An aerial photograph of a city center, likely Belmont, showing a mix of commercial buildings, parking lots, and streets. A large blue rectangular box with a white border is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the main title. The background shows various buildings, some with flat roofs and others with gabled roofs, along with numerous cars parked in lots and on the streets. The overall scene is a typical urban environment.

Belmont Center Zoning Project

Consultant Progress on Design Framework

February 27, 2025

Table of Contents

- **Welcome & Introductions (5 Min)**
- **Background, Goals, & Objectives (10 Min)**
- **Design Framework (35 Min)**
 - Workshop Activities and Findings
 - Focus Groups Findings
 - Initial Height Analysis
 - Revised Height Analysis
 - First Draft Code
- **Next Steps (5 Min)**
- **Public Comment (65 Min)**
- **Adjourn**

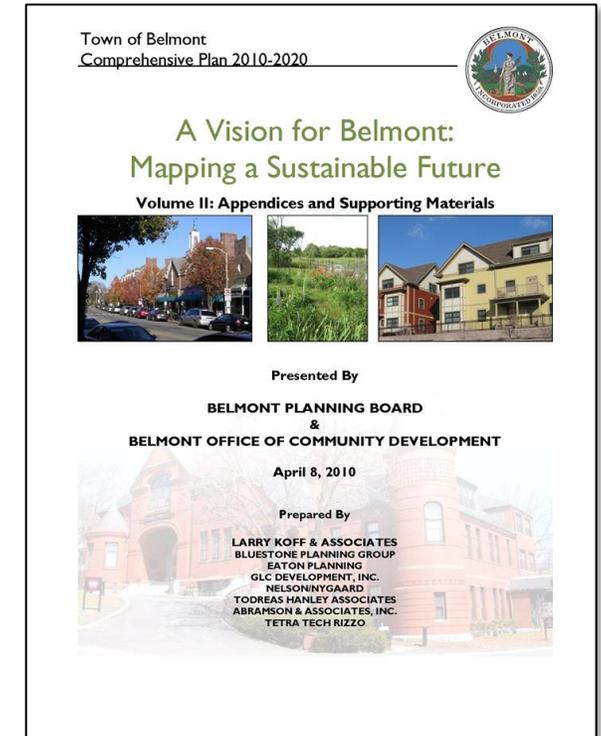
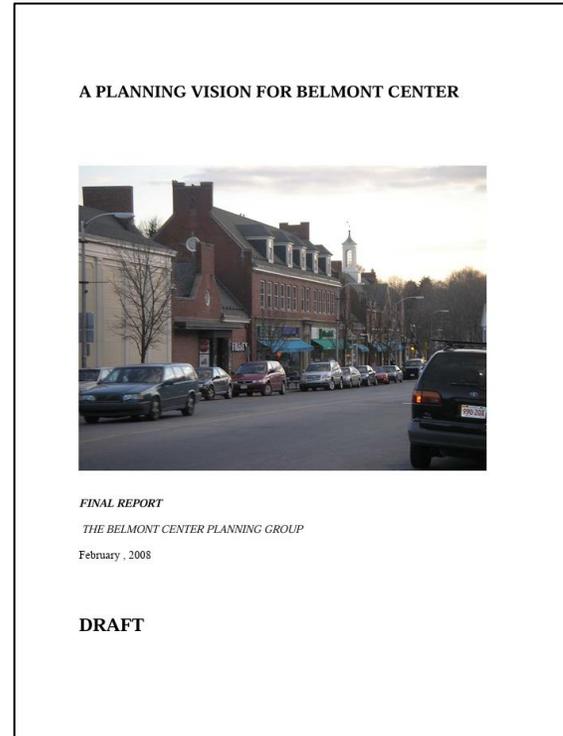
Background

- **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 (General)

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



Project Goals and Objectives (Specific)

- Provide opportunity for thoughtful development of the Claflin Lot and Leonard Street Backlands
- Find a solution for establishing a Paseo or Arcade cut-through from Leonard Street to the Claflin Lot
- Use placemaking to create a vibrant Belmont Center district to serve residents and draw visitors
- Use the Center as a test case for the use of a Form-Based Code.



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



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

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.

GREEN More of this

RED Not so much



Red: 25
Green: 1



Red: 3
Green: 29



Red: 12
Green: 11



Red: 5
Green: 15



Red: 24
Green: 0



Red: 25
Green: 0



Red: 25
Green: 1



Red: 8
Green: 14



Red: 7
Green: 28

STREETS & STREETSCAPES

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: 16



Red: 20
Green: 0



Red: 7
Green: 13



Red: 6
Green: 29



Red: 4
Green: 7



Red: 7
Green: 21



Red: 3
Green: 23



Red: 30
Green: 0



Red: 25
Green: 0

RESIDENTIAL 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: 7
Green: 12



Red: 10
Green: 19



Red: 9
Green: 21



Red: 10
Green: 2



Red: 16
Green: 0



Red: 10
Green: 8



Red: 23
Green: 17



Red: 8
Green: 24



Red: 23
Green: 1

RESIDENTIAL 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: 4
Green: 17



Red: 8
Green: 12



Red: 4
Green: 16



Red: 15
Green: 0



Red: 7
Green: 3



Red: 7
Green: 19



Red: 31
Green: 4



Red: 9
Green: 23



Red: 15
Green: 1

Mapping Exercise

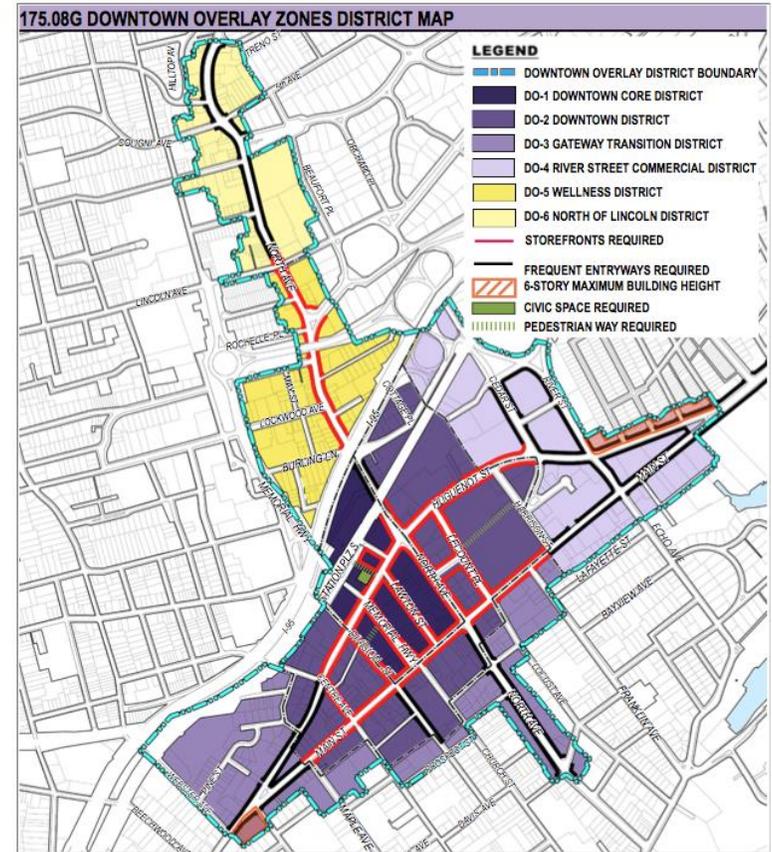


TABLE MAPS

Participants were asked to brainstorm different ideas about what they would like to see in Belmont center...



1



2



5



8



7



13

...participants came up with ideas regarding density and height, parking, circulation, open space, activities. And a number of other criteria...



3



4



6



11



12



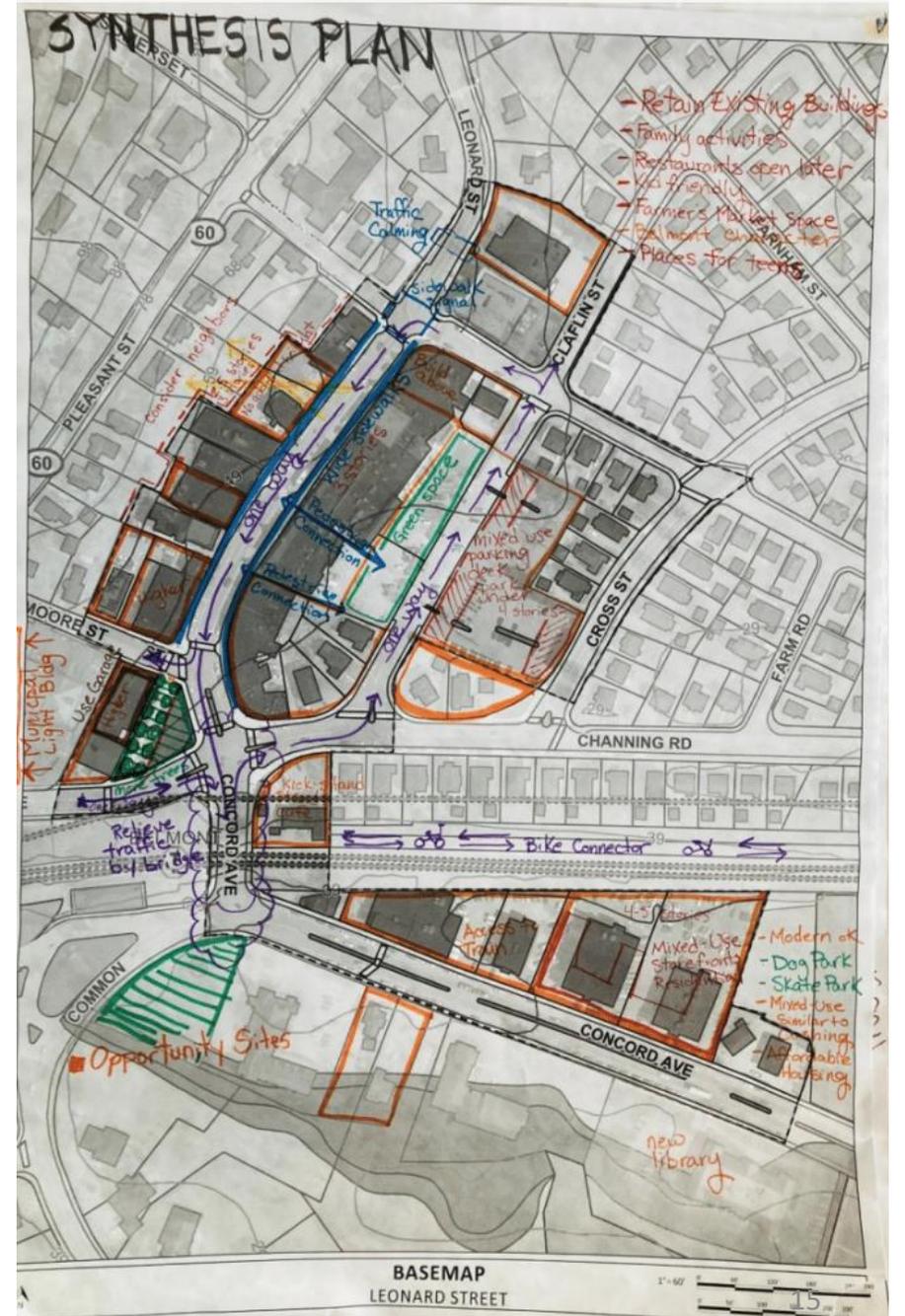
14

Synthesis Plan

The consultant team took these individual table maps and created a Synthesis Plan that featured all of the most common themes.

• Selection of Comments

- Traffic Calming
- Consider Neighbors
- Mixed-Use / Parking Deck
- Pedestrian Connection
- Relieve Traffic By Bridge
- Bike Connector
- One-Way Pairs
- Wide Sidewalks
- Kick Stand Cafe



Five Big Ideas



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, shown in the following slides...

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 Clafin 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 Clafin 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 Clafin 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 Clafin, 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.

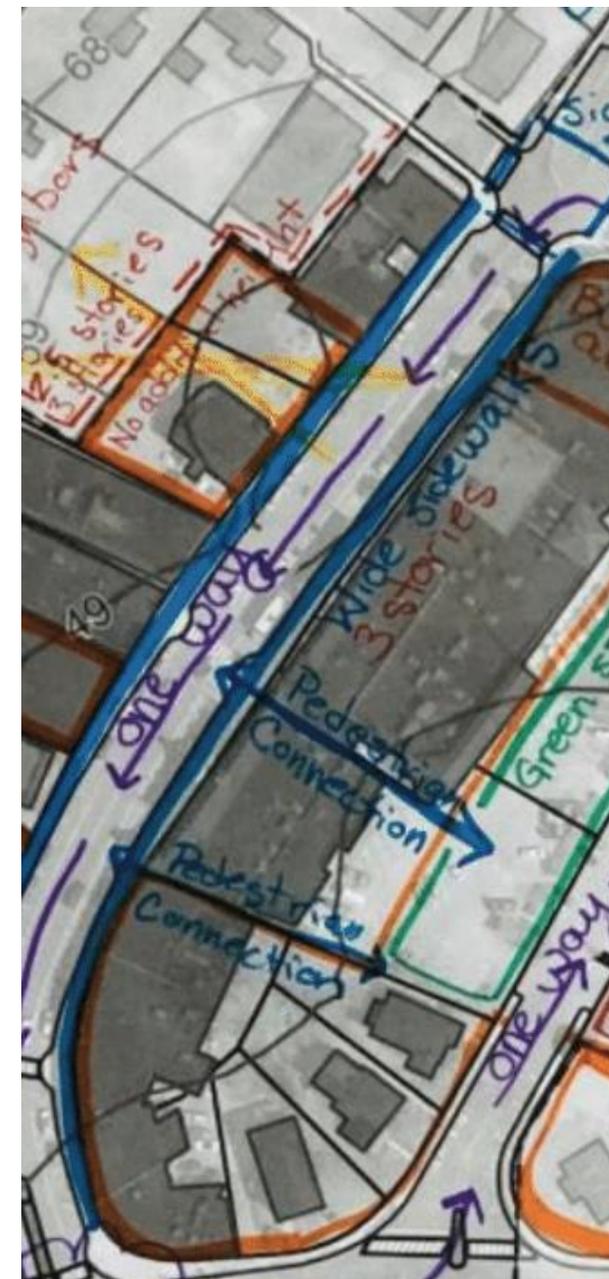
- **New development should be compatible and respectful of context**

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.



SYNTHESIS MAP

BIG IDEA 1:

MAKE THE CENTER A VIBRANT MULTI- GENERATIONAL PLACE

- Residents of Belmont, during the table exercises, recommended mixed-use development along Concord Avenue.
- Enhanced public spaces—such as plazas, a new library, new skating rink, or potential features like a dog park are vital for a vibrant sense of place for all.

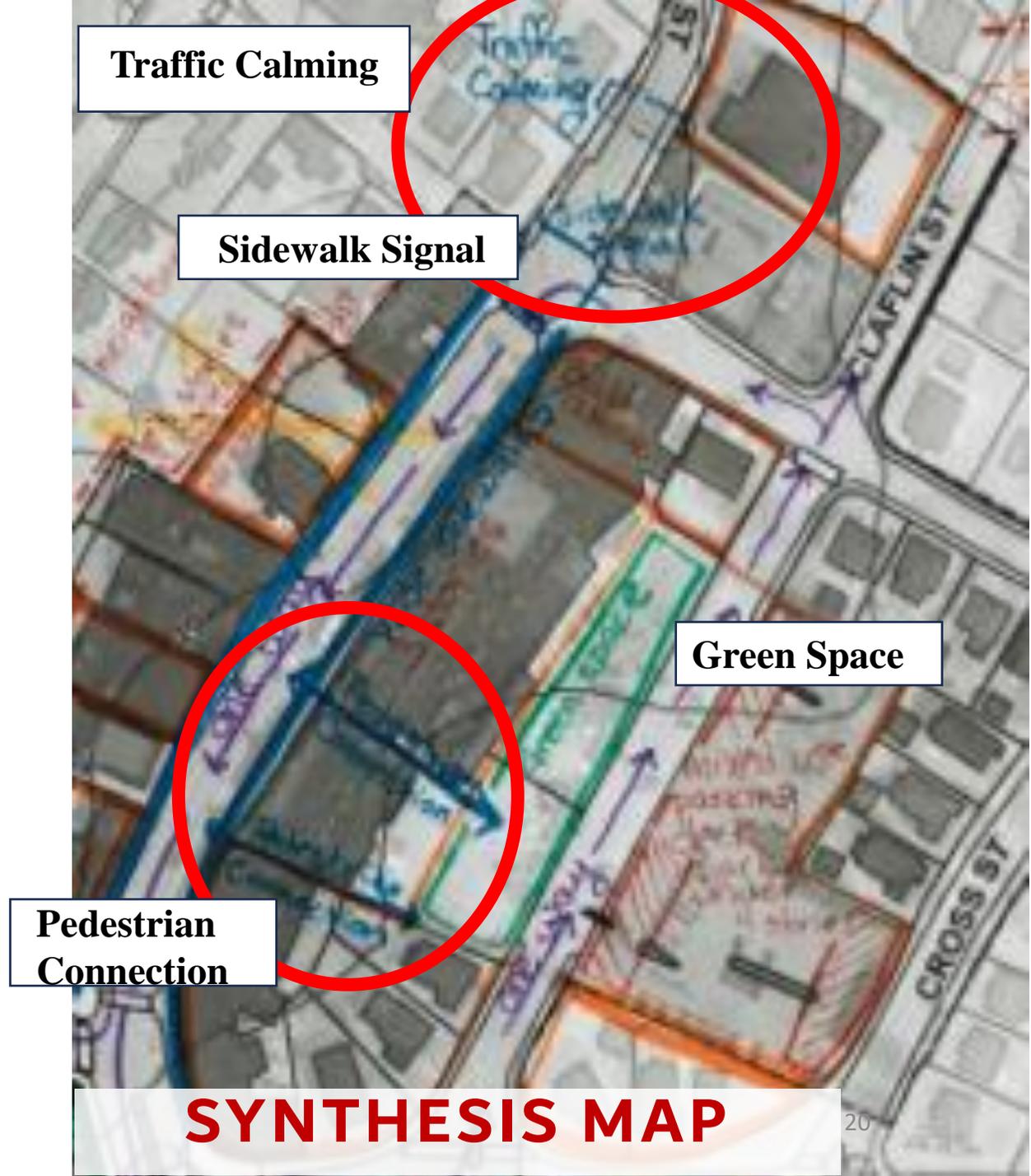


TABLE 12

BIG IDEA 2:

SAFE, COMFORTABLE AND INTERESTING STREETS FOR WALKING AND BIKING

- Enhance Leonard Street with better pedestrian and cycling connections, including a path or arcade from Clafin Street lot and improved alleyways and walkways.
- Consider a one-way pair to widen sidewalks, make temporary dining permanent, and add shopfronts, awnings, and bike stations.
- Additional greenery, accessibility, and elements like planting boxes and banners can create a more welcoming and vibrant streetscape.



BIG IDEA 2:

SAFE, COMFORTABLE AND INTERESTING STREETS FOR WALKING AND BIKING

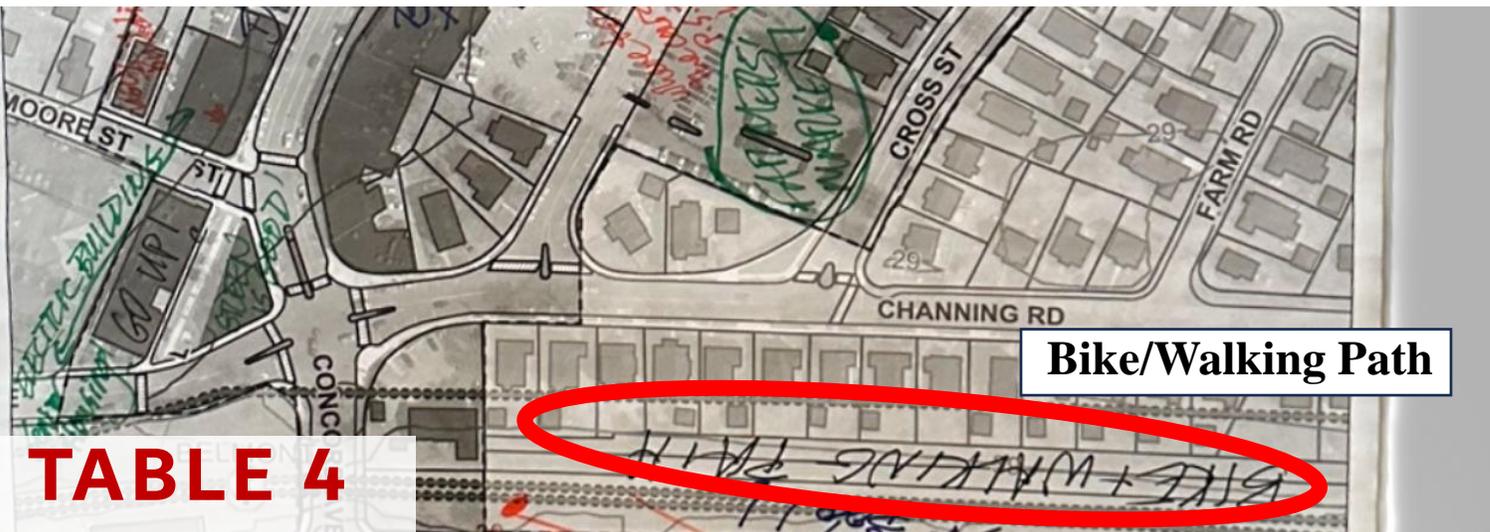
- Workshop attendees recommended widening sidewalks, adding green space in pedestrian areas, and connecting to the bike/walking path near Channing Road to improve walkability and connectivity.

TABLE 2



Wider Sidewalks

Pedestrian Green Space



Bike/Walking Path

TABLE 4

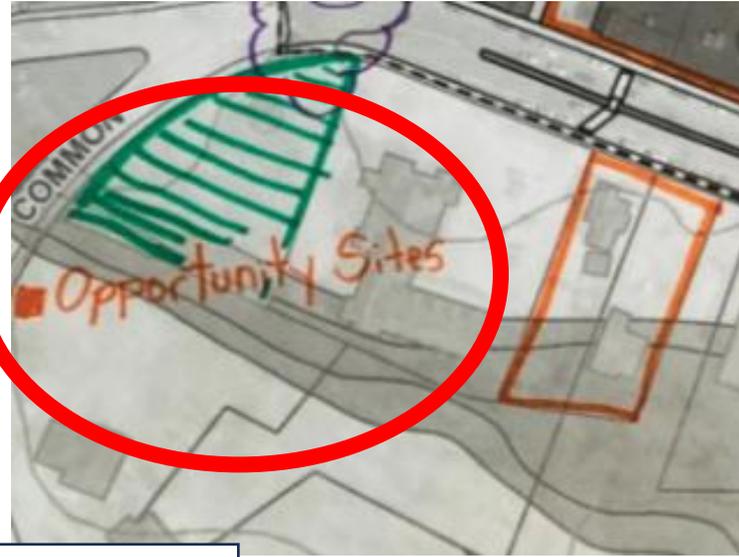
BIG IDEA 3:

INCREASE THE TOWN'S TAX BASE WITH MORE COMMERCIAL DESTINATIONS



Higher Densities
& Mixed-Use

Restaurants open
later, family activities
& places for teens



- Upzoning, activating underutilized areas, and transforming Claflin Street into a 2nd Main Street can attract local-serving businesses and create more activities.
- Extending business hours can help drive economic growth.
- Places for teens was a common issue.

SYNTHESIS MAP

BIG IDEA 3:

INCREASE THE TOWN'S TAX BASE WITH MORE COMMERCIAL DESTINATIONS

- Table exercises identified opportunity sites near Concord Avenue and recommended higher densities at Moore Street to support new businesses.



TABLE 10



Higher height here

TABLE 4

BIG IDEA 4:

PROTECT AND RESTORE HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND PLACES

- Belmont's historic character should be preserved by protecting valued structures outside historic districts, repurposing existing buildings, and avoiding demolitions for surface parking.
- Maintenance improvements like weeding, better signage, and more trash bins can enhance Belmont Center.
- Importance of considering neighbors and abutters, retaining certain existing buildings, and being careful on additional height, particularly on Leonard Street, to maintain the town's character.

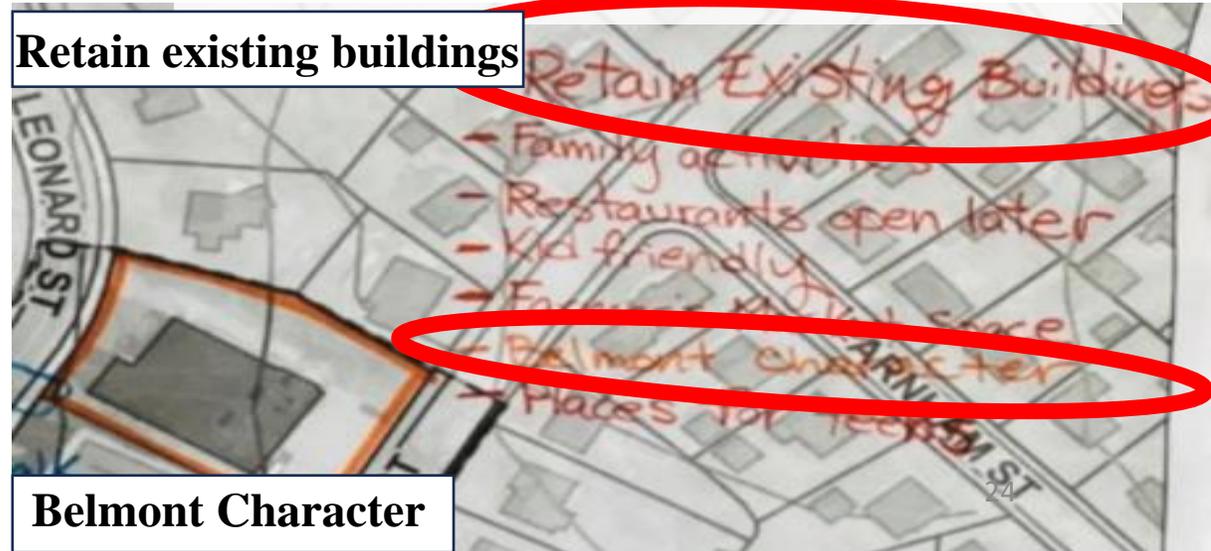
Consider neighbors



No additional height

SYNTHESIS MAP

Retain existing buildings

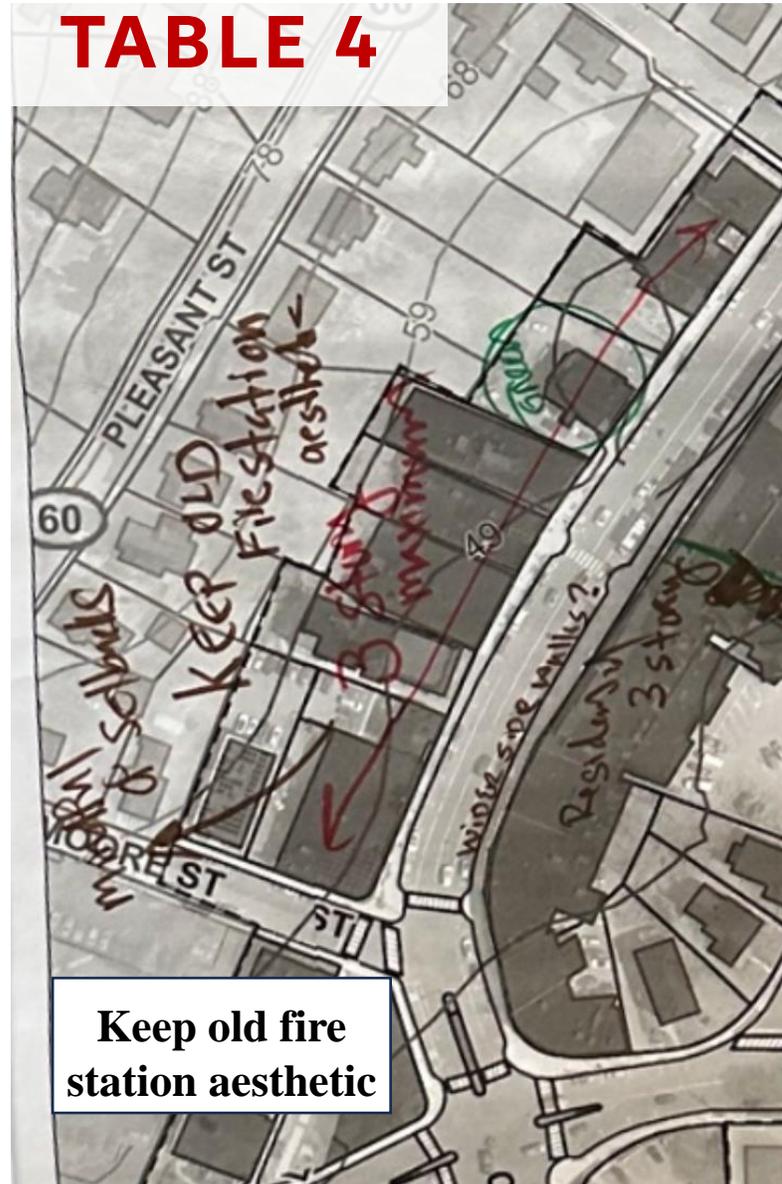


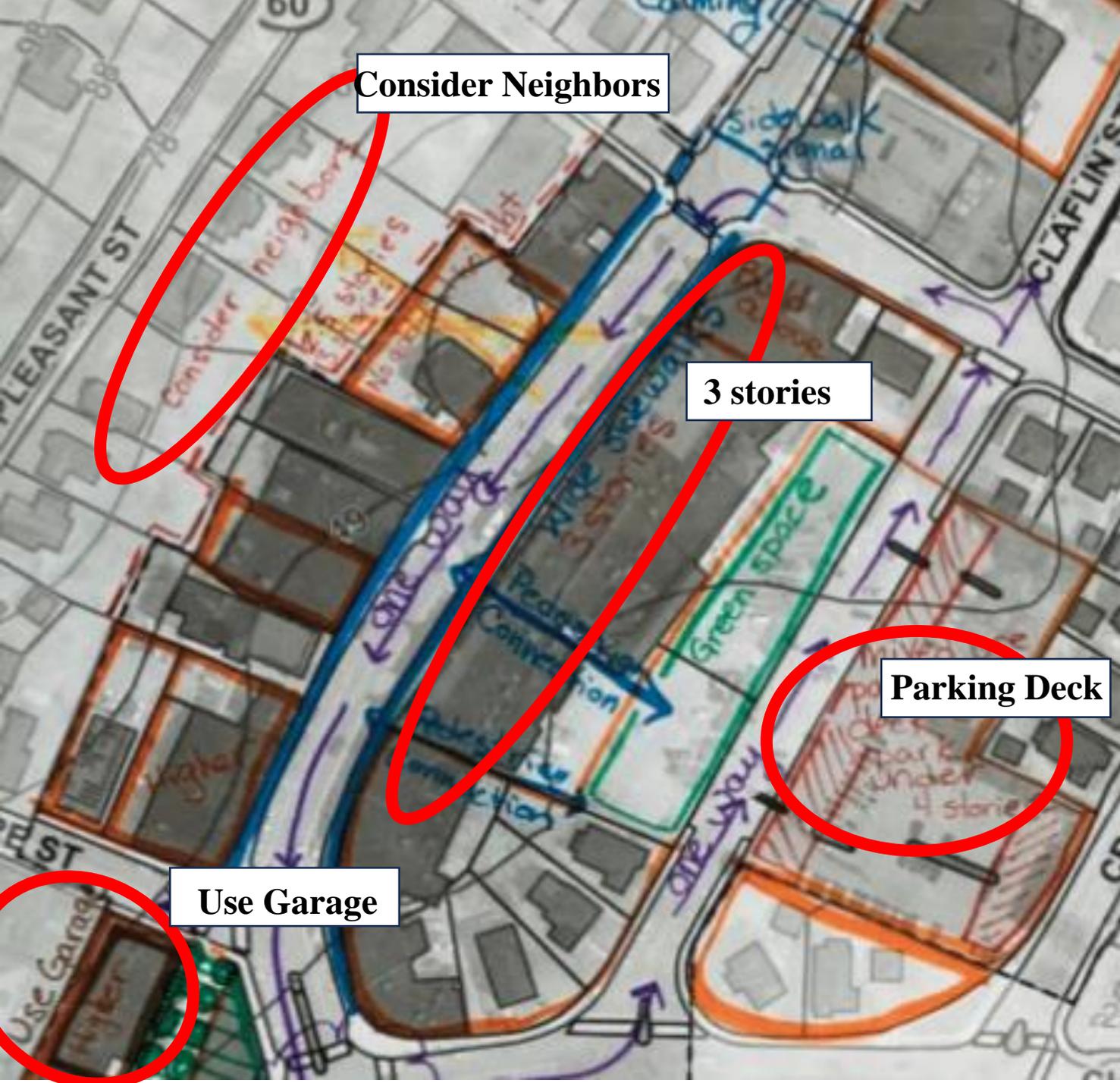
Belmont Character

BIG IDEA 4:

PROTECT AND RESTORE HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND PLACES

- Workshop participants also recommended preserving the character and aesthetic of the Pleasant Street area while making it more vibrant, emphasizing keeping the historic look of the old fire station to protect, restore, and enhance Belmont's original charm.





Consider Neighbors

3 stories

Parking Deck

Use Garage

BIG IDEA 5:

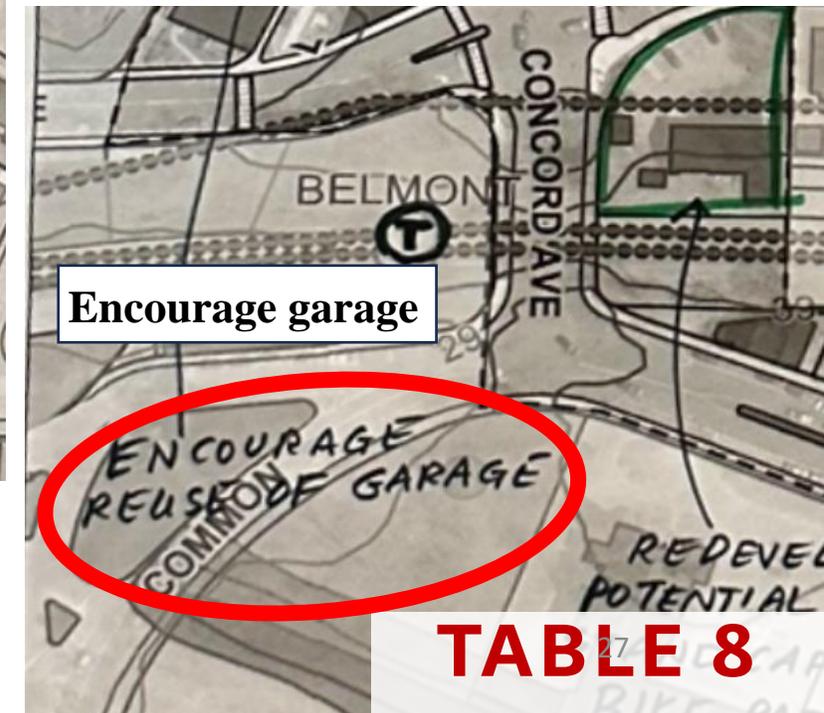
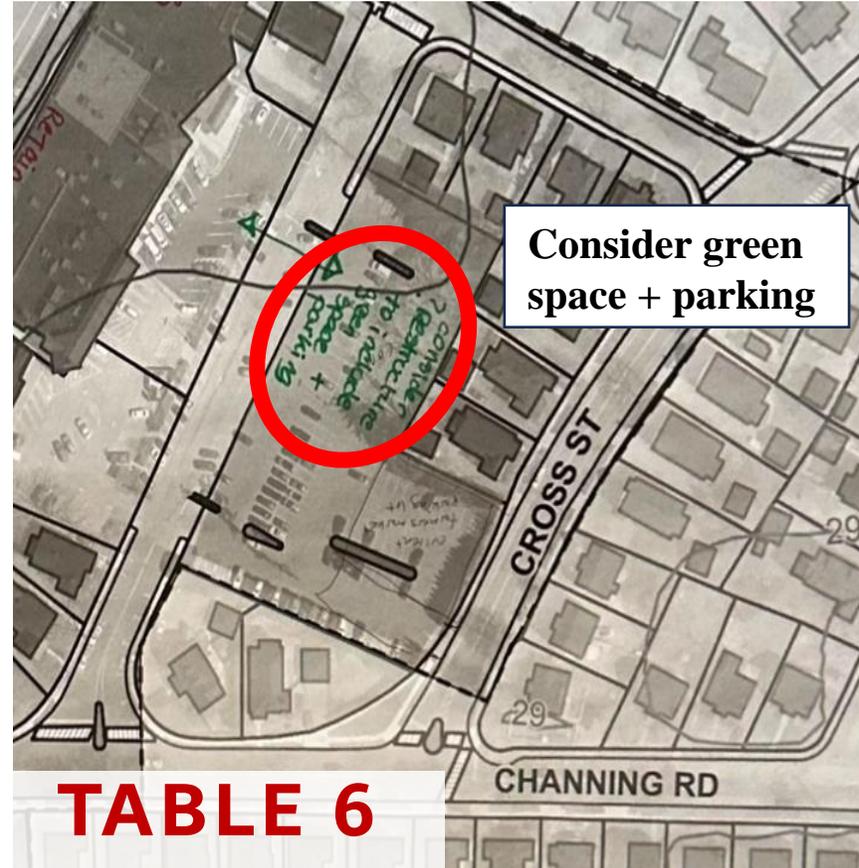
NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE COMPATIBLE AND RESPECTFUL OF CONTEXT

- New development should scale thoughtfully to consider Pleasant Street views and respect Belmont's historic character.
- Tallest buildings could be concentrated on Concord Street, while Leonard Street should be maintained at ~ three stories.
- Underground parking or a garage could reduce surface lots
- Recommendations to use structured parking solutions and exploring a one-way traffic system to balance growth with community needs.

BIG IDEA 5:

NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE COMPATIBLE AND RESPECTFUL OF CONTEXT

- Residents also recommended balancing parking and green space between Leonard and Cross Street, preserving the farmers market, and prioritizing underground parking or garage use to reduce surface lots.



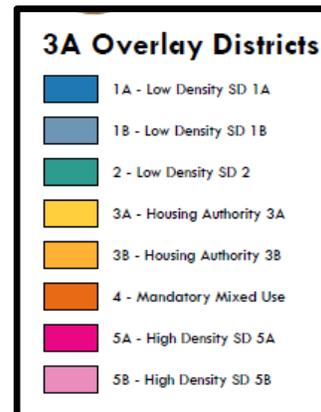
Initial Height Analysis

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”?
- **Propose 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

MBTA Zoning in Belmont Center

- 3A zoning overlay covers some of the parcels proposed for FBC
- One option is to treat both overlays as separate and distinct options for property owners
- Current 3A subdistrict 4 allows a height of up to 55' and the equivalent in the proposed zoning is only 48'



MAXIMUM HEIGHTS

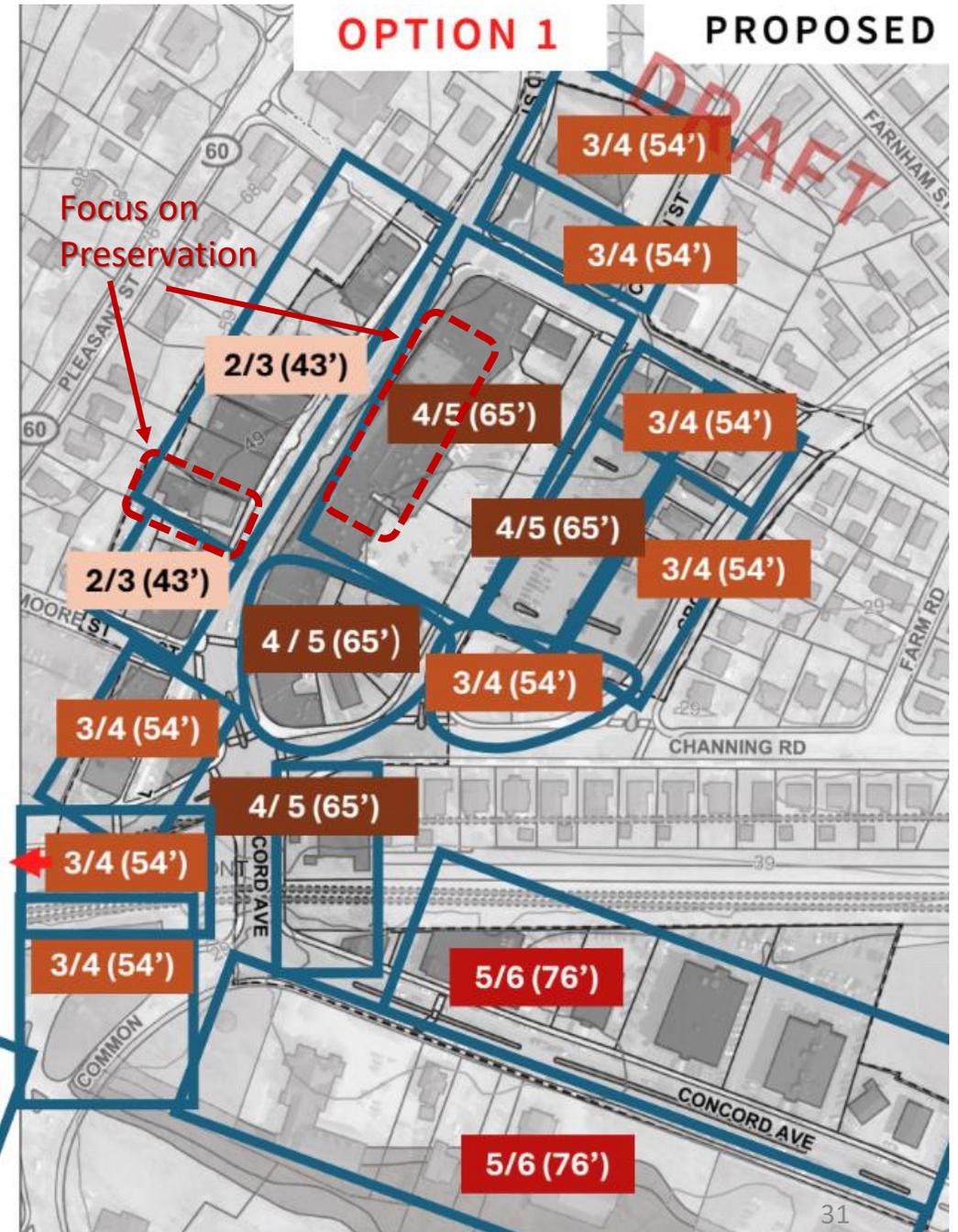
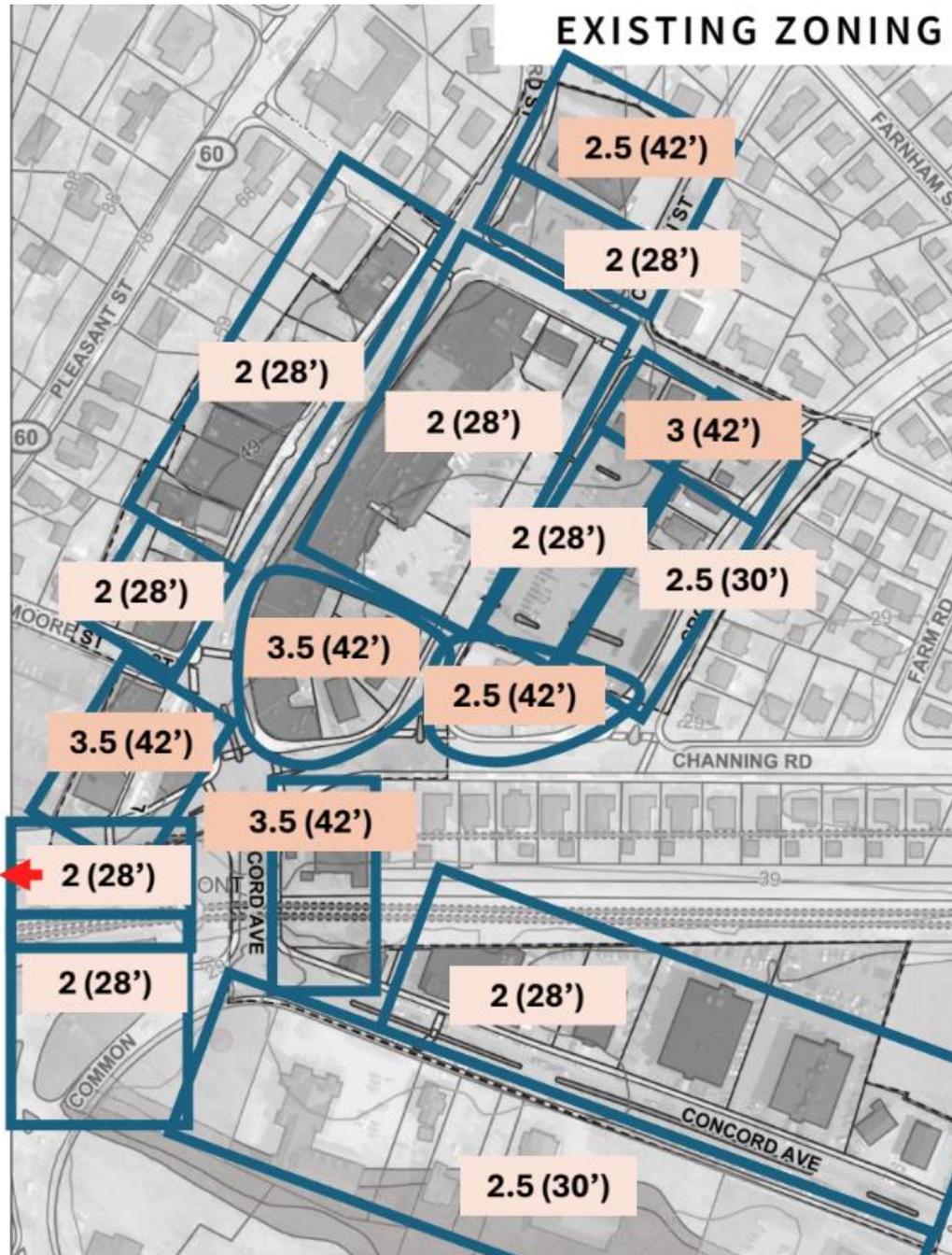
STORIES & FEET

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

4/5 (65')

PUBLIC BENEFIT PROVIDED

"AS OF RIGHT" HEIGHT



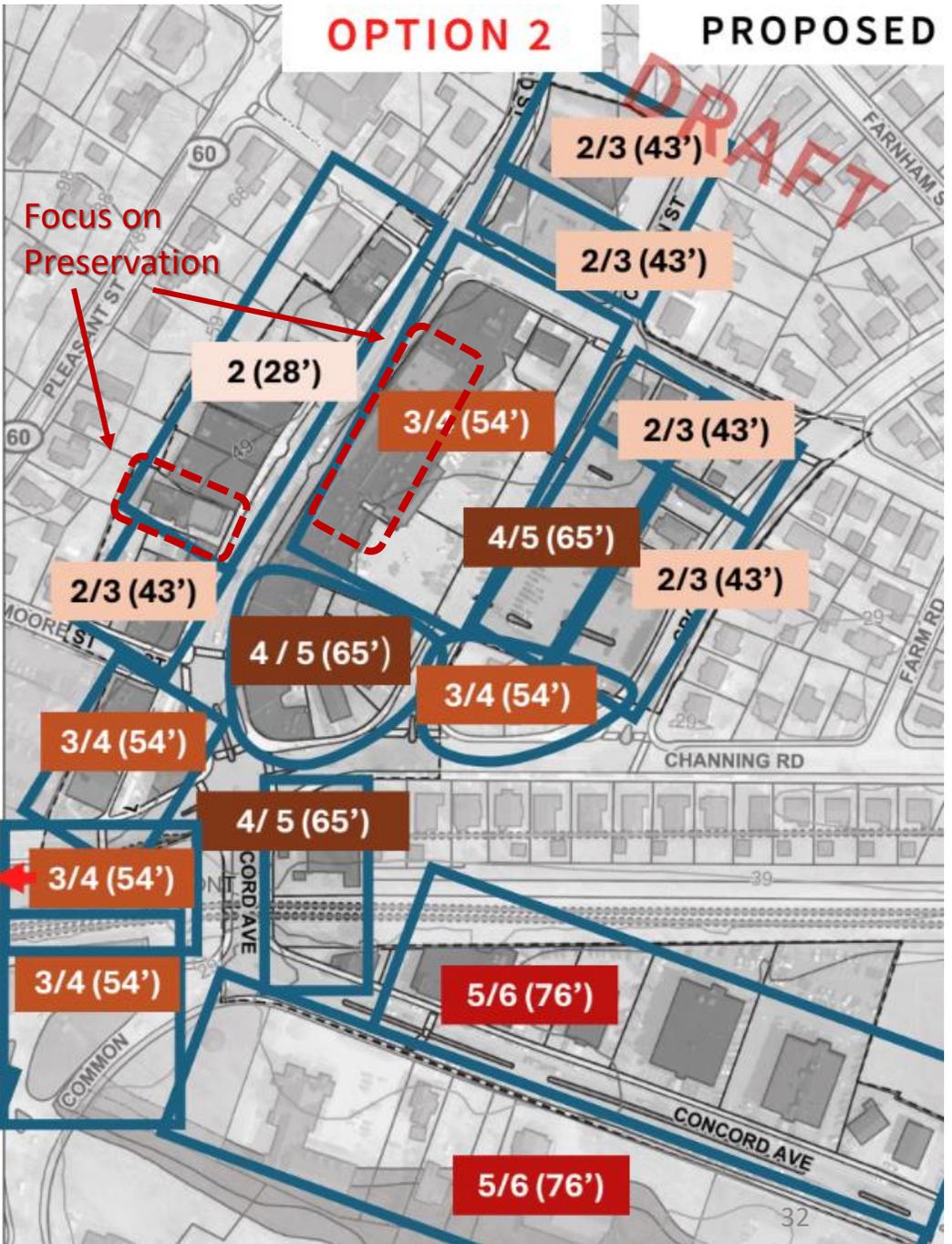
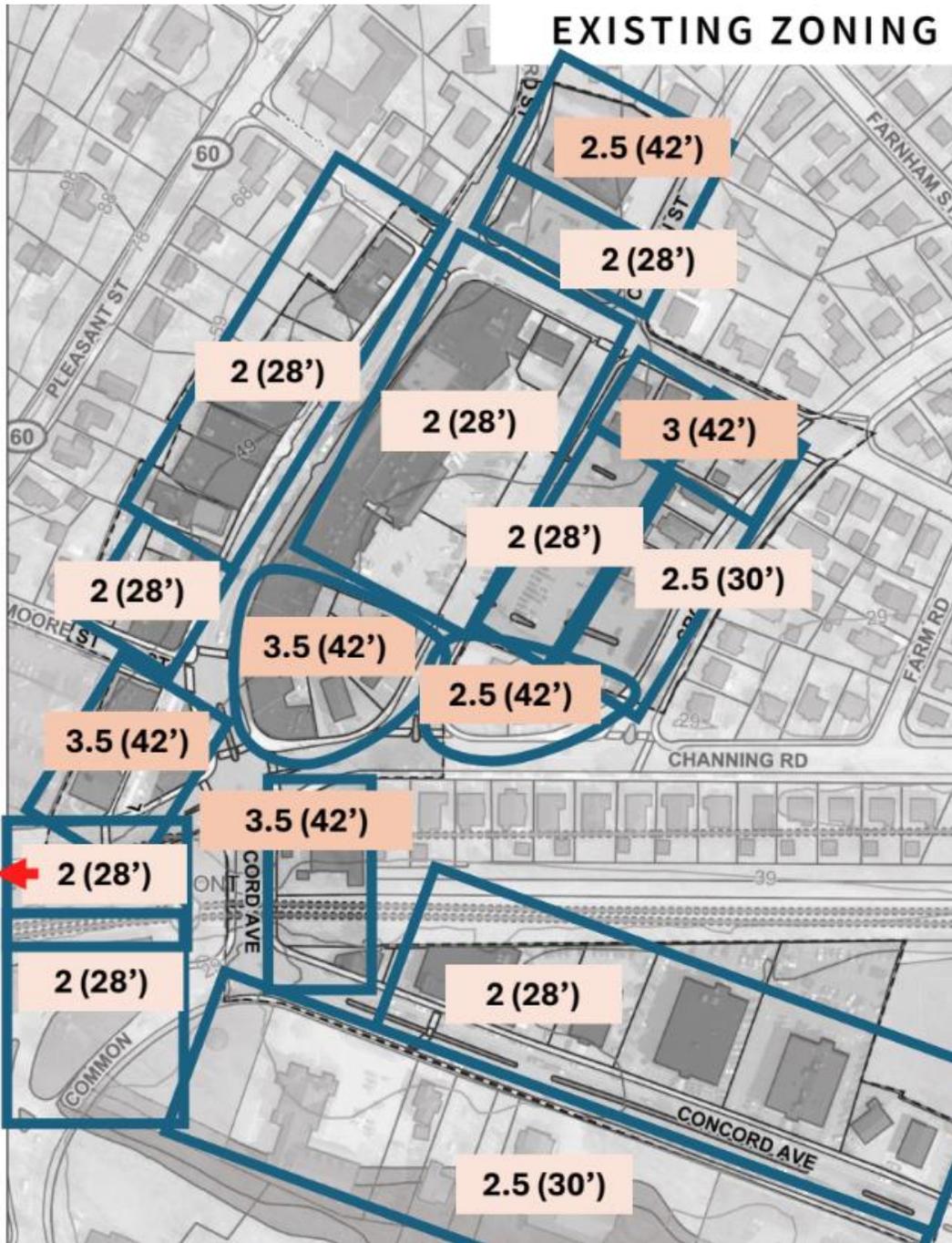
MAXIMUM HEIGHTS

STORIES & FEET

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

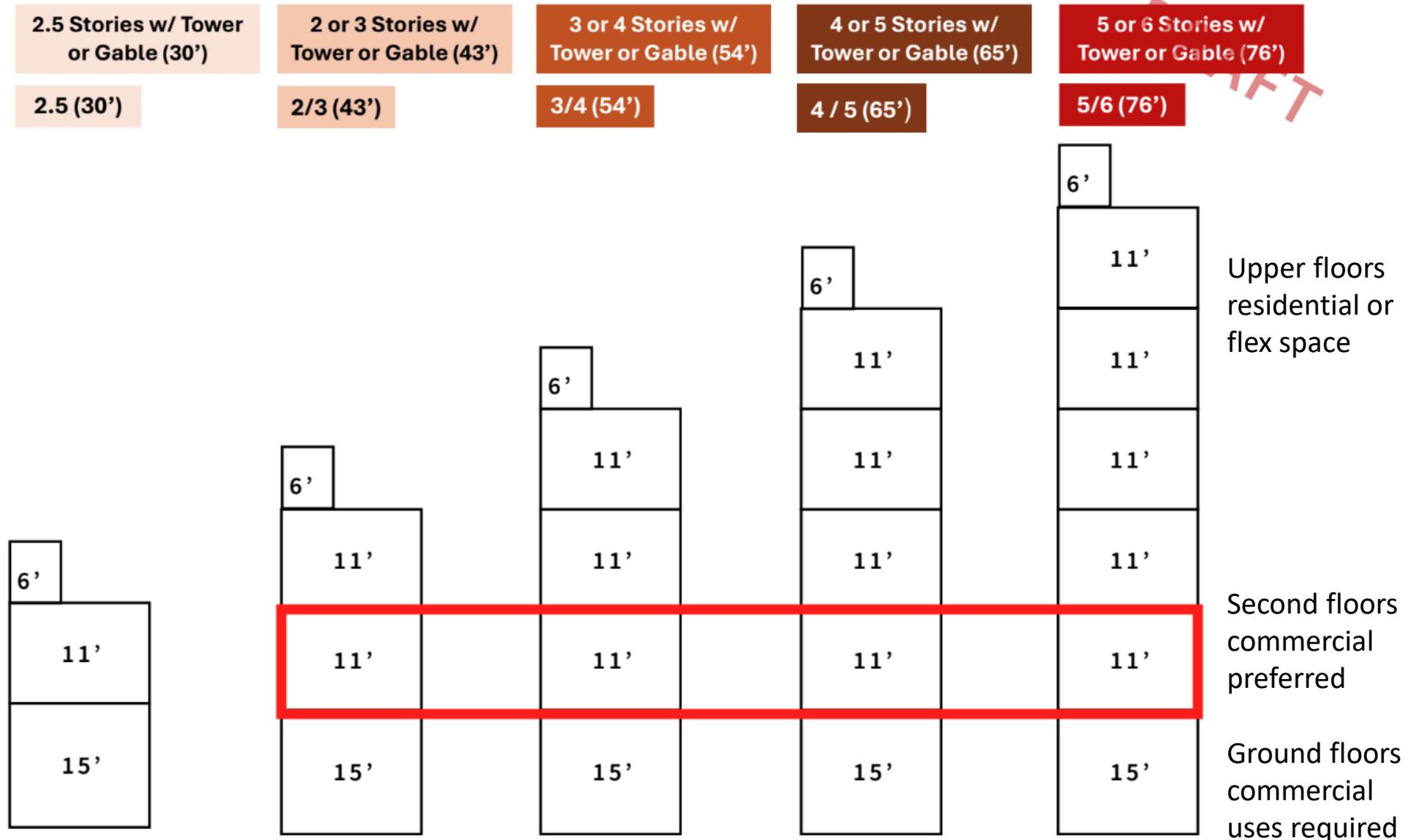
4/5 (65')
 PUBLIC BENEFIT PROVIDED

"AS OF RIGHT" HEIGHT



MAXIMUM HEIGHTS

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



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 and 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

Revised Height Analysis

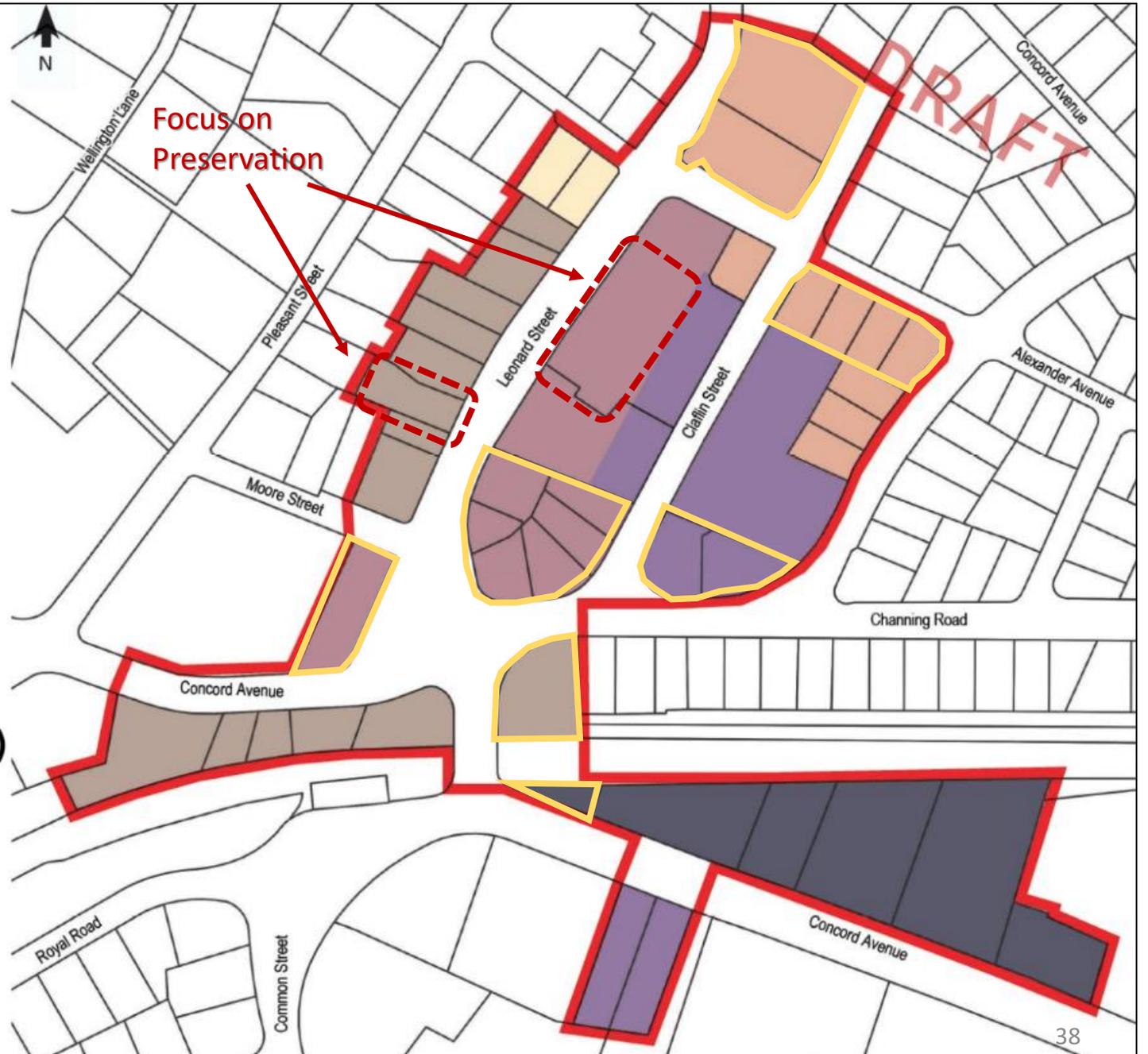
Revised Height Analysis

- Initial Height Analysis evaluated by staff
- Specific Comments Included:
 - Establish lower heights in some edge areas
 - Maintain a consistent 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.
- Review with Planning Board on 2/25/2025

REGULATING PLAN

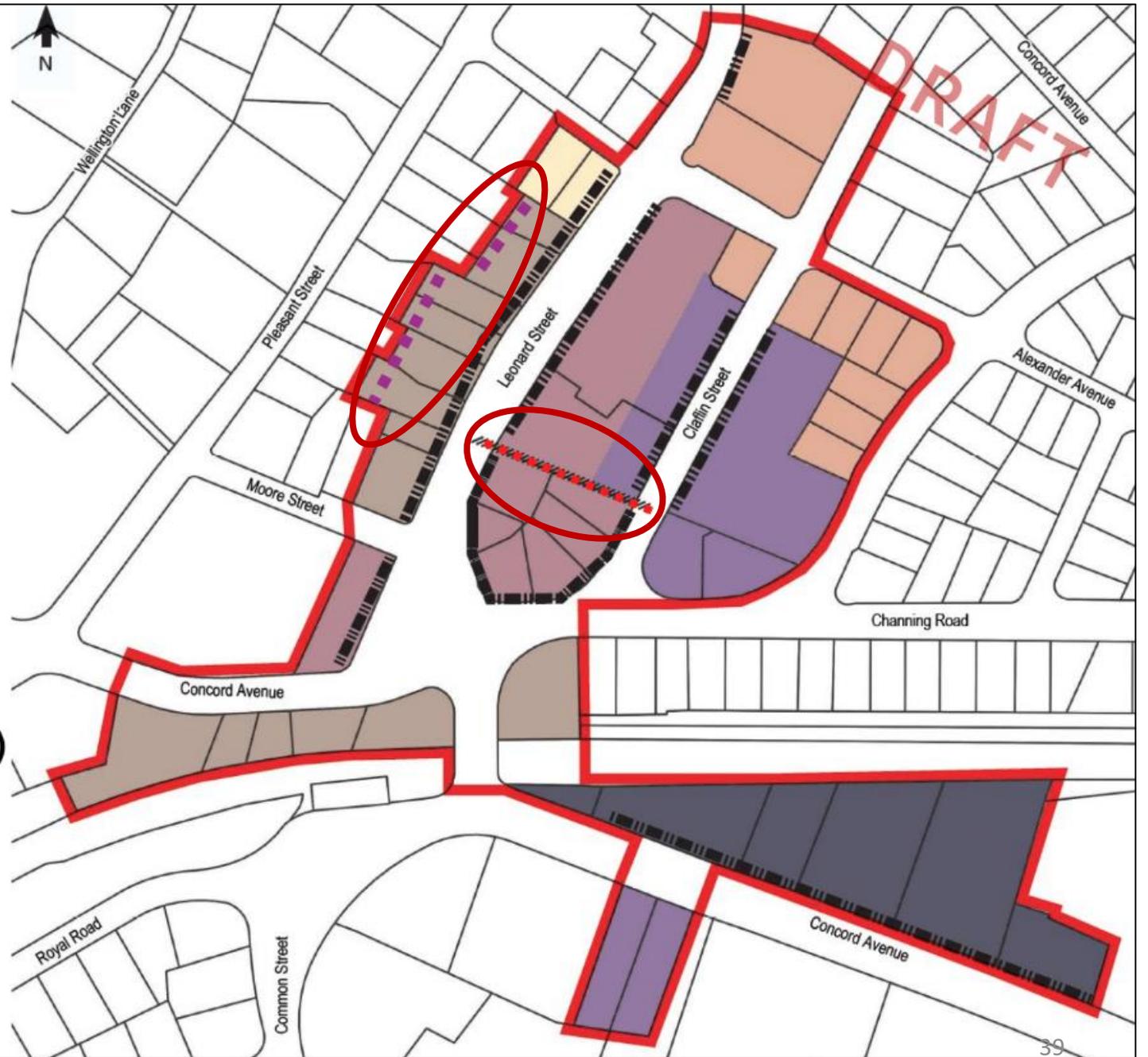
- Consultant team devised a first draft FBC Regulating Plan based on Town input.
- First draft FBC due last week of February 2025.
- Planning Board will evaluate FBC in March 2025

- 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

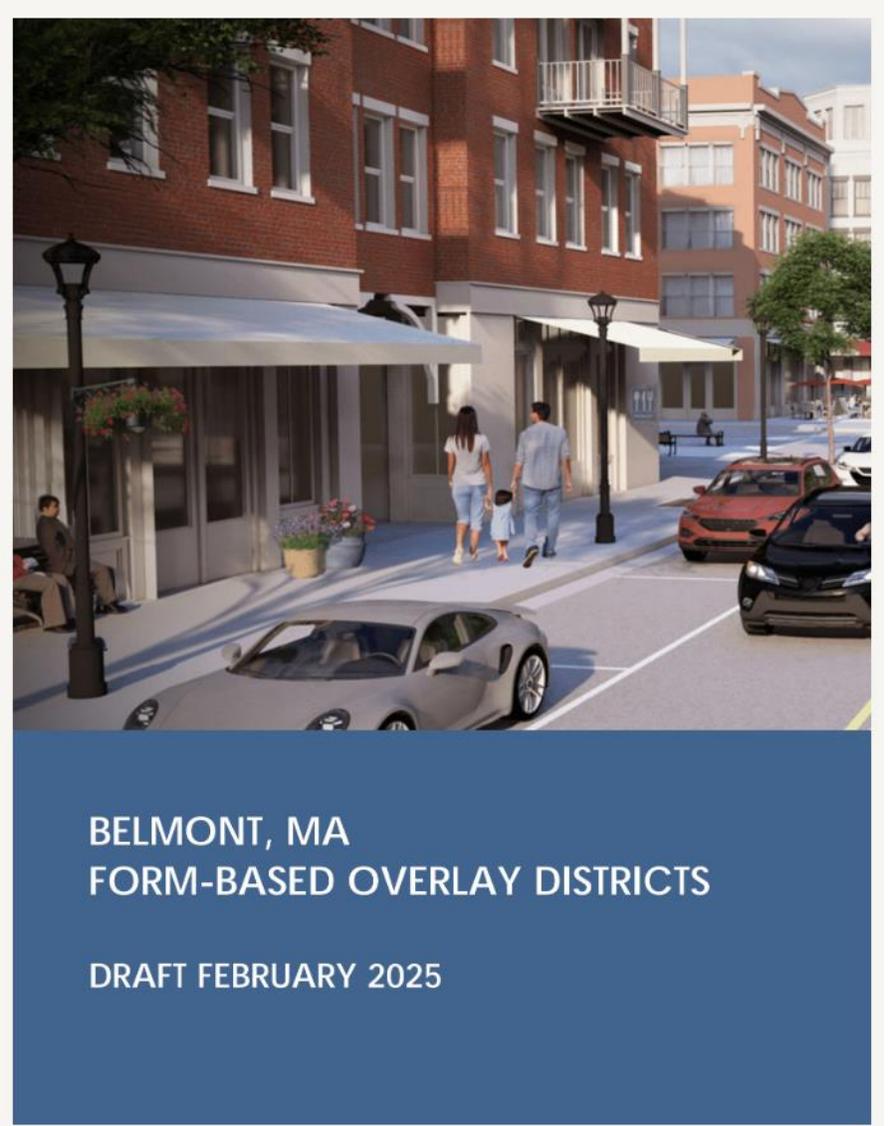
- Required Shopfront
- Arcade Connection
- Rear Accommodations
- FB1: Edge 1 (2 stories – 28')
- FB2: Edge 2 (2.5 stories – 37')
- FB3: General (2.5-3.5 stories – 48')
- FB4: Center (3-4 stories – 48')
- FB5: Core 1 (4-5 stories – 65')
- FB6: Core 2 (5-6 stories – 76')
- Form-Based Overlay Boundary



Other Key Issues

- **Traffic**
 - Consider One-Way Pairs
 - Consider Strategic Signalization
 - Consider Range of Other Traffic Calming Measures
- **Parking**
 - No Net Loss
- **Clafin Lot**
 - What Could Reasonably Fit Here?
 - Could Clafin Street Serve as a 2nd Main Street?
- **Building Height**
 - Reasonable for Feasibility and Revenue Generation
 - Limit for Meeting but not Exceeding “Reasonable Impacts”

First Draft By-Law



BELMONT, MA
FORM-BASED OVERLAY DISTRICTS

DRAFT FEBRUARY 2025

First Draft By-Law

- The first draft of the overlay district By-Law was received on February 25, 2025.
- It will have its first public vetting at the Planning Board meeting of March 11, 2025.
- Once the staff and Planning Board have made their initial comments and critiques, the consultant will develop a second draft that will be presented formally to the public in April.

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 Clafin 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.



FB1



FB2



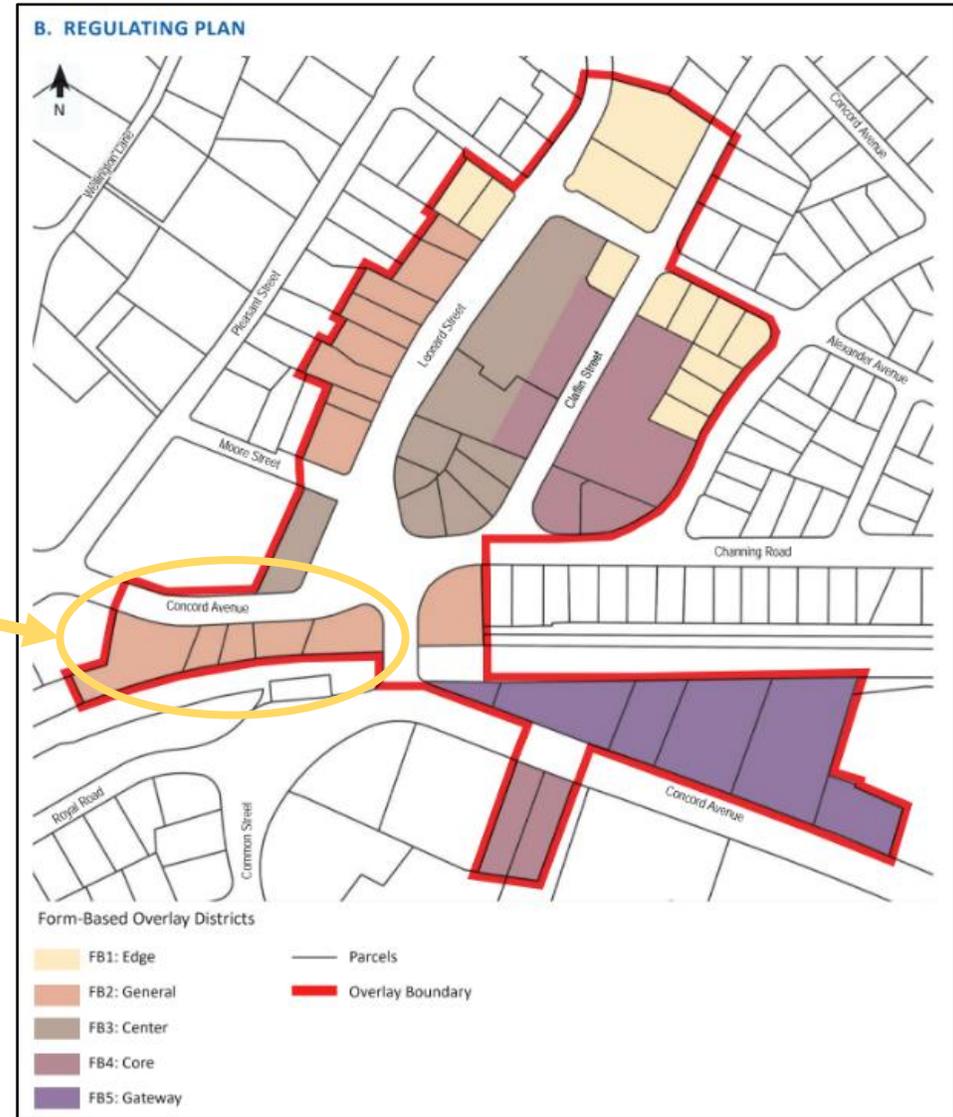
FB3



FB5

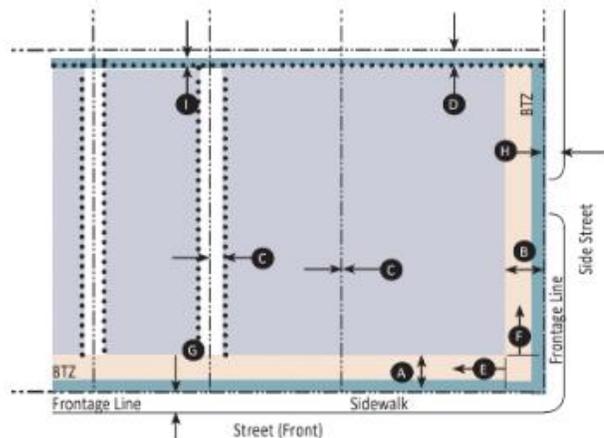


FB4



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

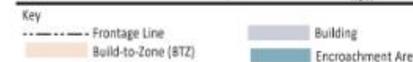
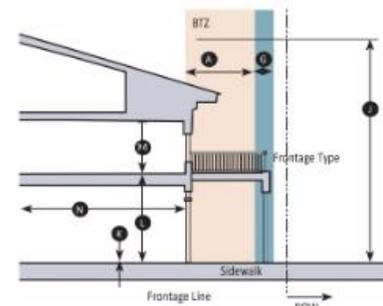
Building Façade within Build-to-Zone		
Front Street Frontage	40% min	F
Side Street Frontage	N/A	F
Lot Coverage (% maximum)	70% max	

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

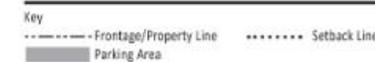
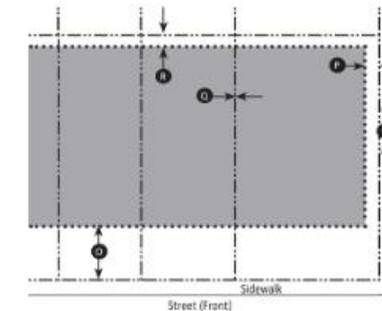
Height		
Main Building	2.5 stories	J
	48' max	K
Maximum Building Height with Public Benefit Incentive	3.5 stories	
Rear Accommodation Building Height within 50' of Lot Line Abutting R District	pitched roof preferred 2.5 stories / 41' max	
Ground Floor Elev. Above Sidewalk	6" max (commercial)	L
Ground 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

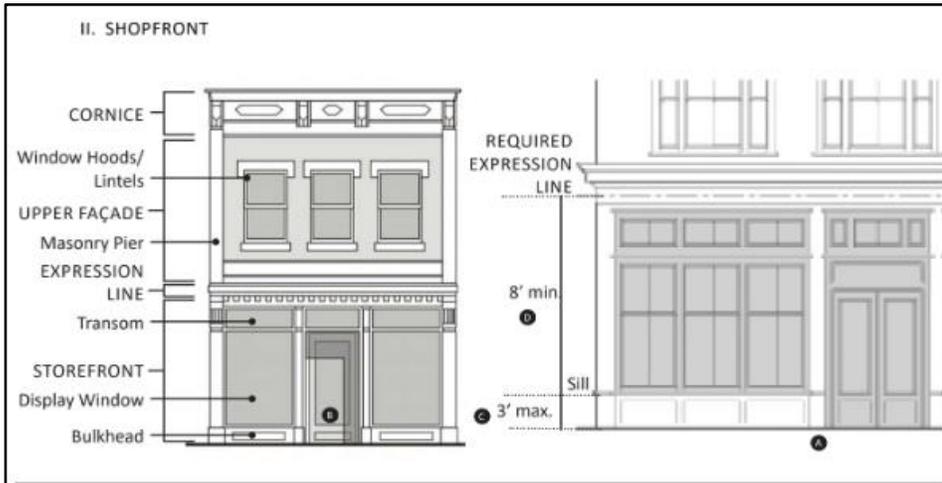


a. Parking Location (Distance from Property Line)

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.



FB5

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.	
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.