

The image displays a dense, repeating pattern of small, identical text blocks arranged in a grid. Each block contains a short paragraph of text, which appears to be a placeholder or a test image. The text is rendered in a light blue or teal color against a white background. The overall effect is a textured, almost abstract composition of many tiny, legible sentences.

Economic Development Committee – Town Meeting Zoning Bylaw Discussion

- For the past five months, the EDC alongside the Vision 21 Committee has led an effort to encourage new business formation and growth in Belmont, helping to ease the residential tax burden

Spring Committee Work

- In May and June, we explored zoning regulations pertaining to hotels, restaurants, parking, signs, building heights, and other affiliated issues
- This culminated in a June 30th meeting with the Vision 21 Committee where we unanimously endorsed proposals pertaining to all areas of focus

Summer: Article Refinement

- In early July 2023, the EDC and VIC chairs presented the SB with our recommendations. The SB authorized town administration to hire a zoning consultant to draft new zoning language in partnership with the EDC and VIC
- With final assistance by the town administrator, consultant, and new Senior Planner, we have completed our warrant article refinement

Fall: SB and TM Approval

- Process of Endorsement
 - EDC and VIC – early to mid September
 - Planning Board – September 19
 - Select Board – Future meetings include 9/18, 9/25
 - Public Forum – EDC aiming to run public forum the week of October 9
 - Town Meeting – November 6, 8, and 13th



Restaurant Parking Proposal

Article – Restaurant Off Street Parking



Overall Description

- This article would reduce the off-street parking requirements for restaurants from 1 space per two seats to 1 space per four seats

Specific Proposed Language

- Amend Section 5.1 Off Street Parking and Loading as follows:
- Amend Section 5.1.2 d) Restaurant by deleting the words “2 persons seating capacity” and replacing it with the words “4 persons seating capacity”

Reducing the restaurant parking requirement in line with other towns will ensure our restaurants are able to compete on a more even playing field

“Ambiguity on parking spaces needed per occupancy quantities lead a decision to be postponed which set the project back three months and cost \$20k extra to execute. This would easily or deter or sink many projects. And should be a simple fix”

“Our business is on Leonard St. According to the zoning bylaws, a fast food or quick service restaurant requires additional approval through the zoning board. Also parking is an issue for this type of business. This is an extra step in the process which seems unnecessary. And do we need to put an ad in the town newspaper? And wait 20 days for comments? In this day and age, a post on the town website would seem sufficient”

“This is suburbia and not Cambridge. There is plenty of parking everywhere!”

“Belmont needs more parking clarity and lower the spots needed per occupant”

Parking Frequently Asked Questions & Answers



| Question | EDC Analysis |
|---|--|
| If we reduce parking requirements, won't that make it harder for me to find parking at our favorite restaurant? | While it may seem counterintuitive, reducing parking requirements can actually improve parking availability. By promoting more efficient use of space and encouraging alternative modes of transport, we can create a more balanced and effective parking system that benefits everyone. |
| What about overnight parking? Will this be affected? | The proposed changes don't address or change the overnight parking ban. Existing rules on overnight parking will remain in place |
| How will these changes impact residential areas? | By modernizing parking requirements and bringing Belmont more in line with our neighboring towns and cities, we aim to make residential areas more pedestrian-friendly without significantly impacting parking availability |
| Will these changes make parking less accessible for those with disabilities? | No, ADA-compliant parking is a federal requirement that won't be affected by these changes. |
| What about commercial loading and unloading zones? | Commercial zones have their own set of guideleis which are not being addressed in these specific changes. Existing rules for commercial loading will remain in place |
| Will reduced parking requirements impact public safety? | Public safety is a top priority. The proposed changes are designed to maintain or improve public safety, including the ability for emergency vehicles to navigate streets effectively. |

Source: Work-based Learning Alliance website, MA press release, EDC discussions

Restaurant Parking Benchmarking



| Belmont | Arlington | Watertown | Waltham | Lexington | Winchester |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| 1 per 2 persons seating capacity; up to 20 outdoor seasonal seats shall not count in total | 1 per 4 seats total seating; outdoor seating shall not count | 1 per table or 4 seats and 1 per 4 linear ft of standing table | 11 per 1000 sqft gross floor area and 1 per 6 seasonal outdoor seats; fast food: greater of 1 parking spaces for every 3 seats in customer food service area, including seasonal outdoor seats, or 6 spaces per 1000 sqft gross floor area | 1 per 3 seats, or 1 per 150 sqft; 1 per 5 seats or 1 per 200 sqft in Central District | Central District: 0.75 spaces per 1k SF; General Business (1 & 2): 1 space per 4 seats Fast Food: 1 space per 2 seats |
| 5000 SQFT Restaurant Example (assumed 133 seats) | | | | | |
| 67 spaces | 33 spaces | 33 spaces | 55 spaces | 34 spaces | 33 spaces (non-CBA) |
| 1000 SQFT Restaurant (assumed seating of 27 seats) | | | | | |
| 14 spaces | 7 spaces | 7 spaces | 6 spaces | 9 spaces; 5 spaces in CBD | 1 space (CBD); 7 (Non-CBD) |



Motion 1: Recommendation for Adoption of Article to Amend Section 5.1 Off Street Parking and Loading

“Motion to recommend the adoption of the proposed article amending Section 5.1 ‘Off-Street Parking and Loading’ of the Zoning Bylaws. This article aims to modernize Belmont’s approach to parking by reducing off-street parking requirements for restaurants”



Food Service Establishments Proposal

Food Service Establishment Proposal



Belmont
MASSACHUSETTS
The Town of Homes

Overall Description

- The changes represent a significant modernization of the town's zoning bylaws, making them more flexible, easier to understand, and better aligned with current trends in the food service industry, all while prioritizing the preservation of local character and safety

Specific Proposed Language

- Amend Section 1.4 Definitions and Appreciations
- Amend Section 3.3 Schedule of Use Regulations
- Amend Section 6 Special Regulations – Formula Based Food Service Establishments

Adopting these changes streamlines food service categories, encouraging business diversity, and sets thoughtful standards for maintaining the town's unique charm and public well-being

"The current process is long and arduous. The town has a checklist to go through which helps business owners navigate through the different departments, but some processes seem outdated and unnecessary"

"The process was unnecessarily long and complex involving far more meetings, documents, and approvals than in any other town in Massachusetts"

There are some pro-business people in town who know how to move things along, and that's a huge positive. At the same time there's some archaic and ambiguous laws that are huge obstacles."

"Belmont's location is ideal, as was our chosen restaurant location. It had parking, foot traffic, demographics, etc."

But if we'd known how difficult the process would be, we might have considered other towns"

| Definition Changes Overview | |
|---|---|
| Why are we introducing new definitions like ‘Formula Based Establishment’ and ‘Food Service Establishment’? | The definitions modernize our zoning bylaws to better reflect current trends in the food service industry while allowing us to maintain the unique character and diversity of local dining options |
| What’s the difference between ‘Food Service Establishment’ and ‘Restaurant’? | A ‘Food Service Establishment’ is a broader term that includes both restaurants and catering services, while ‘Restaurant’ is more narrowly defined as a place where the primary business is the sale of food intended for on or off-premise consumption |

| New Restaurant Definition Proposals |
|--|
| Catering Service – An establishment that prepares food for consumption at various locations. This establishment may not provide on-site consumption facilities |
| Formula Based Establishment - An Individual Retail or Consumer Service establishment that is required by virtue of a contract, franchise agreement, ownership or other similar legal obligation to conform or substantially conform to a set of common design and operating features that serve to identify the establishment as one of a group of establishments for business, marketing and public relations purposes. Specifically, an establishment shall be considered a Formula Based Business if it shares at least two (2) of the following three (3) characteristics with ten (10) or more other establishments worldwide regardless of ownership or location <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trademark, service mark or logo, defined as a word, phrase, symbol, or design or combination thereof that identifies and distinguishes the source of the goods or services from others2. Standardized building architecture including but not limited to façade design and signage3. Standardized color scheme used throughout the exterior of the establishment, including color associated with signs and logos |
| Food Service Establishment - Any Restaurant or Catering Service place where food is prepared and intended for individual portion service. This includes the site at which individual portions are provided for consumption on or off the premises |
| Restaurant - An establishment whose primary business is the sale of food intended for consumption either on or off the premises, available upon a short waiting period. This category includes both traditional dine-in establishments as well as quick service and fast-casual models |

Source: Work-based Learning Alliance website, MA press release, EDC discussions

Updated Schedule of Use Regulations

| Additional FAQ | |
|--|--|
| Will my favorite local restaurant be affected by these changes? | Restaurants that aren't a "Formula Based Food Service Establishment" will be allowed "by right," meaning they won't be subject to the special permit process |
| What does it mean that "Formula Based Food Service Establishments" will need a special permit? | These establishments will need to go through a special permit process to ensure they fit well with the character and economic diversity of the community? |
| How will this impact fast food and take-out restaurants? | The old definitions would be replaced by these more modern categories. Fast Food and take-out service will fall under the broader 'Food Service Establishment' or "Formula Based Food Service Establishment" categories, depending on their business model |
| Will this make it more difficult for new restaurants to open? | The aim is to make the process simpler and more streamlined for local, independent restaurants while ensuring larger chains fit well into the character of Belmont |

| Uses | DISTRICTS | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|----|----|------|-------|--------|----|----|
| | SR-A, B, C, D | GR | AH | LB I | LB II | LB III | GB | PL |
| Food Service Establishment | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | N |
| Formula Based Food Service Establishment (See section 6.13) | N | N | N | SP | SP | SP | SP | N |

Site Plan Review – 7.13

These changes would not change any aspect of 7.13 – Site Plan Review. Any development >2,500 sqft would still be subject to all existing Site Plan Review zoning bylaws

“a) Design and Site Plan Review is required for any new building, addition or change in use of a predominantly non-residential building greater than 2,500 gross square feet gross floor area in any zoning district, or a proposal that results in the need for six (6) or more parking spaces on the lot or if the proposal reduces the number of on-site parking spaces or changes to the configuration of off-street parking, screening, egress, utilities, drainage or lighting.”

Section 6.13 Special Permit Review for Formula Based Food Service Establishments



6.13.1 Purpose. The purpose and intent of the Formula Based Food Service Establishments regulation is to address the adverse impact of nationwide, standardized businesses on Belmont villages, historic and residential areas as well as gateways to the town. The proliferation of Formula Based Food Service Establishments will have a negative impact on the town’s economic diversity, historical relevance, unique character, walkability, and economic vitality. These uses are therefore restricted in order to maintain unique dining experiences in the designated areas. Formula Based Food Service Establishments frustrate this goal by detracting from the overall village experience, appearance, and character, Formula Based Food Service Establishments which are one (1) of ten (10) or more other businesses or establishments worldwide may alter their features in order to remove themselves from the Formula Based Business Definition.

- 6.13.2 Review Criteria. In areas where Formula Based Food Service Establishments are allowed by Special Permit, the Planning Board shall review the application and determine whether the plan meets the following objectives:
- a. Approval of the Formula Based Food Service Establishments will not alter the character of the Zone in a way which detracts from its uniqueness or contributes to a nationwide trend of standardized offerings;
 - b. Approval of the Formula Based Food Service Establishments will contribute to a diverse and appropriate blend of businesses in the Zone;
 - c. Approval of the Formula Based Food Service Establishments will complement those businesses already in the Zone and help promote and foster the local economic base as a whole;
 - d. The Formula Based Food Service Establishments will be compatible with existing surrounding uses; has been designed and will be operated in a non-obtrusive manner to preserve the community's character and ambiance; and the proposed intensity of uses on the site is appropriate given the uses permitted on the site and on adjoining sites;
 - e. There shall not be a substantial impact to the public safety from increased traffic. At the discretion of the Planning Board, the applicant may be required to submit a traffic study, prepared by a Registered Professional Engineer, approved by the board.
 - f. There shall not be any adverse impacts to the roadway or abutting properties from the loading area;
 - g. The applicant shall submit a plan indicating the provision for rubbish removal, including the dumpster location with proper screening and buffering so that there are not any substantial adverse impacts to abutting properties;
 - h. No drive thru windows shall be permitted;
 - i. Maximize pedestrian and vehicular safety both on the site and accessing and egressing from it;
 - j. Minimize obstruction of scenic views from publicly accessible locations;
 - k. Minimize visual intrusion by controlling the visibility of parking, storage, or other outdoor service areas viewed from public ways or premises residentially used or zoned;
 - l. Minimize glare from headlights and lighting intrusion;
 - m. Ensure compliance with the provisions of this Zoning Bylaw, including parking and landscaping.

Source: Work-based Learning Alliance website, MA press release, EDC discussions



Motion 2: Recommendation for Adoption of Article to Modernize Restaurant Definitions and Allow All Restaurants by Right in All Business Districts

“Motion to recommend the adoption of the proposed article to update and modernize the definitions related to food service establishments in the Zoning Bylaws. This includes the definitions for ‘Food Service Establishment,’ ‘Restaurant,’ and ‘Formula Based Food Service Establishment,’ and allows for all restaurants to be permitted by right in all business districts. This modernization aims to make the bylaws more flexible, streamline the permitting process, and foster economic diversity while ensuring that the town’s unique character is maintained.”

LEONARD ST., BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

BELMONT BUSINESS CENTER 1930'S

Source: Belmont Historical Society

