Town of Acton
Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720
Telephone (978) 264-9636
Fax (978) 264-9630
outreach@acton-ma.gov
www.ActonOutreach.com

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Acton
Today. Tomorrow. Together.

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Acton

Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Appendix

Introduction

Acton
Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Appendices: Acton Voices...

The following appendices are documentation of the participation of Acton residents in the visioning process. Over a period of six months, Acton residents were asked through various methods and outlets to voice their opinions about the town and its future goals.

A series of small meetings were held for targeted interest groups and larger set of public visioning sessions were held at the Parker Damon Building. ~~Over two hundred~~ people attended the first Visioning Session alone. Comment boards were posted at Town Hall and the Library for additional feedback.

All town residents and business owners were mailed a survey and asked to respond via the hardcopy survey or online. A random sampling of residents was additionally contacted to participate in a phone survey.

Children in all levels of the school system were engaged. Expressions came in the form of surveys, drawings, movies, posters, a mural, and even the creation of a town song.

Town government, boards, commissions, and the outreach steering committee all met and discussed the challenges and opportunities for Acton's future.

By asking important questions about what is commonly believed, desired and valued by its residents, the Acton ~~C~~ommunity can find consensus and a shared vision of its future. The numbers of responses were useful in terms of their relative value, i.e., if many more people said they thought "x" was a priority than "y," it was a way to identify points of consensus. The following appendices contain many of the thoughts and opinions expressed throughout the process.

ACTON Goals/Core Values Prioritization[1]

Participants were asked to "vote" on the following core values as identified during the first round of visioning. The following represents voting at six different meetings:

- Town-wide visioning, May 31 (Visioning II)
- Boards, Committees & Commissions (3 separate meetings)
- June 16 public meeting
- Steering Committee visioning (June 11)

Core Value/Goal	Number of votes
Preserve rural and historic characteristics (incl acquiring open space)	66
Plan and educate for sustainability	65
Address lack of walking/biking facilities	52
Enhance village centers	43
Address growth management & site and design review issues	41
Address traffic issues	37
Improve Senior center of build new Community/Senior Center	30
Address high cost of living	21
Enhance neighborhoods	8
OTHER[2]	
Address public transportation	8
Promote economic development (controlled)	8
Preserve Acton's culture	8
Transform Kelley's corner to village center	8
Support diversity, socio-economic and cultural	7
Upgrade aging schools	5
Provide activities for teens, including movie theater	2

[1] Participants were asked to add goals/values if they wished and then to vote on these. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item.

[2] Each group was asked to add actions for consideration; votes for those actions in the "other" category were only voted on by one group at a time, that is the count represents the number of individuals in one group who voted on the goal.

SPECIFIC VOTES[3]

The following are compiled from a number of different meetings. The participants at these meetings are by definition a self-select group in that they chose to attend one of the meetings, The numbers are useful only in terms of providing a relative sense of the community's values, that is, in helping to identify where the majority opinion lies.

RURAL AND HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

Do you think the town should acquire more open space?

Yes - 269

No - 89

No Opinion – 61

Additionally 82.7% of those responding to the mail survey said they wanted more open space (including trails, meadows, woods, recreation areas).

The next highest percentage of what people said they wanted more of was "historic homes protected and preserved" (74%).

SUSTAINABILITY

How many of you agree that planning for sustainability is an important concern for the town's future?

Yes – 316
No – 51
No Opinion - 57

Should the Town take actions to reduce greenhouse gases?

Yes – 324
No – 51
No Opinion - 29

Additionally, 1035 respondents to the survey felt that Acton should take actions (171 said no and 186 had no opinion).

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[3] These questions were "voted on" by asking participants to raise their hand at the Visioning II (May 31), Steering Committee Visioning and June 16th public meeting. A random sample of residents were also asked these questions in a phone survey

SENIOR CENTER

Do you think the senior center should be expanded?
Yes – 136
No – 33
No Opinion - 246

If the Town builds a new larger building to hold a senior center, should portions of that building be available for other community needs or should the building be dedicated solely to the use of Acton seniors?

Community + Seniors = 252
Senior only - 47

Additionally, 38.2% of the respondents felt that the needs of "active and older seniors' are unmet.

Variety in Activities and Opportunities to Socialize.

In previous participation venues, many residents expressed what they see as a need for more variety in places to go; they specifically listed wanting more opportunities for gathering and more cultural activities in Acton. What kinds of activities would you be interested in the Town developing and/or supporting?

Community Center	*Restaurants (what kind?)*	*Cultural activities (what kind?)*	*Movie theater*
20 if it includes senior center (2) include a movie theater include a pool - can we use the senior center on weekends?	17 indoor/outdoor homemade food café, soup/salad a gathering place ethnic: Vietnamese mid-level: Not Your Average Joe's mid-low level: Paneras fine dining, sit down casual, but not pizza pub-like, wine bar neighborhood-based Chinese, Middle Eastern, Brazilian Outdoor seating; Porches Small bistro type, ethnic foods W.Acton would be perfect if it had sewers More atmosphere	8 - festivals - like W.Newton cinema - only if self-funded - music - theater (drama), concerts, dance - more classical music opportunities	20 - independent, art films - walk to outdoor café & nighttime gathering places - community theater with film capability - most important - the movie theater in Maynard suits us fine - via tax break

Train Station Improvements

Do you use the train station? Yes __17__ No__15__ (one "no, but planning to use next month" one "no, but my wife does")

Residents have suggested a number of improvements to the station. What do you feel would be the most important improvement to make?

More parking	*Provide train station building*	*More overhang on canopy (to protect from rain an snow)*	*Shuttle bus to and from station*
13 multi-story yes, but where?	6	16	24

Taxes[4]

Which of the following would you be willing to increase taxes to pay for:

New senior/ community center	*Acquiring open space*	*Green-house gas reduction*	*Shuttle bus*	*Cultural Activities*	*Walking facilities*[5]	*Biking facilities*[6]	*OTHER*
115	*155*	*169*	*174* *- only from train station*	*85*	*324*	*187*	*Train station* *Cultural center* *Upgrade aging schools* *Improved town center*

[4] Includes input from the participants at the Visioning Session on May 31 and those in a random sample called in a phone survey.

[5] Sidewalks, trails

[6] bike paths, bike racks

LIST OF IMPORTANT CHALLENGES AS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

High cost of living
Lack of walking/biking facilities
Traffic
Need for growth management & site & design control

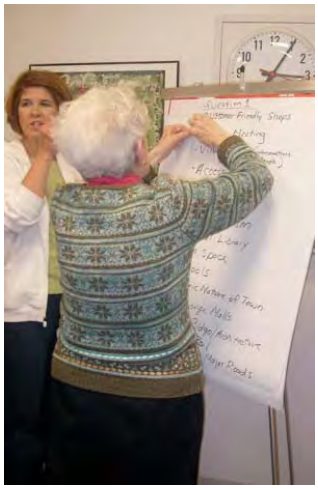
Maintain Acton's culture
Address Climate change
Recruit more volunteers
Attract more businesses to town
Increase school involvement

Appendix

Town-wide Visioning Workshops

VISIONING WORKSHOP

Parker Damon Building
Saturday, March 29, 2008
1:30 – 4:30 pm.



A town-wide visioning was held at the Parker Damon Building on Saturday, March 29th, 2008 from 1:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon. Approximately one-hundred and seventy-five (175) residents participated. The workshop began with a presentation from the Consultants followed by facilitated small group discussions. Each of the ten groups were comprised of approximately ten to twelve participants and all of the groups answered the same six questions.

The purpose of the workshop was to invite the Acton community to come together and generate ideas that will create a shared vision for Acton's future. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.

Participants were asked the following questions:

- *"What are your favorite things about Acton (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)"?*
- *"What are your least favorite things about Acton (that you feel are important to change in the future)?"*
  "What words and/or images would you use to describe Acton's character?"
- *What makes Acton unique?*
- *What do you see as challenges and/or potential obstacles to positive change facing Acton now or in the future?*
- *"If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be?"*

The following is a summary of these discussions.

DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION OF ACTON'S FUTURE

Crafting a vision statement is a way of understanding and describing the desired future as envisioned by a group of people. The input of those who participated in this visioning workshop will be combined with the input of residents gathered in other meetings and solicited through other means including a town-wide survey to craft a vision statement and goals for the future of Acton. The following represent the key elements to include in the vision statement as identified by the participants of the workshop. An action plan will be developed at a later part in the process; it will be based on this vision. The plan will outline steps necessary to reach the shared vision.

The following represents a compilation of ideas suggested by the participants who attended the visioning workshop who contributed the elements of a desired future for the town. The elements included represent those around which relative consensus was reached and/or seemed consistent with other thoughts as outlined by the workshop participants.

Two of the youngest participants waiting their turn to present their input regarding what they would like to include in the vision of Acton's future.

KEY ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN A VISION & GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

- Preserve and protect rural character
  - Natural features, open lands, ponds, natural habitat
  - Conservation lands
  - Tree-lined roads
  - Farms

- Preserve sense of community
  - Small town feel, family-friendly
  - Casual social interaction, run into people you know on the street
  - Friendly, helpful, welcoming, town spirit

- Improve experience for walkers and bikers
  - Safety, pleasant
  - Connections, system of sidewalk, paths, trails
  - Provides alternative mode of transport

- Continue to provide excellent education
  - Community commitment to education, translate to facilities
  - Community education and use of schools after hours
  - Relationship to local businesses and town

- Protect and enhance distinct village centers
  - Make more walkable
  - Provide more activities
  - Improve Kelley's Corner

- Create a town center
  - Need for town center identity
  - Place to gather, walk, socialize

- Improve functioning and aesthetics of commercial areas
  - Great Road – safety, visual appeal, pedestrian experience

- Manage and control development
  - Enforce existing zoning and design review
  - More proactive planning of development
  - Protect open spaces

- Protect and enhance historic buildings/sense of history
  - Historic preservation of buildings (e.g. Exchange Hall)
  - Historic celebrations, (e.g. Crown Resistance Day, Patriots Day) -- "presence of the past"

- Plan for Sustainable Development
  - Renewable energy sources in public buildings
  - Recycling

- Protect and enhance retail mix
  - Support local businesses
  - Attract more family restaurants
  - Enjoy lack of malls and big box
  - Increase commercial tax base

- People, Diversity
  - Support variety in population – age, economic, ethnic, religious
  - Support tolerance
- Train
  - Some improvements, esp. to parking
  - Consider commuter rail shuttle

- Recreational opportunities for youth and adults
  - Outdoor and indoor (e.g. x-country skiing, Nara Park, tennis courts, ice skating)

- Arts and culture
  - Community Theater
  - Create more opportunities

- Neighborhoods
  - Walkable to services
  - Safe
  - Moderate density; Green space

- Importance of community gathering
  - Libraries
  - Senior Center
  - Community center?
  - Teen center?
  - Movie theater and family restaurants

- Provide range in housing types
  - Affordable to empty nesters, workforce and young families
  - Need for accessible units
  - Ensure that all design be compatible with community character

- Traffic and Circulation
  - Reduce congestion, increase safety at intersections, traffic calming
  - Provide public transportation option & bike and pedestrian lanes
  - Improve parking
- Town Governance
  - Improve communication
  - Creative solutions
  - Culture of volunteerism (build on, attract more)
  - Strike balance between affordable taxes & provision of town services

What makes Acton unique? How would you describe Acton's character?

- Trees and open land
- Excellent schools, community commitment to education
- Sense of community, small town feeling, run into people you know
- "Seasonal changes, stone walls, foliage, picturesque, old barns"
- Historic, New England architecture
- "Not Your Average Wonderbread Town"
- "semi-rural/town and country, suburb"
- villages provide focal points
- no town center
- "peaceful, quiet, family-oriented, friendly, safe, socially aware, livable"
- "rural meets suburban conflicts"
- "good value – schools & town economically efficient"
- culturally diverse, accepting, welcoming
- high achieving, driven, ambitious
- threatened, at a turning point
- high degree of civic involvement
- small town close to Boston – good mix
- good balance between nature and development
- strong dog culture

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES OF INTEREST

The following strategies were suggested by participants to address protecting what they liked and/or improving aspects that they felt could be better. They are recorded here so as to be reviewed a later stage in the master planning process.

- Develop a youth master plan
- Develop a non-profit semi-government organization to revitalize town centers
- Start a "Transition Town Project" toward self sufficiency and energy autonomy
- Create a Town Committee charged with protecting the environment and implementing practices to reduce greenhouse gases in public buildings, businesses and homes
- Turn the dump and/or Grace site into a renewable energy power plant (also use yard waste)
- Develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan for commuters (including rail schedules/parking), cars, bikes, pedestrians (sidewalk planning & implementation) and shuttle service
- Reduce the amount of land required to keep horses and other animals in order to protect rural character.

DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF GROUP RESPONSES

1. *"What are your favorite things about Acton (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)"?*

Response	***Comments***	***# of groups***	***# of dots***[1]
Rural character, natural features, conservation lands	-Farmland, Arboretum, conservation land, open land, ponds -Woods and trees; hiking trails -Tree-lined roads, water resources -Fresh air, lack of pollutants, peaceful -Natural habitat, deer -Meet co-environmentalists/social consciousness, environmental aware	10	65
Schools	- Commitment to education - Community education - Also good relations b/w schools and local businesses and town - Appreciate value of education	10	55
Village centers	West Acton center walkability Variety of areas with distinct character WAV, SAV, Acton Center – vestige of past, "diamonds in the rough, not from scratch" village sense	8	25
Sense of community,	- Small town feel, Feeling of connection, social contacts on the street; "town spirit" - Laid back, not formal, welcoming - Helpful, friendly - Neighbors, hospitality	9	21
People, Diversity	Diverse conomic, ethnic, age, housing type Eclectic array of people Middle-class, not snobby, accepting	7	13
Variety & Convenience of retail and services	Good retail balance opportunities available to shop locally historic and contemporary not a lot of chain stores; no malls	8	11
Train	Commute to city	5	9
Culture of volunteerism	Caring community	5	8

[1] All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item. *Two of the ten groups did not vote on their responses, however their comments are recorded.*

	Lead to better run schools & better run local government Civic minded town		
Recreation	Outdoor opportunities, e.g. x-country skiing, Nara Park Tennis courts	4	7
Location	Accessibility to Rt.2, Rt. 95, Rt. 495, Commuter train Small town w/proximity to Boston	5	7
The arts and culture	Community Theater	3	7
Neighborhoods	Layout of subdivisions create neighborhoods; moderate density Walkable services	4	6
Good balance b/w development & nature/land preservation	Green space in developed areas Combination b/w nature and shopping	3	4
Libraries		5	3
Family-friendly	Committed & involved citizens and parents; resources such as Discovery Museum, Acton Family Network	4	3
Biking access	Sidewalks to ride bikes on Streets bikable	3	3
Slow permitting process		1	-
"Can do" attitude	"if we believe in something, we can do it"	1	2
History and historical architecture preservation	AHS and Acton's past	6	2
Bowladrome		1	1
Idylwilde Farm		2	1
Businesses	Limits thereto	1	-
Safe	Relatively minor problems	2	-
Community services	e.g. Police Dept.; domestic violence unit	1	-
Affordable, attractive housing		1	-
Accessibility/responsiveness of town government	Competent High quality town staff Town Meeting	3	1
Old McCarthy School bldg.	Visually prominent but empty	1	-

Individuals in at least half of the groups (five or more) mentioned the following as favorite features:

*Rural character, natural features**
*Schools**
Village centers
Sense of community
People, diversity
Variety & convenience of retail
Train
Culture of volunteerism
Location
Libraries
History/historic preservation

**Individuals in all ten groups referred to these features*

2. ***"What are your least favorite things about Acton (that you feel are important to change in the future)?"***

Response	***Comments***	***# of groups***	***# of dots*** [2]
Traffic	- Congestion, speed; 2A too narrow - Need bike & pedestrian lanes - Unsafe intersections - Lack of transportation planning - Potholes, Signalization improvements needed, impossible to cross roads - Cross through traffic - Need for traffic calming - Rt. 2/Piper Road intersection - Difficult to get around town & in & out of shops; Roche Bros. esp. difficult	10	37
Lack of walkability	- Lack of sidewalks - Need sidewalks to connect centers -Need sidewalks to/ around Town Hall - Too dangerous to cross Rt. 2A on foot - Not enough areas for "passive walking" & shopping & hanging out - Sidewalk construction too slow - Sidewalks too close to road	8	29
No real town center	- No town center identity - Lack of restaurants, theaters, social centers; no place for adults to gather - Doesn't encourage hang out, enjoyment	7	24
Affordability	- Town staff cannot afford to live in town - Elderly forced to leave; too expensive - Mansionization – not affordable & affects neighborhood character	5	22
Lack of adequate site review, subdivision design & design review	- Laws regarding bldgs not flexible enough regs for configuring bldgs. - Current lot size & zoning don't prevent crowding – new houses showing up behind /front in odd ways	7	21

[2] All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item. *Two of the ten groups did not vote on their responses, however their comments are recorded.*

	- More planning needed for development - Eroding aesthetics, too much tenement style housing being built on main roads - Eyesores, e.g. Meinike building, new condos opposite JHS - 40B development control - Need for more stringent tree-cutting rules - Cluster dev. detracts from individual appeal		
Kelley's Corner	A wasted opportunity Ugly & hard to navigate; odd set of businesses	6	15
Biking and walking not safe	Hard to commute on Rt. 2A Lack of bike lock locations around retail areas; lack of trails No crosswalks, hostile environment	5	15
Lack of growth management	- Development of open space - Town is more reactive than proactive - Need to follow town rules - Houses being cramped into open spaces - Too easy for developers to get approval	5	15
Poorly designed commercial areas	Strip malls, parking in front, no downtown feel, no village feel Too many signs Great Road: how it feels, looks, traffic, no sidewalks/crosswalks	6	15
Improvements needed at train station	- No parking at commuter rail - Also no train station building - Need for commuter rail shuttle - Commuter rail not convenient for weekend & evening activities in Boston - No nice place to spend time nearby - Lack of privacy	6	13
Divisions b/w competing interests	b/w schools & municipal government too much emphasis on schools/kids adversarial town politics	3	12
Taxes are too high	Concern @ future property taxes relative to other Boston-area towns Suboptimal delivery of services	5	12
Schools	Overcrowded conditions Too much focus on school sports Schools need to be more inclusive to support diverse/SPED population, class size issues; Over-programmed kids Lack of neighborhood schools Full-day K is only available for 1/3 of those entering (3 votes)	3	11
Lack of variety in activities/ places to go	Lack of restaurants Not enough for families No place for adults to gather	5	10

	Lack of multi-age community center Need better senior center Lack of movie theater No place for teens to have fun Need healthy food choices near schools		
Lack of public transportation	Lack of intra-town public transportation Reliance on cars	7	8
Lack of planning for sustainable development	Lack of renewable energy especially in public buildings; need better recycling Investigate use of windmills Implement power alternatives Overuse of chemicals on lawns Environmental concerns, e.g. W.R. Grace, toxic waste site	6	7
Lack of preparation for pandemic illness		1	6
Exchange Hall	Ugly; has lost original splendor Appearance & safety	2	5
Town Hall communication	Not candid; hidden agendas	1	5
Commute (Acton to Maynard)	"is a nightmare. We used to have these towns connected by rail. Railroad rights of way should be reserved for public transportation, light rail in the future, not recreation Leominster commuter rail line seems slower than others Distance from city	3	3
Library	Children's area not the best atmosphere	1	3
Road side obstacles	Affect vehicles & bikes; trees, boulders, stone walls, utility poles need to be moved back from road	1	3
Water quality	Discoloration of AWD water	1	2
Lack of community communication	No radio; poorly read local paper	1	2
Lack of diversity	Ethnic and income	2	-
Issues of government Lack of planning	- Nagog Pond goes too cheaply to Concord -"Acton rate" delivery charges are higher to Acton than Littleton from -- - Concord even though Acton closer – - Town is run by "squeaky wheels" – - - Reactive process of government - Town relies too heavily on volunteers - Visioning process too long	4	1
Lack of parking	Esp. West Acton	1	1
Good intentions in town planning not working out	e.g. Rt. 2A	1	1
Bedroom community	No time to do things in town	1	-
High turn over of residents		1	-
Need for more accessible apt	For people with disabilities	1	-

No local arts association		1	-
Above ground electrical/phone/cable wires	Ugly	1	-
Dogs in cemeteries	Lack of animal law enforcement	1	-

Individuals in at least half of the groups (five or more) mentioned the following as least favorite features:

*Traffic**
Lack of walkability
No real town center
Affordability
Lack of adequate site review/design review
Kelley's Corner
Biking & walking not safe
Lack of growth management
Improvements needed at train station
Poorly designed commercial areas
Taxes are too high
Lack of variety in activities/places to go
Lack of public transportation
Lack of planning for sustainable development

**Individuals in all ten groups referred to this feature*

Additionally:

- *The category of comments counted under "no real town center" (twenty-four votes in seven groups) are related and have some overlap with those in "lack of variety in activities and places to go" (ten votes in four groups).*

- *The category of comments counted under "lack of walkability" (twenty-nine votes in eight groups) are very closely related to those in "biking and walking is not safe" (fifteen votes in five groups).*

3. ***"What words and/or images would you use to describe Acton's character?"*** [3]

Qualities of Place

Trees and open land
- Great open spaces
- Arboretum
- Conservation land
- Environmental awareness

Good schools
- Open enrollment – each has its own personality

Seasonal changes, stone walls, foliage, scenery, "steepled" churches, postcard picture, old barns, picturesque
Lots of big houses
Historic, Classic New England
- Exchange Hall, Town Hall

Visually attractive, e.g. Arboretum
It's next to Concord
Disjointed, no town center
Not overly commercial
Traffic congestion
Mix of housing & green space

Sense of Place

Beautiful
Neighborliness, friendly
Semi-rural/town and country
Bedroom community, commuter town
"Not your average Wonder bread town"
Suburb of Boston and Cambridge
Spread out
Villages
Quiet, peaceful, sleepy
Family-oriented, family-friendly, kid-friendly
liveable, enjoyable
Convenient
Socially aware
Safe community
Nourishing and supportive community
The presence of the past
Rural –meets – suburban conflicts
Efficient town government
More proactive than other towns
Volunteer-oriented
Solid corps of volunteers; limited participation of others; "shrinking population" for volunteering; community participation/activism
Good value – schools and town economically efficient

People

Lack of diversity culturally and economically and racially
Upwardly mobile, middle-class/eco diversity
Culturally diverse
Middle upper class
Sense of community, supportive people
Outreach, i.e. libraries deliver books if needed
Competitive in everything: education, sports, leisure Driven, ambitious
- High achieving
- Academic and athletic competitiveness
- Girls soccer champs

Educated
Self-aware
Stress
Education as a shared value

At a tipping point - development

- On the edge of being a disaster
- Congested
- Overextended
- Financially unplanned – taxes not prudently allocated
- Sustainability in question if current growth rate leads to 35,000 with current services & infrastructure -- Threatened
- Adhoc planning and development
- Infrastructure doesn't support connectivity
- Strip mall

[3] Only 9 out of the 10 groups contributed input to this question.

- *What words or images describe what <u>used to be Acton</u>'s character (and you would like to bring back)*

Less populated
Farmland, "the sticks"
Used to be more rural

- *What words or images <u>do NOT describe Acton's</u> character (could exist & you wish it didn't)?*

ACTON IS NOT/DOES NOT HAVE:
overcrowded
urban
Snobby, passive
Commercialized
Walkable/bikeable (except West Acton)
nightlife
affordable for new families
mobility to Boston

4. What makes Acton unique?

Village nature of various parts of town
Mix of residential and village centers
North Acton, West Acton, South Acton, Center
Walkability of West Acton
Schools
- School choice/open enrollment
- School innovations
- Parent involvement in the schools , sports & recreational programs
- Innovative management of schools keeps pupil cost low for quality
- Very heavily school-aged population [the advent of MCAS has reduced the diversity of the elementary schools]
- priority on education
- school system as sole draw
- best schools for cost of living
- people attracted to teaching positions
- excellent schools that produce excellent students
- School choice leads to community cohesiveness

Commitment to children; Danny's Place
Open Spaces and Recreational Facilities
- Farms; Idylewilde Farms
- Arboretum
- Conservation lands
- Commitment to preserving open space
- High regard for open space
- Nara Park
- Accessibility

Historic --Architecture
- Historic celebrations (e.g. crown resistance day, patriots day, etc.)
- Awareness of local history
- Deep history, Isaac Davis

Settle differences with civility
Lack of town center
Limited (controlled) development
High quality town staff
Majority of town on septic system

W. Acton Citizens' Library
Community Supper
Household Goods Recycling Ministry
Interesting light industries
Town dump/Transfer Station
Train
Recreational opportunities such as ice rinks

Rich set of activities for adults and children
NARA, library, indoor sports, theater/music)
Variety & convenience of services
- Unique retail options, e.g. Hopscotch, Idywilde
- Range of theater group options
- Acton Jazz Café

Conveniently located
- Close to high-tech employment
- Access to both the country (conservation land) and the city (commuters)
- Good access to transportation (commuter rail)

Volunteerism in town, school and sports activities; people are strongly civic-minded
Community involvement and access to variety of cultural activities
Cooperation among residents
Community events such as Oktoberfest

Diversity of population (for a suburb)
large Indian & Chinese population
Multiple faith opportunities
Chinese Language School
Diverse income levels
Educated/progressive
High tech professionals
Not an elitist community
Warmth

Suburban area - open spaces, balanced land uses
Benefits of "snob" town without the sense of barriers or entitlement
Good value
Relatively affordable compared to surrounding towns with good schools
Good results despite lower costs
Good corporate citizens; Generosity of local businesses
Transitional community – in between suburban and rural community
Cleaner, not polluted
"strong dog culture"
Good mix – small town and close to Boston
Don't have or want big box retail – can drive elsewhere for it
Different from other towns in the area
Balance – nature/development

5. *What do you see as challenges and/or potential obstacles to positive change facing Acton now or in the future?*

Response	***Comments***	***# of groups***
Limit to ability to limit growth & development	Landowners have development rights Multiple owners, lack of coordination of development, e.g. Kelley's Corner Limited power of town to change course Lack of public control over dev; zoning Population Way to guide new development w/compliance to state laws; 40B Business growth could jeopardize existing businesses Regional development pressures - high cost of land discourages conservation land purchases; encourages large expensive homes	10
Money/budget	Economic downturn; recession; lack of capital Prioritizing budget needs State shortfalls & uncertainty How to do good things w/o raising taxes Funding education via property taxes	9
Achieving consensus difficult	On priorities On positive change Vision may die if not championed to completion Divisiveness School/municipal turf & budget wars Conflicts b/w newcomers & old-timers Changing demographics, ethnicity	5
Taxes	Striking balance b/w affordable taxes & town services Including structure of taxes Reliance on property tax rather than progressive income tax	4
Approach of town government	Lack of strategic problem solving; Need creative solutions Backroom politics – should be more transparency Ability to implement plans, e.g. Kelly's corner plan; redesign/redeployment of space; attitude that residents cannot change looks or goals of space Lack of communication – lack of trust/quality of info	4
Volunteerism	Town committees meet only at night - Limits involvement Need to pro-actively recruit new volunteers Fewer volunteers - Due to economic pressure Due to older households leaving	3
Lack of walkability in many parts of town	Physical layout limitations Makes making centers more difficult Too many cars compete with bikers & walkers	3
Limited public transportation	Access to commuter rail, more parking or shuttle bus; reliance on car	3

Aversion to bringing new businesses into town to reduce residential tax burden	No big box stores such as Walmart or Home Depot "acceptable"	3
Provide entry level homes within town character	Maintain historic character in new development	2
Dependence on oil	Need to find & implement alternatives Expense of gas in a car-oriented town	2
Traffic	Transportation needs improvement Traffic Management	2
Infrastructure	Roads, sewers	2
Schools	SPED not responsive to pupils with special needs Classroom size an issue	2
Lack of civic involvement	Need new leaders Apathy	2
Attitudes	Inertia, consumerism, Short term view/tunnel vision Lack of learning from other town's experiences	2
People who are here only for schools	Leave when children finish with schools Not committed to community	1
Stagnation	Certain things are stagnant & will not change because its the way its always been	1
Lack of past open space commitment	Lack of purchase in the past Risk of development of private wooded space	1
Reputation as an affluent town		1
NIMBY		1
Structure of town government	- Inefficient management structure; paradigm shift needed' new ideas, open meeting laws are challenged - Need staff to implement Community Plan & be held accountable	1
Jurisdiction issues	e/g/ Rt. 2 is controlled by Mass Highway	1
Limited control over outside influences	Rt.2, taxes, gas costs	1
Lack of public/private partnership	Should share costs for facilities such as playing fields	1
Lack of local jobs		1

Individuals in at least half of the groups (five or more) mentioned the following as potential challenges or obstacles to making improvements:

*Limit to ability to limit growth & development**
Money/budget
Achieving consensus is difficult

**Individuals in all ten groups referred to this obstacle/challenge*

6. *"If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be?"*

Response	***Comments***	***# of groups***	***# of dots***[4]
Pedestrian-orientation Bike friendly	More promenades Complete the bike access network Sidewalks; "build sidewalks everywhere"	6	38
Create centers for congregating,	- Develop non-profit semi-gov. organizations to revitalize town centers - More walking distance independent restaurants/pubs - Sidewalks, bike access, public transport - Look for land to create public space, esp. near water bodies - Create intergenerational community center	5	27
Sustainable Development	- Start a "Transition Town Project" toward self sufficiency, energy autonomy - Be on the leading edge of green, environmentally positive practices – energy, chemicals, blds etc. - Create town committee charged with protecting environment & implementing practices to reduce greenhouse gases in public bldgs, businesses and homes - Educate youth in practical ways on how environment impacts their lives - Turn the dump and/or Grace site into a renewable energy power plant to make cheap energy. Also use yard waste - Develop sustainable design standards – turn Acton into a "green town" - Incorporate ideas such as plastic bag ban at grocery stores, energy efficient street & field lighting) - More access to natural gas pipelines - Encourage/systematize recycling	8	25
Expand the commercial tax	Attract new businesses that fit within the	5	20

[4] All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item. *Two of the ten groups did not vote on their responses, however their comments are recorded.*

base	rational plan to offset residential tax burden Attract low impact businesses Make decisions that reduce taxes Revise tax system for equity		
Traffic improvements	- Re-work key intersections - Traffic calming to reduce impacts of thru traffic; review traffic patterns; develop comprehensive transportation plan - Develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan for commuters (rail schedules/parking) cars, bikes, pedestrians (sidewalk planning & implementation) & shuttle services.	3	19
Control development	- Stop development of open space -Confine development to redevelopment - Moratorium on new projects until - Comprehensive Plan is complete	4	16
Support for open space	- Reduce the amount of land required to keep horses & other animals - Identify & acquire land abutting conservation areas	2	15
Public transportation	Intra-town transportation Community shuttle	5	12
Improve town government	Improve Town Meeting, e.g. change to representative; Limit # of items/times for discussion;Make more efficient/new paradigm	1	9
Need to be friendlier to local businesses		1	8
Design Review of new housing	Define the character of unique areas Be mindful @ type of growth in each area	2	8
More family restaurants	Also micro-brewery , pub	1	8
Financial planning		1	7
Create balance b/w seniors & school age families		2	6
Improve Kelley's Corner	Blow up Meineke Muffler Visual and traffic improvements needed Create a village center	3	6
Develop a youth master plan		1	5
Forge consensus on future	Plan	1	3
Improve train station	Need more creative ways to solve parking & traffic problems	1	3
Blow up Concord Rotary		1	2
Market Acton	As tourist destination; more relevant/visible	1	2
Create a town center		1	2
More state aid		1	2
Sewers		1	1
Affordable housing	To promote diversity	1	1
Increase participation	Don't complain: Act!	1	-
Hire a Social Worker		1	-

Individuals in at least half of the groups (five or more) mentioned the following being the one improvement they would make to Acton (if they had to choose one):

Pedestrian-orientation/bike friendly
Create centers for gathering
Sustainable development planning
Expand the commercial tax base
Provide public transportation

Also:

- *The issue of providing public transportation is also brought up under the need for making traffic improvements*

- *The comments counted under the need to create centers for congregating (twenty-seven votes in five groups) is also related to the comment that there is a need for more family restaurants (eight votes in one group).*

Town-wide Visioning Session: Kids Visioning

Several high school teens led visioning sessions with younger children in a room down the hall from where their parents were envisioning the town's future. This is some of what they came up with:

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE FOR ACTON IN THE FUTURE

Fat cats (mangoes)
Aquarium
Coldstone Creamery
More playgrounds
More bike paths
More swimming areas
Candy store
Lollipop forests
More flags (old-style colonies' flags)
Kids-only swimming area
More sports fields
More historical STUFF
Movie theatre – Chunky's

LEAST FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT ACTON

Far drive to hospital
Lack of sidewalks
Trees being cut down

CAPTIONS TO KIDS DRAWINGS

Kids Only
Big town pool that only Acton people or their guests can to to
I think there should be more flowers in Acton and more colorful buildings
I wish there were more candy stores (Charlotte, 6 ¾ years old)
I wish there were more playgrounds (Bronwyn, 6 ½ years old)
West Acton Center should be more friendly toward pedestrians and shoppers. The sidewalks should be much wider with benches, trash cans, etc. There should also be more parking available.

I wish Acton had more bookstores because I love reading books.
I think there should be more barrels for cigarettes so that they won't be all over the street.
I wish there as more wildlife in Acton (Liam, 8 years old)
I wish lollipops grew out of the ground.

VISIONING WORKSHOP

Parker Damon Building
Saturday, May 31, 2008
1:30 – 4:30 pm.

A town-wide visioning was held at the Parker Damon Building on Saturday, March 31th, 2008 from 1:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon. Approximately eighty (80) residents (including children of the participants) attended. The workshop began with a presentation from the Consultants. Two members of the high school Student Council also presented a summary of a survey they conducted of their peers. This was followed by facilitated small group discussions. Each of the five groups were comprised of approximately twelve participants and all of the groups answered the same questions. There were many displays of information and exhibits of previous input into issues related to the comprehensive planning process, including an impressive array of exhibits of work completed by each of the Acton public schools.

The purpose of the workshop was to invite the Acton community to come together and listen to a preliminary report back, a summary of input received to date, and to begin to identify key elements of a shared vision, goals and the priorities within that vision. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.

Participants were asked the questions regarding the following topics:

Preserving "Rural Character"
Open Space preservation
Enhancing neighborhoods
Enhancing village centers
Addressing Acton's challenges
Planning for Sustainability
Expanding the Senior Center/Creating a Community Center
Prioritizing Resources

The following is a summary of these discussions.

DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION OF ACTON'S FUTURE

Crafting a vision statement is a way of understanding and describing the desired future as envisioned by a group of people. The input of those who participated in this visioning workshop will be combined with the input of residents gathered in other meetings and solicited through other means including a town-wide survey to craft a vision statement and goals for the future of Acton. The following represent the key elements to include in the vision statement as identified by the participants of the workshop. An action plan will be developed at a later part in the process; it will be based on this vision. The plan will outline steps necessary to reach the shared vision.

The following represents a compilation of ideas suggested by the participants who attended the visioning workshop who contributed the elements of a desired future for the town. The elements included represent those around which relative consensus was reached and/or seemed consistent with other thoughts as outlined by the workshop participants.

Reporting group priorities

SUMMARY OF MAJORITY RESPONSE (OR WHAT MOST PEOPLE SAID)

PRESERVING AND ENHANCING ACTON'S ASSETS

Open Space

A large majority of participants were in favor of the town acquiring more open space.

Other means of preserving open space were also supported; these included:

- Zoning,
- Deed restrictions,
- Public education
- Use of Community Preservation Act funding
- Limiting development
- Providing tax incentives

Rural Character

Participants suggested ways of preserving rural character including through:

- Zoning
- active support of agriculture
- meandering sidewalks
- promoting natural environments
- preserving and promoting green space along roads
- in front of buildings
- protecting and promoting community gardens, stone walls, trees and country fairs,

Neighborhoods

Participants defined the characteristics of a good neighborhood and included such features as:

- Sidewalks
- Many ways of communicating and interacting among neighbors both casually and formally
- Addressing traffic issues
- Providing more activities such as playground, neighborhood swimming pool, coffeeshop, library, places to walk to

Village Centers

Participants defined the characteristics of an ideal village center:

- Activities including parks, outdoor areas to congregate, grocery store. Family restaurant, benches, variety of businesses, parking in back of buildings, places to go at night
- Walkability
- Events
- Character – "quaint, but not cute," each village with its own distinct character
- Strategies – ease traffic, plant flowers and trees, use zoning, move towards mixed use

ADDRESSING ACTON'S CHALLENGES

Participants offered suggestions regarding how to address the following challenges as addressed in the previous visioning session and the town-wide survey:

- High Cost of Living
- Lack of Walkable Facilities
- Traffic
- Need for growth management and site and design control

Participants also added the following challenges:

- Maintain Acton's culture
- Biking
- Address Climate Change
- Recruit more volunteers
- Attract more businesses to town
- Increase school involvement

Planning for Sustainability

The large majority of participants agreed that planning for sustainability is an important concern for the town's future. A large majority of participants also agreed that the Town should take actions to reduce greenhouse gases. Participants prioritized the kinds of actions they felt the Town should take. The top priority actions were:

- More walking/biking facilities
- Provide incentives for homes and businesses to become more energy efficient
- Provide public transportation
- Increase recycling
- Building and retrofitting energy efficient public buildings

Senior Center/Community Center

A large majority of the workshop's participants felt the senior center should be expanded and a significant majority felt that the larger center should have a portion dedicated to use by the community at large.

PRIORITIZING USE OF RESOURCES

Participants identified the following priority goals:

- Planning for sustainability
- Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities
- Enhancing village centers
- Preserving rural character
- Addressing traffic issues
- Addressing growth management and site and design review issues

DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF GROUP RESPONSES

PRESERVIING AND ENHANCING ACTON'S ASSETS

1. Preserving "Rural Character"

The number one feature that residents agree should be preserved is what they described as Acton's rural character, natural features, and conservation lands. An important element that residents felt contributed to this sense of rural character was the town's open space. About 13% of Acton's 20 square miles are protected open land (compared to, for example, Boxboro's 25%).

1.1. Do you think the town should acquire more open space?

Yes 39 No 5 No Opinion 3

1.2. What other means could be used to preserve open land?

- Zoning
  - purchasing conservation easements instead of land
  - Zoning – protect trees as well as land
  - Link density and town centers to green space
  - Open space vs. development – variety of ways to protect – zoning is one way.
  - "Set asides"

- Define Open Space Requirements
  - Require playgrounds for kids in developments as part of approval process
  - Cluster (PCRC's) – encourage
- Convert open municipal property to protected conservation status
- Deed Restrictions – conservation
  - Individual landowners protect via deed restrictions
- Education
  - Educate homeowners about land use
  - School Programs
  - Promote National Wildlife programs
  - Bio-diversity education
  - Make residents more aware of open space
  - When open space becomes available, do a better job of selling preserving it to the public – remember Robbins Mill Pond – need to understand cost/benefit ratio

- Use Community Preservation Act
  - CPA funds to buy/protect open space
  - Prioritize protecting lots that could be developed (Percable) – maximize use of C.P.A. funds for this.

- Limit development
  - Less single family houses. Encourage business and employees to settle here. Open space is both public and private
  - Stop single family development to reduce pressure on open space AND to reduce pressure on schools.
  - Limits on building permits (time limits to this)
  - Decrease population density

- Tax incentives
  - Reduce taxes on open land so incentive is not for development
  - Tax square feet of lawns
  - Tax incentives to donate land
  - Restructure taxes
  - Tax incentives for farmers

- Preserve waterways
- Don't know a lot about ways to save open space.
- Sometimes families need to cash out – how to balance that against protecting open space.
- Open space is a spectrum, includes transport corridors, business use, rec use, and more.

1.3. What else should the town do to preserve its "rural character"?

- Zoning laws
  - laws regarding signage (no neon signs)
  - Reinstate PUDs
  - More adherence to existing zoning bylaws; fewer variances issued
  - Address snob zoning

- Support agriculture
  - Farmer's markets
  - CSAs
  - Create Agriculture Commissions
  - Establish "right to farm"
  - Preserve old farms
  - Community farming

- Sidewalks
  - as means to preserve character – meandering
  - Do not widen roads for driving (but add sidewalks)

- Promote natural environments
  - Inter-municipal cooperation to preserve wildlife corridors
  - No plan for preserving space even though parcels are prioritized – no concept beyond visual – biodiversity, wildlife corridors
  - Promote natural environments on private land
  - Don't turn everything into lawns
  - Encourage tree growth – street tree program and planting of "native plants"

- Ways to maintain rural character without open space – building placement, parking lot landscaping
    - Green spaces along roads
    - Better building codes – remember Meineke
    - Prevent clear-cutting – preserve wooded areas
    - Take great care – design review, no mcmansions
    - Increase set back—more greenery, planting by the roadside
    - More green/less visibility of blacktop
    - Improve 40B developments
        - Targeted and cooperative 40B development more centralized so it's not spread out over town
        - 40B – curb it
        - Work with state on affordable housing legislation to eliminate unforeseeable consequences

- Problem with lack of large open parcels – QRCC
- Common deed restriction by seller of property limiting what is developed
- Target parcels town wants restricted and develop plan to acquire said parcels
- Better planning when existing property is replaced (ie. after a fire, etc)
- Create county fairs
- Promote community gardens
- Preserve and promote physical presence : trees (not dumpsters), stone walls, streetscapes, old trees

Small group discussion

2. Enhancing Neighborhoods

Many of the survey respondents and participants in the previous visioning session mentioned the sense of community, neighborhood feeling and the village centers as being important features that make Acton unique and that residents wish to preserve. An interesting comment on Acton's neighborhoods is that well over half of the survey respondents (61%) reported that they know three of their neighbors "very well" or "well." Let's think about works about Acton's neighborhoods and what could be better.

Define the elements or characteristics of an ideal neighborhood. (e.g. What does it look like? What is in the neighborhood?, What can you walk to?, Is there such a neighborhood in Acton?, What do you want to make sure to preserve in Acton neighborhoods?, What would it take to make your neighborhood more desirable?)

- Sidewalks
  - More sidewalks.
  - Meandering sidewalks are good.
  - Sidewalks away from street.
  - Weston has small sidewalks that can wiggle around trees
  - Pedestrian access, more sidewalks to encourage people to be out and about
  - Enhance accessibility within communities
  - Footpaths/bikepaths

- Communication/Interaction
  - everyone getting to know each other well…better communication in neighborhoods
  - Acton Day NARA—break up into neighborhood units
  - Block parties
  - Neighborhood newsletter
  - Make renters feel more included
  - Gathering place – functions and meetings
  - Close streets for block parties
  - Neighborhood email lists
    - (e.g. Indian Village)
    - Email lists a la Beth Petr – link to Beth's list on Town website
  - Neighborhood book group and other activities
  - Promote neighborhood gathering (town promotion)
  - Bring generations together
  - South Acton community organization – hears there is one but can't find it
  - Acton Neighborhood Network enforced communication
  - Neighborhood organizations
  - Mutual aid/assistance blog
  - Neighborhoods have different characters due to demographics – kids and older kids and no kids, etc. – empower neighborhoods to decide what works for them
  - EAV, SAV, WAV, NAV, Center and many subdivisions with own complexion – define areas
  - Neighborhood pools competition, etc.
  - Subdivision wet sites for facilitating communication
  - Point people in each area/neighborhood

  - Walking groups in neighborhoods
  - "Neighborhood networks"
  - "School bus society"
  - Establish community projects and activities

- Addressing Traffic
  - Less traffic
  - Speed bumps to slow traffic – like Windsor Ave.
  - Safety for children, speed bumps, sidewalks, other ways to quiet traffic
  - Safe roads
  - Non-through streets and dead ends
  - "no residential cut-through" signs
  - Promote driver courtesy
  - Encourage school bus use

- Activities
  - Have places to walk to
  - Common land – forever wild
  - Neighborhood swimming pool
  - playground
  - Nearby walkable coffee shop for small gatherings
  - Coffee shop in library
- Aesthetics
  - Reduce traffic signage clutter
  - Parking BEHIND stores – stores lining streets – like West Concord.
  - Interesting open space with new structures like bridges and sculpture. Concord as good example.

- More diversity in people – skin colors and languages and cultures.
- More affordable.
- Good neighborhood examples: Windsor Ave. and Gates School (i.e. local geographically defined school, not one based on politics or philosophy)

Small group discussion

3. Enhancing Village Centers

In all participation venues residents expressed a high degree of appreciation for the town's village centers. However, there were also significant numbers of people calling for improvements to the existing centers and/or for additional centers.

Let's think about the ideal village center. (What does it look like? (can use examples from other places to describe or give description of physical features), What does it include? (what kind of uses, what kind of retail, does it include housing), How can existing village centers be enhanced? Should any new village centers be created?

- Activities
  - Theater. Constellation of shopping.
  - Kiosk, grass.
  - Parking in back.
  - Artists lofts.
  - Shop for basics. Bakery. Affordable shopping. 2nd hand clothing. West Concord as a model.
  - Family restaurant. Examples: Ichabods, Not Your Average Joe, etc.
  - Place where people can gather
  - Benches
  - Reasons such as shops/services to go there—run into people
  - A commons/green space
  - Focal point-variety of uses-commercial/gathering places, restaurants
  - Parking
  - Outdoor seating
  - Train Stop
  - Variety of businesses
  - Small restaurant/pub – outdoor cafes
  - Grocery store
  - Hardware store
  - Library
  - Places open at night
  - Groton – green space, room for gathering mixed-age group
  - South Acton Village – Exchange Hall
  - Parks to define village center (open spaces)
  - Open space with gazebo, surrounded by businesses
  - Amenities around train station
  - Outdoor areas where people can congregate, e.g. park, sidewalks where there's something to be there for
  - Parking in village areas – well landscaped, not visible

- Walkability
  - Fewer cars.
  - Walkable bikeable.
  - benches

- Events
  - Parades.

- Character
  - Should have personality.
  - "Quaint, but not cute"
  - [side bar, contributed to by many:] Acton's culture and character: not snobby. well-run town. Egalitarian. Intelligent. Volunteerism. Proactive. value community. less entitlement than in within-128 towns. schools reflect [all of] this. healthier environment for kids. Example: coming together for Danny's place. C.A.F.Y.
  - No commuter traffic
  - West Acton Village
  - West Concord
  - Concord Center – ideal center
  - Architectural homogeneity in village centers
  - Acton's villages are 5 very different places – nothing to build around to make them village-y
  - West Concord around train station –nothing in S. Acton
- Strategies
  - Replace Kelly's corner – could be ideal town center. (2)
  - Plan to acquire property around train station
  - Carefully crafted zoning
  - Village centers versus sewer systems – Title 5 constraints on creating town center
  - More parking (e.g. S. Acton)
  - Move village centers (e.g. N. Acton)
  - Ease traffic (e.g. S. Acton)
  - Plant flowers and trees
  - Small park with benches, bike racks & outdoor lighting with W. Acton
  - Move towards mixed use with higher/increased floor-area ratios
  - Create store parking behind the buildings (out of sight)

Small group discussion

ADDRESSING ACTON'S CHALLENGES

4. Important Challenges

*Looking at both the survey and the previous visioning session, residents identified what they considered to be Acton's most important challenges. These included the following. (*Keeping in mind that we are trying to identify those challenges that will be most important or significant to the town's future, is there anything else that you would add to this list? ,Do you have any ideas regarding how to address any of these challenges?)

CHALLENGE	*WAYS OF ADDRESSING*
High cost of living	• Education – Energy Efficiency • Town-based energy – Energy Cooperative • Retain middle age and elderly population • Affordable housing (not necessarily 40B) • Taxes – Efficiency (fiscal responsibility) • Encourage volunteerism • Green Energy. Wind Turbines + Municipal Electric Company. Denser, more affordable housing. Preserve open space. Town and School sharing resources with each other; people, software, services. • Broader tax base. Localized commercial development • Encourage more business development • Surtax for families with school-age kids (not favorably regarded by others) • User fees for school • Limit size of homes • Decrease tax rate based on longevity of residency • Certain age – 65+ - cap on taxes until property changes hands • Due to nature and income level in town • Commuting alternatives • Bring business into town • Telecommute – high speed internet • Recycle existing housing for affordable to meet 40B requirements (deed restriction) • Build and manage movie theatre using high school kids as labor, as an educational opportunity • Federal state, other grant funds – town grant writer • Diversity in planning for commericial areas to include entertainment – more and smaller stores in shopping areas such as Brookside, instead of large stores • Split tax rate business/residence • Shift school costs • Adopt pay for services (e.g. trash) • Increase business tax rate
Lack of walking facilities (sidewalks, trails)	• Commercially contract sidewalk development • Increase Town Meeting participation • Walking paths/trails vs. sidewalks • Investigate alternate surfaces/designs • Link sidewalk planning to Town Centers

	• Bike trails – bike racks • Start sidewalks in Town Centers and train access • Comprehensive sidewalk plan • Finish bike trail • Sidewalks to preserve green • Inducement for landowners to allow sidewalks deeper onto property • Continue sidewalk committee • Grants for sidewalks and bike trails • Link bike and sidewalk networks – all part of non-motorized transportation • Integrated plan and dual use • Different contexts/uses – safety & transport vs recreation • Bike trail/walkway – connectivity, not in isolation • Pedestrian connectivity for town as comprehensive part of master plan • Walking for recreation vs walking to get somewhere • Upgrade & maintain existing infrastructure • Network (connect) existing trails & paths, incl. easements to connect same • Build path parallel to train tracks
Traffic	• Central place for carpooling • Town website/phone for carpooling • Shuttle – ActonExpress (train/school) • Discourage students driving to H.S. • Limit or charge more for parking • Provide late bus • More bike trails • More food stores in villages • Design to coexist with bikes and pedestrians. Bus system, esp. at commuter hours to trains. Bike locker use. Encourage train use. • Public transportation; encourage double track on commuter rail • Town Shuttle • Dedicated corridor-electrified system (Freeman and Assabet) rails with trails • Speed bumps in the center • Shuttle bus from train • Public transportation – long term plan – rights of way should be bought • More bike racks to encourage use • Keep traffic flowing along main roads – especially Main St. – don't allow stopping to let people from side roads in or across • Get cars off the road • Bypass town center • Increase motor vehicle excise tax to discourage cars • User fee for driving in center • Encourage other towns to develop transportation

	options • Decrease our population • Increase alternative roads
Need for growth management and site and design control	• Zoning control • Restrict type of development • Encourage design review. Commercial strip management (2A). Implement East Acton Village Plan. Cluster uses. • Upgrade zoning, increase lot sizes (may be self correcting) • Cluster housing with smaller houses • Building codes – more restrictive • Too easy to get a project built in this town – should be design review for all projects not a single home • Incorporate all other issues discussed in review • No more 40B • Revise 40B (look at Wayland for example of managing 40B • Mixed use zoning (cluster housing, Davis Rd. example)
OTHER	
Maintain Culture	• Awareness and celebration of what we have
Biking	
Address Climate Change	• Complete street light program • Town to investigate individual electric power • Town should encourage individuals to adapt new conservation awareness program • Town committee to centralize effort to be proactive to see what Acton can do to look into creating Acton Municipal Light Dept.
Recruit more volunteers	
Attract more businesses to town	
Increase school involvement	

5. Planning for Sustainability[1]

A significant number of people responding to the mail survey and participating in the visioning session indicated the lack of planning for sustainable development was a significant concern for them. Sustainable development is taking care to use resources in such a way so as to ensure that future generations can continue to meet their needs.

5.1. How many of you agree that planning for sustainable development is an important concern for the town's future ? 39

How many disagree? 7
(should not be focus, don't nickel and dime, cost/benefit analysis needed)

5.2. A large number of respondents to the survey supported the idea that the Town should take actions to reduce greenhouse gases.

How many of you agree that the Town should take such actions? 25

How many of you disagree? 2

Small group discussion

[1] Only four (4) of the five (5) discussion groups documented their discussion of this topic.

5.3. The following are some actions being considered by other municipalities.

Are there any actions you would add to this list for consideration?

Action for a more sustainable Acton	***# of dots***[2]
More walking/biking facilities	46
Providing incentives for homes and businesses to become more energy efficient	35
Increase recycling	18
Buildings and retrofitting energy efficient public buildings	14
OTHER[3]	
Provide public transportation	20
Different ways to educate on larger issues/action – organized campaign	8
Rail-trail multi-purpose	8
Selectmen leadership	7
Manage water resources	7
Work closer to home	6
Other ordinances and laws	2
Anti-idling laws	2
Education of kids	1
Fewer people	1
Support carpooling	2
Add public water fountains	1
Sewering	1
Increase attractiveness of local shopping & entertainment so that people shop locally	1
Change school schedule to 4 days a week, longer days	1
Increase number of hazardous waste days	N/A[4]

[2] All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item.
[3] Each group was asked to add actions for consideration; votes for those actions in the "other" category were only voted on by one group at a time with the exception of "Provide public transportation" which was added by three of the five groups.
[4] This action was proposed in one group, but not voted on.

6. Senior Center/Community Center

A large number of respondents felt that more services were needed for the elderly population. Others felt that more community gathering places were needed in general.

6.1. **Do you ever use the Senior Center ?** Yes 16 No 24

6.2. In what ways do you think the existing Senior Center can be improved?

- Move it to an Acton center. Transportation to and from.
- Use kitchen for more types of groups and activities.
- More centralized location
- Add pool
- Combine with Community Center
- Location
- Integrate into community
- Publicize – newsletter
- Open to all ages
- Improve poor design and space
- Improve inadequate transportation, parking and slope
- Shuttle
- Make larger community center/multi-age use, more community involvement
- Make more accessible to people – transport

6.3. Do you think the senior center should be expanded?
Yes 35 No 7 No Opinion 3

6.4. If the Town builds a new building to hold a larger senior center, should portions of that building be available for other community needs, or should the building be dedicated solely to the use of Acton seniors? Community 42 Seniors Only 3

6.5. WHY?

- Whatever we do, let's make sure there are enough activities for seniors. Let's learn from good models in the northwest US and Scandinavia

- Good for commingling of multi-generations; each group benefits and learns from each other; need to maintain amenable community for town's elderly so they will stay; need to do more to encourage seniors to be part of community.
- Link Senior/Community Center to Town Centers

7. PRIORITIZING USE OF RESOURCES

As we move forward in developing goals and objectives we will be trying to prioritize which issues to address first in terms of spending time and money and attention.
The following issues were discussed today.

7.1. Is there anything you would like to add to the list of important issues to be addressed – -both in terms of preserving and enhancing existing assets as well as addressing challenges in the future.

Themes for developing preliminary goals	***# of dots*[5]**
Planning for sustainable development	37
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	35
Enhancing village centers	24
Preserving rural character	23
Addressing traffic issues	23
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	23
Improving existing senior center or building new one	19
Addressing the high cost of living	10
Enhancing neighborhoods	5
OTHER[6]	
Encourage use of renewable energy in public buildings & private homes[7]	11
Preserve culture	8
Transform Kelley's corner to village center	8
Providing public transportation	7
Upgrade aging schools	5
Encourage controlled economic development	3

[5] All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item.
[6] Each group was asked to add actions for consideration; votes for those actions in the "other" category were only voted on by one group at a time, that is the count represents the number of individuals in one group who voted on the goal.
[7] In addition to Sustainability being the number one goal based on the number of priority votes it received (37), the "Encourage use of renewable energy in public buildings and private homes" , a very related goal, received an additional 11 votes.

The following questions were on the back of participants agendas. Forty-one (41) participants responded.

Variety in Activities and Opportunities to Socialize.

In previous participation venues, many residents expressed what they see as a need for more variety in places to go; they specifically listed wanting more opportunities for gathering and more cultural activities in Acton. What kinds of activities would you be interested in the Town developing and/or supporting?

Community Center	*Restaurants (what kind?)*	*Cultural activities (what kind?)*	*Movie theater*
20 if it includes senior center (2) include a movie theater include a pool - can we use the senior center on weekends?	17 indoor/outdoor homemade food café, soup/salad a gathering place ethnic: Vietnamese mid-level: Not Your Average Joe's mid-low leve: Paneras fine dining, sit down casual, but not pizza pub-like, wine bar neighborhood-based Chinese, Middle Eastern, Brazilian Outdoor seating; Porches Small bistro type, ethnic foods W.Acton would be perfect if it had sewers More atmosphere	8 - festivals - like W.Newton cinema - only if self-funded - music - theater (drama), concerts, dance - more classical music opportunities	20 - independent, art films - walk to outdoor café & nighttime gathering places - community theater with film capability - most important - the movie theater in Maynard suits us fine - via tax break

OTHER:

- Town Travel Day
- Sharing community center
- Recreation & social & housing for the mentally disabled
- More arterial sidewalks, including north along Main Street
- The Town Hall has little influence on specific businesses
- Kelley's Corner village variety of restaurants
- Neighborhood centers : meet and discuss your neighborhood with your neighbors
- Smaller sitting parks – outdoor gathering areas in walking village areas
- Schools already have so much community space available (no need for a community center)
- Go to Maynard for a movie theater
- Senior center on school campus in old brick Town building

Train Station Improvements

Do you use the train station? Yes __17__ No__15__ (one "no, but planning to use next month" one "no, but my wife does")

Residents have suggested a number of improvements to the station. What do you feel would be the most important improvement to make?

More parking	*Provide train station building*	*More overhang on canopy (to protect from rain an snow)*	*Shuttle bus to and from station*
13 multi-story yes, but where?	6	16	24

OTHER:

- Use WR Grace property for a parking lot; if need be, more the train station
- Shuttle buses from neighboring towns that also pay for the service
- Parking in outlying areas with shuttle bus
- Stop in West Acton – people could walk or bike to this train station
- More frequent trains leaving Acton M-F b/w 6:45 and 8:30 a.m. and leaving Boston & Porter Square M-F b/w 5:30 and 7:00 p.m.
- Save the current level of train service – which is threatened if Grest and General Court doesn't relieve MBTA of other purpose debt load.
- Give more parking to locals to help force surrounding towns to develop shuttles
- There was a train station building similar to West Concord's – should be rebuilt
- Safe bike lane on 27th Central Street so that I can bike to it!
- Encourage walking/cycling to train
- Supportive retail – pharmacy, cleaners, bakery/coffee shop, liquor store, etc. – "walking errands"
- Create transit link to station using existing rail corridors
- How about a "zip car" business, where small autos are shared?
- Design the area by the train station as a mini-mall for mixed use shopping, cafes, attractive and organized
- I use the West Concord Station

Taxes

Which of the following would you be willing to increase taxes to pay for:

New senior center	*Acquiring open space*	*Green-house gas reduction*	*Shuttle bus*	*Cultural Activities*	*Walking facilities*[8]	*Biking facilities*[9]	*OTHER*
13 communit y center for all ages (3)	*17*	*17*	*18* *- only from train station*	*6*	*30 sidewalks only most important*	*23*	*Train station* *Cultural center* *Upgrade aging schools* *Improved town center*

OTHER:

- Greenhouse gas reduction is a great side effect of sustainable development
- Concept of a true town center – with community center (indoor & outdoor) incorporated
- Bikes on our narrow roads always force cars over double yellow lines --more bikes without wider roads equals more danger. Don't encourage more bikes.
- No New Taxes
- Biking on roads safely; design roads so that cyclists are respected
- Reduce the School budget and have more money for other uses
- Community Center should include senior center and cultural activities
- No more taxes, I can barely afford to live here, as it is! Must move out of town in a few years.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- Upgrade aging schools
- Rail trails and connections to pedestrian and bike paths and sidewalks continue to be highest priority

[8] Sidewalks, trails
[9] bike paths, bike racks

COMMENTS PAD

Several "comment pads" were available for participants to write their answers to specific questions. The questions and the participants' responses are listed below.

Many residents have identified the schools as being one of Acton's key assets. Do you agree? If yes, what about the schools do you feel merits such top ranking?

- I'm always impressed with the precociousness I see in the students
- Excellent staff
- The School Committee did an exceptional job moving towards more state funding. These people should be more publicly applauded!
- Almost too good
- Absolutely central to the quality of life and our economic strength
- The school system draws in new families and will support the vibrance of the town.
- Yes, but more, much more, needs to be done so people don't get pushed out of town by school-related tax increases
- Schools and Town should combine some "back room" services and be more transparent to each other's leadership groups.
- Lower class sizes – why do we have some of the highest in the state?
- Make certain that all students are grounded in knowledge of their Natural Environment – the best chance for protecting our natural landscape and biodiverse health (e.g. not only subdivisions).
- Capable students, involved parents, varied activities for kids to participate in (Jr. High and High schools). Good education with one of ht lower per pupil costs in the area. Strong volunteerism on the part of parents.
- I've been very impressed with the schools, very happy with Meriam's emphasis on learning how to work with others in groups. We need to develop better skills in conflict resolution – to deal with all the challenges our country (and planet) faces. Also need to develop skills for understanding the impacts of decisions and practices – integrative thinking.
- Mostly due to educational level of parents and parents willingness to pay for schools
- Lower class size!
- Yes, educators are top notch. Curriculum has breadth and depth.

Many residents were displeased with the lack of a "real town center." Do you agree? How would you address this issue?

- Why just one? We have several…
- We need a commercial town center, like West Concord, that supports the town and is a place for people to meet. Is it too late?
- Encourage the redevelopment of Kelley's corner to accomplish the above
- I second that
- Yes, and get rid of that horrible Meineke building!
- The previous Kelley's Corner plan was the answer
- Any way to create this near 111/27 corner?
- Agree!
- Me too!
- Also what are the opportunities along 2A so that it is not just a a car-oriented passage?
- Not sure where, but agree that town center similar to West Concord would be nice
- Yes, indeed!
- How about diverting rush-hour/through traffic away from Acton Center and creating a larger "common" (green space). Maybe a round-about (rotary) concept would help by Town Hall area.
- I love our town center as it is. We have the library, playground and open space – perfect!
- Actonians already speak of "West Acton Center" and other existing centers – why not develop those – so that they are accessible by walkers –multiple town centers – rather than one giant traffic/parking nightmare. We can't preserve rural character if we create giant central spaces.
- No – out Town Center as it is reflects the historic importance of Acton.
- Town Center could be improved without losing character. There is a cement or stone object which obstructs the view of on-coming traffic on 27. The object needs to be moved back. There is not enough signage to make a significant area of the Center.

Do you think there is a need for more variety in the types of housing in Acton? If yes, what kinds of housing is needed and for whom?

- Enough – no more 40B. We have plenty of affordable housing within the price range even though it may not be designated affordable – 40B just puts dollars in developers pockets.

- Need a balance – fairness balances with preservation of town character. Conclusion: meet the needs of 40B with enthusiasm, but stop there.

- Yes, we need a variety of housing types – to support people with different economic resources as well as different ages and needs (e.g. condos and smaller apartments within walking distance of shopping for bank needs, allows people to remain independent longer even if can't afford a car or can't drive. Those types of housing opportunities create vibrant "centers."

- Acton has plenty of housing, and quite a variety. What is missing entirely are play areas safely designated for children within housing complexes. Acton needs a bylaw requiring all builders of multiple housing to set aside common, easily accessible play areas (grass) as well as common playgrounds.

- More accessible units should be required in 40Bs and restrict defacto affordable housing density within walking distance of commercial.

- Enough 40B housing units.

- No more 40B projects

- Limit house size – no Mcmansions

CONNECTING ACTON'S ASSETS: GETTING AROUND
Walking and Biking

Significant numbers of residents suggested making Acton more accessible to walkers and bikers by providing sidewalks, walking facilities such as trails and bikeways.

How would you rate each type of facility in relation to each other? In other words if you could decide in which order the Town should undertake to extend these which order would you choose? Please place tally marks so that if you think Sidewalks should go first place one tally mark under "first", if you think bikeways should be third, place one tally mark under "third."

	FIRST	**SECOND**	**THIRD**	**COMMENTS**
SIDEWALKS	7	3	2	No Yes, including the post office square to 2A, foolishly voted down at 08 TM
TRAILS	4	2	7	
BIKEPATHS	9	6		- Not just "for fun"- encourage use of bicycles as transportation (train, etc.) requires multiple small commercial centers - I second the above – very important - Third here! - Bikepaths are also sidewalks along roads. - Keep bikes off dirt paths + woods + meadows

Participation in Town Activities. What can the town do to make it easier for you to be involved in town activities in general?

- There are so many things it is almost impossible to do all that might interest one. Keeping up with kid activities takes up much family time and energy

- Encourage schools to add volunteerism to their curriculum, i.e. Jr. High School donations to food band, etc.

- Too busy – too pulled in multiple directions – kids, work, home maintenance

- I have attempted to participate in issues that interest me and have been personally attacked by other group members who seem to be part of an inner "clique" of people close to Town Hall. I hope that a new Selectmen's composition will no longer make this possible. It's a major deterrent; that and the nasty, negative rumor mill. Acton should be ashamed of its past in this respect!
- Second this comment
- Third this comment
- I fourth this comment and agree with comments on the next page.

- Very busy schedule, volunteer at school, but would like to get more involved at Town level.

- Transportation is sometimes a problem.

- There is a fundamental flaw with Acton's volunteering process which makes the creation of new/temporary committees subject to unfair discrimination. (I don't know about this, but I do know that existing committees "hire their own.") For example, Selectmen (and existing Committee members) can "stack" committees with members that only they choose. The flaw is that the Volunteer Coordinating Committee does not process ALL volunteers! Many time the Selectmen just choose who they want with no screening involved, by an independent entity. I strongly recommend that the VCO be the foal point for ALL volunteers for committees in the future. Anything else is a joke.

- Another thing – regarding selecting Committees: there are no standards for how they function (and for diverse views to be aired) - except the most minimal. Ostensibly, committees are formed to permit a forum for public involvement. BUT there is no standard in place requiring committees to advertise when they are meeting (in addition to the problem potentially unfair of committee appointments, as noted above). So, a committee head can say, quite openly and without guilt, "we don't have to inform the public about anything we are doing." Amazing, but true. I know at least one committee (too many) whose members boldly scorned all public input, only to write up a report based almost entirely on one members "vision." This makes a mockery of Acton's committees process.

Additional Comments

- Get Boxboro to do this too!

- Climate change, climate change, climate change! Go local :
  - Food
  - Transportation
  - Reduce consumption (products, fuel)
  - Reduce waste

- More commercial property to expand tax base – goes with the going local
- Pedestrian-oriented shopping, etc. at Kelley's Corner

- Local food sources
  - CSA's
  - "green" transportation
  - reduce waste
- Yes I would definitely take advantage of CSAs
- Complete Rail Trail – need bike routes on most main roads

- Don't forget our wildlife! – our health depends on a healthy, intact ecosystem.
- Help make Acton a dog friendly environment! Don't exclude dogs and their owners from events – make Acton a welcoming place for pets (Have you been to Oregon? They allow dogs everywhere, and it works beautifully). Prejudice against dogs should be forbidden – it's not nice!

- Improve parking (increase it) at train station. Parking garage with green space and retail space?

- I'd like to see Acton develop an awareness of our connections and participation in larger constructs. Where do we fit into the local watersheds. We should know more about the biodiversity of our landscape. There was a funny comment in our discussion group today and several other people joined this person in wanting to get rid of the deer, turkeys and other wildlife, in their yards. Our "rural character" has brought these animals back to share our environment. I don't want Acton to become "faux rural" – I want more real rural – as much as I can get in the suburbs.

- To have a real rural village quality requires multiple smaller centers, accessible by walking, and a tolerance and support of biodiversity and choices that support sustainability rather than continuing growth. Sustainability requires multiple age groups to be able to afford to stay here – not just families with children who move away once the children are through school. Education and community for all ages – not just children and families. Thanks for reading!

- One thing to change – pedestrian
- Didn't focus on top items from last survey

- We have to be proactive to protect Acton's remaining farms as our neighboring communities (Concord, Westford, Littleton, Sudbury) are doing to protect theirs. It must be a priority or in the future we will lose them. The same thing goes for Acton's remaining parcels of open space.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Each of the Acton schools in the Acton public school system participated in the visioning process in their own way. Students and teachers prepared a large number of varied ways of expressing their concerns and desires for the future. These included a significant number of surveys at every grade level, drawings, movies, a song, posters, a mural, etc. These were displayed at the visioning session and ~~will be~~ available for viewing at the library during the month of August, 2008.

The following are the lyrics from a song developed from a teacher-led brainstorm with the 6th grade students and written by the Music Department.

This Town is Your Town

Melody: "This Land is Your Land"

Chorus/Refrain
This town is your town; this town is my town,
From the edge of Boxborough to the Concord border.
From the pine tree forests to the Nagog waters,
This town will change with you and me.

Install some streetlights and maybe sidewalks.
I've walked past litter and don't enjoy it.
Add many trashcans to make it cleaner,
Then Acton will be a better place.

Chorus/Refrain

As I was walking around Acton
I saw we needed bike paths and park space,
A community center, more ethnic restaurants.
This town should change; don't you agree?

Chorus/Refrain

Stop building condos and houses, too.
Let's make it greener for me and you.
Use solar panels and biofuel.
If we unite it will come true.

Chorus/Refrain

Stop driving SUV's,
Help plant some more trees.
Recycle paper, glass, plastic, too.
Acton's the place for me and you.

Chorus/Refrain

Get rid of Styrofoam as our lunch trays
Compost the food scraps, don't fill the landfills!
Stop chopping down trees upon the highways
This town should preserve the greenery!

Chorus/Refrain

I like my school, And the library
From Dunkin Donuts To Starbucks coffee
From Hybid Farm to Friendly's ice cream
Acton's the place for you and me!

Chorus/Refrain

In addition to this song, the children who attended the session came up with their own song and sang it to the adults in attendance. The lyrics are written below:

I've got my sights set on Acton
And I'm ready for change
I've got some great ideas that will never be tamed.
I know that Acton is special 'cause everyone's nice
And I'm so glad I live in Acton.

I love Nara Park
And all the old houses

I s-s-stuttered when I saw the pretty nature
It's like I couldn't breathe
You asked what's wrong with me
I said: "I wish there were more flowers"

I don't like the traffic
And off of the construction

My heart can't rest till change
Oooh oooh oooh….
I – I can't wait to see the new Acton!

"The Acton singers"

The following are some sample quotes from surveys of Acton students in different grades:

"If I elected myself mayor of Acton I will make Acton a better place by stop littering in rivers because animals can get hurt or die. I would also like more people to recycle because trees get cut down and animals sometimes lose their homes. I would like to try to put most of the polar bears in captivity because in the artic the temperature is rising and polar bears need a cold habitat. What about cleaning. If you clean you have fun and people don't bother. Also listen to your parents and teachers. Thank you"
Extended Day, Grades 1 and 2

"I want more animals and wildlife"
Claire, Gates Elementary School , Cindy Hollis Class, Grade 1

"I would like Acton to have more parks. One reason why is because family's can bond." Also kids needs exercise like doing sports at the parks. It 's so fun for everybody. Kids are all over Acton. What if all of them wanted to go to a park and there's only one – they can't all fit!"
Claire, Gates Elementary School , Cindy Hollis Class, Grade 1

Student Survey – Stratified Random Sample
7 Green, RJ Grey Jr. High School (5/27/08)

Are you interested in making Acton a more environmentally conscious town?
49% YES
41% Maybe (it depends on the changes being made)
8% No

When you stay after school for extra help or an activity, how do you get home?
Walk 19.6%
Bike 6.1%
Carpool with a friend 16.7%
I get picked up in the family car 60.8%
Other (roller blades, scooter) 2%

If Acton had a clean, modern movie with affordable prices, how often would you go?

One or more times per week -34%
About one time per month -- 51%
About one or two times in six months – 11%
About one time per year 3%
Never -- 3%

R.J. Grey Junior High School, Grade 7

"I enjoy all of the parks and playgrounds around town it makes it look friendly and inviting."

"A nice new mall, a movie theater with a lot of colors, and restaurants…"

Pretty stuff:
Town center monument
Arboretum
Nara Park
Amanda
Clouds
Gardens
Duck Pond
Nature
Great Road stuff

Not Pretty Stuff::
Kmart
Condos
Litter
Libby's fence

Want:
Mall ((girls say and guys agree)

"I don't enjoy how may houses there are in Acton that ruin the scenery."

"Plant more trees.,"

"What I enjoy most visually in Acton is its nice rural area look." – Christian

"We could make malls, better-bigger brand stores to make visually exciting"

"Not cut down trees and stuff, not build ugly houses, conserve the environment."

"the thing that is least appealing is the old automobile shop on the corner near the bowling alley."

"I don't like downtown West Acton. The stores look very … almost run down – as well as the house next to the Fire Department…"

"I love the parks – Nara Park and the design of the neighborhoods and houses."

"Acton needs flashing neon signs along the border saying: Welcome to Acton."

"I like the old colonial look."

8th grade surveys

What are THREE most important assets you feel Acton has (qualities you like).

"It is a tight community that is very loving. The people in Acton are very nice and are loving to their neighbors. Also is has almost no pollution."

School is very educational
Great sports program
good schools
low crime rate
good neighborhoods
nice people
Small town
Caring community
The history
Fun things to do/activities
"riding horses"
"Danny's Place"

What are the THREE most important challenges you feel face Acton (qualities you do not like):

Way too competitive
Get up too early to go to school
Not enough sidewalks
Houses are expensive
Amount of litter
Drugs, smoking and bullying at school
Loss of small town feel
"Really bad school lunches."
"Taxes are too high"

What makes Acton unique?

"It is a tight community that is depending on each other that builds a great community."
"Acton is very woody and does not look like your average town."
"friendly people"
"has lots of different activities"
it's history"
close to cities but rural
close to the Cape
"The people who live in it"

How well do you know at least three of your neighbors?

"My friend Phoebe lives next door she is in my wind and I sit with her on the bus. Rachel is in 8th grade and I talk with her at the bus stop. Carol is someone my mom uses in case of emergency.'

"I know my neighbors well enough to be their friends."
"very well"
"I see and play with them everyday."
"Very well, we talk a lot, we're relatives"
"not very well"

What would you like to see more of in Acton?

"More green and open spaces because I really like nature, forests and large open fields that are left untouched by humans because you don't see those types of things often anymore."

Activities for teens
More eco-friendly opportunities
Restaurants and clothing stores
Sidewalks
Less big companies, more local ones
grass
"Programs to know more others less fortunate/elderly"
"A downtown area."
"I would like to see more parks and places to play for young children, because I, as a young child, loved to play around outside, and I don't want Acton to turn into a city with only houses and buildings."
"More activities other than sports and school."

What would you like to see less of in Acton?

Less sports competition on Sundays
Development
\loss of open space
Litter
People going to fast food places like McDonald's and Dunkin Donuts
Pollution
Drugs and smoking kids
"I hate all the trees being cut down and having more and more townhouses/condos"
roads
"Less frivolous spending by town committees (stained glass window in high school instead of fixing mold in Douglas)"
"Bad substitute teachers."

Acton Visioning Notes

June 16, 2008

Four participants attended.

Preserving Rural Character

Town should acquire more open space? Yes 4 No 0

Other means to preserve open land

- 40B is not a good way – too dense and the land that is set aside for open space is not good land
- Should modify development controls to set aside upland open space
- Change zoning
- Gifts of land
- Conservation restrictions
- Preserve roadside trees
- Protect farms, using federal tax benefits – Estabrook example

Ways to preserve rural character

- Agricultural commission
- Right-to-farm bylaw
- Publicize active farms
- Farmers markets
- Access to conservation land, e.g., across Rte 2 and Rte 2A
    - Wetherbee area
    - Linear paths and bike trails
- Preserve historic landscapes
    - Wright Holden farmhouse
- Community garden plots, as at Morrison Farm
- Conservation restrictions, as at Flagg Hill Farm in Boxboro

Enhancing Neighborhoods

Ideal Neighborhood

- Easily walkable
- Shops you can walk to
    - Groceries, etc.
- Closed-in feel, e.g. Heritage Rd, Patriots Hill, Minuteman Rd., Indian Village
    - Lack of through traffic
- Neighborhood "spark plugs" to welcome newcomers, organize neighborhood events
- "Nosey Book" with information about people in the neighborhood – street listing, database of people
- A way to send information to a list of neighbors
- Regular annual events – barbeque, etc.
    - Town should encourage, provide tables, close streets for events
- Encourage neighborhood associations
- Encourage age mix in neighborhood
- Sidewalks, ability to walk safely to auto repair, mall, grocery store,
    - Informal outdoor gathering places
- Improve mobility for seniors who walk but have some difficulty
    - Require sidewalks to be cleared of snow
- Benches for outdoor eating – en courage businesses to provide
    - Recent zoning changes encourage outdoor seating
- Rail trail provides access, connections, safe crossing of busy streets
    - Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail could raise funds for benches along the way
- East Acton Village green – recent event with steel band

Enhancing Village Centers

Ideal Village Center

- Like West Acton
    - Grid street pattern
    - On-street parking
    - Sidewalks
    - Historic buildings
    - Street lights
    - Safe for pedestrians to cross
    - Unique, fun window shopping
    - Things people want to buy, e.g., neighborhood pharmacy
- Avoid uses that deaden the sidewalk, e.g. bank with blind windows
- Maintain variety of locally owned shops
- "Buy local" campaign
- Kelly's Corner has the potential but need incentives to make it happen there
    - Why did McDonalds close?
- Village needs "anchor" with "pulling power"
    - Could be civic use
- Employers that create a lunchtime crowd
- Restaurant/bar, e.g. Not Your Average Joe's
- West Concord example - 5 and 10, bead store, kids shoes, 2nd hand stores
- Contribution of ethnic communities to village life and food

Challenges

After discussion of the potential challenges Acton faces and potential ways to address them, each participant was given five sticky dots and asked to vote by placing up to three of the dots on the flip chart next to the items they consider the most important challenges.

Votes	Challenge	Ways of addressing
0	High cost of living	
7	Lack of walking facilities	Rail trail (multi-modal – walk, bike, stroller, etc.); accessibility and maintenance
3	Traffic (especially on Saturday)	Slow down traffic Rail trail and access to activity centers that become destinations
2	Need for growth management and site and design controls	Stricter design controls, incl. landscaping
5	Rapid loss of open space	Rail trail Protecting right of ways
2	Lack of destinations/activity centers	Rail trail access
1	Lack of affordable housing	

Planning for Sustainability

Important for town's future? 4 yes, 0 no

Take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? 4yes, 0 no

As in the section on challenges, ways to plan for sustainability were discussed and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are most important.

Types of action	Votes
• Increase recycling	4
• More walking/biking facilities	5
• Green buildings/retrofitting public buildings (LEED certification)	1
• Incentives for residential and a business energy efficiency	3
• Life cycle cost analysis (incl energy costs)	5
• Re-think how town staff works and commutes	0
• Create "Green team"	0
• Eliminate idling vehicles	0
• Establish town energy committee	1
• Organize carpooling (web based)	1

Senior Center

How can it be improved?

- Transportation to it
- More parking with accessible spaces
- More space, e.g., exercise room, multi-uses
- More staff and activities, resources to support

Expand existing facility? 3 yes, 0 no

Combine with community center? 3 yes, 0 no

- Let the seniors decide about this
- Avoids waste of underutilized space
- Shared community use of the <u>existing</u> senior center

Prioritizing

As in the previous sections, potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

Issue	Votes
Preserving rural character	5
Enhancing neighborhoods	0
Enhancing village centers	2
Addressing high cost of living	0
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	2
Addressing traffic issues	2
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	2
Planning for sustainability	1
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	0
Activities for teens	1

Appendix

Targeted Outreach Meetings

Town of Acton
Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720
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TARGETED COMMUNITY OUTREACH:
ACTON LATIN FAMILY NETWORK
Sunday, May 18, 2008
Clubhouse Village of Nagog Woods

Six members of the Latin Family Network participated in a focus group discussion as part of the Comprehensive Community Plan outreach process. Participants were attending an annual event organized by the Family Network. They were the only Acton residents at the event and sat together in a group to respond to the visioning questions. The discussion took place in Spanish and lasted approximately one and a half hours. Both men and women participated; all had small children. Those present estimated that there are approximately thirty Latino families living in Acton; they are mostly from the following countries: Argentina, Columbia, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru and Guatemala.

Participants pointed to the fact that they represented a particular socio-economic group and that the less affluent was not represented in the sample. They emphasized that those not present have very different needs and perceptions. They tried to make some comments on their behalf (e.g. the need for providing affordable housing and the need for identifying families in need of support).

Participants were asked the following questions. Shaded responses represent the group's priorities (they were asked to vote on the complete list of responses to the questions.

Why do you live in Acton/did you move to Acton? (Porque viven en Acton/fueron a Acton?)

- It is close to work
- Schools (3)
- More affordable housing than other comparable communities
- Affordable for families

What do you like about Acton? (Que aspectos les gustan sobre de Acton?)

- Parks, open space, green
- Safety
- Schools
- Has most things that I need
- Centrally located
- No significant traffic jams
- Close enough to the city, has what we need, but without the major problems

What don't you like about Acton and would like to see change in the future? (Que aspectos no les gustan y quieren ustedes cambiar?)

- Lack of center to walk around in, gather in, shop, eat, etc.
    - Need to beautify town ("only West Acton has had attention paid to it, what about the rest of the town?" Would like more vital, attractive village centers.
- Lack of public transportation within town, not even taxi service (what would one do in an emergency?)
- High taxes
- Douglas school building outdated
- Poorly maintained recreation facilities (need bathrooms, parking, need to update facilities)

If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be? (Si pueden cambiar solamente un aspecto de Acton, cual estara?)

- Improve water quality – once a month the water is brown ("why are there no wells?")
- Extend sewer to all homes
- Increase environmental measures related to sustainable development
    - Need for municipal trash pick up
    - Need for free recycling/transfer station

- Provide full-day kindergarten for all kindergartners
- Provide foreign language instruction starting at Kindergarten

What issues would you say are most important to the Latino community? (Que piensan ustedes son las temas mas importante en la comunidad de los Latinos en Acton?)

- Need for access to the schools for ethnic celebrations, language instruction, etc.
- Need for affordable housing
- Need to help identify families in need and connect them with existing resources. Often there are families who are in crisis but who are disconnected, they have no access to resources that could provide support, and often do not know where and how to get help, have language barriers and do not reach out.
    - The Latino Family Network would like to work with the schools and Town Hall to ***identify families who are potentially in need*** of support.

They have access to volunteers who could help these families once they are stabilized. They feel that often the issues are multi-faceted and are currently dealt with in a fragmented manner whereas a more holistic approach (e.g. tending to issues of education, employment, healthcare, etc.) is proven to be more successful. All participants felt the schools could play a larger role in helping to identify these families and connect them to resources.

- In addition they identified the need for a ***welcoming committee for immigrant families.*** They need information in their language and help with networking and accessing information and resources.

What are some obstacles to your and other Latino families' participation in town activities and what could the town do to help you be more involved?
(Que pueden hacer los officios de Acton para ayudarse o apoyarse en participar en los actividades de la municipalidad?)

The main reason participants cited for their lack of participation in town affairs was a lack of time as well as the fact that many of the ***meetings take place during evening hours*** which are difficult for families with young children. They also felt that for others the two main obstacles to participation were:

- ***Language barriers*** (they felt that even for those who speak English well if materials were translated into Spanish it would make people feel more welcome)
- Most immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries are not used to this kind of governance, they are ***not familiar with the volunteer process*** and do not really know what to do and how to enter the system.

4 May 2008

TARGETED OUTREACH MEETING:

Acton Indian Community

On Sunday, May 4, 2008, Lauren Rosenzweig, Acton Selectwoman and Daphne Politis from Planner's Collaborative consulting team met with representatives of the Acton Indian Community. They described the process and opportunities for involvement in town government in general and in the community planning process more specifically. The presentation was followed by a visioning session conducted with the approximately 13 persons in attendance (one had to leave early). Participants were regular members of the Irep, an organization representing the Indian Community of Acton, estimated to be comprised of approximately 450 families. Those present have resided in Acton from 5 to 16 years, with most having moved to the Town approximately five years ago. Discussion was friendly and lively. There was a high degree of consensus regarding what participants wished to preserve in the future, how it could be improved, and how they felt the Town could respond to their needs as an ethnic community.

Participants were asked the following questions:

- *Why did you move to Acton?*
- *What are your favorite things about Acton (and hope to preserve)?*
- *What are your least favorite things about Acton (and wish you could change)?*
- *Are there any issues affecting the Indian community specifically that you would like to bring up?*
- *Can you think of ways the Town can make it easier for you to be involved in Town affairs?*

Why did you move to Acton?

- Schools (12)
    - Reputation of school system
    - Cut off date for Kindergarten Sept. 1
    - Availability of pre-school childcare options
- Location and proximity to jobs (6)
- Safety
- Ethnic diversity (5)
- Housing affordability – more value for the money (2)
- Commuter rail (5)
- Warmth and welcome of Actonians
- Picturesque town
- Romance
- Small town
- No malls

What are your favorite things about Acton (and hope to preserve)?

- Small town feel
- No big malls
- Schools – keep as they are
- Hold real estate value because of schools
- Ability to choose schools (K-6)
- Green spaces
- History – homes and the stories behind them
- Safety
- Beautiful landscape
- Preserve land – keep balance of housing – big and small
- Small town, but close to everything
- Get to see your friends in the grocery store
- Values – sense of brotherhood, children growing up together
- Feelings of safety
- Can use resources, accessible/available , e.g. tennis courts
- Plentiful resources
- Don't have to lock your door, at least not until now

- Very friendly
- Try to keep green, countryside
- Preserve town center – keep its charm. History
- West Acton Center – keep it small – it has special feeling
- Have more festivals in Town Centers
- Chance social encounters
- Library – different ages go there, can share ideas
- Like-minded young professionals attracted to move to Acton
- Acton has "prestige", "cache" – "Oh, you live in Acton?"
    - Rt. 2 fields – used to be outskirts, now known
- Would stay in Acton even if won the lottery
- Accepting community – felt welcome even when was the only Indian child in the class
- Availability of a variety of stores and restaurants for a small town (e.g. Italian, French, etc.). Now also Indian Market & restaurant
- NARA Park – green space from old Quarry
- Safety – people walk. Kids can walk to things safely, from schools, to McDonald's
- Other Indian kids in classrooms, make children feel comfortable
- People are accepting, welcoming, attend Indian dance performance, etc.
- Friendly, no racial issues – e.g. can wear turbans comfortably; people are interested to learn about new cultures
- Diversity
- Location
- Train – keep, but improve, make cheaper
- Discovery Museum

What are your least favorite things about Acton (and wish you could change)?

- Lack of sidewalks – need more on Rt. 27
- Great Road – need more traffic lights, especially Brookside Shops/Staples shopping center
- Train – need lower cost, more frequent trains
- People drive too fast on residential streets – enforce speed limits
- People parking on street and blocking driveways and traffic, e.g. Windsor Road.
- More affordable shops
- Public transportation for children and grandparents (e.g. Lexpress and/or afterschool buses)
- Don't' have good Town Center – want place defined, place to walk around. Tree-lined, village center, connected walking paths to and from Town Center and other places in town, e.g. rail trail
- More celebrations and town events
    - Schools do this, but not Town Hall
    - Need community center, a place to host a party, Diwali celebration
- Need bike path – roads too dangerous
- Try to expand tax base and attract high tech/bigger business to locate in Acton, provide incentives to locate here
- After a certain point seniors have to leave because taxes too high – can we help then age in place, stay in their home, at least in Acton?
- Need more town-sponsored after school programs/extended day for working parents
- Traffic patterns – left turns are difficult
- Speed limits should be lower and/or enforced better
- Would like to taka a bus to things, to commuter station
    - Would like an hourly bus that goes around town
    - A bus can be an asset to the town

- Concord Rotary – backs up, need 40 minutes to get through, change pattern, need to fix, worst spot/reflects on Acton, can we fix?
- Train Station – not attractive, needs improvement, can't park after 7:18 Express

Are there any issues particular to the Indian community that you would like to bring up?

- Diwali – would like to have children have day off from school to help with cooking and decoration preparations. Even a half day would be good. Also ask that teachers be aware and not schedule important tests, etc. Include Diwali in the discussions of the "Festival of Lights."
- Need for space for cultural activities
  - Currently have to rent from the Maynard Elks
  - Need a function hall for parties, celebrations for up to 500 people
  - Need space for the arts (dance, drums, etc.) – currently rent space, but is expensive
  - What about the use of school space?
  - Ideal would be a large hall with adjacent small spaces – would like to use on Saturday mornings and some evenings for a nominal fee/custodian
  - Would like the use of a gym for dance classes
  - Currently there is no space to rent./not affordable or not available

- Need more for teens to do
  - Nothing for teens to be able to walk to/have to drive them everywhere
  - Need movie theater
  - Game arcades
  - Acceptable/appropriate activities – recreation/entertainment

- A more vibrant town center
- Public transportation – many Indian families have seniors living with them.

Participants were asked to vote for their top two priorities from the above responses. The following documents the group's priorities:

Space for celebration and cultural activities --- 12 votes
Public transportation for seniors and teens – 12 votes
More vibrant Town Center – 3 votes
Time off from school for Divali --- 2 votes
More for teens – 2 votes

Participants also mentioned that Acton could be a regional center for the area Indian community. They estimated that between Westford, Acton and Boxborough there are approximately 600 Indian families.

Can you think of ways the Town can make it easier for you to be involved in Town affairs?

- Indians come from a place that is much less wasteful, is conscious of recycling and could share these values and contribute to the Acton community (schools, seniors).
    - Movable art – demonstrating renewable energy sources
    - Transfer station – use as a model for sustainable development, including exhibiting trash as art
    - Help to develop a Town Strategy for sustainable development
        - Solar energy

- Town website – should be maximized, kept more up to date, more informative, should be more dependable, more of a community bulletin board
- Need for a community bulletin board
- A more involved library /community bulletin board there
- Provide contact people – who to contact for different communities including Chinese, Indian, Brazilian, etc.

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Date: 2 April 2008

TARGETED COMMUNITY OUTREACH: ROTARY CLUB

Fifteen Rotary Club members attended the weekly Rotary Luncheon (held at the Scupperjacks Restaurant in Acton) and participated in a mini-visioning session as part of the outreach process of the Comprehensive Community Plan.

Participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves. Approximately half of the members present live or have lived in Acton and operate a business here. The other half conduct their business in Acton, but live out of town. Occupations included: CPA, consulting product safety engineer, attorney, Acton Police Chief, real estate/vending business, marketing services, paralegal, chemical sales, restaurateur, real estate, hotel sales manager, electrical engineer manager, retired police officer/author, and an owner of a clothing store.

The following is a summary of participants' responses to a number of questions.

Why did you decide to conduct your business in Acton? How was it easy? How was it hard?

- Family connections
- Moved to town for the school system
- Five minute commute from my home
- Open spaces are being cultivated
- Senior services are being developed
- It is more lucrative to do business in MA than in NH (where he was before)
- A good quality of life

Notes by Daphne Politis

What could town do to make it easier/better for new businesses? What could the town do to support existing businesses?

- The taxes are driving me out
- My house is too big
- The permitting process is too difficult
- Growth control policies of the Town are good, attracting the kind of people that support our businesses
- Licensing (especially Board of Health) – very difficult
- Signage regulations (especially Historic District) – too strict
- Lack of parking is an obstacle to the growth of businesses (as patrons cannot park) – especially in South Acton.
- Traffic safety is a serious obstacle to attracting customers
- Since people move here for the schools, they need to support the overrides as these support the school system which in turn preserve the real estate values.
- The fact that "visual pollution" is controlled is a good thing (e.g. no billboards, neon, etc.) – but it is a balancing act.

The Town is interested in attracting a diversity of businesses, and would very much like to fill current vacancies. These do not do benefit anyone.

What can the Town do to attract new businesses to fill vacancies? How can the Town best market Acton?

No ideas offered.

What do you think would complement the existing business mix, what's missing that could ultimately attract more people to your businesses as well?

- There seems to be an anti-brand name attitude in town (most seemed to feel this was good, preserving a level, a quality of businesses, some disagreed thinking that the Town was excluding some possibilities as a result).
- It was noted that Home Depot was chased out of town – participant simply observed fact -- not sure whether this is a good thing or a bad thing
- Have to travel forty minutes for large shops (department stores, Linens & Things, Best Buy, Home Depot)

One of the difficulties of being a small business in a town is competing with the area malls. It seems that towns that have been able to compete best with the malls are those that try to make shopping an experience, that make their town into a place, not just a row of shops.

Do you have any ideas about what kind of improvements could be made in order to improve both the aesthetics and the functioning of commercial areas in Acton?

- Figure out what to do with the traffic.
- Where are the sidewalks?
- Review model such as the Gateway area of Salt Lake City with an "outdoor mall" that revitalized that part of the city
- Kelley's Corner has much potential
- Some merit to the past suggestion of closing off Rt. 111 to cars and making it pedestrians only.
- Meineke Building, built second story without permit—Town should have made him tear it down - - now it is an eyesore
- There needs to be quality control and oversight of the town budget and operations as well as those of the schools to ensure efficiency and effectiveness
- Need for a 10-story parking garage at the train station. People would come to park there to use the train and then find there is more to do in Acton.
- Roche Brothers parking lot re-design is a disaster.

9.. Do you think that having a shuttle bus take people around town would help your businesses?

Most seemed to support this idea

10. Do you have any creative ideas about how these improvements could be funded?

Unfortunately there was no time for this question.

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TARGETED COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETINGS

Meeting With: Sandy Cambell, Executive Director

Representing: United Way

Date: 6 March 2008

NOTES:
Daphne Politis and Lauren Rosenzweig
Location of meeting: Café Ziba, 2:00 p.m.

MEETING NOTES:

Serve Acton/Boxborough indirect service to population; fund social service needs:

- Hunger
- Affordable housing
- Domestic violence
- Elder care
- Children and youth
- Mental health
- Developmental disabilities

Serve approximately 1,500 – 2,000 people served

Do their own fundraising plus regional funding campaign

The number of people served is increasing due to:

- Greater awareness of services
- Expanding new initiatives and outreach to immigrant groups
- Baby boomers are getting older
- More outreach to adolescents

Emerson Hospital did a study of at risk youth behavior (larger geographic area).

Positive Attributes of Working in Acton

A lot of people are interested in working for the betterment of others
Big on volunteerism throughout the Town.

Challenges of Working in Acton
Funding
Denial (affluent community)
Shift to more cause-oriented philanthropy (e.g. school, cancer-research, etc.)

Needs:

- Community Services Coordinator (start out part time)
- Local transportation especially for vunerable populations
    - Elders
    - Kids after school
    - Immigrant populations (multiple generations, some only have one car, some do not have MA driver's license)

- More counselors in the schools
- More services need for seniors
    - Variety (especially art classes and computer classes)
    - Social interaction
    - Physical fitness

- Address domestic violence prevention
    - Education
    - Teen violence
    - Cultural issues

- More English As A Second Language Classes
    - one-on-one tutoring (organization: English At Large out of Medford)
    - community education has classes
    - need for support – transportation and support to keep at it

- Combat hunger
    - Several programs exist currently
    - Food Pantry, Hot Meals, and Meals on Wheels (some seniors, some ethnic groups)
    - Household Goods Recycling Ministry : take in donations of furniture and appliances and make available to those in need. Have their own facility on Main St. Approximately 30,000 pieces are placed yearly. Individuals need to be referred by a social service agency or clergy.

- Support for people with disabilities
  - Need transportation
    - Concord-based Minuteman ARC provide some
    - FISH – call and volunteers will come
    - Need for job opportunities (CASE provides training, e.g. in supermarket)
    - Need for greater acceptance
  - Support for school-aged population with special needs
    - A high number of autism based special needs

February 19, 2008

TARGETED OUTREACH MEETING:

Chinese Language School Comprehensive Community Plan Seminar

On Sunday, February 24, Lauren Rosenzweig, Acton Selectwoman and Daphne Politis from Planner's Collaborative consulting team presented at the Acton Chinese Language School Seminar Series. They described the process and opportunities for involvement in town government in general and in the community planning process more specifically. The presentation was followed by a visioning session conducted with the approximately 10-15 persons in attendance (some had to leave early). Participants were regular members of the Chinese Language School; residency in Acton ranged from 1 – approximately 10 years (with one participant residing in Acton for 38 years). Participants were asked to place a colored dot on a map to indicate where they live; the individuals lived in neighborhoods throughout the town. Discussion was lively; there was a general sense of agreement regarding what most considered the attributes of the Town as well as regarding which issues they felt needed to be addressed in the future.

Participants were asked the following questions:

- *Why did you move to Acton?*
- *What are your favorite things about Acton (and hope to preserve)?*
- *What are your least favorite things about Acton (and wish you could change)?*
- *If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be?*
- *Can you think of other ways in which the Chinese community can be involved?*
- *What are some reasons that might limit your involvement*
- *Can you think of ways the Town can make it easier for you to be involved?*

Why did you move to Acton?

- Schools (12)
- Commuter rail (3)
- Reputation
- Friends living here (2)
- Location convenient to work (8)
- Peaceful setting (2)
- The town welcomes multi-culturalism (2)
- Housing is affordable (5)
- Green – trees, conservation land (3)
- Existence of a good-sized Chinese community

What are your favorite things about Acton (and hope to preserve)?

- School system (2)
- Town open to listening
- Balanced development/growth
- Preserved open land/conservation
- Safe community – walking, biking, kid-safe
- Commuter rail (e.g. "super express" from Acton to Porter Square)
- Good library programs (multi-cultural, story time, child-oriented)
- Park programs
- Chinese school, the fact that the town lets us use the facility, creating a regional center
- Family resources (including library, parks, private indoor sports facilities & after school programs)

What are your least favorite things about Acton (and wish you could change)?

- Parking at commuter rail, especially in the winter is a problem, sometimes have to use non-resident parking and even that fills up (some ideas to address the issue included providing a shuttle bus to the station, encouraging people to walk and bike to the station by improving the sidewalk system which is not continuous, in need of repair and not adequately sized).
- Tap water – not drinkable, has a bad taste and a yellow tinge (high mineral content, needs better filtration, some neighborhoods are worse than others)
- No trash collection (choices are take your garbage to the dump or pay for a private service)
- There is no central Town Center (instead there are smaller village centers such as West/East/South Acton) – would like a central place for all the Town to meet (e.g. summer town fair, eat outside, small stores, control traffic)
- Some small businesses are leaving town (need to attract and keep small businesses in Acton, especially family-oriented services)
- Lack of swimming facilities (would be nice to have an indoor pool e.g. Sudbury, more family time in school pool which now rents out too much time to private organizations)
- NARA park should be free for residents
- Tax-overrides are too many – need for better fiscal planning
- Too much housing development - control the development of housing because of its impact on schools
- People leaving after children are done with school… *"What can we do to keep people here after their school-aged children complete high school?"*
- Taxes too high

If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be?

- Preserve excellence in school system
- Control residential growth (because it adversely impacts class size at the schools)
- Balance growth
- Control density
- Improve parking at the commuter rail (short term goal)
- Keep safe (crime-free)
- Provide transportation options to youth and seniors
- Allow all taxpayers (including non-citizens) to vote on town issues
- Compare tax rate to other comparable communities and understand why different, hopefully reduce

Participants were asked to think about the following questions and get back to us with comments as we ran out of time (the children's language classes were dismissed and parents had to go and retrieve their children).

Can you think of other ways in which the Chinese community can be involved?

Let's talk about reasons that might limit your involvement:

Too busy/not enough time	Language
Not sure exactly what I can do	Lack of transportation
Not sure how to find information	Not use to the idea
	Other:_____

Can you think of ways the Town can make it easier for you to be involved?

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15 July 2008

Targeted Outreach Meeting: Brazilian Community

After several efforts to gather a group of Brazilian residents together to have a mini-visioning session were unsuccessful, we conducted an interview of two Brazilian residents willing to be representatives of their community. The meeting took place in DiCapri's pizzeria.

Andre Abreu
Renato Amorim

Linda Chance, a member of the Outreach Committee and her husband Gabe, both of whom speak Portuguese attended and participated in the meeting.

Why do you think most Brazilian's moved to Acton?

- jobs (e.g.. pizza places)
- schools
- other Brazilians (including that there are two Brazilian shops selling Brazilian goods)
- business community is educated

What do you think most Brazilians like about Acton?

- Schools
- Landscape – trees, open space
- Feel very welcome in the community – people are educated, some have been to Brazil, know about Brazil, etc.
- Indoor soccer (at Teamworks on Great Road in Acton)
- Soccer in school

What do you think most Brazilians dislike about Acton?

- Hard to commute – limited parking at train station
- Need more computers at the library
- Need for more Portuguese language books at the library
- Expensive – rent + taxes

What would you say are the main issues facing the Brazilian community in Acton?

- ESL for children and adults
  - Need for more ESL after school (volunteer program)
- Would like more entertainment (nightclub, food, music, dancing).
  - Jazz Café used to have Brazilian night once a month, unsure if it still does
  - Acton/Boxborough Cultural Council had "Day in Brazil" – could have more
  - Capoeira – martial arts/dance (slave dance developed in Brazil) taught in South Acton
  - Some Brazilians would love to have a carnival in Acton
  - A Brazilian restaurant would be a good thing (pizza place tried to add Brazilian items to the menu but was not successful – no marketing).

If you could do one thing to make Acton better for the Brazilian community, what would it be?

- Town wide shuttle bus (many Brazilians do not have a driver's license)
- ESL teachers at school do not speak Portuguese (children are assigned a Spanish-speaking teacher)

Why do you think most Brazilians do not participate in town government (main obstacles)?

- Perception that they are here only "temporarily" (going back to Brazil even if it doesn't eventually turn out to be true, it is in their minds)
- Estimated 70% of Brazilian population in Acton is undocumented
- They are not used to the idea of participation – attitude is more traditional of "leave it up to the government to decide."
- Language

What can the town do to increase participation on the part of Brazilians in town government?

- Have a Portuguese-speaking staff person at Town Hall
- Have a person(s) represent the Brazilians and speak on their behalf

The two individuals interviewed found it difficult to estimate the number of Brazilians in Acton; they guestimated approximately 500. Most can be found at the Baptist Church in Acton and the Catholic Church in Maynard. Networking tends to be done by "word of mouth" and there are no formal networks currently in place.

NOTE: Linda Chance and Renato Amorim exchanged e-mails and talked about the possibility of organizing a Brazilian carnival some where in Acton next winter. Because of the cold weather, they both agreed to look into possible indoor venues.

Acton

Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Appendix

Town Government Focus Group

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ROUNDTABLE:
TOWN STAFF/DEPARTMENT HEADS
June 4, 2008

Participants:

Karen Kucala - Asst. Finance Director
Stephen Barrett - Finance Director
Marcia Rich - Library Director
Corey York - Asst. Engineer
Mark Hald - IT Director
Catherine Fochtman - Recreation Director
Merrily Evdokimoff - Nursing Administrator
Dean Charter - Director of Municipal Properties & Tree Warden
Robert Craig - Fire Chief
Roland Bartl – Planning Director
Doug Halley - Health Director
Russell Robinson - Highway Super.
Frank Ramsbottom - Building Inspector
Steve Ledoux - Town Manager
Frank Widmayer - Police Chief
Tom Tidman - Director of Conservation
Jean Fleming - Director of Council on Aging
Jennifer Friedman - Director of Citizens Library
John Murray - Asst. Town Manager

Purpose of meeting: *To get a preliminary sense from Department Heads of what their realities and informed perceptions are regarding Acton's assets and challenges. As we move forward to identify priority issues it is important to have input from those "on the ground" , dealing with issues day to day with insight into what works and what doesn't work and why. Additionally department heads were asked to identify potential future challenges.*

What in your experience makes Acton a good place to live and/or work?

- Nice to work near where you live (3)
  - Walk to work
  - Enjoy living and working in the same place, nice being close to home
- Well-run town
  - Town sees the big picture
  - Willingness to support projects
  - Allowance for dissenting voice to be heard
- Town staff responsiveness to community goes above and beyond (2)
- Location – before you hit the commuter traffic going to Boston (3)
  - Non-stressful commute

- Professionalism of staff (6)
    - Staff are really industry leaders, experts in their field, very high caliber
    - Town attracts good staff
    - Weekly staff meeting important and useful – even for those who don't see each other on a regular basis, knowing that Wednesday morning meeting is there keeps the staff communicating.
    - Staff are "thoroughbreds"
    - All chip in and solve the problem (don't have the attitude of "that's not my job…")
    - Not afraid to take on new tasks

- Support within community and within Town Hall

- The longevity of the employees is very significant leading to depth of understanding of issues (3)
    - Know each other well which leads to smooth working relationships

- Cooperative spirit, very helpful, lots of support, willingness to work together
    - Results in being able to do a lot in-house
    - "The people I work with are really wonderful and cooperative"

- High-end professional volunteers tremendous
    - If they want it, they pass it
    - High level of volunteerism – working hard, smooth running

- The Town is generous to the needy
    - Supportive to the elderly too

- The Departments feel supported
    - E.g. small W.Acton library probably wouldn't exist in another town, but received a lot of community support

- Town's population
    - Is very educated (including high school kids on committees)
    - Diversity of town's population (poses some language problems but is a plus)
    - Is passionate
        - Greening of Acton
        - Multi-culturalism
        - Compassionate towards the needy (e.g. social worker position voted to be funded at Town Meeting)

What in your experience is your least favorite aspect of living and/or working in Acton?

- Too much funding goes to the schools without enough left over to do what needs to be done in terms of the other town services
    - Results in a fight for resources
    - More funding is needed
    - Divisive : "schools group" vs. "non-schools group" – large chasm and division among the population
    - Acton is at the bottom 3% of towns in the state regarding the amount of money devoted to municipal government
    - Schools have "emotional advantage" and grass roots support like PTOs

- Need more volunteers that will take leadership roles

- The pressure of the community's high expectations (without the financial support to be able to provide the level of service they expect)
    - Unrealistic expectations from the part of residents

- Inequity in funding levels makes it very hard to meet expectations
    - The pressure of being asked to do more for less is felt at the departmental level but also the organization as a whole is too stretched
    - Not enough hours in the day to do all that is needed to be done
    - Seems to be more people worn out, asking for more sick days
    - Newcomers seem to be higher income with higher expectations sometimes with a sense of entitlement

- The system and structure of Committees often makes it difficult to get decisions to move forward
    - (often re-visit decisions -- e.g. recent examples: street lights, sidewalks-- when a decision had already been reached to move forward).
    - When a project is clearly not desired a Committee is formed to study it anyway wasting resources (response to perceived "hysteria")

- It is sometimes a challenge to have to do what the community wants when it goes against what you believe.

- There seems to have been a lot of turn-over until recently

- Administering to a politically-entitled group

- The public process can sometimes derail projects that have had a lot of support because just when you get started another group comes along and opposes what you thought was a go-ahead.

    - Allowing for the dissenting voice is sometimes too much – it ends up creating the perception that it is a more majority opinion than is the reality

- The salary issue is in the process of being addressed (this will be good when parity issue is addressed).

- Need to do public relations campaign re: town services, etc.
    - Lay people don't understand the budget process
    - Needs to be more discussion in group and public settings
    - It would be interesting to ask residents: "How important is Town government in your day-to-day lives?" (as opposed to town services)
    - Town needs to do more advocacy -- think of "quantitative arguments" regarding need for and impact of services.
    - No time to do PR, education campaign, too busy trying to get work done
    - Need to educate residents as to the value of town services
    - Schools need to be part of the marketing plan and PR effort
    - Need to reiterate the purpose of town services
    - Bad press (e.g. re: Boston police officers) is generalized and people have misperceptions regarding reality
    - Example of how PR has worked in the past – tours of the police and fire stations made people realize how much a new municipal safety building was needed.

- Town Meeting process is "broken"

- No way of achieving consensus, currently often undemocratic way of deciding priorities
    - Chair of BOS gives direction without full consensus of Board and noone dares say "no" (hope that with new Board this will change)
    - Board membership changes and then review the same thing over and over again.
    - It is hard to protect departments from having to go down rat holes

- Overcrowding in the Town Hall
    - Need to address space needs

Can you identify any future challenges or changes (e.g. demographics, technology) that may affect your Department's buildings and/or services?

- Increasing traffic
    - has meant need for sidewalks and lights – trying to provide and failing due to lack of funding and lack of support
    - increase on demand of police parking lot

- Rental projects
    - are bringing in lower income residents, gang members and causing a variety of problems
    - 40B housing projects impact on services

- Diversity of population
    - Asian community, higher income, but not necessarily connected
    - Brazilian community, lower income, not plugged in
    - Need for bilingual services
    - Need to get used to different accents

- Demand for youth services

- Aging population: Increasing 60+ population (approx. 3,400 residents now)
    - Senior Center expansion project is being studied by a Task Force, exploring options for both outdoor and indoor space.
    - Projected future population: 6,000 seniors in 2030
    - Challenge to respond to needs for physical exercise, intellectual stimulation, and need for socializing
    - Increasingly culturally diverse group of seniors, language, culture
    - More requests for evening and weekend usage results in increased cost for staffing and utilities
    - Increasing traffic results in van driver driving for longer hours than before
    - Increasing real estate taxes is an issue for seniors on a fixed income
    - Fire Department feels the impact of the increasing aging population in an increase in EMS calls. Additional assisted living and senior housing projects is expected to increase these further.

- What about water and waste water services – what do people think about the need for these?

- Predict increasing demand for virtual town services in the future

    - This will save staff a lot of time if residents can take care of more and more on-line, especially researching records
    - May result in more need for public relations as town staff will be even more invisible than now
    - Need to reorganize due to changes in communications technology (e.g. shift from phones to e-mail); need to retrain staff
    - New challenges (e.g. keeping up with amount of e-mails)
    - Need to decide: "What are the core services we provide?" (e.g. safety net, public safety, etc.)
    - Document management systems
        - GIS will be a large self-service tool for staff, the public and real estate agents

- Increasing interest in "green" and sustainable development
    - is going to cost a lot more (and there doesn't seem to be additional sources of funding in the foreseeable future).
    - It also impacts the staff's workload.
    - How will we save energy? (streetlights, walking, etc.) and other such decisions that are difficult to make

- Aging infrastructure will need attention

- Desires regarding historic preservation and taking into account community character take time and there is not enough staff time available.

- It will be a challenge to complete Comprehensive Community Plan in such a way so that it is not just a "wish list"
    - Need to address action items in a realistic way
    - How can the town as an organization work most effectively and efficiently so that they don't get sidetracked from individual agendas and stay focused on larger goals

- Due to increasing cost of building there has been a recent trend which is expected to continue of more renovations than new construction. This requires a lot of staff time in helping to research issues.

- Cost of open space is very high
    - Need to prioritize parcels
    - Perhaps buying portions of properties is an answer
    - Fiscal impact analysis sometimes demonstrates that purchasing the parcel as open space is more cost effective than allowing it to develop as housing

- Increasing demand for recreation, increased demand on facilities, Nara, etc.
    - More and more recreation wanted locally
    - Demand for athletic fields

- Challenge to incorporate additional development, esp. 40B

- Challenge of public process derailing projects

- Need to respond to next generation and ways of communicating
    - Use of computers
    - 3-D imaging

- Library facing challenges including
    - Aging workforce
    - Need for more staff due to growing usage
    - Changes in technology are rapid, need to communicate these to staff and the public
    - Need for more opportunities for staff development
    - Language/diversity issues
    - Fear of vandalism and other behaviors (are increasing at the schools)

- Need for more schools – town cooperation
    - Should be more community service from the schools
    - Business class – could help out at town hall (a couple of people who grew up in Acton worked on the town census as students)

- "We need to focus on tomorrow's problems"
    - "We are reactive, spending too much time solving yesterday's problems"

- Need to do succession planning
    - "How will we attract younger people to do public service?" (used to be considered noble and dignified, no longer as much)

Appendix

Boards, Committees, & Commissions Focus Groups

Acton Today, Tomorrow, Together

Boards, Commissions, and Committees Session #1
June 25, 2008

Attendance

- Terry Maitland — Conservation Commission
- Mike Gowing — Council on Aging
- Pat Clifford — Finance Committee
- Herman Karakoff — Finance Committee
- Steve Noone — Finance Committee
- Anne Forbes — Historic District Commission
- Michaella Moran — Historic District Commission
- Jim Snyder-Grant — Land Stewardship Committee
- Carol Holly — Water Resources Advisory Committee (formerly member of East Acton Village Planning Committee
- Roland Bartl — Planning Director
- Daphne Politis — Planners Collaborative
- Jim Purdy — Planners Collaborative

Missions, Goals, and Issues

Members reported on their mission and the issues they are addressing

Conservation Commission

- Administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Act and Acton Wetlands Bylaw
- Town bylaw expanded setbacks in 2004 to 50 feet (no disturbance) and 75 feet (no structure)
- Problem exists of people building to the very edge of the setback, with later encroachment sometimes occurring
- Two subcommittees
- Open Space
- Land Stewardship
- Expect to make some “tweaks” in the bylaw but not major initiatives planned

- Enforcement is the key issue. Need adequate resources to identify and respond to violations of permits

Land Stewardship Committee

- 12 stewards care for 16 open space parcels
- Goals
  1. Preserve biodiversity and habitat
     a. Small, rare habitats more important in this respect than large common ones
     b. Large tracts generally support more diversity than small tracts – fewer pests and invasive species. (The Committee did a survey of invasives and a management plan to control them).
  2. Capture carbon by encouraging tree growth
  3. Create experiences to foster a love of nature by providing a variety of trails suited to different people

  Would like to document these more formally.

- Plan to do more to manage meadows and grasslands – need to do more research on how to do it properly

Finance Committee

- Nine members
- Gives it opinion to Town Meeting on all articles that affect the budget
- Maintains a long-range financial plan with a three-year horizon
- The Committee's goal is sustained improvement of the budget process.
- Acton's budget process is different from most of the nearby towns, e.g., there is not a separate capital budget, partly owing to the regional school district
- Biggest issue is increasing costs and demand for services and facilities while revenues are limited, particularly by 2-1/2 percent ceiling on annual property tax increases
- However, there are some things that people want that don't cost a lot of money.
- At town meeting, one is likely to hear from people who haven't participated in outreach process
- "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." – So it's good for the town to have a master plan.
- The Finance Committee is important in the town's priority setting process.

Historic District Commission

- Purpose: to maintain the historic character of Acton's three historic districts (Town Center, West Acton Village, and South Acton Village)
- Its mission is distinct from the Acton Historical Commission, which is concerned with the whole town and administers the Demolition Delay bylaw.
- The Town Center District extends through front yards all the way to Nagog Hill Road.
- The Commission is considering a demolition-by-neglect bylaw, perhaps paired with a fund for owners of historic homes to do maintenance and make improvements. (Cambridge is a model).
    - Needs careful consideration and drafting to address issues such as cost, form of financial assistance, and relationship to other town goals.

Council on Aging

- Projections show 11 percent increase in population by 2030 but 60% growth in the people 65 and over.
- Aging in place
- Projecting "senior enrollment" statistically speaking
- Goals of the council:
    - Outreach
    - Socialization
    - keeping seniors in their homes, active, and engaged
- Hope to expand the Senior Center and its programs
- Surveying people 50-65 who will move into the senior population
- Want to do more sophisticated computer training for seniors and involve them in projects

Green Team

- 9 participants, recently formed
- Goals are protecting Air and Water Quality
    - Land use and transportation are critical to this
- Would like town to consider density bonus for LEED certification
    - Develop local standards that mimic LEED but don't require bureaucracy and cost
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provides bonus in exchange for moving away from stream

- Question to consider: how do we zone in terms of density and usage to protect air and water and still get village centers
- Need to evaluate projects – Design Review board
- Relationship with Water District, which owns well-head protection land.
    - Water Protection Bylaw
- Challenges – standardize the protection zones between state definition and zoning overlay
    - Work with Acton and organizations
- Communications
    - Acton Neighborhood Network – phone calls with info on town events
    - School email lists
    - Audix – capability to call all homes in Acton
    - Explore uses – e.g. can form networks for groups such as seniors

Prioritizing

Potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

Issue	Votes
Preserving rural character	7
Enhancing neighborhoods	0
Enhancing village centers	1
Addressing high cost of living	4
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	3
Addressing traffic issues	5
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	3
Planning for sustainability	4
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	3
Addressing public transportation	1
Protecting historic resources	9

Acton Today, Tomorrow, Together

Boards, Commissions, and Committees Session #2 June 26, 2008

Attendance

- Franny Osman — Transportation Advisory Committee
- Bob Surdel — Acton Memorial Library Board of Trustees
- Lauren Rosenzweig — Economic Development Committee/Board of Selectmen
- Nick Francis — Economic Development Committee
- Nancy Tavernier — Acton Community Housing Corporation
- Kimberly Connors Hughes — Historical Commission
- Peter Grover — Historical Commission
- Bill Klauer — Historical Commission
- Paul Turner — Council on Aging
- Kristen Alexander — Planning Department
- Daphne Politis — Planners Collaborative
- Jim Purdy — Planners Collaborative

Missions, Goals, and Issues

Members reported on their mission and the issues they are addressing

Transportation Advisory Committee

- Review development re: transportation incl. biking/walking
- Shuttle bus to commuter rail and need for other public transportation
- Currently two vans M-F 8:30 – 3:30 for seniors/disabled
- Applying for suburban mobility funding CMAQ
    - More hours, more vans, fixed route service
    - Better coordination
    - Service entire population
- Need willingness to support with $
- Survey – online/assisted
    - Need to know what support might be there

Council on Aging

- When the Senior Center was planned, had considered including intergenerational space by combining it with Danny's Place, but the timing didn't work out.
- Study committee on age mixing
- Bringing legislators/Selectmen to visit and talk about seniors' questions and concerns
- Hope to work with Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas
- Potential for kids to interact with seniors – oral history - activities at Arboretum

Library

- Goals:
    - Access to all citizens
    - Managing expectation of the patrons
- Experiencing record number of visits, circulation, meeting room use
- Cultural days – Chinese, Indian, Russian, Brazilian – talks, dancing, performances, readings - very successful and well attended
- Future:
    - Civil War exhibit just opened (Community Preservation Act funds used)
    - Need staff hours – ½ million items, staff is pressed
    - 7th highest in state in library materials per library staffing
    - More technology to make more productive use of space and staff and meet expectations
    - Efficiency challenge
    - Maintaining facilities – HVAC, roof, etc.
- Did 5- year plan last year – Library Director Marcia Rich presented to Council on Aging
- Invited schools to take tours of library
- Chinese collection one of the best (developed from zero ten years ago)
- West Acton Community Library – elder program
- Held hugely popular lecture series (might be able to share town hall space in future)
- Room for Council on Aging coordination with library
- More large print books

Historical Commission

- Confused sometimes with Historic District Commission
- Maintains the town's cultural resource list
- Responsible for resources outside the historic districts

    - 5 properties on National Register of Historic Places
    - 500 on State Register
- Looking into National Register nomination of South Acton as an industrial mill complex
    - Listing on NR protects envelope but doesn't restrict use
    - First industrial complex in colonial America
- Look for new uses for historic buildings, e.g. Vaillaincourt House (as library annex?)
- Towne School as possible senior center
- Acton needs to retain look of a New England town
    - Avoid tear-downs – sustainable, maintains supply of potential starter homes
    - Tear-downs a major problem -
    - Have surveyed up to 1920s era – the inventory should extend forward to 1960s –
    - Housing stock age mix is important to community character
    - Need to enter inventory into a database
- Need to make people aware of cultural resources list and conduct public education on what it means
- Can add properties to list at Historical Commission's discretion
- Pressure from 40B developers – would like 12 months demolition delay in these cases
- Could achieve affordable housing goals through rehab of small houses
    - (Peter: 1/2 acre zoning has been biggest problem – 2 acre better)
- Need options for development that reuse existing housing stock
- Historic landscapes important, e.g. Morrison Farm and the Prison fields
- Heritage Landscape Inventory is great – need to pay attention to it
- Working with Concord to save Wright Holden House on Rte 2 near State Police from demolition during highway improvements to Concord Rotary

Acton Community Housing Corporation

- Often confused with Acton Housing Authority
- Mission: Promote and facilitate housing that is affordable to moderate income
- Priorities: (from "To Live in Acton" report)
    1. Affordable rental – low (50% of median income) and very low (30% of median)
    2. Affordable rental – low, moderate, senior and disabled
        - Purchased two condo units last year
        - 17 rental units in old Towne School
            - About to apply for 40B permit
            - Interested group of alumni of the school
        - 3 rental units at Assisted Living Facility – very low and low income

3. Affordable moderate income family owned units
   a. Town should look at inclusionary zoning – negotiable number of affordable units in new development
   b. Encourage friendly 40B's – ACHC permit policy
   c. Have recently saved a 60s Cape and a small ranch, working on others
   d. People will accept density if design is good
   e. Need Design Review Board to have more teeth/ need more coordination with them
   f. Property at corner of Arlington St. in West Acton Village coming up
   g. Design guidelines might be helpful – they need to be specific to each part of town
4. Affordable moderate income senior housing in variety of types and locations – two sales recently
5. Ownership units at below market 80 – 120 % of median ("workforce housing") – important gray area. MA Dept of Housing and Community Development making this a new priority.– Acton could be pilot.

Future:

- Condo buy-down program - Two garden apartments in past year – (however more of the demand is for townhouse units)
- Closing cost assistance for first time owners
- Education
- Land acquisition
- Aging– in-place capital fund

Board of Selectmen

Sponsoring this Acton outreach initiative

- Sustainability
- More diversity
- Support historic preservation

Village enhancement (siting of Sovereign Bank is an example)

Goals:

1. Greening Acton – protect environment, preserve resources, energy, reducing autos, walking, technology in buildings
2. Understandable budget process – 3-5 year financial plan
3. Acquisition of open space – water, farms, vistas
4. Limit resident growth

5. Support seniors

Economic Development Committee

- Began prior to 98 Update
- Interest in more shopping and commercial use – there was originally a balance of residential and commercial development, but residential growth outstripped business growth
- Identified areas for business, but rezoning not always successful
- Acton has recently become a desirable location for expansion of current businesses

Future:

- Considering becoming more active in specific developments
- Incentives to attract desirable development
- Form-based zoning
- Looking for synergy (e.g. Crossroads Mall helped by nearby Avalon development)
- Stability
- Diversity of uses
- Reach out to ethnic groups and support business development
- Educating businesses about Sign bylaw
- Seek more participation from organizations
    - Lions Club
    - Rotary
    - West Acton Merchants Association
    - Chamber of Commerce
- Need GIS
- Focus on people who work in Acton – how can they find ways to live here?
- Trade-off between small town feel vs. more use of technology in providing town services – less face-to-face contact with town employees may lessen public understanding of what they do and reduce support for them
- Patchwork of historic homes
- More cooperation, communication and outreach – preservation efforts
- Community service @ high school

Prioritizing

Potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

Issue	Votes
Preserving rural and historic characteristics	5
Enhancing neighborhoods	2
Enhancing village centers	5
Addressing high cost of living	1
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	5
Addressing traffic issues	1
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	2
Planning for sustainability	1
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	3
Increasing/supporting diversity	2
Acquiring open space	3

Acton Today, Tomorrow, Together

Boards, Commissions, and Committees Session #3 June 28, 2008

Attendance

- Bernice Baran Housing Authority
- Nancy Kolb Housing Authority
- Bob Whittlesey Housing Authority
- Steve Baran Council on Aging
- Brian Bendig Historic District Commission
- Bill Klauer Cemetery Commission
- Les Gerhardt Cemetery Commission
- Michael Fisher Transportation Advisory Commission
- Dick Calandrella ACCP Commission
- Peter J Berry Board of Selectmen
- Celia Kent Sidewalk Committee
- Paulina Knibbe Sidewalks, Senior Center Expansion
- Ann Sussman Design Review Board
- Daphne Politis Planners Collaborative
- Jim Purdy Planers Collaborative

Missions, Goals, and Issues

Members reported on their mission and the issues they are addressing

Acton Housing Authority

(See attached written statement)

- Owns 142 units – 2 locations with housing for elders and disabled residents at Windsor Ave. and Sachem Way
- Mission is to serve low (50% of median income) and very low income (30% of median) population
- 39 family units on Sachem way and scattered throughout Acton
- Housing for 12 disabled people in a house owned by the Housing Authority

- Family self-sufficiency program

- 155 local preference applicants on Section 8 rental housing assistance program waiting list and 25 on the elderly housing waiting list
- Hope to add more units at Sachem Way
- Want the Master Plan to include an explicit statement of the goal to increase affordable housing
- Most suburban towns have policies that discourage diversity, Acton is an exception
- Challenge to create sense of community -
- There is a tremendous amount of diversity and support for it

Council on Aging

(See attached goals statement)

- Council on Aging refers to both the COA Board and the Senior Center
- Senior Center has sense of vibrancy, modern feeling
- COA goals for seniors are a full quality of life and connection to the community

Objectives for the future:

1. Outreach to ethnic and cultural roots
   Friends of CoA sponsors activities of this kind
2. Accommodate baby boomers
   They did a survey with 490 responses
   Physical activity is a major interest– T'ai Chi, aerobics, etc
3. Response to caretaker needs
   CoA has a social worker to help families with elders
4. Create a green center
   Senior Center on bird flyway, try to provide opportunities to enjoy nature
5. Advocacy to prevent elder abuse – neglect, battering, financial abuse
6. Need for expansion – 65 and over population growing rapidly:

1994	2000
2006	3000
2020	4400

Therefore will need more space, more programs

- Senior Center expansion group
- Current center is inadequate in size for current seniors – fastest growing demographic group in town by far
- Town goal is to keep seniors in the community – better quality of life for them, and it improves economic vitality

- Challenge for the Future 10-20 years

- What would encourage them to stay?
    - Core central values
    - Maintain web of social connections - changes with life changes
    - Continue to be useful
- Three Choices for Senior Center

1. Remodel existing center – value proposition good for 4-5 years
2. Lease space in vacant commercial buildings good for 5-10 years
3. New building – best in long run

    A number of potential sites
    Multiple uses for community

Historic District Commission

- Different from Historical Commission (which is town-wide)
- Regulatory/permitting group for the town's three historic districts – 190 parcels
- Formed 1990 under Ch40C of the Mass. General Laws
- Historic resources and character very important/central to town
- East Acton station master's house saved by town
- Tremendous commitment of resources, including CPA funds (1-1/2%)
    - Town Hall and monument have been restored and maintained
- Robust commitment to enforcing bylaw
- Attention given to Exchange Hall
- Goal: want to expand the districts in size and number
- HDC is all-volunteer; no staff – but will need it if expansion occurs
- Chapter P refers to town-wide resources
- Two buildings in West Acton Village currently in demolition delay

Goal: Enact a demolition-by-neglect bylaw – need to educate the public and encourage an attitude among homeowners to maintain their historic property

Issues

1. Protect town history and character
2. Minimize aesthetic degradation of environment

Cemetery Commission

- Three cemeteries:
    - Woodlawn (1737)
      Original plan to expand into adjacent soccer field
      Alternative is to move to Morrison Farm
      Expanding into woods would be expensive
    - South Acton
    - Mt.Hope

- Enough property North, off Rte 27, to suffice for many years to come
- Maintaining grounds, historic buildings and tombs
- Complaints of dogs in cemeteries, especially with elderly and children
- Plan to expand as needed – soccer field and woodland
- Need facility to house vehicles and maintenance equipment
- Cemetery roads need repair
- Environmental damage to head stones
  1820-1890 marble stones – eroding
  Deer damage to vegetation
- People are not buying lots up front any more – loss of income for Commission

Board of Selectmen

- Priority: Sustainability
    - Walkability
    - Bike paths

  Cultural change needed
- Kelley's Corner – potential new town center. Could look like W. Concord.
- South Acton: Exchange Hall is a large issue
- Want to change town from automobile friendly to people friendly

Sidewalk Committee

- Established criteria – priority list of improvements
- Funding, implementation are key
- Limitations: $ and staff time
- Need plan
- Going back to Town Meeting with next step
- Negotiating easements with land owners

Design Review Board

- Overall goal: make design and building more human – centered
- Design Review Guidelines, May 2007, for commercial development – would like to get form-based zoning in place and to be consistent with concept
- Sidewalks
    - Develop links b/w destination
    - Inter-relate with other committees
- Increase of commercial development
- Planning and educating for sustainability needs to be inter-generational

Prioritizing

Potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

Issue	Votes
Preserving rural and historic character	9
Enhancing neighborhoods	0
Enhancing village centers	6
Addressing high cost of living	3
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	4
Addressing traffic issues	5
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	3
Planning and educating for sustainability	5
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	4
Supporting diversity – socioeconomic, and cultural	5
Get movie house in Acton	1

Acton elder quest - Vision 2008 - notes

"We're seniors walking for health and for fun..

"We're seniors surfing the Net, emailing grandchildren in Australia, getting tickets online, organizing our finances on spreadsheets, learning to use our new digital cameras.

We're seniors learning French, listening to Broadway composers and operas, creating heirloom quilts, discussing major world issues, showing our creative side."

Friends of the Council on Aging

Mission - enabling elderly to enjoy a full quality of life and remain connected to the community.

Goal - undertake outreach to varied ethnic and cultural groups - Chinese, Indian - students.

Goal - accommodating baby boomers - 60+ - exercise - tai chi - aerobics - intellectual and educational programs.

Goal - responding to caretaker needs - parents, spouses, friends and themselves.

Goal - creating a green center - birds, plants, flowers.

Goal - advocacy - real estate property taxes, elderly abuse.

Goal - expansion - responding to increases in population and more varied space requirements.

Steve Baran (Council on Aging board) and Paulina Knibbe - Expansion Committee

PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

I am here as a member of the Board of the Acton Housing Authority to address the need for affordable housing in Acton.

First a little background on the Housing Authority. Established in 1970, the Housing Authority is funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is part of the Department of Housing and Community Development's efforts to provide affordable housing throughout the state. In Acton, the Housing Authority owns 142 units of state aided housing and also provides 170 rental subsidies These include rental units for elderly and/or handicapped individuals on Windsor Ave. and Sachem Way. In addition, there are 39 family units, twelve of which are located in our family development on Sachem Way and 27 in condominium apartments scattered through Acton. There are also 12 disabled people living in a house owned by the Housing Authority. Preference is always given to Acton residents for housing. There is a five person Board, 4 of whom are elected, which is responsible for setting policy and establishing financial oversight.

The town of Acton has supported the Housing Authority through making grants of Community Preservation funds. These have been used for capital improvements and support services. The Authority is particularly proud of its Family Sufficiency Program which has assisted many families in their lives. Several families have been able to move from our housing into first time home ownership.

The Housing Authority strives to maintain attractive, quality units for its residents. It has its own maintenance staff. Tenants have planted and maintained gardens within the developments.

There is a steady stream of Acton residents who are applying to us for housing. We have recently housed two families with children who had grown up in this community and were at risk of homelessness. Out of the last 6 family units 5 were provided to Acton-Boxborough families. All of the senior units have gone to Acton residents. We have 155 local preference applicants on our Section 8 waiting list and 25 people on our elderly waiting list.

The present goal of the Housing Authority is to increase the stock of affordable housing in Acton. We are therefore exploring the possibility of adding units to property we own on Sachem Way. We are hopeful that the community will support us in this endeavor.

We believe that the town benefits from having quality housing for its diverse economic populations. We are therefore hopeful that the Comprehensive Community Plan will include an explicit statement that increasing affordable housing is one of its goals.

Bernice Baran

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN
BOARDS, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS
JUNE 28, 2008 10:00 AM SIGN-IN SHEET

NAME	COMMITTEE	E-MAIL OR PHONE
Bill Klauor	Cemetery Commission	
Ann Sussman	Design Review Board	
BRIAN BENDIG	HISTORIC DISTRICT COMM'N	
NANCY KOLB	HOUSING ANTHORITY	
Bob Whittlesey	" "	rbwhittlesey@verizon.net
Bernie Baran	Housing Authority	tara45555@aol.com
STEVE BARAN	COUNCIL ON AGING	
Michael Fisher	Transportation Advisory Comm.	mgfisher2020@comcast.net
Pauline Knibbe	Sidewalks, Sr Ctr Expansion	p.knibbe@comcast.net
Les Gerhardt	Cemetery	Lengerhardt@comcast.net
DICK CALANDRELLA	ACCP COMM	DICKCALANDRELLA@EARTHLINK.NET 978-263-2867
Celia Kent	Sidewalk	celia_kent@harvard.edu
Peter J. Berry	Selectman	PJberry@comcast.net

Acton Design Review Board – Visioning '08

Acton Design Review Board – Visioning ‘08

Acton Design Review Board – Visioning '08

What are Design Review Guidelines?

- A collection of Design Standards & Concepts that promote town 'character' and overall health & economic viability;
- DRGs cover architectural features, including facades as well as scale, building siting, signage & landscaping & pedestrian accessibility;
- They augment zoning codes; unlike codes, they often have lots of photos & drawings – they show 'the vision';

Town of Acton

Design Review Guidelines

for Commercial Development

February 2007

PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines are to:

- **Streamline the approval process for commercial development**
- **Promote attractive development of commercial areas**
- **Preserve and enhance the New England character of the Town's commercial centers and thoroughfares**
- **Relate commercial properties both visually and physically with surrounding land uses**
- **Facilitate a more healthful and walk-able suburban atmosphere that integrates pedestrian needs with those of drivers**
- **Protect property values by enhancing the Town's appearance.**

Acton's character is defined by its 19th century village centers and rural New England roots. Successful future development should respect this special past by using contextual sensitive building design with appropriate materials, scale, massing and site planning. Acton has three historic village centers, as well as rural and commercial areas that each have a unique visual context. The following guidelines outline site and building components for successful commercial development throughout the town.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Building Placement on Site

New structures should present their main entrance and storefront to the public street and be located no further from the front lot line than adjacent structures on either side of the proposed location. Create a unified and consistent alignment of building facades that define and address the street. Locating the building closer to the street will preserve more open space and also permit more space behind it for parking and service access.

Building Massing/Scale

With the objective of maintaining a small town character buildings should appear to be modest in scale relating to the scale of the immediate context if appropriate. Reduce the apparent scale of the building by introducing small scaled architectural features, creating of an irregular footprint and breaking the roofscape with dormers, gables or changes in roof direction. Avoid long expanses of repetitive architectural elements, and flat unarticulated wall surfaces.

Existing Structures

Existing buildings and structures of historic value should be preserved and if renovated and expanded done so in a manner that is respectful of the character, features and details of the existing structure. Historic structures are valuable contributors to the Town's character and should be preserved in their original location if possible. Refer to the U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures.

TOWN OF ACTON — DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

Parking
Where possible locate parking behind the structure to allow the building to be in closer proximity to the street. This is important for encouraging greater density along the street, creating a more appealing pedestrian environment, and permitting more space for parking and service access. In all cases screen parking with a landscape buffer to minimize its visual impact . Refer to the Zoning Bylaws regarding layout and other design requirements.

Sidewalks
Well designed walkways are critical to creating a pedestrian friendly experience. Where building setbacks permit, separate sidewalks from the street with a landscaped buffer. Buildings entrances, parking areas, and important public spaces should be directly served by sidewalks. Refer to Acton's Sidewalk Design Guidelines.

Signage
Building signage should be appropriately scaled to the building or surface onto which it is placed, should not obscure important architectural features and should be readable for both pedestrians and drivers approaching the site. Acton has comprehensive signage regulations within its Zoning Bylaws that provide further detailed requirements.

Storefronts
Well designed storefronts add vitality to the streetscape encouraging business as well as pedestrian traffic. Retail storefronts should make generous use of glass, face the street or sidewalk and not be obstructed by piers or other features that block view of the display windows. Carefully designed awnings coupled with appropriately scaled signage and lighting will further enhance the storefront's appearance. To the extent possible, storefronts should be continuous, and uninterupted to maximize its frontage on the public way.

Lighting
Acton has adopted a lighting bylaw that encourages energy conservation and eliminates extraneous light that can spill offsite or cause glare. Select pedestrian-scaled light fixtures appropriate to building type and location. Avoid the use of floodlighting, wall packs and tall light posts intended for lighting large areas.

Windows and Doors
With the exception of retail storefronts, modestly scaled vertically proportioned windows articulated with muntins are most appropriate to the the local building vernacular. Building facades should have an abundance of windows and doors that use clear nonreflective glass. Windows on higher floors should align vertically with windows below if possible. Building entrances should be architecturally prominent, protected from the weather and address the street or primary pedestrian pathway.

Landscaping
Thoughtfully designed landscaping appropriate to the context of a small New England town should include the careful use of stone walls, wood fencing, paving materials and plantings. These features can tie a structure to its landscape, define spaces and make for a pleasant pedestrian experience. Preserve mature plantings, stone walls and other other historic features where possible and minimize modifications to the natural topography of the site.

Plantings
Indigenous planting appropriate to the context should be used and placed in a manner that appears natural and integrated into the landscape. Avoid State listed invasive plant materials. Planting should be grouped to include a variety of types and scale from trees, shrubs, perennials and ground cover. Planting should be used to define spaces, shade pedestrian spaces, soften buildings and to create buffers between public spaces and roads, parking areas and mechanical equipment.

Public Spaces
Development should strive to create appealing public spaces and provide pedestrian access and connections to existing public amenities via sidewalks, covered walkways, and lawns. Provide public amenities that invite public use such as benches, water features, and shaded gathering spaces. The character materials and scale of buildings that front public spaces play a vital role in the quality of the space created. In order to strengthen the definition of the public spaces buildings should maximize their frontage on the street and public spaces that they abut.

Roofs
It is characteristic of traditional New England architecture and smaller scaled structures that roofs be sloped and articulated with dormers, chimneys, gables, cupolas, etc. Larger structures likewise can benefit from a similar treatment that will break-up the massing into appropriately scaled elements. Avoid large flat roofed areas or conceal them behind parapets or sections of sloped roof.

Materials
There is a strong preference for authentic natural materials such as wood, brick, and stone for the exterior of structures and landscape features. Construct windows, storefronts and public doorways of wood where possible. Synthetic materials should be as close in appearance and detail to the natural material it simulates.

Mechanical Equipment
Conceal utilities and mechanical equipment from public view. If possible utilities should be placed below grade, ventilation equipment enclosed within the building envelope or concealed by parapets, and service areas and dumpsters enclosed and located away from public view.

For further information contact:

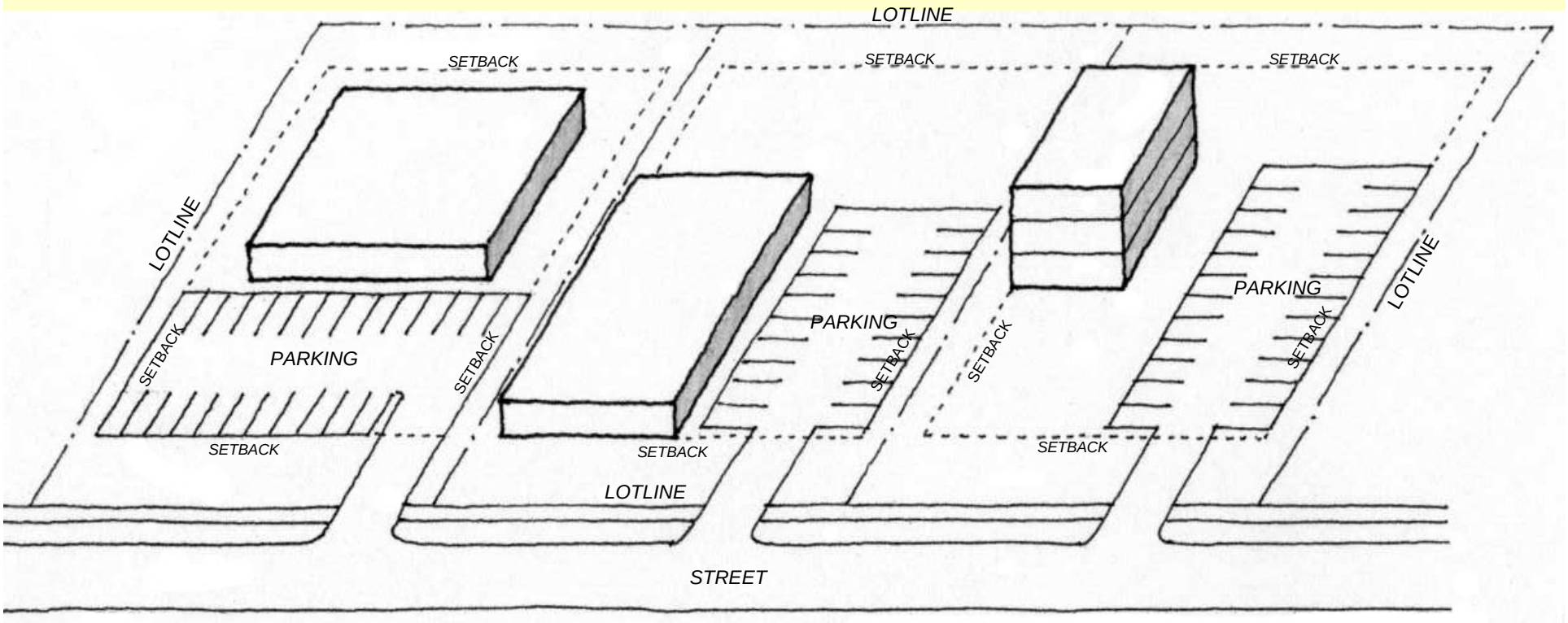
The Design Review Guidelines Committee
drgc@acton-ma.gov

Town Hall
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

The commercial center in Mashpee, on Cape Cod, developed with Design Review Guidelines, in the late 1980s…

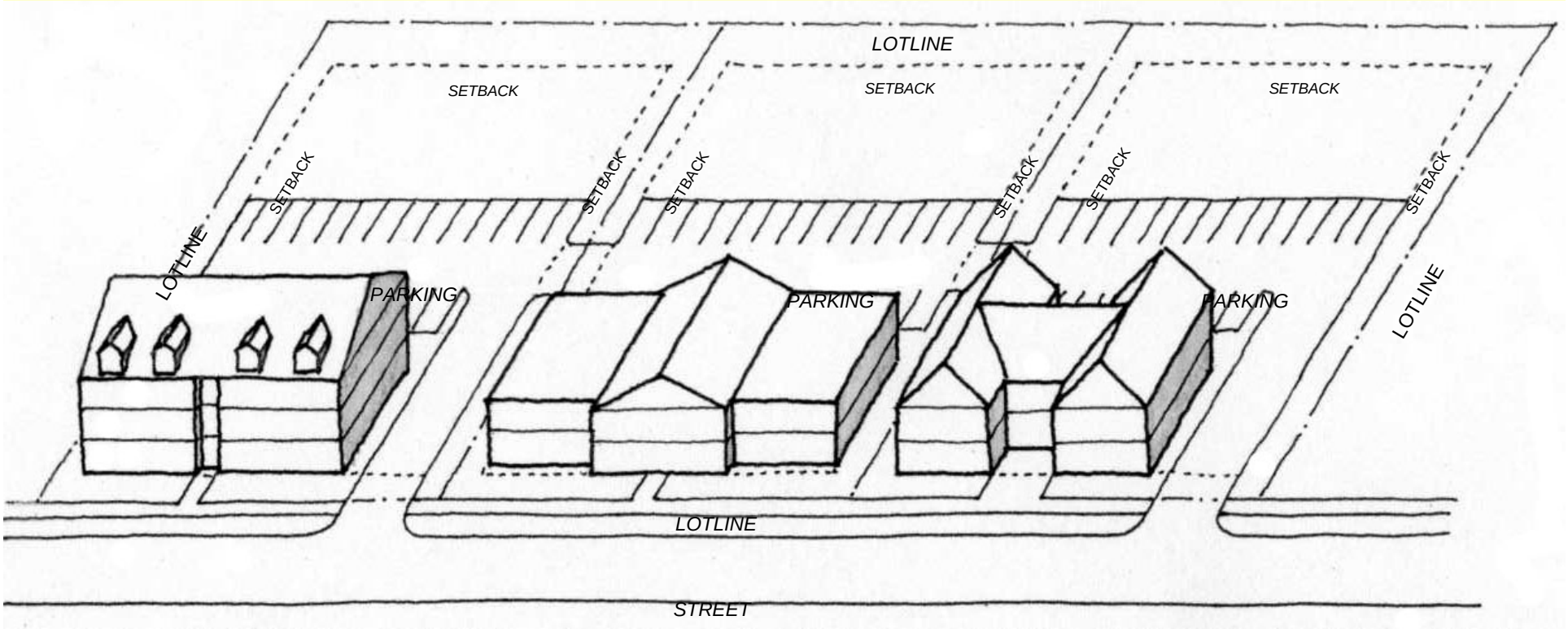
The commercial center in Mashpee in the 1970s, *before* design review guidelines…

Lexington's Center commercial district adopted Design Review Guidelines in 1990…



Pro Forma based on Current Bylaw for village districts (except WAV):

- .20 FAR (.40 allowed at KC)
- 30' min front yard setback (10' at EAV, NAV, SAV)
- 10' min side yard setback
- 1 parking space for 250sf office, 300sf retail
- Parking allowed in front (side only at SAV, EAV)
- 24' Access drive required on each lot



Form based Zoning based on the following:

- .40 FAR
- 10' front yard setback (mandated)
- 10' side yard setback (maximize frontage)
- 1 parking space for 500sf office and retail
- Parking allowed in back only
- Shared Access Drives
- Entrances on Street, connected to public sidewalk
- Encourage multistory, mixed use buildings

Form-based codes are drafted to achieve a community vision based on time-tested forms of urbanism.

Promoting business districts that are safe and pleasant to walk in…and fit with residential areas…

Acton

Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Appendix

Surveys

Survey of Acton Residents

March, April and May, 2008

1. Introduction

As part of the Acton Comprehensive Plan Outreach efforts, a survey of attitudes, values and opinions about the future of Acton, was conducted in March, April and May, 2008. All town residents were sent a mail-out/mail-back postage-paid survey form in April. In March the survey form was posted on a website, encouraging Acton residents to fill it out electronically. 335 returns were obtained electronically. Of the 9,438 survey forms mailed out 1,141 were mailed back (or in case of a few, brought back to Town Hall). The combined total of 1,476 returns (website and mail-back) represents a 15.6% return rate. Publicity was done via newspapers, notices and meeting announcements to help increase the return rate. The original deadline for mailing back returns was extended from April 11th into May to encourage more returns.

The survey was developed through a process of determining topics for questioning from public and committee meetings, then preparing a draft for review by a subcommittee of the entire outreach project. Eight redrafts of the survey were prepared through review by the subcommittee resulting in a final two-page survey for sending out. This form was printed on two sides of a large sheet of heavy paper that could be folded, taped shut, and mailed out and mailed back with postage paid in both directions. The survey was addressed to Resident, Acton, MA 01720 (and 01718 for Nagog Woods) and sorted by 21 mail routes for delivery at a bulk-rate by the U. S. Postal Service. It is an anonymous survey with no way to identify who sent back returns.

The survey is comprised of seven multi-part questions, which contain a mixture of multiple-choice responses and open-ended comment type responses. Sixty-four separate items of information are asked for in the survey. Three of the questions are socio-economic status items that allow comparison with U. S. Census data to check the relative representativeness (compared to the town as a whole) of the survey returns. These three items are age, annual income and ethnicity. There was no attempt to identify which part of town survey respondents live in, as there was in the Open Space and Recreation Survey done in January and February, 2008. There was a conscious attempt not to duplicate questions asked in that survey, and not to duplicate questions asked in an earlier survey done to help make decisions about a Senior Center, and finally, not to duplicate information in the Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report for Acton.

1,476 returns are associated with an error rate of +/- 2.6%. This means the percent result reported for each item may vary by as much as +/- 2.6% if 1,476 answers were given. Because in most cases not all respondents answered all questions, fewer than 1,476 responses were received for many questions. It is therefore advisable to think in terms of a +/- 3% error rate, which is quite acceptable for a survey of this type. Very many of the answers given varied from each other by more than 6% (3% error for two items being compared), indicating that the survey gives a significant and accurate accounting of how two items are valued. It is important to point

out that the survey results do not meet the test of randomness, which is a requirement for an absolute accounting when inferring that results of a survey represent the results that would be obtained if all the residents of Acton had responded. It is likely that a self-selection process occurred which resulted in most returns being sent in by those most interested in Acton and its government. This is similar to the conditions that surround our local, state and national elections where only a limited number of voters turn out to vote.

Randomness is defined as each member of a group being surveyed (residents of the Town of Acton) having an equal chance to be selected to provide a return. This test was met in the Phone Survey described in another report. In that survey some of the same topics as those in the Resident Mail-Out Survey were covered, giving a chance to better determine public opinion.

Tables below show how well the age, income and ethnicity characteristics of Residential Mail-Out Survey respondents match those characteristics of the entire population of Acton (as measured in the 2000 U. S. Census which is now 8 years old).

Survey % Distribution by Age Groups Compared with the Town as a Whole

Age Group	18-30	31-45	46-65	66-80	81+	Total
Survey %	2.5	31.8	48.7	13.8	3.2	100.0
Town %	12.4	38.5	37.1	9.1	2.9	100.0

Survey % Distribution of Annual Household Income Compared with the Town as a Whole

Income Group	$10-40K	$41-70K	$71-100K	$101-131K	$131K +	Total
Survey %	6.7	12.1	16.1	21.5	43.6	100.0
Town %	15.5	23.7	14.4	21.7	24.7	100.0

Survey % Distribution of Ethnic Heritage Compared with the Town as a Whole

Ethnic Heritage Group	Survey %	Town %
African	0.2	0.7
East Asian	7.4	6.4
European	62.9	84.9
Latino	0.9	2.7
Middle Eastern	1.0	0.8
Native-American	1.8	0.3
South Asian	4.5	2.2
Mixed Heritage	2.7	1.5
Other Heritage	10.5	0.6
Preferred not to Answer	8.1	- - - -
Total	100.0	100.1

Source for Town Data: 2000 U. S. Census of Population

In some cases the survey percentages within the data groups agree well with town percentages. In other cases there are fairly large differences, such as the over representation of high income respondents, and the under representation of respondents of European ethnic heritage. Some of these differences can be attributed to the different time periods of the data. The survey was taken in 2008 and the town data is from the 2000 Federal Census. Since 2000 Acton town officials have noticed that more people from South and East Asia have moved into town. Also, income has increased since 2000. Overall the survey seems to represent the population of Acton fairly well.

The survey questions are contained on the following pages, and the results of the survey are given on pages following that. The physical format of the survey was altered to meet the needs of both the mail-out and website applications, but the questions and the language are as shown on the following pages.

2. **ACTON RESIDENT SURVEY** Comprehensive Community Plan, Outreach

The Town would like to hear from you about how you would like Acton to further evolve over the next 5 to 10 years. **We want to know the features, services and characteristics of the Town you value and would like to preserve and enhance.** This survey is designed to help town officials better understand how our townspeople feel about Acton's future. Please send it back to the Planning Office in the Town Hall at 472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720 by April 11th. Thank you. **Individuals will not be identified in this survey.** This survey is intended to supplement, not duplicate, information already received in the Open Space and Recreation Survey and in the Historic Landscape Reconnaissance Report. This survey is available on the Internet Web at http://www.ActonOutreach.com, or copies can be made of this form and sent in with the original in case more than one person in a household wants to complete the survey.

1. Check the **three** most important assets you feel Acton has (qualities you like). Add any you think are missing.

___ diversity of activities, including open and wooded land, homes and businesses
___ history, historic architecture
___ small town appeal with large town features
___ rural character, agricultural land
___ sense of community
___ easy access to highways
___economic and ethnic diversity of population
___friendly, welcoming small town feel
___schools
___commuter rail transportation
___conservation land
___Other: _____
___Other:_____

2. Check the **three** most important challenges you feel face Acton (qualities you do not like). Add any you think are missing:

___ lack of continuous pedestrian/bike paths
___ lack of opportunities for casual social interactions
___ traffic
___ isolation
___ lack of walkable shopping districts
___high cost of living in Acton
___lack of range of retail shopping opportunities
___lack of range of restaurants
___lack of range of employment opportunities
___lack of parking in commercial areas
___erosion of town character
___Other: _____
___Other:_____

3. Which of the following would you like to see more of in Acton? Please circle one for each item. If you would like to comment on any one of these, please do so at the end of the survey in the last two questions.

Open space, e.g., trails, meadows, woods, recreation areas	Yes	No	No Opinion
Detached single family homes	Yes	No	No Opinion
Attached single family homes, e.g., duplexes, town houses	Yes	No	No Opinion
Historic homes protected and preserved	Yes	No	No Opinion
Apartments	Yes	No	No Opinion
Affordable housing	Yes	No	No Opinion

Shops and services, e.g., food stores, doctors, pharmacies, hardware stores, apparel stores, automotive services?	A Little More Variety	A Lot More Variety	Stay the Same

Restaurants e.g., fast food, family, gourmet, ethnic, function?	A Little More Variety	A Lot More Variety	Stay the Same
Employers, e.g., industrial, retail, services?	A Little More Variety	A Lot More Variety	Stay the Same
Mix of historic and new homes and buildings?	A Little More Variety	A Lot More Variety	Stay the Same
Cultural activities in Acton, e.g., community theater, art exhibits, Discovery Museum, concerts, media (Channel 8), music venues?	A Little More Variety	A Lot More Variety	Stay the Same
Diversity of population in Acton, e.g., socio-economic, ethnic, age groups?	A Little More Variety	A Lot More Variety	Stay the Same

4. What makes Acton Unique? (Open-ended question)

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Do you feel there are enough town or other public services in Acton to meet the needs of residents of all ages? (Please circle one) Yes No No Opinion

If not, which public services needs are unmet: Please list. _____ _____
_____ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____ _____

Which age category needs are unmet? Young Children Teens Young Adults Middle Age People Active Seniors Older Seniors

6. **Environment**

The Town government would like to know if you think protecting the environment should be a priority and what types of activities you would be willing to support.

Do you think Acton should actively reduce greenhouse gases[1]? Yes No No Opinion

Are you willing to support Acton taking action in reducing greenhouse gases providing it doesn't cost too much? Yes No No Opinion

If yes, what type of actions do you think the town should take? Check as many as you favor.

___adopt a proclamation supporting greenhouse gas reduction
___publicize the issue to promote greater public awareness of the problem and solutions
___invest in making public buildings more energy efficient
___provide more safe-bicycle and walking trails/lanes and sidewalks
___implement a "non-idling policy" for municipal and school vehicles
___offer incentives to encourage homeowners and businesses to take appropriate actions

[1] Gases that increase the temperature of the earth's surface. They include water vapor, tropospheric ozone, chlorofluorocarbons, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

___increase recycling efforts
___promote less dependence on cars (for example, promote new bus and van options)
___Other:_____
_____
_____

7. **Questions of Fact** Please circle one

Do you do most of your outside-the home shopping (excluding mail-order and e-mail shopping) in Acton? Less than 25% About 50% More than 50% Almost all

Do you work? Full-time Part-time Not employed

If yes, where do you work?* In Acton Outside of Acton

Would you like to work in Acton? Yes No No Opinion

How well do you know at least three of your neighbors? Very Well Well Just Acquaintances Not At All

Were you involved in a volunteer activity over the last 12 months? Yes No

If yes what type of volunteer activities? Town Schools Church
Other:_____
_____

What limits or restricts your involvement? Check all that apply.

__ lack of time
__ not sure exactly what to do
__ not sure how to find information
___language
___lack of transportation
___Other:_____
_____

What kinds of things can the Town do to increase involvement of its residents?
_____
_____
_____

How long have you lived in Town? 1 – 5 Years 6 – 10 Years 11 - 15 Years 16+ Years

How long do you plan to remain in Acton? 1 – 5 Years 6 – 10 Years 11+ Years Don't Know

What is your age category?* 18– 30 Years 31–45 Years 46–65 Years 66–80 Years 81+ Years

What is your annual household income category?* (In Thousands) $10-$40 $41–$70 $71-$100 $101-$130 $131+

What is your ethnic heritage?* African East Asian European Latino Middle Eastern Native-American South Asian Mixed Other: _____ Prefer not to answer

What would you like to see **more** of in Acton?
_____
_____
_____

What would you like to see **less** of in Acton?
_____

*These questions are asked so we may judge how well the survey responses match socio-economic data provided by the U. S. Census 8 years ago. **Remember, no individuals will be identified in this survey.**

Results of the combined website and mail-out survey returns are shown on the following pages. First the summarized results for each multiple-choice question is shown with the absolute number of responses and percentages each choice represents of all responses. Then the results of the open-ended questions are shown with a tally of number of times key words were mentioned. Then a complete listing of all the verbal open-ended responses is included.

3. **Combined Mail-Out and Website Residential Survey Results for Multiple Choice Questions**

Three Most Important Assets	No.	%
diversity of activities, including open and wooded land, homes and businesses	467	10.9
history, historic architecture	293	6.8
small town appeal with large town features	336	7.8
rural character, agricultural land	218	5.1
sense of community	300	7.0
easy access to highways	391	9.1
economic and ethnic diversity of population	206	4.8
friendly, welcoming small town feel	193	4.5
schools	1005	23.4
commuter rail transportation	390	9.1
conservation land	408	9.5
Other	84	2.0
Total	4291	100.0

Three Most Important Challenges	No.	%
lack of continuous pedestrian/bike paths	642	15.2
lack of opportunities for casual social interactions	176	4.2
traffic	684	16.2
isolation	52	1.2
lack of walkable shopping districts	362	8.6
high cost of living in Acton	854	20.3
lack of range of retail shopping opportunities	163	3.9
lack of range of restaurants	377	8.9
lack of range of employment opportunities	104	2.5
lack of parking in commercial areas	51	1.2
erosion of town character	371	8.8
Other	381	9.0
Total	4217	100.0

Which would you like to see more of in Acton?	Yes	%	No	%	No Opinion	%	Totals
Open space (For Example, trails, meadows, woods, recreation areas)	1101	82.7	114	8.6	117	8.8	1332
Detached single family homes	346	25.6	724	53.6	282	20.9	1352
Attached single family homes (For example, duplexes, town houses)	198	14.8	892	66.5	251	18.7	1341
Historic homes protected and preserved	1025	74.0	128	9.2	233	16.8	1386
Apartments	106	7.6	1056	75.7	233	16.7	1395
Affordable housing	554	40.8	551	40.5	254	18.7	1359

What additionally would you like to see more of in Acton?	A little more variety	%	A lot more variety	%	Stay the same	%	Totals
Shops and services (For example, food stores, doctors, pharmacies, hardware stores, apparel stores, automotive services)	396	29.2	207	15.3	751	55.5	1354
Restaurants (For example, fast food, family, gourmet, ethnic, function)	516	37.7	363	26.5	490	35.8	1369
Employers (For example, industrial, retail, services)	440	32.8	202	15.1	699	52.1	1341
Mix of historic and new homes and buildings?	207	15.8	81	6.2	1019	78.0	1307
Cultural activities in Acton (For example, community theater, art exhibits, Discovery Museum, concerts, media/Channel 8, music venues)	583	42.8	235	17.3	543	39.9	1361
Diversity of population in Acton (For example, socio-economic, ethnic, age groups)	328	24.7	158	11.9	842	63.4	1328

How well do you know at least three of your neighbors?	Very Well	Well	Just Acqu-aintances	Not at All	Total
Number	429	407	449	82	1367
%	31.4	29.8	32.8	6.0	100.0

Do you feel there are enough Town or other public services in Acton to meet the needs of residents of all ages?	Yes	No	No Opinion	Total
Number	672	428	230	1330
%	50.5	32.2	17.3	100.0

Which age category needs are unmet?	Young Children	Teens	Young Adults	Middle Age People	Active Seniors	Older Seniors	Total
Number	84	186	130	153	181	161	895
%	9.4	20.8	14.5	17.1	18.0	20.2	100.0

Should Acton actively reduce greenhouse gases?	Yes	No	No Opinion	Total
Number	1035	171	186	1392
%	74.4	12.3	13.4	100.0

Are you willing to support Acton taking action in reducing greenhouse gases providing it doesn't cost too much?	Yes	No	No Opinion	Total
Number	1106	166	121	1393
%	79.4	11.9	8.7	100.0

If yes, what type of actions should the Town take?	No.	%
adopt a proclamation supporting greenhouse gas reduction	455	8.0
publicize the issue to promote greater public awareness of the problem and solutions	625	11.0
invest in making public buildings more energy efficient	722	12.7
provide more safe-bicycle and walking trails/lanes and sidewalks	773	13.5
implement a “non-idling policy” for municipal and school vehicles	647	11.3
offer incentives to encourage homeowners to take appropriate actions	685	12.0
offer incentives to encourage businesses to take appropriate actions	288	5.0
increase recycling efforts	740	13.0
promote less dependence on cars (for example, promote new bus and van options)	598	10.5
Other	173	3.0
Total	5706	100.0

Do you do most of your outside-the-home shopping in Acton?	Under 25%	About 50%	Over 50%	Almost All	Total
Number	325	446	363	215	1349
%	24.1	33.1	26.9	15.9	100.0

Do you Work?	Full-Time	Part-Time	Not Employed	Total
Number	800	268	322	1390
%	57.6	19.3	23.2	100.0

If yes, where do you work?	In Acton	Outside Acton	Total
Number	254	701	955
%	26.6	73.4	100.0

Would you like to work in Acton?	Yes	No	No Opinion	Total
Number	578	184	351	1113
%	51.9	16.5	31.5	100.0

Were you involved in a volunteer activity over the last 12 months?	Yes	No	Total
Number	864	487	1351
%	64.0	36.0	100.0

If yes, what type of volunteer activities?	Town	School	Church	Other	Total
Number	227	356	179	211	973
%	23.3	36.6	18.4	21.7	100.0

How long have you lived in Acton?	1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	11 - 15 Years	16 Years or More	Total
Number	295	275	206	604	1380
%	21.4	19.9	14.9	43.8	100.0

How long do you plan to remain in Acton?	1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	11 Plus Years	Don' t Know	Total
Number	160	213	413	518	1304
%	12.3	16.3	31.7	39.7	100.0

What is your age category?	18 - 30	31 - 45	46 - 65	66 - 80	81 Plus	Total
Number	35	436	668	190	44	1373
%	2.5	31.8	48.7	13.8	3.2	100.0

What is your annual household income category?	$10 - 40 thousand	$41 - 70 thousand	$71 - 100 thousand	$101-131 thousand	$131,000 Plus	Total
Number	87	158	209	280	567	1301
%	6.7	12.1	16.1	21.5	43.6	100.0

What is your ethnic heritage?	Number	%
African	2	0.2
East Asian	97	7.4
European	822	62.9
Latino	12	0.9
Middle Eastern	13	1.0
Native-American	23	1.8
South Asian	59	4.5
Mixed	35	2.7
Prefer not to Answer	106	8.1
Other	137	10.5
Total	1306	100.0

4. Frequency of Mentions in Open-Ended Questions

What makes Acton Unique?	Mentions	What public service needs are unmet?	Mentions	What can Town do to increase volunteer involvement?	Mentions
1. Schools	201	1. Transportation	98	1. Publicize	29
2. Small Town	50	2. Trash/Garbage	56	2. Website	18
3. Rural	43	3. Senior/Elderly	45	3. Information/Commun-icate	15
4. Location	35	4. Sidewalks	20	3. Taxes	15
5. Population	34	5. Parking	18	5. List	14
6. Access	33	5. Sewer	18	6. Promote	11
6. History	33	7. Teen	10	7. Events	10
8. Taxes	23	8. Bike	9	8. Reach-Out/Outreach	8
9. Services	20	9. Social Services	8	9. Town Meeting	7
10. People	17	10. Social Worker	7	10. Transportation	6
10. Quality	17			10. Incentives	6
12. Diverse	15			10. Committee	6
13. Safe	12			10. Schedule/Timing	6
13. NARA	12			14. Cable TV	5
15. Proximity	9			15. Access	4
16. Sports	6			15. Gathering	4
17. Police/Fire	5			15. Fun	4
17. Quality	5			18. Recruit	3
17. Charm	5				
17. Atmosphere	5				

What would you like to see MORE of in Acton?	Mentions	What would you like to see LESS of in Acton?	Mentions
1. Sidewalks	131	1. Traffic	154
2. Restaurants	68	2. Taxes	122
3. Open Space	43	3. Development	101
4. Parking	39	4. Building	48
5. Bike Paths	33	5. Housing	29
6. Public Transportation	32	6. Construction	24
7. Trails	29	7. Apartments	18
8. Shopping	23	7. Malls	18
9. Preservation	21	7. Spending	18
9. Conservation Land	21	10. 40B Projects	17
10. Population/People	18	11. Mansions	15
11. Fiscal Restraint	16	12. Population/People	14

12. Businesses	14	13. Residential	10
12. Recreation	14	14. Retail	9
14. Affordable Housing	13	14. Over-Rides	9
15. Movie Theater	12	14. Fast Foods	9
16. Diversity	9	17. Shopping	8
17. Recycling	8	17. Growth	8
18. Trees/Woods	7	17. Wasteful	8
18. Parks	7	20. Condos	7
		20. Businesses	7

5. Combined Mail-Out and Website Residential Survey Unsummarized Results for Open-Ended Questions (A complete listing of written responses)

What are Acton's Top Three Other Assets?	What additionally are Acton's Top Three Other Assets?
town center	
stores-retail shopping	
safety	
safe place to live	
nice housing communities	
bus service	
well managed	
enough open land	
public libraries	
shopping	
services, supermarkets	
roads kept better than surrounding towns	
shopping options	
Small town appeal	
Community programs for families	
children and adult recreation activities	
Council on aging programs	
Rail Trail	
Sidewalks	
Not too close but not too far from Boston	
Medical care	
Well managed	
Great library	
Small town feel	Sense of physical safety
Quiet suburban neighborhoods	
Small town appeal	
Proximity to Boston	
bike lockers at RR station	minuteman library network

wooded land	
our children nearby	
athletic fields	
family owned businesses	
Volunteerism for charitable and civic matters	
wooded, undeveloped land	
beautiful countryside	
the people	
Bloomingdales	open park in S. Acton
good library	
great facilities	
more affordable housing	
churches	
senior center	
Open farm land	
Safe community	
Starbucks	
Clean air	
Separation of business/homes	
Conservation land	
Theatres, open door, HS, JHS	
Schools	
Nearness to hospital/other medical facilities	
Library network	
Library (excellent)	
Walk to W Acton Village	
Commuter rail station	
Diversity of neighborhood pricing	
many neighborhoods are walking distance to shops, cafes, library etc	
Close to our jobs (495)	Daycare centers quality (not home daycare)
Safety	
Location	
library	Trader Joe's
athletic options for kids	
Good Library	

What are Acton's Top Three Other Challenges?	**What additionally are Acton's Top Three Other Challenges?**
no garbage pickup	
uncontrolled development	
lack of economic diversity	
more frequent/regular train to/from Boston, shopping,	

school	
high population	
cost of municipal services/police/schools	
high taxes	
class size in schools is too high	
teachers should get involved more, give more homework	too many new homes and projects
growing school population	development of open land
lack of financial restaurants	snobbery (vs. Maynard etc)
McMansioning ugly housing	
Concord rotary backup	
Public Transportation	
No parking at train stop after 7:15, so can't use the train	
distance to higher quality hospital	school choice (divided neighborhoods)
Polarity of opposing political factions	
too much stress placed on jr. high and high school students because homework	
over development	
high/growing taxes	
continuous land development	
lack of commuter rail parking	
ongoing disrepair/erosion	
sidewalks	
chapter 40B pressure	lax traffic law enforcement
help with solar, environmental issues	
lack of economic diversity	
lack of all-town sewer system	
high taxes	
taxes	
limited access to commuter lot	
limited parking at commuter rail	
lack of parking at commuter rail	
municipal budget	
lack of african-americans	
lack of charm	
unfettered development	
lack of diversity	
road conditions	
taxes	
lack of traffic lights	high taxes
High fees of Nara Park	
commuter rail parking	

Taxes	
Controlled, well-planned development	
Protecting Ground Water	
Lack of parking for commuter rail	
High taxes	
High Taxes	
Small farms	
Taxes	
Taxes	
Commuter rail parking	
loss of conservation areas	overbuilding
too crowded	
taxes	taxes
transportation for teens and elders	
lack of sidewalks	
housing development	
relying only on property tax	
need for major changes	
stop building on 2A	
tough commute to Boston	
bus facility to other towns	
too many condos	
too many strip malls	
overbuilding	
town-wide communications	
Keeping taxes down	
Lack of parking space in the train station	
Lack of shuttle	Commuter rail parking
Too much building of homes/apartments	
overdevelopment	
high taxes	
more conservation land	
too much building	
erosion of neighborhoods due to school choice	lack of superstores (costco, home depot etc)
lack of youth gathering places	
master plan restriction to business expansion, growth	
not controlling property tax increases	
school alcohol and drug abuse not addressed by school officials	
no town center	
lack of sidewalks	
too many condos!	

poor planning board that is lenient in allowing indiscriminate construction for homes and businesses	
Toxic waste/recycling	
Need more sidewalks	
Police Visibility	Town wide by-law 25 MPH throughout the community
Too much new development	
Ability of small business owners to make a living in Acton	
Lack of public transportation	
Route 2 Rotary	
Lack of affordable housing	
No water pressure	
Too many amenities that have to be paid for	
High taxes	
High Taxes	Control of 40B projects
Lack of control/strategy on residential development	
Level of public transportation	
Lack of effective master plan	
In town buses	
Elderly cannot afford to stay in town	
Too much spending	
Building of extra large houses	
Lack of parking at commuter rail station	
Overbuilding	Lack of conservation land
Lack of town bus-in town transport	
Property taxes	Bike racks in shopping areas
Taxomg residents out	
No sewers	
Parking at rail station	Sewage/septic, water supply and water quality
Lack of clear, long-term planning that is well publicized	
Taxes	
Taxes	
Taxes	
Competition in schools	
Too many housing developments	Continual waste of tax payers money
Mansions	
Need a development plan	
Lack of parking in train station	
Lack of public transportation	
Taxes	
High tax on property	Not enough lights on streets

Population gets bigger	
Increased building of all kinds	
Too much home development	
limiting growth/strain on schools	
high taxes	
lack of town sewer	small buisness tax base
high property taxes	
lack of town commercial center	
too many rich people	
no residential development plans/limits	
lack of sidewalks	
high tax rate	
lack of downtown	
controlling growth	
lack of parking at T	
lack of lights to make left turns	
high residential property taxes	
sidewalks	
too much growth	
too much building	
high taxes	excessive town spending
lack of athletic fields	
lack of parking at RR station	
class size in schools	
water quality	
lack of sewers	
huge houses that look alike	
anti business town government	
crowded schools	
expand access to town sewer system	
40B development,	
quality of water	
ever increasing property taxes	
improving unattractive commercial areas	
public bus route	
lack of resident parking at the commuter rail lot	
over concentration on schools- no regard for taxes for long time residents committed to stay in town	
parking at the train station	
public transportation in town and to other towns	
high taxes	
finances (town)	unanimity on boards and commitees
it has become too large- no sense of community	

the arrogant attitude of many of the people in town	
no basketball (indoor)	places for kids. Schools not always available
too much developing (it's horrible)	
continued new developments	
pressure of 40B law	
overdevelopment	
Roche Bros. parking lot	
lack of wheelchair accessibility	
lack of downtown shopping area	
taxes	
lack of parking at commuter rail	lack of bus service
development of open spaces	
more open conservation land	
perpetual residential building	
lack of street lights	
lack of town center	
lack of open space	
poor planning	
water quality	
lack of town sewage	
no sewers	
train station parking	
high tech use in gov't	
low rate recycling	pesticide spraying
overdevelopment	lack of businesses
too much new houses	too much expansion
small homes for first time buyers	
larger houses	
lack of parking at commuter rail	
real estate taxes too high	
too much growth	lack of diversity
too many apartments	
horrible playgrounds	
minimal business tax base	
overdevelopment	
lack of parking at commuter rail	
overdevelopment	
too many condos	
cutting down trees	
attracting businesses	
poor maintenance of roads	
Lack of parking at train station	Lack of sidewalks

Lack of town center	
No center for the arts	
Too much new development	
High property taxes	
Lack of parking in commuter rail	Too many apartments station and condos
Overrides	Town leadership
Constant development	
Lack of affordable housing	
High real estate taxes	
High real estate taxes	
Lack of town sewage system	
Commuter rail parking	
High property tax	
Lack of parking in commuter rail station	
Friendly small town feel-spread no center	
Limiting road and utility cost	Unlimited growth of "public safety"
overbuilding of low end housing	
Lack of town services for people w/o children - free classes via adult ed., free NARA access	
No quaint town center	
High RE Taxes	
Taxes overrides	
Poor schools	
Haphazard planning/development	
Lack of parking - commuter rail	Taxes
Decrease taxes	
High taxes	
Reliance on property taxes for school/town revenue	
Lack of town character	
Town is too big for town meeting	
Lack of dog leash law	Many dangerous intersections throughout town
Development	
HOB	No center, can't go east
Lack of parking - trains	
Public transportation	
over building	
Over development (esp. 40B)	
40Bs, development, build-out	
Too many wedged-in condo developments on too little land	
Graffiti on signage near Maynard, signage tampering	
Incredible citizen	in town activities

Ever increasing property tax	
Need underground wiring	Need planned village centers, connected with community by sidewalks; centers should have shopping, restaurants, entertainment
Recycling (lack of bin/options)	
Unable to walk around town such as High St. to commuter rail	
Skyrocketing employee benefits, healthcare, retirement/pension for town employees - associated increase to our taxes	
Lots of run-down trashy properties	
Over development/40Bs	
Town has no curb appeal	Lots of dead trees, trashy front yards, ugly commercial areas; Ugly mix of business and residential
Too much new development	
Restricting building	
Lack of appreciation of preservation	The pansy to develop
High tax rate	Small commercial tax base
Lack of public transportation	
Lack of parking at train station	
Schools - large class sizes	
Water erosion/pollution	
Over crowding - too much new construction of multi-family/apartment/attached housing	
Lack of RR lot parking	
Noise pollution e.g.. Unshielded commercial AC units	
lack of social workers	
environment	
too many condos	
tax rate	non-conservative town managers
high taxes	
fix southern entry at Rts. 111/27	
too much growth	
cost of education	
overly competitive	
overdevelopment	
not enough sidewalks	
property taxes too high	property taxes too high
too many houses	
lack of town sewers	
tax	
mcmansions	

ugly bldg at Main and Rt. 111	
low cost movies	
high cost of schools	
high taxes	extravagant school spending
overbuilding	
too much red tape	
Bad zoning laws - too crowded	
Speeding cars, especially near the High School (Haywood Road) Rushing H. S. drivers leave school in school hours.	
Lack of a shuttle bus service	

What Makes Acton Unique?
good schools, safe
community involvement/support of the schools and students
evolving, changing
schools
good school, culture diversity, good education background of adults, visionary town/school leaders, open minded excellent Chinese school with excellent town/support parents
well located town to access Boston by commuter train/school choice/4th of July fireworks/NARA park
ethically diverse, high quality small town with great schools
schools, rural space, historic homes
well maintained roads, public buildings and other facilities (commuter rail, transfer station etc), participation of parents in school system, excellent library
diversity of population even though it's a suburban town
elementary school choice, Asian ethnic
schools, location, excellent town planning
education system and diversity of population
quality schools and educated population while properties are not too large and expensive
it used to be unique but the over development over growth in the schools and lack of a master plan has destroyed it
focus on education (it is one of Acton's industries)
schools
diversity and great schools. Great value in Acton's ethnic and economic diversity
good community location, good schools, good mix of retail outlets, good community with low crime rate
its excellent overall facilities and services while still retaining a friendly, comfortable historical charm
history and charm, close to Boston and New Hampshire and Central Massachusetts, conservation land and trails, 275 years old in 2010 (a big party?)
rural feeling
location
colonial and semi-rural feel + look
safe environment, good schools, diverse population
great schools, country living
the good balance of small-town community and larger town conveniences
center has a nice small rural town feel but there is access to shopping and other amenities. Lots of community activities and participation. School reputation is very good.
it has no town center really - cannot force Acton to be like Concord or Lexington - it sprawls. Period.
well educated but not snobby; on the border between city & country- easy access to both
good schools, easy access to highways, small town with large town features
nothing, the town lacks a soul

Quaint, historical
diversity, affordability
nice small town
relatively stable population
focus on schools, and raising talented kids
diverse population
historical, great schools, open spaces, retail businesses, and diversity
high tax rate
quite neighborhoods, farmlands, orchards
not much, too developed
overzealous police
good schools
good school
great schools, choice of elementary school
schools, quality of residents
history, long term residents, theater opportunities
feeling of community
quality of schools
small town access to Boston
nothing
diversity
cost of living/taxes, conservation land
rural appeal
history
small town feel but just 40 minutes from Boston
nothing
great schools and services, while still caring for people
the sense of a village, but affordable
terrible taxes, no services
school system, NARA, good shops, open land, access to Boston
schools, good medical and food services
small town atmosphere
schools, Asian population, high taxes
good roads, choice of elementary school
small town
nice mix of economic levels
small town
conservation lands
close to Boston
cannot be defined
schools
excellent schools
schools

schools
great schools
community
small town
excellent community
diversity
small town
upscale living
historic preservation
excellent schools
good schools
isolation
Schools
Diversity of restaurants and retail
Small town appeal with large town features
Schools
Good balance of neighborhoods and open land
Schools
Schools
Housing more affordable than Concord/Lexington etc, nice amount of shopping, schools
Schools, high taxes
School choice at elementary level, diverse conservation lands, historic architecture
Rural feel but access to major highways
Commuter rail, villages, history, schools
Location, schools
Overrun by developers
School choice at elementary level, diverse conservation lands, historic architecture
Rural-yet easy access to Boston, cultural events
Safe small town with many cultures
Schools, cultural diversity
Quiet
Good balance of history, shopping/dining opportunities
Schools, library, conservation land
Choice for elementary schools
Schools
Small town community
Great school system, convenient shopping, stores, restaurants
Lack of amenities
it's not unique
town meetings
great location, easy access
diversity
services

great mix for kids and adults
not unique anymore
bucolic setting close to Boston
location
villages, trees
community-based town
diversity
better sub shops
diversity
filling empty commercial spaces
location
friendly people
excellent schools
community support for schools
the people
great schools
always first on any alphabetical news listing
success of schools
used to be it's rural character
family oriented
school system
Great schools
Great schools, friendly neighborhoods, close to Boston
The people, Great location
Schools
Small town with rural feel, close to Boston
Great schools, ethnic diversity, great cultural events
Great schools
Highly educated and informed population
Good balance of city and country living, Nara park, variety of activities
Has lots of qualities that Concord and Lexington with more reasonable cost of living
Great schools, close to Boston with small town feeling
Balanced schools, town services
It's history, pleasant surroundings, Nara Park
Very welcoming, big town
School system, distance to Boston, Nara park
Historic setting
Does not have a well developed "center" in town
Sense of history and community
History and character
Largest class sizes in state yet some of best performance
Great schools
Great schools, conservation land, commuter rail station

good schools with reasonable real estate prices
location excellent. Town services are good
good schools, location to highways and close to Boston, town government
Acton is not unique- and each year the destruction of our historic homes and development of our lands for low income people is ruined the town
good schools
people, good schools, friendly atmosphere, good location
the schools with low cost/student makes Acton unique. Also, Acton's high taxes with fewer services than other towns makes it unique (not a good thing)
great schools and family opportunities
combination of good schools, affordability and good commuter location
safe, small/tight community, high quality schools, diversity/booming town
I don't think Acton is unique
I like how Acton used to feel- I grew up in Acton in the 1960s, 1970s- now too much development, too many fast food places, too much traffic, too many "McMansions"
relatively low cost/pupil, but high quality public education. Not a "walkable" community (no real town center, few sidewalks)
see answers to above questions
good schools, multi-cultural, clean, safe, beautiful, recreation areas, train, HGRM, school choice
size, not too crowded
it isn't. It just is as it has developed. No leadership. Its blaw.
the taxes-quite unbelievable- and the per student spending is still less than other towns. (and the condition of the elementary schools is horrific) where does our money go??
open space and schools with good reputation
excellent schools at reasonable price. Good stores and excellent variety
quality of schools, well run family businesses, Nara Park and Arboretum
commitment to quality schools and participatory government and diversity of citizens
rural feel with close proximity to major urban area and outstanding schools
great schools in an area with rural feel. Connection to city via commuter rail
l really think the indiscriminate development permitted over the past 20 years has detracted from the unique rural feeling it once had
its lack of services and high tax rate
Good schools, community service
Schools, open space, historic home, sense of community
Good schools, high quality cultural offerings
Schools, open space, historic home, sense of community
Schools
Open space
Affordable for first time home buyers
Diversity of population
Schools
Schools

Open space, great schools, great library
Schools, historical connection
Schools
History
Schools
Schools, diversity of population
Affluent town with liberal feel
Rural atmosphere within comfortable distance to larger and smaller towns/cities
Beautiful conservation land, diverse population
Abundance of conservation land and history
Schools
Unique town centers
Schools, active and engaged citizens
Clean and has friendly atmosphere
Friendly town
Schools, great roads
Safe place to live
School system
Well-educated population
Small town appeal with modern conveniences
Schools
Welcoming feeling, great schools
Involvement and passion of Acton community, friendly environment
High quality of schools/living
Much like surrounding communities
Quiet town that's easily accessible to city activity
Beautiful town with fairly easy access to Boston area
High taxes
Great school system
Great school system
Open space, diversity of town centers, non commercial village center
Pay higher taxes than neighboring towns
History, easy access to Boston, schools
Small town feel only 25 miles from Boston, great schools and sports
Quiet, charming, wide roadways
Very high taxes but little town services
Largest town in Massachusetts without town sewerage
Its balance
Many positive attributes
Schools, location, access to highways
Good schools, history, commuter rail
Excellent schools, open space, great library, history
Open space

Great schools
Schools
Hustling town
Easy access to highways with small town feeling
Emphasis on education on all levels
Good schools, location and size
Diversity with small town feel
Good schools, open land
Unity
Schools, taxes, history, culture
Great schools, friendly community, small town
Traditional New England small town
Semi-rural elements, conservation land, great schools
Close to Boston but with rural areas
Good library, senior center, and activities
Schools, community programs/sports
Excellence in education with remarkable diversity
Mix of housing, business, recreational, conservation open space, location
Parent involvement in education and athletics
Great schools, sense of community, location within state
Location and great school system
School, diversity
Easy access to highways, rural feel, close to Boston
Residents, town pride, small-town feeling with access to Boston, excellent schools
Schools, library
Quiet, safe
Excellent schools
Good schools, access to highways
Extremely friendly and giving community
Location, schools, taxes
high taxes with no services
great schools with lower per pupil costs than most towns
employment opportunity, schools, shopping, proximity to Emerson hospital and Boston, good services
mix of urban development and historical architecture
rural character with lots of historic buildings, and great schools and services
school system, bright/fun/diverse population
value of education, sense of community, parade in Acton, open space, caring for all age groups
good town to raise kids, good location, educated population, progressive politics
diverse/growing population
small town, great schools
location, schools, socio-economic makeup
easy access to Boston, good amenities, country feel

good school system, proximity to Boston
small town feel, but lots of diversity
school choice, small town feel, community sense
55+ single level homes in community
it's not
division of the town into distinct areas
laid back, but fun town
great schools, history, relative affordability
schools, conservation land
NARA park
school system
kind, generous and friendly people
good school system, reasonable cost
schools and history
schools, history, NARA
good schools, relatively affordable
school system
country setting with conservation walks, biking, wooded areas, great schools, population diversity
good school system
schools/diversity/mix of residential and commercial
strong sense of community, with conveniences of a city
good services, accessible to all major quality of life necessities
it isn't
rural/historic character, too much residential growth
good schools, affordable housing, good location
socio-economic diversity, farms, schools, historic architecture, history, commuter rail, access to highways, community spirit
our children in vicinity
mix of suburban, and rural in a historic venue with a good mix of urban amenities
good schools, family friendly, co-housing exists
involvement/motivation of citizens, educational level of population
schools, rural setting
small town community feeling
rural character/agricultural, yet close to Boston/major highways
mix of houses, businesses, woods, and farms
great schools that bring sense of pride to community
strong family orientation, commitment to schools, youth sports
used to be rural, turning into city
history, good schools
good schools, community spirit, conservation land
nice family oriented community
rural feeling, safe area, near Boston, community feeling, good schools

historic character, schools, NARA
good access to Boston, good area to raise a family
senior housing
location, educated population, family oriented
great schools at low cost, annual collaboration among committees, incredible amount of woodlands with public access
convenient location
convenience with a rural feel
schools and small town appeal with large town features
the variety of shops in such a secluded area
historic significance. Conservation lands within walking distance of almost every neighborhood
I love Acton for all the reasons listed in question 1. The people are great and I love being able to walk to a "farm". The schools are a huge bonus, because I have school age kids and I find it "artsy". I (half kiddingly) call it the Cambridge of the West!
exceptional schools, colonial history
the amount on conservation land and the HIGH TAXES
country setting, undeveloped land
high tax rate for small condos
No longer unique with all the developments, apartments, and commuters cutting through town with NO enforcement of traffic- numbers of rude, impatient new residents here for schools only- raising taxes for some then leaving town after last child graduates high school.
A high level of community involvement in town, school, and other activities.
sense of community and schools
Acton is unique because of its rich history and for its open space.
Highly educated population earning above average incomes that prefer to shop for a bargain. Schools have always come first-this is good. Wellesley schools in real trouble due to no overrides, etc
old-fashioned village
I don’t know, but I like it.
good schools; opportunities to be involved in town government, schools, organizations, etc.
Schools, neighborhoods, commuter rail station, historic buildings renovated/preserved -- valued history, visible history
Country-suburban feel and friendliness
Good access to needed services with short distances to travel
Large Asian population
type of government and schools
small town appeal, friendly
The schools are terrific. The recreation/conservation areas wonderful.
good school system
excellent schools, ethnically diverse, proximity to Boston
rural reeling and retain convenience
Acton has lost its small town feel
the residents

character, residents
great schools
rural landscape
diversity
good schools
diversity
school system
cares about residents
community
schools
diversity
the people
location
good schools
history
diversity
rural area
history
easy access
elected officials
self-contained town
schools
schools
proximity to Boston
rural area
vibrant town center
hardworking volunteers
Nara park
not happy with lack of access to services
location
diversity
close to highways
high SAT scores
nothing
small town
community
easy access
nothing
diversity
schools
small town
schools
small town

high taxes
town character
great schools
diversity
small town
conservation lands
diversity
location
motivated student population
great people
educated citizens
history of school quality
high taxes
rural area
rural area
small town
schools
schools
small town
rural area
nothing
easy access
ethnic diversity
community
schools
open welcoming character
new library
schools
small town
diversity
ethnic diversity
not much
Safety
School system
People care and get involved
Schools, sense of community, family atmosphere
Friendly town with increasing population diversity
Mixture of country appeal and commercial
School system
Good unit of homes/businesses. Schools, recreation and services
School system, wide variety of sports
Close to Boston, accessible to roadways, great schools/sports
Scenery, easy access to Boston

Diversity, excellent school system
Ample supply of condos
Nara Park
Great sports for kids and great schools
Good schools
High taxes and small town politics
High taxes
Rural character, but near shoppin gin other towns (malls), educational opportunities
Good community efforts with town and schools
Nice roads, schools
High education, high social standards, high house prices
Parental involvement in schools
School system, community interaction, safe, small town feel
Conservation lands and trails
Involved caring people
Diversity, useful retail development
Schools
Country style environment, beautiful trees, excellent schools
Mix of rural feel with suburban conveniences
Schools, high property tax
High tax rate
Large number of community groups, community involvement, excellent schools
Outstanding school system
Schools
Independent stores/coffee shops
Community activities, great neighborhoods/neighbors
Rural character with easy access to major highways
Small town with many conveniences, shops and services, diversity of population
Well educated, diverse population
Good schools, American history, location
Relatively affordable given quality of schools
Feels home-like and rural
Schools, educated population, ethnic diversity
Lovely wooded areas
Good choice of stores, close to highways
History-oriented town, Dr Orescott's Ride, Patriot's Day Activities, Pre-revolution stone walls & names, chiming of town bell
Old charm with modern amenities
Schools, theatre
Schools, community involvement, relatively rural, friendly, people, great nature trails
Great schools, ethnic diversity, good commuter location
Great location with restaurants and shops to meet one's needs
No downtown area - not necessarily a bad thing

Reputation of school system
Good place for professional families to bring up children
Great schools, high taxes
Small enough for residents to have meaningful participation in the institutions - can still know everyone in town
Closeness of shopping and comfortable neighborhoods
High taxes with very little in return for those without kids in schools; Don't frequent NARA (=for families), the library or over-sized police station
A great value- strong schools plus affordable wooded/natural areas, but threatened historic architecture/landscape
Historic, excellent schools, arts, community feeling
It's history
Diversity
Lots of trees, small town feel; school system
Diverse professional population, good schools, close families
Best school system
Very good public school system with relatively low per-pupil expenditure; Largest town in state without town sewerage
Reasonably uncrowded town with diverse population and excellent town services
I think that the BOS and others in positions of authority are interested in what general town residents have to say
Small town within a big town
Small community
A small town feel yet easy proximity to Boston; Good open spaces and conservation land
Schools are good, elementary school choice
Sense of community, welcoming small town feeling, educated population
The "can-do", "We'll find a way to make things work" attitude of residents and town/school employees
Outstanding schools, open spaces, commuter rail
Its historical character, its many trees and open areas for recreation, conservation, its inhabitants
Being in a nice town, but not far from the city
We are pretty diverse, good balance of cultures, religions and economic demographics. Good location for Boston commuting or weekend travel to the north. Good dog friendly parks.
Great schools, ? And suburban mix, family focused
Friendly, welcoming people
Sense of/place in history, school choice, diversity
Acton is well located, quiet area but close to Boston, airport and family living in Worcester
Community spirit, willingness to be involved in positive development of town, rootedness in historical past, concern for children and elders
Acton has excellent schools with beautiful wooded areas and friendly community
Schools, taxes/home value, people, nice facilities, you can have a great school system and a home for less than you can in Concord, Lex, Sudbury

Great schools, commuter rail, conservation land, some rural character, some diversity (condos and apartments available), lack of snobbery - especially in the schools
Good schools and lots of recreation facilities
Town feeling
Small town with good schools, lots of open/wooded land
School system
Commitment to education
Was nice in 80s, now it is overspend and overbuild
I'm not sure it is "unique" which means "one of a kind" - it would be pushing hard to characterize Acton that way
Trees, rock walls, access to Boston
The wonderful schools, small town feel with proximity to Boston
It isn't unique
It's a pleasant suburban town that offers a superior school system and many benefits for residents of all ages, in a somewhat rural and historical environment.
School system, multi culture, farm stand
Proximity to Boston, superior schools (especially the high school), historic "underdog" (i.e. Concord gets all the credit for being historic)
Citizens working together to get things done
It has a good community, good churches, good resources, good activities and helpful publications for all of this; good library, good businesses; Acton has an especially good morale
Public spirited citizens who contribute their time to town activities
When I moved here 40 years ago it was unique because of its natural character and easy access to Boston
Population - transient vs. old school - nice mix; Great schools
What makes you thing Acton is unique?
educated but practical population, open town meeting, excellent school system, rural flavor
Access to both 495 & 128 via Route 2; Easy to go into Boston or Worcester or NH
The location is extremely convenient; Excellent school system
I don't think Acton is unique. It's like many other towns.
Its history, Isaac Davis, Abner Hosmer
High performing schools - challenging academics, high college placements, successful athletes that engage students; Minimal downtime, ensuring everyone's productivity and safety
Nice place to live but too many residents are unaware of our history and don't care to attend town meeting - they are here for schools and will not stay
Historic and a well educated population with a town loyalty mindset
Schools - most people move to or stay in Acton because of the quality of the schools. It does not have the cleanliness or charm of other area small towns.
A diverse population (ethnic) that is highly educated; Family oriented - kids first
Population highly educated and hi-tech oriented; Town is close to 495 & 128 for these jobs; Easy/short drive to Cambridge/Boston; Lots of daycare centers; Schools great and not overcrowded
High cost of living vs. services
Historic/rural character

Nothing
Small town feel near a large urban area - feel based on continued building and increases this brings to school population and traffic - we are quickly losing; Has changed too much in 20 years we're lived in Acton
Over the past 15-20 years Acton has let much of its uniqueness get away. It used to be a rural gem combined with its proximity to Boston. It has become too much like the urbanized areas in-between
Quality of services - schools, police, fire, public ?, library - as high as Concord/Sudbury without the cost and attitude of exclusivity of those towns
People - the citizens
Close to major routes, safe town, excellent schools
Many international residents
Good library service/school; Nice housing environment
Location in proximity to highways; Population is diverse; Arboretum; Mix of housing; Active citizens; School quality and activities; Conservation land
Acton Jazz Café, Indian Village is a welcoming, friendly neighborhood
location, geography
very rural, yet close to Boston
very good school system
extraordinary history
diversity
rural settings close to major routes
history
great schools
old buildings
good schools
open space but close to urban metro center
historic buildings
small town
architecture
Rt. 2A
high property taxes
affordable town
public education
historic heritage
good schools
historic
school system
nothing
small town
schools
not unique
small town

family oriented
high taxes
family oriented
location
good schools
location
quality of services
ethnic diversity
small town
Its farming background
Small lot zoning results in too many single family homes too close together.
Level of civic mindedness

Which Public Service Needs Are Unmet?
trash pickup/more town sewer
public transportation
swimming pool, improved soccer fields
public transportation around town
public transportation in town and to neighboring towns
traffic control at dangerous intersections, parking at commuter rail lot, snow removed at intersections where snow piles obstruct view
public transportation, teacher/student ratio
public transportation! Internet access (residential), bike paths
perceived lack of activities/facilities for teens and young adults
not clear if senior citizens are able to access town ammenities enough
need improvement in van services
garbage pickup, leaf pickup
transportation for those who do not drive
food pantry where a person can select only items they need, affordable recreation opportunities and activities for physically disabled adults
garbage pickup
transportation
more sidewalks
pathways/sidewalks
Special education in elementary schools, teaching assistants
bus service, more public transportation for any age group
trash pickup
senior's transport, services allowing them to live at home
traffic jams, unsafe roads for children
transportation for elderly, disabled and temporarily disabled
trash collection
curbside trash pickup

curbside recycling, environmental initiative
help for elderly and poor
garbage collection, town sewer
trash pickup, open land for hunting, leaves pickup
more bus service
public transportation
transportation for elderly
less government
social worker
story time for young children
public transportation
transportation
more services for middle ages and infants
commuter rail parking
public transportation
Swimming for dogs
Cinema, town swimming pool, rec./indoor center
Public transportation
Public transportation
Access to services limited for older/elderly, lack of sidewalks
In-town transportation, sidewalks, bike trails
trash pick up
Trash pick up, more street lighting, public transportation
More parking for train transportation
Transportation within town/area
Garbage
Garbage pick up, sidewalks, town pool, street lights
Public transportation
public transportation
teen services
trash pickup
transportation
public transportation
more parking at train station
senior services
transportation
activities for young adults
lack of afterschool care
in-town transportation
garbage collection
housing assistance
teen activities
local transportation

bus service
safe public hangouts for teens
sidewalks
Transportation
Movie theater should be open
Reasonably priced trash curbside pickup
Public sewer service
Trash pick up
Public transportation, activities for teens
Transportation within town, commuter rail parking
Sidewalks, recycling
Transportation
Garbage pickup
Extended daycare or class
Public transportation, social services
Movie theater should be open
Affordable housing, safe transportation, more social opportunities for middle aged
sewers (West Acton)
pet store
garbage pickup
arts, a real commercial center, fix up South Acton w/ sidewalks, it has the train
universal trash pick-up
needs more sidewalks and faster completion of rail trails
I don't know enough
traffic lights in some areas, pedestrian paths
anyone with children beyond school age
not enough playing fields and gym space. Curb-side trash pickup. Too few after school programs for K-6
not enough extended day programs on Thursdays
children friendly activities
no public transportation
public transportation (e.g. commuter shuttle)
town sewers, scheduled bus
bus service to commuter rail
Open space, gardens
Sewers
No town pool, not enough outdoor recreation space
Senior art center with fitness facility
Trash pick up, sidewalks
Services for elderly
Visiting nurses/physical therapists
Transportation
Buses, cabs

Larger senior center for Baby Boomers
Public transportation
Public transportation
Trash pick-up, more street lights, more sidewalks
Trash pick up
Outreach person for community resources for all ages
Buses, garbage removal from homes
Public transportation to commuter rail
Garbage pick up, transportation for seniors, senior center
Public transportation, bicycle friendly trails
Public trash pick up
Public transit
Water, sewers
Garbage pick up, sewers
Compassion towards elderly
Walk-in clinics
Senior center
Trash pick up
Social worker
Sidewalks, bike paths
Town dump open on Sundays
Senior activities and recreation in daytime
Transportation of seniors/people who don't drive
Garbage pickup
Exercise classes for seniors
Public transportation
Public transit, late bus for schools, social worker
sewer, services for elders
night life after 8 p.m.
garbage pick up
trash pickup
trash pickup
public transportation
recycling pickup
public transportation, trash pickup, sewer
public transportation
transportation
commuter rail parking lot
transportation
public transportation
transportation, affordable for elderly/disabled
waste collection, street lights, brown water
public transportation, pub

senior services, emphasis on history of Acton, recreation fields, tax relief for seniors
public transportation for young/old
more senior discounts
bus transportation, bike/walking paths
more athletic fields
public transportation
recycling
public transportation
public transportation, elderly activities
transportation for seniors, services for seniors
town sewer access
more parking for cars at train station and have a train twice a day to Boston
senior services
public transportation, on a regular, scheduled and posted route
public transportation, employment services, employment opportunity
travel services for elderly
larger senior center/traffic enforcement. Need indoor walking area available. Nov-March i.e., schools!
Transportation for those who cannot drive. Residential and social activities for cognitively impaired.
Garbage pick up. Senior services
services for the elderly
Transportation around town or to malls elsewhere; structures at playgrounds; inadequate space at senior center for exercise classes
help for elderly and sick
public transportation
larger senior center, traffic enforcement, new building for food pantry, use of schools for seniors sports and recreation during winter months
recreation for young people
none
transportation
trash pickup
trash pickup
public transportation
sewer
public transportation
community center
tax relief for all seniors
larger building for seniors
bus service
adult day care
support for seniors
traffic control

trash collection
public transportation
community service coordinator
community education
public transportation
public transportation
bus service
social worker
public transportation
focus on schools
fire and police services
educational needs for public safety
none
public transportation
recreation
recreation
public transportation
nursing for older seniors
public transportation
trash pickup
larger building for seniors
elders not being served
services for older seniors
social services
social services
senior services
Trash pickup
Trash pickup
Elders
Transportation, senior services
Public transportation, train parking
Train parking is insufficient, lack of sidewalks, plowing is poor
Public transportation, parking at commuter lot
Transportation to airports
Public bus, limit parking for train station
Town sewer
Parking space for commuters, recreation resource
Transportation, social services
Parking for commuter rail
Public transportation, bike access on roads, walking areas
Sidewalks, recreation center
Municipal Sewer
Garbage pickup

Better access other than driving
Transportation
Town sewage system
Activities for teens
Cost effective trash pickup
Garbage disposal, sewers
Transportation
Sidewalks
Enforce traffic laws
Public transportation
Shuttle bus to train station
Family friendly cultural activities
Transfer Station hours, No young children events @ local library
Services for teens
Transportation, Adequate parking at rail station
Garbage collection
Should have more free or reduced adult recreation or education options
Adults without young children or teens at home
Fire/emergencies in North Acton area, sorely needed additional police; sidewalks
Commuter rail parking
No public transportation, no trash pick up by town
Public sewerage, general social services, elderly tax assistance
Not certain of services for older seniors
Public transportation
Public transportation, stable taxes
Public transportation, sidewalks, bike paths
Teens, elderly
Public transportation is needed - without car you are stuck
Access to information for newcomers, ? Transportation, more walkway, info on employment, bike paths
Town social worker to help with access
Public transportation
We need to help older seniors stay in town
Walkways, bike paths, especially to NARA Park; Enough parking for train
Transportation
Police patrols, street maintenance, residential sidewalks
It would be helpful to have a social worker for community referrals
Transportation for affordable housing, which should be kept near to the PO and Market
Town trash collection, town underground wiring, town sidewalks, planning of village centers, town sewerage
Social services for low income; Services for seniors who don't qualify for low income and can't afford to buy own
Assistance with accessing social services, public transportation

Public transportation
Garbage pick up
More child care options for young children/infants/pre-schoolers/elementary school as evident by overnight line waiting for limited spots in community after school program; Community bus - loop down 27, access Rte 2A/111; Seniors commuters to rail service
Transport for seniors - too much for high school students
All playgrounds are in poor condition, especially the one behind library
High schools ridiculously overcrowded, esp. AE classes - unfair - all levels should have same teacher/student ratio
Town sewage, trash collection
Not enough activities for pre-teens and teens
Retired people activity/meeting/ health care
Bus for JR and SR high; Transportation around town
Lack of RR lot spaces for Acton residents - residents should be able to use their sticker in all spaces (@meters)
need social services and transportation
trash pick-up
trash removal, public water, public sewers
before and after school care limited
transportation, no sidewalks on 2A or 27
commuter rail parking
activities for children
leash law
services for older seniors
help for older residents with large tax bills
need social worker
bike trails
trash pickup
more adult sports leagues
sidewalks
not up to the town
excellent libraries
trash pickup
affordable swimming area
public transportation
public library
public transportation
More cultural activities are needed for adults
Parking at Library

Other Greenhouse Gas Reduction Actions for Town?

reserved parking at MBTA lot for hybrids
fewer houses and businesses
safe sidewalks
trash pickup
limit the scale of farm services, ticket idling private vehicles
composting changes for home gardens
don't spend tax money on surveys
encourage school bus use
track greenhouse gas use
give canvas shopping bags
limit development
use windpower
stop killing trees
Make access to recycling at dump FREE
Offer "green energy"
non-idling policy for patrons of stores
Natural gas service on streets
Electric/hybrid municipal vehicles
Improve traffic flow
Require apt./condo complexes to recycle curbside
Install wind/solar power generator
Increase parking for commuter rail
Morrison Farm
limit building
localize production, food, etc.
less snow plowing
other public trains besides commuter rail
removable energy for municipal buildings
Make safer to walk around town
work with state to make commuter rail better-more practical schedule
emphasize carbon footprint awareness, drivers of school buses are irresponsible sometimes-they drive too fast and take risks by pulling out in front of drivers
promote use of cars less, more walking, cycling, ZIP cars (electric, pay per use)
limit plastic bags, limit waste in cafeterias by serving on reusable plates, build a large greenhouse and run gardening activities there throughout the year
encourage more students to use school buses
promote tree planting
Support local farming/gardening
More commuter parking
Organic farm at Morrison Farm
Mandatory recycling
Ban plastic bags
Tax all SUV owners

Add more commuter parking
Limit size of new or expanded houses
More commuter rail parking
Make students take bus to school
Outlaw burning brush
encourage solar/other energy sources
promote "green energy" businesses
enlarge parking lot at train station
parking spaces at commuter rail
ban plastic shopping bags in stores
promote more recycling
improve parking at RR station
stop building houses
less stops for school bus children could walk to major stops
utilize schools for after school recreation for all ages
create space at dump to leave reusable items
charge for parking at schools (high school) to discourage pick up/drop off idling too
build wind farm, more solar use
anything to save our environment
sidewalks
more train parking
new bus service
curbside recycling
add recycling
build sidewalks
encourage children walking to school
more education incentives
High Schoolers should ride buses
Institute laws mandating some of these practices
Support train station with more parking spots
Become a "transition town" (www.transitionculture.org)
No spraying with toxic chemicals on grass etc.
Solar panels in public buildings
Hybrid buses and vans
Recycle more than paper in schools
Reduce population
Curbside recycling - paper/glass/cardboard/aluminum/plastic
Mandate school recycling of trash in school cafeterias
Sidewalks
More action, less talk & proclamations
Fine SUV owners!
Shuttles on major routes, such as 110, 27, 2A
Town shuttle route to reduce traffic and pollution

More on-site energy generation, such as for homes and offices, public facilities
Hydrogen refueling station
Thanks!
Not in favor of removing trees and farmland to support bike trails
Don't spend $ to study this - let state government do it
Solar panels on town/school buildings; Athletic teams need to recycle plastic water bottles; High school does not recycle cans or plastic bottles
Wind power
Turn the heat down in schools, town hall, library - are too hot
Build parking garage at train station
Ban leaf blowers
invest in renewable energy sources
town sewerage
public transportation to commuter rail
solar panels on buildings
build windmills
require "green" procedures in new housing and businesses
no burn permits for residents
invite "greener" businesses to Acton
Leave it at the state and federal level. Local enforcement means more money and higher taxes.
Explore possibilities of wind and solar energy possibilities. Sidewalks attack the environment.

Other Types of Volunteer Activities?
garden club
community supper
girl scouts
trail building
community theater
English tutoring
youth sports
grounds committee
condo board
youth sports
neighborhood
service club
blood donor
HGRM
heartwalks
HGRM
hospital
HGRM
COA

VA Hospital
non-profit
environmental
senior services
HGRM
sports league
home owners association
hospital
2 schools
Garden club, Salvation Army, West Acton Library
Minute Man, Arc for Human Services
Emerson Hospital
Water District Committee
Food pantry
Danny's Place Newcomers Club
Youth activities
Hospital, hospice
Library
Medical
Tutoring outside of Acton
Community theatre
Hospital
HGRM
Museum, Scouts
Relay for Life (Cancer org)
Habitat for Humanity
Non-profit
Museum & AWD
Exercise
Concord
Ethnic Cultural Society
Landscaping
Homes for our troops build
Girl Scouts
non-profit charity
United Way, neighborhood pool
work, United Way
Children's Hospital
APHNS
non-profit
recycling ministry
Commonwealth Ballet
helping with post-Katrina recovery

open table
youth baseball
charity
Lion's Club
Mass. Association for the Blind

Other Limits or Restrictions on Volunteer Activities
age
lack of energy and commitment
ability and lack of desire
need more money to pay for kids' activities and to save for their college tuition
energy
travel out of town frequently for work
childcare
town doesn't motivate people to help
walkways
"cliquey" schools
concern commitment will be hard to keep long-term
personal energy level
not interested
need to do extra work to afford to stay in Acton
old age
physical problems
Energy
Health reasons
Family medical demands
Unsure about time commitment
Work is far away
don't care
work outside community
not enough interesting volunteer work
people are very involved
mix of time and talent
Not a lot of people same age (20's)
spend time with our kids
not able-age, eyes
attitude of some volunteers I would need to work with
disability
Job
Lack of energy
Age
Heath reasons

Caring for young children
Just moved into town
Age
Health
Interest
Health issues
Family obligations
Heath issues
work
disability
age
lack of field space
age
lack of interest
age
older age
I'm already pretty involved but I'm not more involved by choice-I like to be home sometimes!
difficulty finding sitters
town government committees are too confrontational
health problems
too "clicky"
market involvement activities
not limited
no interest
health issues
don't hear about needs other than school
age
age
not sure
working too hard
need a push
age
I am a senior
school
health
childcare
Age
Health
Heath
Age
Heath
Health
Lack of childcare

Motivation
Lack of interest
Age: husband/wife; 87/83 years
Retired
No practical limits
As a former adjunct professor/teacher I feel I've done my civic "volunteer work" with little compensation.
I am a family daycare provider, so it would inconvenience too many families.
I am as much involved as I want to be
Activities I prefer
Energy
Acton has many opportunities with adult ed, Nara Park, Patriots Day, monthly historic home openings. Issue for me it time.
Disabilities
Been there, done that
Not sure
I'm old
No interest at present
Age (84)
Only 24 hours in a day
Depression, still in recovery
Time will be available in next few years
Clinical depression
Primary caregiver of a special needs child and work
Conflict of interest
other siblings
unwelcoming attitude
lack of interest
red tape
already doing a good job
don't know
my children's or family's needs
Too busy working to afford living in Acton
Wife in nursing home
Busy enjoying retirement. Was active when younger.

What Kinds of Things Can the Town Do To Increase Involvement Of Its Residents?
small units of opportunities
never thought about it
sponsor events like "Earth Day" etc.
web site to coordinate/publicize, more general info in town web site (not just meeting/budget stuff)
good & easy access to activities that most of the family members can participate
provide comprehensive information on volunteer activities available and how to get started… to every

household
stop building and take care of the residents that have been here and are here now
ask for help
publicize volunteer opportunities, form steering/planning committees
keep up a vigorous program of informing residents of opportunities and needs through the media and internet
write articles in Beacon or newsletter featuring people who volunteer, volunteer section on website
more comprehensive, up-to-date website, more community bulletin boards
add volunteer opportunities to current publications i.e. community ed. and Acton rec. class lists so people are more aware of opportunities. Tax credits for volunteering
build a database of people and skills/interests, and make available to selective organizations
walkable town center
stop wasting resources, get people of the town more involved in financial decisions
encourage volunteering on town committees
focus on committee work/task groups by creating definite start and end dates
stay out of personal business
publicize more
convince people to be more involved in long term commitment
publicize more
stop the present process of town meetings
offer tax incentives, prize given at end of year, continued out reach efforts
publicize government body schedules and events.
reduce insularity of municipal boards, advertise town committee/volunteer opportunities, improve website
people are too busy
adopt better board management practices
too much involvement
execute a "growing leadership"
publicize volunteer info
good selectmen
add more opportunities
strip mall needs friendly atmosphere
publicize volunteer info
no need
publicize volunteer info
publicize volunteer info
publicize volunteer info
activities at NARA
hold events earlier in the day
publicize initiatives
organize charity events
increase visibility of volunteering options
flexible work groups

newsletter
more shops
Be more specific about how to volunteer
Provide more thorough analysis and logical justification for ideas
Volunteer fairs
Newspaper with "real" news
New website
Develop one-page descriptions of each volunteer opportunity
Make more citizens aware of opportunities
Adopt a representative
Improve organization, communication
Publicize volunteer opportunities
More info on cable network
Do more for teens, have bus service
better publicity of volunteer opportunities
activities for all ages
children's activities
more activities in small time-slots
ask them to volunteer
not up to the town
better outreach
newsletter
this survey and town meetings
volunteering
Brochure available in public places
Identify tasks and communicate to community
Publicize and promote
More publicity
Communication
Inform residents
More publicity (email or website)
Lower taxes
Town fair
Newsletter to advertise community needs and volunteering opportunities
Promote volunteering through schools
Educate and publicize
Advertise volunteer need more openly
less taxes, less cost of living so don’t have to work 50-60 hours a week to get by
lower taxes so we can have more at home moms to volunteer- the cost of living is so high here, it requires two incomes and therefore no time to volunteer in the community
Let them know what's out there. Make it fun and tie it to an organization one is involved in. for example- project graduation is voluntary, it's fun and tied to the schools.
offer real opportunities in various ways.

more actively promote/make info available. Identify clearly time commitments and offer opportunities with smaller commitment levels to get people started
institute a public service requirement for all residents (certain number of hours or fee for opting out), more direct ballot initiatives
not sure
sponsor volunteer weekends. Announce opportunities on website/ at local coffee shops. Have mother/daughter and son/father events. Target neighborhood concerns.
return to a conservative viewpoint
let people know what is needed
mailers requesting help
lower taxes so I don't have to work 80 hours a week to afford to live here
Encourage and acknowledge volunteers
Activities at night and weekends
Send info on town wide efforts online or to schools
Schedule for community
Town meetings on Saturdays (noon)
Publicize what is needed
Volunteer opportunities, listed online, advertise
Provide transportation
Information at town hall
More welcoming to new people
Be more accessible-ability to converse with committee chairs to learn of needs
Decrease taxes
Website to publicize volunteer needs on front page
Reduce real estate taxes
Reduce taxes
Tax breaks with public service
Advertise
Hold and support more community activities
More all-community events (like Acton Day)
Sponsor a volunteer fair
Create gathering place that promotes volunteer needs
Be kinder
Event with food
Include volunteer opportunities on town website
More information/encouragement on TV
People recruiting people, list activities
Reach out to new residents
Provide more information about what is needed and how to be involved
Ask for involvement
Publicize needs
Encourage more restaurants/bars to area activities not only on weekends Set priorities around two or three key motives

Volunteer fair
Cook-out gathering
Expand council on aging
offer multi-lingual publications inviting people to participate
communicate
wide distribution of a town sponsored directory of volunteer opportunities
improve the website, use the town channel more effectively, flyers
people are already involved
provide means of transportation
set out goals to achieve, and have a plan of action
promote, make volunteer work mandatory for unemployed, a day for people to sign up for volunteering
stop yelling at town boards at ATMTG
publicize needs
new way to elect politicians
other ways, besides town meetings, for sending out information about volunteering
make a town website
widen range of offerings, provide transportation
publicize volunteer activities, make the sign up process less confusing
publicize volunteer opportunities, include all details
fun town activities, NARA park more accessible to everyone
publicize opportunities
be more open, reach out to Asian and Latino populations
reschedule meetings to a more accessible time, show how resident's ideas are incorporated into final actions of town
lower the taxes for seniors
provide/list volunteer opportunities on town website
free newsletter/magazine
promote more volunteer programs
it's already doing the right things
provide information
develop school street athletic fields for youth
resource center, website, info clearing house
publicize opportunities
publicize, reach out to adolescents
reach out to young people to help seniors
learn from other towns
communication, give bigger voice to volunteering members
publish a list of places needing help- I.e., vet hospital, public schools, etc.
e-mail suggestions to residents
I think there are plenty of opportunities to volunteer. For a good amount of people, time is the issue. Another issue for people in my age group is "volunteer burnout". We volunteered when our children were in school and now it is time for a break. We're too busy working to put those children through college.

This is a good idea-this survey
Start an Acton Town Newsletter program that promotes activities for middle age people with busy lives.
listen to them at town meetings
lower property taxes for elderly
Encourage a less elitist attitude. Welcome and encourage long-time residents to contribute their sense of history and opinions re all issues- particularly living within a budget and saving money! Remember long term residents have build and maintained this town.
Work towards making it possible for people to participate/ be heard via online forums so that people working long hours can contribute, e.g. investigate ways volunteer boards can function via online forums without violating open meeting laws.
Actively reach out- I do not mean just using "The Beacon" and other print media.
publish where the need is
Adopt a strategy of finding a capable and passionate leader for each identified need area. Do not change leaders frequently. Use the leader to attract others even if it takes years. After all it is a long range matter.
Provide activities that bring active seniors (over 50) together- dance music at NARA concerts targeted at over 50 (not just families); lower property taxes to keep us here!
publish a listing
increase public awareness
Have evening meetings so that working people can get involved.
Give info about volunteer opportunities. Provide opportunities for people who work full time.
Do not consider long term residents obsolete or out of touch- they have paid and repaid for all new schools, library, public safety, and have committed to town.
promoting involvement
better advertising of volunteer needs
don't raise taxes
more town days
send out announcements
reduce cost of living
offer $500-$1000 deduction in property taxes
listing volunteer opportunities on website
add more opportunities
publicize volunteer info
restore historical buildings
greater transparency of town expenditures
build a clubhouse
transportation to committee meetings
make things more affordable for older people
a place for teens
plan gatherings around volunteerism
create neighborhood watch groups
use everybody that volunteers

publicity of volunteer opportunities
create activities
update website
effective volunteering
make residents more aware of issues
more awareness for prevention of common diseases
direct appeals for help
publicize volunteer info
publicize volunteer info
be specific
hire seniors
aggressively solicit volunteers
support the church
mail out issues ahead of time
email opportunities
make McCarthy Towne school into a community center
active recruiting
make information more available
increase visibility of volunteering options
publicity of volunteer opportunities
tasks for elders
providing information
listing volunteer opportunities on website
variety of volunteer projects
tax incentives for volunteers
active outreach
groups for all ethnicities
childcare
Tax incentive options for seniors
Publicize volunteer needs more and how to apply
Program for volunteers
Make list of volunteer jobs available
Look for skills rather than filling positions
Activities held on weekends or after work hours
Have a community building much like Emerson Umbrella in Concord
Reduce taxes
Publicize activities more
Offer more opportunities through school (for students)
Send mailing/email once every two months
Post notices at shops and supermarkets
Make it easier and more obvious what kinds of volunteers are needed
Publicize
Increase awareness of community activities and how to get involved

Promote opportunities for working parents
Post at local coffee shops/community center
Better publicity
Boards and Commissions run by cliques who work agendas behind scenes, volunteers on boards feel powerless to change status quo
More awareness and info to residents
Use channel 8/9 on cable to promote volunteer opportunities
Hold volunteer information fair with all volunteer agencies - publicize it throughout town with emphasis on becoming part of the town through volunteering
Senior center activities should be expanded
Ask Beacon to do a quarterly article
Offer incentives - perhaps tax reductions
Town does well at encouraging involvement - it's easy to be involved
Post agendas/meeting times for town board meetings - ask. Better communication/clarity of process
Create a page on Acton website where community organizations can list volunteer opportunities and residents can list available skills/resources. Add a web page listing all community events - school/theatre/concerts/reading programs/classes - 1 stop shopping. Make it easier to find this.
Reach out to residents
Focus on schools and youth sports is admirable, but "play" is too organized; More bike paths and open areas for "being kids" would be nice; In some ways, Actonians are too involved!
Good question - not sure. Maybe have a "fair" with booths for people to learn and sign up about organizations
Changes of the old guard
Have more meetings such as Vision meeting on March 29
Cost of living reduction (to reduce # of our working hours)
Print twice yearly volunteer pamphlets indicating upcoming volunteer opportunities
Fit activity to my schedule
Establish some type of information center (for newcomers especially) on opportunities for enrollment, contracts, employment etc
I don't like East Acton, North Acton, So Acton, West Acton - I moved to ACTON
Have more organized activities
A simple thing like public transportation would automatically increase involvement of residents in all aspects
If the town listened to the residents, like with the Main St sidewalks almost nobody wants, the BOS just thought the citizens were ignorant. We aren't, we just want to invest the money where it will do the more good
Publicize what town government and local businesses have available for seniors on a part-time basis, possibly at home - I'm a retired architect, author/editor with lots to offer
Make volunteer opportunities that are available known to the public
Follow through on plans for the Bruce Freeman Trail - it's a great way to promote a friendly, healthy community. Bike trails were one of the greatest assets in the mid-west region/town where we used to live.

Help neighborhoods, condominiums and apartments resolve the problem of any gang activity (signs, signage tampering, graffiti, harassment, etc), that can disturb the peace; Enforce law to curtail internet-inspired disturbance
Use a time capsule the go back 100 years
More publicity
Active village planning groups, fundraising groups with village planning groups
Active volunteers and officials can take on proactive recruiting efforts - divide and conquer!
I think getting more people to attend town meetings is crucial. The people who attend are almost all special interest groups.
Advertise
Activities outside of school, not works; Neighborhood gatherings
Better transparency - clarification of our relationship with Concord (why do they derive all the benefits of our sewer and our residents do not. Why should we take on their traffic from the Alexan development.)
Chinese speaking (several dialects) social workers for families; Pass out history of Acton pamphlets to new voters and residents and translate info into other languages (esp. at transfer station)
Publications on the subject (well written), mailings and on TV stations
Get rid of that disgusting Mineke building across from K-Mart; Force the Acton Bowling Alley to re-build a nicer building; Adopt town by-laws to condemn homes and business buildings that are blithe.
Stop offering services - people will step up and fill the void
Promote walking in neighborhoods by finishing sidewalks; Have 2 Acton resident clean up days to encourage people to pick up their own front yards (April/Fall); Town could send DPW trucks/chipper to collect/dispose of big items
Re-organize approach of town meeting - it is sloppy and hap hazardous; this leads to lower and lower participation by residents
Volunteer Fire Dept; Community policing in conjunction with county sheriff; Meet state's minimum requirement for hours in classroom for students; Eliminate half-day Thursday in schools
Not sure about the needs of town schools
Publicize opportunities; Community emails
Help publicize local volunteer opportunities
Provide transportation around town; Better promotion of activities
Publish comprehensive list of volunteer opportunities
town website with in-town job listings
encourage citizens to be more open, less political
volunteering at schools
accommodate two income families
adult sport leagues, organized nature walks
more info on town website
specific hours for leash law
more cultural activities
interesting meeting places
more publicity regarding opportunities
location of N. Acton Fire Station

smaller projects
town-wide registry for volunteer work
proposed financial budgets should be available in their entirety
be more open to change
have less "clicky" people
email newsletter
leave them alone
reduce taxes
communicate areas that need improvement
Lower property taxes so people don't have to work all the time, resulting in more spare time to volunteer.
2-worker families limit time for volunteer activities. Some people don't care about the Town government. Award the people do volunteer work. Seek more volunteers for the Town, recreation and school activities.
Why is this the Town's business?

Other Ethnic Heritages
10-Caucasian
10-American
10 European-South Asian
10-white american
10 European-Latino
10-WASP
10 English
10 Anglo-Saxon
10 White
10 White American
10 White American
10 White Caucasian
10 White American
10 Asian American
10 White
10 Caucasian
10-caucasion
10-Jewish
10-american
10-american
10-american
10-american
10-white
10 Caucasian
10 Caucasian
10 White

10 White American
10 American
10 Russian
10 Canadian
10 Caucasian
10 White
10 White
10 American
10 German- American
10 White American
10 American
10 Canadian
10 American
10 Caucasian
10 White
10 White
10 Caucasian
10 American
10 White
10 Caucasian
10 Canadian
10 European Multi-lingual
10 Yankee American
10 American
10 White American
10 Caucasian
10 USA
10 Caucasian
10 Caucasian
10 American
10 American
10 Caucasian
10 Space Alien
10 American
10 American
10 American

What Would You Like To See MORE Of In Acton?
trash pickup, town sewer in more areas
sidewalks, town wide sewers
list of updated street map and businesses in Acton sent to each resident

fiscal responsibility
less property taxes
should be bikeable, walkable central shopping district that could be a gathering place for all citizens, use the old town building as senior citizen center so that young and old can be integrated
preserve the history and rural community
restaurants, retail shops-small stores-not big box stores (walmart), florists
safe way to cross Great Rd on foot or bike at the intersection with Concord Road and Brook St., smaller elementary class size, intramural sports at the Jr. + H.S. level, public transportation
keep things more or less the same
upscale restaurants, mid-price restaurants, bike paths, internet access, better road maintenance & removal of sand in spring, public transportation from train station, lower property taxes
churches, shopping stores, walking/biking routes, recreation areas, afterschool programs
preservation of woods and open space
sidewalks, pedestrians, outdoor activities, attractions that encourage families (ice cream place like Kimball's, outdoor podium near Bagels Plus)
more sidewalks
improved van service- has had bad experiences with it
open space
lower property taxes, more services (leaf/garbage pickup), better restaurant choices, lower speed limit near Trader Joe's plaza, more businesses to shoulder the tax burden, better fiscal management to keep tax increases to a minimum
farms or recreation park
move more quickly on completing the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, create a town bus service with longer hours using environmentally friendly vehicles that are easier for physically disabled people to get on and off of, recreation opportunities for physically disabled adults, if a new building is being built of exteriorly renovated make it look colonial or in a pleasingly visual historic style
I'm a market researcher and one way to involve people is have professionals do surveys. This one is terrible. The question choices are biased and multiple concepts in each answer make it hard to respond. I'd like to see more public transit.
smaller class size in elementary and JHS + HS, maintenance on the main schools' campus
a change in town government
lower taxes
sidewalks (in residential neighborhoods), walkable neighborhoods (retail), diverse restaurants, handicap accessible playgrounds, shade structures at playgrounds, more info on the town website about candidates, more info about what's on and when on the local access cable channel
Nothing. No more development, that's what makes it what it is… :) a desirable place to live.
walking paths in woods, bike trails
traffic lights- Hayward and Rt. 27, Concord Rd and RT 2A
more of a community, people need to stay longer after their children graduate from the public schools.
sidewalks, village areas like west Acton, tax relief for senior citizens
better cost control
courtesy by drivers
protect schools, need business development

Walkways, sidewalks
ranting political factions
congressmen hired to lower living costs, and build less developments
exercise places, meeting areas
personal freedom, conservative values
personalized services, green areas, caring about citizens
open space, multi-purpose community buildings
land, trees, parks
people need to stay in Acton after their children graduate high school, street lights, something new done with the old buildings
cheaper housing
environmental awareness
restaurants, sidewalks, curb side recycling, community events, athletic club, town sewer
limit the years a selectman can stay in office
cluster housing
affordable housing for seniors, environmental awareness, more accurate tax evaluation
environmental awareness, conservation trails
conservation land, protect the history, repeal Ch. 40 B
transparency in development process, conservation land, public transportation
market basket
slower pace of life, more feeling of community
affordable housing, easy crossing of route 2 at Hosmer St.
new leadership, cost cutting
traffic, fast food restaurants
restaurants, casual meeting place, open conservation land for hunting
medical services for poor
restoration of old buildings, more parking, protection of historical properties
sidewalks
publicity for events, less wasteful money spending
better town maintenance
working families getting involved
attention to sewers
lower taxes
restaurants
pretty roads
administration
affordable housing
community-based action
options to raise revenue other than taxes
movie theater
sidewalks
sidewalks
public transportation

variety of retail shopping
sidewalks
sidewalks
sidewalks
some commercial growth
traffic lights
plowing
just right
reduced taxes
open space parking
sidewalks
reduce spending
coffee shops
freeze taxes for seniors
industry to share tax burden
shopping
Businesses
Sidewalks
Parking at commuter rail, restaurants
Larger share of taxes paid by businesses
Sidewalks, crosswalks
Sidewalks, neighborhood pools
Town center
Smaller homes, public transportation, bike trails
Sewers
Language training for youth
Sidewalks, public transportation, bike trails, affordable housing
Downtown-walkable area, cultural activities
Interest in beautifying town
Bike paths, walking paths, conservation land, unique local restaurants
Cultural activities, variety of restaurants
Sidewalks
Bike trails, walking trails
Entertainment, sidewalks
Restaurants
Less expensive grocery stores
Cinema, good boutiques, gourmet restaurants, bike paths, street festivals
sidewalks
sidewalks
open spaces
water conservation
smaller houses
tax reduction

sidewalks
sidewalks
more retail stores
intergenerational activities
sidewalks
town fiscal responsibility
access to train for all
fiscal planning
more conservation
maintaining community
two acre lot for development
open spaces
sidewalks
preservation of open spaces
fiscal conservation
wildlife
attract more individuals to town
better traffic control
conservation land
ethnic restaurants
non fast food restaurants
fix Rt. 2 to 128
tougher permits for new construction
pedestrian friendly choices
community development
parking for public transit
citizen recognition
shopping center
streamlined approach to building
better town water
Sidewalks
Big box stores
Wine bar, bistros, restored historic houses
Sidewalks, bike paths, conservation land, new restaurants
Big box stores
Job opportunities and companies
Sidewalks, tennis courts, bike trails, businesses to pay more taxes
Businesses, higher tax rate for businesses, lower tax rate for residential
Parking space in train station
Public transportation, restaurants, activities for teens, bike/walking trails, stop lights at busy intersections.
Sidewalks, bike paths, restaurants
Attention to transportation issues
Concerts at Nara park, movie theater

Sidewalks, young adult community, recycling programs, commuter rail parking
Attention to playing fields
Stop lights, social worker services in schools
Public transportation
Restaurants, retail, movie theater
Traffic lights
Sidewalks
Open space, lower speed limits/enforced speed limits, bike trails
Trees, sidewalks
Economy in government
Traffic lights/control, chain restaurants
Places to go after school for teens, restaurants past 9:00PM
sewers, walkable spaces (retail, conservation)
bike-roller blade paths, open wooden areas, garbage bins to recycle paper, glass, etc
sidewalks, conservation land, access to conservation land
open, protected conservation land, preservation (of what's left) of our historic buildings
thoughtful design when constructing public areas-Kelly Corners. South Action School St. + Rt., are they ever going to do anything with exchange hall it's a disgrace and embarrassment, sidewalks
conservation land
more sidewalks, speed of traffic makes me anxious about using existing sidewalks-police should be more visible. More attention should be paid to the Roche Bros./CVS parking lot-it's a trap, I think its dangerous
good restaurants/take out, sidewalks
sidewalks and rail trails
I wish I were more involved in the community. How should I begin?
more land conserved, more people walking/biking, more sidewalks, more crosswalks, more ethnic, arts related events, promote a day a year of no cars
supervised after school programs, teacher-directed curriculum, genuine friendliness
sidewalks
class on Thursday afternoons! Half days every week in Acton greatly limits the amount of teaching and makes it difficult for working parents to find daycare. Extended day does not have enough spots on Thursday afternoons to fit the need. An affordable outdoor swimming pool
more students using school buses
playing fields, better restaurants (too many pizza parlors), gathering places for teens and post teens
ease of restrictions in commercial districts
restaurants, drive thru coffee spots, a nicer curb appeal to ugly businesses, another grocery store that has ample parking, a Target store, more landscaping/public + businesses, movie theater
sidewalks and bikepaths. Conservation land. Smart growth development planning. Climate change action and awareness
complete sidewalks on High Street. Demand all eligible units connect to sewer
more money on town services and less for schools
children's activities, better communication of town governments process, better traffic control at numerous dangerous intersections, excellent teachers
something done to Exchange Hall. Improve Kelly's Corner

traffic lights at the Trader Joe's shopping center, Hayward Road and Main Street, and Newtown Road and Main Street. Public golf course. Bistro style restaurants. Sidewalks
sidewalks, clustering retail stores, open space and woodland preservation
ethnic diversity in restaurants, community center with indoor pool/activities for all ages, bike, rail/trail, walking paths
sidewalks
activities in common areas
more thoughtful planning of development and commercial zoning limits. It’s starting to feel like route 9. Public transportation, bike paths
bike paths, restaurants, movie theater, family and community events, arts and theater
Restaurant variety, clothing stores
Planning with regard to housing, development and open space
Socially responsible landscaping and buildings
Bike paths
Sidewalks
Walkable shopping areas
Farm land, police presence
Sidewalks, trash pick up, restaurants, small shops
Chain restaurants, traffic lights, books in the library
Preservation of agricultural land
Open space, town center, designated walkable shopping area
Sidewalks, public transportation
Affordable single-family housing
Town septic, rail trail
Traffic lights
Better shopping,
Transportation, activities for middle aged, side walks
Sidewalks, public transportation, crosswalks
Reasonable priced stores
Preservation of town character, town parks
Cultural activities
Soccer fields
Town transportation
Sidewalks, outdoor ice cream stands
Sidewalks
Planning on residential development
Public transportation, sidewalks
Cheap grocery stores
Sidewalks, street lights, trash collection
Woods and green areas
Bike paths, rail trail
Recycling, environmental options
Control on spending

Good restaurants, historic preservation
Restaurants and shops
Small to moderate sized homes
Sidewalks, buses/vans to commuter stations
Town fiscal responsibility
Traffic lights
In town bus
Fields, playgrounds, open space areas
Public transportation, sidewalks
Movie theater, diner
Traffic lights
Open spaces, commuter rail parking, bike paths
Cheap grocery stores
Commuter parking, recycling
Business tax base
Traffic lights
Commuter rail parking, control over signage outside historic district
Sidewalks, crosswalks
Restaurants
Retail shopping
Enforcement on speed laws
Bike paths, cross walks
Sidewalks
Sidewalks, trails, transportation
Bike paths
Conservation land, walking/biking trails, community farm, sidewalks, ethnic restaurants
Bike trail, sidewalks
Drive-thru services, inside play for children
Small stores, parking at train station
Recreation areas, conservation land
Sidewalks, bike paths
Big box stores
Restaurants/bars, clothing retailers
Restaurants, activities at NARA, traffic lights
Ethnic/cultural diversity, preservation of town history/architecture
Traffic planning/safer roads, public transportation
Outdoor activities, variety of supermarkets and restaurants
Teachers
Sidewalks
Better street signs, light on streets
more walkable areas, parks
gourmet restaurants, cultural events, sewers, multi-cultural influence, sidewalks
all day kindergarten, emphasis on basic skills

higher quality French restaurant
activities for 15-21 year olds, cross-ethnic opportunities to meet/mix, ethnic street fair (like October Fest)
movie theater
community involvement, open space, walking trails to shopping, library etc.
bike path, pedestrian-friendly shopping areas, public parks
conservation land
Sidewalks
police
restaurants, employers, common sense government, shopping
public transportation, restaurants, cluster developments
beautification, renewable resources used
volunteer opportunities/the opportunities being promoted, walking/bike trails, recycling services
literate surveys with less of a political agenda, whole foods store, services for elderly
public transportation, sewer
English speaking people
bike paths, restaurants
open debate of issues facing the town, new style of town meetings
sewers, better schools, accessible commuter rail station, connected library
public pool, small class sizes, fire station in N. Acton
public transportation, parking at train station
attractive areas of commercial development in town centers
parking facilities for commuter rail station
means of transportation, surveys like this!
walking/bike paths, earlier identification of special education needs
access to Big Nagog pond for restricted recreation
restaurants, teen activities, retail, movie house
fiscal responsibility
sidewalks, affordable housing
nicer people, more trains to Boston, beautification
ethnic diversity, cool shops, ethnic restaurants, indoor playground for kids
support for police department, preservation of beauty, transportation for elders
emphasis on Acton's history, recreation space, outreach meetings scheduled on weekday
affordable housing
nice restaurants, upscale retail, larger parking lot at train station, whole foods, sidewalks, bookstores, movie theater
parking at commuter rail, wheelchair accessibility in parks/arboretum, municipal electric utility
sunshine
sidewalks, town spirit
sidewalks, open spaces, commuter rail parking
recycling program, conservation land, bike paths, public transportation
support from town for small businesses
bike trails, sidewalks
restaurants, golf driving range

athletic fields, development of run down areas, fire station
beautification of town
Christmas decorations, social activities
more trashcans at NARA, plowing the walkways at NARA
adult activities/resources, restaurants, bike trails, music venues
Starbucks, better restaurants, parking spaces for commuter rail, whole foods market
public transportation, open space, maintaining farm lands, sidewalks, sewer, parking at RR station, affordable housing, diversity of population
open space, support for small businesses, activities for teens, conservation land
bike trail
rail trail completed
office buildings, restaurants, bike/walking paths, golf course, consolidated town services
ice rink, police
cross walks
a movie theater, fixed property rate for seniors
smiling faces, flowers
improve the appearance of commercial areas on Great Rd. and Kelly's Corner. Commercial buildings should be aesthetically pleasing and well landscaped. We need to preserve open space
open space, prettier shopping centers, farm land
open space (walking, hiking trails), bike paths, historic homes + historic commission preservation
bike paths, pedestrian walks, public transportation
tax breaks for senior citizens so they can stay in Acton
less taxes for senior residents
additional parking at the commuter rail for residents-perhaps a covered garage, multi level
Editorial:town property and auto excess taxes are exorbitant and out of control. The present system of a full government with all its costs for each town is no longer viable. The present individual town government concept should be replaced. Six to eight towns should be merged, so the administrative people for government, fire, police, schools, water, library can be shared. There could still be branch offices for fire, police, water, library, and schools. This would eliminate many costly administrative positions. Personnel costs are the highest part of town budgets. This would help very much.
sidewalks, commuter rail parking or access through some other type of transportation, walkable village districts including neighborhood or village tavern/restaurants that can be accessed without driving, affordable housing for grown children
Ensuring that open and natural spaces remain in Acton and are maintained. Acquire open and natural spaces as they become available. An old time general store would be a great addition. I'd like to see the big, yellow building in South Acton cleaned up, renovated and used more efficiently.
conservation land, preservation of historic areas
More opportunity for employment for the middle aged
Historic homes should be protected and preserved by the people that own them. Not the town. If you want to protect the house then you should buy it
More emphasis in budget on police and fire needs. Traffic enforcement. Provide protected walking areas for minimal/no charge for runners, walkers, etc. Tax breaks for seniors who have biuld infrastructures in town.

Wheelchair/walker accessible places to walk. Pick-up basketball/softball games. Recreation for the developmentally disabled (Special Olympics, Miracle Baseball, pool time). Central place to reserve a community meeting space. Good restaurants. Restaurant that can accomodate more than 20 people groups.
Services (garbage pick up and senior services)
Is it possible to have town meeting and/or town elections on a weekend and during the day (town meeting)?
I would like to see more bike paths and sidewalks. I think that this would reduce the traffic congestion that we all experience in Acton and also reduce the greenhouse gases. I would love to bike to RocheBrothers or to the library but there is no easy way to do that.
Line of sight at intersections improved by clearing tree and bush growth. Playground equipment like Arlington has for children. Develop spaces adequate for adult recreation. Sidewalks.
An ability to stay with and adjust such surveys and plans (long range)
Attention to the fact that senior citizens leave who can, like us, afford to stay here because there are not enough active seniors here to make it interesting, taxes are very high relative to comparable towns, and there is relatively little for us to do here.
Sidewalks. Kelly's Corner improvements especially landscaping and attractive plantings. Drug/weapon/explosive-sniffing dogs
I'd like to see our tax bill to go down. The tax rate of Acton is the highest compared to neighboring towns. I'd also like to see tennis courts in north Acton.
More help for the elderly and infirmed. Affordable super market.
My kids love basketball but there aren't any places that they can play indoor basketball. School is not always available. Outdoor is okay
unified urban planning to increase aesthetics of town- it is losing its charm quickly
More cultural opportunities (concerts, crafts, shows, art exhibits, more poetry readings, authors etc) would be great! Maybe more town gatherings so that all ages can socialize.
Continued support of schools. Better traffic management. Better use of empty business/retail stores
Sidewalks. Safe running trails (similar to minuteman trail). Bike lanes.
Attitude of younger residents to gray hairs changed. Put money towards a central senior center/food pantry/recreation center for us versus all focus going towards youth and schools!
single family developments
sidewalks
strict zoning
fiscal responsibility
sidewalk repairs for wheelchairs
quality ethnic restaurants
larger downtown area
commuter rail parking
restaurants
conservation land
fiscal management
shopping
run town hall more efficiently
open spaces
shopping

restaurants
privacy
affordable single family housing
maintained playgrounds
colonial architecture
traffic lights
direct bus from S. Acton to Symphony Hall
sidewalks
sidewalks
activities for all ages
concentrate on diversity of age
fix historic buildings
ways to meet people
sidewalks
sidewalks
police catching speeders
sidewalks
environmentally friendly actions
community center with social services
sidewalks
sidewalks
distribute results of surveys
sidewalks
mid-priced restaurant
fiscal responsibility
children activities
cleaner roads
protected open space
industrial development
expand senior center
industry
bike paths
sidewalks
lower priced restaurants
smaller homes
open spaces
affordable housing
fiscal responsibility
sidewalks
A YMCA
open spaces
pedestrian village
fix the boardwalk

walkable shopping
shopping
diversity
parks
planning
opportunities for older immigrants
programs for people without children
open spaces
audio chirping for traffic lights
cross country ski area
clean water
restaurants
sidewalks
action to eliminate traffic
traffic lights
sidewalks
bike path
sidewalks
redevelop Kelly's Corner
a Whole Foods store
town sewer
senior discounts
restaurants
healthier business clientele
sidewalks
restaurants
restaurants
walking trails
open areas
cleaner roads
green space in town center
Conservation land, walking trails
Sidewalks
Open/Preserved land
Parking at train station, commitment to green issues, bike path
Sidewalks, more parking at train station, restaurants
Sewer services to all, mosquito control, enforce leash law on public areas, working emergency call boxes at all fields/public areas
Open space
Transportation, affordable concerts/theater
Social outdoor gatherings
Movie theater, arts center, hardware store
Free after school programs

Sidewalks, bike paths, restaurants, trash cans
Bike trails, open space
Restaurants and pubs, public sports facilities, traffic lights
Language training for youth
Shopping, restaurants, businesses
Town sewer
Locations or activities for teens and young adults
Open space, parking service
Community arts, composting, public transportation, dances, bike trails
Sewer, Cultural events, open space, bike/walking trails, small businesses
Softball fields, recreation center
Concern for senior citizens
Sidewalks
Greater support of schools by older citizens
Job opportunities
Traffic control
Town clean up
Traffic safety
City ways, sidewalks
Malls, clubs/venues, apartments, florists
Bike trails, sidewalks, boutiques
Sidewalks, public transportation
Common areas
Parking at commuter rail station
Movie theater
Open space, commuter rail parking
Sidewalks
Open space, commuter rail parking
Parking spaces in Commuter rail station
Vibrant town center
Sidewalks
Sidewalks
Sidewalks, commuter rail parking, concerts
Maintenance
Bike trails
Restaurants, Bakery
Encouragement of small coffee house types of businesses
Sidewalks
Condo building
Emphasis on open space and preservation of historical structures, more arrests for speeding, slow down pace of life, appreciation of architectural and natural beauty

Culture, walking to places (sidewalks), West Acton Center like old towns (cafes, restaurants), bus/public transportation, recreational opportunities, family ? Options, preservation of historic sites, develop South Acton while preserving histories.
Better sewer system
Town centers developed into walk able, fun area; Nowhere enjoyable to walk in South Acton - have to drive everywhere; Rte 27 not bike friendly
Affordable program for young children, drive thru coffee shop
Preservation of open space; Acton should not become another Natick or Framingham; Bike/walking trails; Improvements to Rte 2 in Acton and to Boston
Fabric shop
Inter-cultural/inter-faith activities; Programs that bring awareness to global issues; Promotion of wellness programs at reasonable price
Open space; Cluster housing; Study/more public knowledge of homeless/poor in Acton
More than similar in ethnic origin, age, religion and /or educational level, economic homogeneousness promotes community cohesiveness
More property tax relief for seniors
Complete the Rail Trail and wooden walking bridge over Rte 2 (like Arthur Fiedler one on Storrow Dr - design would work at little cost)
Open space is good - no priority since we have a good amount
Open space, historic buildings maintained, unique restaurants (not chains), sidewalks, sewers
Restaurants, businesses, traffic solutions at busy intersections
Biking/walking paths
More retail stores; Big Box chain store along Rte 2; Sidewalks
Schools - a rounded curriculum for all levels
A center of town where all ages can gather for coffee/tea, watch world go by, shop or dine - West Acton has this possibility
Sewers, support to police and fire services, including EMTs
Limit on how many terms selectmen can do - need regular change; Town people should have say in what places should be dedicated to new police/fire stations since we pay for them
More recreation facilities for adults (bike paths, easy hiking trails); more space and programming at senior center and open eligibility to age 50+; More support to people who can help all community, not just schools; More effort to retain older population (whose kids have graduated school) since they are less expensive to support with services
Town election rather than town meeting; Listening to residents talk just for the sake of talking/being seen gets boring.
Bicycle parking, emphasis on quality education for all students, community-owned high speed internet, regulation of cable TV & Internet providers, DSL everywhere, commuter rail parking, commuter rail trains (mid day/weekends), way to get to commuter rail station, stores selling new/used computer equipment, electronics parts stores
More conservation land/open space; more funding for historic home owners to renovate; keep focus on schools

Commuter parking at train station for residents; Sidewalks, especially on Main St & Mass Ave; Community activity consolidated web page; ethnic/economic diversity; Affordable housing; Additional fire/emergency services in N Acton area; Curbside recycling; Shared community transportation - alternatives to short hop driving; A good Mexican restaurant
More sidewalks, 1 mega store (WalMart etc.)
New town manager must not be beholden to Dore Hunter - must be independent; Don Johnson was unable to make decisions without Hunter. Show this to town manager and Hunter; voters will watch to see if Hunter will let manger make his own decisions. Hunter not doing town favor by re-running for election.
My kids would love to see a Taco Bell
More conservation land; public transportation; bike paths
Restaurant
Sidewalks, especially Main St from Post Office Square to Rte 27
Better train access - more parking, safe bike access, a West Acton stop; Bike paths linking parts of town, recreation areas and adjoining towns; Rte 27 corridor is becoming very congested - perhaps no solution; More single family homes on small lots, more small town feel as in West Concord
Restaurants like "Not Your Average Joes" (similar to that); More concerts at Nara Park
Sidewalks; Commuter rail parking; Public transportation
Not able any more to rely on town meetings - majority not able to make it due to child care/length of meeting; Town becoming dirtier, town takes "not my property" approach; Trash pickup could be done by first-time offenders; Town should be much prettier for the taxes residents pay, especially in bleak winter; Roads not well maintained/ no way to cross Great Road; Leave saving world from greenhouse gasses to Federal Government and concentrate on delivering excellence on basics (roads, bridges, lack of crime, schools); Almost got hit by car due to lack of safe crossings on streets
More development in West Acton center - needs a good restaurant, not just pizza
Sidewalks to village centers
Public transportation; Sidewalks; Inexpensive activities for teens/pre-teens
Commuter rail stops, e.g.. West Acton with parking behind Idylmld (?) Farms; Sidewalks; Sewers; Bike paths
Expansion of senior center; public transportation
Maintain green areas; Keep open areas open
Outdoor concerts earlier in evening (5-6pm) @ NARA; Arts/cultural opportunities; Cleaner/better tasting tap water; Better/more family friendly, make-to-order restaurants; Cheaper NARA Beach rates; More shade @ NARA; Better signage
More sidewalks; More bike paths
Oversight in both residential and commercial design to reflect Acton's historic and small town character; Bike paths; Emphasis on historic preservation - i.e. Exchange Hall (will it ever be repaired?); Maintain school choice
Town needs to balance the needs of citizens. While public transportation is nice property taxes must be controlled - have tripled and cause financial difficulties for families since 2000. Sister was unable to save for retirement and had to leave town
More in-town transportation (buses, vans); Better sidewalks/bike paths; Better information services for newcomers; More accessible parking; Better maintenance of streets; More places to meet others socially and informationally, More amenities/opportunities for active seniors; More integration of multi-use spaces

Sidewalks - I see kids dropped off by school bus on Willow and Central and is scares me; Have builders who are putting in more housing build sidewalks; Planning board members and engineer unit proposed building sites to see potential impact before they approve the project - protect Acton
Revitalization of South Acton; Open Space; Walking paths/sidewalks; Cross walks; Bike paths
Parking at the trains (for everyone); Clothes lines (global warming); Drive up window (there is no evidence that drive ups equal more roadside trash) because I'm mildly disabled and often have small/sleeping children I have to drive to Maynard
Better park maintenance - the park on Martin St needs trash pickup and the park near the library needs updating
I am happy with Acton as it is now
Sidewalks, bike trails, protect undeveloped land
Fiscal responsibility
Interaction between racial groups - can I enroll in Chinese school; Sidewalks
Look to bring more dollars into the town
Stop signs/lights at critical intersections i.e. Hayward & Rte 27; Better enforcements against "slide through" stops at stop sign intersections (Arlington@Mass Ave, Martin @Central, Prospect@ Central, Willow @ Summer; Fence and shrubbery cutback requirements at intersections - poor visibility (bad: Ethan Allan & 111 SW corner)
Acton is sorely missing the "downtown" area with walk able shopping/eating areas. The Kelly's Corner area needs some senior reworking. It could be transformed into a town center. Would definitely like to see more sidewalks and bike paths.
I would like to see more zoning planned to accommodate growth in a realistic way to avoid stresses on the schools, police/fire, other town services. I'd like the town more involved in the repeal of 40B and adoption of a more appropriate way to accommodate affordable housing.
Sidewalks; Bike paths
Pedestrian/bike paths
Another swimming pool for access and use by all ages and the schools; Traffic lights on Rte 27 - very dangerous road; Bruce Freeman Bike Trail; Turn Quail Ridge Country Club into a public golf course if it ends up going out of business
Better traffic control
Resources to help solve problems with repeated violations of condominium rules (I am disturbed daily by a resident in my building); Social worker who can interface to police or recommend legal solutions; Curtail unauthorized handmade signage with inappropriate communications; Regulate intersections, especially those with faster traffic, hills, obstructions; Less speeding/honking; No graffiti on signage so that motorists respect speed limits/signs
Traffic control signals; Enforcement of posted speed limits
Transportation system for affordable housing residents; Public services meet present needs; Redo of the circle at the Concord Reformatory; Better oversight of 40B construction
Controlled traffic, stop lights on Great Rd (Brooks Rd) in front of shopping & in Hayward @Main; Movie theatre; Enforcement of stop signs/driving rules
Some fiscal restraint

Keep all things local with community management; Community supported agriculture; Sidewalks/village centers/underground wires; Sound traffic planning; Support of improved commuter rail to Region (can't ride train many places without going into Boston first - need circumferential connection); Biowaste fuel and soil supplement station.
Sidewalks
More emphasis on controlling taxes that threaten many of us facing retirement
Sidewalks on busy streets; Parking for commuter rail; Public transportation around town and to/from neighboring towns; Options for students "at risk" - easily reachable (i.e. walk able or public transportation available) teen "hangouts" (movies, hang-outs like Danny's, more accessibility to NARA); Ease of reach of afternoon programs that students aren't dependant on parents driving them
More US citizens
Low and middle-income housing; Expanded sewerage; Public transportation options
Shopping choices; Public transportation; Ethnic/Economic diversity; More recreational opportunities for special needs children/young adults
Business
Improved fiscal responsibility; Tax increases have been significant year over year - above inflation - and services are not increasing accordingly. Services are not distributed evenly, for example no sewer or water service in N Acton - yet we contributed to installation
Continue the great historical activities (i.e.. The library ones) and more ways for seniors to be part of the town fabric, even when they have less money than the younger (and often rude) families. Don't toss out the Elvis generation!
More town by-laws to enforce maintenance of properties; Get rid of that eyesore building at corner of 111 & Main (Mineke) and force the Acton Bowling Alley to re-build - there are so many houses in this town allowed to fall in disrepair;
Preservation of open space
More curb appeal; More sidewalks; Quality build smaller homes with trees; Sidewalks from neighborhoods to schools/churches/parks/library for safe walking/bike riding - not 2A/27/111 - finish sidewalks you started (Summer from Willow to Central; Willow betw. Kingman & Summer; Prospect St)
Open spaces/conservation land
Services (trash, sewage); More of a town center
A planning board that puts taxpayers first and developers second
Focus on rural feel
Sidewalks; Bike trails
Further implementation of the "Acton Plan"; Fiscal restraint - no more Prop 2 1/2 overrides; Lower rax rate - encourage business and home ownership; Limit public services or replace with voluntary force (Fire Dept, County Sheriff etc); Kids in school more - meet state requirements; Full day Thursdays; Sidewalks, esp. to NARA Park, YMCA, Home Depot on landfill site etc
Open space
Public transportation; Cheaper recycling fees
Land & open space preservation; Architecture in scale with land size; Sidewalks - Nagog Hill Road!
Safer roadways for walking
Need to attract more business (light industrial or office), perhaps on Rte 2 corridor to help offset the heavy taxes homeowners pay; A senior center more centrally located.
Please improve appearance of commercial zone around Kelly's Corner - especially the old Meineke

building.
More rail lot spaces (@ the main lot) for residents with stickers - it is unfair that sticker holders have to pay to use meters when the lot is full or cannot use the lot at all because it is utterly full
Lower taxes
more conservative spending
drive-thru restaurants
bike path to neighboring towns
fenced dog park, garden club
commuter parking, affordable childcare
public transportation for all ages
town sewerage, restaurants
open area to run with dogs
good restaurants
racquetball court
sidewalks
walkable town center
bike trails
more sewers
open space
community events
asking for suggestions to reduce spending
sidewalks
in town department stores
fiscal restraint
retail shopping
people getting involved
sidewalks
sidewalks
have signs for tax bills face the road
age diversity
property tax abatements
preserve wooded areas
participation
sidewalks
cheaper family fun activities
sidewalks
reduce town spending
bike and walking paths
small businesses
bike paths
larger chain stores
sidewalks
control building rate

Better protection against mosquitoes, better zoning to protect over-building, more preservation of wooded areas, a community fine arts cinema, more community farming areas, Acton Cinema, more cultural activities and fairs, more art exhibits, more classical music events, more recycle opportunities, more cafes open in the evenings.
Financial responsibility by the Town. Follow budgets, don't add employees or programs if the money isn't in the budget. Acton's plan seems to be "Do whatever we want and just raise taxes."
More colonial buildings, more historical markers, repair the old granite markers, need more nice people in town. We have more apartments because Concord turned them down. We need more driver education for high school students, alerting them to accidents resulting from speeding.
Mature trees, courteous behavior, farms
A movie theater that shows foreign films (or work with Fine Arts in Maynard to promote same)

What Would You Like To See LESS Of In Acton?
taxes
any more development
less traffic
taxes
traffic
no more building of homes
housing development, traffic
construction, traffic, noise, abandoned buildings in Kelly Corner
non-ethics activities or organizations (e.g. Homosexual), spirit stores (like wine), Halloween school parade
less building and lower the tax
new housing development
growth in town and growth in the schools, Acton feels like Framingham did 20 years ago and look at it now
building
multi-unit developments that stress the services the town can provide, traffic congestion on Rt. 27 and Rt. 119/2A
shopping center, no more Dunkin Donuts, no more restaurants
development, traffic
less potholes and roads that are rough
a few people making decisions. development
competitiveness-athletic and other, discretionary spending
large SUVs driven by 98 lb housewives on the cell phone, conspicuous consumption
taxes, favoritism, businesses paying a higher tax rate than residences
higher taxes
traffic backups at major intersections (especially 27 + 111), one day of extended hours at transer station, houses built on tiny lots one on top of the other
taxes- people's children graduate high school and they move out ASAP because of high cost of living
development
taxes, traffic, sidewalks, less money spent on outside consulting forms- they do not live in town- we do, the visual nightmare that is the intersection of 111 + 27- our town goofed badly
strip malls
less taxes, stop wasting money
traffic
less single family detached housing
strip malls
condos/apartments
growth, open space being taken over
these surveys, intervention in personal lives, taxes, government employees, political correctness, selectmen elected for live

building expenses, aggressive policemen
residential development
apartments
shopping centers
taxes
spending, high costs
new housing and retail development, overtaking historical and environmental necessities
Irresponsible development, apartment complexes, town employees
traffic
mansions
destroying historical monuments
less building
big retail, motorists not respecting laws, any none USA thinking
residential development
building/expansion/growth, Acton too big
concord rotary, 40B
taxes
taxes
real estate taxes
automobile dealers, traffic
apartment buildings, senseless retail
increases in taxes, dog owners not obeying signs
taxes
traffic
ugly developments
less government
new housing
taxes
apartments
private water and sewer
traffic
traffic
condo construction
untreated water
residential development
wasteful spending
traffic
empty rundown property
mega subdivisions
building
questionnaires about Acton's future
K-mart
40B projects

traffic
taxes
pollution
new building projects
rental housing
Home development
Strict dog leash rules
Taxes
Taxes
Spending tax dollars on surveys
Traffic
Strip malls
Decision making via town meetings
Mansions
Apartments
Hydrant flushing
Traffic, retail operations
Home development
Home development
"Big box" stores
taxes
Home development
Taxes, home development, traffic
Traffic
Traffic, 40B's, taxes
Spending (like the CPA)
Taxes
Tax, Home development
high taxes
sub shops
traffic
fast food restaurants
apartment buildings
excess mansions, lower taxes
taxes
less building
traffic
less building of homes
costly new items like bus service
strip malls
taxes
fees for basic services like garbage removal
traffic

taxes
traffic
traffic
new construction
traffic
large developments
big houses
town meeting style government
ticks
too many police activities
development
strip malls
taxes
random development
no more condos
construction of large homes
mcmansions
traffic
Building of residential homes
Pizza shops
Development, traffic
Home development
Home development
Traffic
Traffic
Apartment/Housing development
Taxes, school budget
Traffic
Traffic
Home development
Taxes
Taxes
Traffic
Apartments, cutting down trees, traffic
Home development
Restrictions on commercial businesses
waste of paper-unwanted senseless mailings
taxes
traffic, taxes
no more "40B" condo/apartment/track housing. Builders are using it as a tool to build more on less land. Build an entire project in north Acton to bring us up to the 40B% like Lincoln did and be done with it!, less bilding = less traffic, lower taxes. 3 full time 24/7 fire stations and want another one in Acton? no way.

less development, less new homes, no attached multi unit structures, no more sidewalks or stop lights, all new homes on no less than 2 acre lots, no more strip malls
single family home construction
development/cluster housing
I would like to see the building on prime land halted. I would like to see commercial space cleaned up, made to look pleasing. At the corner of 111+27 the Verizon building, the Meineke building, the Oil Co., Sunoco-all could be cleaned up- the Meineke building must be breaking building codes. The siding is falling off and there's debris everywhere! Fix it up or sell- until they clean it up!
big, ugly apartment buildings/rental units, ugly K-Mart
traffic and congestion
less drivers! Less people talking on cell phones while driving- they are not paying attention- many accidents with these people, less development
an overly ambitious, ultra-competitive, high pressure culture, high student-teacher ratios in K-6 classrooms, homework, school marketing for school choice
traffic houses built right on top of each other, houses with chipping/peeling paint and/or unkempt yards
less drivers talking on cell phones and cutting other drivers off
less Dunkin Donuts, more stores with character. Dogs running free at Great Hill. Run down historic buildings- Acton needs to help Exchange Hall come back to life
parents driving their children to school
taxes!
taxes and revamping of historic district commission to either make historic areas like Williamsburg or eliminate petty restrictions and time to make decisions
apartments-2A has plenty, Kmart-its always been dingy and dirty, gas stations on every corner
less increase of property taxes
traffic, fast food places
taxes for school services I think are subpar- school addresses only needs of positive well motivated students and ignores on campus drug and alcohol use
less money for school services and more for town projects
traffic congestion, less restrictive water ban
apartments
fast food restaurants, unsightly commercial buildings such as the Meinke Building
residential development, traffic, litter, strip malls, night lights
taxes
condos
new homes (mcmansions)
traffic, taxes, clearing and cutting of trees
Hair salons, McDonald's
Development
Traffic
Home development
Reduce speed, autobus
Traffic

Home development
Taxes, traffic
Shopping malls
Chain stores
Townhouses/apartments
Traffic, pot holes
High priced housing
Home development, taxes
Home developments,
Mansions
Traffic
Taxes
Traffic
Spending by town
Real estate taxes, over rides for seniors
McDonald's
Home development
Home development
Home development
Taxes
Spending in schools, especially Special Education
Spending
Home development, traffic, real estate taxes
Rotary traffic
Taxes
Taxes
Affordable housing
Home development
Spending on schools, traffic
Home development
Traffic
Spending on schools, traffic
Town houses/apartments
School buses, mansions
Traffic
Big-box retail
New construction
School transportation
Taxes
Condo's
Mansions, commercial building
Home development, police/firemen
Home development

Residential and business development
Fast food chains
Home development
Home development
Home development
Fast food chains, strip malls
Fast food chains, traffic
Traffic
Taxes, cobblestone crosswalks
Taxes
Emphasis on lesbian/gay issues
Inappropriate development of land
Cobble stone driveways/brick crosswalks
Home development, traffic
New construction
Diversity activities
Rentals/condominiums
Traffic
Surveys
Businesses leaving, traffic
Population
Home development
Taxes, overrides, traffic
Home development, crowded schools
commercial establishments, traffic
taxes, traffic, wasting of money
deer- destructive to property
residential buildings, smaller class sizes
traffic
residential development
traffic, taxes
taxes
traffic
building, old rundown buildings
traffic, ugly buildings
traffic
anger at town meeting, Dunkin Donuts, early morning noise, rude people
taxes, traffic, strip malls
spending, taxes
traffic, rich people, taxes, rude teenagers 40B developments, traffic 40B development
property taxes, new buildings, commercial activities

traffic
taxes
traffic
taxes, ugly utilities, ugly buildings
construction, multi-family complexes
new housing, taxes, traffic
40B project
car dealerships, hardware stores, traffic, fast food, gas stations
residential property taxes, traffic, excess services that raise taxes
minerals that stain clothes/appliances
taxes, reduction of open space, traffic, large scale construction
traffic, new construction
traffic, empty shopping plazas
taxes
traffic
tax rate
taxes, traffic
summer concerts
new construction
construction, cars, high prices, taxes, snobbishness
inconsiderate dog owners
playing fields, children's activities, paper mailings, unneeded police car investments
apartments, car dealers, taxes
development, traffic, strip malls, emphasis on schools over community
mcmansions, chain stores, lawn chemicals
road side signs, taxes
single family homes
large developments
kids doing drugs, new developments
construction
no overrides!
apartment buildings, no more building of any kind, better sidewalks, bike trails
no more apartments! Building moratorium! No more strip malls!
less housing construction
condos, apartments, fast food, traffic, "mcmansion" neighborhoods
rising taxes
I don't believe the town should be supporting the Acton Chinese Language School. They should be encouraged to build their own facility. Its unfair to local churches for the town to sponsor them. My family is no longer able to use the gym on Sunday because of the ACLS. This is not fair to us. The ACLS is not an inclusive school/community. They are analogous to a church or synagoge.
traffic

cars/traffic. Development of more homes in general. McMansions, tear downs of smaller homes to develop larger homes. Development using wetlands property to find frontage for homes too many yards away to even recognize frontage goes to that house.
I don't want to see more strip malls. I like the "corridor of green" as you enter Acton on Rt. 2. If more shopping, eating places, etc. are wanted I prefer more of a village approach-being able to walk to things.
development
Taxes! They are unfair to the middle class low income people. Somebody that owns a condo should not have to pay $3,000 a year that is outrageous.
401B
No more parking lots of expansion of existing ones for commuter rail. Traffic. Development in questionable areas which are prone to flooding. Fewer apartments. Less taxes for school unless rebate for seniors or long term residents provided. Less use of school vans for personnal errands- better monitoring of mileages by case with exact mileage of routes.
Talk of "town character". I never know what people mean by this. It seems like a nostalgic wish for things to be like they used to be- whatever that memory is. Sometimes it sounds exclusionary- like "we want things the way it was before all these newcomers moved in." I'd rather be a welcoming community.
taxes, traffic
What drew me to Acton 17 years ago was the open space, clean appearance, and proximity to Boston, plus the fact that it lacked the standard conveniences: strip malls, coffee shops, etc. Acton lacks the feel and character that it did 17 years ago. Today it is like any other town with the exception of Lincoln. Lincoln is a gem. In short, less commercialism... less is more!
Tree growth on electric/utility lines-either town to trim/remove or have home owner pay to do it. Less expenditures on traffic studies that do not translate into significant change due to power plays.
less taxes, schools are fine
Filing surveys and plans away after short term use
Less active promotion/welcoming of "friendly" 40B projects. We must accept some, but we don't need a committee that works with developers to encourage them. Acton's density is far too low for public transportation. Let's not talk about it or spend money on it.
Speeders especially teens, traffic deaths
Aggressive arrogant attitudes in public places as well as public roads. Many of the drivers in Acton lack knowledge of the rules of the road and lack common curtosy.
building of apartments and multi unit complexes
No more construction. The new construction makes me sick.
less of new construction- less new homes and developments
less big retailers and more family business type retailers
Uncontrolled commuter traffic through towns. Parking lots. Dunkin Donuts etc. on every corner. Abandoned houses or businesses left to decay to detriment neighborhoods and value of real estate. Storage of junk/vehicles outside of homes.
natural settings
40B projects
high-cluster homes
taxes

overrides
houses
taxes
potholes
traffic
large developments
traffic
taxes
taxes
sprawl
taxes
sub shops
sanding and salting
traffic
property taxes
traffic
wasteful spending
property taxes
road signs
traffic
property taxes
portrayal of "small pie" mentality
new housing
traffic
taxes
speeders
neon signs
traffic
mcmansions
apartments
private development
taxes
tearing down of small houses
overrides
property tax
shopping areas
cars
multiunits
sports on Sunday morning
taxes
duplex apartments
traffic
unnecessary class courses

taxes
student dropouts
development
traffic
traffic
traffic
40B development
tearing down of small houses
gov't
Kmart
rental housing
less pressure on students
40B housing
mosquitoes
building
40B housing
home development
government growth
taxes
speeders
urban development
traffic
development
traffic
new homes
traffic
large retail buildings
low end housing
overrides
construction
traffic
traffic
hair and nail salons
traffic
larger homes
traffic
new development
Tax, Home development
Taxes
Taxes
Development
Supersized single family homes
Bureaucracy, special education-getting their funds first, taxes

Taxes
Large apartment and condo complexes
Congested shopping areas
Emphasis on sports
Taxes
Traffic, potholes
Condo/apartment development
Traffic
New subdivision or apartment neighborhoods
Police
Taxes
Property taxes
Apartment and condos for rent, increasing population
Property taxes, house conservation
Restaurants/stores, property taxes
Cars
Single family large houses
Growth
Overrides
High Taxes
Taxes, overrides
Developers, traffic
Supersized single family homes
Condos, town houses
Traffic, development
Traffic
Building, traffic
Property taxes
Traffic
Property taxes
Traffic, litter
Town meetings
Development, traffic
Housing development
McMansions
Transient people
Building
Commercial buildings
Cars, traffic
Taxes
Traffic
Leashes in dog park
Traffic

Oversized facilities
Less shops and restaurants, places of employment, industry; lower taxes, stick to budgets, stop overrides for things schools think they need; less ?, development, traffic; no sidewalks between P.O. and 2A - all those trees!
Traffic, development of strip mall type
Prevent red-shirting in local schools, allow children to start school at correct age so that older children in lower grades don't raise test scores; Why pay extra for carpet/refrigerator etc disposal on top of dump pass; Change dump hours to include Sundays
No more development - commercial or residential
Cafes, buildings, making improvements that are not necessary in these hard times, i.e. brick walks
Focus on sport activities
New housing (McMansions), traffic; Town meeting - ? many who can't attend
Developments - especially large 40B complexes, million dollar homes, grandiose public buildings
Foolishness like cross walks at the Town Hall; Fire Dept driving Ford Expeditions when sedan or Explorer would suffice
Strip malls, Midas (the old building on Kelly's Corner), Kmart
Building of homes and condos
Taxes, tax overrides votes, apartment building growth
Developments of housing and shopping areas
Road construction
Schools - less emphasis on college entrance
No more building of homes - have enough residents
2 1/2 over-rides; Acton off track - many pressured changes - asking itself "Are schools expensive enough?" "Are there too many transient mansion owners?" " Should we emulate Concord, Carlisle or Lincoln?"
Less tax money spent on schools and soccer fields at expense of town municipal services (library, highway, sewer); Less mentality "Kids have graduated - sell house and move to less expensive town" only for more families with school age kids move in for a few years
Town meetings= a disservice to most residents who can't/won't attend to due work/childcare. Time to be democratic and give everyone a vote in voting booth. Town meeting became anachronistic when Acton grew past 500 residents.
Gentrification, competitive HS sports, Competitive/elite education system, Mercedes Benz, Police details at construction sites, traffic
Traffic; rampant, ugly development/sidewalks without thinking through the price in terms of loss of historic character (through tree removal, loss of stone walls, land-taking)
Lower property taxes - at least slower rate of increases; Traffic, especially for short hops; Chinese restaurants.
Traffic lights
Big retailers
Less development
Apartment complex
Library and public safety buildings are too large and may have unused space that could be used for other purposes

Less hyper-organized activities; More "empty lots" and fewer groomed ball fields; Fewer McMansions - see the frightening article in The Atlantic about future McMansion slums
Traffic; Large single family developments
Town needs to make smart decisions as we face economic downturn; hope cobblestone crosswalk at Town Hall proves itself (rather than paint); Hope little red house can be used for meeting space or scout use; Hope the consultants for this project are worthwhile and not a waste of money
Population should stay as is; if town continues to grow, it will be forced to expand or build new schools - Can Acton afford to do this?; Class sizes are maxed already; Town doesn't need new housing unless it is for 55+; Less development on Great Road
Traffic speed on Rte 2A is too high; Rte 27 traffic is a problem in Acton center, especially during afternoon rush hours
Competition for non-profit funds
Cars
Less new construction; Less traffic
Less taxes; Less Traffic congestion
Less construction of homes/housing developments - the town is very densely populated with some traffic issues; Putting 55+ homes @ the golf course is a bad idea and disrespectful to the residents in the adjoining neighborhoods
Reddish tap water (stains clothes, unattractive, unhealthy?)
Fewer dogs running around unleashed - they and their owners really make walking in/enjoying areas such as the Arboretum and many conservation lands unpleasant; Many fewer SUVs
Less cramming, esp. big houses into small lots; Better management of time at Town Meeting - i.e. save ceremonies for end, budget presentations with time limits etc
Less "overpriced" housing; No more "McMansions"; More thought given to development strategies that focus on enhancing the livability and sustainability of the qualities we love about Acton
Traffic - a real issue; Building on wetlands; Stop compromising because of HOB
Traffic; Suburban sprawl; ? Along roadway; McMansion development; Loss of rural character that remains in a few parts of town; Conservation land turned into dog parks i.e.. Great Hill - disgusting! - this is where kids play soccer and people observe nature
Rules (about everything)
Taxes are very high compared to other town. I believe that towns like Winchester have the same average tax bill but their property value is $200k more than Acton. Another study showed that our high taxes affected the home value increases as compared to other towns.
Woods cut down to build houses
Wasteful spending
The super rich; Business that are for the elite - spas, golf courses etc; 4th of July fireworks that can only be accessed on a bus; Wasn't NARA supposed to be free?
Stop spending like yuppies out of control
Young bicyclists without helmets; Young bicyclists ignoring bicycle rules and laws (out of ignorance): Pedestrians (over 50% ignoring walking laws by not facing traffic) - especially pushing baby carriages where there are no sidewalks; Drivers ignoring "Hidden driveway" signs; Speeding in residential areas
Development seems to be getting out of control. I would like to see less dense housing developments being put in every available piece of land.

Traffic (and that means no more cul-de-sacs and neighborhoods that don't connect to anything else); In case of accidents on Main St traffic backs up due to lack of side streets - impossible to evacuate; No more wedged condo developments on too little land - eyesores!
Big single family homes
Traffic
40B development - the law is being abused
Affordable housing - since Acton has not transportation system, affordable housing is really not available - someone needs a car- affordable housing shouldn't be placed out in the boondocks; Traffic - an alternative: reduce the speed limit in Acton to 30mph - all of Acton
Traffic
Chapter 40B housing
Definitely do not want big box retailers (e.g.. Walmart) or large malls; definitely do not want unplanned development
Traffic; Students feeling stressed out because the school atmosphere does not reflect real life - good students feel like underachievers if they take less than Honors or AE courses, for example
Less spending of town funds on things like Exchange Hall. It's horrible that the North Acton Fire Station is going nowhere because it's been over-planned. Go back to the original plan which fit in the space available.
Less Illegals
There is a very strong elitist attitude in town. I realize this is something a community plan can do nothing about; Traffic jams; Property taxes
Insularity; Fear of change
Traffic
Traffic; Better traffic control; More parking at commuter rail station to ease congestion on Rte 2; Non-resident students coming to AB without paying tuition to offset taxes residents contribute
Enough talk of class sizes - the children/teens do fine here no matter what the size; it is possible to teach with the large class system as used elsewhere (I have taught classes of 31); Less construction on small lots - ugly! Come down hard on developers who build on wet lands
Do not allow residents to store junk in yards; talk legal action against property owners of 68 ? Road who put up a wall of concrete blocks and "no trespassing" signs - these things keep Acton trashy and are why many don't stay here long term; Don't allow residents to claim senior citizens tax reductions when they have children or grandchildren in Acton school system
40B must stop - unfairly taxes rest of the population; Too much development, too dense, stresses what services we have, stresses roads/traffic; Give up state money - privatize our town; Stop spending tax $ - we can make do with a lot less and still have a great place to live; Rec Dept is overkill, but Conserv. Dept is a must.
Less dead trees; Less trashy areas; Less cheaply build, ugly boxy McMansions; Developers at Squirrel Hill never put in trees or paved road until residents forced him - what is wrong with Roland and our planning board? Replace Roland;
Taxes that are obscene
Taxes!
No more development, especially in historic district
Less development - try to preserve a "rural" feel - already gone but stop the building!
Building!

New building permits, which in current economic climate erode all home owners values; Our supply is too great at this time for low demand and we should not make it worse.
Apartments - replace with ownership; Over build public facilities, i.e.. "Public Safety Building", Police Force, Fire Dept etc; Firework displays
Traffic
Development!; Traffic!; Bad, oversized architecture
Less traffic; Less building of homes and apartments and preservation of open space; Less crowded classrooms (smaller class sizes)
Less talk about maintaining the rural character of 50 years ago! Change can be good.
High taxes; ?; 40B legislation needs major changes?
less taxes
less taxes
traffic, property taxes
less taxes
less car congestion
septic tank pollution
strip malls
fast food
cars, construction
condo developments
less plastic bags
no more construction
less housing developments
taxes, overstaffed police
40-B density
taxes
traffic
property taxes
development
traffic
spending
destruction of Indian Village
sanding and plowing
non-open enrollment schools
taxes
taxes
apartments
methodical suppression on individuality
traffic
strip malls
million dollar expenditures
traffic
cars

traffic
crowded housing
new housing
Less building; more preservation of wooded areas; Less Rock + Roll music events, less deer populations.
Taxes, motorcycle cops, general waste of money by the local government (e.g., hiring a zoning enforcement officer because the building inspectors aren't competent enough to enforce zoning like the building inspector is responsible for in all other towns.
High School students rushing (speeding) The seniors and upper juniors with cars rush to the Dunkin Donuts for 42 minutes during their breaks.
Traffic, development, unnecessary emphasis on police and fire buildings, macadam, leash laws, yuppies, political correctness, spending on any "nice" idea that comes along, without appropriate consideration.

Appendix: Statistical Reliability

If all 1,476 people that returned the residential survey answered a given question the error rate for it would be +/- 2.6%. However, very few questions were answered by all the people responding. Typically for any given question, between 1,000 and 1,400 people would provide answers. The error rate associated with this level or response varies around 3%. In fact 2.6% rounds off to 3%. So it is useful to think in terms of an overall error rate of +/-3% for all the questions. A +/- 3% error range is within acceptable statistical limits and is commonly used. Many types of marketing and public opinion surveys take samples of about 1,000 to 1,500 observations, yielding error rates of +/-3%. It means that if survey results for a given question vary by more than +/-3% the results are conclusive. For example, we observe in the survey that 25.6% favor building more detached single family homes, and 53.6% do not favor building more detached single family homes, our error rate tells us the results are conclusive. The table below shows error rates (rounded to the nearest full percent) for different size surveys.

Survey Sample Size	Margin of Error Percent*
2,000	2
1,500	3
1,000	3
900	3
800	3
700	4
600	4
500	4
400	5
300	6
200	7
100	10
50	14

*Assumes a 95% level of confidence

Source: Pamela Hunter, "Margin of Error and Confidence Levels Made Simple," iSigmaSix, 2008, Website: http://www.isixsigma.com/library/content/c040607a.asp#author

Survey of Acton Businesses

March, April and May, 2008

1. Introduction

As part of the Acton Comprehensive Plan Outreach efforts, a survey of businesses, their attitudes, values and opinions about the future of Acton, was conducted in March, April and May, 2008. All town businesses were sent a mail-out/mail-back postage-paid survey form in April. In March the survey form was posted on a website, encouraging Acton business people to fill it out electronically. 11 returns were obtained electronically. Of the 1,622 survey forms mailed out 75 were mailed back (or in case of a few, brought back to Town Hall). The combined total of 86 returns (website and mail-back) represents a 5.3% return rate. Publicity was done via newspapers, notices and meeting announcements to help increase the return rate. The original deadline for mailing back returns was extended from April 11th into May to encourage more returns.

The survey was developed through a process of determining topics for questioning from public and committee meetings, then preparing a draft for review by a subcommittee of the entire outreach project. Five redrafts of the survey were prepared through review by the subcommittee resulting in a final one-page survey for sending out and posting on the web site. This form was printed on one side of a legal size sheet of heavy paper that could be folded, taped shut, and mailed out and mailed back with postage paid in both directions. The survey was addressed to each business in Acton, and sorted by 21 mail routes for delivery at a bulk-rate by the U. S. Postal Service. It was an anonymous survey because a rip-off label was used with instructions to remove it before sending the survey form back.

The survey is comprised of 14 multi-part questions, which contain a mixture of multiple-choice responses and open-ended comment type responses. Thirty-five separate items of information were asked for in the survey. A question about the type of business being operated as asked to allow checking with data annually reported by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development on business type, that allows comparison of survey results with the town as a whole (to determine how representative the survey is). There was a conscious attempt not to duplicate questions asked in the town's recent Open Space and Recreation Survey, and not to duplicate questions asked in an earlier survey done to help make decisions about a Senior Center, and finally, not to duplicate information in the Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report for Acton. Some of the same questions included in the parallel Resident Survey, done as part of this outreach effort for community comprehensive planning were asked, to if there were differences in attitudes between the business community and town residents.

Two lists of businesses were obtained and combined in an extensive editing process which eliminated duplicate listings. One list was obtained from Claritas, a company that is specialized in assembling socio-economic data bases. This list of 1,206 businesses was based on listings from telephone companies for all businesses that had Acton addresses and business telephones.

A second list was obtained from the Acton Town Clerk of all businesses that register names in Acton. These include home businesses and other businesses that do not have business phones. This list consisted of 995 names, addresses and phone numbers. From these two lists the final list of 1,622 unduplicated businesses was prepared and used for mailing. As mentioned, 86 returns were received.

Eighty-six returns are associated with an error rate of +/- 11.4%. This means the percent result reported for each item may vary by as much as +/- 11.4% if 1,476 answers were given. Because in most cases not all respondents answered all questions, fewer than 1,476 responses were received for many questions. It is therefore advisable to think in terms of a 12 or 13% error rate, which is acceptable for a survey of this type. Very many of the answers given varied from each other by more than 24-26% (12 to 13% error for two items being compared), indicating that the survey gives a significant and accurate accounting of how two items are valued. It is important to point out that the survey results do not meet the test of randomness, which is a requirement for an absolute accounting when inferring that results of a survey represent the results that would be obtained if all the businesses in Acton had responded. It is likely that a self-selection process occurred which resulted in most returns being sent in by those most interested in Acton and its government. This is similar to the conditions that surround our local, state and national elections where only a limited number of voters turn out to vote.

Randomness is defined as each member of a group being surveyed (businesses in the Town of Acton) having an equal chance to be selected to provide a return. This test was met in the Phone Survey of residents described in another report. In that survey some of the same topics as those in the Business Mail-Out Survey were covered, giving a chance to better determine public opinion.

The table below show how the businesses types reported in the Business Survey match those reported by the state in its annual compilation of establishments wages and employment for Acton. Townwide 2007 data is used which is the most recent year reported by the state.

Survey % Distribution by Business Types Compared with the Town as a Whole

	Automotive	Retail	Wholesale	Restaurant	Entertainment	Prof. Serv.	Pers. Serv.
Surveyed %	0.0	24.6	5.8	7.2	1.4	30.4	4.3
Acton %	4.9	10.7	6.0	5.1	2.4	34.0	6.9

	Health Services	Lodging	Manufact.	Transport.	Construction	Education	Communic.	Other
Surveyed %	10.1	0.0	4.3	0.0	2.9	4.3	1.4	2.9
Acton %	7.9	0.0	5.1	1.2	8.2	2.5	3.0	2.1

Source for Acton Data is the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

The surveyed data are all within 6% of the Acton Town-wide data with the exception of retail, where the difference is 15.9%. With the exception of retail businesses the survey data appears to have been returned from an accurate accounting of businesses by type.

The survey questions are contained on the following pages, and the results of the survey from both the web site and mail-back returns are given on pages following that. The physical format of the survey was altered to meet the needs of both the mail-out and website applications, but the questions and the language are as shown on the following pages.

2. ACTON BUSINESS SURVEY Comprehensive Community Plan, Outreach

The Town would like to hear from you about how you would like Acton to further evolve over the next 5 to 10 years. We want to know the features, services and characteristics of the Town you value and would like to preserve and enhance. This survey is designed to help town officials better understand how business owners and managers feel about Acton and its future. We encourage you to take this opportunity to inform us how the Town can improve its services and general conditions for businesses. Please return this survey to the Planning Office in the Town Hall at 472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720 by April 11, or take the survey online at http://www.ActonOutreach.com . Thank you. This business survey is intended to supplement, not duplicate, information in the resident goals and objectives survey now being conducted for the Town Comprehensive Community Plan. **There will be no identification of individual businesses or people in the survey.** Data will be tabulated and aggregated and used for Town management and development of an updated Comprehensive Community Plan.

1. How satisfied are you with your dealings with the Town and services of the Town? Please circle one.

	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	No Opinion	Unsatisfied	Highly Unsatisfied
The permitting process (excluding signs)	1	2	3	4	5
Sign permits	1	2	3	4	5
Provide information you need	1	2	3	4	5
Police Department services	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Department services	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic control facilities and services	1	2	3	4	5
Town bylaws (zoning, health, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Value received for your tax dollars	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5

_____

_____

2. What can the Town do to improve business conditions? (Open ended question)

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What would you identify as being assets to Acton (qualities you appreciate)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What would you identify as being challenges to Acton (qualities you do not like)?

_____

_____
_____
_____

5. What makes Acton unique?

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What type of business activity do you operate in Acton? Please circle one Automotive Sales and Services Retail Wholesale Restaurant Entertainment Professional Service Personal Service Health Service Lodging Manufacturing Transportation Construction Education Communications
Other: _____

7. Are you satisfied with your current location? Please circle one Yes No No Opinion

8. Are you satisfied with your current building and premises? Yes No No Opinion

9. Are you satisfied with your current parking and access conditions? Yes No No Opinion

10. Do you reach adequate markets for your business activities? Yes No No Opinion

11. Are you able to find the type of employees you need? Yes No Somewhat

12. Are you satisfied with the current business mix in Acton? Yes No No Opinion

13. Do you have plans for business expansion in Acton in the next few years? Yes No Possibly

14. Are you interested in using "green" construction techniques in your future improvements? (For example, solar energy and/or water saving fixtures) Yes No Possibly

15. Would you be interested in more and increased connections and cooperation between existing businesses (e.g. contributing to a joint fund for aesthetic improvements and/or increased services in commercial areas)? Yes No Possibly

16. Do you participate in any local business organizations? Yes No

17. If yes, which ones? MetroWest Chamber of Commerce Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Rotary Club Other:

_____

18. How long has your business been in Acton? 1 – 5 Years 6 – 10 Years 11 – 20 Years 21+ Years

19. How much do you feel your business is a part of the Acton community? Very Much Some-what Very Little Not at All

20. How should Acton evolve in the future?

_____
_____
_____
_____

21. How does your business contribute to the community? (e.g., team or other sponsorships, scholarship programs, award programs, providing space for public announcements, fund raising drives)_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. What would help to make your business feel more a part of Acton?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Results of the combined website and mail-out survey returns are shown on the following pages. First the summarized result for each multiple-choice question is shown with the absolute number of responses and percentages each choice represents of all responses. Then the results of the open-ended questions are shown with a tally of number of times key words were mentioned. Then a complete listing of all the verbal open-ended responses is included.

3. Results of Multiple-Choice Questions

Question: How satisfied with Town and services?	Highly Satisfied	%	Satisfied	%	No Opinion	%	Unsatisfied	%	Highly Unsatisfied	%	Total
Permitting process (excluding signs)?	10	12.0	26	31.3	33	39.8	12	14.5	2	2.4	83
Sign permits?	3	3.7	16	19.5	36	43.9	13	15.9	14	17.1	82
Provide information you need?	17	21.5	38	48.1	19	24.1	3	3.8	2	2.5	79
Police?	35	42.7	34	41.5	10	12.2	2	2.4	1	1.2	82
Fire?	42	50.6	26	31.3	12	14.5	2	2.4	1	1.2	83
Traffic control?	21	25.6	26	31.7	21	25.6	11	13.4	3	3.7	82
Town bylaws (zoning, health, etc.)?	6	7.2	30	36.1	24	28.9	15	18.1	8	9.6	83
Value received for tax dollars?	4	5.1	28	35.9	18	23.1	15	19.2	13	16.7	78

Question	Yes	%	No	%	No Opinion	%	Somewhat	%	Possibly	%	Total
Satisfied with current location?	73	90.1	3	3.7	5	6.2					81
Satisfied with current building and premises?	62	77.5	14	17.5	4	5.0					80
Satisfied with current parking and access?	50	58.1	22	25.6	14	16.3					86
Reach adequate markets for your business?	58	72.5	11	13.8	11	13.8					80
Find type of employees you need?	42	58.3	14	19.4	16	22.2					72
Satisfied with current business mix in Acton?	56	70.9	15	19.0			8	10.1			79
Plans for expansion in next few years?	17	21.3	51	63.8					12	15.0	80
Would use "green" construction techniques?	46	59.7	9	11.7					22	28.6	77
More connections and cooperation between businesses?	20	26.0	29	37.7					28	36.4	77
Participate in local business organizations?	20	28.2	51	71.8							71

How long have you been in business in Acton?	1-5 years	%	6-10 yrs.	%	11-20 yrs	%	21+ years	%	Total
	24	30.4	17	21.5	14	17.7	24	30.4	79

How much do you feel your business is a part of Acton?	Very Much	%	Somewhat	%	Very Little	%	Not At All	%	Total
	30	41.7	22	30.6	11	15.3	9	12.5	72

To which business organizations do you belong?	Number	%
Metrowest Chamber of Commerce	8	40.0
Middlesex Chamber of Commerce	4	20.0
Rotary Club	2	10.0
Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce	1	5.0
Other*	5	25.0
Total	20	100.0

*Other business organizations that got one mention each are:
AV Chamber of Commerce
Acton Lions
West Acton Business Associates
Woman's Business Network (Based in Harvard)
Acton Family Network

Other types of businesses listed in addition to those identified in the list of types of businesses on page 2.		
Food - Pizzas	Security	High tech equipment
Horse farm	Massage Therapy	Consultant
Travel	Real Estate	Network/Computer Services
Funeral Service	Consulting	Photography
Child Sport Facility	Dental	Consulting
Finance	Self employed, consulting, arts	
Consulting at Raytheon, BAE Systems etc.	Horse farm / breeding/lessons/training/boarding	

4. Frequency of Mentions in Open-Ended Questions

How to improve business conditions in Acton?	Mentions	What are Acton's assets?	Mentions	What are Acton's challenges?	Mentions
1. Traffic	9	1. Schools	18	1. Traffic	19
2. Signs	6	2. Town Character	10	2. Taxes	8
3. Taxes	4	3. Open Character	9	3. Parking	4
4. Permitting	3	4. Location/Access	6	3. Growth	4
4. Zoning	3	5. Community	4	5. Development	4
4. Sidewalks	3	6. Rail	3	6. Housing	4
7. Trash	2	6. Police	3	7. Condos	2
7. Sewer	2	8. Fire	2	8. Transportation	2
		8. Restaurants	2	9. Town Meeting	7
		8. Diversity	2	10. Transportation	6

How should Acton evolve in the future?	Mentions	How does your business contribute to Acton?	Mentions	How can your business be made to feel more a part of Acton?	Mentions
1. Development	6	1. Sponsor	16	1. Business	10
2. Business	5	2. Schools	10	2. Town/Acton	5
3. Walk	3	3. Contribute/Donate	7	3. Signs	2
3. Community	3	3. Fund	7	3. Traffic	2
3. Residential	3	4. Teams	3	3. Improve	2
		5. Charities	2		

5. Combined Mail-Out and Website Business Survey Unsummarized Results for Open-Ended Questions (A complete listing of written responses)

Question: What can the Town do to improve business conditions?

Include businesses in events and notices. Acton Day is really just the Recreation Dept; could be so much more.
Easier permit process
Keep it concentrated in congested areas; don't allow more sprawl. Promote horse farms in all areas of town.
Curb trash pickup, curb manure removal, electricity and postal service still come from Concord - must change!
Better, more permissive signage
Lower taxes and fees. Enforce rules more consistently
Lower property taxes
Lower property taxes, drive out a particular class of people and shrinking business diversity
Be more business friendly and stop looking at merchants as "the enemy"
More flexibility on sign allowances (within reasonable guidelines), allow for expansion for an office over existing garage - zoning changes about 5 years ago was unaware
Think "How will this decision being made hurt small business?" when making future decisions
Site plans should be by planning, no need for local Board of Health, conservation regulations, key intersections should be improved or signalized
Less full time FD and PD, more detectives versus patrol on PD. Were robbed years ago - no one was caught. Why don't large fire engines have ambulances? No good use of fire equipment?
Town to give permits to all businesses to put in their signs by the road, all the same kind
Larger signs allowed
Allow better sign for Acton Woods Plaza
Eliminate conflicts and interest with licensing for town approval services
Make is easier to open a business in town. Do not make outside business jump through hoops
Better permit process
Open up more commercial zoning
Reduce traffic congestion, turning lanes needed (not traffic lights)
Cut taxes
Traffic signs needed, i.e.. Intersection Newtown Rd & Rt 27, need walk path
Stop strip malls, reduce traffic
Would like to see local police more involved with traffic safety and businesses, improved road signs
Continue improvements to bike path and side walks

Better walkability @ Kelly's Corner
Support business. We offer services to citizens to help creator a more green environment. We can work together
Farmers Market, arts center, less duplication of businesses (banks, gas stations), more unique shops
Manage/control property tax rate increases
Add sidewalks Rt 2A to PO Square Rd, continue sidewalks to Rt 2, both sides, add public sewer system
Fix traffic congestion
Allow for larger signs
Better traffic signals and side walks
Allow nice signs on street
Improve transportation - walking, shuttle, interconnect paths
More traffic lights at difficult intersections
Loosen limit in one zoning, eliminate historic district Commission. Town too residentially oriented, business not appreciated/wanted
Continue directory of services
Sewerage and trash pickup
Bigger, noticeable sign in the street with lights at night
Sidewalks to make it safer for customers
Eliminate Concord Rotary, attract more high tech/service business to increase weekday population of town
Acton reasonably hospitable to capably-run businesses, maintain unified tax rate for competitive edge on area's towns, maintenance or improvement of traffic mobility
Pave pot hole, let up on historical signage restrictions and work with building dept
Acton Woods Plaza does not have a sign listing businesses. People drive by and do not know that we are here.
Have less strict signing laws. Have public sewage system for Route 2A.
Provide adequate parking for all businesses. Improve sidewalk access to businesses
For everyone, another traffic light on 2A and on 27.
offer more town services, sewer and water
Keep the taxes level with residences, we do not use the town services like the residents do. The landlords pass on the increased taxes to the residents in the form of products pricing and in some cases are forced to leave town because of profits or lack of.
The town should allow small business owners to display A-Frame signs on weekends and even on certain weekdays particularly in the evening in order to make motorists aware of the existence and special events occurring at these businesses.
Improve the intersection of 111 and 27. Bicycle lanes. More pedestrian crossings. General improvement of Rte. 2A.
As my business is small and internet-based, I am not well qualified to comment

Make the zoning and other bylaws more conducive to development and businesses locating in town.

Question: What would you identify as being assets to Acton?

The People: Highly educated, value local, diverse
Growing city
Police and fire department are very good and efficient.
Semi-rural elements.
Schools, clean streets, not overdeveloped
Affluent customer base
Open land, open feel to the town
Conservation Land, diverse business community
None
Exceptional community spirit and support
Amount of forest/wooded space
High school, elementary school Campus, Historic Center
Nothing until something is done to the size of Great Road. Needs to be widened and improved
Police and fire department
School system, shopping malls, library
The Police Dept
West Acton "village" feeling, open space, green spaces, trails, good schools, educated, good income, population
Schools, great use of green space
It would be good if the Rail trail were finished
Nice place to live
Location, schools, commercial area
Low crime and other high tech businesses
Small town feeling but progressive
Stronger sense of identify and preservation of heritage
Safe, convenient, organized, well-run
Suburban, farm
Access to train/shopping
Good school, safe environment
Green space, school system
Great community, nice people, good school systems
School system, intelligence of population
Mix of people and businesses
Stong community values, charm, history
Arboretum, Nara Park, ABHS Theatre Productions, Trader Joe's, COA (non-business venues)
Proximity to 128/495

Small size, minimal traffic
Good town services
Town events - Acton Day, Winter Fest, Wellren Univ.
Demographics
Schools
Schools and wide demographics (ages, ethnicities)
Location
Open space, cleanliness of town
Public works dept, hazardous waste days, transfer station operation, surveys that continue to be made without results
Safe community, good library, friendly staff, Board of Health
School system
Schools, small town feel
Educational system, concentrating apartments & businesses on Rt 2A corridor
Close to highways, variety of restaurants
Excellent school system, great town workers, location, demographics, proposed rail trail
More cohesive and unified body of residents than in other town, debate and decision processes are largely productive
Small town, upper class population
Conservation land, services for seniors, good schools, nice range of businesses and restaurants, history.
Proximity to highways, pleasant environment (not overdeveloped) Good Town services.
Conservation lands, NARA, School system, future rail trail, children's museum
Very well diversified and safe.
Diversity of environments (business, residential/old, new)
Schools; close to Concord and Lincoln
Response Text
School system; The Discovery Museums, Nara Park, and Recreation Department offerings
town it self
Schools which help keep our town real estate market strong. The shopping conveniences, especially as I like to and do shop locally. The variety of stores is good.
Small Town Environment, Good Schools, Train Station, Diversity
The diversity of the community. The interaction between the town government and the citizens.
historic nature, conservation lands, opportunities for tourism
Quality of schools, lack of crime, great library, Commuter rail station
Schools, mixed-character (rural, residential, village, commercial) of development

Question: What would you identify as being challenges to Acton?

Rapid growth, yet traffic problems don't seem to be addressed on Rt. 27 (Intersection of 111).
No comments
Increased traffic

Mountain trails in Conservation Land in much better condition!
Traffic, esp. Rt. 2 and Rt. 2A
Uncontrolled growth, especially residential
Over development, especially cheap looking condos, i.e.. River St, Main St near K-Mart etc
Over development, taxes too high
Promoting new business, tax incentives to add employment opportunities
No cooperation with local merchants w/ bad checks, people in collection office unable to rectify their own mistakes
Allowing business to grow while still maintaining the character of the town. Cemetery dept should be able to keep more funds rather than channel to general fund
Over regulation of business, i.e. parking & signage. Very poor road and pedestrian conditions
Improving streetscape by planting shade trees within or outside row on Arterial Streets
Traffic, lack of consistency in ? Decisions, i.e.. Retail. More sidewalks on main roads connecting center of town Rt. 27 to 2A and along 2A going west to the Littleton line
Update Great Road
Terrible traffic
Not pro-business in sign by-laws
Traffic, lack of Rail Trail
Entrances to shopping centers (Roche Bros)
Uncontrolled development of arteries - not attractive, poor traffic control
Permitting
Traffic on 2A/119
Traffic, taxes
Traffic issues - Nashoba Rd (between Newtown & Great Rd), Concord Rotary, corner of 27 and Mass Ave during school bus departure
There should be bottle/can return at landfill that pays a nickel per item
Traffic on Rte 27, 2A
Parking availability for retail areas (i.e. West Acton)
No more shopping center, no more housing
High taxes
Parking and commuter rail station
Too congested with day traffic, too many strip malls
Hard to find living arrangements within budget (houses, not apartments)
Intolerance & arrogance
Traffic
Kelly's Corner, too many multi-unit housing projects, lack of charm/design
Parking at commuter station, lack of public transportation, few sidewalks, no service to/from airport shuttles, potholes
Growth, traffic control
Poor public water quality (yellow color)
Traffic congestion, low employee quality and quantity
High taxes

Schools and demographics
Lowering taxes for home owners
Rt. 2A, the rotary in Concord
Transportation - poor connectivity
Need more service businesses (restaurant, grocery store)
Mounting taxes, obstructing action/inaction of Historic District Commission
High taxes (real estate)
Congestion/traffic, over building, costs over runs
Sewerage and trash pickup
No central shopping district
Concord Rotary, Sewage system for the entire town
Ability to maintain sense of cohesive community in face of growth, info overload & cultural diversity. Growth without loss of mobility
Small town, historical board, understaffed/overworked building dept.
Cost of housing/property taxes
Traffic (route 2A business area) control, 40B development, taxing middle income owners out of town.
Traffic
Traffic, Lack of economic and racial diversity
Many businesses (studios, restaurants, retail shops) open for a short time and then close due to lack of success.
Don't need any more condos or houses
No Community Center, or multi-purpose room available for rental. Traffic issues.
keeping the small town feel, no more building!!!!
Traffic especially weekends, too many 40 B projects are changing the character of town, and the buyers are not there for this many condos.. smaller houses clustered would be better..
Speed control on Route 2, Crosswalks for Pedestrians, Foot Traffic (No sidewalks), Lack of Public Transportation to & from the T Station.
Managing growth. Acton seems to be growing in leaps and bounds and being able to maintain a high level of town services and security is the biggest challenge I think.
bad taste in architural building, strip malls, loss of town character, erosion of a dignified appreciation of high art and culurally rich environment, lack of "real" art...focus on still life and crafts
Relatively high property taxes, somewhat limited railway station parking
People tend to be overly cautious when proposals are made to enable additional development and growth in town.

Question: What makes Acton unique?

Our customers value local business, yet the Town's not showing interest in working with businesses. Signing is a big problem.
Diversity
Everything
Great schools
Way too high property taxes - lower them!

It is obsessively self-conscious
Open Conservation Land, Location near important highways
Location near major highway, Conservation Land
Accessibility off major routes
Same as #3
Proximity to Boston in combination with rural feel
Not much, becoming less unique
Its small town rapid growth dilemma
People in Acton
Not yet overgrown
Location - access to Boston & Warcester & Nashua NH
Put an entrance on 111
Balance of "country" feeling, close to Boston
Closeness to Cambridge/Boston
Neighborhoods are spread out
Country charm with suburban conveniences
Acton has allowed runaway development in ways surrounding towns have not
History
Location, commuter rail, mix of businesses
Rural setting, convenience to the city, diversity
Nothing. It was 30 years ago
Diverse people, good ethics/involvement
The older areas, history
Mixture of community, town services
Proximity to Boston/Worcester, 128/495
Suburbia ???
Nothing!
High taxes
Too developed
I live here!
Unwavering commitment to residential development and higher spending on education
Combination of good neighborhoods and good shopping and services
Sewerage and trash pickup
Historical sites, education system quality
Country feel
Big town that feels like a small town, no drive thru joints are big plus for Acton and surrounding towns, restrictive sign laws are good to a certain point
Collaboration between town schools, Chamber of Commerce and businesses add element of bonding within town
Small town, everyone knows each other
Good mix of rural streets and neighborhoods.

Diversity, historical areas, easy access to both Boston and Worcester, Good conservation of open spaces.
Neighborhoods
Very good schools and sage and well diversified.
History, pretty Town Center, NARA Park, conservation land, arboretum, WE NEED THE RAIL TRAILS
History
schools
Mixture of newer and older architecture in the homes here, mixed cultural interests and the people
it's not, it just thinks it is -- that is part of the problem
Sense of History, Ethnic Diversity, Great Choice of Schools
Acton's location and its proximity to Boston and major highways. Diverse and multi ethnic population.
culturally: history, business opportunities: educated population, relatively high disposable income
Not sure
Superb schools, proximity to Boston, mixed character of development

Question: How should Acton evolve in the future?
Preserve open space as much as possible
Add entertainment for young people, movie theatre, move diverse restaurants and a strip joint of class and more support for animal related activities (therapeutic riding) for troubled kids in. More help for seniors.
Be more supportive of local business investment
Slow down developers and preserve green space - there is not much left
Less development, freeze property tax increases
Keep development down to a minimum, cap property taxes
Sponsor student activities annually, donate annually to various local charities, donate parking to Mt Culvary Lutheran
Control commuter traffic through town
More sidewalks so that people can bike and walk 2A & 27 full distance through town both sides. Brian Freeman Rail Trail
More business, less residential to improve tax basis for local residents
Allow drive thus
Less development-dominated
Need to change with the times
Stay the course
Limit development, improve aesthetics, especially Kelly's Corner/Exchange Hill
Continued mix of all businesses
Nicer town scape, booming business, new buildings
Plan "A" look for the town; it is now sprawl
Become more environmentally aware, bring more of its charm back, have building restrictions
Keep its conservation land, provide good affordable housing, better infrastructures
More health fairs
Clean up Kelly's Corner

Become a green community, develop history centers as walk able areas
Doing a good job now - keep doing it
Change anti-business attitude
Better comprehensive planning, avoiding residential over development
Improve access for people who walk on sidewalks
Controlled growth
Our long term aspirations won't necessarily align with collective community's long term goals
Let up on signage rules and work with building dept to ensure signs are approved correctly
Encourage more projects like habitat for humanity, slow the development process.
Conserve more land for future. Stop building too many residential units.
I'd like to see a Community Center here Comm. Ed. Occurs in addition to other events as opposed to scattering throughout town in different buildings.
Stop building condos and houses on every available square inch; Get the RAIL TRAIL ASAP. Get Mass. To put a big train station on Route 2 and 495 intersection with lots of parking.
keep housing growth under control
That is a tough one, slow down growth so we can manage what we have now, with traffic , housing stock and get some of the empty business locations filled again..
It would be nice if Acton evolved into a trendy, stylish and progressive town.
take advantage of its resources, instead of degrading them
Not sure
Be open to additional commercial or mixed-use development that opens opportunities for a greater diversity of housing and retail options.

Question: How does your business contribute to the community?

School auctions. Donate to Recreation Dept. and Rotary Club. Shared giving at local schools. Food Pantry. Breast cancer organizations.
Sponsorships
Oasis of open space in neighborhood for all to enjoy. Employment and sponsorship for people with disabilities
I would do all of this if you didn't tax me to death!
We give thousands of dollars to local charities and fundraisers. We contribute over $100,000 in direct taxes to the town and state, as well as collect over $115,000 in sales taxes, for which we receive no compensation
A unique and necessary service
Provides a needed service
Sponsor & fundraise for preschool, public schools and non-profit organizations
Never asked
Volunteer
Happiness and health
Contributions to Acton Congregational Church in $ and goods
Education
Sponsorships, community involvement, active member of Middlesex West Chamber
Support of High School activities

Not at all
Local discounts
High tech jobs to engineers/PhDs
We give to many fundraisers
Semi-retired consulting engineer seeking full-time retirement
Donate to various organizations
Sponsorships, food, gifts to school project
Contributions to Fire and Police Depts.
Taxes
Donations ($, gifts, services, events), participate in community supper
Professional services
Numerous team sponsorships & advertisements in programs & town/school functions
Contribute to most local drives, offer space to school teams, girls scouts etc for fundraising, sponsor Accessports, recycle bulbs, have many "green" products available to Acton citizens
Started social club 7 years ago with over 300 members who bring revenue to entertainment, restaurants and special events
Fundraising drives
Team sponsorships, equipment donation to Police Dept
Sponsorships
Sponsorships and attendances
Scholarships for working families
Employment for youth
Donate to community requests (library, elderly tax relief, etc); I appreciate being asked
Personal and hobby sales and services
Would like to do more
We sponsor town sports
Sponsorships, providing space for public announcements, fundraising drives for theatre groups, school raffles
Monetary support of local charities, ABRHS scholarship to grad. Storage space for local entities at no charge, school-business activities
Sponsorships, donations to local schools and clubs
Not large enough
Sponsorships, Public Health Involvement
Done sponsorships, etc.
Sponsorships to fundraising events.
Donate to schools and hospital
team sponsor, fund raising drive contributions
Donations to MANY local activities, Historical Society, town events, like the Patriots Day trolley has been sponsored by me since it's beginning. Volunteer for MWCOC, Donation to Sarah Lynn Hughes Road race for 10 years. AB Music award for a Senior each year for the last 2 years, and the Music dept. has enough money to give for another 10 years. (this was in memory of one of my dear employees and friend who loved music and the theatre) then the Arboretum first was developed my whole office worked there for a day each year, as part of the United Way(I think) to help make it a lovely place to be part of our community. There are a lot of other things in the 30 years I have had my business in town, too numerous to remember now.

Being a small business, we are restricted in our participation but are open to ideas.
We contribute to the Acton community by providing financial support to many of the events and activities sponsored by the town, schools, places of worship, civic and charitable groups.
Interesting that you focus on financial contributions, I contribute by offering my services for free AND I give to many organizations.
Too early; still in start-up phase

Queston: What would help to make your business feel more a part of Acton?

Provide information for business owners.
Too many power outages
Order more food here than other places.
Give me agricultural status, subsidize youth and summer programs with horses
A more friendly approach from Town Hall
Ask the various town departments to do business locally and stop buying goods and services out of town
Ask "What have we done as a town to hurt your business? How can we remedy this?"
Nothing
Improvements to foot and motor traffic on 2A, slower speed limits
Improve Great Road and allow business to have signs by the road
Better landlord
Our business service is confidential in nature - n/a
Not sure, good question
Nothing
Not sure
N/A
Solve traffic issues, widen Nashoba Rd, replace rotary, spread out school bus departures, create back road access
Don't know
My business not geographically based, semi-retired
Periodic newsletter with info valuable to local business community
Not relevant to this business
Permit new construction that would be profitable. Not possible today by a large margin
I feel part of Acton
We have been here so long that we feel like everyone knows our name
Better profitability to do more of the above
We are very much part of the community
Not make me spend money on different signs because building dept made mistake
Niche too unique
Some sort of small business/home business organization
I would like an office in my home.
limit growth of business
We spend a lot of time and money giving, it would be nice if someone noticed! But my agents and I DO feel a

part of town and have had the honor of placing many people in their homes here over the years. 52 in business, and 32yrs total for me as an agent (I started in 1976) and then the owner starting in 1980..
why would I want that?
The community and the town leadership is doing a great job in making my business feel part of Acton and this survey just added to the good feeling towards Acton.
regular meeting place in the evening
Business is not location-specific being internet (WWW) based.

Appendix: Statistical Reliability

If all 86 people that returned the business survey answered a given question the error rate for it would be +/- 11.4%. However, very few questions were answered by all the people responding. Typically for any given question, between 70 and 80 people would provide answers. The error rate associated with this level or response varies around +/-12 to 13%. Therefore it is useful to think in terms of an overall error rate of +/-12 to 13% for all the questions. A +/- 12 to 13% error range is within acceptable statistical limits and is commonly used. Some marketing and attitude surveys take small samples of about 70 to 100 observations, yielding error rates of +/-10 to 13%. It means that if survey results for a given question vary by more than +/-12 or 12% the results are conclusive. For example, we observe in the survey that 58.1% of businesses are satisfied with their current parking and access conditions, while 25.0% are not satisfied with their current parking and access conditions. The error rate is within the margin of difference of the two responses, so the survey results are conclusive. The table below shows error rates (rounded to the nearest full percent) for different size surveys.

Survey Sample Size	Margin of Error Percent*
2,000	2
1,500	3
1,000	3
900	3
800	3
700	4
600	4
500	4
400	5
300	6
200	7
100	10
50	14

*Assumes a 95% level of confidence

Source: Pamela Hunter, "Margin of Error and Confidence Levels Made Simple," iSigmaSix, 2008, Website: http://www.isixsigma.com/library/content/c040607a.asp#author

Appendix

Youth Participation

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Each of the Acton schools in the Acton public school system participated in the visioning process in their own way. Students and teachers prepared a large number of varied ways of expressing their concerns and desires for the future. These included a significant number of surveys at every grade level, drawings, movies, a song, posters, a mural, etc. These were displayed at the visioning session and ~~will be~~ available for viewing at the library during the month of August, 2008.

Teen Themes: Favorite Features

- Arboretum/NARA/ conservation land/parks
- Schools
- Restaurants
- Library
- Quiet & peacefulness/ Sense of community, safety
- History
- Scenery, trees, riding horses
- Bowladrome

Teen Themes: Least Favorite Features

- Not enough to do, would like:
  - Movie theater
  - Restaurants
  - Swimming pool
  - Amusement park
- Concern regarding need to plan for sustainable development
- Need for walking/ public transportation
- Too much development
- Traffic

Teen Themes: If you could do one thing to make Acton a better place to live what would it be?

- MOVIE THEATER
- Mall
- SIDEWALKS
- Bike paths
- Another park
- A club for older kids
- Public transportation

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Appendices: Acton Voices...

The following appendices are documentation of the participation of Acton residents in the visioning process. Over a period of six months Acton residents were asked to voice their opinions through various avenues.

A series of small meetings were held for targeted interest groups and larger set of public visioning sessions were held at the Parker Damon Building. Over two hundred people attended the first Visioning Session alone. Comment boards were posted at Town Hall and the Library for additional feedback.

All town residents and business owners were mailed a survey and asked to respond via the hardcopy survey or online. A random sampling of residents was additionally contacted to participate in a phone survey.

Children in all levels of the school system were engaged. Expressions came in the form of surveys, drawings, movies, posters, a mural, and even the creation of a town song.

Town government, boards, commissions, and the outreach steering committee all met and discussed the challenges and opportunities for Acton's future.

By asking important questions about what is commonly believed, desired and valued by its residents, the Acton Community can find consensus and a shared vision of its future. The following appendices contain many of the thoughts and opinions expressed throughout the process.

The following are the lyrics from a song developed from a teacher-led brainstorm with the 6th grade students and written by the Music Department.

This Town is Your Town

Melody: "This Land is Your Land"

Chorus/Refrain

This town is your town; this town is my town,
From the edge of Boxborough to the Concord border.
From the pine tree forests to the Nagog waters,
This town will change with you and me.

Install some streetlights and maybe sidewalks.
I've walked past litter and don't enjoy it.
Add many trashcans to make it cleaner,
Then Acton will be a better place.

Chorus/Refrain

As I was walking around Acton
I saw we needed bike paths and park space,
A community center, more ethnic restaurants.
This town should change; don't you agree?

Chorus/Refrain

Stop building condos and houses, too.
Let's make it greener for me and you.
Use solar panels and biofuel.
If we unite it will come true.

Chorus/Refrain

Stop driving SUV's,
Help plant some more trees.
Recycle paper, glass, plastic, too.
Acton's the place for me and you.

Chorus/Refrain

Get rid of Styrofoam as our lunch trays
Compost the food scraps, don't fill the landfills!
Stop chopping down trees upon the highways
This town should preserve the greenery!

Chorus/Refrain

I like my school, And the library

From Dunkin Donuts To Starbucks coffee
From Hybid Farm to Friendly’s ice cream
Acton’s the place for you and me!

Chorus/Refrain

The following are some sample quotes from surveys of Acton students in different grades:

"If I elected myself mayor of Acton I will make Acton a better place by stop littering in rivers because animals can get hurt or die. I would also like more people to recycle because trees get cut down and animals sometimes lose their homes. I would like to try to put most of the polar bears in captivity because in the artic the temperature is rising and polar bears need a cold habitat. What about cleaning. If you clean you have fun and people don't bother. Also listen to your parents and teachers. Thank you"
Extended Day, Grades 1 and 2

"I want more animals and wildlife"
Claire, Gates Elementary School , Cindy Hollis Class, Grade 1

"I would like Acton to have more parks. One reason why is because family's can bond." Also kids needs exercise like doing sports at the parks. It 's so fun for everybody. Kids are all over Acton. What if all of them wanted to go to a park and there's only one – they can't all fit!"
Claire, Gates Elementary School , Cindy Hollis Class, Grade 1

Student Survey – Stratified Random Sample
7 Green, RJ Grey Jr. High School (5/27/08)

Are you interested in making Acton a more environmentally conscious town?
49% YES
41% Maybe (it depends on the changes being made)
8% No

When you stay after school for extra help or an activity, how do you get home?
Walk 19.6%
Bike 6.1%
Carpool with a friend 16.7%
I get picked up in the family car 60.8%
Other (roller blades, scooter) 2%

If Acton had a clean, modern movie with affordable prices, how often would you go?

One or more times per week -34%
About one time per month -- 51%
About one or two times in six months – 11%
About one time per year 3%
Never -- 3%

R.J. Grey Junior High School, Grade 7

"I enjoy all of the parks and playgrounds around town it makes it look friendly and inviting."

"A nice new mall, a movie theater with a lot of colors, and restaurants…"

Pretty stuff:
Town center monument
Arboretum
Nara Park
Amanda
Clouds
Gardens
Duck Pond
Nature
Great Road stuff

Not Pretty Stuff::
Kmart
Condos
Litter
Libby's fence

Want:
Mall ((girls say and guys agree)

"I don't enjoy how may houses there are in Acton that ruin the scenery."

"Plant more trees.,"

"What I enjoy most visually in Acton is its nice rural area look." – Christian

"We could make malls, better-bigger brand stores to make visually exciting"

"Not cut down trees and stuff, not build ugly houses, conserve the environment."

"the thing that is least appealing is the old automobile shop on the corner near the bowling alley."

"I don't like downtown West Acton. The stores look very … almost run down – as well as the house next to the Fire Department…"

"I love the parks – Nara Park and the design of the neighborhoods and houses."

"Acton needs flashing neon signs along the border saying: Welcome to Acton."

"I like the old colonial look."

8th grade surveys

What are THREE most important assets you feel Acton has (qualities you like).

"It is a tight community that is very loving. The people in Acton are very nice and are loving to their neighbors. Also is has almost no pollution."

School is very educational
Great sports program
good schools
low crime rate
good neighborhoods
nice people
Small town
Caring community
The history
Fun things to do/activities
"riding horses"
"Danny's Place"

What are the THREE most important challenges you feel face Acton (qualities you do not like):

Way too competitive
Get up too early to go to school
Not enough sidewalks
Houses are expensive
Amount of litter
Drugs, smoking and bullying at school
Loss of small town feel
"Really bad school lunches."
"Taxes are too high"

What makes Acton unique?

"It is a tight community that is depending on each other that builds a great community."
"Acton is very woody and does not look like your average town."
"friendly people"
"has lots of different activities"
it's history"
close to cities but rural
close to the Cape
"The people who live in it"

How well do you know at least three of your neighbors?

"My friend Phoebe lives next door she is in my wind and I sit with her on the bus. Rachel is in 8th grade and I talk with her at the bus stop. Carol is someone my mom uses in case of emergency.'

"I know my neighbors well enough to be their friends."
"very well"
"I see and play with them everyday."
"Very well, we talk a lot, we're relatives"
"not very well"

What would you like to see more of in Acton?

"More green and open spaces because I really like nature, forests and large open fields that are left untouched by humans because you don't see those types of things often anymore."

Activities for teens
More eco-friendly opportunities
Restaurants and clothing stores
Sidewalks
Less big companies, more local ones
grass
"Programs to know more others less fortunate/elderly"
"A downtown area."
"I would like to see more parks and places to play for young children, because I, as a young child, loved to play around outside, and I don't want Acton to turn into a city with only houses and buildings."
"More activities other than sports and school."

What would you like to see less of in Acton?

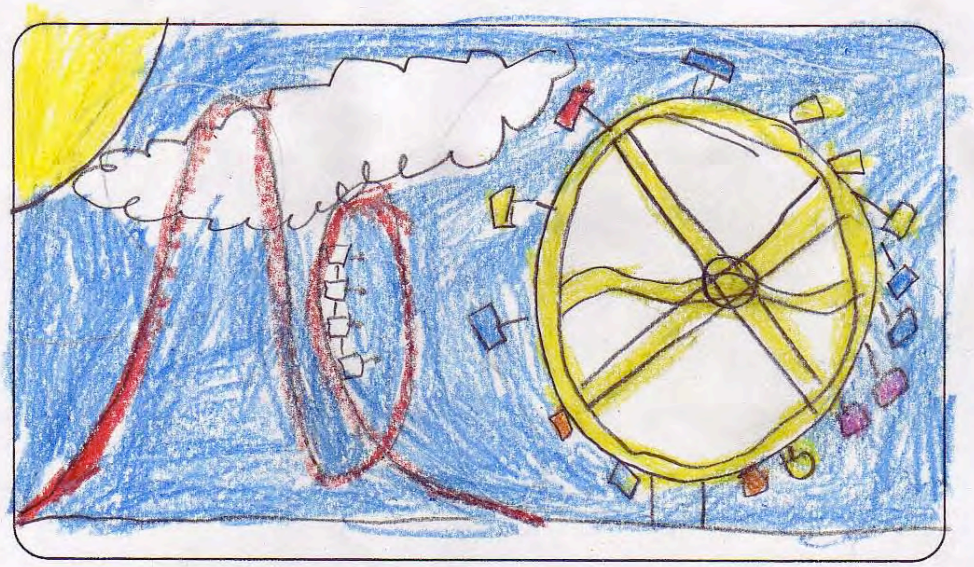
Less sports competition on Sundays
Development
\loss of open space
Litter
People going to fast food places like McDonald's and Dunkin Donuts
Pollution
Drugs and smoking kids
"I hate all the trees being cut down and having more and more townhouses/condos"
roads
"Less frivolous spending by town committees (stained glass window in high school instead of fixing mold in Douglas)"
"Bad substitute teachers."

name: _____

My Dreams for Acton

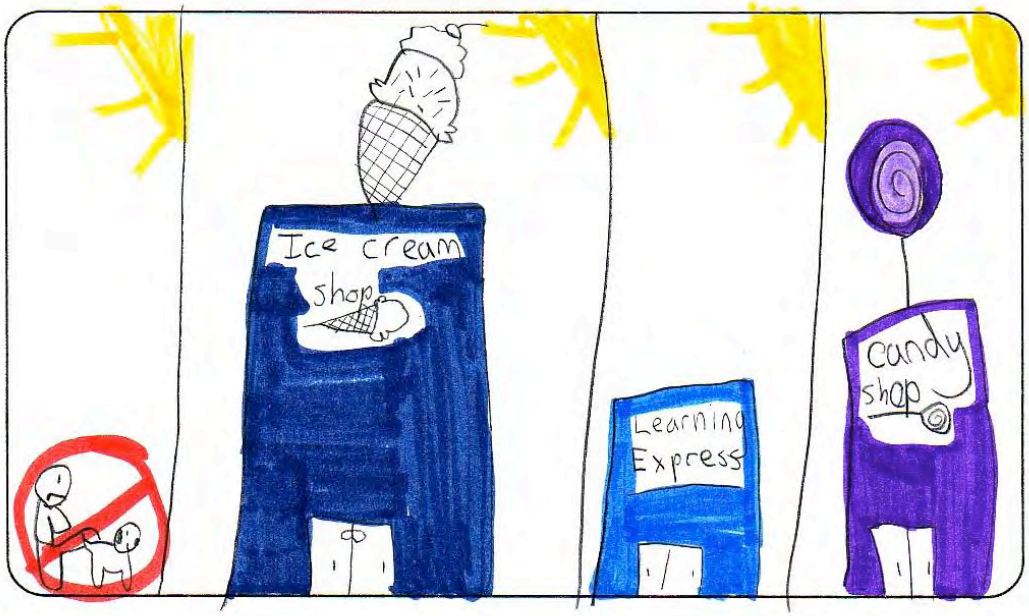
Think about Acton in the future. What would help to make Acton a better place to live? What would you change if you could? Write about your ideas for the future of Acton. Your ideas will contribute to a Master Plan for Acton.

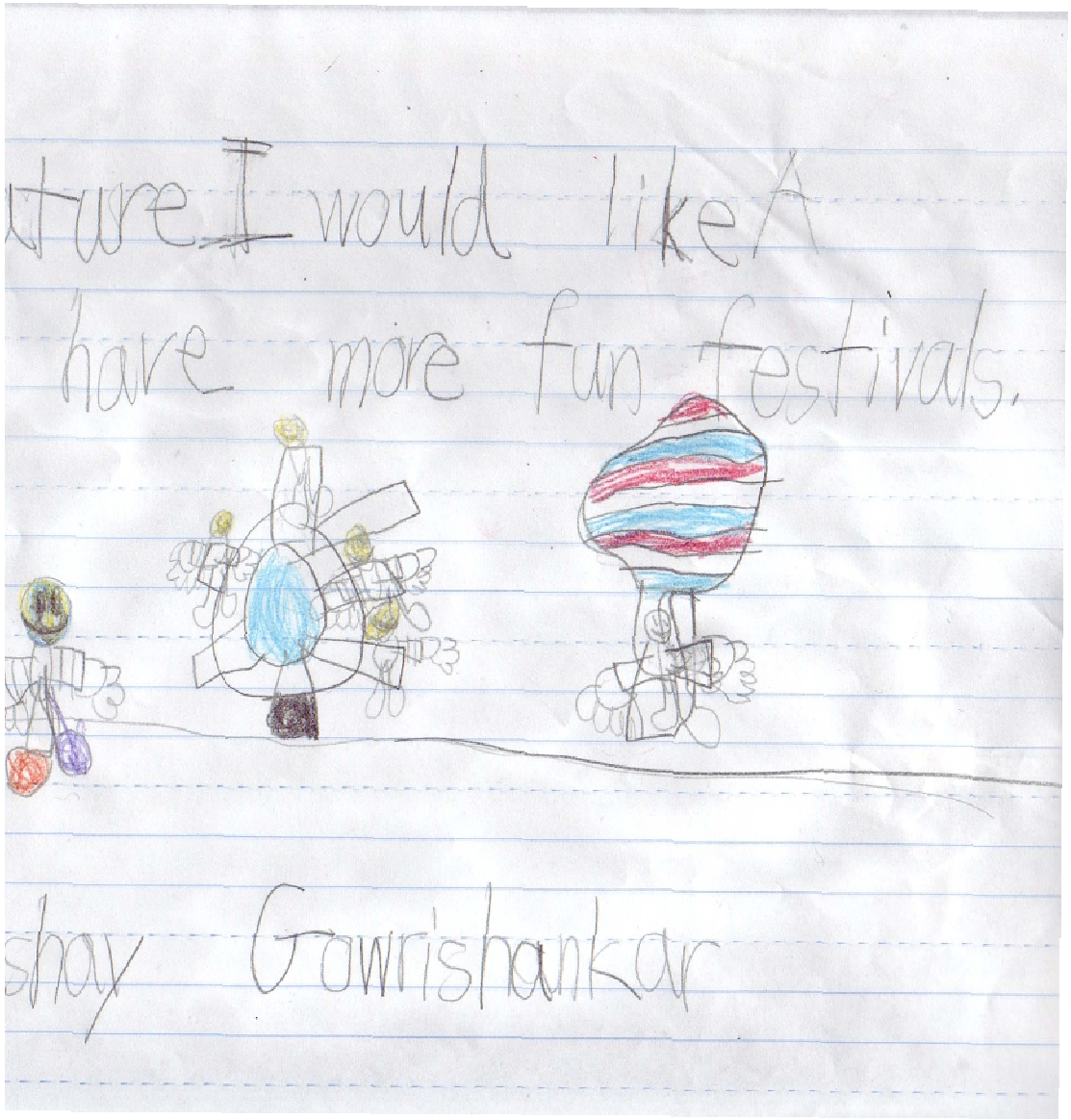
I wish therewas a amusimint park because. I think it would be fun for other kids too. And I like to go on rides



I think we need more place for animals. And hunters cant go in that special place I think that because

I think there should be more shops for kids like a ice cream shop or a candy store or maybe a Learning Express. And I think there should be a law no child or animal abuse. And if you do make a new shop I wish I could own it. I think it will be a hit.




ture I would like A
have more fun festivals.
shay Gowrishankar

I think there should be less expensive houses so people can afford them. The amount of money can still be in the thousands but not so expensive. like 250,981

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Appendix

Publicity

Publicity

June 5, 2008 --- Beacon article published re May 31st Visioning session --- Headline: "Residents Gather to Share Vision"

June 2, 2008 --- Press Release sent to Beacon with 3 photos --- Headline: "Residents & Youth Share Visions for Acton's Future at May 31st Master Plan Meeting"

May 29, 2008 --- Jim Purdy Guest Commentary published in the Beacon --- Headline: "Why (another) Master Plan?

May 24, 2008 --- Action Unlimited article published re May 31st Visioning session --- Headline: "Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Committee"

May 17, 2008 --- Action Unlimited article published re May 31st Visioning session --- Headline: "Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Committee"

May 15, 2008 --- Beacon article published re May 31st Visioning session --- Headline: "Final Vision Session Set"

May 15, 2008 --- Beacon Letter-to-the-Editor from Lauren Rosenzweig thanking donors

May 14, 2008 --- May 31st Press Advisory distributed via Chalie Kadlec's E-Mail list

May 11, 2008 --- Press Advisory sent to Newspapers re May 31st Visioning session --- Headline: "Last Chance for Resident Input to Shape Acton's Future / Final Visioning Session Set for May 31st at Parker Damon Building"

May 10, 2008 --- Action Unlimited article re Online Poll Deadline Extended --- Headline: "Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Survey"

May 8, 2008 --- Beacon article published re Online Poll Deadline Extended --- Headline: "Deadline Extended on Survey for Plan"

May 4, 2008 --- Boston Sunday Globe NorthWest Edition brief published re Online Poll Desdline Extended --- Headline: "Step right up and see the Future"

May 3, 2008 --- Action Unlimited article re Online Poll Deadline Extended --- Headline: "Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Survey"

May 2008 --- Lauren Rosenzweig interview on Channel 8 "Elderberries" show M-F during entire month of May at 8:00 a.m. / 11:00 a.m. / 6:00 p.m.

May 2008 --- Road Banner in West Acton Village

May 2008 --- Town electronic message board

May 2008 --- TV AD Page re May 31st Visioning session running on Channels 8 & 10 during month of May

April 28, 2008 --- Press Advisory sent to Newspapers re Online Poll Deadline Extended --- Headline: "Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Survey Deadline Extended to May 12, 2008"

April 17, 2008 --- Beacon article published re March 29th Visioning session --- Headline: "Residents Share Plan Ideas"

April 12, 2008 --- Press Story submitted to Beacon re March 29th Visioning session --- Headline: "200 Acton Residents Share Visions for the Future at March 29th Comprehensive Community Plan Meeting"

April 10, 2008 --- Beacon article published re Town Meeting reaction to Master Plan --- Headline: "Master Plan Sparks Tension"

April 3, 2008 --- Beacon article published re launch of Master Plan --- Headline: "Acton Launches Comprehensive Community Plan Efforts"

March 27, 2008 --- Beacon article re Launch of Master Plan --- Headline: "Acton Launches Community Plan"

March 27, 2008 --- Beacon Letter-to-the-Editor from Linda Chance re support of Master Plan --- Headline: "Use Your Voice"

March 2, 2008 --- Press Advisory sent to Newspaper announcing new Master Plan --- Headline: "Acton Launches Comprehensive Community Plan to Shape the Community Over the Next 10-20 Years

Residents gather to share vision

Nearly 80 residents and young people turned out May 31 to participate in a second community-wide meeting to share their visions for the future of Acton.

Held at the Parker Damon Building, it was the second public opportunity for residents to offer their personal input in a "visioning session" for Acton's newly-developed Comprehensive Community Plan (Master Plan) designed to shape the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

The first session on March 29 was attended by nearly 200 people.

In this second session, residents were asked if they agreed with the key features identified to date, what they feel are Acton's future priorities, and what issues need further discussion.

After about an hour and a half of animated discussion, all groups returned to the meeting hall and offered summaries of items discussed in their breakout sessions.

Things like transportation, schools, taxes, traffic, community culture, sense of friendliness, sidewalks, open space, and a host of other topics were presented for comment.

It was also noted that the mail survey has been nearly completed and to date, residents have returned 1,464 forms (15.5 percent) and businesses 82 forms (5 percent). In that survey, Acton's most important assets were listed as: schools, diversity of land uses and activities, easy access to highways, commuter rail, conservation land, and the top challenges are high cost of living, traffic, lack of continuous pedestrian and bike paths.

All of this input from the surveys, meetings, and visioning sessions will be tallied and will be available on the Acton town Web site by mid-June 2008.

Major input from Acton's youth was on display throughout the afternoon's activities and through the efforts of assistant superintendent Sue horn and the Art and Music Departments, students ranging from elementary school through high school presented personal and video presentations. In addition, all elementary schools and day care students had a wall of posters and drawings and several tables with notebooks full of statements about what they want Acton to be like in the future.

And the undisputed highlight of the afternoon acknowledged with loud applause was a video song presentation on a giant screen by all of Acton's elementary schools singing to the melody of ("This land is your land") with their own specially created lyrics which began: "This town is your town, this town is my town — from the edge of Boxborough to the Concord border. From the pine tree forests to the Nagog waters, this town will change with you and me."

Peter Rutten from Minot Avenue provided a Powerpoint presentation and also personally addressed the audience with a special plea for bikeways in Acton, saying that favorable conditions already exist in Acton to implement this effort. He called for anyone interested to contact him.

Jason Murphy from Flint Road, a member of the ABRHS Student Council said that a survey was done at the high school, and that survey showed that if one thing could be provided for the teens they listed: movie theater, mall, sidewalks, bike paths, another park, a club for older kids, and public transportation.

Attending her second visioning session, Joan Cirillo of Conant Street said that "traffic, sidewalks, transportation and the town's rural character were important items to consider, but that people have different views of these and other issues and some tradeoffs may be needed" as the plan moves forward

As a wrap-up, Politis noted that telephone surveys are now underway with random households in Acton, and many additional meetings will be held with town boards and committees, and other civic and social groups.

"Two more opportunities are scheduled for the public to come and provide personal input," she said.

Those dates are: June 16, at 7 p.m. in Room 204 at the Acton town Hall, and Saturday, June 21 at 10 a.m. in Room 204 at the Acton Town Hall.

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

MAY 31, 2008 VISION MEETING

Story submitted by Dick Calandrella

RESIDENTS & YOUTH SHARE VISIONS FOR ACTON'S FUTURE AT MAY 31st MASTER PLAN MEETING

Nearly 80 residents and young people turned out on Saturday afternoon, May 31, 2008 to participate in a second community-wide meeting to share their visions for the future of Acton.

Held at the Parker Damon Building, it was the second public opportunity for residents to offer their personal input in a "visioning session" for Acton's newly-developed Comprehensive Community Plan (Master Plan) designed to shape the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

The first session on March 29, 2008 was attended by nearly 200 people.

At that first session, and in a number of group outreach meetings and hard copy, telephone and online surveys, residents thus far have indicated that the things they like and want to preserve and enhance in Acton are: rural character, open land, schools, village centers, sense of community, diversity of people, neighborhoods, train, and recreation.

The least favorite they noted are: traffic, lack of walkability, no real town center, affordability, lack of people gathering places, growth management, and poorly designed commercial areas.

In this second session, residents were asked if they agreed with the key features identified to date, what they feel are Acton's future priorities, and what issues need further discussion.

After opening remarks, the attendees broke off into 5 separate groups in nearby classrooms with facilitators to encourage comments and record their thoughts.

After about an hour and a half of animated discussion, all groups returned to the meeting hall and offered summaries of items discussed in their breakout sessions.

Things like transportation, schools, taxes, traffic, community culture, sense of friendliness, sidewalks, open space, and a host of other topics were presented for comment.

It was also noted that the mail survey has been nearly completed and to date, residents have returned 1,464 forms (15.5 percent) and businesses 82 forms (5 percent). In that survey, Acton's most important assets were listed as: schools, diversity of land uses and activities, easy access to highways, commuter rail, conservation land, and the top challenges are high cost of living , traffic, lack of continuous pedestrian and bike paths.

All of this input from the surveys, meetings, and visioning sessions will be tallied and will be available on the Acton town Web site by mid-June 2008.

Major input from Acton's youth was on display throughout the afternoon's activities and through the efforts of Assistant Superintendent Sue horn and the Art and Music Departments, students ranging from elementary school through high school presented personal and video presentations. In addition, all elementary schools and day care students had a wall of posters and drawings and several tables with notebooks full of statements about what they want Acton to be like in the future.

Some of those wishes were: "more sidewalks so we can safely ride our bikes" / "more streetlights" / "make electric buses so we can conserve energy" / "shelter for injured wildlife" / "please fix the bumpy roads."

And the undisputed highlight of the afternoon acknowledged with loud applause was a video song presentation on a giant screen by all of Acton's elementary schools singing to the melody of ("This land is your land") with their own specially created lyrics which began: "This town is your town, this town is my town --- from the edge of Boxborough to the Concord border. From the pine tree forests to the Nagog waters, this town will change with you and me."

Daphne Politis from the consulting firm Planners Collaborative said that "Acton's young people have done more to support this effort than in any other community we have worked with, and the town should be proud of them."

Peter Rutten from Minot Avenue provided a powerpoint presentation and also personally addressed the audience with a special plea for bikeways in Acton, saying that favorable conditions already exist in Acton to implement this effort. He called for anyone interested to contact him.

Jason Murphy from Flint Road, a member of the ABRHS Student Council said that a survey was done at the high school, and that survey showed that if one thing could be provided for the teens they listed: movie theater, mall, sidewalks, bike paths, another park, a club for older kids, and public transportation.

West Acton resident Paul Kampas (Ethan Allen Drive) thought that there was "too much focus on the physical aspects and not enough on the cultural. "He said his group and others "felt it was important to preserve what makes Acton unique – we're not snobby and we value learning – and if we don't preserve this it will go away."

Attending her second visioning session, Joan Cirillo (Conant Street) said that "traffic, sidewalks, transportation and the town's rural character were important items to consider, but that people have different views of these and other issues and some tradeoffs may be needed" as the plan moves forward

Retiree Jean Schoch (Brewster Lane) said "it makes me feel good that newcomers value the same things as we do."

Jane Saks (Half Moon Hill) who served as a group facilitator said that "bike trails, parking, sidewalks, and long-term planning in general were the focus at their session.

As a wrap-up, Politis noted that telephone surveys are now underway with random households in Acton, and many additional meetings will be held with town boards and committees, and other civic and social groups.

"Two more opportunities are scheduled for the public to come and provide personal input," she said.

Those dates are: Monday, June 16, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 204 at the Acton town Hall, and Saturday, June 21, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 204 at the Acton Town Hall.

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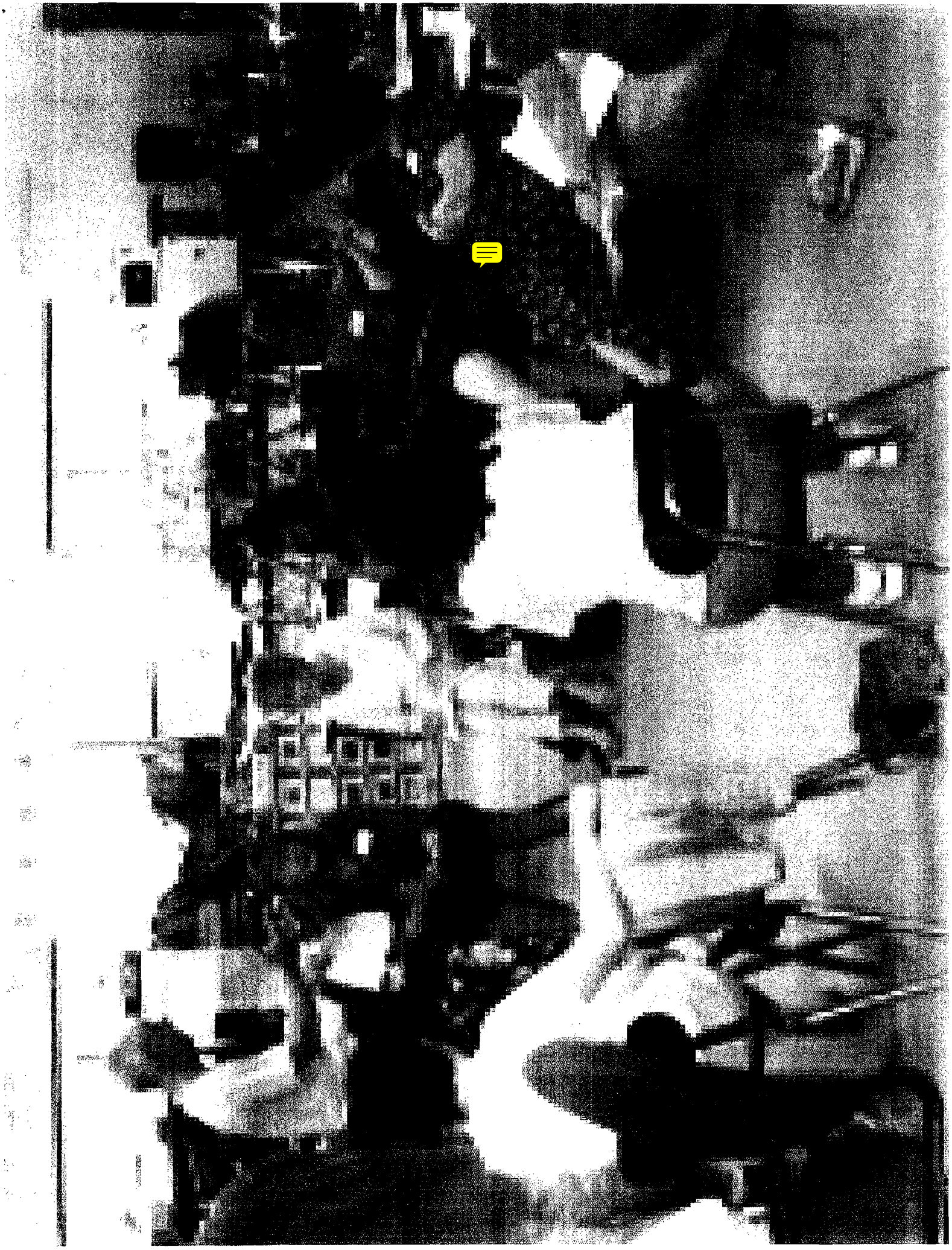
III



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Why (another) Master Plan?

Guest Commentary
Jim Purdy

In the autumn of 2007, the town of Acton began a 12- to 18-month process to complete a new Comprehensive Community Plan ("Master Plan") designed to be a road map for the town's future.

The plan will take stock of how the town's past has shaped it, what it is today, and what Acton can be in the future. The Master Plan will identify action steps toward the new vision that is now being developed with town-wide outreach.

Acton updated its previous Master Plan in 1998. Why are we going through this process again? The answer is that times change, and plans need to be renewed from time to time if they are to be useful tools to guide and spur action. In 1998, Acton was in a housing boom. Gasoline cost less than $1.25 a gallon. Climate change was a controversy, not a reality to many people. Since 1998 Acton itself has experienced a number of changes including the degree of development pressure as well as in demographics.

The 1998 plan still has value to offer (as does the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the "To Live in Acton" Report). It is the obligation of responsible town government to periodically check in with its townspeople to ask them if they agree with the direction the town is taking and what changes they feel are necessary to address current and future challenges.

Town officials are interested in hearing what the residents of Acton envision as a desirable future. Acton is now nearing the conclusion of one of the most extensive efforts undertaken by any town to reach out to both residents and business and hear what they have to say.

Town officials are interested in hearing what the residents of Acton envision as a desirable future.

The vision will reflect the input of public workshops, numerous meetings, and online, telephone and hard copy surveys. And the new Master Plan will outline a strategy for achieving that vision through a clear set of priorities and action steps that will identify the timing of recommendations, the sources responsible for implementing actions, and (wherever relevant), potential sources of funding.

It's not too late to participate in this historic effort. You can still pick up a copy of the survey any weekday at the Acton Town Hall.

You are also urged to come and personally participate in the second Visioning Workshop to be held on Saturday, May 31, from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. at the Parker Damon building on Charter Road.

Refreshments, door prizes, and childcare will be offered. Transportation will also be available by calling 978-264-9636 at least one day in advance. There will also be a special presentation by Acton's school children, who have also volunteered to contribute to the town-wide Vision.

Nearly 200 people attended the first Visioning Workshop on March 29. This second workshop will pick up where the first left off and its goal is to present a first draft of the Vision that will guide the new Master Plan.

Jim Purdy is vice president for planning at Planners Collaborative of Boston, the consulting firm hired by the town of Acton to assist with the new Master Plan.

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Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Committee

Last Chance For Resident Input To Shape Acton's Future

Final "Visioning Session" Set For May 31st at Parker Damon Building Prizes / Refreshments / Child Care / Transportation / Interpretation Provided

Residents have the final opportunity to help shape the future of Acton by participating in the 2nd "Visioning Session" for Acton's Comprehensive Community Plan on Sat., May 31, 2008 from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building on Charter Road.

"This important meeting is designed to build upon the information we heard at the first visioning session," said newly elected Committee Chairperson Ann Sussman. "We're providing door prizes, transportation and kid-sitting. We need everyone there," she stressed.

"We absolutely want to hear from as many residents as possible," she continued, "because this outreach is a critical step in the process to put together the foundation of the town's master plan, and how people want our community to look and function in the next 10 to 20 years."

The town consultant, Planners Collaborative, will present a summary of all the information gathered to date, and then the meeting will break into smaller workshop groups for more detailed discussion of Acton's future.

Acton students from all grade levels have also been gathering their desires and concerns for the future, and their unique input will also be presented.

Committee officials stress that children are welcome (a play room will be provided), and refreshments, door prizes and interpreters will be available.

Transportation will be provided to anyone who needs it by calling 978-264-9636 at least one day before the event.

For further information, visit www.actonoutreach.com.

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Final vision session set

ACTON — Residents have the final opportunity to help shape the future of Acton by participating in the second "Visioning Session" for Acton's Comprehensive Community Plan on Saturday, May 31, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building on Charter Road.

"This important meeting is designed to build upon the information we heard at the first visioning session," said newly elected Committee Chairperson Ann Sussman. "We're providing door prizes, transportation and kid-sitting. We need everyone there."

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Transportation will be provided to anyone who needs it by calling 978-264-9636 at least one day before the event.

For further information, visit actonoutreach.com.

Businesses helped vision

The Outreach Steering Committee for Acton's Comprehensive Community Plan would like to thank the following businesses and organizations for their generous donations to our March 29 Visioning Workshop: Café Ziba, Dunkin' Donuts, Ichabod's Café, Idylwilde Farms, Kitchen Outfitters, League of Women Voters, Little Market, Roche Bros., Savoury Lane, Starbucks Coffee Company, Sweet Bites Bakery and Café

The Workshop was attended by nearly 200 people and the donations of the refreshments and door prizes contributed greatly to the success and enjoyment of the event. It is inspiring to live in a town where so many volunteers and businesses are invested in helping us to plan Acton's future.

Lauren S. Rosenzweig
Acton Outreach Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Community Plan

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN COMMITTEE

Press Advisory

For further information:
Dick Calandrella
Cell Telephone --- 508-733-2705
E-Mail ---------- dickcalandrella@earthlink.net

Last Chance For Resident Input To Shape Acton's Future

Final "Visioning Session" Set For May 31st at Parker Damon Building

Prizes / Refreshments / Child Care / Transportation / Interpretation Provided

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Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Survey

Deadline Extended to May 12, 2008. Take Online Poll at www.actonoutreach.com

The Town of Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Committee announced this week that the deadline for submitting the Residential and Business "Visioning Survey" has been extended to Mon., May 12, 2008.

Paper survey forms may be brought to Acton Town Hall or can be completed online at www.actonoutreach.com

Committee Chairperson Select-man Lauren Rosenzweig said that nearly 1500 forms have been returned to date, and she urged more residents and business owners to complete their surveys to help town officials understand what they want accomplished to help shape the identity and the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

Nearly 200 residents and business owners attended the first public "Visioning Session" on March 29, 2008, and offered a wide variety of thoughts and suggestions about shaping Acton's future.

A second public "Visioning Session" is scheduled for Sat., May 31, 2008 from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building on Charter Road in Acton, and all residents and business owners are encouraged to attend.

"This is a project we urge everyone in Acton to embrace and participate in," Rosenzweig said. "This is an exciting opportunity to play your own personal role in shaping the future of our community and ensure that all of our values and visions will be a part of making Acton a safe and prosperous place to raise our families and grow our businesses."

THE BEACON

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Deadline extended on survey for plan

ACTON — The town of Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Committee announced this week that the deadline for submitting the Residential and Business "Visioning Survey" has been extended to Monday, May 12.

Paper survey forms may be brought to Acton Town Hall or can be completed online at actonoutreach.com.

Committee Chairperson Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig said that nearly 1,500 forms have been returned to date, and she urged more residents and business owners to complete their surveys to help town officials understand what they want accomplished to help shape the identity and the character of the community for the next 10 to 20 years.

Nearly 200 residents and business owners attended the first public "Visioning Session" in March and offered a wide variety of thoughts and suggestions about shaping Acton's future.

A second public "Visioning Session" is scheduled for Saturday, May 31, from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building on Charter Road in Acton, and all residents and business owners are encouraged to attend.

Globe NorthWest

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE MAY 4, 2008 | BOSTON.COM/REGION

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE

Community briefing

ACTON

STEP RIGHT UP AND SEE THE FUTURE — Acton's Comprehensive Community Plan Committee is extending the deadline for submitting a residential and business survey to May 12. The survey asks residents and business owners questions about their vision for the community over the next 10 to 20 years. Paper survey forms should be dropped off at Town Hall, or they can be completed online at actonoutreach.com. Already, more than 1,500 forms have been submitted, and town officials are looking for more input. A public "visioning session" has been scheduled for 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. May 31 at the Parker Damon Building on Charter Road. "This is a project we urge everyone in Acton to embrace and participate in," said Lauren Rosenzweig, chairwoman of the Board of Selectmen.

— Jennifer Fenn Lefferts

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"This is a project we urge everyone in Acton to embrace and participate in," Rosenzweig said. "This is an exciting opportunity to play your own personal role in shaping the future of our community and ensure that all of our values and visions will be a part of making Acton a safe and prosperous place to raise our families and grow our businesses."

THIS TV SPOT IS RUNNING ON CHANNELS 8 & 10

DURING MAY 2008

***

EVERYONE IS INVITED

Acton's 2nd Visioning Session

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 2008

1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building

Transportation (978-264-9636) / Prizes / Snacks / Child Care

Your input is CRITICAL for the Town Master Plan

What Do You Want

Acton to be like in the future!

***

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN COMMITTEE

Press Advisory

For further information:
Dick Calandrella
Cell Telephone --- 508-733-2705
E-Mail ---------- dickcalandrella@earthlink.net

Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Survey

Deadline Extended to May 12, 2008

Take Online Poll at www.actonoutreach.com

Acton, MA (April 28, 2008) --- The Town of Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Committee announced this week that the deadline for submitting the Residential and Business "Visioning Survey" has been extended to Monday, May 12, 2008.

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FOR INTERVIEW --- you are invited to contact:

Lauren Rosenzweig (Acton Selectman) --- 978-821-4172

Daphne Politis (Planners Collaborative) --- 781-820-0873

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Residents share plan ideas

ACTON — Nearly 200 residents turned out on March 29 to participate in a three-hour meeting to share their visions for the future of Acton.

Held at the Parker Damon Building, it was the first public opportunity for residents to offer their personal input in a "visioning session" for Acton's newly-developed Comprehensive Community Plan designed to shape the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

Major questions they were asked to address were:

- What do you like most about Acton, and hope to preserve?
- What do you like least, and would like to change?
- What do you feel is missing from our town?
- What would make Acton an even better place live?

After opening remarks by Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig and Daphne Politis of Boston consulting firm Planner's Collaborative who explained the meeting's objectives, the attendees broke off into 10 separate groups in nearby classrooms with facilitators to encourage comments and record their thoughts.

And the attendees were not bashful or reticent.

After about an hour and a half of animated discussion, all groups returned to the meeting hall and offered summaries of items discussed in their breakout sessions.

Things like transportation, schools, historic character of the town, taxes, traffic, town government, community spirit, sense of friendliness, volunteerism, senior center, sidewalks, open space, and a host of other topics were presented for comment.

A group of teenagers also made a presentation which outlined their unique perspective of the town and how their specific interests could be addressed, and their remarks generated warm applause.

All of this input will be tallied and added to the information now being gathered through thousands of survey forms recently mailed to every home and business property in Acton. Survey forms are also available on the Acton town Web site for electronic response.

West Acton resident Karen Herther thought it was a "wonderful session. It's part of what makes Acton unique to provide an opportunity for citizen input from across the community, and we hope this will continue."

Rosenzweig said the event was a "huge success with wonderful turnout. People were extremely involved, and everyone was actively engaged and came up with some great ideas."

Rosenzweig added that telephone surveys will also be carried out in the weeks ahead with random households in Acton, and many additional meetings will be held with school and town officials, and with many civic and social groups in Acton, such as the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the Senior Center, and others.

She also noted that a second public "visioning session" is scheduled for Saturday, May 31, at 1:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building in Acton, and she hopes many more residents will actively participate.

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Master Plan sparks tension

By Robert Burgess
Staff Writer

Acton will get its additional money for a Comprehensive Community Plan, but the approval didn't come easy from Town Meeting this week.

Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig, who was re-elected by Acton voters last week, made the pitch to Town Meeting on its second night, held April 8. She told residents the Comprehensive Community Plan would be better than a Master Plan because it would include more outreach and research.

Voters at the 2007 Town Meeting approved $180,000 for a new Master Plan, but Rosenzweig said selectmen heard feedback from the community that a broader scope would be better. So town officials returned to Town Meeting this week to ask for

Plan, Page 31

Plan, from Page 1

$90,000 to expand the project into the Comprehensive Community Plan.

"When we started looking into it in great detail, we noticed how much the town had change," Rosenzweig said. "I think we need to take the pulse of the town."

While some residents supported the proposal as forward thinking and a way to develop a shared vision for the town's future, others criticized it as a waste of tax dollars, particularly in a faltering national economy.

Allen Nitschelm — a member of the Finance Committee, but speaking from the floor as a resident — proposed an amendment to the original article that would have taken away funding for the proposal while keeping another $20,000 in the article slated to study the establishment of a town shuttle van service.

Nitschelm argued that selectmen had committed procedural violations by using last year's approved Master Plan money to hire a consultant and begin work on the expanded proposal.

"Money was spend outside the scope of what was authorized at Town Meeting," he said.

Rosenzweig did not attempt to dance around the issue.

"We are guilty as charged," she said. "[But] we want your plan to be a good plan."

In addition, Nitschelm said $90,000 was too much money to ask for extra input from Acton residents and that if selectmen wanted to, they could use part of the $250,000 surplus from the fiscal 2008 budget to pay for the initiative.

The amendment failed with only 62 voting in favor and 80 opposed.

After the article was split into two votes — one for the Comprehensive Community Plan and the other for the van service — residents continued to weigh in.

"This sounds like spending money to find out what to spend more money on," said resident Brandy Brandon.

One resident asked how the plan would be measured to determine success. Another asserted it would be a waste of money, since master plans are rarely followed. However, one woman suggested that while the schools get most of the money in town, the community plan would be something that would benefit the rest of the people in town.

Maple Street resident Margaret Miley proposed reducing the price tag from $90,000 to $40,000 for the plan, saying the high number seemed disproportionate to the work involved. But that amendment failed.

"I think with the scope people have asked for, we need the $90,000," Rosenzweig said.

At the end of debate, voters approved both portions of the article, fully funding the Comprehensive Community Plan and the $20,000 for the shuttle service consultant.

On day two of Town Meeting, voters also approved new spending for three municipal positions — a police officer, deputy police chief, and assistant planner/zoning enforcement officer — for a total of $218,400, which was included in the overall budget.

Robert Burgess can be reached at rburgess@cnc.com or at 978-371-5732.

THE BEACON

SERVING ACTON & BOXBOROUGH · VOL. 58, NO. 9 · THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2008 · WWW.WICKEDLOCAL.COM · $1.00

Acton launches Comprehensive Community Plan efforts

ACTON — The town of Acton this week announced a Comprehensive Community Plan designed to shape the identity and the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig is the town official spearheading the effort, and she is aided by a newly formed Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach Committee of more than a dozen citizens and members of town boards.

The town has also hired a consulting firm, Planners Collaborative from Boston, to assist in this project

This major effort was launched on Feb. 28 with the disbursement of thousands of explanatory flyers to all residents through e-mail lists, schools and businesses, as well as through community and social groups and organizations throughout the town.

Following this initial informational effort, residential and business surveys will be widely circulated to gather input from everyone in the town.

"Our goal is to excite and engage every resident and business owner in Acton to identify what they want our community to be like as it grows and develops in the years ahead," said Rosenzweig in a statement.

Outreach meetings to further explain the process and gather early data are being scheduled with groups and organizations in the weeks ahead.

Courtesy photo

Acton residents participate in one of 10 breakout sessions during the recent Acton Comprehensive Community Plan "visioning session" held on March 29 at the Parker Damon Building.

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

MARCH 29, 2008 VISION MEETING

Story submitted by Dick Calandrella

200 ACTON RESIDENTS SHARE VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE AT MARCH 29TH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN MEETING

Next Public Meeting set for May 31st

Nearly 200 residents turned out on Saturday afternoon, March 29, 2008 to participate in a three-hour meeting to share their visions for the future of Acton.

Held at the Parker Damon Building, it was the first public opportunity for residents to offer their personal input in a "visioning session" for Acton's newly-developed Comprehensive Community Plan designed to shape the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

Major questions they were asked to address were:

What do you like most about Acton, and hope to preserve?

What do you like least, and would like to change?

What do you feel is missing from our town?

What would make Acton an even better place live?

After opening remarks by Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig and Daphne Politis of Boston consulting firm Planner's Collaborative who explained the meeting's objectives, the attendees broke off into 10 separate groups in nearby classrooms with facilitators to encourage comments and record their thoughts.

And the attendees were not bashful or reticent.

After about an hour and a half of animated discussion, all groups returned to the meeting hall and offered summaries of items discussed in their breakout sessions.

Things like transportation, schools, historic character of the town, taxes, traffic, town government, community spirit, sense of friendliness, volunteerism, senior center, sidewalks, open space, and a host of other topics were presented for comment.

A group of teenagers also made a presentation which outlined their unique perspective of the town and how their specific interests could be addressed, and their remarks generated warm applause.

All of this input will be tallied and added to the information now being gathered through thousands of survey forms recently mailed to every home and business property in Acton. Survey forms are also available on the Acton town Web site for electronic response.

West Acton resident Karen Herther thought it was a "wonderful session. It's part of what makes Acton unique to provide an opportunity for citizen input from across the community, and we hope this will continue."

Another West Acton resident Joan Cirillo expressed similar thoughts. "It good to know that everyone can come together to try and affect change in town."

Deena Ferrara said the session was "very valuable, and it brought together young people as well as older people to express their views."

Derrick Chin expressed his thanks to the organizers by saying that "a lot of planning went into this session. I've been here for 31 years and this is the first time I've seen something like this."

Selectman Rosenzweig said the event was a "huge success with wonderful turnout. People were extremely involved, and everyone was actively engaged and came up with some great ideas."

Rosenzweig added that telephone surveys will also be carried out in the weeks ahead with random households in Acton, and many additional meetings will be held with

school and town officials, and with many civic and social groups in Acton, such as the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the Senior Center, and others.

She also noted that a second public "visioning session" is scheduled for Saturday, May 31, 2008 at 1:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon Building in Acton, and she hopes many more residents will actively participate.

"We want to ensure that everyone in Acton has the opportunity to express their views in helping to shape the future of our community," Rosenzweig said.

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THE BEACON

SERVING ACTON & BOXBOROUGH VOL. 58, NO. 8 THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008 WWW.WICKEDLOCAL.COM $1.00

Acton launches community plan

ACTON — The town of Acton has announced a Comprehensive Community Plan designed to shape the identity and the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig is the town official spearheading the effort, and she is aided by a newly formed Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach Committee of more than a dozen citizens and members of town boards.

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"Our goal is to excite and engage every resident and business owner in Acton to identify what they want our community to be like as it grows and develops in the years ahead," said Rosenzweig in a statement.

Outreach meetings to further explain the process and gather early data are being scheduled with groups and organizations in the weeks ahead, and all interested citizens are invited to attend an initial town-wide "visioning session" which will be held on Saturday, March 29, at the Parker Damon School in Acton beginning at 1:30 p.m.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Use your voice

To the editor:

I moved to Acton in 1995 and have never gotten involved in the town until now. I began to get involved after attending the Town Meeting last fall to learn more about the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee that was about to be formed to study the needs and desires of the people for the future of Acton. This provided an opportunity for me to Think Globally and Act Locally.

I joined the steering committee and became very excited about the prospect of reaching out to the citizens of Acton to learn what the community wants for their future. A great deal of effort is being made to give the community ample opportunities to participate. The schools have embraced this and are creating projects to express their ideas. What a wonderful thing for a town to actively enlist the people for their ideas.

My hope is that Actonians will enthusiastically embrace this opportunity. Here are some ways you can:

- Attend the Visioning session on Saturday, March 29, at 1:30 p.m. at the Parker Damon building.
- Respond to the survey you received in the mail.
- Attend Town Meeting on April 7.

Linda Chance
Kinsley Road
Acton

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN COMMITTEE

Press Advisory

For further information:
Dick Calandrella
Cell Telephone --- 508-733-2705
E-Mail ---------- dickcalandrella@earthlink.net

Acton Launches Comprehensive Community Plan
To Shape the Community Over the Next 10-20 Years

Flyers Blanket the Town in First Wave of Information
Public Meeting to be Held on March 29th

Acton, MA (March 2, 2008) --- The Town of Acton this week announced a Comprehensive Community Plan designed to shape the identity and the character of the community for the next 10-20 years.

Selectman Lauren Rosenzweig is the town official spearheading the effort, and she is aided by a newly formed Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach Committee of more than a dozen citizens and members of town boards.

The town has also hired a consulting firm, Planners Collaborative from Boston, to assist in this project

This major effort was launched on February 28, 2008 with the disbursement of thousands of explanatory flyers to all residents through E-Mail lists, schools and businesses, as well as through religious, community and social groups and organizations throughout the town.

Following this initial informational effort, residential and business surveys will be widely circulated to gather input from everyone in the town.

"Our goal is to excite and engage every resident and business owner in Acton to identify what they want our community to be like as it grows and develops in the years ahead," said Rosenzweig.

Outreach meetings to further explain the process and gather early data are being scheduled with groups and organizations in the weeks ahead, and all interested citizens are invited to attend an initial town-wide "visioning session"

which will be held on Saturday, March 29, 2008 at the Parker Damon School in Acton beginning at 1:30 p.m.

"This is a project we urge everyone in Acton to embrace and participate in," Rosenzweig said. "This is an exciting opportunity to play your own personal role in shaping the future of our community and ensure that all of our values and visions will be a part of making Acton a safe and prosperous place to raise our families and grow our businesses.

"Stay tuned," she added. "There's a lot more to come."

###

FOR INTERVIEW --- you are invited to contact:

Lauren Rosenzweig (Acton Selectman) --- 978-821-4172

Daphne Politis (Planners Collaborative) --- 781-820-0873

Appendix

Comment Boards/Maps

Public Comments Posted on the Acton Street Map at the 3/29/08 Visioning Session

NOTE: Comments that are italicized and in parentheses are to help the reader understand where/how the comment was posted on the map. The italicized comments in parentheses are written by Kristin Alexander, Acton Planning Department. All other wording is exactly how the comment was written on the note on the map.

- *(The Quail Ridge Country Club land – 354 Great Road)* should be public conservation land
- I second this *(arrow pointing to above note)* for public conservation land
- Help make this area walkable *(the intersection of Great Road and Davis Road)*
- Bring back the movie theatre
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* Second!
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* + Third
- Take 2A back from the State, reduce speeds, add crosswalks
- Make public land behind mall *(Brookside Shops – 145 Great Road)* accessible
- Preserve Historic home on Rte 2 *(at the intersection of Route 2 and Wetherbee Street)*
- Bus to malls. *(the note was placed on the Concord town line northeast of the School Street/ Lawsbrook Road intersection)*
- Planning (through Town, A.C.T.) for Conant Land *(at the Main Street/Brook Street intersection)* to prevent (eventual?) residential development
- Love those theatre groups *(note placed at the intersection of Nagog Hill Road and Hammond Street)*
- Needs sidewalk *(draws an arrow to the east side of Arlington Street between Route 2 and Newtown Road)*
- Solar Power on all Public Buildings
- Sidewalks
  – Conant School *(80 Taylor Road)* to Town Hall
- Let's redevelop Kelly's Corner *(area surrounding the intersection of Main Street and Mass Ave.)* to include:
  - Mixed use bldgs.
  - Parking behind
  - Pedestrian-friendly, village – aesthetic frontage
  - Town/private/nonprofit partnerships?
  - Green bldgs/LEED cert.
- I second this *(with an arrow to the above comment)*. Make this area walkable; friendly to pedestrians
- Provide 2nd access to Roche Bros. lot *(383 Mass Ave.)*
- Be very cautious re: future devel. of *(W.R.)* Grace property *(50 Independence Road)*
- Provide a Welcome Pack or Flyer to New Residents (I still don't know if I live in S. Acton or W. Acton!) Provide a Map w/Highlights + Features of the town, similar to a map in a tourist town.
- Sidewalk to R.R. station *(the note was placed on High Street between the Hatch Rd./Valley Rd. intersection and the Parker Street intersection)*

- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* Sidewalk on Conant St. + High St.
- Encourage poop scooping on public land/roads
  Discourage scoff dog owners
- S. Acton & Kelly's Big, pedestrian-friendly Creative Buildings w/cars below + residences + stores above
- Sidewalks on High St *(the note was placed on High Street between the bend in the street at 22 High Street and the Conant Street intersection)*
- Senior Ctr Completely Rebuilt + Redesigned (Audubon Hill Accessibility)
- Do not expand parking at train – provide shuttle service
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* Have other towns provide shuttle for their citizens
- Sidewalks! Sidewalks! Sidewalks! All around Train Station
- "Ugly Yellow" Hall @ School + 27. <u>At Least</u> Paint. *(referring to Exchange Hall – 2 School Street)*
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* Yes!
- Wind Turbine to show sustainability *(the note was placed on Great Hill - east of Main Street across from the Prospect Street intersection)*
- Prospect Street needs <u>sidewalks</u>!
- <u>Windsor Green</u> *(68 Windsor Avenue)*, <u>Add</u> bushes to camouflage the parked cars – you see from Windsor Ave. – it's really ugly now
- Windsor Ave Many more benches ALA NARA Park's weatherproof "wood" (Rec Dept)
- Windsor Green *(68 Windsor Avenue)* planting + landscaping + donation of gravel
  All volunteer
  ? Garden Club
- More attractive W. Acton Village Ctr homogeneous store fronts esp pharmacy + New London Pizza facades

Public Comments Posted on the Acton Street Map at the 5/31/08 Visioning Session

NOTE: Comments that are italicized and in parentheses are to help the reader understand where/how the comment was posted on the map. The italicized comments in parentheses are written by Kristin Alexander, Acton Planning Department. All other wording is exactly how the comment was written on the note on the map.

- Make arrangements for Westford area of Avalon – Action *(Acton)* to get emergency services from Westford.
- Build North Acton Fire Station at *(Rts.)* 2A/27 to give north Acton coverage similar to the rest of Town!
- We need to go ahead w/sidewalk on *(Rt.)* 27
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* All along *(Rt.)* 27 in The Woods
- Build the sidewalk ALL along Main Street, one end of Town to the other continues!
- Protect and enhance wildlife corridors, including conserving diverse ecosystems*(:)* meadows, woods, lowland, upland
- Key wildlife corridor here between Grassy Pond + Bulette *(Road)* town forest needs protecting *(the note was placed southeast of the Fort Pond Road / Newtown Road intersection, over Grassy Pond)*
- Buy Land where you can *(the note was placed just west of Arlington Street between Newtown Road and Route 2)*
- need*(:)* Newtown *(Road)* needs more sidewalk
- traffic light / 4-way stop sign @ Concord Road / *(Rt.)* 27 + Hayward *(Rd.)* / *(Rt.)* 27
- widen Taylor Road or put in a sidewalk *(the note was placed on Taylor Road between Minot Avenue and Route 2)*
- 2nd access / egress to Roche Bros shopping center
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* Yes – I vote for this too!
- Clean up outdated retail - provide family restaurants & walking atmosphere *(the note was placed over Kelley's Corner – the Rt. 111 / Rt. 27 intersection)*
- This should be the site of Train parking! Possibly, new station. *(the note was placed over the W.R. Grace site – the ends of Knox Trail & Independence Road, south of the MBTA line)*
- Please ease the safe access to exit Rt. 2 at Rt. 111 (heading west). Difficult to exit from the left (Fast) lane!
- Moratorium on development in South Acton *(the note was placed on Piper Road near the intersection with School Street)*
- Sidewalks here (*draws an arrow to High Street across from Conant Street)*
- Provide shuttle service for trains X 2
- Expand parking at train st. *(train station)*
- Retail services @ train station
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* I second that

- Finish the rail trail project! *(the note was placed over the Assabet River Rail Trail project area in South Acton)*
- *(written in different handwriting on the note above -)* Yes I vote here too!
- Too many traffic lights! *(the note was placed off the map)*
- YMCA / community center (pool – indoor, outdoor – basketball court) – an alternative to Thoreau *(recreation and fitness membership-only club in Concord, MA) (the note was placed on the Great Hill Conservation and Recreation Land – east of Main Street; North of School Street)*
- Sidewalks here (*draws an arrow to Willow Street southeast of the Summer Street intersection)*
- Extend sidewalk here Central Street (*draws an arrow to Central Street - to the northwest corner of the intersection with Summer Street)*
- Traffic light needed!! Rt 111 and Kinsley Rd
- Great place for a local pub if could address the sewer issues here. *(the note was placed on West Acton Village – intersection of Rt. 111 with Central St., Windsor Ave, and Spruce St.)*

COMMENT BOARD:
What Makes Acton Unique?

A Comment Board was placed in the lobby of the Town Hall for the months of April and May. The following is documentation of the responses to the question: "What makes Acton unique?" made by passersby:

- Non-compliance with speed limits and non-enforcement of same
- Town is a big help
- We have the highest taxes in the state
- Small town feel
- West Acton is the greatest-sidewalks; community spirit; old fashioned
- The high taxes
- The schools, the conservation areas and historic architecture. Too much development at the price of town character
- High taxes
- Great Education
- It's a great, safe place to raise a family
- People help out immensely when a neighbor needs it
- West Acton: small village feel
- EMHE sponsors
- Schools, arboretum, conservation land, NARA park, library, small businesses
- High Taxes
- Wonderful woodland trails
- The "Arbo" as we have come to call it-It's a life-enriching sanctuary-Thank you Tom Tidman for caring for it and the vision you have shared with this community
- The preserved history of the founding of the nation
- Education, ethics, environment
- The willingness to post this kind of forum to get new ideas
- Too much "allowance" or multiple housing resulting in "over traffic" will result in lower academics at school
- Bigness is a blight down fall matter of time
- Too much traffic
- Too many multiple dwellings will decline 350 units Nagog. 2 kids each "will happen" make way for new big schools now
- ABRHS
- Steve Carell

- Too large class size at high school
- Big Bird
- Fabulous friendly people
- Presently, the three distinct districts of Acton, i.e. South Acton, West Acton, and the center of Acton and hopefully East Acton and North Acton to come
- The Science Discovery Museum and the Children's Discovery Museum
- The high level of education of diversity of its residents
- High Taxes
- David ABBT Homestead
- Clean-up Kelly's Corner. Buy building
- It's bucolic beginnings which remains in evidence in various parks of town
- Acton Teen Rep. Theatre
- Live performance theater venues
- Zoning fights town character
- What a great place to grow up, learn, and become a productive citizen and well-adjusted adult
- The high degree of volunteerism in the community-for the town, the schools, and community groups
- The Rail Trail will make us stand out, once it's done…
- Bad Sprawl development-on once beautiful land. Careless use of land, wasteful poorly designed parking lots on all commercial sides
- Zoning that's very poorly crafted overall
- Very poor public transportation infrastructure, yet carry people-there may still be hope
- McCarthy-Towne great school, great teachers
- The only thing that is truly unique about Acton is its unique and venerable history, which makes preserving that history particularly important, including the physical remnants of that history
- Preserve cooker schools
- The taxes are too high
- Great wonderful conservation land, trails, ponds, woods…
- Nice unique land very satisfying, great ponds, woods and trails
- Great place to bring up your children, it is too bad a lot of the people have to leave because of HIGH taxes. Older citizens can bring a great deal to a community. I have lived here for 26 years and I truly enjoy Acton
- Povado caves
- Neighborhood pool associations that have swim teams for the children in the summer and swim lessons. Our neighborhood is Minuteman Ridge. It had been a wonderful place to raise our children. We have many close friends and continue to enjoy a close community

What Makes Acton Unique?

Acton. Today. Tomorrow. Together.

www.ActonOutreach.com

High cost of housing need to keep range of housing

Safe a friendly Town
Good Library
friendly efficient Town Office

PARKING LOTS

open space - hard et needs protecting

BAD DRIVERS

great People

too much asphalt!

IT'S HISTORY

fence education

the history the green lawns and the tight knit community

TREES

HISTORIC + NATURAL LANDSCAPES - NEED PROTECTION

HIGH TAXES

THE NUMBER OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS

open Spaces

Clean

PARKING TICKETS

clever ?

What Makes Acton Unique?

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www.ActonOutreach.com

A Great Library

The stegosaurus nest

NARA Park
Arboretum

Chris Hearnes mom

All of our neighborhoods (and pools)

Miss Parker's fish tanks

Alexandra! and Becca

Discovery Museums

~~Bol~~ Bowling alley

Shannon!

the school system

Annie!

So many soccer fields

Acton

Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Appendix

Review of 1998 Master Plan

Acton Comprehensive Community Plan

Review of 1998 Comprehensive Plan Update

At the request of the Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach Steering Committee, Planners Collaborative was asked to evaluate progress made since the previous Comprehensive Community Plan Update in 1998 ("the 98 Plan"). Planners Collaborative met with Steering Committee member Joseph Iannelli and with Planning Director Roland Bartl and Kristen Alexander to review the implementation status of the specific actions recommended in the 1998 Plan.

Status of Recommended Actions

The 1998 Plan addressed the seven topics required by MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D: land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and circulation, as well as goals and objectives and an implementation program. Overall, the 98 Plan contained 12 goals, 65 objectives that articulated these goals more specifically, 126 strategies to achieve the objectives, and 145 actions. Through discussion with the Planning Director and follow-up with the Natural Resources and Conservation Department, it was determined that 102 of the actions (70 percent) were addressed in some manner: 61 actions (42 percent) were fully implemented, 31 actions (21 percent) were partially implemented, and 7 actions (5 percent) were acted upon but not implemented by town staff, town boards/commissions, or Town Meeting. In several cases, implementation is ongoing; for example, the actions concerning East Acton and North Acton villages have been largely accomplished in East Acton, and the town intends to turn its attention to North Acton in the future. Table 1 summarizes the implementation to date by category. Table 2 is a detailed list of actions and their status.

This record of accomplishment is a good one for a comprehensive community plan and it should be viewed as very positive, particularly given the large number of recommended actions. At the same time, a number of lessons can be learned from the implementation of the 98 Plan.

Observations and Implications for the new Comprehensive Community Plan

1. The 1998 Plan was a high quality product that reflected a significant community outreach process.

2. The large number of strategies and actions tended to obscure the main themes of the 98 Plan which in many cases were divided among the required categories. These "big picture" themes were as follows:

    a. Control residential growth

b. Preserve town character, particularly by strengthening the villages for both residential and business uses

c. Encourage appropriate economic development to build the tax base and provide a greater variety of goods, services, and employment opportunities in Acton

d. Protect the environment and cultural resources

e. Calm traffic and encourage non-automobile transportation

f. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections.

3. The new Comprehensive Plan will be stronger and more effective if it strives to keep a "big picture" in view and identifies priorities for a more manageable number of most important actions.

4. The new Plan should identify the staff and financial resources needed to implement each action and adjust priorities and resource commitments accordingly.

Resource Documents

The 1998 ~~**Comprehensive Community**~~ **Plan Update** continues to be a useful planning resource with valuable data and documentation of the public process that went into it.

The 2002 **Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan** contains further data and a five year action plan that is being implemented by the Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, and Land Stewardship Committee. An updated plan is expected by the end of 2008.

The 2004 **To Live in Acton** Report addresses affordable housing goals and actions that are being implemented by the Acton Housing Authority and Acton Community Housing Corporation.

The Land Stewardship Committee has documented its work on the Town's conservation land; this information is available on its website www.actontrails.org/index.htm.

The 2006 **Acton Reconnaissance Report: Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory** was produced under the Massachusetts Heritage landscape Inventory Program. It contains information on nine priority heritage landscapes and preservation planning recommendations.

Acton 1998 Plan Update:
Summary of Completion

Category	Number of Actions	Percent Addressed	Percent Completed	Completed	Uncompleted
Land Use	29	83%	43%	12.6	16.4
Housing	9	78%	52%	4.7	4.3
Economic Dev	43	65%	47%	20.05	22.95
Natural/Cultural	7	86%	56%	3.9	3.1
Open Space/Rec	24	67%	79%	19	5
Services	7	86%	39%	2.75	4.25
Transportation	26	65%	35%	8.98	17.02
Overall	145	70%	49.6%	71.98	73.02

Action			Status
LU-1	Residential growth control	0%	petitions failed at TM
LU-2	Increase density EAV and NAV	50%	EAV not NAV
LU-3	EAV Plan	100%	
LU-4	NAV Plan	0%	
LU-5	Update WAV and SAV plans	0%	but impl. ongoing
LU-6	Revise parking for EAV & NAV	50%	EAV not NAV
LU-7	Revise EAV & NAV zoning -mixed use	50%	EAV not NAV
LU-8	Ped scale lighting and benches	20%	
LU-9	Village design guidelines	75%	Des Rev Cmte; EAV
LU-10	Apply for Mass ReLeaf grant	0%	
LU-11	Allow Multifamily in EAV & NAV	50%	MF in villages; TDR kept
LU-12	Steps to implement Kelly's	100%	took steps but unsuccesful
LU-13	Remove TDR from zoning	0%	considered/rejected
LU-14	Reduce density in LB district	0%	considered/rejected
LU-15	Combine LI and LI-1 districts	50%	made Far same
LU-16	Consider rezoning SM on N Main St.	100%	Considered, decided not to
LU-17	Rezone Wetherbee and Keefe Rds	100%	
LU-18	Raise FAR on Auto Auction	0%	linked to Kelly's
LU-19	Consider consolidating OP-1 and OP-2	n/a	
LU-20	Revise use table and definitions	90%	
LU-21	Update use table for flexibility	100%	but moving target
LU-22	Make site plan review administrative	0%	considered/rejected
LU-23	Reconsider special permits for some uses	100%	but moving target
LU-24	Review prohibition of drive-up windows	100%	considered/rejected
LU-25	Expand Nagog Park OP-1 district	n/a	Parcel used by senior housing
LU-26	Consolidate zoning on Rte 62 & High St	100%	
LU-27	Create index to zoning bylaw	0%	on to-do list
LU-28	Allow dimensional variations by special permit	0%	not well considered
LU-29	Flexible landscape and site design stds	25%	adopted flex parking but not landscape
H-1	Investigate Town Social Services Dept	100%	just established
H-2	Update Affordable Housing Study	100%	
H-3	Consider increased FAR in village districts	25%	EAV
H-4	Simplify Affordable Housing Overlay District	25%	
H-5	Consider requiring affordable housing in new developments	100%	in senior housing; other considered/rejected
H-6	Set-aside fund	20%	CPA $
H-7	find tax title parcels for ACHC development	0%	
H-8	Consider real estate transfer tax	100%	now CPA
H-9	Remove Overlay from ind and business zones	0%	
ED-1	Encourage commercial development	100%	
ED-2	Give attention to remaining comm/ind sites	100%	opportunity-driven
ED-3	Increase types of allowed land uses	100%	2000 use table
ED-4	Consider elimination of high traffic generators cap	0%	
ED-5	Misc. incentives for business	0%	some discussion; real need?
ED-6	Re-write sign bylaw	100%	should pick it up again
ED-7	Increase FAR where appropriate	100%	
ED-8	Reduce non-residiential open space requirement	100%	but decided not to
ED-9	Combine LI and LI-1 districts	50%	LU-15
ED-10	Reduce lot size for several comm'l zones	30%	TD replaced IP with reduced lot requirements
ED-11	Remove complexity from LB dist calcs	0%	related to TDR
ED-12	Revised selected parking reqs	100%	
ED-13	Rezone some res'l land to business	0%	
ED-14	Remove Overlay from ind and business zones	0%	

Land Use Summary		
number of actions	29	
fully completed	10	34%
partially completed	9	31%
addressed but no action	5	17%
completion percent*	43%	
number addressed	24	83%

Housing Summary		
number of actions	9	
fully completed	4	44%
partially completed	3	33%
addressed but no action	0	0%
completion percent*	52%	
number addressed	7	78%

ED-15	Prevent conversion of comm'l land to res'l	25%	but made aff housing progress to same end
ED-16	Restructure TDR provisions	0%	
ED-17	Design stds for comm'l/ind'l	50%	Des Rev Cmte
ED-18	Pursue state and fed intrastructure $	0%	not much possibility
ED-19	Construct public sewers	100%	more needed
ED-20	Encourage transportation improvements	0%	
ED-21	Advance work of Rte 2 Adv Cmte	100%	
ED-22		n/a	duplicate of ED-21
ED-23	Work to increase water withdrawal cap	100%	but not yet successful
ED-24	Work to insure consistent utility service	50%	joined Littleton Electric
ED-25	Upgrade telecomm	100%	
ED-26	Simplify special permit process	0%	
ED-27	Amend zoning to simplify	0%	
ED-28	Re-write Development Guide	0%	
ED-29	Establish business Ambassador program	0%	
ED-30	Evaluate economic dev staff & commission	100%	evaluated, decided not to continue
ED-31	Educte voters on value of commercial property	0%	
ED-32	Newsletter/website for econ dev	0%	
ED-33	Inventory of businesses	0%	lack resources to do it
ED-34	Database of comm/ind property	0%	
ED-35	Analyze the database	0%	
ED-36	Require fiscal impact analysis	0%	
ED-37	Explore Tax Increment Financing	100%	Explored, didn't do
ED-38	New zoning district in Powder Mill area	100%	
ED-39	New village business districts NAV and EAV	50%	EAV not NAV
ED-40	Assorted zoning revisions to promote econ dev	100%	
ED-41	NAV and EAV plans	50%	EAV not NAV
ED-42	Evaluate further Kelly's Corner implementation	100%	but failed in TM
ED-43	Update WAV and SAV plans	0%	
ED-44	Increase diversity of goods and svcs available in Acton	100%	do more?

Economic Development Summary		
number of actions	43	
fully completed	20	47%
partially completed	8	19%
addressed but no action	0	0%
completion percent*	47%	
number addressed	28	65%

NC-1	Implement SAV sewer project	100%	
NC-2	Work with adjaent towns on groundwater protection	0%	
NC-3	Complete cultural resources inventory	80%	in progress
NC-4	Protect list of key historic properties	10%	
NC-5	Pursue National Register nominations	0%	in progress
NC-6	Encourage historic tax credit use	100%	Exchange Hall
NC-7	Encourage use of preservation restrictions	100%	opportunity-driven

Natural/Cultural Resources Summary		
number of actions	7	
fully completed	3	43%
partially completed	2	29%
addressed but no action	1	14%
completion percent*	56%	
number addressed	6	86%

OSR-1	Protect list of key properties	50%	
OSR-2	Plan to educate and inform residents	100%	
OSR-3	Update priorities for open space preservation	100%	
OSR-4	Work with adjacent towns on water resources	50%	Littleton, Concord, ongoing with Stowe
OSR-5	Work with LSC to identify habitat corridors	100%	
OSR-6	Lobby for Lowell-Sudbury rail trail	100%	
OSR-7	Further construction of Assabet Rail Trail	100%	
OSR-8	Participate in bay Circuit Trail planning	100%	
OSR-9	Work with MAGIC on bike trial connections	100%	
OSR-10	Pursue greenbelt for Ft Point and Nashoba Brooks	100%	
OSR-11	Provide corridor information to Cons Trust	100%	
OSR-12	Workwith LSC on Ft Point and Nashoba greenbelts	100%	
OSR-13	Apply for Self-Help funds	100%	
OSR-14	Pursue funding for trails	100%	lot's of activity in this area
OSR-15	Survey of remaining farms	0%	
OSR-16	Handouts & brochures	100%	
OSR-17	New map of conservation lands	100%	

OSR-18	Apply for Urban Rivers grant	0%	
OSR-19	Increase access to areas for pedestrians	100%	Land Stewardship Cmte projects completed
OSR-20	Increase access to Nashoba Brook	100%	
OSR-21	Forestry Mgmt Plan	0%	working on 2008 osr plan with foretry supplement
OSR-22	Complete Arboretum master plan	100%	
OSR-23	Apply for Mass ReLeaf grant	0%	
OSR-24	Plan for conservation of Camp Acton	100%	Camp Acton, extensive HC acess at arboretum and NARA
SF-1	Work to meet infrastructure needs from 1991 plan	100%	
SF-2	School improvements	100%	
SF-3	Plan and implement sewer service for WAV and EAV	25%	
SF-4	Assist water district in promoting conservation	50%	
SF-5	Low water landscaping in site plan review	0%	
SF-6	Assist water district in raising withdrawal cap	0%	
SF-7	Assist water district in developing new sources	0%	
TC-1	Safety studies at Rt 2/Mass Ave	0%	
TC-2	Track accident trends	0%	
TC-3	Study high accident intersections	0%	
TC-4	Townwide traffic calming plan	0%	
TC-5	Study Rt 27 Great Rd to High St	50%	portion
TC-6	Study Rt 2A	33%	portion
TC-7	Monitor completed roadway imporvements	n/a	none completed
TC-8	Work with MAGIC on regional transp issues	100%	
TC-9	Sidewalks to SAV commuter rail	100%	
TC-10	Improve facilities for bicyclists	100%	
TC-11	Funding/support for Assabet River Trail	100%	
TC-12	Reduce curb cuts on Great Rd.	100%	ongoing
TC-13	Sidewalks on Great Rd and Weatherbee	50%	Great Rd only
TC-14	Sidewalks in WAV	30%	Willow St
TC-15	Ped/bike connections between activity ctrs	0%	
TC-16	Slow Mass Ave traffic with ped amenities	0%	
TC-17	Connect NARA with surrounding neighborhoods	0%	Bruce Freeman Trail will accomplish
TC-18	Address missing ped/bike linkages	0%	always in play
TC-19	Comprehensive study of potential linkages	0%	
TC-20	Pursue Rail-with-Trail on Fitchburg RR line	0%	
TC-21	Study bike accommodation on Rt 27	100%	
TC-22	Study bike path in North Acton	100%	
TC-23	Pursue bike lanes along Rt 111	0%	
TC-24	Bicycle signage and pavemetn markings	0%	
TC-25	Require bike racks inproportion to parking	10%	
TC-26	Bike parking in villages, public bldgs, rec areas	25%	

Open Space/Recreation Summary		
number of actions	24	
fully completed	15	63%
partially completed	1	4%
addressed but no action	0	0%
completion percent*	79%	
number addressed	16	67%

Services/Facilities Summary		
number of actions	7	
fully completed	2	29%
partially completed	2	29%
addressed but no action	0	0%
completion percent*	39%	
number addressed	4	57%

Circulation Summary		
number of actions	26	
fully completed	7	27%
partially completed	6	23%
addressed but no action	1	4%
completion percent*	35%	
number addressed	17	65%

Overall

Overall Summary		
number of actions	145	
fully completed	61	42%
partially completed	31	21%
addressed but no action	7	5%
completion percent*	50%	
number addressed	102	70%

*Completion percent includes estimated percent complete for partially completed actions.

Appendix

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

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TOWN CLERK
ACTON

MINUTES—OUTREACH STEERING COMMITTEE
Thursday 5/22/08

Present: Ann Sussman, Terra Friedrichs, Jim Snyder-Grant, Larry Powers, Joe Ianelli, Dick Callandrella, Mary Ann Ashton, Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann, Linda Chance, Susan Benson, Nancy Tavernier, Deborah Elkhoury, Lauren Rosenzweig

Staff: Roland Bartl, Kristin Alexander

Planners Collaborative: Daphne Politis, Jim Purdy

I. Should we schedule additional outreach meetings?

A request came in from Peter Ashton and others that both visioning sessions have been on Saturdays, and there should be at least one alternative meeting on a weekday evening. Discussion ensued that weekends were chosen because experience of the consultants showed that Saturdays had the best turnouts, even though there are other conflicting activities. Weeknights typically had much lower turnouts. Several alternatives were suggested, but by a show of hands it was agreed to take one of the community leader outreach evenings and advertise more widely as a general visioning session.

II. Orton Grant

Acton was not chosen as an Orton Grant recipient, but we were encouraged to be involved in the future. The good news is that through our contact with Tufts University to help us participate in the grant, Tufts is interested in having one or two of their graduate students do an internship in Acton as part of their thesis. This would enable us to have access to the university's visioning technology, which would be tremendously useful in the development of the new Master Plan. The committee delegated staff to look into this possibility, and staff was very amenable to doing so. We have had good experiences working with universities in the past for different studies, etc.

A question came up as to the use of CPA monies for Master Plans. There are certain circumstances for which some planning would fit in to the CPA charter, but it is quite limited, ie. for a housing project, recreation project, historic project, or open space project.

III. Results of First Visioning Workshop

Daphne presented a summary report on the first visioning workshop (see attached). The report lists the topics most people called out as important for the town to address. High on the list was creating Town Centers and places where people could "drop in" and hang out—like community centers. Places you could go in town and run into people you know, walk around, and mingle. Also scoring high was maintaining town character/remaining rural character, sense of history, open space. Transportation

alternatives/reducing traffic was also high on the list, as was walkability/bike trails and exploring "sustainable" development. Quality of schools and ongoing education opportunities was a priority as well. Harder to define, but that came up in many meetings was Acton's friendly, welcoming "culture".

Questions were raised regarding how we might deal with conflicting goals—ie. to address traffic might require widening streets, but that will deteriorate the rural character. Daphne answered that this is what we address during the actual planning phase. Visioning and outreach is about the "ideal" wishes.

Discussion then ensued about visioning sessions vs. survey results. Visioning and surveys are a "temperature taking." The survey is done by an individual alone. The visioning sessions allow for people to hear other's ideas and contribute their own—it is more dynamic. Survey is like a snapshot, visioning is more like a movie.

IV: Summary of Targeted Group Outreach meetings

Latin Family Network—similar results as with wider community. They also felt a particular need for an orientation to the town for newcomers. Participants reported the schools as being the number one reason for them moving to Acton, however, they said affordable housing was an important issue and some Latino families were attracted to Acton because they could get more house for their money than in some of the surrounding communities.

Brazilian Community—need to tap more into the network—folks not sure how to get people out to meetings and get them involved. The committee agreed to pursue contact with community leaders and get input from just a few of them rather than have a large group meeting.

Upcoming meetings include Chamber of Commerce and others.

V: Phone Survey

Post cards telling of survey will go out to give people a "heads up". Goal is to dig deeper than written survey and visioning, as well as get statistically significant random sample data. Need was expressed to ask more detailed questions but not "lead" the answers. Also discussed whether or not to bring in the "money" question—what would you be willing to pay for this or that priority? After much discussion a motion was made by Mary Ann Ashton "Move that we add a question at the end of the phone survey that asks if you would spend tax money on each of the following items, and then list the items ie. Senior Center, Open Space Conservation, etc."

Motion passed unanimously.

VI: May 31st Visioning Session

Daphne outlined what will happen at Visioning Session II. She also outlined all the publicity that has been done so far—flyers in backpacks, Flyers in Beacon (thanks to Dick Calandrella), article in Beacon, ad on cable channels, sandwich boards, etc. 3 days prior we will put on electronic signs. Mary Ann Ashton had it put on school marquee. Leigh Davis Honn has gotten many very good donations for door prizes.

Still need more facilitators.

VII: Membership—need to reduce number of members. Some who can't participate on a regular basis will be asked to change their status to "associates": non-voting members who won't be required for a quorum. Roland will draft an e-mail for Ann Sussman to send.

Next meeting June 11th. Meeting adjourned 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Lauren S. Rosenzweig

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OUTREACH STEERING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

June 11, 2008,
7:30 PM

Location: Acton Senior Center

Next Meeting: TBD

Present:

Ann Sussman	Debra Elkhoury	Jim Snyder-Grant
Kathryn Acerbo-Bachman	Larry Powers	Linda Chance
Ryan Bettez	Susan Benson	Susan Mitchell-Hardt
Leigh Davis Honn	Nancy Tavernier	Roland Bartl
Terra Friedrichs	Jim Purdy	Daphne Politis

1. Minutes

Minutes were approved for the May 8, 2008 meetings.

2. Membership

Four members volunteered to step to Associate position:

- Nancy Tavernier
- Michael Kreuze
- Larry Powers
- Jim Snyder-Grant

Now a quorum will be 10 attendees.

In September we will finish the Outreach work. A new Steering Committee will be form with sub-committees.

3. Walkability

Peter Rutten will research the various aspects and types of sidewalks, trails etc., and report back to the committee.

4. Making the Committee more "Green"

Conservation of paper was discussed. Debra Elkhoury will be in charge of recycling at functions and Ann Sussman will be her backup.

5. Tufts Student Intern

Tammy Zborel is the student who will be assigned to intern with us. We will have access to Tufts Visualization Screen (which is worth a great deal of money).
The Tufts contact is Justin Hollander.
Ann and Roland will have further discussion offline.

6. Data Analysis

As the data are analyzed, it becomes apparent that open space is important.

7. Kathryn Acerbo-Bachman

Kathryn gave an overview of her background in Art & Architectural History, and Research and Design. She has done research for USAID and statistics.
She reviewed our data and stressed that the results are extremely preliminary. The "Other" really has about 400+ uncoded responses. Some of these can be collapsed.

8. Boards, Committees and Commissions

Daphne explained that one of three presentations has been given.
Dates of the remaining meetings were handed out.
It will be important to learn what projects are already planned, and to identify conflicts.
Then it will be important for the various groups to meet with each other.

9. Additional Outreach

- Daphne and Jim had Focus Group meetings with Town Department Heads.
- Jim attended a Chamber Breakfast.
- Phone survey
    - Estimated time of 10 to 15 minutes is actually 20-25 minutes/call.
    - 450 of 600 calls have been completed.
    - Calls will extend through next week.
- Business survey
    - We have preliminary results
    - Results need analysis
- School participation
    - The best participation Daphne has seen
    - Enthusiasm, quality, and quantity

10. Additional Recommended Reading

- Weston Design Guideline which addresses rural character
- Heritage Landscapes Inventory provides a process
- These are available on the website

11. PowerPoint Presentation

- Presentation was reviewed by Daphne

12. Break out into facilitated groups

- There was only one group.
- Facilitation was lively and notes were captured.
- Group ended at 11:00 P.M.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Chance.

Acton Outreach Steering Committee Visioning Notes[1]

June 11, 2008

Preserving Rural Character

Town should acquire more open space? Yes 6 No 0

Other means to preserve open land and preserve rural character

- Preserve land by limiting development
- Change zoning to require more open space on site
    - Visual and habitat preservation
    - Form-based zoning
- Encourage owners to sell conservation restrictions
- Limit extent of sewerage
- Forest management chapter 61
- Water withdrawal cap could be a limit to development
- Incentives for less lawn and more preserved woods in new development; less change in existing land cover
- Not comfortable with limiting development – need the additional tax base
- Develop growth areas with existing infrastructure rather than large lots on open land
- Tree warden should identify specific trees in ROW that merit preservation
- Sustainable development to preserve rural character
    - Support business development
- Expand ROW to encompass large trees
- But balance open space goal with affordability so today's kids can stay in Acton
- Tree planting fund, not just tree cutting
- Plant saplings today – will be mature tree crowns tomorrow (like the elms that once grew on main St)

[1] Two members who had to leave mid-way through the visioning sent their responses to topics 5-7; they are included in the counts and brainstorming items.

- Many fights in the 1990s about the word “rural” – town is now suburban
    - Don’t see a rural look on a daily basis
    - Rural vs. suburban is partly semantics
- Design new development to have the desired look

Enhancing Neighborhoods

Ideal Neighborhood

- Intimate feel
- Sidewalks
- Interaction – informal or through neighborhood association

Physical Characteristics

- Gazebo
- Houses close enough to see neighbors
- Sidewalks are key (unless traffic so low you can walk in the street safely)
- Tradeoff: trees vs. sidewalks, ROW issues
- Each neighborhood addressed case by case – e.g., historic district has different solutions – not one broad brush solution for all
    - River Street has same zoning as S. Acton village but shouldn’t
- Central neighborhood space – play space, neighborhood swimming pool, etc.
- Town should support neighborhoods associations, event calendars, etc.
- West Action village – walk to activities,
    - Doesn’t want sidewalk on her dead-end street, but need them in the village
- Avalon development appalling, a “ghetto”, can’t walk to much from it (except NARA and a couple of Nagog Woods shops) – result of 40B

Making My Neighborhood More Desirable

- Microbrewery
- Traffic mitigation on high St
- More grocery shopping opportunities in walking distance
- Sidewalk

- Microbrewery
- Lighting restriction on outdoor house lighting
- Safer way to cross Main St
- Sidewalks and non-pizza eating place
- Restaurant/pub on corner

Enhancing Village Centers

Ideal Village Center

- Coordinated architecture
- Gathering places, restaurants, shops
- Shared understanding of village theme – bohemian, chi-chi, or other style
- Cafes with outdoor seating
- A little park space
- Benches
- But, not Disneyland (design controls ok, though)
- Wayland new town center on Raytheon land is good example
- Mixed residential/business
- Employment opportunities
- Wide sidewalks with benches
- Trees and landscaping – European model outdoor "living room"
- One-stop parking and walk around village
    - Behind buildings? Is this what killed Maynard Center?
    - (some disagreement about Maynard)
- Breckenridge Colorado model – main street of shops with flowers everywhere
- Design quality is important
- Gates-Douglas wetland boardwalk
- West Action vs. other villages: the town controls the street, not MassHighway
- Parallel parking calms traffic – maintain on-street parking
- Calm traffic
- Need visual and social anchor use (like a mall has an anchor store) – e.g., Exchange Hall in South Acton

- Tools needed: how does the town control the form of development, pull it together?
- Avoid drive-thru uses (e.g., car wash in East Acton)
- Demolition-by-neglect bylaw needed
- Benches, coffee shop
- Night life
- Grocery, pharmacy (neighborhood-oriented, not CVS)
- Architectural lighting
- Restrict chain stores (constitutional issue) or store maximum size
- Apartments above stores – lots of them to support the businesses
    - But, apartments can be located around village perimeter, not just within center

Challenges

After discussion of the potential challenges Acton faces and potential ways to address them, each participant was given five sticky dots and asked to vote by placing up to three of the dots on the flip chart next to the items they consider the most important challenges.

Votes	Challenge	Ways of addressing
4	High cost of living	Prioritize, balance against desired improvements Develop local tourism, e.g., driving tours on CD, information, connections to regional network
3	Lack of walking facilities	
0	Traffic (especially on Saturday)	Ability to get to recreation facilities located all over town on Saturday morning Alternative transportation – shuttles, etc.
8	Need for growth management and site and design controls	Make site plan review binding, not advisory, and with input from residents
1	State of emergency response (public safety, EMS, fire)	
2	Providing sewers, consistent with growth management	
4	Large wooded tracts of land – preserving habitat and experience of nature	Incentives for owners to preserve from development - tax breaks, etc.
2	Keeping our elders in town	
4	Off-grid alternative energy and other planning for sustainability	Regional wind and solar energy Alternative transportation
3	Holding on to sense of community	
2	Getting the boards/committees on board Implementation/prioritization	Accountability Resources and priorities Plan as framework
5	Town governance “on the precipice”	Town council form of government

Planning for Sustainability

Important for town's future? 8 yes, 0 no

Take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? 7 yes, 1 no

As in the section on challenges, ways to plan for sustainability were discussed and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are most important.

Types of action	**Votes**
• Increase recycling (e.g., swap section at town "dump")	8
• More walking/biking facilities, e.g. on Rte 2A; rail trail	7
• Building/retrofitting public buildings	2
• Incentives for residential and a business energy efficiency	6
• Get Nagog Pond back from Concord	2
• Conservation restrictions and development controls – type, size, and amount	4
• Concentrate uses to reduce auto dependency, in-fill	1
• Trees in front of shops	6
• Pursue regional solutions with other towns	1
• Municipal energy generation (esp. at transfer station site)	1

Senior Center

Improvements

- Expand, add second floor
- More parking (garage?) and transportation to (shuttle)
- Better layout with reception, wayfinding
- More creative use of landscaping
    - Aromatherapy garden (good for Alzheimer's patients)
    - Tactile garden (for people with low vision)
- Daycare for seniors
- Less institutional look
- More after-hours activity
- Signage

Expand existing facility? 7 yes, 0 no

Combine with community center? 7 yes, 0 no

- Cost-effective
- Keep seniors from being isolated
- Continues community cohesion in multi-generational
- Mixed generation interactions build community
- Helps build community support
- But, must be in convenient location
- Danny's Place is too small; however, location is critical to a teen center
- Original vision for Danny's Place was to be multigenerational

Prioritizing

As in the previous sections, potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

Issue	Votes
Preserving rural character	5
Enhancing neighborhoods	1
Enhancing village centers	5
Addressing high cost of living	3
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	3
Addressing traffic issues	1
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	10
Planning sustainability	6
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	1
Promoting economic development	5