

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 All plans should be updated when parts of the plan become outdated or the direction of the Town has changed.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)**