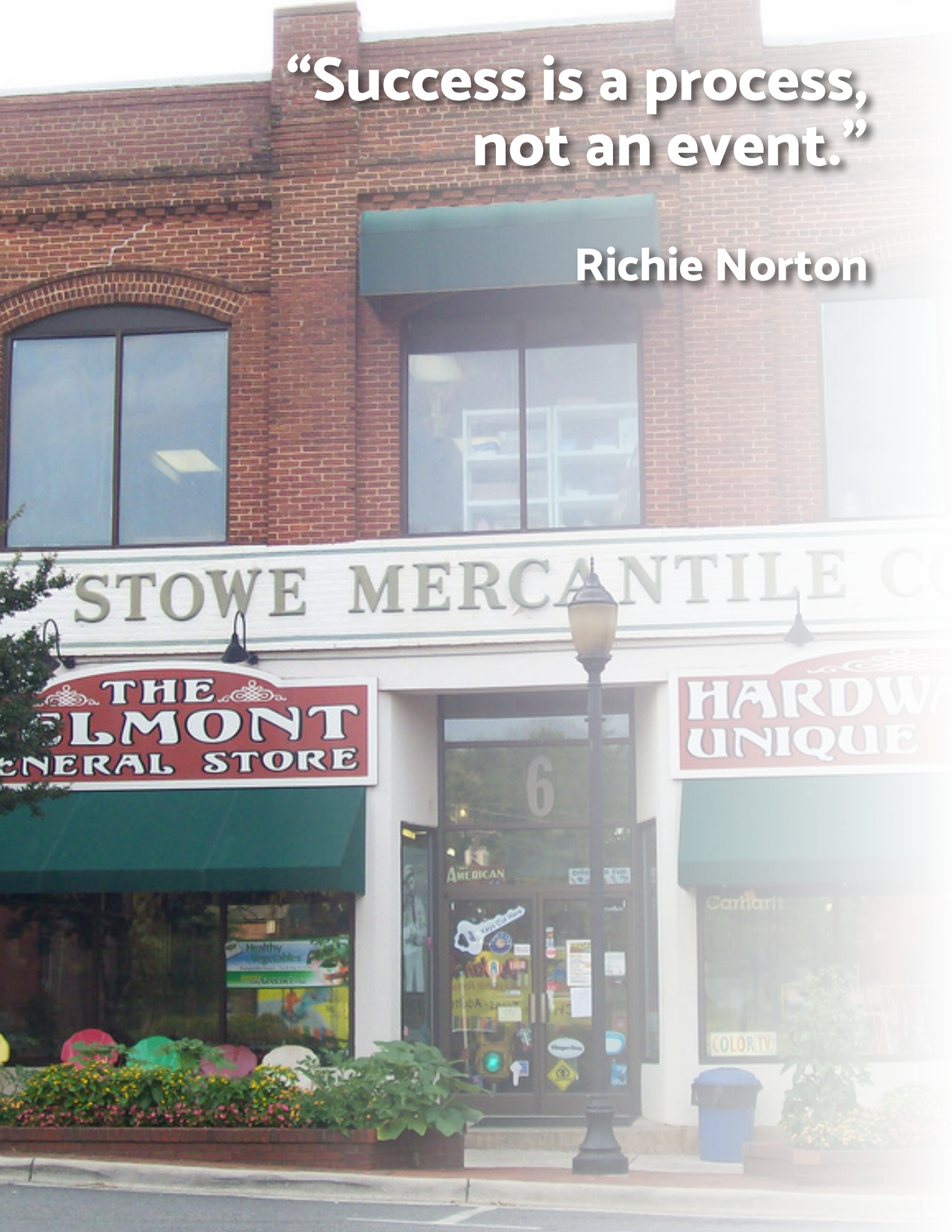


**“Success is a process,
not an event.”**

Richie Norton





II. INTRODUCTION

WHY DO WE NEED A PLAN FOR BELMONT?

Belmont, once a small thriving textile town, is today a growing city with an increasingly diverse economy. Located in the Charlotte metropolitan region within 15 minutes of Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Belmont has become a popular place to live and raise families. However, Belmont is not the only area west of Charlotte experiencing growth. Growth in Cramerton, Gastonia, and northern York County, S.C. is also impacting Belmont. Residents in these areas use roads running through Belmont to travel to work or visit the Charlotte area, and many frequent Belmont's growing list of local restaurants and shops.

Growth brings change. Belmont has chosen to continue guiding that change through the update of its Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This Plan establishes a framework for the development and use of land within the City's planning area. Comprehensive planning is a forward-thinking process that sets forth a vision for the future and goals and strategic actions that will move the community toward that vision. The Plan is based on past and current trends, community values, best practices, future projections, opportunities, obstacles, and the interests, concerns, and ideas of myriad stakeholders and citizens.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

? What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive land use plan is an aspirational policy guide for how Belmont should manage land use change over the next twenty years. It contains a vision statement, guiding principles, a future land use map, goals, action statements and a detailed implementation element that together provide a blueprint for citizens, developers, property owners, City staff, boards and the City Council.

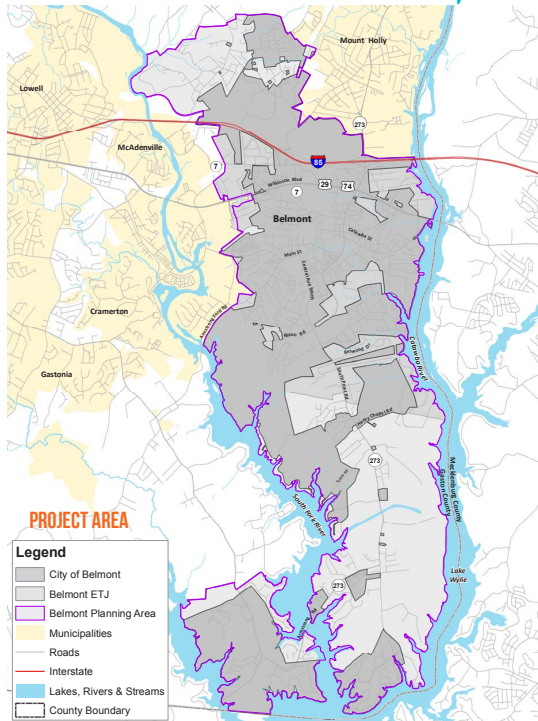
In short, a comprehensive plan answers the following questions for the City:

- ➔ WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?
- ➔ WHERE ARE WE NOW?
- ➔ WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?
- ➔ WHAT WILL WE LOOK LIKE?
- ➔ HOW DO WE GET THERE?

? Since this project is an update of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, what will the update address?

- ➔ Changes since the last plan
- ➔ New initiatives and opportunities
- ➔ New concerns
- ➔ New planning methods
- ➔ Implementation

? What areas are included in the plan?



? What are some of the key topics covered in a comprehensive plan?

HERITAGE & PRESERVATION **INDUSTRY**
 GROWTH **LAND USE** RECREATION
 FUNDING TRANSPORTATION **SCHOOLS**
 DEVELOPMENT **ECONOMICS** TOURISM
HOUSING PARKS & OPEN SPACE
 PUBLIC SERVICES **INFRASTRUCTURE**
NATURAL RESOURCES UTILITIES
 COMMUNITY IMAGE IMPLEMENTATION

? How long before the plan is complete and what phase is this?



The Comprehensive Plan respects what is unique and important about Belmont. It directs growth and change in a way that supports and, in some cases, transforms the underlying infrastructure, land use patterns, and systems needed to support that growth. It envisions a future where there is balance, harmony, and synergy among land uses. The plan provides choice in how people move around Belmont and expands recreational access for citizens. It creates a bold vision for new waterfronts and visual and physical access to the 17 miles of river and lake frontage that serve as a defining edge and vital part of Belmont.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan will guide decision making in the City of Belmont for years to come. It will serve as a reference and a tool for citizens, developers, and builders as well as staff, City Council, and Planning and Zoning Board members. Within these pages you will learn more about Belmont, what it is today, what residents and City leaders want it to become, what they want to preserve and what should change, and how this vision can become a reality.

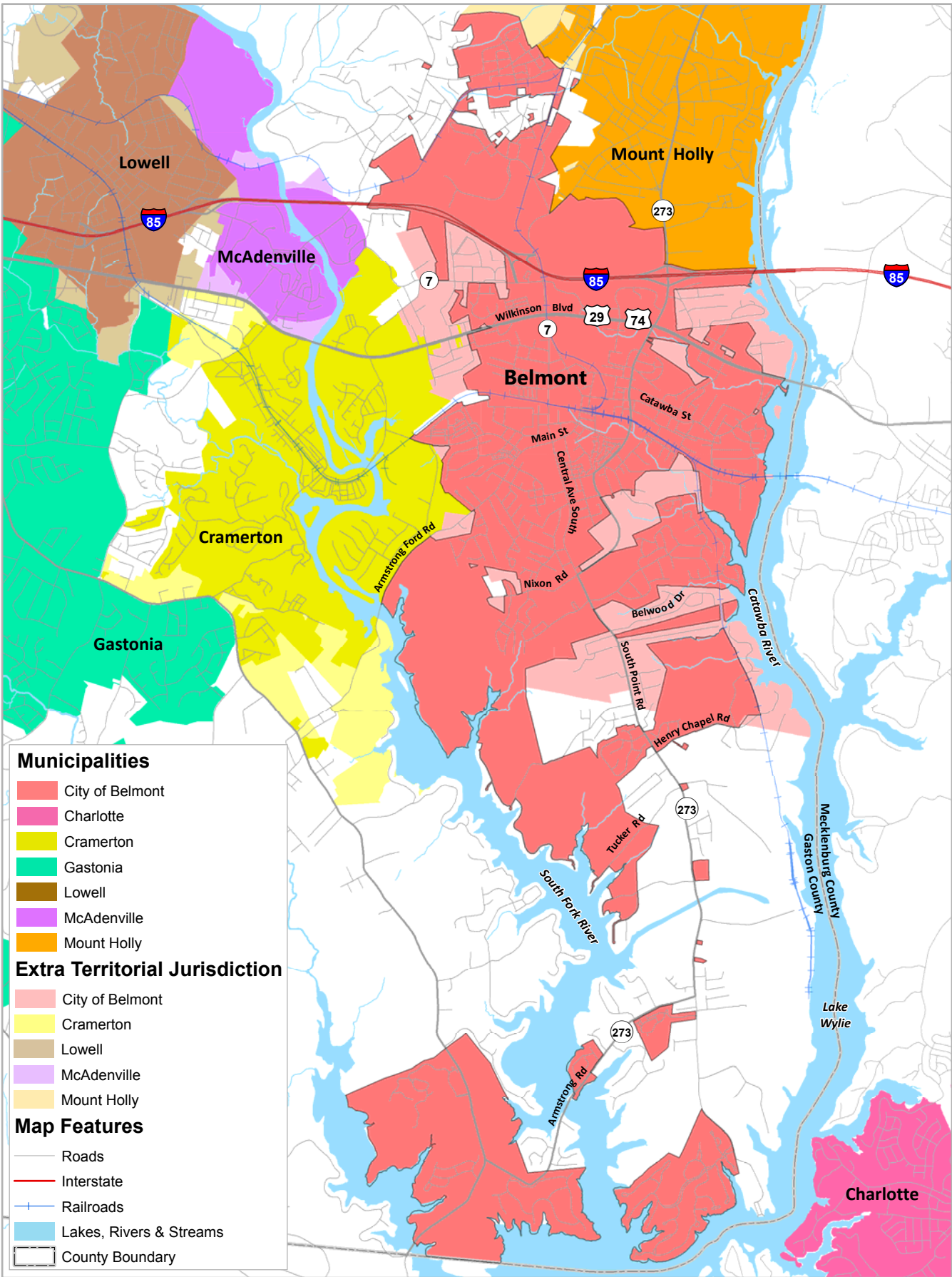


Patricia Franks talks about Belmont’s future at one of the public workshops.

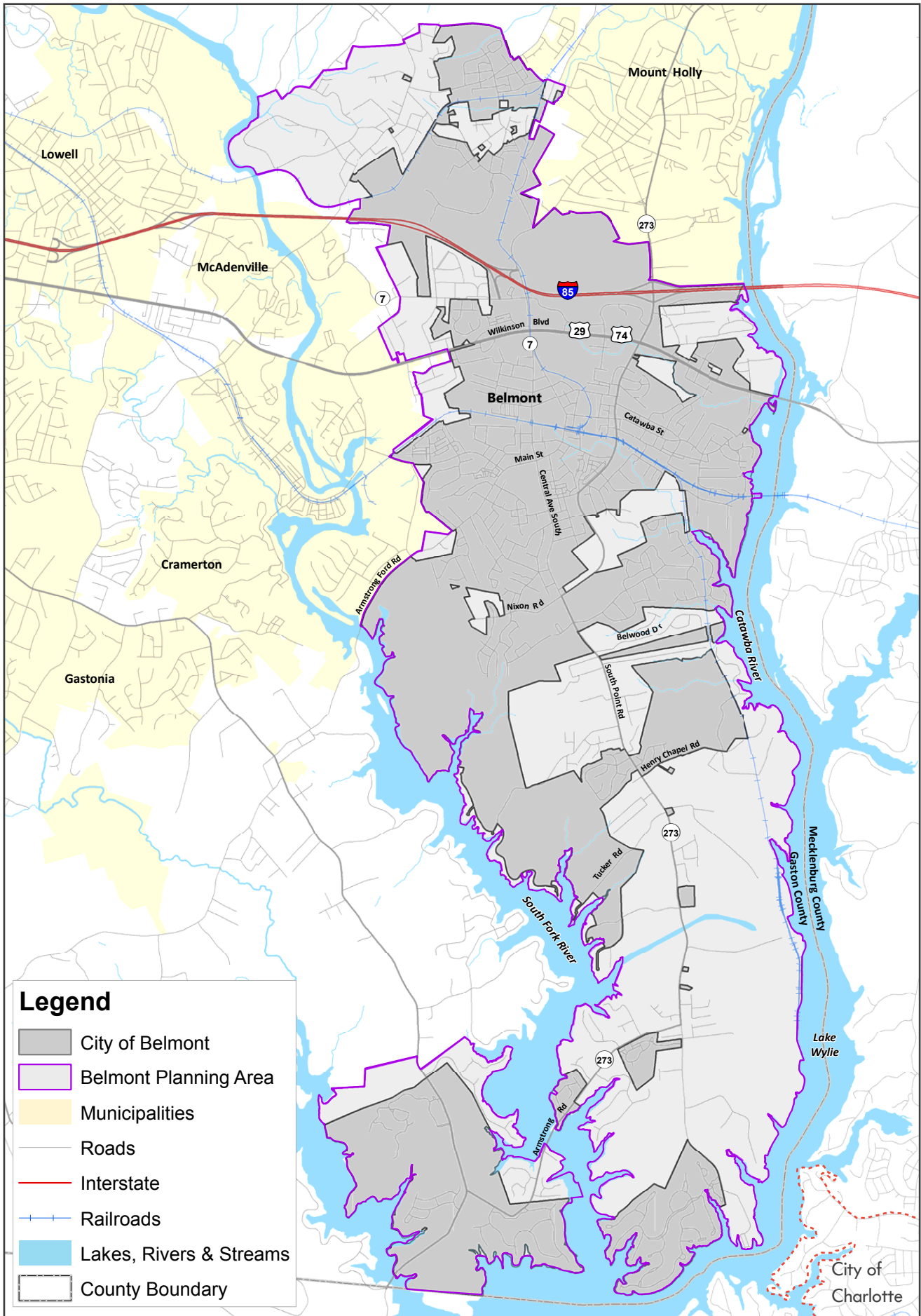
THE BELMONT PLANNING AREA

The current city limits of Belmont, areas within the City’s extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), and other key unincorporated areas were combined to create the Planning Area. The Planning Area serves as the geographic extent of all base mapping and analyses related to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). The Planning Area encompasses more than 20 square miles, or 13,072 acres (Map 2-2 on pg. 17). Of these 13,072 acres, 7,563 acres (58%) are within the current city limits of Belmont. An additional 1,704 acres are extraterritorial jurisdiction areas of the City, and as such are governed by Belmont’s development regulations.

Belmont shares corporate boundaries with the cities of Mount Holly, McAdenville, and Cramerton as shown on Map 2-1 on pg. 16. Charlotte’s city limits and the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County planning jurisdiction about the Catawba River/Lake Wylie area east of Belmont. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan takes into consideration existing land uses and proposed land uses, as well as infrastructure development and long-range infrastructure plans that may potentially impact Belmont within those jurisdictions.



MAP 2-1 BELMONT AND SURROUNDING CITIES



MAP 2-2 PLANNING AREA

OUR APPROACH

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the result of the hard work of many individuals, staff, boards, and the project Steering Committee. The Plan is an update of the original plan that was adopted in 2007. This update, while significantly different in some aspects, provides continuity with the original by bringing forward ideas and information from the 2007 version. It builds on existing concepts, adds detail and new vision where needed, and creates an entirely new implementation element to assist the City.

The project began in December 2016 when Belmont hired Orion Planning + Design (OPD) to assist the City with the update. Research and background work required for the update included a tour of the City's Planning Area; review of many existing policies, documents, and data from Belmont and surrounding jurisdictions; interviews with city stakeholders; public workshops; a workshop with students at South Point High School; and an online survey. Throughout the discovery phase of the project, the project team (city staff and OPD) learned what people love about Belmont, concerns they have about its future, and ideas they have for how the City can accommodate growth and development.

The cornerstone of the planning process was public engagement. One of the first project tasks was the creation of a Public Engagement Plan. The Plan set forth the who, what, where, when, and why of each outreach effort. Important dates, draft documents, and other information were posted to the City's website to keep the public informed. The City also used its Facebook page to distribute information including a link to the online survey.



(Above) Stakeholders listening to the consultant team explaining the planning process.

To kick off the project, the project team hosted a series of meetings in January 2017 designed to inform the public and stakeholders about the project and solicit feedback to help guide the Plan. Nearly 200 people attended the public workshop at Gaston College and provided substantial feedback, both in quantity and substance. The project team also conducted stakeholder interviews to hear the ideas and concerns of targeted groups including developers, builders, realtors, and homeowners, as well as representatives from adjacent communities, Belmont Abbey College, economic development, historic areas, downtown, merchants, and city boards. The project team also met with the Steering Committee to brief them on the events of the week and to begin the process of creating a vision statement and guiding principles.

Left: City Staff and the consultant team head out for field research.



A key element of input was centered around the questions of “What do you love about Belmont?” and “What are some areas of caution that you are concerned about or would like to see addressed?” At the core of these questions is the concept of how people feel about Belmont. The physical environment and how citizens and visitors perceive it has a profound impact on community image, property values, and economic outlook. Taken as a whole, the vision, guiding principles, goals, strategic actions, and projects outlined within this plan seek to protect and build on what people love about Belmont and to address their concerns about the present and the future.

Above and Right: A packed auditorium of community members gather around maps at a public workshop to discuss their thoughts on Belmont’s future.





Above: A workshop at South Point High School resulted in a number of great suggestions for the comprehensive plan.

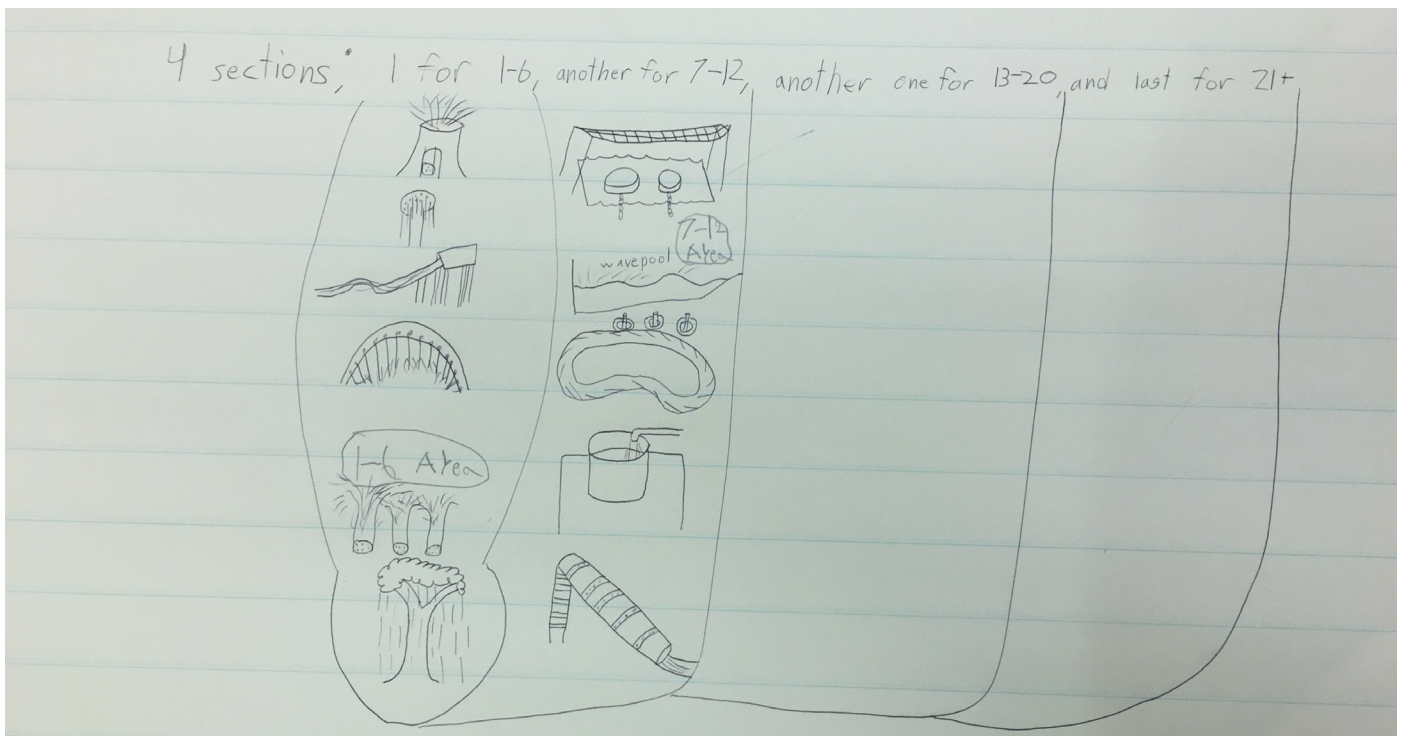
Prior to Trip 2, OPD facilitated a Steering Committee meeting to fine-tune the draft vision statement and guiding principles. OPD also created, and the City distributed, an electronic survey designed to solicit in-depth feedback on community assets and concerns. Some of the results of that survey were presented during Trip 2.

In April 2017, the project team hosted a series of drop-in public workshops, a workshop at South Point High School, and a Steering Committee meeting. Eighteen project boards were created to summarize key information and feedback, and were posted during each meeting to allow attendees to comment. A total of four drop-in workshops were held, one each in the Reid neighborhood, North Belmont, Wilkinson Boulevard, and on the peninsula. Two high school classes also completed a workshop in the school library. The students were very engaged and provided insightful feedback that is reflected in this plan. At the end of the week, the project team met with the Steering Committee to give them an overview of the feedback received.

Between April and August of 2017, OPD created the draft plan with significant input from staff and the Steering Committee. In September, the draft plan was released via the City's website and OPD returned to host public input and stakeholder meetings to receive additional comments.



Below: A child's illustration from a public workshop. Although incomplete, it does clearly show that children understand the concept of planning for everyone in the community.



USING THE PLAN

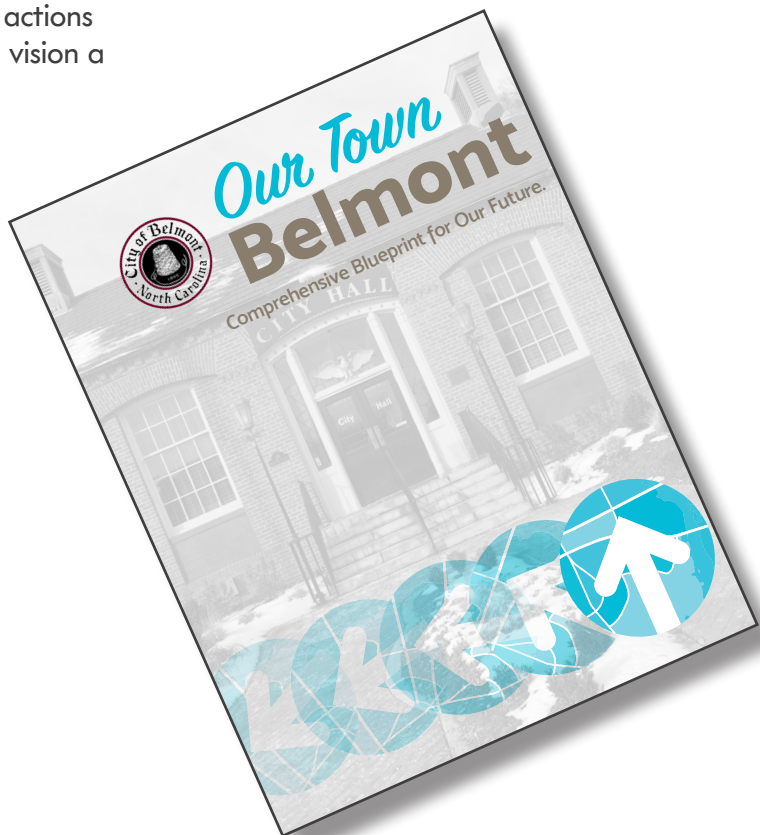
The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is divided into six main chapters. The chapters are listed with a brief description below.

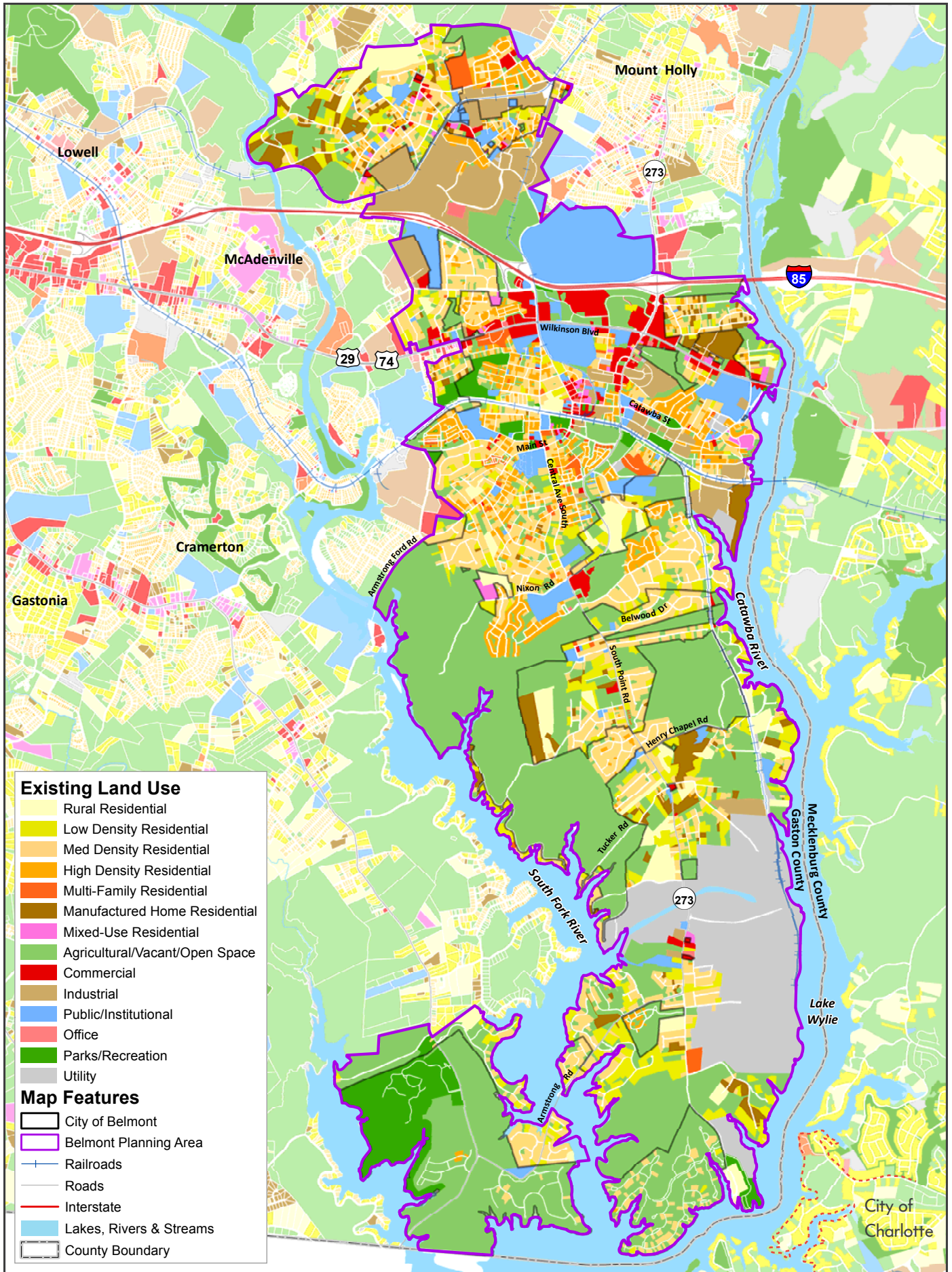
1. **Executive Summary**—a thumbnail sketch of the core elements of this plan.
2. **Introduction**—an overview of what the Plan is, what it contains, how it was created, and how to use it.
3. **Belmont's Past and Present**—a summary of demographic and economic data, the natural environment, land use patterns and regulations, and town character.
4. **Belmont's Vision and Direction**—detail about the foundation of the Plan contained within the vision statement, guiding principles, and goals.
5. **Belmont's Future**—detail about future land use, infrastructure, parks and open space for the Planning Area, planning districts, and small area plans.
6. **Getting There**—information about how the Plan will be implemented including a detailed implementation matrix for strategic actions and projects necessary to make the vision a reality.

The plan is a policy guide and is meant to be a living document requiring flexibility in its application. However, adhering to the spirit and intent, if not the detail, of the Plan will be essential to the City's ability to achieve its vision.

The future land use map included within this plan will require some interpretation as the City moves forward. Boundary lines and the location of village centers should be considered approximate, in that they may need to shift depending on the location and timing of future roads and adjacent land uses as well as the possibility of unforeseen opportunities or obstacles.

Following the implementation element titled **Getting There**, there are a series of appendices that should be consulted for content and additional direction. Among these are the "Build A Better Boulevard" plan for Wilkinson Boulevard completed in 2015 and a summary of stakeholder and citizen input.





MAP 2-3 EXISTING LAND USE PLAN