

# OUR BELMONT

## COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN



Submitted  
September 2025



**PREPARED FOR**  
City of Belmont, North Carolina

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**SPECIAL THANKS**  
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**OUR BELMONT**  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
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**OUR BELMONT**  
WEAVING OUR COMMUNITY'S  
FUTURE, ONE THREAD AT A TIME

**BELMONT**  
COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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**Submitted**  
July 2025



# DEDICATION

Our Belmont outlines a visionary plan for Belmont, aimed to the honor those who laid the foundation for our community's success. Since the adoption of the 2018 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, three instrumental planning leaders and champions who helped to shape what Belmont is today are no longer with us: Alex Robinson, Richard Turner, and Charles "Charlie" Martin. Within each of their respective roles, these men served as champions for the Belmont community and worked tirelessly to make the city the best it could be. This comprehensive plan update seeks to carry their legacy forward – celebrating our heritage while embracing new opportunities to shape our future.



William Alexander "Alex" Robinson (July 25, 1954 – June 30, 2024) dedicated the better part of his long career to the City of Belmont, providing 25 years of service as an employee. Prior to becoming a staff member, Alex served as an active member of the Belmont Planning and Zoning Board, where he assisted with the adoption of the city's visionary form-based code in 1995. Much of Alex's work was done behind the scenes, but that work was key to Belmont's success. While on staff, he assisted with the development of the city's first comprehensive land use plan in 2007, the subsequent land development code update in 2008, and the 2018 Comprehensive Plan update. Alex was also instrumental in the initial stages of this plan update prior to his passing. Alex was best known for his extensive historic and institutional knowledge of all things Belmont, serving as an incredible asset not only to the planning department, but to members of the entire community.



Richard Conrad Turner (June 26, 1962 – July 31, 2024) faithfully served the citizens of Belmont for more than two decades, serving two terms on the Belmont Planning and Zoning Board and two terms on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board before beginning his political career. He was elected to City Council in 2013 and served nine years as a council member before being elected as Mayor in 2023, a role he was honored to serve until his passing. His unwavering dedication was evident in his constant presence at civic events, in addition to his participation for many years on other various boards and committees. He advocated and made notable progress in transportation initiatives and sustainable growth. Throughout his tenure, he worked tirelessly to make Belmont an ideal place to live, work, and raise a family.



Charles "Charlie" Reid Martin (September 24, 1943 – July 1, 2025) represented the City of Belmont as an elected official for over two decades. He began as a council member in 2001, serving for twelve years prior to being elected as Mayor in 2013. Charlie represented Belmont as Mayor until his retirement in 2023, serving with humility and dedication. He also served on several local civic boards over the years. His leadership helped transform Belmont into one of North Carolina's most vibrant small towns. In addition to his accomplishments, Charlie was the voice of South Point High School football for many years, and a passionate coach who led Babe Ruth League baseball teams to two state championships. He also founded Belmont's first youth soccer program in 1976, coaching for 24 years. His lifelong efforts were recognized in 2025 when Governor Josh Stein awarded him the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, North Carolina's highest civilian honor.



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# 01 INTRODUCTION

As a unique community with its own aspirations and values, Belmont deserves its own plan for the future. Answering that call is the goal of this comprehensive plan; to turn wide-ranging community feedback into an actionable guiding document that shepherds this unique place. Belmont’s first comprehensive plan was adopted in 2007 and was later updated in 2018. Following factors such as the pandemic, changes to state legislation, and heightened regional growth, Belmont, Gaston County, North Carolina, and even the world have changed a great deal since then.

This introductory section outlines why the City of Belmont has a comprehensive plan in the first place, why it’s being updated now, what to expect when reading this document, how community feedback was collected, and how a comprehensive plan impacts the day-to-day lives of Belmont residents.



*This icon represents “Introduction” content.*

“Once a community where the textile industry served as the lifeblood, Belmont is a burgeoning success story of thriving growth and redevelopment.”

[Visit Belmont](https://visitbelmontnc.org)  
([visitbelmontnc.org](https://visitbelmontnc.org))



Image: Entrance to Downtown Belmont (source: City of Belmont)

## WHY MAKE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

In a perfect world, the City of Belmont could consult with every stakeholder before making any major decisions. Because that is not realistically feasible, a comprehensive plan is the next best tool. Indeed, **this plan reflects the consensus opinions of a wide range of stakeholders captured through surveys, in-person meetings with polling, categorized feedback boards, and in-person conversations through countless workshops and pop-up events.**

Additionally, the State of North Carolina requires all municipalities that adopt and apply zoning regulations to **also adopt a comprehensive plan** to guide their decisions. This mandate reinforces the **importance of local input in long-term planning initiatives** for municipalities, and helps to **facilitate regulations that align with the community’s vision** for its future.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING MATTERS

Comprehensive planning is an essential process that **guides the growth, development and management of communities.** As cities evolve, the demands on land, infrastructure, and resources increase, necessitating a clear and structured vision for future development. **Comprehensive plans help communities proactively address challenges and opportunities associated with growth,** ensuring new development aligns with long-term community values and objectives. Through this strategic framework, the **City can effectively coordinate a broad range of policies and programs, ultimately improving quality of life for current and future residents.**

Belmont recognizes its distinct opportunities and challenges as part of the rapidly expanding Charlotte metropolitan area. Proximity to Lake Wylie, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, and major transportation corridors such as Interstate 85 produce significant growth pressure. **This growth, while beneficial, stresses other aspects of the community,** including housing affordability, transportation infrastructure, public services and environmental sustainability. **The need for a comprehensive planning approach has never been more critical.**





THE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

This comprehensive plan is organized into clearly defined sections, each addressing a specific aspect of community planning and development. Together, they provide a cohesive vision and actionable roadmap for Belmont’s growth and prosperity over the next 20 years.

Turquoise sections serve as introductory narrative, presenting a broad overview of this document and the community it serves, while crimson sections contain the necessary analysis, visioning and recommended policies to accomplish Belmont’s goals. The appendix is teal.

IN 01 INTRODUCTION

*Current section.* This provides an introductory overview of Belmont’s position, the rationale behind this plan and why it matters, document layout and an exploration of the community engagement that helped shape it.

HU 04 HOUSING

Ensuring a diverse and attainable housing stock is vital for Belmont’s continued vibrancy and resilience. This section focuses on strategies to increase housing availability, attainability, and variety to accommodate a growing and diverse population.

CC 07 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Preserving and enhancing Belmont’s distinct character is critical as the City grows. This section emphasizes the many neighborhoods, historical and cultural assets that give Belmont its feel, provide recommendations, and discuss enhancing gateways for a lasting positive impression.

EN 10 ENVIRONMENT

Recognizing Belmont’s abundant natural resources and their positive impact on its character and economy, this section recommends policies and programs designed to protect environmental quality, manage natural hazards, promote sustainable practices, and enhance resilience.

HS 02 HISTORY

Belmont’s history is briefly recounted in this section, particularly highlighting economic and land use development trends that have shaped the community we know and continue to plan for today.

EC 05 ECONOMY

Economic development strategies outlined in this section should foster a robust local economy. This involves supporting local businesses, attracting new investments, and enhancing workforce development to ensure Belmont remains economically competitive and sustainable.

PR 08 PARKS & RECREATION

Quality parks, recreational facilities and open spaces significantly contribute to quality of life. This section provides an overview of recreational sites and access, as well as green space goals to keep pace with community development. More details on meeting these needs can be found in Belmont’s 2019 Parks & Rec. Master Plan.

IR 11 INTERGOV. RELATIONS

Effective collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, regional agencies and other governmental entities is crucial for comprehensive growth management. This section outlines strategies for maintaining strong intergovernmental partnerships, coordination and advocacy.

LU 03 LAND USE

This section establishes policies to guide the type, intensity and location of future development, ensuring balanced and sustainable land use patterns. By clearly defining development types such as traditional neighborhoods, village centers and major institutions, Belmont can maintain its unique identity and character as it grows.

MB 06 MOBILITY

Efficient and accessible transportation systems are fundamental to community vitality. Also functioning as Belmont’s Multimodal Network Plan, the mobility section promotes improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, road connectivity, public transit availability, and emerging technologies to meet future demands.

IF 09 INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable and sustainable infrastructural systems are essential for community growth. This section profiles topics including water, stormwater, and wastewater planning, outlining strategies for infrastructure maintenance, expansion, and modernization to support current and future needs.

AP 12 APPENDIX

As the final section of this plan, the appendix includes a project implementation matrix. This tool provides additional information and details designed to help achieve the results outlined in each recommendation.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation is the cornerstone of any meaningful and successful planning effort. A comprehensive plan is not merely a technical document produced by planners and officials; it is a collective vision developed with substantial input from residents, business owners, community organizations and other stakeholders. Active and broad participation ensures this plan reflects varied perspectives and addresses genuine community needs to foster widespread support.

In developing this comprehensive plan, Belmont committed to an extensive public engagement process, which included public workshops, focus groups, surveys, feedback boards and interviews. Throughout 2024 and 2025, Belmont residents provided over 2,000 valuable insights and comments, expressing their priorities for the future of their city. The participation process was designed to ensure equitable representation, giving voice to traditionally under-served communities and diverse demographic groups. Such inclusive participation not only enriches the planning process but also strengthens community cohesion and collective ownership of the plan.

Through this collaborative approach, the comprehensive plan integrates community values with professional expertise, resulting in pragmatic strategies that are both innovative and achievable. Belmont’s future, guided by this comprehensive plan, will be shaped by those who know it best –the residents and stakeholders who live, work and invest here.

Finally, the City remains dedicated to continued community involvement beyond the plan’s adoption. Ongoing engagement will ensure this comprehensive plan remains responsive to changing community needs, reinforcing Belmont’s commitment to democracy, transparency and inclusivity in governance.

●

APRIL 26, 2024

PROJECT WEBSITE LAUNCH

Launch of OurBelmont.org, a dedicated place for project information and materials.

●

MAY 1, 2024

FIRST SURVEY OPENS

First project survey, opened on May 1 and accepted 357 responses by Jul 31, 2024.

●

JUNE 6-8, 2024

CITYWIDE WORKSHOPS

Three community workshops were hosted at CityWorks for public feedback and Q&A.

●

JUNE 25-29, 2024

CHARACTER AREA WORKSHOPS

Five additional hands-on public workshops, hosted across three character areas.

●

AUGUST 1, 2024

SECOND SURVEY OPENS

Survey about proposed policies following workshops, 243 responses by Sep 31, 2024.

●

MAY 13, 2025

FINAL OPEN HOUSE

Open house, Q&A, and public presentation based on the recently completed draft plan.

LEGEND

- In-person Engagement
- Online Engagement



Image: Public engagement workshops during the creation of this plan (source: Plusurbia Design)



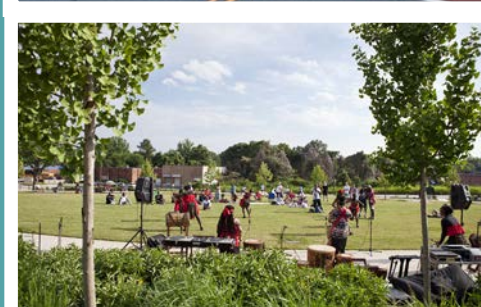
OUR BELMONT: COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE

# BELMONT COMMUNITY PREFERENCES

REPRESENTED BY IMAGERY

75%

of respondents would like to be able to **walk to PARKS & GREEN SPACE** from their home. 46% would like to **walk to shops**.



63%

of respondents would like to see **MORE WATERFRONT DINING** in Belmont at various price points.

71%

of respondents named an **ACTIVE & HISTORIC DOWNTOWN** as Belmont's greatest advantage.



#1

rank of **SMALL TOWN FEEL** among important character attributes for Belmont.

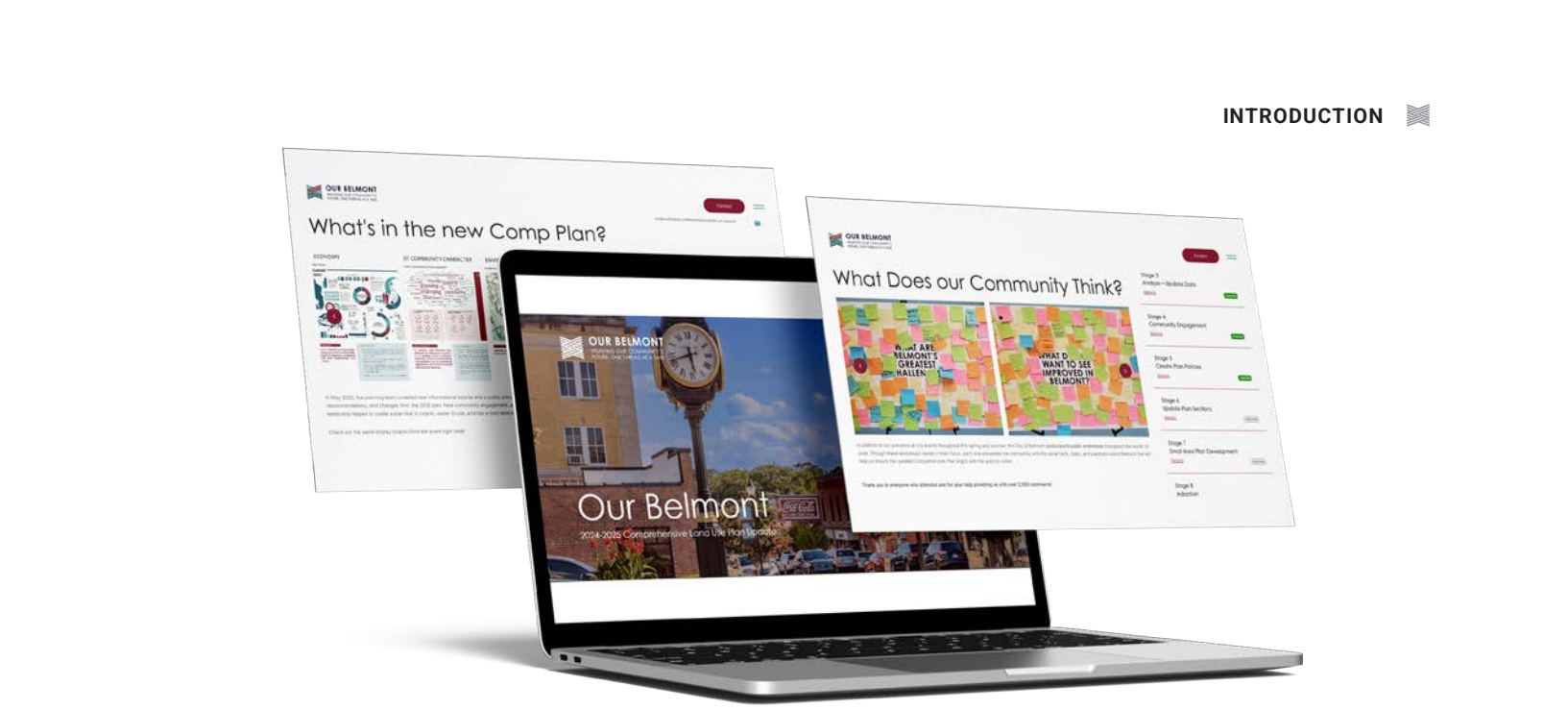


Image: Content from OurBelmont.org (source: Plusurbia Design)

## PROJECT WEBSITE & SURVEYS

Providing online engagement opportunities alongside traditional hands-on workshops was a strategic decision to promote maximum accessibility and community involvement during the plan update.

Launched in April 2024, two months ahead of the first workshops, OurBelmont.org served as the project's digital hub. Among other capabilities, the site allowed the public to track the planning process, review materials from past presentations and events, access educational videos, and even leave comments.

The digital roll-out also included two surveys, open from May through July 2024 and August through September 2024. The first survey explored Belmont's best qualities, opportunities to improve, and the community's desires for the future. Following the workshops, the second survey asked respondents to vote on proposed policy directions. Based on major takeaways from prior community engagement events, it posed the question: "did we hear you?" The results revealed, resoundingly, "yes!"

*More community engagement insights are presented throughout the plan.*

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

As a major component of the plan update, the project team hosted two workshop series, targeting both citywide and focused engagement. Combined with the final open house near the project's conclusion (May 13, 2025), the plan update included nine dedicated public events, impressive for a community of Belmont's size.

Including both weekday nights and a weekend option, the first workshops targeted a citywide audience from June 6-8, 2024. Kicked off with a well-attended presentation, participants explored the planning process, Q&A with the project team, and shared detailed feedback across nearly two dozen exhibits.

With a similar format, the second workshops focused on three "character areas" across Belmont: the northern, central, and southern (peninsula) parts of the planning area. Hosted at North Belmont Elementary, CityWorks, and the Daniel Stowe Conservancy, attendees from each character area shared local opportunities and concerns. The three workshops were bookended by two additional citywide events, held June 25-29, 2024.

Lastly, the project team attended numerous City events throughout 2024, engaging with community members at the Farmers' Market, Red, White, & Belmont, and more.



ENVISIONING BELMONT’S FUTURE

This plan’s vision statement looks forward to a Belmont that continues to celebrate its unique charm and spirit while embracing new opportunities to improve its quality of life and community resiliency. Under this overarching vision, each topic section, from Land Use to Intergovernmental Relations, includes a statement of intent. The topic’s policies and recommended projects are designed to achieve this aspirational statement while also contributing to the plan’s overall vision.

Nestled between two rivers in a major metropolitan area, Belmont celebrates its heritage while embracing opportunities that shape its future. From its charming main street district to its world-class botanical garden, Belmont exemplifies small-town charm, economic and entrepreneurial spirit, and environmental and social vitality. Above all, we are proud to be a family-friendly community.

LU

03 LAND USE

To ensure a balanced approach to **land use** that encourages a **healthy tax base** and **mix of uses** to **promote choice** in housing, shopping, mobility, services, and recreation.

HU

04 HOUSING

To **promote housing choice** that **tastefully meets the needs of everyone** in the community, is aptly **supported by infrastructure**, and positions Belmont’s neighborhoods for **lasting success**.

PR

08 PARKS & RECREATION

To ensure a **range of opportunities** for all citizens to **enjoy and engage with the outdoors**.

EC

05 ECONOMY

To foster a **vibrant** and **sustainable economy** supported by a **diversified tax base** that **balances residential growth with employment** and commerce.

IF

09 INFRASTRUCTURE

To ensure **high quality, efficient** and **effective infrastructure** throughout Belmont.

MB

06 MOBILITY

To provide **equitable** and **affordable choice** in how residents and visitors **move** around Belmont.

EN

10 ENVIRONMENT

To **protect the natural environment** of Belmont as a **critical public asset**.

CC

07 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

To **protect and enhance the character of Belmont** by building on our **heritage**, protecting **historic resources**, embracing **surrounding rivers and lakes**, improving **community appearance**, and promoting **social and economic diversity**.

IR

11 INTERGOV. RELATIONS

To **partner with surrounding jurisdictions**, state agencies, utility providers, and other external entities to **promote the interests of Belmont’s citizens** and to ensure the ongoing success and **quality of life within the greater Charlotte metropolitan region**.

# HOW TO USE THIS CHAPTER

For ease of use and navigation, this planning document follows a standard layout across each of its policy sections (03-11).

Each part begins with an introduction and summary of headline findings, a presentation of key hurdles and community outreach, and the adopted policies and projects for that topic.

## INTRODUCTION & HEADLINE FINDINGS

The first spread in each policy section provides an introduction to the topic and its significance to Belmont, along with a corresponding statement of intent. Based on background analyses, the reader is presented with headline findings as they proceed to the following pages.

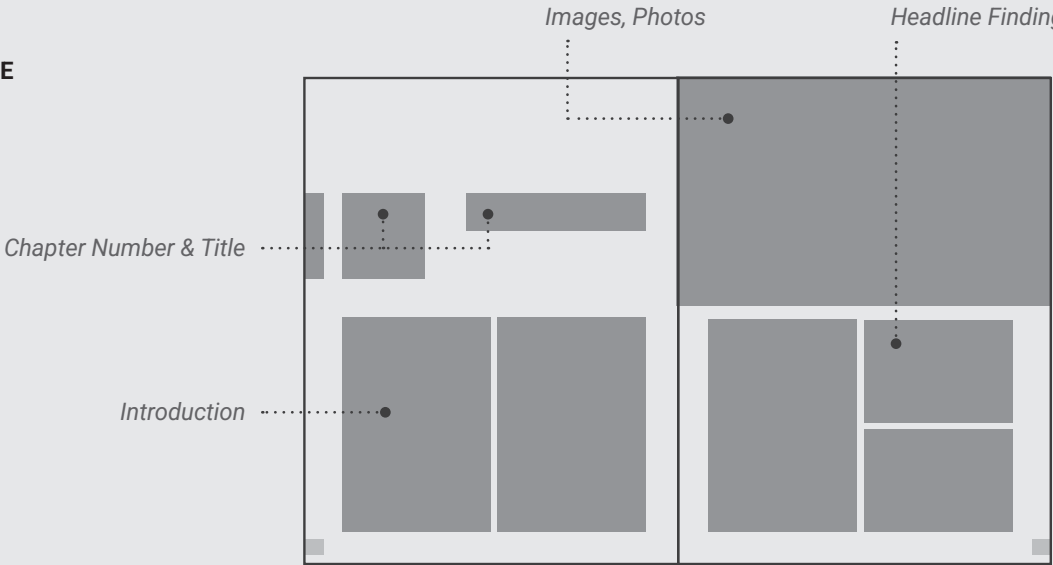
## KEY CONSIDERATIONS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Key hurdles represent the most significant obstacles to progress on each section topic. Critically, Belmont can overcome these hurdles through the implementation of each policy and recommended project. On the opposite page, a profile of community outreach findings show topic priorities.

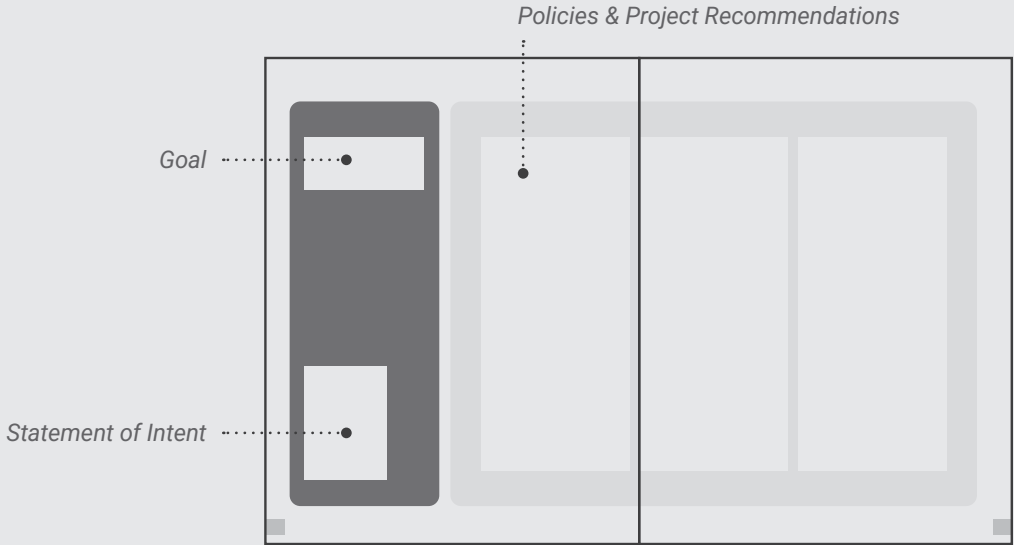
## POLICIES & PROJECTS

The most important pages in the entire document, each topic includes between three and 14 policies designed to strengthen the City’s focus, functionality, and quality of life. Under each is a series of recommended projects Belmont can use to make advancements on the topic.

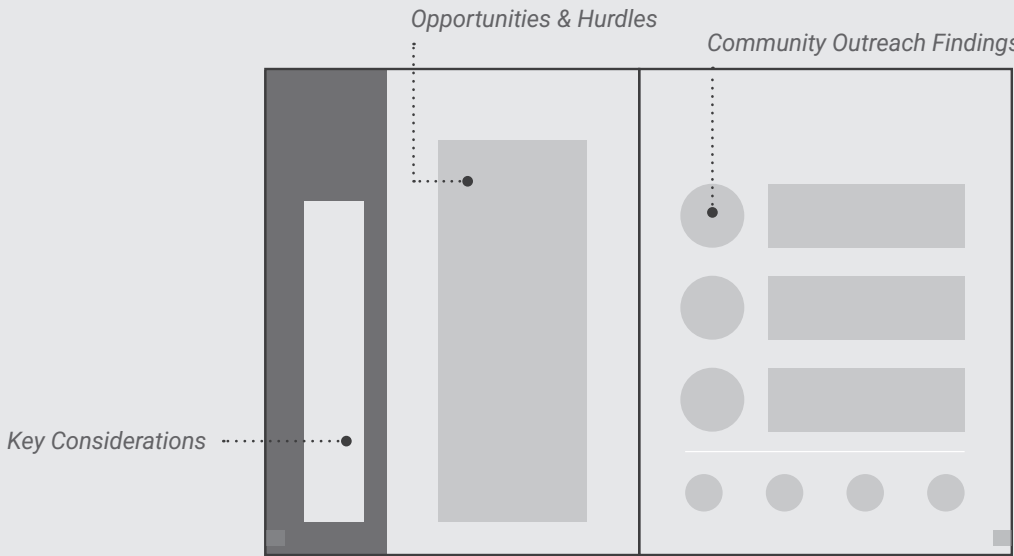
### GOAL INTRODUCTION PAGE



### POLICIES



### KEY CONSIDERATIONS





02

HISTORY

Over nearly 250 years, Belmont has grown from settlement to city, evolving throughout history but always maintaining a unique identity. A working knowledge of this history is critical to making decisions for Belmont’s future.



This icon represents “History” content.

Very few inland places can claim to be located almost entirely on a peninsula. The City of Belmont is one of them.

Indeed, long before major settlement and industrialization of the area occurred, Belmont was naturally defined by the Catawba River to the east and the South Fork of the Catawba River to the west. These water bodies are named for the Catawba tribe, who, along with the Eastern Cherokee, were native to the area and relied on its natural resources.

Turning to colonial times, it’s perhaps because of the converging rivers that the first recorded settlements in the area occurred at the southern end of the peninsula when Dutch settlers built fortifications there during the 1750s. A handful of early mills were later constructed in what eventually became the South Point community.

The peninsula’s geography has played a pivotal role in the history and growth of Belmont. For almost a century, the area was relatively insulated from neighboring communities and their direct influence until the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railway was constructed in 1871. Soon, Garibaldi Station, named for John Garibaldi, who had supervised construction of a water tank near the new railroad, became a link to the outside world.

Over time, existing settlers in the southern part of the peninsula moved north to be closer to the railroad and what we now know as Downtown Belmont began to form, straddling the tracks.

In 1872, a Roman Catholic missionary priest named Father Jeremiah O’Connell, purchased a 500-acre tract known as the Caldwell Farm, less than one mile north of Garibaldi Station. Belmont Abbey was founded in 1876 on this land and still functions today as Belmont Abbey College, a liberal arts school with about 1,500 students.

In 1883, the name of Garibaldi Station was formally changed to Belmont. Until very recently, the origin of this new name has been debated. There have been two theories. One is that the City was named after August Belmont, a New York businessman. More likely is that the name was chosen as a Latin derivative for “Beautiful Mountain.” This was selected due to the proximity to mountains in the area, most likely Spencer Mountain, which can be seen from the Catawba River.

In 1895, by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly, an area within a quarter mile radius from the intersection of Main Street and the railroad was incorporated as the Town of Belmont and an organized municipal government consisting of a mayor, town council and other appointed officials was formed. Belmont was still a small town at the turn of the twentieth century, with a population of only about 145 people.

Just a decade later, the Catawba River was dammed by the Catawba Power Company in 1905 to create a chain of lakes including Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, and Lake Wylie, further defining the peninsular landform of Belmont –and growth patterns to follow. This event improved navigability of the surrounding waterways, but increased the crossing distances required to travel to nearby places just across the river.



Image: Belmont City Hall, built 1939 (source: City of Belmont)



Image: McLean Home, constructed on the peninsula during the 1850s (source: Discover McLean)



Image: A.C. Lineberger House, located on Main St and completed in 1921 (source: Historic Belmont Foundation)



Image: Historic Chronicle Mill, since redeveloped into a multi-family housing project that was completed in 2023 (source: BB + M Architecture)







**Image:** Historic Downtown Belmont (source: Downtown Belmont Development Association)

During the Industrial Revolution (c. 1760 to 1840) textile manufacturing became an important industry for much of the American South, including the Charlotte metropolitan area. In fact, Gastonia, located just west of Belmont, was already the fourth largest textile center in the state by 1860. Slower to develop, the organization of Chronicle Mill in 1901 marked the beginning of Belmont’s growth into a bona fide textile manufacturing center with over 20 mills soon operating there. Mirroring this economic acceleration, the population soared from 145 people near the turn of the century to over 4,000 people by the 1930s. In 1945, the town amended its name to reflect this growth, officially becoming the City of Belmont.

Underpinning the settlement patterns we see today, many of the areas around these textile mills were planned as distinct “mill villages,” which often included churches, stores, and residences to serve and house mill workers. Homes were clustered to support walkability and typically situated on small lots sized in 25-foot increments. These mill villages provided a sense of community within greater Belmont that remains part of the City’s foundation today.

Additionally, several former mill buildings remain and are prime, character-rich sites for adaptive reuse.

While the textile industry declined from 1970 to 1990, Belmont was largely able to stave off major losses until later. A short period of decline followed, until the beginning of the twenty-first century brought about increased interest in Belmont and surrounding areas as developers looked to take advantage of its proximity to Charlotte and adjacency to the rivers and Lake Wylie. Construction of the Interstate 485 beltway around Charlotte provided a further impetus for growth and development throughout the region. Approximately 10 miles from Uptown, Belmont is situated just west of this important loop and astride the Interstate 85 corridor. This location provides Belmont easy access to Charlotte Douglas International Airport, jobs, and amenities throughout the region, while presenting new challenges and opportunities as ever-increasing numbers of people and businesses capitalize on its location. These trends impact everything from Belmont’s transportation systems to infrastructure, housing choices, and development patterns.

“Something was in the air or water in Charlotte in the 1990s, or maybe it was moonshine from the North Carolina hills. But Charlotte was an early adopter of New Urbanism –much more so than most cities. Many planners and developers were willing to try a new approach, and they led by example –especially in reforming codes. Some of the nation’s first municipal form-based codes–called traditional neighborhood development codes at the time– were adopted by Charlotte suburbs nearly three decades ago. Belmont in Gaston County was the first, followed by Davidson, Huntersville, and Cornelius and Mecklenburg County.”

*Robert Steuteville, Public Square  
May 23, 2023*

In response to these factors and the mounting pressure of relatively unchecked growth within and adjacent to current city limits, the City of Belmont is widely known to have taken an early lead on enacting sensible and guiding land use regulations that, though based on more traditional ideas, were crafted to address contemporary planning, growth, and development issues.

These regulations followed from the relatively new doctrine of New Urbanism. Initiated by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, codified by city planners and adopted in 1994, the Belmont zoning code was indeed ground-breaking. The code had an immediate impact on the nearby communities of Davidson, Cornelius, and Huntersville, which all adopted their own similar versions of New Urbanist codes. Other municipalities across the country followed suit.

While residential growth in Belmont slowed in tandem with the sagging state and national housing market between 2008 and 2012, remaining portions of the peninsula are now quickly developing. Simultaneously, downtown





continues to undergo revitalization, accommodating both adaptive reuse projects and new mixed use development. Infill growth has and continues to occur citywide, with a concentration among the blocks near Main Street.

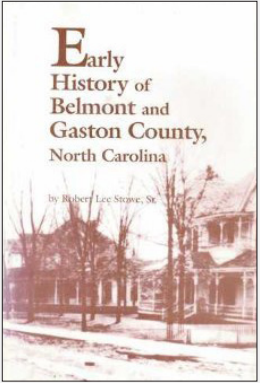
As an effect of this booming housing market, many of the latest detached single-family home developments far exceed the City’s median home value. These new neighborhoods include numerous waterfront properties, providing Belmont with an interesting mix of modern, high-end subdivisions and more modest, established mill-era housing.

Indeed, the current period finds Belmont poised at an interesting crossroads. With care, the City can embrace a modern identity while continuing to maintain its neighborhood-based sense of community, historical character, and quality of life. Based on robust public engagement, this Comprehensive Plan provides the guidance necessary to find this balance, presenting community preferences and strategies for the future.



**Image:** (Left) Low density development patten throughout the peninsula (source: Zillow); (Top-Right) Typical older neighborhood street in North Belmont (source: Coldwell Banker); (Bottom-Right) Imperial Lofts mixed use infill project on Main St (source: Apartments.com)

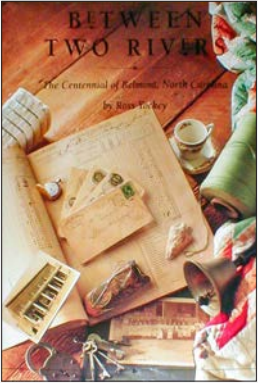
HISTORY FURTHER READING LIST



Early History of Belmont and Gaston County, North Carolina

Author: Stowe, Robert Lee, Sr.  
Publisher: Laney-Smith, 1997. (Originally published in 1951).

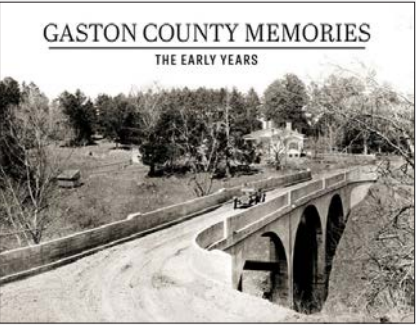
This autobiographical account traces the early development of Belmont through one of its most influential industrial leaders. Stowe reflects on the rhythms of daily life, growth of local institutions, and changes that grew from industrialization.



Between Two Rivers: The Centennial of Belmont, NC

Author: Yockey, Ross  
Publisher: Sally Hull McMillan and Associates, 1996.

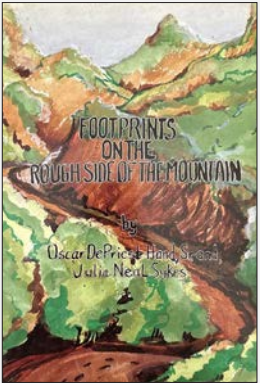
Written for Belmont’s centennial, this book traces the City’s development from its early settlement to its rise as a textile center, shaped by its location between the Catawba and South Fork Rivers.



Gaston County Memories: The Early Years

Author: Pediment Publishing & The Gaston Gazette  
Publisher: Pediment Publishing, 2016.

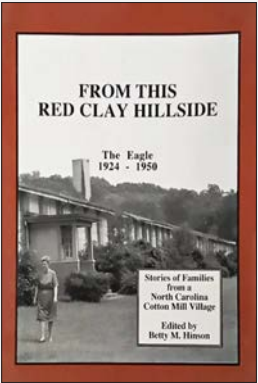
Created in partnership with local museums and the Gaston Gazette, this pictorial book offers a visual history of Gaston County from its founding through 1939, featuring community-submitted photos and archival images.



Footprints on the Rough Side of the Mountain

Author: Hand, Oscar DePriest, Sr., and Sykes, Julia Neal  
Publisher: Oscar De Priest Hand Sr, 1997.

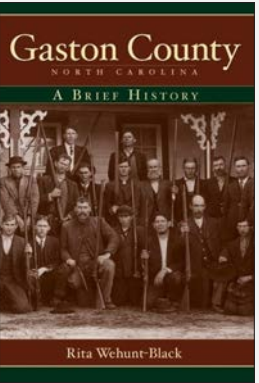
Spanning the late 19th and 20th centuries, this book shares stories of African American life in Belmont through personal interviews, photographs, and historical records. This meaningful historical perspective highlights the City’s people, institutions, and experiences.



From This Red Clay Hillside, The Eagle 1924-1950

Author: Hinson, Betty M.  
Publisher: Spindle Books, 1996.

A collection of personal stories and community memories from Belmont’s Eagle Mill Village (site of modern-day Eagle Park). The book offers a firsthand look at daily life, work, and family in a close-knit textile mill town during the early to mid-20th century.



Gaston County, North Carolina: A Brief History.

Author: Wehunt-Black, Rita  
Publisher: The History Press, 2008.

This book marks the history of Gaston County from its early settlements through the textile era and into the modern day. It highlights towns like Belmont, Cherryville, and Bessemer City, with stories about the people, places, and industries that helped shape the region.



# 03

## LAND USE

To ensure a **balanced approach to land use** that encourages a **healthy tax base** and **mix of uses to promote choice** in housing, shopping, mobility, services, and recreation.

As established in Section 02, “History,” Belmont has been dominated by multiple development patterns throughout its four centuries. Beginning as an informal rural settlement in the 1750s, it was first supercharged by the railroad’s arrival in 1871 –an unstoppable force coupled with the rapid growth of the region’s textile industry. Incorporated in 1895 with a population of just 145, by the 1930s, over 20 local textile mills had helped attract more than 4,000 residents.

With the rise of the textile mills emerged a series of planned “mill villages,” which served as distinct neighborhood centers that housed and accommodated the daily needs of mill workers. This legacy lives on in Belmont today and is evident across the City –particularly in North Belmont, East Belmont, and near Downtown, where historical neighborhood cores still offer a local mix of land uses.

As automobile adoption became increasingly widespread, highways like Wilkinson Boulevard (opened 1926) and later, Interstate 85 (opened 1965), fueled suburban development along key corridors throughout Belmont. Auto-oriented strip malls, gas stations, and drive-thru businesses were among the dominant projects of this era, catering to through traffic as well as new neighborhoods of single-family homes..



*This icon represents “Land Use” content.*



Image: Main Street, the heart of Belmont (source: City of Belmont)

While providing vehicular transportation improvements, the development of Interstate 85 also created a physical and psychological barrier between North Belmont, Belmont Abbey College (founded 1876), and the rest of the City that still exists today.

Belmont continued to suburbanize in the decades that followed, slowing only as the textile industry declined before Charlotte’s rapid growth ignited new pressures for expanded development in Gaston County. With enviable proximity to the City and numerous local assets, including Lake Wylie, the riverfront, historic downtown, and the Daniel Stowe Conservancy (opened in 1999), Belmont has become particularly attractive to developers. In fact, since 2010, the City of Belmont’s population has increased from around 10,000 to an estimated 16,451.

Aware of this mounting pressure, Belmont made headlines in 1994 by adopting the first form-based code in North Carolina, an innovative strategy to regulate development by focusing on building form, as opposed to land use, fostering more predictable growth. Updates to the code are guided by this comprehensive plan and the vision it outlines for Belmont.

### HEADLINE FINDINGS

Belmont’s ground-breaking code has been amended over the years. While it continues to prioritize urban form through seven building types, concerns about sufficient infrastructure support and a desire to maintain small-town character have favored single-family development.

Belmont has a finite amount of land –13,128 total acres in its planning area. Since the last plan update (2018), 1,525 acres have been developed, with 2,760 available.

Particularly on the peninsula, traffic congestion is common, as most residents rely on South Point Road and other collector streets to access grocery stores, restaurants, and childcare elsewhere in the City. By accommodating enough residential growth to support local neighborhood services, residents could meet more of their daily needs without leaving the peninsula.

To reinforce economic resiliency, create local business opportunities, and strengthen neighborhoods farther from Downtown and Wilkinson Boulevard, Belmont must embrace its history of mill village centers to plan for a series of mixed-use nodes with greater residential diversity at key intersections.





# GOAL 1 LAND USE

To ensure a **balanced approach to land use** that encourages a **healthy tax base and mix of uses to promote choice** in housing, shopping, mobility, services, and recreation.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should inform and engage the public in a variety of ways related to proposed new development.**

**1.1. Project** – Use an intentional mix of communication methods, including online platforms, social media, email, phone, text, utility bill inserts, physical signs and alternate language services (upon request) to regularly inform and engage with the public about new development and infrastructure projects.

**POLICY 2. The City should track development patterns and treat vacant and underdeveloped land as a scarce and valuable resource.**

**2.1. Project** – Maintain a citywide build-out analysis and update it with every approved development.

**POLICY 3. The City should grow and evolve in a way that supports and, in some cases, transforms the underlying infrastructure, land use patterns, and systems needed to support that growth.**

**3.1. Project** – The Planning & Zoning Board, with staff input and assistance, should prepare an annual report on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to be forwarded to City Council along with a list of recommended projects, programs, and capital expenditures that it suggests be considered in the next budget cycle.

**3.2. Project** – Plan for strategic acquisition of high impact sites to exercise greater control over their use for economic development, future parks, conservation, etc.

**POLICY 4. There should be balance, harmony, and synergy among land uses.**

**4.1. Project** – Permit the residential development required to attract desired non-residential growth and redevelopment.

**4.2. Project** – Track development in neighboring jurisdictions to ensure the City is not making redundant land use decisions.

**4.3. Project** – Make land use decisions that support a range of uses, activating public spaces throughout the day and into the evening where appropriate.

**POLICY 5. The City should leverage new development as an avenue to meet community needs and support the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.**

**5.1. Project** – Require public access to the waterfront in large waterfront developments.

**5.2. Project** – Require new development to address the walkability and bikeability actions outlined in this plan, including construction of related infrastructure when feasible.

**POLICY 6. The City should prioritize revitalization and redevelopment of the Wilkinson Boulevard corridor to improve Belmont’s image and quality of life.**

**6.1. Project** – Update the Wilkinson Boulevard Small Area Plan in sync with each Comprehensive Plan update (at least every five years).

**6.2. Project** – Maintain the current right-of-way setbacks along Wilkinson Boulevard at 30 feet to reserve realistic space for future transportation investments.

**6.3. Project** – Actively partner with businesses and developers to attract reinvestment along the Wilkinson Blvd corridor without preventing future transportation investments.

**POLICY 7. The City should proactively shape land use patterns on the South Point Peninsula to introduce appropriate scale retail, services, and restaurants within defined Village Centers.**

**7.1. Project** – Extend access to healthy food citywide by attracting a grocer to pre-selected sites on the South Point Peninsula. Working with a retail specialist will be key to build the necessary relationships.

**7.2. Project** – Encourage small businesses, rather than national chains, to locate on the South Point Peninsula through incentives like technical assistance, expedited permitting, or grants to qualifying businesses.

**POLICY 8. The City should proactively shape the land use patterns in North Belmont to introduce appropriate scale retail, services, and restaurants, particularly as part of Village Centers.**

**8.1. Project** – Actively pursue and incentivize walkable mixed use development in designated Village Center areas in North Belmont.

**8.2. Project** – Support the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized commercial structures in North Belmont through annexation when possible.

**POLICY 9. When appropriate, the City should create and support the adoption of Small Area and Site-specific Master Plans for places of special interest to guide their development.**

**9.1. Project** – Create and support the adoption of a Small Area Plan for the proposed North Belmont Village Center near the Acme Rd/Perfection Ave intersection.

**9.2. Project** – Create and support the adoption of a Site-specific Master Plan in East Belmont for a Village Center that allows for a mix of uses including waterfront dining, shoreline activation, shopping, and living experiences.

**9.3. Project** – Create and support the adoption of a Small Area Plan for the proposed Village Center near the NC-273/279 intersection on the eastern peninsula.

**9.4. Project** – Partner with key property owners, the Downtown Belmont Development Association, and other interested parties to create a new Downtown Master Plan to include Stowe Park, the Stowe Property to the north, and the former middle school.

**POLICY 10. The City should make land use decisions that balance present infrastructure needs and opportunities with planned infrastructure improvements, such as trails, transit initiatives, and sewer upgrades.**

**10.1. Project** – Continue to require traffic impact analyses (TIAs) and mitigation measures as needed as part of any significant new development.

**POLICY 11. Land use decisions should account for emerging regional trends and priorities.**

**11.1. Project** – Land use decisions should increase the supply of affordable and accessible housing, including the introduction of “missing middle” housing types to the Land Development Code and modification of density regulations to ensure their feasibility.

**11.2. Project** – The Land Development Code should accommodate small scale urban agriculture in institutional and infill areas.

**POLICY 12. The City should balance parking demand with community character and efficient land use.**

**12.1. Project** – Ensure the Land Development Code provides strategies to adequately meet parking demand without compromising efficient land use and community character.

**12.2. Project** – Research and secure funding, possibly through a public-private partnership, to construct a downtown parking deck.

**POLICY 13. The City should embrace many different types of neighborhoods, housing types, commercial choices, industry, institutions, and services while maintaining and deepening those character elements that make the City special.**

**13.1. Project** – Update the Land Development Code to ensure new projects and infill developments can re-create and reinforce the traditional neighborhood style that makes Belmont such an appealing place to live. For aesthetic components of interest, incentives should be used to encourage established styles.

**13.2. Project** – Establish an improvement program for strategic neighborhoods that seeks to: establish neighborhood action teams, eliminate blight and nuisances, coordinate public expenditures, improve public infrastructure, and identify infill and neighborhood center opportunities.

**13.3. Project** – Foster a land use pattern that encourages a range of independent small businesses to meet the daily needs of residents.

**13.4. Project** – Balance the needs of new businesses with existing residents.

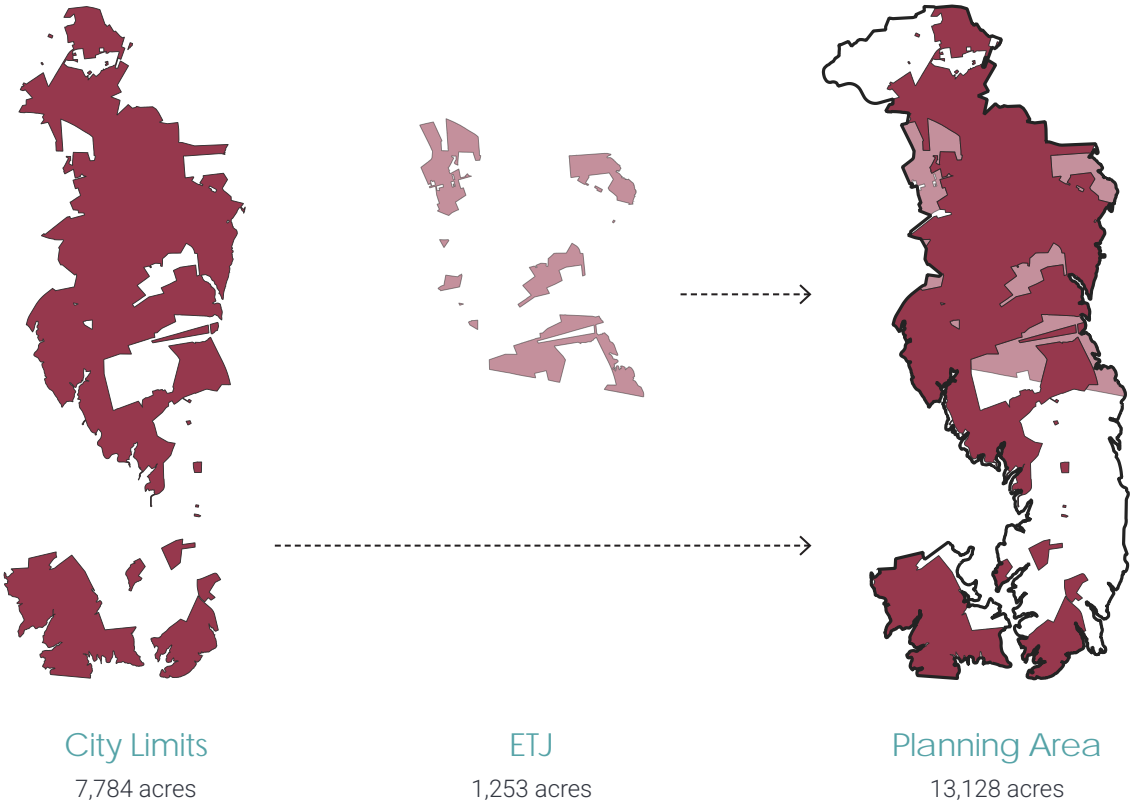


BELMONT’S CITY LIMITS & PLANNING AREA

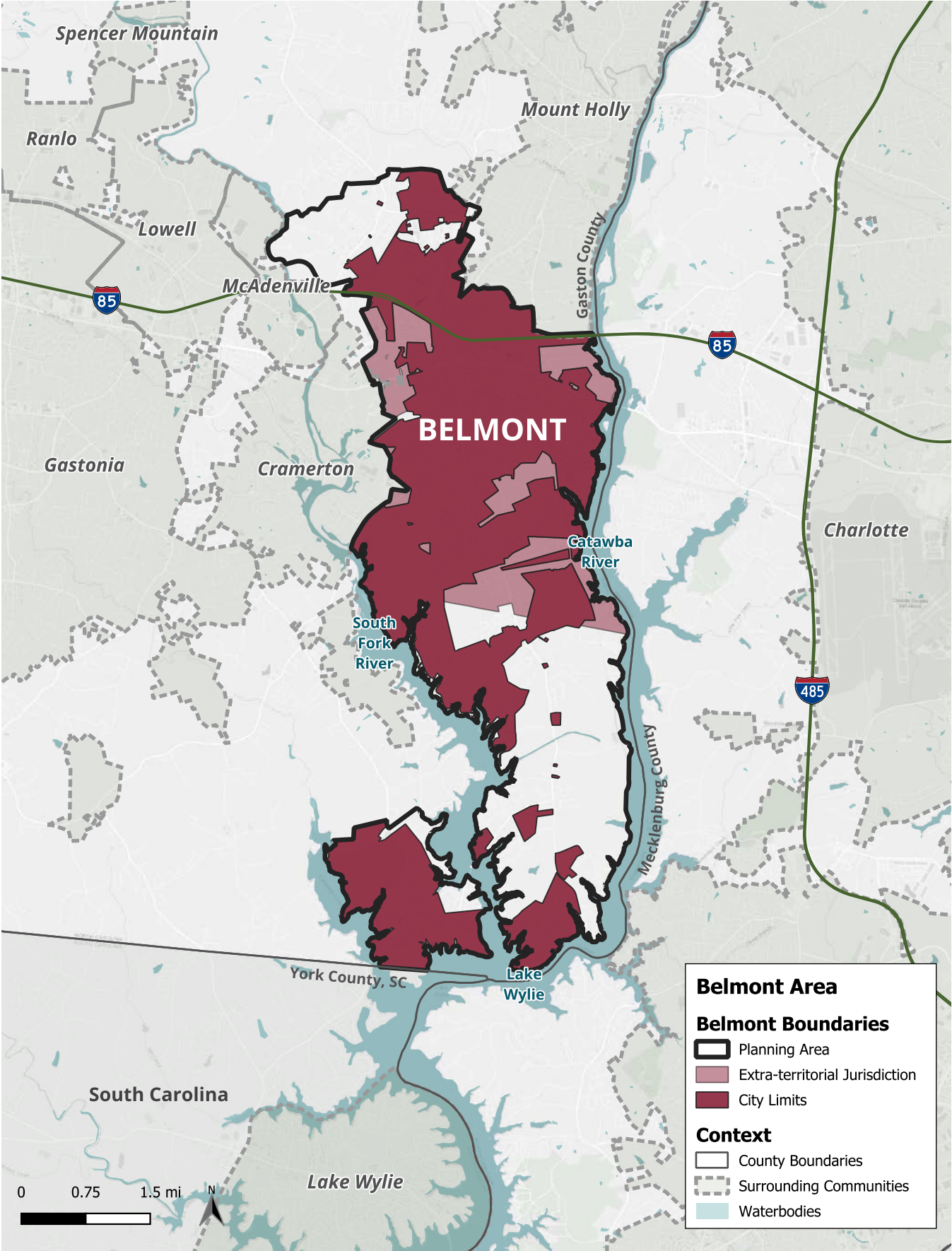
Belmont’s City Limits extend to 7,745 acres, an increase of 182 acres since 2018. These current limits were combined with the City’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and other adjacent areas of influence to create the Planning Area this document’s policies are intended to shape.

Today, 59.3% of Belmont’s Planning Area lies within the City Limits. In the future, as new developments are approved on the edge of this boundary, Belmont will continue to annex more area into the City –gradually increasing this ratio.

Most land within the Planning Area that remains outside of Belmont’s City Limits and ETJ is located midway down the peninsula, much of which is occupied by the Allen Steam Station. This site will likely remain unincorporated. North Belmont is also located partially outside of these jurisdictions.



Map: Belmont City Limits, ETJ and Planning Area (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



Map: Combined Planning Area (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



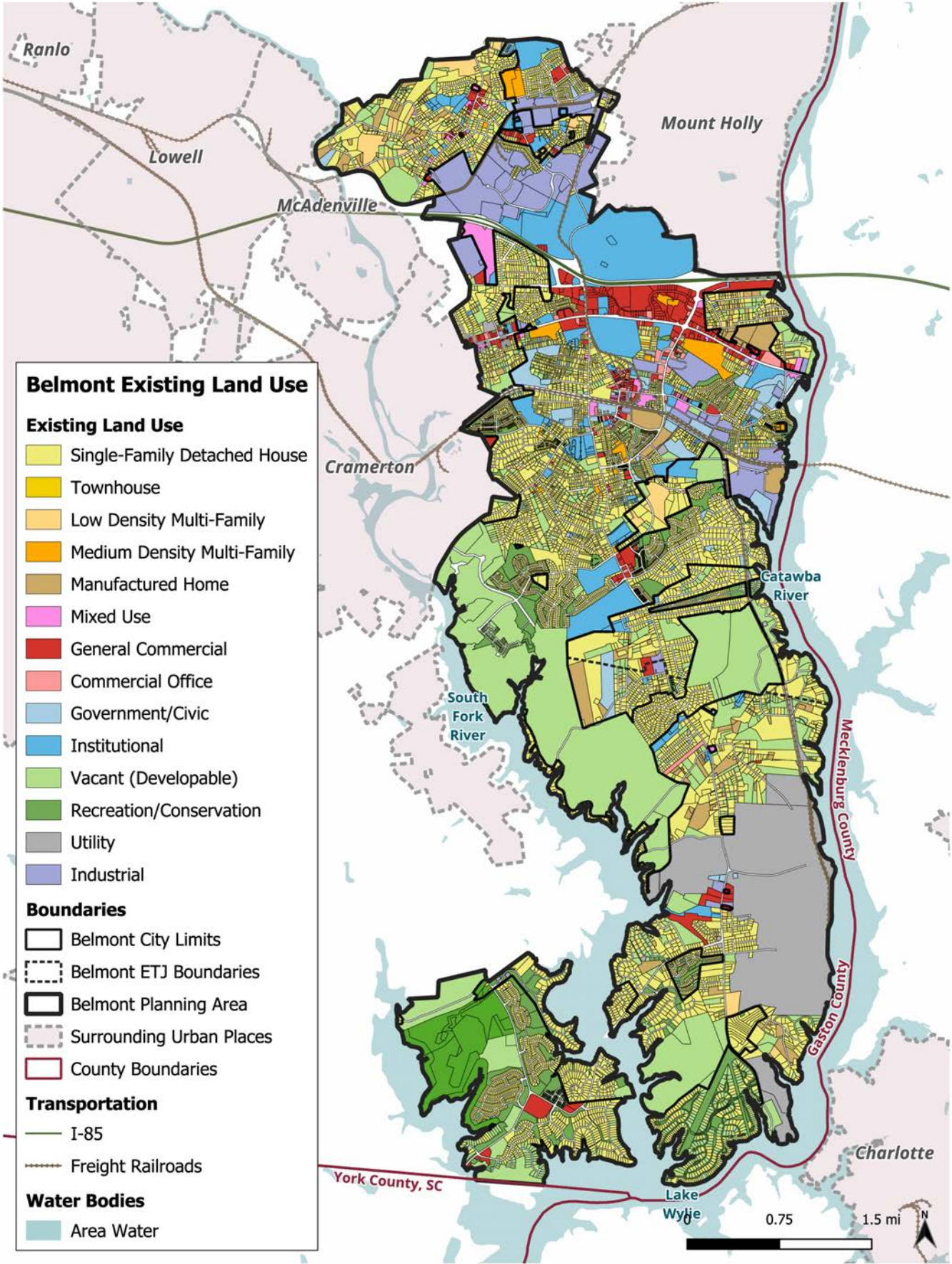
BELMONT’S EXISTING LAND USE

Typical of a suburban community, Belmont’s Planning Area is dominated by residential land uses (around 37%), with single-family developments accounting for nearly the entire category. Though Belmont’s neighborhoods vary, ranging from large-lot communities like Reflection Pointe, to traditional neighborhood developments like Eagle Park –featuring a mix of housing types, the majority of residential land use falls between those in character, at three to six dwelling units/acre.

While there is sufficient range of choice across local single-family options, only 2.7% of Belmont’s land use includes multi-family units, which range from low density (triplexes and quads) to medium density condos and apartments, mostly in Central Belmont. As discussed under Section 04, “Housing,” recent interest in the development of “missing middle housing” aims to introduce greater residential choice to Belmont, while protecting the small-town character residents relish.

EXISTING LAND USE				
LAND USE CATEGORY	CITY LIMITS ACRES	CITY LIMITS % LAND USE	PLANNING AREA ACRES	PLANNING AREA % LAND USE
RESIDENTIAL ONLY				
Single-Family Detached House (incl. Duplex)	1,884	27.4%	3,665	31.0%
Townhouse	20	0.3%	21	0.2%
Low Density Multi-Family (Triplex/Quad)	24	0.3%	184	1.6%
Medium Density Multi-Family (Condo/Apts)	103	1.5%	104	0.9%
Manufactured Home	100	1.5%	364	3.1%
COMMERCIAL				
Mixed Use	76	1.1%	89	0.8%
General Commercial	337	4.9%	435	3.7%
Commercial Office	45	0.7%	58	0.5%
GOVERNMENT & INSTITUTIONAL				
Government/Civic	198	2.9%	245	2.1%
Institutional	835	12.1%	951	8.0%
OPEN SPACE				
Vacant (Developable)	1,893	27.5%	3,121	26.4%
Private Recreation/Conservation	811	11.8%	881	7.4%
INDUSTRIAL				
Utility	8	0.1%	1098	9.3%
Industrial	547	7.9%	624	5.3%
TOTAL	6,879	100.0%	11,840	100.0%

Figure: Belmont City Limits and Planning Area Existing Land Use (data source: City of Belmont, analysis: Plusurbia Design)



Map: Belmont Existing Land Use (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



Other dominant land use categories in Belmont include open space, distantly followed by utilities and institutional. See Section 08, “Parks & Recreation” for more information on public parks, which are classified among other civic uses (light blue) in Belmont’s Existing Land Use Map.

Open space, shown in shades of green, includes developable vacant land (light green) and recreation or conservation space (dark green). Once on the outskirts of Belmont’s City Limits, much of the Planning Area’s vacant land has been recently annexed into the City and is envisioned for future master planned communities and “semi-rural neighborhoods.” Feedback received during the creation of this plan demonstrated overwhelming public support to conserve as much of this land as possible, so new development should use clustering techniques to maximize open space preservation.

By requiring new development to consolidate density (leaving more open space), shift excavation away from sensitive areas, or dedicate offsite-offsets for parks and open space, this development interest can actually be harnessed to meet Belmont’s environmental aspirations. Demonstrating this, aside from the Daniel Stowe Conservancy, dark green mapped areas represent the conservation land that has already been set aside by existing development, often through these techniques.

Duke Energy’s Allen Steam Station, a coal power plant located near the terminus of Belmont’s primary peninsula, largely explains the high proportion of land use dedicated to utilities outside City Limits. Based on 2025 reporting by *Business North Carolina*, Duke has reached an agreement with the NC Department of Environmental Quality for an upcoming plant closure that includes secure storage of coal byproducts on the site in perpetuity. Though the plant is expected to cease operations before the end of the decade, it is unlikely this site will be safe for new development within this plan’s time horizon.

The last of the major land uses, institutional, plays a particularly important role in Belmont. Though this use also includes schools, churches, and other non-profits within the Planning Area, Belmont’s largest institutional landowner is the Southern Benedictine Society of North Carolina. Over time, this organization has assembled about 700 acres, which have been gradually developed into commercial, industrial, and residential projects through long-term leases. This acts as Belmont Abbey College’s primary funding mechanism. Together, this organization and neighboring major land-owners in Belmont and Mt. Holly are represented by Montcross, LLC, which will continue to strategically develop this area (including 754 acres within Belmont’s City Limits) according to their mixed use Montcross Small Area Plan.

Regarding other areas of interest, Downtown provides Belmont with a traditional, walkable, mixed use destination that supports foot traffic-driven shopping, limited office uses, and integrated multi-family housing. Existing secondary nodes include the intersection of South Point and Nixon Rd, as well as the restaurant and marina located along New Hope Rd near the state line.

Outside these locations, most retail uses in Belmont are concentrated along Wilkinson Blvd (US-74), which is dominated by largely auto-oriented businesses, such as drive-thrus, gas stations and “big box” retail. A historically downtrodden corridor, its redevelopment into a modernized Belmont gateway is a top priority of this plan –a process that will include new transportation investments outlined under Section 06, “Mobility.”

Lastly, an even more important corridor, Interstate 85 has afforded significant industrial development opportunities to Belmont (such as The Oaks Business Park). Due to land availability, much of this development has occurred in North Belmont, which has supported infill and diversified the City’s tax base, but has also impacted adjacent neighborhoods with increased truck traffic.



**Image:** (Top) Single-Family Detached House: 30.7% of Planning Area (source: Discover McLean); (Bottom-Left) Vacant Open Space: 26.4% of Planning Area (source: Redfin); (Bottom-Top-Right) Utility: 9.3% of Planning Area (source: Plusurbia Design); (Bottom-Right) Institutional: 8.0% of Planning Area (source: Plusurbia Design)



ENVISIONING FUTURE LAND USE

New development and regulatory changes in Belmont will be guided by the City’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which consists of nine land use categories, notes the location of proposed Village Centers, and demarcates four areas of additional complexity that are covered by corresponding Small Area Plans (SAPs). Overall, this vision will enable Belmont to maximize the opportunities presented by growth, while minimizing the negative consequences that often result from unplanned, haphazard, or misguided development. The path to implementing this land use vision is highlighted at the end of this section.



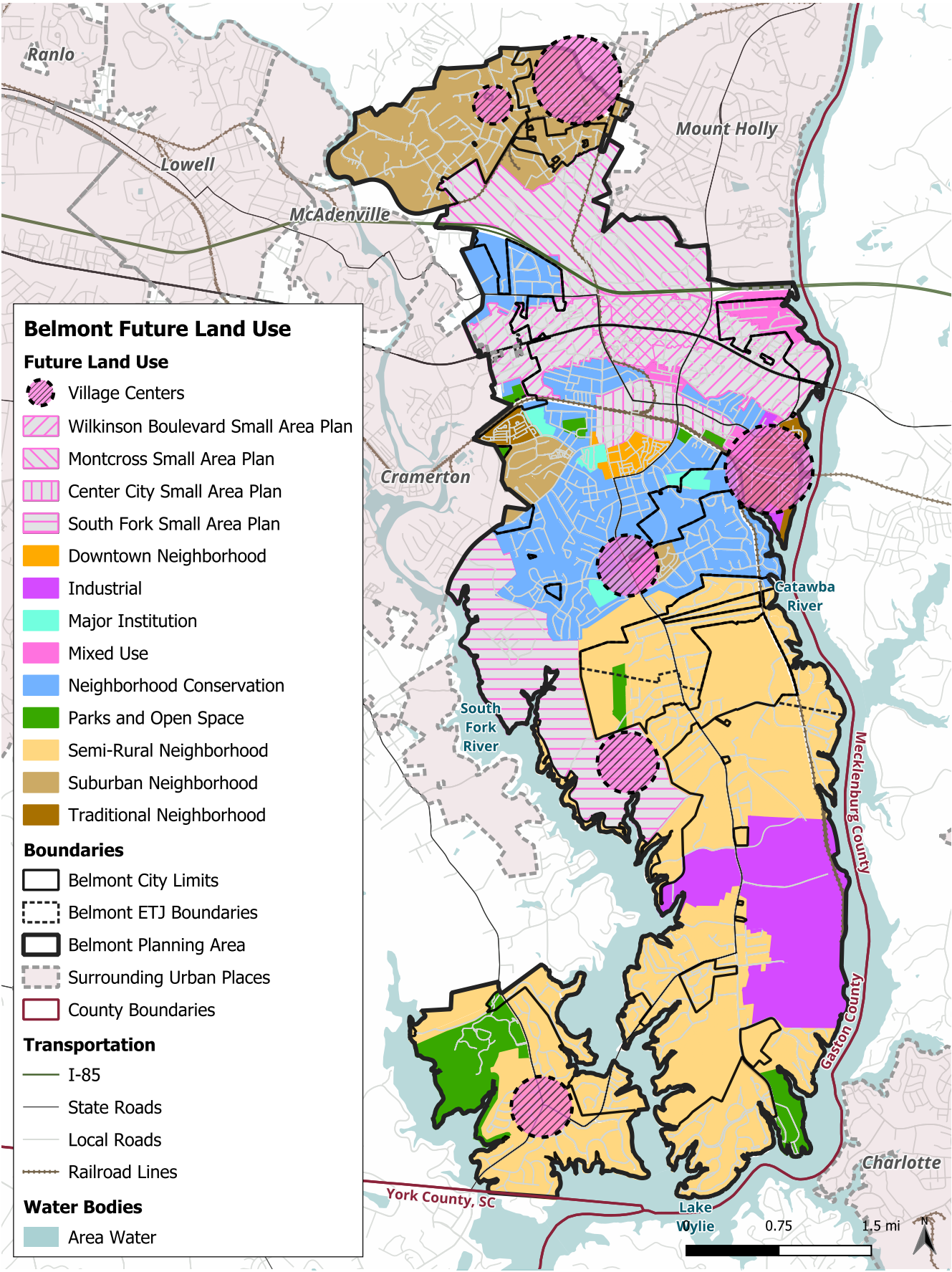
As discussed, much of Belmont’s existing vacant land is envisioned for future master planned communities and Semi-Rural Neighborhoods. Through conservation policies, this development type can maximize open space preservation while addressing growth pressures and adding residential diversity. Such creative strategies are critical, as blanket legislation in favor of large lot zoning can quickly lead to both home price escalation and the inability to effectively preserve natural areas deeded to many individual property owners.

Next, Belmont should continue to invest in its core neighborhoods, which have been placed under the Neighborhood Conservation designation. Varying densities of single-family homes and “missing middle” residential types are appropriate in these areas. In general, infill development is desirable, but must be properly calibrated, so as not to alter the character of each neighborhood. Residential development above six dwelling units per acre, such as townhomes and rowhouses, can be supported in these areas as well, but only along major transportation corridors.

Suburban Neighborhoods are defined by pre-existing moderate to lower density development patterns, but may also be appropriate for walkable, neighborhood-scale retail uses at key intersections (ex. cafe, hair salon), particularly throughout North Belmont. Calibrated infill development should also be prioritized in these areas.

By contrast, Downtown Neighborhood areas –those walkable to downtown– feature traditional neighborhood development. Future development in the area is envisioned to follow this pattern, including a strategic embrace of higher density residential types in some cases. Overall, this will expand the heart of Belmont as a large, cohesive, safe and walkable area.

Image: Various land uses in Belmont (source: City of Belmont)



Map: Belmont Future Land Use (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



Intentionally broad, the Mixed Use designation is intended to guide redevelopment within transitional areas. Designated based on greater transportation infrastructure capacity and mixed adjacent uses, a wider variety of land uses can flourish, ranging from shopping and entertainment destinations to multi-family developments. Emphasis should be placed on cultivating a more walkable land use pattern through redevelopment to reduce vehicular traffic, improve image, and consolidate parking. New projects should be conscious of neighboring uses, building scale, and buffering. Given the co-location of varied uses and densities, Mixed Use areas are also an ideal location for the development of new affordable housing.

Based on the continuing needs of the Allen Steam Station site, this utilitarian area of the peninsula will remain Industrial. Likewise, Institutional areas should continue to host schools and other community uses.

Lastly, Parks and Natural Areas can and should exist within each of these Future Land Use categories, offering an approach that fills the needs of the surrounding area. For example, neighborhoods should feature parks with a variety of play and recreation amenities, while industrial locations should include natural buffers. Parks and Natural Areas can also be treated as their own land use classification; existing natural destinations are mapped.



Image: Village Center in Greenville, SC (source: McMillan Pazdan Smith)

VILLAGE CENTERS

Drawing on Belmont’s history of mill villages, today’s Village Centers should provide a concentrated area of civic, office, retail, and local services at greater densities than Neighborhood Commercial areas. They normally serve several neighborhoods, and are ideal places for higher density residential development.

To support walkability, Village Centers are generally about 1/4-mile in radius and should be located at the strategic intersections outlined in the FLUM.



Image: Eagle Park TND in Belmont, NC (source: Daily Herald)

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

A Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a human scale, walkable community with moderate to high residential densities, dedicated green space, and sometimes a mixed use core. These neighborhoods can also effectively integrate several housing types, allowing families to age in place. In Belmont, Eagle Park and Hawthorne Place are examples.

TND will be crucial to the build-out of several mixed use and residential areas. It is also envisioned along the Catawba River, surrounding and as part of the Waterfront Village Center.

APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT TYPES BY FUTURE LAND USE	
VILLAGE CENTER	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medium Density Res. (3-6 dua)</li><li>Higher Density Res. (&gt;6 dua)</li><li>Traditional Neighborhood Dev.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Neighborhood Commercial</li><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medium Density Res. (3-6 dua)</li><li>Higher Density Res. (&gt;6 dua)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Traditional Neighborhood Dev.</li><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
INDUSTRIAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Industrial</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
MAJOR INSTITUTION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Institutional</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
MIXED USE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medium Density Res. (3-6 dua)</li><li>Higher Density Res. (&gt;6 dua)</li><li>Traditional Neighborhood Dev.</li><li>Neighborhood Commercial</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Downtown Core</li><li>Commercial Mixed Use</li><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Low Density Res. (&lt;3 dua)</li><li>Medium Density Res. (3-6 dua)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Higher Density Res. (&gt;6 dua)*</li><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
PARKS & OPEN SPACE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>	
SEMI-RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Low Density Res. (&lt;2 dua)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Low Density Res. (&lt;3 dua)</li><li>Medium Density Res. (3-6 dua)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parks &amp; Natural Areas</li></ul>
TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medium Density Res. (3-6 dua)</li><li>Higher Density Res. (&gt;6 dua)</li><li>Traditional Neighborhood Dev.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Neighborhood Commercial</li><li>Commercial Mixed Use</li></ul>

SIX CALIBRATED VILLAGE CENTERS

Establishing each of the six Village Centers proposed across Belmont is underpinned by a common goal to meet everyday needs locally (therefore reducing traffic inside the City and strengthening neighborhood identity). However, each center will materialize differently based on its context and underlying zoning. Boundary lines and the location of each Village Center should be considered approximate, as this vision should adapt as Belmont evolves and new opportunities arise. Currently, Village Centers are planned to range from lower density shopping areas to waterfront destinations.

Each proposed Village Center is detailed herein.

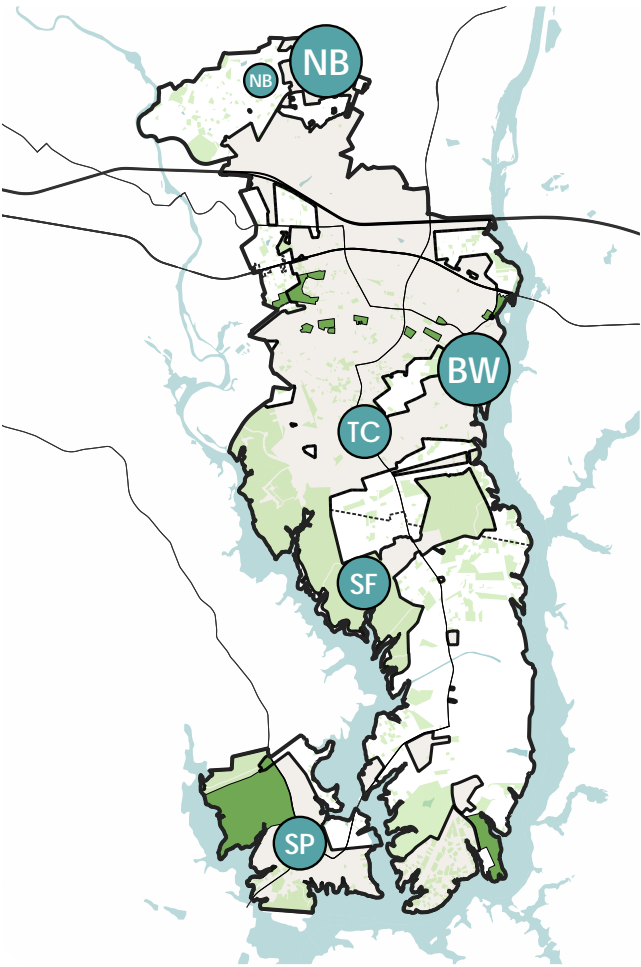


Image: Distribution of Proposed Village Centers across Belmont Planning Area (source: City of Belmont, Plusurbia Design)



Image: Proposed North Belmont Village Center (source: City of Belmont, Plusurbia Design)

[NB] North Belmont

To offer North Belmont neighborhoods a better way to meet their daily needs locally, a Village Center is proposed at the intersection of Perfection Ave and Acme Rd. This area is already home to a grocery store and other local services, which could act as the foundation for a more dynamic area.

Future build-out on the Village Center could include additional retail establishments and senior and affordable housing, which would benefit from sites within walking distance of these amenities.

Nearby, a secondary node at the intersection of Perfection Ave, Hickory Grove Rd, and Woodlawn St already exists as another small commercial pocket. It is anchored by a dollar store and contains several auto service shops. Though currently outside of Belmont’s City Limits and ETJ, this site meets the right criteria to become a Village Center. Future redevelopment should support a greater mix of land uses and annex into the City.

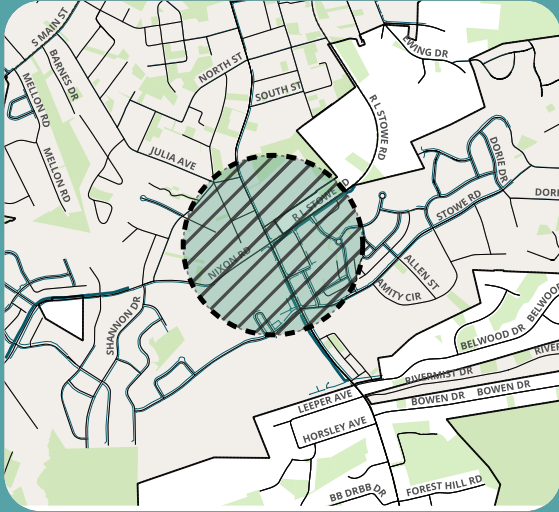


Figure: Proposed Belmont Town Center Village Center (source: City of Belmont, Plusurbia Design)

[TC] Belmont Town Center

Much of the planned Village Center at the Nixon and South Point Rd intersection has already been built out, including a grocery store, townhomes, detached houses, and other businesses. Belmont Middle School and South Point High School are also located there.

The area’s strong sidewalk network and housing choice offers neighbors a convenient walk to these shops and a safe pedestrian route to school for students –helping to alleviate long pick-up and drop-off lines.

Little developable land remains in this Village Center area, but future projects could include limited infill residential or low density retail/offices on remaining sites along Town Center Dr.

Collaboration with NCDOT on the mitigation of traffic congestion, especially related to commuter and school peak times, will be a priority to support any additional development.

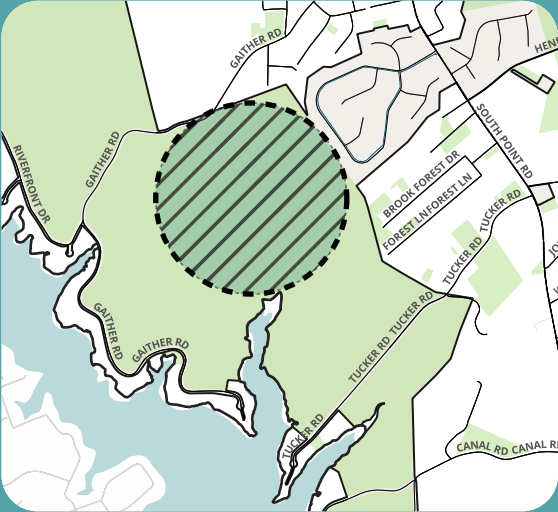


Figure: Proposed South Fork Village Center (source: City of Belmont, Plusurbia Design)

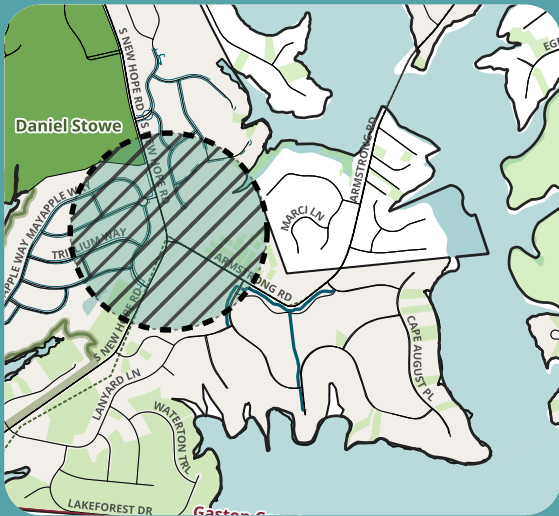
[SF] South Fork

Planned for entirely undeveloped land, this Village Center draws from the South Fork Small Area Plan, which calls for a mixed use area along the completed South Fork Pkwy. This new route will become an artery for this side of the peninsula and act as an alternative to a portion of South Point Rd.

With construction of the 809-unit Del Webb community currently underway to the north and the immediate site’s future residential land use, sufficient future demand is expected for local retail and office space. The South Fork Small Area Plan also envisions multi-family residential options to support the Village Center.

Village Centers are most successful when supported by the right multi-modal transportation infrastructure. In addition to the South Fork Pkwy, multi-use trails will connect this node to the surrounding neighborhoods. Finally, if the Catawba Crossings regional parkway project is constructed through this area, Village Center size and density should be upscaled to capitalize on an increase of non-local visitors.





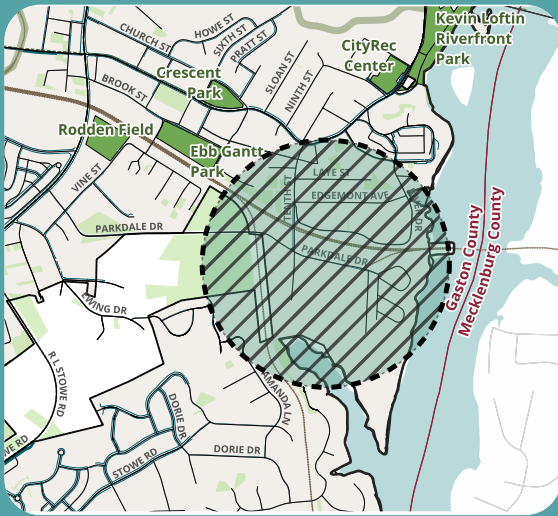
**Figure:** Proposed South Peninsula Village Center (source: City of Belmont, Plusurbia Design)

[SP] South Peninsula

The desire for grocery and other retail options near the point of Belmont’s peninsula was one of the top comments made during public engagement. A planned Village Center for undeveloped land at the major intersection of Armstrong and New Hope Rd was identified by the community as the best place to host these mixed uses.

Adjacent to the Daniel Stowe Conservancy, this Village Center should host new local businesses that capitalize on the presence of this regional destination, such as a garden shop or even a boutique hotel. Other community desires for the area include a grocer, while market demand may also support small office spaces. Residential development will be limited to single-family types.

Accordingly, the land has already been zoned NC-C (Neighborhood Center Commercial), but is unlikely to be fully developed until additional residences are built in the area, ensuring a local consumer base sufficient to attract retailers.



**Figure:** Proposed Belmont Waterfront Village Center (source: City of Belmont, Plusurbia Design)

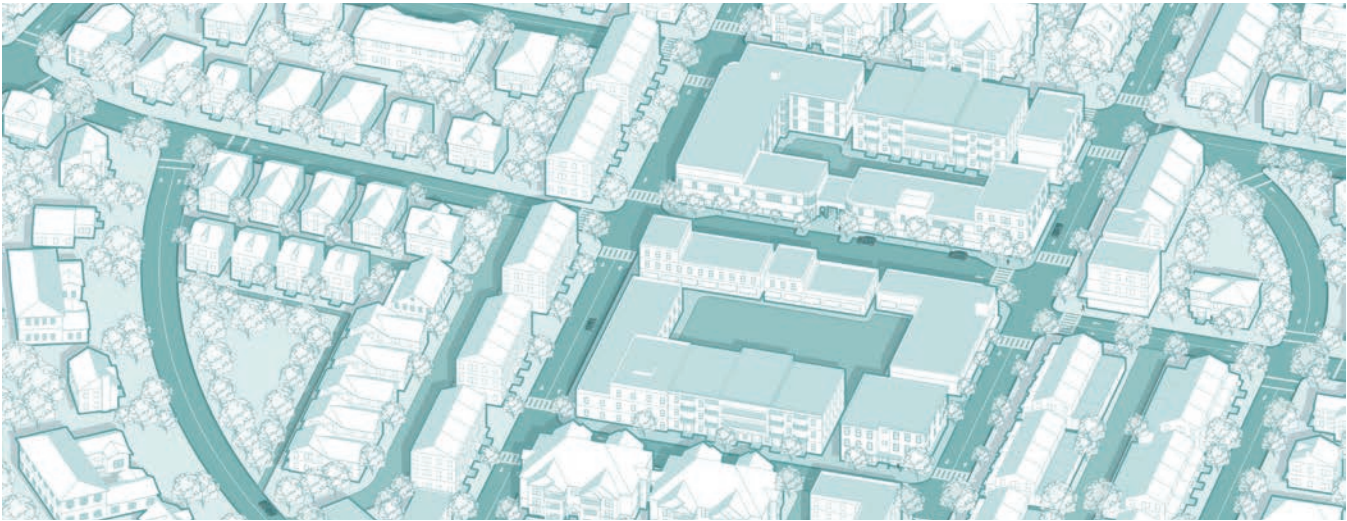
[BW] Belmont Waterfront

Community engagement identified a strong desire to cultivate a new hub for public waterfront access along Belmont’s 17 miles of shoreline, supporting activities like recreation, dining, shopping, and tourism.

Given recent investment in Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park, the new Belmont Rec Center, private developments like Aberfoyle Village, and nearby transportation improvements by NCDOT, this area south of Wilkinson Blvd is ready for additional study. Tactful redevelopment into a Village Center would capitalize on one of the few remaining areas of shoreline not already deeded to private homes.

Of all of Belmont’s proposed Village Centers, this would be the most dynamic, leveraging unique destination restaurants and retail with watersports facilities, several types of housing, parkland and trails.






Development of a Site-specific Master Plan for a more detailed examination of this location, property ownership, stakeholders, and refined community vision is recommended to most effectively implement this Village Center.



VILLAGE CENTER BUILDING BLOCKS

Informed by their context, each proposed Village Center will materialize differently but draw on a collective series of pedestrian-scaled building types. These five types include three already distinguished in Belmont’s Land Development Code and two “missing middle” housing types favored by the community (fourplex and courtyard building). Architecturally, the style of each building should draw on the materials and accents present in surrounding neighborhoods.

To cultivate neighborhood retail and services, every Village Center will support a mix of land uses, but only the Belmont Waterfront, North Belmont, and South Fork areas will include medium to higher density residential development. Design-wise, the most intense uses should be located at the Village Center’s core, methodically decreasing in height and density where adjacent to single-family neighborhoods. Emphasis should be placed on wide sidewalks and gridded streets when possible.

	LOW INTENSITY LAND USE AREAS		MEDIUM INTENSITY LAND USE AREAS		
					
BUILDING TYPE	FOURPLEX	COURTYARD BUILDING	TOWNHOUSE	SHOPFRONT BUILDING	MID-RISE RESIDENTIAL
GENERAL CHARACTER	Lawns, landscaped yards, pedestrian crossings, large open setbacks	Balance between landscape and buildings; presence of pedestrians	Balance between landscape and buildings; presence of pedestrians	Pedestrian focused, engaging ground floor facade	Pedestrian focused, engaging ground floor facade
BUILDING PLACEMENT	Large and variable front and side yard setbacks	Shallow to medium front and side yard setbacks	Shallow to medium front and side yard setbacks	Minimal front and side yard setbacks	Minimal front and side yard setbacks
FRONTAGE TYPE	Porches, fences, naturalistic landscaping	Porches, fences, dooryards	Porches, fences, dooryards	Shopfront	Shared entry or shopfront
TYPICAL BUILDING HEIGHT	1 to 2-story	2 to 3-story	2 to 3-story	2 to 3-story	2 to 4-story
APPLICABLE VILLAGE CENTERS	North Belmont Belmont Waterfront South Fork	North Belmont Belmont Waterfront South Fork	North Belmont Belmont Town Center Belmont Waterfront South Fork South Point	North Belmont Belmont Town Center Belmont Waterfront South Fork South Point	North Belmont Belmont Waterfront South Fork South Point* *Lodging only



IMPLEMENTING FUTURE LAND USE THROUGH ZONING

Belmont’s Land Development Code is the single most important tool available to implement the desired development patterns envisioned in its Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. The code establishes the policies and procedures used to shape how land will be developed, how it can be divided, how it will be used, what infrastructure and amenities are required, and how the impacts of each parcel are addressed. The code also includes standards that address building location, parking, landscaping, and signage. This document works in tandem with the Land Development Standards Manual, which details necessary infrastructure and other public improvements for development.

Zoning districts are established in Chapter 5 of the Land Development Code and were originally adopted in 1994. Belmont was one of the first communities in North Carolina to instate form-based zoning, which emphasizes building form, rather than use, as well as walkability. The Zoning Code applies to every parcel within Belmont’s City Limits, as well as its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). The Code received its last major update in 2013, with

incremental text edits since. The rest of the Planning Area (outside of these boundaries) is instead subject to Gaston County zoning and development standards, though major projects may request annexation by the City to gain access to municipal utilities, depending on availability.

Zoning districts primarily focused on residential development include General Residential (G-R), Infill Residential (INF-R), Manufactured Housing Residential (MH-R), Rural Residential (R-R), Suburban Residential (S-R), and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TN-D). Together, these zones account for 5,874 acres, or 73.5% of Belmont’s City Limits and ETJ.

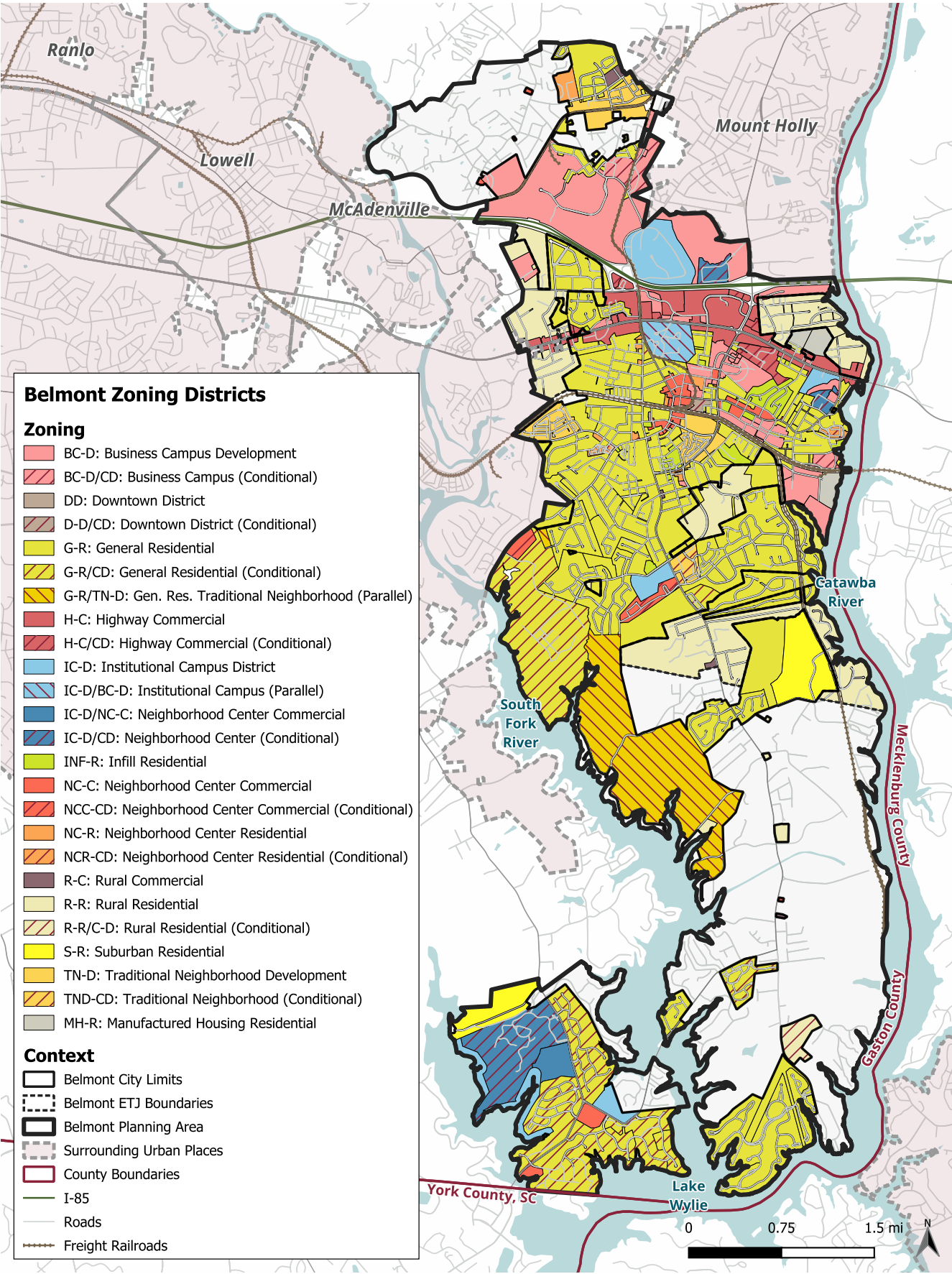
Interestingly, due to the Code’s focus on building form, certain residential uses are actually permitted in every district, except for Rural Commercial (R-C). Developers choose from one of up to seven Building Types allowed in each zone (ex. Townhouse, Shopfront Building, Workplace Building) and shape their project according to form and architectural requirements.

While this set-up encourages mixed use projects, greater walkability, and other elements that support Belmont’s future vision, additional Building Types are recommended. For example, when not integrated into a mixed use building, any multi-family project must adopt the Apartment Building Type, which is geared toward larger buildings and developments, like those found along Wilkinson Boulevard. Introducing a wider variety of small to medium scale residential Building Types would provide more options that better reflect Belmont’s community character and neighborhood scale. See Section 04, “Housing” for more.

Lastly, many of the areas designated as Village Centers, already have NC-C or TND-CD zoning, supporting the development of mixed use destinations.



Image: Example Traditional Neighborhood Development in Greenville, SC (source: Upstate Business Journal)



Map: Belmont Zoning Districts (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



GETTING IT RIGHT: OVERLAY ZONES

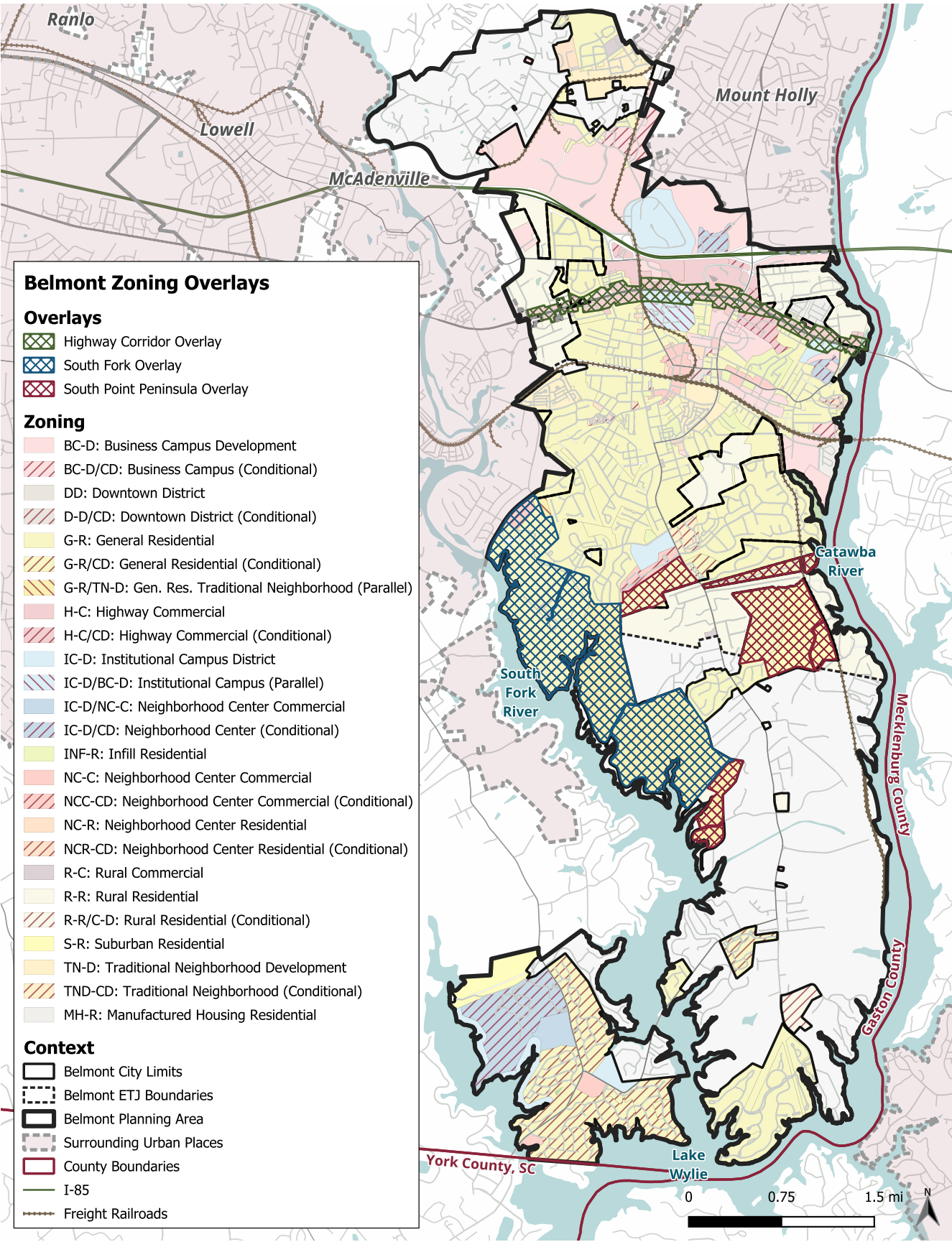
While parallel districts (such as G-R/TN-D or IC-D/BC-D) offer property owners a choice between two assigned zoning districts, **overlay zones** are more prescriptive, ensuring new development in unqie areas adheres to additional requirements. These provisions help new projects to “get it right,” by shaping their scale and site design to match the community vision established in planning documents and necessitated by infrastructure.

Belmont’s overlays include:

- **Highway Corridor Overlay:** Additional lot and landscaping standards along Wilkinson Blvd.
- **South Fork Overlay:** Supports Small Area Plan implementation.
- **South Point Peninsula Overlay:** Sets maximum density for these areas of the peninsula.

BELMONT ZONING				
ZONING DISTRICTS	CITY LIMITS ONLY		CITY LIMITS + ETJ	
	ACRES	% OF ALL ACRES	ACRES	% OF ALL ACRES
BUSINESS CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT				
BC-D, BC-D/CD	843.8	12.61%	890.6	11.14%
DOWNTOWN DISTRICT				
DD, D-D/CD	8.1	0.12%	8.1	0.10%
GENERAL RESIDENTIAL				
G-R, G-R/CD, G-R/TN-D	4,181.2	62.47%	4,365.5	54.62%
HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL				
H-C, H-C/CD	240.2	3.59%	321.6	4.02%
INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT				
IC-D, IC-D/BC-D, IC-D/CD, IC-D/NC-C	688.3	10.28%	688.3	8.61%
INFILL RESIDENTIAL				
INF-R	88.9	1.33%	88.9	1.11%
MANUFACTURED HOUSING RESIDENTIAL				
MH-R	36.6	0.55%	60.4	0.76%
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER COMMERCIAL				
NC-C, NCC-CD, NC-R, NCR-CD	194.7	2.91%	194.7	2.44%
RURAL COMMERCIAL				
R-C	12.2	0.18%	15.4	0.19%
RURAL RESIDENTIAL				
R-R, R-R/C-D	133.6	2.00%	922.0	11.54%
SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL				
S-R	87.5	1.31%	231.0	2.89%
TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT				
TN-D, TND-CD	177.9	2.66%	206.4	2.58%
TOTAL	6,693.1	100.0%	7,992.9	100.0%

Figure: Belmont Zoning Statistics (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



Map: Belmont Overlay Zoning Districts (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



WITH GROWTH COMES OPPORTUNITIES

Belmont has grown quickly, particularly over the last decade, as vacant land has increasingly developed and many more families have moved into new neighborhoods across the City. While the effects of this growth have brought changes to life in Belmont, numerous of which were discussed during community engagement, strong planning can help manage this influx and leverage it to score many positive benefits.

Though there are unique aspects of Belmont’s situation, the common challenges of growth are shared across the entire Charlotte Metropolitan Area. The region grew by

Regional Population Change 2013-2023

ACS 5yr Estimates

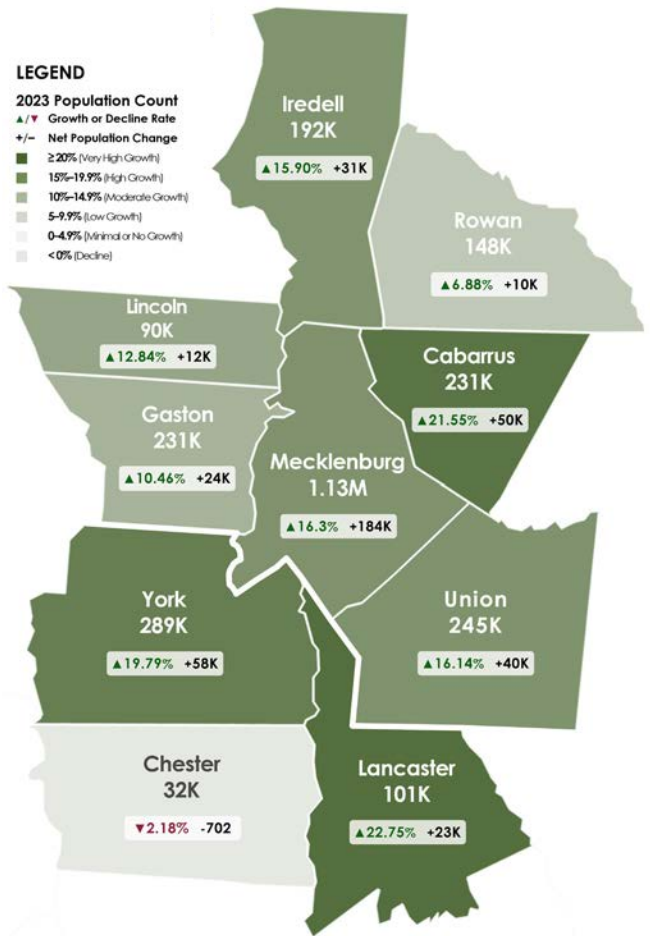


Figure: Charlotte Regional Population Change (data source: US Census Bureau, ACS 5yr estimates, design: Plusurbia Design)

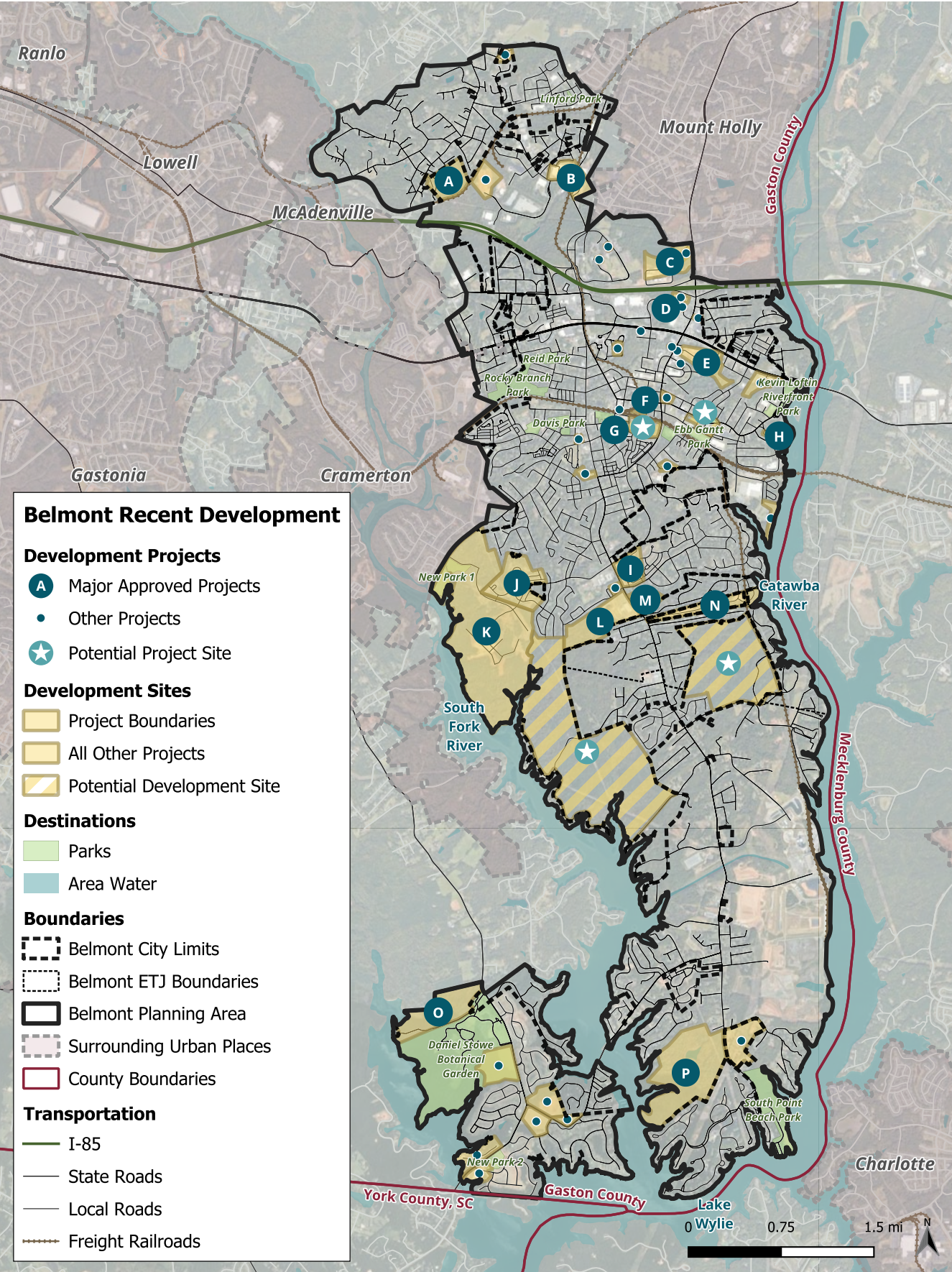
over 16% (451,497 residents) between 2013 and 2023, with Gaston County growing by around 10.5% –below average when compared to other suburban counties, especially Lancaster, Cabarrus, and York. During this time, Belmont grew by a jaw-dropping 48%, and growth within Belmont’s expanding city limits represented about one-fifth of Gaston County’s population increase.

With population growth felt regionally, instead of waiting for external forces to dictate the City’s future direction, use, and character, Belmont has and can continue to leverage this change to strengthen the economic, social, and environmental fabric of the City. In other words, Belmont can remain proactive, ensuring that growth and redevelopment serve as catalysts for a better future.

For instance, growth and redevelopment can help deliver on community needs, such as introducing desired retail and services to an area. On the peninsula, there is land zoned as NC-C, which supports the community goal of attracting a grocery store. By permitting enough complementary, nearby residential development, the conveniences of a grocery-anchored Village Center will become economically feasible.

Growth and redevelopment can also lead to environmental gains by collectively protecting natural lands through cluster development for preservation or passive recreation. The right policies have also already led to private developers funding new trails through their sites, supporting the implementation of Belmont’s future greenway system.

Finally, among other benefits, growth and redevelopment balance the tax base. These forces have already helped Belmont to recover from the decline of the textile industry, and by balancing economic development, land use, infrastructure, and open spaces, the City will remain a well-rounded community into the future.



Map: Belmont Recent Development (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



FEATURED DEVELOPMENT + REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Impactful Recent Projects Since the Last Comprehensive Plan Update

2018 - 2025

Timeframe

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2018

Since the last Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2018, there have been 47 approved development projects in Belmont. These range from building upfits (to accommodate new uses) and the construction of drive-thru restaurants, to the development of several suburban neighborhoods with over 100 homes. New projects have been of various land uses, including industrial and commercial, but are heavily weighted toward new single-family neighborhoods.

The largest of these is the Del Webb 55+ community, which will fulfill many of the South Fork Small Area Plan’s goals. Not far is the intersection of South Point and Nixon Road, where the new Middle School, Harris Teeter, and multiple neighborhoods now form a mixed use Village Center. Excluding campus dormitories, only four multi-family projects have been approved, with the Chronicle Mill redevelopment being the closest to downtown.

Four significant areas remain undeveloped, and are designated as potential project sites. Two are near downtown, while the other pair represent 826 acres along the peninsula.



47  
total projects



1,525  
acres developed

Image: Approved development projects in Belmont, sources: (A) LBA Logistics; (B) Zillow; (C) Property Castle; (D) Zillow; (E) LoopNet; (F) Chronicle Mill; (G) Facebook; (H) Zillow; (I) McMillan Pazdan Smith; (J) WK Dickson; (K) City of Belmont; (L) City of Belmont; (M) WGM Design; (N) Zillow; (O) Gaston County Schools; (P) City of Belmont



OAKS COMMERCE CENTER  
Office warehouse



REVERIE BELMONT (THE MORRIS)  
325 unit multi-family development



BELMONT TOWN CENTER  
Large shopping development, 99 single-family homes



SMITH FARM COMMUNITY  
76 single-family and townhomes



RIVER WEST BUSINESS PARK (ACME MILL)  
Office warehouse



CHRONICLE MILL  
Mixed use mill redevelopment with 238 residential units



NEW YORK BUTCHER SHOPPE  
Downtown retail infill development



RIVER MIST COMMUNITY  
86 single-family homes



CAROMONT HOSPITAL  
New medical facility along I-85



AMBERLEY SUBDIVISION  
188 single-family homes



CAROLINA RIVERSIDE (DEL WEBB)  
809 unit senior residential community



WORRELL'S RIVER  
201 single-family homes



LOFTIN AT MONTCROSS  
172 unit senior apartment community



ABERFOYLE VILLAGE  
102 unit multi-family development, 70 townhomes



BELMONT MIDDLE SCHOOL  
New middle school



LAKEVIEW FARMS  
385 single-family homes



RESPONDING TO GROWTH

How Belmont responds to new growth and redevelopment opportunities will dictate the extent to which these market forces accelerate its economic, social, and environmental aspirations. The tactful policies and programs on the insert at the beginning of this section provide guidance on how to maximize this outcome.

In North Carolina, local governments are unable to levy exactions –a tool requiring developers to pay proportionally for public services expansion. As a partial alternative, Belmont is able to negotiate reasonable stipulations for major developments requiring conditional zoning approval, which may include proportional community benefits, such as setting aside land for public parks or constructing roads and trails.

Exemplifying this is the Carolina Riverside (Del Webb) community, which included construction of a significant portion of the South Fork Parkway (an alternative to South Point Road), various trails, and the dedication of public parkland. These improvements were guided by Belmont’s Comprehensive Plan and implemented through the conditional rezoning process.

In addition to the benefits from this process, the total tax base growth resulting from a strong development market has allowed Belmont to realize a scale of new public amenities and infrastructure improvements not usually possible for a city of just over 16,000. As such, it is crucial these policies continue, leveraging development demand to improve Belmont for those who already live here.

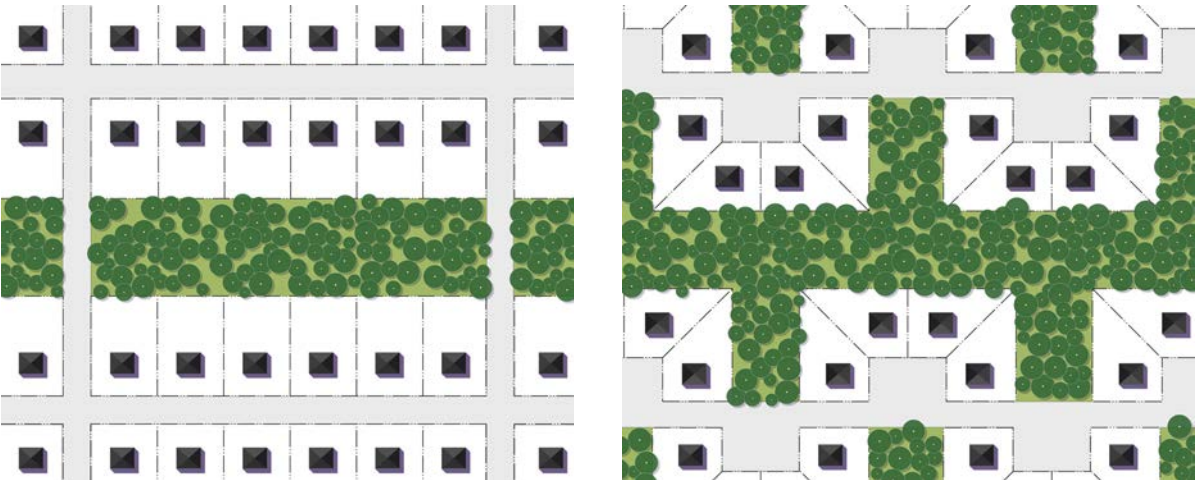


Figure: (Left) Conventional Development; (Right) Cluster Development (source: American Planning Association, design: Plusurbia Design)

CLUSTERING DEVELOPMENT FOR OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Referenced throughout this section, clustering is one of the most effective tools to ensure new development in Belmont will reinforce and contribute to the City’s conservation goals. Particularly for single-family subdivisions, by clustering residential development to certain parts of a site, large and contiguous tracts of open space can be conserved while accommodating the

same amount of homes. Conservation land may be deed restricted by a homeowners association or transferred to the City or land trusts as a permanent easement.

Finally, this development pattern also represents a significant boost in infrastructure efficiency by reducing the linear feet required for road and utility access.

LEVERAGING 17 MILES OF WATERFRONT

Unique among many suburban communities, Belmont is home to 17 miles of waterfront, including Lake Wylie and the Catawba and South Fork Rivers. As a token of their importance to the City, discussions about strengthening Belmont’s offerings and connections to these natural features generated some of the most excitement during community engagement. Participants left nearly 700 votes and comments on this topic alone!

Today, most of these 17 miles are occupied by the edge of private, single-family lots or are part of the Allen Steam Station operation. Often, even in these planned suburban communities, there is no common neighborhood space that provides access or even significant visibility of the waterfront. Rather, shared spaces are inland, while shoreline adjacency is sold as a feature of the neighborhood’s largest homes.

Rekindling this sense of connection to Belmont’s waterfront is critical for the community to maintain its heritage in the face of change. While Duke Energy

regulates shoreline activities, such as permitting piers, docks and shoreline stabilization via the Catawba-Wateree Shoreline Management Plan, the regulation of land use (behind the required buffer zone) is conducted by the City of Belmont and Gaston County.

This arrangement provides Belmont with an opportunity to encourage and plan for additional public and privately owned spaces that interact with the shoreline. When surveyed across eight public workshops and through online polling, the following vision emerged: a conscious mix of trails, parks, waterfront dining opportunities (at more price points) and natural viewsheds.

When planning for these desired features, waterfront dining and park space should be integrated into the recommended Belmont Waterfront Village Center, while trails link this area to stretches of natural shoreline, neighborhoods, other nodes, and blueway access points. See Section 08, “Parks & Recreation” for more on green space and connectivity.



Image: Trails. (Sources: InForum)



Image: Parks and Green Space. (Sources: Beltline.org)



Image: Waterfront Dining. (Sources: Garden & Gun)

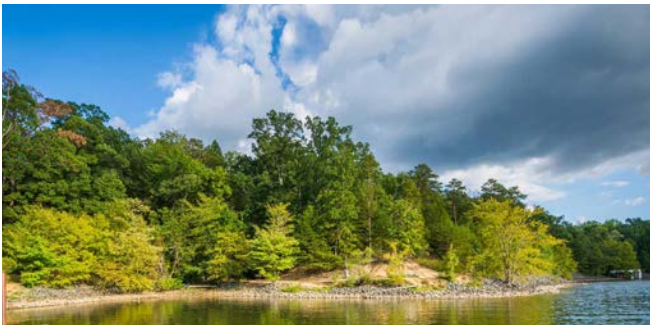


Image: Natural Shoreline. (Sources: Scoop Charlotte)



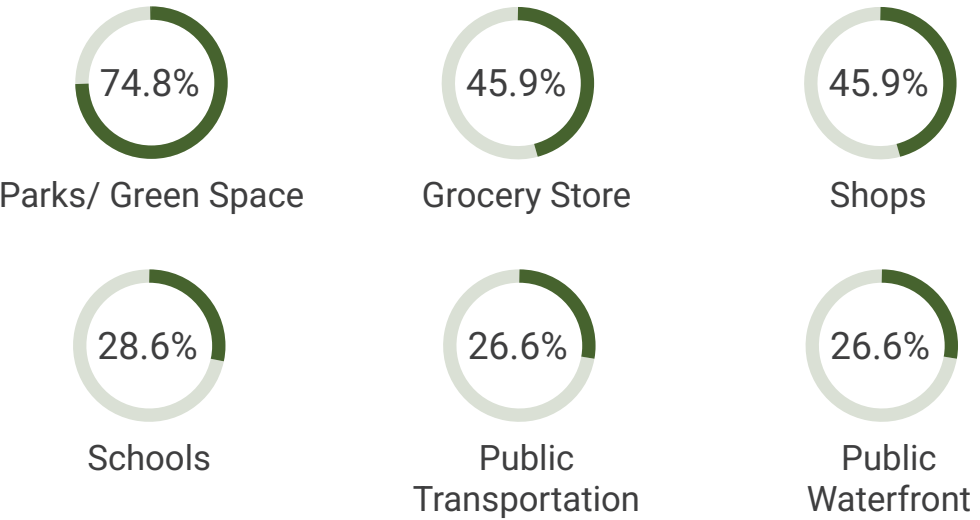
OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Additional housing inventory will strengthen the customer base to help attract desired retailers (such as grocers), especially when paired with a deeper understanding of market needs.
- New private development interest can help Belmont to preserve its natural resources and tree canopy as it grows through cluster and low impact development techniques.
- Envisioned future land use, particularly as part of Village Centers, can unlock new opportunities to partner with private developers to upgrade City infrastructure.
- Areas like the South Point Peninsula, North Belmont, and the Waterfront could benefit from their own focused plans to ensure these areas develop in accordance with community desires.
- Neighborhood services are not located conveniently throughout the City. This results in longer vehicular trips and adds to traffic, rather than needs being met closer to home. Planning for Village Centers can improve this.
- Relatively limited housing choices have contributed to escalating home prices and this presents a hardship for essential workers and others who want to live in Belmont.
- With the Small Area Plan, Wilkinson Boulevard can be better leveraged as a gateway that provides a desirable first impression of Belmont.
- A rewrite of the Land Development Code can strengthen Belmont's approach to form-based regulation.

LAND USE

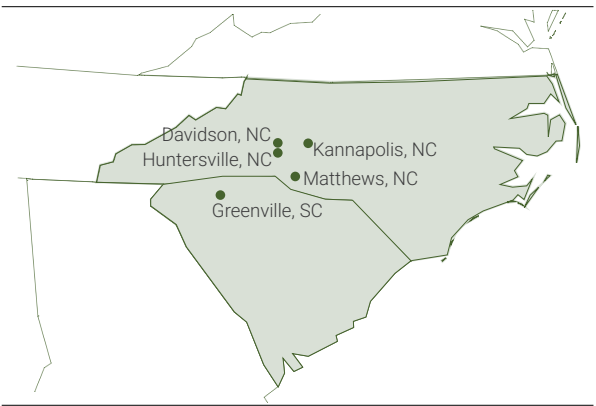
2024-2025 community outreach findings

"WHICH OF THESE DESTINATIONS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF YOUR HOME?"



"IS THERE ANY COMMUNITY BELMONT SHOULD DRAW INSPIRATION FROM?"

1. Davidson, NC
2. Greenville, SC
- 3 (Tied). Birkdale Village (Huntersville, NC); Matthews, NC; Kannapolis, NC



"WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THESE INSPIRATION COMMUNITIES?"

TOP 5 ANSWERS





04

HOUSING

To promote housing choice that tastefully meets the needs of everyone in the community, is aptly supported by infrastructure, and positions Belmont’s neighborhoods for lasting success.

While Belmont has a variety of land uses, industries, and resources that help it thrive as a distinct community, the City’s housing and neighborhoods are one of the most vital. This section has been included to focus specifically on Belmont’s housing typologies. This is in recognition that Belmont’s small-town charm, historic and environmental integrity, family-friendly environment, and safe, stable, attractive neighborhoods are essential elements of its character that must be preserved as it grows and changes.

Of equal importance, limited affordable housing supply, barriers to certain types of homes in Belmont’s Land Development Code, and planning for a combination of build out and conservation of the City’s vacant land are critical topics to direct forward motion.

Like many suburban communities, Belmont is dominated by single-family homes, with most new development concentrated in large subdivisions along the peninsula. Neighborhoods range from large-lot communities like Reflection Pointe, to traditional neighborhood developments (TND) like Eagle Park and cluster developments that preserve larger tracts of open space, such as Amberley.



This icon represents “Housing” content.



Image: Seven Oaks community (source: Tri Pointe Homes).

While over 83% of Planning Area residential land is occupied by detached single-family houses, a number of multi-family projects are located throughout Central Belmont. These are largely market-rate communities along the edges of Downtown and Wilkinson Boulevard. North Belmont also contains multi-family properties, providing much needed senior and affordable housing options. Townhouses are scattered throughout the Planning Area, with manufactured home communities largely located outside of City Limits.

With residential growth as the leading user of undeveloped land, Belmont must decide how the remainder of the Planning Area will be allocated. Under current regulations, full build out of vacant land within City Limits could result in an impressive \$2.1 billion in new taxable development (see Section 05, “Economy”). However, weighing the costs and benefits of thousands of new single-family homes against the need to balance open space conservation and housing affordability will be essential to reaching the optimal outcome.

To achieve this goal, this section explores seven strategies to maximize residential land use. One of the most important is to further diversify Belmont’s housing stock to accommodate missing middle types, capitalize

on infill sites before developing new land, and support community walkability, especially around Downtown. Adjustments to the Land Development Code and building support for small, local developers will be key to realizing this positive change.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

Belmont’s homes and neighborhoods are some of its best defining features. As more homes are eventually developed across the City, strategic regulation and incentivization of TND, cluster development, missing middle, and other techniques will maximize the benefits of growth.

Belmont has countless opportunities for missing middle housing, but unlocking them will require regulatory change. These nimble residential types can both bolster established neighborhoods and promote community character and housing attainability in new ones.





# GOAL 2 HOUSING

To promote housing choice that tastefully meets the needs of everyone in the community, is aptly supported by infrastructure, and positions Belmont’s neighborhoods for lasting success.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should implement the recommendations of the 2024 Missing Middle Housing Study.**

- 1.1. Project** – Foster increased housing supply to meet local demand without compromising community character or overtaxing city infrastructure.
- 1.2. Project** – Amend the Land Development Code to permit a wider range of residential densities to encourage different housing options and provide additional flexibility for multi-family alternatives to apartment buildings.
- 1.3. Project** – The City should encourage mixed-residential subdivisions that include a range of residential types, as opposed to single-type subdivisions permitting only one housing type, through an amendment to the Land Development Code.
- 1.4. Project** – Provide a density or other bonus for developments using a minimum percentage of deed-restricted or managed affordable units.
- 1.5. Project** – Continue to permit and encourage the development of accessory dwellings in single-family neighborhoods, particularly to support residents who wish to age in place and multigenerational households, and establish design criteria to minimize their impact on adjacent properties and neighborhood character.

**POLICY 2. The City should regularly amend the Land Development Code to ensure new residential development is serving all types of residents.**

- 2.1. Project** – The Land Development Code should be amended to accommodate increased demand for smaller homes, cottage courts, courtyard buildings, and homes in mixed-use developments.
- 2.2. Project** – Incorporate more mixed-use building types into the Land Development Code that accommodate new residential demand while adding to the community character of downtown.
- 2.3. Project** – Encourage new neighborhood-scale developments to cluster homes and other buildings to maximize environmental preservation.
- 2.4. Project** – Review the Land Development Code to ensure its regulations do not create unnecessary nonconformities within existing residential areas and amend the code as needed.

**POLICY 3. The City should remove barriers to infill development to promote efficient growth patterns and reduce vacant lots.**

- 3.1. Project** – Explore adding additional land to the Infill Development (INF-D) district, particularly vacant parcels in residential zones.
- 3.2. Project** – Recalibrate the minimum project size for Infill Developments to allow infill at smaller scales.
- 3.3. Project** – Consider incentives for infill development on challenging sites, such as those with brownfields, steep slopes, and dilapidated structures for projects that support attainable housing goals.

**POLICY 4. The City should consider the housing needs of seniors, providing them with the ability to age within their community.**

- 4.1. Project** – Establish a continuing care retirement community use as a by-right use in higher-density residential and mixed-use districts.



RESIDENTIAL COMPOSITION

About 36.6% of Belmont’s Planning Area is composed of residential land uses, in addition to another 0.8% when accounting for mixed use properties. **Like most communities, Belmont’s housing stock is dominated by detached single-family houses.** Public engagement revealed this as the preferred development form for the peninsula, with other housing options best located closer to Downtown, Village Centers, and corridors like Wilkinson Boulevard. When considered with smart growth strategies, like cluster development, and mixed use and missing middle integration where appropriate, Belmont can follow a livability model that embraces its heritage while accomplishing the other goals outlined in this plan.

Belmont’s existing residential land use can be best understood via the following six categories, which are also reflected in Section 03 “Land Use.”

SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE

Generally at densities below six dwelling units per acre (dua), it is unsurprising detached single-family houses account for over 3,600 acres and 82.1% of the Planning Area’s residential land use. This category also encompasses duplexes, which are often of compatible size and intensity to single-family homes. Represented by the brightest yellow, single-family neighborhoods are present throughout Belmont, with the greatest concentration within two miles of Downtown. Outside of the City Limits and ETJ, these neighborhoods are generally comprised of smaller, older homes, often at lower densities. Compare the established neighborhood patterns in North Belmont to new development on the McLean Peninsula.

TOWNHOUSE

Though townhouses are an attached unit type, because they may be bought and sold on their own parcels, they are also considered single-family development. Nearly all townhome developments in the Belmont planning area can be found within city limits.

Townhomes are designated as a distinct building type in the City’s Land Development Code and represent a key source of affordable or attainable housing. The best examples in Belmont feature these unit types integrated into neighborhoods with housing variety, such as Eagle Park and Aberfoyle. These allow families to stay in the same neighborhood during different stages of life.

LOW DENSITY MULTI-FAMILY

Low density multi-family includes single lots with multiple homes, as well as small examples of missing middle housing, such as triplexes and quadruplexes. There are 63 such multiplexes scattered throughout the Planning Area, with most located in more established parts of central Belmont, largely within City Limits. When designed to resemble single-family homes, these unit types represent the best way to integrate broader housing choice into established neighborhoods without disrupting their existing character.

MEDIUM DENSITY MULTI-FAMILY

In Belmont, medium density residential types include both condominium and apartment units. These range widely, from the high-end adaptive reuse apartments at Chronicle Mill and condos at Catawba Mills, to older units with more modest rent, representing naturally-occurring affordable housing. Premium apartments, targeting young professionals and downsizing retirees, are concentrated in central Belmont. There are no apartments on the Peninsula (south of Nixon Road).

Turning to affordability, 82 apartment units are managed by the Belmont Housing Authority as part of a state-funded housing assistance program. Most of these units are located in central Belmont.

MANUFACTURED HOMES

Representing 3.1% of the Planning Area’s residential land, manufactured homes are a broad housing category that

includes pre-1976 “mobile homes” (largely located in two parks along Wilkinson Blvd), post-1976 manufactured homes, and modular homes (assembled on site from factory components). The later two can be found across the Planning Area, often in the same neighborhoods as site-built homes, but almost entirely outside of City Limits.

MIXED USE

Belmont’s mixed use buildings usually pair commercial ground floors with upper floor residential units. Many are located Downtown, helping to sustain foot traffic for local businesses and support vibrancy in the City’s core. Other mixed use types include in-home businesses.

RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES	ACRES	SHARE
<div>Single-family House</div> <div><div>Single-family detached</div><div>Duplex</div></div>	3,665 3,636 29	82.8%
<div>Townhouse</div>	21	0.5%
<div>Low Density Multi-family</div> <div><div>Multi-home Lots</div><div>Triplex/Quadruplex</div></div>	184 179 5	4.2%
<div>Medium Density Multi-family</div> <div><div>Condominiums</div><div>Apartments</div></div>	104 1 103	2.3%
<div>Manufactured Homes</div> <div><div>Modular</div><div>Manufactured</div><div>Mobile</div></div>	364 115 188 61	8.2%
<div>Mixed Use</div>	89	2.0%
RESIDENTIAL TOTAL	4,427	100.0%



Map: Residential structures in Belmont (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design).





# IMPROVING HOUSING CHOICE

In planning for some degree of inevitable build out, Belmont should focus on the expansion of its housing options carefully, decisively, and conservatively. Presented here are seven recommended growth strategies to meet this challenge, promoting the protection of natural resources, increased mobility, and strengthened community character through more attainable residential options.

1. **Establish Neighborhood Conservation Areas**
2. **Promote Traditional Neighborhood Developments**
3. **Increase Neighborhood Infill**
4. **Increase & Incentivize Cluster Development**
5. **Encourage Housing Options for a Wider Spectrum of Families**
6. **Expand Options for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**
7. **Codify Preferred Missing Middle Housing Typologies**

**Image:** Aberfoyle Townhomes, built 2019 (source: Terra Vista Realty).

## 1. NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AREAS

Briefly discussed in Section 07, “Community Character,” the overall goal of all Neighborhood Conservation Areas is to perpetuate strong, viable, livable neighborhoods that are valued by their residents for their history and sense of place. Though they are generally designed for neighborhoods at least 30 years old, this designation can also be considered for newer areas as they become established, particularly those without homeowners associations.

Technically speaking, Neighborhood Conservation Areas are applied to established parts of communities possessing unique and distinctive features that Belmont residents agree should be conserved. Once designated, a Neighborhood Conservation Plan and set of guidelines should be developed to encourage and implement programs that facilitate revitalization, maintenance, and support for neighborhood character. This includes the compatible development of vacant or underused lots.

When pursuing this strategy, neighborhoods looking to create a Conservation Area must define their boundaries through extensive community engagement. Residents and property owners should then work together to prepare desired design guidelines for the district. Neighborhood characteristics such as massing, scale, sites, building orientation, and relationship to the street should be the focus for guidance rather than individual building details. City staff could then help property owners comply with the neighborhood goals. Aesthetic regulations could also be encouraged or required as part of architectural standards for neighborhoods with a homeowner’s association or voluntary deed restrictions.

In North Carolina, aesthetic standards through zoning regulations are only able to be enacted for residential development with five or more units. Therefore, community buy-in to the vision of neighborhood conservation is critical to encourage voluntary compliance in single-family residential areas.

## 2. TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

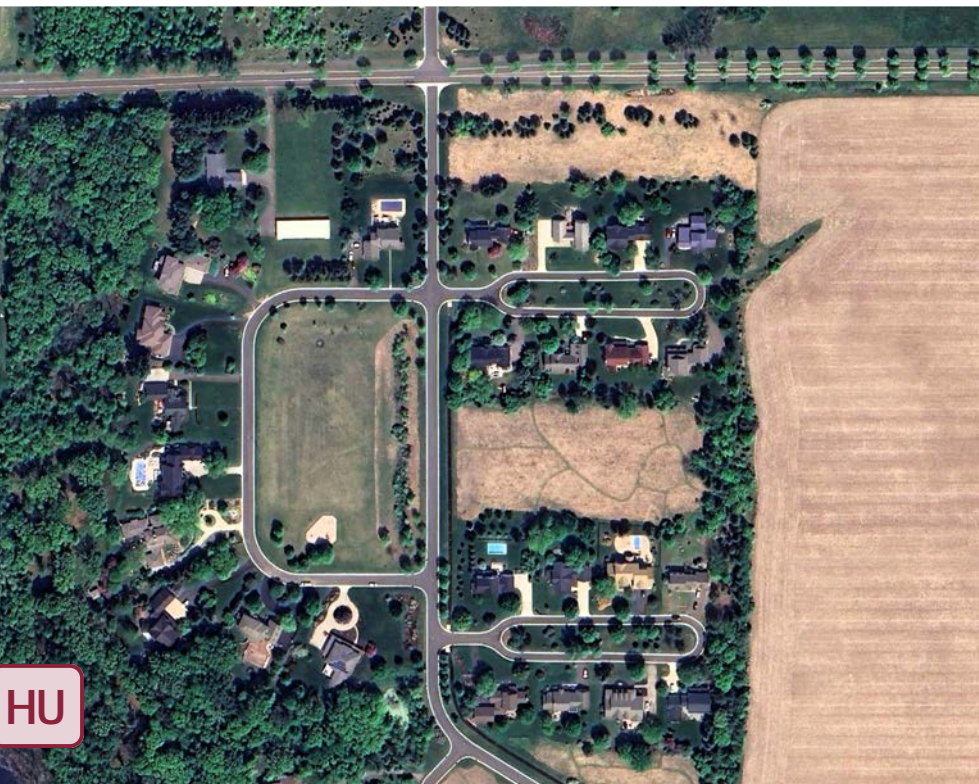
Featured in Section 03, “Land Use,” a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a human-scaled, walkable community with moderate to high residential densities and often a mixed use core. A TND is served by a network of streets and paths suitable for pedestrians as well as vehicles. This development type provides residents the option of walking, biking, or driving to places within their neighborhood. Example neighborhoods in Belmont today include Eagle Park and Hawthorne Park, which contain some of the City’s most valuable property.

Public and private spaces have equal importance within TNDs, creating a balanced community that serves a wide range of home and business owners. The inclusion of civic space –in the form of plazas, greens, parks, squares, and even civic buildings– enhances community identity and value. Beyond this, TNDs may also include a neighborhood commercial center at a “village-like” scale.

TND developments typically have a build out density of approximately 4-6 du/a. In some circumstances, this density could be higher, depending on building types included. Furthermore, because of its compactness, TND is also well suited to cluster growth strategies that maximize natural open space for conservation purposes, shifting density toward the interior of the development. Slightly taller or larger-scale housing options, such as townhouses, quadruplexes, and other missing middle types, should be placed in these central areas, with lower density housing at the edges, creating a smooth transition from adjacent land uses.

Belmont’s Land Development Code promotes this kind of development on sites of 40 to 200 acres. As it is envisioned as the dominant future land use for portions of Belmont, as well as a key development type within Village Center, Downtown Neighborhood, and Mixed Use areas, this threshold could be lowered to as little as 20 acres and allow limited retail typically excluded from G-R zones.





### 3. INFILL DEVELOPMENT

With certain exceptions, settlement and development patterns across the country have tended to follow a “path of least resistance” model. That is, communities spread out, consuming the land that’s least expensive and easiest to build on before transitioning toward more dense patterns that offer better tax values and infrastructure efficiency. Development in Belmont has also followed this trend, replacing woodlands and other natural areas with inefficient, low density growth.

Countering this land consumption –a top priority voiced during community engagement– will require zoning adjustments to better encourage and enable neighborhood and community infill, maximizing open space preservation. This way, growth will tap into existing infrastructure, rather than requiring installation, acceptance, and maintenance of new infrastructure which would add to the City’s operation costs and taxpayer burden.

Section 5.9 of the current Land Development Code sets forth the requirements for Infill Development (INF-D), a zoning district designed to promote this type of growth. The Code defines infill lot development as “the development of new housing or other buildings on scattered vacant sites in a built-up area” with a minimum of 3 acres required for consideration. However, calculations show that only 2.93 acres of land currently zoned INF-D is vacant and available for this purpose!

Additional vacant land should be explored for this zoning type and added to the INF-D district. Simultaneously, the minimum project size should be recalibrated to allow infill at multiple scales, depending on the development type. Finally, incentives should be considered for those that might seek to develop on challenging sites –such as those with brownfields, steep slopes, dilapidated structures and so on, to ensure infill development does not result in exclusively high-end projects. Consideration for non-standard building types will also remove barriers.

**Image:** *Top Left:* Traditional Neighborhood Development in Huntsville, AL (source: Plusurbia Design), *Top Right:* Conservation development in Serenbe, GA (source: Google Earth), *Center:* Traditional Neighborhood Development in North Augusta, SC (source: Plusurbia Design), *Bottom left:* Cluster development example in agricultural context (source: Google Earth), *Bottom Right:* Small restaurant in TND neighborhood, North Augusta, SC (Source: Plusurbia Design)

### 4. CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

Cluster development is a simple concept designed to maximize preserved open space while accommodating new growth. For any given tract of land with a set density, buildings are grouped more tightly together and the remaining land permanently designated for conservation, agriculture, or open space uses, depending on the context.

Already the dominant style for new, larger single-family neighborhoods in Belmont, the Land Development Code defines cluster development as, “the grouping of development on a portion of land in order to conserve land resources and minimize stormwater runoff impacts. This term includes both residential and non-residential development.” Today, the Amberley and Stowe Pointe neighborhoods are examples.

A simple modern example would be a 20-acre site that has an allowable density of four dwelling units per acre (dua) assigned to it by right, resulting in 80 homes. Instead of clear-cutting the site and dividing its entirety into quarter-acre lots, the neighborhood for these 80 homes could be redesigned so each lot is an eighth-acre, resulting in the other half of the site remaining as open space. If natural preservation is the core focus, ownership of this open space could then be transferred to a local land conservancy for perpetual conservation.

This does not effectively increase the overall density of the given site in this example, although this could be achieved with conditional zoning if desired. However, it does place valuable land into protection for future generations to enjoy. This aligns with key stakeholder concerns about loss of treecover and natural resources, while adding value to the neighborhood and Belmont.

To increase the effectiveness and flexibility of cluster development, Belmont could amend the Land Development Code to allow for a sliding scale of density bonuses based on the amount of open space conserved.



5. ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE FAMILIES

The typical house plan portfolio of most of today's popular single-family builders tends to be suited to a very narrow range of family types. The same is generally true of most multi-family apartment builders. At a broad scale, the lack of flexibility in these plans and the increasing diversity of modern family structures are at odds.

Indeed, common non-traditional households include multi-generational families, cohabitating roommates, young couples without children, single-parent households, and seniors –either living alone or with caretakers. For most in these groups, the four bedroom homes being delivered by the market are too large and costly to fit their needs, while the limited apartment stock poses its own challenges. Rather, many Belmont families would be best served by townhomes, duplexes, duets, cottage courts, or ADUs.

As described in Section 03, "Land Use" and Section 05, "Economy," regardless of if TND, infill, or cluster principles are applied to new residential development, the housing delivered should span a broader spectrum of unit types so Belmont families can continue to find housing that works for them in their own city, or even neighborhood, as they move through different stages of life, downsize, or require additional care.

Today, a more creative supply of housing is restricted in Belmont, as the Land Development Code makes multi-family development contingent on conditional zoning approval in every district it is permitted in – besides Highway Commercial or Institutional Campus Development. This creates significant barriers to the development of small (5-12 unit) housing types and may actually push developers to pursue large multi-family developments to make the process worthwhile.

Discussed next, strategies like ADUs and promoting Missing Middle Housing can help to split the difference.

6. ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) have been a part of American neighborhoods for centuries. They are often referred to as "granny flats," "in-law suites," "garage apartments," or "carriage houses" and can serve as additional living quarters for college students, caretakers, grandparents, friends, and many others.

For other families, ADUs become rental units, sources of additional income that capitalize on empty yard space or unnecessary interior square footage while the owners continue to live on the lot in the primary house.

Belmont's Land Development Code defines ADUs as, "an accessory to a single family detached dwelling that is either attached to or separate from the principal dwelling unit (excludes motorized and non-motorized vehicles, cargo containers, and similar units)." Further regulations in Section 3.10.1 limit these units to one per single-family home and an area of not more than 900 square feet.

Carriage house-style ADUs can easily be paired with duplexes, townhouses, and even multi-family buildings. Since 2022, Portland, OR has allowed the construction of detached ADUs paired with duplexes, making it easier to leverage the potential of large lots. This decision has been especially impactful, as all residential zones in the City also allow duplexes, maximizing the number of possible sites for this configuration.

In Belmont, ADU allowance should be explored more fully, along with the discussed infill development guidelines to provide not only increased options for housing, but to also to preserve larger, developable tracts of land.

Image: Top Left: Duplex ADU in Portland, OR (source: Neil Heller), Top Right: ADU over garage (source: St Pete Rising), Center: ADU behind home (source: Duggan Homes), Bottom Left: Quadruplex in single-family neighborhood (Zillow), Bottom Right: Carriage house ADU (source: myhomefloorplans.com)







Image: Cottage Court (source: Rough Draft Atlanta)



Image: Cottage Court (source: Kerney Homes)

## 7. MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Belmont’s future rests most decidedly upon how it addresses housing growth. With limited remaining land, focusing on **allowing for well-designed density in specific areas with building forms that complement the character of the surrounding neighborhood will reduce growth pressures on the peninsula** where infrastructure is more constrained and environmental protection is prioritized.

This gentle density strategy will also **help Belmont to meet its economic goals**, allowing for the additional residential growth required to **attract and support desired employers, retailers, and service providers**. See Section 05, “Economy.” This will increase the population base near these other uses without necessitating the construction of expansive new neighborhoods.

Collectively referred to as “missing middle housing,” these **5-12 unit residential types fit between single-family and large multi-family projects**, providing alternative residential options with minimum impact on traffic or neighborhood character. In partnership with the Centralina Regional Council, Belmont conducted a Housing Choices Study (2023-2024) that **identified community support for**



Image: Courtyard Building (source: City of Tigard)



Image: Courtyard Building (source: Plusurbia Design).

integrating missing middle types like **cottage courts and courtyard buildings into the Land Development Code**. By incorporating these new residential options into the Code as their own Building Types, their development can be streamlined, separating them from the more intense and conditional approval processes required for large apartment projects.

Location-wise, missing middle types will fit best in areas where slightly higher density is envisioned. This includes the **Downtown Neighborhood, Mixed Use, Neighborhood Conservation, and Traditional Neighborhood future land use classifications, but the missing middle may be most integral as part of Belmont’s Village Centers**. Within each center, buildings should scale from higher density, mixed use types at their core to a context of single-family detached houses on their edges. Due to their medium scale, **missing middle types will be essential to ensure a smooth transition** between these development patterns.

Finally, creative detached types, such as **cottage courts, could blend seamlessly with certain Suburban Neighborhood areas**, depending on site context.

## EXAMPLE MISSING MIDDLE PROJECT 1



Image: Missing middle project 1, hypothetical site plan (source: Plusurbia Design & R. John Anderson Consulting).

### TWO QUADRUPLICES ON A VACANT LOT (8 NEW UNITS)

Zoned G-R, this example vacant lot in Belmont could readily accommodate one to two quadruplexes, or even an eight-plex, providing an interior courtyard and one parking space per unit off-street. While an eight-plex would allow the City and neighborhood to exercise aesthetic controls, each quadruplex could easily be constructed at a similar scale to the surrounding detached single-family homes.

Recent amendments to the North Carolina building code allow for four unit buildings to be covered by the North Carolina version of the International Residential Code (IRC) and do not require fire sprinklers –a significant expense that previously made the construction of small missing middle projects economically infeasible. With supportive State legislation now in place, if the City expanded the G-R zoning district to permit new four to eight unit missing middle Building Types, larger sites could be unlocked for a broader realm of character-appropriate residential options.

To support new missing middle types, it is **important to expand the way development is regulated beyond the overly simple metric of density** –that is, calculating the number of dwelling units per net acre. For example, this parcel is approximately 14,000 SF. There are three parcels



Image: Missing middle project 1, hypothetical axon view (source: Plusurbia Design).

this size in a net acre, so under the G-R zoning district’s maximum density of six dwelling units per acre, two detached houses or a duplex are the limits of what could be built within today’s regulations.

By adjusting housing regulations to focus on the number of structures per acre instead of counting dwelling units, more housing options could be accommodated while still adhering to the same building forms as the surrounding neighborhood. For instance, each quadruplex could be constructed as a 2.5-story building with a single shared entry, closely resembling a single-family home.

Under market forces alone, one large single-family home would likely be delivered –an easy-to-permit project that could sell due to this parcel’s proximity to downtown. However, if Belmont is serious about promoting missing middle opportunities, limiting the clearing of new land, and boosting walkability, removing barriers in the Land Development Code will be key.

Once the opportunity is unlocked, this missing middle project would likely be more valuable to both the developer and tax base than a single luxury home, all the while demonstrating excellent infill.



EXAMPLE MISSING MIDDLE PROJECT 2



Image: Missing middle project 2, hypothetical site plan (source: Plusurbia Design & R. John Anderson Consulting).



Image: Missing middle project 2, hypothetical axon view (source: Plusurbia Design).

QUADRUPLEX, NEW HOUSE & BACKYARD ADUs  
(14 NEW UNITS)

In this example, additional units could be added to several parcels where a relatively small house is sited on an approximately half-acre lot, retaining the existing house with all additional units added to the rear of the parcel. This solution does not disrupt the existing character of the neighborhood, all while integrating new housing options and flexibility for homeowners.

Neighborhoods like this one, containing former mill worker homes and modest post-WWII houses with sizable yards, are typical of central Belmont. Most are zoned G-R, limiting them to no more than six dwelling units per acre. Revising how density is calculated to a per primary structure strategy will open up many opportunities for small-scale residential infill, including the quadruplex suggested. Additionally, one attached and one detached ADU per single-family lot could offer another alternative to add housing with just one outbuilding.

This concept includes the following housing types and lot configurations:

- New quadruplex
- Existing single-family house with attached and detached ADUs

- New single-family house with a detached ADU
- Existing single-family house with a detached ADU

In this case, additional units could be added to the rear of 210 x 115' and 210 x 70' lots, with the largest of these subdivided into two to accommodate a new detached house and ADU. The two lots to the west have garage or parking access off a side street while the 100 x 200' lots to the east both show an attached and detached ADU with driveway access to the rear of the lot.

Finally, one new quadruplex could be accommodated by a vacant lot on the side street, but would require changes to the Land Development Code's Building Types and minimum lot sizes to be permitted.

Critically, each lot in this example involves four or fewer units, keeping the properties under the four-unit threshold that provides access to 30-year residential mortgage underwriting from the VA, FHA, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac. Furthermore, these projects could be done incrementally with less upfront capital, making them well-suited to small local builders and developers.

EXAMPLE MISSING MIDDLE PROJECT 3



Image: Missing middle project 3, hypothetical site plan (source: Plusurbia Design & R. John Anderson Consulting).



Image: Missing middle project 3, hypothetical axon view (source: Plusurbia Design).

MISSING MIDDLE COMMUNITY ON VACANT LOTS  
(108 NEW UNITS)

This concept on a series of large, vacant parcels demonstrates how adjacent sites near Downtown Belmont could be incrementally redeveloped into a variety of modest 4-12 unit missing middle housing types. Depending on their configuration, these Building Types, including courtyard buildings, cottage courts, and quadruplexes, are highly compatible due to their related scale and pedestrian focus.

While this site is significant enough to lend itself to a single large project, each parcel could be completed independently with a compatible Building Type by a different developer. Overall, cultivating a local cohort of small developers is the key to nuanced infill, as is streamlining the local approval process.

Completed in 2024, Belmont's Housing Choices Study recommends new missing middle types be approved by right (4 units or less) or administratively (5-12 units), like a minor subdivision, to simplify their development. Under State law, the latter of these also allows for aesthetic standards to be defined and required.

Additionally, rather than using the current density metric, regulating these properties by how many of an allowed

missing middle Building Type they include will be more effective at producing the desired results.

Other communities across the country are now using pre-approved and pre-reviewed stock plans to further streamline these development processes, including Spokane, WA, South Bend, IN, and Groveland, FL. Pre-approved plans are curated stock plans that have been through the municipality's building permit plan check, requiring just a site plan for the issue of a permit. Pre-reviewed plans have not been through this process, but have approved exterior designs.

This configuration includes two groups of 12-unit courtyard buildings along with pods of quadruplexes and other residential types. Surface parking is provided at the rear of each parcel.

Other Building Types featured in this concept include a cottage court, three-story walk-ups –which could support mixed use development (such as offices or retail spaces on higher traffic streets), and duplex or single-family units over garages. Two quadruplexes to the north demonstrate liner concepts for a large building's blank facade.



OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Missing middle typologies with clear public support could represent a key source of character-friendly housing diversity if integrated into the Development Code.
- Buyer preference has shown that the older mill houses in Belmont are desirable and this housing type could be a model for new, modernized equivalents.
- Similarly, renovated mills in Belmont are a common-sense prototype for multi-family housing. This concept has been generally embraced by citizens and could be replicated successfully.
- Missing middle housing types are currently classified as the same land use as major multi-family developments, resulting in barriers to their construction.
- Multi-family residential development at all scales is key to serving a broader range of Belmont residents, but requires a burdensome conditional approval process in nearly every zoning district –even mixed use centers.
- Regulation of missing middle housing development through typical density metrics (dwelling units per net acre) disallows most projects, despite keeping with neighborhood character.
- Land prices could potentially “edge out” smaller developers and entrepreneurs who see Belmont as an otherwise great opportunity to build a variety of housing.
- Belmont’s Development Code already allows for Traditional Neighborhood Developments to be permitted by-right, supporting this sought-after development type.

HOUSING

2024-2025 community outreach findings

“WHERE DO YOU THINK THESE TYPES OF HOUSING BELONG IN BELMONT?”

● = Recommended by Comprehensive Plan with special considerations.



LOW DENSITY SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

- 1. Semi-rural Areas
- 2. Downtown/City Center
- 3. Undeveloped Areas



DUPLEX/TRIPLEX/QUAD

- 1. Existing Neighborhoods
- 2. Village Centers
- 3. Downtown/City Center



TOWNHOMES

- 1. Downtown/City Center
- 2. Village Centers
- 3. Semi-rural Areas



LOW-RISE MULTI-FAMILY

- 1. Highway Corridors
- 2. Downtown/City Center
- 3. Existing Neighborhoods



MIXED USE MULTI-FAMILY

- 1. Downtown/City Center
- 2. Highway Corridors
- 3. Village Centers



TRAD. NEIGHBORHOOD SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

- 1. Existing Neighborhoods
- 2. Undeveloped Areas
- 3. Semi-rural Areas



COTTAGE COURT

- 1. Village Centers
- 2. Downtown/City Center
- 3. Semi-rural Areas



COURTYARD BUILDINGS

- 1. Village Centers
- 2. Downtown/City Center
- 3. Existing Neighborhoods



MID-RISE MULTI-FAMILY

- 1. Highway Corridors
- 2. Downtown/City Center
- 3. Village Centers

Public engagement revealed support for lower density houses and townhomes on Belmont’s edges, with strategically increased density approaching the City’s core through mixed use and missing middle development.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS



# 05

# ECONOMY

To foster a **vibrant and sustainable economy** supported by a **diversified tax base** that **balances residential growth with employment and commerce**.

Like most growing communities in the Charlotte metropolitan area, Belmont is experiencing shifts, sometimes substantial, in its economic and demographic composition. Locally, these shifts are driven by a booming housing, industrial, and to a lesser extent, retail market. Since 2018, new development along the peninsula has resulted in an uptick of the City’s total population and workforce. Paired with bold business recruitment and support, continuation of these trends will unlock new potential to strengthen Belmont’s economic position.

To better understand these shifts, their implications, and the potential for Belmont’s vacant land, **economic, market, and build out analyses were completed as part of this Comprehensive Plan update**. This section presents the summary findings of this analysis to help identify current market realities and specific market-based opportunities for growth and development, grounding this document’s policies with data.

This section includes:

- A **demographic analysis** of the study area that examines trends in population and income, including a market segmentation study that presents additional characteristics and profiles of Belmont residents.



*This icon represents “Economy” content.*



Image: CaroMont Regional Medical Center – Belmont, opened in stages during 2024-2025 (source: CaroMont Health)

- An **industry analysis** that includes employment data and presents general market indicators and trends.
- A **real estate market analysis** that examines gains and losses in the trade area across the multifamily, office, industrial, and retail sectors and identifies opportunities for growth for each.
- A **build out analysis** that explores the amount and type of development that could occur on Belmont’s vacant land under current regulations and its potential tax base impact .

For this analysis, five geographies were studied, which are referred to collectively herein as the **Market Area**: the City of Belmont (Belmont), the 28012 Zip Code (Planning Area), Gaston County (County), the 10-County Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC Core Based Statistical Area (Charlotte Metro), and the State of North Carolina (State). In this section, to approximate Belmont’s entire Planning Area, the 28012 Zip Code was used, which closely resembles its boundaries while offering more accurate data estimates.

Demographic and market data for the analyses were sourced from the US Census Bureau and other trusted providers, including ESRI, Lightcast, and CoStar Group.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

Most significantly, the investigations in this section highlight Belmont has an opportunity to better meet the economic needs of its residents and strengthen itself for the future. Advantages including a growing population, a well-educated workforce, regional market demand, and a strong local quality of life can help Belmont foster and recruit new businesses to support this goal.

Nearly all of Belmont’s residents leave the City for work, while Belmont’s jobs are almost entirely filled by commuters. This pattern reveals the need to improve attainable workforce housing options, as well as the opportunity to attract higher wage employers in diversified sectors.

Running errands in Belmont today is time-consuming. Attracting more local goods and service providers, both in variety and location will increase convenience, decrease congestion, and keep sales tax dollars in Belmont.

There is opportunity to create regional destinations. Arts and waterfront investments could become new economic drivers for Belmont, supporting the development of the Village Centers outlined in Section 03, “Land Use.”





# GOAL 3

# ECONOMY

To foster a **vibrant and sustainable economy** supported by a **diversified tax base** that **balances residential growth with employment** and commerce.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should create local incentives to recruit new economic development.**

- 1.1. Project** – Meet with economic development partners to inventory existing messaging, as well as determine gaps in marketing and toolsets.
- 1.2. Project** – Identify and market available infill sites, including a vision for the most important properties.
- 1.3. Project** – Cultivate relationships with regional developers to communicate opportunities within Belmont.

**POLICY 2. The City should attempt to attract a broad range of employers to reduce commuting outflow from Belmont and increase local median wages.**

- 2.1. Project** – Facilitate a Branding and Market Positioning Plan specifically for business recruitment, including: Belmont’s specific economic market position, testimonial ads from recent and new investors who have chosen Belmont, and an economic development marketing package.

**POLICY 3. The City should promote a diversity of businesses and services.**

- 3.1. Project** – Inventory the existing business and service mix, determining the types and potential locations for needed new businesses and services.

- 3.2. Project** – Review the Land Development Code to make sure it does not discourage or prevent a healthy range of business possibilities and revise the code, if necessary.

- 3.3. Project** – Update the Land Development Code to allow home daycares in as many districts as possible to support Belmont’s working population.

**POLICY 4. The City should attract retailers that service the needs of existing residents, so they do not need to leave Belmont to meet daily shopping needs.**

- 4.1. Project** – Based on community feedback, prioritize attracting grocery stores, specialty food retailers, women’s clothing stores, jewelry stores, electronic stores, and building material stores.
- 4.2. Project** – Foster mixed use development in Village Centers and recruit businesses that will support existing and future residential development.
- 4.3. Project** – Continue to recruit and support businesses that enhance the work-life integration of potential start-ups and young entrepreneurs.

**POLICY 5. The City should encourage development near all public trails that services an increased volume of cyclists, joggers, and walkers.**

- 5.1. Project** – Consider developing a zoning overlay for parcels adjacent to completed sections of greenway to cultivate active, trail-oriented development.

**POLICY 6. The City should plan for and incentivize the development of new waterfront destinations to help drive a healthy economy grounded in what makes Belmont unique.**

- 6.1. Project** – Work to cultivate a Village Center in the marina area south of Wilkinson Blvd, and develop a Small Area Plan when appropriate.
- 6.2. Project** – Identify other opportunities to create meaningful, publicly-accessible locations along the waterfront.

**POLICY 7. The City should focus on the creation of destinations which are well connected to nearby land uses and mobility options to attract people, create economic opportunities for businesses, and add diversity and interest to the community.**

- 7.1. Project** – Attract independent downtown shops, entertainment venues, and cultivate new regional destinations.



**7.2. Project** – Leverage Belmont’s growing recreational assets, the Catawba River, and under-used mill properties to recruit recreation-based industries, such as the manufacturing of kayaks, cycling components, recreation textiles, etc.

**7.3. Project** – Encourage appropriate-scale, mixed use development that is well-integrated into the existing fabric of downtown and Village Centers.

**POLICY 8. The City should strive to be the region’s most desirable city for entrepreneurs, small industry and technology-based business.**

**8.1. Project** – Collaborate with co-working organizations and post-secondary educational institutions to foster “economic gardening” techniques that grow startup businesses from within the local market, sharing knowledge resources, including market research, intellectual capital, and more.

**8.2. Project** – Collaborate with Gaston College’s Textile Technology Center and private sector investors to pursue a “makerspace” in Belmont.

**8.3. Project** – Partner with Montcross Chamber, Gaston College, and other agencies to determine gaps in small business support and develop a plan to grow programming in those areas.

**8.4. Project** – Explore ways to preserve and maintain Belmont’s historic connections to the textile industry while continuing to foster

innovation and industrial tax base growth.

**8.5. Project** – Identify opportunities to engage with Belmont Abbey College, Gaston College, and UNC Charlotte to support educational work that advances key local industries and employment.

**POLICY 9. The City should strive to have the region’s most vibrant arts community.**

**9.1. Project** – Expanding on the success of downtown mural grants, the City should develop a Public Arts Program inspired by Charlotte’s 1% Art Ordinance.

**9.2. Project** – Explore the development of a performing arts venue.

**9.3. Project** – Cultivate a diversity of cultural uses, including attracting art galleries to downtown.

**POLICY 10. Providing all of the infrastructure, facilities, and support services required by this plan will generate numerous expenses for the City, and while no one source of funding will pay for all those improvements, the City will need to draw on numerous potential sources.**

**10.1. Project** – Pursue as many funding strategies as possible to accomplish the various projects identified in the Comprehensive Plan.



POPULATION

The entire Charlotte region has seen significant population growth since the turn of the century, and Belmont has been no exception.

It's worth noting that data projections developed by Nielsen/Claritas, a respected global provider of market information, were cited in the 2018 City of Belmont Comprehensive Land Use Plan and predicted the population of Belmont would outpace growth rates countywide and statewide with the population projected to increase 5.4% - 5.6% by 2022.

The 2023 population of Belmont is estimated to be 16,451 people. That is an overwhelming 44.6% increase over 2017 (10,972). In fact, since 2017, Belmont's growth by percentage has far outpaced the entirety of the Market Area and shattered previous forecasting.

The population is expected to continue to grow to 17,941 people by 2028. This represents a more modest pace of growth of about 9.1% from 2023 to 2028. However,

Belmont upset the previous trend forecast for 2017 to 2023 and could do so again.

Across the Planning Area, the 2023 population was estimated to be 28,614, with a 6.5% increase to 30,475 over the next five years.

Overall, Belmont is likely to remain a highly attractive community for residential development. Its location immediately across the Catawba from Charlotte, available land area, and key community assets, including Downtown, easily accessible waterfront and a strong parks system, will continue to amplify demand.

Harnessing the benefits of this private investment to build the strongest community possible will be critical for future economic resiliency and continued high quality of life.

By 2028, Belmont's median age is expected to continue to grow to 42.0 years, representing a modest 0.7% increase.

This trend is likely explained by two factors:

- 1. Belmont's existing residents are choosing to stay in the community. High quality of life, access to rich amenities, and a positive future outlook encourages long term residents.
- 2. Belmont's new housing is overwhelmingly tilted toward large, detached single-family homes in an increasingly unaffordable geography, meaning only certain segments of the population, particularly older, wealthier buyers are able to easily find a new home.

AGE

Belmont's population had a median age of 41.7 years in 2023. This is an 8.6% increase from 38.4 years in 2017, indicating that Belmont's population is growing older.

Belmont's median age is less than that of the slightly larger Planning Area (28012 Zip Code approximation) at 42.6 years, but almost equal to the County (41.6 years). Additionally, the population is decidedly older than the Charlotte Metro (38.3 years) and the State (39.4 years).

Overall, nearly 42% of Belmont's population is in the 35-64 age range, representing the largest portion of the population. However, the fastest growing segment overall are those over age 65, jumping from 11.8% to 15.0% of the population between 2013 and 2023.

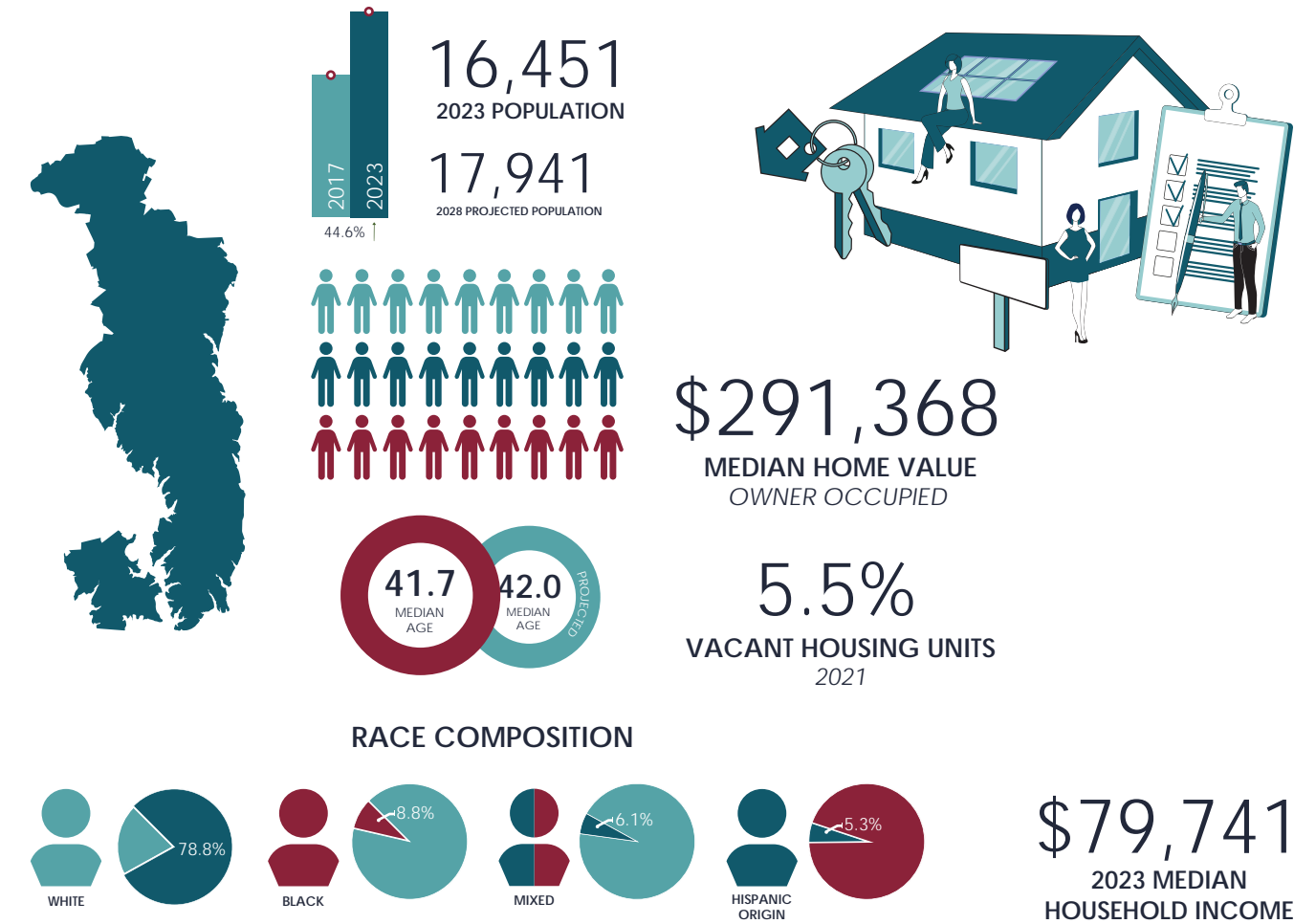


Figure: Demographic, Economic, and Housing Snapshot of Belmont (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)

RACE

Belmont is increasingly called home by a more diverse population, seeing a measurable change in its racial composition in recent years. From 2018 to 2023, the percentage of white residents dropped from 84.0% to 78.8%.

This percentage is slightly less than the Planning Area (28012 Zip Code) (78.9%) but is higher than the County (67.8%), the Charlotte Metro (58.6%) and the State (61.2%).

In summary, the data for Belmont and the Planning Area reflect considerably less racial diversity than the Charlotte Metro and the State as a whole. Belmont is still nearly 79% white, with a diversity index of 43, which measures the probability that two people from the same area will

be a different race/ethnic group. A higher index group indicates a greater probability.

The percentage of residents who are Black or African-American at 8.8% is nearly half that of the County at 17.8% and much lower than the Charlotte Metro and the State at 21.7% and 20.4%, respectively. Black or African-American residents are the largest minority group, followed by mixed-raced residents (two or more races) at 6.1%, Hispanic residents at 5.3%, Asian residents at 3.4% and followed by all other races at 2.4% or less.

Hispanic is recognized as an ethnicity by the Census Bureau, so these residents may classify themselves as any race.



INCOME

Median household income in Belmont increased from \$49,546 in 2017 to \$79,741 in 2023; a very significant 60.9% increase over just that six-year period. This is projected to increase further over the next five years (2023 to 2028) by an additional 15.1%, bringing the median household income to \$91,779.

This forecasts a continued trend in which the income of Belmont residents (as an indicator also of presumed wealth) exceeds all other geographies studied in the Market Area. This income is not a factor directly related to employment potential specific to Belmont because the income is generated in multiple ways and often from beyond the Market Area.

In fact, research reveals only 337 Belmont residents actually hold jobs within the City itself –data partially explained by the types of jobs available in the community.

GEOGRAPHIC VARIATION

Median household income varies considerably throughout Belmont’s Planning Area, generally increasing as one travels south down the peninsula. This geographic difference aligns with the location of Lake Wylie, as well as the area’s historical development patterns. That is, the peninsulas are dominated by more expensive properties built during the last three decades, whereas North Belmont includes more naturally occurring affordable housing, accessible to families with a wider range of incomes.

Communities in North Belmont, including several neighborhoods outside of City Limits, have the lowest median household incomes, with one census block group earning below \$30,000 annually.

Other lower income areas include the neighborhoods between I-85 and the railroad line, which consist of smaller and older homes in East Belmont, Browntown

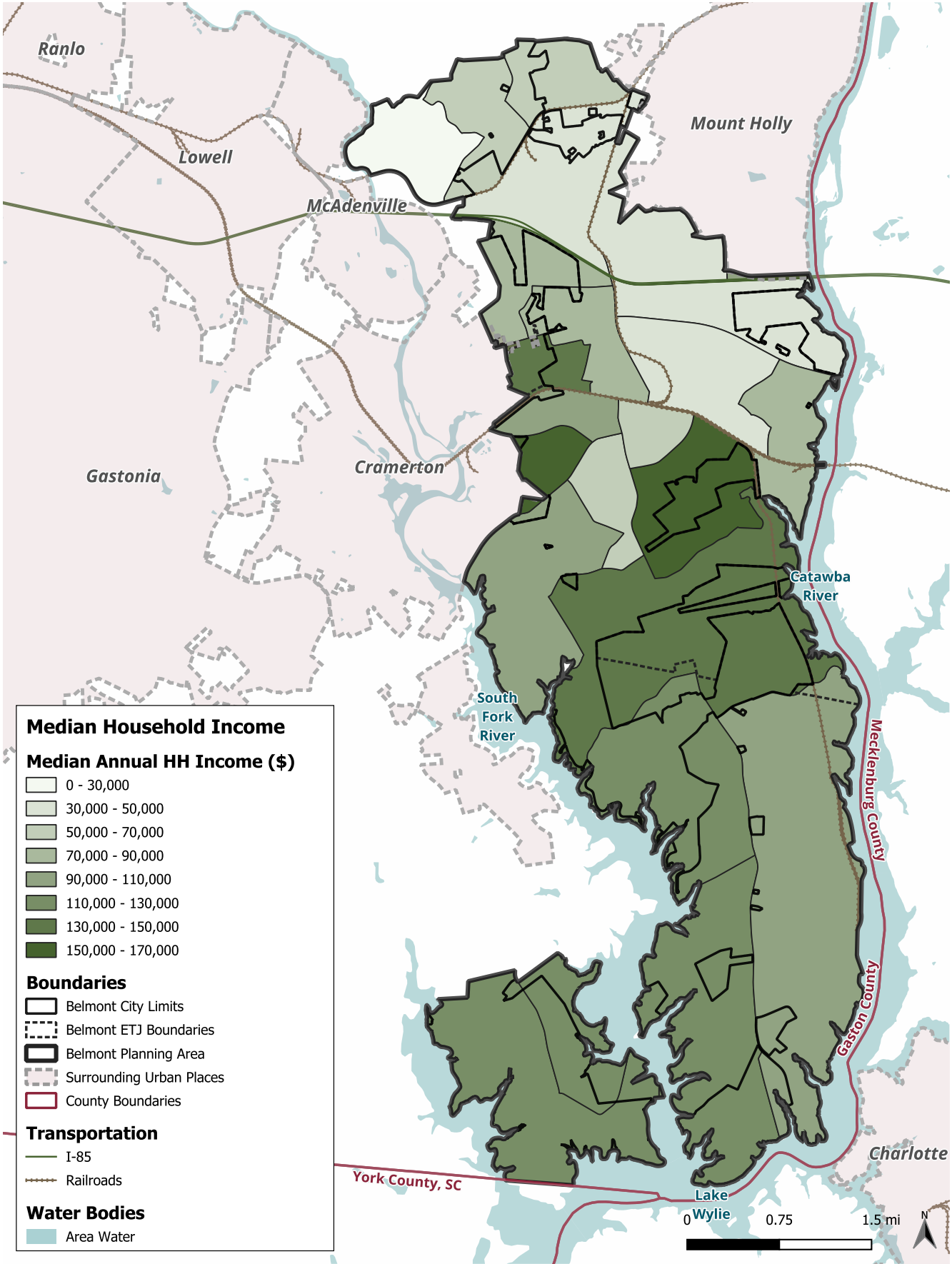
The difference between this relatively high level of median income and that which is associated with poverty or near-poverty levels is significant. The U.S. Census Bureau defines poverty using a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition. The official poverty definition takes into account income before taxes and is exclusive of non-cash benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP (food assistance). The 2024 federal poverty guidelines state that for a family of three, including two children, the maximum income is \$25,820.

In Belmont, approximately 10.8% of families were below poverty levels in 2023. This is compared to about 10.7% for the Charlotte Metro and 12% for the State. While Belmont ranks about average in its region, it is important to note the increased struggle of living in poverty in a community where market rates reflect higher-income demand, meaning lower-income residents face a significantly increased cost of living.

(in ETJ), and two mobile home communities. Notably, Belmont Abbey College may be disregarded, as this data is based upon dormitory student incomes.

Interestingly, Belmont’s highest income census blocks are not located on the peninsula, but include the Glenmere and Pinsto Forest neighborhoods, as well as Stowe Pointe, Laurel Walk, and Belmont Reserve. These two areas have an estimated median household income of \$150,000 - 170,000 annually.

The majority of Belmont’s farthest south neighborhoods are home to families with \$130,000 - 150,000 of annual income, with the area opposite the Allen Plant Steam Station including the wealthier households.



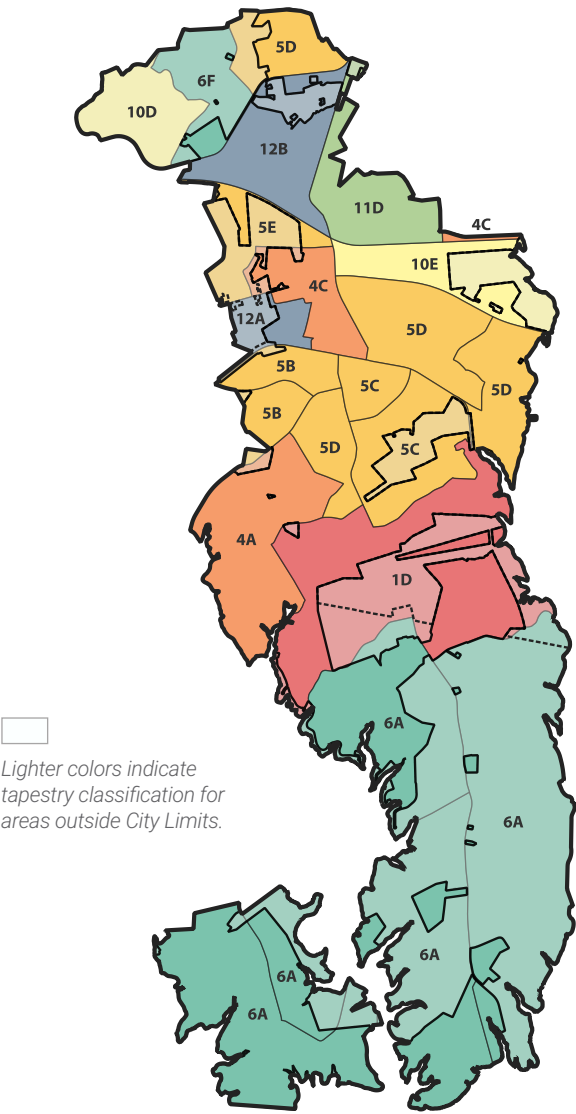
Map: Median Household income (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)



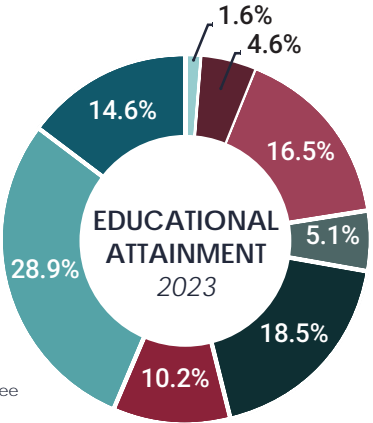
EDUCATION

Belmont has a well-educated population by several measures. It currently has the highest level of attainment among the comparative geographies for “Bachelor’s Degree” (28.9%) and “Graduate Professional Degree” (14.6%), as of 2023. For reference, in several of these measures, Gaston County underperformed the Metro-wide totals, meaning Belmont is particularly standout.

Belmont also has the lowest percentage of residents (over 25 years old) with less than a ninth grade education (1.6%) or who are solely high school graduates at 16.5%.



**Figure:** Educational Attainment of Residents (2023) (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)  
**Map:** Geographic Distribution of Tapestry Segments in Belmont (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)



TAPESTRY SEGMENTS		CITY HOUSEHOLDS	
5D: Rustbelt Traditions		27.6%	
5C: Parks & Rec		15.0%	
6A: Green Acres		14.7%	
5B: In Style		10.9%	
4C: Middleburg		9.2%	
1D: Savvy Suburbanites		7.8%	
4A: Workday Drive		6.7%	
10E: Rural Bypasses		5.3%	
12B: Traditional Living		1.6%	
12A: Family Foundations		1.1%	
5E: Midlife Constants	Outside City Limits		
10D: Down the Road	Outside City Limits		
6F: Heartland Communities	Outside City Limits		

MARKET SEGMENTATION

A broader understanding of the makeup of Belmont’s market and its residents can be made by performing what’s called a **Market Segmentation Study**. This type of analysis describes psychographics, such as behavioral traits, personal preferences and consumer patterns based on various “segments” that make up the market. Segments are groupings based on population characteristics such as age, income, education, family structure, and even values.

For this study, ESRI’s Tapestry Segmentation tool was used. The tool outlines 14 broader segments ( “dominant tapestries”) which are defined as “LifeModes.” Each LifeMode has subsegments, of which there are 68 total.

According to this analysis, Belmont is composed of 10 subsegments, listed on the opposite page. The Planning Area has three more in unincorporated North Belmont.

Spotlighting older neighborhoods surrounding downtown, Belmont’s top subsegment is “Rustbelt Traditions,” representing many middle class households and long-term city residents. The “Parks & Rec” segment, with around half as many households, is concentrated southeast of downtown, and noted for kid-friendly neighborhoods with a mix of housing types that have attracted young couples. Rounding out the top three, “Green Acres,” a segment that dominates both peninsulas, features large lot homes and an emphasis on the suburban lifestyle.

Belmont subsegments with fewer households include “In Style” –professional couples, often without children, with a focus on arts and education, “Middleburg,” representing older, smaller home neighborhoods marked by new development, and “Savvy Suburbanites” –well educated and well capitalized households, often empty nesters.

Tapestry segments will continue to evolve as Belmont’s neighborhoods change and new ones are developed.

TOP SEGMENT PROFILES

RUSTBELT TRADITIONS

A mix of married-couple families and singles living in older developments of single-family homes. While varied, the workforce is primarily white collar, with a higher concentration of skilled workers in manufacturing, retail trade, and health care. Rustbelt Traditions represents a large market of stable, hardworking consumers with modest incomes but an average net worth of nearly \$400,000. Family oriented, they value time spent at home. Most have lived, worked, and played in the same area for years.

PARKS & REC

These suburbanites have achieved the dream of home -ownership. They have purchased homes that are within their means. Their homes are older, and townhomes and duplexes are not uncommon. Many of these families are two-income married couples approaching retirement age; they are comfortable in their jobs and their homes, budget wisely, but do not plan on retiring anytime soon or moving. Neighborhoods are well established, as are the amenities and programs that supported their now independent children through school and college. The appeal of these kid-friendly neighborhoods is now attracting a new generation of young couples.

GREEN ACRES

Avid do-it-yourselfers, they maintain and remodel their homes with all the necessary power tools to accomplish the jobs. Gardening, especially growing vegetables, is a priority, again with the right tools, tillers, tractors, and riding mowers. Outdoor living features a variety of sports: hunting and fishing, motorcycling, hiking and camping, and even golf.



INDUSTRY SECTORS & EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Belmont’s economy is built on a broad range of industry sectors within a relatively small Market Area. This appreciable diversity is increasing, but is still driven by these top five sectors, representing 63.0% of employment:

2023 PLANNING AREA INDUSTRY COMPOSITION		
INDUSTRY SECTOR	JOB COUNT	SHARE OF TOTAL
Retail Trade	1,402	14.7%
Manufacturing	1,349	14.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	1,201	12.6%
Construction	1,108	11.6%
Government	944	9.9%
SUBTOTAL	6,004	63.0%
All Other Sectors	3,525	37.0%
TOTAL	9,529	100.0%

Figure: Industry Composition of Belmont Planning Area by Sector (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)

As of 2023, 9,529 people were employed within Belmont’s Planning Area (approximated by the 28012 Zip Code area). This is an increase of 12.6% (or 1,064 jobs) since 2013.

Of the job types analyzed, two trends should be noted during this ten-year time period. Jobs in the construction sector increased by 777 (331 to 1,108) or 234.7% while jobs in the real estate, rental, and leasing sector increased by 106 (69 to 175) or 153.6%. These increases are significant and indicative of Belmont’s steady growth –particularly in the housing market.

Projecting ahead to 2033 using the analysis and modeling available, most employment sectors (industries) are expected to add jobs. While, interestingly, retail trade jobs are expected to drop slightly, a significant increase in construction jobs is forecast with approximately 139 new jobs added by 2033.

In recent years, Belmont has been a net exporter of jobs, with nearly twice as many people leaving to work elsewhere as the number coming into Belmont for work. This has

begun to change as more employment opportunities are created and commuting patterns continue to shift. Based on 2021 data, 4,119 people commute into Belmont to join the 337 people that both live and work there. At the same time, 6,293 leave the City for jobs elsewhere indicating that Belmont has a net out-commuting population of 2,174 people.

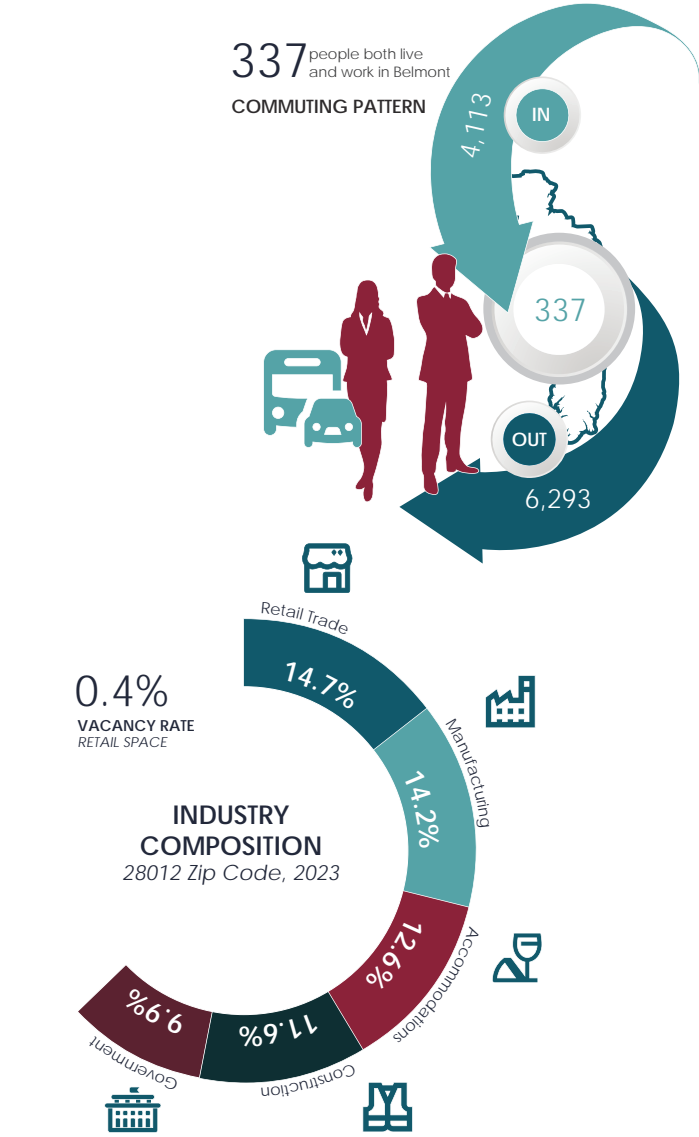


Figure: (Top) Commuting Patterns of Employed Residents (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design); (Bottom) Sector Distribution by Share of Jobs and Retail Vacancy Rate (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)

BOLSTERING BELMONT’S ECONOMIC POSITION

While Belmont is expected to continue experiencing healthy job growth into the next decade, these investigations highlight the City is not fully meeting the economic needs of its population. That is to say, there is a clear disconnect between the job and housing opportunities available in Belmont.

While Belmont is growing quickly and boasts a median household income 5.3% higher than the Charlotte Metro, for all but 337 residents (5.1% of the labor force), these dollars are being generated elsewhere.

The largest proportion of jobs (14.7%) available in the City today are classified as “retail trade,” and are accompanied by other traditionally modest-paying industries, such as manufacturing and food services. Due to the low availability of attainable housing within Belmont, including rental opportunities, the vast majority of Belmont’s jobs are held by commuters.

At the same time, those who do live in Belmont need to commute an average of 25.5 minutes to work, much of which is spent in traffic on I-85, Wilkinson Boulevard, or South Point Road.

While this is characteristic of what might be referred to as a “bedroom community,” Belmont was historically an economic hub of its own, and must concentrate on economic and housing diversification to maximize resiliency against the whims of the Charlotte market.

Refocusing on attracting new living wage or higher wage employers, engaging in “economic gardening” to foster local start-ups and small businesses, and updating economic marketing campaigns are all policies and programs that will be key to implementation.

2023 PLANNING AREA PROJECTED INDUSTRY COMPOSITION				
INDUSTRY SECTOR	2023 JOB COUNT	2033 JOB COUNT	2012-2033 CHANGE	2033 COMPOSITION
Utilities	31	53	71.0%	0.5%
Information	23	28	21.7%	0.3%
Construction	1,108	1,267	14.4%	13.0%
Educational Services	129	145	12.4%	1.5%
Health Care & Social Assistance	638	703	10.2%	7.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	312	340	9.0%	3.5%
Finance and Insurance	111	338	8.7%	3.5%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	432	463	7.2%	4.8%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	183	194	6.0%	2.0%
Other Services (Except Public Admin.)	681	718	5.4%	7.4%
SUBTOTAL	3,648	4,249	16.6%	43.6%
All Other Sectors	5,881	5,486	–	56.4%
TOTAL	9,529	9,735	2.2%	–

Figure: Projected Industry Composition and Job Growth in Belmont Planning Area (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)





**Image:** The Reverie (source: Apartment Finder)



**Image:** Commercial office space near Downtown Belmont (source: Business North Carolina)



**Image:** New warehouse in RiverWest industrial park (source: The Business Journals)



**Image:** Downtown retail in historic buildings (source: City of Belmont)

REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS (2024)

In the same way that Belmont has many individual industry sectors (which most closely represent jobs and occupations) there are likewise several real estate markets that can be tracked, offering additional information on Belmont’s economy. The trends in four of these markets were analyzed including: Multi-family Housing, Industrial, Office, and Retail.

MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

Including condos, apartments, multiplexes and everything in-between, there are approximately 3,000 multi-family residential units in Belmont. Since 2018, the vacancy rate has typically fluctuated between 4% and 8% with some spikes as new product came on the market. A vacancy rate of 5%-6% is typically seen as ideal both for individual properties as well as the Market Area as a whole. The current vacancy rate is 22.5%, due to three large multi-family developments that have come on the market since the beginning of 2023 with 876 new units combined. The vacancy rate is forecast to stabilize by 2026, but could remain as high as 10-12% based on market response to increasing rents.

Market rents per unit are currently estimated at \$1,507 per month. In general, rents have increased year over year, with a slight dip in 2023. Market rents are expected to continue to increase steadily through 2028.

OFFICE

According to CoStar, a leading provider of real estate data, Belmont offers approximately 395,000 square feet of office space across 76 buildings. There is currently a 3.3% vacancy rate, representing a slightly constrained supply, which is largely constituted of small buildings scattered throughout downtown and the rest of the City.

CaroMont Regional Medical Center–Belmont, opened along I-85 in stages during 2024-2025, represents the largest influx of office space to the Belmont market in years, marking a key economic diversification. Expected to serve Gaston, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and York Counties, the state-of-the-art facility includes about 100,000 square feet of medical office space. After these spaces are occupied by the healthcare provider, Belmont’s office vacancy is forecast to drop below 5% until 2028. Unlike Multifamily Housing, Office uses can generally tolerate a higher vacancy rate.

In general, rent prices grew consistently between 2014 and 2022 and have increased even faster over the last two years. Rent prices are forecast to dip again as new office buildings come onto the market before steadily increasing again in 2026.

Based on 2024 estimates, market rent for office space in Belmont was \$24.00/sf (per year).

INDUSTRIAL

Belmont has approximately five million square feet of industrial real estate across 60 buildings. Since 2015, vacancy rates stayed at or below 4% until new product came onto the market in 2022. Vacancy rates are forecast to drop back down to 4% in 2024, and then rise to approximately 6% in 2027. The current vacancy rate is 4.7%.

Overall, industrial development is a re-emerging focus for Belmont, which was once tightly tied to the land use as a prominent manufacturing center for textiles and related industries. With much of that sector diminished decades ago, industrial growth in Belmont is now tied to key transportation corridors like I-85 and focuses on warehousing.

Illustrating this opportunity, since 2018, the RiverWest and Oaks Commerce industrial projects have added over one million square feet of industrial space to Belmont.

Industrial rents grew consistently between 2014 and 2021 and have increased faster over the last three years. Industrial rents are forecast to increase above \$8.00/sf by 2029. Currently, industrial market asking rents are estimated at \$6.80/sf (per year).

RETAIL

Belmont has approximately 1.8 million square feet of total retail space. Vacancy rates have historically been very low since 2015, typically falling at or below 2%. The exception is in 2020 when new retail uses came onto the market, causing a spike in vacancy rates until they dropped back down to 2% in 2022. Currently, the vacancy rate is 0.4% and is forecast to stay below 1.0% through 2028.

Rental rates in Belmont have increased steadily since 2014 from about \$12.00/sf to \$18.74/sf currently.

There are multiple retail areas that make up the commercial market for Belmont:

**Downtown Belmont** – This area is generally defined by the North Main Street corridor through downtown, including blocks defined by Glenway Street and a portion of East Catawba Street. This area includes primarily independent retail and restaurants.

**Wilkinson Boulevard** – Also known as US Highway 74, this corridor traverses the peninsula from the Catawba River and Charlotte in the east to Cramerton and broader Gaston County in the west. Home to the majority of Belmont’s retail, this corridor generally includes older commercial strip development, drive-thru restaurants and other auto-oriented shopping destinations.



Walmart and Lowes, developed on Montcross, LLC landholdings in 2006-07, represent the most significant “big box” retailers.

The intentional redevelopment of Wilkinson Boulevard is a top priority for Belmont, necessitating regulatory changes, partnerships with private landowners, and collaboration with NCDOT. Potential extension of high-capacity transit between Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties represents yet another long-term variable that could drive redevelopment. Concurrently prepared with this document, the Wilkinson Boulevard Small Area Plan explores planning for this future.

**Interstate 85** – Belmont’s stretch of I-85 parallels Wilkinson Boulevard and includes the interchanges at Park Street/ Beatty Drive and North Main Street/ Belmont-Mt. Holly Road. Particularly on the southern side, toward Wilkinson Boulevard, these points have fostered limited highway-oriented commercial development.

**South Point Road** – Generally referred to as “South Point,” this area has various small commercial developments to support neighborhoods within the peninsula, including Belmont Town Center. Easily the best-established of this plan’s future Village Centers, this development features a Harris Teeter grocery store, along with adjacent retail and restaurant outparcels.

MEDIAN HOME VALUE

Finally, consideration of Belmont’s owner-occupied housing provides a barometric reading of the local residential market, particularly detached single-family homes, which account for nearly 72.7% of the City’s housing stock. This proportion is significantly higher than both the Charlotte Metro (66.9%) and North Carolina (65.4%), but slightly lower than highly suburbanized Gaston County at 73.3%.

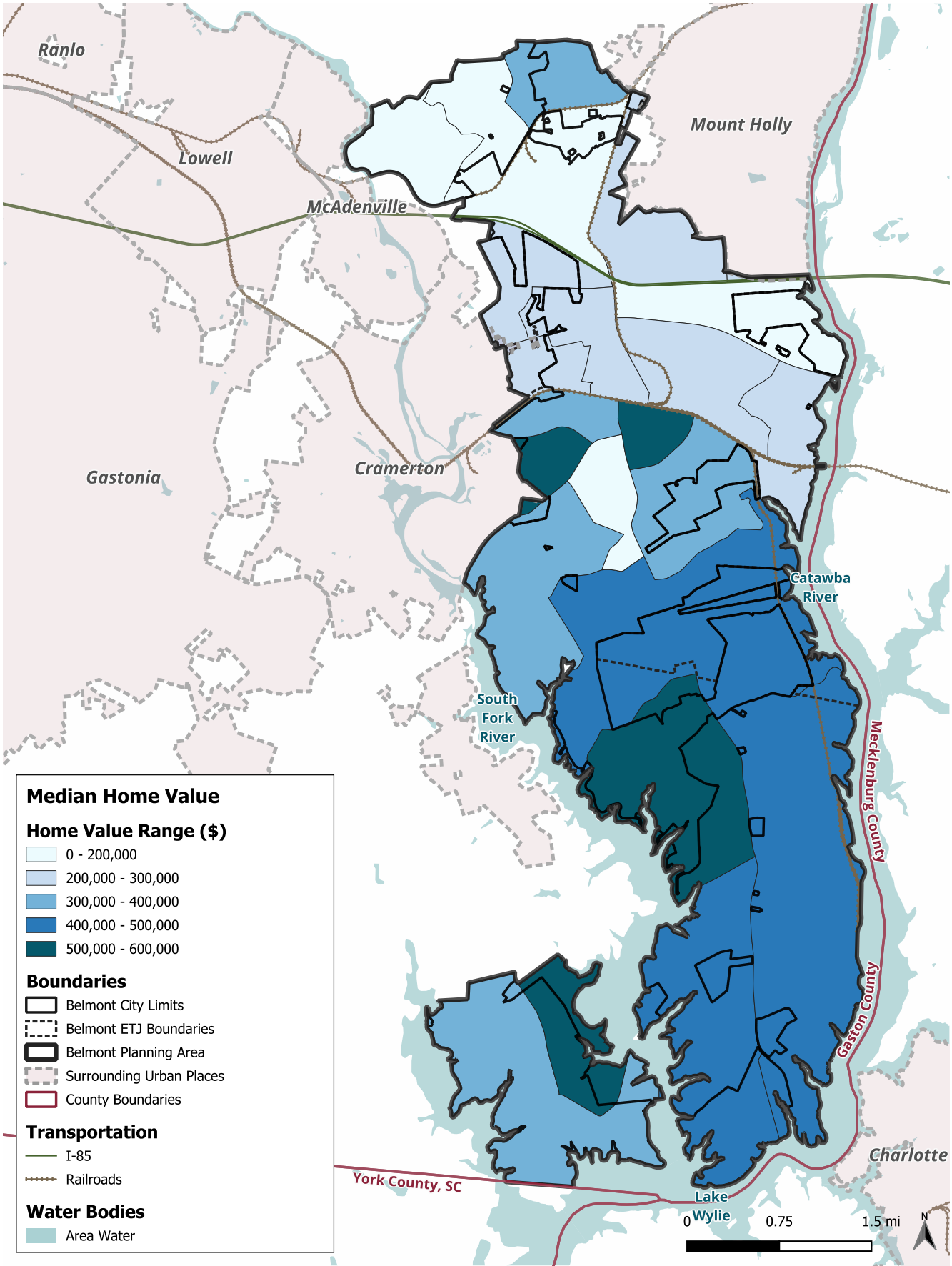
In 2023, Belmont’s median owner-occupied home value was \$291,368, a figure higher than all comparison geographies except the Charlotte Metro. High home values in Belmont are likely influenced by the great quality of life that make the City’s neighborhoods an attractive place to live and encourages upkeep of private property. Additionally, a large proportion of properties built during recent decades are larger, more premium single-family homes with greater initial base value.

2023 MEDIAN HOME VALUE COMPARISON	
GEOGRAPHY	MEDIAN HOME VALUE
Belmont	\$291,368
Planning Area (28012 Zip Code)	\$288,671
Gaston County	\$237,355
Charlotte Metro	\$312,575
North Carolina	\$262,944

Figure: Median Home Value table (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)

The geographic distribution of home values in Belmont is similar to that of median household income, following the trend of increasing value down the peninsula.

However, key differences include the block group with Hawthorne Park. Middle of the pack in terms of income, it now boasts the highest median home value in the City at \$571,300, exceeding even Glenmere. Other high value homes include large lot waterfront properties on the South Fork side that predate recent large subdivisions.



Map: Median Home Value map (data source: Lightcast, design: Plusurbia Design)

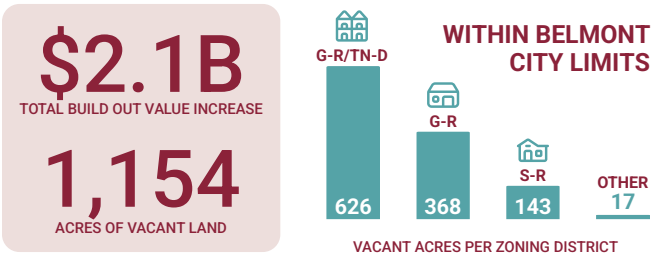


BUILD OUT POTENTIAL

Belmont has an extremely defined border and limited potential for growth, geographically speaking. As the community grows, it is forecast that the leading cause of land consumption will continue to be residential development. Left unchecked, this will quickly exhaust the supply of land –as well as the capacity of necessary utilities and services such as water, sewer, and emergency services. Belmont is fortunate to have a Land Development Code that allows residential uses to be integrated into other land use areas, slowing consumption. How this is done in practice remains key.

A build-out analysis is a critically important tool to assist in understanding the potential scale and likely impacts of future growth and development. Build-out analyses look ahead to the planning horizon to project the amount and location of growth allowed under current community development policies.

By analyzing the approximately 1,154 acres of vacant land within City Limits (excluding any already committed to conservation, open space, or part of approved developments) by zoning district and overlay, Belmont’s carrying capacity can be determined. At the maximum permitted density in each district, 6,320 new residential units could be constructed.



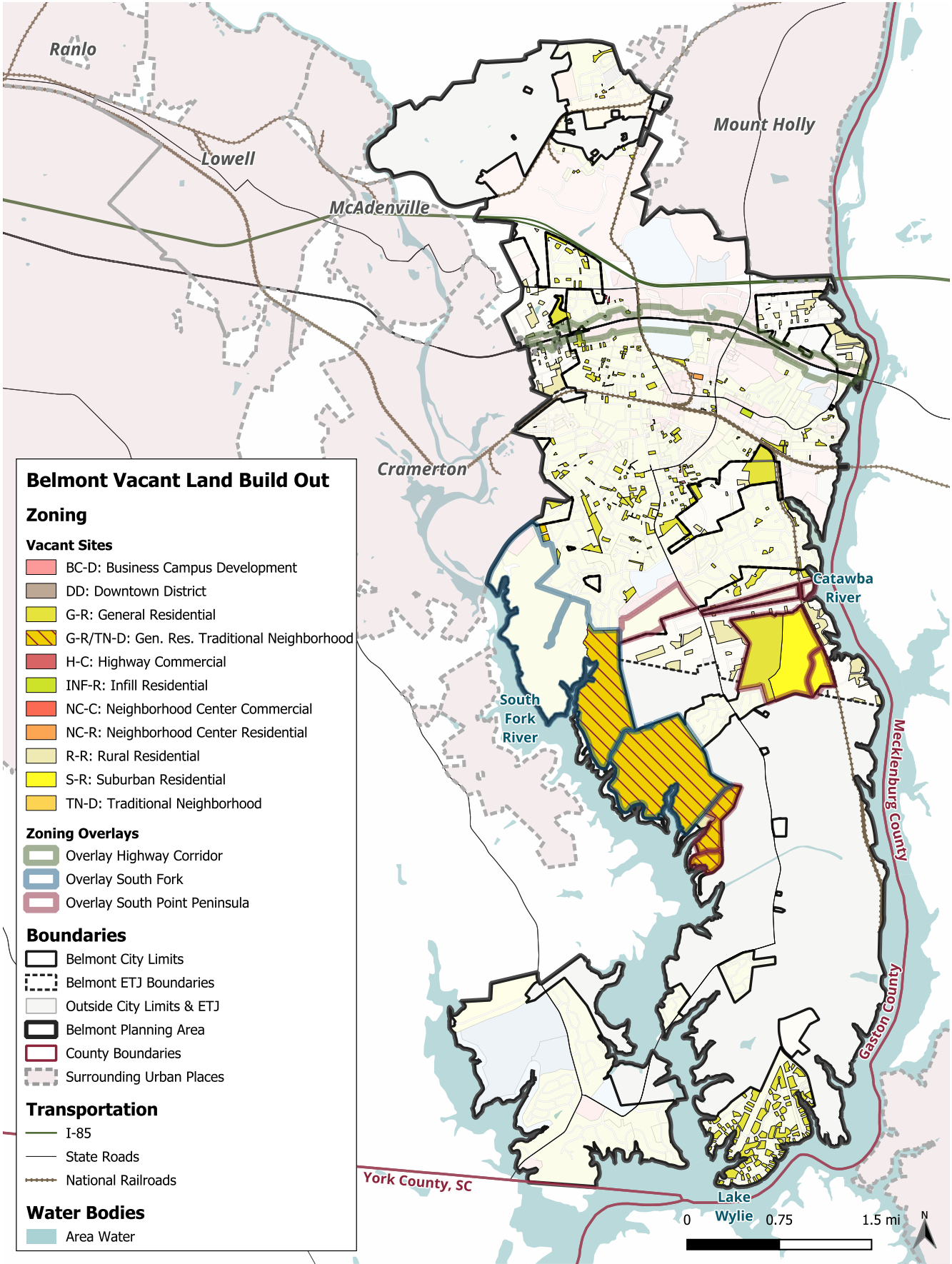
It is unlikely, however, that this result will actually occur, particularly as the City allows residential development in every zoning classification except for Rural Commercial (R-C), meaning significant land holdings in flexible districts are likely to be used for non-residential purposes.

Assuming that is the case, the fiscal impact of build out for this vacant land can be projected using the average improved value per acre of existing development in each district. Considering property within City Limits, build out is estimated to add \$2.07 billion to the local tax base, supporting better services, infrastructure, and sustained economic prosperity.

Key opportunities lie in developing land in the G-R zone and G-R/TN-D parallel zone, where TN-D growth would represent significantly higher value per acre. Citywide, Belmont will maximize gains through a balanced approach to residential, commercial, and institutional growth.

BUILD OUT FISCAL IMPACT – WITHIN CITY LIMITS				
SYMBOL	ZONING DISTRICT – TOP FOR VACANT LAND	VACANT ACRES	IMPROVED VALUE PER ACRE	BUILD OUT VALUE INCREASE
G-R/TN-D	General Residential Traditional Neighborhood (Parallel)	626	\$2.5M	\$1.53B
G-R	General Residential	368	\$1.2M	\$459M
S-R	Suburban Residential	143	\$109K	\$15.6M
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>1,137</b>	<b>\$3.9M</b>	<b>\$2.05B</b>
–	All Other Vacant Land	17	\$1.5M (Avg)	\$18.8M
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,154</b>	<b>\$14.6M</b>	<b>\$2.07B</b>

Figure: Estimated Build-Out Fiscal Impact by Zoning District within Belmont City Limits (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



Map: Vacant Land and Zoning Designations within Belmont Planning Area (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



## OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Partnering with key organizations and institutions can help Belmont cultivate robust small business support systems key to incubating and growing local start-ups.
- Capitalizing on Belmont's waterfront through the fostering of a Village Center offers a new way to create key experiential retail destinations.
- To remain economically resilient, Belmont needs improved business diversification that better matches the skills of its workforce and the types of shopping and services they prefer.
- Limited employer and housing choice mean nearly all of Belmont's labor force commutes to work elsewhere, while jobs in the City are overwhelmingly held by non-residents.
- New Village Centers and the revitalization of Wilkinson Boulevard should help to expand retail choice, allowing more residents to meet their shopping needs in the City.
- Implementing the infrastructure, facilities, and support services required will generate numerous expenses that benefit from an influx of private development but will require careful budgeting.
- In the years following the closures of the mills, Belmont has struggled with replacing that industry. A new, thriving mix of industries is what it can set its sights on.
- Belmont's economy is greatly influenced by its neighboring cities and towns. This interdependence can help unlock new economic opportunities.



# 06

# MOBILITY

To provide **equitable and affordable choice** in how residents and visitors **move** around Belmont.

As the community grows, Belmont faces new transportation challenges. Our transportation vision, as defined through the Belmont Multimodal Plan, envisions a community with a multimodal transportation network that gives people the freedom to move around the City efficiently and safely by whichever mode they choose. The plan contains recommendations including roadway projects, pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities, and transit, along with policies and actions to support that identified vision.

The Multimodal Plan was developed in alignment with the Our Belmont Comprehensive Land Use Plan to ensure comprehensive growth strategy where land use and transportation visions support one another. Representative findings and takeaways are presented in this chapter, and the full plan is incorporated into this document by reference.

Belmont's population growth, age distribution, and economic disparities highlight the need for varied transportation services and multimodal infrastructure. The presence of younger residents and seniors calls for a more diverse transportation network that emphasizes choice, safety, and affordability.



*This icon represents "Mobility" content.*



Image: Intersection of Main Street and Catawba Street (City of Belmont)

The City's transportation network is predominantly reliant on single-occupancy vehicles (SOV), with 70% of workers driving alone to their jobs. Public transit usage is minimal, constituting only 4.7% of commuters, indicating a potential area for enhancement in Belmont's transportation strategy. Around 36% of households have access to only one vehicle or none at all, indicating that a significant segment of the population could benefit from increased investment in other mobility options.

Commute times for residents vary, with a significant portion of the population experiencing moderate travel durations between 15 to 34 minutes. This range indicates a relatively manageable commute for most residents but also reflects the potential for congestion and delays, particularly during peak hours. A cohesive multimodal system can encourage alternative transportation options while reducing congestion and improving air quality.

Safety concerns are highlighted by Belmont's crash history, which includes 11 fatal injuries, 20 incapacitating injuries, and over 2,000 incidents of property damage over the latest five-year period (2019-2024). This suggests a critical need for improved traffic safety measures and infrastructure upgrades to enhance the overall safety of the transportation network.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

The Belmont Multimodal Plan aims to create a comprehensive, forward-thinking mobility strategy that supports the City's growth while maintaining connectivity, safety, and sustainability.

**Accommodating future growth on our network requires a focus on congestion management, safety, and increased choice.** Resources are limited, and our geography is fairly constrained, which limits the amount of roadway infrastructure that can be built. Targeted roadway improvements, along with investment in other modes of travel, will ease the burden of congestion.

**Belmont's Downtown, neighborhoods, and natural amenities offer key destinations for the community.** The Multimodal Plan prioritizes investment in places that people most want to get to, enabling the City to make smart, defensible decisions about what to invest in next.

**Safety is a critical consideration for the City's future transportation vision.** Implementing the Vision Zero Action Plan recommendations and the Multimodal Plan will ensure that future investments in the transportation network improve safety for all people in the community.





# GOAL 4

# MOBILITY

To provide **equitable** and **affordable choice** in how residents and visitors **move** around Belmont.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should promote solutions to manage existing and future congestion.**

- 1.1. Project** – The City should encourage the reduction of single occupancy vehicle travel by expanding public transit, promoting carpooling and active transportation, developing park-and-ride facilities, supporting TOD, and raising public awareness.
- 1.2. Project** – The City should prioritize capital roadway improvements by upgrading key corridors, enhancing intersections, expanding capacity, and incorporating multimodal infrastructure.
- 1.3. Project** – Utilizing forecasting tools to predict future congestion, the City should identify high-impact areas, and inform proactive infrastructure planning and congestion management strategies.
- 1.4. Project** – The City should assess the viability of transit and other multimodal options along South Point Road to move people more efficiently and manage congestion.
- 1.5. Project** – The City should optimize operations and signal timing for efficient travel through key corridors.

**POLICY 2. The City should provide increased multimodal transportation solutions.**

- 2.1. Project** – The City should implement existing and future multimodal plans by

developing infrastructure that supports public transit, walking, biking, and other sustainable transportation options.

- 2.2. Project** – The City should identify key corridors and destinations for bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- 2.3. Project** – Regional trail connectivity should be enhanced by linking Belmont’s local trails with surrounding networks.
- 2.4. Project** – The City should create a framework for the prioritization of space for multimodal options.

**POLICY 3. The City should improve local neighborhood connectivity to enhance access to transportation options.**

- 3.1. Project** – Working with private developers, the City should construct pedestrian walkways and bikeways to link neighborhoods with surrounding services and destinations.
- 3.2. Project** – The City should partner with neighborhoods to prioritize traffic calming measures that improve safety and reduce vehicle speeds in residential areas.
- 3.3. Project** – The City should identify opportunities to improve street grid connectivity by reducing the frequency of dead-end streets.

**POLICY 4. The City should improve roadway safety for all users.**

- 4.1. Project** – The City should conduct safety

audits of high-crash corridors and intersections to identify needed improvements.

- 4.2. Project** – The City should implement traffic calming measures such as speed humps, raised crosswalks, and roundabouts to reduce vehicle speeds in high-risk areas.
- 4.3. Project** – The City should improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure to separate vulnerable users from motor vehicle traffic.

**POLICY 5. The City should enhance safe access to schools.**

- 5.1. Project** – The City should install crossing guards, signage, and crosswalks in school zones.
- 5.2. Project** – The City should collaborate with Gaston County Schools to develop Safe Routes to School programs and encourage walking and biking among students.
- 5.3. Project** – When considering infrastructure upgrade priorities, the City should install and enhance sidewalks and bike lanes within a half-mile radius of schools to increase safety and accessibility.
- 5.4. Project** – The City should coordinate with Gaston County Schools to encourage locating new schools in places that will enable more students to walk to school and to reduce the length of trips for parents who drive their children to school.



**POLICY 6. Working with its partners, the City should strengthen regional transportation connectivity.**

**6.1. Project** – The City should support efforts to identify future roadway connections across the Catawba River into Mecklenburg County’s future River District development.

**6.2. Project** – The City should work with regional partners to improve transit access between Belmont and major employment centers in the region.

**6.3. Project** – The City should develop regional trail connections that link Belmont’s trail system with surrounding jurisdictions.

**6.4. Project** – To better serve its heavy commuter population, the City should explore options for expanding park-and-ride facilities and express bus services to regional employment hubs.

**POLICY 7. The City should expand and enhance transit options.**

**7.1. Project** – The City should identify high-demand corridors and expand bus service, including increased frequency and extended hours.

**7.2. Project** – The City should improve transit stops by adding shelters, seating, and real-time transit information displays.

**7.3. Project** – Working with NCDOT when necessary, the City should develop transit priority lanes or signal prioritization at key intersections to improve transit reliability and

reduce delays.

**7.4. Project** – The City should support efforts to identify future Silver Line transit connections to Mecklenburg County.

**POLICY 8. The City should enhance quality of life and accessibility by improving transportation options.**

**8.1. Project** – The City should increase access to parks, greenways, and trails through enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections.

**8.2. Project** – The City should encourage the use of low-emission and electric vehicles (EVs) by planning for and promoting private and public charging infrastructure.

**8.3. Project** – To reduce air pollution, the City should support multimodal transportation that decreases dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.

**POLICY 9. The City should update development codes to support multimodal connectivity and complete streets.**

**9.1. Project** – The City should require new developments to incorporate complete street designs that accommodate walking, biking, and transit.

**9.2. Project** – The City should update zoning and subdivision regulations to promote street grid connectivity and discourage disconnected street layouts.

**9.3. Project** – The City should cultivate a diversity of cultural uses.

**9.4. Project** – The City should implement requirements for bicycle parking, sidewalks, and transit access in new developments.

**POLICY 10. The City should align transportation policies with local and regional planning goals.**

**10.1. Project** – The City should coordinate transportation investments with regional partners to ensure seamless connectivity across jurisdictions.

**10.2. Project** – Transportation improvement projects should be aligned with land use plans to promote smart growth and reduce sprawl.

**10.3. Project** – The City should regularly review and update transportation policies to reflect the vision and priorities outlined in this document and regional transportation plans



EXISTING MULTIMODAL NETWORK

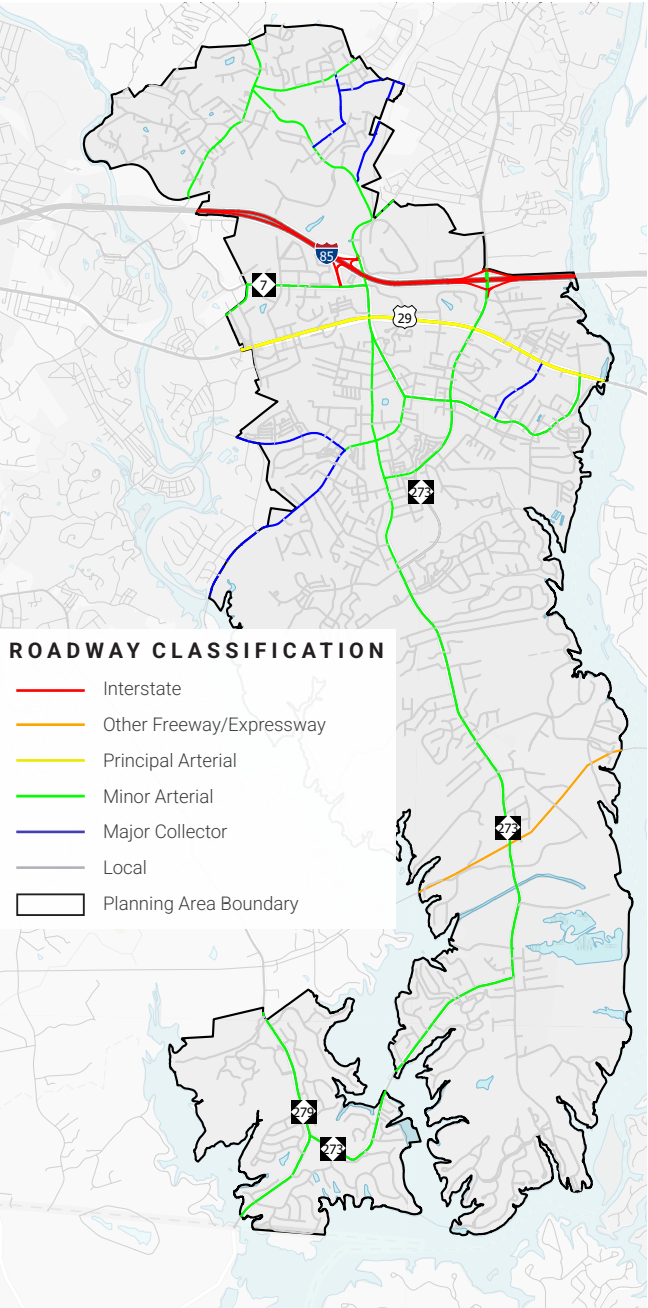
The Multimodal Plan study area reflects the same Planning Area boundary as the Our Belmont Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This study area includes diverse residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and significant natural and historic landmarks. The multimodal transportation network serving this area is comprised of roadway facilities, pedestrian and bicycle networks (including sidewalks, dedicated and shared bicycle facilities, greenways, and trails), and public transportation.

ROADWAY FACILITIES

Belmont, North Carolina’s roadway classification system organizes roads by function and traffic volume. Key classifications include:

- **Interstate Highways:** I-85 facilitates high-speed, long-distance travel, connecting Belmont regionally and nationally.
- **Principal Arterials:** Wilkinson Boulevard (US 29/74) handles high traffic volumes, linking Belmont to nearby cities and major highways.
- **Minor Arterials:** Roads like NC 273 (Park Street) connect local traffic to principal arterials and highways.
- **Collectors:** Streets—such as Central Avenue—gather traffic from local streets to arterial roads.
- **Local Roads:** Residential streets prioritize access to homes and businesses.

Key routes like I-85 provide regional and national access, while Wilkinson Boulevard (US 29/74) and NC 273 link local traffic to major highways, allowing travel throughout the City and beyond. As Belmont grows, traffic congestion considerations impact residents commuting in and out of Belmont.



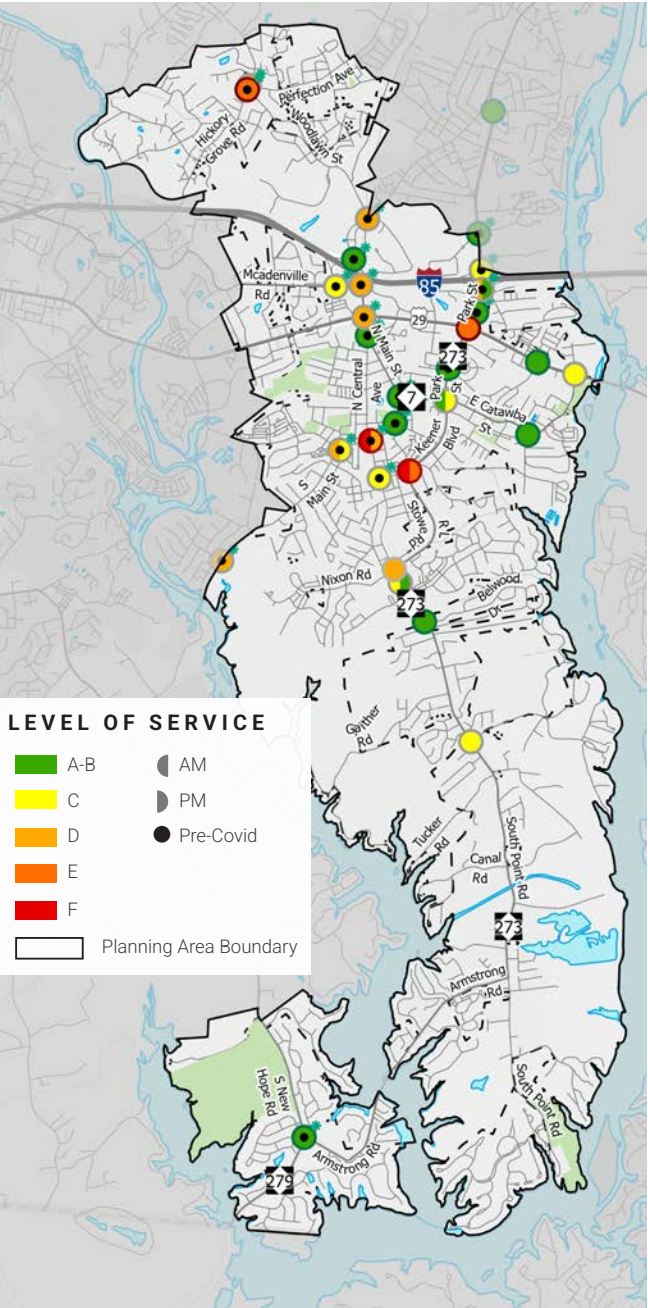
Map: Roadway Classification Map (Kimley-Horn)

Belmont’s roadways see a wide range of traffic volumes, with AADT values from 300 to 146,000 vehicles per day. High-traffic routes like I-85 and Wilkinson Boulevard are key arteries for local and regional travel, while residential streets handle much lighter, intercity traffic. Some residential streets however serve as cut-through options to avoid congestion, impacting quieter neighborhoods.

The Level of Service (LOS) in Belmont is a key metric used to evaluate the performance of roadways based on traffic flow and congestion. LOS is graded on a scale from A to F, with A representing free-flowing traffic and F indicating severe congestion and delays. The data reveals that most road segments and intersections maintain a satisfactory level of service, rated between A and C. However, certain high-traffic areas, particularly along I-85 and Wilkinson Boulevard, along with some key intersections along South Point Road, experience lower LOS, ranging from D to E, reflecting higher congestion levels during peak hours. These insights are critical for planning future infrastructure improvements to enhance traffic efficiency and safety across Belmont’s transportation network.

Most of Belmont’s roadways maintain a good LOS, rated A to C, ensuring smooth traffic flow. However, busier areas like I-85 and Wilkinson Boulevard face congestion challenges, with LOS ratings dropping to D or E during peak hours.

LOS	What it means
LOS A	Vehicles almost completely freely-flowing and unimpeded
LOS B	Reasonably free-flow operations and mostly steady speeds
LOS C	Flow with speeds near the free-flowing speed, some restricted maneuverability
LOS D	Speeds start declining, more queuing
LOS E	At capacity with no space; any disruption can cause delay
LOS F	Full breakdown in traffic operations



Map: Level of Service Map (Kimley-Horn)



SIDEWALKS

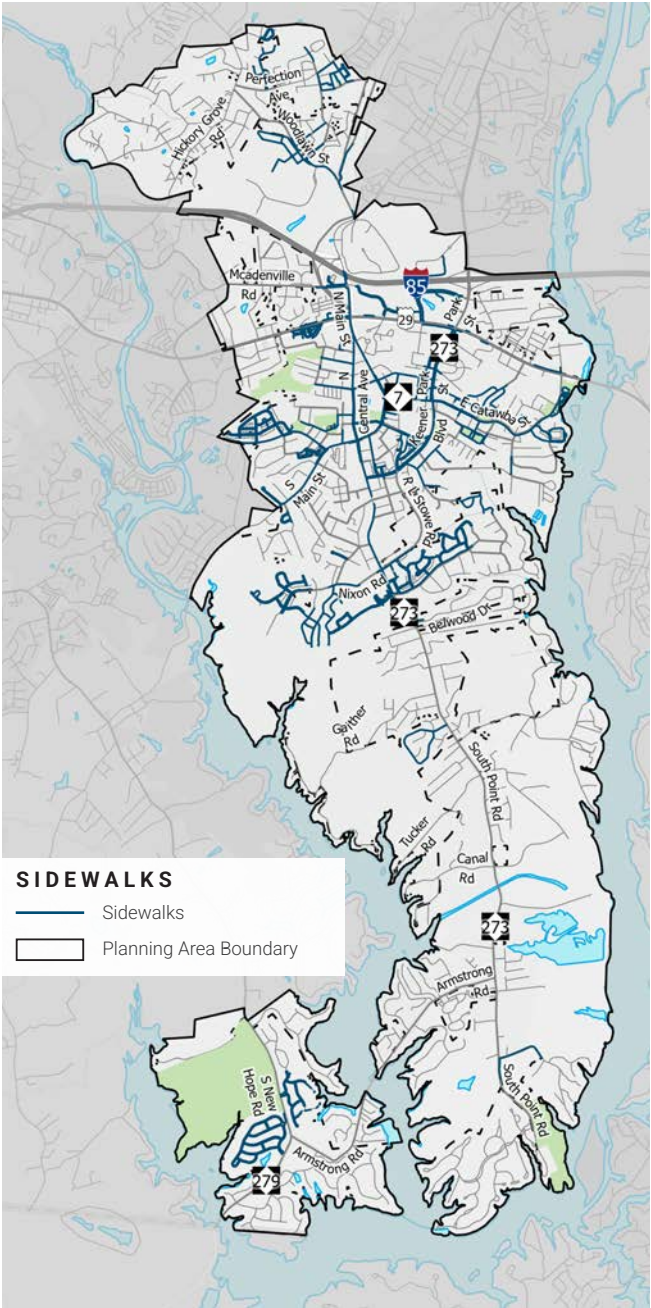
Sidewalks in Belmont, North Carolina, play a crucial role in promoting walkability and helping ensure the safety of pedestrians. Sidewalks are defined as a paved path for pedestrians on the side of a road. The data showcased earlier in the report underscores the need for improved pedestrian infrastructure to encourage walking as a viable mode of transportation. Enhancing and expanding the sidewalk network, particularly in residential areas and near key destinations, can significantly boost pedestrian safety and accessibility, fostering a more connected and walkable community.

BIKE ROUTES

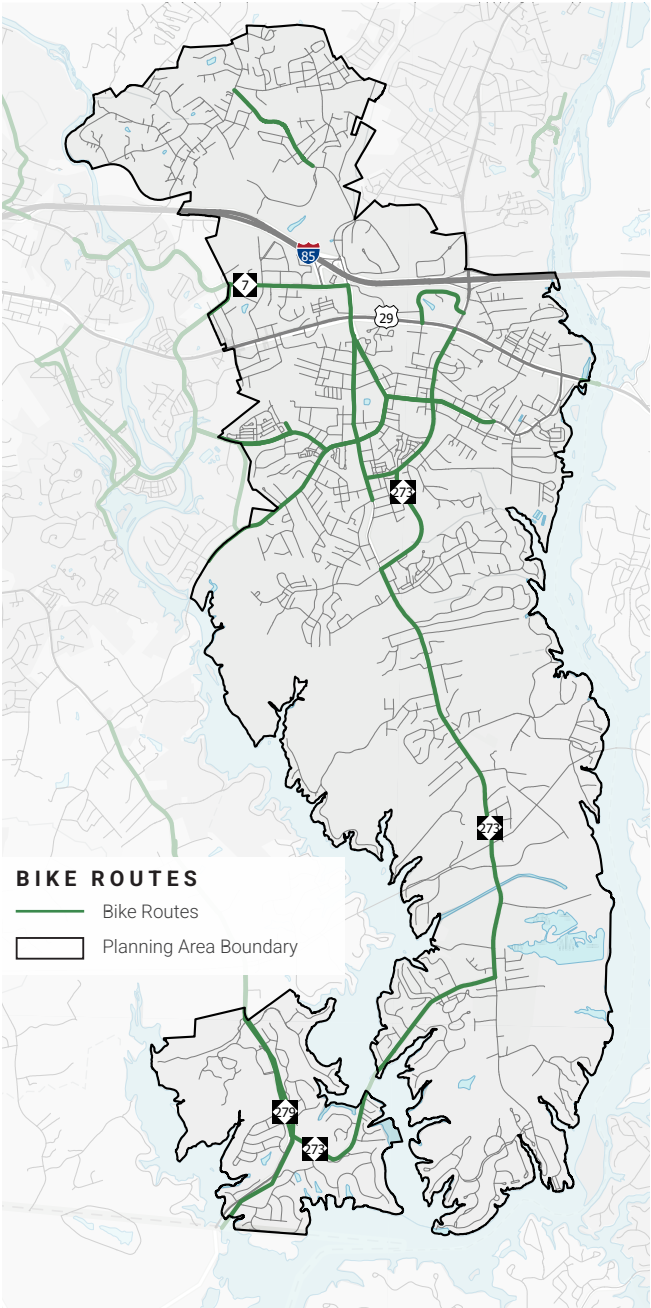
Currently, Belmont largely lacks dedicated bicycle infrastructure except for bike lanes on Catawba Avenue. Census data indicates a low current usage of biking for commuting. By developing a comprehensive network of dedicated bike lanes and safe biking routes that connect residential areas with key employment and recreational destinations, Belmont can promote more transportation choices, manage traffic congestion, and enhance the overall health and well-being of its residents. The map on the adjacent page highlights the existing bicycle network.

TRAIL NETWORK

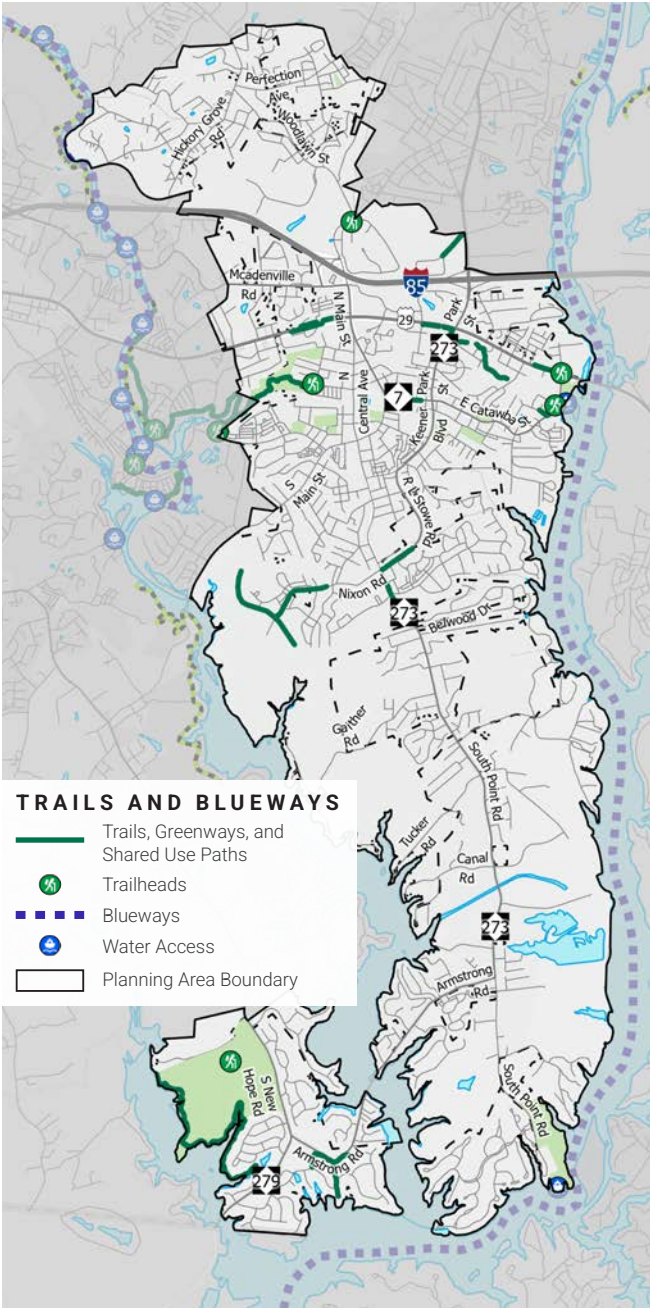
The trail network in Belmont, North Carolina, offers residents and visitors a scenic and recreational option for walking, biking, and connecting with nature. A trail is defined as a small, paved or unpaved path that encourages multiple modes transport alternative to vehicular transport. Trails typically run through parks or natural spaces. A well-maintained trail network not only supports healthy lifestyles but also strengthens community ties and increases the City's attractiveness as a place to live and visit. The map on the adjacent page highlights the existing trail network.



Map: Sidewalk Map (Kimley-Horn)



Map: Bike Route Map (Kimley-Horn)



Map: Trails and Blueways Map (Kimley-Horn)



EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSIT

Currently, the only existing fixed route transit connection in Belmont is the CATS 85X Gastonia Express, which provides an express connection between Charlotte and Gastonia with a stop and park and ride serving Belmont at the Abbey Plaza Shopping Center. Belmont has expressed interest in moving this stop to a proposed mobility hub slightly further west on Wilkinson Boulevard.

Gaston County ACCESS provides full-county demand response coverage with the goal of identifying and arranging efficient and economical transportation services for all requests. ACCESS also operates two deviated fixed route transit services connecting Gastonia’s Bradley Bus Station to Bessemer City and Gaston College’s Dallas campus, though neither serve Belmont directly currently.

GastonACCESS and new innovations by GoGastonia offer potential opportunities to provide additional service coverage across the county while addressing the transportation challenges Belmont faces.

POTENTIAL TRANSIT EXPANSIONS

GoGastonia offers an on-demand van service that replaces Gastonia’s former fixed route bus service. The program is an innovative, new option that provides flexible transportation throughout Gastonia. While GoGastonia doesn’t directly serve Belmont at this time, it may be worth expanding or emulation on the eastern side of the County.

Similarly, with Gaston County ACCESS operating deviated fixed route services, the type of connection Gastonia has with Bessemer City and Gaston College could be worth emulating with a reliable weekday connection between Belmont and Gastonia.

These two regional transport options service residents locally and have potential to be a future solution to Belmont’s growing and congested local and regional corridors.



Image: Parking Sign in Downtown Belmont (City of Belmont)

In addition, the City of Charlotte recently adopted the 2055 Transit System Plan as a means to serve the corridors and communities in the area. The Transit System Plan includes systemwide bus frequency upgrades, including goals of expanded service on express services, as well as the buildout of several rapid transit corridors radiating out from Uptown Charlotte. The Plan will advance economic mobility, while supporting innovation and sustainability to connect communities through an increase of transit options.

Within the Transit System Plan, the LYNX Silver Line light rail line is currently proposed to reach as far west as Charlotte-Douglas International Airport. However, Belmont is included within the plan as a “future potential Silver Line extension if/as funding allows”. While funds will likely not be available to plan or implement a Silver Line connection to Belmont within the life of this plan, there is still a growing need for high-speed transit from Charlotte to Belmont, which this plan highlights and considers.



Map: CATS 85X Gastonia Express Route (Kimley-Horn)



MODE CHOICE AND MOBILITY

MOBILITY PATTERNS AND SAFETY

The City's transportation network is predominantly reliant on single-occupancy vehicles (SOV), with 70% of workers driving alone to their jobs. Public transit usage is minimal, constituting only 4.7% of commuters, indicating a potential area for enhancement in Belmont's transportation strategy. Vehicle access within households is relatively high, with the majority having one or two vehicles. However, 3.39% of households do not have access to a vehicle, pointing to a segment of the population that could benefit from improved public transportation and alternative mobility options.

The City's commute times vary, with a significant portion of the population experiencing moderate travel durations, primarily between 15 to 34 minutes. This range indicates a relatively manageable commute for most residents but also reflects the potential for congestion and delays, particularly during peak hours. A more cohesive multimodal system can encourage alternative transportation options while reducing congestion, and improving air quality.

Safety concerns are highlighted by Belmont's crash history, which includes 11 fatal injuries, 20 incapacitating injuries, and over 2,000 incidents of property damage. The data from NCDOT from 2019-2024 suggests a critical need for improved traffic safety measures and infrastructure upgrades to enhance the overall safety of the transportation network.

COMMUTING

Belmont experiences significant commuting activity, characterized by a high inflow and outflow of workers. Taking this into consideration, there is a marked reliance on transportation infrastructure to support daily travel. Almost all residents commuting out of Belmont travel into Charlotte. This commuting pattern underscores the need for efficient transit options, especially towards major employment hubs such as Uptown Charlotte.

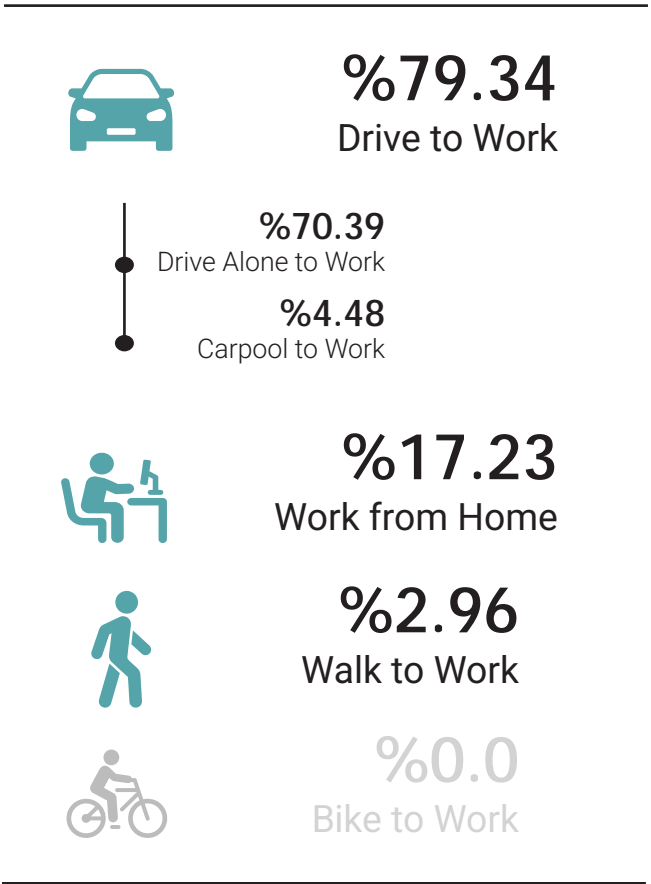


Figure: Commuting by Travel Mode (ACS 2023 5-year estimates; Kimley Horn)

DRIVING ALONE TO WORK

The data reveals a heavy reliance on single-occupancy vehicles for commuting. A significant majority of workers—73.7%—drive alone to their place of employment. This is followed by carpooling, which accounts for 18% of workers, though larger carpools are rare. Public transit usage remains low at 4.7%, and alternative modes such as walking, bicycling, or using motorcycles are minimally utilized. Additionally, 18% of the workforce works from home, reflecting a growing trend of remote work. This reliance on driving alone highlights the need for improvements in public transportation, carpooling incentives, and infrastructure to support alternative modes of transportation to manage traffic congestion and promote a more sustainable commute.

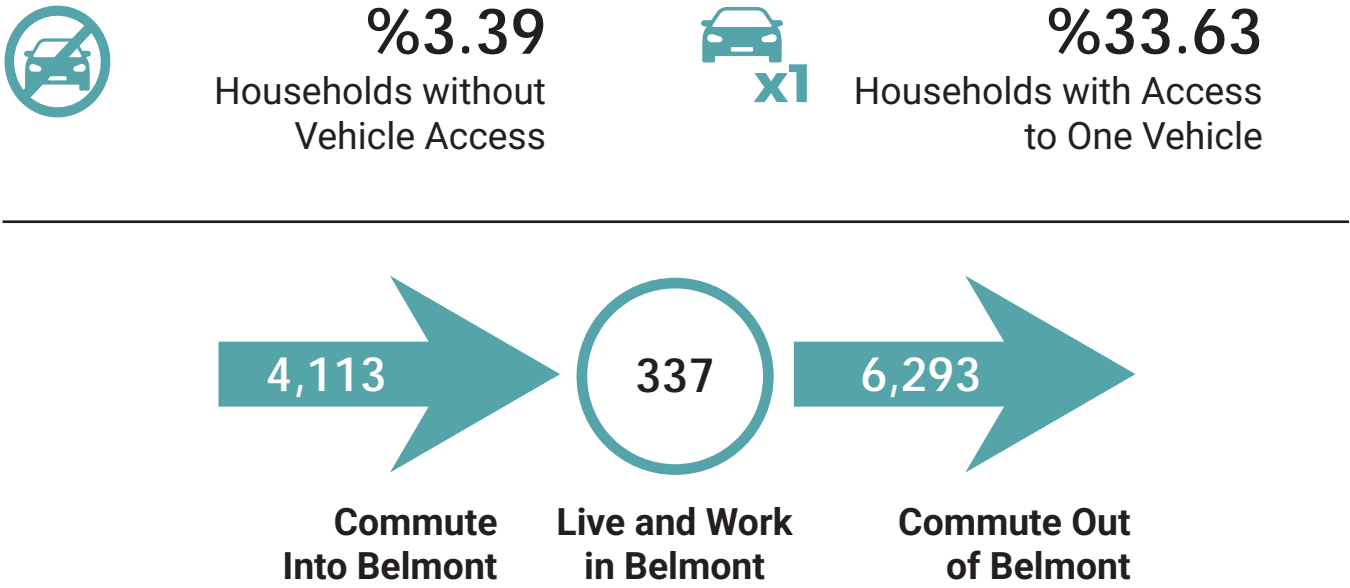


Figure: Household Vehicle Access and Commuting Patterns (ACS 2023 5-year estimates; Kimley Horn)

WALKING TO WORK

Walking to work is currently a minimally utilized mode of transportation, with very few residents choosing this option. To encourage walking, there is a need for enhanced pedestrian infrastructure—such as well-maintained sidewalks, safe crossings, and pedestrian-friendly routes—particularly in areas with higher residential density and proximity to employment centers. Improving these facilities can promote walking as a viable and healthy commuting option or recreational activity for Belmont residents.

BIKING TO WORK

Biking to work in Belmont, North Carolina, is an underutilized mode of transportation, with no residents—according to census data—opting for this eco-friendly commute. To increase the appeal of biking, Belmont needs to invest in dedicated bike lanes, secure bike parking, and safe biking routes that connect residential areas with key employment centers. Promoting biking can not only help manage traffic congestion and environmental impact

but also improve the overall health and well-being of the community.

OTHER TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

Belmont offers other forms of transportation and transit opportunities at the local, and regional level. Ride-share options such as Uber or Lyft, or Share the Ride NC support transit within the city. Belmont also offers a stop on the Charlotte CATS 85x Gastonia Express bus providing peak service connecting the city to Uptown Charlotte and Gastonia.



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

BELMONT’S HIGH INJURY NETWORK (HIN)

The Belmont HIN combines the 15 most dangerous streets and the 15 most dangerous intersections throughout the planning area. These locations were selected utilizing crash data highlighting the areas with the highest rate of crashes and the most severe crashes. It is important to note that I-85 was not included in the network due to the complicating factors in alleviating crashes on interstates.

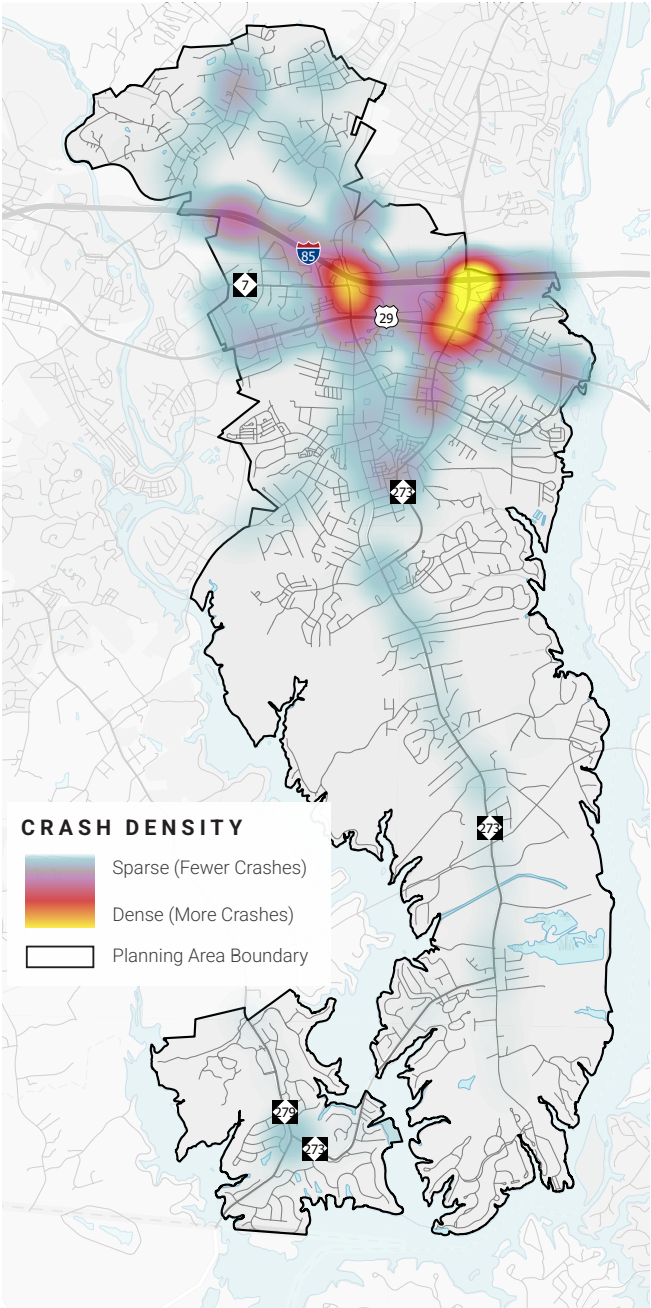
CORRIDOR CRASH RATES

The top 15 corridors saw at least one fatal or disabling crash, or at least 15 crashes per year, calculated during the study period. These corridors were responsible for 60% of all crashes and 59% of fatal and severe crashes. The top 15 intersections had similar results, with at least one fatal or disabling crash, or at least 4 crashes per year, during the same study period. The HIN intersections were responsible for 21% of total crashes and 6% of fatal or disabling crashes.

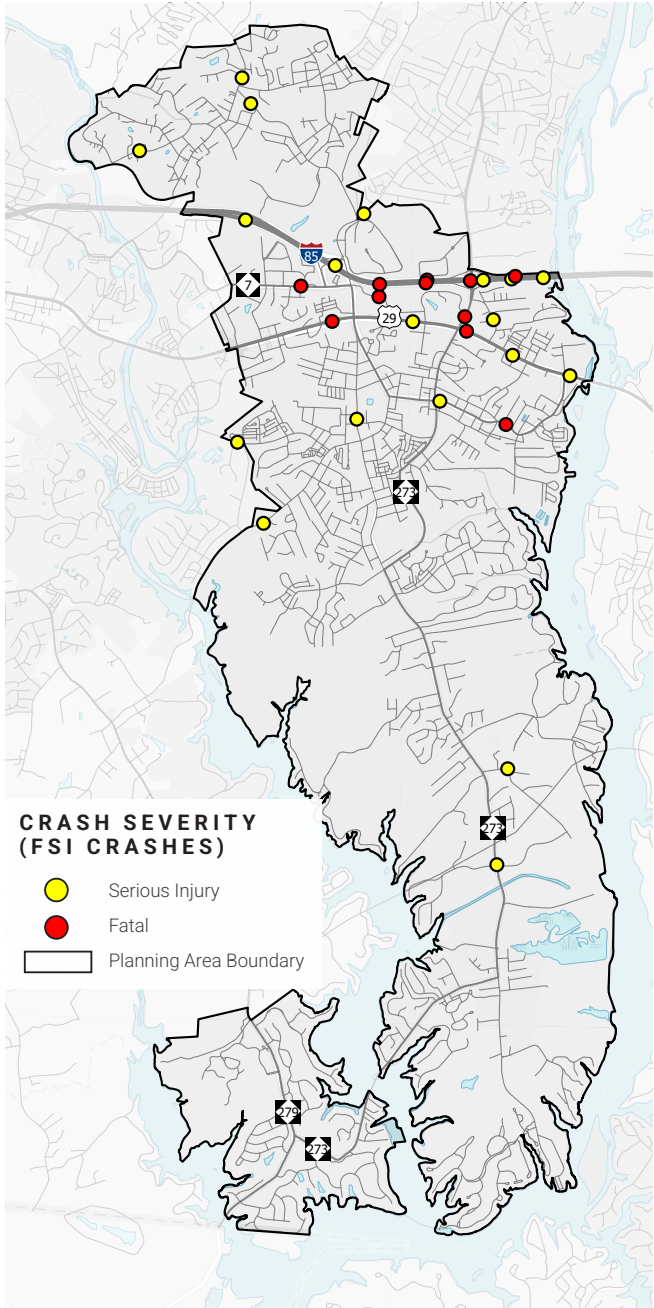
PRIORITIZATION

After locating and analyzing the top 15 corridors and intersections to include in the HIN, a prioritization methodology was formulated to rank and prioritize specific locations along the HIN for near-term funding and implementation. To calculate the location priorities, each location was assigned a score out of 40 possible points based on crash types and severity, the surrounding infrastructure and land use context, as well as alignment with existing projects and recommendations. Below are the criteria weights:

- Crash Severity (25%)
- Vulnerable Road Users (20%)
- Infrastructure Characteristics (15%)
- Equity Areas (15%)
- Sensitive Destinations (15%)
- Project Feasibility (10%)



Map: Crash Density Heat Map for 2019-2025 (Kimley-Horn)



Map: Fatal and Severe Injury Crashes for 2019-2025 (Kimley-Horn)

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Several factors contribute to crashes in Belmont. Speeding was a factor in 5% of crashes, driving under the influence in 4%, and distracted driving in 22%. Demographically, seniors (ages 65+) were involved in 19% of crashes, while young drivers (ages 15-19) were involved in 13%, despite making up only 7% of the population.

FATAL AND SEVERE INJURY CRASHES

Fatal and severe crashes tended to occur on streets with higher traffic volumes that serve as the community’s major arterials and connectors. Out of 3,107 that occurred in Belmont, just over 1% or 32 crashes, resulted in fatality (11 crashes) or severe injury (21 crashes). Belmont has experienced 2.2 fatalities per year and has an annual fatality rate of nearly 15 fatal per 100,000 people. Data included was accessed through Belmont’s Vision Zero Plan.

COMMON CRASH TYPES

The most common types of crashes, which made up 68% of total incidents—but only 16% of fatal and disabling crashes—were rear-end collisions (39%), sideswipe collisions in the same direction (18%), and angle collisions (11%). These common crashes highlight areas where targeted safety measures could reduce the overall number of incidents.

LEADING THE WAY WITH VISION ZERO

The data underscores the importance of the Vision Zero initiative in Belmont, which aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries. This involves creating a shared community vision for traffic safety, gathering and analyzing data, identifying priority locations, and implementing strategies to address safety concerns. The ongoing efforts will focus on pursuing funding for traffic safety improvements, leading community events, and continually monitoring and benchmarking success.



KEY DESTINATIONS

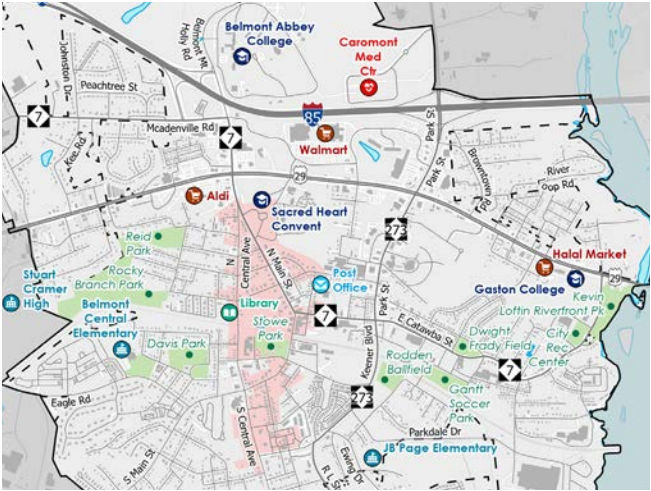
At the heart of the city is the Downtown Belmont Historic District, covering 1,700 acres and showcasing Tudor Revival, Bungalow/Craftsman, and Colonial Revival architecture.

Belmont is home to a variety of parks and greenspaces, from world-class gardens and trails at the Daniel Stowe Conservancy and Seven Oaks Nature Preserve to smaller parks across the heart of the city such as Rocky Branch Park, Stowe Park and Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park. Belmont is also only a short distance from the U.S. National Whitewater Center, offering activities such as rafting and kayaking.

For community programs and other resources, the Belmont Public Library and the recently-opened CityRec Center provide recreational and educational programs and provide opportunities for hosting events.

The Belmont area is also home to several colleges, including Belmont Abbey College’s main campus and Loughridge Center, Gaston College’s Kimbrell Campus, and St. Joseph College Seminary.

Other major destinations across the study area include Caromont Medical Center, area schools, and various supermarkets.



Map: Downtown Belmont Destinations (Kimley-Horn)

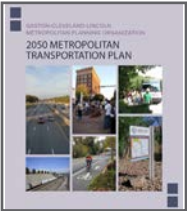


Map: Key Belmont Destinations (Kimley-Horn)

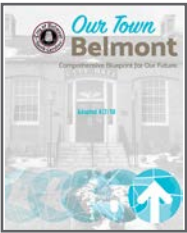
EXISTING TRANSPORTATION PLANS

A review of previous transportation plans was conducted to inform the foundation and recommendations of the Multimodal Plan. By examining the recommendations and findings from these key documents, the project team can integrate insights and strategies into the multimodal planning process. This review ensures that the Belmont Multimodal Plan builds upon past work, aligns with regional goals, and addresses the community's evolving needs.

KEY PLANS REVIEWED:



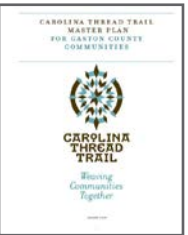
• Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) (2022): The 2050 MTP outlines a comprehensive transportation strategy for the region through a multimodal transportation network, encompassing roadway, transit, freight, bicycle, pedestrian, and aviation modes.



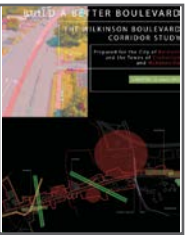
• Our Town Belmont: Comprehensive Blueprint for Our Future (2018): The prior Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Belmont provides a strategic framework for managing the city's growth, development, and land use through 2038.



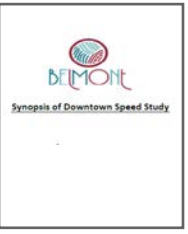
• Belmont Pedestrian Master Plan Update (2023): This Pedestrian Master Plan update aims to create a safe, accessible, and enjoyable pedestrian environment for all ages and abilities.



• Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Gaston County Communities (2009): This Carolina Thread Trail plan lays out a framework for a comprehensive network of greenways and trails across the county.



• Build a Better Boulevard: The Wilkinson Boulevard Corridor Study (2015): This plan maps out the comprehensive redevelopment of Wilkinson Boulevard, considering its historical context, current state, and future potential.



• Downtown Belmont Speed Study (2023): Conducted by the Belmont Police Department in 2023, this study assesses pedestrian safety, traffic flow, and accessibility in downtown Belmont.



PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

Prioritization is an important part of the process of taking project recommendations from lines on paper to reality. By aligning project prioritization with community values, previous plans, and connections with the greatest need, the City can evaluate what should be emphasized first with limited resources to have the greatest impact and benefit for the transportation network. To this end, several criteria were identified based on the community vision for the transportation network. These include local connectivity, regional connectivity, implementation, demographics and community context, public input, safety, and multimodal access. The following section explains how each of these topics is guiding the planning process.

The recommendations in the following pages outline targeted improvements across multiple travel modes, each designed to enhance safety, accessibility, and connectivity throughout the community. These multimodal strategies aim to close gaps in the existing network, support future growth, and create a transportation system that works for everyone whether traveling by car, foot, bike, or transit.

IMPLEMENTATION (20%)

- **Constructability and Maintenance:** Evaluating constraints that effect initial construction and accessing potential long-term maintenance, repair, and operational costs.
- **Funding:** Evaluating the potential options for funding and likelihood to receive that funding.
- **Project Location:** Assessing project location in relation to municipal boundary for ease of implementation.

**Methodology:** Projects received points based on constructability and ease of maintenance (based on a scale from easy, medium and hard), inclusion in previous plans, and whether the project is within the municipal border.

LOCAL CONNECTIVITY (15%)

- **Enhanced Mobility to Key Destinations:** Improving multimodal access to downtown, retail centers, and essential community features such as libraries, recreation centers, and schools to support local economic and social activity.
- **Neighborhood Connectivity:** Strengthening connections between residential areas in Belmont to help ensure accessible transportation options for all users.

**Methodology:** Projects received points based on access to various destinations, including downtown, retail, libraries, community centers, neighborhoods, and schools.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY (15%)

- **City and Employment Hub Connectivity:** Expanding multimodal connections between Belmont and regional job centers, transit stations, and neighboring municipalities to enhance workforce mobility and economic development.
- **Regional Parks and Trail Access:** Improving safe and efficient routes to regional parks, greenways, and recreational areas, supporting active transportation and environmental sustainability across the broader region.

**Methodology:** Projects received points based on their connectivity to places outside Belmont or major employment centers. Projects were scored on a yes/no basis for connections to City and employment hubs, and received a separate yes/no scoring for connections to regional parks and trails.

MULTIMODAL ACCESS (15%)

- **Seamless Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity:** Strengthening links between bicycle facilities, sidewalks, and trails to create a continuous, safe, and accessible active transportation network.
- **Transit Integration for All Modes:** Enhancing multimodal connections to transit by improving first/last-mile access through sidewalks, bike lanes, and trail linkages within a 1/4-mile buffer.
- **Equitable and Sustainable Mobility Options:** Expanding infrastructure that supports walking, biking, and transit to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and promote a more accessible and environmentally friendly transportation system.

**Methodology:** For roadway projects, projects received points if a bike or pedestrian project is planned along the same route as the roadway project. For bike and pedestrian projects, projects received points if they helped fill gaps in the current bike/pedestrian network. (0—doesn't address gaps, 0.5—somewhat addresses gaps, 1—yes addresses gap)

PUBLIC INPUT (15%)

- **Community Driven Decision-Making:** Ensuring transportation improvements reflect the public's most preferred projects by actively engaging residents, gathering input through surveys and meetings, and prioritizing initiatives that align with community needs and aspirations.

**Methodology:** Analyzed interactive map for comments, then utilized comments to formulate three categories based off the number of comments supporting a given project.

SAFETY (15%)

- **Reducing Crash Risk and Severity:** Addressing high-crash locations by analyzing total crashes, severity levels (K/A/B/C), and risk factors to implement targeted safety improvements for all road users.
- **Enhancing Public and Traffic Safety:** Improving roadway design and multimodal infrastructure based on traffic volumes (AADT) and public safety concerns to create a safer environment for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

**Methodology:** Projects received points if along the High Injury Network (HIN) established in Belmont's Vision Zero Action Plan.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT (5%)

- **Equitable Transportation Access:** Prioritizing multimodal investments that serve minority communities and low-income residents, ensuring equitable access to jobs, healthcare, and essential services.
- **Mobility and Economic Opportunity:** Enhancing transportation options for communities with limited vehicle access, supporting workforce mobility, and connecting residents to employment centers to drive economic growth.

**Methodology:** Projects received points based on their overlap with census tracts with minority populations, low income households, or zero vehicle households that exceeded the community average.



ROADWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

Roadway improvements focus on enhancing the function and safety of Belmont’s primary corridors. These include intersection upgrades, traffic calming measures, access management strategies, and complete street design principles that support all users—not just motorists. Prioritizing these improvements helps mitigate congestion, improve safety, and better manage the flow of vehicles through key areas of the City.

WIDENING AND ROAD REDESIGNS

Several of Belmont’s major corridors in the northern and southern parts of the planning area are planned for widening or a redesign for smoother traffic flow and safety.

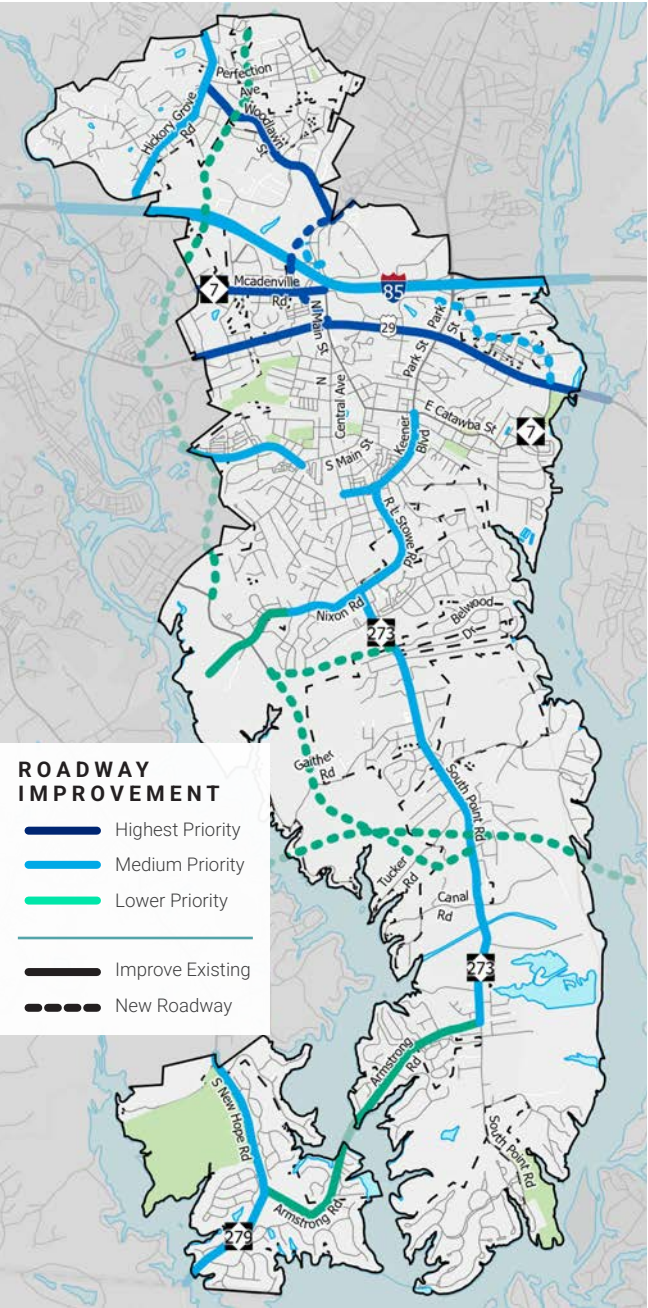
Roadway projects often also provide opportunities for other improvements for people walking or biking, especially when they overlap with a multimodal project and at intersections along the corridor.

NEW ROADWAYS

New roadways added to improve connectivity. Belmont’s proposed roadway network includes a new western north-south roadway acting as a bypass and connection to Mount Holly, a new east-west connection in the southern part of the City, a new connection bypassing Wilkinson Boulevard, and a proposed freeway bridge for an additional east-west connection across the Catawba River.

PRIORITIZED ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements to the roadway network would begin with a focus on projects along the major corridors that connect central Belmont to places to the north, east and west as the highest priority. Other major corridors such as South Point Road, New Hope Road, and Eagles Road were medium priorities that would help improve the local roadway network, while projects for completely new roadways emerged as the lowest priority.



Map: Recommended Roadway Improvements by Priority Level (Kimley-Horn)



Image: Intersection of S Main Street and Mill Street (City of Belmont)

ROADWAY	PROJECT EXTENTS	IMPROVEMENT	PRIORITY
Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment	I-85 to Planning Area Boundary	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Highest Priority
Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment	I-85 to Wilkinson Blvd	4-Lane Undivided Boulevard	Highest Priority
Woodlawn St	Hickory Grove Rd to Belmont-Mt Holly Rd	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Highest Priority
McAdenville Rd	Main St to Planning Area Boundary	4-Lane Boulevard w Center Turn Lane	Highest Priority
Wilkinson Blvd	Across Planning Area	6-Lane Boulevard	Highest Priority
Northeast Loop Connector	Hawley Ave to Wilkinson Blvd	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Medium Priority
Belmont Abbey Connector	Belmont-Mt Holly Rd to Wimmer Cir	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Medium Priority
I-85	Through Planning Area	8-Lane Freeway	Medium Priority
Hickory Grove Rd	Through Planning Area	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Medium Priority
RL Stowe Rd	Keener Rd to South Point Rd	4-Lane Boulevard w Median and turn Pockets	Medium Priority
South Point Rd	Nixon Rd/RL Stowe Rd to Armstrong Rd	4-Lane Divided Boulevard	Medium Priority
New Hope Rd	Planning Area Boundary to Planning Area Boundary	4-Lane Divided Boulevard	Medium Priority
Eagle Rd	Planning Boundary to Main St	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Medium Priority
Keener Blvd	Central Ave to R L Stowe Blvd	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Medium Priority
Keener Blvd	RL Stowe Rd to Catawba St	4-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Medium Priority
Armstrong Rd	New Hope Rd to South Point Rd	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Lowest Priority
Catawba Crossings	Across Planning Area	6-Lane Boulevard	Lowest Priority
Belmont Middle School Connector	Future Roadway to South Point Rd	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Lowest Priority
South Fork Pkwy/Belmont Mt-Holly Lp	South end of existing South Fork Pkwy to South Point Rd	4-Lane Divided Boulevard	Lowest Priority
South Fork Pkwy/Belmont Mt-Holly Lp	Carolina Riverside Blvd to Thomasville Dr	4-Lane Divided Boulevard	Lowest Priority
South Fork Pkwy/Belmont Mt-Holly Lp	Main St to Thomasville Dr/Peach Orchard Rd	4-Lane Divided Boulevard	Lowest Priority
South Fork Pkwy/Belmont Mt-Holly Lp	Thomasville Dr/Peach Orchard Rd to Planning Area Boundary	4-Lane Divided Boulevard	Lowest Priority
Nixon Rd	Western End to South Point Rd	2-Lane Boulevard w Median & Turn Pockets	Lowest Priority

Figure: Table of Prioritized Roadway Improvements (Kimley-Horn)



PEDESTRIAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a safe, connected pedestrian network is essential for walkability and community health. Recommended improvements include new sidewalks, sidewalk gap closures, and shared-use paths that offer safer and more comfortable routes for people of all ages and abilities. These investments are especially important near schools, parks, transit stops, and downtown areas, where pedestrian activity is highest.

SIDEWALKS

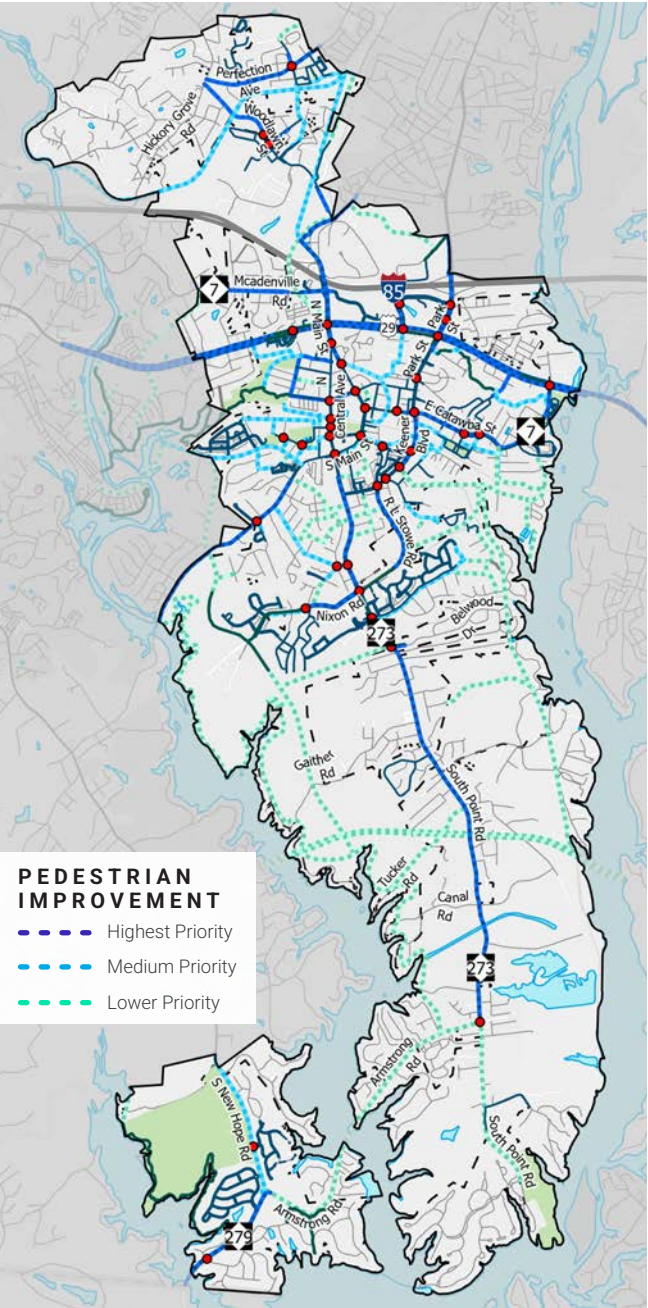
Paved paths, usually alongside roadways, for people walking or rolling. Sidewalks are generally the backbone of any pedestrian facility network and are critical to accessibility and safe connectivity. Belmont’s planned pedestrian network focuses on providing new sidewalk connections where they don’t currently exist and filling critical gaps in the existing sidewalk network.

SHARED USE PATHS

Generally wider than sidewalks, shared use paths provide connections for people walking as well as people biking. These paths are usually separated from the road by more greenspace or a physical barrier. While some shared use paths (sidepaths) follow roadways like sidewalks, Belmont’s planned network also includes rail trails along railroad alignments, paths that follow power line easements, and greenways that follow rivers and creeks.

PRIORITIZED PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Within Belmont’s planned pedestrian network, key connections along some of the most critical corridors are treated as highest priority, including filling sidewalk gaps on Catawba Street and new facilities along Wilkinson Boulevard, South Point Road, Park Street, Main Street/ Belmont Mount Holly Road, Nixon Road, and Woodlawn Street. Several planned rail trails and other additional connections are medium priority projects, while other shared use paths and minor sidewalks on residential roads are lower priority.



Map: Recommended Pedestrian Improvements by Priority Level (Kimley-Horn)



Image: High-Visibility Crosswalk and Curb Ramps (City of Belmont)

ROADWAY	PROJECT EXTENTS	IMPROVEMENT	PRIORITY
Wilkinson Blvd	South Fork Crossing to Catawba River Crossing	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
R L Stowe Rd	Keener Blvd to Existing SUP	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
South Point Rd	Belwood Dr to Armstrong Rd	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Nixon Rd	Existing MUP to South Point Rd	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
N Main St	Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment to N Main St/Mercy Drive	Greenway	Highest Priority
S New Hope Rd	Seven Oaks Preserve Trailhead to Armstrong Rd	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
South Point Rd	Nixon Rd to Johnson St	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Main St/Armstrong Ford Rd	Dogwood Lane to South Fork River	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Perfection Ave	City Limits to Planning Area Boundary	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Park St	McLean Ave to CaroMont Pkwy	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
E Catawba St	Wilkinson Blvd to CityWorks Driveway	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
McAdenville Rd	Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment to Existing Sidewalk	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Belmont Mt Holly Rd	Woodlawn St to Rail Trail	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Hawley Ave	Walmart Driveway to Wilkinson Blvd	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Off Road	Existing MUP to Catawba St	Greenway	Highest Priority
Keener Blvd	Catawba St to Parkdale Dr	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
S New Hope Rd	Seven Oaks Preserve Trailhead to SC State Line	Greenway	Highest Priority
Belmont Mt Holly Rd	Woodlawn St/Wimmy St to Forney Ave	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
E Catawba St	Tucker St to Chronicle Mill	Shared-Use Path	Highest Priority
Woodlawn St	Cason St to Belmont-Mt Holly Rd (gaps)	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Pebble Creek Dr	Food Lion Driveway to Perfection Ave	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Lincoln St	Sacco St to Central Ave	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Sacco St	Woodrow Ave to Lincoln Ave	Sidewalk	Highest Priority

Figure: Table of Prioritized Pedestrian Improvements (Kimley-Horn)



ROADWAY	PROJECT EXTENTS	IMPROVEMENT	PRIORITY
Sixth St	Catawba St to Wilkinson Blvd (Gaps)	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
W Woodrow Ave	Sacco St to Main St	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Perfection Ave	Hickory Grove Rd to City Limits	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Nixon Rd	South Point High to South Point Rd	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Mcadenville Rd	Planning Area Boundary to Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Belmont Mt Holly Rd	Oak Trl to Wilkinson Blvd	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Perfection Ave	Pleasant St to Moses Rhyne Dr	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
New Hope Rd/Armstrong Rd	Conservancy Dr to Seven Oaks Landing	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Woodlawn St	Hickory Grove Rd to School St	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
School St	Woodlawn St to Apricot St	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
E Catawba St	Sixth St to Thirteenth St	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Belwood Dr		Sidewalk	Highest Priority
South Point Rd	Stowe Rd to Cedar Tree Dr	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Park St	Hawley Rd/Browntown Rd to Wilikinson Blvd	Sidewalk	Highest Priority
Abbey Creek Greenway	Park St to Catawba St (gaps)	Greenway	Medium Priority
Eagle Rd	Lakewood Dr to Main St	Shared-Use Path	Medium Priority
Rail Trail	Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment to Woodlawn St	Greenway	Medium Priority
Rail Trail	Woodrow Ave to Glenway St	Greenway	Medium Priority
Ferrell Ave	Hospitality Ln to Burns Mitchell Dr	Shared-Use Path	Medium Priority
S New Hope Rd	Belmont City Limits to Armstrong Rd	Shared-Use Path	Medium Priority
Rail Trail	Main St to Woodrow Ave	Greenway	Medium Priority
I-85 Crossing	Hawley Ave to Compassion Dr	Greenway	Medium Priority
Rail Trail	Cason St to Belmont City Limits	Greenway	Medium Priority
Rodden Field Connector	Hawthorne St to Childers St	Greenway	Medium Priority
Park Connector	Stowe Park to Rocky Branch Park	Greenway	Medium Priority
Hawley Ave	Wilkinson Blvd to Harley Ave	Shared-Use Path	Medium Priority
Reid Park Connector	Lincoln St to Rocky Branch Trail	Greenway	Medium Priority
Ewing Dr	Charles Dr to Gilchrist Cir	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Stowe Rd	South Point Rd to Samuel Pickney Dr	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Nixon Rd	Amberley Crossing Dr to Shannon Dr (gaps)	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Julia Ave	Armstrong Ford Rd to South Point Rd	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Willerine Dr	Nixon St to Julia Ave	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Park Dr	Park Dr to Oak Dr	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Tenth St	Catawba St to Edgemont Ave	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Mellon Rd	Armstrong Ford Rd to Belmont Village Dr	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Cason St	Burton St to Cason St	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Oak St		Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Oak St/Myrtle St	Park Dr to Central Ave	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Kingston St	Eagle Rd to Park Dr	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Elizabeth St	Eagle Rd to Park Dr	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Ferrell Ave	Harris St to Burns Mitchell Dr	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
S Main St	Central Ave to McLeod Ave	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
McLeod Ave	Main St to Hawthorne St	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Lincoln St	Wilkinson Blvd to Sacco St	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Acme Rd	Cason St to Woodlawn St (gaps)	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Vine St/Fifth St Extension	Brook St to Flowers Ct	Sidewalk	Medium Priority

Figure: Table of Prioritized Pedestrian Improvements - Continued (Kimley-Horn)

ROADWAY	PROJECT EXTENTS	IMPROVEMENT	PRIORITY
Tucker St	Catawba St to Brook St	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Brook St	Keener Blvd to Fifth St Ext	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Brook St	Seventh St to Tenth St	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Merewood Rd/Vesta St	Eagle Rd to Summerfield Pl	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Cason St	Cherry St to Woodlawn Ave	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Cason St	Cason St to Cason St	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Burns Mitchell Dr	Park Dr to Ferrell Ave	Sidewalk	Medium Priority
Off Road	RL Stowe Rd to Parkdale Dr	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Parkdale Dr	Keener Blvd to Tenth St	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Eastwood Dr/South Fork Pkwy	Carolina Riverside Blvd to Eagle Rd	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Off Road	Caromont Pkwy to Belmont-Mt Holly Rd	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Armstrong Rd	New Hope Rd to South Point Rd	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
South Fork Pkwy	Current end of South Fork Pkwy to South Fork Trail	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Elmore St/Powerline St/Hugh St Connections	Hugh St to North St	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Belmont Middle School Driveway/Off Road	South Point Road to South Fork Pkwy	Shared-Use Path	Lowest Priority
Lakewood Rd	Stream Path SUP to Catawba River Path	Shared Use Path	Lowest Priority
South Fork River Trail	Armstrong Rd to Armstrong Ford Rd	Greenway	Lowest Priority
Parkdale Dr/Stove Thread Rd	River Dr to Catawba River	Shared Use Path	Lowest Priority
Railroad	Parkdale Dr to Catawba Crossings	Greenway	Lowest Priority
Tucker Rd	South Fork River Trail to South Point Rd	Shared Use Path	Lowest Priority
Catawba Crossings Boulevard	South Fork River Crossing to Catawba River Crossing	Shared Use Path	Lowest Priority
Off Road	Pebble Creek Dr to City Limits	Greenway	Lowest Priority
Southfork Dr Connector	Point Crossing Ct to South Fork Pkwy	Shared Use Path	Lowest Priority
Oakland Ave Connector	Oakland Ave to Rocky Branch Trail	Greenway	Lowest Priority
Timber Ridge Rd Connector	Timber Ridge Rd to Railroad Trail	Greenway	Lowest Priority
Parkdale Dr	Keener Blvd to City Limits	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Cason St	Cason St to Cherry St	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Ewing Dr		Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Todd St	Sacco St to Central Ave	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Johnson St	Central Ave to Prince St	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Peach Orchard Rd	McAdenville Rd to Lake Dr	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Parkdale Dr	Tenth St to Landing Rd	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Samuel Pinckney Dr	Stowe Rd to Amanda Ln	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Dorie Dr	Stowe Rd to Hanks Creek Ln	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Kenwood St	Main St to Glenway St	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Davis St	Woodrow Ave to Kenwood St	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Piedmont St/River Dr	Tenth St to Linestowe Dr	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Faires Ave	Armstong Ford Rd to Powerline Ave	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
North St/Henry Ave	Hugh St/Julia Ave to RL Stowe Rd	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
East Ave	Keener Blvd to South St	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Vesta St	Eagle Rd to Vesta St	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Elmore St	Faires Ave to Central Ave	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
South Point Rd	Armstrong Rd to South Point Beach Park	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Amanda Ln	Dorie Dr to N of Deas Dr	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
Prince St/Bryant St	Johnson St to McLeod Ave	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority
South St	Central Ave to East Ave	Sidewalk	Lowest Priority

Figure: Table of Prioritized Pedestrian Improvements - Continued (Kimley-Horn)



BICYCLE RECOMMENDATIONS

To support active transportation and reduce vehicle dependence, the plan recommends a range of bicycle facilities. These improvements help create a cohesive bicycle network that links neighborhoods with key destinations and regional trails. Design treatments are tailored to the context of each corridor to ensure comfort and safety for both experienced and casual bicyclists.

BIKE LANES

A painted lane on a roadway dedicated to bicycles. The majority of Belmont’s proposed bicycle network consists of standard bike lanes.

SHARED LANES

A location where bicycles and vehicles share a lane marked for bicycle traffic. Also known as “sharrows” after the symbol used to indicate the shared lane. Shared Lanes are usually used in locations without enough right of way to add lanes and with slow enough traffic for the mixing of cars and bikes to be less dangerous.

SEPARATED BIKE LANES

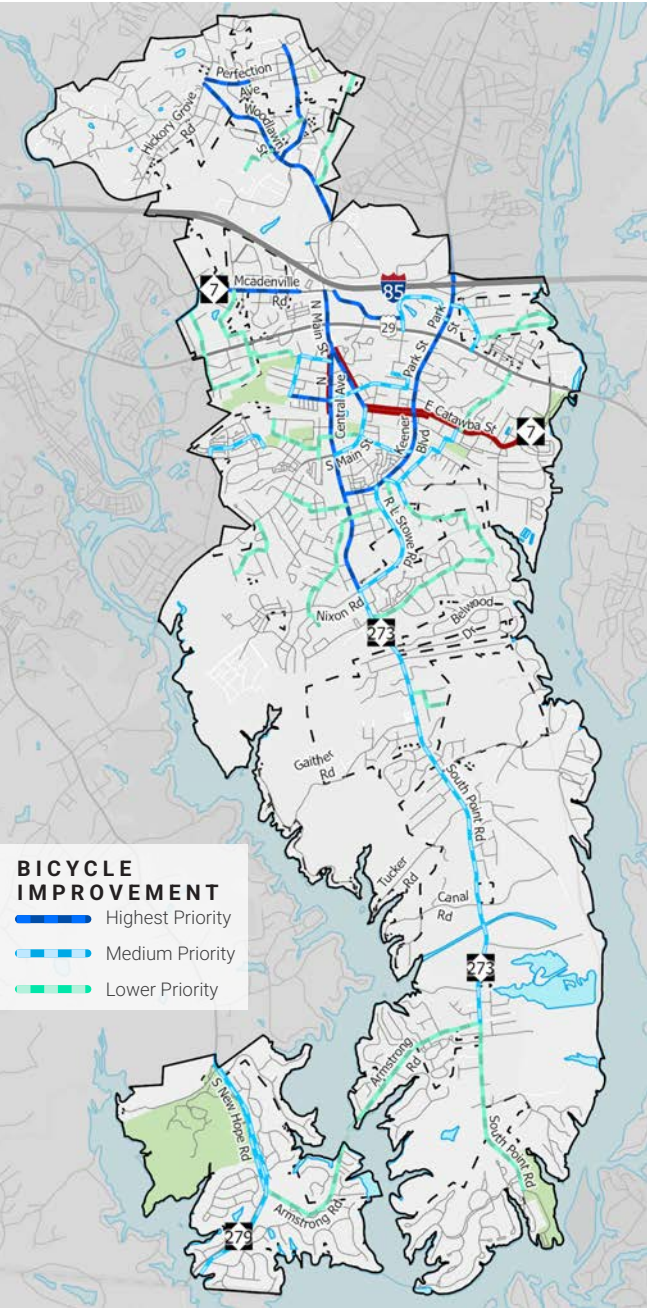
A bike lane separated from vehicle traffic for additional safety and comfort. The separation can range from a painted buffer to physical separation via a curb, flex posts, or other separators. Belmont’s planned network includes a separated bike lane along Park Street north of Downtown.

PAVED SHOULDERS

The paved portion of a roadway outside the lane lines on the side of the road. On more rural roadways where full bike facilities are unlikely to exist, paved shoulders can help provide a safer route for people biking.

PRIORITIZED BICYCLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Belmont’s bicycle facility recommendations focus on creating a connected network in the north and central parts of the City first, and then expanding out the backbone to other major corridors and connections.



Map: Recommended Pedestrian Improvements by Priority Level (Kimley-Horn)

ROADWAY	PROJECT EXTENTS	IMPROVEMENT	PRIORITY
Central Ave	Main St to RL Stowe Rd	Bike Lane	Highest Priority
Keener Blvd	Central Ave to Catawba St	Bike Lane	Highest Priority
Woodlawn St	Hickory Grove Rd to Belmont-Mt Holly Rd	Paved Shoulder	Highest Priority
Park St	Catawba St to I-85	Separated Bike Lane	Highest Priority
Central Ave	N Main St to S Main St	Shared Lane Markings	Highest Priority
Main St/Belmont-Mt Holly Rd	McAdenville Rd to Catawba Ave	Other Bike Feature	Highest Priority
Caldwell Farm Rd	End of Proposed Shared Use Path to Hawley Ave	Bike Lane	Highest Priority
Acme Rd	Arc Dr to Woodlawn St	Bike Lane	Highest Priority
Park St	I-85 to CaroMont Parkway	Bike Lane	Highest Priority
McAdenville Rd	Peach Orchard Rd to I-85 Interchange/Proposed Belmont-Mt Holly Rd Realignment	Paved Shoulder	Highest Priority
Woodrow Ave	Sacco St to Central Ave	Other Bike Feature	Highest Priority
South Point Rd	RL Stowe Rd to Armstrong Rd	Bike Lane	Medium Priority
Hawley Ave	Wilkinson Blvd to Park St	Bike Lane	Medium Priority
New Hope Rd	Armstrong Rd to Planning Boundary near Worrells River Rd	Paved Shoulder	Medium Priority
RL Stowe Rd	Keener Blvd to South Point Rd	Shared Lane Markings	Medium Priority
Main St	Catawba St to Central Ave	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
New Hope Rd	Planning Boundary to SC Border	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
Browntown Rd	Park St to Wilkinson Blvd	Bike Lane	Medium Priority
Peach Orchard Rd/Lakewood Rd	McAdenville Rd to Lake Dr	Paved Shoulder	Medium Priority
Fifth St/Vine St	Ewing Dr to Catawba St	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
Assembly St	Eagle Rd/Eastwood to Eagle Rd/Assembly St	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
McLeod Ave	Main St to Keener Blvd	Shared Lane Markings	Medium Priority
Sacco St	Lincoln St to Woodrow Ave	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
Lincoln St	Sacco St to Central Ave	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
Woodrow Ave	Central Ave to Hawley Ave	Other Bike Feature	Medium Priority
Ewing Dr	Keener Blvd to Charles Dr	Bike Lane	Medium Priority
Armstrong Rd	New Hope Rd to South Point Rd	Paved Shoulder	Lowest Priority
Ewing Dr/Amanda Ln/Stowe Rd	Charles Dr/Ewing Dr to Stowe Rd/South Point Rd	Bike Lane	Lowest Priority
River Loop Rd	Browntown Rd to River Loop	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Sixth St	Catawba St to Wilkinson Blvd	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Morning Glory Ave	Ewing Dr to end of street	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
North St/Greenwood Ave/Shannon Dr	South Point High Fields to RL Stowe Rd	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Mellon Rd/Southfork Dr	Armstrong Ford Rd to Point Crossing Ct	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Secrest Ave/Gaston Ave	Armstrong Ford Rd to Central Ave	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Park Dr	Burns Mitchell Dr/Ferrell Ave to Oak St	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Oak St/Myrtle St	Oak St/Main St to Myrtle St/Main St	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Lincoln St	Mason St to Reid Park	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Belmont Ave	Full length of street	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
School St	Woodlawn St to Acme St	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Cason St	Woodlawn St to Cherry St	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Forest Hill Rd/Timber Ridge Rd		Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
South Point Rd	Armstrong Rd to South Point Beach Park	Paved Shoulder	Lowest Priority
Kee Rd/Barnes St/Mason St	McAdenville Rd to Wilkinson Blvd	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Mason St	Hubbard St to Wilkinson Blvd	Other Bike Feature	Lowest Priority
Georgia Belle Ave/Hubbard St	Peach Orchard Rd to Oakland Ave	Paved Shoulder	Lowest Priority

Figure: Table of Prioritized Bicycle Improvements (Kimley-Horn)



TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Although regional transit priorities have shifted, particularly with changes in CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) planning, transit remains an essential component of Belmont’s multimodal vision. Additionally, in accordance with the goals of coinciding plans, Belmont does not support the greenfield alignment projects being pursued by GDOT. To build a more connected and inclusive transportation network, the plan recommends several strategies to support and expand transit opportunities in the near and long term.

SUPPORT MICRO-TRANSIT PILOT PROGRAMS

Belmont has expressed support at the council level for exploring micro transit solutions—flexible, on-demand services that can serve neighborhoods and key destinations not accessible by fixed-route transit. These services can act as a vital first-mile/last-mile connector, especially in low-density areas where traditional bus service is not feasible. Nearby Gastonia has already implemented a similar service (GoGastonia) and could be partners in establishing this microtransit zone.

EXPLORE PARK-AND-RIDE OPPORTUNITIES

To support regional commuting and reduce congestion, park-and-ride lots should be evaluated near high-traffic corridors like Wilkinson Boulevard and I-85. These facilities can complement future express buses, micro transit, or carpooling initiatives and help connect Belmont residents with transit options to Charlotte and beyond.



COORDINATE WITH REGIONAL TRANSIT AND LONG-TERM HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT OPTIONS

While CATS’ priorities may have shifted, Belmont should remain engaged in regional transit discussions and position itself for future high-capacity transit connections. Long-term opportunities could include:

- Belmont Trolley connecting downtown with Belmont Abbey College and eventually Mount Holly and other parts of Gaston County
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Wilkinson Boulevard
- Express bus service to Charlotte employment hubs
- Enhanced rail connectivity through regional coordination

DEVELOP MOBILITY HUBS

As identified in the Connect Beyond regional mobility framework, mobility hubs serve as centralized points where travelers can transfer between modes such as walking, biking, micro transit, or regional transit. Belmont should consider planning for future mobility hubs along key corridors, particularly:

- Near Wilkinson Boulevard
- Around major employment centers
- In Downtown Belmont

These hubs should include amenities such as bike parking, wayfinding, waiting areas, EV charging, potential park-and-ride facilities, mapping and route information, and shelters.

SUGGESTED MOBILITY HUB LOCATIONS

Location is important when planning mobility hubs since they need to be in locations that work to connect across multiple modes. While these locations are flexible, the following are four locations that could potentially make good locations for intermodal mobility hubs.

Wilkinson Boulevard between Main Street and Park Street:

- CATS 85X Gastonia Express
- Near I-85, US 29, and NC 273
- Available land along Wilkinson Boulevard High Capacity Transit Corridor
- Near several shopping centers

Main Street/McAdenville Road Park and Ride:

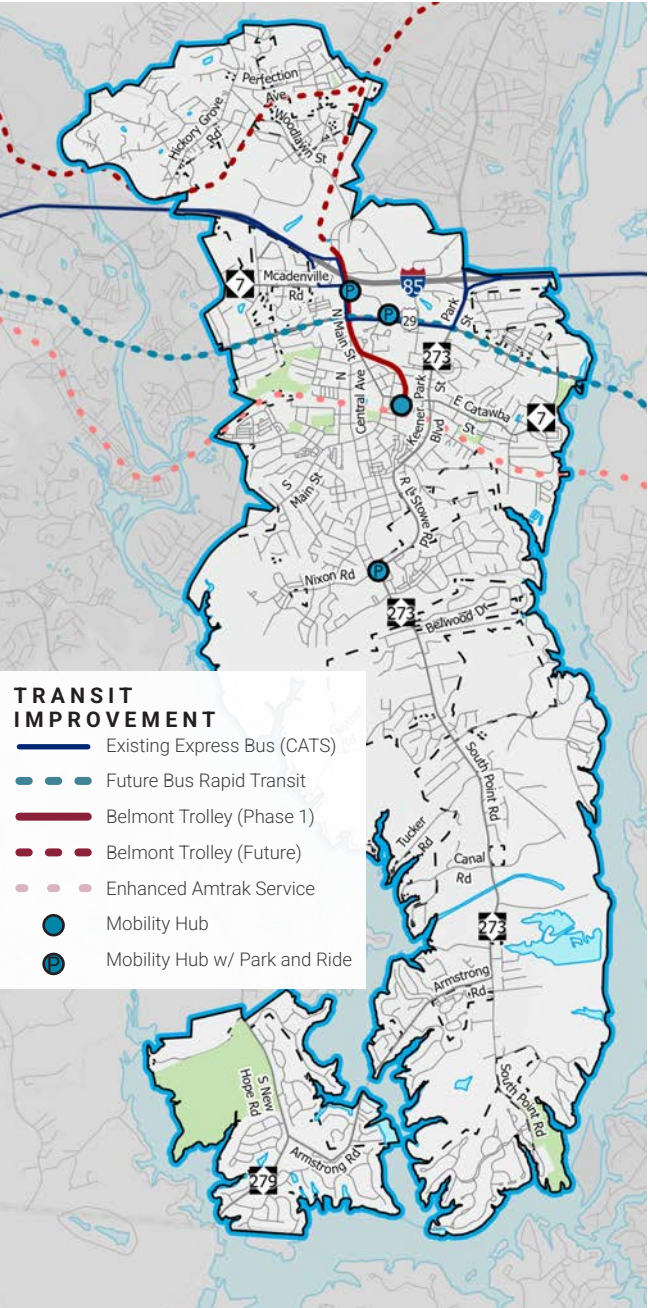
- Available land near I-85 interchange
- Along CATS 85X and proposed Belmont Trolley

Belmont Trolley Car Barn/Station:

- Proposed as a central destination and downtown hub
- Terminus of proposed Belmont Trolley
- Potential for Amtrak intercity rail station

RL Stowe Road/South Point Road:

- Major intersection in south central Belmont
- Gateway to southern Belmont
- Nearby apartments, retail, and schools



Map: Recommended Transit Improvements (Kimley-Horn)



DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

To bring these recommendations to life and build momentum for long-term investment, a series of ten demonstration projects have been identified. Each demonstration project was selected based on its potential to address a known issue, improve safety for vulnerable users, and build support for future implementation.

While the ten selected demonstration projects primarily focus on roadway and bike/ped improvements, transit-related elements could also be included as part of a demonstration project, particularly within the proposed Wilkinson Boulevard corridor improvements. A pilot micro transit service, park-and-ride enhancements, or a temporary mobility hub installation could serve as an early action item to test concepts and gather community feedback.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan provides a high-level overview of the ten selected projects. Full profiles, project descriptions, locations, cost estimations (2025 dollars), and conceptual designs can be found in the full Multimodal Plan.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Implementing the Multimodal Plan will require a coordinated approach to funding and partnerships. While many of the recommendations in this plan are ambitious, a wide range of local, state, federal, and private funding mechanisms can be leveraged to bring these projects to life. The full Multimodal Plan outlines key strategies and potential partners that can help support both short-term improvements and long-term infrastructure investments.

Some of these critical opportunities include leveraging developer partnerships to deliver needed multimodal infrastructure, seeking state and federal funding for capital improvements, and exploring advocacy pathways to expand the capacity for local option sales taxes to fund transportation improvements in North Carolina.

ROADWAY-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENTS

A

**WILKINSON BOULEVARD**  
From Planning Boundary (South Fork) to Planning Boundary (Catawba River)

B

**RL STOWE ROAD**  
From Keener Boulevard to South Point Road

C

**SOUTH POINT ROAD**  
From Nixon Road/RL Stowe Road to Armstrong Road

D

**NEW HOPE ROAD**  
From Planning Boundary (near Worrells River Road) to Planning Boundary (near State Line)

E

**NIXON ROAD**  
From South Fork Parkway to South Point Road

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENTS

A

**CATAWBA STREET**  
From Main Street to Wilkinson Boulevard

B

**PERFECTION AVENUE**  
From Hickory Grove Road to planning boundary

C

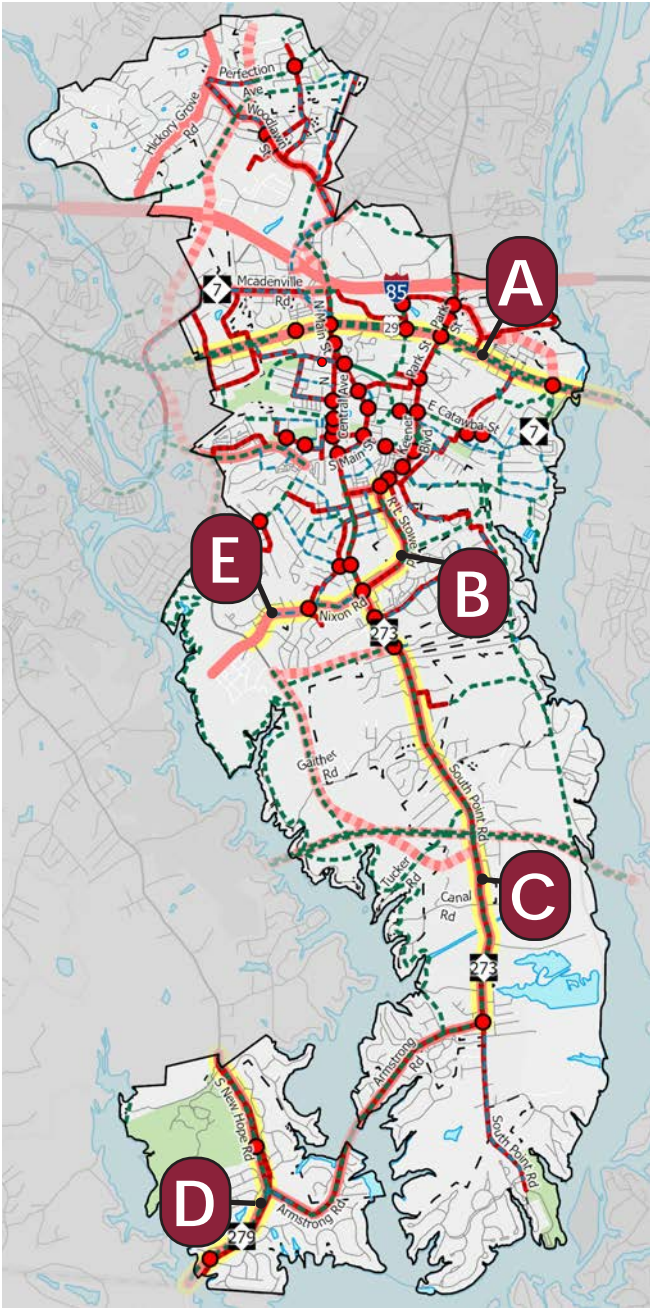
**WOODROW AVENUE**  
From Rocky Branch Trail to Park Street

D

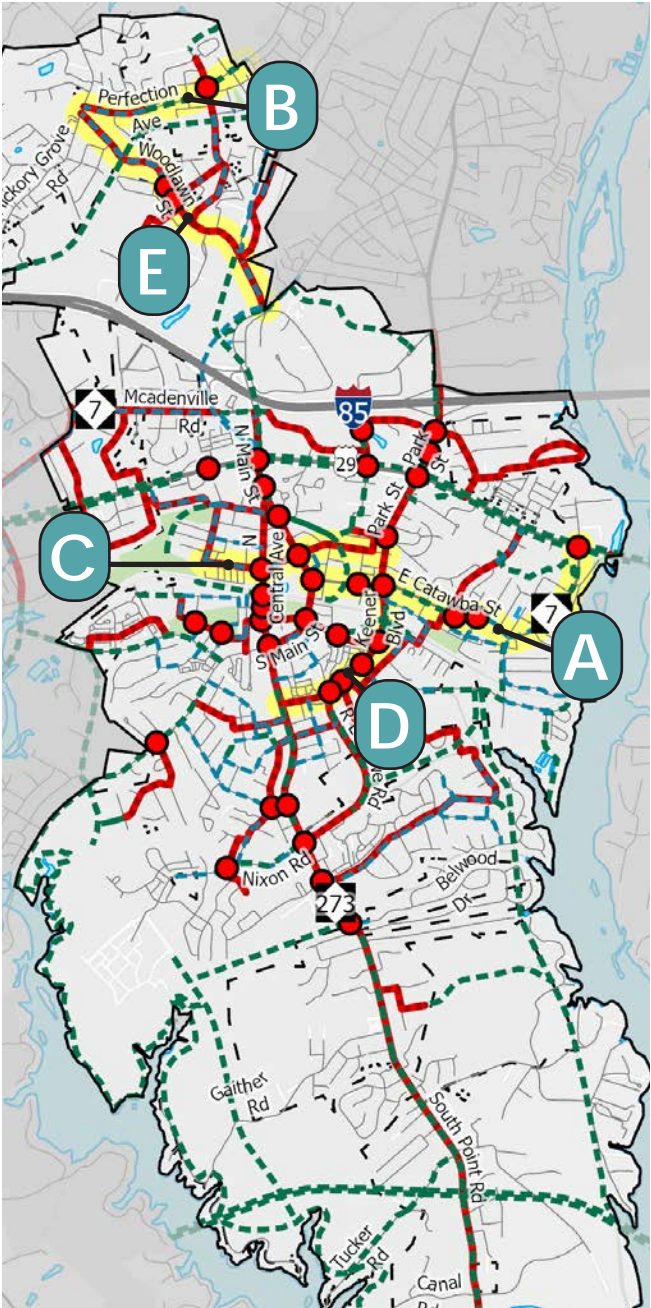
**KEENER BOULEVARD**  
From Central Avenue to Catawba Street

E

**WOODLAWN STREET**  
From Hickory Grove Road to Belmont-Mt Holly Road



Map: Roadway-focused Improvements (Kimley-Horn)



Map: Bicycle/Pedestrian-focused Improvements (Kimley-Horn)



OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

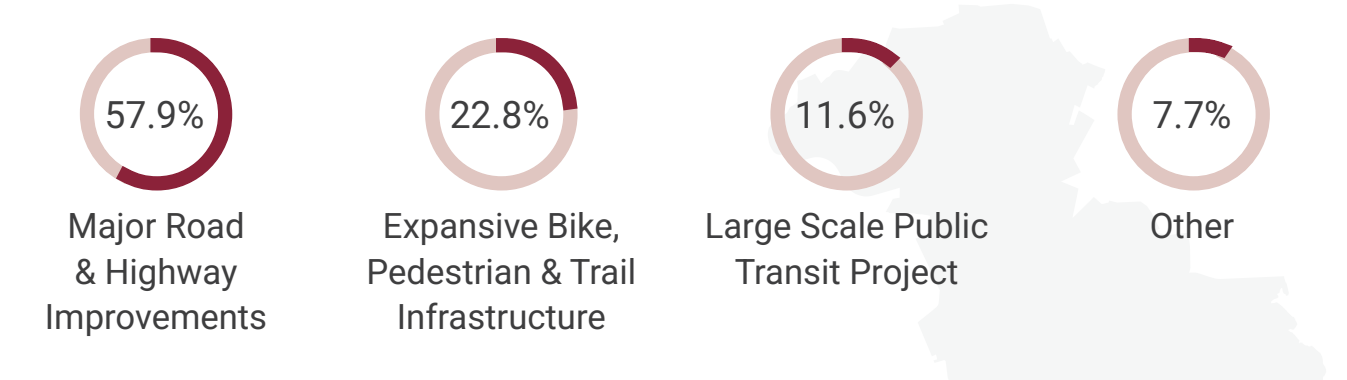
- Residents desire a balanced approach to transportation investment, with a fairly even mix of large capital investments along with smaller maintenance efforts.
- Congestion management is a critical priority for the community, but with a balanced emphasis on safety improvements.
- The majority of the community would like to see investment in road and highway improvements. However, almost 50% agreed that they would walk, bike, or take transit more often if better options were available.
- Peak-hour traffic causes significant commute delays, especially along key corridors that lack sufficient roadway capacity or multimodal alternatives.
- Belmont’s anticipated growth may increase travel demand, requiring proactive multimodal planning to prevent worsening congestion
- Need for new developments to follow transit- and pedestrian-friendly designs.
- Low public transit use due to limited coverage, convenience and awareness reinforce new and existing traffic issues.
- Incomplete sidewalks and bike lanes create safety risks.
- Crash rates, including 31 fatal/incapacitating injuries during the last five years, highlight a need for safer streets and intersections.
- Limited funding challenges infrastructure improvements, necessitating prioritization and a diversification of sources.

MOBILITY

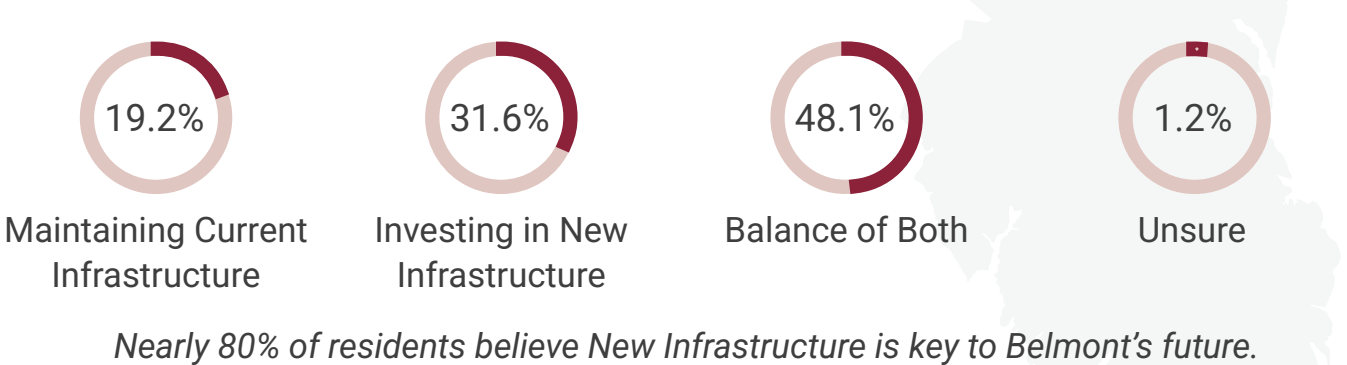
2024-2025 community outreach findings



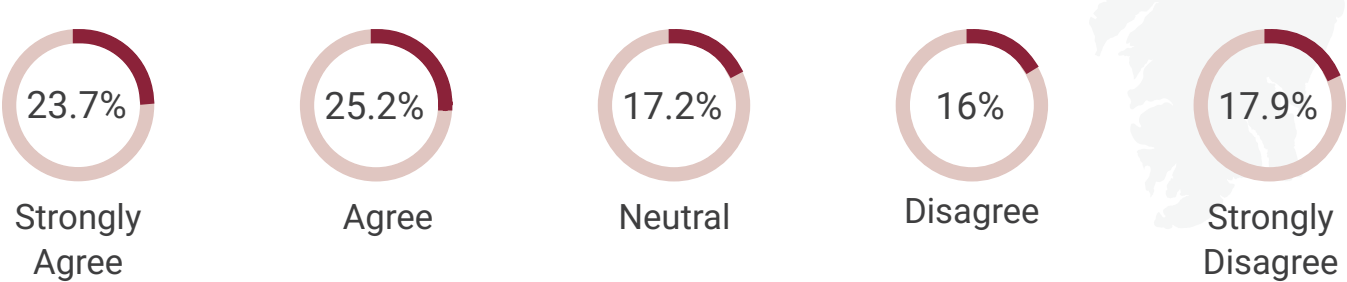
“IF BELMONT COULD ONLY FOCUS ON ONE MAJOR TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, WHAT WOULD YOU PREFER?”



“WHICH DO YOU VALUE MORE?”



“I WOULD WALK, BIKE, AND/OR TAKE TRANSIT MORE IF I HAD BETTER ACCESS TO THESE OPTIONS.”





## 07

To protect and enhance the character of Belmont by building on our heritage, protecting historic resources, embracing surrounding rivers and lakes, improving community appearance, and promoting social and economic diversity.



*This icon represents “Community Character” content.*

# COMMUNITY CHARACTER

With its bountiful natural resources, rich history, and family-friendly neighborhoods, **Belmont exudes small-town charm**, all while in close proximity to Charlotte, a major regional hub.

These qualities have proven attractive to many, and as Belmont inevitably continues to grow, it is critical to preserve the elements that make this City unique while providing for new social and economic opportunities. The goal of this plan's Community Character element is to nurture Belmont's existing cultural, historic, and natural assets while still allowing the City to evolve and meet the needs of future generations. Through thoughtful planning and community engagement, Belmont can leverage its unique qualities and fortify its community character.

## DEFINING BELMONT

Above all, community engagement, conducted across eight workshops, several pop-up events, and through various virtual channels, helped to define the overarching vision for Belmont outlined in this plan. **Out of 2,000+ comments heard, respondent's definitions of Belmont in three words were some of the most insightful.**



**Image:** Downtown Belmont set amongst leafy neighborhoods (source: Belmont Trolley via Facebook).

*"What three words best describe Belmont?"*

As demonstrated by the “word cloud” graphic below, it is clear Belmont residents are overwhelmingly positive about their community. Popular words like “charming,” “community,” and “friendly,” exemplify this, while “quaint” and “small town” reflect Belmont’s beloved ambiance.

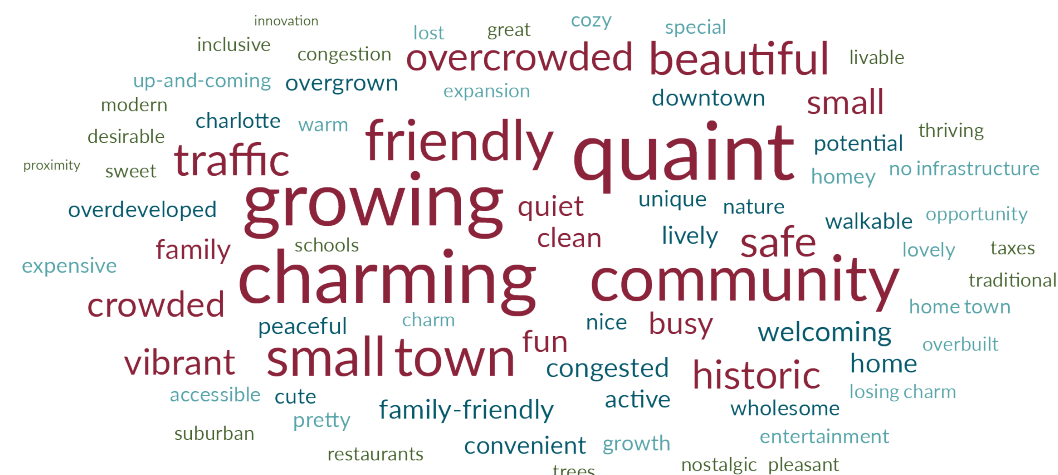
These words highlight the City's past and present –with the positive aspects to be considered a force this plan harnesses to ensure a better future and that doubles down on what makes Belmont ... *Belmont!*

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

Safe, stable and attractive neighborhoods are essential to Belmont's quality of life. Easy access to amenities and other parts of the City keep them desirable, as does preservation of the existing mill communities consisting of modest homes, brick detailing, and other elements.

A strong Downtown is a strong Belmont. The City's active, historic Downtown supports its small-town feel and family-friendly identity apart from other suburbs.

**Environmental integrity is key.** The adjacent rivers, lake, and lush tree canopy are core to Belmont's character.





# GOAL 5 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

To protect and enhance the character of Belmont by building on our heritage, protecting historic resources, embracing surrounding rivers and lakes, improving community appearance, and promoting social and economic diversity.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

### POLICY 1. The City should preserve the authenticity of Downtown.

- 1.1. **Project** – Using the Land Development Code and marketing efforts, Belmont should encourage a mix of uses that are complementary with each other and Downtown's character.
- 1.2. **Project** – Working with building owners, Belmont should focus on attracting small, independent businesses to Downtown that cater to a pedestrian-oriented environment.
- 1.3. **Project** – Encourage a wider range of Downtown eateries with diverse cuisine and health-focused options.
- 1.4. **Project** – Create a detailed Downtown Master Plan that identifies infill potential, establishes a marketing strategy, proposes the location(s) for structured parking, and identifies key architectural elements.
- 1.5. **Project** – Encourage appropriately scaled residential development Downtown, such as upper floor housing units above commercial uses.

### POLICY 2. New development on the edges of Downtown should serve as effective transitional land uses to surrounding residential areas.

- 2.1. **Project** – Investigate additional zoning districts to implement desired form on the edge of Downtown. These should be intentional form-based codes that regulate building design more than use types.

- 2.2. **Project** – Encourage small to medium-sized uses that do not require significant land assembly.

- 2.3. **Project** – Allow retail uses on the edges of Downtown, such as neighborhood services in residential areas that will serve adjacent residents.

### POLICY 3. The Reid, North Belmont, and East Belmont neighborhoods should be supported through new investments that enhance their unique character without causing displacement.

- 3.1. **Project** – Ensure that the policies and standards of the Land Development Code support and strengthen these existing neighborhoods as well as areas determined to have a specific character.
- 3.2. **Project** – Work to attract a range of neighborhood-scale housing typologies to each of these neighborhoods, where possible.
- 3.3. **Project** – Leverage the potential of East End to provide a revitalized commercial core (Village Center) for East Belmont and generate stronger connections to Downtown.
- 3.4. **Project** – Discourage residential development and improvements that are out of scale and character within existing residential areas that can lead to or worsen the effects of gentrification.

### POLICY 4. Future development should be designed to contribute to a dynamic and accessible waterfront along portions of the peninsula.

- 4.1. **Project** – Both public and private development(s) should leverage public, common access to the shoreline where possible.

### POLICY 5. The City should coordinate with the Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission and other community groups advocating for historic preservation to preserve key landmarks and districts in the community.

- 5.1. **Project** – Survey properties in and around Downtown every five years to determine if any deserve local designation.
- 5.2. **Project** – Investigate expansion of Belmont's National Historic District.
- 5.3. **Project** – Advocate for and encourage methods to protect the urban fabric, historic architecture, and community character of the City Center.
- 5.4. **Project** – Advocate for the preservation and reuse of the former City Hall building.
- 5.5. **Project** – Work with Belmont's historical organizations to expand both guided and self-guided walking tours, possibly during National Historic Preservation Month, among other activities that raise awareness.



**POLICY 6. The City should take steps to create a sense of arrival to Belmont.**

- 6.1. Project** – New development around identified entry points to the City should include a highly visible gateway monument with modern branding and statement landscaping.
- 6.2. Project** – Enhance the City’s gateways by cultivating the right mix of land uses and controls through changes in the Land Development Code and Zoning Map, particularly along Wilkinson Boulevard.
- 6.3. Project** – Embrace critical road construction projects, such as the Wilkinson Boulevard (US-29/74) bridge replacement and the I-85 widening project, as an opportunity for community beautification.
- 6.4. Project** – Continue to utilize the City’s *2020 Belmont Brand Guidebook* and any successive document, to design and implement new wayfinding signage within the City.

**POLICY 7. The City should celebrate its distinct neighborhoods and districts while improving a sense of unity.**

- 7.1. Project** – Work to better connect both the commercial and residential areas of Downtown through mobility, recreation, and visible branding.
- 7.2. Project** – Create a branding and connectivity plan for North Belmont and East Belmont while keeping with the overall brand standards established for the City.

**POLICY 8. The City should formally promote and protect the architectural character of key buildings and districts.**

- 8.1. Project** – Develop Design Guidelines for Belmont’s historic Downtown that are reinforced through incentives and advocacy.
- 8.2. Project** – Review the Land Development Code for its effectiveness in reinforcing distinct character elements and allowance of vernacular architectural styles.
- 8.3. Project** – Increase investment into Belmont’s Facade Enhancement Grant Program and consider expanding its eligibility to commercial structures in other areas of the City.

**POLICY 9. Small-town charm, historic and environmental integrity, a family-friendly atmosphere, and safe, stable, attractive neighborhoods are essential elements of Belmont’s character that need to be preserved as the City evolves.**

- 9.1. Project** – Ensure the Land Development Code and other relevant policies allow property owners to build new development that respects the old, essential fabric of the City, such as historic development patterns, uses, and other design characteristics.
- 9.2. Project** – Recruit more youth and teen-oriented retail, entertainment, and leisure activities that target this growing age group.

**POLICY 10. The City’s existing building stock is an important community asset that should be maintained through adaptive reuse and preservation techniques when feasible.**

- 10.1. Project** – Encourage appropriate adaptive re-use of older buildings by developing an inventory of existing underutilized or vacant buildings, identifying potential appropriate uses for each building given its location and context within the City, and market buildings for appropriate uses.
- 10.2. Project** – Ensure that adaptive reuse is not prevented or discouraged through unnecessary Land Development Code restrictions or building regulations.
- 10.3. Project** – Establish standards of best practices for adaptive reuse and preservation in the City Center and beyond.

**POLICY 11. The City should proactively pursue redevelopment of sites that are incongruent with the character Belmont seeks to reinforce.**

- 11.1. Project** – Identify abandoned or underutilized properties, particularly former mills or other large industrial sites, and work with the private sector to facilitate their character-appropriate redevelopment. Some sites may be historically eligible.
- 11.2. Project** – Encourage and assist Duke Energy with transitioning a portion of the Allen Steam Station property to another use or uses that supports the Belmont community, such as a regional park and recreation facility.

**POLICY 12. The City should amend and enforce current nuisance regulations as needed to address property deterioration.**

- 12.1. Project** – Review the current Nuisance Code to identify problems and opportunities, and adopt revisions as needed.
- 12.2. Project** – Address the condition of existing commercial properties that are deteriorating or dilapidated through enforcement of property maintenance codes and the Land Development Code.

**POLICY 13. The City should work to reduce the amount of litter along streets, within public spaces, in waterways, and at the rivers’ edge.**

- 13.1. Project** – Continue to advocate for Keep Belmont Beautiful and coordinate with Catawba Riverkeeper and other organizations to identify and intervene in areas that necessitate waste clean-up.
- 13.2. Project** – Continue to participate in and market Keep Belmont Beautiful’s biannual clean-up days.
- 13.3. Project** – Create “adopt-a-road,” “adopt-a-river,” and similar programs.
- 13.4. Project** – Provide adequate trash and recycling facilities in public areas throughout the City to reduce litter.





Image: Main Street (source: City of Belmont)



Image: Homes on Linestowe Dr (source: Compass Real Estate)



Image: Waterfront at McLean (source: Keystone Custom Homes)



Image: Hawthorne Park (source: Zillow)

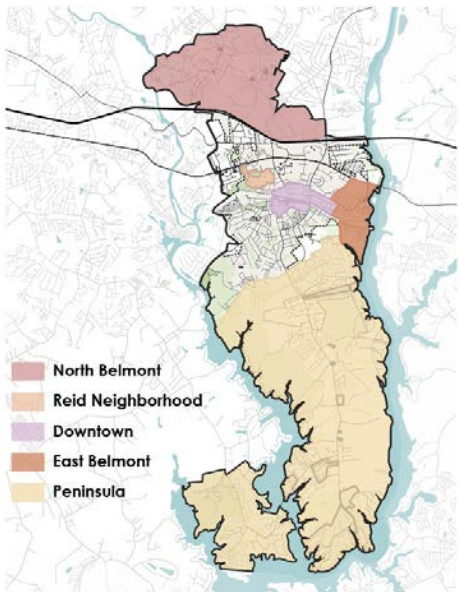
## A CITY OF DIVERSE CHARACTER

Despite a planning area of just 20 square miles, Belmont is a striking mosaic of distinct neighborhoods and districts constructed across three centuries. In recent decades however, it has been dominated by a generally suburban growth pattern, whereby each of the City's areas varies considerably in its character, density, and style.

The oldest of these, the traditional mill villages, situated within walking distance of the textile mills that built and owned them until the 1970s and 1980s, remain largely occupied and well-cared for. Prominent examples include the Crescent Mill Village (now Adams Bluff), North Belmont, and East Belmont, where residents all have strong commitments to their neighborhoods and push for them to continue to be viable, thriving communities into the future.

Other identifiable districts that contribute to the character of Belmont include those that make up Downtown and its immediate context, as well as the varied newer neighborhoods throughout the South Point and McLean areas of the peninsula.

This diverse mix of neighborhoods and areas each contribute to Belmont's overall charm in their own way, making it essential to recognize these variations and harmonize them into a strategic plan for measured, tasteful growth across the Planning Area.



Map: Areas of Belmont (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)

## DOWNTOWN

The streets and blocks within and near the historic commercial center of Belmont are cherished for their quiet, family-friendly atmosphere, historic building patterns and homes, and mature tree canopy. Housing sizes, ages and styles range widely from block to block and often even within blocks. There is also variability in housing types in certain areas where accessory dwellings, duplexes, and slightly higher density residential development mix with single-family detached homes.

The Downtown neighborhood includes a National Register of Historic Places district originally listed in 1996, boasting Main Street's most distinctive structures and several adjacent homes of varying architectural styles. Ten properties are also locally designated by the Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission. To preserve these assets for Belmont's future generations, consideration should be given to expanding the district and encouraging more properties to become local landmarks.

Today, Downtown Belmont is expanding. Recent projects like Chronicle Mill, a redevelopment of the historic textile site completed in 2023, and the Imperial Lofts infill project added desirable residential housing options closer to walkable amenities and services located downtown.

Moreover, an increasing appetite by the community for further infill and adaptive reuse projects within and adjacent to Downtown presents an incredible opportunity to extend the district and offer new, complementary uses. In addition to housing and workplace options, other re-use opportunities include additions to the impressive existing restaurant scene, art galleries and shops.

The Downtown Belmont Development Association (DBDA) and Main Street are committed to enhancing businesses and aesthetics within each of the three distinct districts in Downtown Belmont: Historic Downtown, Chronicle, and East End. As interest in this area continues to expand, a

proactive look should be taken at these district boundaries, and the boundaries of the Center City Small Area Plan, to ensure that new development compliments the style and distinct character elements that exist today. Additionally, Belmont should develop a new Downtown Master Plan and consider crafting Downtown Design Guidelines to be promoted through incentives and/or updates to the Land Development Code.

Beyond Main Street, this guidance could be harnessed to shape infill development on the edges of Downtown, creating effective transitions to the district's immediate context. To the north and south, there are traditional single-family neighborhoods; to the west, there are parks, open space and some adjacent gravel lots suitable for redevelopment.

During public engagement, 97.4% of survey respondents noted Downtown Belmont or Stowe Park as a city-defining location, illustrating this core area's importance to the community. Overall, strengthening downtown through targeted new investment and actions that enhance its character must be a top priority of this plan.



Image: Main Street (DBDA), Chronicle Mill Apartments (source: BB+M Architecture), Catawba Street (DBDA)



BELMONT’S NEIGHBORHOODS

EAST BELMONT

Spanning a large area between Downtown and the Catawba River, bounded by both Wilkinson Boulevard and the freight rail line, East Belmont represents a diverse collection of land uses and deep, historical ties to the former textile industry.

Critically, East Catawba Street also serves as a gateway to Downtown, with a significant swath of land visible to travelers from I-85 and Wilkinson Boulevard. As this plan prioritizes strengthening the sense of arrival to Belmont, several opportunities for high-impact beautification, infrastructure, and even infill development projects on the City’s edges and highest traffic routes are in East Belmont.

Concerning what’s on the ground today, there are many neighborhood styles in East Belmont, ranging from established single-family detached homes developed primarily as mill housing, to neighborhoods comprised solely of manufactured housing. Housing sizes, ages, and styles vary widely, but homes generally have a small to medium-sized footprint. Multi-family complexes are present here as well, though generally in the form of smaller multifamily units and quadruplexes.

Older commercial developments and underused vacant land also occupy notable portions of the area and offer significant opportunities for future investments. Streetscape improvements and facade upgrades have already been made along two primary blocks, but underutilized buildings and surrounding vacant land have left this node isolated. Fostering residential infill development on these adjacent empty parcels and continuing the enhanced streetscape to Downtown could foster a better sense of place in this area.

Another major opportunity is the shoreline in East Belmont which is relatively underdeveloped, presenting significant potential here for a vibrant waterfront district. Such a destination would build on existing mixed uses in

the area, which include a marina, multi-family housing, and several businesses. Assets like Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park, the new Belmont Recreation Center and Belmont Skate Park are also nearby – as are possible connections for a future greenway. A Small Area Plan may prove useful to better define and guide development goals in this part of Belmont.

REID NEIGHBORHOOD

The Reid Neighborhood, located immediately northwest of Downtown and just south of Belmont’s two main corridors (Interstate 85 and Wilkinson Boulevard), is a historically Black neighborhood named after African American educator and prominent citizen, Charles Jesse Bynum Reid. This intact neighborhood primarily includes small to medium-sized single family detached homes but is currently experiencing infill that may change its character.

With new developments far exceeding the median value of housing being built in most areas of Belmont, the opportunities for purchase and renovation underscore the importance of preserving naturally occurring affordable housing in the Reid Neighborhood, as well as exploring further attainable housing opportunities on infill sites. A neighborhood rich in history, it exemplifies Belmont’s vision of a family-friendly community.

A central asset of the community is the site of the former Reid High School, which closed in 1966. Today, the aptly-named Reid Park, one of Belmont’s most popular green spaces, is currently on this site, along with nearby Hood Memorial African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church and Rocky Branch Park. In between, on Sacco Street, Charles Reid’s childhood home still stands.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD AND INFILL DEVELOPMENTS

In Belmont, the Land Development Code (LDC) requires a minimum of forty acres for Traditional Neighborhood



Image: Historic Single-Family Home near Reid Park and Downtown Belmont (source: Coldwell Banker Homes)

Developments (TNDs) whereas infill development is characterized by no new infrastructure required (such as no new streets or utility lines) to support a proposed development and/or subdivision. Though constructed after 1990, neighborhoods such as Eagle Park, Hawthorne Park and Belmont Reserve represent a return to the pedestrian-focused urbanism that dominated Belmont’s foundations and early history and are examples of this type of development. These places echo the railroad and mill-oriented neighborhoods that once represented the majority of the city, offering housing diversity for families of all sizes, transportation choice and integrated green space. These neighborhoods are often characterized by walkable, tree-lined streets, on-street parking, rear service alleys and raised first floors with porches or stoops in the front.

During public engagement, residents highlighted the ability of their families to remain in the same neighborhood throughout different stages of life that demanded larger or smaller homes, as well as the opportunity for their children to grow into their own rowhouse or townhome down the block before single-family properties were within financial reach. Eagle Park residents enjoy easy foot or bicycle access to Belmont Elementary School,

while those living in Hawthorne Park can comfortably walk to downtown businesses and events, supporting local businesses.

While this development style is not desirable everywhere, TND and infill opportunities represent two of the most efficient strategies of development in Belmont. By clustering homes in close proximity to one another, and allowing for a mix of lot sizes and attached and detached housing styles, this type of development results in less street lengths (mileage) overall with far fewer linear-feet of utility lines, less infrastructure requiring public maintenance, and the creation of more taxable properties per acre, all while providing a safe, highly desirable community atmosphere.

Overall, the TND typology contributes to Belmont’s distinct, family-focused and historically-rooted community character. Continuing to cultivate this style of infill growth on vacant land around Downtown and in mixed use areas (see Section 3, “Land Use”) will be important in maintaining the city’s fabric and sense of place.



Image: Traditional Neighborhood Development Style in Belmont’s Infill Communities (source: Belmont Realty)



SOUTH POINT PENINSULA

The South Point Peninsula is characterized by newer, single-family residential development, with many neighborhoods situated along Lake Wylie and its coves. Built as subdivisions, often with over 100 homes, these residential developments are organized around a small network of collector streets with few surrounding commercial or public uses. Aside from the water and a marina/ restaurant, the area’s most prominent amenity is the Daniel Stowe Conservancy, situated off of New Hope Road. At nearly 400 acres, this destination represents Belmont’s largest green space.

Overall, the neighborhoods in this area are generally wealthier than the rest of the City with the exception of the highest income Downtown-adjacent communities, with median home value above \$400,000 across the entire primary peninsula (see Section 5, “Economy”). Significant changes are not currently proposed to the existing development pattern, which means that this will likely continue to be the case, depending upon how Gaston County conducts its future land use reviews - and considering Belmont’s limited influence outside of its jurisdiction.

While peaceful, most of these neighborhoods tend to be less walkable internally due to limited shade (tree canopy)



Image: New Single-Family Residential Development in South Point Peninsula (source: Google Earth)

and a lack of sidewalks, though newer developments like Overlake and The Conservancy include them. This condition exists externally beyond each neighborhood onto key arteries like South Point, New Hope and Armstrong Roads, where pedestrian access to most locations outside of these neighborhoods is limited.

In fact, community feedback revealed residents in this area named traffic congestion on South Point Road as their foremost issue, a symptom not only of lacking potential multi-modal transportation options, but even more so, isolation from the retail, services and institutions necessary to help residents meet every day needs. This is one of several reasons this plan advocates for a Village Center (or centers) further south on the peninsula.

With the South Point Peninsula representing the vast majority of the planning area’s remaining undeveloped land, Belmont should be alert as developers seek to capitalize on the opportunity. Certainly, zoning appropriately and advocating to the private sector for envisioned commercial development, as well as incentivizing the incorporation of more diverse housing types (such as clustered single family units), will be key to cultivating a higher-functioning area.

Finally, identifying additional locations to create public waterfront access along the peninsula will be critical



Image: Public Waterfront Access Along South Fork River Near Reflection Pointe (source: Duke Energy)

to preventing the complete privatization of Belmont’s remaining shoreline.

Locations like South Point Beach Park and its boat ramp, near Reflection Pointe, are extremely popular throughout the warmer months, allowing all residents to enjoy Belmont’s waterfront. Such access points incorporated as part of each new, shoreline-adjacent development (either as publicly-dedicated and accessible open space or private common amenities), will effectively increase the City’s relationship to the water and make it an even more desirable place to live. A recently approved schematic plan (under a conditional zoning) by Del Webb creates publicly accessible trails along the South Fork River and represents a step in the right direction. This should serve as a model to maximize benefit from new private investment.

NORTH BELMONT

An informal area encompassing both Belmont and Gaston County land north of I-85, North Belmont is characterized by sprawling streets lined with older, more affordable homes with smaller lots and set-backs.

North Belmont is also associated with Belmont Abbey, a major historic landmark of the region. Belmont Abbey - a Benedictine monastery and small Catholic liberal arts

college - also provides a unique identity for Belmont, as does its sister institution, the Sisters of Mercy Convent. The Abbey’s neo-Gothic architecture is visible from I-85 and its beautiful campus is a distinctive landmark on the north side of Belmont. Detailed planning for the Abbey’s extensive landholdings has been directed by the Montcross Small Area Plan, which covers much of North Belmont and has facilitated major recent developments, including the CaroMount Health Belmont Medical Center.

Benefiting from close freeway access, the area is also interspersed with industrial development, including The Oaks Business Park.

Like other areas of Belmont, such as East Belmont and the Reid Neighborhood, many of the homes here are mill village houses that hearken back to the textile age. These smaller homes, often of clapboard construction, provide important naturally-occurring affordable housing for many of Belmont’s residents. These homes are also becoming more popular within the region, especially among younger households, for their greater affordability and more traditional community design elements. These homes provide a house size missing from the new home market which is desirable for both entry-level and aging residents.



Image: Belmont Abbey College campus (source: Belmont Abbey College)



Image: Residential Street Pattern and Streetscape Conditions in South Point Peninsula (source: Zillow)





Image: Various land uses in North Belmont (source: Google Earth)

Above all, North Belmont is both physically and perceptually separated from the rest of the City due to the barrier posed by I-85 and the industrial and institutional uses that border this corridor. To better integrate this area, it is necessary to **improve connectivity** by expanding multi-modal transportation opportunities. **Further pursuit of the Belmont Rail Trail concept**, which may eventually be accompanied by a privately operated Belmont Trolley, will drastically improve safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle access between North Belmont and Downtown.

Community feedback has also communicated the desire to **revitalize deteriorating buildings, reduce nuisances and blight, and expand the variety of commercial and mixed-use development available** to meet needs locally. Where aging industrial facilities are located, particularly along the railroad line(s), they negatively impact adjacent neighborhood land value, while vacant or underutilized commercial spaces along Woodlawn Street and Hickory Grove Road (outside the City Limits) are in desperate need of a face lift to improve marketability.

Outlining a bright future for North Belmont are **two planned Village Centers**, designed to build on local services already available along Perfection Avenue. **Increased housing**

diversity and additional commercial integration in these areas will greatly improve the quality of life for North Belmont’s residents.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AREAS

Neighborhood Conservation Areas are defined as areas possessing unique and distinctive features, history, identity and character that are unanimously considered worthy of conservation. In Belmont, these tools have so far been used sparingly to enforce low density development in naturally sensitive areas and are suggested as overlay districts identified in the 2018 Future Land Use Map.

New Conservation Areas could also be used to reinforce historic character in the face of neighborhood change, should there be sufficient public support and subject to enforceability under North Carolina law(s). Conservation Area stakeholders could collaborate with the City to create Neighborhood Conservation Plan(s) (a set of best practices) to facilitate the revitalization, maintenance, and protection of the area’s character and quality of life. Doing so will better ensure that residents and property owners are at the forefront of decisions regarding what aspects of the neighborhood should be preserved and what should be introduced.

Neighborhood Conservation Plans should include the preparation of design guidelines that encourage compatible uses that further enhance the neighborhood’s character and limit those that would radically alter the existing conditions. Neighborhood characteristics such as massing, building scale, parcel size, and building orientation should be the focus for protection, though individual building details may also be addressed. Regulation and enforceability of these plans by the City itself will be strictly limited based on current North Carolina statutes. Infill development of vacant or underused lots should be encouraged as well. These plans should also identify funding opportunities to enhance the neighborhood’s infrastructure, amenities, aesthetics, and safety.

Plans can be enforced by Conservation Overlay Districts that define specific provisions, such as permitted and encouraged uses and development guidelines that specify allowable building forms and any standards that would ensure that the character is maintained in a way that is unique to each area.

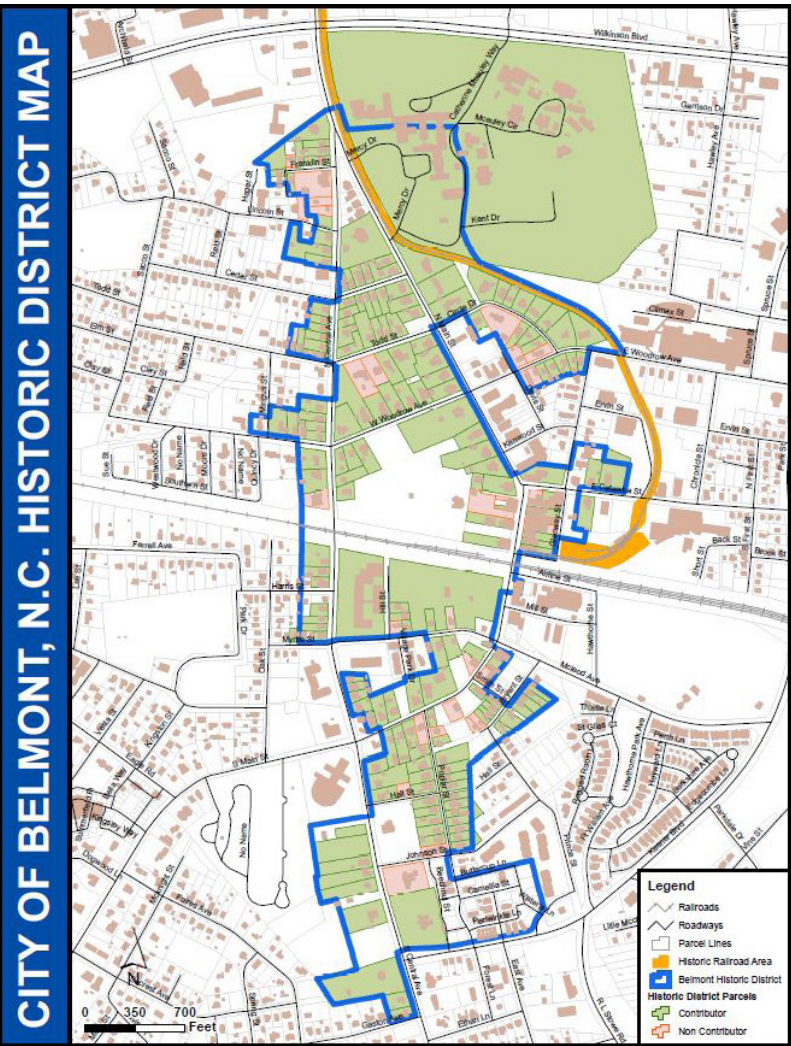
HERITAGE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

From the legacy of the textile industry to the plethora of historic buildings, Belmont’s historic character is a defining element of the City’s identity. In addition to providing a unique sense of place, history and heritage add interest to the community, showcasing the region’s evolution and growth to attract social and economic opportunities. To safeguard these assets and ensure they continue to be cherished and enjoyed by future generations, it is essential that the City integrate preservation efforts with plans for growth.

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

Belmont’s historic architecture is primarily concentrated in the Downtown area, though mill housing and other historic residential development is prevalent across several core neighborhoods. Even the McLean area at the southern end of the peninsula features two stately homes from the mid-1800s, preserved while the new neighborhoods have sprung up around them. Whenever possible, the City should work to preserve historic and otherwise notable buildings.

In 1996, the Downtown Belmont Historic District (one of the oldest in the state) was designated on the National Register of Historic Places. The district catalogs and draws attention to 264 historic resources that roughly stretch from Wilkinson Boulevard to Keener Boulevard. In addition to most of the commercial buildings along Main Street, the district also boasts Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Bungalow/American Craftsman style homes, many of which were built during the textile boom of the early 20th century. Also included is the Sisters of Mercy



Map: Belmont historic district map (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)

campus. Belmont Abbey College and its 1876 historic basilica were listed in 1993 under a separate historic district.

Historic designations like this help highlight the importance of Belmont’s historic heritage, foster community pride, and unlock key income tax credits that can be used to fund qualifying restoration efforts. However, they do not restrict how a property is used, or even prevent its demolition.



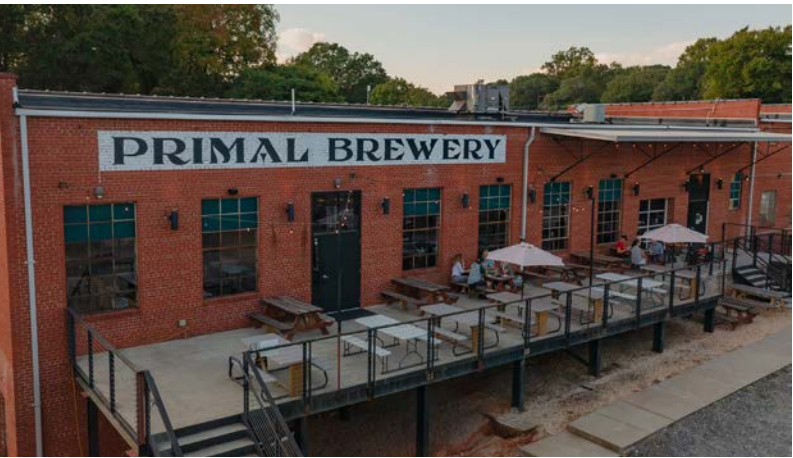


Image: Adaptive reuse (source: City of Belmont)

As such, beyond advocating for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, **Belmont should encourage local historic designation(s), which could offer more robust protections and grant opportunities.** Additionally, Belmont should complete the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) survey of properties – especially those in and around downtown – every five years to determine their eligibility and educate property owners about the potential benefits of local designation.

Public education campaigns may also help deepen the knowledge of and appreciation for Belmont’s history and heritage. The City can help cross-promote educational efforts by other local groups to bring awareness as **community feedback has revealed a desire for expanded historical programming - such as guided and self-guided walking tours** - that would create new recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Working with local and regional preservation groups is key to propelling these efforts.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Adaptive reuse entails the repurposing (often involving renovation) of an existing building or site to a new use. In addition to breathing new life into structures that would have otherwise continued to deteriorate or have been demolished, this development method reduces the need for new

construction and minimizes the associated environmental impacts. Through adaptive reuse, Belmont can encourage the preservation of its historic fabric, foster economic development and create unique spaces that reflect the City’s past while still accommodating future growth.

To realize this, Belmont should **ensure that adaptive reuse is encouraged through enabling zoning legislation, land use, and building incentives.** Additionally, Belmont should **maintain an inventory of older and vacant buildings** and work with the community, developers, and other stakeholders to determine and market the most appropriate alternatives for their redevelopment.

BALANCING THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

With the benefits of formal historic designation and adaptive reuse in mind, Belmont should take an approach to growth that honors historic building patterns while still allowing space for new construction, preferences and change.

**The key will be to strike a balance between the past, present and future.** This can be achieved through the thoughtful integration of new development types and styles that avoid overwhelming the existing built environment.

For example, the need for character-appropriate growth is most acute around Downtown. To address this, the **creation of a new Downtown Master Plan is recommended,** outlining catalytic sites (such as Stowe Park and adjacent properties) and placing an emphasis on new projects that require small to medium-scale land assemblage, allowing the identity-rich district to evolve gradually. Furthermore, creating a new **“Downtown Transitional” zoning district could be a useful tool to cultivate less intense commercial and mixed use growth where the district’s edges meet single-family areas** - as long as downzoning of properties is not involved.

Overall, Belmont has a finite amount of remaining developable land, and even less that has never been

developed before. **Intentional planning to continue the character established by neighborhoods in each area, employment of conservation and preservation tools, and consideration for district edges will be necessary to strengthen historic roots and adapt the wider community in the face of change.**

NATURAL RESOURCES

LEVERAGING BELMONT’S NATURAL RESOURCES

Belmont’s geography and natural resources have been instrumental in shaping the City’s development and overall character. To be sure, Belmont’s parks, gardens, trails and waterways are valued assets that provide the community with a wide array of recreational opportunities. Protecting and expanding these resources is essential, not only for preserving Belmont’s natural beauty, but also for maximizing the social and economic benefits they provide. **Ensuring adequate public access to (and connectivity between) Belmont’s natural resources is critical** to accomplishing this goal.

EMBRACING THE WATERFRONT

Situated on a peninsula surrounded by Lake Wylie and the Catawba and South Fork Rivers, **the 17-mile waterfront has long been one of Belmont’s defining features.** Ironically, most of the shoreline is currently inaccessible



Image: Kayaking on the Catawba river (source: Go Gaston NC)



Image: Dining on the Catawba river (source: Go Gaston NC)

and invisible to the public, severely limiting recreational and economic opportunities Belmont could otherwise benefit from. As of 2025, the waterfront is primarily occupied by private single-family residential development, industrial uses and vacant open space. Some lakefront neighborhoods do not even reserve private shoreline green space or docks for homes across the street from the water, limiting access further.

While this trend reflects similar land use in peer cities, nearby **Cornelius and Davidson are both trying to maximize their available shorelines by offering opportunities for the entire area to enjoy the water.** Likewise, Mount Holly has begun to offer more accessible waterfront dining opportunities to the greater community.

With that said, **there is potential to create a more dynamic, accessible waterfront that better showcases Belmont’s natural beauty, promotes tourism and provides new opportunities** to the community. This is especially true of East Belmont, which offers one of the few remaining areas of shoreline that has not been entirely deeded to private residential development. In line with stakeholder desires, this area could be consciously cultivated into a mixed use district, providing memorable waterfront access near existing city parks and to Downtown. See Section 3, “Land Use” for more on this potential Village Center.



**Partnerships - and leadership - with private stakeholders** will be necessary to redevelop this area, as well as other locations of interest along the waterfront. For example, Belmont could collaborate with Duke Energy through open dialogue, design charrettes, case study review and so on to encourage redevelopment of a portion of the Allen Steam Station property for public use, following the site’s transition to a battery facility.

**Whenever possible, Belmont should encourage private development to grant public access to the waterfront.** In addition to new parks and redevelopment efforts, even simple initiatives, such as the expansion of kayak access points will benefit the community, supporting access to the thirty-one mile Catawba River Blueway system, now part of the Carolina Thread Trail network.

PRESERVING ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

As a common good, the preservation of natural resources is the responsibility of residents and city officials alike. Still, local government must act as an environmental steward that proactively guides and encourages their protection.

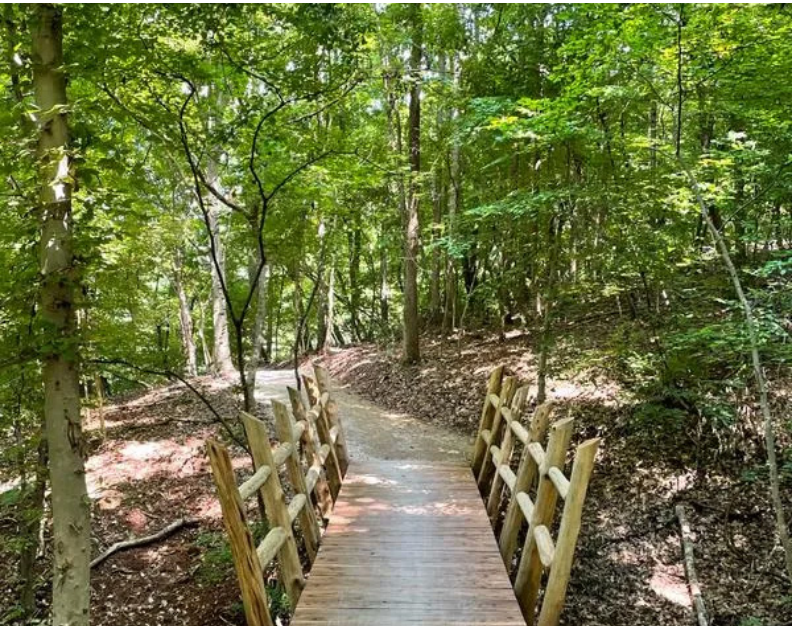


Image: Rocky Branch Trail (source: Carolina Thread Trail Map)

Examples of recommended initiatives include educational programming and signage to increase public awareness, activation of areas adjacent to streams to provide access for shoreline stabilization and organized cleanup efforts, all of which bring awareness to Belmont’s natural amenities. The City should establish adopt-a-road, adopt-a-river and similar programs to help recruit volunteers with the common goal of reducing litter and ensuring continued vitality of natural resources. Collaborating with existing organizations and community groups, such as the Catawba Riverkeeper and Keep Belmont Beautiful, can help facilitate environmental preservation efforts.

By creating opportunities for community engagement in environmental preservation, the City of Belmont can also help cultivate a strong sense of pride and unity that further enhances the overall character of the area.

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

ADDRESSING NUISANCES AND BLIGHT

**Belmont should closely consider how nuisances and blight impact its appearance, and consequently, its character and residents’ sense of pride and place.** Ensuring the City is beautiful, inviting, and livable can also increase property values and attract new economic investment.

In pursuit of this, the City should **regularly review its Nuisance Code and make revisions** that would improve the City’s appearance and overall quality. Additionally, the City should work closely with the community to identify and address emerging concerns.

**Today, this issue is most pressing along Wilkinson Boulevard**, where facade deterioration and underutilized commercial properties negatively impact the character and image of the City. **During several rounds of public engagement, stakeholders cited reversing this trend as a top priority.**

In decades to come, high-capacity transit connectivity to

Charlotte may spur overall revitalization along this corridor. However, **Belmont cannot afford to continuing waiting for such an investment catalyst.** Instead, injecting city funds to support key aesthetic upgrades throughout and actively **pursuing developers with incentives to build along the corridor** could foster significant change far faster.

To accomplish this, the City should **increase investment in its Facade Enhancement Grant Program and consider expanding its eligibility to commercial structures outside of Downtown.** In the case of Wilkinson Boulevard, Belmont should also continue close coordination with Montcross, LLC and their evolving infill development vision, which has already significantly helped generate new, image-shifting economic activity. In parallel, the City can proactively invest in transportation and utility infrastructure to encourage private investment for smaller projects.

Finally, addressing nuisances and blight goes hand in hand with improving public safety concerns that are essential to maintaining Belmont’s family-friendly atmosphere. For example, the maintenance of street trees, vegetation and lighting can help ensure visible, pedestrian-friendly sight lines. Working with NCDOT’s typically rigid framework to champion multimodal improvements and beautification upgrades to Wilkinson Boulevard could create outsized positive effects.

GATEWAYS: LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF BELMONT

As the first and final areas encountered by those moving towards and through the City, gateways have an enormous impact on guiding individuals’ overall perception of the community. Accordingly, Belmont should ensure its gateways help define the community’s boundaries, identity, and tone. Land uses, structures, signage and their overall aesthetic appearance should cater to a positive perception of the City’s character.

Belmont’s main gateways include New Hope Road (NC-279) entering from York County, the east and west ends of I-85 and Wilkinson Boulevard, as well as Park Street

(NC-273), Catawba Street and Main Street leading into downtown. These gateways should be improved to better signal arrival to and departure from the City.

Gateway plans should include a highly visible gateway monument or monuments, statement landscaping, relevant land uses and ongoing maintenance. Certain development opportunities – such as the proposed widening of the Wilkinson Boulevard bridge – may also offer opportunities to incorporate gateway redevelopment strategies.

Gateway redevelopment efforts desperately needed on Wilkinson Boulevard have already been implemented in an example project on East Catawba Street. In 2023, several “East End” buildings were fitted with facade upgrades that removed pre-fabricated metal panel coverings from the 1970s intended to “modernize” their appearance. Returning the buildings to their former glory has significantly elevated the appearance of this gateway to Downtown and improved the areas’ economic trajectory.

BRANDING & WAYFINDING

Over the last decade, Belmont has deployed significant branding and wayfinding signage, helping to enhance mobility, promote its assets and amplify a sense of cohesion. As this is gradually upgraded to reflect the City’s new branding, installments should continue to inform the public of major facilities, services, landmarks and attractions, facilitating better navigation **to these destinations. This will be especially critical to strengthen connectivity between North Belmont and the rest of the City, as well as bridging Downtown to East End and the waterfront.**

As part of citywide initiatives, including wayfinding deployment, **branding can also be tailored to specific neighborhoods** to highlight their unique characteristics. This could be an important tool to **amplify the identity of core historic neighborhoods facing change, such as the Reid, North Belmont, and East Belmont neighborhoods.**

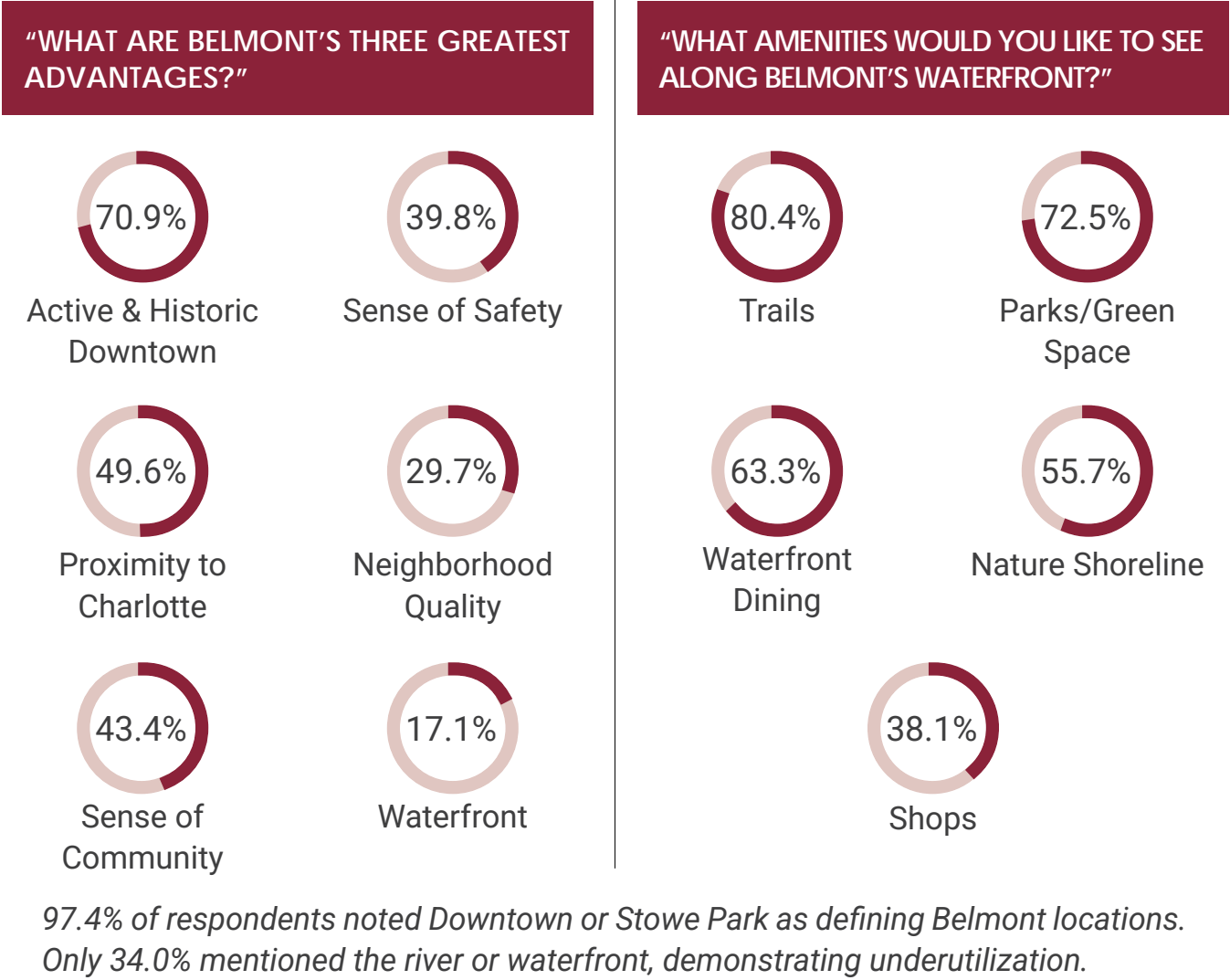


OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Belmont has a strong, historic Downtown that separates it from other suburban communities and strengthens its sense of identity.
- Cultivating a mixed use waterfront destination presents a clear opportunity to capitalize on community desires and bolster Belmont’s connection to its shoreline.
- Upcoming changes to Wilkinson Boulevard provide the ideal opportunity to create gateways that clearly signal the arrival to and departure from Belmont and Downtown in a presentable manner.
- Large abandoned or underutilized properties, particularly industrial, are ripe for redevelopment.
- No current City organization or agency exists to support properties and districts on the National Register of Historic Places –other than Gaston County.
- Residential development and housing renovations that significantly increase building mass and worsen the effects of gentrification are becoming more common.
- Though also a challenge, new development can help bolster Belmont’s identity by contributing to the expansion of Downtown and creating connections to the waterfront.
- Physical and psychological separation of North Belmont from the rest of the City is a challenge for commerce, identity, and policymaking.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

2024-2025 community OUTREACH findings





08

PARKS & RECREATION

To ensure a range of opportunities for all citizens to enjoy and engage with the outdoors.

Quality parks, open space, and recreational opportunities are essential to maintaining and growing Belmont’s reputation as a livable city. These are undeniable elements of a healthy, vibrant community that connects citizens both to each other and to the environment in ways few other land uses can. They are also a key aspect of Belmont’s economy, acting as sites for local events, tourism drivers, and more.

Today, Belmont offers a diverse parks portfolio, including gathering spaces such as Stowe Park, athletic fields, the trail-focused Rocky Branch Park, a skatepark, waterfront green space, and a state-of-the-art indoor Recreation Center (opened in 2023). At 143 acres in total, each park varies in its level of programming and the types of facilities it offers.

When considering the externally operated Daniel Stowe Conservancy (non-profit) and South Point Beach Park (Gaston County), the Planning Area’s green space nearly quadruples (549 acres). These parks are critical recreation destinations, especially for those living at the southern end of the City. However, while Daniel Stowe accounts for 65.6% of the Planning Area’s parkland, the facility charges admission fees for certain elements of the property and is thus not a truly public open space.



This icon represents “Parks & Recreation” content.



Image: Stowe Park in Downtown Belmont (source: Visit Belmont via Facebook).

In recent decades, Belmont has worked to extend its recreation offerings beyond parks, establishing multiple greenways to provide safe connectivity throughout the City, gradually implementing local stretches of the multi-state Carolina Thread Trail vision. These will eventually support trail oriented development, improving walkability and bikeability citywide.

Beyond this, continuing to capitalize on Belmont’s natural amenities (see Section 10, “Environment”) through the designation of new parks facilities will help to keep pace with new development. This is especially important because new public green spaces will serve the entire city, not just adjacent new neighborhoods. For that reason, this Plan establishes a new target of up to 10% of Belmont’s city limits to be reserved as park space. While this total may include private regional or athletic facilities, the goal should be for new park spaces to be public.

To accomplish this, Belmont can still promote a wide variety of Development Types based on its Future Land Use Map (see Section 03, “Land Use”), as “Parks & Natural Areas” remain a complementary use in all scenarios, offering gathering spaces, a natural reprieve, acting as buffers, and more to connect everyone to the outdoors and a wider range of healthy activities.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

Belmont is positioned to be the region’s premier outdoor recreation destination, supporting an active lifestyle culture. Quality access, both visual and physical, to Belmont’s 17 miles of river frontage and other abundant natural resources is valued and essential to its quality of life and character.

At 481 acres, 6.2% of land within city limits is currently park space, with a goal set to reach 10% at build-out. The city should focus on building true public green spaces and capitalize on opportunities for partnership with other public entities, such as Gaston County.

Belmont should ensure new park investments include a variety of equipment and experiences. As new parkland is designated and aging facilities are upgraded, these sites should offer needed community amenities, including a dog park, splash pads, and restrooms.

Investment in greenway connectivity will multiply park and economic impact. By building better pedestrian and bicyclist access to green spaces from Downtown, Village Centers and neighborhoods, Belmont can leverage its parks investment as a cohesive experience, promote tourism, and even boost adjacent property values.





GOAL 6  
PARKS &  
RECREATION

To ensure a range of opportunities for all citizens to enjoy and engage with the outdoors.

POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should continue its investment into park programming to maintain a well-rounded experience for residents and visitors.**

- 1.1. **Project** – Continue to host active recreation classes and events to improve the health of all City residents, particularly seniors.
- 1.2. **Project** – Maintain the quality of programming directed at City youth, extending beyond the summer months.

**POLICY 2. The City should expand access to existing infrastructure and create new opportunities for recreational walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized transportation modes.**

- 2.1. **Project** – Actively pursue construction of the 10-foot wide Belmont Rail Trail alongside the City’s inactive rail corridor.
- 2.2. **Project** – Continue developing the Abbey Creek Greenway as an off-street alternative to Wilkinson Boulevard for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized uses.
- 2.3. **Project** – Continue to invest in the Rocky Branch Trail and identify new ways to improve safe bicycle access to its trailheads from Downtown and other parts of the City.

**POLICY 3. Residents should have visual and physical access to the 17 miles of river and lake frontage that serve as a defining edge and vital part of Belmont.**

- 3.1. **Project** – Develop and market recreational events in waterfront parks and along trails.

3.2. **Project** – Improve directional and informational signage along publicly accessible waterfront areas, with a focus on birding and fishing.

3.3. **Project** – Explore a partnership with Catawba Riverkeepers to develop waterfront educational content and resources.

3.4. **Project** – Invest in the Catawba River Blueway with as much supporting infrastructure as possible.

**POLICY 4. Quality parks and recreational opportunities are essential elements of a healthy, vibrant community and must be preserved and expanded upon.**

4.1. **Project** – Increase the percentage of land use attributed to parks and recreational open space to 10% of total land area (currently 6.2% in City Limits, not including private tree save).

4.2. **Project** – Ensure new development meets or exceeds established parks levels of service addressed in the adopted Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan (2019).

4.3. **Project** – As Belmont’s City Limits expand, continue to acquire new property for additional parks and recreation facilities via purchases, leases, or negotiations as part of approved developments seeking annexation.

4.4. **Project** – Develop and program new park sites in accordance with the adopted Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan.

4.5. **Project** – To accommodate additional recreation program participation, the City should continue or expand its partnership with Gaston County Schools to share athletic facilities.

4.6. **Project** – The City should seek to achieve the highest and best use for the Ford Center.

**POLICY 5. The City should prioritize the addition of park equipment and facilities that are currently missing, as well as the maintenance and reimagining of existing facilities to create a more well-rounded experience for residents and visitors.**

5.1. **Project** – Diversify amenities at City parks, including adding a splash pad and other activities.

5.2. **Project** – Add restrooms to public parks whenever possible.

5.3. **Project** – Ensure that playgrounds and trails have adequate shade, mature tree canopy, and sufficient seating.

5.4. **Project** – Retool aging sports parks to fit modern recreation demands, including the creation of new outdoor pickleball courts.

5.5. **Project** – The City should develop a bicycle park with a pump track and/or bicycle playground.

5.6. **Project** – The City should create a dedicated dog park to serve its residents.



IMPORTANCE OF GREEN SPACE

Parks and natural areas are intended to set aside land for open spaces at a range of scales and to preserve key environmental features. Parks should be developed –and/or preserved– in areas suitable for passive or active recreation and may include a range of natural and constructed spaces such as trails, athletic facilities, playgrounds, and similar uses.

PLANNING FOR GREEN SPACE

In planning for these functions, Belmont’s Future Land Use Map (see Section 03, “Land Use”) includes two categories:

- 1. “Parks & Open Space” Future Land Use Classification, which distinguishes areas to be perpetually used or newly cultivated to serve park or environmental preservation functions. Current parks within the Planning Area are also given this designation.
- 2. “Parks & Natural Areas” Development Type, promoting the inclusion of these areas in all other Future Land Use Classifications. For example, land within the “Suburban Neighborhood” classification should develop such that it includes not only low to medium residential densities, but also quality community parks and preserved natural lands that result from clustering techniques.

Overall, these categories encompass conventional parks and open spaces as well as important hydrological features such as floodplains, wetlands, and streams. Unlike park spaces, natural areas should include only trails and support structures such as picnic shelters and maintenance facilities. When required, road and accessway design should conform to the natural features of the site and only minimally intrude into protected areas to preserve their integrity.

Future parks in Belmont should include large parks in the North Belmont, South Fork and Southern Peninsula areas, as well as pocket parks, river launches, boardwalks, and other small facilities integrated throughout the community. Specific requests during public engagement included waterfront spaces, a dog park, bicycle pump track, additional pickleball courts, a splash pad, and playground facilities (ex. monkey bars). These resources add character to both neighborhoods and Belmont as a whole, enhancing quality of life.

While privately-held green spaces, such as amenities provided by homeowners associations, commercial courtyards, or rooftop greens, are also beneficial to community character, these should not be counted toward Belmont’s park space target (10% of City jurisdiction). Beyond concerns about fair access, private parks can gradually alleviate pressure on the government to dedicate public green space that is better leveraged for events and tourism. This concept is especially important when considering investments in waterfront open space.

Finally, all parks and natural areas should be well connected to the greater community, particularly through greenways, and serve as part of a larger network of public open spaces, maximizing Belmont’s combined recreational investments.



Image: Fishing pier at Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park (source: Visit Belmont via Facebook)

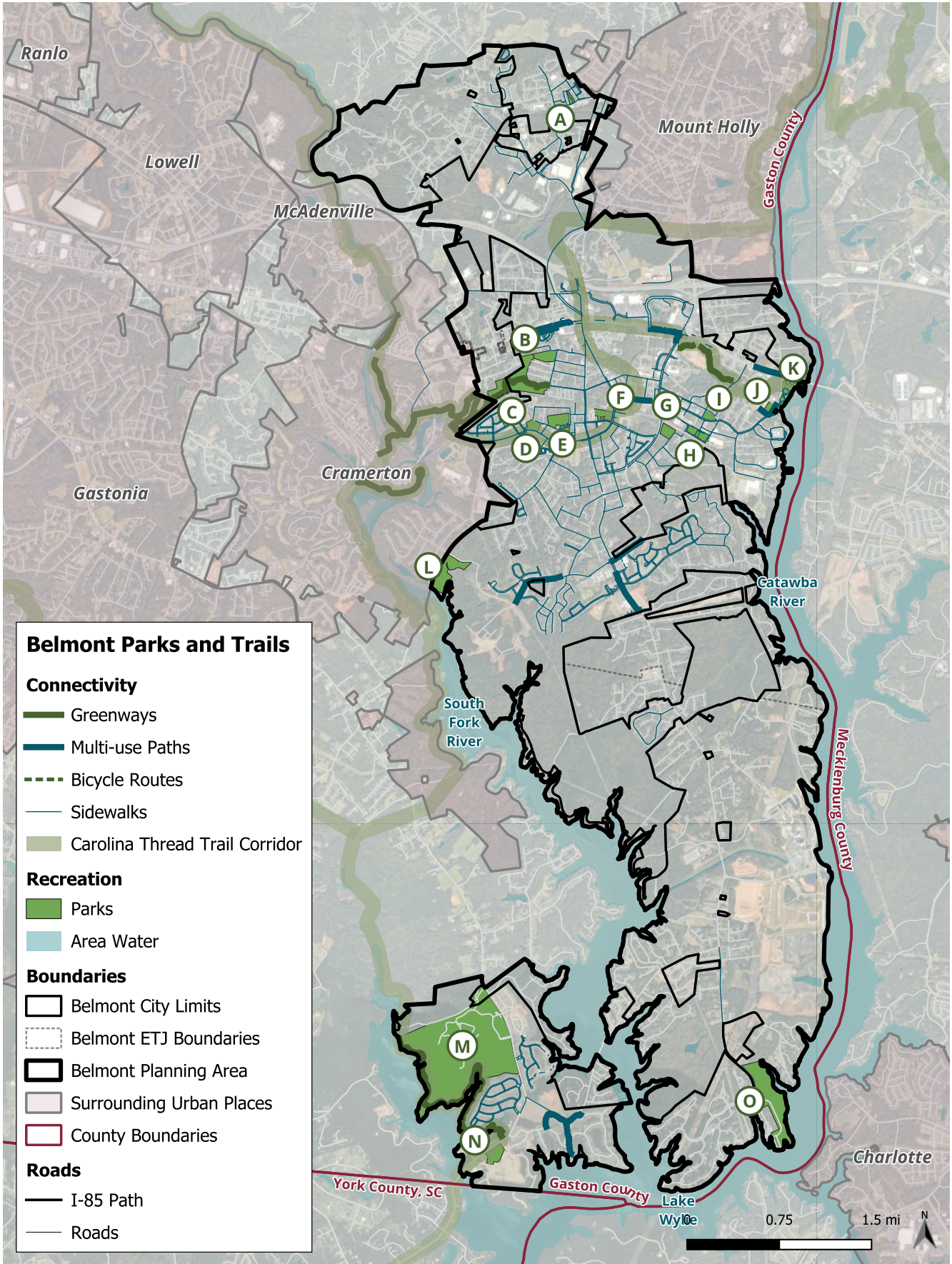


Image: Map of Existing Parks & Trails (source: Plusurbia Design)





Figure: Parks of Belmont (source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)

PARKS OF BELMONT

Belmont is home to 12 city-operated public parks, CityRec –an impressive indoor recreation facility, South Point Beach Park –a waterfront space managed by Gaston County, and the non-profit Daniel Stowe Conservancy. Together, these represent an admirable green space portfolio of 549 acres, 143 of which are the responsibility of Belmont Parks & Recreation.

Currently, the City’s 2019-2029 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan outlines the need for an additional 160 acres of City parkland by the end of the decade. Already making progress, in early 2025, over 34 new acres were designated between two future parks on Armstrong Ford Road (“New Park 1”) and S. New Hope Road (“New Park 2”). These facilities have yet to be named.

A wide variety of classes, camps, and athletic programs are also run by the Parks & Recreation Department, which are frequently at capacity. To accommodate additional participation, the City should continue or expand its partnership with Gaston County Schools and other regional partners to share athletic facilities.

STOWE PARK

In many ways, Stowe Park acts as the heart of Belmont and its Downtown. The perfect complement to Main Street, it is also home to some of the community’s most memorable events, including the Garibaldi Festival, BooFest, and Movies in the Park. The park’s more programmed lower portion offers a playground, fountain, restrooms, and a stage, while the open, upper portion is frequently used for events. As part of continued Downtown investment, upper Stowe Park should be enhanced to better support events and other functions, including the future of the adjacent former middle school.

WATERFRONT PARKS

Three green spaces offer waterfront access in Belmont, with each operated by a different group. Under the City’s Parks & Rec. Department is Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park,

a very popular green space located directly across E. Catawba Street from the CityRec Center. The park features a playground, pavilion with restrooms, an impressive wood fishing pier, creative seating, and a kayak launch. Paired with a short trail leading to a public boat launch, Kevin Loftin offers a well-rounded waterfront experience.

Near the end of South Point Road, South Point Beach Park also offers convenient public access to Lake Wylie, including many of the same features at nearly six times the acreage. Unique among parks in the Planning Area, it is home to a swimming area and sand beach. Outside of City Limits, it is maintained by Gaston County.

RECREATIONAL PARKS

Belmont’s reputation as an active community is reinforced by its parks, the majority of which are or feature athletic fields/courts, including: Reid Park, Belmont Central Field, Davis Park, Rodden Field, Ebb Gantt Park, Crescent Park (Dwight Frady Field), and the CityRec Center. Mostly older, these green spaces are dispersed between several neighborhoods, but all located in Central Belmont. The largest of these is Davis Park, at 12.4 acres.

Alternatively, Rocky Branch Park offers trail-focused recreation in a forested setting of over 40 acres through a replicable example of multi-jurisdictional collaboration. Belmont’s trailhead is situated off Woodrow Avenue, four blocks from Downtown, while the other is located in Cramerton, south of Stuart W. Cramer High School.

DANIEL STOWE CONSERVANCY

The renowned Daniel Stowe Conservancy (formerly “Botanical Garden”) is located within Belmont’s boundary and boasts 337 acres of rolling meadows, woodlands, and lakefront property. The Trailhead Store provides a retail option for the broadly residential peninsula, while formal gardens, a conservatory, visitor’s pavilion, and miles of trails make Daniel Stowe a regional destination. In 2023, the facility completed a long-range strategic master plan.





Image: (Left) Entrance to hiking trail (source: Single Tracks); (Top Right) Downtown Carolina Thread Trail sign (source: City of Belmont); (Bottom Right) kayakers on the Catawba (source: Catawba Lands Conservancy)

GREENWAYS & BLUEWAYS

In the future, Belmont will boast a formal, interconnected system of greenway trails throughout the community, made possible via a combination of creek corridors, utility easements, and NCDOT inactive railroad rights-of-way. When complete, this system will link neighborhoods together and provide public waterfront access to both sides of the peninsula.

This ambitious initiative aligns with Gaston County’s Comprehensive Plan, which envisions greenway connectivity between its major communities and key regional destinations like Crowders Mountain State Park and the Daniel Stowe Conservancy.

GREENWAYS TODAY

Today, Belmont has limited greenway mileage, represented by the partial Abbey Creek Greenway, Rocky Branch Trail, and the Duke Kimbrell Trail, which connects to the Daniel Stowe Conservancy. Leveraging private dollars, the first portion of Abbey Creek Greenway was constructed in partnership with “The Reverie.” Future segments will connect to Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park.

Perpendicular to Abbey Creek, the Belmont Rail Trail will eventually intersect it while connecting North Belmont

to Downtown. Through the pursuit of grants, aided by targeted public investment, Belmont can eventually build out these trails and complete a fully-connected system.

FUTURE CONNECTIVITY

Priority areas for greenway development should be between existing city parks, schools, residential neighborhoods and Village Centers in accordance with the mapped vision and in support of the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) network. For pedestrian/ bicyclist safety and comfort, greenways should also offer alternatives to major vehicular corridors, such as Wilkinson Boulevard and the future Catawba Crossings.

CATAWBA RIVER BLUEWAY

Part of the CTT network, the Lake Wylie portion of the Catawba River Blueway is a 27-mile flatwater paddle route from the Mountain Island Lake Dam to Tega Cay, SC. About one-third of the blueway follows the shoreline of Belmont’s Planning Area, highlighting the City’s opportunity to improve route access by providing additional public canoe and kayak launches. Signage and marketing improvements could also foster increased use, while the future Waterfront Village Center could capitalize on related tourism growth (see Section 03, “Land Use”).

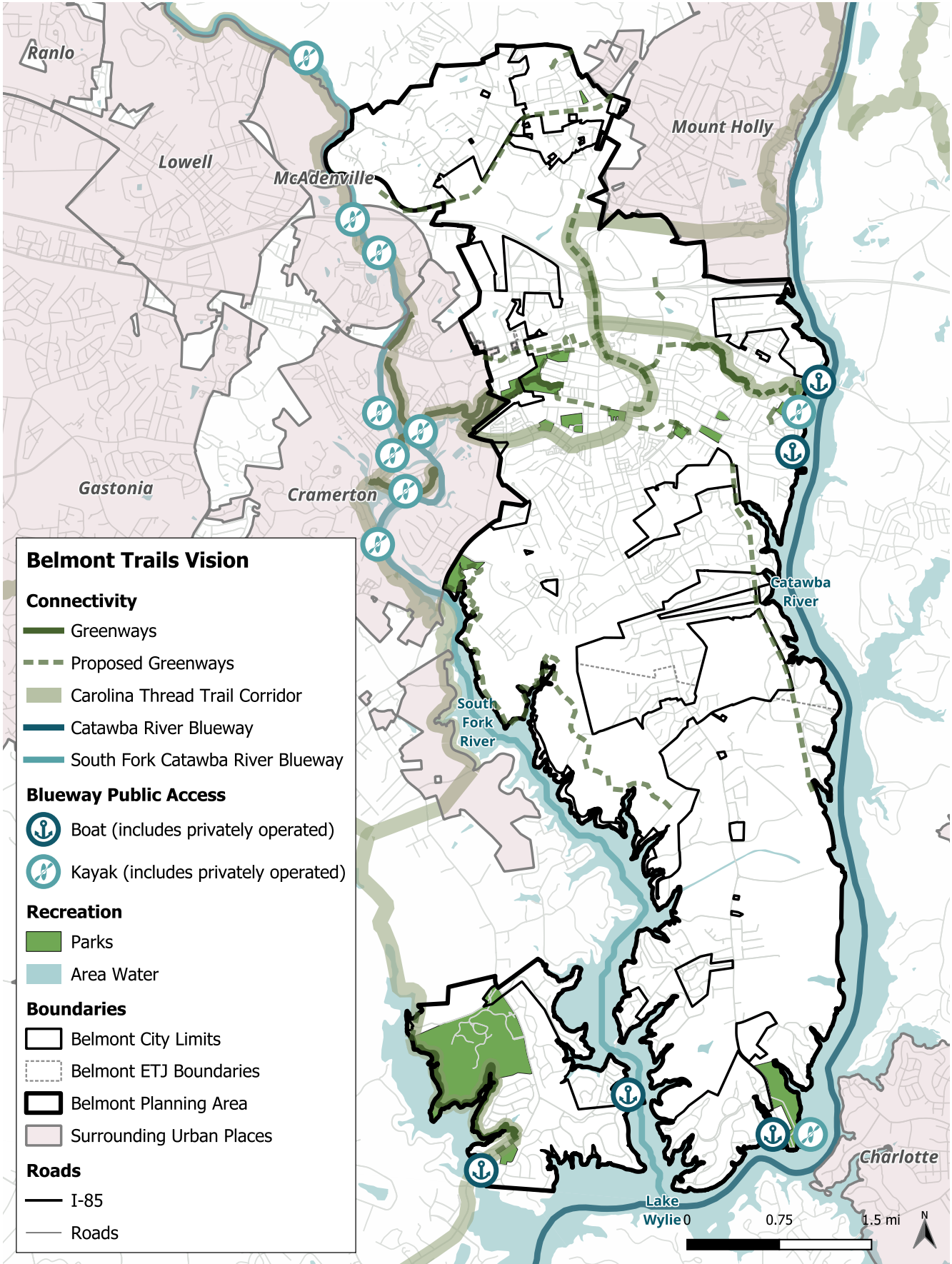


Image: Belmont Trails Vision (data source: City of Belmont) (design: Plusurbia Design)



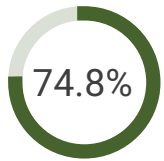
OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- The Daniel Stowe Conservancy provides Belmont with a regional, independently maintained parks and recreation asset.
- Private development activity bolsters the ability for the City to offer new parks investments, especially as part of conditionally-approved projects.
- Older sports-focused parks are prevalent in Central Belmont and could be updated to support modern green space desires.
- Increasing population growth and pressure to use land for something other than parks and open space will continue.
- Intergovernmental and inter-organizational coordination has proven cumbersome in some cases. Partnerships are key to a successful parks and open space program.
- Readily available public water-related activities –similar to those offered by the US National Whitewater Center nearby– are a tremendous opportunity for Belmont.
- Recreation-based and/or themed amenities, retail, and branded products are under-leveraged opportunities by both the City and some of the local businesses.
- Future visions for the Carolina Thread Trail pass through Belmont. The City can realize the benefits of this by constructing more greenway mileage, as well as amenities for blueway users, such as access points and destinations.

PARKS & RECREATION

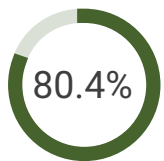
2024-2025 community OUTREACH findings

“WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PARKS/ GREEN SPACE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF YOUR HOME?”

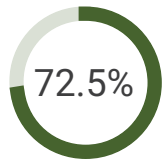


Yes! Nearly three-quarters of Belmont residents surveyed said they would like to be able to walk to Parks/ Green Space.

“WHAT AMENITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ALONG BELMONT’S WATERFRONT?”



Trails



Parks/  
Green Space

Belmont residents would like to see more waterfront trails and park space! When asked about cities Belmont should model itself after, respondents provided dozens of answers, but many cited “access to parks and nature” as a top quality.

“WHERE DO YOU GO TO ACCESS OUR REGION’S RIVERS AND LAKES?”

1. Tuckaseege Park (Mt. Holly)
2. Goat Island Park (Cramerton)
3. Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park
4. South Point Beach Park
5. Seven Oaks Trails



“HOW DO YOU USE OUR REGION’S RIVERS AND LAKES?”

TOP 5 ANSWERS

1

Kayak or Paddle Board

2

Riverfront Walking Trails

3

Fishing

4

Watching Wildlife

5

Boating



# 09 INFRASTRUCTURE

To ensure **high quality, efficient and effective infrastructure** throughout Belmont.

Without reliable infrastructure, Belmont cannot sustain itself or grow in ways that support its economy, citizens, or environment. **Aligning growth and land use policies with infrastructure implementation, maintenance and expansion plans** will help ensure Belmont’s viability and security well into the future.

Belmont provides critical infrastructure and support services to ensure public safety and welfare. These vital services and infrastructure are generally funded from tax revenues, municipal fees, and assessments that are allocated to various entities that provide them directly. Like most municipalities, Belmont relies on both the public and private sectors to be able to meet these needs.

When we refer to a place’s infrastructure –especially from a planning and municipal perspective– we are most commonly referring to the physical systems that keep things running. Also known as public works projects or public utilities, these typically include the initial installation and ongoing maintenance of systems that provide resources such as potable (drinking) and fire-fighting water, stormwater runoff control, wastewater (sewerage), energy (natural gas, electric, etc.), data and communication, solid waste and recycling disposal, and transportation networks.



*This icon represents “Infrastructure” content.*



Image: Belmont CityWorks (source: Gaston Gazette)

Often, civic services such as police, fire, EMS/rescue, and parks and recreation operations are also considered part of a municipality’s infrastructure systems.

All of these systems directly affect –or are affected by– the way in which Belmont continues to grow. **This section will focus on the three most critical systems: water, stormwater and wastewater.** Note that transportation networks - as a component of Belmont’s infrastructure - is covered in more detail in Section 06, “Mobility.”

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

Many components of Belmont’s infrastructure have evolved in an ad hoc, as-needed basis rather than in a **proactive response to careful long-range planning**. This is not unusual among cities across the United States. Infrastructure changes are usually a reaction to immediate needs, emergencies, and unforeseen circumstances, rather than being implemented in advance.

Some of Belmont’s existing infrastructure dates back to its establishment in 1895 or earlier, particularly related to the historic mills and neighborhoods immediately surrounding them. This situation has led to a mix of old and new systems concentrated in different areas of the

City. Continued inventory and assessment of these, along with a plan to repair or modernize the areas in need, is in the City’s best interest.

Belmont stands to benefit from its increasingly proactive stance on public policy initiatives and “getting out ahead” of issues that might otherwise be overlooked. Leaders are actively seeking examples of best practices and tested measures from other municipalities to improve their infrastructure systems.

Concurrency is key to maintaining Belmont’s infrastructure. Municipal concurrency is a planning tool that ensures new development does not strain a city’s public infrastructure and services (like roads, sewer, and water) by requiring that these services are available at the time of development or that the developer provides necessary improvements. This helps to manage growth and ensures that infrastructure can support the increased demand generated by new development.

Belmont has engaged professional, outside consultants to conduct an assessment of its infrastructure systems, particularly its wastewater and stormwater systems, in parallel with this plan update. The key findings, takeaways, and action plan(s) have been considered in this document.





# GOAL 7 INFRA- STRUCTURE

To ensure **high quality, efficient and effective infrastructure** throughout Belmont.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should schedule infrastructure expansion and maintenance at times that are minimally disruptive to city residents.**

**1.1. Project** – Make use of the City Connect platform, as well as temporary on-location signage, to advertise the timeline for substantial infrastructure maintenance projects, both upcoming and underway.

**POLICY 2. The City should require all private development to meet robust stormwater and erosion control standards, as well as comply with post-construction stormwater management requirements, to minimize the need for public infrastructure installation and maintenance.**

**2.1. Project** – Regularly evaluate and update the Stormwater Ordinance to ensure appropriate levels of restriction, detention requirements, and other improvements.

**2.2. Project** – Stormwater management standards should act to address the amount of runoff generated by development, pollutants carried by runoff, and the rate at which stormwater leaves a site.

**2.3. Project** – Advocate for vegetative buffers along the waterfront as the most effective method of erosion prevention.

**POLICY 3. The City should prioritize infrastructure improvements consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), where feasible, with a goal of city-wide compliance.**

**3.1. Project** – Ensure accommodations for mobility challenged residents, such as tactile curb ramps and audio cues at crosswalks.

**3.2. Project** – Improve the accessibility of its digital platforms and communication systems in order to more effectively disseminate important information.

**POLICY 4. The City must align growth and new land uses with infrastructure maintenance and expansion plans to ensure Belmont’s continued appeal as a place to live and grow a business.**

**4.1. Project** – Extend sewer service to new land, when possible, as it is annexed into the City.

**4.2. Project** – Routinely audit the level of sewer service where existing service exists, and gradually replace aging infrastructure.

**4.3. Project** – Work to prevent sewage overflow and runoff into waterways.

**POLICY 5. The City must ensure infrastructure can meet demand both immediately and in the future.**

**5.1. Project** – Prior to development approval, applicants should provide a detailed infrastructure capacity analysis in a form suitable to Planning and Public Works Department staff.

**5.2. Project** – Develop a policy or plan to better ensure adequate provision of water and wastewater services for existing and proposed land uses.

**5.3. Project** – Develop a GIS toolkit to track all current and future water, stormwater and sanitary sewer infrastructure, including hydrant locations.

**5.4. Project** – All water and sewer materials installed should be standardized by the City through a new standard set of details.

**5.5. Project** – Implement its agreement with Charlotte Water to provide more cost effective sewage treatment for Belmont, meeting its growing needs.

**POLICY 6. The City should strive for all city departments to have adequate staffing and the ability to meet the daily needs of Belmont residents.**

**6.1. Project** – Set population-linked metrics for adequate staff in each department in order to monitor needs as Belmont grows.



**6.2. Project** – Anticipate and plan for Citywide infrastructure needs in advance (instead of reacting to them) by consistently retaining outside engineering, policy, and other consultants to assist its staff.

**POLICY 7. The City should place special emphasis on investments in fire and police coverage to meet the service goals of these departments.**

**7.1. Project** – Review its annual budget and capital improvements projects plan related to fire and police services to ensure funding needs are met, addressing the trend of increasing annual service demand.

**7.2. Project** – Construct an additional fire station in North Belmont to improve response metrics, as recommended by the 2023 Fire Department Station Location Analysis.

**7.3. Project** – Allocate necessary resources to resume the Fire Inspection Program.

**7.4. Project** – Follow the replacement schedule for fire equipment established by the NFPA.

**7.5. Project** – Actively encourage existing businesses to take advantage of the Police Department’s Threat Assessment abilities by marketing this service.

**7.6. Project** – Require that the Police Department provide Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) input for new developments during plan review to be incorporated into projects from their inception.

**7.7. Project** – Implement the recommendations outlined in the 2024 Vision Zero Safety Action Plan.

**POLICY 8. The City should leverage annual capital planning efforts to identify infrastructural maintenance needs and develop a plan for remediation.**

**8.1. Project** – Calibrate annual maintenance funds based on the length/extent of the City’s infrastructure network.

**8.2. Project** – Plan how to invest collected system development fees and any additional payments provided by developers to offset taxpayer burden.

**POLICY 9. The City should invest in IT infrastructure to develop better network coverage and bandwidth across all parts of the City.**

**9.1. Project** – Embrace smart IT solutions wherever is advantageous.

**9.2. Project** – Bridge the digital divide by offering free public wifi throughout Belmont, especially where it is needed by vendors during events, such as in parks and along Main Street.

**9.3. Project** – Work with telephone companies to improve cellular service throughout the peninsula.



WATER SYSTEM

Water services within most of Belmont are provided by the City’s Public Works Department’s Water and Sewer Division and extend to the area shown on the Water Service Area Map. Drinking water is drawn from Lake Wylie (Catawba River) and treated at the City’s Water Treatment Plant. The plant has the capacity to treat 10 million gallons of water per day. According to local officials, the plant has excess capacity and will be able to provide water service for the foreseeable future as Belmont continues to develop.

Beyond the core service area, Belmont has extended a large water main southward along South Point Rd to the Reflection Pointe and McLean developments that could accommodate future water service throughout much of the peninsula with the installation of additional service lines. Water services have been provided to the Planning Area southwest of the South Fork River by suspending a water main from the NC-273 bridge.

Unincorporated portions of the Planning Area are generally not provided with public water service and currently operate individual and community wells as their source of water. However, state law mandates that individual properties near Duke Energy’s Allen Steam Station must be provided with municipal water service to avoid any potential groundwater contamination.

These factors indicate that much of the Planning Area currently does, or could have, expanded water service in the future. Providing details on this topic, Belmont’s 2008 Peninsula Water and Wastewater System Master Service Plan describes improvements necessary to serve large undeveloped areas within the City service area. In 2016, Belmont completed a Water Master Plan that confirmed the findings of the 2008 Master Plan.

STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

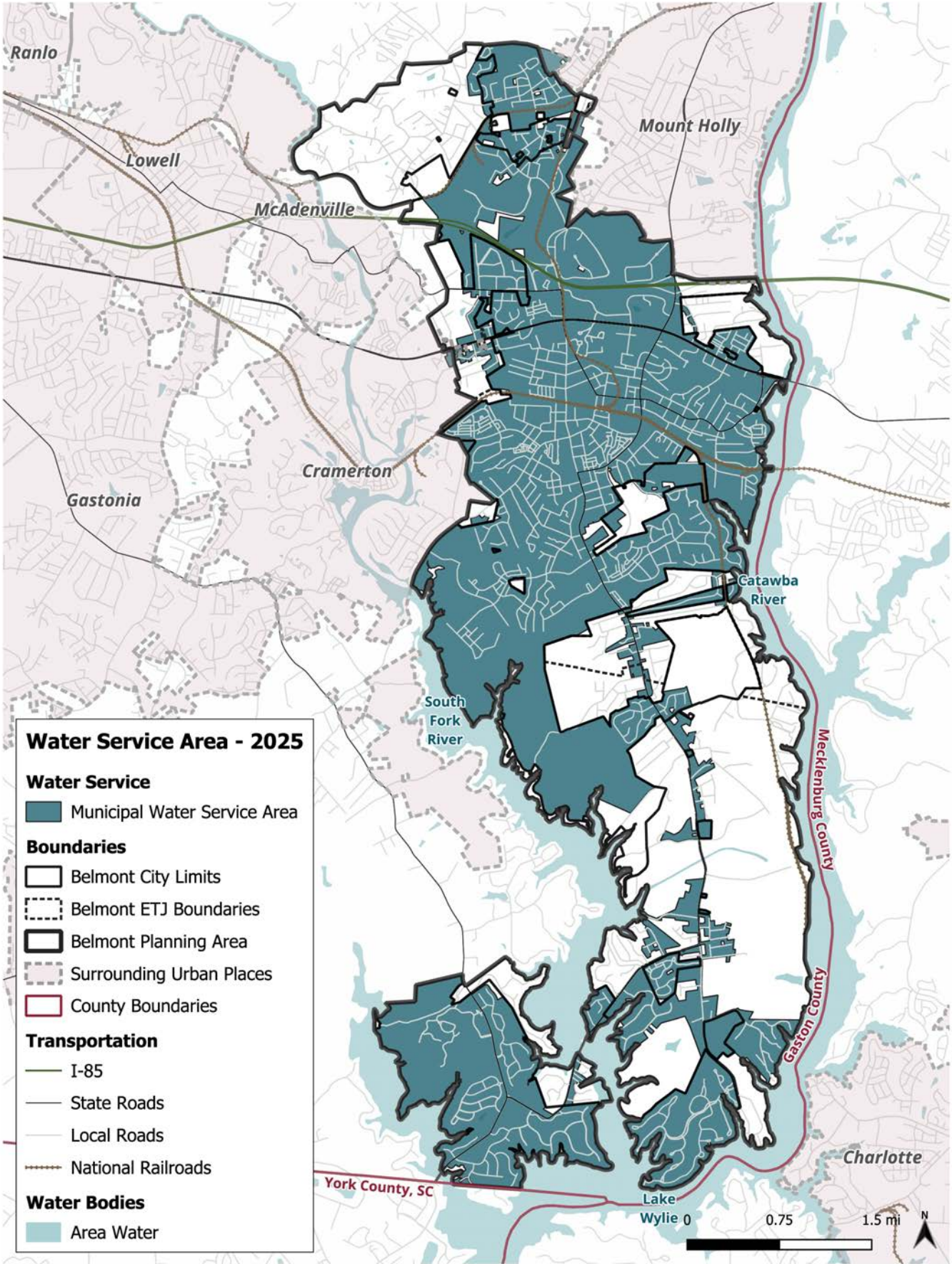
Belmont was designated a Phase II Stormwater community by the State of North Carolina and must meet the US Environmental Protection Agency’s guidelines for stormwater management. Most importantly for this plan, development is required to meet stormwater control standards during site development and post-construction stormwater standards that act to address the amount of runoff generated by development, pollutants carried by runoff, and the rate at which stormwater leaves a site.

Stormwater management falls under the Belmont Department of Public Works and follows Gaston County’s Stormwater Control Ordinance that exceeds the minimum State requirements. Administration of the City’s portion of this ordinance is funded entirely through a stormwater fee collected from properties within City Limits. Closely aligned with but separate from this ordinance is Gaston County’s Sedimentation and Soil Erosion Control Ordinance that focuses on controlling the downstream impacts of land development during construction.

Belmont has also established a minimum requirement for pervious surfaces in new development. These surfaces allow stormwater to penetrate the ground and become absorbed, rather than running off into the natural and/or artificial drainage system. For example, single-family residential lots must have a minimum of 50-percent pervious area, while high-density development permits depend on a metric of pervious surfaces and watershed classification(s). Given the increased intensity of rainfall and new development, additional requirements and best practices are recommended to mitigate runoff.

STREET TYPOLOGIES

The predominant stormwater drainage method for Belmont’s standard street typologies is a curb and gutter system with underground storm drains. However, in areas with inadequate stormwater systems or in low-impact development areas, an open drainage system may be used. This method consists of appropriately sized drainage swales adjacent to the roadways, which capture and allow stormwater infiltration back into the soil.



Map: Belmont Municipal Water Service Area (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



WASTEWATER SYSTEM & CAPACITY

Belmont’s wastewater treatment and service is primarily provided by the Public Works Department’s Utilities Division. Belmont owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility with the capacity to treat 10 million gallons of wastewater per day. The plant is currently operating under capacity and is expected to be able to provide additional treatment capacity for the foreseeable future.

However, in October of 2024, Belmont’s City Council voted unanimously to implement a moratorium on new major subdivisions and commercial developments due to identified wastewater capacity concerns centered around an area south of Henry Chapel Road, served by the Morgan’s Branch Pump Station. A May 2024 report confirmed that expanding this pump station would put the downstream eight-inch force main over capacity. The moratorium will remain in effect until the existing capacity constraints at the pump station are resolved.

Altogether, the City uses 23 active public and private pump stations to move sewage from areas that cannot reach the wastewater treatment facility in eastern Belmont by gravity flow. As with potable water, sewer services reach the Planning Area southwest of the South Fork River through a force main from the NC-273 bridge.

Outside this system, an area in the western portion of the City is served by Two Rivers Utilities via a wastewater treatment facility in Cramerton. Unincorporated portions of the Planning Area are not provided with public sewer service and currently operate on-site septic systems. These factors indicate that much of the Planning Area has or could have sewer service as the system is expanded.

Most recently, Belmont has been coordinating with Charlotte Water to enhance wastewater services as part of the Stowe Regional Project. This involves replacing the existing Belmont Wastewater Treatment Plant with a new pump station and wastewater pipelines. As a result, Belmont’s sewage output will travel to Charlotte for treatment, providing more efficient wastewater service and meeting the future needs for communities in

northwestern Mecklenburg and eastern Gaston Counties.

This color-themed map is organized by sewer basin, showing capacity challenges and opportunities at build-out (see the Future Land Use Map in Section 03, “Land Use”). This information is based only on Lift Station capacity and does not account for gravity challenges.

Wastewater basins in need of upgrades to support the community’s future vision are classified as **Critical Priority Sewer Areas** or **Priority Sewer Areas**, depending on the extent of capacity investment required. In some cases, Critical Areas represent key opportunities to forge private sector partnerships for utility upgrades that support planned Village Center development. For example, sewer upgrades near the proposed Waterfront Village Center could be supported by one or multiple developers, adding necessary capacity that also reduces bottlenecking at the treatment plant to its south.

Priority Areas will be addressed through a mix of public sector investments and creative partnerships, depending on their context. Concerning the system today, recent drawdown tests found Greystone Pump 2, Morgans Branch, Reflection Pointe, and South Point Ridge Pump 2 exhibit an average drawdown capacity to design capacity ratio below 0.9. This suggests possible wear and tear.

Should there be additional wastewater allocation from new development within the South Point area, it should be coordinated with an upgrade to the Morgans Branch pump station and its force main, which are at risk for sanitary sewer overflow during a major storm event.

Citywide, Belmont will maintain a wastewater capacity model over the coming years to track new development permitting alongside infrastructure improvements. Called LUCID, this software program allows for a data-driven understanding of the infrastructure needs associated with new developments as they are proposed, guiding projects to areas better prepared to support growth and/or suggesting best practices to ensure projects account for their share of needed infrastructure.

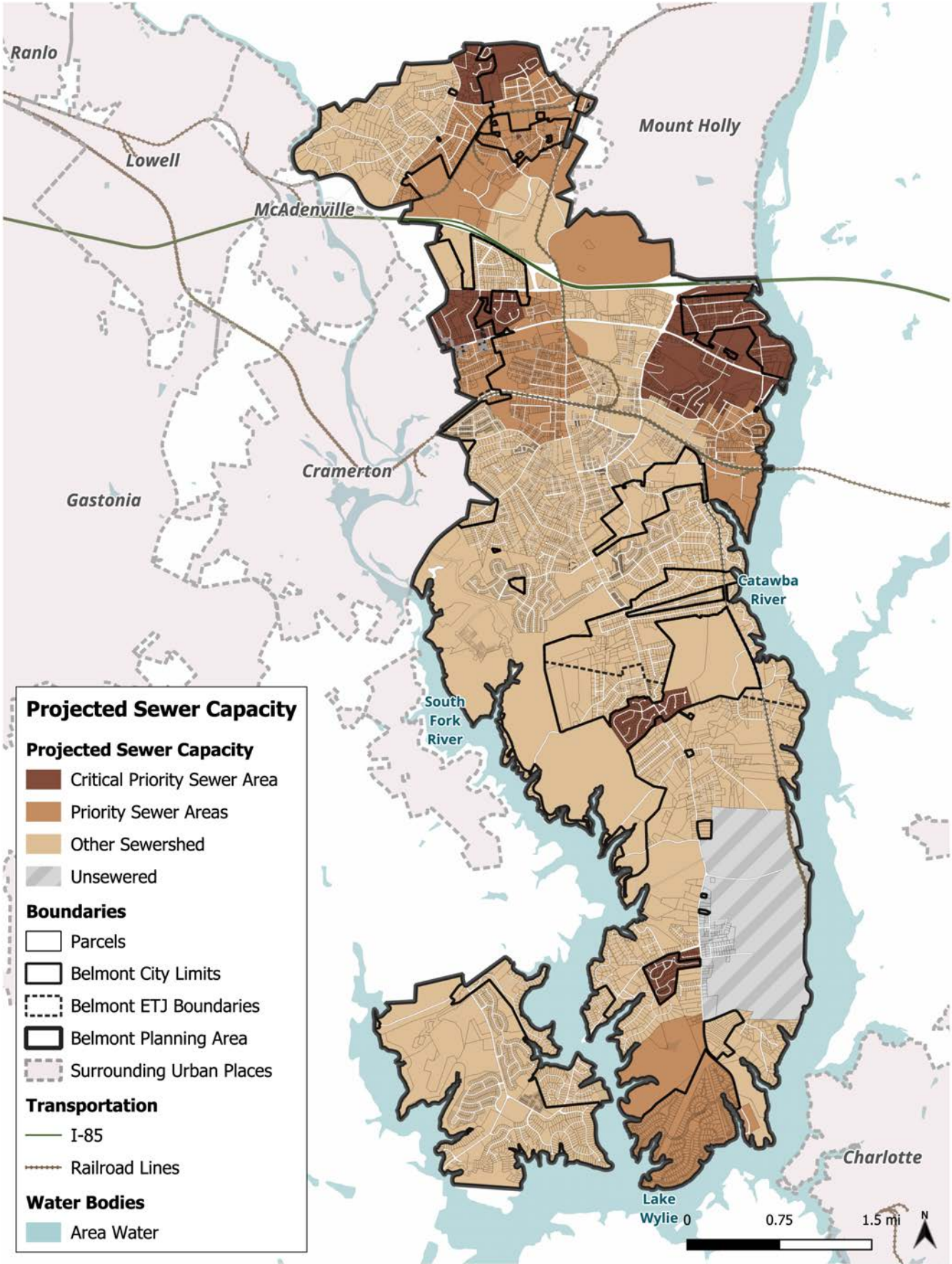


Image: Projected Sewer Capacity (data source: WithersRavenel, City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



## OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Overcoming identified capacity constraints could be funded through partnerships with private developers as part of higher density projects.
- New interlocal partnerships around utility delivery, such as with Charlotte Water, can support more efficient services and potentially lower rates for Belmont.
- Based on analysis of Belmont’s wastewater treatment system, infiltration by stormwater into the system has been determined to be a significant limiting factor.
- Lack of redundancy in all of Belmont’s infrastructure systems continues to be a critical issue, especially as growth places stress on these systems and natural disasters test their reliability. Current planning demonstrates a vision to create redundancy that has yet to be realized.
- Despite Belmont’s “small town feel,” it has some of the infrastructure requirements of a larger municipality. Balancing this both financially and aesthetically will be a challenge.
- Funding and staffing to enhance and maintain Belmont’s infrastructure, primarily within its Public Works Department, should be prioritized.
- Some of the city’s infrastructure dates back to the mills and villages that surrounded them and has not been significantly upgraded in many instances.
- New alternate methods of distributing essential utilities and infrastructure within cities are becoming more proven, available, and efficient as technology changes.



# 10 ENVIRONMENT

To protect the natural environment of Belmont as a critical public asset.

A high-quality natural environment is essential to Belmont’s character and livability. Water quality, tree canopy, animal habitat, erosion, and storm resiliency are among many concerns that must be addressed. This is because Belmont’s citizens and their future depend on the protection of the City’s natural resources and the careful implementation of human interventions that affect them.

For much of the Piedmont region’s history, the natural environment shaped the way villages, towns, and cities developed. Major roads and rail lines followed ridges, town centers were typically built on high ground, and, for the most part, development stayed out of lowlands subject to known flooding. Commerce and industry often followed these patterns. Until adequate infrastructure existed, houses were typically located where soils were suitable for cesspools and septic tanks. In early Belmont, housing was also aggregated around the mills that were built along the primary rail lines. Eventually, public water followed roads, and development was located where it could drain by gravity to public sewer lines, usually placed in draws near creeks and rivers.

Today’s cities are still influenced by the natural environment, which is increasingly threatened by haphazard growth and climate change, as well as



Image: Daniel Stowe Conservancy (source: American Society of Landscape Architects)

development pressures creating impacts farther and farther from the original downtown core. Understanding Belmont’s natural resources and setting is therefore important to understand how it should plan for its future.

It is also worth noting that **preservation of Belmont’s natural environment** –whether that meant maximizing natural tree canopy, controlling soil washout into the South Fork River, or expanding park and waterfront access– **was one of the foremost concerns of city residents** during this planning process.

This section is therefore intended to catalogue and describe the various natural characteristics of Belmont and how successful environmental stewardship of each can be achieved.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

The environmental impacts of Belmont’s growth and development are among the top concerns of residents. Regardless of their overall home density, new single-family subdivisions largely clear cut their sites during development, resulting in a rapid loss of tree canopy and accelerated erosion. Property owner’s rights to develop their land and meet growing housing demand must be balanced with the City’s goal to do so responsibly and in

a way that protects the environmentally sensitive areas of the community.

Belmont has the opportunity to strengthen environmental defense efforts by implementing an updated Stormwater Ordinance. Currently under update by the City’s Department of Public Works, this tool and its enforcement will allow better planning for project drainage.

Less than 20-percent of Belmont’s Planning Area has slope, soil, or hydrological constraints with the potential to significantly restrict development. This presents a significant opportunity to primarily shape undeveloped areas through zoning and underscores the need to consciously preserve open space.

Cluster development along the peninsula, near streams, and other sensitive areas presents the best way to preserve tree canopy and limit other environmental issues. This development technique maximizes open space preservation by shifting new buildings onto a portion of the site, reserving the rest for conservation through easements or public ownership. See Section 03, “Land Use” for more information.



This icon represents “Environment” content.





# GOAL 8 ENVIRON- MENT

To protect the natural environment of Belmont as a critical public asset.

## POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should strive to achieve sustainable, well-managed growth, preserving the environment and maintaining the efficiency of infrastructure investments.**

- 1.1. Project** – Capitalize on incentives offered by Duke Energy for energy-efficient infrastructure as well as assistance provided by tools such as the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission’s Green Growth Toolbox.
- 1.2. Project** – Continue to review proposed developments to ensure they meet federal and state standards for floodplain development.
- 1.3. Project** – Continue to enforce regulations established by the North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (NCDENR), which include a two-part, 50-foot development buffer on the Catawba River mainstream and the North Carolina portion of Lake Wylie.
- 1.4. Project** – Coordinate with Catawba Riverkeepers and the Lake Wylie Marine Commission to encourage increased buffers that exceed NCDENR minimums in priority areas of the shoreline.
- 1.5. Project** – Adjust public lighting schedules to more accurately correspond with sunrise and sunset to reduce electricity expenditures during daylight hours.
- 1.6. Project** – Consider sustainability and conservation implications in all decision-making processes.

**1.7. Project** – Continue to encourage density-shifting cluster development to protect on-site natural resources. Consider regulatory changes to promote and incentivize increased conservation of land area while maintaining overall site development densities.

**POLICY 2. The City should protect air and water quality to provide Belmont residents with the safe and healthy environment they deserve.**

- 2.1. Project** – Continue to enforce the adopted Watershed Protection Ordinance and look for ways to enhance its effectiveness.
- 2.2. Project** – Continue cooperating with Gaston County to inspect development for erosion control, limiting any sediment discharge into Lake Wylie or the South Fork River.
- 2.3. Project** – The Department of Public Works should implement the updated Stormwater Ordinance to regulate all stormwater post-development and cooperate with Gaston County to monitor areas within the Planning Area but outside of City Limits.
- 2.4. Project** – Routinely reassess the City stormwater fee.
- 2.5. Project** – Work to remediate pollution in surrounding water bodies.
- 2.6. Project** – Promote non-vehicular transportation options to reduce emissions and improve air quality.

**POLICY 3. The City should preserve its scarce and valuable natural resources, including its pristine waterfront and mature tree canopy, which are bound to its identity.**

- 3.1. Project** – The zoning ordinance should continue to permit off-site offsets for required parks, open space, and impervious areas when planning staff deems appropriate but also allow applicants to submit additional creative solutions for consideration on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.2. Project** – Protect valuable water resources by prohibiting incompatible or potentially hazardous land uses within 500-feet of creeks and rivers.
- 3.3. Project** – Continue to enforce the limits on site clearing which were updated in the tree ordinance in 2020 and seek additional ways to limit unnecessary loss of tree canopy.
- 3.4. Project** – Remove invasive species from public property, especially parks, and coordinate with local and regional entities to manage or remove invasive aquatic species from nearby waterways.
- 3.5. Project** – Consider public stewardship of these resources by incorporating regular maintenance, restoration, and outreach education programs into the budget and responsibilities of the Public Works Department.
- 3.6. Project** – Seek out partnerships with land conservancies to identify opportunities on vacant parcels to protect significant areas.



**POLICY 4. When and where feasible and permitted by state law, the City should limit the amount of new impervious surfaces.**

**4.1. Project** – Track the subdivision of already-developed parcels to ensure new construction remains in compliance with impervious surface and open space requirements, allowing the City to meet its goals.

**4.2. Project** – Remediate existing drainage issues on public property.

**4.3. Project** – Coordinate and balance the policies, projects, and programs set forth in Section 09, “Infrastructure,” as they are closely associated and interdependent with goals related to Belmont’s environment.

**POLICY 5. The City should encourage a diversity of native street tree types to enhance visual interest, reduce vulnerability to disease and pests, and add wildlife habitat.**

**5.1. Project** – Encourage the planting of all required trees, rather than payment in lieu or similar alternatives.

**5.2. Project** – Protect existing wildlife by preserving tree canopies in both contiguous areas and segmented tree clusters, combined with best practices for habitat conservation.

**5.3. Project** – Update Belmont’s approved tree list to account for changes in available supply, hardiness, and climate factors.

**POLICY 6. The City should focus on improving resident health by cultivating a built environment, implementing projects, and hosting events that are conducive to a healthy lifestyle.**

**6.1. Project** – Always consider how policies made by decision-makers (staff and/or elected) impact various populations, access to goods and services, equity, and more in parallel with issues related to the environment.

**6.2. Project** – Pursue opportunities to educate staff, elected officials, and residents about how the built environment affects community health.

**6.3. Project** – Coordinate with the Gaston County Department of Public Health to address identified needs within Belmont and its Planning Area, such as better transportation connections, food deserts, health access, etc.

**6.4. Project** – Develop and adopt tools to routinely consider the health and safety impacts of new projects, policies, plans, and programs.

**6.5. Project** – Promote environmental education and placemaking opportunities to bring awareness to Belmont’s environmental assets.

**6.6. Project** – Coordinate and balance the policies, projects, and programs set forth in Section 08, “Parks & Recreation,” as they are closely associated and interdependent with goals related to Belmont’s environment.



TOPOGRAPHY

A topographical analysis was conducted using data provided by the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Web Soil Survey (WSS). Slope values were grouped into four classifications by the level of probable development constraint, ranging from low to high. A fifth category, “Highly Urbanized Land,” is also derived from the WSS findings and includes land most intensely covered by streets, parking lots, buildings, and other structures.

In general, slopes of 8% or less are considered to pose low to no development constraint. These sites can easily be used or graded level to support any type of development.

By contrast, slopes between 8% and 16%, including excavated soils (Udorthents) are considered to pose low to moderate development constraints and are best suited for residential and light commercial projects, but often require retaining walls to address uneven ground.

Slopes from 17% to 24% are considered moderate and can be suitable for low density residential development, but are not usable for commercial or industrial development.

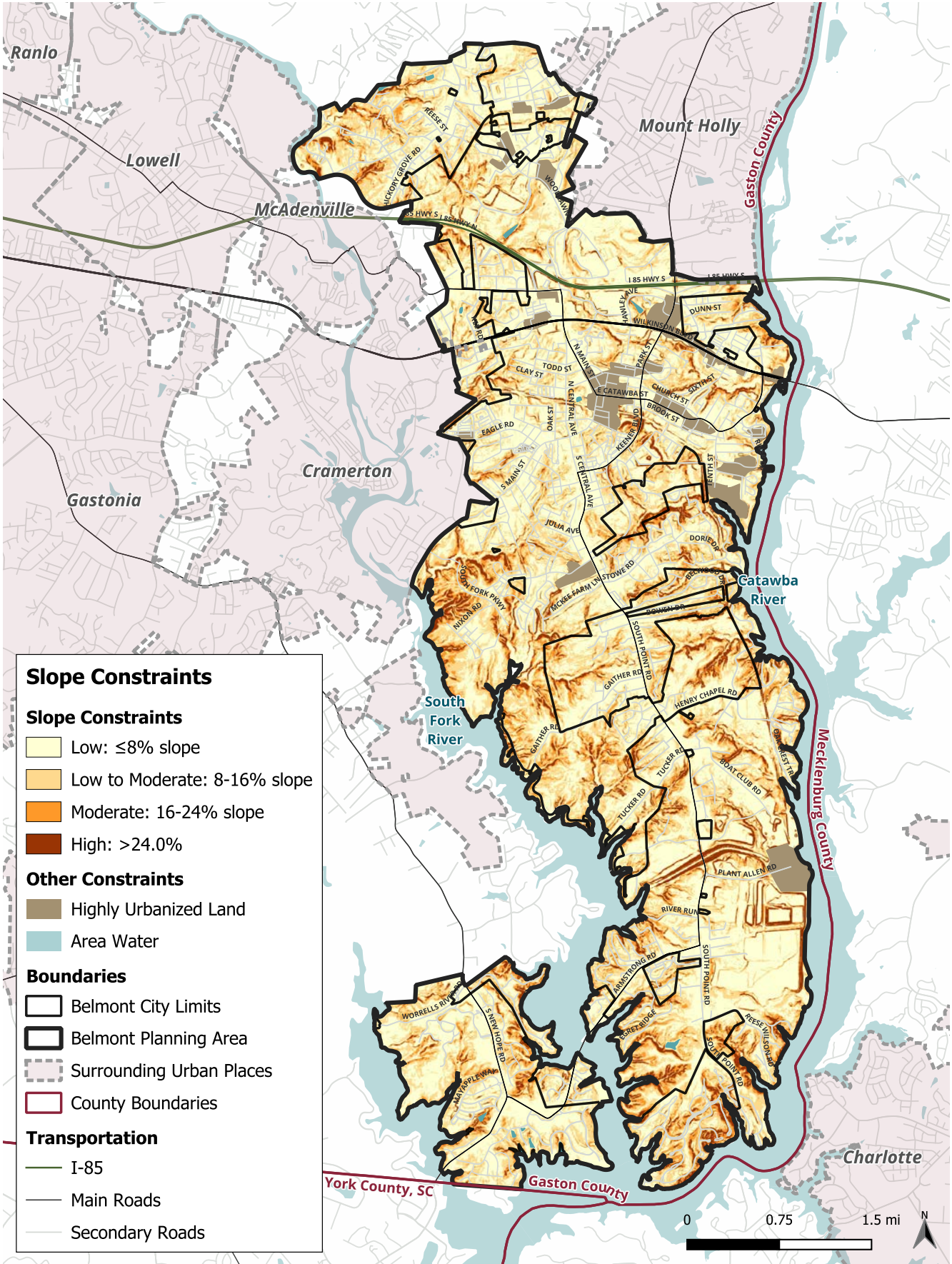
Finally, areas with slopes of greater than 24% are considered to pose a high level of constraint for any type of development. These areas are best reserved as conservation easements or other open spaces.

Overall, more than half of the Planning Area (54%) is relatively flat and provides little to no constraint to development. An additional quarter of the land in the Planning Area poses low to moderate constraints. These small slopes are scattered throughout the Planning Area.

Areas where topography poses a moderate constraint to development are primarily found along the banks of small streams and creeks that feed into the Catawba and South Fork Rivers, representing 14% of all land in the Planning Area. Places with the steepest slopes (beyond 24%) that pose the highest constraint to development are limited, with the highest concentration located at the southern point of the primary peninsula.

In general, the topography of Belmont and the surrounding areas is conducive to development –which can be thought of as an asset. However, this can also be detrimental from an environmental standpoint if left unchecked. To meet environmental goals, intentional conservation and open space land must encompass more than just the steepest slopes.

Image: (Top) Curvilinear roadway and gentle slopes (source: Redfin); (Bottom) Slopes and lakefront residential development (source: Redfin).



Map: Slope constraints map (data source: USDA, City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



SOILS

The USDA's Web Soil Survey also provides detailed soil composition data that can be used to determine suitability for development. Constraints to development related to soil suitability were analyzed by comparing suitability for residential homes (without a basement) to soil suitability for those with septic tank absorption fields. Suitability for septic tanks was included in the analysis because public water is not currently available in much of the Planning Area (see Section 09, "Infrastructure").

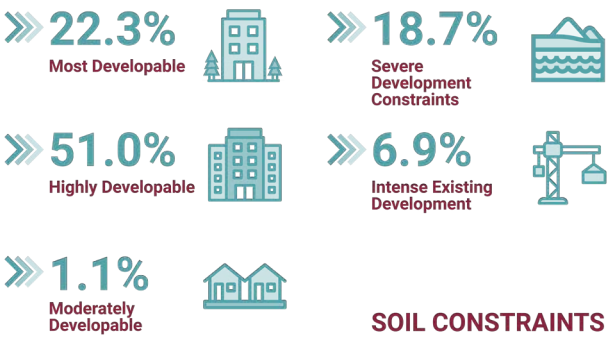
Perhaps unsurprisingly, lack of access to public water (and sewer) service can impact the intensity of new development. In Belmont, connection to these utilities is required for all uses except single lot developments in the Rural Residential (R-R) zoning district. The Suburban Residential (S-R) zoning district also allows for this on lots one acre and larger with certain conditions. The consideration of these factors provides a series of development suitability indicators that range from the most developable to soil conditions that are very limited for development.

The soils for 22.3% of Planning Area land exhibit slight to no limitations to the construction of dwelling units, whereas an additional 51.0% has moderate limitations. Both classifications have moderate favorability for the installation of septic systems, and represent the vast majority of Belmont's developable area.

Another 1.1% features soils suitable for residential construction but generally infeasible for septic tanks.

Soil conditions for 18.7% of the Planning Area are very limited, with one or more features that are unfavorable for residential construction. These soils are located throughout the Planning Area and are considered unfavorable for development for one or more reasons such as slope, flooding, and/or poor drainage.

"Excavated Soils," refer to udorthents –a type of soil in North Carolina composed of areas where the natural



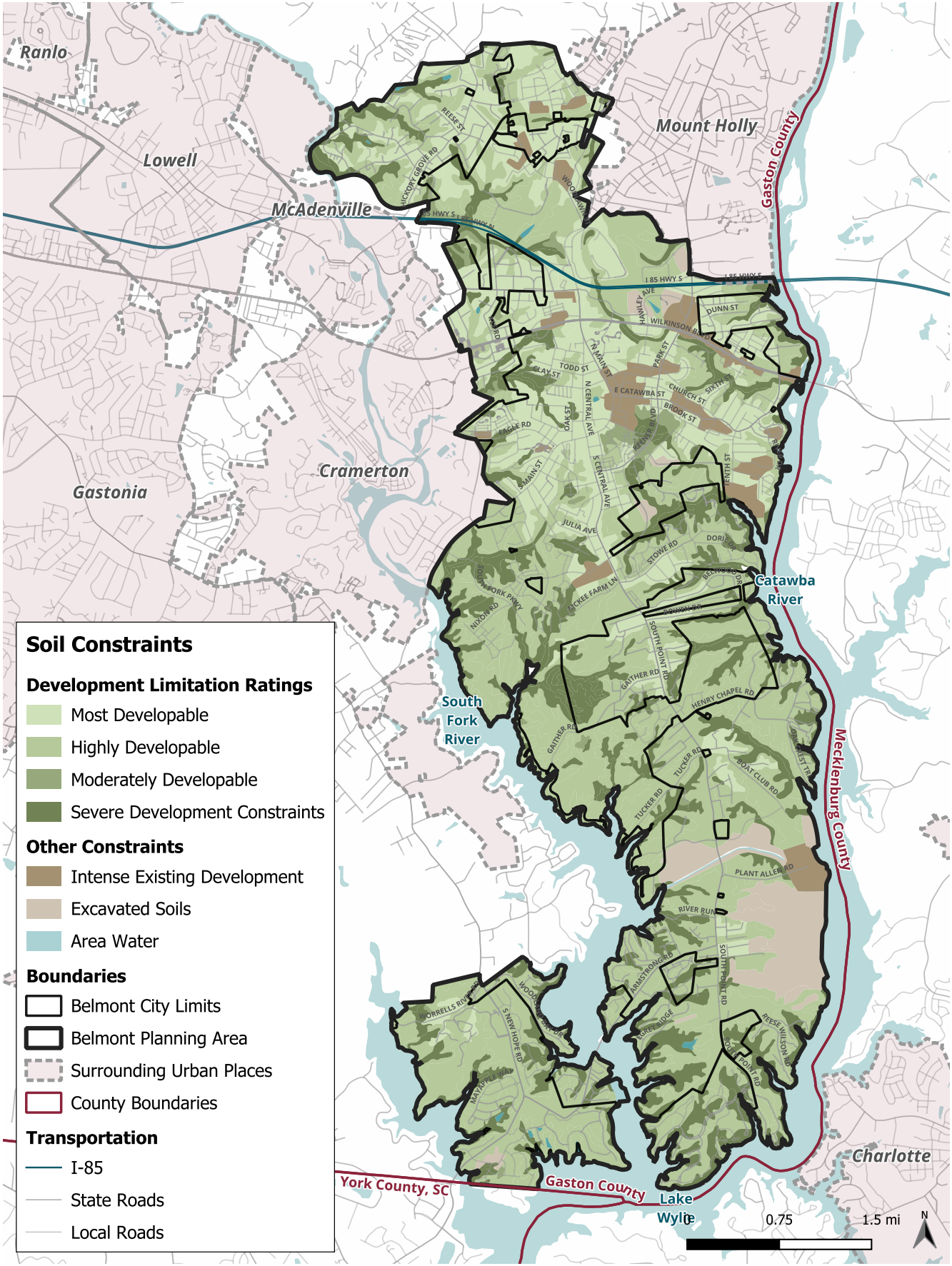
earth has been altered by digging, grading, or filling. In Belmont, cut and fill areas resulting from previous or ongoing development at the time of data capture (2024) have this classification, as well as the coal ash burial underway at the Allen Steam Station.

When absent of other hazards, udorthents are considered to pose low to moderate development constraints and are best suited for residential and light commercial development. These soils account for 6.9% of the Planning Area.

"Intense Existing Development" represents areas already occupied by significantly dense or impervious development, presenting infill projects in these areas with their own unique challenges. The majority of these sites have "excavated soils" as their underlying classification.

Finally, while known soil contamination is present around the power plant site, like most other cities, it is likely contamination exists elsewhere throughout Belmont. Typically identified only when sites are developed, these are usually the result of commercial and industrial wastes from older facilities, operations, and unreported incidents.

Often referred to as "brownfields," these sites must be catalogued and remediated in accordance with the latest best practices established by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), and others.



Map: Soil constraints map (data source: USDA, City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)



HYDROLOGY

Belmont’s Planning Area contains portions of three creek basins and one water supply watershed. The last of these, the Lake Wylie Class IV Water Supply Watershed (WSW), is located in the northeast portion of the Planning Area, north of Henry Chapel Road and east of South Point Road, Central Avenue, Woodlawn Street, and Hickory Grove Road. It largely overlaps with the portion of Belmont located within the Mountain Island Lake Catawba River Watershed.

The Critical Area of this WSW extends 2,500 feet inland of the Catawba River and covers several distinct neighborhoods and land uses. The Critical Area places certain state-mandated restrictions on both high and low density development and requires safe stormwater drainage systems. These are key constraints that will impact future Village Center-focused redevelopment along the Lake Wylie shoreline.

Floodplains within the Planning Area are based upon 100-year flood events and are derived from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). Floodplain areas are quite limited within the Planning Area and are concentrated along the South Fork River, Catawba Creek, Fites Creek, and several unnamed tributaries to the Catawba River and South Fork River.

The water table (or groundwater level) in Belmont is variable but within reach of reasonable well depths. The USGS North Carolina Water Science Center monitors the ongoing quality of this groundwater via at least nine public wells and several private systems that allow discovery of pollutants such as sewage components, lithium hydroxide, coal ash compounds, and more.

WATERSHED REGULATIONS

In 1993, Belmont adopted a Watershed Protection Ordinance to meet state requirements targeted at improving drinking water quality, or conversely, limiting

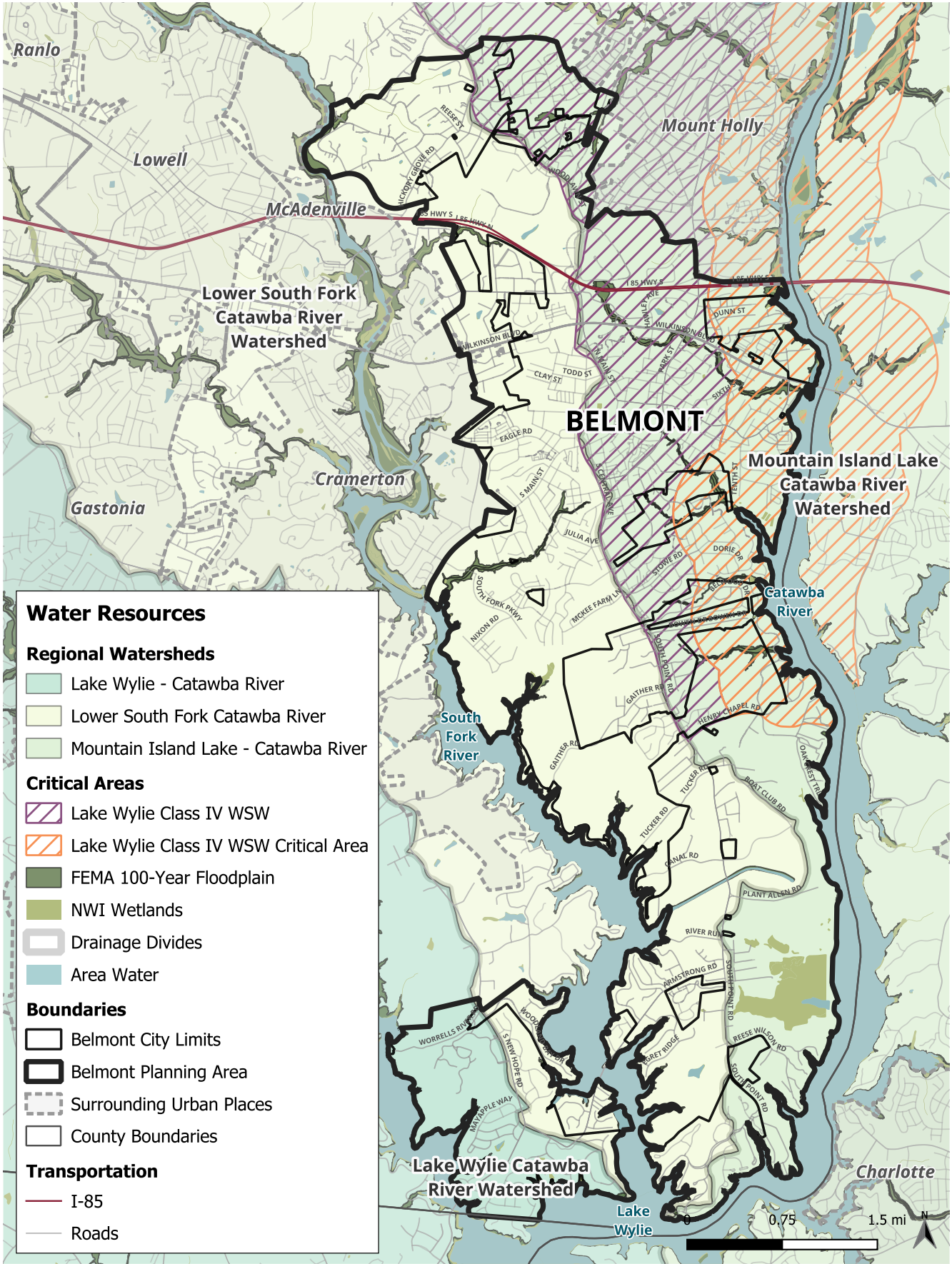
the cost and extent of treatment needed, by regulating the intensity of development with respect to surface water supplies. The Planning Area includes both Critical Areas and Protected Areas as classified by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ).

This ordinance exists separately from zoning and subdivision regulations but impacts the land use and subdivision of all parcels in the watershed. Development within the designated Critical Area is limited to two dwelling units per acre or 24% built-upon area for the low-density option and 24-50% built upon area for the high-density option. This aligns with the maximum densities allowed in the Suburban Residential (S-R) and South Point Peninsula Overlay (SPP-O) zoning districts.

Within the remainder of the WSW, development is also limited to two dwelling units per acre for the low-density option, but allows 24-70% built upon area for the high-density option. Additional regulations established by the state include a two-part, 50-foot buffer on the Catawba River mainstream and the North Carolina portion of Lake Wylie.

FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS

All communities containing a regulated floodplain (as defined by FEMA) are required to adopt a Floodplain Management Ordinance that meets or exceeds National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements. Belmont has floodplain associated with all major waterbodies and some minor creeks. The NFIP requires a permit for any construction or development in a regulated floodplain defined as a Special Flood Hazard Area. Belmont must review these proposed developments to ensure they meet federal and state standards. Gaston County currently provides this review on behalf of Belmont through an interlocal agreement. Compliance helps to reduce liability for property loss from flooding.



Map: Water Resources (data source: City of Belmont) (design: Plusurbia Design)





Image: Flooded dock on Lake Wylie (source: Reddit)

### DISASTER RESILIENCE

Following Hurricane Helene in September 2024, Charlotte-area communities along the Catawba-Wateree River System experienced historic levels of flooding, with portions of Gaston County along Mountain Island Lake bearing the worst of the impacts.

Though better protected due to its position at the end of the three lake system, Lake Wylie also saw dangerous levels of floodwater, prompting the City of Belmont to issue voluntary evacuations for residents along four waterfront streets.

Fortunately, floodplain regulations that have largely prohibited recent development within the impact zone and the presence of flood-adaptable green spaces along the waterfront minimized local damage.

To ensure maximum resiliency for future disaster-level storm events, new development along Belmont’s waterfront should be constructed with variable water levels in mind, using tiers of green space and hardscaping to create meaningful, adaptable public space.

### WETLAND REGULATIONS

Wetlands are vital to sustaining a variety of plant and animal species, and also play a role in mitigating pollutants and stormwater runoff. Though mostly natural in origin, certain human-constructed features such as ponds, lakes, bioretention facilities, and the like can become bona fide wetlands over time. Regardless of origin, their protection is crucial to the continued health of Belmont and its natural environment –a topmost concern of community stakeholders.

These important natural features are regulated by the North Carolina Division of Water Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Any disturbance to a regulated wetland requires a permit from these agencies.

In Belmont, wetlands are primarily confined within the floodplains, river tributaries and within Duke Energy’s Allen Steam Station property. In fact, the National Wetlands Inventory maintained by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) has defined a 142-acre portion of the 996-acre property as an “impounded wetland” which has transitioned from a natural, low-lying area to serving as “polishing ponds,” treating runoff from repositories of coal ash –the by-product of coal burning.



Image: Catawba River system (source: Redfin)

### EROSION CONTROL

As a function of topography, groundcover, soil condition and water runoff, erosion is a critical environmental issue –especially for a city like Belmont with rivers along most of its perimeter that receive stormwater, sediment and contaminants from adjacent higher elevations. In fact, erosion was noted as a top stakeholder concern during public engagement, with workshop participants sharing how the influx of soil runoff into the South Fork River from recent development has rendered more of the waterway inaccessible by boat in recent years.

In light of this, and in addition to the watershed, floodplain, and wetland considerations described above, how Belmont manages water runoff from both natural areas and those disturbed by development and other human activities is a priority.

Belmont continues to promote the use of pervious surface materials, such as such as pavers, gravel, stone, and turf to reduce the amount of surface runoff and related erosion and flooding across the Planning Area. This strategy offers key advantages over conveying stormwater offsite, which typically increases runoff speed and volume.

Because erosion control regulations are primarily focused on developments that are one acre or greater, the City should also start to address stormwater issues in areas seeing increased infill development.

### STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Belmont is designated as a Phase II Stormwater Community by the State of North Carolina and must meet the EPA’s corresponding guidelines for stormwater management. Most importantly for this plan, each project is required to meet stormwater control standards during site development, as well as post-construction standards that act to address the amount of runoff generated by development, pollutants carried by that runoff, and the rate at which stormwater leaves a site.

Stormwater management is cooperatively conducted by Gaston County and Belmont’s Department of Public Works. Together, they administer a Stormwater Control Ordinance that complies with the requirements of the Phase II program. Closely aligned with –but separate from this ordinance– is Gaston County’s Sedimentation and Soil Erosion Control Ordinance that focuses on managing the downstream impacts of land development during construction.

Administration of Belmont’s portion of the County’s Stormwater Control Ordinance is funded entirely through a stormwater fee. This fee is levied on properties located only within the corporate limits of Belmont, and should be routinely revisited for its fairness and effectiveness.

Beyond concerns with the stormwater fee, public engagement highlighted citizen’s uneasiness about the adequacy of current erosion standards, citing they are out of date and/or do not include critical areas, such as the South Fork River. This ordinance was updated during this planning process by Belmont’s Department of Public Works to regulate all stormwater post-development. Cooperation with Gaston County is key in order to monitor areas within the Planning Area but outside City Limits.



Image: Development along the South Fork River(source: Google Earth)



TREE CANOPY

From increasing property values, to maintaining Belmont’s community character, reducing the urban heat island effect, and improving local air quality, trees offer a multitude of benefits. To support the preservation of existing tree canopy and ensure regrowth of that which is cleared for new development, Belmont’s Land Development Code includes requirements for tree save and new plantings.

The current ordinance emphasizes the protection of heritage trees, planting a diversity of native species, and provides on-site tree save requirements for various development types. For single-family residential, all tree save must be provided on-site. To provide flexibility, other uses may exercise varying degrees of off-site solutions.

Affirming its commitment to tree preservation, in 2010, Belmont was designated as a Tree City USA municipality by the Urban and Community Forestry division of the North Carolina Forest Service. An Arbor Day Foundation Program, it acts as a framework for community forestry management, where the Tree City USA status is earned by meeting four criteria each year. These are maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least two dollars per capita on urban forestry, and celebrating Arbor Day.

Through its participation, Belmont continues to celebrate the importance of its tree canopy while seeking to reverse the net loss of this community asset as soon as possible.

TREE CANOPY CHANGE

Belmont’s tree regulations are critical, as sprawling new development represents the leading cause of canopy loss in the Planning Area. According to data provided by the Global Forest Watch –established by the World Resources Institute (WRI), Gaston County lost 10,141 acres of tree cover between 2014 to 2022, a loss equivalent to 7.0% of its tree cover area in 2000.

Though Belmont has also experienced decreased tree cover, the City recently completed its own tree canopy assessment, which tracked only a 2.6% decline (202 acres) between 2014 and 2022. This undertaking helped to pinpoint the areas of most prevalent canopy loss, but in some cases, revealed where tree canopy has been regained as a result of new plantings that were required after initial clearing.

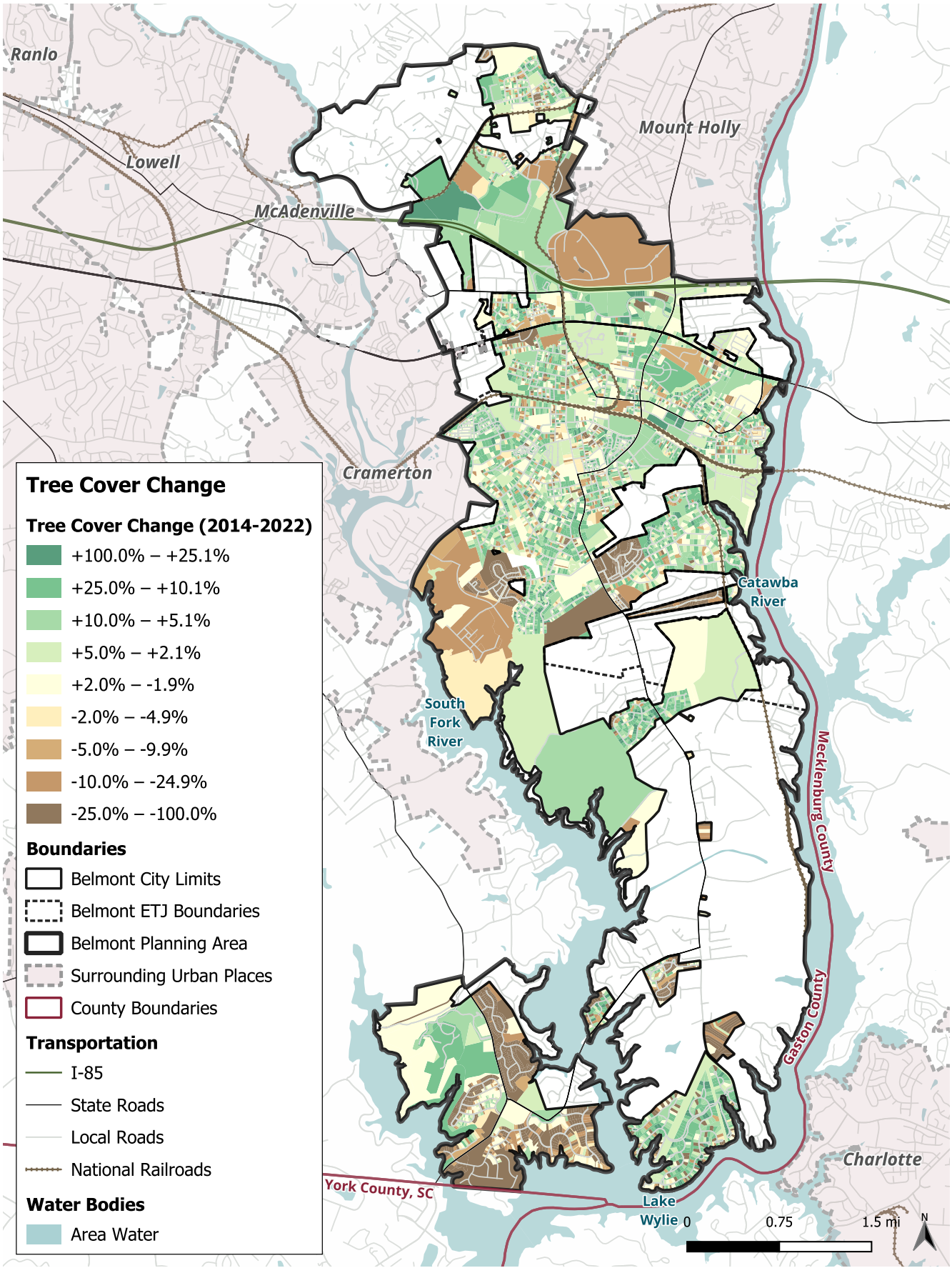
Examining the map, the largest canopy changes during the eight year period are concentrated in several distinct areas. Recent residential development accounts for the most dramatic changes, though commercial and industrial projects, particularly north of I-85, have also contributed to this total.

Notable sites of tree loss include the CaroMont Medical Center campus between I-85 and the Mount Holly boundary, the Carolina Riverside (Del Webb) community along the South Fork River, and multiple new neighborhoods in the McLean area of the peninsula. The substantial canopy loss across all of these sites is consistent with ongoing development. While these areas show significant change, it is important to note that tree planting efforts will help mitigate losses since, given time, trees are a regenerative resource.

For example, most parcels within Belle Meade, Stowe Pointe, and Hawthorne Park exhibit positive tree canopy change, showcasing preservation and replanting efforts that have offset some of the clearing required for development. These localized gains illustrate how proactive management and reforestation can counterbalance losses.

LEVERAGING NEW DEVELOPMENT

Overall, if implemented intentionally, new development can actually provide a key opportunity to re-establish biodiversity and supplement the natural environment



Map: Tree canopy coverage map (data source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)





Image: Tree-lined path at Belmont Abbey College (source: Plusurbia Design)

by adding to the tree canopy and creating meaningful, substantial, connected, and preserved open spaces.

Trees planted along streets and in natural open spaces quickly become part of the environment by default. They provide shade, offset impervious surfaces, and give character to the community. In fact, the majority of the street typologies proposed in the Land Development Code include street trees in their design and should be incorporated into future transportation improvements. Furthermore, establishing parks, greenways, lawn areas, bioswales, and similar features represent an act of purposefully increasing the amount of natural open space.

Instead of developing in ways that diminish Belmont’s coveted natural resources, change and new investment can help preserve them through the use of myriad flexible land planning and zoning techniques that go beyond the tree ordinance, such as density shifting to cluster developments (see Section 03, “Land Use”) and offsets for parks, open space, and impervious areas.

PARKS & NATURAL AREAS

Belmont is rich with both natural and human-created areas that can be used for passive and active recreation, sustaining biodiversity and preserving land. The designation and promotion of public parks, protected areas, and preserves throughout Belmont has been a consistent objective in recent years.

See Section 08, “Parks & Recreation” for current analysis and recommendations on these topics, as well as how they relate to a strong local environment and improved quality of life.

LOCAL INITIATIVES

Belmont has been proactive with regard to protecting its natural resources and guiding development in ways that seek to minimize impacts on the environment.

As part of this goal, the City’s Planning Department currently works with a citizen board called the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB), which is comprised of several members of the community and has a specific set of duties and responsibilities. The ESB currently has four subcommittees with a focus on trees, bees, recycling, and energy.

The Department of Public Works oversees amendments to Belmont’s Tree Ordinance, which are presented by the Planning Department for recommendation. On October 5, 2020, Belmont’s City Council approved a significant revision to Chapter 11 of the Land Development Code to update its Landscape and Tree Ordinance. This was accomplished after a thorough review and “in order to protect, preserve, and proliferate canopy coverage.”

In 2019, Belmont became the 90th municipality in the nation to achieve “Bee City USA.” This designation is awarded by a national nonprofit organization that encourages city leaders to celebrate and raise awareness of the contribution bees and other pollinators make to our world by endorsing a set of commitments to create sustainable habitats for pollinators. The “Bee City USA” designation is renewed annually, based on the celebration of the bee community through a proclamation, public awareness activities, and various educational opportunities.

Overall, continued progress in the policy areas of tree protection, pollinator and ecosystem support, recycling, energy, and similar topics will be necessary to meet Belmont’s environmentally-focused community goals.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Although not regulatory, certain regional plans in effect within the greater Charlotte metropolitan area include Belmont and have the potential to influence development decisions, the allocation of resources, and the provision of services. One such plan, CONNECT Our Future, provides a framework for guiding and investing in growth. In particular, its aim is to create:

- Sustainable, well-managed growth for quality of life, preserving the environment and maintaining the efficiency of infrastructure investment.
- A safe and healthy environment with good air and water quality.
- A strong, diverse economy that provides jobs throughout the region.
- Strong partnerships with non-profit organizations such as the Catawba Lands Conservancy, Catawba Riverkeepers, and others.



Image: Development on the lakefront (source: Jome Listings)





# ALLEN STEAM STATION: A VISION WORTHY OF THE FUTURE

Chapter 6 of Belmont’s 2018 Comprehensive Land Use Plan called for efforts to “proactively work to create a collaborative long-term vision for (the) Allen Steam Plant.” This was an action item under the heading of Economic Development that anticipated the closure of the plant and remediation of coal ash deposits produced and located there. In April 2022, Chapter 6 was reviewed by planning staff in order to determine progress on the action items and recommend revisions to City Council. This action item remained a priority, among others.

Since that time, the plant’s owner and operator, **Duke Energy**, has continued with the closure and remediation procedures as required by its February 2020 consent order with NCDEQ. This process is ahead of schedule and the 2038 deadline with construction of four permanently encapsulated coal ash impoundments underway and demolition of the plant itself tentatively scheduled as soon as 2025.

Duke Energy has stated that new construction on this site is not viable –including what would be required for solar farms similar to the 42 they currently operate in North Carolina– two of which have been constructed and brought online recently in Cleveland and Cabarrus Counties. Instead, the current “reuse” plan is to transform 8 acres into a battery storage system, which will connect to the Duke Energy grid, storing power when available to redistribute during peak demand.

Though the plant is located outside of Belmont’s City Limits, it occupies at least 996 acres of Planning Area land spanning across lower-middle section of the peninsula. Despite limited resuse for battery development, the remaining natural land that existed prior to 1957 now

stands the chance of laying isolated and fallow forever.

*Is this the end for almost 1,000 acres, or is Belmont positioned to advocate for something different?*

Across the world, mines, quarries and even landfills have been repurposed for public use and to generate alternate sources of revenue. The EPA’s RE-Powering America’s Land Initiative encourages renewable energy development –primarily solar and wind– on current and formerly contaminated lands, landfills, and mine sites when such development is aligned with the community’s vision for the site.

With alternative energy uses largely ruled out by Duke, other creative adaptations might represent a more viable path toward reuse.

In Sanguhar, Scotland, renowned cultural theorist, land artist, and architectural historian Charles Jencks was commissioned to take the 55-acre derelict Crawick Coal Mine site and “put it back on the map” as a competitive artland and visitor attraction.

The much-anticipated **Crawick Multiverse** opened in 2015, inviting people with the words, “whether you are interested in cosmology, science, art –or just want to walk your dog, enjoy a picnic, or savour the beautiful landscape– we look forward to welcoming you.”

Thinking boldly, there is no reason that Belmont cannot have its own inspiring attraction that follows this and other examples, transitioning the site into an enduring new community asset.



**Image: (Top)** Crawick Multiverse (source: [crawickmultiverse.co.uk](http://crawickmultiverse.co.uk)); **(Bottom)** Render of Allen Steam Station site with completed coal ash impoundments (source: [businessnc.com](http://businessnc.com))



OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Belmont’s community members identified the City’s natural environment as one of its greatest assets and are interested in exploring options to preserve tree canopy and water quality.
- A new Stormwater Ordinance will help Belmont make strides toward runoff mitigation while combating erosion and sediment influx into regional waterways.
- Clear-cutting for new development has quickly reduced tree cover and created other adverse effects across the Planning Area.
- Environmentally-sensitive cluster developments can help respond to growth concerns while protecting tree coverage and limiting site disruptions. This represents an alternative to large lot single-family developments.
- Impervious surface tracking systems are currently limited in their ability to identify parcels linked with developments already approved, specifically those approved as low density, which are capped at 24-percent build-out.
- Closure of the Allen Steam Station may provide a platform for City and County-led conversations about new opportunities for the site.
- There is a need for greater consideration of the impacts of policy decisions on Public Health and Sustainability.
- The new vision and plan for the Daniel Stowe Conservancy is a model for other locations that could similarly promote awareness of Belmont’s precious ecosystems.

ENVIRONMENT

2024-2025 community outreach findings

RATE THESE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY DIRECTIONS:



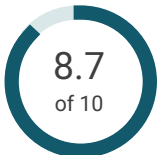
*Protecting water quality and limiting sediment discharge into Lake Wylie and the South Fork River should be a priority to ensure these resources remain healthy and accessible.*



*Belmont must work to **preserve its valuable natural resources** currently under threat, including its **mature tree canopy** and **pristine waterfront**.*



*Belmont should work to **minimize challenges with stormwater and flooding** through prompt infrastructure upgrades and regulations that harmonize development with environmental protection.*



*Belmont should **encourage a diversity of street trees and other plant species** to enhance visual interest, reduce vulnerability to disease and pests, and add habitat for native wildlife.*



*Belmont should **consider the implications on sustainability and resiliency in all decision-making** processes to ensure actions are forward-thinking.*

*Of all sections in this Comprehensive Plan, proposed Environmental policy directions ranked the highest during Survey 2, with an average of 9.0. This demonstrates considerable consensus among the public that Belmont’s natural environment is a top priority.*



# INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

To partner with surrounding jurisdictions, state agencies, utility providers, and other non-local external entities to promote the interests of Belmont's citizens and to ensure the ongoing success and quality of life within the greater Charlotte metropolitan region.



*This icon represents "Intergovernmental Relations" content.*

Belmont is part of a thriving region that is experiencing both shared success and shared challenges. Building and maintaining effective partnerships with surrounding municipalities, county governments, regional organizations, and state agencies significantly strengthens Belmont's capacity to sustainably manage its own growth and chart its own course, actively responding to external forces.

Situated in this dynamic context, Belmont cannot insulate itself from neighboring cities such as Charlotte, Gastonia, Mount Holly, McAdenville, and Cramerton. This can be seen in the commuting, freight movement, shopping, and leisure patterns that cross city, county, and state lines every day, intricately linking every community.

Cooperative regional planning ensures coordinated growth and development, addressing common challenges and capitalizing on shared opportunities. To build on this, Belmont should continue to pursue regional dialogue and collaboration in areas including transportation improvements, economic development, and environmental management, ensuring regional decisions reflect Belmont's priorities and benefit the broader community.



Image: I-85 corridor, underpinning Belmont and the Charlotte Metropolitan Region (source: crexi.com).

One of Gaston County's greatest strengths lies in its relationships among municipalities, non-profits, and other regional organizations, such as the Gaston County Economic Development Commission, Catawba Riverkeeper, and the Catawba Lands Conservancy, which doubles as the driving force behind the Carolina Thread Trail. While it will be important for Belmont to start and continue its own regional dialogues, forging deeper partnerships with existing organizations is often the most straightforward way to spur action.

As an example of planning with the region in mind, Belmont must target growth strategies that consider neighboring visions, particularly Gaston County's, as almost 4,100 acres of the Planning Area sits outside Belmont's City Limits and Extra-territorial Jurisdiction. Though the City cannot exercise development control outside these boundaries, understanding what is allowable or envisioned can help Belmont to better accommodate compatible uses within City zoning areas or as parcels request annexation.

The regional perspective is also important when considering environmental and transportation planning, as poorly planned growth in a neighboring community can result in major soil erosion or traffic generation events

that impact Belmont's waterway health, roads, and other infrastructure. That is, without any real change within the City, major shifts or events in adjacent communities can significantly impact Belmont.

That said, Belmont must also play its part to enact policies that promote regional environmental quality (ex. cluster development for new peninsula neighborhoods and a revised Stormwater Ordinance) and transportation infrastructure (ex. participation in regional multimodal projects) for the benefit of its neighbors as well as itself.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

To effectively plan for itself, Belmont must collaborate. Most important is regional coordination in the areas of land use, environmental conservation, transportation, economic prosperity, and emergency and public services.

Neighboring communities are planning for growth that will impact Belmont. In many cases, this new development may be beneficial to Belmont residents, by offering new destinations and employment opportunities, but will also increase traffic and competition.

Belmont school enrollment has slightly decreased, but schools are still near capacity. This mirrors related trends.





GOAL 9  
INTERGOV-  
ERNMENTAL  
RELATIONS

To partner with surrounding jurisdictions, state agencies, utility providers, and other external entities to **promote the interests of Belmont’s citizens** and to ensure the ongoing success and **quality of life within the greater Charlotte metropolitan region.**

POLICIES, PROJECTS + PROGRAMS

**POLICY 1. The City should strive to be aware of the impacts of future development and planning in adjacent jurisdictions.**

- 1.1. Project** – Monitor plans, developments, transportation projects, and infrastructure availability in adjacent jurisdictions, including at local, county, regional, and intermediate levels.
- 1.2. Project** – Work with adjacent jurisdictions to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate negative impacts of land use, development, transportation projects, and infrastructure.

**POLICY 2. The City should seek relationships and partnerships with the private, non-profit, and public sectors to create quality community elements.**

**POLICY 3. The City will partner with other jurisdictions and service providers to establish effective working relationships and collaborate toward future successes.**

- 3.1. Project** – Ensure Belmont is well represented on regional task forces and committees.
- 3.2. Project** – Coordinate closely with Gaston County Schools to keep school capacity abreast of Belmont population growth and to provide input on the location of new facilities.
- 3.3. Project** – To advance regional economic development, the City should ensure a mechanism for collaboration, work to determine a lead agency, develop a strategic framework for collaboration, and create a work plan.

- 3.4. Project** – Collaborate on the pursuit of regional grants or other funding opportunities.
- 3.5. Project** – Maintain and explore other productive intergovernmental service contracts (ex. building permits) in order to serve Belmont citizens.

**POLICY 4. The City should actively cultivate social infrastructure, and strive for every resident to be well-informed and conversant in relevant regional land use matters.**

- 4.1. Project** – Enhance the ways Belmont communicates directly with residents and actively promote public registration for the new City Connect program at every opportunity.
- 4.2. Project** – Partner with local schools to educate students on how local government works and to cultivate the next generation of civic leaders.
- 4.3. Project** – Strive for the most qualified, professional workforce possible and routinely revisit employee pay scales to remain competitive with peer communities for top talent.
- 4.4. Project** – At least one Planning Department staff member should participate in the Gaston County and Municipal Planners (GCaMP) meeting each month to support regional coordination and communication.



REGIONAL PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Among other factors, the ongoing regional development boom necessitates conversations between Belmont and its neighbors, particularly those with which it shares boundaries and infrastructure. The City must structure its planning, land use, and other policies with an awareness of Gaston County (which overlaps with its Planning Area) and other adjacent jurisdictions to identify any inconsistencies and their potential impact.

In this Comprehensive Plan, growth intentions depicted by the Future Land Use Map (see Section 03, “Land Use”) align with those of Gaston County. For instance, peninsula areas external to Belmont’s ETJ are classified as “Semi-rural Neighborhood” in this document, mirroring the “Suburban Neighborhood” future land use designated by the County. From there, Belmont provides a more specific idea of the development types that could coexist within that classification (low-medium density residential, parks and natural areas), but the vision remains similar. Differences in density regulations and utility availability remain key factors developers must take into account.

By proactively participating in joint planning initiatives, Belmont will ensure its residents’ priorities are reflected in broader planning efforts, exercising influence on County and regional visions.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Belmont’s environmental resources, including Lake Wylie, the Catawba River, and its South Fork, require regional cooperation for effective management and preservation. As such, Belmont is committed to actively participating in regional environmental initiatives that focus on watershed protection, floodplain and stormwater management, and habitat conservation.

By collaborating with regional partners, Belmont can more effectively preserve its valuable natural resources, improve water quality, and ensure sustainable land use practices that benefit all communities in the region.

EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Transportation infrastructure is a prime example of regionalism, as the impacts of projects –and the costs to mitigate those impacts– expand well beyond any individual locality’s borders. Belmont’s strategic position along Interstate 85 and near Charlotte Douglas International Airport further emphasizes this, not to mention over 99-percent of Belmont workers commute in or out of the City daily (see Section 05, “Economy”).

In light of this, Belmont should continue to actively collaborate with regional transportation authorities, such as the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO), to enhance road networks, public transit options, and multimodal connectivity, ensuring transportation systems adequately support regional growth and local accessibility needs.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Economic prosperity in Belmont is intrinsically linked to regional economic health. Collaborating with economic development agencies, educational institutions, and workforce organizations throughout the region, Belmont should continue to strive for a robust environment that supports small businesses, attracts new investments, and aligns workforce training with market needs. Coordinated economic initiatives will amplify Belmont’s opportunities and ensure a competitive regional position that benefits both the City and its neighbors.

Examples of independent community facilities focused on economic development include TechWorks Gaston, a STEM accelerator focused on countywide workforce



Image: (Top Left) Lakefront development (source: Compass Real Estate); (Top Right) Small business office (source: WSOC TV); (Bottom Right) Emergency response vehicle (source: South Point Fire Department)

development and business incubation. The organization also doubles as an anchor for Downtown Belmont.

Another example of a regional institution, Gaston College’s Textile Technology Center, is also located in Belmont, providing testing services, product prototyping, and sample production to regional textile businesses. The campus’ Fiber Innovation Center, opened in 2025, represents its latest \$16.5M expansion, as well as a significant new investment on Wilkinson Boulevard.

Supporting these examples and other independent initiatives focused on shared regional prosperity will be important to the future of Belmont and Gaston County.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Given the interdependent nature of emergency services between communities, Belmont will continue to strengthen its relationships with Gaston County Emergency Management and regional public safety partners. This includes partnerships with Volunteer Fire Departments (VFDs) throughout the Planning Area, such as the Community VFD on Perfection Avenue (North Belmont), as well as Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties for water rescues. Through coordinated emergency

response planning and resource sharing, Belmont and its regional partners will enhance readiness for emergencies and improve collective response capabilities, ultimately ensuring the safety and well-being of all of Belmont residents.

PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES

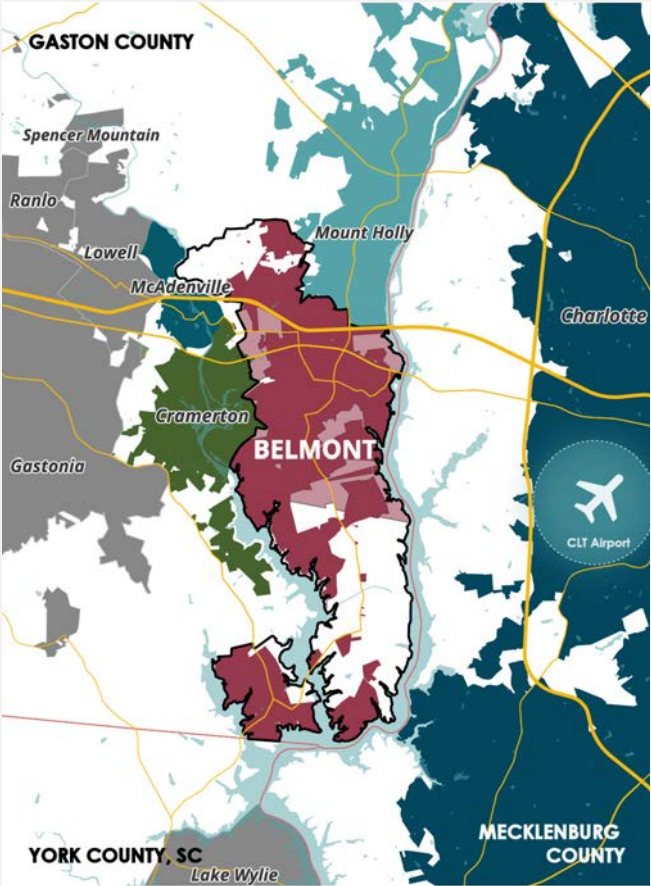
Finally, Belmont is committed to seeking innovative partnerships to deliver necessary public services and facilities. Cooperative agreements, such as joint-use facilities, shared procurement arrangements, and mutual aid for public safety, maximize resources and foster effective service delivery across jurisdictions. This type of collaboration enhances Belmont’s ability to offer quality public services while managing costs and optimizing resource utilization during challenging budget years. A current example is the pending wastewater agreement between Belmont and Charlotte Water, which would lower costs and better accommodate growth.

By maintaining open lines of communication among officials and stakeholders, Belmont ensures continual responsiveness to emerging challenges and opportunities, reinforcing the City’s commitment to sustainable regional collaboration.





ADJACENT PLANS & GROWTH TRENDS



Map: Belmont and adjacent communities highlighted in this section (source: City of Belmont, design: Plusurbia Design)

BELMONT’S NEIGHBORS

At the nexus of three dynamic counties, Belmont is far from the only community in the area experiencing dramatic shifts in population and development. The impacts of these trends on its neighbors will create larger, regional effects that will be felt within Belmont. These will include new destinations, job opportunities, shopping, and housing options, but will also result in increased traffic, changing land use, and even annexation that will reshape the regional map. Understanding how Belmont’s neighbors are planning for the next two decades will better inform this Comprehensive Plan and how Belmont will address its future.



Image: Goat Island Park, Downtown Cramerton (source: Town of Cramerton)

CRAMERTON

[www.](#) [View plan here](#)

The most recent version of the *Town of Cramerton Land Use Plan* was adopted on June 2, 2022. The goal of the document is to provide a clear vision for future growth and development through 2044. The plan includes general recommendations for facilitating quality and diversity in new development, maintaining the integrity and character of existing neighborhoods, continuing revitalization and development of the downtown area, and further enhancing parks and open spaces.

Similar to Belmont, Cramerton’s plan highlights the river as a key opportunity for new mixed use development that follows the compact, mill village model. The community has also prioritized the development of a robust multimodal transportation network, which will include several pedestrian and bicyclist-forward connections stretching into Belmont as part of the Carolina Thread Trail network.

Finally, if the proposed Catawba Crossings boulevard from Charlotte is constructed, it will also pass through Cramerton. The plan outlines the necessary preparedness for such a transition.



Image: Main Street McAdenville (source: Town of McAdenville)

MCADENVILLE

[www.](#) [View plan here](#)

Adopted on June 14, 2022, McAdenville’s *Town Plan 2040* outlines the next 15 years of development for the small community. Originally a textile mill company town like most of its neighbors, the Pharr Corporation (Pharr Yarns) still operates within McAdenville and remains a major landowner.

The 2040 Town Plan aims to preserve and enhance the community’s identity above all else, guiding new development to be similar in scope and intensity to McAdenville’s established character. Other major priorities include maintaining and upgrading local infrastructure, enhancing community safety, diversifying the job market, promoting events and tourism, expanding downtown through adaptive reuse, and increasing housing options. McAdenville is projected to add only about 100 residents by 2040, but faster growth could noticeably impact travel times on I-85 and Wilkinson Boulevard.



Image: Main Street Mount Holly (source: Yancey Realty)

MOUNT HOLLY

[www.](#) [View plan here](#)

Adopted on June 15, 2020, *Plan Mount Holly: A Framework for the Future* serves as the guiding planning document for Belmont’s northern neighbor. The community’s aspirations are divided into a Land Plan and a Park Plan, aligning future growth, land use planning, and green space investments with the values and opportunities presented to the community.

Key strategies include cultivating several unique mixed use centers throughout the City, investing in strong, multimodal corridors, promoting infill (particularly near downtown), and achieving a diversified housing portfolio. Design and identity are highlighted as other priorities that will promote Mount Holly as a unique destination, a technique already well implemented by Belmont.

The area immediately adjacent to Belmont, along Beatty Drive (NC-273), is designated by the plan as a key “Gateway Center” to the east and a “Neighborhood Center” to the west. These classifications envision different scaled mixed use centers with various residential densities, safe multimodal transportation options, and pedestrian-oriented development. Not unlike the land just across the City Limits in Belmont, much of the “Gateway Center” area is owned and strategically developed by Montcross, LLC.





**Image:** Gastonia, Gaston County seat (source: Wikimedia Commons)

GASTON COUNTY

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Since 2010, Gaston County has experienced moderate growth and is now the fifth-most populous county in the Charlotte metropolitan region. Much of this growth has been absorbed by the communities closest to Charlotte, including Belmont and Mount Holly. County-wide development patterns are guided by the **2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan**, which was adopted on September 27, 2016.

The 2035 Plan outlines key goals and objectives that include improving public education and other citizen resources –critical for Belmont as all public schools are operated by Gaston County, developing better multimodal connectivity, supporting economic development across its 15 municipalities, and reshaping its image to focus on recreation opportunities like Lake Wylie and Crowders Mountain. The plan also emphasizes regional collaboration as the key to enhancing public services and improving quality of life.

At the time of this plan adoption, Gaston County has begun the process to update their comprehensive plan to outline the county's vision for 2050. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration and public engagement remain critical to ensure Belmont's voice is considered in this new vision.



**Image:** Charlotte growth in Uptown and South End (source: Multi-Housing News)

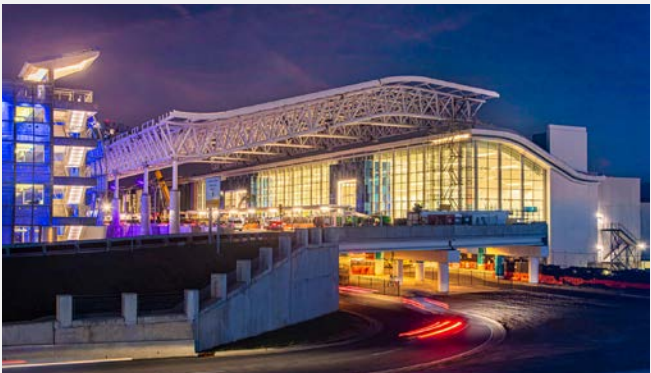
CHARLOTTE & MECKLENBURG COUNTY

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Belmont's eastern neighbor, Mecklenburg County, has also seen an uptick in large-lot waterfront subdivisions developed on the Catawba River opposite Belmont and Mount Holly. Proximity to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport and the U.S. National Whitewater Center, located just north of the I-85 bridge, are key nearby attractions.

Most importantly, the proposed 1,378-acre "River District," located west of I-485 and across the Catawba River from Belmont, may prove to be the most impactful development in the area. When completed, it could include up to 8 million square feet of office space, 500,000 square feet of retail and services, 1,000 hotel rooms, and over 5,000 residential units, ranging from single-family to multi-family and retirement care. Also under discussion is the construction of "Catawba Crossings," a connector boulevard and bridge from the River District to Belmont.

On a broader scale, Charlotte's growth is guided by **Charlotte Future 2040**, adopted June 21, 2021. Its "West Outer" section is most relevant to Belmont, which envisions the River District as future "Regional Activity Center," continued industrial development along I-85 and near the airport, and residential or park preserves near the river.



**Image:** 2025 terminal lobby expansion at Charlotte Douglas International Airport (source: Gresham Smith)

CHARLOTTE DOUGLAS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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In March 2017, Charlotte Douglas International Airport released its **Commercial Development Strategy**, an action guide for implementing the **CLT Airport Area Strategic Development Plan**. Together, the development of 694 acres of land controlled by the Airport is outlined for the next two decades. This includes a mix of aviation and non-aviation uses complementary to the site, focusing on the target areas of 1) Manufacturing and Distribution, 2) Amenities, and 3) Services. A more detailed vision of the Airport's northern landholdings, called the "Destination District" has been released, based around a future Silver Line light rail station on Wilkinson Boulevard. Its focus includes mixed use development, hotels, and flex office space.

Closer to Belmont, the "CLT West" area is envisioned as a warehouse and logistics hub, just north of the anticipated River District. The resulting increase in direct and indirect employment, as well as the development of competing regional destinations, will impact Belmont and its future.



**Image:** Downtown Rock Hill, York County's largest city (source: Visit York County)

YORK COUNTY, SC

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A rapidly growing county, second only to Mecklenburg in terms of metro population, York County is located south of Belmont and borders several miles of Lake Wylie. **York Forward**, adopted on March 6, 2023, serves as its Comprehensive Plan and seeks to promote intentional growth patterns to address sprawling development. The guiding document is organized by South Carolina's 10 required Comprehensive Plan elements.

Most relevant to Belmont, land use recommendations for the Lake Wylie area are predominantly single-family and rural residential, with mixed use and commercial development supported at the SC-274/49/557 intersection and along SC-49 to the shore. This existing suburban node also serves Belmont's southernmost peninsula residents, who are farthest from Belmont Town Center (Harris Teeter area). In York County, a future Village Center is planned near the Buster Boyd Bridge, which will offer more walkable, mixed use development.

Commuter traffic from York County into North Carolina is of major concern to Belmont residents, given the stressed capacity of South Point Road, a problem perpetuated by continued residential development on both sides of the lake.



SCHOOLS

Of all intergovernmental relations topics discussed during public engagement, none garnered close to the interest of public schools.

Seven public schools, including three elementary schools, one primary school (grades PK-1), a middle school, South Point High School, and Stuart Cramer High School, served 4,275 students from Belmont and nearby/surrounding areas during the 2022-23 school year –the latest data available. Interestingly, this represents a decrease of 298 students since 2016, when nearly all schools were noted as operating at or over capacity. Belmont Middle School was the only institution studied that experienced an uptick in students between these two years.

Overall decreasing K-12 student numbers mirror other trends about Belmont’s population (see Section 05, “Economy”), which is projected to continue to grow in age. This could be due to existing residents choosing to stay in the community, aging in place while their children pass through school as well as post graduation.

Another explanation for this trend could be shifts amplified by the pandemic, where more families migrated to private schools, charter schools and homeschooling. In fact, according to *The Carolina Journal*, North Carolina charter school enrollment experienced a whopping 12-percent increase between 2019-2022.

Regardless, Belmont’s public schools remain an essential fixture of the community, and are all part of the Gaston County public school system.

In planning for growth, the District utilizes population growth projections developed by Gaston County, as well as 10- and 20-year projections provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Also considered is local knowledge of planned large residential developments and new job centers. As Belmont continues to grow, many new neighborhoods will likely house families with children who will attend Belmont schools, underscoring the need for coordination with Gaston County to keep development tracking current for ongoing regional school planning.

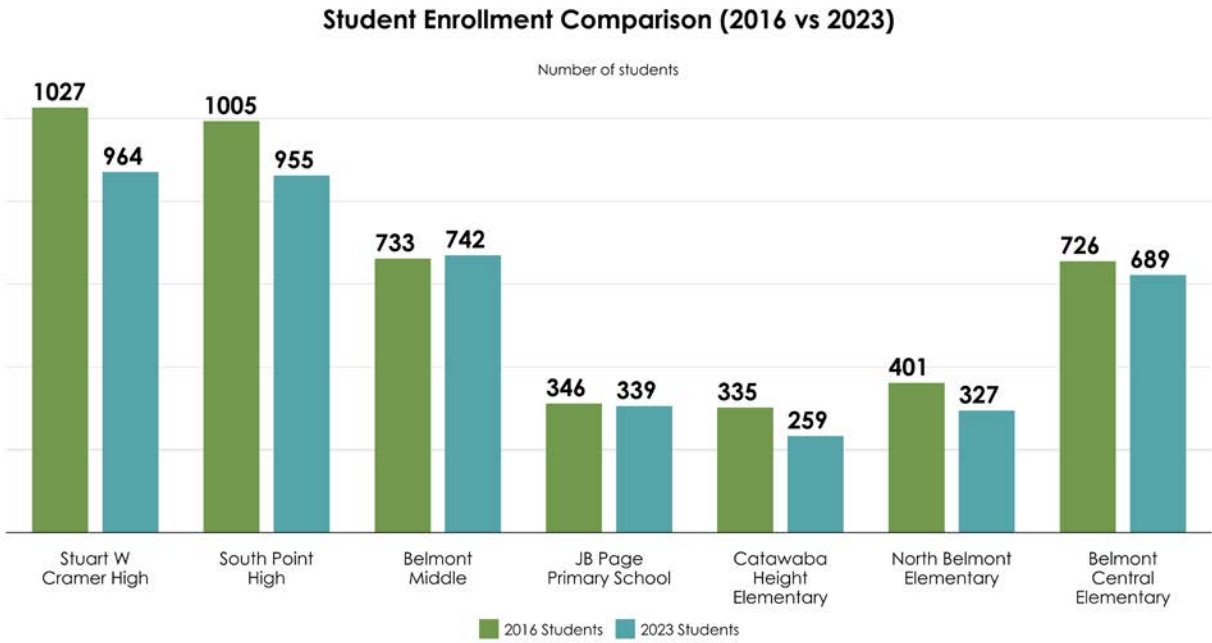
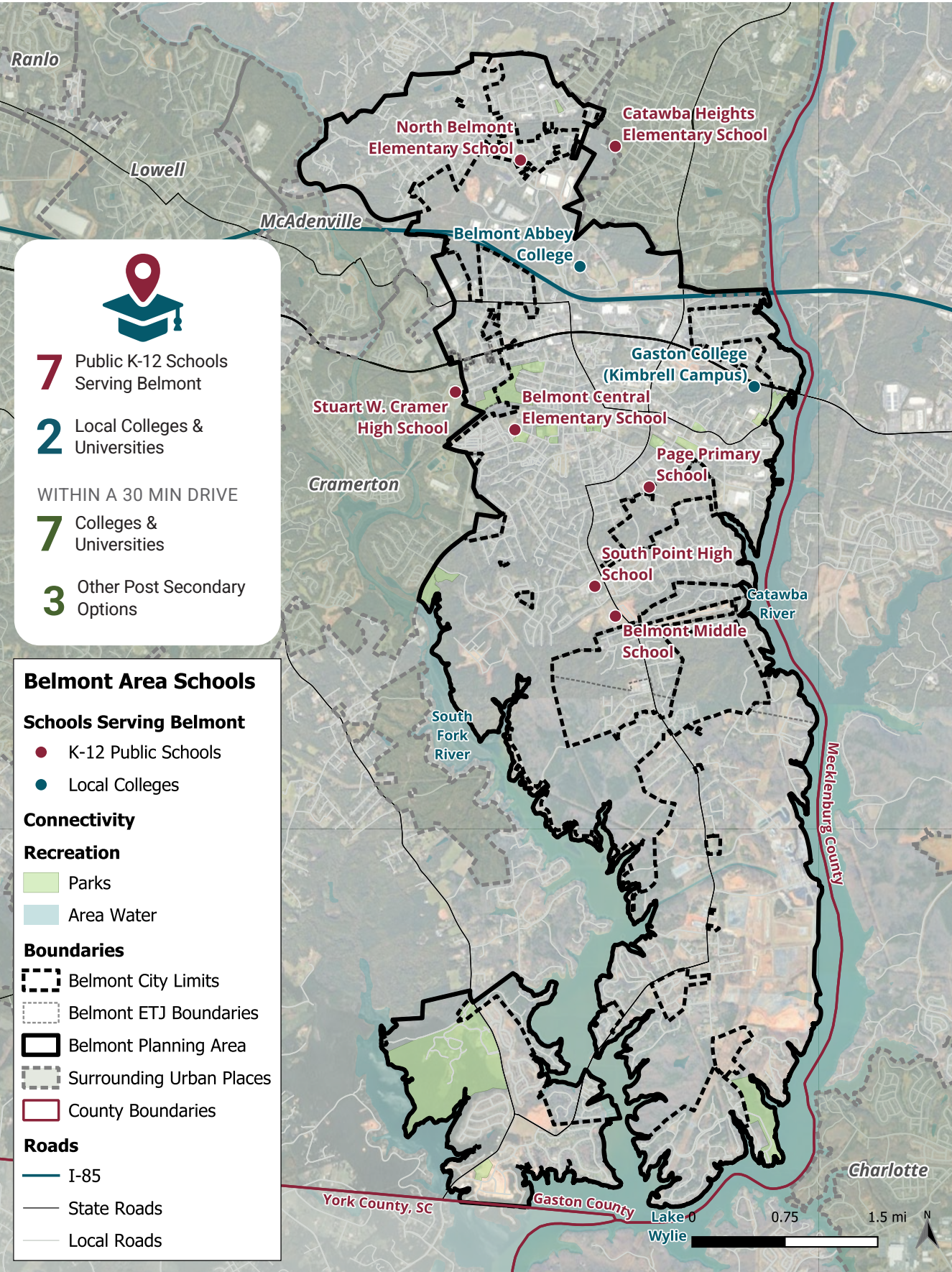


Figure: Belmont public schools enrollment (data source: Gaston County Schools, design: Plusurbia Design)



Map: Locations of schools within Belmont (data source: Gaston County Schools, design: Plusurbia Design)



## OPPORTUNITIES & HURDLES

- Opportunities for partnership and sharing of resources –such as certain enforcement responsibilities– with adjacent municipalities may increase as they continue to grow.
- Communities surrounding Belmont continue to plan for and permit new development, meaning Belmont will have to accommodate growth regardless of whether it occurs within its own City Limits.
- Many of Belmont’s schools remain at or near capacity, despite a slight decrease in students from 2016.
- Straddled by two rivers, Belmont is especially susceptible to regional impacts to water quality and regulations that affect flooding.
- Overlapping emergency service providers and County land within Belmont’s Planning Area can create responsiveness and level of service discrepancies.
- Future pressures for annexation, encroachment, and other similar burdens from nearby Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and other municipalities must be anticipated.
- The vision, decisions, and policies set by Gaston County directly affect Belmont and ideally should be done in partnership at every level.
- Belmont has distinguished itself as a leader among its peer communities in eastern Gaston County and can continue to make forward-thinking decisions that create positive impacts on the region.



# 12

# APPENDICES



*This icon represents the document Appendices.*





OUR BELMONT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
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COLLABORATIVE, PLLC

AUTHORS + PARTNERS

**PLUSURBIA DESIGN** is a finely-tuned ensemble launched on the shared strength of more than 25 years of professional success in planning, urban design, zoning, code creation, development and architectural design. The practice is rooted in collaboration that designs contextual cities, towns and neighborhoods that create lasting value. Plusurbia’s diverse team creates inspired design, collaborative approaches and innovative solutions to shape vibrant, efficient, adaptable and sustainable places of lasting cultural identity.

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