



Acton 2020

Community Comprehensive Plan

Public Workshop 1
October 20, 2010





Tonight

- Welcome, Information, and Group Assignments
- Presentation
- Breakout Group 1 – 7:30 to 8:30
- Breakout Group 2 – 8:45 to 9:30
- Resume as a large group – 9:30 to 9:45
- Door prizes





Acton 2020 Comprehensive Plan

- The Planning Process
- Goals and Plan Elements
- Key Findings So Far





What is a Comprehensive Plan?

- “a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality” (MGL Ch 41 Sec 81D)
- A process that leads to a plan for action that is based on the town’s values and goals
- A set of priorities for addressing the full range of issues that town is facing.





The Planning Process





Phase I Community Outreach

- Purpose: to elicit the input of Acton residents and businesses:
 - What to preserve
 - What to change
 - What they are concerned about
 - What they hope to improve
- Used 1998 Plan Goals as starting point
- Product: *Emerging Vision and Goals for Acton's Future*





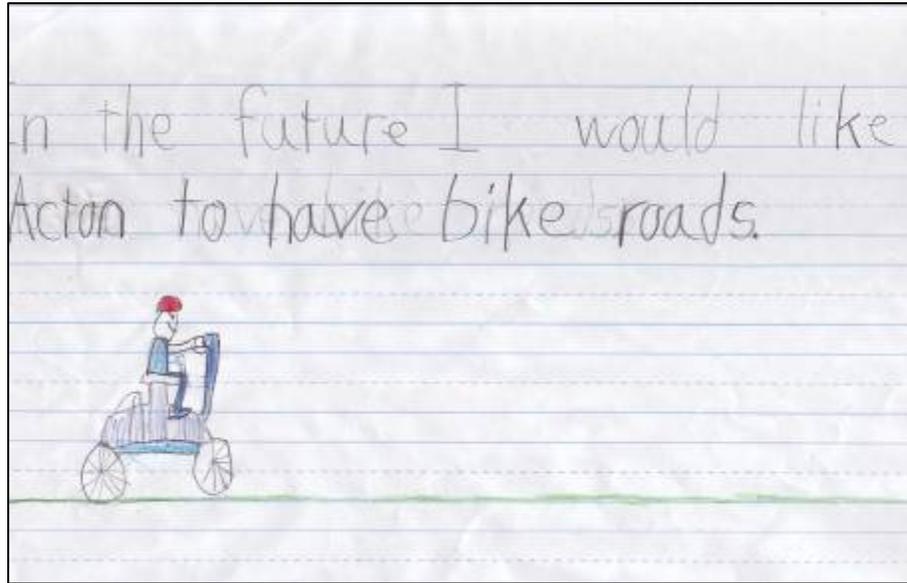
Phase I Community Outreach

- Process:
 - 12 Outreach Committee meetings
 - 3 town-wide visioning sessions
 - 4 focus groups with town department heads, boards, committees, and commissions
 - 12 targeted outreach meetings and presentations
 - Town-wide mail and web survey to residents (15.6% response rate) and phone survey
 - Town-wide business survey (5.3% response rate)
 - Comment board
 - Involvement of school pupils





Phase I: Community Outreach



Six Emerging Goals





Preserve Town Character





Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Plan for Sustainability





Improve Connections





Provide Opportunities for Gathering





Support Inclusion and Diversity





Preserve/Enhance Town Assets



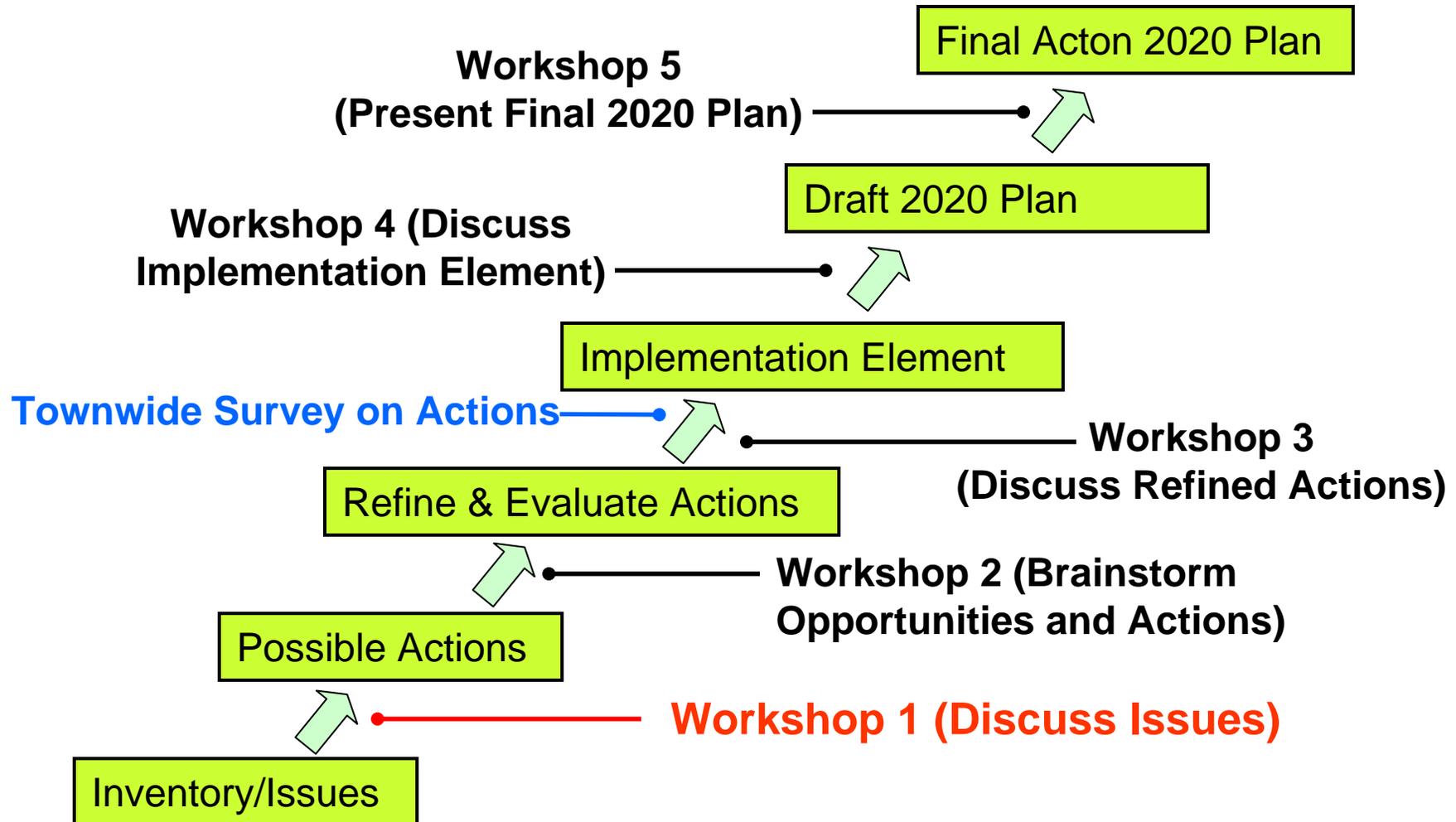


The Planning Process



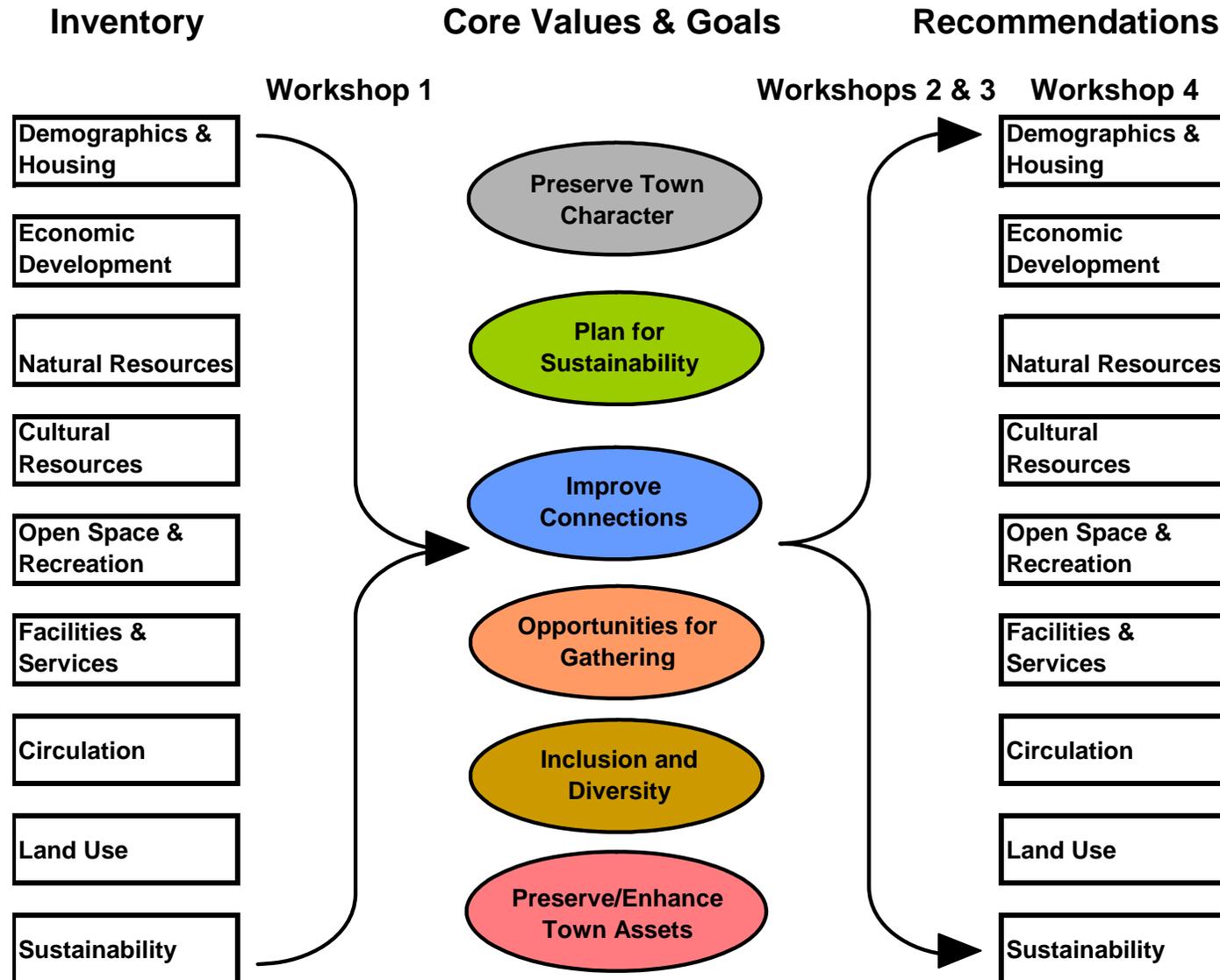


Phase II Planning Process





Connecting Goals and Elements





Key Findings from the Inventory





Demographics

- Current estimates for 2010:
 - **21,724 people**
 - **8,400 households**
- 2000 U.S. Census counts:
 - **20,331 people**
 - **7,495 households**
- Growth over the past decade
 - **Population +6.9%**
 - **Households +12.1%**
- Growth from 1990 to 2000
 - **Population +13.8%**
 - **Households +13.6%**

Sources: 2010 population – Acton Town Clerk; 2010 households – Metropolitan Area Planning Council





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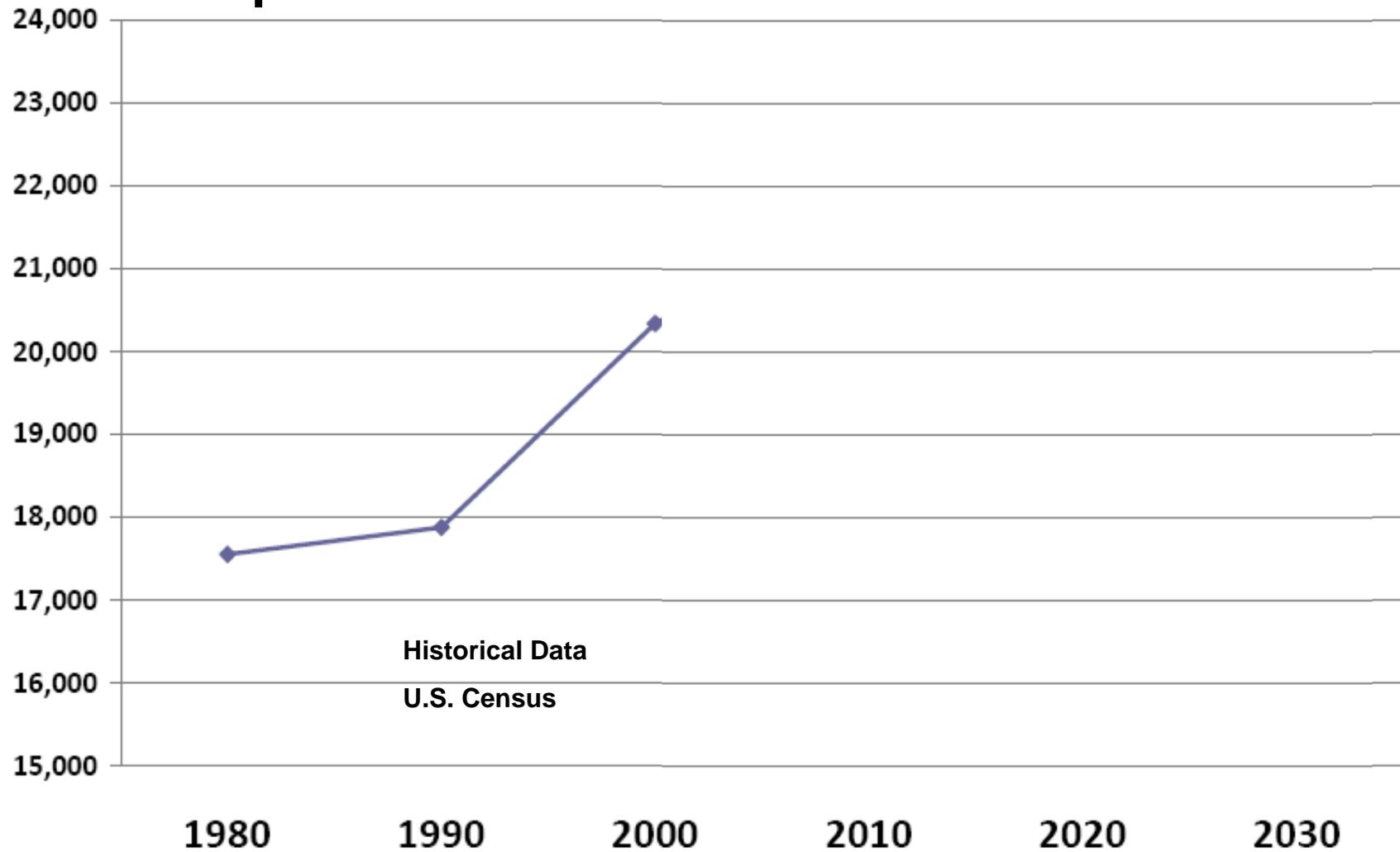
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Demographics

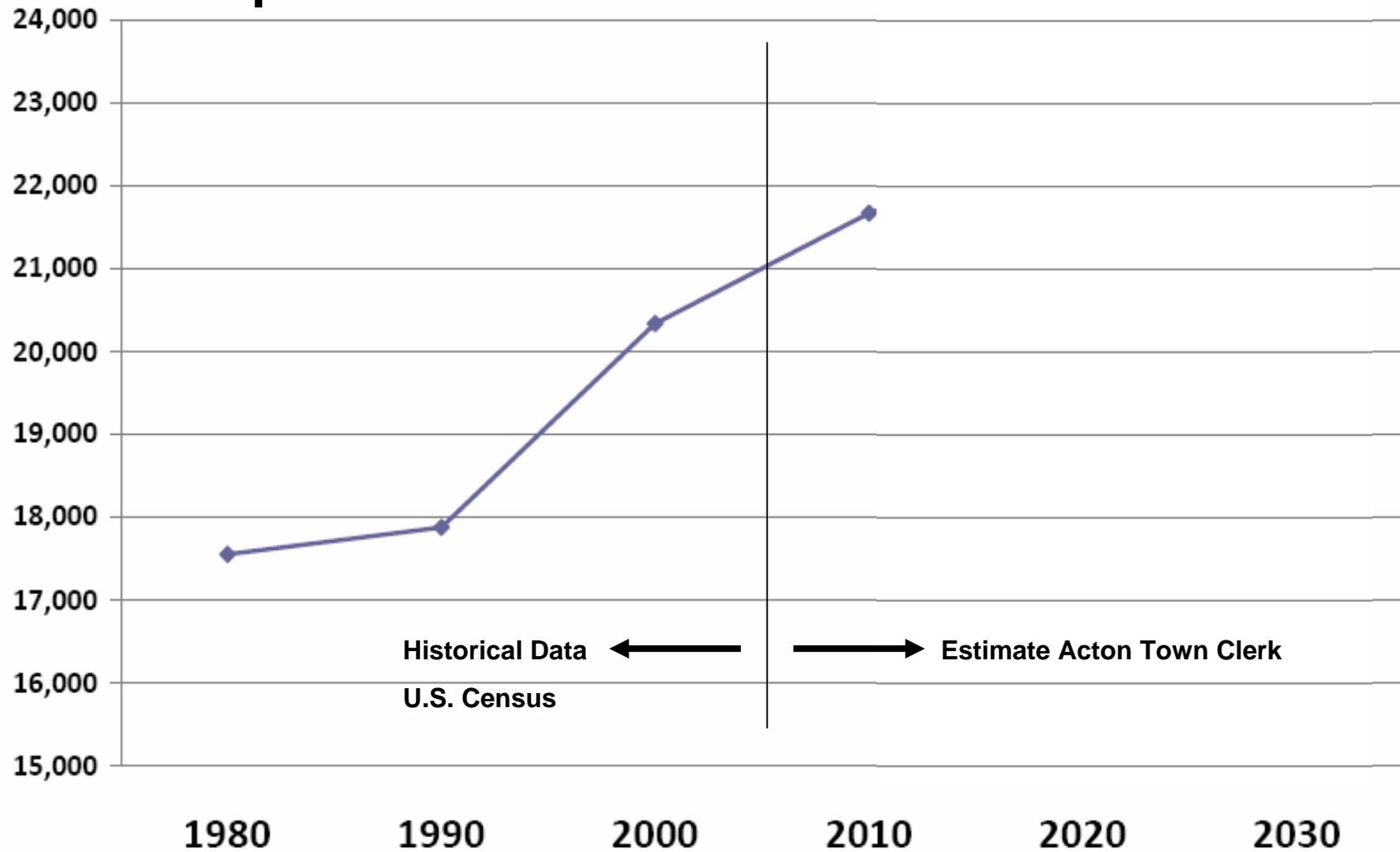
Population Growth to 1980 to 2000





Demographics

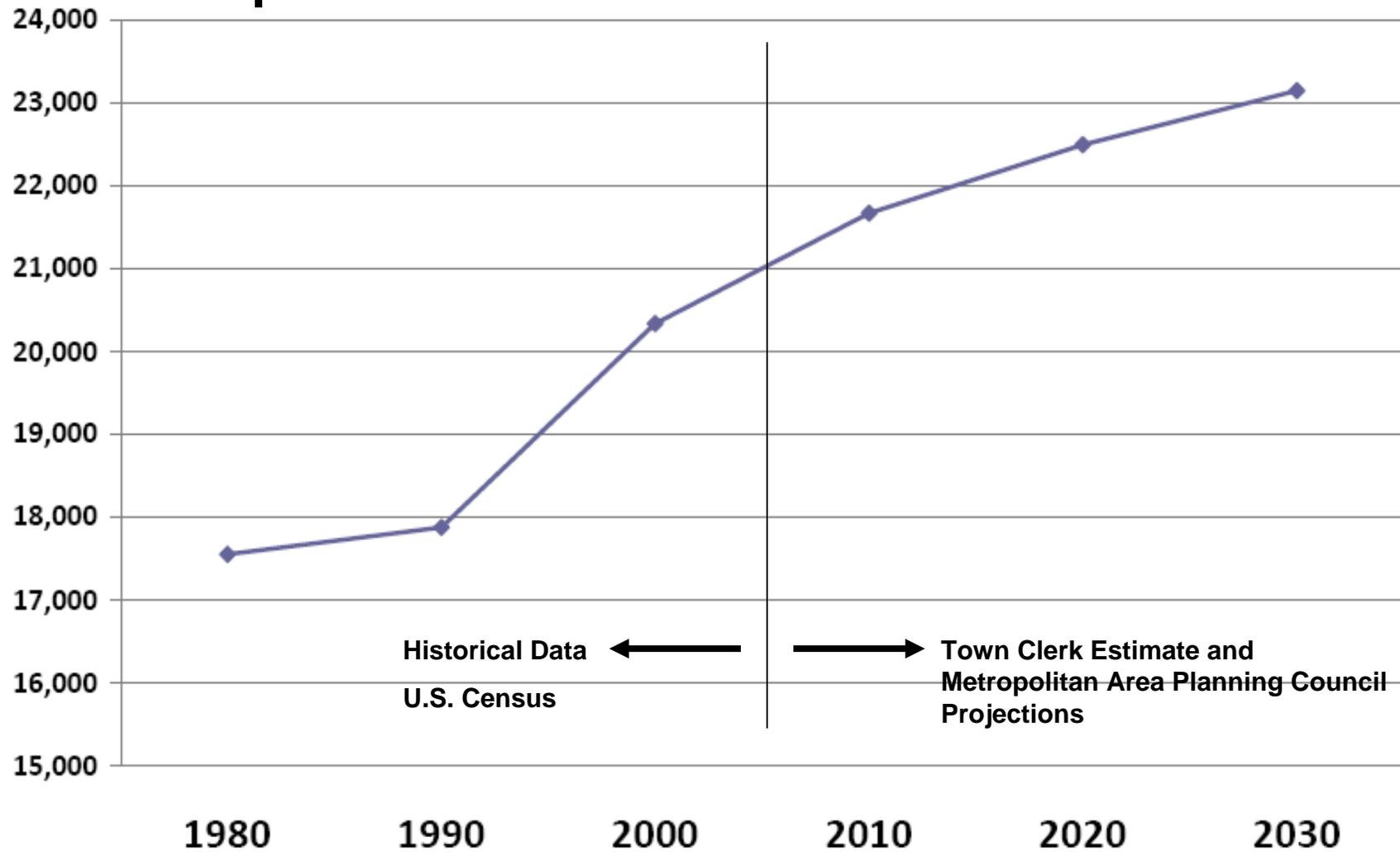
Population Growth to 2010





Demographics

Population Growth to 2030





Demographics

- MAPC* expects population growth to remain slow (3.5% from 2010 to 2020)
- Household size declined from 2.72 in 2000 to 2.58 in 2010
- MAPC projects average household size to continue to decline from current 2.58 to 2.52 per household in 2020
- Age groups will shift and so will service demand

*Metropolitan Area Planning Council





Demographics

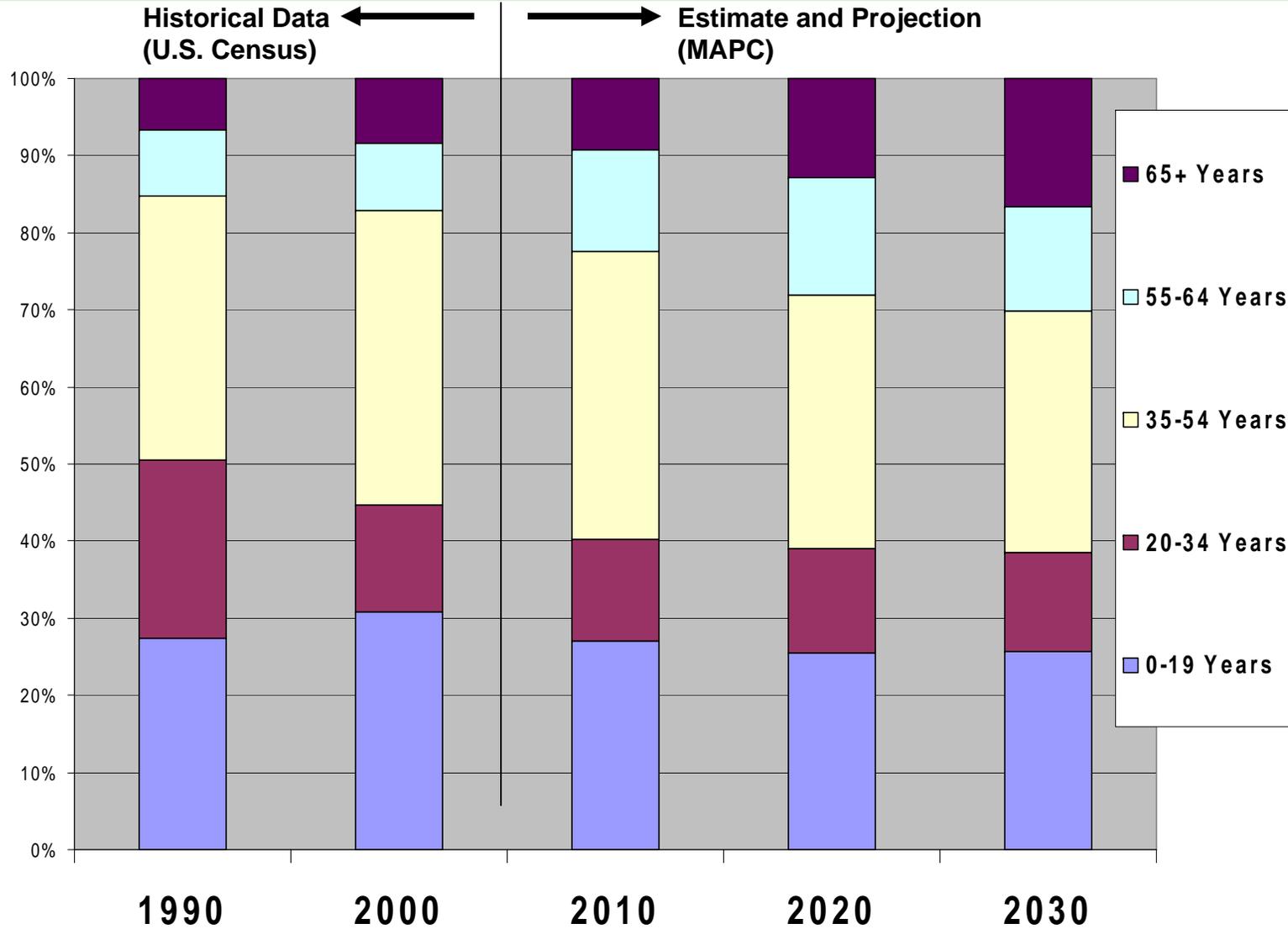
- The over 55 share will increase by 2020
 - 600 more “empty nesters” (55-64)
 - 856 more seniors (65+)
- 700 fewer adults 35-54 (family formation age group)
- Fewer school-age children in the future
 - 227 fewer in 2010 than in 2000
 - Approx 375 fewer in 2020 than in 2010

(Projections by Metropolitan Area Planning Council)





Demographics: Acton Population by Age



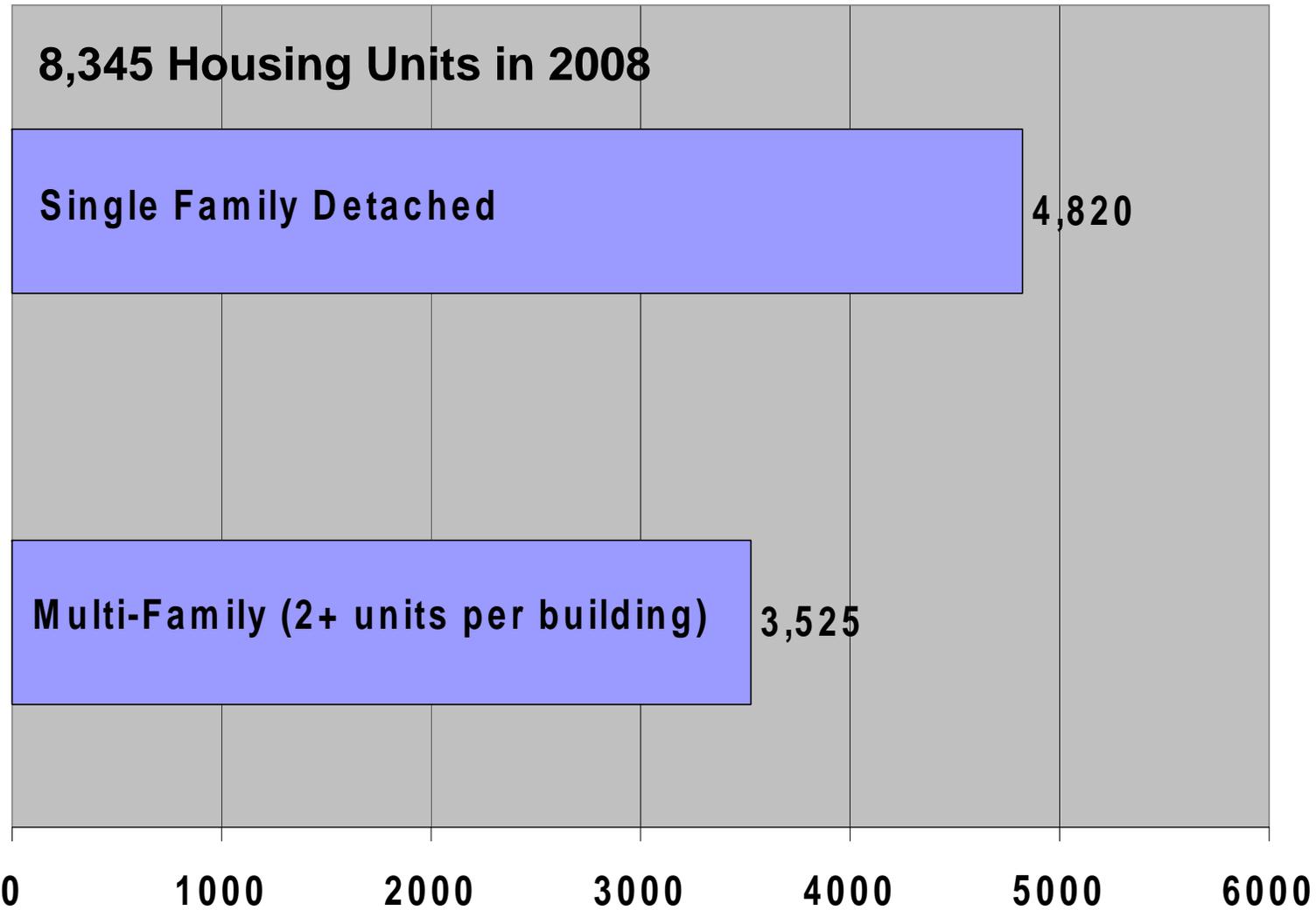


Housing





Housing

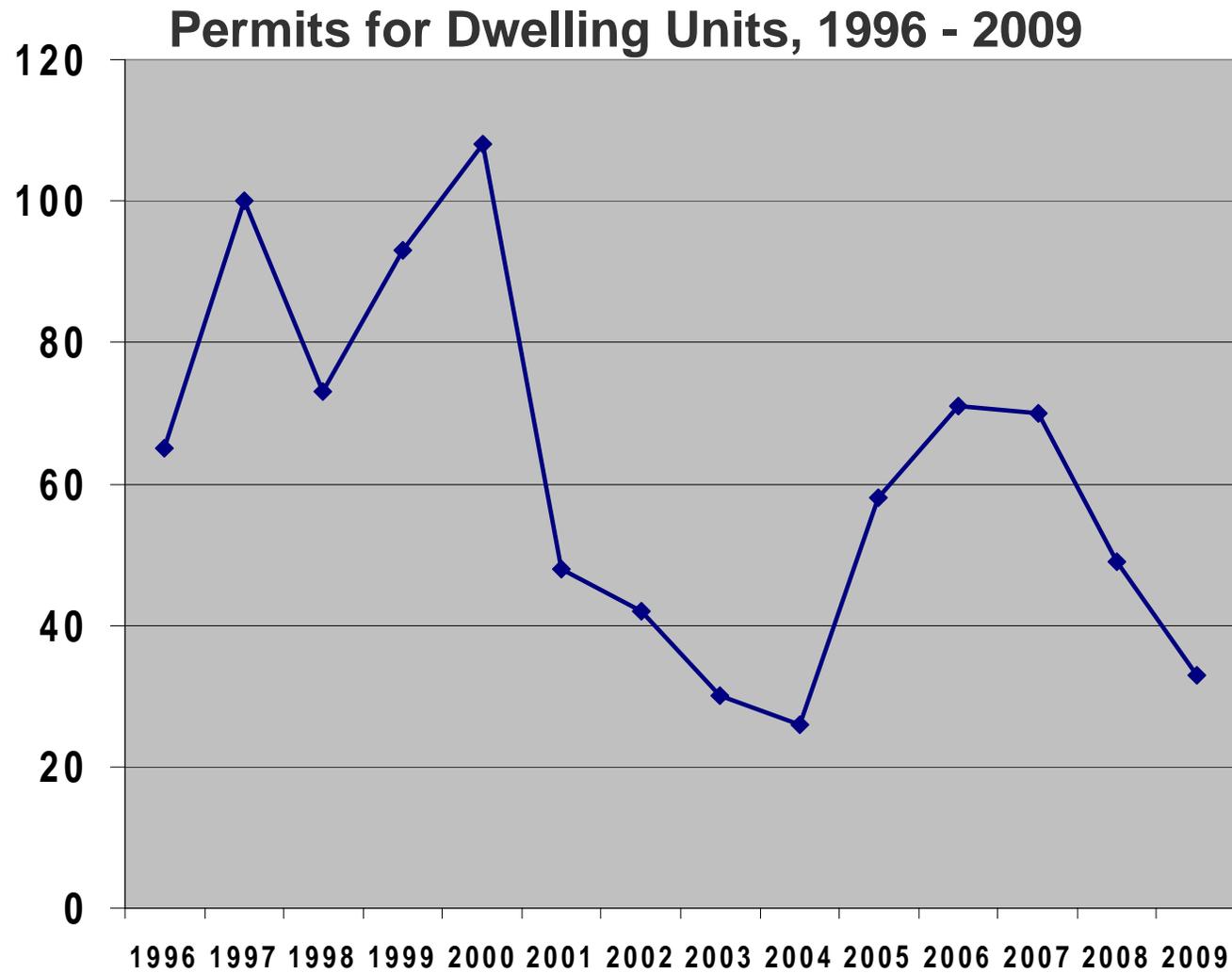


Source: Acton Assessor's Office





Housing



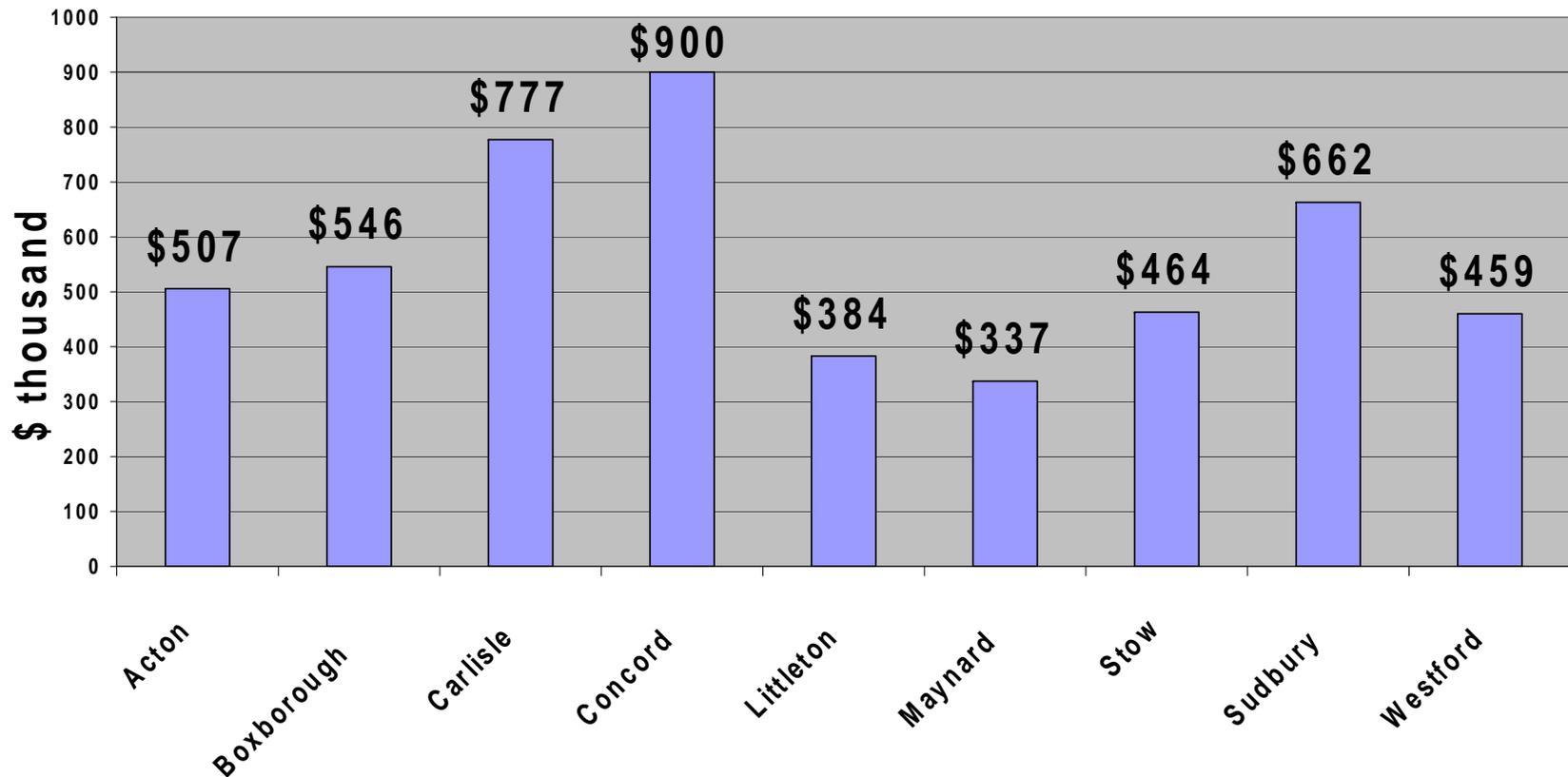
Source: U.S. Census Bureau





Housing

Average Single Family Home Assessed Value, 2009



Source: MA Dept. of Revenue





Housing

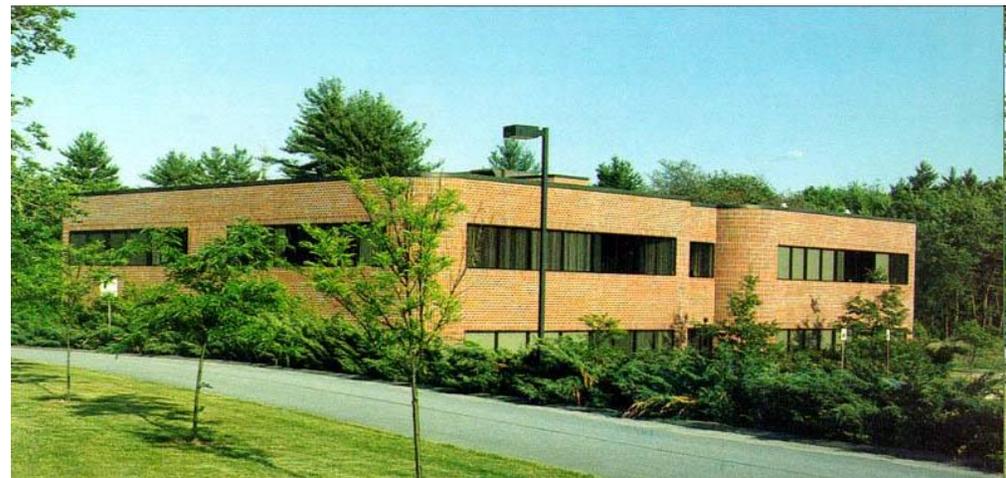
Observations:

- The housing boom is over and won't return soon (if ever)
- Decreasing demand for large homes (4 - 5 bedrooms)
- More demand for smaller units near shopping and recreation
- Based on both Acton projections and national trends



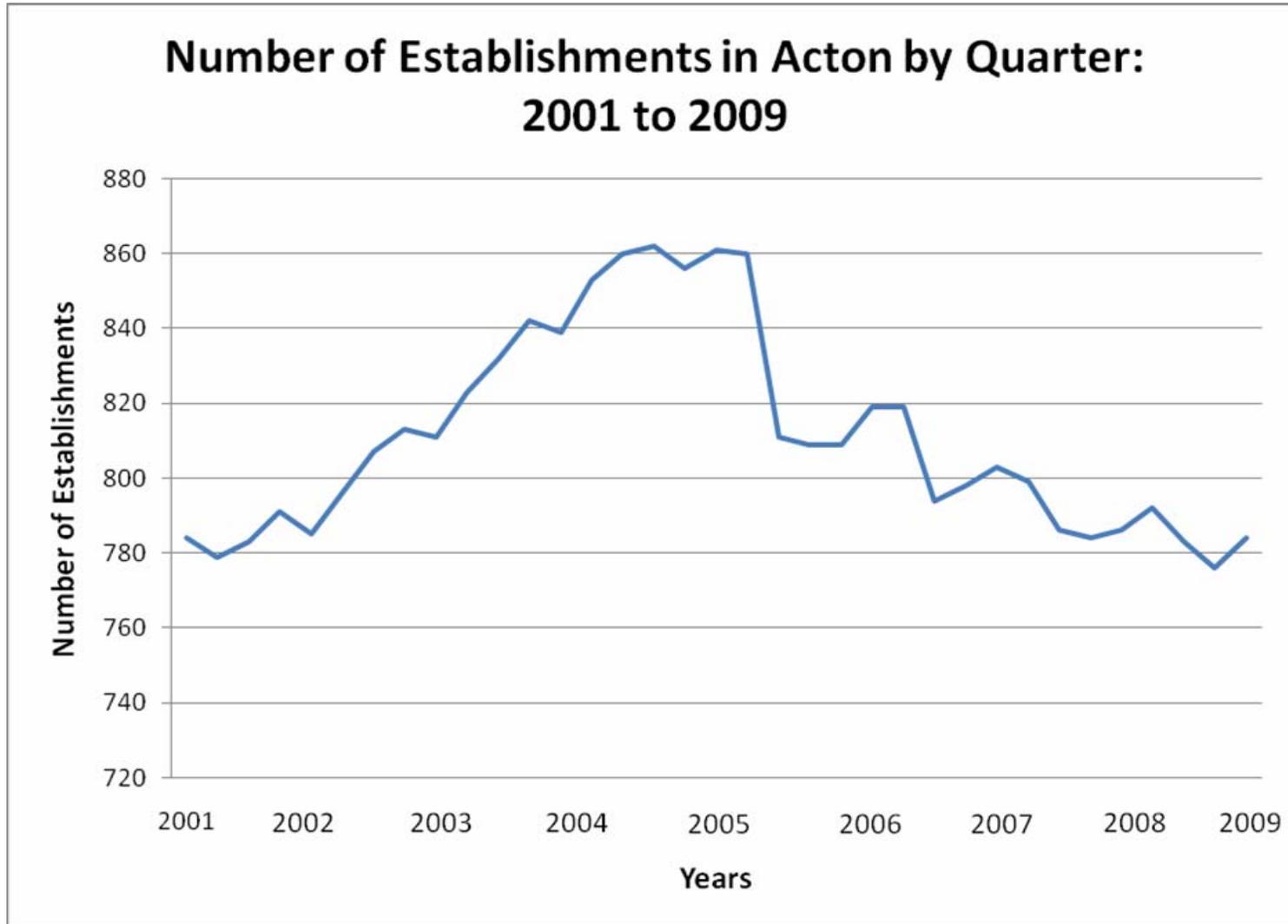


Economic Development





Economic Development



Source: Mass. Dept. of Workforce Development





Economic Development

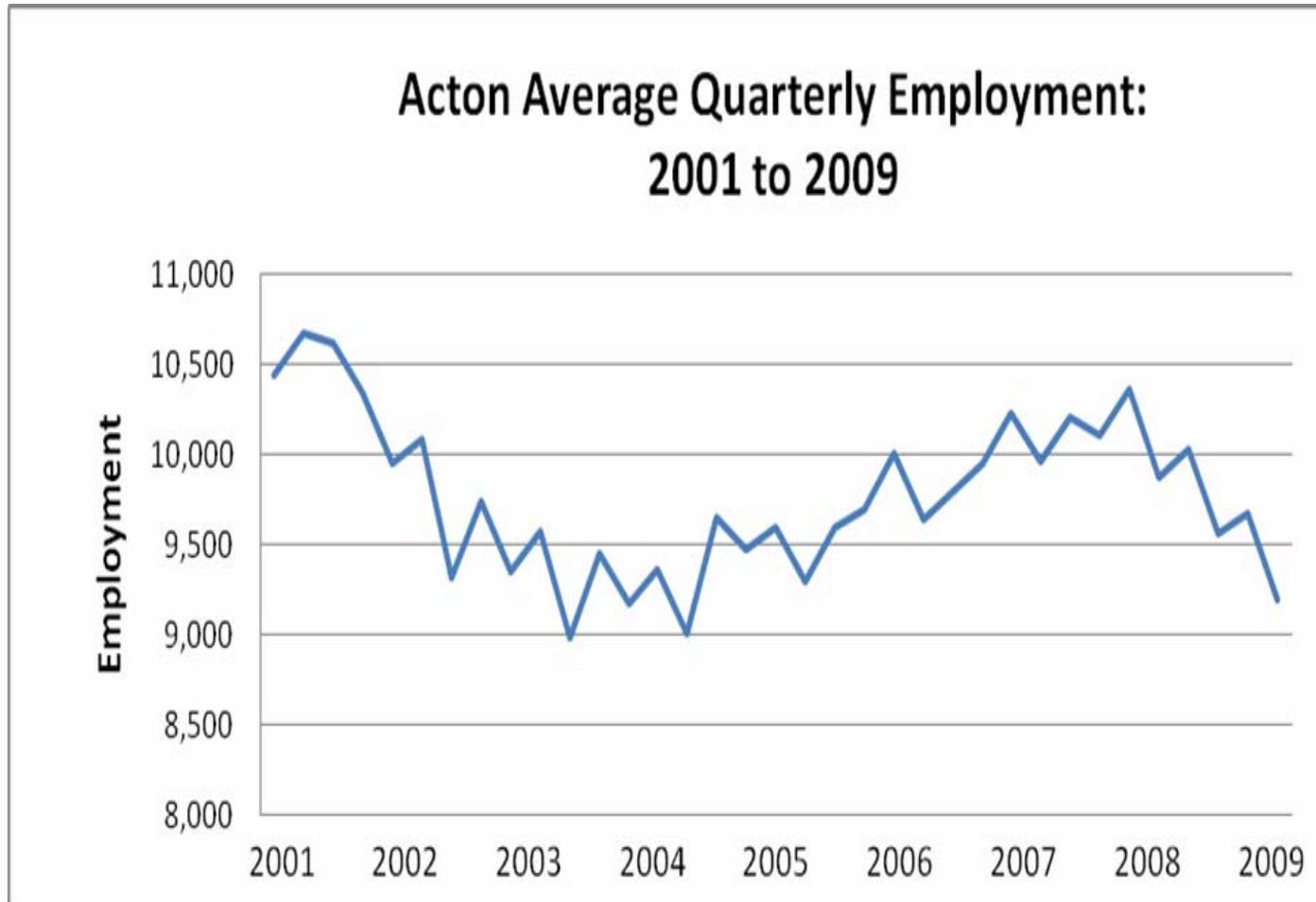
- 781 businesses reported employment to the state in 2009
- Approximately 500 additional small and home businesses
- Approximately 9,200 private sector jobs located in Acton in 2009
- 1,070 additional public sector jobs located in Acton

Sources: Mass. Dept. of Workforce Development & Acton Economic Development Committee





Economic Development



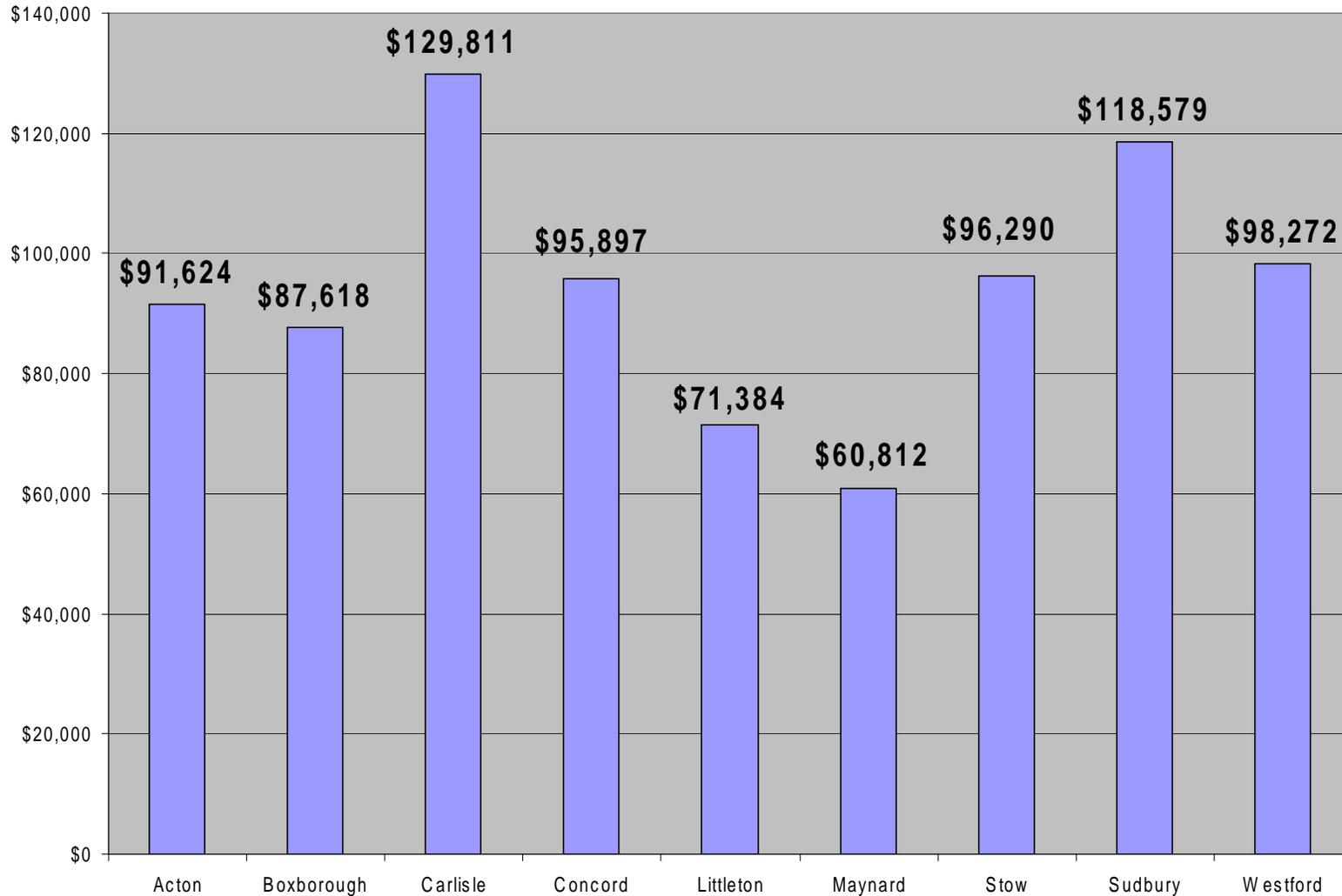
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Economic Development

Median Household Income, 2000



Source: U.S. Census





Economic Development

- 1/3 of Acton residents surveyed do half or more of their shopping in town





Economic Development

Observations:

- Acton has many small and home businesses in addition to those that report their employment to the state.
- Acton household income is in the mid range of neighboring communities.
- Getting more people to shop in Acton helped by more amenities, being pedestrian friendly
- Jobs and tax base require encouraging more development and redevelopment of commercial land





Natural Resources





Natural Resources

- Acton's water comes from groundwater wells in five areas of town
- 80% of homes have on-site septic systems
- 75% of land has "severe" limitations for on-site septic systems, including aquifer recharge
- Water supply limitations exist
- Acton "controls" most of its water cycle, both opportunity and challenge
- Many areas of natural beauty and wildlife habitat are not protected from development





Historic and Cultural Resources





Historic/Cultural

- The five villages date from 1735 (Acton Center) and the mid-19th century (West, South, East, and North Acton)
- Three historic districts (Acton Center, West Acton, and South Acton)
- Over 600 historic buildings, landscapes, and other resources – important to town character
- Many cultural events held throughout the year; gathering places important





Open Space and Recreation





Open Space and Recreation

- 25% of Acton's 20 square miles is public open space or recreation areas; 2/3 of this is protected
- 20 major conservation areas are managed by the Land Stewardship Committee
- 13 public active recreation facilities and two community gardens; most geared toward younger age groups
- Several priority areas identified in the Open Space and Rec Plan are not yet protected





Community Facilities and Services





Community Facilities and Services

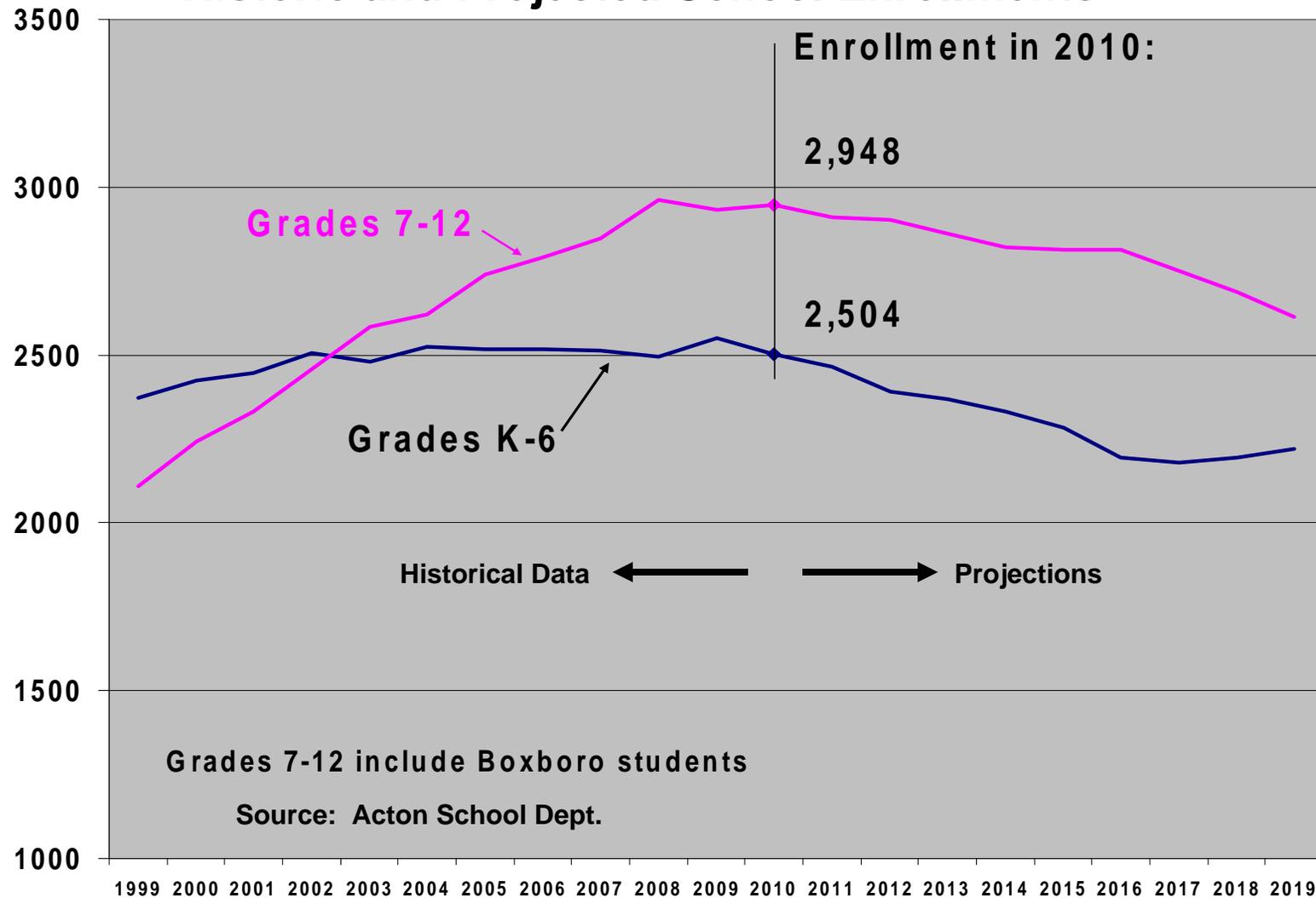
- Major needs identified in past master plans have been fulfilled: Memorial Library, Public Safety Facility, Parker Damon school building, R.J. Grey JHS and ABRHS expansions
- School facilities should be adequate for foreseeable future enrollments projected by School Department
- Ongoing projects work to keep buildings in good condition and reduce energy use





Community Facilities and Services

Historic and Projected School Enrollments





Community Facilities and Services

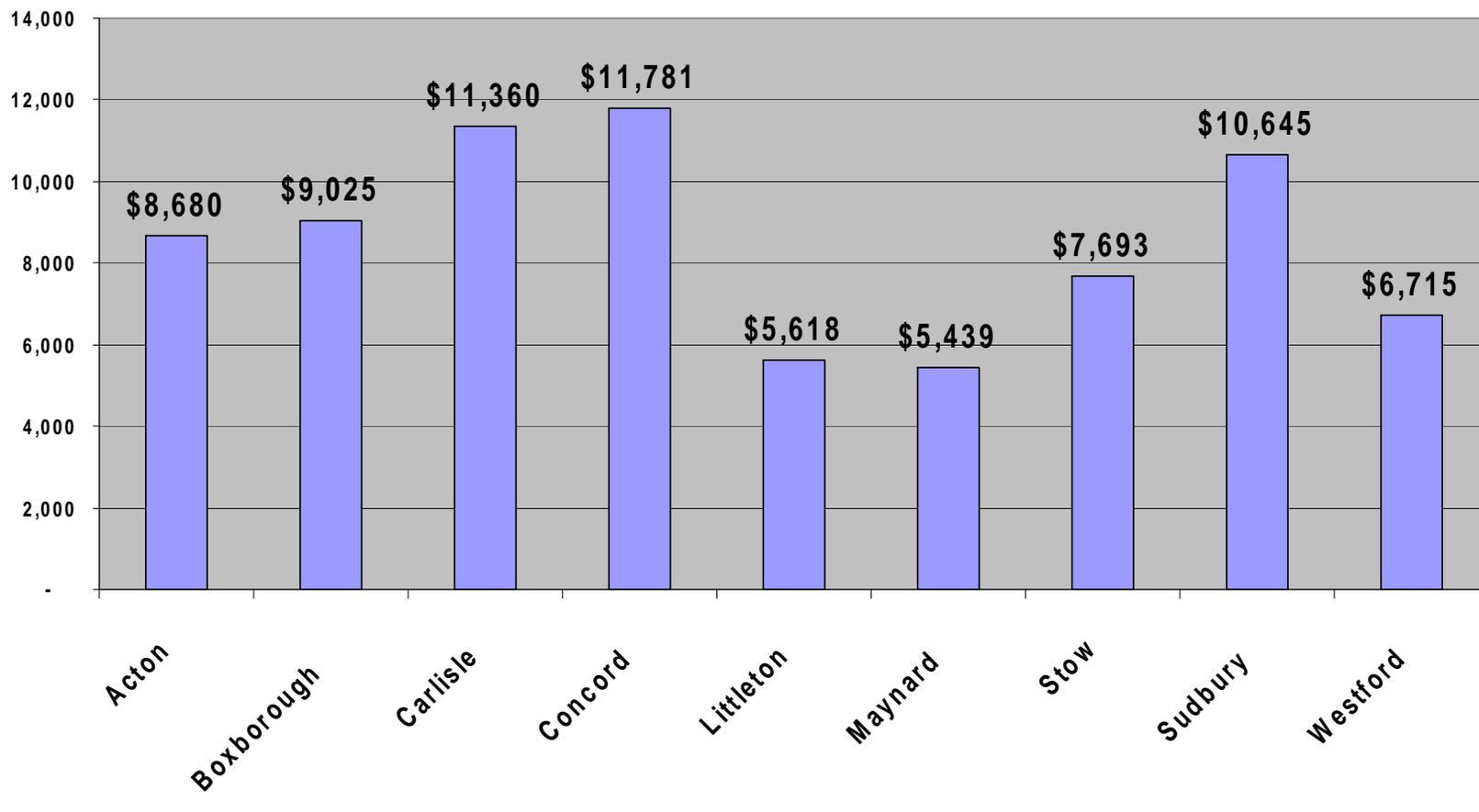
- Town Hall space for departments is tight
- New Senior Center and new Fire Station for North Acton have been identified but not funded due to lack of consensus
- Water District has made major investments; quality is good, but peak demand exceeds technical “safe yield”
- Incremental sewer system expansion has been discussed for several years, but cost and other issues have been disincentives





Facilities and Services: Taxes

Average Single Family Home Tax Bill, 2010



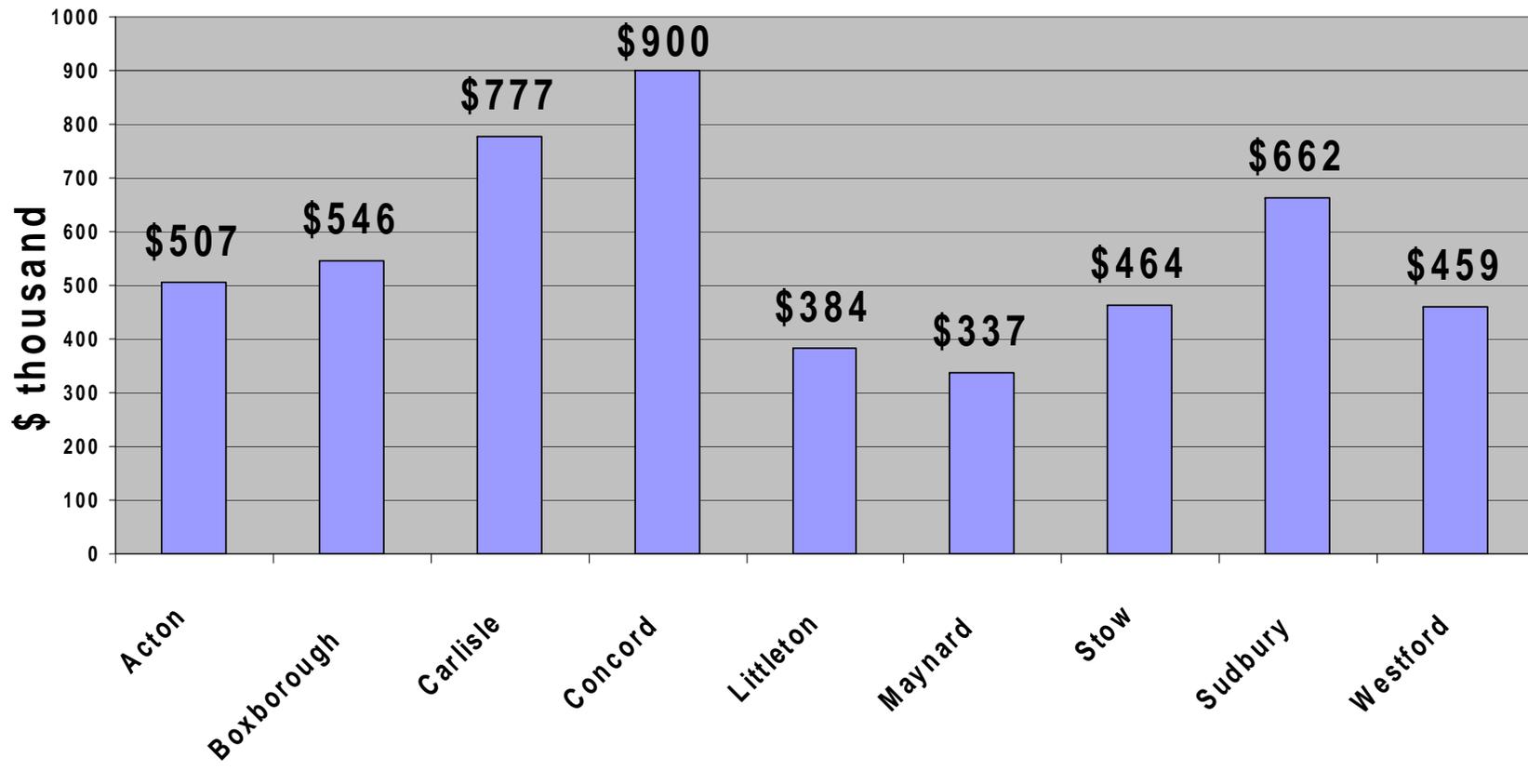
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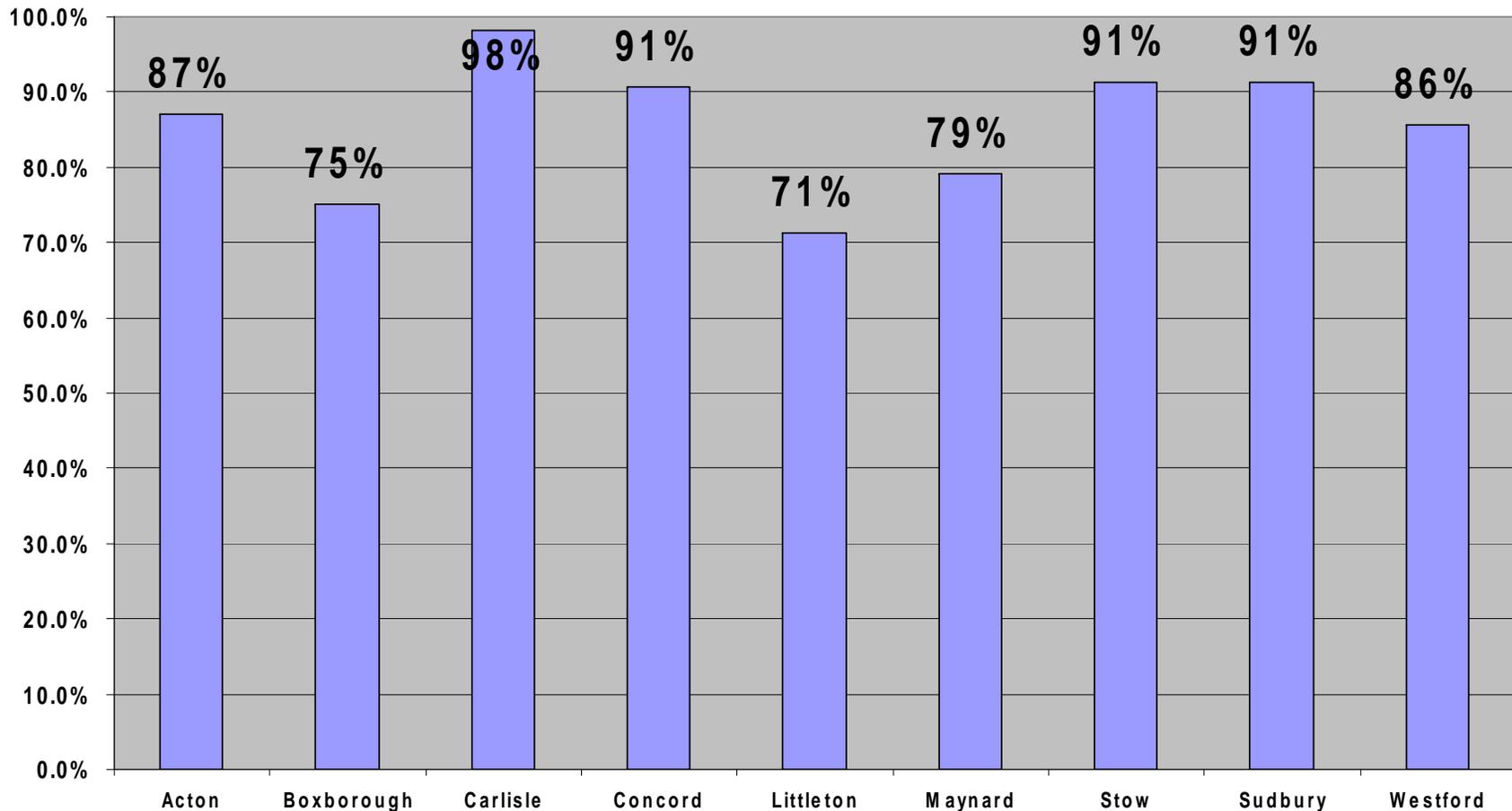
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Facilities and Services: Taxes

Residential Share of Property Taxes

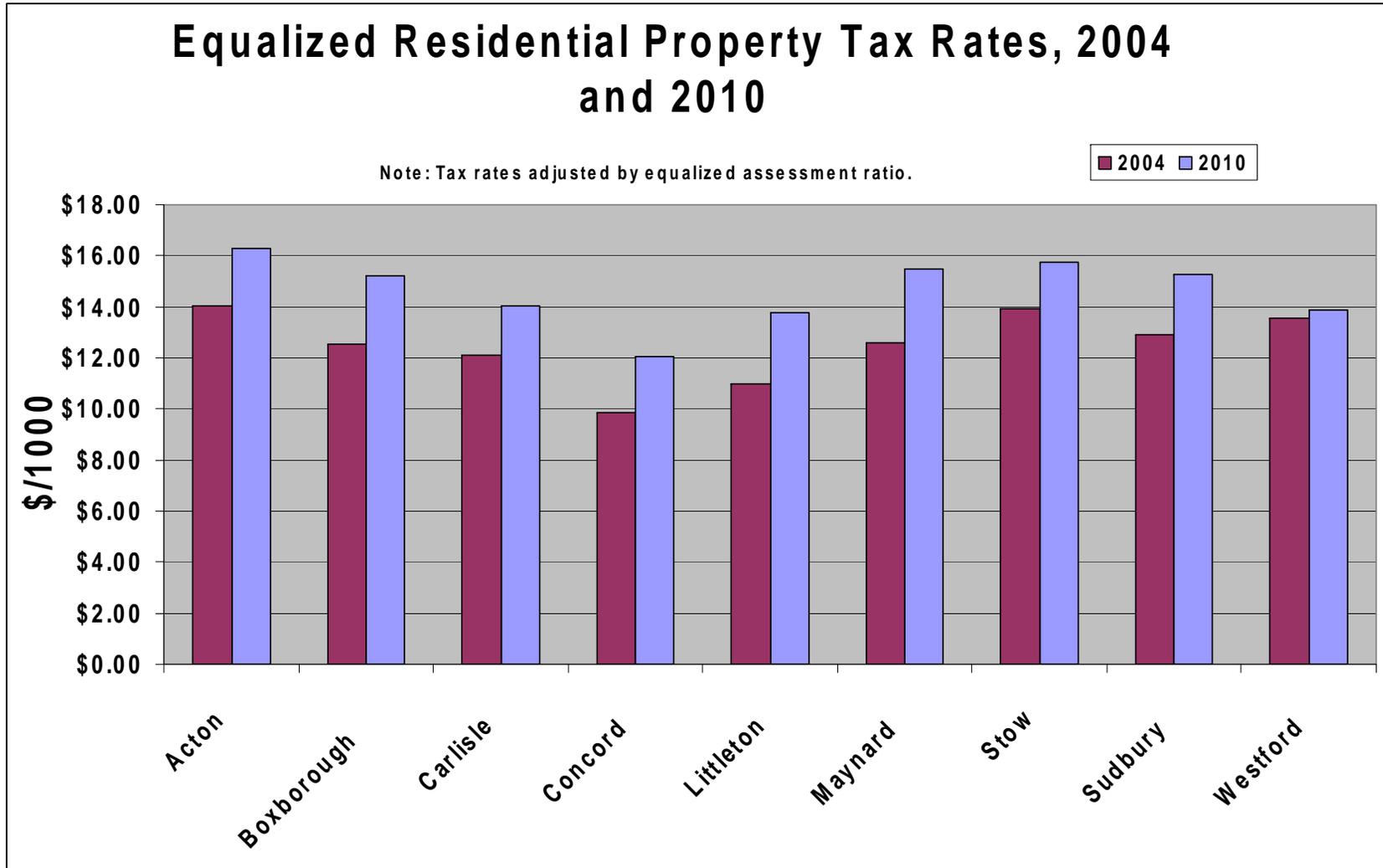


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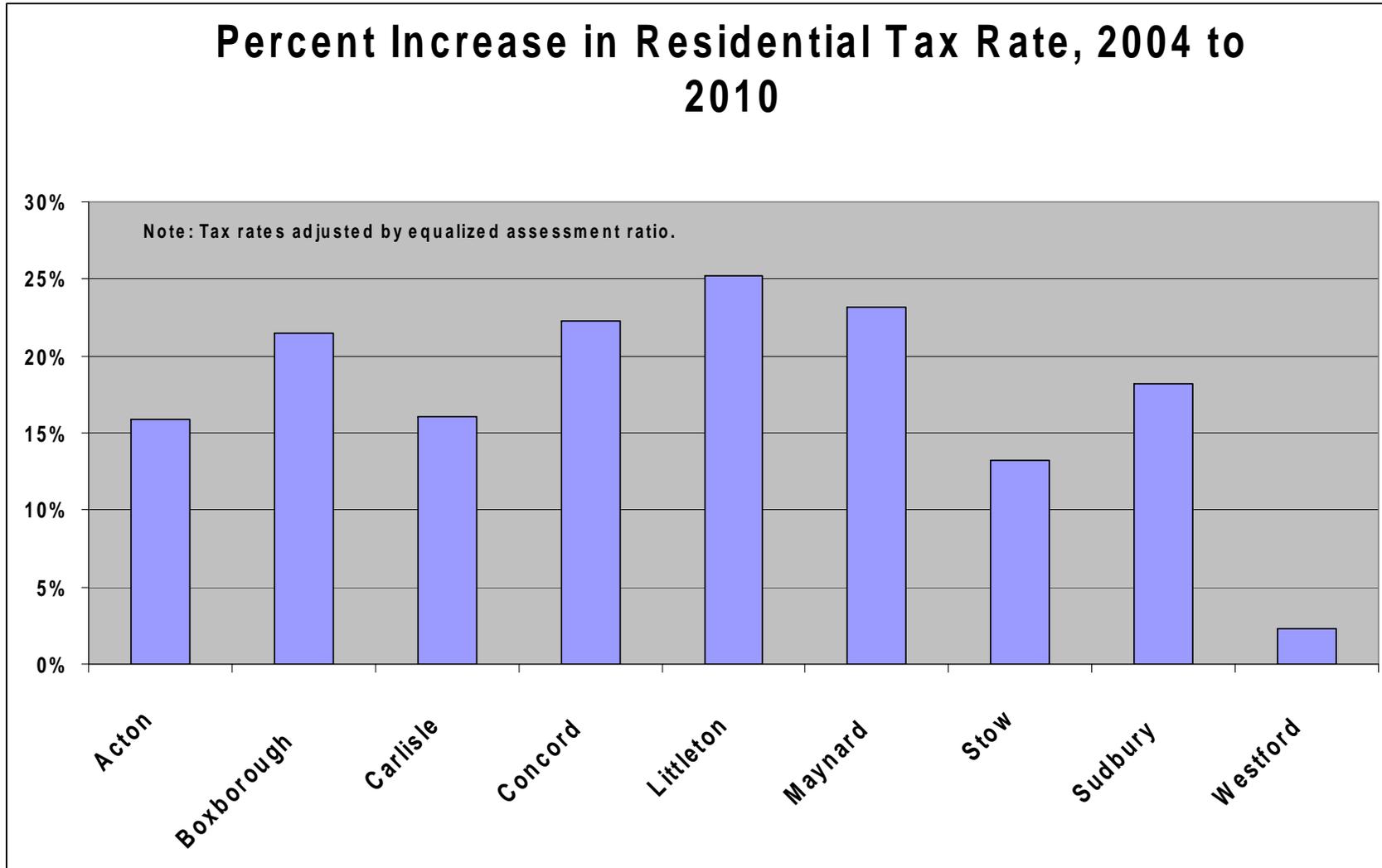


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Facilities and Services: Taxes



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Circulation and Transportation





Circulation/Transportation

- Road congestion hot spots and some safety issues; traffic not easily limited
- Many concerns about cut-throughs and speeding on neighborhood streets
- Several shuttle services including to S. Acton train station and the Senior Center
- Commuter bus East Acton – Copley Square
- Sidewalk system steadily expanding
- Few improvements yet for bicycles
- Acton supports two federally funded rail trails





Next: Discussion Groups





Discussion Groups

- Purpose: thinking together about trends, issues, and opportunities for the future
- Organized around the 6 Goals from the Phase I process
- Everyone attends two 40-minute sessions
- Re-convene at the end of the evening to compare notes





Are you ready?

- Everyone should have:
 - An agenda
 - 2 different colored tickets
 - A set of write-ups on the six goals from Phase I
 - A set of summary sheets from the Phase II inventory
 - Refreshments (thanks to Hostess)
 - Energy!

