

## Acton Comprehensive Community Plan

### ***Review of 1998 Comprehensive Plan Update***

At the request of the Acton Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach Steering Committee, Planners Collaborative was asked to evaluate progress made since the previous Comprehensive Community Plan Update in 1998 (“the 98 Plan”). Planners Collaborative met with Steering Committee member Joseph Iannelli and with Planning Director Roland Bartl and Kristen Alexander to review the implementation status of the specific actions recommended in the 1998 Plan.

### **Status of Recommended Actions**

The 1998 Plan addressed the seven topics required by MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D: land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and circulation, as well as goals and objectives and an implementation program. Overall, the 98 Plan contained 12 goals, 65 objectives that articulated these goals more specifically, 126 strategies to achieve the objectives, and 143 actions. Through discussion with the Planning Director and follow-up with the Natural Resources and Conservation Department, it was determined that 102 of the actions (70 percent) were addressed in some manner: 61 actions (42 percent) were fully implemented, 31 actions (21 percent) were partially implemented, and 7 actions (5 percent) were acted upon but not implemented by town staff, town boards/commissions, or Town Meeting. In several cases, implementation is ongoing; for example, the actions concerning East Acton and North Acton villages have been largely accomplished in East Acton, and the town intends to turn its attention to North Acton in the future. Table 1 summarizes the implementation to date by category. Table 2 is a detailed list of actions and their status.

This record of accomplishment is a good one for a comprehensive community plan and it should be viewed as very positive, particularly given the large number of recommended actions. At the same time, a number of lessons can be learned from the implementation of the 98 Plan.

### **Observations and Implications for the new Comprehensive Community Plan**

1. The 1998 Plan was a high quality product that reflected a significant community outreach process.
2. The large number of strategies and actions tended to obscure the main themes of the 98 Plan which in many cases were divided among the required categories. These “big picture” themes were as follows:
  - a. Control residential growth

- b. Preserve town character, particularly by strengthening the villages for both residential and business uses
  - c. Encourage appropriate economic development to build the tax base and provide a greater variety of goods, services, and employment opportunities in Acton
  - d. Protect the environment and cultural resources
  - e. Calm traffic and encourage non-automobile transportation
  - f. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections.
3. The new Comprehensive Plan will be stronger and more effective if it strives to keep a “big picture” in view and identifies priorities for a more manageable number of most important actions.
  4. The new Plan should identify the staff and financial resources needed to implement each action and adjust priorities and resource commitments accordingly.

### **Resource Documents**

The 1998 **Comprehensive Community Plan Update** continues to be a useful planning resource with valuable data and documentation of the public process that went into it.

The 2002 **Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan** contains further data and a five year action plan that is being implemented by the Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, and Land Stewardship Committee. An updated plan is expected by the end of 2008.

The 2004 **To Live in Acton** Report addresses affordable housing goals and actions that are being implemented by the Acton Housing Authority and Acton Community Housing Corporation.

The Land Stewardship Committee has documented its work on the Town’s conservation land; this information is available on its website [www.actontrails.org/index.htm](http://www.actontrails.org/index.htm).

The 2006 **Acton Reconnaissance Report: Freedom’s Way Landscape Inventory** was produced under the Massachusetts Heritage landscape Inventory Program. It contains information on nine priority heritage landscapes and preservation planning recommendations.