

# BEDPG Survey

*Belmont Residents' Perspectives on Business Districts*

Final Report

1/21/04

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# BEDPG Mandate

Develop recommendations for:

- Preserving and enhancing current businesses
- Attracting desirable new businesses
- Facilitating the opening of new businesses

## Survey Objectives

- Identify types of changes residents believe would improve Belmont's business districts
- Define “desirable” new businesses
- Gauge residents’ views on restaurants, parking and traffic and other hot button issues

## Methodology

- Conducted 9/05/03-10/31/03
- Questionnaire designed by Business and Economic Development Planning Group (BEDPG)
- Modes of administration: hardcopy mailed to 1000 residents and available in six Town office and business locations; also available on the Town website
- Responses encouraged through local media, Town listserv, Town website, electric bills, letters, and reminder postcards
- Responses of 525 respondents (216 random, 309 volunteer) are combined and treated as a single group of volunteer respondents for this report

# Respondent Characteristics:

women, people ages 46-55, and homeowners are overrepresented.

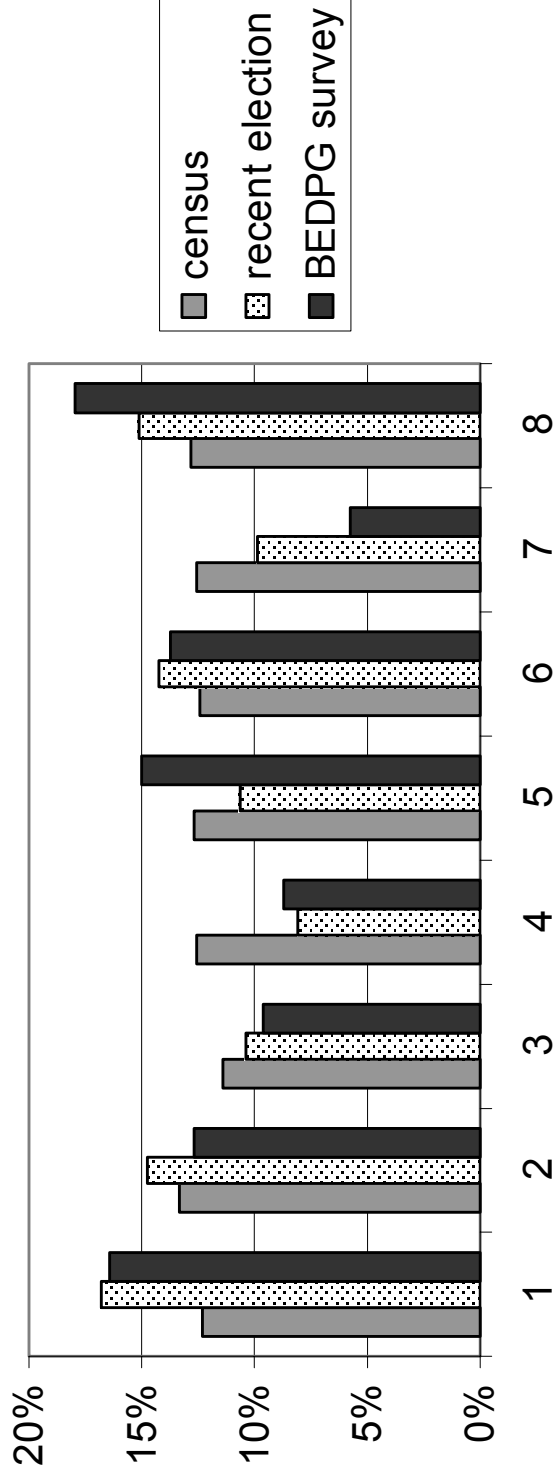
GENDER	Respondents	Census
Female	<b>65%</b>	53%
Male	30%	44%
Not reported	5%	3%

OWN/RENT	Respondents	Census
Own	<b>81%</b>	61%
Rent	15%	39%
Not reported	4%	0%

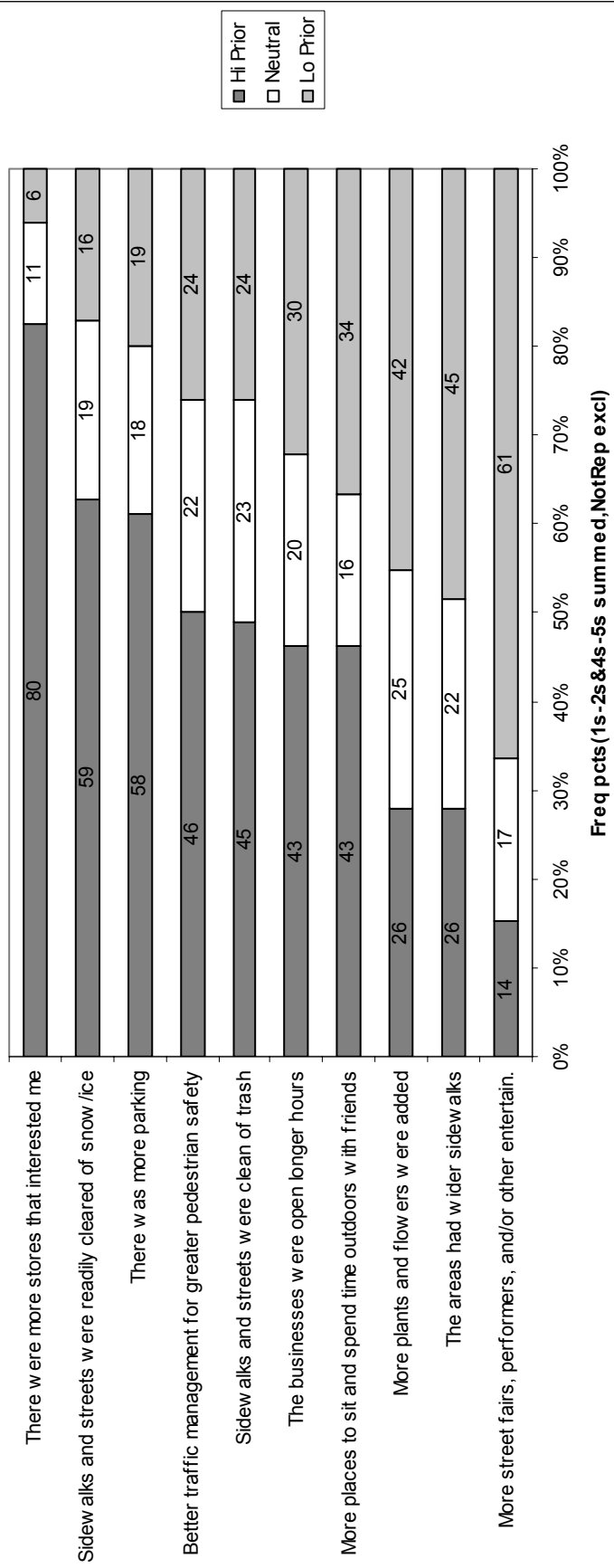
AGE	Respondents	Census
18-35	12%	27%
36-45	26%	22%
46-55	<b>27%</b>	19%
56-65	18%	13%
>65	13%	19%
Not reported	4%	0%

YEARS IN BELMONT	Respondents
<3 years	9%
3-5 years	12%
6-10 years	17%
11-30 years	31%
>30 years	21%
Not reported	11%

# Response Rates by Precinct



**Q1 : " I would go to Belmont's business districts more often if..."**

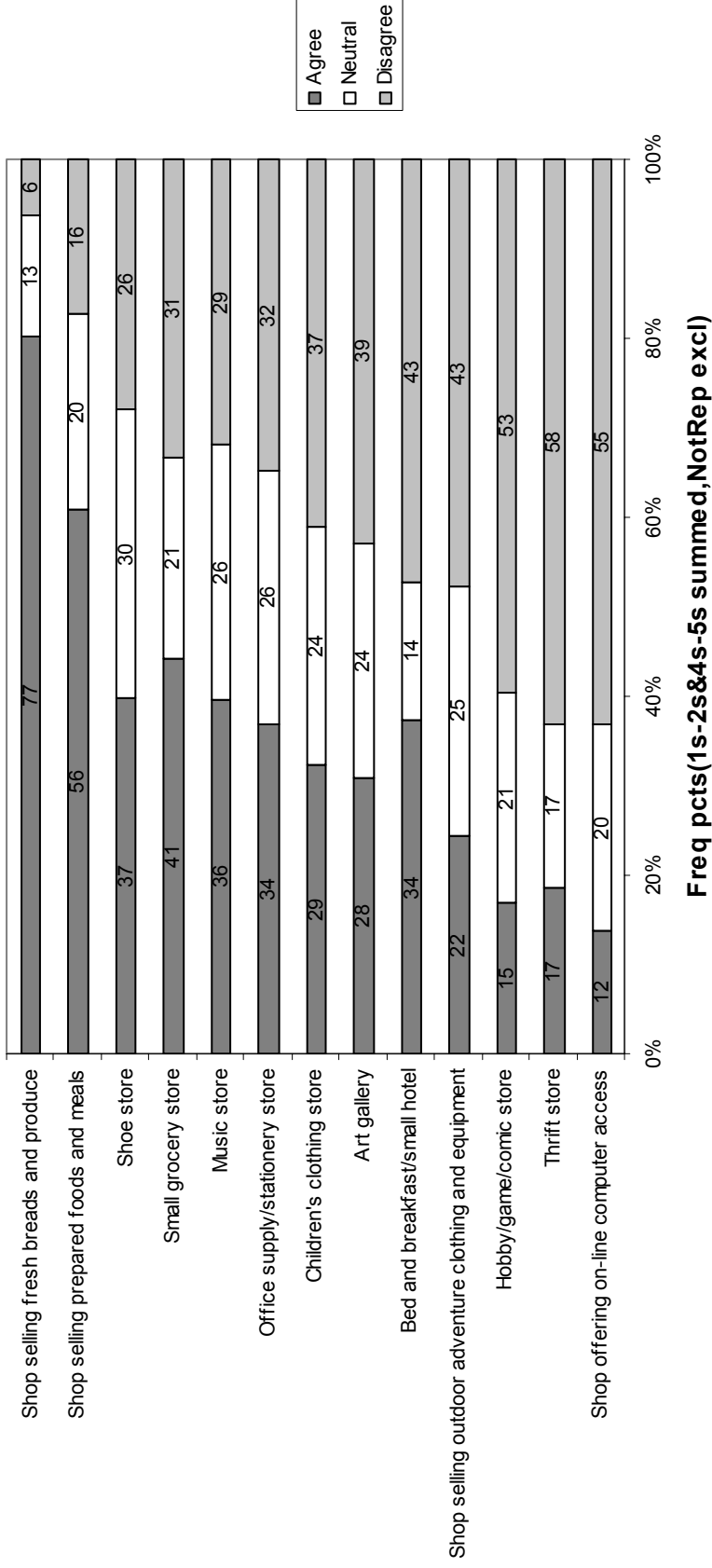


**Q1 Other: "I would go to Belmont's business districts more often if..."**

# of Mentions  
(>10)

- Sidewalk/street conditions (trash, snow, pavement conditions, curbs, space, crosswalks, etc) 60
- Non-restaurant store, general comments (general comments about stores) 39
- Retail mix (comments about too much of one thing or another, balance of types of businesses) 38
- Restaurant specific type (comments about specific restaurant names, chains, categories) 30
- Non-restaurant store, specific type (comments about specific stores, businesses) 21
- Traffic 21
- Parking 19
- Restaurant general comments (comments about more restaurants, appearance of them, locations, etc) 19
- Other comments 11

**Q2: "I would like to see the following new types of business open in Belmont."**



**Q2 Other:"I would like to see the following new types of business open in Belmont"**

# of Mentions  
(>5)

Restaurant (all types)	112
Food, Speciality(e.g., cheese, ice cream, bread)	56
Liquor/Wine	31
Clothing-Adult	26
Art/Craft/Hobby/Fabric	24
Houseware/Gifts/Jewelry	23
Book	22
Movie/Video	19
Other	15
Food, General (markets, grocery, convenience stores)	12
Hardware	12
Clothing-Other	11
Sports/sporting goods	9
Health/Beauty/Drug (nails, hair, pharmacy)	7
Electronic/Computer	6
Stationary/Card/Office supply	6

**Q3 open-end: "Please list one or more type of business that you'd rather not have more of in Belmont"**

	# of Mentions (>10)
Banks	231
Beauty Salons (Nails, Hair)	129
Pizza	116
Chain Drug Stores	68
Dry Cleaner	57
Asian (Chinese, Indian, Thai)	42
Auto Body/Auto Sales	31
Department (Target, Walmart)	31
Food, Specialty (eg. Cheese, Ice Cream, Bread)	29
Houseware/Gifts	21
Other	21
Food, General (markets, grocery, convenience stores)	19
Fast food	18
Store Comments in general	16
Liquor/Wine	14
Real Estate Agencies	12
Clothing-Adult	11

**Q4 open-end: "Please list three specific restaurants or types of restaurants that you wish were located in Belmont."**

# of Mentions  
(>10)

**Type s**

Italian	217
American	135
Seafood/fish	91
Family	82
Cafe	76
Mexican	70
Deli	54
Upscale/Gourmet/Fine Dining	51
Other	40
Steak/Beef	37
French	33
Asian	27
Breakfast	27
Pub	23
Vegetarian/Healthy	21
Continental	20
Greek	15
BBQ	13
Ice cream	13
Japanese/Sushi	12
Thai	11

**Specific**

Legal Seafood	29
Full Moon	20
Panera Bread	20
Bertucci's	19
Not Your Average Joe's	16
Jimmy's	14
Flora	11

**Q5 open-end: "Please list three businesses located outside of Belmont that you wish were in Belmont"**

# of Mentions  
(>10)

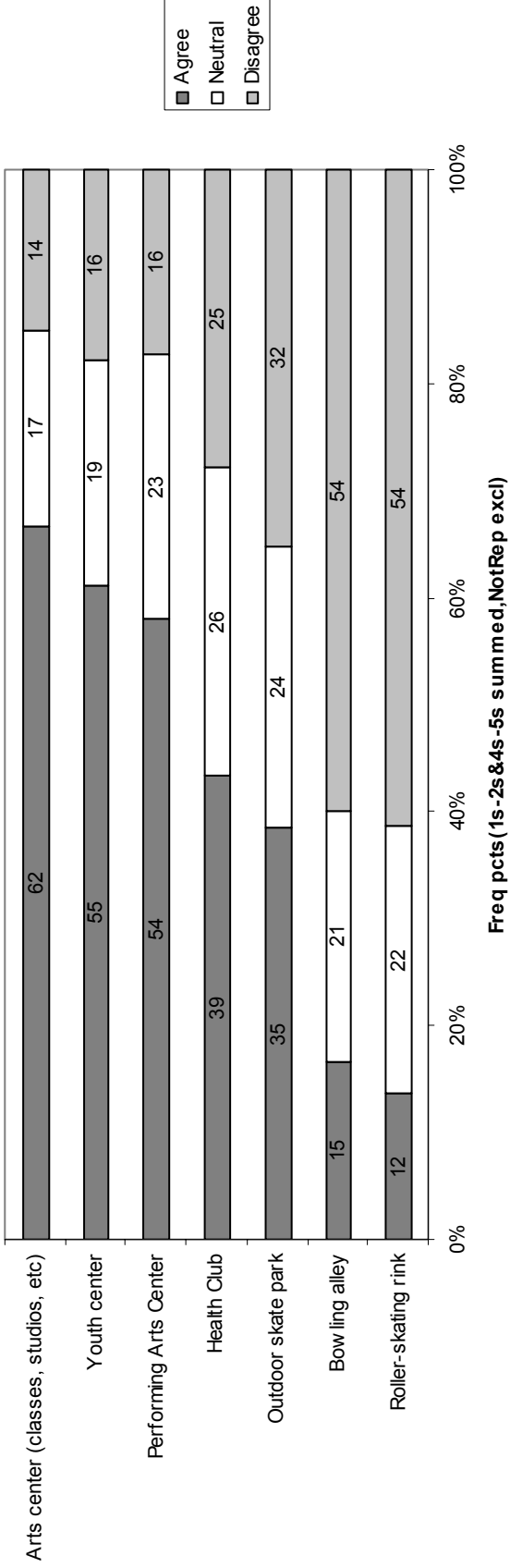
**General**

Food, General(markets, grocery, farm stand)	134
Food, Specialty(eg. bread,cheese, other)	114
Restaurant,General	97
Clothing-Other	93
Department (Target, Walmart)	44
Houseware/Gifts	43
Art/Craft/Hobby/Fabric	39
Clothing-Adult	38
Stationary/Card/Office supply	30
Sports/sporting goods	26
Movie/Video	25
Liquor/Wine	21
Clothing-Kid	19
Music	18
Book	13
Hardware	13

**Specific**

Trader Joes	55
Gap	28
Bread & Circus	26
Michaelson's	22
Crate & Barrel	16
Wilson Farm	16
Russo's	15
Iggy's Bakery	13
Talbots	13
Target	12
Staples	11

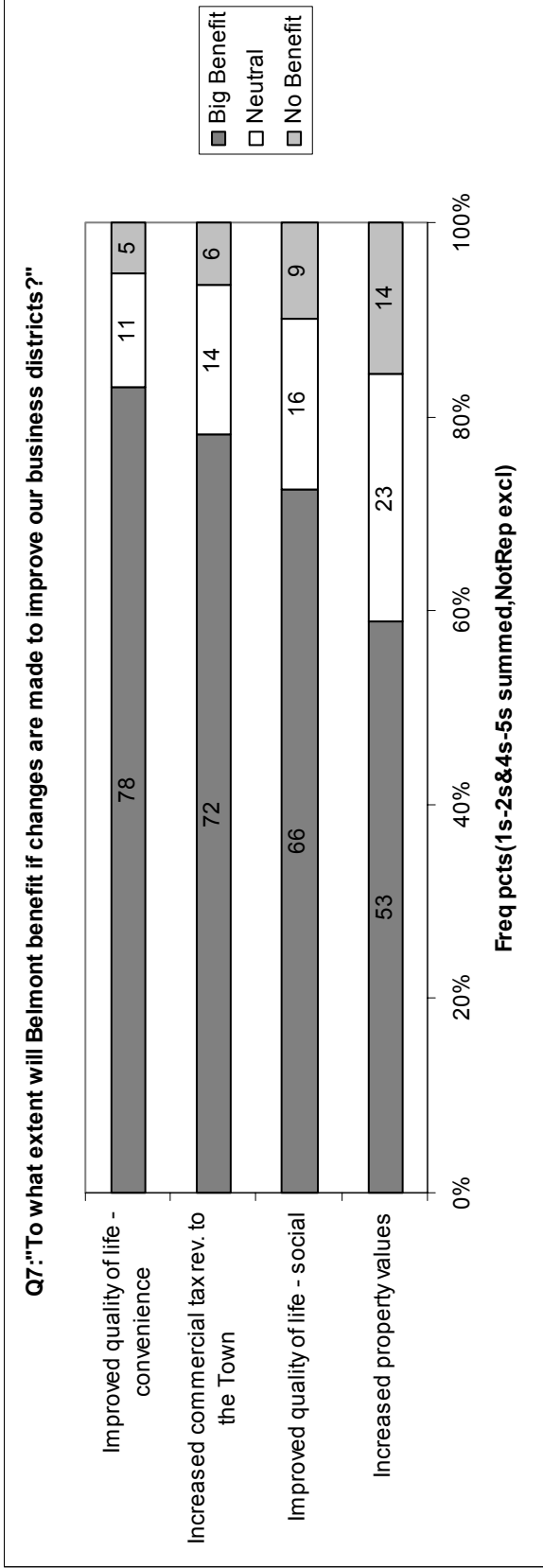
**Q6: "I would like it if the following new venues/activities were available in Belmont."**



**Q6 Other: "I would like it if the following new venues/activities were available in Belmont"**

# of Mentions  
(>5)

Sports centers (batting cages, bowling, golf, etc)	26
Movie/film	16
Senior center	16
Arts center/space/studios	13
Community/youth center	11
Retail stores, all	9
Bike path/Biking	8
Kid Center/Day Care	8
Gardens/Parks	6

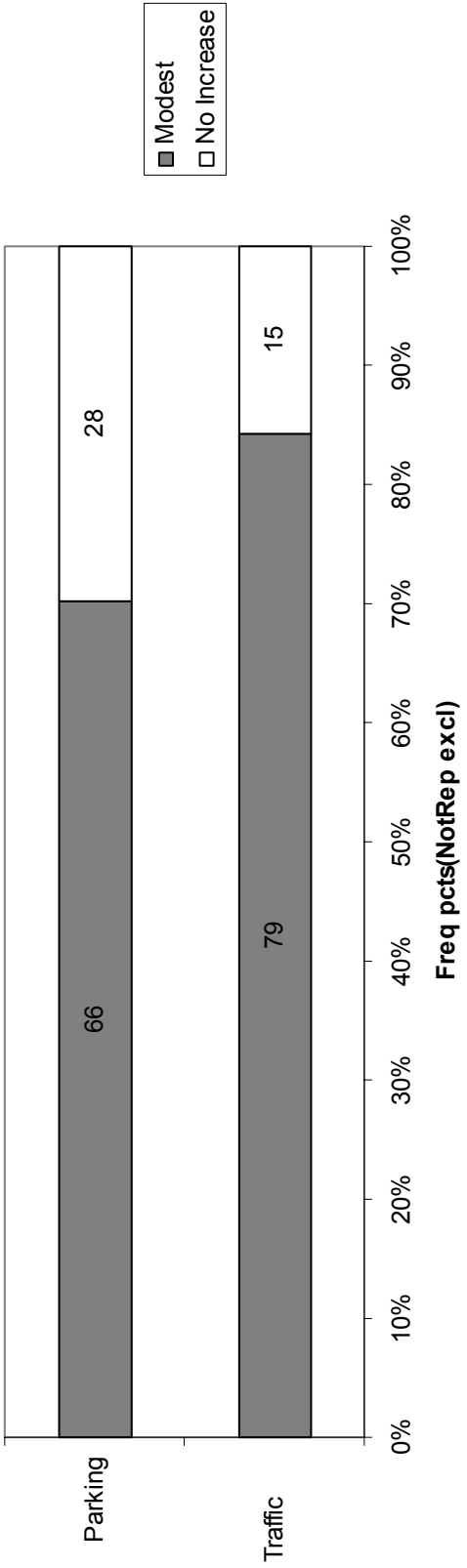


**Q7 Other: "To what extent will Belmont benefit if changes are made to improve our business districts?"**

# of Mentions (>5)

- Community spirit 13
- Image/Reputation 13
- Tax Revenue 13
- Aesthetics, Beauty 8
- Other 7
- Diversity, cultural and ethnic 6
- Improvements for youth, keep kids here, kid-friendly town 6

**Q8: Modest or No increase in traffic/parking if it occurred as a result of revitalizing our business districts**



Q9:” Are there other issues we missed but that you consider important?”

### **Travel/Access**

- Parking - enough; not enough; not well managed
- Traffic - too much; only too much during commute time; to be expected with vital business districts
- Improve pedestrian safety and access
- Improve bike safety and access (e.g., more racks)
- Introduce cross-town transportation
- Extend store hours

### **Appearance and Appeal**

- Distressed and abandoned buildings and spaces - do something!
  - Most often cited example: the pink building in Belmont Center
- Appearances matter - redevelopment and design enhancements are needed
- Variety of shops
  - Need greater variety and more unique selection to attract customers
  - Need more basics so more/all errands can be run in one stop
- We need more places to congregate to build community

### **Other Issues**

- What is the role of the Town in determining what businesses locate here?
- What is the role of commercial taxes in the Town's financial health and in encouraging/discouraging small business development?
- Residents perceive that commercial rents are too high for many small businesses.

# Conclusions

Although not representative of the Town demographic profile, the respondents to this survey nonetheless expressed some compelling views. Survey respondents:

- Prefer a greater variety of businesses with fewer banks, pizza places and beauty salons.
- Favor the retail/restaurant mix of other towns.
- Want more food! In particular, they want more fresh and prepared food options and more places to go out to eat.
- Will tolerate moderate increases in traffic and parking hassles if that's what it takes to revitalize our business districts.
- Agree that Belmont will benefit in a variety of ways if improvements are made to our business districts.

# Appendix A – Survey Instrument

Note: Formatting is off because survey was originally in portrait mode on double-sided legal paper. Frequency percentages replace 1-5 scale. The numbers in parentheses show the percent of respondents not reporting.

## Survey of Town Residents - Fall 2003 conducted by the Business and Economic Development Planning Group

### Thinking about revitalizing Belmont's business districts...

Belmont's Business and Economic Development Planning Group (BEDPG), under the auspices of the Vision 21 Implementation Committee, is conducting a survey of Belmont residents to find out what sorts of changes you think would improve Belmont's business districts. The Working Vision for Belmont's Future, adopted by Town Meeting in April 2001, states that "thriving business centers contribute economic stability while offering places for residents to dine, shop and socialize." Our vision statement also includes as a goal that "we will work with neighborhoods and residents to identify and support retail needs and opportunities." To turn these statements into action, the Board of Selectmen created BEDPG and charged it with recommending ways to "attract and facilitate the opening of new businesses and preserve and enhance current businesses."

We are glad you have chosen to participate in this survey. Completing the survey should take you only about 10-15 minutes. Your responses will be completely confidential and results will be reported to the Town only in the aggregate. We encourage you to be candid with your responses and to complete the few demographic questions at the end of the survey so that we can confirm that the responses are reflective of Belmont resident demographics.

You may, if you prefer, help us save on data collection costs by completing the survey on line. Go to [www.town.belmont.ma.us](http://www.town.belmont.ma.us), find the Public Notice Bulletin Board, and click on the BEDPG survey link. Or, go directly to [www.theworld.com/~pkt](http://www.theworld.com/~pkt).

Either way, you have until **October 31<sup>st</sup>** to complete the survey. *Thank you!*

**1. Please prioritize the following statements by circling 1 to 5 where 1 means it is not at all a priority for you and 5 means it is a very high priority. Circle the number that best reflects your thinking.**

<i>I would go to Belmont's business districts more often if...</i>	Low Priority	High Priority
... there were more places to sit and spend time outdoors with friends. (7)	14	23
... the businesses were open longer hours. (6)	15	25
... there were more street fairs, performers, and/or other entertainment. (7)	42	17
... more plants and flowers were added (7)	20	25
... the areas had wider sidewalks. (6)	25	23
... there was more parking. (5)	8	11
... the sidewalks and streets were clean of trash. (8)	13	12
... there were more stores that interested me. (4)	3	3
... the sidewalks and streets were readily cleared of snow and ice. (4)	8	7
... there was better traffic management for greater pedestrian safety. (6)	11	13
<b>Please add any other items and their priorities on the 1 to 5 scale (272 mentions)</b>		
Sidewalk/street conditions (trash, snow, pavement conditions, curbs, space, crosswalks) <b>60</b>		
Non-restaurant store, general comments (general comments about stores) <b>39</b>		
Retail mix (comments about too much of one thing or another, balance of types of bus) <b>38</b>		

**2. Please respond to the following choices by circling 1 to 5 where 1 means Strongly Disagree and 5 means Strongly Agree. Circle the number that best reflects your thinking.**

<i>I would like to see the following new types of business open in Belmont .....</i>	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
Shoe store (8)	11	14
Office supply/stationery store (9)	13	19
Shop selling fresh breads and produce (4)	2	4
Children's clothing store (11)	19	18
Shop selling prepared foods and meals (7)	5	11
Thrift store (9)	38	20
Small grocery store (7)	17	14
Hobby/game/comic store (12)	34	19
Shop selling outdoor adventure clothing and equipment (10)	27	16
Art gallery (10)	19	20
Music store (10)	13	15
Bed and breakfast/small hotel (9)	29	14
Shop offering on-line computer access (12)	36	19

<b>Other</b>	<b>(414 mentions)</b>				
Restaurant (all types)	112				
Food, Specialty (e.g., cheese, ice cream, bread)	56				
Liquor/Wine	31				

**3. Please list one or more type of business that you'd rather not have more of in Belmont.**

<b>General: (904 mentions)</b>	
Banks	231
Beauty Salons (Nails, Hair)	129
Pizza	116
Chain Drug Stores	68

**4. Please list three specific restaurants or types of restaurants that you wish were location in Belmont**

<b>General: (1140 mentions)</b>	
Italian	217
American	135
Seafood	91
<b>Detail: (392 mentions)</b>	
Legal Seafood	29
Full Moon	20
Panera Bread	20

**5. Please list three businesses located outside of Belmont that you wish were in Belmont.**

<b>General: (841 mentions)</b>	
Food, General(markets, grocery, farm stand)	134
Food, Specialty(e.g., bread, cheese, other)	114
Restaurants, General	97
<b>Detail: (601 mentions)</b>	
Trader Joe's	55
The Gap	28
Bread & Circus	26

**6. Many Belmont residents believe that the presence of a greater variety of destination activities would have a positive impact on nearby businesses and, therefore, on the Town. Please let us know what you think about the following choices by circling 1 to 5 where 1 means Strongly Disagree and 5 means Strongly Agree. Circle the number that best reflects your thinking.**

*I would like it if the following new venues/ activities were available in Belmont.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Performing Arts Center	(8)	8	8	22	31
Bowling alley	(10)	35	19	21	5
Roller-skating rink	(11)	35	19	22	5
Health Club	(10)	14	11	26	20
Outdoor skate park	(10)	19	13	24	17
Arts center (classes, studios, etc.)	(7)	6	7	17	37
Youth center	(10)	7	9	19	34

<b>Other – (135 mentions)</b>					
Sports centers (batting cages, bowling, golf, etc)	26				
Movie/film	16				
Senior Center	16				

**7. Please respond to the following choices by circling 1 to 5 where 1 means No Benefit and 5 means Big Benefit. Circle the number that best reflects your thinking.**

*To what extent will Belmont benefit if changes are made to improve our business districts?*

	No Benefit	Benefit	Benefit	Benefit	Big Benefit
Increased commercial tax revenue to the Town	(7)	3	3	14	51
Improved quality of life – convenience	(6)	2	3	11	48
Improved quality of life – social	(9)	5	4	16	41
Increased property values	(10)	7	7	23	10
<b>Other (86 mentions)</b>					
Community Spirit	13				
Image	13				
Tax Revenue	13				

<b>8. Please place a mark next to the two statements below that most closely represent your thinking.</b>	
<b>Traffic Option 1</b> - A modest increase in traffic would be acceptable to me if it occurred as a result of revitalizing our business districts.	<b>79</b>
<b>Traffic Option 2</b> – Any changes that cause increased traffic would be unacceptable to me even if those changes revitalized our business districts. (6)	<b>15</b>
<b>Parking Option 1</b> - A modest increase in parking difficulty would be acceptable to me if it occurred as a result of revitalizing our business districts.	<b>66</b>
<b>Parking Option 2</b> – No increase in parking difficulty would be acceptable to me even if it happened as a result of revitalizing our business districts. (6)	<b>28</b>

**9. Are there issues we have missed but that you consider important? Please tell us. Feel free to add your own paper if we have not provided enough space for your comments.**

Travel/Access
Appearance and Appeal
Other Issues

**10. Demographics - Please check the appropriate answer or write in your response.**

<b>Living situation?</b>	Own <input type="checkbox"/>	Rent <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Years in Belmont?</b>
<b>Your age?</b>	under 26 <input type="checkbox"/>	26-35 <input type="checkbox"/>	36-45 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Which precinct do you live in?</b>	46-55 <input type="checkbox"/>	56-65 <input type="checkbox"/>	66-75 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>What neighborhood do you live in?</b>	75 and older <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Gender?</b>	Male <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Which business district is closest to your home?</b>			Female <input type="checkbox"/>

*Thank you for your participation!*

**Please mail this survey by October 31<sup>st</sup> to: BEDPG, 88 Farnham Street, Belmont, MA 02478**  
**Or drop it off at one of the following participating locations:**  
*Belmont Toys • Ben Franklin • Rosen Pharmacy/Belmont Medical Supply • Wheelworks*  
*Town Clerk's Office • Main Library • Recreation Department*

# Appendix B - Additional respondent characteristics

## Random and Volunteer respondent characteristics

Random group differs from non-random (volunteer) group which in turn differs from Census comparisons. Therefore we decided to combine random and non-random groups.

Percent of total

Gender	Random	NonRan	Ran+NR	Town Census 7/03
Female	67	64	65	53
male	27	32	30	44
not reported	6	4	5	3
sum->	100	100	100	100

Homeownership	Random	NonRan	Ran+NR	US Census '00
Own	80	82	81	61
Rent	17	15	15	39
not reported	3	3	4	0
sum->	100	100	100	100

Age Categories	Random	NonRan	Ran+NR	Town Census 7/03
18-35	10	13	12	27
36-45	23	29	26	22
46-55	29	25	27	19
56-65	18	18	18	13
>=66	17	11	13	19
not reported	3	4	4	0
sum->	100	100	100	100

## Appendix C - Miscellaneous

- BEDPG thanks all Belmont residents who participated in the survey, for their thoughtful, enthusiastic and creative responses.
- This report will be placed on the Town website and in the Town library
- Contact Sara Oaklander, BEDPG chair, 617-484-4690 with questions