, canopy, gallery, arcade, colonnade should overlap the sidewalk.

B. SIZE

Distance between Glazing	2' max.	a
Door Recess ¹	5' max.	b
Habitable Space Depth	15' min.	c
Window Sill Height	3' above sidewalk max.	c
Shopfront Window	8' min. above sill	d
Ground Floor Transparency	60% min.	

¹ A recessed entry may be designed in a variety of configurations (recessed door, sawtooth pattern, etc.) and may be located on the front façade or the corner of a building. An exception to meet ADA ramp compliance between sidewalk height and inside finished floor is permitted.

C. MISCELLANEOUS

- Doors may be recessed as long as main facade is at BTZ.
- Shopfront doors shall contain at least 60 percent transparent glass. Solid doors are prohibited.
- Open ended awnings are encouraged. Rounded and hooped awnings are discouraged.
- Shopfronts shall have a Cornice or Expression Line between the first and second story.
- Shopfront windows should be transparent to be able see into the space.



Figure 1-8: A shopfront with a recessed doorway



Figure 1-9: A shopfront with a chamfered corner entry



Significant design requirements are built into the By-Law itself.

Each subdistrict provides a 3-D graphic example of a building type.



A separate set of Design Guidelines further refines the architectural and site design for each project to ensure that Belmont’s objectives are met.



A consistent trim color in an area with architectural variety adds a visual unity to a commercial district.



New buildings that use a brick facade to fit the local context can distinguish new additions with more modern materials like glass, steel, and iron.

Design Guidelines help shape how buildings, streets, parks and other open spaces look and feel. They are important because they help define how the town should be built and arranged to create a positive experience for everyone. Creating places that look right and feel right helps make Belmont a great place to live, work, visit, and learn.

CONCORD STREET: AFTER



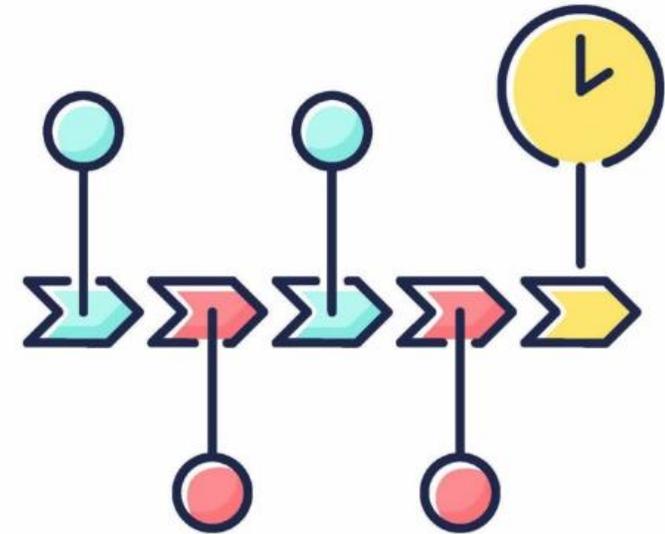
The consultant provided an initial set of renderings to show how the zoning could result in the kind of development appropriate for Belmont

Next Steps...

- The Planning Board and staff are evaluating potential codes and policies that can address concerns over **construction impact, parking,** and softening the effect of increased **height.**
- The Board has officially removed the Claflin Lot area from the first phase of the project by vote (March 25, 2025).
- A parking study will be an important prerequisite to any proposal for the Claflin Lot
- The Board will continue to listen to public input regarding the shaping of the program.

Current Schedule

- **March 26** – Third Public Listening Session
- **April 17** – Public Open House to Reveal 2nd Draft
- **May/June** – Target Date for Town Meeting Consideration of Plan





Public Questions & Comments