

Revised Goals and Objectives: DRAFT 2C

The following is a working draft of the Revised Goals and Objectives.

Yellow highlight represents changes to Phase I language suggested by Oct. 20 Workshop participants

Green highlight represents changes to wording suggested by Committee and/or Town Staff

Blue text represents Committee member comments and/or suggested changes.

Lilac highlight indicates that a decision needs to be made (as a result of discussion)

Preserve Town Character

GOAL: We feel strongly about preserving and enhancing what makes Acton special and unique, including its rural and historic characteristics and its village centers.

Objective: Preserve Rural and Historic Characteristics

Merge with : Preserve Historic Buildings and Landscapes (from “Preserve Town Assets” goal)

Merge with “Protect Existing and Acquire Additional Open Space” (from “Preserve Town Assets” goal) - ???

- I feel the urge to clarify that Acton is no longer rural so rural as a context for a way of life is something that we can't preserve because it's already gone. But we can preserve certain evocations of our rural past - “views” and “landscapes”. Can we also refer to the goal of Preserving Town Assets for more discussion of land preservation and the goal of Sustainability for preserving remaining farms and supporting community gardens and other forms of new local food production to emphasize that “rural” in its agricultural sense is not just limited to the historical context?

Objective: Preserve and Enhance Village Centers

Plan for Sustainability

GOAL: Increase Awareness Regarding the Need to Plan for Sustainability, We value taking responsibility for our actions and planning for the future. We are mindful of our actions today because we are considerate of future generations living tomorrow.

As Acton residents, we recognize that our health and well-being depend on protecting the web of life of which we are a part. Therefore, it is vital that we live and work here in a manner that supports that web and the well-being of people everywhere, including future Actonians.

Objective: Continue current sustainability efforts and develop a plan and action steps to proactively address issues of sustainability

Objective: To protect the quality and quantity of the water in our watershed.

The water part of the statement seems much more passive than the other portions. The other portions in their wording reflect an active goals of moving towards some better place. The water part of the statement seems to be more passive as written. I would therefore suggest something like:

"Protect and improve the quality and quantity of water in the Acton watersheds and environment, such that the water quality continues to be an excellent source of supply for the population and environment for natural life and such that the quantity is balanced with the extent of development. This will include advance planning to minimize quality threats and a transition to the need to balance development with the ability of the watershed to support it."

I would like to see a change in the first objective. While I think the "goal" of this first objective is on-track, I don't believe the use of the word watershed is correct. In its most common use, watershed refers to the surface water runoff to another body of water, typically a river, stream or lake. It generally does not consider the groundwater. I hope that was not the intent of this objective, since Acton's groundwater is the source of all of our drinking water at this time. I would like to see language that looks at all of the water in Acton, which includes storm water, wastewater and groundwater as a resource that is to be protected.

Objective: To move toward a sustainable material economy in which every part of every manufactured object becomes, at the end of its useful life, part of another sustainable product or process.

Acton 2020
13 January 2011

In objective number two, I'm not happy with the word "potentially." A substance or chemical which is harmless in one environment can be potentially hazardous or toxic in another environment. Perhaps simply removing the word potentially in using the word hazardous and/or toxic may do the trick if used in the context of an environment.

Objective: To make the transition to safer and renewable energy sources.

In objective number three, I am a little worried since there is no time context with the transition to the use of safe and renewable energy sources. I am not sure how to handle this exactly

Objective: To reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal uses.

Objective: To protect our trees and forests, especially in support of their capacity for capturing carbon for a long time.

Objective: To move toward patterns of land use and land protection that support broad biodiversity, soil preservation, and healthy local agriculture.

While it is somewhat understandable that the goal and objectives are "motherhood and apple pie," I think there is some need to temper the objectives with the reality of time. For example, many people may support the third objective to support a transition to the use of safe and renewable energy sources but will actively participate in this objective only when the replacement technologies can support cost structures that make the replacement technologies viable. That is, the new cost structures must be very similar to the existing (old) cost structures. It is likely that "early adopters" will utilize a new technology regardless of the cost unless that cost is outlandish. However, based on past results, the general public is much slower to adopt new technologies until they see both a clear benefit and a similar cost. Experience shows that if they are pushed to adopt a new technology or practice too early (before costs are in-line), there is a risk of a backlash against adoption. If this should happen, there is a good possibility that the advancement toward the objective would be substantially slowed.

Improve Connections

GOAL: We recognize that a community that is connected is safer, stronger, and provides more opportunities for meaningful interaction. We envision supporting these connections through physical means including sidewalks, bike paths, trails and public transportation to connect people and places, and to support independent and safe travel for all. We also envision open communication as a means to further connect residents (e.g. through the web, cable TV, community bulletin boards, etc.).

Objective: Improve Walking and Biking Experience

Objective: Improve Circulation In and Around Town

Objective: Improve Communication

This needs to be more specific – communication between /among who? Which communication methodologies?

Objective: Support and Strengthen Neighborhoods
(moved here from Town Assets goal)

I like that this is under improve connections, but I think we need to think through if the town can actually play a role here.

Provide More Opportunities for Community Gathering

We value the small town feeling and appreciate the sense of community that results from frequent opportunities for interaction. We support providing places for casual social interaction and organized events that bring members of the community together. We believe in offering opportunities for intergenerational experiences, and for sharing of inter-cultural celebration (e.g. community/senior center, park, farmer's market, cultural venues, community garden).

Objective: Expand Senior / Community Center

This one seems more like an Idea for Strategies than it does an objective. And given how controversial this specific idea has been, it probably makes sense to take it out.

Objective: Support Additional Cultural Activities

Objective: Provide Additional Opportunities to Gather

Support Inclusion and Diversity

GOAL: We value a diverse population and wish to foster respect, promote interaction and actively support a wide variety of individuals to live, work, and play in our community. This includes a range of ages and socio-economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Objective: Support All Ages

Objective: Support Socio-economic Diversity

Objective: Embrace Cultural Diversity

Objective: Support the Disabled Community

I would be curious to understand how big a need is this – how large is our disabled community?

Preserve and Enhance Town Assets and Resources

GOAL: We value our Town assets and wish to preserve and enhance them. These include our open spaces, schools, historic sites, municipal properties, commercial areas, recreational areas, and our neighborhoods, including the people who live in them.

In the "Preserve and Enhance Town Assets and Resources" goal I would stay with our current language. Adding 'resources' and then saying they are covered in the "sustainability" goal instead doesn't seem like the right use of goal & objectives language.

I am also confused about whether we intend 'Town' here to mean the municipality or the entire town. I think making this about the entire town makes this goal too general - it encompasses too much. Keeping this about municipally-owned assets allow us to keep our focus on this particularly important topic. The non-town-owned stuff is covered in other goals. If we accept that, then we would shorten and change the goal a bit, perhaps as follows:

Objective: Protect Existing and Acquire Additional Open Space

Is this redundant with the preserve rural and historic characteristics objective under the town character goal?

Objective: Protect Existing and Acquire Additional Open Space
would stay, at least for town-owned lands. Encouraging private conservation restrictions and chapter 61 lands might belong

elsewhere, perhaps in land use changes that support sustainability.

Objective: Support Excellence in Schools

Objective: Maintain Town Properties

Objective: Improve Commercial Areas and Promote Economic Development

This one deserves some discussion. Pieces related to these two related objectives emerged in the community feedback, but there was not a rousing "we need to promote economic development" rallying cry. The parts I can see are:

- a) Restaurants to encourage community gathering.
- b) Deeper tax base to encourage lower taxes to encourage economic diversity (I think this is a bit of a stretch, but that's just me. I don't think new businesses help taxes all that much in Acton, and I don't think lower taxes are what discourage less-well-off people from living here)
- c) Enabling more local shopping for essentials in Acton supports some sustainability and community gathering goals.
- d) There were some specific traffic safety and esthetic improvements in commercial areas that people asked for, that fit in to the Connection goal and the Town Character goal, respectively.

I am tempted by this analysis to remove this as a top-level objective, and instead have specific targeted strategies under some of the other goals & objectives as listed. I think its useful to question the assumption that economic development is a top-level objective, especially as it can compete against the other goals and objectives.

Objective: Maintain and Increase Recreational Opportunities

I am not sure that the townspeople want to generically "increase recreational opportunities". I am sure they want to maintain most of the ones we have, but I don't know if that calls for a specific objective of its own. I think we need to look at the parts of this. The town likes open space - does it want to see more open space converted in to soccer fields and baseball fields? I think there are many opposed to that, and a minority in favor of it. Are there kids in Acton who want to participate in organized sports and can't because there are not enough fields in our region? I don't see evidence, but I could be wrong. Again I'd look to the other goals to pick out the specific ideas for implementation that will help, and put them there. For example, to support our young people and our seniors, there may be specific activities that need support. I saw in the "Acton voices" section a mention of things such as Bike trails and Walkable

Acton 2020
13 January 2011

villages and Swimming Pools that would also support our goals for Connections and Village Centers, and Community Gathering. I also saw that improving the tennis courts was a priority - that would also support diverse age groups, and create chances for community gathering.

6. Objective: Preserve Historic Buildings and Landscapes

I think this belongs as an objective in "Preserve Town Character"