

Belmont Citizens Forum

Vol.1, No. 3

A Newsletter for Belmont Residents

May 2000

McLean "Plan B" Would Halve Development

By Jim Graves

On March 15, 1999, a few days after Town Meeting's initial McLean "no" vote, an associate at Hill & Barlow, the town's legal consultant on the McLean rezoning, wrote a letter to Mel Kleckner, Belmont Town Administrator, and Richard Betts, then chairman of the Belmont Planning Board, with the following message:

As we discussed, I enclose a revised draft zoning by-law which limits development at McLean to (a) psychiatric hospital use within the core campus and (b) cluster townhouse residential use within the old development zones (other than old Zone 1A). If negotiations are truly at an end, something like this may need to be noticed for public hearing in order to protect the Town's rights.

Attached to the letter was a complete alternative "Plan B" for the McLean land. Although Belmont's taxpayers had paid for the development of Plan B, its existence was never revealed to the public. The Belmont Citizens Forum obtained a copy only because the town's consultants were required to produce it by the Massachusetts Land Court as part of the McLean litigation.

Summary: Belmont officials had an alternate plan for rezoning the McLean land that was never revealed to the public. This plan would have conserved more open space than the plan adopted by Town Meeting and would have reduced additional traffic to and from the site by 80%.

Here are Plan B's key features compared with those of the plan passed in 1999:

- Less than half as much development: 513,000 square feet instead of the 1,116,000 square feet in Plan A, the one accepted last year by Town Meeting.
- One fifth as many additional daily car trips: 1044 car trips instead of the 5,000 to 5,500 car trips in Plan A.
- More open space: over 150 acres designated as resource areas, where development is banned and trees cannot be cut down, instead of 120 acres of public and private land covered by conservation restrictions.

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Take a Tour of Alewife Reservation

Alewife Reservation is a wetland area and bird sanctuary, owned by the Metropolitan District Commission, on the Cambridge-Arlington-Belmont border near Route 2. Like other open space in the area, it is threatened by encroaching development.

Twelve acres of privately owned land adjacent to the reservation are located in Belmont, near Little Pond. This parcel was recently bought from Arthur D. Little, Inc. by O'Neill Properties of Watertown, a commercial developer. Right now, the private land, which is indistinguishable from the adjacent MDC property, helps to absorb storm water runoff from Belmont. Nearby residents fear that paving it would cause serious flooding in low-lying parts of town.

The parcel is currently zoned for one- and two-family homes, but Belmont Town Meeting has just approved a one-year building moratorium to give the Planning Board time to consider rezoning it for higher or lower density uses.

Meanwhile, Belmont residents are encouraged to take a tour of the area, on their own or with volunteers from the Friends of Alewife Reservation. Pedestrians can reach the reservation from Brighton Street near the railroad tracks. Organized tours are scheduled for the following dates:

June 10 Canoe tour of Alewife Brook led by Stewart Sanders. Bring your own canoe. For information, call 489-3120.

June 20 Edible-plant tour led by Russ Cohen. Meet behind the Alewife T-stop. Tour begins at 6 PM and ends at 9 PM. Call 547-1944.

June 24 Walking tour of Alewife Reservation led by Stew Sanders and a park ranger from the Metropolitan District Commission. Call 547-1944.

Free tours will also be offered on May 13 from 10 AM to 2 PM as part of the Cambridge Earth Day celebration. Bring the children and convene across from the passenger pick-up area at the Alewife T station for food, balloons, puppets, and herring-hat making.

Friends of Alewife Reservation are sponsoring a Shoreline Survey of Alewife Brook as part of the Massachusetts Riverways program. Volunteers are needed to assess the condition of the brook, present reports, and develop plans for improvement. To volunteer, please call 547-1944.

Also, anyone who sees evidence of illegal dumping in the reservation is asked to call the MDC Alewife supervisor John Price at 727-5380, ext. 211.

Belmont Buzzes Over Alewife

The Alewife area is the topic of the third monthly cable television talk show sponsored by Belmont Citizens Forum. Ellen Mass and Ralph Yoder of Friends of Alewife Reservation are guests on the May *Belmont Buzz*, moderated by BCF Publicity Director Peter Rand.

Last month, Belmont Town Meeting passed a moratorium on development of the Belmont land at Alewife to allow wetlands to be mapped and zoning changes to be considered.

In April, Rand discussed local traffic issues with Mark Paolillo, chairman of the town's Traffic Advisory Committee, and Linda Nickens, a member of the committee. *Belmont Buzz* was launched in March with a discussion of the Mormon Temple.

The show is broadcast on Belmont cable channel 8. The times are listed weekly in the *Belmont Citizen-Herald*.

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Bikeway Committee Maps Trail Alternatives

By Jane Sherwin

Belmont Bikeway Committee (BBC) Chair Bob Livermore has reported that planning for the Belmont Bikeway is underway, although much is still left to do. The BBC is using a study prepared by Wallace Floyd Associates, a consultant to the town, to determine which route would be most suitable.

Livermore said, "We would much prefer a trail that meanders through town and enables all residents to reach the parts of the community that are important to them. Speeding commuter bikes should be on the main roads, where they belong." The Wallace Floyd design calls for a two-mile trail that begins where Brighton Street intersects the railroad tracks and ends where it joins a proposed Waltham Trail at Beaver Brook Park. The Belmont Bikeway would have a number of points where bikers could leave the main trail to reach the library, the high school, the town pool, and areas around Belmont Center. It would, in the words of Town Planning Coordinator Jeff

Wheeler, provide safe access to vital public spaces.

Livermore and Wheeler have also pointed out that the Belmont Bike Trail is part of a larger trail plan for all of metropolitan Boston.

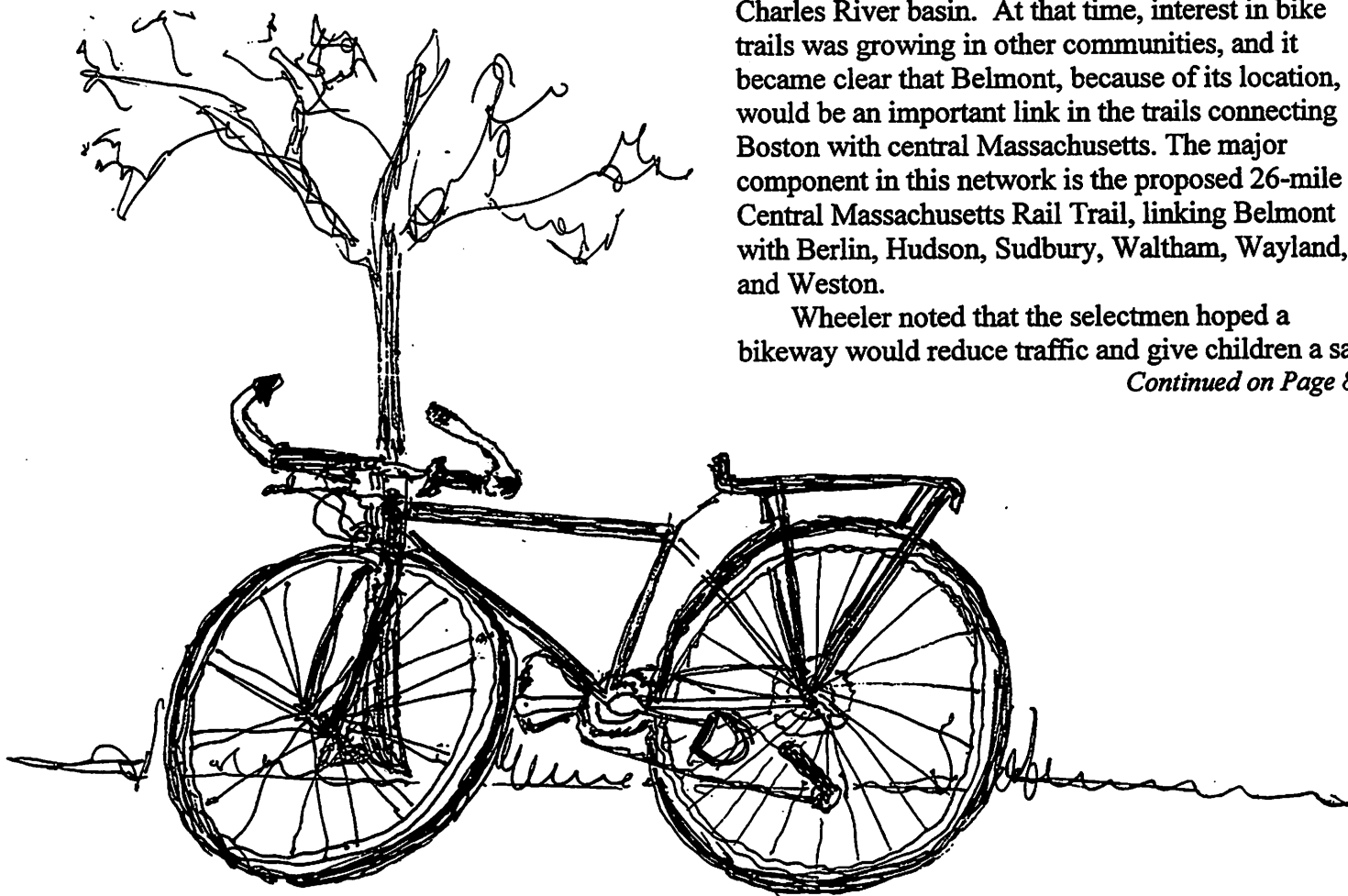
According to Wheeler, the Belmont Bike Trail became a possibility when the federal government funded a study of the abandoned rail lines north of Alewife station. These lines were left unused after

Summary: A proposed town bikeway has been mapped from Brighton Street to Beaver Brook Park, in consultation with neighbors and various town committees, but questions remain about how to fund it.

communities like Lexington refused to permit any extension of the Red Line. In 1994, the Belmont Board of Selectmen formed the Bikeway Committee to examine the feasibility of a trail linking Belmont to the Paul Dudley White trail, which runs along the Charles River basin. At that time, interest in bike trails was growing in other communities, and it became clear that Belmont, because of its location, would be an important link in the trails connecting Boston with central Massachusetts. The major component in this network is the proposed 26-mile Central Massachusetts Rail Trail, linking Belmont with Berlin, Hudson, Sudbury, Waltham, Wayland, and Weston.

Wheeler noted that the selectmen hoped a bikeway would reduce traffic and give children a safe

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Cash-Strapped Town Could Benefit From Community Preservation Act

By Sharon Vanderslice

Every year, Belmont town officials are asked to do more with less. They must hire more teachers to address rising school enrollments at a time when the Education Reform Act is shifting state subsidies to more needy communities. They must repair roads damaged by increased traffic, while so-called Chapter 90 money (provided by the state to rebuild local roads) is being reduced by 34 percent, because of the Big Dig overruns. They must renovate town buildings to make them accessible to the disabled, but have little money to pay for such improvements due to the restraints imposed by Proposition 2-1/2.

The Community Preservation Act, now being considered by the state legislature, could provide some relief. The act would allow local communities to raise funds for projects related to historic preservation, open space conservation, and affordable housing--without taking money away from other municipal programs.

In Belmont, for example, local Community Preservation money could pay for the planned renovation of the Town Hall Annex (estimated at \$5 million), the preservation of the historic fire stations in Belmont Center and Waverley Square, the purchase, renovation, or construction of housing for low- or moderate-income buyers, the purchase of land or deed restrictions to protect Belmont's remaining open space, and the maintenance of some of this space for the enjoyment of Belmont residents.

Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket are presently using this kind of funding to prevent the overbuilding that puts stress on both the natural environment and municipal services. Massachusetts as a whole, however, has a poor record of preserving open space. It is currently losing 44 acres of non-federal open space every day to development--more than any state in the country except New Jersey. Obviously, it is time for us to do something.

Where Would the Money Come From?

If the Community Preservation Act becomes law, Belmont could raise funds in one of three ways:

a transfer tax of *up to* 1 percent on property sales, a surcharge of *up to* 3 percent on real property tax levies, or a combination of these two. Recognizing that *any* additional tax is a burden for some landowners, the act would give towns the option to exempt:

- the first \$100,000 worth of property from the transfer tax,
- one-half of the real property tax levy from the surcharge,
- property owned or occupied by persons qualifying for low-income or low-income senior housing,
- commercial or industrial property.

Also, anyone already receiving an abatement or exemption from property tax or deeds excise tax would automatically be exempt from Community Preservation taxes.

If, for example, Belmont chose to collect a real estate transfer tax of 1 percent, but exempted the first \$100,000 of the property's sale price, the town would receive \$2000 on the purchase of a \$300,000 house. If the town chose to put a 3 percent surcharge on property taxes for middle- or upper-income homeowners, the owner of a \$300,000 house would pay an extra \$110 per year. Ultimately, the town could end up with well over \$1 million a year in additional revenue. If the state chose to match a portion of this amount, as stipulated in the House of Representatives version of the bill, the extra revenue for the town could rise by 25 percent or more.

Belmont could revoke the act after five years if residents believed the revenue was no longer needed.

How Could the Money Be Spent?

Just as the act gives towns a choice in how to raise preservation money, it also allows some flexibility in spending it. The funds would be dispersed by Town Meeting based on the recommendations of a local Community Preservation Committee. Funds could be allocated to whatever projects the town feels are important--as long as they

Community Preservation Act, *continued from p. 4*

are related to open space, historic preservation, or affordable housing. The only requirements are that at least 10 percent of the money is to be spent on each of these three purposes, and that no more than 5 percent of the revenue go to administrative costs.

Belmont's Community Preservation Committee, comprising five to nine people, would consult with various town boards as well as individual citizens before making its recommendations for each fiscal year.

Will This Act Become Law?

That may be up to you. The Massachusetts Senate and the House of Representatives have passed the bill, but in different forms. The House, under pressure from real estate agents, did not include the option of a real estate transfer tax (although some agents believe that the preservation of open space actually enhances property values). But the House version does include state funds to match local property tax surcharges.

A compromise version of the act must now be hammered out by a House-Senate Conference Committee. If the bill is to pass in this legislative session, which ends in July, the Committee must act soon. Voters wishing to express their opinion on this matter should call members of the Conference Committee. Their names and phone numbers are listed on the right.

Belmont's Board of Selectmen has sent a letter to the State House asking legislators to give local communities the chance to vote on this bill.

Belmont's state representative, Anne Paulsen, strongly supports the legislation, as does the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Robert Durand.

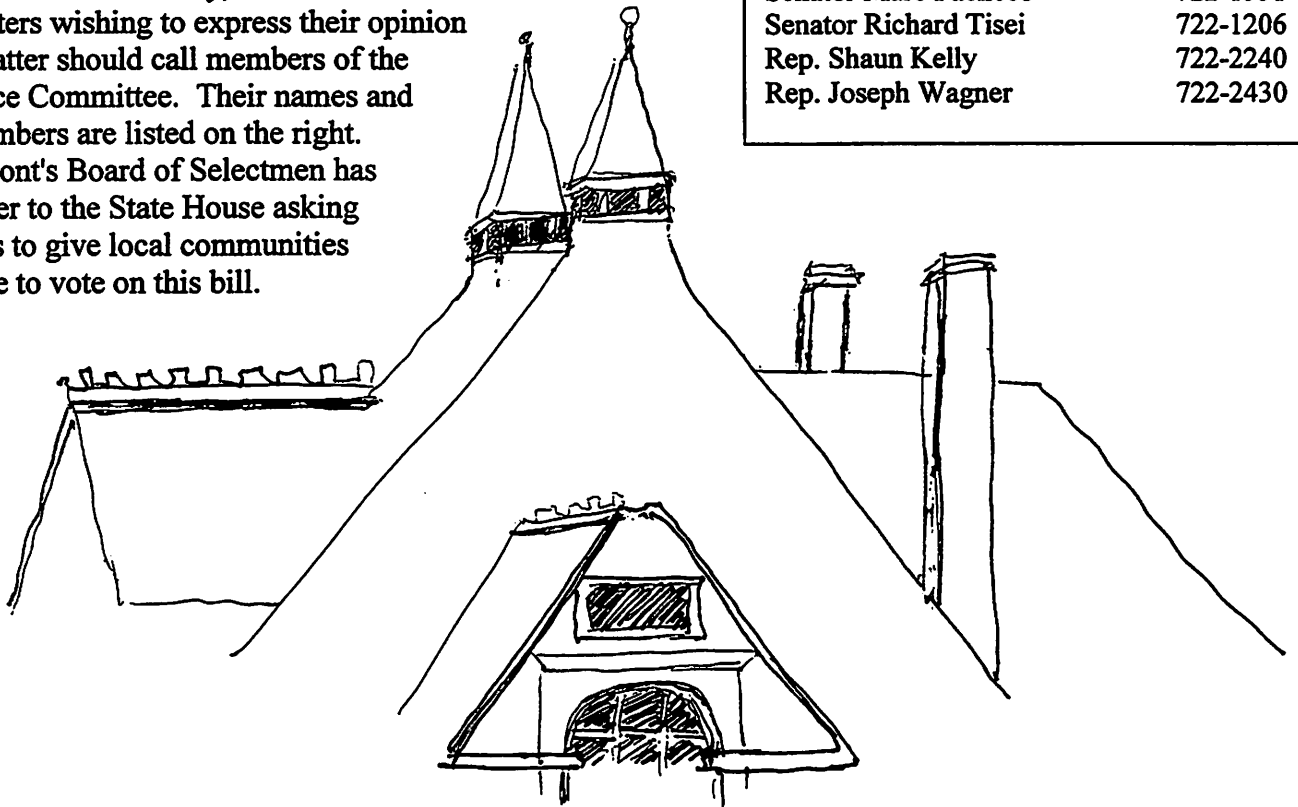
It has also been endorsed by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Massachusetts League of Women Voters, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Trustees of Reservations, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Conservation Law Foundation, the former EPA Chief John DeVillars, and many others.

If the act passes at the state level, Belmont would have the option to accept or reject it by townwide vote. We could decide *how much* Community Preservation money we want to raise and exactly *how* we want to raise it. Then we'd have the luxury of deciding how much of Belmont we want to preserve.

For more information on the Community Preservation Act, contact Marcia Molay, Director of the Community Preservation Coalition, at 725-0597.

House Senate Conference Committee State House, Boston MA 02133

Senator Marian Walsh, Chair	722-1348
Rep. John Rogers, Chair	722-2430
Senator Marc Pacheco	722-1551
Senator Richard Tisei	722-1206
Rep. Shaun Kelly	722-2240
Rep. Joseph Wagner	722-2430



Alternate McLean Plan Cuts Traffic, Saves Trees

Plan B, continued from Page 1

- No development in Zone 1A: This area is a protected resource area in Plan B, but under the plan that was passed, Zone 1A contains a townhouse development that juts into the open space near One-Tree Hill.
- Land for a cemetery: Resource area designation in Plan B protects the land now slated for a new cemetery. The town would have to purchase this land, but it would be relatively affordable, because it would not be zoned for development. Plan A would set aside 14 acres for a cemetery but would allow twice as much development overall.
- Only residential development, no commercial R&D: Plan B permits 171 townhouses instead of the 600 apartments and townhouses, 150,000 square-foot R&D building, and multi-level parking garages allowed by Plan A.
- Large tax revenue, though less than from Plan A: Plan B is estimated to generate net tax revenue of \$605,000 (1 percent of the town's annual budget) instead of the \$1.1 million estimated from Plan A (1.8 percent of the town's annual budget).
- Comparable payment to McLean: Plan A requires a \$2.2 million payment to McLean to decrease the size of the R&D complex (from 200,000 down to 150,000 square feet). Plan B requires no payment. Instead, the \$2.2 million could be allocated to buy land for a cemetery and affordable housing.

(Note: all figures are based on estimates from town consultants, town officials, and the Selectmen's Committee of 12 Town Meeting Members.)

Under Plan B, Belmont would not have to

upgrade streets and traffic intersections to accommodate the 4,000 to 4,500 extra cars allowed under the 1999 plan. Nor would the town be forced to increase spending *permanently* for fire, police, and ambulance services for the 1000 new residents and 500 to 1000 employees at the new R&D facility. Under the alternative plan, R&D on the Hospital property would be limited to psychological research.

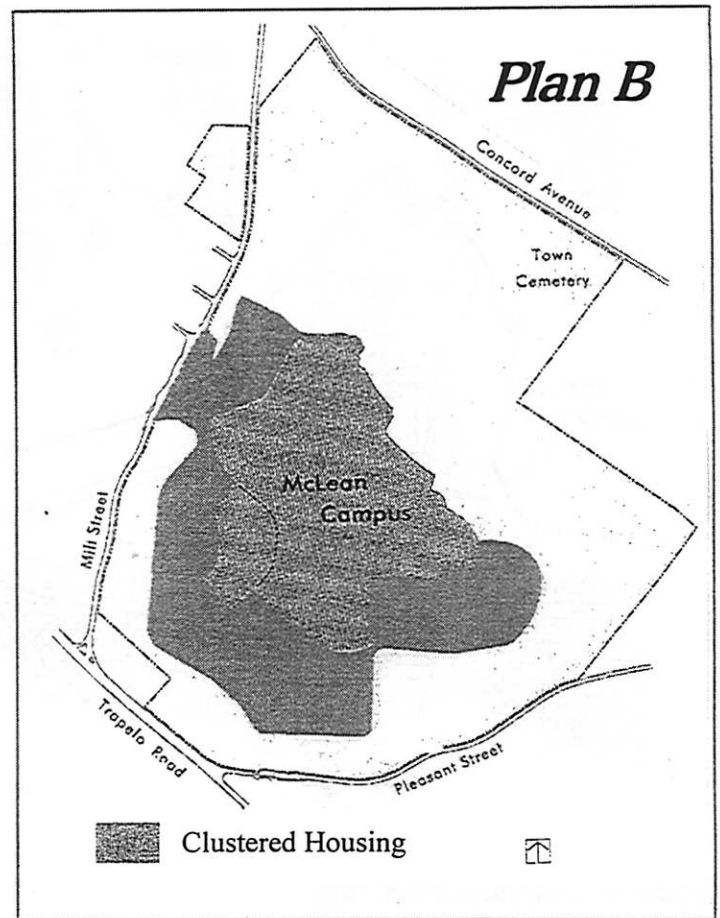
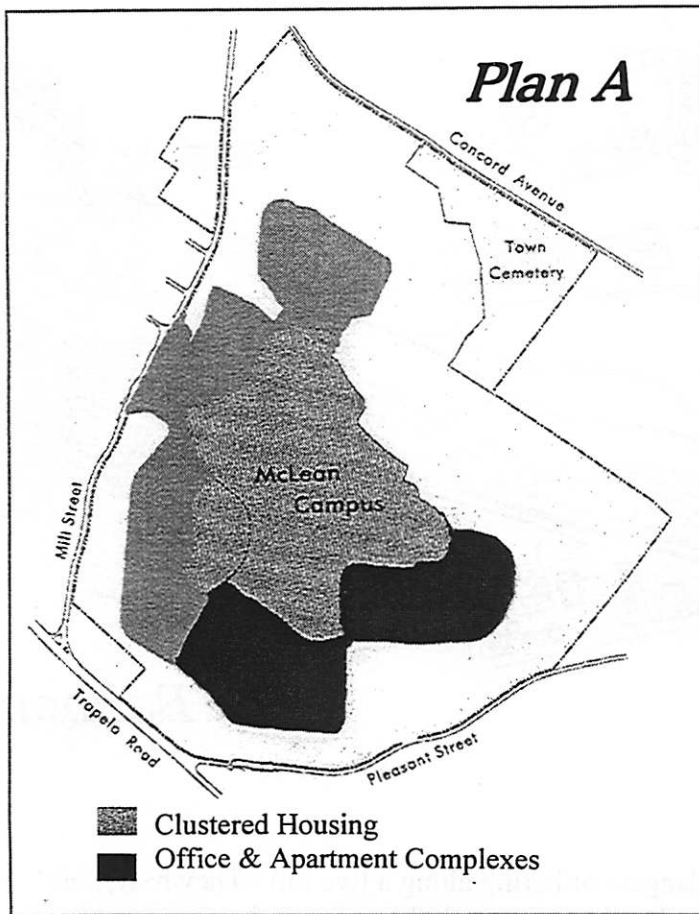
It is likely that if this alternative plan had been presented to Town Meeting, it would have passed, thereby avoiding the deep divisions caused by the accepted plan. Many who voted for the plan at Town Meeting, or in the referendum, believed there was no realistic alternative. Now that Plan B has been revealed, it is apparent that there was a good alternative all along. Unfortunately, the alternative was never discussed in a public forum.

Is this alternative still possible? If the Land Court overturns the accepted plan, which is a possibility, then this alternative plan can be given careful consideration. To begin with, Plan B would serve to protect Belmont's rights, because as soon as it is sent to the Planning Board and a notice of a public hearing appears in the newspaper, development must be halted on the McLean land.

Plan B would require no approval by, or negotiation with, McLean because Town Meeting is invested with the power to pass zoning by-laws. The alternative plan is fair to McLean Hospital and its parent company, Partners Healthcare. The 171-unit townhouse development in Plan B appears to have economic value comparable to the value of the single-family zoning that was in place before the current plan was accepted. If the economic value after a rezoning approximates the value before the change, it is difficult for a property owner to challenge the rezoning in court.



ROSA AUGUSTA!



Alternate McLean Plan, continued from Page 6

In summary, if Plan B gets accepted by Town Meeting, it would do away with the inordinately heavy traffic and oversized development inherent in the accepted plan. Plan B would not reduce Belmont's residential property values--a serious possibility with the plan passed in 1999.

If the court gives Belmont a second chance, the town will have the opportunity to place Plan B before the public for review and improvement. Should the Town decide to negotiate with McLean again, it

should begin discussions based on something closer to Plan B, rather than simply trying to negotiate a reduction in the 1.1 million square feet of development allowed under the old plan.

If you would like a copy of the 14-page alternative plan, which was prepared with your tax dollars by the town's consultants, please send a self-addressed #10 envelope, and \$2 to cover copying and postage costs, to Belmont Citizens Forum, P.O. Box 609, Belmont MA 02478.

Belmont Citizens Forum Committee News

Archeology & Historic Preservation: *Committee member Gayle Valiant urged the Planning Board last month to require an archeological impact study, including subsurface testing, of the McLean land before any further development takes place. In a detailed memo, she quoted the late Mark Strohmeyer, an archeological researcher, as saying that the McLean land "is a jewel sitting on top of a hill with no other site like it in Greater Boston." The committee's next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 20 at 9:30 AM. Call 489-4322 for information.*

Environmental Protection: *The next meeting is set for Monday, May 15 at 7 PM. Please call coordinator Jennie Summerall at 484-5262 if you'd like to participate.*

Since the Belmont section of the Central Massachusetts trail involves a live rail, with trains passing through several times a day, safety is a major design concern. Belmont is not the first town to face this challenge; there are an estimated 47 trails-with-trails along live rail lines and another 70 in planning stages, according to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's web site.

Another concern is the possibility of property damage. Carolyn and Dick Sheridan, whose Channing Road home is located just north of the high school, say they fear that a bikeway may result in noise and loss of privacy. They also stress the

Safety and Security Issues

residents.

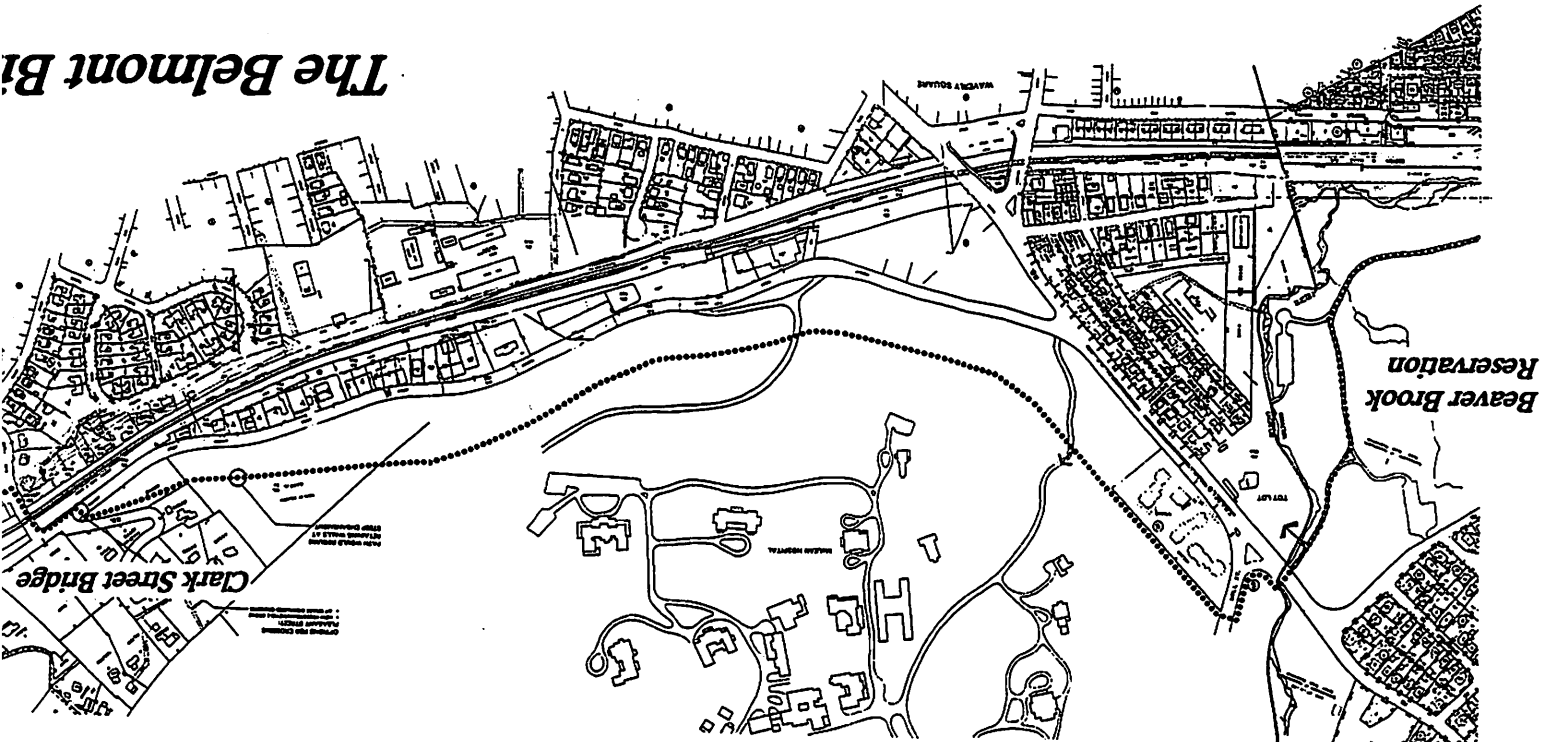
address safety concerns raised by some Belmont commissioned its own study from Wallace Floyd to funded study was completed, in 1997, the town Central Massachusetts Rail Trail. When this state-should participate in a feasibility study for the place to ride. In late 1995, they agreed that Belmont

Bikeway, continued from Page 3

Bob Livermore, who said that the Bikeway Committee did extensive research on bike trails in other communities, pointed out that bike trails actually increase safety and raise property values. Fencing and lighting can help protect property and prevent unlawful access, he said.

One study by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy indicates that crime on rail trails is minimal. If bikers exercise the proper precautions and the trails are well maintained and frequently used, crime is not a likelihood.

dangers of biking along a live rail. They have long endured having trash thrown into their yard from the elevated railroad track, including, one year, metal blades that penetrated the roof of their garage. Dick has also expressed concern about protecting the natural green space filling the embankment between the Channing lots and the rail line, and the rabbits and woodchucks that live there. The Sheridans do support a bikeway---"most people on bike trails are good people," said Carolyn, "and I look forward to using it myself"--- but the BBC may have considerable difficulty assuring them and other Channing Road residents that safety issues are fully addressed.



Bikeway, continued from Page 9

dig under the tracks to do so, at a cost of about \$1 million. Wheeler said the town might use that opportunity to build the underpass.

Jenny Fallon of the School Committee has said that committee members are generally in favor of a bikeway, especially if it solves the problem of how to cross the tracks behind the high school, but do have some concerns about the limited space for a trail along the crowded rail property.

Section B: Belmont Center

After leaving the Alexander underpass, the bikeway would run along the back of West Channing Road to Belmont Center. Trail users would have access to the center from behind the Store 24. The trail would then cross the stone bridge and use the existing underpass west of the Lion's Club to reach Royal Road.

Section C: Royal Road to Clark Street Bridge

This stretch of the bikeway would parallel Royal Road before crossing back over the tracks at the Clark Street Bridge. Nancy Weingarten, a resident of Royal Road, has voiced concerns about treatment of the wetlands on the north side of the road. If the trail is paved, the water table may be disrupted, resulting in floods as well as the loss of trees and animal habitat.

Livermore has stated that the BBC recognizes these concerns and will work with the Conservation Commission to protect the wetland area. Two possible solutions are (1) to place the path right next to the road and (2) to run a boardwalk through the wetland.

Section D: Pleasant Street to Waverley Oaks Park

The trail would cross Pleasant Street at or near the Clark Street Bridge, run through private and town property and along the McLean property to Mill Street (where a crosswalk is already in place), perhaps connecting to the Star Market and to Trapelo Road. There is a provision in the McLean agreement for a bikeway. At Mill Street the trail would connect with a Waltham trail at Waverley Oaks Park. The bikeway also may be able to use the three-foot-wide bike lanes to be installed on either side of Pleasant

Street between Trapelo and Route 2 when that street is rebuilt with funds from the state.

Funding the Bike Trail

Some residents mistakenly believe that work on bikeways around the state has been halted due to a lack of state funding. But Craig Della Penna, of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, has said that there is a considerable amount of federal funding available. The problem is that Massachusetts has not taken full advantage of these funds. The federal government, on average, will pay 80 percent of the cost of a bike trail, with the remainder to be covered by the state. (The state has approved \$20 million through bond bills, and the governor has the power to release this money. Concerns about Big Dig cost overruns, however, make it unlikely that he will do so any time soon.)

To the disappointment of many, the Town of Weston, in town meeting, voted not to participate in the Central Massachusetts Rail Trail. There is, however, much that individual communities can do to establish bike trails, and a number of them, including Waltham and Belmont, are moving forward.

If you would like more information on the bikeway, you may contact Bob Livermore, chair of the Belmont Bikeway Committee at 484-6707 or Jeffrey Wheeler, Town Planning Coordinator, at 489-8221 or jwheeler@town.belmont.ma.us.

You may also consult the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition web site at <http://www.massbike.org/> or the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy web site at www.railtrails.org



McLean Developers Present Concept Plans

By Sharon Vanderslice

Construction and Utilities

Three developers have signed purchase-and-sale agreements to buy land from McLean Hospital. They plan to construct a large residential and commercial complex, as permitted by the zoning by-law passed by Town Meeting a year ago. On March 7, the developers presented rough schematic drawings of what the buildings would look like, where they would fit in relation to the landscape, how much of the land would be paved, the exact location of driveways, and other large-scale design elements.

The Belmont Planning Board, which held two public hearings on these plans, has issued a 64-page document requesting changes and additional information. This included a summary of the comments made by citizens at the public hearings. The developers are to present more detailed plans by May 24.

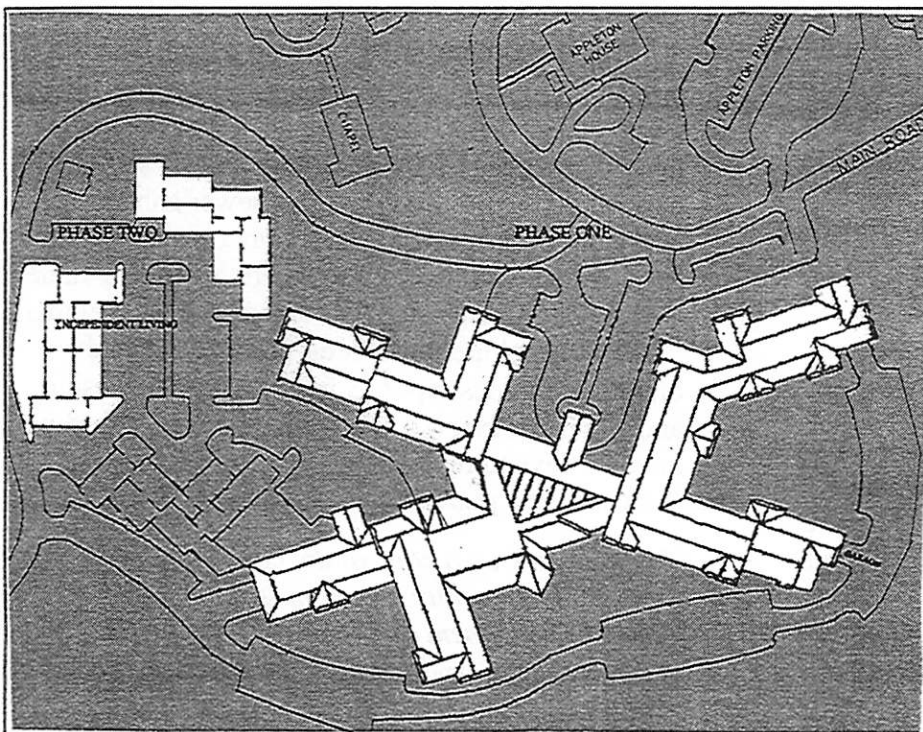
The Planning Board was assisted by a private consultant, the Cecil Group, in reviewing and responding to the plans. Here are a few highlights of the board's report:

The board is concerned about the existing utilities on the McLean site. Sewer pipes appear to be substandard, and storm water may be flowing into the sewers in some places. Surface runoff from this site has historically been a problem, causing floods on Trapelo Road and on Pleasant Street during moderate storms. Management of storm water may require blasting to build in-ground catch basins or the construction of retaining walls.

It is not known whether water pressure is sufficient to fight fires on the site. The existing water mains in the area are old and undersized. The water main on South Pleasant Street was replaced by the town last fall. Engineers are currently conducting flow tests to determine what other improvements will be necessary to serve the McLean property effectively.

All of the construction sites are on a slope, with only a shallow layer of soil covering the bedrock.

Continued on Page 12



Senior Citizen Housing

American Retirement Corporation of Tennessee is the developer of this enormous spider-like complex, to be built in two phases on 12.8 acres. Phase one would be 252 apartments for independent living and 130 health-care units (40 for assisted living, 70 for skilled nursing, and 20 for Alzheimer's patients). Phase two would add 100 more independent-living apartments. American Retirement estimates that residents would pay an average entry fee of \$350,000, plus monthly charges. Thirty independent-living units would be affordable housing. The project would also include a 50,000-square-foot common area for dining and meeting facilities and services like banks and barbershops. There would be parking for 532 cars (182 in parking garages and 350 in surface lots). The architect is DiMella Shaffer Associates.

Concept Plans Reviewed By Planning Board

Continued from page 11

Consequently, the board has asked the developers to show how they would control erosion and limit noise and vibration from blasting during construction.

The developers must also clean up environmentally contaminated areas, including an ash dump and lead-contaminated soil under an existing water tank.

Evidence of prehistoric Native American settlements has been found on the property, and the board has asked the developers to show how they plan to protect these archeological resources.

Visual Impact

The developers were asked to provide digital computer images of the buildings' appearance from the surrounding streets and open space. Members of the Planning Board were particularly concerned about the location of the senior living complex on a slope facing Waverley Square, which would be "potentially visible from many different perspectives." The board has requested that the developer of this complex reconsider the design, materials, bulk, massing, and location of the structures.

In addition, the R&D developer was asked to consider shifting the southeast corner of the building away from the adjacent open space and putting more of the parking inside a garage to reduce the amount of lighting needed to illuminate outdoor lots. The townhouse developer was asked to reduce or reconfigure the units in Zone 1A to allow for better planting and adequate screening of the complex from the adjacent open space.

Transportation and Pedestrian Access

The internal road network on the site has been designated private, and therefore not subject to regulation by the Belmont Board of Survey. The Planning Board has requested that the developers agree on some overall design standards for these driveways, however, to ensure that they would be equipped to handle the estimated traffic and the number of service deliveries. "Since there will be a

lot of truck traffic for service deliveries and for moving residents in and out of the senior living facilities," the report said, "it is important that the driveways be designed to accommodate truck maneuvers for loading and unloading."

Noting that the driveways will be steep and curved, the board said lighting would be required at night to protect pedestrians and to prevent cars from running off the road. It wants the developers to show the effect of this lighting on neighboring houses.

Access routes for vehicles and pedestrians between the various buildings on the site are to be presented in May. Lieutenant Angus Davison, of the Belmont Fire Department, noted that additional access roads may be needed to serve the residences on cul-de-sacs.

The board also wants sidewalks to be built so pedestrians can easily reach Waverley Square and South Pleasant Street. And it wants bike lanes for those who may choose to commute to the site by bicycle. The report noted that the entire development could be a boon to local businesses and commercial property owners in and around Waverley Square.

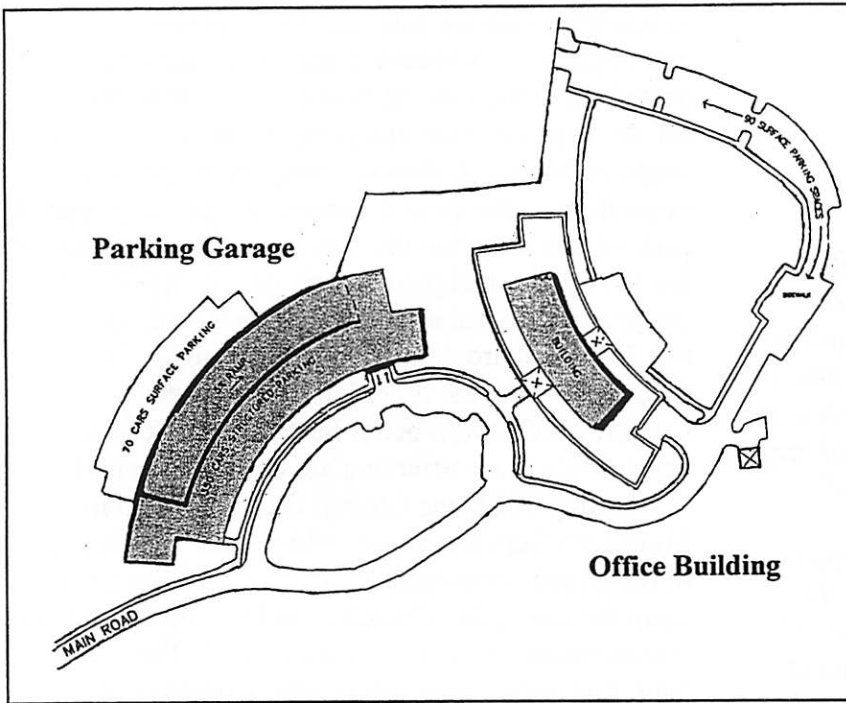
The complex is to include over 1600 parking spaces (not counting those on the Hospital campus).

Fiscal Impact

The developers are to present a five-year projection of increased revenues and costs to the town related to the development. This is to include the town's expenses for additional public services and new infrastructure like road and sewer enhancements as well as the benefits of larger tax revenues, higher employment entailed in construction, and the value of any public infrastructure provided by the developers.

The developers will present more detailed drawings and descriptions in late May for "design and site plan review." Then the Planning Board will have 95 days to review the plans before they are discussed at a public hearing.

You may pick up a copy of the concept plans at the Office of Community Development in the Town Hall Annex or view them on the town's Website: <http://www.town.belmont.us.ma/> The Planning Board's report on the concept plans is also available.



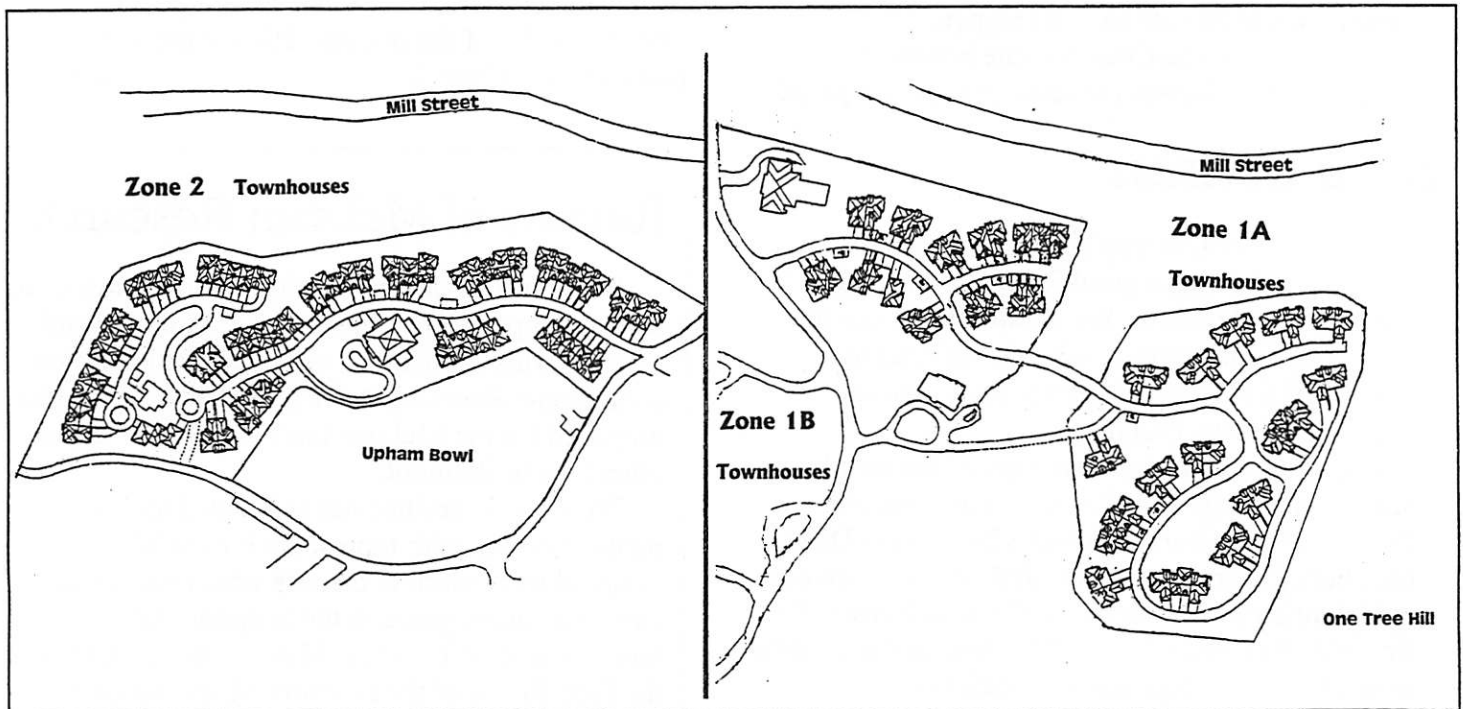
Research and Development Complex

The developer of this complex is Belmont ValueRealty (of which Belmont resident Joe O'Donnell is a partner). The plans were drawn up by Tsoi/Kobus Architects. The complex consists of two large curved buildings. One, a four-story, 150,000-square-foot office and laboratory structure, would be occupied by one or more science and technology companies. The other, a two-story parking garage, is designed to hold 350 cars. In addition, there is to be surface parking for 175 more cars. The parking garage would rise only fifteen feet above grade, because one level of parking would be underground. A driveway, with a turnabout at the top, would lead down to Pleasant Street just behind the Star Market.

Townhouse Complex

This 121-unit luxury complex would sit on three parcels of land on the Mill Street side of the McLean property. Parcel 1A, on the north end, with 33 townhouses, would stand within 200 feet of One Tree Hill. Parcel 1B, to the left of the McLean Hospital entrance on Mill Street and across the street from the Kendall Gardens subdivision, would consist of 22 townhouses and four housing units inside an old stable. Parcel 2, located just above the

Waverley Oaks Apartments, at the intersection of Mill Street and Trapelo Road, would contain 56 townhouses. Six more units would be in existing buildings in that zone (five in Upham House and one in South Cottage). Each townhouse would have four parking spaces (two inside, two outside). There would also be spaces for visitors. Traffic to the townhouses would use the main driveway entrance to McLean Hospital on Mill Street. Northland Residential Corporation of Newton is the developer; the architect is Grazado Velleco.



More on the Mormon Temple

Our last issue featured an article entitled "How the Mormon Temple Came to Belmont." Several residents contacted us to say that our history of this 16-acre parcel, purchased by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1979, was incomplete. For clarification, we provide the following summary of events based on meeting minutes and legal records of 20 years ago. Those wanting still more detail may request the relevant documents at the Town Hall.

In September 1979, a preliminary development plan for this 16-acre property was presented to the Board of Selectmen (sitting as the Board of Survey) by Jerry Brown, a landscape architect, and H. Kent Bowen, a Belmont resident and a representative of the Church. The plan included two roads, nineteen house lots, and a Mormon meetinghouse. According to the minutes of that meeting, "no areas of conflict or concern were identified."

In early 1980, the Board of Survey approved a subdivision plan. The meetinghouse was to be located on the lower section of the property furthest from Route 2 and accessed by a new, dead-end street called Ledgewood Place. The plan also included seven large house lots on Ledgewood Place. The remaining eight acres, the upper portion of the property, was to be sold to a developer.

In May 1981, the Church came before the Zoning Board of Appeals to request a special permit

to construct parking lots next to the planned meetinghouse. A special permit was required, according to the Zoning Board, "in order to provide off-street parking for more than three vehicles" in a single residence-A district. Neighbors spoke in opposition to the special permit, saying the proposed parking lots were too close to the lot lines (within 50 feet). A petition signed by 166 people opposing the permit was presented to the Zoning Board. In June, the Zoning Board denied the permit saying "there are several areas on the other land still owned by the Church which could better bear the brunt of the parking while not affecting adversely the neighbors."

In July 1981, the Church filed an appeal in Middlesex Superior Court, which said "the Decision of the Board constitutes an unreasonable restriction upon the use of the Church's land for a purpose which is intrinsically accessory to a church." Three years later, this appeal was voluntarily dismissed by the Church and, in July 1984, the Zoning Board voted to grant the special permit for the parking lots--now reduced in size and set back at least 80 feet from neighboring properties.

Construction of the meetinghouse had begun the previous year and was nearing completion when a suspicious fire gutted the chapel on August 1, 1984. Fire Chief William Osterhaus said the blaze was probably set, but no one was charged in the incident. The chapel was rebuilt and finally opened in 1985. Five houses on Ledgewood Place were built in 1986 by developer Mark Moore and sold to private owners. The remainder of the original 16-acre parcel is still owned by the Church.

--The Editor

Logo Contest

The Belmont Citizens Forum is building a Web site and needs a graphic logo to give the site a distinct identity. We would like to use this logo on our publications too. Please send us *your ideas* for a graphic representation of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

The winner will receive a copy of the new book *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. You can mail your entries to: Belmont Citizens Forum, P.O. Box 609, Belmont MA 02478. Send as many ideas as you like. The deadline for entries is May 30, 2000. Thanks for your help.

Review of McLean Research

Belmont's Biotechnology Advisory Committee, recently appointed by the town's Board of Health to study what regulations might be needed for the commercial Research & Development laboratories proposed for the McLean land, will also consider other labs in Belmont.

The new committee has scheduled an open, public meeting with representatives of McLean Hospital this month to discuss what research is currently taking place in the hospital's labs. The meeting will be Tuesday, May 16, at 7:30 PM in the Flett Room of the Belmont Memorial Library.

McLean Costs, continued from Page 16

These costs are just the beginning. For example, communities usually require developers to pay for new traffic signals and other work at the intersections most affected by the traffic they cause. Yet the town's agreement with McLean limits the hospital's contribution to \$800,000, even though the agreement specifies fourteen intersections that would need work. Of that \$800,000, \$690,000 would be allocated for just two intersections – the new exit road onto Pleasant Street and the intersection of Pleasant Street and Trapelo Road. The remaining \$110,000 can't possibly cover the cost of work on the other twelve intersections. We taxpayers will once again have to pay.

The Fire Department has recently announced that it needs twelve more firefighters, at approximately \$600,000 a year, on top of the 57 now budgeted for, to cover extra calls to McLean. That would enable the department to add a three-man pumper to its current equipment: two pumpers, one ladder truck, and one ambulance. It takes twelve people to fill three additional job slots around the clock, seven days a week, explained Fire Chief William H. Osterhaus.

"We really need these men," he said. "There'll be a large nursing home facility, large assisted-living facilities, plus probably a lot of senior citizens moving in. That all spells to me additional medical

runs, not to mention additional accidental fire alarms." He estimated that the department would need to respond to between 7 and 10 percent more calls because of the McLean development.

Chief Osterhaus added that he needs four of those extra firefighters regardless of McLean, because the department is already short staffed. If the department decides to add a second ambulance instead of a third pumper, it would require fewer new employees, because ambulances are staffed by two people rather than three. Still, the final tally is eight or twelve additional firefighters – a 14 percent or a 21 percent increase in staffing.

This is surely far more than was expected by the consultants, who calculated the costs to provide town services to the McLean development by using standard formulas: 80 cents a square foot for the R&D and 90 cents a square foot for the senior community.

How many more extra expenses will crop up? It seems likely that these are just the beginning. Instead of fattening the town's coffers, development at McLean could end up costing the town money. Unforeseen increases in costs may outstrip the revenues, which, in turn, may fail to match expectations. That would not be a startling development, though it would be a grave disappointment to voters who accepted the development, however reluctantly, because they believed the promises of increased revenue.

– Sue Bass

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People Are Asking

Will development at McLean keep Belmont in the black?

Belmont is planning a lot of expensive projects in the next few years – upgraded athletic facilities, a library expansion, new fire stations, and much more. A lot of people are wondering how we'll pay for it all. We've been told to expect more revenue from development at McLean. But can we rely on that?

Two years ago, the prospect seemed sweet. McLean Hospital promised the town \$3.9 million in gross revenues a year, offset by a mere \$900,000 in service costs plus the loss of McLean's \$500,000 annual tax payment. "Net New Tax Revenues to Belmont: \$2.5 Million," the hospital's literature trumpeted. That could certainly help balance Belmont's budget, now \$64 million a year.

After study, however, the town's advisers came to doubt that estimate. First of all, they said the May 1998 calculation of added income was at least \$600,000 too high. Then, with a revised proposal in the spring of 1999, the Committee of 12 Town

Meeting Members chopped off another \$800,000. The net fiscal surplus, the committee declared, would be about \$1.1 million a year.

In recent months, Belmont residents have learned of some new costs. At Town Meeting in December 1999, we voted \$378,747 for the current fiscal year to pay for more town employees, equipment, and consultants to help cope with development at McLean.

Approved at Town Meeting in April 2000 were the full-year costs for July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2001, of those town employees, etc., mentioned above – at least \$800,000 a year and probably more. Though we were told, when these additional expenses were first discussed, that there would be plenty of money to pay for them from the developers' building permit fees, the two sides of the equation do not balance. The building permit fees are paid once; the salaries go on for years, perhaps forever.

Still to be paid is \$1.5 million in cash for the reduction in size of the R&D complex from 200,000 square feet to 150,000 square feet. That's in addition to a reduction of \$700,000 in the money McLean was originally supposed to pay the town but has now been forgiven.

Continued on Page 15