



Belmont Zoning Bylaw Reform Proposals

June 28, 2023



DISCLOSURE

This is NOT a final set of proposed reforms, it is a set of concepts that are related to our Select Board mandate:

Review zoning bylaws that are of dubious value to the town and:

- Burdensome on businesses that hang signs
- Burdensome on restaurants
- Prohibit hotels as a permissible use
- Burdensome on businesses generally



Reform Areas

We are developing proposals for 4 areas of reform:

- | | | |
|----|------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Signage | 1 reform |
| 2. | Restaurants | 4 reforms |
| 3. | Hotels | 3 reforms |
| 4. | General Business | 2 reforms |

Reform Area: Signage





Reform Area: Signage

1. Conforming signs allowed by right; non-conforming signs allowed with a special permit



Reform Area: Signage

Conforming signs allowed by right; non-conforming signs allowed with a special permit

Rationale:

1. Aligns with how the rest of the zoning bylaw works
2. Keeps the principles behind the 2017 sign law intact
3. Saves the Planning Board and Office of Community Development time
4. Saves business owners time and money

Reform Area: Restaurants





Reform Area: Restaurants

1. All restaurants allowed by-right in all business districts
2. Consolidate restaurant definitions to: Sit down, Quick service, Quick service - Chain
3. Remove parking requirements
4. Create grease trap code



Reform Area: Restaurants #1

All restaurants allowed by right in all business districts

Rationale:

1. Belmont implicitly allows this already, as we have restaurants in every business district:
 - a. Local Business I - Tatte (Waverley) / Ovenbird Cafe (Cushing) / The Wellington (Belmont Center)
 - b. Local Business II - My Other Kitchen
 - c. Local Business III - Number 1 Taste (Trapelo) / Dunkin' (Pleasant & Brighton) / Moozy's Ice Cream (Belmont St)
 - d. General Business - Comella's (Brighton Street)
2. Saves the Planning Board and Office of Community Development time
3. Saves business owners time and money



Reform Area: Restaurants #2

Consolidate restaurant definitions to: Sit down, Quick service, Quick service - Chain

Rationale:

1. Current definitions are not clear, overlapping, and restrictive in ways that do not help the town
2. The current definition of “Fast Food” and “Take Out” are so expansive they capture many small businesses and add additional regulations (special permit required in all business districts and “Take Out” is not allowed in LB I)
3. The new definitions would allow the town to regulate restaurants based on what we actually care about (i.e. the balance of local and chain restaurants in town)
4. Saves the Planning Board and Office of Community Development time
5. Saves business owners time and money



Reform Area: Restaurants #3

Relax parking requirements

Rationale:

1. The number of parking spots in our business districts does not materially change on a regular basis, so we are effectively re-litigating the same issue over and over again, so we should lower the bar to complete this task
2. Saves the Planning Board and Office of Community Development time
3. Saves business owners time and money

Alternatives:

1. Relax parking ratios to be more in line with other towns (EDC input)
2. Create a formula for the number of restaurants allowable in each district (not preferred due to complexity)



Reform Area: Restaurants #4

Create grease trap code

Rationale:

1. Best practice designs are known, they should be written into zoning by-law rather than litigated case-by-case
2. Saves the Planning Board and Office of Community Development time
3. Saves business owners time and money

Reform Area: Hotels





Reform Area: Hotels

1. Create hotel definitions for Hotel, Hotel - Boutique, Hotel - Bed & Breakfast
2. Allow Hotels - Bed & Breakfast by-right in all business districts, Hotels in General Business and Local Business I districts
3. Relax parking requirements



Reform Area: Hotels #1

Create hotel definitions for Hotel, Hotel - Boutique, and Hotel - Bed & Breakfast based on number of rooms and other relevant criteria if necessary

Rationale:

1. Definitions are required for proper regulation



Reform Area: Hotels #2

Allow Hotels - Boutique and Hotels - Bed & Breakfast by-right in all business districts, Hotels in General Business and Local Business I districts

Rationale:

1. Hotels - Boutique would be limited in size and therefore not disrupt the character of neighborhoods
2. Hotels that are larger would be a good candidate for currently underutilized lots
3. Brings foot traffic to streetscape
4. Could fit into upper levels of retail buildings
5. Can be “triple taxed”



Reform Area: Hotels #3

Relax hotel parking requirements

Rationale:

1. Would make more hotels viable

Reform Area: General Business





Reform Area: General Business

1. Permits convey with property under a certain time frame / are grandfathered
2. Office of Community Development must respond to application requests within 30 days



Reform Area: General Business #1

Permits convey with property under a certain time frame / are grandfathered

Rationale:

1. Current law requires to a new business to re-apply for permits, even if its business model closely resembles its predecessor
2. Saves the Planning Board and Office of Community Development time
3. Saves business owners time and money



Reform Area: General Business #2

Office of Community Development must respond to application requests within 30 days

Rationale:

1. Creates certainty for business owners
2. Saves business owners time and money