

Belmont Master Plan

A Community's Master Plan serves several purposes. Primarily the document provides direction and insight into the community's desires and needs as they relate to future development. It meets the administrative needs of Town Officials as well as the statutory requirements of NH RSA 674:2. It provides guidance to officials, property owners and developers as they consider the use of property and future of the community.

The Belmont Planning Board initiated an update of the 1992 Master Plan in the summer of 2000. Phase One, completed in 2002, includes updates of 7 existing chapters and the addition of 3 new chapters recommended by NH RSA 674:2.

Vision (*new*)
Community Facilities
Conservation & Preservation
of Natural Resources

Construction Materials (*new*)
Housing
Land Use
Recreation

Transportation
Utility & Public Services
Implementation (*new*)

For this project, the Planning Board wanted not only significant citizen involvement, but intended that the plan be a direct product of that involvement. They extended a town-wide invitation for interested parties. As a result, more than 40 community volunteers stepped forward to complete Phase One. The team consisted of adults, school children, retired and employed persons, business owners, long-term and new residents, people who had previously volunteered in community efforts such as prior master plans and the Belmont Civic Profile, and those who had never participated in a community project. Subcommittees began meeting in May of 2001, and by March of 2002, a report on volunteer hours contributed to date indicated that over 5,500 hours, at a volunteer dollar equivalency of \$78,000 had already been invested in the Plan update¹.

Communication was important to a successful project and many forms were used. A web site, www.belmontnh.org/masterplan1.htm was developed and a special e-mail address, views@belmontnh.org, was prominently advertised throughout the process for input specific to the Master Plan. Printed information was distributed through the use of local newspapers. The Belmont Better Times, mailed directly to over 4,000 Belmont addresses, carried pages of Master Plan information and questionnaires. The local access cable channel broadcast the summer community meeting and invitations, handouts and questionnaires were available at the Town Hall, Post Office and Belmont Mill offices. Master Plan updates were presented at the Belmont Senior Center and at the 2001 and 2002 Town Meetings. Charts and maps were developed and displayed at Master Plan meetings, town and community meetings and other gatherings. Information was mailed to officials, employees, civic, fraternal and neighborhood organizations, businesses, owners of large land areas, new property owners, civic leaders, and schools.

Two community meetings were held, November of 2001 and June of 2002, to inform and educate the public on the purpose and need for a master plan and to encourage input to the subcommittees determining the direction of their efforts. The meetings provided citizens with an overview of the process, the accomplishments to-date and the upcoming schedule of Master Plan development. Residents were invited to provide verbal and/or written input through informal discussions with subcommittee members and the submission of printed surveys containing specific questions on key Master Plan issues. This document provides a summary of the 2002 Master Plan findings.

¹ The Independent Sector – Basis 2001 dollar value per volunteer hour of \$16.05

Implementation

As a Master Plan is, indeed, a plan to live by, the Community must commit to follow through with the long-range action program necessary to implement the Vision. However, it is also true that the implementation plan is based on assumptions and data from a snapshot in time. Change is unavoidable. Strategies should be prioritized to provide adequate time and opportunity to fulfill some of the more long-term efforts.

The Plan includes a specific list of actions, time frames, responsibility allocation, land development regulations to be adopted, and procedures that may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of each section of the plan. This action schedule should be reviewed on an annual basis, and adjustments made in response to changes that occur in scheduling, opportunity, and completion of identified strategies.

Implementation of these strategies must occur in a manner that enhances the community's ability to attain the goals and objectives identified in the plan. A logical sequence of actions acknowledges the needs of the community, impacts on funding, staffing and infrastructure levels, and is flexible enough to adjust to unexpected circumstances, opportunities or delays. Many of the strategies require the cooperative effort of several individuals or groups for completion.

Future

Engaging and sustaining the interest and commitment of the community will result in successful direction of its future. In addition to the specific strategies included in the Plan's implementation schedule, the following will assist in continuing to meet the varying needs of the community.

Ongoing/Annual

Encourage alternative funding and volunteer input
Investigate access design alternatives and trail development
Balance man-made and natural
Coordinate regional issues
Encourage best management practices
Encourage cluster lot design
Enforce existing regulations
Maintain gateways

Preserve open space
Promote compatibility of uses
Promote recreational uses
Retain rural character
Review ordinances and regulations
Update studies
Utilize all available tools in making land use decisions

Other current initiatives of the Land Use Boards and Commissions include:

Community Street Map
Community Updates in Local Publications
Data Development and Reporting
Public Health Issues
Property Record Development

Community Business List
Land Use Web Site
Transportation Related Projects
Land Use Guidance Processes
Community Brochure

As well strategy implementation, Phase Two of the Master Plan project, scheduled to begin in 2003, is anticipated to include an update of the existing Economic Development Chapter and the addition of five new chapters recommended by the Statute. Upcoming chapters include Community Design, Cultural and Historic Preservation, Natural Hazard, Neighborhood Plan and Regional Concerns. Community involvement will again be a primary focus of future updates.

Implementation Schedule Summary of Strategies

2003

Community Facilities

- Facility needs assessment
- Facility management plans

Earth Excavation

- Evaluate & amend regulations
- Inventory and map

Economic Development

- Cost of community services study
- Complete Master Plan chapter
- Promote economic development commission processes

Enforcement

- Cure violations
- Evaluate fine system

Housing

- Evaluate housing regulations
- Housing needs assessment
- Inventory/map residential uses

Neighborhood Plan

- Complete Master Plan chapter
- Focus on Village area development

Recreation Lands/Uses

- Identify, inventory and map

Recycling

- Support community recycling efforts

Water/Aquifer

- Map
- Regulate to protect

2004

Agriculture

- Incentives to protect
- Inventory and map
- Regulate to protect
- Resource assistance

Building

- Incentives for visitable
- Regulate for aesthetics and Universal Design

Conservation & Preservation

- Create conservation districts
- ID resources on Town-owned and other lands and adjacent to highways
- Incentives to maintain unfragmented lands
- Open Space Committee
- Promote “green” development

Growth

- Complete Master Plan Chapter
- Coordinate transportation needs
- Impact fees
- Limit bldg permits

Logging

- Best management practices

Regional

- Complete Master Plan chapter
- Coordinate transportation needs

Transportation

- Identify for Scenic status
- Increase minimum road standards
- Inventory
- Park & Ride
- Plan bridge repairs/maintenance

Transportation (cont.)

- Protect and provide wildlife corridors
- Provide for alternative transportation modes
- Require sidewalks
- Strengthen access management
- Subsidized transportation
- Trails
- Transportation Improvement Plan

Wildlife

- Identify and develop best management practices
- Incentives to protect habitat and unfragmented lands
- Protect corridors and links
- Regulate to increase buffers
- Regulate to protect habitat
- Resource assistance

2005

Community Design

- Complete Master Plan chapter
- Encourage mixed-use
- Landscaping
- Promote nodal design
- Regulate for aesthetics
- Regulate location for non-residential
- Regulate signage

Community Design (cont.)

- Rural neighborhood design standards
- Viewshed analysis and protection

Historical/Heritage/Cemetery

- Fairgrounds as Heritage site
- Heritage Commission
- Identify and Protect significant places
- Regulate for family burial plots

Preservation/Town

- Develop conservation Plan
- Educate stakeholders on natural and other resource conservation
- Seek alternative funding
- Seek conservation easements and lands

Belmont Planning Board Master Plan 2002

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Vision

The Town of Belmont brought together citizens from all walks of life with a common goal to develop a guiding document to plan for its future while protecting its past. The Town recognizes its potential for growth and is committed to the protection of its unique natural resources, history and recreational opportunities. This plan will enhance the Town's ability to direct growth to benefit the community while balancing the needs of present and future generations.

Belmont will continue to grow with or without the community's guidance and active involvement in the administration of the Town and School District. This Master Plan advises those in roles of leadership and responsibility to administer the goals that will benefit the residents and advance the following visions:

- Guide the growth of residential and non-residential development in order to provide adequate facilities for all residents while minimizing the impacts on our natural resources and providing long term land use planning
- Preserve and protect the rural quality of life including natural, agricultural and historic features
- Develop the Village Area into a unique and attractive combination of residential, commercial, historical and recreational uses to serve as a focal point for the Town
- Clearly identify, catalog, protect and preserve the natural, man-made and historical resources throughout the Town
- Advocate the adequacy, safety and aesthetic appeal of existing and planned housing, community facilities and transportation options to address the needs of all citizens
- Encourage economic development that is compatible with the goals of rural character and natural resource preservation
- Maintain, enhance, expand and improve accessibility to the wide range of recreational choices in our community
- Encourage and enlist the participation of Belmont citizens in community activities and local government involving youth, newcomers and seniors

Master Plan Goals

The following Goals enhance the Town's ability to manage growth while balancing the needs of present and future generations.

Community Facilities

1. Evaluate and balance over time the financial impact of community facilities and services.
2. Provide for expanded services and facilities to meet the demand of growth within the Community.
3. Develop regulations to mitigate the impact of new development on existing services and community facilities.
4. Provide an education for every child from pre-school through grade 12 that enables each to become a productive and involved citizen.
5. Assure adequate health care for all citizens.

Conservation & Preservation of Natural Resources

1. Incorporate annual studies and mapping of wildlife habitat and travel corridors throughout the town.
2. Preserve the availability and quality of Belmont's recreational opportunities through increased conservation planning and initiatives.
3. Preserve natural features of Belmont and ensure that they are not adversely affected by future development.
4. Encourage conservation through public/landowners education.
5. Protect, conserve and preserve the remote portions of Belmont from excessive development pressures and/or activities that would be detrimental to the unique environmental characteristics and qualities of these areas and that would detract from the peaceful enjoyment and tranquility they afford local residents.
6. Identify and consider ordinances or other mechanisms for protecting key scenic community vistas, views and viewsheds.
7. Establish proactive administrative goals to research, monitor and apply for established, available funding opportunities (state, federal and foundation sources).
8. Seek guidance from the Center for Land Conservation Assistance on benefits of establishing and funding a dedicated Belmont Conservation Community Trust Fund or partnering with other organizations.
9. Identify historic buildings and sites and areas of special importance in Belmont.
10. Protect farmland resources and heritage as an integral part of Town rural character.

Construction Materials

1. Determine the present state of extraction operations in the Town.
2. Ensure appropriate closure of obsolete or depleted sites.
3. Ensure that future construction material extraction operations are compatible with planned land uses, applicable regulations, community values, and transportation infrastructure.

Housing

1. To provide guiding principles and strategies for managing present and future housing needs. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.

2. Establish architectural housing design standards in accordance with the characteristics of the various neighborhood areas of Belmont.
3. Increase revenues to offset costs associated with Land Use Department services.

Land Use

1. Preserve and protect the rural qualities
2. Protect our agricultural land because it provides us with the very essence of rural character, open space, woodlots, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat and the ability to maintain some self-sufficiency to feed ourselves. All of this requires a minimal demand on community resources, but is vital to our economy.
3. Preserve and protect our water resources
4. Preserve and protect our natural resources
5. Guide residential development to meet the overall housing needs of various income groups, while retaining open space to preserve the rural character.
6. Guide and support non-residential development.
7. Protect transportation corridors from encroachment of structures, congestion and blight
8. Recommend land use chapter be reviewed annually to keep pace with development.

Recreation

1. Acknowledge the need to create new recreational opportunities for all ages while maintaining existing recreation throughout parts of Town.
2. Determine the need for, and the responsibilities of, a Parks and Recreation Department.
3. Establish, create, expand, and map a series of loop trails to link Town lands, scenic and wildlife areas, restaurants, and sleeping facilities throughout the Town.
4. Enhance and create recreational opportunities for adults and families through the use of the Shaker Regional School District Facilities.

Transportation

1. Improve, maintain, and inventory existing roads, streets, bridges, and culverts.
2. Develop a funding plan.
3. Maintain, enhance and manage a transportation infrastructure that facilitates, encourages and supports public transit and non-motorized travel to reduce energy consumption, preserve air quality, and reduce pollution.
4. Promote use of technology and tools available now and in the future to provide and ensure safe mobility.
5. Participate in transportation discussions with residents, Town, County, Regional, State, and Federal officials.
6. Provide new road construction guidelines using access management principals and flexible road standards.
7. Coordinate transportation planning with conservation and preservation goals.
8. Establish a gateway enhancement initiative to improve the image of Belmont.

Utilities and Public Services

Electric Utility

1. Assure that the needs of the users are being met and the changes to the Public Utility laws are not negatively impacting the residents and businesses of the Town of Belmont.

2. Assure that to the greatest possible extent all utility lines are installed underground in accordance with the ordinances of the Town.

Water Utility

1. In cooperation with the Fire Department, conduct a comprehensive study of water demand for firefighting needs.
2. Address the adequacy of water quality. Are the minimum NH DES standards adequate or should a higher standard be set?
3. Plan ahead for the expansion of the water utility outside of the Village area. This will be on a pay as you go basis with payment made by the users from the new areas and successful applications for grant monies.
4. Work with the State of New Hampshire and the local towns sharing the same aquifer to insure its future purity. This may require the elimination of certain residential, commercial or industrial expansion in the areas of the aquifer. This study commenced in mid-2002 and the results should be available in 2003.

Sewer Utility

1. Extend as required the sewer mains to assure that the quality of water in the lakes and the aquifer are not compromised.
2. Require that upon any extension of the sewer line all nearby residents and business be required to hook-up.
3. Continue the policy of submitting grant applications for the expansion of the system. This will help keep the cost to the user at the lowest possible level.

Gas Supply (Natural & Bottled)

1. Coordinate the expansion of this utility with the goals of the Town to insure that natural gas will be where it will be needed to best benefit the Town. Expansion of this utility is directly related to the expansion of the Town.
2. Assure that all expansion of the bottled gas utility and usage is in accordance with the applicable building codes and safety measures.

Telecommunication Utility

1. Since this will be the utility that will most likely have the greatest change in the near future, special attention must be paid to assure that the Town's ordinances are kept current with these changes.
2. The placement of telecommunication/cellular towers will be one of the most sensitive issues to face the Town in the near future. The placement must be unobtrusive yet technically located to minimize the number of towers. Towers should first be located on public property and out of the residential/rural areas where possible. Co-locating users will help the town minimize the total number of towers, which must be a major goal of the Town. Locating tower on the sides of Town buildings, existing towers and water tanks will also aid in reaching this goal.
3. With the expansion of the cellular type of communication, there will hopefully be a reduction in the overhead wires and applicable telephone poles. This will be a noticeable improvement in the visual impact on the community.

Cable and Satellite Communication Utility

1. This area will experience the greatest growth in the next decade. Included is the Internet, which is fast becoming the "Way" to communicate, research and spend leisure time. Therefore, review of this utility will also require overview to assure the proper handling of the services to all the residents of the Town.