

Belmont 2050: Vision for a Thriving Future

Comprehensive Plan Public Engagement Plan

Overview

VHB prepared this Public Engagement Plan (PEP) to establish a process whereby the Comprehensive Plan Project Team will facilitate constructive dialogue within Belmont's diverse and dynamic community. This PEP leverages Belmont's unique community dynamics, integrating innovative outreach strategies and extensive community involvement to ensure every citizen has the opportunity to participate in the process.

VHB will perform digital and in-person engagement activities. For each touchpoint, VHB will review background materials and develop questions in advance, prepare speaking points and slide decks, facilitate dialogue, and record all input received.

VHB will track input in multiple ways to ensure stakeholder and public feedback is considered and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. During meetings, VHB will have a note-taker present to capture any stakeholder input and share meeting minutes following each meeting to demonstrate that the team has heard and recorded critical information.

VHB understands and emphasizes to all municipal clients the importance of involving diverse voices in the comprehensive planning process. Integrating diverse perspectives ensures that the development goals do not disproportionately benefit certain groups while neglecting others. For example, actively reaching out to underrepresented groups, including marginalized populations, youth, and seniors, enhances their participation and ensures that their unique needs are met. By encouraging input from Belmont residents from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, the goals and actions coming out of the comprehensive plan will lead to more equitable, sustainable, and socially cohesive outcomes. This inclusive and targeted outreach will be achieved by collaborating with organizations and institutions supporting vulnerable populations (for example, the Belmont Food Pantry, Belmont Housing Authority, Belmont Against Racism, Belmont Human Rights Commission, etc.), implementing a range of engagement strategies, and continuously integrating feedback into the plan. As a result, Belmont can create a comprehensive plan that reflects the needs and aspirations of its entire population.

In this document, blue italicized text highlights opportunities for the Town and Belmont Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to provide extra support. We encourage the Advisory Committee to review these items before the first public meeting. Please contact Julia Mintz (jmintz@vhb.com) with any questions or concerns.



Key Roles & Responsibilities

Suggested division of roles and responsibilities:

As the consultant, VHB will conduct background research, help identify stakeholders and Envoys, create materials for public engagement events, and write the comprehensive plan.

As the community lead, Town staff will identify key stakeholders and Envoys, manage the project webpage, share information about public engagement opportunities, and attend public workshops.

As the advisory partner, the Advisory Committee will identify key stakeholders and Envoys, share information about public engagement opportunities, attend pop-up events (1-2 people as opposed to whole Committee), and attend public workshops (ideally, whole Committee).

As voices for specific target populations, Community Envoys will share information to their core groups, organizations, or institutions; participate in a focus group; attend pop-up events (1-2 people); and attend public meetings (ideally, all Envoys).

These responsibilities may change through the process as needed to best support the creation of Belmont 2050: Vision for a Thriving Future.

Event	VHB	Town Staff	CPAC	Envoys
Kick Off Meeting	X	X	All	
Background Research	X			
Logo Creation	X	X	All	
Stakeholder Mapping	X	X	All	
Stakeholder Interviews	X			
Identify Community Envoys	X	X	All	
Community Envoys Focus Groups	X			All
Public Survey – Create Questions	X	X	All	
Public Survey – Share with Public	X	X	All	All
Online Engagement – Content Creation	X			
Online Engagement – Webpage Updates		X		
Public Workshop 1 – Outreach & Meeting	X	X	All	All
Pop-Up 1 – Event	X		1-2	1-2
Public Workshop 2 – Outreach & Meeting	X	X	All	All
Pop-Up 2 – Event	X		1-2	1-2
Public Workshop 3 – Outreach & Meeting	X	X	All	All

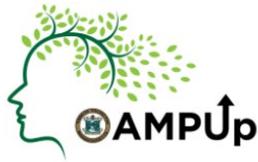
Breakdown of Engagement Opportunities

PROJECT BRANDING

Branding is critical in establishing a clear and recognizable identity for a comprehensive plan, helping to foster community engagement and public trust. A well-designed brand and logo can effectively communicate the plan's vision, objectives, and values, making it easier to unify stakeholders and gain support for implementation.

The logo should align with the established town brand while incorporating elements of flexibility and forward-thinking design. The logo will also establish a color palette for public outreach materials, presentations, and the final report.

The Town and Advisory Committee is expected to provide guidance and direction for the creation of the comprehensive plan logo. For previous master plans, VHB has either created a logo with the support of the Town and/or Committee, or the Town and/or Committee chooses to utilize schools or public institutions to host logo contests to incentivize involvement from kids or residents.



Arlington Master Plan Update (AMPUp) logo



Haverhill Master Plan logo



Andover Master Plan logo

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING (APRIL 2025)

Our first step will be to perform stakeholder mapping. This exercise, which will rely upon the local knowledge of the Advisory Committee, will enable us to identify specific individuals and groups within Belmont whose participation and input will be critical to diagnosing local conditions and shaping the Comprehensive Plan.

VHB will provide a Stakeholder Mapping template and work with the Town and the Advisory Committee to identify suitable stakeholders to participate in important comprehensive plan engagement activities. Stakeholders usually possess key knowledge around specific Town characteristics, institutions, or organizations.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WEBPAGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH (MAY 2025)

VHB will provide branding elements and content for a project webpage, which Town staff will set up on a Town-hosted website in alignment with a Town-provided template. The website will help drive the process forward and can also be used during implementation to track the status of each goal and action.

VHB will also support targeted social media outreach, creating social media tiles for key constituencies and providing direct outreach through channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and

X (formerly Twitter). Messages will include links to comment forms, updates on the process, and online surveys.

Other channels for public engagement and information will be identified with the support of the Advisory Committee, Select Board, businesses, and more. Ideas at the time of this document include chat groups and apps that are popular with different social groups.

VHB will also develop web-design components for the Comprehensive Plan, including cohesive social media tiles, branding elements, and content for a dedicated webpage to support these outreach efforts. The webpage will be an easy repository of all presentations, meeting notes, translations, public updates, and other key information.

VHB will collaborate with Town staff to publish information about the comprehensive planning process, including notifications about the town-wide survey and upcoming engagement opportunities, through appropriate channels. Examples of local media and organizations through which to disseminate information may include:

<i>Town Website:</i>	› <u>News Flash • Belmont, MA • CivicEngage</u>
<i>Newsletters:</i>	› <u>Belmont Public Schools Parent Newsletter</u> › <u>Belmont Public School Superintendent Update Newsletter</u> › <u>Newsletter - Belmont Public Library</u> › <u>Belmont Council on Aging - Belmont, Massachusetts My Community Online</u> › <u>Belmont Citizens Forum</u>
<i>Local Print/Digital Media:</i>	› <u>Belmont Media Center</u> › <u>The Belmontonian – Belmont's Independent Media Outlet Covering the 'Town of Homes'</u> › <u>The Belmont Voice - Independent, nonprofit news for Belmont, Mass.</u>
<i>Social Media:</i>	› <u>Belmont Massachusetts Parents Group Facebook</u> › <u>Belmont Community Group Facebook</u> › <u>Town of Belmont X Account</u> › <u>Belmont Journal Facebook</u> › <u>Belmont Council on Aging Facebook</u> › <u>Belmont Service Officer Facebook</u> › <u>Belmont Library Foundation Facebook</u> › <u>Belmont Cultural Council Facebook</u>
<i>Listserves:</i>	› <u>Next Door Listserv (need support from committee to find contact for Listserv)</u> › <u>Neighborhood-specific listservs (to be identified with support from the Advisory Committee and/or Select Board)</u>

VHB acknowledges that this is not a comprehensive list, and that additional or different communication channels may be used during the comprehensive planning process.

ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY (JUNE 2025)

VHB will facilitate an online survey to complement face-to-face dialogue using Esri's Survey123. The survey will present an efficient list of questions that will provide actionable data on public sentiment. VHB will share the link to the survey launched during Public Workshop #1. The Town can further publicize the survey by sharing the link online.

Based on Belmont's population size, a statistically significant sample group with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error is approximately 400 respondents. This target will help ensure that the survey results most accurately reflect community perspectives. The Town will aim to exceed this number by promoting the survey through multiple channels, including the Town's website, social media, email newsletters, community events, and local organizations.

VHB will collaborate with the Town and Community Envoys, with support from the Advisory Committee, to distribute information about the comprehensive planning process (including notifications about the town-wide survey and upcoming engagement opportunities) through relevant avenues.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #1: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES (MAY 2025)

In Public Workshop #1, we will foster transparency, partnership, and participation by introducing the Planning Team to the public, outlining the community-based process, and explaining what a Comprehensive Plan entails and how we will prepare it. Following the introductions, we will stage a fun and collaborative workshop with group and/or individual activities to examine Belmont's most pressing Issues and Opportunities. Community Envoys can play a role in this event, with the opportunity to hear directly from, and work with, community members at the beginning of the process.

In advance of the workshop, VHB will prepare an agenda, presentation materials, and interactive exercises. During the event, VHB will record all feedback in an accessible format. The Advisory Committee and Community Envoys are expected to attend this meeting and, ideally, bring at least three additional attendees to participate in the meeting, providing the Committee and VHB with valuable information to include as part of the existing conditions analysis.

POP-UP EVENT #1 (MAY 2025)

VHB and the Town will facilitate tabling or "Pop-Up" events at well-attended cultural or social gatherings to engage the public in the Comprehensive Plan process. The first Pop-Up will take place at Belmont Town Day on May 17, where VHB and Committee Members (as available) will host a table to share informational materials about the Comprehensive Plan, gather public input, and answer questions from community members.

VHB will work with the Town and the Advisory Committee to identify an appropriate event at which to conduct the Pop-Up. Staff attendance should include at least one VHB staffer, one Committee member, and one Community Envoy.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2: GOALS (OCTOBER 2025)

Public Workshop #2 will provide the opportunity for the Planning Team to present the draft Belmont Vision Statements, and associated Goals and Actions. This workshop will involve interactive stations, allowing participants to provide verbal and written feedback on the draft materials. It is anticipated that this session will prompt the Planning Team to make significant adjustments to the draft materials in response to community considerations.

In advance of the workshop, VHB will prepare an agenda, presentation materials, and interactive exercises. During the event, VHB will record all feedback in an accessible format. The Advisory Committee and Community Envoys are expected to attend this meeting and, ideally, bring at least three additional attendees to participate in the meeting, providing the Committee and VHB with valuable information to include as part of the existing conditions analysis.

POP-UP EVENT #2 (FALL 2025)

VHB and the Town will facilitate a second Pop-Up event at another community venue, such as the Belmont Media Center's Film Festival, a Belmont Gallery of Art exhibition, or the opening of the new public library (as of March, has a targeted open date of August 2025). This event will offer another opportunity for residents to learn about the Comprehensive Plan, ask questions, and provide input in an informal setting. Additionally, based on insights from the stakeholder mapping exercise, the Town and VHB may identify alternative or additional locations, such as public libraries, community centers, parks, or schools, to ensure broad and inclusive engagement.

VHB will work with the Town and the Advisory Committee to identify an appropriate event at which to conduct the Pop-Up. Staff attendance should include at least VHB staffer, one Committee member, and one Community Envoy.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #3: FINAL PRESENTATION (APRIL 2026)

The purpose of Public Workshop #3 is to present the final draft vision, goals, and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. An open house style will follow, wherein each Envoy Focus Group will break out to informally present and discuss various elements with the public. This interactive format encourages ongoing dialogue, ensuring the community's voice remains integral throughout the final stages.

In advance of the workshop, VHB will prepare an agenda, presentation materials, and interactive exercises. During the event, VHB will record all feedback in an accessible format. The Advisory Committee and Community Envoys are expected to attend this meeting and, ideally, bring at least three additional attendees to participate in the meeting, providing the Committee and VHB with valuable feedback to tailor and prioritize the plan's goals and actions.

COORDINATION WITH ENGAGEMENT ENVOYS

The Engagement Envoys will comprise a group of local stakeholders and community leaders established by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. This group will be critical in building

community awareness buy-in regarding the Comprehensive Plan and facilitating active community participation. The Envoys will assist in spreading awareness about the plan and available engagement opportunities through their individual networks and by interacting with residents at various public outreach events such as farmers' markets, ball games, and Belmont Town Day. Engagement Envoys will support community outreach tasks, participate in meetings as necessary, and continuously advocate for the project within the community.

VHB will coordinate with the Engagement Envoys with respect to their role in the process regarding community engagement workshops and events.

Opportunities to Engage Belmont's Different Communities

ALL/GENERAL

- › [Belmont Recreation](#) (19 Moore Street): Organizes and oversees public recreation programming at parks and public institutions. One event that we could consider doing a pop-up at is the [2025 Summer Movie Series](#) (at Town Field).
- › [Belmont Public Library](#) (19 Moore Street): The Library hosts a variety of events that the team could attend for pop-up events. Here is the [event calendar](#). Here is their [newsletter](#).

ASIAN-PACIFIC COMMUNITY

- › [Belmont Pan-Asian Coalition \(BPAC\)](#): Works to unite the Asian community through education, advocacy, and engagement.
- › [Belmont Chinese-American Association \(BCAA\)](#): Nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve the cultural heritage, and to promote participation of Chinese Americans in the cultural and civic life in Belmont.
- › Asian-owned restaurants and businesses such as Shine's Fresh Asian, Patou Thai, and Gen Sushito.

HISPANIC & LATINO COMMUNITY

- › [Latinos for Education](#): A Belmont-based national organization focused on educational advocacy for Latinos.
- › [Latinos Unidos en Massachusetts \(LUMA\)](#): Located in Everett, this group provides legal and social services to immigrants.
- › [Mount Hope Christian Church](#) (51 Lexington St): Spanish-language services and serves as a hub for Hispanic residents.
- › [Belmont-Watertown United Methodist Church](#) (421 Common St): serves a diverse congregation, including Hispanic families.

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

- › [New England Justice for Our Neighbors](#) (421 Common Street): Nonprofit organization that provides free, expert legal aid to Massachusetts immigrants seeking humanitarian-based visas. Located at 421 Common Street. JFON has an active newsletter: [Newsletters – NEJFON](#).

LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY

- › [Belmont Food Pantry](#) (within the Town Hall): volunteer-run nonprofit organization open certain days of the month.
- › [Belmont Housing Authority](#) (59 Pearson Road): Manages a portfolio of 262 state aided public housing units of conventional housing which provides housing assistance for low-income families, veterans, elderly and disabled.

POPULATIONS WITH DISABILITIES

- › [Disability Access Commission](#) (Town Hall): Belmont Disability Access Commission is a body of volunteers appointed by the Select Board. The Commission supports the rights of all Belmont citizens, of all ages and with the full range of all abilities and disabilities.

INCLUSION-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS/COMMISSIONS

- › [Belmont Against Racism](#) (PO Box 649): Community-action, all-volunteer organization addressing issues of racism. Belmont Against Racism has many partner programs (frequently collaborates with the Belmont Human Rights Commission) and events (like [District-Wide Family Bowling](#) and a [Book Group](#)).
- › [Belmont LGBTQ+ Alliance](#): A part of Belmont Against Racism, the LGBTQ+ is devoted to addressing issues faced by all members of the LGBTQ+ community in Belmont. They have a mailing list [here](#). They have a list of events [here](#).
- › [Belmont Human Rights Commission](#) (Town Hall): The Commission is charged with addressing discrimination, serve as a public resource for residents, increase awareness of issues related to diversity and discrimination, and more.

OLDER ADULTS

- › [Council on Aging](#) (266 Beech Street): The COA advocates on behalf of older adults in Belmont. They provide transportation services, nutrition services, social services, events, and they have a [monthly newsletter](#). They're located at the [Beech Street Center](#). [Events/programs](#) include a book club, pickleball, computer help, lunches, bingo, and movie matinees.

OTHER CULTURAL CENTERS/ORGANIZATIONS

- › [Belmont World Film](#): Nonprofit corporation that screens top films followed by discussions led by expert speakers. Events are accompanied by cultural performances and international food experiences. The [International Film Series](#) focuses on Pride and World Refugee Awareness Month on Mondays June 2, 9, and 16, 2025.
- › [Belmont Cultural Council](#) (Town Hall): The Cultural Council is a permanent committee appointed by the Select Board and is part of a network of regional cultural councils.

STUDENT & PARENT COMMUNITY

- › [Belmont Public Schools](#): Can use Listserv, parent newsletters, pop-ups at games or events to reach students, parents, and faculty.
- › [Belmont High School Parent Teacher Student Organization \(PTSO\)](#): Volunteer-run organization comprised of parents, teachers, students and staff dedicated to improving

the educational experience of all students at Belmont High School. The PTSO has social media and many [programs/events](#).

- › **[Foundation for Belmont Education \(FBE\)](#)**: Non-profit organization run by volunteers who are dedicated to improving educational opportunities for Belmont's students and teachers. A notable fall event is the [Spooktacular Halloween Run & Fun](#), in October.
- › **[Belmont Teen Committee](#)** (Homer Municipal Building): Program designed to provide 6th-8th graders with an opportunity to lead, plan and serve the Belmont youth through a variety of fun activities.

VETERANS

- › **[Veterans Services Officer](#)** (19 Moore Street, 2nd Floor): The Department of Veterans Services advocates for veterans and supports financial and/or medical needs. The VSO is Bob Upton.