

East Acton Village Plan

East Acton Village Planning Committee
Acton Planning Department
December 2003

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Many people have participated in and contributed greatly to the East Acton Village planning process. The East Acton Village Planning Committee (EAVPC) would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for helping to create a better East Acton Village. To those of you not listed who have responded to the survey, attended public input meetings, and supported the planning process in other ways – thank you.

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Acton Monument Company	State of Massachusetts - DHCD
Acton Water District	SunLite Café, formerly of Great Rd., Acton
Bagels Plus, Acton	The Cecil Group
Dunkin' Donuts, Great Road, Acton	Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. (VHB)
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EAST ACTON VILLAGE (EAV) PLAN SUMMARY

This section is meant to provide the reader with an easy to read summary of the goals, objectives, and strategies created for the East Acton Village (EAV) area. Strategies with an asterisk are proposed changes to the Acton Zoning Bylaw or Town Bylaw. In the chart, “priority” shows how the East Acton Village Planning Committee (EAVPC) has prioritized the strategies with “high” as most important and “low” as least important.

To learn more about the background and details of this information, please read the page(s) referenced to the right of each goal, objective, and strategy.

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
Village Character and Housing Goal V1: Reinforce community by creating a sustainable, memorable, shared experience connecting the full spectrum of the local population.				48
Objective 1: Enhance diversity of uses and users in a socially and economically sustainable manner.				49
	V1.1a *	Amend Table of Principal Uses in Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow appropriately scaled recreational, educational, commercial entertainment, scientific and additional business types and eliminate the use of gas stations, nursing homes and trade shops.	High	52
	V1.1b	Establish an informal organization (EAVO) consisting of local residents, business owners, and property owners to monitor and promote the Goals and Objectives of the EAV Plan.	High	52
	V1.1c	Encourage campaigns to increase recognition, patronage, and community involvement of village businesses.	Low	52
	V1.1d	Produce an EAV business directory.	Low	52
	V1.1e	Establish cultural and public service presence in the village.	Medium	52
Objective 2: Integrate commercial, recreational, civic life around a community focal point.				49

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	V1.2a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to include “Special Provisions for East Acton Village” design guidelines to help developers understand the vision for East Acton Village.	High	52
	V1.2b	Establish, construct and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green.	High	52
	V1.2c	Construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT).	High	53
	V1.2d *	Amend Dimensional Requirements for the EAV Zoning District to decrease minimum set backs.	High	53
Objective 3: Enhance and promote a sense of “connectedness” between indoors and outdoors (i.e., the structure and its lot); among multiple structures /lots within the village; and between the village center and its surroundings.				49
	V1.3a *	Amend Dimensional Requirements for the EAV Zoning District to decrease minimum set backs.	High	53
	V1.3b	Augment existing sidewalk network.	Medium	53
	V1.3c *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to include “Special Provisions for East Acton Village” design guidelines to help developers understand the vision for East Acton Village.	High	53
Village Character and Housing Goal V2: Preserve East Acton Village’s historic, cultural and recreational resources.				55
Objective 1: Research and locate historical buildings and structures in order to preserve them.				55
	V2.1a	Using the appropriate form from the MA Historical Commission, list those buildings, unique physical sites, landmarks, archeological sites, etc that distinguishes East Acton Village.	High	56
	V2.1b	Complete MA Historical Commission’s forms for individual buildings within the East Acton Village area.	High	56
Objective 2: Encourage the preservation, maintenance, and restoration of historically or architecturally significant structures and places.				55
	V2.2a *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to encourage the preservation of EAV structures on the Town Cultural Resource List.	High	56

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	V2.2b *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw to provide FAR, parking, or signage incentives for the EAV Zoning District for the renovation of historic structures which reestablish approximate original facades to Acton Historical Commission standards. New structures with complementary architecture could be constructed on the same site through increased FAR where appropriate from the density options menu.	Medium	56
	V2.2c	Compile a written history of East Acton Village.	Medium	56
Objective 3: Support cultural and recreational events, places and opportunities.				55
	V2.3a	Establish an informal organization (EAVO) consisting of local residents, business owners, and property owners to monitor and promote the Goals and Objectives of the EAV Plan.	High	57
Objective 4: Encourage restoration/preservation of existing common spaces and public lands for shared community experiences.				55
	V2.4a *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to encourage the development and/or preservation of common spaces by providing incentives for them.	High	57
	V2.4b	Construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT).	High	57
	V2.4c	Establish, construct and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green.	High	57
Village Character and Housing Goal V3: Create a defining identity for East Acton Village that enhances the appearance and better distinguishes East Acton Village from the rest of the Great Road corridor.				60
Objective 1: Establish a system of consistent design elements to delineate the village area and enhance village aesthetics.				60
	V3.1a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to include "Special Provisions for East Acton Village" design guidelines to help developers understand the vision for East Acton Village.	High	62
	V3.1b *	Amend the "Maximum Floor Area of Businesses and Industries" Zoning Bylaw table for the EAV Zoning District to provide for a greater variety of business types and sizes.	High	62

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
Objective 2: Ensure that land uses and densities allowed, along with the dimensional requirements for buildings, parking lots, and other structures, create a village ambiance and promote the village as an activity center.				60
	V3.2a	Require landscaping for parking that will enhance the village environment.	High	62
	V3.2b *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw to reduce the minimum open space requirement in the EAV Zoning District from 35% to 25%.	High	62
	V3.2c	Increase tree plantings and other landscaping, encourage grounds maintenance, and encourage the development of green spaces throughout the village.	High	62
	V3.2d	Encourage underground utility lines.	Medium	62
	V3.2e	Install village entry signs at key points in East Acton Village along Great Road (Route 2A): near Keefe Road and at the EAV Green.	High	63
	V3.2f *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to create a new EAV II Zoning District.	High	63
	V3.2g *	Rezone tax map G5, parcel 69 (8 Wetherbee Street) to EAV.	High	63
	V3.2h *	Rezone tax map G4, parcel 212 at corner of Concord Road and Great Road from LB to ARC.	High	63
	V3.2i *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to disallow structured parking in EAV District.	High	63
	V3.2j *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce required parking within the EAV Village District to 70% of that presently required.	High	63
	V3.2k *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce parking required within the EAV Village District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the parking requirement in the new EAV II district to 70% of that presently required if shared parking is used.	Medium	63
Objective 3: Encourage private or volunteer efforts to improve community identification, to create a sense of place and pride.				60
	V3.3a	Encourage, through the volunteer organization (EAVO), activity in the Village through both public programs and private efforts (i.e., book fairs, concerts, sidewalk sales, exhibits and artists' corners).	Medium	64

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	V3.3b	Facilitate the joint effort of Town personnel and community volunteers to beautify East Acton Village.	High	64
Objective 4: Promote a community focus and awareness within and around the village.				60
	V3.4a	Encourage, through the volunteer organization (EAVO), activity in the Village through both public programs and private efforts (i.e., book fairs, concerts, sidewalk sales, exhibits and artists' corners).	Medium	64
	V3.4b	Facilitate the joint effort of Town personnel and community volunteers to beautify East Acton Village.	High	64
	V3.4c	Establish, construct and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green.	Medium	64
	V3.4d	Working with the Acton Historical Commission, establish the use of plaques that name buildings, famous sites or discuss historic events within the Village.	High	64
Objective 5: Encourage the on-going maintenance and repair of buildings, structures, and properties within the village.				60
	V3.5a	Establish an informal organization (EAVO) consisting of local residents, business owners, and property owners to monitor and promote the Goals and Objectives of the EAV Plan.	High	65
	V3.5b	Make the design guidelines to East Acton Village in the Zoning Bylaw available to property owners to help them understand the vision and guide them when maintaining/developing their properties.	High	65
Objective 6: Encourage façade and signage improvements.				60
	V3.6a *	Amend sign bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow for exterior sign improvements and to provide a unifying feature to the village district.		65
Village Character and Housing Goal V4: Encourage the qualities, characteristics, and ambiance of a village center through appropriate development or redevelopment.				72
Objective 1: Ensure that any new buildings, structures, renovations and additions are situated, designed and built at a human scale and in a style that is compatible with existing historical village structures and in harmony with the residential village architecture.				72

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	V4.1a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to create design guidelines for EAV.	High	73
	V4.1b *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide a menu of incentives to developers to encourage the type and location of density that enhances a village ambiance.	High	73
Objective 2: In order to discourage “highway strip” development and strip malls, encourage buildings with architectural detail and richness.				72
	V4.2a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to change dimensions and parking requirements to permit the clustering of separate buildings and separate properties and to reduce curb cuts.	High	73
	V4.2b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to require both vertical and horizontal variety in large buildings to enhance village aesthetics.	High	73
Objective 3: Enhance and promote a sense of “connectedness” between indoors and outdoors (i.e., the structure and its lot); among multiple structures/lots within the village; and between the village center and its surroundings.				72
	V4.3a	Provide walkways, bike paths, arcaded walks, etc. to connect EAV internally and with the surrounding communities.	High	73
	V4.3b	Promote development or redevelopment that encourages walking or the use of bicycles.	High	73
Objective 4: Ensure a variety of residential and business opportunities by promoting a mix of land and building uses that enhance the village character.				72
	V4.4a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow multi-family housing as residential only up to a maximum of four units per building.	High	74
	V4.4b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide that apartments in excess of four units be permitted above the ground floor in mixed use developments.	High	74
	V4.4c *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce required parking within the EAV Village District to 70% of that presently required.	High	74

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	V4.4d *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce parking required within the EAV Village District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the parking requirement in the new EAV II district to 70% of that presently required if shared parking is used.	High	74
	V4.4e *	Amend Zoning Bylaw land use table for the EAV Zoning District to provide for a greater variety of business types and sizes.	High	74
Objective 5: Encourage a diversity of neighborhood-oriented retail and business development and redevelopment.				72
	V4.5a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw land use table for the EAV Zoning District to provide for a greater variety of business types and sizes.	High	74
	V4.5b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to limit certain business sizes to maintain village scale.		74
Village Character and Housing Goal V5: Promote diverse residential development in East Acton Village and the surrounding area.				77
Objective 1: Encourage apartments above retail stores, offices, and other permitted uses.				77
	V5.1a *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide that residential apartments in excess of four units be permitted above the ground floor only in mixed use developments.	High	80
	V5.1b *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide a menu of incentives to developers to encourage the type and location of density that enhances a village ambiance.	High	80
Objective 2: Encourage a mixture of housing opportunities including affordable, low and moderate income in the village and within walking distance of the village.				77
	V5.2a *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow multi-family housing up to a maximum of four units per building.	High	80
	V5.2b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow two family houses by right in EAV.	High	80
	V5.2c *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide incentives to preserve historical homes by providing FAR bonuses.	Medium	80

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
Transportation & Infrastructure Goal T1: Improve safety, convenience, and comfort for pedestrians in East Acton Village (EAV) and the surrounding area.				82
Objective 1: Complete the sidewalk system as recommended on Great Road, Pope Road, Wetherbee Street, and Keefe Road.				82
	T1.1a	Add the Great Road, Pope Road, Wetherbee Street, and Keefe Road sidewalks to the Sidewalk Master Plan.	High	84
	T1.1b	Provide a continuous sidewalk of gray concrete on the north side of Great Road from just west of the Concord Road intersection through to the Town line.	High	84
	T1.1c	Provide a continuous sidewalk of gray concrete on the south side of Great Road from the Concord Road intersection through to the Town line.	Medium	84
	T1.1d	Repair and upgrade sidewalks in EAV Zoning District to meet Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and American Architectural Board (AAB) requirements.	Medium	84
	T1.1e	Construct a sidewalk on the east side of Pope Road between Bayberry Road and Great Road.	Medium	84
	T1.1f	Complete sidewalk on west side of Pope Road from Great Road up to Brabrook Road.	Medium	84
	T1.1g	Construct a sidewalk on the east side of Wetherbee Street from Great Road through the end of the residential area.	Low	85
	T1.1h	Construct a sidewalk on the south side of Keefe Road.	Low	85
Objective 2: Provide walkways to connect East Acton Village with surrounding residential and natural resource areas and to interconnect buildings and lots within the village.				82
	T1.2a	Create walkways between the businesses on the north side of Great Road and the residential areas surrounding them.	High	85
	T1.2b	Establish, construct, and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green, ensuring that it accommodates the Rail Trail as well as good pedestrian access to and from the Village and nearby neighborhoods.	High	85

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	T1.2c	Create safe walkways through large parking areas using raised, marked crosswalks; by using thermoplastic marking material; or any other approved design to make the walkways noticeable to drivers.	High	85
	T1.2d *	Require developers to have sidewalks or pedestrian trails connecting to adjacent lots at logical connecting points if properties are renovated or redeveloped.	High	86
Objective 3: Support efforts to provide pedestrian scale lighting, benches, and other amenities.				82
	T1.3a	Install “full cut-off” (FCO) lights in parking areas and along walkways that are of human scale providing adequate light without creating glare.	High	86
	T1.3b	Install benches or seating areas (steps, granite blocks, etc) in or near green spaces within the village with consideration for maintaining village character.	Medium	86
	T1.3c	Install stroller “parking” areas throughout the Village to provide parents a safe place for their carriages and strollers while they shop.	Low	86
Objective 4: Install crosswalks, other pedestrian crossings, and traffic calming measures to facilitate pedestrian access, circulation, and safety.				82
	T1.4a	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Concord Road. Crosswalk should be as described in the “Implementation” section below. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection.	High	86
	T1.4b	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just east of the intersection with Wetherbee Street. Crosswalk should be as described in the “Implementation” section below.	High	87
	T1.4c	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Keefe Road. Crosswalk should be as described in the “Implementation” section below. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection.	Low	87
	T1.4d	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Pope Road at its intersection with Great Road.	High	87
	T1.4e	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Concord Road at its intersection with Great Road.	Medium	87

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	T1.4f	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Wetherbee Street at its intersection with Great Road.	Medium	87
	T1.4g	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Keefe Road at its intersection with Great Road.	Low	88
	T1.4h	Install a series of integrated traffic calming measures along the length of Pope Road at key locations, including signage and a raised crosswalk at intersection with Bayberry Road.	Medium	88
	T1.4i	Paint shoulder striping ("Fog lines") along the edges of Pope Road	Medium	88
Transportation & Infrastructure Goal T2: Improve bicycle access and safety in East Acton Village and the surrounding area.				91
Objective 1: Support efforts to develop the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.				91
	T2.1a	Share the results of the <i>EAV Transportation Study</i> with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail team and other citizen groups supporting the Rail Trail.	Medium	93
	T2.1b	Ensure that a Town Bruce Freeman Rail Trail planning committee requires a representative from East Acton, ideally a representative from the EAV volunteer organization or a former member of EAVPC.	High	93
	T2.1c	Construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.	High	93
	T2.1d	Establish, construct, and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green, ensuring that it accommodates the Rail Trail as well as good bicycle access to and from the Village and nearby neighborhoods.	High	93
Objective 2: Provide clear, convenient, and safe bikeways within East Acton Village and connecting East Acton Village with surrounding residential and natural resource areas, and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.				91
	T2.2a *	Provide clear and convenient bicycle connections from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to businesses in the Village area, where appropriate.	Medium	93
	T2.2b	Support the addition of bike lanes along Great Road from the point near Route 27 at which the BFRT crosses Great Road west to Littleton with appropriate signage and pavement markings.	Low	94

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	T2.2c	Add a bike lane or path along the north side of Concord Road from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to the proposed crosswalk across Great Road.	Medium	94
	T2.2d	Add signage on Pope Road reminding motorists and bicyclists that this is a shared road.	Medium	94
	T2.2e	As part of the redesign of the Rt. 2 rotary, support the inclusion of appropriate travel ways for bicycles from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to cross Rt. 2.	High	94
Objective 3: Ensure pedestrian and bicycle compatibility.				91
	T2.3a	Provide separate bike paths and sidewalks throughout EAV Zoning District where there is sufficient space to do so.	Low	95
Objective 4: Encourage bicycle use through incorporation of bicycle facilities.				91
	T2.4a	Provide public bicycle parking facilities in Village areas.	Medium	95
Transportation & Infrastructure Goal T3: Improve vehicular circulation and safety within the village district.				96
Objective 1: Eliminate points of automobile conflict.				96
	T3.1a	Limit street curb cuts for driveways and businesses, making their boundaries clear so pedestrians and drivers know where they are safe and where to be careful, and narrowing the existing wide curb cuts. Where wide driveways remain, consider installing crosswalks.	Medium	100
	T3.1b	Reduce speed limit on Great Road to 35 MPH from the town of Concord border to ¼ mile west of Concord Road.	High	100
	T3.1c	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Concord Road. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection. (See Transportation Goal 1, strategy 4a.)	High	100
	T3.1d	Recommend installation of a traffic light at Great Road and Concord Road. This should be the next traffic light installed on Great Road east of Rt. 27.	Medium	100
	T3.1e	Install a traffic hump and raised crosswalk on Pope Road at the Bayberry Road intersection.	Medium	101
	T3.1f	Require any new development or redevelopment to demonstrate how bicycles will safely travel through the parking lot to bicycle racks.	Medium	101

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	T3.1g	Reconfigure the Keefe Road intersection with Great Road, consolidating the driveways near the intersection and creating a small green space in front of 1 Keefe Road.	Medium	101
	T3.1h	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Keefe Road. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection. (See Transportation Goal 1, strategy 4c.)	Low	101
	T3.1i	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just east of the intersection with Wetherbee Street. (See Transportation Goal 1, Strategy 4b.)	High	102
	T3.1j	Install landscaped transition section on Great Road as part of the redesign of Keefe Road or near the Town of Concord border that provides a “gateway” to EAV and slightly narrows the roadway at the entry point into EAV.	High	102
	T3.1k	Design and install vegetation at the East Acton Village Green and at the east end of the village to give a “Gateway” appearance similar on both ends of the Village.	High	102
	T3.1l	Install EAV gateway signage at the EAV Green and at the beginning of the landscaped transition area near Keefe Road.	High	102
Objective 2: Improve traffic flow and increase safety of turning movements at intersections.				96
	T3.2a	Straighten Concord Road at Great Road intersection with defined left turn lane on Concord Road.	High	102
	T3.2b	Reduce the slope of the intersection of Concord Road at Great Road.	High	103
	T3.2c	Recommend installation of a traffic light at Great Road and Concord Road. This should be the next traffic light installed on Great Road east of Rt. 27.	Medium	103
	T3.2d	Define a left turn lane on Pope Road at its intersection with Great Road.	Medium	103
	T3.2e	Paint shoulder striping (“Fog lines”) along the edges of Pope Road.	Medium	103
Objective 3: Avoid redundancy in parking and excessive pavement by encouraging combined parking facilities between businesses, recreation and entertainment outlets.				96

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	T3.3a *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for EAV to reduce required parking within EAV Zoning District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the parking requirement in the new EAV II district to 70% of that presently required if shared parking is used.	High	103
	T3.3b	Install on-street parking in EAV Zoning District along Great Road.	High	103
	T3.3c	Install on-street parking on the northeast side of Keefe Road.	Medium	103
	T3.3d	Grade and re-gravel the parking area at Ice House Pond to support vehicles parking to use the East Acton Village Green and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.	Medium	104
	T3.3e	Recommend the completion of a parking area on Wetherbee Street on the State Police Equestrian Facility to support traffic for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the conservation land on Wetherbee St.	Low	104
Objective 4: Reduce traffic volume by promoting public transportation to other activity centers such as other village districts and transportation nodes.				96
	T3.4a	Support the implementation of a regional public transportation system as conditions make it feasible.	Low	104
Transportation & Infrastructure Goal T4: Increase accessibility to public facilities and utility services.				105
Objective 1: Encourage environmentally responsible wastewater treatment options.				105
	T4.1a	Plan and implement appropriate shared wastewater systems in East Acton.	High	109
	T4.1b	Support the creation of a town wastewater management body so that the most appropriate wastewater treatment options are available to East Acton Village.	Medium	109
Objective 2: Provide adequate drinking water to East Acton.				106
	T4.2a	Encourage the extension of Acton water to areas in East Acton currently served by Concord water.	Medium	109
Objective 3: Assure that other utilities are adequately provided to East Acton.				108
	T4.3a	Encourage adequate cellular service to East Acton.	Medium	109

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	T4.3b	Encourage high-visibility fireboxes and/or emergency phones throughout the village and at places like the rail trail and the Village Green to ensure public safety.	High	109
	T4.3c	Construct public toilet facilities at rail trail and other appropriate areas as needed.	Low	109
Environment, Open Space & Recreation Goal E1:				
Protect and improve the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water resources in the East Acton Village Area.				113
Objective 1: Encourage development and redevelopment in the East Acton Village area that will not negatively impact EAV water resources, including the use of stormwater management methods and sewage disposal methods that minimize adverse environmental impact.				113
	E1.1a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to reduce parking required within the EAV Village District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the unshared parking required to 70% of current required parking.	High	122
	E1.1b	In EAV, encourage clustering of buildings and tracts of shared open space to reduce total impervious surface.	High	122
	E1.1c	Decrease impervious surfaces by encouraging efficient design of parking spaces.	Medium	122
	E1.1d *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to factor in a “bonus” of 25% for TDRs sold from the parcels along the riparian (streamside) corridor along Great Road to the other side of Great Road.	High	122
	E1.1e	Encourage snow stockpiling on pervious surfaces as far away as possible from waterbodies and wetlands.	Medium	122
	E1.1f *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to factor in a density bonus of .05 FAR for LEED Certification.	Medium	122
	E1.1g	Require the planting of shade trees around the perimeter of parking areas to keep them cool, particularly near wetlands or waterbodies, and discourage the removal of mature trees in these areas.	Medium	123
	E1.1h	Educate the business owners in the EAV area, as well as the public at large, to the importance of maintaining quality waterbodies.	Medium	123
	E1.1i	Establish decentralized wastewater management body.	Medium	123

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
Objective 2: Facilitate, support, and /or maintain awareness of the cleanup of contaminated (21E) sites and other conditions that may pose a threat to ground and surface water in East Acton Village.				113
	E1.2a	Inform developers or redevelopers interested in property in the EAV area of documents indicating the location of any substantial releases of oil or hazardous material and the contaminant plume locations (if any).	Low	123
	E1.2b	Educate Public via articles in the Municipal Quarterly and elsewhere regarding significant releases of oil or hazardous materials in EAV (as well as other areas of Acton)	Low	123
	E1.2c	Support local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) via information sharing and other means in their efforts to maintain awareness of the status of local spills.	Low	123
Objective 3: Support efforts to minimize both point and non-point source pollution, including nonpoint source pollution associated with motor vehicle traffic. Encourage environmentally sound business practices as a means to this end.				113
	E1.3a	Incorporate Massachusetts Stormwater Management Policies in their entirety into the Acton Zoning Bylaw.	High	124
	E1.3b	Design stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) to work effectively in the New England climate.	High	124
	E1.3c *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to permit waiving parking lot landscaping dimensional requirements if landscaped areas are consolidated for the purposes of parking lot runoff bioretention and the minimum dimensions of said areas are 38x12 feet.	High	124
	E1.3d	Implement non-structural stormwater BMPs.	Medium	124
	E1.3e	Implement pet waste clean-up program.	Medium	124
	E1.3f *	Encourage participation in the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System.	Medium	124
	E1.3g *	Amend Town Bylaw to ban non-emergency motorized craft in Ice House Pond.	Medium	124
Environment, Open Space & Recreation Goal E2: Enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the EAV area.				125

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
Objective 1: Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to, between and within recreation and conservation areas, e.g. the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.				125
	E2.1a	Construct or reconstruct sidewalks to improve pedestrian access within, to and from EAV as described in the VHB Transportation Study Pages 49, 63, 66.	High	128
	E2.1b	Raise public awareness of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and EAV Green via signage, letters to newspapers, public meetings, brochures available at kiosk, library and town hall, public meetings and events.	High	128
Objective 2: Provide and encourage recreational opportunities in the EAV Area such as skating, cross-country skiing, hiking, fishing and canoeing.				125
	E2.2a	Ensure that a substantial portion of the Morrison land is left in its natural state to achieve a balance of passive and active recreation on the parcel.	High	128
	E2.2b	Support the development of playing fields on a portion of the Morrison property.	High	128
	E2.2c	Encourage the Open Space and Recreation Committee to have an EAV Resident on the Committee.	High	128
	E2.2d	Establish, construct, and continually enhance the EAV Green.	High	128
Environment, Open Space & Recreation Goal E3: Protect, enhance, and manage open spaces that have value as aesthetic, agricultural, recreational, wetland, flood control and/or wildlife resources.				129
Objective 1: Promote creation and enhancement of open spaces for public use.				129
	E3.1a *	Encourage creation of smaller public open spaces and “pocket parks” within the EAV area in design guidelines.	High	136
	E3.1b	Using the OSRP priority list and other ranking tools, protect appropriate existing open space and create new open space by the “reclamation” of high priority parcels in the greater EAV area, by outright purchase, PDRs, CRs or TDRs.	High	136
Objective 2: Encourage protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat.				129
	E3.2a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to factor in a density bonus of .05 for LEED Certification.	Medium	136

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	E3.2b	Publicize and encourage participation in programs such as the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Habitat Program and the Humane Society of the United States's Urban Wildlife Sanctuary Program.	Medium	136
	E3.2c	Support the establishment of a protected green belt along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond by prioritization and acquisition of land areas.	High	136
Objective 3: Support the establishment of a protected green belt along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond.				129
	E3.3a	Prioritize land areas along Nashoba Brooks and Ice House Pond for protection as open space.	High	136
	E3.3b	Enable protection of high priority parcels by municipal or private agencies by outright purchase or use of TDRs, CRs, or PDRs.	High	136
Objective 4: Promote cleanup of debris from private and public spaces.				129
	E3.4a	Designate a location within East Acton Village for Acton Cleanup Day.	Medium	136
	E3.4b	Encourage cleanup of larger debris in the EAV area by establishing an award and a means of publicizing it.	Medium	137
	E3.4c	In the Municipal Quarterly, The Beacon, the EAV Green kiosk and elsewhere, publicize the detrimental effects of litter and debris on the environment and wildlife.	Medium	137
Objective 5: Raise public awareness of the natural resources in the EAV area and their benefits to the EAV community.				129
	E3.5a	Publish of articles in the <u>Municipal Quarterly</u> .	High	137
	E3.5b	Request feature articles to be published in <u>The Beacon</u> .	Medium	137
	E3.5c	Continue to conduct nature walks with the Town Natural Resources Department Director or other qualified individual on Wetherbee Street Conservation Land, Morrison Land, and in the future if established, the Nashoba Brook Greenway.	Medium	137
	E3.5d	Request publication of articles on the Nashoba Brook/Ice House Pond area in the NGO newsletters and/or websites (Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), Stream Team, etc.).	Medium	137

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE (cont'd)

Goal/ Objective	Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Page
	E3.5e	Post informational pieces about Open space in the EAV area in the EAV Green information kiosk.	Medium	137
	E3.5f	Establish turnout areas along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail so that cyclists may enjoy the views of natural open space.	Medium	138
Environment, Open Space & Recreation Goal E4: Protect and promote air quality in the EAV area.				139
Objective 1: Encourage and support the establishment of green spaces.				139
	E4.1a	Ensure that a portion of the Morrison property remains in its natural state.	Medium	142
	E4.1b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to establish Village landscaping & plaza guidelines.	High	142
	E4.1c *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to allow for density bonus to Encourage participation in LEED Green Building Rating System.	Medium	142
Objective 2: Ensure that existing and future development or redevelopment minimizes harmful and noxious air emissions.				139
	E4.2a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw to allow for density bonus to Encourage participation in LEED Green Building Rating System.	Medium	142
	E4.2b	Encourage control of odors from septic systems.	Low	142
Objective 3: Minimize pollutant effects associated with motor vehicle traffic while ensuring public safety.				139
	E4.3a	Work with MassHighway to improve traffic flow to reduce pollution from idling vehicles.	Medium	142
	E4.3b	Work with Mass Highway to calm traffic to encourage pedestrian and bicycle use.	High	142
	E4.3c	Provide turning lanes on Pope Road and Concord Road as suggested in the Transportation and Infrastructure section of this document.	High	142
	E4.3d	Construct sidewalks according to the recommendations in the Transportation and Infrastructure section of this document	High	142
	E4.3e	Support the implementation of a regional public transportation system as it becomes feasible.	Low	143
	E4.3f	Ensure the completion and integration of the BFRT into EAV.	Medium	143

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF EAST ACTON VILLAGE AND THE PLANNING AREA

Introduction

Historically, the “East Acton area” was known as extending along Great Road from the Concord town line to the intersection with Main Street. The area has a rich history and is one of the oldest sections of Acton, especially around East Acton Village. From the late 1600s, European settlers (from Concord, MA) began to move into East Acton and develop farms. By the 1730s, an iron forge had been established in the village. A couple of East Acton’s residents played prominent roles on that famous day (April 19, 1775) when it was announced that the Regulars were coming. In the late 1700s / early 1800s, several mills and taverns developed in East Acton. By about the mid to late 1800s (to the early 1900s), the East Acton Village area was thriving with taverns/inns, mills, retailers, residents, a post office, its own school, and a railroad station. One of its several taverns, Wetherbee’s Tavern, was known from as far away as Canada. Then in the early 1900s the village area began to change. Around 1900, East Acton’s school had closed because several of Acton’s schools had been consolidated. Many of the mills ended operations. By 1930, most if not all of the taverns and inns had closed. Around the 1930s and 1940s, the East Acton railroad station and post office also disappeared. During this time, the East Acton Village area still had several businesses and some vibrant and unique enterprises such as an ice business and a hoop business. In the mid 1900s, East Acton transformed into primarily a retail, office, and auto-oriented business area.

The next few pages describe the history of the East Acton Village area in more detail.

1500 – 1619

Prior to 1615, there is evidence that some Massachuset Indians were settled in and around present day Acton. Unfortunately, there is not much known about the Indians. Artifacts indicating native settlements were found southeast of Great Hill, in South Acton. There is also evidence that a permanent Indian village existed around Nagog Pond in 1655. The Indians survived on agriculture and subsistence, fishing, hunting, and gathering. The Indians’ trails later became transportation routes for the European settlers. A major trail/travel route followed Nashoba Brook to Nagog Pond. It was called many names (Groton Road, Littleton Road, Route 2, and the Mohawk Trail), but eventually came to be known as Great Road (Route 2A).

1620 - 1674

Most of Acton, including all of East Acton and East Acton Village, was part of Concord in the 1600s. It was part of a land grant called the “New Grants of Concord” or Concord Villlage. The grant gave the people of Concord full title to the lands. As part of the process, agreements were made with the Indians to purchase the land. European

settlers from Concord began to move into Acton. Records from the early settlers indicated that the Indians were to be reimbursed for shad, salmon, alewife, beaver, and land.

In 1669, Captain Thomas Wheeler leased 260 acres west of Nashoba Brook from Concord and kept cattle for their townspeople on it. Wheeler also built a house. The lease expired in 1690. He was one of the first European settlers in Acton. Unfortunately, all the buildings from the early settlements and farms have disappeared.

1675 – 1774

In the last few years of the 1600s, it was decided to divide and sell the land in Concord Village to the individual proprietors. The first division of Concord Village began in the 1730s. In 1735, Acton became a separate town. Around this time, the area around Nashoba Brook started to see more activity. Approximately 30 acres on both sides of Nashoba Brook with two acres of adjoining meadow was granted in 1728 to John Barker by the Concord Proprietors to set up a forge. About five years later, he added about 20 acres, so together the land would've extended on both sides of Great Road (with a depth of about 600 feet) from Pope Road to about 750 feet north of the Concord and Great Roads intersection. The forge was located at or near the dam around the present location of 127 Concord Road. John Barker Jr.'s house stood just northwest of the Concord and Great Roads intersection. Acton's first cemetery, Woodlawn, was established in 1737 fairly nearby along Concord Road. And in 1755, Mark White Jr.'s received a license to establish a tavern on Great Road (274 Great Road). Additional farms developed, especially near the brook, and farming became the primary activity in East Acton. Mills started to develop too.

1775 - 1829

Joseph Robbins, a captain in the militia who lived on Concord Road (just east of Woodlawn cemetery), was instrumental in the formation of Massachusetts and the country. Furthermore, it was Captain Robbins who that was brought the first alarm in Acton that "the Regulars are coming" on April 19, 1775. Captain Robbins rushed outside and fired three shots to signal to the Acton minutemen and militiamen to report to their captains' homes. It was Captain Robbin's 13 year old son, John, who then mounted a horse and rode off to notify Captain Isaac Davis and Captain Simon Hunt who would be leading the Faulkner company that day. Part of the minutemen's and militiamen's line of march to Concord followed Strawberry Hill Road. There is a stone marker on Concord Road highlighting Captain Robbins and the first alarm given in Acton.

In 1788, John Barker conveyed 12 acres of his land to Captain Joseph Robbins. Captain Robbins, and later his son and grandson, operated the sawmill near the dam on the west bank of Nashoba Brook. Not too long after John Barker sold 12 acres to Robbins, he sold more of his land, and gave the remaining land to his son Samuel who ran a blacksmith shop on the property from approximately 1794 to 1812.

In the 1700s and 1800s, schools were located in different sections of Acton. The first school serving the East Acton area (and North Acton area) was built around 1796 and was located at approximately ___ Great Road. It is believed that the schoolhouse at one time had 80 pupils.

East Acton contains one of the Acton's four "lottery houses" (144 Great Road). The houses were called lottery houses because the money used to build them came from a winning ticket purchased by Acton resident Abel Conant and his neighbors from Harvard University Lotteries in the 1790s. The lottery house at 144 Great Road was John Robbins' house, the same John Robbins who as a boy, alerted the captains of the Regulars coming on April 19, 1775. The house was built around 1799.

In the late 1700s, "Groton Road" (which is known today as "Great Road") was a major route west for mail, coach traffic, and cattle drovers. It was part of the Boston to Groton Stage, inaugurated in 1793 and contained many taverns and inns. In 1794, Daniel White, tavern owner Mark White's Jr.'s son, opened a tavern/inn at what is now Nagog Woods (across from 514 Great Road). Its original name was Pond Tavern, but it later became known as the Lake Nagog Inn. It appears that the White family business shifted down Great Road. Lake Nagog Inn was very successful and was a summer retreat for Bostonians for many years. In 1803, Edward Wetherbee opened a tavern/inn and stagecoach stop (65 Great Road). The tavern's ownership switched hands a few times in the mid-late 1800s, but lasted until 1889. According to a publication from 1890 called *History of Middlesex County* (Hurd), Wetherbee's Tavern was known to the Canada line as a "temporary Mecca of drovers and drivers of baggage-wagons for more than half a century preceding the advent of railroads." In 1828, White's Tavern closed permanently (it had been operating since 1756, but between 1773 and 1790 it was unclear whether it was being used as a tavern/inn), but James Hapgood's Tavern opened (162 Great Road). The White's Tavern building is no longer at 274 Great Road, but the Hapgood's Tavern building still exists at 162 Great Road. It was said (but never confirmed) that Hapgood's Tavern and Wetherbee's Tavern were stops on the Underground Railroad.

1830 - 1869

In 1840, Captain Joseph Robbins' grandson, Elbridge, conveyed 11 acres to Daniel Wetherbee with the rights to take water from the sawmill pond to run a gristmill (at the present location of 94 Great Road). The gristmill was built that year along with a canal whose water fed the mill's machinery. In 1850, Daniel Wetherbee opened a general store at the location of 65 Great Road. Around 1881, Daniel Wetherbee also purchased the sawmill and two acres from Robbins. It was around this time when the East Acton Village area became known as Wetherbee's Mills.

In the 1840s, East Acton and North Acton received their own schoolhouses. The East Acton school house was built out of brick, could hold up to 50 pupils, and was located near the Strawberry Hill Road / Great Road intersection. That schoolhouse was then

followed by a one room wooden schoolhouse built in 1870 near present day ___ Great Road.

1870 - 1914

In 1871, the Lowell and Framingham Railroad (later known as the “Framingham and Lowell” railroad) was established from Concord along Nashoba Brook to North Acton in 1871. State Reformatory nearby in West Concord was also constructed around this time. An East Acton railroad station was built and the railroad was open to passenger and freight traffic. The original railroad station was destroyed by fire and a second station was built nearby (at the northwest corner of the present day Concord and Great Roads intersection and the site of the EAV Green). As a result, of the railroad and Reformatory, a small village, along with a post office developed in East Acton. Residents originally wanted the post office to be called Elmwood, but the name conflicted with an existing village. “Ellsworth” was then chosen as a compromise, and in 1873, the Ellsworth post office was established and the area started to be called Ellsworth Village. Later, more confusion resulted because there was an Ellsworth in Massachusetts and an Ellsworth in Maine, so in 1885 the village area name was changed to East Acton.

During this time, wholesale and retail dealers sold items in East Acton Village such as flour, grain, oil, various kinds of meal, coffee and tea, spices, shorts, boots and shoes, crockery ware, farming tools, plaster, etc. A spur line from the railroad was built to Wetherbee’s grist mill. When this occurred, Wetherbee enlarged the mill buildings. A grist mill and wheel, plaster mill, saw mill, and store house were all in operation in the late 1800s. The saw mill disappeared by 1900 (after almost 100 years in business). Around 1902, the grist mill operation ended and the building was used to grind talc until 1910. The various Wetherbee properties switched hands numerous times until around 1919. The East Acton schoolhouse also closed around this time (1897). According to the *Acton Business Directory* from 1902, however, East Acton was still an active place and contained many other commercial and industrial enterprises. Some of the businesses and businessmen located in East Acton in 1902 included a blacksmith, cattle dealer, an express company, fish seller, ice dealer (hence the name, “Ice House Pond”), two justices of the peace, a realtor, market gardeners, milk dealers, a painter, and a wheelwright.

1915 - 1949

In the 1900s, regional autohighways started to be constructed along the Colonial roads. Great Road was one of these autohighways and it was called Route 2 and the Mohawk Trail. There were still multiple taverns and inns along the route. For example, the site of Wetherbee’s Tavern (65 Great Road) which closed in 1889, reopened as the Red Robbin Inn for some time after 1917. Lake Nagog Inn was a popular stop or destination along the route, but after 135 years in business, it closed its doors and was later demolished in 1970 to make way for a condominium development (Beth Circle).

On November 26, 1938, the East Acton railroad station closed. During its existence, the stations and the two tracks saw much rail traffic. The stations served the Framingham and Lowell railroad and the Nashua, Acton and Boston railroad on the same track in East Acton (the second railroad serving from North Acton to Middlesex Junction – near the Concord reformatory). The second track (closer to Great Road) came after the first track and ran from Concord Junction to Lowell. One of the tracks also served the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. The railroad made for three booming businesses in North and East Acton: quarried stone, cucumbers, and hoops. The Brooks family on the corner of Strawberry Hill and Great Roads produced thousands of hoops. Hoops are strips of birch used to make citrus fruit crates. Tons of hoops were shipped to Florida. There was also another interesting and/or unique business operation in the 1900s in East Acton. In 1920, Nelson H. Tenney built a hydro-electric plant on the former Robbins/Wetherbee sawmill site in an attempt to use the water power to provide Acton with inexpensive electricity. Tenney's hydro-electric plant was converted into a residence in 1945. During the same time as the plant, a more familiar name and business to present day Actonians came into being. Bursaw Oil Company obtained the former Wetherbee gristmill site and began operations.

1950 +

In 1950, the new Route 2 was constructed. Great Road then became Route 2A. East Acton started to become less of a tourist area and place of manufacturing and evolved into primarily a retail area.

Several of East Acton's historically and/or architecturally significant structures stand today. The list below provides the names, locations, and a brief description of the historically and/or architecturally significant structures and sites in the East Acton Village area.

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The East Acton Village (EAV) Planning Area

The East Acton Village Planning Committee (EAVPC) focused primarily on the East Acton Village (EAV) zoning district, but also took into consideration and studied the East Acton Village planning area (EAV planning area). Map 1 shows the location of the EAV Zoning District and the EAV planning area.

The EAV Zoning District is located along both sides of Great Road (Route 2A/119) from the Concord town line to just beyond Concord Road. It is just over one half mile long and comprises about 26 acres. The EAV Zoning District does not include any apartment or condominium complexes. The apartments and condominiums in the area are zoned Residence A (R-A), but were still reviewed and considered as part of the planning process. Most zoning changes recommended later in this plan are for just the EAV Zoning District.

The EAV planning area includes the EAV Zoning District and surrounding neighborhoods. Its boundaries are Route 2 to the south, Hosmer Street to the west, Strawberry Hill Road to the north, and the Concord town line to the east. The area contains approximately 1,200 acres or 1.875 square miles.

Topography and Soils

The EAV planning area consists of rolling hills with lower areas near Nashoba Brook. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) map on page ___ shows the general contours and some existing structures in the EAV planning area.

Soils in the EAV planning area vary greatly. In East Acton Village, the primary soils are Merrimac-Urban Land Complex, Windsor Loamy Sand, and Charlton-Hollis-Rock Outcrop Complex (see Map 3). For an explanation of these soils, see the Middlesex County Massachusetts Interim Soil Survey Report in Appendix ___.

Groundwater

Acton residents rely on ground water for their drinking water. In order to protect Acton's drinking water supply, the Town has established through the Zoning Bylaw the Groundwater Protection District overlay. The Groundwater Protection District is divided into four zones, based on their proximity to present and future drinking water supply wells. Zone 1 is closest to the wells and most restrictive. Zone 4 is the furthest away from the wells and least restrictive. East Acton Village is located mainly in Groundwater Protection District Zone 3. The north end of the village (tax map G4, parcels 50, 28-1, and 28) is located in Groundwater Protection District Zone 4. Certain uses and activities are prohibited in Groundwater Protection District Zone 3 (in addition to the land uses prohibited in the Table of Principal Uses of the Zoning Bylaw) such as solid waste

disposal sites; underground storage of hazardous materials; chemical, bacteriological, biological, or radiological laboratories; and some subsurface disposal of wastewater effluent. For a list of the other prohibited uses and activities, please see Acton Zoning Bylaw Table 4.3.7.2.

Surface Water

Nashoba Brook runs along the southwest side of Great Road through EAV. Ice House Pond is also located in the EAV planning area at the intersection of Concord and Great Roads. Map 1 on page 34 shows Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond. Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond provide recreational opportunities for people and habitat for wildlife, but also limit what owners can do with their property. For more information on Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond, please refer to Goal 1 of Chapter 6: Environment, Open Space and Recreation.

Drainage and Stormwater Runoff

Map 4 shows all the drainage basins in the EAV planning area. “NB” on the map stands for Nashoba Brook. All of the drainage basins in the EAV planning area except for two ultimately drain into Nashoba Brook. NB-4E and NB-4F basins drain into Spencer Brook in Concord. East Acton Village (EAV) Zoning District is primarily located in the NB-1A drainage basin. Only two properties in EAV Zoning District (tax map G4, parcels 28 and 28-1 – in the northeast corner of the village) are located in a different basin: NB-1B. Some areas of East Acton Village occasionally have problems with stormwater runoff. There have been reports of water pooling and high water levels, especially in the spring.

Wetlands and Floodplain

Significant portions of village properties on the southwest side of Great Road are within the boundaries of delineated wetlands and floodplain along Nashoba Brook. There are also significant wetlands behind structures that line Esterbrook Road and some large areas along Pope Road. In East Acton Village, the wetlands buffer area, based on the Town of Acton Wetlands Bylaw, in some instances extends as far as Great Road (see Map 5).

Vernal Pools

According to the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program website, “vernal pools are unique wildlife habitats best known for the amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed...The Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program “certifies” the occurrence of vernal pools based on documentation of the pool's use by one or more groups of species that rely on vernal pools...Official certification provides a vernal pool, and up to 100 feet

beyond its boundary in some cases, certain protection under several state and federal laws.”¹

There is one certified vernal pool within the EAV planning area. It is located on the Wetherbee Conservation Land (see “Conservation Land” below). For more information regarding this vernal pool or others in Acton, contact the Acton Natural Resources Department.

Wildlife

The Ice House Pond basin is a corridor for white-tailed deer, coyote, red fox and fisher. More permanent residents include Canada geese, wood ducks, mallards, muskrat and beaver. River otters, opossum, turkeys, minks, and several species of turtle, snake, frog, and fish also live in and around the pond. Over one hundred bird species have been seen from the Concord Road dam in the spring. South of Ice House Pond, toward Route 2, nesting bluebirds can be found in the appropriate season.

Endangered species

There are no known State-listed endangered species in the EAV planning area. A State-listed threatened species has been identified in the EAV planning area on the Wetherbee Conservation Land (see “Conservation Land” below): the Vesper sparrow. In addition, two or three breeding pairs of Savannah sparrows, which are unusual to see, have been observed on the Wetherbee Conservation Land for at least the last ten years. Savannah sparrows are not listed as endangered or threatened by the State, but their numbers have been dwindling over the last several years. For more information about these species, contact the Acton Natural Resources Department.

Scenic Roads

According to the Bylaws of the Town of Acton, Chapter J – Scenic Road Bylaw , the following roads in the EAV planning area have been designated by the Town of Acton as “Scenic Roads”:

- Concord Road
- Esterbrook Road
- Pope Road
- Proctor Street
- Spring Hill Road (only partially located in the EAV planning area)
- Strawberry Hill Road

¹ Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, “Vernal Pools,” 11/15/02, <<http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhosp/nhvernal.htm>>, (16 December 2003)

Any proposed work to be done to or along a Scenic Road that involves the cutting or removal of trees, or the destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof, would first need written approval from the Planning Board (after a public hearing).

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

There are three land classification/tax programs in Massachusetts that involve the preservation and enhancement of certain lands: Massachusetts General Laws 61, 61A, and 61B. Chapter 61 encourages the preservation and enhancement of forest land. Chapter 61A encourages the preservation of valuable farmland and promotes active agricultural and horticultural land use. Chapter 61B encourages the preservation of valuable open space and promotes recreational land uses. These three programs offer tax benefits to property owners willing to make a long term commitment in one of these areas. In exchange for these benefits, the Town is given the right to recover some of the tax benefits when the land is removed from the program, and is given an option to purchase the property should the land be sold or used for other purposes. There are certain criteria that must be met and adhered to in order to qualify for each program.

There is one property in Chapter 61A and four properties in Chapter 61 in the EAV planning area. The Chapter 61A property is located at 145 Strawberry Hill Road near the Concord town line (tax map F5, parcel 12-6). The four properties in Chapter 61 are: 82 Strawberry Hill Road (tax map E5, parcel 15-1), between 54 and 68 Esterbrook Road (tax map F5, parcel 10-1), behind 35 Wetherbee Street (tax map G4, parcel 174), and 35 Wetherbee Street (tax map G4, parcel 189).

For more information about these programs or classifications, please contact the Acton Assessor's Office.

Conservation land

There are two pieces of Town conservation land within the EAV planning area: the Wetherbee Conservation Land and the Stoneymeade Conservation Land. The Wetherbee Conservation Land is 72 acres in size and is located on the northwest corner of Wetherbee Street and Route 2. The property includes active farm land, a small meadow, marshy habitat, a little stream, a collection-pool, and woods. The Stoneymeade Conservation Land encompasses 44.5 acres of fields, small streams, and woods. It is located off Stoneymeade Way which is off of Pope Road. The land is home to many species of birds and borders conservation land in the town of Concord.

For more information about these and other Acton conservation lands, please go to the Acton Conservation Commission's Land Stewardship Committee website "www.town.acton.ma.us/LSCOM" or contact the Acton Natural Resources Department.

Zoning and Land Uses

The EAV Zoning District, like other Acton village zoning districts, encourages a mix of residential and non-residential land uses. Map 1 shows the location of the EAV Zoning District and surrounding zoning districts. Different types of smaller scale residential uses are encouraged in the village zoning district. Businesses that promote face to face interaction between the customer and the business, and businesses that discourage automobile use, are also desirable. The Zoning Bylaw also limits business sizes in the village. These help facilitate walking, reduce reliance on driving and traffic, and allow more businesses in the village.

East Acton Village currently has several restaurants (take out and sit down), offices (insurance, realty, etc.), service businesses (salon, landscape contractor, medical/dental, electronics, home improvement, etc.), automobile businesses (gasoline, repair, detailing, car wash), arts and recreation places, and a variety of retail outlets (clothing, convenience goods, liquor, furniture, appliances, etc.). For a list of all uses in EAV and the surrounding area, please refer to the "East Acton Village Area Commercial Buildout" chart in Appendix ____.

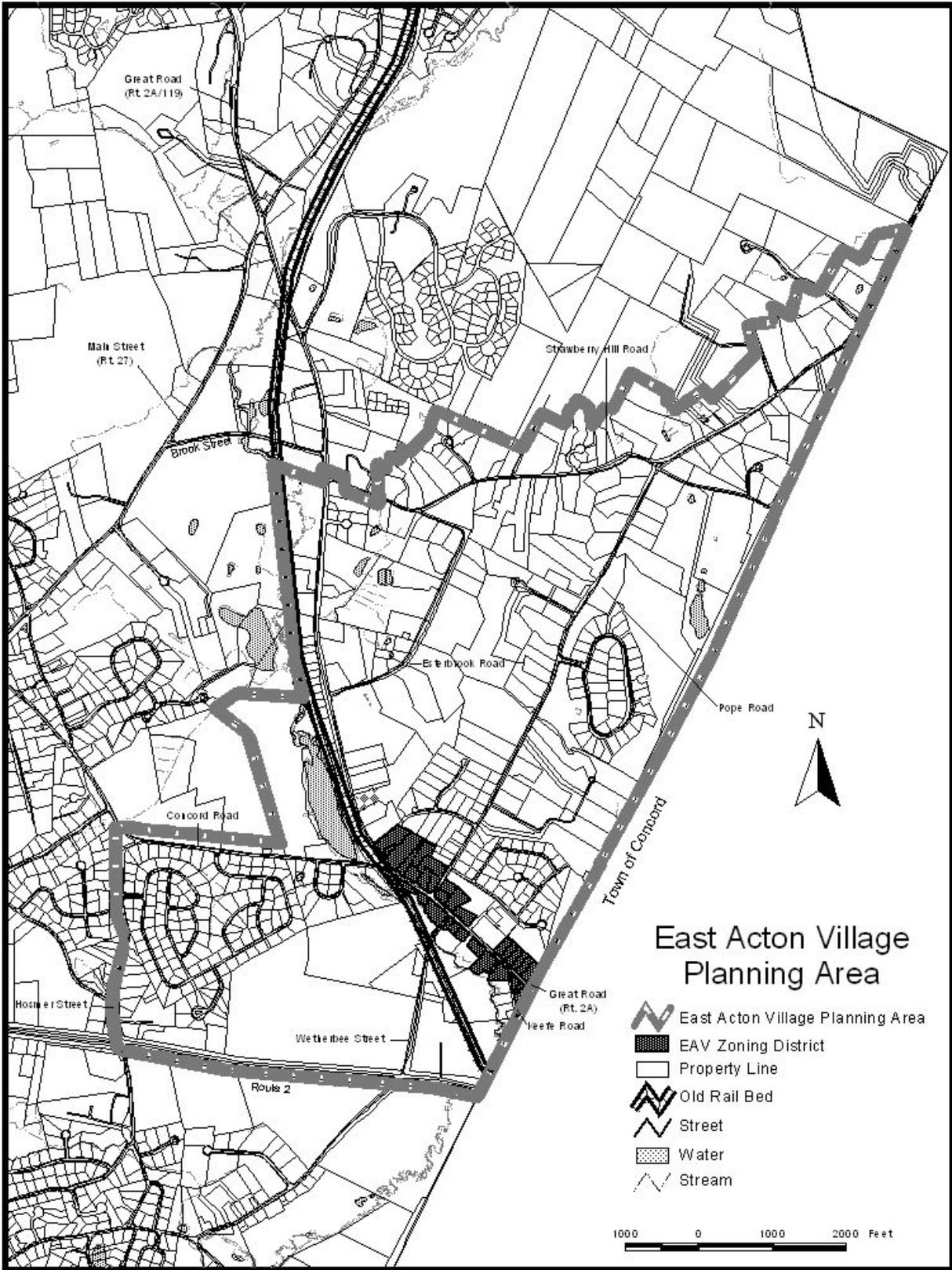
Buildout

In 2001/2002, the Acton Planning Department completed a buildout analysis of the EAV Zoning District (the village) and the surrounding zoning districts: SM (Small Manufacturing), LB (Limited Business), ARC (Agriculture, Recreation, Conservation), RA (Residence A), R2 (Residence 2), R8/4 (Residence 8/4), and R8 (Residence 8). The buildout analysis looked at the developable site area and existing floor areas of structures to determine the existing floor area ratio for each property. The EAV Zoning District currently has a maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.2 (up to 0.4 FAR if the transfer of development rights program (TDR) is utilized). Determining the FAR of each property and the area as a whole indicates how much more development can occur under current zoning. There are other limitations to buildout such as parking regulations, health requirements, federal, state, and local wetlands and rivers laws, the market, etc., that affect the development potential of property. Additionally, development is up to individual property owners. For these reasons, the maximum allowable FAR under the Zoning Bylaw may not be achieved. However, it is important to analyze the maximum development potential for planning purposes.

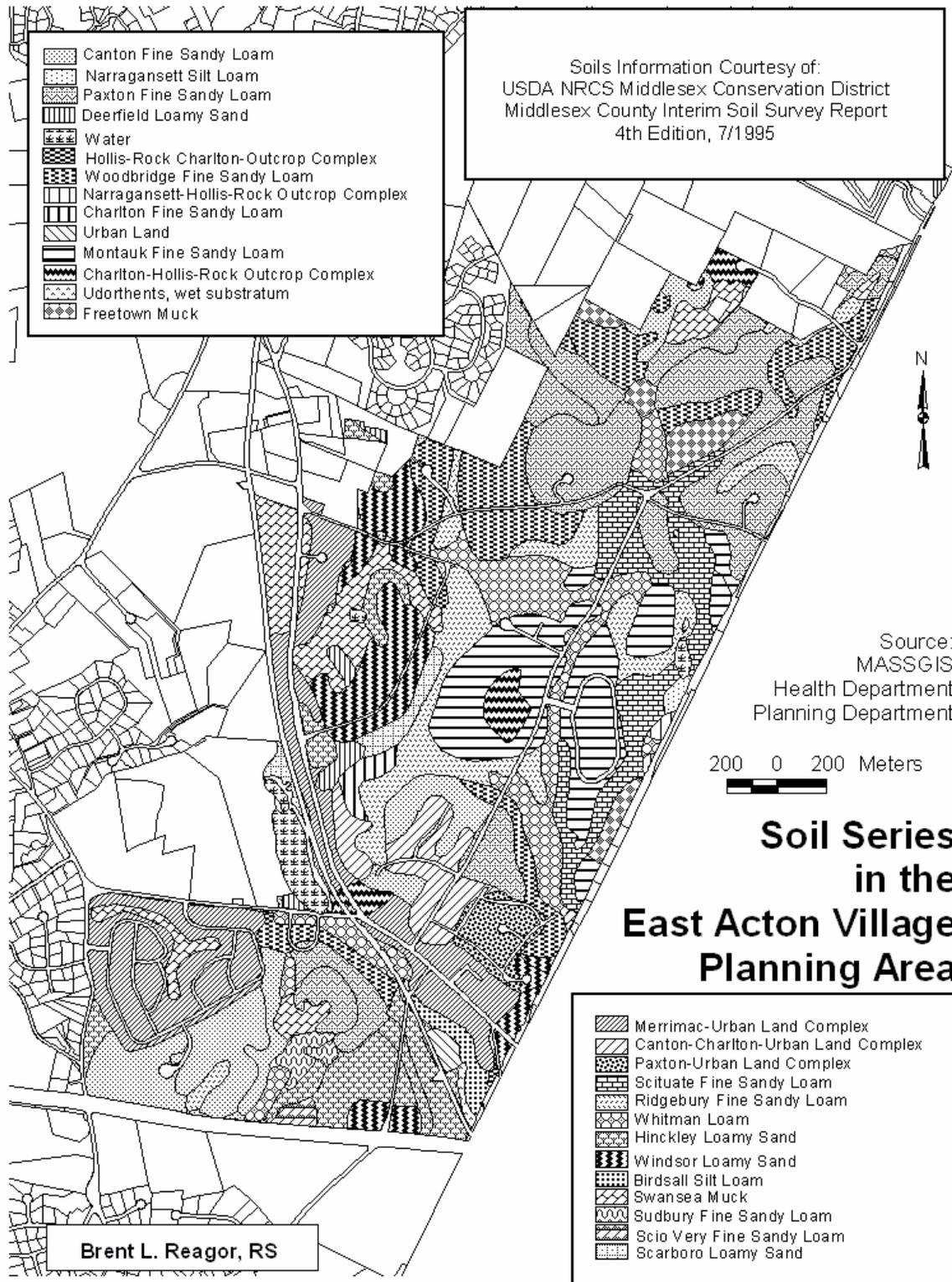
Based on the buildout analysis, as of November 2001, the EAV Zoning District was approximately 80% built out. Under current zoning, an additional 58,000 square feet of floor area could be built in the EAV Zoning District. The LB and SM zoning districts in the EAV area have very little opportunity for further development based on current zoning. Only about a maximum of 12,000 square feet of floor area remains to be built in the LB zoning district and 6,100 square feet maximum in the SM zoning district. As for residential zoning districts surrounding EAV, the R8/4 zoning district can accommodate the most additional housing under current zoning: approximately 30 residential units.

For more detailed information about buildout in the EAV Zoning District and surrounding area, please see the “East Acton Village Area Commercial Buildout” chart and the “East Acton Village Area Residential Buildout chart” and associated notes located in Appendix

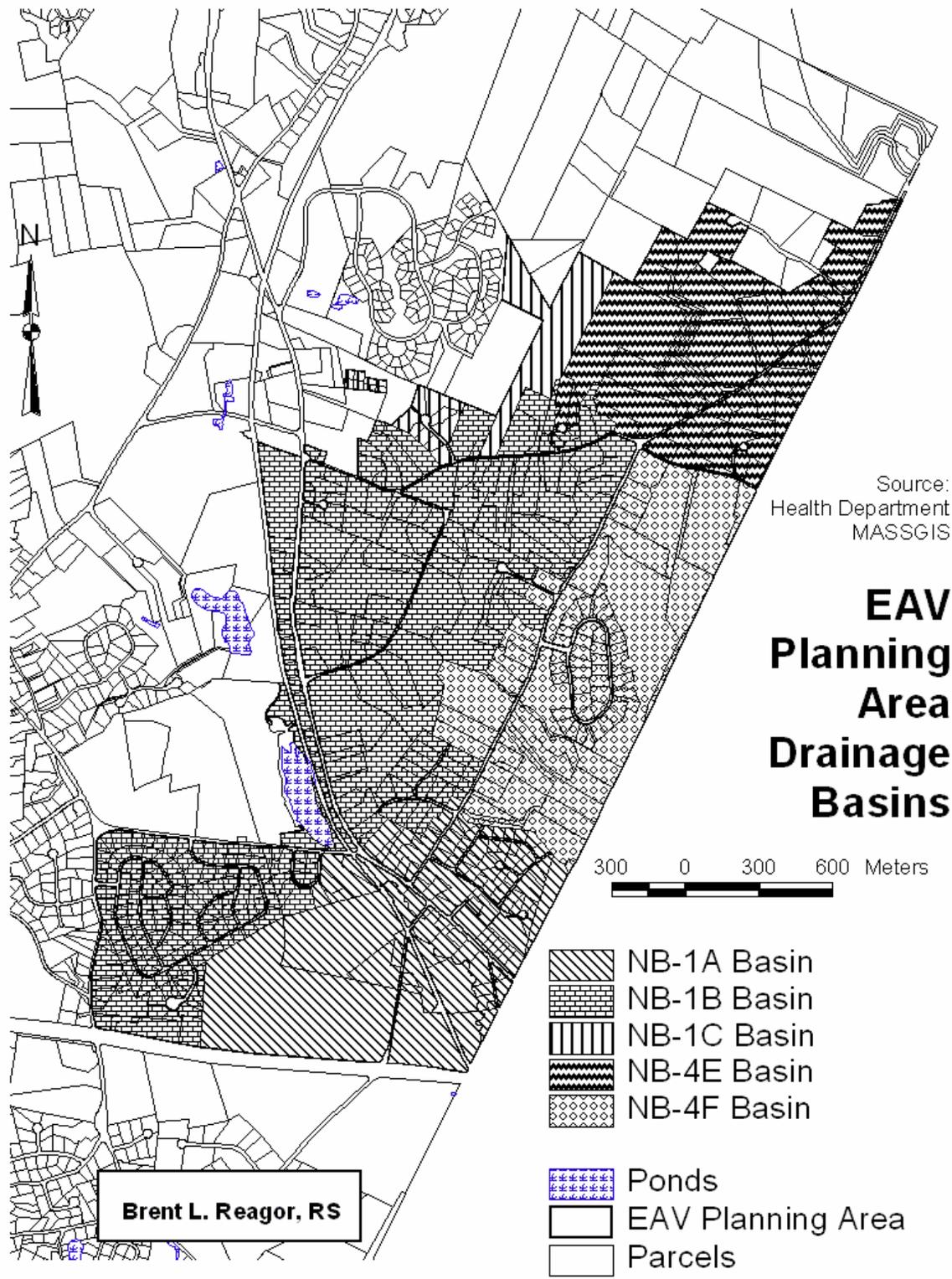
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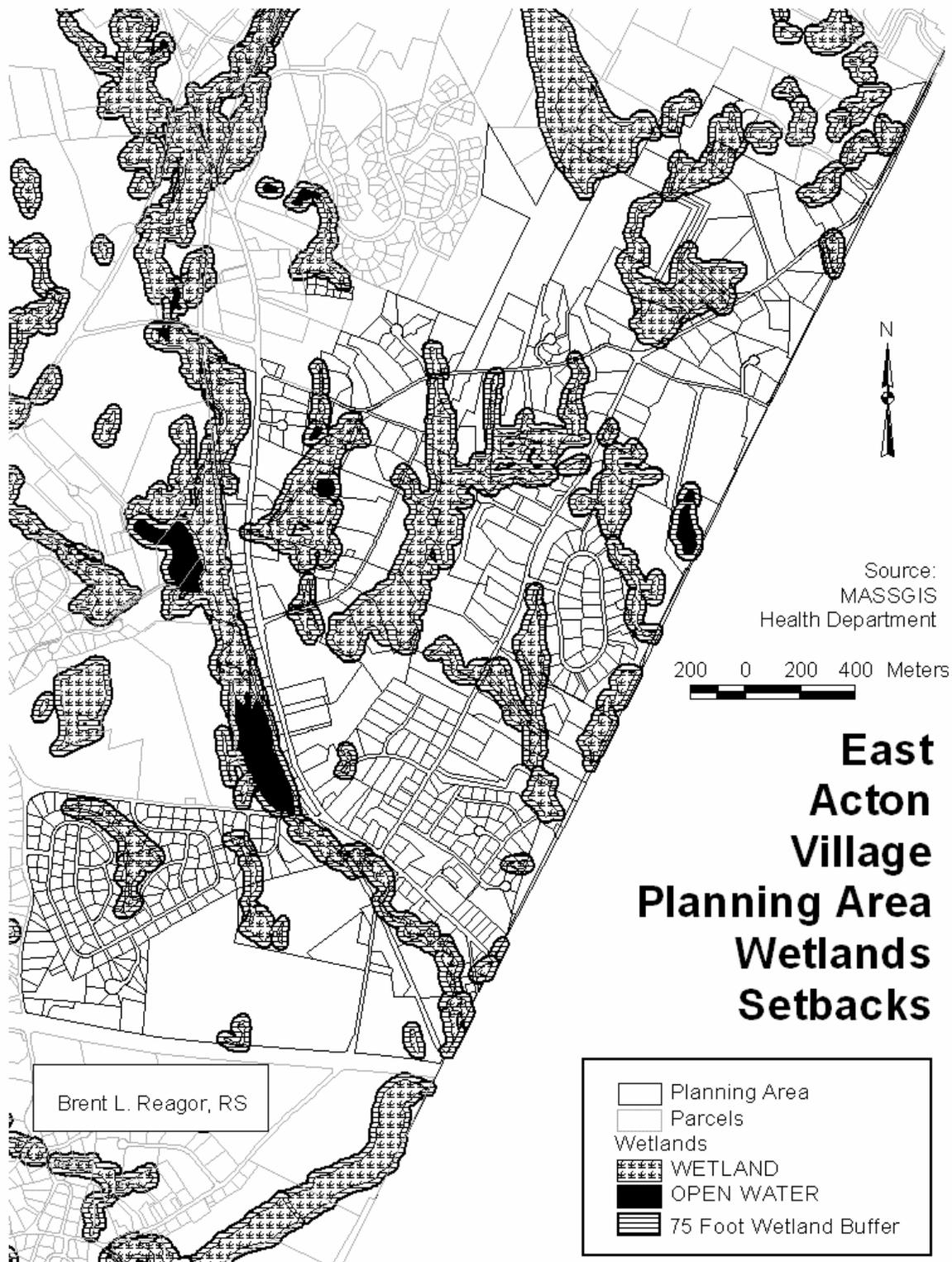
Map 1.



Map 3.



Map 4.



Map 5.

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING EAST ACTON VILLAGE (EAV)

Why there is an East Acton Village (EAV) Plan

In 1990, the Town of Acton voted to adopt the Goals and Objectives of the Acton Master Plan. In 1998, the Acton Master Plan Update was completed which reaffirmed the Acton Master Plan Goals and Objectives. One of the objectives of the Acton Master Plan and Master Plan Update was to develop plans for each of Acton's villages: West Acton Village (WAV), South Acton Village (SAV), East Acton Village (EAV), and North Acton Village (NAV). Village plans have been created for West Acton Village and South Acton Village, and a plan has been made for Kelley's Corner (one of Acton's business centers). East Acton Village was next.

In fall 2000, the Acton Board of Selectmen appointed a group of citizen volunteers to create a plan for East Acton Village (EAV). The group was called the East Acton Village Planning Committee (EAVPC) and it consisted of residents, property and business owners, and representatives from the Acton Planning Board and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The EAVPC was assisted by the Town's Planning Department staff. The EAVPC met at least twice a month since fall 2000 to work on the EAV Plan. The Committee was also divided into subcommittees: Education, EAV Green, Environment, Housing and Village Character, Survey, and Transportation and Infrastructure. The subcommittees were created to research the details of the topics they represented, and then presented their findings and draft recommendations to the committee as a whole. Subcommittees met almost as often as the whole committee in the last year of the planning process. The EAVPC's work was guided by this research and also by feedback they received at four additional public input meetings and from two surveys they conducted (see Appendix ___ for public input meeting notes and Appendix ___ for survey questions and results).

How the EAV Plan Relates to Other Acton Plans

The Acton Master Plan and Master Plan Update provide a vision for the entire town and recommendations / guidance as to how the town as a whole has been planned and should grow. Each village plan and business center plan, including the EAV Plan, is an addendum to and consistent with the Master Plan and Master Plan Update. Village and business center plans are created to supply additional, more detailed information and guidance related to that section of town. All plans should be updated when parts of the plan become outdated or the direction of the Town has changed.

The Planning Process

The EAV planning process included the following steps:

- I. Data Collection
 - A. Reviewed history

- B. Examined existing conditions
 - 1. topography
 - 2. natural resources
 - 3. land uses
 - 4. residences
 - 5. businesses
 - 6. recreation
 - 7. transportation
 - 8. public services and infrastructure
- C. Sought Public Input
 - 1. Conducted surveys (see below)
 - a. residents
 - b. Town Meeting attendees
 - c. property owners
 - d. business owners
 - 2. Held a visioning workshop (public input meeting)
- D. Hired a consultant to do an EAV Transportation Study
 - 1. examined existing transportation conditions (traffic)
 - 2. projected future transportation conditions and needs
 - 3. asked for public input (public input meeting)
 - 4. provided transportation recommendations for EAV
- E. Analyzed future conditions
 - 1. completed a build-out analysis
 - 2. determined future transportation needs and traffic
 - 3. reviewed land use trends
 - 4. investigated future infrastructure needs
- II. Developed goals for East Acton Village
- III. Created objectives for East Acton Village based on the goals
- IV. Asked for public input (public input meeting)
- V. Produced strategies (specific action items) to implement the goals and objectives
- VI. Asked for public input (public input meeting)
- VII. Wrote the EAV Plan text
- VIII. Finalized the draft EAV Plan
- IX. Presented the draft EAV Plan to the Acton Planning Board for adoption
- X. Presented the final EAV Plan to the Acton Board of Selectmen
- XI. Presented zoning changes recommended in the EAV Plan to Town Meeting for approval

Surveys and Public Input Meetings

East Acton Village Residential and Town Meeting Survey

A residential survey was mailed to 753 residences in the East Acton area in March/April 2001. Approximately 450 were also distributed at Annual Town Meeting of April 2001. The survey asked citizens for feedback on a number of issues related to the future development and vision for the East Acton Village (EAV) Zoning District. The goals of the survey were to:

- Assess the current uses of/satisfaction with East Acton Village;
- Raise awareness of potential changes;
- Obtain feedback on a vision for East Acton Village;
- Identify potential zoning and other changes needed to enhance East Acton Village; and
- Quantify and document needs and concerns.

234 surveys (64% of total) were completed and returned from the mailing. 131 surveys (36% of total) were completed by Town Meeting attendees. 365 surveys total were completed (a response rate of 30%).

Town Meeting attendees who already completed and returned a survey through the March/April 2001 mailing were asked not to complete another survey at Town Meeting.

East Acton Village Property Owner/Business Owner Survey

Likewise, a survey was mailed to 332 business owners and property owners in East Acton in August 2001. The survey asked business and property owners for feedback on a number of issues related to the future development and vision for the EAV Zoning District. The goals of the survey were identical to those of the Residential and Town Meeting survey.

46 surveys were completed and returned from the business and property owners (a response rate of 14%). The majority of Property/Business Owner survey respondents to the survey indicated that they live outside East Acton.

People who were business owners and property owners, people who were property owners and EAV homeowners, and people who owned multiple businesses or multiple properties, were only sent one survey (not multiple surveys).

The answers to the business and property owner survey, along with answers to the residential survey (March/April 2001), helped the EAVPC prepare recommendations and planning goals for future development in East Acton

Village. Many of the same questions were asked on both the business and property owner survey and the residential survey.

Summary of the Surveys' Findings

The respondents to both the Residential/Town Meeting and Property/Business Owners surveys agreed in many areas where the surveys overlapped. Both groups were interested in improving pedestrian access and general traffic safety in the EAV. Both supported the idea of improved aesthetics in the district. Increased open space and restaurants were popular for future uses in each of the surveys. Likewise, a majority of each of the surveys' respondents supported a maximum business size of 10,000 square feet or less for new businesses. Finally, the surveys seemed to indicate mutual support for the concept of the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT).

Public Input Meetings

Public meeting attendees' ideas and concerns were similar to those expressed by survey respondents. To review what was presented and discussed at the public input meetings, see Appendix ____.

The EAV Plan Format

East Acton's history and existing conditions, along with results from the surveys and public input meetings, provided the foundation from which the following chapters were developed.

The next three chapters provide goals, objectives, and strategies for village character and housing; transportation and infrastructure; and environment, open space and recreation, in the EAV area. Each chapter presents the "goals" and "objectives", the background / "issues" related to the goals and objectives, then the committee's "recommendations" for how to address the goals and objectives. The recommendations are formatted as "strategies" or action items, and are provided in tables. Each table lists specifically every action that should be taken to achieve each goal and objective. If strategies require further explanation, they are described in an "implementation" section after the table.

The last chapter of the EAV Plan describes other projects that are ongoing in the EAV planning area.

Strategies Tables Key

"Strategy Number" = Strategies have been numbered so they can be linked to plan goals and objectives. An example of the numbering format used is: "V1.2a*".

"V" represents it is a Village Character and Housing Goal

“T” would represent a Transportation and Infrastructure Goal
“E” would represent an Environment, Open Space, & Recreation Goal)

“1” represents the Village Character and Housing goal number

“2” represents the related objective number

“a” represents the related strategy letter

“*” represents a regulation or bylaw change

“Strategy” = The action to be taken to achieve the related goal and objective.

“Appendix Reference” = If the strategy involves a regulation or bylaw change (i.e. a Zoning Bylaw amendment), the legal language for the regulation change is located in the appendix section listed.

“Priority” = The EAVPC has prioritized each strategy with “high” being most important and “low” being the least important to the committee.

“Approval Required?” = If approval is needed to implement the strategy, the approval agency or board has been listed.

“BOS” represents the Board of Selectmen

“PB” represents the Planning Board

“TM” represents Town Meeting

“Amount of Effort/Time” = The EAVPC has rated the effort involved (“minimal”, “medium”, “major”) and how much time it would take to implement each strategy.

In some cases, the implementation of a strategy is dependent on the future actions of individual property owners or organizations, or should occur more than once, so there can be no firm amount of time to implement or completion date. In such cases, the “amount of time” and “desired completion date” are listed as “ongoing.”

“Desired Completion Date” = Indicates when the strategy should be completed.

“Person(s) Responsible” = The individuals, organizations, or agencies responsible for implementing the strategy.

**SIDEWALKS AND CROSSWALKS MAP
(to be included)**

**TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR) SENDING DISTRICTS
MAP
(to be included)**

**GRAPHICS TO DEMONSTRATE SPECIAL PROVISIONS/DESIGN
GUIDELINES
(to be included)**

CHAPTER 4: VILLAGE CHARACTER AND HOUSING

Population centers have been a focus of development from pre-history until around 1950 when, in the U.S., affluence and the automobile led to suburban development. The integration of land uses with stores, work and residences within walking distance or clustered around transportation nodes was no longer necessary. This has come at some social cost in terms of changing the character of communities and forcing people into automobiles to take care of basic convenience needs. Population centers are either vibrant or stagnant. It is the goal of this committee to establish a framework that will allow East Acton Village to be vibrant for the benefit of those living in the surrounding areas.

Results from surveys taken two years ago of Acton residents indicate that to attract people to East Acton Village there would need to be an improvement in “aesthetics” (the look of the area), an increase in the landscaping, and additional open space and parks. East Acton Village now consists of a busy vehicular artery with strip malls on each side. In order to create the atmosphere of an attractive and active village, which is the goal, incentives are required so that when redevelopment occurs, it will be compatible with the village environment envisioned by residents.

An important first step in attaining these goals is to make East Acton Village pedestrian friendly. Crossing Great Road is dangerous now and accommodations must be made for crossing the highway for pedestrians and bicyclists. Sidewalks and walkways connecting village destinations must be improved to allow the greatest possible number of surrounding residents to come without cars, and to be able to shop and return in the safest manner possible. Once in the village, people need to have spaces to sit and relax; enjoy food and beverages; watch other people; meet friends, neighbors, and colleagues; and find respite from traffic and work in open, green spaces.

A critical mass is required. In order to encourage pedestrians to come, a variety of businesses is necessary to meet their needs. At the same time, businesses require a sufficient customer base to remain viable. Businesses need signs that allow them to adequately inform passing motorists and pedestrians of their presence. They also need enough people living and working in the area to provide a steady stream of clients and customers. Also, by providing unique events, businesses can draw outside of the commuting and residential area to increase business opportunities. The village needs to provide space for these activities.

Acton is in line for continuing development as businesses and residents move out of the Greater Boston area and westward towards Route 495. In order to preserve what little remaining open, green space is still available in East Acton, it must be maintained wherever possible. As one enters East Acton on Route 2A from the rotary there is an area of land off Wetherbee Street that provides a rural backdrop for this community. This property has tree-covered hills and open space within walking distance of the

village center and is surrounded by town conservation land with a potential rail trail. While property development is up to the landowner, the community would like to see as much of the open space surrounding EAV preserved as possible. Coming from the west along Route 2A into East Acton Village, the EAV Planning Committee has recommended the establishment of a village green near the location of the old train depot and Ice House Pond. This area, on the corner of Great Road and Concord Road, provides another opportunity to preserve open, green space for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

East Acton contains many historical structures dating from the turn of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The Nashoba Tavern at the corner of Wetherbee Street and Route 2A was built at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the Wetherbee Tavern (currently Phillips Glass et.al.) dates from the early nineteenth century. Bursaw Gas and Oil was first built in the 1920's. Many of the single-family homes along Route 2A are from these same time periods. These buildings are an important part of the fabric of East Acton Village and should be preserved or redeveloped in such a way that the basic architecture remains. New construction or reconstruction in the area could also be designed to more appropriately reflect the architecture of this time period.

Goal V1: Reinforce community by creating a sustainable, memorable, shared experience connecting the full spectrum of the local population.

This goal can be elaborated by further defining the terms used:

- **Community:** home, work, commerce, cultural and social fabric, support systems, and other elements of the human environment, which are created and used by the local population. Enhances citizenship, achievement, ethics, and public safety and mitigates alienation and intolerance.
- **Sustainable:** capable of inexhaustibly (socially, financially, environmentally, etc.) furthering all aspects of this goal while adapting to the changing needs and makeup of this community.
- **Memorable:** a unique place arising from a unique combination of circumstances, (i.e., the cultural, social, commercial, and other entities) and relationships, and their supporting environment that have accrued over time in response to the needs of this community.
- **Shared:** communally, rather than individually, experienced. Public occurrences in public places where the full spectrum of this local populace and visitors can interact
- **Connecting the full spectrum:** accessible such that all participants - children, elderly, handicapped, singles, families, lower income, etc. - can independently take part in their daily activities and make the resulting social and business connections.
- **Local population:** Only a village responds most intimately and holistically to these needs of the nearest workers and residents. From the full spectrum of the local working and living population come the constituents of this community.

A successful center provides for the daily needs of its primary constituents, the population that pursues its daily activities in and around the East Acton Village area. These activities may include residing, working, studying, worshiping, governing, relaxing and playing, buying things, sending packages, using services, socializing, eating out, etc. For a village-sized center these are, to a large degree, satisfied by smaller shops and businesses primarily serving the local community. The above characteristics (see bullet points) are the timeless qualities of a successful village-sized center. This goal seeks to revive these factors through attracting needed providers and resources and helping them to prosper, and through strengthening positive qualities in the built environment.

East Acton Village (EAV) can be significantly more successful in fulfilling the role of a village serving the local community. Few of the characteristics bulleted above presently exist in any planned way in EAV. The existing design and location of buildings, structures, roads, etc. (the “built environment”) in EAV do not effectively support and respond to the needs of the local population or create a community feeling. In order to

implement this vision, the EAV Planning Committee recommends the following objectives and strategies.

Objective 1: Enhance diversity of uses and users in a socially and economically sustainable manner.

Objective 2: Integrate commercial, recreational, civic life around a community focal point.

Objective 3: Enhance and promote a sense of “connectedness” between indoors and outdoors (i.e., the structure and its lot); among multiple structures /lots within the village; and between the village center and its surroundings.

Issues

All parcels in East Acton Village are developed to some degree at this time. Therefore, the process to create smart growth and to recreate village character will take time. Recommendations within this plan are long-term but contain incentives to try to expedite the changes.

While most of the village is currently surrounded by residential area, there are two areas that are now zoned Limited Business and Small Manufacturing. In order to protect the village from encroachment by non-village type business, the plan includes rezoning of these two areas to more compatible business uses.

Recommendations

Zoning and business incentives, design guidelines, and other public sector initiatives are the most effective ways to encourage the appropriate development of the built environment and the cultural, social, and commercial relationships that would achieve this goal. The strategies proposed are all meant to achieve a “distinct village” concept for East Acton Village. The vision is of a vibrant business area with sufficient population to support the local businesses and business diversity to support the needs of the local residents. Included should be areas for townspeople to gather to meet, eat, rest and shop. Bringing town services (such as a mini-postal center, voter registration options, tax bill payment) as well as businesses to the village adds diversity. Social events, such as music festivals, food fairs, fund-raisers, attract more than local residents and bring potential customers to the area. With nearby water and trails available, advertising these opportunities will also bring customers as well as town residents to the East Acton Village area.

The EAV Planning Committee recommends amending the Table of Principal Uses to provide for additional job creating office businesses in and around EAV. Small educational/instructional services, commercial entertainment, and small scientific enterprises (requiring special permits) would enhance job potential. Nursing homes, trade shops, gas stations are business types that no longer provide the type of community business or jobs conducive to a pedestrian scale village. Business sizes will be limited under the allowed Maximum Floor Area chart in the Zoning Bylaw to

discourage the large, regional businesses that create traffic problems and change the ambiance of the village.

Villages require a level of residences near or around them in order to become and remain viable. Acton is concerned about the lack of affordable housing in the community. By providing for additional affordable dwelling units within or near the village the housing issues can be addressed and it allows for more shoppers to keep the area vibrant during non-business hours. While the thrust of the intent is to make the village a vibrant business center, a variety of residential units is also needed. The proximity of four large apartment complexes currently provides a minimum population density.

The importance of preserving the historic components of the village area is paramount. The structures built during the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century will be used as the basis for the redevelopment process. These structures and the East Acton Village Green will become integrated parts of the recreated village. Also, these buildings set off East Acton Village from the current strip mall/mini-mall businesses and apartment complexes that have come to represent the rest of the Route 2A corridor. Sidewalks, interconnecting walkways and paths leading to and from surrounding residential areas, walk up food windows, plazas with fountains and compact parks will add to the character of EAV. They will also encourage people to leave their cars, making the area more pedestrian friendly and hopefully reducing traffic. Compact, historic, with business variety, easy access for customers and green space is all part of the vision for East Acton Village.

The factors that will achieve these goals will be implemented with the following strategies.

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V1

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V1.1a*	Amend Table of Principal Uses in Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow appropriately scaled recreational, educational, commercial entertainment, scientific and additional business types and eliminate the use of gas stations, nursing homes and trade shops.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Moderate, 1 year	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V1.1b	Establish an informal organization (EAVO) consisting of local residents, business owners, and property owners to monitor and promote the Goals and Objectives of the EAV Plan.	High			Moderate, 2 months	Spring 2004	EAVPC, Local Businesses, Property Owners
V1.1c	Encourage campaigns to increase recognition, patronage, and community involvement of village businesses.	Low			Moderate, 1 year, ongoing	Ongoing	EAVO
V1.1d	Produce an EAV business directory.	Low			Moderate, 1 year	2006	EAVO
V1.1e	Establish cultural and public service presence in the village.	Medium		BOS	Major, 1 year	2006, ongoing	Town, EAVO
V1.2a*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to include "Special Provisions for East Acton Village" design guidelines to help developers understand the vision for East Acton Village.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, BOS, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V1.2b	Establish, construct and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green.	High	EAV Green Concept Plan	BOS	Major, 2 years	2004, ongoing	Highway, Municipal Properties, volunteers

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V1.2c	Construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT).	High	BFRT feasibility study	BOS	Major, 5 years	2008	Natural Resources, BFRT Committee
V1.2d*	Amend Dimensional Requirements for the EAV Zoning District to decrease minimum set backs.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, BOS, TM	Minor, 1 week	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V1.3a*	Amend Dimensional Requirements for the EAV Zoning District to decrease minimum set backs.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, BOS, TM	Minor, 1 week	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V1.3b	Augment existing sidewalk network.	Medium	Transportation and Infrastructure section	BOS	Major, 2-3 years	Ongoing	Highway, MassHighway, Property Owners
V1.3c*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to include "Special Provisions for East Acton Village" design guidelines to help developers understand the vision for East Acton Village.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, BOS, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB

Implementation

Create an organization of volunteers made up of residents, business owners, property owners and other interested parties which would act in a supporting role for the business and residential community. It would be called the East Acton Village Organization (EAVO). Some of the tasks recommended include:

- Establish a campaign to increase recognition, patronage, and community involvement of village businesses through incentives such as preferred town vendor classification, and/or public relations (marketing, community events, sponsorship of sports or other community activities, etc.).
- Create a business directory with descriptions of types of services, products, et al to be displayed at EAV businesses, distributed to residents, put in the local newspapers, etc.
- Establish cultural and public service presence in the village through, for some examples, local municipal office hours, installation of satellite library branches, or relocation of town/public facilities (e.g., performance space, branch library, Town Clerk's desk, mailboxes, meeting/function rooms, elected official's office), possibly ranging from mobile carts/booths to small leased or donated indoor or outdoor spaces or larger.
- Conduct a "Learn about your Town" event each fall in the village with each Town department and committee represented to talk to residents.
- Create foot/bike paths to and between surrounding neighborhoods and to close and useful destinations such as the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) and Brookside Mall.
- Explore public-private funding opportunities when necessary.
- Coordinate with other town bodies to encourage the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's)
- Periodically review the TDR process and make recommendations for change to guarantee that TDR's are having the desired effect

Using A Pattern Language (Oxford University Press, 1977) by Alexander, Ishikawa, Silverstein, et al as the basis for making East Acton Village more successful in fulfilling the role of village center for its constituents, strategies were chosen from the several patterns proposed by these authors. The ones delineated in objectives two and three deal with those issues thought to be most important as they relate to East Acton Village. Objective 2 relates to activity focal points in order to integrate recreational and other activities within the village. Objective 3 solutions come from the suggestion by the authors to enhance the connection between and among focal points with public corridors. "The Special Provisions Design Guidelines" for EAV integrate these solutions.

Goal V2: Preserve East Acton Village's historic, cultural and recreational resources.

- Objective 1:** Research and locate historical buildings and structures in order to preserve them.
- Objective 2:** Encourage the preservation, maintenance, and restoration of historically or architecturally significant structures and places.
- Objective 3:** Support cultural and recreational events, places and opportunities.
- Objective 4:** Encourage restoration/preservation of existing common spaces and public lands for shared community experiences.

Issues

Preservation and fostering that which sets the East Acton Village area apart from the more “strip like” development along the rest of Route 2A in Acton is a primary issue. East Acton Village contains some structures and places that reflect the history and development of the village. These structures and places add character to the village, but they are threatened because Route 2A is a major commuter route and there is pressure to develop “strip like” retail centers along the roadway.

A village is more than a physical setting; it is a community of people, businesses and visitors. Areas are required for getting people together for community based activities. These areas can be formal or informal / public or private. Activities may range from passive recreation (spaces to sit and read) to formal events (seasonal fair or musicians). They can be publicly or privately owned. According to the surveys done in 2001, more of these areas are needed in East Acton Village.

Recommendations

Before preservation can occur the Town and townspeople need to know which buildings and structures are historical. While the Town has added a number of East Acton Village buildings to its Cultural Resource List, there is still a lot of information that is not readily available on the structures in this area. The state historical organization provides forms to help communities determine the historical significance of structures within its borders. The Acton Historical Commission and proposed EAV Organization are urged to take the time to research the East Acton Village area to determine significant structures, landmarks, physical sites et al. Once this information is available, then preserving these building, landmarks, sites et al will be easier and noting their history will be helpful to all Acton residents.

Once this information is available preservation incentives can be created to encourage property owners to maintain and preserve these structures and features. The new Community Preservation Act could provide funding for some of these projects if owners apply and are accepted for funding by the Community Preservation Committee.

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V2

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V2.1a	Using the appropriate form from the MA Historical Commission, list those buildings, unique physical sites, landmarks, archeological sites, etc that distinguishes East Acton Village.	High		Acton Historical Commission	Major, 2-4 years	2007	Acton Historical Commission
V2.1b	Complete MA Historical Commission's forms for individual buildings within the East Acton Village area.	High		Acton Historical Commission	Major, 4 years	2007	EAVO, Acton Historical Commission
V2.2a*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to encourage the preservation of EAV structures on the Town Cultural Resource List.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Moderate, 1 year	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V2.2b*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw to provide FAR, parking, or signage incentives for the EAV Zoning District for the renovation of historic structures which reestablish approximate original facades to Acton Historical Commission standards. New structures with complementary architecture could be constructed on the same site through increased FAR where appropriate from the density options menu.	Medium	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, BOS, TM and later PB, BOS and Acton Historical Commission	Moderate, 2 months and ongoing	Spring 2004, ongoing	EAVPC, PB, BOS, Property Owners, Developers
V2.2c	Compile a written history of East Acton Village.	Medium			Moderate, 1 year	2008	EAVO, Acton Historical Commission

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V2 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V2.3a	Establish an informal organization (EAVO) consisting of local residents, business owners, and property owners to monitor and promote the Goals and Objectives of the EAV Plan.	High			Moderate, 2 months	Spring 2004	EAVPC, Local Businesses, Property Owners
V2.4a*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to encourage the development and/or preservation of common spaces by providing incentives for them.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, TM	Moderate, 1 year	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V2.4b	Construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT).	High	BFRT Plan	BOS	Major, 2 years	2006	Natural Resources, BFRT Committee, State
V2.4c	Establish, construct and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green.	High	EAV Green Concept Plan	BOS	Major, 2 years	2004, ongoing	Highway, Municipal Properties, volunteers

Implementation

Encourage preservation

There are many buildings within East Acton Village District that are on the Town's "Cultural Resource List." These are the homes that should be preserved and, as others are added, they should be preserved as well. Working with the Acton Historical Commission to complete the area forms and the individual building forms will bring attention to the number and quality of historical sites in East Acton Village. This may also result in an expanded Cultural Resource List and encourage current owners to restore their properties. In addition, it could encourage developers of larger sites or assemblages to preserve "historic" buildings.

Providing incentives to maintain and/or improve historical sites and structures would help with preservation. Redevelopment of lots where historic structures are preserved would be rewarded by an additional 0.10 FAR. For those owners who destroy historic structures, development on those lots would be restricted to a maximum of 0.20 FAR.

Once this work is done the volunteer committee from East Acton Village should put together a history of the area both to encourage preservation and to encourage maintenance of the village characteristics found in the history.

Historical area survey

Completing this inventory will allow the community to pinpoint more specifically what should be maintained or improved in the village so that the most important physical aspects are addressed. This includes not only the buildings but unique historical sites (the location of the train depot and other outbuildings within the East Acton Village Green; the site of the old ice house; the railroad tracks from the two original lines that ran through the area; gristmill wheels from the mills; etc) and physical examples such as the canal that used to run the mills.

Individual building surveys

The cultural history represented by a typical village is worthy of protection. Historic and architectural resources are often the best evidence of that heritage. In addition to providing cultural and educational benefits, these assets can also enhance property values, increase local pride and bolster economic development. Without the knowledge of which houses are worthy of protection, there is the chance that some very important architectural resources will be lost.

Once the area survey is complete or as part of that process, each structure in the Village should have a form with information as to construction date, design style, any history that's known, outbuildings (barns, carriage houses), etc. This is

important in making sure that owners are aware of the history of the building so that they can take special care of those characteristic features.

Informal organization

Town Hall or the Chamber of Commerce can provide a contact list of local businesses. The EAVO must include local residents as well as business owners as they both have a vested interest in the success of the village.

Incentives for common space

Public outdoor courtyards or gathering areas can be costly to build and maintain. Areas such as the newly redesigned Colonial Spirits Plaza should be encouraged by providing incentives for their development.

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) and East Acton Village Green

The committee charged with implementing the rail trail will consider many options for funding. For the development of the East Acton Village Green, the EAVPC is seeking funding from the Community Preservation Act and the local businesses.

Goal V3: Create a defining identity for East Acton Village that enhances the appearance and better distinguishes East Acton Village from the rest of the Great Road corridor.

- Objective 1:** Establish a system of consistent design elements to delineate the village area and enhance village aesthetics.
- Objective 2:** Ensure that land uses and densities allowed, along with the dimensional requirements for buildings, parking lots, and other structures, create a village ambiance and promote the village as an activity center.
- Objective 3:** Encourage private or volunteer efforts to improve community identification, to create a sense of place and pride.
- Objective 4:** Promote a community focus and awareness within and around the village.
- Objective 5:** Encourage the on-going maintenance and repair of buildings, structures, and properties within the village.
- Objective 6:** Encourage façade and signage improvements.

Issues

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns Route 2A (Great Road in Acton) and controls the speed limit and all improvements on or along the roadway that Acton, as a community, might wish to make (e.g., traffic management controls, driveway curb cuts, etc.). Traffic on Great Road is a major impediment cutting off pedestrian/ bicyclist access to the village shops across the road. The speed limit (40 mph) is too high for safe passage from one side to the other and prohibits (according to general state guidelines) the use of crosswalks.

The Nashoba Brook flows through the Village on the southern side of Great Road. Environmental concerns and regulations limit the development or redevelopment of lots on that side of the roadway and makes compliance with set back, parking and waste water system design requirements difficult.

During the late 1800s and up to the 1930's and 1940's East Acton Village was a center of commerce with a tavern, restaurant, ice cutting business and mills along or near Nashoba Brook. Many of these destinations and trade businesses that were the core of the village are now gone. With the increase of traffic along Great Road over the years and with the change in business types, the village has lost its identity and also has been divided by traffic. Businesses tend to cater more toward drive-by traffic rather than serve as a destination for residents and visitors. One goal for the East Acton Village Plan is to recreate that sense of village.

Zoning and business incentives with design and historical preservation guidelines are the most feasible and effective ways to encourage business and residential owners to

make the necessary changes to achieve the goal of village identity. By integrating a variety of land uses and open space within the Village District, a defining character can be preserved that separates East Acton Village from the rest of the Great Road corridor. By giving incentives to village businesses to expand, a wider variety of shops can be promoted, more pedestrian friendly amenities can be added, and, as a result, a more attractive place to live and do business will be created.

The current clutter of signs along Great Road is very distracting; it does not enhance the sense of village; nor is it easy for customers or potential customers to locate businesses. In order to facilitate the village ambiance, some uniformity is recommended while preserving each business's right for a unique identification. Since it is not the purview of the EAV Planning Committee to change the sign bylaws, the Committee urges the Town to establish a process to review and amend the signage requirements.

Other ideas considered

While structured parking is currently allowed in East Acton Village, it would not help create a sense of village. The zoning bylaw should be amended to disallow structured parking within the EAV Zoning District.

On-street parking is recommended in the future and discussed in the Transportation and Infrastructure section.

Recommendations

Creating a compact, viable village center from strip mall development is a challenging task. The objectives and strategies recommended are the incentives and tools that are necessary to encourage current and future property owners to make the changes necessary to create the desired ambiance sought.

The recommendations for property zoning changes are based on the need to create a compact village center and to maintain open space within the village environment. While the properties on Wetherbee Street beyond the railroad bed were discussed, there was no consensus on recommendations that were appropriate to change the current zoning. The goal of the Master Plan to concentrate business development in village centers might be undermined were the lots on Wetherbee rezoned to include retail and/or business at this time. This issue was discussed at length with some recommending a change along the Wetherbee Street saving the rear parcels for residential or open space. Rezoning to allow for only office park and senior housing did not achieve consensus. Some felt that, while it was a good idea, it might be too limited in scope and might be a detriment to the neighborhood and the conservation land abutting it along Route 2. The view of the heavily treed hill on the property on the westerly side of Wetherbee Street creates a wonderful, rural backdrop for EAV and should be maintained.

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V3

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V3.1a*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to include “Special Provisions for East Acton Village” design guidelines to help developers understand the vision for East Acton Village.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.1b*	Amend the “Maximum Floor Area of Businesses and Industries” Zoning Bylaw table for the EAV Zoning District to provide for a greater variety of business types and sizes.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2a	Require landscaping for parking that will enhance the village environment.	High	See the Environment Section	BOS, TM	Major, 1 year, then ongoing	2005	Owners, Developers
V3.2b*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw to reduce the minimum open space requirement in the EAV Zoning District from 35% to 25%.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2c	Increase tree plantings and other landscaping, encourage grounds maintenance, and encourage the development of green spaces throughout the village.	High		BOS, TM	Major, 2 years	2006	Property Owners, Developers, Highway, Tree Warden
V3.2d	Encourage underground utility lines.	Medium		Property Owners, Local Utilities, MassHighway	Major, 5-10 years	2014	Highway, MassHighway, Property Owners, Local Utilities, MassHighway

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V3.2e	Install village entry signs at key points in East Acton Village along Great Road (Route 2A): near Keefe Road and at the EAV Green.	High		BOS, Highway	Moderate, 1 year	2004, 2007	Municipal Prop, Highway, Boy Scouts, Property Owners
V3.2f*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to create a new EAV II Zoning District.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2g*	Rezone tax map G5, parcel 69 (8 Wetherbee Street) to EAV.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2h*	Rezone tax map G4, parcel 212 at corner of Concord Road and Great Road from LB to ARC.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2i*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to disallow structured parking in EAV District.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2j*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce required parking within the EAV Village District to 70% of that presently required.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V3.2k*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce parking required within the EAV Village District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the parking requirement in the new EAV II district to 70% of that presently required if shared parking is used.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V3.3a	Encourage, through the volunteer organization (EAVO), activity in the Village through both public programs and private efforts (i.e., book fairs, concerts, sidewalk sales, exhibits and artists' corners).	Medium		By individual event group organizers	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	EAVO
V3.3b	Facilitate the joint effort of Town personnel and community volunteers to beautify East Acton Village.	High		BOS	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	EAVO
V3.4a	Encourage, through the volunteer organization (EAVO), activity in the Village through both public programs and private efforts (i.e., book fairs, concerts, sidewalk sales, exhibits and artists' corners).	Medium		By individual event group organizers	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	EAVO
V3.4b	Facilitate the joint effort of Town personnel and community volunteers to beautify East Acton Village.	High		BOS	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	EAVO
V3.4c	Establish, construct and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green.	Medium	EAV Green Concept Plan	BOS,	Major, 2 years	2004, ongoing	Municipal Properties, Highway, volunteers
V3.4d	Working with the Acton Historical Commission, establish the use of plaques that name buildings, famous sites or discuss historic events within the Village.	High		Acton Historical Commission, BOS	Major, 2 years	2004, ongoing	EAVO, Acton Historical Commission

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V3.5a	Establish an informal organization (EAVO) consisting of local residents, business owners, and property owners to monitor and promote the Goals and Objectives of the EAV Plan.	High			Moderate, 2 months	Spring 2004	EAVPC, Local Businesses, Property Owners
V3.5b	Make the design guidelines to East Acton Village in the Zoning Bylaw available to property owners to help them understand the vision and guide them when maintaining/developing their properties.	High	Special Provisions for EAV		Minor, 1 month	2005	EAVO, Planning
V3.6a*	Amend sign bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow for exterior sign improvements and to provide a unifying feature to the village district.		Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Moderate, 1 year	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB

Implementation

Design guidelines

Incorporating guidelines into the Zoning Bylaw will codify the vision for the East Acton Village zoning district.

Business Sizes

To encourage a variety of businesses, and that are small enough to walk to and between, the East Acton Village Planning Committee recommends amending some of the maximum floor area limits currently in the Zoning Bylaw for EAV zoned businesses. The changes are highlighted below. Striked-through words are deletions and underlined words are additions.

Principal Use	Square Footage Allowed in the EAV Zoning District
<u>Commercial Education or Instruction</u>	<u>5,000</u>
Retail Store	5,000 <u>7,500</u>
Office	5,000 <u>7,500</u>
Health Care Facility	5,000
Restaurant	5,000
Lodge or Club	NR <u>5,000</u>
Veterinary Care	NR <u>5,000</u>
Services	5,000
Repair Shop, Technical Shop, Studio	5,000
Building Trade Shop	5,000
Commercial Recreation	NR <u>7,500</u>
Commercial Entertainment	NR <u>5,000</u>
Manufacturing	NR (no regulation – the use is not permitted)

Village aesthetics

Entrance signs: These would be simple ways to create identifiable boundaries for East Acton Village and to make it clear to motorists that they are entering a demarcated district. The use of entrance signs on both the east and west ends of the district will make it clear that this is a unique place on Great Road.

Historic structures

Small, historical buildings don't necessarily fit the modern business need. Therefore, the zoning bylaw land use section should be changed to allow for more business types within EAV that would fit into and onto the smaller buildings and properties. The intention is not to change all single-family

buildings into business property but to encourage the continued use of some of the current single-family homes to remain as such in order to populate the village.

Parking

The sight of continuous parking areas is aesthetically unpleasing and does not create the effect of a village center. Requiring parking behind or beside structures, brings the focus back to the people and businesses, increasing a sense of community. Where this is not possible, property owners are to be encouraged to mix trees, shrubs and other landscaping greenery beside and within the parking area. In order to encourage current or future property owners to join in creating this atmosphere, incentives such as reduced setback requirements and allowing shared parking will/should be provided and the use of design guidelines to encourage bicycle parking. If and when it becomes feasible, on-street parking should be allowed and encouraged.

Lighting

Lighting in the EAV Zoning District will be appropriate to village scale and character and abide by the new Acton Outdoor Lighting Bylaw in order to provide safety as well as a village unifying element. The EAVPC is also recommending gooseneck lighting for signs in the village (see strategy 6a). Lighting is also discussed in the Transportation and Infrastructure section so please refer to that section for further details.

Power lines

Overhead utility lines, not common during the earlier heyday of East Acton Village, detract from the landscaping and open areas of EAV. Placing utility lines underground is not a simple task. It would require working with all the utility companies (electric, telephone and cable), the State (if the lines are along Great Road), and the individual landowners during redevelopment to place utility lines underground. The appropriate Town Board would need to take the lead on this.

Scenic views and landscaping

Green spaces and proper landscaping will set the East Acton Village District apart from the rest of Great Road. The East Acton Village Green and Nashoba Brook enhance the beauty and attractiveness of East Acton Village to local residents and village patrons. Building on the "Acton Looks Good" campaign, local volunteers should work with the Acton Highway Department or Municipal Properties Department to maintain the EAV Green (mowing and pruning), the Concord Road island and other more

“islands of beauty” that may be created. The focus is on the quality of the open space in the village, not just quantity (also see Chapter 6, Goals 1 and 3).

Signage

The EAV Planning Committee recommends that the Town review the current Sign section of the Zoning Bylaw in order to update and improve the regulations to aid local businesses and patrons. The following changes to the Sign section of the Zoning Bylaw for East Acton Village are recommended:

1. Allow the use of full cut-off, gooseneck lamps for all external lighting of signs.
2. Allow for a maximum of three external signs per business from the following menu provided that there are no more than two signs on one side of the business:
 - a. One sign across the front entrance to the business (limitations as provided in the current Zoning Bylaw).
 - b. One awning sign either in the front or rear of the business that is lit externally with full cut-off lights or gooseneck lights if it meets the village ambiance criteria.
 - c. One projecting sign (limitations as provided in the current Zoning Bylaw).
 - d. One smaller wall sign (for secondary access to the business).
 - e. One free-standing sign (limitations as provided in the current Zoning Bylaw).
3. In addition to the current allowed material for signs in the village, add the use of wood or “wood appearance” signs. [As technology makes materials that are safer and from recycled materials, the EAV Planning Committee would like the Town to consider allowing these in signs as well.]

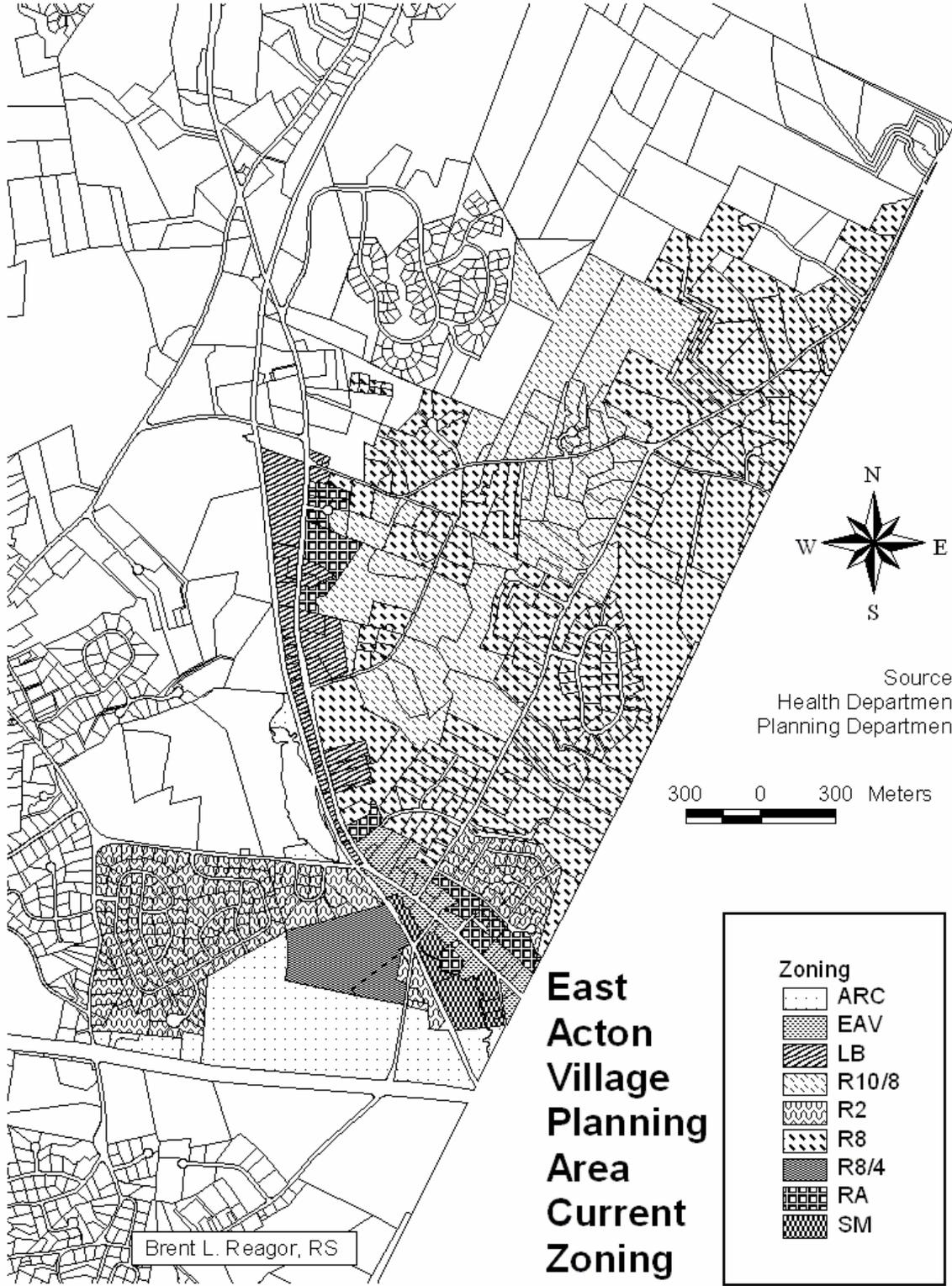
Zoning

The purpose of rezoning specific parcels to EAV is to create a viable, compact village area for shopping and gathering. The recommended rezoning of the one Small Manufacturing parcel (along with the parcel rezoned at the October, 2003 Special Town Meeting) will result in a village district area that is continuous and sufficiently large in area to promote the type of village atmosphere desired.

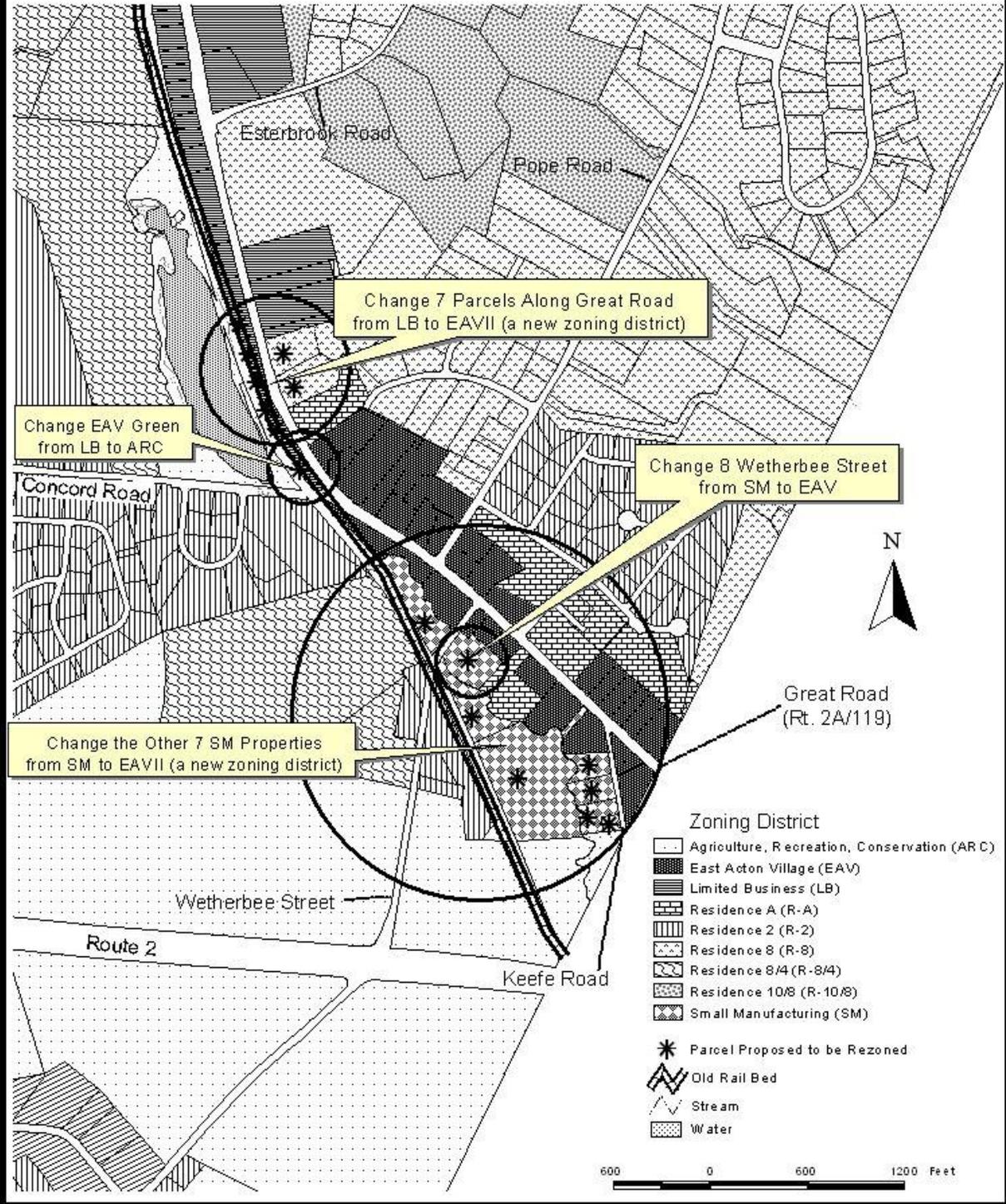
In order to create an environmental and development buffer zone around the East Acton Village District, the EAV Planning Committee recommends rezoning

several parcels: Tax map G4, parcel 10 (126 Great Road) and Tax map F4, parcels 69-1, 104, 69, 67-1, 67, 54 (125, 128, 129 & 133, 132, 134 and 136 Great Road) along the Great Road corridor and Tax map G4, parcel 143 (13 Wetherbee Street) and Tax map G5, parcels 83, 90, 92, 93, 82-1, 82 (13, 19, 21, 25 Keefe Road; 30 & 30A Great Road; and 18 Wetherbee Street) along Keefe Road and between Keefe Road, Great Road and the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) to a new EAV II Zoning District [See Map 6, page 67]. The allowed uses recommended in the EAV II district are similar to EAV. The recommended minimum front yard and side and rear yard setbacks for the district would be 10 feet (30 feet if a non-residential use abuts a residential zoning district). The recommended minimum lot frontage requirement for the district would be 50 feet. No minimum lot width would be recommended for the EAV II Zoning District. Furthermore, a minimum of 35% open space would be recommended for the district. The recommended allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the EAV II district would be 0.20 by right, with no provision for increasing the FAR above 0.20. Also, the EAV Planning Committee recommends that EAV II be a Sending District only under the Transfer of Development Rights provision. The EAV II District would discourage development on the Nashoba Brook side of Great Road and direct development more to the northerly side of Great Road for environmental protection by allowing a bonus for transferring development rights from the brook side to the northerly side. The TDR provision would allow those property owners who transfer their development rights to realize the value in their property without developing in an environmentally sensitive area.

Rezoning area: A new zoning district entitled EAV II would be created that would incorporate parcels along Great Road on both sides of the road from Tax map G4, parcel 28 on the north up to but not including Tax map F4, parcel 55 (Toyota dealership) and from the newly zoned ARC lot on the south side of Great Road up through Tax map F4, parcel 54 (Bright Appliance). Also included are the non-EAV zoned lots on the Acton south side of Keefe Road, and the non-EAV lots between EAV zoning and the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT). See the Table of Principal Uses for allowed uses in this new zone.



DRAFT Proposed Changes to the East Acton Village Zoning District



Map 6.

Goal V4: Encourage the qualities, characteristics, and ambiance of a village center through appropriate development or redevelopment.

- Objective 1:** Ensure that any new buildings, structures, renovations and additions are situated, designed and built at a human scale and in a style that is compatible with existing historical village structures and in harmony with the residential village architecture.
- Objective 2:** In order to discourage “highway strip” development and strip malls, encourage buildings with architectural detail and richness.
- Objective 3:** Enhance and promote a sense of “connectedness” between indoors and outdoors (i.e., the structure and its lot); among multiple structures/lots within the village; and between the village center and its surroundings.
- Objective 4:** Ensure a variety of residential and business opportunities by promoting a mix of land and building uses that enhance the village character.
- Objective 5:** Encourage a diversity of neighborhood-oriented retail and business development and redevelopment.

Issues

All parcels in East Acton Village (EAV) are developed to some degree at this time. Therefore, the process of creating the village character will take time and the redevelopment of many parcels. By providing the “Special Provisions Design Guidelines” and by offering incentives of increased density, the property owners will be encouraged to redevelop their properties according to the village concepts contained in this plan. Also, should any maintenance or expansion occur within village properties, the town should encourage the use of the Guidelines, to the extent possible, at that time as well.

Concentrating development within the village district may put historical structures in jeopardy. With property value high, owners might be tempted to sell to the “highest bidder.” Therefore, historic preservation remains of paramount importance and has been given strong incentives.

Recommendations

The goal of these recommendations is to distinguish East Acton Village aesthetically from the rest of the development along Great Road (Route 2A). By developing according to the design guidelines, property owners and town boards will help bring about the vision that the stakeholders have for this area.

Recommended Strategies for Village Character Goal V4

Objective	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V4.1a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to create design guidelines for EAV.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, TM	Moderate, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.1b *	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide a menu of incentives to developers to encourage the type and location of density that enhances a village ambiance.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Major, ongoing	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.2a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to change dimensions and parking requirements to permit the clustering of separate buildings and separate properties and to reduce curb cuts.	High	Special Provisions for EAV, Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Moderate, ongoing	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.2b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to require both vertical and horizontal variety in large buildings to enhance village aesthetics.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, TM	Moderate, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.3a	Provide walkways, bike paths, arcaded walks, etc. to connect EAV internally and with the surrounding communities.	High	Special Provisions for EAV. See also Transportation & Infrastructure section	BOS, PB	Major, 4 years, ongoing	Ongoing	Highway, Engineering, Property Owners, Developers
V4.3b	Promote development or redevelopment that encourages walking or the use of bicycles.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, PB	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	BOS, PB

Recommended Strategies for Village Character and Housing Goal V4 (cont'd)

Objective	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V4.4a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow multi-family housing as residential only up to a maximum of four units per building.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.4b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide that apartments in excess of four units be permitted above the ground floor in mixed use developments.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.4c *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce required parking within the EAV Village District to 70% of that presently required.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.4d *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to reduce parking required within the EAV Village District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the parking requirement in the new EAV II district to 70% of that presently required if shared parking is used.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.4e *	Amend Zoning Bylaw land use table for the EAV Zoning District to provide for a greater variety of business types and sizes.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.5a *	Amend Zoning Bylaw land use table for the EAV Zoning District to provide for a greater variety of business types and sizes.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V4.5b *	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to limit certain business sizes to maintain village scale.		Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Major, 1 day	Spring Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB

Implementation

Transfer of Development Rights

The Transfer of Development Rights, already available in the current Acton Zoning Bylaw, is one tool to aid redevelopment. While this tool has not been used in Acton, it has been successful in other parts of the country.

The EAV Planning Committee strongly urges the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board to review the current Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provision of the Acton Zoning Bylaw to make the process easier and more understandable. The EAV Planning Committee also urges the BOS to create a board or agency to act as a clearing-house for development rights (such as the Economic Development Committee). Such a clearing-house would facilitate the use of TDR's by providing information to property owners, helping prospective buyers identify potential sellers and possibly serving as a broker of development rights. A member or members of EAVO should be a liaison to the TDR review process and clearing-house agency/board.

Since redevelopment is costly and might include the loss of business during the construction time, the EAV Planning Committee has developed a menu approach to incentives. By Special Permission only, a property owner may exceed a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.20 on his or her property by accepting one or more options from the "menu." In any case, the maximum allowable FAR for any parcel could not exceed 0.50 FAR. Since parking, open space, and waste water management requirements will impact the development potential of any parcel, not all properties may be able to achieve 0.50 FAR. Density is not to be perceived as an end in itself but as a tool to achieve the critical mass required for a vibrant village.

Density options menu

- Special Provisions Design Guidelines for East Acton Village District will provide the vision for the Village.
- All development or redevelopment greater than 500 square feet will require a site plan and will be required to adhere to the Special Provisions Design Guidelines for the new construction only (and the rest of the building at the owner's discretion).
- Development by right will be limited to 0.20 FAR.
- Any increase in FAR over 0.20 requires a Special Permit of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) up to a maximum of 0.50 through the following means:
 - TDR's will allow an additional 0.20 FAR. However, development rights purchased from the Nashoba Brook side of Great Road within either EAV or EAV II [see map 6 page 67] will receive an additional 25% bonus on square footage transferred. (e.g., should a developer wish to obtain 1,250 square feet he/she would be able to do so by buying 1,000

square feet from a brook side property and receive the remaining 250 square feet as a bonus or he could purchase the 1,250 square feet from a non-brook side sending property and pay for 1,250 square feet).

- With historical preservation as defined by the Acton Historical Commission [see Appendix], an additional 0.1 FAR will be allowed. Any developer or property owner who tears down an historical structure will be denied additional FAR. That property will be limited to a FAR of 0.20 maximum.
- Affordable housing on the upper floors of mixed use new development or redevelopment only (at least 1 unit, 10% of the total number of units, or such higher number determined by the Board of Selectmen during the permitting process) would be allowed an additional 0.1 FAR.
- With LEED certification an additional .05 FAR is allowed (see the Environment Chapter for a description of the LEED program).

Dimensional Requirements

At the turn of the twentieth century buildings were close to the road to allow easy access to homes and businesses. The buildings that were used for businesses were often family homes as well. Parking, when cars were available, was easily accommodated on the street due to the limited number of motor vehicles. Architecture was varied according to use and finances. Large buildings were used for taverns with rooms to rent above and the owner's family living behind; mills were close to the road with family homes nearby; and village residences both large and small were all part of the landscape.

To recreate a similar landscape the EAV Planning Committee recommends changing the minimum required setback in the Zoning Bylaw so that buildings in EAV can be situated up to 10 feet from the right-of-way ("front yard setback") and 5 feet from side and rear lot lines. It is also recommended that the minimum lot frontage and lot width requirements in the Zoning Bylaw be removed for the EAV Zoning District. Sidewalks must be available for pedestrians along with benches and pocket parks as amenities. Within the same parcel, buildings may be situated close together for the convenience of pedestrian shoppers. Off-street parking should be located to the rear or side of the buildings. On large parcels where buildings could be located in several areas, developers are encouraged to locate parking and green spaces in the center of the development, similar to a quadrangle. Again, buildings would be both close to the street and at the rear of the property with other amenities in between or on the side.

Lighting

While, all properties must adhere to the Acton Outdoor Lighting Regulations in order to enhance the character of the village district, gooseneck lights will be permitted within the East Acton Village zoning district.

Goal V5: Promote diverse residential development in East Acton Village and the surrounding area.

Objective 1: Encourage apartments above retail stores, offices, and other permitted uses.

Objective 2: Encourage a mixture of housing opportunities including affordable, low and moderate income in the village and within walking distance of the village.

Description of Existing Housing in East Acton

Apartment Complexes

All three complexes are zoned Multifamily (R-A) and are located on Great Road. Zoning would not allow additional units to be constructed at these sites.

1. Azalea Court Apartments, located on tax map G5, parcel 72-3 (6 and 8 Azalea Court). These two buildings are condominiums, but they are mostly rented to apartment dwellers. There are no other properties located on Azalea Court.
2. Iris Court Apartments, located on tax map G5, parcels 63, 72, and 72-4 (1, 2, 3, 5, and 14 Iris Court). These five buildings are rentals. There are no other properties located on Iris Court.
3. Pillar House Apartments, located on tax map G5, parcel 76-1 (48 Great Road). This is a single building containing condominiums with its own driveway onto Great Road.

Smaller Apartment Buildings

There are a few smaller buildings, all located along Great Road within the East Acton Village District, which contain multiple apartment units. These include buildings such as:

- *56 Great Road: a four-unit rental building with indoor garages at the southwest corner of Wetherbee Street and Great Road. This building contains rentals but has been converted to condominiums, which are for sale as such. The original building is on the Cultural Resource List.
- *60 Great Road: at the northwest corner of Wetherbee Street and Great Road. This historic tavern contains three rental apartments on the second floor and office/retail on the ground floor. This building is also on the Cultural Resource List.
- *52 and 54 Great Road: these two older buildings contain some rented rooms and some rented apartments. #52 is on the Cultural Resource List.

*65 Great Road: this historic tavern and stage stop has two rental apartments on the second floor and Phillips Glass and a photography studio on the ground floor. This building is on the Cultural Resource List.

Other Residential Buildings on Great Road and Keefe Road

There are several individual homes either owner-occupied or rented along Great Road. Some of these may contain more than one rental unit, such as 38 Great Road (between the Mobil and Ginger Court) which is on the Cultural Resource List. There are some owner-occupied homes on Keefe Road.

Pope Road

The area behind the Iris Court/Azalea Court apartments (Myrtle, Bayberry, Magnolia, Phlox, Rose) is zoned Single Family (R-2), 20,000 square foot lots. The remainder of Pope Road is zoned Single Family (R-8), 80,000 square feet. There appears to be very little of this area that has not been developed.

Concord Road

This area is zoned Single Family (R-2), 20,000 square feet. There appears to be little land left for development.

Wetherbee Street

1. West Side:

- *21 and 39 Wetherbee), which are in the R-2 zoning district (20,000 square feet).
- * Parcel 189 contains 5 1/3 acres of open land with frontage on Wetherbee Street and is zoned R-8/4 (80,000 square feet).
- * Parcel 174 contains 27 3/4 acre, zoned R-8/4, showing no frontage on Wetherbee Street, but lengthy frontage on the railroad right of way. It is behind and adjacent to Parcel 189 above. Both Parcel 189 and Parcel 174 are within Subdistrict B of the Affordable Housing Overlay District.

2. East Side. This side of the street is zoned R-2 from the railroad right-of-way to the State-owned land (50 Massachusetts Ave.).

- * There a couple of homes (36 and 40 Wetherbee Street) on small lots all of which are on the Cultural Resource List.
- * Tax map G4, parcel 208 contains an industrial building on a 3 1/3 acre plot with extensive frontage on the railroad right of way. This parcel is also within Subdistrict B of the Affordable Housing Overlay District.

Issues

Several vintage buildings, primarily from the nineteenth century, remain in use in East Acton both as homes and commercial properties. Preservation of these historic structures will serve the essential function of providing the New England character and ambiance of the village. New England villages typically had apartments located on the second and third floors of buildings and retail or offices on the first floor. In the East Acton Village zoning district, there are several examples of this arrangement. Examples of this configuration in the East Acton Village zoning district include the building at 60 Great Road (the old Nashoba Tavern) which contains two offices and a store on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. The building at 65 Great Road (the old Wetherbee Tavern) now houses Phillips Glass and a photography studio on the first floor and apartments above. In keeping with this village character, large apartment buildings are not acceptable while smaller apartment buildings (4 units or less), and above business apartments would fulfill the need for housing. Furthermore, it is inconsistent with village character, and therefore undesirable, to demolish or radically alter historic structures in order to generate large apartment complexes.

Residential support is vital to a vibrant village. Sufficient pedestrian traffic is a requirement for viable community based businesses. This is why housing above stores and businesses is important for the area as well as pedestrian walkways and sidewalks. At the same time, having people living in the village 24 hours a day 7 days a week provides some security for the local businesses and other residents.

Recommendations and Implementation

In order to preserve the remaining historical homes in EAV and to encourage a return to a village ambiance, the EAV Planning Committee has recommended amending the zoning bylaw to provide more allowable uses that would accommodate these older homes and structures. By providing for apartments above retail without requiring owner occupancy and allowing for two-family homes and conversions to two to four-family homes, economic incentives are provided to maintain and improve these houses currently listed on the Acton Historical Cultural List. These changes will also encourage more residents in East Acton Village which will provide more customers and overnight and weekend traffic for business security, and add more life and activity to the village. The need for affordable housing is addressed by providing incentives to business/property owners in the district to add FAR for developing housing on the upper floor of office/retail buildings in the village with a minimum of 10% set aside for low-income residents. Also, the conversion of two family homes should be allowed as a right provided historical buildings are maintained as such. The building inspector will assure compliance when issuing the building permit.

Recommended Strategies for Village Character Goal V5

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
V5.1a*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide that residential apartments in excess of four units be permitted above the ground floor only in mixed use developments.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V5.1b*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide a menu of incentives to developers to encourage the type and location of density that enhances a village ambiance.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Major, ongoing	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V5.2a*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow multi-family housing up to a maximum of four units per building.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V5.2b*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to allow two family houses by right in EAV.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Minor, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
V5.2c*	Amend Zoning Bylaw for the EAV Zoning District to provide incentives to preserve historical homes by providing FAR bonuses.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes. See also the Density Options Menu in Goal 3 of this chapter	PB, TM	Major, 1 day	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB

CHAPTER 5: TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Straddling Great Road (Route 2A) and situated in the Littleton/Acton/Concord Great Road corridor, East Acton Village (EAV) faces multiple and sometimes competing transportation needs. As Great Road is a major commuter and commercial corridor, efficient through traffic operation is critical to restraining spillover onto neighborhood streets. The efficient flow of traffic is also essential for the retail businesses in this commercial corridor. However, efficient through traffic operation can conflict with pedestrian and bicyclist safety goals. There are clear safety challenges for these two groups to navigate to and in the EAV Zoning District, especially when crossing Great Road. Complicating implementation of a balanced response to these transportation needs is the additional task of negotiating desired signage or physical modifications with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which administers Great Road.

Both the EAV Residential & Town Meeting and Property Owner/Business Owner Surveys highlighted popular concern with pedestrian and bicyclist safety. They identified vehicular safety as a key concern as well. The Property/Business survey also indicated concern that the traffic volume (pass-by customer volume) might be adversely affected.

To assess the current and projected traffic conditions and identify ways to meet transportation needs, the East Acton Village Planning Committee (EAVPC) commissioned Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. to perform the *EAV Transportation Study*. The EAVPC adopted the study's recommendations that were most in line with goals in the EAV Plan. Key recommendations include adding gateways to demarcate EAV, adding consistent streetscape design (curbing, landscaped frontage strips, sidewalks, etc.) to integrate EAV, upgrading the existing sidewalk system into an integrated network, and adding public spaces. Making the intermodal connections in EAV between the various bicycle, pedestrian, vehicle, and potentially regional public transit networks will help to reduce the number of vehicle trips on Great Road and intersecting streets.

The EAVPC wants to ensure that infrastructure needs are met to the extent that they facilitate achieving the other goals in the EAV Plan. Infrastructure action areas include encouraging environmentally responsible wastewater treatment, maintaining adequate drinking water supply, and maintaining a satisfactory level of service for the delivery of fuel, power, telephone, cable, and broadband access.

Goal T1: Improve safety, convenience, and comfort for pedestrians in East Acton Village (EAV) and the surrounding area.

Objective 1: Complete the sidewalk system as recommended on Great Road, Pope Road, Wetherbee Street, and Keefe Road.

Objective 2: Provide walkways to connect East Acton Village with surrounding residential and natural resource areas and to interconnect buildings and lots within the village.

Objective 3: Support efforts to provide pedestrian scale lighting, benches, and other amenities.

Objective 4: Install crosswalks, other pedestrian crossings, and traffic calming measures to facilitate pedestrian access, circulation, and safety.

Issues

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns Great Road (Route 2A) in Acton and has control over speed and all other improvements on or along the roadway that we, as a community, might wish to make (i.e., traffic management controls, driveway curb cuts, etc.). Great Road (Route 2A) becomes a major impediment cutting off pedestrian/ bicyclist access to the village shops. Although the speed limit was recently reduced from 45 mph to 40 mph, the committee believes it is still too high for safe passage from one side to the other.

Any improvements to pedestrian safety within the Village will come from the desire of local businesses to help the community recreate the village character that was in East Acton last century. Incentives during development or redevelopment could be provided by the appropriate town board (e.g., allowing shared parking to reduce an individual property's parking requirements). The objectives listed below are to set the standard for what the EAVPC envisions for the area.

Recommendations

The East Acton Village Zoning District is the heart of the East Acton area with shops, restaurants and other amenities for local residents as well as others from Acton and nearby towns. The EAV Planning Committee envisions the future of East Acton Village Zoning District to be a pedestrian and bicycle friendly area with a separate identity from the rest of Great Road. In order to do that, it is essential that surrounding residents can cross Great Road easily and safely, and that surrounding neighborhoods have direct, safe access to the area. The recommended strategies address these needs by recommending specific sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian amenities. The strategies reflect many of the suggestions that came from both the *EAV Transportation Study* (see Appendix XXX) done by VHB and the surveys and hearings that EAVPC has held. The recommended sidewalks and crosswalks are also shown on the map in Figure XXX.

Ideas Considered But Not Recommended

As part of the *EAV Transportation Study*, VHB suggested several alternative, long-term ideas that were discussed by the committee and found to be inappropriate at this time. (See the *EAV Transportation Study*, pages 67 - 75). These ideas may be appropriate to reconsider if conditions change in the future. Among them was an alternative that proposed discontinuing Wetherbee Street near the railroad bed (proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)). The purposes were to eliminate vehicular conflict at Wetherbee and Great Road, provide connection points for pedestrians and bikes from the BFRT to Great Road, and allow the rezoning of lots for businesses to add to the diversity of uses in and around the village. This idea was rejected because the committee felt it would put more pressure on surrounding roads to access Route 2, would shut off current Wetherbee Street residents from East Acton making it harder for them to patronize the EAV Zoning District shops, and would leave several business sites with limited entrance and egress.

Another idea was the extension of Bayberry Road behind the shopping center to a signalized, 4-way intersection with Concord Road and a 3-way intersection with Pope Road by disconnecting Pope Road northbound at Bayberry Road. The committee rejected this idea because it would isolate the southern end of Pope Road. There are numerous rights-of-way issues with this concept, it would be quite costly, and it might not provide sufficient safety and sense of community.

The committee also rejected an idea to place a median in the center of Great Road from the Concord Road intersection to the intersection with Keefe Road. The committee felt this would divide the village in half, segregating each side and making it difficult for pedestrians and vehicles on one side to access areas on the opposite side of Great Road. The *EAV Transportation Study* suggests that drainage might also be a major issue to overcome.

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T1

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T1.1a	Add the Great Road, Pope Road, Wetherbee Street, and Keefe Road sidewalks to the Sidewalk Master Plan.	High	<i>Sidewalk Master Plan</i>	BOS	Minor	2004	Engineering
T1.1b	Provide a continuous sidewalk of gray concrete on the north side of Great Road from just west of the Concord Road intersection through to the Town line.	High	<i>EAV Transportation Study [page 49], Master Plan</i>	BOS	Moderate, 1 month	2005	Property Owners, Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T1.1c	Provide a continuous sidewalk of gray concrete on the south side of Great Road from the Concord Road intersection through to the Town line.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study [page 63], Master Plan</i>	BOS	Major, 3 months	2006	Property Owners, Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T1.1d	Repair and upgrade sidewalks in EAV Zoning District to meet Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and American Architectural Board (AAB) requirements.	Medium	ADA and AAB and <i>EAV Transportation Study [page 51]</i>	BOS	Major, ongoing	Ongoing	Property Owners, Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T1.1e	Construct a sidewalk on the east side of Pope Road between Bayberry Road and Great Road.	Medium		BOS	Minor, 2 weeks	2005	Property Owners, Engineering, Highway
T1.1f	Complete sidewalk on west side of Pope Road from Great Road up to Brabrook Road.	Medium		BOS	Minor, 2 weeks	2005	Engineering, Highway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T1.1g	Construct a sidewalk on the east side of Wetherbee Street from Great Road through the end of the residential area.	Low		BOS	Major, 1 month	2008	Property Owners, Engineering, Highway
T1.1h	Construct a sidewalk on the south side of Keefe Road.	Low		BOS	Moderate, 1 month	2007	Property Owners, Engineering, Highway
T1.2a	Create walkways between the businesses on the north side of Great Road and the residential areas surrounding them.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, Property Owners	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Property Owners, Engineering, Highway
T1.2b	Establish, construct, and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green, ensuring that it accommodates the Rail Trail as well as good pedestrian access to and from the Village and nearby neighborhoods.	High	Cecil Group plan for EAV Green	BOS, ConsCom	Moderate, 4 months	2004, then more as BFRT is built	Municipal Properties, Natural Resources
T1.2c	Create safe walkways through large parking areas using raised, marked crosswalks; by using thermoplastic marking material; or any other approved design to make the walkways noticeable to drivers.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	Property Owners	Minor, ongoing	Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Property Owners

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T1.2d*	Require developers to have sidewalks or pedestrian trails connecting to adjacent lots at logical connecting points if properties are renovated or redeveloped.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS	Minor, 1 month	Spring 2004	PB, EAVPC, Developers, Property Owners
T1.3a	Install "full cut-off" (FCO) lights in parking areas and along walkways that are of human scale providing adequate light without creating glare.	High	Acton Outdoor Lighting Regulations	BOS	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	Developers, Property Owners
T1.3b	Install benches or seating areas (steps, granite blocks, etc) in or near green spaces within the village with consideration for maintaining village character.	Medium	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, Property Owners	Minor, 1 day	Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Developers, Property Owners
T1.3c	Install stroller "parking" areas throughout the Village to provide parents a safe place for their carriages and strollers while they shop.	Low	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, Property Owners	Minor, 1 day	Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Property Owners
T1.4a	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Concord Road. Crosswalk should be as described in the "Implementation" section below. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection.	High	Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System (MassHighway) and EAV <i>Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 week	2005	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T1.4b	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just east of the intersection with Wetherbee Street. Crosswalk should be as described in the "Implementation" section below.	High	Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System (MassHighway) and <i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 week	2005	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T1.4c	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Keefe Road. Crosswalk should be as described in the "Implementation" section below. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection.	Low	Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System (MassHighway) and <i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 week	For later consideration as conditions warrant	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T1.4d	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Pope Road at its intersection with Great Road.	High	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 55]	BOS	Minor, 2 days	2005	Engineering, Highway
T1.4e	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Concord Road at its intersection with Great Road.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS	Minor, 2 days	2006	Engineering, Highway
T1.4f	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Wetherbee Street at its intersection with Great Road.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS	Minor, 2 days	2006	Engineering, Highway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T1.4g	Establish a new, stamped asphalt crosswalk across Keefe Road at its intersection with Great Road.	Low		BOS	Minor, 2 days	2007	Engineering, Highway
T1.4h	Install a series of integrated traffic calming measures along the length of Pope Road at key locations, including signage and a raised crosswalk at intersection with Bayberry Road.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study [page 54]</i>	BOS	Moderate, 1 week	2005	Engineering, Highway
T1.4i	Paint shoulder striping ("Fog lines") along the edges of Pope Road	Medium		BOS	Minor, 2 days	2005	Engineering, Highway

Implementation

Sidewalks

Since the EAV Planning Committee charter was to deal with East Acton Village, the committee has made recommendations for EAV Zoning District and the immediate surrounding EAV area. However, the committee encourages the town to continue sidewalks on both sides of Great Road from the Concord town line to the Littleton town line.

The goal is for all sidewalks in the EAV Zoning District to be constructed of gray concrete; this is consistent with the use of gray concrete sidewalks within other village areas in Acton. The remaining sidewalks are currently constructed out of asphalt paving material. As a part of the repair and upgrade process, sections should be created with the gray concrete. Sidewalks should be wide enough for two people to walk side by side.

The committee also understands that in order to have a sidewalk added, it must be on the approved sidewalk list maintained by the Board of Selectmen (BOS). The sidewalks recommended here for Great Road, Pope Road, Wetherbee Street, and Keefe Road are not currently listed as proposed in the *Sidewalk Master Plan*. Therefore, the committee urges the BOS to add them. Telephone poles that are currently in the middle of sidewalks should be removed when wires are placed underground. If poles, hydrants, or other obstructions must be located in the sidewalk, the sidewalk should be widened around them to allow strollers and pedestrian groups to pass the poles easily. Sidewalks should also be routed around mature trees rather than removing the trees to make way for the sidewalk.

Crosswalks

Crosswalk safety is extremely important. The most difficult crosswalks are those needed to allow pedestrians to cross Great Road. The EAV Planning Committee recommends that a traffic light be installed at the intersection of Great Road and Concord Road. This light would include a walk light for pedestrians. (See the recommendations under Goal 3 below.)

Until a full traffic light is installed at Great Road and Concord Road, and for the crosswalks that allow pedestrians to cross Great Road near Wetherbee Street and Keefe Road, the committee recommends that the crosswalks should be as follows (or the equivalent in terms of safety and pedestrian visibility): They should be painted, slightly raised, "Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System," Traffic Safety Corp ZA-230 Crosswalk Warning System Flashing (3 flashers per lane). These devices are implanted in the roadway directly in the motorist's line of vision. They flash once every second in both directions to indicate pedestrians are in the crosswalk or about to enter. These flashing lights outline the crosswalk to alert motorists well in advance of reaching the crosswalk. They are snowplow safe for winter.

Crosswalks across Great Road (whether they use the in-pavement warning system or a crossing light) should also include the visible yellow pedestrian warning signs (W11-2) a minimum of 200 yards from intersection in both directions with a supplemental distance marker indicating the distance from the sign to the crossing location. Another safety feature might be to provide overhead lights in crosswalks so drivers can easily see pedestrians in the crosswalk at night.

The committee recommends that crosswalks parallel to Great Road across Concord Road, Wetherbee Street, Keefe Road, and Pope Road be “stamped asphalt.” (See the *EAV Transportation Study*, page 55 and Figure 4-4) This method of defining a crosswalk is textured, for example to look like paving stones or bricks. The texture, in addition to being attractive and providing a well-defined pedestrian crossing, is felt by drivers, and thus has a slight traffic-calming effect by signaling a transition to a different traffic area.

The EAVPC recommends that pedestrian safety be enhanced by narrowing wide curb cuts. (See Transportation Goal 3.) But where large driveways remain, developers should consider installing crosswalks across those driveways. The crosswalks should be similar in construction and appearance to the crosswalks across roads such as Pope Road, Wetherbee Street, and Keefe Road.

Goal T2: Improve bicycle access and safety in East Acton Village and the surrounding area.

Objective 1: Support efforts to develop the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Objective 2: Provide clear, convenient, and safe bikeways within East Acton Village and connecting East Acton Village with surrounding residential and natural resource areas, and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Objective 3: Ensure pedestrian and bicycle compatibility.

Objective 4: Encourage bicycle use through incorporation of bicycle facilities.

Issues

The committee envisions Acton adults and children, especially those in nearby neighborhoods, being able to safely and enjoyably use their bicycles to run an errand, go for a meal, or take an enjoyable ride through our lovely natural environment. However, one of the main findings of the resident and business surveys was the need to increase bicycle access and safety in East Acton Village. Of the resident respondents, 69% felt that bicycle and pedestrian friendliness needs to be increased; the figure for business respondents was 54%. (See Appendix XXX.)

There are currently no specific accommodations for bicyclists, who face safety difficulties similar to those faced by pedestrians. The only ways for bicyclists to travel to or within the Village involve mingling with fast-moving motor traffic, waiting at intersections with often-impatient motorists, hoping to be seen by traffic using the numerous curb cuts, negotiating large parking lots, and finding no safe way to cross Great Road. There are few facilities to safely park and secure bicycles while riders patronize businesses in the Village.

The EAVPC sees the planned Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) as a significant asset. It will likely bring increased bicycle and pedestrian traffic through East Acton Village. It has the potential to greatly foster the village character, to bring more people to the Village, and to give bicyclists and pedestrians easier access to business, recreational, and natural sites along the Rail Trail. There is support for the Rail Trail among the businesses in the Village, too. The survey done by the EAVPC showed that of 46 respondents, only 2 expected the Rail Trail to have an unfavorable effect on their business or property; 23 expected it to have a favorable effect.

The committee does not see the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail as a substitute for other bicycle facilities in East Acton Village. Instead, the committee thinks that along with building the Rail Trail, there should be increased attention paid to providing infrastructure and facilities for bicyclists to safely ride between the Rail Trail and other parts of the Village and surrounding neighborhoods. Otherwise, the bicyclists will be “stuck” on the trail.

Recommendations and Implementation

EAVPC strongly supports the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The town needs to do what it can to design and develop the Rail Trail, to make sure that it is safe for bicyclists and pedestrians (and roller bladers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, etc.), and to make sure that the portion paralleling the Village supports the Village character and allows for pedestrians and bicyclists to easily get to and from the trail.

EAVPC does not at this time agree with one of the recommendations for bicycle safety presented in the *EAV Transportation Study* – the recommendation to add bike lanes along Great Road. (See the *EAV Transportation Study*, page 58.) Even though in most areas the road is wide enough to accommodate the 12.3 feet for travel lanes and 4.1 feet (preferred, 2.5 feet minimum) for bicycles on each side, the committee felt that the needs for bicyclists to travel in the direction of Great Road will be adequately and more safely met by the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The committee also felt that bike lanes would be dangerous next to parked cars and around landscaped neck-down areas; both on-street parking and neck-down areas are recommendations of EAVPC within the EAV Zoning District (see the recommendations under Goal 3).

Bicyclists heavily use Pope Road, but the EAVPC considers it too narrow to safely add bicycle lanes. The committee does recommend that signs be installed reminding motorists and bicyclists to watch out for each other and to share the road. The signs should be SHARE THE ROAD (sign W16-1) in conjunction with a yellow diamond with a picture of a bicycle (sign W11-1). (See *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Part 9, Traffic Controls for Bicycle Facilities.)

Whatever solutions are implemented to help get pedestrians safely across Great Road should be designed to be safe and accessible for rail trail users, too. The locations that the committee recommends for crossings (just west of Concord Road, just east of Wetherbee Street, and just west of Keefe Road) seem adequate for rail trail users, too. Good signage and street markings of the crosswalk are crucial. (See the *EAV Transportation Study*.) As with pedestrian traffic, bicycle traffic should be provided with paths they can use to get among business areas in the Village without going out onto Great Road.

The *EAV Transportation Study* also recommends (and the committee agrees) that parking areas in the Village should include “parking” areas for bicycles that are safely segregated from automobile traffic and parking. Bicycle racks should be located as close to all public buildings, businesses, and recreation areas as possible, while minimizing conflict with pedestrian and automobile traffic. They should be a type that allows people to safely lock their bikes in place.

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T2

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T2.1a	Share the results of the <i>EAV Transportation Study</i> with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail team and other citizen groups supporting the Rail Trail.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i>		Minor, ongoing	Ongoing	EAVPC, Planning, TAC
T2.1b	Ensure that a Town Bruce Freeman Rail Trail planning committee requires a representative from East Acton, ideally a representative from the EAV volunteer organization or a former member of EAVPC.	High		BOS	Minor, ongoing	2004	Natural Resources
T2.1c	Construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.	High	Acton Rail Trail Feasibility Study	BOS, TM	Major	2006	Natural Resources, BFRT construction contractor
T2.1d	Establish, construct, and continually enhance the East Acton Village Green, ensuring that it accommodates the Rail Trail as well as good bicycle access to and from the Village and nearby neighborhoods.	High	Cecil Group plan for EAV Green	BOS, ConsCom	Moderate, 4 months	2004, then more as BFRT is built	Planning, Natural Resources, Municipal Properties
T2.2a*	Provide clear and convenient bicycle connections from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to businesses in the Village area, where appropriate.	Medium	Special Provisions for EAV, Acton Rail Trail Feasibility Study	BOS, ConsCom	Moderate, varies for different sites	2004, Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Business Owners, BFRT construction contractor, Natural Resources

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T2 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T2.2b	Support the addition of bike lanes along Great Road from the point near Route 27 at which the BFRT crosses Great Road west to Littleton with appropriate signage and pavement markings.	Low	EAV Transportation Study	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 month	2010	MassHighway, Engineering
T2.2c	Add a bike lane or path along the north side of Concord Road from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to the proposed crosswalk across Great Road.	Medium	Acton Rail Trail Feasibility Study	BOS	Minor, 1 day	2006	Highway, Engineering, BFRT construction contractor
T2.2d	Add signage on Pope Road reminding motorists and bicyclists that this is a shared road.	Medium	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Part 9, Traffic Controls for Bicycle Facilities	BOS	Minor, 1 day	2006	Highway, Engineering
T2.2e	As part of the redesign of the Rt. 2 rotary, support the inclusion of appropriate travel ways for bicycles from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to cross Rt. 2.	High		BOS, MassHighway	Unknown. If the state planners take town input, effort could be Minor.	2010	BOS, TAC, EAVPC, Friends of BFRT, MassHighway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T2 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T2.3a	Provide separate bike paths and sidewalks throughout EAV Zoning District where there is sufficient space to do so.	Low	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, PB	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Property Owners
T2.4a	Provide public bicycle parking facilities in Village areas.	Medium	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, PB, TM	Moderate	Ongoing	PB, EAVPC, Property Owners

Goal T3: Improve vehicular circulation and safety within the village district.

Objective 1: Eliminate points of automobile conflict.

Objective 2: Improve traffic flow and increase safety of turning movements at intersections.

Objective 3: Avoid redundancy in parking and excessive pavement by encouraging combined parking facilities between businesses, recreation and entertainment outlets.

Objective 4: Reduce traffic volume by promoting public transportation to other activity centers such as other village districts and transportation nodes.

Issues

The East Acton Village is a ½ mile stretch along Great Road (Rt. 2A/119) beginning at the Concord border and running beyond Concord Road. The current configuration has a major effect on the circulation and safety within the village district. With the posted speed of 40 miles per hour, two feeder roads, numerous curb cuts and the Concord rotary only 1 mile to the east, the current traffic pattern presents multiple issues. Traffic safety is a factor that needs to increase, according to 50% of business respondents and 55% of residential respondents on the EAV surveys. (See Appendix XXX.)

The *EAV Transportation Study* details many of these traffic issues. According to the study, the average traffic volume along the EAV section of Great Road varies from 19,000 to 23,500 vehicles per day. According to the Commonwealth's *2000 Highway Capacity Manual*, this traffic usage is 50% of the road's capacity. The issue arises in EAV when the intersections are incorporated.

There are three major intersections in the Village. Exhibit XXXX details the results from the *EAV Transportation Study*. Specifically, during morning rush hour the Concord Road and Great Road intersection is at failure (Level-of-Service (LOS) = F) according to standards in the Massachusetts *2000 Highway Capacity Manual*. This intersection also received a failure (F) grade on peak hours for Saturday. For the evening commute, the intersection received an E grade (one better than failure). The Pope Road and Great Road intersection received grades of "E" for all peak hours for both weekday and weekend. Lastly, the Wetherbee Street and Great Road received slightly better grades in the C to D range. The Keefe Road and Great Road intersection was not tested because it is a dead end street.

Recommendations and Implementation

As mentioned in Goal 1, EAVPC recommends that the speed limit in the EAV area be reduced to 35 MPH. According to accident statistics, the majority of accidents happen

at off peak times when traffic is more likely to be flowing at the posted 45 MPH (Note: as of 2/1/03 Mass Highway reduced the posted speed limit to 40 MPH. No accident information is available for this reduced speed limit due to the infancy of the reduction). Further, the posted speed impacts the safety of pedestrian crossings. The EAVPC believes that MassHighway generally does not support crosswalks on roads with a posted speed of 40 MPH. Currently, pedestrians and bicyclists must dash across Great Road when there is a gap in traffic.

Along Great Road EAVPC recommends that a landscaped traffic calming transition section be installed at both the eastern and western boundaries of the village. The transition section would be a slow elimination of the breakdown lane on both sides of the road (a neck-down area). In this area drought and salt-tolerant landscape materials should be planted to give the driver a sense of transition into the village area. The transition area should coincide with the reduction of speed to 35 MPH. These landscaped areas should also house the East Acton Village gateway signs, which would be a further signal to the driver that they are entering the village area.

Between the landscaped transition areas, the EAVPC recommends that formal on-street parking be installed on Great Road. The committee believes that on-street parking is a feature that characterizes most village areas. It is a traffic calming measure in that it signals to drivers that they are in a village center. It makes most sense to be installed when sidewalks along Great Road are installed or improved and in conjunction with businesses located close to Great Road. Formal on-street parking is also recommended along the northeast side of Keefe Road. Currently, cars park on the dirt shoulder, so this would formalize the current practice and make it clearer to drivers where it is appropriate to park their vehicles.

To improve traffic safety, the EAVPC recommends the redesign of three of the four intersections in the village.

- **Intersection of Great Road and Concord Road.** At Great Road and Concord Road, four changes are suggested. First, the angle and slope of the intersection should be changed. The angle should be as close to 90 degrees as required for adequate safety. The current angle makes right hand turns from Great Road to Concord Road dangerous because of the sharp turn. The problem is magnified due to the slope of the intersection. Drivers exiting Concord Road stop on a hill at the top of Concord Road and find it difficult to maintain traction when accelerating onto Great Road. The problem is magnified during winter when there are ice and sand on the roadway.

Second, a dedicated left turn lane that extends further back on Concord Road than the current design will allow for better traffic movement. The current left turn lane can only hold two cars before merging into a single lane. Because left turning cars take significantly longer to turn, the right turning cars are delayed.

Unless there is a traffic light, the EAVPC does not recommend including a left-turn lane for vehicles turning left from Great Road onto Concord Road because it conflicts with many of the objectives in this EAV plan. Such a lane would make it harder for pedestrians to cross Great Road, would be more dangerous for bicyclists traveling along Great Road, would require minor road widening that would conflict with the recommended small landscaped areas that mark the entrance to the village, and would conflict with the long-term goal of on-street parking in EAV. However, the EAVPC does recommend that the inclusion of a left-turn lane from Great Road to Concord Road be reconsidered if and when the intersection is redesigned to include a traffic light. It is important that the intersection be designed to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety, village character, and all the other goals of this plan, not just efficiency of traffic flow.

Third, to assist pedestrian safety and indicate to motorists where they should stop, a crosswalk across Great Road just west of Concord Road is recommended. This crosswalk is detailed in Goal 1 of this section. The crosswalk will likely slightly slow the flow of traffic in the Village. The EAVPC felt that the small impact on traffic flow would be more than offset by the safety of Acton's residents. This is the most important crosswalk, as it allows residents from the neighborhoods south of Rt. 2A to walk to EAV destinations on the north side Rt. 2A.

Fourth, the EAVPC recommends that the next traffic light installed east of Rt. 27 be at Concord Road. The current accident rate does not support a traffic light at the Great Road and Concord Road intersection. (See the *EAV Transportation Study*, page 20.) However, the EAVPC expects that the increased traffic from current and future developments outside of the village will stress this intersection to a point that signalization will be required. Such a light would have benefits beyond just allowing shoppers better access to one mall; it would greatly improve pedestrian safety and movement of traffic to and from Concord Road. The light should have left hand turn lights for traffic on Concord Road turning left onto Great Road and Great Road turning left onto Concord Road. The light should have a walk light for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- **Intersection of Great Road and Pope Road.** The second intersection that the EAVPC recommends changing is the Great Road and Pope Road intersection. Five changes to Pope Road are recommended. First, Pope Road should have a marked left turn lane at its intersection with Great Road. It is difficult for traffic on Great Road to discern whether a driver on Pope Road is attempting to turn left or right. A left turn lane may eliminate some of this confusion and allow for better traffic flow.

Second, in an attempt to help reduce speed on Pope Road, a traffic hump (raised crosswalk) is recommended at the crosswalk across Pope Road at Bayberry Road. The hump is less pronounced than a speed bump but will warn drivers of the crosswalk and slow traffic that has turned off of Great Road by signaling the driver that Pope Road is a residential area. (For other crosswalk recommendations, see Transportation Goal 1.)

Third, the speed limit on Pope Road should be reduced to 25 mph between Brabrook Road and Great Road. This will be consistent with Concord Road, where the speed limit is similarly reduced to 25 mph for traffic near Great Road.

Fourth, painted fog lines (white lines indicating the right-hand edge of the travel lane) are recommended for both sides of Pope Road. The EAVPC recommends that the fog lines run the full length of Pope Road. The painted fog lines will also act as a traffic calming measure by perceptually narrowing the roadway.

Fifth, as mentioned in Transportation Goal 2, signs indicating that Pope Road is a shared roadway for both vehicles and bicycles should be installed. Currently, Pope Road is a designated bike route for many local bicycling groups. While the committee feels that Pope Road is not wide enough to safely accommodate separate bike lanes, motorists and bicyclists should be reminded that both use this road heavily.

- **Intersection of Great Road and Keefe Road.** The last intersection that the EAVPC recommends changing is the Keefe Road and Great Road intersection. The road currently is at a difficult angle for vehicles to exit onto Great Road. It was recommended by the *EAV Transportation Study* that the intersection be changed to 90 degrees and the driveways at the beginning of Keefe Road be consolidated. This will minimize traffic confusion. Also, as stated above, formal on-street parking is recommended along the northeast side of Keefe Road.

The EAVPC also supports public transportation. Connecting EAV to the regional public transportation system would help village residents to commute by public transportation to destinations in Boston and Cambridge, and help people to arrive by public transportation to work or engage in other activities in EAV. This may

- Reduce commuter vehicle trips and the resulting demand on Great Road and neighborhood feeder roads.
- Reduce reverse commuter vehicle trips and EAV parking demand.
- Increase pedestrian presence in EAV.
- Alleviate parking demand at the South Acton and West Concord train stations and, as a result, increase the attractiveness of residing or providing a service in EAV.

The EAVPC encourages the establishment of an intermodal connection in EAV to link vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and bus modes of travel with commuter rail and/or subway. This will be most probably in the form of a local shuttle service that includes a stop at a focal point in EAV and a stop at a train or subway station. EAVPC recognizes that the current population density, modal connections, and public/private partnerships don't yet exist to generate adequate ridership and funding but encourages the cultivation of these enabling factors.

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T3

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T3.1a	Limit street curb cuts for driveways and businesses, making their boundaries clear so pedestrians and drivers know where they are safe and where to be careful, and narrowing the existing wide curb cuts. Where wide driveways remain, consider installing crosswalks.	Medium	Special Provisions for EAV	PB, BOS, MassHighway	Minor, ongoing	Ongoing	Property Owners, PB, EAVPC, MassHighway
T3.1b	Reduce speed limit on Great Road to 35 MPH from the town of Concord border to ¼ mile west of Concord Road.	High		BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 day	2005	Highway
T3.1c	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Concord Road. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection. (See Transportation Goal 1, strategy 4a.)	High	Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System (MassHighway) and EAV <i>Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 week	2005	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.1d	Recommend installation of a traffic light at Great Road and Concord Road. This should be the next traffic light installed on Great Road east of Rt. 27.	Medium		BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 month	2008 or when warranted	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T3.1e	Install a traffic hump and raised crosswalk on Pope Road at the Bayberry Road intersection.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 55]	Highway	Minor, 1 week	2005	Highway, Engineering
T3.1f	Require any new development or redevelopment to demonstrate how bicycles will safely travel through the parking lot to bicycle racks.	Medium	Special Provisions for EAV	BOS, PB	Minor, ongoing	2004	Property Owners
T3.1g	Reconfigure the Keefe Road intersection with Great Road, consolidating the driveways near the intersection and creating a small green space in front of 1 Keefe Road.	Medium	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 52]	BOS, MassHighway	Moderate, 1 month	2007	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.1h	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just west of the intersection with Keefe Road. Consider adding a pedestrian-operated stop light at this intersection. (See Transportation Goal 1, strategy 4c.)	Low	Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System (MassHighway) and <i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 week	For later consideration as conditions warrant	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T3.1i	Establish a crosswalk on Great Road just east of the intersection with Wetherbee Street. (See Transportation Goal 1, Strategy 4b.)	High	Inpavement Crosswalk Warning System (MassHighway) and <i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 66]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 week	2005	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.1j	Install landscaped transition section on Great Road as part of the redesign of Keefe Road or near the Town of Concord border that provides a “gateway” to EAV and slightly narrows the roadway at the entry point into EAV.	High	<i>Massachusetts Pedestrian Transportation Plan, 1998, and EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 54]	BOS, MassHighway	Major, 2 weeks	2007	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.1k	Design and install vegetation at the East Acton Village Green and at the east end of the village to give a “Gateway” appearance similar on both ends of the Village.	High	<i>Massachusetts Pedestrian Transportation Plan, 1998</i>	BOS, ConsCom	Minor, 2 weeks	2004, 2007	Highway, Municipal Properties
T3.1l	Install EAV gateway signage at the EAV Green and at the beginning of the landscaped transition area near Keefe Road.	High	Samples	Highway	Minor, 2 weeks	2004, 2007	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.2a	Straighten Concord Road at Great Road intersection with defined left turn lane on Concord Road.	High	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 60]	BOS, MassHighway	Moderate, 3 months	2006	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T3.2b	Reduce the slope of the intersection of Concord Road at Great Road.	High	<i>EAV Transportation Study</i> [page 60]	BOS, MassHighway	Moderate, 3 months	2006	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.2c	Recommend installation of a traffic light at Great Road and Concord Road. This should be the next traffic light installed on Great Road east of Rt. 27.	Medium		BOS, MassHighway	Major, 1 month	2008 or when warranted	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.2d	Define a left turn lane on Pope Road at its intersection with Great Road.	Medium		BOS, MassHighway	Moderate, 2 weeks	2005	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.2e	Paint shoulder striping ("Fog lines") along the edges of Pope Road.	Medium		BOS	Minor, 2 days	2005	Engineering, Highway
T3.3a*	Amend the Zoning Bylaw for EAV to reduce required parking within EAV Zoning District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the parking requirement in the new EAV II district to 70% of that presently required if shared parking is used.	High	See Village Character and Housing section	BOS, TM	Moderate, ongoing	Spring 2004	PB, EAVPC
T3.3b	Install on-street parking in EAV Zoning District along Great Road.	High		BOS, MassHighway	Minor, 3 days	2006 or with ongoing development	Engineering, Highway, MassHighway
T3.3c	Install on-street parking on the northeast side of Keefe Road.	Medium		BOS	Minor, 1 day	2007	Engineering, Highway

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T3.3d	Grade and re-gravel the parking area at Ice House Pond to support vehicles parking to use the East Acton Village Green and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.	Medium		BOS	Minor, 1 week	2006	Engineering, Highway, Municipal Properties
T3.3e	Recommend the completion of a parking area on Wetherbee Street on the State Police Equestrian Facility to support traffic for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the conservation land on Wetherbee St.	Low		BOS, State Police	Major, 2 months	As bicycle usage requires increased parking facilities	Engineering, Highway
T3.4a	Support the implementation of a regional public transportation system as conditions make it feasible.	Low		BOS, TM	Major, ongoing	2008 and ongoing	BOS

Goal T4: Increase accessibility to public facilities and utility services.

The East Acton Village Planning Committee believes that managing growth and controlling allowable uses of property are best accomplished through zoning. Infrastructure, such as public facilities, utilities, and services, should be provided as needed to support new development allowed by zoning within the East Acton Village Zoning District.

For the most part, the committee does not see big issues in meeting infrastructure needs. However, there are a few areas, such as sewage treatment and water, that warrant specific objectives and strategies, as described below.

Objective 1: Encourage environmentally responsible wastewater treatment options.

Issues, Recommendations, and Implementation

In East Acton, most properties are currently served by private on-site septic systems. Systems are regulated under 310 CMR 15.000 (Title 5) and Acton Board of Health Regulations. Each lot contains its own system serving the building or buildings located on that lot. If a system will have a design flow of 10,000 gallons per day or greater, a groundwater discharge permit issued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection will be required. This usually necessitates the construction of a complete wastewater treatment facility. In East Acton, the Lifecare Center is the only property served by its own wastewater treatment plant.

On-site septic systems can have a variety of problems. There is no way to control effectively the substances that are introduced into the system. Some soils have inadequate infiltrative capacity to dispose of and treat certain flows of effluent from a septic tank. Septic systems need to be maintained by pumping and inspection of filtering devices. Even when properly maintained, septic systems have limited lives and must be replaced, repaired, or upgraded. These systems have the potential for polluting groundwater. (See the Environmental section of this plan for more details on the environmental concerns raised by traditional septic systems.) Lastly, because of the shallow depth to groundwater, certain systems have to be “mounded.” This can create an unsightly topographical feature out of character with the Village.

Some desirable and allowed businesses that happen to have high wastewater requirements are limited or are not feasible in East Acton Village due to inadequate areas for leaching fields. A good example is restaurants. Residents and business owners in East Acton were asked, “If properties become available in or near the current East Acton Village Zoning District, which of the following potential uses would be desirable?” “Restaurants” was the second most desirable potential use chosen by residents: 59% rated restaurants as desirable. “Restaurants” was the most desirable potential use chosen by business owners: 74% rated restaurants as desirable. (See the Appendix for complete survey results.) Currently, limited land area for onsite

wastewater treatment and disposal makes it difficult or impossible to locate more restaurants in East Acton Village. Existing restaurants may not be able to increase their number of seats. A similar limitation exists for other water-intensive uses, such as hair salons and residential units.

To allow properties in the Village District to be developed to the degree allowed by zoning, additional appropriate, environmentally responsible wastewater treatment options should be made feasible. Increased development will likely require an increase in the need for offsite wastewater treatment and disposal solutions, as individual septic systems to serve the increased development would be greatly limited by the absence of available land area and/or the less than ideal soil conditions.

Inclusion within the existing sewer district is probably not feasible because of its distance from East Acton and the difficulty of crossing Route 2. However, the committee supports other smaller, environmentally responsible solutions such as shared septic systems or a small new East Acton sewer district. The committee agrees with the Master Plan (page 193) in recommending that the town “plan and implement appropriate shared wastewater systems in East Acton.” The town’s *Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan* currently underway by Woodard and Curran should be used to guide the planning for East Acton Village.

In some parts of East Acton Village, developing wastewater management systems that are shared by multiple parcels with multiple owners may be among the most cost-effective and environmentally appropriate solutions. However, it is difficult for property owners and developers to build shared systems because legally there must be a governing body (for example, a town wastewater management body or a condominium association) to manage the shared resource, and there must be financial securities to ensure continued operation and maintenance of the shared resource. Condominium associations may be appropriate for properties already jointly owned, but they are very difficult to put in place for separate properties with separate owners. Therefore, the committee supports the creation of a town wastewater management body so that the most appropriate wastewater treatment options are available to East Acton Village.

Objective 2: Provide adequate drinking water to East Acton.

Issues, Recommendations, and Implementation

The Water Supply District of Acton (WSDA) currently supplies Town water to 97% of the businesses and residents in Acton. Either private wells or Concord Water Supply (CWS) provides the remaining 3%. EAV, however, has the majority of its parcels (26) supplied by CWS. CWS maintains a 16-inch water main down Great Road from Brook Street to the Concord town line. The vast majority of businesses along this section are connected to the CWS. The water source for CWS is Nagog Pond.

CWS has indicated that it will continue to supply water to these locations even if the owner redevelops the property. However, they will not allow new connections, nor will

they allow current customers in Acton to increase the size of the pipe that connects the property to the water main. If the current pipe is not sufficient to supply the necessary water for a proposed development, the owner will be required to look to WSDA to supply the water. WSDA has its own water main along Great Road from Concord Road to Wetherbee Street. This water main was recently installed and not all EAV property owners have connected to WSDA. Given the WSDA water main from Wetherbee Street west to Concord Road, EAVPC believes this portion of the village has sufficient water to support future redevelopment.

EAVPC does recommend the extension of the WSDA water main easterly along Great Road to the Concord town line (estimate 1,100 linear feet) and down Keefe Road (estimated 600 linear feet). WSDA has provided cost guidelines in its 2001 Water System Master Plan Update. According to their figures, as a general guide, the cost would be approximately \$350,000 to cover this area. Note that this figure is just a rough estimate. Costs can and do vary significantly depending on specific local conditions. There may be costs associated with the fact that Great Road is a state road and therefore additional requirements and permits may be applicable. WSDA, per its charter, will not pay to extend the main unless it has benefits to the existing users. In this light, it is unlikely that the WSDA will pay for the expansion. However, it is EAVPC's belief that the cost would not prohibit redevelopment. Any redevelopment location closer to Wetherbee Street would only need to extend the main to their property. Any minor redevelopment would likely not require greater water needs so the owner could stay with CWS.

EAVPC also examined the potential water drain on WSDA if the 26 EAV properties were connected to Town water. According to James Deming, District Manager for WSDA, in 2002 WSDA was permitted by DEP to withdraw 2.02 MGD (million gallons per day) of water. The actual water usage was 1.90 MGD. Further, Mr. Deming stated that the 2002 WSDA usage was higher than normal. A major leak at the Rt. 2 and Rt. 27 interchange and an open valve to Maynard's Water Supply caused a spike in usage. Mr. Deming estimates 2003 water usage at 1.6 MGD – 1.7 MGD. WSDA has never exceeded the permitted usage in any calendar year. Mr. Deming stated that Acton's per capita usage is quite low and DEP has used Acton as a positive example in many DEP reports.

Mr. Deming does not believe that an inclusion of EAV properties into the WSDA would cause a water shortage even if water usage in EAV doubled. The 2002 WSDA usage still leaves 120,000 gallons per day unused per the permit. EAV properties on CWS total approximately 20,000 gallons per day (based on data from 2001, supplied by WSDA), which is less than 1% of the overall Town usage. If redevelopment doubled the usage this would still be well within the water supply already available.

Overall, EAVPC does recommend the expansion of the WSDA water main east of Wetherbee Street to the Town line and down Keefe Road. Property owners and the Town should work together to insure that EAV can be transformed into the village

concept outlined in this plan. It is EAVPC's belief that once significant redevelopment begins, the extension of the water main (if necessary) will not be a major deterrent.

Objective 3: Assure that other utilities are adequately provided to East Acton.

Issues, Recommendations, and Implementation

East Acton is presently served by several utilities. On the survey of East Acton business owners (see the Appendix for complete results), the level of satisfaction with natural gas, electricity, telephone, and cable TV was generally good; these utilities appear to meet the needs of the business community. Therefore, the committee has no specific infrastructure recommendations related to them. However, the committee does support the village character recommendations that all utility wires (electrical, telephone, cable) be buried along Great Road and throughout the village. Although this will take time and coordination with the State, the committee believes it will improve aesthetics and not be a detriment to future development.

The number one infrastructure need, expressed by 45% of business owners in *the EAV* survey, was for high-speed Internet service. Comcast has now provided this service throughout Acton for residences, and also offers a business connection service in all locations that are close to an existing cable wire, so the need appears to have been adequately met in EAV.

There have been some complaints that cellular telephone service is weak in some parts of the East Acton area. The committee expects cell-phone companies to resolve the slight "dead spots" as they hear from customers.

As the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is built and the village becomes more pedestrian-friendly, the committee recommends two additional infrastructure improvements. First, for safety, ensure that there are enough high-visibility emergency pull-boxes located along the rail trail and at a few high-visibility locations in the village. And second, for comfort, install public restroom facilities.

Recommended Strategies for Transportation and Infrastructure Goal T4

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
T4.1a	Plan and implement appropriate shared wastewater systems in East Acton.	High	<i>Acton Master Plan Update, page 193</i>	BOS, TM	Major, several years	2010	BOH
T4.1b	Support the creation of a town wastewater management body so that the most appropriate wastewater treatment options are available to East Acton Village.	Medium	<i>Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan</i>	BOS, BOH	Major, several years	2010	BOS, BOH, Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan
T4.2a	Encourage the extension of Acton water to areas in East Acton currently served by Concord water.	Medium	<i>Acton Water Supply District Master Plan</i>	Water Supply District of Acton	Moderate, ongoing	2008	Developers, Water Supply District of Acton
T4.3a	Encourage adequate cellular service to East Acton.	Medium		BOS	Moderate, ongoing	Ongoing	Cell phone companies
T4.3b	Encourage high-visibility fireboxes and/or emergency phones throughout the village and at places like the rail trail and the Village Green to ensure public safety.	High		BOS, Fire, Police	Moderate, ongoing	2006	Fire, Police, Municipal Properties, Natural Resources, Highway
T4.3c	Construct public toilet facilities at rail trail and other appropriate areas as needed.	Low		BOS, BOH	Moderate, 2 months	2006	Municipal Properties, Natural Resources, BOH

CHAPTER 6: ENVIRONMENT, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

Henry David Thoreau once said “a river town is a winged town”². On a more local scale, a citizen at an EAVPC public input meeting observed that “water, tourists and colleges create villages”³ indeed EAV’s original development in the seventeenth century was due to the presence of Nashoba Brook. Actonians have expressed concern about the general environment in East Acton. While there were no questions directly relating to environmental preservation, Question 7 of the Spring 2001 EAV residential public input survey generated these responses: 60% of respondents wanted an increased level of aesthetics in the village area, 58% an increase in landscaping, 69% an increase in open space and parks, and 57% wanted better pedestrian access⁴, demonstrating a mandate for a “greener” area. This section defines the goals and objectives relating to water quality, air quality, open space and outdoor recreation, and suggests strategies for implementation of these goals.

The contemporary creation of village districts is a manifestation of the Smart Growth and Sustainable Development movements, which essentially seek to establish community-enhancing, economically viable, and environmentally friendly areas. The Smart Growth principles addressed in this section of the East Acton Village Plan are:

- Mixing land uses
- Fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Creating walkable communities⁵

Sustainable Development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.⁶ This philosophy was summarized in 1992 into nine basic components known as the Hannover Principles. These include:

- Insist on rights of humanity and nature to co-exist in a healthy supportive, diverse and sustainable condition.
- Recognize interdependence. The elements of human design interact with and depend upon the natural world, with broad and diverse implications at every scale. Expand design considerations to recognizing even distant effects.

² Thoreau, Henry David, *Journal*, July 2, 1858

³ EAVPC Public information input meeting notes, www.town.acton.ma.us/eav

⁴ www.town.acton.ma.us/eav

⁵ Smart Growth Network/International City/County Management Association, “Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation”, January, 2002

⁶ United Nations’ World Commission on Environment and Development, the “Brundtland Commission” 1983

- Accept responsibility for the consequences of design decisions upon human well-being, the viability of natural systems and their right to co-exist.
- Understand the limitations of design. No human creation lasts forever and design does not solve all problems. Those who create and plan should practice humility in the face of nature. Treat nature as a model and mentor, not as an inconvenience to be evaded or controlled.⁷

The implementations of these principles are symbiotic. Preservation of open space along the Nashoba Brook riparian (streamside) corridor that enhances water quality in the brook and Ice House Pond also provides an area for passive recreation; creating a walkable district decreases motor vehicle traffic, thereby enhancing air quality; design standards that encourage attractiveness encourage the creation of landscaped areas that can be planted to treat parking lot runoff and foster wildlife.

Concepts presented in this section of the East Acton Village Plan primarily come from the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program, the Low Impact Development (LID) Center, the Massachusetts Riverways Program, Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan 2002-2007 (OSRP), and other sources as cited. LEED and LID are described in more detail below.

Based on the Hannover Principles, LEED Green Building Rating System "is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. LEED was created to

- Define 'green building' by establishing a common standard of measurement
- Promote integrated, whole-building design practices
- Recognize environmental leadership in the building industry
- Stimulate green competition
- Raise consumer awareness of green building benefits
- Transform the building market

LEED provides a complete framework for assessing building performance and meeting sustainability goals. Based on well-founded scientific standards, LEED emphasizes state of the art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. LEED recognizes achievements and promotes expertise in green building through a comprehensive system offering project certification, professional accreditation, training and practical resources."⁸

⁷ William McDonough Architects, 1992

⁸ http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp

Any development or redevelopment in the EAV area complies with the intent of LEED Credit 2, as EAV is an area “with existing infrastructure.”⁹

Low Impact Development (LID) promotes “an ecologically friendly approach to site development and storm water management that aims to mitigate development impacts to land, water and the air. The approach emphasizes the integration of site design and planning techniques that conserve the natural systems and hydrologic functions of a site.”¹⁰

Open space is an integral part of a healthy village environment, as manifested both in “pocket parks” that lend visual interest and respite for pedestrians as well as mini-refuges for local wildlife, and in larger tracts of land used for active and passive recreation. Acton’s OSRP incorporates the goals of MetroGreen, the land resources protection element of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s (MAPC) regional development plan¹¹, which are:

- “To preserve and protect critical land resources
- To shape the growth of the region
- To help preserve and enhance a “sense of place” for the region
- To fulfill the recreational needs of the region’s population and to provide access, when appropriate, to protected open areas.”¹²

Methods to preserve land for open space and recreation that were considered for the greater EAV area include Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), outright municipal purchase of a property, and Conservation Restrictions (CRs)¹³. Recommended methods to prioritize land for open space preservation include use of the OSRP’s list of desirable properties and use of the “Green-Space Acquisition Ranking Program (GARP)”.¹⁴ While this document addresses issues in the East Acton Village area, it would be appropriate to employ such methodology town-wide.

⁹ US Green Building Council, *LEED 2.1*, page 3

¹⁰ NAHB Research Center, *Builder’s Guide to Low Impact Development* (pamphlet)

¹¹ OSRP, p 20

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See the Open Space goals and objectives of this document for further information.

¹⁴ Grant Ian Thrall, Bert Swanson, Dom Nozzi, “Green Space acquisition and ranking program (GARP): a computer assisted decision strategy”, *Computers, Environment, and Urban Systems*, Vol. 12, pp. 161-184 This computerized ranking system utilizes a list of 15 criteria that are inserted into spreadsheets for easy parcel-to-parcel comparison

Goal E1: Protect and improve the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water resources in the East Acton Village Area.

Objective 1: Encourage development and redevelopment in the East Acton Village area that will not negatively impact EAV water resources, including the use of stormwater management methods and sewage disposal methods that minimize adverse environmental impact.

Objective 2: Facilitate, support, and /or maintain awareness of the cleanup of contaminated (21E) sites and other conditions that may pose a threat to ground and surface water in East Acton Village.

Objective 3: Support efforts to minimize both point and non-point source pollution, including nonpoint source pollution associated with motor vehicle traffic. Encourage environmentally sound business practices as a means to this end.

Issues

*“Acton’s greatest environmental problem, water, is the frame in which our future will take place”.*¹⁵

Acton’s Master Plan Update includes as goals protect and sustain Acton’s natural environment and resources, with an objective of ensuring the restoration of polluted environmental resources.¹⁶

The East Acton Village District straddles Great Road. To the northeast of the Village District is Pope Road Hill, and to the southwest are Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond. Soils within the District consist of sand and gravel deposits to a depth of 50 feet with a high water transmissivity (ability to transmit water through the soil) rate (see Soils Map, figure XX)¹⁷. Most parcels are deemed suitable for on-site sewage disposal systems, although two parcels, one abutting the Village and one within, require mounded leaching areas due to high groundwater¹⁸. The Acton Health Department monitors Nashoba Brook in East Acton Village on a regular basis for bacterial count¹⁹.

The Nashoba Brook Watershed is a 48 square mile area. The brook starts in Littleton and runs through Westford and Acton before joining Fort Pond Brook by Warner’s Pond in Concord. The EAV area is in the southeast corner of subbasin NB1, a 1,615 acre

¹⁵ *Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan*, p. 5

¹⁶ *Acton Master Plan Update*, p 41

¹⁷ Woodard and Curran, *Draft Acton Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan*.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Per Brent Reagor, RS, Acton Health Dept.

section of the watershed (see figure XX). Nashoba Brook is a cold water habitat perennial stream, annually stocked with trout by Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife. “There is evidence indicating Nashoba Brook and associated ground and surface water resources in the basin may already be impaired by existing water withdrawals and effective impervious surfaces. For example, a report issued by the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission (MWRC) in December 2001 titled Stressed Basins In Massachusetts classified the Nashoba Brook basin as *hydrologically stressed*. The purpose of the stressed basin classification is to flag areas which may require a more comprehensive and detailed review of environmental impacts or require additional mitigation.”²⁰

Ice House Pond is an artificial impoundment of Nashoba Brook, first dammed in the 17th century. It is a Class B waterbody, so designated for protection and propagation of fish and other wildlife, and for primary or secondary recreation. It is periodically stocked with trout for sport fishing purposes. The Master Plan Update notes that the pond is “still a major wildlife area, especially for waterfowl”²¹ Occasional spikes of *E-coli* bacteria counts in Ice House Pond, however, render it of questionable use for swimming. The Pond’s shallow depth and small size (12 acres) makes it unsuitable for powerboating, but it is a favored site for ice skating, fishing and canoeing. Ice House Pond suffers from continued eutrophication due to the high nutrient load from nearby and upstream wastewater systems and runoff. The shallow depth of the pond (3 feet before a dredging project, 5 feet after)²² leave the waterbody vulnerable to bottom-rooting aquatic plants. Per “The Ice House Pond Report”, in 1992, the pond was host to one of the worst infestations of water chestnut, *trapa notans*, on record. Probes showed sediment 2 feet deep and anoxic (no oxygen available in the water for breakdown bacteria) conditions led to incomplete degradation of plant debris. The nutrient load from decaying vegetation with effluent from private on-site sewage disposal systems led to cultural eutrophication (filling in) of the pond.²³ The pond was dredged in the late 1990’s and continues to be monitored. Unfortunately, as water chestnut is spread by many vectors, including seeds lodged in waterfowl feathers, it will be nearly impossible to completely eradicate the invasive alien plant and continual monitoring and weeding is required.

Several properties near East Acton Village, on Wetherbee Street and Pope, Flagg and Brabrook Roads, depend on private potable water supply wells. Several commercial properties along Nashoba Brook, most notably East Acton Mobil and Bursaw Gas and Oil, possess underground storage tanks that contain oil, gasoline, or other hazardous materials.

To mitigate the adverse effects of human activities and improve the general quality of ground and surface water, the Clean Water Act requires that several steps, both

²⁰ Letter from Julia Blatt, Executive Director, Organization for the Assabett River, to Kurt Jacobson, MADEP, February 14, 2003.

²¹ *Master Plan Update* p 165

²² T. Tidman, *Ice House Pond Report*, 1/93, conversation with Town Staff

²³ T Tidman, *Ice House Pond Report*, 1/93

structural and educational must be taken.²⁴ Proven technologies known as Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) need to be designed keeping the New England climate, the low-lying topography of the EAV area, and the proposed density of a village setting in mind. A holistic approach to environmental issues in the village district is desirable, including a mix of stormwater management solutions, innovative wastewater treatment, and “integrated sustainable design”²⁵ in building construction and business practices as outlined in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system. The Facility Managers’ Institute News, Spring 2003 Issue, quotes the USGBC (US Green Building Council) as follows: “Smart business people recognize that high performance green buildings produce more than just a cleaner, healthier environment. They also positively impact the bottom line. Benefits include: better use of building materials, significant operational savings and increased workplace productivity.”²⁶

Water quality preservation steps applicable to the East Acton Village District are discussed below.

Recommendations

Objective 1: Encourage development and redevelopment in the East Acton Village area that will not negatively impact EAV water resources, including the use of sewage disposal methods that minimize adverse environmental impact.

- a) **Reduce Impervious Cover.** Research has shown that stream degradation occurs at relatively low levels of impervious cover (10-20%) and 30% or more impervious cover can be “quite damaging.”²⁷ Impervious cover includes paved areas, decks and rooftops. “Imperviousness is one of the few variables that can be explicitly quantified, managed and controlled at each stage of development.”²⁸ In the Zoning Bylaw the required minimum for Collective Use of Parking Facilities in EAV should be 50% of the unshared parking requirement, and the required minimum for unshared parking should be reduced to 70% of the standard requirement. Other recommended methods to reduce impervious surfaces include shared driveways, angled parking, and taller buildings (taking up a smaller portion of the lot).²⁹ LEED standards dictate that a developer “Size parking capacity to meet, but not exceed, minimum local zoning requirements....”³⁰ (LEED Credit 4.4) and that building footprints be reduced (LEED Credit 5.2).

²⁴ *SmartGrowth and the Clean Water Act*

²⁵ energydesignresource.com e-news, Issue 5, April 29, 2000

²⁶ Sticky, Nick, “Buildings for a Livable Future”, the FMI News Spring 2003

²⁷ Smart Growth Primer

²⁸ *Site Planning for Urban Stream Protection*, www.cwp.org/SPSP

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ US Green Building Council, *LEED – Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, Green Building Rating System Version 2.1*, Revised 3/03 p. 8

- b) **Encourage the use of TDR's with the brook side of Great Road as sending area and the opposite side of Great Road as receiving area.** Most of the southwest section of East Acton Village lies within the legal riparian (stream side) zone of Nashoba Brook, a perennial stream. Regulations promulgated pursuant to the Rivers Act (MGL c 258, Acts of 1996) and the Wetlands Protection Act, (310 CMR 10.00) may restrict development possibilities in this area. It would benefit both the sending district in terms of maintaining water quality and complying with regulations, and the receiving district in terms of allowing greater density, to facilitate the intra-village Transfer of Development Rights process. Also, by being allowed to sell development rights that could not otherwise be exercised, the stream-side property owners reap financial benefits.
- c) **Encourage site plan design that, where possible, sets a pervious area aside for snow stockpiling at the farthest possible distance from waterbodies or wetlands.** Spring snowmelt has a particularly high level of pollutants, as an entire winter's buildup of salt and other pollutants in snow are released over a short time span. Further, acid snow can accumulate over the winter months...when it melts in spring, an entire season's acid content is released. This large pulse of pollution creates an acid shock in small streams and pools."³¹ To protect waterbodies, snow storage should be as far from the stream as possible and should be placed on a pervious surface so that the snowmelt can be filtered through vegetation and soils before reaching streams, ponds or wetlands.
- d) **Encourage site plan design that, where possible, and particularly in or near the riparian (streamside) zone of Nashoba Brook, provide shade over parking areas in order to keep runoff cool.** "Cold water can hold more oxygen than warm water....this keeps trout, salmon and other oxygen-lovers happy"³². Heated runoff adversely impacts the ability of a waterbody to hold oxygen, adversely impacting resident creatures in the brook. Parking lots will need to be designed to accommodate the root systems of larger trees. (LEED Credit 7.1 – Heat Island Effect, Non-Roof)
- e) **Educate the public as to the importance of high quality water bodies.** Public education is a part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) process currently undertaken by several municipal departments. Private organizations in the Greater Acton area, including the Stream Teams, Organization for the Assabet River, Clean Water Action, and Acton Citizens for Environmental Safety advocate for clean water. Ultimately the success of responsible water policy depends on the support of individuals in town and in the EAV area. Education about the significance of clean waterbodies to the health of the community and the impact of individuals' actions on water quality is an essential component of clean water policy.

³¹ Beck, Gregor Gilpin and Dobson, Clive. *Watersheds: A practical Handbook for Healthy Water*, 1999

³² Ibid

- f) Encourage the use of advanced wastewater treatment technologies.** Several new technologies have made on-site sewage disposal systems environmentally friendlier than in years past. Title 5, section 15.28 also notes that “Alternative systems, when properly designed, constructed, operated and maintained, may provide enhanced protection of public health, safety, welfare and the environment” (LEED Credit 2).
- g) Where possible and appropriate, encourage the use of shared septic systems.** In a village setting where clustering of buildings and collective use of parking is desired, shared systems may be appropriate. Title 5, Section 15.290(1) states “An approving authority may allow the use of shared systems, subject to any special conditions...for upgrade of existing systems, for new construction, or for increased flow to an existing system.” The additional regulatory and legal work required for the installation of shared systems may prove, in the long term, worthwhile.
- h) Establish a decentralized wastewater management body.** East Acton Village, with its potential for shared wastewater treatment systems, could become a decentralized wastewater management district, administered by the appropriate agency (e.g. a Board of Health or a Sewer Commission). One function of this entity is to plug the regulatory gap between municipal treatment plants, regulated directly by the DEP, and the small system that is subject to state-mandated standards but is difficult to manage locally by the property owner. In this fashion the agency is charged, at the local level, with regulatory and enforcement functions similar to the DEP. This entity may also be charged with hands-on operational and service oriented tasks, much like a local sewer authority or DPW.³³

³³ Shephard, Frank C., “Managing Wastewater” Prospects in Massachusetts for a Decentralized Approach – A discussion of options and requirements”. April 1996

Objective 2: Facilitate, support, and /or maintain awareness of the cleanup of polluted sites and other conditions that may pose a threat to ground and surface water in East Acton Village.

- a) **Inform developers or redevelopers interested in property in the EAV area of documents indicating the location of any substantial releases of oil or hazardous material and the contaminant plume locations (if any).** These documents are available, per the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (310 CMR 40.00), in the Health Department. Information about any nearby releases of oil or hazardous material should be made available to individuals inquiring as to the purchase and/or development of property in EAV. These individuals may also be referred to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup (MADEP BWSC) website for information, at <http://www.state.ma.us/dep/bwsc/sitelist.htm>.
- b) **Educate the Public via articles in the Municipal Quarterly and elsewhere regarding significant releases of oil or hazardous materials in EAV (as well as other areas of Acton).** Certain public notices are required per the Massachusetts Contingency Plan.
- c) **Support local nongovernmental organizations via information sharing and other means in their efforts to maintain awareness of the status of local spills.** These organizations currently include but are not limited to Acton Citizens for Environmental Safety (ACES), Acton Stream Teams, and Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), and the SuAsCo Watershed Community Council

Objective 3: Support efforts to minimize both point and non-point source pollution, including nonpoint source pollution associated with motor vehicle traffic.

“Stormwater quality tends to be extremely variable (EPA 1983; Driscoll et al 1990). The intensity (volume or mass of precipitation per unit of time) of rainfall often varies irregularly and dramatically. These variations in rainfall intensity affect ... phenomena that collectively determine the pollutant concentrations, pollutant forms, and [stormwater] flow rate observed at a given monitoring location at any given moment....In addition, the complexity of introducing a structural management practice can greatly affect hydraulics and constituent concentrations in complex ways....Effluent quality is the best current measure of overall BMP performance.”³⁴

³⁴ EPA-821-C-02-005, Urban Stormwater BMP Performance Monitoring: A Guidance Manual for Meeting the National Stormwater BMP Database Requirements, 4/02

Massachusetts Stormwater Policy and Regulations dictate that “no stormwater conveyances may discharge untreated stormwater or cause erosion in wetlands or waters, and peak discharge rates may not be more after than before development.”³⁵

The New England climate presents particular design challenges to stormwater systems, including:

- extreme cold can cause pipes to burst
- thick layers of ice can form on top of some BMP structures
- cold weather creates anoxic conditions on pond bottoms due to water density – water is densest at 39°F
- particulate matter settles more slowly in cold, dense water
- frost heaves cause structures to crack
- spring melt causes high runoff volume
- sand in snow piles can smother or fill structural BMPs³⁶

a) To ensure consistency, incorporate Massachusetts Stormwater Management Policies in their entirety into the Acton Zoning Bylaw.

b) Design stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) to work effectively in the New England climate. The Acton Engineering Department oversees the design of stormwater systems. While open channels, ponds, and constructed wetlands are considered the most effective BMPs for colder climates,³⁷ they may not be compatible with the space constraints of a village district.

c) Ensure that the design of structural stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) are compatible with both Massachusetts standards and a village setting.

Elements of a village setting that can impact the choice of stormwater BMPs include:

- *Village districts are somewhat dense.* Space constraints can render some stormwater BMPs (such as detention basins) incompatible with other features of a village district. Detention basins need to be carefully integrated with other features of the village. Some Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management techniques, referred to as Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) may be appropriate for village districts. IMPs reduce runoff by integrating stormwater controls throughout the site in many small, discrete units.³⁸ Rooftop runoff can be manageable through storage, reuse (such as dry wells or rainbarrels), and/or redirection to

³⁵ B. Eisenberg, “Massachusetts Stormwater Management Policy/Regulations: Development, Implementation and Refinement”

³⁶ Center for Watershed Protection, “Cold Climate Stormwater” www.cwp.org

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Low Impact Development Strategies: An Integrated Design Approach

pervious surfaces.³⁹ Vegetated rooftops that mitigate roof runoff have been installed as far north as Toronto, Canada⁴⁰ (LEED 6.1).

- *Village districts need to be pedestrian-friendly.* Installation of attractive bioretention areas in parking lots should be encouraged to trap and mitigate runoff from upgradient impervious surfaces. “Bioretention utilizes soils and both woody and herbaceous plants to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff.”⁴¹ A study in Maryland has shown that a \$4,500 retrofit of a 38x12 foot vegetated island can treat the pollutants in a half-acre of parking lot.⁴² Bioretention areas may be sited in such a way as to aid in traffic calming and encourage pedestrian use of the village. They may be adjacent to and connecting with vegetated areas on the perimeter of a lot.
- *Village districts should have open spaces for public gatherings.* Pedestrian plazas may be grassed or perviously paved, which encourages stormwater infiltration instead of generating runoff.
- *Village districts should have regularly spaced items of visual interest (landscaping, store windows, architectural details, benches, etc).* Streetscapes may be designed to minimize, capture and reuse stormwater runoff. Planting spaces should be provided in site plans to promote healthy street trees while capturing and treating stormwater.

More traditional stormwater BMPs may also be appropriate for some of the densely developed sites in the village district, or a mixture of BMPs or IMPs could serve as well. Stormwater Management Standards dictate that BMPs, to the extent practicable, must include an extended detention pond, a water quality swale, dry wells for rooftop runoff, and sand or organic filter pretreatment devices.⁴³ It may be desirable to construct shared stormwater management facilities in order to promote pedestrian and traffic flow and to lend an appropriate village ambiance.

d) Implement non-structural stormwater BMPs.

Non-structural BMPs should be a part of an overall stormwater management plan. These include:

- Education – efforts to inform the public and businesses about the importance of protecting stormwater from inappropriate use, storage and disposal of pollutants, toxics, household products, etc. The ultimate goal is behavioral change. Educational efforts include meetings, brochures and pamphlets, seminars, etc. The Board of Health, the Conservation Commission, and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are of great assistance in educational efforts.

³⁹ Redevelopment Roundtable Consensus Agreement – Smart Site Practices for Redevelopment and Infill Projects

⁴⁰ EPA-841-B-00-005D, *Vegetated Roof Cover*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

⁴¹ USEPA Storm Water Technology Fact Sheet: *Bioretention*. EPA 832-F-99-012, September 1999.

⁴² EPA-841-B-00-005A, *Bioretention Applications*

⁴³ MADEP, *Stormwater Management Vol. 1*, 3/97

- Maintenance – regular catch basin cleaning, street and parking lot sweeping, road and pavement repair, and ditch cleaning should be practiced by the Acton Highway Department and private property owners.
 - Source control – keeping rainfall from contacting pollutant-laden surfaces and preventing pollutant-laden runoff from leaving the site⁴⁴
- e) **Implement pet waste clean-up program.** Dog waste is a potent potential source of bacterial and nutrient pollution, as well as a general aesthetic nuisance. Surveys have indicated that most pet owners do not realize that pet wastes contribute to nutrients to local water bodies.⁴⁵ The pet waste issue is a town-wide problem and promulgation of regulations may be appropriate. Installation of pet waste receptacles in public green spaces is an effective but maintenance-intensive control measure. Signage installation can also be an effective part of an education campaign. Societal influences that may encourage “pooper-scoopers” include personally directed complaints from community members, sanitary collection methods, convenient disposal locations, and fines.⁴⁶
- f) **Encourage participation in the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System.** LEED Credit 6.1 deals with Stormwater Management: Rate and Quantity. The LEED intent is to “limit disruption and pollution of natural water flows by managing stormwater runoff”.⁴⁷
- g) **Ban non-emergency motorized craft in Ice House Pond.** “Gasoline and oil entering our waterways is a major problem because most outboard motors are two-stroke engines, “which release up to 20 to 30 percent of their gas/oil mixture unburned directly into the water.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid p 178

⁴⁵ Center for Watershed Protection, “A Survey of Residential Nutrient Behavior in the Chesapeake Bay”, July, 1999

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ LEED Guide p. 11

⁴⁸ EPA NE: Question of the Month: Do Motorboat Engines Cause Water Pollution?
www.epa.gov/region01/questions/archive/200106_boatpollution.html

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E1

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E1.1a*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to reduce parking required within the EAV Village District to 50% of that presently required if shared parking is used and reduce the unshared parking required to 70% of current required parking.	High	Zoning Bylaw Changes	PB, TM	Minor	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
E1.1b	In EAV, encourage clustering of buildings and tracts of shared open space to reduce total impervious surface.	High		PB, BOS	Minor	Ongoing	BOS, PB
E1.1c	Decrease impervious surfaces by encouraging efficient design of parking spaces.	Medium		PB, BOS	Moderate	Ongoing	PB, BOS
E1.1d*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to factor in a “bonus” of 25% for TDRs sold from the parcels along the riparian (streamside) corridor along Great Road to the other side of Great Road.	High	Zoning Bylaw Changes	PB, TM	Moderate	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB, BOS
E1.1e	Encourage snow stockpiling on pervious surfaces as far away as possible from waterbodies and wetlands.	Medium	DEP Snow Disposal Guidelines		Minor	Ongoing	MassHighway, Highway, Property Owners
E1.1f*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to factor in a density bonus of .05 FAR for LEED Certification.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes, LEED 2.1	PB, TM	Minor	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB, BOS

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E1.1g	Require the planting of shade trees around the perimeter of parking areas to keep them cool, particularly near wetlands or waterbodies, and discourage the removal of mature trees in these areas.	Medium		PB, BOS, Tree Warden	Minor	Ongoing	PB, BOS
E1.1h	Educate the business owners in the EAV area, as well as the public at large, to the importance of maintaining quality waterbodies.	Medium			Moderate	Ongoing	ConsCom, BOH, NGOs, EAVO
E1.1i	Establish decentralized wastewater management body.	Medium	Managing Wastewater	BOS	Moderate	2008	BOS
E1.2a	Inform developers or redevelopers interested in property in the EAV area of documents indicating the location of any substantial releases of oil or hazardous material and the contaminant plume locations (if any).	Low			Minor	Ongoing	BOH, Natural Resources
E1.2b	Educate Public via articles in the Municipal Quarterly and elsewhere regarding significant releases of oil or hazardous materials in EAV (as well as other areas of Acton)	Low			Minor	Ongoing	BOH, ConsCom, NGOs, AWD
E1.2c	Support local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) via information sharing and other means in their efforts to maintain awareness of the status of local spills.	Low			Minor	Ongoing	ConsCom, BOH, BOS

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E1 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E1.3a	Incorporate Massachusetts Stormwater Management Policies in their entirety into the Acton Zoning Bylaw.	High		PB, TM	Minor	Spring 2005	PB
E1.3b	Design stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and Integrated Management Practices (IMPs) to work effectively in the New England climate.	High		PB, BOS	Minor	Ongoing with development & redevelopment	ConsCom, Engineering, Highway, BOS, PB, BOH
E1.3c*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to permit waiving parking lot landscaping dimensional requirements if landscaped areas are consolidated for the purposes of parking lot runoff bioretention and the minimum dimensions of said areas are 38x12 feet.	High	Zoning Bylaw changes	PB, TM	Moderate	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB
E1.3d	Implement non-structural stormwater BMPs.	Medium			Moderate	2005	BOH, ConsCom, NGOs
E1.3e	Implement pet waste clean-up program.	Medium			Minor	2005	BOH
E1.3f*	Encourage participation in the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes, LEED 2.1		Minor	Ongoing	BOS (site plan), PB
E1.3g*	Amend Town Bylaw to ban non-emergency motorized craft in Ice House Pond.	Medium	Town Bylaw changes	BOS	Minor	Spring 2004	EAVPC, Municipal Properties, Police

Goal E2: Enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the EAV area.

Objective 1: Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to, between and within recreation and conservation areas, e.g. the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

- Complete construction of sidewalks, paths, and crosswalks to improve connectivity and access as described in the Transportation and Infrastructure section of this document.
- Raise public awareness about the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the EAV Green
- Provide access to future recreational opportunities, e.g. sidewalks along Wetherbee Street.

Objective 2: Provide and encourage recreational opportunities in the EAV Area such as skating, cross-country skiing, hiking, fishing and canoeing.

- Ensure that a portion of the Morrison land remains forested, with enhanced trails to achieve a balance of passive and active recreation on that parcel.
- Establish, construct, and continually enhance the EAV Green.
- Support the development of playing fields on a portion of the Morrison property.
- Encourage small scale recreational and leisure activities and opportunities throughout the village, e.g. game tables, fountains, playgrounds, hopscotch.

Issues, Recommendations, and Strategies

East Acton Village once shared many of the desirable characteristics of a village. It now, though, has no real, defined center. It has been swallowed up by the strip mall/commercial growth along Great Road. While there are no undeveloped parcels of significant size within the EAV boundaries, there are several parcels surrounding the village that bear careful attention for the future. These land parcels are mainly located along the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is a pedestrian and bicycle trail planned to extend from Lowell to South Sudbury. The East Acton portion (4.5 miles) of the proposed trail follows the old Penn Central Railroad right-of-way alongside Nashoba Brook. The trail will connect several of the conservation and recreational parcels along its length. Two properties, Ice House Pond and the Morrison Property (116 Concord Road), along with the Woodland Cemetery, represent a wildlife corridor through to the Acton Arboretum. Part of the goal is to preserve and carefully manage these parcels in keeping with the village character and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities in the village.

Currently, there are no outdoor recreational facilities within the EAV District. However, there are several privately owned recreational areas just outside the EAV district that provide a variety of opportunities for sports enthusiasts. Ice House Pond (a twelve-acre impoundment of Nashoba Brook) provides several low-key forms of recreation. Winter activities include skating and ice fishing. Warmer weather finds people fishing, row-

boating, canoeing and bird watching. The Nashoba Brook runs south from the pond through the village to Concord. These areas both support an active and important water and wildlife habitat.

The proposed EAV Green is located on the northwest side of the Great Road and Concord Road intersection. It will provide a gateway to EAV and Ice House Pond as well as an area for people to gather around benches and plantings. A conceptual plan for the Green exists and the Town should make implementation of this plan a top priority. Also, the realization of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will bring many to the village who will find it a convenient and scenic rest stop. A feasibility study for the Rail Trail has been completed and efforts should be made to support its implementation. The soccer fields on Concord Road, while outside the village, are accessible from the village by sidewalk. The fields are Town-owned as part of the Woodland Cemetery property. The land is currently leased to the Recreation Department on an annual basis. Eventually, this area will be used for cemetery purposes. The future improvement of the Morrison property will provide significant draw to this already growing recreational area. There are preliminary plans from the Conway School of Design for ball fields and for improved trails within the forested area. The 5 Year Open Space and Recreation Plan 2002-2007 (OSRP) states that "funds will be sought for the final design and construction of athletic fields at the Morrison Farm."⁴⁹

There are several tracts of open space within and proximate to EAV. Two of these parcels, a 5 ¹/₃ acre parcel and a 27 ³/₄ acre parcel located on Wetherbee Street are privately owned and currently tax-sheltered under Massachusetts Forestry Laws. They are allowed reduced property tax status in return for retaining the land open for forestry. Also, there are two large parcels of fields on either side of Wetherbee Street at the Route 2 intersection that bear careful consideration. The Town owns conservation land on the west side of Wetherbee Street and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns the open fields on the east side. These fields are currently leased to the Department of Corrections to grow cattle fodder. All the fields are zoned conservation (ARC – Agriculture Recreation Conservation). Acton, and EAV residents in particular, have identified the preservation of open space as a means to increase the Town's recreational potential, protect the Town's natural resources, and maintain Acton's remaining rural character. The OSRP states "If any of these fields become available, the town's highest priority should be to purchase them from the state, as was done with the Wetherbee Street parcel, keep them in agriculture and as a scenic overlook."⁵⁰

There are several improvements that will help to maintain and enhance the outdoor recreation opportunities within the village area. With the proposed Rail Trail and future field and trail development of the Morrison Property, it will provide a balance of commercial development and recreational use in the EAV district to contribute to a viable village. Consequently, the appropriate infrastructure will need to be in place to support this additional use. Currently, sidewalks do not exist with any consistency, and

⁴⁹ *Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2002-2007*. Page 6

⁵⁰ *Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2002-2007*. Page 48

where they do exist, conditions vary. There are no current cyclist facilities. There are no buffers between the sidewalks and road. There are no crosswalks on Great Road within EAV. The needed improvements to sidewalks as identified in the EAV Transportation and Infrastructure section will provide the critical pedestrian connections to the village. Finally, access to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is crucial. Two possibilities exist: t the intersection of Concord Road and Great Road and Wetherbee Street and Great Road. Both lend themselves to being gateways to and from the rail trail.

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E2

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E2.1a	Construct or reconstruct sidewalks to improve pedestrian access within, to and from EAV as described in the VHB Transportation Study Pages 49, 63, 66.	High		BOS, MassHighway	Major	2004-2010	Highway, MassHighway, Property Owners
E2.1b	Raise public awareness of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and EAV Green via signage, letters to newspapers, public meetings, brochures available at kiosk, library and town hall, public meetings and events.	High	BFRT Plan	BOS (signage)	Moderate	2004	EAVO, BFRT Committee
E2.2a	Ensure that a substantial portion of the Morrison land is left in its natural state to achieve a balance of passive and active recreation on the parcel.	High	Conway School of Design Plan Excerpt	BOS	Minor	2005	Municipal Properties, Natural Resources
E2.2b	Support the development of playing fields on a portion of the Morrison property.	High	Conway School of Design Plan Executive Summary	BOS, TM	Major	2005	Municipal Properties, Natural Resources
E2.2c	Encourage the Open Space and Recreation Committee to have an EAV Resident on the Committee.	High		BOS	Minor	Ongoing	BOS, OSRC
E2.2d	Establish, construct, and continually enhance the EAV Green.	High	EAV Green Conceptual Plan	BOS	Major	2004	Municipal Properties, Highway, Volunteers

Goal E3: Protect, enhance, and manage open spaces that have value as aesthetic, agricultural, recreational, wetland, flood control and/or wildlife resources.

Objective 1: Promote creation and enhancement of open spaces for public use.

Objective 2: Encourage protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

Objective 3: Support the establishment of a protected green belt along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond.

Objective 4: Promote cleanup of debris from private and public spaces.

Objective 5: Raise public awareness of the natural resources in the EAV area and their benefits to the EAV community.

Issues

Respondents to the East Acton Village Resident Survey, when asked what about the desirability of uses “if properties become available in or near the current EAV Zoning District” strongly favored (72%) open space and parks. Business and property owners also favored open space to some degree – 10 respondents found the use undesirable, 19 were neutral, and 16 believed open space and parks to be a desirable use.⁵¹

“Why protect open space?” In short, land conservation can create more healthy, livable, economically sound communities. Consider these benefits:

- *Open space is good for the bottom line....*Real estate analysts predict long-term economic advantage will go to communities that are able to guide growth using land conservation and other smart-growth measures.
- *Open space attracts home buyers.* Open space and trails are among the top community features home buyers look for when choosing a home....
- *Open space protects public health.* Land use practices that create runoff are some of the biggest threats to public drinking water supplies.
- *Open space protects the environment.* By protecting open space, forestlands, and wetlands, communities protect endangered species habitat and keep the air and water clean....
- *Open space can secure our quality of life and our lifestyle.* With a community’s most treasured places preserved, so too are its character and quality of life.”⁵²

⁵¹ http://www.town.acton.ma.us/eav/eav_residential_survey.htm,

<http://www.town.acton.ma.us/eav/Desirability%20Bus.htm>

⁵² Trust for Public Land and National Association for Counties, *Local Greenprinting for Growth*, p. 6-7 (date?)

Very little green space remains in the EAV zoning district proper. The only unmanaged spaces exist in a narrow margin along Nashoba Brook; this greenbelt is critical to the health of the riparian (streamside) habitat. The proposed EAV Green on the corner of Concord and Great Roads as designed by a Commonwealth grant-funded consultant (The Cecil Group) would be a public space that includes a landscaped green space, a seating area, and an informational kiosk. The parking area of Colonial Spirits Plaza has recently been redeveloped to include vegetated islands and lawn and to create a pedestrian plaza area.

The EAV's immediate surroundings present a mixed bag: there are commercial properties to the east set far back from Great Road with large steep green buffer areas between the roadway and buildings, a strip of commercial properties along Nashoba Brook comprised of a sea of asphalt broken only by structures, residential areas, light industrial areas and the open space of the Morrison land. Substantial tracts of woods and fields owned by private citizens, the Town, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are located along Wetherbee Street, which connects EAV to Route 2 West. Of all these properties, only the Acton Conservation Land on Wetherbee Street is currently protected as open space. The Morrison land is classified "general municipal" although currently planned for recreational use. The Moritz property on Wetherbee Street is currently in forestry use under Chapter 61 but could be developed in the future. The substantial tract of Commonwealth-owned agricultural land that gives Acton a rural feel from Route 2 could be subject to sale or development by the Commonwealth. The Open Space Recreation Plan (OSRP) emphasizes that "if any of these fields become available, their purchase from the State should be a high priority".⁵³

The Acton Master Plan and the East Acton Village Plan intend to discourage sprawl by concentrating development into a more intimate, centralized area, surrounded by open space and less dense development that will protect environmentally sensitive areas while defining the village and better serving the social, cultural, financial and environmental goals of the community. Small pockets of open space should also be located within East Acton Village to provide visual interest, wildlife mini-habitats, and respite for people. Further development of East Acton Village in this manner will provide a more pedestrian-friendly area with open spaces where friends and neighbors can meet, shop, enjoy refreshments, relax, and foster a stronger sense of community.

Recommendations

Objective 1: Promote the creation and enhancement of open spaces for public use.

- a) **Encourage the creation of smaller public open spaces and "pocket parks" within EAV.** Vegetated islands in parking lots lend eye appeal to a shopping district. Small raised gardens along the fronts and sides of buildings also lend eye appeal. Both planting areas can be host to a variety of birds and butterflies. Small pedestrian plazas, or open spaces within the shopping district, encourage gatherings of people; if these areas are grassed and landscaped, they add wildlife habitat value.

⁵³ OSRP p. 48

- b) **Using the OSRP priority list and other ranking tools, protect appropriate existing open space and create new open space by the “reclamation” of high priority parcels in the greater EAV area.** There are several developed parcels within the 200-foot riparian buffer zone as defined by the Massachusetts Rivers Act. These parcels are still vulnerable to further development. With the use of TDRs and PDRs, many parcels smaller than those usually approved for Conservation Restrictions may be protected from denser development. Eventually, with the use of Community Preservation Act funds as they become available, such parcels may be purchased outright by the Town or a private land conservation organization such as Sudbury Valley Trustees or Acton Conservation Trust. Smaller sensitive parcels, such as the strip of small buildings along Nashoba Brook, may be relatively affordable yet have a high environmental protection value. It may be desirable for the Town or a conservation organization to purchase these properties for their open space value as they come on the market.
- c) **Ensure protection of larger open spaces in the greater EAV area by outright purchase, Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), Conservation Restrictions (CRs), or Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs).** Larger parcels may also be protected by the granting of a Conservation Restriction (CR) by the landowner. TDRs and PDRs are also viable means of protecting larger tracts of land and may be more economically viable than outright purchase.

Objective 2: Encourage the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. The Ice House Pond basin is a corridor for white-tailed deer, coyote, red fox and fisher. More permanent residents include Canada geese, wood ducks, mallards, muskrat and beaver. River otters, opossum, several species of turtle, snake, frog, and fish also live in and around the pond. Over one hundred bird species have been seen from the Dam House in the spring.⁵⁴ South of Ice House Pond, toward Route 2, nesting bluebirds can be found in the appropriate season.⁵⁵ While certain species require a level of remoteness from human activity, many birds, insects, and small mammals are content with mini-habitats if they contain appropriate food and shelter.

- a) **Encourage participation in LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System.** LEED Credit 2 requires that development be channeled to “protect greenfields and preserve habitat and natural resources.”⁵⁶ This LEED credit refers to “greenprinting”, a smart growth strategy that emphasizes land conservation to ensure quality of life, clean air and water, recreation and economic health.⁵⁷ Potential incentives include an appropriate increase in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or allowance for extra signage to advertise LEED status.

⁵⁴ www.damhouse.com

⁵⁵ OSRP p. 45-46

⁵⁶ LEED 2.1 p.3

⁵⁷ Trust for Public Land and National Association for Counties, “Local Greenprinting for Growth”, p. 6

- b) Publicize and encourage participation in habitat creation/preservation programs such as the National Wildlife Federation’s (NWF) Backyard Habitat Program and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) Urban Wildlife Sanctuary Program.** Both HSUS and NWF are long-established national organizations. NWF has posted an on-line course on its website at <http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/>. Owners of Certified Habitats may publicize themselves by ordering a 9x12 inch sign made out of recycled aluminum. Business owners may also leverage the creation of habitats into publicity by sponsoring habitat creation events on their property and enlisting the participation of local Boy Scout, Girl Scout, and Campfire groups. The HSUS describes its program as providing “individuals and communities the opportunity to assess and improve their property’s usefulness as a wildlife habitat.”⁵⁸ HSUS provides instructions for creation of a sanctuary and a certificate, and has signs available for purchase. The HSUS and NWF programs are similar. The HSUS program is described in detail at <http://www.hsus.org/ace/12006>. These programs, in fact, should be encouraged town-wide.
- c) Encourage and support establishment of a greenbelt for habitat purposes along Nashoba Brook (see Objective 3).** Riparian (streamside) habitats support a wide variety of bird, mammal, insect and plant life.

Objective 3: Support the establishment of a protected green belt along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond.

The Connecticut River Joint Commissions noted that riparian (streamside) buffers have many desirable attributes:

- *Wildlife Habitat.* The distinctive habitat offered by riparian buffers is home to a multitude of plant and animal species, including those rarely found outside this narrow band of land influenced by the river [or stream]. Continuous stretches of riparian buffer also serve as wildlife travel corridors.
- *Aquatic Habitat.* Forested riparian buffers benefit aquatic habitat by improving the quality of nearby waters through shading, filtering, and moderating stream flow. ...It can also create stepped pools, providing cover for fish and their food supply while reducing erosion by slowing flow.
- *Recreation and Aesthetics.* Forested buffers are especially valuable in providing a green screen along waterways, blocking views of nearby development and allowing privacy for riverfront landowners. Buffers can also provide such recreational opportunities as hiking trails and camping.”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ <http://www.hsus.org/ace/12053>

⁵⁹ Connecticut River Joint Commissions, “Introduction to Riparian Buffers”, p. 1

- a) **Prioritize land areas along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond for protection as open space.** A narrow green belt currently exists along most of the length of Nashoba Brook habitat, however, it is interrupted in the EAV area. Ideally, for environmental protection, stream buffers should be 300 feet. The Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act places a 200-foot riparian (streamside) area under the jurisdiction of local Conservation Commissions, but a buffer as narrow as 35-50 feet is considered minimal effective space in most cases.⁶⁰ Acquisition of privately owned property by voluntary sale may be desirable in order to establish a more extensive greenbelt. Since outright purchase of multiple properties along the entire length of Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond in the EAV area is financially infeasible in current economic conditions, prioritization using predetermined guidelines and incorporating the Open Space and Recreation Plan's current priority list is desirable.
- b) **Enable protection of prioritized parcels by municipal or private agencies, such as the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), etc.** There are several methods to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive real estate, including the generation of Conservation Easements or Restrictions (CRs), a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), and a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR).

Conservation Restrictions (CR) "enable a landowner to protect natural resources on his/her property while retaining full ownership and the ability to sell or convey the property subject to the terms of the restriction. A CR is a voluntary, legally binding, permanent agreement between a landowner (grantor) and a holder (grantee), usually a public agency or a private non-profit land conservation organization. The grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the purpose of protecting certain conservation values. The conservation restriction is recorded at the Registry of Deeds and runs with the title. Certain income, estate or real estate tax benefits may be available to the grantor of a conservation restriction."⁶¹ CRs are a very flexible tool with which landowners (grantors) can negotiate with the entity to hold the restriction (grantee - usually a municipal body or land conservation group, such as ACT or SVT) as to the allowed activities, and they require State-level approval.

TDRs entail the selling of development rights from a parcel in a legally designated "sending" district to another parcel in a legally designated "receiving" district. Development rights can be sold from riparian areas to less environmentally sensitive parcels in EAV. PDRs are the outright purchase of the development rights, usually by a governmental body or a conservation

⁶⁰ Ibid p. 3

⁶¹ Massachusetts Audubon Society, "Legislative Priorities", [http://www.massaudubon.org/News_& Action/Priorities/cons_restr_amndaact.html](http://www.massaudubon.org/News_&_Action/Priorities/cons_restr_amndaact.html)

organization, and they cannot be used on any parcel. The value of the development rights in both cases is negotiated according to the difference between current and potential use of the land and the resulting increase in real estate value due to potential more intensive development. Deed restrictions apply in both cases on the “sending” or “selling” parcel.

Objective 4: Promote cleanup of debris from private and public spaces. Aside from being unsightly, litter and debris can leach contaminants and harm wildlife by ingestion or entanglement.

- a) **Designate a location within East Acton Village for Acton Cleanup Day.** Cleanup Day is an annual event currently promoted and managed by the Acton Conservation Trust. Establishing a sign-in and drop-off location in East Acton Village would render EAV as visible as other sections of town for Cleanup Day. Should the Town-wide cleanup be discontinued in the future, it is strongly recommended that an East Acton Cleanup event be organized to take its place.
- b) **Encourage the cleanup of larger debris in the EAV area by establishing an award for improved properties.** This award could be publicized in the local press, “Municipal Quarterly”, or by use of temporary signage.
- c) **In the Municipal Quarterly, The Beacon, EAV Green kiosk and elsewhere, publicize the detrimental effects of litter and debris on the environment and wildlife.** Small articles regarding the hazardous materials that can leach out of certain discarded containers as well as the danger to wildlife that might swallow plastic scraps, etc. will remind the public that litter is more than an aesthetic issue.

Objective 5: Raise public awareness of the natural resources in the EAV area and their benefits to the EAV community.

While the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is a document of vital importance to the greater Acton community, its readership will probably be somewhat narrow. Less extensive informational pieces distributed to a wider audience need to be published. Potential methods of informing the public include:

- a) **Publication of articles in the Municipal Quarterly.** This publication reaches a broad readership, but informational pieces need to be brief.
- b) **Requesting feature articles to be published in The Beacon.** Use of this widely-read publication requires buy-in from the newspaper staff and expenditure of money or a trip to a library to read.
- c) **Expansion/continuation of nature walks with the Town Natural Resources Department Director, or other qualified individual, on Wetherbee Street Conservation Land, Morrison Land, and in the future if established, the**

Nashoba Brook Greenway. These structured outings are a long-standing, popular means of raising the consciousness of Actonians to Acton's wildlife and open spaces.

- d) **Request publication of articles on the Nashoba Brook/Ice House Pond area in Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) newsletters and/or websites (Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), Stream Team, etc.)** OAR's interest in Nashoba Brook is evidenced by its Stream Quality board next to Concord Road; a discussion of the lands surrounding the brook would be a natural outgrowth of this project. As a land trust, ACT by definition is dedicated to open space preservation. The Steam Team maintains an attractive and informative website to publicize the conditions of Acton's streams.
- e) **Post informational pieces about open space in the EAV area in the EAV Green information kiosk and on the municipal website.** Once established, and particularly once the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail has been developed, the EAV Green should enjoy a great deal of public use. The planned kiosk can serve to educate visitors about the value of the open spaces in the greater EAV area.
- f) **Encourage the designers of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to include turn-out areas with appropriate informational signage near significant open spaces and habitats.** In this manner, users of the trail can safely view, enjoy, and learn about the surroundings.

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E3

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E3.1a*	Encourage creation of smaller public open spaces and “pocket parks” within the EAV area in design guidelines.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	TM	Moderate	Ongoing	PB, BOS
E3.1b	Using the OSRP priority list and other ranking tools, protect appropriate existing open space and create new open space by the “reclamation” of high priority parcels in the greater EAV area, by outright purchase, PDRs, CRs or TDRs.	High	OSRP List, GARP	TM	Major	Ongoing	PB, BOS, ConsCom, OSRC
E3.2a*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to factor in a density bonus of .05 for LEED Certification.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes, LEED 2.1	TM	Moderate	Spring 2004	EAVPC, PB, BOS
E3.2b	Publicize and encourage participation in programs such as the National Wildlife Federation’s Backyard Habitat Program and the Humane Society of the United States’s Urban Wildlife Sanctuary Program.	Medium	NWF Form		Minor	Ongoing	PB, Natural Resources, Volunteers,
E3.2c	Support the establishment of a protected green belt along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond by prioritization and acquisition of land areas.	High	OSRP Priority List	TM	Major	Ongoing	Planning, Natural Resources, OSRC, NGOs
E3.3a	Prioritize land areas along Nashoba Brooks and Ice House Pond for protection as open space.	High	OSRP List, GARP		Moderate	Ongoing	PB, ConsCom, OSRC
E3.3b	Enable protection of high priority parcels by municipal or private agencies by outright purchase or use of TDRs, CRs, or PDRs.	High		TM if municipal purchase	Major	Ongoing	BOS, NGOs, ConsCom, OSRC
E3.4a	Designate a location within East Acton Village for Acton Cleanup Day.	Medium			Minor	Spring 2004	EAVO, ACT, Volunteers

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E3.4b	Encourage cleanup of larger debris in the EAV area by establishing an award and a means of publicizing it.	Medium			Minor	Ongoing	EAVO, Volunteers
E3.4c	In the Municipal Quarterly, The Beacon, the EAV Green kiosk and elsewhere, publicize the detrimental effects of litter and debris on the environment and wildlife.	Medium			Minor	Ongoing	Natural Resources, Volunteers
E3.5a	Publish of articles in the <u>Municipal Quarterly</u> .	High			Minor	Ongoing	Natural Resources, Planning, Volunteers
E3.5b	Request feature articles to be published in <u>The Beacon</u> .	Medium			Minor	Ongoing	Volunteers
E3.5c	Continue to conduct nature walks with the Town Natural Resources Department Director or other qualified individual on Wetherbee Street Conservation Land, Morrison Land, and in the future if established, the Nashoba Brook Greenway.	Medium			Minor	Ongoing	Natural Resources, Volunteers
E3.5d	Request publication of articles on the Nashoba Brook/Ice House Pond area in the NGO newsletters and/or websites (Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), Stream Team, etc.).	Medium			Minor	Ongoing	Volunteers
E3.5e	Post informational pieces about Open space in the EAV area in the EAV Green information kiosk.	Medium		BOS	Moderate	Ongoing	Natural Resources, Planning, Volunteers

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E3 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E3.5f	Establish turnout areas along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail so that cyclists may enjoy the views of natural open space.	Medium					Natural Resources, Recreation

Goal E4: Protect and promote air quality in the EAV area.

Objective 1: Encourage and support the establishment of green spaces.

Objective 2: Ensure that existing and future development or redevelopment minimizes harmful and noxious air emissions.

Objective 3: Minimize pollutant effects associated with motor vehicle traffic while ensuring public safety.

Issues

The sprawl development, both commercial and residential, that has become so common throughout the region has dramatic impacts on air and water quality. Concentrating future growth in centers so as to make efficient and maximum use of existing infrastructure will help minimize the negative environmental effects on the Town and region. Also mitigating the air quality problems of the village are the green spaces around and throughout the area. Additional green spaces and landscaping, such as trees and grass, provide shade in the summer months and help purify the water and air. Trees have been shown to sequester most air pollutants from cars, including carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxide, ozone, and even particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter^{62,63}. The shade provided by trees in the summer reduces evaporative emissions from parked cars, and reduces the need for energy consumption for cooling cars and buildings. Improving the efficient flow of vehicles through the Village and limiting vehicle speed while in the Village will also help reduce air pollution due to traffic through the Village.

Recommendations

Appropriate levels of landscaping along the streets, throughout the parking areas and between businesses should be encouraged for air quality, aesthetics and a pedestrian-scale, friendly environment for customers and local residents. Design standards can encourage people to stay out of their cars and walk. Buildings and streetscapes should be sized to be comfortable for the pedestrian, with ample sidewalks and low sidewalk lighting, plenty of interesting storefronts for pedestrians, and ample green space and places to stop and rest. Businesses and developers should be encouraged to provide pedestrian plazas with ample greenery. The Town should fund the creation and maintenance of the Bruce Freeman Memorial Rail Trail along East Acton Village, and should ensure that a portion of the Morrison land remain in its current natural state.

Objective 1: Amend the Zoning Bylaw to incorporate Village Landscaping Guidelines. The Planning Board should adopt new landscaping guidelines for the Village District.

⁶² <http://www.coloradotrees.org/benefits.htm>, accessed December 8, 2003

⁶³ Nowak, David J. "The Effects of Urban Trees on Air Quality," USDA Forest Service, Syracuse, New York, November 1995 (<http://www.fs.fed.us/ne/syracuse/>)

These guidelines should include shade trees on Village roads and adequate green landscaping among buildings and along pedestrian ways to enhance the beauty of the Village, encourage pedestrian use, and help purify the air in the Village. The Planning Board should require all new development in the district to meet the landscaping guidelines. The Town should encourage existing developments in the district to move to the new guidelines whenever possible

The Town should work with the Massachusetts Highway Department, local developers, business owners and residents to line streets within the Village with shade trees and to place trees and greenery throughout the Village parking areas. All landscaping should use salt-tolerant and drought-tolerant native species.

Objective 2: Ensure that existing and future development or redevelopment minimizes harmful and noxious air emissions (see LEED sections on Energy and Atmosphere and Indoor Environmental Air Quality).

The Town will continue to enforce all zoning and environmental regulations, and work with state and federal authorities regarding state and federal regulations. The Town should encourage the use of devices on septic systems to mitigate noxious odors in the Village.

The Health Department should consider requiring odor control systems, such as carbon canisters, on commercial and residential septic and sewer vents that have been deemed to be an odor nuisance. The East Acton Village should be maintained as a pleasant environment for people, and any complaints regarding chronic wastewater odors should be addressed.

Objective 3: Minimize pollutant effects associated with motor vehicle traffic while ensuring public safety.

The Town should strive to maintain an even stream of traffic flow, at reduced speed, through East Acton Village. Traffic calming measures, such as on-street parking, traffic lights and crosswalks increase pedestrian safety and use, and should be considered to reduce energy consumption and pollution. Traffic flow through the Village should not be unduly hampered, however. The Town should work with the State to provide turning lanes, as well as sidewalks and street landscaping (see the Transportation and Infrastructure section for more details.) The Town should encourage and promote the establishment of a public transportation shuttle service between the Village and the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line, with possible expansion to other local areas as well.

Zoning should encourage the concentration of commercial and residential development in areas in and around the District, while limiting the development away from the District, to maximize the efficient use of District resources and infrastructure.

Currently the only public transportation available from EAV is a bus that makes one round trip daily into downtown Boston. More public transportation options, including shuttles to local destinations, should be encouraged as soon as they become economically viable. Traffic volume and resultant pollutants could be mitigated by reducing traffic volume by promoting the implementation of a public transportation network.

Implementation

The proposed Bruce Freeman Memorial Rail Trail has received widespread support from the community. The Town has funded a study for the development of the rail trail portion that is in Acton. The Town should continue supporting and funding the development of the rail trail. The rail trail will provide a non-polluting transportation alternative into and out of the village.

The Town must make a concerted effort to improve traffic flow and to calm traffic in the Village District. The major traffic route, Great Road (Great Road), is a State highway, and as such, will require State approval for any improvements to the roadway and in the highway layout. The Town must lobby MassHighway to implement traffic calming measures and improve traffic flow on Great Road. See the Transportation section for specific details regarding traffic mitigation recommendations.

The Town must encourage the use of pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation whenever possible. The Town should develop a schedule for the addition of crosswalks, on-street and/or collective use of parking, sidewalks, vehicle turning lanes and bicycle lanes, to encourage people to park their cars and use alternative forms of transportation within the Village.

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E4

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E4.1a	Ensure that a portion of the Morrison property remains in its natural state.	Medium	Draft Conway School of Design Plan	BOS	Moderate	2004	BOS, Municipal Properties
E4.1b*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to establish Village landscaping & plaza guidelines.	High	Special Provisions for EAV	Planning	Moderate	Spring 2004	Planning
E4.1c*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to allow for density bonus to Encourage participation in LEED Green Building Rating System.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes, LEED 2.1		Minor	Spring 2004	Engineering, EDC, Planning, BOH
E4.2a*	Amend Zoning Bylaw to allow for density bonus to Encourage participation in LEED Green Building Rating System.	Medium	Zoning Bylaw changes, LEED 2.1		Minor	Spring 2004	Engineering, EDC, Planning, BOH
E4.2b	Encourage control of odors from septic systems.	Low			Minor	Ongoing	BOH
E4.3a	Work with MassHighway to improve traffic flow to reduce pollution from idling vehicles.	Medium	Traffic Study	MassHighway	Major	Ongoing	Engineering, Highway
E4.3b	Work with Mass Highway to calm traffic to encourage pedestrian and bicycle use.	High	Traffic Study	MassHighway	Major	2006	Engineering, Highway
E4.3c	Provide turning lanes on Pope Road and Concord Road as suggested in the Transportation and Infrastructure section of this document.	High		MassHighway	Major	2006	Engineering, Highway
E4.3d	Construct sidewalks according to the recommendations in the Transportation and Infrastructure section of this document	High			Major, Ongoing	2004-2010	BOS

Recommended Strategies for Environment, Open Space and Recreation Goal E4 (cont'd)

Strategy Number	Strategy	Priority	Appendix Reference	Approval Required	Amount of Effort	Desired Completion Date	Person(s) Responsible
E4.3e	Support the implementation of a regional public transportation system as it becomes feasible.	Low		BOS, TM	Major, Ongoing	2008	BOS
E4.3f	Ensure the completion and integration of the BFRT into EAV.	Medium	BFRT Feasibility Study	BOS, TM	Moderate	2006	BOS, Recreation, Municipal Properties

CHAPTER 7: OTHER PROJECTS IN THE EAST ACTON VILLAGE PLANNING AREA

East Acton Village Green

On the northwestern corner of Concord Road and Great Road are two half-acre parcels that EAVPC is recommending to be turned into East Acton Village Green (“EAV Green”). The Town of Acton currently owns the parcels. These parcels have importance to the Town for the following reasons:

- Historically Significant
- Gateway to EAV
- Recreationally and Ecologically Significant

This section will speak to the importance of the EAV Green, the processes that EAVPC went through to arrive at the proposed EAV Green, the plan itself and the future of the EAV Green.

Why the EAV Green?

The one-acre area where the proposed EAV Green would be located has significant historic ties. The site was the location of the East Acton Railroad Depot. The Depot was part of the Lowell to Framingham railroad line and was founded in the late 1800’s. It was in operation until the mid-1930’s. The structure was torn down and the pieces were used to construct a house in South Acton. Figure XX is a photograph of the Depot before its demise. EAV still has a few structures remaining that have direct ties to the Depot. The telegraph pole shown in the photograph and railroad ties are still present on the site and should be preserved and maintained. The home of the last stationmaster (Arthur Raynor) of the Depot is located on the opposite side of Great Road from the EAV Green. This home is being restored by the current owner.

The EAV Green abuts Ice House Pond. The Pond was known for harvesting ice in the 1800’s through the 1950’s. At the east end of Ice House Pond, across Concord Road, was a Grist Mill that has been turned into a residence and can be seen from the proposed EAV Green.

The EAV Green is strategically located near the northwesterly edge of the village. These parcels would act as the gateway into the heart of the village. EAVPC is proposing that a sign be placed on the EAV Green that faces the east bound traffic on Great Road that would identify East Acton Village. Figure XX is a sample of a similar sign.

One of the two parcels is already zoned Agriculture, Recreation and Conservation (“ARC”). As part of the EAV plan, the second parcel is recommended to be rezoned from Limited Business to ARC. The EAV Green

abuts the Ice House Pond and is in close proximity to the Morrison Land, which is under review by the Town for future ARC uses. The proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (“BFRT”) would bisect the EAV Green and the EAV Green integrates the proposed trail into its design but would not dependent on the BFRT being completed.

Lastly, in the residential survey and the focus groups, the participants overwhelmingly desired open space within the village. The EAV Green will allow EAV businesses to give their employees an outdoor place to eat their lunch in the warmer weather. Users of the BFRT can stop and rest before continuing down the trail or over to the village. Neighbors can simply stop and enjoy the pond views.

What was the Process?

EAVPC formed a subcommittee to review the possibility of re-establishing a Green on the corner of Concord Road and Great Road. The committee drafted design criteria and approached three landscape designers. The firm selected informed the committee that State grants could be available for the design work. The committee applied to the Commonwealth and received a \$5,000 grant for the design of the EAV Green. The Commonwealth named The Cecil Group (one of the three firms originally selected) as the preferred designer.

The committee worked with The Cecil Group to incorporate the criteria that the EAVPC felt were important. Specifically, the design had to include the following elements:

- Gateway to East Acton
- Scenic rest-stop
- Educational enlightenment:
 - History of EAV
 - Natural feature
- Low-water/low maintenance/low impact on landscaping
- Compatible with the proposed BRFT

What is the design for EAV Green?

The current plan for EAV Green is located at Exhibit XX. The plan calls for a blue stone area at the former location of the train depot that corresponds to the footprint of the depot. Three of the four corners of the blue stone area would be framed with granite slabs that would double as benches. The fourth corner would be an informational kiosk that could display information about EAV’s history and current events in EAV.

There would be short walking paths that would connect the sidewalk along Concord Road, the blue stone area and the BFRT. A few granite benches would

be located along the paths. The paths would be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The EAV Green would only occupy approximately 25% of the site and would be located next to Concord Road and Ice House Pond. The remainder of the site would be undeveloped with the exception of the rail bed, which may be converted to the BFRT.

What next?

The Cecil Group estimated that if the Town contracted out all the construction work for the EAV Green, the cost would be approximately \$100,000. Members of EAVPC have been working with local EAV businesses to make donations or donations in kind to reduce the overall cost. As of this writing, a significant portion of the costs have been pledged from these businesses. Other potential funding sources include the Community Preservation Act, private donations, State grants, etc.

Since the Town of Acton owns the parcels, the final EAV Green design would require submission to the Board of Selectman for their approval. Also, because a portion of the EAV Green encroaches on the former rail line, which is now owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, approvals from the State would be required before any work can begin. There is no current timetable for the construction of the EAV Green, but it is EAVPC's desire to see the EAV Green completed in the next few years.

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

As described in the History Chapter, East Acton was once served by railroads, with a station located near the intersection of Concord and Great Roads. The tracks ran all the way from Framingham to Lowell and were used as recently as the early 1990's to bring supplies to Rex Lumber and Acorn Structures. After the tracks were no longer in use, ownership of the railroad right of way was transferred to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Transportation and Construction.

Now there is a plan to convert the unused railroad bed to a multi-use, paved path that will run the full 22 miles from Framingham to Lowell (near Cross Point Towers). It is currently referred to as "the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail" (BFRT) in honor of Bruce N. Freeman, a late State Representative from Chelmsford who championed the creation of this rail trail. Completion of the portion of the BFRT from Lowell through Westford is scheduled for 2004.

The Acton portion of the BFRT railroad bed is approximately 4.6 miles long. It begins in the north near the intersection of Main Street (Route 27) and Route 225 at the Carlisle town line. It then runs roughly along Main Street south to Great

Road, where it curves slightly southeast through East Acton to the Concord town line at Route 2. The majority of the BFRT in Acton is very near Nashoba Brook. For details on the proposed design and construction of the BFRT in Acton, see the comprehensive *Acton Rail Trail Feasibility Study*, recently drafted for the Town of Acton by Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike.

EAVPC strongly supports the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and sees it as a significant transportation, recreation, and historic asset for Acton and EAV. The main reasons are as follows.

First, there is strong support for the BFRT among residents and business owners. When East Acton residents and Town Meeting attendees were asked to rate their potential rail trail use, the majority said they expected to use the trail occasionally to very frequently. Almost half (48%) of East Acton residents said they expected to use the trail “Very Frequently.” Among the 46 respondents to the business survey, only two expected the BFRT to have an unfavorable effect on their business or property; 23 expected it to have a favorable effect.

Second, the BFRT will bring increased pedestrians and bicyclists to EAV and is an important part of making EAV more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly.

Third, the BFRT will provide residents an important and healthy route to travel to destinations in EAV (such as Nashoba Brook, Ice House Pond, the Morrison Land, and all the businesses in EAV), destinations along the southeastern part of Great Road and the northern part of Main Street (such as all the businesses along Great Road, Veterans Memorial Field, Nashoba Brook Conservation Area, the Bay Circuit Trail, and the North Acton Recreation Area), and eventually destinations to the north as far as Lowell. Once the Route 2 rotary is replaced, the BFRT is planned cross Route 2, allowing users of the trail to travel south to West Concord, Sudbury, and Framingham. It is particularly important to ensure that the BFRT safely crosses Route 2, because then it provides a convenient connection from East Acton to the West Concord train station, allowing people to begin and end their daily commute by walking or biking instead of driving. In addition to simply transportation, the BFRT will provide excellent recreational opportunities in East Acton; the trail is being designed to be appropriate for multiple non-motorized uses, including biking, walking, roller blading, cross-country skiing, etc.

Fourth, because it bisects the East Acton Village Green, the BFRT is a significant and highly visible part of the Green. The Green will be designed to provide a convenient place for people to stop and rest, learn about EAV history through the kiosk displays, and enjoy Ice House Pond.

Specific recommendations on how the BFRT fits into the EAV Plan can be found in the sections on Transportation and Infrastructure, Environment, and Village Character and Housing.

ACRONYMS

ACT	Acton Conservation Trust
AWD	Acton Water District
BFRT	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
BOH	Board of Health
BOS.....	Board of Selectmen
ConsCom	Conservation Committee
EAVO	East Acton Village Organization (proposed)
EAVPC	East Acton Village Planning Committee
EDC.....	Economic Development Committee
Engineering	Engineering Department
Highway.....	Highway Department
MassHighway	Massachusetts Highway Department
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSRC.....	Open Space and Recreation Committee
PB	Planning Board
Planning.....	Planning Department
TAC	Transportation Advisory Committee
TM	Town Meeting

GLOSSARY
(to be included)

**APPENDIX
(to be included)**