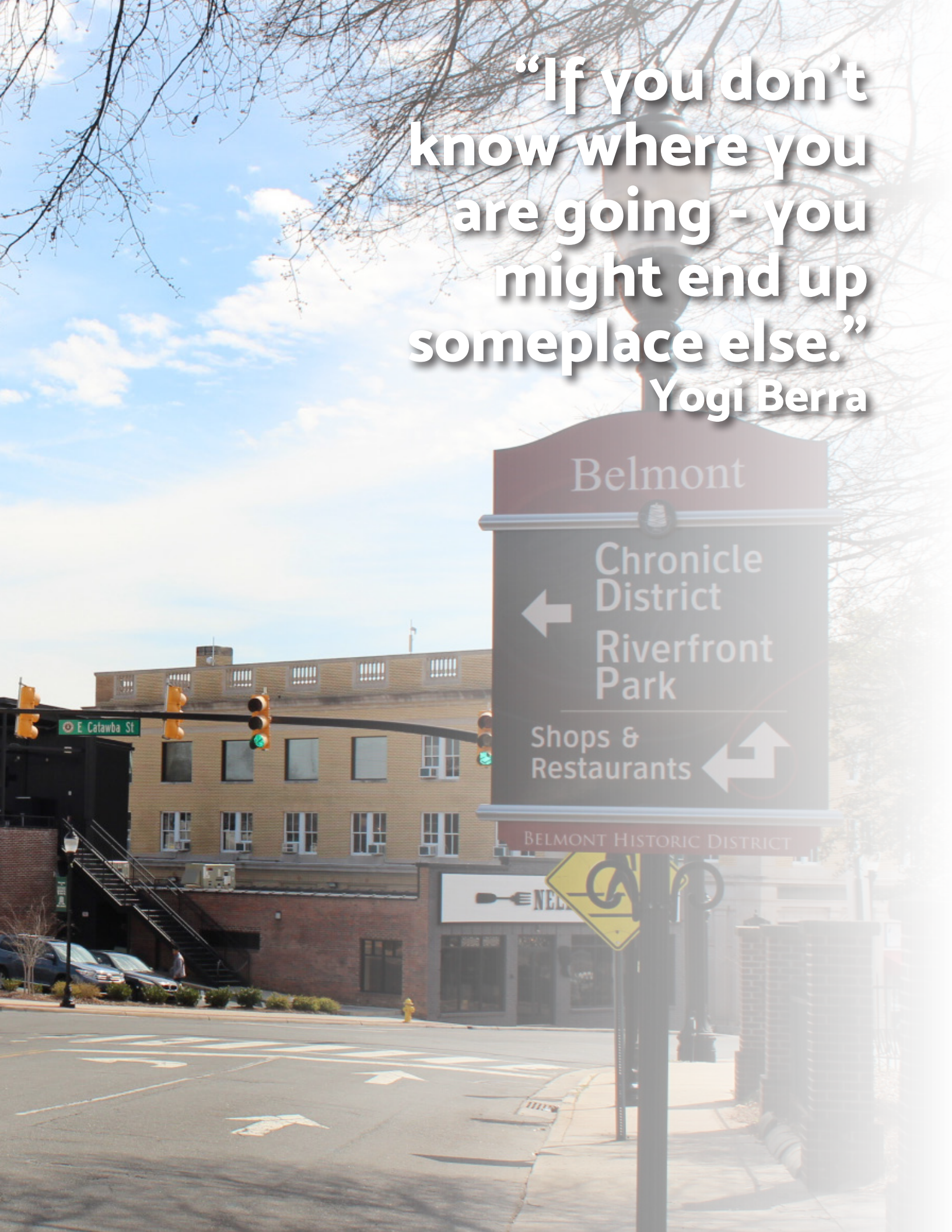


“If you don’t know where you are going - you might end up someplace else.”  
Yogi Berra





## IV. BELMONT'S VISION

### CHANGE CAN CREATE OPPORTUNITY

Whether growing or shrinking, improving or declining, cities rarely remain the same from one generation to the next. This is especially true for cities located in the Charlotte metropolitan area, one of the nation's hottest economic engines. While many citizens expressed dismay at the negative aspects of change, of which there may be many, it is impossible to stop it, and change can be managed and made to work for Belmont. With the right vision and plan and the persistent dedication it takes to make that plan a reality, Belmont can use change to create opportunity.

Change can be caused by growth, decline, or redevelopment, and change means different things to different people. To some, change means an end to familiar places, childhood memories, and community character. To others, it means progress, convenience, and new choices. How it is perceived may also vary from one neighborhood or place to another. Whatever it means to the citizens of Belmont, change is coming, and, given Belmont's location and assets, change will certainly include more growth and redevelopment. Instead of waiting to let change dictate direction, use, and character, Belmont can control conditions to make change strengthen the economic, social, and environmental fabric of the City. Belmont can ensure that growth and redevelopment are catalysts and means to a promising future.

### **Growth and Redevelopment Can Lead to Environmental Gains**

Despite the grubbing, grading, and clearing that come with development, and the increased population, vehicles, and land coverage that result, growth and redevelopment don't have to impact the environment negatively. In fact, they can be used to help preserve it.

Belmont contains rich natural resources including miles of waterfront and acres of mature tree cover. Instead of developing in ways that diminish these resources, change can help preserve them through the use of myriad flexible land planning and zoning techniques, such as density shifting permitted in cluster developments and offsite-offsets for required parks, open space, and impervious area.



## Growth and Redevelopment Can Help Create Regional Linkages

Although Belmont and its Planning Area have discrete borders and edges, the City is impacted by and has impacts on surrounding jurisdictions. Most immediately, zoning and plans for future growth in Charlotte and Gaston County will have the greatest impacts on and present the greatest opportunities for the citizens of Belmont.

A vast network of local and regional trails and bike-ways exist or are planned. Building trails and bike-ways in Belmont that connect to this system multiply recreational and mobility opportunities for Belmont citizens and add to the network that will serve the area for years to come. Growth and redevelopment can help provide the land, if not the trail itself, as part of required parks and recreation facilities for new development. Including future trail locations and bikeways in the Plan is the first step to realizing this network.

Surrounding jurisdictions have earmarked a significant amount of land for industrial, commercial, and residential growth along their border with Belmont. If planned correctly, Belmont can take advantage of nearby growth by providing shopping, dining, and employment opportunities close by. In a like manner, residents of Belmont have the opportunity to be close to job and commercial opportunities in the region. Although land use can be competitive among jurisdictions because of the taxes generated by growth, it is possible for all to be successful.

# Growth and Redevelopment Can Help Balance the Tax Base

It is tempting to say that Belmont should concentrate on future growth and redevelopment that is non-residential, particularly non-residential development that generates significant tax base. However, this strategy is flawed. First, there is not enough consumer demand or spending potential to warrant a plan that does not include residential growth as part of its future vision for the amount of vacant property available in Belmont. Second, balancing land uses throughout Belmont is our best chance to slow the rate of rising impacts caused by increased traffic. Third, although the textile industry is not coming back to Belmont, industry and jobs are still critical and must be an important part of our future. And lastly, creating quality communities means balancing land use and investing in infrastructure in ways that make people want to live, shop, work and play in Belmont.

There is no magic formula for determining an appropriate land use balance, but there are general guidelines for growth and redevelopment that can help Belmont ensure it changes in ways that maximize the potential for creating great places that add to the tax base and quality of life. These include:

- ▶ Have enough open space to encourage consistent active and passive recreation.
- ▶ Make sure infrastructure can meet demand both immediately and in the future.
- ▶ Create a community where everyone can move around the community as efficiently as possible, as independently as possible, and in as many ways as possible.
- ▶ Maximize options for housing choice and location and make sure housing is connected and, when possible, mixed with other land uses that provide services, destinations, diversity, and interest.
- ▶ Ensure that new growth remains connected to the City identity and contributes to a strong sense of place.
- ▶ Require minimum standards of design that are necessary to make sure the built form strengthens the City identity and results in buildings that will be welcome landmarks and resources for years to come.
- ▶ Seek relationships and partnerships with the private, non-profit, and public sector to create quality community elements.



# Growth and Redevelopment Can Create New Destinations

Destinations can be large or small, but whatever the size they attract people, create economic opportunities for businesses, and add diversity and interest to communities. Ideally, destinations are well connected to nearby land uses and mobility options and may include downtown shops, entertainment venues, and places to visit such as Stowe Botanical Garden, Loftin Riverfront Park, and historic sites. Perhaps of great significance to Belmont, reimagined and redeveloped waterfronts have helped cities redefine themselves and create new economic opportunity. In this way Belmont can create new destinations that help drive a healthy economy.

National and regional growth trends can and should inform how Belmont grows. National trends that

could be considered include:

- More interest in walkability
- Reducing commute times
- Demand for smaller homes and homes in mixed-use developments
- Affordable and accessible housing
- More public space
- Greater flexibility in work locations (resulting in less office demand)
- Small industry and cottage industry
- Interest in urban agriculture
- Interest in green development

Belmont has the opportunity to ensure that it is a place that not only serves the needs of today's citizens and residents but serves future citizens, businesses, and residents as well.

Rendering of a conceptual mixed-use development that could be created somewhere along Belmont's extensive waterfront.



# BELMONT'S VISION

A community vision is a consensus of what the community wants to be. It captures what citizens value most about the community and inspires all to work together, think big, and reach for a collective future. This section expresses that vision for Belmont and its Planning Area in three ways: a vision statement, guiding principles, and goal statements. These elements progress from broad aspiration to more definitive direction on what the City values and hopes to achieve in the future.

The Belmont Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a long-range guide for growth, development, and redevelopment of the City and its Planning Area through the year 2038. The Plan vision is designed to be relevant to Belmont throughout this entire planning horizon.

## Community Input

A substantial amount of community input went into the development of the vision statement and principles. In stakeholder meetings, a public workshop, steering committee meetings, a public survey, and during a workshop held for students at the high school, the vision and principles were gleaned by asking what you love about Belmont, what concerns you about Belmont's future, and what your favorite places are in Belmont. Draft statements were then posted at public drop-in sessions for further refinement.

Students at South Point High School learn about the Comprehensive Planning Process and provide valuable input for their community's future.





# Belmont's Vision for the Future

In creating Belmont's vision statement, some well-known precepts were followed:

- ▶ Vision statements should be aspirational; they should require the community to reach.
- ▶ Vision statements should be expressed as if the desired future has already been realized.
- ▶ Vision statements should be clear and concise.
- ▶ Vision statements should be inspirational.
- ▶ Vision statements should be passionate and invoke feelings.

A vision statement cannot contain everything a community might want to be or achieve, but it should reflect key elements.

## OUR 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.**

**Opposite page:** Belmont citizens discuss their visions for Belmont during a public workshop.





## BELMONT'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles provide a framework for developing the comprehensive plan that bridges the City's vision and its goals. Like the vision statement, Belmont's guiding principles were gleaned from many hours of public and stakeholder input and finalized in draft form by the project Steering Committee. They express what is important in protecting, preserving, nurturing, creating, and doing in Belmont as related to this comprehensive plan. They are also at their core a series of statements about what the City believes and how it will act on these beliefs.

### Economic vitality

Belmont has an opportunity to be the region's most desirable city for entrepreneurs, small industry, technology-based business, and the arts community. We will promote and foster a vibrant economy and a healthy tax base to strengthen our facilities and services necessary to ensure the City prospers.

### Balanced growth

The City will work to balance growth that supports economic vitality, preserves community character, and responsibly considers the natural environment.

### Community character

Small town charm, historic and environmental integrity, a family-friendly environment, and safe, stable, attractive neighborhoods are essential elements of Belmont's character that need to be preserved as the City grows and changes.

### Heritage

We believe that historic properties are an important community asset that should be preserved through adaptive reuse and preservation techniques when feasible.

### Access and connectivity

One of the City's great assets is its access to the region and its proximity to Charlotte, the airport, and surrounding communities and industries. We will strive to provide mobility options and ensure local and regional connectivity among residences, businesses, natural areas, schools, parks, and other community assets, which are essential to sustaining a vibrant, active, and appealing town.



## **Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination**

We will partner with other jurisdictions and service providers to establish effective working relationships and work with them toward our future successes.

## **Outdoor recreation**

With more than 17 miles of river frontage and many parks, trails, blueways and natural areas, 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 miles of river frontage and abundant natural resources is valued and essential to the City's quality of life and character.

## **Revitalization, redevelopment, and repurposing**

Revitalizing threatened neighborhoods, redevelopment of aesthetically and economically challenged areas of commerce, requiring architectural compatibility for new development, and repurposing infrastructure, buildings, and land uses for more viable and needed uses will make Belmont stronger, more competitive, and attractive.

## **Schools**

Belmont's high-quality schools and colleges are a critical component of our strong community and a healthy economy.

# **BELMONT'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS**

The following goals flow from and relate to the vision statement and guiding principles. They help to refine the City's priorities and direct its actions.

## **Goal #1 Land Use:**

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

Land use imbalances can lead to economic fragility and a threatened tax base. Land use is also a critical component of our character and is a determinant of how healthy and vibrant Belmont is as a city.

## **Goal #2 Economy:**

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

Belmont has an opportunity to be the region's most desirable city for entrepreneurs, small industry, technology-based businesses and the arts community. Interstate 85 and Wilkinson Boulevard provide space for commercial growth, and the City has successfully created a vibrant downtown environment. The quality of life in Belmont, with reasonable housing prices, growing recreational resources, and a destination downtown, makes it a desirable place for both commercial and new residential development.

## **Goal #3 Mobility:**

**To provide choice in how citizens and visitors move around Belmont.**

Mobility options are needed to ensure that all citizens, whether young or old, fully functional or impaired, rich or poor, have the ability to transport themselves to critical services, food outlets, employment, institutions, and places of recreation. Multi-modal communities also encourage healthy activity, create more interesting places, and better support densities needed for vibrant communities.

## **Goal #4 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.**

Belmont isn't just an address. It's a place with a strong sense of character, and our character is what sets us apart in the region. It is possible to embrace many different types of neighborhoods, housing types, commercial choices, industry, institutions, and services while maintaining and deepening those elements of our character that make us special. We can enhance our character by identifying, building on, and using our assets.

## **Goal #5 Parks and Recreation:**

**To ensure a range of park and recreational opportunities for all citizens.**

Quality parks and recreational opportunities are not optional if Belmont wants to maintain and grow its reputation as a livable city. They are essential elements of a healthy, vibrant community and connect our citizens to each other and the City in ways few other types of land uses can.

## **Goal #6 Infrastructure:**

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

Without reliable infrastructure Belmont cannot sustain itself or grow in ways that support our economy, our character, or our environment. Aligning growth and land uses with infrastructure maintenance and expansion plans will help ensure Belmont's continued appeal as a place to live and grow a business.

## **Goal #7 Environment:**

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

A high-quality natural environment is essential to Belmont's character and livability. Whether the issue is water quality, tree canopy, habitat, or healthy air, Belmont's citizens and the future of our city depend on our success at protecting our natural resources.

## **Goal #8 Intergovernmental Relations:**

**To partner with surrounding jurisdictions, state agencies, utilities and other non-local 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.**

Belmont does not exist in isolation. The City impacts and is impacted by the jurisdictions that intersect it, surround it, and lie within the greater Charlotte metropolitan area. Belmont residents depend on access to jobs, retail, entertainment, and services available within the region. The health and success of our city depend on a healthy, successful region. We must work with other jurisdictions to ensure a bright future.

These goals are broad, general expressions of Belmont's aspirations toward which planned effort is directed, and serve as ends rather than means. In this plan the goals flow directly from the vision statement, and respect and reflect the guiding principles. They are not directly measurable but are further refined through the future land use and development plans located in Chapter V and a series of action statements detailed in the implementation matrix in Chapter VI. This matrix includes measures for each action and much more detail about how Belmont will make this plan a reality.