

the belmont plan

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BELMONT'S
COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

NEWSLETTER: 1

SEPTEMBER. 2006



VISION

Belmont is a small, independent city with a unique location on a peninsula, and a history as a textile mill town, as well as a college town. The identity of Belmont extends beyond its City limits, to the peninsula, the west side of the South Fork, and north of Belmont Abbey.

With the closing and downsizing of many mills and the growth of new suburban subdivisions, Belmont is a City in transition. While becoming a part of a larger metropolitan area, there is a very strong desire to retain the sense of identity and community that has historically characterized Belmont, even as it grows.

It is very important that Belmont continues to be an economically diverse city. The walkable neighborhood structure that characterizes the historic center should be reflected in new development areas, and the City's existing neighborhoods and residents need as much attention as new development in considering the future of the community.

STRUCTURE

Belmont has very distinct neighborhoods. The traditional mill villages, built within walking distance of the textile mills, remain neat, well-cared for neighborhoods. Reid Park, North Belmont and East Belmont residents all have strong commitments to their neighborhoods, and want them to continue to be viable, thriving communities in the future.

Belmont's historic downtown is one of the most notable in the metropolitan Charlotte area, and perhaps in North Carolina. It has survived the economic pressures that have afflicted many small downtowns throughout the US, and continues to be a viable business and restaurant center.

Belmont Abbey College also provides a distinct identity to the City. Its neo-Gothic architecture is visible from I-85, and its beautiful campus is a distinct landmark on the north side of the City.

Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens, while not within the City limits, is widely identified as a Belmont institution. It provides a southern counterpoint to the Abbey as a Belmont landmark.

Belmont is one of only a handful of cities in any state located on a Peninsula, between Lake Wylie and the South Fork. While it provides a distinct sense of identity, little of the waterfront is accessible to the public. Other than single family homes, there is virtually no waterfront development that takes advantage of this outstanding natural feature.

Interstate Highway 85, built in the 1970's, became a physical and psychological barrier dividing North Belmont and Belmont Abbey from the rest of the City. There is a desire to overcome that barrier, and to make both the neighborhoods and the college more physically integrated with the rest of Belmont.

Duke Energy Company's Plant Allen is a distinct presence on the Peninsula. Its large land area separates the southern tip of the peninsula from the middle and the historic City center. Numerous electric transmission line rights-of-way are notable elements in the overall landscape of the Peninsula.

GROWTH

The population size of the current City limits has not grown particularly rapidly over the last two decades. The current population, estimated at just under 10,000 people, is somewhat larger than the 2000 population of 8,700, but Belmont's growth has not been nearly explosive as many communities in Mecklenburg and Union Counties.

Much more growth has occurred on the Peninsula south of South Point High School. Some new development has also taken place in North Belmont. The I-85/Wilkinson Boulevard corridor is beginning to experience new commercial development.

PUBLIC MEETING

synopsis

The first public meeting in Belmont resulted in overwhelming support with more than 300 people in attendance. That being said, there was lots of feedback during the evening's activities, which included filling out a survey, voting on preferred types of land uses, and specifying where those land uses should apply within Belmont. Of all the comments made, the following were some of the recurring themes:

- *Waterfront at all available space
- *Interested in connecting greenways
- *No "big box"
- *Renovation of mills
- *I-85 interchange good for offices
- *Not feasible/not good idea to connect communities
- *Need greenways down to Southpoint area and northern areas
- *Conservation is a big issue (no clear cutting of trees)
- *Improve recreation facilities and add new (sports complex, etc.)
- *One Belmont
- *More schools needed
- *Standards should be tightened on infill
- *Primarily concerned with access
- *Encourage recreational development along waterfront (public access)
- *Should annex southern portion
- *Want access to Mecklenburg south of I-85, but no tolls
- *More affordable middle class/TND neighborhoods
- *Quality development; infill to match existing patterns
- *Downtown preservation
- *Need services further down peninsula

- *Truly use open space that is zoned into each development
- *Light industrial for tax revenue
- *Want to see north and east Belmont brought into City
- *Spruce up US 74

Survey results showed that roads and/or traffic, schools, and parks and recreation were among the most important factors in Belmont. Other issues of high importance evolved around smart growth issues, waterfront development and Traditional Neighborhood Development. Two issues that most respondents were against included manufactured housing and gated communities. The three top reasons respondents like Belmont were because of its small town atmosphere, its location to various things (i.e. I-85, Charlotte, etc.), and its people.

These and other comments will be incorporated into more detailed alternatives offered at the next public meeting in November or December. Since this meeting answered the question of "where we are," the next meetings will address "where we want to be" and "how do we get there."

THE DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF THE HNTB TEAM IS ONE THAT CREATES A SENSE OF IDENTITY THAT IS THOUGHTFUL, PROVOCATIVE, AND CONTEXTUALLY SOUND.



PARTNERING

for Success

With more than 40 years in urban design and planning, HNTB is a leader in providing innovative solutions to clients. HNTB brings technical expertise to virtually every aspect of the planning and design process with services including engineering, urban and regional planning, and general and specialty architectural design. As demand for these services grows, HNTB continues to expand its urban design and planning practice in office locations nationwide. HNTB is well-positioned to guide the Town of Belmont in the process of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

HNTB opened its Charlotte office in 2001, focused on urban design and planning for the Carolinas, and context sensitive transportation design for the Southeast Division. Services offered from Charlotte include community planning, urban design, land planning, landscape architecture, and transportation planning. HNTB Charlotte and HNTB Raleigh comprise HNTB North Carolina, P.C., giving the firm full service engineering, architecture, and planning services in North Carolina.

Projectteam: Donal Simpson, Project Director; Carl Rogers, GIS; Talitha McGuinness, Public Involvement; Chris Bird, Urban Design; Michael Abate, Urban Design; and Susan Fisher, Planning.



WHAT SETS THE HNTB TEAM APART IS THE ABILITY TO USE CREATIVE DESIGN TO CONNECT TO A COMMUNITY AND ITS PEOPLE.

Why Have a Land Use Plan?

A land use plan will guide development, revitalization and preservation of Belmont, so that the City:

- has a unique sense of community and place;
- preserves and enhances natural and cultural resources;
- equitably distributes the costs and benefits of development;
- expands the range of transportation, employment and housing choices in a fiscally responsible manner; and
- values the long-range growth and development of the City over short term actions.

A good plan provides these benefits:

- A comprehensive plan forms the basis of a community's vision of its future, and provides the grounding for its zoning and subdivision regulations.
- A good plan lets a community anticipate future services like police, fire, and garbage collection efficiently.
- The vision created in the plan can make future decision-making on development proposals easier and less politically charged.
- Resources provided by state and federal governments are

increasingly tied to good plans and planning processes. Highway funds, water and sewer grants, and environmental clean-up funding is easier to bring to your community if you have a well-crafted plan that shows extensive community involvement.

The goal of good planning is to get out in front of potential problems and prepare for quality growth, not to stifle it or remove any individual's rights.

KEY STEPS TO REMEMBER:

November/December, 2006 - Framework Plan Public Meeting. Review of alternative scenarios developed from the first public meeting, and a suggested "Framework Plan" that will set the conceptual framework on which the Comprehensive Plan will be based.

March, 2007 - Draft Comprehensive Plan Public Meeting. Public information presentation at or near a mid-point of the Comprehensive Plan to present the draft Plan, and solicit comments and suggestions for incorporation.

May, 2007 - Final Comprehensive Plan Presentation. The adoption presentation to the Planning Board and to the City Council will also be a public meeting, with the opportunity for the public to review the proposed Comprehensive Plan and provide comments.



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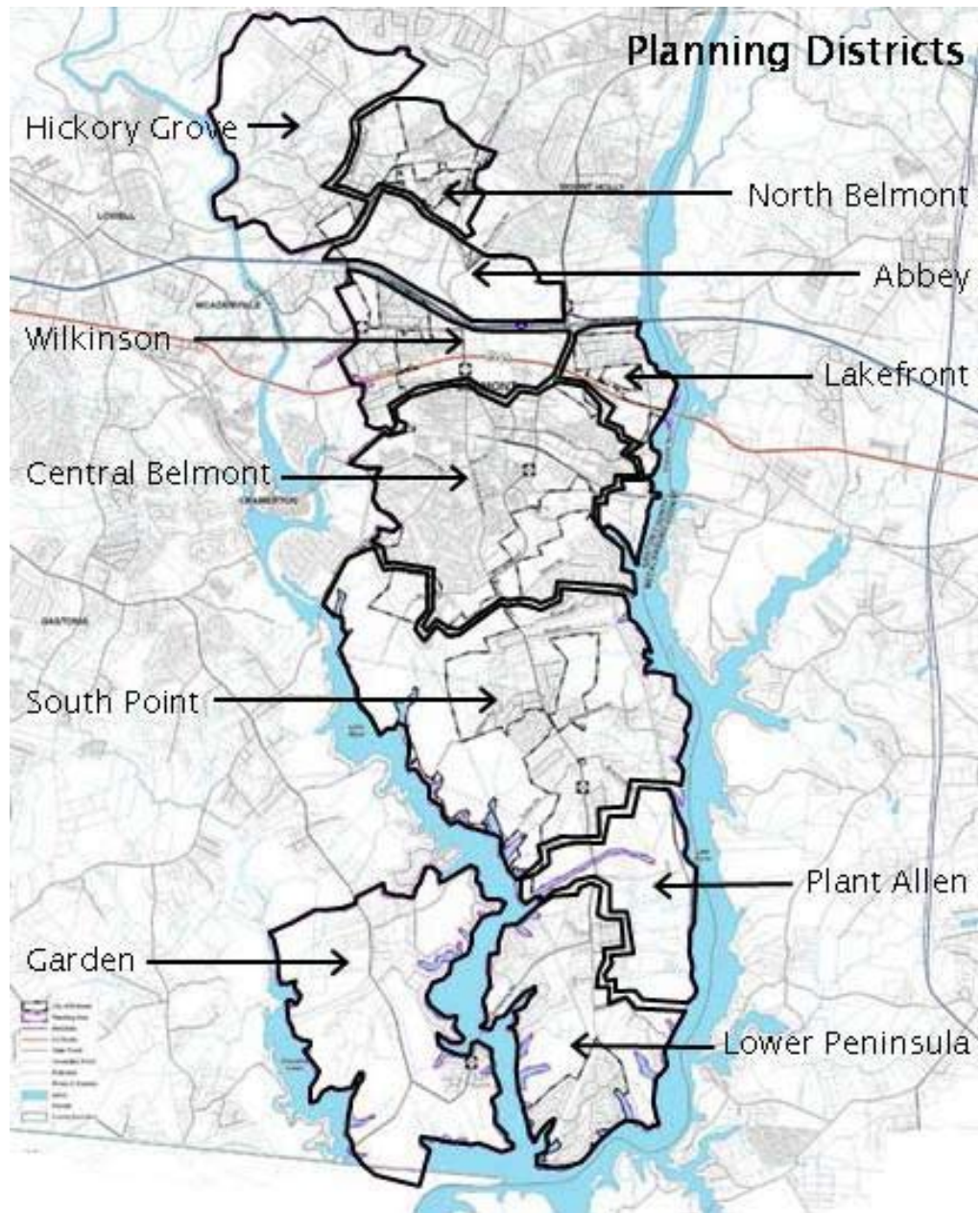
WHAT IS SCENARIO PLANNING?

The November/December Public Meeting will provide a collection of all the feedback presented in what is referred to as alternative growth and development “scenarios” for Belmont.

In scenario planning, anticipated growth is distributed into areas suitable for development. Several different ways the community can develop, or “scenarios,” examine a realistic range of growth and development options for the City, based on the desirable futures expressed by the community in the community visioning process. In addition to development patterns and densities, the implications for the City of each scenario are estimated: population capacity, location of major land use types, transportation system capacity requirements, necessary infrastructure support, environmental factors, and fiscal implications.

These summary analyses will allow the City and community leadership to make an informed choice about the strategic direction that the Comprehensive Plan should take. This direction, which will draw from all of the scenarios as appropriate, would be the “Framework Plan.”

Once the City and community leadership has identified a “Framework Plan,” it is the basis for development of detailed Comprehensive Plan elements, defining the intended growth and development policy for the City.



*Note: The planning area for the Comprehensive Plan is nearly three times larger than the present city limits. It includes a wide range of existing communities and vacant land facing different issues of growth and development. Rather than a “one size fits all” plan that treats all parts of the planning area the same, ten different districts are being used to tailor the ultimate land use plan to each part of the planning area’s specific needs and goals. In the final plan, they will all fit together as one Belmont.